ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT
POWERED BY YOU
2021
Houston Public Media serves Greater Houston—one of the most diverse cities in America—with free access to informative, educational and inspiring content through a multi-media platform that includes TV 8 | PBS, News 88.7 | NPR and Classical HD. Every year, more than three million people in our community engage with Houston Public Media through its broadcast channels, podcasts, social media platforms, website, mobile app and streaming content. Houston Public Media features 24/7 curriculum-based children’s programming and presents a diverse range of perspectives on topics and issues that are critical to the future of our region, state and nation. Houston Public Media is a service of the University of Houston and is made possible by the generous support of donors, foundations, legacy gifts and sponsors.
It’s difficult to imagine a time that would test our resolve as individuals or as an organization more than this past year did. We persevered through a global pandemic and an unprecedented snowstorm that took down the Texas power grid. Reliable news and information have never been more critical, and Houston Public Media is committed to being the trusted source of news you and your families need to stay safe and informed.

You have been there for us to provide the financial support we need to continue our mission to serve the region. We are committed to justifying your faith in us as reliable stewards of your contributions. Like many organizations, we have been looking inward to assess our diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) commitment and actions. Toward this effort, we have set three main objectives:

- Maintain our commitment to an inclusive and safe work environment through Houston Public Media’s Culture Committee
- Expand the Houston Public Media Foundation Board to be more reflective of Houston in age, gender, ethnicity and cultural background
- Continue to invest in professional development and career advancement

We value your participation in our growth and your investment in our future. We look forward to continue working with you.

Thank you for valuing Houston Public Media and ensuring its legacy is preserved for generations to come. I am so proud that Houston Public Media has been a strong voice in our community during the COVID pandemic, providing education and information that remains necessary for understanding what is happening locally and around the world. Members who invest in Houston Public Media keep the community safe and impact change in the classroom as well. We couldn’t do it without you.

Houston Public Media gathered feedback from our audience to learn more about the issues that greatly impact our community. We responded with I SEE U with Eddie Robinson—a program that explores cultural identity through the stories of people and places. Houston Public Media also increased its streaming options this year so you can enjoy more of your favorite shows anytime, anywhere, including 24/7 PBS Kids content. This free and accessible programming helps ensure children are prepared for school and people have access to lifelong learning.

On behalf of the Houston Public Media Foundation Board, I thank you for being an enduring part of our journey to serve our community.
Houston Public Media is Greater Houston’s source for national PBS and NPR programming, and our partnerships go even further. In 2021, our content team collaborated with PBS and NPR stations across the country, and in our own backyard, to bring Houston stories to the national stage. Here are some highlights:

- In February, Houston Public Media’s Eddie Robinson interviewed Dr. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. in a live and local virtual event to mark the premiere of the PBS television series, The Black Church: This Is Our Story, This Is Our Song.
- Houston Public Media helped produce American Cities Rebuilding, a virtual event from WNET, New York’s PBS affiliate, that showcased how major American cities are grappling with the social, economic and political challenges exposed and amplified by the pandemic.
- In September, Houston Public Media, The Texas Newsroom, Columbia Journalism Investigations, NPR and The California Newsroom published an investigative series into the effects of heat on workers. Houston Public Media and KERA in Dallas decided to tell the stories of two industries that were responsible for most of these deaths and hospitalizations in Texas: construction and trash removal. A few weeks after the stories were published, the Biden Administration announced that it would begin the rulemaking process for a federal heat standard—a solution highlighted in the story and championed by worker rights advocates for years.
- Houston Public Media worked with the GBH Boston production team and local organizations to develop and record two special episodes of the program Stories from the Stage featuring storytellers from Houston. In the fall, the PBS WORLD Channel aired Resilience and Second Chance. The topics featured in these episodes resonated with viewers both in Houston and around the country.

We know that stories and programs like these are best told and produced by people who live right here in our community. With your support, we will continue to share the Houston spirit with the nation. Thank you for making it possible.

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I can only imagine how much you have heard about the challenges of the last two years. Rightfully so, this pandemic has been profoundly disruptive to nearly every aspect of human life around the globe. What has really struck me in my time with Houston Public Media is the innovation this team has displayed throughout these incredibly difficult times.

The global pandemic forced us, like every business, to totally reimagine not only our day-to-day workflow but also the processes by which we produce and deliver local content to you. Team members worked to bridge the distance and produced daily newscasts, talk shows and specials in ways and locations we never imagined possible. The need for community access to reliable information during the early days of the COVID lockdown led to the creation of a new daily talk show, Town Square with Ernie Manouse.

As the nation and the world struggled for answers to generations-old issues of equality, justice and race, the content team launched a new podcast and show to inform, challenge and give voice to the voiceless. I SEE U with Eddie Robinson endeavors to create a safe space to have unguarded conversations about topics in which many of us have struggled to engage.

While trying to maintain their own warmth and safety throughout an unprecedented freeze and power outage, our team deployed creativity and resourcefulness to keep our community informed. For many experiencing power, internet and cellular disruptions, Houston Public Media was their only source for information during this extremely dangerous weather event.

It’s said that innovation exists where opportunity and inspiration meet. Thanks to your support, the team at Houston Public Media saw opportunities with each challenge and found the inspiration to meet each moment. While the moment may change, the mission remains—to inform and inspire. We look forward to meeting the next challenge, and we are excited to serve new audiences with new content on new platforms. With your help, we look forward to creating a more informed, educated and connected community.
Houston Public Media Adults

AN INSIDE LOOK AT LOCAL EDUCATION NEWS COVERAGE
Houston Public Media’s News Education focuses coverage on topics affecting primary, secondary and higher education throughout the region. Our Houston Public Media newsmroom shares breaking news stories—as well as thoughtful analysis and in-depth reporting of education news—by going inside some of the region’s longest struggling schools, sharing live updates via Twitter and taking part in community conversations with parents, teachers, school officials and education advocates.

ENGINES OF OUR INGENUITY
Engine of Our Ingenuity, hosted by Dr. John Lienhard and other contributors, is a radio program that tells the story of how our culture is formed by human creativity.

HEALTH MATTERS
Health Matters is a radio series hosted by the founding dean of the University of Houston College of Medicine, Dr. Stephen Spann, featuring other doctors from the medical school. Health Matters empowers listeners to lead healthy lives. The series is brought to you by the UH College of Medicine and their academic partner HCA Houston Healthcare.

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Houston Matters
Sept. 24, 2021, “How Schools are Handling COVID”

I SEE U, EPISODE 14 “Digital Dance School Playgrounds”

Party Politics

Houston Public Media Kids

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PROBLEM SOLVERS
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In response to the pandemic, Houston Public Media converted the PBS KIDS Writers Contest from a traditional competition to an online program that provided PBS KIDS writing tools and resources to encourage young children’s creativity in any environment.

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As I reflect on the past year, I see a shift in how we think about covering the Houston community and the mission we aim to fulfill. We are increasingly aware of the privilege and responsibility we have to be able to tell the stories of Houston—and of the great honor you bestow on us by listening. Think back to February with me. So many of us couldn’t turn on the television and didn’t have internet access. Even our cell phones were struggling to connect. I knew Houstonians everywhere could at least sit in their cars, blast the heat, and turn on their radios. Houston Public Media would be there—providing up-to-date weather and vital information.

I can’t tell you what it meant to each of us when a listener called and left this voicemail: “I just wanted to say thank you for staying on-air this week. If it wasn’t for my trusty transistor radio and your staff, I and my family wouldn’t have known what was going on. I’ll be sending in my donation in support of your work. But aside from that…thank you, I appreciate all you have done.”

That is why we do what we do. We work in the dark and cold for you. We drive to the station during the hurricane for you.

We question and challenge government officials and politicians for you. You are our mission.

HEAT DEATHS

In September, The Texas Newsroom, Columbia Journalism Investigations, NPR and The California Newsroom published an investigative series into the effects of heat on workers. Houston Public Media and KERA in Dallas decided to tell the stories of two industries responsible for most of these deaths and hospitalizations in Texas: construction and trash removal. Reporters Sara Willa Ernst and Stella Chavez put together a seven-part radio series, after reviewing hundreds of pages of depositions, spending months tracking down sources, field reporting and interviewing officials, subject matter experts, organizers and family members. In late September, a few weeks after the stories published, the Biden Administration announced that it would begin the rulemaking process for a federal heat standard, a solution highlighted in the story and championed by worker rights advocates for years. This means employers will be required to offer certain protections to workers who are exposed to heat—things like access to water, shade and scheduled breaks.

THE TEXAS NEWSROOM

Every two years, Texas reporters cover the state legislative session. Reporters at Houston Public Media joined forces with journalists from across the state to cover dozens of laws coming out of Austin. Much of that coverage was centered here in Houston, where local voting initiatives and pandemic-related innovations drew scrutiny and prompted a flurry of legislation surrounding election security and voter rights. Politics Reporter Andrew Schneider, Senior Producer Paul Deldedenetto and City Hall Reporter Jen Rice led local, state and national coverage of the fight over voter access, election laws, political maps and gerrymandering.

FIRE TRIANGLE

Since 2019, half a dozen chemical disasters have ripped apart Texas neighborhoods, sent dozens of people to the hospital and killed unsuspecting bystanders as well as workers. Texas Public Radio and Houston Public Media’s Environmental Reporter, Katie Watkins, investigated these events to answer the question: why do so many chemical disasters keep happening in Texas, and what—if anything—is being done to prevent more?
2021 was a year full of challenges, but it was also full of opportunities to reach new audiences through our talk shows, podcasts and special programming that expand on the great coverage from NPR, PBS and our news team. There is a common thread that binds all this very diverse content: our programs and initiatives are centered around the listener, the viewer, the user. Our goal is always to help make sense of the city, the world and the changing times in which we live. As we move forward, our local talk shows will include more voices from women and more voices that reflect the cultural diversity of the city.

“I know how lucky I am to do this work, and what an enormous responsibility it is to lead this essential daily guide to the people, places, issues and ideas that define Greater Houston.”

Craig Cohen, host of Houston Matters with Craig Cohen
Voices of the People We Serve

Houston Public Media is proud to recognize and serve all communities in Greater Houston, one of the most diverse regions in the country. Our mission is one of diversity, equity and inclusion: to inform and inspire for the love of Houston. Below are just a few of the many diverse communities that make up our great city and its surrounding areas. Within each of these initiatives, you’ll find a vast array of content that honors and recognizes the many cultures and voices that make up our area—including radio and television programs, digital content, learning resources to share with your friends and family and profiles of influential members of our community who have shaped and continue to help shape Greater Houston.

Asian Americans

Houston Public Media pays tribute to the generations of Asians and Pacific Islanders who have enriched America’s history and culture. Asian Americans is a series that explores and chronicles the contributions and challenges of the fastest-growing ethnic group in America.

Houston Latino and Latina Icons

Houston Public Media proudly recognizes and celebrates the contributions and impact of our country’s Hispanic and Latino heritage. In a three-part series from Houston Public Media, in collaboration with Tony Diaz, Director of Nuestra Palabra: Latino Writers Having Their Say, we took a closer look at three trailblazing Latino icons who have helped shape our city.

Houston Public Media Celebrates Hispanic Heritage

Better Together!

Keeping the Faith: The Black Church in Houston

This companion piece to PBS’s The Black Church was produced by Houston Public Media in partnership with The University of Houston Diversity and Inclusion Committee and KTSU. Keeping the Faith: The Black Church in Houston is a series of interviews with Houston Public Media’s Statewide Newscaster Sascha Cordner and four influential leaders in the Houston faith community.

We Are Better Together When We Embrace All

Houston Public Media proudly celebrates and recognizes the contributions and impact of our LGBTQIP2SAA community. In a special episode of I See U with Eddie Robinson, Eddie explores fatherhood through surrogacy as a single gay man and takes us on a personal and emotional journey in fulfilling a promise to his own dad who died unexpectedly.

Carey Shuart Women’s Research Collection

To celebrate Women’s History, the University of Houston Libraries feature archival stories from the Carey C. Shuart Women’s Research Collection, which preserves the records of women’s organizations and the papers of Texas women.

A Conversation with Dr. Henry Louis Gates, Jr.

Houston Public Media’s Eddie Robinson, host of I See U with Eddie Robinson, joined Dr. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., host of PBS’s The Black Church: This is Our Story, This is Our Song, and Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee for a special conversation. The discussion centered around Dr. Gates’s two-part series about the history and culture of the Black Church and his ongoing PBS series Finding Your Roots. The event was in partnership with the University of Houston Racial Equity and Social Justice Committee.

Powered By YOU Every Day, All Day

A Connected and Inspired Community
Houston Public Media is powered by YOU. At any given time, there are over 50,000 of you who make this work possible with financial support and volunteerism. We count on you, and you come through every year—even in times of uncertainty.

You show up as financial contributors in the Houston Public Media membership, and in our giving societies (Studio Society, Affinity Council and Legacy donors). You show up as volunteers on our Foundation Board, in our Young Leaders Council and as Houston Public Media Mission Ambassadors. You consider those who are unable to financially support Houston Public Media and you contribute more. You offer matching challenges during our fundraising drives that inspire new members to make gifts.

You open access to those who are challenged by transportation, and for those without internet or cable service. You provide event tickets so that others may participate in things that might not be accessible to them like travel, the arts, cuisine and more. You make it possible for children to be ready for school regardless of economic or pandemic barriers. You provide safe and trusted resources for news and information critical to everyday life decisions. You provide the region’s Weather and Emergency Alert System to all so that our communities have the information they need to keep them safe.

When you think of the impact you make with your support, remember you are supporting services that are free to more than seven million people, every day.

Thank you for showing up every day, every year!
We would like to recognize and thank our Affinity Council members. The Affinity Council giving society is a place to bring together individuals who can provide additional financial support to help sustain and advance the mission of Houston Public Media.

AFFINITY COUNCIL MEMBERS

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Mark White
The Wortham Foundation
Sally Woshington
Crystal Wrieden
Ellen Yarrell
Alisha Young
Kristi L. Young
Edith and Robert Zinn

...the three shows:
Texas Standard, Houston Matters and Town Square bring new insight about our local politics.

Jennifer & Matt Esfahani

Town Square—with its ability to help and impact the lives of our audience—has brought me the most satisfaction of any continuing project I have worked on for Houston Public Media. As they say, knowledge is power, and every day, we empower our listeners!”

Ernie Manouse, host of Town Square with Ernie Manouse