

West Carolina Tel

MAY/JUNE 2017

# CONNECTED



## DIAGNOSING THE FUTURE

A new path for Abbeville  
Area Healthcare Center

## COASTER TO COASTER

Experts pick their top  
theme park rides

## SMALL BUSINESS WINNER

Breezy Quarters is a  
local treasure

# Better care during a busy season

**S**ummertime. It's the season for cookouts, vacations and long days of fun in the sun. Unfortunately, it's also the season for more scrapes, cuts, bites and falls. But WCTEL is providing the technology that may help take care of those "oops" moments.



**JEFF WILSON**  
Chief Executive Officer

In the summer, more of us go outside to work in the yard, play sports or explore the great outdoors. And whenever our activity levels increase, we are more likely to experience an accident that leaves us seeking medical attention.

Medical data shows that in the summer, we as Americans experience more falls, auto accidents, dog bites and injuries related to sports, water, bicycling and skateboarding. In fact, some hospitals even refer to summer as "trauma season."

At WCTEL, there are many reasons we've built a robust broadband network, but one of the most important reasons is to help doctors, nurses and other providers take better care of the people in our community.

Across the country, broadband is enabling rural doctors, small hospitals, rehabilitation therapists, pharmacists and regional specialists to connect with patients and with each other in ways that were impossible only a few years ago. From cloud-based appointment scheduling and medical record-keeping to automated inventory tracking and ordering, there are dozens of ways providers are harnessing the power of broadband to provide their patients with better care.

Doctors can compare symptoms and diagnoses with colleagues around the country. X-ray images can be sent to specialists at major hospitals for analysis. Nurses can transmit prescriptions to pharmacists so that medicine is ready before a patient even arrives at the pharmacy. And everyone in the medical field has an unbelievable amount of training opportunities and research right at their fingertips.

This year, as there's more talk in Washington about investing in infrastructure, it's important to remember that infrastructure doesn't just mean roads and bridges. At WCTEL, we've invested millions of dollars in building the broadband infrastructure that connects the cornerstones of our community, including education, public safety, commerce and, of course, health care. With that in mind, we're happy to join telcos across the country in NTCA's campaign encouraging federal, state and local officials to "Build Broadband with Us." I hope you will review the information on Page 2 of this magazine to find out more about this campaign.

As your local broadband provider, we're proud of the strides our local health care providers are making in caring for their patients and proud of the role we play in helping them.

I hope everyone has a fun, safe, injury-free summer. But know that if you fall victim to trauma season, local health care providers are backed by a strong broadband network to help deliver the best possible care and get you back out there enjoying summer again. 📶

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is a member-owned cooperative dedicated to delivering advanced telecommunications technology to the people of Abbeville, Anderson and McCormick counties.

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## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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## On the Cover:



Abbeville Area Healthcare Center's Chief Nursing Officer Ernest Shock uses a mobile telemedicine cart to confer with a doctor.  
See story Page 12.

# West Carolina Telephone Cooperative Board Member Elections for 2017

At the annual meeting, scheduled for Aug. 21, 2017, an election will choose three members for the board of directors. The three seats up for election this year are part of a normal rotation:

- ▶ **Area 1 – Starr**
- ▶ **Area 6 – Calhoun Falls**
- ▶ **Area 9 – South McCormick**

The three directors who currently hold these positions all plan to seek re-election. For those interested in participating in the nomination process, the cooperative provides the following instructions:

*A nominating committee will be appointed and will nominate one or more members from each of these three areas.*

*If you wish to notify the nominating committee of your interest in serving on the board, you may provide the company CEO a letter of intent that can be turned in to any of the Company offices during regular business hours no later than 5 p.m. on June 2, 2017. Materials on qualifications and filing instructions are also available upon request from any of our offices.*

*Please remember, you must be a member from the area with the vacancy and meet the other qualifications outlined in the bylaws. A person not nominated by the nominating committee may file as a petition candidate, which is more specifically described in our bylaws. In accordance with the bylaw requirements, petition candidates will have a period following the nominating committee's meeting to file as a petition candidate and still be listed on the election ballot provided they have met the bylaw qualifications to be a board member.*

*Petitions must be received no later than 5 p.m. on July 7, 2017. If you have any questions, you are encouraged to contact CEO Jeff Wilson at 864-446-2111.*

*This information is for notification of the process for board election only and is NOT the notice of the annual meeting.*

## ALWAYS CALL BEFORE YOU DIG



**Know what's below.  
Call before you dig.**

Before you start digging or tilling the soil, WCTEL asks that you call 811. Lines could be buried in the yard, and cutting them could mean service outages.

## Video on Demand New Releases



For a small rental fee, WCTEL's Video on Demand service gives you access to new releases as many as eight weeks before Netflix or Redbox. To access Video on Demand, press the "VOD" or "On Demand" button on the remote or press the "Menu" button and look for "On Demand."



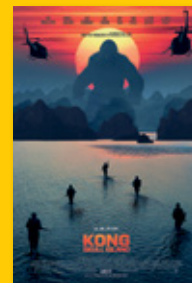
### **The LEGO Batman Movie\***

Holy box office, Batman! Will Arnett and Zach Galifianakis bring their voices to a pint-sized version of Gotham's Dark Knight.



### **A Dog's Purpose\***

A creative tear-jerking tale about a pup named Toby sheds light on the responsibilities of owning a pet.



### **Kong: Skull Island**

Explorers venture onto an uncharted Pacific island unaware of what dangers lurk in the tropical depths.

**Don't miss these other releases coming soon to Video on Demand:**

- John Wick: Chapter Two
- Resident Evil: The Final Chapter
- The Shack
- The Great Wall\*
- Fist Fight



# The truth behind what's driving up TV subscription costs nationwide

BY KERRY SCOTT

As a provider of TV service, we are caught in the middle of a tug-of-war. On one side, content providers and networks are demanding more money every year from companies like WCTEL who carry their programming. The most expensive networks charge providers \$5 to \$8 per customer per month to show their programs. Less popular networks may charge less per customer per month. Meanwhile, subscribers often just want to enjoy their favorite shows on the stations they prefer without the feeling that they're paying for channels they rarely, if ever, watch.

At WCTEL, we are committed to providing you with the channel selections you want while doing all we can to maintain package prices. There is more great television programming spread across more channels than ever before, which will continue to cause price increases in the future as the cost we pay for these channels keeps going up.

That's where friction occurs in the television universe, and it's a challenge TV providers such as WCTEL work hard to resolve. The rising prices are driven by ever-increasing demands from broadcast networks that providers like WCTEL are forced to pass on to customers to keep from losing money. Out of a monthly television bill, almost all of it is

allocated to fees WCTEL must pay the networks, leaving only a tiny sliver for personnel costs and equipment maintenance.

Instead, the massive media corporations providing the programs have tremendous leverage when structuring deals with providers like WCTEL. Some argue that it's an unfair game. The key to pricing is in the agreements that networks negotiate to allow companies such as WCTEL to retransmit their programming.

Last year the American Cable Association (ACA), which represents independent cable operators, filed complaints with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) asking for greater transparency in how networks such as CBS, FOX, NBC and ABC set their prices.

## PACKAGE PLANS VERSUS A LA CARTE CHOICES

Currently, providers like WCTEL are required to buy a bundle of several channels — and often place them in certain packages to get the two or three most popular channels a programmer offers. WCTEL is part of a national consortium of cooperatives that leverage its buying power to provide competitive prices to cooperative members.

Congress has considered legislation that would change such requirements, making it possible for subscribers to



## WCTEL average retransmission costs for local channels only:

- 2010 — \$1.71 per month per subscriber
- 2017 — \$10.80 per month per subscriber

have options for paying only for those channels they want to watch.

Judging by past attempts at such legislation, it appears to be a longshot that mandated unbundling will happen any time soon. It also remains unclear if picking your channels a la carte would have a significant impact on your bill. A study released last year by Needham Insights suggested that the fees per member charged by ESPN, for example, would soar to \$30 under such a structure, based on the assumption that their number of subscribers would drop from 100 million to approximately 20 million die-hard sports fans.

This could also spell an end for the smaller specialty channels that would not attract a large enough audience to generate the ad sales to support them.

## REPRESENTING YOUR INTERESTS

There is a glimmer of hope that the FCC may look once again at the federal rules that address many of these issues.

Let your representative or senator know they should take time to listen to companies like WCTEL on these issues. WCTEL makes a point to share its concerns on your behalf, and your voice can only help. [🗨️](#)

# Breezy Quarters offers hand-crafted quality with a local touch



WCTEL Director of Commercial Operations Shannon Sears, left, presents Paige Bowser with the WCTEL Small Business of the Year recognition. Her homemade soap creations were so popular that she opened a shop in downtown Abbeville.

## *What led you to start this business?*

"I was working my way out of teaching to spend more time with my family and to be at home with my children," owner Paige Bowser says. "I started building a business to supplement my husband's income. Since then, it's grown to the point where we opened the storefront in September."

## *What is the best part of your job?*

"Getting to see and interact with so many different people and providing them with really good products that help them out," Bowser says. "I like helping them look for something that's more natural, something that won't irritate their skin, or something that makes people happy. It's just fun."

## *Why is it important to shop local?*

"Your local dollars are going to stay in the community. It keeps that money moving in a cycle to support the business so that we can support the community," Bowser says. "Your local business owners understand the community and how the community works more than a large corporation would."



## BREEZY QUARTERS

**Owner:** Paige Bowser

**Year Founded:** 2012

**Description:** Breezy Quarters offers handcrafted bath and body products including bath bombs, face products, no-melt lip balm, home fragrances, men's grooming and skincare products, and gift sets. Each item is formulated and handcrafted from scratch in their studio and made in small batches to guarantee freshness and quality.

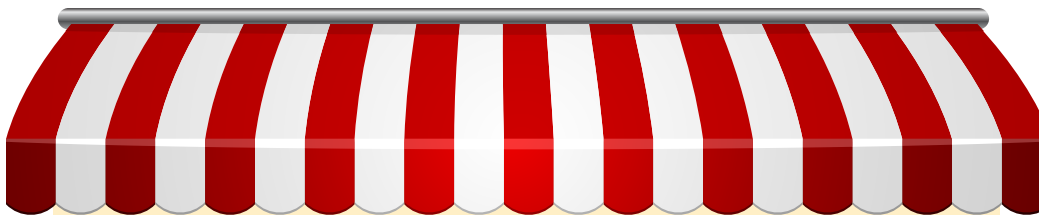
**Location:**  
117 Trinity St., Abbeville

**Phone number:**  
864-362-0555

**Website:**  
[breezyquarters.com](http://breezyquarters.com)

*"Paige has a great eye for even the smallest details, which is evident by the presentation of her products," says Shannon Sears, WCTEL director of commercial operations. "Small businesses like hers are the backbone of our rural communities."*

**-WCTEL**



## CELEBRATING NATIONAL SMALL BUSINESS WEEK

April 30-May 6, 2017 is National Small Business Week. America's 28 million small businesses account for about half of all jobs in the private sector. WCTEL is proud to celebrate their contributions by spotlighting our Small Business of the Year. Congratulations to **Breezy Quarters** and to all the small businesses we are honored to serve!





Adding the Abbreville Area Healthcare Center has increased the number of services offered on the AAMC hospital campus to patients.

# CHANGING WITH THE TIMES

## Abbeville Area Healthcare Center meets the needs of the community

BY MATT LEDGER

**M**edicine has advanced over the years, and hospitals have modernized to keep pace. Now, Abbeville's hospital is undergoing its latest update as it works to not only meet the needs of patients but also keep up with rapid changes in technology.

The current medical center is vastly different from the original Abbeville County Memorial Hospital, which opened in 1919 and was eventually transformed into an apartment complex.

The community's second hospital opened in 1966 and

currently houses the Abbeville county offices and the emergency services offices. The Abbeville Area Medical Center (AAMC) opened in 2006. It's a streamlined 18-bed hospital and nine-bed emergency department.

Now, the construction is near completion for a new medical office building called the Abbeville Area Healthcare Center. The facility will house primary care physicians, a general surgeon, professionals specializing in diabetes and behavioral health, a laboratory and X-ray services. The new facility will allow better coordination among physicians and other professionals to provide better patient care.

The addition will also fea-

ture a walk-in clinic conveniently adjacent to the hospital for times when advanced care becomes necessary.

"The current hospital cares for patients with less acute issues than in the past due to a shortage of specialists," says Ernest Shock, the hospital's chief nursing officer. "But if a person had something much more serious, like a heart attack, we would stabilize them and get them to a larger facility in Greenville, Anderson, Greenwood or even Charleston."

### MEETING THE NEEDS OF TODAY'S PATIENTS

Now, the hospital is in the middle of an improvement program that started in Decem-

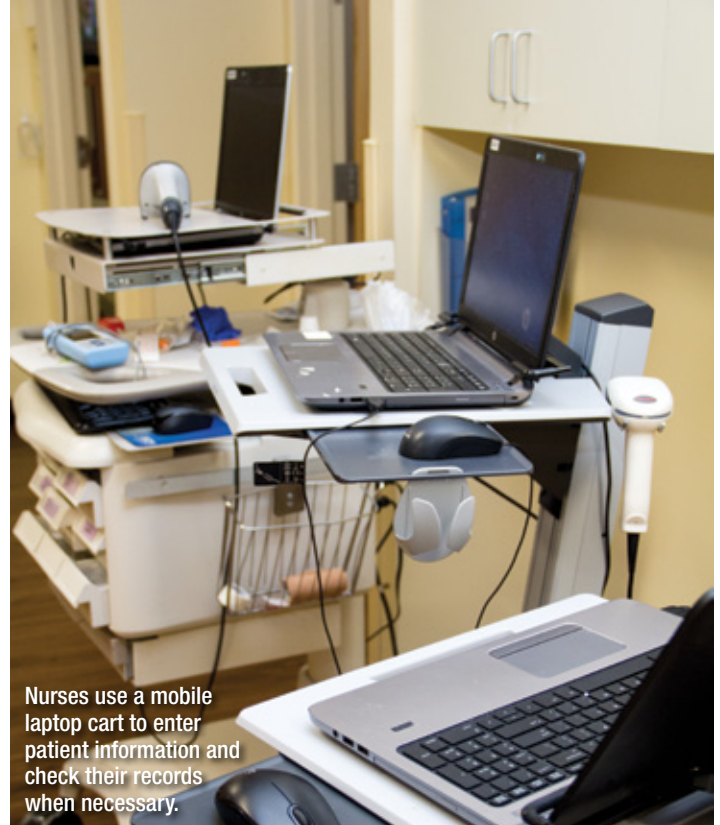
ber 2016. "It's about looking at all of our processes and how we can deliver care more efficiently, less costly and with more convenience to the patient without compromising quality," Shock says.

AAMC includes a surgical center for outpatient or inpatient surgeries and a wound care center offering simple wound care, hyperbaric therapy and lymphatic therapy. "We're preparing for this new direction toward outpatient treatment," Shock says.

"Over the years and through medical advances, we've improved the way we do things," Shock says. "Our inpatient admissions are about 30 percent of what they were just three years ago due to a



AAMC has implemented innovative treatments and kept proven techniques, like using a hyperbaric chamber in wound care, says Chief Nursing Officer Ernest Shock.



Nurses use a mobile laptop cart to enter patient information and check their records when necessary.

shift towards observation and outpatient patient stays.”

## TELEMEDICINE

Another aspect to modern medicine is the ability to collaborate virtually with specialized doctors in other hospitals. “We consider telemedicine a supplement to what we can do,” Shock says. “We began with tele-behavioral health because there is a shortage of psychiatrists in rural communities.”

The system includes a mobile computer terminal with a mounted camera that allows a behavioral health professional to meet virtually with a patient. “This is perfectly suited for behavioral health medicine as those doctors do not lay hands on a patient,” Shock says.

The next area of focus will be tele-stroke identification and treatment. Doctors and nurses at AAMC will remotely partner with a neurologist at a larger facility like the Medical University of South Carolina

to determine the severity of a stroke minutes after a patient arrives. “When it’s a blocked artery, we can give medicine to open that up,” Shock says. “However, if it’s a bleeder, they need to be transported immediately for neurosurgery to relieve the pressure on the brain.”

## CRITICAL CONNECTION

The days of a massive file folder filled with medical forms are a thing of the past. In just a few keystrokes, doctors are now able to quickly access a patient’s medical records.

Medical machines record patient information to computer systems accessible by physicians. “We’ll be able to look back and see what your vital signs were and how you were treated,” Shock says. “All of that hinges on our internet connection and servers.”

One challenge has been the various transcribing programs

that might differ from hospital to hospital. AAMC has partnered with Common Well, a national vendor that manages medical records and stores them on remote servers.

“It does exactly what it sounds like,” Shock says. “Even though hospital systems don’t talk to each other, everybody goes to the same place to get the information.”

Many of the advances AAMC has made would not work without reliable technology and internet capacity. As the hospital is advancing, WCTEL is upgrading telecommunications lines.

## PUBLIC PARTNERSHIP

The campus has a wellness center, including a state-of-the-art gym and rehabilitation services. It was built in 2005, before the hospital, and has undergone some renovations in recent years. “It made sense to open that first while the original construction of the hospital was happening,” Shock says.

The facility accommodates patients needing physical, speech or occupational therapies. “We’ve even started some Parkinson’s rehabilitative therapy and recently added pulmonary rehab,” Shock says. “It’s part of our continued-care program for patients — long term or short term — after a hospital stay.”

AAMC has also launched Direct Health, a wellness program that partners with area businesses for injury prevention and workplace safety.

Through the program, requirements such as annual physicals and wellness assessments are scheduled, making them more convenient and reducing an employee’s time away from work.

“It is a free service to the industry, but it helps us develop a better relationship with our patients,” Shock says. “Medicine, just like everything else, changes so rapidly that if you’re not keeping your eye on those advances, you’re going to get left behind.” ☐





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