

# CONNECTED

## Connected community

Remote workers at  
Regency Park



**SERVING THE  
NEED**

**LIGHTS, CAMERA,  
LOCATIONS**



## RURAL CONNECTIONS

By SHIRLEY BLOOMFIELD, CEO  
NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association

# A front row seat to history

I recently spent the morning at the White House celebrating the historic announcement of \$42.5 billion allocated to all the states and territories in our union to help bridge the digital divide as part of the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment program, also known as BEAD.

The buzz in the security line was electric as folks lined up early to compare notes on why we are all passionate about broadband deployment, and I enjoyed sharing the activities of community-based broadband providers. I found myself beaming when a few people specifically referenced the fiber networks deployed by NTCA member companies. I love that the hard work of these companies and co-ops like yours is finally getting the credit that is due.

Mitch Landrieu, head of infrastructure initiatives for President Joe Biden, kicked us off and turned the podium to Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo, who is leading BEAD and has genuinely put her passion behind her work. President Biden then took the podium and got right into sharing how much this historic investment in broadband means for our country. I was delighted to hear all the administration's folks share a mindset on the importance of reliable, comparable and affordable broadband and even how fiber is really the technology of choice for this historic investment.

As Secretary Raimondo noted, it really was a "happy broadband day." And, with the support of your community-based provider, we are sure to have many more delightful broadband days in the future. 📶

# Why is broadband vital?

## It strengthens rural America



Life is often lived online, including working, socializing, learning, relaxing and more. Without fast internet access, however, these day-to-day essentials grind to a halt. But for rural communities, the stakes are even higher.

While it's something we might take for granted — at least for those of us who have access to broadband — the power of fast internet to profoundly improve quality of life remains striking.



-1-

### ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES:

High-speed internet helps rural businesses expand their reach through e-commerce — possibly even connecting globally.



-2-

### REMOTE WORK:

Rural workers can tap into a pool of work-from-home jobs, allowing residents to avoid commutes or the possibility of relocating for work.



-3-

### HEALTH CARE:

Telemedicine and access to medical resources — such as time-sensitive treatments like stroke care — are critical.



-4-

### EDUCATION:

Rural schools, colleges and students can tap vast resources, including virtual classrooms and distance learning programs.



-5-

### AGRICULTURE:

Online resources allow farmers in rural areas to optimize crop management, monitor livestock, access weather information and more.

That's just the beginning. New opportunities will continue to appear, and rural internet providers will make the connections to bring those services to you.



©matortin/Adobe Stock

# Stream it to win it

## DON'T MISS A GAME THIS SEASON

**F**all is prime time for sports fans. There's both college and NFL football. The baseball regular season wraps up, followed by the playoffs and World Series. The first NBA games tip off, too. And with such a rich stew of possibilities, the buffet of options for viewing sports is tastier than ever.

Once, a sports fan might be limited to viewing the feats of only regional teams, and the selection of those games was limited to the lineup a TV network offered. Now, however, sports fans can choose streaming services that best suit their interests and budgets. Pricing can change at any time, though, so verify the cost when you're ready to make a game-time decision.

### SOME POTENTIAL WINNERS

▶ **NFL Game Pass:** For pro football fans, NFL Game Pass is a game-changer. This streaming service provides access to live out-of-market games. It's hard to beat if you're a fan who wants to keep up with a favorite team whose games typically aren't

broadcast in your TV market. NFL Game Pass also offers on-demand replays, condensed games and access to an extensive archive of previous seasons. While Game Pass is just one possibility for streaming NFL games, it's a good one.

▶ **NBA League Pass:** Do you love professional basketball? Thanks to NBA League Pass, there's a premium service perfect for anyone hooked on the NBA. There's coverage of live games and the opportunity to watch past games on demand. There's plenty of analysis, features, interviews and more. And it also works great on most devices.

▶ **Paramount+, Amazon Prime Video and Apple TV:** These services aren't known primarily as platforms that feature sports. Instead, they established footholds by offering deep libraries of new TV shows and movies, as well as catalogs of longtime favorites. But if you're already subscribing to stream from one of these services, or other

similar ones, take a closer look. You might be surprised by the sports available on a subscription you already have.

- ▶ **YouTube TV:** If you want an experience that's close to traditional TV — all the big networks and smaller ones, too — check out YouTube TV. ABC, CBS, NBC, ESPN and more are all available, and they're streaming in real time. You see the games as they're happening. You can even record events so you can watch them later.
- ▶ **ESPN+:** Are you a fan of sports other than the big leagues? ESPN+ takes a deep dive into soccer, tennis and more. There's coverage of everything from Ultimate Fighting Championship bouts to U.S. Open tennis. Smaller college conferences, such as the Ivy League and Conference USA, are showcased, with baseball, softball, hockey, wrestling and more. There's even access to a library of content from the ESPN documentary series "30 for 30." [📺](#)

# Faster service for a slower pace of life

It seems that in a blink of an eye, summer came and left all at once. And what a glorious blur it has been! Summer festivals, farmers markets and our annual meeting provided opportunities to visit with customers and members. Through our Upcountry Fiber partnership with Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative, we are making construction progress — record setting, in fact.



**JEFF WILSON**  
Chief Executive Officer

We welcomed Darius Rucker for the first-ever Southern Fried Circuit charity concert event benefiting the Upcountry Fiber Foundation. Thousands of people from South Carolina and beyond flocked to Anderson to watch our South Carolina-native belt out his famous songs all in the name of benefiting his home state.

We announced more funding to connect the Upstate, including parts of McCormick County, thanks to a solid partnership with the South Carolina Office of Regulatory Affairs.

And, we recently announced our newest service plans, designed for those who want even faster than fast speed without leaving the quaint rural life we collectively love, 2.5 gigabit and 10 gigabit service.

The need for more bandwidth is only going to continue to grow. Our new multigig service offerings are perfect for households

where there are several devices competing for a lot of bandwidth. Think about the professional who works from home and is on a Zoom call while the kids are streaming movies and playing online video games. Having multigig service allows each of them to have zero lag time.

Additionally, from an economic development standpoint, our new multigig service allows people to have even more opportunities to work from home, which is a plus for drawing more professionals to our area and supporting the ones who are already here. We are excited to be a part of what makes the Upstate even more attractive with this critical service.

Simply put, we've built an internet network that will be ready for your technology needs when they arise — or even sooner.

The truth is, we've never really considered ourselves an internet provider. Rather, we provide an internet experience and related services designed to help you live your optimum life. That's why we've curated a variety of internet speed packages, along with WiFi options that fit what you need and want.

Our account service representatives are highly trained and happy to talk through options with you based on how you use your internet. So, while it'd be tempting to sell everyone 10 Gig internet because it's simply the fastest, we won't do that, because it may not be best for YOU. And, that is the West Carolina difference. We want to match you with the best internet package for your lifestyle.

Choosing the right speed package may seem overwhelming, but we are here to help. We are your partner, and serving you fairly and kindly is our mission. 📞



## CONNECTED

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2023

VOL. 11, NO. 5

The West Carolina Tel Connected is a bimonthly newsletter published by West Carolina Telephone, © 2023. It is distributed without charge to all members/owners of the cooperative.



is a member-owned cooperative dedicated to delivering advanced telecommunications technology to the people of Abbeville, Anderson and McCormick counties.

West Carolina Telephone  
233 Highway 28 Bypass  
Abbeville, SC 29620  
Telephone: 864-446-2111  
www.WCTEL.com

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Westley "Wes" McAllister, President  
North McCormick, Area 8

John Michael Thomas, Vice President  
Iva, Area 2

Jane U. Stone, Secretary  
Donalds, Area 3

Aimee Gray  
Starr, Area 1

Lee W. Logan  
Due West, Area 4

Eric McCall  
Antreville/Lowndesville, Area 5

James Robert Hester  
Calhoun Falls, Area 6

Darren Campbell Lewis  
Abbeville, Area 7

Talmadge R. Bussey  
South McCormick, Area 9

Produced for West Carolina Tel by:



### On the Cover:



Laney Beckwith moved to Regency Park luxury apartment community in 2022, partially for the fiber internet she needed as a remote worker. See story Page 8.

Photo by Matt Ledger

# WCTEL Scholarship winners

West Carolina Rural Telephone Cooperative recently honored the recipients of the WCTEL and Foundation for Rural Service 2023 college scholarships, which help local students further their education.

Neely Bell, of Due West, was awarded the WCTEL Scholarship of \$8,000, issued over four years at \$2,000 per year. She plans to attend Anderson University.

FRS awards 42 scholarships to students across the United States from over 1,100 applicants. Neely also received the \$2,500 FRS Regional Scholarship. In total, she was awarded \$10,500 in scholarship funds to support and advance her education.

Emily Blackwell, of Starr, was awarded the \$5,000 FRS Good Neighbor Scholarship. She is a graduate of Crescent High School and plans to attend North Greenville University.

In addition to these community scholarships, the WCTEL Family Scholarship offers a \$1,000 scholarship to every dependent of WCTEL employees. Started by an anonymous donor and sustained by WCTEL family members, the program recognized the following 2023 high school graduates: Jackson McCall, Ashton Crocker, Bailey Seawright and Grace Miller.

"The board and employees of West Carolina Tel are delighted to help area youth pursue their future education," WCTEL CEO Jeff Wilson says. "These students are a shining light, and each one represents a bright future. We wish these students well as they enter the next stage in life. Maybe one day they will return to our area to raise their families and pursue their career dreams."



## Cybersecurity month

October is Cybersecurity Month. Since 2004, the National Cybersecurity Alliance has championed the need to make cybersecurity a daily pursuit. Its [staysafeonline.org](https://staysafeonline.org) is a rich resource to help you dodge the latest scams.

No matter which devices you're using, the site offers security tips, including:

- Update software often.
- Enable multifactor authentication.
- Use strong passwords and a password manager.
- Recognize and report phishing.

Remember, it's far easier to embrace security strategies than rebuild your identity and credit after you've been targeted.

The FBI estimates that Americans lost more than \$10 billion in 2022 — nearly triple the amount from 2020 — to these online scams.

**Visit [staysafeonline.org](https://staysafeonline.org) and learn how to protect yourself.**

## Need help with your internet bill?

Are your kids attending public school? You may be eligible for a discount on your internet bill.

The Affordable Connectivity Program is a Federal Communications Commission program to help eligible households pay for internet service. Your public school district may participate in Community Eligibility Provision. If you have a student currently enrolled in a CEP public school, you may be eligible for a \$30 per month discount on your internet service, regardless of your income level. For more information go to [wctel.com/acp](https://wctel.com/acp).



## Enter our photo contest — if you dare!

Have you found your child's outfit for WCTEL's Halloween photo contest? We look forward to seeing all of the creative costumes and ghoulish garb.

The online entries are popular on social media, and you may win a prize. All local residents can enter images of their children, ages 12 and under. For a complete list of rules and details on how to enter, go to [wctel.com/Halloween](https://wctel.com/Halloween).



# ON LOCATION

Movie productions seek rural Southern settings

Story by ANNE BRALY

Lights, camera, action! Those words, once heard primarily in Hollywood studios, now echo through wooded forests and city streets across the South. And for many, a visit to places they've seen on the silver screen adds some excitement to a vacation.

"Film has always been such a powerful medium, and I think people enjoy being a part of something that meant so much to them," says Dan Rogers, senior project manager for the South Carolina Film Commission.

It's widely known that the Atlanta area is a hot spot for zombies in "The Walking Dead" and the unusual happenings in "Stranger Things." Nashville's been given the nod by directors, too, with films including "The Green Mile," with Tom Hanks, and "Coal Miner's Daughter," starring Sissy Spacek as Loretta Lynn, filming in Music City.

Small towns, too, have seen their share of screen time. Black Mountain and Cedar Mountain, both in western North Carolina, were locations for several scenes in "The Hunger Games." Berry College in Rome, Georgia, was transformed into Carmichael Plantation in scenes from "Sweet Home Alabama." Also, Tidalholm Mansion along the Beaufort River in Beaufort, South Carolina, set the stage for both "The Big Chill" and "The Great Santini."

So, what is it about the South that has turned it into the new Hollywood? Kyle Bucher, production manager for virtual productions at 3rd Realm Creations in Mobile, Alabama, says it all goes back to what helps make the region famous — Southern hospitality.

"It goes a long way," he says. "The local hospitality of people and their willingness to try and help is ideal. Also, the local creativity among artists and the community is a stark comparison from Los Angeles and other filming areas."

## ALABAMA

Lower Alabama has seen a lot of interest come its way since "Close Encounters of the Third Kind" was released in 1977. You can still see where the main character, Roy Neary, lived in Mobile, 613 Carlisle Drive, along with the home of character Jillian Guiler at 22250 Alabama Highway 181, in Fairhope.

More movie sites in Alabama include Waverly Lake, where a scene in "Norma Rae" was filmed, and Eufaula, where the historic streets were the backdrop for "Sweet Home Alabama." Huntsville's Space and Rocket Center has also been a location in several movies, including "Space Camp" and "Space Warriors." Most recently, West Mobile's Honduran Kitchen, off Snow Road, was used to shoot Robert de Niro's new comedy "About My Father," released Memorial Day weekend.



Blacksher Hall, a grand mansion in Mobile, was used in filming "USS Indianapolis: Men of Courage."

Photo courtesy of Kyle Bucher



## KENTUCKY

The diverse topography in the Bluegrass State makes it ideal territory for scouts looking to film movies, says Tim Bates, manager of the Kentucky Film Office.

“Some might think that a destination is particularly beautiful, or maybe they really enjoyed a film so much that they want to experience more of it,” he says. “It’s a rather easy connection between filmmaking and tourism.”

Some of the movies filmed in Kentucky and sites that you can visit include, Pompilio’s Italian Restaurant in Newport, featured in 1988’s “Rain Man” with Dustin Hoffman and Tom Cruise. Or, visit Fort Knox to see where “Stripes,” starring Bill Murray and John Candy, was filmed. The Pioneer Playhouse in Danville was the backdrop for the film “Raintree County” with Elizabeth Taylor and Montgomery Clift. Also, Keeneland in Lexington is always a fun place to visit for tours, a chance to see the horses and, while you’re there, see where much of “Seabiscuit” was filmed.



Danville’s Pioneer Playhouse remains a popular place and is the setting for the Elizabeth Taylor film “Raintree County.”

Photo courtesy of Kentucky Tourism



Photo courtesy of New Line Productions

Walk in the steps of Ryan Gosling and Rachel McAdams along King Street in Charleston as they filmed “The Notebook.”



## SOUTH CAROLINA

“Outer Banks” a hit show on Netflix, has brought many people to the area. As a result, “they’ve discovered the beauty of our Lowcountry,” Dan says.

Some of the best areas to visit locations from “Outer Banks” are along Shem Creek in Mount Pleasant. Also, visit the Gaillard Center in Charleston, aka the UNC Chapel Hill Law Library. If you’re in the Charleston area and want to find out more, visit [charlestoncvb.com](http://charlestoncvb.com).

Other South Carolina movie sets include Four Square Gospel Church — actually, Stoney Creek Independent Presbyterian Chapel in McPhersonville — where Forrest Gump went to pray for shrimp, and Lucy Point Creek between Coosaw and Lady’s Island, where most of the water scenes were shot. Movie fans can find more places at [southcarolinalowcountry.com](http://southcarolinalowcountry.com).



## TENNESSEE

The flatlands and mountains of Tennessee have been the backdrop for many movies, and here are some sites that you can visit and relive the magic of the big screen.

Visit Charleston, Cleveland and the Hiwassee River to see where “Wild River,” the first major motion picture filmed entirely in Tennessee, was made. Tour the town of Charleston with a local researcher, and walk the banks of the river and learn of other nearby places that were used in the film. Email [davidswafford@charter.net](mailto:davidswafford@charter.net) for details.

Drive by the Tennessee State Prison in Nashville and see where parts of “The Green Mile,” “Last Dance” and “Walk the Line” were filmed.

Visit Knoxville’s Neyland Stadium, Market Square and the historic Tennessee Theatre to check out locations you’ll recognize from “The Last Movie Star.”

The swamp at Reelfoot Lake was a setting for the action film “U.S. Marshals.” Be sure to bring your binoculars, too. The bird-watching here is some of the best in the state.

Visit Fall Creek Falls State Park where you can bring out your Baloo and explore areas where the 1994 live-action adaption of “The Jungle Book” was filmed. Wear your hiking shoes — there are plenty of waterfalls, hiking trails and rocks to climb and a canopy challenge course to experience. 📱



Photo courtesy of Tennessee Tourism

The eerie, spooky swamps in Reelfoot Lake made the perfect backdrop for the thriller “U.S. Marshals.”

# The joys of the 10-second commute

Remote workers find there's no place like home

Story by LAZ DENES

In January 2022, when Charlie Beckwith took a job in Hodges with construction equipment manufacturer Caterpillar, he decided to establish a residence just down the road in Greenwood. His wife, Laney, hoped to continue in her marketing and events manager role, albeit remotely, with Alabama-based human resources management company Lyons HR.

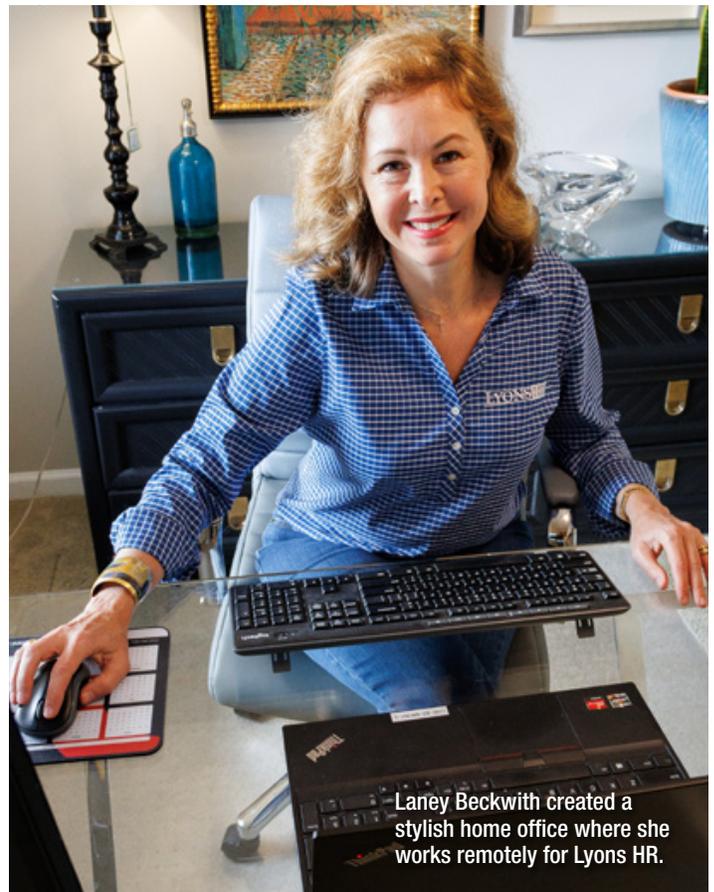
Lyons was all for Laney working from home, as long as she met two conditions — a dedicated office space and a robust and reliable internet connection that could meet the company's strict speed requirements. Laney added a must-have of her own, foreseeing lengthy workdays in the couple's dwelling. "I'm a little claustrophobic, so I needed tall ceilings and lots of natural light," she says with a laugh.

All three requirements were met with flying colors when Laney and Charlie's search led them to Greenwood's Regency Park luxury apartment community. There, they found the perfect two-bedroom, unit that is spacious and well-lit, and features WCFIBER's high-speed internet.

## A GREAT PLACE TO LIVE AND WORK

Since moving into Regency Park in March 2022, Laney transitioned into a new role as client relationship manager for Lyons HR. She is responsible for ongoing contact with 275 of the company's 800 clients in 46 states via internet calls and emails. She also maintains contact with company leadership, other team members and vendors via frequent video calls. Laney typically works three weeks a month in Greenwood, then spends a week at the couple's brick rancher in Gadsden, Alabama, allowing her to drop in at nearby Lyons HR locations, as well as check in with family.

"Living and working in Regency Park is wonderful," Laney says. "We love the community, our neighbors, the beautiful landscaping, the location, and we really appreciate the investment they've made in top-notch infrastructure. It has made living and working here so easy and enjoyable."



Laney Beckwith created a stylish home office where she works remotely for Lyons HR.

Photo by Matt Ledger

Lori Shackelford, a customer service rep for Danish skylight manufacturer Velux, is another of the many professionals working out of their residences at Regency Park, thanks to WCFIBER. Lori moved into her apartment in September 2018 and began her tenure with Velux the following May. Her responsibilities involve answering an average of 125 calls a day from the company's nationwide dealer group, providing price quotes, placing orders and dealing with supply chain issues. Also a trainer for her product group, Lori often conducts online sessions via Microsoft Teams.

“Everything has worked great,” Lori says. “We have to have that kind of internet capability to be able to work this job from home. It’s fast enough to keep up with our remote servers, and we have a lot of programs working all at once. It’s been a great experience with WCFIBER. I’ve never had any problems, and I’m very happy with it.”

### TOP-OF-THE-LINE TECHNOLOGY

Had Laney, Lori or any of the other Regency Park residents who work from home needed the kind of high-speed internet capability prior to 2017 that they have today, they likely would have had to set up shop elsewhere, perhaps in a different county.

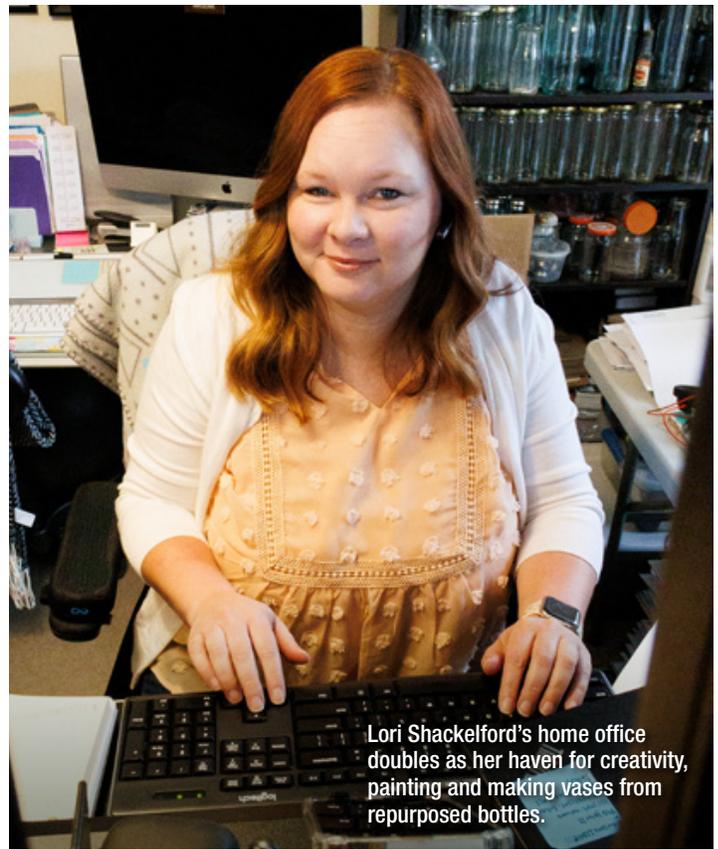
That was the year Doug Collins, an architect-turned-builder and developer who opened what is now the 132-unit Regency Park property in 2002, finally lured WCFIBER’s fiber internet to the area. Doug moved to Greenwood from Research Triangle Park in the Raleigh-Durham area, a place he calls “technology heaven.” He says he was “extremely disappointed” to discover that Greenwood, at the time, didn’t have access to reliable high-speed internet service.

After losing numerous tenants who found the available internet speeds inadequate over Regency Park’s first 15 years, Doug began urging WCFIBER to bring its fiber internet to the area.

“For a four-year period I called on them, basically begging for fiber optic in Greenwood County. Finally, they were convinced Greenwood would be a great market for them because it was underserved. I agreed to sign a long-term contract, and they pulled fiber to our property.”

Regency Park became one of the first residential properties in Greenwood County to have fiber internet from WCFIBER, and the county quickly became one of its major markets.

Not only has WCFIBER been instrumental for Regency Park’s work-from-home professionals and others seeking post-graduate degrees online, it is a key element of the community’s security and sustainability initiatives. The network of 53 security



Lori Shackelford’s home office doubles as her haven for creativity, painting and making vases from repurposed bottles.

Photo by Matt Leiger

cameras throughout the property is monitored via WCFIBER. So is the array of solar panels that supplies electricity to the clubhouse, offices, pool system, outdoor kitchen and dining area, as well the two new electric vehicle charging stations monitored by WCFIBER.

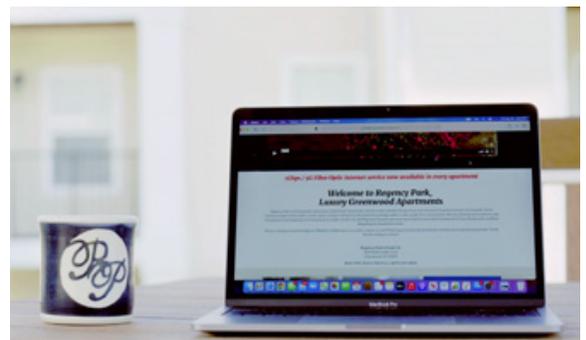
“We could not have picked a better company to partner with than WCFIBER,” Doug says. “As owner of this property, I am very, very pleased with the relationship, the partnership that we’ve had with them since we embarked on this together back in 2017. Their customer service is second to none.”



Photos courtesy of Regency Park

LEFT: Regency Park has top-notch common spaces for residents with a pool and outdoor grilling area.

BELOW: High-speed internet capability from WCFIBER is a top consideration for residents at Regency Park.



# Learning

The word "Learning" is written in a large, cursive, dashed font. The letters are colored in a gradient from light blue to orange. A black needle with a white thread is positioned horizontally across the middle of the word, with the thread looping through the eye of the needle and around the letter 'i'.

## THROUGH OUR CULTURE

*Textile arts have long history in rural America*

Story by **CHÉRÉ COEN**

**F**or centuries, quilts, pieced together from fabric swatches, warmed sleeping families. Woven blankets also provided warmth and offered an opportunity for creativity in a time when women were busy working at home and had little time for the arts.

Today, quilts and blankets still cover beds around the world, but the historic art form has reached exceptional heights through the use of 3D techniques, photography, natural elements and more. “It’s not just a pretty quilt on a bed,” says Deborah Blanchette Bradley, managing director of the nonprofit Texas Quilt Museum. “This is fine art.”

The La Grange, Texas, museum began when quilters Karey Bresnenhan and Nancy O’Bryant Puentes, producers of Houston’s International Quilt Festival, wanted to share art quilts year-round and not just during the November festival. They restored an 1892 building to 95% of its original architecture and opened the museum in 2011 to exhibit quilts and educate the public on the art of textiles.

“Our purpose is to help people see and understand the world of quilting,” Deborah says. “Women were the heart of the home. Our mission is to offer and share the legacy and history — mostly women’s history — through quilting.”

The museum weaves together American textile history and modern art in its exhibits, including the recent “A Tribute



Photos courtesy of National Quilt Museum

to Mary Ann Vaca-Lambert,” whose quilts have been displayed internationally. The museum also hosted an “All Creatures” juried show with 50 quilts based on James Herriot’s novels and the popular PBS series “All Creatures Great and Small.”

### ADDITIONAL INCOME

Textiles evolved from utilitarian items to high art, but they also provide many people with additional income. Many members of the McCreary Mountain Craft Center in Parkers Lake, Kentucky, sell their textiles, in addition to other works. The center started as a 4-H organization designed to preserve the craft traditions of Southeast Kentucky.



Photos courtesy of National Quilt Museum

**TOP:** The National Quilt Museum is in Paducah, Kentucky, one of only a handful of UNESCO Creative Cities in the United States.

**ABOVE:** The museum displays a wide variety of contemporary textile arts.



A display this year at the Texas Quilt Museum included artwork created by Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo blue ribbon prizewinners.



Photos courtesy of Texas Quilt Museum

“The center was started by an extension agent,” says President Terri Cash. “He wanted to help people in the area make money by selling their crafts.”

The center celebrates 60 years in 2023 and is completely run by volunteers. Artists join for \$10 a year and keep 75% of their earnings. It’s a labor of love, Terri insists. “We’re definitely not out to make money because of the amount of time we put into it.”

Most members are middle-aged and above, but Terri sees young people crafting as well, so weaving and quilting continue to be American art forms. “And we’re happy to pass it down,” she says.

### GETTING STARTED

Deborah sees museum visitors looking at professional quilts and other textile artwork and forlornly musing that they could never create such masterpieces. She encourages people to view these showpieces as inspiration to create. “There’s so many ways of being inspired in quilting,”

Deborah says. “You can find inspiration in everything.”

It’s the reason the museum includes education in its programming. It works with Arts for Rural Texas for after-school programs and two summer camps. Children learn skills like needle felting and quilting. “They make a nine-block quilt,” Deborah says. “They learn three patterns and do it all in one week. None of them will look alike.”

The recently opened Discover Exhibit gives children quilt block puzzles and an I Spy adventure through the museum. “It’s meant to inspire kids to learn and take on the art of fabric,” she says. “Art stretches the mind and inspires.”

In addition to the classes and lectures the museum offers, adults looking to get into quilting should find a local guild, Deborah suggests. Quilting guilds exist across the country, and group members are available to mentor and help newcomers. “That’s a great place to start,” she says. “All of these ladies — there’s men in there, too — love to share. It’s like a modern-day quilting bee. If nothing else, it helps you not do it alone.”

Another avenue is sewing classes at extension offices and through 4-H. The University of Minnesota Extension Office, for instance, offers a youth quilting workshop.

Deborah was never a quilter, she was hired to administer the museum, but she’s since taken it up and loves the community she found. “It’s been a wonderful world to become a part of,” she says. 



Photo courtesy of Texas Quilt Museum

Western art created by La Grange High School students is displayed at the Texas Quilt Museum.

# Online Resources

• **Paducah, Kentucky**, is home to both the National Quilting Museum and the American Quilter’s Society, dedicated to spreading the importance of quilt making and helping quilters achieve their goals. Because of its quilting heritage and advancements of quilting worldwide, the city was named a UNESCO Creative City for Crafts & Folk Art. View textile art in Paducah’s Lower Town Arts District and visit for AQS’s QuiltWeek April 24-27, 2024. For more information, visit [quiltmuseum.org](http://quiltmuseum.org) or [americanquilter.com](http://americanquilter.com).

• **McCreary Mountain Craft Center** celebrates 60 years of showcasing and selling handmade art and crafts. Located in Parkers Lake, Kentucky, near Cumberland Falls, the center sells a variety of textiles. Visit Facebook and search for the McCreary Mountain Craft Center.

• **Texas Quilt Museum** in La Grange rests between Houston and San Antonio and offers exhibits that change four times a year, youth education and one of the largest quilt research libraries in the country. Learn more at [texasquiltmuseum.org](http://texasquiltmuseum.org).

# Faithfully serving the community

## United Christian Ministries of Abbeville County helps hundreds each year

Story by PATRICK SMITH

Whether through prayer, monetary donations or volunteer hours, more than 50 churches band together to help individuals and families make ends meet through the United Christian Ministries of Abbeville County (UCMAC).

It's a much-needed service in a county where nearly 15% of the population lives in poverty, according to 2022 U.S. Census Bureau data. Hundreds of community members find help annually with free medical care, financial assistance and a food pantry by UCMAC.

To instill confidence in its donors and restrict potential fraud, UCMAC abides by the federal poverty guidelines and limits its assistance to Abbeville County residents.

"It seems like we see more and more people in need lately because of the economy," says Jane Agan, UCMAC financial director. "In the past, they've gotten by just fine, but now they're having a hard time. We'll help to pay an electric bill, rent, a car payment, the taxes on their home. We're here to help people from going too far into debt, make their groceries last a little longer or find medical care. We're able to help the community. I don't know where they'd go or what they'd do if we weren't here."

Following her early retirement from Bank of America, it didn't take Agan long to find new work. She helped start the nonprofit organization in 2008. "I enjoy the challenge to try and make all the pieces fit together," she says. "It's a pleasure to be around all these people. If I wasn't doing this work, I don't know what I'd do each day."

Her work to make the pieces fit created financial strength for UCMAC. "God's been good to us," Agan says. "We've always had enough money, but in the beginning there were times where we



Photos courtesy of UCMAC

**ABOVE:** United Christian Ministries of Abbeville County Executive Director Bill Boone sorts through a trailer load of food collected by local letter carriers.



**LEFT:** Volunteer staff members donate their time and skills in the free medical clinic.

**BELOW:** Physicians meet prior to a free medical clinic event.



didn't know whether we'd have enough to open the door. Somehow, it's always worked out, and now we're in a good financial situation."

Staffed with more than 100 volunteers and no paid employees, UCMAC operates three food pantry locations in Abbeville, Calhoun Falls and Lowndesville.

"As a volunteer, you get so much more than what you give to the people you serve. The camaraderie of your team is phenomenal," UCMAC Executive Director Bill Boone says. "I'm surrounded by people who absolutely believe in our mission. I've lived in six different towns and five different states, and I've never seen a community that's so giving of its time and resources." 

► **For more information**, or to learn how you can volunteer, contact UCMAC at 864-366-6525, or visit the main office at 101 Center St., Abbeville — located behind the Abbeville Nursing Home.

► **Visit [ucmac.net](http://ucmac.net)** to learn more about the charitable works or make a donation. For assistance from UCMAC's free medical clinic call 864-366-0365 or cellphone 864-828-0987.



# The ultimate home network security

Story by JOHN CLAYTON

Household WiFi networks have become increasingly larger and more complex with the ability to run just about anything — from security systems to thermostats.

With our ever-increasing dependency on WiFi connections comes the potential of additional security threats, but WCTEL recently introduced a solution with its WiFi X service.

“Everything from baby monitors to doorbells to cameras are all WiFi enabled,” says Mary Miller, WCTEL Marketing Communications Manager. “With that comes the unfortunate need to protect them and fortify them because these threats and viruses are only growing, so WiFi X just gives people a little more peace of mind.”

## CONNECT, PROTECT, CONTROL

WiFi X provides that security for customers, using a high-end WiFi 6 router. WiFi 6 is the latest generation of wireless communications technology. It is faster and more secure than its predecessors, allows for more devices to be connected to the network and can reduce battery drain on mobile devices. WiFi 6 routers will work with WiFi 5 devices, as well as many older devices.

The average home now has more than 10 devices



WCTEL offers WiFi X as the front line of protection against increased potential malware and virus attacks.

Photo by Matt Leiger

connected to its WiFi network, giving clever cybercriminals multiple access points. WiFi

X is the front line of protection for customers against increased potential malware and virus attacks.

“We want our customers to have the best WiFi experience that they can have,” says WCTEL Director of Commercial Operations Shannon Sears. “When we talk about the average number of devices on networks increasing, almost 100% of those are wireless — and those numbers are going to continue to go up. As that happens, more bandwidth is required, more apps are being developed and more streaming is being done. All of

those things equate to having a good solid router and being protected.”

All the enhanced

protections are available to customers through WiFi X for just \$7.95 per month. This service also includes the WiFi X app where you can control and manage your network from your phone.

“It blocks threats before they can even access the home. Every WiFi-connected device — smart light bulbs, appliances, fitness bikes, etc. — is vulnerable to threats; with WiFi X, you can have worry-free WiFi,” Mary says. “This is a game changer for our customers. The app will even send notifications to customers when threats have been

blocked. WiFi X is working for them 24-7.

Beyond offering improved security, WiFi X provides additional tools, including parental and bandwidth controls, which allow customers to prioritize the bandwidth used by certain devices.

Through the WiFi X app, customers have the ability to set up profiles for children, filter content, websites and apps and set appropriate time limits for use.

“WiFi X offers an array of enhancements that take our customer experience to the next level. At the end of the day, it’s giving customers more hands-on control,” Mary says.

The response to WiFi X has been positive since the cooperative introduced the service earlier this year. “What we’ve found so far with WiFi X is that people see the need for it and are excited about the product,” Shannon says. “They’re excited about having an app they can look at and control.”



Scan this QR code to get the WiFi X app on your phone.

# Layers of flavors

## *Perfect the sandwich*

**W**hat makes a sandwich? We posed that question to Bridget Lancaster, host of the popular cooking show “America’s Test Kitchen.”

“A classic sandwich will have a filling between two slices of bread,” she says. “It’s portable, self-contained, and you probably won’t need a knife and fork to eat it. But then you get something like an open-faced sandwich, which is often very saucy or hot and is eaten with a knife and fork.”

Really, a sandwich is what you make it — one slice, two slices, baked, broiled, grilled in butter or served cold. Here are some sandwich tips from “America’s Test Kitchen.”

- Add a tangy sauce such as tzatziki, horseradish or a creamy salad dressing rather than mayonnaise or mustard.
- Consider other breads, such as a sturdy ciabatta or even a nut bread for extra flavor. To keep the sandwich from becoming too much to handle, use just 3–4 ounces of meat and an ounce of cheese. Toast the bread to boost the flavor and keep the sandwich from becoming soggy.
- Instead of a pickle, try chutney or a tangy relish. Instead of iceberg lettuce, try arugula, watercress or spinach. And don’t forget veggies. Consider cucumber, shredded carrots and sprouts.



**Food Editor  
Anne P. Braly  
is a native of  
Chattanooga,  
Tennessee.**

Photography by **Mark Gilliland**  
Food Styling by **Rhonda Gilliland**



### *‘America’s Test Kitchen’* **GROWN-UP GRILLED CHEESE**

- 7 ounces aged cheddar cheese, cut into 24 equal pieces, room temperature
- 2 ounces brie, rind removed
- 2 tablespoons dry white wine or vermouth
- 4 teaspoons minced shallot
- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- 8 slices hearty white sandwich or rosemary bread

Process cheddar, brie and wine in a food processor until smooth paste is formed, 20 to 30 seconds. Add shallot and pulse to combine, 3 to 5 pulses. Combine butter and mustard in small bowl.

Working on a parchment paper-lined

counter, spread mustard-butter evenly over one side of slices of bread. Flip four slices of bread over and spread cheese mixture evenly over slices. Top with remaining four slices of bread, buttered sides up.

Preheat a nonstick skillet over medium heat for 2 minutes. Place two sandwiches in skillet; reduce heat to medium-low; and cook until both sides are crispy and golden brown, 6 to 9 minutes per side, moving sandwiches to ensure even browning. Remove sandwiches from skillet and let stand for 2 minutes before serving. Repeat with remaining two sandwiches.

**Note:** Hold sandwiches on a wire rack on a baking sheet in the oven at 250 F while the second round cooks.

# Easy Reuben

- 8 slices rye bread
- 4 tablespoons butter, softened
- 1/4 cup Russian or Thousand Island dressing
- 8 slices Swiss cheese
- 1 pound corned beef
- 1 1/2 cups sauerkraut, well-drained

Butter one side of each slice of bread. On the nonbuttered side, spread Russian dressing on each slice. Top half of the slices with cheese, corned beef and sauerkraut. Top each sandwich with remaining slices, dressing side down.

Heat a medium skillet over medium heat. Place a sandwich in the skillet and cook until golden and cheese is melted, 3 minutes per side. Serve immediately.



## ZIPPY BEEF BARBECUE SANDWICH

*Make the barbecue the day before and assemble the sandwiches right before your hike or tailgate or wherever you spend your beautiful autumn weekend.*

- 1 1/2 cups ketchup
- 1/2 cup packed brown sugar
- 1/2 cup picante sauce
- 1/2 cup dry red wine
- 1/4 cup balsamic vinegar
- 2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon pepper
- 1/4 teaspoon ground allspice
- 1 beef sirloin tip roast (4 pounds)
- 4 garlic cloves, sliced
- 16 kaiser rolls, split and toasted
- 2 cups deli coleslaw

Mix first nine ingredients. Cut roast in half; cut slits in roast and insert garlic. Place in a 5-quart slow cooker. Pour sauce over top. Cook, covered, on low until tender, 8-10 hours.

Remove beef. Skim fat from cooking liquid. Shred meat with two forks; return to slow cooker and heat through. Serve on rolls with coleslaw. 





233 Highway 28 Bypass  
Abbeville, SC 29620

PRSRT STD  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
HILLSBORO, OR  
PERMIT No. 66

# Internet for **all**



### Do you have kids enrolled in public school? You may be eligible!

Your public school district may participate in Community Eligibility Provision (CEP). If you have a student currently enrolled in a CEP public school, you may be eligible for a \$30 discount on your internet service, regardless of your income level.

The internet isn't just nice to have, **it's essential.**

**Scan, call or visit**  
to save \$30 per month  
on your internet bill



**WCTEL is a proud participant of the Affordable Connectivity Program**, providing qualifying households with a monthly credit to help pay for internet service.

If eligible, you may receive a credit of up to \$30 per month toward your internet bill.

**(864) 446-2111 | [wctel.com/ACP](http://wctel.com/ACP)**

The Affordable Connectivity Program provides up to \$30/month credit towards broadband service for qualifying households. Program credit expires upon FCC's termination of the program. Upon its conclusion, customers are subject to regular rates, terms and conditions. Limit one ACP credit per household, credit is non-transferable. Eligibility requirements apply.

