

CONNECTED

Sweet Escape

Enjoying The Ice
Cream Xperience

DIVINE CREATIONS

COLD SPRING CAFE

By Mike Romano, CEO
NTCA—The Rural Broadband Association

More Than Service— A Commitment to Community

Before I begin this column, my first in your magazine, I would like to introduce myself. I am Mike Romano, the new CEO of NTCA—The Rural Broadband Association. I look forward to sharing a national perspective on the vital work your broadband provider does, and there is no better place to start than with the connections that work creates. Of course, I'm not only talking about broadband connections, but community connections, as well.



MIKE ROMANO
Chief Executive Officer

Across the country, community-based broadband providers like yours deliver advanced, high-speed networks that keep rural communities connected. But these providers' impact extends far beyond the technology they deploy. They are also active partners in the communities they serve.

Rooted in their hometowns, these providers are invested in helping their neighbors thrive. That may mean hosting workshops to help teach community members how to use new devices or stay safe online, supporting local schools with back-to-school supply drives, sponsoring sports teams and community events, creating good-paying jobs or partnering with local economic development organizations to build stronger communities. Their success is measured not only by network speeds and connections, but by the opportunities those connections make possible.

I am excited to highlight these efforts and the remarkable things happening in rural communities in future columns. When you choose a local provider, you get more than quality high-speed internet. You also have a partner committed to your community's success, today and for years to come. 📶

A LEGACY OF SPEED AND RESULTS

Fast, reliable and irreplaceable, your internet service connects you to essential digital services and resources. The pace of change has been blazing.



1. The Dawn of the Internet (1970s–1980s):

Early computer networks connected universities, researchers and government agencies, laying the groundwork for the modern internet.



2. Bringing the Web Home (1990s):

Internet access entered the home. Connections were slow by today's standards, but suddenly information, email and websites were available—even if it took a noisy modem to make it happen.



3. Always-On Connections (Early 2000s):

Faster, more dependable internet changed expectations. Users could stay connected without tying up phone lines.



4. The Streaming Era Begins (Mid-2000s):

Rising speeds made online video, music and larger file downloads practical for more households and businesses.



5. A More Connected Lifestyle (Late 2000s–2010s):

Internet service became essential, supporting smart devices, online gaming, social media and remote work.



6. High-Speed Homes and Businesses (2010s):

Growing demand drove another leap in performance, enabling high-definition streaming, cloud services and multiple connected devices running at once.

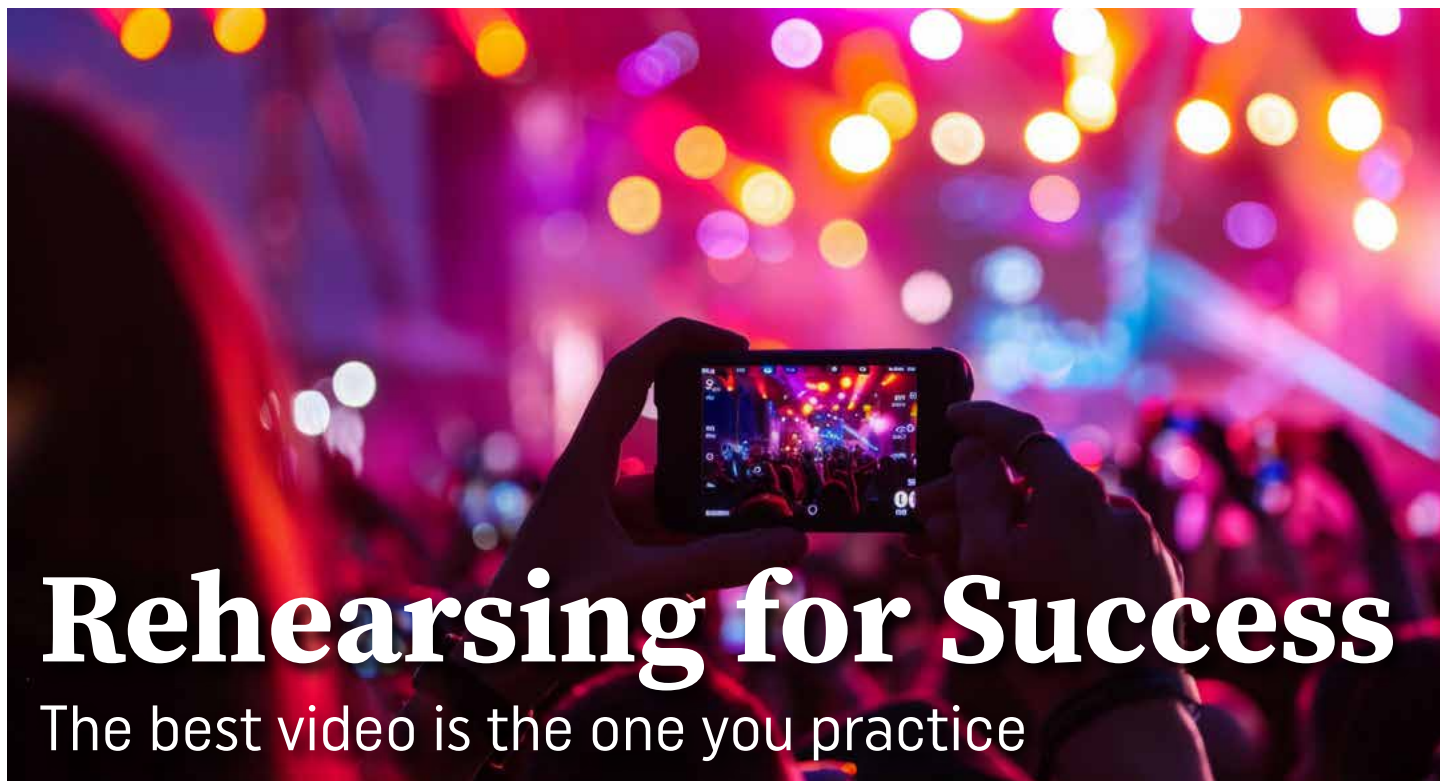


7. Keeping Pace With Demand (2020s–Present):

Today's networks deliver remarkably fast speeds and reliability, powering everything from telehealth and online learning to smart homes and more.



8. The Future Is Unlimited: Thanks to your broadband service, you'll have the speed you need.



Adobe Stock image by Emilia

Rehearsing for Success

The best video is the one you practice

Story by LAURA MCGILL

Smartphones make it easy to capture video of life's important moments. From concert footage of your favorite band to milestone events like graduations and weddings, there are so many special moments worth recording. Don't risk the results by being unprepared.

IN ADVANCE

The video camera on your phone is an amazing tool. And like with any tool, you need to practice to get the most out of it.

- Familiarize yourself with the settings and features to use them effectively. Do test shoots to learn and adjust.
- Holding a phone steady is harder than you think. If you notice your practice videos are shaky, try using a selfie stick, gimbal stabilizer or tripod.
- Take your videos up a notch with editing apps. These apps allow for color corrections and audio adjustments, as well as transitions, cuts and captions to produce an enhanced video.
- Be as prepared as possible by thinking ahead. Start with a full battery. If you are planning to shoot a long video or multiple videos, consider a portable battery pack. Check your phone's available storage capacity. During a shoot is the wrong time to realize you are out of space.

IN THE MOMENT

Once the camera is rolling, be aware of your phone's settings and your surroundings.

- Switch your phone to airplane mode to avoid interruptions from calls or notifications. Make sure your lens is clean.
- Position yourself in the optimal location. It is better to

be closer to your subject than to use the zoom function.

Remember, while filming in landscape mode is best for traditional video, some social media platforms prefer vertical formats. Choose the best approach for your end goal.

- Think about the lighting and sound. Pick a spot that is well-lit and close to the sound. If possible, use a microphone to improve sound quality.
- Tap the record button, then double-check that you are recording.

STORAGE OPTIONS

Now that you've shot that great video, you'll want to store it somewhere safe.

Physical external storage options include USB-C flash drives, SD cards and external solid state or hard drives. External storage means a one-time purchase of a device that gives you full control of your files.

Using a cloud storage service means that your videos and other files are stored with a third party. Some may offer a small amount of storage free of charge to their users. For example, Google provides 15 GB free for Google accounts. Additional storage is available for a monthly fee, maxing out at 2 TB for \$9.99 per month.

Amazon Prime members have access to 5 GB of free video storage from Amazon Photo. The free level also includes unlimited storage for photos. Additional video storage plans start at \$1.99 a month. iPhone users start with 5 GB of free storage through iCloud. They can upgrade to iCloud+ options, which range from 50 GB up to an impressive 12 TB. 

Freedom Lives Here

Celebrating 250 years of American community

When I think about the Fourth of July, I think about burgers and hot dogs on the grill, Mama's baked beans, mac and cheese and deviled eggs on the picnic table and fireworks exploding over a summer night sky. I think about gatherings with family and friends and my father-in-law, a proud Marine, having us recite the Pledge of Allegiance and sing the national anthem before anyone touches a plate. Community, in every sense of the word.



CHRIS TOWNSON
Chief Executive Officer

Those memories feel ordinary, but they aren't. They're a privilege paid for by folks who came before us, many of them here in our own backyard.

As America celebrates her 250th birthday, I keep thinking about how close that history is to us. Most people picture the revolution unfolding in Boston or Philadelphia, but American independence was largely won in the South. The Southern Upstate was a hotbed. Within a 50-mile radius of our Abbeville headquarters, over 100 Revolutionary War battles and skirmishes were fought. In July 1775—before the Declaration of Independence was signed—patriots seized Fort Charlotte in McCormick County. This was the first overt act of South Carolina defiance against the Crown. At Cherokee Ford in Abbeville, a small band of patriots ambushed a Loyalist force of 500. Anderson County is named for Gen. Robert Anderson, who fought there.

These weren't strangers in tricorne hats. They were farmers, blacksmiths and neighbors, and many of them never came home.

For me, this isn't museum history, it's family. My eighth great-grandfather, Repentance Townsend, later spelled Townson, came from England through the Virginia Colony and ultimately lived and died here in Abbeville in 1794. My family tree, and the freedoms we celebrate today, run through this same red Carolina clay.

What they bought for us with their lives was put on paper in three documents every American should read: the Declaration of Independence, which dared to say all men are created equal; the Constitution, which built a framework strong enough to hold that promise; and the Emancipation Proclamation, which began the hard work of making that promise true for everyone.

That work isn't finished. It never is. But it's ours to carry.

So, when I fire up the grill this summer, watch fireworks over Lake Hartwell, hear the gospel preached, vote in an election or speak my mind without fear, I try to remember that none of it was free. People sacrificed. People bled. And many of them did it on ground we still walk today.

At West Carolina, we take our small role in this community seriously. We get to keep folks connected to each other, to information, to opportunity. That's a freedom too, and one we don't take lightly.

This summer, I hope you'll slow down to look around. Hug your people. Thank a veteran. Visit a battlefield. Read those founding words again. And celebrate—really celebrate—the extraordinary gift of being an American.

Happy 250th, West Carolina friends. Freedom lives here. 📞

Chris E. Townson

west carolina

CONNECTED

JULY/AUGUST 2026

VOL. 14, NO. 4

West Carolina Connected is a bimonthly newsletter published by West Carolina Telephone, © 2026. It is distributed without charge to all members/owners of the cooperative.

west carolina

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
864-446-2111
westcarolina.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 by:

Pioneer
UTILITY RESOURCES

On the Cover:



Photo courtesy of Jess Bowie

Felicia Miller followed her dream of operating a small business, repurposing a school bus into the Ice Cream Xperience. See story Page 8.

SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

West Carolina recently celebrated the achievements of local students at its annual Scholarship Reception, recognizing scholarship recipients and family members of West Carolina employees as they pursue their educational goals.

The cooperative presented the \$1,000 Walt Thomas Memorial Scholarship to Turner Mapp of Crescent High School. Named in honor of longtime community leader Walt Thomas, the scholarship recognizes students who demonstrate strong character, leadership and service to their communities.

West Carolina also awarded \$1,000 scholarships to the children of West Carolina employees, including Lane Dominick of Ninety-Six High School, son of Business Solutions Representative Courtney Dominick, and Kate Taylor of Greenwood Christian High School, daughter of VP of Government & Community Affairs Stephen Taylor.

Additional scholarship awards included West Carolina's signature \$8,000 scholarship and the \$1,000 Roger Cox Scholarship through the Foundation for Rural Service (FRS), both awarded to Daniel "Miller" Crawford of Dixie High School. Ella Atkins of Abbeville High School received the \$1,000 West Carolina Scholarship Honors award in recognition of her academic achievement and commitment to excellence.



West Carolina CEO Chris Townson, left, and Board member Aimee Gray, right, present the scholarship to Turner Mapp, with his father present.



Lane Dominick, son of Courtney (West Carolina Business Solutions Representative) and David Dominick and Chrissy and Paul Smith, receives the WC Family Scholarship from West Carolina CEO Chris Townson, left and Board President Wes McAllister, right.

LEFT: Kate Taylor receives the West Carolina Family Scholarship on May 21, 2026, surrounded by proud family and West Carolina leadership. Pictured from left: CEO Chris Townson, grandmother Frankie, Kate Taylor, father and VP of Government & Community Affairs Stephen Taylor, and Board President Wes McAllister.



MORE SPEED, SAME COST

West Carolina is helping customers get their WiFi summer ready with faster internet speed and a better online experience—at no extra cost!

Whether it's streaming family movie nights, working from home, online gaming or keeping smart devices connected, reliable internet has become an important part of everyday life. That's why West Carolina is offering a complimentary internet speed tier upgrade for an entire year.

This offer gives members the opportunity to experience faster speeds, smoother streaming and better performance across multiple devices.

This internet upgrade offer is available for a limited time to qualifying residential customers. If you're interested in learning more or signing up, visit westcarolina.com/year-of-internet-upgrade for details.

HAPPY FOURTH OF JULY!

As our nation celebrates 250 years of independence, West Carolina is proud to celebrate the communities, neighbors, and connections that make our region so special.

We're grateful for the opportunity to serve our members every day and wish everyone a safe, joyful, and meaningful Independence Day.



Take Family Fun on the Road

Tips for traveling with kids

Story by LAURA MCGILL

Nothing ruins a family road trip faster than an unhappy child. Meltdowns at the museum and refusals at restaurants are the stuff of parents' nightmares. However, with a little planning, family getaways can be enjoyable experiences for everyone.

Consider the ages and tolerance levels of your kids when deciding how many miles you should drive, how many days to stay and what activities to plan. If this is your first family getaway, pick a closer destination and a shorter stay. If everything goes great, you can extend your visit. If things don't go so well, you can end the trip early and be back home quickly.

ON THE ROAD

Pack a few favorite toys and games and bring along plenty of snacks. Keep a supply of over-the-counter medications for cuts and scrapes, upset tummies and motion sickness handy. Look for convenient stops along the way to take short breaks.

Spend some time getting your children excited about the destination before you leave. Check for coloring pages and puzzles from the tourism office. You can also share details about the places you are going to visit to build interest and to set expectations.

AT YOUR DESTINATION

Make sure your plan includes where to stay and where to eat. Pick a family-friendly accommodation close to the places on your itinerary to cut down on time in the car. Do some research in advance to check out restaurant menus, especially if you have a picky eater.

Pace yourself and be flexible because something will likely not work out as planned. Have options in mind if you need to adapt to weather conditions or need to slow things down with a low-key activity. ☺

Adobe Stock image by Halfpoint





Adobe Stock image by Alekberpici

Where to Go

To increase your chances of having a fun family trip, pick some activities you know your children will enjoy. Maybe they are all about dinosaurs, or perhaps they love animals or are obsessed with their favorite sport.

GET PREHISTORIC

In addition to a collection of 70 million-year-old dinosaur bones, the museum also features 40 million-year-old whales and the impressive skull of a saber-toothed cat that was unearthed about an hour's drive from the museum.

The Middle Tennessee Museum of Natural History in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, allows visitors to observe ongoing research while touring exhibits of dinosaur bones and other unique relics from around the world. Cave City, Kentucky, takes the roar outdoors at Dinosaur World, where guests can walk among hundreds of life-sized replicas and enjoy interactive exhibits.

EXPLORE NATURE

If your trip includes a Saturday near Franklin, Tennessee, stop by Noble Springs Dairy for Baby Goat Cuddling Days. During your visit, you can learn about the farm, pet some adorable baby goats and try some amazing cheese. In Cottageville, South Carolina, Bee City Zoo offers animal encounters with hedgehogs, lemurs, sloths and more.

Its reptile center will certainly illicit a few shrieks with snakes, lizards and alligators.

CATCH THE GAME

If your child likes baseball but major league prices aren't in the budget, try a minor league game. The tickets are more affordable, stadiums are smaller, putting you closer to the field, and the atmosphere is relaxed and family friendly with a children's play area at many of the ballparks.

Madison, Alabama, just outside Huntsville, is home to the Rocket City Trash Pandas. Bats are swinging in Tennessee with the Nashville Sounds, Memphis Redbirds, Knoxville Smokies and Chattanooga Lookouts. In Kentucky, the Louisville Bats and Bowling Green Hot Rods take to the diamond. Central Indiana welcomes fans to watch the Indianapolis Indians. Fans in South Carolina cheer for six teams, the Greenville Drive, Hub City Spartanburgers, Augusta GreenJackets, Myrtle Beach Pelicans, Charleston RiverDogs and Columbia Fireflies.

This summer's biggest sporting event is the FIFA World Cup. With 48 clubs playing games in 16 host cities, it's generating a lot of excitement. If your child now has soccer fever, consider a closer-to-home option at an MLS NEXT Pro league match. Huntsville City FC plays its home games in Huntsville, Alabama, and the 2026 season runs through September.



License to Chill

The Ice Cream Xperience delivers family-building fun

Story by BRANDI DIXON

On a hot August day in 2021, the unmistakable jingle of an ice cream truck rang out in a South Carolina neighborhood for the first time. Children and parents alike stopped in their tracks, turning to the source of the joyous melody. As the vibrant truck painted with cheerful colors rolled into view, its presence sparked excitement and curiosity.

This moment marked the beginning of Felicia Miller's dream becoming a reality.

A veteran educator with more than two decades of classroom experience, Felicia

believes in the power of connection and celebration. Inspired by her desire to create joyful moments and meaningful family memories, she launched The Ice Cream Xperience out of a repurposed school bus. "I wanted to create unique experiences that bring people together," she says. "There is something about hearing an ice cream jingle as an ice cream truck approaches that every child should experience."

The Ice Cream Xperience's menu features more than 30 ice cream treats, everything from classic favorites to new

novelties. The goal isn't just to provide its customers with dessert, it's to bring "joy in motion" to the community, Felicia says.

"At the heart of The Ice Cream Xperience is family, faith, education and service," she says. "This business is more than ice cream—it's about building connections, creating memories, empowering children and giving back to the community that continues to support us."

What started as a simple idea quickly became a way for Felicia to serve the community while building something



Felicia Miller followed her dream of owning an ice cream truck.

Photos courtesy of Jess Bowie

lasting with her own family. The Ice Cream Xperience is committed to transforming ordinary events into community magnets that unite families and neighbors through shared joy.

“As an educator who served schools in Greenwood and Laurens, community service has always been central to my purpose,” she says. “The Ice Cream Xperience allows me to extend that mission beyond the classroom by supporting school events, fundraisers and youth programs.”

Felicia and her family use the business to partner with local organizations, churches and schools to help raise funds, create positive experiences and promote community unity. They travel hundreds of miles across South Carolina, reaching neighborhoods and towns that might otherwise be overlooked, bringing smiles and support wherever they go.

“We give back a portion of sales to schools as well as donating to youth programs at churches and nonprofit after-school programs,” she says.

The Ice Cream Xperience serves Greenwood, Abbeville, Laurens, Clinton, McCormick and surrounding areas.

“Locally, we love participating in school functions, fundraisers, community festivals and special pop-up events that allow us to connect directly with families and neighbors,” Felicia says.

FAMILY SERVING FAMILIES

A family-run business, The Ice Cream Xperience consists of Felicia, her husband, son, parents and close friends. Everyone involved plays an active role in daily operations, and they were all essential in bringing the truck to life.

“From setup and serving to customer engagement and marketing, they all do a great job of running the truck while school is in and I’m working,” Felicia says. “This business has truly become a shared labor of love that strengthens our bond while teaching valuable life and business skills.”

The Ice Cream Xperience is a new kind of classroom for Felicia’s 17-year-old son, Mitchell. He helps with event setup, serving customers, social media content, inventory and cleanup, developing real-world skills that add to his regular education.

THE ICE CREAM XPERIENCE

864-992-0673

theicecreamxperience.com

Follow The Ice Cream Xperience on Facebook

“It’s a powerful hands-on learning tool,” she says. “Through the business, he has learned communication, customer service, marketing, responsibility, financial responsibility and teamwork.”

Felicia’s friends and family aren’t the only ones giving The Ice Cream Xperience a boost. West Carolina also plays an important role in keeping the sweet treats rolling out.

“West Carolina has been an incredible support to our business and community outreach,” Felicia says. “Their reliable WiFi and services help us stay connected, manage bookings and promote our events efficiently. Their commitment to local businesses truly makes a difference.” 📶



The Ice Cream Xperience serves sweet treats out of a repurposed school bus.

Without a Trace

Bigfoot researchers hope to turn myth into reality

Story by DREW WOOLLEY

Charlie Raymond knows all the best spots for Bigfoot hunting in Kentucky. As founder of the Kentucky Bigfoot Research Organization, he can tell you where you're most likely to run into the dark-haired Skunk Man or an Anderson County Sasquatch nicknamed Howdy for its habit of waving at spotters.

So, when a group of Girl Scouts visiting from Ohio wanted to go on their own expedition about 10 years ago, he knew Mammoth Cave was the place to take them. Bigfoot sightings at the edge of the park spiked after a park employee reported seeing what he thought was a bear stand up on two legs and run off.

"I told them Bigfoots are curious, so the best thing to do is go out there with no flashlights and just laugh, talk and act natural," Charlie says. "Here I've got two dozen giddy girls, aged 10 to 14. I said, 'You're perfect bait.'"

Much like the skeptical Scout moms who joined them, Charlie didn't really expect the group to run into Big Mo, the name of the Bigfoot living in the area, according to local legend. But Charlie showed the girls how to knock trees with a baseball bat and make whooping noises, which he believes the creatures use to communicate.

Then, they heard a distant knock and whistle in response. Shortly after, there was a loud bang as something big struck the boardwalk they were standing on. The entire group was so startled that Charlie recalls one of the moms making a break for the parking lot, leaving the girls behind.

"I think it thought we were another Bigfoot calling for help, then it stomped or jumped on the boardwalk as kind of a bluff charge," Charlie says. "But I heard when they drove back to Ohio, those girls didn't talk about putt-putt or riding horses. All they talked about was that night."

MYTH AND MEMORY

Charlie is just one of many Bigfoot researchers around the country hoping to find definitive proof of the legendary elusive creatures. Driven by true believers, skeptics and gawkers alike, the ongoing hunt has produced hit TV shows, museums and even festivals that bring people together from all corners.

Robert Dobler, a senior lecturer at the Indiana University Department of Folklore and Ethnomusicology, says the lasting power of these creatures is fundamentally human.

"I think it's human to need to think about things outside of the everyday or the mundane," he says. "We're interested in these creatures that exceed language as often as they exceed categories. These stories are how we can take something that is unknown and unknowable and still find ways to talk about it."

That sense of the unknown is often inseparable from the creatures themselves. For Bigfoot or his Florida cousin, the Skunk Ape, it might be the wilderness of the forests or swamplands where they're believed to reside. In West Virginia, the dangers of munitions dumps often conjure sightings of the Mothman. Similarly, in Texas, stories of the Chupacabra are more likely to swirl when anxieties about uncontrollable livestock loss due to disease are at their height.

But that doesn't mean those stories are entirely false.

"A lot of skeptics think these claims are made for attention," Robert says. "But the reality is most people know they are vulnerable and subjecting themselves to potential ridicule. So, they're usually reluctant to talk about it and kind of careful about who they tell."

David Bakara, who owns the Expedition: Bigfoot museum in Blue Ridge, Georgia, has had much the same experience when people share their stories. Some people are still terrified of their experiences. Others are driven by curiosity. But they are all trying to confront something they know shouldn't exist.

"Almost all the Bigfoot researchers I know used to be just normal people that watched football and cooked ribs in the backyard. Then they saw one of these things, and it kind of happened on accident," David says. "Some things, the more you dig into them, the more boring they are. But that's not the case here. The more you look into Bigfoot, the more interested you become."

UNTAMED PLACES

That allure of the unknown is one of the reasons Charlie helped start the Red River Gorge Bigfoot Festival, which takes place in Stanton, Kentucky, each May. The idea originated with a drive-in screening of "The Legend of Boggy Creek," a 1972 docudrama about the Fouke Monster, a Bigfoot-like creature spotted around Fouke, Arkansas.

Now, the festival is an opportunity to gather researchers and cryptozoologists to speak to believers and naysayers alike. The celebration is one of many across the country focused on Bigfoot and other local cryptids that give enthusiasts a chance to gather without fear



Photos courtesy of Charlie Raymond



Photos courtesy of David Bakara

Sheepsquatch

A Southern variation on Bigfoot, Sheepsquatch is reportedly a large beast with shaggy white fur and curled horns similar to a ram's. The creature has been spotted in remote forests and hollows along the Appalachian Mountains and is said to be distinctive for its sulfuric odor.

If you would like to report a Bigfoot or cryptid sighting, in Kentucky or beyond, you can contact Charlie Raymond and the Kentucky Bigfoot Research Organization at info@kentuckybigfoot.com.

AI-generated image by Brandon Pomrenke/ChatGPT



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Charlie Raymond carries along a bat on Bigfoot investigations in hopes of communicating with the creatures through tree knocks. Charlie's wife, Lyndsey, is a fellow Bigfoot investigator and a police officer with experience in forensics and fingerprint analysis. David Bakara opened Expedition: Bigfoot in Blue Ridge, Georgia, in 2016. David built the museum in the style of the roadside attractions he loved as a kid.

of judgment. But Charlie's hope is that the experience can also open more people's minds and encourage them to ask questions.

Barring that, it's an opportunity to step away from technology and gain a better appreciation for all wildlife, whether it's the creatures we know or those yet to be discovered.

"There are lots of things in this world we don't know about. A lot of animals we discover every year," he says. "We like to say, 'Leave only footprints. Pick up your trash, stop and smell the flowers every now and then and respect the wilderness.' Just like Bigfoot." 🐾



Original AI-generated image by James Middleton/Adobe Stock

ON THE HUNT

Ready to track down your own Bigfoot sighting? The Bigfoot Mapping Project has you covered. The site tracks reported encounters all over the country, with filters for locations where footprints, vocalizations and tree knocks are part of the accounts. Visit bigfootmap.com to find the location of your next adventure.

Create, Sip and Stay Awhile

Divine's new location brings it all together

Story by SARA DIAMOND PATTERSON

Imagine a place where you can listen to live, local music and flex your creative muscles with projects like painting pottery or designing a terrarium, all while savoring local libations, socializing and enjoying the fresh Abbeville air.

Kyle Fuller brought that vision to life in February, combining his two businesses, Divine Your Space and Divine Wine and Craft, into a new location known simply as Divine.

Long recognized for his eclectic mix of home and garden offerings, Kyle saw an opportunity to grow the workshops area folks had come to love at the original spot he opened on the square in 2018. “In June 2021, I added the beer and wine component to the home and garden,” Kyle says. “It paired well with the workshops of terrarium-building or ceramics-painting. We did bridal showers and office gatherings and would do food trucks.”

Divine is now one shared space with huge garage doors that roll up to let in fresh air and the sounds of live music on the weekends. Plants fill the tables, ceramics line the walls, and a thoughtfully curated gift shop showcases local artisans and handmade goods. Free WiFi from West Carolina is available inside and outside Divine, where the comfortable patio welcomes patrons with firepits, heaters and food trucks on a rotating schedule.

At first Kyle, an Abbeville native, was concerned about moving his Divine enterprises away from their former home on Trinity Street to the West Greenwood Street building he bought and renovated last October. However, he says the visibility of being located on a four-lane highway is increasing business daily. “I think people were worried about our foot traffic, but now we’re attracting the people who are completely interested and invested and are seeking us out,” Kyle says.

DIVINE

303 W. Greenwood St., Abbeville

864-548-3744

divineabbeville.com

Find [divineabbevillesc](#) on Facebook and Instagram.

'A LOCAL, LITTLE HANGOUT'

The festive First Friday Flight Night is Divine’s latest addition. The event features a selection of curated beer, wine and mead samples, local music and special attractions. Kyle says people like being able to sample the flights’ small portions without having to drink a full pour. He’s careful to note, however, First Friday—like every other night at Divine—doesn’t promote a “bar atmosphere.”

“We won’t ever be open late, and the music wraps up before 8 p.m.,” Kyle says. “We’re just a local, little hangout where people can come and enjoy music and a food truck, or they can just hangout and then go grab dinner.”

Among those hanging out and helping around the shop are Kyle’s two grandmothers, his parents and his partner, Ernie Bloom. “I have a really great team and a supportive family,” Kyle says. His family plays an active role in the day-to-day operations, becoming part of a loyal and growing group of regulars and those discovering his vision for the first time.

“We really have a good crowd already with a lot of our regulars, but there’s also a lot of faces joining us that we haven’t seen before,” Kyle says. “So, it’s been fun getting to know them, as well.” 📷



Kyle Fuller’s dream of bringing joy to the Abbeville community is alive and thriving at Divine.



Locals attend a terrarium class, one of the many workshops offered at Divine.



Live music draws a crowd on Divine’s First Fridays, including this performance by Josh Bowles.

Photos courtesy of Jess Bowles



ABOVE: The Breakfast Bird Dog is a protein-lover's dream with meat, egg and cheese.

LEFT: Ruby Overholt has been serving up Southern classics at Cold Spring Cafe since 1999.

Comfort Food

Cold Spring Cafe nourishes community connections

Story by SARA DIAMOND PATTERSON

Customers ordering to-go meals at Ruby Overholt's Cold Spring Cafe often find themselves having second thoughts. Accessing the menu online is never a problem, and filling their orders isn't hard for the lifelong cook who has run the cafe since 1999. The issue tends to arise when hungry diners arrive to pick up their meals.

"Sometimes when people call in or place an order online, when they come in to pick it up, they see the meats and vegetables on our hot bar, and they say, 'Oh, I wish I had gotten this,'" Ruby says.

She prepares the Southern classics on that hot bar daily, along with her scratch-baked bread, hamburger buns and biscuits that complement full breakfast and lunch menus. Her efforts aren't lost on the community.

"We have a lot of customers who come in every day for breakfast, some for breakfast and lunch," Ruby says. "We have some who have been coming the whole 26 years we've been here."

One of those loyal customers told Ruby if she prepared his breakfast favorite—an open-faced biscuit topped with a sausage patty, two eggs, gravy and cheese—he

would order it every day. The Richard Special now bears his name and inspired the Little Ricky for folks with smaller appetites. "Most of our regular customers probably don't even know we have the Richard Special since they haven't looked at a menu in years," Ruby says. "They just know what they want and most tend to get the same thing every day."

They know Tuesdays and Saturdays mean smoked chicken—it's fried the other days of the week—and they enjoy free WiFi from West Carolina, which runs the cafe's point of sale system and phone service.

'ONE OF MY GIFTINGS'

Ruby shares her kitchen with six employees, and her husband, Larry, lends a hand now and again. The crew members don't hang up their aprons when they close the doors each afternoon, however. That's when they head out, catering meals for local events, weddings and business meetings.

Ruby credits a lifetime of cooking for developing her skills—"one of my giftings," she says. More than 40 years ago, she helped her sister, Loretta

COLD SPRING CAFE

Tuesdays-Fridays, 5:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Saturdays: 5:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.

1151 Highway 20, Abbeville

864-446-3164

coldspringcafe.com

Find Cold Spring Cafe on Facebook and Instagram.

Swartzentruber, establish Swartzentruber's Bakery with their parents, the late Mary and Norman Swartzentruber.

On Sundays, Ruby likes to share her family favorites with her own five children and 14 grandchildren. "They always say, 'We're going to Nana's! We know this is going to be good,'" she says.

Her recipes are all tried and true, but Ruby is still open to new options, like fresh-milled bread after recently discovering its health benefits. It's been a hit, and she's considering converting over some of her regular bread items.

How does Ruby do it all? "I go to bed early, and I don't have any trouble sleeping," she says. ☺

Summer Potluck Staples

Reliable, affordable dishes perfect for warm-weather sharing



Potlucks call for recipes that can handle travel, sit happily on a table and please a wide range of tastes.

These summer-ready dishes rely on ingredients readily available in July and August, use straightforward techniques and are developed for home cooks. All are budget-conscious, and none require special equipment. 🗨️

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

OVEN-BAKED BARBECUE CHICKEN DRUMSTICKS

- 3 pounds chicken drumsticks
- 1 1/2 cups barbecue sauce
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- Salt and black pepper to taste

Preheat oven to 400 F. Pat chicken dry and season with salt and

pepper. Toss with oil and arrange on a foil-lined baking sheet. Bake 30 minutes, turn, brush generously with barbecue sauce and bake 15 minutes more until cooked through and sticky. Serve warm or at room temperature.

EASY PEACH CRISP

- 6 cups fresh peaches, peeled and sliced
- 1/4 cup granulated sugar
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice

TOPPING:

- 1 cup rolled oats
- 1/2 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/2 cup brown sugar
- 1/2 cup butter, melted



LEMON HERB ORZO SALAD

- 1 pound orzo pasta
- 1 pint cherry tomatoes, halved
- 2 cups English cucumber, diced
- 1/3 cup red onion, finely chopped
- 1/2 cup crumbled feta cheese
- 1/4 cup fresh parsley, chopped

DRESSING:

- 1/3 cup olive oil
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon lemon zest
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- Salt and black pepper, to taste

Cook orzo in salted water until tender.

Drain and rinse with cold water. In a large bowl, combine orzo, tomatoes, cucumber, onion, feta and parsley. Whisk dressing ingredients and toss with salad.

Chill at least 30 minutes before serving.



SLOW-COOKER PULLED PORK SLIDERS

- 4 pounds pork shoulder or pork butt
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 teaspoon smoked paprika
- 1 cup barbecue sauce
- 1/2 cup chicken broth
- 12 slider buns

Season pork with salt, pepper and paprika. Place in slow cooker and add broth. Cover and cook on low for 8 hours until very tender. Shred meat with forks, discard excess fat and stir in barbecue sauce. Serve warm on slider buns.



WARM DILL AND MUSTARD POTATO SALAD

- 3 pounds small red or Yukon Gold potatoes
- 4 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar
- 2 tablespoons whole-grain mustard
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- 1/2 teaspoon sugar
- 1/2 cup celery, finely sliced
- 1/3 cup red onion, finely diced
- 1/4 cup fresh dill, chopped
- Salt and black pepper, to taste

Boil potatoes in salted water until fork-tender. Drain and cut into bite-size pieces while still warm.

In a large bowl, whisk together olive oil, vinegar, mustards and sugar. Add warm potatoes, celery and red onion, tossing gently so the potatoes absorb the dressing. Season with salt and pepper. Fold in dill just before serving. Serve warm or at room temperature.



Preheat oven to 375 F.

Toss peaches with sugar and lemon juice and spread in a baking dish. Mix topping ingredients and sprinkle evenly over fruit.

Bake until golden and bubbly, about 40 minutes. Cool slightly before serving.





233 Highway 28 Bypass
Abbeville, SC 29620

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

The kind of friend that's always there

*More speed, same local support
you already love.*

We're beyond grateful to have you as a West Carolina customer. As a thank you, you can now upgrade your internet speed, complimentary, for an entire year.

500
MBPS

~~\$65~~
\$50

1.0
GIG

~~\$80~~
\$65

2.5
GIG

~~\$95~~
\$80

5.0
GIG

~~\$110~~
\$95

8.0
GIG

~~\$125~~
\$110



Claim your free upgrade!

westcarolina.com/year-of-internet-upgrade

Visit your local West Carolina office or scan
the QR code. We'll take care of the rest.



Limited time offer. Residential customers only. Not valid for all speed tiers. WiFi X subscription required. Some restrictions apply. The upgrade moves you to our latest plans, retired plans will no longer be available once accepted.

