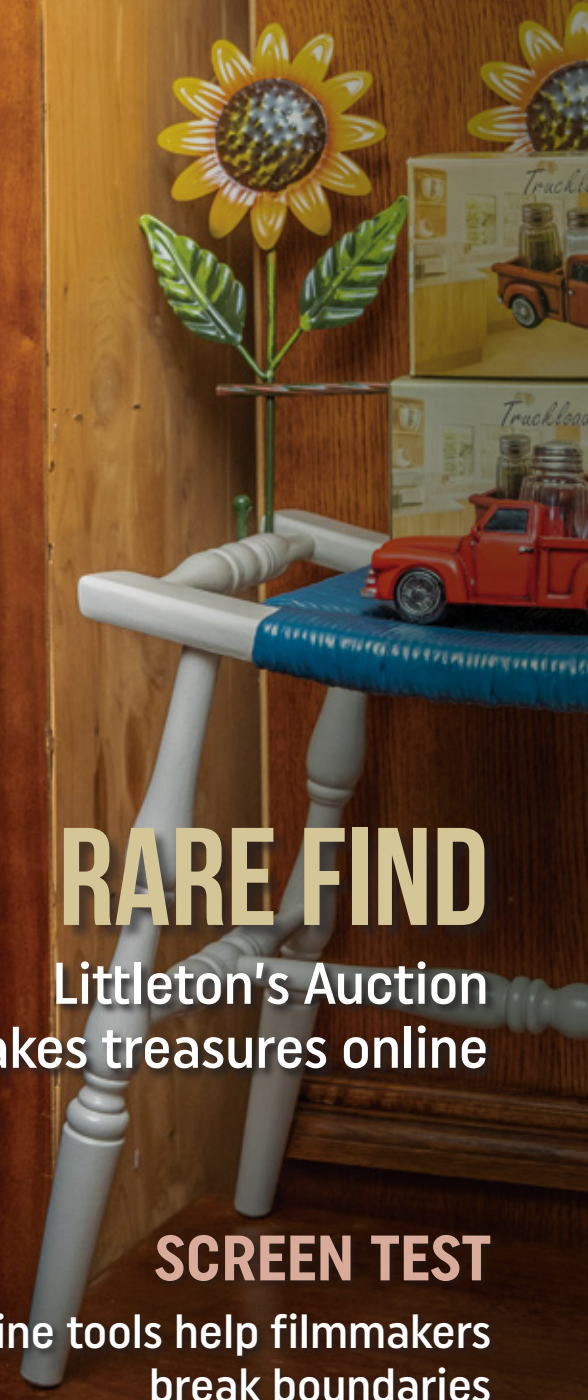




Mountain Telephone

MAY/JUNE 2021

CONNECTION



RARE FIND

Littleton's Auction takes treasures online

FABULOUS FUDGE

New shop brings famous treat to Campton

SCREEN TEST

Online tools help filmmakers break boundaries




By SHIRLEY BLOOMFIELD, CEO
NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association

Broadband is critical for working from home

Nearly all of us have spent at least some time this past year working from home. And while remote work surged during the pandemic, it certainly isn't a new idea. Between 2005 and 2017, according to Statista, there was a 159% increase in remote work.

Today 11.2% of Americans are working from home, up from 5.7% in 2019. And many are growing to prefer it — 22% of workers say they'd like to work from home permanently. I believe full-time remote work makes it difficult to create and maintain a collaborative work culture, but I do think that work is likely to have a new face when we get back to "normal."

The Foundation for Rural Service recently published a white paper entitled "Rural America's Critical Connections." (You can download it for free at www.frs.org.) The report cites a Global Workplace Analytics report that states, "Our best estimate is that 25-30% of the workforce will be working from home multiple days a week by the end of 2021."

What does this mean for broadband, that critical connection that helps us work remotely? It certainly means our country needs to continue the work to get broadband to everyone — and that in doing so we must build robust networks using technology proven to support the speeds and synchronous connections that working from home requires. Regardless of the work patterns and flexibility we see in the coming year, one thing is for certain: NTCA members such as your provider will continue to be at the forefront of connecting rural America. 



A free online resource helps female entrepreneurs

About 45% of businesses are owned or co-owned by women. Spanning a range of industries, most of these businesses are small with potential for growth. The federal Small Business Association wants to provide support.

The free, information-packed online Ascent program offers a range of helpful resources.

TAKE A JOURNEY

Experts in women's entrepreneurship created informational Journeys. Participants can choose any Journey, opting out of sessions with information they already know. Each Journey includes Excursions filled with resources needed to master a topic.



Exercises and tools



Fireside chats



Infographics



Success stories



Discussion guides



Videos



Key insights



Self-assessments

DO YOU NEED HELP WITH YOUR BUSINESS?

Visit ascent.sba.gov

Secure your Internet of Things

The Instant Pot, a pressure cooker, is one of the most popular small kitchen appliances of recent years. Naturally, there's a model capable of connecting to the internet via Wi-Fi — an example of the Internet of Things, or IoT.

Smart thermostats, door locks and security cameras are just a few devices on the IoT spectrum. Refrigerators, toys and a range of whimsical gadgets are all on the bandwagon. And businesses and industry, including agriculture, manufacturing and medicine, take advantage of connected devices.

Like the connected Instant Pot, which lets a cook control it via a smartphone app, IoT devices provide convenience, useful data and new ways of using technology. Cisco, a leader in networking systems, estimates that more than 75 billion such devices will be in use by 2025.

The utility of what is sometimes described as the fourth industrial revolution is balanced by the need for mindful caution. These devices offer people with bad intent potential doorways into private homes and businesses that use the internet-dependent gadgets.

Meanwhile, companies are finding new ways of leveraging these systems. One example is Amazon Sidewalk, which rolled out earlier this year. Here's how Amazon described the innovation: "Amazon Sidewalk is a shared network that helps devices like Amazon Echo, Ring security cameras, outdoor lights and motion sensors work better at home and beyond the front door."

Essentially, Sidewalk links your Amazon devices to those of your neighbors through a specialized network. Why? Well, imagine your internet goes down while you're out of town, making your security-focused Ring Doorbell useless. With Sidewalk, however, your internet-connected doorbell would keep right on working, relying on the internet connections of your neighbors to power the system. Everyone on the Sidewalk

system gives up a little bit of their internet bandwidth to this network. Instead of a smart home, Sidewalk can create a smart neighborhood.

Amazon released a detailed white paper outlining the system's security features. And while security experts have been quoted praising the company's efforts, others have expressed concern about privacy and the potential for hackers to target the system. Amazon Sidewalk can be turned off in the settings section of the company's smartphone app.

As IoT devices proliferate and offer new, practical ways to leverage the power of the internet, knowledge and a few practical security steps can offset possible risks. In the past, the FBI noted the need for IoT caution. "Unsecured devices can allow hackers a path into your router, giving the bad guy access to everything else on your home network that you thought was secure," Beth Anne Steele wrote for the Portland FBI office. [🔗](#)

Security tips for IoT devices

- Change the device's default password. Consider a different device if instructions for changing the password aren't readily available.
- Long passwords — as long as possible — work best. Make them unique to each IoT device.
- Many IoT devices connect to smartphone apps. Take a few minutes to understand the permissions granted to these apps. An internet search will help here, too.
- If possible, have a separate network for devices, such as an internet-connected refrigerator and a laptop containing sensitive information.
- Regularly update the devices, and turn off automatic updates.



A legacy of service

Together, we've created a foundation for the future

Connecting a rural community such as ours to the world has never been easy. Decades ago, crews first strung telephone lines across a landscape that large nationwide companies chose to ignore, deeming the places we call home too rural and unworthy of the effort.



SHAYNE ISON
General Manager

Naturally, we never felt that way. After all, no one understands the importance of our home and places like it better than we do. The countless hours of work to create that first telephone system proved invaluable, opening new doors for businesses and individuals. All of that effort gave us a foundation for the future.

As new technologies appeared, we continued that original commitment to serving you by bringing you those innovations. Today, our internet services rival — and often greatly exceed — those found in metropolitan areas. Just as those first crews did when they engineered a telephone system, we've built and maintained a robust internet network.

The depth of my appreciation for the men and women who make these essential services possible only increases from year to year. No matter the challenge, they adapt and overcome so that we all may benefit daily from those efforts.

Can you imagine not having the ability to link a computer or mobile device to the internet? Work, entertainment, medical care, education and more rely on rock-solid service. In just a few decades, we've gone from marveling at the idea of being able to speak one-on-one to someone miles away via phone to having a world of information at our fingertips. We've never been so connected. In fact, internet services are as essential for many of us as water and electricity.

Despite our best efforts, though, no communications and technology company such as ours avoids adversity. It's how you overcome adversity that matters most. After all, no one escapes the power of nature. Across our region, we've seen ice storms, snow and floods that have left our communities without the utilities many of us take for granted.

Every season of the calendar brings the possibility of an event capable of disrupting our systems. But our team maintains detailed plans to both avoid disruptions and to respond quickly if they do occur. Often, long hours of work are required to restore services after an outage. The environment in the field after an event like a severe storm is likely to be dangerous. Yet, our crews always answer the call. Our office staff willingly puts in long hours to support the efforts. Everyone helps. And they do it gladly, because we understand how much you rely on the services we provide. They're essential, as is our commitment to you.

Our investment in not only expanding our services but also in maintaining existing infrastructure is significant and ongoing. The mission that began with construction of the first telephone lines continues. We believe in you, and our community. We prosper together. Regardless of the challenges, we embrace our commitment to serving you.

Everyone at Mountain Telephone is proud of our heritage, a sentiment we wish to carry over to future generations that will continue to provide you the communication tools needed to thrive. Thank you for letting us be part of this community. 📞

The Mountain Telephone Connection is a bimonthly newsletter published by Mountain Rural Telephone Cooperative, © 2021. It is distributed without charge to all member/owners of the cooperative.



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.

Send address corrections to:

Mountain Rural Telephone Cooperative
P.O. Box 399 • 425 Main St., Suite A
West Liberty, KY 41472
Telephone: 606-743-3121

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On the Cover:



Terry Littleton, with Littleton's Auction, sells a variety of great items at even better prices.
See story Page 9.

Mountain Telephone named "best of the best"

NTCA—The Rural Broadband Association Chief Executive Officer Shirley Bloomfield announced Mountain Telephone as a winner of the 2020 Smart Rural Community Showcase Award for the second time.



The award honors Mountain Telephone for its efforts in driving economic growth and development in the region. "As we all grappled with the COVID-19 pandemic last year, our SRC members led the charge to ensure that their communities stayed connected during this crucial time," Bloomfield says. "The 2020 Showcase Award Winners are truly the best of the best who went above and beyond to serve their communities. I want to congratulate Mountain Telephone for winning the 2020 Showcase Award, and also thank them for the work they have done to keep small-town America connected."

Mountain Telephone CEO Shayne Ison says he was honored by the NTCA's recognition earlier this year. "We're always working to make our community better in every way we can," Ison says. "For us to thrive, every business and individual in our region needs to thrive, as well. We keep that in mind with everything we do."

NTCA is an association of nearly 850 independent, community-based telecommunications companies in rural communities across America that are committed to creating opportunities through high-quality broadband service.

Photographers wanted!

Mountain Telephone is accepting photos for its 2022 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 service 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.

Need help paying for services?

Lifeline assistance may be an option for you!

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

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

DO YOU QUALIFY? Apply today!

To find out whether you qualify for Lifeline assistance, please visit www.lifelinesupport.org or call Mountain Telephone at 606-743-3121.

We salute you!

Mountain Telephone offices will close on Monday, May 31, in observance of Memorial Day and all those who served and sacrificed for our country.



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Marvelous vistas

Rhododendron make summertimes scenic

Story by ANNE P. BRALY

Climb to the top of Roan Mountain, a 5-mile ridgetop along the Appalachian Trail, in the month of June, and something magical happens. The view, normally green with vegetation, turns into a blanket of crimson as the rhododendron opens in full bloom.

“The views are spectacular — and that’s an understatement,” says Keith Kelley, ranger for the Cherokee National Forest, Watauga District.

It’s this view that people have been traveling to experience for generations, according to Jennifer Bauer. She is the author of three books about Roan Mountain. The most recent is “Roan Mountain: A Passage of Time.”

As early as the 1700s, botanists made their way up the mountain range to study

the flora and fauna. In 1794, Andre Micheaux discovered alpine species rarely found outside of the New England and Canadian latitudes. Five years later, John Fraser hiked up the mountain, collecting specimens of rhododendron and noting the existence of the fir tree we now know as the Fraser fir. And yet another early explorer was Elisha Mitchell, for whom Mount Mitchell is named.

But it wasn’t until the magnificent Cloudland Hotel opened high atop Roan Mountain that it became known to the general public and word of its rhododendron — the largest proliferation of wild rhododendron in the world — spread across the South and beyond. Today, little remains of the Cloudland other than a forest service marker providing information


about the hotel’s glorious heyday. But people continue to come to see the magnificent gardens tended by Mother Nature. Sometimes too many people, Kelley adds, so he offers a suggestion should you go.

“South of Carver’s Gap is an area known as the Rhododendron Gardens, which you can drive to, park and hike from there,” he says. “There is a small user fee you have to pay to enter the area, but it is well worth it. That area is accessed by turning south at Carver’s Gap.”

Bauer’s attachment to “The Roan,” as she calls it, began in college when she was a student at East Tennessee State University. Her botany professor introduced her to The Roan, and the rest, as they say, is history. She’s now been with Tennessee State Parks for 38 years, the first 21 of which were spent working as an interpretive ranger at Roan Mountain State Park. The position enabled her to conduct research in an effort to learn more about the natural history of The Roan and its people. Bauer is now the park ranger at Sycamore Shoals State Historic Park in Elizabethton, Tennessee.

Roan’s highlands, which reach up to 6,285 feet at its peak, is where you’ll find the Rhododendron Gardens — toward the west end of the highlands at the end of a U.S. Forest Service road that turns off from Carver’s Gap at the North Carolina/Tennessee state line.

“When they are in full bloom, you see a sea of crimson flowers in areas where there are not many spruce and fir trees popping up among them,” Bauer says. “But even with the trees, it’s a beautiful sight. In other areas of the mountain, you’ll walk through areas that are in different stages of transition between balds to forests. In these areas the rhododendron reaches for the sun and blooms among the spruce and firs. All of these unique habitats present a feeling of great beauty and a sense of visiting an enchanted forest.”

Any time of year is worth visiting, Kelley notes. “But in June, the rhododendron are in bloom, along with some of the other vegetation, which offers incredible, breathtaking scenery.” 

Where does Roan Mountain get its name?

Some say the name refers to the reddish color of the mountain when rhododendron comes into bloom in early summer or when the mountain ash berries appear in autumn. But, according to the United States Department of Agriculture, there’s another theory. Some say it comes from Daniel Boone’s roan-colored horse, because the man and his horse were frequent visitors to the area.





Grow it yourself

Rhododendron grows best in cooler climates and acidic soil — definitely not the hard-packed red clay found throughout the South. There are hybrid varieties, though, that have been developed for the southern garden. But that's no guarantee they will survive. Rhododendrons do not like high heat and wet soil. However, if you're willing to try, here are some tips from Southern Living.

- **Start with heat-tolerant plants.**
- **Pay attention to the soil and have it tested for acidity. Also, plant your rhododendron in an area that drains quickly and contains lots of organic matter, such as chopped dead leaves, cow manure and ground bark. Again, no clay.**
- **If your ground is flat, plant the rhododendron in a raised bed.**
- **Finally, choose a location that is lightly shaded in the afternoon and shielded from strong winds.**

Balding

The Appalachian Trail travels along the highest ridges of the Roan Mountain range, which separates Tennessee and North Carolina. A portion of the highlands is a red spruce and Fraser fir forest. Other areas of The Roan are described as "bald" communities. Just as the name implies, balds are areas on mountaintops where the forest ends and thick vegetation of native grasses and/or shrubs begins. One of the most popular areas along the entire Appalachian Trail from Maine to Georgia is the portion that crosses the balds of Roan Mountain, says Jennifer Bauer, former ranger at Roan Mountain State Park and a board member of Friends of Roan Mountain.

How the balds developed is anyone's guess, but scientists now believe they may have formed during the last ice age when constant winds and freezing temperatures caused trees to make a hasty retreat down the mountaintop. Mammoths and other beasts acted as Mother Nature's personal weed eaters, keeping the balds grazed. Now that the woolly beasts are gone and temperatures have warmed, balds are beginning to grow some "hair." But Roan Mountain's balds still shine. Among the most popular are the balds starting at Carver's Gap and going north.

They are, in order:

- **Round Bald**
- **Jane Bald**
- **Grassy Ridge**
- **Yellow Mountain**
- **Little Hump Mountain**
- **Hump Mountain**

Making it work

Local teachers find new ways to engage students during crisis

Story by JEN CALHOUN | Photography contributed by JENNIFER WELLS

After 18 years of teaching, Jennifer Wells thought she'd seen it all. But when the pandemic hit and schools closed, Wells and her fellow teachers were forced to seek new ways to engage and educate students.

"We had to adapt so quickly," says Wells, a seventh and eighth grade social studies teacher at Menifee County Elementary School, which includes students up to eighth grade. "And that's the thing. It can make it hard for students and staff alike. Consistency for kids is really important, so I'm sure it's been really challenging for them to have to constantly adapt."

CHANGING WITH THE NEED

Wells, like many teachers in Kentucky, moved quickly. And after more than a year of coronavirus infection rates that rose and fell and rose again, they've continued to keep the needs of the students and the parents in mind. "I want to give a shoutout to the parents, because the teacher-parent relationship is more critical than ever now," she says. "They've really worked with us, and it's been wonderful."

Depending on infection rates, states and school systems closed schools and took students online or put them on hybrid schedules. The hybrid system meant that groups of students would attend in-person classes on different days of the week in an effort to reduce infection rates. "Really, the whole point is to keep the numbers low in the classrooms on any given day," Wells says.

Moving to online classroom work might have been easier on her than for some others. As a social studies teacher, most of her classwork was already taking place via

Google Classroom, a web-based platform that allowed Wells to virtually share assignments, provide research resources and communicate with her students. "They already knew how to access it and maneuver through it," she says. "They knew their passwords, and they knew what to expect."

Mountain Telephone also stepped up, Wells says. "They've been good to work with families that didn't have internet service before. They've been able to work with them and provide them with service in an affordable way."

While the current scenario is not perfect, Wells senses a change in the way education will work in the future. "I think this whole situation has forced us as a country and a system of education to look at opportunities we didn't look at before," she says. "Some students I've had for a few years have thrived through virtual learning. They're doing better than they ever have, and they're feeling good about themselves." 🗨️

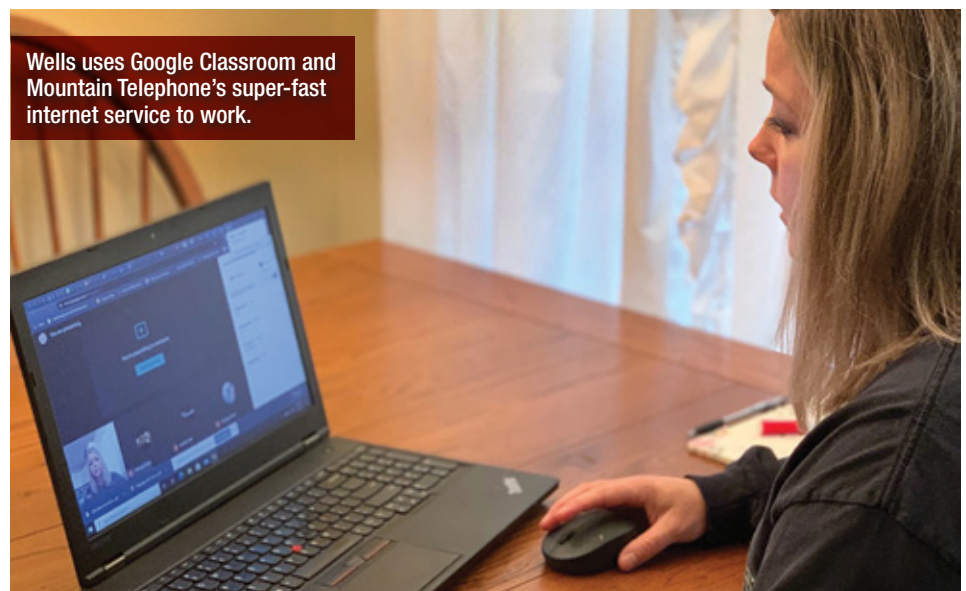


Jennifer Wells, a social studies teacher at Menifee County Elementary School, sometimes teaches from home.

Moving on up

Jennifer Wells recently moved back to Menifee County, where she's originally from. She was excited about coming home, but she worried about leaving her old internet service without knowing anything about Mountain Telephone's. Turns out, she need not have worried.

"My son likes to do online gaming, and he's always saying our internet connection here is faster and better," she says. "We have amazing service. There's not one day here that I've had any interruptions or issues."



Wells uses Google Classroom and Mountain Telephone's super-fast internet service to work.

Bidding and buying online

Longtime auction company tests out a new way to do business

Story By JEN CALHOUN | Photography by WILLIAM LEMASTER

Terry Littleton participated in his first auction at the age of 12. It was the early '70s, and his father ran small auctions around Lewis County. As a kid, he'd help move the merchandise and set it up to show. Sometimes, he'd help deliver it. "Back then, you could work a little bit, trade a little bit and have a little money in your pocket," Littleton says.

By the age of 18, he had made it his life's work. Now, after 44 years in business, his auction house, Littleton's Auction & Furniture Inc., has become an Elliott County institution.

HOT TICKET

Located on state Route 7 in Sandy Hook, the auction house/retail store sells everything from furniture and other antiques to quilt sets and more. The 40-by-110-square-foot building holds enough space for a showroom or a live auction, along with a storage area.

For the last four decades, Littleton's live auctions have tended to dominate the social scene in the rural county. People came to grab a little food, chat with their friends and catch up on the latest news. Sometimes, they were serious about an item up for bid. Or sometimes, they spy something they like, even if they haven't planned on buying.



Terry Littleton, owner of Littleton's Auction & Furniture, recently started airing online auctions.

As an auctioneer and show organizer, Littleton knows how to speed up the action to keep people engaged in the spectacle of it. "You might be selling merchandise, but you're also selling a show," he says. "In a small county like this, there ain't too much coming off, you know?"

But that changed with COVID-19, he says.

FINDING NEW WAYS

Littleton temporarily shut down the live auctions in March 2020 for safety reasons. More than a year later, he's still worried about holding an auction until the spread of the virus gets under better control. "It's hard to get a crowd together these days," he says. "We usually do get a pretty good crowd, but it's hard to have an auction and social distance at the same time."

To keep the business going, Littleton and his family decided to do two things: First, they would keep the store open as a retail showroom. Second, they would try out holding auctions on Facebook Live via the Littleton's Auction & Furniture page.

Littleton says the pace of the online auction tends to run a little slower than a live event, but Facebook can spread the word farther and wider to people who are willing to travel to pick up the perfect china cabinet, table or quilt. "We're giving it a shot, and it does OK," he says. "We're looking forward to having a few more." 🗨️

An Elliott County institution

Littleton's Auction & Furniture is at 6742 N. KY 7 in Sandy Hook. The store offers a large selection of furniture, antiques, quilt sets and more and is generally open from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Saturday and by appointment. For more information and to find out about the newest items or upcoming live and online auctions, visit Littleton's Auction & Furniture on Facebook. Call 606-738-4873 for a private appointment, or message the business on Facebook.

Final cut

How the freedom of the internet is transforming filmmaking

Story by DREW WOOLLEY

Some filmmakers learn their craft by making home movies in the backyard. Others go to film school. Madelaine Turner likes to say she got her education on YouTube.

“That’s essentially where I got my film degree,” she says. “Movies were my first love, but filmmaking wasn’t something I pursued for a long time. Until quarantine started.”

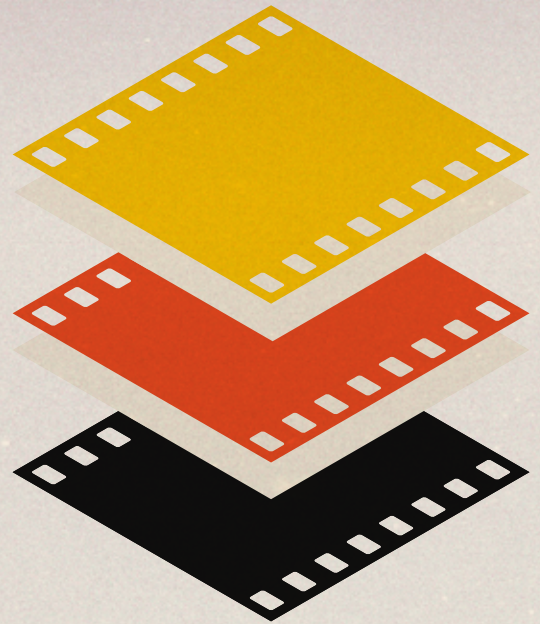
At 27 years old, the California native considers herself a senior by the standard of apps like TikTok. Of the app’s 500 million active users, nearly half are estimated to be in their teens and early 20s.

Originally, Turner’s quick videos were just a way to stay connected with her younger siblings. But she began to view the platform as a way to genuinely flex her creative muscle after a positive response to her Wes Anderson tribute video, “The Anderson Guide to Surviving a Global Pandemic,” filmed using only objects she had in her apartment.

“It gives you really specific boundaries with the content you’re allowed to create, which is 59 seconds,” she says. “So the challenge and excitement as a storyteller, director and creator is getting your point across and making those 59 seconds really enjoyable for your audience.”

Within those confines, Turner has explored her wide-ranging creative interests, from short films paying homage to Jane Austen costume dramas and French heist movies to abstract dream sequences and a cyberpunk take on “The Wizard of Oz.” Each new style gives her a chance to learn more about the filmmaking process both during and after filming.

“I’d never really used a green screen or After Effects before,” she says. “Now, taking on a new genre is really exciting because it allows me to push the boundaries of what I know how to do and challenges me to figure out how I can convey this effectively without having a whole production crew.”



Her growth as a filmmaker hasn’t gone unnoticed. As a freelance screenwriter, Turner has been able to point to her online portfolio and hundreds of thousands of followers to build connections within the movie industry. And thanks to the algorithms of apps like TikTok, Instagram and YouTube, more people are discovering her work every day.

“It allows you to come across content from someone with virtually no following,” Turner says. “And from my perspective, I was putting my stuff out there and very quickly engaging an audience that gave me the permission to go bigger, further and more creative.”

That audience is one of the reasons Turner doesn’t expect she’ll ever stop making short-form videos online, even as she pursues her larger filmmaking dreams. The real-time feedback she receives on those platforms has already shaped her as a filmmaker and may come to shape the industry itself.

“A traditional filmmaker might go years in between films, whereas on TikTok you get this microenvironment of trying new things and getting that quick feedback,” she says.

“So I think I’ve been lucky to hyper-develop my style as a filmmaker because of that feedback loop. Hopefully I can be part of a generation of filmmakers that is able to bridge that gap between the internet and the mainstream.”



Madelaine Turner puts her spin on genres ranging from French heist movies to cyberpunk.



Long distance

For every film festival that was able to pivot to digital in 2020, there were many more that had to be canceled altogether. With so much of the industry on hold, a team of five cinephiles in Brooklyn started the entirely online Long Distance Film Festival, harnessing the power of broadband to give rural and urban filmmakers around the world an outlet for their creativity.

"There was a certain freedom to starting an all-online festival," says Festival Director Elias ZX. "It was much cheaper than doing it in person. We didn't sell tickets and had unlimited capacity so friends, family and fans of the filmmakers were able to join from around the globe and watch the festival in its entirety."

To pull it off, the team partnered with the independent Spectacle Theater and Kinoscope to stream its 15 selected short films to hundreds of viewers around the world. Plans for a second edition of the festival are already underway, with submissions open for 2021.



Industry standard

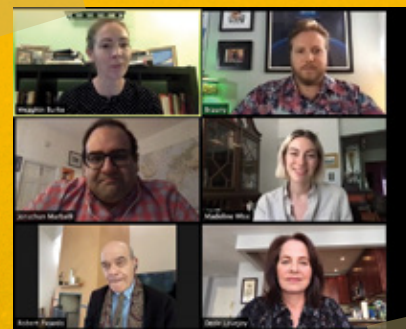


Oxford Film Festival Executive Director Melanie Addington was making last-minute arrangements for the Mississippi-based event when the state's governor banned gatherings of more than 100 people. Using Eventive's brand-new online festival platform, she quickly pivoted to take the event virtual.

"We were one of the first virtual festivals with Eventive and had to learn a lot very quickly, mostly that a lot of our community doesn't have good internet access," she says. "That was restricting in some ways, but it also expanded who could see them to a new audience."

Moving forward, Addington anticipates OFF will have a hybrid format, combining the accessibility of a virtual festival with the in-person experience of a live event.

"This will be what we do from here on out," she says. "Not everyone can travel to Oxford, but they can still take part in the experience. It makes absolute sense for this to become a standard in our industry."





Fudge-tastic!

What the Fudge Shoppe brings famous recipe to Campton

Story by JEN CALHOUN | Photography by WILLIAM LEMASTER

Sam Dunn Jr. was helping his great-aunt, Thelma Bryant, close up her shop, Ye Old Country Peddler in Slade, a few months back when she asked, “Hey, you want to buy the fudge kettle?”

About 20 seconds later, Dunn became the proud owner of the kettle and a legacy of fudge making that spanned nearly 40 years. The Peddler, a notions shop full of collectibles, was probably best known for the tasty fudge that brought people from all over the country for boxes of the treat.

KEEPING THE LEGEND ALIVE

Now, Dunn, a special education teacher and pawn shop owner, sells the famous fudge from his What the Fudge Shoppe, which he opened last fall at 145 Main St. in Campton. “I don’t know why I did it,” he says. “I didn’t have any direct relationship with Thelma’s business, but it’s always been a staple down there for so long. She did so well with it, so I thought, ‘We just gotta try.’”

After tutorials with his aunt, Dunn has perfected the recipes. He offers at least 32 flavors of fudge — all the traditional favorites, plus pumpkin nut, peanut M&M,

raspberry cheesecake, chewy praline and dark chocolate caramel sea salt, to name a few. In addition, the Campton shop sells roasted and flavored nuts, a large selection of Case knives, Department 56 and Enesco collectibles, and much more. Dunn hopes to add a Kentucky Proud selection of items produced by Kentucky-based crafters and artisans. He believes those items are becoming more important to tourists looking for souvenirs, as well as to locals who like supporting local businesses, entrepreneurs and crafters.

But one of Dunn’s main goals is to cook up more tourism for Campton and help the city grow. “It’s the biggest thing we’re trying to do,” he says. “We’re trying to find ways to get people into Campton and show them all we have to offer. This is kind of an avenue to help start that process.”

Although the fudge making has moved to Campton, Dunn is working with a Slade shop that will buy the popular treat by the slab and sell it in pieces. “So, it’ll still be down there,” he says. “It won’t be in the same location as Ye Old Country Peddler, but it’ll be back in Slade.”

MORE FUDGE IN MORE PLACES

Dunn says he has big plans for the popular treat, too. “I recently received my manufacturing and distribution license from the state,” he says. “So I’m trying to get this fudge and this product in every little nook and cranny that I can. That’s where I see this going.”

The outlets he is eyeing are mostly local and regional stores, possibly all across the state. “I’m really focusing more on mom-and-pop shops — the kinds that are locally owned and someone’s in there every day,” he says. “We want to start small and see how the whole process works before we jump into a big contract with someone that has a large coverage area.”



Sam Dunn Jr. took his aunt’s famous fudge recipes from Ye Olde Country Peddler in Slade and started his own shop after she retired.

With little more than a Facebook page to spread the word, What the Fudge Shoppe continues to bring in the curious and the hungry. Over the holidays, Dunn shipped fudge to 10 different states not long after the store opened. Dunn says he also plans school fundraising drives — or Fudgeraisers — to bring in money for student clubs and teams.

Right now, the shop employs about four part-time employees. But that number could change with the movement of the fudge and the ever-increasing popularity of the Red River Gorge area. “It’s seen amazing growth lately,” Dunn says. “And it’s only going to grow more and more over the years.”



The What the Fudge Shoppe in Campton offers nearly 32 varieties of fudge.

Fudge + more

What the Fudge Shoppe sells everything from 32 flavors of some of the best handmade fudge around to Case knives and name-brand collectibles. Coming soon are Kentucky Proud items and more. The shop is at 145 Main St. in Campton. For more information, or to get a feel for everything the store has to offer, visit the What the Fudge Shoppe Facebook page.

What the Fudge Shoppe boasts at least 32 flavors of fudge. We've listed a few to whet your palate:

- Chocolate
- Vanilla
- Peanut Butter
- Peanut Butter Chocolate
- Pumpkin Pie
- Butter Pecan
- Strawberry Shortcake
- Chewy Praline
- Rocky Road
- Red Velvet
- Birthday Cake
- Blueberry Cheesecake
- Chocolate Cheesecake
- Maple and Maple Nut
- Dark Chocolate Caramel Sea Salt
- Cookies & Cream
- Orange Cream



Dunn says he hopes the shop's famous fudge tradition will help bring more people into Campton.



Perfectly pleasing peas

Enjoy a surprisingly flexible legume

If you're denying yourself the simple beauty of peas, it's time to rethink your weekly menu. Full of healthy benefits and flavor, they should be a part of everyone's diet.

Peas' nutrition profile includes manganese, protein, fiber, vitamin A and folate, with lots of lesser vitamins to boot. And their neutral flavor allows them to go from smoothies at breakfast to salads for lunch and pot pies for dinner. They're inexpensive and add a lot of texture and color to any plate.

Try tossing them with pasta and a creamy Alfredo sauce. Or use peas as a topping for a baked potato with cheese and sour cream. You can also make an incredible pesto sauce for buttery rounds of crusty bread. Simply add a bag of

frozen peas to a handful of mint leaves and a half cup of Parmesan cheese, blend them together in a food processor and add olive oil as the machine is running until you get a smooth, thick consistency.

If you're lucky enough to have a garden full of the green pods filled with fresh peas, you've done yourself a favor. Just go outside and grab a handful of taste and nutrition. If not, grab a bag of frozen peas — they're just as good for you.



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



PEA SALAD WITH SMOKED ALMONDS

- 2 (16-ounce) packages frozen peas
- 6 ounces smoke-flavored almonds, finely chopped
- 1/2 a sweet onion or more, to taste, finely chopped
- 1/2 cup mayonnaise (reduced fat OK)
- 1/2 cup sour cream (light OK)
- Ground black pepper, to taste
- 1/2 cup shredded cheddar cheese

Place frozen peas in a colander and rinse them under cold water until thawed. Drain and transfer them to a large bowl. Add the almonds and onions. Mix well. Fold mayonnaise, sour cream and black pepper into the pea mixture until evenly coated. Transfer to a serving container and top with shredded cheese. Cover and refrigerate until serving. Before serving, you may want to blend cheese into the mixture, or leave it on top for a prettier presentation.





GREEN PEA BANANA SMOOTHIE

- 1/2 cup frozen green peas
- 1 frozen banana
- 1 cup spinach
- 4 mint leaves or more, to taste
- 1 1/2 cups almond milk
- 1 tablespoon almond butter, optional

Combine all ingredients in a blender. Blend until smooth, about 1 minute. Add more almond milk if needed to achieve your desired consistency.

CREAMY CHICKEN POT PIE

Peas add taste, color and texture to this creamy dish.

- 2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup cold unsalted butter, cut into cubes
- 1/2 cup cold buttermilk
- 1 or 2 tablespoons cold water
- 1 large egg, beaten, for the egg wash

For the pot pie filling:

- 1/4 cup unsalted butter
- 1/3 cup diced onion
- 2 medium carrots sliced (about 1 cup)
- 1 stalk celery sliced (about 1/2 cup)
- 2 cloves garlic minced
- 1/3 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 1/2 teaspoons minced fresh thyme
- 1 tablespoon minced fresh Italian parsley
- 1 3/4 cups chicken broth
- 1/2 cup heavy cream
- 3 cups shredded chicken or turkey
- 1 cup frozen peas

First, make the pie dough. Combine the flour, sugar and salt in a large bowl. Add the cubed butter and toss to coat.

Dump the mixture out onto a clean surface and use a rolling pin to roll the butter into thin sheets, combining it with the flour. Use a bench scraper to scrape the rolling pin and to bring the mixture back into a pile as necessary. Continue until all of the butter is incorporated into the flour. The mixture will be very flaky. Return the mixture to the bowl and place it in the freezer for 15 minutes to chill the butter.

Remove from the freezer and add the buttermilk. Use a spoon, and then your hands, to stir the mixture until it comes together into a ball. If the mixture is too dry, add the water a tablespoon at a time. Divide the dough into 2 parts and flatten them into disks. Wrap each disk in plastic wrap and chill in the fridge while you make the filling.

To make the filling, heat the butter over medium-high heat in a large skillet. Add the onions, carrots, celery and garlic and cook until tender, stirring occasionally. Whisk in the flour, salt, black pepper, thyme, parsley, chicken broth and heavy cream. Whisk until there are no flour lumps, then simmer over medium-low heat for 10 minutes or until the sauce has thickened. Stir in the shredded chicken or turkey and frozen peas. Remove from heat and set aside.

Preheat the oven to 400 F. Remove the pie dough from the refrigerator. On a lightly floured surface, use a rolling pin to roll out the dough into a 12-inch circle. Dough should be about 1/4 inch thick. Transfer the dough to a 9-inch pie pan. Pat with your fingers, making sure it is smooth. Trim the extra overhang of dough with a knife and discard.

Pour the filling into the dough-lined pie pan. Roll out the second disk of dough and carefully cover the pie. Trim the extra overhang off the sides. Seal the edges by crimping with a fork or your fingers. With a sharp knife, slice a few small slits in the center of the top crust. Using a pastry brush, brush the crust and edges with a beaten egg.

Bake for 45 minutes, or until the crust is golden brown. Cool for 10 minutes, allowing the filling to settle and thicken a bit. Cut into slices and serve.





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