



SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2024

CONNECTION

Dog's Day Out

Luxury pet resort in Bowling Green

GHOST TOURS

HEALTHY TAILGATING



By Shirley Bloomfield, CEO
NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association

The Most Important Rural Broadband Program You Probably Don't Know

In Washington, D.C., we often talk about the new grant programs that are going to help bridge the digital divide in our country. But I want to highlight what I believe has been the most successful rural broadband initiative, the federal Universal Service Fund.

So, what is the Universal Service Fund? The Communications Act of 1934 included language that said all Americans should have access to “rapid, efficient, nationwide communications service with adequate facilities at reasonable charges.” Today, the USF is the main federal program helping rural consumers connect to services comparable in price and quality to those in urban areas. This makes services more affordable for low-income families and supports critical connections for schools, libraries and health care facilities in rural communities by offsetting the high cost of building and managing rural communications networks.

There is one big difference that sets the USF apart from many of the new grant programs: The USF not only supports the construction and deployment of networks but also the maintenance of those networks. It helps ensure that these networks are maintained and sustained so Americans continue to make use of broadband long after the last shovel is put down.

An NTCA survey found that without the High-Cost USF program all rural consumers will pay at least \$100 more per month for their broadband service. And the viability of some rural broadband networks would be at risk, as the operations costs and repayment of the loans needed to build them cannot be covered.

NTCA is committed to efforts to preserve the USF so that the mission of universal service for all Americans can be fulfilled.

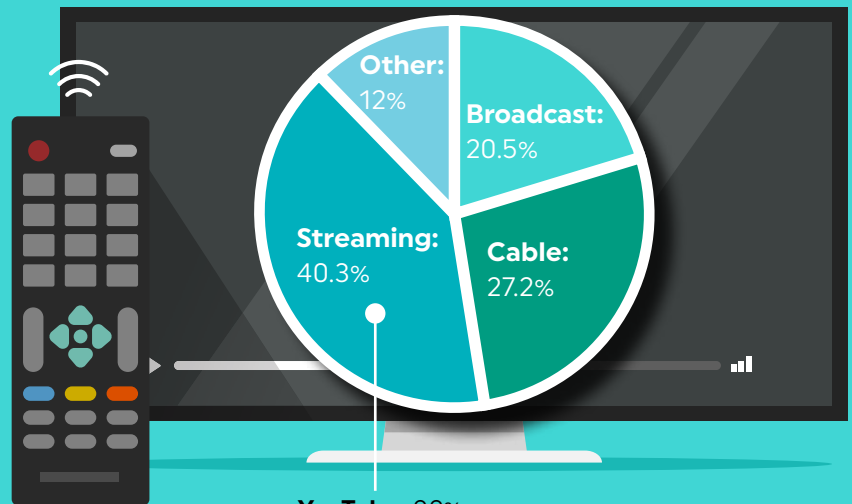
Streaming Remains Strong

Each month Nielsen, a company that has long tracked viewership habits across a range of media, updates The Gauge. The report offers a snapshot of how various forms of media are consumed to create a picture of the media landscape.

Several key trends shaped the streaming results, such as June marking the end of the school year and start of school breaks, which led viewers 17 and younger to drive the largest upticks in TV usage across all ages.

As a result, this June streaming topped the earlier viewership record set by cable for that month in 2021.

A SUMMER STREAMING SNAPSHOT



- YouTube:** 9.9%
- Netflix:** 8.4%
- Other streaming:** 6%
- Prime Video:** 3.1%
- Hulu:** 3%
- Disney+:** 2%
- Tubi:** 2%
- Roku Channel:** 1.5%
- Max:** 1.4%
- Peacock:** 1.2%
- Paramount+:** 1.1%
- Pluto TV:** 0.8%

Source: Nielsen The Gauge



A Web for All

Technology assists those with diminished sight

About two-thirds of Americans rely on some form of contact lenses or glasses to correct nearsightedness, farsightedness and more. Then there are eye injuries and diseases like glaucoma that can diminish sight, and the inevitable process of aging can also cause a slow decline in eyesight.

In an increasingly online world—where vital information is often communicated using text on screens—people with diminished vision can struggle. However, there are resources available to help those with impaired sight, and even blindness, interact online.

For example, the Americans with Disabilities Act requires all websites to be accessible to everyone. While not every website is ADA compliant, sites for government agencies, banks and larger organizations are. The basic tools you need are free and as handy as web browsers like Chrome, Edge, Firefox and Safari.

BROWSER BY BROWSER

Microsoft's Edge browser scores well for assistive technologies. It lets users

increase the size of text and get image descriptions for screen readers. Also, a simple keyboard command—Ctrl+Shift+U on PCs and Shift+Command+U on Macs—signals the browser to read the current webpage aloud. Most other browsers require users to go into system preferences or use an extension for screen readers.


Meanwhile, Chrome's TalkBack screen reader adds spoken, audible or vibration feedback to your device. While the browser does not have a way to change the look of text, it does have extensions that allow users to customize their browsers to control visual clutter.

Google, the maker of Chrome and a popular search engine, has an award-winning disability employee resource group and says it is committed to hiring employees with disabilities. That commitment also helps it find ways to make its site more accessible.

Like Chrome, Apple's Safari comes with its own screen reader, VoiceOver. Users can choose the voice they find most pleasing and set the speech speed. It also lets users increase contrast, zoom in and

remove ads and distractions.

Firefox allows users to adjust the settings so every site has the same font, type size and color to enhance the ease of reading. It also has extensions for changing text to speech and making bookmarks larger, among other things.

While users may need a sighted person to set up the assistive features, modern technologies unlock the world to more people than ever. 



Influence That Matters

Connect locally to make a difference

If you venture into the world of social media—and most people do—you'll cross paths with personalities known as influencers. From social media platforms like Facebook and X to video sites such as YouTube and TikTok, online personalities have the power to generate attention. With attention comes income, often six figures or more.



**JOHNNY
MCCLANAHAN**
President/CEO

These people, and they can range wildly in accuracy and professionalism, seem to touch on every possible topic: lifestyle, health, politics, sports, entertainment and just about anything else. They can attract millions of eyeballs, and some of the largest, most visible companies advertise on their channels.

I don't mean to imply this is a new trend. It's not, at all. However, as other types of media fall more into the background, online influencers continue to have greater reach and, well, influence. But in our busy and often highly online lives, we shouldn't lose sight of the other influencers around us. You don't have to look far, either.

One of the things I enjoy about our community, and this is true of many rural places like ours, is that there are individuals who make a tangible positive difference. They lift up others. They provide help

where it's needed. You need look no further than the pages of this magazine to see stories of neighbors helping neighbors, and what's more powerful of an influence than that?

You see, every time you smile at someone you pass in the aisle of a store, volunteer with a community organization, help your child with homework or have any of the other interactions that make up daily life, you're an influencer. This is also something we all can do.

In fact, a commitment to helping others is a core part of our mission at NCTC. Naturally, it begins with the services we provide—we want our community to have the best communications resources anywhere.

We've seen how high-speed internet changes lives, opening doors for local businesses, expanding career options, supporting education and connecting to an exciting world of online resources. We strive to be the people who can answer your questions, solve your communications problems and provide the resources you need today while planning for the future.

But that's only part of the equation. Every year, NCTC gives back. One of our guiding principles is that you benefit not only from the services we provide but also through direct contributions of time and money invested into our community.

So, as you enjoy our industry-leading communications services, if there are online influencers you find informative or entertaining, please do enjoy. But I hope you can also join us in finding opportunities to create beneficial, helpful moments right here at home. It's that spirit of togetherness that makes this place so special.

As always, it's a pleasure serving you, and I hope NCTC remains a positive influence in your life. 📞

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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:



Dog's Day Out in Bowling Green offers a happy and relaxing experience for your pooch.
See story Page 8.

Photo courtesy of
Dog's Day Out

Congratulations!



Scottie Perdue is celebrating 30 years of service with NCTC this year.



SAVE THE DATE!

NCTC'S ANNUAL MEETING IS JUST AROUND THE CORNER, AND YOU'RE INVITED.

Mark your calendars for **Saturday, Nov. 2.** The meeting will be held at Macon County Junior High School auditorium. Entertainment begins at noon, and the business meeting starts at 1 p.m. In addition to socializing and business matters, we will announce the NCTC Community Service Award Winner.



HAPPY LABOR DAY

Take a load off. You've earned it. In observance of the holiday, NCTC's offices will be closed on **Monday, Sept. 2.** Have a safe, happy and relaxing weekend!



811
Know what's below.

ALWAYS CALL BEFORE YOU DIG

SPIRITS OF THE SEASON

Ghost Tours Scare Up Connections to the Past

Story by KATIE TEEMS NORRIS



Photo courtesy of American Ghost Walks

Allison Jornlin, depicted here in an illustration, researches and writes scripts for ghost tours.

For many, October isn't complete without spine-tingling ghost stories, and chances are your hometown has a few of its own. Allison Jornlin, co-founder and tour developer with American Ghost Walks, conducts research and writes ghost tour scripts in towns across the United States. Allison is also a paranormal investigator and speaker, and

she's been featured on the CW Network's "Mysteries Decoded."

Ghost tours are immensely popular, and Allison says they can be found in almost every large city and even in many small towns across the country. "I think people have lost their connection with history and with their ancestors, and this is a way to reconnect," she says.

Unlike haunted house attractions that have terrifying special effects, ghost tours offer authentic history in locations that give guests the chance to literally step into the paranormal. They allow people to connect to the haunted past through walking tours, bus/trolley tours, investigation-style tours and even pub crawls. Some guests report experiencing



Photo courtesy of Bulldog Tours

The Old Charleston Jail, which once held pirates, Civil War prisoners and the first known female serial killer, is an especially spooky spot.



Photo courtesy of Birmingham Historic Touring Company

A group pauses before entering the First Presbyterian Church during a ghost walk in Birmingham, Alabama.



Ghost tours can include exploring the paranormal by bus or trolley, as well as on foot.

paranormal phenomena, like feeling unexplained cold spots or photographing disembodied faces and shadowy figures.

Allison pores through old newspapers and historical archives and interviews local people to give her tours as much local flavor as possible. “I’m looking for stories that are unique to the community that they come out of,” she says. While many stories across the country have common themes, Allison says, every place is a little bit different.

“You don’t have to believe in ghosts to enjoy the tour,” she says. Skeptics can have fun learning spooky stories. Tour guides often encourage guests to share their personal paranormal experiences to relate to one another. Ghost tours can’t guarantee guests will have an otherworldly encounter, but there is always a possibility.

If you’re ready to test your luck, consider joining these popular local tours, if you dare:

- Charleston, South Carolina’s, rich history, fascinating places, people and landmarks bring with them incredible stories—and lots of ghosts. Check them out through Bulldog Tours. bulldogtours.com/tours/ghost
- The Birmingham Ghost Walk in Alabama includes two walking tours and the Ghosts and Graveyards Chauffeured Experience. bhamhistory.com
- Old Louisville is home to what many consider to be the “most haunted neighborhood in America.” Learn why through Old Louisville Ghost Tours, in Louisville, Kentucky. louisvillehistorictours.com/louisville-ghost-tours 📱

FUN FACTS

- Most ghost tours in the U.S. run year-round.
- Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, claims to have America’s oldest ghost tour. It began in 1970 and is still running. In 1973, historian Richard Crowe started Chicago’s first ghost tour. He told ghost stories on the radio around Halloween, which inspired Allison Jornlin and her brother to establish American Ghost Walks.
- Many ghost stories have common themes. Allison notes the prevalence of stories about women who met unfortunate ends. Guides across the nation tell local stories of jilted lovers, forlorn widows and vanishing hitchhikers.

SCARING UP A GREAT TOUR

Are you spending the spooky season exploring a new town—or your own hometown? A ghost tour is a fun way to learn about the history of a place and its people. Before you book one, follow these tips:

CHOOSE A TOUR THAT SUITS YOUR GROUP

While each tour is unique, they typically fall into these categories: walking tours, bus tours, investigation tours and pub crawls. Investigation tours allow guests to become paranormal researchers for one night, and they typically focus on one building or property. A haunted pub crawl offers spirits of both the alcoholic and ethereal kinds.

CHECK THE WEBSITE

Tour companies list important information on their websites, including an overview, length of the tour, walking distance, accessibility, age-appropriateness and cancellation/refund policies. Many tours encourage guests to purchase tickets in advance.

READ THE REVIEWS

Check Google reviews and websites like Yelp or Tripadvisor for reviews. Search for detailed reviews that weigh the pros and cons of the tour. If you find positive reviews of a specific guide, you may be able to book a tour on a night when that person is working.

If you still have questions after your research, don’t be afraid to give the tour company a call.



Happy Campers

Dog's Day Out lets pooches play and stay in luxury

Story by JEN CALHOUN



Photos courtesy of Dog's Day Out

Dog's Day Out offers grooming services in addition to day care, boarding and training.

When Angela Counts and the late Pam Brown opened Dog's Day Out in 2004, it was the only day care for dogs in Bowling Green. For years, Pam had trained dogs to work alongside children with autism. But she also saw a need for an upscale boarding and day care facility for dogs whose owners increasingly treated their pets like family.

Today, Dog's Day Out has grown into a facility that offers training and grooming, in addition to luxury boarding and day

care. It employs 17 people and includes two buildings with more than 10,000 square feet of indoor and outdoor play areas on the 33-acre private farm where Angela lives.

"The dogs are surrounded by beautiful Kentucky countryside with quiet farmland bordering the entire property," manager Dorothy Gomez says. "We are here to ensure your dog has a safe place to stay and play while you are away."

ROVER'S RETREAT

Pet boarding facilities have come a long way in recent years. According to statistics found by Forbes Advisor, 66% of households in the U.S. own a pet. That's nearly 87 million homes that keep pets for companionship, emotional support and security. Of those, about 97% consider them to be a vital part of their owners' lives.

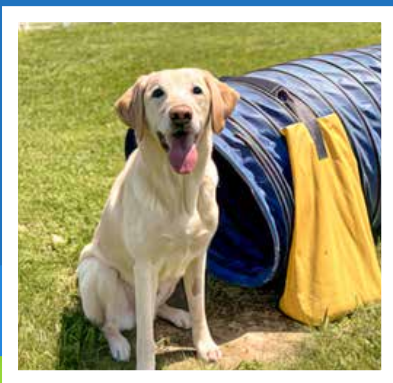
So, when it comes to boarding their furry friends, more people choose places that promise more than somewhere to stay. Their pet, they figure, also needs comfort, stimulation and companionship. That was the philosophy behind Dog's Day Out.

Dog's Day Out boarding packages can include upgrades with everything from luxury suites with special dog beds, gourmet treats in interactive toys, massages, one-on-one playtime with a staff member and leisurely private strolls. Upgrades can even include seasonal activities like visits to paddling pools, sensory gardens or an agility course.

DOGS GET SAD, TOO

While pampering like that might sound over the top to some people, more and more owners worry about their dogs' well-being while they're away. Like humans, dogs can suffer from anxiety and depression, according to a 2016 article in *Psychology Today*. "Dogs," it says, can be especially sensitive to environmental conditions and changes.

That's why Dog's Day Out tries hard to keep the boarding experience a positive one for pets by offering add-ons meant to soothe and comfort. "We use essential oils for aromatherapy, calming music designed just for dogs, Kuranda beds for comfort, toys and



treats to ensure proper mental stimulation,” Angela says, noting that Kuranda beds are cots raised off the ground.

“We also offer a staff-to-dog ratio that allows for adequate time and attention for each guest,” she says. “And we focus on using positive reinforcement with tools like treats, petting and verbal praise. Our staff are trained through the pet care business advisors The Dog Gurus on industry standards for canine play styles and body language.”

For those owners worried about their dog’s health, Dog’s Day Out has them covered. Not only do they have attendants certified in PetTech Canine CPR and First Aid, but pets also get their own personal suites with potty breaks and play times every hour.

In addition, the staff takes pictures of dogs during day care and posts them to Facebook. It’s a cute way for owners to watch their dog from afar. They also use their NCTC internet connection to market their services, connect with clients, restock



TOP: A boarding Labrador pauses in front of the facility’s agility course—one of the perks Dog’s Day Out offers.

CENTER: Picture day is always special at Dog’s Day Out.

BOTTOM: Dog’s Day Out in Bowling Green offers 10,000 square feet of indoor and outdoor play areas on a 33-acre private farm.

their inventory and advertise for new employees, Dorothy says.

“We love providing a high level of care to dogs, and we take pride in our services,” she says. “We love being their home away from home. Here, we feel like everyone is family, and we make it our job to create a safe, fun and inviting environment.” 🐾

DOES YOUR DOG NEED A DAY OUT?

Let your pet enjoy luxury boarding, day care, grooming and training services at Dog’s Day Out at 4800 Sunnyside Gott Road in Bowling Green, Kentucky. Services are customizable, and packages are available for various services. To find out more, visit the website at ddoky.com, or find the business on Facebook. You can also call 270-770- 2067 or email dogsdayoutky@gmail.com.



PUPPY LOVE

- Dogs are the country’s most popular pet: 65.1 million U.S. households own a dog, followed by cats in 46.5 million households and freshwater fish in 11.1 million.
- Millennials make up the largest percentage of current pet owners, 33%; followed by Gen Xers, 25%; and baby boomers, 24%.
- In 2022, Americans spent \$136.8 billion on their pets, up nearly 11% from \$123.6 billion in 2021.
- Essential dog expenses cost an average of \$1,533 annually.
- About 42% of dog owners and 43% of cat owners got their pets from a store, while 38% of dog owners and 40% of cat owners found their pets at an animal shelter or rescue.

Source: Forbes Advisor, “Pet Ownership Statistics 2024”



RUNNING TOWARD THE FUTURE

Rural Athletes Must Overcome Hurdles to Win Scholarships

For much of her life, Olivia Murphy focused on becoming a collegiate swimmer. The biggest obstacle she faced didn't come in the pool—it was catching the eye of college coaches.

Each year thousands of student-athletes pursue college athletic scholarships. Ultimately, only about one out of every 50 succeeds, according to a 2021 study by Next College Student Athlete. That bar can be even tougher to clear for athletes like Olivia, who live in rural areas, where it's often difficult to get the attention of major programs.

For those students, earning a spot on a college roster takes more than just the talent and commitment to be a high-level athlete—it also takes a “second job” as a communicator and organizer, working just to be seen.

“I didn't start the actual recruitment process until summer of my junior year, which is a little late for some people,” says Olivia, a Tennessee resident and 2024 Tullahoma High School graduate.

MAKING A SPLASH

Olivia's path was more straightforward than that of many other athletes: Swim fast, win races. A key member of the Wildcats' school-record-setting relay team, she recorded plenty of fast times while helping the team win its first division title.

She knew she had the speed, she just needed the coaches to know it, too. “When you first reach out to a coach, whether it's through a questionnaire or an email, you put your best events and your best times in there,” Olivia says.

When prospective recruits submit statistics, coaches compare their times to those of their current swimmers, as well as the

ones winning division and national titles. Athletes from almost every sport send out these cold-call emails to coaches across the country. In sports like football and basketball, where skills can't be boiled down to a set of times or statistics, athletes will create their own highlight videos and send those to coaches.

This can be especially valuable for rural athletes. Coaches can't visit every town to scout athletes, but there's no travel time in opening an email. Olivia says coaches especially want to see the swimmers' videos. “They love videos,” she says. “Most coaches like to see video because they want to see your technique or where your weaknesses might be.”

SHOWCASING SKILLS

Sometimes, rather than sending videos, recruits travel to camps and showcases so coaches can watch them in action and compare their skills to athletes at a similar level. These are often sport-specific camps run by college programs where potential recruits get hands-on practice time with

Photo illustration by Mark Gilliland



Photo courtesy of Olivia Murphy

Olivia Murphy's best swimming events are the 100-meter freestyle, butterfly, backstroke and the 50-meter freestyle.

coaches. At regional showcases or tournaments, thousands of athletes can test their skills while scores of coaches look for diamonds in the rough.

Landyn Cox, a 2024 high school graduate from McKee, Kentucky, competes in archery and found success at these large events since most high schools don't have archery teams. He was offered a scholarship to be an archer at the University of the Cumberlands in Williamsburg, Kentucky. He competed on the USA Archery U18 Compound National Team, the World Archery 3D Championships and other USA Archery Team events. He says the USAT events are a solid way to draw attention. "If you win like one of the USATs or certain big events, that gets your name out there pretty fast," he says.

MAKING A DECISION

Once coaches begin recruiting, the challenge comes in settling on a school. Olivia narrowed down her list to three. "I wanted to limit myself to three visits because I'm really bad at decisions," she says.

Part of the process was deciding what size school she wanted to attend. Many athletes feel the need to compete at a prestigious NCAA Division 1 school, but they



Photo courtesy of USA Archery

Landyn Cox first competed in archery through the National Archery in the Schools program.

SCORING AN OFFER

1. Know your skill level and learn the NCAA or NAIA eligibility requirements.
2. Compile an athletic resume with:
 - Skills video
 - Athletic stats
 - Academic transcripts, ACT/SAT scores
 - Extracurricular activities
3. Email coaches.
 - Include your athletic resume.
 - Subject line: Name, position, current grade level and key stat: "Jane Doe, High School Sophomore, Pitcher, 90 mph fastball"
 - Individually craft each email, clearly stating why you're interested in that program.
4. Make campus visits and meet coaches. Keep sending updated stats.
5. Lock down your offer and negotiate your amount. Don't discount merit-based, academic or other scholarships.



could find a home—and potentially more playing time or better financial aid—at a smaller school. "Division 1 isn't everything," Olivia says. "It's not live or die."

No matter the size or program, a visit is the critical component. After a successful recruiting visit where she got along great with her future teammates, Olivia chose Delta State University, a Division II school in Cleveland, Mississippi.

"They need to go where they feel like they best fit," she says. "I was like,

'There's no way that I'm not going to go Division 1,' and then I found a school that matches up with Division 1 schools and I got better scholarship offers and felt like I fit with the team better. And so, I was like, 'Oh, that's not the end of the world.'"

But it will be a whole new world for Olivia, Landyn and other rural athletes as they aim to parlay their hometown successes and hard work to the next level. 🏹

SOCIAL SAFE

Share memorable moments,
not private details

As fall settles in and we're on the cusp of the holiday season, memorable events are happening, and fun journeys are about to begin. From Halloween costumes and trick-or-treating to family Thanksgiving celebrations, there are moments worth capturing in an image or as a written note.

And if an instant in time is worth noting, many people also choose to share it online through social media. There are many options, and most people have a favorite social media service. Each is a little different, though, in how it manages your information.

Following a few basic safety tips will keep your personal details safe as you share the adventures you enjoy.

1 Choose strong passwords and an additional form of authentication.

A good password guideline is to include a mix of uppercase and lowercase letters, numbers and special characters. Another strategy is to use a long phrase you find memorable but can still confound hackers. Also, if available, enable two-factor authentication, which uses a unique code sent to your phone or email as an additional layer of security.

2 Don't overshare.

Some information should always be off limits, including phone numbers, email addresses, places of employment and more. Review your social media account profiles to clarify exactly what information is visible on your accounts and who can see it. Is it everyone, family and friends or no one? Choose the level right for you.

3 Be photo shy.

Carefully choose the photos you post. Images can often provide details such as a place of work, your child's school and more that you might find best left private. Also, keep in mind that uploading an image taken with a mobile phone might contain location information. Review the settings specific to your device to learn how to control these details.

4 Treat strangers with care.

Sadly, not everything on social media is as it seems. Scammers will even create bogus accounts to entice you to give up personal information. So, before you accept an interaction with someone on social media, first verify who is contacting you. When in doubt, block or ignore the request.

5 Wait until the end of the trip.

While it's fun to share images of a trip during the journey, consider waiting until you are home. That way, you avoid broadcasting that your home is vacant. It's an easy, practical step.



KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

Smoothly navigate internet slowdowns

Your internet-connected devices are the last stops in a river of information bringing you entertainment, business services, communications tools and so much more. Sometimes, however, a clog upstream can turn a digital cascade into a trickle. Streaming movies lag. Websites become slow to load. File uploads take time. When slowdowns occur, it's helpful to understand potential chokepoints.



KNOTTED UP: It doesn't happen often, but there are times when the internet itself has difficulties. A storm might disrupt a massive data center—a place storing hundreds of computers. Or a technical glitch might cause the modern equivalent of a wrong phone number. It's doubtful all services will go out—the internet lives by redundancy.

Downdetector.com is a helpful website that offers real time outage information for many sites, including Facebook, Roku, FireTV, Instagram and more.



THE NETWORK: Fiber optic lines carrying massive amounts of information connect our local systems to the broader internet. Our professionals work hard to keep everything up and running. Sometimes an accident or storm might disrupt this network, but we'll make repairs as quickly and as safely as we can.



THE BOX: Inside your home, you'll find a vital device. We call it the optical network terminal (ONT), and it makes it possible to deliver services like TV, voice and data. If you're having trouble, we may remotely reset the ONT to get you up and running again.



THE WI-FI ROUTER: Your router keeps you connected, wirelessly. Turning the router on and off can unclog a surprising number of internet logjams. But keep in mind, multiple devices connected at once, appliances like microwaves, the distance between the router and your devices and more can all impede the performance of your Wi-Fi network. NCTC offers solutions that can handle all your needs. Call us to make sure you have the right package.

Call 270-622-2056 for help. Remember to update your email and phone numbers on your account for outage notices.

Kick Off THE SEASON



Healthy Eats for Your Tailgate

It's time to think about tailgating. Even if you aren't a football fan, you can enjoy the food that goes along with the big game, from pots of chili to tater skins and Buffalo wings.

But these tailgating treats may not agree with your waistline. There are healthy alternatives to consider for lightening up your football spread without sacrificing taste. You'll score some touchdowns yourself.



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

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

WHITE CHICKEN CHILI

- 4 boneless chicken breasts (2 to 2 1/2 pounds)
- 1 teaspoon dried basil
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon onion powder
- 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- 1 teaspoon dried parsley
- 1 tablespoon butter
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 3 stalks celery, chopped
- 3/4 cup chopped red bell pepper
- 2 cans whole green chilies, chopped (see tip)
- 3-4 cans cannellini beans, drained and rinsed (see note)
- 2-3 teaspoons cumin
- 1 cup sour cream
- 1/2 cup heavy cream
- 1/2-1 cup chopped fresh cilantro
- 1/2-1 cup grated Monterey Jack cheese
- Additional chicken broth, if needed

In large pot, add chicken breasts and completely cover with water (4-6 cups). Simmer chicken breasts with basil, salt, onion powder, garlic powder, thyme and parsley until completely cooked.

Remove chicken from broth and let cool. Reserve the seasoned broth for the chili. Once chicken is cool, chop and set aside.

In a large stock pot, add butter and olive oil, and saute onion, celery and bell pepper until vegetables are translucent. Add chopped chilies and two cans cannellini beans. When mixture is warm, mash beans with a potato masher.

Add 2-3 cups of the reserved broth, chopped chicken, cumin and 1-2 more cans cannellini beans. Let simmer 30 minutes to an hour. If mixture becomes too thick, add more broth. Add sour cream, heavy cream and fresh cilantro, and stir well. Taste and adjust seasonings, such as salt and cumin. Just before serving, stir in grated Monterey Jack cheese and ladle into serving bowls.

Tip: You will get better quality if you buy the whole chilies rather than chopped chilies.

Note: Progresso brand provides a better-quality bean that holds up well as the chili simmers, and you should only need three cans. If you use another brand and find that it is disintegrating as the chili simmers, add a fourth can of beans.



PARMESAN CHICKEN WINGS

These delicious wings are oven-baked.

- 1/2 cup all-purpose flour
- 2 tablespoons garlic powder
- 2 teaspoons ground pepper
- 3 large eggs, beaten
- 1 1/2 cups panko breadcrumbs
- 1 1/4 cups grated parmesan cheese
- 2 pounds chicken wings, cut at joints, wing tips discarded
- 3 tablespoons balsamic glaze (store-bought or made from scratch)
- Lemon wedges
- Ranch dressing
- Celery and carrot sticks

Preheat oven to 450 F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Coat with cooking spray. Combine flour, garlic powder and pepper in a shallow dish.

Place eggs in a second shallow dish. Combine panko and cheese in a third shallow dish. Working in batches, dredge chicken pieces in the flour mixture, then the eggs and finally in the panko mixture, shaking off excess after each dredging. Place on the prepared baking sheet. Coat the chicken lightly with cooking spray.

Bake, turning the chicken halfway through, until the chicken is golden brown, and an instant-read thermometer inserted in the thickest portion registers 165 F, 20-25 minutes.

Arrange the chicken on a platter. Drizzle with balsamic glaze and serve with lemon wedges and ranch dressing for dipping with celery and carrots.

DOUBLE DIP HUMMUS

This recipe from Eating Well could be the creamiest hummus you've ever tasted. It's best made a day in advance.

- 8 ounces dried chickpeas (about 1 cup)
- 1 tablespoon baking soda
- 7 large cloves garlic, divided
- 1/2 cup extra-virgin olive oil, divided
- 1/2 cup tahini, divided
- 1/4 cup fresh lemon juice plus 1 tablespoon, divided
- 1 1/2 teaspoons kosher salt
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cumin, plus more for garnish
- Paprika for garnish
- 1/4 cup chopped flat-leaf parsley
- 2 tablespoons of the prettiest chickpeas for garnish.

Rinse the remaining chickpeas and garlic and set the colander over a bowl. Refrigerate the chickpea mixture, reserved cooking water and pretty chickpeas separately overnight.

The next day, combine the chickpeas, 6 of the garlic cloves and 1/2 cup of the reserved cooking water in a food processor (or blender) with 1/4 cup each oil, tahini and lemon juice. Add salt and cumin. Process until creamy. Transfer to a serving bowl. Puree the remaining 1/4 cup each oil and tahini with the remaining garlic clove, 2 tablespoons of the cooking water and 1 tablespoon lemon juice until smooth.

Place chickpeas in a medium saucepan and cover with 2 inches of water. Stir in baking soda. Soak overnight. Drain the chickpeas and rinse well. Rinse out the pan. Return the chickpeas to the pan and cover with 2 inches of fresh water. Add garlic. Bring to a boil. Keep at a rolling boil until the chickpeas are tender and almost falling apart, 25-40 minutes.

Reserve about 3/4 cup of the cooking water, then drain the chickpeas. Set aside

Make an indentation in the center of the hummus and spoon in the tahini-lemon mixture. Sprinkle the hummus with cumin and paprika, if desired. Garnish with the reserved whole chickpeas and parsley. Serve with fresh carrots, celery and other colorful vegetables and/or pita chips. 📄





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