

The

Communicator

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2019

BROADBAND:
MILLENNIAL EDITION

GOING ONCE, GOING TWICE

Local auction house
offers bargains galore

LOOK TO THE SKIES

Eagle watching
weekends are here

TRY A TOUR THAT POPS

Soda bottlers showcase
regional favorites





BY SHIRLEY BLOOMFIELD, CEO
NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association

What is your broadband story?

We just closed out a year when rural broadband was a continuing news item, and I believe that will hold true in 2019. This is good news for those of you reading this magazine, and even better news for the millions of rural Americans not served by a progressive broadband provider like yours.

It's easy to get caught up in the policy behind the issues. After all, the bills Congress debates become the laws that govern rural broadband. It's so important that rural broadband providers like yours stay involved in the process to ensure that public policy encourages investment in building reliable broadband service to our rural regions. That's a key function of NTCA as the unified voice of nearly 850 independent, community-based telecommunications companies.

But we must always remind ourselves that the reason we work for good public policy is to help communities build the networks needed to support an improved quality of life for real people. In every issue of this magazine, you read stories of people who are using broadband to make a difference in their lives, businesses, families and communities. That is what drives our work.

With funding programs in the news, USDA efforts and FCC initiatives — not to mention new providers getting into the telecom business — 2019 is going to be another big news year for broadband. Help us keep our eyes on the human impact by sharing your broadband stories on social media using the #ruraliscool hashtag. [📱](#)



Fighting cyberthreats together

NTCA continues a collaboration with the Department of Homeland Security to provide telcos with critical cyberthreat information

Small telecommunications providers mount a strong defense against advanced security threats from criminal elements and overseas enemies. Beyond the professionals on its local staff, your internet provider benefits from the cybersecurity efforts of hundreds of similar companies across the U.S.

NTCA—The Rural Broadband Association represents nearly 850 independent, community-based telecommunications companies, helping them collectively work toward solutions to industry challenges and better serve their members and customers.

The association recently announced that, in partnership with the Department of Homeland Security and National Institute for Hometown Security, it will explore creating a forum for small, rural telecom operators from across the country to share and receive timely, actionable and relevant cyber information.

Bob Kolasky, director of the National Risk Management Center, presented NTCA with a National Infrastructure Protection Program Security & Resilience Challenge award for 2019 to support the project, which will include the creation and beta test of a daily cyber intelligence report. This will be curated to meet the unique needs and interests of community-based telecommunications broadband providers.

This new award follows NTCA's successful collaboration with DHS to create the 2018 Cyber Wise Program that provided free, industry-focused risk management training to rural telcos.

"NTCA is proud to support small, rural operators as they navigate an increasingly complex cyber landscape," says NTCA Chief Executive Officer Shirley Bloomfield. "As we all know, cyberattacks are truly a matter of 'when,' not 'if,' and this new partnership with DHS and NIHS will help explore a new forum to ensure rural broadband providers are both aware of threats and equipped with the information and tools that they need to respond. I'm grateful for this continued collaboration and look forward to seeing its results." [📱](#)

Lifeline SERVICE

Lifeline is a government assistance program that can help pay a portion of your telephone, mobile phone or internet bill each month. Consumers are allowed only one Lifeline program benefit per household.



How much will Lifeline save me?

If you qualify for Lifeline, you will receive a credit of \$9.25 each month on your bill.



What services are covered by this credit?

You have the choice (where applicable) of applying your benefit to one of three types of service offerings:

- Fixed or mobile broadband
- Fixed or mobile voice-only
- Bundles of fixed or mobile voice and broadband

NOTE: Lifeline can only be used for one source of communication from the list above.



Can I receive more than one Lifeline credit?

No, consumers are allowed only one Lifeline program benefit per household.



How do I qualify?

You are eligible for Lifeline benefits if you qualify for and receive one of the following benefits:

- SNAP
- Medicaid
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Federal Public Housing Assistance
- The Veteran's Pension or Survivor's Pension benefit.

Additionally, consumers at or below 135 percent of the Federal Poverty

Guidelines will continue to be eligible for a Lifeline program benefit. (State determinations of income will no longer be accepted.) There are no changes to the eligibility criteria for Tribal programs.

NOTE: Some states have additional qualifying programs, allowances and stipulations. Check with your local telecommunications provider for information about benefits that may be available in your state.



How do I enroll in the Lifeline program and start receiving this benefit?

To find out whether you qualify for Lifeline assistance, please visit www.lifelinesupport.org or call your local telecommunications provider.

NOTE: Your telephone company is not responsible for determining who qualifies for these programs or who receives assistance. Consumers must meet specific criteria in order to obtain assistance with their local telephone and/or broadband service, and qualifying is dependent upon government-established guidelines.



DO YOU QUALIFY?

Stay connected with a Lifeline discount.

Apply today!



FRS YOUTH APP CHALLENGE

Students, it's time to start thinking about the Foundation for Rural Service's challenge and the app that could pave the way to your future.

WHO: Students enrolled in grades seven to 12. A single student, or teams with as many as five students, may compete.

WHAT: Develop a concept for a mobile app to address a problem or improve a process in your rural community or in rural America at-large. The challenge is concept-based only, and entries will be judged based on how well-researched and well-presented the app is. It must be possible and not already an app in existence.

WHEN: The submission deadline is March 1, 2019.

WHY: The winning team will receive \$1,000 in gift cards and Codecademy scholarships.

HOW: Visit FRS.org for more information about submissions.

Service for all generations

One thing that's great about our business is how our network can have a positive impact on so many people. Broadband benefits everyone from children to seniors — even if they use it for different things.



JIM COOK
General Manager

In many instances, NHTC has served four, five, six or even seven generations of families in our area. How many companies can say that? Obviously, times have changed, and the communication needs of your grandparents or great-grandparents were very different than yours are.

This issue of the magazine is focusing on one particular generation that seems to grab a lot of headlines: the millennials. While experts vary slightly on the parameters, “millennial” is the name given to people with birth dates from the mid-1980s through about 2005.

Depending on what article you've read most recently, you may feel millennials are either ruining everything or likely to save us all.

But I believe one thing is certain: With millennials becoming the largest segment of our population, they are going to change the way companies operate and the way our society works.

One of the primary traits most millennials share is the pervasiveness of technology in their lives. In fact, most members of this generation — especially those in their teens and early 20s — have never known a world without internet-connected technology.

It may be easy to sit back and worry about the shifts this generation is already creating. But to me, it's important to remember that these millennials are the future of our community and of NHTC.

Think about it with me.

- Their complex lives frequently play out in a mix of social media and text messages, rather than face-to-face interactions.
- With the advent of digital photography and phones with cameras, they are the most photographed generation in human history.
- They aspire to jobs working remotely, like coding, web design or other careers that couldn't have existed a decade or two ago. And if they create their own companies, the business world — especially in rural America — doesn't present nearly as many obstacles for startups as it once did.
- For entertainment, many of us grew up with only a few channels on the television set, but millennials are accustomed to hundreds of channels and programming on demand right on their tablets.
- They take classes online, apply for jobs through mobile apps and often lead the way on digital innovation, whether smart home, telemedicine or other technology.

The tastes and preferences of millennials are already having an impact on NHTC. Millennials are some of our most frequent users of services like online bill pay and WatchTVEverywhere. They are more likely to want fast internet speeds to handle all their devices as well as their internet usage. NHTC has worked hard to offer a robust internet connection (with speeds capable up to 1 gig) to all our members via a fiber optic network.

Personally and professionally, I'm excited to see the way these young people make an impact on NHTC, our community and our world. And we're going to adapt and work hard to continue meeting their communication needs just like we have for the generations before them. ☎

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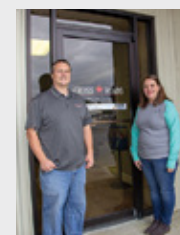
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On the Cover:



Crossroads Auction House owners, Mark and Heather Randolph, offer live and online auctions, as well as stop and shop opportunities.
See story Page 12.

ANDREA BRIDGES CHOSEN AS NATIONAL AMBASSADOR



The Afterschool Alliance announced that Andrea Bridges, executive director at the CARE Center, was selected to serve as a 2018-2019 Afterschool Ambassador. She is one of just 15 leaders in the country selected for the honor. "We're thrilled that Mrs. Bridges will serve as an Afterschool Ambassador this year," says Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant.

Each Afterschool Ambassador will continue leading a local after-school program while also serving a one-year Afterschool Ambassador term. Duties include organizing public events, communicating

with policymakers and in other ways growing awareness and support for the after-school and summer learning programs. "I am delighted to join in the Afterschool Alliance's work to build support for after-school programs," Bridges says.

The Afterschool Alliance is a nonprofit public awareness and advocacy organization working to ensure that all children and youth have access to quality after-school programs. Visit afterschoolalliance.org for more information.

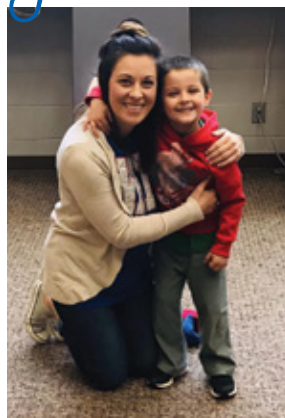
The CARE Center is a nonprofit, faith-based organization seeking to empower neighbors in southeast Madison County through education, employment, crisis and recovery support. Visit thecare-center.org for more information.



New phone directories

Phone directories will be delivered in February. Remember, NHTC's members will be listed alphabetically, without the separation of the three exchanges for New Hope, Grant and Owens Cross Roads.

.....NHTC says "Thank you".....



Every year, New Hope Telephone Cooperative honors the people who make the company possible — its members. NHTC's Customer Appreciation Day was Oct. 26. Members were welcomed by employees and enjoyed food and activities. "The members are the backbone of our cooperative," says Jim Cook, NHTC general manager. "We couldn't do what we do without them, and this is just one small way we can show our appreciation."

Groundbreaking!



On Oct. 23, South Hampton Nursing and Rehabilitation Center in Owens Cross Roads broke ground on a new 18,700-square-foot wing expected to be open later this year. The addition includes a 2,600-square-foot gym and conversion of all semiprivate rooms to private rooms.



Kathy Smothers, administrator at South Hampton Nursing and Rehabilitation Center, left, discusses plans for an additional wing with Linda Robertson, administrator at Marshall Manor Nursing and Rehabilitation Center in Guntersville.



Take a sip of history

Soda bottling tours offer a tasty treat



Ale-8-One is a signature Kentucky soda and part of a family-owned business dating to 1902. Tours are available at its plant in Winchester, Kentucky.

George Fletcher boarded a train in New York near his Long Island home and rode for hours until he arrived in Cincinnati. Then, he rented a car and drove 100 miles to his destination: the Ale-8-One plant in Winchester, Kentucky. He patiently waited until the start of the tour, which had also drawn parents with young children, grandparents and others who love Kentucky's favorite soda.

"I've wanted to do this for a long time," Fletcher says. "I've loved Ale 8 for so long, and it will be fun to see how it's made. Just to see the process will be so interesting."

Fletcher's quest is not unusual. Guests come from all around to see where and how their favorite soda is made, says DeAnne Elmore, the company's public relations and field marketing manager.

Crafting a destination

The building now housing Ale-8-One was originally part of a bowling alley. The first soda was produced in 1926, and the company moved its headquarters in 1966. In 1989, an addition enabled increased soda production. There are now four varieties of Ale-8-One: the original, diet, caffeine-free and cherry.

Tours began during the soda's 75th birthday celebration. "We are limited by space, so we try to keep groups at about 30 people," Elmore says. "That way, everybody gets a good experience and can see our production facility. People get to see up close and personal who's really making this brand."

The company embraced Kentucky's legacy of beverage production, which benefits from the popularity of bourbon and the Bourbon Trail tourism guide. "We are a member of the Kentucky Distiller's Association and an associate member of the Bourbon Trail as Kentucky's only soft drink," Elmore says.

Guests on the tour take a seat in a large room where they enjoy a video presentation hosted by the company's CEO, Fielding Rogers, who is the fourth generation of the Rogers family to hold the post. The video offers a history of the brand and the manufacturing processes that are not part of the tour due to OSHA safety regulations. Following the video, a vial of the secret formula that is part of every bottle of Ale-8-One is passed around for sniffing before the tour takes a turn

through the heart of the facility. Visitors see where bottles are filled, capped and prepared for shipping.

"We're still an operating manufacturing facility, so we can't guarantee that all the lines will be running, but we try to do our best to make sure they are when we have tours," Elmore says.

Following the tour, guests are treated to tastes of Ale-8-One, and if you want to take some home — or a baseball cap, hoodie, koozie, salsa, barbecue sauce or other Ale-8 gear — there's a gift shop near the entrance/exit.

For tours of Ale-8-One, offered on Thursday and Friday mornings, log on to www.ale8one.com.

HOW IT BEGAN

George Lee Wainscott started his soft drink company in 1902, making distilled water and flavored drinks. In 1906, he added Roxa-Cola to his inventory, named for his wife, Roxanne. Coca-Cola sued and lost, but even so, Wainscott wanted something new and unique to him, so he invented a new, unnamed soda — a pleasant blend of ginger and citrus. He introduced his creation at the Clark County Fair and sponsored a "name-that-soda" contest. The winning name was "A Late One," meaning, in Southern vernacular, "the latest thing" or "something new." The name "A Late One" was then created into a logo pun, Ale-8-One, that would eventually become the colloquial name. But every bottle still carries the original "A Late One" name above Ale-8-One.

Following Wainscott's death, the company passed into the hands of his second wife, Jane Rogers; then to her brother, Frank Rogers; and on to his son, Frank Jr., who left it to his son, Frank III, who left it to his son and current CEO Fielding Rogers. He still uses his great-great-uncle's handwritten notes to hand-mix the secret original formula.

Sodas around the South

TENNESSEE

Double Cola is as synonymous with Chattanooga, Tennessee, as Moon Pies. Double Cola has been made in the downtown area since 1933 by the company that also produces other soft drinks like Ski, Jumbo Chaser and Oranta. Buy a hoodie and other items online and learn more about it at double-cola.com.

SOUTH CAROLINA

Since 1903, Blenheim has produced ginger ale in Hamer, South Carolina. But the drink's origins go back to the 1700s when a man lost his shoe in a water hole. Thirsty, he sampled the water and found it to be excellent. One hundred years later, ginger was added to the water and Blenheim Ginger Ale was born. The soda now comes in three varieties: mild, hot and diet.

ALABAMA

Buffalo Rock Ginger Ale was created in the late 1800s and is instilled in the hearts of Alabamians. The Birmingham company of the same name — Buffalo Rock — continues to make its famous ginger ale. It has added more sodas to its line over the years, including Grapico, Wham and Sunfresh. The company remains family-owned and is under the leadership of founder Sidney Lee's great-grandson, James C. Lee.

Interesting fact: Buffalo Rock developed the first 3-liter soda bottles used by many soft drink companies today.

GEORGIA

Coca-Cola was created in Atlanta, and a visit to World of Coke teaches you all about the Coke phenomenon. Learn the story behind it, see Coke artifacts, enjoy interactive exhibits, get a behind-the-scenes look at the bottling process and more. For information, visit www.worldofcoca-cola.com.

NORTH CAROLINA

L.D. Peeler created Cheerwine in Salisbury, North Carolina, 102 years ago at the height of a sugar shortage in World War I. The wild cherry cola was an immediate hit and is now marketed across the country. The family-owned company is under the leadership of L.D. Peeler's great-grandson. 🍷





Flying *High*

EAGLE AWARENESS WEEKENDS GOING STRONG

BY LISA SAVAGE

Larry Clowdus steadied his hands as he gripped his camera and pushed the shutter release. On his many trips to the dam at Lake Guntersville, he had waited and watched to capture just this image.

The eagle was flying above the lake with a tree limb in its talons. “They’re fun to watch, and once you take a photograph of an eagle, it gets in your blood,” he says.

But it’s more than an opportunity for that perfect picture. It’s a sign that the eagles are thriving as they build another nest near the dam using twigs, sticks and grass. And that’s a positive sign for the eagle population at Lake Guntersville. It’s not easy to spot the nests, but Clowdus and another eagle-watching enthusiast, Bobby Fox, start scouting each year in October. Both men have captured thousands of spectacular images of eagles.

On many weekends in January and February, Clowdus and Fox are at the Tennessee Valley Authority’s Guntersville Dam, pointing out the locations of the nests and assisting visitors as part of Lake Guntersville State Park’s Eagle Awareness Weekends. Guided eagle-watching tours along the Lake Guntersville watershed, where eagles are known to nest, are included in the

field trips. The tours include locations, such as the dam, and areas inside Lake Guntersville State Park at Town and Short creeks. There’s also an option to visit Cathedral Caverns State Park.

It’s the 34th year for the Eagle Awareness Weekends. The event started in 1985 as an effort to engage and educate the public on the importance of re-establishing the bald eagles, which were then on the federal endangered species list.

From 1985 to 1991, a combination of federal, state and private organizations released 91 juvenile eagles throughout Alabama. There’s been a steady increase in the bald eagle population, says Lake Guntersville State Park Naturalist Michael Ezell.

The bald eagle came off the endangered species list in 2007, but monitoring of the population and the nests continues. Ezell says he is monitoring at least one nest he believes will be active this year at the state park. He depends on volunteers such as Clowdus, Fox and many others for information about the eagles in areas such as the dam.

Now, about 25 percent of the state’s bald eagle population nests in Marshall County, primarily in and around Lake Guntersville.

For many years, one of the oldest known nests in the state belonged to a pair of eagles at the dam, Ezell says. It was one of the most photographed nests in the state, and possibly in the country, because it was so easy to observe. But it’s empty now, and Clowdus, Fox and other enthusiasts regularly scout to locate new nests.

Eagles mate for life, and the mother and father work together to care for their young. They usually lay their eggs in December and are on the nest for 35 days. For several years, the enthusiasts watched the pair they named Barney and Thelma Lou, who hatched eaglets for at least three years.

Then, in 2013, Barney went missing. "Thelma Lou sat on the nest for a week," Clowdus says. When he didn't return, she abandoned the nest.

The enthusiasts believe Thelma Lou found another mate and returned to the area, and the newlyweds, as the avid watchers call them, built a new nest. Raccoons and great horned owls pose the biggest threat to eagles, Fox says, but they tend to come back to the same areas.

The Lake Guntersville watershed is a great source of food, which brings the eagles back each winter.

"When the lakes further north freeze over, they'll come back to Lake Guntersville for their food," Ezell says. The eagles are usually still taking care of their young as well. "That's why this is a perfect time for the Eagle Awareness Weekends," Ezell says. 🐾

Eagle photos courtesy of Larry Clowdus and Bobby Fox.



Photographers have captured thousands of images of eagles near Lake Guntersville Dam near New Hope.

EAGLE AWARENESS WEEKENDS begin on Jan. 25 with a program on Friday night. Activities begin at 5:30 a.m. each Saturday and Sunday with various activities and tours planned throughout the day. The event continues for four weekends.

The Eagle Awareness Weekends events are open to the public, and packages for lodging and other activities are available to purchase. Lodge guests have priority seating for all events. To learn more about the Eagle Awareness Weekends, visit www.alapark.com/lake-guntersville-state-park-eagle-awareness-weekends-2019, check out Lake Guntersville State Park's Facebook page or call the state park at 256-571-5440.

A SHORT Road trip

Don't expect to see eagles at Cathedral Caverns State Park, but it is a good option to add to the Eagle Awareness Weekends at nearby Lake Guntersville State Park. Part of the Eagle Awareness Weekends includes field trips to the Tennessee Valley Authority's Guntersville Dam, and it's only a short drive to Cathedral Caverns.

"We like tying them all together," says Mike Ezell, a naturalist at Lake Guntersville State Park and coordinator of Eagle Awareness Weekends.

Eagle Awareness Weekends events are open to the public, but lodge guests have priority seating. There is a separate

entrance fee at Cathedral Caverns. However, guests who sign up for the weekend events get a discount for a Cathedral Caverns tour. It's ideal to have Cathedral Caverns as an option if it's too cold or rainy for some folks to get out and enjoy eagle watching, Ezell says.

It's a great opportunity for Cathedral Caverns because it's a slow time of the year, says Judy Holderfield, acting park manager. The inside of the cave is 60 degrees year-round, so it doesn't really matter what the weather is like outside, she says. Cave tours are wheelchair-accessible.

Bats hibernate in the cave during winter, which presents a unique opportunity for visitors that's not available during the summer months. "They're hanging upside down, and they're sound asleep," Holderfield says. "We'll point those out to the visitors. You're not going to see that in summer."



Cathedral Caverns is open seven days a week, but the hours are modified from Sept. 1 to March 15. Daily tours are at 10 a.m., noon, 2 p.m. and 4 p.m. The cost for adults is \$18.50 and \$8 for children ages 5 to 12. Ages 4 and under are free. Cathedral Caverns is located at 637 Cave Road in Woodville. For more information, call 256-728-8193.



Rethinking rural

How some millennials are re-evaluating life in rural communities

BY DREW WOOLLEY

Six years ago, Chase Rushing thought he had his future planned. Living in San Marcos, Texas, between San Antonio and Austin, he and his wife had access to all the entertainment a 20-something couple could want — not to mention a burgeoning tech scene.

“Our plan was to stay in the Austin area,” Rushing says. “That’s where the jobs were, and that’s what I was preparing myself for.”

That preference for metropolitan areas is typical for a generation that rural communities have had difficulty holding on to: millennials. But there’s reason to believe millennials may find more to like in rural communities as they age.

For many, the term millennial has become synonymous with the silly, and derogatory, stereotype of any young person eating avocados while staring at their phone. But the Pew Research Center works with a more precise definition. They define millennials as anyone born from the years 1981 to 1997.

That means even the youngest millennials have likely already entered the workforce, while the oldest probably have



Photo courtesy of Isahel Reyna

Chase Rushing wants his own family to experience the small-town lifestyle he grew up with.

a mortgage and kids to raise. As Rushing and his wife began considering the latter, the idea of returning to his hometown of Yantis, Texas, lodged itself in Rushing’s mind.

“It was important for me that my son got to experience what I did growing up,” he says. “Being around all your family, the friendships, the bonds you form over that time. It’s like nothing else.”

WIDE-OPEN SPACES

Even if millennials are no longer the youngest generation, several characteristics set them apart from those before them. They tend to value experiences over

possessions, get their news online rather than from TV, and value work-life balance in their careers.

Perhaps most importantly, millennials are the first generation to grow up in the internet age, meaning they have a natural comfort with technology previous generations have not had. That could make them a predictor of how future tech-savvy generations will behave.

Millennial trends are of particular interest to Dr. Roberto Gallardo, assistant director of the Purdue Center for Regional Development. While the mainstream consensus has been that millennials are flocking to cities, Gallardo

believes improved internet connectivity could provide new opportunities in rural areas.

“If you have a young family, you may consider moving out of an urban area because of rising housing prices,” he says. “Rural areas have a natural ambiance that can attract younger families if their job allows them to telework.”

That draw depends heavily on rural communities building a high-speed internet connection, but there is reason to believe doing so could have a significant impact.

A population analysis by Gallardo and two colleagues published in *The Daily Yonder* shows that, while rural counties across the country are seeing declines in millennial populations, those with high-speed internet service saw millennial populations increase by 2.3 percent from 2010 to 2016.

That may not sound like much, but Gallardo points out that this is a process just getting started as millennials grow older.

“Younger folks always flock to cities, so if you’re a very rural community, broadband is not a silver bullet,” says Gallardo. “But it is a very key ingredient to attract or retain millennials or younger families.”

CROSS-GEN COMMUNITIES

John Larson moved to a rural community not because he wanted to work remotely, but because his work could only be done from there. As a ceramic sculptor living outside of Milan, Minnesota, Larson is able to run his own business with low overhead and access natural materials that would be costly or inconvenient in a larger city.

“Ceramics is a product of its location. If you use local materials, it will be a reflection of its place,” he says. “I’ve built my small business on reusing bent nails and foraging for materials.”

Larson’s work also gets a boost from the established market for ceramics in the Midwest, but finding a place in that market isn’t always easy for young artists.

Fostering more rural development programs is one step Larson believes communities like his could take to better promote the culture that already exists, as well as to help business owners collaborate and learn from one another.

As the generation that now makes up the majority of the workforce, millennials will have an important say in those efforts. But Rushing believes that if his generation is going to open up rural communities to more young people, they will have to do so without losing sight of what makes the rural lifestyle special. It may be necessary to break down generational divides altogether.

“I think we need to be asking what we can do to impact our community. What

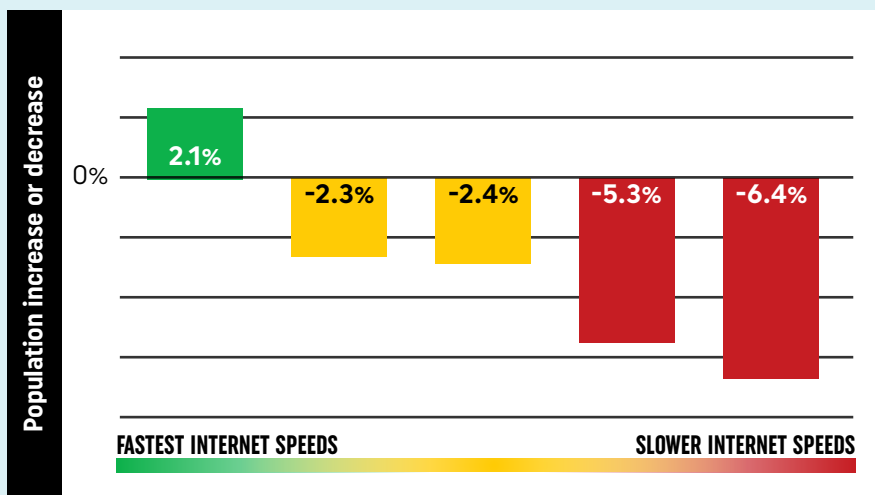
are the challenges we face and what can we do to address them?” he says. “It’s not millennials versus baby boomers or anyone else. It’s about all of us as a community.”



Photo courtesy of Kristin Lindstrom.

Rural America online

Millennial population change in southeastern states



Nationwide population data shows that rural communities are losing younger residents to larger metropolitan areas. When looking at rural counties that have invested in high-speed internet connections, however, the picture changes significantly.

The graph above shows how millennial populations changed in the most rural counties in Alabama, Kentucky, South Carolina and Tennessee from 2010 to 2016. Counties were ranked based on their internet connection, with the column on the far left showing those with the fastest internet speeds and the column on the far right showing the slowest.

Over that time, counties with the fastest internet connections saw millennial populations grow by more than 2 percent, while counties with slower connections saw their millennial populations drop by more than 6 percent.



Auctioneer Clint McElmoyl leads the bidding on a Friday night live auction.

SOLD!

Good deals at Crossroads Auction House

BY LISA SAVAGE

The auctioneer's rhythmic calls rang out through the room as people raised their numbered cards to bid. "Sold for \$30," Clint McElmoyl spoke into the microphone. "Hmmm, purple rhinos. I just thought I'd sold everything," the auctioneer at Crossroads Auction House says of the lighted Christmas decorations.

Items for auction range from furniture to household goods, and just about anything else imaginable. Buyers even got a shot at a set of running boards. "We do not know what it fits, but it fits a truck," McElmoyl says with a comedic tone.

Mark Randolph, who owns Crossroads Auction House with his wife, Heather, can't help but smile when McElmoyl cracks a joke and laughter erupts from the crowd. There's plenty more to smile about, too. It's standing room only on auction night.

Crossroads Auction House opened in June 2016 and has been wildly successful, bringing crowds to the live auction in Owens Cross Roads.

The business started primarily as a live auction every Friday night, with a few Saturday nights mixed in. "In the beginning, 85 percent of our revenue was coming from live auctions," Heather Randolph says.

In July 2017, they launched an online auction. "We're doing seven to eight online auctions each week," she says. They also offer items on eBay.

Live auctions have been scaled back to the first Friday each month. In July, they added Stop & Shop, opening the business to the public on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays.



Mark and Heather Randolph opened Crossroads Auction House in 2016, and it's grown by leaps and bounds.

ENTREPRENEURS

Mark Randolph has always enjoyed finding a great bargain. And he's good at it. When he and his wife decided to start an auction business, his love of buying and selling was key. It offers the Randolphs the flexibility they sought. With the demands of four small children, it was important to find something that fits their lifestyle.

"We're entrepreneurs at heart," she says. "This was a perfect fit for us. It actually is an art and a talent to find those deals, and Mark has a keen eye in finding good deals on unique items."

Mark Randolph had dabbled in buying and selling on eBay, and he and his wife went to a couple of live auctions. They had a vision for creating an auction focused on the customer while providing quality merchandise, honest deals and a fresh, lively environment.

"We thought 'We could do this,'" she says. They started looking at logistics to determine the best location and fit for the business they envisioned. They really liked the south Huntsville area. Then, they found a building that fit their needs perfectly on Hamer Road in Owens Cross Roads. "We knew we had found the place we needed to be," she says.

In an average week, the business might sell a thousand items, between the auction, store and online sales.

The live auction is in a white metal building, with customer seating and a booth for the auctioneer in the front room. Two buildings, one behind the other, are connected with a sidewalk, and merchandise is stored in the back building. There's barely room to walk through the back, especially after a shipment comes in.

There's no storefront with stylish displays, but local manager Eric Aycock and his team have the items organized in such a way that they know where everything is and can help customers find just what they're looking for.

BIG SAVINGS

The store might have just about anything, but they primarily sell furniture, household items, tools and collectibles.

Crossroads Auction House buys overstock and returns from businesses like Wayfair, Amazon, Home Depot, Lowes, Sears and Target. "We usually sell our items for about half of retail," she says.

It's like Christmas going through a new shipment. "We might buy a truckload from Amazon, and we get what we get," she says.

Some of the items are new, but other things might be broken and not worth repairing. So, employees spend a lot of time sorting through the shipments, and only items in good condition are sold.

"We are focused on customer experience," Heather Randolph says. "If the customers are satisfied, everything else just comes naturally." 📱



Heather Randolph posts photos on Facebook of items available at the live auction at Crossroads Auction House.



Natalie Mathis is connected to NHTC's fiber internet for reliable and fast photo uploads for online auctions at Crossroads Auction House.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:

The auction house has an active Facebook page used to display photos of merchandise and provide information about upcoming online auctions or any changes in the live auction schedule.

- Live auctions are scheduled the first Friday of each month, but the schedule could change.
- Check the company's Facebook page for updates or changes.
- Doors open at 4:30 p.m. to preview items for sale, and the auction starts at 5:30 p.m.
- Arrive early to register, preview the items and get a good seat and bidder number, which requires a valid driver license or identification.
- Staff members are always available to assist during the auction.
- Online auctions are available on the website at www.crossroadsauctionhouse.com. Just click on the "Bid online" tab to get started.

**The store is open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.,
Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays.**

**Crossroads Auction House is located at
230 Hamer Road, Owens Cross Roads.**



The joy of COOKING SLOW

In the South, when the weather turns cold and the days are short, we bring our slow cookers out of hibernation to blanket ourselves in comfort food. “Nothing beats a slow-cooked pork butt or roast chicken with all the trimmings,” says Sandra Corbin.

She lives on a farm in Clarksville, Tennessee, and she started using a slow cooker when her children were young and still in school. Her first slow cooker, purchased in the 1970s, was harvest gold with a brown lining and glass top that didn’t seal very well. “It was round and only had two settings — high and low,” she says.

But with work on the farm and children’s after-school activities, she appreciated the freedom of not spending time

laboring over the stove. “A momma is always full time, and a farm momma even more so,” she says. “When my youngest daughter was 16, I worked full time commuting to Nashville five days a week while attending college at night. The Crock-Pot certainly came in handy during that time of my life, too.”

Her daughter, Melissa Corbin, a Nashville-based food consultant and freelance journalist, says she remembers coming home to her momma’s



Melissa Corbin learned slow cooker secrets from her mother, Sandra.

cooking. The house would be filled with the smells of delicious foods that had slow-cooked for hours.

“There were always aromas to be savored in her kitchen,” she says. “She encouraged me from a very early age to cook alongside her. She didn’t

care what mess I might make. It was more important to her that I learn kitchen basics that, to this day, I can remember her teaching me.”

Though Sandra Corbin made much use of her slow cooker when she had children in tow, she appreciates it all

SLOW COOKER CANDY

Sandra Corbin's slow cooker candy is adapted from several online sources, such as this favorite from country music star Trisha Yearwood.

- 2 pounds salted dry-roasted peanuts
- 4 ounces Baker's German's sweet chocolate
- 1 (12-ounce) package semisweet chocolate chips
- 2 1/2 pounds white almond bark

Put the peanuts in the bottom of a slow cooker. Over these, layer the sweet chocolate, chocolate chips and almond bark. Slow cook on low for about 3 hours. Do not stir the mixture while cooking until after the 3 hours is up. Then, stir with a wooden spoon until smooth. Drop the candy into cupcake pan liners and let cool.

the more as she's gotten older. "As I've aged, I prefer one-pot meals with simple ingredients, like a pot roast, cream of mushroom soup and a package of Lipton Onion Soup Mix with all the veggies simmered on low all day," she says.

As life changes, so do slow cookers. Many come with multiple bells and whistles. "Too many parts prone to breaking," Melissa Corbin says. "Rather, we have the same slow cookers in different colors from the original Rival Crock-Pot line. Mine is stainless and Momma's is red. She's drawn to bright colors."



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

POZOLE VERDE

A favorite go-to recipe from Melissa Corbin.

- 3 pounds pork butt, roughly cut into 1-inch pieces
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1-2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1/2 cup white wine
- 1 large onion, diced
- 3 cloves of garlic, finely chopped
- 1 poblano pepper, charred and chopped
- 1 jalapeno pepper, charred and diced
- 1 pound tomatillo, roughly cut into 1-inch pieces
- 2 (15.5-ounce) cans hominy, drained
- Sliced limes, chopped cilantro, freshly sliced jalapeno and chopped red onion for garnish

Generously season pork with salt and pepper. Sprinkle with cumin. Heat a large frying pan (preferably cast iron) with 1 tablespoon of vegetable oil, adding extra oil as needed. The pan should be screaming hot to sear the pork without cooking through. Make sure to work in small batches so you do not steam the pork. Look for caramelized edges to the pieces of pork as you brown. Transfer the pork directly into the slow cooker, and then reduce the heat and deglaze the skillet with 1/2 cup white wine and pour over pork. Add to the slow cooker the onion, garlic, peppers and finally tomatillos in the order listed. Cover and cook on high for 3 1/2 hours. Then, stir in the hominy for a final 30 minutes of cooking. Turn the slow cooker to its lowest setting to give the pozole time to rest before serving. Finish with lime, jalapeno, cilantro and red onion. Makes approximately 6 servings.

SLOW COOKER SOUP STARTER

This nutrient-rich soup starter recipe will be just what the doctor ordered in the cold months of winter.

- 3 yellow squash or zucchini, cubed
- 4 banana peppers or 1 bell pepper, chopped

- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 carrots, diced
- 4 cups chicken or vegetable broth
- 1 (16-ounce) can tomatoes or 3-4 fresh tomatoes roughly chopped
- 1/2 tablespoon onion powder
- 1/2 teaspoon thyme
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon sugar
- 1 teaspoon olive oil
- 2 bay leaves

Stir all ingredients into a 6-quart slow cooker. After cooking on high for 30 minutes, simmer on low for 4 hours. Remove bay leaves. The starter is ready for immediate canning. Otherwise, let cool thoroughly before freezing in freezer-safe bags.

Suggested additions:

- ▶ Consider using this starter as a foundation for curry. Heat 1 1/2 cups of full-fat coconut milk with 1 tablespoon curry powder, 1/2 teaspoon powdered ginger, 1/8 teaspoon red pepper flakes, 1 stalk of lemongrass (optional), 1 diced potato and a protein of your choice, such as chicken or shrimp. Stir in 1-2 cups starter and simmer, uncovered, until desired thickness. Remove lemongrass before serving. Garnish with chopped cilantro or green onions. This soup is great on its own but is delicious over a bed of jasmine rice.
- ▶ Into a cast-iron skillet, add 1 cup shredded rotisserie chicken, 1/4 cup chopped kalamata olives and 1 teaspoon dried oregano to 1-2 cups of the soup starter. Spoon over grilled bread and top with fresh feta cheese for a Mediterranean twist on bruschetta.
- ▶ Minestrone is an Italian soup classic. Combine 1 cup cooked elbow macaroni, 1 (15-ounce) can of drained kidney beans, 2 cups chicken stock, 4 cups soup starter, 1 teaspoon dried oregano and 1 teaspoon dried basil. Simmer on low for 15-20 minutes. Garnish with freshly torn basil leaves and grated parmesan cheese. Drizzle a bit of extra virgin olive oil for the perfect finish. 🍲



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