



MARCH/APRIL 2023

CONNECTION

Walking on Sunshine

Store lights up Lafayette

Q COFFEE EMPORIUM

CHOOSE YOUR OWN
ADVENTURE



By SHIRLEY BLOOMFIELD, CEO
NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association

Fresh opportunities

New funding supports rural broadband

Closing the digital divide is an ongoing effort and not a one-time mission. Every month the diligent work of NTCA members helps to bridge these gaps. Even in the most remote areas, telcos are building world-class broadband networks and enabling critical, life-altering technologies and applications.

Our leaders here in Washington, D.C., continue to notice the gains being made in communities like yours. While the 118th Congress is still getting its feet under it, so to speak, we are seeing interest in several broadband-related bills that could help our members and their customers, and federal agencies continue to implement and execute on various broadband funding programs.

As community-based providers with a long history of service and successful performance, telcos are in a good position to vie for critical financial support for broadband deployment, such as the \$42.5 billion Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment Program. This year, we expect the National Telecommunications and Information Administration to announce allocation of this money to the states and U.S. territories, and, eventually, grants could be given out to providers like yours to serve even more people.

In anticipation of these distributions, we spent much of 2022 on Capitol Hill and with local, state and federal agencies to urge them to work closely with NTCA members. We also brought key decision-makers to NTCA meetings, conferences and webinars, and we provided members-only tools to help position telcos.

Such efforts pay dividends. For example, NTCA member companies have already received more than \$1 billion in U.S. Department of Agriculture ReConnect loans and grants. Job one for NTCA and its members continues to be pursuing policies that will enable small rural providers to keep delivering on the promises of broadband connectivity every day and for decades to come. 🗨️

Fiber internet

It makes a difference



Fiber internet makes essential tools and services possible: commerce, education, entertainment, personal communication and more.

Here are a few examples, highlighted by the Fiber Broadband Association, offering a detailed look at how fiber networks make a difference:



1 FASTER INTERNET: Creating a network capable of keeping up with growing consumer demand for videos, music streaming and online gaming is no easy task. Fiber, however, consistently outpaces the fastest download and upload speeds of older technologies like cable, DSL and wireless.



2 INCREASED HOME VALUES: Studies have shown that fast, reliable broadband is rated as the single most important amenity for rented or multifamily homes. Access to fiber broadband increased rental and property values by as much as 8%.



3 FIBER NETWORKS HELP LOCAL ECONOMIES: There's growing evidence fiber connectivity not only encourages businesses to stay in their locations but also helps them grow and become more productive. It even attracts new businesses, particularly in high-tech industries.



4 SUSTAINABLE: The glass that makes fiber work so well is made from sand, which is plentiful and requires less energy and creates less pollution to acquire than older technologies.

This could have been an email

How digital literacy is shaping communication in the workplace

Story by DREW WOOLLEY



Clear communication can be a challenge at the best of times. But particularly for remote workers relying on digital chat and email tools, it's never been easier for wires to get crossed, even during simple exchanges.

ALWAYS ONLINE

In some cases, the generation gap can rear its head even before the first word has been typed or spoken. While baby boomers and members of Generation X tend to prefer doing business face-to-face or over the phone, younger generations are much more digitally inclined.

According to research from Purdue University, both millennials and Generation Z or Zoomers — people born between the mid-1990s and about 2010 — tend to prefer communicating by email, instant message, text and social media. Having grown up with access to high-speed internet, Zoomers expect a rapid response to messages, based on a survey by marketing company LeadSquared.

THANKS.

It's no secret periods at the end of lone sentences are falling by the wayside in texts, chats and social media. For some, it's a punctuational pet peeve. But for younger colleagues, the reappearance of that little dot can carry extra meaning.

For example, while some millennials and older generations might put a period after a short message like "Thanks" or "Good job," for Gen Z, that hard stop can imply coldness or sarcasm. Younger professionals are more likely to use exclamation points to express enthusiasm. So don't worry, they aren't yelling at you.

TBH, IDK

For those who came of age texting before phones could predict what you're trying to type, quick abbreviations for common phrases were a must. BTW (by the way), TBH (to be honest), IMO (in my opinion), JK (just kidding) and IDK (I don't know) are just a few examples.

While many of these abbreviations are now part of the internet's vocabulary, they can be a stumbling block for anyone who didn't grow up seeing them daily. When clarity is a priority, consider taking the extra few seconds to spell it out. 🗨️

A picture's worth a thousand words

As platforms like Slack and Microsoft Teams become more popular, emoji are rapidly invading work chats. Many are self-explanatory and can help add some extra expression to a message. Others can be confusing or misinterpreted. So be sure you know what message you're sending.



While many people use the **smile emoji** to denote, well, a smile, some younger professionals interpret it more ironically. That may seem confusing, but just ask yourself if there's any warmth in that smile's cold, dead eyes.



By and large, the **thumbs up** should be saved as a response to a clear yes or no question, or to acknowledge that you've seen a comment that doesn't require a longer reply. Offering a thumbs up in conversations that are any more nuanced could cause confusion about whether any follow-up is needed or suggest you aren't giving the exchange your full attention.



This one is just a public service announcement. Despite — or maybe because — the **crying laughing emoji** is the world's most popular, according to Adobe, Gen Z has officially dubbed it cliché and uncool. If you're looking to stay up on the trends, consider changing things up with the skull emoji to let them know their joke really killed.

New ways to serve

A sturdy foundation creates fresh opportunity

Each day, I appreciate how NCTC is here to support the communities we serve as powerfully as we can. One of the best examples of this is our fast internet network, which opens opportunities for everyone who uses it.



**JOHNNY
MCCLANAHAN**
President/CEO

Thanks to telemedicine, our rural communities have access to convenient, high-quality care. The agriculture industry can turn to digital resources that can save time and money. Students learning in a classroom or at home can access a wealth of information. This fast digital network also provides the foundation for economic growth that can uplift everyone.

In fact, neighbors helping neighbors has always been at the heart of the cooperative mission for NCTC. A key part of the cooperative model is that you're more than a customer. You are a member of NCTC, and you can vote to elect those who serve on the board of directors leading us.

Recently, we lost one of NCTC's original board members, Bill Green, who is an example of the men and women who started the cooperative and who continue to help it thrive. A banker with

Macon Bank & Trust and a decorated World War II veteran, Mr. Green was committed to improving our community. He passed away in December at the age of 96.

As a founding member of the NCTC Board of Directors, Mr. Green was a key part of the effort to bring telephone service to the region. After serving as the board's vice president in 1951, he became president and chairman of the board in 1969. He served as president-chairman until 2002, and was on the board until 2007.

There's no better example of what we try to do at NCTC than those 56 years of support and commitment. While we miss Mr. Green's presence, his memory and achievements will live on as part of the foundation that makes all we do possible.

You need to look no further than our efforts in Bowling Green and Warren County to see how NCTC is as committed and forward-thinking as ever as we seek new ways to support those we serve. In December, the Bowling Green Area Chamber of Commerce hosted a ribbon-cutting ceremony for NCTC's new office off Porter Pike.

The location is part of our partnership with Warren RECC, a commitment to create a gig-capable, fiber internet service to benefit parts of Warren, Grayson, Edmonton, Simpson and Butler counties. We'll be part of those communities through that office, where customers can ask questions, start service and more.

I believe Mr. Green and all the other board members who through the years helped shape who we are would appreciate not only the work we're doing with Warren RECC, but also the ongoing efforts to continuously adapt our services to your changing needs and the latest technological innovations.

Thank you for being part of the journey. 📧

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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, Tennessee, Allen County and Warren County, Kentucky. NCTC also serves portions of Sumner, Trousdale, Smith and Clay counties in Tennessee.

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On the Cover:



Jennifer Marshall, owner of Sunshine Decor & Gifts, talks about home decor, big trucks and the black wall.
See story Page 12.

Photo by Tony Young

Remembering Bill Green

The NCTC Board of Directors, staff and management would like to honor William "Bill" Green, one of the cooperative's original directors, who passed away Dec. 27, 2022, at the age of 96. Green, a decorated World War II veteran and longtime banker with Macon Bank & Trust, spent his life helping his community grow and prosper.

As a founding member of the NCTC Board of Directors, Green helped bring affordable and reliable telephone service to the region. He first served as vice president in 1951, and he went on to become president and chairman of the board in 1969. After stepping down as president-chairman in 2002, he remained on NCTC's board until 2007.

His 56 years of dedication and service to NCTC and the community earned him the Director Life Achievement Award from the National Telecommunications Cooperative Association, and NCTC awarded Green its Community Service Award in 2017.

"NCTC would like to extend its warmest condolences to the family of Mr. Green," NCTC President and CEO Johnny McClanahan says. "He was an important part of bringing phone service and connectivity to our region. Mr. Green, along with Will Hall Sullivan and other area residents, helped establish the cooperative, laying the foundations of what it is today. He will be missed, but his legacy still stands strong."



Laurie East retires

NCTC would like to thank accounting employee Laurie East for her years of dedication and service to the cooperative and its members.

East will retire from NCTC after more than 24 years. She plans to spend more time enjoying her children and grandchildren, as well as her new puppy. She also hopes to travel the country with her family. NCTC appreciates East's commitment to customers and the cooperative's mission.



Laurie East and CEO Johnny McClanahan

Bowling Green chamber welcomes NCTC's new office

The Bowling Green Area Chamber of Commerce in December held a ribbon-cutting ceremony for NCTC's new office at 176 Porter Pike, Suite 301, in Bowling Green, Kentucky. The new location is a result of NCTC's partnership with Warren RECC to build a cutting edge, gig-capable, fiber internet service for residents of parts of Warren, Grayson, Edmonson, Simpson and Butler counties. The new office will help customers with everything from getting service information to signing up for service and making electronic payments.



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, includes details like 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, 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.

OUTDOOR adventures

The Southeast is a treasure trove of thrilling nature excursions

Story by ANNE BRALY

Photo courtesy of Tennessee Department of Tourism

The Southeast harbors its own kind of magic when it comes to outdoor attractions among its ancient mountains and waterways.

“It’s no secret that the Southeast United States is a remarkable hot spot for adventure,” says Terri Chapin, program coordinator for Outdoor Chattanooga. “Thrill-seekers are cool with the variety of outdoor adventures in the abundant lakes, rivers and mountain streams.”

From the region’s national parks and forests to world-class whitewater and wind sports, there’s something for everyone. And when the day is done, Terri suggests balancing your nature fix with a little urban exploration. It’s not too far from the forest to good food. “Here is the secret sauce — the Southeast blends both urban and the wild to offer endless possibilities for multiple cool adventures in one day,” she says.



ABOVE: Kayaking along the Tennessee River is very popular.

LEFT: The South’s sandstone cliffs make for great rock climbing.

RUNNING THE RAPIDS

The Southeast is blessed with numerous rivers offering whitewater excitement. From the Nantahala and the Green River in North Carolina to Chattahoochie Whitewater Express in Georgia, you’re in for an adrenaline rush at every stroke of the paddle.

The **Ocoee River** in eastern Tennessee boasts some of the best freestyle kayaking in the U.S. It was once a dammed waterway, but the Tennessee Valley Authority has been releasing recreational flows since the 1970s, creating a 10-mile stretch of Class III whitewater.

Rapids like Grumpy, Broken Nose, Flipper and Tablesaw create challenges for even the most experienced paddlers. But if you have the skills, the Ocoee has thrills. And if you don’t? Consider rafting. There are several rafting enterprises that will give you the thrills in a more-protected type experience. For a complete list of outfitters, visit timetoraft.com.

The **Chattooga River** begins in the mountains of North Carolina before



Photo courtesy of Outdoor Chattanooga

heading south to form a natural border between South Carolina and Georgia. Though it has a reputation of being one of the most unforgettable whitewater experiences in the South — thanks, in part, to its inclusion in the film “Deliverance” — the Chattooga is actually a river for all, from families to experienced paddlers.

There are two distinct sections. The calmest, Section III, is recommended for kayakers ages 8 and older and has numerous swimming holes. Leave Section IV for those with more experience. It has heart-stopping, Class IV rapids. For a list of rafting outfitters and guides, log onto visitoconeesc.com.

PEDAL POWER

Whether you want a strenuous mountain ride or prefer to pedal through flatter terrain, great cycling trails snake through the forests of the Southeast.

The trail running through Alabama’s **Chewacla State Park** takes you along some of the most beautiful parts of the Southern Appalachian Trail — 696 acres of it, to be exact. Some of it is good for beginners, while other parts add more thrills for experienced cyclists. There are some hand-built trails, as well as the state’s only

wall ride — a 15-foot-high arc wall known as the Great Wall of Chewacla. For more information, visit aotourism.com.

With terrain ranging from flatlands to challenging mountain climbs, some of Kentucky’s best cycling trails are found in **Mammoth Cave National Park**. Mammoth Cave Railroad Bike and Hike Trail is one of those rails-to-trails experiences that offers a choice of adventures. Ride or hike the 9-mile graveled trail that, back in the 1880s, was the rail line of the Mammoth Cave Railroad. The trail offers scenic overlooks, historic sites and interpretive displays along the way. Find more excitement at kygetaway.com.

HANG TIME

Hang gliding is a heart-stopping thrill ride that gives you a bird’s-eye view of the landscape. And the mountains around the Southeast offer the perfect opportunity to take a flying leap.

If you want a beautiful hang gliding location that offers stunning views of the Tennessee Valley, **Lookout Mountain Flight Park** is where you can see the “Grand Canyon of Tennessee” spread out before you.

Experienced guides offer extensive lessons with beginners starting out in the valley below. Altitude and speed on these tandem flights are gained by a tow line attached to a small aircraft. Jumping off the mountain above is only for rated pilots. For more information, visit flylookout.com.

The Wright Brothers took to the air first in **Kitty Hawk, North Carolina**, and now you can, too. There are no mountains, but there is wind, dunes and lots of room to run and land in soft sand. There are schools to teach you how, and it’s a good way to learn the art of hang gliding. Fly on over to kittyhawk.com for more information.

ROCK OUT

When your adventurous spirit calls out to let you know it’s time to hit the rocks, the Southeast’s sandstone cliffs are made for the sport.

The Red River Gorge occupies 29,000 acres within the beauty of Kentucky’s

Daniel Boone National Forest. Its climbing routes are a favorite with some of the best climbs and bouldering options in the world. Log on to redrivergorge.com for more information.

Climbers flock to the **Tennessee Wall** just north of downtown Chattanooga for hundreds of routes for climbing and bouldering. The Tennessee Wall is about 2 miles of cracks, overhanging walls, roofs and other features in a beautiful setting overlooking the Tennessee River in the Tennessee River Gorge. Visit trgt.org for more information.

Go bouldering at **Horse Pens 40**, a privately owned recreation area near Steele, Alabama. It’s home to a highly concentrated boulder field scattered among deciduous trees and grasslands, and it’s been attracting boulderers for decades. There’s a small fee to enter, \$8-\$10, and camping is available for a few dollars more. Check it out at hp40.com. 📍

BELOW: Running the rapids on the Ocoee River.



Photo courtesy of Outdoor Chattanooga

PUTTING THE Q

Bowling Green cafe offers something fresh for everyone

Story by JEN CALHOUN

By noon on a recent Monday, the cafe known as Q had already served 313 customers at its Scottsville Road location. Whether they came for handmade bagels and croissants, a specialty brew or one of the shop's popular sandwiches, co-owner Ike Minor can't say for sure. What he does know is that the number of customers has multiplied since the cafe opened in 2019.

"We're pretty busy," says Ike, who co-owns Q Coffee Emporium — Bagels & Artisan Bakery alongside four other family members. "I think it's because it's not like anything you usually see in Bowling Green."

FAMILY MATTERS

Q's uniqueness is a direct result of the people who own and operate it. The five owners include Steve and Cristie Wilson; two of their children, Emily Logsdon and Nathan Wilson; and Ike, who is married to another Wilson daughter, Jessica Minor.

In addition, Jessica creates all the designs for the cafe, and her sister, Rachel Wilson, takes care of the shop's



Q co-owner Ike Minor worked in coffee shops for years before bringing his talents to the family business.

social media. Noah Logsdon, Emily's husband, helps manage the restaurant alongside Ike. "Everyone's got some certain niche that they bring to the business," Ike says. "Steve has been involved in several restaurants, but he was also a general manager at Toyota. And Emily has worked at restaurants all over California and Kentucky. I worked at a large coffee store chain for many years, so I had knowledge of the coffee side. Nathan, who is the newest owner, spent countless hours learning and perfecting this incredible,

Roman-style pizza that we started serving last summer."

ORIGINAL AND FRESH

But one of the brightest lights at the shop is Cristie, who was long known as the Cake Lady of Bowling Green for her beautifully decorated, tasty, fresh-baked goods. "She's the heart and soul of this place," Ike says. "She's just really gifted with that kind of thing, so we sent her to San Francisco to a baking institute. She learned all kinds of things that she uses at Q."

The owners of Q Coffee Emporium — Bagels & Artisan Bakery wanted the shop to feel like a community gathering space.



IN COMMUNITY



Photos by Tony Young

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Q employee Brently Sorgmann prepares one of the cafe's specialized drinks. Q's owners say they wanted a comfortable, sleek vibe for the cafe, which offers Wi-Fi from NCTC's ultra high-speed fiber internet service, as well as TVs, a conference table and a soft-seating area. Q's chicken salad sandwich is served on a fresh, handmade croissant.

From the beginning, the family set out to make every food item from scratch, using some of the highest quality ingredients. They make the bagels, croissants, pastries and sandwich breads in-house daily. They produce the pizza dough through a traditional Roman style that takes three days to create. "We won't serve anything over a day old," Ike says. "There's something really special about having a sandwich made with fresh bread or a dessert that was made the same day. We want our customers to have that experience every time, so nothing here is old."

GATHERING SPOT

In addition to fresh, high-quality food and drinks, Q offers several ways for customers to enjoy their visit. The restaurant includes tables and high-tops, a 10- to 12-seat conference table for meetings, four soft armchairs, a large circular couch and a mini library. "We also have three TVs running on different channels," Ike says. "One's always on sports, one's on a nature show and one is for kids. We also

have three monitors with a keyboard and a mouse, so you can log in and do work on your own. Anyone can use them."


Q also provides guests with multiple plug-ins to charge devices, and the restaurant's NCTC fiber connection provides some of the fastest internet speeds in the country. There's not a slow spot in the restaurant. "I have Wi-Fi everywhere," Ike says. "The internet is a huge deal here."

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

But with all its popularity, Ike still fields questions about the restaurant's name.

"I don't necessarily have a good answer as to why we called it Q," he says with a laugh. "Early on, Emily was interested in doing something with quesadillas, so Q was in her head. Then, when we decided on a different type of place, someone brought up Q again. The thinking was that it was a good way for people to make it their own and play with it."

These days, they like to say the Q stands for "Qmmunity." "A lot of that is because, not long after we started, the

pandemic came," Ike says. "If it wasn't for the support of the community, we couldn't have made it. But we also think it's important for people in the community to get together and talk and be together. It's such an important touchstone for us." 

Quest for Q

Q Coffee Emporium — Bagels & Artisan Bakery is a family-owned restaurant, coffee shop and bakery at 5851 Scottsville Road in Bowling Green, Kentucky. For more information, the full Q menu and hours of operation, visit the website at qbowlingsgreen.com or find the cafe on Facebook. Its Instagram handle is [q_bowlingsgreen](https://www.instagram.com/q_bowlingsgreen).

Q is expected to open another location this year at Waterbury Court, near the Western Kentucky University Center for Research and Development on Nashville Road.

Family TV night

Great family binges for all ages

With the wealth of streaming services available today, there have never been so many viewing options available at the tap of a few buttons. But the constant barrage of new TV shows and movies can make it difficult to sort the wheat from the chaff, especially if you're looking for something the whole family can enjoy.

While services like Disney+ come ready with a huge catalog of family classics, other major streamers are still building up their libraries of kid-friendly content. Here are a few suggestions to help your family start exploring the latest offerings.





AGES 4+

“Bluey,” Disney+ — Inexhaustible Blue Heeler dog Bluey turns everyday life into amazing adventures that stimulate her imagination and emotional resilience. Broken up into short, nine-minute episodes, the Australian animated show has garnered praise for providing constructive messages while remaining engaging for adults.

“Motown Magic,” Netflix — This feel-good series celebrates music, has colorful, eye-catching visuals and instills positive messages about self-confidence. For lovers of oldies, the soundtrack is also a great introduction to Motown and soul classics.

“Sesame Street,” HBO Max — Starting with the show’s 51st season in 2020, HBO Max became the official home of “Sesame Street.” Get access to new episodes immediately so your kids can experience the fun and entertaining brand of education that “Sesame Street” has offered for decades.

“Madagascar: A Little Wild,” Hulu — Drawing on the humor and animation that made the Madagascar movies popular, this musical comedy series follows four young animals in a rescue habitat in Central Park. The show celebrates being yourself and pursuing your dreams, no matter how wild.

“Shaun the Sheep,” Netflix — Adults and young kids alike can enjoy a laugh in this clay-mation series from the makers of “Wallace and Gromit.” Shaun’s barnyard misadventures with his cousin Timmy, sheepdog Bitzer, cat Pidsley and fellow sheep Shirley have even spun off into several movies available exclusively on Netflix.

AGES 7+

“Just Add Magic,” Amazon Prime Video — When Kelly discovers her grandmother’s mysterious cookbook in the attic, she and her best friends, Darbie and Hannah, find out there’s more magic to the recipes than just a secret ingredient. Loosely based on Cindy Callaghan’s popular book by the same name, the show offers magical fun for the whole family.

“Pokemon Journeys,” Netflix — This Netflix series is action-packed enough to grab the attention of new viewers and based on the anime series some parents may have watched when they were kids. Follow young trainer Ash as he travels the world learning about new Pokemon.

“Gravity Falls,” Disney+ — If your little

ones aren’t quite ready for shows like “Stranger Things” or sci-fi classics like “The X-Files,” “Gravity Falls” might be just the ticket. This show offers Pacific Northwest weirdness for the whole family as twins Mabel and Dipper Pines spend the summer with their great-uncle Stan investigating strange mysteries in Oregon.

“Star Wars: The Clone Wars,” Disney+ — Before there was a Disney series for every character in the Star Wars universe, “The Clone Wars” was filling in the gaps between the canonical Star Wars movies. The continuing adventures of Obi Wan, Anakin and young Palawan Ahsoka Tano feature enough surprisingly deep storytelling that parents might be as eager as their kids to hit play on the next episode.

“TrollsTopia,” Hulu — Picking up after the movie “Trolls: World Tour,” “TrollsTopia” follows Poppy as she attempts to unite delegates from the Country Western, Classical, Funk, Techno and Hard Rock tribes in one harmonious city. Watch as they learn to celebrate their differences with a variety of catchy tunes.

AGES 11+

“Raising Dion,” Netflix — Second grader Dion learns to balance super powers and villain battles with the everyday challenges of growing up. The mild violence and portrayals of bullying might be a little much for younger viewers, but tween audiences will find plenty to enjoy.

“The Hardy Boys,” Hulu — Based on the popular book series, this show follows Frank and Joe Hardy when they move from the city to their parents’ hometown of Bridgeport. When their dad takes on a secret investigation, it doesn’t take long for the Hardy boys to get drawn into the mystery.

“The Quest,” Disney+ — A new take on the reality competition series from the team behind “The Amazing Race,” “The Quest” drops eight teens into an immersive fantasy world where it’s their job to save the kingdom. Find out which contestant is The One while scratching that old “Legends of the Hidden Temple” itch.

“The Dark Crystal: Age of Resistance,” Netflix — This prequel to the 1982 dark fantasy movie from Jim Henson follows a group of Gelflings as they seek to stop power-hungry overlords from draining the life from their world. Parents who enjoyed the original will enjoy the shot of nostalgia, while younger viewers marvel at the stunning visuals. 📺

Ray of light

Sunshine Decor & Gifts glows in Lafayette

Story by JEN CALHOUN

A few times a year, Jennifer Marshall rolls into Lafayette with a 28-foot trailer packed with the latest and greatest decorative pieces to fill her shop.

From unique furniture, lighting and wall decor to handbags and accessories, there are always unique offerings at Sunshine Decor & Gifts. “It’s a lot of fun,” Jennifer says. “We’ll travel about 2,500 miles to all kinds of different places and markets just to find the right stuff. Then, we like to post the open truck on our Facebook page. It gets everyone excited. One customer came in the other day and said that we had a dream job for women.”

She can’t exactly disagree, either. Since Sunshine opened in 2015, Jennifer’s enjoyed every aspect of running the business with her husband, Mike. She loves going to markets in Atlanta and other cities, and she enjoys creating displays and decorating the shop down to the smallest details. But her favorite part is seeing her customers’ delight as they walk through the store. “It’s just a good place to chill out and browse,” she says.

BACKSTORY

Before starting Sunshine Decor, Jennifer worked at American Greetings for 25 years. When the factory closed, she managed the family’s rental properties and helped her husband run a shipping store that also sold buildings and carports. “When we first opened the shipping store, I was pretty nervous,” she says. “I came from having a steady income with insurance benefits and all that, so it was a little nerve-racking to go without that.”

She started the Sunshine shop while managing the shipping store and the rental properties. Since she was already working at the site, she wanted to add her own business into the mix. She’d always liked decor items, and she noticed that one of the local shops that sold outdoor decor had closed. “We were in this little, 300-square-foot space, so we started selling outdoor planters, arbors — things of that nature,” Jennifer says. “It fit the amount of space we had, and I thought it filled a need in Lafayette.”

But she had no idea how popular the store would become in such a short time. Her first Facebook page attracted not only locals but also people from outside the region and from different states entirely. As the Sunshine Decor business grew, the business moved into larger quarters. Then, it grew even more.



Photos by Tony Young



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Jennifer Marshall owns Sunshine Decor & Gifts.

The Lafayette shop offers a wide selection of home decor items and furniture.

Designing displays is part of the fun for Jennifer.

Jennifer assists customer Kathy Tuck with a purchase.



In April 2022, Sunshine Decor & Gifts moved into its third location — an 1,800-square-foot showroom that came with an additional 1,800 square feet in storage space. “My husband felt like the move would help the business, and it really did make it better,” Jennifer says. “He just gave me one big, open room and said, ‘Tell me what you want.’”

DESIGNING WOMEN

Since then, the shop has become a popular fixture in the community for its unique items and beautiful displays. “Sometimes, we’ll do a display five or six times to get it where we want it,” Jennifer says. “We’ll think it looks good, then we’ll walk around it and go, ‘No, let’s try again.’ Sometimes, it takes just one little piece — a candle or a little something — that will pull the whole thing together.”

One of the walls in the shop is painted black and serves as backdrop for Jennifer’s staging and displays. “The black wall is everybody’s favorite,” she says. “We decorate it for Christmas and spring and all the seasons. I’ve had several customers come in and say they’ve painted a black wall in their house now, too.”

MIXING IT UP

With all the designing and traveling, Jennifer stays busy and doesn’t expect another expansion anytime soon. She also maintains a strong following on her Facebook page where she keeps customers alerted to the newest finds. She currently has no plans to sell online because shipping costs for many of the items would likely be too high. Besides, the experience of walking into the store is a big part of the fun.

“Some people call us a mini Hobby Lobby,” she says. “We try to carry all kinds of different items and styles, whether it’s the farmhouse style or modern or, well, any kind of style. We have a variety of things, and there’s something for everybody. But I also love putting all the things together and seeing how it turns out.” 📷



Let the Sunshine in

Sunshine Decor & Gifts is at 34 Brattontown Circle in Lafayette. It sells everything from handbags to lamps to large furniture pieces. The shop also offers outdoor decorations and furniture and items for the man cave. Bridal registries are available, and delivery is available within the city limits of Lafayette. Sunshine is always decked out for the seasons, and the staff encourages shoppers to take in the displays and enjoy a relaxing experience. To check out the store’s latest goodies, visit and like the Sunshine Decor & Gifts Facebook page, which is updated regularly.

MEALS

that will make you

SQUEAL



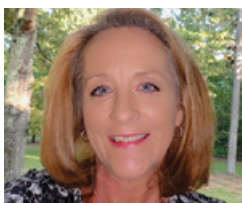
Ham-bitious ways to use your leftovers

While much of the rest of the world celebrates the arrival of spring with lamb, in the U.S. pink, salty-sweet slices of cured pork, slathered in a sugary glaze, will fill many tables.

The problem, however, is that unless you buy a boneless ham by the pound or one of those small canned hams, you'll probably bring home a large bone-in ham from the market or treat yourself to one from the honey ham store. And more likely than not, after you serve dinner with a couple of side dishes, you're going to have a lot of leftovers.

There are so many ways to use up that ham that go beyond deviling or as a salad topper.

Here are three ideas to make the most of your leftover ham. They're wonderful by themselves, or just make a day of it and make them all, using up most, if not all, of that leftover ham. There's nothing better than a bowl of creamy ham soup with cheesy ham-studded biscuits and a delicious ham sandwich — with a twist.



FOOD EDITOR
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Photography by MARK GILLILAND | Food Styling by RHONDA GILLILAND

CREAMY POTATO HAM SOUP

- 4 strips of bacon
- 1/2 cup onion, finely chopped
- 3-4 medium potatoes, peeled and diced (2-3 cups)
- 3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 4 cups chicken broth, preferably homemade (see note)
- 1 1/2 cups cooked ham, cut into 1/2-inch cubes
- 1 cup corn, canned (drained) or frozen (no need to thaw)
- 1/2 cup heavy cream
- 1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper
- Salt (to taste)
- 1 teaspoon fresh parsley, finely chopped

Saute bacon in a large stockpot over medium-high heat until crisp. Chop the bacon and set it aside on a plate, reserving bacon drippings in the pot. Add onion and potatoes to the pot and saute for 1-2 minutes until fragrant. Stir in flour and mix well until the flour is fully incorporated. Stir in chicken broth and mix until the soup is smooth and uniform. Bring the soup to a boil over medium-high heat. Cover and let it continue to boil for 10-15 minutes until the potatoes are fork tender.

Mash half of the potatoes in the



pot with a potato masher to help thicken the soup.

Stir in ham, corn, heavy cream and black pepper. Let the soup simmer over medium heat and whisk occasionally until thickened to a desired consistency, 5-10 minutes. If the chowder gets too thick, add a little water to dilute it. Add salt to taste. Serve topped with reserved crispy bacon and fresh parsley. Makes about 4 servings.

Note: To make homemade chicken stock, boil a whole chicken in water to cover with some chunks of onion and celery added. Simmer the chicken until tender. You can tell if it's tender by pulling on the leg. If the leg comes out easily, the chicken is ready. Save the chicken for chicken salad or a chicken casserole. But save the stock, too. Salt it, to taste, and use it right away for this soup, or let it cool, pour it into a gallon-size freezer bag and freeze it.



CHEESY HAM BISCUITS

These biscuits pull double duty as a side to soup or cut them in half, add a fried egg and make a breakfast biscuit.

- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 cup salted butter (1 stick)
- 1 1/4 cups buttermilk
- 1/2 cup chopped ham
- 1 cup shredded extra sharp cheddar cheese

Preheat the oven to 450 F.
Mix dry ingredients. Cut butter into thin slices and then cut it into the flour

until pieces of butter are small. Add in the buttermilk slowly and incorporate with the flour mixture. Don't overmix.

Sprinkle a small amount of flour on a work surface and place dough on top of it. Press down to make flat and then add the ham and cheddar cheese to the top. Knead dough a few times to incorporate the ham and cheese.

Press or roll out into 1/2-inch thickness. Use a biscuit cutter or rim of a glass to cut out biscuits.

Place biscuits on a baking sheet and bake for 10-12 minutes. Makes about a dozen biscuits.



BAKED HAM SANDWICHES

This is a favorite vintage recipe from Encore! Nashville, a Junior League of Nashville publication from the 1970s. Prepare ahead: These sandwiches are best made early in the morning or the day before to give time for the "custard" to soak into the bread.

- 8 slices bread
- 2 tablespoons butter, softened
- 4 slices ham
- 4 slices sharp cheddar cheese
- 1/2 teaspoon dry mustard
- 3 eggs, slightly beaten
- 2 cups evaporated milk or whole milk
- 1 teaspoon grated onion
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper
- Dash of Worcestershire sauce
- Dash of cayenne pepper

Trim crusts from bread and butter both sides well. Place 4 slices of bread

in a buttered baking dish. Place a piece of ham on each piece and cover with cheese, then top with remaining bread slices.

Combine remaining ingredients and pour over bread. Refrigerate all day or overnight. When ready to bake, spoon sauce over bread again and bake at 300 F, uncovered, until sandwiches are bubbly and golden brown on top, about 1 hour. Makes 4 servings.

Note: For a heartier sandwich, slices of tomato, avocado or bacon may be layered between the ham and cheese. 🍷





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