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Smoky Hills PBS' Les Kinderknecht Announces Retirement

BUNKER HILL, KS – Smoky Hills PBS announces the retirement of Les Kinderknecht, Senior Producer / Director, following almost 37 years of dedicated service to the station and the communities it serves throughout Central and Western Kansas.

During his nearly four decades at Smoky Hills PBS, Les has played a vital role in shaping the station's local programming and sports coverage. As Senior Producer/Director, he has directed many of the station's local documentaries and LIVE productions, helping bring the stories, history, culture, and events of the region to viewers across the Smoky Hills PBS viewing area.

"I've had the privilege of working alongside Les for more than 20 years, and his impact on Smoky Hills PBS is impossible to measure," said Michael Quade, Smoky Hills PBS Director of Broadcasting. "On a personal level, I owe him a great deal, as I have always been able to count on him. His knowledge, quick wit, sense of humor, and willingness to help have made him someone we all looked up to and enjoyed working with. While he will be missed throughout the station, his presence will be especially missed by everyone fortunate enough to have worked with him."

Les leaves behind an extraordinary legacy of storytelling at Smoky Hills PBS. He played a key role in producing many of the station's signature documentaries, including **Bombers on the Prairie: The B-29 in Kansas**, **Stories from the Dust Bowl**, **Placing Out: The Orphan Train**, and **WPA (Work Pays America)**. These productions helped preserve the rich history of Kansas while sharing the stories of the people and events that shaped the state. He also produced more than **100 episodes** of the acclaimed series **Kansas Arts Today**, highlighting the incredible artistic talent found throughout Kansas. Les was also instrumental in capturing footage and helping create Smoky Hills PBS' long-running **Traveling Kansas** series, showcasing the history, communities, and attractions that make Kansas special. Many of these local documentaries continue to educate and inspire our viewers and are available to stream on [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com), [PBS.org](https://www.pbs.org), or the PBS app.

In addition to producing local documentaries, Les has been a driving force behind Smoky Hills PBS sports coverage, serving as director for countless sporting events. Most notably, he has directed the 3-2-1A State Wrestling Championships broadcasts for the past 35 years, helping bring one of Kansas' premier high school sporting events to viewers across the state. Les' work has helped preserve and share important stories from Kansas communities, creating programming that has informed, educated, and connected audiences for generations!

"I have truly enjoyed my time at Smoky Hills PBS, working on many different types of programs and meeting interesting people from across the state," said Les Kinderknecht. "I greatly appreciate the support of the staff, volunteers, and Board of Directors throughout my career. Most of all, I want to thank our viewers and supporters for making these years incredibly rewarding."

To honor Les' retirement and celebrate his contributions, Smoky Hills PBS invites viewers, community members, colleagues, and friends to send cards and notes of appreciation. Cards and notes can be mailed to:

Smoky Hills PBS
Les Kinderknecht Retirement
P.O. Box 9
Bunker Hill, KS 67626

You can also email your appreciation to lkinderknecht@shptv.org.

"Les has been an integral part of Smoky Hills PBS for almost 37 years," said Betsy Schwien, Smoky Hills PBS General Manager, "His creativity, professionalism, and passion for storytelling have made a lasting impact on our station and our viewers. We are deeply grateful for his years of service and the legacy he leaves behind."

Smoky Hills PBS extends its sincere congratulations to Les on his retirement, and we thank him for his outstanding service and commitment to public broadcasting.

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Smoky Hills PBS serves 71 counties in central and western Kansas. It is available on many cable systems, DirecTV, and Dish Network. More information on Smoky Hills PBS and its programs and projects are available at www.SmokyHillsPBS.org or by calling 1-800-337-4788.