

West Carolina Tel

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2014

# CONNECTED

## FIBER FUTURE

The story behind  
South Carolina's  
first fiber network



### WIRES RECYCLED

Ex-contractor reclaims  
old copper network lines

### HIT THE ROAD!

Exploring automotive  
museums of the South

## FCC addressing rural calling issues

Rural telecommunications providers work through NTCA to encourage government action



**B**y working together and being involved in the regulatory process, rural telecommunications providers are seeing progress toward resolving rural calling issues.

NTCA—The Rural Broadband Association represents the voice of rural providers across America. For three years, NTCA has been working with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) on the issue of rural call completion, where subscribers in rural areas report significant problems receiving long-distance or wireless calls on their landline phones. These problems include failed connections and poor call quality.

The problem appears to lie in the fact that some long-distance and wireless carriers, in an effort to cut costs, are contracting with third-party service providers to route phone calls into rural areas.

In its latest ruling toward the end of 2013, the FCC took steps that the NTCA described in a statement as “positive developments for

rural consumers and their loved ones who have suffered the frustration or fear of a call not completing, lost business or endured public safety concerns because of circumstances beyond their control.”

Shirley Bloomfield, CEO of NTCA, expressed gratitude for the FCC’s efforts, adding “there is still much work to be done to ensure that no consumer will be cut off from critical communications, but NTCA is hopeful that this order will help to minimize consumer confusion by precluding false ringing, provide immediate incentives for providers to better manage completion of their calls, give the FCC a useful tool in identifying bad actors for enforcement, and serve as a springboard for further conversations about what else remains to be done to achieve truly universal and seamless connectivity.”

As your telecommunications provider, we will continue to keep you updated on this important issue through the pages of this magazine. ☎

## The IP Evolution

*Regulations must change to accelerate advances in technology*

Two letters — IP — are changing the way we connect as a society. Short for “Internet Protocol,” the term refers to the standardized method used to transmit information between devices across the Internet. This goes well beyond accessing websites on your computer. IP technology is used today for connecting everything from security systems to appliances, and it enables you to share photos, watch TV, chat over video and more.

As innovation continues to bring us new ways to use IP technology, it is important for industry regulations to support the adoption of that technology. As your telecommunications provider, we are working with other companies like ours across the U.S. to encourage changes in FCC rules that will help consumers take advantage of the IP evolution.

We are doing this work through NTCA—The Rural Broadband Association. In coming issues of this magazine, we will take a look at incentives NTCA is recommending to the FCC. In the March/April issue, we will explore the idea of universal support for standalone broadband service — and explain why current rules prevent us from being able to sell a broadband connection without some type of phone line bundled with it.

The IP evolution is here, and our mission is to ensure your home and community are ready for all the benefits it brings. ☎

# #ruraliscool



Share your photos, videos, thoughts and stories on your favorite social media channels, and use the #ruraliscool hashtag.

Simply add #ruraliscool to your posts on Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest and YouTube. Your posts will help spread

the word that our region offers a great lifestyle — and one that is supported by modern technology.

We are looking for photos and story ideas for possible use in future issues of this magazine. Share yours today!



# Introducing your kids to email



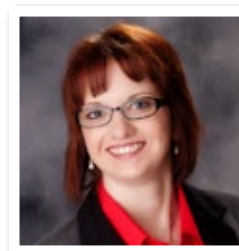
## Digital Citizenship

Email is an important communication method, with adults using it daily at work, in school and for personal needs. However, with so many ways to communicate, many children are drawn to interact through Facebook, Twitter and text messaging. It's therefore important that we teach our children the value of email as a form of correspondence.

### Consider the following guidelines for introducing your young one to email.

- Contact your local telecommunications provider and ask them to set up a new email account for your child.
- Talk to your child about how beneficial email can be for the future, and the importance of using it right now. They can use it for sharing ideas and tips, asking questions, assigning tasks to family members and even sending funny jokes.
- Email your child a few times each week. Ask them about their ideas for weekend activities, send links to educational websites or even mention a recipe that you want to make together.
- In the evening, open the emails together and demonstrate how the content is beneficial and sometimes couldn't be shared through another method.
- Try to foster an understanding that not all communication has to be done through social media, and that email will be an important part of their life in the years ahead.
- Only open and reply to email from people you know.
- If you receive an email from a company or a bank asking for information, never reply (and your child should inform you about this email as soon as possible).
- Never share sensitive information, such as date of birth, social security number, physical address or passwords in an email.
- Never open email attachments unless you are absolutely certain they are from a known source.

Put these tips to work and start teaching your child how to properly use email. It's an important part of becoming a good digital citizen. 📞



**Carissa Swenson** is the owner and technology specialist of TechTECS, a technology training, education, consulting and support company.

# Building our future's foundation

Can you imagine life without electricity? Of course not. It helps you take care of your home and family, earn a living, get your news, enjoy entertainment and experience a better quality of life. Wait ... can't the same be said for broadband?



I draw that parallel to drive home an important point — the broadband network we are building today is as foundational to modern society as the electricity distribution system that began powering rural America in the 1930s and 1940s.

Do you remember the first time you logged on to the Internet? Maybe it was through a West Carolina Tel Internet account. Perhaps you dialed a toll-free number, or even paid long-distance charges, to connect to EarthLink or AOL (how many CDs did you receive in the mail over the years offering 10 free hours of service to try AOL?). As you listened to the whistles and pops of your modem making a dial-up connection, you could not have imagined a day when such a network connection would impact practically every part of your life.

But that day is here. As dial-up access gave way to broadband connections, technology drove innovations that go far beyond simply browsing the Internet. And just like in the early days of electrification, rural America is benefiting greatly.

Consider these examples of how people are using their broadband connections:

- Students are staying current with their studies when they miss class, and turning in their homework online.
- Teachers and professors are bringing advanced studies into their classrooms through distance learning.
- Clinics and hospitals are managing records and expediting test results in ways that help them control costs while improving patient care and convenience.
- Businesses are selling products and services, buying supplies and communicating in ways that help them compete with companies in larger markets.
- Local governments, fire departments, police forces, water providers and other agencies are saving money on training while offering greater access and improved services to citizens.

Our network is making stories like these possible. And it's not just West Carolina Tel. Providers like us across rural America are creating real solutions as we lead the way for a more advanced telecommunications network in our country.

If these stories are not enough to convince you that we truly are building the foundation for our future, look at the story "Wireless Needs Wires" on Page 6. With so many people connected by cell phone these days and the use of traditional landlines on the decline, you might be tempted to think of your local telecommunications company as a provider whose most relevant days are behind them. But as you see from this article, even the cell phone service people are so attached to depends heavily on the wired network that we continue to improve. It wouldn't work without us.

Broadband is indeed the infrastructure of the future – one we are building for you today. ☎

**JEFF WILSON**  
Chief Executive Officer

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

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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West Carolina Telephone  
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### On the Cover:



Light illuminates the strands of glass that make up a fiber optic cable like the ones West Carolina uses. See story Page 12.



## New channels coming to DE Plus

There are some exciting additions coming to DE Plus in 2014. Throughout the next few months, West Carolina Tel will be adding channels and rolling out an entirely new lineup of music channels. Please check future issues of this magazine for more details.

## Phone books are on the way!

West Carolina's 2014 phone directories will be shipped to members this month. If you do not receive your book by Feb. 1 or you need additional books, please stop by one of our offices for your complimentary directory.

### RECYCLE YOUR OLD BOOK

The Abbeville library will have a dumpster in its parking lot for members to recycle their old phone books. Get rid of your old directory the green way!



## Cooperative offers CLICKS for seniors

West Carolina Tel has partnered with Abbeville County Adult Education to offer "CLICKS" — free computer literacy training for adults. CLICKS classes, which stands for Customer Learning Internet Computer Keyboard Skills, will be broken up into two three-hour, instructor-led sessions and will be open to residents from across the cooperative's service area.

Participants can expect to cover various basic computer skills in a small, unintimidating setting with 10 to 15 other students. The classes are part of a pilot program and additional sessions could be provided in the future based on participation in this initial offering.



**➔ To sign up, please call 864-446-2111.**



## Cooperative sees bump in TV subscriptions as competitor falters

West Carolina Tel saw an increase in new members switching services over this fall, due in part to a confusing digital television conversion by one of our competitors.

Drew Davis of Abbeville, one such new member, says he came home one day to find his televisions "snowing" with static. When he called his provider, they said the service had been converted to a digital signal and it would be a couple of days before technicians could come to the Davis home and restore service.

"The operator asked, 'Didn't you know?' and I said 'If I'd known, don't you think I would have done something?'" he remembers.

West Carolina has been offering digital television for more than 10 years.

"I'd been waiting for the contract with (the other provider) to end," Davis says.

He called the cooperative and found out that not only would he save about \$35 per month on phone, Internet and television service, but he also qualified for a promotion to receive a new PlayStation3.

On top of that, Davis says, he can count on West Carolina's renowned service. "If I need something done, I can call one of those guys and they're on the spot," he says. "I'm saving a good deal of money, too."

Board members and employees at West Carolina Tel would like to welcome Mr. Davis and all of the other new members who made the switch. 📞



## Make your home a **HOTSPOT!**

Did you know you can make the power of the Internet available throughout your home? With a Wi-Fi network, your Internet connection is no longer confined to one computer.

When the broadband service coming into your home is connected to a wireless router, you can create a Wi-Fi network that allows you to get more benefit from the same service — just like a Wi-Fi hotspot you see in libraries, restaurants, malls, hotels and other public places.

Many devices today are Wi-Fi enabled, ready to take advantage of your home's network. This includes smartphones, tablets, laptops, e-readers, monitoring and security systems, gaming systems, televisions, thermostats and even appliances.

Unlock the power of your broadband Internet connection. As your telecommunications company, we can help you determine what you need to create a home Wi-Fi network.



**NOTE:** Are you a business owner who would like to set up a Wi-Fi network for your employees or customers? Contact us for more information.

# Wireless Needs Wires

## Why your cell phone would not work without the wired landline network

When this company was formed decades ago, our mission was to provide reliable telephone service to our region. Telephone service was the single most important method of communicating quickly with family, businesses or emergency services — across town or across the country.

Today there are more cell phones in America than there are people. Users talk trillions of minutes each year and send billions of text messages every month. With all this wireless connectivity, do we really need the wired network at all?

Absolutely. The copper and fiber lines that run overhead and underground through the networks of companies like ours play a critical role in moving signals between the more than 300,000 cell sites located across the country. When you use your cell phone to make a call or access the Internet, your connection spends part of its journey on the same network that makes landline calls and Internet connections possible.

“The wireline network is the backbone of our whole telecommunications system. We need wires.” Those were the words of U.S. Sen. Mark Pryor, D-Ark., who chairs the Subcommittee on Communications, Technology, and the Internet, in an interview last fall on C-Span ([www.c-spanvideo.org/program/Pryor](http://www.c-spanvideo.org/program/Pryor)). AT&T CEO Randall Stephenson expressed a similar sentiment last year in a Forbes magazine article when he said, “The more wireless we become, the more fixed-line dependent we become.”



According to a Foundation for Rural Service whitepaper\*, the components of a wireless phone network are:

- **Cell phone:** The device you use to make the call
- **Cell site:** A radio transceiver that connects the caller to the network
- **Mobile switching center:** The “brains” that control all elements of the wireless network
- **Interexchange switching and transport network:** The equipment that connects the wireless network to other wireless or wireline networks

The transport network is where we come in. Without our network of wires, your wireless phone calls would never be connected. So the next time you reach for your cell phone to make a call or check your email, remember that it's the wireline companies like ours that are helping make that connection possible. 📞

\*The whitepaper “Wireless Needs Wires: The Vital Role of Rural Networks in Completing the Call” was produced by the Foundation for Rural Service and authored by GVNW. To order a complimentary copy of the full paper, visit [www.frs.org](http://www.frs.org).

# The TV Pricing Drama

It's no mystery, and it's certainly not a comedy

Remember when watching TV meant having to choose between ABC, NBC and CBS (and sometimes the public television station, when it was clear enough)? As we walked across the room to switch channels on a TV set encased in a wood-grain cabinet, we could not imagine a world where hundreds of channels existed, catering to viewers interested in sports, movies, home decorating, cooking, science fiction, cartoons, politics and everything in between.

While we have gained tremendous choice in our television viewing options, we have also lost any pricing stability. In fact, the only thing predictable about programming rates is that they will continue to increase for the foreseeable future.

## WHY DO TV PROGRAMMING PRICES KEEP CLIMBING?

A portion of the fee you pay for your TV package each month covers the equipment and personnel costs associated with delivering you the service. But a majority of your bill goes to pay the providers of the programming you love to watch — and that you don't watch. Because of the way these companies (from CNN and FOX News to Disney Channel and ESPN) structure their contracts, we must pay them according to the number of subscribers we have, not the number of people who actually watch each channel.

A 2013 article in the New York Times<sup>1</sup> offered ESPN as a good example. Only 1.36 million of the sports network's 100 million subscribers, the article states, were tuned in during prime time hours April-June of 2013. Nonetheless, all 100 million

paid ESPN's programming fees those months as part of their monthly bill from their service provider.

ESPN is an easy target for a discussion on why TV subscription costs keep climbing. According to a recent Planet Money article on npr.org<sup>2</sup>, ESPN is the most expensive channel, charging service providers \$5.54 per month per subscriber. That same article lists TNT at \$1.33 and Disney Channel at \$1.15. Rounding out the bottom of the list as the least expensive channels were Hallmark Channel at 6 cents and CMT Pure Country at a nickel per subscriber.\*

But ESPN is not the only channel that continues to raise its rates. In fact, some of the biggest increases have come from the broadcasters of "local stations," who traditionally allowed service providers to carry their signal at no charge. Now, each time service providers have to negotiate the retransmission consent agreements with these networks, their monthly price per subscriber goes up.

## IS THERE A SOLUTION ON THE HORIZON?

Currently, providers like us are required to buy a bundle of several channels (and often place them in certain packages) in order to get the two or three most popular channels a programmer offers. Congress has considered legislation that would change such requirements, making it possible for subscribers to 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 anyway. 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.

## WHAT IS OUR ROLE?

As your telecommunications company, we are committed to providing you with the channel selections you want while doing all we can to maintain package prices. This will not be easy, and you will continue to see price increases in the future as the cost we pay for these channels keeps going up.

However, we want you to know that our eyes are on the bigger picture. Whatever happens in the future regarding how you buy and watch your favorite channels, we know that the most important part of that equation is the network for delivering the signal. Whether it's traditional TV, media websites or "over the top" services like Netflix and Hulu, you must have a robust, reliable network to enjoy these services. And we are committed to providing the broadband connectivity to deliver all you demand — in whatever form that might take — for many years to come. 📞

(1) "To Protect Its Empire, ESPN Stays on Offense," by Richard Sandomir, James Andrew Miller and Steve Eder - New York Times, Aug. 26, 2013

(2) "The Most (And Least) Expensive Basic Cable Channels, In 1 Graph," by Quoctrung Bui - Planet Money, NPR.org, Sept. 27, 2013

\*These estimates are based on a study by SNL Kagan of fees paid by the large, nationwide providers, and do not reflect the exact cost we pay for these channels.

# Meet the **NEW GUYS**

Two new members say garage and hardware experience will help them on cooperative board

Billy Bauman and Mike Thomas were elected to the West Carolina Tel board of directors at the annual meeting in August. Each board member serves three-year terms.

## ▼ MIKE THOMAS

Even though Mike Thomas's father Walt spent nearly three decades on the board of directors, the youngest Thomas acknowledges that he's got a lot to learn.

"It's been a learning experience," he says of his first three months in his father's old board seat. "It's been an interesting journey that I've enjoyed so far. It's really just begun."

One thing Thomas did learn from his father through their hardware store in Iva was how to run a business. The store and the cooperative both depend on keeping customers satisfied and providing dependable service.

Both businesses also need to react to customer demands. "If you're sitting still, you're getting passed," Thomas says. "Things are more challenging than it used to be. The landscape has changed."

Thomas and Bauman both say they are happy to have joined the board at the same time, so they can help each other learn the ropes. They say the board is doing an admirable job and hope they can carry on the legacy. "It's a pretty good mix on the board already and I think Billy and I will fit in and make it even better," Thomas says.



## ▲ BILLY BAUMAN

The biggest obstacle Billy Bauman faced in winning the election to the board of directors was making sure voters knew that "William Bauman" on the ballot was actually "Billy" who fixes their cars.

To be sure other members knew who he was, Bauman, who owns Dependable Auto Care in Abbeville, turned to Facebook, where he launched a campaign. "We're a communications company, so you might as well take advantage of online communication," he says.

Bauman, the youngest member of the West Carolina Tel board, says he hopes to bring this new approach and perspective to the group.

In his work at the shop, he's been impressed by what cooperative employees have to say about their employer when they bring in their cars for service.

"From what I could feel from the employees, they are a great company," he says. "West Carolina employees have got to be the most loyal, dependable and hardworking people around."

Bauman says he brings not only his experience as a business owner, but also lessons learned in a more corporately structured setting at Firestone. Already, he can see one thing in common between a garage and the cooperative — customers come first.

"West Carolina treats their customers extremely well," he says. "It's all about the service." 📞



# COPPER CHOPPER

Fiber contractor uses recycling to help cooperative and environment

By Andy Johns

**W**hile working on West Carolina Tel's fiber project as a subcontractor, Larry Coker had an idea. "As we were putting that fiber in the ground, I got to thinking," he says. "They're going to cut all of these copper lines dead. It will be laying in the ground and will never be used again and it has value."

The fiber project replaced the copper-based infrastructure that had connected cooperative members for decades. After the project concluded, the Aiken resident started a business called X2S (Excess to Salvage) and began pulling up and recycling the old copper. So far, they've brought in almost a million pounds of wire and contributed \$300,000 back to the cooperative.

"It's been a really good project," says Mark Crawford, outside plant group leader for West Carolina. "The cooperative gets a percentage of money back; Larry makes a living and pays his employees; and we get that copper out of the ground so it can be used again."

Coker says the project is a rare "win-win" situation. "When you take this cable out of the ground, you're cleaning up the right-of-way," he explains. "The state and the county loved it. If somebody needs to go in there in the future, they'll have more room."

## A GROWING IDEA

Part of the reason the operation works is the relatively high price of copper, which reached \$4 per pound during the fiber build. Some of the bigger cables can weigh six or seven pounds per foot. "I started running the numbers as the price of copper went up," Coker says. "I said Lord have mercy this could be a serious business model."

When they pull up a line, they recycle not only the copper, but also the aluminum ground lines and plastic sheathing. Any of those materials that are recycled means less mining, importing and production of new rubber, copper or aluminum. "It's a green process," Coker says.

So far, the model is proving success-

ful. While they are still finishing work for West Carolina, Coker got a contract to recycle fiber for another cooperative in South Carolina, as well as a national network.

"The people at West Carolina have been our best salesmen," he says.

Crawford believes the project continues West Carolina's legacy of being progressive in the industry. "I think we're one of the first ones to be doing it," he says. "We go to a lot of shows and I haven't heard of anyone else doing something like this."

Coker says the project has not only contributed directly to the cooperative, but it has also been an economic boost to the region. Recycling the fiber has created six full-time jobs for his crew, and he estimates the company has spent \$150,000 in local hotels and restaurants.

"Very few things can really be considered a win for everyone," Crawford says. "So far, I can't find a downside and everybody is gaining something." 📞

X2S foreman David Icenhour pulls up old copper lines for recycling.





Corvettes come from all over the country to pose for the perfect picture.

# A DRIVING PASSION

BY PATRICK SMITH

## MUSEUMS EXPLORE AMERICA'S LOVE AFFAIR WITH THE AUTOMOBILE

Since the prehistoric age when the first wheel was chiseled from stone, mankind has been fascinated with motion. Forward motion. That connection between man and machine is embodied in the automobile, with its roaring engine giving humans the power to conquer distance and time. The power of man and machine, performing as one, gave birth to the wide-open road we love to traverse, along with a multitude of ways to work and play behind the wheel.

Long before NASCAR thrived as we know it today, the roar of the dirt track echoed through the South. The glory days of dirt tracks may have waned, but our interest in cars has not. In fact, the South is America's new automotive corridor, with a number of automakers having located manufacturing plants in the region and thousands of workers earning a living on an automotive assembly line.

Scattered across the region are a number of unique museums that preserve our automotive history and help us to relive the milestones in our fascination with the car (and truck). Visit their websites, learn more, then plan a road trip to remind yourself of why the automobile just might be America's greatest pastime.

### FLOYD GARRETT'S MUSCLE CAR MUSEUM

The sleek lines and powerful facades of the '70s muscle cars are alive and well at Floyd Garrett's Muscle Car Museum in Sevierville, Tenn. Widely considered an expert on the era, Floyd Garrett showcases his \$8 million collection of more than 90 cars, including a 1969 Ford Mustang Boss 429 and a 1970 Chevrolet Chevelle LS6 (Detroit's highest factory horsepower car).

• Address: 320 Winfield Dunn Parkway, Sevierville, TN 37876  
Phone: 865-908-0882 • Website: [www.musclecarmuseum.com](http://www.musclecarmuseum.com)

### INTERNATIONAL TOWING & RECOVERY HALL OF FAME & MUSEUM

The first tow truck was built in Chattanooga in 1916. Started in 1995, the International Towing & Recovery Hall of Fame & Museum is a walk through the history of the wrecker. In addition to the array of displays and exhibits, there's a Hall of Fame presentation and a memorial to those who have fallen during their service as recovery operators.

• Address: 3315 Broad Street, Chattanooga, TN 37408  
Phone: 423-267-3132 • Website: [www.internationaltowingmuseum.org](http://www.internationaltowingmuseum.org)  
While in Chattanooga, visit the Volkswagen plant, home of the Passat sedan. For more information email: [tours@vw.com](mailto:tours@vw.com).

## NATIONAL CORVETTE MUSEUM

The father of the Corvette, Belgian-born Zora Arkus-Duntov would surely be proud to see his creation thriving at the General Motors Corvette assembly plant in Bowling Green, Ky., and the accompanying National Corvette Museum. The museum draws enthusiasts from around the world to admire its collection spanning the 60-year history of the American classic.

- Address: 350 Corvette Drive, Bowling Green, KY 42101 • Phone: 270-781-7973 • Website: [www.corvettemuseum.org](http://www.corvettemuseum.org)  
Public tours of the assembly plant are also available. For more information visit: [www.corvettemuseum.org/plant\\_tours](http://www.corvettemuseum.org/plant_tours)

## LANE MOTOR MUSEUM

Uncommon cars find a home at the Lane Motor Museum in Nashville. Celebrating a decade of operation, the museum showcases vehicles like the 1919 Leyat Helico, a propellor-driven car meticulously developed by aircraft engineer Marcel Leyat. Leyat believed propellor-driven cars would be simpler because they wouldn't require a transmission, rear axle or clutch. Lane also hosts several unique motorcycle and truck designs.

- Address: 702 Murfreesboro Pike, Nashville, TN 37210 • Phone: 615-742-7445 • Website: [www.lanemotormuseum.org](http://www.lanemotormuseum.org)

## RUSTY'S TV & MOVIE CAR MUSEUM

The unmistakable creativity of Hollywood, combined with American style and ingenuity, are presented at Rusty's TV & Movie Car Museum in Jackson, Tenn. Who wouldn't want to solve a riddle with Scooby Doo in the Mystery Machine, or fight crime in the Batmobile? Rusty's is the place to see more than 25 cars used in television shows and movies.

- Address: 323 Hollywood Drive, Jackson, TN 38301 • Phone: 731-267-5881  
Website: [www.rustystvandmoviecars.com](http://www.rustystvandmoviecars.com)

## INTERNATIONAL MOTORSPORTS HALL OF FAME & MUSEUM

Teaming man with machine, the International Motorsports Hall of Fame & Museum satisfies the need for speed. This institution celebrates the achievements of drivers breaking the limits and setting new heights. Spanning three buildings next to the Talladega Superspeedway, the facility is home to the memories of drivers, engineers and designers who shaped the motorsports community.

- Address: 3366 Speedway Boulevard, Talladega, AL 35160 • Phone: 256-362-5002  
Website: [www.motorsportshalloffame.com](http://www.motorsportshalloffame.com)

## WHEELS OF YESTERYEAR CAR MUSEUM

Lifelong collector Paul Cummings showcases more than 50 vintage muscle cars and trucks at the Wheels of Yesteryear Car Museum in Myrtle Beach, S.C. Opened in 2009, the museum shows off the raw power of the 1965 Pontiac GTO and the elegant simplicity of the 1949 Dodge pickup truck. It has quickly become a landing place for tourists and car aficionados alike.

- Address: 413 Hospitality Lane, Myrtle Beach, SC 29579 • Phone: 843-903-4774  
Website: [www.wheelsofyesteryearmb.com](http://www.wheelsofyesteryearmb.com)

## BMW ZENTRUM MUSEUM

BMW admirers flock to see the past and catch a glimpse of the future at the Zentrum Museum in Greer, S.C., the home of BMW's only American production facility. Visitors flow through the history of exquisitely engineered German cars, SUVs and motorcycles while interacting with educational exhibits, galleries and interactive displays.

- Address: 1400 Highway 101 South, Greer, SC 29651 • Phone: 864-989-5300 • Website: [www.bmwusfactory.com/zentrum](http://www.bmwusfactory.com/zentrum)  
Visit [www.bmwusfactory.com](http://www.bmwusfactory.com) to inquire about the BMW Performance Center's "Ultimate Driving Experience" and factory tour.

## SWOPE AUTO MUSEUM

The horsepower of the '70s or the fuel efficiency of today's cars can't match the solid steel and molded aluminum of the time-honored transportation at the Swope Auto Museum in Elizabethtown, Ky. A collection that spans from the early 1900s to the 1960s, Swope is home to classics like the 1914 Model T Ford Touring and the 1925 Pierce Arrow. Swope also sells antiques to passionate collectors.

- Address: 100 North Dixie Avenue, Elizabethtown, KY 42701 • Phone: 270-765-2181 • Website: [www.swopemuseum.com](http://www.swopemuseum.com)



National Corvette Museum



Lane Motor Museum



Rusty's TV & Movie Car Museum



BMW Zentrum Museum



Lane Motor Museum

# First in FIBER

What it means to have South Carolina's only large-scale fiber optic network

By Andy Johns

Ask people around the state to guess which area is home to South Carolina's first and only large-scale fiber optic network and you will most likely get answers like Columbia, Greenville, Charleston, Clemson, Spartanburg or Myrtle Beach.

But ask a West Carolina Tel member and they will probably give you a better answer.

After three years of work, more than 1,300 miles of state-of-the-art fiber optic lines crisscross Abbeville, McCormick and Anderson counties, providing industry-leading connections to cooperative members.

"Our members have access to faster connections than most people in Columbia or Charleston can get," says CEO Jeff Wilson. "But while that Internet speed is important, the benefits of this network go well beyond faster downloads and better browsing."

In fact, no other technology available would give the kind of bandwidth, reliability and flexibility that a fiber optic network does.

## FUTURE IN FIBER

To many people, fiber sounds more like something they get in their breakfast cereal than from their phone company. But the technology of fiber optics has revolutionized the way communications companies work and given users more entertainment and communication options than ever before.

Installer Chad Posey splices fresh fiber on an ONT at a member's house in the Cold Spring area.



Fiber optics uses long strands of glass to send microbursts of light between two points. Not only does the light move much faster than electrical impulses through copper wire, but it can also travel much farther without losing signal strength.

"You are limited on copper DSL, the farther you live from the cabinet," says Jeff Robinson, engineering manager for West Carolina.

Fiber is different. While a signal on a copper line starts to noticeably deteriorate after 5,000 feet, signals could travel 12 miles on one of West Carolina's fiber lines before there were any noticeable changes.

That means fiber provides better service farther out into rural communities like Abbeville and McCormick counties. When the network was completed, the cooperative was able to offer high-speed connections to areas that could not previously get broadband service. "Really, the fiber network is helping us further the coopera-

tive's mission," Wilson says. "We were created to help connect people in our rural community to the outside world. The new network allows us to connect them in ways we never could before."

Wilson credits former CEO David Heron and the board of directors for having the wisdom to move forward on the project. "They looked at the technology and where the industry was headed and said 'the quicker we could do it, the more favorable it would be for us,'" he says. "The cooperative and our members are still reaping the benefits of that decision."

Robinson has been working at West Carolina Tel for 10 years and says being ahead of the game is where the cooperative tries to stay.

"There's a tradition that's been set that we are going to be very progressive in the industry," Robinson says. "That's something that's ingrained in everyone on staff."

Robinson says other telcos are looking at the path West Carolina has blazed. “Companies around the country took notice of what we were doing,” Robinson says. “We still have people coming up and asking ‘How did you do it?’ at every conference we attend.”

The answer to that question, Robinson says, is “quickly.” The main lines in the network were laid in an ambitious two-year time frame. At one time, there were as many as 30 construction companies engaged on the project.

## BROADBAND BENEFITS

Any newer network should have fewer problems than the previous system, but the fiber network is proving to be extremely reliable, which means fewer service calls. Part of the reason for this is the decision to run all of new lines underground. In most cases, that keeps falling trees or car accidents from damaging lines and causing outages.

“We have only a few areas with older overhead lines, compared to most coopera-

tives our size,” says Russell Clark, outside plant manager. “This saves us the expense of rolling a truck and crew out to the scene of an accident or having to fix lines after a storm passes through.”

Additionally, fiber is not susceptible to lightning or other types of interference. “We see very few problems with the fiber itself,” Robinson says.

And unlike DSL, which was always intended as a stopgap technology until fiber networks could be installed, fiber should be around for a while. Many experts have called fiber “future-proof” because the system can handle faster speeds than are currently available. “The amount of data you can send across it is almost endless,” Robinson says. “It’s only limited by the electronics you put on either side of it.”

But the biggest benefit most members will enjoy from the service is bandwidth, which means a faster Internet speeds. While a 1.5 Mbps connection might be fine for someone who just wants to check email, the faster speeds that fiber allows will enable members to stream video,

upload photos quickly, play games and download music in no time.

When you consider the way combining a couple of computers, smartphones and a tablet can bog down a connection, fiber service is a must have. “The number of connected devices in a home today puts a lot of demand on a broadband connection,” Wilson says. “With fiber, you have all of the bandwidth you need.”

Beyond the residential use, that bandwidth — capable of speeds up to 1 Gbps — can be used for industries, schools, hospitals and other operations as well.

Even less obvious uses like security service, HD content on DE Plus TV service and upcoming expansions into home automation wouldn’t be possible without fiber.

“The new services we are able to provide for our customers are very exciting,” Wilson says. “But to me, what’s more exciting is that fiber will allow us to continue serving them and developing new products for years to come.” 📞

▶ **OPTICAL FIBER** is an amazing technology that is changing the way the world stays connected. Fiber-to-the-home, or FTTH, is the infrastructure of the future. Just as cooperatives changed rural America decades ago by delivering electricity and basic telephone service, companies such as West Carolina Tel are now connecting rural America with an advanced network capable of almost limitless bandwidth.

## ➔ CONSIDER THESE FIBER FACTS:

- ▶ Fiber works by sending pulses of light along strands of glass the thickness of a human hair
- ▶ Because it is glass and not metal, fiber is not susceptible to lightning strikes or electrical surges
- ▶ Fiber is ‘future-proof.’ As technology advances, the sending and receiving equipment on the network can be upgraded while the fiber itself continues to carry data

## Picking a favorite?

There's no better way to ward off winter's chill than holing up inside with a bowl of steaming soup. So lately, I've been experimenting and making many different soups. I can't make up my mind which is best, but I know one thing for sure: using my mother's old soup pot makes a difference. Not only does it make a good soup, but somewhere in the steam, I swear I can see Momma smiling.

So what's your favorite soup? For me, it's West African Peanut Soup. There are many different recipes for this soup, but my favorite is this one that I managed to get from a restaurant in Chattanooga that no longer exists.

### West African Peanut Soup

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 medium onions, very finely diced
- 2 large green peppers, finely chopped
- 6 large cloves garlic, minced
- 1 (28-ounce) can chopped tomatoes with juice
- 8 cups vegetable or chicken broth
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper
- 1/4 teaspoon red pepper flakes
- 1/2 cup uncooked rice
- 1 (18-ounce) jar creamy peanut butter
- Chopped roasted peanuts (optional)

Heat olive oil in large stock pot over medium-high heat. Cook onion, bell pepper and garlic until lightly browned. Stir in tomatoes with juice, broth, pepper and red pepper flakes. Simmer, uncovered, for 15 minutes. Add rice to soup; stir. Reduce heat, cover and simmer 25 minutes, or until rice is tender. When rice is cooked, whisk in peanut butter, return to a simmer and serve. Garnish with chopped roasted peanuts. Makes about 8 servings.

## Baked soup: a family staple



Soup cuts across cultures. Its popularity spans the nation in wintertime and becomes comfort food in every corner of America. This is especially true in the small town of Kirbyton, Ky., when Rebecca Spraggs makes her Baked Soup, a recipe handed down in her family for generations.

"I can remember my grandfather making it. Just the thought makes me happy," she says. "He'd cook it in a great big iron kettle. And when we'd come inside from sledding, it would be ready."

This soup, as well as others, is part of Spraggs' repertoire of comfort foods that she brings to the table as a caterer. About a year ago, she and a friend launched Catering by Lorie and Rebecca.

"We both loved to cook, and often did for family and friends," Spraggs says. "So we started catering out of our houses." In

less than a year's time, they've built up a good client base.

Spraggs says clients often ask for soups when they call. "It's just good comfort food. People love it. And it makes a hearty meal, too, when we add sandwiches or salads."

Magic happens when Spraggs stirs the pot of her favorite baked potato soup. As the cheese melts, the flavors of bacon, garlic and onions come together, bringing the pot to a crescendo of comforting flavors. "It's got just the right amount of texture to make your taste buds happy," she says. "It's just wonderful."

Her lasagna soup is one that sends mouth-watering Italian aromas through the home as it simmers in the slow cooker for hours. And her baked soup cooks in a slow oven allowing the vegetables to absorb the flavors of fork-tender meat, creating a delicious gravy that you can sop up with bread, or use a spoon to get every last bite. There's something about cooking it in the oven that gives it such good taste, Spraggs adds.

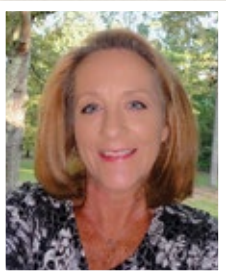
"Soup is just so good. And it's so easy, you can just throw it together and let it cook all day and you have a full meal, getting all the vegetables and meat you need," Spraggs says. "You can use leftovers and probably canned goods from your pantry."

Are you in need of a little comfort? Try one of Spraggs' recipes and see if it doesn't bring some warmth to your soul. ☎



### TIPS FOR MAKING A SUPER BOWL OF SOUP:

- To lighten up a cream-based soup, use fat-free milk or chicken or vegetable broth.
- Simmer soup as long as you can. It will only make the flavor better.
- Don't saute the vegetables first.
- Use the freshest ingredients you can find.
- Do not add salt until the end. Taste as you go.
- If the recipe calls for chicken broth, and if you have the time, make your own. Use the chicken in the soup or save it to make chicken salad for sandwiches to go with the soup.



**Anne P. Braly**  
Food Editor

Email Anne Braly at  
[apbraly@gmail.com](mailto:apbraly@gmail.com).

# Serve up super soups for supper

## Loaded Potato Soup

- 3 pounds potatoes, peeled, cooked and chopped
- 1/4 cup butter
- 1/4 cup flour
- 8 cups of half-and-half
- 16 ounces Velveeta cheese, cubed
- White pepper, to taste
- Garlic powder, to taste
- 2 teaspoons Tabasco sauce
- Bacon, cooked and crumbled
- Green onions, chopped (tops only)
- Cheddar cheese, shredded
- Sour cream, optional

Melt butter in large pot, slowly add flour and half-and-half. Stir continually until flour is incorporated. Add Velveeta; continue stirring on medium heat until melted. Add potatoes, pepper, garlic, Tabasco, bacon and green onions. Once cheese is melted, turn heat down and simmer for 30 minutes. Serve topped with cheese and sour cream, if desired.

## Baked Soup

- 1 (14.5 ounce) can diced tomatoes, undrained
- 1 cup water
- 3 tablespoons quick-cooking tapioca
- 2 teaspoons sugar
- 1-1/2 teaspoons salt



*Baked Soup*



*Loaded Potato Soup*

- 1/2 teaspoon pepper
- 2 pounds beef stew meat, cut into 1-inch cubes
- 4 medium carrots, cut into 1-inch chunks
- 3 medium potatoes, peeled and quartered
- 2 celery ribs, cut into 3/4-inch chunks
- 1 medium onion, cut into chunks
- 1 slice of bread, cubed

In a large bowl, combine the tomatoes, water, tapioca, sugar, salt and pepper. Stir in remaining ingredients. Pour into greased 3-quart baking dish. Cover and bake at 375° for 2 hours or until meat and veggies are tender. Serve with cornbread or corn cakes.

## Crock Pot Lasagna Soup

- 1 (28-ounce) can diced tomatoes
- 1 (6-ounce) can tomato paste
- 3 cups beef broth (or more, see note)
- 1 pound ground beef, browned and drained
- 4-5 cloves of garlic, minced
- 1 tablespoon dried parsley
- 1 tablespoon dried basil
- 1/2 cup onion, chopped
- 1 cup V8 juice
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup water
- 2 cups uncooked shell pasta
- Shredded cheddar cheese, optional

Mix tomatoes and tomato paste in Crock pot. Add broth, beef, garlic, parsley, basil, onion, V8 juice, salt and pepper. Cover and cook on low 7 to 8 hours or on high 4 to 5 hours. Thirty minutes before end of cooking time, add in 1 cup of water and pasta. Stir to combine, cover and continue cooking 30 minutes. Serve topped with cheese, if desired.

*Note: If you need more liquid, add extra broth when you add pasta. 📞*

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