

**HOLLY
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HOLLAND**
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HER OWN
TV SHOW!**

The PBS animated series “Arthur and His Friends” was based on the best-selling children’s books by Marc Brown. The series revolved around an eight-year-old aardvark and his friends. It was a show about being a kid, exploring the world, and finding your place in it. It is about kids finding inner strengths, learning to make choices for themselves, taking responsibility for them, and, of course, having fun.

The series also modeled the joys and rewards of literacy by presenting the many ways kids and adults incorporate reading and writing into their lives. Beginning in 1996, each of the Arthur episodes consisted of two independent stories that focused on themes and events central to children’s lives. “Arthur and His Friends” managed to solve their dilemmas with imagination, kindness and a lot of humor.

“What children loved about Arthur was that he felt real to them,” said Carol Greenwald, WGBH executive producer. “The emotions he experienced were universal. When Arthur triumphed over something, kids thought they could, too.” The series built on that sense of empowerment by showing how Arthur and His Friends used effective, age-appropriate, problem-solving skills.

In 1998, TV Guide ran a contest named “Create Your Own Arthur Episode!” It sought children’s ideas for an episode. The grand prize: the winner’s story becomes an episode of the show. Eight-year-old Holly Bourgeois Holland of Canadian, Oklahoma, entered the contest. She loved to read and wanted to be a writer when she grew up. “I thought participating would be fun because you get a certificate. I wrote a story about that.”

Holly’s winning idea was chosen from more than 10,000 entries. She was almost disqualified when her mother forgot to sign the release form. After a call from TV Guide, the form was faxed and Holly learned she was the winner. “I was really excited because I’ve never won a contest before. And I was really happy, and as soon as I got home, I started dancing around the house,” Holly said.

Judy Matthews, senior publicist for Arthur, said the competition was tough, and Holly’s entry was chosen for its originality, creativity and spirit. Episode #404 called “The Contest: Prove It” was broadcast on September 27, 1999. Holly’s story involved Arthur entering “The Contest” about his favorite cartoon character.

It all started when Arthur and his friends were in the park when they saw Buster writing a story for the “Andy and Company” contest. His friends decided to participate in the contest with their own stories. Five years later, the results are finally in and the gang is shocked when they find out that Holly Holland from Oklahoma had won. The stories the characters wrote were from the other finalists of the contest that Holly won.

Today Holly Holland still lives in Oklahoma. You can see her interview after she won the contest on YouTube. In the introduction to her current Facebook page, she writes, “AND before you direct message me....YES, I am Holly Holland from Arthur.”