

The

# Communicator

MARCH/APRIL 2013

Published for  
customers of



## KEEPING YOU INFORMED

when severe  
weather strikes

## NHTC DELIVERS PRIZES

to art & essay contest winners

## TECHNOLOGY TRANSFORMING

houses into "smart homes"

# Speaking with one voice in D.C.

Almost every day in our nation’s capital, discussions are held that lead to decisions, which in turn lead to new laws and regulations. The effects ripple out from Washington, D.C., often making a real impact on lives right here in our service area.



A good example is the work being done by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to restructure the telecommunications industry. The decisions this regulatory body is making are changing the very foundations of how companies like New Hope Telephone Cooperative receive our revenue. There is good reason to fear that these decisions will drive up costs for subscribers in rural areas while limiting the services to which you have access.

For these reasons, it has never been more important for cooperative and independent telecommunications companies to speak with one voice. These changes threaten to impact millions of individuals and businesses across America, and Washington needs to hear your concerns.

The National Telecommunications Cooperative Association, or NTCA, is the group through which NHTC and hundreds of other telcos like us make your voice heard at the national level. NTCA has a staff of professionals who keep a close watch on regulatory and congressional activity. They also engage with officials, educate them on our concerns, file briefs and court cases, and in general make sure that cooperative and independent telcos have a voice in the legislative and regulatory processes.

One of the most important NTCA functions will take place toward the end of April, when the organization hosts its annual Legislative and Policy Conference. NTCA members from across the country will gather in Washington, D.C., to meet with elected officials and regulators. We will ask questions, provide information and speak with one voice as we share our concerns on your behalf.

In the previous issue of this magazine, I discussed the importance of building partnerships and how this regional publication is a great example of those efforts. The NTCA Legislative and Policy Conference is an even broader joint effort, allowing us to make sure the FCC and members of Congress know who you are. We are all fighting these problems, and it’s our job as your telecommunications provider to present your concerns to those making these decisions.

Dealing with the federal government can at times be frustrating, to say the least. In the past couple of years in particular, the decisions and mixed signals coming out of Washington have left many people feeling like ours is a lost cause. But we will never give up the fight. We must keep a seat at the table if we hope to have an impact on the laws and regulations affecting the telecommunications industry. And we will do so with a unified voice, working together through NTCA to make sure officials understand that their desire to restructure our industry should not compromise the good work that has already been done to connect people and communities across rural America. 📞

**JIM COOK**  
General Manager



is a member-owned corporation dedicated to providing communications technology to the residents and businesses of New Hope, Grant and Owens Cross Roads.

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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*Owens Cross Roads Exchange*

David Ayers, Vice President  
*Grant Exchange*

Mike Whitaker, Secretary  
*New Hope Exchange*

Jimmy Segler, Treasurer  
*Grant Exchange*

Jeffrey Cantrell  
*Grant Exchange*

Jeff Cooper  
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Jim Duncan  
*New Hope Exchange*

Garland Elders  
*Owens Cross Roads Exchange*

Barry Jones  
*New Hope Exchange*

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### On the Cover:



Area meteorologists, including Spencer Denton from WAAY-31, rely on broadband to keep you informed. See story, Page 8.

# Annual Meeting

Tuesday, May 21

New Hope School

5 p.m. Registration

7:30 p.m. Business Meeting

*Be sure to bring a valid photo ID with you to vote in the board election.*



## Excerpts from the Bylaws

### Voting Procedure to Elect Board Members

#### ARTICLE IV BOARD MEMBERS

**SECTION 1.** General Powers. The business and affairs of the Cooperative shall be managed by a board of directors, consisting of nine (9) members. The membership of the Board of Directors shall be based as follows:

New Hope, four (4) members on the Board of Directors; Owens Cross Roads, two (2) members on the Board of Directors; and Grant, three (3) members on the Board of Directors.

**SECTION 2.** Election and Tenure of Office. The persons presently serving as directors of the cooperative shall compose the Board until the first annual meeting or until their successors shall be elected by a secret ballot at each annual meeting of the members, beginning with the year 1984 by and from the members at large to serve until the next annual meeting of the members or until their successors shall have been elected and shall have qualified. If an election of directors shall not be held on the day designated herein for the annual meeting, or at any adjournment thereof, a special meeting of the members shall be held for the purpose of electing directors within a reasonable time thereafter. Directors may be elected by a plurality vote of the members. All elected directors shall serve a term of four (4) years provided they do not resign or are not removed from office by the members. All directors terms will be staggered so that two (2) are elected each year, except in 1987 three (3) members of the Board of Directors shall be elected and every four (4) years thereafter; i.e., 1991, 1995, etc., three (3) members of the Board of Directors shall be elected.

**SECTION 3.** Qualifications. No person shall be eligible to

become or remain a board member of the cooperative who:

a) Is not a member of the Cooperative; and  
b) Is not a bona fide resident of the respective exchange from which said Board member was elected.

c) Is in any way employed by or financially interested in a competing enterprise or a business engaged in selling or reselling telephone service or supplies, or constructing or maintaining telephone facilities, other than a business operating on a cooperative non-profit basis for the purpose of furthering rural telephony.

Upon establishment of the fact that a board member is holding the office in violation of any of the foregoing provisions, the board shall remove such board member from office.

Nothing contained in this section shall affect in any manner whatsoever the validity of any action taken at any meeting of the board.

**SECTION 4.** Nominations. It shall be the duty of the board to appoint, not less than thirty (30) days nor more than seventy five (75) days before the date of a meeting of the members at which board members are to be elected, a three member (3) committee on nominations consisting of one (1) member from each exchange, so as to insure equitable representation. No member of the board may serve on such committee. The committee keeping in mind the principle of equitable representation, shall prepare and post at the principle office of the Cooperative at least twenty (20) days before the meeting a list of nominations for board members which shall include at least

two candidates for each board position to be filled by the election. The Secretary shall be responsible for mailing with the notice of the meeting or separately, but at least ten (10) days before the date of the meeting, a statement of the number of board members to be elected and the names and addresses of the candidates nominated by the committee on nominations. Any fifty (50) or more members acting together may make other nominations by petition and the Secretary shall post such nominations at the same place where the list of nominations made by the committee is posted. Nominations made by petition, if any, received at least five (5) days before the meeting shall be included on the official ballot. Later nominations by petition shall be treated as nominations from the floor. The chairman shall call for additional nominations from the floor and nominations shall not be closed until at least one minute has passed during which no additional nominations has been made. No member may nominate more than one candidate, for the same position.

Any nominee by petition or from the floor must meet the qualifications stated in the Bylaws, Article IV, Section 3.

**SECTION 5.** Failure of Action by the Nominating Committee. In the event the nominating committee fails to make a report after 3 requests by the Secretary and having been notified and appointed in accordance with the Bylaws Article IV Section 4, it shall be the duty of the Board of Directors to make said nominations or nomination based upon the guidelines set out in the Bylaws, Article IV, Sections 1 through 4.



### Scholarships available

NHTC offers two \$500 scholarships each year to assist area seniors with college expenses. One scholarship will be awarded to a high school senior from DAR school and one to a high school student from NHHS. The scholarships will be awarded to students who exemplify academic achievement and community involvement.

Hurry, deadline for NHTC to receive applications is **March 31**.

Applications are available from your school's guidance counselor or at NHTC.

# Increased Internet presence in tomorrow's forecast

WHNT 19 Chief Meteorologist Jason Simpson (right) prepares to give a report on the weather while Brandon Chambers and Jennifer Watson track storms.

By Diana LaChance

**T**here's a severe thunderstorm in the Valley and a tornado is heading your way. You need information now.

How can you get a weather update? And more importantly, how soon can you get it? Those are exactly the kinds of questions that the National Weather Service (NWS), area forecasters and NHTC take very seriously. The answers may surprise you.

"Social media is now a major part of the job for TV meteorologists," says WAAY-31 Chief Meteorologist Spencer Denton. He lists Facebook, Twitter, Google Plus and even LinkedIn as some of the platforms he uses to provide weather information to the public. "It's where people are going, and we're going to go wherever people are."

In the past, he continues, "we used to just go on TV and do three minutes of broadcast – and there is still a fair amount

of people who watch the local weather." But now, he continues, "it's to the point where you not only have to be a good forecaster and a good broadcaster, but you also have to have an effective Internet presence, whether it's getting information to the public or being aware of new technologies."

WHNT News 19's Chief Meteorologist Jason Simpson also spends a lot of time online, and says his followers expect nothing less. "People are plugged into us through Facebook and Twitter, through email, and to some extent through Google Plus," he says, adding that he prefers Twitter over Facebook as a more effective means of communication.

"Twitter was built for weather, in my opinion," Simpson says. "If there's a tornado about to cross I-65, I can use hashtags on Twitter to reach many more

people than with a Facebook post." Hashtags are key words or phrases, preceded by a hash mark, that are embedded in Twitter messages which makes searching for specific topics easier.

Forecasters aren't the only ones making the most of social media. Even the NWS has stepped up its online presence. "Not only do we use broadband to transmit warnings and monitor weather," says Stephen Latimer, a forecaster at Huntsville's NWS office, "but we also post weather reports and storm watches on Twitter and we have trained weather spotters who can post on our Facebook page." Furthermore, the NWS sends out Really Simple Syndication (RSS) feeds, which summarize news and information from a variety of sources and display them in a single place, often referred to as a news reader or news aggregator.



**ABOVE: Dedicated Internet connections enable Stephen Latimer with the NWS to stay in touch with meteorologists across the area during severe weather.**



**LEFT: WAAY-31 Chief Meteorologist Spencer Denton gives a weather forecast from the Backyard Water Garden.**

Those RSS feeds become even more vital to area residents during the months of March to May, the primary tornado season. “It’s very important to be weather-aware, especially with the amount of severe weather we get in the spring,” says Latimer.

That importance has only increased since the devastating tornado outbreak that hit Alabama in April 2011. “I think we are probably at a heightened level of weather awareness at this point in the history of north Alabama and southern Tennessee simply because of April 27th,” says Simpson.

It was in the wake of those storms that Denton visited NHTC to give a presentation on weather awareness and safety. “Severe weather safety is vital for NHTC, not just to keep their employees safe, but also to make sure their network is holding together so that customers have Internet access during that time,” he says. “After all, if you need weather information immediately, high-speed Internet is a much better way to get it.”

It’s not only about weather information. “It’s also about keep-

ing the public’s services up and running in case they need 911 services,” says NHTC Manager of Administrative Services Tammy Weeks. “We have to be weather aware and know the signs to watch for because we have crews out and about all day long and we must be able to keep those communications up.”

As with residents, the news stations and the NWS office also rely on uninterrupted access during weather emergencies. “There are a lot of communication lines that come through here, and we have several that are broadband,” says Latimer. “I would say the faster the better, because when we’re in severe weather mode, we have to have fast connections.” And if those connections are knocked out, Latimer says not to worry. “Because we can’t sacrifice speed at all, if our system starts going down or isn’t performing like it should be, we have a sister office in Jackson, Miss., to back us up.”

That said, broadband technology isn’t just useful during severe weather. When it comes to providing day-to-day information, it can be just as valuable, if not downright essential. “You need broadband capability to watch the videos and to look at the graphics we put out on our website, and you also need broadband for Facebook,” says Simpson. “And now we have an app called LiveAlert19, where we stream our live weather coverage, so that’s another application for which broadband can be useful.”

Denton concurs. “For our Tennessee Valley Weather Blog,” he says, “which is a more detailed discussion of the weather, you need high-speed Internet for some of the videos we have and weather software that we use.” He cites the Gibson Ridge radar product as an example. “Gibson Ridge is the same radar we look at as meteorologists, but to use it you must have certain specs on your computer — and you must have high-speed broadband Internet.”

In the end, no matter what platforms or tools you use to get your weather information, be it Twitter or Facebook, RSS feeds or live streaming, the important thing is to be prepared and stay informed when the storm hits. “As long as you have some reliable, stable connection, you can get the information you need,” says Simpson. ☎



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# NHTC Competition

A win for the whole community

by Diana LaChance

Contests, by their nature, must have a winner. But everyone ended up victorious after New Hope Telephone Cooperative's competition this past October, in which local students participated in age-appropriate challenges in celebration of National Cooperative Month.

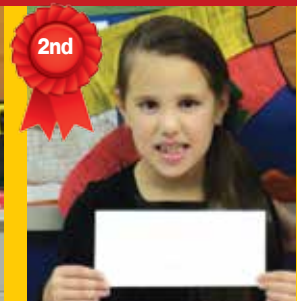
"We'd done something similar in the past, but this year we decided that we wanted to have something for all students at all schools," says contest coordinator and NHTC Marketing Administrator Christy Nelson. "As one of the largest businesses here, we want the community to know we're helping the schools – by challenging the kids and rewarding them for participating."

The competition was broken down into four categories, with each challenge tailored to a targeted age group. Pre-K students through first graders were tasked with coloring a telephone repairman picture with the theme 'NHTC is My Cooperative'; second through fourth graders were tasked with drawing and coloring their own picture with the theme 'Stay Safe: Call 8-1-1 Before You Dig'; fifth through eighth graders were tasked with creating a poster with the theme 'How I Use the Internet'; and ninth through twelfth graders were tasked with writing an essay with the theme 'My Community, My Cooperative'.

## PRESCHOOL – 1<sup>ST</sup> GRADE



Karli Ikard (OCR)



Elizabeth Mann (OCR)



Alyssa Copeland (OCR)



Landon Reed (NH)

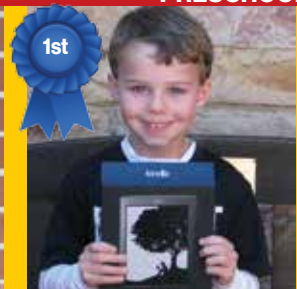


Zachary Loudermilk (NH)

## PRESCHOOL – 1<sup>ST</sup> GRADE



Roman Callahan (NH)



Trevor Baugh (DAR)



Cash Rogers (DAR)



Laiken Rice (DAR)



Karli Schrimsher (OCR)

## 2<sup>ND</sup> – 4<sup>TH</sup> GRADE

## 2<sup>ND</sup> – 4<sup>TH</sup> GRADE



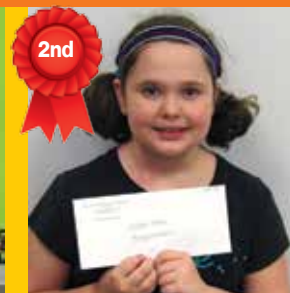
John Gowan (OCR)



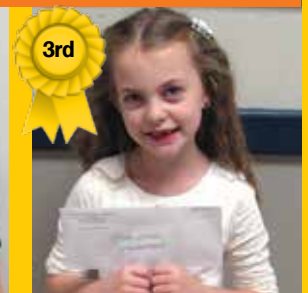
Wesley Esslinger (OCR)



Ella Whitaker (NH)



Sarah Meeks (NH)



Ciara Whorton (NH)

“We didn’t want to impose a lot of stipulations on the contest,” says Nelson, “so the only rules we had were that the work was to be completed by the students, and the essay had to be at least 500 words with sources.”

The end result was more than 400 entries, which were then judged by two NHTC employees, accountant Bobby Morrison and Internet technician Justin Clark. “So many of us have children in the schools,” explains Nelson, “to be fair we chose Bobby and Justin because neither of them have children within these school systems.”

The first-place winner in each category received a Kindle e-reader, with the second- and third-place finishers receiving cash prizes of \$50 and \$25, respectively. The prizes were then hand-delivered to the classroom, says Nelson. “The kids who won were ecstatic, for being recognized and for getting a prize, but all the students seemed really excited.”

And not just the kids, she adds. “We received a lot of calls from the teachers and principals, who all said their students enjoyed participating in the contest.”

That includes Keith Stanfield, principal at DAR Middle School.

“Three of our students won either a Kindle or a cash prize,” says Stanfield. “It’s always nice to see a company that gives back to its community and invests in its future.” And just as appreciative is Andrew Caves, principal at New Hope Elementary School, who lauded NHTC’s leadership role in the community and expressed gratitude for “involving the students in an initiative to promote and educate students in the area of Internet safety and usage.”

But for Nelson, it was the positive feedback she received from parents that meant the most. “As a parent, when you see an organization that is doing something to help or challenge or reward kids, then that’s priceless,” she says. “We just want them to realize that we’re here for the community, and that we are trying to do things not only to help the adults, but the kids, too.”

So while there may have only been 28 official prize recipients of the competition this past October, everyone in the community came out a winner thanks to NHTC’s involvement. And next year promises to be even better. “We’re hoping to make this an annual event,” says Nelson. “And though we haven’t decided yet what they will be, we know we’re going to have great prizes!” 📞



NHTC would like to thank everyone who participated in the competition.

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