

The Foothills

JULY/AUGUST 2017

CONNECTION



A man and a woman are standing in a barn. The man is wearing a blue button-down shirt, jeans, and a black baseball cap. The woman is wearing a light-colored, patterned top. They are both smiling. In the background, there are horse stalls and a horse is visible in one of the stalls.

A SIZZLING BUSINESS

Cattle production
brings farming
dream to life

GET CREATIVE AND WIN

Kids, enter Foothills'
summer essay contest

WHAT-A-MELON!

Watermelon Festival brings
summertime treats



BY SHIRLEY BLOOMFIELD, CEO
NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association

Lessons from our Founding Fathers

As we celebrate Independence Day, I reflect on the patriots who helped start America. We are indebted to these Founding Fathers who fought for and forged the beginnings of our nation.

I was fortunate to have two experiences this spring that put the Founding Fathers on my mind early this year — and reminded me of the important work NTCA does to represent our member telcos and the people they serve.

The first lesson came in April when I attended a seminar at the Washington Library in Mount Vernon. We can learn many things from our first president, but what struck me is how Washington made so many decisions with people's long-term interests in mind. He knew that the choices he made would have implications for decades, and he wisely considered their impact.

The second lesson came in May when I was able to attend the musical "Hamilton." The show tells the story of our first secretary of the treasury, Alexander Hamilton. One of the songs in "Hamilton," "In The Room Where It Happens," discusses the importance of being at the table when decisions are made.

The lessons from these Founding Fathers reminded me of the duty we have at NTCA to represent rural America. We deal with policy matters that have long-lasting implications for millions of Americans, and we have to make sure policymakers keep that in mind. In order to do that, it's important for NTCA to represent you and your telco in the rooms where decisions are made. ☑



Don't let your business get held hostage

Imagine arriving at work one morning to find everything on your computer locked, accompanied by a message that if you want to regain access, you'll have to pay money to the people who locked it.

This is what happens when a computer is infected with a type of virus called ransomware, and in recent months, computer systems across the globe have been taken hostage.

The virus known as WannaCry or WannaCrypt gains access to computers using a security hole in Windows' server software. Small businesses are especially vulnerable to these attacks because they often can't dedicate as many resources to cybersecurity as larger companies.

Fortunately, the Federal Trade Commission recommends an easy way to protect your business from this threat: Make sure your system software is up to date.

Like any real-world thieves, hackers are always looking to exploit holes in a system's security, while software companies race to find and close them first. Many computers download and install these security updates automatically; however, if your business uses an older, unsupported version of Windows, you may need to visit Microsoft's website to download the latest update.

The Commission also suggests protecting against ransomware attacks by backing up important files.

Businesses save many important documents on computers and mobile devices, from tax forms to planning documents. Get into the habit of backing up those files in the cloud or to a hard drive. Log out of the cloud when you're finished, and unplug any external hard drives afterward so that hackers cannot use ransomware to lock them.

Avoid unfamiliar links, attachments and apps as well. The most common source of ransomware is phishing emails. You should never click on a link, download an attachment or follow an ad from a source you don't know and trust.

Because small businesses are a vital part of the economy and are often targeted by scammers, the Commission has launched a website dedicated to helping those businesses protect themselves. For more information on defending against ransomware, data breaches and other cybersecurity threats, visit ftc.gov/SmallBusiness. ☑



Travel tips for the digital family

Vacations were not something we took when I was growing up. Between our family's tight budget and my dad's work schedule, it was just too hard to get away. Now as a working mom, I am trying to do my best to take my boys on at least one trip each summer. Some years, we are only able

to do short weekend trips, but I am trying to organize bigger vacations as my boys get older. Regardless of the types of trips we take, I want to make them as affordable and stress-free as possible. Here are some apps I use and activities I plan to help make each trip a success.

MY TRAVEL APPS

► **TripAdvisor:** This is a well-known and commonly used app to get reviews on hotels, tourist attractions, restaurants and more. I use this very frequently when traveling.

► **Yelp:** If you need a great local restaurant, try looking at Yelp. There you can read reviews from customers and find the best places to eat.

► **GasBuddy:** Find the cheapest gas near your location.

► **Waze:** Get crowdsourced travel information and directions. Be one of the first to know of traffic jams, accidents, road conditions or road construction. You can contribute to and access real-time information.

► **iExit:** Find out if the next interstate exit has helpful resources such as a gas station, a campground, a restaurant or a hotel.

family while traveling. It allows you to treasure hunt in a fun, affordable way. Geocaching uses GPS to find little hidden treasures all across the country. Many of these treasures are nothing more than a little metal container (often half the size of a finger or smaller) containing a rolled-up piece of paper that you can sign and date to show you found the item. Sometimes there are little treasure boxes where you can remove an item and replace it with something else. Download a GPS app and get out and explore. You can learn more by going to www.geocaching.com.

► **Digital Scrapbooking:** Any time you travel, have your kids contribute to the memories by letting them use a camera or video recorder. Sometimes the pictures they take and the videos they make are some of your most treasured. Then, take those videos and pictures and make a digital scrapbook or video using websites or apps such as Shutterfly or Animoto.

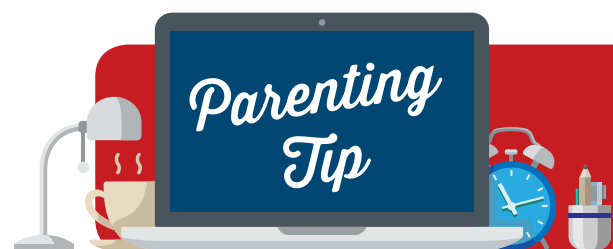
Whether you are planning a weekend camping trip or a two-week beach vacation, it helps to be prepared so everyone can have fun and enjoy the trip. Happy traveling! 📱



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

➡ **Also, don't forget to add to your vacation fun with activities or projects.**

► **Geocaching:** Geocaching is one of my favorite activities to do with my



A movie, audiobook or podcast can help time in the car pass quickly — for children or grown-ups. To save on mobile data, download these using your home Wi-Fi network before hitting the road.

United to improve infrastructure

In this day of harsh political divisions, few issues have widespread support in both parties. But one topic finds consensus on both sides of the aisle in Congress — and telcos like Foothills Communications play a major role in this discussion.



RUTH CONLEY
Chief Executive Officer

Investing in infrastructure, everything from roads and bridges to schools and waterlines, was a leading issue during the 2016 presidential campaign for many candidates. Putting money into infrastructure, it was argued, would not only improve assets such as airports, hospitals and tunnels, but would also create new jobs for Americans.

Since the election, this emphasis has continued, with both parties putting forth plans that would improve the systems that make our society work. Like most Americans, I agree that improving our infrastructure is important. I'm eager to see improved roads and upgraded transportation options. But Foothills Communications and our partners around the state and country want to make sure these plans include broadband for rural America.

In 2010, the FCC summed it up nicely when the commission released its National Broadband Plan. "Broadband is the great infrastructure challenge of the early 21st century," the FCC report states in its opening line. "Like electricity a century ago, broadband is a foundation for economic growth, job creation, global competitiveness and a better way of life. It is enabling entire new industries and unlocking vast new possibilities for existing ones. It is changing how we educate children, deliver health care, manage energy, ensure public safety, engage government, and access, organize and disseminate knowledge."

Improving broadband connectivity is a key to our nation's strength and security. While there are sure to be arguments over the amount of federal funding, how incentives are delivered, and which regulations may be relaxed, most experts believe we're in for a period of investment and building not seen in several decades.

As we celebrate Independence Day, Americans should be proud to see such a massive effort to rebuild and modernize the roads, water systems, power grids and communication networks that have made progress possible in our nation.

And as a customer of Foothills Communications, you can be proud to know that your telecommunications provider has a voice in shaping these national policies, thanks to our work with NTCA—The Rural Broadband Association. Some 850 telcos like ours across the nation are unified through NTCA in our efforts to make sure our story — your story — is heard by the policymakers who are shaping America's infrastructure decisions.

Shirley Bloomfield, the chief executive officer of NTCA, said it best: "Small, hometown broadband providers have led and are continuing to lead the way in deploying high-speed, sustainable broadband that responds to the needs of consumers and businesses in rural America." We face many challenges in continuing that good work, but we remain committed to keeping your needs at the forefront as elected officials make choices in the coming months about where to invest your tax dollars in order to improve America's infrastructure.

With so much attention from both political parties on investing in our communities, the time is right to share our story with all who will listen. Will you join us? Visit www.buildbroadbandwithus.com and sign up to become an advocate to help spread awareness of the critical need for rural broadband infrastructure.

It's a rare moment when there is consensus among our leaders. Help shape our tomorrow by joining the broadband movement today. [📧](#)

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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.

Foothills Communications
P.O. Box 240
1621 Kentucky Route 40 West
Staffordsville, KY 41256
www.foothills.net
606-297-3501

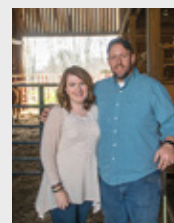
Foothills Mission Statement

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

Produced for Foothills Communications by:

WORDSOUTH
— A CONTENT MARKETING COMPANY —

On the Cover:



Raising cattle is a part of Kentucky's culture, and Tyler Ferguson and his wife, Andrea, are committed to the lifestyle. See story Page 8.

★★★ Happy Fourth of July ★★★

Enjoy **FREE ACTIVATION** on telephone calling features, as well as premium movie packages, from July 1-8.*

Enjoy **FREE PREMIUM MOVIES** Saturday, July 1, through Tuesday, July 4. To watch premium movies from **HBO, Cinemax, Showtime, STARZ and STARZ ENCORE**, tune to channels 400-492.*

**A set-top box is required for viewing. Parental controls are available.*



Congratulations!

Mike Wilks was the winner of the Foothills Mother's Day Facebook drawing. Wilks received a farmhouse bench with wicker storage containers, which he accepted with his mother, Virginia. Enjoy!

Better



LIFELINE

Affordable service
for income-eligible
consumers

You are eligible if you receive any of the following assistance programs:

- SNAP, formerly known as Food Stamps
- Medicaid
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Federal Public Housing Assistance (FPHA)
- Veterans Pension or Survivors Benefit
- Income at or below 135 percent of the federal poverty guidelines

Only one benefit per household.

Learn more about Lifeline at www.lifelinesupport.org.

Holiday office closing

The Foothills Communications office will close Tuesday, July 4, in observance of Independence Day.

Even 5 isn't too young to be a **NATIONAL PARK RANGER**

A long-running program offers adventure and education



A ranger leads a bird program at Congaree National Park in South Carolina.

Tired of the beach and had enough of movie theaters and playgrounds? This summer, get the kids off the couch and have them head in a new direction as Junior Rangers.

And they have fun.

Interested youth complete a series of activities during a park visit, share their answers with a park ranger, and receive an official Junior Ranger patch and certificate. Parks are open daily except on Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Day. Junior Ranger programs are free with park admission and offered all year.

Junior Rangers help preserve outdoor treasures as the National Park Service's representatives to their friends, families and schoolmates back home. They share their knowledge about parks and continue to use good environmental practices.

Junior Ranger programs are offered in national parks across the South. Here are a few favorites:

Little River Canyon National Preserve, Fort Payne, Alabama

Learn what it takes to keep Little River Canyon National Preserve in pristine condition, find out what can be discovered in the park, and discover how to do these activities safely. Those things and more fill an activity book for kids found in the park's visitors center.

Those who complete the book will take an oath and receive a badge and certificate before heading out to experience firsthand what they've learned while exploring the more than 15,000 acres of land atop Lookout Mountain.

The park is Alabama's only national preserve, home to several native endangered species, such as the green pitcher plant, Kral's water plantain and tiny blue shiner minnows. Take a dip in the Little River. Or pack a picnic and take a hike to Mushroom Rock, one of many natural sculptures forged by millions of years of water pouring through the canyon. There's much to see, do and learn in this wonderland of nature.

🌿 **Park admission:** Free (\$3 per vehicle to park in picnic area).

🌿 **Information:** 256-845-9605 or www.nps.gov/liri.

Abraham Lincoln Birthplace National Historical Park, Hodgenville, Kentucky

A lot of people don't realize our 16th president, Abraham Lincoln, wasn't born in Illinois, The Land of Lincoln.

"He was born in a little cabin at Sinking Spring Farm here in Kentucky," says Stacy Humphreys, chief of interpretations and resource management at the park. "The Junior Ranger program helps kids learn about the park and the formative years of Abraham Lincoln."

Kids will enjoy discovering facts about the man and his family by touring the cabin and museum. They can track their steps through an activity book. There are different books for different ages, and once a book is completed, a ranger will check answers and issue a badge and certificate to the park's newest Junior Ranger.

"It's a wonderful program, and we get excellent response from parents who come asking if we have a Junior Ranger program," Humphreys says. "I've had a lot of children come in with Junior Ranger badges from other parks sewn onto hats, shirts and vests. The program inspires kids to visit other national parks."

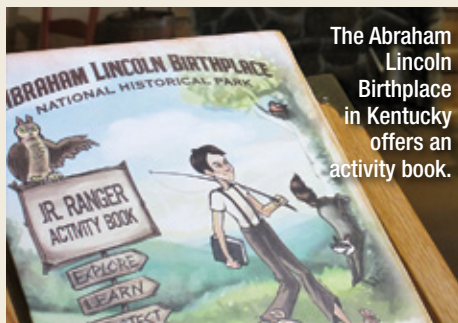
#Park admission: Free.

#Information: 270-358-3137 or www.nps.gov/abli.

Congaree National Park, Hopkins, South Carolina

Walking deep into a forest surrounded by giant oaks, loblolly pines and acres of massive cypress is all part of the Junior Ranger program at this park founded in 1976. Congaree National Park preserves the last big chunk of old-growth bottomland forest found in the United States.

"We have the tallest trees in the Eastern



United States," says Scott Teodorski, chief of interpretations. "If you want to see trees in their natural, old primeval state, this is the place to do it."

The park's Junior Ranger program is geared toward learning about these trees and the park's history, its plants and animals. Pick up an activity book at the visitors center and wander through the park with your children on a self-guided tour. If you don't have a lot of time, the book can be completed at the center.

"We work with the kids to make sure they get their badge or patch — it's their choice — and certificate," Teodorski adds. "And then they're sworn in. This is one of the most memorable things we do as park rangers. The program is one of the best things going for the national park system. It's a piece of our future."

#Park admission: Free (There are fees for camping in campgrounds).

#Information: 803-776-4396 or www.nps.gov/cong.

Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area, Oneida, Tennessee

The Junior Ranger program at Big South Fork takes kids on a ranger-led program around the park, followed by completion of an age-appropriate activity book. Once the work is finished, a ranger signs off, the book gets stamped and dated, and your child will be sworn in as an official Junior Ranger. But only after taking an oath:

"I (child's name) pledge to be a good Junior Ranger, to learn about Big South Fork National Recreation Area, and to protect the park from harm. I will help others have fun learning about the park and the Big South Fork River. I will do my part to follow rules of the park and always act in a safe manner."

The program, now in its fifth year, has become increasingly popular, says Chris Derman, chief of interpretations. "There are some kids who have a large collection of badges and want to add more," he says.

Big South Fork offers a wide range of recreational activities, including hiking, mountain biking, water sports and hunting. The park encompasses 125,000 acres, with sections in Tennessee and Kentucky. Youth can pick up Junior Ranger books at one of the visitors centers or download one at www.nps.gov/biso and complete it prior to a visit. Booklets are available in English and Spanish.

#Park admission: Free (There are fees for pool use and camping).

#Information: 423-569-9778 or www.nps.gov/biso.

Waco Mammoth National Monument, Waco, Texas

Young paleontologists will have fun becoming a Junior Ranger at Waco Mammoth National Monument. Go on a tour. Dig in a mock dig pit at the Excavation Station. Have a picnic. Participate in special programs and try the newest activity, "Bone-oculars," where you can decorate your own binoculars to take with you on the tour to see mammoth bones. It's all part of the park's Junior Ranger program and the only program in the national park system designed by a young person — an 11-year-old Girl Scout.

Just stop by the welcome center and ask for a free book or download it in advance on the park's website (www.nps.gov/waco). Each book contains activities that help kids learn about the park and the amazing fossil resources.

"Waco Junior Rangers become park stewards and proudly wear their ranger badges to show others that they are our best and brightest park representatives," says Raegan King, monument site manager.

#Park admission: \$5 (adults), \$4 (seniors 60-plus, teachers, military and students seventh grade-college), \$3 (pre-kindergarten-sixth grade), free (age 3 and under).

#Information: 254-750-7946 or www.nps.gov/waco.



RAISING BEEF

Locals with Foothills ties return to farm life

BY JEN CALHOUN



Andrea and Tyler
Ferguson

T Tyler Ferguson always knew he would be a farmer. After all, the Flat Gap native grew up working his grandfather's tobacco and hay farm. It was in his blood.

But life got in the way as Ferguson attended college, married and started working as an outside sales representative in the mine equipment industry.

Now, he's one of several people who have gotten back to their farming roots while maintaining their day jobs. "I still didn't know when or how, but I knew I was going to farm," says Ferguson, whose wife, Andrea, is a customer service representative at Foothills Communications. "I guess it's just ingrained in me so much that I can't understand why other people don't want to do it. I've always respected the business, admired the business. There was no doubt that I was going to do it. I just had to put all the pieces together."

A FARM OF HIS OWN

In 2008, those pieces did come together when the now-34-year-old bought a 90-acre parcel of vacant land on a reclaimed strip mine. The flattened hill left an area perfect for raising beef cattle.

While Ferguson continues to work 50-60 hours a week at his sales job, he's also found success as a cattle farmer. In February, he

The Fergusons' cattle do not receive hormones, steroids or antibiotics.



Tim Ferguson, left, and Tyler Ferguson are both part-time farmers in the Foothills area.



Andrea Ferguson and her husband are part-time cattle farmers. She is pictured here with their pet donkey, Eugene.

was voted president of the Highland Beef Cattle Association.

A self-described “cow nerd,” Ferguson says he soaked in knowledge from every outlet available to him, including the University of Kentucky’s extension service programs and the Highland Beef Cattle Association members and programs.

He can tell you the recent history of the cattle market one minute and launch into a discussion of cow and bull genetics and the science of feed the next.

And while he’s careful not to bore the uninitiated, it’s clear Ferguson is the real deal when it comes to cattle farmers, even though that particular type of farming wasn’t in his background.

“I attended everything,” he says with a laugh. “I went on a lot of tours and trips to other farms and the university. Any time I could pick up information, I was there.”

FINDING A MARKET

Now, Ferguson maintains about 25 head of cattle, each of which has been carefully bred and raised without antibiotics, steroids or hormones. “There’s a big push in the community for local and fresh,” he says.

Recognizing the trend, Ferguson and a local produce farmer and friend joined forces to start selling their products at a portable stand on Broadway Street in Paintsville on Saturdays from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. He says the stand was an alternative to selling the cows at market.

But after news of the stand spread through social media, Ferguson ended up selling out of the 450 pounds of beef he had on hand in less than an hour and a half.

“We’re probably more excited about that than anyone can understand,” he says. “This is a depressed area, so we weren’t sure what kind of response we’d be met with. But we thought we’d try it and see what would happen. The response we have been met with — well, it’s made us have to take a step back and try to figure out where to go.”

The USDA-inspected natural beef is free of preservatives and food coloring and is packaged just like you’d see at a grocery store, which he believes is the reason it caught on so quickly.

“People want to be able to shake the hand of the guy who raised the beef,” he says. “And that’s what we want. We want to be able to educate our customers about what we do. That way, we can bring more value to them, and it brings more value to us. It’s a win-win for everybody.”

In the future, he hopes to open a permanent retail shop four or five days a week, but first he has to figure out how to meet the demands of his eager customers, and that takes time and money.

“We’ve worked very hard to cashflow everything we do,” he says. “The only debt we owe is property, and that’s why we’ve grown so slow.”

Ferguson says he plans to try to meet the demand, but he won’t cut corners on quality to get there. Steroids, hormones and antibiotics will continue to be out, and overfeeding the cows leads to a fatty meat that won’t make the grade as prime beef.

“It’s a balancing act,” he says.

But none of that deters this cow nerd, who says the science and the business of

raising beef continues to fascinate him. “I want to keep growing as long as I enjoy it,” he says. “To give you a number of years? I really can’t.”

A GROWING PASSION

Tyler Ferguson isn’t the only part-time farmer making a go of cattle farming in the Highlands. He’s not the only Ferguson, either.

Tim Ferguson, who is not related to Tyler, works a full-time job at Foothills Communications as an installer/repairman. About two years ago, he also started raising beef cattle.

Now, he has 27 head and hopes to double that when calving season starts in the fall. He uses some of his father’s land to farm and to raise his own cattle, and he also leases a few acres.

“Farming has been in my family pretty much all my life,” he says. “I’ve been around my dad raising cattle, and he also raised tobacco and hay. I could always see myself doing this, but it wasn’t a priority when I first starting working (outside the farm).”

And while the extra work is time-consuming, he doesn’t mind. He likes the work, and it’s important to him and his family.

“It’s one of those things that once you get your feet wet and get into it, you just gotta go with it,” he says. “My father helps me a lot while I’m at work. If something comes up, he can do it. Then again, if there’s something he can’t do on his farm, I help him out.” 🐾



Through the LOOKING GLASS

The story
behind
revolutionary
optical
fibers

BY DREW WOOLLEY

Eric Parsons wore two hats when he worked as a sales manager for Corning Inc. in the 1970s. By day, he sold the manufacturing company's glass and ceramics products to industrial and scientific customers. In the evenings, he and others on the sales staff would help with products being developed in the lab.

Parsons still remembers the day a group working on a new communications technology appeared and told them to drop everything.

"One day they came in and said, 'Fellas, quit working on this altogether. This is dead,'" he recalls. "'Box all your information up and put it in the archives. There's a new technology called fiber optics.'"

Since that day in 1979, fiber has become a household term, and millions of miles of line have crisscrossed the globe, connecting people continents apart almost instantaneously, supporting high-definition video and enabling lightning-fast internet.

COMMUNICATION IN A FLASH

With exposure to so much technology, we've grown used to the idea that

information can travel in many ways. Landline telephones convert the sound of a voice on one end of a call into electric signals transmitted across lengths of wire. Cellphones ditched the wires in favor of radio waves that travel through the air.

Corning scientists looked at those methods and took them a step further. "They said, 'Hey I've got an idea. What if we transmit light through glass and use that for telecommunications?'" says Pat Turner, the director of marketing operations for Corning Optical Communications.

Imagine you and a friend are on opposite ends of a long, straight tunnel and both have a flashlight. If you worked out a code, you could send signals with the flashlights that would reach the other person almost instantaneously.

But what if the tunnel curved and changed direction multiple times? To send messages back and forth, you would need mirrors to bounce the light around corners.

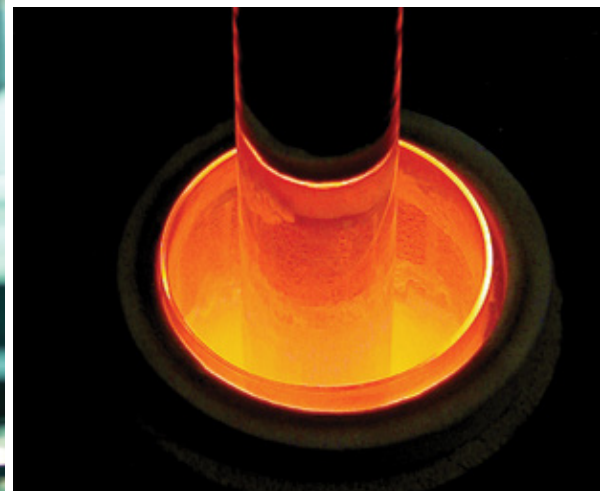
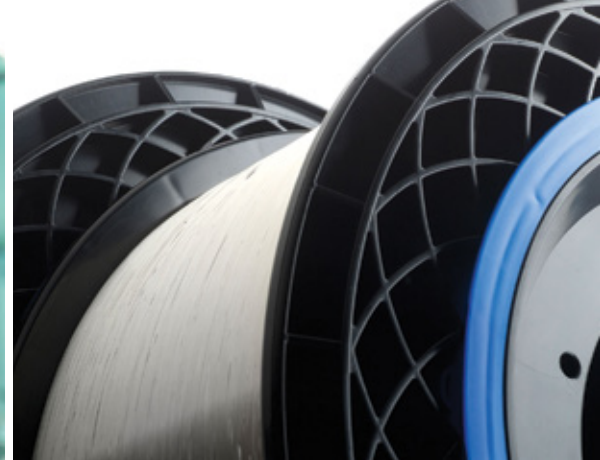
The same concept is at the heart of fiber optics. Each fiber strand is made up of a glass core thinner than a human hair. Light signals are transmitted through the

glass, just as you might send a signal down the tunnel. To keep the light from simply passing through the glass when it changes direction, the core is surrounded by a cladding that reflects light back into the glass. This works similarly to the mirrors in the tunnel, bouncing the signal from side to side until it reaches its endpoint.

Since each fiber is much thinner than a traditional copper wire, fiber optics make it possible to transmit large amounts of information simultaneously. And a single cable can bundle hundreds, or even thousands, of fiber strands.

ACTUALLY, IT IS ROCKET SCIENCE

Despite being incredibly thin, fiber is far from brittle. A single strand is three times stronger than steel and more durable than copper, yet light and flexible. In addition, to prevent the light signal from degrading over long distances, the glass core has to be extremely pure. So pure, in fact, that if the ocean was made of the same glass, you could stand on the surface and clearly see the ocean floor miles below.



To most people, it would seem almost impossible that such a material exists, much less that it could be manufactured on a large scale. “Making fiber is rocket science,” says Parsons. “Precision is everything.”

He’s not exaggerating. The first step in manufacturing fiber requires mixing oxygen with liquid forms of silicon and germanium inside a glass tube. If that mixture isn’t just right, the resulting glass core might not be as durable or clear as necessary.

As these chemicals mix, the tube is heated to extreme temperatures. The ensuing chemical reaction leaves a white soot on the inside of the glass tube, which the heat fuses into what will become the glass core of the fiber. The tube itself will become the reflective cladding surrounding the core.

The process takes several hours to complete, with the tube eventually collapsing on itself to form a solid glass rod called a preform.

While the preform has the internal structure needed for an optical fiber, it’s too

thick and bulky to be useful across long distances. To stretch it out, the preform is hung from a drawing tower, where one end of the rod is heated in an oven to 3,600 degrees Fahrenheit. From there, gravity takes over.

As the tip of the rod softens, a glob falls slowly toward the ground, forming a long, thin thread not unlike honey stretching as it is poured from a spoon. But because of the strength of the glass, the fiber can become incredibly thin and stretch to great lengths without breaking. As it cools, the fiber is threaded through pulleys and receives a series of protective coatings before being wound onto a spool, ready to be tested and then used.

ENDLESS POSSIBILITIES

Perhaps the only thing more impressive than the process behind fiber optics is the range of ways it’s being put to use. The convenience of blistering internet speeds or being able to carry on a crystal-clear phone conversation with someone on the other side of the world is apparent, but that’s just the start of how fiber is improving people’s

lives — especially in rural areas.

“The true value of fiber is what we can do from a human aspect,” says Turner. “The ability to do distance learning for people who wouldn’t otherwise have access to a university environment, or telemedicine, or allowing families to connect — that’s what is truly changing the landscape of the global community.”

Fiber optics are even being used to provide tiny lights for improved noninvasive surgery techniques and in the development of prosthetic limbs that can produce the sensation of feeling for the user. Almost five decades after its discovery, it still blows Turner’s mind to think scientists are uncovering new and innovative applications for fiber.

“If you think about how that concept started from nothing, to what we have today, it’s mind-boggling,” he says. “They had the vision to see the potential of fiber. Then they had the technical capacity to make it happen. I’m in awe of the reality of what we have today because of the changes fiber has created.” 🗨️

Read, write, create

An author's advice to aspiring writers

BY LISA SAVAGE

John H. Preston began writing in high school, and his first short story was published by the time he was a senior in college.

"Then I made a big mistake," the Lawrence County author says. "I began thinking of myself as a writer, finding more egotistical satisfaction in that claim than in actually doing any good work."

Preston says it was years before he actually wrote anything publishable and that he learned from his mistake.

"My advice to young writers, even published writers, is to forget that you are a writer, which is simply window dressing for your ego,"

he says. "Sit down and concentrate on writing as truly as you can."

He says reading is one of the most important tasks in becoming a good writer. "One of the things that helped me was reading the classics, seeing what other writers have done," he says.

Preston says that 99 percent of writing is hard work, and inspiration is only about 1 percent. "Even though a writer might be inspired, it doesn't get the writing done. Having the discipline to do the hard work gets the writing done."

Preston has written a novel, short stories and a regional favorite: "History and Tales of the Paintsville Stockyard."

He has written a play, too, "Kentucky's Richest Man, the Life of John CC Mayo." It will be produced and directed by Terry Salyers at the Mountain Arts Center in

Prestonsburg with performances in September.

Preston says Mayo's life is an important historical subject, a story that he felt should be told. The play spans from 1888 to 1914, the years in which Mayo brought the railroads to Eastern Kentucky and established the massive coal industry.

Although celebrated for his achievement during his lifetime, Mayo now is vilified because of the principal legal instrument he used to enrich himself — the broad form deed, which was used to open land to mining. "I'm kind of an apologist for him," Preston says.

While he is excited for the play's debut in September, Preston is now working on another novel, though his time is split between writing and chores on his Eastern Kentucky farm. Before farm life, he was a college professor and journeyer.

While Preston loves to write about the history of Eastern Kentucky, he says all writers are deeply indebted to Homer and Shakespeare.

"They copied life as they saw it, showing its goodness as well as its coarseness," he says. "Is literature really important? Who knows in the end. But it seems to be enjoyable to some people, unfortunately to fewer and fewer people nowadays." 📖



John Preston is an advocate for libraries, specifically his local Lawrence County Library, where a few of his books are currently shelved.

Let's get creative!

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Ready,
set, write!

Nine winners will each receive a \$100 back-to-school Hibbett Sports gift card.

Entry Form:

To enter, please fill out the form below and submit with your entry to:
Foothills Essay Contest
Marketing Department
P.O. Box 240
Staffordsville, KY 41256

Parent: By signing this form, I give permission for identification of my child and his/her essay in The Foothills Connection. I also attest that the essay is the child's original creation.

Student's Name: _____

Name of Parents or Guardian: _____

Address: _____

Telephone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

Grade in School (2017-18): _____

Name of School: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

In search of the perfect summer treat?

DON'T MISS THE PAGELAND WATERMELON FESTIVAL

You know it's summertime in South Carolina when watermelons are put on a pedestal and celebrated by hordes of visitors to the Pageland Watermelon Festival.

Now in its 66th year, what began as a small community affair to promote local melon growers has grown into a festival that lures visitors and competitors. Come see one of South Carolina's best parades on Saturday morning. Men and women, both young and old, test their spitting power in the annual seed-spitting contest — the record spit is 29 feet. And there are, of course, sweet watermelons. “We give away watermelon slices during several periods at the festival,” says festival director Darron Kirkley.

And if a slice of watermelon isn't enough to satisfy your craving, visit any one of dozens of vendors who get into the spirit of the festival by selling watermelon smoothies, watermelon ice cream and burgers with watermelon on the side.

Also, local farmers will be on hand

selling the sweet fruit, and there are so many ways to enjoy it once you get it home.

Cooking with watermelon is all about preparation, says Stephanie Barlow, senior communications director for the National Watermelon Promotion Board.

“Watermelon is 92 percent water, so it's quite watery,” she says. “If you want to try to make foods like grilled watermelon, we suggest taking your piece of watermelon and patting it between paper towels to remove the excess juice.”

Grilling is just one idea that takes watermelon beyond fruit salad.

“Nothing surprises me anymore with the creative uses for watermelon,” Barlow says. “But I am often wowed by what you can do with it. My favorites are recipes that use the whole melon, whether using

the rind as the serving vessel, slivering the rind for coleslaw, or juicing the scraps of watermelon for delicious healthy juice.”

One of the newest recipes entering the kitchens of the Watermelon Promotion Board is a watermelon stir fry. And for the upcoming tailgating season, there's watermelon fire and ice salsa. “I also use the salsa over blackened salmon or chicken and kick up the fire with some extra jalapeno pepper,” Barlow says.

There are more than 1,200 varieties of watermelons grown in 96 countries on the market. In South Carolina alone, there are seven main watermelon production areas; Chesterfield County, home to Pageland, is one of the strongest producers. The variety most often seen at the festival is Crimson Sweet.

Watermelons can have red, yellow and even orange flesh. And though most are large and oval, there have been square ones on the market. And don't forget about the wonderfully convenient miniwatermelons — all can be used interchangeably in any recipe, such as the following ones. They're the finest things you can do with a watermelon save cutting it open, slicing it up and eating it — a taste of summer in every sweet bite. 🍉



WHAT: Pageland Watermelon Festival (parade, rodeo, seed-spitting contest, watermelon-eating contest, car show, fireworks and more).

WHEN: July 21-22. Activities begin at 3 p.m. on Friday and at 9 a.m. on Saturday.

WHERE: Various locations around downtown Pageland, South Carolina, which claims to be the Watermelon Capital of the World.

INFORMATION: pagelandwatermelonfestival.com.



FOOD EDITOR
ANNE P. BRALY
IS A NATIVE OF
CHATTANOOGA,
TENNESSEE.

Blue watermelon walnut salad

- 1 cup walnut pieces
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 1 teaspoon soy sauce
- 2 cups balsamic vinegar
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 sprig fresh rosemary
- 4 ounces fresh baby greens
- 2 seedless oranges, peeled and sectioned
- 4 cups seedless watermelon cubes
- 2 cups seedless grapes, halved
- 2 cups fresh, trimmed and sliced strawberries
- 1 cup crumbled blue cheese

Heat the walnuts in a seasoned wok or heavy nonstick saute pan over medium heat for a minute and stir in the sugar and soy sauce. Adjust heat to prevent burning while constantly stirring the nuts until the sugar melts. Continue to stir and cook until the nuts begin to stick and the mixture is getting sticky. Spread the nuts over a sheet of waxed or parchment paper and cool. Break apart into small pieces and crumble. Set aside. Heat the vinegar in a heavy noncorrosive saucepan over medium heat and stir in sugar. Continue to stir and adjust heat to bring the mixture to a simmer. Add the rosemary sprig to the pan. Continue to simmer until the contents of the pan reduce by 1/2 their original volume. Set aside. Divide the greens among 6-8 salad plates and arrange the orange sections, watermelon, grapes and strawberries over the greens. Drizzle the balsamic syrup over the fruit and the cheese crumbles over that. Top with the candied walnut pieces and serve. Makes 6-8 servings.

Watermelon rind stir-fry

- 2 cups watermelon rind, julienned (white part only, from about 1/2 of a seedless watermelon)
- 1 cup julienned carrots
- 1 1-inch piece of ginger, minced
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1/2 cup chives, cut into 3-inch pieces
- 1 tablespoon honey



Photo courtesy of the National Watermelon Promotion Board.

- 2 cups seedless watermelon chunks
- 2 peeled and chopped kiwis
- 2 cups vanilla yogurt
- 1 cup ice
- 2 sprigs of fresh mint, for garnish

Place watermelon, kiwi, yogurt and ice in a blender and puree until smooth. Pour into glasses and garnish with a sprig of fresh mint. Makes 2 servings.

- 1 tablespoon soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon fish sauce
- 2 teaspoons sesame oil
- 1/2 cup fresh basil leaves, torn
- 1/4 cup mint leaves
- 1/4 cup cilantro leaves
- Crushed red pepper flakes (optional)

Heat sesame oil in a wok over high heat. Add the watermelon rind and carrots and stir-fry, stirring constantly, for 1-2 minutes. Let sit over high heat for 1 additional minute without stirring. Add the chives and stir to combine. In a small bowl, whisk together the honey, soy sauce, fish sauce, garlic and ginger. Pour the sauce over the watermelon rind and cook, stirring, 30 seconds to 1 minute until fragrant. Transfer to a serving dish. Add the basil,

cilantro and mint, tossing to combine. Sprinkle with red pepper flakes, if desired, and serve as a side dish with chicken, fish or steak. Makes 4 servings.

Fire and ice salsa

- 3 cups chopped watermelon
- 1/2 cup chopped green bell pepper
- 2 tablespoons lime juice
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro
- 1 tablespoon chopped green onions
- 1 tablespoon chopped jalapeno pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon garlic salt

In a large bowl, combine all ingredients, mix well and serve with tortilla chips or over grilled chicken or fish. 🍴



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NOTE: Look for the entry form and additional details on Page 13 of this month's The Foothills Connection.