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Smoky Hills PBS Announces the 2026 PBS KIDS Writers Contest *Zoo-Themed Stories Invited from Young Kansas Authors*

BUNKER HILL, KS – Smoky Hills PBS is excited to announce that the 2026 PBS KIDS Writers Contest is now officially open for entries. The annual contest encourages creativity and imagination by inviting children in 1st through 5th grade to submit their very own original stories.

This year introduces a new contest requirement: **every story must include a Zoo theme.** Whether it's a daring adventure, a silly animal tale, or a heartwarming zoo friendship, young writers are encouraged to let their imaginations run wild.

"At Smoky Hills PBS, we love celebrating the creativity and imagination of young writers across our region," said Betsy Schwien, General Manager of Smoky Hills PBS. "The PBS KIDS Writers Contest is a wonderful opportunity for students in 1st through 5th grade to explore storytelling, share their unique voices, and maybe even see their work featured on television. We can't wait to read all the amazing zoo-themed stories this year!"

Students may submit stories individually, and teachers are also welcome to submit multiple entries on behalf of their classrooms. Printable entry forms are available at SmokyHillsPBS.org, and completed forms and stories can be emailed to writerscontest@shptv.org.

All entries must be received by February 23, 2026.

Winners will receive prizes and be recognized in May 2026, during the annual *Smoky Hills PBS Awards Show*, where selected stories will be featured on TV.

The PBS KIDS Writers Contest continues to be a fun and educational opportunity for children to strengthen their writing skills, express themselves creatively, and share their ideas with the community.

Key Details:

- **Who Can Participate:** Students in grades 1-5
- **Submission Deadline:** February 23, 2026

- **How to Enter:** Visit SmokyHillsPBS.org for contest rules and a printable entry form

Thank you to [Messer: Gases for Life](#) and the Beach Family Foundation for making this year's 2026 PBS KIDS Writers Contest possible!

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Smoky Hills PBS is dedicated to inspiring, informing, and engaging our community through educational programming and outreach. We proudly support initiatives like the PBS KIDS Writers Contest to foster creativity and learning in children across our region.

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.