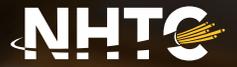


The



# Communicator

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2021

## FITNESS AND FIBER

Technology helped  
Body By B expand  
classes



### INFINITY FITNESS

State-of-the-art gym opens  
in Owens Cross Roads

### KEEP THE RHYTHM

Broadband connects  
musical creators



By SHIRLEY BLOOMFIELD, CEO  
NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association

## To expand broadband access, we must protect our supply chains

We at NTCA are encouraged to see rural broadband take center stage as people talk about how to improve our nation’s infrastructure. While grappling with a pandemic, more people than ever — especially in Washington, D.C., and in the policy arena — are realizing that robust and reliable broadband is essential for people to work and learn from home and for our country to move forward. It has been encouraging to see federal and state resources being put toward addressing gaps in broadband coverage.

However, the job is only beginning when the funds start to flow. While NTCA member companies are eager to keep building broadband networks, lead times for fulfillment of orders of telecom supplies are approaching deeply concerning levels. One member recently received a quote that projected an eight-month delay for fiber, and another was told it would take one year for fulfillment of a fiber order. We’re hearing stories of delays of several weeks or months for routers and other gear.

These supply chain delays could have real implications on American consumers — and they could present real problems when it comes to provider compliance with things like buildout deadlines and performance testing obligations.

It’s terrific that resources are being made available to ensure every American has access to sufficient broadband. But it’s going to be equally important that policy-makers pay attention to whether the supply chain can keep up and consider what steps must be taken to ensure that happens.

# BROADBAND: Connecting your life



### Telehealth

Broadband connects you with doctors and health care services



### Work From Home

Broadband connects you with servers and applications to work remotely



### Remote Learning

Broadband connects your children with their teachers and study resources



### Shopping

Broadband connects you with grocery stores, restaurants and retailers for pickup and home delivery



### Family & Community

Broadband connects you with your people over video calls and social media



### Small Business

Broadband connects your business with customers and suppliers



How did your broadband connection help you through 2020? How will it support you in the new year? Share your story with the hashtag **#MyBroadbandStory**.



# Don't ZOOM into trouble

## Do learn the secrets to a great virtual meeting

There are some gaffes co-workers never forget. And with the likes of Zoom, GoToMeeting and FaceTime bringing business gatherings into many homes, the potential for memorable pitfalls only increases.

“Don't take your phone with you to the bathroom during a video call” should most likely be the first rule to remember for any team shifting to virtual gatherings. A quick search on YouTube will show you the wisdom of that policy.

While there's potential for unintentional blunders during video calls, the tools also offer an indispensable resource for teams. In many cases, productivity would grind to a halt without the ability to connect virtually through broadband.

### So, here are a few “Dos” and some “Don'ts” to consider before your next virtual meeting:

**DO** dress fully. A work shirt on top and running shorts or pajamas on the bottom can prove embarrassing if you forget to turn off the camera before standing up. It happens, often.

**DO** take a few minutes before the meeting to confirm you know how to turn the microphone and camera on and (likely more importantly) off in the software you're using. It's also a good policy to stay muted unless speaking.

**DON'T** leave your notifications turned on when screen sharing during a meeting. Otherwise, everyone attending might see the message from your hungry spouse regarding the takeout lunch you promised to deliver.

**DO** have a clear, detailed agenda and stick to it. The attention of participants can wander, and a well-paced plan can keep everyone focused.

**DON'T** ignore the background. People will judge you on the contents of your bookshelves. Also, if there's a forgotten not-safe-for-work bit of kitsch visible on a shelf or wall, don't expect your co-workers to spare you embarrassment. They may just enjoy the humor.

**DO** consider lighting. Everyone looks better with good lighting, and a great presentation can not only set the tone for how others perceive you but also boost your self-confidence.

**DON'T** forget to take the time before the meeting to get a glass of water or cup of coffee.



**DO** jot down any notes about points you wish to cover, and keep a pen and paper handy. Know the steps you need to take to help you be more present during the meeting, and repeat the formula every time.

**DO** remember to inform other household members you're joining a video call. More than one relative or friend has taken an unintended star turn during a serious discussion.

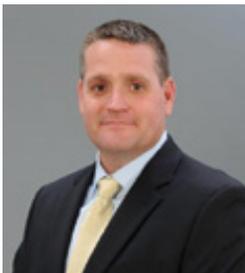
**DON'T** leave the cats and dogs free to wander. Disembodied voices may draw their attention, usually at the most inopportune time. While a stray tail or untimely howl might add levity to a meeting, know your audience and prepare accordingly.

**DO** remember that the most important thing of all is to laugh. Isolation and, often, stress can counterbalance the freedom of remote work. Every meeting, take a moment to appreciate your co-workers, share a joke, smile and laugh. Enjoy the virtual time together. 🗨️

**That's a formula for a great, productive meeting.**

# Resolve to master streaming TV in 2021

Each year at this time, I usually find myself looking ahead at all of the promise of the new year. Many of us will consider resolutions we can make to improve ourselves as the calendar turns to 2021.



**DANIEL MARTIN**  
General Manager

After the year we've all just been through, I think we could likely use that fresh sense of optimism. But just as admirable as it is that we will resolve to lose a little weight or get organized this year, it's also unfortunately predictable that many of us will drop those diets, exercise regimes or organizational systems by spring.

That's why I have a suggested resolution for many of our members that can be accomplished from the couch.

If you're one of the roughly 1 in 4 Americans who hasn't tried streaming video service through platforms like Netflix, Hulu or Amazon Prime, I'd urge you to consider resolving to give it a try in 2021.

According to the researchers at Nielsen, many older TV watchers did just that in 2020. Spurred on in a hunt for programming while staying home during the pandemic, older viewers now account for 26% of all streaming minutes viewed, up from 19% a year ago, according to the Nielsen data.

While there is a little bit of a learning curve on the new platforms, the amount of shows and movies to watch at your command is astounding.

While Netflix, Amazon Prime Video and Hulu are the dominant providers, new streaming services like Disney+, Peacock and HBO Max have debuted in the last 18 months. Paramount+, due out this year, promises to offer an immense catalog of shows from CBS and other Viacom networks, as well as decades' worth of hit movies produced in the Paramount Studios. The summer Olympics alone are expected to provide hundreds of hours of programming for NBC's Peacock.

And thanks to our work building and maintaining the NHTC broadband network, this vast world of programming is available right in your living room.

Here are my suggestions for how to give it a try:

- 1. Start small.** Most streaming platforms offer a free trial of up to 30 days. Beyond that, basic plans for Disney+, Hulu and Netflix are each priced at under \$10 per month so you can try the service without a huge financial commitment.
- 2. Pick the right box.** Your TV may already have some streaming capabilities built in to get you started. If not, you'll need a Roku device, Amazon Fire TV Stick or other streaming device connected to your Wi-Fi to get you started.
- 3. Ask for help.** Whether it's a friend, family member or one of our friendly staff, don't hesitate to reach out and ask for advice on navigating this exciting new world of streaming video. 

## The Communicator

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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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NHTC  
P.O. Box 452  
New Hope, AL 35760  
256-723-4211  
www.nhtc.coop

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### On the Cover:



Brandy Hall operates her own training facility near her home in Grant and teaches classes tailored to all fitness levels.  
See story Page 8.



## Celebrating change!

NHTC employees dressed in their favorite '80s attire to celebrate the cooperative's new internet-only option, which eliminates the requirement for internet service customers to also have a landline. Find out more about the internet-only option at [www.nhtc.coop](http://www.nhtc.coop) or call 256-723-4211.

## PROTECTIQ

You have locks on every door and window. But not on your network?



**\$3.99/  
MONTH**

As viruses and malware become increasingly sophisticated, your network requires equally innovative solutions. ProtectIQ™ helps you keep a lock on your network – and alerts you when any unwanted visitors try to enter.

- **Protect all devices on your network!** Every file that passes through your network is scanned, and known viruses are blocked and destroyed.
- **Keep your sensitive information secure!** With our Intrusion Prevention System, cybercriminals are restricted from accessing your network.
- **Stop malicious websites in their tracks!** We analyze and block the data from thousands of phishing, hijacking, spyware, adware and malware sites.

Disclaimer: ProtectIQ requires a Calix GigaSpire BLAST router.

# Lifeline SERVICE

**LIFELINE IS A FEDERAL PROGRAM TO HELP LOW-INCOME AMERICANS PAY FOR PHONE OR BROADBAND SERVICE**

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

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

Additionally, consumers at or below 135% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines will continue to be eligible for a Lifeline program benefit. (State determinations of income will no longer be accepted.) There are no changes to the eligibility criteria for tribal programs. To learn more about Lifeline assistance, please visit [lifelinesupport.org](http://lifelinesupport.org) or call your local telecommunications provider.

**DO YOU QUALIFY?**  
Apply today!

## NEW DIRECTORIES!

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

# Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge

## An avian sanctuary

Story by ANNE P. BRALY

Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge in North Alabama is a rich, diverse wildlife habitat.

As winter's chill sets in across North Alabama, Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge undergoes a feathery transformation. Birds that normally call the northern reaches of the continent home fly south, finding the relative warmth of the 35,000-acre property along the banks of the Tennessee River far more to their liking.

Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge came to be in 1938 as a protected area for migratory birds and other wildlife who call the refuge home year-round — snakes, deer, small mammals, amphibians and other animal species. It was the first-ever wildlife area to occupy a hydroelectric impoundment, which is part of a larger hydroelectric system that uses a dam to store river water in a reservoir — in this case, Wheeler Dam. It was an experiment that has become a tremendous success over ensuing decades.

Although designated as a waterfowl refuge, Wheeler provides for a wide spectrum of wildlife with its deep river channels, creeks, tupelo swamps and other areas. There is shelter and food for wintering birds, such as the critically endangered whooping crane, and year-round residents like the endangered gray bat.

The refuge is also home to 115 species of fish, 74 species of reptiles and amphibians, 47 species of mammals, 38 species of freshwater mussels and 26 species of freshwater snails.

Teresa Adams, supervisory park ranger at Wheeler, says the refuge's appeal to sandhill and whooping cranes is due to management practices in place since Wheeler's inception. Those practices reflect a partnership between the refuge and farmers in the region.

"Farmers plant food crops — corn, soybeans and winter wheat — and leave around 18% of the crop in the field for the wintering waterfowl, cranes, and migratory and native birds," Adams says.

Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge, which serves as the gateway to the North Alabama Birding Trail, has a visitor center that hosts a series of interpretive exhibits. These displays have information about the refuge's numerous animals, as well as the early human residents of the Tennessee River Valley.

At any time, you might witness one of more than 300 species that have been recorded on the refuge. Year-round residents include great blue herons, great egrets, mourning doves, downy woodpeckers, Northern flickers and many more. It's not hard to recognize the brilliant hue of a blue jay or an Eastern bluebird or hear the caw of a crow or the screech of an owl.

Among the most common waterfowl that choose to winter at the refuge are wood and ring-necked ducks. Occasionally, you may spot a Ross's goose or greater white-fronted goose. 📷



Eastern screech owl.

## Ready, set, shoot!

Tom Ress, a resident of Athens, Alabama, is an avid bird-watcher. His passion for photography has taken him far and wide with a camera in hand and a bird in the viewfinder. With his Canon 7D Mark II camera and Canon 100-400mm II zoom lens, he's zeroed in on the elusive blue-winged teal at Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge only once every two to three years, but he spots the tufted titmouse flitting from limb to limb more often.

### Ress points out a number of important things to consider when photographing birds.

- For starters, you need to learn about their habitats and what foods and activities they enjoy. Do they hunt for rodents by soaring over open fields? Do they search through dead leaves for bugs, or do they prey on flying insects?
- Find a good vantage point and wait. Patience is one of the main things to bring with you when you plan on getting the perfect shot.
- Invest in a small, portable blind so that you're as well-hidden as possible. Such blinds are sold at big-box stores such as Dick's Sporting Goods, Walmart and Academy Sports + Outdoors.
- Tripods are a good idea, allowing you to capture a longer exposure by using a slower shutter speed. They're also useful if you don't have a steady hand. The use of a tripod is good for shooting baby birds in their nests or birds roosting in tree holes, on ledges and in other secure places. Tripods are not good, though, if you plan on shooting birds in action, Ress says. They are also rather cumbersome to carry if your hike is a long one.
- You will find more birds by learning their calls and songs. The Cornell University-funded website [allaboutbirds.org](http://allaboutbirds.org) is a good resource that includes more than 600 bird sounds and songs.
- Morning and evening are the best times for photography, offering the best lighting. Avoid midday when the sunlight is at its harshest.
- You don't need an expensive camera, but you don't want the cheapest, either. Make sure whatever camera you purchase has a good zoom lens.

### Top-five birding apps:

1. **eBird** offers a paperless way to log your bird sightings (Android and iPhone).
2. **Merlin Bird ID** will assist you with identifying birds in seconds (Android and iPhone).
3. **Audubon Bird Guide** is a complete guide to more than 800 species of birds found in North America (Android and iPhone).
4. **BirdsEye** helps ID birds around you and find the birds you want to see (iPhones only).
5. **Larkwire** turns learning bird sounds into a game to help you and the kids identify birds by their calls (iPhones only).

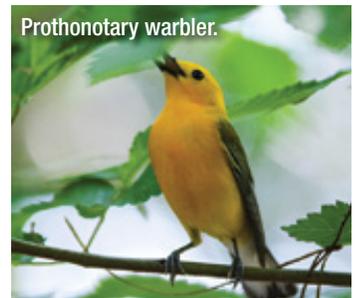
## Bird-watching essentials

Whether it's in your own backyard or out in the wild, there are a few things to ensure your bird-watching experience is a success. Having spent countless hours in the field, Tom Ress is well-versed in the essentials, including:

- **BINOCULARS**
- **A FIELD GUIDE**, such as "A Field Guide to the Birds East of the Rockies" by Roger Tory Peterson and "The Sibley Guide to Birds" by David Sibley are good ones.
- **A BIRDING APP**, such as Audubon's Bird Guide: North America or eBird, to have bird-watching tips and other info at your fingertips.
- **RAIN GEAR** — Always be prepared.
- **PATIENCE** — You can never have enough.



Indigo bunting.



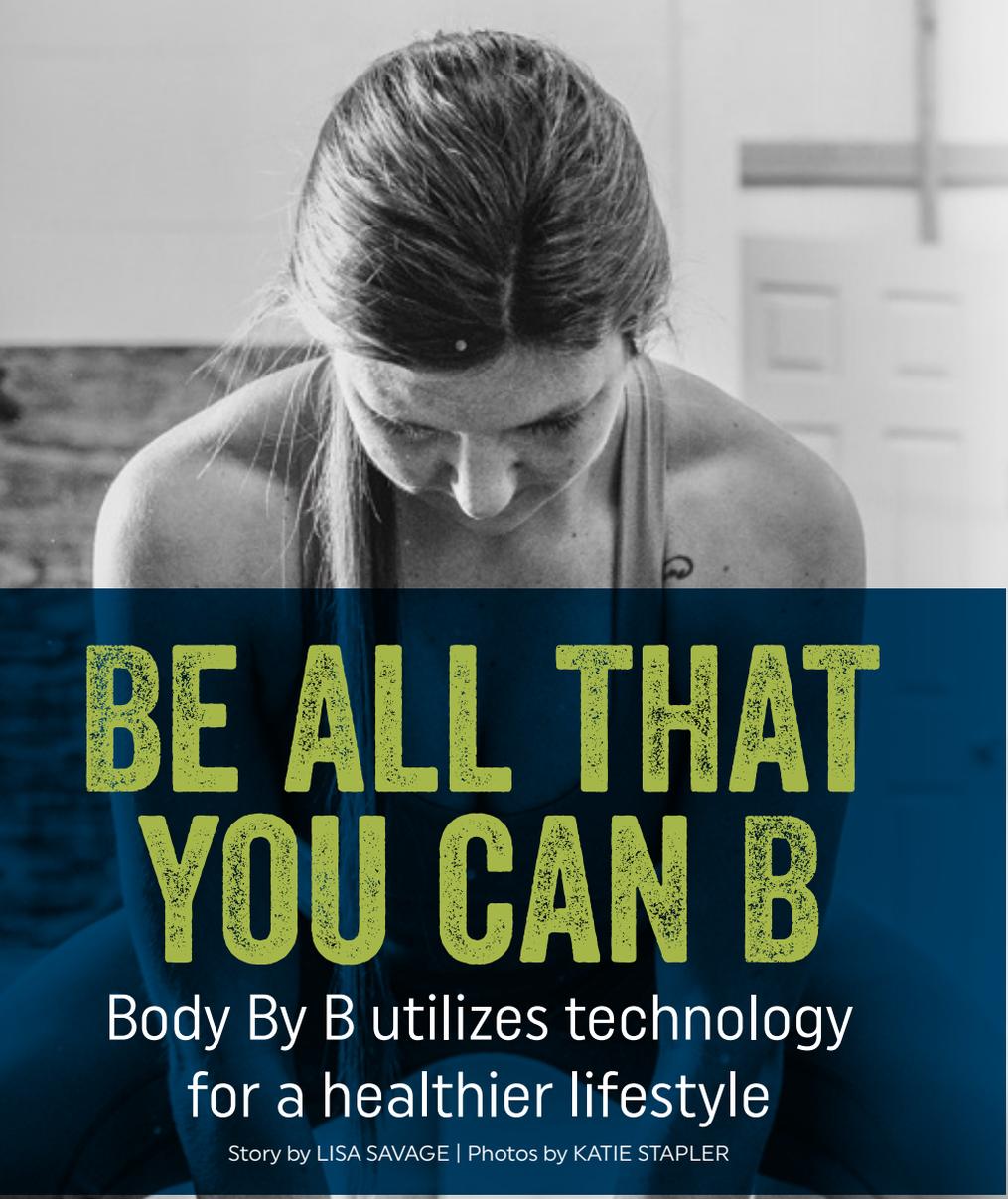
Prothonotary warbler.



Pectoral sandpiper.



A whooping crane, left, and a sandhill crane.



# BE ALL THAT YOU CAN BE

## Body By B utilizes technology for a healthier lifestyle

Story by LISA SAVAGE | Photos by KATIE STAPLER

Growing up, Brandy Hall struggled with self-esteem and dealt with eating disorders and weight gain. After high school, she decided to get in shape and looked for a healthy way to do it. That's when she discovered CrossFit and fell in love with the fitness regimen on the path to a healthier lifestyle.

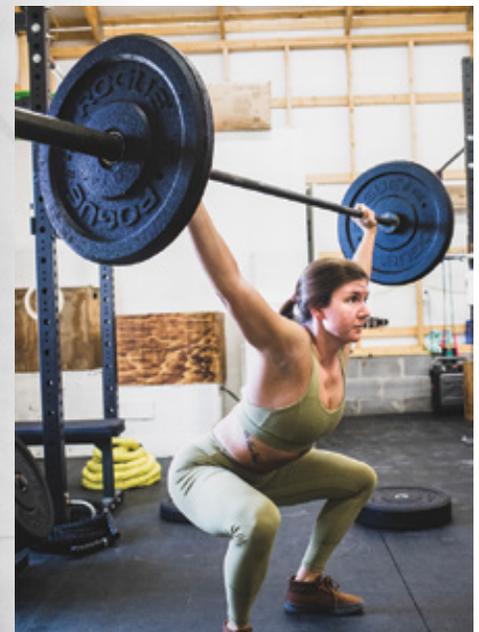
Although she doesn't teach CrossFit, she is a certified instructor and shares her knowledge with others at Body By B, the training facility she opened two years ago in Grant. Her internet service through NHTC allows her to teach classes both in person and online, meeting the various needs of her clients.

### MAKING A CHANGE

Hall grew up in Grant and was active as a cheerleader at Kate Duncan Smith DAR School. All through school, she struggled with her weight, and she knew it was time to make a change after she graduated.

She became hooked on fitness while working as an accountant in Huntsville. With a focus on aerobic exercise and cardio workouts, she loved a fitness routine. "I was healthy and enjoyed the workouts," she says.

Eventually Hall stopped working in Huntsville, and it was too far to go there for workouts. That's when she joined a CrossFit gym in Guntersville and fell in love with the weightlifting and cardio combo.



Brandy Hall, owner of Body By B.



To learn more about Hall's program, find her on Facebook at BrandyBob Hall or contact her through email at [bodybyb2020@yahoo.com](mailto:bodybyb2020@yahoo.com).

She continued training all through her pregnancy in 2016 and reached a personal record of 200-pound back squats. "I was in the gym just a few hours before my son was born," she says. "After squatting, I came up and thought, 'OK, it's baby time.'"

She returned to the gym before her son was 3 weeks old. She studied to become a Level 1 CrossFit instructor and taught at the Guntersville gym. Hall continued training and teaching 5 a.m. classes, taking her young son with her, until the gym closed in 2019.

She hoped to open her own business related to fitness, but it never felt like it was the right time until the gym she loved closed its doors. "My dream was to have my own place, but financially, I couldn't make that work," Hall says.

With her husband's encouragement, she rented space from Work 2 Win in Grant. The owners, Randy and Kelly Dennis, allowed her to use the facility for free when she started training their son. "They are longtime family friends and believed in me to get my career started," she says.

She taught classes tailored to all fitness levels, and she had three people in the first class. Those three quickly turned to six and then 15. "Now, I have about 36, and here I am, in my own place," she says.

### A NEW YOU

After teaching at that location for several months, Hall opened Body By B in a 30-by-50-foot shop built on property she and her husband, Bob, bought on Simpson Point. The gym is right out her front door,

which allows more time with her son, who is now 4 years old and in prekindergarten classes.

"I couldn't have done this without the support of my husband," she says. "He works hard so I can stay home and follow my dream. He's a handyman around the gym, building racks for weights and bars."

She teaches classes several mornings a week at 5 a.m. and 6 a.m. and from 3:30 p.m. to 6 p.m., depending on the day. Other times, she offers an open gym, and members work out on their own using free weights. While she doesn't have machines such as treadmills or cable machines like a traditional gym, she plans to add rowing machines.

Her classes are not affiliated with CrossFit, and they're adapted for individual strengths and weaknesses. "I call it functional fitness," Hall says.

Classes combine warmups, weight training, gymnastics-style weightlifting using dumbbells and a pullup bar rig, and a cool-down period. Clients range from teenagers to people in their late 60s.

"I do my own programming, designed for each individual's fitness level," she says. "Everything is modified for someone's own ability."

She often uses her favorite motto, "Challenge for Change." "What doesn't challenge you doesn't change you," she says.

Hall requires a judgment-free gym and hopes people treat it as an escape from stress. Some people might be intimidated the first time, but she encourages everyone to come as they are. "People sometimes think, 'I've got to get in shape before I

can go to the gym,' and that's just not the case," she says.

### TAKING ADVANTAGE OF TECHNOLOGY

For a time last year, the gym closed due to the pandemic. Hall kept the workout classes going, though, using the videoconferencing platform Zoom.

"We were thankful we had that option, but we were glad to get back in the classes in person when we could," she says.

She continued offering Zoom after in-person classes resumed, and some clients still choose the online option. "It's still ideal if someone doesn't feel well and just can't make it to class or if they're just more comfortable doing the workout at home," she says.

Getting back to in-person classes required some modifications, such as allowing only 10 or fewer participants per class. She follows the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines.

Hall sanitizes the gym daily and requires clients to sanitize their hands before and after using weights. She sanitizes the weights between each use and sanitizes rubber mats and all areas in the gym throughout the day and at the end of the day.

Using Wodify, a fitness tracking app for clients, she posts each client's customized workout, along with class updates and details about upcoming workouts. She also uses the app for client payment. "Everything we do is on the app," Hall says. "The technology we have available allows us to have so much more flexibility now. I'm so blessed to be able to do what I love." 



# Come together

Story by DREW WOOLLEY

Broadband brings together musicians across the world

As the pandemic stretched on last year, drummer Mike Kosacek and other members of the band Cosmic Singularity started kicking around the idea of recording a second album. With most music venues shut down and more time to write, it was a familiar story for bands and musicians across the world. But there was one key exception: Kosacek has never actually met any of his bandmates in person.

“Without high-speed internet, we just couldn’t do this,” he says. “I live in Round Rock, Texas. The keyboard player lives in Florida. The bass player is in Utah, and at the time, our singer and guitar player was living in Scotland.”

The globe-spanning collaboration would have been impossible just a decade ago. The songwriting process is a sort of musical relay. One member of the band will share a demo of a song he created, and the others will add their parts one by one.

“We’ll start stripping off the individual parts, and everyone will add in their own instruments to build up the song,” Kosacek says. “Once we’ve got all those parts, they’ll send it to me, and I’ll do the mixing in my studio.”

## A NOD TO THE DRUMMER

Kosacek built his home studio, DoubleDog Recording, in 2009. He had been recording in his bedroom for several years, but the situation wasn’t ideal.

“In terms of sound, that wasn’t optimal. Plus, I have a family, so the noise wasn’t optimal for them, either,” he says. “When I decided I really wanted to make money off of my music, it had to be better.”

The stand-alone, 475-square-foot recording space gives him room to play without driving his family from the premises and provides Kosacek the option of recording bands live. Normally, he estimates, about a fifth of his business would come from mixing and mastering recordings for live bands. The rest is his Studio Drum Tracks business, where he records drum parts for Texas-based groups and artists like Black Dirt Tango, ThemThatKnow and Mike Hamilton, as well as others from across the globe.



Broadband technology underpins drummer Mike Kosacek’s business.

“At least half of it is mind reading,” Kosacek says. “But for me, I find that a lot of it is just experience playing and listening to a lot of music. So, when someone sends me a song that needs drums, I have some idea of where to go with it. A lot of times, it’s right the first time, and people are wowed at the difference, which is, of course, my goal.”

These days, with bands unable to record in person, all of Kosacek’s work comes from the drum tracks business. But internet connections have come a long way since he started, making the transition an easy one.

“I actually saw an uptick in business, because people were stuck at home writing songs that needed drums,” he says. “Ten years ago we would have to mail CDs, DVDs, even hard drives back and forth, because sometimes it was faster and more reliable than internet transfers. Being able to do this digitally and share files online — that’s what makes it happen.” 📧

## Remote mastery

From his earliest memories, Serge Espitia was in love with music and how it comes together. He eventually moved to New York, where he had the chance to work as a producer with artists including James Iha of Smashing Pumpkins and Adam Schlesinger of Fountains of Wayne, as well as producers for artists like David Bowie, Beyonce and John Legend.



But in 2016, Espitia and his wife were tired of the city, so they moved to New Jersey. There, he set up his own home studio for mastering — the art of touching up songs to achieve professional sound quality.

“There’s a lot of fear of the mastering process, but it’s really about your personal taste and appreciation for music,” Espitia says.

His mastering business is completely online, and that’s the way Espitia likes it. Operating remotely allows him to work faster compared to in-person sessions with artists that can take hours longer. The key, he says, is making a human connection with artists to better understand what they want.

“A lot of people I work with are very sensitive, so they have a good understanding of their musical influences and what they want to draw from,” Espitia says. “So, that part of the business really hasn’t changed.”

## Home schooling

- ▶ **Education** — Books, magazines, online tutorials and more are available to help developing artists learn their trade. Online collaboration groups can also provide a supportive community and opportunities to hone your craft.
- ▶ **Know what you want** — Understand what kinds of sounds you want to create for yourself or others. These preferences will guide the type of recording environment you need and the equipment you use.
- ▶ **Learn your tools** — Having the best gear isn’t the be-all and end-all. Whether you’re using GarageBand or Pro Tools, knowing how to use what is at your disposal effectively and efficiently is crucial.
- ▶ **Listen** — Spend a lot of time listening to music. The more you can develop a critical ear, the better you’ll be at identifying the sounds you want to create and others want to achieve.

Thinking of building your own home studio? Take some advice from the pros.

### *gear list* 🎙️

- **Microphone** — Beginners can get by recording on a smartphone, but serious musicians will want to invest in a quality mic.
- **Headphones** — Always opt for wired over wireless to prevent delays and unexpected interruptions to your connection.
- **Studio monitors** — These speakers play back unenhanced sound so you can be confident how your mix will sound on different systems.
- **Audio interface** — This converts the sound from your mic to digital sound on your computer.
- **Software** — There are many programs available to mix and export your music. GarageBand is free and a good starting place for beginners.
- **Soundproofing** — Keeping your sound in will make the neighbors happy. Keeping their noises out will make you happy.

# SHAPING UP

OXR Infinity Fitness open for business

Story by LISA SAVAGE

Chris and Kellie Rodel always wanted their own fitness center, and the New Hope couple fulfilled that dream a year ago when they opened OXR Infinity Fitness in Owens Cross Roads.

“There was nothing out here in this area, without going into Hampton Cove, and we wanted to open something close to home,” Chris Rodel says. “We wanted to buy a building, and we didn’t want to be part of a franchise.”

The couple bought the former Bluebird Antique Mall on U.S. Highway 431 between New Hope and Owens Cross Roads. All the antiques inside came with the sale. “It was a 5,000-square-foot building packed full of antiques,” Rodel says. “It had some neat and interesting things.”

Most of the items were sold or given away to clear the building for renovations. Local contractors worked on plumbing, electrical and other adjustments to get the fitness facility ready for its January 2020 opening. “We were just settling in when we had to close for the pandemic,” Rodel says.

The Rodels reopened the gym in May with many additional sanitizing protocols in place. They follow guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control, cleaning all equipment before and after each use. Kellie Rodel manages day-to-day operations.

The fitness center provides 24-hour access, and exercise and tanning options are available with each membership. Spray tans are offered for an additional fee. Using a secure key, members can access the club even when it’s not staffed.

OXR Infinity Fitness offers a wide variety of solutions for fitness goals, including strength, resistance, cardiovascular training and high-intensity interval training equipment. The gym also provides personal and small-group training, and the Rodels plan to add an outdoor turf section for additional training. Locker rooms include a private dressing area and showers.

Members can pay month to month with no commitment, and 12-month memberships are available for individuals or families. The center offers a 10% discount for military members and seniors ages 65 and older. It also offers SilverSneakers classes geared toward those 65 and older. Insurance often covers these classes.





OXR Infinity Fitness opened in Owens Cross Roads in January 2020.

## GIVING BACK

The Rodels love that they've been able to give back to the community by opening OXR Infinity Fitness. Based on the reviews on the fitness center's Facebook page, the members appreciate the convenience and location, too.

"From the owners to the members, everyone is super sweet and helpful! It is so nice to have a gym so close to home that is free of judgment so that I can get healthier and be confident and comfortable while doing it. Thank you for bringing this gym to our tiny town," one member writes.

"Pleasantly surprised to finally find a gym that is not loaded down with treadmills," another member notes. "It has just enough of them for whoever wants to run, just not my thing. This isn't your typical 'chain store' gym. They actually have old-school barbell plate sets and awesome machines that you don't find at most gyms these days."

"We're excited about being here and providing a fitness center that our community can be proud of," Chris Rodel says. "This is something we wanted to do for our community." 📍

## A GREAT START



New Year's resolutions are easy to start but challenging to sustain. Some say resolutions are a waste of time, but experts say actually making a resolution improves the odds of success. ⚡

Statistics show that at the end of January, some 64% still meet their goal. But six months later, the number drops to 44%, according to WebMD.

### Exercise statistics

- Less than 5% of adults participate in 30 minutes of physical activity each day, and only 1 in 3 adults receives the recommended amount of physical activity each week.
- Only 35%-44% of adults 75 years or older are physically active, and 28%-34% of adults ages 65-74 are physically active.
- More than 80% of adults do not meet the guidelines for both aerobic and muscle-strengthening activities, and more than 80% of adolescents do not do enough aerobic physical activity to meet the guidelines for youth.
- Children now spend more than 7.5 hours a day in front of a screen (TV, video game, computer, etc.).
- About 28% of Americans, or 80.2 million people, ages 6 and older are physically inactive.

### Nutritional statistics

- Typical American diets exceed the recommended intake levels or limits in four categories: calories from solid fats and added sugars, refined grains, sodium and saturated fat.
- Americans eat less than the recommended amounts of vegetables, fruits, whole grains, dairy products and oils.
- About 90% of Americans eat more sodium than is recommended for a healthy diet.
- Since the 1970s, the number of fast food restaurants has more than doubled.

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

### About OXR Infinity Fitness

9195 Highway 431 S., Owens Cross Roads  
256-725-5556 | [oxrinfinityfitness.com](http://oxrinfinityfitness.com)



## TUSCAN WHITE BEAN SKILLET

- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil, divided
- 8 ounces brown mushrooms, sliced
- 1 1/2 cups diced yellow onion (about 1 large onion)
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 2/3 cup drained and chopped oil-packed sun-dried tomatoes
- 2 (14.5-ounce) cans fire-roasted diced tomatoes
- 2 (14.5-ounce) cans drained and rinsed cannellini beans
- 2 (14.5-ounce) cans quartered artichoke hearts, drained
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1/2 teaspoon dried thyme
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- Parsley for garnish

Heat 1 tablespoon of the oil until shimmering in a 10-inch, cast-iron skillet over medium-high heat. Working in batches, add the mushrooms to the pan in a single layer. Brown for 1 to 2 minutes per side. Transfer to a bowl and repeat with remaining mushrooms.

Add the remaining tablespoon of oil to the pan. Add the onions and saute until lightly browned, about 3 minutes. Add the garlic and sun-dried tomatoes and cook until fragrant and softened, another 2 minutes.

Add the diced tomatoes to the pan, along with the beans, artichoke hearts, salt, pepper, oregano, thyme and sugar. Cover the pan and turn the heat down to medium. Let cook for about 10 minutes, until hot. Return the mushrooms to the pan and cook for another 1 to 2 minutes to warm them up.

# Healthy & hearty

## Beans are perfect for cold days

**W**ith the holiday season behind us and winter in full swing, it's time for a bit of comfort. And there's perhaps no better way to create a feeling of warmth than with a steaming bowl of bean soup, or chili with beans, or, for that matter, any type of bean dish.

Beans can also pull double duty, offering wonderful taste and texture while being a delicious meat substitute.

Whether they are black, red, white or brown, beans are a great source of fiber, protein, iron, B vitamins, potassium, magnesium and many other beneficial nutrients. And if you choose dried beans over canned, you'll save money as well as reduce your sodium intake. If you do use canned beans, be sure to rinse them to reduce excess salt.



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

To serve: Spoon the bean mixture into bowls and garnish with chopped parsley, if desired. Be sure to serve with plenty of crusty bread for sopping up the tasty juices.

## BLACK BEAN ENCHILADAS

- 2 large portobello mushroom caps
- 1/2 medium red onion
- 1 orange bell pepper
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 (15-ounce) can black beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 2 teaspoons cumin
- 1 teaspoon onion powder
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 2 tablespoons lime juice
- 1/2 cup vegetable broth or water
- 3 cups red enchilada sauce, store-bought or homemade
- 1 1/2 cups guacamole, store-bought or homemade
- 12 (8-inch) corn tortillas

**For the garnish:** 1 cup thinly sliced romaine lettuce; 1 to 2 radishes, julienned; 2 tablespoons minced red onion; and torn cilantro or parsley

Sour cream or Greek yogurt, optional

Preheat the oven to 400 F.

Remove the stems from the mushroom caps and thinly slice the caps. Thinly slice the red onion. Thinly slice the bell pepper.

In a large skillet, heat the olive oil over medium high heat. Saute the sliced veggies for 6 to 7 minutes until tender. Add the drained and rinsed black beans, garlic powder, cumin, onion powder, paprika, kosher salt, lime juice, and vegetable broth or water. Cook for 2 minutes until the liquid is thickened into a sauce.

Spread 1 cup of the enchilada sauce in the bottom of a large baking dish.

Brush both sides of each tortilla lightly with olive oil. Heat a large griddle to medium-high heat. Cook the tortillas in batches for 15 seconds per side until lightly browned.



Fill each tortilla with 1/4 cup of the vegetable filling and about 2 tablespoons guacamole, running in a line down the center. Roll it up and place it in the baking dish, seam side down. Once all of the tortillas are in the dish, pour the remaining 2 cups of enchilada sauce over the top.

Bake for 5 minutes until warmed through. Top with garnishes and serve.

## NUTTY WHITE BEAN, WILD RICE SOUP

- 1/2 cup cashews
- 1 medium yellow onion
- 2 celery stalks
- 3 medium carrots
- 8 ounces baby bella mushrooms
- 6 cloves garlic
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 tablespoon dried thyme
- 1 tablespoon dried oregano
- 8 cups vegetable broth
- 1 cup wild rice (not a wild rice blend)
- 2 teaspoons kosher salt, divided
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- 2 (15-ounce) cans white beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 cup water
- 2 teaspoons dried sage
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce, tamari or liquid aminos

Place the cashews in a bowl and cover them with water. Leave them to soak while you make the recipe.

Dice the onion. Thinly slice the celery. Cut the carrot into rounds. Slice the mushrooms. Mince the garlic. In a Dutch oven, heat the olive oil and saute the onion, celery and carrots, stirring occasionally, for 5 minutes or until lightly browned. Add the mushrooms and saute for 2 more minutes. Add the garlic, thyme and oregano and stir for another 2 minutes.

Add the broth, wild rice, 1 1/2 teaspoons kosher salt and black pepper. Bring to a simmer and cook, uncovered, for 20 minutes. Add the drained and rinsed beans and continue to simmer, uncovered, for 30-35 minutes more, or until the rice breaks open.

Using a liquid measuring cup, carefully remove 2 cups of the hot soup, including broth, veggies and rice, and put it in a blender, along with 1 cup of water. Drain the cashews, then add them and the dried sage to the blender. Blend on high for about 1 minute, until creamy. Pour the creamy mixture back into the soup. Add the soy sauce. Taste and, if needed, add the remaining 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt. Adjust seasonings as desired. Garnish with freshly ground pepper. 📄

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