

The

# Communicator

JULY/AUGUST 2015

## HITTING THE MARK

New Hope archery  
team wins big

## ANNUAL MEETING PERFORMER

Country singer  
Melissa Ramski

## APPALACHIAN ADVENTURES

Sightseeing, stargazing  
and ... moonbows?



By Shirley Bloomfield, CEO  
NTCA—The Rural Broadband Association

## FCC commits to working with rural carriers to extend broadband service

**B**roadband Internet service is impacting practically every part of our lives — from economic development and health care to education and entertainment. As NTCA member companies such as your local telecommunications provider work hard to deliver advanced broadband services, it is a significant development to see the Federal Communications Commission turn its attention to helping them meet the challenges of serving rural America.

In April, FCC Chairman Tom Wheeler announced that the regulatory agency would move forward with efforts to modernize the part of the Universal Service Fund (USF) dealing with smaller rural carriers such as yours. The FCC has worked the past few years to

transform the USF for the nation's big carriers into its Connect America Fund. Now it is our turn, and we couldn't be more delighted to finally see this progress.

This is great news for the people who live and work in rural America, where a reformed USF would have a tremendous impact. In his blog post dated April 17, Chairman Wheeler stated, "Senator (John) Thune (the South Dakotan who chairs the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee) rightly recognizes this fact, and my colleagues and I recently made a commitment to him to take action on this issue by the end of this

year. Modernization would ensure that this program reflects the realities of today's marketplace and supports the deployment of broadband networks throughout rural America."

As part of these efforts, the FCC is pulling together key players in the industry to ask for their input and to draw upon their expertise. You can be assured that, working together through NTCA, your local telecommunications provider will have a voice at the table as these critical discussions are being held.

What is at stake? As the FCC sets out to modernize the USF, it must craft

an approach that promotes broadband deployment, stabilizes a dependable stream of support, incentivizes investment and establishes equity

surrounding a relatively small, limited pool of support. The policy update must maintain the goal of ensuring that all rural Americans have access to supported broadband, with or without a landline phone.

This is important work so that, as Chairman Wheeler said, "all Americans, regardless of where they live, can be equal participants in the social and economic life of the 21st-century United States. We all share this goal, and modernizing this program is something everyone should be able to get behind." That's a sentiment that I believe we can all agree upon.

— “ —  
*You can be assured that, working together through NTCA, your local telecommunications provider will have a voice at the table as these critical discussions are being held.*  
— ” —




# MOVE OVER



The next time you're driving along and see a utility vehicle on the roadside, don't think about our robust, reliable network. Don't think about the advanced services we offer across that network.

Instead, think about the men and women who sometimes put themselves in harm's way so you can enjoy the best in telecommunications. **Pay attention. Slow down.** And, if you can do it safely, **move over** a lane.



**Thank you for helping our employees return home safe and whole to their families each day.**



# Decline in rural jobs and workforce underscores importance of broadband in community development

Throughout much of 2014, America's rural counties posted year-over-year increases in their number of jobs. According to reports from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, that trend is reversing.

Comparing January 2014 and January 2015 published numbers, rural areas posted job losses of more than 330,000.

This job loss coincides with a loss in workforce for rural regions as well. "Workforce includes both those who are employed and those looking for work," writes Bill Bishop, co-editor of the Daily Yonder, a multi-media source of rural news found at [www.dailyyonder.com](http://www.dailyyonder.com). "The workforce in all rural counties dropped by 557,000 people between January 2014 and January of this year."

As jobs and the population in general

shift from rural to metropolitan areas, the need to develop broadband infrastructure becomes all the more important. Telecommunications companies such as your local provider understand this and have been working hard the past few years to build the networks necessary to offer advanced broadband services to rural communities.

A recent report by Broadband Communities magazine found a strong correlation between the availability of broadband and population trends. The study showed that counties ranking in the top half of their state for access to high-speed broadband service experienced population growth 10 times that of the bottom half of counties from 2010 through 2013. "Good broadband is even more closely related to economic opportunity

than has been realized," writes Steve Ross, the magazine's editor-at-large.

Broadband's role in job creation and retention is well established. It now stands alongside reliable electricity and transportation systems as a must-have offering before a company will consider bringing jobs to a community. Writing for Site Selection magazine, Matt McQuade, director of North American Business Development for Columbus2020, says, "Advances in technology have elevated the importance of the Internet in economic development and site selection. The availability, quality and competitiveness of broadband service have become and will continue to be a key issue for many locations." ☞

► For more on the impact of broadband, visit [www.broadbandbuildsbusiness.com](http://www.broadbandbuildsbusiness.com).

## New look, new technology for RFD-TV

Network "connects city and country" from redesigned studio on Nashville's Music Row

RFD-TV, "Rural America's Most Important Network," has launched new state-of-the-art studios in Nashville, Tennessee, along with a fresh new look, upgraded technology platforms and all-new live production capabilities.

"We are giving our viewers the experience they demand and deserve," says Patrick Gottsch, founder of RFD-TV. "Our new look stays true to rural America's roots, while the set design and technology shows how we will grow and thrive in the future, as we connect city and country."

"Viewers will see the difference immediately from our investment and our strategy," says Gary Kanofsky, chief content officer and executive vice president for news. "We've built a set our audience will relate to and loaded it with the best tools of the trade to create a gorgeous new on-air look." The technology and design upgrade provides the following for viewers:

- New state-of-the-art studio featuring a main anchor set, complemented by additional areas for interviews, weather, live music and virtual production
- New 3D news graphics presented on an industry-leading platform
- Expanded real-time commodities and market data



The upgrade also includes all-new live production capabilities that make it possible for RFD-TV to broadcast live from virtually anywhere. With streamlined production, RFD-TV can cover more stories, while at the same time expand content partner relationships. ☞

► To learn more about RFD-TV's changes and programming, visit [www.rfdtv.com](http://www.rfdtv.com).

## Making a 'smart' decision

When it comes to technology, we want everything to be “smart” these days. We have smartphones and smart watches, smart appliances in our kitchen and laundry room, smart thermostats and smart home gadgets with smart apps to control them.



**JIM COOK**  
General Manager

While all this smart technology is impressive and can make life more convenient while saving us money, the really smart part of it all is the broadband network that so many of these devices and apps rely on to bring us this functionality.

This trend toward devices that are only possible with broadband is not going away. And as broadband becomes the leading infrastructure driving innovation, it is impacting every facet of our lives.

That's why we decided long ago that improving broadband service in our rural area was the smart thing to do. With access to an advanced broadband network, boundless opportunities open up for our region:

**Smarter businesses:** Technology allows businesses to reach new customers and better serve the customers they already

have. Smart businesses are using data and their broadband connections to learn more about customer habits, streamline supply chains and optimize their operations. Studies have shown that broadband-connected businesses bring in \$200,000 more in median annual revenues than non-connected businesses. Our network ensures that these tools are available to our local businesses so they can compete regionally, nationally or even globally.

**Smarter education:** Local teachers and school administrators are doing amazing things with tablets, online resources and other learning tools. These smart schools are opening up new avenues for students to learn. Experts say that nationally, students in schools with broadband connections reach higher levels of educational achievements and have higher-income careers.

**Smarter health care:** From bracelets that keep track of physical activity to telemedicine, smart technology and broadband are improving the way we monitor and care for our bodies. Physicians are able to confer with other medical experts, transmit X-Rays and lab results and communicate with patients over our network. Through smart electronic medical records, everyone from stroke patients to expectant mothers is receiving better care because hospitals and doctors are getting “smarter.”

**Smarter homes:** A host of new devices has allowed users to bring smart technology into their homes. Smart devices allow you to monitor your home, change the thermostat, turn on lights and even lock or unlock doors remotely. While these smart devices offer plenty of convenience, they are also a smart safety decision to avoid coming home to a dark house or to receive an alert anytime someone pulls into your driveway.

We've made smart decisions that put our community in a position to take advantage of this smart revolution. As our devices, businesses, homes, schools and hospitals get smarter, rest assured that your cooperative is smart enough to have the infrastructure in place to handle these demands — plus whatever the future holds. ☺

## The Communicator

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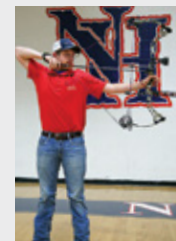
Barry Jones  
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Produced for NHTC by:



### On the Cover:



Jared Solmon sought to start an archery team during his senior year. The inaugural team of eight won all six tournaments on the season and even took home a state championship. See story Page 8.

# Homemakers recognized



The Owens Cross Roads Homemakers Club was recognized as the Club of the Year during the Madison County Homemakers Celebration Day and received other awards, too. Club president Barbara Cooper was given the 2014 Outstanding Homemaker Award. The club has contributed to a fence at Owens Cross Roads School, has donated money to the Owens Cross Roads Fire Department and New Hope Library and has supported numerous other ongoing community projects.

The club will host a craft show at Owens Cross Roads School on October 3, from 9 a.m. until 3 p.m.

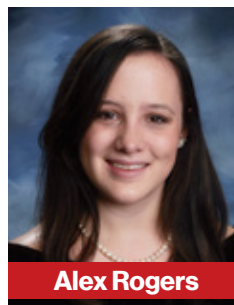
The group meets every fourth Tuesday night of the month at a club member's home. If you would like more information about the club, please contact Barbara Cooper at 256-723-3086.

## NHTC SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS

The New Hope Telephone Cooperative awards two scholarships each year to students who exemplify academic achievement and community involvement and have submitted an essay. The two selected entries — one from DAR and the other from NHHS — will each receive a \$500 scholarship.

Alex Rogers is the DAR High School winner, scoring a 29 on the ACT test. She has been accepted to the University of Alabama in Huntsville where she plans to study nursing.

Autumn Pruitt of Owens Cross Roads is the NHHS scholarship winner. She has been accepted to the University of Alabama in Huntsville where she plans to major in business management.



Alex Rogers



Autumn Pruitt



## Congratulations!

New Hope Telephone Cooperative would like to wish former Customer Service Representative Amber Parsley the best of luck in her new marriage to Jeremy Coburn and with all her future endeavors.

## *It's almost time for kickoff!*

### NHHS FOOTBALL BOOSTER CLUB

Football season is just around the corner, so it's time to reserve the best seats and reserved parking passes for the 2015 Football Season.

- Reserved Seats — \$30 each
- Reserved Parking Passes — \$30 each

Any reserved seats from last season will need to be paid by August 7 to be reserved for the upcoming season. After August 7, seats become available to the public. All proceeds go toward assisting the New Hope Indians football team.

Please contact Bob Rodgers at 256-725-4545 or 256-652-3846 for more information.

### SECOND ANNUAL ALUMNI FOOTBALL GAME

New Hope High School  
vs. Madison County High School (Gurley)

August 8 at 6 p.m.

Madison County High School

*All proceeds go to each participating school's football program.*

## Mark your calendar

- A "Zumbathon" fundraiser will be held on **July 18** from 8-10 a.m., with all money going toward the New Hope High School athletics program, with the sport selected by votes. Sign-up fee is \$20. Please contact Shannon Bolton at 256-426-5713 for more information.
- The CARE Center's third annual "I Grill Because I Care" BBQ competition will take place on **August 1** in downtown New Hope. Admission is free, and a water slide will keep the kids entertained. For more information or to register, contact event coordinator Teek Patnaik at pranteekpatnaik@hotmail.com or call 256-694-0117.
- NHTC is accepting sealed bids for lawn maintenance. For detailed information, contact the business office. All bidders must have workers' compensation and general liability insurance. Bids are due by **September 8**.
- Don't miss the NHTC Customer Appreciation Day from 8:30 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. on **October 30**.



# HIKE, CLIMB, FLOAT, ZIP!

*Take an action-packed road trip through Tennessee and Kentucky's grandest scenery*

By ROBERT THATCHER

Our Southern landscape is shaped by the relentless activity of water on stone. You see it where water flows underground to create breathtaking caves. You see it where water flows above to carve glorious gorges. The wonders of water also invite relentless human activity — especially in the summer.

So let's hike, climb, float and zip on a road trip through some of the most beautiful and rugged country in the world.

## MAMMOTH CAVE NATIONAL PARK

*An alien world of secrets and stalactites*

We start with a walk, or crawl if your knees are up to it, hundreds of feet below the sinks and springs of south-central Kentucky.

Entering the natural arch of Mammoth Cave, the name makes sense. It's the world's longest cave (400 miles and counting). Vaulted chambers like "Grand Avenue" are so big it's hard to believe that you're underground. You lose all sense of time and orientation in this delicate biosphere where it's always 54 degrees.

Take the two-hour historic tour or test your claustrophobia with the five-hour Wild Cave expedition. Young spelunkers can do the Kids Crawl, but no parents are allowed.



Mammoth Cave

Photo courtesy of National Park Service

A big surprise for many is the mammoth fun above ground. Kentucky's largest national park offers canoe-camping along the gentle Green River, a horse-friendly camping location and trails, as well as the new Big Hollow Mountain Bike Trail.

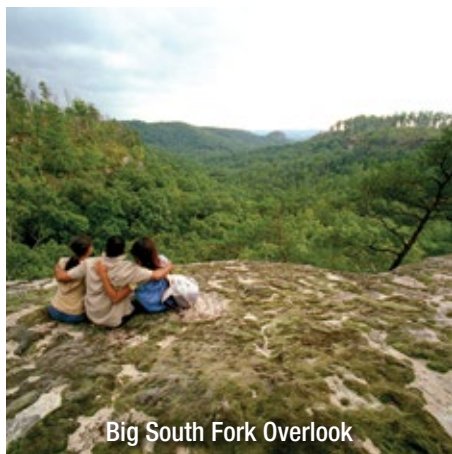
**EAT:** Even if your eyes haven't adjusted to the light on the surface yet, follow your nose to the Travertine Restaurant's great fried chicken.



## TECH-SAVVY TRAVELER:

Weekend warriors are cramming into their minivans as millions of Americans hit the roads this summer. Loading a few cellphone apps before the trip can be just as important as grabbing sunscreen or putting ice in the cooler. The **Oh, Ranger!** app by Ford will turn anyone into an explorer, searching by activity in state and federal parks. Parents of fearless thrill-seekers will want quick access to first-aid information, such as the **American Red Cross** app.





Big South Fork Overlook

Photo courtesy of National Park Service

## BIG SOUTH FORK NATIONAL RIVER & RECREATION AREA

### *Grand gulfs, serious stargazing*

Leaving cave country, we drive up 1,000 feet to the Cumberland Plateau — the rugged tableland creased with spectacular gorges and home of Big South Fork National River & Recreation Area, straddling the Kentucky-Tennessee border. At 125,000 acres, there's plenty to explore.

Visitors can travel 420 miles of trails by foot, bike or horseback. Those are also the only ways you can get to Charit Creek Lodge. Accessible by three trails under 5 miles, Charit Creek is one of the few hike-in lodges in the country. Your trek is rewarded by a family meal and lodging in a circa-1800 cabin. With no phone service, Charit Creek offers a rare chance to look up from handheld devices to see how bright the night sky can be. Make reservations in advance.

Big South Fork has other cool ways to enter the park without driving. Ride the Big South Fork Scenic Railway from Stearns, Kentucky, to a restored mining town and trailhead. Or hike in from historic Rugby, Tennessee, an experimental utopian colony built in the 1880s. The experiment failed, but Victorian buildings remain.

Mountain bikers should cruise the Grand Gap Loop — one reason this national recreation area is the only one ranked an “epic ride” by the International Mountain Bicycling Association.

**EAT:** Schedule a family-style dinner at Charit Creek Lodge.

## CUMBERLAND FALLS STATE RESORT PARK

### *Mist and Moonbows*

Head north on the plateau into the Daniel Boone National Forest to some of the most rugged terrain west of the Appalachians.

Cumberland Falls State Resort Park near Corbin, Kentucky, offers a great overlook of the 200-foot-wide “Niagara of the South.” But on a trip about action, why not feel the mist on your face? Shelton Trace Adventure Resort, 5 miles east, will float you from the base of the falls down the Cumberland River's Class III rapids.

Cumberland Falls has great campsites — from primitive to RV-ready. But after a day of getting soaked, a better option is sitting by the big stone fireplace in the historic DuPont Lodge. This sandstone lodge offers a cozy break beneath rustic hemlock beams.

If you visit when there's a full moon and clear sky, you may be lucky enough to see the falls' trademark Moonbow. The misty nocturnal arch extends downstream from the falls and is a rare sight in the western hemisphere.

**EAT:** The lodge's Riverview Restaurant offers a fine Southern buffet and magnificent views.



Cumberland Falls

Photo courtesy of Shelton Trace Adventure Resort



Zipline at Red River Gorge

Photo courtesy of Red River Gorge Zipline Tours

## RED RIVER GORGE

### *Climb the soaring cliffs*

We began the trip underground — and end it in the sky. Traveling north to the Red River Gorge, we see the sandstone cliff lines that attract rock climbers worldwide.

The good news is that you don't have to be one of the many chalk-stained pilgrims to enjoy “the Red.”

Torrent Falls Climbing Adventure lets non-climbers experience the thrill with the only “via ferrata” in the U.S. Created to ferry troops across Italian mountains, this system of cables and iron rungs makes it easy for anyone (ages 10 and up) to traverse the resort's horseshoe canyon.

No worries if vertigo keeps you off the cliffs. Nearby Natural Bridge State Park features hikes past majestic arches, rock shelters and wildflowers that grow nowhere else on the planet. Don't miss the 6-mile Courthouse Rock and Double Arch Trail, or the half-mile Chimney Top Overlook.

But what if these cliffs whetted your appetite to go higher? Red River Gorge Zipline Tours will provide the adrenaline rush you need. This five-line tour zips you at 55 miles per hour 300 feet above Cowan Fork Gorge. So end your trip with a WHOOOOOSH!

**EAT:** Enjoy pizza and buy a T-shirt at Miguels, where serious climbers go to eat and camp. 🍕

# Aiming for a state title

BY MATT LEDGER

**E**ight archers at New Hope High School set goals, took aim and hit the bullseye quicker than anyone expected, winning the state championship in their first year.

"This is a brand-new thing that started this year," says Doug Solmon, the 3D archery team coach.

Competitive 3D archery involves aiming at point rings on a foam animal target from distances ranging from 5 to 30 yards. Competitors are awarded points based on the predetermined value of spots on the target — from five points for hitting the foam deer or other animal to 12 points for the smallest ring. Facing 20 targets, New Hope's top three shooters in each tournament have scored in the 205-212 range, causing lopsided victories by an average of 43 points.

"I've got one kid, Adam Reed, who had never shot a bow before," Solmon says. "During his first year in the sport, he made it into the top ten for shooter-of-the-year points in Alabama." Four of his teammates also made the list during the inaugural season.

The team has practiced twice weekly throughout the year and every night for a week leading up to the Alabama state championships. The team went six-for-six in the regional tournaments and won the state tournament on May 9. Jared Solmon finished second overall at state and had the most points during the season, garnering Alabama shooter-of-the-year honors. His teammates Tyler Brown and Gavin King finished third and fifth place, respectively.

"Their shooting improved all year long," coach Solmon says. "However, going



The undefeated New Hope High School archery team. (L to R) Tyler Brown, Jonathon League, Casey Selvage, Jared Solmon, Adam Reed, Josh Quick, Tyler Williams and Gavin King.



The New Hope High School archery team had their sights set high during its first year competing.

undefeated and winning the state championship is more than I ever expected."

## GROWING POPULARITY

Archery has primarily been a sport closely associated with training for hunting and typically passed down from fathers to sons. Doug Solmon has enjoyed the sport for 25 years and began teaching it to his son, Jared, at age 9. As a high school senior, Jared sought to bring the sport to his school, recruiting several friends and his dad to a new team in the process.

Coach Solmon partnered with New Breed Archery from Fulondale, Alabama, which gave a generous discount to equip the new team. Coach Solmon and assistant coaches Jamie Selvage and Darryl Moore dug through their personal supplies to find remaining items to start practices twice a week.

Archery in general is growing, particularly with 3D targets. According to The Archery Manufacturers and Merchants Organization, two-thirds of archers now shoot only at targets, and there are now

more than 9 million archers in the United States.

Prior to joining a high school team, younger competitors — in fourth through eighth grade — can join the National Archery Schools Program. New Hope Middle School has a NASP team with 23 members, including several girls. The NHHS 3D archery team will go co-ed next year, as a few more young ladies have already expressed interest in joining the team. "I hope our community understands how important this program is and that it can show our kids how to be successful in all areas of their lives," coach Solmon says. "We're hoping it will continue to grow and we'll have 20 kids on our team next year."

On May 18, the New Hope champs celebrated their victory with the NASP team, showing the younger archers a new target to aim for. "My team and I are still ecstatic over winning the state shoot and going undefeated this season," Jared says. "I will be coming back next year, to help coach this small-town team to win it all again." 📞



# Keep Dreamin'

BY MATT LEDGER

Career aspirations frequently lead to relocation, and for singers and songwriters determined to leave their mark, Music City has long been that destination. Originally from Ulysses, Kansas, Melissa Ramski, 24, has lived in Nashville six years, while chasing her dream of being a country singer.

"At the age of only 3 or 4, she could memorize songs and just started singing along," says Dave Ramski, her father. In those days, she would sing from the back of the car as her father drove the family on vacations. "I was probably in the fourth grade when I realized that singing and performing is what I really wanted to do," Melissa recalls. A fellow Kansan, Martina McBride, was a major early influence for Ramski, among several chart-topping female performers.

## A FAMILY ON THE MOVE

"All she ever talked about was wanting to be a country music star," Dave says. "We tried to help her along the best we could from the middle of nowhere."

Ramski's parents drove her to many talent shows and performances throughout the Plains states, and even gave her an acoustic guitar. "It just sat there for a year. Then one day (during her senior year of high school), I decided I was going to learn how to play it," Melissa says. "I started Googling videos and looking up techniques on writing and eventually got pretty good at it."

At age 18, Melissa's family bought another home near Music City, helping to jump-start her career. Melissa's mother, Nancy, has helped manage Melissa's career throughout the years. Dave's career at a telephone cooperative kept him in Kansas for a few more years, traveling cross-country numerous times for performances.



Melissa Ramski belted out numerous classic country songs and a few of her own during the NHTC Annual Meeting held on May 19.



Earlier this year, Melissa Ramski won the Solo Female Artist award from Indie Ville TV. Her father, Dave, spends nearly as much time on the road as Melissa, traveling from New Hope to catch many performances.

That continued until 2013 when he moved to New Hope upon taking a position as an engineering manager at NHTC.

## CAREER AMBITIONS

Ramski released a single, "Keep Dreamin'," earlier this year. While it might sound like a tune about career ambitions, it's actually a final sentiment to a prior boyfriend. "It's one of those 'See ya, I'm not coming back' kind of songs," she says, chuckling. "It's my way of letting all my emotions out. Having people relate to your music is an amazing thing."

Melissa's sound is a blend of traditional influences and contemporary pop country from the radio, as evidenced by her most recent song "Lace and Diamonds." She was nominated for several awards by country promoter Nashville Universe, which recognized Florida Georgia Line and Colt Ford the previous year. In June, Melissa performed at the CMA Fest, then at the Country FanJam festival. She will be touring later this year.

"She's making a lot of progress and doing really well," her father says. "I couldn't be more proud of her." He not only goes to most of his daughter's performances, but he also tries to make most of the rehearsals. "We love going to her events, and it's become our way of life." 📱

# PICTURE PERFECT

## What will readers find at your blog?

**ZG:** Jody and I empower photographers to succeed, so you will find a plethora — more than 1,000 blog posts — of lighting, shooting, business and marketing content for photographers. We have videos, downloads, how-tos and behind-the-scenes information to learn how to make your business stronger and shoot better.

## Why did you become a blogger, and how has blogging changed your life?

**ZG:** We started blogging in order to help answer questions we were getting through emails from photographers who wanted to know how we were doing what we were doing. We had no idea it would turn into a full-time business. Content is king, and useful, digestible content that a photographer can consume is a powerful thing to create. It can change someone's entire life if it's done right.

## What are some of your favorite pieces of equipment, and what would you recommend for the amateur shooter who wants to get high-quality photos of their family vacations and hobbies?

**ZG:** Our favorite simple tool is the Expo Disk from ExpoImaging.com. White balance is how your camera perceives color. If the white balance is correct, all the colors are correct in the image. The Expo Disc allows you to custom white balance



your camera so that your color and exposure are perfect in all your photos. It's an awesome tool!

## How has the Internet changed photography?

**JG:** The Internet has allowed anyone who shoots to share their images with the world. It allows you to create an audience without advertising it and has raised the level of amateur and pro shooters since so many people are now sharing their photos.

## What is the most important thing to consider when getting ready to shoot a photo?

**ZG:** Lighting times five! Good lighting is the most important thing to look for when shooting. Large light sources create soft and beautiful light, and you can find that with indirect window light, in open shade — when you are in the shade but can see the open sky above you — just after the sun sets, or just before the sun rises. All those are great places to get soft light that looks great on your subjects.

## OTHER PHOTOGRAPHY BLOGS YOU MIGHT LIKE:

### ► [www.priscillabphotography.com/blog](http://www.priscillabphotography.com/blog)

Besides taking a look at some of her photographic artistry, you'll find her frequent musings that help to inspire her photography.

### ► [www.marieelizabetschmidt.com/blog](http://www.marieelizabetschmidt.com/blog)

Her pictures contain more than captions. Marie Elizabeth Schmidt's photos fully encompass the moods of her subjects.

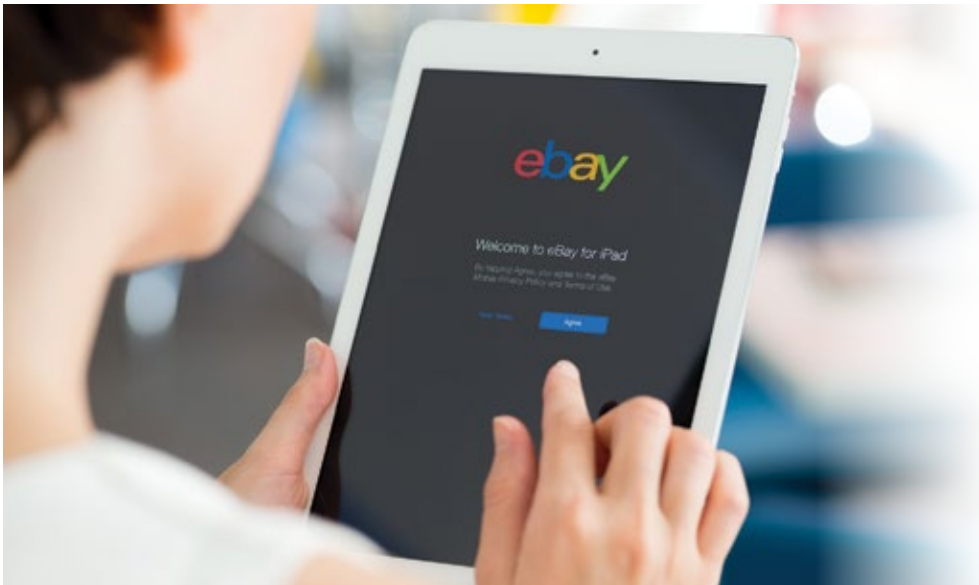
## Do you prefer a studio/indoor setting or to let nature be your backdrop?

**JG:** Definitely outside is best. It feels natural and organic, and most of our favorite photos are taken outside. 📷



Whatever your interest, there is likely an online community of people who share that interest with you. Our "Featured Blogger" series introduces you to people who write on the Web about a variety of topics. In the September/October issue, we'll focus on car blogs.





# Digital Dollars

## *Making money online*

BY MELISSA SMITH

**T**here's plenty of money to be made on the Internet. Just ask the early investors in companies like Amazon, eBay and Google. Though on a smaller scale than the early dot com

investors, people earn a living every day by combining their skills, the Web and a little bit of business savvy. Check out these proven ways to make some money online.

### Etsy

It's easy to set up a shop on Etsy, the popular site for handmade one-of-a-kind goods. The site boasts over 2 million shops, and it's growing daily.

And it's almost as simple to sell on the site.

Etsy has a fairly straightforward setup page for new shops. Simply select a template and enter your information. Also, it's very important to have nice, high-quality photos of the items you have for sale. You don't have to hire a professional photographer; just

find a place with nice natural light and think of the best ways to showcase your product.

Etsy stores charge 20 cents per item you post and collect 3.5 percent of the selling price of each item. Also, if you have items that remain unsold, an auto-renewal fee of 20 cents will be charged after four months until the item is sold.

Do you have more than one type of craft? In an Etsy store, you can list items in 10 different sections.

### ArtFire

Like the better-known Etsy, ArtFire welcomes those with a creative spirit to sell their crafts online. With everything from home decor, handmade jewelry, fine art and craft supplies, ArtFire is a place to find something special and one-of-a-kind.

For a premium account, you pay a \$20 per month membership, and after that, you get to keep

everything you make from the items you sell. There are no hidden fees, and ArtFire doesn't take a cut of your profits. Also, your business page is completely customizable, and you get to post up to 10 photos per listing.


Once you start selling items and making money, ArtFire deposits the money in your account via the method you choose.

### eBay

Perhaps the most well-established and well-known selling portal online, eBay made its first sale on Labor Day in 1995.

Twenty years later and still going strong, eBay remains one of the most popular sites to find good deals on rare and everyday items. One of the biggest selling points on eBay is that most items are up for

auction. So, the buyer can offer as much or as little as they like for an item.

eBay does require some seller fees, depending on the item up for sale, what kind of price reserve you set, the type of item, etc. Whether selling your own handmade crafts or cleaning out the garage, the Internet can help you turn those items into cash. 

# Annual Meeting highlights a secure future

A record number of registered members — 603 in total — attended the New Hope Telephone Cooperative Annual Meeting on May 19. Neighbors and newcomers packed the hallways of New Hope Elementary and Middle School, as employees served popcorn and lemonade and gave away t-shirts and other items.

Families packed the auditorium as Nashville-based country singer Melissa Ramski sang classic hits and a few tunes of her own during a two-hour set. NHTC employees drew names for raffled gifts, handing out a number of electronic devices and vouchers for NHTC services. Three flat-screen TVs were also given as prizes, with the grand prize 50-inch HD Vizio won by James Sutphin.

During the business meeting portion of the evening, NHTC management gave a review for 2014. “During this past year, we have continued to add new programming, currently offering up to 260 channels, which includes 75 HD channels on our fiber network,” said General Manager Jim Cook. He also announced the addition of the SEC Network.

The fiber-to-the-home network is the



largest project NHTC has ever undertaken, connecting more than 450 subscribers in 2014 with plans to add more than 700 others during 2015.

The financial news was also good. “Jim Cook and our employees negotiated bid prices and changed a few vendors, leading to a savings of \$1.7 million dollars,” NHTC Board President Jim Duncan told the crowd. “Keep in mind that those cost adjustments will continue saving money annually for years to come.”

▲The New Hope Telephone Cooperative's board of directors following the annual meeting on May 19. (Front row, from left) Jeffrey Cantrell, secretary; Jim Duncan, president; Garland Elders, vice president; and Mike Whitaker, treasurer. (Back row, from left) Andrew Sieja, NHTC attorney; Jim Cook, general manager; Jeff Cooper; Barry Jones; Greg Glover; Randy Morrison; Calvin Bearden; and Mac Martinson, NHTC attorney.



## A VIDEO PRESENTATION BY COOK HIGHLIGHTED A NUMBER OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Total NHTC assets reached \$38.3 million, including a \$3.5 million increase with fiber-optic infrastructure.
- NHTC board of directors approved plans for completing the fiber project without additional debt.
- Long-term debt was reduced by \$1.3 million during 2014.
- Operational revenue increased by 5.6 percent, or \$646,000.
- Operating expenses were reduced \$266,000, creating a record high operating margin of \$2.5 million.
- FCC commitment to develop the Connect America Fund, partnering with NTCA, to provide support and sustainability to rural broadband networks.
- NHTC has gained subscribers, adding 2.4 percent to the membership.
- The broadband customer base also grew by 6.5 percent.
- NHTC's Security Solutions was unveiled, offering home security and home automation.
- NHTC subscribers now have access to WatchTVeverywhere, enabling them to watch more than 30 networks on their electronic devices.
- Programming rate hikes from ABC, CBS, NBC and FOX have caused NHTC content costs to increase by more than \$4 a month per subscriber.



# Libraries' 21st-century evolution

BY MATT LEDGER

**L**ibraries are no longer “as quiet as a mouse.”

Instead, patrons are sliding mice back and forth as they surf the Internet on public computers. Fingers are busily tapping the keyboard buttons to search for new recipes, download e-books or even apply for new jobs.

Technology has helped the modern library expand its role as a valuable asset in the community.

## LOCAL TECH SUPPORT

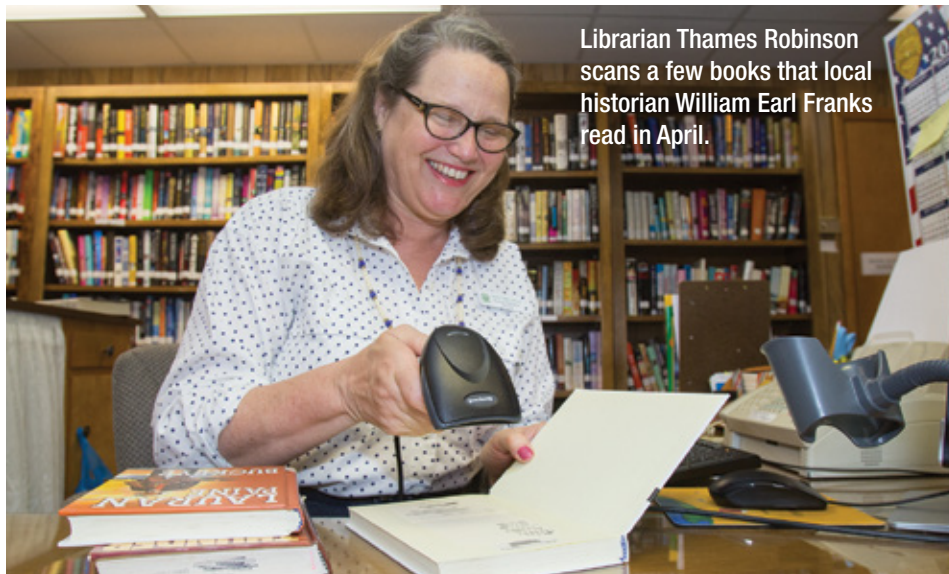
Staff at the Elizabeth Carpenter Library in New Hope and the Grant Public Library are working hard to keep up with digital trends. “It really all started with the kids,” says Laura Washburn, branch manager at the New Hope library.

The facility has two computers loaded with programs for elementary-aged youngsters. However, librarians noticed a gap for the older kids who needed something more than the kids computers. That gap was remedied by the addition of e-books.

Washburn filed a grant application that allowed for the purchase of four handheld Kindle tablets in 2014. Two of the devices are designated for the kids, loaded with



Children can use two of these colorful Kindles while at the New Hope library, either to read or play games.



Librarian Thames Robinson scans a few books that local historian William Earl Franks read in April.

games like Minecraft and other age-appropriate games. “It helps to show that the library is about more than books,” Washburn says. “Many of the kids don’t have access to technology, and this gives them a chance to explore with an e-reader.” The other two tablets are loaded with the current best-selling e-books, and adults can check out the devices for a week at a time.

Officials at the Grant Public Library are working toward the purchase of e-books, ever since a conference earlier this year. Library board member Susie Keller and librarian Thames Robinson convinced city council members to approve funding for the new Atrium library suite of programs.

The Grant library has also selected Overdrive as a platform for e-readers. Having already used grant money for other improvements, Robinson is seeking financial donations to join the Camellia Net collective, which shares e-book resources with numerous Alabama libraries. Officials also hope that the local contributions will allow for the purchase of e-reader devices.

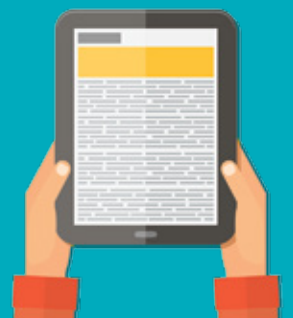


New Hope librarian Laura Washburn wrote a grant that enabled the Elizabeth Carpenter Library to receive four e-readers in 2014.

Many local residents and students will benefit from the program by simply using a library card with their own Wi-Fi enabled devices, without even needing to go to the library. “It will be a big benefit for us since we will significantly expand the number of patrons using our services,” Robinson says. ☞

## THE BENEFITS OF E-BOOKS

- Significantly lighter than printed books
- Thousands of titles available
- Selections sync across many different devices while maintaining the same page
- Increase or decrease font sizes
- No late fees (An e-book simply disappears from the device when due date is reached.)



# TOMATOES GOING GREEN

**B**ooks have been written about them; movies have been made about them; and songs have been sung about them. But when it comes to cooking fried green tomatoes, some say no one does it better than Brett Hadley.

He's been making them for 25 years and now serves them at his restaurant named after the beloved dish: Green Tomato Grill in Mooresburg, Tennessee.

A native of Hendersonville, Tennessee, Hadley worked for a few years as a corporate chef for a major casual dining restaurant. That's where he learned the intricacies of making fried green tomatoes.

Yes, intricacies. Because if you don't choose the right tomatoes, don't soak them for a while in buttermilk seasoned with Cajun seasoning or whatever strikes your fancy, and don't coat them with the right batter, they're simply not good.

"After testing my take on fried green tomatoes for many months until I got them right, we added them to our menu at 60 locations in 10 states," he says. "That company went out of business several years after I left, but I have used my recipe at several restaurants that I have owned," including, he adds, his 100-seat eatery "in the middle of nowhere where we sell over 250 pounds of green tomatoes a week."

Green Tomato Grill opened in the winter of 2012, and giving the place its name made sense. After all, everyone knows that just across the county line is where you'll find the famous Grainger County Tomatoes. "With the success I have had in the past with fried green tomatoes and the fresh, made-from-scratch menu I wanted to do, this seemed like a no-brainer to me," Hadley says.



**Brett and Tammy Hadley opened the Green Tomato Grill in Mooresburg, Tennessee, in 2012.**

When a green tomato is ready for the skillet, you'll notice just the slightest blush. That's when the flavor is at its sweetest, Hadley says.

"So much better than really firm tomatoes that have just been picked," he advises.

And though size doesn't matter to most, to Hadley, it does: The bigger the better, so there's more tomato on the plate for all to enjoy.

Though he won't give away all his trade secrets, he says the best way to fry a green tomato is to soak it first, then use dried rice flour in the batter.

"They'll fry up nice and crisp, and you will not lose your breading," he says.

At Green Tomato Grill you'll find fried green tomatoes served with nothing more than a homemade dipping sauce, but the tomatoes also replace cucumbers in the house salad. They appear alongside bacon in a pasta Alfredo dish and replace ripe tomatoes in the BLT. And there's nothing better than a fried green tomato on a grilled pimiento cheese-jalapeno cornbread sandwich.

The versatility of fried green tomatoes never ceases to amaze the palate. Here are some recipes Hadley has found particularly pleasing. 🗨️



## FAST FACT

They're certainly a Southern staple, but, in fact, fried green tomatoes originated in the Midwest. The first recipes for them were found in Jewish and Midwestern cookbooks in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. But it is here in the South where they've been embraced as part of our culture.

## IF YOU GO

**Green Tomato Grill**  
802 Old Highway 11 West  
Mooresburg, TN 37811  
Phone: 423-921-8282



*Food Editor Anne P. Braly is a native of Chattanooga, Tenn. Prior to pursuing a freelance career, she spent 21 years as food editor and feature writer at a regional newspaper.*



## MARINATED FRIED GREEN TOMATOES

- 2 green tomatoes, sliced 1/4-inch thick
- 1/2 cup buttermilk
- 1/4 cup rice flour
- 1/4 cup cornmeal
- 1/2 teaspoon Cajun seasoning
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- Oil for frying

Soak the tomato slices in the buttermilk for at least 30 minutes. Mix the flour, cornmeal, salt and pepper. Pull the tomato slices out of the buttermilk, then dredge them in the cornmeal mixture. Fry the tomato slices in about a 1/2-inch oil over medium heat in heavy skillet, such as cast iron, until golden brown on both sides, about 3-4 minute per side. Serve with remoulade sauce, if desired.



## REMOULADE SAUCE

- 1 cup mayonnaise
- 3 tablespoons ketchup
- 2 tablespoons dill relish
- 1 1/2 teaspoons dry mustard
- Few drops of hot sauce
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 1-2 teaspoons prepared horseradish, optional

Combine all ingredients, adding horseradish if you like for a spicier sauce. Store, covered, in refrigerator. Serve with fried green tomatoes or use as sandwich spread for fried green tomato po' boys.

## FRIED GREEN TOMATO BENEDICT with Smithfield Ham & Pimiento Cheese Hollandaise

- 8 slices fried green tomatoes
- Pimiento cheese hollandaise:**
  - 8 tablespoons (1 stick) unsalted butter, melted
  - 4 egg yolks
  - 1 tablespoon lemon juice
  - 4 teaspoons powdered cheddar cheese (like that found in a package of mac and cheese)
  - 1 (4-ounce) jar chopped pimientos

- Dash of cayenne or Tabasco
- Dash of Worcestershire sauce
- Salt, to taste

### Poached eggs:

- 4 eggs
- 2 teaspoons white or rice vinegar

### To finish:

- 4 thin slices Smithfield ham
- Chopped chives
- Salt and freshly cracked pepper

Fry the tomatoes, using the preceding recipe or any of your favorites. Once they're cooked, keep them in the oven on warm until you're ready to assemble the dish.

### Make the pimiento cheese hollandaise:

Vigorously whisk together egg yolks and lemon juice in a stainless-steel bowl until the mixture is thickened and doubled in volume. Place the bowl over a saucepan containing barely simmering water (or use a double boiler); the water should not touch the bottom of the bowl. Continue to whisk rapidly. Be careful not to let the eggs get too hot or they will scramble. Slowly drizzle in the melted butter and continue to whisk until the sauce is thickened and doubled in volume. Remove from heat, whisk in powdered cheese a teaspoon at a time, Worcestershire sauce and cayenne. Stir in the pimientos. Cover and place in a warm spot until ready to use for the eggs

Benedict. If the sauce gets too thick, whisk in a few drops of warm water before serving. Salt to taste.

**Poach the eggs:** Bring a large saucepan, filled 2/3 full, with water to a boil, then add the vinegar. Bring the water to a boil again, then lower the heat to a bare simmer. This is the water in which you will poach the eggs. Working one egg at a time, crack an egg into a small bowl and slip into the barely simmering water. Once it begins to solidify, slip in another egg, until you have all four cooking. Turn off the heat, cover the pan, and let sit for 4 minutes. (Remember which egg went in first; you'll want to take it out first.) When it comes time to remove the eggs, gently lift out with a slotted spoon. Note that the timing is a variable on the eggs, depending on the size of your pan, how much water, how many eggs, and how runny you like them. You might have to experiment a little with your setup to figure out what you need to do to get the eggs exactly the way you like them. Gently remove the eggs from the poaching water and set in a bowl.

**To assemble:** Place two fried green tomatoes on each plate and top each with a slice of Smithfield ham, trimming the ham to fit the tomato. Place a poached egg on top of the ham, pour hollandaise over. Top with sprinkles of chives and fresh cracked black pepper. Serve at once. 🍴



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