



Mountain Telephone

MARCH/APRIL 2023

CONNECTION



Buggy biz

Campton carpenter
restores horse carriages

AFFORDABLE
CONNECTIONS

INTO THE WILD



By SHIRLEY BLOOMFIELD, CEO
NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association

Fresh opportunities

New funding supports rural broadband

Closing the digital divide is an ongoing effort and not a one-time mission. Every month the diligent work of NTCA members helps to bridge these gaps. Even in the most remote areas, telcos are building world-class broadband networks and enabling critical, life-altering technologies and applications.

Our leaders here in Washington, D.C., continue to notice the gains being made in communities like yours. While the 118th Congress is still getting its feet under it, so to speak, we are seeing interest in several broadband-related bills that could help our members and their customers, and federal agencies continue to implement and execute on various broadband funding programs.

As community-based providers with a long history of service and successful performance, telcos are in a good position to vie for critical financial support for broadband deployment, such as the \$42.5 billion Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment Program. This year, we expect the National Telecommunications and Information Administration to announce allocation of this money to the states and U.S. territories, and, eventually, grants could be given out to providers like yours to serve even more people.

In anticipation of these distributions, we spent much of 2022 on Capitol Hill and with local, state and federal agencies to urge them to work closely with NTCA members. We also brought key decision-makers to NTCA meetings, conferences and webinars, and we provided members-only tools to help position telcos.

Such efforts pay dividends. For example, NTCA member companies have already received more than \$1 billion in U.S. Department of Agriculture ReConnect loans and grants. Job one for NTCA and its members continues to be pursuing policies that will enable small rural providers to keep delivering on the promises of broadband connectivity every day and for decades to come. 🗨️

Fiber internet

It makes a difference



Fiber internet makes essential tools and services possible: commerce, education, entertainment, personal communication and more.

Here are a few examples, highlighted by the Fiber Broadband Association, offering a detailed look at how fiber networks make a difference:



1 FASTER INTERNET: Creating a network capable of keeping up with growing consumer demand for videos, music streaming and online gaming is no easy task. Fiber, however, consistently outpaces the fastest download and upload speeds of older technologies like cable, DSL and wireless.



2 INCREASED HOME VALUES: Studies have shown that fast, reliable broadband is rated as the single most important amenity for rented or multifamily homes. Access to fiber broadband increased rental and property values by as much as 8%.



3 FIBER NETWORKS HELP LOCAL ECONOMIES: There's growing evidence fiber connectivity not only encourages businesses to stay in their locations but also helps them grow and become more productive. It even attracts new businesses, particularly in high-tech industries.



4 SUSTAINABLE: The glass that makes fiber work so well is made from sand, which is plentiful and requires less energy and creates less pollution to acquire than older technologies.

This could have been an email

How digital literacy is shaping communication in the workplace

Story by DREW WOOLLEY



Clear communication can be a challenge at the best of times. But particularly for remote workers relying on digital chat and email tools, it's never been easier for wires to get crossed, even during simple exchanges.

ALWAYS ONLINE

In some cases, the generation gap can rear its head even before the first word has been typed or spoken. While baby boomers and members of Generation X tend to prefer doing business face-to-face or over the phone, younger generations are much more digitally inclined.

According to research from Purdue University, both millennials and Generation Z or Zoomers — people born between the mid-1990s and about 2010 — tend to prefer communicating by email, instant message, text and social media. Having grown up with access to high-speed internet, Zoomers expect a rapid response to messages, based on a survey by marketing company LeadSquared.

THANKS.

It's no secret periods at the end of lone sentences are falling by the wayside in texts, chats and social media. For some, it's a punctuational pet peeve. But for younger colleagues, the reappearance of that little dot can carry extra meaning.

For example, while some millennials and older generations might put a period after a short message like "Thanks" or "Good job," for Gen Z, that hard stop can imply coldness or sarcasm. Younger professionals are more likely to use exclamation points to express enthusiasm. So don't worry, they aren't yelling at you.

TBH, IDK

For those who came of age texting before phones could predict what you're trying to type, quick abbreviations for common phrases were a must. BTW (by the way), TBH (to be honest), IMO (in my opinion), JK (just kidding) and IDK (I don't know) are just a few examples.

While many of these abbreviations are now part of the internet's vocabulary, they can be a stumbling block for anyone who didn't grow up seeing them daily. When clarity is a priority, consider taking the extra few seconds to spell it out. 🗨️

A picture's worth a thousand words

As platforms like Slack and Microsoft Teams become more popular, emoji are rapidly invading work chats. Many are self-explanatory and can help add some extra expression to a message. Others can be confusing or misinterpreted. So be sure you know what message you're sending.



While many people use the **smile emoji** to denote, well, a smile, some younger professionals interpret it more ironically. That may seem confusing, but just ask yourself if there's any warmth in that smile's cold, dead eyes.



By and large, the **thumbs up** should be saved as a response to a clear yes or no question, or to acknowledge that you've seen a comment that doesn't require a longer reply. Offering a thumbs up in conversations that are any more nuanced could cause confusion about whether any follow-up is needed or suggest you aren't giving the exchange your full attention.



This one is just a public service announcement. Despite — or maybe because — the **crying laughing emoji** is the world's most popular, according to Adobe, Gen Z has officially dubbed it cliché and uncool. If you're looking to stay up on the trends, consider changing things up with the skull emoji to let them know their joke really killed.

Working hard

Fast internet connects rural communities to new opportunities

One thing I very much appreciate about leading Mountain Telephone is that we're here to support the communities we serve as powerfully and in as many ways as we can. One of the best examples of this is our fast and reliable internet network, which opens opportunities for individuals, businesses, government and just about anyone who uses it.



SHAYNE ISON
General Manager

This potential to help others is particularly on my mind after seeing a report that there were about 10 million job openings late last year across the nation. Now, those numbers do fluctuate, but I think it's fair to say we're in a time when opportunity exists — you just must be able to take advantage.

Fortunately, our fast internet service can be the key needed to unlock the world of work-from-home jobs, which can range from positions with call centers and medical records companies to careers in technology or marketing. Really, that's just scratching the surface. No matter the industry, the innovative communications services provided by Mountain Telephone give you the opportunity to pursue these jobs.

Internet networks like ours can tie small towns and remote areas to national employers and well-paying professions. But having the resources and skills needed to do these jobs is just the beginning. After all, you still must land that new job.

The world of employment has changed rapidly in recent years, and tapping into all the opportunities requires fast internet and some new perspective. Really, it's a fascinating landscape.

Consider that many companies and job recruitment sites now use artificial intelligence to weed through resumes, screening them so a person only sees those who make the cut. It's something that changes how you think about applying for a job. For instance, a CNBC article suggested listing job titles in reverse-chronological order, because the machine-based screening systems appreciate clearly structured information. Similarly, when writing a bulleted list of work experience, the first one should tie into a specific job requirement.

Also, internet-based companies like Indeed, Glassdoor and Monster connect job seekers with employers. For job seekers, these companies can provide not only daily updates of potential jobs but also offer tips for succeeding in a competitive job market.

Simply, the rules of the employment game have changed and, fortunately, you have the resources to change with them. Our communications services can help sites like Indeed come to life. These companies provide daily updates on new jobs, email blasts, tips and more.

Then, when you make a connection with a potential new employer, fast internet service can make even more of an impression. When remote jobs are on the table, videoconference interviews are common. Thankfully, fast, reliable internet can create lag-free, professional connections that put you and your abilities in the best possible light. For an even more flawless experience, we suggest adding MRTC Total Command, ExperienceIQ & ProtectIQ, an app that provides the utmost control over your devices.

If all of this seems like a challenge to navigate, this same internet network can help with that, too. YouTube and TikTok have plenty of examples of experts offering advice. Meanwhile, professional social media sites like LinkedIn can help you boost your profile with potential employers.

All the resources and opportunities are made possible by fast internet service by Mountain Telephone, and we're committed to always providing you with the services needed to succeed. 📶

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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 11,500 members.

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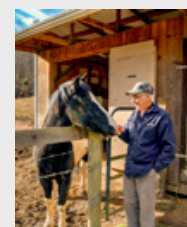
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UTILITY RESOURCES

On the Cover:



Retired truck driver Charles Grigsby uses his carpentry skills to restore and build horse buggies.
See story Page 8.

Photo by William LeMaster

MOUNTAINS OF MONEY FOR SCHOOL!

Scholarship application deadlines are nearly here



Mountain Telephone is proud to invest in our community by offering several ways to earn money for school. We still have two scholarships available to help local students build bright and prosperous futures.

► **Mountain Telephone and Morehead State University**

- Multiple \$3,000 scholarships will be awarded.
- Scholarships are available to residents of Elliott, Wolfe, Morgan, Menifee and Bath counties who are attending Morehead State University.
- Application deadline is **March 15**.
- Visit moreheadstate.edu/scholarships or contact your high school guidance counselor to find out more.

► **Mountain Telephone and Maysville Community & Technical College**

- Multiple \$1,500 scholarships will be awarded.
- Scholarships are available to residents of Elliott, Wolfe, Morgan, Menifee and Bath counties who are attending Maysville Community & Technical College.
- Application deadline is **April 15**.
- Visit maysville.kctcs.edu or contact your high school guidance counselor to find out more.

"The biggest mistake that students and their families make is they feel they wouldn't qualify – they opt out."

– James Lewis, president and co-founder of the National Society of High School Scholars



Have you captured a breathtaking snapshot that shows the beauty of Bath, Elliott, Menifee, Morgan or Wolfe County? If so, we want to hear from you.

Mountain Telephone is accepting photos for its 2023 directory and calendar. We are **no longer accepting printed photos**. Each submission can include up to two photos, which must be digital high-quality JPEG images. Submit images to Lisa Fannin at lfannin@mountaintelephone.com. Photos will be selected on the basis of creativity, quality and portrayal of the area. Deadline for submission is June 1. Winners will be announced on or before Sept. 30. All entries must be submitted by the original photographer who has sole ownership of any copyright. By entering the contest, you agree to have your photograph displayed on the MRTC directory or annual calendar without any fee or other forms of compensation.

For more information on the photo contest, please visit mrtc.com.



OUTDOOR adventures

The Southeast is a treasure trove of thrilling nature excursions

Story by ANNE BRALY

Photo courtesy of Tennessee Department of Tourism

The Southeast harbors its own kind of magic when it comes to outdoor attractions among its ancient mountains and waterways.

“It’s no secret that the Southeast United States is a remarkable hot spot for adventure,” says Terri Chapin, program coordinator for Outdoor Chattanooga. “Thrill-seekers are cool with the variety of outdoor adventures in the abundant lakes, rivers and mountain streams.”

From the region’s national parks and forests to world-class whitewater and wind sports, there’s something for everyone. And when the day is done, Terri suggests balancing your nature fix with a little urban exploration. It’s not too far from the forest to good food. “Here is the secret sauce — the Southeast blends both urban and the wild to offer endless possibilities for multiple cool adventures in one day,” she says.



ABOVE: Kayaking along the Tennessee River is very popular.

LEFT: The South’s sandstone cliffs make for great rock climbing.

RUNNING THE RAPIDS

The Southeast is blessed with numerous rivers offering whitewater excitement. From the Nantahala and the Green River in North Carolina to Chattahoochie Whitewater Express in Georgia, you’re in for an adrenaline rush at every stroke of the paddle.

The **Ocoee River** in eastern Tennessee boasts some of the best freestyle kayaking in the U.S. It was once a dammed waterway, but the Tennessee Valley Authority has been releasing recreational flows since the 1970s, creating a 10-mile stretch of Class III whitewater.

Rapids like Grumpy, Broken Nose, Flipper and Tablesaw create challenges for even the most experienced paddlers. But if you have the skills, the Ocoee has thrills. And if you don’t? Consider rafting. There are several rafting enterprises that will give you the thrills in a more-protected type experience. For a complete list of outfitters, visit timetoraft.com.

The **Chattooga River** begins in the mountains of North Carolina before



Photo courtesy of Outdoor Chattanooga

heading south to form a natural border between South Carolina and Georgia. Though it has a reputation of being one of the most unforgettable whitewater experiences in the South — thanks, in part, to its inclusion in the film “Deliverance” — the Chattooga is actually a river for all, from families to experienced paddlers.

There are two distinct sections. The calmest, Section III, is recommended for kayakers ages 8 and older and has numerous swimming holes. Leave Section IV for those with more experience. It has heart-stopping, Class IV rapids. For a list of rafting outfitters and guides, log onto visitoconeesc.com.

PEDAL POWER

Whether you want a strenuous mountain ride or prefer to pedal through flatter terrain, great cycling trails snake through the forests of the Southeast.

The trail running through Alabama’s **Chewacla State Park** takes you along some of the most beautiful parts of the Southern Appalachian Trail — 696 acres of it, to be exact. Some of it is good for beginners, while other parts add more thrills for experienced cyclists. There are some hand-built trails, as well as the state’s only

wall ride — a 15-foot-high arc wall known as the Great Wall of Chewacla. For more information, visit aotourism.com.

With terrain ranging from flatlands to challenging mountain climbs, some of Kentucky’s best cycling trails are found in **Mammoth Cave National Park**. Mammoth Cave Railroad Bike and Hike Trail is one of those rails-to-trails experiences that offers a choice of adventures. Ride or hike the 9-mile graveled trail that, back in the 1880s, was the rail line of the Mammoth Cave Railroad. The trail offers scenic overlooks, historic sites and interpretive displays along the way. Find more excitement at kygetaway.com.

HANG TIME

Hang gliding is a heart-stopping thrill ride that gives you a bird’s-eye view of the landscape. And the mountains around the Southeast offer the perfect opportunity to take a flying leap.

If you want a beautiful hang gliding location that offers stunning views of the Tennessee Valley, **Lookout Mountain Flight Park** is where you can see the “Grand Canyon of Tennessee” spread out before you.

Experienced guides offer extensive lessons with beginners starting out in the valley below. Altitude and speed on these tandem flights are gained by a tow line attached to a small aircraft. Jumping off the mountain above is only for rated pilots. For more information, visit flylookout.com.

The Wright Brothers took to the air first in **Kitty Hawk, North Carolina**, and now you can, too. There are no mountains, but there is wind, dunes and lots of room to run and land in soft sand. There are schools to teach you how, and it’s a good way to learn the art of hang gliding. Fly on over to kittyhawk.com for more information.

ROCK OUT

When your adventurous spirit calls out to let you know it’s time to hit the rocks, the Southeast’s sandstone cliffs are made for the sport.

The Red River Gorge occupies 29,000 acres within the beauty of Kentucky’s

Daniel Boone National Forest. Its climbing routes are a favorite with some of the best climbs and bouldering options in the world. Log on to redrivergorge.com for more information.

Climbers flock to the **Tennessee Wall** just north of downtown Chattanooga for hundreds of routes for climbing and bouldering. The Tennessee Wall is about 2 miles of cracks, overhanging walls, roofs and other features in a beautiful setting overlooking the Tennessee River in the Tennessee River Gorge. Visit trgt.org for more information.

Go bouldering at **Horse Pens 40**, a privately owned recreation area near Steele, Alabama. It’s home to a highly concentrated boulder field scattered among deciduous trees and grasslands, and it’s been attracting boulderers for decades. There’s a small fee to enter, \$8-\$10, and camping is available for a few dollars more. Check it out at hp40.com. 📍

BELOW: Running the rapids on the Ocoee River.



Photo courtesy of Outdoor Chattanooga

New again

Local carpenter restores horse-drawn buggies

Story by JEN CALHOUN
Photography by WILLIAM LEMASTER

Since he was 7 years old, Charles Grigsby liked horses and wheels. Specifically, he enjoyed riding anything with wheels that a horse could pull. “I got started with a work-horse on a farm we lived on,” he says.

But over his 30-year career as a truck driver, he exchanged his horse-drawn carts for diesel engines with horsepower in the hundreds. It wasn’t until about six years ago that the 83-year-old Campton man returned to his roots and his favorite childhood pastime. “When my wife passed away a few years ago, I got one buggy that I restored, and then I built a four-wheel buggy and a two-wheel cart,” he says. “I also got a horse now that I use. In all, I’ve got about five of them.”

BUGGY BOOM

Once word got out about Grigsby’s talents, others came calling. People now seek him out to restore their own horse-drawn buggies. “It’s been a long time since people had to use them to get around, but a lot of people have got them for luxury now,” Grigsby says.

It’s true, too. In fact, the most recognized horse and buggy club in the country, the Carriage Association of America, is based a little more than an hour away in Lexington but includes chapters all over. According to the CAA website, it formed in 1960 and is the oldest and largest international organization devoted to the preservation and restoration of horse-drawn carriages and sleighs. It offers help with driver training, building and restoring carriages and merchandise.

The website also gives a glimpse into a world of hobbyists willing to spend money on everything from actual carriages and horses to books and overseas trips to view them. And club chapters dot the country from Oregon to Florida.

NATURAL-BORN CARPENTER

Grigsby never received any formal training in carpentry, but over the years he’s built tables and cabinets, usually giving them away to people he knows. “If I take a notion to build something,



ABOVE: Charles Grigsby restores and builds horse-drawn buggies for himself and others.

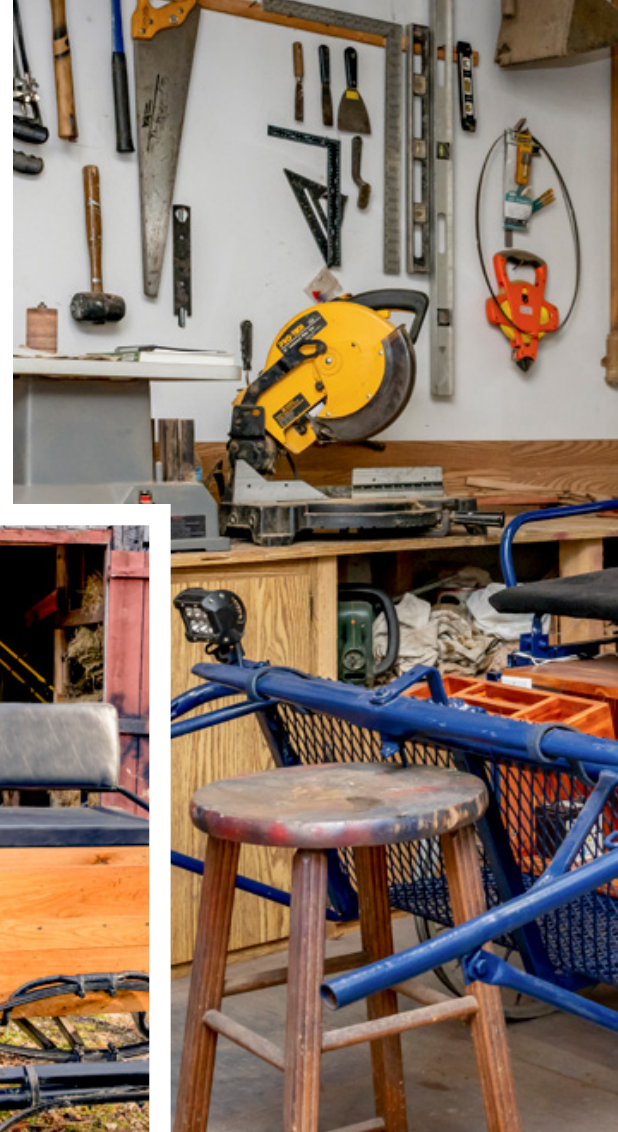
RIGHT: A restoration tag on Grigsby’s carriages offers a way for generations to come to identify his work.



I try to think it out before I start on it,” he says. “I’ve pretty well got it built before I start on it.”

When he started restoring and building buggies, he used the same techniques, focus and admiration for the work that he found in building furniture. He also used a sawmill to cut his own lumber. “I just picked it up on my own,” Grigsby says.

But while other horse and carriage hobbyists take their coaches on the road for shows and races and other competitions, Grigsby keeps a fairly low profile. It’s the love for the horses and making something lasting and beautiful that drives him. “I just always liked it, you know,” he says. 📱





Buggy-ing out in Lexington

Whatever their size and scope, carriages are considered a part of American history that was almost lost with the invention of the car and the rapid industrialization movements of the late 19th and 20th centuries. But there is a place that's keeping the knowledge of those buggies alive, and it's in Kentucky.

PAUSING THE PAST

To find out more about the rich history of all horse-drawn carriages, consider a research-based trip to the Carriage Museum of America at the Kentucky Horse Park in Lexington. The museum, at 4075 Iron Works Parkway, shares office space with the Carriage Association of America, its sister organization. The museum is the perfect place to start learning more about the history, mechanics and creation of horse-drawn buggies.

However, the museum is not simply a pleasure ride for the mildly curious. It's a serious place for serious research. No carriages are on display at the museum, but it does maintain a collection of rare and unusual vehicles that are preserved in their original condition for research purposes. Because of this serious scholarship, the museum entertains carriage enthusiasts from all over the world.

The museum primarily functions as a world-class research library dedicated to preserving the history of the carriage era, according to carriagelibrary.org, the museum's website. The CMA Library maintains a collection of approximately 1,500 books and trade catalogs in addition to a large collection of prints, photographs, carriage blueprints, trade journals and other resources. And while visitors can't check the books out and take them home, they can visit them.

The library also holds a collection of more than 3,000 drawings for horse-drawn vehicles — many of which are from two major trade journals from previous centuries. In addition, a digital database is available online at the museum's website. Many visitors to the museum are researching their own carriages, the website says. The biggest question museum operators get is, "Who made my carriage, and how old is it?" Whether visitors find an answer or not, they're sure to take a journey through time.

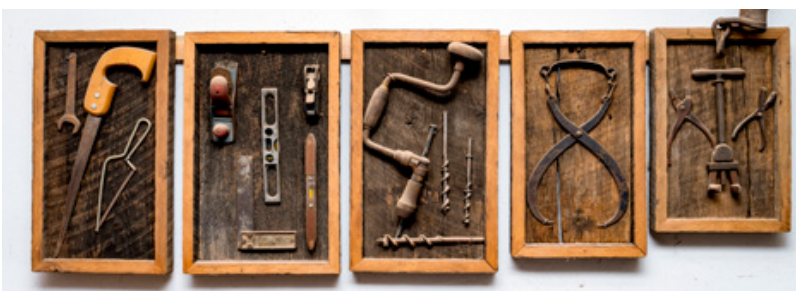
Photography by William LeMaster



ABOVE: Grigsby smooths a spot on one of the horse-drawn buggies in his shop.

LEFT: Grigsby taught himself how to restore buggies.

BELOW: Grigsby collects old carpentry tools and implements.



Family TV night

Great family binges for all ages

With the wealth of streaming services available today, there have never been so many viewing options available at the tap of a few buttons. But the constant barrage of new TV shows and movies can make it difficult to sort the wheat from the chaff, especially if you're looking for something the whole family can enjoy.

While services like Disney+ come ready with a huge catalog of family classics, other major streamers are still building up their libraries of kid-friendly content. Here are a few suggestions to help your family start exploring the latest offerings.





AGES 4+

“Bluey,” Disney+ — Inexhaustible Blue Heeler dog Bluey turns everyday life into amazing adventures that stimulate her imagination and emotional resilience. Broken up into short, nine-minute episodes, the Australian animated show has garnered praise for providing constructive messages while remaining engaging for adults.

“Motown Magic,” Netflix — This feel-good series celebrates music, has colorful, eye-catching visuals and instills positive messages about self-confidence. For lovers of oldies, the soundtrack is also a great introduction to Motown and soul classics.

“Sesame Street,” HBO Max — Starting with the show’s 51st season in 2020, HBO Max became the official home of “Sesame Street.” Get access to new episodes immediately so your kids can experience the fun and entertaining brand of education that “Sesame Street” has offered for decades.

“Madagascar: A Little Wild,” Hulu — Drawing on the humor and animation that made the Madagascar movies popular, this musical comedy series follows four young animals in a rescue habitat in Central Park. The show celebrates being yourself and pursuing your dreams, no matter how wild.

“Shaun the Sheep,” Netflix — Adults and young kids alike can enjoy a laugh in this clay-mation series from the makers of “Wallace and Gromit.” Shaun’s barnyard misadventures with his cousin Timmy, sheepdog Bitzer, cat Pidsley and fellow sheep Shirley have even spun off into several movies available exclusively on Netflix.

AGES 7+

“Just Add Magic,” Amazon Prime Video — When Kelly discovers her grandmother’s mysterious cookbook in the attic, she and her best friends, Darbie and Hannah, find out there’s more magic to the recipes than just a secret ingredient. Loosely based on Cindy Callaghan’s popular book by the same name, the show offers magical fun for the whole family.

“Pokemon Journeys,” Netflix — This Netflix series is action-packed enough to grab the attention of new viewers and based on the anime series some parents may have watched when they were kids. Follow young trainer Ash as he travels the world learning about new Pokemon.

“Gravity Falls,” Disney+ — If your little

ones aren’t quite ready for shows like “Stranger Things” or sci-fi classics like “The X-Files,” “Gravity Falls” might be just the ticket. This show offers Pacific Northwest weirdness for the whole family as twins Mabel and Dipper Pines spend the summer with their great-uncle Stan investigating strange mysteries in Oregon.

“Star Wars: The Clone Wars,” Disney+ — Before there was a Disney series for every character in the Star Wars universe, “The Clone Wars” was filling in the gaps between the canonical Star Wars movies. The continuing adventures of Obi Wan, Anakin and young Palawan Ahsoka Tano feature enough surprisingly deep storytelling that parents might be as eager as their kids to hit play on the next episode.

“TrollsTopia,” Hulu — Picking up after the movie “Trolls: World Tour,” “TrollsTopia” follows Poppy as she attempts to unite delegates from the Country Western, Classical, Funk, Techno and Hard Rock tribes in one harmonious city. Watch as they learn to celebrate their differences with a variety of catchy tunes.

AGES 11+

“Raising Dion,” Netflix — Second grader Dion learns to balance super powers and villain battles with the everyday challenges of growing up. The mild violence and portrayals of bullying might be a little much for younger viewers, but tween audiences will find plenty to enjoy.

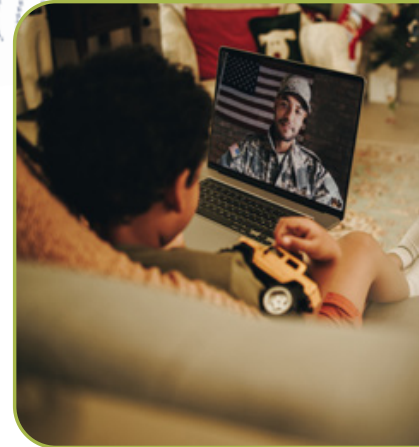
“The Hardy Boys,” Hulu — Based on the popular book series, this show follows Frank and Joe Hardy when they move from the city to their parents’ hometown of Bridgeport. When their dad takes on a secret investigation, it doesn’t take long for the Hardy boys to get drawn into the mystery.

“The Quest,” Disney+ — A new take on the reality competition series from the team behind “The Amazing Race,” “The Quest” drops eight teens into an immersive fantasy world where it’s their job to save the kingdom. Find out which contestant is The One while scratching that old “Legends of the Hidden Temple” itch.

“The Dark Crystal: Age of Resistance,” Netflix — This prequel to the 1982 dark fantasy movie from Jim Henson follows a group of Gelflings as they seek to stop power-hungry overlords from draining the life from their world. Parents who enjoyed the original will enjoy the shot of nostalgia, while younger viewers marvel at the stunning visuals. 📺

INTERNET READY

SOAR tackles the digital divide



Story by JEN CALHOUN

Lizzie Gillum remembers when her family in Morgan County connected to the internet for the first time. “I was 16, and it was a game-changer for me,” she says. “It opened a whole new world. All of a sudden I could look things up for my homework, or I could connect with my friends in a whole different way.”

Back then, however, the internet was still mostly optional. That’s not the case today. Whether it’s filling out a job application, taking an exam or starting a business, access to the internet — along with a working knowledge of it — is a requirement for almost everyone. That’s why Shaping Our Appalachian Region, or SOAR, has launched a new program to reduce the digital divide in its 54-county region in Kentucky.

SOAR is a nonpartisan nonprofit that organizes projects and programs to fill the economic gaps left by the state’s receding coal industry. “Our entire purpose is to improve the quality of life for people in this region,” says Gillum, who serves as a digital navigator with SOAR’s newly launched Digital Equity program.

The Digital Equity program’s goals are to get people in the region connected to the internet and teach them how to use it so they can work, play, study and connect with others online. The program also plans to train residents in telehealth,

remote classroom work, civic participation and social engagement.

CONNECTIONS COUNT

For Gillum, helping bridge the digital divide means educating people on the resources that can fulfill their basic needs or fuel their wildest dreams. Last year, she met with a woman in Wolfe County who was pursuing her GED on her way to getting a college degree in early childhood education. “She needs a broadband

connection at home, so she can take some of her college courses online,” Gillum says.

“But then, there are other people who can’t get around much, and they need it to keep in touch with their family and friends or attend church online,” she adds. “It’s not just about getting people broadband — it’s understanding how they use it. Our office wants to know how we can help get them the resources they need to do whatever they need to do.”



In her work with SOAR’s new Digital Equity program, Lizzie Gillum focuses on getting people connected to the internet to improve their quality of life.

Photo by William LeMaster




DEEP DISCOUNTS

In addition to training programs and other projects, SOAR's digital navigators can help residents apply for the Federal Communications Commission's Affordable Connectivity Program. The ACP started out as the Emergency Broadband Benefit program during the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic when more people were working and studying from home, and a reliable internet connection was nonnegotiable.

Since then, online jobs and classes have become the norm, Gillum says. Anybody without a fast, reliable connection like the one they can get through Mountain Telephone could be at a big disadvantage. Through the federally subsidized ACP, eligible residents can get up to a \$30 monthly discount on their internet service. Unlike the EBB program, the ACP is long-term with no end date set. "People are always wondering, 'What's the catch?'" Gillum



says. "But there isn't a catch. As long as your earnings are within 200% of the federal Poverty Guidelines, then you're eligible. If you're on SNAP, Medicaid, WIC, or if you're in public housing, you're eligible. You can also get it if you've received a Pell grant in the past year or if you're receiving free or reduced-price lunch."

Gillum says she's looking forward to helping people apply for the program, whether they already have internet service or not. "It's a really good program, and I'm excited to walk people through the process," she says. "It could be life-changing for some people in some really positive ways." 

Getting connected with SOAR

Shaping Our Appalachian Region is a regional nonpartisan nonprofit organization that focuses on filling the economic gaps left by the loss of the coal industry in Appalachian Kentucky.

SOAR recently launched its Office of Digital Equity, which focuses on helping people in the region get connected to the internet to improve their quality of life. For help with applying for the ACP, or other questions about reducing the digital divide, contact Lizzie Gillum at 606-495-1143 or lizzie@SOAR-ky.org. Her office hours are Monday and Wednesday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Mountain Telephone headquarters building in West Liberty.

ACP eligibility

A household is eligible for Affordable Connectivity Program assistance if its income is at or below 200% of the federal Poverty Guidelines, or if a member of the household meets at least one of the criteria below:

- Received a federal Pell Grant during the current award year
- Meets the eligibility criteria for a participating provider's existing low-income internet program
- Participates in one of these assistance programs:
 - Free and Reduced-Price School Lunch Program or School Breakfast Program, including at U.S. Department of Agriculture Community Eligibility Provision schools
 - SNAP
 - Medicaid
 - Federal housing assistance, including:
 - » Housing Choice Voucher Program (Section 8 Vouchers)
 - » Project-Based Rental Assistance /Section 202/ Section 811
 - » Public housing
 - » Affordable Housing Programs for American Indians, Alaska Natives or Native Hawaiians
 - Supplemental Security Income
 - WIC
 - Veterans Pension or Survivor Benefits
 - Lifeline
- Participates in one of these assistance programs and lives on Qualifying Tribal lands:
 - Bureau of Indian Affairs General Assistance
 - Tribal TANF
 - Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations
 - Tribal Head Start (income based)

Source: [fcc.org/acp](https://www.fcc.org/acp)

Those eligible for the ACP can fill out forms located on the Federal Communications Commission website's ACP page at [fcc.org/acp](https://www.fcc.org/acp).

MEALS

that will make you

SQUEAL



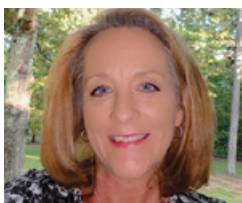
Ham-bitious ways to use your leftovers

While much of the rest of the world celebrates the arrival of spring with lamb, in the U.S. pink, salty-sweet slices of cured pork, slathered in a sugary glaze, will fill many tables.

The problem, however, is that unless you buy a boneless ham by the pound or one of those small canned hams, you'll probably bring home a large bone-in ham from the market or treat yourself to one from the honey ham store. And more likely than not, after you serve dinner with a couple of side dishes, you're going to have a lot of leftovers.

There are so many ways to use up that ham that go beyond deviling or as a salad topper.

Here are three ideas to make the most of your leftover ham. They're wonderful by themselves, or just make a day of it and make them all, using up most, if not all, of that leftover ham. There's nothing better than a bowl of creamy ham soup with cheesy ham-studded biscuits and a delicious ham sandwich — with a twist.



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

Photography by MARK GILLILAND | Food Styling by RHONDA GILLILAND

CREAMY POTATO HAM SOUP

- 4 strips of bacon
- 1/2 cup onion, finely chopped
- 3-4 medium potatoes, peeled and diced (2-3 cups)
- 3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 4 cups chicken broth, preferably homemade (see note)
- 1 1/2 cups cooked ham, cut into 1/2-inch cubes
- 1 cup corn, canned (drained) or frozen (no need to thaw)
- 1/2 cup heavy cream
- 1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper
- Salt (to taste)
- 1 teaspoon fresh parsley, finely chopped

Saute bacon in a large stockpot over medium-high heat until crisp. Chop the bacon and set it aside on a plate, reserving bacon drippings in the pot. Add onion and potatoes to the pot and saute for 1-2 minutes until fragrant. Stir in flour and mix well until the flour is fully incorporated. Stir in chicken broth and mix until the soup is smooth and uniform. Bring the soup to a boil over medium-high heat. Cover and let it continue to boil for 10-15 minutes until the potatoes are fork tender.

Mash half of the potatoes in the



pot with a potato masher to help thicken the soup.

Stir in ham, corn, heavy cream and black pepper. Let the soup simmer over medium heat and whisk occasionally until thickened to a desired consistency, 5-10 minutes. If the chowder gets too thick, add a little water to dilute it. Add salt to taste. Serve topped with reserved crispy bacon and fresh parsley. Makes about 4 servings.

Note: To make homemade chicken stock, boil a whole chicken in water to cover with some chunks of onion and celery added. Simmer the chicken until tender. You can tell if it's tender by pulling on the leg. If the leg comes out easily, the chicken is ready. Save the chicken for chicken salad or a chicken casserole. But save the stock, too. Salt it, to taste, and use it right away for this soup, or let it cool, pour it into a gallon-size freezer bag and freeze it.



CHEESY HAM BISCUITS

These biscuits pull double duty as a side to soup or cut them in half, add a fried egg and make a breakfast biscuit.

- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 cup salted butter (1 stick)
- 1 1/4 cups buttermilk
- 1/2 cup chopped ham
- 1 cup shredded extra sharp cheddar cheese

Preheat the oven to 450 F.
Mix dry ingredients. Cut butter into thin slices and then cut it into the flour

until pieces of butter are small. Add in the buttermilk slowly and incorporate with the flour mixture. Don't overmix.

Sprinkle a small amount of flour on a work surface and place dough on top of it. Press down to make flat and then add the ham and cheddar cheese to the top. Knead dough a few times to incorporate the ham and cheese.

Press or roll out into 1/2-inch thickness. Use a biscuit cutter or rim of a glass to cut out biscuits.

Place biscuits on a baking sheet and bake for 10-12 minutes. Makes about a dozen biscuits.



BAKED HAM SANDWICHES

This is a favorite vintage recipe from Encore! Nashville, a Junior League of Nashville publication from the 1970s. Prepare ahead: These sandwiches are best made early in the morning or the day before to give time for the "custard" to soak into the bread.

- 8 slices bread
- 2 tablespoons butter, softened
- 4 slices ham
- 4 slices sharp cheddar cheese
- 1/2 teaspoon dry mustard
- 3 eggs, slightly beaten
- 2 cups evaporated milk or whole milk
- 1 teaspoon grated onion
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper
- Dash of Worcestershire sauce
- Dash of cayenne pepper

Trim crusts from bread and butter both sides well. Place 4 slices of bread

in a buttered baking dish. Place a piece of ham on each piece and cover with cheese, then top with remaining bread slices.

Combine remaining ingredients and pour over bread. Refrigerate all day or overnight. When ready to bake, spoon sauce over bread again and bake at 300 F, uncovered, until sandwiches are bubbly and golden brown on top, about 1 hour. Makes 4 servings.

Note: For a heartier sandwich, slices of tomato, avocado or bacon may be layered between the ham and cheese. 🍷





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