



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contact:

Amanda Smith, Marketing Director

785.483.6990, asmith@shptv.org

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Smoky Hills PBS Announces 2026 PBS KIDS Writers Contest Winners

BUNKER HILL, KS - Smoky Hills PBS (SHPBS) is thrilled to unveil the winners of the 2026 PBS KIDS Writers Contest. This year's contest received an inspiring number of entries from students in grades 1 through 5, each one showcasing imagination, heart, and unique voices from our local communities in Central and Western Kansas. Students in grades 1 through 5 submitted original stories, each paired with their own illustrations, showcasing a wide range of ideas, characters, and adventures.

After careful review by a panel of judges, Smoky Hills PBS is excited to recognize the following winners in each grade division:

2026 Smoky Hills PBS KIDS Writers Contest Winners

First Grade

1st – *The Purple Animals* – Brynn Giannetti – Osborne Elementary

2nd – *Lizzo and Stripe's Big Fight* – Jaycee Koelling – Osborne Elementary

3rd – *Get Me Out of Here!* – Ryder Morries – Osborne Elementary

Second Grade

1st – *Charlie's Happy Zoo* – Ripley Gillespie - Russell

2nd – *The Tigers Journey* – Brynn Johnson – Colby

3rd – *Moving Zoos* – Emily Kuhlman - Colby

Third Grade

1st – *The Tigers and Bears Escape* – Kinsley Wagner - Otis-Bison Elementary

2nd – *Ship Wrecked Zoo* – Elsie Mai – Russell

3rd – *Hadley the Monkey* – Henleigh Wegener - Otis-Bison Elementary

Fourth Grade

1st – *The Missing Lion* – Lennon Mai - Concordia

2nd – *Zoo Attack* – Emmett Wright - Sterling

3rd – *A Day at the Zoo* – Journey Goering – Salina

Fifth Grade

1st – *The Secret Adventure* – Harper Lamatsch – Hoisington

2nd – *The Zoo World Series* – Jenson Miller – Gorham

3rd – *Pebbles' Special Surprise Party* – Karly Dopita – Zurich

To read the winning stories and view the “Young Writers & Illustrators Award Show”, visit SmokyHillsPBS.org. The Award Show is also available to stream here: [2026 Award Show](#)

Smoky Hills PBS extends a special thank you to all the teachers, parents, and caregivers who encouraged kids/students to participate. We are also grateful to [Messer](#), the proud sponsor of the 2026 PBS KIDS Writers Contest!

For more information about Smoky Hills PBS and its educational initiatives, please visit SmokyHillsPBS.org. Stay tuned for more information on the 2027 PBS KIDS Writers Contest!

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Smoky Hills PBS serves 71 counties in Central and Western Kansas. Smoky Hills PBS is committed to providing educational and entertaining programming for viewers of all ages. As a trusted source of quality content, we strive to inspire, inform, and engage our community through television, online platforms, and community events.

Smoky Hills PBS is available over the air with an antenna, on many cable systems, DirecTV, DirecTV Stream, and Dish Network, HULU + LIVE TV, YouTube TV, and Amazon Prime. You can also access Smoky Hills PBS via the FREE mobile app for Android and iPhone devices and is also available to stream by clicking here: video.smokyhillstv.org/livestream. More information on Smoky Hills PBS and its programs and projects are available at SmokyHillsPBS.org or by calling 1-800-337-4788.