

# We're Here for You

A look at how the Minnesota Public Television Association responded to the COVID-19 pandemic and the uprisings against racism and police brutality in Minneapolis in May 2020

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Our communities turned to their local PBS station to provide the following during the major crises of 2020:

<b>Entertainment</b>	<b>*70%</b>
<b>Health and wellness information</b>	<b>*56%</b>
<b>Community connection</b>	<b>*55%</b>
<b>Distance learning support</b>	<b>*25%</b>

*\*Annual MPTA Legacy Survey of members, participants and subscribers*

## Community members statewide shared:

*Arts are a release from the stressors we face. Art is uplifting, helping us to feel better, happier, more empowered.*

*We need some beauty in our lives right now.*

*To help us all see we are part of one community. Creativity invites us in to participate with one another. We grow together through the arts. The programming is especially important now that we're all mainly at home most of the time, trying to not get or spread the virus.*

*It is a way for community members to feel connected to each other, especially during the time of this global pandemic and political division.*

*We need arts, cultural & history programming to continue as enrichment. It is especially important for youth to be encouraged in the arts and for the housebound to feel part of something bigger!*

*PBS plays a crucial role making the arts accessible.*

*During our current pandemic the PBS stations can share our narratives thereby supplying the glue that holds cultures together.*

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## MPTA stations shared how they responded:

**Lakeland PBS provides important LOCAL news and information to our region throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.** *Lakeland News*, along with our public affairs series, *Lakeland Currents*, (these two programs are self-funded, not funded by ACH) has continued providing valuable information and local community updates throughout all of the COVID -19 pandemic. Our News reporters have been resourceful and flexible in bringing important stories to our viewer's homes throughout north central Minnesota, including daily updates regarding local COVID situations, and news from organizations and officials providing vital community support. Lakeland PBS has also continued to deliver our viewers quality entertaining and educational content through PBS and locally produced, Legacy-funded, arts, history, and cultural programming.

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**KSMQ** partnered with the St. Augustine church in Austin to broadcast and live stream the Easter Service. Public gatherings were very limited during the early days of the Coronavirus pandemic including church services. Unfortunately, many people were not able to celebrate the Easter holiday in their traditional way. KSMQ broadcast and streamed the St. Augustine Easter service live so that people could celebrate Easter from the safety of their own homes. The

Artwork by Kim Jore



service was repeated later in the day.

KSMQ broadcasted local updates regarding COVID-19 after the 2pm governor briefings in March and April. The updates (labeled On-Q COVID-19 Updates) included conversations with health officials from the counties within the KSMQ viewing area. The updates were not Legacy funded.

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**Pioneer PBS** began thinking about how we can get information out about how our communities and local organizations were being impacted by and responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. Starting in March, we created nine special “Covering Coronavirus” episodes of our public affairs program, *Compass* — each containing several interviews with area school superintendents, teachers, students, farmers, business owners, journalists, bankers, Native Americans, artists, activists and postal workers. These nine initial stories on the *Compass* Facebook page brought in more views and shares than all the stories from the first five years combined.

In the wake of George Floyd’s killing by Minneapolis police, we realized that we’re all—urban, rural, suburban—processing grief and reckoning with systemic racism in different ways. We had a staff person visit the George Floyd memorial and posted about their experience on social media. We also hosted a Facebook Live interview, using our *Compass* platform, to hear about another staff member’s experience attending protests and food drives in Minneapolis and how people in rural Minnesota can work to be better allies to our BIPOC community members.

Additionally, we compiled a list of local and national educational resources on our website ([pioneer.org/learning](http://pioneer.org/learning)) so that students and teachers learning and working from home could easily find the many assets that Pioneer PBS and PBS make available for them.

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Immediately after the pandemic closed schools in northwest Minnesota, **Prairie Public Education Services** prepared curated resources for at-home learning for students of all ages. Planning kits, teaching tips, and resources for using special programming featured daily on the World Channel were made available to teachers. PBS LearningMedia analytics indicate significant increases in the access during the peak months of at-home learning in April and May, 2020.

*Photo from Prairie Public’s More Than Just the Music*

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**WDSE•WRPT** responded this spring with locally focused programming that helped our community stay informed and revitalized. In response to the pandemic, WDSE hosted leaders from throughout Northern Minnesota on our weekly public affairs program, *Almanac North*. We also created eleven additional COVID-specific *Doctors on Call* programs, providing our viewers with direct access to health experts, in addition to broadcasting and partnering with the Duluth NAACP to present *\*Disinfecting Misinformation*, a panel of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) Health Professionals discussing racism, health disparities, as well as how we move forward in the pandemic. To keep our viewers’ spirits up, we created a short series of crowd-sourced videos, featuring local musicians, kids and neighbors singing Mister Roger’s “It’s a Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood” in our *Be Our Northland Neighbor* series. WDSE also broadcasted two local high school \*graduations for family and friends who were not able to attend this important milestone.

WDSE also added *\*At Home Learning* programming to our main channel, PBS North, so youth experiencing school closures could continue to have access to on-going learning with corresponding educational resources provided on our website.

In response to the social unrest this spring, WDSE featured BIPOC leaders from the area on special additions of *Almanac North*. WDSE also partnered with a BIPOC documentary team to share *I Can’t Breathe: A Clayton Jackson McGhie Memorial* with our viewers.

*\*Programs that are not ACH-funded*

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In early March, as coronavirus began to shape a new reality for Minnesotans, over a dozen educators, parents, caregivers and community members reached out to **TPT** with suggestions for how they'd like to see TPT play a role in supporting distance learning for their children during this challenging time. **TPT** launched **TPT Home Learning** to provide trusted, research-based PBS tools and curriculum-based activities, to support Minnesota's children in learning, and staying active, healthy, and connected. This effort lifts up many Legacy-funded programs, like *MN Original*, *Minnesota Experience*, *Moving Lives Minnesota* and *Minnesota Remembers Vietnam*, as resources to tie into curriculum.

We created a new Legacy-funded TV series called "STAGE" in direct response to the pandemic and with specific intent to help artists and performing arts organizations. The new digital series, *Pregnant in the Time of Coronavirus*, was shared on TPT Originals, a Legacy-funded website. As more pregnant women face uncertainty due to COVID-19, one Twin Cities PBS producer chronicled her story and that of others along the way.

For more information on the Minnesota Public Television Association, please visit:  
**[mptalegacymedia.org](http://mptalegacymedia.org)**

*This content is an excerpt from the 2020 - 21 MPTA Legacy Report*