

West Carolina Tel

MARCH/APRIL 2018

CONNECTED

SUPERIOR SUPPORT

Learn the value
of high-speed
business networks

UNDER A ROCK?

Social media creates a
hide-and-seek promotion

BIRTHDAY CELL-EBRATION

Happy 45th to the modern
mobile phone





BY SHIRLEY BLOOMFIELD, CEO
NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association

Rural youth are the future

At NTCA and the Foundation for Rural Service, we believe an investment in our rural youth is an investment in the future of rural America.

That's why we are committed to making those kinds of investments. Each year, our partners at FRS award \$100,000 worth of scholarships to assist rural students in attending college or technical school. FRS also coordinates a trip each year for rural youth to visit Washington, D.C., and learn about the way our government works.

I am thrilled about the launch of the FRS Rural Youth App Challenge and excited to see the bright ideas that come from the minds of our rural youth.

I believe deeply in the importance of these programs, but for NTCA members like your local provider, support for our rural youth goes much deeper.

Your broadband provider works hard to bring a reliable internet connection to students' homes — and often their schools — to get the education they need. They make sure teachers can connect to the resources and research needed to provide quality instruction. And once these young men and women graduate, it will be your broadband provider whose service enables them to apply for jobs, start a business or work remotely.

I'm proud of the investments NTCA, FRS and our member telcos have made and will continue to make in the future of rural America. ☑



Apps play a big role in making life easier. They are often the fastest and easiest way to access social media, check the weather forecast, pay bills, listen to music, shop and access just about anything imaginable on the internet.

That's why the Foundation for Rural Service created the FRS Rural Youth App Challenge. Students will develop a concept for a mobile app that addresses a problem or improves a process in their rural community, or anywhere in rural America, says Jessica Golden, executive director of the Foundation for Rural Service. "Youth engagement is a huge part of what we do," she says.

The FRS is the charitable arm of NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association and has been involved in scholarships, youth tours in Washington, D.C., and many other programs geared toward engaging the youth of America, Golden says.

It's all part of the emphasis on the importance of broadband, which is becoming a vital thread in the American fabric. "We want all our youth to see themselves as a gamechanger and a voice of the rural communities," she says. "We want them to think outside the box."

The App Challenge will judge students based on how well-researched and well-presented the app is. While the idea can be similar to an existing app, it must be an original idea.

The program launched Jan. 23, and the deadline for submissions for the contest is April 20. Students in grades 7-12 are eligible.

Either a single student or groups with as many as five participants may enter. A parent of at least one student in the group must be a member of a cooperative that is an NTCA member.

Winners will be announced in mid-to-late May. The winning team will receive \$1,000 in gift cards and Codecademy scholarships. The first 10 student applicants with complete applications will also receive a subscription to Codecademy-PRO, worth about \$84. ☑

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
Go to frs.org, send an email inquiry to foundation@frs.org, or call 703-351-2026.



**HEY
TELEMARKETERS:**

DO NOT CALL!

The Federal Trade Commission and the Federal Communications Commission established a National Do Not Call Registry. Joining this registry can drastically reduce the number of telemarketing calls you receive.

JUST THE FACTS ABOUT DO NOT CALL:

- Once you've registered, telemarketers have 31 days to stop calling your number.
- Register as many as three non-business telephone numbers. You can also register cellphone numbers — there is not a separate registry for cellphones.
- Your number will remain on the list permanently unless you disconnect the number or you choose to remove it.
- Some businesses are exempt from the Do Not Call Registry and may still be able to call your number. These include

political organizations, charities, telephone surveyors and businesses with whom you have an existing relationship.

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

- Call before 8 a.m.
- Call after 9 p.m.
- Misrepresent what is being offered
- Threaten, intimidate or harass you
- Call again after you've asked them not to



IT'S EASY!

Add your number to the
Do Not Call Registry

Register online at
www.donotcall.gov
or call 888-382-1222.
For TTY, call 866-290-4236.

You must call from the telephone
number you wish to register.

**ATTENTION LOCAL
BUSINESS OWNERS:**

**Make sure you follow
the Do Not Call rules**

No matter if you're a one-person shop or a beloved company, local business owners should remember that National Do Not Call Registry rules and regulations apply to you. After all, you don't want to upset a loyal customer, or frustrate potential new customers, with unwanted phone calls.

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

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

OFFICIAL NOTIFICATION:

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

Keeping our part of the 'net' neutral

It's very rare that telecommunications policy grabs headlines, dominates social media feeds, and leads the news broadcasts. But that's exactly what we saw after the FCC's decision on net neutrality.



JEFF WILSON
Chief Executive Officer

It's encouraging to see people around the country take stock, realize how important their broadband service is to their daily lives, and take action to protect it. Concerns over net neutrality have caused some of our members to email, call or message us on social media. I'm proud that our members are tuned in to the issues and willing to communicate with us about the future of their service.

The term "net neutrality" refers to policy that would prevent internet providers from interfering with selective forms of internet traffic through blocking or slowing down certain services or websites.

There's a lot of conflicting information about how the regulations and the FCC changes to the rules will affect broadband, but I wanted to set the record straight for WCTEL customers. Our No. 1 concern has been and will always be delivering to you the best online experience possible.

We do not throttle, prioritize or block any legal internet traffic and have no plans to do so in the future. Essentially, we are keeping our members' connections net neutral.

I understand that many people have concerns about this ruling, but please know that WCTEL has no intention of making changes to our service based on the FCC's decision.

“I can't speak for what other profit-driven corporate telecommunications providers may do, but we have been net neutral and will stay that way because it's the right thing to do for our customers.”

I can't speak for what other profit-driven corporate telecommunications providers may do, but we have been net neutral and will stay that way because it's the right thing to do for our customers.

The only thing the FCC's decision will change for us will be reducing the amount of regulatory paperwork we have to keep. Representatives from NTCA—The Rural Broadband Association — which represents 850 small, rural, community-based member companies like ours — testified to this before congressional committees.

For small telcos like ours, the so-called net neutrality rules implemented in 2015 required extensive reporting that took time and effort from our team. That's time and effort we'd rather spend on growing and improving our network and customer service features.

NTCA Senior Vice President Michael Romano told Congress the 2015 rule's "heavy-handed regulatory burdens can be distracting at best or devastating at worst."

In summary, some experts would have us believe that the removal of net neutrality rules is a threat to the internet as we know it. But here at WCTEL, we're going to keep your internet service open and free as you enjoy it today — and will work hard to make it even better tomorrow. 📶

West Carolina Tel

CONNECTED

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

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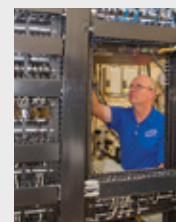
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On the Cover:



WCTEL Technology Manager Bobby Clarke fine-tunes equipment at the Abbeville Area Medical Center. See story Page 12.

PLEDGE: WCTEL does not throttle, prioritize or block any legal internet traffic, and we have no plans to do so in the future.

Building a smarter home, one gadget at a time

Millions of Americans wake up to the sound of their new digital assistant, such as an Amazon Echo or Google Home. Here's a quick look at some of the smart technology available and how it can make your life easier, especially if you're armed with a high-speed broadband connection.

- Hubs:** While most of the smart gadgets rely on smartphone apps, a central hub is best. There is a futuristic feel to controlling your home via voice commands — through an Echo or Google Home — but there are also hubs, such as the Samsung SmartThings Hub or Wink Hub 2, that unify access to your devices in a single, easy-to-use app.



AVAILABLE WITH THE WCTEL HOME SECURITY PACKAGE:

- Thermostats:** Heating and cooling accounts for about half of monthly energy bills, so a smart thermostat can help you save money. You can program your thermostat from your smartphone, and set daily schedules for the perfect temperature 24/7.
- Lights:** There are a wide variety of options for lighting your home. Whether it is a lamp or a ceiling light, you can have maximum control of your lights. You can dim, turn off, and schedule your lights from your smartphone.
- Locks:** A smart lock makes sure your home is consistently secure. Lock or Unlock your door from your smartphone. Or, you can even set a temporary code to share with a house sitter or maintenance personnel.

New to the crew

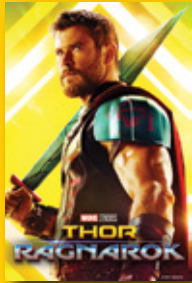
We are pleased to welcome two new team members who joined the WCTEL family in 2017. Rusty Latham, left, is from Greenwood, and he now works as a Managed IT Services Technician II. Wesley Charlesworth, right, is from Antreville, and he handles the books for WCTEL as an accountant.



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."



Thor: Ragnarok
Can Thor overpower the Hulk when the two former allies are pitted against each other, while Ragnarok threatens to destroy Thor's home world of Asgard?



Star Wars: The Last Jedi
Rey may have found Luke Skywalker, but will she be able to learn the ways of the Jedi? Leia and the Resistance brace against an assault from the First Order.



Murder on the Orient Express
In a vivid revamp of the 1974 classic, super sleuth and master of the mustache Hercule Poirot tackles a murder on a train with a complex list of suspects.

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

- Coco
- The Disaster Artist
- Justice League
- Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle
- Ferdinand

TAKING IT LOW AND SLOW

ON THE TRAIL FOR

THE BEST BBQ IN THE SOUTH

BY ANNE BRALY

Other regions of the country have certainly tried to imitate, but none have been able to duplicate the barbecue found in states across the South. Some restaurants have different sauces, while others are known by the type of wood they use for smoking. But all are known for the magical spell they put on the grill. Just follow the smoke from state to state on this road trip around the South to get your 'que on.



Owensboro, Kentucky — Moonlite Bar-B-Que Inn

2840 W. Parrish Ave.

It once said, "Bahhh," but your taste buds will say, "Ahhh," when you bite into the barbecued mutton that put Moonlite on the map. Order it by the plate, on a sandwich or by the pound, and don't forget an order of the famous Kentucky burgoo. There's a barbecue buffet serving lunch and dinner and a dine-in menu with traditional pork or beef barbecue, catfish and chicken.



Memphis, Tennessee — Central BBQ

147 E. Butler Ave., 2249 Central Ave. and 4375 Summer Ave.

Memphis is in the heart of the barbecue belt, so it's hard to visit and not find a good pit. Central, though, is consistently ranked in the top three and always comes home from competitions with a trophy. So when you want to pig out on ribs, pork, chicken, turkey, brisket, sausage and even bologna, Central can't be beat. No sauce meets the meat until the latter comes out of the smoker, and even then, not until you order. The spice mixture has been a deeply held secret since the first Central opened in 2002. Now, there are three locations, all of which have been featured in national publications, and it's a favorite stop for TV food personalities, too.

📍 Little Rock, Arkansas — Whole Hog Cafe

2516 Cantrell Road; 12111 W. Markham St.; and 5107 Warden Road, North Little Rock

It's no small feat to garner a win in the esteemed Memphis in May World Championship Barbecue Cooking Contest, but Whole Hog has done it three times with two second-place wins for its ribs and a first-place for its whole hog. What began as a food truck in a parking lot in Little Rock has now spread across the nation, but its heart belongs in Little Rock, where you can order a simple pulled pork sandwich or get a taste of it all with the Ultimate Platter, which includes pulled pork, smoked beef, smoked chicken, ribs, three sides and dinner rolls. Hungry yet?

📍 Dallas, Texas — Pecan Lodge

2702 Main St.

In a state known for its barbecue, Pecan Lodge was named one of the top four barbecue joints in the world — that's a pretty big deal. But owners Justin and Diane Fourton say they weren't out to set the world on fire, just the seasoned woods they put in the pit to smoke their mouthwatering brisket, among other meats. It's well worth the hour-long wait you might encounter. Order the brisket on a sandwich or by the pound, or have it piled into a salt-crusted sweet potato with cheese, spicy sour cream, butter and onions. It all smacks of Southern comfort.

📍 Jackson, Mississippi — Pig & Pint

3139 N. State St.

This joint puts a spin on barbecue with its barbecue chicken tacos and pork belly corn dogs, while also offering traditional favorites like pulled pork, smoked brisket and barbecued chicken. It gives a nod to other regional cuisines, too. There are Asian smoked wings and fried boudin balls, a Louisiana favorite served with beer mustard and housemade bread-and-butter pickles. The menu may sound outlandish, but the food is a hometown favorite that's picked up awards, including best barbecue in Mississippi by firstwefeast.com.

📍 Decatur, Alabama — Big Bob Gibson Bar-B-Que

1715 Sixth Ave. S. and 2520 Danville Road SW

Cross the Alabama border and ask for a good barbecue place and chances are you'll be directed to the town on the banks of the Tennessee River just south of the Tennessee border where Big Bob started cranking out the 'cue back in 1925. Gibson created his empire from smoked chicken smothered in white sauce, a recipe that's appeared in numerous publications, as well as in bottles sold online and in the restaurant. The menu expanded over the years to include every kind of smoked meat you may crave — pork butts, turkey breasts, whole chickens, brisket and ribs. And don't forget a slice of peanut butter pie.

📍 Gainesville, Georgia — The Hickory Pig

3605 Thompson Bridge Road

When you envision a barbecue shack, the building housing The Hickory Pig is what comes to mind. From the stack of wood out front, to the giant pig in the parking lot, to the ramshackle building, it's a place with pure Southern small-town charm. And the food? Just bite into a fork-tender rib and you'll see why it's a favorite in the north Georgia area for barbecue. The Brunswick stew is not to be missed.

📍 Spartanburg, South Carolina — Carolina BBQ and More

7115 Lone Oak Road

Southern Living named Carolina BBQ as the best barbecue joint in the state, a reputation built on finger-licking 'cue: St. Louis-style ribs, hickory-smoked chicken and turkey, brisket and pulled pork. Brunswick stew is made from scratch, and you won't shut up about the chocolate hush puppies. The red slaw is known as some of the best in the business, and you're welcome to take home a bottle of the barbecue sauce for yourself. 🍷



Phil Beaubien is the owner of The Hickory Pig barbecue shack in Gainesville, Ga.



Pig & Pint in Jackson, Miss., puts a spin on barbecue with dishes such as its pork belly corn dogs.



Big Bob's Bar-B-Que is famous for its smoked chicken served with white sauce so good they bottled it.



The barbecued mutton made Moonlite BBQ in Owensboro, Ky., famous.



Is online TV the best option for you?

BY DREW WOOLLEY

For many of us, the way we watch TV has changed in recent years. Busy lives make it difficult to carve out time to watch favorite shows every week, and many people just want access to the channels they enjoy. On-demand streaming services are increasingly the answer.

At West Carolina Tel, we believe that live TV is still a great value. Whether your interests lie in sports, cooking, singing or animals, there is something for you all day every day.

We also understand the rising cost of TV isn't something that fits into every family's budget. Since 2004, when WCTEL began offering TV service, broadcast programmers have raised their fees more than 500 percent, and those costs have been passed on to our members.

TV ON YOUR SCHEDULE

Increasingly, people are turning to the internet for more affordable and flexible ways to watch their favorite shows and events. At WCTEL, we recognize the future of TV is online, and we want to help our members find the best option.

► **WatchTVEverywhere** — Want to pick and choose your channels? WatchTVEverywhere lets you subscribe to individual networks and organizes them all in one place. Stream programming from networks like CNN and Nickelodeon anywhere with an internet connection on any computer or mobile device. (Included with WCTEL's Bronze or Silver TV packages)

CONSIDER OTHER OPTIONS

If a traditional TV package is no longer feasible, consider looking into one these streaming options:

- **YouTube TV** — Google's entry into TV streaming is a robust service offering a solid package of channels and DVR functionality. In addition to staples such as ESPN, Fox and AMC, YouTube TV also adds local channels in many markets.
- **Sling TV** — Choose one of Sling's two basic channel packages to start off, and then choose from smaller add-ons like sports, comedy or kids programming. The total will likely still save you money while offering flexibility and DVR features.
- **Hulu with Live TV** — Get access to Hulu's extensive catalog of streaming shows, plus 50 live channels that include A&E, ESPN and TNT. Hulu also provides an easy-to-navigate interface and helpful suggestions for other shows you might like, even if more DVR space will cost you extra. 📺

?

Why would a telco encourage streaming TV?

At WCTEL, we don't function as a traditional cable company. As a cooperative owned by you, we always want to provide the best value to our members. Whether that means continuing to provide high-quality TV or upgraded internet service for online streaming, we take our lead from you.



An assortment of painted rocks will be placed around the Iva area as part of a modern hide-and-seek game.



Local children gather together to paint rocks that will be left in locations around Iva.



Lily Grace shows off rocks she painted of her family poodles.

Contributed by DM Photography

Rocking Iva

Art brings a community together

BY RACHEL BROWN KIRKLAND

A strawberry ice cream cone with sprinkles on top, a butterfly with the words “be kind” just beyond its wing tips, a cellphone with rows of neon buttons: the artistic possibilities are endless — when your canvas is a rock.

Iva Rocks, with more than 500 members, is the local version of a rock-hiding craze sweeping the nation. Anyone who wants to participate can paint a rock, hide it in a public space, and then post the picture to Facebook in the Iva Rocks group. It’s then up to others to find the rock and either keep it or hide it again.

Iva Mayor Bobby Gentry says the project began around June 2017 at local resident Kayla Richards Sanders’ suggestion. Sanders says Iva Rocks was inspired by a similar endeavor in neighboring Calhoun Falls.

“Through Facebook, I saw how their rocks were bringing



Kayla Sanders

the small community together and spreading kindness and joy to others, so I thought it would be great for Iva to get involved as well,” says Sanders.

A mix of younger and older artists, hiders, finders and keepers are involved. Gentry’s family alone has painted about 200 rocks. He estimates there have been at least 1,000 others.

“We’ve focused on hiding rocks around our ballfield areas and our town hall and our business areas,” Gentry says.

ROLLING STONES

Of course, some of the rocks inevitably travel much farther. Gentry has found rocks from Hilton Head, South Carolina, in Oconee County, and there are rocks in Iva from Anderson, South Carolina. One participant posted on the Facebook page that they had found a rock in New York.

Of course, Iva puts its own special touch on the nationwide trend. Some of the residents have built wooden tic-tac-toe games and painted Iva rocks with Xs and Os. The games are placed around town at different businesses for individuals to play. Others have painted quilt patterns on the rocks.

BUSINESS CONNECTIONS

Tammy Norwood and Brittani Nicholson, account service representatives for WCTEL, were among the workers from many local businesses who joined the game. Community members often hide rocks at the WCTEL office building, and Norwood and Nicholson decided to decorate some of their own. Norwood helped with the designs, and Nicholson did the painting.

On the backs of the rocks, they instructed finders to bring the stones back to the WCTEL office for a free pen.

Sanders says hiding rocks has helped individuals meet one another. People go out riding around in golf carts or walking through town with their cellphones, comparing their locations to clues about where rocks might be hidden.

“It’s a fun thing to get started in a community because it’s good for all ages,” Norwood says. ☺



Mobile phones turn 45

Wireline technology makes cellphone popularity possible

BY PATRICK SMITH

While you've likely heard of Steve Jobs, the influential entrepreneur and one-time leader of Apple, you probably don't know of Martin Cooper, a Motorola employee who made the first cellular phone call on April 3, 1973. Jobs' achievements with the iPhone, along with much of Apple's recent success with the device, wouldn't be possible without Cooper.

When Cooper stood in midtown Manhattan and placed a call 45 years ago, he forever changed how we communicate. Known as the father of modern cellphones, Cooper successfully connected to Bell Labs headquarters in New Jersey, calling on what would become the world's first commercial cellphone.

Much like Jobs' success was dependent on Cooper, today's cellular technology is dependent on a wired copper

and fiber optic backbone to connect wireless communications.

Wireless technology needs a hardwired foundation to operate. Without wireline technology, cellphones would neither be able to make calls nor use internet data.

THE WIRELINE BACKBONE

When it comes to cellphones and the wireline technology they need to operate, think of the concept like the wireless router in your home. A wired connection runs from the wall to your router so it can broadcast and receive a signal. The same principle applies to the fact that cellular phones need a wired connection to operate.

Copper and fiber lines running overhead and underground play a crucial role in carrying signals between more than 300,000 cell sites across the country. When you use your cellphone 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.

RURAL TELCOS PLAY A VITAL ROLE

Telecommunications companies provide an essential service by keeping cellular callers connected in rural areas. Many rural telco providers supply wireline copper or fiber service to large cellular towers. These lines keep people connected when they are making cellular calls in rural regions, whether they're traveling through the area or residing there.


3G SPEEDS AND BEYOND

As fiber optic connections become more common, they also help to lay the groundwork for faster cellular speeds. The blazing-fast speed of fiber not only means faster upload

and download speeds for area homes and businesses, but it also means faster cellular data speeds.

Mobile data service — 3G, 4G and 4G LTE — relies on fast connections from telecommunications providers to cell towers, so users can have dependable mobile access to the internet.

While a release date has not been set, developers are working to create a new 5G technology, which could offer data speeds as fast as 10 Gbps. Peak 4G LTE speeds top out at about 50 Mbps today, making 5G potentially about 200 times faster.

And while it's impossible to predict the future and the developments that newer, faster cellular technology will bring, it's clear that progress isn't possible without a strong base of copper and fiber wireline technology to connect our calls and provide high-speed mobile data. 

Gadgets for the golden years

Los Angeles Times Publisher Ross Levinsohn once said, “The speed at which technology evolves affects everyone; we repeatedly hear that constant innovation is overwhelming for consumers, who struggle to keep pace.”

I couldn’t agree more with that statement. It seems like as soon as I learn a new piece of software, or how to use the latest technology gadget, it becomes outdated and replaced with a newer version.

If it gets overwhelming for me — a professional who works with technology daily — I can just imagine how overwhelming it is for someone who considers themselves non-techie.

I want to take a bit of the guesswork out of researching technology and point out a few gadgets that I think are good starter items for those adopters in their golden years.

Tablet: Amazon Fire

The Amazon Fire is a great starter tablet for a couple of reasons. It is reasonably priced, coming in under \$100. It’s great for watching movies or TV shows, checking email, playing games and, of course, reading books. The Fire even has a blue light filter that makes reading on the tablet less strenuous on



your eyes. If you have trouble reading small print, you can make the font larger so that it is easier to read, even without your reading glasses.

Gadget for a Non-Techie: Pix-Star Wi-Fi Picture Frame

If you are looking for a great gift for a parent or a grandparent, this is a good one. The picture frame is connected to Wi-Fi and has an email address. The system makes it very easy to add updated photos to the frame. Family and friends can simply email photos directly to the frame.

Medical Tech Gadget: MedMinder Pill Dispenser

Never worry about remembering to take your medicine at the right time each day. MedMinder can help you remember your meds by calling, texting or emailing you. Multiple features and differing models ensure the right style for different needs.

Voice Control Gadget: Amazon Echo Show

Once the Amazon Echo Show is set up, you can get the information you want easier. Ask the built-in helper, Alexa, for the temperature, score of the game, or a fact you can’t

remember. My favorite feature of this device is the ability to “drop in” on loved ones to see how they are doing. Just by answering a call with your voice, you can see and hear the people you care about the most.

The best way to learn how to use the latest in tech gadgets is to give them a try. You never know; you may find you enjoy using them! 📱



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



To learn more about the gadgets mentioned in the article, visit the following websites:

- ▶ www.amazon.com/fire
- ▶ www.pix-star.com
- ▶ www.amazon.com/echo-show
- ▶ www.medminder.com

Leave IT to us

WCTEL's managed IT services give local businesses the support they need

BY DREW WOOLLEY

When your business is keeping people healthy, a reliable internet connection can mean the difference between life and death. That's why, two years ago, Abbeville Area Medical Center's IT Manager Tim Stewart turned to West Carolina Tel for help with its IT services.

The medical center previously used a homegrown wireless system. But with connections dropping more frequently and a growing need for bandwidth as electronic medical records became standard, it was clear they needed a more stable system.

"Our needs became too much to have

something like that, so WCTEL put in a professional system that was much more robust," says Stewart. "That has been critical for us to do the work we have to do in a medical system."

During construction of its medical office building, the medical center faced the challenge of integrating high-speed

internet service with the system that already existed throughout the hospital. WCTEL suggested a cost-effective solution that provided the hospital with one pipeline of bandwidth, which could then be segmented to other buildings.

"That's worked great, and it kept us from having to run fiber between the buildings," says Stewart. "It was a unique solution that we hadn't thought of until WCTEL did it for us. We're hoping to expand that into all the other offices soon."

TAILORED SERVICE

That individualized treatment for businesses is a point of pride for WCTEL, and it starts from the very first consultation. "It's not package A, B or C; it's a custom fit," says WCTEL's Director of Business Solutions Chuck Nash. "We actually go to every customer and do a full-blown evaluation of their network. We custom-build for every customer based on whatever their IT needs are."

For Abbeville Area Medical Center, that meant changing out switches in all build-



Chuck Nash, middle, and Bobby Clarke, right, talk with Abbeville Area Medical Center CEO Dean Turner about the center's technology services plan.



WCTEL's Business Solutions and Network Services team is ready to address your technology needs.

ings when Voice over Internet Protocol phone services were installed to keep all phones and computers on the same system, even in the hospital where VoIP service was not installed. But it also means staying aware of the medical center's unique needs beyond specific technology.

As IT manager for a hospital, Stewart needs advance notice of any temporary service shutdowns to minimize their impact on crucial medical services. He has been impressed by how conscientious WCTEL is about those needs, even if the interruption happens in the middle of the night.

"We've been very pleased with WCTEL because they're local and have a commitment to us as an organization that you just don't see in other providers," Stewart says. "We're a small hospital, but we're big for Abbeville, and they give us priority."


A TRUSTED PARTNER

In the future, Stewart hopes to expand the single internet pipeline solution to other buildings, and he intends to take

advantage of what WCTEL calls a Virtual chief information officer. The offering lets businesses leverage WCTEL's expertise for advice on high-level decisions that a CIO might tackle in a larger IT department, such as strategic planning and budgeting.

"We can't afford to hire someone full time to do some of that stuff, so we'll work with them on an as-needed basis for the tech support that's above our ability to handle," says Stewart.

Such a partnership sets WCTEL apart from other IT service providers, and it was ultimately why Stewart felt no one could compete with the management the cooperative provides.

"There are a lot of IT companies out there who do things like this, but we feel like we already have this relationship established with our customers, so it's a natural fit for us," Nash says. "We like to consider ourselves a trusted adviser, and that's the way we want our customers to see us." 

Solutions for your IT problems

In today's world, building and growing a business is challenge enough without figuring out how to implement the IT infrastructure to support it. WCTEL business solutions can do the heavy lifting on IT problems, letting business owners focus on what they do best.

"Our customers may not always have the resources or the manpower for a full IT department," says Director of Business Solutions Chuck Nash. "That's where we come in and try to relieve some of that burden to them."

WCTEL offers an array of cost-effective solutions for your business:

Hosted Voice — Get reliable voice service that can start with one phone line and scale to an entire system with dozens of extensions in multiple locations. This feature-rich, cloud-based communications solution is hosted on WCTEL's network to provide high-definition voice quality that always comes with WCTEL's trademark personal service.

Cloud Hosting — Data from your website, email systems or software has to live somewhere, and if that place is a server down the hall, your business can be at risk of failing from damage related to storms, fires and even cyberattacks. WCTEL's hosting services keep your systems protected off-site in a highly secured data center under the watchful eye of full-time server administrators.

Managed Networks — Not sure how to keep your network updated and secure? WCTEL's IT professionals are trained for just that. The team can set up firewalls; shore up network vulnerabilities; and update your hardware, software and cable so you don't have to.

Have an internal IT team? Trust WCTEL to work with them so you can focus on your business.

Baking for spring

with Jason Smith

Springtime baking means shedding the heavy ingredients of winter: “All that butter and those heavy chocolates,” says Jason Smith.

Smith, a resident of Grayson, Kentucky, once a cafeteria manager at Isonville Elementary and also a florist and caterer, was the 2017 Food Network Star. Just months before that win, he won Food Network’s “Holiday Baking Championship,” followed by a victory on “Holiday Baking: Adults vs. Kids.” In less than a year’s time, he baked his way to three major wins, making more than 50 dishes to impress the judges.

Smith’s successes in the food competitions came as no surprise, says Felicia Green, who served as a teacher and a principal at Isonville Elementary for 27 years before retiring in November 2016. “He always went the extra mile,” she says. “I remember he was always making things for us to put in the teachers lounge. And on TV, his personality is so genuine.”

In the past year, Smith has also been a judge for Food Network’s “Best Baker in America.” He now has a show of his own in the works, which he hopes to make “very dessert heavy.”

Smith’s earliest memories of cooking go back to a hot day on his family’s tobacco farm



in Laurel County, Kentucky. “I decided I didn’t want to be outside hoeing tobacco, so I went inside and asked my grandmother if I could stay and help her in the kitchen,” he recalls.

On the menu that day? Fried chicken, fresh corn on the cob, potatoes and strawberry shortcake made with berries from the garden, along with biscuits left over from breakfast that morning.

Smith says his grandmother saw something in him that day that others had dismissed. “She always told my mom about how much I loved to be in the kitchen, whether it was to wash the dishes or peel potatoes,” he says.

Cookbooks are one of Smith’s hobbies. He collects them and enjoys reading the stories behind the recipes. “I’ve taken so many recipes and switched things around to give the recipes new life,” he says.

That’s a trademark of his as evidenced by recipes he shares.



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



BLACKBERRY-GRAPE PIE

- Dough for double-crust pie
- 2 pints fresh blackberries
- 2 cups green grapes
- 2 tablespoons cornstarch
- Zest from 1 small lemon
- 1 teaspoon freshly grated ginger
- 1 1/2 cups sugar

Heat oven to 350 F. Spray an 8-inch pie plate and place 1 sheet of dough in it, allowing edges to hang over. In a large mixing bowl, toss the berries and grapes in the cornstarch, lemon zest, ginger and sugar, stirring to coat. Pour into pie shell. Place other sheet of dough on top, and crimp the edges of the 2 sheets of dough together. Then, using a sharp knife, make 4 slits in middle of top to let steam escape. Brush with egg wash (one egg whisked with a little cold water) and place pie on cookie sheet. Tent pie with a sheet of aluminum foil and bake 30-45 minutes. Remove foil and bake a few more minutes to brown the top.



Lemon Chiffon Cake with Blueberry Mousse

LEMON CHIFFON CAKE WITH BLUEBERRY MOUSSE

- 1/4 cup vegetable oil
- 2 unbeaten egg yolks
- 1/4 cup plus 2 tablespoons cold water
- 2 teaspoons lemon extract
- 2 teaspoons lemon zest
- 1 cup plus 2 tablespoons sifted cake flour
- 3/4 cup white sugar
- 1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 2 teaspoons fresh thyme, minced
- 4 egg whites
- 1/4 teaspoon cream of tartar

Blueberry mousse:

- 2 cups heavy cream
- 1/4 cup powdered sugar
- 2 pints fresh blueberries
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 cup finely chopped or grated/
shredded white chocolate

Heat oven to 325 F. Mix together oil, egg yolks, water, lemon extract and lemon zest. Sift dry ingredients together, then mix into the wet ingredients in a stand mixer until smooth. In another large bowl, combine egg whites and cream of tartar,

beat with a mixer until stiff peaks form. Pour batter over the beaten egg whites and gently fold with a figure-eight motion until all streaks disappear. Pour into a lined 13-by-18-inch sheet pan or rimmed cookie sheet and bake for 25-30 minutes or until a toothpick stuck into middle comes out clean. Take out and let cool; cut into 1-inch squares.

Meanwhile, make the mousse: Place the cream and sugar in a large bowl and whip into stiff peaks. Then fold in the vanilla and half the blueberries.

To assemble: Place 1/3 of the cake cubes and then 1/3 of the mousse in a trifle bowl. Then sprinkle a few blueberries and some of the white chocolate over the top. Repeat layers until all the cake, mousse, berries and white chocolate are used. Make sure to save a few berries for the garnish. You can also garnish with fresh thyme sprigs on top. Refrigerate for 8 hours or overnight before serving. Serve with strawberry sorbet if desired.

CARROT CAKE WITH COCONUT FROSTING

- 2 1/4 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon allspice
- 1 3/4 cups packed light brown sugar
- 3/4 cup vegetable oil
- 4 large eggs
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 3/4 cup tomato soup
- 1 cup buttermilk
- 1/2 cup grated fresh carrots

Coconut frosting:

- 4 tablespoons butter, divided
- 2 cups shredded coconut
- 1 (8-ounce) package cream cheese, room temperature
- 2 teaspoons milk
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 3 1/2 cups powdered sugar

Heat oven to 350 F. Spray a 10-cup tube pan. In a bowl, sift together the flour, baking powder, soda, salt, cinnamon and allspice. Place brown sugar, oil and eggs in stand mixer and mix till fluffy; add the vanilla extract and tomato soup and mix in. Then add the dry mixture. Turn the mixer on low and slowly drizzle in the buttermilk until combined, and then stir in the carrots. Pour into pan and bake for 30-35 minutes or until a toothpick inserted in the middle comes out clean. Let cool and frost with coconut frosting.

Coconut frosting: Melt 2 tablespoons butter in a skillet and add the coconut; toast until lightly brown, then place on a paper towel to cool. Cream the rest of the butter and cream cheese till fluffy in a stand mixer; mix in milk and vanilla extract, then slowly add the powdered sugar, mixing well. Fold in 1 3/4 cups of the cooled coconut. Frost cake and sprinkle remainder of coconut on top. 📺



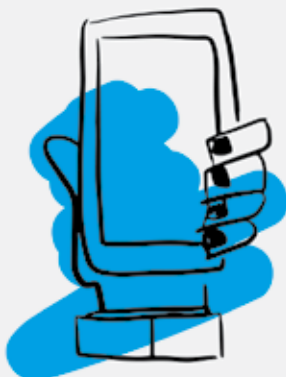
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