



SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2025

CONNECTION

Dinner on a Stick

Tasty meals from the grill

HOMEPRO

SKELETON'S LAIR



By Shirley Bloomfield, CEO
NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association

Ensuring Access for All

Supreme Court upholds
Universal Service Fund

Money raised by a small fee on your communications bill makes a critical difference throughout rural America. Earlier this year, a ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court allowed the Universal Service Fund, or USF, to continue.

I can't emphasize enough how critical this ruling is in a journey that began in 1934, when the Communications Act decreed all Americans should have access to rapid, efficient and nationwide communication services at reasonable prices.

Then, the 1996 Telecommunications Act created the USF to better connect rural areas and make voice and broadband services more affordable for rural and low-income consumers, schools, libraries and rural health care facilities.

By affirming that the Federal Communications Commission has discretion to collect the fees, the court kept this foundational tool in place. A March survey of nearly 270 NTCA members indicated that the USF programs help keep rural broadband rates more affordable. Without this funding, rural consumer rates could be more than double those in urban areas.

Policymakers in Washington, D.C., are debating how to reform universal service programs going forward, so that they can continue to serve the needs of millions of Americans.

It is essential that our elected officials understand the positive impacts the critical USF programs have had—and continue to have—on the availability, affordability and sustainability of voice and broadband services for millions of consumers, businesses and anchor institutions in rural America.

Visit ntca.org/universalservice.



Secure Your Digital World

Keys for success

While October is National Cybersecurity Awareness Month, protecting yourself requires year-long vigilance. And everyone's needs vary based on the online tools and resources you use.

Remember, bad actors are increasingly sophisticated—they want access to your information. The FBI offers a few tips for some of the key points of emphasis, and they provide a good starting point for planning your personalized security strategy.

Create a sturdy defense. Update systems, software and apps. Also, install a strong, reputable antivirus program.

Connect carefully. Be cautious when connecting to a public Wi-Fi network. Avoid sensitive transactions, including purchases. Create a strong and unique passphrase for each online account.

Lock down all accounts. Establish multifactor authentication. Examine the email address in all correspondence and scrutinize website URLs before responding to a message or visiting a site. Don't click on anything in unsolicited emails or text messages.

Guard your information. Be cautious about your information in online profiles and social media accounts. Sharing the names of pets, schools and family members gives scammers hints they need to guess your passwords or the answers to your account security questions. Never send payments to unknown people or organizations, particularly those urging immediate action.

RAISING HISTORY

Heritage breed farmers preserve the past while protecting the future

Story by LES O'DELL

Farmers, ranchers, shepherds and homesteaders work to raise crops and livestock as efficiently as possible. Like any business, the goal is to maximize income and profitability.

Yet many agriculturalists also see themselves as conservationists, working to preserve the past while ensuring the future by using Earth-friendly farming methods and raising animals facing extinction.

In Pikeville, Tennessee, Amy Balog and her family raise endangered agricultural animals, also called heritage livestock breeds. “There are so many reasons why,” she says. “It’s not only keeping the genetics going. It’s the history and provenance of the breeds.”

Her Faverolles chickens, Sebastopol geese and Saxony ducks are among 180 breeds listed on the Conservation Priority List, an annual ranking of farm animals on the brink of disappearing. The list includes varieties of 11 different animals, from rabbits to cattle, horses and hogs. Many breeds fall out of favor in commercial agricultural settings. Perhaps they don’t put on weight as quickly as other breeds, for example. But they still have value.

SUSTAINABILITY

Protecting biodiversity and genetic resources is an important reason for protecting heritage breeds, says Allison Kincaid, executive director of The Livestock Conservancy. But many producers choose heritage animals because they want to make a difference.

“None of us can predict what the future of agriculture will look like. This is about keeping these breeds around as a genetic

reservoir,” she says, adding these animals are key to food security. “If we didn’t have this diversity, eventually we would narrow our food system down to where it wasn’t sustainable. There would be no backup.”

Likewise, farmer Grant Breitreutz of Redwood Falls, Minnesota, takes a conservation approach to crop production. “We’ve been no-till for 12 years for all of our crops,” he says. Grant leaves farm implements that expose the soil, such as plows and discs, in the machine shed. Instead, he plants cover crops, grasses and other plants he sows without exposing the soil in order to replenish organic nutrients and to minimize erosion.

Grant pivoted to conservation farming practices to ensure his soil is healthy and hearty enough to produce bumper crops for generations to come. “If we’ve done this for 130 years of farming, how much time do we have left? So, that’s why we focus so hard on building our soils back,” he says. “It has made a world of difference, and the crops are much more drought resistant and are yielding more bushels per acre. Plus, our pastures have tripled in production over the years by taking care of the soil first.”

The Breitreutz family won the inaugural Minnesota Leopold Conservation Award, presented in 2024 by the Minnesota Soil Health Coalition. Grant says honors are not important, but preserving things for future generations is. Amy agrees.

“It’s more about quality over quantity and quality is what keeps these lines going. If we don’t do it, I’m afraid they’ll all get lost,” she says.



Amy and Daniel Balog, who live outside Pikeville, Tennessee, raise heritage animals like the Sebastopol goose she’s holding.



Grant Breitreutz uses no-till techniques that protect soil quality on his Minnesota farm.

For more about agronomic conservation, visit sandcountyfoundation.org and to learn about livestock conservation efforts, visit livestockconservancy.org.

Photo courtesy of Amy and Daniel Balog

Photo courtesy of Grant Breitreutz

National Co-op Month

Seven principles remain key difference

Every October, we celebrate National Cooperative Month. Why? Because it's a time to reflect on what makes co-ops special. While many businesses focus solely on income—co-ops like NCTC consider the needs of our members and the community.



**JOHNNY
MCCLANAHAN**
President/CEO


That sentiment might sound strange in a world where national communications companies spend millions to advertise services that often overpromise but underperform. But it's the truth. Cooperatives put people first. We serve the community and give you and your neighbors the power to make local decisions.

NCTC is a cooperative at our core and serving our members is a priority. But we are also committed to serving all of our customers, including those outside of our original service area, with the same dedication. While only members can vote or receive capital credits, we extend the same excellent service and to every single person and business we serve.

Our success at NCTC is built on seven core principles that guide everything we do and highlight the strength of the cooperative model.

1. **Open and Voluntary Membership**—Everyone is welcome. It doesn't matter your race, religion or gender. If you need our services and accept the responsibilities of membership, you're a member.
2. **Democratic Member Control**—That means you help guide the direction of your cooperative by electing fellow members to serve on our board of directors and make decisions on your behalf.
3. **Members' Economic Participation**—When you invest in us, we invest in you. At NCTC, we spread your dollars across the community, improving your service, strengthening local nonprofits and, when possible, returning any capital credits to you.
4. **Autonomy and Independence**—We're local through and through, which means we answer to you, not faraway investors. It also means we won't enter into any agreements or partnerships that put local control of the co-op at risk.
5. **Education, Training and Information**—Knowledge is power. We prioritize education, training and sharing information about the issues that affect our co-op.
6. **Cooperation Among Cooperatives**—Co-ops support each other. Together we're stronger. We work with other cooperatives at the local, state and national levels to share knowledge, improve services and strengthen the communities we serve.
7. **Concern for Community**—This is our home, too, and NCTC succeeds when our communities do. That's why we care deeply about supporting you, through college scholarships, community sponsorships or charitable donations.

These aren't just words on paper. They're the ingredients that make NCTC a vital addition to our community.

Thank you for being part of something meaningful. At NCTC, we're proud to serve you. 

The North Central Connection is a bimonthly newsletter published by NCTC, © 2025. 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.

North Central
872 Highway 52 Bypass E.
P.O. Box 70
Lafayette, TN 37083
Telephone: 615-666-2151
nctc.com

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UTILITY RESOURCES

On the Cover:



Healthy, tasty dinner options from the grill don't have to be expensive or time-consuming.
See story Page 14.

Photo by Mark Gilliland

When in doubt, check it out!

NCTC will never ask for your personal information by call, text or email.



Unsure if a message is real? Call us at 615-666-2151. We're always happy to chat.



NCTC'S ANNUAL MEETING IS COMING SOON, AND YOU'RE INVITED.

Mark your calendars and check out the NEW TIME for NCTC's Annual Meeting! **This year, we'll kick off at 10 a.m. on Saturday, Nov. 1, at the Macon County Junior High School auditorium.** Join us for socializing, business matters and more.

ALL CHOCOLATE, NO RAISINS!

Treats aren't just for Halloween. With NCTC, savor the sweet benefits of high-speed internet all year long.

- Seamless streaming
- Lag-free gaming
- Reliable connectivity

And so much more!

SIGN UP TODAY!

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Know what's below. Call before you dig.



Mapping out your perfect road trip

Story by DREW WOOLLEY

Fall is the perfect time for travel and new experiences with family and friends. And while flying can have its conveniences, most travelers prefer to hit the road when mapping out their next adventure. According to AAA's domestic travel forecast for a recent holiday weekend, 87% of travelers planned to make trips by car.

PREPARE FOR THE ROAD AHEAD

"I usually tend to drive, and most people choose to drive. And the reason for that is, for most families and groups of people, it's the most affordable way to travel," says AAA Texas Communications Manager Doug Shupe. "It's also the most convenient. You can leave when you want to leave and return when you want to. But there definitely needs to be some preparation before taking a long road trip."

Before everyone piles into the car, make sure you're ready for the journey. That includes giving your vehicle a quick inspection, planning a route and having the supplies—and the tunes—to keep everyone happy until you reach your destination.

SAFETY CHECK

Before any lengthy road trip, Doug recommends taking your vehicle for a tuneup at a trusted repair facility. But if you can't find time for that, it's still a good idea to do a few quick checks on your own.





Check your tires to make sure they're properly inflated and in good condition.

That includes the tread. If you can put an upside-down quarter in the grooves of your tires and see the top of George Washington's head, it's probably a good idea to replace them before taking a long trip.

If your vehicle's battery is more than 3 years old, consider having it tested before getting on the road. Vibration can also cause a battery to fail sooner, so check that the terminals are secure and free of corrosion.

Examine your radiator and cooling system to make sure they're in good condition. Check belts and hoses for cracks or fraying that could lead to problems after extended use.

Ensure your wiper blades are in good shape in case you pass through a rainy patch, and have someone help you check that your headlights, taillights and turn signals are all working properly.

PLANNING YOUR ROUTE

One of the best parts of any road trip is mapping out a path, as long as there's a little room for improvisation. Plan ahead and make the most of these tools



that can help you find the right stops along the way.

Know what's coming—Apps like Roadtrippers and GasBuddy can help you pick the best place to make a pit stop. Get suggestions for must-visit restaurants and scenic drives or just scope out the most affordable gas prices so you can make the most of your detours.

Go analog—GPS is an invaluable resource on the road, but it's still smart to have a physical map to orient yourself just in case you lose signal or your battery dies. Maps can even be a fun distraction for kids and give them a hands-on way to follow along with where you are.

Track your itinerary—If you've already set up all your reservations for hotels, restaurants and attractions, TripIt can keep track of it all in one place. The app syncs with your inbox to compile an itinerary, so you don't have to search for each confirmation email, and sends you reminders so you can focus on having fun.

Don't be afraid to rest—If you're driving for multiple days, be realistic about how far you can go before resting for the night. It's better to lean toward too many stops than too few. You can even pull over for a quick 30-minute nap if you're feeling drowsy.

FUN AND GAMES

Hitting the open road also means getting to spend plenty of time with your favorite people. So don't forget

to prepare the food, games and music that will help you make the most of it.

State of play—Road trip games are classic, from the Alphabet Game and I Spy to Two Truths and a Lie and 20 Questions. Make your own fun by taking turns thinking of a movie and describing it in the worst way possible to see who can guess it. Or, learn more about each other by picking a category like songs, books or foods and building your own top-five lists.

Fight the munchies—Stops at hole-in-the-wall restaurants are a must for



any road trip. But someone is bound to get hangry in between meals. Everyone's favorite snacks will vary, but it's hard to go wrong with some trail mix or jerky. You can even pack fruit and rice cakes for healthy options.

The perfect mix—Planning out a playlist that will make everyone happy is a tall task. You want music that will fit the mood and maybe even complement the terrain you're driving through. Fortunately, you don't have to do it alone these days. If everyone shares the same music service, you can make a shared playlist that everyone can contribute to. You can even make a game out of it, guessing who's the secret Swiftie or where all those oldies came from. 🗣️





Nailed It!

Shop local, save money at HomePro Building Supply

Story by JEN CALHOUN

As owner of HomePro Building Supply in Westmoreland, Terry Garrison has a pretty good idea about the preconceived notions most people have about local lumber, plumbing and hardware stores. Businesses like his, they figure, could never keep their prices competitive against big players like Lowe's, Home Depot and Tractor Supply.

But he says that's just not true. "We shop prices pretty much daily, and we try to stay competitive," says Terry, who recently overheard a customer tell an employee that HomePro's prices were lower than the big-box stores on a significant portion of items. "I heard him say, 'We always come here first, because we realized about 50% of the time, you're cheaper than Lowe's.'"

Terry was so happy to hear the comment that he walked out of his office to shake the man's hand and introduce himself. "It's an awesome compliment to hear. They were comparing us to a company that does billions in sales."

SLAYING THE GIANTS

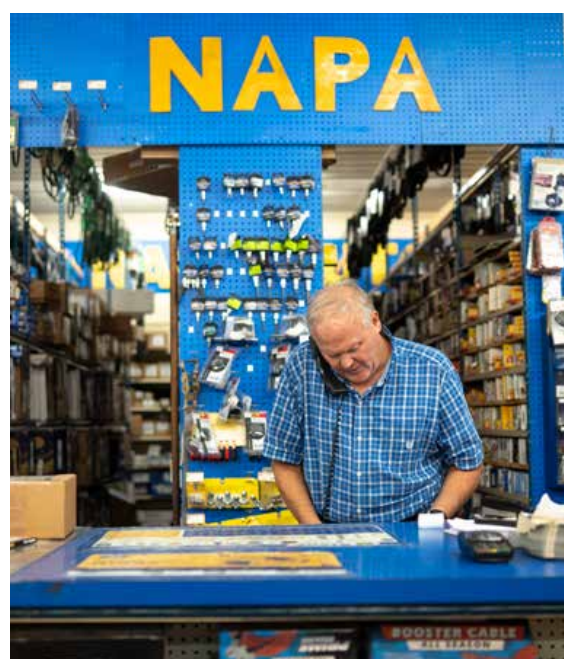
There's a reason HomePro can compete against the corporate retail giants. Big-box stores offer low prices on some items, then increase the prices on others to make up for the loss of revenue. "Those stores are obviously very good at what they do," Terry says. "But they target. They know what areas to target, because they know what the consumer is focusing on. So, they price according to that."

But HomePro tries to keep prices low

all the time, Terry says. And people are taking notice.

"We're getting a lot of new customers now because they moved here from out of town," he says. "They like to shop locally, and they're used to shopping locally."

On the other hand, longtime residents are practically trained to leave town to shop, he says. It's something they've always done, because they had to. Many small, locally owned businesses died out in the 1960s and '70s with the increased number of cars and shopping hubs in bigger cities. As a result, corporate giants were able to thrive.



FROM LEFT: The contractor sales desk is where the plans come together. Douglas, the store's sales manager, takes an order over the phone. HomePro's prices compete with, and sometimes even beat, the big-box stores. Employees move lumber from pallets. Front desk workers Kim, from left, Thelma and Laree offer a human touch at checkout. Glen, the yard manager, looks over blueprints.

But those misconceptions about shopping locally seem embedded in the minds of small-town shoppers. “I think people don’t always give small-town hardware stores a chance,” Terry says. “They just assume the prices are too high, which isn’t the case at all.”

DECADES OF SERVICE

HomePro is a 12,000-square-foot wholesale and retail store selling lumber, plumbing items, hardware, paint and just about anything else it takes to build a home. The store also offers contracting services for plumbing and roofing and other home-renovation needs.

“I mean, we can build a house from the ground up,” Terry says.

He started HomePro in 2002, when he bought out L&B Lumber, a longtime fixture in Westmoreland. Today, Terry employs 15 people—12 of whom work full time. HomePro sponsors local youth baseball teams and high school sports teams.

Maybe the biggest benefit of all is that HomePro has real experts who can help customers find the right tool, part or materials for any project they’re working on.

“I’ve got people who have been with me for 10-plus years,” Terry says. “One, for instance, handled windows and interior trim, and he’s very knowledgeable. Another of the guys used to be a home framer—several of them, in fact. And I’m a former homebuilder myself. So, we have some very knowledgeable people who are willing to help. If one of us doesn’t know the answer, we’ll find someone who does.”

As a bonus, customers pay at the register operated by an actual human being, not a self-checkout machine with lines of customers winding through the aisles.

KEEPING IT REAL

Not too long ago, Terry says, someone told him HomePro was the best-kept secret around. “That’s pretty sad,” he

says. “It’s sad we haven’t done our job getting the word out, and it’s sad the local community hasn’t given us a chance.”

He’s had some people tell him the rumors about high prices are spread unintentionally by well-meaning, but misinformed, folks.

“I’ve had a couple of people tell me they’ve heard things around town from others,” Terry says. “They’ll be talking about a project at their house, and somebody will ask where they got their lumber. ‘Oh, I got it at Lowe’s,’ they’ll say.”

When they’re asked why they didn’t shop at HomePro, they almost always blame prices. “But they’d never even checked it out,” he says. “They just assumed our prices were higher. It’s the biggest lie about local businesses.”

But as home prices rise in the region and more people build homes, Terry hopes more locals will start seeing the hidden gem right in front of them. “We get daily comments when people finally discover us,” he says. “They almost always say, ‘I had no idea you carried this much stuff.’ Pretty much the only thing we’ve ever asked is for people to give us a chance.”



Photos courtesy of Adrianna Texcahua

HOMEPRO HAS IT ALL

HomePro Building Supply is at 5200 US-31E in Westmoreland. It sells lumber, plumbing supplies and hardware and offers contracting services for everything from roofing to plumbing. Visit or call 615-644-2351.

HOW THE WEST WAS HEARD

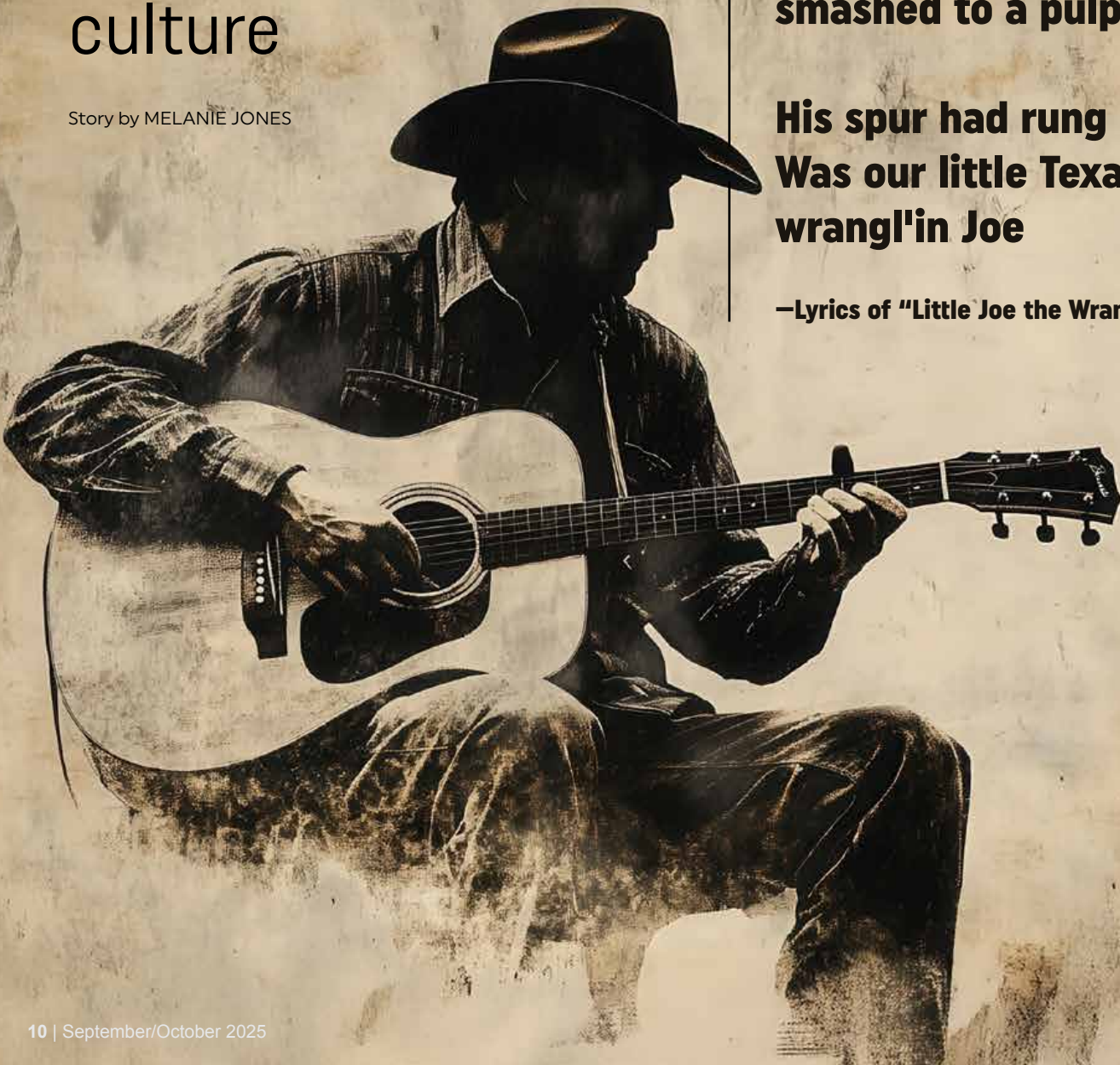
Poet and musician captures cowboy culture

Story by MELANIE JONES

**Next morn'in just
at daybreak
And beneath his horse,
smashed to a pulp**

**His spur had rung his knell
Was our little Texas Faithful,
wrangl'in Joe**

—Lyrics of “Little Joe the Wrangler”





Andy Hedges plays several instruments favored by cowboys, including the banjo.

Andy Hedges, a cowboy poet, musician and podcaster, collects oral histories of the Old West the way rodeo champs collect belt buckles. He's a champion of cowboy culture, and he has the hat to prove it.

"I think there's something about that image that just resonates with people," he says. "They know cowboys represent some of the best of American values—independence, honesty, hard work. And when they hear it, they're hearing real, authentic stories from cowboy culture. They learn the real truth behind the cowboy image."

Cowboy poetry also extends to music, with songs like "Rounded Up in Glory" and "Little Joe the Wrangler." Roy Rogers and Gene Autry brought that style of music to the silver screen, although the Hollywood version is not at the heart of the genre.

Authenticity inspires events across the country, from the Cowpoke Fall Gathering in Loomis, California, to Old West Days in Valentine, Nebraska. Minnesota annually declares a Cowboy Poetry Week, and Andy is returning to Jonesborough, Tennessee, where he performed several times. Cowboy music has even made it to the world-famous Carnegie Hall.

DISCOVERY

Andy, who lives in Lubbock, Texas, is part of a movement that began in 1985, when a group of cowboys met in Elko, Nevada, for the inaugural National Cowboy Poetry Gathering. It's where cowboys swap tales, sing songs of the range and recite poetry that fills lonely days and nights.

What makes a poet a cowboy poet? Andy says his friend Vess Quinlan explains it this way: "He told me there's two ways you can make a deposit in the cowboy poetry bank. One is by being a working cowboy who writes poetry. The other one is to be a non-cowboy who writes poetry that is so good, it becomes accepted by working cowboys. And, of course, it has to be authentic. It has to ring true to those people.

"A lot of people write or recite cowboy poetry or sing the old cowboy songs or write new songs," Andy says. "The truth is a lot

of us, including myself, have never made a living as a cowboy."

Andy has spent years immersing himself in cowboy culture's history, poetry and music. "I try really hard to represent the culture in an authentic way," he says.

He grew up hearing stories of his dad, who worked the rodeo circuit before becoming a Primitive Baptist preacher. He watched old Hollywood Westerns and listened to Western music. "All I really thought I wanted to do was be a cowboy," he says.

But his true obsession with cowboy culture began when he saw an episode of "Austin City Limits" featuring Michael Martin Murphy and friends. Those friends included cowboy poet Waddie Mitchell, cowboy singer Don Edwards and the groups Sons of the San Joaquin and Riders in the Sky. "It just opened that world up to me," Andy says. "I didn't realize there were people who still sang the old songs. I'd never heard cowboy poetry before I heard Waddie on that show."

A self-taught guitarist, young Andy learned some of the old songs. "It was really the beginning of a lifelong obsession with cowboy poetry and cowboy songs," he says.

By the time he could drive, the homeschooled teen was traveling to cowboy gatherings. By 20, he made it to Elko, where he's appeared 17 times. Since recording his album of duets, "Ride On, Cowboy," he and some of the album's guests have appeared on the Grand Ole Opry and practiced, practiced, practiced their way to Carnegie Hall, where they performed for an appreciative audience in March 2024.

The music has an international audience. While travelers come to the United States for gatherings, some performers also toured overseas. Andy even traveled to Turkmenistan as part of a cultural exchange. "The cowboy has always been the folk hero of America," he says. "People identify with that image. You know, when I traveled to Turkmenistan, or just travel overseas not performing, when I wear a cowboy hat, people love that and immediately associate that image with the United States." 🗨️

SWAPPING STORIES

Cowboy poet and musician Andy Hedges will be the teller-in-residence at the National Storytelling Center in Jonesborough, Tennessee, Sept. 2-6. Andy has participated in the National Storytelling Festival before.

"It's a really fantastic gathering of all kinds of storytellers from different traditions," he says of the festival. "I was honored to be there representing the cowboy tradition and sharing cowboy poetry with them." As teller-in-residence, he'll perform a concert every day, make media appearances and take part in other community events. For more information on the event, go to storytellingcenter.net.

To learn more about cowboy culture, check out Andy's podcast, "Cowboy Crossroads." You can download episodes at andyhedges.com/cowboy-crossroads.

SKELTON'S LAIR SCREAM PARK

The frightful legacy keeps spines tingling

Story by JEN CALHOUN

Amy Burge was working at Skeleton's Lair Scream Park one night when she got a radio call from a staff member asking to meet her in the site's Halloween Pavilion.

When she got there, Amy found a couple from Texas who wanted to tell her how excited they were to be back. They'd driven hundreds of miles just to return to the haunted attraction they'd discovered years earlier while visiting the Corvette plant in Bowling Green.

This time, they weren't just passing through. "They said, 'We had such a great time that we came back,'" says Amy, who co-owns the park with its founder, Sherryl Lockett. "They'd planned their entire vacation around this trip to Skeleton's Lair."

Skeleton's Lair is entering its 26th year of operation. The Halloween theme park, or scream park, is located on Cemetery Road between Bowling Green and Scottsville. Situated on several acres, it offers multiple haunted attractions, including a self-guided haunted woods experience, a haunted house, a haunted hayride and a 3D zone filled with optical illusion-oriented art. Visitors can choose to visit one or all the attractions, depending on their mood and their nerve.

The Kentucky venue is part of a much larger haunted attraction industry that spreads across the U.S. America Haunts, an organization made up of some of the nation's most successful haunted attractions, estimates there are more than 1,200 haunted attractions in the country that charge admission fees. While a few are huge and can welcome up to 60,000 guests in a season, about 10% of all these haunted attractions average between 12,000 and 20,000 paid guests. The majority have lower attendance rates.

We don't just work the month of October and boom, we're done. We work all year long.

—Amy Burge, co-owner of
Skeleton's Lair Scream Park

YEAR-ROUND VENTURE

Although Skeleton's Lair is a seasonal venue, the staff works year-round to keep it operational and the attractions fresh. "We don't just work the month of October, and boom, we're done," Amy says. "We work all year long. We were out here earlier this year clearing about 12 trees that came down from one of the big storms."

Many of the attractions change every couple of years or so. All the hard work is worth it, Amy says, especially when she sees the excitement on the visitors' faces. The attraction offers multiple activities designed to appeal to all kinds of people. The Gold City Ghost Ride delivers a haunted hayride experience, while the Doomsday Doll Factory will feature a new theme in 2025 called Scary Tales: Where Childhood Fairy Tales Turn to Nightmares.

The park offers multiple attractions throughout the month of October.



Adobe Stock image by iugimar

Skeleton's Lair Scream Park opened 26 years ago in Scottsville, Kentucky, not far from Bowling Green.

Adobe Stock image by Niki S.



Another attraction, Skeletal Visions 3D Zone, is filled with optical illusions created by a Michigan artist. Visitors can walk past images that appear to pop off the walls.

In addition to Halloween, the venue offers Christmas in the Country in December. The event features train and wagon rides through holiday light displays, costumed characters, visits with Santa and live animal exhibits that have included reindeer and camels.

“We totally turn the cards,” Amy says.

FRIDAY THE 13TH

This year, Skeleton’s Lair will include a special guest appearance by C.J. Graham, the actor who played Jason Voorhees, the iconic masked killer in “Friday the 13th Part VI: Jason Lives.”

“It’s the 45th anniversary of the movie franchise,” Amy says. “And if you know anything about the horror film genre, you’ll know it’s a huge deal to those fans.”

During the appearance, fans will be able to pose for pictures with the actor in costume and get autographs. “It’s something we’ve been doing for a while now,” Amy says. In previous years, Skeleton’s Lair hosted Tyler Mane and Don Shanks, who both played Michael Myers in some of the “Halloween” films.

“These kinds of horror franchises have been around for decades now, so they have real staying power,” she says. “Our fans really enjoy meeting the people who helped make them and were part of them. It’s just an added bonus for our guests. They don’t have to buy anything. They just walk up and shake his hand. But if they choose to take home a souvenir, they can purchase a picture or autograph.”

The park will celebrate the 45th anniversary of the “Friday the 13th” movie franchise with a special guest appearance by C.J. Graham, the actor who played Jason Voorhees, the iconic masked killer, in “Friday the 13th Part VI: Jason Lives.”

CREEP-TASTIC!

Skeleton's Lair is an award-winning scream park in Allen County, Kentucky, minutes from Scottsville and Bowling Green. The park's address, 48 Lockett's Dream, is off Cemetery Road. For directions, tickets or more information, visit the website at skeletonslair.com. You can also stay up to date by visiting the Skeleton Lair Facebook, Instagram and TikTok pages and its YouTube channel.

FRIGHTENING FACTS ABOUT HALLOWEEN

- Halloween is the second-largest commercial holiday in the United States.
- Around 100 countries celebrate Halloween worldwide.
- In the U.S, people spend more than \$7 billion annually on candy, costumes and Halloween-related activities.
- About 90% of households with children participate in at least one Halloween activity. The most active demographic during the season is young adults ages 18-34.
- Research shows that people enjoy being scared in safe environments—such as at the movies, on thrill rides or in haunted houses—and are willing to pay for the experience.

Source: America Haunts



Image courtesy of Skeleton's Lair

Dinner on a Stick

Kabobs make for easy meals, quick cleanup

Do you ever crave an easy meal with meat and vegetables? Try putting kabobs on the menu. It's a tasty grill-friendly choice, and cleanup is easy.

Begin with a tender cut of meat like top sirloin, which is affordable. Filet also works well. If you'd like, substitute chicken or tofu. Just remember to cut your protein portions to about the same size so they cook evenly. You can add as many chopped veggies as you like.

Begin with a fresh marinade. Homemade chimichurri does double duty as a marinade and seasoning sauce—it works for any protein. Round out your meal with crunchy Asian coleslaw and a fresh apple cake for dessert.

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

GRILLED CHIMICHURRI STEAK KABOBS

CHIMICHURRI SAUCE

- 1/2 cup fresh cilantro, packed, leaves and tender stems
- 1/2 cup fresh parsley, packed
- 3 tablespoons fresh oregano or 3 teaspoons dried
- 1 lemon, zested and juiced
- 3-4 cloves of garlic
- 1/2 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 3 teaspoons red wine vinegar
- 1 teaspoon crushed red pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt

Put all ingredients in a food processor

and pulse until blended. Taste and season with salt and pepper as desired.

STEAK KABOBS

- 32 ounces top sirloin, or the protein of your choice, cut into 2-inch cubes
- 36-48 baby potatoes, golden or mini reds
- 2 medium bell peppers, any color, chopped into 2-inch pieces
- 2 small red onions, chopped into 2-inch pieces
- Kosher salt and ground black pepper



CRUNCHY ASIAN COLESLAW

- 2 packages ramen noodles, any flavor
- 2 16-ounce packages shredded coleslaw mix
- 1 cup slivered almonds, toasted
- 5 green onions, chopped
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1/2 cup vegetable oil
- 1/3 cup rice vinegar

Reserve the flavor packets from the noodles for another use or toss. Crush the

noodles and set aside. Toss together the coleslaw mix, almonds and green onions in a large salad bowl.

Whisk together the sugar, oil and vinegar in a small bowl until mixed. Add the dressing to the coleslaw mixture and toss to coat. Mix in the chopped noodles. Serve immediately. Makes 12 servings.

Note: You may prepare the salad in advance, adding the noodles just before serving so they are crunchy.

FRESH APPLE CAKE

- 1 cup oil
- 2 cups sugar
- 3 eggs
- 2 1/2 cups flour
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 cup pecans or walnuts, chopped
- 3 cups apples, peeled and chopped

CREAM CHEESE FROSTING

- 1 8-ounce package cream cheese, softened
- 16 ounces powdered sugar

- 8 tablespoons butter
- 2 teaspoons vanilla

Measure oil into a large bowl, then whisk in sugar and eggs.

Mix together the flour, salt, baking powder and cinnamon, then add to the creamed mixture, beating well. Add vanilla, then fold in nuts and apples.

Pour mixture into a greased 9-by-13-inch pan. Bake at 350 F for 50 minutes or until cake tests done. Cover with foil if it gets too dark around the edges.

To make frosting: Combine all frosting ingredients and spread over cooled cake.

After reserving some of the chimichurri to use during cooking and for dipping the cooked kabobs, combine the rest of the sauce and the cubed protein in a sealable bag. Set aside to marinate. Meanwhile, soak the skewers in water a minimum of 20 minutes so they don't burn on the grill.

Add potatoes to a large pot, cover with water and 2 teaspoons of salt. Boil for 5-7 minutes or until fork tender. Drain and rinse the potatoes. Let them sit in cold water to cool. Chop veggies and have them ready to slide onto your skewers.

Now it's time to assemble: Using a soaked skewer, put either a potato or piece

of meat on first, so the rest of the veggies don't slide off the end. Then alternate between meat, potatoes and veggies.

Prepare the grill to about 500 F. Once it's ready, place steak kabobs perpendicular to the grill grates. Grill 3 minutes on each side for medium doneness. If you use chicken, cook for 5-7 minutes. Tofu needs to cook about 10 minutes. While cooking, brush the reserved chimichurri on the kabobs.

Remove the kabobs from the grill and let rest for 3-5 minutes. Use the chimichurri as an extra dipping sauce, if desired. 🍴





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