

The Communicator

MARCH/APRIL 2015



THE UNEXPECTED CHAMPIONSHIP SEASON

A look back at how the
New Hope Indians conquered

SHARING WITH THY NEIGHBORS

Praise the Lord and
pass the deviled eggs

TURNING PASSIONS INTO PAYCHECKS

A community project to
help the less fortunate

BY SHIRLEY BLOOMFIELD, CEO
 NTCA—THE RURAL BROADBAND ASSOCIATION

The search for better broadband should start with existing local providers

There is no question that broadband Internet service is the key to economic and community development, especially in rural America. However, there are differing opinions in Washington about the best way to continue building our nation's connected infrastructure.

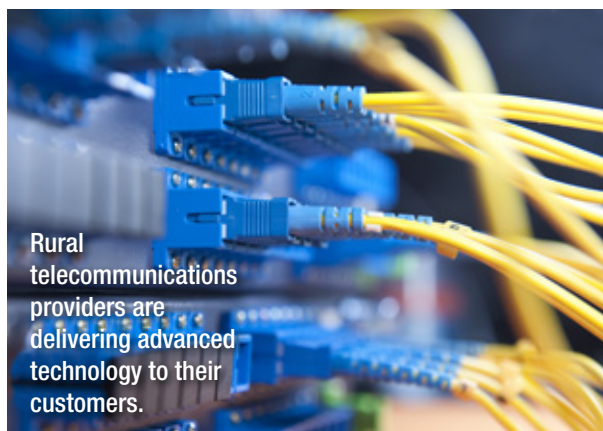
While I applaud President Obama's recent attention on increasing every American's access to robust and affordable broadband, it's not clear that his focus on creating more government-run networks in marketplaces where private operators already exist is the best path toward bringing more jobs and opportunity to rural America.

If our leaders are looking for an excellent model for what can be accomplished, we believe they should turn to the experts who have decades of experience deploying and maintaining modern telecommunications infrastructure: community-based, independent telcos like yours.

Nationwide, there are over 1,000 technology providers like yours that serve over 4 million households in the most sparsely populated pockets of our country, deploying high-speed, high-quality broadband services. For decades, these providers have gone above and beyond to build the infrastructure that allows our country's most rural markets to access the same technologies found in our largest cities — and they've done it all under the extremely difficult financial and physical conditions that come with deploying technologies in rural and remote communities.

Thanks to the hard work and commitment of companies such as your local

provider, rural America now has access to affordable broadband in some of the most remote locations. But the sustainability of those networks is at risk, and other areas



Rural telecommunications providers are delivering advanced technology to their customers.

need broadband as well. Policymakers in search of answers to these communications challenges in rural America should turn first to those who have shown they can get the job done time and again, rather than casting about for the next new thing, creating regulatory uncertainty and putting at risk significant investments already made in existing networks through the prospect of redundant or wasteful overbuilding.

There's already a great broadband success story out there in rural America, and it is being written by community-based telecom providers like yours. As our national broadband story progresses, we should strive to build upon proven initiatives and leverage existing efforts that are working, rather than pursue new uncharted pathways. As this debate plays out, you can be assured that you have a voice in Washington, as your provider joins with hundreds of others through NTCA as the unified voice of America's rural broadband companies. 📶

LANDLINE?

YOU STILL NEED ONE IN 2015

Today, mobility means everything. We want to check email, log onto Facebook, watch videos, get the news and generally stay connected no matter where we are. And that, of course, includes the ability to make phone calls. With mobile phones in practically everyone's pocket, some people question the need for a traditional landline. But consider this:

- 1** With a landline, you never have to worry about signal strength. Knowing you can get a call through, especially during an emergency, is more than a comfort.
- 2** Speaking of emergencies, your landline sends your complete address information — including apartment number — when you dial 911. Cell phones use GPS-based information, which can be inaccurate.
- 3** The clarity of a conversation on a landline (if you have a quality wired or cordless handset) is unmatched by any cell phone call.
- 4** With the right plan, you'll never run out of minutes with a landline.
- 5** Your "home phone number" provides a way people can always reach you or leave a message. When everyone in the house has their own cell phone with separate numbers, the landline can serve as a central point of contact for the entire family.



YOU'VE GOT MAIL

With so many new apps and services to help keep us connected, email is still king in the business world

From instant messaging applications such as Skype to social media tools such as Twitter, Facebook and Snapchat, the past few years have brought us many new options for connecting electronically. And yet, when it comes to communicating in business, email remains the method of choice.

In the report “Technology’s Impact on Workers,” released by Pew Research Center at the end of last year, 61 percent of workers who use the Internet say that email is very important to doing their job.

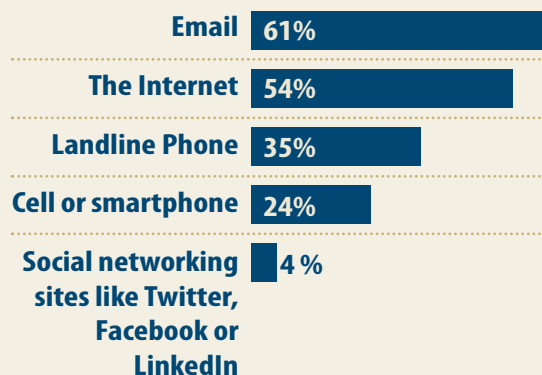
“The high value of email comes

despite the challenges of the past generation,” the report states, “including threats like spam and phishing and competitors like social media and texting.”

Email’s continued reign as the communications tool of choice has its benefits. The study found that 39 percent of workers believe that email, along with the Internet and cell phones, allows them more flexibility in the hours they work.

The downside to that flexibility, however, is that 35 percent — almost the same amount — say these tools have increased the amount of time they spend working. ☞

Email and the Internet top the list of important tools for online workers



Source: Pew Research Center

Email overload? Manage your inbox with these simple tips

With so much importance placed on email in today’s business world, managing your messages can be overwhelming. You can benefit from this communications tool without letting it wreck your day by putting a few simple principles into action.

Set an email schedule. If you make yourself available for email all day long, you leave yourself open to constant distraction. Set a schedule of specific times during the day when you will check email. You may have to adjust it to find the schedule that’s right for you, but try starting with once before lunch and again early afternoon. You will feel more freedom than when you are drawn in by every email that lands in your inbox.

Turn off notifications. You can’t stay focused on any one

task if your computer provides a pop-up notification every time an email comes in. Turn off that productivity-killing feature. In fact, shut down your email app altogether and only launch it when you are ready to focus on email.

Organize your inbox. Most email apps allow you to set up folders, filters and rules to bring order to your email madness. It

may take a few weeks of adjusting to find the approach that best fits you, but the result will be a more organized workspace. Your mail will be in intuitive categories so that you’ll be able to deal with the most important messages first.

Keep it brief. When you send an exhaustive email with hundreds of words and multiple questions and points, you invite an equally

exhaustive response that you’ll have to wade through.

Consider alternatives. Email is not for every conversation. In fact, it’s a terrible way to manage a project. Post messages pertaining to a specific project inside tools such as Basecamp or Trello. Having all related conversations in the same place with related notes and action items will help you track progress. ☞



Is email an important part of your business? Do you have any tips for managing email to work more efficiently? Tell us your story at www.BroadbandBuildsBusiness.com.

Adding fiber to your community builds a strong network

Our culture is fascinated with potential. We talk about athletes at the high school level having great potential, with hopeful futures at the college and pro levels. We talk about friends having the potential to be successful in business, education or the arts.



JIM COOK
General Manager

When we view something as having potential, we believe that within it lies the power for it to become greater than what it is now, to accomplish good things and impact lives in a positive way.

I can't think of a better description for the broadband network we are building today.

About six years ago, New Hope Telephone was faced with a decision to invest significant dollars to upgrade the existing copper network that has served our members since the beginning of the cooperative in 1952, or start from scratch and build an entirely new state-of-the-art fiber network that would meet the needs of our members for years to come. Constructing more than 400 miles of fiber "backbone" and another 400 miles of individual fiber connections to approximately 5,000 homes was a

huge challenge, but it was the right thing to do.

Today, we are over 45 percent complete with the network build. We have placed over 250 miles of the backbone fiber, and approximately 2,300 NHTC members are connected to and enjoying the fiber network for their voice, video and broadband services.

But that is just the beginning of the story. The most important feature of our broadband network is the potential it holds. Studies have shown that when people put broadband to work in their homes and communities, some exciting things happen:

- Household incomes rise
- Job opportunities increase
- Poverty levels and unemployment drop

The potential is there — but the key to unlocking that potential is you. Some of our customers are doing an outstanding job in this area.

New Hope dentist Dr. Dugald McMillan continues to use technology to improve the customer experience with ceiling-mounted televisions for patients. His office manager/wife Natalie manages the schedule and files online insurance claims for customers.

Owens Cross Roads business owner Pat Miller created a website for Unified Chemical several years ago, enabling his company to efficiently fulfill online orders for customers.

Grant Shoe Outlet is one of many businesses that utilizes social media to promote their business as well as blowout deals on fashionable footwear.

The network we are building allows you to take advantage of today's technology. But here's the most exciting thing: Where the true power lies is in our network's ability to adapt to new technologies as they become available, freeing you to explore new ways to put broadband to work. You have the tools to reinvent how you live, work and play.

So go innovate. Go learn. Go imagine new ways to use the technology we are blessed with in this region. Put it to work to change your community, your family, your business. Then be sure to share your story with us. Like those I mentioned above, your story may inspire someone else to unlock the potential of broadband, while discovering the potential inside themselves. ☎

The Communicator

MARCH/APRIL 2015

VOL. 14, NO. 2

The Communicator is a bimonthly magazine published by New Hope Telephone Cooperative, ©2015. It is distributed without charge to all cooperative members/owners.



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

Send address corrections to:
New Hope Telephone Cooperative
P.O. Box 452
New Hope, AL 35760
256-723-4211
www.nhtc.coop

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Jim Duncan, President
New Hope Exchange

Garland Elders, Vice President
Owens Cross Roads Exchange

Jeffrey Cantrell, Secretary
Grant Exchange

David Ayers, Treasurer
Grant Exchange

Jeff Cooper
New Hope Exchange

Greg Glover
Owens Cross Roads Exchange

Barry Jones
New Hope Exchange

Randy Morrison
Grant Exchange

Mike Whitaker
New Hope Exchange

Produced for NHTC by:



On the Cover:



Coach Rodney McGehee congratulates the Indians youth football team after winning their league championship.
See story Page 8.

NEW HOPE TELEPHONE COOPERATIVE

ANNUAL MEETING

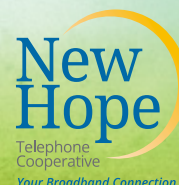
2015

Tuesday, May 19, 2015 ★ New Hope Middle School

➡ REFRESHMENTS ★ ENTERTAINMENT ★ DOOR PRIZES ⬅

Registration and voting begins at 5 p.m. ★ Business meeting to follow at 7:30 p.m.

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



New Hope Telephone Cooperative is offering two \$500 scholarships — one to a graduating senior from DAR and the second 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 or at NHTC's business office at 5415 Main Drive, New Hope. Don't miss out on this opportunity! All applications must be received no later than March 31.



Pie Valley Grocery is an independent community grocery store, located at 5063 Main Drive. Since opening in May 2014, Pie Valley has been operated by J.P. and Tina Rogers of New Hope as a combination convenience store and grocery market. "Anyone that's interested in saving money can shop here," Rogers says. Customers can save between 20 and 80 percent on name-brand foods, and there are no membership fees. The store will now be giving \$50 of groceries to one lucky customer during a drawing at the end of each month. See Pie Valley Grocery for more details.



CALLING ALL QUILTERS

The 2nd Annual "Quilts Then and Now" show will take place on April 11 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Registration is \$5, and the event is sponsored by the New Hope Friends of the Library. It will take place at three sites: Elizabeth Carpenter Public Library of New Hope, New Hope United Methodist Church and the Northern Lodge. For more information, search Facebook for Quilts Then and Now: New Hope's Annual Quilt Show.

A NATION DIVIDED: 150 YEARS LATER

Relive history on a tour of these prominent Civil War battlefields

By ROBERT THATCHER

This year, the country will conclude its 150th anniversary remembrance of the Civil War. But don't worry if you missed the reenactments and fanfare over the past four years. Take this trip on US Highway 41 from Kentucky through Middle Tennessee to find plenty of history while tracing pivotal battles in America's most costly war.



Re-enactments, like this one near Chickamauga, Ga., can bring history to life, but battlefields throughout the Southeast are interesting places to visit anytime.

Stop #1 – Fort Donelson National Battlefield

Where Ulysses Grant became a household name

Fort Donelson National Battlefield, on the banks of the Cumberland River just south of the Kentucky border, is a natural starting point for a drive through Middle Tennessee. It's also a good beginning militarily.

"Almost everything that happened in the state is a sequel to what happened here," says Doug Richardson, Fort Donelson's chief of interpretation.

Rivers were arteries of commerce for the South, and the Confederates built Fort Donelson to protect the Cumberland and upstream cities like Clarksville and Nashville.

But on Feb. 12, 1862, a little-known Union brigadier general named Ulysses S. Grant set his sights on Fort Donelson. He was confident of victory after his gunboats easily took nearby Fort Henry on the Tennessee River.



Dover Hotel

Donelson was not so easy. Well-positioned Confederate guns brought victory, setting up a successful "break out" through Union lines. But the victory was short-lived, as the Confederates unwittingly helped Grant by pulling troops back to their original positions. Grant retook the lost ground, and the 12,000-man garrison surrendered unconditionally. The battle made Grant a star and was a catastrophe for the South.

TOURING FORT DONELSON

The park preserves more than 20 percent of the original battlefield, with several square miles of earthwork fortifications. Don't miss these highlights:

- » Stand at the gun batteries where Confederate gunners battered Grant's



TECH-SAVVY TRAVELER: CHARTING YOUR COURSE

Robert E. Lee is regarded by many as the most clever battle tactician of the Civil War. Imagine what he could have done with a GPS! Nowadays, it's easy to come up with a battle plan and map out the route for you and your troops on your next vacation. Apps like Google Earth provide directions for tourists with aerial or street views of those historic sites from Gettysburg to Charleston. For those battling interstate traffic, Road Ninja is an app that will help you find fuel, food and shelter for the evening, keeping your small army on the move.

- gunboats.
- » Visit the Dover Hotel where Ulysses S. Grant demanded “unconditional surrender” from his old West Point friend, Confederate Simon Buckner.
 - » Pause at Fort Donelson National Cemetery for a reminder of the sacrifices that Americans have made from the Civil War to the present day.
 - » While absorbing the history, you may also encounter two notable park residents. “We’ve got two resident bald eagles who live down at the river,” Richardson says. “Our eagles are about as famous as our generals.”

Stop #2 – Stones River National Battlefield

The Fight for the Confederate Heartland



Cemetery at Stones River

We could follow General Grant to the Mississippi line and Shiloh, where his Army of the Tennessee headed after Donelson, but there’s good reason to drive to Stones River National Battlefield in Murfreesboro.

“When Fort Donelson falls, the Confederates have to give up Nashville,” explains Park Ranger Jim Lewis. “And Nashville becomes the base for the Union Army to launch the campaigns which will lead to Stones River, Chickamauga and Chattanooga.”

For many, Stones River is a quiet retreat from bustling Murfreesboro. But the 6,100 gravestones across from the visitor center are a sober reminder of what took place there. Of the 81,000 who fought here, 23,000 were killed, wounded or went missing in action — the highest

percentage of casualties of any Civil War battle.

EARLY SUCCESS, THEN RETREAT

On New Year’s Eve 1862, the Southern army under Braxton Bragg attacked first, catching William Rosecrans’ Union troops at breakfast and driving them north. Then on Jan. 2, the Confederates launched another attack along the east bank of the Stones River to drive Union troops off of a high hill.

“In the process of pursuing, those Confederates will come under the fire of 57 Union cannons along the other side of the river and will lose about 1,800 men in 45 minutes,” Lewis says. “That’s a pretty bloody exclamation point.”

The Confederates then retreated.

TOURING STONES RIVER

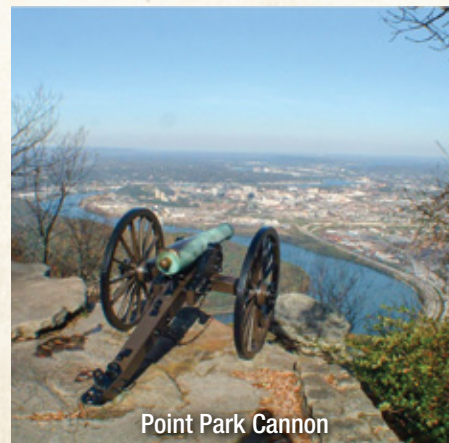
Stones River offers a 12-stop auto tour, including these sights:

- » Walk around The Slaughter Pen, a rock outcropping where Union troops made a stubborn stand.
- » Pay respect at the Hazen Brigade Monument, one of the oldest war monuments in the country.
- » Be awed by Fort Rosecrans, the largest earthworks fortification in North America.

Stop #3 – Chickamauga & Chattanooga National Military Park

The Death Knell of the Confederacy

We’ve followed the Union push to Nashville and Murfreesboro. The next stop is Chattanooga. Actually, we’ll go



Point Park Cannon

south of the city to Chickamauga & Chattanooga National Military Park, in Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia.

Driving to the park, you’ll cross the mountains that convinced General Rosecrans not to advance directly on Chattanooga. He moved southwest of the city to block supply lines, forcing Confederate troops into Georgia as well. But Chattanooga was the Union goal.

“Chattanooga is a doorway through the southern barrier of the Appalachians,” says Park Historian Jim Ogden.

Driving through the dense woods of the 5,300-acre park, you can see why confusion reigned in the war’s second-bloodiest battle. About 35,000 men were killed, wounded, missing or captured in fighting from Sept. 19-20, 1863. Strategic mistakes led to a Union retreat. The Union troops retreated to Chattanooga, where they withstood a two-month siege before ultimately breaking through in the battle of Chattanooga.

“This allowed the Union drive across Georgia in 1864, from Chattanooga to Atlanta and from Atlanta to Savannah,” Ogden notes.

TOURING CHICKAMAUGA

Start at the visitor center on Lafayette Road. After touring the park, drive 17 miles to Lookout Mountain Battlefield for views from 1,500 feet above Chattanooga. Other key sites:

- » Stand on Snodgrass Hill where George Thomas became “The Rock of Chickamauga.”
- » Get a general’s view from Orchard Knob, Grant’s command post, and the Bragg Reservation, Confederate headquarters on Missionary Ridge.
- » Watch the conflict electronically at the Battles for Chattanooga Museum on Lookout Mountain.

Chattanooga was a major blow for the Confederacy. But there’s much more to see on the campaign South – Tunnel Hill, Resaca, Kennesaw Mountain all the way to Savannah and then into South Carolina. The war continued on and your trip can too. Visit nps.gov/civilwar for more sites from the War Between the States. ☞

The Indians team and coaching staff gather for a celebratory photo on the field after the game.



TURNAROUND

The unexpected championship season

By MATT LEDGER

New Hope Indians Coaching staff (above from left) head coach Rodney McGehee and assistant coaches; Mike Acklin, Mario Duster, Jamey Gordon and Teron Prince.

For a few crucial seconds, the 2014 New Hope Indians, longtime underdogs of the Tennessee Valley Football League, looked like their old selves again.

They were in overtime of their championship game on the 3-yard line and trying for a go-ahead extra point. In the excitement and the pressure of the moment, the center snapped early as quarterback Kolton Acklin yelled “Down!” instead of “Hut.” The pigskin bounced on the ground, coming to rest by pint-sized passer’s feet, with the offensive line still standing in a state of confusion. The opposing Hartselle Tigers defense crashed the line, and the defensive ends charged towards the quarterback as Acklin grabbed the ball from the turf.

“It was our worst play and the worst we have played all year,” defensive line coach Teron Prince says.

The Hartselle squad had already found the end zone in overtime, for a go-ahead score of 19-13, but failed to convert the extra point. The Indians answered back with their own overtime touchdown, tying the score, and coaches had called for a run

up the middle for the extra point before the failed snap.

In years past, the game probably would have ended then and there. A few years back, New Hope went two years without winning a game, or even scoring a single point. In 2013, it took six games before the players reached the end zone.

But 2014 was a miraculous kind of year for the Indians, and on that November night, they had one more miracle left. The quarterback managed to curl left out of the chaos, sprinting away from the tacklers and darting into the end zone for the win.

A TEST OF COMMITMENT

Losing can reveal character deficiencies or it can build a commitment to try even harder next time. New Hope is a young 3A team, with 7- and 8-year-olds playing a difficult schedule. All opponents were in higher conference classifications with

twice the number of players as New Hope. “It’s so hard to beat those big districts,” offensive line coach Rodney McGehee says.

Team members may have felt defeated on the field after 2012 and 2013, but they never let that deter their spirit, and the vast majority of those players returned again in 2014. “Our goal was to win half of our games this year,” Prince says. “Last year, we got a penalty after our first touchdown because we went out there on the field and were hugging the kids.” While the coaches were flagged, a few of the parents were brought to tears upon seeing their kids finally replace the 0 on the scoreboard.

The Indians lacked the speed of other teams, which meant they had to rely on charging up the middle instead of sprinting around the corner to the sidelines like many of their opponents. From July 21 through early November, coaches scheduled three practices a week in addition to the games on Saturdays.

“We made up our mind that we needed to be as tough on those kids as we possibly could to get them ready,” Prince says. “But we had two years’ worth of coach-

ing mistakes to learn from.” Seven of the Indians played offense and defense — not missing a single play for three entire seasons. Coaches rotated nearly all players’ positions to provide new challenges and discover who excelled as the season progressed. “We preached to give 100 percent, no matter what position we had to put them,” McGehee says. “We were in better shape going into the fourth quarter than any other team.” The Indians put in the effort, finishing their eight-game regular season in fifth place of the twelve teams.

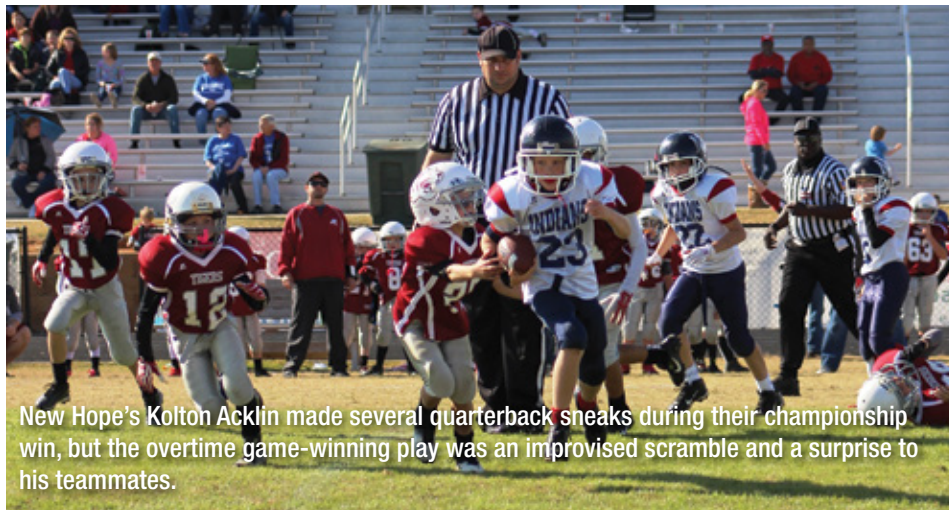


The New Hope Indians brought an intense focus during their successful playoff run.

A SEASON BEYOND EXPECTATIONS

The Indians’ first offensive possession of 2014 took more than six minutes of the first quarter to reach the end zone. But this Cinderella season didn’t occur without several challenges, in addition to that frenzied final play of the season. The first loss of the season occurred in Decatur, during their fourth game. After being down 18-0 at halftime, the Indians rallied in the third quarter, scoring 12 points in the first four minutes. Players showed their potential, but could not crawl out of the first-half hole they had dug for themselves. “They never got down on themselves the entire season,” McGehee says.

An 18-7 loss against the Monrovia Panthers became a pivotal turning point for the squad. “That was where the team turned it on, and where they made up their minds that they weren’t going to allow that to happen again,” Prince says.



New Hope's Kolton Acklin made several quarterback sneaks during their championship win, but the overtime game-winning play was an improvised scramble and a surprise to his teammates.

Despite their 5th-place finish, the New Hope boys hit their stride in the postseason, beginning to peak during the third round of the playoffs against first-place Decatur. The play of the game belonged to Nathan Adcock. From the opposite side of the field, he sprinted to make a touchdown-saving tackle on the 2-yard line, stopping a 60-plus yard Decatur gain. The play gave the Indians momentum, and Decatur fumbled the next handoff. The Indians took the ball to their end zone on the following play.

All New Hope coaches had several sleepless nights prior to their next game, a fourth-round playoff clash against that same Monrovia Panther team, with a chance at the championship game on the line. The Indians gave their best performance of the year to beat Monrovia, 19-13, — one of two playoff victories against teams they had lost to during the regular season. “After they had beaten the best team in the league, they knew there were no excuses and the championship was theirs, if they wanted it,” Prince says.

A TEAM EFFORT TOWARD VICTORY

The second meeting with 6A Hartselle Tigers was for the league championship at Madison County High School on Nov. 8. Well before kickoff, the game turned into one of the community’s biggest football events anyone could remember. Decorated vehicles streamed into the parking lot and began tailgating at 9:30 a.m. with

fans munching on beans, cheese dips and cookie cakes two hours before the kickoff. Fans young and old — many of whom didn’t have a child on the team — brought homemade shakers and airhorns to cheer on the Indians.

A glimmer of the old Indians appeared on the opening kickoff when New Hope fumbled the ball before they could run their first offensive play. But the team quickly rallied and got the ball back via an interception two plays later, before driving down the field for their first touchdown. For much of the season, the Indians’ best efforts came when they trailed, finding confidence to reverse opponents’ momentum as the game wore on.

“We just prepared the same way that we did all year,” McGehee says. “This year, they just believed in themselves, in each other, and that they were as good as any other team.” The championship victory ended a playoff drought that dates back at least a few decades. In the days and weeks that followed, players and parents exchanged high-fives during grocery shopping trips, and the experience will be a lifetime memory for all involved.

On Dec. 30, the Indians gathered in Nashville for a pregame recognition ceremony at the Music City Bowl. They stayed to watch as Notre Dame beat the LSU Tigers. “I am so proud of every one of them,” McGehee says. “Looking back at it all, a few years from now, the kids will then realize what a big deal this really was.” 📺

FOR THE EVERYDAY HOME

What will readers find at your blog?

Shaunna West: Perfectly Imperfect is a window into our lives. You'll find DIY projects, furniture makeovers, before-and-after room makeovers, shop talk, topics on running a creative business and even a few family posts.

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

SW: I have been writing since I was a little girl, and in 2009, I needed to write. I began sharing my furniture-painting techniques and the process of our attic renovation, and soon, the blog became a business and a place for people to seek inspiration for their everyday homes. The community and readers at Perfectly Imperfect took me completely by surprise. There is a world of people interested in the same things you are, and if you're lucky, you'll even develop relationships with these incredible people. The Internet can be used for such good, and its reach is incredible. I'm

grateful for PI, for my readers and for their willingness to listen to what I have to say.

What are some big trends in decorating this spring and summer?

SW: Any time you gear into spring and summer, people are going to be looking to brighten and lighten their homes. There are lots of beautiful metallics out there and lots of blues and golds and greens as far as colors. Anything you can do to try and make your home feel fresh and clean. Spring is the time when we all begin to organize and begin to purge and pare down and only have what's necessary in the home. Homes should be functional and efficient as well as beautiful. ☞

Perfectly Imperfect

A Q&A with **SHAUNNA WEST**, a blogger from Troy, Alabama, who writes about everything from painting furniture to decorating to homeschooling.

Check out her blog...

www.PerfectlyImperfectBlog.com



OTHER HOME/DIY BLOGS YOU MIGHT LIKE:

- ▶ www.TheLetterCottage.net
Layla shares her love of cottage style with readers.
- ▶ www.BeneathMyHeart.net
Tracey describes herself striving to create beauty in her heart and in her home.
- ▶ www.thistlewoodfarms.com
KariAnne shares her transition from the big city to a slower-paced, happier life.

Shaunna's tips for changing your home on a budget



- ★ Keep in mind that your home is your sanctuary away from the busyness of the world. Take the time to create spaces you enjoy and that create rest for you and your family.
- ★ If you're feeling like your home has become dark and dreary, give the walls a fresh coat of paint in lighter neutrals. It will instantly brighten your space. My favorites are Benjamin Moore White Diamond, Sherwin Williams Sea Salt, Sherwin Williams Crushed Ice and Sherwin Williams Comfort Gray.
- ★ Save and invest in key pieces like your sofa and armchairs, and shop flea markets and antique malls for small end tables and dressers. You'll be amazed how much you'll save when you allow time for your space to come together.
- ★ Paint everything in sight. Seriously, paint is the cheapest and fastest way to transform your home. Have a coffee table you love, but hate how beaten up it is? Paint it, and you will have a new piece of furniture in a few hours.

Photos courtesy of Shaunna West.

Whatever your interest, there is likely an online community of people who share that interest with you. Our "Featured Blogger" series introduces you to people who write websites about a variety of topics. In the May/June issue, we'll focus on marriage and relationships.

Can you hear the music?

You're only a click away from your favorite tunes

BY CECIL H. YANCY JR.

The Rolling Stones asked, "Can you hear the music?" And the answer is, yes! You can easily listen on your computer or mobile device anytime you like.

Digital music services offer you two ways to listen to old favorites or explore new artists.

A download captures the music on your computer for use in the future — think of being able to burn a CD or play the music by clicking on a file from your computer. On the other hand, music streaming is like having a steady flow of music coming into your computer. Just click and create stations from artists you choose.

While downloads have their advantages, streaming appears to be the wave of the future. By this year, according to a Pew Research Institute study, as many as 80 percent of Americans will listen to audio on digital devices. While 51 percent of all adults say they listen to music on these devices, age makes a big difference in music habits, according to the study. More than 60 percent of millennials and 58 percent of Gen Xers listen to music online compared with 48 percent of younger Boomers. Older Americans tend to prefer the traditional AM/FM radio format. But streaming music is getting so easy, music lovers of all ages can jump on board.

OPEN THE BOX TO MUSIC STREAMING

Pandora opened the box with one of the first online Internet radio services. With Pandora, you can listen free for 40 hours per month, with advertisements. Pay \$36 a year and get the music without commercials. It's easy to use. Say you like Johnny Cash: Type in his name and a "radio station" of his songs and those of similar audiences will begin playing. The best part is Pandora gives you background

information about the artist as the music is playing. You can even skip a certain number of songs you don't like.

NEW RELEASES AND EXCLUSIVES

Spotify is another big player in the music-streaming arena. It has a 20-million-plus song catalog from the major record labels, which can be organized into playlists that allow users to stream their own lists or lists from friends or celebrities. The basic features are free after downloading the application, or the premium version is \$9.99 per month. Music on Spotify can be imported from iTunes and synced with a mobile device so you can make your favorite songs available anywhere you go!


CREATE YOUR OWN ITUNES STATION

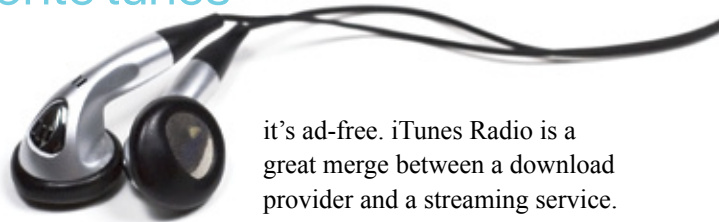
In addition to 25 DJ-curated and genre-based stations, iTunes Radio allows you to create personalized radio stations or follow "guest DJ" stations from famous artists. You can pause, skip and playback with iTunes Radio and even buy the tune you're currently listening to. If you have an iTunes Match Account for \$25 per year,

it's ad-free. iTunes Radio is a great merge between a download provider and a streaming service.

A COUPLE OF CLICKS AND NO COST

If you're leaning toward listening to music online, but a bit overwhelmed by the choices, check out sites that only require a couple of clicks to get started and are designed to be more like your radio.

Sites like Boomerradio.com and Bluegrassmix.com offer an easy way to listen to your favorite tunes, with either stations or DJs that pick the tunes. On the Bluegrass site, DJs host shows. On the Boomer Radio site, users can pick from moods like acoustic café, sweet soul music and classic mix. 





The O'Neals decorate their home for the Easter gathering, which includes an Easter egg hunt with hundreds of colorful eggs for the children.



▲ TOP: Friends and family bring a dish or two for the potluck meal that everyone enjoys during the Easter social. BOTTOM: Children wander around the O'Neals' property seeking the colorful eggs and the treasures hidden within.

A GRATEFUL GATHERING

BY MATT LEDGER

Southern culture requires that any holiday meal, sports gathering or Sunday afternoon picnic is met with the largest meal of the week. The mere mention of cornbread dressing, black-eyed peas or a honey-glazed ham conjures the corresponding holiday. For most parties, a dozen or so people will shuffle by the slow cookers and Tupperware, filling their plate a scoop at a time.

However, an afternoon Easter celebration for one New Hope couple means two 12-foot rows of tables in the garage, a massive spread of colorful food creations and many ... many more guests.

The O'Neals have no children of their own, but realized their yard could hold an Easter egg hunt for a handful of kids, including their two goddaughters. Debbie and Bobby O'Neal originally opened the doors of their home for acquaintances who had no plans for Easter.

In the years that followed, their circle of friends and family brought more people, and it has become the social event of the neighborhood.

Within the first few years, the event grew to nearly 40 people. Those attending enjoyed the quaint backyard atmosphere and delicious food and soon began ask-

ing if they could invite others — and the O'Neals always obliged. "We never know who is going to show up," Debbie O'Neal says. "Every year we have at least two or three people we've never seen before."

Their gathering of family and friends has occurred for 35 of the 39 years they have been married. The afternoon event is now several times larger than when it began, with 150 to 200 people attending.

A PLENTIFUL POTLUCK

While the kids are geared up for the frenzied egg hunt, the home-cooked specialties on the table are likely the main draw for the adults. "We've never been lacking in food," O'Neal says. "Everybody brings a dish or two and joins in the fun." A parade of guests arrive after 1 p.m., typically carrying containers or Crock-Pots with a variety of homemade recipes.

O'Neal makes a coconut cake and a chocolate delight dessert that have been staples since early on. Crock-Pot dressing, Mexican cornbread and barbecue are favorites, while fried okra patties are an unusual recipe that is quite popular at the luncheon.

After the meal, the adults take turns

assembling the 1,400 Easter eggs that are scattered about the property. Colorful eggs dot the grass like wildflowers, as three designated areas are used to separate the children by age. After a flurry of small feet and Easter baskets, the youngsters are shaking the eggs and finding the trinkets, gum, balloons, candy and even loose change inside.

Four years ago, O'Neal began wearing a bunny suit, created by her friend Sandy Tucker. "Now the kids know it's time to go hunt the eggs when I come out wearing the bunny suit," O'Neal says. She even poses for photos with the children. The afternoon activities typically continue with men engaged in a game of horseshoes as kids bump a volleyball over the net.

Over the decades, many who attended as children have continued to return as adults and are now sharing the experience with their own kids. But children aren't the only ones wowed by the experience.

One year, the O'Neals invited an elderly German lady, Karla Crum from New Market, to the gathering. "She had never been to an Easter egg hunt before," O'Neal says. "Karla had a blast, and it felt good to know she came to experience that with us." 🐰

Shopping for a local cause

BY MATT LEDGER

The fashionable new shopping experience isn't at the mall or the big box store, and it may be closer to home than you realize. "We're all Southern girls here and we love to shop, so to shop and give back, that's an even better experience," says Sharon Hicks, the store manager at Pickers on Main. "We want to help people in a dignified way and we just knew this store could do that."

The shop is the latest mission for the CARE Center. The center, with the name standing for Community Assistance Resource Effort, began in New Hope during 2000, when 15 churches in southeastern Madison County were approached about contributing toward an emergency food assistance program. "It started out just as a food pantry, but it has been one of the best things to happen to this area," Mary Cole says, one of the consigners at the store.

With that mission in mind, many community members have stepped up during the past 15 years, expanding the center to address the growing needs of their neighbors. More than two dozen programs are now providing a wide range of resources for the community, with the latest being a community collaboration called Pickers on Main.

MUCH MORE THAN A STORE

A quick glance in the window, a person might think Pickers on Main is an ordinary boutique, but the quality crafts and designer decor products have a dual purpose much greater than beautifying any living room. "The CARE Center's mission is to



Store manager Sharon Hicks (right) and consigner Mary Cole standing inside of Pickers on Main.

help reduce poverty through education initiatives and influential resources," Hicks says. The shop provides a bit of the traditional Southern charm that small towns are known for. "We thought Pickers on Main would be a perfect fit for this community," Hicks says.

Collectors and crafters are finding and creating marvelous merchandise, turning "passions into paychecks" at the store, which opened Nov. 1, 2014. "Many of the kids in the local school are making things within their classroom, then bringing those items here and selling them," Hicks says. That transaction provides youth an opportunity to learn about the value of community service. A portion of the profits goes toward the general budget for the 501(c)(3) charity.

PRODUCTS WITH PROMISE

Pickers on Main fits the increasingly popular "buy local" principle, helping area shoppers avoid those time-consuming trips to Huntsville. "Just because New Hope is small doesn't mean it can't have the same things as the bigger cities have," Hicks says. "The idea was out there, and then the Communicator ran the story on Mike Wolfe and it talked about how main streets in rural downtown areas are few and far between."



It's providing a popular place to shop and keeping the economic impact and tax dollars local. "This store is like Pinterest on Main Street," Hicks says, laughing.

She also liked how 'pickin' can involve the whole family and teach children about pricing, budgeting and even local history. There are more than a dozen regular consigners, called "Partners in Hope," that pledge to provide toward the program. Hicks finds that a Pablo Picasso quote sums up the core mission for the store: "The meaning of life is to find your gift. The purpose of life is to give it away." 📺

REAL MEN DO EAT QUICHE

Bea Salley loves to cook. So much so, in fact, that she says she'd like to own a restaurant in her hometown of Walterboro, South Carolina. But until her ship comes in, she'll stick to catering for area residents in her spare time. Her forte? Quiche.

"I make potato pies, apple pies, coconut pies and cakes, but quiche is my specialty," she says. "It's a good, year-round dish, but particularly in the spring."

Salley's mother died when she was 13 years old. So with just her father and no siblings, she would never have learned the intricacies of cooking had women in her community — she grew up in Oakman Branch right outside Walterboro — not intervened, taking her under their wing to teach her and stirring her interest in what would become her passion.

But it wasn't until about 10 years ago that she realized she wanted to make a difference by catering to her community with more healthful food choices.

"No one in my household — my husband, Fred, our five kids and 10 grandchildren — ever had any problems with high blood pressure or diabetes, and I know what you cook with makes a difference," she says.

So almost all of her recipes, particularly her quiches, have healthy ingredients, such as fish and vegetables, and not a lot of sodium. And everyone loves them, she adds.

But there's a saying that's become quite familiar: "Real men don't eat quiche."

Not so, Salley says.

"There are a lot of men who love my quiche. They say it's filling, so they don't have to eat as much."

David Walton of Summerville is one example. He's been eating and enjoying



A HEALTHY CHOICE — With so many ways to prepare quiche, it can be a healthy choice for any season. Bea Salley likes to use ingredients such as fish and vegetables, while keeping the sodium low.

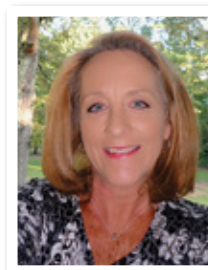
Salley's quiches for at least a dozen years. "'Real men don't eat quiche' simply isn't true when you have quiche as good as Bea's!" he says.

And it's this time of year that Salley's kitchen heats up with quiches in her oven. People like to be outside in the warm weather and not inside cooking, so Salley does it for them.

"Quiche is a quick, full meal for friends and family," she says. Serve a slice of quiche with a salad and a basket of bread, and you have a complete, healthy dinner. Leftovers are even better — if there are any to be had.

Whether you're baking a

brunch-friendly bacon-and-egg-filled treat for Easter or an elegant vegetarian dinner served with a healthy lettuce or fruit salad, quiche is extremely easy to adapt in a number of delicious ways. The recipes that follow are some of Salley's favorites. [📖](#)



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

VEGGIE QUICHE

- 1/4 stick (2 tablespoons) butter
- 1/2 onion, diced
- 1/2 green bell pepper, diced
- 1 10-ounce bag spinach
- 1 12-ounce container fresh mushrooms, sliced
- 1 medium zucchini, sliced
- 1 medium yellow squash, sliced
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 1/2 cup flour
- 1/2 cup cheddar cheese (or cheese of your choice), plus more for topping
- 1/2 cup sour cream
- 1 9-inch pie crust (store-bought or homemade)

Heat oven to 350°F. Melt butter in skillet over medium heat; add onions and bell pepper; let simmer. Add spinach, mushrooms, zucchini and squash; cover and saute until softened. Stir in salt and pepper; let cool, then pour in bowl and add eggs, flour and cheese, blending mixture together. Last, add sour cream, blending well. Pour into crust, sprinkle with shredded cheese and bake for 40 minutes or until quiche is set around the edges and still slightly loose in the center. Remove from oven and let sit for a few minutes before cutting.

SALMON AND MUSHROOM QUICHE

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1/2 cup onions, diced
- 1 16-ounce container fresh mushrooms, sliced
- 1 large can salmon
- 1/2 cup shredded Swiss cheese
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 1/4 cup flour
- 1 cup (8 ounces) sour cream
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 1 9-inch pie crust
- 1/4 cup shredded cheddar cheese

Heat oven to 400°F. Heat olive oil in skillet over medium heat; add onions and let simmer for 3 minutes until onions are soft. Add mushrooms, stirring until soft, then

add salmon. Blend mixture together, let cool, then add Swiss cheese, eggs, flour, sour cream, salt and pepper. Blend all together, then pour into crust, sprinkle with cheddar cheese and bake for 35 minutes or until quiche is set around the edges and still slightly loose in the center. Remove from oven and let it sit for a few minutes before cutting.

Note: This quiche is also good served "crust-less." Bake in pie pan that has been sprayed with nonstick cooking spray using no pie crust. Follow directions as written.

BEA'S PIE CRUST

This is the quickest and simplest pastry crust ever, and it tastes great.

- 1 1/4 cups all-purpose flour
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 cup shortening (preferably Crisco)
- 5 tablespoons butter, chilled and cut into small pieces
- 3-4 tablespoons ice water
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice

Whisk together flour and salt in medium bowl. Add shortening and butter, tossing with fingers until pieces are well-coated with the flour mixture. Using a pastry blender or your fingers, cut the shortening and butter into the dry ingredients. Drizzle in 3 tablespoons of the ice water and the lemon juice; mix just until the dough comes together, adding the last tablespoon of water if the dough is too dry. Do not overwork the dough or it will become too tough. Pat the dough into a flat disk, wrap tightly in plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least one hour before rolling out.



TIPS TO MAKE THE PERFECT QUICHE

Quiche is a simple idea for brunch or dinner, but getting it right can be difficult. Here are a few key steps to ensure that your quiche will be creamy and your crust will be flaky.

- ▶ **The crust:** The first step to a good quiche is having a great pastry shell. It will come out better if you parbake (partially bake) it for about 10 minutes so that it's dry and crisp before adding your filling.
- ▶ **Seal it:** To avoid a soggy pastry, brush the bottom of the crust with an egg wash (a beaten egg white) right after parbaking it. The warmth of the crust when you remove it from the oven is all you need to "cook" the egg white and seal the shell to help keep it crispy.
- ▶ **Say "no" to low-fat:** There's nothing worse than wimpy flavor when you bite into a quiche, so make sure to avoid using low-fat or nonfat ingredients. Their high water content prevents the quiche from setting properly, resulting in a watery finish.
- ▶ **Protect the edges:** Once in the oven, keep an eye on the shell, and if the edges of the pastry start browning too quickly, wrap them in a little aluminum foil.
- ▶ **Loose is a good rule of thumb:** Take the quiche out of the oven when the center is still slightly wobbly. This will ensure that it doesn't over-cook and will still have its creamy custard texture when you cut into it.



P.O. Box 452
New Hope, AL 35760

Presort STD
US Postage PAID
Permit #21
Freeport OH

NHTC has **3 ways** for new customers
to save on **high-speed Internet!**



1

one...

Giving you **\$20 off**
your bill for 3 months
(A \$60 savings!)

2

two...

Waiving the
connection fee
(A \$45.15 savings!)

3

three...

Saving **\$10 off** the
purchase of a wireless
router or modem/
router combo

**No-Fee
Upgrade
Special!**

Did you know that NHTC now has speeds up to 50 Mbps?

For our existing customers, NHTC is waiving the upgrade fee
to get you on the road to a high-speed broadband experience.
Call to see if you qualify.*

*Offer ends April 30, 2015. Promotion is intended for new Internet customers or upgrades. If existing Internet service is disconnected and reconnected during the promotional period, full rates apply. Not all services are available in all areas. Internet speeds are best-effort up to stated speed and not guaranteed.

Call now to tap into the advantages of broadband Internet service.

256-723-4211 | nhtc.coop

