



MAY/JUNE 2023

CONNECTION



Farm fresh

Flavor comes first
at Catesa Farms

**NCTC HELPS
BUSINESSES THRIVE**

MEATBALL MANIA



By SHIRLEY BLOOMFIELD, CEO
NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association

Training broadband professionals

New NTCA partnership will make a difference

As rural communities like yours experience the life-changing benefits of fast, reliable internet service, the NTCA is proud to expand its support of the professionals making these innovations possible.


We are partnering with Northwood Technical College, which will offer remote workforce training opportunities exclusively for NTCA members. This agreement is one example of how we are pulling out the stops to help providers like yours bridge the digital divide.

Building a robust internet network requires a range of skills, but the work doesn't end after the first connections are installed. Maintaining the systems that power work-from-home jobs, telehealth and so much more demands highly skilled workers.

This new initiative with Wisconsin-based Northwood Tech will help NTCA members secure the expertise needed to not only accelerate broadband deployment but also sustain future-proof technologies.

Northwood Tech has several decades of innovative telecommunications and broadband training experience, but its Broadband Academy's focus extends beyond network systems, hardware and software. The consumer experience, and how communications professionals can better serve their customers, is also a priority.

Northwood Tech President John Will says the partnership with NTCA allows the school to reach and train more students and upskill employees who will gain industry-recognized digital badging credentials.

Also, the remote classes mean NTCA members and Northwood Tech will use broadband technology for broadband training. It's just one more example showing how fast internet service can make a difference in the nation's rural communities. 

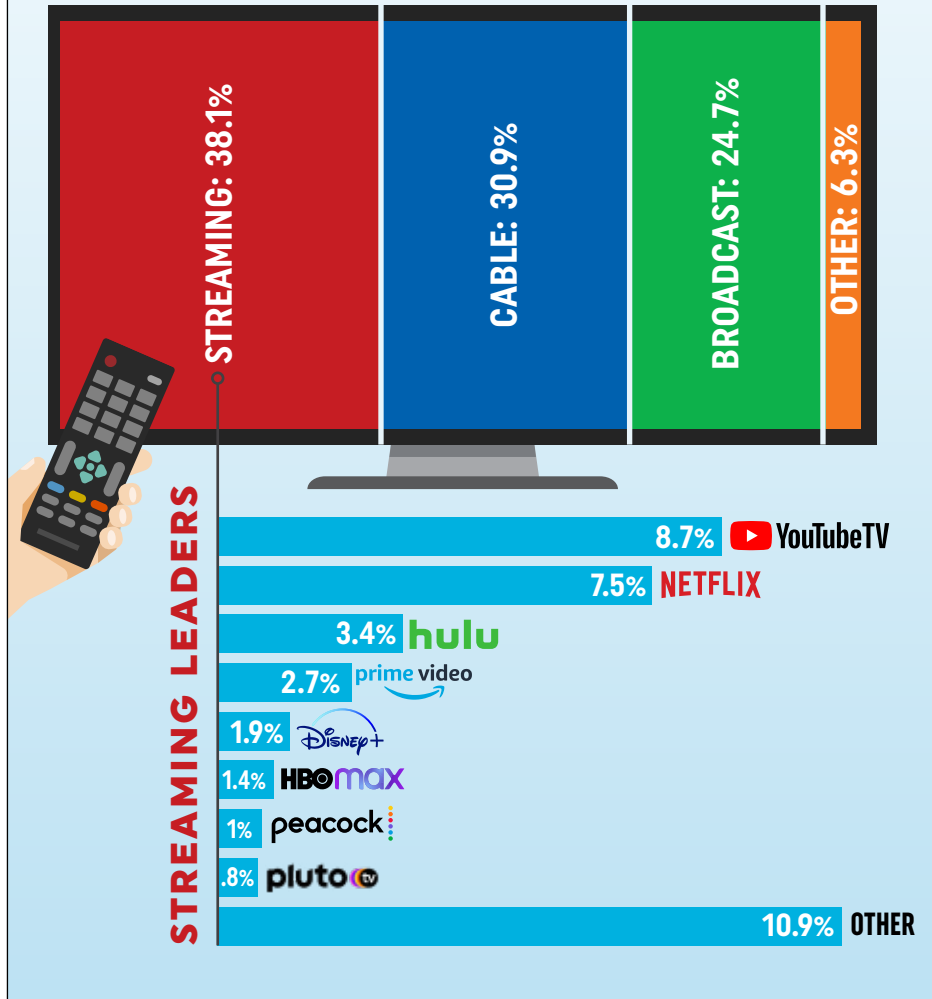
Entertainment riches

Viewers match their interest to the service

Whether you enjoy the predictable pace of a baseball game, catching a 30-minute comedy viewed when your schedule allows, watching a movie from your favorite genre — or just about any other entertainment choice — there's a wealth of options.

And today, you can design the viewing experience you want.

Nielsen, a company that measures audiences to provide important research to advertisers, released a report earlier this year that gives a peek into our viewing habits:



GAMING FAVORITES

For many people, a little screen time means something more interactive than a show or movie — they play video games. Nielsen identified some of the top games from recent months, so here are a few to consider if you're looking for fresh options.

- ▶ Hogwarts Legacy
- ▶ The Legend of Zelda: Tears of the Kingdom
- ▶ Resident Evil 4
- ▶ Diablo IV
- ▶ Minecraft



Home security

KEEP YOUR DATA SAFE WHILE WORKING REMOTELY



Story by DREW WOOLLEY

Working from home is no longer uncommon. As access to high-speed internet and tools for remote collaboration become more widespread, employers are increasingly warming to the idea of letting people get out of the office at least a few days a week.

The comfort and accessibility of remote work mean it isn't likely to go away anytime soon. But it can also introduce new challenges like security concerns. Whether you're taking your laptop to the nearby coffee shop or setting up a work station at home, keep these guidelines in mind to make sure your work is secure wherever you are.

STAY UPDATED

When you see an alert about a new software update, don't wait to install it. Among other things, these updates often close security loopholes that malware can use to get access to your data. It's also important to have an antivirus program installed that can protect your devices from the latest viruses, spyware and phishing scams.

DON'T TAKE THE BAIT

Speaking of phishing scams, it's important to be extra alert when working remotely. Bogus emails can hit an office just as easily as your home computer, but it's easier to spot a fake when the co-worker supposedly asking for sensitive information is in the same room as you. Always make sure your devices are secure outside the office, and be sure to double check any suspicious requests directly.

PROTECT WORK DEVICES

Working from home often means exposing your work devices to kids or other family members who may not be as careful about security measures as you are. Take steps to make sure others

aren't using your work devices or accidentally seeing sensitive information. Also, try to avoid doing work on personal devices that may not be as well-secured.

KEEP YOUR VPN ON

Many companies use virtual private networks, or VPNs, to help employees communicate securely via an encrypted network. If your employer does the same, it's important to stay connected for as long as you're working. Dropping that virtual defense could open the door for someone to steal important information.


STAY IN THE CLOUD

Not only do cloud applications receive regular security updates, but saving your work to cloud storage creates a shared backup of all your work. That way, even if local files on your device are lost, corrupted or stolen, you'll still have access to everything.

MAKE VIDEOCONFERENCES PRIVATE

The popularity of videoconferencing apps like Zoom has skyrocketed in recent years as more teams collaborate from afar. But a digital meeting space comes with additional security considerations. To prevent unwanted visitors from listening in or even trying to intimidate people, consider requiring a password for calls or keeping any new arrivals in a waiting room.

UP YOUR PASSWORD GAME

Strong passwords are always important, but they're even more crucial when you're working remotely. A password manager can help you keep track of numerous strong passwords, which should generally be at least 12 characters and contain letters, numbers and symbols. If that's too much to keep up with, consider using favorite song lyrics, movie quotes or other phrases that are easy to remember but more complex than your dog's name. 

Ready to serve

There for you when needed most

One of the pleasures of my role at NCTC is the honor of working alongside some of the most dedicated and hardworking professionals in our industry. We are blessed to have an experienced, committed staff devoted to serving you.



**JOHNNY
MCCLANAHAN**
President/CEO

Their efforts are most visible — and most critical — when times are the hardest. Sudden storms, flooding and so much more can disrupt not only the services we provide, but also the lives of individuals and productivity of businesses. We know you depend on our communications tools, especially in critical moments such as the need to call for emergency help.

So, even in the most trying of conditions, our crews go into the field as our front line in the effort to keep you connected. They work tirelessly for as long as needed to restore service to you.

I'm always appreciative as these crews go out into environments most of us wish to avoid, including in the middle of downpours, high winds or extreme heat. The challenges change by season and are as unpredictable as the weather itself. But our commitment to

excellence means your service is as consistent and reliable as possible.

If you've ever wondered why someone would work so hard, the answer is simple. Each member of our crews — truly our entire staff — has roots in this area. We know we're working to help our friends, our families, our neighbors and our entire community. They genuinely care about those they serve.

When an outage does occur — and no matter the preventive steps we take they sometimes will — we ask for your patience as our crews hit the road to restore service. Also, as you're driving please keep in mind to take note of repair vehicles on the roadside. Please slow down and give them a little extra space. They're working to help everyone, and in return you can help keep them safe.

While repair crews are some of the most visible members of the NCTC team, others play equally critical roles. When problems arise, everyone helps. But I'd like to also mention a unique challenge unimagined when the first telephone calls crossed our lines.

The fast internet network we manage requires care, and our professionals work daily to keep it safe and secure. NCTC is your local hub on the global internet, connecting you to resources needed for health, education, employment, entertainment and far more.

Our teams keep that connection solid, a highly technical, always-evolving role. After all, cyberthreats are real, and we follow industry best practices to secure our network. But the responsibilities extend to the needs of individuals and business users. If you have an internet problem, our customer-support experts and technical staff are committed to helping.

Whether it's the immediate recovery after an event such as a storm or the day-to-day aid to keep critical services like internet access working, everyone at NCTC makes your needs the priority.

Thank you for letting us serve and to be a part of this wonderful community.

The North Central Connection is a bimonthly newsletter published by NCTC, © 2023. 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, Tennessee, Allen County and Warren County, Kentucky. NCTC also serves portions of Sumner, Trousdale, Smith and Clay counties in Tennessee.

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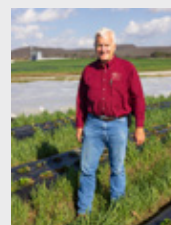
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On the Cover:



George McDonald, owner of Catesa Farms, focuses on quality crops and making sure Tennessee farms succeed.
See story Page 8.

Photo by Tony Young

NCTC promotes young leaders

North Central Telephone Cooperative sponsored local couple Jason and Ashlea Evitts at Tennessee Council of Cooperatives' Young Leaders Conference earlier this year. The conference, held on Feb. 17-18 in Franklin, gives cooperatives across the state the opportunity to educate outstanding young couples about the benefits of the cooperative business model, as well as cooperative principles and practices.



Photo contributed by TCC Young Leaders Conference

Jason Evitts and his wife, Ashlea (not pictured), were sponsored by NCTC to attend the TCC Young Leaders Conference in February.

The conference — a combined effort of the TCC and the Tennessee Farm Bureau Young Farmers and Ranchers — is geared toward business-minded couples under 40 and offers attendees a chance to learn about new ideas and information that can help them in their own businesses and form new connections.

Jason Evitts learned a few new things while attending the conference and enjoyed visiting with representatives of Hermann Holtkamp Greenhouses out of Nashville. "The keynote speaker Braxten Nielsen gave a powerful message," Jason says. "It was about always seeing the positive even in a negative situation, and it reminded me to keep that perspective."



Attention photographers!

Submit your photos now for the annual **NCTC photo contest**, and your image could be featured in NCTC's 2024 calendar!

This year, we're looking for rural, pastoral pictures that show the natural beauty of our region. The deadline for submission is July 31. Photos should be horizontal only. Vertical photos will not be accepted. Please email your photos to amy.phelps@nctcstaff.com.

NCTC leads the way with its

100%

FIBER NETWORK

North Central Telephone Cooperative's broadband network is now 100% fiber! This means all of our customers can access the fastest, most reliable internet service available. While more than half of the country still struggles with copper-based internet infrastructure,* NCTC has been working hard to build a superfast and future-proof fiber optic network. Fiber sends data faster, more securely and more reliably than copper wiring. It's also more compatible with cutting-edge products, services and devices. This means NCTC customers hold a winning technological edge, whether they're in a downtown boardroom or on a farm.

*Source: Fiber Broadband Association's 2022 study

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

Eligible users can receive a monthly discount up to \$30.



Memorial Day office closure

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 29.**

CORRECTION: Laurie Cox was incorrectly identified in an item on the news page in the March-April issue. We regret the error.

ROAD TRIP

Revival

YOU'LL GET THERE, EVENT-UALLY!

Story by ANNE BRALY

From a celebration of Moon Pies in Tennessee to glorifying okra pods in South Carolina, the South is famous for the funk it puts in festivals.

“Funky festivals allow folks to do a deep dive into niche interests in a way that generalized, traditional festivals don’t allow,” says Jamie McCormick, operations manager for the Southeast Festivals &

Events Association. “Maybe you can get lucky and find shrimp and grits or banana pudding at your standard festival, but can you compare 14 different recipes and flavor profiles, or find strawberry banana pudding or shrimp and grits pizza? Offbeat festivals allow us to celebrate the weirdest things about ourselves — the things we think only we like — and in the process,

find out that quite a lot of other people like them, too!”

Here’s a look at festivals across the South that celebrate the love of offbeat fun.

Hula hooping is hard enough on its own, but have you ever tried it while eating a MoonPie and drinking an RC Cola? It’s not as easy as it looks, but you can give it a try at the annual **RC Cola-MoonPie Festival Festival** held the third week of June in the charming, historic town of Bell Buckle, Tennessee.

Folks have come from near and far — England and Australia and up to 17 states — to sample small-town life and see what this quirky festival is all about, says Jenny Hunt, public relations director for festival sponsor Bell Buckle Chamber of Commerce. The event kicks off with marathons on certified courses before transitioning into a full day of fun for all, with a grand parade and the crowning of the RC Cola-MoonPie Festival King and Queen; hula-hooping; and a test of skill to see just how many cans of RC Cola



ABOVE: The RC Cola-MoonPie festival features a can-balancing contest.

LEFT: Hula hooping while eating a Moon Pie and drinking an RC Cola isn’t as easy as it may look.

Photos courtesy of Bell Buckle Chamber of Commerce

you can stack on your head and walk across the festival stage.

The festival culminates with the cutting of the world's largest Moon Pie to be shared with all.

► Date: June 17

► Information: bellbucklechamber.com

The Original Gullah Festival in Beaufort, South Carolina, celebrates the history, customs, cultures and accomplishments of African Americans who carved remarkable lives in the Lowcountry. The festival is like none other, highlighting the culture and history of the Gullah people — their art, crafts, music, dance and yes, their food. This isn't your typical festival fare — it's platters of fried catfish, bowls of shrimp and grits and soul food by the plateful. It's a family-friendly weekend that brings in travelers from around the world.

► Date: May 26-28.

► Information: originalgullahfestival.org.



Don't want to commit to an entire day or week of festival fun, but still want to experience the unusual? Here are some places around the South that offer something a little different from your typical sightseeing experience.

It's not often a restroom is a major attraction, but such is the case for the men's room at **Nashville's historic Hermitage Hotel**. The restroom features a spectacular and memorable design, with lime green and black glass tiles, lime green fixtures and a shoe-shine



Photo courtesy of Town of Irmo

No town celebrates okra the way Irmo, South Carolina, does. In fact, there's no other okra festival in the world, other than **Irmo Okra Strut**, a chance for townfolk and others to showcase the often-unappreciated pods. The festival has been growing strong for more than 50 years and commences with live bands on Friday night. Then the fun begins Saturday morning with a parade — the largest in the state — before opening up to thousands of festivalgoers who come for magic shows, demonstrations and the okra-eating contest.

► Date: Sept. 29-30.

► Information: okrastrut.com.

Whether you call him Bigfoot, Sasquatch or Yeti, the **Smoky Mountain Bigfoot Festival** in Townsend, Tennessee, is the

station right in the middle of the room. The men's room has been the setting of many business deals in the past, as well as movies and music videos in current times. Note to families: Have a man check it out first to make sure the room is empty.

► Information: thehermitagehotel.com

Clayton City Cemetery in Clayton, Alabama, is home to a tombstone with a story. Both the headstone and footstone are shaped like whiskey bottles, designed by an extremely frustrated woman who reportedly told her husband, William T. Mullen, that she'd make him a tombstone shaped like a whiskey bottle if he didn't stop drinking. It seems as though she kept her word.

► Address: 41 N. Midway St.

Read my lips. Fort Mitchell, Kentucky, is home to the world's only museum



Photo courtesy of Blount Partnership

ABOVE LEFT: Celebrate okra at the annual Irmo Okra Strut.

ABOVE RIGHT: Live music is part of the fun at Smoky Mountain Bigfoot Festival.

place to celebrate the big guy. There's Bigfoot wrestling, Bigfoot calling, a wood-carving challenge and other Squatchy competitions. Visitors will also find food vendors and live music, along with Bigfoot hunters and researchers. Do you believe?

► Date: May 6.

► Information: exploretownsend.com/event/smoky-mountain-bigfoot-festival-2023. 🗨️

dedicated to the art of ventriloquism, the **Vent Haven Museum**. If you love little wooden people, this museum is a must-see. Renovations to the museum are near completion, and it will reopen on May 9.

► Information: venthaven.org

The Harry and Harry Too restaurant in Bishopville, South Carolina, takes most of its interior decor cues from pop culture — The Three Stooges, Elvis and Tomb Raider, among others. What sets it apart is its colorful handmade outdoor sign promoting its connection to a local monster, the terrifying, car-chomping Lizard Man. The restaurant displays replicas of the monster's footprint casts — the originals are in the town museum — and serves Lizard Man sandwiches.

► Online: Check out the menu and more on Harry and Harry Too's Facebook page.

Tennessee grown

CATESA FARMS KEEPS IT FRESH

Story by JEN CALHOUN

When George McDonald's two daughters were still in middle school, he made a deal with them. If they would help raise and sell strawberries on the family's farm, they could keep the profits.

The only catch was they had to be there on the day of the sale. "If both girls were there, they got to split the money," George says. "If only one was there, she got to keep it all. If neither of the girls showed, Daddy got to keep all the money."

There were a few no-shows early on. But as the little half-acre strawberry patch on Catesa Farms grew so did the profits, and both girls began to see the benefit of making it to the field on payday. "I was doing good there for a while," George says with a laugh. "Then they got older, the strawberry field got bigger, and it didn't work out for me as much."

FAMILY TRADITION

Today, the family-owned-and-operated farm grows and sells 15 acres of strawberries, as well as hundreds more acres of corn, milo — a type of sorghum — soybeans, wheat and watermelons. They sell their always-fresh, high-quality produce to retailers all the way into Kentucky and as far south as Alabama.

George is the fourth generation of his family to run the Riddleton-based farm,



George McDonald, left, relies on farm manager Kyle Cato, one of nine employees at Catesa Farms.

Photos by Tony Young

which his great-grandfather started on 257 acres in 1927. Since then, the farm has grown to thousands of acres spread out over six counties.

"We're always looking at the next thing," George says. "We're always keeping an open mind, looking at the market and trying to figure out what's next. Our farming operation is a family tradition, and it's a family heritage, but first and foremost, it's a business."

FRESH FIRST

Catesa Farms was named long ago by mashing up the names of George's grandfather, Carmen, his grandmother, Temple,

and his father, Sam. "It's the name that's hard to remember, then hard to forget," George says. "So, we make sure our brand is on the things we sell, like our watermelons. People have learned to associate our name with fresh, quality produce."

When he says fresh, he means it. George remembers walking into a large, chain retail outlet a few years ago and seeing a sign that said, "Fresh local berries." "I was surprised, because I thought I knew all the farms in the area, in the state, even," he says. "I didn't know of one that provided that particular store with produce. When I looked at the labels on the fruit, it said Salinas, California."



Even if the produce wasn't labeled, George could've told anyone standing there it wasn't fresh. "When I bring a flat of strawberries into a room, you can smell them," he says. "You can open them up and they're red, not white, like the ones that have been shipped across the country. Fresh makes a difference."

Catesa Farms' products go from the farm to the truck and into the stores in a matter of hours. "What that means for a consumer is that you can pick up a watermelon with our label on it, and it was very likely in the field the day before," he says.

SOCIALLY SPEAKING

Another way George's employees promote the brand is through the Catesa Farms social media accounts on Facebook, Instagram and TikTok. All of the accounts are run primarily by farm manager Kyle Cato, with help from George's daughter, Sarah Owen.

The farm's social media accounts have grown in popularity and do everything from educate readers on agricultural issues to alert them when the farm is ready to sell its strawberries.

There's room for some fun, too. A recent video posted by the @catesafarms TikTok account panned over giant tractors and other farm equipment while playing the Brooks & Dunn song "Only in America." It captured more than 19,000 views. George says that some ag-related businesses have even started referring to Catesa as influencers in their world.



"Having fiber broadband has really helped our business in so many ways," George says. "It allows us to have video meetings with different boards across the state and so many other things you don't always think of on a farm. It's been able to change how we do business. That's all thanks to NCTC for installing fiber."

But with all the successes at Catesa Farms, George says he's probably most proud of the environment the family has built at their workplace. "Many of our employees will tell you they haven't worked a day yet," he says. "Anybody can buy land, buy equipment, plant a crop and harvest it. We feel like we've created a culture that distinguishes itself." 📱



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Over the years, the strawberry patch at Catesa Farms has grown from half an acre to about 15 acres.

George McDonald uses high-tech farming equipment at Catesa Farms.

George visits with his stepmother, Linda McDonald, at the Catesa Farms office.



Look for the label

Catesa Farms is at 780 Dixon Springs Highway in Riddleton. The best way to keep up with Catesa Farms and all its fresh, quality products is to like and follow the Catesa Farms LLC Facebook and Instagram pages and @catesafarms on TikTok.

HOW DOES YOUR ONLINE GARDEN GROW?

Digital communities revolutionizing backyard agriculture

Story by SARA D. PATTERSON

Starting a garden in your own backyard isn't something you have to do alone. While you're unlikely to find help digging holes, putting in plants or moving mulch on the internet, you can find countless friends online to offer advice and support.

Online communities have revolutionized gardening, according to Adriana Copaceanu, whose 2016 gardening blog grew into the website backyardgardenlover.com. More than 100,000 gardeners also turn to its Facebook page where they can exchange tips and experiences. "By making it easier for people to find information and connect with others online, gardening communities have made gardening more accessible and appealing to a wider audience," Adriana says. "In the last few years, the amount of information online on gardening and resources has absolutely skyrocketed."

More than half the country — 55% of American households — gardens, according to findings by Scotts Miracle-Gro. The average garden measures 600 square feet, and tomatoes are the most common plant grown, appearing in about 85% of U.S. gardens. In addition to providing produce for a healthier diet, gardening has many other positive impacts including stress relief, promoting exercise, fighting dementia and staving off loneliness, to name just a few.

CULTIVATING COMMUNITIES

While gardening has always offered opportunities for interactions at garden centers and at farmers markets, the online gardening community now presents limitless forums for collaboration. "I get daily emails with questions," Adriana says. "Sometimes, it's a quick answer, and other times I need to do some research because I'm not familiar with their specific location."

More than 5 million gardening enthusiasts have forged connections with other green thumbs through Reddit, a website that's home to thousands of online communities where users can anonymously discuss their interests and hobbies, seek support and share tips. They can also post photos and find immediate answers to questions like "I just pulled this dead squirrel out of my garlic patch, can I still eat the garlic in the summer?" or "Is this snake dangerous?"

"As the size of the gardening community has grown, there are more dumb and wrong answers; unfortunately, that's the nature of a platform that encourages participation," Reddit contributor kirbs2001 says. "The flip side is that more people are gardening and want to share what they know, or think they know, with others, and that's cool."

Still others just want a place to enjoy the outdoors in a community setting. "The gardening season is pretty short where I am, so



Photo by dprodi/Adobe Stock

Photo by Diederik/Adobe Stock

ONLINE RESOURCES ARE IN FULL BLOOM

Gardening apps

- * **From Seed to Spoon Gardening** — Created by new gardeners struggling to find all the right information for growing their first gardens, this covers it all.
- * **SunCalc** — This is a sun-finder for garden placement. Enter an address and the app will tell you where to plant.
- * **Homegrown with Bonnie Plants** — America's most-trusted vegetable company provides all the answers to questions about what to grow for specific conditions.
- * **Planty** — Not sure what you've grown? This cute, simple app will identify and offer care tips for plants.
- * **Garden Answers** — This extensive identification app provides garden and horticulture experts at your fingertips. The app identifies more than 20,000 plants and answers more than 200,000 commonly asked care questions.

Websites

- * The National Gardening Association's **garden.com** offers courses, gardening guides, a database and much more.
- * The Old Farmer's Almanac has tips, daily facts and information, and other tried-and-true suggestions at **almanac.com**.
- * Through its website **ahsgardening.org**, the American Horticulture Society promotes healthy, sustainable gardening practices and the critical role of plants.

“In the last few years, the amount of information online on gardening and resources has absolutely skyrocketed.”

— Adriana Copaceanu, founder of backyardgardenlover.com

I like to live vicariously through other people's gardens to get me through winter, lol,” says Calamity 0o0, another Reddit member who's active in the site's garden community.

Other gardening websites — including gardening-forums.com, gardenweb.com and gardenstew.com — offer all kinds of answers to all kinds of questions. Gardeners can also find like-minded friends on Twitter, and if it's easier to learn from videos, YouTube is for you.

The holy book of gardening and all things outdoors-related, The Old Farmer's Almanac, now offers a comprehensive website, almanac.com, full of valuable tips, along with a daily newsletter. The National Gardening Association formed in 1971 simply to promote gardening, and is now the largest

social media website dedicated exclusively to gardening. The group's garden.org offers online tools “to help gardeners connect, teach, share and trade with each other.”

Websites are great resources, but apps truly can be a gardener's best friend. First-time gardeners will find everything they need to start their plots through the Seed to Spoon app. Based on a home address, the SunCalc app designates the perfect location for plants to thrive, and Homegrown with Bonnie Plants has a “Help Me Choose” section to help gardeners determine which plants to grow, as well as one to help schedule tasks like sowing, watering, weeding and fertilizing.

So, while you may be on your own physically, you'll never lack for company along your gardening journey. 📱

Taking care of

NCTC Business Solutions team always finds a way

Story by JEN CALHOUN

The Business Solutions team at NCTC can make your office work for you. From left, Jeff Powell, Jason Carver, Dwayne Colter and Felliha Adams.



As the office manager of a busy primary care clinic in Bowling Green, Pam Doszak doesn't have time for problems with her phone and communications systems. Not only do Doszak and the staff at Bluegrass Medical Care see dozens of patients every day, they constantly talk to insurance providers, pharmacies and hospitals.

So, when Bluegrass Medical Care recently switched back to NCTC's business communications systems after a change in ownership of the practice, Doszak was relieved. "Thankfully, we were only without the NCTC phone systems for a year or less," she says. "The only reason we left was because the company that owned us was spread out over other locations, and they added us to that phone system."

But now Bluegrass Medical and NCTC are back together, which makes Doszak's life easier. "We were excited to go back to NCTC," she says. "We liked how the people there are so easy to work with, and how easy the phone systems are. For example, if the office is closed, all I have to do is program it to say the office is closed. I don't have to make a recording or bother with anything else. It's really simple."

Even better, the Business Solutions team at NCTC is quick to respond if Doszak needs something. "It's so easy to get them," she says.

MAKING IT WORK

NCTC's Business Solutions team is made up of Dwayne Colter, Jason Carver and Jeff Powell, all of whom are business systems engineers; and Felliha Adams,

Our customer service is unmatched. We offer:

- Knowledgeable local service technicians to configure your service
- 24/7 business support
- Dedicated local account team

Business CSR
Andrea Marsh



business

a sales and marketing specialist. Andrea Marsh, business customer service representative, makes sure orders are processed and billed correctly. They offer systems to businesses all over the region, even in places where NCTC's fiber broadband and telephone services are not yet available.

"NCTC has been providing communications systems to businesses for more than 40 years," Colter says. "Most businesses want different features. They want to be able to transfer their phones, or use on-hold advertisements or overhead paging — all the things you can't do with a basic phone system. That's where we get involved."

Services include everything from cloud-managed network systems to Voice over Internet Protocol, or VoIP, services, wireless local area networks and network security. If any of that sounds confusing don't worry, the NCTC Business Solutions

team is happy to help with solid advice.

But one of the greatest advantages of going with NCTC's Business Solutions is the service, which is often same day — a rarity in a time when many service providers are headquartered hundreds or even thousands of miles away.

"I think most businesses prefer us because we're available, more often than not, at all times of the day," Colter says. "If they have issues, they speak to a human. Our service is top notch. There's a lot of our competitors that may take two or three days to get something fixed."

Doszak agrees. After all, her medical clinic depends on being able to provide constant communication, whether they're dealing with test results and X-rays or managing patient calls. "I know everybody there," Doszak says. "It's just one phone call, and they come over and help us with whatever we need." 📞

NCTC Business Solutions include:

- VoIP Services
- Wireless LAN
- Cloud Managed Network Systems
- Network Security
- LAN (Local Area Network)
- WAN (Wide Area Network)
- Special connections deployment, including metro Ethernet, T1 lines and SIP trunks

FOR MORE INFORMATION,
contact Fellisha Adams for
a quote or to schedule an
on-site survey.
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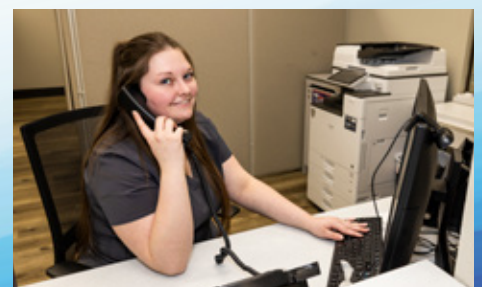
The Bluegrass Medical Care team includes, from left, Berna Brosnan, Malorie Mann, Kaelynne Cherry, Hailee Scarbrough, Elizabeth Lanham and Pam Doszak.

BELOW: Malorie Mann, left, and Elizabeth Lanham demonstrate how they make a chart entry using the NCTC services at Bluegrass Medical Care.

NCTC powers the technology Kaelynne Cherry uses to assist patients at Bluegrass Medical Care in Bowling Green.



Bluegrass Medical photos by Tony Young



Bite-size brilliance

A not-so-spicy meatball!



Few foods have the versatility that meatballs offer. They're perfect for parties served with toothpicks, but they can also be your dinner tonight served over pasta or mashed potatoes.

What makes a good meatball? Some recipes call for chicken or veal while others rely solely on ground beef. Some recipes call for frying them in a skillet while others send them straight to the oven.

No matter the approach to the finished product, most everyone can agree on one thing: Meatballs are a blessing in the culinary world all wrapped up in a ball of meat.



SWEET-AND-SOUR MEATBALLS

Sauce:

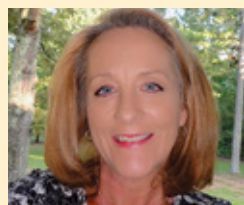
- 1/2 cup brown sugar
- 3 tablespoons white vinegar
- 2 tablespoons ketchup
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce
- 1/3 cup pineapple juice
- 1/4 teaspoon Chinese five-spice
- 2 teaspoons cornstarch

Place the brown sugar, vinegar, ketchup, soy sauce, pineapple juice and Chinese five spice in a saucepan over medium heat. Simmer for 5 minutes or until the sugar has dissolved. Stir in cornstarch and simmer for 2 minutes more to thicken. Remove from heat and set aside.

Meatballs:

- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 (1-pound) bag frozen meatballs
- 1 onion, sliced
- 1 red or green bell pepper, cut into bite-sized pieces
- 1 cup diced pineapple
- 4 green onions, cut into 1-inch pieces

Place a wok or large frying pan over high heat. Add the oil and the meatballs and cook, turning every minute or so, for 4-5 minutes or until almost cooked through. Add the onion and stir-fry for another 2 minutes. Add the bell pepper and stir-fry for another minute, then add the pineapple and the sweet-and-sour sauce. Stir-fry until well combined. Remove from heat and toss in the green onion.



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

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

SALISBURY STEAK MEATBALLS

- 1/4 cup grated onion
- 2/3 cup panko bread crumbs
- 3/4 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon onion powder
- 2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce
- 2 teaspoons soy sauce
- 2 teaspoons ground mustard
- 1 egg
- 2 tablespoons ketchup
- 1 1/4 pounds ground beef
- 1 tablespoon olive oil (plus more, if needed)

Gravy:

- 3 tablespoons butter, divided
- 6-8 medium mushrooms, chopped
- 1/2 cup onion, sliced 1/4-inch thick
- 4-6 cloves garlic, minced

- 3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 2 cups beef stock
- 2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce
- 2 teaspoons Dijon mustard
- 2 teaspoons soy sauce

In a medium bowl, combine grated onions, breadcrumbs, salt and all the remaining ingredients except the ground beef and oil. Allow the mixture to stand for 5 minutes, then add the meat and mix until just combined and divide the mixture into about 20 meatballs.

Add oil in a large skillet and heat to medium-high. Add the meatballs in a single layer and cook for about 10 minutes, flipping halfway through, until all sides brown evenly. Remove to a plate. If needed, add additional oil and cook any

remaining meatballs the same way.

For the gravy, add 1 tablespoon of butter to the skillet. When melted, add mushrooms and cook 3-4 minutes. Add the onions and saute for 3 minutes, add the garlic and let cook for 30 seconds or until fragrant. Add the remaining butter to the skillet. When melted, add the flour and stir to combine and cook for 1 minute, stirring constantly. Gradually pour in the beef stock, still stirring constantly. Stir in Worcestershire sauce, Dijon and soy sauce and simmer for 3 minutes or until it thickens slightly. Add the meatballs to the skillet along with any juices that may have collected on the plate and cook for 4 minutes. If the gravy thickens too much, add a splash of water. Taste and adjust seasonings as desired.

BUTTERY CHICKEN MEATBALLS

- 1/2 medium onion, grated
- 1/2 cup panko breadcrumbs
- 1 1/2 pounds ground chicken
- 1 egg
- 2 teaspoons garam masala
- 2 tablespoons freshly chopped parsley
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon pepper
- 1 tablespoon olive oil

Butter sauce:

- 1/2 cup butter
- 5 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 1/2 teaspoons ground ginger
- 1 cup tomato sauce
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- 1 tablespoon garam masala
- 1 tablespoon smoked paprika
- 1 teaspoon turmeric
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon ground coriander
- 1 cup chicken broth
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 1 tablespoon freshly chopped parsley

Mix the onion and bread-crumbs together in a large

mixing bowl. Let the mixture sit for 2-3 minutes. Add the rest of the meatball ingredients, excluding the oil, to the bowl. Mix everything together well. Form the mixture into meatballs.

Heat the olive oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the meatballs, working in batches if needed. Cook for 2-3 minutes per side until well browned. Transfer the cooked meatballs to a plate and set aside.

For the sauce, add the butter to the skillet, then stir in garlic and ginger and cook for 1 minute. Add the tomato sauce, tomato paste, garam masala, smoked paprika, turmeric, cumin, coriander and chicken broth. Bring the sauce to a boil, then reduce to a simmer and cook for 10 minutes or until slightly thickens. Stir in the cream. Return meatballs to skillet and let them simmer in the sauce until heated through. Garnish with parsley and serve. 🍴





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