



Mountain Telephone

BROADBAND:
HELPING YOU SERVE



NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2020

CONNECTION

CARRYING THE WORD

Churches use
internet for good



THE PERFECT FIT

Finding the right MTTV
plan to suit your needs

SERVICE AND SOLACE

Broadband powers
community outreach



By SHIRLEY BLOOMFIELD, CEO
NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association

Being thankful for broadband in 2020

When you're making your list of things to be thankful for this season, make room for this: "access to broadband from a reliable, community-based provider." This year has taught us many things, one being that broadband is vital to so many areas of our lives — work, school, health and more.

I recently spoke with a journalist who has been covering the gaps in broadband connectivity across our country. She lives in a beautiful community in the mountains of Vermont and is lucky to be able to download emails — forget anything like streaming or VPN access. She has learned from working with NTCA and some of our members that building broadband is not a cheap proposition. There are physical hurdles (Vermont mountains?) that make the task even more formidable.

Several months into a remote world, her office is closed and her options for connectivity are limited. She joins the ranks of local school kids in nearby fast-food parking lots trying to complete their homework while she tries to upload her stories. In the most prosperous country in the world, in 2020, she has realized the hard way that having a broadband connection has become a lifeline and a necessity — and that speed and capacity actually do matter.

If you are holding this magazine, you are served by a community-based provider committed to keeping you connected. And that's a reason to be thankful! 📶



Wired up Hot spots rely on fast internet networks

Connecting rural communities to reliable broadband networks represents a vital challenge for not only individual states but also the nation as a whole. Jobs, education, health care and more increasingly rely on fast internet access.

As state and national policymakers consider strategies to expand broadband networks, weighing the benefits of an often misunderstood technology might prove beneficial.

Hot spots are described by NTCA–The Rural Broadband Association as wireless on-ramps to the internet that cover a small area. Many consumers and policymakers associate hot spot technology with cellular phones, because many phones have the capability of becoming hot spots to serve as gateways to the internet for other devices.

NTCA, however, notes that these mobile connections represent only one form of hot spot. A fixed hot spot is created by use of a Wi-Fi router connected to a physical internet source such as a fiber optic network. These hot spots are common in homes, coffee shops, offices and more. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many rural telcos used this technology to provide free Wi-Fi connections at schools, churches and public spaces.

The important point to remember is that wireless connections do ultimately need wires. Fast broadband networks make these Wi-Fi-based hot spots possible, because those wired links provide the final connections to the internet.

NTCA emphasizes it's important for policymakers to remember that the term "hot spot" is associated with far more than mobile phones. Robust rural broadband networks make Wi-Fi-based hot spots possible, bringing their power and convenience to your homes, businesses and more. 📶

The 2020 gift guide



\$200



Senstroke

Giving that budding Buddy Rich in your household a full-size drum kit is the fastest way to put yourself on the outs with your neighbors and less-than-appreciative family members. So, the Senstroke is a great gift for everyone. The Bluetooth sensors attach to drumsticks, as well as to your feet, allowing you to mimic a bass drum and hi-hat. Connect to a free app to play and practice drums on most surfaces. The app includes a learning mode for beginners and can also record, playback and export your performance in MIDI format. Complete kit: \$280. Essential kit: \$200.



\$59.99

SHOP FOR THE TECH THAT'S SURE TO PLEASE

Getting the right holiday gift for that special person in your life can be difficult. But whether they're into technology, music, sports or "Star Wars," our gift guide has something for everyone on your list. 📺

The CrazyCap



\$69.99



The CrazyCap uses ultraviolet light to kill germs inside your water bottle. This means you never have to worry about a smelly bottle again, even if you leave it overnight in your gym bag. It self-cleans every four hours. And forget about running low on water during a hike. The manufacturer claims you can safely disinfect any debris-free water, so you can refill your bottle from rivers, lakes or streams. The rechargeable cap can also disinfect surfaces or objects, such as your smartphone or keys. CrazyCap can be purchased with its bottle or separately, and it fits most cola-style bottles. The company donates 5% of every sale to water.org, a group that helps people around the world have access to clean water. The CrazyCap with 17-ounce bottle: \$69.99.



Gadget Discovery Club

\$96

For year-round giving to that tech junkie in your family, you may consider getting him or her a subscription to the Gadget Discovery Club. Every month, the service mails a new mystery gadget for you to discover upon opening the box. The promise from the company is that you will receive a high-quality item at a cheaper price than retail, with a one-year guarantee and a 30-day return period. Don't expect to get an iPhone, but past deliveries have included gadgets such as fitness trackers, Bluetooth speakers and wireless earphones. Subscriptions range from \$96 for three months to \$276 for 12 months.



The Child Animatronic Edition

The creators of the hit Disney+ show "The Mandalorian" want you to call him The Child, while the internet knows him as Baby Yoda. Whatever his name is, he is undeniably adorable and ready to come home for the holidays. The Child Animatronic Edition giggles, babbles and makes Force effect sounds. It also features motorized movements, including eyes that open and close and ears that move back and forth. The Child even lifts his arm as he prepares to use the Force, after which he may need a "Force nap." Demand will be high, so you may need an intergalactic bounty hunter to snatch one up or be quick on the draw at your favorite online retailer. \$59.99 MSRP.

Thank you to ‘the helpers’

When times are tough, it’s probably a good time to go back to one of America’s most respected and revered voices: Mr. Rogers. And, let’s face it. We’ve had some tough times in 2020.



SHAYNE ISON
General Manager

I’m not even exactly sure what to call Fred Rogers. He was more than a TV personality. To multiple generations of Americans from all backgrounds, he became a teacher, guru, attitude coach, theologian and maybe even a long-distance friend.

And while he’s famous for asking people to be his neighbor or telling people he likes them “just the way they are,” this year I believe one of his messages rings through especially strong.

Throughout his time on PBS and especially in his appearances after the Sept. 11 attacks of 2001, he would remind viewers of what his mother told him to do in a bad situation: to look for the helpers.

Even though he may have meant it for children, I think it’s also pretty sound advice for us grown-ups. In times when things seem out of control and we feel helpless, we can often look at the situation and focus on those trying to help. Ideally, I think we try to become a helper if we can. In those situations when we can’t help, focusing on the people in need will almost always add order to how we feel.

This year has had no shortage of troubling events, but with that, we can hopefully recognize all the people doing what they can to make situations better. Where there were wildfires in Oregon and California, there were thousands of firefighters doing their part to help. When devastating hurricanes slammed into the Gulf Coast, emergency personnel and aid organizations rushed in to assist those affected by the storms.

Since the pandemic hit, doctors, nurses and scientists have worked to study it, limit the spread and find a vaccine. Certainly on the list of helpers has to be our local educators, and I would be remiss if I didn’t recognize them for their efforts to essentially reinvent school this year.

I would humbly suggest that in our own way, many of the community-based internet providers like Mountain Telephone around the country have been among the helpers as we’ve connected or upgraded the services to people in our neighborhoods who needed broadband to work or attend school online.

Even when we face struggles as a nation, as a state or as a local community, I believe there will always be helpers who work hard to serve where they can.

In this issue, we highlight some of those helpers and look at how they use technology to strengthen their mission. Whether through fundraising, recruiting volunteers, connecting with similar organizations or raising awareness of their causes, dozens of organizations in our region alone use broadband to do great work in serving their communities.

As we move into what may be a very different kind of holiday season, may we all pause to give thanks for those helpers. 📧

The Mountain Telephone Connection is a bimonthly newsletter published by Mountain Rural Telephone Cooperative, © 2020. 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.

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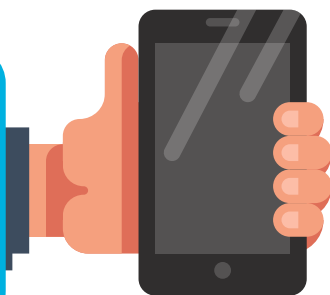
WORDSOUTH
A CONTENT MARKETING COMPANY

On the Cover:



Bethel Baptist in Frenchburg uses its Mountain Telephone internet connection to broadcast sermons. See story Page 12.

**HEY
TELEMARKETERS:**



DO NOT CALL!

**It's easy to add your number to the
Do Not Call Registry.**

**Register online at
www.donotcall.gov**

or call 888-382-1222. For TTY, call 866-290-4236.

You must call from the telephone number you wish to register.



Holiday closings

Mountain Telephone offices will be closed on the following days:

Veterans Day, Nov. 11 | Thanksgiving, Nov. 26-27

Christmas Eve, Dec. 24 — Close at noon

Christmas Day, Dec. 25

WHAT IS CPNI?

A special notice regarding your account information

Mountain Telephone knows the importance of privacy to its members. Federal law requires telecommunications companies to explain the use and disclosure of information gathered during the course of providing service.

WHAT KIND OF INFORMATION?

Customer Proprietary Network Information, or CPNI, are details such as the calling features, options and plans to which you subscribe; billing information; and the identity of the long-distance carrier you have chosen. You have the right, and Mountain Telephone has the duty under federal law, to preserve the confidentiality of this information.

HOW IS THIS INFORMATION USED?

We only use CPNI to let you know about changes in services you currently buy from us. With your permission, we may use your CPNI to tell you about other services that may interest you. We will never share your CPNI information with third parties unless required by law.

HOW DO I PROTECT MY CPNI?

Mountain Telephone has tools in place to protect your CPNI information, including passwords. Mountain Telephone is adamant in protecting the privacy of our members, utilizing password-protected accounts to validate that we are speaking with the person authorized on each account.

If you have not set up a password, please call the business office at 606-743-3121.



Visitors to Rock City's Enchanted Garden of Lights in Lookout Mountain, Georgia, are greeted with traditional holiday cheer.



Tis the time for Christmas lights, and cities around the South tend to take the holidays to a whole 'nother level, brightening the season and lighting up the town.

It's time for brightly lit trees, warm cider simmering on the stove and scenting the house, and steam rising from mugs of hot chocolate. And it's time to revel in the joy of the Christmas season with family, friends and lots of colorful displays of light.

Rock City's Enchanted Garden of Lights, now in its 26th year and named a Top 20 Event for 2019 by the Southeast Tourism Society, is just that — enchanting. There are more than 30 holiday scenes and a million-plus LED lights — more than ever before. As the lights brighten the night, Rock City Gardens' daytime splendor is transformed into a fantasyland of brilliant wonder.

For many, a trip to Rock City atop Lookout Mountain is a holiday tradition. For others, it will be a new experience. For all, it offers popular attractions preserved from years past, along with new adventures through the lights.

There are four areas that light up each Christmas season: Yule Town; Magic Forest; North Pole Village, where Santa and Mrs. Claus live and work with their magical elves; and the popular Arctic Kingdom, which has a brand-new look this year, offering one of the world's first of its kind — walk-through Christmas trees.

FESTIVALS *of* LIGHT

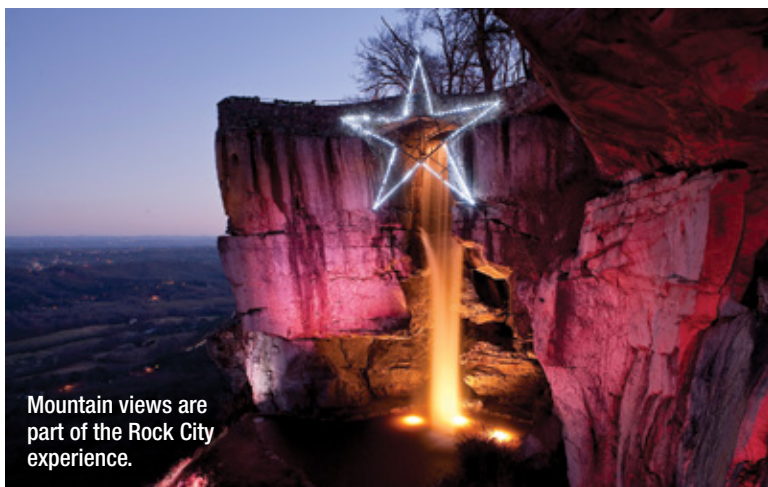
Have a merry time

Also new this year are the fashions on Inara the Ice Queen and Jack Frost. They will be decked out in colorful, new garments to prepare them for a journey through a stunning display of ice crystals in the Arctic Kingdom with a design reminiscent of the aurora borealis lights. Within this area of the Enchanted Garden of Lights is the Glacier Grotto, which offers a firepit to warm visitors passing through. Treats to warm the body and soul are also found at the North Pole Lodge, where kids of all ages can enjoy gingerbread cookie decorating and sipping hot cocoa while enjoying live music.

But that's not all. Other presents Rock City offers for the season include the chance to enjoy dinner with Santa, storytimes with Mrs. Claus, pictures with Santa and greetings from Jack Frost, Inara the Ice Queen and other characters roaming through the Enchanted Garden of Lights. 📷



Whimsical light displays are part of a holiday stroll through Georgia's Rock City.



Mountain views are part of the Rock City experience.

Rock City Enchanted Garden of Lights

Nov. 20-Jan. 2, 4-9 p.m. (closed Christmas Eve)

Rock City Gardens, 1400 Patten Road, Lookout Mountain, Georgia

For information on special events and deals on weekday pricing during the holiday season, visit www.seerockcity.com/lights.

Lights around the South

Holiday lights shine all around the South this season. Here's a look at some in your area.

• Magic Christmas in Lights

Bellingrath Gardens, Theodore, Alabama

Take a tour through the gardens and become illuminated with the more than 3 million lights sparkling throughout the gardens every Christmas. It's a holiday event that has become a tradition along the Gulf Coast. www.bellingrath.org

• Natchitoches Festival of Lights

Natchitoches, Louisiana

The city's historic district lights up with holiday spirit as hundreds of thousands visit annually for fireworks, parades, plays, historic tours and the charm of the oldest community in Louisiana. More than 300,000 lights drape the cobblestone streets decorated with garlands of greens. www.natchitocheschristmas.com

• Southern Lights Holiday Festival

Kentucky Horse Park, Lexington, Kentucky

Santa on horseback outlined with lights and other scenes are part of the 3-mile driving tour of the Kentucky Horse Park that attracts more than 120,000 visitors each year. www.kyhorsepark.com

• Anderson Christmas Lights

Anderson, South Carolina

Old Man Winter, Santa Claus, the Anderson Express and a salute to the military are among the 160 displays and 3.5 million lights that brighten the night at Anderson Christmas Lights. Warm up by the fire, roast some marshmallows, sing some Christmas songs and get into the holiday spirit. andersonchristmaslights.org

• Dollywood's Smoky Mountain Christmas

Pigeon Forge, Tennessee

The mountains come alive with color and cheer as Dolly's crew turns on the lights — 4 million of them — throughout the park. They are a backdrop for the amazing Parade of Many Colors and other events, including live shows with a holiday theme, such as the popular "Christmas in the Smokies." www.dollywood.com

• Galaxy of Lights

Huntsville, Alabama

The Huntsville Botanical Garden is all decked out in holiday finery as the annual Galaxy of Lights turns the gardens into a fantasyland of lights and color. It's a driving tour that takes you past nearly 200 animated displays, from those with holiday themes to dinosaurs and nursery rhyme characters for the kids. Special Galaxy of Lights Walking Nights are also available. Walk through snow falling inside a twinkling icicle forest, visit with Santa and enjoy hot chocolate along the way. www.hsvbg.org

Finding the right fit

MTTV packages for everyone

Mountain Telephone TV offers packages to suit every family's needs, ranging from Basic to Expanded to Digital. Which one is right for you?

BASIC PLAN: TV BEFORE BED

For Larissa and Jacob Johnson and their family, the Basic plan made the most sense. With three sons and plenty of work to be done on their small farm, TV wasn't always their favorite way to relax. "We didn't have a cable package until about a year ago," Larissa Johnson says. "We'd just been streaming Netflix or seeing what we could find on the computer."

But after the Johnsons moved into their new house, they decided to add the Basic MTTV package for a little entertainment and some local news. The Basic plan offers more than 30 channels with a set-top box. "My husband likes some of the MeTV with the reruns of 'Gomer Pyle' and 'The Andy Griffith Show,'" she says. "I don't really watch too much TV, but I like to know if there's going to be bad weather or if there's some information we need."



From left are Larissa Johnson with her son, John Solomon; her husband, John Jacob; and their sons, Jacob and Jeremiah.

EXPANDED PLAN: HOOP DREAMS

Basic wouldn't cut it for Wolfe County resident Jennifer Smith's sports-fanatic family. If there's one thing they won't live without, it's basketball. Whether they're watching their beloved University of Kentucky Wildcats or Wolfe County High School games, the Smiths are all in.

So, when it came to choosing an MTTV package, Smith and her family went with the Expanded plan. It offered everything they needed to watch their Wildcats and to make sure they caught the latest high school sports action. Expanded plans provide more than 145 channels.

"My daughters have been very active in sports, especially basketball," Smith says. "We like being able to see and record their high school basketball games from the local channel, and we need to make sure we have our UK basketball. As long as we've got those things, we're good when it comes to TV."

Smith was also able to record the 2020 high school graduation of her middle daughter, Hailey, when the ceremony aired on their local MTTV station, so their entire extended family could watch it together. "These were very important moments that were aired, and it was really special for us," Smith says.

DIGITAL MTTV

The Digital option gives families all the flexibility they need. Whether you're interested in sports, movies, news, lifestyle television or anything else under the sun, the Digital MTTV package has you covered with more than 250 channels. 📺



Getting the most out of your TV experience

Every family is different, and Mountain Telephone knows it. MTTV packages come in different sizes to suit everyone's needs. For more information, visit our website at mrtc.com or call us at 606-743-3121 or 800-939-3121. Ask about our holiday specials.

Basic MTTV

- 30+ channels including locals
- One set-top box, plus \$4.95 per additional box
- All channels available in HD are free

Expanded MTTV

- 145 channels including locals and music
- One set-top box, plus \$4.95 per additional box
- All channels available in HD are free

Digital MTTV

- 250+ channels including locals, music and major networks
- One set-top box, plus \$4.95 per additional box
- All channels available in HD are free



SAY WHAT?

Making sense of broadband terms

Ever get tired of trying to decipher what techies are talking about? This convenient glossary of broadband terms might help.

- **Gbps** — Gigabits per second, a standard of measurement for very fast internet that can download or upload billions of bits of data per second. We measure most internet connections in Mbps, which is megabits per second. But fiber connections can be significantly faster, and we measure them in Gbps instead.
- **“The Gig”** — Often describes internet services that can provide at least 1 Gbps of speed. This is an extremely high-speed connection for both homes and businesses.
- **Mbps** — Megabits per second, a standard of measurement that describes how many bits of data your internet connection can upload or download per second. The higher the number, the faster you can upload or download content online.
- **The Cloud** — Refers to the fact that some data, software and services are located on internet servers rather than your individual device. When something is in “the cloud” instead of on your computer, you can access it from any device with a mobile connection. Examples include your email account, Google Docs and online photo storage services.
- **Fiber** — The fastest, most reliable network infrastructure available. Strands of fiber, rather than cable or copper, allow these networks to provide speeds of 1 Gbps and beyond.
- **Router** — A unit that connects the devices in your home to your internet connection and to one another. A router often functions with a modem, another device that brings the internet from our network into your home.
- **Wi-Fi** — The technology that makes wireless internet possible. Because Wi-Fi uses radio waves to transmit your internet signal, you no longer have to plug your devices into an Ethernet cable to get online access.
- **Streaming** — Downloading media a few seconds at a time so that you can enjoy a podcast, music or video even as it downloads. This enables you to enjoy live video in real time and to consume media without having to fully download it to your device first.
- **Bits and Bytes** — Units of measurement for data. Because bits and bytes are so small, you’ll usually see data measured in megabits (Mb) or megabytes (MB), which is 1,000 bits or bytes, respectively. Bytes are used to measure file size — a 10MB file on your computer, for example — while bits are used to measure the speed of your connection, such as 100 megabits per second (Mbps). Another difference between the two involves their size: a bit is about one-eighth the size of a byte.
- **Bandwidth** — The capacity your internet connection has for uploading or downloading data. You can think of this like a pipe that carries water. A large pipe can move big quantities of water much more quickly than a small straw can. Similarly, increasing your internet bandwidth enables you to upload and download data more quickly.
- **Upload and Download Speeds** — Measured in Mbps or Gbps, this tells you how fast you can upload data, such as posting a photo or video to social media, or download data, such as loading a website or streaming video or music. Because most people download more than they upload, some internet packages make the most of limited bandwidth by designating more space for downloading than uploading. For example, 200/10 Mbps of internet speed refers to 200 Mbps for downloading data and 10 Mbps for uploading data. 🗨️



CHOWGIRLS

Making a change

High-speed connections power service organizations across the country



Chowgirls Killer Catering in Minneapolis leveraged online tools to better serve their community.

Story by DREW WOOLLEY

In March 2020, Chowgirls Killer Catering in Minneapolis was busy preparing for its Sweet 16 party, complete with signature food and a swing band. Like many events in the early days of the coronavirus pandemic, the celebration was ultimately called off. The next day, while watching Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz recommend against large gatherings across the state, it occurred to co-owner and CEO Heidi Andermack that one canceled party was the least of her problems.

“We had a big leadership meeting about what to do, because all our events were canceling,” she says. “Our chef, who had been working with Second Harvest Heartland, thought of calling them to see what they were going to do. We would have a big empty kitchen, so maybe we could work with them.”

As service organizations, charities and churches throughout the nation learned,

creating connections to serve their communities meant relying more on online tools, broadband access and digital communication. They learned to talk, collaborate and succeed with the help of technology.

Chowgirls had first partnered with Second Harvest Heartland, a member of the Feeding America network of food banks, on a food rescue program around the 2018 Super Bowl. The two groups met once again and created the Minnesota Central Kitchen to feed families in need.

Chowgirls is now one of eight kitchens cooking for Minnesota Central Kitchen, preparing 30,000 meals weekly for hungry populations in the Twin Cities area. Large-scale donors such as restaurants, grocery stores and food distributors contribute ingredients, which are managed using Feeding America’s MealConnect app.



Chowgirls prepared 30,000 meals weekly.

“It’s a lot of meals to keep track of, so our high-speed internet has been pretty key to keeping it all coordinated,” Andermack says. “We also organize all of our meals and what is available using Google Spreadsheets. We’re not just tracking our kitchen but tying together a whole network of kitchens.”



In Smithville, Tennessee, the Rev. Chad Ramsey of Smithville First Baptist Church used online tools to stay connected to members.

WORSHIP ON DEMAND

While the importance of online tools is nothing new to service organizations across the country, they have become all but essential over the last year. Rev. Chad Ramsey at Smithville First Baptist Church in Smithville, Tennessee, has relied on the ability to stream services online to reach parishioners who might find themselves homebound.

“Streaming is huge everywhere,” he says. “We see that in the media world with Netflix, Disney+ and all the streaming services. But the same is true for the church.”

Smithville FBC not only streams live services for parishioners who can’t make it to the church but also has its own studio for recording and uploading training videos for everyone from new members to those preparing for mission trips. With so many demands on the church’s internet service, Ramsey isn’t sure what they would do without a fiber connection.

“We saw where things were going in this world and knew that having that ability to connect with each other would be important, whether it’s sharing files, videos, streaming or uploading to social media,” he says. “People are so much more connected than they have been, and if you don’t have that consistent and quality connection, you’re going to be left behind.”

That approach has helped Smithville FBC build a church that appeals across generations, attracting millennials and seniors alike. And while their

preferences for how they worship may not break down as neatly as expected, the fiber connection provides the flexibility to meet everyone’s needs.

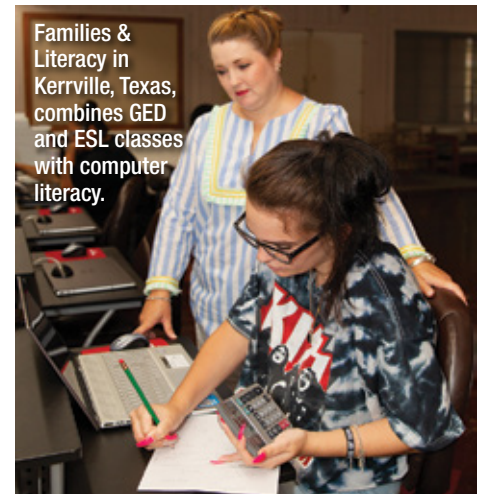
“You might see someone really young who wants things to be done the way they were decades ago, and then there are other people who are much older who want to know why we aren’t making the changes we need to be around for another 100 years,” says Ramsey. “That’s the challenge: Getting the focus not on style but the purpose. We’re here to serve God, not ourselves. That’s what makes us tick.”

DIGITAL LITERACY

At Families & Literacy in Kerrville, Texas, it’s opening doors to people’s futures that makes them tick. The organization serves adult learners throughout the community and inmates of the Kerr County Jail, helping them to earn their citizenship or GED or learn English as a second language.

While most of the classes Families & Literacy organizes take place in local churches or other off-campus locations, the in-office broadband connection has been particularly helpful in getting prospective students on the path to learning as quickly as possible. Not every student has access to a reliable internet connection at home, so the organization provides Chromebooks on-site so they can take placement tests and register for the appropriate classes.

Families & Literacy even offers an



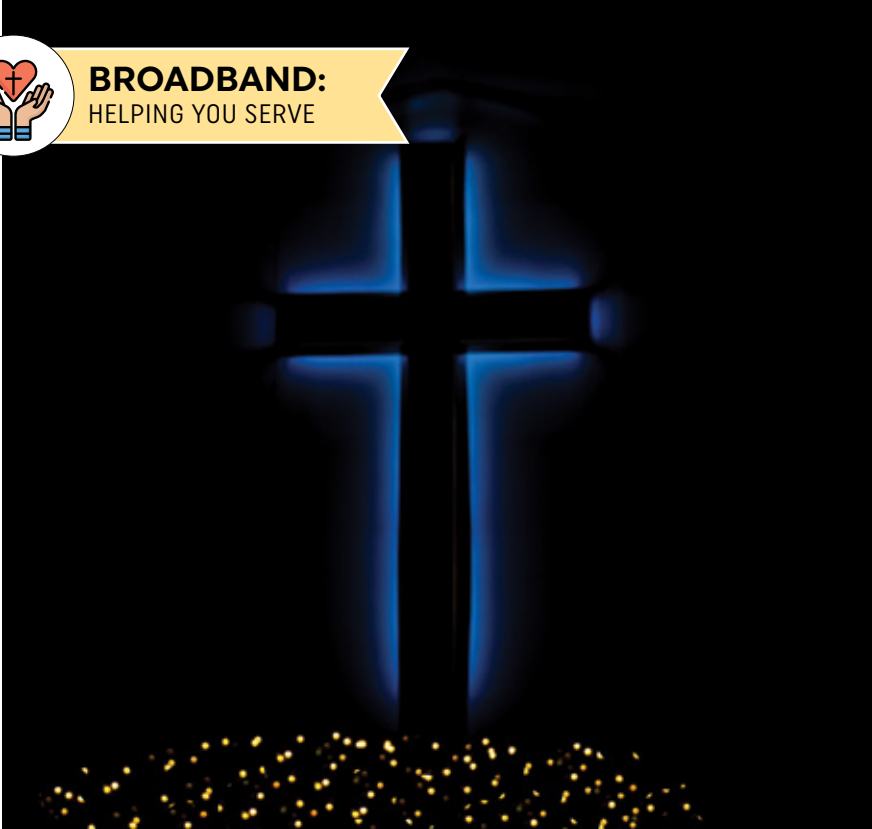
Families & Literacy in Kerrville, Texas, combines GED and ESL classes with computer literacy.

ESL class that incorporates computer skills, helping prepare students to be ready to communicate in the workplace and to better understand the tools they will be using day to day.

“Computer technology is prevalent in pretty much every job you go to now,” says Families & Literacy Executive Director Misty Kothe. “It’s important that not only can our students speak the language and do the work but they can also efficiently use that technology. It just makes them more employable in the future.”

Moving forward, broadband connections offer new opportunities for all three organizations. Families & Literacy aims to offer limited-size classes on location, outdoors if necessary, while Smithville FBC is eager to explore the possibilities of Bible study streaming services. Meanwhile, the Minnesota Central Kitchen project has proven so successful that Andermack now plans to incorporate its mission into Chowgirls’ regular operations even when the pandemic has passed.

“We have always had a mission of reducing food waste, but now we’re looking at it as hunger relief,” she says. “It’s become essential to our business, helping us give jobs to chefs who would otherwise be unemployed and keep the lights on at our facility. Sometimes you just need to support each other, and it comes back in ways you don’t expect.” 📺



GO TELL IT ON THE MOUNTAIN

Frenchburg church expands its reach with broadband

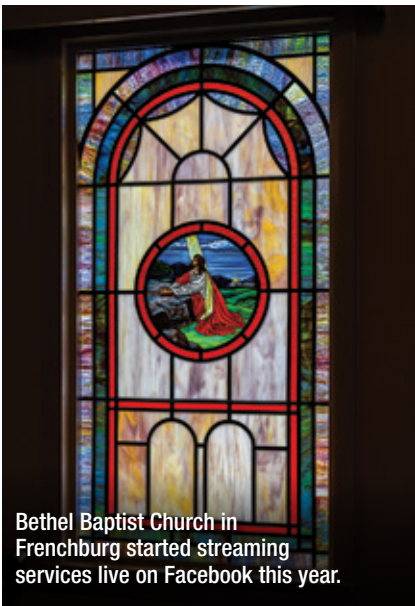
Spreading the good news has long been a struggle for churches, but Tim Rhodes is finding it a little easier these days. Rhodes, pastor of Bethel Baptist Church in Frenchburg, says his church has actually increased its following in recent months by streaming services live on Facebook, podcasting sermons and adding recorded services to YouTube and other broadcasts.

“When the coronavirus pandemic hit, we knew we had to make some changes,” Rhodes says. “Before that, we hadn’t really streamed our services much. We just needed to be more flexible and get the message out. So, while it was tough not being able to hold in-person services, it’s made us a better church because we’re getting the word out to more people.”

Bethel Baptist is one of many houses of worship across the country that took its services online in recent months as a way to connect with their congregations without meeting inside. The switch was for good reason, too, according to an April 6 Gallup article, “Religion and the COVID-19 Virus in the U.S.” The article notes previous research by sociologists and others that found religion can help people cope with major disruptions in life and is often a positive force for overall well-being.

CHANGING TIMES

“Worship as usual” changed for Bethel Baptist when the governor ordered churches to close in-person services in March. Church leaders flew into action, Rhodes says. They didn’t want their congregations going without words of faith and comfort during such uncertain times.



Bethel Baptist Church in Frenchburg started streaming services live on Facebook this year.



The church also offers Sunday services on Mountain Telephone’s local channel 2.

Pastor Tim Rhodes says Bethel Baptist chose to reach out to its congregation online during the pandemic. It reached so many people they plan to continue the online services in addition to in-person services.



But he still worried about how some people might view newer forms of communication. “The internet can be used for bad, of course,” he says. “But it’s one of those vehicles that can also be used for good. We’ve had the opportunity to use it for good.”

Gathering the necessary equipment also concerned him. He and the audiovisual workers at the church needed to make sure they had the right cameras, computers and sound equipment. “There’s a lot of roadblocks to doing something new,” he says. “You think, well, what about this? And will this cause problems with this? You have to have all the pieces in place, and there’s always something new to learn. It can seem overwhelming until you realize all the positives.”

In addition to streaming Sunday services live on Facebook, the church started podcasting its services. Bethel Baptist also broadcasts its services on MTTV’s local channel, on WLJC out of Beattyville and via YouTube. The church uses Mountain Telephone’s high-speed broadband service to make much of these efforts happen.

BETTER REACH

Before the virus, about 190 people showed up for Sunday services. Those numbers didn’t immediately bounce back after the church’s doors opened again.

But church members who can’t attend in person can follow along on TV or online. New listeners and watchers are constantly joining.

Rhodes doesn’t have specific numbers on how many more people the church reaches today, but he knows it’s grown. He’s also received many positive comments from all over the region and the country. “We’re a much better, more efficient church today because of this technology,” he says.

Rhodes is quick to point out that these broadcasts can’t fully replace in-person contact and the fellowship so important to a church’s ministry. But he knows it can’t hurt, either.

“There are so many more opportunities to reach people and give them the gospel of Jesus — to inform them, teach them and disciple them,” he says. “We haven’t lost our personal touch, and we haven’t lost our love for our church family or our community. But we have been able to reach out to a whole new world of people.” 🗨️

Does your church stream?

Across the country, church services, prayer meetings and youth fellowships have been streaming over Facebook and other social media platforms. A Pew Research Center Survey conducted in April found that 25% of Americans say their faith has grown amid the coronavirus pandemic, despite their houses of worship being closed. Of the U.S. adults who reported attending religious services at least monthly, 82% say their place of worship is streaming or recording its services so that people can watch them online or on TV. The best way to find out whether your church or other churches stream their services online is to seek out their Facebook page or Facebook member group. Also check out your local MTTV channel for the latest recorded church services.



A tart treat

Cranberries are a longstanding staple at holiday time



They're great with turkey and stuffing or baked in your morning muffin. Dried, they're known as raisins and perfect sprinkled on a salad. A fixture on Thanksgiving tables or even wrapped around trees as a Christmas garland, the jolly red cranberry takes center stage at holiday time.

People have been eating cranberries for centuries. Native Americans first used them as food and medicine, well before Pilgrims set foot here. The absence of sugar in the colonies in the early 1600s meant cranberries, which benefit from sweetening, were probably not at the first

Thanksgiving table. Nonetheless, it didn't take long for them to become a part of that holiday's menu, and today, consumers eat more than 80 million pounds of cranberries from Thanksgiving to Christmas.

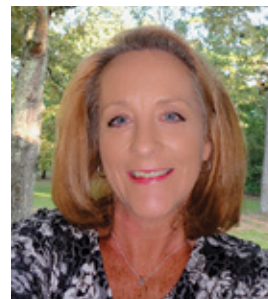
Every year, holiday celebrators enjoy more than 5 million gallons of the canned sauce that jiggles like Santa's belly, and cranberries are a simple way to add color to your table and a sweet, tart flavor to your turkey. But as Americans are latching on to the farm-to-table trend, fresh cranberries are outselling the canned variety.

Here are several tips from Vitamix for cooking with fresh cranberries:

- **Baking with cranberries** — Cut cranberries in half before adding them to baked goods to prevent them from swelling and popping.
- **Cooking cranberries on the stovetop** — Simmer whole berries gently in a small amount of water, uncovered, since

too much steam might cause them to swell and explode.

- **Freezing cranberries** — To freeze and enjoy them throughout the year, spread the berries in a single layer on a cookie sheet and place it in the freezer. Once they are completely frozen, transfer the berries to freezer-safe bags or airtight containers. There's no need to thaw your cranberries before cooking. Just give them a quick water bath before using.



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CRANBERRY APPLE HOLIDAY BREAKFAST CASSEROLE

Make this casserole a day ahead.

Casserole:

- 2 tablespoons softened unsalted butter, divided
- 3 large, firm, sweet tart apples, diced
- 2/3 cup fresh cranberries
- 8 large eggs
- 1 cup vanilla Greek yogurt
- 1/2 cup milk
- 1/4 cup maple syrup, plus more for serving
- 2 teaspoons cinnamon
- 6 cups stale bread cubes, crusts removed

Streusel topping:

- 1/3 cup flour
- 1/4 cup rolled oats
- 3 tablespoons brown sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- Pinch kosher salt
- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
- 1/2 cup chopped walnuts or pecans

Make the casserole: Melt 1 tablespoon butter in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the apples and cook, stirring until they are starting to brown and become tender — 4 to 6 minutes. Remove from the heat. Stir in the cranberries.

Grease a 9-by-13-inch casserole dish with the remaining 1 tablespoon of butter. Whisk the eggs in a large bowl. Add the yogurt, milk, maple syrup and cinnamon, then whisk to combine. Add the bread cubes and the apple mixture, and stir until combined. Transfer to the prepared baking dish. Cover it with foil and refrigerate up to 24 hours.

Make the topping: Stir the flour, oats, sugar, cinnamon and salt in a medium bowl. Drizzle 3 tablespoons melted butter over the oat mixture, tossing with a fork until the crumbs are evenly moist. Add



Cranberry Crumble Bars

Crust and topping:

- 2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 cup sugar
- 1/2 cup ground slivered almonds
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup chilled butter
- 1 egg
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon

Filling:

- 4 cups fresh cranberries
- 1 cup sugar
- Juice of half an orange (4 teaspoons)
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch
- 1 teaspoon vanilla

Preheat oven to 375 F. Grease a 13-by-9-inch pan.

In a large bowl, mix the flour, 1 cup sugar, almonds, baking powder and


salt. Cut in the butter, using a pastry blender or pulling 2 table knives through the ingredients in opposite directions, until the mixture looks like coarse crumbs. Stir in the egg. Press 2 1/2 cups of crumb mixture in the bottom of the pan. Stir cinnamon into the remaining crumb mixture. Set aside.

In a medium bowl, stir together the filling ingredients. Spoon the filling evenly over the crust. Spoon the reserved crumb mixture evenly over the filling.

Bake 45 to 55 minutes or until the top is light golden brown. Cool completely. Refrigerate until chilled. Cut into 6 rows by 4 rows. Store tightly covered in the refrigerator.

the nuts and stir to completely combine. Refrigerate.

Preheat the oven to 350 F. Remove the casserole and topping from the refrigerator. Bake the casserole, covered, until heated through and steaming, 35 to 40 minutes. Break up any large topping pieces if necessary.

Remove the casserole from the oven, remove the foil cover, and sprinkle the top with the streusel topping. Continue baking until the topping is golden and the casserole is puffed, 25 to 30 minutes. Allow the casserole to cool 10 minutes before cutting it into squares to serve. Serve with additional warm maple syrup, if desired. 



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