



SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2022

# CONNECTION



## Creating community

Oliver Creative helps power the Square

220 YEARS OF FAMILY FARMING

FARM GETAWAYS

# The power of a cooperative

## Your voice guides our mission

When it comes to a for-profit business, some would say a company is what it sells. The nature of the product defines the culture, the business's interactions with customers and how it spreads its message. For instance, a manufacturer with a production plant creating physical goods is fundamentally different than a local real estate agency or medical facility.



**JOHNNY  
MCCLANAHAN**  
President/CEO

The day-to-day realities of the many job roles and policies needed to make that product possible can shape how a business operates, how consumers view it and even how employees view themselves. For North Central Telephone Cooperative, there's no doubt about our products or the expertise needed to make them possible. Simply put, we know rural communications better than anyone. Our roots are in telephone networks. After all, not that long ago, copper wires strung from pole to pole throughout our area were our primary ties to the world. We've moved well past those days, and we're now far more than a telephone company.

Today, we're a true communications hub using fast internet service to link you to the information you need. Our systems keep pace with the latest innovations to create the best experience for you. Now, telephone services are only a single part of that product mix — one component of the complex, powerful and reliable infrastructure we've created to link our community to all the resources now at our fingertips. Streaming television and music. Telemedicine and online learning. Movies and social media. These are all modern necessities, and we make it possible for you to connect to them.

Our technical experts have the skills to maintain and support the latest systems. We train our staff to not only anticipate the questions you may have about your services, but also to have the knowledge to provide clear answers.

At a very basic level, the services we provide do define North Central Telephone Cooperative — at least in part. You see, we're more than simply a communications company. We are also part of a national community of organizations responsible for bringing services to areas larger national companies would not serve.

Unlike businesses that put profit or stock values above all else, cooperatives proudly go a different direction. We put your needs and the needs of the communities we serve first.

Does that mean we're not worried about income? Of course not. We're vigilant stewards of the cooperative's finances. In a world of escalating costs and ever-changing technology that's no small task.

As a cooperative, though, we're also governed by you through a board of directors elected by you. Other communications companies can't say the same, particularly the large national providers. We are part of the community, devoted to making life here better for everyone. In fact, that's a central principle of every cooperative — concern for the community.

We support local organizations and businesses through donations, scholarships and more. The members of our team live here, shop here and enjoy our rural way of life just as you do. 📧

The North Central Connection is a bimonthly newsletter published by NCTC, © 2022. It is distributed without charge to all member/owners of the cooperative.



North Central is a member-owned corporation dedicated to delivering advanced telecommunications technology to the people of Northern Middle Tennessee and Southern Kentucky, including Macon County, Tenn., Allen County and Warren County, Ky. NCTC also serves portions of Sumner, Trousdale, Smith and Clay counties in Tennessee.

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

#### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Glen Hardcastle  
Chairman of the Board  
Scottsville Exchange West

Randy Harston  
Vice Chairman of the Board  
Scottsville Exchange East

Calvin Graves  
Secretary of the Board  
Bethpage/Oak Grove Exchanges

Martha Bowser  
Westmoreland Exchange

Kevin Dickerson  
Defeated/Pleasant Shade Exchanges

Donnie Steen  
Lafayette Exchange East

Jeff Flippin  
Lafayette Exchange West

Chad Evitts  
Hillsdale/Green Grove Exchanges

Chad Owens  
Red Boiling Springs Exchange

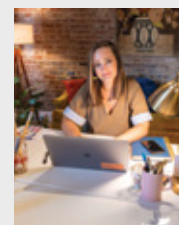
Johnny McClanahan  
President/CEO

Guy Holliman  
General Counsel

Produced for North Central by:



On the Cover:



Jennifer Oliver opened her branding agency, Oliver Creative, on the Square in 2020. See story Page 8.

Photo by Tony Young.

Save the date!

# NCTC'S ANNUAL MEETING is coming soon

North Central Telephone Cooperative is happy to announce its annual meeting will take place in person on **Saturday, Nov. 5**, at Macon County Junior High School. Entertainment begins at noon, and the business meeting begins at 1 p.m. Information on the director elections in October will be mailed to our members with details for each service area. Remember to like our Facebook page for the latest community news and information!



## Take a load off

In observance of the Labor Day holiday, NCTC offices will close on **Monday, Sept. 5**. We wish you a relaxing and safe holiday!

## Nondiscrimination statement

In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Civil Rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/ parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior credible activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g. braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible agency or USDA's TARGET Center at 202-720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at 800-877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English. To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at How to File a Program Discrimination Complaint and at any USDA office. Or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call 866-632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: 1) mail: USDA, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Ave. SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; 2) fax: 202-690-7442; or 3) email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov). USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender.

# COMING HOME

## Scottsville native returns to invest in community

Story by JEN CALHOUN

When Ada Oliver left for Georgetown College shortly after graduating from Allen County-Scottsville High School in 2005, it felt like an ending to her life in Scottsville. The opportunities for an advertising creative like herself weren't available in her hometown, and Nashville seemed like a better fit.

But a bad economy and fate brought Oliver to work as a designer at advertising agencies in nearby Bowling Green in 2012. At these companies, she honed her skills in branding, web design, and app and game design with some big-name clients, including Billy Crystal, the NBA and the actor, Tom Hanks. "I helped build his typewriter app," says Oliver, explaining that Hanks is an avid collector of vintage typewriters. "So, we created an app for him that would allow your keyboard to type in the different fonts from his collection."

### COMING HOME

Ten years after starting her career, Oliver quit her job and started her own advertising and branding business from her home in Bowling Green. And on March 13, 2020, she decided to open up Oliver Creative just off the Square in downtown Scottsville.

She describes Oliver Creative as a brand strategy and design company. They offer everything from logo creation to website design, helping with marketing strategies and other problem solving ideas. "I never really intended to be back in Scottsville," Oliver says. "But there was an opportunity to lease a building here. It was in my price range, and it gave me the ability to operate this agency I'd started right in my hometown."



Bonnie West, left, and Ada Oliver.

She wanted a few things from the business, she says. First, she hoped to invest in the city that gave her so much and also be part of the rebirth of the historic Scottsville Square. "Every time I was in town, I'd look out and think, 'If we don't do something now, will these buildings be here in 50 years? We need to take care of them now. We need to maintain the integrity of our own downtown.'"

She also wanted a little more freedom to serve her clients on her own terms. "I work for long hours, but I also love to talk to people," Oliver says. "I love to be outdoors, and this has provided me flexibility and a lifestyle that allows me to enjoy some of the passions I have outside the office."

Building her own business also gave her the opportunity to do things in a more personal, less superficial way. "I like to have meaning behind what I do," Oliver says. "I

like to talk to my clients and find out what drives them, why they do the things they do. It serves them better. It brings more meaning to whatever they offer, and it connects their customers to them."

She describes how one famous brand does this. "Oftentimes, we look at branding as the logo, like the Nike swoosh," she says. "But really, it's the gut feeling that you get when you think about Nike. It's the urge to run or to accomplish something."

### BRAVING THE PANDEMIC

When she signed her first lease on March 13, 2020, it turned out to be a bigger day than Oliver imagined. That same day, the president declared a national emergency for the COVID-19 outbreak. "It was the day the world shut down," Oliver says. "Everybody else was going home to work, and I was doing the opposite."

During the early days of the pandemic, Oliver Creative designed and sold T-shirts like these to keep afloat.



Her largest client at the time stopped its marketing functions, which left Oliver scrambling. For the first few weeks, she sold Scottsville T-shirts to make ends meet. But soon, she gained more local clients, including restaurants looking for new ways to reach customers during a time of shutdowns. Soon, however, businesses sought her out to rebrand themselves or make changes they'd been too busy to implement before the pandemic. "I think people realized they were going to have to get creative with their businesses and how they reached people," she says.

### FORGING AHEAD

Oliver Creative's fiber internet connection with NCTC helped in a big way, she says. While other towns and cities across the country were struggling to meet the increased demands of bandwidth, Scottsville wasn't. "I started in an older building with older wiring, but NCTC came and got me set up on fiber broadband," Oliver says. "I work with a lot of large files and graphics that I have to not only build but send back and forth to clients. I wouldn't be able to do the work I do in Scottsville if it wasn't for NCTC's fiber internet. The



Ada Oliver, owner of Oliver Creative, works on a design for one of her clients.



Designer Bonnie West, left, and Ada Oliver study a client design.

efficiency of the internet here is a huge, essential part of this business."

Soon, Oliver outgrew the space and found a new building directly on the Square. She's gained even more clients, some of which are outside the region. She's also helped smaller businesses with branding on a pro bono basis. She calls it the branding fairy, and it's her way of giving back to her community. "It's hard work, but it's rewarding," she says. "I love being part of all this." 📧

### What's your brand?

Oliver Creative is a boutique branding agency that helps clients with marketing, web design and other strategies. The office is at 110 E. Public Square in Scottsville. To find out more, visit the website at [olivercreative.co](http://olivercreative.co), or find them on Facebook and Instagram.

Photos by Tony Young

# FARM LORE

## Century Farms Program documents rural histories

Story by JEN CALHOUN

**R**onnie Johnson's farm and family link together in a way that's tough to separate. Since 1804 or before, at least 115 acres of Johnson's farm in Macon County has been under the ownership of someone in his family.

The thought overwhelms him at times, especially when he's looking out across the rolling hills and steep, wooded hollows of what he now calls 4 J Farm. It's as if he can feel the grit and determination of his ancestors who struggled with and against the land to keep their families fed.

"Their blood, sweat and tears are on this land," he says.

### RURAL HERITAGE

Johnson's strong connection to the land and his family convinced him to register 4 J Farm with the Tennessee Century Farms Program in 1985. The program started as a way to recognize and document Tennessee's agricultural heritage. Today, 4 J Farm is one of 2,085 farms certified as a Century Farm, says Dr. Antoinette van Zelm, assistant director of Middle Tennessee State University's Center for Historic Preservation, which oversees the Century Farms Program



Ronnie Johnson was born and raised on a Macon County farm that's been in his family for generations.

and archives the documents of the state's rich, rural history.

Going through the certification process is more a labor of love on the part of the farm families than anything, van Zelm says. For some, it's a way to get started on ancestry research they've been putting off for years. For others, it's the knowledge that their family's history is going to be preserved in a safe place so others can learn.

Not all of the 2,085 farms are still certified. Some have been sold. Some lands have been sold out of the original families. But the histories are still documented.

4 J Farm is one of the oldest consecutively-owned family farms in the state.





Clockwise from left: Shirley and Ronnie Johnson made a commitment to keeping the farm in the family.

An old school house on 4 J Farm offers a glimpse inside the farm's 200-year history.

The Johnsons collect old farm implements and display them with their Century Farm sign.

Today, 4 J Farm in Macon County raises beef cattle.



Photos by Tony Young

## RAISING HOUSES, NOT CROPS

The notion of selling the family farm isn't a new one, Johnson says. "The economic problem with farms has been around for years — high interest rates, high inflation, low prices. Lots of people didn't have a choice but to sell. But I know that for the people who were reared on the land, it would be hard to give up."

A friend from another county told Johnson they stopped raising everything but houses on their land. "Real estate pays more than agriculture," Johnson says. "You've got to have a commitment, in my opinion. Otherwise, you just cash out. I can understand how it can get to that, too."

But the thought of selling his land hurts Johnson's soul. Family is everything to him, and the farm is so intertwined with his family that he can't imagine them separated. "I am a Johnson, but my great grandmother was a Jenkins," he says, starting a winding tale of ancestry and ownership that travels back to possible land grants issued sometime after America's War of Independence. "Her great grandfather was Noah Jenkins, and he was the first person to own this land. This land is tied to the family. We've been working on it for more than 200 years."

From what Johnson has learned, Noah Jenkins accumulated about 1,400 acres by the time he died. Over the next two centuries, heirs sold or subdivided parts of the land while also purchasing new sections.

## KEEPING IT TOGETHER

Like his father and grandfather before him, Johnson held another job to keep the taxes paid and the farm running on the side. His grandfather and father ran a sawmill.

Johnson himself graduated with a degree in agriculture from the University of Tennessee and worked a full-time job off the farm. Since buying the farm from a family member in 1972, Johnson and his wife, Shirley, have continued to raise beef cattle and grow hay and other forage crops. "This land is pretty rough, so farming has never been something that most of the family could make a business on," he says. "But there aren't many of these old family farms around."

Johnson's grown daughters are set to inherit the farm eventually, and they've told him they don't plan to sell or subdivide, but no one can know what the future holds or what challenges could arise, he says. For the most part, he simply hopes they understand how much the farm is a part of them. "It's important they know their heritage," he says. "I hope we gave them some roots and some wings." 📱

## THE HISTORY OF US

The Center for Historic Preservation at Middle Tennessee State University administers the Tennessee Century Farms Program. The center identifies, documents and recognizes farms the same families have owned for at least 100 years. The CHP maintains a database of information and photographs of these farms, most of which come from the families that own them. This database offers a wealth of historical information about the state, its people and the land itself. For more on Tennessee Century Farms and the requirements to become one, visit [tncenturyfarms.org](http://tncenturyfarms.org). You can also find them on Facebook at Tennessee Century Farms Program.



P.O. Box 70  
Lafayette, TN 37083

PRESORT STD  
US POSTAGE PAID  
PERMIT #6  
RAINSVILLE, AL

**DON'T BE AFRAID OF SOMETHING NEW!**



**GET A SPOOKTACULAR TELEVISION EXPERIENCE WITH NCTC TV.**

**WE'VE GOT THE FEATURES YOU LOVE:**

Pause and restart live TV, simultaneously stream on multiple devices, CatchupTV, Network DVR, On Demand Subscriptions, WatchTVEverywhere.

Visit [nctc.com](http://nctc.com) to find your package and sign up, or call 615-666-2151.

Check out  
the new

