

West Carolina Tel

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2018

CONNECTED

UNDER A ROCK

Digging into a
lifelong passion for
precious stones

RISE AND SHINE

The magic of baking
biscuits from scratch

ROMANTIC RENDEZVOUS

A vacation destination for
Valentine's Day



RURAL CONNECTIONS

BY SHIRLEY BLOOMFIELD, CEO
NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association

Promoting rural entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurs, those brave individuals willing to take a chance on an idea to start a business, are an important part of any thriving economy. We've seen rural entrepreneurship in particular become a key to sparking development in downtowns and invigorating communities.

Indeed, attitudes are changing about where someone can be an entrepreneur. When people think of startups, they often envision cities like New York, Austin or San Francisco. Big cities are no longer the only locations where startups can thrive thanks to low costs, an eager workforce and the availability of broadband.

Networks like the one your local telco has built provide a critical link for new and existing businesses. Through the power of broadband, any rural area is a possible hotbed for entrepreneurial activity.

New rural businesses can connect with suppliers, customers and peers in ways that were impossible just a few years ago. Robust fiber optic networks allow for companies to hire remote workers, share big files with designers or engineers, and hold virtual meetings through videoconferences.

Being an entrepreneur is not for everyone. It takes patience, drive and energy, a positive attitude, and a high tolerance for risk. But I'm glad that today when those type of people look at rural America, they now see opportunities thanks to hardworking NTCA members like your local telco. ☎



Stream on!

More than half of U.S. homes use streaming for never-ending entertainment

Regardless of location, high-speed internet brings endless entertainment options. More so than ever before, viewers have options for high-quality programming through streaming devices and services.

Streaming is an entertaining addition to traditional television services. Nearly 60 percent of U.S. TV homes have at least one internet-enabled device capable of streaming to a TV set, according to a recent survey by The Nielsen Company.

HOW POPULAR ARE STREAMING DEVICES?

Since June 2016, streaming devices have grown by 12 percent.

WHAT IS A STREAMING DEVICE/STREAMING SERVICE?

A streaming device is a gadget that uses the internet and allows viewers to connect to content online. A streaming service is a downloadable app that lets users watch content online.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

While traditional TV services are still crucial, at the touch of a button, streaming offers limitless entertainment. Streaming allows viewers to watch whatever content they choose, when and how they want.

WHAT'S SO GREAT ABOUT IT?

Variety: Whether you're looking for reruns of "The Dick Van Dyke Show" or original streaming-only content like Netflix's "Stranger Things" and Amazon Prime's "All or Nothing," it's all online.

Simplicity: Streaming devices and streaming services are simple to set up and require little to no technical knowledge.

Affordability: Streaming devices like AppleTVs are typically less than \$180, while some Roku models are about \$40. Streaming services like Netflix and Hulu are about \$10 per month or more. ☎

STREAMING DEVICE EXAMPLES:

Apple TV, Google Chromecast, Amazon Fire TV, Roku, a video game console or smart TV.

STREAMING SERVICE EXAMPLES:

Netflix, Hulu, Amazon Prime, YouTube and HBO Now.

69.5 MILLION U.S. TV homes have at least one internet-enabled streaming device.

39 MILLION U.S. TV homes have an internet-enabled game console.

6.5 MILLION U.S. homes have a streaming device, game console and smart TV.

Source: The Nielsen Company

More Americans are getting their news to go




BY DREW WOOLLEY

In today's world, everyone is connected all the time. That's changed the way we communicate, shop and even get our news. A recent report from the Pew Research Center took a closer look at how people's news habits are changing and the surprising groups driving the growth of mobile news.

Online news is closing the gap with TV. Today, 43 percent of Americans get their news online, just 7 percent fewer than those who say they get it on TV. That's less than half of the 19-point gap that existed in 2016, meaning the internet could soon become most people's primary news source.

News on mobile is still growing. In 2017, 45 percent of adults in the U.S. regularly got news from a mobile device, a 9 percent increase from 2016 and more than double the percentage in 2013. And while many of those people also turn to a desktop or a laptop computer for news, nearly two-thirds prefer a mobile device.

Mobile news growth is being driven by older adults. About 85 percent of adults get news from a mobile device, an increase of 13 percent from 2016. That increase is mostly made up of those 65 and older whose mobile news consumption jumped 24 points to 67 percent in 2017. For those aged 50 to 65, 79 percent of people get news from a mobile device, about twice as many as in 2013.

Two-thirds of the country gets news from social media. A small increase in the overall consumption of news on social media from 2016 to 2017 was spurred by a significant uptick among people 50 and older. Now, more than half of Americans older than 50 get news on social media. 

WATCH OUT FOR FAKE NEWS

One of the biggest drawbacks of online news is that it can be difficult to tell which sources are reliable and which are not. Since the FBI announced Russia's efforts to spread false stories during the 2016 election, it's more important than ever to protect yourself against unreliable information.

» Start with the facts.

A recent BuzzFeed analysis of CNN, ABC News and Politico found the vast majority of the news outlets' reporting to be truthful. Subscribing to a reputable newspaper or magazine can be a good first step to inoculating yourself against fake news.

» Step outside your bubble.

People tend to consume media inside echo chambers that confirm their beliefs. Whether it's a group of friends or your social media feed, take some time to break out of your normal news habits and challenge your views.

» Think like a fact-checker.

The best way to get to the bottom of any subject is to dig deep. Read as many sources as you can and check sites like Snopes or Politifact that specialize in verifying popular news stories.

Cord cutting TV service? We have you covered

Every year networks increase the fees they charge providers like WCTEL. And while our TV package is still a great value, I'm glad WCTEL's broadband gives customers options.



JEFF WILSON

Chief Executive Officer

If you are one of our many subscribers to Digital Entertainment +, WCTEL has to pay a fee for nearly every channel in your TV package (except the shopping channels). While sports and news channels are by far the most expensive, even the less popular channels charge from a few nickels to a few dollars per month per subscriber to carry their programming. Some of the more expensive channels can be up to \$8 each month per subscriber. If you multiply those fees by every channel in your package, you can see what we're up against. Almost all of your monthly television bill goes directly to those networks. And those fees are increasing. This year, for instance, many local stations are doubling the fees they charge WCTEL. The days of commercial breaks covering the networks' financial demands are long over.

Thankfully, for most networks, the value of their programming has kept up with the cost of their channels. In fact, many media critics say we are in the midst of the "Second Golden Age of Television" and that some of the programming on TV today is the finest ever produced. Go back and watch the rebroadcast of a classic Clemson or South Carolina game to see how far the clarity, graphics and overall quality has improved in 10 years. Every minute of every day, your WCTEL TV package provides excellent programming. Considering the cost of other entertainment expenses like movie tickets and live sporting events, you would be hard-pressed to find better entertainment value for your money than what WCTEL's TV service provides.

However, thanks to the world-class network that WCTEL has built through our region, members have other entertainment options. As you can see from the article on Page 2, streaming TV devices are now in more than half of U.S. households. A high-speed broadband connection from WCTEL allows you to connect a streaming device — such as a smart TV, game system, Roku, Amazon Fire Stick or Apple TV — to the internet. Then, using a service such as Netflix, Hulu, Prime Video or HBO Now, you can stream thousands of hours of news, sports, shows and movies to your TV screen. Many of the so-called "cord-cutters" — people who have cut the cord from cable, satellite or other traditional TV service — use HD antennas to pick up local channels for free over the air if they are close enough to Augusta or Greenville to receive the stations.

WCTEL provides a range of valuable, high-quality TV packages. But I also want for each of our members to find the right mix of entertainment options that fits them best.

To me, the wide array of entertainment options available is just another example of how WCTEL's broadband network improves the quality of life here on the Freshwater Coast. We appreciate the opportunity to be your trusted provider for broadband, video and phone service today — and well into the future. ☎

West Carolina Tel

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

West Carolina Telephone
233 Highway 28 Bypass
Abbeville, SC 29620
Telephone: 864-446-2111
www.WCTEL.com

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WORDSOUTH
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On the Cover:



Amos Cunningham has enjoyed studying rocks since he was a kid. That childhood pastime fueled a passion for the land he calls home. See story Page 12.

WCTEL SCHOLARSHIP and FRS YOUTH TOUR

SCHOLARSHIP: Each year, WCTEL awards a scholarship to a motivated high school senior who is accomplishing his or her educational goals, and who is seen as a positive influence in the community. See your guidance counselor or call the WCTEL office for more details. **Applications must be received by Feb. 14. For student eligibility rules and to download an application, visit wctel.com.**

YOUTH TOUR: High school juniors can apply for the 2017 Foundation for Rural Service Youth Tour. FRS brings together high school students from across rural America to visit Washington, D.C. The trip offers students a chance to learn about rural telecommunications along with the legislative and governmental process in our nation's capital. Speak with your guidance counselor or call the WCTEL office for more details. **Applications must be received by March 7. See wctel.com for instructions and eligibility rules and to download an application.**

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 Feb. 28!

**Start the year
off with fewer
unwanted calls**

The **National Do-Not-Call Registry** gives you a choice about whether or not to receive telemarketing calls at home. The registry applies to all telemarketers with the exception of businesses with whom you have an existing relationship and certain nonprofit and political organizations. Commercial telemarketers are not allowed to call you if your number is listed on the registry.

Consumers may register their residential telephone number, including wireless numbers, on the National Do-Not-Call Registry at no cost, either by telephone or via the internet. To register by phone, call 1-888-382-1222. For TTY, call 1-866-290-4236. You must call from the telephone number you wish to register. To obtain additional information or register online, please go to www.donotcall.gov.

Inclusion of your telephone number on the National Do-Not-Call registry is effective 31 days following registration. You may remove your number from the list at any time. WCTEL is happy to provide you with this information, as required by the Federal Communications Commission.

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."



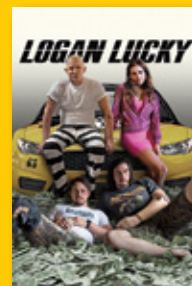
Cars 3

Will high-tech race cars leave Lightning McQueen in their dust, or does the seven-time Piston Cup champ have something left in his tank?



Despicable Me 3

Learn if the Minions coerce Gru back to his villainous ways or if reuniting with his twin brother means his treacherous ways are behind him for good.



Logan Lucky

Two misfit brothers concoct a ridiculous plan to overcome their circumstances. Jimmy and Clyde Logan team up to rob Charlotte Motor Speedway in this hilarious comedy.

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

- Dunkirk
- Flatliners (2017)
- Stronger
- Leap!
- The LEGO Ninjago Movie
- Kingsman: The Golden Circle



A getaway to **ROMANCE**

The Main Inn at Beaumont Inn was built in 1845 and offers the perfect ambiance for a night of romance.

Photo courtesy of Beaumont Inn.

Romance can happen wherever you are. But add a wonderful dinner and beautiful surroundings, and you've upped the ante. Here are some suggestions for hotels, inns, lodges and resorts that know what it takes to create a memorable getaway, whether it's a Valentine's retreat or simply some much-needed time away to recharge.

Beaumont Inn

638 Beaumont Inn Drive, Harrodsburg, Kentucky

Named one of the South's most charming inns, Beaumont, in the heart of horse country, has drawn couples from around the region for 99 years. Harrodsburg, the oldest town in Kentucky, offers history and charm. The inn follows suit, adding all the modern amenities you would expect, including comfortable linens, free Wi-Fi and cable TV in the 31 guest rooms and the suites located in Beaumont's three buildings — Goddard Hall, circa 1935; Greystone House, circa 1931; and the Main Inn, circa 1845.

Breakfast is included in your stay and is served every morning.

- ▶ **Where to eat:** The inn features two dining options. The Main Dining Room received the prestigious America's Classic Award from the James Beard Foundation in 2015 and serves classic dishes, including corn pudding, country ham and fried chicken. The Owls Nest Lounge serves wines and cocktails, along with appetizers and entrees. In town, step back in time for a burger or pot roast at Kentucky Fudge Company, 25 S. Main St. Or if you're looking for a taste of Mexico, reasonable prices and killer enchiladas, try La Fonda, 121 S. Main St.
- ▶ **Rates and reservations:** \$120-\$196, weeknights; \$133-\$208, weekends. Contact 859-734-3381 or beaumontinn.com



Overlook Pavilion at Gorham's Bluff is a beautiful place to say "I do" or renew your vows with the one you love.

♥ Gorham's Bluff

100 Gorham Drive, Pisgah, Alabama

Choose a room with a fireplace, antique furnishings and other beautiful trappings or a private cottage that offers all the amenities of home without all the distractions. Gather family on the bluff and say your vows for the first time, or renew your vows in the wedding pavilion overlooking the Tennessee River from atop Sand Mountain. Gorham's Bluff is the go-to place in the mountains of North Alabama to experience luxury, privacy and romance.

- **Where to eat:** Most meals are served in The Lodge at Gorham's Bluff. Breakfast is made to order, box lunches can be delivered to your room, and three- or four-course dinners by candlelight are offered each evening.
- **Rates and reservations:** 256-451-8439 or gorhamsbluff.com/the-lodge. Suites begin at \$155 per night.

♥ Dancing Bear Lodge

7140 E. Lamar Alexander Parkway, Townsend, Tennessee

You'd be hard-pressed to find a more scenic, romantic getaway in Tennessee than Dancing Bear near the Great Smoky

Mountains. Cabins and cottages are equipped with wood-burning fireplaces and kitchens stocked with fruits and other treats. Many have hot tubs, too. And all offer great porches with rocking chairs where you can relax and view the wooded hillside and other surroundings. If weather permits, ask the front desk to deliver a gourmet picnic basket, and then find a quiet spot in the Smokies to relax with that special someone.

- **Where to eat:** You don't have to leave the property to find one of the best restaurants in the area, Dancing Bear Appalachian Bistro. Executive chef Shelley Cooper brings gourmet dining to the mountains, with farm-to-table specialties such as cast-iron beef tenderloin with loaded potato casserole, seasonal vegetables, wild mushrooms and house-made steak sauce. Reservations are strongly suggested during popular times, such as Valentine's Day. The resort's Apple Valley Cafe offers casual dining, breakfast through dinner. In nearby Maryville, restaurants run the gamut from fast food to white tablecloth.
- **Rates and reservations:** \$160-\$300 per night. Contact 800-369-0111 or www.dancingbearlodge.com.

♥ Red Horse Inn

45 Winstons Chase Court, Landrum, South Carolina

Plan your escape to Red Horse Inn in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains. The inn was chosen as one of America's



The Red Horse Inn was named one of America's most romantic inns by Travel and Leisure.

most romantic inns by Travel and Leisure. Choose a guest room in the inn or a private cottage, several of which are pet-friendly and all of which offer views of the surrounding pasture or mountains. All accommodations have whirlpool tubs or hot tubs.

- **Where to eat:** Breakfast is included in your stay at Red Horse. In nearby Saluda, North Carolina, The Purple Onion, 16 E. Main St., offers live bluegrass on Thursdays and Saturdays and Mediterranean-inspired pizzas, seafood and pastas nightly.
- **Rates and reservations:** \$175-\$325 per night, depending on accommodations. Contact 864-909-1575 or www.theredhorseinn.com.

♥ Stag Leap Country Cabins

2219 FM 2782, Nacogdoches, Texas

Nestled deep into the woods of East Texas, Stag Leap is the ideal secluded place for a romantic getaway. There are seven cabins, ranging in size from one bedroom to three. All cabins have full kitchens and charcoal grills, so you can bring your own food or dine in Nacogdoches just 2 miles away. Cabins also have wireless internet and satellite television. For some fresh air, step outside and enjoy the 200 acres of woodlands and waterways right outside your door. Most cabins have whirlpool tubs, inside or out, and gas or electric log fireplaces for romantic ambiance. Also, a private, centrally located hot tub for six, or just the two of you, may be reserved.

- **Where to eat:** Creekside Cafe at Pine Creek Lodge, 341 Pine Creek Road, is next door to Stag Leap and offers gourmet dining in a casual atmosphere. Try the rabbit Dijonnaise or grilled rib-eye. And it's said that the catfish at Clear Springs Restaurant, 211 Old Tyler Road, is the best on the planet.
- **Rates and reservations:** \$140-\$195 per night (cash discounts offered). Contact www.stagleap.com or 936-560-0766. 📞

All Wi-Fi routers are not the same

Make sure you get the performance you need

Streaming movies, listening to online music services, sharing files between work and home, and completing school assignments are only a few of the ways high-speed broadband can make life better.

A weak or out-of-date Wi-Fi router can turn fun and productivity into frustration and irritation.

A Wi-Fi router makes it possible to wirelessly connect to the internet with computers, smartphones, televisions, game consoles and more. But it's important to realize all routers are not the same — far from it.

“Buying the wrong router can mean you do not have access to the full speeds available through a service such as WCTEL’s internet bundles,” says Amanda Clark, senior account services representative at WCTEL. “In order to achieve faster speeds, your device needs to support 5 GHz radios.”

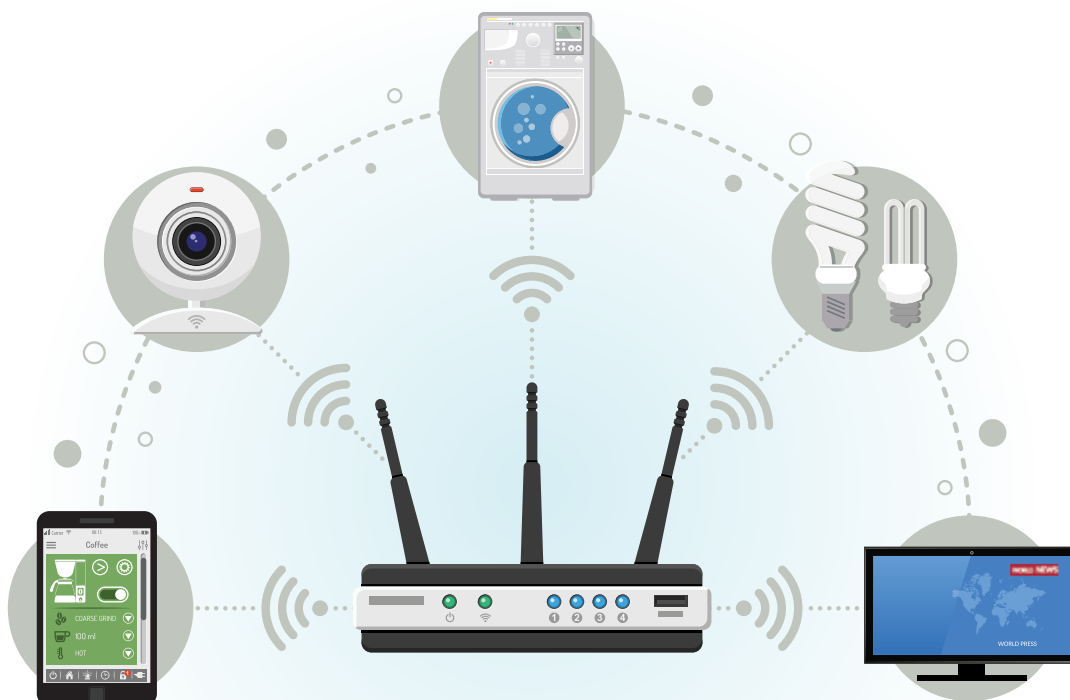
WCTEL’s Wi-Fi service is designed to keep a home’s internet moving fast and offers the greatest Wi-Fi range. Compared to low-

cost routers, such as those typically found in big-box stores, the DeviceLink routers used by WCTEL are built for performance.

DeviceLink routers are capable of handling extremely high-speed internet. For comparison, the common Netgear N300 Wi-Fi router can handle speeds no faster than 300 Mbps.

There are other key differences between a DeviceLink router and lower-performing units.

DeviceLink routers rely on the latest technology, such as the ability to broadcast at 2.4 GHz, 5 GHz and 802.11ac speeds. That means the DeviceLink routers with 5 GHz radios can support the fastest wireless speeds available today with less interference than most older routers. For example, many discount routers offer only 2.4 GHz, limiting their usefulness. ☎



“

HI, I'M AMANDA CLARK!

In this column, in each issue, you'll learn about technology and read simple tips to get the most out of your electronics. For more tips or help with your devices, be sure to read this column in future publications. I'm always happy to help!

”

Some factors that may affect wireless internet speeds include:

- Placing your wireless router centrally in your home — doing so will help to maximize coverage and speed throughout the house.
- Remembering to check your device manual for maximum speed and Wi-Fi technology — each wireless device has different speed capabilities.
- Distance between your router and your device.
- Other wireless devices — these may cause interference.
- Number of walls or obstacles between the router and your device.



From gentle face soaps to mason jar candles, Breezy Quarters has a wide-ranging line of products for luxurious personal hygiene and soothing home decor.



Paige Bowser mixes the ingredients for one of her signature soaps in her shop on Trinity Street.

Healthy and hand-crafted

Breezy Quarters offers the best in bath and body products

BY JEN CALHOUN

Alison Stone likes to shop smart and buy local. So, when Breezy Quarters opened in downtown Abbeville last year, she was thrilled.

For Stone, a bookkeeper at WCTEL, the handcrafted bath and body products at Breezy Quarters are the perfect gifts for family, friends and herself.

"I buy myself bath bombs, and I shop for birthday and Christmas gifts for everyone I know," Stone says. "All the products are naturally made, and if you have any issues with your skin or your face, they know exactly which items will help."

NATURAL AND SAFE

She also likes the owner, Paige Bowser, who started making and selling skin care products about five years ago. "It started with an obsession with what was in my food," Bowser says. "I've also always loved fragrances. Anytime I felt bad, I wanted to light a candle or use some bubble bath. But when I started reading all the labels and noticing what was in them, I was horrified."

Finding natural and organic skin care products was also difficult, and she wasn't sure what to trust. So, she started educating herself. Then, she made her own and sold them at the Abbeville Farmers Market.

Her handcrafted products include soaps, candles, lip balms, lotions and cleansers. Her products range in price from about \$4 to \$24. Gift-wrapping is available.

"We use great ingredients, including essential oils," Bowser says. "We try to have fun fragrances. I like to tie everything in with some type of nostalgia or sense memory for people. I want it to be a comforting experience when people use our products."

One of her fragrances is called "Front Porch Sippin'," she says. It's a lemon verbena scent that reminds people of hanging out on a front porch, sipping lemonade with friends and family.

GROWING THE RIGHT WAY

Bowser also sells her products online at breezyquarters.com, and at the combined shop and workroom at 117 Trinity St. in Abbeville. Her products are also offered at various stores in the region.

"I can help anyone find products that are right for their skin," she says. "We have some very gentle products that are perfect for people who want them or need them. I have several unscented products and specialized products, too."

The whole operation is built on principles she embraces. "I'm passionate about small businesses," says Bowser, who also serves as the vice president of the Downtown Abbeville Merchants Association. "Small business is the heartbeat of a community. If people come into town, and the only place they can shop is a big-box store or a gas station, then the community loses a little bit of its soul." 🗨️

Looking for natural skin care products and candles?

Breezy Quarters has you covered. Shop online at breezyquarters.com, or go to the shop at 117 Trinity St. in Abbeville. Products can also be found at Home Sweet Home in Elberton, Georgia, and Lowes Foods in Lexington, among other locations.



Spend smart in 2018

Your guide to the latest apps for coupon clipping

BY LUIS CARRASCO

If one of your New Year's resolutions is to finally start clipping coupons, or to just be smarter with your shopping budget, don't even bother taking out the scissors — take out your smartphone instead. Whether you like flipping through digital sales circulars or getting cash back on your purchases, the path to savings has never been smoother.

Here's a quick look at some of the services and apps available. All apps are compatible with iOS and Android devices.

COUPONS

Flipp allows you to browse through weekly sales ads from your favorite retailers — including Home Depot, Toys R Us and Walmart — or just search to see if an item you want is on sale. You can also make a shopping list and the app will point you to any existing deals. It also notifies you about expiring coupons and nearby discounts.

If you still enjoy searching for bargains in the newspaper, the **SnipSnap** coupon app lets your phone's camera do the clipping.

You can snap a picture of a printed offer and the app will capture the pertinent information so that you can use it at your favorite retailer. It also allows you to share coupons with your friends or find coupons other users have digitized.

Many retailers — including Target, Hobby Lobby, Michaels and Walgreens — also have their own apps that offer coupons.

'TEXTING CLUBS'

Hundreds of companies participate, so odds are that your favorite retailer, convenience store or chain restaurant is ready to send you coupons or deal alerts through a text. Simply check their website or ask a representative the next time you visit. Standard texting rates apply, though, so be careful of signing up for too many if you don't have unlimited texting.

Here are two to get you started: text SUB to 782929 for deals at Subway; text JOIN to 527365 for discounts at JC Penney. Any service you sign up for may be canceled anytime by texting the word STOP.

MONEY BACK

Both **Ibotta** and **Ebates** give you cash back for shopping, but they each take a different approach. When you shop through the Ebates website or app, the company receives a commission from the retailer and you get a part of that money, which you can then receive through a check or PayPal.

With Ibotta, you can either find cash-back rebates before you shop or check the app after you come back from the store. Either way, you watch a brief commercial or answer a survey and then take a photo of your receipt. The app recognizes the products on sale and deposits the money into your account, which you can then receive through PayPal, Venmo or a gift card.

Whichever app or service you choose, enjoy being a savvy shopper in 2018! 📱

Learning the language of tech

Enjoy a translator for today's essential tools

When people ask me what I do for a living, one of my favorite responses is that I am a translator. I translate between the technicians who build our networks, fix our computers, and sell us the latest in technology and those people who do not consider themselves “techie.” I think learning how to use technology is very much like learning a new language, so having a translator is always helpful.

In 2018, my plan is for this column to be your translator, helping you gain a better understanding of everyday technology. I will cover some basic things you need to know,

and I will introduce you to some of my favorite gadgets that you might find helpful.

In the meantime, here are some tips to get you started on using technology in your golden years.

- ▶ Remember, it is not your fault that you struggle to understand the language of technology. The lingo is not your native language, and it takes time to learn it. However, it is up to you to take the opportunity to learn whenever you can.
- ▶ Ask questions. You may think your question is trivial, but you will never learn if you don't ask. We all know that a child who speaks French

because they are raised in France is not smarter than someone who cannot speak French. We all have knowledge, and kids today have a better understanding of technology because it is part of their everyday lives.

- ▶ Start by picking technology that allows you to do what you love. If you enjoy playing cards or games, choose a tablet that allows you to play games. If you love creating crafts, sign up for sites such as Pinterest to look up ideas for woodworking, quilting or scrapbooking.

I have so much respect for those of you in your golden years. You have so many skills

and so much knowledge that many of us will never know or understand. However, I want you to have the same opportunities to learn how to go online safely and enjoy using technology. There are things out there that can help keep you safe and make your life a little easier. I am looking forward to introducing you to some of these things and teaching you about the language of technology. 🗨️



CARISSA SWENSON
IS A TRAINING
AND EDUCATION
CONSULTANT
FOR CONSORTIA
CONSULTING.



Do you want to learn the basics on how to use your smartphone or computer? Are you interested in signing up for a Facebook or Pinterest account? **Check out www.gcflearnfree.com for free tutorials on how to do all this and more.**



HIDDEN GEMS

Cunningham Farm Mineral Site boasts a rich heritage

BY JEN CALHOUN

Amos Cunningham remembers stories of his grandfather plowing the fields of his farm and tossing all the colorful stones that got in his way.

During the 1920s and '30s, Amos' grandfather, William Cunningham, had no way of knowing that his 165-acre farm in the Due West community was on a band of rich mineral deposits filled with amethyst, quartz, aquamarine, garnets and green beryl.

"This area in Abbeville County is actually a contact zone from when Africa was once pushed up against South Carolina," says Amos Cunningham, a retired Michelin Tire Corporation employee who inherited the farm he now calls Cunningham Farm Mineral Site. "The contact caused a lot of friction and volcanic and

hydrothermal action, so there was a lot of geological activity here."

A BEAUTIFUL SECRET

To most of the world, Abbeville County's gem-mining culture is a hidden secret. "If you look up any gem-related books, you won't see South Carolina listed," Amos Cunningham says. "But Abbeville County has some of the finest minerals in the world. It's just one of those things. We don't mind, I guess. It's just not well-known."

But it's a bigger deal than many people might think, he says. About two years ago, and about 6 miles from his property, Cunningham found an amethyst that sold for \$12,000. Another amethyst from nearby Ellis Mine was featured on a U.S. postage stamp in 1974. That same stone is on display at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C.

Diamond Hill Mine in Due West already brings in thousands of people a

year who are looking for gems. The mine, situated on a nearly 6-acre site, is open 365 days a year. But it's the only mine in the Due West community that's truly open to the public. Cunningham Farm Mineral Site is mostly closed to the public, except for about twice a year when Amos Cunningham allows rock clubs or other groups to access the farm for about \$25 per person.



EXHIBITION FOR RECOGNITION

Four of the mine sites in Abbeville County collaborated in November for an exhibition of their finds at Erskine College's Bowie Arts Center. The nearly month-long event was called the Upper Abbeville Gem and Mineral Exhibit and included collections from Diamond Hill Mine, Ellis Mine, Ashley Farm and Cunningham Farm.

It was the first time the sites had ever held a joint exhibition, and Amos Cunningham says he believes it spurred interest in the gem-collecting world.

Despite these steps and the popularity of Diamond Hill Mine, South Carolina's gem-mining industry tends to float under the radar compared with other states.

"Many people go to North Carolina to collect specimens, and they don't realize just how rich in minerals South Carolina really is," Cunningham says. "Due West has some of the most beautiful amethysts in the world. But it's like an economic secret, even though the Diamond Hill Mine is 300 or 400 years old."

DIGGING IT

Gem collecting can pay off in other ways, too, Amos Cunningham says. He grew interested in the hobby as a child after his father, Willie B. Cunningham, investigated to see if the colorful rocks were worth anything. Then he would occasionally sell a few of the rocks to collectors for "a little something."

"He believed that a little something was better than nothing," his son says.



Green and blue beryl were found recently on the Cunninghams' property. This is the raw form of emerald and aquamarine.



A love for crystals began when Amos Cunningham was a child and would dig up rocks on his grandfather's land.

The minerals continued to fascinate Amos Cunningham, who picked up books at the library to feed his knowledge. He continued to collect rocks on the farm and eventually found bigger, better ways to find the minerals.

In 1989, after extensive excavations, several mineral deposits were found, he wrote in a history of the farm. The deposits included amethyst and beryl. Green beryl quartz is sometimes classified as emerald, depending on whether the chromium content is high enough.

In 2008, he hosted the first formal rock dig on the farm with a rock club from North Carolina. They brought nearly 300 people to the site. Other visitors over the years have included a group of students from Clemson University and Michael Wise, a curator from the Smithsonian.

But many of the visitors are hobbyists, Cunningham says. Gem collectors come from all walks of life, but they're connected by their shared passion for minerals.

"It ranges from retired NASA engineers to doctors and scientists and regular folks," he says. "Some people out there, like me, just love rocks." 🗿



Gem mining at Diamond Hill

If you're looking to mine for gems in the Due West community, Diamond Hill Mine is probably your best bet, as most mines are private and don't offer much in the way of public events. Diamond Hill Mine is at 100 Diamond Mine Road in Abbeville. It is open daily throughout the year, including weekends. Daily sign-in is from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Guests can dig in the area until dark, and camping is free. Many digging spots are located throughout the nearly 6-acre area, and the spots are not salted with gems from other locations. Reservations are not required, but groups interested in special rates can call 864-934-3744. The limit on finds is a carload or a truckload.

For more information and rates, go to www.diamondhillmine.com.

The secret to perfect BISCUITS

Like a magician in her lab or an artist in her studio, Phyllis Cabe stands in her kitchen at The Big Biscuit Barn, where she takes basic biscuit dough and turns it into delicious masterpieces of culinary genius.

Cabe opened her restaurant right outside one of North Georgia's most historic towns, Fort Oglethorpe, locally known as the gateway to Chickamauga and Chattahoochee National Military Park. Because of its location, visitors from across the globe happen upon this eatery known for serving the biggest, best biscuits in town.

"I also have a solid group of regulars — people who come here every day, and some who eat here twice a day," she says.

They come for eggs, sausage and biscuits with gravy for breakfast. Then, they return for fried chicken with garlic-cheese biscuits for lunch, among other menu offerings.

Suffice it to say, Cabe knows a thing or two about making biscuits, an art she learned at her mama's apron strings and then further developed before opening The Big Biscuit Barn in 2007. Now, she makes 400-500 biscuits daily. While some are served alongside entrees

with butter and jam, others are made into the giant Cinnabarn cinnamon rolls — a house favorite — crispy fried fruit pies, crusts for chicken pot pie and other creations.

First and foremost, Cabe stresses the importance of not overworking the dough when making biscuits. Don't knead it, she says.

"Pick the dough up and lay it over itself six or seven times, incorporating layers in the dough, working in a little more flour if the dough feels too wet," she says. "This helps to create a fluffier biscuit."

Before cutting the dough, let it proof for about 15 minutes. Once the biscuits are cut and on the baking sheet, let them proof again for another 15 minutes. This, Cabe says, is her secret to making good biscuits, and something she discovered by accident.

"Nobody does that," she says. "And recipes won't tell you to. But I've thought this through a million times, and it makes a difference."

Here are more tips for making biscuits the way it's done at The Big Biscuit Barn:

- If you don't have White Lily flour, go get some. Cabe swears by it.
- When using a biscuit cutter, go straight down through the dough without twisting the cutter. "The less you mess with it, the prettier the biscuit," Cabe says. And you



Phyllis Cabe makes 400 to 500 biscuits daily at The Big Biscuit Barn in Ft. Oglethorpe, Georgia.



A Biscuit Primer

Phyllis Cabe, owner of The Big Biscuit Barn, teaches the basics of biscuit making in classes at her restaurant. Winter classes are Jan. 13 and Feb. 10. Groups are welcome. For reservations or more information, call 706-861-0000.

don't need to spend a lot of money on fancy biscuit cutters. Cabe uses a pineapple can that's been cut in half.

- Your rolling pin is not a bulldozer. Very lightly roll out the dough, sprinkle it with flour and continue rolling lightly to your desired thickness.
- For tall biscuits with a crispy edge, place a biscuit on the baking sheet so that one side lightly touches the biscuit next to it. Allow about an inch of space between rows.

The Big Biscuit Barn

Where: 1391 Lafayette Road, Rossville, Georgia

Phone: 706-861-0000

Hours: 6 a.m.-2 p.m. Tuesday-Friday, 6 a.m.-noon Saturday



FOOD EDITOR
ANNE P. BRALY
IS A NATIVE OF
CHATTANOOGA,
TENNESSEE.

WHITE LILY BISCUIT DOUGH

This recipe is on the back of every bag of White Lily flour. Cabe tweaks it by upping the amount of liquid. "People always add too much flour, so upping the amount of buttermilk compensates for that," she says.

- 2 cups White Lily all-purpose flour
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 cup vegetable shortening
- 7/8 cup buttermilk
- 1/4 cup butter, melted

Heat oven to 475 F. Combine flour, baking powder and salt in large bowl. Cut in shortening with pastry blender, or two knives, until mixture has a cornmeal texture. Blend in buttermilk with fork. Turn dough onto lightly floured surface. Fold dough over itself 6-7 times, just until smooth. Roll dough into a 7-inch circle that is 1/2- to 3/4-inch thick. Cut out 7 to 8 biscuits using a floured 2-inch biscuit cutter. You may use larger cutter to make fewer but bigger biscuits. Place on baking sheet so that edges almost touch, leaving about an inch of space between rows. Shape dough scraps into a ball. Pat out to desired thickness. Cut out additional biscuits. Bake 8 to 10 minutes or until golden brown. Brush with butter, if desired.

Note: Cabe makes the first part of the recipe (through the shortening) and keeps it on hand in the refrigerator. She says the mixture will last three to four weeks. She adds the buttermilk right before making her biscuits.

SPINACH-ARTICHOKE BISCUITS

- 1 recipe White Lily biscuit dough
- 1 package Hidden Valley spinach-artichoke dressing mix
- 2 cups chopped chicken (roisserie or fried)
- 2 cups chopped spinach, well drained
- Ranch dressing

Make biscuit dough, adding 2 tablespoons dry dressing mix to the dough; roll out to 1/2-inch thickness. Using a 2-inch biscuit



cutter, cut biscuits and place on baking sheet. Gently press an indentation into each biscuit. Combine chicken and spinach. Place about 1 tablespoon mixture into biscuit and bake at 475 F until lightly browned. Remove from oven and sprinkle with 1 tablespoon dressing mix. Serve immediately with ranch dressing for dipping, or make a dip using the remaining dressing mix and following package directions.

CHICKEN CORDON BLEU BISCUITS

- 1 recipe White Lily biscuit dough
- Chopped chicken (fried, grilled or boiled)
- Chopped ham
- Provolone cheese, shredded
- Garlic salt
- Greek seasoning

Chill dough, then roll out to 1/2-inch thickness. Using a 6-inch cutter, cut dough into circles. Top each circle with meats, cheese and seasonings. Fold dough over filling and crimp edges of dough with a fork. Deep fry until golden brown.

Note: Any combination of meats and cheeses works with this recipe. Ham and Swiss cheese is a good choice. Or try corned beef, Swiss cheese and well-drained sauerkraut for a biscuit Reuben served with some Thousand Island dressing for dipping. 📺

"STUFFED" BISCUITS

- 1 recipe White Lily biscuit dough
- Cooked meats, such as crumbled sausage or shredded ham
- Mrs. Dash seasoning
- Shredded cheese (your choice)
- Melted butter

Heat oven to 475 F. Roll out dough to 1/2-inch thickness and cut into biscuits using a 2-inch biscuit cutter. Place biscuits on baking sheet and lightly press down the center of each biscuit, making an indentation. Place meat in the indentation and sprinkle with Mrs. Dash. Bake at 475 F until biscuits are lightly browned. Remove from oven and sprinkle with cheese and drizzle with melted butter. Serve immediately as an appetizer.

Note: You can turn these into dessert by stuffing the biscuits with Heath Bits and drizzling them with your favorite chocolate icing after baking. Or stuff them with cinnamon-sugar-butter and drizzle with confectioner's sugar glaze after baking.



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- Applications are due by **March 7, 2018**. See guidance counselor for an application.
- Applicants must live in the WCTEL service area and their legal guardian/parent must be a WCTEL customer.
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