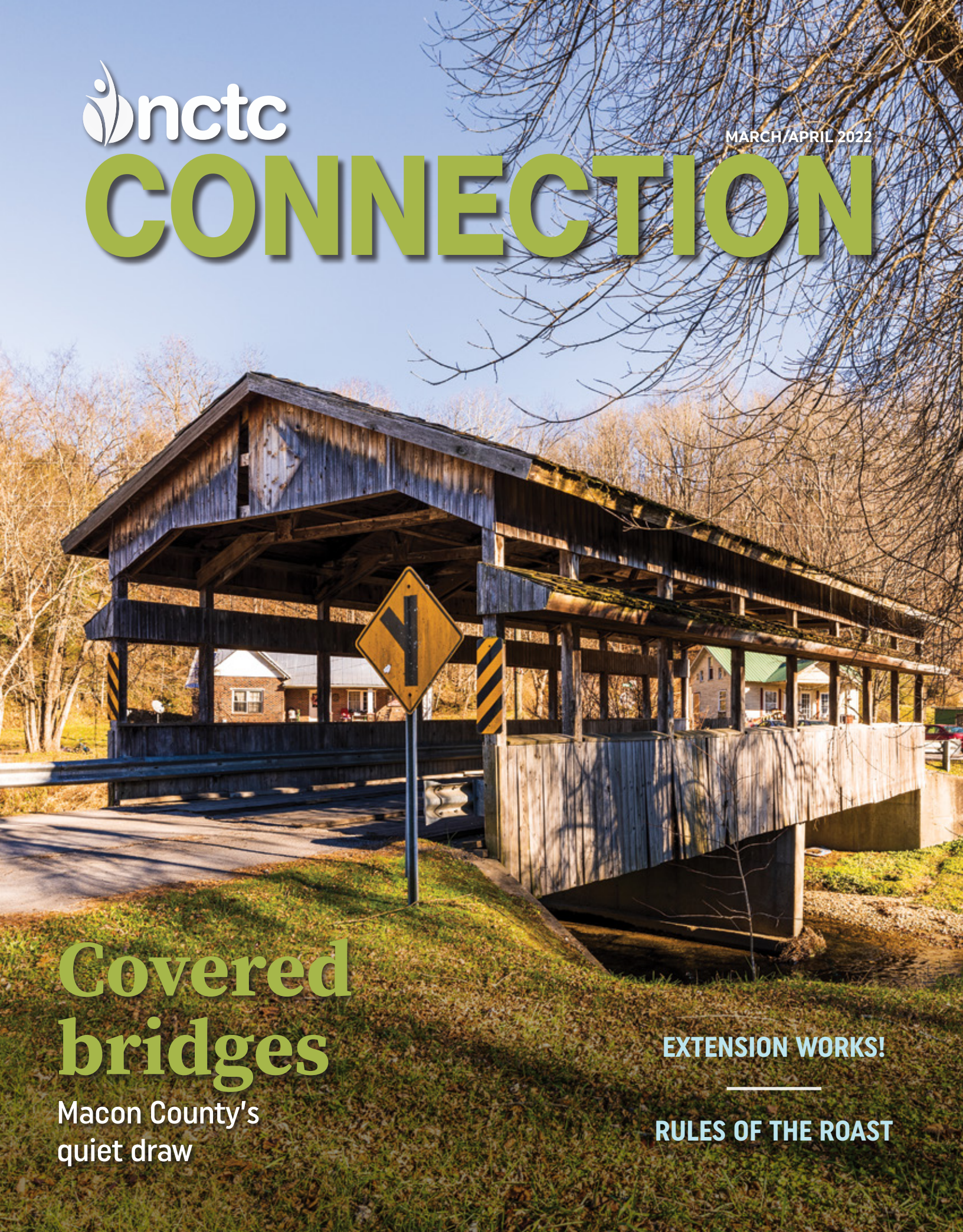




MARCH/APRIL 2022

CONNECTION



Covered bridges

Macon County's quiet draw

EXTENSION WORKS!

RULES OF THE ROAST



By SHIRLEY BLOOMFIELD, CEO
NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association

Strengthening ties

Rural internet providers gain ground


No matter the challenges, NTCA members have a long history of stepping up to extend fast internet service to rural America, allowing residents to work, learn and engage with family and friends online.

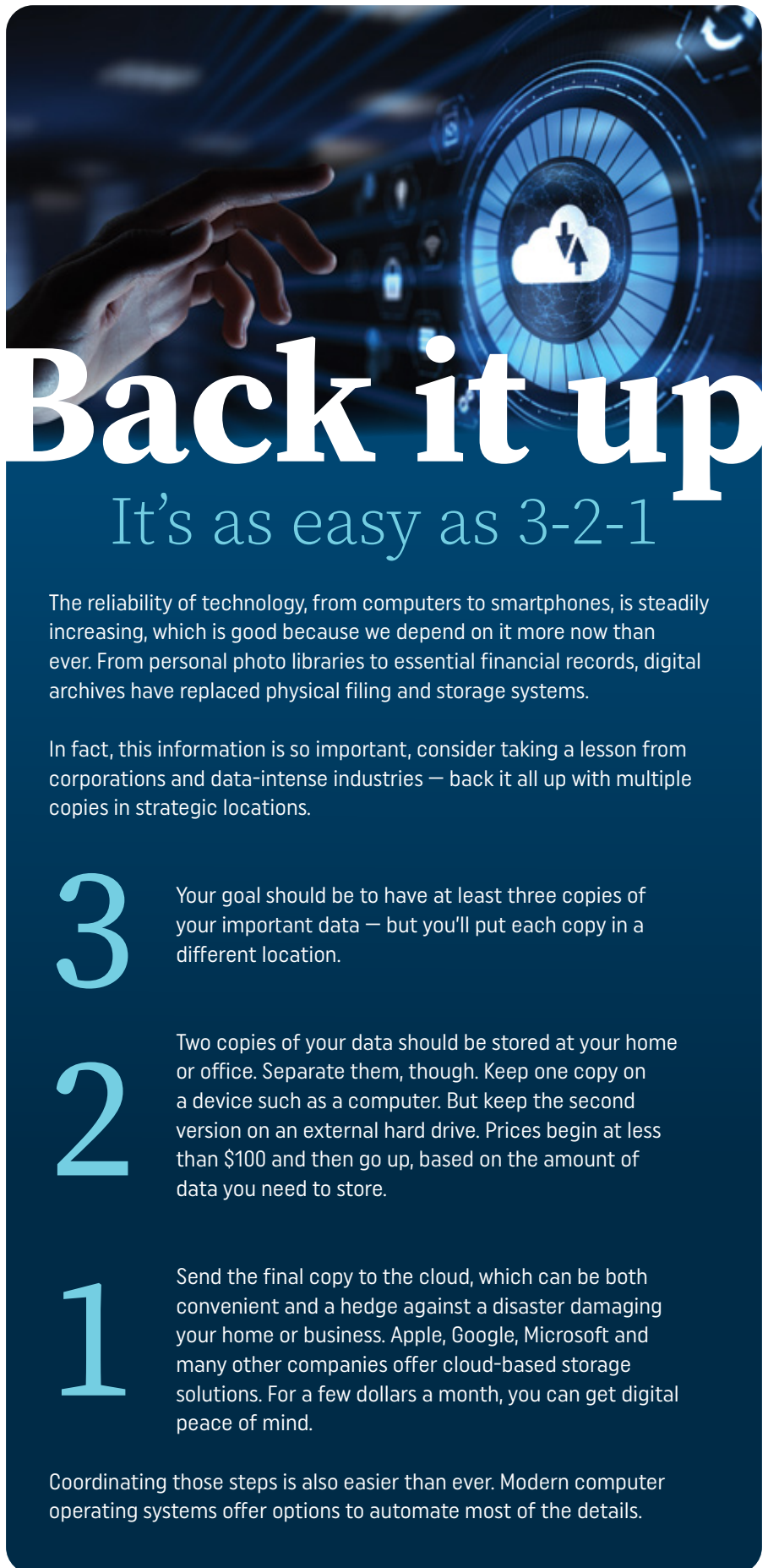
Recently, we released our 2021 Broadband/Internet Availability Survey Report, reaffirming the commitment to rural broadband as the industry stands on the cusp of once-in-a-generation investment to bring connectivity to all Americans.

NTCA members responding to the survey indicated that nearly 76% of their customers can receive downstream speeds of at least 100 Mbps. That’s up from 67.8% in 2020. Similarly, 55.4% of customers have access to gigabit downstream speed, up from 45.1% in 2020.

A year earlier, 28% of respondents subscribed to services with 100 Mbps broadband or better. Last year, that number was 37%.

These gains appear throughout the communities NTCA members serve, including in critically important broadband service to libraries, community colleges, state universities and extensions. There are 911 call centers and medical facilities that benefit, as well as nearly all primary and secondary schools, along with police and fire departments.

Despite the successes, NTCA members continue to face pandemic-related supply chain issues, leading to slowdowns in installing services for customers and delayed network construction. Still, these companies serving rural America continue to put your needs first, building networks that can change lives and communities for the better. As the 2021 Broadband/Internet Availability Survey Report shows, they’re making a difference. 



Back it up

It's as easy as 3-2-1

The reliability of technology, from computers to smartphones, is steadily increasing, which is good because we depend on it more now than ever. From personal photo libraries to essential financial records, digital archives have replaced physical filing and storage systems.

In fact, this information is so important, consider taking a lesson from corporations and data-intensive industries — back it all up with multiple copies in strategic locations.

- 3 Your goal should be to have at least three copies of your important data — but you’ll put each copy in a different location.
- 2 Two copies of your data should be stored at your home or office. Separate them, though. Keep one copy on a device such as a computer. But keep the second version on an external hard drive. Prices begin at less than \$100 and then go up, based on the amount of data you need to store.
- 1 Send the final copy to the cloud, which can be both convenient and a hedge against a disaster damaging your home or business. Apple, Google, Microsoft and many other companies offer cloud-based storage solutions. For a few dollars a month, you can get digital peace of mind.

Coordinating those steps is also easier than ever. Modern computer operating systems offer options to automate most of the details.



Are blue light glasses hype or help?

According to the American Optometric Association, the average office worker spends seven hours a day in front of a computer — and that’s only when they’re on the clock. In our off-hours, we’re often squinting at our smartphones, using tablets to catch up on the news or following the twists and turns of the latest best-seller on an e-reader.

After so much time staring at screens, many people experience digital eye strain, also known as computer vision syndrome. Symptoms can include everything from dry and tired eyes to blurry vision, neck pain, headaches and more.

Some folks are turning to blue light-blocking glasses for relief. Available in a variety of styles and a wide range of prices, these glasses purport to reduce eye strain by filtering out the blue light emitted by digital screens.

But are these lenses really all that they’re cracked up to be? According to experts, maybe not.

WHAT IS BLUE LIGHT?

All visible light contains the entire spectrum of wavelengths, from red to violet, and each wavelength has its own specific energy level. Blue light has the highest energy level in the visible spectrum.

The sun is the source of most of the blue light we encounter, but blue light is also emitted by fluorescent and incandescent light bulbs and the screens of electronic devices. However, no measurable harm done by the light from digital devices has been documented.

Studies have shown that it’s not the screens themselves that are causing eye strain but, rather, how we use them. We blink less frequently when looking at screens and we tend to hold electronic devices, particularly mobile phones, much closer to our eyes than paper documents. Also, glare, reflections and existing uncorrected or undercorrected vision problems can contribute to discomfort, as does focusing on screens for extended periods of time.

So, if blue light glasses won’t help, what will? Believe it or not, taking breaks. Most symptoms of eye strain will resolve themselves when you stop using the computer. When you have to be in front of a screen for an extended period of time, experts like those at the American Academy of Ophthalmology recommend the 20-20-20 rule — after every 20 minutes of continuous screen time, look at something 20 feet away for 20 seconds.

BLUE LIGHT AT BEDTIME

While there isn’t scientific evidence that blue light is responsible for digital eye strain, experts say there isn’t any harm in wearing blue light glasses, and they may help at bedtime.

Blue light affects the body’s natural waking and sleeping cycle, known as circadian rhythm. During daylight hours, blue light wakes us up and keeps us alert. But when it’s time for bed, the blue light from screens can stimulate the brain just when you’re trying to wind down for the night. This is why many devices have nighttime settings to minimize blue light exposure after dark. Experts recommend limiting screen time two to three hours before bed, but if you must use your devices in the hours leading up to bedtime, blue light glasses could help ensure a solid night’s rest. [📄](#)



Better connected

Why rural broadband outshines the big guys

A high-tech web threads its way throughout our region, extending to homes, businesses, government offices, medical facilities and more. NCTC is at the center of that web, the hub linking you to the power of the internet. Together — because you're very much a part of this success — we've created an amazing resource.



**JOHNNY
MCCLANAHAN**
President/CEO

But have you ever wondered how we stack up against other service providers? I'm sure you see advertisements for national communications corporations, and you may be curious if your local company keeps pace. Truthfully, there's a vast separation between how NCTC and corporate-owned businesses operate. Rather than a focus on returning value to faceless shareholders, we prioritize giving you, our neighbors, the best service possible at the most reasonable price.


When you consider the technological wonder of it all, it really is amazing. A global system of computers shares digital information, whether it's something as large as a streaming movie or as small as a few lines of text in a social media post. Physical cables link the servers, and some cables even run beneath the ocean.

NCTC is the local stop on this system, and we maintain the networking equipment needed to tap those massive streams of information. Then, we provide you access through the lines we've installed across the community — our community.

The differentiation between us and those national companies accelerates as we translate that amazing infrastructure into packages of services you can obtain. As you can see, there are plenty of moving parts, but we work hard to boil all of them down into straightforward, understandable service plans.

Here's one example. Our fiber optic internet network is designed to allow you to upload information as fast as you can download it, a balance so important for how we communicate. Maybe you work from home and share files with the office or rely on videoconferencing. Or, perhaps you're a gamer who wants an edge on the competition. In both cases, that two-way speed is essential. Can performance vary at times? Certainly. Wi-Fi router settings and other variables in the home and at work can make a difference, but our network is designed to serve your needs as consistently as the technology allows. Can all the national companies say the same thing?

Similarly, it can be easy to promise one thing and deliver another. When you do business with NCTC, we strive to provide what we promise. We want you to take full advantage of our services, and we do not put a cap on your use. Many of the corporate-owned companies do not work that way. In fact, it's common for those national providers to either slow down service or charge additional fees to customers who exceed usage limits. That's just not how we do business.

While we enjoy the advantages of living in a rural community — and there are many — rest assured you have access to a communications network comparable to that of most metropolitan areas. In fact, many of those people living in cities would be envious, not only of the internet services available to you, but also the friendly customer support and honest communication NCTC provides. In the end, we are neighbors helping neighbors, and that makes all the difference. 

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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On the Cover:



Church Street Bridge is one of the covered bridges in Red Boiling Springs that draws visitors with an old-time allure.
See story Page 8.

Scottsville mayor applauds NCTC service



Scottsville Mayor David Burch thanked NCTC after getting fiber internet service installed at his home. "We're in love," Burch says in a call with NCTC. "It's a huge improvement, and it has allowed us more access to a variety of things. We're able to work from home so much better." Burch went on to say that relatives visiting from Cincinnati found the high-speed service far better than their own.

WHAT IS CPNI?

A special notice regarding your account information

NCTC knows the importance of privacy to its members. Federal law requires telecommunications companies to explain the use and disclosure of information gathered during the course of providing service.

WHAT KIND OF INFORMATION?

Customer Proprietary Network Information, or CPNI, are details such as the calling features, options and plans to which you subscribe; billing information; and the identity of the long-distance carrier you have chosen. You have the right, and NCTC has the duty under federal law, to preserve the confidentiality of this information.

HOW IS THIS INFORMATION USED?

We only use CPNI to let you know about changes in services you currently buy from us. With your permission, we may use your CPNI to tell you about other services that may interest you. We will never share your CPNI information with third parties unless required by law.

HOW DO I PROTECT MY CPNI?

NCTC has tools in place to protect your CPNI information, including passwords.

NCTC is adamant about protecting the privacy of our members, utilizing password-protected accounts to validate that we are speaking with the person authorized on each account.

If you have not set up a password, please call the business office at 615-666-2151.

YOUR NCTC INTERNET IS YOUR TV.



A better TV experience is here!

- Features you'll love like network DVR, Catchup TV, Restart Live TV and more.
- Packages for every budget and need.
- Stingray Music included.



Visit <https://nctc.com/tv-service> for more details.



Happy Easter!

NCTC offices will close on Friday, April 15, in observance of Good Friday. We wish you a joyous Easter holiday.

Muscle Shoals

a musician's mecca

Story by ANNE BRALY

Alabama is steeped in music history with greats like W.C. Handy, Jimmie Rodgers, Nat King Cole, the band Alabama and Hank Williams, who all left their marks on the state's list of native sons.

But those names became just a drop in the bucket when a group of musicians got together in the small Northwest Alabama town of Muscle Shoals and charted a course that would explode on the music scene and have a huge impact on American music.

Spencer Coats, a young musician and tour guide for FAME studios in Muscle Shoals, says back in the 1950s and '60s, many of the local musicians didn't care about giving live concerts, focusing more on jamming and, a little later, recording.

Now, the recording industry in North Alabama reads like a playlist of the legends of music, and it all started with three hometown men — Rick Hall, Billy Sherrill and Tom Stafford.

Hall and Sherrill were in their teens when they recorded their first song in the back of a bus station in Florence, Alabama.

One of their songs, "Sweet and Innocent," became a hit, primarily around North Alabama, but

it struck a chord with Stafford. After hearing it, he built a recording studio above City Drugs in Florence and, to make a long story short, went into the recording business with Hall and Stafford, creating Florence Alabama Music Enterprise. The business quickly took root, and Stafford soon picked up stakes and moved to what he thought were greener pastures in Nashville. Big mistake.

Hall became the driving force behind Florence Alabama Music Enterprise. He was soon forced out, but he never looked back. He took the name with him — eventually shortening it to FAME — and opened a new studio at 603 Avalon Ave. in Muscle Shoals. The sign above the door as one enters Studios A and B says it all:

"Through these doors walk the finest Musicians, Songwriters, Artists, and Producers in the World."



Chase Brandon is a tour guide at Muscle Shoals Sound.

Here's how the small Alabama town attracted major recording artists

© Jurek/Alamy Stock

Studio A at Florence Alabama Music Enterprise, or FAME, hosted some of music's biggest recording stars.



Hall's new venture began producing a string of hits, with artists like Otis Redding, Percy Sledge and Aretha Franklin, that would become known as the "Muscle Shoals Sound." Hall soon brought in a house band that consisted of bassist David Hood, guitarist Jimmy Johnson, drummer Roger Hawkins and keyboardist Spooner Oldham, later adding keyboardist Barry Beckett to the mix. The group would become known as the Muscle Shoals Rhythm Section, or The Swampers, as mentioned in Lynyrd Skynyrd's "Sweet Home Alabama."

History lesson over. Today, FAME Recording Studios is one of two recording studios in the Muscle Shoals area. Muscle Shoals Sound Studio in Sheffield is the other, and Cher made its address popular after recording her hit album, 3614 Jackson Highway, there.

Tours of the studios take visitors back in time. Photos of musicians who have recorded there line the walls. "If only these walls could talk," Coats says, pointing to a photo of Gregg Allman, who, with brother Duane, recorded at FAME.

Tours of both studios allow guests to see many of the instruments, spaces

and iconic items used during recording of so many familiar songs. The green sofa where the Rolling Stones sat down for a break while recording "Wild Horses" still remains at Muscle Shoals Sound. Next to it hangs the original bill for the studio's services: Dec. 4, 1969 — \$1,009.

One can just picture the mood in the studio at Muscle Shoals Sound when Aretha belted out her hit "I Never Loved a Man the Way I Love You." Or when Percy Sledge recorded "When a Man Loves a Woman." But what is it about The Shoals area that attracted these artists when there were bigger studios in larger nearby cities like Nashville and Memphis?

Coats thinks the vibe along the swamps of North Alabama may have played a part. "The same magic wouldn't have happened elsewhere like it did here," he says.

Both FAME and Muscle Shoals Sound remain active studios with artists coming in to record several days a week. Would-be visitors to Muscle Shoals Sound Studio can make reservations for tours by calling 256-978-5151 or visiting muscleshoalssoundstudio.org. Make FAME tour reservations at famestudios.com. 📍

Hit RECORD

The South is a haven for recording artists who take to studios in towns large and small. Probably the best known of these are in Muscle Shoals, home of Rick Hall's FAME Recording Studios. Nearby Florence, Sheffield and Tuscumbia have also witnessed an explosion of talent, but some other studios beyond The Shoals where artists tell their story through song include:

- Royal Studios in Memphis, where artists including Al Green, Ann Peebles and Mark Ronson, in collaboration with Bruno Mars, recorded their hits.
- Sun Studios in Memphis, where Elvis Presley recorded hits including "That's All Right" and Johnny Cash cashed in on "Folsom Prison Blues."
- Quad Studios in Nashville — a one-hit wonder that saw the recording of "Margaritaville."
- Miami's Criteria Recording Studios, which produced such hits as "Layla" for Derek and the Dominos, James Brown's "I Got You (I Feel Good)" and the Bee Gees' "Nights on Broadway."
- Stax Records headquarters in Memphis, which turned out hits from Otis Redding and Isaac Hayes, but today also features the state-of-the-art Museum of American Soul Music.
- RCA Studios A and B in Nashville, where the Everly Brothers recorded "All I Have To Do Is Dream" and Dolly Parton immortalized "Jolene."
- PatchWerk Recording Studios in Atlanta, which, though not a familiar name, has produced big sounds, including Usher's "You Make Me Wanna."
- American Recording Studio in Memphis, which flies under most radar but produced such major hits as Elvis' "In the Ghetto," Dusty Springfield's "Son of a Preacher Man" and Neil Diamond's "Sweet Caroline."
- Sea-Saint Studios in New Orleans, which became a major player in the recording industry with Patti LaBelle's "Lady Marmalade" and Paul McCartney's "Listen to What the Man Said."

Picture this

Covered bridges in Red Boiling Springs get online attention

Story by JEN CALHOUN | Photography by TONY YOUNG

June Shrum loves a good history story. As the secretary of Macon County Historical Society and the office manager at the society's headquarters, she knows plenty about the families and stories that make up the county's past.

But Shrum needed to do some digging for when she gets questions about the covered bridges in Red Boiling Springs. The overpasses include the Church Street Bridge, the Valley View Road Bridge and the Walking Bridge, a pedestrian-only span that connects to The Donoho Hotel.

"Nobody really talks about them in books," Shrum says. "We have history books galore here, but only one mentions the bridges."

BRIDGE DRAWS

Despite the lack of local fanfare, the Red Boiling Springs bridges have gained a virtual life of their own online as visitors seek them out for photos or write about them in blogs. Their pictures appear on photo websites like Flickr, and they've come up in articles about covered bridges, including one in onlyinyourstate.com.

Covered bridges are a rare sight in most parts of the country, as better materials and technology replaced them over the years. Today, only a small fraction of covered bridges remain in the U.S., with some estimates showing only about 1,000 left. To many, they represent an ideal in rural landscapes. They also tend to give rise to an air

of romance and mystery, as portrayed in love stories and suspense films.

"They are a tourism draw," says Rita Watson, a Red Boiling Springs shop owner and executive director of Vision 2020, a nonprofit with the goal of promoting the town and enhancing the quality of life for people who live there. "The best part is that people who come just to see the covered bridges also tend to stay in one of our three historic hotels."

HISTORY

Many covered bridges in the U.S. went up for practical purposes back in the 1800s. Their timbered trusses were covered with a roof — and sometimes siding — to prevent wear from the elements. Covered wooden bridges often stayed up four or more times as long as uncovered ones, making them safer and more cost-efficient than the alternatives.

The covered bridges of Red Boiling Springs got their start in the early 1970s, however. Shrum's search found origins of the bridges in the book "Early Stories of Red Boiling Springs, Tennessee." The two driving bridges, it says, were built after a "disastrous flood" in Red Boiling Springs on June 23, 1969. The book notes that

The Church Street Bridge in Red Boiling Springs was built after a flood in 1969.



several historic landmarks succumbed, but it makes no mention of previous covered bridges. The book says the federal government gave the city money to buy the flooded properties and build parks, along with a watershed and the bridges to mitigate damage and danger from future floods.

“They were built as a way for people to get across the creek,” Watson says. “During the flood, people got trapped. So, we received grants to get the bridges built.”

Bridge hobbyist Dale Travis lists the town’s bridges in the online document “Tennessee Covered Bridges” dated March 3, 2021. The Church Street and Valley View Road bridges, he notes, were constructed in 1973. Both span Salt Lick Creek. No date is given for the Walking Bridge near The Donoho Hotel.

BRIDGE BOOST

Watson sees the bridges as an important part of the town’s history — a draw that could bring more people to Red Boiling Springs to learn about its history. The town, once famous for its mineral spring spas, grew to be a popular destination for people looking for healthy getaways and entertainment. Its hotels saw visits from famous artists, musicians and statesmen, including President Woodrow Wilson.

But Red Boiling Springs slowed as a tourist destination around the mid-20th century as the popularity of “taking the waters” declined. Other forces also conspired to hurt the town. “Between floods and fires, so much of our history was destroyed over the years,” Watson says.

She hopes the town can build upon what remains and that the bridges will help draw in tourists. “Tourism is good for us economically,” she says. “For every dollar they spend, it’s like a \$7 boost to our economy.”

Tourism can also bring up the town’s collective spirits, Watson says. “I think it’s good for us, emotionally, to see that people from outside value what we have. It’s a big boost to our well-being.” 🗨️



The Walking Bridge spans Salt Lick Creek near The Donoho Hotel, a historic resort in Red Boiling Springs.



Valley View Road Bridge

Finding the bridges

Visit the Macon County Chamber of Commerce website, maconcountychamber.org, for more information on the covered bridges of Red Boiling Springs. For more information on Vision 2020 and its projects, visit its website, vision2020inc.com, or Vision 2020 Inc. on Facebook.

HIT *the* TRAIL

These apps can help you plan your next outdoor adventure

Looking for new adventures this spring? A good internet connection can come in handy when you're planning your next excursion into the great outdoors. From discovering your next destination to sharing every step of the journey, these digital tools make it easier than ever to get out there and start enjoying our world.

Yonder

Yonder helps people find nature-rich destinations off the beaten path. Search the more than 20,000 locations across the United States to find your new favorite hidden gem. Each listing puts just as much focus on the experiences guests can expect during their stay as it does on the price tag. Those experiences can include trekking through a canyon, sampling grapes off the vine or enjoying nearby views. Travelers can book online or in the Yonder app available for iOS and Android.

Tripcast

Share more than just the highlights of your trip with the people who matter most. With Tripcast, available on iOS and Android, you can add friends and family to an interactive photo album that puts every traveler's pics in one place. Post notes, photos and real-time updates that are all automatically added to a trip map. Make your trip public or only invite those who want to share in every step of the journey.

AllTrails

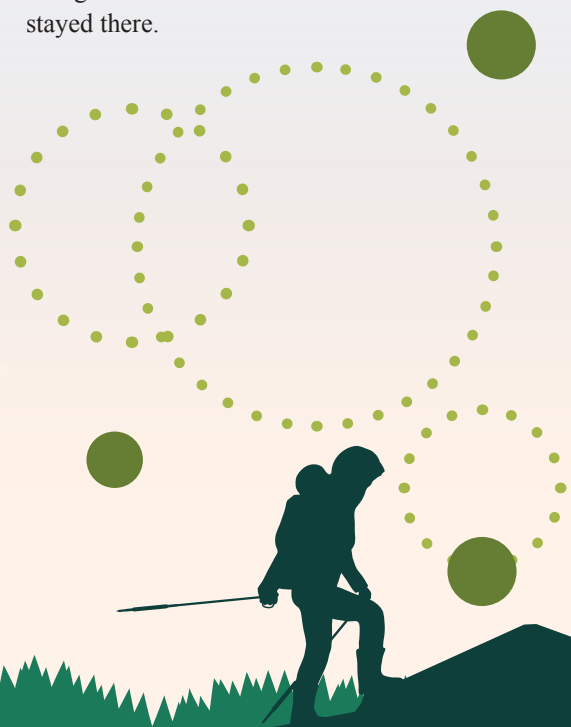
You might be surprised how many great trails there are right in your own community, and AllTrails can help uncover them all. Whether you're looking for a relaxing hike, an invigorating trail run or a challenging, off-road bike ride, you're bound to find something that fits your needs. Browse nearby trails based on their length, difficulty and popularity to find exactly what you're looking for. You can even search for trails that are dog-friendly, have great views or are suited to a fun family outing. You can download the app in iOS or Android.

Star Walk

Make a night under the stars even more exciting with this augmented-reality star chart that tracks over 200,000 celestial objects. Open the app and point your phone at the night sky to see constellations traced right before your eyes and learn about the mythology behind them. Track planets or the International Space Station, and even get notifications for major astronomical events on iOS and Android devices.

Recreation.gov

For those seeking an extended stay in the wild, Recreation.gov is a great starting point. The site and its official app are both built to help travelers find and reserve campsites at national parks, forests and other federally designated properties across the country. Browse amenities and nearby activities for each site, as well as ratings and reviews from those who have stayed there.





Find your Little Free Library

An online map guides readers to book boxes

Take a book. Leave a book. That's the simple, powerful idea behind more than 100,000 Little Free Libraries scattered across the globe.

Todd H. Bol, who created the first Little Free Library in 2009, founded a nonprofit of that name to help people access books at no cost, no matter where they live. A key goal of the Little Free Library organization is the promotion of literacy.

The effort is driven by volunteers who build small, waterproof library boxes, find the libraries a home in their yards or other appropriate spots, and seed them with books. You don't have to share a book before taking one, and you don't even need to return the book you take. It's all on the honor system. But, please do consider contributing a book or two, because that's how the library system grows.

**Do you want to find a Little Free Library near you?
For a searchable map, visit littlefreelibrary.org/ourmap.**



E-READERS

Are you the type of avid reader who enjoys keeping a couple, or maybe even a couple dozen, reading options handy at all times? E-readers were made for you.

E-readers' screens are more eye-friendly than those of do-everything tablets like iPads. And there's another key advantage to e-readers — fewer distractions. There are no notifications, social media, games or email.

While the screens of phones and tablets emit light to create bright, clear images, those of e-readers, such as the Kindle, direct light toward the screen instead of sending it outward. Eye strain is lessened, and the e-readers typically are easy to view even when in direct sunlight.

Amazon remains the e-reader leader. The company is on the 11th version of the Kindle Paperwhite, which was updated late last year. The price is about \$140, with slightly more expensive and less pricey versions also available.

With a Kindle, you can tap into the Amazon library to purchase and store online books. While companies such as Apple offer bookstores, those are not available on Kindle devices.

There are also non-Kindle e-readers, like the Clara HD by Kobo. The company has its own e-book store. You can't reach the Amazon bookstore through a Kobo device, but you can get books through software such as OverDrive, which is used by many library systems. A Clara HD is available for about \$118 from online sites such as Walmart.

Bonus tip: Do you ever want to read the classics, for free? Project Gutenberg makes it possible, providing digital versions of books whose copyrights status allows free distribution. Visit gutenberg.org for details and to browse the library.



Allen County Extension agency staff, from left, Patty Perez, Kelly Burgess, Nancy Owens, Adam Huber, Anna Meador and Tammie Hill.

Know more, **DO MORE**

Allen County Extension Agency helps community blossom

Story by JEN CALHOUN | Photography by TONY YOUNG

In a world full of expensive ways to learn, Anna Meador says extension agency programs have always been one of the nation's best-kept secrets.

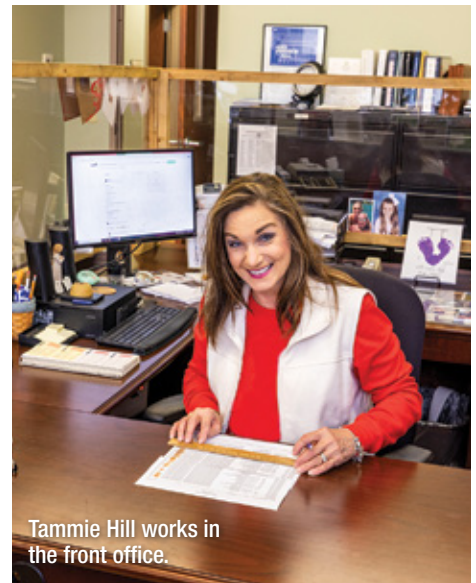
"We're a nonprofit, and most of what we provide is free or nearly free," says Meador, the 4-H Youth Development coordinator at Allen County Cooperative Extension Agency. "I always say you could nearly get the equivalent of a degree just by participating in our programs."

SOCIAL CLIMBING

But the Allen County Cooperative Extension Agency isn't that big of a secret — not anymore, at least. With the help of internet service from NCTC, the agency's social network presence has brought in even more participants to its programs.



"No doubt, there's been an upswing in participation since using social media," Meador says. "Each of our program areas offers its own Facebook page — 4-H, Agriculture and Natural Resources, and Family and Consumer Sciences. It lets us put out frequent reminders and updates about our workshops and programs. And when families share things online about all we do, it gets others interested, too."



When Meador started at the agency about four years ago, it focused primarily on other forms of media to get the word out. “We used a lot of flyers,” she says. “We still do, but as fast-paced as life is for people these days, it just helps to market to people online.”

The marketing helped give several programs and workshops a boost, including the agency’s SET Club, which stands for science, engineering and technology. The program, which meets about eight times a year when schools are in session, gives children hands-on experience with science-related projects. “It’s a really popular program,” Meador says. “A few months ago, they made a walking robot out of cut wood pieces. It was battery-powered from the back. They’ll do a little bit of everything, but robots are really popular right now.”

ONLINE ALL THE TIME

The agency also found new audiences online with YouTube videos that focus on everything from planting a garden to whether those popular meal kits are worth the price. “We are definitely very tied to the internet,” Meador says. “If we don’t have it, things definitely slow down quite a bit.”

Compiling and transferring all that information keeps the agency on its toes. The staff includes Family and Consumer Sciences Agent Kelly Burgess, Agriculture and Natural Resources Agent Adam Huber and SNAP-Ed Assistant Nancy Owens. “All of our programs are supported with research from the University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Program,” Meador says. “We do everything from soil testing and insect identification to helping families with budgets or learning how to plant winter greens or a summer garden. We have solutions for so many problems people face in their homes or on their farms.”

BUILDING BLOCKS

Fortunately, the agency sits in a building that many such organizations might envy for its space and location. Once a large

tractor dealership, the three-story building on East Main Street in Scottsville became the agency’s permanent home about 15 years ago. The basement and main floor hold the bulk of the meeting space, along with a demonstration kitchen. The top floor is primarily for storage.

“It’s probably one of the most heavily used buildings in the county, besides the school system,” Meador says. “It’s open to the entire community to use. Nonprofits can use it for free, and for-profit groups can use it for a small fee.”

Meador says the building helps the agency meet its mission, which is to provide education for everyone in the community. “We focus on hands-on learning and continued education for young people and adults — just anything that provides skills to enhance everyday life,” she says. “We all work very hard to provide a wide variety of programs, and we take a lot of enjoyment in tailoring and providing programs to meet the community’s needs.”

Classes, services, shows and more

Allen County Cooperative Extension Agency offers many opportunities for anyone looking to know more. From cooking videos, recipes and youth activities to helping with growing gardens and crops, the extension agency offers a little bit of everything. Information about programs and workshops can be found at the agency’s website, allen.ca.uky.edu, and on Facebook. Each subset of the organization has its own Facebook page, filled with the latest information and tips.

You can also check out the agency’s “Recipe of the Month” segments on NCTV Channels 6 and 15. Check your local listings for more information. Also make sure to subscribe to the Allen County Extension Office YouTube channel, which offers videos on gardening, 4-H and food.

Roasting

can yield the perfect taste and texture

Explore the nuances of a common cooking technique

A perfectly roasted cut of beef is a thing of beauty. A deliciously roasted chicken surrounded by colorful roasted vegetables is Instagram worthy. But how do you get these cuts of meat to reach these levels of perfection?

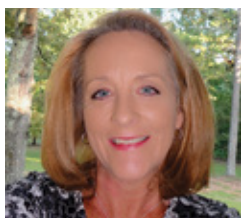
Roasting is an age-old culinary technique that takes relatively tough cuts of meat and, like magic, turns them into tender, mouthwatering bites. It all has to do with cooking low and slow. There's a marked difference between roasting and baking. Baking transforms liquid — batter — into solids like cakes and cookies. Roasting does the opposite, taking meats and vegetables and breaking down their sinewy fibers into a near-gelatinous state.

Here are some simple tips to consider when roasting.

Bring food to room temperature before roasting: Tempering food is a simple but critical step that involves bringing an ingredient to room temperature so that it cooks more evenly. When roasting whole chickens, turkeys, Cornish hens and other birds, keep in mind that white and dark meat are best cooked to different temperatures.

To ensure your bird is roasting properly, position different parts toward hotter or cooler parts of the oven, or cover the breast with foil. It's important to rest meat after roasting, particularly larger cuts that continue to cook after you take them out of the oven. Letting the meat rest for 10 to 20 minutes is usually sufficient. Rested meat will cut more easily.

Remember that size matters: When roasting vegetables, cut veggies into pieces of the same size to ensure even cooking. The best meats to roast are large, tough cuts, such as pork shoulder. Don't roast thinner, less fatty cuts of meat such as boneless, skinless chicken breasts — they'll dry out. Good vegetables to roast are the heartier ones like beets, carrots, potatoes, squashes, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts and sweet potatoes. 🍴



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PERFECTLY ROASTED RIB-EYE

- 1 (4- to 5-pound) rib-eye roast
- Olive oil, optional
- 1 tablespoon kosher salt
- 1-2 teaspoons black pepper, crushed or ground

Before roasting, bring the meat to room temperature. Preheat the oven to 325 F. If the roast is very lean, you may want to drizzle 1 to 2 tablespoons of olive oil over it. Sprinkle salt and pepper over the roast, then place it on a wire rack on a baking sheet. Keep in mind that your cooking time depends on the size of your roast.

Bake for approximately 25 to 30 minutes for every pound of meat for the roast to be cooked to medium. Adjust accordingly for your preferred level of doneness.

You should use a meat thermometer to determine when the roast is done. Push the thermometer all the way into the center of the roast. The ideal temperature for medium is 140-145 F, and the meat may become tough if cooked to well done, which is 155 F and above. Remove the meat from the oven when the inside temperature is about 10 degrees less than your desired level of doneness, because it will continue to cook as it rests.

Let the roast rest for at least 15 minutes, tented in aluminum foil to keep it warm, before carving to serve. Makes about 10 servings.

GARLIC BUTTER ROASTED CHICKEN

- 1 (4-pound) whole chicken, at room temperature, giblets and neck removed from cavity
- 1/4 cup unsalted butter, melted
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1/2 cup dry white wine
- 1 lemon, halved
- Salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste
- 2 tablespoons fresh chopped parsley
- 4 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 whole head of garlic, roughly peeled and cut in half horizontally through the middle crosswise
- 3 fresh whole rosemary sprigs

Preheat the oven to 425 F. Line a baking tray with foil, or lightly grease a roasting pan. Pat the chicken dry with paper towels.

Pour the melted butter, olive oil, wine and juice squeezed from one of the lemon halves over the chicken, under the skin and inside the cavity. Season the chicken liberally with salt and pepper on the outside and inside the cavity, then sprinkle the parsley over it. Rub the minced garlic over the chicken, mixing all the ingredients together over the chicken and under the skin.

Stuff the garlic head into the chicken cavity, along with the rosemary sprigs and the squeezed lemon half. Tie the legs together with kitchen string. Place the chicken, breast-side up, onto a baking sheet or roasting pan and roast for 1 hour and 15-20 minutes, basting halfway through cooking time, until its juices run clear when you pierce the chicken thigh with a skewer.

Baste again, then turn on the broiler to high and broil the bird for 2-3 minutes or until the skin is crisp and golden. Keep an eye on this process, because it can burn quickly.

Remove the chicken from the oven, cover it with foil and allow it to rest for 10 minutes before serving. Drizzle it with the pan juices, and serve it with the remaining lemon half cut into wedges or slices.



Roasted Vegetable Medley

- 3 zucchini squash, cut lengthwise into fourths, then sliced into bite-sized pieces
- 3 yellow squash, cut lengthwise into fourths, then sliced into bite-sized pieces
- 1 red bell pepper, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 1 red onion, cut into wedges
- 8 ounces whole mushrooms
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar, or more to taste
- 1 tablespoon rosemary leaves
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt

Preheat the oven to 450 F. Spray a large baking sheet with cooking spray.

Mix all of the cut-up vegetables and garlic in a large bowl. Add olive oil and balsamic vinegar. Toss until all the vegetables are covered. Add rosemary leaves and salt, and toss again.

Roast the vegetables for 30-40 minutes, stirring once, until they are brown on the outside edges and tender on the inside. Makes 6-8 servings.





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