



The Mountain Telephone

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2018

CONNECTION

A TIME OF CHANGE

Photographer finds inspiration in the seasons

BREAKDOWN ADVENTURE

Mountain Telephone employees rappel and reel for documentary

RISE AND SHINE

The magic of baking scratch-made biscuits





BY SHIRLEY BLOOMFIELD, CEO
NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association


Promoting rural entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurs, those brave individuals willing to take a chance on an idea to start a business, are an important part of any thriving economy. We've seen rural entrepreneurship in particular become a key to sparking development in downtowns and invigorating communities.

Indeed, attitudes are changing about where someone can be an entrepreneur. When people think of startups, they often envision cities like New York, Austin or San Francisco. Big cities are no longer the only locations where startups can thrive thanks to low costs, an eager workforce and the availability of broadband.

Networks like the one your local telco has built provide a critical link for new and existing businesses. Through the power of broadband, any rural area is a possible hotbed for entrepreneurial activity.

New rural businesses can connect with suppliers, customers and peers in ways that were impossible just a few years ago. Robust fiber optic networks allow for companies to hire remote workers, share big files with designers or engineers, and hold virtual meetings through videoconferences.

Being an entrepreneur is not for everyone. It takes patience, drive and energy, a positive attitude, and a high tolerance for risk. But I'm glad that today when those type of people look at rural America, they now see opportunities thanks to hardworking NTCA members like your local telco. 



Regardless of location, high-speed internet brings endless entertainment options. More so than ever before, viewers have options for high-quality programming through streaming devices and services.

Streaming is an entertaining addition to traditional television services. Nearly 60 percent of U.S. TV homes have at least one internet-enabled device capable of streaming to a TV set, according to a recent survey by The Nielsen Company.

HOW POPULAR ARE STREAMING DEVICES?

Since June 2016, streaming devices have grown by 12 percent.

WHAT IS A STREAMING DEVICE/STREAMING SERVICE?

A streaming device is a gadget that uses the internet and allows viewers to connect to content online. A streaming service is a downloadable app that lets users watch content online.


WHY DOES IT MATTER?

While traditional TV services are still crucial, at the touch of a button, streaming offers limitless entertainment. Streaming allows viewers to watch whatever content they choose, when and how they want.

WHAT'S SO GREAT ABOUT IT?

Variety: Whether you're looking for reruns of "The Dick Van Dyke Show" or original streaming-only content like Netflix's "Stranger Things" and Amazon Prime's "All or Nothing," it's all online.

Simplicity: Streaming devices and streaming services are simple to set up and require little to no technical knowledge.

Affordability: Streaming devices like AppleTVs are typically less than \$180, while some Roku models are about \$40. Streaming services like Netflix and Hulu are about \$10 per month or more. 

STREAMING DEVICE EXAMPLES:

Apple TV, Google Chromecast, Amazon Fire TV, Roku, a video game console or smart TV.

STREAMING SERVICE EXAMPLES:

Netflix, Hulu, Amazon Prime, YouTube and HBO Now.

69.5 MILLION U.S. TV homes have at least one internet-enabled streaming device.

39 MILLION U.S. TV homes have an internet-enabled game console.

6.5 MILLION U.S. homes have a streaming device, game console and smart TV.

Source: The Nielsen Company

More Americans are getting their news to go



BY DREW WOOLLEY

In today's world, everyone is connected all the time. That's changed the way we communicate, shop and even get our news. A recent report from the Pew Research Center took a closer look at how people's news habits are changing and the surprising groups driving the growth of mobile news.

Online news is closing the gap with TV. Today, 43 percent of Americans get their news online, just 7 percent fewer than those who say they get it on TV. That's less than half of the 19-point gap that existed in 2016, meaning the internet could soon become most people's primary news source.

News on mobile is still growing. In 2017, 45 percent of adults in the U.S. regularly got news from a mobile device, a 9 percent increase from 2016 and more than double the percentage in 2013. And while many of those people also turn to a desktop or a laptop computer for news, nearly two-thirds prefer a mobile device.

Mobile news growth is being driven by older adults. About 85 percent of adults get news from a mobile device, an increase of 13 percent from 2016. That increase is mostly made up of those 65 and older whose mobile news consumption jumped 24 points to 67 percent in 2017. For those aged 50 to 65, 79 percent of people get news from a mobile device, about twice as many as in 2013.

Two-thirds of the country gets news from social media. A small increase in the overall consumption of news on social media from 2016 to 2017 was spurred by a significant uptick among people 50 and older. Now, more than half of Americans older than 50 get news on social media. [👉](#)

WATCH OUT FOR FAKE NEWS

One of the biggest drawbacks of online news is that it can be difficult to tell which sources are reliable and which are not. Since the FBI announced Russia's efforts to spread false stories during the 2016 election, it's more important than ever to protect yourself against unreliable information.

» **Start with the facts.**

A recent BuzzFeed analysis of CNN, ABC News and Politico found the vast majority of the news outlets' reporting to be truthful. Subscribing to a reputable newspaper or magazine can be a good first step to inoculating yourself against fake news.

» **Step outside your bubble.**

People tend to consume media inside echo chambers that confirm their beliefs. Whether it's a group of friends or your social media feed, take some time to break out of your normal news habits and challenge your views.

» **Think like a fact-checker.**

The best way to get to the bottom of any subject is to dig deep. Read as many sources as you can and check sites like Snopes or Politifact that specialize in verifying popular news stories.

TV networks won't stop increasing their fees

Imagine you run a delivery company and you charge \$100 to bring goods to a business in our region. Then, consider how a new toll booth would affect your business.



SHAYNE ISON
General Manager

You already spend much of your \$100 on gas, wages for your driver and maintenance for the truck. Imagine how it would affect your operation if a new toll booth charging \$10 each way opened up directly on the route.

Suddenly, instead of \$100 to cover wages, fuel and maintenance, you now only have \$80. A delivery company that spends more to deliver something than it charges is not going to be in business very long. You would have to charge customers more to cover the new costs.

This is the situation small rural telcos like Mountain Telephone find ourselves in when it comes to the rates we have to pay television networks to provide their programming.

You see, if you are one of our many TV subscribers, Mountain Telephone has to pay a fee for virtually every channel in your TV package (except the shopping channels). While sports channels are by far the most expensive, even the less popular channels charge from a few nickels to a few dollars per subscriber to carry their programming. Some of the more expensive channels can be up to \$8 per subscriber. If you multiply those fees by every channel in your package, you can see what we're up against. Almost all of your monthly television bill goes directly to those networks. The days of commercial breaks covering the networks' financial demands are long over.

This hasn't always been the case. Only a few years ago, local channels did not require a fee for Mountain Telephone to retransmit their programming. Now, however, not only are they requiring us to pay a fee, but they are also increasing that fee every year or two. This year, for instance, many local stations are doubling the fees TV providers like Mountain Telephone have to pay for each television subscriber.

In addition to fees, many popular cable channels require that providers carry — and pay for — less popular channels owned by their corporate parent companies.

Like the delivery business in my story above, these new "tolls" keep popping up and have greatly affected what we have to charge for television service. Now, your first thought might be to have the driver go a different route in order to avoid the new toll, but in the analogy I'm making with Mountain Telephone and TV networks, there's only one route to deliver the goods our customers want. Certain programming is only available on certain networks, and we have to carry that network to provide what our customers expect.

This is why — despite the pretense of having negotiations — TV networks with the unchecked power to charge whatever they want creates an unfair fight for Mountain Telephone and other small rural telcos working on behalf of our members.

We know you are counting on us to deliver quality television programming at an affordable price. Our staff works every day to control our overhead expense and to be as efficient as possible in everything we do. I hope this metaphor of the delivery company and the increasing toll road helps you understand why Mountain Telephone may be forced to raise the rates or fees we charge members for television service. As your trusted local telco, we were able to absorb the cost of the first few retransmission rate increases. However, the board and I are charged with ensuring the long-term continued financial viability of the cooperative, and with that in mind we have to pass these costs along to our subscribers.

We appreciate the opportunity to be your trusted provider for broadband, video and phone service today — and well into the future. ☎

The Mountain Telephone

CONNECTION

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Mountain Telephone

Mountain Rural Telephone Cooperative, Inc., is a member-owned cooperative dedicated to providing communications technology to the people of Elliott, Menifee, Morgan, Wolfe and a section of Bath counties. The company covers 1,048 square miles and supplies service to nearly 12,000 members.

Send address corrections to:
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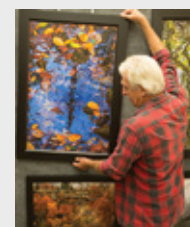
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On the Cover:



Dean Hill, who specializes in nature imagery from the hills of Kentucky, sets up a booth to sell photographic prints. See story Page 13.

USDA assistant to the secretary visits with Mountain GM

Anne Hazlett, assistant to the secretary USDA, Rural Development, met with Mountain Telephone General Manager Shayne Ison during the fall meeting of the Kentucky Telecom Association and the Tennessee Telecommunications Association.



Hazlett said she has a vision for what broadband can do for rural America and a better understand-

ing of the needs of local residents after touring Kentucky and Tennessee in late October. "I've been inspired by what I've seen," she told those on the tour.

Hazlett came to Kentucky and Tennessee hoping for "a conversation about telecommunications" and to hear about the needs of rural residents in the area.

She also said she appreciated the opportunity to hear from local officials and area residents. "You cannot know what the true needs are in communities without getting out here," Hazlett said.

While speaking at the fall meeting of the Kentucky Telecom Association and the Tennessee Telecommunications Association, she praised those in attendance for their leadership and innovation in serving rural Americans. "You all know the challenges of serving these areas, and you've met them head-on," Hazlett told the crowd of rural telecommunications executives, employees and vendors. "These are simply critical services, not just for communities to survive, but to thrive."

Ison said keeping the success of rural telcos like Mountain on the minds of policymakers is important. "At Mountain we have a very positive story to tell about building our fiber network in East Kentucky," he said. "Anytime we have the opportunity to let someone in Washington know what's working here for our members in rural America, that's an opportunity we need to take."

New Hope Academy awarded \$4,000 grant

With the endorsement of Mountain Telephone, the Foundation for Rural Service awarded New Hope Academy a \$4,000 grant.

The organization supports advancing quality of life and enabling economic development in rural America.

"The Foundation for Rural Service is honored to highlight these incredible communities — each reflecting the culture of vision, service and innovation at the heart of rural America," said Jessica Golden, executive director of FRS. "We congratulate all of our applicants for the collaborative work they do to improve the well-being of rural America."

The academy in Oil Springs, Kentucky, was awarded the grant to purchase computers for classrooms. According to the grant application, most students do not have computers at home, and the shared computer lab is insufficient for all students.

Kick-start that New Year's resolution to streamline your life —
and get a \$10 credit.

Sign up for Auto Bill Pay and Mountain Telephone will give you a one-time \$10 credit on your bill!

To get started, call **606-743-3121** and follow the prompt to set up Auto Bill Pay.

Call Customer Service at 606-743-3121 for \$10 discount. Promotion ends February 28, 2018.





A getaway to ROMANCE

The Main Inn at Beaumont Inn was built in 1845 and offers the perfect ambiance for a night of romance.

Photo courtesy of Beaumont Inn.

Romance can happen wherever you are. But add a wonderful dinner and beautiful surroundings, and you've upped the ante. Here are some suggestions for hotels, inns, lodges and resorts that know what it takes to create a memorable getaway, whether it's a Valentine's retreat or simply some much-needed time away to recharge.

Beaumont Inn

638 Beaumont Inn Drive, Harrodsburg, Kentucky

Named one of the South's most charming inns, Beaumont, in the heart of horse country, has drawn couples from around the region for 99 years. Harrodsburg, the oldest town in Kentucky, offers history and charm. The inn follows suit, adding all the modern amenities you would expect, including comfortable linens, free Wi-Fi and cable TV in the 31 guest rooms and the suites located in Beaumont's three buildings — Goddard Hall, circa 1935; Greystone House, circa 1931; and the Main Inn, circa 1845.

Breakfast is included in your stay and is served every morning.

- ▶ **Where to eat:** The inn features two dining options. The Main Dining Room received the prestigious America's Classic Award from the James Beard Foundation in 2015 and serves classic dishes, including corn pudding, country ham and fried chicken. The Owls Nest Lounge serves wines and cocktails, along with appetizers and entrees. In town, step back in time for a burger or pot roast at Kentucky Fudge Company, 25 S. Main St. Or if you're looking for a taste of Mexico, reasonable prices and killer enchiladas, try La Fonda, 121 S. Main St.
- ▶ **Rates and reservations:** \$120-\$196, weeknights; \$133-\$208, weekends. Contact 859-734-3381 or beaumontinn.com



Overlook Pavilion at Gorham's Bluff is a beautiful place to say "I do" or renew your vows with the one you love.

♥ Gorham's Bluff

100 Gorham Drive, Pisgah, Alabama

Choose a room with a fireplace, antique furnishings and other beautiful trappings or a private cottage that offers all the amenities of home without all the distractions. Gather family on the bluff and say your vows for the first time, or renew your vows in the wedding pavilion overlooking the Tennessee River from atop Sand Mountain. Gorham's Bluff is the go-to place in the mountains of North Alabama to experience luxury, privacy and romance.

- ▶ **Where to eat:** Most meals are served in The Lodge at Gorham's Bluff. Breakfast is made to order, box lunches can be delivered to your room, and three- or four-course dinners by candlelight are offered each evening.
- ▶ **Rates and reservations:** 256-451-8439 or gorhamsbluff.com/the-lodge. Suites begin at \$155 per night.

♥ Dancing Bear Lodge

7140 E. Lamar Alexander Parkway, Townsend, Tennessee

You'd be hard-pressed to find a more scenic, romantic getaway in Tennessee than Dancing Bear near the Great Smoky

Mountains. Cabins and cottages are equipped with wood-burning fireplaces and kitchens stocked with fruits and other treats. Many have hot tubs, too. And all offer great porches with rocking chairs where you can relax and view the wooded hillside and other surroundings. If weather permits, ask the front desk to deliver a gourmet picnic basket, and then find a quiet spot in the Smokies to relax with that special someone.

- ▶ **Where to eat:** You don't have to leave the property to find one of the best restaurants in the area, Dancing Bear Appalachian Bistro. Executive chef Shelley Cooper brings gourmet dining to the mountains, with farm-to-table specialties such as cast-iron beef tenderloin with loaded potato casserole, seasonal vegetables, wild mushrooms and house-made steak sauce. Reservations are strongly suggested during popular times, such as Valentine's Day. The resort's Apple Valley Cafe offers casual dining, breakfast through dinner. In nearby Maryville, restaurants run the gamut from fast food to white tablecloth.
- ▶ **Rates and reservations:** \$160-\$300 per night. Contact 800-369-0111 or www.dancingbearlodge.com.

♥ Red Horse Inn

45 Winstons Chase Court, Landrum, South Carolina

Plan your escape to Red Horse Inn in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains. The inn was chosen as one of America's



The Red Horse Inn was named one of America's most romantic inns by Travel and Leisure.

Photo courtesy of Red Horse Inn.

most romantic inns by Travel and Leisure. Choose a guest room in the inn or a private cottage, several of which are pet-friendly and all of which offer views of the surrounding pasture or mountains. All accommodations have whirlpool tubs or hot tubs.

- ▶ **Where to eat:** Breakfast is included in your stay at Red Horse. In nearby Saluda, North Carolina, The Purple Onion, 16 E. Main St., offers live bluegrass on Thursdays and Saturdays and Mediterranean-inspired pizzas, seafood and pastas nightly.
- ▶ **Rates and reservations:** \$175-\$325 per night, depending on accommodations. Contact 864-909-1575 or www.theredhorseinn.com.

♥ Stag Leap Country Cabins

2219 FM 2782, Nacogdoches, Texas

Nestled deep into the woods of East Texas, Stag Leap is the ideal secluded place for a romantic getaway. There are seven cabins, ranging in size from one bedroom to three. All cabins have full kitchens and charcoal grills, so you can bring your own food or dine in Nacogdoches just 2 miles away. Cabins also have wireless internet and satellite television. For some fresh air, step outside and enjoy the 200 acres of woodlands and waterways right outside your door. Most cabins have whirlpool tubs, inside or out, and gas or electric log fireplaces for romantic ambiance. Also, a private, centrally located hot tub for six, or just the two of you, may be reserved.

- ▶ **Where to eat:** Creekside Cafe at Pine Creek Lodge, 341 Pine Creek Road, is next door to Stag Leap and offers gourmet dining in a casual atmosphere. Try the rabbit Dijonnaise or grilled rib-eye. And it's said that the catfish at Clear Springs Restaurant, 211 Old Tyler Road, is the best on the planet.
- ▶ **Rates and reservations:** \$140-\$195 per night (cash discounts offered). Contact www.stagleap.com or 936-560-0766. 📞



E-READING RAINBOW

Local libraries offer varieties of e-books and audiobooks

BY JEN CALHOUN

Looking for a good e-read this winter? You're in luck. The region's local libraries lend thousands of e-books and audiobooks to their patrons for free. All you need is a library card.

As the number of Kindles, Nooks and tablets grows, so does the number of people checking out e-books. Deby Baker, director of Wolfe County Public Library, estimates that 20 to 25 percent of the system's patrons borrow e-books.

LARGE LENDING LIBRARY

Wolfe County Public Library is one of several libraries across the state that band together to offer OverDrive, an online program that allows patrons to check out

e-books and audiobooks for free. E-books come in many categories and genres, including fiction and nonfiction, self-help, children's books and more. By working together, smaller libraries are able to access far more titles than they could on their own, Baker says.

The increased digital resources also help smaller library systems expand community access to information while allowing library members access to e-books 24/7 from the comfort of their homes, or anywhere else with internet access.

"The people who do use it are thrilled with it," Baker says, adding that the number of OverDrive users in Wolfe County has increased over the past two years. "We've been trying to get the word out with flyers and bookmarks. People can even access it through their smartphones."

Aaron Gibbs, assistant director and e-services librarian at Morgan County Public Library, says the OverDrive system has given the library better access to more titles.

It also provides the library a way to keep patrons from spending too much on pricey e-book downloads from Amazon, iBooks and other sites.

"A physical library can only hold so many books," Gibbs says. "And while we do offer many bound books, this gives people many more options. This also lets us provide a free service for people who may not have the means to buy many e-books."

Many children are choosing e-books as well, he says. "I feel like the kids who have access to the technology like to utilize e-books," he says. "When I visit schools, there are plenty of children who are either on iPads or Kindle Fires. I think the more access to technology people get, the more they'll move toward e-book checkouts."

But bound books are still a big draw, Gibbs says. That could be because many people still like the feel of the book in their hands. "I think some parents want to make sure their children know what it's like to hold an actual book," he says.

PARTNERING FOR THE PUBLIC GOOD


Menifee County Public Library and Elliott County Public Library also offer access to the OverDrive system through Rowan County Public Library. Both libraries can offer their patrons online-only cards through Rowan County, and the cards are available at patrons' home libraries.

"Rowan County Public Library pays for it, and they get to count us in their circulation numbers for helping us out," says Melissa Clifford Wells, director of Menifee County Public Library. "Without this partnership, we wouldn't be able to offer e-books at all because it's so expensive and we're such a small library with a smaller budget."

Angie Anderson, director of Elliott County Public Library, agrees.

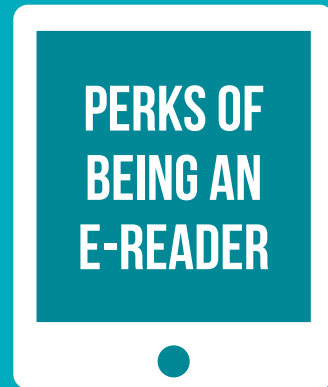
"This helps smaller libraries like us," Anderson says. "We can't always afford to buy the newest books. But with our partnership through Rowan County, our patrons can possibly get a lot more of those titles from OverDrive. It may not be in the library physically, but this gives us more to offer the public."

Getting the word out to patrons might be the biggest challenge, Clifford Wells says.

"It's been going on for about a year now," she says. "We've had a few people sign up for it but not as many as I'd like." 



The Wolfe County Public Library offers free Wi-Fi and computers for the community to use.



Reading by the glow of an e-reader or tablet has its benefits. We've lined up a few of them for you here:

1. Light and portable.

Heavy readers know the struggle of heading out on a trip and packing only a couple of books or magazines. But e-readers and tablets allow you to carry a library of books in one light package.

2. Adjusting the font size.

One of the best things about e-readers and tablets is being able to adjust the font size. It keeps you from having to wear glasses or grow longer arms.

3. Get new books any time of day or night.

Ever needed a new book right before bed but forgot to stock up at your bookstore or library? E-readers solve that problem by letting you buy or check out a book whenever you want. Make sure to sign up for digital access at your local library, however. Those one-click orders at Amazon and iTunes can get costly.

IF YOU GO

Interested in getting your e-read on but don't have a library card? You can find one at your local library. We've included addresses and websites for each below:

Wolfe County Public Library

164 Kentucky Highway 15 N.
Campton
606-668-6571
wcplib.org
Also on Facebook.

Morgan County Public Library

151 University Dr.
West Liberty
606-743-4151
www.youseemore.com/mcpl
Also on Facebook.

Elliott County Public Library

400 Main St.
Sandy Hook
606-738-5796
No website, but they are on Facebook.

Menifee County Public Library

1585 Main St.
Frenchburg
606-768-2212
www.youseemore.com/
menifee
Also on Facebook.



Spend smart in 2018

Your guide to the latest apps for coupon clipping

BY LUIS CARRASCO

If one of your New Year's resolutions is to finally start clipping coupons, or to just be smarter with your shopping budget, don't even bother taking out the scissors — take out your smartphone instead. Whether you like flipping through digital sales circulars or getting cash back on your purchases, the path to savings has never been smoother.

Here's a quick look at some of the services and apps available. All apps are compatible with iOS and Android devices.

COUPONS

Flipp allows you to browse through weekly sales ads from your favorite retailers — including Home Depot, Toys R Us and Walmart — or just search to see if an item you want is on sale. You can also make a shopping list and the app will point you to any existing deals. It also notifies you about expiring coupons and nearby discounts.

If you still enjoy searching for bargains in the newspaper, the **SnipSnap** coupon app lets your phone's camera do the clipping.

You can snap a picture of a printed offer and the app will capture the pertinent information so that you can use it at your favorite retailer. It also allows you to share coupons with your friends or find coupons other users have digitized.

Many retailers — including Target, Hobby Lobby, Michaels and Walgreens — also have their own apps that offer coupons.

'TEXTING CLUBS'

Hundreds of companies participate, so odds are that your favorite retailer, convenience store or chain restaurant is ready to send you coupons or deal alerts through a text. Simply check their website or ask a representative the next time you visit. Standard texting rates apply, though, so be careful of signing up for too many if you don't have unlimited texting.

Here are two to get you started: text SUB to 782929 for deals at Subway; text JOIN to 527365 for discounts at JC Penney. Any service you sign up for may be canceled anytime by texting the word STOP.

MONEY BACK

Both **Ibotta** and **Ebates** give you cash back for shopping, but they each take a different approach. When you shop through the Ebates website or app, the company receives a commission from the retailer and you get a part of that money, which you can then receive through a check or PayPal.

With Ibotta, you can either find cash-back rebates before you shop or check the app after you come back from the store. Either way, you watch a brief commercial or answer a survey and then take a photo of your receipt. The app recognizes the products on sale and deposits the money into your account, which you can then receive through PayPal, Venmo or a gift card.

Whichever app or service you choose, enjoy being a savvy shopper in 2018! 📱

Learning the language of tech

Enjoy a translator for today's essential tools

When people ask me what I do for a living, one of my favorite responses is that I am a translator. I translate between the technicians who build our networks, fix our computers, and sell us the latest in technology and those people who do not consider themselves “techie.” I think learning how to use technology is very much like learning a new language, so having a translator is always helpful.

In 2018, my plan is for this column to be your translator, helping you gain a better understanding of everyday technology. I will cover some basic things you need to know,

and I will introduce you to some of my favorite gadgets that you might find helpful.

In the meantime, here are some tips to get you started on using technology in your golden years.

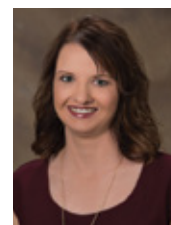
- ▶ Remember, it is not your fault that you struggle to understand the language of technology. The lingo is not your native language, and it takes time to learn it. However, it is up to you to take the opportunity to learn whenever you can.
- ▶ Ask questions. You may think your question is trivial, but you will never learn if you don't ask. We all know that a child who speaks French

because they are raised in France is not smarter than someone who cannot speak French. We all have knowledge, and kids today have a better understanding of technology because it is part of their everyday lives.

- ▶ Start by picking technology that allows you to do what you love. If you enjoy playing cards or games, choose a tablet that allows you to play games. If you love creating crafts, sign up for sites such as Pinterest to look up ideas for woodworking, quilting or scrapbooking.

I have so much respect for those of you in your golden years. You have so many skills

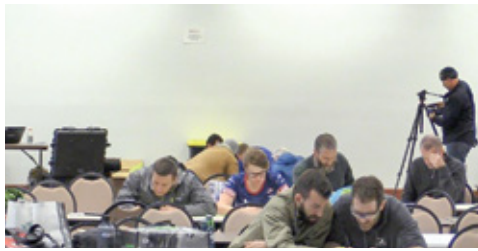
and so much knowledge that many of us will never know or understand. However, I want you to have the same opportunities to learn how to go online safely and enjoy using technology. There are things out there that can help keep you safe and make your life a little easier. I am looking forward to introducing you to some of these things and teaching you about the language of technology. 🗨️



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



Do you want to learn the basics on how to use your smartphone or computer? Are you interested in signing up for a Facebook or Pinterest account? **Check out www.gcflearnfree.com for free tutorials on how to do all this and more.**



Ricky Pennington, left photo, raced in honor of his nephew, while his co-workers Matt Daniel, middle photo, and John Aragon, right photo, filmed the experience.

Bold new adventure

Mountain employees film rugged expedition race

BY JEN CALHOUN

It's fair to say John Aragon and Matt Daniel had no idea what they were getting into when they decided to film the four-day, 275-mile Breakdown XPD Adventure Race in the rugged territories of Breaks Interstate Park and Jefferson National Forest last April.

Sure, the Mountain Telephone employees knew about expedition adventure races. They knew competitors would hike, mountain bike, canoe, raft and rappel their way through the woods, mountains and waterways with backpacks and maps.

But Aragon, a lineman with many roles at the cooperative, and Daniel, the central office supervisor, were still nervous about filming the race in April. The amateur cameramen had filmed ballgames, but never anything like this.

TEAM SKYLER

But it was important to them. Their co-worker, Ricky Pennington — Mountain's business systems, security and Wi-Fi supervisor — was racing in honor of his late nephew, Skyler Pennington. The 10-year-old had died after being diagnosed with childhood leukemia. Skyler's death

hit hard in the tightly-knit community of West Liberty.

"During my nephew's illness, he and I spent a lot of time together," Pennington says. "When he got older, he wanted to do one of these races with me. Of course, we never got to do that."

Pennington is an experienced racer who participates in about three or four races a year. Team Skyler included him and his friends Lonnie Parker, a retired Marine gunnery sergeant, and Vance Basham, a postal worker.

SHOWING OFF THE REGION

Aragon and Daniel had another reason to film the event. They wanted to show off the beauty of the region that had lost so many jobs to the decline of the coal industry.

"This sounds unbelievable, but we actually had a Walmart close in one of the towns in southern West Virginia,"

Aragon says. "Most people have never heard of a Walmart closing. That's how bad the economy's gotten around here."

Outdoor recreational tourism could help replace some of what the region has lost, he says.

FILMING THE RACE

Not knowing what they would find during the race, Aragon and Daniel packed up a trailer full of camping equipment, lights, cameras and laptops. They worked day and night, rushing to capture video of racers. Aragon, a seasoned outdoorsman, even rappelled down a cliff in the dark for an interview.

They grabbed a few hours of sleep when they could. Like the racers, they wrestled their way through the woods in cold conditions. At night, they'd catalog their footage. Tech smarts came into play more than once.

"Technology changes so much in our business that you have to be innovative with your thinking," Daniel says. "I think that helped prepare us."

It worked, too. The video, a 42-minute documentary of the race, was the product of

days of filming and weeks of editing. College student and part-time employee Andrew Bailey was an invaluable help during the editing process.

The film features interviews with racers and contributed footage from camera-equipped drones offering views of the gorges.

"We didn't know how to do this, so we made it up as we went along," Aragon says. "It was challenging. I won't lie."

In case you missed it

The 42-minute video of the Breakdown XPD Adventure Race first aired in spring 2017 on Mountain's Channel 2. It's not available online, but you can still catch it locally on Jan. 5 and Jan. 6 on Channel 2. The video will air on both days at 12 p.m. and again at 8 p.m. It features breathtaking views of the region and footage of the racers rappelling, hiking, biking and canoeing their way through the grueling four-day, 275-mile event.

Dean Hill is a nature photographer who runs a gallery displaying imagery from the hills of Kentucky where he lives.



Seasonal delights

Dean Hill captures Kentucky from behind a camera

BY RACHEL BROWN KIRKLAND

Each year, Dean Hill and his wife, Karen, visit festivals, fairs and craft shows across the region to sell and showcase his stunning landscape photographs of Kentucky's seasons.

They live in Morgan County, just off Paintsville Lake, a location ideal for a fine art photographer who prides himself on capturing the soul and rhythm of the natural world. "My first exhibit and art fair was in 1999 in West Liberty at the Sorghum Festival," he says.

Although he developed an interest in photography at a young age, he did not pursue the hobby until many years after serving in the Peace Corps in Thailand and venturing into Southeast Asia, India, the Himalayas and the western United States. After returning home, he developed a unique way of viewing his Kentucky.

Themes of peace and tranquility integral to Eastern cultures influence the work, Karen Hill says.

He considers the transitions between winter, spring, summer and fall seasons in their own rights. "I'm showcasing the beauty of this region," he says. "It's pretty easy to focus on that. Each season has its own special reason for photographing it."

As for the business, Karen Hill does the printing. They started out doing local arts and crafts shows, and eventually her husband's self-taught hobby grew into a successful full-time operation.

At first, they ran it out of their home, but a 2012 tornado that destroyed many of the homes and buildings in Morgan County brought about a significant change for the business. Among the flattened structures was a tobacco barn Dean Hill owned. It was salvaged and rebuilt as his studio and workshop — Gallery of the Hills.

Although the gallery has been modernized, the recycled barn materials help



Dean Hill sets up a booth to sell his photographic prints at an art fair in Berea, Ky. Hill specializes in nature imagery from the hills of Kentucky.

maintain the rustic charms of this rural setting. "Being 18 miles from the nearest town provides a beautiful setting for a photography gallery," he says. "Yet, it does create challenges for a business."

The couple is able to oversee most of their work from start to finish. They rely on high-speed internet to help with projects that require shipping. Access to fast and reliable internet service through Mountain Telephone has allowed their business to continue to grow, they say.

"Several projects that required sending large files to a distant location were made possible because of the quality of the internet service," he says. "The internet is also invaluable for applying to fairs, buying supplies, and communicating with the outside world. The website allows people to order photographs outside of art fairs or the gallery." 📱

To follow Dean Hill's work and activities, visit www.deanhillphotography.com.

The secret to perfect BISCUITS

Like a magician in her lab or an artist in her studio, Phyllis Cabe stands in her kitchen at The Big Biscuit Barn, where she takes basic biscuit dough and turns it into delicious masterpieces of culinary genius.

Cabe opened her restaurant right outside one of North Georgia's most historic towns, Fort Oglethorpe, locally known as the gateway to Chickamauga and Chattahoochee National Military Park. Because of its location, visitors from across the globe happen upon this eatery known for serving the biggest, best biscuits in town.

"I also have a solid group of regulars — people who come here every day, and some who eat here twice a day," she says.

They come for eggs, sausage and biscuits with gravy for breakfast. Then, they return for fried chicken with garlic-cheese biscuits for lunch, among other menu offerings.

Suffice it to say, Cabe knows a thing or two about making biscuits, an art she learned at her mama's apron strings and then further developed before opening The Big Biscuit Barn in 2007. Now, she makes 400-500 biscuits daily. While some are served alongside entrees

with butter and jam, others are made into the giant Cinnabarn cinnamon rolls — a house favorite — crispy fried fruit pies, crusts for chicken pot pie and other creations.

First and foremost, Cabe stresses the importance of not overworking the dough when making biscuits. Don't knead it, she says.

"Pick the dough up and lay it over itself six or seven times, incorporating layers in the dough, working in a little more flour if the dough feels too wet," she says. "This helps to create a fluffier biscuit."

Before cutting the dough, let it proof for about 15 minutes. Once the biscuits are cut and on the baking sheet, let them proof again for another 15 minutes. This, Cabe says, is her secret to making good biscuits, and something she discovered by accident.

"Nobody does that," she says. "And recipes won't tell you to. But I've thought this through a million times, and it makes a difference."

Here are more tips for making biscuits the way it's done at The Big Biscuit Barn:

- If you don't have White Lily flour, go get some. Cabe swears by it.
- When using a biscuit cutter, go straight down through the dough without twisting the cutter. "The less you mess with it, the prettier the biscuit," Cabe says. And you



Phyllis Cabe makes 400 to 500 biscuits daily at The Big Biscuit Barn in Ft. Oglethorpe, Georgia.



A Biscuit Primer

Phyllis Cabe, owner of The Big Biscuit Barn, teaches the basics of biscuit making in classes at her restaurant. Winter classes are Jan. 13 and Feb. 10. Groups are welcome. For reservations or more information, call 706-861-0000.

don't need to spend a lot of money on fancy biscuit cutters. Cabe uses a pineapple can that's been cut in half.

- Your rolling pin is not a bulldozer. Very lightly roll out the dough, sprinkle it with flour and continue rolling lightly to your desired thickness.
- For tall biscuits with a crispy edge, place a biscuit on the baking sheet so that one side lightly touches the biscuit next to it. Allow about an inch of space between rows.

The Big Biscuit Barn

Where: 1391 Lafayette Road, Rossville, Georgia

Phone: 706-861-0000

Hours: 6 a.m.-2 p.m. Tuesday-Friday, 6 a.m.-noon Saturday



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

WHITE LILY BISCUIT DOUGH

This recipe is on the back of every bag of White Lily flour. Cabe tweaks it by upping the amount of liquid. "People always add too much flour, so upping the amount of buttermilk compensates for that," she says.

- 2 cups White Lily all-purpose flour
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 cup vegetable shortening
- 7/8 cup buttermilk
- 1/4 cup butter, melted

Heat oven to 475 F. Combine flour, baking powder and salt in large bowl. Cut in shortening with pastry blender, or two knives, until mixture has a cornmeal texture. Blend in buttermilk with fork. Turn dough onto lightly floured surface. Fold dough over itself 6-7 times, just until smooth. Roll dough into a 7-inch circle that is 1/2- to 3/4-inch thick. Cut out 7 to 8 biscuits using a floured 2-inch biscuit cutter. You may use larger cutter to make fewer but bigger biscuits. Place on baking sheet so that edges almost touch, leaving about an inch of space between rows. Shape dough scraps into a ball. Pat out to desired thickness. Cut out additional biscuits. Bake 8 to 10 minutes or until golden brown. Brush with butter, if desired.

Note: Cabe makes the first part of the recipe (through the shortening) and keeps it on hand in the refrigerator. She says the mixture will last three to four weeks. She adds the buttermilk right before making her biscuits.

SPINACH-ARTICHOKE BISCUITS

- 1 recipe White Lily biscuit dough
- 1 package Hidden Valley spinach-artichoke dressing mix
- 2 cups chopped chicken (roastisserie or fried)
- 2 cups chopped spinach, well drained
- Ranch dressing

Make biscuit dough, adding 2 tablespoons dry dressing mix to the dough; roll out to 1/2-inch thickness. Using a 2-inch biscuit



cutter, cut biscuits and place on baking sheet. Gently press an indentation into each biscuit. Combine chicken and spinach. Place about 1 tablespoon mixture into biscuit and bake at 475 F until lightly browned. Remove from oven and sprinkle with 1 tablespoon dressing mix. Serve immediately with ranch dressing for dipping, or make a dip using the remaining dressing mix and following package directions.

CHICKEN CORDON BLEU BISCUITS

- 1 recipe White Lily biscuit dough
- Chopped chicken (fried, grilled or boiled)
- Chopped ham
- Provolone cheese, shredded
- Garlic salt
- Greek seasoning

Chill dough, then roll out to 1/2-inch thickness. Using a 6-inch cutter, cut dough into circles. Top each circle with meats, cheese and seasonings. Fold dough over filling and crimp edges of dough with a fork. Deep fry until golden brown.

Note: Any combination of meats and cheeses works with this recipe. Ham and Swiss cheese is a good choice. Or try corned beef, Swiss cheese and well-drained sauerkraut for a biscuit Reuben served with some Thousand Island dressing for dipping. 📧

"STUFFED" BISCUITS

- 1 recipe White Lily biscuit dough
- Cooked meats, such as crumbled sausage or shredded ham
- Mrs. Dash seasoning
- Shredded cheese (your choice)
- Melted butter

Heat oven to 475 F. Roll out dough to 1/2-inch thickness and cut into biscuits using a 2-inch biscuit cutter. Place biscuits on baking sheet and lightly press down the center of each biscuit, making an indentation. Place meat in the indentation and sprinkle with Mrs. Dash. Bake at 475 F until biscuits are lightly browned. Remove from oven and sprinkle with cheese and drizzle with melted butter. Serve immediately as an appetizer.

Note: You can turn these into dessert by stuffing the biscuits with Heath Bits and drizzling them with your favorite chocolate icing after baking. Or stuff them with cinnamon-sugar-butter and drizzle with confectioner's sugar glaze after baking.

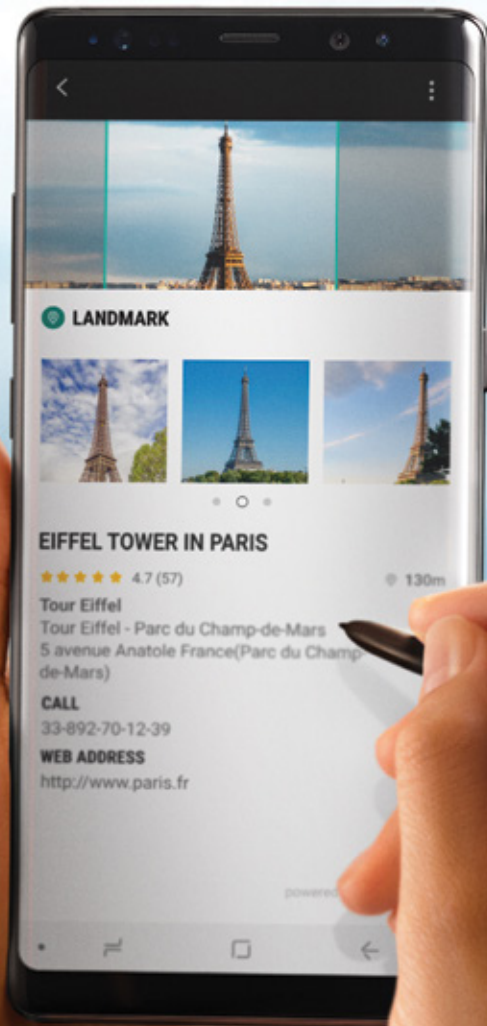


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