



Mountain Telephone

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2021

# CONNECTION

## ARTIST IN RESIDENCE

Working from home inspires painter



## YOU'RE INVITED

Mountain Telephone's annual meeting

## CREATIVE COMMUNITIES

Online connections inspire photographers



By SHIRLEY BLOOMFIELD, CEO  
NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association

## Building a connected future

As the nation’s leaders work to improve the infrastructure that supports our economy and our communities, there is a growing understanding of just how vital broadband service is to rural areas.

It’s important rural providers have the resources and regulatory stability they need to connect areas that often have no other options for service. The challenges those providers face go beyond simply building an internet network that must keep pace as the demands of users grow from decade to decade.

Recently, representatives of several cooperatives — among them, Golden West Telecommunications Cooperative, South Dakota; the Yelcot Telephone Company, Mountain Home, Arkansas; and Totelcom Communications, De Leon, Texas — made sure members of Congress heard this message.

Similarly, months of coping with a global pandemic proved the success of rural broadband. Countless households, businesses, schools and others leaned on their local internet providers during these challenging times. However, there is still work to do in deploying networks and delivering robust and affordable services.

This is where public policy can continue to play an important role, setting standards for broadband infrastructure and leveraging the know-how of community-based experts, like the company providing your internet service today.

I’ve been delighted at the bipartisan nature of these discussions and the understanding that broadband kept the American economy humming during the pandemic. Now, we just need to ensure the lasting investment needed to future-proof this powerful system. 📶

# 'SIX PILLARS' OF RURAL BROADBAND

Fast internet builds successful communities

Rural broadband's influence extends throughout every community where fast internet networks are available. How many of these "six pillars" of rural broadband play a role in your daily life?



### 1. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Housing values increase and businesses move more product when rural communities have broadband.



### 2. PUBLIC HEALTH

Instead of driving 50 miles to a health center, a telemedicine visit can bring care into the home.

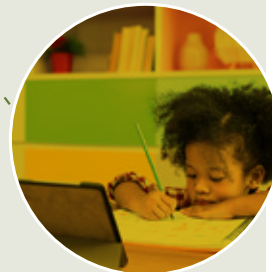


### 3. TELEWORKING

Remote work creates fresh opportunities.

### 4. EDUCATION

Educators from grade school to colleges and universities are reaching students remotely.



### 5. PUBLIC SAFETY

Broadband networks can improve the communications systems used by emergency responders.

### 6. QUALITY OF LIFE

Thanks to broadband, young people find rural communities more appealing.



These pillars of rural broadband are based on the work of Christopher Ali, an associate professor in the Department of Media Studies at the University of Virginia. He is also the author of "Farm Fresh Broadband: The Politics of Rural Connectivity." 📖

**CORRECTION:** In the July-August issue of your magazine, the final word of a travel story on Page 7 about the Red River Gorge was omitted. This is the complete sentence: As the Red River continues through the heart of the gorge, it levels out and provides gentle Class I paddling ideal for beginners.



# Better-looking videos are just a few steps away

Thanks to smartphones, recording and sharing videos has never been easier. Whether you're capturing precious moments to share with friends and family, showcasing your talents or documenting a moment the rest of the world needs to see, a high-quality video helps get your message across loud and clear.

## Here are some tips to help make sure your next video is your best one yet.

- **Clean the lens** — Sometimes it's easy to overlook the obvious. We're touching our phones constantly. We're taking them out of our pockets and purses multiple times a day, so they're bound to pick up a few fingerprints and smudges along the way. Take a second and give the lens a couple of swipes with a moistened cleaning wipe. No wipes? No worries — a quick breath and a swab with your shirttail can get the job done, too.
- **Orientation** — Make sure to turn your phone horizontally when shooting videos. Shooting horizontally, also called landscape orientation, results in a more aesthetically pleasing experience for viewers, and it looks great across multiple platforms, especially on wide screens. Shooting this way also allows you to capture more of the surroundings in the video.
- **Stabilization** — Nothing is harder to watch than a shaky video. A simple way to make your video better is by using two hands to hold the phone steady. Instead of extending your arms, tuck your elbows in close to your sides and hold the phone closer to your chest. If a professional-quality video is what you're after, consider investing in a tripod or a gimbal to give your arms a rest. Also, many newer phones now include image stabilization features that can correct for inadvertent movements during shooting.
- **Composition** — Take a moment to compose your shot before pressing the record button. For example, if you are making a video in a controlled environment, perhaps filming a tutorial in your home, look around and make sure the background is clear of anything you wouldn't want people to see.
- **Lighting** — When recording indoors have the subject face a window if possible. If there is no natural light, consider purchasing an LED light ring. Light rings have become very popular and are an inexpensive way to make your video look professional. Avoid backlit settings, which can erase a person's features on video and replace them with a dark figure instead.
- **Zoom cautiously** — While the digital zoom option is a nice feature to have, using it while recording can result in an awkward-looking video. Instead, to keep the image crisp, take the time to frame the shot before recording and avoid using the zoom. Unless you're planning to use the zoom distortion as an effect, get as close to the subject as you safely can to preserve the image quality.



# Competing for jobs

## Fast internet service puts us in the game

Our world is a competitive place, and not just when it comes to sports. The leaders of every town and county understand they're in a fight for one of the most desired assets anywhere — jobs. The opposition isn't just the next county over, either. Every community in the nation is in the game.



**SHAYNE ISON**  
General Manager

Success means bringing any possible advantages onto the playing field, and fast internet service is more than critical. It's essential because it's important to businesses of all types and sizes.

Small manufacturers benefit from ultra-fast internet service because resources from accounting to customer support often flow through the internet. Similarly, video calls are now just a normal part of business life. For communities hoping to recruit these types of employers, fast internet access is mandatory.

Then, think about all the changes we've seen in remote work, which was on the rise even before the pandemic. Remote work is more common than ever, and if you can work from home, our community is highly attractive. After all, the big-city pace isn't for everyone.

So, why not bring those jobs to rural America? That's certainly the plan the West Virginia Tourism Office had last spring when it promised to pay remote workers \$12,000 to relocate to that state. This shows the level of competition we face and how far some organizations will go. I'm not suggesting we should pay people to relocate here, though, because I believe our communities are enough of a draw.

We live in a friendly, affordable and beautiful place. And we have the fast, reliable internet network required to make remote work more than just a possibility. The speed and affordability of our internet service is comparable to — and often greatly exceeds — service in major cities. In many ways, we're a better place for remote work than metropolitan areas.

But it's about more than just jobs. We're also building for the future. Our students can learn the skills they need to be competitive, not only for today, but also for tomorrow. A growing number of colleges and universities offer online courses. Students about to enter the workforce can broaden their horizons without ever leaving home.

But students aren't alone in benefiting from classes accessed via the internet. People looking to grow professionally now have similar resources available that allow them to continue their education and open new doors to either advancement or entirely fresh careers. Many of those classes and other resources are best experienced through live video, which needs a high-speed internet connection.

While our friends in economic development always keep a watchful eye out for opportunities to attract the attention of large employers, one of the things that excites me most is the entrepreneurs: industrious people putting in the hard work needed to kick-start a business.

Our affordable living costs can give young businesses an edge, allowing them to keep overhead lower than their competitors. They can move large amounts of data, share information, hold online meetings and more. Thanks to fast internet access, even home-based startups can link to a worldwide market that was once only accessible to businesses with large staffs in big-city offices.

Throughout the nation, there are signs of vitality in rural economies. For all the reasons I've described, fast internet service is part of the foundation making it all possible. We're in the game, and I firmly believe we're ready to compete. Mountain Telephone is beyond proud to be a Smart Rural 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 12,000 members.

#### Send address corrections to:

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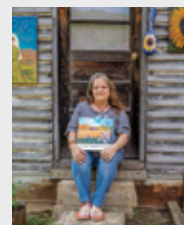
John Nickell, 662 exchange  
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D. Joleen Frederick  
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#### On the Cover:



Local artist Tami Booher uses her Mountain Telephone connection to work and create from home.

See story Page 12.



# Mountain Telephone

## BALANCE SHEET

December 31, 2020

### ASSETS

Current Assets .....\$ 5,041,153

#### Other Assets

Investments in Affiliated Companies ..... 45,471,814  
(including Cellular)

Miscellaneous Physical Property ..... 2,914,179

Other Investments ..... 36,530,214

Total Current/Other Assets ..... 89,957,360

Telecommunications Plant ..... 135,666,963

Less Accumulated Depreciation ..... (87,708,242)

Net Telecommunications Plant ..... 47,958,721

**TOTAL ASSETS .....\$ 137,916,081**

### LIABILITIES and MEMBERS' EQUITIES

Current Liabilities .....\$ 3,607,512

Long-Term Debt to U.S. Government ..... 5,367,105

Long-Term Liability ..... (4,848,256)

#### Members' Equities:

Membership ..... 137,116

Patronage Capital ..... 132,328,629

Retired Capital Credit Gain ..... 1,323,975

**TOTAL LIABILITIES and MEMBERS' EQUITIES .....\$ 137,916,081**

# AS MOTHER NATURE INTENDED

Okefenokee Swamp  
is a wildlife  
watcher's dream

Story by ANNE BRALY

**N**estled deep down in Georgia and stretching into Florida, the Okefenokee Swamp is eerie in places, and just plain spooky in others. It's a mosaic of vast pine islands, cypress forests and water as black as night — all elements that make up this national treasure.

The swamp, one of the world's healthiest water ecosystems, is protected from human encroachment by the National Wildlife Refuge System, an organization established to oversee a network of lands and waters for conservation, says Susan Heisey, supervisory refuge ranger of the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge.

The Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge has 80% of the Okefenokee Swamp under its jurisdiction, as well as close to 40,000 acres of uplands immediately surrounding the swamp. At 407,000 acres it's the largest national wildlife refuge in the East.

Where there is swampland, there are gators. And alligators love this swamp because they're protected here. The refuge provides them a safe haven — a wealth of food and shelter to sustain a thriving population of the reptiles.

"There are generally no problems between man and alligators due to the amount of habitat the refuge provides," Heisey says. "Generally, when an alligator sees a person, it moves in the opposite direction."

The only times that alligators can be confrontational or dangerous is if they identify people with food, Heisey explains. "So, we try to educate our visitors about the dangers of feeding and approaching wildlife so there are no issues with nuisance alligators."

Alligators can basically be found in any portion of the swamp and most adjacent ponds, ditches or other bodies of water. Alligators do live in the water, but they can also be found on land at times. The females will build up their nests adjacent to

the water where they live. Interesting trivia: Female alligators protect their nests and their young for several years, and they are the only reptiles that do this.

And their numbers remain pretty stable, although there has been no recent official count. It's a matter of water level fluctuation, a limited amount of food sources and competition between males for territorial rights.

The largest alligator ever documented was in Louisiana in the early 1900s and was more than 19 feet long. "We do not have a record of the largest alligator in the Okefenokee Swamp, but occasionally there can be individuals at around 14 feet or so," Heisey notes.

Gators aren't the only creatures found among the swamp's wetlands and woodlands. The refuge is home to 39 fish species, 37 amphibian species, 63 other reptiles, 234 birds and 50 mammals.

Most notable among the animals are wood storks, indigo snakes, gopher tortoises, black bears, endangered red-cockaded woodpeckers and sandhill cranes.

The refuge is home to both migratory and resident sandhill cranes, and most recent observation found that there are about 100 nesting pairs in residence. The migratory sandhill cranes are usually present from November through February, at which time they'll migrate up the Atlantic Flyway to their breeding grounds.

Wildlife observation is one of the most common types of recreation for visitors to enjoy while on the refuge. Walking the Chesser Island Boardwalk to the 40-foot observation tower at its end and boating the water trails on a prearranged or self-guided tour are the best ways to see the animals.

Finding the cranes is easy. Just listen for their loud bugling calls and look among the refuge prairies where the water is relatively shallow — good hunting grounds for the big, long-legged birds. Look down, not up. Sandhills nest on the ground, not in the trees.

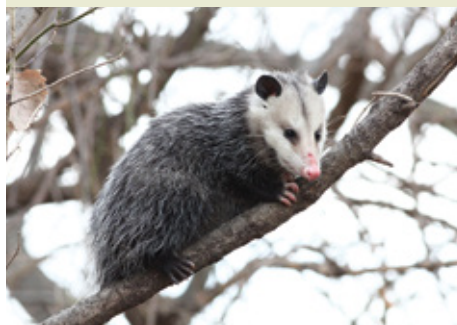
"Visitors love seeing those cranes," Heisey says. 🗨️



## THE 'POGO' CONNECTION

Some baby boomers may remember "Pogo," one of the most popular comic strips of their youth. Pogo was a possum that lived in a tree in the Okefenokee Swamp and came to life weekly in newspapers across America, born from the mind of cartoonist Walt Kelly.

At its peak, "Pogo" appeared in nearly 500 papers in 14 countries, and close to 300 million copies of books about Pogo and his friends were sold. Kelly died in 1973, and his widow, Selby, continued the internationally syndicated comic strip until July 1975. After 26 years of syndication, "Pogo" the comic was completely discontinued, but the character lives on today in the welcome center at the Okefenokee Swamp Park in Waycross, Georgia. There, a large room has been turned into Kelly's studio, complete with a likeness of the man himself and his alter ego, Pogo.



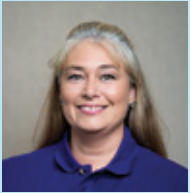
## SWAMP TRIVIA

The Okefenokee is OK, for now, but its future is directly tied to maintaining the integrity of the ecosystem's complex processes. The future of people and communities surrounding the swamp also is dependent on conserving the swamp.

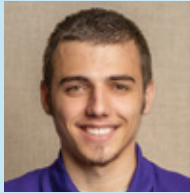
- The swamp is the largest intact black-water swamp in North America and is more than 7,000 years old.
- The swamp is a massive, peat-filled bog inside a huge, saucer-shaped depression that was once part of the ocean floor.
- Fire is an important part of the Okefenokee ecosystem, and the refuge has a prescribed burn program in place to accomplish what wildfires once did. The fire staff burns an average of 6,000 to 10,000 acres per year.
- Most area residents have ancestors who once lived or worked in the swamp as a part of their heritage.
- The Okefenokee Swamp, as the headwaters of both the Suwannee and St. Marys rivers, provides clean water to the most pristine rivers in the Southeast.
- A National Geographic publication included the Okefenokee Swamp as among the top 100 most beautiful places on Earth.

# THANK YOU FOR LETTING US SERVE OUR COMMUNITY!

## OUR EMPLOYEES



Tina Adams



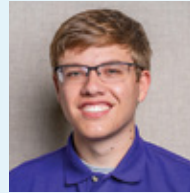
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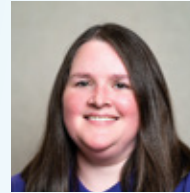
Tyler Adkins



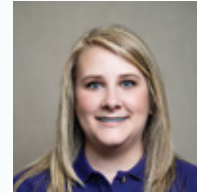
John Aragon



Andrew Bailey



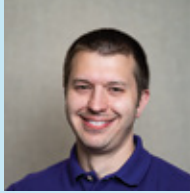
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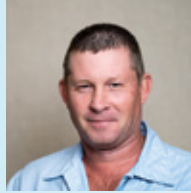
Kristen Beculhimer



Carter Bolin



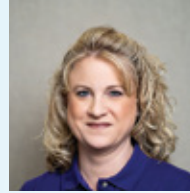
Michael Bradley



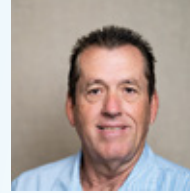
Kevin Brickey



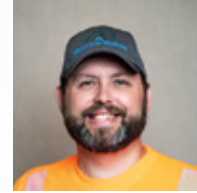
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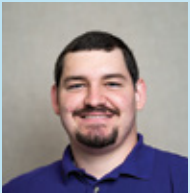
Amie Burden



Roy Burton



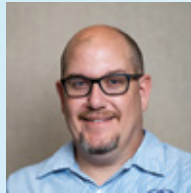
Paul Cantrell



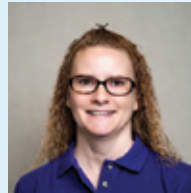
Caleb Caudill



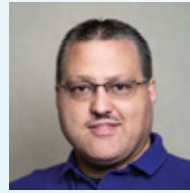
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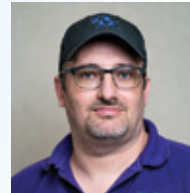
Kent Cole



Tammy Cole



Wes Collett



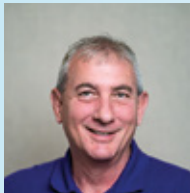
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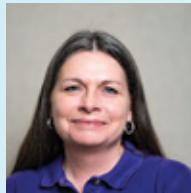
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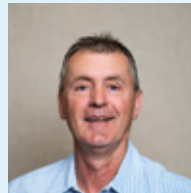
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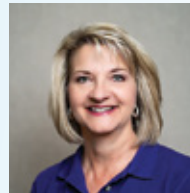
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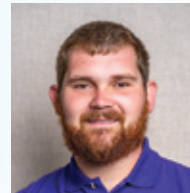
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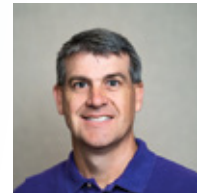
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Lisa Fannin



John Gibson



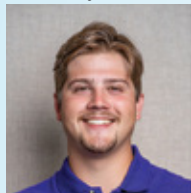
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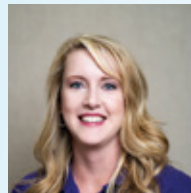
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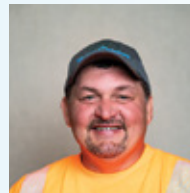
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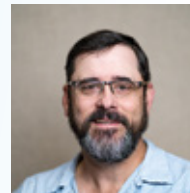
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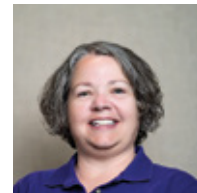
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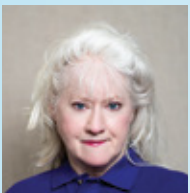
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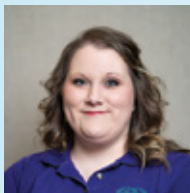
Curtis Howell



Rose Howell



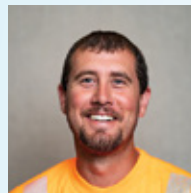
Lana Ingram



Keshia Ison



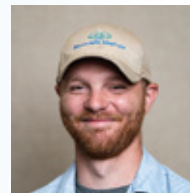
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Michael Keeton



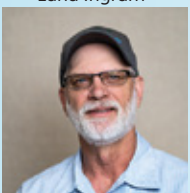
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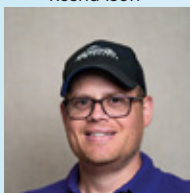
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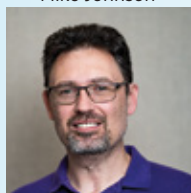
Michelle Kidd



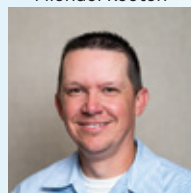
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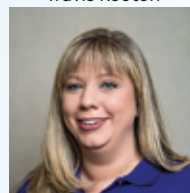
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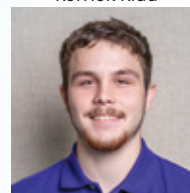
Adam Mann



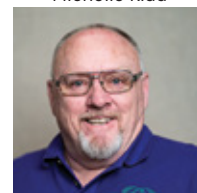
Tim Mays



Maria Motley



Austin Murphy

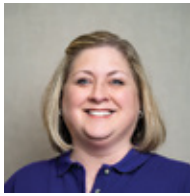


Jim Music





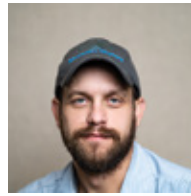
Brad Nickell



Lisa Nickell



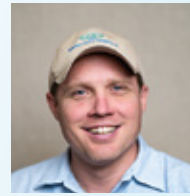
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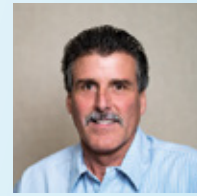
Dave Pence



Angie Pennington



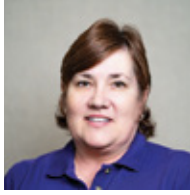
Ricky Pennington



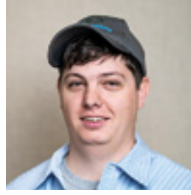
Jim Phelps



Latisha Phipps



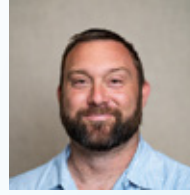
Elaine Prater



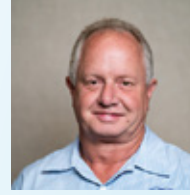
Jacob Preece



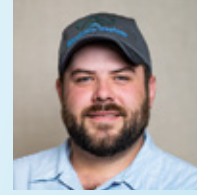
Missie Preece



Courtney Rice



Gary Robinson



Brendan Rose



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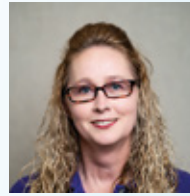
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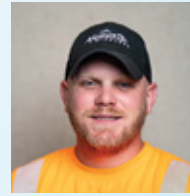
Keith Stamper



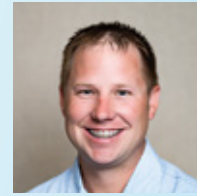
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Alicia Walter



Denver Williams

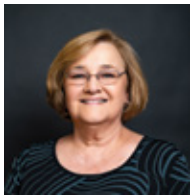


Brandon Wilson

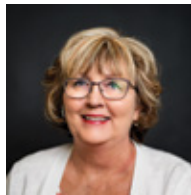
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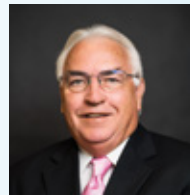
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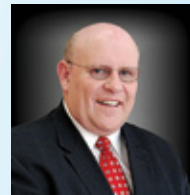
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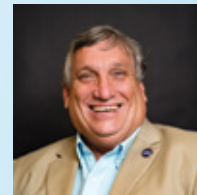
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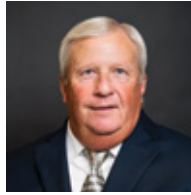
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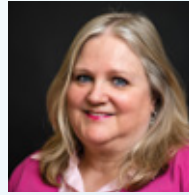
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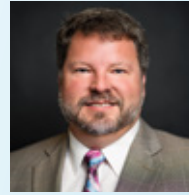
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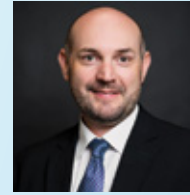
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# A PERSONAL INVITATION TO OUR ANNUAL MEETING 2021

Morgan County Fairgrounds | Thursday, Sept. 9

Registration, entertainment and dinner | 5-6:15 p.m.

Entertainment by West Liberty Mountain Boys

Door prize drawings | 6:15 p.m.

Business meeting | 6:30 p.m.

More door prizes following the meeting

Employee photos not available for  
**WESLEY BOTTS**  
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# NEW PERSPECTIVES

## Jason Stitt sees rural Texas through a different lens

Story by DREW WOOLLEY

Jason Stitt has always seen the world a little differently. Through the lens of his camera, he likes to find new views of the places other people might pass every day without a second thought.

“Photography helps me to view the world in ways most people don’t get to. To look at things from different angles, different perspectives and to see things in a way that others may not,” he says. “Mostly, it’s an outlet for me to be creative and to show the world the beauty of God’s creation, whether that be people or nature.”

Now, with the help of the internet, he can encourage others in his community to find their own individual perspectives. Social media has been a place for Stitt to grow as a photographer by sharing his work, asking questions and engaging in critiques with other professionals. He even runs his own Facebook group, Tyler Area Photography, with more than 600 members dedicated to growing the

photography community in Tyler, Texas. “I’m still learning and growing and will never stop,” Stitt says. “We don’t have lots of photography shops like you might find in bigger cities. So almost all of my continuing education and growing the craft relies on the internet.”

Stitt caught the photography bug 18 years ago while living in California. Working as a graphic designer, he started submitting his shots to a stock photo website before becoming a full-time photographer two years later. After moving back home to New Zealand with his family, Stitt discovered his passion for landscape photography. But it was only a few years before the cost of living caught up with them. They didn’t want to give up the opportunity to have his wife, Ruth, home-school their children. So, Stitt took his newfound talent for capturing natural beauty to Tyler, where he could continue pursuing his career while supporting his family.

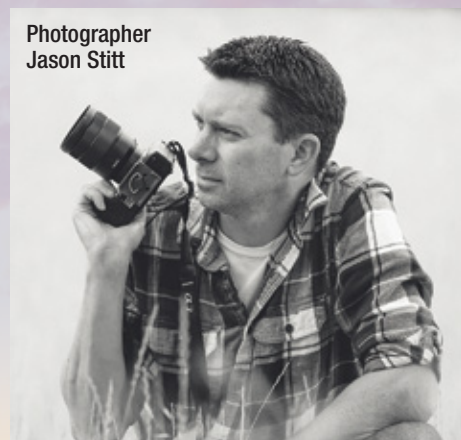
“I am an introvert by nature,” he says. “So I really enjoy the quiet solitude of being out in nature with just my camera gear.”

### IN FOCUS

When Stitt and his family were deciding where to relocate on their move back to the States, there was one must-have for his business: a strong internet connection.

“That was one of the most important factors in choosing a place. It had to have a reliable and fast internet connection,” Stitt says. “Ninety-nine percent of my business I get through either my site or social media. So without the internet, I lose all of that.”

Photographer  
Jason Stitt



He isn't exaggerating. About a year and a half after moving to Tyler and gradually building momentum as a professional photographer, Stitt and his family visited New Zealand for five weeks to see his parents. Stitt stayed away from social media during the trip and returned to find business had ground to a halt.

"I felt like I had just lost all the momentum I had built while we were gone and had to start all over again," he says. "Now, ideally, I try to post something every weekday to keep business relatively steady and keep getting inquiries. If I'm not posting regularly, those inquiries just stop happening." 📱



## Getting the shot

Whether you're just starting out or a seasoned pro, Stitt offers some pointers to make your photos stand out.

- **Shoot, shoot, shoot** — As with any learned skill, the best way to hone it is to do it. Get out and take as many photos as you can to develop a better idea of your interests and style.
- **Be intentional** — Ansel Adams said, "You don't take a photograph, you make it." Photography is art, and good art requires forethought and planning. Think about what you want to capture and how you want to photograph it.
- **Study the greats** — Look closely at the work of photographers you admire. Figure out what it is about their work that appeals to you and then try to emulate it.
- **Master the light** — Light is the single most important factor in photography. More than determining how bright or dark your photos are, controlling light also decides the tone, mood and atmosphere of your images.
- **Learn to edit** — Don't neglect learning how to use your editing software. In today's world, the ability to edit well is one of the elements that makes for a great photographer.
- **Find your community** — Locate a local camera club or Facebook photography group to join. These can be great places to meet like-minded people from whom you can learn and grow.

## TOOLS OF THE TRADE

The internet is full of resources for aspiring photographers and professionals alike. Whether you're looking to manage your shots or learn a new skill, there's something for everyone.



- **Education** — Even the best photographers have something to learn. For professional courses, Stitt turns to sites like CreativeLive and Improve Photography. If you're looking for something to peruse at your leisure for education and inspiration, he recommends Scott Kelby's blog.
- **Editing** — With Adobe's Photography package, anyone can get access to professional-grade software like Photoshop and Lightroom to edit and organize your photos on any device — all for little more than some streaming subscriptions.
- **Website builders** — Every photographer needs a place to share their work with the world. Popular website builders like Squarespace and Portfoliobox make it easy to show off your best shots and even to sell your work.
- **Storage** — As all those photos pile up, you'll need somewhere to keep them. Flickr offers a substantial 1 TB of free storage, while services like Dropbox and Google can provide up to 16 TB of space as your portfolio grows.



# A SHED OF ONE'S OWN

## Artist finds work and inspiration in Appalachia

Story by JEN CALHOUN | PHOTOGRAPHY BY WILLIAM LEMASTER

Every weekday morning, Tami Booher grabs a drink and heads off to work. Most days, her husband holds the door and says, “Be careful out there,” and Booher takes off. About 20 steps later, she’s at the office.

The office, in this case, is a wooden shed outside her home in Isonville. The small cabin is outfitted with dozens of paintings of landscapes, flowers, birds and dogs. A computer and two large monitors rest on a desk, and art supplies sit close by.

A former barbershop, the shed now serves as Booher’s office and studio. By day, she works from there as a customer service advocate for UnitedHealthcare, helping answer insurance questions from people all over Kentucky and New York.

After work, the shed transforms into Booher’s art studio — a wonderland of oil paints and acrylics, paintbrushes and canvases. “I have an air conditioner for summer and a gas heater for winter,” she says. “So, I’m good.”

### REMOTE WORK IN A REMOTE LOCATION

Booher is not only an accomplished and award-winning artist, but she’s also one of hundreds of thousands of people in Eastern Kentucky who’ve landed well-paying, work-from-home jobs through Teleworks USA. It’s an innovative program that connects job seekers with national companies that need employees. Since it first started in 2011 as Kentucky Teleworks, the program has helped people in the region find meaningful employment with national and global employers through internet-driven, virtual workplaces.

Booher signed on with Teleworks after getting laid off from her previous job due to COVID-19 cutbacks. She admits being surprised at the offerings from Teleworks — interesting work, high pay and a short commute. The decision practically made itself. “I looked at other jobs,” she says. “But I realized I’d have to drive an hour just to make what I make doing this.”

The work suits her, too. “I help people with questions or problems,” she says. “The best part is getting to help people, and I get to have some really interesting conversations.”



Tami Booher’s artwork includes paintings of nature, inspired by the Appalachian wilderness.

## SEEING STARS

One of the top perks for Booher is getting to work from home surrounded by the natural beauty of rural Appalachia that inspires her art. “I’m honestly a self-contained person,” she says. “I don’t require a lot of outside stimulation, except for nature. I don’t get bored, and I don’t even use the word. I’ve always got something I can do.”

Born in Illinois and raised in Virginia, Booher moved to Kentucky about 11 years ago as an adult. “As a child, we’d drive through Kentucky on our way from Virginia to Illinois to see relatives,” she says. “I was in love with Kentucky even then. Everything here fascinated me to no end.”

But for more than 25 years of her adult life, Booher lived in Hickory, North Carolina. It wasn’t until she visited a friend in Kentucky that she decided to pull up roots and move north. “When I visited here, I walked out one night and saw the stars,” she says. “I didn’t realize all I had been missing. I mean, I could actually see the stars.”

By then, she was already an artist, having trained with a painter in Hickory since her early 30s. But the call of Kentucky ended up deepening her love for nature and her work.

## MOUNTAIN SALES

Booher sells and shows most of her work online through Facebook, etsy.com and other outlets, nudging in the occasional show or event. She credits her high-speed, fiber internet connection through Mountain Telephone for enabling her to sell her work, take painting classes and, of course, keep a good day job. “When we talk about moving to a different house, I always say that it has to be in Mountain Telephone’s territory,” she says.

On her Facebook site, Booher describes herself as “a palette knife painter, nature painter, muralist and designer.” Painting has brought more to her life than income and acclaim, however. “It’s taught me to never give up,” she says. “It’s about persistence. I’ve seen my growth over the years, and it wouldn’t be there if I didn’t keep trying.” 📧



Tami Booher found a work-from-home job as a customer service advocate through Teleworks USA.

## TELL ME ABOUT TELEWORKS

Teleworks USA helps people in Eastern Kentucky find well-paying, work-from-home jobs with companies from all over the country. For more information, visit [teleworksusa.com](http://teleworksusa.com). Job seekers can also access services at one of Teleworks USA's nine hubs in Ansville, Beattyville, Booneville, Harlan, Hazard, Hyden, Louisa and Pikeville. Services can include intensive training and certifications that can help job seekers land remote positions without leaving home.



## NATURE ART

To find out more about Tami Booher and her art, visit her Facebook pages at Tami Booher Appalachian Nature Painter-Illustrator and Tami Booher Artist-Illustrator. You can also find her work at [artpal.com/tamibooher](http://artpal.com/tamibooher) and at [etsy.com/shop/AppalachainPainter](http://etsy.com/shop/AppalachainPainter) — an incorrect spelling Booher decided to keep after noticing other “Appalachian” painters on the arts and crafts site. “I guess my spelling mistake sets me apart,” she says with a laugh. In addition to her paintings, Booher makes wooden ornaments with pet portraits and other images.

# Palate pleasers

## Pears make perfect sweet and savory dishes

**P**ears add a dose of seasonality to dishes this time of year with a sweetness that's nuanced and subtle yet plentiful. But understanding which type of pear is best for what use will help you choose wisely from the fruit you'll see in the produce section of your local market.

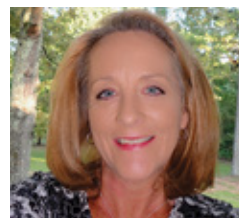
Any type of pear is good to eat as long as it's ripe enough to bring out its sweetness. But when it comes to using pears in cooking, the variety you choose matters. Do you want the pear to retain its shape when poached? Or do you want it to melt into a sauce? Just remember your pear ABCs — Anjou, Bosc and Comice.

Anjou is an all-purpose pear that can be grilled, roasted or eaten as a snack.

Bosc pears are best for poaching, as they maintain their shape well when cooked.

Comice pears are best used raw, as their tender flesh will not hold up well under heat. They are a sweet pear to pair with cheese.

The best way to ripen pears is on the counter at room temperature, a process that requires patience, since the fruit can take up to a week to reach its sweet peak. Once fully ripe, pears may be stored in the refrigerator for up to a week, if they stick around that long before being used in any of the following recipes.



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



### *Pear & blue cheese salad*

- 12 cups torn romaine lettuce
- 2/3 cup balsamic vinaigrette (homemade or store-bought), see note
- 2 medium pears, sliced (Comice suggested)
- 2/3 cup crumbled blue cheese
- 2/3 cup glazed or salted pecans

Place romaine in a large bowl. Drizzle it with vinaigrette; toss to coat. Top with pears, cheese and pecans. Serve immediately. Makes 10 servings.

Note: If you can't get enough blue cheese, substitute blue cheese dressing for the balsamic.



## PEAR & GORGONZOLA PIZZA

- 1 (16-ounce) package refrigerated pizza crust dough
- 4 ounces sliced provolone cheese
- 1 Bosc pear, thinly sliced
- 2 ounces chopped walnuts
- 2 1/2 ounces Gorgonzola or blue cheese, crumbled
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh chives

Preheat the oven to 450 F. Spread the pizza crust dough on a medium baking sheet. Layer provolone cheese on the crust and top the cheese with Bosc pear slices. Sprinkle walnuts and Gorgonzola cheese over the pears.

Bake for 8-10 minutes, or until the cheese is melted and the crust is lightly browned. Remove the pizza from the oven, top it with chives and slice to serve.

## PEAR PANCAKES

- 1 1/2 cups baking mix (such as Bisquick)
  - 1 medium ripe pear, peeled and finely chopped
- 2/3 cup old-fashioned oats
  - 2 tablespoons packed brown sugar
- 1 1/2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
  - 1 cup milk
  - 2 tablespoons butter or margarine, melted
  - 1 egg
- 1/2 cup butter or margarine, softened
  - 2 teaspoons powdered sugar
  - Maple syrup, if desired

Heat a griddle or skillet over medium heat. Grease it with butter or vegetable oil if necessary.

In a large bowl, stir the baking mix, chopped pear, oats, brown sugar and 1 teaspoon of the cinnamon until blended. In a medium bowl, beat the milk, melted butter and egg with a fork or wire whisk. Add the milk mixture to the dry ingredients, stirring just until moistened.

For each pancake, pour about 1/4 cup batter onto a hot griddle. Cook the pancakes until bubbles form on top and the edges are dry. Flip, then cook the other side until golden brown.

While the pancakes are cooking, make cinnamon butter: In a small bowl, mix 1/2 cup butter, the powdered sugar and the remaining 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon. Serve the pancakes with cinnamon butter and syrup.

## BAKED PEARS WITH WALNUTS

- 2 large ripe Bosc pears
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/4 cup crushed walnuts
- 2 teaspoons honey
- Vanilla ice cream or whipped cream, optional

Preheat the oven to 350 F. Cut the pears in half and place them on a baking sheet. You may want to cut a sliver off the uncut side so that they sit upright.

Using a measuring spoon or melon baller, scoop out the seeds. Sprinkle the pear halves with cinnamon, top them with walnuts and drizzle 1/2 teaspoon honey over each one.

Bake for 30 minutes. Remove from the oven, let them cool slightly and serve the pears topped with ice cream or whipped cream, if desired.



## PEAR CLAFOUTIS

*Think pear cobbler, only easier.*

- Salted butter for the dish
- 2 ripe but slightly firm Anjou pears (about 1 pound total)
  - 1 cup half-and-half
  - 3 eggs
  - 1/3 cup plus 1 tablespoon granulated sugar
- 1 1/2 teaspoons vanilla extract
  - 1 teaspoon orange zest
  - 1/8 teaspoon nutmeg
  - 1/4 teaspoon kosher salt
  - 1/2 cup flour
  - Powdered sugar

Peel, core and slice the pears lengthwise about 1/3-inch thick. Preheat the oven to 350 F. Butter a shallow 3-quart baking dish and arrange the pears over the bottom — they will rise to the top as the batter bakes.

Put half-and-half, eggs, granulated sugar, vanilla, orange zest, nutmeg, salt and flour (in this order) in a blender and whirl until very smooth and frothy, 1 minute. Pour the batter over the pears.

Bake until the clafoutis is well browned and a little puffed, about 50 minutes. Let it cool on a rack about 15 minutes. Serve warm, sprinkled with powdered sugar.



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