



# PBS-based Spanish network to launch

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NEW YORK— A new Spanish-language network featuring public-TV fare and other programming with an educational focus will go on the air March 5 in several U.S. cities with large Hispanic populations, the network announced Wednesday.

It's called V-me (pronounced "veh-meh," from the Spanish *ve me*, for "see me") and will begin as a 24-hour digital broadcast network carried on basic digital cable and satellite systems. The network will be partners with public TV stations, which will receive V-me at no cost.

Provided to viewers as part

of cable companies' basic digital service, V-me initially will be available in markets representing 60 percent of all U.S. Hispanic homes, the network said, and will be carried in about 24 million homes.

It will be available in New York, Miami, Los Angeles, Houston, Chicago, San Francisco and San Antonio, among other cities.

Programming will feature a mix of original productions and acquisitions as well as public television fare adapted for American Latinos, the network said, with content organized into four categories: kids, lifestyle, current affairs/informational, and movie/special events.

V-me has established con-

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tent and co-production relationships with PBS producers WGBH and Thirteen/WNET, in addition to BBC Worldwide, Sesame Workshop, HiT Entertainment, Alliance Atlantis and others.

Airing without commercials, the programs will carry the sort of underwriting associated with public broadcasting. Revenues will also come from syndication of the network's originally produced programs, and sales of DVDs and other products.

The schedule, to be announced in about two

weeks, will be provided as a national feed that each local station can air intact or tailor to its local audience.

"What has driven our selection of content both for production and acquisition is the idea that there is a hunger for programming that's engaging and meaningful as it entertains our particular audience," said V-me President Carmen M. DiRienzo.

The New York-based network is a venture of V-me Media Inc., a partnership of Thirteen/WNET New York as well as private investors including the Baeza Group and Syncom Funds, both of which specialize in investing in media companies to reach underserved markets.