

The

# Communicator

MARCH/APRIL 2014

Published for  
customers of

**New  
Hope**  
Telephone  
Cooperative  
*Your Broadband Connection*

## EXPLORING NEW WORLDS

Astronomy buff  
builds high-end  
telescopes

## FROM GUITARS TO CARS

Tour factories that make  
the things we love

## THE 'WRITE' TOOLS

Meet three local authors





# Connected homes, connected bodies

Consumers are embracing home automation and mobile, wearable devices

By Stephen V. Smith, Editor

For decades, society has imagined what the future will look like through movies, television, comic books and novels. These images almost always portray people interacting with technology to communicate with one another and control everyday tasks.

In the past five years, that future has moved much closer to reality, thanks to the convergence of several factors:

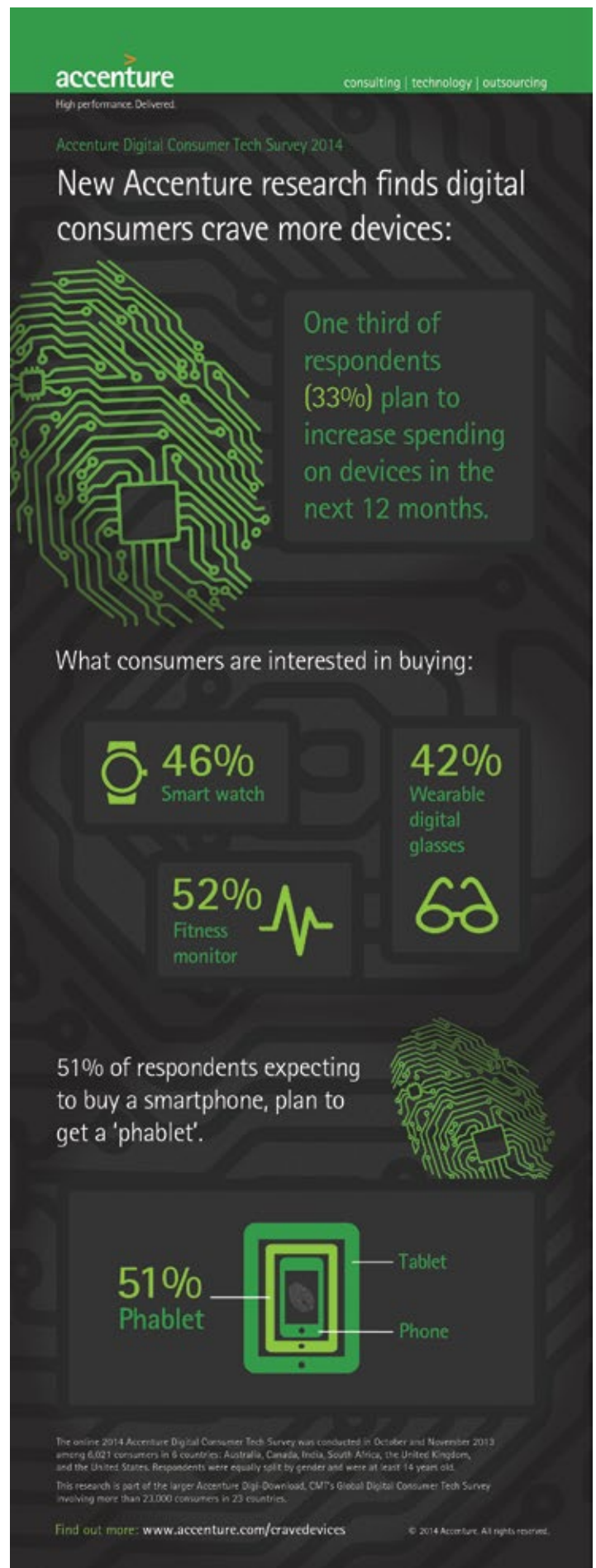
- 1) Tech companies are creating devices that are more affordable and easier to use.
- 2) Consumer demand for such technology is increasing (*see infographic on right*).
- 3) Communications networks are delivering the bandwidth necessary to make these devices work.

Several recent news reports reveal just how fast we are moving toward a lifestyle similar to that of “The Jetsons.” The global market research and consulting company MarketsandMarkets published a report in November stating that the value of the home automation and controls market is expected to reach \$48.02 billion by 2018. And in January, tech giant Google entered the home automation arena when it bought Nest Labs, the maker of advanced thermostats and smoke/carbon monoxide detectors.

The future was perhaps most evident at the Consumer Electronics Show (CES), held in January in Las Vegas. Dominating the huge conference were new, wearable, connected devices that control, monitor, collect, communicate and share for a wide range of functions (*see [www.cesweb.org](http://www.cesweb.org) for highlights*).

For any of this technology to work, however, consumers need access to a reliable broadband network. Whether the devices are connecting directly to the Internet, across a broadband-enabled Wi-Fi network in your home or via a cell tower, the network that our independent telecommunications providers are building is making all this functionality possible in rural America. ☎

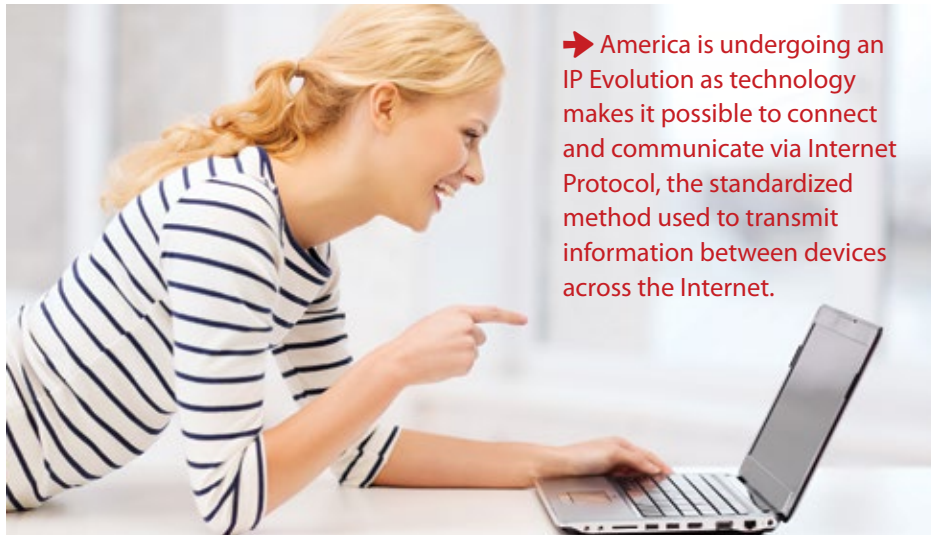
The Ijee, a voice-activated assistant that controls home automated devices over your Wi-Fi network, was one of the many products that premiered at the Consumer Electronics Show in January.





# The IP Evolution

*Regulations need to change to support consumer demand for standalone broadband*



→ America is undergoing an IP Evolution as technology makes it possible to connect and communicate via Internet Protocol, the standardized method used to transmit information between devices across the Internet.

**B**asic telephone service provides a reliable connection with family members, emergency services and business opportunities. Many people today, however, use other methods for their daily conversations. Even in rural areas like ours, there is growing demand for standalone broadband Internet service that comes without the requirement of a landline phone.

While rural telecommunications companies across the nation understand and acknowledge this trend, their hands are tied when it comes to offering a true standalone broadband service. This is one of the areas telcos are addressing as a group through NTCA—The Rural Broadband Association.

NTCA has petitioned the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to consider changes to rules that punish consumers who would prefer standalone broadband. “The Universal Service system needs to be designed to accommodate those consumers who are looking for broadband but may not want telephone service,” says Mike Romano, senior vice president of policy for NTCA.

Currently, telcos such as ours receive Universal Service support based upon

whether a consumer chooses to take telephone service. Universal Service is a fee that is paid within the industry to ensure we achieve maximum value from the nation’s interconnected networks. Telecommunications companies pay into the fund, then draw from the fund based on the cost of serving consumers in their area.

“If a consumer only wants broadband, Universal Service support is lost for that consumer’s line — and their broadband rates skyrocket as a result,” explains Romano. “That is an unsustainable and, frankly, somewhat questionable public policy result of a system that is supposedly being repositioned to support broadband.

“We’ve urged the FCC to fix that,” Romano continues. “We have been in very productive conversations with them, but there are still many details to be ironed out.”

As your telecommunications provider, we will continue to work on this issue with our fellow companies through our national association. We will make sure rural consumers have a voice at the table as Washington develops regulations to guide us through the IP Evolution. ☎



## Are you a cyberbully?

Childhood bullying has always been a concern. It is one of the unfortunate parts of growing up. I saw it as I grew up, my parents saw it and my kids see it today.

However, something has changed. The traditional bully has an even more evil twin — the cyberbully. Cyberbullies may never physically touch their victims, but through technology they can inflict much more damage on those they aim to hurt.

Today, a cyberbully can access their victims almost any time. They use multiple platforms to cause damage. From cell phones to social media to email, they stay connected to taunt their victims.

Some quick facts about cyberbullying:

- Girls are about twice as likely as boys to be victims — and perpetrators — of cyberbullying.
- Only 1 in 10 victims will inform a parent or trusted adult of their abuse.
- 1 in 6 parents know their child has been bullied online.

In the next “Digital Citizenship” article, I will provide tips and advice on how to identify and respond to cyberbullying.



To find more information about cyberbullying, along with some great resources for teachers, parents and teens, visit these sites:

- ▶ [www.stopbullying.gov](http://www.stopbullying.gov)
- ▶ [cyberbullying.us](http://cyberbullying.us)



**Carissa Swenson** is the owner and technology specialist of TechTECS, a technology training, education, consulting and support company.



## Connecting you to the future

It has been almost 30 years since our imaginations were captured by the movie “Back to the Future.” One of the reasons it became the top-grossing film of 1985 is that we as humans are fascinated with the idea of seeing what the future holds.



Spend a few minutes online searching for news articles covering the recent Consumer Electronic Show (CES), and you will start to get a fairly clear picture of the future. The show is billed as “the world’s gathering place for all who thrive on the business of consumer technologies.” (*Be sure to read the article on Page 2 of this magazine for more on this topic*).

Josh Seidemann is director of policy for our national trade group, NTCA—The Rural Broadband Association. He attended CES and kept rural telcos informed about what he saw. “You cannot leave CES without the growing sense that beginning now we are becoming increasingly connected to machines that measure, analyze and interpret our data,” wrote Seidemann at [ntca.org/new-edge](http://ntca.org/new-edge). “So, if I had to describe what impressed me the most, it would not be any particular product — rather, it is the proliferation of connected devices and how normal their use will become.”

Even if we’d had a time-traveling DeLorean, it would have been difficult to predict all this connectivity. In the early days of the Internet, even the tech leaders were short-sighted. Robert Metcalfe, founder of 3Com and inventor of Ethernet technology, wrote in a magazine column in 1995 that “I predict the Internet will soon go spectacularly supernova and in 1996 catastrophically collapse.”

I think it’s safe to say, 17 years later, that the Internet is here to stay.

When we first rolled out Internet service in this region, no one could have foreseen the level of connectedness we are seeing today. Already, many households have simple devices they can control with their smartphones or tablets, including security cameras and lighting controls. But change is coming fast. Think about some of these products displayed at CES, and how you might use them in your home:

- An infant sleep monitor that fits into a chest pocket of a baby’s clothing, tracking breathing, temperature and even how the baby is positioned, sending all this information to your mobile device
- A simple heart monitor you can wear comfortably that will send your electrocardiogram to your smartphone and to a physician to monitor your heart remotely
- A tiny device you can wear that will record information about your movement and activities, then display the information in an app

All this talk of the future emphasizes an important point. As your telecommunications company, we don’t know what’s coming — but through the network we are building, we are committed to equipping you to fully participate in all the future has to offer.

I think Seidemann said it best: “Sure, we could live without all the technology, but you could also hike down to the creek with a washboard to launder your old socks. Fact is, we expect electricity, we expect water, we expect broadband.” I couldn’t agree more. ☎

**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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### On the Cover:



Dave Tandy turned his love for astronomy into a new career, manufacturing telescopes. See story Page 8.



NEW HOPE TELEPHONE COOPERATIVE

# ANNUAL MEETING

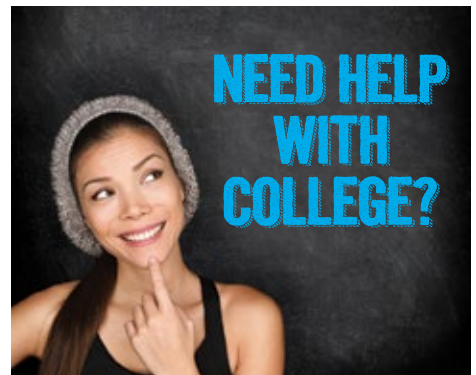
Tuesday, May 20

New Hope Middle School Library and Auditorium



- ▶ Registration and voting begin at 5 p.m.
- ▶ Business meeting follows at 7:30 p.m.

*Members must bring a valid photo ID to vote in the board election.*



## ATTENTION HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS:

NHTC will offer two \$500 scholarships — one to a graduating senior from DAR and one to a graduating senior from NHHS — to help with college expenses. Applications are available from your school's guidance counselor, online at [www.nhtc.coop](http://www.nhtc.coop) or at NHTC's business office. **Hurry! All applications must be received no later than March 31.**

## People you know... working for you!

The employees at NHTC work hard every day to provide members with the technology they need to stay connected. Meet Teron Prince and Bart Hopkins, two of the dedicated individuals who install the phone, Internet and TV services you rely on.

### MEET TERON

Teron Prince came to work for NHTC through a temp agency. After quickly learning the trade of fiber splicing, Prince was hired full time in January 2013.

After contractors have placed the fiber, Prince splices the fiber to connect the customer to any NHTC services they have ordered.

He and his wife, Mary, live in New Hope and he has two sons, Tyson and Marshall.

When not busy at work giving members a fiber connection, Prince likes to spend his time in the great outdoors hunting, fishing and camping. He usually helps coach one of his son's youth sports teams each year, too.



### MEET BART

The cooperative welcomed Bart Hopkins as a service technician in September. Before coming to NHTC, Hopkins worked for Otelco doing many of the same things he does here. He installs new service and makes repairs for phone, DSL and cable service as well.

He lives in Owens Cross Roads with his wife, Ericka, and stepson, Will. They are expecting another child in March.

When not working or with his family, Hopkins says he's either hunting or fishing. "I really like this area," he says. "Besides great people in the community, there's plenty of places to hunt."





# Rural telcos and electric cooperatives host joint Emergency Preparedness Summit

## Utility leaders come together to focus on preparing for disasters

When a region is struck by a natural disaster, quickly restoring power and lines of communication is a critical first step in rebuilding neighborhoods, communities and lives. Leaders among U.S. telecommunications companies and electric cooperatives recently gathered in the nation's capital to learn how to better prepare for potential disasters such as ice storms, hurricanes, tornadoes and floods.

The Emergency Preparedness Summit, held in November in Washington, D.C., was co-hosted by NTCA—The Rural Broadband Association and the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA). The summit focused on emergency preparedness issues for rural utilities, covering such topics as emergency planning; federal, state and local policy issues; recovery after an event; best practices; mitigation and the mutual assistance network. Utilities also learned ways that social media is becoming an important tool for disseminating news to communities.



When disaster strikes, the quick restoration of telecommunications networks is vital to a community's recovery efforts.

Retired Army Lt. General Russel L. Honoré was the key-note speaker for the event. As Commander of Joint Task Force Katrina, he led the U.S. Department of Defense response to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana.

“General Honoré had the crowd on its feet by the end of his talk,” says Shirley Bloomfield, chief executive officer of NTCA. “He preached the importance of ‘getting to the left side of disaster’ by being prepared.”

“He also highlighted the incremental costs that will be spared,” she adds, “by working to prepare in advance, instead of cleaning up the aftermath of any disaster — natural, man-made or cyber.”

Utility leaders also heard from Tim Bryan, chief executive officer of the National Rural Telecommunications Cooperative, who talked about plans for the nation's first interoperable, public-safety broadband network known as the First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet). 📞

—From NTCA reports

## SCAM ALERT

### The National Do Not Call Registry will never call you

If you receive a phone call from someone claiming to represent the National Do Not Call Registry, hang up immediately.

The Federal Trade Commission has posted the following warning on the registry website:

“Scammers have been making phone calls claiming to represent the National Do Not Call Registry. The calls claim to provide an opportunity to sign up for the Registry. These calls are not coming from the Registry or the Federal Trade Commission, and you should not respond to these calls.”

The website, [www.donotcall.gov](http://www.donotcall.gov), allows citizens to register their phone numbers, thereby limiting the telemarketing calls they receive. Telemarketers covered by the National Do Not Call Registry have up to 31 days from the date a phone number is registered to stop calling.



The National Do Not Call Registry website, found at [www.donotcall.gov](http://www.donotcall.gov), allows visitors to register a phone number, verify a registration and submit a complaint against a telemarketer.

## TIP

To protect themselves and their assets, citizens should never provide information to a caller asking for sensitive data such as date of birth, Social Security number and account numbers.



Looking for a good outdoor project this spring?

# Plant a tree!

**A**s spring arrives, homeowners start thinking about outdoor do-it-yourself projects that will add to the enjoyment of their homes while increasing its value.

One of the best investments a homeowner can make isn't a swimming pool or a deck. Planting trees, when done correctly, will deliver pleasure — and financial rewards — for years to come.

The secret to tree-planting success, however, is two-fold: planting the right tree in the right location.

## THE RIGHT TREE

There are many factors to consider when selecting a tree to plant on your property:

- How tall will it grow?
- How fast will it grow?
- How much sun does it need?
- What shape will it be at maturity?
- What temperature extremes can it withstand?

Visit [www.arborday.org/states](http://www.arborday.org/states) and click on your state to learn what hardiness zone you live in and what trees grow well in your area.

## THE RIGHT LOCATION

If you select the perfect tree but plant it in the wrong spot, you could cause problems for yourself, your neighbors and even utility workers in the future.

The illustration below shows what could be the most important tip in adding trees to your property. Never plant trees near a utility pole if those trees will grow more than 25 feet in height. Limbs growing into telecommunications or electricity lines can interrupt service for you and your neighbors, as well as cause additional work (sometimes dangerous work) for those who maintain the utility lines.

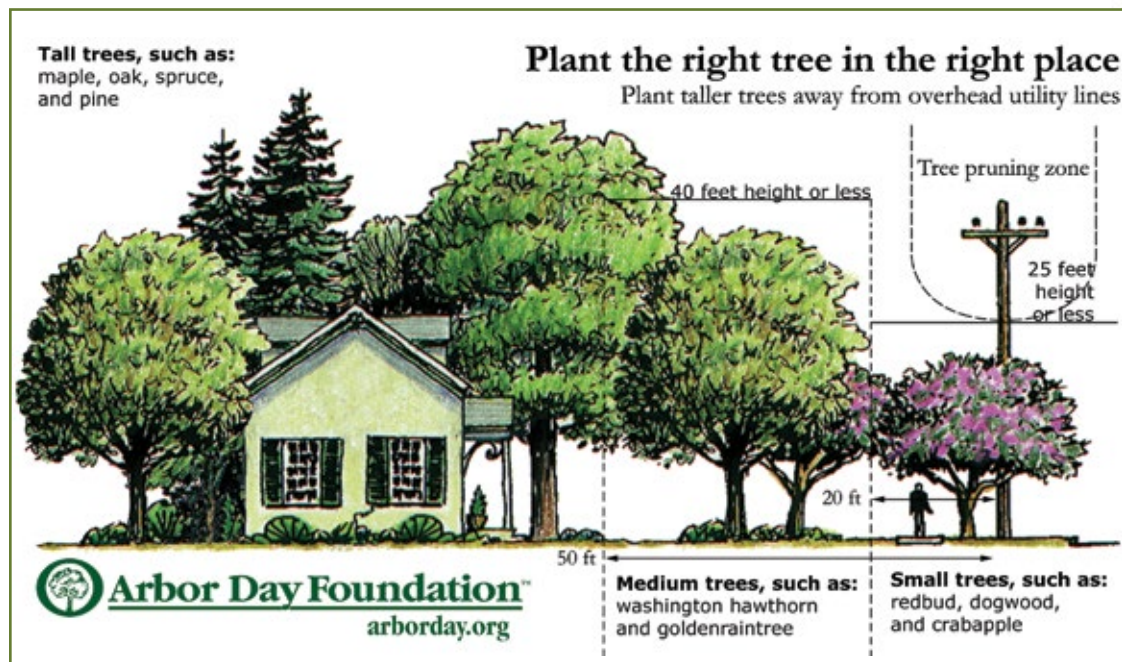
A pick and a shovel will be helpful, but the most important tool when planting trees is information. Your local nursery is often a great place to learn more about the varieties that grow well in your community. Every state has a forestry commission or department. And the Arbor Day Foundation ([www.arborday.org](http://www.arborday.org)) is one of the best-known resources to help homeowners make good tree-planting decisions. ☎



## WHY PLANT A TREE?

- ▶ Trees can add value to your home — as much as 15% by some estimates.
- ▶ Trees can lower your heating bills by 10-20%.
- ▶ Trees can lower your cooling bills by 15-35%.
- ▶ Trees can provide shelter and food for songbirds and other wildlife.

— Source: [www.arborday.org](http://www.arborday.org)



## STOP! BEFORE YOU PLANT A TREE:

**LOOK UP** to make sure the tree you are planting is far enough away from utility lines.

### CALL BEFORE YOU DIG

Call "811" to have underground utilities located, to ensure you don't dig into lines. You could interrupt power, broadband, phone, gas or water for you and your neighbors!



Helix Nebula as seen with  
AGO 12.5-inch Newtonian.

# REACHING FOR THE STARS

By Mikala Reasbeck

In eighth grade, David Tandy was introduced to something that would forever change his life.

“I was in Mr. Bruce’s science class,” he explains. “It was that generic science class everyone has to take. You learn a little bit about everything, and one part was astronomy.”

That one mish-mash class of chemistry, biology, geology and astronomy charted a course of stargazing.

“Within a month, I had read all the books in the library about astronomy,” Tandy says with a laugh.

In 2009, he founded AG Optical Systems (AGO), a company specializing in the design, development and production of high-resolution imaging systems for astronomical, scientific and military clients. AGO machines many of its own parts and sources out others from reliable manufacturers, then assembles these components into top-of-the-line, custom telescopes.

The telescopes Tandy’s company manufactures in New Hope are complex, high-end products. They are capable of snapping breathtaking color images of nebulae and galaxies — the kinds of images that have captured the imaginations of generations of schoolkids, just like Tandy.

## PURSUING HIS PASSION

Though Tandy has tinkered as an amateur stargazer and astronomer since that eighth grade science class, the path to AGO was not a direct one. When it was time for college, he chose to study aerospace engineering at the United States Naval Academy. After graduating, he served as a Marine officer for five years. Later, he earned both a master’s in engineering and an MBA.

“I’ve always focused on the engineering stuff,” he says, “because it’s a lot easier to go from an engineering background to business. But it’s a lot harder to go from a business or accounting background to be an engineer.”

After he finished school, he entered the corporate business world and got into venture capital, working with finance, business development and product development at start-ups.

“But it’s really not a good fit with who I am,” Tandy says. “I kind of like a little more independence, and driving a desk from 9 to 5 is just not my idea of career bliss.”

In 2002, Tandy started networking among Naval Academy and West Point alumni, which, he says, “quickly zeroed me in on Huntsville.”

On a whim, Tandy and his wife, Angie, drove to Huntsville to see if it was somewhere they might like to live. After a casual business lunch, he found himself with a few job offers.

For a while, he worked in what he describes as “standard government contracting.” In 2008, the couple moved to Nashville when Tandy accepted a job offer at a healthcare company. However, they soon missed the Huntsville area and decided to move back. The couple found their perfect home in New Hope.



Dave Tandy, owner of AG Optical Systems, demonstrates how he tests and adjusts the line of sight on his telescopes.



**RIGHT:** Tandy, with the help of his wife, Angie, manufactures many of the parts for these complex telescopes in his New Hope facility.

**BELOW:** Carbon fiber composite tubes with honeycomb cores are made on site and can be as much as 72 inches long.



In 2009, Tandy started AGO as a “part-time business out of the garage.” But after moving to New Hope in June 2012, he was able to quit his job and turn his entire focus toward his business.

“I noticed I’m starting to get a little more gray, my near vision isn’t as good as it used to be,” he says. “I thought, ‘Before I get too much older, I really should pursue this passion and see how it turns out, because I still have plenty of time to recover.’”

## STARGAZING

AGO targets the amateur astronomer market, but they’re not making the kinds of telescopes Santa might leave under the tree at Christmas. The telescopes Tandy and his wife build aren’t quite strong enough for peeking into unknown galaxies, but they are capable of helping amateur astronomers who have moved past the hobbyist stage see much, much further than a telescope from a toy and hobby shop.

There’s a surprising amount of demand for these powerful telescopes. AGO takes advantage of NHTC’s broadband service to operate a website that handles orders for custom-built telescopes from customers in

the United States and countries around the world, including Russia, Italy and Japan.

“We’ve heard horror stories about people buying \$20,000 telescopes with really identifiable flaws,” he says, adding that some companies also charge their customers to fix these problems.

With AGO, however, there’s an insistence on providing great customer support both before and after a product gets delivered and on being honest with customers throughout the entire process. This is a boon for their customers, who pay upwards of \$30,000 for telescopes built to exacting standards.

Despite the hefty price tag, Tandy says the telescopes look more impressive and complicated than they really are. “You can design a part, and the software takes care of the rest.”

Once the software is running, he says, it’s just a matter of running the machines so the products have a nice finish and no tools get broken. “But that just comes with some experience and Googling a lot.”

While he can make it sound like a relatively simple process that anyone with enough time and interest could handle, he’s also ready to admit that there’s a bit more to it.

“The competencies you develop to build these telescopes ...” he says with a sigh.

“You have the optical design and mechanical design. There’s thermal analysis, because it’s warm when it gets started in the evening and gets cold overnight. And the optical tolerances are on an order of a millionth of an inch, so when things move, it affects them.”

If that’s not enough for the uninitiated to wrap their heads around, there are also the mirrors that go inside the telescopes. These mirrors are necessary for capturing breathtaking galactic shots, but they’re tricky, to say the least.

“You would think you could drive a tank over the mirror, and it wouldn’t bend, but you’d be surprised,” Tandy explains. “If you even breathe on it the wrong way, the mirror bends enough to distort stars. It’s a real finesse job to hold a 35-pound mirror to where it won’t move and it’s not bent at all.”

Even with all that goes into the process, Tandy’s happier reaching for the stars than grabbing at capital and investments.

“I lose a lot more sleep, because I’m more invested in it, but I’m having more fun, career-wise, than I’ve ever had,” he says. ☎



# ONE PIECE AT A TIME

## Factory tours offer a glimpse of the hard work needed to create the products America loves

BY PATRICK SMITH

Headlines may say America's manufacturing base is slowly dwindling, but across the Southeast there are thousands of businesses creating the products that people drive, play, eat and otherwise use everyday. From the popularization of the assembly line by Henry Ford in the early 1900s to the thousands of robots that help to manufacture today's vehicles, factories can be one of the best examples of American ingenuity — and fascinating places to visit. Not all of the factories spread throughout the South offer tours, but here are a few that are built to please visitors.



### GIBSON GUITAR – Memphis, Tenn.

Long before a man named Les Paul revolutionized the sound of the electric guitar, Gibson was creating some of the world's best musical instruments. Today, Gibson's instruments are still shaping the world of music, including their signature solid-body Les Paul models. See the wood transform into a musical masterpiece as visitors to Gibson Beale Street Showcase in Memphis, Tenn., watch the skilled luthiers go through the intricate process of binding, neck-fitting, painting, buffing and tuning the classic instruments. If Memphis is too far away, Gibson's Nashville store in Opry Mills Mall showcases craftsmen building guitars throughout the week.

More information: [www2.gibson.com/Gibson/Gibson-Tours.aspx](http://www2.gibson.com/Gibson/Gibson-Tours.aspx)







#### ▶ **LOUISVILLE SLUGGER** – Louisville, Ky.

Celebrating America's pastime could be difficult without the creation of Bud Hillerich. Along with his partner Frank Bradsby, Hillerich popularized the baseball bat and by 1923 they were selling more bats than any of their competitors. For most familiar with the sport, their creation – known today as the Louisville Slugger – has become as synonymous with the game of baseball as the player's glove and a fan's hot dog. Patrons can take a guided tour through the entire process – visitors even receive a free miniature Louisville Slugger bat – at the Louisville Slugger Museum and Factory in Louisville, Ky.

More information: [www.sluggermuseum.com](http://www.sluggermuseum.com)

#### ▶ **MAYFIELD DAIRY** – Athens, Tenn.

From their humble beginnings in 1910 with 45 Jersey cows, Mayfield has grown into one of America's treasured dairy brands — all while keeping the family-owned business based in small town Athens, Tenn. The educational, behind-the-scenes tour walks visitors through the history of the brand and the creation of their delicious milk, ice cream and many other products. Didn't get your fill of ice cream? Just 20 minutes away, travelers can visit Sweetwater Valley Farm and see how a modern dairy farm operates.

More information: [www.mayfelddairy.com](http://www.mayfelddairy.com) and [www.sweetwatervalley.com/tours.html](http://www.sweetwatervalley.com/tours.html)



#### ▶ **CHARLESTON TEA PLANTATION** – Wadmalaw Island, S.C.

With the beautiful setting in the Lowcountry of South Carolina, enjoying a cup of tea is practically a bonus rather than the main attraction at the Charleston Tea Plantation in Wadmalaw Island, S.C. During a factory tour, visitors can not only see how American Classic Tea is made, but they can also take a trolley ride through more than 127 acres of farmland with breathtaking Camellia Sinensis tea plants as far as the eye can see.

More information: [www.charlestonteaplantation.com/tours/factory-tours.aspx](http://www.charlestonteaplantation.com/tours/factory-tours.aspx)



#### ▶ **TOYOTA** – Georgetown, Ky.

Outside of Japan, car enthusiasts can find Toyota's largest vehicle manufacturing plant in the Bluegrass state. Employing more than 7,000 workers and producing nearly 2,000 vehicles every day, Toyota's Georgetown, Ky., facility covers 7.5 million square feet of floor space — the equivalent of 156 football fields. Visitors can see the five different vehicles and three engine models being built during the roughly two-hour plant tour.

More information: [www.toyotageorgetown.com/tour.asp](http://www.toyotageorgetown.com/tour.asp)

#### ▶ **GOLDEN FLAKE** – Birmingham, Ala.

Once endorsed by legendary Alabama football coach Paul "Bear" Bryant, Golden Flake snack foods still hold true to their Southern roots at their operation in Birmingham, Ala. Would you believe that more than 1 million pounds of chipping potatoes are processed in a normal week at their factory? Guests can follow the process as potatoes and corn sweep through conveyor belts to create and fill up to 100 bags per minute of finished snack foods, which are then ready to be shipped to convenience stores throughout their 12-state market.

More information: [www.goldenflake.com/walkingtour.html](http://www.goldenflake.com/walkingtour.html)



#### **Still want to see more? Each of these factories have tours available:**

- Honda Manufacturing in Lincoln, AL
- Hyundai Manufacturing in Montgomery, AL
- Blue Bell Ice Cream in Sylacauga, AL
- George Dickel Tennessee Whisky in Normandy, TN
- Jack Daniel's Distillery in Lynchburg, TN
- Ale-8-1 soft drink in Winchester, KY
- Rebecca-Ruth Candies in Frankfort, KY
- General Motors Corvette Manufacturing in Bowling Green, KY
- Maker's Mark Distillery in Loretto, KY



# A GOOD BOOK

By Mikala Reasbeck



## Meet three local authors writing about God, family and fiction

It's no surprise that this area attracts scores of engineers and scientists, but it's also home to a few active, vibrant female writers. These ladies are turning out heartfelt memoirs, powerful devotionals and paranormal thrillers imbued with Christian themes and deeply rooted in the South. Though their material is as diverse as the ladies themselves, it's guaranteed to get readers thinking about, reflecting on and enjoying life.

### BARBARA DICKENS

*Love Bugs, Peaches, and My Life in the South*

To commemorate the 45th anniversary of her father's death, Barbara Dickens started putting down her memories of him onto paper. She had hoped to share these stories with her three sons, allowing her father's legacy to live on.

"My sons never knew their grandfather, but he would have made such a great one," she says.

Dickens, a seasoned teacher, had never written a book and had never intended to, but on a whim, she sent some of her stories to Tate Publishing.

"I didn't expect to hear back," Dickens says, "but they sent a contract, so I had to finish writing the book."

Those stories were expanded and organized into her 2012 memoir "Love Bugs, Peaches, and My Life in the South."

"Love Bugs" refers to her first encounter with the insects when she transferred to college in Florida. "Peaches" was inspired by a college beau who called her Peaches because she grew up in Georgia, the Peach State. However, the final part of the title, "My Life in the South," truly illustrates the point of the book: that this is her chance to pass on her legacy and heritage.

Her life in the South has been spread across four states, decades of students, her sons and a growing brood of grandchildren. Chapters on parenting, raising boys, her mother and her father, among others, are brimming with practical advice, anecdotes and a strong emphasis on Christian values.



"Nowadays, you hear so much about dysfunctional families and kids going in different directions from their parents," she says. "I've found that the family that prays together and plays together, stays together."

Purchase information: paperback (\$19.99) or ebook download (\$13.99) available at [tatepublishing.com](http://tatepublishing.com); Kindle version (\$7.99) and paperback (\$16.14) at [amazon.com](http://amazon.com).



## DONNA JACKSON

*Temple Sweepers • Come Saturday Morning  
Everyday Heroes: Old, New, and Even You*

Since 2010, Donna Jackson of Grant has maintained an active blogging presence on Perfection Road ([perfection-road.com](http://perfection-road.com)). The blog's tag line, "Filling life's potholes with God's perfection," provides a summary of her work — to encourage people to turn to God for guidance through life's troubles and struggles.

"Writing just seems to be where my heart is," Jackson says. "Besides, when you work with the gifts that God's given you, it's really a lot of fun."

The retired teacher decided to take her writing talents from the screen to the page in 2011, when she self-published her first book, "Temple Sweepers: Motivation for a Healthy Body and Soul."

"It's my own personal story and things I learned about how the physical body and spirit go together — how they coexist," she explains.

Though she says the first book took her quite a while to put together, it's given her momentum to keep going. In 2012, she self-published "Come Saturday Morning: Thoughts from Perfection Road," a compilation of blog posts and devotional. Her third book, "Everyday Heroes: Old, New, and Even You," is a self-published devotional for women that was just released.

All of her books are aimed at empowering readers to live



healthy physical and spiritual lives. Her forthcoming devotional, however, is also meant to motivate generations of women to talk and learn from one another.

"I think sometimes grandmothers forget to tell their grandchildren things," she explains. "But when you get three generations together, you get some really meaty discussion."

Purchase information: "Temple Sweepers," "Come Saturday Morning" & "Everyday Heroes: Old, New, and Even You" available for \$10 each at [perfectionroad.com](http://perfectionroad.com); "Temple Sweepers" available for \$10 at [amazon.com](http://amazon.com).



## AMANDA PORTER

*The Shadow*

It wasn't just a matter of having time on her hands, though. She also had to have courage because, as she says, "You hear a lot of, 'No, No, No'" while trying to get a book published. After some of those "No, No, No" responses, she decided to publish it herself.

"The Shadow" is the first installment of "The Darkness Trilogy," a collection of psychological paranormal thrillers for the young adult market. The main character is a young Southern girl with Christian values who Porter describes as "someone I thought I could see in my own neighborhood and connect with."

It's an ambitious move for a young writer to attempt to tackle a trilogy, but Porter knew that her character needed room to grow.

In the meantime, she's using NHTC's Internet service to connect with bloggers and writers, sell her work online and get other projects off the ground.

"I write, I do photography for family and friends," she says. "Anything creative I can get my hands on, I want to do it."

Purchase information: Kindle version (\$9.99) and paperback (\$11.99) at [amazon.com](http://amazon.com); paperback (\$14.99) at [createspace.com](http://createspace.com). ☎

When Amanda Porter, aka A. G. Porter, was in 9th grade, she started filling up notebooks with character sketches and story ideas. It took some time, but one of those ideas made it out of an old notebook and into a book in 2012.

"I was going through notebooks one day and just picked it back up," Porter says, explaining the origins of "The Shadow."

She says she always thought "it would be really cool" to be a writer, but it wasn't until she got laid off from her government contract job that she could try it full time.

"I was in the same boat as a lot of other people here," she says. "So, I thought maybe this is God's way of saying, 'I'm giving you some time here, so use it wisely.'"



## Coming around to sweet potatoes

I've had a love-hate relationship with sweet potatoes for 10 years. The 40 years before that, it was mostly the latter. I never cared for them. My parents once tried to convince me that a baked sweet potato was just as good as a baked Idaho potato. Never fell for that one. But that's my bad. It was about a decade ago, though, that sweet potato fries became trendy in restaurants. And chefs began using them in place of white potatoes when they served roasted vegetables. And of course, there are the bags of sweet potato chips that are hard to resist. Oh, and I can never tire of Ruth's Chris Steak House's sweet potato casserole as a side dish or dessert with a scoop of vanilla ice cream. Sweet potatoes are one of the healthiest foods on the planet. They contain lots of fiber and vitamins B6, C and E. They have almost double the amount of potassium as a banana, and are loaded with beta carotene which our bodies convert into vitamin A. Those tubers appear to be health-boosting ninjas. So if you can eat one without all the fat added through frying or with all the fattening additives used in making a casserole, more power — and good health — to you.



Anne P. Braly  
Food Editor

## Sweet potatoes get their day in the sun

Sweet potatoes — they're not just for holiday meals anymore. With the popularity of sweet potato chips and fries, more farmers are growing them than ever before and more consumers are enjoying them year round.

Evelyn Rudd has lived her life in Benton, Ky., a town that has an affinity for the once-lowly spud. There was a time when farmers came in droves to sell their sweet potatoes on the town square. Soon, it grew into a huge community event. Now, 170 years later, the folks of Benton roll out the red carpet in honor of sweet potatoes.

"In the past, there was a huge focus on sweet potatoes and people selling them," Evelyn recalls. Now, she says, it draws vendors selling a variety of food and wares. It's a festival atmosphere that draws crowds from in town and out. "The whole town shuts down."

Evelyn grew up eating sweet potatoes. Her mother had a garden, and the family ate them year round. "I've always loved them," she says.

For decades, Americans mainly consumed sweet potatoes in casseroles flowing with butter and marshmallows on Thanksgiving and Christmas, resulting in dishes full of flavor, but also fat and calories. In recent years, however, this mainstay of southern agriculture has charted new territories — on restaurant menus, in healthy drinks and as frozen french fries and tater tots on grocery store aisles.

Sweet potatoes are loaded with nutrition.



Evelyn Rudd

Just one cup of mashed sweet potatoes gives you healthy doses of vitamin A, critical for eye health, and vitamin B6, needed for heart health. So eating them with as few additives as possible is the healthiest way to go.

"Most of the time I bake them like a regular baked potato, but I top them with butter and cinnamon or nutmeg," says Evelyn.

Just like any good cook, she has a library of cookbooks, their pages dog-eared and stained through years of use, the mark of any seasoned cook. And it's her sweet potato recipes that get the most use.

"There's just something about Kentucky soil that makes our sweet potatoes even sweeter," she says. 🍷



### TATER DAY

The Kiwanis Club of Benton, Ky., is gearing up for its biggest event of the year, the annual **Tater Day**, celebrating the town's beloved relationship with sweet potatoes. It's always held on the first Monday in April, which this year falls on April 7. Now in its 170th year, it continues to grow in popularity. Folks from near and far come for a day of old-fashioned fun. The town closes up and the festival opens with a big parade.

It all started when local farmers would bring their sweet potatoes and their potato slips to the court square to sell them. There are still a few vendors who sell sweet potatoes, but these days it's more about having fun and enjoying horse races, mule pulls and other contests, including the always-popular barbecue cook-off. It's a day for old-fashioned fun sponsored by the Benton Kiwanis Club. For more information or to see what's cooking for the 2014 Tater Day, log onto [www.bentonkykiwanisclub.org](http://www.bentonkykiwanisclub.org).





## SWEET POTATO PIE

- 1/4 cup butter
- 1/2 cup light brown sugar
- 1 1/2 cups mashed sweet potatoes
- 3 eggs, slightly beaten
- 1 cup light corn syrup
- 1/2 cup milk
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1/4 teaspoon cinnamon

Cream together butter and sugar. Add hot potatoes and eggs. Mix well. Mix in syrup, milk, salt, vanilla and cinnamon. Pour into a 9-inch unbaked pie crust. Bake 10 minutes at 425° F. Reduce heat to 325° F and bake until done.

## Perfect pies, super soufflés

### Caramel Sweet Potato Soufflé

#### Soufflé:

- 3 cups cooked and mashed sweet potatoes
- 2 tablespoons melted butter
- 2 eggs, beaten
- Pinch of nutmeg
- Pinch of salt
- 1/2 cup chopped pecans

#### Caramel sauce:

- 1 1/2 cups white sugar, divided
- 1/2 cup milk
- 1 tablespoon butter

**For soufflé:** Mix all soufflé ingredients, pour into soufflé dish or casserole and bake at 350° F for 15 minutes. Remove from oven and, while still warm, top with caramel sauce and serve.

**To make caramel sauce:** Caramelize 1/2 cup sugar by putting in skillet over medium heat; cook, stirring, until sugar is golden brown; set aside. In separate pan,

add 1 cup sugar to milk and cook slowly until bubbly; add butter and stir until melted and combined. Mix in caramelized sugar, stirring to combine. Pour over sweet potatoes.

### Sweet Potato Bread

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 1/4 teaspoons baking soda
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 1/2 teaspoons allspice
- 2 eggs
- 1 cup mashed sweet potatoes
- 1 1/2 cups milk
- 1/2 cup olive oil
- 1 cup chopped walnuts or pecans

Mix together dry ingredients; add eggs, sweet potatoes, milk and olive oil; mix until thoroughly blended. Stir in nuts, then pour into a 9- by 5-inch loaf pan. Bake in preheated 350° F oven for 1 hour 15 minutes (if using a dark nonstick pan reduce oven heat to 325° F). Check

for doneness by inserting toothpick in center of loaf. Cool in pan for 10 minutes, then turn out onto a wire rack.

### Sweet Potato Cobbler

- 2 cups thinly sliced sweet potatoes
- 4 cups water
- 1 1/2 cups sugar, divided
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1/2 cup vegetable oil
- 3/4 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/2 cup milk
- Nutmeg, to taste

Bring sweet potatoes and water to boil, cooking until tender; drain potatoes, then add 1 cup sugar and butter; set aside. In separate bowl, mix together oil, 1/2 cup sugar, flour and milk; pour into greased baking dish. Add hot sweet potatoes over batter. Sprinkle with nutmeg. Bake in 350° F oven for 20 minutes or until crust is golden brown. Crust will envelope sweet potatoes as cobbler cooks. 🍴





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