

# CONNECTION



## FLOWER POWER

Williams Floral expands its reach

**MIMI'S PLACE & MORE**  
Farm fresh restaurant in Salyersville

**KEEP THE RHYTHM**  
Broadband connects musical creators



By SHIRLEY BLOOMFIELD, CEO  
NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association

## To expand broadband access, we must protect our supply chains

We at NTCA are encouraged to see rural broadband take center stage as people talk about how to improve our nation’s infrastructure. While grappling with a pandemic, more people than ever — especially in Washington, D.C., and in the policy arena — are realizing that robust and reliable broadband is essential for people to work and learn from home and for our country to move forward. It has been encouraging to see federal and state resources being put toward addressing gaps in broadband coverage.

However, the job is only beginning when the funds start to flow. While NTCA member companies are eager to keep building broadband networks, lead times for fulfillment of orders of telecom supplies are approaching deeply concerning levels. One member recently received a quote that projected an eight-month delay for fiber, and another was told it would take one year for fulfillment of a fiber order. We’re hearing stories of delays of several weeks or months for routers and other gear.

These supply chain delays could have real implications on American consumers — and they could present real problems when it comes to provider compliance with things like buildout deadlines and performance testing obligations.

It’s terrific that resources are being made available to ensure every American has access to sufficient broadband. But it’s going to be equally important that policy-makers pay attention to whether the supply chain can keep up and consider what steps must be taken to ensure that happens.

# BROADBAND: Connecting your life



### Telehealth

Broadband connects you with doctors and health care services



### Work From Home

Broadband connects you with servers and applications to work remotely



### Remote Learning

Broadband connects your children with their teachers and study resources



### Shopping

Broadband connects you with grocery stores, restaurants and retailers for pickup and home delivery



### Family & Community

Broadband connects you with your people over video calls and social media



### Small Business

Broadband connects your business with customers and suppliers



How did your broadband connection help you through 2020? How will it support you in the new year? Share your story with the hashtag **#MyBroadbandStory**.



# Don't ZOOM into trouble

## Do learn the secrets to a great virtual meeting

There are some gaffes co-workers never forget. And with the likes of Zoom, GoToMeeting and FaceTime bringing business gatherings into many homes, the potential for memorable pitfalls only increases.

“Don't take your phone with you to the bathroom during a video call” should most likely be the first rule to remember for any team shifting to virtual gatherings. A quick search on YouTube will show you the wisdom of that policy.

While there's potential for unintentional blunders during video calls, the tools also offer an indispensable resource for teams. In many cases, productivity would grind to a halt without the ability to connect virtually through broadband.

### So, here are a few “Dos” and some “Don'ts” to consider before your next virtual meeting:

**DO** dress fully. A work shirt on top and running shorts or pajamas on the bottom can prove embarrassing if you forget to turn off the camera before standing up. It happens, often.

**DO** take a few minutes before the meeting to confirm you know how to turn the microphone and camera on and (likely more importantly) off in the software you're using. It's also a good policy to stay muted unless speaking.

**DON'T** leave your notifications turned on when screen sharing during a meeting. Otherwise, everyone attending might see the message from your hungry spouse regarding the takeout lunch you promised to deliver.

**DO** have a clear, detailed agenda and stick to it. The attention of participants can wander, and a well-paced plan can keep everyone focused.

**DON'T** ignore the background. People will judge you on the contents of your bookshelves. Also, if there's a forgotten not-safe-for-work bit of kitsch visible on a shelf or wall, don't expect your co-workers to spare you embarrassment. They may just enjoy the humor.

**DO** consider lighting. Everyone looks better with good lighting, and a great presentation can not only set the tone for how others perceive you but also boost your self-confidence.

**DON'T** forget to take the time before the meeting to get a glass of water or cup of coffee.



**DO** jot down any notes about points you wish to cover, and keep a pen and paper handy. Know the steps you need to take to help you be more present during the meeting, and repeat the formula every time.

**DO** remember to inform other household members you're joining a video call. More than one relative or friend has taken an unintended star turn during a serious discussion.

**DON'T** leave the cats and dogs free to wander. Disembodied voices may draw their attention, usually at the most inopportune time. While a stray tail or untimely howl might add levity to a meeting, know your audience and prepare accordingly.

**DO** remember that the most important thing of all is to laugh. Isolation and, often, stress can counterbalance the freedom of remote work. Every meeting, take a moment to appreciate your co-workers, share a joke, smile and laugh. Enjoy the virtual time together. 🗨️

**That's a formula for a great, productive meeting.**

# Let's look forward to a bright 2021

The entire Foothills Communications's family wishes you a happy New Year. We hope everyone enjoyed a safe, fulfilling and joyous holiday season.

As 2021 begins, though, it's hard not to reflect on the past 12 months, a time of unexpected challenges for many of us. Throughout history, there are pivotal moments responsible for reflection, even wonder, decades later. Often, these times mark challenges such as a stock market crash, a war or, yes, a global pandemic. For better or worse, 2020 was one of those unforgettable moments. Nearly everyone was touched in some way by COVID-19, either by illness or by the economic ripples.



**RUTH CONLEY**  
Chief Executive Officer

Even in a year of challenge, however, you can find countless examples of the traits that make our nation so strong. Educators went above and beyond to help our children. Health care workers showed their heroism, as always. And the list goes on.

I believe our communities are strong because neighbors are so willing to help neighbors. This is personal for me. Frankly, it's at the heart of what we do here at Foothills. This cooperative originated when residents of our rural community came together to provide telephone service at a time when larger national companies saw no profit in serving our area. Instead, neighbors helped neighbors by forming a cooperative to provide a vital service, a mission that now includes making a fast internet network available to you.

Every day we see how important that service really is. Businesses, schools, hospitals, emergency service agencies, law enforcement and more rely on the digital tools made possible by broadband internet. The pandemic made this reality evident.

The ability to work from home became more important than ever. Churches created streaming worship services to keep flocks connected. Schools turned to online learning to engage with students when in-person classes were not possible. And let's be honest, streaming services like Netflix, Disney+ and Hulu helped to keep many of us entertained during a year when some cheer was at a premium. Just for a second, imagine experiencing 2020 without your internet connection. That's not a world I want to think about, and we're proud to offer a service that is so essential to so many.

As we enter 2021, the potential for fresh opportunities greet each of us. Better health. New creative challenges. Improved organization. It's hard not to look at the start of a new year as a way to reboot and recharge.

Broadband technology can once again help, and I'm sure some of you have new devices. Maybe they were found beneath a Christmas tree, or perhaps they were picked up during gift-buying shopping.

The options appear limitless. Smartwatches can help track fitness. A seemingly endless stream of online tools promises the hope of better productivity. And new tablets, computers and more open up a world of resources ranging from telemedicine visits to library digital book downloads.

Fast internet access is one thread tying together all of those possibilities and creating an onramp to a better 2021. And the potential of widespread, fast broadband access such as that provided by Foothills makes it all possible.

Thank you for allowing us to help you make 2021 as bright and positive as it can be. Have a great start to the year. 📧



## 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, 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:



On the Cover:



The Williams Floral team is, from left, Kelsie Hill, Vicki Hannah, Paula Stambaugh, Michelle Porter and Kayla Waller. See story Page 12.

# Benefits of fiber

At Foothills Communications, we've been committed to bringing local businesses and residents the best in communications technologies since we started. Today, we are proud to bring you the best in internet technologies with a fast, reliable, fiber-based network.

**Why fiber? Here are a few of the reasons companies like ours are building fiber networks all across rural America.**

## FIBER IS FAST

Simply put, fiber is the fastest technology available. Traditional internet connections range from 10 to 25 Mbps, but fiber internet can be as fast as 1 "gig" — that's 1,000 Mbps!

## FIBER IS RELIABLE

Unlike other internet technologies, fiber internet is not slowed down by weather, physical obstructions or electromagnetic interference. That means less downtime and a more reliable connection for businesses and individuals alike.

## FIBER IS FUTURE-PROOF

While copper and cable have limits, society is nowhere near inventing technologies that will outpace the speeds fiber can provide. Even as the needed bandwidths increase over time, fiber internet will continue providing sufficient speeds for years to come.

## FIBER IS SCALABLE

As companies like Foothills Communications build out fiber networks, it's easy to lay more fiber strands than an area currently needs. This allows us to quickly increase capacity later, as the demands of technology call for it, without having to go back and build another new network for our community.

## FIBER IS IDEAL FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES

Delivering a strong internet connection to rural areas can be a challenge. Because fiber is unparalleled in its ability to maintain fast speeds over long distances, it is an ideal solution for communities like ours. We are committed to bringing rural customers the same speed and reliability enjoyed by many homes and businesses in larger cities, and fiber helps us do exactly that.

With our advanced fiber network, Foothills Communications is providing fast, reliable internet that enables access to cutting-edge technologies for improved health care, education, agriculture, business and much more.

HEY  
TELEMARKETERS:

DO NOT CALL!



It's easy to add your number to the  
**Do Not Call Registry.**

Register online at

[www.donotcall.gov](http://www.donotcall.gov)

or call 888-382-1222. For TTY, call 866-290-4236.

You must call from the telephone number you wish to register.

## Need help paying for services?

**Lifeline Assistance may be an option for you!**

You are eligible for Lifeline benefits if you qualify for and receive one of the following benefits:

- SNAP
- Medicaid
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Federal Public Housing Assistance
- The Veteran's Pension or Survivor's Pension benefit
- Meet income requirements

## DO YOU QUALIFY?

**Apply today!**

To find out whether you qualify for Lifeline assistance, please visit [www.checklifeline.org](http://www.checklifeline.org) or call 1-800-234-9473.

# Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge

## An avian sanctuary

Story by ANNE P. BRALY

Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge in North Alabama is a rich, diverse wildlife habitat.

As winter's chill sets in across North Alabama, Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge undergoes a feathery transformation. Birds that normally call the northern reaches of the continent home fly south, finding the relative warmth of the 35,000-acre property along the banks of the Tennessee River far more to their liking.

Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge came to be in 1938 as a protected area for migratory birds and other wildlife who call the refuge home year-round — snakes, deer, small mammals, amphibians and other animal species. It was the first-ever wildlife area to occupy a hydroelectric impoundment, which is part of a larger hydroelectric system that uses a dam to store river water in a reservoir — in this case, Wheeler Dam. It was an experiment that has become a tremendous success over ensuing decades.

Although designated as a waterfowl refuge, Wheeler provides for a wide spectrum of wildlife with its deep river channels, creeks, tupelo swamps and other areas. There is shelter and food for wintering birds, such as the critically endangered whooping crane, and year-round residents like the endangered gray bat.

The refuge is also home to 115 species of fish, 74 species of reptiles and amphibians, 47 species of mammals, 38 species of freshwater mussels and 26 species of freshwater snails.

Teresa Adams, supervisory park ranger at Wheeler, says the refuge's appeal to sandhill and whooping cranes is due to management practices in place since Wheeler's inception. Those practices reflect a partnership between the refuge and farmers in the region.

"Farmers plant food crops — corn, soybeans and winter wheat — and leave around 18% of the crop in the field for the wintering waterfowl, cranes, and migratory and native birds," Adams says.

Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge, which serves as the gateway to the North Alabama Birding Trail, has a visitor center that hosts a series of interpretive exhibits. These displays have information about the refuge's numerous animals, as well as the early human residents of the Tennessee River Valley.

At any time, you might witness one of more than 300 species that have been recorded on the refuge. Year-round residents include great blue herons, great egrets, mourning doves, downy woodpeckers, Northern flickers and many more. It's not hard to recognize the brilliant hue of a blue jay or an Eastern bluebird or hear the caw of a crow or the screech of an owl.

Among the most common waterfowl that choose to winter at the refuge are wood and ring-necked ducks. Occasionally, you may spot a Ross's goose or greater white-fronted goose. 📷



Eastern screech owl.

## Ready, set, shoot!

Tom Ress, a resident of Athens, Alabama, is an avid bird-watcher. His passion for photography has taken him far and wide with a camera in hand and a bird in the viewfinder. With his Canon 7D Mark II camera and Canon 100-400mm II zoom lens, he's zeroed in on the elusive blue-winged teal at Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge only once every two to three years, but he spots the tufted titmouse flitting from limb to limb more often.

### Ress points out a number of important things to consider when photographing birds.

- For starters, you need to learn about their habitats and what foods and activities they enjoy. Do they hunt for rodents by soaring over open fields? Do they search through dead leaves for bugs, or do they prey on flying insects?
- Find a good vantage point and wait. Patience is one of the main things to bring with you when you plan on getting the perfect shot.
- Invest in a small, portable blind so that you're as well-hidden as possible. Such blinds are sold at big-box stores such as Dick's Sporting Goods, Walmart and Academy Sports + Outdoors.
- Tripods are a good idea, allowing you to capture a longer exposure by using a slower shutter speed. They're also useful if you don't have a steady hand. The use of a tripod is good for shooting baby birds in their nests or birds roosting in tree holes, on ledges and in other secure places. Tripods are not good, though, if you plan on shooting birds in action, Ress says. They are also rather cumbersome to carry if your hike is a long one.
- You will find more birds by learning their calls and songs. The Cornell University-funded website [allaboutbirds.org](http://allaboutbirds.org) is a good resource that includes more than 600 bird sounds and songs.
- Morning and evening are the best times for photography, offering the best lighting. Avoid midday when the sunlight is at its harshest.
- You don't need an expensive camera, but you don't want the cheapest, either. Make sure whatever camera you purchase has a good zoom lens.

### Top-five birding apps:

1. **eBird** offers a paperless way to log your bird sightings (Android and iPhone).
2. **Merlin Bird ID** will assist you with identifying birds in seconds (Android and iPhone).
3. **Audubon Bird Guide** is a complete guide to more than 800 species of birds found in North America (Android and iPhone).
4. **BirdsEye** helps ID birds around you and find the birds you want to see (iPhones only).
5. **Larkwire** turns learning bird sounds into a game to help you and the kids identify birds by their calls (iPhones only).

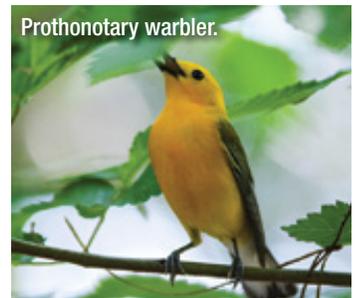
## Bird-watching essentials

Whether it's in your own backyard or out in the wild, there are a few things to ensure your bird-watching experience is a success. Having spent countless hours in the field, Tom Ress is well-versed in the essentials, including:

- **BINOCULARS**
- **A FIELD GUIDE**, such as "A Field Guide to the Birds East of the Rockies" by Roger Tory Peterson and "The Sibley Guide to Birds" by David Sibley are good ones.
- **A BIRDING APP**, such as Audubon's Bird Guide: North America or eBird, to have bird-watching tips and other info at your fingertips.
- **RAIN GEAR** — Always be prepared.
- **PATIENCE** — You can never have enough.



Indigo bunting.



Prothonotary warbler.



Pectoral sandpiper.



A whooping crane, left, and a sandhill crane.

# Homemade heaven

Mimi's Place & More offers a fresh take on home cooking

Story by JEN CALHOUN | Photography by JIM ARNETT

**W**ithin a week of opening Mimi's Place & More in September 2020, Carolyn Griffith Blevins realized her restaurant had hit a culinary nerve in Salyersville. "We did over 125 orders a day in the first six days," Blevins says. "We were still about a month away from the grand opening."

Every day, nearly all her made-from-scratch food would sell out, whether it was the home-made lasagna, hand-cut cheese fries, platters of locally raised roast beef, rib-eyes or prime rib, or freshly made chicken salad. "One day, I had 12 steak sandwiches going out at the same time," she says. "It was just plain crazy."

By the following Monday, Blevins was worn out from the long hours and the near-constant movement involved in running a restaurant. But even though it was the only day of the week the restaurant didn't open, cars still found their way into the parking lot. "I had to say, 'Now, remember, we're closed on Mondays,'" she says with a shrug and a laugh. "It felt like we were a success."

## FAMILY TIES

Deciding to open a restaurant felt natural to Blevins, who has spent a lifetime in food service. For 21 years she worked alongside her mother, Wilma Eldridge, who owns the restaurant Wilma's in Paintsville. After that, she served in sales for another 24 years with Sysco Restaurant Supply, traveling all over the region.



Mimi's Place & More in Salyersville offers locally sourced meats and home-cooked meals.

When she lost her job with Sysco in 2018, Blevins took a year off to figure a few things out. The restaurant business was in her blood, but she wasn't sure how she could fit it in with her life. "I didn't want to go back on the road," she says. "But I needed to make a living. I'm also a worker — always have been — so I was ready to get back to it."

## FARM-FRESH TRADITION

Within a year, Blevins came up with the idea for Mimi's Place. Named after her oldest grandson's nickname for her, the restaurant would be designed to offer locals the homestyle cooking they knew and loved but with an emphasis on locally grown meats and produce.

Blevins had learned at Sysco that food distributors were offering regionally sourced products to restaurants as a way to help local economies, ensure freshness and keep better tabs on food safety. The idea appealed to Blevins as a prospective restaurant owner and a chef because it helped support her neighbors and made for better, fresher flavors.

Access to high-quality ingredients is important to Blevins, she says, because she incorporates family recipes that have survived generations. "Some of my recipes go back to the start of the Lemaster family," she says. "They've been passed down by my great-aunt, Ruth Lemaster, and my grandmother — known as Granny — Neva Caudill, and my aunt, Wilma Jane Baker. Some are at least 100 years old."



Blevins also wanted her restaurant to reflect a country style. She enlisted Mike Brown, who is her boyfriend and a local contractor with Mid-South Contracting, to design the farmhouse-style building and add wooden fencing to give it a classic country feel. “It looks like an old country store,” she says. “There’s a big area out here, so we plan to do a lot more things with it in the future — maybe weddings and outdoor events, whatever it develops into.”

### RUSTIC MODERN

Despite the homey feel and farm-fresh products, Blevins’ longtime experience in food service trained her in the importance of technology in operating a modern-day business. She installed a point of sale system to track sales, cash flow and food inventory. She also makes use of the restaurant’s Facebook page to spread the word about her menu and show appreciation to her customers.

“When I opened, Facebook was the only thing I did to let people know,” she says. “I didn’t have to do any advertising.”

Blevins says more plans for the restaurant are on the horizon and could be rolled out in the near future. She hopes to do breakfast at some point. But she already holds special events and caters. “I’ll need more help,” she says with a laugh. “Right now, I’m pulling about 17-hour days.” 📱



Carolyn Blevins, owner of Mimi’s Place, got help on the construction side of things from her boyfriend, Mike Brown.



Blevins cooks up fixings from scratch.



## *Mimi’s Place & More*

Mimi’s Place & More is at 1365 New Paintsville Road in Salyersville. The restaurant is open Tuesday through Sunday for lunch and dinner. Indoor and outdoor seating is available, as is carryout and delivery. Mimi’s also caters functions of all sizes and offers event space. Menu items include everything from fresh-cut cheese fries to deep-fried pickles and locally sourced prime rib, roast beef and rib-eyes. Sandwiches and burgers are also a big hit. For more information and operating hours, visit the restaurant’s Facebook page.



# Come together

Story by DREW WOOLLEY

Broadband brings together musicians across the world

As the pandemic stretched on last year, drummer Mike Kosacek and other members of the band Cosmic Singularity started kicking around the idea of recording a second album. With most music venues shut down and more time to write, it was a familiar story for bands and musicians across the world. But there was one key exception: Kosacek has never actually met any of his bandmates in person.

“Without high-speed internet, we just couldn’t do this,” he says. “I live in Round Rock, Texas. The keyboard player lives in Florida. The bass player is in Utah, and at the time, our singer and guitar player was living in Scotland.”

The globe-spanning collaboration would have been impossible just a decade ago. The songwriting process is a sort of musical relay. One member of the band will share a demo of a song he created, and the others will add their parts one by one.

“We’ll start stripping off the individual parts, and everyone will add in their own instruments to build up the song,” Kosacek says. “Once we’ve got all those parts, they’ll send it to me, and I’ll do the mixing in my studio.”

## A NOD TO THE DRUMMER

Kosacek built his home studio, DoubleDog Recording, in 2009. He had been recording in his bedroom for several years, but the situation wasn’t ideal.

“In terms of sound, that wasn’t optimal. Plus, I have a family, so the noise wasn’t optimal for them, either,” he says. “When I decided I really wanted to make money off of my music, it had to be better.”

The stand-alone, 475-square-foot recording space gives him room to play without driving his family from the premises and provides Kosacek the option of recording bands live. Normally, he estimates, about a fifth of his business would come from mixing and mastering recordings for live bands. The rest is his Studio Drum Tracks business, where he records drum parts for Texas-based groups and artists like Black Dirt Tango, ThemThatKnow and Mike Hamilton, as well as others from across the globe.



Broadband technology underpins drummer Mike Kosacek’s business.

“At least half of it is mind reading,” Kosacek says. “But for me, I find that a lot of it is just experience playing and listening to a lot of music. So, when someone sends me a song that needs drums, I have some idea of where to go with it. A lot of times, it’s right the first time, and people are wowed at the difference, which is, of course, my goal.”

These days, with bands unable to record in person, all of Kosacek’s work comes from the drum tracks business. But internet connections have come a long way since he started, making the transition an easy one.

“I actually saw an uptick in business, because people were stuck at home writing songs that needed drums,” he says. “Ten years ago we would have to mail CDs, DVDs, even hard drives back and forth, because sometimes it was faster and more reliable than internet transfers. Being able to do this digitally and share files online — that’s what makes it happen.” 📧

## Remote mastery

From his earliest memories, Serge Espitia was in love with music and how it comes together. He eventually moved to New York, where he had the chance to work as a producer with artists including James Iha of Smashing Pumpkins and Adam Schlesinger of Fountains of Wayne, as well as producers for artists like David Bowie, Beyonce and John Legend.

But in 2016, Espitia and his wife were tired of the city, so they moved to New Jersey. There, he set up his own home studio for mastering — the art of touching up songs to achieve professional sound quality.

“There’s a lot of fear of the mastering process, but it’s really about your personal taste and appreciation for music,” Espitia says.

His mastering business is completely online, and that’s the way Espitia likes it. Operating remotely allows him to work faster compared to in-person sessions with artists that can take hours longer. The key, he says, is making a human connection with artists to better understand what they want.

“A lot of people I work with are very sensitive, so they have a good understanding of their musical influences and what they want to draw from,” Espitia says. “So, that part of the business really hasn’t changed.”



## Home schooling

- ▶ **Education** — Books, magazines, online tutorials and more are available to help developing artists learn their trade. Online collaboration groups can also provide a supportive community and opportunities to hone your craft.
- ▶ **Know what you want** — Understand what kinds of sounds you want to create for yourself or others. These preferences will guide the type of recording environment you need and the equipment you use.
- ▶ **Learn your tools** — Having the best gear isn’t the be-all and end-all. Whether you’re using GarageBand or Pro Tools, knowing how to use what is at your disposal effectively and efficiently is crucial.
- ▶ **Listen** — Spend a lot of time listening to music. The more you can develop a critical ear, the better you’ll be at identifying the sounds you want to create and others want to achieve.

Thinking of building your own home studio? Take some advice from the pros.

### *gear list* 🎙️

- **Microphone** — Beginners can get by recording on a smartphone, but serious musicians will want to invest in a quality mic.
- **Headphones** — Always opt for wired over wireless to prevent delays and unexpected interruptions to your connection.
- **Studio monitors** — These speakers play back unenhanced sound so you can be confident how your mix will sound on different systems.
- **Audio interface** — This converts the sound from your mic to digital sound on your computer.
- **Software** — There are many programs available to mix and export your music. GarageBand is free and a good starting place for beginners.
- **Soundproofing** — Keeping your sound in will make the neighbors happy. Keeping their noises out will make you happy.



# BUSINESS IS BLOOMING

*Paintsville florist expands online with home decor & more*

Story by JEN CALHOUN | Photography by JIM ARNETT

**P**aula Stambaugh always imagined herself living in a big city, working in a highrise and living a life far away from her Paintsville upbringing. “I took all these business courses in high school,” Stambaugh says. “I’m a go-getter — a workaholic. I knew I could do it, and I knew I was going to do it. But then life happened, and things didn’t go according to plan.”

Instead, Stambaugh stayed home to help her mother, Virginia Vitito, at her shop, Williams Floral. She learned to design floral arrangements and run a business, among other things. In 2004, she bought the shop from her mother and started putting her own spin on it.

“Now I can’t imagine doing anything else,” says Stambaugh, who has brought her own daughters on staff, along with two other employees. “We have a blast. If I’m off a day or two, I can’t wait to get back to the girls and get back to the shop. This is home.”

## FAST-PACED FUN

The life of a florist and entrepreneur isn’t for everyone, she says. “A lot of people get this look in their eye and say things like, ‘I’d love to do what you do.’ But we don’t really get to stop and smell the roses like people would think. It’s a lot of hard work.”

When the shop opens at 9 a.m., Stambaugh and her staff have already flipped on the lights, lit the candles and swung into action. If they don’t have any new orders for freshly cut flowers, then they start on seasonal wreaths and other arrangements for the shop’s Etsy store. Etsy is an online marketplace that gives businesses and cottage industries a place to sell their handmade goods. “We’ve been doing this for eight years now, and we ship all over the U.S.,” she says.



Kayla Waller creates a flower arrangement at Williams Floral in Paintsville.

Last fall Stambaugh started polkadotpumpkin.com, an online store that sells home decor, gifts, wreaths, flags, pillows, throws and more. She launched it around the same time she was planning for her usual extravagant Christmas display at Williams Floral. “The Christmas setup takes a lot of thought,” she says. “We want people to gasp. We want people to get into the spirit.”

All the while, Stambaugh and her staff of four are taking orders, answering questions, designing flower arrangements and doing the other tasks that keep a flower shop running. “We work six days a week,” she says. “There’s always so much stuff to do.”

## EYES FORWARD

But Stambaugh's business doesn't thrive on hard work alone. She realized early on that internet selling would be an important addition to local sales. She also figured out that just about everything would rely on internet service and technology. "Times change, and so do flowers," she says. "We have to keep up with the latest trends, and we do. The internet is everything. We stay on top of things, because if you don't, then you'll get passed up."

It's worked, too. Since she bought the shop from her mother, business has tripled. The Williams Floral Facebook page is up to about 59,000 followers — about 12 times Paintsville's population. She's also renovated her 4,000-square-foot shop in bits and pieces over the years. She's even bought another flower shop in Paintsville in hopes of expanding. "We have grown this business every year," she says. "That means we've also outgrown our building."

If she does find more space at some point, Stambaugh might even start offering classes on floral design, wreath-making and bow-making. "If I get big enough, I might have to," she says. "We don't sit still on anything. We make it happen."

Stambaugh believes dotting on customers also helps her find success — in more ways than one. Whether she's adding a "Thank you" sticker to a bag or holding a customer's hand through a tough time, she believes it's those little details and small kindnesses that make up the bigger picture. "Just when I start wondering, 'Why am I here?' God shows me," she says. 📩



Kelsie Hill, owner Paula Stambaugh and Kayla Waller are part of the team that keeps Williams Floral thriving.



Williams Floral offers everything from gifts and wreaths to home decor and more.



In addition to the shop on Court Street, Stambaugh and her team run an online Etsy shop.

## Flowers & more

Located at 261 Court St. in Paintsville, Williams Floral offers flower arrangements for every occasion and much more. The shop includes a large variety of gifts, candles, wreaths and home decor items. Visit in person or shop the WilliamsFloral Etsy.com store. In addition to williamsfloral.com, owner Paula Stambaugh has started a new website with even more decor at polkadotpumpkin.com. Visit Williams Floral on Facebook for shop hours and the latest information.





## TUSCAN WHITE BEAN SKILLET

- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil, divided
- 8 ounces brown mushrooms, sliced
- 1 1/2 cups diced yellow onion (about 1 large onion)
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 2/3 cup drained and chopped oil-packed sun-dried tomatoes
- 2 (14.5-ounce) cans fire-roasted diced tomatoes
- 2 (14.5-ounce) cans drained and rinsed cannellini beans
- 2 (14.5-ounce) cans quartered artichoke hearts, drained
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1/2 teaspoon dried thyme
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- Parsley for garnish

Heat 1 tablespoon of the oil until shimmering in a 10-inch, cast-iron skillet over medium-high heat. Working in batches, add the mushrooms to the pan in a single layer. Brown for 1 to 2 minutes per side. Transfer to a bowl and repeat with remaining mushrooms.

Add the remaining tablespoon of oil to the pan. Add the onions and saute until lightly browned, about 3 minutes. Add the garlic and sun-dried tomatoes and cook until fragrant and softened, another 2 minutes.

Add the diced tomatoes to the pan, along with the beans, artichoke hearts, salt, pepper, oregano, thyme and sugar. Cover the pan and turn the heat down to medium. Let cook for about 10 minutes, until hot. Return the mushrooms to the pan and cook for another 1 to 2 minutes to warm them up.

# Healthy & hearty

## Beans are perfect for cold days

**W**ith the holiday season behind us and winter in full swing, it's time for a bit of comfort. And there's perhaps no better way to create a feeling of warmth than with a steaming bowl of bean soup, or chili with beans, or, for that matter, any type of bean dish.

Beans can also pull double duty, offering wonderful taste and texture while being a delicious meat substitute.

Whether they are black, red, white or brown, beans are a great source of fiber, protein, iron, B vitamins, potassium, magnesium and many other beneficial nutrients. And if you choose dried beans over canned, you'll save money as well as reduce your sodium intake. If you do use canned beans, be sure to rinse them to reduce excess salt.



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

To serve: Spoon the bean mixture into bowls and garnish with chopped parsley, if desired. Be sure to serve with plenty of crusty bread for sopping up the tasty juices.

## BLACK BEAN ENCHILADAS

- 2 large portobello mushroom caps
- 1/2 medium red onion
- 1 orange bell pepper
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 (15-ounce) can black beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 2 teaspoons cumin
- 1 teaspoon onion powder
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 2 tablespoons lime juice
- 1/2 cup vegetable broth or water
- 3 cups red enchilada sauce, store-bought or homemade
- 1 1/2 cups guacamole, store-bought or homemade
- 12 (8-inch) corn tortillas

**For the garnish:** 1 cup thinly sliced romaine lettuce; 1 to 2 radishes, julienned; 2 tablespoons minced red onion; and torn cilantro or parsley

Sour cream or Greek yogurt, optional

Preheat the oven to 400 F.

Remove the stems from the mushroom caps and thinly slice the caps. Thinly slice the red onion. Thinly slice the bell pepper.

In a large skillet, heat the olive oil over medium high heat. Saute the sliced veggies for 6 to 7 minutes until tender. Add the drained and rinsed black beans, garlic powder, cumin, onion powder, paprika, kosher salt, lime juice, and vegetable broth or water. Cook for 2 minutes until the liquid is thickened into a sauce.

Spread 1 cup of the enchilada sauce in the bottom of a large baking dish.

Brush both sides of each tortilla lightly with olive oil. Heat a large griddle to medium-high heat. Cook the tortillas in batches for 15 seconds per side until lightly browned.



Fill each tortilla with 1/4 cup of the vegetable filling and about 2 tablespoons guacamole, running in a line down the center. Roll it up and place it in the baking dish, seam side down. Once all of the tortillas are in the dish, pour the remaining 2 cups of enchilada sauce over the top.

Bake for 5 minutes until warmed through. Top with garnishes and serve.

## NUTTY WHITE BEAN, WILD RICE SOUP

- 1/2 cup cashews
- 1 medium yellow onion
- 2 celery stalks
- 3 medium carrots
- 8 ounces baby bella mushrooms
- 6 cloves garlic
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 tablespoon dried thyme
- 1 tablespoon dried oregano
- 8 cups vegetable broth
- 1 cup wild rice (not a wild rice blend)
- 2 teaspoons kosher salt, divided
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- 2 (15-ounce) cans white beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 cup water
- 2 teaspoons dried sage
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce, tamari or liquid aminos

Place the cashews in a bowl and cover them with water. Leave them to soak while you make the recipe.

Dice the onion. Thinly slice the celery. Cut the carrot into rounds. Slice the mushrooms. Mince the garlic. In a Dutch oven, heat the olive oil and saute the onion, celery and carrots, stirring occasionally, for 5 minutes or until lightly browned. Add the mushrooms and saute for 2 more minutes. Add the garlic, thyme and oregano and stir for another 2 minutes.

Add the broth, wild rice, 1 1/2 teaspoons kosher salt and black pepper. Bring to a simmer and cook, uncovered, for 20 minutes. Add the drained and rinsed beans and continue to simmer, uncovered, for 30-35 minutes more, or until the rice breaks open.

Using a liquid measuring cup, carefully remove 2 cups of the hot soup, including broth, veggies and rice, and put it in a blender, along with 1 cup of water. Drain the cashews, then add them and the dried sage to the blender. Blend on high for about 1 minute, until creamy. Pour the creamy mixture back into the soup. Add the soy sauce. Taste and, if needed, add the remaining 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt. Adjust seasonings as desired. Garnish with freshly ground pepper. 📄



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