

The Foothills

MAY/JUNE 2017

CONNECTION

PRAYERFUL PURPOSE

Josh Ramey found a
future through faith

GONE FISHING

Local lakes have anglers
casting for the big one

KIMBER'S COUNTRY MARKET

A family keeps a friendly
store alive in Blaine



NTCA THE RURAL BROADBAND ASSOCIATION RURAL CONNECTIONS

BY SHIRLEY BLOOMFIELD, CEO
NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association

Taking the voice of rural America to Capitol Hill

Working in the nation's capital, sometimes it can feel as if people have forgotten how to work together toward a common goal. That is one reason I look forward to springtime, when NTCA hosts our annual Legislative and Policy Conference. Leaders from telcos just like yours, from all across the country, visit D.C. to meet with policymakers and to speak with one voice — yours.

As this year's conference began in late March, telco leaders gathered for a meeting with new FCC Chairman Ajit Pai. A product of rural America himself, Chairman Pai shared with us his ideas on ways to ensure that discussions among our elected officials about improving the nation's infrastructure also include the critical role of broadband.

Telco leaders came to Washington ready to share with lawmakers their stories, data, challenges, investment plans and economic opportunities for rural America that they are primed to kick-start. The energy and enthusiasm of this group was inspiring, as they went from meeting to meeting reminding policymakers about the importance of broadband for all Americans.

There are significant challenges when working to deliver broadband in rural areas, such as federal regulations and funding — not to mention the challenges inherent with building infrastructure to areas of low population density and rugged terrain. But you can be proud to know that your telco is part of a much larger family of service providers that is taking your message to lawmakers: that rural broadband is good for all of America.

Last year, U.S. consumers received about 2.4 billion robocalls monthly, according to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). The regulatory agency is proposing new rules that could bring relief to consumers weary of this annoying — and sometimes dangerous — practice.

The FCC is considering rules that would give telephone companies the authority to block spoofed robocalls — wherein callers fake their Caller ID information in order to hide their identity — when a subscriber requests that calls originating from that number be blocked. The proposed rules would allow providers to block spoofed robocalls when the spoofed Caller ID information cannot possibly be valid, including numbers that have not been assigned to anyone.

In its proposal, the FCC highlights the danger of robocalls by referencing IRS reports. “There have been over 10,000 victims of a scam in which callers pretend to be representing the IRS and claim the called party owes back taxes,” according to the FCC. Threatened with arrest or deportation, victims of these scams have collectively paid over \$54 million.

More recent reports tell the story of callers already having some personal information about a targeted consumer or business, then tricking them into saying “yes” to a seemingly harmless question in order to falsely authorize charges to their victims.

While the idea of blocking calls may seem like a good one on the surface, the FCC is quick to point out that a balanced approach must be taken. “It is also important for the Commission to protect the reliability of the nation's communications network and to protect consumers from provider-initiated blocking that harms, rather than helps, consumers,” according to the FCC's proposal. “The Commission therefore must balance competing policy considerations — some favoring blocking and others disfavoring blocking — to arrive at an effective solution that maximizes consumer protection and network reliability.”

These latest steps from the FCC continue efforts by industry, regulatory and consumer groups to put an end to robocall practices — and that is welcome news for the millions of Americans on the receiving end of those annoying calls. ☎

Build Broadband With Us!

As Washington focuses on improving our nation's critical infrastructure, broadband needs to be a key component of those plans. Why?



Rural broadband providers contribute billions of dollars to the U.S. economy and support billions of dollars in e-commerce.



The rural broadband industry supports nearly 70,000 jobs.

(From 2015 survey)



Members of NTCA–The Rural Broadband Association serve rural customers in 45 states, covering 37 percent of the nation's landmass.



Rural broadband providers collaborate with local leaders on broadband-enabled solutions.

TAKE ACTION!

- ▶ Sign up to be an advocate at www.buildbroadbandwithus.com.
- ▶ Follow and share at [www.twitter.com/NTCAconnect](https://twitter.com/NTCAconnect) and www.facebook.com/NTCARuralTelecom.
- ▶ Contact your U.S. elected officials and let them know that "I am served by a rural broadband provider, and I know firsthand the positive impact this vital service has on a community. Please include rural broadband in your plans as Washington focuses on building our nation's infrastructure." (For contact information for your U.S. senators and U.S. representative, visit www.usa.gov/elected-officials).

#BUILDBROADBANDWITHUS



Better care during a busy season

Summertime. It's the season for cookouts, vacations and long days of fun in the sun. Unfortunately, it's also the season for more scrapes, cuts, bites and falls. But Foothills Communications is providing the technology that may help take care of those "oops" moments.



RUTH CONLEY
Chief Executive Officer

In the summer, more of us go outside to work in the yard, play sports or explore the great outdoors. And whenever our activity levels increase, we are more likely to experience an accident that leaves us seeking medical attention.

Medical data shows that in the summer, we as Americans experience more falls, auto accidents, dog bites and injuries related to sports, water, bicycling and skateboarding. In fact, some hospitals even refer to summer as "trauma season."

At Foothills Communications, there are many reasons we've built a robust broadband network, but one of the most important reasons is to help doctors, nurses and other providers take better care of the people in our community.

Across the country, broadband is enabling rural doctors, small hospitals, rehabilitation therapists, pharmacists and regional specialists to connect with patients and with each other in ways that were impossible only a few years ago. From cloud-based appointment scheduling and medical record keeping to automated inventory tracking and ordering, there are dozens of ways providers are harnessing the power of broadband to provide their patients with better care.

Doctors can compare symptoms and diagnoses with colleagues around the country. X-ray images can be sent to specialists at major hospitals for analysis. Nurses can transmit prescriptions to pharmacists so that medicine is ready before a patient even arrives at the pharmacy. And everyone in the medical field has an unbelievable amount of training opportunities and research right at their fingertips.

This year, as there's more talk in Washington about investing in infrastructure, it's important to remember that infrastructure doesn't just mean roads and bridges. At Foothills Communications, we've invested millions of dollars in building the broadband infrastructure that connects the cornerstones of our community, including education, public safety, commerce and, of course, health care. With that in mind, we're happy to join telcos across the country in NTCA's campaign encouraging federal, state and local officials to "Build Broadband with Us." I hope you will review the information on Page 2 of this magazine to find out more about this campaign.

As your local broadband provider, we're proud of the strides our local health care providers are making in caring for their patients and proud of the role we play in helping them.

I hope everyone has a fun, safe, injury-free summer. But know that if you fall victim to trauma season, local health care providers are backed by a strong broadband network to help deliver the best possible care and get you back out there enjoying summer again. 📶

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CONNECTION

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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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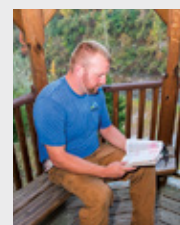
Foothills Mission Statement

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

Produced for Foothills Communications by:



On the Cover:



Foothills Communications installer Josh Ramey's religious faith deepened through the years and now provides his guiding light. See story Page 8.



Let's all celebrate Mother's Day with some special Foothills Communications features.

- **FREE HBO** — Channels 400-410 from May 13 to May 14.
- **FREE activation** on telephone calling features, as well as premium movie packages, from May 8 to May 14.

Have a great Mother's Day!



For fathers, Foothills Communications would like to celebrate your special day with some great features.

- **FREE Cinemax** — Channels 420-434 from June 17 to June 18.
- **FREE activation** on telephone calling features, as well as premium movie packages, from June 12 to June 18.

Enjoy Father's Day!

Memorial Day Holiday

The Foothills Communications office will close Monday, May 29 to observe Memorial Day.

Please enjoy **FREE Starz & Starz/Encore** from May 27 to May 29 on channels 470-492.



The Gift Basket Giveaway

Don't forget our extra-special Mother's Day and Father's Day drawings!

For a chance at a gift basket — one perfect for mom and another ideal for dad — visit the Foothills Communications Facebook page during the week of each holiday. To enter, all you need to do is like the page and write a post containing the "secret code" below.

Mother's Day Secret Code: Connect to Mom.

Father's Day Secret Code: Make the link to Dad.



COAST OF THE TOWN

Experts discuss their favorite thrill rides

The anticipation is heart-throbbing. There's nothing between you and the ground but a metal bar across your lap as the train of terror rises to the top of the first drop, the grinding and creaking of machinery heard above the screams. Higher and higher you go; your heart is pumping. Do you dare look down? Then, suddenly, you're in a free fall, jerking 'round and 'round, down and under, sometimes upside down. Before you know it, you've stabilized. Then in front of you is another mountain to climb, and in the distance you see rails that seemingly defy gravity. Are you ready to take the ride?

We asked four people — all of whom have nerves of steel and find death-defying coaster rides a pleasant way to spend the day — about their favorite roller coasters around the South.



**Kevin Lusk, 40,
Chattanooga, Tennessee**
Favorite coaster: Dollywood's
Wild Eagle

Like many, Lusk's passion for coaster-riding began as a child when his parents took him on trips to Walt Disney World. On off years, they'd visit parks closer to home, such as Atlanta's Six Flags, Opryland in Nashville (now closed) and Lake Winnepesaukah in North Georgia near Chattanooga. "Riding coasters gets in your blood, and you can't stop," he says.

His favorite coaster to date is Dollywood's Wild Eagle, a coaster that defies gravity and tradition by taking riders on a trip along the side of the tracks rather than in cars directly on them. The coaster is America's first wing coaster and is perched 21 stories above Dollywood. It takes riders on a unique experience, creating the sense of soaring high above the Smoky Mountains. "You truly do feel like an eagle flying," he



Dollywood's Wild Eagle

says, adding that his 8-year-old daughter, Aleah, rode it for the first time last year and now “wants to ride it again and again.” Like father like daughter. “It is without a doubt her favorite coaster, too,” Lusk adds.

Hometown favorite ride: Lake Winnepesaukah’s Cannonball

“It was built in the 1970s and was my first big coaster. It’s a big old wooden thing — an oldie but a goodie.”



Chuck Campbell, 56, Williamsburg, Virginia
Favorite coaster: **The Intimidator 305 at King’s Dominion**

A California native, Campbell frequented the many parks around the state and by the age of 12 was hooked on coasters, but he admits to being rather frightened of them at first. But the defining moment happened when he took his initial ride on an old wooden coaster, the Wild Mouse, along the boardwalk at Santa Cruz beach. “It featured a series of hairpin turns, and the cars were designed to lean over as you changed direction,” Campbell says. “Then, there was a ‘double down’ followed by a sharp hill and curve upward, which threatened to catapult riders into the Pacific. It was terrifying! But I decided that the boardwalk’s large wooden coaster, the Giant Dipper, couldn’t possibly be scarier, so I gave it a try. I’ve been riding coasters ever since.”

But it’s the Intimidator 305 at King’s Dominion in Virginia that he finds hard to beat when it comes to a coaster that will leave your stomach in your throat. “It’s hard to top that fast ride up the lift hill, followed by a 305-foot plunge into a huge banked curve,” he says. “Many riders, including me, experience what’s called a ‘gray out,’ in which the world becomes fuzzy around the edges for a few moments until the g-forces let up. The rest of the ride is a great mix of high-speed changes in direction that throw riders around like rag dolls.” Campbell ranks the Intimidator 305 among the top 10 worldwide.

Hometown favorite: The Griffon at Busch Gardens, Williamsburg, Virginia

“Griffon’s cars ‘hang’ over the edge

for a few seconds, giving riders a chance to reconsider their lives before the big plunge,” he says, adding that the ride gives you a great view of the James River if you can open your eyes long enough to see it.



Erik Johnson, 43, Gainesville, Florida
Favorite coaster: **Fury 325, Carowinds, Fort Mill, SC**

It wasn’t until his early 30s that Johnson developed his love for the big coasters. Until then, he stuck to the smaller ones. But with a bit of encouragement, plus researching at themeparkreview.com, a bible of sorts for coaster lovers, Johnson took the plunge and hopped on Kumba, a legendary coaster at Busch Gardens in Tampa, Florida. Since then, he’s ridden many of the nation’s biggest and has found Carowind’s Fury 325, the world’s tallest full-circuit coaster, to be his favorite. “It’s one of the best examples of what I would call a speed coaster,” he says. “Instead of having a lot of up and down airtime hills, Fury has more twists and turns to help the coaster maintain its speed.”

Kentucky Kingdom in Louisville has his runner-up pick. “Kentucky Kingdom really has become a great park since it reopened in 2014,” Johnson says. “As for the coasters, I really liked Lightning Run. While



The Intimidator 305 at King’s Dominion

medium-sized, it’s pretty wild and produces a lot of fun airtime moments. They’ve added Storm Chaser since I was last there, and I understand that one is quite good.”

Hometown favorite: Kumba

“After my first ride, I was hooked and embarked on my new hobby to travel all across North America to ride roller coasters,” Johnson says. “It was one of the coasters that really brought on a resurgence to roller-coaster building in the early 1990s.”



Michael Betzler, 51, Montville, New Jersey
Favorite coaster: **New Texas Giant, Six Flags Over Texas, Arlington, Texas**

Like many beginners, Betzler admits to being a little afraid of coasters in his youth. That all changed after watching a documentary on Pennsylvania’s Leap The Dips, the oldest of all coasters in the United States. His interest was piqued, and he joined roller coaster clubs, met other enthusiasts and embarked on a hobby that has taken him across 31 countries. He has visited 445 parks and, so far, has ridden 1,427 roller coasters. His adventures led to the creation of The Big Mike Road Show, an internet production all about his rides. His favorite is the New Texas Giant, an award-winning wooden behemoth that opened in 1990. It soon fell into disrepair, however, and closed. But the wooden frame remained, and the coaster was rebuilt and reopened better than before with a metal track covering the wood structure. “It’s fast and smooth and such a great ride,” Betzler says. “This was the first coaster of its kind — a hybrid coaster with metal on wood — and now there are many more like this around the world.”

Favorite hometown ride: Kingda Ka at Six Flags Great Adventure in Jackson, New Jersey

“It was once the fastest coaster in the world — now second — at 128 miles per hour in 3.5 seconds. And it’s still the world’s tallest at 456 feet high.”

FINDING PEACE IN FAITH

Assistant Pastor Josh Ramey follows his calling

BY LISA SAVAGE

Growing up, God wasn't a big presence in Josh Ramey's personal life.

But, as the now-31-year-old installer and repairman at Foothills Communications grew through the years, so did his need to embrace a much higher power.

"My parents hadn't been saved, but I had a couple of uncles who were preachers," Ramey says. "My uncles took me to church a few times when I was little, and I got to learn about Jesus. The older I got, the more it bothered me that God wasn't really part of my life."

Those times turned out to be key as Ramey's life unfolded.

A chance invitation to a revival led him to accept salvation on Dec. 6, 2006. Initially slow to accept the invite, Ramey showed up a couple of days late.

"The Lord was speaking through my heart, telling me I needed to do better — telling me I needed to live through him," Ramey remembers. "The preachers were preaching about heaven and hell, the two places that all the human race is going to. I was scared to death that I was going to die and go to hell, and I



Foothills Communications installer Josh Ramey is an assistant pastor at Cordell Free Will Baptist Church in Blaine. Below, he is pictured outside a historic church at the Mountain Homeplace.



didn't want to go there. So, I got saved, and I promised I'd follow him and what he'd have us do."

Two years later, in 2008, Ramey says he felt God call him to preach. But, as with many Christians, the path wasn't easy.

"Well, it scared me," he says. "So, I ran for six years.



I just ran. I didn't think I could do it."

He worried too much about his past mistakes and fears about helping others. He worried nobody would take him seriously. He worried about taking himself seriously. He had little faith that he could carry out the mission he'd been given.

"I was running," he says. "I wasn't doing what the Lord wanted me to do, and I was the most miserable person that there ever was."


He got to the point where he couldn't enjoy anything in life — not even the hunting and fishing that he'd always loved. He worked two jobs to keep occupied, always running, always avoiding.

"I went through all this misery," he says.

But all that changed in early 2015 when Ramey followed through on his calling. It was a scary proposition, he says now. But he knew he had to do it. Otherwise, he'd repeat the misery he'd felt over the past few years.

After confiding his dilemma to his pastor, Ramey has since become assistant pastor at Cordell Free Will Baptist Church in Blaine, in addition to his job at Foothills Communications.

"I put the Lord first, and now everything just falls in line," says Ramey, the married father of two girls. "I just want as many people as possible to go to heaven when this life is over.

"I love telling people about the Lord and what he has done for us because I want to see other people happy. If everybody in the world has the love of Christ in their heart, we'd have a lot better world today." 

Blaine's one-stop shop blends old and new



Kimber Skaggs, her husband, Brad, and his son, Bryce, are part of the team behind the Blaine store.

BY RACHEL BROWN KIRKLAND

If you want grass-fed beef burgers delivered to your table by a young girl wearing roller skates, Kimber's Country Market is the place to go.

It's also the place for groceries, firearms, Bob White syrup, hardware, plumbing supplies, tanning sessions and made-from-scratch pies. Pit bull "Bow" greets customers at the door, old-timers sit around talking and drinking coffee, and on a special night you can find someone celebrating a milestone birthday at the 18-seat diner. The one-stop shop is the only store in Blaine, Kentucky, which has a population of less than 100.

"It's a very tight-knit little community," says Kimber Skaggs, who owns and operates the store with her husband, Brad, and a dedicated crew of family members. "I'm very blessed that I get to do this work and try to help out the community."

Skaggs purchased the B&C

Market in June 2015 from mother-son business owners Ruby and Barry Ferguson, who had decided to retire. Before that, Skaggs worked at the Bank of Blaine, which has since closed. The bank building, market and a post office are almost all that remain of what was once a small but thriving town. The market is the closest thing to a full-scale grocery store or restaurant for nearly 20 miles.

After Skaggs bought the business, she added a diner that features a pizza bar, fountain drinks, deep-fried pickles, hot sandwiches, cold subs and a rotating daily special. Skaggs uses grass-fed beef on the menu.

Skaggs moved to Blaine from Texas when she was in the eighth grade. Her husband, who grew up in Blaine and previously worked as a pipefitter and welder, says the summer months bring an abundant supply of fresh produce into the market. Besides local sales,

Kimber's takes orders from all over the United States for Bob White table syrup.

Donna Dixon helps her daughter with whatever is needed at the store, but her specialty is baking coconut, chocolate, butterscotch, apple, pecan and other flavors of mouth-watering pastries. "In one week, we had some missionaries come in from Alabama, and I made 64 pies," Dixon says.

Skaggs and her husband operate the market with the help of several other family

members, including their children: Bryson, 20; Will, 17; Brayley, 10; and Brooklyn, 8. Brooklyn learned to roller skate at the store and now enjoys delivering diner orders on wheels.

Skaggs is a hard worker, Dixon says, but don't mistake her for a stiff businesswoman. Many of her customers still come in to ask about Alvin, the pet squirrel Skaggs rescued out of a dog's mouth and carried to work with her until he grew up. 🐿️



The market's menu includes pizza, enjoyed by, from left, Donna Dixon, Tonya Ramey and Kimber Skaggs.

KIMBER'S COUNTRY MARKET in Blaine, Kentucky, is open six days a week from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., with slightly shorter hours on Sundays and in the winter.

A key question for modern parents

What age is appropriate for the first mobile phone?

As I was watching my son warm up with his teammates at a fourth-grade basketball tournament, one of the other parents leaned over and asked me at what age we planned on giving him a mobile phone.

My initial thought was, “I don’t know, a long time from now!” When I said I wasn’t sure, the parent informed me that they decided 12 was the magic age for their kids. As I thought about this, I couldn’t help but think that I was 18 and in college before I had my first mobile phone. Do 12-year-olds really have mobile phones? When I asked that very question, I quickly found out that several of the 10-year-olds currently playing basketball already had mobile phones.

Does a 10-year-old need a mobile phone? A 12-year-old? At what age is a phone necessary for our kids? Truthfully, I don’t know. Owning a mobile phone is a big responsibility.

You need to decide what age is right for your kids based on their maturity and need. If your child is responsible and involved in activities that frequently take them away from parents, such as sports, then maybe life would be easier for everyone if they had a phone. The decision shouldn’t be treated as simply giving them another toy or gadget, though. A



mobile phone provides a child access to the world, and they need to understand that it is a privilege, not a right. I believe it should be considered a rite of passage much like getting a driver’s license.

We have found a middle ground we can live with for now. We gave our son a GizmoPal when he was 8. The GizmoPal is a wearable mobile phone that can only send and receive calls from a few select

contacts that I designate. This allows my son to call me when he needs to, and I can reach him when he is away from me. This might be when he’s playing at the city park, when he might be getting home late from a ball game, or when he is in a crowded store. The GizmoPal doesn’t allow apps; it’s simply for calling or for the child’s caretaker to track them to a location. Through the GizmoPal app, I can see exactly where he is on a map on my smartphone.

Ultimately, as a parent, the choice is yours. What is right for your family may not be right for mine. I still haven’t decided a “magic” age for my sons. Only time will tell when I cave in to the pressure of a mobile phone. My hope is that I can delay that day as long as possible. I plan on sticking to the simple GizmoPal for my sons for the foreseeable future. ☎

ONLINE RESOURCES

For more information on this topic, go to www.common sense media.org and look under Parent Concerns. They have a whole section dedicated to cellphone parenting.



CARISSA SWENSON
IS A TRAINING
AND EDUCATION
CONSULTANT
FOR CONSORTIA
CONSULTING.

*Parenting
Tip*

If you think your child is old enough to need a cellphone, the **GizmoPal by LG** may be the place to start. Wearable as a watch, the phone allows your child to call parents and allows parents to see where they are. GizmoPals are available at Amazon, Verizon and Best Buy starting at \$75 plus subscription.

ALL GOOD IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Broadband access helps drive real estate value

According to the experts, June is the busiest month for moving in the United States. And whether people are buying, selling or looking for a new place to rent, broadband plays a role in where they decide to move — and how much they are willing to pay.



Access to a **24 Mbps CONNECTION** increases a home's value by

3.8%

over one where only dial-up is available.

Homes with **FIBER AVAILABILITY** have a transaction price that is about

1.3%

more than similar homes in neighborhoods where fiber is not available.

Access to a **GIGABIT CONNECTION** increases the sale price for homes by

7%

over homes with a top speed of less than 25 Mbps. That's an average difference of \$5,437, or about the same as adding a fireplace.

People who live in multifamily housing units, such as apartments and condos, say fast and reliable internet service is the **single most important amenity** — more important than cable TV, a pool, security and workout facilities.

For landlords, giving renters access to fiber broadband can **increase resident satisfaction** and reduce churn. In apartments and condos, renters frequently spread the word about better broadband access, bringing in more renters.

Fiber broadband increases condo purchase prices by

2.8%



Fiber broadband increases rental values by

8%

That's \$40 per month on a \$500 monthly rent payment.



51%

of homebuyers used the internet to find the house they purchased.



Hooking an ADVENTURE

Anglers find a challenge on area lakes



BY DREW WOOLLEY

Ryan Meeks still remembers the first time he went bass fishing with an artificial lure, mostly because it got him out of school. It was the end of his senior year of high school, and after some friends suggested spending the day out at Yatesville Lake, he decided anything was better than class.

Just a rookie at the time, Meeks had to rely on his friends to tie on his hook, set up the plastic lure, and teach him how to fish with it. But when all was said and done, he landed the day's biggest catch: a 4.5-pound bass.

At that point, most people would have

been hooked on fishing. But not Meeks.

"I didn't fish for years after that, but that was the biggest bass I ever caught," he says. "Now I realize how big of a fish that was for this area. It was a trophy really."

Now a lineman for Foothills Communications, Meeks, 29, has rediscovered his passion for fishing, and he enjoys learning new things from those around him. About three years ago, he decided it was time to up his game, so he joined the East Kentucky Bass Club, which holds competitions for members every two weeks.

"Bass fishermen are not known for giving out information, but there's a great camaraderie among the guys I fish with," he says. "They've taught me to pay attention to the water's depth and to look at the structures a lake has that might attract fish, like rock, grass or wood."

With that new knowledge, Paintsville Lake has become Meeks' favorite spot to fish, even though its depth and

crystal-clear water make it one of the most difficult lakes in the area. And for all he's learned, his go-to lure is still a simple jig.

"There's always a new technique that someone figures will hook them the best," he says. "But the old tried-and-true ways are tried and true for a reason."

CASTING FOR THRILLS

Unlike his co-worker, Foothills technician Clayton Brown, 37, caught the tournament fishing bug at a young age. He recalls fishing with his father at 6 years old, and he found that he enjoyed the experience more each time.

"I was just into competitive fishing more than sports growing up," he says. "The longer I fish, the more I realize it's not just luck. I do a lot of studying on what kind of bait fish eat at different times of the year."

But when the studying is done, it's the excitement of fishing that Brown craves. His most unforgettable trip was an



Foothills Communications coworkers Ryan Meeks, left, and Clayton Brown enjoy their favorite pastime.

INSET: Meeks lands a fish at a favorite spot: Paintsville Lake.



action-packed few days on Lake St. Clair in Michigan in April 2016, during which he and his friends caught more than 100 smallmouth bass, ranging from 2 to 4.5 pounds. Even on a normal day, he enjoys the drama of a good topwater lure.

“I love seeing the explosion when they strike on top of the water; it’s just much more exciting,” he says. “Topwater lures seem to catch several big fish, too. That’s a good technique during the spring.”

While Brown isn’t a member of a paid club, he does meet with a group of fishermen who ante up \$20 a boat for weekly tournaments on Thursday nights. For aspiring fishermen interested in tournaments, he suggests finding a favorite lake and keeping an eye out for friendly competition.

“You can guarantee that almost every Friday night there will be a tournament on one of the lakes around here,” he says. “Just look for a group of guys on the dock, and they’ll usually put you right in.”

HOOK, LINE AND SINKER

Meeks and Brown often cross paths in some of the same tournaments. With his more extensive experience, Brown has the edge for now, estimating that he won about six tournaments last year.

But as Meeks continues to learn, he’s setting his sights on bigger competitions, such as the local Casting for Kids Tournament and the Yatesville stop on the Trail of Dreams Tournament Series, which pro anglers Whitney Stephens and Jacob Wheeler won last year.

In fact, just this February, Meeks and a friend teamed up to win their first tournament with the East Kentucky Bass Club, proving to themselves once and for all that they can compete with the best fishermen in the area.

“We always thought we could do it, but that win just meant the world to us,” he says. 🗨️

Go fish

Even if you’re an avid angler, there are always some new tricks to learn. Ryan Meeks and Clayton Brown shared their advice for aspiring fishermen of all skill levels.

» **JOIN THE CLUB:** For new anglers or anyone wanting to learn how to improve their catch, Meeks suggests finding a club and asking every question possible. “As many people who will let you ride in their boat with them, do it,” he says.

» **TIMING IS EVERYTHING:** Some people think fishing is all about the luck of casting a line and hoping the big one bites, but Meeks recommends learning something about the fish you’re after. If you’re hoping to catch a trophy-sized bass, the best time to be on the lake is before they spawn. Once they start making their beds, it will be much tougher to hook an impressive catch.

» **BAIT WISELY:** One of the most important skills a more experienced fisherman can have is careful observation of his surroundings. Taking note of the color of the water, what type of shad the lake has, and how big the shad are can all influence how to bait your hook, Brown says. If the water is murky and the fish are moving slow, use a more visible chartreuse lure and a jig or some kind of creature bait. If the water is clear, moving fast with something like a spinnerbait can make it more likely that a fish will mistake your lure for a quick shad.

» **TRUST YOUR GUT:** Once you’ve accrued some experience on the water, it can be helpful to draw on the instincts you’ve developed. “Sometimes I’ll remember catching a fish a certain way in a certain place,” says Brown. “And once you learn the lakes, you know what lures work best in certain areas.”



History, fine dining and ... SPOONBREAD

Spoonbread is served with every meal at Boone Tavern Restaurant in Berea, Kentucky.

The tavern is known throughout the country, and the world, for many things. Its history goes back more than 100 years to when it opened as a guesthouse for Berea College. And it has built a reputation for award-winning accommodations and customer service.

The inn, one of just a handful of Kentucky hotels to receive the LEED green building certification, has hosted many dignitaries, including the Dalai Lama, President Calvin Coolidge, First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, Archbishop Desmond Tutu and auto magnate Henry Ford.

But sometimes it's the simplest of things that builds a reputation, and in the case of Boone Tavern's restaurant, it's the spoonbread.

"The fascination of it brings people here," says Executive Chef David Poulton.

Some say spoonbread was born of a mistake. Maybe the first cook added one egg too many and it turned into a soufflé rather than the intended cornbread. That's the most likely scenario. But for sure, this culinary gaffe turned into a mainstay of many Appalachian meals in the late 1800s. Its light, airy texture made for a more elegant presentation than cornbread. Also, since cornmeal was readily available in the South, spoonbread became more common than yeast breads.

Now it's not so common, but still, some people come to the restaurant, located inside the inn on Berea's campus, just to get the spoonbread, says Bruce Alcorn, a Berea native who has been in charge of spoonbread production for more than 40 years.

The recipe has been the same since

innkeeper Richard Hougen first developed and served it to guests in the 1940s, and Alcorn has the recipe imprinted in his mind. The trick to a successful batch, he says, starts at the beginning — allowing the milk to scald without coming to a full boil.

"You can mess it up if you don't do that," he says.

Alcorn estimates he makes 24 to 28 pans — eight servings per pan — of spoonbread daily, sometimes more, sometimes less depending on the time of year.

Any cornmeal will work, but in keeping with the restaurant's farm-to-table mission, the cornmeal used at Boone Tavern Restaurant comes from the Berea College farm store whenever possible, Poulton says.

Other products gleaned from the store include beef, pork, bacon, oatmeal and other processed foods. Fresh vegetables are used from the college's farm whenever they are in season. The majority of food products that cannot be obtained from the college farm and store are from farmers and other members of Kentucky Proud, a program established by the Department of Agriculture in the Bluegrass State.

The spoonbread recipe has remained the same through the years, but there have been a few incarnations that the restaurant experimented with before Poulton came on board more than two years ago.

"I've been told that we once served it with three different butters — plain, apple butter and cinnamon butter. And once we made chocolate spoonbread for a dessert. I heard that didn't go over real well," Poulton says.

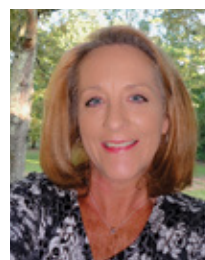
Now the spoonbread is back to its origins, served warm with plain butter — honey if you ask — with every lunch and dinner entree. The options include



David Poulton is executive chef at Boone Tavern, where a farm-to-table mission — and its famous spoonbread — keeps patrons coming back to the historic restaurant.

favorites such as "Pork Chops the Tricky Way" (pork loins breaded with tomato and Parmesan) served with cheese grits, braised greens and mustard cream, as well as lamb meatloaf served with mashed butternut squash, local wild mushrooms, balsamic glaze and cucumber yogurt sauce. Both dishes have roots in Appalachia, but you'll find them on the menu alongside seared scallops with asparagus and ricotta ravioli or a dish with an Asian influence — tempura salmon with papaya honey glaze and a wasabi drizzle.

For those unable to make the trip to Berea to sample the dishes — and the spoonbread — Poulton is happy to share some of the inn's recipes. 📖



FOOD EDITOR
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Boone Tavern's Spoonbread

- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter
(1 tablespoon softened, 3
tablespoons melted)
- 3 cups milk
- 1 1/4 cups white cornmeal (preferably
stone ground)
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon fine salt
- 2 eggs, well beaten

Grease a 9-inch round cake pan with some of the softened butter. Cut out a parchment paper circle to fit inside the pan, nestle it into the bottom, and grease the paper with the remaining softened butter. Set the prepared pan aside. In a 2-quart saucepan, scald milk (do not allow to fully boil), whisking occasionally, over high heat. While whisking, pour in cornmeal in a steady stream. Whisk vigorously to incorporate the cornmeal, about 1 minute. Remove pan from heat and set aside to let the cornmeal mixture cool to room temperature. Heat oven to 350 degrees. Transfer the cornmeal mixture to the bowl of a standing mixer fitted with paddle attachment. Add the remaining butter, baking powder, salt and eggs and mix on medium speed until the mixture is uniform and aerated, about 15 minutes. Pour batter into the prepared pan and bake until golden brown and puffy and a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean, about 1 hour and 20 minutes. Serve immediately with butter.

Lamb Meatloaf

Meatloaf:

- 1 medium onion (finely diced)
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 pounds ground lamb
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1/2 teaspoon curry powder
- 3 tablespoons dried oregano leaf
- 1 1/2 teaspoons kosher salt
- 2 eggs



Mashed butternut squash:

- 2 cups cubed butternut squash
(peeled and seeded)
- 2 cups cubed baking potatoes
(peeled)
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1/2 cup warm milk
- Salt and pepper, to taste

Cucumber sauce:

- 8 ounces plain Greek yogurt
- 1/2 cup grated seedless cucumber
- 1/4 teaspoon onion powder
- Salt and pepper, to taste

Balsamic-glazed mushrooms:

- 2 cups mushrooms (rough
chopped)
- 1 (8-ounce) can beef gravy
- 2 tablespoons balsamic glaze
- Olive oil

For meatloaf: Sauté onion in olive oil until translucent. Add all dry ingredients and simmer 2 minutes. Let cool.

Combine mixture with ground lamb and eggs. Mix thoroughly. Form loaf on baking pan or other cooking vessel. Cook at 350 degrees until internal temperature of 155 F degrees. Let rest before serving.

For mashed squash: Boil squash and potatoes until soft. Drain. Combine with butter and milk. Mix thoroughly. Season to taste.

For cucumber sauce: Mix all ingredients together. Chill for one hour.

For mushrooms: Sauté mushrooms until soft. Add gravy and glaze. Simmer 5 minutes.

To Serve: Place mound of mashed squash on plate and top with a slice or two of lamb meatloaf. Top with a spoonful of balsamic-glazed mushrooms. Serve cucumber sauce on the side. Makes about 6 servings. 🍽️



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