

# PODCASTS FOR THE PEOPLE

High Five Access Media provides  
a platform for Vail Valley voices

By Laura Lieff

PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRENT BINGHAM

**MEDIA IS EVERYWHERE THESE DAYS AS ANYONE WITH**

a smartphone can take a photo, shoot a video, record audio, write or communicate using audio text or quickly type out what they want to say. That being said, having access to high-tech, media-specific equipment can be harder to come by — unless you're an Eagle County resident.

A creative hub for residents, students and nonprofits to learn about media-making and share productions via local cable television (Channel 5), social media and the internet, High Five Access Media prioritizes giving the Vail Valley ways to ensure their voices are heard. "We believe in putting the power of the media in the community's hands because we want everyone to have an equal voice," says High Five Executive Director JK Perry. "Larger media companies don't ask your opinion but we are a hyper-local organization that provides a platform for the community to share information about itself."

Located in Avon, High Five is a nonprofit, noncommercial community access media center that covers a variety of government proceedings and local events. It serves Eagle County by offering video production education, access to professional equipment and distribution of programming.





High Five's Brett Ferraro in the studio with podcasters Jennifer Sydow and Liz Ferron.





*Brett Ferraro and JK Perry, part of High Five Access Media's leadership team, are committed to helping local, everyday people and share their voice.*

Most recently, High Five revamped its Podcast Studio, which is attracting locals who are interested in getting the word out about various issues, events and anything else that is important to them.

One of those people is Liz Ferron — a Vail Valley local who has been a radio host for over a decade and hosted a weekly show on TV8. In 2024, her ChatBox podcast launched on KYZR and then moved to TV8. In July 2025, High Five became the podcast's new home. "We couldn't be happier in our new, state-of-the-art studio," says Ferron. "ChatBox is geared towards mental health and wellness because, through this podcast, I

wanted to give back by bringing on individuals who are altruistic and giving of their time." Ferron and cohost Jennifer Sydow record and film their podcast at High Five every Tuesday afternoon.

When asked about the difference between her podcast and hosting on TV or radio, she explains that the podcast is not just about locals with businesses. Instead, ChatBox "is purely about people who bring love and light to those of us in the valley that might need it. Whether they feel isolated, lonely, depressed, traumatized or any other emotions, we hope that we have somebody on each Tuesday to satisfy people's needs." She describes High Five as

"the best outlet for our community" because the organization "has enlightened us to so many different aspects of our lives here, including governmental and county issues, sports, podcasts and so many other wonderful things that no other media forum brings."

Another longtime local who records her podcast at High Five is Dana Theresa. She initially started The Energy Center Podcast — which she says is meant to "empower listeners to connect deeply with their authentic selves" — from her home in 2023. She adds, "With the knowledge that everything is energy, we explore how to heal, nurture and transform

our whole being through energetic awareness and energy work."

Theresa began recording at High Five after being a guest on Ferron's ChatBox podcast because she felt "it was an incredible opportunity" and was "extremely excited to take (her) show to the next level with professional audio and video." The topics she discusses include Reiki, the chakras, the Akashic Records and ancient shamanic wisdom. She records on Tuesdays and then releases each episode on the following Wednesday.

"Podcasts reach people from all over the world," Theresa explains. "I hope to guide others to step outside of their comfort zone and share

their own gifts with the world.” She also notes that she appreciates High Five prioritizing free speech. “For a small business owner like me, this platform is extremely accessible and affordable. As a nurse and energy healer, technology does not always come easily to me. The staff takes their time to make sure the product I’m putting out there is high quality.”

#### MEDIA OPTIONS

Those interested in seeing firsthand what High Five is all about can attend a Community Makerspace event which take place every first and third Friday, 5 to 9 p.m. (with the exception of holidays) and are designed to provide time and a place to create, share and connect with others. Every second and fourth Tuesday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., High Five offers drop-in studio time for people to practice using their professional equipment, as well as receive one-on-one instruction from their experienced staff. “The Makerspace events are stepping stones toward membership,” Perry explains. “Our mission is to empower the local community, through media education and technology, to become civically engaged, express ideas and advocate for causes. The hope is that those events encourage attendees to want to do more to get their voices heard.”

Annual membership options include \$25 for individuals, \$40 for families and \$50 for nonprofits. Avon and Vail residents are able to obtain memberships for free thanks to cable franchise agreements with the Towns of Avon and Vail. Perry explains that because Comcast runs its wires through Eagle County’s public rights of way, the company shares a portion of its profits with Avon and Vail, and then those towns share some of that funding with High Five. Once members sign up, they have access to a variety of workshops during which they can learn about media equipment and production and then check out the equipment to make their own creations.

According to Brett Ferraro, High Five’s Education and Production Assistant, “Anyone living and working in Eagle County can become a member, which gives them access to workshops (including Mobile Video, Basic Camera, Basic Editing and Advanced Camera), equipment and platforms.” They can also use the Podcast Studio under the direction of Perry or Ferraro, who will explain how to use all the equipment, answer questions and then post shows for the podcasters on High Five’s website. Additionally, Podcasters can post on platforms like Spotify, Apple or YouTube with Perry and Ferraro on hand to help.

#### POPULARITY OF PODCASTS

While High Five has been offering this type of access to media and technology for a long time (2025 marked Channel 5’s 40th anniversary), and podcasts (formerly audio blogs) started becoming what they are today in the early 2000s, Perry says podcasts have hit a new level in the last five years. “Podcasts keep surprising me because more and more people want to host them and listen to them,” he explains. “There is a podcast for everyone because interests are so nuanced, which means it’s not oversaturated. Even if you’re not super technical, it’s easy to get what you want out to the community.”

Perry goes on to say that High Five makes it simple for locals to express their passions and points of view without the cost of technology getting in the way. When asked if the popularity of podcasts is encouraging people to move away from traditional radio, Perry says the two mediums are still too different. He adds, “Radio has become retro and people like being ‘on the air.’ It’s popular for its nostalgia and the ability to hear an actual voice through radio speakers.”

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Additional reasons behind the popularity of podcasts are convenience, the variety of formats and assortment of genres. “There are DIY and longform storytelling podcasts and then people can choose from podcasts about a variety of hobbies, music and so many other genres,” Perry says. “They are indicative of our media landscape in general because people can listen to them whenever they want and all these different hosts cater to varied interests.”

## EAGLE COUNTY YOUTH

With that in mind, Perry and Ferraro encourage Vail Valley locals of all ages to record podcasts. They emphasize that High Five is family-friendly and that working closely with the school district is a priority. “We want to expand our impact on the community and one of the areas we focus on is youth education,” says Ferraro.

High Five hosts the Media Club at Eagle Valley High School, which invites students who are interested in becoming media producers to meet each week. “I love working with our community’s youth,” Ferraro adds. “They are fun and interesting and the future of our country.” Additionally, High Five assists Battle Mountain High School with the audio for their theater, choir and band productions, which involves providing equipment supervision and training, as well as streaming their performances on YouTube.

Both Perry and Ferraro agree that, regardless of the age of the person hosting or tuning in, the lines between media platforms are blurring as there is less separation between audio and video. “It doesn’t have to be one or the other anymore,” Perry explains. “People can listen, watch or both, which is becoming the norm — especially with podcasts.”

## LOOKING AHEAD

Throughout the winter, Perry and Ferraro hope to see their cast of podcasters grow and more community members spending time at High Five and learning about

media. This past fall, the Towns of Avon, Minturn and Vail proclaimed October 20 as High Five Access Media Day which coincided with Community Media Day — a national effort to raise awareness about accessible media, promote free speech, and ensure everyone has the opportunity to share their

stories. The proclamations included language about High Five’s positive impact on the community over the last four decades.

“We want to be welcoming to everyone — our neighbors, friends and Eagle County as a whole,” adds Perry. “This is the community’s platform. We don’t censor

anything and your content is your responsibility. Everyone gets equal time and visibility.” **VVM**

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*High Five Access Media’s  
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equipment is put to use in  
the nonprofit’s studio.*



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