

The

Communicator

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2015

DIRECTING DEVELOPMENT

SEMCBA helps grow
the community

RUNNING BACK

New Hope alumni return
to the turf for game

SEASON'S EATINGS

Christmas cookie recipes to
ring in the holiday season

BY SHIRLEY BLOOMFIELD, CEO
 NTCA—THE RURAL BROADBAND ASSOCIATION

Broadband may be the greatest health care innovation for rural America

When we talk about the impact of broadband Internet access, we often focus on its importance to economic development, business growth and such. While it is absolutely an economic driver, broadband may also be just what the doctor ordered for rural America.

You will sometimes hear it referred to as telemedicine; other times, telehealth. Whatever you call it, the use of broadband technology is changing the way health care is delivered. And I believe we are only seeing the beginning.

For example, electronic medical records are allowing doctors to streamline care, especially for patients in rural areas. A patient who normally visits a rural clinic can be confident that their health information is accurate and up-to-date when they visit a regional hospital.

I wrote in the previous issue of this magazine about aging in place, noting that technologies such as videoconferencing, remote health monitoring and X-ray transmission are helping rural seniors stay at home longer. But the aging population is just one segment that can benefit from broadband-enabled applications.

Recently, I attended a technology showcase that focused on the interconnection between technology providers, health care providers and innovation in telemedicine. It was a fascinating conference that

left my mind spinning with the possibilities for rural health care delivery.

We heard from a rural telecommunications provider who said small telcos are

often too small to get the main contracts from the base hospitals, but that they have an important role in providing the local infrastructure and having the construction team on the ground. This has helped build the case for having a role in the large clinic and university hospital contracts in the future.

Hugh Cathey of the innovative company HealthSpot provided a real glimpse into what broadband can mean to all segments of society. His company has kiosks in several Rite Aid drug stores in Ohio where patients can walk in and be face-to-face with a healthcare professional via a video screen. These stations come outfitted with everything you need to receive a wide variety of remote treatments. The HealthSpot network has seen thousands of patients since May, for ailments such as allergies, cold and flu, bronchitis, cough, rashes, sore throat and fever.

With applications such as these, it's easy to get excited about what the future holds for telemedicine. And with the great work being done by your telco and others like it who are building world-class broadband networks, we can know that rural America will not be left behind in this evolution. ☎



Lifeline Service

When you need help paying for telephone service

Is your annual household income at or below 135 percent of the Federal Poverty Guidelines for a household of its size? Do you or someone in your household participate in any of the following low-income government assistance programs? If so, you may qualify for Lifeline Service.

- Medicaid
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Section 8 Federal Public Housing Assistance (FPHA)
- Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
- National School Lunch Program's Free Lunch Program

To find out whether you qualify for Lifeline assistance, customers must fill out standard forms, available at your local telephone company's office, as mandated by the Federal and/or State government. Your telephone company is not responsible for determining who qualifies for these programs or who receives assistance. Customers must meet specific criteria in order to obtain assistance with their local telephone service, and qualifying is dependent upon government-established guidelines. To qualify for Lifeline credit, each customer must apply and provide proof that he/she, or a household member for whom he/she is financially responsible, participates in at least one of the programs listed above or that the customer meets the income-based requirements. Additional eligibility requirements may also apply. Customers must choose to apply the Lifeline discount to a landline or a wireless number, not both.

For more details about Lifeline Service and to apply for assistance, please contact your local telephone company.

Easy steps to help **STOP** telemarketing calls!

If you are like most consumers, you are tired of being disturbed by telemarketing calls. There is help.

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) and the U.S. Federal Communications Commission (FCC) have established a National Do Not Call Registry. Joining this registry can drastically reduce the number of telemarketing calls you receive.

Here are some important facts about the list:

- Once registered, telemarketers have 31 days to stop calling your number.
- You can register up to three non-business telephone numbers. You can register cell phone numbers; there is not a separate registry for cell phones.
- Your number will remain on the list

permanently unless you disconnect the number or you choose to remove it.

- Some businesses are exempt from the Do Not Call Registry and may still be able to call your number. These include political organizations, charities, telephone surveyors and businesses that you already have a relationship with.

Strict Federal Trade Commission rules for telemarketers make it illegal to do any of the following regardless of whether or not your number is listed on the National Do Not Call Registry:

- Call before 8 a.m.
- Call after 9 p.m.
- Misrepresent what is being offered
- Threaten, intimidate or harass you
- Call again after you've asked them not to



**Adding your number to the
Do Not Call Registry is easy!**

**Register online at
www.donotcall.gov
or call 888-382-1222
For TTY, call 866-290-4236**

You must call from the telephone number you wish to register.



Beware of sales calls disguised as surveys

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) says they have received numerous complaints from individuals who report receiving deceptive sales calls. The callers identify themselves with Political Opinions of America and ask you to participate in a brief survey, usually consisting of about three questions. After answering the questions, the individual is transferred to someone offering them a bonus for participating in the survey — usually a sales pitch for a time-share disguised as a “free vacation.”

The FTC warns that if the purpose of the call is to try to sell something — even if it includes a survey — it is telemarketing and all Do Not Call Registry rules apply.

If you believe a call violates the FTC rules against telemarketing, you can file a complaint by calling 888-382-1222 or go to donotcall.gov. ☎

ATTENTION LOCAL BUSINESS OWNERS:

You can be penalized for not following these FCC rules

When people think of telemarketing phone calls, they usually imagine them coming from distant call centers. But local businesses that make phone calls to customers or potential customers should be aware that the same National Do Not Call Registry rules and regulations apply to them.

The Do Not Call initiative, regulated by the U.S. Federal Trade Commission (FTC) and the U.S. Federal Communications Commission (FCC), requires telephone service providers to notify customers of the National Do Not Call rules and regulations.

If you are a company, individual or organization that places telemarketing calls, it is very important that you familiarize yourself with the operations of the National Do Not Call Registry. Unless you fall under one of the established exceptions, such as telemarketing by charitable organizations or for prior business relationships, you may not make telemarketing calls to numbers included in the National Do Not Call Registry.

For information regarding National Do Not Call regulations, visit the National Do Not Call registry at www.telemarketing.donotcall.gov. You can find the Federal Communications Commission and Federal Trade Commission rules governing telemarketing and telephone solicitation at 47 C.F.R. § 64.1200 and 16 C.F.R. Part 310, respectively.

Bringing Congress to Rural America

For the past few years, the Foundation for Rural Service has brought a busload of congressional staff members through rural America. This is a big opportunity.



JIM COOK
General Manager

This year's tour, which wound through the hills of Eastern Kentucky and Middle Tennessee, saw the biggest group of legislative aides yet go on the tour. The 2014 tour went through upstate New York, and the 2013 tour exposed the staffers to rural Montana.

FRS took these bright, young staffers — most of whom work for representatives and senators on key commerce, technology and communications committees — out of Washington, D.C., to see what rural broadband looks like firsthand.

The staffers came from across the country, representing places such as Salt Lake City, the Dallas suburbs, Central Florida and the Research Triangle in North Carolina. Before moving to the nation's capital, many of them lived in big cities, such as Chi-

cago. For some, this bus trip may have been the first time they'd ever spent in an area that could be considered rural.

It was good for them to hear rural business owners, hospital administrators and local officials talk about the importance of a broadband connection. It was good for them to see how vibrant rural communities are, and how important cooperatives like ours are to those residents.

And it's important for them to understand the challenges rural telcos face in building a network that may cost tens of thousands of dollars each mile, with as few as five customers per mile.

Long term, Congress and Washington regulators play a significant role in the strength of our telco and our industry, through issues such as the Universal Service Fund. As you've read in this space before, the USF provides funding that allows rural, high-cost providers like us a way to recoup the investments we've made in our communities and still provide telephone and broadband service at a price local residents can afford.

Cooperatives like ours work closely with FRS and NTCA — The Rural Broadband Association to make sure rural voices are heard among elected officials and policymakers. We're about to move into a busy election year in 2016, and their work will be more important than ever. You can read more about that in Shirley Bloomfield's column on Page 2.

Rural telephone companies like ours have a great story to tell, and it's a story that our country's leaders need to hear. We are providing service in areas that for-profit companies will not serve, and local residents depend on our network to work, play, shop, learn and connect with friends and family.

I am proud of the work FRS, NTCA and our fellow telcos are doing to bring our voice to leaders in Washington. And I'm proud every day that you've trusted NHTC to connect you to the world. ☎

The Communicator

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2015

VOL. 14, NO. 6

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

Mike Whitaker, Treasurer
New Hope Exchange

Calvin Bearden
Grant Exchange

Jeff Cooper
New Hope Exchange

Greg Glover
Owens Cross Roads Exchange

Barry Jones
New Hope Exchange

Randy Morrison
Grant Exchange

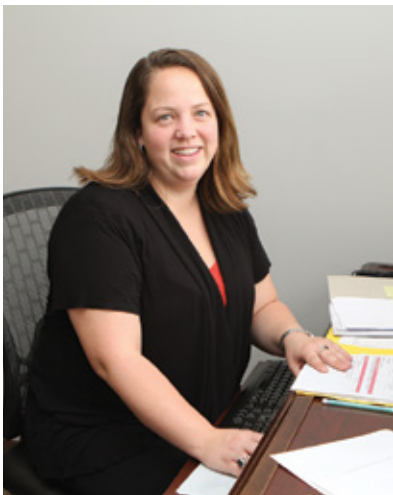
Produced for NHTC by:



On the Cover:



School leaders, local politicians and small business owners aim to accelerate the economic development in New Hope and Owens Cross Roads.
See story Page 8.



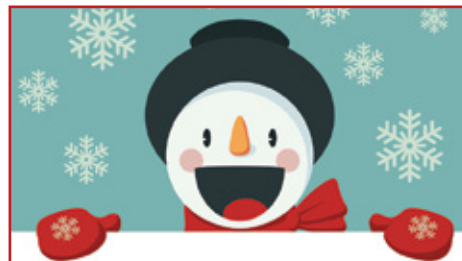
Meet Amy

Amy Reavis Deen is the newest addition to the NHTC family, joining as an Accounts Payable Representative. She is a lifelong resident of New Hope and graduated from New Hope High School in 2000. She is the mother of four, including Zac, 22; Christopher, 17; Carson, 11 and Will, 6. She joins the NHTC team with 12 years of prior customer service experience at Citizens Bank & Trust.



Visit to the VMAs

NHTC congratulates New Hope resident Nicole Reed - winner of tickets for two to MTV's Video Music Awards back in August. Nicole was selected from thousands of entrants nationwide. The tickets were courtesy of MTV and the National Cable Television Cooperative.



Christmas Parades

The **Grant Christmas parade** is on Dec. 5 and begins at 1 p.m. Vehicles and floats will line up at DAR school and the parade route travels along Main Street.

On Dec. 12, the **New Hope parade** begins at 6 p.m. with the lineup starting at 5 p.m. at New Hope School. After the parade, everyone is encouraged to meet at the downtown gazebo to watch the lighting of the Christmas Tree.

Costs for TV programming continue to rise

As your local cooperative, NHTC strives to bring you the highest-quality service possible at the lowest rates possible.

In an effort to bring you the best possible service, NHTC has created a robust lineup of channels offering something for most everyone. We now offer up to 260 channels on our fiber network and up to 170 channels on our cable network.

Unfortunately, the network providers that we get our programming from have increased their rates year after year to the point where we have once again been forced to pass a portion of those increases on to our subscribers.

We want our members to know that NHTC is not alone in the struggle against continually increasing content costs. In a recent survey, conducted by Vantage Point Solutions, over 54% of rural video providers saw an increase of 100% or more in the retransmission fees that must be paid to the Television

Broadcast providers to carry the local broadcast stations. Over two-thirds of the survey respondents acknowledge their video

offerings are unprofitable and said that if the trend continues they were not likely to offer video service five years from now.

NTCA – The Rural Broadband Association which represents rural providers like NHTC continues to lobby the Federal Communications Commission to review and reform retransmission consent regulations to ensure that small rural video providers have access to affordable broadcast programming content.

NHTC will continue to offer video services so that you may choose the convenience of bundling all of your services, including voice, video, internet and security on one bill and we will continue to lobby the Federal regulators on your behalf for fair and equitable access to affordable programming.

Thank you for your business and support. ☎





BOWLED OVER

There's more to bowl-game trips than football

As football season fades into history, host cities gear up for events that really score. Get ready for kickoff with a tour of the 2015 bowl games in cities across the South — which are great places to visit anytime.

DECEMBER 23

GoDaddy Bowl; Mobile, Alabama; Ladd-Peebles Stadium

Let's start your tour with the week leading up to the bowl game in Mobile. The focus is on the bowl's eve and its Mardi Gras-style parade. Marching bands and cheerleaders from each bowl team will help pump up team spirit. The parade culminates in a giant pep rally on the waterfront at Mobile Bay. So don't sit on the sidelines. Get into the action.

Other sights to see:

- The USS Alabama arrived in Mobile Bay in 1964 and opened for public tours a year later. Bill Tunnell, executive director of the USS Alabama Memorial Park, says bowl week is always a lot of fun for players and fans.



USS Alabama

Photo courtesy of USS Alabama Battleship Memorial Park

- One of the best places to view Mobile's historic past is at the Cathedral of Immaculate Conception. The cathedral's stained-glass windows date to 1890, so bring your camera. And this would be a good place to say a prayer for a successful Hail Mary near game's end. The church is at 2 S. Claiborne St.

Where to eat: Regina's Kitchen, 2056 Government St., a mile from the stadium. Best bet: muffuletta with a side of potato salad.



TECH-SAVVY TRAVELER:

As if the holidays didn't provide enough excitement, it's nearly time for an unending blitz of college bowl games. There are a few apps to help get us even further into the game. **Team Stream** is a popular sports news app by Bleacher Report. Want the latest scores and highlights? The **ESPN** app alerts you when your team scores. Searching for a social media society of sports fans? **FanCred's** app could help visiting fans survive a trip into hostile territory.



DECEMBER 26

Camping World Independence Bowl; Shreveport, Louisiana; Independence Stadium

On our next stop, the days leading up to the bowl game see a marked change in the city of Shreveport. Fans sporting team colors are out in full force enjoying the many cool, old places to eat, drink and socialize along the riverfront. There will be a pep rally, which consistently draws big crowds. And there's always been a free event for families: Fan Fest — a fun time with face painting, jump houses and more.

If you feel the need to shop, there's no better place to go than Louisiana Boardwalk Outlets, home to 60-plus stores. "It's probably the most-popular destination for football fans," says Chris Jay, with the Shreveport-Bossier Convention and Tourist Bureau.

Kids will enjoy spending time at Sci-Port: Louisiana's Science Center. It's always ranked in the top 10 of children's science museums in the country.

Where to eat: Sam's Southern Eatery, 3500 Jewella Ave., 0.7 miles from the stadium. One of the best spots in town for fried seafood. Favorite dish? It's a coin toss between the 3N3 — three shrimp and three fish fillets — or the shrimp with red beans and rice.

DECEMBER 30

Birmingham Bowl; Birmingham, Alabama; Legion Field

The journey continues as the year winds down. It's one of the smaller bowl games, but don't be blindsided by the fact that there will be as much play-by-play action off the field as on.

Bowl eve begins with the Monday Morning Quarterback Club Team Luncheon. The public is welcome, but tickets are required. Then, at 2 p.m., the Uptown Street Fest and Pep Rally kicks off a huge celebration with team bands, cheerleaders, players and live music.

And if you have time, make a drive to the Barber Vintage Motorsports Museum with its collection of almost 750 vintage and modern motorcycles and race cars.

Where to eat: Niki's West Steak and

Seafood, 233 Finley Ave. W, 2.7 miles from the stadium. Some of the best soul food in Alabama. Fried green tomatoes, turnip greens, stewed okra and white beans are favorite sides to daily entree choices.



Hot Chicken Eating World Championship

Photo courtesy of Franklin American Mortgage Music City Bowl

DECEMBER 30

Franklin American Mortgage Music City Bowl; Nashville, Tennessee; Nissan Stadium

The home of country music earns a stop on the itinerary. Last year's Music City Bowl was one of the highest-attended in its 17-year history, and organizers are hopeful to repeat that success this year. To kick things off, there's a battle off the field on game eve: MusicFest and Battle of the Bands. It begins with the Hot Chicken Eating World Championships, followed by a free concert at Riverfront Park. The evening ends with the two team bands "duking it out" on the streets.

While in town, be sure to make time for the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum, where the history of country music comes alive.

Where to eat: Manny's House of Pizza, 15 Arcade Alley, 0.8 miles from the stadium. Creative pies are the trademark of this pizzeria, as well as great spaghetti and calzones. A local favorite.

DECEMBER 31

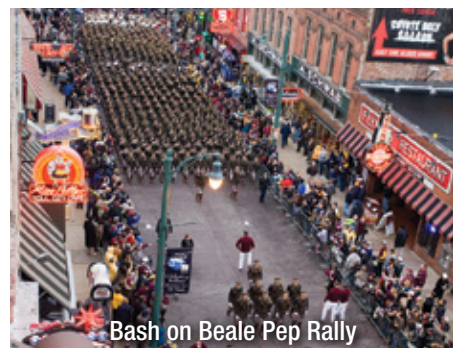
Chick-fil-A Peach Bowl; Atlanta, Georgia; Georgia Dome

Don't forget to plan a New Year's Eve stop. When traveling to a city the size of Atlanta, deciding what venues to visit is difficult. And during bowl week, they're often crowded. The Peach Bowl draws one of the largest of all bowl crowds. Visitors enjoy the restaurants, sights and sounds of The Big Peach, including the

Peach Bowl Parade. Dozens of bands and floats pass through the streets.

To narrow down the playing field of other sights to see, there are two places near the Georgia Dome. The College Football Hall of Fame is a touchdown for football fans with its interactive exhibits and helmet and jersey collections. And for fishy folks, there's the Georgia Aquarium and the inhabitants of its 10 million gallons of fresh and salt water.

Where to eat: Jamal's Buffalo Wings, 10 Northside Drive NW, 0.7 miles from the stadium. Scramble over to Jamal's for a football tradition: wings. It's a hole-in-the-wall, but don't let that stop you.



Bash on Beale Pep Rally

Photo courtesy of AutoZone Liberty Bowl

JANUARY 2

AutoZone Liberty Bowl; Memphis, Tennessee; Liberty Bowl Memorial Stadium

There's nothing sad about ending a bowl season journey at the home of the blues. As if Beale Street wasn't busy on any given day or night, it scores big with an undercurrent of excitement that builds as the Liberty Bowl teams come to town, exploding at the Bash on Beale Pep Rally. The area comes alive beginning at 3 p.m. with a parade featuring local bands, team bands, cheerleaders and more. When the parade ends, the pep rally begins. And this year, it all happens on Jan. 1, the day before the game.

And if there's time in your schedule, don't forget a tour of Graceland, as well as Sun Studios where Elvis, Johnny Cash, Roy Orbison and more sang the blues.

Where to eat: Soul Fish, 862 S. Cooper St., 1.4 miles from the stadium. The best catfish, Cuban sandwiches and fish tacos in Memphis, but the place scores an extra point for its oyster po' boys. ☑



Economic development and expansion is occurring locally as (from left) Joseph Conwell and Larry Durham meet with builder J W Cobb at a home on Embassy Circle in the new Cobb's Cove subdivision.

Growth through grass-roots group

BY MATT LEDGER

Larry Durham, who grew up in southeast Madison County and now owns Durham Service Company, Inc., recognized local entrepreneurs could benefit from a dose of teamwork. "There was no vehicle here for businesses to come together to express concerns to the government, and there were no networking opportunities."

So, Durham, along with some other business owners in the community, decided to form the Southeast Madison County Business Association (SEMCBA) one week after a conversation with Allen Paseur a retired teacher and football coach at New Hope High School, who owns Paseur Farms.

The 4-year-old SEMCBA has 50 members, including community leaders, educators and individuals. Membership fees are \$125 for businesses and \$25 for individuals.

Once the group formed, members contacted state Senator Clay Scofield for help. "He wants to work with this community because we are on the edge of his district," Durham says. "He donated money to help get us off the ground." Scofield provided TVA funds that are allocated to him to use in his district for business development projects.

REACHING OUT

The grass-roots organization sponsors outreach events in the community — most recently an open house. “In the last year, we’ve really tried to focus on how we can shine a light on our community,” SEMCBA President Joseph Conwell says. He’s served in that post for the past two years, after Durham held the post for the first two years. The group will be nominating and electing new officers in January.

The association emphasizes the improved graduation rates at New Hope High School, as well as other advances at Owens Cross Roads and New Hope Elementary Schools.

“Our area has gotten a bad rap over time because we’re rural, so sometimes people think our schools aren’t as good. The statistics don’t prove that. NHHS’ numbers are climbing, and we’ve seen dramatic improvements in recent years,” Conwell says.

Their group wanted to emphasize the statistics to realtors, who can boost growth in the area. “We sponsored an open house for all of the area realtors to come and see the schools. The principals even gave a presentation and discussed several topics with the realtors who came to the event,” Durham says.

SEMCBA is always looking for new opportunities to partner with local organizations. Meetings are the second Monday of each month, alternating between the Owens Cross Roads and New Hope town halls. At most meetings, mayors are present, as well as County Commissioner Eddie Sisk. Often, school principals attend.

“Where else can you go and have an open forum to discuss issues with that many elected leaders under one roof? I think it’s a good thing a lot of people don’t know about,” Conwell says.

While the organization hopes to emphasize the success of the schools, there is also a benefit for educators to understand the needs of businesses. “We wanted to work with local government to give business folks in this area a voice, and to let schools understand what the needs are of the business community,” Durham says.

Similarly, the association works to



ABOVE Conwell and Durham tour NHHS and have noticed significant strides of improvement in recent years.



LEFT The history of New Hope surrounds the city hall building, as Mayor Butch Taylor (center) meets with Larry Durham (right) and Joseph Conwell.

inform many of the area’s business owners about available resources. “I’m surprised how many people live here and don’t know what services are available to them,” Durham says.

The association firmly believes that growth is on its way and local businesses are helping pave the way. “At NHTC, we believe in investing in our communities through economic development,” says NHTC General Manager Jim Cook, also a member of SEMCBA. “We are currently doing a 100 percent buildout of replacing copper with fiber.”

This buildout allows businesses, along with residences, to take advantage of NHTC’s state-of-the-art fiber connectivity and as much bandwidth as they need. “The infrastructure is here to support whatever growth desires to come this way,” Cook says.

COMMUNICATION FOR GROWTH

The organization also has an open line of communication with state government. An original member of SEMCBA, Ritchie Whorton was elected as House District 22 State Representative.

Whorton is the owner of All Star Pools Inc, and was instrumental in marketing and growing the SEMCBA membership. “The community made a great decision in electing Ritchie; he’s doing a great job. He stepped out and became a leader of this freshman class,” Durham says. “Whorton’s presence in the state legislature places the entire community in a positive light.”

And, along with local lawmakers, several politicians have come up from Montgomery to meet with the group. “We’re starting to get collaboration. That’s what it takes. Business and government have to work together for a community to grow,” Durham says. ☑

FOR THE LOVE OF FOOD

What do readers find at your blog in addition to recipes?

Stephanie Parker: In addition to recipes, Plain Chicken posts about our world travels and our three cats, and we also post a weekly menu on Sunday to help get you ready for the week.

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

SP: Blogging started as a way for me to store recipes. I would make food and take it to work. People would ask for the recipe later, and I had to search for it. I decided to make a blog and store everything online. The blog started expanding because we were in a dinner rut. I decided to make one new recipe a week. Well, that morphed into four new recipes a week. Plain Chicken has totally changed my life. I was in corporate accounting for over 18 years. Plain Chicken took off, and I was able to quit my corporate job and focus solely on plainchicken.com. I am so lucky to be able to do something that I love every single day.

Everyone has different tastes, so when the extended family gets together, what kind of menu can you plan to please everyone?

SP: Pleasing everyone is always hard, especially nowadays with all the different diet plans people are on. I always try to have something for everyone. If you know someone is vegetarian or gluten-free, make sure they have some options. But for me, at the end of the day, I'm their hostess, not their dietitian.

What are some ideas for getting the children involved in preparing the holiday meal?

SP: Getting the children involved with preparing the holiday meal is a great idea. When making the cornbread dressing, let

the children mix up the batter and crumble the cooked cornbread. Have the children mix the cookie batter and form the cookies. For safety's sake, just make sure the adults put things in the oven and take them out.

Budgets play a big role in planning holiday menus. What are some ideas for hosting a party with "champagne taste on a beer budget?"

SP: Plan your menu early and watch the grocery store sales. Buy ingredients and store them for the holidays. Freeze what you can, and store canned/dry goods in the pantry. Wholesale clubs, like Sam's and Costco, are also great places to buy large quantities of items and meats.

Do you have a good recipe for the holidays you're willing to share?

SP: Yes. Spicy Ranch Crackers are a great snack to have on hand during the holidays. The recipe makes a lot, and the crackers will keep for weeks. They are perfect for unexpected guests and are also great in soups and stews. 🍷



Spicy Ranch Crackers

- 1 (1-ounce) package ranch dressing mix
- 1/2 to 1 tablespoon cayenne pepper
- 1 1/2 cups canola oil
- 1 box saltine crackers

Combine dry ranch mix, cayenne pepper and oil. Pour over crackers. Toss crackers every 5 minutes for about 20 minutes, until all crackers are coated and there is no more oil mixture at the bottom of the bowl. Store in a resealable plastic bag.

Stephanie Parker

A Q&A with Stephanie Parker, a blogger from Birmingham, Alabama, who loves to share recipes and family adventures with fellow foodies on her blog "Plain Chicken."

Check out her blog...
plainchicken.com



OTHER FOOD BLOGS THAT MIGHT TEMPT YOUR PALATE:

- ▶ **www.brittanyspantry.com**
This site combines a love of reading, writing and cooking into a blog that will keep you busy in the kitchen creating recipes that have been tested and tweaked for delicious results.
- ▶ **www.iamafoodblog.com**
Even for people who work with food for a living, the editors at Saveur "were overcome with desire," and named this blog its "Blog of the Year" for 2014.
- ▶ **www.southernbite.com**
This Prattville, Alabama-based blog focuses on Southern food with the idea that "food down South is not all about deep frying and smothering stuff in gravy."



CONNECTED CHRISTMAS

Your 2015 Gadget-Giving Guide

Ah, Christmas. It's approaching quickly, and it's never too early to start shopping. But are you struggling with what to buy that someone who has everything? Here are some of the season's hottest items that are sure to impress that technologically savvy, hard-to-buy-for family member, significant other or friend.

WOCKET SMART WALLET

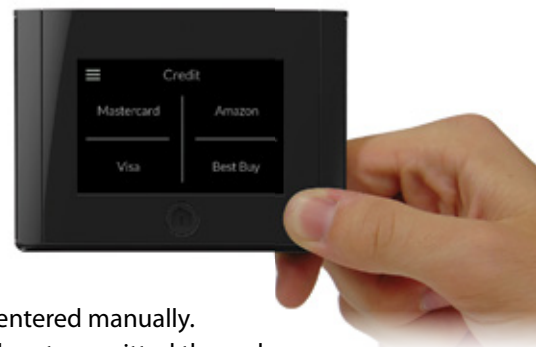
If you're tired of keeping up with all the cards in your wallet, the Wocket is for you.

The Wocket Smart Wallet is the world's smartest wallet. How does it work? First swipe your cards using the card reader included in the Wocket. Information like your voter registration or any membership or loyalty cards with bar codes can also be entered manually.

The information stored in the Wocket is then transmitted through the WocketCard.

The WocketCard gives the information to the point-of-sale device when it is swiped, just as with a regular credit card.

For only \$229, you can own the smartest wallet on the planet. Order yours at www.ocketwallet.com.



LILY

Have you been considering getting a drone, but can't bring yourself to pull the trigger? Meet Lily, the drone that takes flight on its own, literally. All you have to do is toss it up in the air, and the motors automatically start.

Unlike traditional drones that require the user to operate what looks like a video game controller, Lily relies on a hockey puck-shaped tracking device strapped to the user's wrist. GPS and visual subject tracking help Lily know where you are. Unlike other drones, Lily is tethered to you at all times when flying.

Lily features a camera that captures 12-megapixel stills, and 1080p video at up to 60 frames per second, or 720p at 120 frames per second. You can preorder today, but Lily will not be delivered until May 2016. Expect to pay \$999. www.lily.camera



AMAZON ECHO

If you're looking for a new personal assistant, Amazon has you covered. The Amazon Echo is designed to do as you command — whether it be adding milk to your shopping list, answering trivia, controlling household temperature or playing your favorite music playlist. The Echo, which uses an advanced voice recognition system, has seven microphones and can hear your voice from across a room. The Echo activates when hearing the "wake word." The Echo is constantly evolving, adapting to your speech patterns and personal preferences. "Alexa" is the brain within Echo, which is built into the cloud, meaning it's constantly getting smarter and updating automatically. It's available for \$179.99 on www.amazon.com.

ICPOOCH

Have you ever wondered what your beloved pup is doing while you're not at home? Wonder no more. iCPooch allows you to see your dog whenever you're away. By attaching a tablet to the base of iCPooch, your dog can see you, and you can see them — you can even command iCPooch to dispense a treat. Just download the free app to your tablet or smartphone and never miss a moment with your pup! iCPooch is available for \$99, not including tablet, from Amazon and the website store.icpooch.com.



BACK IN THE GAME:

Local alumni defend their home turf

The Friday night lights continued to shine bright for local high school alumni who strapped on the pads one more time to challenge their rivals. And they raised money for charity, too.

The second annual alumni football game fundraiser was Aug. 8 at Madison County High School in Gurley. This year, the New Hope Indians continued their winning ways by beating the Madison County Tigers 16-0. The Indians also won last year 18-12 in overtime.

The men, some more than two decades past their high school days, didn't let the fact that they've been out of practice for a while curb their enthusiasm.

"Last year, I was the oldest person on the team," 44-year-old David Whitaker says. He played defensive end and sacked the quarterback during the game.

This year he gave the honor of being the oldest player to another friend and former teammate, Harold Manley. "I had told him, 'Harold, you're going to wish you had played. It's worth it to get under the lights one more time,'" Whitaker says.

So Manley, 45, not only played on the team this year, but his son, Zack, also joined the team. "It's something you



New Hope Alumni continued their gridiron greatness by beating the Madison County Tigers for the second consecutive year.



Alumni players shut out their competitors 16-0.



The annual fundraiser at Madison County High School broke all expectations and provided \$25,000 for charity.

can't explain," he says. "I'm his dad, but in the huddle I'm his teammate."

While Manley was the oldest on the team, the youngest player was Zack, a 2013 New Hope High School graduate and current student at the University of Alabama at Huntsville. It's a sense of pride that can't be explained, Manley says about wearing the same uniform as his son. Manley, a 1990 NHHS graduate, played wide receiver during the alumni game.

"I've got another son, and I'm trying to talk him into playing, too," Manley says. "If that happens, I won't play

again."

Each team exceeded their initial goal of raising \$10,000. New Hope High School raised \$10,300, and Madison County High School raised \$12,500. As the home team, Madison received concession profits. All proceeds from the game are earmarked for each school's football program.

The committee made a decision to rotate the location every year so each school has an opportunity to benefit from the parking and concession profits. Each team was allowed to use their respective school's equipment, except for the

uniforms.

Alumni cheerleaders cheered the men on, and the Madison County High School band also performed during halftime.

For competitors such as Manley and Whitaker, the game creates new sports memories.

"I love the game of football," Whitaker says. "It was the experience of a lifetime. It had been 26 years since I strapped on pads and played football."

It certainly won't be the last time he steps foot on the field either. Whitaker says he plans to play in next year's game. 📺

Meet the 2016 NHTC Board members

► **CALVIN BEARDEN** has served on the Board since May and is a 49-year resident of Grant. Bearden graduated from Guntersville High School and has worked as a Tech 3 at Huntsville Hospital for six years. He and his wife, Cheryl, have been married 28 years and have three daughters: Victoria, Lindsey and Chloe.

► **JEFFREY CANTRELL** is in his fifth year on the Board and is a 38-year resident of Grant, where he graduated from DAR High School. He's the facilities manager at Digium and has been there eight years. He has an associate degree from Snead State Community College, a bachelor's from Athens State University and a Facility Management Professional credential. He and his wife, Christen, have been married 11 years. They have two children: Collin and Olivia.

► **JEFF COOPER** has been on the Board for 26 years and is a 60-year resident of New Hope. He owns Cooper's Small Engine, which has been in business for 42 years. He and his wife, Tammy, have been married 24 years, and they have four children: Kelli, Jenni, Morgan and Troup.

► **JIM DUNCAN** has served on the Board for 15 years. He's a lifetime resident of New Hope and owns D & D Greenhouse, established in 1977. He graduated from New Hope High School, served four years in the Alabama National Guard and earned his bachelor's degree from the University of West Alabama. He and his wife, Gina, have been married 15 years. He has four children: Clay, Lisa, Laura and Cole.



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

► **GARLAND ELDERS** is a nine-year Board member, a lifetime resident of Owens Cross Roads and a realtor. He earned his associate degree in business. He and his wife, Jennifer, have been married nine years. Garland has two stepdaughters, Sydney and Brooke.

► **GREG GLOVER** has served on the Board since 1998 and is a lifetime resident of Owens Cross Roads. Glover is a landscaper and turf farmer and raises cattle and quarter horses. He attended New Hope High School, Hiwassee College and Alabama A&M. He and his wife, Harriet, have been married 32 years and have one son, Shane.

► **BARRY JONES** has served on the Board for 11 years. He's a 53-year resident of New Hope, graduating from New Hope High School. Jones served in the Army Reserve for six years, retired from the Madison County Water Department after 30 years and co-owns a lawn service. He and his wife, Sandy, have been married 27

years and have two daughters: Brittney and Megan.

► **RANDY MORRISON** is in his second year on the Board. He grew up on Merrill Mountain and has resided in the Grassy Mountain community on Gunter Mountain for 28 years. He is an alumnus of KDS DAR and Snead State Community College. Randy serves as an elder for the Church of Christ at Owens Cross Roads. He and his wife, Penny, have two children, Dana and Todd, and three grandchildren, Kate, Madi and Averi.

► **MIKE WHITAKER** has served 11 years on the Board and is a lifetime resident of New Hope, graduating from New Hope High School. He is a plant manager at NHES, where he's been for 28 years. He and his wife, Melody, have been married seven months. Whitaker has two sons, Josh and Jeremy, and two step-daughters, Audrey and Sarah. ☎

CLASSIC CHRISTMAS COOKIES

Cookies so good
Santa won't want
to leave

We all know that holiday cookies are a lot more than sugar, flour and eggs. They tell a story.

Remember walking into grandma's house only to see warm cookies she just took from the oven sitting on the counter?

Hope Barker has similar stories when she reminisces about baking cookies with her mom. Her favorite recipe is a simple one: sugar cookies.

"My mom and I used to make these when I was young," she recalls. The recipe came from an old cookbook — now so yellowed and worn with age that it's fallen apart, but, thankfully the pages were saved and are now kept in a folder.

She learned to cook at the apron strings of her mother, Glyndia Conley, and both grandmothers. "I can remember baking when I was in elementary school," Barker says. "My mom and I made sugar cookies to take to school parties. And Mamaw Essie (Conley) taught me how to bake and decorate cakes. From Mamaw Nora (Cottle), I learned how to make stack pies — very thin apple pies stacked and sliced like a cake."

She honed these techniques and soon became known for her baking skills in her town of West Liberty, Kentucky, so much so that she opened a bakery business that she operated from her home, making cookies and cakes for weddings, birthdays, holidays and other special events.

Hope Barker, of West Liberty, Kentucky, makes family cookie recipes her own.



During the holidays, cookies are in demand. Not only are they scrumptious, but just about everyone loves them, too. They make great gifts from the kitchen, and if you arrange them on a beautiful platter, they can become your centerpiece.

"Cookies are easy to make and easy to package," Barker says. "They don't require plates and forks, so they are more convenient than many other desserts. Also, because they are less time-consuming, you can make a variety in less time than many other desserts. They can be decorated many different ways. And who doesn't love to get a plate of pretty cookies?"

But there is one big mistake some less-practiced cooks often make when baking cookies — overbaking.

"If you leave them in the oven until they 'look' done, they are going to be overdone," Barker warns. "The heat in the cookies will continue to bake them after you have taken them out of the oven."

She says the best outcome for pretty cookies is to start with the right equipment

— a good, heavy cookie sheet lined with parchment paper. "This will keep them from sticking to the cookie sheet and help them to brown more evenly on the bottom," she says. And when finished, remove them from the oven and let them cool completely before putting them in a sealed, airtight container to keep them moist.

Barker no longer caters, but she continues to do a lot of baking during the holidays for family, coworkers and friends.

Cookies, she says, just seem to be a universal sign of welcome, good wishes and happy holidays. 🍪



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.

Sugar cookies are a delicious and versatile classic during the holiday season. This is Hope Barker's favorite recipe. They can be made as drop cookies or chilled and rolled for cut-out cookies. You can use the fresh dough and roll balls of it in cinnamon sugar to make Snickerdoodles, or use it as a crust for a fruit pizza.

CLASSIC SUGAR COOKIES

- 2/3 cup shortening
- 1 1/2 cups granulated sugar
- 2 eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 3 1/2 cups self-rising flour
- 1/4 cup milk
- Additional sugar (optional)

Cream together the shortening and sugar. Add the eggs and vanilla and mix very well. Add flour and milk alternately, beginning and ending with flour. Make sure all ingredients are well-incorporated.

For drop cookies, scoop fresh dough into 1-inch balls and place a couple inches apart on a parchment paper-lined cookie sheet. Smear a small amount of shortening on the bottom of a glass, dip the glass into the sugar of your choice and flatten each dough ball into a disk about 1/4-inch thick. Continue to dip the glass into sugar and flatten the dough balls until all are flattened into disks. Sugar can be sprinkled on cookies at this point, if desired. Bake the cookies at 400 degrees for 8-10 minutes. Remove from the oven when they begin to color at the edges.

For rolled and cut cookies, refrigerate the dough for at least 3 hours or overnight. Roll out portions of the dough on a floured surface to about 1/4-inch thick and cut into desired shapes. Sugar can be sprinkled on cookies at this point, if desired. Place the cookies at least 1 inch apart on a parch-



ment paper-lined cookie sheet. Bake at 400 degrees for 8-10 minutes, depending on the size/thickness of the cookies. Remove from the oven when they begin to color at the edges.

SUGAR COOKIE VARIATIONS

Frosted Cookies

Bake either the rolled or drop cookies. Prepare your favorite frosting recipe (or buy canned frosting) and frost the cooled cookies. Frosting can be tinted with different colors and piped on in seasonal designs.

Snickerdoodles

When making the drop cookies, mix together 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon with 1 cup granulated sugar. Roll each ball of dough in the cinnamon-sugar mixture and then put onto the cookie sheet. Flatten with the bottom of a glass into a disk shape and bake as directed.

Maple Cookies

Replace the vanilla flavoring in the recipe with maple flavoring. Make rolled cookies with no sugar on the tops. On the stovetop, stir together 1/4 cup butter and 1/2 cup brown sugar in a small saucepan. Bring to a boil and let boil for 2 minutes. Remove from heat and add 2 tablespoons milk; stir well. (Be careful as the mixture will splatter a little when

you add the milk.) Put saucepan back on stove and bring back to a boil. Remove from heat. Pour the mixture over 1 1/2 cups of sifted powdered sugar and mix on low/medium speed until smooth. Drizzle the warm frosting over the cookies with a spoon. Allow to cool completely.

Jell-O Cookies

Make rolled cookies with no sugar on the tops. When the cookies come out of the oven, spread a thin layer of light corn syrup on the tops with a spoon. Immediately sprinkle with Jell-O gelatin powder of your choice. Allow to cool completely.

Fruit Pizza

Use about a half batch of the dough and spread evenly in a greased jelly roll pan. This will be the crust. Bake at 400 degrees for 10-15 minutes, or until the dough begins to get some color at the edges and on top. Let the crust cool completely. Mix together 8 ounces softened cream cheese with 7 ounces marshmallow creme. Spread this over the crust. Cut up about 4 cups of fresh fruit (strawberries, kiwi, bananas, mandarin oranges, grapes, apples, etc.) and stir together with a package of strawberry fruit gel. Spread the fruit mixture over the cream cheese mixture. Refrigerate before slicing and serving. 🍷



P.O. BOX 452
NEW HOPE, AL 35760

Presort STD
US Postage PAID
Permit #21
Freeport OH

Going green

can save you some green in 2016

If you make the
switch to paperless
billing, NHTC will give you a

\$5

credit on your bill.

one...

Go to our
website:
nhtc.coop

two...

Click the
"Pay Your Bill
Online" link

three...

Follow the online
instructions to set up
an E-Bill account

four...

Click the "Click Here" link under the
Billing Information Mailing Stub and
choose "Stop Paper Billing."

Your NHTC bill will be converted to an email statement.
Offer valid through Dec. 31, 2015.

A one-time \$5 credit will be posted to your February
bill statement for choosing paperless billing.

256-723-4211
nhtc.coop

