

The

# Communicator

NHTC

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2021

NHTC  
70  
Years  
1951 - 2021

## FEELING LIKE FALL

OCR Church of Christ hosts annual gathering

## CREATIVE COMMUNITIES

Online connections inspire photographers



By SHIRLEY BLOOMFIELD, CEO  
NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association

## Building a connected future

As the nation’s leaders work to improve the infrastructure that supports our economy and our communities, there is a growing understanding of just how vital broadband service is to rural areas.

It’s important rural providers have the resources and regulatory stability they need to connect areas that often have no other options for service. The challenges those providers face go beyond simply building an internet network that must keep pace as the demands of users grow from decade to decade.

Recently, representatives of several cooperatives — among them, Golden West Telecommunications Cooperative, South Dakota; the Yelcot Telephone Company, Mountain Home, Arkansas; and Totelcom Communications, De Leon, Texas — made sure members of Congress heard this message.

Similarly, months of coping with a global pandemic proved the success of rural broadband. Countless households, businesses, schools and others leaned on their local internet providers during these challenging times. However, there is still work to do in deploying networks and delivering robust and affordable services.

This is where public policy can continue to play an important role, setting standards for broadband infrastructure and leveraging the know-how of community-based experts, like the company providing your internet service today.

I’ve been delighted at the bipartisan nature of these discussions and the understanding that broadband kept the American economy humming during the pandemic. Now, we just need to ensure the lasting investment needed to future-proof this powerful system. 📡

# 'SIX PILLARS' OF RURAL BROADBAND

### Fast internet builds successful communities

Rural broadband's influence extends throughout every community where fast internet networks are available. How many of these "six pillars" of rural broadband play a role in your daily life?



## 1. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Housing values increase and businesses move more product when rural communities have broadband.



## 2. PUBLIC HEALTH

Instead of driving 50 miles to a health center, a telemedicine visit can bring care into the home.



## 3. TELEWORKING

Remote work creates fresh opportunities.

## 4. EDUCATION

Educators from grade school to colleges and universities are reaching students remotely.



## 5. PUBLIC SAFETY

Broadband networks can improve the communications systems used by emergency responders.

## 6. QUALITY OF LIFE

Thanks to broadband, young people find rural communities more appealing.



These pillars of rural broadband are based on the work of Christopher Ali, an associate professor in the Department of Media Studies at the University of Virginia. He is also the author of "Farm Fresh Broadband: The Politics of Rural Connectivity." 📖

**CORRECTION:** In the July-August issue of your magazine, the final word of a travel story on Page 7 about the Red River Gorge was omitted. This is the complete sentence: As the Red River continues through the heart of the gorge, it levels out and provides gentle Class I paddling ideal for beginners.

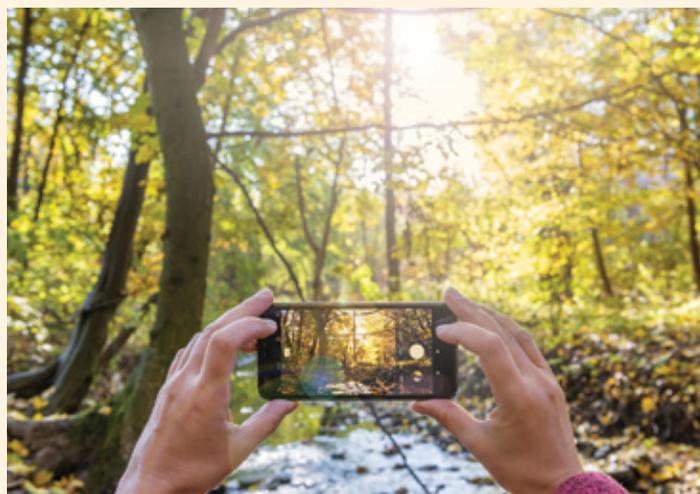


# Better-looking videos are just a few steps away

Thanks to smartphones, recording and sharing videos has never been easier. Whether you're capturing precious moments to share with friends and family, showcasing your talents or documenting a moment the rest of the world needs to see, a high-quality video helps get your message across loud and clear.

## Here are some tips to help make sure your next video is your best one yet.

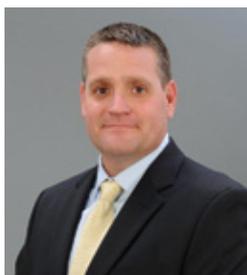
- **Clean the lens** — Sometimes it's easy to overlook the obvious. We're touching our phones constantly. We're taking them out of our pockets and purses multiple times a day, so they're bound to pick up a few fingerprints and smudges along the way. Take a second and give the lens a couple of swipes with a moistened cleaning wipe. No wipes? No worries — a quick breath and a swab with your shirttail can get the job done, too.
- **Orientation** — Make sure to turn your phone horizontally when shooting videos. Shooting horizontally, also called landscape orientation, results in a more aesthetically pleasing experience for viewers, and it looks great across multiple platforms, especially on wide screens. Shooting this way also allows you to capture more of the surroundings in the video.
- **Stabilization** — Nothing is harder to watch than a shaky video. A simple way to make your video better is by using two hands to hold the phone steady. Instead of extending your arms, tuck your elbows in close to your sides and hold the phone closer to your chest. If a professional-quality video is what you're after, consider investing in a tripod or a gimbal to give your arms a rest. Also, many newer phones now include image stabilization features that can correct for inadvertent movements during shooting.
- **Composition** — Take a moment to compose your shot before pressing the record button. For example, if you are making a video in a controlled environment, perhaps filming a tutorial in your home, look around and make sure the background is clear of anything you wouldn't want people to see.
- **Lighting** — When recording indoors have the subject face a window if possible. If there is no natural light, consider purchasing an LED light ring. Light rings have become very popular and are an inexpensive way to make your video look professional. Avoid backlit settings, which can erase a person's features on video and replace them with a dark figure instead.
- **Zoom cautiously** — While the digital zoom option is a nice feature to have, using it while recording can result in an awkward-looking video. Instead, to keep the image crisp, take the time to frame the shot before recording and avoid using the zoom. Unless you're planning to use the zoom distortion as an effect, get as close to the subject as you safely can to preserve the image quality.



# Competing for jobs

## Fast internet service puts us in the game

Our world is a competitive place, and not just when it comes to sports. The leaders of every town and county understand they're in a fight for one of the most desired assets anywhere — jobs. The opposition isn't just the next county over, either. Every community in the nation is in the game.



**DANIEL MARTIN**  
General Manager

Success means bringing any possible advantages onto the playing field, and fast internet service is more than critical. It's essential because it's important to businesses of all types and sizes.

Small manufacturers benefit from speedy internet service because resources from accounting to customer support often flow through the internet. Similarly, video calls are now just a normal part of business life. For communities hoping to recruit these types of employers, fast internet access is mandatory.

Then, think about all the changes we've seen in remote work, which was on the rise even before the pandemic. Remote work is more common than ever, and if you can work from home, our community is highly attractive. After all, the big-city pace isn't for everyone.

So, why not bring those jobs to rural America? That's certainly the plan the West Virginia Tourism Office had last spring when it promised to pay remote workers \$12,000 to relocate to that state. This shows the level of competition we face and how far some organizations will go. I'm not suggesting we should pay people to relocate here, though, because I believe our communities are enough of a draw.

We live in a friendly, affordable and beautiful place. And we have the fast, reliable internet network required to make remote work more than just a possibility. The speed and affordability of our internet service is comparable to — and often greatly exceeds — service in major cities. In many ways, we're a better place for remote work than metropolitan areas.

But it's about more than just jobs. We're also building for the future. Our students can learn the skills they need to be competitive, not only for today, but also for tomorrow. A growing number of colleges and universities offer online courses. Students about to enter the workforce can broaden their horizons without ever leaving home.

But students aren't alone in benefiting from classes accessed via the internet. People looking to grow professionally now have similar resources available that allow them to continue their education and open new doors to either advancement or entirely fresh careers. Many of those classes and other resources are best experienced through live video, which needs a high-speed internet connection.

While our friends in economic development always keep a watchful eye out for opportunities to attract the attention of large employers, one of the things that excites me most is the entrepreneurs: industrious people putting in the hard work needed to kick-start a business.

Our affordable living costs can give young businesses an edge, allowing them to keep overhead lower than their competitors. They can move large amounts of data, share information, hold online meetings and more. Thanks to fast internet access, even home-based startups can link to a worldwide market that was once only accessible to businesses with large staffs in big-city offices.

Throughout the nation, there are signs of vitality in rural economies. For all the reasons I've described, fast internet service is part of the foundation making it all possible. We're in the game, and I firmly believe we're ready to compete. 📞

The Communicator is a bimonthly magazine published by NHTC, © 2021. It is distributed without charge to all cooperative members/owners.



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

### Send address corrections to:

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

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### On the Cover:



From telephones to fiber technology, NHTC celebrates 70 years of service in New Hope and the surrounding communities. See story Page 8.

**THE SEARCH FOR AFFORDABLE, DEPENDABLE CLOUD VIDEO SURVEILLANCE IS OVER**

**Introducing NHTC Cloud Video Surveillance**

**AFFORDABLE** — Options start at \$6.99 per month and vary based on camera resolution and desired retention period.

**CONVENIENT** — Monitor your home & business remotely from anywhere you have internet access.

**SECURE** — The cloud-based data center in Austin, Texas, is ultra-secure with built-in redundancy and encryption.

**RELIABLE** — Secure, off-premises data storage means you don't have to worry about local recording devices being tampered with or stolen. You can easily offload video when needed.

For more information please call or visit NHTC.

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**2021 CUSTOMER APPRECIATION DAY!**

Join NHTC for a day of food and fun for Customer Appreciation Day on Friday, Oct. 22. Please check NHTC's Facebook page and website for updates.

Customers are invited to visit between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. at the business office at 5414 Main Drive in New Hope.

Thank you for trusting NHTC as your technology provider!



*Labor Day!*

NHTC will be closed on Monday, Sept. 6, for Labor Day.

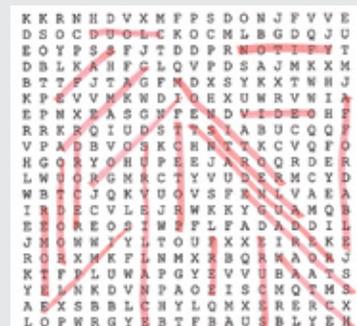
**LOOKING FOR A BARGAIN?**

Don't miss Grant's 15th Annual Mile-Long Yard Sale on Saturday, Sept. 25, beginning at 6 a.m.

The annual yard sale extends along Main Street in Grant. Vendors are welcome. For more information, or to rent a space, call the Grant Chamber of Commerce at 256-728-8800.



Here's the answers to the puzzle on Page 16.



# AS MOTHER NATURE INTENDED

Okefenokee Swamp  
is a wildlife  
watcher's dream

Story by ANNE BRALY

**N**estled deep down in Georgia and stretching into Florida, the Okefenokee Swamp is eerie in places, and just plain spooky in others. It's a mosaic of vast pine islands, cypress forests and water as black as night — all elements that make up this national treasure.

The swamp, one of the world's healthiest water ecosystems, is protected from human encroachment by the National Wildlife Refuge System, an organization established to oversee a network of lands and waters for conservation, says Susan Heisey, supervisory refuge ranger of the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge.

The Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge has 80% of the Okefenokee Swamp under its jurisdiction, as well as close to 40,000 acres of uplands immediately surrounding the swamp. At 407,000 acres it's the largest national wildlife refuge in the East.

Where there is swampland, there are gators. And alligators love this swamp because they're protected here. The refuge provides them a safe haven — a wealth of food and shelter to sustain a thriving population of the reptiles.

"There are generally no problems between man and alligators due to the amount of habitat the refuge provides," Heisey says. "Generally, when an alligator sees a person, it moves in the opposite direction."

The only times that alligators can be confrontational or dangerous is if they identify people with food, Heisey explains. "So, we try to educate our visitors about the dangers of feeding and approaching wildlife so there are no issues with nuisance alligators."

Alligators can basically be found in any portion of the swamp and most adjacent ponds, ditches or other bodies of water. Alligators do live in the water, but they can also be found on land at times. The females will build up their nests adjacent to

the water where they live. Interesting trivia: Female alligators protect their nests and their young for several years, and they are the only reptiles that do this.

And their numbers remain pretty stable, although there has been no recent official count. It's a matter of water level fluctuation, a limited amount of food sources and competition between males for territorial rights.

The largest alligator ever documented was in Louisiana in the early 1900s and was more than 19 feet long. "We do not have a record of the largest alligator in the Okefenokee Swamp, but occasionally there can be individuals at around 14 feet or so," Heisey notes.

Gators aren't the only creatures found among the swamp's wetlands and woodlands. The refuge is home to 39 fish species, 37 amphibian species, 63 other reptiles, 234 birds and 50 mammals.

Most notable among the animals are wood storks, indigo snakes, gopher tortoises, black bears, endangered red-cockaded woodpeckers and sandhill cranes.

The refuge is home to both migratory and resident sandhill cranes, and most recent observation found that there are about 100 nesting pairs in residence. The migratory sandhill cranes are usually present from November through February, at which time they'll migrate up the Atlantic Flyway to their breeding grounds.

Wildlife observation is one of the most common types of recreation for visitors to enjoy while on the refuge. Walking the Chesser Island Boardwalk to the 40-foot observation tower at its end and boating the water trails on a prearranged or self-guided tour are the best ways to see the animals.

Finding the cranes is easy. Just listen for their loud bugling calls and look among the refuge prairies where the water is relatively shallow — good hunting grounds for the big, long-legged birds. Look down, not up. Sandhills nest on the ground, not in the trees.

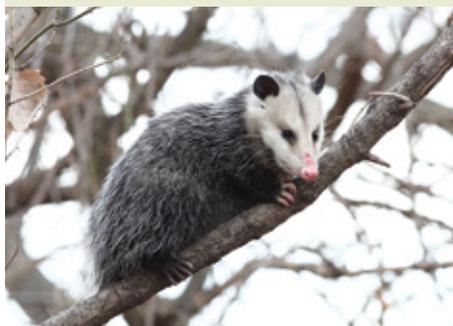
"Visitors love seeing those cranes," Heisey says. 🗨️



## THE 'POGO' CONNECTION

Some baby boomers may remember "Pogo," one of the most popular comic strips of their youth. Pogo was a possum that lived in a tree in the Okefenokee Swamp and came to life weekly in newspapers across America, born from the mind of cartoonist Walt Kelly.

At its peak, "Pogo" appeared in nearly 500 papers in 14 countries, and close to 300 million copies of books about Pogo and his friends were sold. Kelly died in 1973, and his widow, Selby, continued the internationally syndicated comic strip until July 1975. After 26 years of syndication, "Pogo" the comic was completely discontinued, but the character lives on today in the welcome center at the Okefenokee Swamp Park in Waycross, Georgia. There, a large room has been turned into Kelly's studio, complete with a likeness of the man himself and his alter ego, Pogo.



## SWAMP TRIVIA

The Okefenokee is OK, for now, but its future is directly tied to maintaining the integrity of the ecosystem's complex processes. The future of people and communities surrounding the swamp also is dependent on conserving the swamp.

- The swamp is the largest intact black-water swamp in North America and is more than 7,000 years old.
- The swamp is a massive, peat-filled bog inside a huge, saucer-shaped depression that was once part of the ocean floor.
- Fire is an important part of the Okefenokee ecosystem, and the refuge has a prescribed burn program in place to accomplish what wildfires once did. The fire staff burns an average of 6,000 to 10,000 acres per year.
- Most area residents have ancestors who once lived or worked in the swamp as a part of their heritage.
- The Okefenokee Swamp, as the headwaters of both the Suwannee and St. Marys rivers, provides clean water to the most pristine rivers in the Southeast.
- A National Geographic publication included the Okefenokee Swamp as among the top 100 most beautiful places on Earth.

# Reaching out

## Local church hosts one of the largest fall festivals around

Story by LISA SAVAGE

On the last Saturday in October, it's common to see children dressed in costumes in a long line that wraps around the building at Owens Cross Roads Church of Christ. Police officers sometimes direct traffic because it's so congested trying to get off of busy U.S. Highway 431.

The church's annual Fall Family Fun Day usually attracts a crowd, and church leaders hope that's the scene once again this year. Even in the year of a pandemic in 2020, more than 1,000 visitors participated in a drive-thru version of the event.

Hundreds typically gather at the Owens Cross Roads Church of Christ's annual Fall Family Fun Day the last Saturday in October.



Kids can participate in a range of activities at the Owens Cross Roads Church of Christ Fall Family Fun Day.

"We hope this year is bigger and better than ever," says the church's pulpit minister, Patrick Flanagan.

When Flanagan came to the church three years ago, he was shocked at the number of people who attended the fall event. "When they told me how many show up, I was blown away," he says. For a few years, more than 3,000 attended the festival for food, games, cake walks and, of course, lots of traditional Halloween treats.

"It's so much more than just giving away candy," Flanagan says. Those who attend can register for door prizes, but registration isn't required. And there are no strings attached.

"There is a place on the card if someone has a spiritual need and wants to let us know or if they want to learn more about other church activities," Flanagan says. "But this event is about making sure that everyone who comes through that door gets a hot meal and feels welcome. It's just something we love doing for our community."

### LONG-STANDING TRADITIONS

The church has been part of the Owens Cross Roads community for 113 years and moved into its current location five years ago. An early learning center became the church's newest outreach program. It opened in March 2020, just prior to mandated statewide closures stemming from the pandemic. The program shut down

for a time but reopened as soon as possible to provide daycare services for families returning to work.

The church made an easy transition to virtual church services. It had already livestreamed services since its move into the new building in 2016. Fiber internet available through NHTC provided many online options, from livestreaming to security.

On March 22, 2020, the church presented the first all-virtual service on YouTube and Facebook. "Since we already had the systems in place, it was an easy transition," Flanagan says.

Rather than livestreaming the preacher and song leaders in front of an empty sanctuary, however, they and other church leaders prerecorded the singing service, message and Bible studies in smaller areas, including the office and classrooms.

"We wanted it to feel intimate," Flanagan says. An empty sanctuary served as a stark reminder of the pandemic, and he says he decided early on he never wanted to show that image. "We wanted our members to feel like they were sitting in a chair next to us."

The church held in-person services three times a week on and off that summer. However, all in-person services returned in August 2020 with attendees practicing social distancing and following sanitation guidelines.

### A BIG LITTLE COUNTRY CHURCH

The church usually had between 300-325 in attendance for Sunday services before the pandemic. Now, as activities are back to normal, about 250 participate in



Elder Tom Conwell recorded a communion thought for virtual services last year.

Photos courtesy of Owens Cross Roads Church of Christ.

person. Others are still more comfortable with a virtual service. And Flanagan is OK with that.

When all the services were virtual, it was impossible to know how many individuals tuned in, but technology helped determine that viewers used as many as 1,500 devices to watch. “We almost always had between 500 and 800 — well over the number we usually had in live services,” Flanagan says. “On the highest weeks, we averaged between 1,100 and 1,500. While we don’t know who all was watching, we were reaching people all over the country. There’s no way we would have reached that many people without the technology to present these services.”

Technology does more than provide access to livestream services. The church also utilizes NHTC Security Solutions.

A few years ago, a portion of the church flooded during the night. “We were able to look at our security cameras and see where the water came in,” Flanagan says. “We were able to do some mitigation with trenches to deviate the flow of water where it was building up. There’s no way we could have guessed how that water was coming in without this.”

While the technology makes the building more safe and livestreams reach more people, the church members want to be good stewards in the community. “That’s what makes this congregation what it is,” Flanagan says. “They’re committed to

## Don't miss the OCR Church of Christ

### *Fall Family Fun Day*

The Owens Cross Roads Church of Christ began a trunk or treat in 2007 at the church's previous location. “It started on a Wednesday night in the back parking lot,” says Kevin Bridges, coordinator of the annual fall festival. “Now, it’s grown into one of the biggest outreach programs we have.”

The church reaches out to schools and those in the community to invite anyone who wants to attend, encompassing all the areas from Gurley to the base of Monte Sano Mountain to Lake Guntersville. “We just want to have a safe place for kids to come,” Bridges says. The church provides food, games and activities for the event.

The festival is always the last Saturday in October, rain or shine. This year’s event will be on Oct. 30 from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the church at 124 Eastwood Drive, Owens Cross Roads, just off U.S. Highway 431.

Visit the Owens Cross Roads Church of Christ's website at [ocrroc.org](http://ocrroc.org) or its Facebook page for more details about the Fall Family Fun Day and other church activities.

Owens Cross Roads Church of Christ hosts an annual fall festival for the community.



# NEW PERSPECTIVES

## Jason Stitt sees rural Texas through a different lens

Story by DREW WOOLLEY

Jason Stitt has always seen the world a little differently. Through the lens of his camera, he likes to find new views of the places other people might pass every day without a second thought.

“Photography helps me to view the world in ways most people don’t get to. To look at things from different angles, different perspectives and to see things in a way that others may not,” he says. “Mostly, it’s an outlet for me to be creative and to show the world the beauty of God’s creation, whether that be people or nature.”

Now, with the help of the internet, he can encourage others in his community to find their own individual perspectives. Social media has been a place for Stitt to grow as a photographer by sharing his work, asking questions and engaging in critiques with other professionals. He even runs his own Facebook group, Tyler Area Photography, with more than 600 members dedicated to growing the

photography community in Tyler, Texas. “I’m still learning and growing and will never stop,” Stitt says. “We don’t have lots of photography shops like you might find in bigger cities. So almost all of my continuing education and growing the craft relies on the internet.”

Stitt caught the photography bug 18 years ago while living in California. Working as a graphic designer, he started submitting his shots to a stock photo website before becoming a full-time photographer two years later. After moving back home to New Zealand with his family, Stitt discovered his passion for landscape photography. But it was only a few years before the cost of living caught up with them. They didn’t want to give up the opportunity to have his wife, Ruth, home-school their children. So, Stitt took his newfound talent for capturing natural beauty to Tyler, where he could continue pursuing his career while supporting his family.

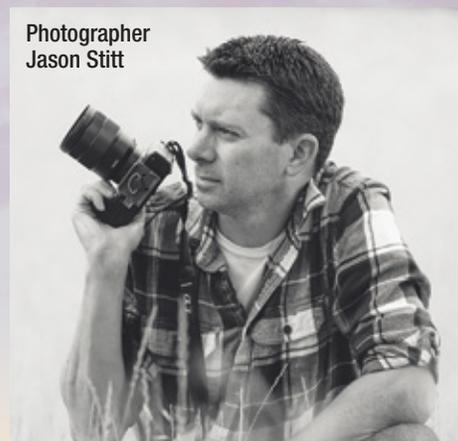
“I am an introvert by nature,” he says. “So I really enjoy the quiet solitude of being out in nature with just my camera gear.”

### IN FOCUS

When Stitt and his family were deciding where to relocate on their move back to the States, there was one must-have for his business: a strong internet connection.

“That was one of the most important factors in choosing a place. It had to have a reliable and fast internet connection,” Stitt says. “Ninety-nine percent of my business I get through either my site or social media. So without the internet, I lose all of that.”

Photographer  
Jason Stitt



He isn't exaggerating. About a year and a half after moving to Tyler and gradually building momentum as a professional photographer, Stitt and his family visited New Zealand for five weeks to see his parents. Stitt stayed away from social media during the trip and returned to find business had ground to a halt.

"I felt like I had just lost all the momentum I had built while we were gone and had to start all over again," he says. "Now, ideally, I try to post something every weekday to keep business relatively steady and keep getting inquiries. If I'm not posting regularly, those inquiries just stop happening." 📱



## Getting the shot

Whether you're just starting out or a seasoned pro, Stitt offers some pointers to make your photos stand out.

- **Shoot, shoot, shoot** — As with any learned skill, the best way to hone it is to do it. Get out and take as many photos as you can to develop a better idea of your interests and style.
- **Be intentional** — Ansel Adams said, "You don't take a photograph, you make it." Photography is art, and good art requires forethought and planning. Think about what you want to capture and how you want to photograph it.
- **Study the greats** — Look closely at the work of photographers you admire. Figure out what it is about their work that appeals to you and then try to emulate it.
- **Master the light** — Light is the single most important factor in photography. More than determining how bright or dark your photos are, controlling light also decides the tone, mood and atmosphere of your images.
- **Learn to edit** — Don't neglect learning how to use your editing software. In today's world, the ability to edit well is one of the elements that makes for a great photographer.
- **Find your community** — Locate a local camera club or Facebook photography group to join. These can be great places to meet like-minded people from whom you can learn and grow.

## TOOLS OF THE TRADE

The internet is full of resources for aspiring photographers and professionals alike. Whether you're looking to manage your shots or learn a new skill, there's something for everyone.



- **Education** — Even the best photographers have something to learn. For professional courses, Stitt turns to sites like CreativeLive and Improve Photography. If you're looking for something to peruse at your leisure for education and inspiration, he recommends Scott Kelby's blog.
- **Editing** — With Adobe's Photography package, anyone can get access to professional-grade software like Photoshop and Lightroom to edit and organize your photos on any device — all for little more than some streaming subscriptions.
- **Website builders** — Every photographer needs a place to share their work with the world. Popular website builders like Squarespace and Portfoliobox make it easy to show off your best shots and even to sell your work.
- **Storage** — As all those photos pile up, you'll need somewhere to keep them. Flickr offers a substantial 1 TB of free storage, while services like Dropbox and Google can provide up to 16 TB of space as your portfolio grows.

# From phones to fiber

## NHTC celebrates 70 years of service

Story by LISA SAVAGE | Photography by MARK GILLILAND

**J**im Richard considers himself a newcomer to New Hope. While he's only been in the community 57 years, the ancestors of his wife, Jimmie Ruth, were among the soldiers who came through with Andrew Jackson and helped cut through the mountain to establish Gurley Pike. Some of her ancestors stayed and settled the land.

While Richard has seen many changes in southern Madison County, one thing remains steadfast and stronger than ever — NHTC. The rural telephone cooperative is celebrating 70 years of service and continues to provide for all communication needs in the region.

Richard, 81, and his wife live just outside New Hope on a farm that's been in her family for generations. The Richard family joined NHTC 48 years ago for their first telephone, and they now stay connected to the rest of the world with fiber optic internet technology.

While growing up in Huntsville, New Hope seemed a world away to Richard. He met his wife, and they both went to the University of Alabama. He didn't hesitate to relocate to her hometown after college. He worked at Redstone Arsenal for 30 years, commuting from New Hope every day. He also raised cattle on the farm until he turned operations over to his son about 15 years ago.

As a member of the Lions Club for 45 years, Richard realizes his community's good fortune that the early club members saw the need to help establish the cooperative 70 years ago. "New Hope Telephone has been wonderful," he says. "Not only do they provide great local service and good jobs for local people, but nothing compares to the customer service."

Richard still has friends and former

Jim Richard connects to NHTC fiber internet to use his iPad at his home near New Hope.



co-workers in Huntsville who receive service through large telephone companies. "I know some of them have problems, and if they call for service, they usually wait at least a week," he says. "If I have a problem, they're going to be here within a few hours."

### THE COOPERATIVE MODEL

The story of progress in the New Hope area, as well as the founding of NHTC, begins with the Lions Club, a group of dedicated residents whose efforts throughout the 1950s and 1960s shaped the future of the region.

With safety, economic growth and convenience in mind, community members wanted phone service, and the Lions Club became a driving force locally in community development. After unsuccessful attempts to bring a big, investor-owned telephone company to New Hope, Lions

Club members set out to make it happen for their community.

Each founding member pledged money up front and then provided continued support for the new cooperative to get started. Those members took a risk, but it was a chance worth taking because they knew they needed a modern communications network.

Today, broadband is the dominant communications need, and NHTC has evolved to bring that connection to the residents in the communities it serves. Members own the cooperative, and a board of directors elected by those same members governs it. That makes all the difference in the world.

NHTC offers broadband internet, advanced Wi-Fi and telephone services via a state-of-the-art fiber optic network. There's also peace of mind with NHTC Security Solutions including security systems, cloud video surveillance and conve-

nient mobile medical alert with MobiPro. “Our purpose is to improve the quality of life in the communities we serve,” says Daniel Martin, NHTC’s general manager. “We’ve built a state-of-the-art fiber optic network to serve our communities’ communications needs now and in the future. We’re here because we carry the legacy of our founders and our members.”

### OUTSIDE THE BOX

For many years, cooperatives could only serve, by law, members living in cooperatives’ designated service areas. That changed after the Telecommunications Act of 1996, which broke up the monopoly of AT&T and the Bell System. This gave cooperatives the option to go outside the original areas they served, which meant all these organizations, including NHTC, had the ability to offer their service beyond their traditional boundaries and compete with the larger companies.

That’s huge for residents in communities like Berkley, just east of U.S. 431 between Owens Cross Roads and Hampton Cove. Even though the area isn’t far from the bustling Hampton Cove community, other internet providers have traditionally extended little or no service

there. Those who did provide service only offered access to internet with low speeds. It took forever to download anything, and uploads were practically impossible. The area also had inadequate cellphone service, due in part to the terrain near the base of the mountain. Now, residents can have better cellphone service by accessing Wi-Fi calling.

These changes are why a fiber internet expansion in Berkley means so much to residents like Mark Andreoni. He and his family live on Esslinger Road, near McMullen Road, and they changed from a national internet provider to NHTC last spring. “We were very limited before,” Andreoni says.

NHTC’s fiber internet is a game changer for the Andreoni household, which includes a 21-year-old and two 14-year-olds who are gamers and love streaming movies and shows. “It’s so much faster and more reliable,” Andreoni says.

He called for assistance once, he says, and NHTC responded within 30 minutes. With his previous provider, service calls usually took a week or two. “Not only is NHTC’s service so much better, their customer service sets them apart,” Andreoni says. 📞



Jim and Jimmie Ruth Richard became NHTC members 48 years ago.

The Berkley Community Center helped NHTC qualify for a grant to provide fiber internet service to the community just outside NHTC’s traditional area of service. Even though Berkley isn’t far from the bustling Hampton Cove area, other internet providers have traditionally extended little or no service there.



# Palate pleasers

## Pears make perfect sweet and savory dishes

**P**ears add a dose of seasonality to dishes this time of year with a sweetness that's nuanced and subtle yet plentiful. But understanding which type of pear is best for what use will help you choose wisely from the fruit you'll see in the produce section of your local market.

Any type of pear is good to eat as long as it's ripe enough to bring out its sweetness. But when it comes to using pears in cooking, the variety you choose matters. Do you want the pear to retain its shape when poached? Or do you want it to melt into a sauce? Just remember your pear ABCs — Anjou, Bosc and Comice.

Anjou is an all-purpose pear that can be grilled, roasted or eaten as a snack.

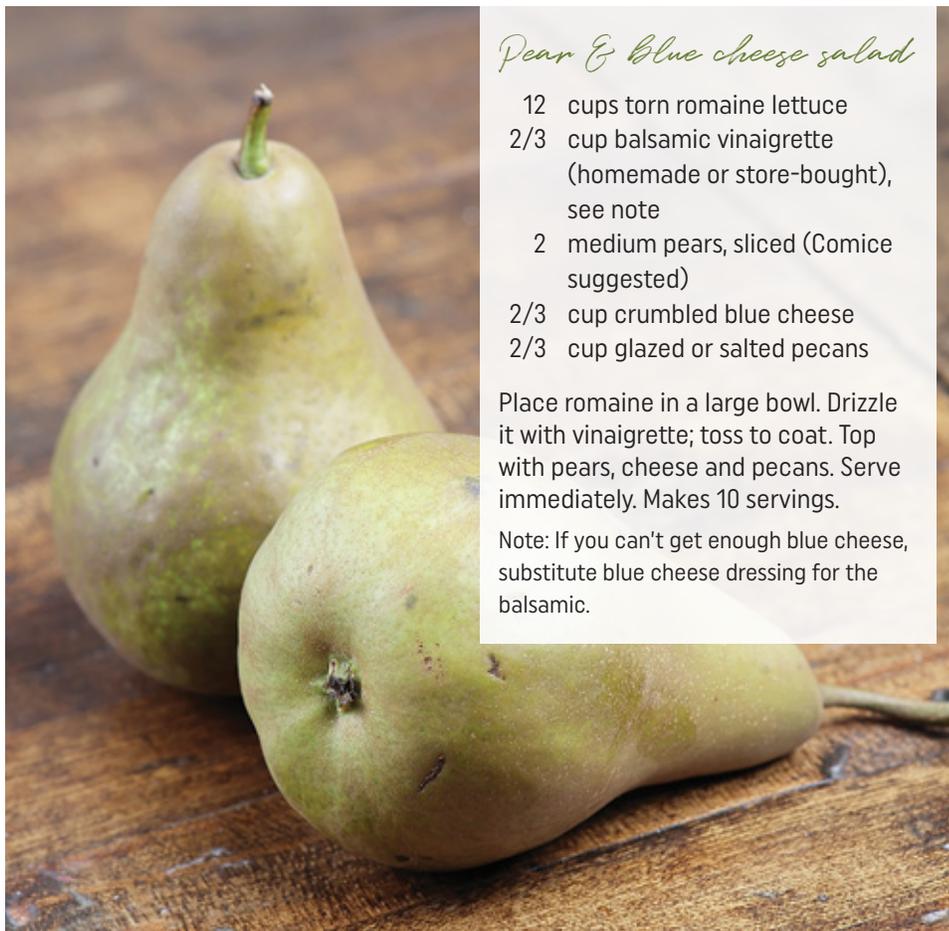
Bosc pears are best for poaching, as they maintain their shape well when cooked.

Comice pears are best used raw, as their tender flesh will not hold up well under heat. They are a sweet pear to pair with cheese.

The best way to ripen pears is on the counter at room temperature, a process that requires patience, since the fruit can take up to a week to reach its sweet peak. Once fully ripe, pears may be stored in the refrigerator for up to a week, if they stick around that long before being used in any of the following recipes.



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



### *Pear & blue cheese salad*

- 12 cups torn romaine lettuce
- 2/3 cup balsamic vinaigrette (homemade or store-bought), see note
- 2 medium pears, sliced (Comice suggested)
- 2/3 cup crumbled blue cheese
- 2/3 cup glazed or salted pecans

Place romaine in a large bowl. Drizzle it with vinaigrette; toss to coat. Top with pears, cheese and pecans. Serve immediately. Makes 10 servings.

Note: If you can't get enough blue cheese, substitute blue cheese dressing for the balsamic.



## PEAR & GORGONZOLA PIZZA

- 1 (16-ounce) package refrigerated pizza crust dough
- 4 ounces sliced provolone cheese
- 1 Bosc pear, thinly sliced
- 2 ounces chopped walnuts
- 2 1/2 ounces Gorgonzola or blue cheese, crumbled
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh chives

Preheat the oven to 450 F. Spread the pizza crust dough on a medium baking sheet. Layer provolone cheese on the crust and top the cheese with Bosc pear slices. Sprinkle walnuts and Gorgonzola cheese over the pears.

Bake for 8-10 minutes, or until the cheese is melted and the crust is lightly browned. Remove the pizza from the oven, top it with chives and slice to serve.

## PEAR PANCAKES

- 1 1/2 cups baking mix (such as Bisquick)
  - 1 medium ripe pear, peeled and finely chopped
- 2/3 cup old-fashioned oats
  - 2 tablespoons packed brown sugar
- 1 1/2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
  - 1 cup milk
  - 2 tablespoons butter or margarine, melted
  - 1 egg
- 1/2 cup butter or margarine, softened
  - 2 teaspoons powdered sugar
  - Maple syrup, if desired

Heat a griddle or skillet over medium heat. Grease it with butter or vegetable oil if necessary.

In a large bowl, stir the baking mix, chopped pear, oats, brown sugar and 1 teaspoon of the cinnamon until blended. In a medium bowl, beat the milk, melted butter and egg with a fork or wire whisk. Add the milk mixture to the dry ingredients, stirring just until moistened.

For each pancake, pour about 1/4 cup batter onto a hot griddle. Cook the pancakes until bubbles form on top and the edges are dry. Flip, then cook the other side until golden brown.

While the pancakes are cooking, make cinnamon butter: In a small bowl, mix 1/2 cup butter, the powdered sugar and the remaining 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon. Serve the pancakes with cinnamon butter and syrup.

## BAKED PEARS WITH WALNUTS

- 2 large ripe Bosc pears
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/4 cup crushed walnuts
- 2 teaspoons honey
- Vanilla ice cream or whipped cream, optional

Preheat the oven to 350 F. Cut the pears in half and place them on a baking sheet. You may want to cut a sliver off the uncut side so that they sit upright.

Using a measuring spoon or melon baller, scoop out the seeds. Sprinkle the pear halves with cinnamon, top them with walnuts and drizzle 1/2 teaspoon honey over each one.

Bake for 30 minutes. Remove from the oven, let them cool slightly and serve the pears topped with ice cream or whipped cream, if desired.



## PEAR CLAFOUTIS

*Think pear cobbler, only easier.*

- Salted butter for the dish
- 2 ripe but slightly firm Anjou pears (about 1 pound total)
  - 1 cup half-and-half
  - 3 eggs
  - 1/3 cup plus 1 tablespoon granulated sugar
- 1 1/2 teaspoons vanilla extract
  - 1 teaspoon orange zest
  - 1/8 teaspoon nutmeg
  - 1/4 teaspoon kosher salt
  - 1/2 cup flour
  - Powdered sugar

Peel, core and slice the pears lengthwise about 1/3-inch thick. Preheat the oven to 350 F. Butter a shallow 3-quart baking dish and arrange the pears over the bottom — they will rise to the top as the batter bakes.

Put half-and-half, eggs, granulated sugar, vanilla, orange zest, nutmeg, salt and flour (in this order) in a blender and whirl until very smooth and frothy, 1 minute. Pour the batter over the pears.

Bake until the clafoutis is well browned and a little puffed, about 50 minutes. Let it cool on a rack about 15 minutes. Serve warm, sprinkled with powdered sugar.

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E	O	Y	P	S	S	F	J	T	D	D	P	R	N	O	T	I	F	Y	T
D	B	L	K	A	H	F	C	L	Q	V	P	D	S	A	J	M	K	X	M
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For answers, see Page 5.

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