

KEEPING VERMONTERS CONNECTED

While Staying Apart



When Governor Phil Scott issued the Stay-at-Home order in mid-March due to the COVID-19 health emergency, Vermont's 25 **Community Media Centers** (known collectively as the **Vermont Access Network** or **VAN**) adapted quickly to provide Vermonters with important health and safety information and access to Public, Educational and Government (PEG) communications. This work includes timely emergency management updates, live remote municipal meetings, educational programs for Vermonters of all ages, graduation ceremonies, election forums, religious services, and a reliable forum for the expression of important ideas and community solutions.

In the town of Windsor, **Windsor On Air** (WOA) provided regular updates from Mt. Ascutney Hospital, the Town Manager, Fire Chief and School Superintendent. These “hyper-local” updates provided that community with a transparent look at how Windsor’s leadership was managing the crisis and as a result of this work, viewership has increased and the community sees WOA as a “go to resource”.



Still from “Mt. Ascutney Hospital Video,” WOA

While Community Media Center staff made the transition to remote operations, they also provided the technical assistance necessary for municipalities and schools to govern remotely. Many of our centers began offering curbside equipment loans so community members could continue to make and share videos, and we moved video education courses online.

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As school districts were faced with the daunting task of moving student learning online, Community Media Centers provided direct support to educators and helped design and deliver unique online curriculum.

KATV in St. Johnsbury worked with the Fairbanks Museum to share, distribute and develop K-8 educational programs. This went immediately into production on March 23rd. Through June, KATV and the museum have produced and 123 “Virtual Learning” programs that have been downloaded more than 1,200 times by other centers and shared on community media channels around Vermont.



Still from “Fairbanks Museum Video Lesson,” KATV

A SAMPLE OF OTHER SPECIAL PROGRAMS INCLUDE:

- In Milton, LCATV covered the “drive through voting” for the school budget while providing an all-day live stream shot of the voting machines to provide security and public peace of mind
- Physically distanced or completely remote high school and college graduation ceremonies
- Community coverage of racial justice protests across Vermont
- **Hardwick Community TV’s** PSA series “Who do you wear a mask for” featuring local community members
- Production and distribution of workshops on how to apply for the PPP, EDIL and dealing with an economic downturn
- In Ludlow, **Okemo Valley TV** worked with the local arts community to quickly move a cancelled music concert “remote” and shared it with viewers
- **Crowdsourced Cinema VT**, a Vermont-wide community film project to recreate the popular film *Cast Away* and conceived by VAN members as a way to replace “in person” summer video camps



“Christel Tonoki, CVU Graduation,” The Media Factory

In June 2020, the Vermont Legislature recognized the efforts of VAN’s 25 Community Media Centers to help our communities to learn, work and govern remotely. H. 966 (Section 18) provided our communities with \$466,500 to support operational and staffing costs spent in response to the COVID-19 health emergency. VAN members are deeply grateful for the State’s recognition and financial support as we help to keep Vermonters connected while we must stay apart.



The Vermont Access Network (VAN) is a membership organization of the 25 regional Community Media Access Centers operating more than 80 local cable channels across Vermont.

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