



## 2021 LOCAL CONTENT AND SERVICE REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY



*“Over the past year, OPB has been a beacon of light in the darkness for me as I drive to work each day.”*

– Jimbo, Lebanon

***OPB: giving voice to the community, connecting Oregon and its neighbors, illuminating a wider world.***



OPB serves the Northwest with public service journalism that connects us to the rich and important stories of our region—stories that would not be told elsewhere. We provide in-depth, trusted news and award-winning stories that can be accessed anywhere, at any time on OPB TV, OPB Radio, [opb.org](http://opb.org) and on digital and social media.

OPB creates content that features the important people, places and issues of the Northwest. Our newsroom expands across the region, from southern Washington to southern Oregon, to deliver in-depth reporting.

OPB serves diverse communities of the region with fact-based, in-depth news and information about politics, the environment, science, arts, history and cultures, business, education and more. We seek out a variety of voices in our communities and lift up authentic stories of the people, places, events and issues of the region, providing context and a deeper understanding.



2021 proved to be another complex and challenging year, as those in our region navigated life a second year into the COVID-19 pandemic. We also saw an increase in climate disasters, a deepening political divide in our country and continued disparity over basic human rights, such as racial inequality, lack of housing and health care access and much more.

Throughout it all, OPB's public service was more critical than ever. In 2021, our journalism focused on the important issues and events facing our region, but we also witnessed and shared hopeful stories of resiliency and communities coming together.

## News

OPB delivers local and regional news coverage daily, along with deep investigative reporting. Some of our major news series and initiatives in 2021 include:

- Continuing coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic, and how it is still affecting communities around the Northwest (see page 5 for details).
- Comprehensive reporting and analysis about [redistricting in Oregon](#), including proposed plans and negotiation efforts, along with how the new political maps will affect the state.
- Ongoing reporting about the region's unprecedented multiple [heat waves](#) and the [wildfires that ensued](#), along with examination into the [state's response](#).
- An in-depth investigative series on the role and rise of private security in downtown Portland, amid a growing homelessness crisis and a record number of homicides. OPB's [three-part series](#) explored how private safety firms are thrust into public safety roles they are not prepared for nor are they protected by the law.

We also delivered our daily email newsletter "First Look," giving readers convenient access to the most important news and culture stories right in their inbox. The weekly "OPB Politics Now" podcast also continued to deliver to its online and mobile subscribers, taking a deep dive into the region's hottest political topics. Every Friday, OPB reporters and special guests offer in-depth analysis, discussion and insight into local government, legislative activity, events and issues.

In 2021, OPB continued playing a central role in the regional news ecosystem with our Northwest News Partnership, which brings together news coverage from more than 50 news organizations across Oregon and Washington. We also continued work on several national content partnerships, including participation in the ProPublica Local Reporting Network for local and regional investigative journalism.

**"Think Out Loud®,"** an engaging OPB original daily radio program and podcast, has established itself as the centerpiece of our region's coverage of politics and civic and cultural life. The show explores issues, ideas, culture and news and encourages people with different perspectives to discuss various topics with one another.

In 2021, "Think Out Loud":

- Connected with students, teachers and educators around the region to discuss [inequitable policies](#), reflect on the [life-changing year](#) that was 2020, examine the [mental health impact of returning to classrooms](#) and hear stories on how the ["American Dream"](#) has evolved over the past five years.
- Investigated the rising role of climate change in the Pacific Northwest, like a threatening [water crisis in the Klamath Basin](#) and how [natural disasters affect mental health](#).
- Discussed injustices that marginalized communities face, like [violence against Asian American Pacific Islanders](#) and how [homelessness is criminalized](#).

## Science & Environment

OPB's **Science & Environment** team unites all of OPB's collective resources—digital, radio and TV—to deliver the most comprehensive and consequential science and environment stories unfolding in our own backyards.

Last year, our team of reporters kept communities up to date as the pandemic continued with [new variant surges](#) that stretched [hospital capacity](#) and disrupted everyday life (see more on page 5). They reported on urgent regional issues like climate change's [impact on the Pacific Northwest farmworker community](#). They broke stories about [post-wildfire logging plans](#), shined a light on the [inequities in resources](#) that communities of color face, and joined KPCC, KQED and KUOW colleagues on a national "Marketplace" panel discussion of clean energy and natural climate solutions called ["How We Adapt: Climate Change on the West Coast."](#)

Our science and environment team provided critical and continuous updates to the public as multiple record-breaking [heat waves](#) overran the region, resulting in unprecedented droughts, [extreme working conditions](#), wildfire and deaths among community members who [lacked life-saving resources](#).

OPB producers and photographers also took time to remind viewers of the beauty and wonders of our state through our flagship program, **"Oregon Field Guide."** For over 30 years this award-winning OPB original television series has delivered smart and informed coverage of environmental, geological, ecological and outdoor recreation topics, while providing audiences a window into the beauty of the Northwest.

Last year, “Field Guide” producers took viewers on memorable journeys across the region, including an [underwater geological excursion](#) to uncover the Northwest’s seismic past, a pursuit to learn more about the sneaky and relatively unknown [Sierra Nevada Red Fox](#) and a trip to a ski resort to see how dogs are trained for [avalanche rescue](#). They visited [“Mudbone Grown,”](#) a local enterprise that is changing the narrative of what it means to be a Black farmer in Oregon. “Field Guide” also explored the impacts of wildfires in the region and potential solutions, including [returning to wildfire sites](#) to find hope in devastation and investigating how [beavers](#) play a surprisingly useful role in fighting wildfires.

## Arts & Culture

OPB’s arts and culture reporting features the latest in visual arts, theater, music, literature, culture and more. In 2021, we continued to chronicle the enormous impact of both the COVID-19 pandemic and calls for racial justice on our creative community. We witnessed the toppling of public statues nationwide and locally, launching conversations about [historical](#) and [current representation](#) of individuals and groups in art. We also [celebrated art](#) and [profiled artists](#) that emerged from underrepresented communities, visited [new restaurants](#) and [local food events](#), and reported on how Oregon’s changing food culture is confronting racism in the food industry.

In 2021, we turned to music, dance and performance for joy in the midst of another heavy year. We spotlighted the return of [in-person events](#) and noted how the theater community is [fostering inclusivity](#). We met up-and-coming musician [Jimmie Herrod](#), who made the community proud with how far he made it on reality show “America’s Got Talent” and emerging country music artist [Margo Cilker](#), whose debut album is filled with vivid stories inspired by beautifully rugged people and places. And we shared stories of iconic performers from across the region, like Portland drag performer [Poison Waters](#) who has begun teaching about Portland drag history at a local community college. We also traced longtime Northwest rock band [Sleater-Kinney’s journey](#) to an ever-evolving sound.

“Oregon Art Beat,” another of our award-winning original television series, profiles artists, musicians and artisans from around the region. Show producers and crew have traveled extensively to capture the eclectic mix of creative talent in the Northwest. The program features on-location reporting and thematic episodes.

Last year, “Art Beat” visited Portland, Oregon-based mural artist [Jesus Torralba](#), whose designs draw on his Indigenous roots in Oaxaca. They toured a small [glass blowing studio](#) whose owner was featured on Netflix reality show “Blown Away” and met up with Amelia Bjesse-Puffin, creator of the handmade zine [Smash the Skatriarchy](#), who shadowed Indigenous skaters to feature in her next issue. And they talked with [Lisa Jarrett](#), artist and an associate professor of art at Portland State University, whose socially engaged work centers on the Black experience.

The “Art Beat” team also traveled to southern Oregon to catch up with Ashland illustrator [Claire Burbridge](#), who finds inspiration from the natural world. They visited the Oregon Shakespeare Festival to meet new [Artistic Director Nataki Garrett](#). The team even met up with [Paleo artist](#) Mark Hallett who created original concept art for Jurassic Park.

“Oregon Experience” is an OPB original television history series that explores Oregon’s rich past and helps all of us—from natives to newcomers—gain a better understanding of the historical, social and political fabric of our state. Co-produced with the Oregon Historical Society, the series draws upon the Society’s skilled researchers and extensive image archives.

Last year, the “Oregon Experience” one-hour documentary [“In the Shadow of Fairview”](#) (originally produced in partnership with the “Move to Include” initiative in 2020) was reproduced with Spanish subtitles for use as training material for state, county and nonprofit agencies. This story examined the complex and often shocking history of one of Oregon’s most notorious institutions—the Fairview Training Center. For nearly 100 years, Fairview was Oregon’s primary facility for those with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). This documentary, along with many other full-length “Oregon Experience” episodes, was released on YouTube in 2021, gaining new popularity and expanded audiences for the program.

**KMHD Jazz Radio** is a community radio station showcasing the best of the jazz spectrum. Operated by OPB and licensed to Mount Hood Community College, KMHD has been a staple of the Portland jazz scene for the last 36 years. KMHD champions jazz performances and education to ensure that this uniquely American art form continues to thrive in our region.

In 2021, KMHD interviewed local artists and supported various partnerships and projects including the PDX Jazz festival, as well as virtual events such as the Cathedral Park and Montavilla jazz festivals. KMHD also worked with local musicians and entities during the global pandemic to share live streams, DJ sets and new recorded content.



Mural artist Jesus Torralba

## "Superabundant" Food Series

The Pacific Northwest is a gastronomic powerhouse of diverse, essential and surprising foods, as it's home to hundreds of commercial crops and edible bounty. In 2021, OPB debuted six episodes of a new video series [Superabundant](#). Each episode featured a local ingredient and sought to understand the histories of regional food systems.

We told stories of how the unprecedented [purple sea urchin](#) population boom has pushed Oregon chefs to find creative ways to utilize this ingredient in their menus. We traced the history of [wheat](#) in the Pacific Northwest, and why the region's climate is the perfect location for growing the numerous varieties that thrive here. And we investigated how [truffles'](#) irresistible aromas entice animals to dig them up, eat them and excrete their spores in new territory.

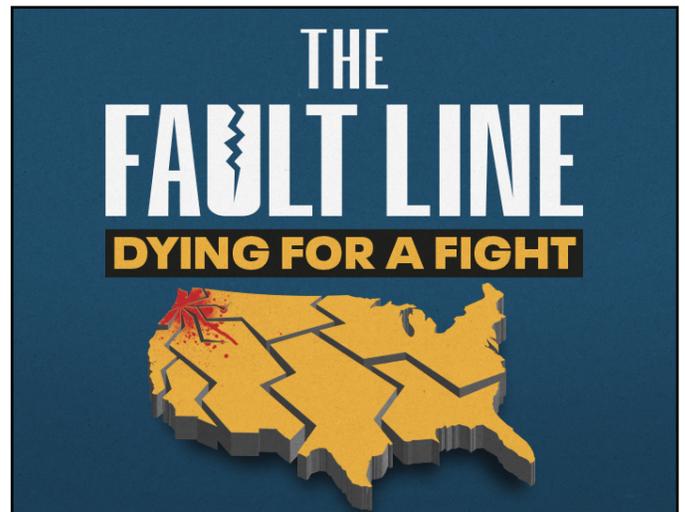


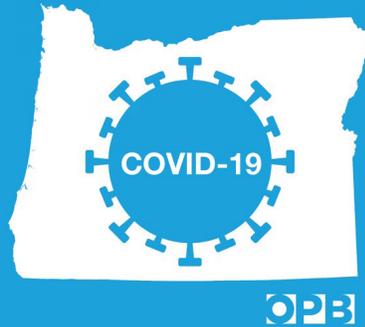
## Two New Podcast Series in 2021

OPB offers our audiences a variety of podcast series that take a deeper dive into the important issues and diverse Northwest topics. In 2021, OPB launched two podcasts to bring the power of audio storytelling to expanded platforms. We presented serious, investigative reporting about the unsolved killing of a well-known Portland anti-fascist, along with a more lighthearted series that followed a once local writer and illustrator on her quest to uncover family secrets.

In "[The Fault Line: Dying for a Fight](#)," OPB collaborated with production company Somethin' Else and Sony Music Entertainment to investigate the killing of Sean Kealisher, an anti-fascist and anarchist, who was killed in 2019 while leaving a Portland bar that was a known hangout for the city's anti-fascists. Nearly two years later, his homicide remains unsolved, and his mother believes police hatred for her son, and his politics, is the reason why. In this podcast series, we dive deep into the lives of those at America's political extremes.

Our "[Relative Fiction](#)" podcast follows Nicole Georges, author of the award-winning 2013 graphic memoir, "[Calling Dr. Laura](#)," as she sought answers about her family history. Growing up, Georges' family told her that her father was dead, but a visit to a palm reader in her 20s confirmed her deep-seated suspicions that he was alive. Georges becomes an amateur sleuth in her quest for the truth, piecing together the different accounts about her father and why he was kept away from her. She analyzes stories she was told as a child and takes the audience on a rollercoaster of belief and identity.





## A trusted source of continuing COVID-19 coverage for the region

In 2021, the pandemic continued to impact all facets of life, from education to the economy, the overwhelmed health care system and more. OPB was there to provide thoughtful, fact-based journalism about COVID-19, with daily local reporting on the impact on science, the environment, arts, culture, education, business and more.

### A one-stop source for COVID-19 vaccine development and questions

The emerging vaccine to curb the spread of the novel virus presented people around the region and world with an overwhelming amount of information, misinformation and scientific and medical jargon. To help our audiences stay informed and up to date, OPB's dedicated Science & Environment reporters were there to provide the facts and break down the information in a clear, understandable way. Our audience turned to us to find essential FAQs on [how adults can get the vaccine](#) and what to know about the [vaccine for children](#). We informed our audience about [state vaccine guidance and mandates](#); and we sought answers to questions about [booster shots](#) with the rise of new variants.

### Education coverage in a fast-changing environment dominated by new variants

One key concern was—and still is—how the virus has disrupted everyday life, including for educators and children in schools. We followed [K-12 schools](#) and [universities](#) on their in-person reopenings. We kept our audience up-to-date on state-specific [quarantine requirements](#) and a program to [limit student quarantines](#). And OPB connected with students to hear their takes on [keeping up with their schooling](#) while in quarantine.

## Analysis of the mental health impact two years into a global pandemic

As we entered a second year of the pandemic, the issue of mental health was at the forefront. We talked with [health care workers struggling with stress](#) about the complex emotions that go along with treating people who chose not to get vaccinated. We reported on how [the mental health crisis has deeply affected houseless individuals](#). And we heard firsthand [how youth are coping with stress and anxiety](#).

In November, OPB hosted a [virtual conversation](#) about how COVID-19 and other stressors are impacting the well-being of young people. The event was presented in partnership with Call to Mind—American Public Media's mental health initiative—as part of the Well Beings Youth Mental Health Project and its Well Beings Tour. The tour is a national project led by public media organization WETA addressing youth mental health needs.

Dave Miller, host of OPB's "Think Out Loud," moderated the conversation with local high school counselors, educators, students and others to explore how young people in Oregon are coping with anxiety and stress. Audience members had the opportunity to submit questions, comments and to share their own experiences.





## Becoming an Anti-Racist Organization

As a public media organization, OPB takes seriously the responsibility to embrace and reflect the diversity of the world—and of our region—to make equity and inclusion central to everything we do.

Led by our employee equity team, in 2021 we embarked on our third year of focused, intensive work to become an anti-racist organization. Some of our work included (but was not limited to):

- Continued training for OPB's Senior Leadership Group, supervisory and management staff and various OPB teams focused on consciousness raising, understanding white culture and decision making through an equity filter.
- Established affinity groups—such as the BIPOC affinity group and the white learning group—and committees within our functional areas such as Content and Development to evaluate their respective functions, policies and practices with an equity lens.
- Continued work on OPB's Equity Statement and organizational equity plan, gathering input from the staff through interactive conversations and feedback forms.
- Began recruitment for OPB's first Equity Leader, who will be instrumental in helping move OPB forward in our equity journey.

We want to ensure employees of all backgrounds feel a sense of belonging, value and investment at OPB. We also are focusing our equity mission on incorporating the voices of underrepresented and marginalized communities in our work, confronting injustices and holding those in power and those with privilege accountable—beginning with ourselves.

***"OPB has helped us feel connected to accurate information during the pandemic."***

– Theresa, Portland

***"I love Oregon Field Guide. I love Art Beat. I love that OPB helps me stay connected to issues I care about across the Pacific Northwest."***

– Lindsay, Seattle

***"OPB continues to provide a thoughtful perspective on what is happening in the world. I know I can always find a wide range of material when I tune into OPB!"***

– Kristi, Portland

## OPB by the Numbers

OPB reaches an average of more than **one million people per week** in Oregon and southern Washington on OPB TV and OPB Radio combined; and OPB reaches on average over 81,000 viewers per month on streaming apps and over 222,000 viewers per month on YouTube.

OPB.org averages **4.3 million page views per month**, including 1.5 million monthly average users; and, across platforms, OPB averages more than 1.4 million live audio streams from over 205,000 unique users per month.

OPB is generously supported by more than **160,000 members** who provide nearly two-thirds of our funding.

OPB's weekly e-newsletter "OPB Insider" connects its more than **62,000 active subscribers** to all things related to OPB content and community, while our daily e-newsletter "OPB First Look" serves more than 20,000 subscribers with an average daily open rate of 53 percent.

OPB has more than **174,000 Facebook fans, 125,000 Twitter followers, 31,000 Instagram followers and 49,000 YouTube subscribers**.

OPB continued remote and virtual volunteer opportunities in 2021 as in-person opportunities remained suspended due to the ongoing pandemic. Last year, 145 volunteers donated more than **7,200 hours of service** to OPB.