

West Carolina Tel

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2018

# CONNECTED

## A SCENIC GEM

Lake Russell offers  
nature at its best

## UDDERLY DELICIOUS

Family-owned  
dairy offers  
fresh raw milk

## HOW LOW CAN YOU GO?

Cutting carbs helps  
promote weight loss





BY SHIRLEY BLOOMFIELD, CEO  
NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association

## Working together for rural broadband

With few exceptions, we can accomplish more by working together than when we stand alone.

People impact others through churches and community organizations. Businesses support one another through chambers of commerce and trade associations. Your telecommunications provider joins forces with other independent and cooperative telcos through NTCA.

These examples show people acting jointly to ultimately improve the quality of life for those around them. Across the U.S. we are seeing this spirit play out in new ways to make real progress on the issue of rural broadband.

We have seen this before. Creating a nationwide electric grid and connected landline telephone network that included rural America was an enormous undertaking. The same was true for our network of highways that connects us from coast to coast and all parts in between. Now, our greatest challenge is connecting all of America — urban and rural — to a reliable broadband network.

NTCA member companies are uniquely positioned to tackle this challenge, and increasingly we are seeing them partner to develop creative solutions. For example, telecommunications providers are developing partnerships with one another to serve new areas and operate more efficiently. We are even seeing electric providers join with telecommunications companies to deliver broadband to unserved rural areas.

These efforts are encouraging, and NTCA is focused on supporting such cooperation among providers. After all, that spirit is the very foundation on which our industry is built. 📞

# Farm bill will impact future of broadband for rural America

BY STEPHEN V. SMITH

**T**he legislation known as the “farm bill” making its way through Congress affects far more than farmers. It will also impact access to internet service in rural America for years to come.

The farm bill, which is reauthorized every five years, governs how food is grown in America by legislating farm subsidies, trade, conservation, research and related issues. The Rural Development portion of the bill includes funding and guidelines for the Rural Utilities Service and its Rural Broadband Program.

This program makes funding available to help service providers bring broadband to rural areas.

The U.S. House of Representatives passed its Agriculture and Nutrition Act of 2018 on June 21, with the U.S. Senate passing its version a week later. There are many differences between the two bills on issues such as food stamps, conservation programs and farm subsidy payment limits. These will be addressed as part of the conference committee process.

In speaking with the publication Hoosier Ag Today in July, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue said, “The farm bill has always been bipartisan, and it will be so at the end.” He added that lawmakers “don’t want to go back and face midterm elections in November without having a farm bill” in place.

Members of NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association were among those testifying before Congress as the bills were debated. Shirley Bloomfield, CEO of the association, says rural telecommunications providers shared the importance of investing for the long term and “looking to providers with a proven track record of success deploying and maintaining services in rural communities.”

Bloomfield says rural broadband providers have deployed robust broadband networks in rural areas through a combination of community commitment, entrepreneurial spirit, private capital, the FCC’s Universal Service Fund and “critical programs like those made available through RUS.”

NTCA members will remain engaged in the process. “We look forward to building upon this early progress, and making the best possible use of the valuable resources through programs such as those contained in the farm bill to advance and sustain rural broadband,” Bloomfield says. 📞

## What happens next?

1



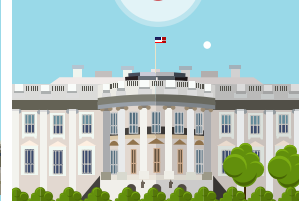
The Senate and House versions go to a conference committee to work out the differences and create one bill.

2



This combined bill goes to the full House and Senate for a vote.

3



The final bill goes to the president for his signature.

Deadline for action: Before the current farm bill expires on Sept. 30

# Rural Broadband Matters to America

Internet-based transactions drive half the U.S. economy, and rural residents—who make up almost 20 percent of the population—have the same vital need for internet access as urban dwellers.



## Internet Usage

Compared to urban areas, rural residents:



use Wi-Fi in their homes at the same rate



connect the same types of devices to the internet



use the same types of broadband access (although urbanites have greater access to fiber-based service)



use the internet for approximately the same amount of time each day



use smartphones to connect at nearly the same rate

## Internet-Driven Commerce

### The Numbers

→ **15.5%** ←

Rural America is responsible for 15.5% of all consumer, internet-driven transactions.

**10.8 billion** Rural transactions per year

### The Money

**\$1.4 trillion**  
value of rural online transactions

**14%**  
of all internet-driven transactions

**7%**  
of the U.S. nominal gross domestic product (GDP)

### The Future

**TODAY**

**50% GDP**

Internet-driven transactions = 50% of U.S. GDP (\$9.6 trillion)

**2022**

**65% GDP**

Internet-driven transactions = 65% of U.S. GDP (\$14 trillion)

## Rural Broadband Investment

Rural consumers depend on their broadband connection for online transactions, which drive the U.S. economy. This highlights the value of continued investment in rural broadband for the good of all Americans.



FOUNDATION FOR  
RURAL SERVICE

Source: Foundation for Rural Service white paper "A Cyber Economy: The Transactional Value of the Internet in Rural America," by iGR

# Cooperatives carry a remarkable legacy

Imagine the headlines if this happened today — a group of rural South Carolina residents raises money to build their own internet network because corporate internet providers determined their area didn't deserve coverage.



**JEFF WILSON**  
Chief Executive Officer

Given how essential internet service has become to modern life and recent media trends of emphasizing grassroots efforts to fill in where investor-controlled corporations fall short, such a story would get coverage from coast to coast and go viral on social media.

But that seemingly sensational situation is how WCTEL got started decades ago with the technology of the day. It's tough to get more grassroots than the story of our founding, and we're proud to have built on that legacy to continue serving you today.

October is National Cooperative Month, supported by the National Cooperative Business Association and recognized by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. That designation always leads me to reflect on our remarkable story. When this company was founded by John A. McAllister in 1952, the farmers, merchants, teachers and

other community members knew this area needed a telephone network capable of keeping up with the rest of the country. For reasons of safety, economic growth and convenience, they wanted phone service, and they took it upon themselves to make it happen. Meanwhile, the big phone companies wouldn't build here because they said it wasn't profitable enough.

Creating a cooperative wasn't easy. Each founding member pledged money up front and then provided continued support in order for the new cooperative to get started. Each individual took a risk — but it was a risk worth taking because they knew they needed a modern communications network.

Today, broadband is the dominant communications need for our area, and WCTEL has evolved to bring that connection to the farmers, merchants and other residents of our community.

Our history and structure as a cooperative business make us different from other companies. Like the more than 40,000 other cooperative businesses in the U.S., we are member-owned. That means the people we serve are more than just customers — they are invested in our company in the same way we are invested in the communities we share. While most other telecom and cable providers exist to enrich their corporate investors or owners, we are fundamentally different. Our purpose is to improve the quality of life in the communities we serve — and to ensure we can do that today and in the future.

We've built our networks in areas so difficult to reach or so sparsely populated that no other provider would think of connecting. We're here because we carry the legacy of our founders and our members. 📞

## COOPERATIVE FACTS:

- There are 40,000 cooperative businesses with 343 million members in the United States.
- Cooperatives generate \$514 billion in revenue and more than \$25 billion in wages.
- National Cooperative Month has been a nationally recognized celebration since 1964.
- Agricultural cooperatives are the most common type of cooperative in the U.S., but there are also cooperatives specializing in housing, electrical distribution, retail and, of course, telecommunications.

—Source: National Cooperative Business Association

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.

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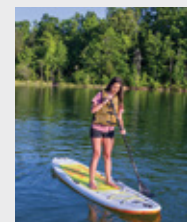
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Produced for West Carolina Tel by:

**WORDSOUTH**  
A CONTENT MARKETING COMPANY

On the Cover:



Paddleboarding is a popular activity on Lake Russell. Olivia Rodriguez takes advantage of the natural beauty.  
See story Page 12.

## Congratulations to WCTEL scholarship winners



**Kayleigh Smith** of Abbeville High School won a \$2,500 Foundation for Rural Service scholarship. She also received WCTEL's annual scholarship, which gives \$2,000 to the recipient for each of the four years of college, a total of \$8,000 toward their enrollment. Smith was accepted to the pre-medicine program at the University of South Carolina.



**Kamiya Shosan** of Abbeville High School was awarded a \$2,500 Foundation for Rural Service scholarship. She plans to study nursing while attending the University of South Carolina.

## Students tour Washington, D.C.

Each year the Foundation for Rural Service provides rural high school students across America a chance to visit the nation's capital and learn about rural telecommunications. To be selected for this trip, students must submit an essay application to WCTEL. A selection committee chooses the deserving students. This year's attendees were Victoria Sears, Jake McAllister and Devin Bryant. During the tour, students visited museums, national monuments and the Federal Communications Commission. They also met lawmakers and visited historical sites, including the Lincoln Memorial, Mount Vernon and Arlington National Cemetery. This trip educates students about the importance of cooperatives like WCTEL in rural areas across the United States.



## Don't miss 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."



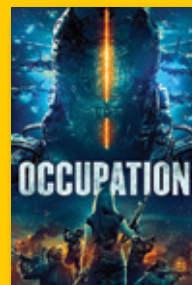
### Avengers: Infinity War

Thanos must be defeated. The Avengers will risk it all to protect the universe.



### Ready Player One

Steven Spielberg brings more sci-fi action adventure. The film is set in 2045, when a virtual reality program gives the ultimate opportunity to gamers.



### Occupation (2018)

With an action theme that never gets old, a group of residents must align and fight off alien invaders.

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

- Adrift
- Beast
- Book Club
- Breaking In
- Deadpool 2
- Overboard (2018)
- Rampage
- Show Dogs

## 2018 HALLOWEEN PHOTO CONTEST



**SUBMIT  
YOUR  
PHOTOS**

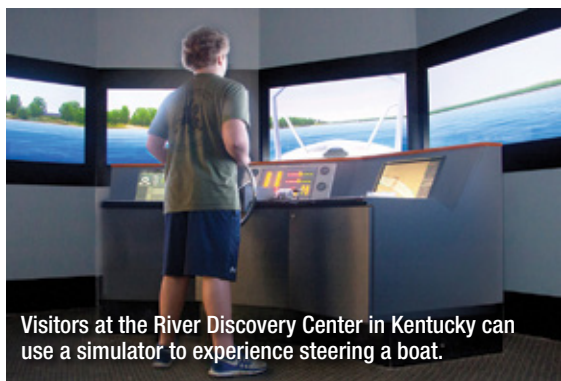
Send your photo to: [PhotoContest@wctel.net](mailto:PhotoContest@wctel.net)  
Go to: [www.wctel.net](http://www.wctel.net) for contest rules and details.

Patriots Point Naval and Maritime Museum draws visitors to Mount Pleasant, South Carolina.

# Take time for Maritime Museums

Photo courtesy of the Patriots Point Naval and Maritime Museum.

A hoy, mates! Landlubbers and seafarers alike will enjoy a trip through the South's maritime museums. They're filled with historic tales, ships, waterways to discover and more.



Visitors at the River Discovery Center in Kentucky can use a simulator to experience steering a boat.

Photo courtesy of the River Discovery Center.

## Texas Maritime Museum

1202 Navigation Circle, Rockport, Texas

Hurricane Harvey devastated much of the Lone Star State's coastline, including the Texas Maritime Museum. But thanks to the efforts of the museum staff and volunteers, the museum reopened bigger and better than ever in April 2018, less than a year after Harvey. Texas has several museums dedicated to ships and other watercraft from days gone by, but this one is the largest.

There are exhibits focused on exploration of the ocean and waterways, but they are only the beginning. The museum also features information about the settlement of the area and oil and gas exploration in the Gulf of Mexico. And commercial and sports fishing, as well as shipbuilding, all receive attention.

- **Admission:** Adults: \$8. Seniors and active military: \$6. Ages 3-12: \$3. Children under 3: Free.
- **Information:** 361-729-1271 or [texasmaritimemuseum.org](http://texasmaritimemuseum.org).
- **Hours:** 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday and 1 to 4 p.m. Sunday.

## River Discovery Center

117 South Water St., Paducah, Kentucky

As a new country, America depended on its rivers for transportation, sustenance and communication. Rivers helped build our nation, and you'll learn about the history of America's waterways during a day at the River Discovery Center.

The museum focuses primarily on the Four Rivers Region around Paducah where the Tennessee River meets the Ohio River. It's just upstream from where the Ohio and Mississippi rivers merge, and it's a short distance downstream from where the Cumberland River meets the Ohio River. The area teems with life and history.

The museum houses artifacts and lots of exhibits. One features the workings of a lock and dam, and another lets kids explore the rivers' habitats and delicate ecosystems. Audio stations are located throughout, including one where you'll learn about notable past riverboat captains. Thanks to a live feed from a rooftop camera, the River Spy exhibit lets you see vessels moving past the museum on the river and even what cargo they are transporting.

- **Admission:** Adults: \$8. Seniors: \$7. Children under 12: \$5.
- **Information:** 270-575-9958 or [www.riverdiscoverycenter.org](http://www.riverdiscoverycenter.org).
- **Hours:** 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday and 1-5 p.m. Sundays April through November.

## Patriots Point Naval and Maritime Museum

40 Patriots Point Road

Mount Pleasant, South Carolina

A beacon at the mouth of the Cooper River in Charleston Harbor, the USS Yorktown, a legendary aircraft carrier, stands proudly as the primary exhibit at Patriots Point.

Not to be missed during a tour of the ship is the Engine Room Experience, the latest exhibit to open aboard the Yorktown. The renovated space uses the latest technology to bring the story of the engine room to life, making it easier for guests to understand the duties and



Photo courtesy of the Texas Maritime Museum.

purpose of this vitally important room in an aircraft carrier. There are also tours of a submarine that stealthily crept through the oceans during the Cold War, as well as a World War II destroyer and other watercraft that saw action in and on the seas. Be sure to check out the Vietnam Experience while you're there, too.

It's a full day of adventure that, for youth groups of 10 or more, can culminate in a night aboard the USS Yorktown. Overnight visitors sleep where the sailors did and eat in the crew's mess hall. Wear comfortable shoes and get ready for lots of walking.

- **Admission:** Adults: \$22. Seniors and active military: \$17. Children 6 to 11: \$14. Children under 6 and active military in uniform: Free.
- **Information:** 843-884-2727 or [www.patriotspoint.org](http://www.patriotspoint.org).
- **Hours:** 9 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. daily.

## Mississippi River Museum

125 North Front St., Memphis, Tennessee

The Mighty Mississippi is a river of lore. Stories have been written about it. Men and women have died paddling its waters. And it marks a divide between the East and West. The Mississippi River Museum will teach you all about it. Located on Mud Island off the Memphis riverbank, the museum is accessible via a sky bridge.

There are 18 galleries with exhibits that tell of the early inhabitants of the Lower

Mississippi River Valley and describe modern-day transportation along the river. There are also two full-size boat replicas to tour.

Pack a picnic and head to the adjacent Mississippi River Greenbelt Park. There are two concession stands open during park hours where you can pick up a drink or snacks.

- **Admission:** Free for general admission and sky bridge access. Museum package includes museum admission, riverwalk access with optional tour and round-trip monorail ride. Adults: \$10. Seniors: \$9. Children 5-11: \$7. Children 4 and under: Free.
- **Information:** 901-576-7241 or [www.mudisland.com](http://www.mudisland.com).
- **Hours:** 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesday-Sunday.

## USS Alabama Battleship Memorial Park

2703 Battleship Parkway, Mobile, Alabama

The USS Alabama arrived in Mobile Bay in 1964 and opened for public tours a year later. Now, more than 50 years later, millions have come to visit and pay tribute to a ship that served in the Atlantic and Pacific theaters during World War II. Tour the ship from stem to stern, then visit the USS Drum, a submarine that also saw action in World War II and is the oldest submarine in the nation on display.

Battleship Memorial Park is a voyage through time and will teach children and adults about the maritime happenings during World War II. This is an outdoor "museum" that also includes an extensive aircraft collection, along with tanks and artillery. There's a picnic area as well as a cafe, The Galley, indoors next to the ship's store.

- **Admission:** Adults: \$15. Seniors: \$13. Children 6-11: \$6. Children ages 6-11 of active military: \$5. Active military and Children 5 and under: Free.
- **Information:** 251-433-2703 or [www.ussalabama.com](http://www.ussalabama.com).
- **Hours:** 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. April through September and 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. October through March. ☎



HI! I'M AMANDA CLARK.

This column, which appears in each issue, will allow you to read about technology and learn 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!

## DEVICE OF THE MONTH



### HP LaserJet Pro M281fdw

This all-in-one printer is ideal for a home office. It's a color laser printer that can scan, copy and fax. It outputs up to 22 pages per minute, and it can handle two-sided printing. You can print from your iOS or Android device wirelessly. It also comes with a touchscreen for setup and use, as well as printing directly off a USB drive. MSRP \$349.99.

# Pick the right tool

## Tips for choosing a printer and scanner

A home printer is indispensable, whether you need it for a book report, a bake sale flyer, a photograph or a special recipe. Similarly, having a scanner to bring a physical object into the digital world can be just as important.

But selecting the right printer or scanner can be daunting, so it's key to ask yourself a few basic questions before you make a choice. Let's start with the printer.

If you're like most home users, your printer will be a jack-of-all-trades. An inkjet printer uses color ink cartridges to produce final images. Most inkjets can handle text and images well, although results often vary depending on the quality of the paper. These printers are usually inexpensive, with many models starting at less than \$50. But you can run out of ink quickly, and replacing the cartridges can cost more than the printer.

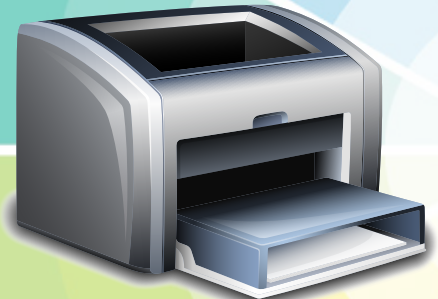
If you only need to print text, a laser printer may be a better purchase. Laser printers use toner, which is a powder fused to the paper during printing. And while toner can be more expensive than ink, it will generally need to be replaced less frequently. There are also color laser printers, but they are more expensive than an inkjet. Expect to pay about \$100 for a black-and-white laser printer and about \$200 for a color laser printer.

If you like to print your photos at home, some printers specialize in providing the best image quality. Some are inkjet, but if you're willing to spend more, you can go with a dye sublimation printer, which will give you professional-quality prints.

Choosing a scanner may be easier. For often less than \$100, a traditional flatbed scanner can handle most things a home user may need. Tasks might include text, images and optical character recognition, which transforms a scanned document into editable text. Pricier models can handle scanning slides and film, too. Portable scanner models, including handheld or wand scanners, allow you to capture documents on the go and can transfer information wirelessly.

Unless you're doing very specific work, you don't need to worry about resolution when buying a modern scanner or printer. They all do a good job with general tasks.

Some alternatives: If you need to save on desk space, a combination printer and scanner is a good choice because it also functions as a copier. ☑



# Farm fresh

Raw milk breathes  
new life into dairy

BY JEN CALHOUN

Every day for the past 35 years, Mark Wiley has woken up before 2 a.m. to milk the dairy cows on his farm in Abbeville. And every day has brought a new challenge.

But the biggest challenge over the past 10 years or so has been making money, says Keri Young, Wiley's daughter and one of the full-time workers at Southern Oaks Jerseys Farm & Creamery.

"We used to sell milk to a big cooperative," says Young, who left her job as a surgical technician to work full time at the family farm. "But there's no market doing that anymore. Milk prices are dropping. That's bad for the farmers because there's no money in it after everybody else gets paid."

## BACK TO THE OLD WAYS

Wiley and his family changed their business model in 2011 after discovering a growing number of people looking for fresh milk straight from the source. Now, they sell both raw and pasteurized milk, chocolate milk and buttermilk to restaurants, coffee shops, bakeries and individual customers.

Raw milk, or unpasteurized milk, has become increasingly popular with consumers who say the bacteria killed in the pasteurization process is beneficial to gut health and overall well-being.

Farm fresh isn't just a marketing slogan either, Young says. The 100 or so cows on the farm are milked at 2 a.m. and 2 p.m. daily, and the milk is bottled on-site the same day. "If they're drinking our milk, it's usually straight from the cow that morning," she says. "It's always fresh and not watered down."



Mark Wiley has operated his cattle business for the last 35 years.



Mark and Dana Wiley, along with their daughters, Keri Young and Hannah Davis, operate Southern Oaks Jerseys Farm & Creamery.

## OLD WAYS ARE NEW AGAIN

If it sounds like an old-fashioned way to run a business, it is, Young says. So is the creamery's honor system, which allows customers to pick up milk day or night and drop their cash in a box. This payment system has been abused in the past but is now guarded by a security system through WCTEL.

"It just helps us keep an eye on what's going on down there," she says. "We have an app on our phone that lets us check out what's going on."

The system also lets them focus on the hundreds of other tasks at the farm.

"It's a 24-hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week job," she says. "There is no rest for the weary. But it's in my dad's blood, and it's his dream. Now, it's in all of our blood." ☎



## If you go

Southern Oaks Jerseys Farm & Creamery is a dairy farm owned and operated by Mark and Dana Wiley with help from their daughters, Keri Young and Hannah Wiley Davis. It sells raw and pasteurized milk, chocolate milk and buttermilk. Pick up milk 24 hours a day at 1458 Highway 20 in Abbeville. The farm uses the honor system for payments, so just leave your cash in the box. For more information and testimonials, check out their Facebook page.

# PAMPERED PETS

THE BEST DOGGONE ONLINE SERVICES THAT WON'T BREAK THE BANK

BY PATRICK SMITH

From top-shelf food to all-organic goodies and toys galore, we love to spoil our pets. But if you're tired of outdated playthings and boring treats, look into an online subscription for your most cherished friends. Toys and treats help pets focus and develop to improve their mental and physical well-being.

And while online subscription boxes for dogs and cats are the most common, don't fret if you have another type of pet. The internet has thought of everything. Search online and you'll find boxes for horses (SaddleBox), fish (My Aquarium Box), birds (ParrotBox) and more.

More than anything else, online shopping means one thing: convenience.

That's what's great about rural living powered by high-speed internet. You have the benefits of rural, hometown life with the convenience of staying connected. Internet-based subscriptions can bring deliveries of the products you need most.

In the July/August issue, we featured several food subscription services — look back if you missed it. If you're curious about other online subscriptions out there, don't wait on us. Check them out for yourself. Everything from shaving products to jewelry and coffee to mystery boxes is shipping out daily. In the next issue, we'll feature a few popular online fashion subscriptions.



## BARKBOX BARKBOX.COM

Put the pep back in Fido's step with BarkBox. It's a fun, dog-themed delivery service with unique toys, treats and more for your four-legged friend. Choose a theme for your box, like New York City. This one comes complete with a miniature fire hydrant and "I Love NY" T-shirt. A Chewrassic Bark box comes with dinosaur-inspired treats and a lava-spewing chew toy.



## BULLYMAKE BULLYMAKE.COM

Is that old toy rope past its prime? Bullymake to the rescue! Billed as the box that's designed for "power chewers," Bullymake gives you durable toys and healthy treats to keep your dog entertained for hours and hours. They also specialize in goods specifically tailored to your dog's weight and allergies.



## PUPBOX PUPBOX.COM

Not much is cuter than a young pup learning to navigate life. And with all the work we put into helping our kids succeed, why not help our puppies thrive? Based on your dog's age, PupBox has training guidelines to help them navigate puppyhood with a nonstop wagging tail. PupBox brings training tips, treats, toys, chews and more to your mailbox each month.

## KITNIPBOX KITNIPBOX.COM

Don't turn your frisky kitty into a grumpy cat. KitNipBox keeps your cat entertained with several quality toys and all-natural treats in each box. It'll leave your friend purring for more. Best of all, KitNipBox helps support several animal welfare organizations with your purchase.

What's getting in  
the way of your

# Wi-Fi SIGNAL?

Wi-Fi makes internet service available to a wide range of devices without physically connecting them to your router. However, it's important to remember that the strength and quality of your signal can be influenced by several factors:



## The age of your device and its capabilities

Some computers and gaming consoles may use older technology that can't take advantage of today's higher speeds.



## Other electronics in your home

Common, non-connected electronic items can sometimes interfere with your Wi-Fi strength. These include microwave ovens (the major offender), cordless phones, Bluetooth devices and even fluorescent lights.



## Home construction materials between the router and your device

Some materials used in home construction can weaken your Wi-Fi signal strength. Metal in particular can cause interference because it can reflect and scatter Wi-Fi signals. Culprits include metal framing, ductwork, electrical panels and metal roofs.



## The distance between the router and your device

A computer in a second-floor bedroom, for example, may have a weaker connection than a computer on the first floor where the router is located.



## The number of devices sharing your Wi-Fi connection

Every device connected to your Wi-Fi is sharing the total bandwidth of your home's internet connection. If people in your home are streaming a movie on a tablet, playing a gaming console, watching a smart TV, sharing photos online and searching the internet all at the same time, some users could notice slower performance compared to times when fewer devices are used.

## Not Enough Speed?

If you have a number of devices fighting over your Wi-Fi signal, you may want to consider increasing your internet speed. Give us a call. We'll walk through how you use your broadband internet connection and talk about the right package to meet your needs.


## Too Far Away?

If you use Wi-Fi enabled devices in rooms far away from your router, you may want to consider adding one or more network extenders to your home. Give us a call and we can discuss ways to boost your Wi-Fi signal strength to extend better connection speeds to more rooms — or even to a patio or deck.

# ‘HIDDEN MECCA’

## Lake Russell group advocates for local treasure

BY JOHN CLAYTON

A person with short brown hair, wearing a yellow shirt and a pink life vest, is seen from behind while paddling a yellow kayak on a calm body of water. The water reflects the surrounding green trees and foliage. The person is holding a black paddle with both hands. The kayak has a small logo on its side.

Bebe Wesson, president of the Lake Russell Recreation and Tourism Coalition, paddles out into the Blue Hole Recreation Area.

Bebe Wesson’s diesel pickup, trailering a pair of Day-Glo yellow kayaks, rumbles to a stop at the Blue Hole Recreation Center.

She is always prepared if an overwhelming desire to paddle in Lake Russell strikes. This is a distinct possibility at a place volunteers with the Lake Russell Recreation and Tourism Coalition call a hidden mecca among South Carolina’s waterways and state parks.

“It’s such a pretty area,” says Wesson, the recently installed president of the coalition. “There are no houses on Lake Russell, so you’re surrounded by all the natural beauty.”

Named for the former Georgia senator, Lake Richard B. Russell hugs the Georgia and South Carolina state line and provides 540 miles of shoreline. Private development and use of the lake-

shore are prohibited, so visitors truly get back to nature. The lake is surrounded by 26,500 acres of largely undeveloped public land, including large swaths of South Carolina’s Calhoun Falls State Park.

### TOURISM RESOURCE

Coalition volunteer Ken Tinsley says state statistics show that the state park hosts 300,000 paid visitor days annually to Calhoun Falls and Abbeville County, pumping millions of dollars into the local economy. The coalition wants to improve those numbers, creating activities and a new energy around the Blue Hole Recreation Center, which includes the WCTEL pavilion, a small outdoor music venue on the shore of the lake.

The coalition formed more than a decade ago to help develop activities, events and economic opportunities in the Lake Russell



The sunset on Lake Russell draws people from the area to come watch the sun sink below the trees.



Bebe Wesson is the president of the Lake Russell Recreation and Tourism Coalition.



Lake Russell is perfect for kayaking.



Lake Russell Coalition members, from left, are Ronnie Ashley, Bebe Wesson, and Marian and Ken Tinsley.



This year, more than 100 paddlers made their way around the Blue Hole during Paddle Fest in May.

area. Wesson says there have been ups and downs, but the core group of volunteers remains committed to the group's mission. "We're going to try to get this thing going and try to make it a huge success so it grows and grows," she says.

The cadre of dedicated volunteers has worked tirelessly to organize events at the Blue Hole year after year, but Wesson says there is added strength in greater numbers. "We're always looking for volunteers," she says. "It's fun, and it's a lot of activity."

The coalition's dozen active members intend to create excitement around Lake Russell in the community. "I'm hoping next year to start doing some fun things for the group — things like having a potluck or bringing out the kayaks for a paddle just for the group," Wesson says of the coalition.

On Oct. 13, the Blue Hole's signature event — The Blue Hole Jubilee — will end the 2018 series of special events. The gathering at the WCTEL Pavilion features area musicians, vendors, food, family and friends.

Throughout spring and summer, the Blue Hole also hosts the Lake Russell Hustle, a 5K run and walk. The Freedom Blast

is another entertainment-for-the-whole-family event at the WCTEL Pavilion in late June. The Kids Fishing Derby, sponsored by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for more than three decades, puts thousands of catfish into the cove for young anglers.

Paddle Fest allows people to take kayaks out onto the lake for free each May. The event was on the verge of cancellation a couple of years ago, Wesson says, but this year, more than 100 paddlers made their way around the Blue Hole, and the event seems to be poised for growth.

"You've got to have activities if you're going to get people to come here," Wesson says. "I want Calhoun Falls to grow, and I want the area to succeed. I want to be able to give back to the community and maybe bring a new perspective. I'm looking forward to working with the new mayor, Chris Cowan, and the Calhoun Falls Chamber of Commerce and to having a new beginning for Calhoun Falls."

### DROUGHT-PROOF

Tinsley says Lake Russell is special by design, thanks to the Corps of Engineers. Lake Russell, filled over 15 months in 1983

and 1984, has a design that keeps its water at a consistent level, making it drought-proof while neighboring lakes, such as Lake Hartwell and Lake Strom Thurmond, can suffer significant drops in water levels.

Now, volunteers like Tinsley work to promote the lake as a unique resource. "What I'm pushing is the theme of 'the greater outdoors' with the state park and Lake Russell," Tinsley says. "We're calling it 'the greater outdoors' because Abbeville County is blessed with an abundance of natural resources."

Tinsley recently made his pitch to the Ten at the Top, a group of leaders from 10 upstate South Carolina counties working on economic development projects. Members of the group took a bus tour across the upstate that included Abbeville County.

"We have been left with the most exquisite environmental gem on the East Coast and maybe the nation," Tinsley told the group. "It is just now being found by the masses. And based on the Ten at the Top study, the 300,000 people expected to come to this area by 2040 will be clamoring for a place to get away." 🗣️

# GO LOW

## A low-carbohydrate diet can improve overall health

**J**on Rector has always been a big guy. Now 48 years old, he can't remember a time when he didn't buy his clothes in the husky department at his local department store. As a preteen and teenager, he was teased about his size, too. "I had a good disposition, though," he says. "I played it off."



Jon Rector's low-carb diet is helping to improve his overall health.

But when he tipped the scales at 300 pounds, shortly before he married his wife, Donna, he knew he needed to make a change. He dropped 80 pounds in three short months.

But, he says, "married life happens." And it didn't take long for those pounds to return to his 6-foot-4-inch frame. Rector is a big man and carries his weight well. He never had medical issues. Physically, he was fine through his 20s, 30s and most of his 40s. But chasing his young grandson was hard on him. "I wanted to be around for him," Rector says. "I knew I had to do something."

Two years ago, he went to his doctor, and tests came back confirming that his A1C count, a test used to diagnose diabetes, was 6.4. Diabetes is indicated when results are 6.5 or higher. "That was when I got more serious about my weight," he says.

Rector lost about 30 pounds and lowered his A1C some by reducing calories. But after a few months, he went back to his old habits. His nemeses? Sweet tea, ice cream, candy — all sorts of sugary treats. Before he knew it, he put on all the weight he had lost, plus more.

Rector is executive director of Union Gospel Mission, an organization that offers a residential program in Chattanooga to homeless men with life-controlling issues. He does not get much exercise.

In December 2017, he

weighed 470 pounds, and his A1C was at 6.8. That was his wake-up call. "My doctor wanted to put me on medication, but I hate meds," Rector says. "So I told the doctor 'no.' I wanted to lose weight on my own."

His doctor was skeptical, but Rector gave it a try. He'd lost weight before, so he figured he could do it again, and he did.

"It was nothing for me to be eating 6,000 to 8,000 calories a day," he says. "I'm a stress eater, and my go-to places were Taco Bell and McDonald's. We like Mexican food, too. And the waiter at the restaurant we used to go to knew me, and he would automatically bring me a sweet tea in the largest beer mug they had."

Rector knew he was in for a lifestyle change, and he chose to focus on low-carb eating. It's an approach he can live with. He thanks registered dietitian Danielle Townsend, with Primary Healthcare Centers in Chattanooga, for her guidance.

"Low-carb diets can be a sensible way to lose weight," Townsend says. "They have been shown to benefit those with cardiovascular disease and diabetes and also to help diminish food cravings. I think people opt for the low-carb diet because it allows them to lose weight faster, and that is an important motivating factor for them."

Rector lost 30 pounds in his first two months following a low-carb lifestyle and is now

down about 50 pounds since December.

Most people, Townsend says, have difficulty eliminating or reducing items such as pizza, biscuits, hamburger buns, rice, pasta and potatoes. The diet puts emphasis on whole, unprocessed foods, such as vegetables, eggs and lean meats.

Donna Rector, Jon's wife, has had to change her lifestyle, too. No longer does she prepare pasta and rice dishes. "I cook a lot of turkey now," she says.

Rector doesn't miss all the high-carbohydrate foods too much. He's always liked vegetables. "It's the way our grandparents used to eat," he says. "I really like this kind of food. The hard part, for me, is not the pasta and rice. It's the sweets. But the bottom line is that what you take in, you have to take off."

That motto, along with his grandson, keeps Rector going. "I want to take him hiking, take him camping," he says. "A year ago, I couldn't have done that. Now that I've lost some weight, I think I might be able to. In another year, I know I'll be able to. It's just like the same thing I teach the guys at the mission. It's all about making the right decisions."



FOOD EDITOR  
**ANNE P. BRALY**  
IS A NATIVE OF  
CHATTANOOGA,  
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# Low-carb recipes

## BREAKFAST SCRAMBLE

- 1/2 pound ground turkey
- 1/2 pound ground pork sausage
- 1 zucchini (large dice)
- 1 yellow squash (large dice)
- 1 medium onion (chopped)
- 1 bell pepper (large dice)
- 6 eggs
- 1/4 cup of cheese (your choice)

In a skillet, brown the turkey and pork, add vegetables and cook about 5-7 minutes. Scramble in eggs and cook completely. Add cheese to top and serve warm.



## TURKEY SLOPPY JOES


- 1 pound ground turkey
- 1 medium onion, finely chopped
- 1 medium bell pepper, finely chopped
- 1 clove of garlic, minced
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- 1 tablespoon Frank's Red Hot Sauce
- 3 cups crushed tomatoes
- 1 tablespoon honey

Salt and pepper, to taste  
Low-carb buns

Brown turkey in skillet. Remove from skillet and add onions, bell peppers and garlic, sauteing until soft. Return meat to skillet and add tomato paste, mustard, hot sauce, tomatoes and honey. Taste and season with salt and pepper if needed. Simmer mixture till warmed through and thickened slightly. Spoon onto low-carb buns.

## LOW-CARB VEGETABLE BEEF SOUP

- 1/2 teaspoon olive oil
- 1 pound lean ground beef
- 1/2 large onion, chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, crushed
- 1 (15-ounce) can diced tomatoes, undrained
- 3 (15-ounce) cans beef or vegetable broth
- 6 ounces fresh green beans, cut into bite-sized pieces
- 1/4 head cabbage, chopped
- 4 ounces fresh mushrooms, chopped
- 1/2 medium zucchini, peeled and roughly diced
- 1 bay leaf
- Salt and pepper, to taste

In a medium to large pot, heat olive oil; brown ground beef, onion and garlic. Add remaining ingredients. Bring to a boil; simmer, cover and cook on low for 15-30 minutes. Discard bay leaf before serving. 



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