

West Carolina Tel

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2017

CONNECTED

COMMUNITY CORNERSTONE

The Belmont Inn spurs
downtown renaissance

MAKE FOR THE LAKE

Weekend escapes at
Plum Branch Yacht Club

LEARNING THE LEGENDS

Museums tell stories of
sports heroes



NTCA THE RURAL BROADBAND ASSOCIATION

RURAL CONNECTIONS

BY SHIRLEY BLOOMFIELD, CEO
NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association

Keeping rural in the conversation

A writer for several respected national news websites recently asked this question on Twitter: "There's a weird amount of focus on 'rural broadband' ... Is this really important to people?"

This immediately told me two things. First, rural broadband is getting enough attention to creep into the awareness of urban media outlets. That's a good thing.

But secondly, this tweet also told me that we still have a lot of work to do in telling our rural success story.

What the writer didn't understand was that for years a lack of investment from large nationwide providers, along with geographic challenges, has left many rural residents with inadequate broadband access. Research has shown that a lack of access can cripple a local economy, lower academic achievement and reduce positive health care outcomes.

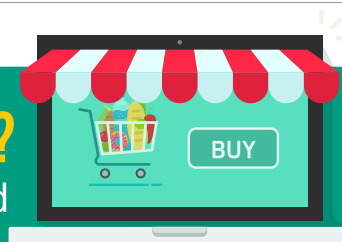
Telcos like yours believe people shouldn't face longer odds at a successful life just because of where they live, and they have done great work in extending broadband service to their parts of rural America. It's encouraging to see this issue gaining national attention.

It didn't take too long before the writer's Twitter feed was full of insight from rural advocates. "The overwhelming consensus ... is that rural broadband is, in fact, incredibly important and I'm a moron," he wrote.

A moron? Certainly not. More likely, he's someone who hasn't been to rural America to see the impact of reliable broadband. This was only one exchange on Twitter, but at NTCA, we're working every day to make sure everyone knows just how important rural broadband really is. ☎

THE END OF AN ERRAND?

Big changes in grocery shopping ahead



New data shows that a growing number of consumers are avoiding the pains of the weekly grocery-grab by shopping online.



About **25%** of all American households buy some groceries online, according to the Food Marketing Institute and Nielsen's "The Digitally Engaged Food Shopper" report.



That number is up from previous years thanks to **online delivery sites** like AmazonFresh. Walmart, Kroger and even some local grocers are bringing convenience through their online grocery pickup options.



By 2025, Americans are expected to spend more than **\$100 billion** on online grocery shopping, the report says.

FOOD SHOPPING FACTS

Curious to know how you could be shopping in the future? Check out these stats from the Food Marketing Institute and Nielsen:



Within the next decade, consumer spending on online grocery shopping could equal the gross sales of **3,900** grocery stores.



Mobile devices are used by **60%** of shoppers for deals and coupons.



2/3 of shoppers say mobile devices improve their lives.

HOW SATISFIED ARE WE WITH ONLINE SHOPPING?

More than 80 percent reported satisfaction with their online shopping experience. What makes it so popular?



81%
The ease of checkout



80%
The variety of brands and products offered online



73%
The number of shopping options offered



69%
Free or discounted shipping

Sources: Food Marketing Institute and Nielsen study, "Digitally Engaged Food Shopper," and invespro.com's blog, "Online Consumer Shopping Habits and Behavior."

LISTEN UP, TELEMARKETERS: DO NOT CALL!

You might not know that the Federal Trade Commission and the Federal Communications Commission have established a National Do Not Call Registry. If you join this registry, it can help reduce the number of telemarketing calls you receive.

THE BASICS ABOUT DO NOT CALL:

- The Do Not Call Registry prohibits sales calls. Political calls, charitable calls, debt collection calls, informational calls and telephone survey calls are still allowed.
- You can register up to three nonbusiness phone numbers, including cellphones.
- Your number goes on the list the day after you register. After that, telemarketers have 31 days to stop calling.
- Telephone numbers on the registry do not expire. The number you register is only removed when it's disconnected and reassigned.
- Companies may still call if you've recently done business with them or if you've given the company written



permission to call you. But if you ask a company not to call you again, it must honor your request.

Strict Federal Trade Commission rules make it illegal for telemarketers to do any of the following, regardless of whether or not your number is listed on the National Do Not Call Registry:

- Call before 8 a.m.
- Call after 9 p.m.
- Misrepresent what is being offered
- Threaten, intimidate or harass you
- Call again after you've asked them to stop



Register up to three nonbusiness numbers online at **www.donotcall.gov**.

You can also call **888-382-1222** to register the telephone from which you are calling.

For TTY, call 866-290-4236.

ATTENTION LOCAL BUSINESS OWNERS:

You must follow the Do Not Call rules

Local businesses may not think of themselves as typical telemarketers, but the same Federal Trade Commission Do Not Call laws apply to them.

If you are a company, individual or organization that places telemarketing calls, it's important to familiarize yourself with the operations of the National Do Not Call Registry. Unless you fall under one of the established exceptions, such as telemarketing by charitable organizations or for prior business relationships, you may not make telemarketing calls to the numbers included in the National Do Not Call Registry.

For information regarding these regulations, visit the National Do Not Call Registry at www.telemarketing.donotcall.gov. You can find the Federal Communications Commission and Federal Trade Commission rules governing telemarketing and telephone solicitation at 47 C.F.R. Sections 64.1200 and 16 C.F.R. Part 310, respectively.

OFFICIAL NOTIFICATION:

The Do Not Call initiative, regulated by the Federal Trade Commission and the Federal Communications Commission, requires telephone service providers to notify customers of the National Do Not Call rules and regulations.

Kids at heart

When I was young, being prepared to go back to school meant making sure I had my pencils and paper ready. Today, kids need more than what they can fit inside their backpacks to be prepared to get the education they need — and we are here to help.



JEFF WILSON
Chief Executive Officer

Having broadband at school and at home is an increasingly important part of equipping today's students for academic achievement and career skills development. I recently ran across a statistic about internet and education that presents a strong reminder to those of us in the business of bringing broadband to rural communities. According to a study commissioned by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, high school graduates who consider themselves "online" are twice as likely to go to college as those who do not use the internet.


While attending college isn't necessarily the key to success for every student, other research at home and abroad points to broadband access as a key to higher test scores and better-educated students:

- A 2015 study by the U.S. Federal Reserve Board showed that high-speed internet improved students' postsecondary outcomes and that students with access to high-speed internet in their junior year of high school had better SAT scores than those without.
- Earlier this year, a New Zealand researcher published a report stating that fiber internet service at schools raises National Standards passing rates in each of the three areas of the test.
- An Irish study from 2014 showed that the use of the internet in a classroom was associated with significantly higher average math scores and improved reading scores on standardized tests.
- In 2011, researchers found that South Korean students who used the internet for educational purposes showed higher academic achievement than those who did not.
- A 2009 study from Brazil showed eighth-graders with broadband at home had significantly higher test scores than students without a connection.
- In the U.S. Chamber of Commerce report, 60 percent of surveyed school districts said distance learning over broadband was important to give students access to Advanced Placement courses.

Results like these are at the foundation of why we have worked so hard to build the high-speed broadband network we have today. You see, while I'm glad that our network allows our youth to stream movies or play their favorite video games, I'm even more pleased that our service allows their teachers to use new and engaging ways to educate their students. I'm proud that our network allows children and parents to get help with their homework and connect with tutoring services. And I'm very proud that our network lets students pursue their passions through research or developing skills in their chosen careers.

We don't know what the future holds for today's students, but we have a pretty good idea that technology will play a significant role in their lives. Whether they are farming, building, nursing, teaching, running a business or piloting planes, computer skills and the resources provided through technology are going to be essential to their careers.

As your locally rooted telecommunications provider, we want to give educators the resources to help our children excel — and then provide the technology those students need to start careers, open small businesses and raise families right here at home.

WCTEL has equipped generations of local families with the communication tools they need to thrive. As school bells ring back in session, we're proud to be equipping the next generation. 

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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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On the Cover:



The two-year revitalization of the Belmont Inn has helped encourage Abbeville's return as a thriving tourism destination.
See story Page 12.

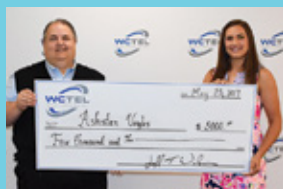
Congrats to the WCTEL scholarship winners



Maria Olson of Emerald High School in Greenwood won a \$2,500 Foundation for Rural Service scholarship. She also received WCTEL's annual scholarship, which awards \$2,000 to the recipient for each of the four years of college, totaling \$8,000 toward their enrollment. Olson was accepted to the pre-nursing program at Lander University.



Darnell Norman of McCormick High School was awarded a \$2,500 Foundation for Rural Service scholarship. He will attend Lander University, studying English and professional writing.

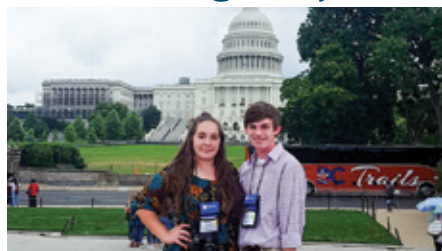


Ashstan Voyles of Dixie High School in Due West received the \$5,000 Staurulakis Family Scholarship. She plans to study nursing while attending Lander University.

FRS Youth Tour trip to Washington, D.C.



Thomas Dove attended the annual Foundation for Rural Service Youth Tour of Washington, D.C., this summer as part of WCTEL's commitment to providing opportunities to area students. He is a senior this year at Calhoun Falls Public Charter School.



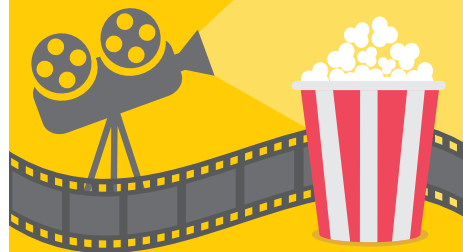
Thomas Dove toured the Capitol building with friend Hannah Bridges. Students also saw the Russell Senate Office Building, where they learned about the FCC and were able to speak with interns from the U.S. Senate.

2017 HALLOWEEN PHOTO CONTEST

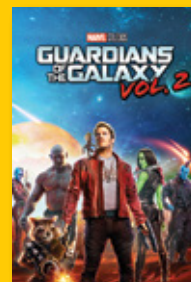


Send your photo to: PhotoContest@wctel.net
Go to: www.wctel.net for contest rules and details.

Coming soon to Video on Demand

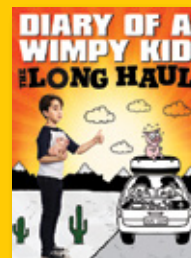


For a small fee, WCTEL's Video on Demand service gives you access to new releases as many as eight weeks before Netflix or Redbox. To access Video on Demand, press the "VOD" or "On Demand" button on the remote or press the "Menu" button and look for "On Demand."



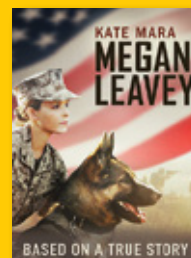
Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 2

The Guardians must band together to help Peter Quill on a quest to learn about his heritage.



Diary of a Wimpy Kid: The Long Haul

A family road trip takes a few detours for the Heffley family. Will Greg make it to the video game conference on time?



Megan Leavey

The true story of a wayward female who ultimately finds her way as a military police officer in the Marine Corps.

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

- Paris Can Wait
- 47 Meters Down
- All Eyez on Me
- Baby Driver
- The Mummy (2017)
- Captain Underpants: The First Epic Movie

MEET THE LEGENDS OF SOUTHERN SPORTS

Museums celebrate football, racing and more



The Paul W. Bryant Museum in Tuscaloosa is a must-see for sports fans touring Alabama.

Photo courtesy of Paul W. Bryant Museum.

We can't all be our team's starting quarterback. Nor can we all pitch a perfect game, catch the checkered flag seconds ahead of the rest or hit perfect 3-pointers. Fortunately, though, there are museums across the South that allow us to come close to sports legends.

Paul W. Bryant Museum

300 Paul W. Bryant Drive, Tuscaloosa, Alabama

As head football coach of the University of Alabama's Crimson Tide for more than 25 years, Paul W. "Bear" Bryant was larger than life. It's only fitting that in 1988, only five years after his death, a museum bearing his name and housing a collection of items related to all University of Alabama sports teams opened at the university. The museum draws not only fans of the Tide, but also fans from visiting teams on game day, says museum director Ken Gaddy.

- **Most prized item:** Coach Bryant's Presidential Medal of Freedom
- **Where to eat:** Dreamland Bar-B-Que at 5535 15th Ave. is a local favorite in Tuscaloosa. They offer barbecue, smoked sausage, homemade sides and more, but they're famous for their ribs. As their slogan says, "ain't nothing like 'em nowhere!"
- **Admission:** \$2, adults; \$1, seniors 60-plus and children 6-17; free, children younger than 6
- **Information:** 205-348-4668 or bryantmuseum.com

Ty Cobb Museum

461 Cook St., Royston, Georgia

Ty Cobb's name is a legend in the world of baseball. He played outfield for 22 seasons for the Detroit Tigers, setting 90 Major League Baseball records during his career. But he was

more than a ballplayer. In 1953, he donated a quarter of his estate to establish the Ty Cobb Education Foundation. To date, more than \$16 million has been awarded to Georgia residents who prove financial need to attend college. Also visitors will find art and memorabilia: Cobb's baseball glove, his 1907 Batting Champion award, his childhood Bible and a Tigers uniform. There are also film, videos, books and historical archives. The Northeast Georgia museum draws thousands of folks annually from around the country who want to learn more about the man famously known as "The Georgia Peach."

- **Most prized item:** A bronzed cleat that Cobb actually wore
- **Where to eat:** The Old Corner Hardware Store Lunchroom at 919 Church St. It's only open for lunch Wednesday through Saturday, and folks in town say the chicken and dumplings are a home run.
- **Admission:** \$5, adults; \$4, seniors 62-plus; \$3, students; free, under age 5 and active military
- **Information:** 706-245-1825 or www.tycobbmuseum.org

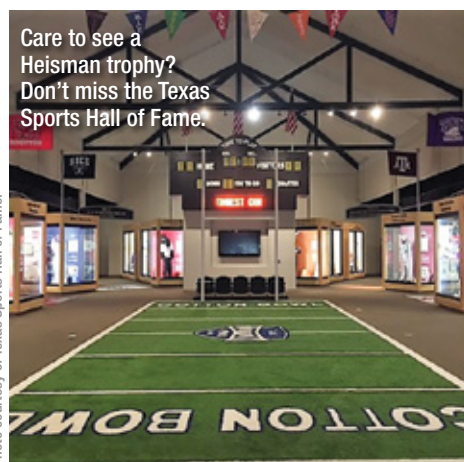


Photo courtesy of Texas Sports Hall of Fame.

Texas Sports Hall of Fame

1108 S. University Parks Drive, Waco, Texas

You've most likely seen a Heisman trophy before, but only on TV. At the Texas Sports Hall of Fame Museum, you'll see one of the oldest in existence up close and personal — a 1938 model awarded to Davey O'Brien, quarterback for Texas Christian University. "That's what excites most people," says Jay Black, vice president of

museum operations. But there are 15,000 more objects to pique your interest, including trophies, uniforms, equipment and more. Plus, there's a sports simulator where kids play ball.

- **Most prized item:** Final-out baseballs from Nolan Ryan's seven no-hitters
- **Where to eat:** Vitek's BBQ — at 1600 Speight Ave., about a mile from the museum — is the home of the famous Gut Pak. In case your imagination isn't enough, it's a monster: Fritos, cheddar cheese, sausage, hand-chopped brisket, beans, pickles, onions, jalapeno peppers and barbecue sauce with sliced bread.
- **Admission:** \$7, adults; \$6, seniors 60-plus; \$3, students first-12th grade; free, children 6 and under
- **Information:** 254-756-1633 or www.tshof.org

Women's Basketball Hall of Fame

700 S. Hall of Fame Drive, Knoxville, Tennessee

The Women's Basketball Hall of Fame is the only museum dedicated to all levels of women's basketball. The museum has a number of interactive exhibits that will challenge and entertain visitors of all ages. Test your skills on the court or walk through and see all the sights. There are trophies, signed basketballs and uniforms. While parents might appreciate learning the history of the game, kids will enjoy the hoops, a passing course and a dribbling course. The collection is large, and exhibits often change, so visitors may not see the same items from one visit to the next.

- **Most prized item:** The first rulebook for women's basketball, written by Senda Berenson in 1901.
- **Where to eat:** Calhoun's on the River is located at 400 Neyland Drive on Knoxville's historic waterfront. It offers a panoramic view of the Tennessee River and is accessible by boat.
- **Admission:** \$7.95, adults; \$5.95, seniors 62-plus and children 5-15; free, children under 5
- **Information:** 865-633-9000 or www.wbhof.com



Photo courtesy of Harrelson Photography for Darlington Raceway.

Darlington Raceway Stock Car Museum

1301 Harry Byrd Highway, Darlington, South Carolina

Even if you're not a fan of stock car racing, you'll find a tour of the Darlington Raceway Stock Car Museum an experience like no other. The museum offers a glance into the remarkable history of a sport born in the South. "It's a trip through the history of not only Darlington Raceway, but also the entire sport," says Dennis Worden, director of public relations. The museum offers an informational movie, memorabilia and more than a dozen race cars on display. The location is also home to the National Motorsports Press Association Hall of Fame, where you can learn about the personalities who made stock car racing into the sport it is today, including Junior Johnson, Dale Earnhardt and more. Kids will enjoy learning about the 1951 Hornet, which inspired the character of "Doc" in the animated 2006 Pixar film "Cars."

- **Most prized item:** Richard Petty's 1967 Plymouth championship car.
- **Where to eat:** When you cross the finish line, go next door to the Raceway Grill. In the past, famous race car drivers would enjoy the homemade French fries, hamburger steaks, sandwiches, rib-eyes and more. Hours are Wednesday-Saturday from 11 a.m.-9 p.m.
- **Admission:** \$7.50, adults; \$5, military; free, children under 12
- **Information:** 843-395-8821 or www.darlingtonraceway.com

A scenic sunset over a lake with a pine tree in the foreground. The sky is a mix of orange, yellow, and blue, reflecting on the calm water. A dark silhouette of a pine tree with needles and cones is in the upper left, partially obscuring the text.

NOT FOR
MEMBERS
ONLY!

PLUM BRANCH YACHT CLUB *welcomes all*

The serene tranquility of Lake Thurmond draws many visitors to the Plum Branch Yacht Club annually.

BY JEN CALHOUN

Plum Branch Yacht Club may sound like an exclusive, members-only retreat. But don't let the name throw you off.

Bea McClain and George Selfridge obtained the lease for the former Fishing Village on Lake J. Strom Thurmond in 1996. Since then, Plum Branch Yacht Club has become known as a destination for everything from 90-foot houseboats to canoes and kayaks, bicycles and campers.

And membership is not required.

The club — on 93 acres off the 71,000-acre lake — includes a marina, restaurant, campgrounds, ship's store and storage for boats and recreational vehicles.

Thousands of people come for relaxation

and recreation to the outdoor retreat, which is open all year, says McClain. "We have people who love to fish and others who don't fish at all," she says. "We have some people who just like to look at the water and others who can't stay out of it."

Many of the club's visitors tend to stay for the weekend during summers, but no one lives on the land. The property is owned by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Bea and George own the business, but they pay rent to the Corps. Part of every dollar they earn goes to the U.S. government, McClain says.

George's favorite job at the marina is manning the gas dock, getting to know customers one boatload at a time.

The busiest season for visitors is from Memorial Day through the end of October. Special events and concerts are on Memorial Day, Independence Day and Labor Day. And neighbors chip in for fireworks shows.

While the big holiday weekends might be crowded, it can be hard to find any crowds at the lake. "They get here, and they get in their boats," McClain says. "So, it doesn't seem like there's that many people here."

In the fall, many campers love coming out to enjoy the cooler weather and campfires, she says. Some of the die-hard anglers show up at the lake regardless of the season. "They put on their padded coveralls, gloves and knitted caps where all you see are the eyes and the mouth," she says. "And they go fishing anyway."

A SIMPLER WAY OF LIFE

When Bea and George moved to the area in 1996, they loved the idea of a place where their then 6-year-old son could roam free, Bea McClaine says.

"At the time, we lived in Atlanta," she says. "He couldn't go but two houses down, and that was it. But when we got here, we just said, 'Don't go past the entrance line, and come home when you're hungry.'"

The club offers a family-friendly environment, where children can play on



Avid fisherman Newt Holloway enjoys every opportunity to take his boat out on the lake.

floating toys in the lake or ride their bikes around the grounds. Adults can cruise in golf carts, in boats or on foot. Stand-up paddleboarding has also become popular.

"We try to create an environment here where it's safe for kids to have that kind of innocence of youth and to fall in love with nature and become responsible about the ecosystem," McClain says, who credits the work of her loyal staff who make the marina what it is today.

She is proud of the club's longtime partnership with Clemson University's extension program. Each summer, the extension agency offers the 4H2O program, a four-day camp that teaches children about the environment, pollution and runoff. Par-

ticipants learn to take samples of water and to test the water for purity using scientific equipment.

PRISTINE AND UNPOLLUTED LAKE

McClain says her family used to spend time on a lake in Georgia, where advisories warn against eating the fish.

But Lake J. Strom Thurmond is different. The lake offers fishing for largemouth bass, bream, catfish, crappie, hybrid bass, striped bass and other varieties. "On this lake, the Army Corps of Engineers says (adults and children) can eat all they want," she says. "It's good to know that you can eat all you want."

SUNSET TIME IS THE BEST TIME

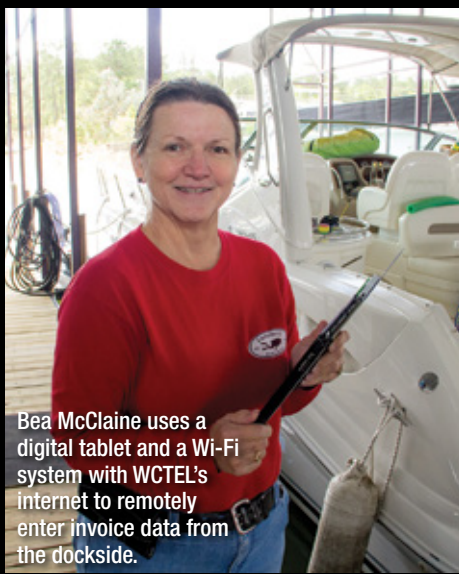
It's not only the pure lake, fishing and fun that bring visitors to Plum Branch. The club is also known for its beautiful sunsets, visible from boats or the deck of the club's restaurant, Lakeside Grill.

"Probably the thing I love most is watching the kids get to connect with nature," McClain says. "It's really fun to see these kids learn how to fish and think that's the coolest thing. I'll go down and take sunset pictures, and half of those kids that were fishing earlier are down there with their bikes to watch the sunset.

"It's just good, clean fun." 🚲



Russell Strickland electronically enters an order at the Grill where he serves up lunch.



Bea McClaine uses a digital tablet and a Wi-Fi system with WCTEL's internet to remotely enter invoice data from the dockside.

Back-to-School GADGET GUIDE

BY LUIS CARRASCO

It's back-to-school time in 2017, and while we still don't have self-driving cars that will handle that early morning drop-off, robot dogs that come with homework-shredding attachments, or even lockers that won't jam, several services and gadgets will make the life of any student (and parent) a little easier. Here are a few of them along with suggested age ranges.

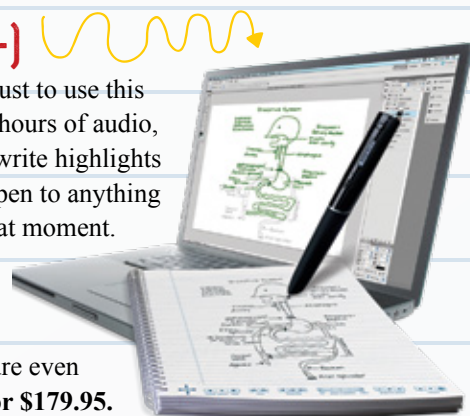


BITSBOX (6-14)

To build a fantastic future, we are going to need more people going into science, technology, engineering and mathematics. STEM box subscription services, which range from programming projects to the more traditional chemistry sets and electronics-building, give students the chance to tinker, create and put theoretical concepts to practical use. Bitsbox (www.bitsbox.com) focuses on coding, with kids as young as 6 learning the basics of programming and producing fun apps. Technology moves very quickly, but having coding knowledge — understanding the basic way that computers do what they do — is invaluable. ... but if you must put a price on it, **Bitsbox starts at \$20 per month.**

LIVESCRIBE ECHO SMARTPEN (18+)

It would almost be worth going back to college just to use this pen in class. The device records as much as 200 hours of audio, which is synchronized to your notes. You could write highlights during a presentation and then simply touch the pen to anything you wrote, and it will play the recording from that moment. With the included software, all notes and drawings are transferred to your computer along with the attached audio. You can share any piece you want as an interactive PDF, and your notes are even searchable. **Available at store.livescribe.com for \$179.95.**



XYZPRINTING DA VINCI MINI (10+)

Having a 3D printer at home would have been unthinkable only a few years ago, but consumer models like the da Vinci Mini have made it an affordable investment. The educational use of a 3D printer is only limited by the imagination or by the included access to an online STEM and arts curriculum for grades K-12. The printer includes 3D modeling software for beginners and uses filaments derived from cornstarch, making them biodegradable and nontoxic. If dads are still not convinced, it also makes neat toy soldiers. **Available at us.xyzprinting.com for \$289.95.**

ROCKETBOOK WAVE SMART NOTEBOOK (13+)

Each page of the notebook has a series of symbols at the bottom that, when used with the Rocketbook Wave app, allows everything from notes to doodles to be stored digitally. The app scans, enhances and sends the notebook page to a chosen cloud service, including options like Evernote, Dropbox and Google Drive. If you use the included FriXion pen — made by Pilot and available at most office stores and online — you can pop the notebook in the microwave and completely erase it once it's full. The only caveat is that if you don't upload your pages regularly, the disappearing ink feature is just a mean prank waiting to happen. **Available at www.getrocketbook.com, erasable models start at \$27.**



Defeat the BACK-TO-SCHOOL BLUES

Apps and sites to help your student



The kids are back to school! Whew! As a mom who works from a home office and lives with a couple of rambunctious boys, I must admit that life is just a little bit simpler when they are back in school.

I love them to pieces, but they can be a distraction! Even if my days are a little less crazy during the school year, it picks right back up when school is over at the end of the day.

They are always starving — who knew boys could eat so much? They have practices and activities to get to and of course HOMEWORK. I didn't like homework as a kid and don't like it as a parent, especially as my boys continue to grow older and the homework gets a bit harder.

Their frustration increases, and my patience decreases. I'm already dreading the day they bring home geometry homework, and don't even get me started on spelling! I'm sure spellcheck has already corrected me at least a dozen times as I write this article.

However, I'm resourceful, and we have super-high-speed internet at home, so there are tools that will make these homework stresses easier. I will do my

best to ensure my kids are better spellers than I am, and I want to give them their best chance at good grades in all their subjects. Here are a couple of sites and apps I recommend:

KHAN ACADEMY

Khan Academy is well-known in the education world, but a lot of parents are unaware of it. The academy has great, free educational videos on math, science, politics and lots of other topics with content for students from kindergarten to graduate studies. If your child is struggling with a topic, and content is available, I strongly encourage you to check it out.

<http://www.khanacademy.org>

VOCABULARY SPELLING CITY

This is a great website and app to help your kids prepare for their spelling tests. Many schools implement it districtwide. If your school doesn't, you can always set up a parent account.

Reviewing spelling words is free, and with a premium account, you can also access lessons on vocabulary and writing. I love that I can enter my sons' spelling words and then they can play games and

take practice quizzes to prepare for tests.

<http://www.spellingcity.com>

ADDITIONAL SITES

If you are looking for a specific subject or topic your child needs help with in school, take a look at the list of suggested apps at Common Sense Media. They break down the apps based on age and topic. You may just find something that makes evening homework a little more manageable.

<https://www.commonsensemedia.org/lists/homework-help-apps>

Raising kids isn't easy, and parents today face a different set of challenges than previous generations. Technology is a huge part of that. Take advantage of the help that's out there to make your after-school routines a little more bearable. ☎



CARISSA SWENSON

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*Parenting
Tip*

The pace of school is picking up, and that's great. But there can be challenges, too. Cyberbullying is never OK. If your child faces a cyberbully, ask the bully to stop, unfriend them and report them to proper authorities if necessary.



Abbeville residents Renee Smith, left, and Edie New have spent two years operating and renovating The Belmont Inn.

Betting on The Belmont

Historic inn creates welcome space in downtown Abbeville

BY JEN CALHOUN

Renee Smith and Edie New never claimed to have a background in managing a historic inn. But they were committed to making sure their beloved downtown Abbeville continued to thrive.

So when The Belmont Inn came up for sale two years ago, Smith and New decided they needed to buy it. The 25-room inn originally opened in 1903 on the town's historic Court Square. It serves as a cor-

nerstone for the revitalized downtown and gives visitors a place to stay that's as warm and relaxed as the town itself.

"What we realized is that when The Belmont isn't open, nothing does well in (downtown) Abbeville because there is nowhere to stay," Smith says. "We felt that, for the good of Abbeville, somebody who loved Abbeville needed to take it."

Jennifer Creswell agrees. She is president of the Downtown Abbeville Merchant's Association and owner of As We Grow children's boutique. "You can't beat having somewhere to stay that's right on the square," she says. "You can walk right out to everything. It's the perfect place."

FALLING IN LOVE WITH ABBEVILLE

Smith came to Abbeville several years ago and began managing a trucking business owned by New, a native of the town. Smith says she fell in love with the "eclectic" town because of the people. They were interesting and kind. Actors and artists mingle with Mennonites and lawyers, bringing unique perspectives and ideas to the city.

"I like small towns," she says. "Some people don't because people get in your business. But people can get in your business for the right reasons or the wrong reasons. This is one of those towns that,

when you're down, people will be there to hold you up. It's just a great little town."

The longer she lived there, the more Smith became involved in the town. She and New ended up opening a popular bar and crepe shop on the square, Natty's on Trinity. It became known for its large selection of craft beers.

LIVING HISTORY

When the Victorian-era inn opened as The Eureka, it mainly housed railroad workers and traveling troupes that played nearby at The Abbeville Opera House. During the mid-20th century, the hotel went into decline, closing in 1972. The inn was purchased again in 1983, and it was renamed The Belmont.

The then-owners renovated the inn from 33 bedrooms and three shared bathrooms to 25 bedrooms with individual bathrooms. Smith and New purchased it in 2015. They have continued to change and renovate the inn. They installed new furnishings, draperies and flat-screen televisions in each room.

Smith says staying in the 114-year-old inn isn't like staying at a modern hotel with all the amenities. "But what we're finding is that people are coming to love that about it, because it's not cookie-cutter," she says. "You see original hardwood floors and chenille bedspreads."

They're even seeing an increase in the number of professionals. "They're coming here because it's not like you're going to some town where you don't know anybody and sit in a room," Smith says. "Here, you can come out

to the veranda and talk to other people. And you're within walking distance of the restaurants and bars."

Downtown Abbeville holds many attractions, which the community showcases in a variety of ways.

The Abbeville Opera House brings in about 35,000 patrons annually. The playhouse offers packages with The Belmont Inn. "When you stay here, you can have live theater right next door to you," Smith says. "And if you want to come see a play, you have somewhere to stay afterward."

Downtown is also home to dozens of restaurants and retail shops. The Downtown Association hosts events including two wine walks, a beer walk, a chocolate walk and a cookie walk. A Dickens Christmas festival and the popular Greater Abbeville Chamber of Commerce Oyster Roast & Low Country Boil also bring in large crowds. Dozens of other festivals, events and parades also take place in the square.

In addition, The Belmont Inn regularly hosts special events, including weddings, family reunions and business conferences. Guests from around the country and the world stay at the inn.

They may arrive strangers, but they leave as family, Smith says.

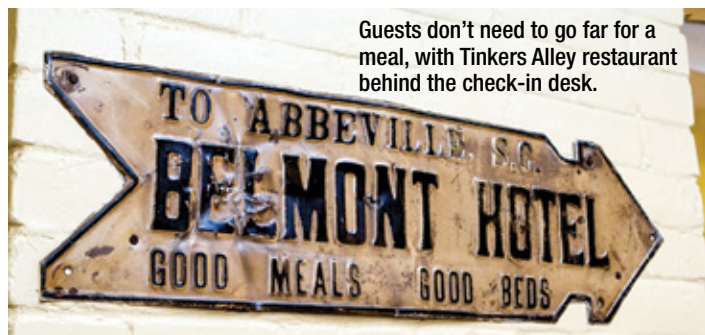
"Most of the time when you come to The Belmont and Abbeville, it's like coming to your great-aunt's house," she says. "You're going to meet people and feel like you've known them forever. People are going to talk to you, so bless your heart. It's a pretty neat little town." 🗨️



The Belmont Inn features a dog grooming and boarding business in the basement.



The Belmont Inn has an extra-large room for families on vacations and another room that includes an additional guest — a ghost that has been known to wander the building.



Guests don't need to go far for a meal, with Tinkers Alley restaurant behind the check-in desk.

→ If you go

The Belmont Inn is located on the historic Court Square in downtown Abbeville at 104 E. Pickens St. The inn includes 25 guest rooms with their own private baths and a conference room. Breakfast is free with the price of a room. The inn is pet-friendly and offers free Wi-Fi for guests. Downstairs, the inn is home to The Belmont Boutique; The Paw Spa, a pet grooming and boarding facility; and Tinkers Alley, a bar and grill. For more information, go to the inn's website at belmontinn.net or check out their Facebook page for an up-to-date listing of events. **To reserve a room or book a special event, call 864-459-9625.**

GOING DUTCH

Learn the secrets to the all-in-one pot

A Dutch oven is the workhorse of your outdoor cooking experience. It's an all-in-one pot that can withstand the heat it takes to make myriad meals from beginning to end — appetizer to dessert.

Cookbook author J. Wayne Fears says there are some tricks to success — the primary one being experience. He offers these tips to help with the learning curve:

- Make sure you have the right accessories — lid turners and heavy leather gloves among them. “I’ve been burned more times than I can count,” Fears says.
- When you’re making something like cake or biscuits, put them in a cake pan set on a cake rack inside the Dutch oven. The heat will circulate better, and cleanup is much easier. Soups and stews should be added directly to the pot.
- There’s no set time or temperature in Dutch oven cooking. You’re cooking outside, so you never know how hot the fire will be.
- Always watch the pot. “When you’re cooking, don’t get distracted and walk off,” Fears says. “You will have a problem. I guarantee it.”

From his home office in New Market, Alabama, he discusses what led him to become

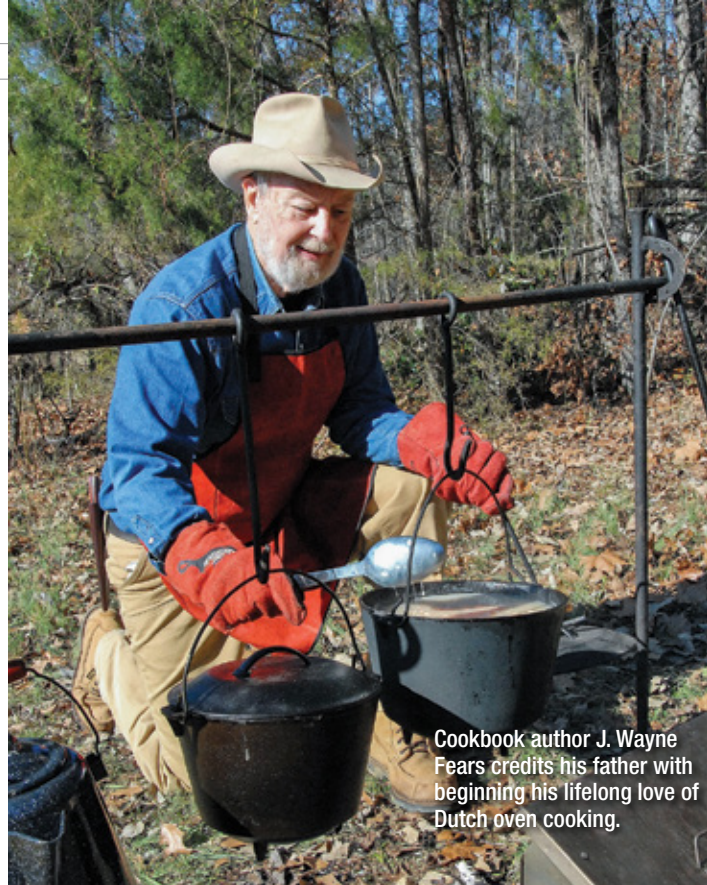
an expert at using one of the oldest cooking methods known to modern man — a cast-iron Dutch oven set over flames.

Fears’ father was a trapper who often used a Dutch oven. He instilled in his son a love of the outdoors and impressed on him the importance of knowing how to cook. When Fears was a young man, he also had a Scoutmaster who was a Dutch oven cooking expert.

After college, Fears worked for Gulf States Paper Corp. Knowing his affinity for hunting and wildlife management, the firm asked him to turn 500,000 acres it owned into a profitable hunting preserve. It didn’t take long for the operation to expand, with organized hunts offered in remote areas of Colorado, British Columbia and Alaska. “And those people expected to be fed well,” he says.

Fears, a member of the International Dutch Oven Society, now shares his techniques with readers around the world in two cookbooks, “The Complete Book of Dutch Oven Cooking” and his latest, “The Lodge Book of Dutch Oven Cooking.”

“I’m extremely proud of this book and the partnership with Lodge,” he says. “I tried to pick recipes that would make it easy for first-time Dutch oven cooks but that were delicious enough that seasoned Dutch



Cookbook author J. Wayne Fears credits his father with beginning his lifelong love of Dutch oven cooking.

oven cooks would not get bored cooking them.”

Fears says Dutch oven has become a trendy cooking method, particularly with millennials and “preppers,” people preparing for the worst — no electricity or other modern cooking methods. “Millennials are also finding it’s a great, fun way to entertain. Something different, rather than grilling,” he adds.

There are two methods to cook the food — over an open flame using hardwood or on a grill over charcoal. “You can control the heat better with charcoal and have enough ready to add more if needed,” he says.

But there’s only one kind of Dutch oven he recommends: the Lodge preseasoned cast-iron camp Dutch oven made in South Pittsburg, Tennessee. “Now with preseasoned, you don’t have to spend all day seasoning the thing,” he says.

Dutch ovens come in various

sizes, but there are several things common to all: a flat, recessed lid so coals can be placed on top; a strong bail for hanging over the fire; and a heavy lid with handle in the center.

What is the most interesting food Fears has cooked in a Dutch oven? Caribou brains. It was a stormy night in Alaska, and his group of hunters were stranded in camp and ran out of food.

“I told them what it was, and they liked it, but I did get a lot of strange looks,” Fears says.

Fortunately, most of his recipes tend to follow a more traditional route. Here are some of his favorites.



FOOD EDITOR
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SARA GRAVE'S BEEF STEW

"This beef stew has to be the best in the country," says Fears. It can be made entirely outdoors, or you can use your kitchen stove to brown the meat in advance.

- 1 package Adolph's beef stew mix
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 cup flour
- 3 pounds beef round, cut into 1-inch cubes
- 1 package McCormick's beef stew seasoning
- 1 package McCormick's brown gravy mix
- 6 large Irish potatoes, cubed
- 1 cup carrots, peeled and sliced

In 12-inch Dutch oven, bring 3 quarts of water to a boil over charcoal or hardwood fire, keeping bottom of oven from coming into direct contact with coals. In separate pan on medium high heat, add 2 cups of warm water and stir in Adolph's stew mix. Heat to simmer, then add to water in Dutch oven. Heat oil in a skillet over medium heat. Coat cubed meat with flour and brown in oil on all sides. Add browned meat to boiling water in Dutch oven, stir, cover with lid on and reduce heat to low. Cook for 2 hours, stirring every 20-30 minutes to prevent meat from sticking to bottom. After 2 hours of cooking, mix McCormick's beef stew seasoning mix into two cups of warm water. When completely mixed, add to Dutch oven mixture. Stir well. Mix McCormick's Brown Gravy Mix in two cups of warm water. Add to Dutch oven and stir. While stew continues to cook on low heat, peel and cut potatoes and carrots. Bring water to a boil in two pots and put potatoes in one and carrots in the second. Reduce heat and let the potatoes and carrots boil until they can be easily pierced with a fork. Remove and drain. (Cooking potatoes and carrots separately has proven to keep them more tender.) Add vegetables to Dutch oven mixture. Stir. Remove from heat and serve. Makes 6-8 servings.



STUFFED BAKED APPLES

- 4 baking apples
- 1/3 cup raisins or dried cranberries
- 1/3 cup slivered almonds
- 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon nutmeg
- 2 cups water
- 4 ounces orange juice concentrate
- 2 tablespoons honey

Wash apples and core 3/4 of apple, leaving a little of the core in the bottom. In a bowl, combine raisins, almonds, cinnamon and nutmeg. Mix well. Take mixture and stuff each apple. In a bowl, mix honey, water and orange juice concentrate. Mix well. Place apples in a 9-inch aluminum pan. Pour liquid mixture over apples. Place pan on trivet in 12-inch Dutch oven over charcoal or hardwood fire, keeping bottom of oven from coming into direct contact with coals. Bake until apples are tender. Makes 4 servings.

DUTCH OVEN PINEAPPLE UPSIDE DOWN CAKE

- 1/4 cup butter, softened
- 1/2 cup brown sugar
- 1 can pineapple slices, drained, reserving juice
- 1 small jar of maraschino cherries
- 1 (9-ounce) package Jiffy golden yellow cake mix
- 1 egg

Heat Dutch oven over charcoal or hardwood fire, keeping bottom of oven from coming into direct contact with coals. Melt butter in the pineapple-upside-down cake pan and sprinkle it with 1/2 cup of brown sugar. Place pineapple slices over the brown sugar and place a maraschino cherry in each center. Set aside. In a medium bowl, beat yellow cake mix, egg and half of pineapple juice for 4 minutes. Pour batter over pineapple slices in cake pan. Place pan in 12-inch Dutch oven on trivet or cake rack. Cook until cake is golden brown and toothpick inserted in center comes out clean. Remove from Dutch oven, pour remaining half of pineapple juice over cake and allow to cool in pan for 2 minutes. Carefully flip onto serving plate and serve warm. Makes 6 servings. 📖





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