

The Foothills

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2018

CONNECTION

CHEERFUL CORRESPONDENCE

Copy Cats Printing is in
the holiday spirit

REGIONAL REPORTING

Ritt Mortimer is
on your TV and
in your mailbox

DRESSING FOR DINNER

This Southern
staple just got
more interesting





BY SHIRLEY BLOOMFIELD, CEO
NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association

Rural broadband is on our wish list

The federal government is not usually known for moving quickly. That said, the Rural Utilities Service, an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, has been working at a fast and furious pace the past several weeks on its e-Connectivity Pilot Program. This program could make \$600 million available in loans and grants to bring broadband to rural areas where service is desperately needed.

Now, let's hope the USDA is just as fast and furious when it comes to releasing funds to rural broadband providers who can continue to build networks in areas where connectivity is sorely needed.

Many of you reading this enjoy access to a reliable broadband network thanks to your local telecommunications provider. The cooperative and independent telcos who are part of NTCA have done a tremendous job of connecting their members and customers to some of the fastest internet service available in the country. Even so, rural America is home to many communities that are so remote, isolated and sparsely populated that extending service to them is a serious challenge.

Through NTCA, telcos like yours share their opinions and concerns with elected officials and agencies. We sent a letter to RUS stating that the rules of the e-Connectivity Pilot Program should be set in a way that makes sense and that prioritizes the most productive use of limited federal dollars.

Seeing progress that releases new dollars for rural broadband is definitely on our wish list this season.

Groups study impact of broadband on rural prosperity

Several national associations, nonprofits and government agencies joined forces throughout 2018 to examine the impact of broadband on life in rural America.

The Farm Foundation, a nonpartisan agricultural policy institute, launched a project entitled "What's on the Horizon for E-Connectivity in Rural America." As part of this project, the group organized a series of E-Connectivity Listening Sessions in collaboration with CoBank, NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association, the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

"We want to identify the challenges rural communities now face in providing quality broadband services, as well as the innovative options being used to address those challenges," said Constance Cullman, Farm Foundation president and moderator of the listening sessions.

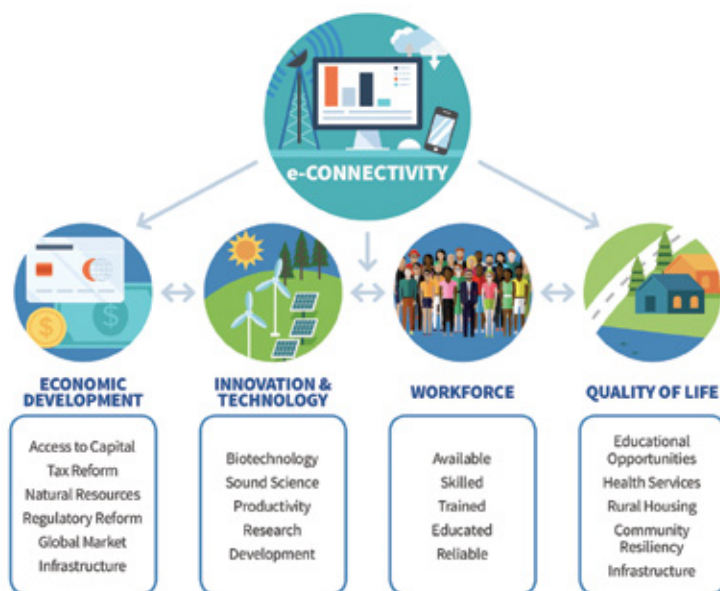
One of the sessions was in Birmingham, Alabama, in August. Among the panelists was Fred Johnson, executive vice president and general manager of Farmers Telecommunications Cooperative in Rainsville, Alabama. Johnson also serves on the board of directors for NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association.

Johnson applauded the effort to bring stakeholders together to share the accomplishments of small, rural broadband providers. "Closing the digital divide is a goal we all share, and creating partnerships to reinvest in our networks is an important component of achieving that goal," he said.

Also speaking at the Birmingham session was Jannine Miller, USDA's senior advisor for rural infrastructure. She discussed the Interagency Task Force on Agriculture and Rural Prosperity that was formed in 2017. The task force identified over 100 recommendations for the federal government to consider in order to help improve life in rural America. The recommendations centered around five areas, with e-connectivity being central to all components (see illustration below).

More information about the listening sessions — including videos of the events — can be found at www.farmfoundation.org.

RURAL BROADBAND: A KEY TO AMERICAN PROSPERITY



Source: USDA. The agency's full report can be found at www.usda.gov/ruralprosperity.

Always on

More than one-quarter of adults constantly online



Social media, text messages, gaming, weather reports, email and much more are daily parts of busy lives. But just how connected are we really to the online world?

For about 26 percent of the U.S. population, the answer to that question is dramatic — just more than a quarter of adults say they are online “almost constantly,” according to a Pew Research Center study released earlier this year.

The widespread use of smartphones and mobile devices has helped drive the sense of being online all the time, a result that is up from 21 percent in a similar 2015 poll.

While not everyone feels constantly connected, about 77 percent of Americans still go online daily. Forty-three percent go online several times a day, and about 8 percent go online only about once a day. Meanwhile, 11 percent connect several times weekly, and a similar percentage does not use the internet at all.

The biggest indicator of the time spent online is access to a mobile device. Of those who possess a smartphone or similar device, 89 percent go

online daily and 31 percent report almost constant use.

Meanwhile, of the people who do not have a mobile device, only 54 percent report daily online usage and only 5 percent are constantly connected.

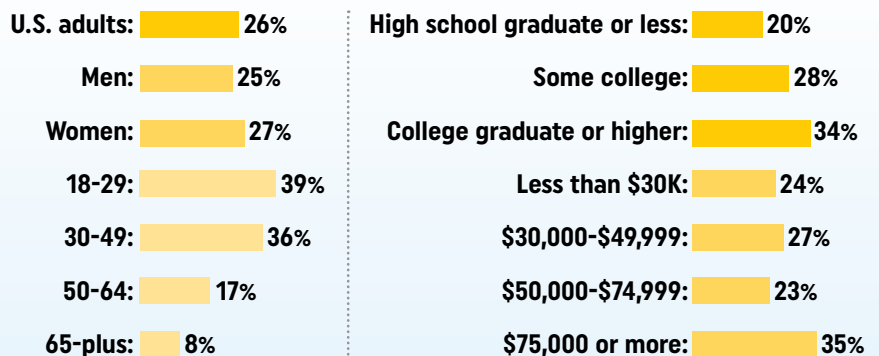
But when the poll added age into the mix, the results grew more interesting. Age matters less than it did three years earlier. Americans between the ages of 30 and 49 indicated the same rate of almost constant online use as younger adults: 36 percent to 39 percent for the younger generation. Meanwhile, the percentage of those between the ages of 50 and 64 who report constant online use has spiked from 12 percent to 17 percent since 2015.

Households with higher incomes and those who live in urban and suburban areas report almost constant online usage at a rate that is nearly double that of residents of rural areas, where only 15 percent report the highest usage.

As online tools become more useful and services better connect friends and families, the importance of access to fast, affordable internet connections continues to increase. 📶

A connected nation

The chart represents the percentage of Americans who describe themselves as being online “almost constantly,” according to a Pew Research Center poll.



Source: Pew Research Center analysts Andrew Perrin and Jingjing Jiang reported results of the study.

Thankful during the holidays, and all year long

I am truly thankful to live in a rural community where the sense of family and belonging are apparent all year. During the holiday season, our bonds to loved ones, co-workers and our communities in the beautiful Kentucky hills are even more evident. I love the holidays, and I can't ever imagine living anywhere else.



RUTH CONLEY
Chief Executive Officer

While we enter a time of celebration, we must also recognize some among us who need support. We are fortunate to live in a place where so many people are willing to help each other when needed. And believe me, we all need help sometimes.

But help is not always a grand gesture. Simply sharing a smile or showing kindness or consideration can lighten someone else's day. When you bump into someone on the street or at the store, you can never know what else that person might be facing. I know I've often been on the receiving end of simple kindness, and it truly made a difference.

The holidays are the perfect chance to take a breather, to ponder and to give thanks for our many blessings. It's a chance to appreciate the people who bring a smile, even when they may have troubles of their own, as well as all of those we love and cherish.

The reasons for giving thanks extend to the opportunities we each have. For me, I appreciate all that our work family here at Foothills Communications accomplishes each day.

I'm grateful for being part of a cooperative bringing needed services, such as 1 Gbps internet speeds and affordable telecommunications, to our area. Think about this for a moment. Broadband internet is defined as having download speeds of 25 Mbps, well below what we offer to all of our customers. But in the United States, at least 22 million rural residents don't even have access to that type of internet performance.

As we've learned, fast internet access benefits schools, businesses and residents. It makes it possible to work from home, opening up our area to employers who would otherwise go elsewhere. Our students have access to online resources that support their education. At home, fast internet allows services that provide everything from entertainment to home security systems.

I'm grateful to be part of something that makes a difference in people's lives, and I'm proud of the place Foothills has in our community. Our mission is to bring these needed services to as many people as possible.

As I consider all of the people and opportunities that have enriched not only my life but also those of many others, I want to thank our great communities, customers, board and employees for all they do. Please join me in continuing to create an attitude of gratitude throughout the holiday season and beyond. 📺

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CONNECTION

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2018

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The Foothills Connection is a bimonthly newsletter published by Foothills Communications, ©2018. 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 which 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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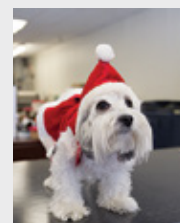
Foothills Mission Statement

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

Produced for Foothills Communications by:

WORDSOUTH
— A CONTENT MARKETING COMPANY —

On the Cover:



Debbie Stepp's dog, Bella, greets customers at Copy Cats Printing. Stepp prides herself on providing excellent customer service. See story Page 12.



UNWRAP THE GIFT OF FREE ACTIVATION THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

Foothills is offering FREE activation during November and December for all customers who upgrade service, add special calling features or add a premium movie package.

Another gift for you!

DON'T MISS THESE HUGE GIVEAWAYS!

Sign up for select services before Dec. 31 and you'll be entered to win a special prize.*

INTERNET CUSTOMER
Beats Wireless Headphones

CABLE CUSTOMER
Sonos Playbar System

PLATINUM CUSTOMER
Bose Radio

*Items must be claimed within two weeks of being notified.



'TIS THE SEASON OF GIVING

FOOTHILLS HOSTS ANNUAL TOY DRIVE

Bring a new, unwrapped toy to the Foothills office by Dec. 7 and the cooperative will donate it to a child in need this Christmas.

The names of members who donate a toy will be entered in a drawing for a \$100 Visa gift card.

Drawing will be held Dec. 10.



HOLIDAY CLOSINGS

Foothills offices will close the following holidays:

Thursday, Nov. 22, and Friday, Nov. 23.

Monday, Dec. 24 (close at noon), and

Tuesday, Dec. 25

Tuesday, Jan. 1



FREE MOVIE WEEKENDS

Nov. 22-25: STARZ & STARZ ENCORE

Dec. 1-2: HBO

Dec. 8-9: Cinemax

Dec. 15-16: Showtime

Dec. 22-Jan 2: All movie channels

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

Ober Gatlinburg in Tennessee, a classic Southern destination, offers great skiing and, possibly, even better views.

Let it snow Time to hit the slopes

Ski resorts can offer hours or even days of entertainment. From the most daring skiers to those preferring the bunny slopes, winters in the South play host to some fun adventures. The destinations offer a flurry of activities to maximize the time you spend on the slopes, whether skiing, snowboarding or tubing.

Ober Gatlinburg

1339 Ski Mountain Road, Gatlinburg, Tennessee

Expect to find restaurants; a multitude of shops; a play area for the little ones; one of the largest trams in the country; a coaster full of dips, zigzags and turns through the treetops; and more. Then, stay in one of a dozen partner hotels, campgrounds or rental cabins.

Oh, and don't forget the 10 trails and three lifts, plus the Mighty Carpet lift in the ski school area for skiing and snowboarding. There's snow tubing, too. While Ober Gatlinburg is an exciting way for skiers to satisfy their cravings for the slopes, non-skiers can shop until they drop. And everyone can enjoy hot food and cold drinks on a cold winter's day.

- **Lift tickets:** Adults: \$36. Juniors (ages 6-11) and seniors: \$30. 5 and under: Free with paying adult. Rates may be higher on weekends and holidays. Look for discounts after 3 p.m. and twilight skiing until 10 p.m.
- **Phone:** 865-436-5423
- **Online:** obergatlinburg.com

Cloudmont Ski Resort

721 County Road 614, Mentone, Alabama

High atop Lookout Mountain, Cloudmont has offered hours of fun for skiers for more than 40 years. The resort has two 1,000-foot beginner and intermediate slopes. And while they may not be the biggest in the South, the slopes are a good place to learn the sport or to practice for the big leagues. When weather permits, you'll ski on natural snow.

Rental gear, including snowboards, is available in the ski lodge. Lessons are offered as well. Call ahead for snow reports.

If you're hungry, pack up your skis and head 3 miles down the road into the heart of Mentone, where you'll find a number of restaurants, including the Wildflower Cafe, the Greenleaf Grill and the Plowshares Bistro.

- **Lift tickets:** Adults: \$29. Children: \$22.

Prices are higher on weekends and holidays. Half-day tickets are available.

- **Phone:** 256-634-4344

- **Online:** www.cloudmont.com

Winterplace Ski Resort

100 Old Flat Top Mountain Road
Ghent, West Virginia

Almost the entire state of West Virginia is in the Appalachian Mountain range, making the Mountain State a great one for skiing, and it boasts a large number of ski resorts. Winterplace is the southernmost resort, and it offers 90 acres of fun. The longest run of the 27 trails is more than a mile long, and the views of the surrounding mountains are beautiful. There are 10 lifts to take you to the top. All but one of the slopes are open for nighttime skiing, as are the two terrain parks and the largest snow tubing park in the state. There's also a snow tubing park for children who are under 45 inches tall.

When you've had your fill of the snow, warm up with a cup of hot chocolate in front of a roaring fire at The Mountain House, one of several eateries. The Cabins at Winterplace offer lodging right on the property, and they include a free,



Don't ski? Not a problem. Destinations such as Winterplace Ski Resort in West Virginia offer something for everyone.

hearty breakfast designed to provide fuel for your day in the snow.

- **Lift tickets:** Adults: \$54. Students and seniors: \$35. Prices are higher on weekends and holidays.

- **Phone:** 304-787-3221

- **Online:** www.winterplace.com

Sapphire Valley Ski Resort

127 Cherokee Trail
Sapphire Valley, North Carolina

Just a hop, skip and a jump across the South Carolina border, Sapphire Valley is a gem of a resort for snow lovers. Take a ride up the mountain on a state-of-the-art quad lift. Then, ski down a heart-stopping 1,600-foot run with a 200-foot vertical drop. For the less-skilled, there's a learning slope as well as a park for tubing with multiple lanes that will give you the thrill of downhill action at a safe pace. A magic carpet-style moving sidewalk will get you to the top. You can also enjoy the thrill of a zip line that will take you racing over the valley in its wintertime beauty.

Sapphire Valley is a resort for all seasons, with plenty of homes available for rent, as well as hotels and restaurants. Sapphire Valley Ski Resort also offers lessons, and there's a rental shop for all your equipment needs.

- **Lift tickets:** Adults: \$40. Children: \$23.

Complimentary for skiers over 65.

- **Phone:** 828-743-7663

- **Online:** www.skisapphirevalley.com

Wolf Ridge Ski Resort

2578 Valley View Circle
Mars Hill, North Carolina

Nestled in the scenic Blue Ridge Mountains, Wolf Ridge is smaller than the nearby resorts at Beech Mountain and Sugar Mountain. But if you're looking for a laid-back experience that still offers tremendous challenges, this is the place. Just 30 minutes north of Asheville, Wolf Ridge, at an elevation of 4,700 feet, has 72 acres of skiable terrain. Ski and snowboarding equipment is available to rent. Wolf Ridge's Snow Sports School offers private lessons to people ages 5 and over and group lessons to ages 8 and over.

There are 15 runs, a terrain park, two seated lifts and two surface lifts. When you get to the top, take a second to enjoy incredible views. When you come down, warm your toes in front of a crackling fire in one of the two lodges.

Wolf Ridge is right off Interstate 26, the first road in the state to be designated a scenic highway. Stay the night in one of the luxury townhomes, each of which has amazing views.

- **Lift tickets:** Adults: \$42. Students: \$33.

Free for skiers 65 and over and for children under 5. Rates are higher on weekends.

- **Phone:** 828-689-4111

- **Online:** www.skiwolfridgenc.com



Put up the skis and snowboards and enjoy a roller coaster at Ober Gatlinburg. Then, head inside for warm food.



Ritt Mortimer hosts the "Your News Today" broadcast and owns the Salyersville Independent newspaper.



Local focus

Longtime broadcaster adds newspaper to his fold

BY JEN CALHOUN

In college, Ritt Mortimer signed up for public speaking classes nine times. Each time, he dropped out.

"I had a mortal fear of public speaking," he says. "I was a train wreck as a kid. I just couldn't do it. I was just one of those people who'd get sick to their stomach at the thought of it."

So, nobody felt as surprised as Mortimer when he started hosting the popular local TV news show "Your News Today" on Foothills Channel 40 just a few years later. "How I ended up in front of a camera and in front of thousands of people every night is a total mystery," he says.

AN IDEA COMES TO LIFE

Mortimer had bounced around a couple of different jobs by his late 20s, but none of those occupations clicked for him. And while he knew other cities might bring more opportunities, he didn't want to leave his hometown. "Your News Today" ended up becoming his reason to stay.

The show, which first aired in November 1998, was the brainchild of his mother, Sue Mortimer. "She and my dad, Doug, were professional photographers by trade," Ritt

Mortimer says. "They had a video camera and a VCR, and she had this idea for a television news show that she wanted me to run. I couldn't get out of it is basically what happened. I had no other options, and I finally just relented and said, 'OK.'"

FROM TV TO PRINT

That decision gave Mortimer a 20-year career as a newsman on the half-hour program. It also led to the family's purchase of the Salyersville Independent, a weekly newspaper, earlier this year.

"Buying the paper was always something that was in the back of my mind," he says. "A friend of mine that I grew up with had owned it for 17 years, but I never thought he would sell."

After purchasing the weekly, the Mortimers also renovated one of their proper-

ties — the old Grace Howard department store at 15 E. Maple St. — and used it as the paper's new home.

As executive editor, Ritt Mortimer also updated the newspaper's format while keeping the price at 50 cents a copy. With the help of his staff, he changed logos and fonts and added a section on local history that proved to be a hit with readers. "We have a couple of local historians here who just have this wealth of pictures and stories," he says.

But if it sounds like a big job to juggle the demands of the TV show and the newspaper, Ritt Mortimer shrugs. It's really more of a blessing.

"It's been much more than I expected," he says. "I look forward to coming to work every day. It's an added burden, and I take it very seriously. But it all goes back to one of the reasons we started the TV program. I didn't want to leave my hometown for work. I've always called my customers my sponsors. They're giving me the opportunity to be part of this community."

ALL THE NEWS THAT'S FIT

Check out "Your News Today" on Foothills Channel 4. You can also check out the show's Facebook page. The Salyersville Independent hits the news stands on Thursday.



Heather Oney, editor of the Salyersville Independent, works on an issue of the paper.

Ready for a close-up

TVS Productions helps put Eastern Kentucky in the spotlight

BY JEN CALHOUN

By day, Terry V. Salyer is a mild-mannered energy manager for Johnson County Schools. But at night and on the weekends, it's anybody's guess who he might turn into.

That's because, for the last 30 years or so, Salyer has operated TVS Productions, a multipurpose entertainment company that produces plays and films. Over the course of his life, he has produced and directed more than 300 plays and performed for thousands of people. Through his stage workshops, he teaches children every aspect of the business, from set and costume design to acting and stage lighting.

THE BUSINESS OF JOY

For this longtime actor, director and singer, it's all about bringing joy to the people. "Joy is a big thing for me," says Salyer, who started singing and acting for audiences as a high school student in Ohio. "My whole life is about being able to create a positive environment and to help others use their gifts and talents to bring joy to others."

Through TVS Productions, Salyer directs children and adults in several live productions each year, many of which are original. In April, he produced "John C.C. Mayo," a play written by John H. "Butch" Preston about the Kentucky-born entrepreneur known for introducing coal mining to Eastern Kentucky and Southwest Virginia. TVS Productions will also begin filming a TV series about Mayo in the spring of 2019. The series will air later that year on Foothills Channel 4.

'FIFTH HOLLAR'

One of Salyer's most ambitious collaborations to date is "Fifth Hollar," a TV series that follows the mysterious disappearances of young women in the fictional town of Raelin in Eastern Kentucky.



The cast of "Beauty and the Beast" gets direction from Salyer at a rehearsal.

The series, which was written by Jan Lewis and Chad Horne, is produced by Harrodsburg-based South PAWZ Productions. Jan Lewis and her husband, Curt Lewis, run South PAWZ. They collaborated with Salyer because of his experience and connections with local actors. Salyer himself plays a lead role in the production and has helped with casting, directing and producing.

The first season of the miniseries premiered in May, and the second season went through the editing process over the summer. A third season is also in the works.

"It's amazing the transition from live theater to film or TV," says Salyer, who spends as much time behind the camera as he does in front of it. "It's completely different. It's all based on angles and camera shots."

The business of film is also different, he says. Currently, he and South PAWZ are

pitching the series to Syfy, Netflix, History and Amazon Prime Video. They're also putting together a film version to submit for grant proposals.

"We've seen how other, smaller producers have done things like this with success," he says. "We think this could be a great thing for our actors and our community." 📺

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

"Fifth Hollar" airs on Foothills local Channel 4. For more information on "Fifth Hollar" and TVS Productions, check out their website at fifthhollarseries.com and on Facebook at the "Fifth Hollar Cast" page. The production is currently looking for outside investors, as well as actors and others interested in being a part of the show. For more information on those opportunities or on TVS workshops, contact Terry V. Salyer at 606-367-3839, or email him at terry.salyer14@gmail.com.

RELEASE YOUR INNER *Fashionista*

The latest styles are only a few clicks away

BY PATRICK SMITH

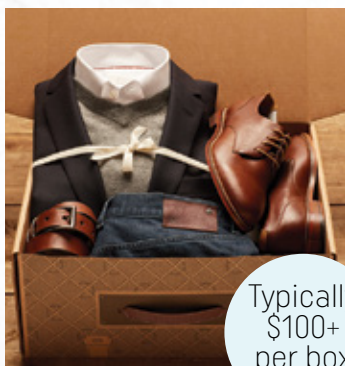
Sometimes it's tough to find the latest designer clothes around town. And remember the last time you hit the mall? It was miles away, you couldn't find anything that matched your style, and you searched endlessly to find your size. If that scenario rings a bell, it's time for an online fashion subscription. You'll get your perfect style and fit every time without the drive.

The latest fashion trends you see online and in magazines can be delivered to your doorstep with no hassle. And if you don't like what came your way in the latest shipment, relax. Most of the time you can return or exchange it. It's stress-free shopping.

Whether you live in a fashion capital like New York City or a rural town that barely makes it onto a map, the power of a high-speed internet connection means you can always dress to impress.

In the past two issues, we featured several food and pet subscription services — look back if you missed it. If you're curious about other online subscriptions out there, don't wait on us. Check them out for yourself. Everything from hot sauces to geeky toys and candles to kids' school kits is shipping out daily.

HERE ARE A FEW OF OUR FAVORITE ONLINE FASHION SUBSCRIPTION SERVICES:



Typically
\$100+
per box

TRUNK CLUB

Operated by Nordstrom, Trunk Club provides high-quality fashion without the struggle of putting together an impeccably matched outfit. Professional stylists for men and women fill your box with everything you need: shirts, earrings, belts, jackets, shoes, sunglasses, handbags and more. You choose your style, price range and frequency, and they do the hard work for you.



Typically
\$100+
per box

STITCH FIX

Stitch Fix brings you five hand-selected clothing items that match your personal style profile in every box. There's no subscription required, and you'll find a mix of familiar brand names, along with new ones, to keep you up to date with the most popular trends for men and women. The service includes free returns and has options for children.



As low as
\$59
per box

YOGA CLUB


Honestly, what's more comfortable than yoga pants? Keep up with the newest styles by ordering through Yoga Club. You'll save up to 60 percent off retail prices. From just pants to full outfits for your workout, Yoga Club keeps you feeling stylish and comfortable for your next trip to the gym.



Typically
\$100+
per box

RACHEL ZOE

Ladies, start planning your seasonal wardrobe around Rachel Zoe's Box of Style. With a new shipment of several items each quarter, Rachel Zoe brings you everything you need to stay on the cutting edge of sophistication and glamour. A typical box may include a necklace, fragrance, makeup and beauty items, wallet clutch, and more.

*Note: Items from Rachel Zoe cannot be returned. 

GET SMART

The latest connected devices
supercharge your home

The holidays are the perfect time to stock up and make your home "smarter" with a variety of devices that allow you to automate and remotely control door locks, lights, household systems and more.

Here are five gadgets that can make your life around the house easier — or at least more fun. Remember, the smart home experience is better with a high-speed broadband connection.

SMART HUB: You can control many smart devices through individual phone apps, but to truly take advantage of a smart home setup, you need a hub. While some hubs run everything through an easy-to-use app — such as the Wink Hub, \$69 — there's something cool about controlling your devices with voice commands through an Apple HomePod, \$349; Google Home, \$129; or Amazon Echo, \$99.99.

The hub you choose will determine the other smart gadgets you buy since there are competing communication standards.



SMART THERMOSTAT: A smart thermostat is not only handy — the devices are capable of learning your routine and effectively program themselves — but it can help you save money by heating and cooling your home more efficiently. One of the most popular options is the Nest thermostat, which starts at \$169. With its new temperature sensors, which can be placed in different rooms, you can tell the thermostat a specific area of the home, such as the baby's room or the kitchen, to maintain a specific temperature.

SMART LOCK: The many features that smart locks offer include unlocking with your phone, responding to voice commands and linking to other devices, such as unlocking the door if the smoke detector goes off. The new Kwikset Kevo, \$314 for all features, also adds a neat new option. To open your door, you just need to touch the lock — even with the side of your finger or your elbow. It's a lifesaver if you're juggling kids or some last-minute gifts.



SMART LIGHTS: If you want remotely controlled outdoor Christmas lights, the easiest solution is to connect them to something like the iHome iSP100 Outdoor SmartPlug, \$39.99. The plug connects through your Wi-Fi network, is compatible with all digital assistants and is resistant to dirt, dust and rain. If you have an Echo, the company Light Rhapsody makes indoor holiday lights, \$59.99, that use Alexa to set different colors, add effects, change brightness, dance to music and turn the lights on or off.



SMART TOY: Speaking of gifts, how about the DropMix Music Gaming System, \$69.99, by Harmonix, the people who created "Rock Band." The DropMix Music Gaming System is played by placing color-coded cards on the board and building musical tracks using elements from songs. The game comes with 60 cards with music by popular artists, and more packs are available in different genres, including hip-hop and rock. 🎮

Copy Cats Printing got a new name and logo to go with its new location on North Mayo Trail.



Bella often greets customers as they come through the door.



Purring along

Paintsville print shop keeps it local

BY JEN CALHOUN

Debbie Stepp's talent for design runs in the family. Her mother, Frances Smith, was known for her flower arrangements, and Stepp has long been known in Paintsville as a quilter. But it wasn't until she earned her degree in graphic design and started working at a print shop in 2007 that print media became her "thing." Now, Stepp, owner of Copy Cats Printing Company, is known around Paintsville as someone who can make things happen with her talent and determination. The company serves thousands of clients and continues to bring in more every day. "I'm an entrepreneur," she says. "I've always been self-sufficient."

Formerly known as Broadway Printing, Copy Cats makes wedding and graduation invitations, event posters, brochures, flyers, business cards and any other traditional print jobs a breeze for customers.

Stepp takes it further by creating custom designs for funeral programs and grave markers and restoring photos. She has even earned a credit as a production designer on the documentary film "The Rivalry: Red v. Blue," which chronicles the longstanding fight for basketball dominance between the University of Louisville and the University of Kentucky.

"I don't shy away from anything," she says. "If you bring it to me, I'll make it happen — just about anything you can think of, I'll do it."

Copy Cats has stayed strong through the country's most recent recession. "When the market was down, we didn't feel it," she says. "So many people were suffering, but we skated along and did just fine."

LOCAL EDGE

The printing company got its new name and logo — a big-eyed, pink kitten holding a picture of itself — about two years ago when Stepp moved the company to its new location on North Mayo Trail. Her team consists of longtime associate Chelsey Jolas and Stepp's dog, Bella, a tiny Havanese fuzzball who serves as the shop's very own "customer service representative."

Stepp says part of her recipe for success rests in the high quality of her printing and design, which continues to bring customers to her door. If she makes a mistake, she'll correct it at no extra charge. She'll also pitch in when a customer needs a helping hand. "I've had women come in wanting me to do invitations for their wedding at the last minute because they came out wrong elsewhere," she says.

Debbie Stepp, left, and Chelsey Jolas work closely together to make sure every project is completed the right way.



Stepp says she also likes to live by the “buy local” mentality. She switched her internet services from a nonlocal company to Foothills as a way to support the people and businesses of her region.

“They’re a customer of mine, and I wanted to be a customer of theirs,” she says. “I absolutely love my Foothills service. I wanted the best, and I get it with them.”

That attitude also applies to helping local nonprofit organizations, she says. For several years, Copy Cats Printing has donated printed media for local theater groups as well as Whiskers or Wags, the Johnson County Animal Shelter.

“I think it’s important to help out local people when I can,” Stepp says. “These organizations bring good things to our area, and I want to be part of keeping them going.”

EYING THE FUTURE

And even though she keeps her focus local, Stepp still dreams of expanding her business in the future — possibly into another county, possibly as an online service. Recently, she had a new website created that could eventually include online sales and service. “I want to take the Copy Cats logo and see that go across the world,” she says. “She’s just too adorable. I can see that as a big thing out there.”

But while Stepp keeps one eye on her work, she keeps the other firmly on her faith. She believes the people she meets make her life and her mission important. “I love to counsel women, because I’ve been there, done that,” she says. “I know what some of these people are suffering. God has been with me the whole way. I’ve had people come in and say, ‘I don’t know why I just came in,’ and then they’ll start bawling. We have church at the counter a lot of times.” 🐾



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Stuffed for the holidays

Enjoy a classic side dish

You could say Mindy Merrell is an expert when it comes to making holiday dressing. Not only is it one of her favorite side dishes during the season, but she also worked for a dozen years as the director of culinary services for Martha White's public relations company. One of her responsibilities was working in the test kitchen to create new recipes using the company's cornbread mix.

"It was fun. I love test kitchen creativity and working within parameters," she says. "Why don't we make dressing more often? It's so delicious and easy to make ahead."

"Traditionally, many families in the South had chicken and dressing for Sunday dinner, so it wasn't just relegated to the holidays. In fact, we were always reminding folks that cornbread dressing is a wonderful side dish for any meat."

Merrell is such a fan of dressing that she actually considers turkey the side dish. "Dressing is an economical vehicle for making something wonderful with leftovers and stretching the menu," she says. "And there's so much room for creativity. I know lots of families must have the same recipes for the holidays, but not me. I'm always tinkering and using what's on hand or what sounds fun at the moment."

And here's a word of advice: "Do not use those bags of

crumbs," she says. "And I don't like my dressing sweet, so there's no using a sweet cornbread mix or putting sugar in the batter."

Follow the instructions on a bag of any Southern, self-rising cornmeal mix and make a pan of real cornbread. Everyone living in the South should absolutely know how to do this.

"I've heard that an iron skillet is one of the most popular wedding gifts now, so there's no excuse for young folks not knowing how to make it."

"Also, whenever we have leftover cornbread, I just put it in a bag in the freezer and use these leftovers for a pan of dressing later. I do the same with biscuits and any other kind of bread. They all work. It just depends on which you like."

Merrell says it's OK to use more than one type of bread in a bowl of stuffing and that adding wheat bread gives it a softer texture. Once you've



More on Mindy ...

In 2014, Mindy Merrell was the winner of TV Food Network's popular cooking show "Chopped." She and her husband, R.B. Quinn, are both food writers in Nashville. You can follow them on their recipe website: www.rbandmindy.com.

combined the bread, decide on the seasonings.

"Traditionally, that would be lots of sauteed celery, onions and sage," she says. "Moisten it with broth and beaten eggs to hold it together, bake and that's it. You can't get any easier than that, so why overdo?"



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

MINDY MERRELL'S FAVORITE STUFFING

- 1 1/2 sticks butter, divided
- 2 cups chopped onion
- 2 cups chopped celery
- 5 to 6 cups crumbled cornbread from a skillet of cornbread made with 2 cups self-rising cornmeal mix or self-rising cornmeal
- 3 cups stale, toasted or fresh bread cubes. Regular bread helps hold the dressing together and gives it a softer texture. You can also use leftover biscuits.
- A handful of fresh chopped parsley
- Other fresh herbs as you like — fresh chopped sage, marjoram, thyme and/or rosemary. If you go with dried herbs, use about 1 teaspoon each of rubbed sage, marjoram, thyme and/or rosemary.
- A generous amount of black pepper
- 3 to 4 cups chicken or turkey broth, homemade or canned
- 2 eggs, beaten

Melt 1 stick of the butter in a large skillet. Cook the onions and celery in the butter over medium heat until soft and caramelized, about 20 minutes.

Combine the crumbled cornbread and bread cubes in a large mixing bowl. Stir in the cooked vegetables, parsley, herbs and black pepper. Blend well. Taste it before you add the eggs and broth to test for seasonings. Stir in the broth and eggs. Add enough broth so that the mixture is moist, but not soupy.

Grease a 9-by-13-inch baking pan with 1-2 tablespoons of the remaining butter. Pour the dressing into the prepared dish. Dot with the remaining butter.

Bake the dressing right away, or cover and refrigerate overnight and cook the next day. Cover lightly with foil and bake in an oven heated to 375 F. Baking time

will vary — if baked right away it should take about 45 minutes. If it's just out of the refrigerator, it will take closer to an hour. If you have other things in the oven, a lower temperature won't matter. Just make sure you brown at the end by removing the foil during the last 15 minutes for a nice crispy brown top.

To be sure the dressing is cooked through, check the internal temperature with an instant-read thermometer. It should read at least 165 F.

Leftovers reheat well in the microwave or oven. Or, crisp them up in an iron skillet for breakfast and serve with runny eggs! 🍳



Dressing add-ins

Mindy Merrell says dressing is one of those dishes that opens itself up to versatility. "It's a blank canvas, so change it up to match the theme of your menu," she says.

- Italian — Add a pound of cooked and crumbled Italian sausage. Add some rosemary, red bell pepper and pine nuts.
- Sausage, apple and pecan — Add a finely chopped apple, 1 pound of cooked and crumbled sausage, and 1 cup of toasted pecans to the mix.
- Leek and country ham — Use leeks instead of onions and add bits of country ham.
- Clams or oysters — Add fresh chopped clams or oysters to the mix and a sautéed green bell pepper.



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- ★ Enjoy refreshments and register for door prizes.
- ★ Representatives from Highlands Health Service, Appalachian Wireless and Walmart Vision Center will be here to provide special offers just for Foothills customers.

