



The Mountain Telephone

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2018

# CONNECTION

## CALLED TO SERVE

Carrie Prater spent 54 years in the lunchroom

## A MOUNTAIN MILESTONE

Gig certified to better serve your needs



## DRESSING FOR DINNER

This Southern staple just got more interesting





BY SHIRLEY BLOOMFIELD, CEO  
NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association

## Rural broadband is on our wish list

The federal government is not usually known for moving quickly. That said, the Rural Utilities Service, an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, has been working at a fast and furious pace the past several weeks on its e-Connectivity Pilot Program. This program could make \$600 million available in loans and grants to bring broadband to rural areas where service is desperately needed.

Now, let's hope the USDA is just as fast and furious when it comes to releasing funds to rural broadband providers who can continue to build networks in areas where connectivity is sorely needed.

Many of you reading this enjoy access to a reliable broadband network thanks to your local telecommunications provider. The cooperative and independent telcos who are part of NTCA have done a tremendous job of connecting their members and customers to some of the fastest internet service available in the country. Even so, rural America is home to many communities that are so remote, isolated and sparsely populated that extending service to them is a serious challenge.

Through NTCA, telcos like yours share their opinions and concerns with elected officials and agencies. We sent a letter to RUS stating that the rules of the e-Connectivity Pilot Program should be set in a way that makes sense and that prioritizes the most productive use of limited federal dollars.

Seeing progress that releases new dollars for rural broadband is definitely on our wish list this season. [📄](#)

## Groups study impact of broadband on rural prosperity

Several national associations, nonprofits and government agencies joined forces throughout 2018 to examine the impact of broadband on life in rural America.

The Farm Foundation, a nonpartisan agricultural policy institute, launched a project entitled "What's on the Horizon for E-Connectivity in Rural America." As part of this project, the group organized a series of E-Connectivity Listening Sessions in collaboration with CoBank, NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association, the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

"We want to identify the challenges rural communities now face in providing quality broadband services, as well as the innovative options being used to address those challenges," said Constance Cullman, Farm Foundation president and moderator of the listening sessions.

One of the sessions was in Birmingham, Alabama, in August. Among the panelists was Fred Johnson, executive vice president and general manager of Farmers Telecommunications Cooperative in Rainsville, Alabama. Johnson also serves on the board of directors for NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association.

Johnson applauded the effort to bring stakeholders together to share the accomplishments of small, rural broadband providers. "Closing the digital divide is a goal we all share, and creating partnerships to reinvest in our networks is an important component of achieving that goal," he said.

Also speaking at the Birmingham session was Jannine Miller, USDA's senior advisor for rural infrastructure. She discussed the Interagency Task Force on Agriculture and Rural Prosperity that was formed in 2017. The task force identified over 100 recommendations for the federal government to consider in order to help improve life in rural America. The recommendations centered around five areas, with e-connectivity being central to all components (see illustration below).

More information about the listening sessions — including videos of the events — can be found at [www.farmfoundation.org](http://www.farmfoundation.org). [📄](#)

### RURAL BROADBAND: A KEY TO AMERICAN PROSPERITY



Source: USDA. The agency's full report can be found at [www.usda.gov/ruralprosperity](http://www.usda.gov/ruralprosperity).

# Always on

## More than one-quarter of adults constantly online



**S**ocial media, text messages, gaming, weather reports, email and much more are daily parts of busy lives. But just how connected are we really to the online world?

For about 26 percent of the U.S. population, the answer to that question is dramatic — just more than a quarter of adults say they are online “almost constantly,” according to a Pew Research Center study released earlier this year.

The widespread use of smartphones and mobile devices has helped drive the sense of being online all the time, a result that is up from 21 percent in a similar 2015 poll.

While not everyone feels constantly connected, about 77 percent of Americans still go online daily. Forty-three percent go online several times a day, and about 8 percent go online only about once a day. Meanwhile, 11 percent connect several times weekly, and a similar percentage does not use the internet at all.

The biggest indicator of the time spent online is access to a mobile device. Of those who possess a smartphone or similar device, 89 percent go

online daily and 31 percent report almost constant use.

Meanwhile, of the people who do not have a mobile device, only 54 percent report daily online usage and only 5 percent are constantly connected.

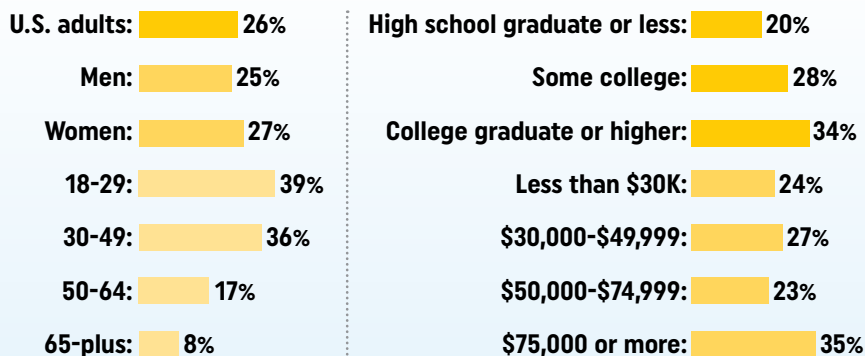
But when the poll added age into the mix, the results grew more interesting. Age matters less than it did three years earlier. Americans between the ages of 30 and 49 indicated the same rate of almost constant online use as younger adults: 36 percent to 39 percent for the younger generation. Meanwhile, the percentage of those between the ages of 50 and 64 who report constant online use has spiked from 12 percent to 17 percent since 2015.

Households with higher incomes and those who live in urban and suburban areas report almost constant online usage at a rate that is nearly double that of residents of rural areas, where only 15 percent report the highest usage.

As online tools become more useful and services better connect friends and families, the importance of access to fast, affordable internet connections continues to increase. 📱

### A connected nation

The chart represents the percentage of Americans who describe themselves as being online “almost constantly,” according to a Pew Research Center poll.



Source: Pew Research Center analysts Andrew Perrin and Jingjing Jiang reported results of the study.

# Thankful for world-class broadband in rural America

Lately, I've seen many commentators and public officials paint our nation's digital divide with a broad brush. "Urban areas have great internet connectivity, and rural areas don't," they say. I'm thankful those people are wrong.



**SHAYNE ISON**  
General Manager

I always enjoy taking time at Thanksgiving to look back on the year and appreciate what we have, both personally and at Mountain Telephone. We are truly blessed.

I'm thankful we live in a country where we can put so much energy into things like holidays, family get-togethers and football games instead of worrying about clean water or our general safety. Our country may not be perfect, but I'd certainly rather be here than anywhere else.

When I think about where we are, I'm thankful for our community. I appreciate the scenic beauty of our area and the genuine, hardworking and caring people who make up the backbone of the communities we serve.

I'm truly thankful for the team we have at Mountain Telephone and the work they do every day to make sure we serve you the best way we can. This year in particular, I appreciate their hard work in taking the necessary steps to become a gig-certified company and in making substantial progress toward our very own "in-house" technical support help desk.

I'm also thankful for the modern conveniences our network provides. Whether it's streaming an unlimited catalog of quality entertainment, running a smart home or connecting with loved ones hundreds of miles away, we have amazing technology that previous generations could not have imagined.

It is clear to me that we need to continue telling this story, because I've seen or heard an oversimplification many times where a political leader or supposed expert talks about the disparity between the wonderful internet service found in urban areas and the primitive connections of rural America. Such a sweeping generalization is simply not accurate.

While it's true many communities in rural America are suffering from slow broadband speeds as a result of neglect from big corporate internet providers or isolated terrain, the fiber optic connections we offer are world-class. And we're working hard every day to bring those connections to more people in our region.

There are apartment complexes in Los Angeles and New York stuck with slower internet speeds than those we provide to farmers in our community. Some businesses in Chicago and Seattle do not have the same access to high-speed broadband as small businesses in our service areas.

Broadband has become essential for modern life, and I don't believe people should have to sacrifice their connectivity just because they want to live in a rural area like ours. That's why our mission is the same as it's always been — to connect you with the best technology available today.

I'm thankful for the opportunity to help create such a network in our community, and I'm thankful for the trust you place in Mountain Telephone. 📞

The Mountain Telephone

# CONNECTION

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## Mountain Telephone

Mountain 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.

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On the Cover:



Carrie "Maw" Prater reminisces about serving meals, especially her famous yeast rolls, to the students of Ezel for more than 50 years.  
*See story Page 8.*



## A SALUTE TO VETERANS!

Everyone at Mountain Telephone would like to honor every man and woman who has served in our nation's armed forces. You have helped keep us safe and protected the freedoms we hold dear.

**"Our debt to the heroic men and women in the service of our country can never be repaid. They have earned our undying gratitude. America will never forget their sacrifices."**

— President Harry S. Truman



## Holiday Closures

Mountain Telephone offices will be closed Nov. 12 for Veterans Day, Nov. 22 and 23 for Thanksgiving and Dec. 24 and 25 for Christmas.

*We wish you and yours a happy and safe holiday season!*

Ober Gatlinburg in Tennessee, a classic Southern destination, offers great skiing and, possibly, even better views.



# Let it snow Time to hit the slopes

**S**ki resorts can offer hours or even days of entertainment. From the most daring skiers to those preferring the bunny slopes, winters in the South play host to some fun adventures. The destinations offer a flurry of activities to maximize the time you spend on the slopes, whether skiing, snowboarding or tubing.

## Ober Gatlinburg

1339 Ski Mountain Road, Gatlinburg, Tennessee

Expect to find restaurants; a multitude of shops; a play area for the little ones; one of the largest trams in the country; a coaster full of dips, zigzags and turns through the treetops; and more. Then, stay in one of a dozen partner hotels, campgrounds or rental cabins.

Oh, and don't forget the 10 trails and three lifts, plus the Mighty Carpet lift in the ski school area for skiing and snowboarding. There's snow tubing, too. While Ober Gatlinburg is an exciting way for skiers to satisfy their cravings for the slopes, non-skiers can shop until they drop. And everyone can enjoy hot food and cold drinks on a cold winter's day.

- **Lift tickets:** Adults: \$36. Juniors (ages 6-11) and seniors: \$30. 5 and under: Free with paying adult. Rates may be higher on weekends and holidays. Look for discounts after 3 p.m. and twilight skiing until 10 p.m.
- **Phone:** 865-436-5423
- **Online:** [obergatlinburg.com](http://obergatlinburg.com)

## Cloudmont Ski Resort

721 County Road 614, Mentone, Alabama

High atop Lookout Mountain, Cloudmont has offered hours of fun for skiers for more than 40 years. The resort has two 1,000-foot beginner and intermediate slopes. And while they may not be the biggest in the South, the slopes are a good place to learn the sport or to practice for the big leagues. When weather permits, you'll ski on natural snow.

Rental gear, including snowboards, is available in the ski lodge. Lessons are offered as well. Call ahead for snow reports.

If you're hungry, pack up your skis and head 3 miles down the road into the heart of Mentone, where you'll find a number of restaurants, including the Wildflower Cafe, the Greenleaf Grill and the Plowshares Bistro.

- **Lift tickets:** Adults: \$29. Children: \$22.

Prices are higher on weekends and holidays. Half-day tickets are available.

- **Phone:** 256-634-4344
- **Online:** [www.cloudmont.com](http://www.cloudmont.com)

## Winterplace Ski Resort

100 Old Flat Top Mountain Road  
Ghent, West Virginia

Almost the entire state of West Virginia is in the Appalachian Mountain range, making the Mountain State a great one for skiing, and it boasts a large number of ski resorts. Winterplace is the southernmost resort, and it offers 90 acres of fun. The longest run of the 27 trails is more than a mile long, and the views of the surrounding mountains are beautiful. There are 10 lifts to take you to the top. All but one of the slopes are open for nighttime skiing, as are the two terrain parks and the largest snow tubing park in the state. There's also a snow tubing park for children who are under 45 inches tall.

When you've had your fill of the snow, warm up with a cup of hot chocolate in front of a roaring fire at The Mountain House, one of several eateries. The Cabins at Winterplace offer lodging right on the property, and they include a free,



Don't ski? Not a problem. Destinations such as Winterplace Ski Resort in West Virginia offer something for everyone.

hearty breakfast designed to provide fuel for your day in the snow.

- **Lift tickets:** Adults: \$54. Students and seniors: \$35. Prices are higher on weekends and holidays.
- **Phone:** 304-787-3221
- **Online:** [www.winterplace.com](http://www.winterplace.com)

## Sapphire Valley Ski Resort

127 Cherokee Trail  
Sapphire Valley, North Carolina

Just a hop, skip and a jump across the South Carolina border, Sapphire Valley is a gem of a resort for snow lovers. Take a ride up the mountain on a state-of-the-art quad lift. Then, ski down a heart-stopping 1,600-foot run with a 200-foot vertical drop. For the less-skilled, there's a learning slope as well as a park for tubing with multiple lanes that will give you the thrill of downhill action at a safe pace. A magic carpet-style moving sidewalk will get you to the top. You can also enjoy the thrill of a zip line that will take you racing over the valley in its wintertime beauty.

Sapphire Valley is a resort for all seasons, with plenty of homes available for rent, as well as hotels and restaurants. Sapphire Valley Ski Resort also offers lessons, and there's a rental shop for all your equipment needs.

- **Lift tickets:** Adults: \$40. Children: \$23. Complimentary for skiers over 65.
- **Phone:** 828-743-7663
- **Online:** [www.skisapphirevalley.com](http://www.skisapphirevalley.com)


## Wolf Ridge Ski Resort

2578 Valley View Circle  
Mars Hill, North Carolina

Nestled in the scenic Blue Ridge Mountains, Wolf Ridge is smaller than the nearby resorts at Beech Mountain and Sugar Mountain. But if you're looking for a laid-back experience that still offers tremendous challenges, this is the place. Just 30 minutes north of Asheville, Wolf Ridge, at an elevation of 4,700 feet, has 72 acres of skiable terrain. Ski and snowboarding equipment is available to rent. Wolf Ridge's Snow Sports School offers private lessons to people ages 5 and over and group lessons to ages 8 and over.

There are 15 runs, a terrain park, two seated lifts and two surface lifts. When you get to the top, take a second to enjoy incredible views. When you come down, warm your toes in front of a crackling fire in one of the two lodges.

Wolf Ridge is right off Interstate 26, the first road in the state to be designated a scenic highway. Stay the night in one of the luxury townhomes, each of which has amazing views.

- **Lift tickets:** Adults: \$42. Students: \$33. Free for skiers 65 and over and for children under 5. Rates are higher on weekends.
- **Phone:** 828-689-4111
- **Online:** [www.skivolfridgenc.com](http://www.skivolfridgenc.com) 



Put up the skis and snowboards and enjoy a roller coaster at Ober Gatlinburg. Then, head inside for warm food.

# Standing the heat

'Maw' Prater spent 54 years serving kids at Ezel school

BY JOHN CLAYTON AND MELISSA GAINES

Carrie Prater couldn't stand the thought of children going hungry, and for more than half a century, she did her best to make sure they didn't.

Sometimes that commitment meant showing up for work at 5 a.m. to bake her famous yeast rolls or to cook breakfast so the students at Ezel School — later, Ezel Elementary School — could get off to a healthy start. And sometimes, that meant slipping an extra yeast roll or two into the pocket of children she suspected might not have another meal after they left school.

"She'd be upset at the end of the year because she was scared some of the kids would go hungry," says Rachel Burchett, Prater's granddaughter and a former student at Ezel Elementary.

The school replaced the K-12 Ezel School more than two decades ago, but there was no replacing Prater, who became known as "Maw" to the students. Now, they'll have to try.

## RETIREMENT

Prater retired at the end of the 2017-18 school year after 54 years of working in the Ezel lunchroom serving breakfast and lunch to students — and quite often to their children, and then their children.



"I liked the kids, and I liked the work," Prater says of her long career at Ezel. She outlasted teachers, administrators and many of her co-workers on the lunchroom staff. "People didn't understand how I could get around and work for 54 years, but it's because the Lord blessed me with strength and good health."

She says she learned to cook from her mother while growing up in the Calaboose area of Wolfe County, and she brought those skills to Ezel School long before the days of school dietitians and district meal plans. The lunchroom staff would plan the meals and do the cooking.

"We tasted the food. We cooked like I cook," Prater says. "Then, we weren't supposed to put on seasonings or put anything in it. I don't go for that."

When illness, death or tragedy befell the community, Prater and the other members of the lunchroom staff would swing into action, preparing meals for bereaved families. Every Thanksgiving, the school would host families for a traditional meal. "It was a lot of work, but I enjoyed seeing the parents come into the school," Prater says. "I never cared about extra work as long as it helped us with the kids."

Carrie Prater used an industrial-sized mixer to make her famous yeast rolls.



After her retirement, the city of West Liberty has declared May 31 to be Carrie D. Prater Day. And now "George," the Chevy Nova she has driven since buying it new in 1974, is logging a lot fewer miles.

Former Ezel students have posted their memories of her on social media, many recalling her tasty yeast rolls and her kind smile.

"I see some of them at the store and at church, and they'll come hug me and tell me they miss me," Prater says of the students. "I miss them, too." 📧





# HEALTHY MAKES HAPPY

## How to keep children active during cold months

BY JEN CALHOUN

**W**hen the winter months roll around, spirits can drop with the temperatures, even for the youngest and liveliest among us. Wet weather and freezing temperatures can limit children's playtime and send parents into a stress spiral.

But it doesn't have to be that way, says Wendy Lykins-Frederick, an advanced practice registered nurse at Appalachian Regional Healthcare's Morgan County Clinic and a mother of three young children. "Kids need at least 60 minutes of physical activity per day, regardless of the weather," she says.

While it might be challenging to stay active when it feels better to burrow under blankets, hibernation is not so good for humans, she says.

### PLAYTIME

The first step is to bundle up, get outside and play. Whether it's a game of tag, a scavenger hunt, a bike ride or hide-and-seek, nothing beats outdoor playtime for physical, emotional and mental health.

Lykins-Frederick says all children need playtime — and plenty of it — to keep their brains and bodies working at their best. To encourage and stimulate movement, children who are infants to 11 months old need short periods of physical activity several times per day, along with some supervised tummy time — placing a baby on his or her stomach.

"When kids get enough active play, there is a marked improvement in their cognitive abilities, academic behavior and overall attitude," she says.

One- to 4-year-olds need about 60 minutes of structured play daily and several hours of nonstructured physical play. In fact, they shouldn't stay sedentary longer than 60 minutes at a time unless they're sleeping.

After the age of 5, children continue to need at least an hour of structured

playtime, including bursts of moderate to vigorous activity, Lykins-Frederick says.

### INTERNET ACTIVITY

When parents need to enlist screen time to engage their children, the internet offers plenty of options for getting fit. "Games that encourage physical activity like 'Wii Sports,' 'Dance Dance Revolution' and 'Pokemon Go' are good solutions," Lykins-Frederick says. "There's also plenty of activity sites on YouTube for workouts and skill development. In addition, there's 'GoNoodle,' a free online game that gets kids moving."

Luckily for Mountain Telephone internet subscribers, speeds are high and reliability is strong, making it easy for parents to download apps and games and stream videos that keep children active.

But whatever you do, just do it, Lykins-Frederick says. The same goes for adults.

"A parent or caregiver is a child's main role model," she says. "So, it's important to teach your children healthy habits." [🔗](#)

# RELEASE YOUR INNER *Fashionista*

The latest styles are only a few clicks away

BY PATRICK SMITH

Sometimes it's tough to find the latest designer clothes around town. And remember the last time you hit the mall? It was miles away, you couldn't find anything that matched your style, and you searched endlessly to find your size. If that scenario rings a bell, it's time for an online fashion subscription. You'll get your perfect style and fit every time without the drive.

The latest fashion trends you see online and in magazines can be delivered to your doorstep with no hassle. And if you don't like what came your way in the latest shipment, relax. Most of the time you can return or exchange it. It's stress-free shopping.

Whether you live in a fashion capital like New York City or a rural town that barely makes it onto a map, the power of a high-speed internet connection means you can always dress to impress.

In the past two issues, we featured several food and pet subscription services — look back if you missed it. If you're curious about other online subscriptions out there, don't wait on us. Check them out for yourself. Everything from hot sauces to geeky toys and candles to kids' school kits is shipping out daily.

HERE ARE A FEW OF OUR FAVORITE ONLINE FASHION SUBSCRIPTION SERVICES:



Typically  
\$100+  
per box

## TRUNK CLUB

Operated by Nordstrom, Trunk Club provides high-quality fashion without the struggle of putting together an impeccably matched outfit. Professional stylists for men and women fill your box with everything you need: shirts, earrings, belts, jackets, shoes, sunglasses, handbags and more. You choose your style, price range and frequency, and they do the hard work for you.



Typically  
\$100+  
per box

## STITCH FIX

Stitch Fix brings you five hand-selected clothing items that match your personal style profile in every box. There's no subscription required, and you'll find a mix of familiar brand names, along with new ones, to keep you up to date with the most popular trends for men and women. The service includes free returns and has options for children.



As low as  
\$59  
per box

## YOGA CLUB

Honestly, what's more comfortable than yoga pants? Keep up with the newest styles by ordering through Yoga Club. You'll save up to 60 percent off retail prices. From just pants to full outfits for your workout, Yoga Club keeps you feeling stylish and comfortable for your next trip to the gym.



Typically  
\$100+  
per box

## RACHEL ZOE

Ladies, start planning your seasonal wardrobe around Rachel Zoe's Box of Style. With a new shipment of several items each quarter, Rachel Zoe brings you everything you need to stay on the cutting edge of sophistication and glamour. A typical box may include a necklace, fragrance, makeup and beauty items, wallet clutch, and more.

\*Note: Items from Rachel Zoe cannot be returned. [👉](#)

# GET SMART

The latest connected devices supercharge your home

The holidays are the perfect time to stock up and make your home "smarter" with a variety of devices that allow you to automate and remotely control door locks, lights, household systems and more.

**SMART HUB:** You can control many smart devices through individual phone apps, but to truly take advantage of a smart home setup, you need a hub. While some hubs run everything through an easy-to-use app — such as the Wink Hub, \$69 — there's something cool about controlling your devices with voice commands through an Apple HomePod, \$349; Google Home, \$129; or Amazon Echo, \$99.99.

The hub you choose will determine the other smart gadgets you buy since there are competing communication standards.



**SMART LIGHTS:** If you want remotely controlled outdoor Christmas lights, the easiest solution is to connect them to something like the iHome iSP100 Outdoor SmartPlug, \$39.99. The plug connects through your Wi-Fi network, is compatible with all digital assistants and is resistant to dirt, dust and rain. If you have an Echo, the company Light Rhapsody makes indoor holiday lights, \$59.99, that use Alexa to set different colors, add effects, change brightness, dance to music and turn the lights on or off.



Here are five gadgets that can make your life around the house easier — or at least more fun. Remember, the smart home experience is better with a high-speed broadband connection.



**SMART THERMOSTAT:** A smart thermostat is not only handy — the devices are capable of learning your routine and effectively program themselves — but it can help you save money by heating and cooling your home more efficiently. One of the most popular options is the Nest thermostat, which starts at \$169. With its new temperature sensors, which can be placed in different rooms, you can tell the thermostat a specific area of the home, such as the baby's room or the kitchen, to maintain a specific temperature.

**SMART LOCK:** The many features that smart locks offer include unlocking with your phone, responding to voice commands and linking to other devices, such as unlocking the door if the smoke detector goes off. The new Kwikset Kevo, \$314 for all features, also adds a neat new option. To open your door, you just need to touch the lock — even with the side of your finger or your elbow. It's a lifesaver if you're juggling kids or some last-minute gifts.



**SMART TOY:** Speaking of gifts, how about the DropMix Music Gaming System, \$69.99, by Harmonix, the people who created "Rock Band." The DropMix Music Gaming System is played by placing color-coded cards on the board and building musical tracks using elements from songs. The game comes with 60 cards with music by popular artists, and more packs are available in different genres, including hip-hop and rock. 🎮



# CAN YOU GIG IT?

## NTCA names Mountain Telephone a 'Certified Gig-Capable Provider'

BY JEN CALHOUN

**W**endy Whitt has no idea what it means for Mountain Telephone to be certified as a gig-capable provider by NTCA–The Rural Broadband Association. And like many of us, the office manager for St. Claire Family Medicine–Frenchburg doesn't really know what a "gig" is.

What she does know is that Mountain Telephone's gig internet service at her office is lightning-fast, super-reliable and capable of moving large amounts of data with no interruptions. "All our medical records are electronic," Whitt says. "That means we need fast internet so we can take care of our patients. We can even send patients' prescriptions electronically to their pharmacies anywhere in the United States."

### GIG-A-WHAT?

A gig refers to the speed of the internet connection. It means that information can be downloaded at 1 gigabit per second, or 1,000 megabits per second. It's an ultra-high-speed internet service not offered in many parts of the country, which gives Mountain Telephone customers and the region an edge. The NTCA certification offers an added incentive to the many businesses and industries looking for that kind of elite technological capability to set up operations in Mountain's service area.

"From an economic standpoint, it means that Mountain Telephone is extremely capable and offers the most progressive broadband service to any large businesses or industries that may locate within Elliott, Menifee, Morgan and Wolfe counties," says Shayne Ison, general manager at Mountain Telephone. "To our cooperative members, gig certification is reassurance that they can always depend on Mountain Telephone to provide the best services technology has to offer right here at home."

And while Mountain Telephone has been equipped to offer gig service to some customers for several years, the cooperative was able to apply for the NTCA gig certification after completing its most recent expansion of the network.

"To be able to attach this gig-certified seal to our logo and publications advertises to future entrepreneurs and businesses that they are moving into an area that can reach out to all parts of the world," Ison says. "It basically lets people know that they can move their products via Mountain Telephone's spectacular internet service."

### MULTIPLE DEVICES? NO PROBLEM.

For life insurance representatives like James and Brittany Smith, Mountain Telephone's gig service means that working from their home in Campton is just as easy as working from their office in Hazard — without the hourlong commute.



**ALL YOU NEED**

What does it mean to be a gig-capable provider? Yes, it means we have one of the fastest internet networks in the country. But more than that, it means you have access to all the speed and reliability you need to learn, play, grow, build and enjoy the connected life you want to live.

“We can have all our computers and our phones up at the same time,” James Smith says. “But we also use it to power our TV and stream Netflix and all that. It’s just super-convenient and handy for us, and it allows us to take care of some things here without running up a large data bill.”

The signal strength and speed at their home is so strong that their company was able to install all its software remotely through the couple’s home network, James Smith says. “I didn’t even have to take our computers to the office to have it done there,” he says.

But like Whitt, the Smiths didn’t realize they were sitting on a speed of service not offered in many parts of the country. “We didn’t realize how lucky we were,” he says with a laugh. “I’ve lived in two or three different counties in Kentucky, and we’ve had other internet providers. But since they installed this, it has been the most reliable service that we have ever had. I mean, it’s always up. If it’s been down, except for interruptions from electricity, I’m not aware of it. It’s always geared up and ready to go.” 📞



## FASTER INTERNET STARTS WITH A PHONE CALL

As families and businesses increase their internet usage for connecting smart homes, sending large files and streaming media, they don't always realize that they may need a bigger internet package to boost their speed and reliability and eliminate interruptions. If you're interested in increasing your internet speed, call Mountain Telephone at 606-743-3121 to discuss your options. You can also check out the company's website at [mrtc.com](http://mrtc.com) and click on "Our Services" at the top of the home page. Choose "Internet" from the drop-down menu. While 1-gig speed is great for families and businesses using multiple devices, Mountain offers an internet package for every type of user. Call today to find out what's right for you.



# Stuffed for the holidays

## Enjoy a classic side dish

**Y**ou could say Mindy Merrell is an expert when it comes to making holiday dressing. Not only is it one of her favorite side dishes during the season, but she also worked for a dozen years as the director of culinary services for Martha White's public relations company. One of her responsibilities was working in the test kitchen to create new recipes using the company's cornbread mix.

"It was fun. I love test kitchen creativity and working within parameters," she says. "Why don't we make dressing more often? It's so delicious and easy to make ahead."

"Traditionally, many families in the South had chicken and dressing for Sunday dinner, so it wasn't just relegated to the holidays. In fact, we were always reminding folks that cornbread dressing is a wonderful side dish for any meat."

Merrell is such a fan of dressing that she actually considers turkey the side dish. "Dressing is an economical vehicle for making something wonderful with leftovers and stretching the menu," she says. "And there's so much room for creativity. I know lots of families must have the same recipes for the holidays, but not me. I'm always tinkering and using what's on hand or what sounds fun at the moment."

And here's a word of advice: "Do not use those bags of

crumbs," she says. "And I don't like my dressing sweet, so there's no using a sweet cornbread mix or putting sugar in the batter."

Follow the instructions on a bag of any Southern, self-rising cornmeal mix and make a pan of real cornbread. Everyone living in the South should absolutely know how to do this.

"I've heard that an iron skillet is one of the most popular wedding gifts now, so there's no excuse for young folks not knowing how to make it."

"Also, whenever we have leftover cornbread, I just put it in a bag in the freezer and use these leftovers for a pan of dressing later. I do the same with biscuits and any other kind of bread. They all work. It just depends on which you like."

Merrell says it's OK to use more than one type of bread in a bowl of stuffing and that adding wheat bread gives it a softer texture. Once you've



## More on Mindy ...

In 2014, Mindy Merrell was the winner of TV Food Network's popular cooking show "Chopped." She and her husband, R.B. Quinn, are both food writers in Nashville. You can follow them on their recipe website: [www.rbandmindy.com](http://www.rbandmindy.com).

combined the bread, decide on the seasonings.

"Traditionally, that would be lots of sauteed celery, onions and sage," she says. "Moisten it with broth and beaten eggs to hold it together, bake and that's it. You can't get any easier than that, so why overdo?"



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## MINDY MERRELL'S FAVORITE STUFFING

- 1 1/2 sticks butter, divided
- 2 cups chopped onion
- 2 cups chopped celery
- 5 to 6 cups crumbled cornbread from a skillet of cornbread made with 2 cups self-rising cornmeal mix or self-rising cornmeal
- 3 cups stale, toasted or fresh bread cubes. Regular bread helps hold the dressing together and gives it a softer texture. You can also use leftover biscuits. A handful of fresh chopped parsley
- Other fresh herbs as you like — fresh chopped sage, marjoram, thyme and/or rosemary. If you go with dried herbs, use about 1 teaspoon each of rubbed sage, marjoram, thyme and/or rosemary.
- A generous amount of black pepper
- 3 to 4 cups chicken or turkey broth, homemade or canned
- 2 eggs, beaten

Melt 1 stick of the butter in a large skillet. Cook the onions and celery in the butter over medium heat until soft and caramelized, about 20 minutes.

Combine the crumbled cornbread and bread cubes in a large mixing bowl. Stir in the cooked vegetables, parsley, herbs and black pepper. Blend well. Taste it before you add the eggs and broth to test for seasonings. Stir in the broth and eggs. Add enough broth so that the mixture is moist, but not soupy.

Grease a 9-by-13-inch baking pan with 1-2 tablespoons of the remaining butter. Pour the dressing into the prepared dish. Dot with the remaining butter.

Bake the dressing right away, or cover and refrigerate overnight and cook the next day. Cover lightly with foil and bake in an oven heated to 375 F. Baking time



will vary — if baked right away it should take about 45 minutes. If it's just out of the refrigerator, it will take closer to an hour. If you have other things in the oven, a lower temperature won't matter. Just make sure you brown at the end by removing the foil during the last 15 minutes for a nice crispy brown top.

To be sure the dressing is cooked through, check the internal temperature with an instant-read thermometer. It should read at least 165 F.

Leftovers reheat well in the microwave or oven. Or, crisp them up in an iron skillet for breakfast and serve with runny eggs! 🍳

### Dressing add-ins

Mindy Merrell says dressing is one of those dishes that opens itself up to versatility. "It's a blank canvas, so change it up to match the theme of your menu," she says.

- Italian — Add a pound of cooked and crumbled Italian sausage. Add some rosemary, red bell pepper and pine nuts.
- Sausage, apple and pecan — Add a finely chopped apple, 1 pound of cooked and crumbled sausage, and 1 cup of toasted pecans to the mix.
- Leek and country ham — Use leeks instead of onions and add bits of country ham.
- Clams or oysters — Add fresh chopped clams or oysters to the mix and a sautéed green bell pepper.



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