

# CONNECTED

## WCTEL BUSINESS SERVICES

Custom solutions,  
cutting-edge  
technology

### TRY A TOUR THAT POPS

Soda bottlers showcase  
regional favorites

### 2018 YEAR IN REVIEW

WCTEL hits milestones and  
supports the community



BY SHIRLEY BLOOMFIELD, CEO  
NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association

## What is your broadband story?

We just closed out a year when rural broadband was a continuing news item, and I believe that will hold true in 2019. This is good news for those of you reading this magazine, and even better news for the millions of rural Americans not served by a progressive broadband provider like yours.

It's easy to get caught up in the policy behind the issues. After all, the bills Congress debates become the laws that govern rural broadband. It's so important that rural broadband providers like yours stay involved in the process to ensure that public policy encourages investment in building reliable broadband service to our rural regions. That's a key function of NTCA as the unified voice of nearly 850 independent, community-based telecommunications companies.

But we must always remind ourselves that the reason we work for good public policy is to help communities build the networks needed to support an improved quality of life for real people. In every issue of this magazine, you read stories of people who are using broadband to make a difference in their lives, businesses, families and communities. That is what drives our work.

With funding programs in the news, USDA efforts and FCC initiatives — not to mention new providers getting into the telecom business — 2019 is going to be another big news year for broadband. Help us keep our eyes on the human impact by sharing your broadband stories on social media using the #ruraliscool hashtag. [📱](#)



## Fighting cyberthreats together

**NTCA continues a collaboration with the Department of Homeland Security to provide telcos with critical cyberthreat information**

Small telecommunications providers mount a strong defense against advanced security threats from criminal elements and overseas enemies. Beyond the professionals on its local staff, your internet provider benefits from the cybersecurity efforts of hundreds of similar companies across the U.S.

NTCA—The Rural Broadband Association represents nearly 850 independent, community-based telecommunications companies, helping them collectively work toward solutions to industry challenges and better serve their members and customers.

The association recently announced that, in partnership with the Department of Homeland Security and National Institute for Hometown Security, it will explore creating a forum for small, rural telecom operators from across the country to share and receive timely, actionable and relevant cyber information.

Bob Kolasky, director of the National Risk Management Center, presented NTCA with a National Infrastructure Protection Program Security & Resilience Challenge award for 2019 to support the project, which will include the creation and beta test of a daily cyber intelligence report. This will be curated to meet the unique needs and interests of community-based telecommunications broadband providers.

This new award follows NTCA's successful collaboration with DHS to create the 2018 Cyber Wise Program that provided free, industry-focused risk management training to rural telcos.

"NTCA is proud to support small, rural operators as they navigate an increasingly complex cyber landscape," says NTCA Chief Executive Officer Shirley Bloomfield. "As we all know, cyberattacks are truly a matter of 'when,' not 'if,' and this new partnership with DHS and NIHS will help explore a new forum to ensure rural broadband providers are both aware of threats and equipped with the information and tools that they need to respond. I'm grateful for this continued collaboration and look forward to seeing its results." [📱](#)

# Lifeline SERVICE

Lifeline is a government assistance program that can help pay a portion of your telephone, mobile phone or internet bill each month. Consumers are allowed only one Lifeline program benefit per household.



## How much will Lifeline save me?

If you qualify for Lifeline, you will receive a credit of \$9.25 each month on your bill.



## What services are covered by this credit?

You have the choice (where applicable) of applying your benefit to one of three types of service offerings:

- Fixed or mobile broadband
- Fixed or mobile voice-only
- Bundles of fixed or mobile voice and broadband

NOTE: Lifeline can only be used for one source of communication from the list above.



## Can I receive more than one Lifeline credit?

No, consumers are allowed only one Lifeline program benefit per household.



## How do I qualify?

You are eligible for Lifeline benefits if you qualify for and receive one of the following benefits:

- SNAP
- Medicaid
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Federal Public Housing Assistance
- The Veteran's Pension or Survivor's Pension benefit.

Additionally, consumers at or below 135 percent of the Federal Poverty

Guidelines will continue to be eligible for a Lifeline program benefit. (State determinations of income will no longer be accepted.) There are no changes to the eligibility criteria for Tribal programs.

**NOTE: Some states have additional qualifying programs, allowances and stipulations. Check with your local telecommunications provider for information about benefits that may be available in your state.**



## How do I enroll in the Lifeline program and start receiving this benefit?

To find out whether you qualify for Lifeline assistance, please visit [www.lifelinesupport.org](http://www.lifelinesupport.org) or call your local telecommunications provider.

**NOTE:** Your telephone company is not responsible for determining who qualifies for these programs or who receives assistance. Consumers must meet specific criteria in order to obtain assistance with their local telephone and/or broadband service, and qualifying is dependent upon government-established guidelines.



## DO YOU QUALIFY?

**Stay connected with a Lifeline discount.**

**Apply today!**



## FRS YOUTH APP CHALLENGE

Students, it's time to start thinking about the Foundation for Rural Service's challenge and the app that could pave the way to your future.

**WHO:** Students enrolled in grades seven to 12. A single student, or teams with as many as five students, may compete.

**WHAT:** Develop a concept for a mobile app to address a problem or improve a process in your rural community or in rural America at-large. The challenge is concept-based only, and entries will be judged based on how well-researched and well-presented the app is. It must be possible and not already an app in existence.

**WHEN:** The submission deadline is March 1, 2019.

**WHY:** The winning team will receive \$1,000 in gift cards and Codecademy scholarships.

**HOW:** Visit [FRS.org](http://FRS.org) for more information about submissions.



# Service for all generations

One thing that's great about our business is how our network can have a positive impact on so many people. Broadband benefits everyone from children to seniors — even if they use it for different things.



**JEFF WILSON**

Chief Executive Officer

In many instances, WCTEL has served four, five, six or even seven generations of families in our area. How many companies can say that? Obviously, times have changed, and the communication needs of your grandparents or great-grandparents were very different than yours are.

This issue of the magazine is focusing on one particular generation that seems to grab a lot of headlines: the millennials. While experts vary slightly on the parameters, "millennial" is the name given to people with birth dates from the mid-1980s through about 2005.

Depending on what article you've read most recently, you may feel millennials are either ruining everything or likely to save us all. But I believe one thing is certain: With millennials becoming

the largest segment of our population, they are going to change the way companies operate and the way our society works.

One of the primary traits most millennials share is the pervasiveness of technology in their lives. In fact, most members of this generation — especially those in their teens and early 20s — have never known a world without internet-connected technology.

It may be easy to sit back and worry about the shifts this generation is already creating. But to me, it's important to remember that these millennials are the future of our community and of WCTEL.

Think about it with me.

- Their complex lives frequently play out in a mix of social media and text messages, rather than face-to-face interactions.
- With the advent of digital photography and phones with cameras, they are the most photographed generation in human history.
- They aspire to jobs working remotely, like coding, web design or other careers that couldn't have existed a decade or two ago. And if they create their own companies, the business world — especially in rural America — doesn't present nearly as many obstacles for startups as it once did.
- For entertainment, many of us grew up with only a few channels on the television set, but millennials are accustomed to hundreds of channels and programming on demand right on their tablets.
- They take classes online, apply for jobs through mobile apps and often lead the way on digital innovation, with smart home, telemedicine or other technology.

The tastes and preferences of millennials are already having an impact on WCTEL. Millennials are some of our most frequent users of services like online bill pay or the chat function on our website. They are more likely to only want a cellphone, rather than a landline. Most importantly, they need a robust internet connection to handle all of their devices, and we are working hard to deliver and improve that service every day.

Personally and professionally, I'm excited to see the way these young people make an impact on WCTEL, our community and our world. And we're going to adapt and work hard to continue meeting their communication needs just like we have for the generations before them. ☎



## CONNECTED

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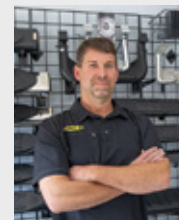
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### On the Cover:



Todd Martin, co-owner of Line-X of the Carolinas, relies on customized business communications solutions provided by WCTEL. See story Page 9.





## Calling all high school juniors!

Apply today for the 2019 Youth Tour to Washington, D.C.

High school juniors are encouraged to apply for the 2019 Foundation for Rural Service Youth Tour. Applicants must be rising high school seniors graduating in 2020, and must be under the age of 18 at the time of the tour.

FRS brings together high school seniors from across rural America to visit Washington, D.C. The trip offers them a chance to learn about rural telecommunications and observe the legislative and governmental processes in our nation's capital. The 2019 tour will be June 1-5.

Applications must be received by March 6. Applicants must live in the WCTEL service area and be active members of WCTEL.

Students can get more information from their guidance counselors or go to [wctel.com](http://wctel.com) for instructions and eligibility rules and to download an application.

## Scholarships available for high school seniors



Applications are being accepted for WCTEL's annual four-year scholarship, which provides \$2,000 per year for a total of \$8,000. One FRS scholarship of as much as \$7,000 may also be awarded.

High school seniors who are active members of WCTEL, or whose parents or guardians are active members, are eligible. This scholarship is not based on GPA. A student's leadership qualities, community involvement, extracurricular activities and teacher recommendations will also be considered.

The scholarship winner will be chosen by the FRS Scholarship Selection Committee.

Student eligibility rules and an application are available on [wctel.com](http://wctel.com) or from the school guidance counselor.

## 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 tele-

phone 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](http://www.donotcall.gov).

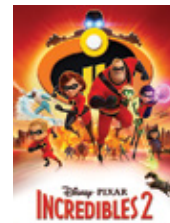
The inclusion of your telephone number on the National Do-Not-Call registry is effective 31 days following registration. You may remove your number from the list at any time. WCTEL is happy to provide you with this information as required by the Federal Communications Commission.



*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."



### INCREDIBLES 2

The long-awaited, action-packed sequel brings back this family of superheroes as they learn what powers baby Jack Jack will possess.



### MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE — FALLOUT

Tom Cruise returns in the Ethan Hunt series to face a potential nuclear attack in the Middle East.



### THE HOUSE WITH A CLOCK IN ITS WALLS

Jack Black and Cate Blanchett join this fantastical tale of witches, warlocks and a magical house.

*Don't miss these other releases*  
**COMING SOON TO VIDEO ON DEMAND:**

- Alpha (2018)
- Crazy Rich Asians
- Dog Days
- The Meg
- Mile 22
- Searching (2018)
- Smallfoot

# Take a sip of history

## Soda bottling tours offer a tasty treat



Ale-8-One is a signature Kentucky soda and part of a family-owned business dating to 1902. Tours are available at its plant in Winchester, Kentucky.

George Fletcher boarded a train in New York near his Long Island home and rode for hours until he arrived in Cincinnati. Then, he rented a car and drove 100 miles to his destination: the Ale-8-One plant in Winchester, Kentucky. He patiently waited until the start of the tour, which had also drawn parents with young children, grandparents and others who love Kentucky's favorite soda.

"I've wanted to do this for a long time," Fletcher says. "I've loved Ale 8 for so long, and it will be fun to see how it's made. Just to see the process will be so interesting."

Fletcher's quest is not unusual. Guests come from all around to see where and how their favorite soda is made, says DeAnne Elmore, the company's public relations and field marketing manager.

### Crafting a destination

The building now housing Ale-8-One was originally part of a bowling alley. The first soda was produced in 1926, and the company moved its headquarters in 1966. In 1989, an addition enabled increased soda production. There are now four varieties of Ale-8-One: the original, diet, caffeine-free and cherry.

Tours began during the soda's 75th birthday celebration. "We are limited by space, so we try to keep groups at about 30 people," Elmore says. "That way, everybody gets a good experience and can see our production facility. People get to see up close and personal who's really making this brand."

The company embraced Kentucky's legacy of beverage production, which benefits from the popularity of bourbon and the Bourbon Trail tourism guide. "We are a member of the Kentucky Distiller's Association and an associate member of the Bourbon Trail as Kentucky's only soft drink," Elmore says.

Guests on the tour take a seat in a large room where they enjoy a video presentation hosted by the company's CEO, Fielding Rogers, who is the fourth generation of the Rogers family to hold the post. The video offers a history of the brand and the manufacturing processes that are not part of the tour due to OSHA safety regulations. Following the video, a vial of the secret formula that is part of every bottle of Ale-8-One is passed around for sniffing before the tour takes a turn



through the heart of the facility. Visitors see where bottles are filled, capped and prepared for shipping.

"We're still an operating manufacturing facility, so we can't guarantee that all the lines will be running, but we try to do our best to make sure they are when we have tours," Elmore says.

Following the tour, guests are treated to tastes of Ale-8-One, and if you want to take some home — or a baseball cap, hoodie, koozie, salsa, barbecue sauce or other Ale-8 gear — there's a gift shop near the entrance/exit.

For tours of Ale-8-One, offered on Thursday and Friday mornings, log on to [www.ale8one.com](http://www.ale8one.com).

## HOW IT BEGAN

George Lee Wainscott started his soft drink company in 1902, making distilled water and flavored drinks. In 1906, he added Roxa-Cola to his inventory, named for his wife, Roxanne. Coca-Cola sued and lost, but even so, Wainscott wanted something new and unique to him, so he invented a new, unnamed soda — a pleasant blend of ginger and citrus. He introduced his creation at the Clark County Fair and sponsored a "name-that-soda" contest. The winning name was "A Late One," meaning, in Southern vernacular, "the latest thing" or "something new." The name "A Late One" was then created into a logo pun, Ale-8-One, that would eventually become the colloquial name. But every bottle still carries the original "A Late One" name above Ale-8-One.

Following Wainscott's death, the company passed into the hands of his second wife, Jane Rogers; then to her brother, Frank Rogers; and on to his son, Frank Jr., who left it to his son, Frank III, who left it to his son and current CEO Fielding Rogers. He still uses his great-great-uncle's handwritten notes to hand-mix the secret original formula.

# Sodas around the South

## TENNESSEE

Double Cola is as synonymous with Chattanooga, Tennessee, as Moon Pies. Double Cola has been made in the downtown area since 1933 by the company that also produces other soft drinks like Ski, Jumbo Chaser and Oranta. Buy a hoodie and other items online and learn more about it at [double-cola.com](http://double-cola.com).

## SOUTH CAROLINA

Since 1903, Blenheim has produced ginger ale in Hamer, South Carolina. But the drink's origins go back to the 1700s when a man lost his shoe in a water hole. Thirsty, he sampled the water and found it to be excellent. One hundred years later, ginger was added to the water and Blenheim Ginger Ale was born. The soda now comes in three varieties: mild, hot and diet.

## ALABAMA

Buffalo Rock Ginger Ale was created in the late 1800s and is instilled in the hearts of Alabamians. The Birmingham company of the same name — Buffalo Rock — continues to make its famous ginger ale. It has added more sodas to its line over the years, including Grapico, Wham and Sunfresh. The company remains family-owned and is under the leadership of founder Sidney Lee's great-grandson, James C. Lee.

Interesting fact: Buffalo Rock developed the first 3-liter soda bottles used by many soft drink companies today.

## GEORGIA

Coca-Cola was created in Atlanta, and a visit to World of Coke teaches you all about the Coke phenomenon. Learn the story behind it, see Coke artifacts, enjoy interactive exhibits, get a behind-the-scenes look at the bottling process and more. For information, visit [www.worldofcoca-cola.com](http://www.worldofcoca-cola.com).

## NORTH CAROLINA

L.D. Peeler created Cheerwine in Salisbury, North Carolina, 102 years ago at the height of a sugar shortage in World War I. The wild cherry cola was an immediate hit and is now marketed across the country. The family-owned company is under the leadership of L.D. Peeler's great-grandson. 🍷



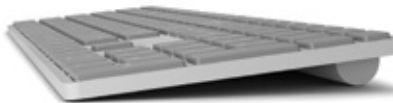




HI! I'M AMANDA CLARK.

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



### Microsoft Modern Keyboard

Want to make sure only you can use your Windows PC? This keyboard comes with a fingerprint sensor that lets you access your computer without the need of a password. Made from aluminum, the keyboard is slim, has a solid feel and looks great. It can also be used wirelessly via Bluetooth, with up to four months between charges. \$129.99 MSRP.



# Lock it down

## Keep your data safe

Once, all you had to worry about in terms of digital security was making sure your antivirus software was up to date. Now, with the host of devices we use and their constant connection to the internet, it's more important than ever to understand how best to keep your information safe.

Below you'll find a few tips on how to secure your specific devices, but a few best practices apply across the board:

1. Don't open any suspicious web links, whether that's through a text, email or pop-up ad.
2. Keep your devices updated. New vulnerabilities are discovered periodically, and companies are pretty good at offering patches or security upgrades.
3. Where available — or practical — use two-step verification to access your accounts, which usually means getting a text or email to confirm your identity. Also, audit your security questions so they don't include information that is widely available or easy to guess.

### IPHONE

Not only is an iPhone an expensive device, but if you're like most users, it also holds a wealth of personal information. A good way to locate your device is to activate Find My iPhone, which can help you see your phone's location from another device or computer. If you know it's lost, you can also remotely wipe it and remove personal information.

Other ways to stay safe are to use a longer passcode than the traditional four-number PIN. The passcode can also be switched to alphanumeric, a combination of letters and numbers, for even more security. Consider enabling the erase data setting, which wipes your information after 10 incorrect passcode attempts. Parents with a curious toddler might wish to avoid that setting.

### ANDROID

Android devices are a little more open to user customization than Apple's closed system,

which makes them somewhat more vulnerable. Activate Google's Find My Device and encrypt your data. Unless you have a Google-branded phone, that option is not on by default, so change it in the device settings under "security." Then, install a security application, such as Avast or AVG. Also, opt to download apps only from Google Play or other secure sources, such as Amazon or Samsung.

### COMPUTERS

Security on a personal computer mostly means internet safety. Don't install suspect software, and don't install Google Chrome extensions from unknown providers.

You can also encrypt your information. If someone gains access to your secured files, they can't be opened without a password. That feature is available on most modern operating systems. It's also always a good idea to back up your data, either physically through an external hard drive not connected to the internet, on the cloud, or both.

### ROUTERS

If you use "admin" as your username and "password" as your password, stop. The No. 1 thing people forget to do is change their router's default login information. You may have a good password for your Wi-Fi network, but if someone can gain access to your router, it won't matter.

Also, use the WPA2 security standard for your network. If practical, you can make your Wi-Fi invisible by telling your router to stop broadcasting its name or Service Set Identifier (SSID). Just remember what you called your network so you can manually share that with trusted devices.

### SMART DEVICES

Use your router's "guest" network feature to connect all your smart devices. If you do, even if a hacker gains access, your computer or phone will be walled off from the primary network. 📶

# Better business

## WCTEL Business Services gets rave reviews

BY JOHN CLAYTON

**T**ina McNeil realized exactly what she had in WCTEL Business Services when it was gone.

Tina and husband Todd, who co-own and operate Line-X of the Carolinas, moved their truck accessories business from Abbeville to Greenwood in 2014. They gave up WCTEL Business Services after 18 years, a span in which the network evolved from dial-up internet to a fast fiber optic communications network.

“We had to go to other providers, and it was not a good experience,” Tina McNeil says. “It was terrible. That’s when I realized how really good WCTEL is. They have a small-town feel to them, but there’s nothing small about it. They can give you everything you want.”

### RETURN TO THE FOLD

When WCTEL expanded and invested in areas of Greenwood County, Line-X of the Carolinas and the McNeils returned. “I think I was literally the first one to sign up,” Tina McNeil says. “It’s like working

with family. They’ve always treated us that way.”

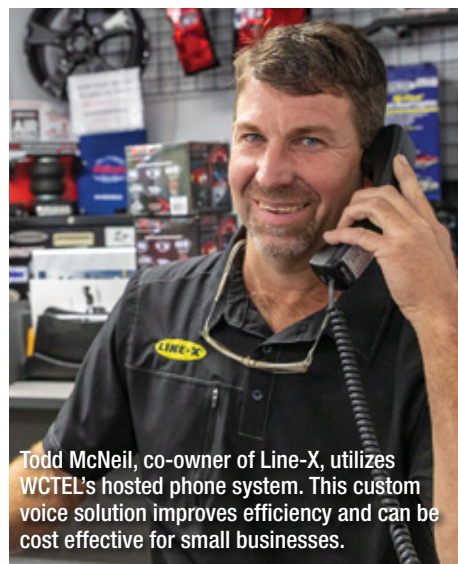
With other providers, McNeil says she never knew exactly who to call or who she would get to help. Not so with WCTEL.

“At WCTEL, more than one person knows what you need. They treat me like I’m the most important,” she says. “WCTEL is bigger now, but they’ve maintained their small-business services. It’s cutting-edge and much better than others. When they come in to do the work, they’re happy and professional. You can feel that, too.”

### BUSINESS TOOLS

The McNeils use WCTEL’s Hosted Business Communications telephone system to stay connected with employees and customers, and they rely on WCTEL’s high-speed internet, which offers up to 1 Gbps download speeds. And they even have high-definition TV. All of it is customized to suit the needs of their business.

“We don’t have cookie-cutter solutions,” says WCTEL Director of Business Services Chuck Nash. “We custom fit every business based on size and need.”



Todd McNeil, co-owner of Line-X, utilizes WCTEL’s hosted phone system. This custom voice solution improves efficiency and can be cost effective for small businesses.

WCTEL serves the Abbeville County School District and the Abbeville Area Medical Center, as well as a host of small businesses in the Abbeville, McCormick and Greenwood areas.

“We custom tailor our services to each business specifically,” Nash says. “We can do a full-blown enterprise-level service or a single business phone line.”

Tina McNeil says WCTEL’s rates for its business solutions are comparable to those of other providers but says it’s hard to put a price on the peace of mind and comfort she has with WCTEL. “Even the billing is precise, and it’s easy to read line by line. There aren’t any hidden fees or anything like that. I can’t say enough good stuff about them.” ☎



The WCTEL Business Team, from left, are Brian Sorrow, business solutions tech; Rusty Latham, managed IT services tech II; Zac Campbell, managed services team leader; Lana Botts, business solutions consultant/project coordinator; Chad Posey, business solutions tech; Chuck Nash, director of business solutions/network services; Max Crawford, regional market manager; Marsha Patterson, business solutions consultant; Ryan Walton, managed IT services tech II; and Kristen Booth, security/home automation consultant.





# Rethinking rural

How some millennials are re-evaluating life in rural communities

BY DREW WOOLLEY

Six years ago, Chase Rushing thought he had his future planned. Living in San Marcos, Texas, between San Antonio and Austin, he and his wife had access to all the entertainment a 20-something couple could want — not to mention a burgeoning tech scene.

“Our plan was to stay in the Austin area,” Rushing says. “That’s where the jobs were, and that’s what I was preparing myself for.”

That preference for metropolitan areas is typical for a generation that rural communities have had difficulty holding on to: millennials. But there’s reason to believe millennials may find more to like in rural communities as they age.

For many, the term millennial has become synonymous with the silly, and derogatory, stereotype of any young person eating avocados while staring at their phone. But the Pew Research Center works with a more precise definition. They define millennials as anyone born from the years 1981 to 1997.

That means even the youngest millennials have likely already entered the workforce, while the oldest probably have



Photo courtesy of Isahel Reyna

Chase Rushing wants his own family to experience the small-town lifestyle he grew up with.

a mortgage and kids to raise. As Rushing and his wife began considering the latter, the idea of returning to his hometown of Yantis, Texas, lodged itself in Rushing’s mind.

“It was important for me that my son got to experience what I did growing up,” he says. “Being around all your family, the friendships, the bonds you form over that time. It’s like nothing else.”

## WIDE-OPEN SPACES

Even if millennials are no longer the youngest generation, several characteristics set them apart from those before them. They tend to value experiences over

possessions, get their news online rather than from TV, and value work-life balance in their careers.

Perhaps most importantly, millennials are the first generation to grow up in the internet age, meaning they have a natural comfort with technology previous generations have not had. That could make them a predictor of how future tech-savvy generations will behave.

Millennial trends are of particular interest to Dr. Roberto Gallardo, assistant director of the Purdue Center for Regional Development. While the mainstream consensus has been that millennials are flocking to cities, Gallardo



believes improved internet connectivity could provide new opportunities in rural areas.

“If you have a young family, you may consider moving out of an urban area because of rising housing prices,” he says. “Rural areas have a natural ambiance that can attract younger families if their job allows them to telework.”

That draw depends heavily on rural communities building a high-speed internet connection, but there is reason to believe doing so could have a significant impact.

A population analysis by Gallardo and two colleagues published in *The Daily Yonder* shows that, while rural counties across the country are seeing declines in millennial populations, those with high-speed internet service saw millennial populations increase by 2.3 percent from 2010 to 2016.

That may not sound like much, but Gallardo points out that this is a process just getting started as millennials grow older.

“Younger folks always flock to cities, so if you’re a very rural community, broadband is not a silver bullet,” says Gallardo. “But it is a very key ingredient to attract or retain millennials or younger families.”

## CROSS-GEN COMMUNITIES

John Larson moved to a rural community not because he wanted to work remotely, but because his work could only be done from there. As a ceramic sculptor living outside of Milan, Minnesota, Larson is able to run his own business with low overhead and access natural materials that would be costly or inconvenient in a larger city.

“Ceramics is a product of its location. If you use local materials, it will be a reflection of its place,” he says. “I’ve built my small business on reusing bent nails and foraging for materials.”

Larson’s work also gets a boost from the established market for ceramics in the Midwest, but finding a place in that market isn’t always easy for young artists.

Fostering more rural development programs is one step Larson believes communities like his could take to better promote the culture that already exists, as well as to help business owners collaborate and learn from one another.

As the generation that now makes up the majority of the workforce, millennials will have an important say in those efforts. But Rushing believes that if his generation is going to open up rural communities to more young people, they will have to do so without losing sight of what makes the rural lifestyle special. It may be necessary to break down generational divides altogether.

“I think we need to be asking what we can do to impact our community. What

are the challenges we face and what can we do to address them?” he says. “It’s not millennials versus baby boomers or anyone else. It’s about all of us as a community.”

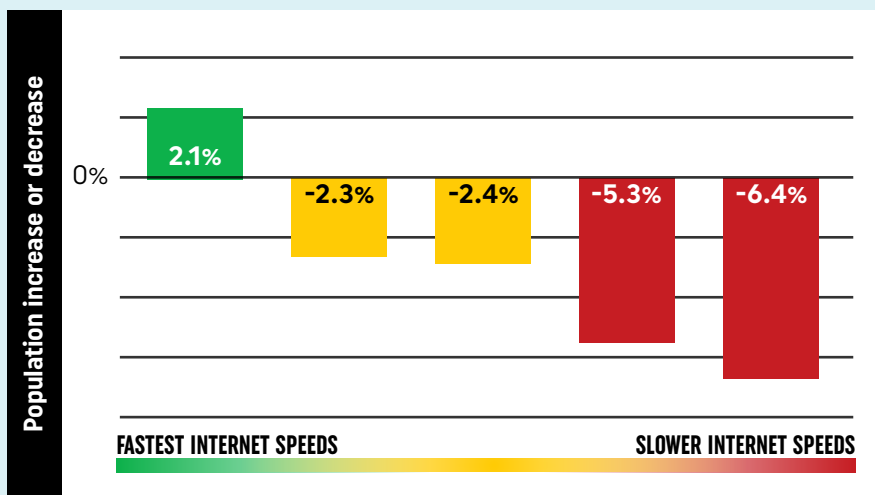


Living in a rural community gives John Larson the chance to share the countryside with his daughter.

Photo courtesy of Kristin Lindstrom.

## Rural America online

Millennial population change in southeastern states



Nationwide population data shows that rural communities are losing younger residents to larger metropolitan areas. When looking at rural counties that have invested in high-speed internet connections, however, the picture changes significantly.

The graph above shows how millennial populations changed in the most rural counties in Alabama, Kentucky, South Carolina and Tennessee from 2010 to 2016. Counties were ranked based on their internet connection, with the column on the far left showing those with the fastest internet speeds and the column on the far right showing the slowest.

Over that time, counties with the fastest internet connections saw millennial populations grow by more than 2 percent, while counties with slower connections saw their millennial populations drop by more than 6 percent.

# YEAR IN REVIEW

## WCTEL celebrates awards, advances in 2018

BY JOHN CLAYTON

In its 66th year, WCTEL continued to grow and to deliver the best in state-of-the-art communications technology to its members. WCTEL's fiber broadband network gives members and customers internet speeds that could be the envy of larger, more urban areas, and leaders in the communications business have noticed.

WCTEL received coveted national recognition for its service and its efforts to advance the community in 2018. But the cooperative was only continuing the story it has written for more than six decades in western South Carolina.

### RECOGNITION AS A SMART RURAL COMMUNITY

WCTEL became one of 13 rural communications cooperatives nationwide honored with the title Smart Rural Community by NTCA—The Rural Broadband Association.

The award, which WCTEL received during a gathering of industry leaders in October, recognized the benefits the cooperative's advanced communication services provided local agriculture, health care, public safety and education.

"WCTEL is a prime example of the power of a broadband connection and a steadfast commitment to growth and prosperity," says NTCA CEO Shirley Bloomfield. "Not only are the people of WCTEL charting their own path to a more prosperous future, but they are also creating a roadmap for many more communities across the country to follow suit. I commend the people of WCTEL for these extraordinary efforts."

WCTEL joined a dozen other providers in places such as Iowa; Kansas; Nebraska; North Dakota; Oklahoma; Texas; Wisconsin; and Ontario, Canada, as recipients of the Smart Rural Community designation.



Celebrating WCTEL's Smart Rural Community designation are, from left, Jay Jordan, network services tech II; Max Crawford, regional market manager; and Shannon Sears, director of commercial operations.

"We are pleased and excited to accept this award," says WCTEL board President Wes McAllister. "We have worked hard with our local leaders to ensure that our citizens have access to advanced communications and the many benefits those services enable. We look forward to building on our success for many years to come."

WCTEL Director of Commercial Operations Shannon Sears says the Smart Rural Community designation is a tangible endorsement of the cooperative's efforts.

"For us, it's about our community, and the designation is a way for us to promote and help our area in economic development," Sears says. "We can promote our work in education and in health care to draw more businesses in because we offer the same services people see in big cities.

It also brings recognition for the type of bandwidth and the type of network we have."

### A NEW DEAL FOR WCTEL CUSTOMERS

In 2018, WCTEL offered a Customer Broadband Only Line (CBOL), which did not require a telephone line to have internet service. WCTEL residents wishing to subscribe to the cooperative's broadband network need only sign up for the symmetrical 60 Mbps internet package for only \$40 monthly.

WCTEL also offers a variety of packages to fit your family's specific internet needs, with symmetrical speeds up to 1 Gbps or 1,000 Mbps. Call our office today to discuss a plan that works best for your family.



## GREENWOOD EXPANSION CONTINUES

Project Greenwood, part of a 10-year plan to expand fiber coverage into Greenwood County, successfully continued into its second year. “WCTEL is investing in Greenwood,” Sears says. “The good news is we have over 2,000 customers in Greenwood now, and we’re growing our fiber optic network daily. The Greenwood project continues to be a success.”

Sears says WCTEL has launched [www.gigupgreenwood.com](http://www.gigupgreenwood.com) for greenwood residents to register their address when they are interested in service. The areas with the most interest are being developed first.

## HELPING HANDS IN THE COMMUNITY

WCTEL continues to be a good neighbor and benefactor in the communities it serves.

The cooperative lends financial support to civic and charity organizations, and its employees continue to take on active roles in fundraising events for the community.

WCTEL and its employees have been involved with Relay for Life in Abbeville and McCormick counties for 15 years. For the fourth straight year, they raised more than \$10,000.

## INVESTING IN LOCAL YOUTH

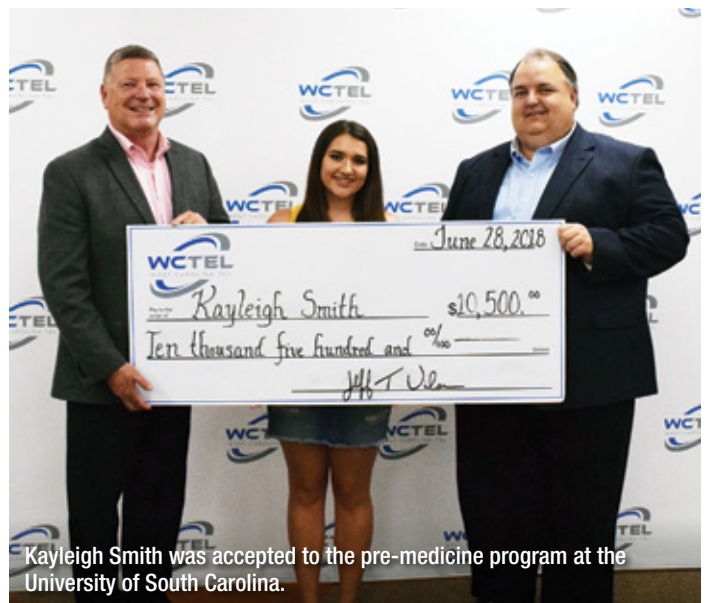
WCTEL continues to invest in local young people through scholarship programs and a new apprenticeship program started in 2018.

The apprenticeship program offers young people a chance to work with WCTEL’s information technology group. Cooperative internships also give students a chance to earn valuable work experience. In 2018, two apprentices began their careers under the guidance of professionals from WCTEL. Marie Titus, who coordinates WCTEL’s apprenticeship program, says it could grow as WCTEL expands into the Greenwood area.

WCTEL also awarded annual scholarships to local students who demonstrate skills and show potential to have a positive impact on our area in the future. Abbeville High School students Kamiya Shosan and Kayleigh Smith received scholarships in 2018 from WCTEL. Shosan was awarded the \$2,500 Foundation for Rural Service scholarship, while Smith won the \$8,000 WCTEL Scholarship and a \$2,500 FRS Scholarship. ☎



Attendees of the 2018 FRS Youth Tour in Washington D.C., were Shannon Sears, WCTEL director of commercial operations; Victoria Sears; Jake McAllister; and Devin Bryant. A selection committee chooses the deserving students. Visit [wctel.com](http://wctel.com) for further information.



Kayleigh Smith was accepted to the pre-medicine program at the University of South Carolina.



WCTEL’s Relay for Life team, which raised \$11,000 for 2018, dedicated its fundraising activities to the memory of a dear co-worker and friend, Laurie Wolfe, who lost her battle with cancer last year.



Kamiya Shosan plans to study nursing while attending the University of South Carolina.





# The joy of COOKING SLOW

In the South, when the weather turns cold and the days are short, we bring our slow cookers out of hibernation to blanket ourselves in comfort food. “Nothing beats a slow-cooked pork butt or roast chicken with all the trimmings,” says Sandra Corbin.

She lives on a farm in Clarksville, Tennessee, and she started using a slow cooker when her children were young and still in school. Her first slow cooker, purchased in the 1970s, was harvest gold with a brown lining and glass top that didn’t seal very well. “It was round and only had two settings — high and low,” she says.

But with work on the farm and children’s after-school activities, she appreciated the freedom of not spending time

laboring over the stove. “A momma is always full time, and a farm momma even more so,” she says. “When my youngest daughter was 16, I worked full time commuting to Nashville five days a week while attending college at night. The Crock-Pot certainly came in handy during that time of my life, too.”

Her daughter, Melissa Corbin, a Nashville-based food consultant and freelance journalist, says she remembers coming home to her momma’s



Melissa Corbin learned slow cooker secrets from her mother, Sandra.

cooking. The house would be filled with the smells of delicious foods that had slow-cooked for hours.

“There were always aromas to be savored in her kitchen,” she says. “She encouraged me from a very early age to cook alongside her. She didn’t

care what mess I might make. It was more important to her that I learn kitchen basics that, to this day, I can remember her teaching me.”

Though Sandra Corbin made much use of her slow cooker when she had children in tow, she appreciates it all

## SLOW COOKER CANDY

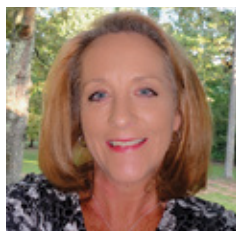
Sandra Corbin's slow cooker candy is adapted from several online sources, such as this favorite from country music star Trisha Yearwood.

- 2 pounds salted dry-roasted peanuts
- 4 ounces Baker's German's sweet chocolate
- 1 (12-ounce) package semisweet chocolate chips
- 2 1/2 pounds white almond bark

Put the peanuts in the bottom of a slow cooker. Over these, layer the sweet chocolate, chocolate chips and almond bark. Slow cook on low for about 3 hours. Do not stir the mixture while cooking until after the 3 hours is up. Then, stir with a wooden spoon until smooth. Drop the candy into cupcake pan liners and let cool.

the more as she's gotten older. "As I've aged, I prefer one-pot meals with simple ingredients, like a pot roast, cream of mushroom soup and a package of Lipton Onion Soup Mix with all the veggies simmered on low all day," she says.

As life changes, so do slow cookers. Many come with multiple bells and whistles. "Too many parts prone to breaking," Melissa Corbin says. "Rather, we have the same slow cookers in different colors from the original Rival Crock-Pot line. Mine is stainless and Momma's is red. She's drawn to bright colors."



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

## POZOLE VERDE

A favorite go-to recipe from Melissa Corbin.

- 3 pounds pork butt, roughly cut into 1-inch pieces
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1-2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1/2 cup white wine
- 1 large onion, diced
- 3 cloves of garlic, finely chopped
- 1 poblano pepper, charred and chopped
- 1 jalapeno pepper, charred and diced
- 1 pound tomatillo, roughly cut into 1-inch pieces
- 2 (15.5-ounce) cans hominy, drained
- Sliced limes, chopped cilantro, freshly sliced jalapeno and chopped red onion for garnish

Generously season pork with salt and pepper. Sprinkle with cumin. Heat a large frying pan (preferably cast iron) with 1 tablespoon of vegetable oil, adding extra oil as needed. The pan should be screaming hot to sear the pork without cooking through. Make sure to work in small batches so you do not steam the pork. Look for caramelized edges to the pieces of pork as you brown. Transfer the pork directly into the slow cooker, and then reduce the heat and deglaze the skillet with 1/2 cup white wine and pour over pork. Add to the slow cooker the onion, garlic, peppers and finally tomatillos in the order listed. Cover and cook on high for 3 1/2 hours. Then, stir in the hominy for a final 30 minutes of cooking. Turn the slow cooker to its lowest setting to give the pozole time to rest before serving. Finish with lime, jalapeno, cilantro and red onion. Makes approximately 6 servings.

## SLOW COOKER SOUP STARTER

This nutrient-rich soup starter recipe will be just what the doctor ordered in the cold months of winter.

- 3 yellow squash or zucchini, cubed
- 4 banana peppers or 1 bell pepper, chopped

- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 carrots, diced
- 4 cups chicken or vegetable broth
- 1 (16-ounce) can tomatoes or 3-4 fresh tomatoes roughly chopped
- 1/2 tablespoon onion powder
- 1/2 teaspoon thyme
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon sugar
- 1 teaspoon olive oil
- 2 bay leaves

Stir all ingredients into a 6-quart slow cooker. After cooking on high for 30 minutes, simmer on low for 4 hours. Remove bay leaves. The starter is ready for immediate canning. Otherwise, let cool thoroughly before freezing in freezer-safe bags.

### Suggested additions:

- ▶ Consider using this starter as a foundation for curry. Heat 1 1/2 cups of full-fat coconut milk with 1 tablespoon curry powder, 1/2 teaspoon powdered ginger, 1/8 teaspoon red pepper flakes, 1 stalk of lemongrass (optional), 1 diced potato and a protein of your choice, such as chicken or shrimp. Stir in 1-2 cups starter and simmer, uncovered, until desired thickness. Remove lemongrass before serving. Garnish with chopped cilantro or green onions. This soup is great on its own but is delicious over a bed of jasmine rice.
- ▶ Into a cast-iron skillet, add 1 cup shredded rotisserie chicken, 1/4 cup chopped kalamata olives and 1 teaspoon dried oregano to 1-2 cups of the soup starter. Spoon over grilled bread and top with fresh feta cheese for a Mediterranean twist on bruschetta.
- ▶ Minestrone is an Italian soup classic. Combine 1 cup cooked elbow macaroni, 1 (15-ounce) can of drained kidney beans, 2 cups chicken stock, 4 cups soup starter, 1 teaspoon dried oregano and 1 teaspoon dried basil. Simmer on low for 15-20 minutes. Garnish with freshly torn basil leaves and grated parmesan cheese. Drizzle a bit of extra virgin olive oil for the perfect finish. 🍲





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# SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE

- Applications must be received by **February 20, 2019**.
- Download applications at **wctel.com** or see your guidance counselor.
- This scholarship is **NOT** based on GPA.
- Applicants must live in the WCTEL service area and their legal guardian/parent must be a WCTEL customer.



## FRS YOUTH TOUR:

June 1-5, 2019

- Applications are due by **March 6, 2019**. Download applications at **wctel.com** or see your guidance counselor.
- Applicants must live in the WCTEL service area and their legal guardian/parent must be a WCTEL customer.
- Applicants must be a rising high school senior (graduating in 2020) and must be under the age of 18 at the time of the tour.



**wctel.com**