

CONNECTED

COMMUNITY SAFE HAVEN

Neighborhood
program cares for
local kids

INGENIOUS INTERNS

College collaboration
with WCTEL foundation

BOUND FOR THE BEACH

A few family spots for
your springtime escape

Changing times

At exactly noon on Nov. 18, 1883, the United States made a change that would affect all citizens. The change worried people so much that panicked editorials lamented its effects, entire towns stopped all activity to brace for the moment it would occur, and one mayor even threatened to jail anyone who went through with it. But in the end, absolutely nothing happened — and I think we can learn a lot from that.



JEFF WILSON
Chief Executive Officer

You see, back in 1883, technology was changing things in ways not dissimilar from today. The telegraph and the railroad had made an unimaginably vast country seem much smaller. Before trains and telegraphs, the time of day in a certain community was essentially whatever the clock in the town square said it was. In all, there were at least 50 time zones across the U.S., and often, even neighboring towns would be 5 to 15 minutes apart. It's easy to see why a train schedule or information relayed along telegraph lines would need a common, standardized time.

So in 1883, the heads of all of the major railroads decided to make it so. It was declared that at noon on Nov. 18, all clocks would be moved up or wound back to make sure the country

was in sync under four time zones.

The notion of changing the time did not sit well with everyone. Many feared what would happen if people tried to interfere with something as elemental as time. The mayor of Bangor, Maine, even went so far as to threaten to jail anyone who moved the hands on the clock. Many townspeople reportedly gathered around their local telegraph offices to wait for the official notice as to when the “new” noon would be. When the message came in, the clocks were set — and nothing else really happened. The fears were misguided, and the change has created the reliable standard we all use today.

While this example seems almost laughable today, how often do we find ourselves caught up in worrying about change? It's so easy for us to spend hours of our time and countless amounts of energy fearing what might happen because of a change. And then, after the change occurs, there's always the danger of getting pulled into wishing for the past.

Of course, any successful change — whether it's a new job, new house or new color of paint on a wall — needs a degree of planning and preparation to make the transition successful. But fear of change shouldn't stop you from doing something you know is right.

That's been our approach at WCTEL. We have embraced change by not letting fears interfere with what we know we need to do. With the way our industry has changed, we've had to be ready to evolve with it. What was once a company offering one product (local telephone service) became a long-distance phone company. Then we became a dial-up internet service provider. Now we've become a company that provides broadband, security, television, personal emergency alert service and cellular service.

Through all of those changes, there were certainly concerns and a little worrying here and there. But we've always done our homework and made the changes that were needed to make life better for our customers.

President John F. Kennedy once said, “Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future.” I believe that is the right attitude we should all strive for as we look ahead to whatever changes are in store for us in the years to come. 

The West Carolina Tel Connected is a bimonthly newsletter published by West Carolina Telephone, © 2017. It is distributed without charge to all members/owners of the cooperative.



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:



Abbeville City Councilman James Jackson created an after-school program, nurturing young minds toward the future and away from the streets.
See story Page 9.

LOOK WHO'S NEW TO THE WCTEL CREW

Please help us welcome three new employees to the WCTEL family.



Bobby Clarke
Network Engineer



Jesse Stone
IT Support Technician 1



Ryan Walton
Network Services Technician



HELP US FIND OUR SMALL BUSINESS OF THE YEAR!

- Visit BroadbandBuildsBusiness.com
- Complete the online nomination form
- Share the link on Facebook and Twitter
- Encourage others to nominate their favorite small business

Hurry, the deadline for nominations is March 10!



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

Now that the temperature is beginning to rise, does your mind wander to planting in the backyard? If you are thinking of tilling up that garden or doing any digging on your property, then your first step is to call 811 before you dig.

Phone lines or fiber optic cables may be below ground. Severing those could cause an expensive service outage, leaving you and your neighbors without TV, phone and internet.

Call 811 at least 72 hours before you plan to dig. A crew will come out and mark the lines free of charge.



WCTEL Outside Plant Engineer Dave Lewis marks out underground telephone lines so homeowners can safely dig in their yards.

Win great prizes with WCTEL!

TAKE YOUR BEST SHOT AT OUR COLLEGE BASKETBALL CONTEST: PICK-IT MARCH MANIA

Play for free! Find out more at: facebook.com/WestCarolinaTel or at wctel.net. Enter by March 16.

Video on Demand New Release Schedule

For a small rental fee, WCTEL's Video on Demand service gives you access to new releases as many as eight weeks before Netflix or Redbox (designated by an *). 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."

March 7

- Moana*

March 14

- Passengers
- Collateral Beauty
- Fences



March 21

- Assassin's Creed
- Sing

March 28

- Patriots Day
- Silence
- Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them



April 4

- Office Christmas Party
- Lucky's Treasure

Unplug to get connected

DeviceLink keeps a busy family wired to the world

BY JOHN CLAYTON

Ironically, the key to being plugged in for the tech-savvy Davis family is being mostly untethered from wires and cords.

That's where West Carolina Tel's DeviceLink wireless router comes into play for Nakia Davis, his wife, Brooke, and their three daughters.

"The main thing is the convenience of the Wi-Fi, of course," says Nakia Davis, a vice president with The Peoples Bank in Iva. "Back before we had the (DeviceLink) router, some parts of the house didn't have Wi-Fi. What we've got now covers the upstairs, downstairs and the whole house from one end to the other."

The ability to be online in any area of the house is a big advantage for daughters Ryleigh, 16; Emerson, 13; and Brantley, 10, using laptops, cellphones and iPads for school and fun.

"It definitely helps the girls with their schoolwork," Davis says. "They can do their work separately and don't have to sit around waiting for one computer downstairs. They each have their own device and can do their work."

His wife, Brooke, a first-grade teacher at Iva Elementary School, also uses her devices for lesson planning and other facets of her job.

Davis says he often uses the trusty wired desktop computer in his home office while the girls tend to be a little more on the cutting edge.



Nakia Davis checks up on his three daughters as they check out social media updates.

With five iPhones, six televisions, two laptops, three iPads and the desktop in use at any given time, coverage and speed are paramount.

"The girls will be doing homework, and my wife will be doing her classwork, preparing for the next day. We can all be doing that on the couch or be in five different rooms doing it," Davis says. "That's what I mean by convenience."

Davis says DeviceLink has performed admirably even as the family has linked more devices to it. "We have great speed; it never slows down," he says. "I can assure you that if my girls are at home, and my wife, too, they're on it."

While the Davises embrace technology, they also find plenty of time to unplug.

All three girls are athletes, play-

ing softball, basketball and volleyball, and Nakia Davis is their coach in Iva's recreation association leagues. An Iva native, he also played a couple of years of football at Gardner-Webb University before finishing college at nearby Anderson University.

"The girls play sports year-round, so it's definitely a hectic life," says the lifelong WCTEL customer.

The girls do take breaks from their phones at night. "We actually make the kids have phones down at certain times of the night," he says. "If they still want to be on them, they have to be downstairs with us. It limits what they can do with apps and certain things. That puts them in our lives more, I guess, because they're downstairs with us watching TV, eating supper and that sort of thing." 📺

Mind and belly

Unlock a child's potential

BY MATT LEDGER

Hardship can break a person, but it did not break James Jackson. The Abbeville native and force behind the Community Outreach Center Afternoon School Program overcame long odds while caring for others.

He was raised on a sharecropper's farm by Alberta, a single mother of six. "I started working in textile mills at age 15," Jackson says. "I saved my money and bought 1 acre of land for my mother."

By age 17, Jackson paid off the property loan and then took out another loan to buy a house and have it moved onto the property for her. Before graduating high school in 1972, Jackson paid off the home loan.



Kendra Jackson-Linton, James Jackson's daughter, and Mike Marshall teach children computer fundamentals at the Community Outreach Center.

"As I moved along in life, I've always wanted to give back to help those who are less fortunate," says Jackson, who believes God guided him down a path of service. "I know how it feels to be poor and not have anything."

PASSIONATE PLAN

After high school, Jackson married his sweetheart, Martha, and they had a daughter, Kendra, and a son, James Jr. And while Jackson's career spanned many professional pursuits, he is particularly proud of one project.

In 2007, Jackson bought a building at 504 Haigler St. in Abbeville with the idea of starting a community center. He and James Jr. began renovating the facility. However, before the center was completed, James Jr. died in an automobile accident.

"I wanted to give up," says Jackson, a member of the Abbeville City Council. A few young men, however, approached him during a Bible class. "They told me that God had taken my son so that I could work with all of them," Jackson says. "They said, 'All of us are your sons now.'"

With the help of his wife and daughter, Jackson opened the Community Outreach Center Afternoon School Program later that year.

Nine staffers work with dozens of children daily, providing a safe environment for them to unwind after school. After a snack, kids work on their homework — or play educational games on the computer — and then have a full meal before heading home. The routine changes on weekends, when the kids engage in activities like talent shows and choir performances.

"We're trying to keep them off the streets," Jackson says. "To do that, we need a combination of counseling and entertainment to keep them interested and away from drugs and crime." 

Summer Outreach Program

Another successful program that was launched out of the Community Outreach Center is the Tracy Jackson Program. Mary Lou Edens taught for 33 years before retiring, but she hoped to stay involved in the community.

In 1999, Edens signed on to a new Department of Social Services program she named for a former Abbeville High School student, Tracy Jackson, who died before finishing college.

The Tracy Jackson Program of GIFT — General Instruction for Tomorrow — is a mission of the South Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church. During the summer, the Tracy Jackson Program partners with the Community Outreach Center at two locations, providing disadvantaged children fun activities and two meals each weekday.

Contact Mary Lou Edens at 864-366-8517 to find out more about this program or to make a donation.

INVESTING IN THE FUTURE

Supporting economic development, education and fine arts

BY MATT LEDGER

Abbeville native Lindsay Costner took a few landscaping courses as a junior at Clemson University, beginning in the landscape architecture program before changing to agribusiness. She has put those skills to work for her hometown.

Last summer, she interned with the Freshwater Coast Community Foundation, which is funded in part by WCTEL. She made site sketches of a multipurpose green space with a pavilion on the land behind the Abbeville Opera House and Belmont Inn, which is a combination of a county property with a city-owned parcel.

If elected officials approve, it would give a new home to artisans and vendors of the popular Abbeville Farmers' Market. "It could even be used as an outdoor amphitheater for annual events and music performances," says FCCF director Wilder Ferreira.

Ferreira initiated a summer internship program in which Costner and a few other local

college students worked on some community-based concepts. Costner also created logos for projects in Abbeville, Due West and Calhoun Falls.

Costner and other interns are one part of a program reinvesting in the community, a project to make the best possible use of unclaimed capital credits by supporting economic and cultural development.

FOUNDATION OF THE COMMUNITY

In 2012, WCTEL encouraged other telephone cooperatives to convince state legislators to pass a new law for a community-based initiative. Officials wanted unclaimed capital credits to remain local, as opposed to the then current system of sending that money to the state. The move didn't change how WCTEL distributes annual capital credit refunds to its members, but it provided a way to invest the unclaimed funds back into the community.

"When that happened, it made many local opportunities avail-



Inspired by outdoor farmers markets, Lindsay Costner created computer renderings for projects in Abbeville and McCormick.

able," former WCTEL Board Chairman Lee Logan says. "After much discussion, we decided the best thing we could do with those funds is to support economic development, education and fine arts."

In 2014, WCTEL made a \$300,000 contribution to launch the Freshwater Coast Community Foundation. "We know it will have a multiplier effect for those funds," Logan says. "In a modern world, where so much of commerce focuses on urban areas, this pilot project is seeking better ways to help our rural areas thrive."

An independent board oversees FCCF, a nonprofit benefiting Abbeville, southern Anderson and McCormick counties. "Our primary project thus far has been supporting a joint effort with Clemson University to establish the Freshwater Coast Center for Rural Development," Logan says.

FRESH IDEAS

That FCCF organization brought Ferreira on as director.

"He's doing an excellent job of encouraging entrepreneurship and working with small businesses," Logan says. "The internship program has been phenomenal, and Wilder has brought in some very talented college students."

He sought an energetic team with a diverse skill set. "Investing in our own kids allows them an opportunity to work on economic development projects in their communities," Ferreira says.

Destin Nichols, an accounting major at Erskine College, wrote a computer program for managing inventory of small businesses. "When I applied for this internship, I had no idea it would teach me so much about business, communications and how to make dreams a reality," Nichols says.

Intern Angela Gowan developed a website for the Starr-Iva Alliance. "They've come together to help promote the two towns, which will help with community development," Ferreira says. "Now they see the



The Freshwater Coast Community Foundation is led by director Wilder Ferreira, an agribusiness professor from Clemson.



An expanded space for the Abbeville Farmers' Market would be one of several weekend events to draw more tourists.



Lindsay Costner's design for a multiuse green space could bring more events and fresh produce to the Abbeville square.

value of working together.”

Grants are also being sought for a community center in Due West and restoration of the public pool. “If we get the funding and the building donated to us, we will have a center with classrooms and activities so kids and families can come and enjoy themselves,” Ferreira says.

REVITALIZING MCCORMICK

In June 2016, the McCormick County Farmers’ Market reopened at the Dorn Mill Complex through a collaboration of local officials. “This beautiful historic building was once a cotton gin,” Ferreira says. “It’s in the perfect place, and we’ll have at least 20 vendors this year.”

The market averaged over

300 people each Tuesday from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m., with many shoppers from the Savannah Lakes Village area. It’s now the most attended community event in McCormick County.

“The diversity of South Carolina produce is what attracted more customers to shop at the market,” Ferreira says. “McCormick County residents enjoyed the ability to buy farm-to-table freshness.”

STRIDES OF PROGRESS

The FCCF is partnering with area chamber of commerce officials to have small business workshops throughout the year. During 2016, 11 farming workshops taught everything from drip irrigation for growing vegetables to backyard poultry

classes. “We are trying to help farmers and entice them to keep farming in our area,” Ferreira says. “If I want the farmers market to grow, then I need even more farmers to grow food.”

Students from five local high schools are competing in an FCCF business plan competition, engaging a younger generation to build a bright future for themselves and their communities. Last year, Calhoun Falls student, Dakota Brock, won locally with a plan for training canines. The project placed second at the state competition.

Other local groups have contributed toward the FCCF fund, and WCTEL has a long-term commitment to support this cause. In 2017, an exploratory

committee will determine local interest in the first capital project, possibly one of Costner’s designs.

“This foundation has tremendous potential to significantly impact the quality of life in Abbeville, McCormick and southern Anderson County areas,” Logan says. “Bringing in more resources from local groups will help make these community dreams a reality.”

Interns, such as Costner, are one example of how many people can contribute. “Designing such a project, for me, is highly rewarding,” Costner says. “I am so humbled to have the opportunity to develop projects that can help the community that I have known all my life.” ☺



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