

# CONNECTION

## Destination Paintsville

Country Music  
Highway Museum

COUNTRY MUSIC HIGHWAY  
MUSEUM



THE COVE KEEPS  
IT PLAYFUL

SWASHBUCKLING  
DESTINATIONS



By SHIRLEY BLOOMFIELD, CEO  
NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association

## Take a BOLD step

### A new toolkit opens doors


Summer is finally here! That means barbecues, days at the pool and, if you have kids, reminding them to tackle their dreaded summer reading list before it is too late.

As they are doing their homework, I have an assignment for you. But don't worry, it's only a dozen pages.

The past few years have shown the world that broadband access is a necessity, not a luxury. As the demand and investment in broadband increases across rural America, so does the need for a skilled workforce to build and maintain these broadband networks.

NTCA's Smart Communities program recently teamed up with the National Rural Education Association to create the Broadband Opportunities and Leadership Development (BOLD) K-12 Career Awareness Toolkit, which is chock-full of new and creative ways to engage students and get them excited about careers in the broadband industry. Whether your student is interested in computer science, engineering and even accounting or marketing, there are opportunities for everyone in the broadband industry.

From guidance on organizing hands-on internships and site visits, to working with schools to develop curricula, or even ways to get involved with local esports and robotics teams, this toolkit is a wonderful resource for parents, educators and community-based broadband providers alike.

Summer may be in full swing, but back-to-school season will be here before you know it. Make sure you add the Smart Rural Community K-12 Career Awareness Toolkit to your summer reading list today! Read it here: [ntca.org/BOLDToolkit](https://ntca.org/BOLDToolkit). 




## Avoid QR mischief

### Scammers co-opt this handy code

QR codes — it stands for Quick Response — pop up frequently. TV ads, restaurant menus and much more rely on these little squares of blocky lines to quickly link a smartphone user to handy information, a download or as a way to digitally send money to someone.

The FBI, however, has warned that cybercriminals may tamper with the codes. The FBI offers a few tips so you can take advantage of QR codes while staying safe and secure:

- After scanning a QR code, check the URL to make sure it is the site you want. A malicious domain name may be similar to the intended URL but with typos or a misplaced letter.
- Be cautious when entering login, personal or financial information.
- If scanning a physical QR code, ensure the code shows no signs of tampering, such as a sticker placed over the original.
- Do not download an app from a QR code.
- If you receive an email asking you to complete a payment through a QR code, call the requesting company to verify. Look up the company's number on a trusted site — don't use a number from the email.
- Do not download a QR code scanner app — the built-in phone camera is a safer option.
- If you receive a QR code you believe to be from someone you know, contact them through a known number or address to verify.
- Avoid making payments through a site navigated to from a QR code. Instead, manually enter a known and trusted URL to complete the payment. 



# Seeding the future

## THE CLOUD UPLIFTS EDUCATION

The arrival of fast, reliable internet service in rural areas sparked innovation across businesses, health care providers and government resources, leading to more options and richer services. When it comes to education, how students interact now with schools and each other has evolved at a similarly blistering pace.

First, there was the growth of cloud-based services — multiple remote networked computers that handle storage and processing of information. Then, since the cloud was doing the heavy computing work, an entire class of low-power, lower-cost devices sprang up.

Together, this combo — low-cost Chromebooks, as well as similar devices, and cloud-based tools — have changed how many students learn.

**Collaboration:** The cloud allows students to work together on group projects after school or other times they're not physically in the same room. Cloud-based storage systems, such as Google Drive, Microsoft's OneDrive and others, allow the creation and sharing of documents, spreadsheets and presentations in real time — you can see the work of other members of your team as they're making changes.

Collaboration and brainstorming are easier than ever.

**Accessibility:** With their Chromebooks or similar devices students can access their work from any location, at any time. All their work is saved on the cloud, making it easily accessible and organized.

**Efficiency:** In many school systems, teachers use the cloud to grade assignments more efficiently and even easily share the results with parents. Students might receive immediate feedback, allowing them to improve their work and better understand the material.

**Personalization:** These cloud-based systems create the option for personalized learning experiences. Students can access online resources and tools that cater to their specific needs and learning styles. For families that home-school, online communities with similar educational interests and other resources also become more accessible.

**Productivity:** Thanks to the cloud and low-cost computing devices, students can be more productive, organized and collaborative. And because the tools are far less expensive than traditional computers, more people can affordably access them. 📧

### Looking ahead to a new school year?

*Make sure you're prepared.*

- **The essential computer:** If your student needs a basic laptop to do homework and access online learning platforms, try the Lenovo Flex 5i Chromebook. "It's comparatively inexpensive, and it offers fast performance plus an excellent keyboard and trackpad. The Flex 5i is also compact and light, and its 1080p touchscreen is vivid and bright," according to a review by Wirecutter, a website operated by The New York Times offering reviews of a range of devices. Prices vary, but expect to pay about \$350.
- **Quality web cam:** From education to work, video calls are common. If your computer isn't already equipped, consider adding a camera. The Logitech C270 HD, often available for less than \$30, is a good choice for students required to attend lessons online. It delivers quality and clarity.

The Foothills Connection is a bimonthly newsletter published by Foothills Communications, ©2023. It is distributed without charge to all customers of the company.

# Ready when you are

As your source for internet, video and phone service, everyone at Foothills Communications knows it's our job to keep you connected to what matters most. That might be family on the other side of the country, an important project for work or just your favorite show when you're ready to unwind at the end of the day.



**JARROD HARDIN**  
Director of Customer Relations

In all likelihood, staying on top of your bill probably does not rank that highly. But having quick access to your account does make it easier to take care of business and get back to what you really want to be doing. After all, in this fast-paced day and age, few of us have time to visit an office to take care of a quick bill payment.

That's why Foothills recently transitioned to a new billing system that makes it easier to break down your charges and better understand exactly what you're paying for. Customers can see their invoices, check their payment history and more. All you need is the eBill Mobile app and your entire account is at your fingertips.

Managing your Foothills account has never been easier. As much as we enjoy working directly with our customers, we know


that coming to the office to drop off a payment can be a hassle. Putting a payment in the mail takes time we don't always have, and even making a payment online can be difficult if we don't have access to a computer.

That's where the eBill Mobile app comes in handy. As long as you have a smartphone and a signal, you can make a payment, change your contact information, set up automatic payments, submit a trouble ticket and make just about any change to your account that you could in person.

This new system will also ensure improved accuracy, so you can rest assured that you are only paying for the service you use. It streamlines our billing process, meaning Foothills can get bills to you more quickly and payments will post to your account sooner.

If you do run into problems, our new billing software will even help you get the answers you need. Between faster response times for billing questions and easier access to customer service representatives through both mobile and online trouble tickets, you'll be able to wrap up your business quickly and get back to what you want to be doing. You can download the eBill Mobile app from Apple's App Store or the Google Play store today to get access to these new features.

And for those who would rather manage their account without the app, you can also enjoy new features on your computer or over the phone. Customers can access our new and improved customer portal at [foothills.net](http://foothills.net). Meanwhile, our new phone payment system makes it possible to hear your account balance, payment due dates, your last payment amount, or make payments by calling 606-297-3501 and selecting option 1.

These are just a few of the changes we're making to better serve our customers each and every day. We will never stop looking for new ways to serve you, just as we'll never stop working to bring you the affordable and reliable internet, video and phone you count on. 



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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Staffordsville, KY 41256  
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606-297-3501

## Foothills Mission Statement

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

Produced for Foothills Communications by:



## On the Cover:



The U.S. 23 Country Music Highway Museum in Paintsville celebrates the legendary musicians from Eastern Kentucky.  
*See story Page 12.*

Photography by  
John Michael Laney

# eBill Mobile

Make your payments on the go



With the eBill Mobile app, you can pay your bill safely and securely online, enroll in automatic payments, and access a summary of your current or past usage anytime, anywhere. Download the **eBill Mobile** app now from the Apple Store for your iPhone/iPad or get it on Google Play for your Android device.

## GETTING STARTED

- 1 Enter your zip code
- 2 Select **Foothills Communications**
- 3 Enter your account information
- 4 **Start making payments!**



*Happy Fourth!*

Foothills Communications  
wishes you a happy and safe  
Independence Day.

In observance of the holiday, our office  
will be closed Tuesday, July 4.

# SHIVER ME TIMBERS!

Family fun sets sail at pirate-themed attractions



The American Star pirate ship sets sail from Orange Beach, Alabama.

Photo courtesy of Gulf Shores & Orange Beach Tourism

Story by ANNE BRALY

For generations, kids and adults alike have been captivated by legendary tales of pirates' treasure-hunting and swashbuckling adventures. If your family loves the story of Peter Pan and the misadventures of Captain Kidd, you're in luck! There's a bounty of places around the South where your crew can get its pirate on.

## PARADISE LAGOON

*Lexington, Kentucky*

Woodland Aquatic Center's brand-new Paradise Lagoon, which opened in May,

is a pirate ship and water attraction that brings high seas adventures to Kentucky.

While the Paradise Lagoon pirate ship is new, it replaces the USS Woodland that generations of people grew up with. That ship sailed the waters of Woodland's pool for decades before being decommissioned when it was no longer seaworthy. The folks from Lexington's Parks and Recreation Department let the public vote on what they wanted to see replace the old vessel.

"Those results clearly indicated that the public wanted to keep the theme of

a pirate ship," says Michelle Kosieniak, parks and recreation superintendent of planning and design.

The new USS Woodland reimagines pirate life by letting kids and adults climb aboard — they can try to find a hidden periscope. They can also use a waterslide to make a quick getaway into the pool while sea creatures look on. The design offers fun sprayers and water cannons, too. But, Michelle says, "It has more gentle play features than the old USS Woodland, so that our youngest visitors can also interact without being overwhelmed."

- ▶ Admission: \$6 for adults, \$4 for kids 15 and under
- ▶ Information: [lexingtonky.gov/neighborhood-pools](http://lexingtonky.gov/neighborhood-pools)

### BLACK DAGGER PIRATE CRUISE

*Hilton Head, South Carolina*

Board the Black Dagger and set sail for a memorable day of adventure. Get your own pirate name, learn some pirate lingo, find sunken treasures, get a temporary tattoo and defeat Stinky Pete in a water cannon battle. It's an action-packed experience that lets kids live their pirate fantasies on the water while using their imaginations.



Visitors have a chance to play pirate aboard the American Star's pirate cruise in Orange Beach, Alabama.

The pirate ship cruises the calm waters of Calibogue Sound, so seasickness is rare. Wear comfortable clothes — bathing suits are not needed, but sunblock is wise. Reservations are strongly recommended.

- ▶ Admission: \$39 for adults and children, infants 11 months and younger are free
- ▶ Information: [piratesofhiltonhead.com](http://piratesofhiltonhead.com)

### CANOE THE CANEY

*Silver Point, Tennessee*

It's said treasure abounds on the banks of the Caney, a river that flows deep in the mountains of East Tennessee. There's a legend about a crew of pirates who stole a cursed treasure belonging to dastardly Captain JaBez and fled, spreading his ill-gotten gains across the water as they went.

Now, boaters — wearing pirate hats and carrying swords — can travel the river in canoes, searching for JaBez's gold coins and sparkling jewels, while keeping their eyes peeled for the captain and his crew who may be disguised as local fishermen.

The Pirate Adventure is one of two pirate-themed trips offered by Canoe the Caney. The Pirate's Dinner and Sunset River Cruise is new this season. The youngest allowed in a canoe or kayak solo is 8 years old, depending on experience. The youngest age for a child with a parent on board is 3 years old.

- ▶ Admission: Starts at \$29
- ▶ Information: [canoethecaney.com](http://canoethecaney.com)

Pirates battle on ship at the Pirate's Voyage Dinner and Show in Pigeon Forge.



Photo courtesy of Hollywood Company

### PIRATE VOYAGE DINNER SHOW

*Pigeon Forge, Tennessee*

You'll have a four-course feast that even the pickiest of pirates will enjoy. The menu includes Cracklin' Pan-Fried Chicken, Swashbucklin' Sugar-Cured Ham, Cob-O' Butter Corn, Pirate Herb-Basted Potato, Walk the Plank dessert and unlimited Coca-Cola, tea or coffee. And just to make sure all pirates are satisfied, gluten-free, vegan and vegetarian meals are available.

While you dine, Blackbeard and his quartermaster, Calico Jack, will lead the Crimson and Sapphire crews in a battle on land and sea in full-size pirate ships.

- ▶ Admission: \$29.99 for kids, \$49.99 for adults and free for children under 3
- ▶ Information: [piratesvoyage.com](http://piratesvoyage.com)

### PIRATE SHIP CRUISE

*Orange Beach, Alabama*

Bring your buccaneers aboard the American Star for a Pirate Adventure on Terry Cove, where they can get their faces painted, learn a little pirate lingo and even sing a sea shanty or two. Visitors get to help defend the ship in a "gun" battle, hear true stories of pirate and privateer attacks in the legendary Pirate's Cove and hunt for the captain's lost gold and treasure chest while keeping their eyes out for any surprise attacks! As an added bonus, you may see some dolphins, too.

- ▶ Admission: Starts at \$29, free for children 1 and under
- ▶ Information: [hudsonmarina.net/Pirate-Adventure.htm](http://hudsonmarina.net/Pirate-Adventure.htm)



Pirates circle the treasure map aboard the American Star's pirate cruise in Orange Beach, Alabama.

Photos courtesy of Gulf Shores & Orange Beach Tourism

An inflatable obstacle course and trampoline contribute to the water park's allure.

# FUN in the SUN

## The Cove brings the beach to Eastern Kentucky



Photo contributed by The Cove

Story by JEN CALHOUN

When Lawrence County government took over management of The Cove at Yatesville Lake last year, the emphasis was accessibility. The expansive water park with its giant inflatable obstacle course, 200-plus-foot slide, concessions stand and kayak rentals was a place to enjoy the activities found at water parks in much larger cities at a far more reasonable price.

“When the last private company decided they weren’t going to operate it, we decided to step in,” says Vince Doty, the county’s deputy judge-executive. “It lets us keep the admission price lower than if a private company were to operate it. We wanted to give residents a place to have affordable fun without having to go out of town or out of state to somewhere like Dollywood.”

The county’s management has resulted in other perks, as well. Since 2022, the county has seen a growing number of

tourists spending their dollars at the park and other local establishments.

“We probably had about 10,000 people come to The Cove last year,” Doty says. “They come by the busloads. We’ve had them come from as far as North Carolina, Georgia and Tennessee. This year, we’re going to put a billboard out and do some more advertising. We’d like to see that figure maybe double.”

### ECONOMIC TECTONICS

Updates and expansion at The Cove are just part of the county’s initiative to improve the lives of its residents and draw tourists. “I don’t know if you know this, but we’re the only Eastern Kentucky county that experienced growth in the last census,” Doty says. “We’re working to keep that up.”

In recent years, the county has helped with various initiatives, including adding lodgings to their parks, building a

motocross track and building new fairgrounds and a soccer park. The government has also pushed to increase the number of special events at local attractions, which include Lawrence County Wilderness Park and Yatesville Lake State Park and its marina.

The county is serious about investing, Doty says. Improving the quality and number of fun things to do in Lawrence County creates three benefits — it lures businesses and industry to the county, it gives residents affordable recreational activities and it instills a sense of pride in the county. “We think a lot about economic development,” he says. “We think creating these attractions will make us a better place all around.”

Tourism is the other side of the economic coin. Attracting people from outside the county to spend the day, the weekend or longer in Lawrence County powers entrepreneurship. Residents can start new



One of the water park's most exciting attractions is an inflatable waterslide that extends more than 200 feet.

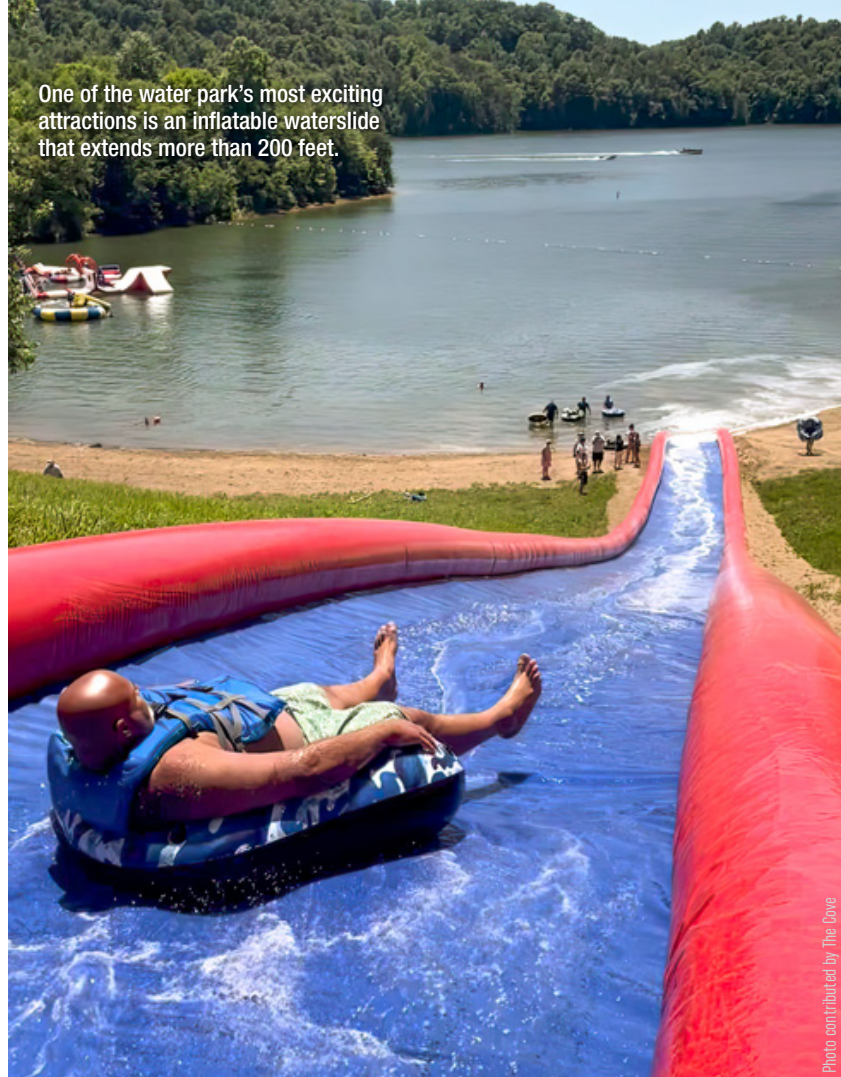


Photo contributed by The Cove

One of the fun activities at The Cove includes a giant inflatable water ball.



Photo contributed by The Cove



Photo by John Michael Laney

Lawrence County Judge-Executive Phillip Carter, left, and Deputy Judge-Executive Vince Doty have helped bring new life at an affordable price to The Cove.

shops and restaurants. Or they can offer Airbnb-type lodgings at their homes and other properties. What's more, tourists to the county might become future residents. "Maybe they'll decide that Lawrence County is the place for them, and they'd like to move here," Doty says. "Who knows?"


Foothills Communications' fiber broadband infrastructure is sure to play a powerful role in attracting visitors and home buyers to the region it serves. In a study released in 2021, 90% of homebuyers said they prioritized fast, reliable home internet during their home searches. The study also said that two-thirds of real estate agents noted that their clients asked more about access to high-speed internet over the previous year than they did before the pandemic.

"Significant parts of American life, including education, health care, shopping and workforce training, are increasingly

happening online," a 2022 fact sheet released by the Pew Charitable Trusts says. "And because of this trend, households need reliable broadband — high-speed internet connections — more than ever before."

### GROWING THE COVE AND THE COUNTY

Meanwhile, Lawrence County officials will continue to keep an eye on the future, Doty says. Soon, they hope to create a Wild West-style camping area complete with tents and covered wagons. They also want to add more fun inflatables to The Cove and other parks, along with jet skis and aqua cycles.

But they want to build on the summer momentum, as well. "We're looking for ways to make The Cove a year-round attraction," Doty says. "We're always looking for ideas. I like to think there's no other county in our state that has as much to offer." 

## See what's new at THE COVE

The Cove at Yatesville Lake is Eastern Kentucky's premier water park experience. The Cove, at 606 Beach Road in Louisa, offers a sandy beach and many recreational activities for people of all ages. Inflatables on the lake include a giant obstacle course, a trampoline and a slide that extends more than 200 feet. In addition, The Cove offers pedal boats, kayaks, a concession stand and much more. Management is always looking for ways to add to the fun. To find out more, visit The Cove Facebook page.



# FELLOW TRAVELERS

Digital communities keep travelers connected on the go

Story by DREW WOOLLEY



The internet was a much different place when Peter Daams started Travellerspoint.com with his brother, Samuel, in 2002. Back then, they were looking at sites like FriendsReunited and classmates.com for inspiration — places for people who had lost touch to reconnect.

“We wanted to make something similar for travelers who had lost track of people they met on trips,” Peter says. “Our tagline was ‘Travel Friends Reunited.’ Our initial launch included a service to help with that, as well as a very basic trip log and a basic travel diary feature.”

The site attracted some attention, but it soon became apparent that Travellerspoint wasn’t giving visitors many reasons to hang around after they had searched for or found their missing travel buddies. The next year, the brothers added travel forums to the site, with a little extra help from a Geocities project that was about to be shuttered.

“That really kick-started the community side of the site and has set the tone for how it’s grown since then,” Peter says. “The owner of that project agreed to let us take it over, so we instantly were able to kick-start our forums with a great group of users who were experts on many travel destinations.”

Today, the site has grown into one of the largest and most active travel communities on the internet with more than 1 million users sharing photos, blog posts and mapping trips. Travellerspoint and other online travel communities like it are also the perfect hubs for the growing number of travelers looking to share their adventures with other enthusiasts.

## NEW DESTINATIONS

Since the end of travel restrictions around the COVID-19 pandemic, Americans have been eager to get out and see more than their backyards. Data from the U.S. Travel Association showed that travel spending in March 2023 was up nearly 10% over the previous year and 5% over spending in 2019.

That enthusiasm shows no sign of slowing down as more than half of Americans say they plan to make travel a priority this year. But how they travel is starting to change. More travelers are putting an emphasis on finding destinations that are off the beaten path, family-friendly and environmentally responsible.

Online communities provide the perfect place for travelers to research these new adventures and get recommendations from others who have tried them. Many of these communities have migrated to social media platforms like Facebook, where they can cater to the specific needs of different groups.

Communities like Wanderful and Girls Love Travel, for example, provide a network of women who can support and even join other women in their travels. The TravelAwaits community offers stories, deals and advice geared toward travelers ages 50 and up. Digital Nomads Around the World, on the other hand, offers inspiration and advice for younger travelers living and working on the go.

While many of these groups rely on social media to maintain their communities, Peter still sees sites like his playing an important role for dedicated travelers. The rise of Facebook initially saw some of the more off-topic banter on Travellerspoint forums shift to the social media channel. But as other communities have shut down, Travellerspoint has become a haven for hardcore travelers looking for a place to discuss their passion.

“Many of those members are now very active on Travellerspoint,” Peter says. “We became something of a refuge for the people who lost their previous online communities.” 🗨️



# TRAVEL TROUPES

Whether you never stop traveling or you're planning each course for your next foodcation, you can find a community that has the same passions.

**Digital Nomads Around the World** — Digital nomads are people who travel freely while using the internet to work remotely. They tend to travel light and live out of temporary housing while they're on the move. It isn't a lifestyle for everyone, but if it piques your interest this group can answer your questions.

**TravelAwaits** — Traveling in your 50s and beyond often comes with the benefit of more time and resources to explore your interests. But it can also present unique challenges. TravelAwaits is a community by and for older travelers, so you can trust that every deal, recommendation and discussion keeps your needs in mind.

**Wanderful** — Whether you're a woman eager to explore solo or looking for a supportive group of fellow travelers, Wanderful has everything you need. Learn about safe travel practices, pick up inspiration for your next excursion or connect with other adventurous women at online and offline events.

**Food Travelist** — Everyone loves a great meal on vacation. But for some travelers, the food is the point. If that's you, Food Travelist has your back with tasty recommendations and mouth-watering photos. When your wanderlust kicks in back home, you can even find recipe ideas to take your taste buds on a trip instead.

# Eastern Kentucky's *got talent*

## U.S. 23 Country Music Highway Museum highlights the hits

Story by JEN CALHOUN

Since 1951, U.S. Highway 23 has wound its way from the Straits of Mackinac that join the Great Lakes of Huron and Michigan all the way to downtown Jacksonville, Florida. It covers more than 1,400 miles and passes through small towns, big cities and even bigger mountains.

But it's the 144-mile jog through Eastern Kentucky that might be the most intriguing section of the entire motorway. From Letcher County all the way to Greenup County, U.S. 23 runs through a remarkable stretch of hills and hollers that produced at least 19 country music stars, including Loretta Lynn, Ricky Skaggs, Dwight Yoakam, Tom T. Hall, Chris Stapleton, Wynona and Naomi Judd and Patty Loveless, just to name a few.

### HALLOWED HOLLERS

Recognized as the Country Music Highway in 1994, this section of Route 23 is also home to the Country Music Highway Museum in Paintsville. The museum showcases 14 superstars of country music through exhibits of memorabilia and biographies.

Since its opening in 2005, thousands of people from all over the world have visited the museum to connect with some of the Eastern Kentucky-born greats of country music. In early April — long before the

traditional tourist season — the museum saw visitors from New Mexico, Kansas, Florida, Georgia, Michigan, Indiana and New York, says Jeremiah Parsons, executive director of Paintsville Tourism, which operates the museum.

"People often ask us, 'What is it about this area? Why do so many great country music artists come from here?'" Parsons says. "I think there are a few reasons."

Most of it likely has to do with rural Appalachia's musical culture. "Singing and playing music is what people from



Jeremiah Parsons



The U.S. 23 Country Music Highway Museum currently showcases 14 artists, including Loretta Lynn, Chris Stapleton and other legends from Eastern Kentucky.

this region have done for entertainment and worship since we got here,” he says. “We work hard during the day. Then, in the evenings and on the weekends, we gather with the family to play music. It goes back to church. It goes back to our front porches. It goes back to our beginnings.”

And while many cultures are known for musical traditions, none of them have produced more per capita hit-makers than this stretch of Eastern Kentucky, the museum’s website says.

Loretta Lynn, who was born and raised in Johnson County, created 24 No. 1 hit singles and 11 No. 1 albums over her 62-year music career. Lawrence County-born bluegrass musician Ricky Skaggs was inducted into the Musicians Hall of Fame and Museum and the Country Music Hall of Fame before receiving the National Medal of Arts. Dwight Yoakam, Tom T. Hall and The Judds produced dozens of hit records and became household names during the heights of their careers.

“If it’s the culture that brought them to the music in the first place, then I think it’s their authenticity that helped make them so successful,” Parsons says. “Each of these artists has their own sound. None of them went to Nashville sounding like someone else. They went to Nashville sounding like themselves.”

### FRONT PORCH PICKIN’

In addition to its exhibits, the museum offers live events, as well. On Thursday nights, the Front Porch Pickin’ events offer local musicians a place to play and collaborate with other artists.

“We showcase local musicians that play bluegrass, country or gospel music,” Parsons says. “It’s \$3 a person, and I tell people all the time that it’s the best \$3 they’ll ever spend in Paintsville. You can sit and listen, but we also have room for dancing.”

*It's got to be*  
**Kentucky**  
*for me*

The U.S. 23 Country Music Highway Museum is at 120 Stave Branch Road in Staffordsville, Kentucky. To find out more about the museum and all that Paintsville and Johnson County have to offer, visit [paintsvilletourism.com](http://paintsvilletourism.com), or like and follow the Paintsville Tourism Facebook and Instagram pages.

**FROM TOP:** Chris Stapleton, a chart-topping country music singer-songwriter, grew up in Staffordsville.

This guitar, signed by Loretta Lynn, is one of two in the exhibit.

The museum includes displays for country music artists Gary Stewart and Crystal Gayle.

The Kentucky stretch of Highway 23 is known for producing some of the most legendary country and bluegrass music artists of our time.

Billy Ray Cyrus, Patty Loveless and Dwight Yoakam all hail from Eastern Kentucky.

The museum also hosts concerts with acts that have included Ralph Stanley, Larry Sparks and other big names in the bluegrass and country music scenes. The museum’s new Rising Star series has included Noah Thompson, the Louisa construction worker who won “American Idol” in 2022.

### BRINGING IN TOURISTS

The Country Music Highway Museum is already making plans to grow, Parsons says. Currently, the staff is working on new exhibits, and they hope to expand in the near future.

It’s a timely growth, Parsons says, because tourism to the region has increased post-pandemic as more people have turned toward adventure tourism. “In addition to our history and our musical culture, it’s the natural commodity that we have that’s drawing tourists here,” he says. “They’re coming to use our trail systems, parks and the lake.”

Foothills Communications’ fiber broadband network also plays a big role in bringing people to the region to spend money, Parsons says. “Most travelers want to stay connected no matter where they are in the world, and that makes Eastern Kentucky uniquely well-positioned for tourism growth. It’s huge for us.”



# Time-saving devices

Gourmet gadgets can make meals manageable

Instant pots became a “thing” in the 2010s, and people fell instantly in love with them. Combining an electric pressure cooker, slow cooker, rice cooker and yogurt maker in one, multicookers save space and cook meals quickly. What better time to hop on the bandwagon than now, when summer produce is at its height?

If you're old enough to remember your grandmother's pressure cooker, you may know horror stories of it blowing up and causing injuries. But don't worry! Today's electric pressure cookers have a slew of safety features, including sensors to monitor temperature and pressure.

The price of multicookers has come



down from north of \$500 to under \$65, an excellent price for beginners. If you want more functions or higher wattage, expect to spend upward of \$100. Here are some recipes to get you started.



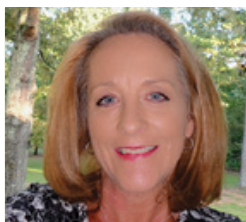
## SUMMER VEGETABLE SOUP

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 4 teaspoons minced garlic
- 3 medium ears fresh corn, kernels removed (or 2 1/4 cups frozen corn)
- 2 pounds tomatoes, peeled, seeded and chopped
- 1 sweet bell pepper, seeded and diced
- 2 medium zucchini, diced
- 1 cup fresh or frozen lima beans
- 8 ounces sliced mushrooms
- 1 small eggplant, peeled and diced
- 4 cups low-sodium vegetable broth
- 1 tablespoon vinegar (red wine, balsamic or white)
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1 tablespoon Italian seasoning
- 1 teaspoon salt, or to taste
- Ground black pepper, to taste

Press the saute button. Add olive oil to the stainless steel insert. Wait 2 minutes for it to preheat.

Add onion and garlic. Saute, stirring frequently, just until onion is tender (about 5 minutes). Press off/stop button. Add remaining ingredients. Place lid on the cooker and make sure the valve is set to sealing. Press soup and set the timer for 12 minutes.

The cooker will beep and start cooking. It may take about 20 minutes for it to come to pressure before the timer starts. When the cooking is done, allow the pressure to naturally release for about 5 minutes, then quick release any remaining pressure by switching the valve to venting. Carefully remove the lid, away from your face, and set aside. Stir and season with salt and pepper. Let cool a bit before serving.



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Photography by *Mark Gilliland*  
Food Styling by *Rhonda Gilliland*

## VEGGIE TOMATO SAUCE

Using canned tomatoes rather than fresh in this recipe from Instant Pot makes this recipe a breeze.

- 4 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 medium onion, diced
- 2 small to medium carrots, diced
- 2 celery sticks, diced
- 3 teaspoons salt
- 1 teaspoon thyme leaves
- 2 bay leaves
- 2 small beets (canned or fresh), diced
- 1 cup diced red bell pepper
- 5 mushrooms, diced
- 1/2 of a medium zucchini, diced
- 2 cups fresh spinach leaves
- 5 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 jalapeno red chili (Use half or less if you don't like some heat.)
- 3 cans whole tomatoes in juice
- 1/2 cup water

Turn the multicooker on and press the saute key. Once hot, add the olive oil, onions, carrots and celery and cook for 5 minutes, stirring a few times.

Add the rest of the ingredients. Press cancel to stop the saute process. Stir the contents and pop the lid on top.

Lock the lid, making sure the top valve points to sealing. Set to manual/pressure cook on high pressure for 10 minutes. The cooker will take 5-10 minutes to build up the pressure and the timer will begin.

Once finished, allow the pressure to release naturally for 10 minutes and then move the top valve to venting to quickly release of the remaining pressure.



Open the lid and stir. Using an immersion blender, puree into a thick sauce. You can also do this in a blender or a food processor, but make sure to cool the sauce down slightly and do this in batches. Pour the sauce into containers or mason jars for storage or use right away as a sauce for pasta, pizza, enchiladas, meatballs and more.

## INSTANT POT ROAST

This recipe from Instapot is a cooker full of comfort.

- 1 tablespoon canola oil
- 1 (4-4 1/2-pound) boneless chuck roast, excess fat trimmed and cut into 6 pieces
- 1 cup beef stock
- 6-8 jarred pepperoncini salad peppers, plus 1/4 cup liquid from jar
- 1 (1-ounce) package dry onion soup mix
- 2 tablespoons dried parsley flakes
- 1 tablespoon dried chives
- 2 teaspoons dried dill
- 1 1/2 teaspoons onion powder
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 3 tablespoons cornstarch

Set a 6-quart cooker to the high saute setting. Heat oil then add beef and cook until evenly browned, about 2-3 minutes per side. Set aside.

Stir in beef stock, scraping any browned bits from the bottom. Stir in pepperoncini and liquid, onion soup mix, parsley flakes, chives, dill, onion powder, garlic powder and pepper. Return beef to the pot.

Select manual setting, adjust pressure to high, and set timer for 45 minutes. When finished cooking, naturally release pressure according to manufacturer's directions, 20-30 minutes.

Remove beef from the pot, then shred, using two forks.

In a small bowl, whisk together cornstarch and 3 tablespoons cold water and set aside.

Select high saute setting. Bring to a boil, stir in cornstarch mixture and cook, stirring frequently until slightly thickened, about 3-5 minutes. If the mixture is too thick, add more beef stock as needed until desired consistency is reached. Serve immediately. 🍴





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