

The

Communicator

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2017

TALENT WORTH SHARING

Local artist
takes her skill
to the web

DOMESTIC DYNAMO

Barbara Webster named
homemaker of the year

DUTCH TREAT

Dutch ovens make your
outdoor meals stand out

NTCA THE RURAL BROADBAND ASSOCIATION

RURAL CONNECTIONS

BY SHIRLEY BLOOMFIELD, CEO
NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association

Keeping rural in the conversation

A writer for several respected national news websites recently asked this question on Twitter: "There's a weird amount of focus on 'rural broadband' ... Is this really important to people?"

This immediately told me two things. First, rural broadband is getting enough attention to creep into the awareness of urban media outlets. That's a good thing.

But secondly, this tweet also told me that we still have a lot of work to do in telling our rural success story.

What the writer didn't understand was that for years a lack of investment from large nationwide providers, along with geographic challenges, has left many rural residents with inadequate broadband access. Research has shown that a lack of access can cripple a local economy, lower academic achievement and reduce positive health care outcomes.

Telcos like yours believe people shouldn't face longer odds at a successful life just because of where they live, and they have done great work in extending broadband service to their parts of rural America. It's encouraging to see this issue gaining national attention.

It didn't take too long before the writer's Twitter feed was full of insight from rural advocates. "The overwhelming consensus ... is that rural broadband is, in fact, incredibly important and I'm a moron," he wrote.

A moron? Certainly not. More likely, he's someone who hasn't been to rural America to see the impact of reliable broadband. This was only one exchange on Twitter, but at NTCA, we're working every day to make sure everyone knows just how important rural broadband really is. ☎

THE END OF AN ERRAND?

Big changes in grocery shopping ahead



New data shows that a growing number of consumers are avoiding the pains of the weekly grocery-grab by shopping online.



About **25%** of all American households buy some groceries online, according to the Food Marketing Institute and Nielsen's "The Digitally Engaged Food Shopper" report.



That number is up from previous years thanks to **online delivery sites** like AmazonFresh. Walmart, Kroger and even some local grocers are bringing convenience through their online grocery pickup options.



By 2025, Americans are expected to spend more than **\$100 billion** on online grocery shopping, the report says.

FOOD SHOPPING FACTS

Curious to know how you could be shopping in the future? Check out these stats from the Food Marketing Institute and Nielsen:



Within the next decade, consumer spending on online grocery shopping could equal the gross sales of **3,900** grocery stores.



Mobile devices are used by **60%** of shoppers for deals and coupons.



2/3 of shoppers say mobile devices improve their lives.

HOW SATISFIED ARE WE WITH ONLINE SHOPPING?

More than 80 percent reported satisfaction with their online shopping experience. What makes it so popular?



81%
The ease of checkout



80%
The variety of brands and products offered online



73%
The number of shopping options offered



69%
Free or discounted shipping

Sources: Food Marketing Institute and Nielsen study, "Digitally Engaged Food Shopper," and invespro.com's blog, "Online Consumer Shopping Habits and Behavior."

LISTEN UP, TELEMARKETERS: DO NOT CALL!

You might not know that the Federal Trade Commission and the Federal Communications Commission have established a National Do Not Call Registry. If you join this registry, it can help reduce the number of telemarketing calls you receive.

THE BASICS ABOUT DO NOT CALL:

- The Do Not Call Registry prohibits sales calls. Political calls, charitable calls, debt collection calls, informational calls and telephone survey calls are still allowed.
- You can register up to three nonbusiness phone numbers, including cellphones.
- Your number goes on the list the day after you register. After that, telemarketers have 31 days to stop calling.
- Telephone numbers on the registry do not expire. The number you register is only removed when it's disconnected and reassigned.
- Companies may still call if you've recently done business with them or if you've given the company written



permission to call you. But if you ask a company not to call you again, it must honor your request.

Strict Federal Trade Commission rules make it illegal for telemarketers 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 to stop



Register up to three nonbusiness numbers online at **www.donotcall.gov**.

You can also call **888-382-1222** to register the telephone from which you are calling.

For TTY, call 866-290-4236.



ATTENTION LOCAL BUSINESS OWNERS:

You must follow the Do Not Call rules

Local businesses may not think of themselves as typical telemarketers, but the same Federal Trade Commission Do Not Call laws apply to them.

If you are a company, individual or organization that places telemarketing calls, it's important to 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 the numbers included in the National Do Not Call Registry.

For information regarding these 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. Sections 64.1200 and 16 C.F.R. Part 310, respectively.

OFFICIAL NOTIFICATION:

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

Kids at heart

When I was young, being prepared to go back to school meant making sure I had my pencils and paper ready. Today, kids need more than what they can fit inside their backpacks to be prepared to get the education they need — and we are here to help.



JIM COOK
General Manager

Having broadband at school and at home is an increasingly important part of equipping today's students for academic achievement and career skills development. I recently ran across a statistic about internet and education that presents a strong reminder to those of us in the business of bringing broadband to rural communities. According to a study commissioned by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, high school graduates who consider themselves "online" are twice as likely to go to college as those who do not use the internet.

While attending college isn't necessarily the key to success for every student, other research at home and abroad points to broadband access as a key to higher test scores and better-educated students:

- A 2015 study by the U.S. Federal Reserve Board showed that high-speed internet improved students' postsecondary outcomes and that students with access to high-speed internet in their junior year of high school had better SAT scores than those without.
- Earlier this year, a New Zealand researcher published a report stating that fiber internet service at schools raises National Standards passing rates in each of the three areas of the test.
- An Irish study from 2014 showed that the use of the internet in a classroom was associated with significantly higher average math scores and improved reading scores on standardized tests.
- In 2011, researchers found that South Korean students who used the internet for educational purposes showed higher academic achievement than those who did not.
- A 2009 study from Brazil showed eighth-graders with broadband at home had significantly higher test scores than students without a connection.
- In the U.S. Chamber of Commerce report, 60 percent of surveyed school districts said distance learning over broadband was important to give students access to Advanced Placement courses.

Results like these are at the foundation of why we have worked so hard to build the high-speed broadband network we have today. You see, while I'm glad that our network allows our youth to stream movies or play their favorite video games, I'm even more pleased that our service allows their teachers to use new and engaging ways to educate their students. I'm proud that our network allows children and parents to get help with their homework and connect with tutoring services. And I'm very proud that our network lets students pursue their passions through research or developing skills in their chosen careers.

We don't know what the future holds for today's students, but we have a pretty good idea that technology will play a significant role in their lives. Whether they are farming, building, nursing, teaching, running a business or piloting planes, computer skills and the resources provided through technology are going to be essential to their careers.

As your locally rooted telecommunications provider, we want to give educators the resources to help our children excel — and then provide the technology those students need to start careers, open small businesses and raise families right here at home.

NHTC has equipped generations of local families with the communication tools they need to thrive. As school bells ring back in session, we're proud to be equipping the next generation. 📺

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

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On the Cover:



Landscape and portrait artist Cynthia Parsons shares the places and faces of North Alabama online through YouTube. See story Page 12.




Thank you, everyone! NHTC appreciates you.

You're invited to

CUSTOMER APPRECIATION DAY

Friday, Oct. 27, from 8:30 a.m. until 4:30 p.m.

Come by the NHTC office for fun and fellowship!



Dennis Martin and the city of New Hope present **Music at the Gazebo** every Monday in September and October from 6-8 p.m. at 5496 Main Drive in New Hope.

It's family-friendly. Limited seating is available, so bring a lawn chair. Invite a friend! Call Dennis Martin at **256-658-1457** for more information.

THE 7 COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLES

NHTC is a cooperative. But what does that mean? There are **SEVEN PRINCIPLES** that make us different than other telecommunications providers.

1 Voluntary and Open Membership 	2 Democratic Member Control 	3 Members' Economic Participation 	4 Autonomy and Independence 
5 Education, Training and Information 	6 Cooperation Among Cooperatives 	7 Concern for Community 	

October is National Cooperative Month

Announcing – FOUNDER'S DAY

The 28th Annual New Hope Founder's Day is Oct. 14 from 9 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. in historic downtown New Hope. Bring the family for music, a chili cook-off, a rib cook-off, a skillet-throwing contest, a parade, political speeches and street dancing. For more information, call 256-655-5140 or 256-603-3182.

HAPPY LABOR DAY!

New Hope Telephone offices will be closed on Monday, Sept. 4, in observance of Labor Day.



DAR High School Marching Band presents

HAUNTED HOLLOW CAVE TOUR

Where: Cathedral Caverns State Park
637 Cave Road in Woodville

Dates: Saturday, Oct. 14, 21, 28, and Halloween night, Oct. 31

Time: 6:30-11 p.m.

All ages welcome! Carnival games and light concessions will be available. Tickets are \$10 per person for the Haunted Hollow Cave Tour. (A portion of each admission will go the DAR High School Marching Band.)

Sponsored by: DAR High School Marching Band and Cathedral Caverns State Park

MEET THE LEGENDS OF SOUTHERN SPORTS

Museums celebrate football, racing and more



The Paul W. Bryant Museum in Tuscaloosa is a must-see for sports fans touring Alabama.

Photo courtesy of Paul W. Bryant Museum.

We can't all be our team's starting quarterback. Nor can we all pitch a perfect game, catch the checkered flag seconds ahead of the rest or hit perfect 3-pointers. Fortunately, though, there are museums across the South that allow us to come close to sports legends.

Paul W. Bryant Museum

300 Paul W. Bryant Drive, Tuscaloosa, Alabama

As head football coach of the University of Alabama's Crimson Tide for more than 25 years, Paul W. "Bear" Bryant was larger than life. It's only fitting that in 1988, only five years after his death, a museum bearing his name and housing a collection of items related to all University of Alabama sports teams opened at the university. The museum draws not only fans of the Tide, but also fans from visiting teams on game day, says museum director Ken Gaddy.

- **Most prized item:** Coach Bryant's Presidential Medal of Freedom
- **Where to eat:** Dreamland Bar-B-Que at 5535 15th Ave. is a local favorite in Tuscaloosa. They offer barbecue, smoked sausage, homemade sides and more, but they're famous for their ribs. As their slogan says, "ain't nothing like 'em nowhere!"
- **Admission:** \$2, adults; \$1, seniors 60-plus and children 6-17; free, children younger than 6
- **Information:** 205-348-4668 or bryantmuseum.com

Ty Cobb Museum

461 Cook St., Royston, Georgia

Ty Cobb's name is a legend in the world of baseball. He played outfield for 22 seasons for the Detroit Tigers, setting 90 Major League Baseball records during his career. But he was

more than a ballplayer. In 1953, he donated a quarter of his estate to establish the Ty Cobb Education Foundation. To date, more than \$16 million has been awarded to Georgia residents who prove financial need to attend college. Also visitors will find art and memorabilia: Cobb's baseball glove, his 1907 Batting Champion award, his childhood Bible and a Tigers uniform. There are also film, videos, books and historical archives. The Northeast Georgia museum draws thousands of folks annually from around the country who want to learn more about the man famously known as "The Georgia Peach."

- **Most prized item:** A bronzed cleat that Cobb actually wore
- **Where to eat:** The Old Corner Hardware Store Lunchroom at 919 Church St. It's only open for lunch Wednesday through Saturday, and folks in town say the chicken and dumplings are a home run.
- **Admission:** \$5, adults; \$4, seniors 62-plus; \$3, students; free, under age 5 and active military
- **Information:** 706-245-1825 or www.tycobbmuseum.org

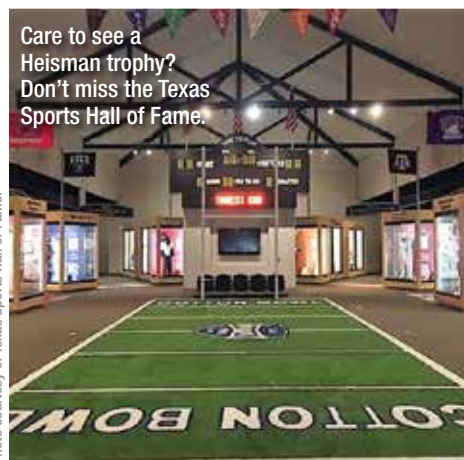


Photo courtesy of Texas Sports Hall of Fame.

Texas Sports Hall of Fame

1108 S. University Parks Drive, Waco, Texas

You've most likely seen a Heisman trophy before, but only on TV. At the Texas Sports Hall of Fame Museum, you'll see one of the oldest in existence up close and personal — a 1938 model awarded to Davey O'Brien, quarterback for Texas Christian University. "That's what excites most people," says Jay Black, vice president of

museum operations. But there are 15,000 more objects to pique your interest, including trophies, uniforms, equipment and more. Plus, there's a sports simulator where kids play ball.

- **Most prized item:** Final-out baseballs from Nolan Ryan's seven no-hitters
- **Where to eat:** Vitek's BBQ — at 1600 Speight Ave., about a mile from the museum — is the home of the famous Gut Pak. In case your imagination isn't enough, it's a monster: Fritos, cheddar cheese, sausage, hand-chopped brisket, beans, pickles, onions, jalapeno peppers and barbecue sauce with sliced bread.
- **Admission:** \$7, adults; \$6, seniors 60-plus; \$3, students first-12th grade; free, children 6 and under
- **Information:** 254-756-1633 or www.tshof.org

Women's Basketball Hall of Fame

700 S. Hall of Fame Drive, Knoxville, Tennessee

The Women's Basketball Hall of Fame is the only museum dedicated to all levels of women's basketball. The museum has a number of interactive exhibits that will challenge and entertain visitors of all ages. Test your skills on the court or walk through and see all the sights. There are trophies, signed basketballs and uniforms. While parents might appreciate learning the history of the game, kids will enjoy the hoops, a passing course and a dribbling course. The collection is large, and exhibits often change, so visitors may not see the same items from one visit to the next.

- **Most prized item:** The first rulebook for women's basketball, written by Senda Berenson in 1901.
- **Where to eat:** Calhoun's on the River is located at 400 Neyland Drive on Knoxville's historic waterfront. It offers a panoramic view of the Tennessee River and is accessible by boat.
- **Admission:** \$7.95, adults; \$5.95, seniors 62-plus and children 5-15; free, children under 5
- **Information:** 865-633-9000 or www.wbhof.com

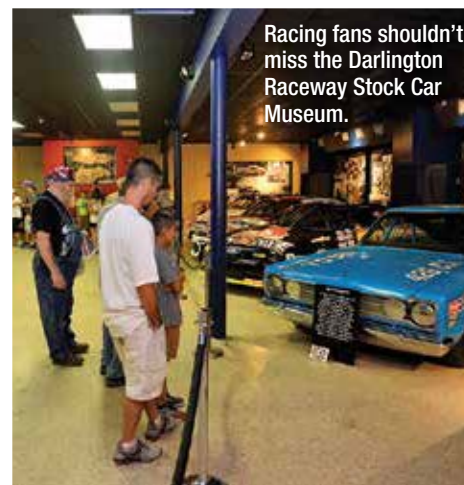


Photo courtesy of Harrelson Photography for Darlington Raceway.

Darlington Raceway Stock Car Museum

1301 Harry Byrd Highway, Darlington, South Carolina

Even if you're not a fan of stock car racing, you'll find a tour of the Darlington Raceway Stock Car Museum an experience like no other. The museum offers a glance into the remarkable history of a sport born in the South. "It's a trip through the history of not only Darlington Raceway, but also the entire sport," says Dennis Worden, director of public relations. The museum offers an informational movie, memorabilia and more than a dozen race cars on display. The location is also home to the National Motorsports Press Association Hall of Fame, where you can learn about the personalities who made stock car racing into the sport it is today, including Junior Johnson, Dale Earnhardt and more. Kids will enjoy learning about the 1951 Hornet, which inspired the character of "Doc" in the animated 2006 Pixar film "Cars."

- **Most prized item:** Richard Petty's 1967 Plymouth championship car.
- **Where to eat:** When you cross the finish line, go next door to the Raceway Grill. In the past, famous race car drivers would enjoy the homemade French fries, hamburger steaks, sandwiches, rib-eyes and more. Hours are Wednesday-Saturday from 11 a.m.-9 p.m.
- **Admission:** \$7.50, adults; \$5, military; free, children under 12
- **Information:** 843-395-8821 or www.darlingtonraceway.com



Coach Todd Jeffers continues a winning tradition at New Hope High School.

On the court and off

New Hope's basketball coach is giving back

BY MELISSA GAINES

Growing up, Todd Jeffers played every sport he could. But he still found time to work for his dad after school in the family electronics business, and he returned to the company after earning a business degree in college.

But in 1998, soon after Jeffers and his wife, Ann, married, he told her he needed a career change. He wanted to follow his dream of becoming a coach.

Now, he is in his second year as the head basketball coach at New Hope High School. He also coaches golf and teaches physical education and driver's education.

"Right after we got back from the honeymoon, I told her I wanted to quit my job," he says.

Even though the news was a bit of a shock, she encouraged Jeffers, and he

set out on a new path. "She would much rather me do something I love than dread going to work," he says. "I'm blessed to have her support."

FROM THE CLASSROOM TO THE COURT

Building a career in athletics was always an option for Jeffers. He graduated from Decatur High School, where he was a member of the state runner-up golf team. He also played golf at Lipscomb University.

He later graduated from Athens State University with degrees in business and secondary education. "I knew I wanted to coach; it was a matter of finding the right time," he says.

His coaching journey started at Randolph High School. He then moved to Sparkman High School before accepting the head coaching job at Hazel Green. In his seven years there, he led the Trojans basketball team to the Class 6A state finals and earned 6A Coach of the Year honors. The Trojans were state runners-up in 2012 and regional runners-up in 2013 and 2015.

MAKING AN IMPACT

Jeffers loves connecting with his players and says it is the most important part of coaching. He enjoys making a difference in their lives, like other coaches made in his.

Jeffers never played for Earl Morris, a legendary Decatur High School basketball coach. But Jeffers says he watched Morris interact with the players, which made him realize what coaching is about. "There's just something special about him, and people gravitated toward him," he says.

Steve McGuffey, a fellow coach at Randolph High School, taught Jeffers to put the kids first. "Sometimes, they wouldn't even practice — he would just sit and talk with the guys," Jeffers says.

Now Jeffers hopes to have that kind of impact on the kids he coaches. "I want players to understand I care about them, first as a person and second as a basketball player," Jeffers says. "Coaching is the best thing in the world. It's my way to give back whatever I can." 🗨️



Coach Jeffers uses his love and talent for sports to make an impact on students' lives.

Making a difference for 42 years

Owens Cross Roads woman named Madison County Homemaker of the Year

BY LISA SAVAGE

As a young wife and mother, Barbara Webster joined the Owens Cross Roads Homemakers Club. That was 42 years ago, and she is still a member, serving as president the last two years.

Webster was recently named Madison County's Outstanding Homemaker of the Year, selected from members of various community clubs across the county.

"Our main focus is to educate ourselves and then try to educate others in the community," she says. The Owens Cross Roads Homemakers Club meets monthly, rotating between members' homes. The maximum number of members is 25.

During a countywide luncheon recently to announce the Madison County Outstanding Homemaker of the Year, Webster listened as the description of the winner was read to the crowd. With so many years of involvement, she knew she would know the winner and

was excited to learn who it was.

As the announcer went through the list of activities the winner had been involved in, Webster thought it could be just about any member.

"When she said something about helping with the food program at church, I knew then she was talking about me," Webster says.

Webster is active in the community through her church, Owens Cross Roads Church of Christ, and the homemakers club. The group provides services at the nursing homes, schools, library, volunteer fire department and more.

Their endeavors include a luncheon during teacher appreciation week and a scholarship each year to a high school senior.

The group's main fundraiser is a craft fair. This year it is Sept. 9 at Owens Cross Roads School. More than 40 vendors will be on hand with a range of crafts.



Barbara Webster was recently named Madison County's Outstanding Homemaker of the Year. She has been a member of the Owens Cross Roads Homemaker Club for the last 42 years and has served as president for two years.

HISTORY OF THE CLUB

Webster and her husband, John, were both born and raised in Madison County. They graduated from Huntsville High School but moved after they married. They settled at his grandparents' old home in Owens Cross Roads and have lived there ever since.

Webster wanted to be involved in the community, and she knew that joining the homemakers club would be a good opportunity.

Owens Cross Roads' first homemakers club was The Tomato Club, dedicated to teaching mothers and daughters homemaking skills such as canning tomatoes. "These ladies were encouraged to pass the information they gained along to other ladies in their neighborhood," Webster says.

Although the group's name has changed many times through the years, its focus remains the same: educating members and others. The club became the Owens Cross Roads Homemakers and Community Leaders Club in 1969.

Recent programs have included a session about why it's important to change out hand towels frequently, 20 things to throw away, how jurors are selected and the importance of the civic duty, food safety, picnic safety, recycling, health and nutrition.

"We make every effort to maintain an organization that focuses on education for our membership, which in turn improves our homes, our family life and our community," Webster says. ☺



Members of the Owens Cross Roads Homemaker Club are: front row, from left, Debbie Maples, LaNelle Patrick, Betty Whorton Fowler, Irmgard Elston; standing, from left, Barbara Webster, Glenda Patterson, Glenda Moody, Kathy Giles, Linda Harris, Terra Wilcox, Barbara Cooper and Deborah Pinkerton.

Back-to-School GADGET GUIDE

BY LUIS CARRASCO

It's back-to-school time in 2017, and while we still don't have self-driving cars that will handle that early morning drop-off, robot dogs that come with homework-shredding attachments, or even lockers that won't jam, several services and gadgets will make the life of any student (and parent) a little easier. Here are a few of them along with suggested age ranges.

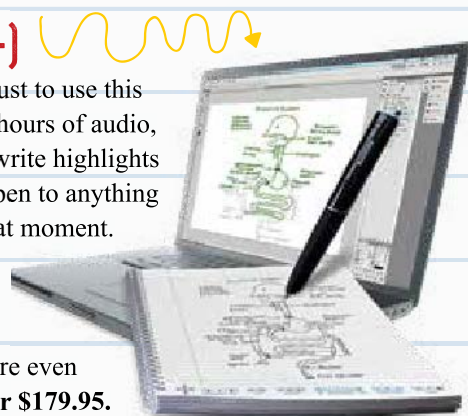


BITSBOX (6-14)

To build a fantastic future, we are going to need more people going into science, technology, engineering and mathematics. STEM box subscription services, which range from programming projects to the more traditional chemistry sets and electronics-building, give students the chance to tinker, create and put theoretical concepts to practical use. Bitsbox (www.bitsbox.com) focuses on coding, with kids as young as 6 learning the basics of programming and producing fun apps. Technology moves very quickly, but having coding knowledge — understanding the basic way that computers do what they do — is invaluable. ... but if you must put a price on it, **Bitsbox starts at \$20 per month.**

LIVESCRIBE ECHO SMARTPEN (18+)

It would almost be worth going back to college just to use this pen in class. The device records as much as 200 hours of audio, which is synchronized to your notes. You could write highlights during a presentation and then simply touch the pen to anything you wrote, and it will play the recording from that moment. With the included software, all notes and drawings are transferred to your computer along with the attached audio. You can share any piece you want as an interactive PDF, and your notes are even searchable. **Available at store.livescribe.com for \$179.95.**

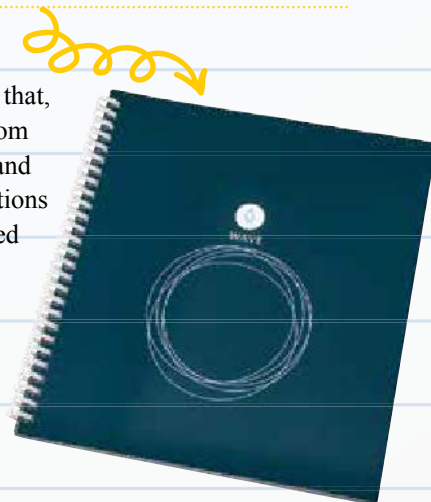


XYZPRINTING DA VINCI MINI (10+)

Having a 3D printer at home would have been unthinkable only a few years ago, but consumer models like the da Vinci Mini have made it an affordable investment. The educational use of a 3D printer is only limited by the imagination or by the included access to an online STEM and arts curriculum for grades K-12. The printer includes 3D modeling software for beginners and uses filaments derived from cornstarch, making them biodegradable and nontoxic. If dads are still not convinced, it also makes neat toy soldiers. **Available at us.xyzprinting.com for \$289.95.**

ROCKETBOOK WAVE SMART NOTEBOOK (13+)

Each page of the notebook has a series of symbols at the bottom that, when used with the Rocketbook Wave app, allows everything from notes to doodles to be stored digitally. The app scans, enhances and sends the notebook page to a chosen cloud service, including options like Evernote, Dropbox and Google Drive. If you use the included FriXion pen — made by Pilot and available at most office stores and online — you can pop the notebook in the microwave and completely erase it once it's full. The only caveat is that if you don't upload your pages regularly, the disappearing ink feature is just a mean prank waiting to happen. **Available at www.getrocketbook.com, erasable models start at \$27.**



Defeat the BACK-TO-SCHOOL BLUES

Apps and sites to help your student



The kids are back to school! Whew! As a mom who works from a home office and lives with a couple of rambunctious boys, I must admit that life is just a little bit simpler when they are back in school.

I love them to pieces, but they can be a distraction! Even if my days are a little less crazy during the school year, it picks right back up when school is over at the end of the day.

They are always starving — who knew boys could eat so much? They have practices and activities to get to and of course HOMEWORK. I didn't like homework as a kid and don't like it as a parent, especially as my boys continue to grow older and the homework gets a bit harder.

Their frustration increases, and my patience decreases. I'm already dreading the day they bring home geometry homework, and don't even get me started on spelling! I'm sure spellcheck has already corrected me at least a dozen times as I write this article.

However, I'm resourceful, and we have super-high-speed internet at home, so there are tools that will make these homework stresses easier. I will do my

best to ensure my kids are better spellers than I am, and I want to give them their best chance at good grades in all their subjects. Here are a couple of sites and apps I recommend:

KHAN ACADEMY

Khan Academy is well-known in the education world, but a lot of parents are unaware of it. The academy has great, free educational videos on math, science, politics and lots of other topics with content for students from kindergarten to graduate studies. If your child is struggling with a topic, and content is available, I strongly encourage you to check it out.

<http://www.khanacademy.org>

VOCABULARY SPELLING CITY

This is a great website and app to help your kids prepare for their spelling tests. Many schools implement it districtwide. If your school doesn't, you can always set up a parent account.

Reviewing spelling words is free, and with a premium account, you can also access lessons on vocabulary and writing. I love that I can enter my sons' spelling words and then they can play games and

take practice quizzes to prepare for tests.

<http://www.spellingcity.com>

ADDITIONAL SITES

If you are looking for a specific subject or topic your child needs help with in school, take a look at the list of suggested apps at Common Sense Media. They break down the apps based on age and topic. You may just find something that makes evening homework a little more manageable.

<https://www.commonsensemedia.org/lists/homework-help-apps>

Raising kids isn't easy, and parents today face a different set of challenges than previous generations. Technology is a huge part of that. Take advantage of the help that's out there to make your after-school routines a little more bearable. ☎




CARISSA SWENSON

IS A TRAINING AND EDUCATION CONSULTANT FOR CONSORTIA CONSULTING.

*Parenting
Tip*

The pace of school is picking up, and that's great. But there can be challenges, too. Cyberbullying is never OK. If your child faces a cyberbully, ask the bully to stop, unfriend them and report them to proper authorities if necessary.



Cynthia Parsons has gained an online following for her YouTube portrait painting lessons.

Outside the Lines

Local artist shares with the world through broadband

BY LISA SAVAGE

Cynthia Parsons loved to use crayons and colored pencils to create drawings as a child. She remembers coloring as her mother painted or played the piano. Other times Parsons would sit on a rock wall and draw and color pictures of the birds and flowers in the yard at her family's Birmingham home.

Years later, she cultivated her talent and became an accomplished artist.

She painted a portrait of Pope John Paul II. She created the official poster of the 1996 Olympic soccer event. She has painted other famous faces, but most of her work is a glimpse into her life in rural Madison County.

She paints local scenery and teaches painting classes in the studio at her

home. But it is her instructional videos on YouTube that introduce the rest of the world to her neck of the woods.

HER JOURNEY

Parsons grew up in the Mountain Brook area near the Birmingham Zoo. Her father, David Lawson Massey Jr., was a third-generation dentist, and her mother, Ophelia Bell Massey, was an accomplished artist.

Although she loved to color when she was young, she didn't plan to focus on art. She went to Florida State University with plans to study business. But when she didn't do well in the first accounting class, she changed to her first love — art studies.

After graduation, she married, and the couple moved to her husband's hometown of Huntsville. They had two children, and she focused on the kids. She was a member of the Junior League and volunteered at the art museum. "I was artistic, but I never painted for the public," she says.

At age 40 and divorced, she had to go to work. "I gravitated toward what I knew how to do," she says.

She painted pastel portraits of children from the downtown neighborhood where she had lived. "It's what I felt most comfortable doing," she says.

When someone asked Parsons to paint a watercolor, she was apprehensive. "I had tiptoed around that because it's what my mother had been so good at," she says. Her mother was a signature member of the prestigious Watercolor Society of Alabama and served as president of the organization in the 1990s.

Parsons blossomed with the use of watercolors and other types of paints and techniques. Now, she's also a signature member of the Watercolor Society of Alabama, along with a number of her students.

She has garnered many awards and recognitions for her work and also has a black belt in the martial art of Tang Soo Do Moo Duk Kwan.

EXPANDING HER HORIZONS

The Vatican recognized Parsons for the oil portrait of Pope John Paul II. She painted the portrait in 1999 for the Archdiocese of New York. "It was through

the most amazing series of coincidences,” Parsons says.

The portrait hangs in the Archbishop John Hughes Archive Center in Yonkers, New York.

The work of John Singer Sargent influenced Parsons in the painting of a portrait of her daughter. The painting, at 2 feet wide and 4.6 feet in height, exhibits the length of Sargent’s works. “This was a pivotal portrait for me,” Parsons says. “I felt that I accomplished painting goals that I had been striving for.”

Parsons’ work also includes abstracts, floral and landscapes, sports, animals and anything she envisions.

Parsons shares her artistic talent with the world through YouTube. She has broadband internet service through New Hope Telephone Cooperative and uses it to showcase art instruction and her community.

She teaches classes at her home studio and at Alabama Art Supply in Birmingham each Thursday.

She taught at the Birmingham Art Museum and the Birmingham Botanical Gardens. In Huntsville, she taught at the Burritt on the Mountain museum and Hobby Lobby in Jones Valley. “Painting is

about science and mathematics,” she says. “You use geometric shapes and paint in a triangle.”

Parsons was encouraged to create videos by her daughter, Sarah, who won the Edward R. Murrow award for her work at Yahoo News and is now senior director of digital programming for NFL.

Parson’s goal is to reach more students and to express herself. Her first videos teach beginning art, and she now creates videos of the world around her — a cotton farmer in the fields or her neighbor playing his fiddle at dusk. “It’s a celebration of the beauty of the area we live in,” she says.

Those short videos help capture a more beautiful piece of art, Parsons says.

“If you can hear the wind blowing through the trees, it’s going to help you have the sense that you are actually there,” she says. “It doesn’t matter what the medium is. You must always love whatever it is you want to paint, and often it is something that takes us back to our roots.”

The broadband speeds have made it much easier to achieve her video goals. “Before I had broadband, it might take all night to upload one of my videos,” she says.

She has depended on the technicians at NHTC. “They’ve been wonderful, and I couldn’t have done this without their help,” she says.

Parsons’ work is displayed in many places, including locally. “Moon’s Barn on Poplar Ridge Road” is an oil canvas on exhibit at Jim’s Grocery on New Hope Cedar Point Road. A portrait of Cowgirl, the store’s greeter, also hangs in the store.

Another favorite is “Winter Peace,” a view looking west from one of three one-way bridges on Old U.S. Highway 431 just east of Hampton Cove.

“We live in a ‘Garden of Eden,’ and I want to share it with the world,” she says. “I can do that through art.” 📺

Learn more about the art of

*Cynthia
Parsons*

[www.youtube.com/c/OpenArtStudio
OfCynthiaParsons](http://www.youtube.com/c/OpenArtStudioOfCynthiaParsons)
www.parsonsgallery.com



Cynthia Parsons is often commissioned for portraits of people’s beloved pets.

GOING DUTCH

Learn the secrets to the all-in-one pot

A Dutch oven is the workhorse of your outdoor cooking experience. It's an all-in-one pot that can withstand the heat it takes to make myriad meals from beginning to end — appetizer to dessert.

Cookbook author J. Wayne Fears says there are some tricks to success — the primary one being experience. He offers these tips to help with the learning curve:

- Make sure you have the right accessories — lid turners and heavy leather gloves among them. “I’ve been burned more times than I can count,” Fears says.
- When you’re making something like cake or biscuits, put them in a cake pan set on a cake rack inside the Dutch oven. The heat will circulate better, and cleanup is much easier. Soups and stews should be added directly to the pot.
- There’s no set time or temperature in Dutch oven cooking. You’re cooking outside, so you never know how hot the fire will be.
- Always watch the pot. “When you’re cooking, don’t get distracted and walk off,” Fears says. “You will have a problem. I guarantee it.”

From his home office in New Market, Alabama, he discusses what led him to become

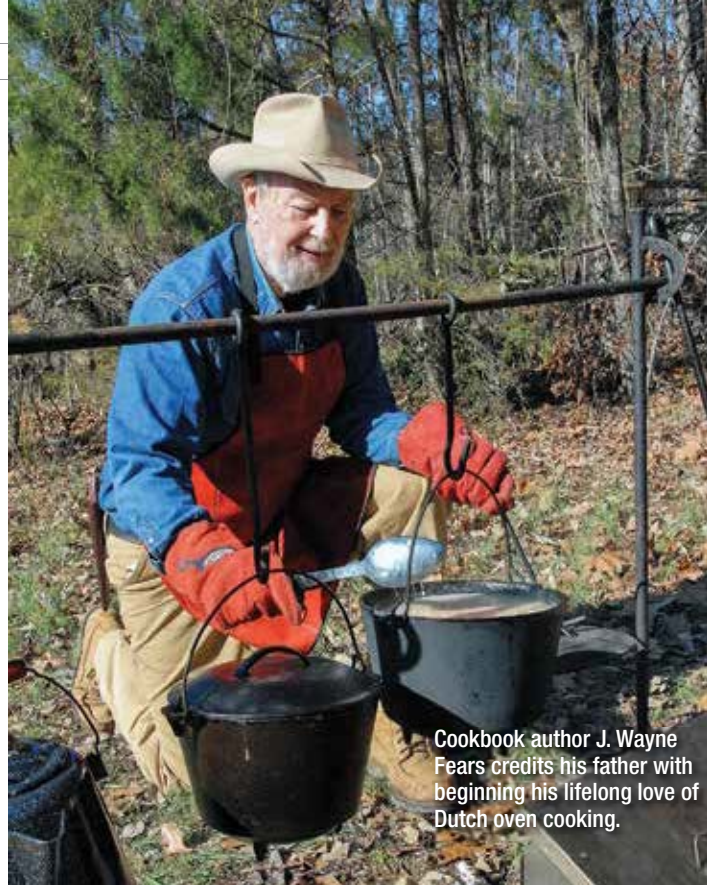
an expert at using one of the oldest cooking methods known to modern man — a cast-iron Dutch oven set over flames.

Fears’ father was a trapper who often used a Dutch oven. He instilled in his son a love of the outdoors and impressed on him the importance of knowing how to cook. When Fears was a young man, he also had a Scoutmaster who was a Dutch oven cooking expert.

After college, Fears worked for Gulf States Paper Corp. Knowing his affinity for hunting and wildlife management, the firm asked him to turn 500,000 acres it owned into a profitable hunting preserve. It didn’t take long for the operation to expand, with organized hunts offered in remote areas of Colorado, British Columbia and Alaska. “And those people expected to be fed well,” he says.

Fears, a member of the International Dutch Oven Society, now shares his techniques with readers around the world in two cookbooks, “The Complete Book of Dutch Oven Cooking” and his latest, “The Lodge Book of Dutch Oven Cooking.”

“I’m extremely proud of this book and the partnership with Lodge,” he says. “I tried to pick recipes that would make it easy for first-time Dutch oven cooks but that were delicious enough that seasoned Dutch



Cookbook author J. Wayne Fears credits his father with beginning his lifelong love of Dutch oven cooking.

oven cooks would not get bored cooking them.”

Fears says Dutch oven has become a trendy cooking method, particularly with millennials and “preppers,” people preparing for the worst — no electricity or other modern cooking methods. “Millennials are also finding it’s a great, fun way to entertain. Something different, rather than grilling,” he adds.

There are two methods to cook the food — over an open flame using hardwood or on a grill over charcoal. “You can control the heat better with charcoal and have enough ready to add more if needed,” he says.

But there’s only one kind of Dutch oven he recommends: the Lodge preseasoned cast-iron camp Dutch oven made in South Pittsburg, Tennessee. “Now with preseasoned, you don’t have to spend all day seasoning the thing,” he says.

Dutch ovens come in various

sizes, but there are several things common to all: a flat, recessed lid so coals can be placed on top; a strong bail for hanging over the fire; and a heavy lid with handle in the center.

What is the most interesting food Fears has cooked in a Dutch oven? Caribou brains. It was a stormy night in Alaska, and his group of hunters were stranded in camp and ran out of food.

“I told them what it was, and they liked it, but I did get a lot of strange looks,” Fears says.

Fortunately, most of his recipes tend to follow a more traditional route. Here are some of his favorites.



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

SARA GRAVE'S BEEF STEW

"This beef stew has to be the best in the country," says Fears. It can be made entirely outdoors, or you can use your kitchen stove to brown the meat in advance.

- 1 package Adolph's beef stew mix
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 cup flour
- 3 pounds beef round, cut into 1-inch cubes
- 1 package McCormick's beef stew seasoning
- 1 package McCormick's brown gravy mix
- 6 large Irish potatoes, cubed
- 1 cup carrots, peeled and sliced

In 12-inch Dutch oven, bring 3 quarts of water to a boil over charcoal or hardwood fire, keeping bottom of oven from coming into direct contact with coals. In separate pan on medium high heat, add 2 cups of warm water and stir in Adolph's stew mix. Heat to simmer, then add to water in Dutch oven. Heat oil in a skillet over medium heat. Coat cubed meat with flour and brown in oil on all sides. Add browned meat to boiling water in Dutch oven, stir, cover with lid on and reduce heat to low. Cook for 2 hours, stirring every 20-30 minutes to prevent meat from sticking to bottom. After 2 hours of cooking, mix McCormick's beef stew seasoning mix into two cups of warm water. When completely mixed, add to Dutch oven mixture. Stir well. Mix McCormick's Brown Gravy Mix in two cups of warm water. Add to Dutch oven and stir. While stew continues to cook on low heat, peel and cut potatoes and carrots. Bring water to a boil in two pots and put potatoes in one and carrots in the second. Reduce heat and let the potatoes and carrots boil until they can be easily pierced with a fork. Remove and drain. (Cooking potatoes and carrots separately has proven to keep them more tender.) Add vegetables to Dutch oven mixture. Stir. Remove from heat and serve. Makes 6-8 servings.



STUFFED BAKED APPLES

- 4 baking apples
- 1/3 cup raisins or dried cranberries
- 1/3 cup slivered almonds
- 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon nutmeg
- 2 cups water
- 4 ounces orange juice concentrate
- 2 tablespoons honey

Wash apples and core 3/4 of apple, leaving a little of the core in the bottom. In a bowl, combine raisins, almonds, cinnamon and nutmeg. Mix well. Take mixture and stuff each apple. In a bowl, mix honey, water and orange juice concentrate. Mix well. Place apples in a 9-inch aluminum pan. Pour liquid mixture over apples. Place pan on trivet in 12-inch Dutch oven over charcoal or hardwood fire, keeping bottom of oven from coming into direct contact with coals. Bake until apples are tender. Makes 4 servings.

DUTCH OVEN PINEAPPLE UPSIDE DOWN CAKE

- 1/4 cup butter, softened
- 1/2 cup brown sugar
- 1 can pineapple slices, drained, reserving juice
- 1 small jar of maraschino cherries
- 1 (9-ounce) package Jiffy golden yellow cake mix
- 1 egg

Heat Dutch oven over charcoal or hardwood fire, keeping bottom of oven from coming into direct contact with coals. Melt butter in the pineapple-upside-down cake pan and sprinkle it with 1/2 cup of brown sugar. Place pineapple slices over the brown sugar and place a maraschino cherry in each center. Set aside. In a medium bowl, beat yellow cake mix, egg and half of pineapple juice for 4 minutes. Pour batter over pineapple slices in cake pan. Place pan in 12-inch Dutch oven on trivet or cake rack. Cook until cake is golden brown and toothpick inserted in center comes out clean. Remove from Dutch oven, pour remaining half of pineapple juice over cake and allow to cool in pan for 2 minutes. Carefully flip onto serving plate and serve warm. Makes 6 servings. 📖





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