

CONNECTED

Jam Session

Local Focal celebrates live music



**MEALS ON
WHEELS**

TEENS & TECH



By Shirley Bloomfield, CEO
NTCA—The Rural Broadband Association

World Wide Web Day

Celebrate decades of digital innovation

World Wide Web Day is Aug. 1. It's a celebration of a 1993 internet milestone that transformed our society, changing everything from work and health care to communications and entertainment.

Before the web, accessing information and resources on the interconnected computers spanning the globe required specific software and skills. Email use was even limited—in business, fax machines still ruled. Then, researchers in Switzerland, including Tim Berners-Lee, developed the World Wide Web. Not only was information easier to share, but the freely distributed tools that made it possible fueled decades of innovation.

Now, rural internet service providers like yours manage the high-speed networks unlocking the modern web. NTCA's 2024 Broadband/Internet Availability Survey Report showed that 89% of rural customers served by providers responding to the survey have access to speeds of at least 100 Mbps.

That's a dramatic change compared to 1993, when connecting was slow and noisy, reliant on dial-up modems and copper lines. Back then, a speed of 14.4 Kbps was great—nearly 7,000 times slower than a 100 Mbps connection today.

Students can now access endless resources online and attend virtual classes. Telemedicine brings services and specialists otherwise unavailable in rural communities. Farmers monitor crops, manage resources and keep livestock healthy with internet-connected tools. And that's only the beginning.

NTCA members across rural America make it all possible. So, let's take a moment to celebrate not only World Wide Web Day, but also the communications professionals in your community.

Thank you for all you do. 📺



Help your community thrive

Local businesses are a cornerstone of the United States' economy, particularly in rural communities. You need to look no further than your local utility providing a fast, reliable internet network. Companies like these are not only committed to providing excellent service but also uplifting their communities.

A report last year by Capital One Shopping, a site operated by the banking and credit card company, highlighted the importance of local retailers.

- In one week, **91% of American consumers** shop at small and local stores.
- **68%, or \$68 out of every \$100**, spent at local stores remains in the local economy.
- American shoppers spent an estimated **\$4.51 trillion** at local stores in 2023, equivalent to **54.3% of all retail sales**.
- The average person **shops locally 213 times per year** or once every **1.7 days**.

Community Benefits to Shopping Local

- **Shopping small** keeps **dollars local**.
- Dollars spent at an independent business may **recirculate** in the local economy **an average of six to 15 times**.
- Small businesses make up to **136% more charitable donations** per employee than businesses with 500 or more employees.
- Residents of communities with more independent businesses **drive three-quarters fewer miles** than their neighbors who have less access to small local shops.





A Sunshine Shield in Your Pocket

Apps to protect your skin

Long days outdoors are a joy of summer. A little sun can even increase your vitamin D levels, which has a range of health benefits. On the other hand, bathing in too much sunlight is not good for the skin, raising the potential for skin cancer. And some people are more susceptible than others.

So, it just makes sense to track and manage sun exposure. Think about all the things we already monitor—steps, sleep and even what we eat. Why not also track exposure to ultraviolet light, the rays produced by the sun?

In fact, your phone's weather app may already offer a forecast for expected sun exposure at your location. Other apps though can ramp up the details. Early UV apps were basically glorified timers with general advice tacked on. Today's versions

are more sophisticated, providing information on everything from cloud cover to how much sun is reflecting off surfaces around you.

These apps often have easy-to-understand color-coded displays that show your risk level. Most will customize their recommendations based on your skin type, which means you're getting advice that's relevant to you specifically.

Some of the more advanced options do more than track UV exposure. They can use your smartphone's camera to analyze your features and suggest proper levels of sun protection. Many will even send timely reminders when it's time to reapply sunscreen based on your activity level and which products you're using.

The more comprehensive sun safety apps don't only monitor UV rays. They

include educational content about sun damage and skin cancer prevention. Some even track vitamin D production, helping you balance protection with healthy sun exposure.

Family-friendly versions allow users to set up profiles for multiple family members with different skin types, making it much easier to manage sun protection during group outings like beach days or picnics.

Of course, no apps replace a proper checkup with your dermatologist, but they do offer daily reminders about a danger we can't always see. So, next time you're heading outdoors for a day in the sun, check the app store for your favorite device and see if there's an app that provides the details you need to stay safe. At minimum, the apps can keep the importance of skin protection top of mind. ☀️

Rethinking Speed

Are you positioned for the future?

When it comes to internet service, one of the most common questions we hear is, “How much speed do I really need?” It’s a fair question, especially when life already feels full of decisions. But perhaps it’s the wrong question with which to start.



CHRIS TOWNSON
Chief Executive Officer

Instead of asking what you need right now, I encourage you to ask, “Am I set up for what’s next?” Our world has become connected in ways many of us never imagined. In my own home, I recently conducted a simple audit of what was connected to our WiFi: phones, laptops, a smart TV or two and then the surprise list—a video doorbell, a thermostat, a security camera in the backyard, our garage door opener, a few smart plugs and even our coffee maker. That’s right, I can program the coffee to start brewing before I’m out of bed, thanks to WiFi.

All of these devices may seem minor on their own, but together, they form a digital load that’s always on. They don’t ask for permission. They just draw bandwidth, often silently, until you notice your movie buffers or your Zoom call freezes.

That’s why I believe in “right-sizing” your internet—not just to meet today’s demand, but to carry you confidently into tomorrow. A 1-Gig-by-1-Gig connection may feel like more than you need, but it gives your household the breathing room to grow, stream, work, learn, play and connect without compromise. Especially as technology continues to advance at a rapid pace.

And if you’re a parent or caregiver, working professional, gamer or someone who wants to feel in control of their online experience, our WiFi X solution was built with you in mind. This powerful app gives you complete control over your home network. You can prioritize devices, create a guest network, run speed tests, set parental controls, block inappropriate content and even scan for threats. It’s your WiFi, your way.

For families with multiple users or smart homes with connected devices running 24/7, a Gig-speed connection paired with WiFi X isn’t just a luxury, it’s the foundation for a smoother digital life.

Let me leave you with this thought: You don’t wait until your car is on empty before filling up the tank. You plan ahead, so you’re ready for the road ahead. In the same way, right-sizing your internet now means you’re not scrambling to catch up later. You’re already prepared for the kids’ homework assignments, the surprise video call, the new streaming platform or that next smart home gadget that makes life just a little bit easier.

At West Carolina, we’re here to help you grow into what’s next. Let’s get you positioned for it. 📶

Until next time,

west carolina

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UTILITY RESOURCES

On the Cover:



Founders Granger Smith, left, and Nic Massey envisioned the Local Focal festival as a way for the community to explore many genres of music. See story on Page 8.

Photo by Mark Gilliland

SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS

West Carolina proudly awarded the Roger Cox Scholarship to Emma Grace Vernon, of Starr. She is one of four recipients in the Carolinas.

The Foundation for Rural Service awarded \$160,500 in scholarships this year to 50 students from rural communities served by members of NTCA–The Rural Broadband Association. Emma Grace plans to attend the University of South Carolina in Columbia.



Photo courtesy of Brandi McAllister

Emma Grace Vernon



Photo courtesy of West Carolina

West Carolina CEO Chris Townson, left, Aimee Gray, Nicolas Largaespada and Wes McAllister, president of the West Carolina Board of Directors.

West Carolina CEO, Chris Townson presented the cooperative's signature \$8,000 scholarship to Nicolas Largaespada, who will receive \$2,000 annually for four years. Nicolas, the son of José and Ada Largaespada, graduated from Crescent High School. He plans to attend Clemson University to major in Computer Science and enter the IT field.

"These scholarships aren't just about financial support," Townson says. "They're about investing in the future of rural South Carolina. Behind every graduate is a community that believes in them. We're honored to be part of that story."

Wes McAllister, president of the West Carolina Board of Directors, emphasized the character and potential of the scholarship honorees.

ENHANCE YOUR ONLINE SECURITY

Choosing strong and unique passwords for online accounts is a great first step to protecting your personal information. However, ensuring your cybersecurity is as effective as possible requires a little extra attention. Using multifactor authentication gives an added shield to guard your digital accounts from unwanted intruders.

Cybersecurity experts estimate that over 80% of data breaches result from weak or stolen passwords, which multifactor authentication can help prevent. While enabling this security measure adds another step to logging into accounts like email, banking apps and more, the added protection is worth the time. In addition to a password, multifactor authentication requires users to confirm their identities in another way. Examples include entering a code sent via text message or email and using dedicated apps that manage the process.

Getting started with multifactor authentication is as simple as checking the options available in your online accounts. Then, follow those guidelines.

By investing a few minutes, you can significantly increase your digital security.



HAPPY FOURTH OF JULY

We hope your Fourth of July is a blast! Our offices will be closed on **Friday, July 4**, in observance of Independence Day. Have a fun and safe holiday.



CATCH A WAVE

These water parks are built for thrill, not chill

Story by KATHY DENES

If summer has a signature scent aside from freshly mowed grass, it's the chlorine of swimming pools and water slides. Water parks are the ultimate hot-weather attractions, and some have been popping up lately that go far beyond splash pads and lazy rivers. These parks lure the adventurous with endless waves and whitewater for rafting, kayaking, canoeing and even surfing—no wild oceans or rivers required.

The first of these parks in the country, the U.S. National Whitewater Center in Charlotte, North Carolina, is home to a whitewater river that challenges even the most experienced wave riders. Touted as the world's largest artificial river, its recirculating treated water flows along dual concrete channels offering rapids

varying in intensity from Class II to Class IV.

The sprawling facility is geared to all sorts of outdoor recreation and is still evolving nearly 20 years after opening. Guided rafts and kayakers with whitewater experience ride the same rapids U.S. Olympic athletes use for training and team trials. The Wilderness and Competition channels provide varying intensity and length before ending in the tranquil pool where riders steer their boats onto a conveyor belt and ride back to the start for another go.

"The USNWC was the first whitewater channel specifically designed for family-level fun at an Olympic-standard facility," says course lead designer Scott Shipley, an engineer, kayak champion

and three-time Olympian who holds four world titles. "Until Charlotte, every whitewater channel in the world was an Olympic channel first that was later adapted for commercial rafting. We created a channel for family recreational rafting first and then added a competition channel. We focused on the church and school groups that will be using it as a way to help get them active."

SURF CITY

At Riversport OKC in Oklahoma City, Olympic and Paralympic athletes train in rowing as well as canoe and kayak. In fact, it is slated to be the canoe slalom venue for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics. Its whitewater center offers rowing, kayaking and surfing lessons,



ABOVE: Progressing from bodyboarding to kneeboarding takes very little time with FlowRider's perpetual waves.

OPPOSITE PAGE: Rafting can get pretty wild on Riverpark Rapids in downtown Oklahoma City.

along with tubing, paddleboarding, high-speed slides and even fun on dry land.

Riverpark Rapids whitewater rafting and kayaking center is in Riversport Adventure Park, in the Boathouse District along the Oklahoma River. Whitewater kayaking and guided rafting start at the top of the artificial river, reached via a conveyor belt. From there, it's an easy slide into the river to start a memorable ride.

Those ready to Surf OKC can catch a wave, no previous skill needed. Starting with bodyboarding, the staff teaches all the basics to help visitors hang 10. Wipeouts are inevitable, but there are no sharks in the nonstop waters of the FlowRider surf machine. Found all over the world, these compact wavemakers keep endless, shallow water flowing atop a trampolinelike surface.

TEST THE WATERS

Riverpark OKC is open daily 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. in the summer and on weekends in the late spring and early fall. Day passes and memberships are available. Each Thursday through Aug. 7, Riverpark offers NightWater Evening Rafting from 6-8 p.m. riversportokc.org

The Charlotte Whitewater Center will celebrate Independence Day by hosting a free two-day festival, July 3 and 4, with live music and more. Evening events those days include illuminated rafting



High above Riversport, a young visitor secured with a safety harness navigates one of the six levels of SandRidge Sky Trail.



In the hills above Charlotte, North Carolina, the U.S. National Whitewater Center caters to whitewater enthusiasts ranging from novice paddlers to Olympic athletes.

Photo courtesy of U.S. National Whitewater Center

and kayaking on the river's Competition Channel, but this requires purchase of an activity pass. See the center's website for schedules, pass information and events, plus details about any required gear and skill prerequisites. whitewater.org. 📱

MAKING A SPLASH

Montgomery, Alabama—Whitewater paddlers of all skill levels can enjoy the thrills of rafting or kayaking at Montgomery Whitewater, complete with a 1,600-foot Competition Channel and 2,200-foot Creek Channel. To open its season, Montgomery Whitewater hosted the 2025 Pan American Canoe Slalom and Kayak Cross Championships. It was the site of the U.S. Canoe/Kayak Slalom Olympic team trials for the 2024 Paris games. For more, go to montgomerywhitewater.com.

Sevierville, Tennessee—Before the 2020 opening of Soaky Mountain, surfer Ben Gravy tested its waters, posted his rides on YouTube and declared the park has the "best manmade novelty wave in America—one of the best on the planet." Soaky Mountain is open daily in July and August and on weekends in September.

Check out soakymountainwaterpark.com.

Rock Hill, South Carolina—Two custom lakes at SouthTown Wake Park await wakeboard riders 7 and older, and there isn't a boat in sight. Boarders hold ski ropes pulled by overhead cables. Beginners can sign up for lessons on the smaller lake, while the larger lake is equipped with jump ramps and other features that let advanced wakeboarders work on extreme moves. There's also Aqua Park for paddleboards, as well as an obstacle course on floating inflatables and onshore games.

Get all the details at southtownwakepark.com.

Music Is the Means

Local Focal drops the beat on Greenwood talent

Story by BRANDI DIXON

Music helped artist Dixie Barnes find the confidence she needed after being diagnosed with a neurological condition at age 8. The life-long Greenwood resident grew up singing in church and, in her early adolescent years, decided she wanted to pursue music professionally.

Now 23, Dixie joins the lineup for her hometown's highly anticipated music event, Local Focal. Set for July 10-12, the Local Focal puts the spotlight on some of South Carolina's best local musical talent.

"This is my first time playing at the festival, and I'm so excited for the opportunity," Dixie says. "Not only are we having great barbecue and great music, but we're sharing community. It's called Local Focal for a reason—we are coming together and supporting one another and having a good time with that."

Co-founded by Nic Massey and Granger Smith, the Local Focal came to be a musical collective scene as part

of one of Greenwood's biggest annual events, the Festival of Discovery.

"We wanted to shine our light on this town's musicians ourselves," Granger says. "Thanks to Howards on Main providing the venue, we were able to bring to life this three-day event that highlights a lot of local talent that doesn't necessarily get a lot of recognition."

Like its birthplace, Local Focal brings a very diverse music scene, featuring a little bit of every genre. Attendees can enjoy rock 'n' roll, country, jazz, R&B, soul and more.

"We keep our eyes on acts throughout the year, releasing lineups each week of when and where people can catch them on stage," Nic says, adding that they select bands and artists from those searches for the annual July event.

Promoting live events on Facebook and Instagram is key to reaching festival fans and maximizing the crowd turnout. On a weekly basis, Granger and Nic use their



Photo by Mark Gilliland

Local Focal page for weekly updates about bands playing around Greenwood, and some big surprise guests for their 2025 festival.

"West Carolina has been crucial to our ability to put out our weekly Local Music Lineups. Without that security and connectivity, we would be in deep trouble. West Carolina's continued support has enabled us to spread the word about our local musicians to more and more people."

NOTEWORTHY ACTS

Headlining on Saturday night for the second year in a row is Pope & Bert. The local duo is a Greenwood favorite, headlining the music scene since 2016 and covering songs by everyone from Phil Collins to Earth, Wind & Fire.

"We first got connected with the Local Focal by Granger Smith and Nic Massey," band member Chris Pope says. "We love to come together and collaborate from time to time, and the night of the Local Focal is an opportunity to have fun with friends in the Greenwood music scene, and those two guys are a few of our favorites."



Photo courtesy of Pope & Bert

ABOVE: Chris Pope, left, and Robert Graham, who perform as Pope & Bert, play a range of styles, including covers of Phil Collins and Earth, Wind & Fire.

TOP LEFT: Nic Massey, left, and Granger Smith founded Local Focal.

BOTTOM LEFT: Musicians and Greenwood natives Michael Gilbert, Justin Hall, Jennings Hollister, Steven Holmes and Steven Cathcart perform together in the band Winners.



Photo courtesy of Local Focal

Melodic indie rock band Winners, featuring Greenwood's own Justin Hall, Steven Cathcart, Steven Holmes and Jennings Hollister, will take a break from the road for Local Focal.

"We haven't played many shows in our hometown, so it will be great to connect with our community through music and make relationships with local music

lovers," Justin says. "They're one of the big reasons why we make music."

Justin and his bandmates encourage everyone to come out as Local Focal continues to write the story of Greenwood's music history. "For those of us who were born and raised in Greenwood, we've seen the local music scene grow exponentially over the last 15-20 years," he says. "We

think it's important for Greenwoodians to continue to foster our music scene so that opportunities for local artists will continue to grow and young artists will have the chance to exercise their craft."

Other artists in this year's lineup include The Senators Jazz Band, Audrey Adams, Ryan Pitts & The Southern Gentleman, Fred Engler & The Troubleshooters and The Bruce Katz Band featuring Krawfish, the latter of which Nic says attendees are sure to love.

"That collaboration is going to be amazing, featuring an Allman Brothers tribute," he says, adding that the performance also features saxophonist Steven Galloway to cap off the weekend. [📺](#)

THE KIDS ARE

How teenagers navigate digital communication

Story by DREW WOOLEY

Born into the world of smartphones and social media, today's teenagers spend more time communicating online than any of their predecessors. While that familiarity with the online world builds skills with digital platforms, it also affects how they experience adolescence.

"We see that a lot of their development is shaped through their interactions with technology," says Kaitlyn Burnell, director of research for the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's Winston Center for Technology and the Developing Mind. "It's not just reflecting those aspects of development but also fundamentally changing how they're going through those experiences."

Experts say the key to making sure those changes are positive is understanding how teens are communicating online and giving them the knowledge to shape their own experiences.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is often the most public form of online communication for young people and an easy way to communicate on a large scale. While social status and approval from peers has always been important for adolescents, Burnell says that influence is amplified by social media's ability to track those reactions in real time.

"Adolescents place a lot of importance on the number of likes and the quality of the comments they're getting," she says. "There's no real counterpart of that in the past. The best thing I can come up with is maybe the number of yearbook signatures or something old school like that. But it's very, very different."

That isn't always a bad thing. While image-heavy platforms like Instagram can lead some to struggle with body image, recent studies show a well-curated social media feed can inspire young people more than discourage them. Many teens understand how their feeds work.

"To adolescents' credit, they're pretty sophisticated in tailoring their algorithms," says Michaeline Jensen, University of North Carolina at Greensboro associate professor. "If they're not liking what they're getting, they game it—unfollow some stuff or press the thumbs down to try and steer toward different content. They're pretty sophisticated with trying to make their online spaces a place that's affirming and positive for them."

DIRECT MESSAGING

Direct messaging is reserved for more personal interactions. Private messages are the go-to way to express love, get emotional support or just check in with a parent.

"It's how they talk to people who really matter to them," Jensen says. "Things like day-to-day logistical stuff can make parenting easier, so you can check in and get work done. But it does seem like when teens have those more emotionally supportive conversations over text, those seem to be perceived positively by the kids."

Written chats proved to be more popular than video chats even during periods of separation like the coronavirus pandemic. While video calls can be an authentic way to communicate with faraway family, the interface can prove distracting when talking to other teens.

"Hypothetically, video communication should be more enriching because it's as close to a face-to-face conversation as you can get," Burnell says. "However, the problem that we've identified is that



online

the default for most software is that you see yourself and that isn't always great. If you're occupied with how you look, then that's going to impede those social benefits."

SOCIAL GAMING

Teens often spend social time gaming online, whether with local friends or players across the world. While there are concerns about this hurting offline relationships, Sophie Janicke-Bowles, an associate professor at California's Chapman University, found the opposite can be true.

"When it comes to kids hanging out with friends, social gaming is taking that over," she says. "And it can actually increase both the online and offline connection when hanging out with friends. So, it can be a contributor to more social interaction rather than less."

Gaming spaces can still expose players to coarse language or bullying. An awareness of how those platforms are used and who they are exposing adolescents to is crucial for creating a positive experience.

RURAL CONNECTIONS

Building digital literacy can be challenging in rural areas, where the digital divide is closing but schools may not have resources to teach how to make the most of digital communication.

"It makes sense that if families are more spread out from each other you can't just go next door and hang out with your friend," Jensen says. "There might be greater reliance on digital technologies in order to facilitate those social connections, and we don't yet know how kids will adjust to that."

But the upside for rural kids can also be much greater. Digital communication can help them stay in touch with local friends who do not live miles away or even find communities around their personal interests that do not exist nearby. The key is staying aware of how they use those tools, even as they are rapidly changing.

"We know that for everyone, these forms of digital communication are just embedded within our daily lives," Burnell says. "Everyone relies on digital forms of communication for social support. So, it's important to remember it's not just good or bad. It depends on the content, it depends on the person, and it depends on what they're doing." 📱



Adobe Stock (altered) AI-generated illustrations by LucyJ

Delivering More Than Dinner

Meals on Wheels fills bellies and hearts

Story by BRANDI DIXON

Sitting on the sidelines is not in Floyd Nicholson's nature. The 76-year-old is a former member of the South Carolina Senate, a longtime fixture of the local education system and even served a stint as mayor of Greenwood.

When Floyd learned about volunteer opportunities with Piedmont Agency on Aging and its Meals on Wheels initiative, he knew he had to help.

"When I retired, I found I had some time, and it's a very rewarding program," he says. "Not only are you taking people a hot meal, but you are giving them a point of connection."

Piedmont Agency on Aging's Meals on Wheels serves four counties, Greenwood, Abbeville, Laurens and Saluda, five days a week. Floyd's regular Monday-morning route takes him through Greenwood. In about an hour and a half he visits and delivers meals to more than a dozen households.

"We have people living longer now, and a lot of them cannot afford nursing homes," he says. "It's so important they have at least one good hot meal a day and know that they are not forgotten."

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Piedmont Agency on Aging and its Meals on Wheels program began 53 years ago in Greenwood County, followed by Abbeville in the late 1980s, according to CEO Tracey Bedenbaugh.

The meal delivery programs in Laurens and Saluda launched in 2015 and 2018, respectively. The mission across the board is to enable seniors to remain in their homes as long as possible by offering meal services, transportation and more.

"It's very unique that our program serves four counties, as most only operate one or two counties," Tracey says, adding the size of the program's service footprint is due to the area being rural.

The agency operates five senior centers that offer meals Monday through Friday along with social activities like bingo, exercise classes, devotionals and guest speakers. An average of 100 people visit the centers on a daily basis.

"Lots of seniors cannot drive, so we provide transportation to the senior centers, major medical appointments and some essential shopping," Tracey says. Services are tailored to individual participants' situations and needs.

Piedmont's Meals on Wheels routes currently deliver to 528 households. With those kinds of numbers, the need for volunteers is great. Tracey says while the organization has a pool of about 300 community members who lend a hand when they can, additional helpers are always needed.


"Most of our volunteers are for Meals on Wheels," she says. "Some deliver the meals, some come to the kitchen and package food, while others help serve and run activities at the centers."

The meals—which come hot, frozen or shelf stable—are delivered on tight schedules to ensure freshness. On a typical day, kitchen staff members begin arriving at 4 a.m. to prepare



the day's menu. Drivers check in starting at 8 a.m., load up their deliveries and the food starts rolling out by 11 a.m. at the latest.

"One of the unique things about us is that we have our own commercial kitchen," Tracey says. "We are wanting to build a new kitchen as the demand and need has increased since accepting two additional counties, we've outgrown our original kitchen."

Fundraising efforts are underway to help the Piedmont Agency on Aging achieve this new goal to allow this important service to continue. Learn more at piedmontaoa.com. 



Photos by Mark Gilliland

ABOVE: A helper draws smiley faces on the covers of meals.

TOP: The Greenwood Meals on Wheels team works together to package meals.

GET INVOLVED

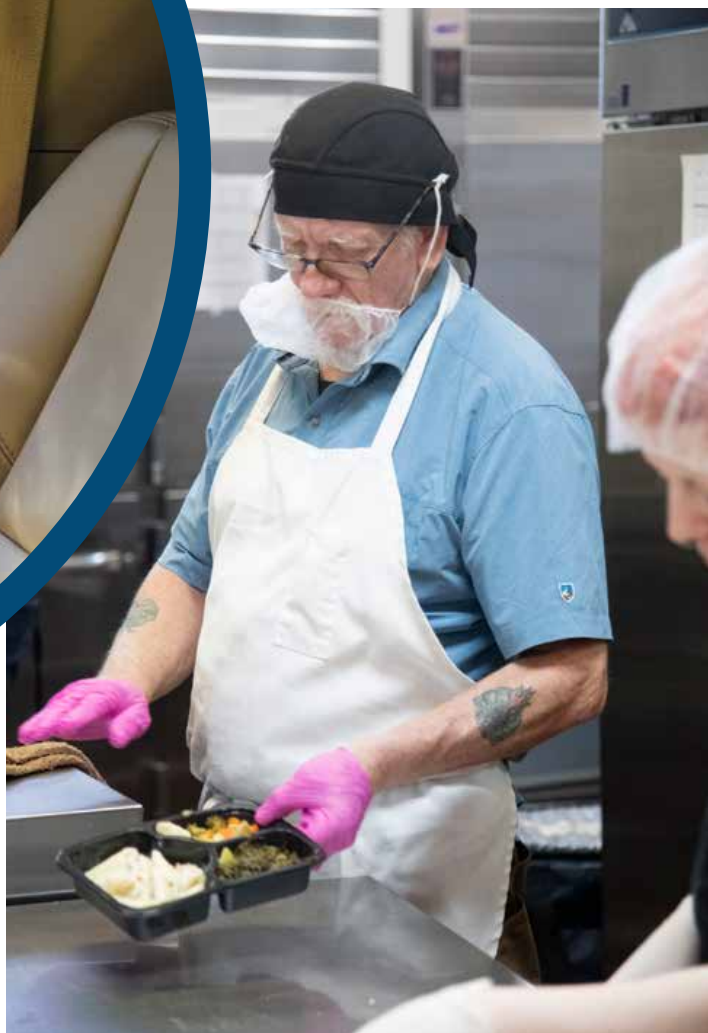
The Piedmont Agency on Aging always needs volunteers, especially for its Meals on Wheels program. From kitchen prep to deliveries, jobs are available for all ages and walks of life.

Abbeville Site Manager Betty Moore welcomes new helpers. "Right now, my specific need is a volunteer for a regular route on Mondays," she says. "I also need volunteers that are willing to be substitutes and willing to come when I have a regular volunteer that needs to be out."

Abbeville delivers approximately 40 hot meals every day, locally and as far out of town as Calhoun Falls.

A volunteer coordinator operates out of the program's main kitchen in Greenwood. Interested individuals can contact her by the agency main phone line or by reaching out to their local senior center to find opportunities at the nearest campus. In Abbeville, Betty encourages interested volunteers to reach out to her at 864-366-9666.

"It's going to be one of the most rewarding things you can do," Meals on Wheels volunteer Floyd Nicholson says. "You are genuinely helping people and letting them know how much you care for them."



ABOVE: James McConnell works the line.

OPPOSITE PAGE: West Carolina employees Tosha Hanna, left, and Kerri Hall load up a vehicle to deliver the day's meals around Abbeville.

PIEDMONT AGENCY ON AGING

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Look for Piedmont Agency on Aging on Facebook and Instagram.

Burger Bliss

Create a meal perfect for summer

Few things in life are better than a big juicy burger in the middle of summer. Mouths water at the thought. And it takes just a few ingredients to reach perfection.

There's more to making the perfect burger than hand-patting the beef, though that's an excellent start. But before you do that, add a little salt and pepper, a dash of Worcestershire sauce, an envelope of onion soup mix and mayonnaise. Yes, mayo. Ignite the fire, add your burgers to the grill and get ready for a taste explosion.

And since it's summer, add a watermelon salad and finish the meal with a big scoop of easy-to-make peach ice cream—no churning required—and you have a meal fit for a summertime feast.



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

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

MAYO BURGERS

- 1/2 cup mayonnaise
- 1/2 cup plain bread crumbs
- 1 envelope onion soup mix
- 2 pounds ground beef
- 8 hamburger buns

Combine mayonnaise, bread crumbs and soup mix in bowl.

Mix mayonnaise mixture into ground beef. Shape into 8 patties. When forming

hamburger patties, make a shallow indentation or dimple in the middle of each patty. This divot will keep the center from bulging up as it cooks so that the patty will stay flat and even. Even cooking and heat distribution will keep each patty juicy and consistent. Grill or broil until done. Serve burgers on buns with desired condiments.



WATERMELON SALAD WITH BALSAMIC REDUCTION

- 2/3 cup balsamic vinegar
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1 7- to 8-pound watermelon
- 2 tablespoons fresh lime juice
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1/4 cup fresh mint leaves, chopped
- 2/3 cup crumbled feta cheese

In a small saucepan set over medium-high heat, combine the balsamic vinegar and sugar. Bring the mixture to a boil and continue cooking, stirring and scraping down the sides as needed, until it has reduced and is the consistency of syrup,

about 5 minutes. It will thicken as it cools and only yield a few tablespoons. Set it aside to cool while you prepare the salad.

Cut the watermelon into cubes or use a melon baller to scoop it into balls. Put the melon pieces in a large bowl.

In a small bowl, whisk together the lime juice and olive oil with a pinch of salt and pepper. Pour the dressing over the watermelon, add the chopped mint and feta cheese, and toss to combine. Drizzle the salad with the balsamic syrup and serve immediately.

SUMMER PEACH NO-CHURN ICE CREAM

- 1 pound fresh peaches, peeled, pitted and sliced
- 1 14-ounce can sweetened condensed milk
- 1 8-ounce block of cream cheese
- 2 cups heavy whipping cream
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract

Using a food processor, pulse the

peaches until they are pea-size chunks. Alternatively, dice the peaches by hand and, in a large bowl, lightly mash them to release juices. Cover with a towel and set aside.

In a large mixing bowl or a stand mixer, mix the sweetened condensed milk, cream cheese, heavy whipping cream and vanilla on a medium-high speed until stiff

peaks form. Gently fold in the peaches until just combined.

Pour the mixture into a freezer-safe container. Cover with plastic wrap, allowing wrap to lie directly on top of the ice cream mixture. This will keep the ice cream from forming crystals on the top. Freeze at least 4 hours for soft-serve ice cream or 6 hours to overnight for firmer ice cream, then scoop away! 🍦

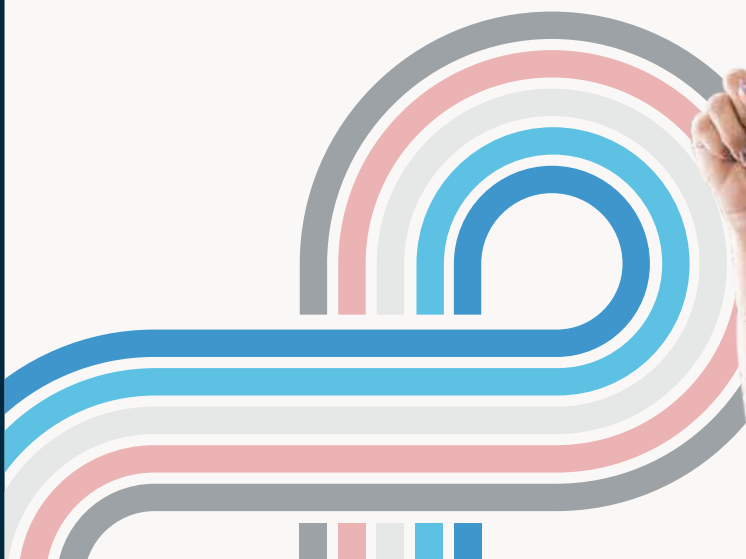




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