



MAY/JUNE 2022

CONNECTION



Digging downtown

Heart of Scottsville paves the way

MARTIN'S GROCERY
GOES ON

DECIPHERING
CRYPTO



By SHIRLEY BLOOMFIELD, CEO
NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association

A partner to support RURAL AMERICA

The Foundation for Rural
Service makes a difference

Our members work hard to serve our nation's rural communities, but they do not do it alone. I'd like to shine a spotlight on an organization whose work I respect, appreciate and support.

The professionals of the Foundation for Rural Service, known as FRS, deserve praise for all the benefits they provide to thousands of people. Established as a nonprofit in 1994, they have made a positive difference for nearly 30 years.

Many of you may know their efforts to help educate young people in rural communities through scholarships and the popular Youth Tour trip to our nation's capital. FRS also annually takes key congressional staff out into our communities to see the challenges faced when deploying broadband.

In particular I want to give a special nod to the annual FRS Community Grant Program designed to benefit communities served by NTCA members. The goal is to support local efforts committed to improving and sustaining rural America. The grants have four areas of concentration: business and economic development, community development, education and telecommunications — the last is a chance to highlight a local plan to support broadband resources for telehealth, education and more. For more information about these programs, visit www.frs.org.

Just like the NTCA member serving you, a remarkable community partner where you live, FRS combines the resources and visibility of all NTCA members to benefit communities like yours across the country. 📩



Get your free annual credit report

Spot scammers early

A free credit report is one of the quickest ways to spot identity theft — someone taking your name, date of birth, address, credit card or bank account information, Social Security or medical insurance numbers.

Scammers can quickly drain a bank account, run up charges on a credit card, get a new credit card in your name and more.

What is a credit report?

A credit report is a summary of your personal credit history, including identifying details such as an address, date of birth and information such as whether bills were paid on time or someone has filed for bankruptcy.

Three national credit bureaus — Equifax, Experian and TransUnion — collect and update this information.

The credit bureaus must:

- ▶ Make sure the information they collect about you is accurate
- ▶ Give you a free copy of your report once every 12 months
- ▶ Give you a chance to fix any mistakes

How do I order my free annual credit reports? The simplest solution is to visit AnnualCreditReport.com. It's fast and easy.

Cryptocurrency 101

A beginner's guide to the new currency

For many people, the idea of cryptocurrency, or digital money, is downright mysterious. Still, cryptocurrency has been around more than a decade, and a growing number of people are starting to use and invest in the world of virtual coins and tokens.

But what, exactly, is it? How does it work? And how do you get it?

CRYPTO BASICS

Put simply, cryptocurrency is digital money. There are no physical coins or paper dollar bills you can pull out and put in a billfold. But it's also not backed up by any asset. According to bitstamp.net, cryptocurrencies are a tradable asset in and of themselves. Their price is determined by demand and the supply available.

Like gold, cryptocurrency's value is in its scarcity and its uses — or potential uses in crypto's case, according to an Investopedia article in December 2021. Bitcoin, which is the most valuable of the different cryptocurrencies, is limited to a quantity of 21 million bitcoins. And while gold is often useful for industrial applications and in valuable jewelry, crypto might be of service in a number of retail transactions one day.

HOW TO GET IT

Most people buy it online and store it in a virtual wallet. The easiest way to buy cryptocurrency is through one of many centralized exchanges that come up on an online search. There are several types of cryptocurrencies, including the three top ones: Bitcoin, Ethereum and Tether.

CRYPTO AND TAXES

The banking system and the government do not oversee cryptocurrency transactions. Instead, these transactions are supported by blockchain, a technology that tracks who owns what. But that doesn't mean cryptocurrency isn't taxable. In fact,

the Internal Revenue Service taxes cryptocurrency as either property, investment or earned income. Because of this, crypto dabblers should keep careful records of all their transactions.

UPS AND DOWNS?

Cryptocurrency is known for its volatile market. In one day in 2021, Bitcoin dropped by 30% — a huge fluctuation in any other trading market. As a new currency that's not legal tender and which any government can issue, crypto can move wildly up or down based on just about anything — perceptions, news articles or, most notably, a tweet from tech entrepreneur Elon Musk.

RESEARCH AND START SLOW

To find out more about cryptocurrency, make sure to do your research. Seek out sources crypto advertisers or others with vested interests in particular products aren't backing. Those determined to try it out should invest conservatively while learning more about the market along the way. 🗨️

Crypto lingo

Knowing more about cryptocurrencies requires learning new words and phrases. Here are a few that are sure to pop up frequently:

FUD — FUD is an acronym that stands for "fear, uncertainty, doubt." In the crypto world, FUD is negative information that can deter investors.

HODL — HODL is an acronym for "hold on for dear life," but internet lore jokes that its origins came from a typo for the word "hold." Either way, cryptocurrency investors use it to caution others against selling when the market is volatile.

NFT — NFT stands for non-fungible tokens. NFTs are pieces of digital content linked to the Ethereum blockchain. Non-fungible basically means that the digital content is unique and cannot be replaced. Because of this fact, NFTs make digital works of art and other items into one-of-a-kind assets.

Sats — Short for Satoshis, sats are the smallest fraction of a bitcoin that you can send — 0.00000001 of a bitcoin. Hardcore bitcoin traders look at sats, not the dollar amount of bitcoin. Note: Satoshi Nakamoto is the made-up name of the person or people who created bitcoin.



Congratulations, graduates

A bright future awaits

Throughout our community, young adults are experiencing a milestone — they're about to begin their first post-high school summer. It's a moment that deserves celebration — a cap on 12 years of hard work and accomplishment.



**JOHNNY
MCCLANAHAN**
President/CEO

Even if you're like me and the high school years have been in the rearview for a while, the memories can still seem fresh. After all, this is such a vivid time, one often filled with excitement, hope and, quite possibly, concern. Each of these young people will soon make choices, many of which have been years in the making. Some of them will go on to higher learning. Others may breathe a sigh of relief to leave school behind and enter the workforce, start families or explore countless other possibilities. All graduates must choose their own paths.

Some of our young people have already faced adult challenges, working jobs or carrying responsibilities that, in an ideal world, would have waited until they were older. Life isn't the same for everyone, and it's often difficult. We appreciate that the circumstances for each high school graduate are unique, and we hope we

can offer one consistent thread of support to all members of the communities we serve. At NCTC, we often discuss the principles that are the bedrock of what we do, one of which is concern for the community.

Our communications network — our fast, reliable internet service in particular — can open doors that didn't exist just a few years ago. Online learning, work-from-home jobs, support for employers and so much more are now available. We are in a rural area, but we have an immediate connection to resources needed to thrive in a modern world. The playing field is more level than ever between cities and communities like ours.

One example of success is the young people leaving high school today and the link they have, not only to the online world, but also to real-world resources once unheard of in rural communities. Imagine moving away for school or a job and being able to use a video call to connect with family back home. No matter how far our graduates roam, there's a convenient link to the people who have supported them every step of the way.

We believe, however, that helping the community goes beyond the services we provide, and we know many other local businesses feel the same. Scholarships, internships, support for athletic programs and first jobs are just a few ways we work to help students attending our schools and this current group of young graduates about to strike out on their own.

While this is a time of celebration for the Class of 2022 and their families, I believe it's also a time for us to celebrate as a community. Life will bring hurdles and triumphs. Many of these former high school students will go on to become part of the fabric of our communities, and others will venture away, carrying the values and lessons they learned here with them for the rest of their lives.

I wish to congratulate all the graduates and their families. Thanks to you, the future is bright, exciting and filled with possibilities. 📩

The North Central Connection is a bimonthly newsletter published by NCTC, © 2022. It is distributed without charge to all member/owners of the cooperative.



North Central is a member-owned corporation dedicated to delivering advanced telecommunications technology to the people of Northern Middle Tennessee and Southern Kentucky, including Macon County, Tenn., Allen County and Warren County, Ky. NCTC also serves portions of Sumner, Trousdale, Smith and Clay counties in Tennessee.

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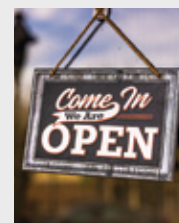
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Produced for North Central by:



On the Cover:



Historic Downtown Scottsville businesses thrive with the help of Heart of Scottsville, the nonprofit behind the action.
See story Page 12.

Hardcastle receives NTCA Life Achievement Award

Glen Hardcastle, North Central Telephone Cooperative's board chairman, was honored with the James L. Bass Director Life Achievement Award at the NTCA—The Rural Broadband Association annual conference in Dallas on Feb. 16. Hardcastle, who has served as the Scottsville Exchange West director for 35 years, has helped the company grow from a telephone cooperative to a full-service, cutting-edge telecom and gig-certified broadband company. Among his many accomplishments, he has helped lead NCTC with its fiber builds and its expansions into new service areas, including those in Warren

County, Kentucky. NCTC also entered into Kentucky's first partnership of electric and telecom cooperatives to build a fiber network. "Glen usually is the voice of reason," says NCTC President and CEO Johnny McClanahan. "He keeps everyone on track and helps give advice or voices his opinion on a topic, but he doesn't force that opinion on anyone. We have grown and evolved through his leadership." Hardcastle's accomplishments are reflected in the fact that two different Federal Communications Commission chairpeople have visited NCTC's service area, which is a unique honor.



NTCA CEO Shirley Bloomfield presents Glen Hardcastle, NCTC board chairman, with the Life Achievement Award.

Affordable Connectivity Program and NCTC internet

The Affordable Connectivity Program is a Federal Communications Commission program that helps connect families and households struggling to afford internet service.

The benefit provides:

- Up to \$30/month discount for internet service.
- A one-time discount of up to \$100 for a laptop, desktop computer or tablet purchased through a participating provider.

To find out if your household is eligible, visit [fcc.gov/acp](https://www.fcc.gov/acp).

The process is quick and easy:

- Step 1** - Go to [ACPBenefit.org](https://www.acpbenefit.org) and submit an application.
- Step 2** - Once approved, an eligible plan will be selected and the discount applied to your bill.



ATTENTION photographers!

Submit your photos now for the annual NCTC photo contest, and your photo could be featured in NCTC's 2023 calendar. This year, we're looking for rural, pastoral pictures that show the natural beauty of our region. Photo orientation must be horizontal, or landscape, and the photos must be of good quality and high resolution. Deadline is July 31. Please email your photos to amy.phelps@nctc.com.



Memorial Day
CLOSING

North Central Telephone Cooperative would like to thank everyone who has served and sacrificed for our country. In recognition of Memorial Day, our offices will close on Monday, May 30.

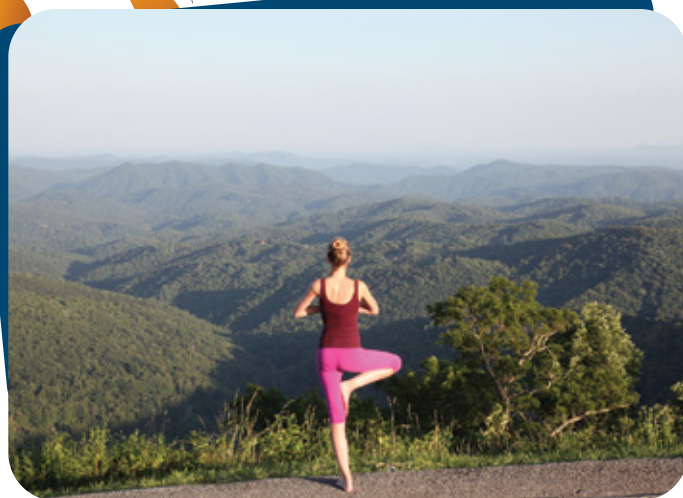
Relaxing DESTINATIONS

Yoga retreats offer an escape from daily realities

Story by ANNE BRALY

When thermometers begin to rise, it's natural to think about a beach vacation, but during summer months, crowds are less than ideal. Instead, head toward the country and the mountains where you can get away from it all and reconnect with nature.

Here are five picturesque properties around the South to consider, each one far from your noisy neighbors and the stresses of everyday life. Some offer yoga, others a chance to hike new paths, while one is ideal for sitting back to catch up on your quilting or scrapbooking.



GRAND OAK RETREAT • SCOTTSBORO, ALABAMA

Grand Oak Retreat is located on a large stretch of land overlooking Lake Guntersville, cradled in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains. It's open to all, but caters to scrapbookers, quilters and other crafty folks.

The large lodge with a beautiful, wraparound porch has five bedrooms with multiple beds to accommodate most families or groups. There's a large work area where crafters can spread out and work while enjoying panoramic views of the lake. Snacks and drinks are available 24 hours a day in a well-stocked kitchen, and guests get three home-cooked meals with a menu that uses local ingredients depending on the season.

For a fully relaxed retreat, guests may arrange massages at an extra cost.

For reservations or more information, visit grandoakretreat.com.

TENNESSEE FITNESS SPA • WAYNESBORO, TENNESSEE

Think of a retreat to Tennessee Fitness Spa along historic Natchez Trace as a summer camp for adults. There's swimming, racquetball, a gym, sauna, hot tub and hiking trails around the picturesque Natural Bridge, a geologic formation thought to be the only double span natural bridge formation in the world. It's a short walk from the spa's dining hall and makes for a beautiful meditative experience.

The center places a strong focus on getting guests back in shape, whatever their goals: losing weight, quitting smoking, detoxing or simply relaxing by the pool. It's a good opportunity to shed that excess weight, whether it be physical or mental, through fitness training, yoga, meditation, water aerobics and more. Just let the staff know what you want, and they'll tailor a routine to meet your needs.

Accommodations range from standard rooms to penthouse suites and private cottages. Most people stay for one week, but guests can arrange for shorter stays, depending on availability.

For more information, visit tennesseefitnessspa.com.

THE RED HORSE INN LANDRUM, SOUTH CAROLINA

This hidden gem tucked into South Carolina's Blue Ridge mountains is an adults-only getaway offering an elegant escape from everyday routines. It's a chance to relax, recover and rejuvenate — all the things you want from a resort vacation. Leave the cooking, cleaning, kids and work behind. Disconnect from everyday life and reconnect with your partner.

Reserve a room in the inn or in one of a half dozen cottages, all with luxury bedding and other appointments. Breakfast is served daily, and afternoons can be spent on the terrace with a glass of wine from the award-winning wine bar.

The inn is located just north of Greenville, South Carolina, a town known for its food scene, and also an area folks looking for majestic waterfalls and nature trails visit.

For more information, visit theredhorseinn.com.

ART OF LIVING RETREAT BOONE, NORTH CAROLINA

Meditation and yoga are two powerful tools for bringing on health and happiness, and at Art of Living Retreat, high in the Blue Ridge Mountains overlooking Boone, North Carolina, you'll rediscover yourself. The center offers getaways focused on happiness and meditation, along with silent retreats. There's also Sri Sri yoga, an ancient, holistic method that integrates body, mind and spirit, targeting internal organs, circulation and body alignment.

Weekend retreats might also include artmaking and journaling or a girls-only time with nature trails, meditation and yoga. Packages at Art of Living include

accommodations at the center's Shankara Wellness hotel with meditation and yoga classes daily, along with one treatment like massage or relaxation therapy, and three meals a day. Snag a seat outside with views of the mountains if the weather allows.

For more information, visit artoflivingretreatcenter.org.

CLIFFVIEW RESORT CAMPTON, KENTUCKY

Come for stunning views of the Red River Gorge, and stay for the adventure you'll experience at Cliffview Resort.

There's plenty to do off the beaten track — a chance to get away from the hustle and bustle of everyday life and connect with nature on a grand scale. Go rock climbing on the cliff high above, take a kayak and explore life in an underground cave beneath the gorge, or zip line above it to experience the magnificent Red River Gorge from a different perspective.

For a more relaxing retreat, take a leisurely walk on well-traveled paths, or wet a line and fish for your dinner from a stocked pond located on the resort property. Or venture over to the Red River and test your skill against smallmouth bass and sunfish.

Book a room in the lodge where you'll find a comfortable place to rest your head with breakfast the next morning. There are 16 rooms in the lodge, plus two cabins, each with 11 to 12 bedrooms and full kitchens to cook your own meals. Don't want to cook? You're on vacation, after all. Red River Gorge and nearby Daniel Boone National Forest have a number of restaurants with offerings ranging from pizza to hot dogs and barbecue to brew pubs.

For information, log onto cliffviewresort.com or call 606-668-5204. 📞



The Art of Living Retreat offers guests serenity and beauty in the mountains of North Carolina.

Best little spot IN DEFEATED

Martin's Grocery spans three generations

Story by JEN CALHOUN



Neely Martin Oldham continued the work of her father and grandfather when she took ownership of Martin's Grocery in Defeated.



Vintage items and memorabilia greet visitors at Martin's Grocery.

Photography contributed by Tony Young

Neely Martin Oldham started working at Martin's Grocery in seventh grade. She'd help clean and take orders after school and on weekends — a practice that continued throughout her high school and college years at Tennessee Tech University.

"This store has been around here longer than I've been alive," Neely says. "We've always been a part of these people's families. We celebrate their accomplishments, and we grieve their losses."

But as much as she loved it, she worried about taking over the grocery and convenience store that her grandfather, D.J. "Mutt" Martin, started in 1962 and her father, Jackie Martin, continued. "I saw how hard my dad worked, and how tied to it he was," Neely says. "As a woman who wanted to be a wife and mother, I didn't know if I could do it."

GIVING IT A GO

That all changed around 2015, when her dad went to sell the shop. Neely, who had graduated with an accounting degree, eventually took a full-time job with a bookkeeper. When she realized her father needed help, she came back to pitch in.

But she knew there would come a time when he'd have to sell. The idea of losing the shop that had been in her family for so long felt wrong somehow. "Daddy was getting on up in years, and he was very serious about retiring," she says. "He even found a buyer."

After praying on the decision and talking to her husband, she went back to her father. "I knew I just couldn't let it go. I realized the store was almost like a member of the family. All of a sudden, I couldn't bear the thought of it not being ours anymore."

“So, I told Daddy I’d give it a try,” she says. “I was afraid I’d regret it if I didn’t try. And I would rather have tried and failed than to let it leave the family for good.”

CHANGING TIMES

Seven years after Neely bought the store and five years after her father’s death, Martin’s Grocery is still going strong. No longer just a grocery store as it was when her grandfather started it 60 years ago, the shop now sells recipe basics, like eggs and flour, as well as bait, tackle and gas. In addition, the shop serves as a restaurant for breakfast and lunch.

“Defeated is like a modern-day Mayberry,” Neely says. “It’s a peaceful place where your kids can still play outside and you don’t have to worry. It is changing, but for the most part it’s the way it was when I was a kid.”

The pace of Defeated and Martin’s Grocery picks up between spring and fall when tourists visit nearby Cordell Hull Lake and the popular campgrounds surrounding it. “The park across the road from the store has beach access, a play area and campgrounds. They’re some of the top-rated in the nation, and it draws people from all over the country.”

LASTING LEGACY

But Neely says the most important aspect of Martin’s Grocery is the same thing that led her to take it on — the connections with the community itself. She remembers one of the local children who grew up coming into the store. Her father, who was a big supporter of education and reaching for goals, would always encourage the boy to go for his dreams. “He wanted to be a veterinarian,” Neely says. “He always stopped at the store to talk to us, because he knew we cared.”

Not long after her father died, the boy returned to show them his diploma from veterinary school. Neely says she nearly burst with pride and tears. “It was so touching that he wanted to share this with us. I saw what my daddy meant to other people. I saw what it meant to have him in this community. I want to keep that alive.” 📧



Martin's Grocery got its start in 1962. Locals and tourists alike enjoy its food and friendly faces.



The store offers everything from bait and tackle to locally made goods.

A special place in Hoggtown

Martin's Grocery is an all-in-one gas station, convenience store, grocery store, restaurant and bait and tackle shop. The store serves full breakfasts, which include scrambled eggs, bacon, toast, biscuits and gravy and more. Lunch includes hamburgers and other short-order items. The store is at 361 Defeated Creek Highway in Defeated, Tennessee, nicknamed Hoggtown for an early family who settled it. The shop is close to Cordell Hull Lake and two top-rated campgrounds, Defeated Creek Campground and Salt Lick Creek Campground. For the latest information and hours of operation, visit the Facebook page, Martin's Grocery.



Make the CONNECTION

The video game industry remains scorching hot, and not just because people turned to a virtual distraction during the pandemic. Certainly, they did. However, the trajectory of the gaming industry continues a yearslong trend of increased popularity.

Nielsen, a company tracking how various audiences use media, provided some insight last year into video game usage.

At one point during the pandemic, 55% of U.S. consumers reported playing video games. In fact, people were buying games at a fast clip, with sales rising about 14% during 2020.

There's a twist with modern gaming, too. People use it to connect with each other. The game Fortnite became famous for in-game live events, and more and more people began using services like Twitch to watch others play games, according to Nielsen.

Simply, gaming goes beyond, well, just a game. It's an experience, one made possible by fast, reliable internet.

But are you maximizing your connection for how you experience gaming?

THE CONNECTION

Your internet provider connects your home to the online world, a physical connection where the final stop is a router. Think of this as the gateway between your home and the internet.

Most modern routers allow two types of connections: Wi-Fi and Ethernet.

BENEFITS OF WI-FI

Wi-Fi uses radio waves to connect the router to your devices, eliminating the clutter of cables. Devices ranging from televisions to refrigerators can use this technology to connect online.

Gaming-related benefits of Wi-Fi include:

- Convenient for mobile games on phones and iPads.
- The ability to connect multiple devices without cables.
- Most devices, including computers, set-top boxes and more, have Wi-Fi connectivity. The same can't be said for wired Ethernet connections. Even some laptops lack the option for an Ethernet connection.
- For watching streaming content such as Twitch, Wi-Fi wirelessly takes devices ranging from TVs to tablets online.

BENEFITS OF ETHERNET — WHEN GAMING GETS SERIOUS

An Ethernet connection is a physical link between your device and router. With modern online gaming, success can depend upon how fast the twitch of a finger on a controller can be translated into actions in an online world living on a faraway computer server.

When speed matters, an Ethernet is often the right option.

- Consistency: Unlike Wi-Fi signals, which can be affected by walls or even signals from other devices, the wired connection's speed should remain consistent with that provided by your internet service.
- Lower latency, which is the time it takes a bit of data to leave your device, reach its online destination and then complete the round trip. With gaming, lower latency is critical, and Ethernet is a difference-maker.
- Simple and secure: Connect an Ethernet cable to your device and to your router and get playing. It's that simple. Unlike with Wi-Fi routers, you typically do not need to enter a password to connect.
- The downside is that cable clutter is real. Serious gamers in particular, though, will benefit from devices connected via Ethernet.



Downtown Scottsville offers everything from home decor shops to boutiques and restaurants.



Scottsville Antique Mall is just one of the town's unique shops in downtown.

BOOM TOWN

Historic Downtown Scottsville slips in more surprises

Story by JEN CALHOUN

Hannah Brooks, executive director of Heart of Scottsville, remembers the doubtful looks last year when the downtown revitalization group announced it would hold community gatherings on the first Friday night of each month between May and October.

“The initial impression was that nobody would want to come downtown on Friday nights,” Brooks says. “So, it felt like a big risk at first.”

But the monthly celebration — complete with food trucks, live entertainment and arts and crafts booths — ended up being a hit with visitors and downtown merchants alike. Locals saw new sights in old spaces and delighted in the quirky shops and tasty restaurants. “And at least one of our merchants here on the square sold out,” Brooks says. “One business that’s been open for 20 years said they’d had the best day of sales ever.”

The community also enjoyed the events, she says. “It was beautiful. People started coming to hang out. Consistently, we heard people say, ‘I had no idea this was down here.’ It was a great way to reintroduce the community to each other.”

ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRITS

The success of First Fridays isn’t the only happy surprise in downtown Scottsville. New businesses have popped up over the last few years, giving the district a fresh glow and energy.

Some small businesses opened right before or during the COVID-19 pandemic. “A lot of them are young, female entrepreneurs. It’s been remarkable to watch them just really dig their heels in and fight

through the pandemic. They kept coming up with innovative new ways to make things work,” Brooks says.

Many of the young business people were those who had left the region to find work but came back and invested their skills and talent in Scottsville. “We thought we’d lost that in the community. So many young people were leaving because of limited opportunities. But I’ve seen them coming back home, and this downtown is creating opportunities for young people right here,” she says.

Businesses in the district include cafes, home decor shops, florists, a candle shop, an Airbnb rental, dental offices, salons and a wellness studio and counseling center, complete with yoga and walk-and-talk therapy.

FIRST FRIDAYS ARE BACK

In addition to the local farmers market, Historic Downtown Scottsville plans to continue to host the popular First Friday events between April and December. The events take place 6-8 p.m. on the first Friday of each month and include live entertainment, food vendors, craft and artisan vendors and plenty of fun inside the shops and restaurants themselves.

Downtown Scottsville offers free Wi-Fi from a fiber connection with NCTC. “We’ve actually seen an improvement down here over the past couple of years since we’ve gotten fiber,” Brooks says.



Photography contributed by Tony Young



A commons area invites friends and families to enjoy a day downtown.



Jerry Whitney, owner of Scottsville Antique Mall, takes a load off on a sunny day.

"It's been incredible. It really allows for a lot of different types of businesses to move here."

WHAT'S NEXT

Over the past 20 years, Heart of Scottsville has overseen several beautification projects, including a redesign of the entire downtown square and the blocks immediately surrounding it. They've also installed new sidewalks, redesigned parking lots, installed planter beds, and added trees, shrubs, lampposts and other lighting. "We've generally just made it walkable and welcoming," Brooks says. "A Nashville filmmaker even made a movie down here."

The final stage of the project should kick off this spring on South Court Street, which will get brick-paved sidewalks and new lampposts. "Beyond that, we have a couple of buildings we'd like to restore," she says. "We'd also love to see the remaining second-floor spaces redeveloped into apartments or Airbnb rentals so they're not sitting empty."

People were again skeptical about the rental potential of the apartments, but they've been popular with out-of-towners. "They've stayed booked with business people and tourists alike. People seem to want that small-town feel these days," Brooks says. 📱



Seth Graves, left, owner of Magnolia and Steel, talks with Hannah Brooks, executive director of Heart of Scottsville. The downtown group holds First Friday festivals once a month most of the year.

DOWNTOWN: Where the lights are brighter

Historic Downtown Scottsville is always hopping, but there's no better time to visit than the first Friday of each month between April and December. First Friday, which runs 6-8 p.m., is a monthly festival offering everything from craft and artisan booths to live music, food trucks and the freshest foods from local farmers. Heart of Scottsville, the downtown revitalization organization that promotes the historic district, hosts the event. For more information on Historic Downtown Scottsville, the farmers market, First Fridays and Heart of Scottsville, visit the website, heartofscottsville.org. You can also check out the Heart of Scottsville Ky Instagram and Facebook pages for the latest information and happenings.

So *fresh* and so

A unique technique locks more flavor in your veggies

The profusion of fresh vegetables coming our way this spring means it's time to learn a bit about blanching, a technique that brings out the beautiful flavors that only fresh produce can bring — a taste explosion.

Blanching can be a cook's best friend. It destroys enzymes that make green veggies turn brown and mushy, so it's ideal when you want to add green vegetables, such as peas and asparagus, to your risotto. Blanching also removes bitterness from some of our more bitter vegetables, like broccoli rabe. It's also a great way to skin tomatoes, as blanching loosens the skins without cooking the fruit, something that also works for peaches and plums. And if you're planning to prepare and serve a veggie platter, blanch the carrots, broccoli, pea pods and cauliflower. The veggies will retain their color, but your guests will find them much easier to chew.

Blanching is nothing more than boiling vegetables until they're just crisp-tender, then plunging them in an icy bath. It sounds like a simple process, and it is, but there are just a few steps to follow to bring out the best of spring and summer's bounties.

If you're a vegetable gardener, think ahead for the cold days of winter when the flavor of fresh vegetables is just a memory, that is, unless you've blanched in advance of freezing them. Not only does blanching preserve the color and texture of your vegetables, it will also preserve their nutrient content.

Now that you know why you should blanch, here's how:

In order to stop the enzyme action that breaks vegetables down, the food must reach 180 degrees.

The time spent in boiling water and time spent in ice water should be roughly equal. If you're not able to prepare a cold immersion for your vegetables, putting them in a colander under cold running water will work.

Adding salt to your boiling water will help make green vegetables even greener. Steer clear of lemon juice or other acids, though; these will react with the

chlorophyll and turn your greens brown. And don't use baking soda — it will damage the nutrients found in vegetables.

Use 1 gallon of water for each pound of food to be blanched. If you overload the water with vegetables, it will lower the water's temperature and slow the cooking process, defeating the purpose.

Once the vegetables are crisp-tender, move them from the boiling water and into a large container of ice water. This will stop the cooking process. Then you're ready to bag them for freezing or use them right away in your spring and summer meals. 📦



FOOD EDITOR
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clean

SALAD NICOISE

- 2 hard-boiled eggs
- 1/2 pound of small potatoes
- 1/2 pound of green beans, blanched
- 1/2 head of green lettuce, washed and torn into bite-sized pieces
- 1 (7-ounce) can of tuna fish
- 4 ounces of tomatoes, diced, or cherry tomatoes
- 10 black olives
- 2 tablespoons of capers
- 1/2 cup of vinaigrette dressing (your favorite)

Cook the potatoes until tender and let cool.

Build each salad starting with a layer of lettuce, then add half the vegetables, including potatoes, tuna, eggs and olives to each plate. Sprinkle with capers. Serve with vinaigrette dressing. Makes 2 servings.



RISOTTO WITH BLANCHED ASPARAGUS

- 1 pound asparagus, trimmed, cut into 2-inch lengths
- 5 cups canned or homemade chicken broth
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1/2 cup chopped onion
- 1 1/2 cups arborio rice
- 1/2 cup dry white wine
- 6 tablespoons butter
- 3/4 cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese (about 3 ounces)

Blanch asparagus pieces in a large pot of boiling, salted water for 2 minutes. Drain. Rinse asparagus under cold water. Drain asparagus well.

Bring chicken broth to a simmer in a small saucepan. Reduce heat to low and keep broth hot. Heat olive oil in a heavy large saucepan over medium heat. Add chopped onion and saute until translucent, about 4 minutes. Add rice and stir for 3 minutes. Add dry white wine and cook until liquid evaporates. Continue cooking until rice is tender but still slightly firm in center and mixture is creamy, adding chicken broth 1 cup at a time and stirring almost constantly, about 20 minutes. Add blanched asparagus pieces and stir until heated through, about 2 minutes. Remove from heat. Add 6 tablespoons butter and stir until incorporated. Stir in grated Parmesan cheese. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Makes 4-6 servings.

WALNUT BROCCOLI SALAD

- 2 pounds broccoli florets
- 1/2 cup toasted walnuts
- 1/2 cup jumbo mixed raisins
- 8 strips bacon cooked and crumbled
- 1/2 red onion thinly sliced
- 1/2 cup mayonnaise
- 1 tablespoon rice vinegar
- Salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste

Bring a big pot of water to a boil and season it liberally with salt. It should taste like the ocean. Add the broccoli florets to the water and cook for 60 seconds, until they're bright green in color. Immediately drain the broccoli florets, then rinse with cold water for 2 minutes or place in an ice-water bath until the broccoli has cooled down.

Transfer the broccoli to a salad spinner, and spin the broccoli dry or drain well if you don't have a spinner. Then blot dry further with a kitchen towel to prevent any excess water from diluting the dressing.

Combine the broccoli with the toasted walnuts, raisins, bacon, onion, mayonnaise, vinegar and salt and black pepper, to taste. Stir well. Chill for at least 30 minutes, preferably an hour, before serving to allow the flavors to marry. Makes 6 servings.



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