



WC west
carolina

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2025

CONNECTED

Walk Through Bethlehem

Cold Spring Mennonite Church
celebrates the season

MORNING RITUAL

FOLK ARTISTS



By Shirley Bloomfield, CEO
NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association

Professionally Secure

NTCA members are committed to your safety

As we enter the holiday season, it is an opportunity to acknowledge a group of professionals you may not realize is working diligently behind the scenes to make this season—as well as every month of the year—enjoyable and safe.

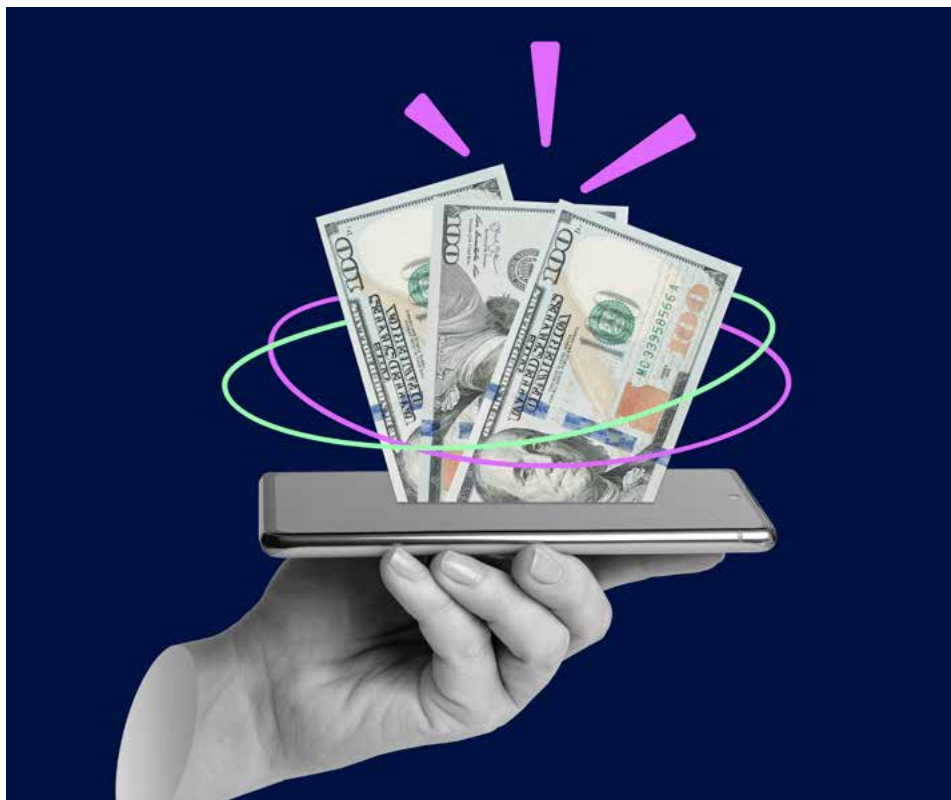
Many of you stream movies, music, short videos or interactive games, and there's always online shopping. NTCA members provide rural communities with the networks vital for all of this and so much more, from banking to education, telehealth and beyond.

Unfortunately, online risks do exist. Scammers may try to capture your personal information, or malicious websites might lead to insecure transactions. There are even attempts to disrupt the infrastructure itself.

Monitoring threats and vigilantly updating everything from software to security strategies is central to the day-to-day job of rural broadband providers. To help with this, NTCA created CyberShare: The Small Broadband Provider ISAC, an information-sharing network that allows participating providers to collaborate and share critical information. Whether it's learning about vulnerable equipment, software exploits, recent cyberattack attempts or mitigation strategies, this information sharing helps members proactively strengthen their defenses to keep you and your family safe online.

You play a role, too. When you're shopping online, make smart choices, such as relying on websites with addresses that begin with https, shop on well-established sites and lean on strong, secure passwords.

Together we can enjoy happy, safe holidays. 📱



Adobe Stock image by LariBat

Use Caution With Cash Apps

While mobile payment apps like PayPal or Venmo make it easy to send and receive money online or through an app on a phone, scammers are also waiting to take advantage.

This service becomes an intermediary between your money and whoever is on the other end of a transaction, which can create an added layer of security.

But if a scammer tricks you into sending money, it's hard to get it back. The Federal Trade Commission notes the risks and offers tips for staying safe.

- Don't send a payment to claim a prize or collect sweepstakes winnings.
- Never give your account credentials to anyone who contacts you.
- Protect your account with multifactor authentication or a personal identification number.
- Before paying, double-check the recipient's information to make sure you're sending money to the right person.
- If you get an unexpected request for money from someone you do recognize, speak with that person directly to make sure the request really is valid, not a scam by a hacker who got access to their account.

If you find unauthorized payments or think you paid a scammer, immediately report the transaction to the service providing the payment app. Instructions should be available on the service's website. Also, report the scam to reportfraud.ftc.gov. 📱

Outside the Box

Personalized presents extend gift-giving beyond holidays

Looking for that gift that keeps on giving long after they've tossed the wrapping paper and bows? With a little online exploration, a nontraditional gift is out there for just about everyone on your list.

GAMING SUBSCRIPTIONS

Just like movie and music services, game subscriptions offer unlimited access to huge catalogs of titles for players who would rather not put up the \$70-\$80 average price for each individual game. Paying a part of the most popular subscriptions—Xbox Game Pass at \$9.99-\$19.99 per month, PlayStation Plus at \$17.99 or Apple Arcade at \$6.99—is a great way to show your gamers some love.

WATCH 'EM PLAY

Video game streaming involves broadcasting live gameplay over the internet, allowing viewers to engage with and watch other players in real time. Like livestreaming on Facebook and TikTok, game streamers provide content for viewers worldwide, playing video games and offering commentary.

Twitch is by far the most popular service, with more than 240 million monthly subscribers who play, watch, create content and follow other gamers. Three subscription tiers with different levels of perks range from \$4.99 to \$24.99 per month. Steam is also huge. Discord, Kick, Caffeine and DLive are other popular choices for gifting your interactive gamers, just confirm the platform they prefer so you're sure to get them a gift they can use.

'OF THE MONTH' CLUBS

With a quick internet search, you can set

up a monthly delivery of everything from pickles to pet chews to bath gels, bacon and beyond. Look at sites like Amazing Clubs or Month Club Store to find multiple choices in one spot.

A monthly themed box or crate can satisfy all ages, from educational toys at Crunchlabs and a monthly Lego set through Brick Loot to a spa-in-a-box from Therabox. Visit Cratejoy for a wide selection.

Consider a gift subscription to Dear Holmes, which mails weekly clues on fancy stationery for solving a Victorian-era crime. For \$50, six months' worth of mysteries will turn your person into a solo Sherlock or the leader of a team of Watsons who share stories on YouTube.

GIFT CARDS

You've no doubt noticed the columns of gift cards at your supermarket or drugstore. They look like colorful credit cards, and that's exactly what they are. These pieces of plastic can be applied toward almost anything from cash to food delivery services. The easiest way to give something everyone wants and by far the simplest to ship, gift cards are expected to generate \$447.1 billion in revenue this year.

You can grab gift cards toward recurring subscriptions, like a movie or music streaming service. You're sure to earn points by gifting a part of the monthly Netflix or Hulu charges. Or find a Spotify, Apple Music or SiriusXM gift card and keep the happy tunes flowing all year. 🎧

GIFT CARD SMARTS

Stick to stores you know and trust. Avoid buying online where shady sellers may promote fake or stolen gift cards.

Avoid cards with signs of tampering.

Pay with a credit card if possible. If you run into problems and have to file a chargeback, your credit card company will investigate.

Consider using the gift card quickly to avoid potential inactivity fees or issues like business closure.

Keep copies. If the gift card doesn't work, the number on the card and store receipt will help you file a report with the Federal Trade Commission at reportfraud.ftc.gov.

Source: Federal Trade Commission

One Connection at a Time

As the seasons change, I am reminded that giving is not bound to a single time of year. It is a constant opportunity to lift one another up. At West Carolina, we have long believed that being connected means more than fiber in the ground. It is about the people, the neighbors and the communities we serve.



CHRIS TOWNSON
Chief Executive Officer

That is why our Give Big campaign each November is one of the traditions I'm most excited to experience as West Carolina's new CEO. Each year, we invite customers to bring three nonperishable food items into any of our offices. In exchange, we provide a speed upgrade or gift. What seems like a small gesture adds up in powerful ways. Year after year, we challenge ourselves to increase our previous goals, and every time, our customers rise to meet the need. Together, we have been able to supply meaningful donations across our service area, bringing the gift of food and hope to families right here at home.

I will admit, it is sobering to see the food shelves in our communities nearly bare. Hunger is not a distant problem. It is here. It is alive. And it is growing. But the good news is this: Together, we can fill those shelves again. We can make sure no family goes without.

What inspires me even more is seeing how our employees carry this spirit of service into their own lives. From delivering meals with Meals on Wheels to sponsoring children through the Angel Tree to volunteering in their churches, they embody what it means to serve with heart. These acts of kindness are not just transactions. They are lasting connections that show children, seniors and neighbors alike that they are cared for and not forgotten. That kind of love changes lives, and I believe it changes communities too.

At West Carolina, our brand values guide how we show up every day: Serve with heart, take care of each other, be the area's biggest fan, work the dream and show up right. These are not just corporate words. They are principles we can live by at home, in our neighborhoods, in our schools and in our communities.

Yes, we provide the fiber that enables connection. But true connection is more than speed and bandwidth. It is about what we do with the gift of being connected. We all have the power to turn those connections into something meaningful, something better for our communities, our neighbors and our families.

On a personal but related note, this time of year has always been special to me. I love Thanksgiving because it gives us the chance to slow down and remember what truly matters.

And Christmas, which celebrates the birth of Christ, reminds me of the greatest gift ever given. These moments inspire us to be thankful, to have hope and to focus on something greater than ourselves. When we live with gratitude and share that hope, we strengthen the connections that hold our communities together.

This season, let us start with one connection at a time. Together. 

west carolina

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west carolina

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

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Cold Spring Mennonite Church in Abbeville created a guided experience with scenes and actors that share a "Walk Through Bethlehem." See story Page 8.

Photo by John Clayton

SHARING THE SPIRIT

The holiday season is a blend of cherished traditions. West Carolina's fast and reliable internet service can help your family keep those traditions going strong even when loved ones are miles away. With a little creative thinking, you can even create some new ones.

Digital greetings

Use a free online design platform to collaboratively create a digital Christmas card from the entire family.

Holiday playlists

Put together a family playlist on Spotify or YouTube Music so everyone gets to hear their favorite holiday hits.

Karaoke party

Use an app like Smule or simply find instrumental versions of holiday songs on YouTube. Each person can take a turn belting out a favorite carol.

Movie night classics

Schedule a movie night and pick a holiday film everyone likes. Using a service like Teleparty, your family can watch at the same time no matter where they are and use the chat feature to share commentary, reactions and favorite lines. It's also great for trash talking during football games.



HOLIDAY OFFICE CLOSURES

May your holidays be filled with love, laughter and all the connections that matter most.

To allow our employees to spend the holidays with their families, West Carolina's offices will be closed on the following dates:

Thanksgiving

Thursday, Nov. 27, and Friday, Nov. 28

Christmas

Christmas Eve: Wednesday, Dec. 24, and
Christmas Day: Thursday, Dec. 25

New Year's Day

Thursday, Jan. 1

Wishing you a holiday season as bright as our fiber optic network.



SAVVY STREAMING

After that second helping of turkey, many holiday shoppers will hit their devices to get a jump on their gift lists. While bargain hunting, don't forget to check streaming services for seasonal discounts.

The mybundle.tv website is your streaming entertainment resource, listing all the holiday deals from platforms like Hulu, YouTube TV and even SiriusXM.

Go to mybundle.tv/wcfiber or get the app to check out this season's savings.

- Compare the value of available options and Black Friday deals.
- Browse trending movies and series on each platform.

Speedway In Lights

Bristol gears up for Christmas festivities

Story by KATHY DENES

Ready to take a lap around the “The World’s Fastest Half-Mile” illuminated by 3 million Christmas lights? For the 29th year, Tennessee’s Bristol Motor Speedway and Dragway is inviting the public to come celebrate the season.

The route of the 4-mile-long Food City Speedway In Lights powered by TVA starts at Bristol Dragway, entered off Highway 394. About midway through, drivers enter the iconic “Last Great Colosseum” and circle its half-mile concrete oval. After taking that memorable lap, guests can park inside the track and treat the family to the Christmas Village, presented by HSN.

The Christmas Village, adorned in holiday decor, includes Santa’s Hut, where kids get the chance to meet the jolliest old elf. There are also carnival rides, vendors offering Christmas crafts and treats, a tubing slide and a snow maze.

After enjoying all the village has to offer, guests will get back in their vehicles and continue the drive, which concludes at the Dragway entrance.

ICE, ICE, BABY!

Finishing the drive doesn’t have to mean it’s time to leave the speedway, though. Adding to the holiday sparkle is the Tri-Cities Airport Ice Rink at Bristol

Motor Speedway, presented by Stateline Services and touted as the region’s best and longest-standing ice rink. Visitors can enjoy skating daily from Thursday, Nov. 20, through Sunday, Jan. 11, 2026. Admission is \$12 for guests who bring their own skates or \$15 for those who need to rent them.

The 120-by-60-foot ice rink is covered by a tent at the speedway’s North Entrance. Promotional nights and special events are offered, such as College Nights at the Ice Rink. On Tuesdays, students who present their valid college IDs at the ticket booth will get a free skate rental.

A LIGHT FOR CHILDREN

Proceeds from the Speedway In Lights and affiliated events benefit Bristol Speedway Children’s Charities, which funds agencies that have helped thousands of children. The charity was founded in 1996 when Bristol Speedway became part of Speedway Motorsports, which has a Speedway Children’s Charities chapter at each of its 11 racing venues.

Claudia Byrd, the executive director of the Bristol chapter, was charged with coming up with a signature fundraising event. Inspired by her family’s tradition of enjoying holiday light displays in her hometown, Claudia suggested the speedway present a Christmas lights show. It

quickly got the green light from track owner Bruton Smith. To date, thanks to the Christmas event and others throughout the year, the charity has distributed nearly \$20 million.

“Speedway In Lights is not only the flagship fundraiser for Speedway Children’s Charities but a tradition for so many in the Tri-Cities region,” says Betsy Holleman, the charity’s senior manager for development and events. “The event has accounted for a third of our annual budget for over 25 years. It’s an opportunity to bring family out for an evening of Christmas fun, while supporting kids in our area.”

FAST FACTS

Speedway In Lights begins on Friday, Nov. 21, and continues daily from 6-10 p.m. into the new year, concluding on Saturday, Jan. 3.

Prices for cars range between \$25-\$35. Vans are \$85, and buses are \$150. Visitors can take advantage of Fast Lane presented by Citi, a speedy \$75 option that provides a shorter wait time on select nights when traffic lines get long.

For details about Fast Lane presented by Citi and all other Speedway In Lights event and pricing updates, go to bristolmotorspeedway.com. 📱



ABOVE: The display of Speedway In Lights sponsor Food City brightens up a section of the route.

LEFT: Skaters enjoy the covered ice rink outside Bristol Motor Speedway.

Sharing the Reason for the Season

Walk Through Bethlehem brings the Nativity story to vivid life

Story by LAZ DENES

Something extraordinary will happen the first two weekends of December on a typically quiet stretch of Cold Spring Church Road in Abbeville. The biblical past will spring to life, complete with horses, sheep, a camel and a donkey amid a flurry of activity by costumed villagers in a bustling marketplace.

It's called Walk Through Bethlehem, and it's hosted by the Cold Spring Mennonite Church. Thanks to the efforts of hundreds of volunteers from the congregation and other Mennonite churches in the area, the eight-night event elevates the traditional live Nativity scene experience to a whole new level.

With its church and adjacent school grounds transformed into the ancient city of Bethlehem, the annual event tells the story of Jesus' birth not merely from a stage, but as an immersive, heartwarming journey of faith and community.

FROM HUMBLE BEGINNINGS

Back in 2019, lifelong church member

Tyler Swartzentruber and his, wife, Larissa, brainstormed ways to enhance the annual Christmas play performed by its school students to spread the gospel message to a much wider audience.

The result was a detailed script delivered as a guided tour through Bethlehem, chronicling the Christmas story from angelic proclamations and to the arrival of the three wise men paying homage to the newborn Jesus.

More than 200 volunteers bring the various scenes to life, taking on the roles of shepherds, shopkeepers and tradesmen to children playing in the street and Roman guards on horseback.

While the script has remained consistent since the inaugural performance, Tyler says the church has introduced subtle details and improvements each year. "to try and up the quality." Not surprisingly, the event has grown steadily in popularity—from 1,000 guests passing through in 2019 to more than 7,000 last year.

"We've come a long way. We look back at that first year and kind of cringe a little bit," Tyler says with a laugh.

"We really didn't know if anyone would show up that first year.

We were ready and watching the road. A few cars came, and we were just thrilled. Now, it's a crowd. God has really worked through this."

A JOURNEY BACK IN TIME

Each night, groups of 90 guests at a time are guided through the village every 10 to 15 minutes. They're handed coins, symbolic of Roman taxes, to present at the city gates. Once inside, the experience becomes truly immersive. Angels are brilliantly lit overhead against the backdrop of the night sky when they appear to Mary, then Joseph and later the shepherds tending to their flocks.

While guests take in the sights and sounds of the city street scene, Joseph walks in their midst, leading a donkey with Mary riding sidesaddle as they search for shelter.

"Our city setup is usually the highlight for everyone," Tyler says. "It's a whole lot of little shops—a blacksmith, a woodworker, bread stands, all kinds of things. The inn scene is at the end, so we give people about five or 10 minutes to look around in the different shops, and there are different food samples they can try. It feels alive. They actually can talk to people instead of just watching and walking around."





COLD SPRING MENNONITE CHURCH

226 Cold Spring Church Road, Abbeville

Dec. 4-7 and Dec. 11-14

6-8 p.m. Groups depart every 10 to 15 minutes.

Free admission

The route is paved. Guests who use wheelchairs are encouraged to bring their own.

For more details, visit coldspring.church.

For more information, call 864-446-8857 or follow Walk Through Bethlehem Cold Spring Mennonite Church on Facebook.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Cold Spring Mennonite Church's Walk Through Bethlehem event includes a depiction of Mary and Joseph being turned away by the innkeeper. The city street scene features a woodworker's shop. The three wise men come bearing gifts for the baby Jesus.

The added presence of live animals adds to the rich sensory experience. Fire pits and straw bale seating keep guests warm and comfortable while they wait for their group to leave, and the evening concludes in the church's gym with homemade cookies and hot chocolate, prepared by the women of the congregation, while a final message is delivered.

A HIGHER PURPOSE

The true beauty of Walk Through Bethlehem lies not only in its realism but in its spirit. Tyler estimates 90% to 95% of church members are actively involved in the event, from children to elders. For the men, women and children who volunteer to put it on each year, it's much more than a production, it's a ministry.

"The main goal is to spread the gospel, and that's for sure our main thrust, giving a little bit of the real story behind the message of Christmas," Tyler says. "Ultimately, the message of salvation is what we want everyone to leave with after their experience here." 🗨️



HEALING BONDS

Pets for Vets makes the perfect match

Story by JEN CALHOUN

When Clarissa Black first took Bear, her husky-malamute, to visit patients at a Veterans Administration medical center, she had no idea he was about to change hundreds of lives.

Of course, she knew Bear was special. He had a way about him. When someone needed quiet company, Bear could lie perfectly still for hours. If someone was working on mobility, Bear would position himself at the perfect distance, paws up, as if to offer encouragement. And when people looked into the dog's eyes and spoke to him, he'd cock his head and let out one of his husky "woos" right on cue.

"People really felt like he was talking to them," says Clarissa, whose background in animal science and anthrozoology gave her a deeper insight into the interactions. "They felt seen, and they felt heard."

Clarissa's experience with Bear at the VA hospital sparked the idea for Pets for Vets, a nonprofit organization that matches veterans with specially trained companion animals. Since she founded it more than 15 years ago, the organization has matched more than 800 animals with veterans.

WANT TO HELP?

Pets for Vets is a four-star rated, not-for-profit organization that relies on donations to provide free services to veterans. There are several ways to donate.

Donate online: Visit petsforvets.com/donate to make a secure online donation.

Donate by mail: Pets for Vets Inc., P.O. Box 10860, Wilmington, NC 28404.

Other ways to give: The organization also accepts cryptocurrency and vehicle donations that include cars, trucks, boats and motorcycles.

Volunteer: Fill out the volunteer form at petsforvets.com to offer your time and expertise.

For more information about the program, or to apply for a companion animal, visit petsforvets.com or send an email to contactus@petsforvets.com.



LEFT: Spyder's tendency to jump in laps and lick faces helped calm and center Leif Mesinger when he became frustrated.

OPPOSITE PAGE: Clarissa Black, founder and executive director of Pets for Vets, with her late dog, Bear, who sparked the idea for the not-for-profit organization.

We're looking for that reciprocal match where both are getting exactly what they want."

MAKING A MATCH

Once the group approves a veteran's application for a companion animal, the search gets underway. Clarissa's experience as a marine mammal trainer taught her the most powerful relationships happen when both parties get exactly what they need. The process isn't about finding a good dog. It's about finding exactly the right dog.

The matching process is not only thorough, it's personal. Veterans work closely with trainers to identify their needs and prepare for pet ownership. "We spend a lot of time getting to know our veterans, finding out what it is they need, what they're looking for and what would be a good fit for them," she says.

Meanwhile, trainers visit shelters and rescue groups to conduct one-on-one "interviews" with potential animal companions, which can include cats, rabbits and other species, as well. If a veteran enjoys outdoor activities, for example, the trainer might look for a more active dog that loves to fetch and hike. On

the other hand, a more sedentary vet might need a peaceful pooch or calm cat.

From there, each animal undergoes foundation training customized for its future human. During this time, which often takes place in a foster situation, trainers enhance what Clarissa calls the animal's "superpowers," or the natural behaviors that made them perfect for their veteran in the first place.

"We're really trying to make this connection where both are getting exactly what they want," she says. "Ultimately, that connection is what's going to fulfill them and maybe even heal them. There's some research out there that suggests that it's not just any dog, it's the right dog—the dog that people feel connected to—that can help mitigate anxiety and depression." 🐾

SECOND CHANCES

After Leif Mesinger returned home from Iraq, the world felt different. It was harder to navigate and harder to understand. The Army infantryman and gunner suffered a traumatic brain injury from an improvised explosive device blast, and it changed everything.

"My mind was racing, and I struggled to communicate," Leif says in a Pets for Vets testimonial video. "I felt disconnected from everything I used to know."

But help arrived in the form of a tiny, hairless waif of a dog named Spyder. Clarissa Black, founder of Pets for Vets, discovered the dog after meeting with Leif and finding out what he needed in a companion animal.

Spyder's superpower was that he loved to jump into people's laps and lick them. It was a trait Clarissa intentionally honed in Spyder before presenting him to Leif. She knew that kind of gentle, rhythmic contact could ground a person dealing with anxiety.

In time, Spyder's constant presence gave Leif a growing sense of purpose and a deepening bond. Thanks to his more than 15 years with Spyder, Leif's communication with others has improved and his life is more fulfilling than ever. "Spyder was kind of like that saving grace that centered me again and brought me back," he says.

SERVING THOSE WHO SERVED

The program generally serves veterans dealing with post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injuries, but the organization is open to helping any vet who could benefit from a deep connection with a pet. And while the service is completely free to the veterans, it relies on donations from the public and a network of more than 100 volunteer animal trainers across the country.

It's important to note that Pets for Vets animals aren't service dogs that have been highly trained to assist people with disabilities. Still, the organization works hard to meet the veterans' needs as well as the animals'.

"We're not just asking what the dog gives the veteran," Clarissa says. "We want to know what the veteran gives the dog."

‘Gather, Unite, Empower’



Main Street Coffee Co. brews success in Abbeville



Photo by Matt Ledger

Shanna Stoll has grown Main Street Coffee to locations in Abbeville and McCormick.

Story by JOHN CLAYTON

Main Street Coffee Co. is a Saturday-morning hot spot in Abbeville, but the family-owned shop serves up more than just cups of joe.

Main Street Coffee upgraded its Abbeville location this year, providing more space for its busy kitchen and additional seating. Owners Shanna and Franklin Stoll bought an adjacent building in 2024 and began making expansion plans to help the business and the Abbeville community grow. The project took 11 months.

“We get lots of compliments on the atmosphere and how amazing the place feels when you step in the door,” Shanna says. “That’s very important to us. We want people to feel loved. We want them to feel seen and heard.”

When the Stolls decided to build on already-successful breakfast and lunch hours by offering brunch on Saturdays, the idea was an immediate hit with their customers.

“It gets crazy, but in the best way,” Shanna says.

Several local organizations hold their monthly meetings at the coffee shops, including the Abbeville Rotary Club and women’s groups. Since 2021, the remote working crowd has flocked to use the upstairs space which has WiFi provided by West Carolina’s fiber broadband.

“We’re grateful for the opportunity to create more spaces in Abbeville for others to come and make connections, while experiencing an atmosphere of peace, joy and community,” Franklin says.

Shanna and Franklin took over Main Street Coffee from Franklin’s cousin, Bethany Stoll, in 2020. Shanna began working with Bethany in the coffee shop back in 2009 and says visits to a Honea Path coffee shop that became her “go-to place” planted thoughts of ownership in her mind. “I love working relationally with people,” Shanna says. “I love conversation and customer service, so that’s what drew me in. Then, I just loved the art of it.”

LOCAL GROUNDS

Keeping it local, the restaurant features coffees from Abbeville-based Thru the Fire roasters.

With coffee, breakfast, lunch or brunch comes the sort of vibe and atmosphere the Stolls and the Main Street Coffee staff have worked hard to create over the past four years.

Shanna says her team of employees help create that heart, working together as friends and family to serve more than just a good cup of coffee. Plans for 2026 include a patio seating area and more creative food options.

“We asked ourselves, ‘What are three words that we want to describe our company?’ We came up with gather, unite and empower,” Shanna says. “We wanted to create a space where that unity and that empowerment could come about. That’s the heart of this space.” ☕

MAIN STREET COFFEE COMPANY

109 South Main St., Abbeville

864-366-5010

Ordering online: order.dripos.com/Main-St.-Coffee-Co.-Abbeville

Find the business on Facebook, @mainstreetcoffeeabbeville, and Instagram, @mainstreetcoffeeco.

Sweet Legacy

Family-run Abbeville bakery thrives on tasty tradition

Story by JAMIE BIESIADA

It's a whirlwind of pies, bread, fruitcakes, chocolate-covered crackers and cookies at the family-owned bakery on Highway 28, but owner Loretta Swartzentruber wouldn't have it any other way.

At Swartzentruber's Bakery in Abbeville, the holiday rush starts in early October. It ends precisely at 3 p.m. on Christmas Eve, when the doors shut and remain closed until the first Thursday in February while the staff enjoys a well-earned break.

Loretta's family has operated the bakery for more than 40 years under the motto set by her mother, the late Mary Swartzentruber: "Our business is to serve the Lord. We bake cakes to meet expenses."

FROM BEANS TO BREAD

Loretta grew up on a small dairy farm. In 1981, her father, the late Norman Swartzentruber, planted too many green beans, so the family set up shop at a farmers market at 6 a.m. every Saturday. But the market lacked prepared food options. Loretta's sister, Ruby Overholt, asked if she could make chocolate whoopie pies. The next week, Ruby's confections joined the green beans.

"They just flew off the table," Loretta says. "They were gone within probably half an hour."

The following week, Mary added pound cake to the mix, and that sold out quickly, too. By the end of the season, regulars asked them to bring baked goods to another market.

"Mom decided we were either going to get out of it completely, or we're going to get licensed and people can come to the house to buy, as well," Loretta says.

That's exactly what they did. Norman and Mary enclosed their two-car carport, and Swartzentruber's Bakery was born.

BAKED GOODS AND BEYOND

Loretta still operates the bakery today much like her parents did. It's open Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays, and a 9-foot-tall lighthouse next to the road beckons to patrons.

Swartzentruber's signature cake is a three-flavor pound cake featuring lemon, orange and vanilla, a recipe given to Mary at a baby shower in the 1960s. It's one of 10 layer cakes and 10 varieties of pound cakes the bakery makes from scratch. Loretta has also added a full supply of jarred goods, including jams, granola and spreads. She credits a great team of employees for fulfilling each order. 📞



Share a Pizza

Share Your Heart

Start a new holiday meal tradition

Turkey, ham, lamb—tradition gives them all a place on the holiday table. But gather the family together for a pizza party, and you can roll out a whole new tradition.

Make your own pizza dough with just a handful of ingredients, and you'll know that there are no preservatives and other unhealthy additives. For a family affair and fun for the kids, create a bar with pizza toppings—pepperoni, sausage, onions, peppers, cheese and the like—and let them make their own.

A preheated pizza stone will crisp the crust, but a cookie sheet also works.

A pizza salad with Italian herbs and a creamy vinaigrette dressing is the perfect pairing.

A dessert pizza with fresh berries and other fruits available year-round delivers a refreshing finish. Make the crust the day before and layer on the cream cheese spread. But wait until shortly before serving to add the fruits so they will stay colorful and fresh.



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

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



FAMILY NIGHT PIZZA

- 1 cup warm water (105 F)
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1 tablespoon active dry yeast
- 1 tablespoon olive or avocado oil
- 1 teaspoon fine sea salt
- 2 to 2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour

Preheat oven to 500 F. Put a pizza stone or cookie sheet in the oven while it preheats, and let it warm for at least 10 minutes.

MAKE THE DOUGH

In a large mixing bowl, stir water, yeast and sugar to combine. Let mixture sit for 5 minutes or until it becomes frothy and bubbles form. Gently stir in olive oil.

Add 2 cups of flour and salt and mix with a spatula until a ball begins to form. The

dough will still be slightly sticky. Add more flour as needed to form a dough ball.

Transfer to a floured surface and knead into a smooth dough, adding up to 1/2 cup extra flour if needed.

Cover the bowl with a damp tea towel, and let it rise for 10 minutes or up to 1 hour.

ASSEMBLE THE PIZZA

Roll the dough into your desired shape and put it on a piece of parchment paper. Add pizza sauce, cheese and toppings of choice. Transfer the pizza to the preheated pizza stone or cookie sheet in the oven.

Bake for 12-15 minutes or until the bottom of the crust is golden brown. Remove the pizza from the oven, and let it cool for 5-10 minutes before serving.

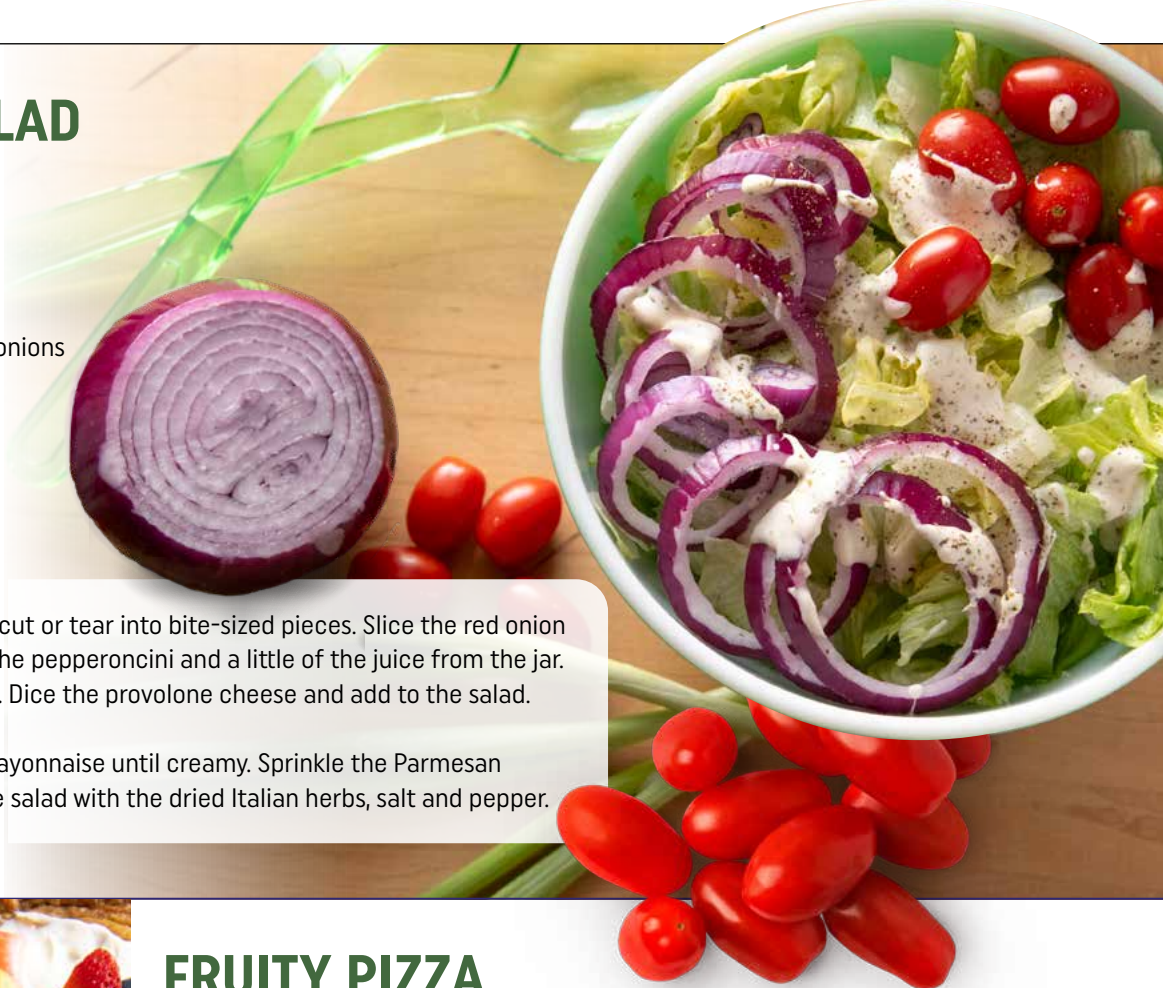
PIZZA NIGHT SALAD

- 1 head iceberg lettuce
- 1 medium red onion
- 6-8 pepperoncini peppers
- Chopped tomatoes to taste
- 8 slices provolone cheese
- 1 bunch fresh chives or green onions
- 1 1/3 cup favorite vinaigrette
- 1 tablespoon mayonnaise
- 1 1/2 cup Parmesan cheese
- 1 tablespoon or more dried Italian herbs
- Salt and pepper, to taste

Wash and air dry the lettuce and cut or tear into bite-sized pieces. Slice the red onion and add to the lettuce, along with the pepperoncini and a little of the juice from the jar.

Toss the tomatoes over the salad. Dice the provolone cheese and add to the salad. Sprinkle the salad with the chives.

Mix the salad dressing and the mayonnaise until creamy. Sprinkle the Parmesan cheese over the top and season the salad with the dried Italian herbs, salt and pepper.



FRUITY PIZZA

FOR THE CRUST

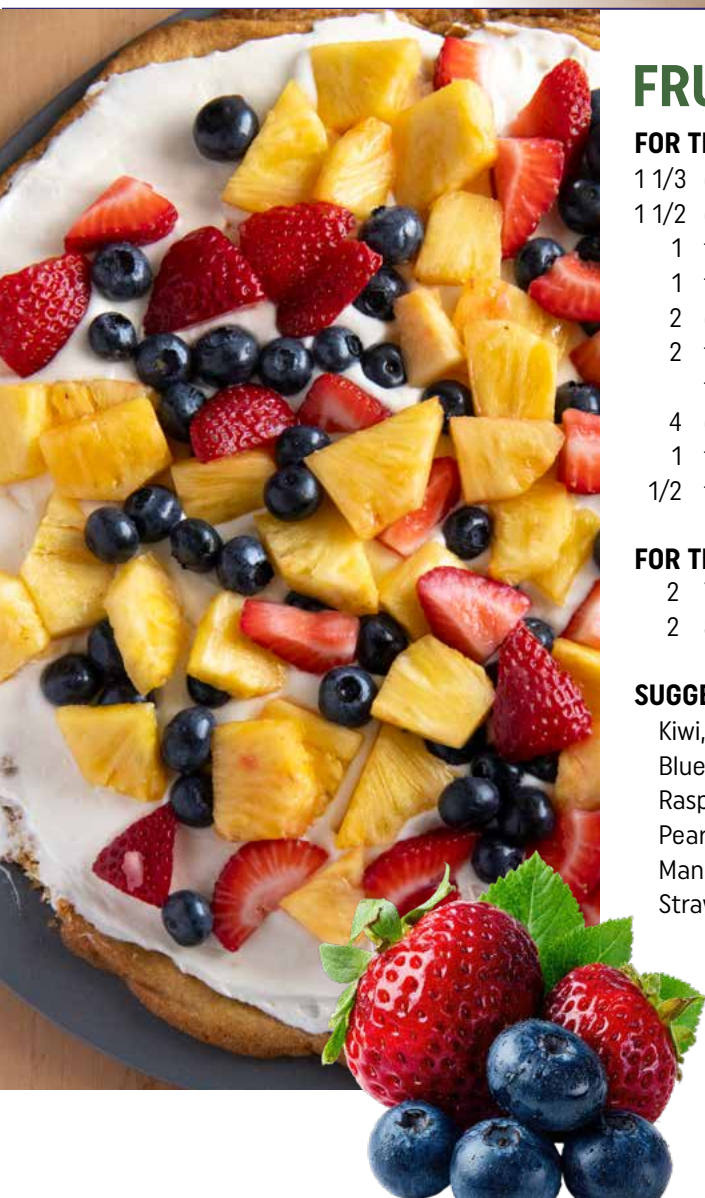
- 1 1/3 cups unsalted butter, softened
- 1 1/2 cups sugar
- 1 teaspoon orange zest
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 2 eggs, room temperature
- 2 tablespoons whole milk, room temperature
- 4 cups flour
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt

FOR THE FROSTING

- 2 7-ounce jars marshmallow creme
- 2 8-ounce packages cream cheese

SUGGESTED TOPPINGS

- Kiwi, sliced
- Blueberries
- Raspberries
- Pears, cored and sliced
- Mango, peeled and cubed
- Strawberries, sliced



Preheat the oven to 350 F.

For the cookie crust: In a large bowl, cream the butter, sugar, orange zest and vanilla thoroughly. Add the eggs and beat until light and fluffy. Add the milk and mix.

In a medium bowl, sift together the flour, baking powder and salt, then blend this into the butter mixture. Divide the dough into two disks and lightly flatten each disk between two sheets of parchment paper. If baking one large pizza, do not divide the dough. Refrigerate for 1 hour or freeze for 20 minutes.

Roll each dough half into an 11-inch round, then transfer to pizza pans. Or, press the dough into a large sheet cake pan.

Bake until the cookie dough is cooked and golden brown, but not overly crisp, 15-18 minutes. Remove from the oven and let cool completely.

For the frosting: In a mixer fitted with the whisk attachment, whip together the marshmallow creme and cream cheese until light in texture. Spread onto each cooled crust.

To decorate: Top the pizza with prepared sliced fruit, as desired. Slice into squares or wedges and serve. 🍷



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