

The Foothills

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2016

CONNECTION

A PATH TO THE FUTURE

Explore the Dawkins Line
Rail Trail and visit Royaltown



WILDCATS ON THE AIR

Kentucky Sports Radio packs
shows with news and humor

FIRST TIME AROUND

A youthful bluegrass band is
steeped in tradition



With the help of your telco, NTCA charts a course for 2016

By SHIRLEY BLOOMFIELD, CEO, NTCA—THE RURAL BROADBAND ASSOCIATION

With so many issues impacting the future of telecommunications, it is important that our nation's independent and cooperative providers speak with a unified voice to lawmakers and regulators. NTCA—The Rural Broadband Association has long been that voice in Washington, D.C.

As 2015 drew to a close, NTCA's board of directors created a strategic plan to help guide us through 2016 and beyond. This plan reaffirms our vision and mission, and sets goals that reflect a desire to continue our outstanding grassroots efforts to shape public policy, to build on and improve our top-notch programs and, of course, to communicate with member telcos like yours about changes that affect their company, our industry and ultimately, the service they provide you.

Your telco had a voice in this process, and that means you had a voice, too. I therefore wanted to share a few parts of our strategic plan with you, in order to highlight the focus and commitment to

excellence that your telco and its partners demonstrate as they work hard to bring quality telecommunications to rural America.

MISSION

Our Core Purpose

The mission of NTCA—The Rural Broadband Association is to promote and sustain advanced communications services in rural America by supporting the viability and vitality of our members.

VISION

Our Picture of the Ideal Future

To be widely recognized as the premier national advocate and essential partner for small, rural, community-based communications providers.

GOALS

Outcomes on the Path to Achieving Our Vision

ADVOCACY AND LEADERSHIP

Lead and shape industry change for the

benefit of rural telecommunications providers and consumers.

COMMUNICATION & EDUCATION

Broaden the scope of education and communication opportunities to our membership.

MEMBERSHIP VALUE

Sustain, market and expand benefits to our membership.

OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCIES

Enhance operational efficiencies for opportunities to maximize the organization's ability to be more flexible and nimble.

In the coming months, NTCA will implement steps to achieve these goals. I will continue to keep you updated on industry activity at the national level, which may impact you and your community. As I do, know that your needs and concerns are at the forefront of NTCA's work as we continue to represent the collective voice of telcos like yours. ☎

LIFELINE



Landline phone OR cell phone

NOT BOTH!

Do you qualify for the federal Lifeline program? If so, you need to know that the credit, which helps you pay for a phone connection, can only be applied to one service at a time.

You can apply for the Lifeline credit on your home landline or your cell phone — but not both.

If you receive the Lifeline credit on your home phone and decide to move it to your cell phone, the credit will stop appearing on your home phone. If you decide to move it back, the process could take a few months, and you will not receive your credit during that time.

Before moving your Lifeline credit to another phone, please contact your local telephone company where you have your credit now.



More questions about Lifeline?

Contact us at the phone number listed on Page 4.

Age does not matter

'Cyber-Seniors' shows technology's power to connect generations

BY NOBLE SPRAYBERRY



Photo courtesy of Cyber-Seniors.

The film "Cyber-Seniors" drives home the point that senior adults can use technology — whether it's emailing, video chatting, streaming videos or even taking selfies.

The documentary film "Cyber-Seniors" follows the effort to connect generations through technology. The film's success created a campaign to encourage seniors to better use the Internet and social media. For director Saffron Cassaday, a Toronto native, the project was both personal and informative.

Q: What was your link to the topic, and why did you choose to make this film?

A: When my two younger sisters were in high school, they started a community service project called Cyber-Seniors. It was small-scale, just them and a few of their classmates visiting a local retirement residence a couple of days a week to teach computer lessons. They got the idea because our grandparents were 80 years old when they learned to use the Internet for the first time. It changed their lives and our relationship with them.

Q: Going into the project, what was your goal?

A: In the beginning, we thought of it almost as a social experiment. What happens when you put these two groups, seniors and teenagers, together in front of a computer? What we found was that a program like this can really positively impact the lives of senior citizens.

Q: How long did it take before the technology started to click?

A: Right off the bat, we could already see magic starting to happen. In the first few lessons, we witnessed a series of "ah ha" moments. The seniors' eyes would light up, and they would lean in close to the computer screen with awe each time they discovered something new.

Q: It's striking how quickly some seniors embraced the technology, particularly Facebook. How did you move beyond that?

A: The introduction to YouTube really brought some of the seniors out of their shells; we even witnessed a few sing-alongs. As the lessons continued, we began to see the generation gap narrow and friendships develop.

Q: Aside from friendship, what were the seniors getting out of this program?

A: In the beginning, we didn't know how easy it would be for seniors to learn this new skill. We didn't know how it would benefit them, or what kinds of things they would be drawn to online. Seniors who were in the habit of learning new things had an easier time catching on, and we started to realize how important lifelong learning is to health and vitality in one's older years.

Q: Having access to all the information the Internet has to offer must be empowering. What were the reactions of the seniors?

A: When you can't move around as much as you once did, the Internet can be used to make day-to-day tasks like banking and shopping easier. But, the No. 1 motivator for most of the seniors was the ability to connect with family and friends around the world. ☺



For resources to help introduce technology to seniors or for more information about the documentary, visit <http://cyberseniorsdocumentary.com>.

Consider Rural America

After hearing politicians talk about this important year for several months, it's finally upon us — welcome to 2016!



RUTH CONLEY
Chief Executive Officer

Later this year, you and I and millions of other Americans will be casting votes to choose the next leaders of the United States.

Around the country, we will elect congresspeople, governors, mayors, councilpersons and other officials to represent us.

Unfortunately, that means we have several months to listen to candidates as they try to convince us they have the answers to all our problems. For the past several months, it's been hard to escape the campaigning on TV, in newspapers, on social media and on news websites.

I'm sorry to add another voice to all of that noise, but I believe the next few months represent an important time for Americans as we make up our minds on who will get our votes

to lead our nation.

In that time, candidates, staffers, political action committees and others will ask you to consider their positions and their points of view. I'm not here to tell you who to vote for. Rural America and rural telecommunications have friends on both sides of the aisle. There are many strong leaders out there with excellent ideas on guiding our country into the future.

But I am asking you to be sure the candidates you vote for are considering your point of view — and that of Rural America.

Rural communities like those served by Foothills have different needs than big cities or sprawling suburbs. We face different geographic, social and economic challenges than urban and suburban residents. Our communities have very different needs when it comes to issues such as education, transportation and telecommunications.

In our own industry, we work closely with NTCA and other telcos to be sure elected officials are aware of how vital programs such as Lifeline and the Universal Service Fund are for rural communities.

I'm sorry to say that in many races, the cards are stacked against us. Candidates and political leaders tend to focus their attention on densely populated areas in order to reach the maximum number of potential voters.

That's why we need you — rural Americans.

The best way we can ensure our rural needs are met is to make the voice of Rural America heard. Raise rural issues at town hall meetings and candidate forums. Write letters or emails to your elected officials. Talk to your friends and neighbors about which candidates you think best represent your community. Most of all, carefully consider the decision you will make this year on Election Day.

I know it's going to be a long year of being bombarded by political ads for all of us, but try to remember: The next time a candidate asks you to consider them, be sure they are considering Rural America's issues. ☑

The Foothills

CONNECTION

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2016

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The Foothills Connection is a bimonthly newsletter published by Foothills Communications, ©2016. It is distributed without charge to all customers of the company.



Foothills is a member-owned cooperative that has been serving residents and businesses in eastern Kentucky since 1951. In the early days, we only offered telephone service over copper wires. Over the years, we have expanded our network and now provide broadband Internet and cable TV services over fiber-optic facilities to much of our service area. Our service area includes Magoffin County and portions of Johnson County and Lawrence County. We love being part of the communities we serve; our customers are our families, friends and neighbors.

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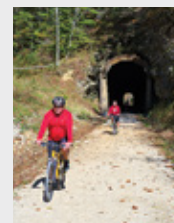
Foothills Mission Statement

"To provide the latest in communications at affordable prices with exceptional service."

Produced for Foothills Communications by:



On the Cover:



Mark Linkous, Justin Bruce and John Ray Ford visit the Dawkins Line Rail Trail for an Eastern Kentucky adventure. See story Page 12.

Tune up your home Internet connection

Rely on Foothills' WiFi@Home



Meet WiFi@Home

- Only \$9.95 a month
- Discounted price for Platinum customers.
- Foothills' experts furnish and install a home router with WiFi@Home.
- If router hardware fails, Foothills provides a free replacement.*
- Foothills' experienced technicians can handle customer support remotely.
- Upgrades are made by Foothills, so your router software is always up to date.
- Never again worry about Wi-Fi setup, performance or troubleshooting.

**And that's just the beginning.
Have technical questions? Just ask!**

Does your home Wi-Fi bring you down — dropped connections, slow Web pages or jerky video? Relax. Foothills Communications has a solution: We take care of the router for you. That's right. No more hassles. No more slow-downs. The technology experts at Foothills move your home Wi-Fi into the fast lane. Best of all, it's simple and affordable.

Don't wait — supercharge your network with WiFi@Home.

Get it today! Go to www.foothills.net.



*Replacement is dependent on a review of the hardware and a determination by a Foothills representative.

THE ROAD TO EQUALITY

By Anne Braly

The civil rights movement has affected generations of Americans, and it continues today in cities across the U.S. But it all began in the South, where a road trip marches through cities where many put down their lives to achieve freedoms never before known. History is not always a comfortable ride through the ages. Oftentimes, it's met with uncomfortable truths. Here are four destinations that keep that history alive, lest we ever begin to forget.



Photo courtesy of National Civil Rights Museum.

Lorraine Motel marquee • Memphis, Tennessee

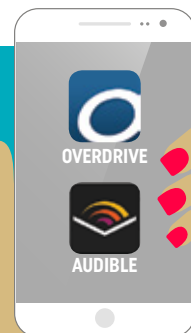
ATLANTA, GEORGIA

Atlanta was in the heat of action during the civil rights movement. Like many large Southern cities, it saw its share of protests, marches and boycotts. Visitors to Atlanta can relive the moments that led up to equal rights for all by touring the International Civil Rights: Walk of Fame, walking “alongside” leaders of the movement. The outdoor passage features granite and bronze footprints of men and women influential in the struggle, such as Rosa Parks, Reverend Ralph Abernathy, former President Jimmy Carter, Justice Thurgood Marshall and dozens more. The walk is at 450 Auburn Ave., in the Sweet Auburn Historic District, a stretch of road that includes Martin Luther King Jr.’s birth home.



TECH-SAVVY TRAVELER:

Make the most of those hours behind the wheel and consider using audiobooks to learn about the history of wherever the road takes you. Books on tape are now books on mobile devices, thanks to apps like **Overdrive** and **Audible**. Download a book to your digital device over Wi-Fi at home and then take those stories with you on the road. Listening to “Death of a King” by Tavis Smiley would provide context before touring the Lorraine Hotel in Memphis, where Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated.





MLK Walk of Fame • Atlanta, Georgia

Where to eat: Busy Bee Cafe (810 Martin Luther King Jr. Drive) is remembered as a gathering place for civil rights leaders in the 1960s and remains a favorite place for Atlantans to get their fill of some of the city's best fried chicken, oxtails, broccoli casserole and collard greens.

MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA

160 miles from Atlanta via I-85

When seamstress Rosa Parks refused to give up her bus seat to a white man in Montgomery in 1955, she knew she was making a statement, but most likely had no idea it would help launch a movement destined to become one of the strongest campaigns for equal rights. The formation of the Montgomery Improvement Association, which chose a young Martin Luther King Jr. as its president, was spawned by Parks' initiative. Today, visitors to Montgomery may tour The Rosa Parks Museum (252 Montgomery St.), which, through the use of visual effects, offers a glimpse of the energy and emotion of the bus boycott struggle, along with exhibits and a large auditorium that hosts lectures and performances.

Where to eat: Chris' Hotdogs (138 Dexter Ave.) King used to come in, buy a paper and visit with the owners when he was pastor at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church. And it was a bus stop for Rosa Parks, so she would come in and buy hot dogs. African-Americans could not dine in, so they had to order it to go as this was a whites-only establishment at that time. Chris' became one of the first restaurants to welcome blacks into its dining room following passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1964.

BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA

92 miles from Montgomery via I-65

1963 was a watershed year for the civil rights movement in Birmingham. In April, Martin Luther King Jr. sat in jail. Protestors marched in the face of fire hoses turned on full force at Kelly Ingram Park. And on Sept. 15, four young black girls were killed in the bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church. Birmingham was a chaotic canvas splattered with strife and violence.

The Birmingham Civil Rights Institute (520 16th St. N) is where visitors can relive these moments in history. A replica of King's jail cell, a robe from the KKK, a burned bus, as well as glimpses into the daily lives of African-Americans, especially during their struggle for equal rights, are features that can be seen. A stroll through Kelly Ingram Park, adjacent to the 16th Street church, is a ghostly reminder of the violence and hatred witnessed there.

Where to eat: Mrs. B's on Fourth (328 16th St.), serving classic Southern fare cafeteria-style, is an easy stroll from the Civil Rights Institute. Favorites: fried chicken, collards, mac 'n' cheese and homemade banana pudding.

MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE

239 miles from Birmingham via I-22 and US-78

On April 3, 1968, Martin Luther King Jr. gave what would be the last speech of his life at the Mason Temple. The next evening, as he stood on the balcony of the Lorraine Motel speaking to colleagues, he was shot and killed. King was 39 years old. Today, his room at the motel, one of just a handful of integrated motels in the late 1960s, has been preserved as a memorial to King. Blood stains mark the concrete balcony to this day. In 1991, the National Civil Rights Museum (450 Mulberry St.) was built around it and features "Exploring the Legacy," an exhibit that includes never-before-seen evidence surrounding the King assassination. Newly finished renovations have increased the number of multimedia and interactive exhibits.

"We want people to understand what the movement was about. The people who fought for our civil rights were young and strived to make our lives and communities better," says Faith Morris, director of marketing, governmental and community affairs at the museum. "And we invite our visitors to join the movement. To take a stand and be a part of social change."

Morris says the museum brings the movement to life and helps give a focus of national and global understanding unlike any other museum of its kind.

Where to eat: The Four Way (998 Mississippi Blvd.). Nothing but legendary soul food is served here, and what makes it even more so is the fact that King dined here whenever he came to town. His favorite choices were the fried catfish and lemon meringue pie, and it's still made and served just like it was in the 1960s. 🍷



Rosa Parks Museum • Montgomery, Alabama



The (very) unofficial voice of the Wildcats

When basketball season heats up, Kentucky sports fans know where to turn to catch the latest news about the team. Oh, and there's plenty of opinion. And expect some wackiness, too.

That mix of insight and antics makes Kentucky Sports Radio a favorite. KSR's Shannon "The Dude" Grigsby recently chatted with Foothills:

Q: For people who are unfamiliar with KSR, what can they expect?

A: Although the core focus of the show is University of Kentucky sports, we venture into topics ranging from pop culture, to the latest bizarre stories in the news, and to everything in between. If nothing else, KSR will entertain you.

Q: What's the mission of Kentucky Sports Radio: booster, critic or journalist?

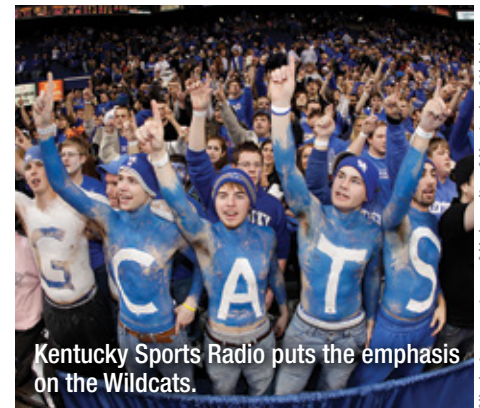
A: The mission of KSR is to bring fans the latest UK sports news in the most ridiculous manner possible. We don't want to just tell you the news, we want

to tell you the news while jumping out of airplanes, riding horses and plunging into lakes, which, by the way, have all happened at live, remote shows.

Q: What's the best part of the job?

A: To me the best part of the job is when we hear about how our show has helped someone get through a tough time and helped change someone's life. We had a guy who started walking every day to try to get back in shape, and he would listen to the KSR podcast. He said it took his mind off exercising, and it made it easier for him to get through his workout. He was able to drop a lot of weight and it transformed his life. He credited it to, in part, KSR. To me, there's nothing better than those types of stories.

Q: To be clear, this is UK radio — not



All photos courtesy of University of Kentucky Athletics.

a statewide sports channel that might include that other school to the west, right?

A: Yes, but that doesn't mean we won't mention little brother and everyone else. We will talk about topics involving other schools, but the show's focus is on what is happening in Lexington.

It's a lot of fun to do the show in a state with big rivals. There is a select group of KSR listeners who hate UK, but they love the show. We like to have fun with it and mix it up with everyone.

Q: What's the one thing about UK sports that deserves more attention?

A: What I think deserves more attention at UK is the baseball team. They've put together some very good teams recently, but Kentucky is a basketball state first and a football state second. Everything after that always seems to get lost in the shuffle.

Q: Finally, what is one thing viewers and listeners should pay attention to when it comes to the basketball team?

A: I think people should pay attention to how well, and how quickly, this team is able to gel. They once again have the talent to win another championship, but they'll need to play completely selfless basketball to bring home No. 9. 📺



The focus is sports, but expect plenty of other entertainment from Kentucky Sports Radio.



FIRST TIME AROUND

Youth, talent and bluegrass make a compelling mix

BY JENNIFER CALHOUN

The members of the band First Time Around may have been born just a few years back, but their pickin' style is as old as the hills.

So it's no surprise that, within less than two years of forming, the Louisa, Kentucky-based bluegrass ensemble of teens and tweens have opened for veteran musician Larry Sparks and performed at the Poppy Mountain Bluegrass Festival in Morehead and the Mountain Arts Center in Prestonsburg. They have also been invited to Nashville to play with other rising stars in the genre.

But while it may tickle them, the fame doesn't really tempt this band.

The group is made up of Zach and Savanna Wright, 14 and 11; Eden and Adrian Webb, 13 and 11; and guitar player Justin LeMaster, 18. They are just happy to perform, whether they're bouncing through their version of "Rocky Top" or wailing away on a rendition of Ralph Stanley's "Rank Stranger."

A BLUEGRASS INTRODUCTION

They're just regular kids, who work hard at school and play with their friends, says Cassandra Webb, mother of Eden and Adrian.

"We want for them to have fun, enjoy the music, meet people and learn about the culture of bluegrass," Webb says. "But, we don't want them to do it so much they get turned off."

The band has been good for the girls, Webb says.

"Adrian, my sixth grader, was so shy before she started performing," Webb



The group is made up of Zach and Savanna Wright, 14 and 11; Eden and Adrian Webb, 13 and 11; and guitar player Justin LeMaster, 18.

says. "If nothing else, this has probably been the best thing we've ever done for her. She enjoys being onstage as much, or more, than Eden now."

So far, it has been fun, says the band's upright bass player, Savanna Wright.

Playing bluegrass wasn't always in the plan, however, Cassandra Webb says.

At first, her girls started out as classical violinists, until their interest waned. It was only when their father, whose family had a long heritage of playing bluegrass, stepped

in that the girls took up bluegrass.

"He said, 'Well, before you give up the violin completely, let's try to find something you do like,'" Cassandra Webb recalls.

The girls took to the music quickly, with Adrian on fiddle and Eden on mandolin.

BUILDING A BAND

During a school concert, they joined up with Zach on banjo and Savanna playing the upright bass. They brought in LeMaster, an accomplished guitarist from nearby Fort Gay, West Virginia, after picking a few tunes with him.

"Bluegrass just runs deep in these woods," says Michelle Wright, mother of Zach and Savanna.

Wright says neither she nor her husband ever played music, but her kids grew up listening to Ricky Skaggs, who was born in nearby Cordell, Kentucky.

Zach, who usually ends up speaking for the band during their performances, says the only thing that could get him to stop crying during car rides as a baby was the sound of Skaggs' music.

"I guess there was just something about it that made me OK," he says. ☺



First Time Around, regular kids steeped in the history and art of bluegrass.

Cyndi Spivey

GRACE + BEAUTY

A Q&A with Cyndi Spivey, a blogger from Kentucky who inspires women over 40 to look and feel their best. Topics include makeup, skin care, fashion, faith and more.

Check out her blog
CYNDISPIVEY.COM



Q: What will readers find at your blog?

Cyndi Spivey: I share wearable fashions for women over 40, taking current trends and showing them how to wear them in everyday life. I also share makeup tips and encourage women to live a more healthful lifestyle. Most importantly, I share my journey with Christ and encourage women to know that true beauty begins on the inside.

Q: Why did you become a blogger and how has it changed your life?

CS: I was introduced to blogging in 2009 by my mom. She started following a few blogs and then encouraged me to start my own blog. My mom passed away in September 2009, and my blog is dedicated to her. I was a dental hygienist by profession but quit at the beginning of this year to become a full-time blogger. I love that I can make money doing something I'm passionate about.

Q: Now that you're in your 40s, how has your style evolved since you were in your 20s, from your clothes to your makeup and hair?

CS: I'm a product of the '80s, so as you can imagine, my style has changed a lot. I think I've evolved because I have learned what clothes look best on my body type. I take better care of my skin and try to

use chemical-free makeup and skin-care products. And my hair is definitely not as big as it was when I was in my 20s.

Q: What is the biggest mistake women make with their makeup as they age?

CS: As we age, our makeup needs to change, too. Some women wear the same makeup they did in their 20s! As we age, we should stay away from anything that shimmers — it will show your fine lines, and dark lipstick — it ages you. Also, make sure you fill in your eyebrows. I use a dark brown eye shadow to help make them look more natural.

Q: Is there a certain age where women should transition into more "mature" clothing, or is a "you're-only-as-young-as-you-feel" philosophy OK?

CS: I wouldn't call it mature clothing, but I do think it's important as we age to have a good basic wardrobe that is classic and timeless. These are clothes that I will spend a little more money on: a good-fitting pair of jeans, a classic pump, a blazer and a white-collared blouse, just to name a few.

Q: Your blog is all about feeling good inside and out. Can a positive outlook on life make us look better?

CS: Absolutely. A positive outlook can

help us feel better, but for me, it's more than a positive outlook. Inner beauty begins with my relationship with Christ. I have more than a positive outlook; I have hope in Jesus Christ. ☺

OTHER FASHION BLOGS YOU MIGHT LIKE:

► WWW.LIFEWITHEMILYBLOG.COM

This blog will give you ideas on how to put together great outfits, even on a budget. The Greensboro, North Carolina, blogger also writes about do-it-yourself projects, including turning last year's clothes into this year's fashions.

► WWW.GLITTERANDGINGHAM.COM

Here you'll find a blogger from Lexington, Kentucky, who makes her way through life one outfit at a time — and she loves to accessorize them. Her endless ideas will make you sparkle.



Using the phone to **market your business**

BY RIEVA LESONSKY

With more and more customers contacting companies online, it may seem as if your business phone no longer matters. But if you aren't taking advantage of the many ways your company's phone can be used as a marketing tool, you're selling your business short. Try these tips for using your phone to market your business.

► GET A TOLL-FREE PHONE NUMBER

No one wants to spend money calling a business. If you serve customers outside your local area code, a toll-free number makes them more likely to call you. Toll-free numbers also create the impression your business is professional and successful, even if you only own one location.

Obtaining a toll-free number that spells out a relevant word is less important than it used to be, but it still helps. Depending on your industry and brand, it can also inject humor and reflect personality — such as junk removal company 1-800-GOT-JUNK.

► USE ON-HOLD MESSAGING CREATIVELY

Don't let customers sit in silence when on hold. Create on-hold messaging that

educates customers about your business, products and services, as well as entertains them. Search online and you'll find many companies that can script, record and produce custom on-hold messages for your business, interspersed with a wide range of music.

Here are some ideas for what to include:

- Tips related to your business: A landscaping service could offer seasonal tips for garden care. For example: "Spring is here, so don't forget to aerate your lawn — or have Spring Green do it for you!"
- Information about new products or services: "Are you trying to save water? Spring Green now offers a full line of water-wise plants, plus xeriscape design services."
- Answers to frequently asked questions: For example, if prospects frequently call you for price quotes, offer general information, such as, "Our weekly lawn-care service starts as low as \$79 a month."
- Special offers, sales or events: "Our yearly Annuals Extravaganza is here! During the month of April, save 25 percent off all annuals."

- Interesting, funny or surprising facts: "Did you know the world's biggest dandelion grew 14 feet high? Keep your weeds under control with our weekly service."
- And always include a call-to-action. "Ask about our..." or "Make an appointment to..."

Don't overwhelm customers with too much information. Think in terms of quick "sound bites." Record a three- to six-minute on-hold message loop, long enough that customers don't end up hearing the same thing over and over.

Keep your brand in mind. The music, tone of voice and information used in your on-hold messaging should reinforce your business brand, as well as appeal to your target customers. For instance, a child-care center might record its message with a warm, soothing motherly voice and play children's music.

Use these tactics to transform your business phone from a ho-hum necessity into a marketing powerhouse. 📞

Rieva Lesonsky is CEO and President of GrowBiz. This article first appeared on SBA.gov. Used by permission.

THE DAWKINS LINE RAIL TRAIL

By NOBLE SPRAYBERRY



*Building a future for
towns like Royalton*

Andrea Ferguson (left)
and Amy Lemaster on an
afternoon run along the
Dawkins Line Rail Trail.

Three bicycle riders stopped to catch their breath at the tall mouth of a tunnel after a ride up a long, gentle slope of the Dawkins Line Rail Trail.

They laughed and cracked jokes before rolling away on the groomed gravel path toward Royalton, a small community recently named Kentucky's 10th Trail Town.

The men from Edmonton, Kentucky, a four-hour drive from the trail, stopped at one of two small stores. Then, they realized they each had forgotten to pack an essential — cash. And they were hungry.

Fortunately, they bumped into Victoria Doucette, a retired social worker and Royalton native. In fact, she was part of the team that helped the community earn the trail town designation.

She loaned the bikers \$20 and traded contact information before the trio again hit the trail. They also mailed a check to pay her back. "Well, they'll remember that," Doucette says, smiling about the new fans of the trail and community.

And that's one of the goals behind the trail — bring tourists to rural communities such as Royalton. But there's more. The trail is already a favorite of local residents, who bike, walk, jog and ride horses along the path.

"I think everyone in Royalton is open to the trail, and they know the trail and tourism are part of their future," says Doucette, who believes residents of the community will set the tone necessary for success. "If a visitor is welcomed and offered friendship, they'll get a good feeling about the area. And they'll come back."

THE LONGEST TRAIL

In a region where the economy grew up around coal, the Dawkins Line was constructed to take advantage of another natural resource — timber. The line was named after the Dawkins Lumber Company, which contracted to build the line in 1912. While the company did not survive the stock market crash of 1929, the line remained in use for many years.

When completed, the 36-mile path will become the state's longest rails-to-trails

project. It will pass through Johnson, Magoffin and Breathitt counties.

An 18-mile portion of the trail opened to hikers, cyclists and horseback riders in 2013, and work is underway on the remaining half. Construction of the final leg of the trail will take the route to Evanston, and it will go through the 1,500-foot Carver Tunnel, which is the second-longest tunnel of its kind in the Southeast. The goal is to complete the work by March.

"The Dawkins Line is becoming one of the true gems of adventure tourism in Eastern Kentucky," says Jane Beshear, Kentucky's first lady, who has supported the trail and similar efforts.

BEAUTY, HISTORY AND SAFETY

Kentucky State Parks Ranger Jim Burke grew up near the trail. "I remember, as a kid, walking the tracks and going fishing," he says.

Now, he patrols the trail, builds relationships with its neighbors and greets those who use the track throughout the year. "This is my office every day," he says, standing on the hard-packed gravel trail. "You can't beat it."

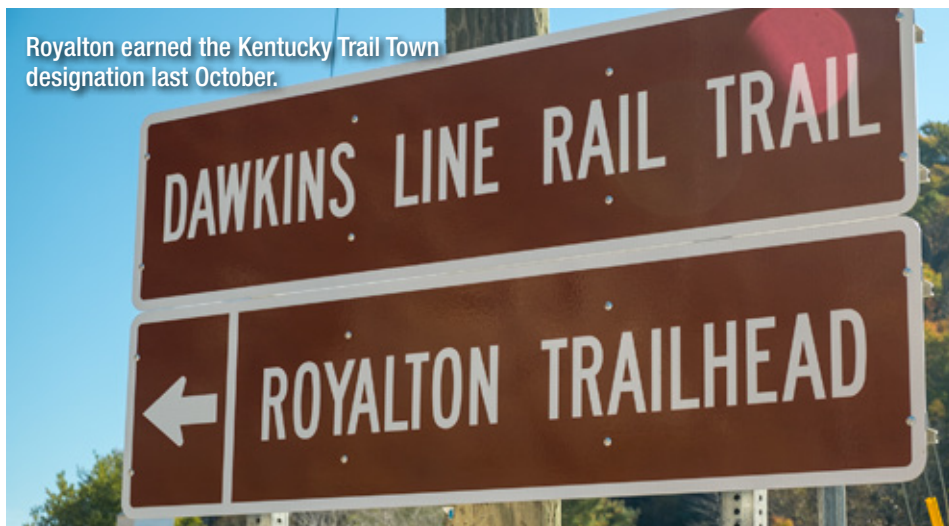
Maintaining a park service presence is important, because it creates a sense of security, Burke says. And the service maintains the trail, whose hard-packed gravel surface is frequently groomed. "What's nice is that you don't need a \$500 mountain bike to use the trail," he says.

The goal is a scenic, safe destination, one that has already been used for special events, such as footraces and a parade of horse-drawn buggies. And while bicycles and horses are welcome, motor vehicles are not. A series of metal gates block access to cars and trucks.

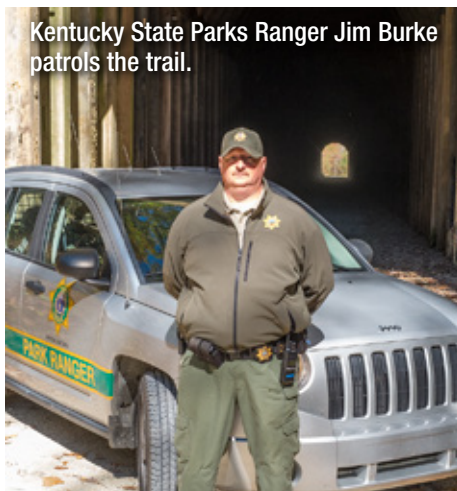
Burke says the efforts to promote the trail have proven successful, and it's well used no matter the season. "From what I've seen, the number of people on the trail doesn't change from summer to winter," he says. "People who are really into something like biking will get their exercise no matter what time of year it is."

In fact, Burke's father, Bill, is a fan. "He's 80 years old, and he walks on the

Royalton earned the Kentucky Trail Town designation last October.



Kentucky State Parks Ranger Jim Burke patrols the trail.



trail for 4 miles every day," Burke says. "He loves it."

Similarly, members of Friends of Dawkins Line Rail Trail have embraced the trail. "It has a huge importance," says Valerie Patrick, the group's president. "In time, I think it will mean economic growth for our area, and we hope entrepreneurs will pop up along the trail and bring services to our visitors."

The group's 30 members volunteer during special events, and they work with local schools and businesses to promote the trail. "We're brainstorming right now about how we can reach the young folks and get them interested," she says.

TRAIL TOWN

An unincorporated town off Route 7 east of Salyersville, Royalton earned the designation of Kentucky Trail Town in October. The program is designed as a

catalyst to help towns develop as tourist destinations, growing jobs and opportunities. Royalton joins places such as London, Stearns and Elkhorn City.

"I'm especially proud of Royalton becoming a Trail Town since it played such an important role in the development of the Dawkins Line," Governor Steve Beshear says. "This is a big step for this community and this area as they work to attract tourists."

The nonprofit Royalton Trail Town Inc. was created to guide the effort. Doucette is the board's president. The designation gives the community a vital advantage. "As a trail town, you get a lot of free advertising through the state of Kentucky's tourism website," Doucette says. "As soon as someone goes on a computer and searches for trail town, it will pop up."

If travelers learn of the trail and visit, the results can benefit the entire community, Doucette says. "This is the future of Royalton because there are no jobs now," she says. "The trail can help bring the community to life."

She's already seen how small success can make a difference. Mark Linkous, one of the three biker riders she helped buy lunch after they forgot their wallets, returned to the trail.

"He was in Campton for a funeral, and that's 45 minutes from Royalton," Doucette says. "But, he came back to the trail because he wanted to show it to his friends." 📍

CHILI WEATHER

To stare into the depths of a bowl of chili, with its heady currents of beef, onions, tomatoes and spices, is to understand a certain truth: Chili demands passion.

And it's with this force that Kentucky native David Bradley, a corrections unit administrator at Eastern Kentucky Correctional Complex in West Liberty, Kentucky, and "a foodie by nature," creates his chili.

"I first remember making chili with my mom when I was around 12 years old," he says. "It was good, but she would serve it over pasta. I didn't like it that way, so she would always reserve a regular large bowl for me."

His mother's love of chili stirred Bradley's interest in making his own, so he began experimenting, using tips and techniques he'd seen on cooking shows, in cookbooks, and — like any good cook — by trial and error. A pinch of this and a dash of that, tasting, testing and tasting again until it was just right. Then, with a shot of confidence, he entered it in a chili cook-off, an event to benefit a local cancer patient.

Even though he knew his chili was good, his win as the "Crowd Favorite" came as a surprise, he says.

His chili goes beyond the typical ground beef mixture

with the addition of ground pork and bacon.

"That definitely gives the chili more flavor," he says. "Not many chili recipes have pork in them."

And here are a couple other secrets to round out the winning mix:

- **Beer:** Not just any brew. Use a hearty ale to give your chili a noted depth of flavor. If all you have on hand is Bud Light, you might as well use water. "If I don't have any beer on hand, I use chicken stock as a substitute," Bradley says. If you're worried about the alcohol, don't be. It burns off as the chili simmers.

- **Sugar:** Sugar tones down the acidity of the tomatoes and rounds out the flavors very nicely without reducing the savory taste.

Chili aficionados are quite opinionated about their preferences when it comes to this all-American meal.

In Texas, you'll most likely find it made with chopped beef rather than ground. And of course, no beans. Up Ohio way, you'll find it served over pasta. In the South, it's oftentimes served over rice and most always has beans.

Hearty chili helps David Bradley get through the cold Kentucky winters.



Bradley's wife and daughter prefer their chili over pasta. And beans? Bradley says he can take them or leave them, but, he says, they do help add protein and help to make the dish more filling.

Americans are in agreement when defining the American classic, though. When the cold creeps into your bones,

nothing warms you better than a steaming bowl of chili.

"Chili is great comfort food," Bradley notes. "It contains all the wonderful components that people love about food — the heartiness of beef, the taste of various vegetables and warm, aromatic seasonings that just make you feel good." 🍲



Food Editor **Anne P. Braly** is a native of Chattanooga, Tennessee. Prior to pursuing a freelance career, she spent 21 years as food editor and feature writer at a regional newspaper.

DAVID'S BEST WINNING CHILI

- 5 to 6 slices of thick-cut bacon, cut into 1/2-inch pieces
- 2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 2 medium onions, finely chopped
- 1 dried red chili pepper, finely chopped, optional
- 1 red bell pepper, chopped
- 1 green bell pepper, chopped
- 3 tablespoons chili powder (preferably New Mexico Chili Powder from Williams-Sonoma)
- 1 tablespoon ground cumin
- 2 teaspoons dried oregano
- 1 tablespoon smoked paprika
- Salt and pepper
- 1 pound 85 percent lean ground beef
- 1 pound ground pork
- 1 cup beer or chicken stock
- 2 (15-ounce) cans kidney beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 (24-ounce) can crushed tomatoes
- 1 (24-ounce) can diced tomatoes, with juice
- 1/3 cup sugar

In a large pot, fry the bacon over medium heat until slightly crispy and browned, then add the garlic, onions, dried red chili pepper (optional), bell peppers, chili powder, cumin, oregano and smoked paprika; season with 1 teaspoon of salt and ½ teaspoon of pepper. Cook until the vegetables are tender and seasonings are aromatic. Next, add the beef and break it up with a wooden spoon. Allow beef to start browning, then add the pork. Add 2 teaspoons of salt and 1 teaspoon of pepper to the meat mixture. Break up the pork and brown, making sure the entire meat mixture is no longer pink. Once the meat is browned, stir in the beer and beans. Mix together thoroughly to combine, then add the crushed tomatoes, diced tomatoes and sugar. The sugar will round out the flavor and cut down the acidity of the tomatoes. Turn the heat down to low and simmer for 1 1/2 to 2 hours. Taste for seasoning; add salt



A great chili can be enhanced by crackers, onions, cheese, corn chips or sour cream.

and pepper, if necessary. Makes about 6 servings. Refrigerate any leftovers. Tastes even better when reheated the next day.

DAVID'S QUICK AND EASY CHILI

This is David's mom's recipe — the one that got him started.

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 medium onion, finely chopped
- 1 green pepper, chopped
- 1 pound ground beef
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 2 tablespoons chili powder
- 1 jar of Ragu garden-style sauce

- 2 tablespoons sugar
- Tabasco sauce, to taste (optional)

In a deep skillet on medium heat, add olive oil, onions and peppers and cook until vegetables are translucent. Meanwhile, in another skillet on medium heat, add hamburger and brown. Salt and pepper hamburger to taste. Drain off excess grease. Add hamburger to onions and peppers and combine. Add chili powder and toss to combine with hamburger mixture. Add Ragu sauce, sugar and Tabasco sauce; stir to combine. Reduce to low heat and simmer for 15 minutes. Makes 4 servings. 🍲



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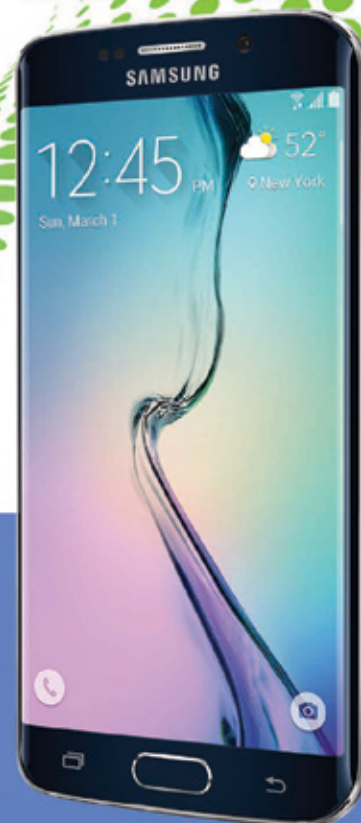
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