

CONNECTED

SPRUCE IT UP

Redefining
ambiance with
Divine Your Space

MAINTAIN THE GREENS

Spending more quality
time away from yardwork

CONNECTING CREATIVES

Artists and artisans unite
through broadband





By SHIRLEY BLOOMFIELD, CEO
NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association

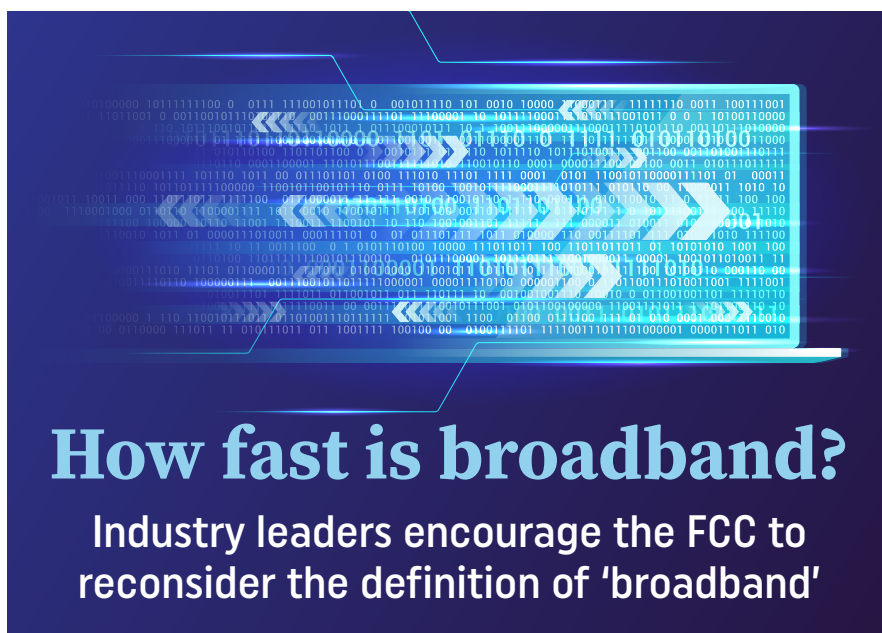
Here's to hope in 2021

The pandemic has made it clear that every American needs broadband to thrive. We need it for work, for school, for health. And we need it for accessing government services, for growing businesses and for building communities. If there is a silver lining to 2020, which was a hard year for so many, it's that more people are now acutely aware of the essential nature of broadband services.

The new year brought new challenges, many of them playing out at our Capitol, a building I've had the honor of visiting many times to talk to members of Congress about the need to support broadband for all of America. But I choose to have hope that better angels of our nature will guide us to rebuild, and I believe NTCA and our members have an opportunity to help that rebuild with the work that we do supporting broadband connectivity and other critical services for rural communities.

The hard-working members of NTCA have made so much progress in the past decade toward solving the rural broadband challenge. There is much work yet to do, but I have hope in the progress they are making. Through federal and state funding programs, coupled with local investments by providers themselves, we are on our way as a country to connecting everyone.

There is a day in our future when we can say that everyone who needs or wants a broadband connection has access. That day is coming, sooner than later. I have hope. 📶



By STEPHEN V. SMITH

We as a nation need to rethink what is considered true broadband connection speeds. That's the message telecom industry leaders recently sent to the Federal Communications Commission.

NTCA—The Rural Broadband Association joined with the Fiber Broadband Association in sending a letter to the FCC in December addressing the definition of broadband. The letter came as the FCC prepares its next report to Congress on the state of broadband deployment in America.

For the past five years, the FCC has considered any connection speeds of 25 Mbps download and 3 Mbps upload to be the benchmark for broadband.

“By any measure, this benchmark does not reflect what American consumers need today, let alone tomorrow,” wrote NTCA CEO Shirley Bloomfield and Fiber Broadband Association President and CEO Gary Bolton.

In urging the FCC to redefine what speeds are considered broadband, Bloomfield and Bolton wrote that “while all Americans would be best

served by the Commission adopting a gigabit symmetric benchmark ... it should at least raise the minimum broadband performance benchmark for the Sixteenth Broadband Deployment Report to 100/100 Mbps.”

Raising the definition, a benchmark that impacts funding decisions and technology choices, would put the country on a path toward ensuring all Americans have broadband access that actually meets their needs, the letter states. With millions of people using broadband at home to work, participate in school and attend doctor appointments, broadband has become essential to everyday life.

Bloomfield and Bolton further concluded that redefining broadband would allow the FCC to “keep pace with broadband service that Americans both need and want,” while providing “a benchmark the Commission can then use to ensure that we build our networks right the first time by driving investment in future-proof broadband infrastructure.” 📶



To hear an interview with Gary Bolton on this and related topics, visit www.RuralBroadbandToday.com, or search for “Rural Broadband Today” on your favorite podcast app, Spotify or Amazon Music.

The price of entertainment

Consumers can tap into a rushing stream of content delivered across devices ranging from TVs to smartphones. Sports, news, movies, comedies, dramas, music — the list of options is seemingly endless.

But there is a cost. And for many consumers that price increases each spring. If you have it handy, take a moment to review a bill for your TV programming from three years ago. Compare it to today, and in most cases the difference is obvious — television programming is pricier.

The increases are not limited to traditional cable TV providers either. Streaming services have seen prices spike, too. When Google launched YouTube TV, the monthly price was about \$35. Now, it's \$65.

In cases such as Google, as well as other providers, adding new, desirable content channels helps drive the increases. For traditional networks, investment in higher-quality programming has become essential to compete with streaming services like Netflix, Amazon and HBO Max. Those costs are then passed on to cable providers and their customers.

But more content is not always the root

cause of the higher prices. In fact, for many providers, such as the rural communications companies serving much of America, the increasing cost of content is an annual struggle to hold prices down. It's not a push to increase profits, and their efforts to control prices illustrate the give and take behind what you see on your bill.

For these companies, only a small portion of a monthly television subscription fee goes to personnel costs, equipment upgrades and tasks such as equipment maintenance. So, where does all the money go?

Much of the cost is wrapped up in agreements allowing TV providers to bring content to you. Networks like ABC, NBC, CBS and Fox regularly renegotiate these agreements. In many cases, these are annual negotiations.

A 2019 analysis of cable TV rates by Consumer Reports found that while advertised rates generally increased by 3% to 4% annually, fees for the major networks and channels airing live sports climbed between 8% and 10% each of the previous four years.

How are those rates determined? Essentially, the TV provider must pay

networks a fixed fee for each subscriber of the service. But each year there are fewer traditional TV subscribers to carry that load. In 2020 alone, about 6.3 million people dropped their cable or satellite TV service, according to investment research firm Moffett Nathanson.

Without an expanding subscriber base to offset these increasing costs, TV providers often pass the expense on to consumers in the form of fees added to advertised prices, according to the FCC's 18th Annual Video Competition Report.

When it comes to these hidden costs, there is one bright spot for consumers. The Television Viewer Protection Act passed at the end of 2019 requires cable and satellite companies to disclose the total monthly price of subscribers' TV bills, including all individual fees and charges, when they sign up.

That transparency won't make your bill any lower. But it will give you an accurate picture of the full cost of your monthly TV bill. 🗨️



Equipping and enabling vibrant rural communities

The 2020 census data will be coming out this year — and despite what the headlines may say, I'm here to tell you that rural America is alive and well.

As you may remember, I urged everyone to participate in the 2020 census. The population counts go a long way in determining our representation in Congress and the statehouse, as well as funding for state and federal programs.



JEFF WILSON
Chief Executive Officer

According to the 2020 census website, 2020census.gov, the census will shape the future of our community for the next 10 years. While that timeframe may be a bit of an overstatement, there's no doubt that an accurate population count is critically important.

While census numbers will contribute to the allotment of funding and political clout, they will also help to tell the story of rural America. The 2020 census should provide definitive evidence of the trends shaping communities like ours. But as you probably know, I'll be the first to say that whatever trend lines on a graph from the U.S. Census Bureau suggest, parts of rural America are more vibrant and offer more opportunities today than ever.

Some communities have no doubt fallen on hard times. But many others, including ours, are very much alive. According to experts at places like the USDA and the National Council of State Legislators, about one-third of rural counties are growing, one-third are stable and one-third are shrinking. Researchers point to 2016 and 2017 as years where many rural areas began showing growth after many years when the number of residents diminished.

Will all the news and research taken from information contained in the census be positive for everyone in rural America? Most likely, it will highlight some of the challenges communities like ours face. Events such as the pandemic, though, have left some city dwellers intrigued by the many benefits of living in rural areas.

We'll know for sure once the data is released, but the 10-year scope of the census may well show a continuation of the gradual, decades-long shift to fast-growing cities and suburbs from small towns and rural areas. It's possible statewide and national news outlets will use a broad brush to highlight this demographic trend as they cover the census statistics over the next few months.

A few troubling statistics, however, should not be sufficient to raise concerns about the future of rural America and our small-town way of life. Census numbers — a comparison across decades that may not fully acknowledge recent positive changes — do not tell the whole story. In many ways, the people of rural America have more opportunities now than ever before for business, education, health care, entertainment and overall quality of life. And I'm proud to say broadband makes many of those chances possible, although I'm not sure how much coverage they'll see.

In fact, our confidence in that vitality and belief in the future is why we've invested millions of dollars into improving the telecommunications infrastructure in our communities. You'll never find a stronger group of advocates for our communities than our team here at WCTEL.

We're proud of the rural areas and small towns we connect to the world — and we work hard every day to make our communities even stronger. 📶



CONNECTED

MARCH/APRIL 2021

VOL. 9, NO. 2

The West Carolina Tel Connected is a bimonthly newsletter published by West Carolina Telephone, © 2021. It is distributed without charge to all members/owners of the cooperative.



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

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On the Cover:



Divine Your Space owner Kyle Fuller features numerous plants and decorations at his store on Trinity Street.
See story Page 13.

WELCOME OUR NEW EMPLOYEES



LEEANNE BURDETTE •From Iva•

Burdette has been married to her husband, Brandon, for nearly 10 years. They have three children: Sophia, 8; Liam, 6; and Ezra, 2.

She has a bachelor's degree in psychology from Erskine College.

Much of her time outside of work is spent with her family, playing outside, going to the pool during the summer, playing board games and hiking. She also likes to read and work on puzzles.

Fun fact: She swam with sharks and is a classically trained vocalist.



KEATON FLOWERS •From Antreville•

He is married to Kerrigan. They have a Labrador retriever, Jax, and a Shih Tzu, Brewster.

He graduated from Dixie High School and has a mechatronics degree from Piedmont Technical College.

Flowers enjoys watching football, playing guitar, cooking and grilling.

Fun fact: "I'm a big Clemson fan."



NAYAH YOUNG •From McCormick•

She has three pitbull terrier dogs.

Young graduated from Lander University, earning a degree in business administration with an emphasis in finance.

Her hobbies outside of work include traveling, designing, reading and being with family.

Fun fact: "I love to dance!"



MASON JOHNSON •From Abbeville•

Johnson has an associate degree in applied science with a major in mechatronics tech.

His hobbies outside of work are hunting and fishing.

Fun fact: He does not consider anyone a stranger.



TYLER LAUGHLIN •From Abbeville•

He is engaged to Taylor Williams and will marry in October.

He has an associate degree in HVAC and plans to further his education in business management.

His hobbies outside of work are camping and going out on the lake. He also enjoys traveling and seeing new places.

Fun fact: Laughlin started operating bulldozers and excavators at age 10, which he did for many years before becoming a WCTEL employee.



OLIVIA PRINCE

•Lives in Abbeville.

From Craytonville•

She and her husband, Eric, have two children, Bryson and Emerson. They also have three pets. Their dog is Francine, and the two cats are Hamilton and D.W.

Her hobbies include hanging out with family and riding their side-by-side vehicle.

Fun fact: Turtles are her favorite animal.



CROSBY LONG

•From Greenwood•

He is engaged to Keran Hodges, and they will marry May 1. He has one daughter, who is 3, and will have four stepchildren.

Long went to Piedmont Tech and majored in building construction management.

He loves fishing, offshore fishing, hunting, water-skiing, riding on the boat and being outdoors.

Since age 16, he has raced go-karts competitively, and he enjoys going to NASCAR races with his family and friends.

Fun fact: At age 18, Long had the experience of driving a NASCAR race car at Charlotte Motor Speedway.

A rider navigates the Tunnel Trail in Sumter National Forest.

TAKE PRIDE IN YOUR RIDE

How to safely blaze the ATV trails

Story by ANNE P. BRALY

In coming weeks, ATVs and other off-road vehicles will come out of hibernation, and riders will be hitting the trails more than any other time of year. There's something about early spring that makes for great riding — cool mornings, mild afternoons, pleasant evenings, new growth appearing all around you. They all come together to make an ideal day as you ride trails through the forests of the South.

"I think the best part about riding is getting to see so much of the forest and so many different habitats in a short period of time," says David Baldwin with the U.S. Forest Service at South Carolina's Francis Marion National Forest. There's one main thoroughfare, the Wambaw Cycle Trail, that's 40 miles long with two different loops — one north and the other south.

"Within a 19-mile section of the north section, you'll witness Carolina Bay trees, hardwood ponds, longleaf pine stands and a variation in terrain that is rare in the low country," Baldwin says.

But if you're new to the sport, how do you know which all-terrain vehicle is best for you? Alice Riddle, an outdoor recreation planner at Sumter National Forest, says it's important to ride vehicles that are age- and size-appropriate. One size does

not fit all. ATVs come with a warning label, clearly stating the minimum age of the rider. Not sure where to look? The label is affixed so riders can easily read it when seated in the proper operating position.

If you're new to the sport, talk with local shops and other riders, and do your homework ahead of time. The internet is a good resource, Riddle says. There are also training courses for both ATV and dirt bike riding. Check with your local bike shop.

It may seem as though the sounds of motorized vehicles are incongruous with

the peaceful sounds of nature, but it's all part of the plan the Forest Service offered when the trails first went in, says Riddle. "National forest lands provide a wide variety of recreational opportunities," she says. "Motorized trails are one of these opportunities. There are many hiking trails or general forest areas that one can go to in order to find a peaceful hike or solitary experience. Motorized trail bikes are only allowed on designated trails for motorized use on National Forest Lands. With national forests encompassing many thousands of acres, there are opportunities for all to enjoy." 🗨️



Choosing an ATV properly fitted to you is a key for safety.



TOP TRAILS

There are two national forests in South Carolina open to the public with well-maintained trails: Sumter National Forest in the Piedmont region offers a gently sloping topography with elevations up to 400 feet, and Francis Marion National Forest in South Carolina's low country — a flat sandy environment with many bogs that the trails skirt. Both offer trails for different levels of ability.

- **Cedar Springs Trail at Sumter** is 11 miles long and offers moderately challenging trail loops.
- **Parsons Mountain Trail** at Sumter is 10.3 miles long and easy — a good one for beginners.
- **Francis Marion has one main trail** — the 40-mile Wambaw Cycle Trail — with two loops. The north loop has more technicality in terrain and is best for more advanced riders than the south loop. On each of the loops, riders will approach signage where the trail forks and have the ability to choose to continue on or head back to the trail head.

MAP IT



One of the primary rules for off-road safety is carrying a trail map with you.

You'll find maps for Sumter and Francis Marion National Forests online at fs.usda.gov.



Volunteers groom trails by pulling a cluster of tires to flatten the path.

SAFETY FIRST

On nice days, trailheads can fill up quickly, says David Baldwin with the U.S. Forest Service. The Forest Service maintains the trails in South Carolina's two national forests. And since there are different loops and trails that riders can take, they do not get terribly congested, he adds.

Keep in mind, though, the trails are not race tracks. "Riders need to be aware there could be hazards that occur along the trail, and they need to be ready to stop on a moment's notice," warns Alice Riddle, an outdoor recreation planner at Sumter National Forest. "Riders must be in control of their bikes at all times. They are responsible for their safety and others. All trails have passing areas, so wait for those opportunities and don't create new impacts to the trail. If it's your first visit to a trail, start off with the loops closer to the parking area until you become familiar with the trail system."

Here are some additional rules of safety and etiquette to be considered when riding the trails.

- Keep in mind that there are going to be riders of all different skill levels around you. So, whether you are a seasoned professional who is training for your next race or a first-time rider who is learning to ride, everyone shares the trail.
- Do not ride above your ability. This practice prevents you from getting injured and keeps other riders safe, as well.
- There are spots on the trails where other riders may pass if they need to, so slow down, let them pass, or pull over if need be. This safety rule keeps the trail flowing nicely during busier days.

A robotic mower makes a mulching pass, keeping the yard at the ideal height.



THE NEXT CUT

Howie finds grass greener with robot mowers Story and Photography by JOHN CLAYTON



Tom Howie's WiFi-enabled robotic mower saves him time.

Abbeville's Tom Howie remembers the days of mowing his own lawn — sometimes even fondly. Now, though, those hours spent in the yard with a gas-powered mower have given way to a couple of high-tech robots, and Howie hardly has to lift a finger.

"Some people enjoy that battle," Howie says. "I have to admit there were times that I loved to mow grass, too. There are times when we do so much in our work that we don't get any feedback from, so we don't get that kick of a job well done."

But Howie has always gotten a bigger kick out of gadgets than he ever got out of lawn maintenance. He loves new technology like internet-linked, video-recording doorbells, such as the Ring. And he loves the Husqvarna Automower 315 Robotic lawn mowers that replaced the three traditional mowers he once had to help him keep the lawn neat and trim at his historic downtown Abbeville home.

Imagine a Roomba — the popular robotic vacuum cleaner that roams inside the home sweeping up dust bunnies and the like — for the yard. It's not exactly something out of "Lost in Space" or "Star Wars," but Howie's robots — he has two — run on preprogrammed schedules to maintain the front and back yards. He purchased two because there is no throughway the robot can traverse from the front lawn to the backyard.

Each mower sits in its own docking station. When their programming tells them to head out for their trips around their respective areas, the robots run on algorithms that guide them around the space. A guide wire keeps them from roaming away from the yard, and when they reach the edge, they simply turn around and head back the other way until they've covered the entire area.

"It'll run for an hour and charge for an hour, but the grass never gets any higher than this because it's cut all the time," says Howie, looking down at the neatly manicured lawn. "The grass hasn't really been cut in three years other than that. It stays this height all the time. There's no mulch because the robot cuts it so fine. It just dissipates into the ground, and nature takes care of it."

The mowers' tiny blades use centrifugal force to shear the grass into fine, almost granular cuttings. Howie buys a pack of new blades and changes them out every two or three months using a screwdriver. "There really is no maintenance," he says, noting that Husqvarna, a leader in the lawncare equipment industry, has provided excellent customer support.

The Husqvarna Automower 315 costs about \$1,500, a price comparable to other makes and models, which range from around \$1,000 to more than \$2,500. If someone lifts the mower up, they must punch in a code on its keypad in order to reengage it, which serves as a theft deterrent.

Howie can connect his robotic mowers to his home's WiFi and control them through an app on his smartphone, but he has opted to use the robots' onboard programming.

The mowers emerge every day in the early afternoon to do their jobs. Sometimes, just that occurrence draws a crowd as folks from around the quiet, historic neighborhood wander over to see them in action. "People will just stop by and watch them go," Howie laughs. 🗨️



TOP 5 ROBOTIC LAWN MOWERS

1. Robomow RS612 Battery Powered Lawn Mower

Bottom line: It's a good robotic mower that can handle rainy weather. Excellent customer service makes it worth a look. **Pros:** The mower works well once the wire is laid correctly, and it's much quieter than a gas-powered mower.

2. Worx WG794 Landroid Robotic Lawn Mower

Bottom line: One of the best robotic lawn mowers available on the market, it has one of the best prices, too. **Pros:** When properly set up with wire at correct spacing and distance, it cuts well. Program times to cut one hour then auto charge for an hour.

3. Robomow RC306 Robotic Lawn Mower

Bottom line: If you've got a small yard, this mower can take care of it without too much maintenance. **Pros:** It's easy to set up through the included app. Control everything using your smartphone. An edging mode for extra reach is included.

4. Husqvarna Automower 315 Robotic Lawn Mower

Bottom line: This is a small unit meant for a quarter-acre or less. It has some trouble staying within boundaries but gets the job done. **Pros:** Manual and online help are adequate to get and keep it running. Its quiet operation is good for weekends and early mornings.

5. McCulloch ROB 1000 Programmable Robotic Lawn Mower

Bottom line: Meant for small yards less than a quarter-acre, it works well to keep a small area trimmed. **Pros:** Programming is easy, and the anti-theft alarm works well when the unit is lifted. A sensor recognizes fencing, so it doesn't require as much wire.

Source: bestreviews.com

CREATIVE SPACES

Artists and craftspeople find community online

Story by DREW WOOLLEY



Jessica Sanders, left, and Addie Moore keep ETX Creatives running along with Lisa Horlander, who is not pictured.



The online community is home to 350 artists and creatives.



ETX Creatives welcomes artists and visitors at in-person events.

Addie Moore just wanted to know a schedule for local art shows. A mixed media artist and art teacher at Chapel Hill High School, she and her friends knew there was a need for better communication among creatives in Tyler, Texas, and beyond.

“I heard it enough times that eventually I realized, ‘OK, I guess I have to do it,’” she says of her commitment in 2018. “Our first meeting we just went out for a beer and decided to make a Facebook group.”

That group became ETX Creatives, an online community of artists and artisans throughout East Texas. Today, the curated Facebook group is home to 350 creatives who use the space to share their work, offer inspiration and encouragement, or share news about upcoming exhibitions.

“We’re a largely rural area, so you have your friends from high school, church or that you’ve met over time. But it tends to happen in pockets,” says Moore. “There aren’t a lot of public spaces, so the internet provided a space for us to connect, express what we’re doing artistically and to let people know you’re not alone in Edom or your small town. You have a community.”

BREAKING THE BLOCK

Having a community of people who understand the struggles of the creative process has been especially important over the last year when artists and creatives have been hit hard by the economic challenges of the coronavirus pandemic.

“It’s a great place for us to say, ‘I’m having some creative block,’ or ‘How are you staying positive during this

time?’” says Moore. “I think having this creative community that knows what we’re going through and can give suggestions if we’re stuck or having trouble with a particular process has been a great support.”

ETX Creatives also hosts a blog on its website, etxcreatives.com, where visitors can find updates on the latest events and shows across East Texas. The site also allows promotion of items ranging from handmade ceramics and jewelry to clothing and one-of-a-kind paintings. The group also produces the “ETX Creatives Podcast” to showcase local artists and to delve into the creative process.

Before the pandemic, ETX Creatives hosted in-person exhibitions and workshops where hundreds of visitors from throughout the state could try their hand at printmaking or creating their own T-shirts. While those meetups have been put on pause, the group has continued to raise funds for local artistic projects.

And the best may be yet to come. Along with her ETX Creatives partners Jessica Sanders and Lisa Horlander, Moore is working to organize their informal group into an official non-profit. Once established, they can raise money for their own space, where they aim to continue hosting public events, have a permanent gallery and provide studio space for short-term artist residencies.

“My ultimate goal is to influence an economy among the creative community so people want to buy from local artists,” says Moore. “It can create appreciation and community support beyond just a space for us to talk to each other.” 📱

THE FUTURE OF ART

When it was founded in 1961, the Kentucky Guild of Artists and Craftsmen promoted local creators with a traveling "Guild Train" that exhibited their work across the state. The Guild Train no longer runs, but the organization still brings artists, craftsmen, collectors, galleries and other interested parties together.

In recent years, the guild's transformation has seen it harness the power of the internet to build social media communities and host online collections, where visitors can view and purchase work from member artists. Greg Lakes, who joined the guild after he and his wife opened the Clover Bottom Bed and Breakfast in McKee, hopes organizations like the guild continue to see the value of online communities for their members.

"Those places are where you have to be now to be viable as a selling artist," he says. "We have a lot of great artists in the area who come to the guild, and I think the groups that are going to survive are the ones who develop their online presence."

For more information, visit kyguild.org.



CREATIVE VOICES

Access to fast internet services creates fresh opportunities for creators in rural communities throughout the nation.

"I've never had to advertise. I just use Facebook to let people know when the classes are, and people usually use that to save a spot."

— Tammie Franklin, owner and teacher at Tammie's Treasures Painting Classes in River, Kentucky

"It helps us stay connected, and we reach a larger audience. It's one of the best ways we have to spread the word about what we do."

— Debra Ruzinsky, director of the Appalachian Center for Craft in Smithville, Tennessee





HI! I'M AMANDA CLARK

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

DEVICE OF THE MONTH



Canon PIXMA TR4520

Whether printing color photos or records for filing taxes, a great printer offers a must-have resource. Consider the Canon PIXMA TR4520, which connects wirelessly, has Canon's color accuracy for photos and allows you to print from your phone. Widely available for about \$80.

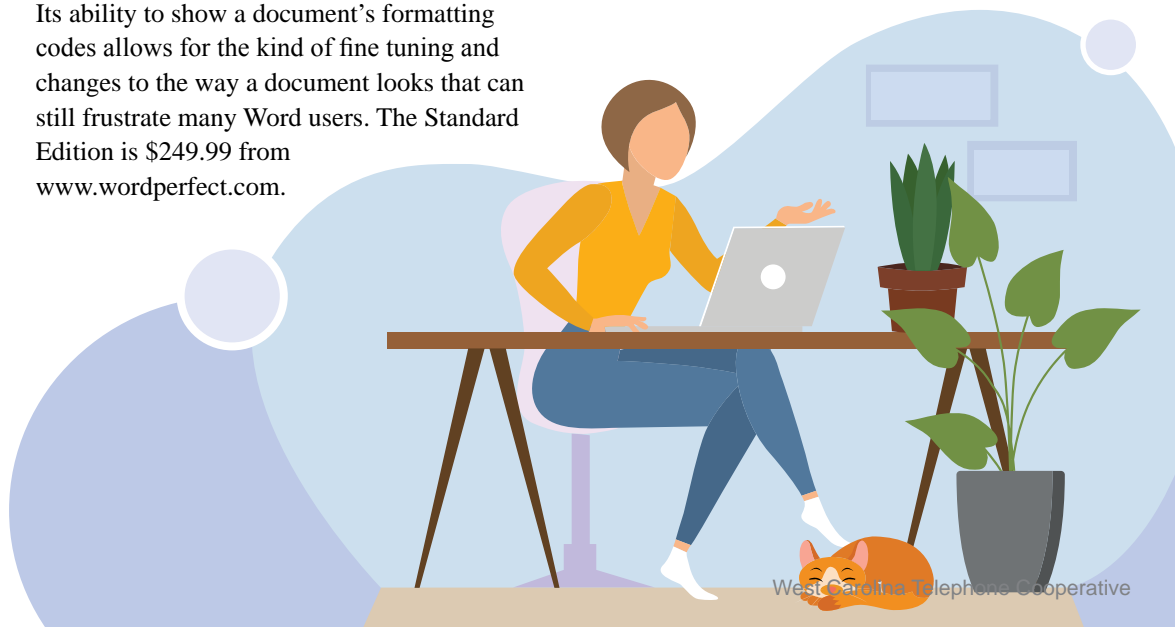


Get a sweet office suite

From free to pro-grade, find the tools you need

A good office suite with its three core applications — a word processor, a spreadsheet and a presentation program — is essential for handling school assignments and personal finances and for getting the most from your home computer in general. But which suite should you choose?

- **Google** has its own office suite that's especially attractive for those who want an easy way to work collaboratively across a variety of platforms. Through Google Docs, Sheets and Slides, the search engine giant offers free word processing, spreadsheets and presentation applications that run in any browser and integrate into Google Drive. For basic use, Google's office suite is tough to beat, especially when it lets you start writing on your home PC, keep working on your phone while waiting at a coffee shop and finish the job on your friend's MacBook. Get it free at google.com.
- **iWork** is what Apple calls its supergroup of free productivity apps: Pages for word processing, Numbers for spreadsheets and Keynote for presentations. As with most things Apple, the apps are elegant and user-friendly, but they don't always play well with others in their native format. You can export to Microsoft Office, but opening an iWork document on a non-Apple machine is cumbersome. The apps are free on Apple computers and mobile devices through the App Store.
- **Microsoft Office** is the gold standard for a reason, offering the best productivity software on the market. Most users don't need the many advanced features included in Word, Excel and PowerPoint. Feeling competition from Google, Microsoft offers a free version of its basic applications online, which work with cloud storage OneDrive. If you find you need more advanced functionality, you can always subscribe to Microsoft 365. Review your options at office.com. ☒
- **LibreOffice** is free — the result of years of development by a worldwide community of hundreds of programmers — and is almost as feature rich and polished as any paid application. Along with word processing, spreadsheets and presentations, the suite also includes database and graphics programs. It works well with Microsoft Office files and can save to popular formats, including PDF. It's available for Windows, Mac and Linux, but there is no mobile version or an option to work online. It's free at www.libreoffice.org.
- **WordPerfect Office** is only available for Windows and has no online version, and its spreadsheet and presentation applications are not particularly impressive. And yet, many people swear by its powerful word processor. It's one of the few options for those who want a program that doesn't try to copy Microsoft. Its ability to show a document's formatting codes allows for the kind of fine tuning and changes to the way a document looks that can still frustrate many Word users. The Standard Edition is \$249.99 from www.wordperfect.com.





Home and garden and more Divine Your Space designed to inspire

Story by JOHN CLAYTON

By the time Abbeville native Kyle Fuller turned 30, he had degrees in business and a corporate pedigree. Despite having qualifications that he could use in any big city, though, his heart was in downtown Abbeville.

“The passion was always interior and exterior decorating, home decor, and things like that,” says Fuller, owner of Divine Your Space, a combination home and garden store and occasional classroom and event space. “I kind of put it on hold for a while and said, ‘No, it’s not the right time.’ Then, you know, life happens. Then, I kind of got stuck and ready to do something different. I took a leap of faith and went after something I really wanted to do.”

That was three years ago. After Fuller spent the better part of four years putting

together a business plan, drawing on his experience working for a Greenwood home and garden business and divining inspiration from other towns and cities across the region, Divine Your Space was born on Trinity Street in 2018.

“I love visiting Asheville — I like that downtown, kind of unique urban feel,” Fuller says. “I went looking at other small towns, and even in downtown Greenville there are shops I got inspiration from.”

Fuller then had to turn that inspiration into a business. The result is an eclectic store and space he refers to as “an urban home and garden store,” which has also hosted the occasional birthday and holiday party, as well as classes and workshops.

“We have everything from plants to pottery to statues to home decor and gift items,” he says. “It’s a little bit of everything for everybody.”

But there is more to Divine Your Space than strictly retail. Fuller recognized a trend among small businesses of giving customers experiences to go with their purchases. That might be an art class or some sort of workshop that creates hands-on learning for everyone involved. “Workshops have been a big, big activity for us,” Fuller says. “It could be pottery workshops or a paint workshop or a terrarium building class — we just want something unique to Abbeville and different activities that will have people come into the store.”

Fuller says the responses to Divine Your Space from customers, other downtown merchants and members of the community have been positive as he works to grow the business. “We’ve even had people bring us ideas if they want to learn something new,” he says. “The pandemic did put some of those on hold, but we do have some smaller groups who have some requests.”

Being a bit eclectic as urban home-and-garden suppliers go is a perfect fit for Fuller, who touts his as the store where “you will find your inner gardener’s happy place.”

“It’s really a combination of all the things I enjoy,” he says. 🌿



Divine Your Space features numerous plants and decorations at the store on Trinity Street.



Brock and Presley Davenport enjoy the plants.

About Divine Your Space

DivineYourSpace.com | 864-366-8463

@divineyourspace on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Pinterest
info@divineyourspace.com

130 Trinity St., Abbeville, SC 29620
Tuesday-Friday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.;
Saturday, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.



Sunny side up?

Mix it up in the morning

Ham and eggs just go together — you rarely think of one without picturing the other. And they are so often seen together on an Easter menu.

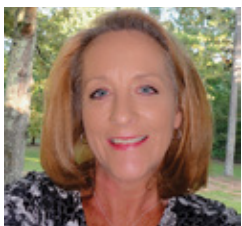
But what do you do once the Easter lunch is over and you're faced with left-over ham and lots of eggs?

For starters, make sure that you've handled all the food safely. With a lot of cooks in the kitchen prepping so much food, sometimes safe food handling practices fly out the window. Make sure you're preparing — and storing — food properly, so all of your guests leave with a full tummy and not a sick stomach.

While you're boiling eggs to dye for Easter, boil some extras, and make sure you keep them in the refrigerator until you're ready to use them.

Don't serve or eat any eggs that have been at room temperature for more than two hours.

As for your ham, if it's ready to eat then, you simply have to warm it up. But if you have to roast it yourself, make sure the internal temperature reaches 145 F.



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

HAM AND EGG CASSEROLE

- 2 medium cooked potatoes, peeled and sliced
- 4 hard-boiled large eggs, chopped
- 1 cup diced fully cooked ham
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper
- 1 large egg
- 1 1/2 cups sour cream
- 1/4 cup dry bread crumbs
- 1 tablespoon butter, melted

In a large bowl, combine the potatoes, eggs, ham, salt and pepper. Combine the raw egg and sour cream. Add to potato mixture and gently toss to coat. Transfer to a greased 11-by-7-inch baking dish.

Toss bread crumbs and butter. Sprinkle over casserole. Bake, uncovered, at 350 F for 20 minutes or until bubbly and cooked through.

CREAMED HAM AND EGGS

- 3 tablespoons butter
- 3 tablespoons flour
- 1/2 teaspoon dry mustard
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/8 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 2 1/4 cups milk
- 1 cup diced cooked ham
- 4 hard-boiled eggs, chopped
- 4 biscuits

Melt butter in a large saucepan over low heat. Stir flour, mustard, salt and pepper into butter until mixture is smooth and bubbly. Remove from heat and add milk. Return to heat and bring to a boil, stirring constantly. Boil until mixture thickens — about 1 minute.

Stir ham and eggs into milk mixture and cook until heated through. Spoon creamed ham and eggs onto biscuits and serve.

PUFFY HAM AND EGG QUICHE

- 1 (17 1/3 ounce) box frozen puff pastry
- 8 ounces ham, chopped
- 4 hard-boiled eggs, sliced
- 8 ounces mozzarella cheese, shredded
- 1 beef bouillon cube
- 1/4 cup evaporated milk, warm
- 1 tablespoon parsley, chopped
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 4 tablespoons Parmesan cheese, grated

Preheat the oven to 375 F. Roll one sheet of puff pastry into a pie dish. Sprinkle ham on the bottom of the pie. Add a layer of sliced hard boiled eggs and a layer of the mozzarella cheese.

Dissolve the beef bouillon in the warm milk and mix with parsley, beaten eggs and Parmesan cheese. Pour over ham, eggs and cheese. Cover the pie with the second puff pastry. Bake for 45 minutes or until golden brown. Let it sit for 5 to 10 minutes before cutting and serving.



Hard boiled eggs benedict

- 4 hard boiled eggs
- 2 English muffins (split half)
- 4 slices ham
- Chopped parsley (optional)

Hollandaise Sauce:

- 4 large egg yolks
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1/2 cup butter (very slightly softened, cut into 5 pieces)
- Pinch of salt
- Dash of cayenne pepper (optional)

Prepare hollandaise sauce by placing a heat-proof bowl over a pan of gently simmering water (about 1 1/2 inches of water). The bottom of the bowl should not be touching the water. Alternatively, a double boiler set can be used. Add egg yolks and lemon juice to the bowl and whisk vigorously until the mixture becomes shiny/glossy and thickens. Whisk in

one piece of butter until fully incorporated into mixture. Repeat with remaining pieces, one at a time.

Whisk in a pinch of salt and a dash of cayenne, if using. If mixture is too thick, whisk in a bit of warm water, a tablespoon at a time. Remove from heat and use immediately.

In a hot skillet, over medium heat, heat the ham. Toast the English muffins until lightly browned. Cut each hard-boiled egg into fourths. Assemble by placing an English muffin half on a plate (cut side up), topping with 1 slice of ham, 1 egg (cut into fourths), and drizzle with 1/4 of the hollandaise sauce. Topped with chopped parsley, if desired, and serve warm.

Alternately, to make this dish a little easier, buy an envelope of Knorr's hollandaise sauce mix and follow package directions.



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