

# CONNECTED

## ALWAYS SEARCHING

Lyn Ellis likes to  
'pick' whenever  
he can

**BROADBAND:**  
MAKERS EDITION

## CONTINUED MOMENTUM

Abbeville football  
looks toward a  
new season

## HONORING MAKERS

Broadband  
empowers  
creativity







BY SHIRLEY BLOOMFIELD, CEO  
NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association

## Celebrating 65 years

**T**his spring telco leaders from across the country gathered in Washington, D.C. We met with regulators and elected officials to not only champion the success of rural broadband providers who are expanding their reach with the support of good public policies, but also to advocate for all the good work our member companies do.

We also celebrated our strong legacy of success and commitment to rural America through service excellence, kicking off a number of activities that led up to our big day: On June 1, NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association celebrated its 65th anniversary.

While the early rural telephone program was born out of the rural electrification program in the mid-1940s, local providers began to realize that a national organization was needed to represent the unique needs of those new companies (many of them cooperatives) that were borrowing federal dollars to build critical communications services to rural parts of the nation. On June 1, 1954, NTCA was born.

We have seen many changes in the ensuing 65 years. Membership in NTCA has grown considerably, with cooperative and independent telcos serving an ever-expanding portion of the population. Regulations and funding mechanisms that impact how communications services are deployed have changed considerably. And, of course, the technology and ways people connect have gone from party lines to broadband.

As a member of NTCA, your telco is part of a large family that connects homes and businesses, farms and small towns, country roads and growing cities across rural America. And that's a reason to celebrate! 📶

## Precision agriculture

Rural broadband creates opportunities



BY NOBLE SPRAYBERRY

**T**he difference between success and failure for those who work in agriculture is, as it has ever been, small and frequently dependent on unpredictable factors: Too much rain. Not enough rain. Fickle prices. And more.

The goal is to manage the challenges in the best way possible, maximizing opportunity and limiting risk. Increasingly, internet-based technology can better balance the margin between losses and gains.

A recent report by the U.S. Department of Agriculture made the case for further extending broadband internet services to rural areas by highlighting the benefits of fast internet for agribusiness.

The report "Insights on Rural Broadband Infrastructure and Next Generation Precision Agriculture Technologies" offered a broad look at the possibilities for broadband to make use of data-driven tools to improve results.

Farmers and ranchers can follow the path of other modern businesses by using digital tools across the production cycle, according to the report. These new tools can support decision-making with integrated data. Automation can increase efficiency. Real-time insight can improve productivity. And entering into global markets becomes more attainable.

The trend can benefit farmers, ranchers and others in agriculture while also supporting technology companies leveraging these new or expanded markets. In fact, they have an opportunity to capture a portion of a global digital agriculture market projected to be between \$254 billion and \$340 billion.

New tools are needed to help farmers and ranchers better estimate the potential profit and economic risks associated with growing one particular crop over another. They may help with decisions about which fertilizer is best for current soil conditions or provide guidance on the best applications for pesticides. There are opportunities to create better water management strategies and to provide ways to use sensors to monitor animal health and nutrition.

"Connected devices equip farmers with a clear picture of their operations at any moment, making it possible to prioritize tasks more effectively and to triage the most pressing issues," according to the report.

Rural broadband capable of supporting these data-intensive tools makes it all possible, and the financial potential of the market emphasizes the need to continue to expand broadband networks throughout the nation. If fully realized, fast internet services paired with new "precision agriculture" technologies have the potential to add \$47-\$65 billion annually to the U.S. economy. 📶



**LIFELINE IS A FEDERAL PROGRAM TO  
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Eligible customers will get at least \$9.25 toward their bill.

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

- Fixed or mobile broadband
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- 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
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- Federal Public Housing Assistance
- The Veteran's Pension or Survivor's Pension benefit

Additionally, consumers at or below 135% 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 or broadband service, and qualifying is dependent upon government-established guidelines.

# **DO YOU QUALIFY?**

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**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.**

# Building communities locally and globally



**JEFF WILSON**

Chief Executive Officer

The internet has changed the way we define community.

Sure, we'll always have the community where we live. Many of us have a community of faith through our church or a school community with our kids.

But one of the things people discovered early on with the internet was the amazing ability to connect people with similar interests into an online community. If no one else in your town was into quilting or vintage motorcycles or jewelry-making, there were thousands of enthusiasts online who shared those hobbies.

Unique, long-distance relationships formed during those early days of group email lists, message boards and online forums.

Whatever our hobbies or interests, many of us have benefited from sharing ideas, swapping stories and soliciting advice with fellow enthusiasts.

As you'll read in the pages of this magazine, creative folks like artists, bakers, photographers, carpenters, seamstresses and metalworkers all use broadband to enhance their skills or to even turn their passions into moneymakers.


Even if your hobbies don't involve creating anything tangible, your broadband connection from WCTEL has likely helped you find joy in your interests.

There are hundreds of active online communities for gaming, hunting, hiking, gardening, music, genealogy, sports and more just waiting for new members to plug in. Many of these are global groups that would be impossible to assemble if not for the reach of broadband networks like ours.

Personally, I'm gratified to know that artisans and craftspeople from our region have a chance to share work that celebrates our local culture. Through their skill, they earn money to support themselves, as well as, export our culture to the rest of the country.

There is more good news for anyone wanting to learn those old ways — or something new. Whether it's refinishing furniture, replacing a headlight, or learning to play the trombone, there are probably videos from experts on YouTube to walk you through the learning process step by step. This is the kind of skills library that has never before been available. Thanks to broadband, it's right at our fingertips.

While I normally use this space to tout the big-picture societal benefits of broadband — such as economic development, educational opportunities or telemedicine — I think it's important to remember the hundreds of small ways a broadband connection makes our lives a little better.

Whether you're learning a new skill or sharing community with fellow enthusiasts, we're proud to be the company in the middle that helps you make those connections. 



## 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.

West Carolina Telephone  
233 Highway 28 Bypass  
Abbeville, SC 29620  
Telephone: 864-446-2111  
[www.WCTEL.com](http://www.WCTEL.com)

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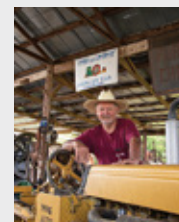
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### On the Cover:



Lyn Ellis, a collector from Calhoun Falls, stands with a No. 6 Auto Patrol road grader he built from scratch.  
*See story Page 8.*

# HAPPY FOURTH OF JULY

The WCTEL offices will close Thursday, July 4, to celebrate Independence Day. Have a safe and happy holiday!

## SAVE THE DATE 2019 WCTEL ANNUAL MEETING

Monday, Aug. 19, at 3 p.m.

Long Cane AME, 8 Long Cane AME Road, Abbeville, SC 29620

- FREE GIFTS
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SEE YOU THERE!



### WCTEL WELCOMES NEW EMPLOYEES

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**Troy Mack**  
Network operations  
manager



Featuring news and events  
around the WCTEL service area

### McCormick

#### McCormick Farmers Market

July 2-Sept. 24  
Tuesdays, 3-7 p.m.  
Dorn Mill Complex, 206 N. Main St.,  
McCormick, SC 29835

#### 2019 Independence Day Celebration

Fireworks and Boat Parade  
Saturday, July 6  
The parade starts at 1 p.m.  
For more info contact the McCormick  
Chamber of Commerce.

### Abbeville

#### Labor Day Cruise In Concert

Aug. 31 at 11 a.m.  
The Square in Abbeville

#### First Fridays

Local Small Businesses After Hours  
Shopping Event  
July 5 and Aug. 2  
6-8 p.m.



# Beat the heat

## Slip and slide through summer

BY ANNE P. BRALY

The start of summer means travelers will be flocking to beaches and lakefronts in droves. When it comes to enjoying the purity of a dip in the water, there's no better way to do it than by taking the plunge at a water park that sparkles with fun. So grab a towel — don't forget the kids — and slip-slide your way to a day of excitement.

And they all come to play at Kentucky Splash, a water park that includes an 18,000-square-foot wave pool, a lazy river and a tower with three slides that will take your breath away as you plunge down one of two tube slides or body surf your way down 40 feet to the water below.

The Aquatwist is a water ride that is totally enclosed. You twist and turn your way along its 180-foot length from a 30-foot-high starting point, and you'll get a thrill as it drops you into the water in 10 seconds — or less.

Small children have their own place to splash around out of the way of the big kids at play. Tadpole Island features a Caribbean-themed playhouse with kid-sized slides and lots of bells and whistles to entertain the little ones. And, of course, mom and dad will enjoy taking it easy on the lazy river.

"There's lots to do, but the park isn't so big that it's hard to keep up with everyone," says manager Diane Bruers.



Families enjoy the water slides at Wilderness at the Smokies, including the Cyclone Racer.



Kentucky Splash opened in May 2001, so this marks its 18th year of providing aquatic fun for kids of all ages. One thing that sets Kentucky Splash apart from other water parks around the state is price, Bruers says. Tickets are \$10 per person, and children 2 and under are admitted free. Prices have not changed in almost 10 years.

Like many small towns, Williamsburg, Kentucky, faced a dilemma when it came to deciding what to do with an aging municipal swimming pool that had provided summer fun for families for decades. The choices were to demolish it or transform it into a facility that would attract people from all around. The answer: a water park now named Kentucky Splash that brings visitors from across Kentucky. And because Williamsburg is just 11 miles from the Tennessee line, it attracts folks from the Volunteer State, too.

A number of familiar chain hotels are located nearby, along with some that are independently owned. The water park itself has a campground, offering 25 RV sites with full hookups — water, sewer, electricity, Wi-Fi internet and cable TV — along with a fire pit and picnic table. Six tent sites are available for primitive camping, each with a fire pit and picnic table, and there's a bathhouse on-site. During busy months, reservations are recommended.

No outside food or drink may be brought into the park, but there are two full concession stands and several food booths selling burgers, hot dogs, chicken strips, pizza, nachos, cheese fries and more. Online: [www.williamsburgky.com](http://www.williamsburgky.com) (click on the Kentucky Splash link). 📱



Families enjoy the numerous water slides at Wilderness at the Smokies.

## WILDERNESS AT THE SMOKIES

Sevierville, Tennessee

[www.wildernessatthesmokies.com](http://www.wildernessatthesmokies.com)

This state-of-the-art water park offers year-round fun under a glass dome that makes you feel like you're in the great outdoors. Even during less-than-perfect weather, you can enjoy 66,000 square feet of fun under the dome. Water features include a hair-raising ride on the Storm Chaser — a 55-foot plummet down a dark tunnel before a zero-gravity fall into an oscillating funnel, which gives way to a pool below. Runaway Canyon is a five-story raft ride that rockets you through water curtains, huge tunnels, explosive turns and loops before a 60-foot drop. Wilderness at the Smokies is one thrill after another.

Tickets: \$49 per person (must be purchased online). Overnight guests at the resort's hotel receive complimentary admission.

## ALABAMA SPLASH ADVENTURE

Bessemer, Alabama

[www.alabamasplash.com](http://www.alabamasplash.com)

Upsurge takes you up, up, then drops you down 216 feet through twists and turns. To take a break from the excitement, tube the lazy river or ride the waves in the 800,000-gallon wave pool. Splash Adventure is an 89-acre water park that operates from May to July, and then on weekends during August and early September.

Tickets: \$27-\$32 (day passes). Season tickets available.

## CAROLINA HARBOR WATER PARK

Fort Mill, South Carolina

[www.carowinds.com](http://www.carowinds.com)

Located on the grounds of Carowinds Amusement Park, Carolina Harbor is the largest of all noncoastal water parks in the state. There are more than 20 waterslides, two wave pools and a 1,000-foot-long lazy river that takes riders across the state line into North Carolina. Blackbeard gets his revenge on a six-story waterslide that features death-defying twists and turns, along with exhilarating slides. The kids have their own play area, featuring Kiddy Hawk Cove and Myrtle Turtle Beach. It's all part of your ticket to Carowinds, a park that also features the world's tallest giga coaster just steps outside the water park. Private cabanas, providing shade and a place to relax, are available for rent.

Tickets: \$33-\$45 (depending on time of day). Discounts available for seniors and military.



The Hal Rogers Family Entertainment Center is home to the Kentucky Splash Water Park.



Among Lyn Ellis' picking treasures are two Model A Fords.

# STILL PICKIN'

## Calhoun Falls collector remains on the hunt

BY JOHN CLAYTON

**L**yn Ellis says the “good stuff” is getting harder to find these days, but that fact doesn’t keep him from looking.

“Everything has pretty much been found, but you can luck up every now and then,” says Ellis, 66, a Calhoun Falls collector who continues to scour the region for the dusty treasures he’s sought for more than half his adult life.

Just two months ago, Ellis found a 1930 Ford Model A, which last ran in 1949, in nearby Ware Shoals. Once the most popular car on U.S. roads — more than 4.8 million rolled onto the nation’s roadways between 1927 and 1932 — original survivors are still coveted by collectors. “It was a barn find,” Ellis says. “It’s still got original paint, and I’m going to keep it original. I’ve already got it back running.”

Collecting — or picking — is something of a family tradition for Ellis. “My daddy was a collector all his life, and I guess I just followed in his footsteps,” he says. “I’ve been doing it for 35 years now.” Ellis gained notoriety with an appearance on the History channel reality series “American Pickers,” which chronicles the exploits of Iowa collectors Mike Wolfe and Frank Fritz. On a visit to the Carolinas and Georgia, the pair visited Ellis and shopped through his collection, which is now squeezed into “eight or 10 storage buildings,” Ellis says.

“It was just like you’d known them all your life,” Ellis says of the visit from Wolfe and Fritz, which took place about six years ago. “I came in there, and nothing was planned ahead, and everything went real smooth.” Ellis sold the “American Pickers” duo a few signs and a few liquor stills that came out of the woods and dated back to Prohibition.

Like his more famous counterparts on “American Pickers,” Ellis says he doesn’t mind a little dirt, cobwebs and rust if it means bringing home a good find. “I’ve dug these old engines out of the bushes in poison oak and briars and everything,” he says. “I’ve had some rough times pulling things out, but it was all worth it in the end.”

Those “hit-and-miss” engines from the late 19th and early 20th centuries are among Ellis’ favorite items to collect. They served a variety of functions, especially in agriculture, powering pumps, saws and other tools. “I’ve picked up some local, real rare ones that I’m proud of,” he says. “I restore them and get them back into shape. I leave a lot of them in their original paint and just get them back running again. And I try to encourage a lot of people. If they have one they don’t want to sell, I’ll try and help them get it running.”

Ellis says auction sites like eBay and the general availability of collectibles online have changed the game for pickers like him, but he still enjoys the hunt. “It’s a real good hobby to get into,” he says. “But stuff has gotten a lot harder to find, and prices have gone up.” 📞





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



The website Wirecutter spent more than 100 hours testing surge protectors to come up with its recommendations. Their top pick is the Tripp Lite 12-Outlet Surge Protector, which features plenty of outlets, coaxial and telephone connectors, an 8-foot cord, a right-angled flat plug that doesn't jut out from the wall, and the important auto-shutoff feature. Price: \$37 on Amazon.

# POWER ON

## Guarding against a surge

All big-ticket pieces of electronic equipment are at the mercy of power spikes: your desktop computer, your big-screen TV, your audio system and more. Fortunately, surge protectors offer relatively low-cost solutions that can help keep your gear and your data safe.



#### POWER STRIPS

The most basic models of power strips offer little surge protection. So, consider them as nothing more than multi-outlet extension cords. While often equipped with a circuit breaker, they aren't very effective in shielding your gadgets from harm. A true surge protector comes with a rating, typically measured in joules, that shows how much energy it can absorb before failing. Generally, a strip with a higher joule rating will offer greater protection.

#### SURGE PROTECTOR

Surge protectors come in many shapes and sizes, ranging from a large block with more than a dozen connectors to a single-outlet travel version. Consider a joule rating of 2,000 and above for your expensive or delicate equipment. Any wire that goes into your devices can produce a power surge, so a good surge protector for your home office will also include connections for a phone line or network cables. For your cable system or TV, some surge protectors also come with a coaxial cable connection.

Surge protectors work by absorbing excess voltage, so protection will degrade over time, depending on how much voltage has been absorbed. Once that protection is gone, it's

gone. While some devices have lights that indicate they are no longer working as intended, they are impossible to see when they're behind the furniture. So, make sure you choose a surge protector with an auto-shutoff feature. Once it is unable to provide protection, the surge protector will stop providing power.

#### UNINTERRUPTIBLE POWER SUPPLY

Commonly known as a UPS, uninterruptible power supplies offer surge protection and keep your equipment working when the power goes out. A blackout won't damage your devices, but if a sudden power outage occurs while you're saving a computer file, it can lead to data corruption and render the file inaccessible. A UPS can buy enough time to save files and shut down equipment properly.

A UPS, however, cannot take the place of a generator for long-term use during an outage. It's still a battery, and its cost is typically tied to its capacity for providing power.

WCTEL also offers a UPS for your Phone and Wi-Fi service. You can get an 8-hour phone backup from WCTEL for just \$3.95/month.

WCTEL also offers 24-hour backup for your phone and Wi-Fi service for just \$6.95/month. With these services, you can use your landline or your Wi-Fi even when the power is out! ☎



# MAKING ART

## and a living

How the internet helps creative people thrive

BY JEN CALHOUN

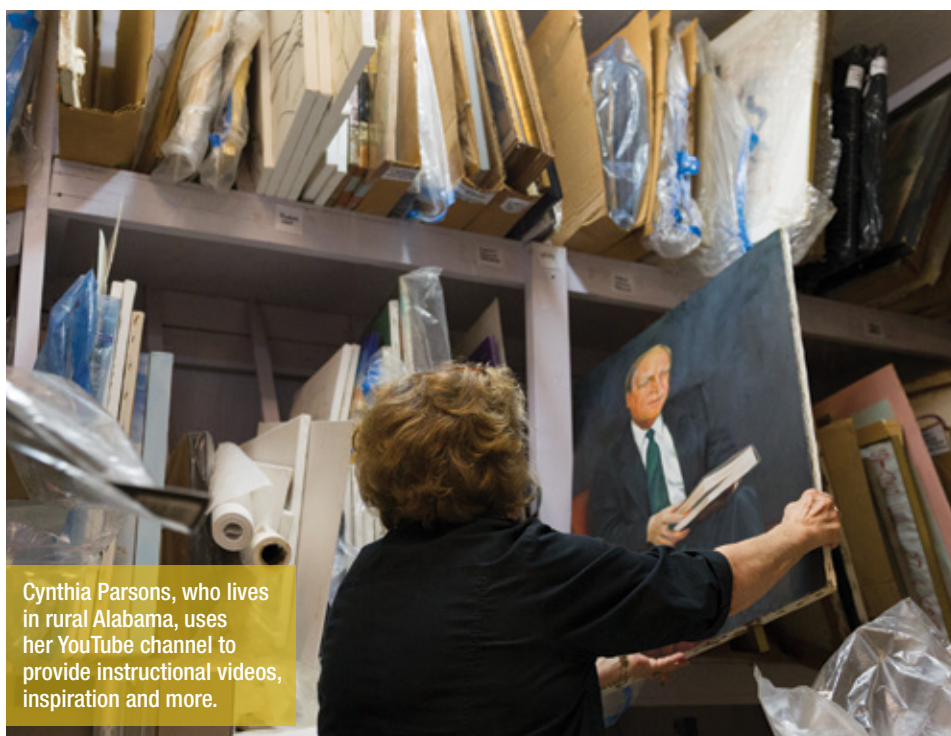
For centuries, artists gathered in big cities to share ideas, sell their art and connect with other creatives. But with greater access to faster internet, more and more creative people are choosing to live in rural areas where the cost of living is low and connectivity is just a click away.

Take John George Larson, for example. He, an accomplished sculptor and painter from rural Minnesota, chose to live with his family in a nearly century-old farmhouse about three hours east of Minneapolis. “Part of my process as a ceramic sculptor involves working with a kiln that uses wood as fuel,” Larson says. “These kilns are kind of dirty and large, and I can’t really do that in a residential area.”

### INTERNET EQUALS OPPORTUNITY

Larson is one of a growing number of rural residents who use the internet to help fuel creative careers. From candlemakers to photographers to musicians, millions of people have found a way to share their talents and make a living online.

According to a recent article on the website The Motley Fool, Etsy, the online marketplace that offers artisans and crafters a place to sell their handmade items,



Cynthia Parsons, who lives in rural Alabama, uses her YouTube channel to provide instructional videos, inspiration and more.

continues to grow. Revenue in its fourth quarter of 2018 came in at \$200 million — an increase of more than \$63 million from the previous year’s fourth quarter. The company’s chief executive officer, Josh Silverman, expects more increases through 2019.

If it sounds unbelievable that artists are no longer mostly starving, think again, says Mark McGuinness, a poet, podcaster and creative coach. The internet has not only opened doors to creativity, but it’s also opened the doors for artists of all kinds. Period.

“We are now living at a time of unprecedented opportunity for artists



While sculptor and painter John George Larson lives a rural lifestyle outside Minneapolis, the internet connects him to other creatives.



and creative professionals,” McGuinness writes in a blog post on his website, wishfulthinking.com. “Once upon a time, if you wanted to get your work in front of an audience, you had to submit it to an editor, agent, manager, curator, talent scout, whoever. A gatekeeper who had the power to open the gate and usher you through, or slam it in your face.”

The gateway shouldn’t close anytime soon, either. According to the 2018 Global Digital report, more than 4 billion people around the world now use the internet, making the possibility of sharing ideas and selling creative goods greater than ever before. Today, musicians from Texas can share music or give lessons to someone in Tanzania. Folk artists in Alabama can sell paintings to a collector in Albania.

## COUNTRY IS COOL AGAIN

For Larson, a rural area offers other benefits. His work requires some solitude, not to mention the natural clay found in the area where he lives. “I don’t use that clay in all my work, but I try to incorporate it as much as possible,” he says. “That’s kind of a big reason why we chose to live in a rural area.”

But Larson, who studied ceramics at Utah State University and under the tutelage of a sculptor in Japan, is far from being isolated from other artists or even art buyers. Thanks to a fast fiber optic internet connection provided by a rural broadband company, he learns new things and explores new ideas every day through online articles. He also connects with others and showcases his craft through his Instagram account, @johngeorgelarson, and his website, johngeorgelarson.com.

“When we moved here, we didn’t realize this kind of high-speed internet was already offered at the house,” Larson says. “I don’t even think I realized how important it would be until after we started using it. Now, we use it every day, all the time. I use it for research for my own work or commission work that I do for other people and businesses. I read a lot of research articles about different topics, and it helps me develop a project or a design.”

While marketing his work used to tire him, Larson is finding ways to make art through apps. “I just started doing animation of my artwork on Instagram,” he says. “One of the things I’ve been thinking of lately is motion and movement in my work. Some of my pieces are made to be viewed from a variety of different angles. So, if you place them on a shelf one way, they’ll look different than if you place them another way. It’s an allegory for our lives and human experience because we can experience life from different perspectives.”

## SPREADING THE WORD

Cynthia Parsons, an award-winning artist and painter who lives in a rural region of northern Alabama, says the internet has opened a whole world of connectivity and possibility.

On her YouTube channel, Open Art Studio of Cynthia Parsons, she offers videos of students working through challenges during class or clips of cotton fields at sunset so others can paint them. She might film a farmer harvesting his corn or make an instructional video about how to save old watercolor paint. She also records regular videos of her son, Elbert, as he recovers from an injury that nearly took his life years ago.

Parsons, who regularly sells her artwork and has taught classes everywhere from Birmingham, Alabama, to France, believes art is everywhere. “You can’t look through your eyes and not see art or the potential of some kind of creation,” she says. “It might be someone doing crafts and using popsicle sticks or carving a bar of soap. All those things are art, and all that creative energy we use when we do it resounds through the universe.”

Parsons finds joy in moving her work and the work of others through time, space and physical boundaries. “For me, the internet is about sharing,” she says. “That’s what it’s been able to do for me. It lets me share these moments of decision-making from my students. The videos of my students are about one minute or two minutes or maybe three. When I show

people what they’re dealing with, it lets others see how they might solve any problems they might be having with their work.” 🗨️

## Get creative

Creative industries and people make jobs for Americans. Here are a few facts:

- The value of arts and cultural production in America in 2015 was \$763.6 billion, amounting to 4.2% of the gross domestic product. The arts contribute more to the national economy than do the construction, mining, utilities, insurance, and accommodation and food services industries.
- Artists are highly entrepreneurial. They are 3.5 times more likely than the total U.S. workforce to be self-employed.
- Arts and cultural goods and services drive industries primarily focused on producing copyrighted content, accounting for just over half of their combined \$1.17 billion value.
- 97% of U.S. employers say creativity is increasingly important to them. Of the employers looking to hire creatives, 85% say they are unable to find the applicants they seek.

Sources: National Endowment for the Arts, Artists and Arts Workers in the United States, 2011, The Conference Board, Ready to Innovate, 2008, National Endowment for the Arts, The Arts Contribute More Than \$760 Billion to the U.S. Economy, and U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, Value Added by Industry as a Percentage of Gross Domestic Product, 2017, U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, Data for 1998-2015, 2018

Abbeville running back  
Cortney Jackson (2)  
stiff arms a Barnwell  
defender in last year's  
Class 2A state title game.



Photo by Shawn W. Knox Images.

# PANTHER DYNASTY

## AHS championship drive starts anew

BY JOHN CLAYTON

**W**hile putting the finishing touches on a 48-14 state championship beatdown of Barnwell in December, the Abbeville High School football team earned more than a trophy.

With their fourth straight state title, the Panthers now share the South Carolina High School League record for consecutive championships with Byrnes (2002-05) and Woodruff (1975-78). It has been a historic run of records and rings for the Panthers, but head coach Jamie Nickles says the program's growing trophy collection is only the punctuation in the story of each team.

"We just enjoy the journey each and every year," Nickles says. "If we win a state championship, that's fantastic, but if we don't, there are still a lot of things we've accomplished along the way, and we just try to keep everything down to earth and let the kids be kids." The next journey for Nickles and the Panthers begins with sweltering summer workouts and an Aug. 23 date with Lincoln County High School in Georgia to begin the 2019 season. If recent history is a guide, they could return to the state finals in search of an unprecedented fifth straight Class 2A championship.

Nickles, who also led the Panthers to back-to-back Class A state titles in 2010-11, watched the players who were part of Abbeville's record-setting run grow up in the local recreation league and knew they were special. Last year's seniors went 54-3-1 over their four years and never lost a home game.

Nate Temple, who is headed to Pitt to continue his football career, was among several seniors with four state championship rings. That group found itself a part of the program's storied history, which now includes 10 state titles. "I wouldn't really change a thing," Temple says. "We gave it all we had. There was a good brotherhood. We did something that'd never been done before."

Nickles said all four of his most recent championship teams are special to him, and all four are unique in his memory. "You saw the hunger of the 2015 team. I think I'd define the 2016 team as driven," he says. "The word for the 2017 team is probably perseverance — we had a lot of injuries that year. This past year, the word was complete — we were a complete football team from running backs to the secondary to the offensive and defensive lines. We were solid in every area."

Temple says he thinks that despite the Panthers losing himself, running back Cortney Jackson (Coffeyville Community College), offensive lineman Jake Hill (Coastal Carolina) and other key contributors to graduation, the team could make a run at a fifth straight title in 2019. "I think we could win the next one, and that would put us in a new category," he says.

But Nickles says he understands the dangers of expectations — from without and from within. So, he continues to concentrate on the next practice and the next game. He chooses to not look too far ahead or too far behind.

"One day, when I'm an old man, we'll sit around and drink cocoa at Christmas and talk about what we accomplished, but that's not our objective," he says. "We're not trying to break anybody's record. We're just trying to be who we are each and every day." 📺



## ABBEVILLE HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL BY THE NUMBERS

- 10** State championships won in school history.
- 04** Consecutive Class AA state titles collected, a streak that began in 2015.
- 16** Abbeville seniors who graduated in June with four state championship rings.
- 34** Consecutive games won at Hite Stadium, a streak dating back to 2014.
- 03** Seniors who signed NCAA/NJCAA National Letters of Intent in February to play collegiate ball. Linebacker Nate Temple (Pitt), offensive lineman Jake Hill (Coastal Carolina) and running back Cortney Jackson (Coffeyville Community College).
- 54** Games won over the past four years. The Panthers are 54-3-1 over that span.
- 19** Consecutive playoff games won over the past four postseasons.
- 06** State championships at Abbeville under Head Coach Jamie Nickles. The Panthers also won back-to-back titles in 2010-11.
- 38** Average points scored by the Panthers in championship games since 2015.
- 21** Average margin of victory in the last four state title games (38-17).
- 04** Number of schools that have won more South Carolina High School League state football titles than Abbeville (Gaffney, 16; Summerville, 12; Byrnes, 11; Lake View, 11). The Panthers are tied with Woodruff on the list.

The Panthers celebrate a fourth straight Class 2A state championship.



Photo by Shawn M. Knox Images.

## Return of Fleet football set for 2020

The T-shirts popular among Erskine College students read in bold maroon letters "Erskine football undefeated since 1951."

That 1951 season was the last time the small, private college fielded a football team, but all that will change nearly 70 years later as the Flying Fleet returns to the gridiron in 2020. Erskine Head Coach Shap Boyd wrapped up his first recruiting class earlier this year, and he plans to welcome them to the Due West campus in August. Those players will still be a year away from kickoff.

"Recruiting has been going well," says Boyd, a former assistant from the University of Virginia's College at Wise. "Right now, we have 109 commits for August, but I imagine our numbers will be about 120 or so."

Boyd calls getting those players on campus part of the process of building an NCAA Division II football program from scratch.

Then, they have an academic year without football games.

"We have to make sure we're keeping the players engaged," Boyd says. "We're going to be working on agility and mobility and

lifting. We'll be getting a feel for what we have and who we have."

Boyd will also be filling out his coaching staff between now

and the 2020 preseason, while new facilities, including a weight room and locker room, are going up. College leaders were also deciding where the Flying Fleet will be playing — on campus or off — and in which conference, with the SAC, Gulf South and Conference Carolinas as possibilities. Erskine competes in Conference Carolinas in other sports, but the conference does not currently include football among its sports. Until all that is settled, Boyd says he is concentrating on getting a team that comprises almost

exclusively freshmen and redshirt freshmen ready for college football.

"In the spring, things will become more traditional as far as football," he says. "We'll start workouts in January, and there will be a little bit more of a sense of urgency that will resemble true college football."





# LOW AND SLOW

## BBQ brings friends together

A spark ignited one summer afternoon almost 20 years ago when David “Hoss” Johnson and three friends decided to toss a coin and see where it landed on the field of competitive barbecuing.

The four men — Johnson, Jeff Chandler, Steve Hatfield and David Schmitt — were all born and raised in Huntsville, Alabama. Johnson played football at the University of Alabama under legendary coach Bear Bryant. Schmitt played football at the University of North Alabama. Hatfield was on the baseball team at the University of Alabama at Birmingham and Columbia State in Tennessee.

Only one of the foursome, Chandler, knew anything about smoking meats and competing in the sport of barbecuing. But that’s all it took when he suggested they enter a competition — not on the amateur level, but as professionals. So, the men paid their entry fee for the WhistleStop Barbecue Festival and gave their team a name: Fork Down and Pork, a riff on the football term “fourth down and short.” They came home with a first-place award in the “anything goes” category for their butterflied scallops stuffed with shrimp, wrapped with bacon and drizzled with hollandaise sauce.

“The next day was for barbecue, and we didn’t do great,” Johnson says. “We came in about 35th out of 60, which wasn’t bad for a first time, but it wasn’t great. We did barbecued pork, ribs and chicken. And we did a brisket, too. But brisket is very hard to do. Just go to Texas if you want good brisket.

“I mean, it’s kind of like football. If you want good football, you come to the South. If you want good brisket, you go to Texas,” he says, sipping on a glass of water and recalling the days when the three men would cook all weekend and go back to their daytime jobs and families during the week.

Following graduation from Alabama, Johnson played offensive line for the St. Louis Cardinals under coach Gene Stallings and then for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. He left the NFL to become athletic director for football operations for the City of Huntsville, Alabama. Johnson retired after 25 years and is now a missionary and national football direc-

tor for SCORE International, a position that takes him on mission trips and to football camps around the world. And in several countries — including Italy, Israel and Costa Rica — he’s fired up a smoker and treated those around him to a taste of the South, complete with barbecue, beans and coleslaw.

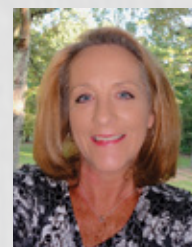
The Fork Down and Pork team quit the competition circuit in 2010. “We had families and kids. Some had grandkids, changed jobs. You know, life happens,” Johnson says. But he continues to cook not only for those in other countries, but also for friends at home, too. One thing he’s learned from all his years of smoking meats is a creed to which every good smoker adheres: low and slow, meaning to cook the meat at a low temperature and not rush things. Johnson says if he’s cooking meat that needs to stay in the smoker for up to 18 hours, he tries to keep a steady temperature of 185 degrees. For meats that need to cook no more than 12 hours, he keeps

the temperature around 250 degrees.

Different cuts of meat call for different woods added to the coals. Johnson likes hickory chunks for pork, mesquite for chicken and applewood chunks for ribs. Another trick he’s learned is not to add the injection liquid or rub to a pork butt until the meat has finished cooking and not to discard all the fat and juices that run off the meat. When the butt has finished cooking, let it sit in a covered pan for an hour or so. Then, remove the bone if there is one, and pull the pork apart. Mix the rub and injection sauce together, and massage it into the meat, adding any accumulated fat and juices back in as needed to make the meat moist. “There’s nothing worse than dry barbecue,” Johnson says.



Barbecue master  
David “Hoss” Johnson.



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



# SMOKED PORK



## VINEGAR SAUCE FOR SMOKED PORK

- 1 cup white vinegar
- 2 tablespoons salt
- 1 tablespoon brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1 teaspoon red pepper flakes

Combine all ingredients, taste and add water to dilute, as necessary.

**Note:** David Johnson combines this sauce with enough of his barbecue rub to make a thin paste. Then, he massages as much as he needs into the smoked, pulled pork after it has been cooked and shredded. As for amounts needed, it's a judgment call. Taste as you go using your favorite rub.

## COLESLAW

David Johnson says sugar is the key to this coleslaw. "You need to make sure it's sweet enough," he says.

- 1 head of cabbage, shredded
- 2-3 carrots, shredded

### Dressing:

- 1 cup mayonnaise
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 1/4 cup white or apple cider vinegar
- 1 teaspoon celery salt
- 1/2 teaspoon pepper
- 1 tablespoon yellow mustard

In a large bowl, toss together shredded cabbage and carrots. In separate bowl, mix together dressing ingredients, then add to cabbage mixture, combining thoroughly. Chill before serving. Makes 10-12 servings.

## HOSS'S PORK AND BEANS

- 1 (28-ounce) can of baked beans (your favorite)
- 2 tablespoons Karo syrup
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 1 Vidalia or other sweet onion, chopped (about 1/2 cup)
- 6 tablespoons mustard
- 6-7 tablespoons ketchup
- 10 pieces of maple-smoked bacon, chopped
- 2 tablespoons bacon grease
- 1 green pepper, chopped
- 1 cup pulled pork
- Dash of cayenne pepper, to taste (optional)

Combine all ingredients, mixing thoroughly, and place in greased baking dish. Bake, covered, for 45 minutes to an hour in a 300 F oven. 🍴





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