

The

Communicator

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2014

New
Hope
Telephone
Cooperative
Your Broadband Connection

REALITY SHOW ROMEO

Justin Barnes
looked for love
on CMT show

GIGABYTES OF GOSPEL

Broadband helps churches
share the Good News

ALL ABOARD!

Tour the scenic
Southern railways



Protect Yourself Today:

Practical steps small businesses can take to protect against cyber security threats

By MICHAEL RAMAGE

With the ever-growing number of cyber security threats, all businesses should take immediate steps to ensure that their operations, systems and networks are secure. In the July/August issue, we looked at some of the threats facing small businesses. Now, let's discuss steps that every small business should consider immediately.

Below are four inexpensive steps that will provide some immediate protection from cyber security threats for any business. These are four steps of many, but they provide a good starting point.

• ANTI-VIRUS SOFTWARE — An essential step that every business should consider is software to help keep its systems clean of viruses and malware. Having a clean computer is vital to a secure network. Several anti-virus software options are available, some even for free. Choose an option that provides real-time monitoring.

• PASSWORD USAGE — A basic requirement that is often overlooked by organizations is the use of passwords. First of all, use them. Every computer, no matter how insignificant, should require a password to log on. Complex passwords should be used if possible. The SANS Institute (www.sans.org) provides tips on security and password usage, such as not mixing personal and business passwords.

• EMPLOYEE TRAINING — Employees are the first line of defense in cyber security protection. Many security attacks could be prevented with proper security awareness training. This should include the do's and don'ts of Internet and cyber security. Examples would include proper password usage, what information can be shared over the phone and how to protect customer information.

• REGULAR BACKUPS — Data loss happens all the time. Sometimes it is due to human error, sometimes to natural

disasters. Other losses are due to malicious activity. Every business should create a regular backup schedule for its critical data and provide offsite storage. Ideally, a business should follow best practices. For example, if you back up to a system within the same building and your building burns down, then you lose your original data and your backup data.

These are just a few steps that small businesses should take immediately. In the November/December issue, we will discuss some longer-term measures small business should consider to protect their systems and information. ☎



Michael Ramage is the Associate Director of the Center for Telecommunications Systems Management at Murray State University.

GROWING MOBILE

SURVEY SAYS MORE CONSUMERS TURNING TO THE SMALL SCREEN

50%

use a tablet to read newspapers

40%

have replaced either their laptop or desktop with a tablet device

80%

use their tablets after hours to research business products or services

75%

have used a smartphone to watch online video

PUT THE POWER OF BROADBAND TO WORK ON YOUR MOBILE DEVICES

DID YOU KNOW that with broadband Internet service and a Wi-Fi network in your home, you can stream all this data over your wireless connection and avoid data charges from your cell phone provider? Call us today to learn more about setting up a Wi-Fi network in your home.

NTCA unveils ad campaign focusing on work of rural broadband providers

As your community-based telecommunications provider, we are committed to delivering the services our rural region needs to stay connected. In fact, no one is in a better position to serve you — and that is the message our national association is sending to Washington through a new advertising campaign.

NTCA—The Rural Broadband Association launched the print and digital ad series in July, sending a strong message to elected officials, regulators and their support staffs in the nation’s capital. That message is twofold: 1) that for more than 60 years, rural telecommunications companies have successfully met the challenges of delivering quality, affordable services to the country’s most rural and remote communities, and 2) that with the right support, these rural providers can continue to deliver real solutions as society becomes increasingly reliant on broadband connectivity.

The campaign is part of NTCA’s work to ensure the story of rural telecommunications is heard at a time when policymakers in Washington look to update rules affecting the industry. These ads are appearing in print and digital publications that have a high level of readership among these policymakers.

NTCA represents nearly 900 independent, community-based telecommunications companies that are leading innovation in rural and small-town America. The

ad campaign is another example of how we work with other companies like us through our national organization to benefit our members and their communities.

Shirley Bloomfield is chief executive officer of NTCA. “As policymakers in Washington consider who to turn to as we continue to tackle the rural broadband challenge, we want to make sure they recognize that community-based telecommunications providers have been the solution for rural America all along,” Bloomfield

says. “For decades, rural telcos have offered the most effective answer for rural communications problems by leveraging their own entrepreneurial spirit, their technical know-how, their commitment to community and federal partnerships that were effective in promoting investment. If they can continue to have access to the tools to do so, these community-based providers will remain the most effective answer to solve such problems in a broadband world.” 📞

Rural Broadband
Solutions-Oriented, Community-Based

For more than 60 years, community-based telecommunications providers have been moving rural America forward with advanced networks that today provide access to high-speed Internet, video and voice services—technologies that make rural markets vibrant places to live, work, raise a family and educate our children.

Finding solutions to remote and rural communities' technology needs is what America's rural broadband providers are all about. It's what inspires us to foster innovations in education, health care, public safety, civic engagement and commerce for the benefit of our nation as a whole.

No one does it better because no one is more committed.

Learn more about our trusted solution providers at www.NTCA.org

NTCA THE RURAL BROADBAND ASSOCIATION

Facebook.com/NTCARuralTelecom @NTCAconnect YouTube.com/RuralTelecommunity

The first print ad in the NTCA campaign reminds policymakers that solutions to rural challenges — such as making technology available to students in our local classrooms — have long come from rural telecommunications providers.

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

What our job is really all about

You wouldn't believe the amount of news articles, policy briefs, mail (paper and electronic) and other documents that come my way each week. These items remind me just how complicated the telecommunications business has become.



As the leader of your cooperative, it is an important part of my job to stay on top of technology and industry changes. As I do so, it's easy to start thinking that my job is all about building a network, advocating for fair laws and policies, managing budgets and leading teams. But those are merely tasks. My real job — and, indeed, the real mission of this company — is all about growing communities and changing lives.

There have been a few times in the history of our country that we reached a turning point, a moment where we accomplished something so important as a society that life would never be the same after that. For example, when the rural electrification program lit up the countryside, it helped families automate labor-intensive chores in their homes and on their farms, enabled a healthier standard of living and empowered people to open small businesses that would provide goods and services to their growing communities.

With the interstate highway system, we opened up new parts of the country for development and created a means of moving products made by American workers to markets all over the continent.

And now, here we are in the early part of the 21st century, creating a new kind of system that will have the same level of impact on society as electricity and interstate highways have had for decades. I'm speaking, of course, about today's broadband network.

In our service area, and in regions like ours across the country, providers such as NHTC are building a network to provide homes and businesses with high-speed data connections — not in the "big city," but in the small towns and rural communities we call home. And like power and highways, broadband is changing lives. Consider these stories, which are playing out all across rural America:

- A fifth-grade boy sits at a home computer taking remedial classes over a broadband connection, helping him stay current with his class and improve his grades.
- A single mother visits a local campus at night to take broadband-enabled distance learning classes, helping her improve her skills in hopes of landing a better job.
- A clinic runs tests on an elderly woman, then sends the results over broadband to a radiologist at a regional healthcare center to determine if she has suffered a stroke.
- A couple opens a business in their town, filling a need in the community while creating jobs — and they use broadband to connect with suppliers and other resources.
- Emergency responders gather in their training room, using broadband to access new information without losing time and money traveling to numerous training events.

This is what my job is really all about. And I'm reminded every day that our mission here at NHTC is about more than providing today's most important infrastructure. Our mission really is about changing lives. 📞

JIM COOK
General Manager

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www.WordSouth.com

On the Cover:



The CMT reality dating show "Sweet Home Alabama" featured Justin Barnes of Grant as one of the country boys looking for love. See story Page 8.

Celebrate 63 years with us!



Customer Appreciation Day

FRIDAY, OCT. 24
8:30 A.M. TO 4:30 P.M.

*Refreshments
all day!*

*Meet with NHTC
staff and fellow
community members!*

*Hot dog
lunch beginning
at 11 a.m.!*

Door prizes!

MAIN DRIVE • NEW HOPE, AL • 256-723-4211

25TH ANNIVERSARY

NEW HOPE FOUNDER'S DAY

Oct. 11 • Downtown New Hope

Fun &
Games

Music

Food

Parade

Arts &
Crafts

For more information call 256-603-3182 or 256-655-5140.

CARE CENTER EVENTS

I Grill Because I CARE

Oct. 18 • Downtown New Hope
(next to city hall)

\$100 entry fee for each team
KCB Sanctioned Event

Categories: Chicken, Ribs, People's
Choice

Grilling begins at 8 a.m.
Judging begins at 4 p.m.

- Live music throughout the day
- Inflatables for kids
- BBQ plates for sale

Proceeds support the CARE Center
For more information visit:

www.thecarecenter.us
or call 256-723-2273

Community-Wide Picnic

Oct. 19 • Downtown New Hope

Potluck picnic for the entire community
For more information visit:

www.thecarecenter.us
or call 256-723-2273

I Golf Because I CARE

**Oct. 20 • Robert Trent Jones Golf
Course, Hampton Cove**

10:30 a.m. Registration

11 a.m. Lunch/Warm Up

1 p.m. Shotgun Start

\$150 entry fee for individuals OR
\$600 entry fee for teams

This is a flighted event

Proceeds support the CARE Center
For more information visit:

www.thecarecenter.us
or call 256-723-2273

HAPPY 100TH BIRTHDAY!

Let's celebrate!



Margie Sneed is turning 100 and you're invited to the celebration!

Oct. 11 • 2 - 4 p.m. • Cave Spring Baptist Church Family Life Center • 1107 Cave Spring Road, OCR

Margie Sneed has been an active member of the community her entire life. She and her late husband raised three children. She's held various jobs over the years, including serving as the site manager of the nutrition program at the senior center. An active member of her church, she has taught different classes and started a senior program at the church which she still participates in. She's also still driving on the back roads and gardening!

MAKING YOUR VOICE HEARD

Why rural telecommunications providers stay connected in D.C.



advocates on these and related issues:

- Broadband
- Call Completion
- Health Care
- Intercarrier Compensation
- Safety & Security
- Taxes & Corporate
- Universal Service
- Video & Cable
- VoIP (Voice Over IP)

The decisions made in Washington, D.C., have a direct affect on the affordability — and even the availability — of broadband and other telecommunications services in rural areas. To continue the progress rural telcos have made in bringing advanced technology to their communities, the U.S. Congress and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) must understand the issues and challenges associated with serving America’s more sparsely populated regions.

Rural telcos voice the concerns of their customers to policymakers through NTCA—The Rural Broadband Association, which represents some 900 independent, community-based telecommunications providers. “It’s a far more competitive world, in terms of policy development and advocacy, than it ever was before,” says NTCA’s Vice President of Advocacy Initiatives Tom Wacker. “If our rural telcos are not out visiting with policymakers and telling their stories, someone else is going to be getting their attention.”

Below are some of the NTCA programs that bring providers together to ensure Washington gets the message: our industry is doing a good job keeping rural America connected, and we need federal policies in place to support our continued progress.



LEGISLATIVE & POLICY CONFERENCE

Held each spring, this conference brings hundreds of managers, board members and employees of rural telcos to Washington for three days of guest speakers and meetings with elected officials and regulatory agencies. Telco leaders in each state work with NTCA staff to assemble information on issues important to rural subscribers. This information is used in presentations aimed at keeping officials up to date on the rural telecom mission, as well as the progress telcos are making in keeping rural America connected through advanced technology.



FLY-INS

Throughout the year, NTCA coordinates numerous fly-ins. These events provide an opportunity for telco leaders to talk with members of Congress and regulators about policies that impact their rural service areas. While the fly-ins have a similar mission as the Legislative & Policy Conference, they focus on specific issues and feature much smaller groups, allowing more one-on-one time with officials.



TELECOM EXECUTIVE POLICY SUMMIT

This October conference is designed solely for general managers, chief executive officers and other upper-level management, allowing them to dive deeper into policy issues, exchange ideas and meet with members of Congress and the FCC.



COMMUNICATIONS

The communications division of NTCA shares the story of rural telcos and advocates for their interests through national media releases, ad campaigns, publications and social media projects such as the #ruralischool campaign.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

ASK candidates where they stand on issues important to the development of rural America.

EXPRESS to candidates your belief that laws and regulations should support rural telecommunications companies as they continue to invest in broadband networks.

VOTE for those candidates who will be a strong voice for rural America.

ELECTION DAY:
Tuesday, November 4



HOW ADVOCACY WORKS



OVERVIEW

PROBLEM:

Rural residents and business owners are reporting that some long-distance and wireless callers are not able to get through to their landline telephone, and that some calls that do come through have poor call quality.

CAUSE:

Long-distance and wireless companies often use third-party companies known as “least-cost routers” to route their calls into rural areas. Substandard service from these providers appears to be the root of call completion problems.

CONSEQUENCES:

Rural residents have reported problems such as connecting with friends and family, reaching emergency personnel and receiving calls from their child’s school. Businesses have reported incidents of lost sales opportunities because of failed calls.

ADVOCACY IN ACTION



1 Residents take their concerns about call completion problems to their local telecommunications provider.



2 Providers work with fellow telcos through NTCA—The Rural Broadband Association to discover the extent of the problem and develop a plan to address it.



3 NTCA organizes meetings in Washington where telcos from all over the country come to discuss the issue with their elected officials and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).



4 Legislative and policy experts with NTCA use real-life customer stories to show the FCC and members of Congress the negative impact this problem is having in rural regions.



5 Managers, board members and other leaders at local telcos talk with their members of Congress during district visits and through other means to express the pressing need to address the call completion problem.



6 The FCC issues a declaratory ruling clarifying that “carrier practices that lead to call completion failure and poor call quality may violate the Communications Act’s prohibition on unjust and unreasonable practices...”



7 The FCC adopts new rules to help the agency “monitor providers’ delivery of long-distance calls to rural areas and to aid the prosecution of violations of the Communications Act.”



8 The FCC issues consent decrees that cost three national carriers millions of dollars for practices that may have contributed to rural call completion problems.



9 Members of Congress introduce legislation designed to end rural call completion problems.

ADVOCACY WORKS

Working together through our national organization, NTCA, we joined efforts with rural telecommunications providers across the country to make your voice heard in the halls of Congress and at the FCC. We are getting results, and will continue to make progress toward resolving the call completion problem for rural residents and business owners.

FROM RODEOS TO A REALITY SHOW

BY KERRY SCOTT

Viewers of the CMT reality dating show “Sweet Home Alabama” watched what appeared to be a romantic picnic on a pier in the Mobile Bay, complete with a fiery sunset streaking the sky and glistening off the waters. If they could turn around and see what was on the other side of the lens, there would have been several cameras, producers and a huge production crew only a few feet away capturing the entire scene and reminding the couple to “just act natural.”

That’s how 25-year-old Grant native Justin Barnes describes his first on-camera date, adding that competing on the show happened quite by chance.

Cody Harris, who was on the first season of “Sweet Home Alabama,” met Barnes at a barrel race in Jackson, Mississippi, and told him he was helping cast for the next season. He asked Barnes if he might be interested in being on the show.

“I really didn’t think anything would come of it,” Barnes says. But three months later, when producers contacted him, all that changed. After a series of phone calls and Skype interviews, Barnes was one of 22 men — culled from about 15,000 — selected to vie for a chance to win the heart of Southern belle Kelsey Smith.

He and 10 other country guys, along with 11 city guys, spent the next several weeks competing with each other on camera to win “dates” with Kelsey. At the end of each episode, Smith would eliminate at least one of the contestants until she chose her dream man.

A man wearing a black cowboy hat, a blue and white plaid shirt, blue jeans, and a large gold belt buckle stands next to a brown horse with a white blaze on its face. They are in a stable with wooden walls and a sandy floor.

Grant native Justin Barnes was cast in the CMT reality dating show “Sweet Home Alabama” searching for love.

RIGHT: It was city guys versus country guys fighting to win Kelsey's heart on the show.

BELOW: The Mobile Bay in Fairhope was the setting of the reality show.

BELOW RIGHT: On location in Louisiana, Justin won time with Kelsey and was able to share a letter he'd written for her.



Photos courtesy of CMT



While Barnes says he was there looking for love, some men were more interested in promoting themselves. "I know some guys went on the show to gain exposure and hopefully open doors," he says." But I had been in a long-term relationship that had ended. Honestly, I was looking for that special girl. I didn't know if it would work out, but I thought, 'Why not give it a shot?'"

Barnes won the first date with Kelsey — that romantic picnic on the Mobile Bay. Everyone also expected him to have the first kiss. "I got ragged so bad for not doing that, but I wanted her to know that I was a Southern gentleman," says Barnes.

And when he returned to the house that evening after his date, Barnes also got into the first fight. Alex Stein, a car salesman from Los Angeles, thought it would be a good idea to knock Barnes' hat off, something you just don't do in the South. Fortunately, some of the other guys kept them from throwing any punches or he could have been sent home. Stein was sent home later after disrespecting Boyd, an

older gentleman running the estate where the contestants were staying.

With so many men from different walks of life, Barnes says it was natural to have some clashes. The 22 men were sequestered at Dorgan's Inn, a beautiful estate in Fairhope, without TV, phones, Internet or contact with the outside world. Sometimes during filming of dates, the other guys would have to stay indoors with the windows closed. "I haven't been around that much drama in my whole life," says Barnes. "But by the top 10, I think we were all there for the right reasons and were all pretty much friends."

The competition actually proved too much for some guys though. Jeremy from Wisconsin actually left the show because of it. "He was there for the right reason," says Barnes. "He wanted to find a wife. He's a super nice Christian guy, but just couldn't handle all the talk from other guys about what they were doing on their dates with Kelsey. He said the contest wasn't for him and left."

In the end, Barnes made it to the top

five before being eliminated, but he has no regrets. "It's funny," he says. "I've never been in a situation like that before, where I was competing with 21 other guys for one girl. We didn't know her personality or know if we would be compatible. It was a shot in the dark. It didn't work out in the end, but it was a good experience."

And he's proud that he had the support of his family and hometown throughout the process. "My family knew that it was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for me, and they supported me fully," says Barnes. "I was told that almost everyone in Grant would get together to watch the show, too. It was great to learn that they were all rooting for me.

"Overall, I think people got to see the real me," he adds. "Yeah, there's stuff I wish they had seen, but I understand the producers have to edit to fit everything into a one-hour show, and drama equals ratings so that's what they're going to air."

Now that "Sweet Home Alabama" is in his past, Barnes has returned to his life in Grant. He's still working for a defense company, buying and selling horses, managing his ranch and barrel racing, too. Being on the show has also afforded him some new opportunities, including being signed by The Block Agency in Nashville.

And, he's still searching for true love. "I am definitely still looking for the right girl," says Barnes. "I feel like time is precious, and I'm not going to waste it with just anybody. When I find that right girl, I'll know it. Until then I'm just doing the same thing." 📞



Big South Fork Scenic Railway in Stearns, Kentucky.

Make a diversion for a **SOUTHERN EXCURSION**

BY MATT LEDGER

The golden age of American rail travel may have peaked nearly a century ago, but the fascination with the legacy of locomotives is still alive and well.

From the syncopated clickity-clack of steel wheels on rails, to the unmistakable howl of a steam whistle, the sensory overload of 19th century travel rekindles a connection with the past and gives us a window into a mode of transportation that has been romanticized for nearly 200 years.

Thankfully, there are still a wide variety of scenic train rides in operation throughout our country. This list of train excursions might help you find a new destination at an old railway station.

TENNESSEE VALLEY RAILROAD (CHATTANOOGA)

423-894-8028

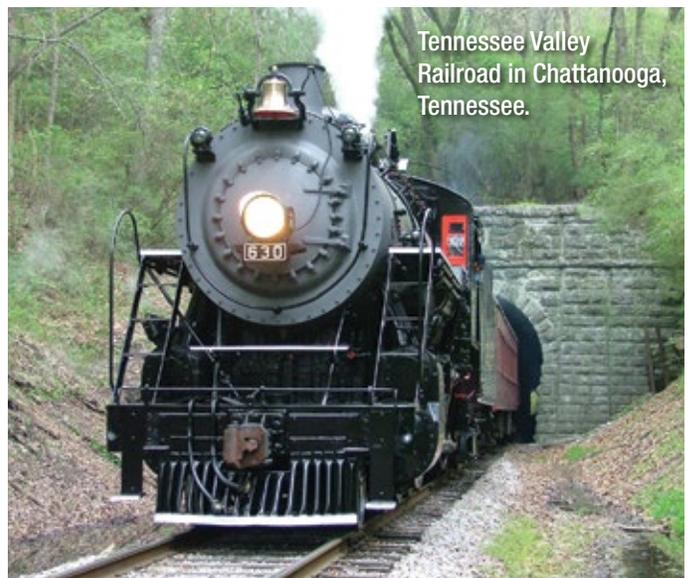
www.tvrail.com

All aboard for the first stop, a city with a name that is forever married to the railways that crisscross the South, in a foot-stomping big band song about a Tennessee train excursion: the “Chattanooga Choo Choo.”

However, nowadays Glen Miller would need to wander over to the Tennessee Valley Railroad Museum to catch the next departure, with a choice of leaving from either Chattanooga or Etowah. It was founded in 1961 and is the largest operating historic rail museum in the Southeast. With seven outings planned for September, nothing could be finer than the “Dinner on the Diner” journey, featuring first-class gourmet meal offerings while riding in the ornate 1924 Pullman dining car.

The month begins with the 4th annual “Railfest” celebration on Sept. 6-7 featuring unique exhibits, blacksmith demonstrations and special excursions. Each week-

end the Copperhill Special rolls from Etowah through the Hiwassee River Gorge during a daylong 93-mile circuit. The Summerville Steam (the longest trip at 100 miles) and the Missionary Ridge Local explore the colorful fall splendor in October, in addition to the festive Halloween Eerie Express.



Tennessee Valley Railroad in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

BIG SOUTH FORK SCENIC RAILWAY (STEARNS, KY.)

1-800-462-5664

<http://bsfsry.com>

The Big South Fork Scenic Railway, in Stearns, Kentucky, has a three-hour hop through the Daniel Boone National Forest during a 14-mile round trip to the Blue Heron Coal Mining Camp. Visitors can also tour the McCreary County Museum. A ghoulish two-hour nighttime journey awaits those who board the Blue Heron Ghost Train on Sept. 6 or the Haunted Hollow Express in mid-October. A half-price fare is available for grandparents on Sept. 7 or for those who served in the military on Nov. 8.

HEART OF DIXIE RAILROAD (CALERA, ALA.)

205-668-3435

www.hodrrm.org

The Heart of Dixie Railroad Museum is located in central Alabama, south of Birmingham. The 10-mile rail line runs from Calera to the historic Shelby Iron Works, which was operational during the Civil War era. Several miles of track were added through the years, allowing for numerous themed trips. Youngsters will enjoy a cornstalk maze and hayride during the Pumpkin Patch Express on weekends in October. Adults have their own opportunity to test drive a train and shovel some coal during the "At The Throttle" trip. A certified engineer and brakeman give directions as you guide the train down the tracks for your personal 30-minute excursion.



The Texas State Railroad
in Rusk, Texas.

THE TEXAS STATE RAILROAD (RUSK)

903-683-2561

www.texasstaterr.com

As the train's durability quickly replaced the sporadic abilities of steamboats, America's railways expanded westward deep in the heart of Texas in 1921. The Texas State Railroad has become quite famous over the years, garnering several appearances in TV series like Chuck Norris' "Walker, Texas Ranger" and 16 films, including "O Brother, Where Art Thou?" and "Rough Riders." The TSR train depot, in Rusk, features campgrounds and numerous outdoor activities for the kids, ranging from a water playground

to horseshoes and shuffleboard. Parents will certainly enjoy the Moonlight Special Dinner Train on Oct. 10 or a Fall Foliage Brunch Train on Nov. 9, as the seasonally themed Maydelle trip includes a savory meal and non-alcoholic beverages.

SOUTH CAROLINA RAILROAD MUSEUM (COLUMBIA)

803-712-4135

www.scrm.org

The city that can lay claim to the nation's first steam passenger train is Charleston (SC), with a six-mile track and a six-horsepower engine, which was opened like a gift, on Christmas Day 1830. However, the South Carolina Railroad Museum is located near Columbia in Winnsboro and features the Blue Granite Express, which typically operates on Saturdays. Passengers can opt for first-class, coach, open air or caboose seating during chartered, seasonal or special events.

GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS RAILROAD (BRYSON CITY, NC)

1-800-872-4681

www.gsmr.com

Combining gorgeous mountain vistas and numerous child-oriented train trips, the Great Smoky Mountains Railroad might be the best whistle stop for the family. Tikes can join the PEANUTS gang while riding The Great Pumpkin Patch Express on weekends in October. An uncommon nighttime run on The Masquerade Train offers spooky scenery and a full buffet for those 21 and older on Oct. 31. The Tuckasegee Excursion will be free for current and prior military members from Nov. 7-9 in honor of Veterans Day.

KENTUCKY RAILWAY MUSEUM (NEW HAVEN)

1-800-272-0152

www.kyrail.org

Remain alert for clues while riding the Mystery Theatre train on Oct. 25 at the Kentucky Railway Museum. For those seeking 90-minute movie-like suspense, passengers can ride the rails for a good cause during the Train Robbery trip. Horse-mounted hooligans will hold up the train, with the loot benefiting the Crusade for Children charity for kids with special needs. On Oct. 11, the number of engines will vastly increase as the railway hosts their 3rd annual Vintage Car Show.

NORTH ALABAMA RAILROAD MUSEUM (HUNTSVILLE)

256-851-6276

www.northalabamarailroadmuseum.com

As summer begins to fade into fall, train enthusiasts can snap photos from an open-air baggage car during a short excursion from the North Alabama Railroad Museum in Huntsville. Others may choose to relax in the renovated dining car during the Sept. 20 trip on the "North Alabamian." Other trips include the Punkin' Pickin' Extravaganza on Oct. 11, Fall Color Specials on Oct 25 and Nov. 1, and Santa Trains on Dec. 6, 7 and 13. ☎



Blessings by broadband

Faith communities are embracing the Internet to share the gospel

By KERRY SCOTT

“One way we glorify God is by maximizing technology. He allowed us to create airplanes, so now we take those planes to foreign countries to share the gospel. We should use the Internet to fully maximize it for His glory, both now and in the future.”

—Justin Pannell,
Youth Minister and
Associate Pastor, OCR
Church of Christ

There was a time when the word “tablet” in church conjured images of Moses coming down from Mount Sinai with two great stones inscribed by God with the Ten Commandments. But that is quickly changing.

These days, the word most likely brings to mind a very different image: one of the high-tech wireless devices that keeps us connected to the world via broadband Internet.

Local churches, including First Baptist Church of New Hope and Owens Cross Roads Church of Christ, are beginning to see an increasing number of members using tablets and smartphones to read Scripture, take notes on sermons or Bible lessons and come up with new ways to connect with their congregations.

When NHTC’s Central Office Manager, Steven Campbell, went on vacation recently, he and his family were able to watch the Sunday service from his iPhone while traveling. “It was amazing to feel like we were right there and didn’t miss a thing,” he says.

At First Baptist Church of New Hope

(www.firstbaptistnewhope.com), the church has gone so far as to install a wireless router in the sanctuary, making it possible for members or visitors to use their devices. Even Pastor Tim Verhine uses an iPad for his sermon notes. While not many are doing so now, it’s a trend that will continue to rise.

The church also displays Scripture on a large projection screen so the congregation can follow along with the pastor. “The Scripture is large and easy to read for members who might have trouble reading small print,” says Bob Freeman, who manages the sound room. “Different preachers like different translations of the Bible, too. We’re able to switch to just about 40 different translations with our MediaShout program.”

That lines up with what is taking place nationally. A study by The Barna Group, a research organization focused on spiritual development, concluded in an April 2012 study that more than 65 percent of Protestant churches now regularly use large screen projections during their services compared to only 39 percent in 2000.

Bob Freeman runs the sound room at First Baptist Church of New Hope. They have a Wi-Fi enabled sanctuary, making it possible for members to look up Scripture and commentary on their tablets and smartphones.



Photo courtesy of Rhonda Cain

While the church has had an Internet presence for years with their website, they now use it as the primary tool for keeping members informed. “I use email quite a bit,” says Rhonda Cain, the church secretary. “I have a master list that I send emails to whenever we have a sickness, death, urgent need or an event we want to let people know about.” She says that those with Internet access help spread the word to the increasingly smaller number of members who don’t have Internet.

The Barna study noted that 62 percent of Protestant churches have an Internet presence and 26 percent are using social media sites like Facebook and Twitter.

GIGABYTES OF GOSPEL

Broadband is also giving churchgoers access to a greater range of material. “Once you get tied into it, it becomes an indispensable tool,” says Freeman. He’s using it to stream videos from sources like YouTube that can help illustrate a particular Scripture lesson, and are sometimes just for fun.

“Some people may have been a little hesitant about broadband at first,” says Freeman, “but they appreciate it now.”

A few miles down the road at Owens

Steven Campbell says he's grateful OCR Church of Christ is using broadband to broadcast some services live via the Internet. "We're putting the message of salvation out there; that's what it's all about," he says.

Cross Roads Church of Christ (www.ocrcoc.org), they are doing many of the same things. They’re also using their fiber connection to make Sunday morning services available live online to members. It’s been used to stream weddings and even funerals, too. “It’s a tremendous blessing for loved ones who can’t travel to be able to see a service that they couldn’t make,” says Campbell, who also serves as sound technician at the church.

He’s not the only person working though. “One person just doesn’t have enough hands to do everything, so we have an entire team that works together to make sure everything runs smoothly,” he

says. Their team consists of Tony Harrell, Mark Burleson, Zack Cavender, Todd Morrison, David Bingham and Justin Pannell.

Pannell, who is the youth minister and associate pastor OCR COC, believes broadband also serves as a research tool for the community. “New people in town, or someone looking for a church, can go online and see what a service at our church is like and see if it’s somewhere they think they can join in,” he explains.

The fiber network NHTC is building throughout its service area will make future upgrades possible, too. One day, OCR Church of Christ hopes to stream high-definition video. “We would have to make some upgrades on our part to do that, but the infrastructure is there if we choose to do so,” says Pannell.

He has a theory about all this technology. He believes that since all truth comes from God, any scientific achievements or technological advancements we make are gifts from Him. “One way we glorify God is by maximizing technology,” says Pannell. “He allowed us to create airplanes, so now we take those planes to foreign countries to share the gospel. We should use the Internet to fully maximize it for His glory, both now and in the future.” 📞



BANANA QUEEN

There's something nostalgic about banana pudding, says Stephanie Lutz. "It always makes you feel like a kid again when you eat it. And really, what's not to like about banana pudding? Vanilla pudding, vanilla wafers and soft, sweet bananas. It makes me smile just thinking about it."

And she kept smiling when she was crowned the 2012 cook-off winner at the National Banana Pudding Festival, which is held annually in Centerville, Tennessee. Her prize in addition to bragging rights? A check for \$2,000 and a beautiful gold-and-white sash. "The kind the beauty queens wear," Lutz says with a laugh. "I think my friends were more excited about the sash than the money."

Lutz heard about the cook-off by chance after picking up a flyer about it at the Tennessee Welcome Center on her move from Kentucky to her new home in Spring Hill, Tennessee, in 2011.

Lutz says she "looked to my husband and said, 'We have to go!'"

So the couple attended that year, and Lutz decided she would try her luck the following year by entering the banana pudding cook-off.

"I've been cooking for as long as I can remember," she says. "I guess it started with my parents. Some of my favorite childhood memories are of my dad teaching me to flip a pancake and my mother baking brownies from scratch."

But she created her winning recipe on her own, along with a good bit of encouragement from friends and family, plus a lot of research.

"Because it's a custard-based pudding, I wanted to make sure it stayed creamy, but had a light flavor," she says. "I probably worked on it for six weeks and must have made 20 batches before getting it right."

Stephanie Lutz can cook an appealing dessert, according to judges at the National Banana Pudding Festival and Cook-Off. They chose her dish as the winner in 2012.



IF YOU GO ... BANANAS

If a dessert could lay claim as the crowning finish to a Southern meal, banana pudding would be sitting on the throne. And in Centerville, Tennessee, banana pudding is put on a pedestal every fall during the National Banana Pudding Festival and Cook-Off.

This year's festival will be held Saturday and Sunday, October 4-5, with the cook-off set for Saturday. In addition to the cook-off, there will be two stages of free entertainment, from music and storytellers to puppets and dancers. In the craft area there will be demonstrations of blacksmithing, wood turning and pottery. Craft vendors will sell pottery, jewelry, forged iron, woodworking and art; and food vendors will offer everything from rib-eye steak sandwiches to bottomless root beer mugs with free refills.

- **HOURS: 9 a.m. – 6 p.m. (October 4); 11 a.m. – 5 p.m. (October 5)**
- **ADMISSION: \$5 per day. Free parking.**
- **LOCATION: Centerville River Park, Centerville, Tenn.**
- **ONLINE: bananapuddingfest.org**

No one complained. "I shared the batches with friends and family, and they were always happily received," she says.

There is a five-year waiting period between wins, so Lutz can't enter again until 2017. But her win has given her the confidence to try her culinary skills in other cooking contests when she has the time, she says. She recently graduated with a bachelor of business administration degree in marketing from Middle Tennessee State University.

This year's National Banana Pudding Festival will feature 10 finalists on-stage cooking their puddings, all a little

different from each other, but all equally delicious. More puddings can be found along the Puddin' Path where, for a \$5 donation, festivalgoers can sample banana pudding from 10 different nonprofit organizations and vote on their favorite. ☎



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.

TRY THESE AWARD-WINNING PUDDINGS



FOSTER'S BANANA PUDDING

- 1 box vanilla wafers (set aside 7 wafers for garnish)

BANANAS FOSTER:

- 6 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1/2 cup brown sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 1/2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 1 teaspoon banana extract or 1/4 cup banana liquor
- 1/2 cup dark rum, such as Appleton Jamaican rum
- 4 bananas, peeled, halved lengthwise and sliced 1/2-inch thick

VANILLA PUDDING:

- 1/4 cup cornstarch
- 3/4 cup sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 3 cups whole milk
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 4 egg yolks
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter

WHIPPED CREAM:

- 1 cup heavy cream
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1/4 cup sugar

For Bananas Foster: In a heavy sauté pan over medium heat, melt the unsalted butter and add the brown sugar. Using a wire whisk, blend the butter and brown sugar. Once the mixture is well blended and begins to simmer, whisk in the cinna-

mon, vanilla extract, banana extract and rum. Bring the mixture back to a simmer and add the sliced bananas. Stir the mixture with a rubber spatula; simmer until bananas are soft, 6-7 minutes; remove pan from heat and set aside.

Vanilla Pudding: In a heavy-bottomed saucepan, combine cornstarch, sugar and salt; mix together with a wire whisk. In a separate bowl, combine milk and heavy cream. Slowly pour 3/4 of the milk mixture into the saucepan with cornstarch mixture, whisking thoroughly so the mixture is smooth. Place the saucepan on medium heat, stirring the pudding mixture constantly until mixture begins to thicken and comes to a soft boil. Continue to boil 1 minute; remove from heat. To the bowl of remaining milk and cream, add egg yolks, whisking until combined. Slowly stream in about 1/3 of hot pudding mixture into bowl of egg yolk mixture, whisking constantly until combined. Pour egg yolk and pudding mixture back into saucepan and return it to medium heat. Continue to whisk mixture and heat until it is thick and begins to bubble. Remove from heat. Add unsalted butter and vanilla extract; stir until combined.

Whipped cream: In a mixing bowl, add cream, sugar and vanilla. Using a hand-held mixer or stand mixer with whisk attachment, whisk mixture at medium-high speed until peaks form.

Assembly: In a 2-quart dish, layer half of the remaining vanilla wafers along the bottom so that they overlap one another. Using a serving spoon, spoon 1/2 of the Bananas Foster over the wafers. Pour 1/2 of hot pudding mixture over wafers and Bananas Foster. Layer remaining wafers in the same manner as before; repeat Bananas Foster and vanilla pudding layer, reserving 2 tablespoons of Bananas Foster for garnish. Cover and place dish in refrigerator to cool, approximately 2 hours. Once pudding has cooled, pour off any accumulated condensation and spread whipped cream over pudding.

Top with 3 vanilla wafers in the center of the dish, add remaining Bananas Foster over wafers. Crush the remaining vanilla wafers and sprinkle over the dish.

—Stephanie Lutz, 2012 winner

BANANA BRICKLE PUDDING BRULEE

- 3 cups half-and-half
- 2/3 cup sugar
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/3 cup cornstarch
- 8 egg yolks, beaten
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 1 cup butter, softened
- Vanilla wafers
- 6 bananas

TOPPING:

- Vanilla wafers
- 1 pint heavy cream, whipped and sweetened with a little sugar

TO MAKE COOKIES:

- Vanilla wafers
- 1 cup butter
- 3/4 cup brown sugar
- 1/2 cup chopped pecans

In 3-quart saucepan over low heat, heat half-and-half, sugar, salt and cornstarch, whisking constantly until it begins to thicken. Temper beaten eggs by whisking in separate bowl with some of the hot mixture. Add tempered egg mixture back into saucepan and continue cooking until thick. Remove from heat, add vanilla and softened butter. Let cool to room temperature. In large dish, layer vanilla wafers, sliced bananas and pudding. Repeat layers. Top with whipped cream and vanilla brickle cookies.

Prepare cookies: Place one vanilla wafer in each cup of a mini-muffin pan. In a saucepan, bring butter, brown sugar and pecans to a boil, reduce heat and simmer for 3 minutes. Spoon over cookies and bake at 375° F for 10 minutes. Cool.

—Roger Tisdale, 2013 winner 🏆



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