

CONNECTION



**Marlana
VanHoose**

Sharing her voice
with the world

AXE COUNTRY

GAME ON!



By SHIRLEY BLOOMFIELD, CEO
NTCA—The Rural Broadband Association

Supporting the Universal Service Fund

For more than 100 years, America has embraced the belief that everyone should have reliable access to reasonably priced communications services. Today, the federal Universal Service Fund, known as the USF, continues its vital role in this mission. The fund helps rural consumers access services comparable in price and quality to those in urban areas, making services more affordable for low-income families. It also supports critical connections important to schools, libraries, health care and businesses.

As we work with NTCA members daily, we see the good the USF does for rural America. We proudly support the continuation of the USF even as new broadband programs expand access to unserved areas. Simply, it makes a practical difference.

Consider, for example, the economic value of broadband, which exceeds \$1.5 trillion annually. It sustains hundreds of thousands of jobs and adds billions of dollars to local economies. With the growing demand for broadband, the USF supports the advanced, sustainable services rural businesses need to compete globally.

Similarly, fast and reliable broadband access helps narrow health care disparities between rural and metropolitan communities. The USF expands the reach of medical services through telehealth and fosters improved patient communication as well as the adoption of electronic health records.

Join us in support of the USF and its essential mission to provide broadband access to all rural residents. I encourage you to learn more about the critical role of the USF by visiting ntca.org/universalservice. 📧



Help may be a click away

Thanks to telehealth services, a trip to a physician’s office isn’t always necessary, and when you’re fighting a winter bug, that convenience counts. Here are a few tips to make your telehealth visit as productive and easy as possible:

CHOOSE THE RIGHT SPOT: Find a quiet, well-lit space for your telehealth session. It’s not a Broadway audition, but good lighting helps your doctor see you better. Eliminate background noise as much as possible — you don’t want the family pet stealing the spotlight during your appointment!

HAVE YOUR INFO READY: Make a mini cheat sheet with your symptoms, questions and any medications you take. It’s easy to forget things during a virtual visit. Plus, it makes you look like a pro patient!

DRESS APPROPRIATELY: Pajamas might be comfy, but consider saving them for bedtime. Dressing appropriately can not only help your doctor assess your physical condition but also put you in the right mindset for a serious health chat.

BE HONEST AND OPEN: Telehealth works best when you’re open about your symptoms and concerns. Don’t be shy. Doctors can only help if they know the whole story. 📧

Illustration by A.barks/Adobe Stock



Tugging at your purse strings

Online romance scams can break more than just your heart

Falling in love can make anyone vulnerable. Shady cybercriminals know this and are all too eager to steal hearts and much more.

According to the FBI, a romance scam occurs when someone creates a fake online profile and fakes romantic interest to gain trust to steal the victim's money or personal information. Also known as "catfishing," romance scams can be devastating, both financially and emotionally.

Nearly 70,000 people reported being the victim of catfishing in 2022, and losses hit a staggering \$1.3 billion, according to Federal Trade Commission statistics. But actual losses are likely much higher — romance fraud is grossly underreported due to its sensitive nature.

Romance scammers often prey on older people, who may be divorced or widowed. Online dating apps are just one place they lurk. They also reach out through popular social media sites like Facebook and Instagram. They target victims' insecurities and work to develop intimacy as quickly as possible — a practice known as "love bombing." Scammers attempt to make the victim feel special or like they're the "only one who gets" the culprit.

Sometimes a scammer will ask for a short-term loan to get out of a bad situation and start a new life with the victim. Or, they'll say access to a credit card would smooth the way to a relationship. Other gifts include asking for money to cover the customs charges for an expensive gift, or a crypto investor who wants to help the victim cash in on the trend.

Despite the warning signs, victims are often too lovestruck to realize it's a swindle.

Romance scam victims can be male or female, young or old. Their only common denominator is that they believe in true love, and they feel they have found it. 📧

Follow your head, not your heart

- Allow relationships to develop slowly and naturally.
- Set up a video chat to verify the identity of the person you are messaging.
- Research the person you are messaging.
- Conduct a reverse image search to make sure the person you are talking to is really the person in the photo.

If you've been scammed

Falling victim to a scammer can happen to anyone. Talking about your experience can lessen feelings of shame and help protect others from being victimized.

- Immediately contact your bank or financial institution.
- Report it as soon as possible to the FTC at reportfraud.ftc.gov.
- Alert the FBI's fraud division — the Internet Crime Complaint Center — at ic3.gov/. Be prepared to share any records of your communication with the scammer.
- Contact the platform where the scammer first contacted you, so it can prevent others from being victimized.

Foothills employees go the extra mile for the whole community

In an era dominated by the rapid flow of information and the constant need for connectivity, broadband services have become the backbone of our digital lives. Streaming, gaming, remote work and virtual communication all hinge on the reliability of broadband networks. While sleek technology and cutting-edge infrastructure often steal the spotlight, the true heroes ensuring seamless connectivity are the dedicated employees working tirelessly behind the scenes. I'd like to take a moment to reflect on these exceptional individuals who form the backbone of our company.



RUTH CONLEY
Chief Executive Officer

Let's start with the technical wizards who ensure that the digital highways we pave are not just fast but also reliable. From the network engineers who design, construction teams who climb poles and crawl through trenches to build our infrastructure and technicians who do the same to install and troubleshoot your services, each member of our technical team plays a pivotal role in keeping Foothills at the cutting edge of connectivity.

Our celebration doesn't end with the technical marvels — it extends to the customer service superheroes who bridge the gap between technology and humanity. Their patience, expertise and dedication to resolving issues ensure that our customers not only have access to high-speed internet, but also experience unparalleled

service that goes beyond the ordinary.

The innovation hub at Foothills is a breeding ground for ideas that push the boundaries of what's possible. Our research and development team, composed of forward-thinking individuals, constantly seeks ways to enhance our services, introduce new features and stay ahead in an ever-evolving tech landscape.

But the strength of Foothills lies not only in the visible aspects but also in the silent contributions of those working behind closed doors. The administrative staff, logistics experts and support personnel are just as critical to our operations. Their meticulous attention to detail ensures that everything runs like a well-oiled machine, allowing our frontline employees to shine.

In the world of Foothills, resilience is not just a quality, it's a way of life. Our employees weather the storms — literal and metaphorical — with grace and determination. Whether it's facing technical challenges, navigating market shifts or adapting to the demands of an increasingly digital society, the resilience of our team is the cornerstone of who we are.

As we celebrate the advancements in broadband technology, let's not forget the human element that ensures these services run smoothly. The next time you enjoy a seamless video call, stream your favorite movie without buffering or meet a tight deadline thanks to a stable internet connection, take a moment to appreciate the remarkable hardworking individuals who make it all possible. To the entire Foothills team, thank you for your tireless efforts, your innovative spirit and your commitment to keeping the world connected. 📶



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, Johnson, and Lawrence counties, as well as parts of Boyd and Carter counties and Prichard, West Virginia. 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:



A busy career keeps singer Marlana VanHoose on the road. She's performed in 30 states and alongside stars like Ricky Skaggs. See story Page 8.

Photo courtesy of
Teresa VanHoose

Visit the nation's capital for FREE!

Foothills Communications is sending one lucky student on an all-expenses-paid trip to Washington, D.C., for the Foundation for Rural Service Youth Tour. The tour, which takes place June 3-7, is an educational gathering of more than 100 students and their chaperones from all over the country. Students will gain leadership skills, while touring the sites and learning firsthand about Capitol Hill and the federal government.

Eligible students must be 15, 16 or 17 years old at the time of the tour. Students age 18 and over are ineligible. For frequently asked questions, visit frs.org/youthtour.

To find out more about applying, contact Foothills Communications at 606-297-3501.



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 Veterans Pension or Survivors Pension
- Meet income requirements

DO YOU QUALIFY?

Apply today!

To find out whether you qualify for Lifeline assistance, please visit lifelinesupport.org or call 800-234-9473.

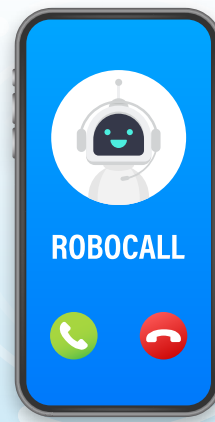
Resolutions 2024:

- Make streaming movies and TV seamless.
- Connect the whole family.
- Speed up our internet connection.

Check off all your resolutions at once — **upgrade today for the best-ever internet experience.**



606-297-3501
foothills.net



Tired of robocalls?

The Do Not Call Registry can help reduce the number of unwanted telemarketing calls you receive.

Learn more at donotcall.gov, or call **888-382-1222**. You must call from the telephone number you wish to register. For TTY, call **866-290-4236**.

Cumberland Caverns
near McMinnville,
Tennessee

BEAUTY LIES BELOW

Area caverns contain
links to the past

Story by KATHY DENES

Bones and footprints of prehistoric jaguars and their prey are preserved within many caves across the Southeast, but that's just the beginning. There are also works of art, as well as artifacts and writings of indigenous peoples — from the ancients to those who would face a Trail of Tears. There are even tools left behind by those who mined saltpeter used in multiple wars.

There are colonies of bats, ever-growing stalactites and stalagmites, as well as flowing underground waters. Some caves are easily found, offering entry through a vast visible gash in a mountainside. Others remain hidden until their accidental discovery, perhaps by a passerby on a hot day who notices cool air seeping out through a wall of rock. They range in size from shallow squeezes to soaring cathedrals, and their passages can stretch for hundreds of miles.

KENTUCKY



Kentucky's Mammoth Cave is the world's longest known cave system, with over 400 miles of its corridors mapped and surveyed. Within a short drive of Mammoth are numerous other caves with their own claims to fame, making the Park City area one of the most popular cave tour destinations in the country. Popular neighboring attractions include Diamond Caverns, a World Heritage Site and International Biosphere Reserve that has offered public tours for more than 160 years. A good resource for learning more about these and other notable caves across the state is worldofcaves.com/the-best-list-of-caves-in-kentucky.

Photo courtesy of Cumberland Caverns

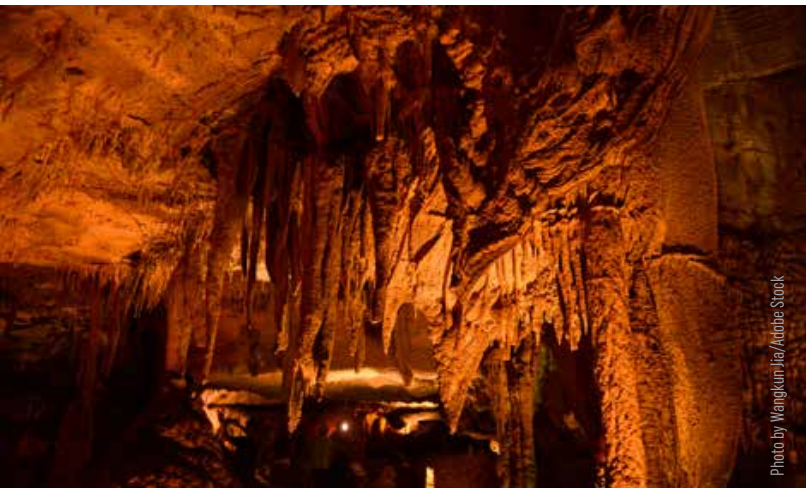


Photo by Wangkun Jia / Adobe Stock



Photo by K.A. / Adobe Stock

In Kentucky's Mammoth Cave, stalactites create a memorable natural spectacle.

The National Park Service manages Mammoth Cave.

TENNESSEE



Tennessee's caverns are spread far and wide. Near McMinnville are Cumberland Caverns, open daily year-round, and Big Bone Cave, named for the giant sloth bones found near where Civil War-era saltpeter vats remain. In the Chattanooga area, visitors can descend by elevator deep into Lookout Mountain to witness the beauty of Ruby Falls or can cross the interstate to visit Raccoon Mountain Caverns. A drive up I-75 brings visitors to Sweetwater, where boats glide across The Lost Sea in artifact-rich Craighead Caverns, open every day except Thanksgiving and Christmas. Continue toward the Great Smoky Mountains to find the Forbidden Caverns of Sevierville and impressive Tuckaleechee Caverns in Townsend. Read about some of these and more at explorationjunkie.com/caves-in-tennessee.

ALABAMA



Alabama is home to hundreds of caves stretching along the Appalachian foothills. Of those, six are touted by onlyinyourstate.com as among the very best and included in its Alabama Cave Trail. These renowned subterranean destinations include Russell Cave, Neversink Pit, Sauta Cave, Cathedral Caverns, Rickwood Caverns and Majestic Cave, formerly called DeSoto Caverns. Find information about these and other popular Alabama caves at enterthecaves.com/best-caves-in-alabama. 📍

DIG DEEPER

- » cavern.com/directory
- » worldofcaves.com/the-ultimate-list-of-caves-in-america
- » abackpackerstale.com/best-caves-in-the-united-states
- » Also, visit tripadvisor.com and search for "caves" to find options in your area and beyond.



TO SAVE A CAVE

Protecting the fragile ecosystems and histories of caves large and small is the mission of Southeastern Cave Conservancy Inc. The nonprofit has worked since 1991 to acquire and sustainably manage endangered caves. Through cave purchases and its EduBat and Project Underground programs, among others, SCCi has preserved historic Cherokee syllabary, written characters serving as an alphabet, found on cavern walls and created compelling curriculum and educator workshops. Check out the group's ongoing projects at saveyourcaves.org.

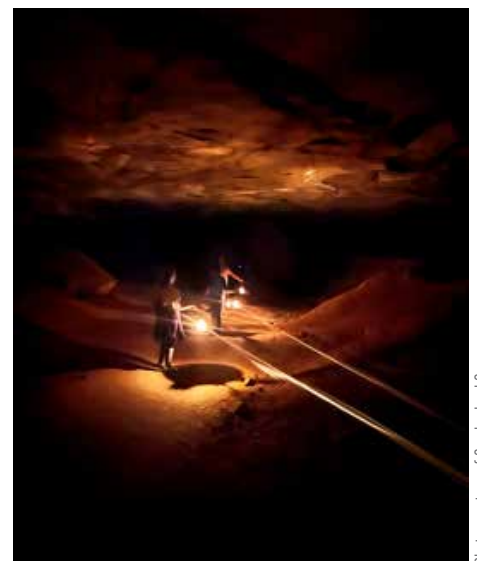


Photo courtesy of Cumberland Caverns

Cumberland Caverns near McMinnville, Tennessee, offers unique adventures, including a lantern tour.

Making m

Marlana VanHoose uses her voice to inspire others

Story by JEN CALHOUN



Marlana VanHoose was 4 years old when her mother, Teresa, heard something extraordinary coming from the kitchen floor. “She was lying there on her back and all of a sudden, she just started singing so beautifully,” Teresa says.

Fast forward 24 years and the Denver, Kentucky, singer has traveled to more than 30 states and countless cities, bringing crowds in venues large and small to their feet with her melodic and powerful voice. Whether she’s singing “The Star-Spangled Banner” for tens of thousands of people at a University of Kentucky Wildcats game, a tender rendition of “You’ve Got a Friend” on her YouTube channel or simply a fun parody she’s composed for her family, the Johnson County native has earned her spot in Kentucky’s long line of talented musicians and singers.

At 28, Marlana has performed with superstars like Ricky Skaggs, and she’s met the Beach Boys and ZZ Top. She’s sung at Carnegie Hall, NASCAR races and the Hearst Castle in San Simeon, California. She’s also been featured on the “CBS Evening News,” ESPN, “Entertainment Tonight,” “Inside Edition,” “Good Morning America” and more.

Despite her accolades, Marlana remains approachable and friendly. An artist dedicated to her craft, she also wants to meet people, inspire them and make them smile.

PATH PAVED WITH MUSIC

Not long after she was born, doctors discovered Marlana had a condition known as cytomegalovirus, or CMV. The CMV disrupted the development of her optic nerve, which rendered her blind from birth. Medical professionals said she might not live to see her first year, but the virus went into remission.

When she was 2, Marlana was diagnosed with a mild case of cerebral palsy. She underwent surgery

Marlana VanHoose is a Denver, Kentucky, singer and musician who has performed across the country.

Photos submitted by Teresa VanHoose

music

on both her feet at the age of 9, but Marlana says it was unsuccessful. “She can’t walk far or stand for very long,” Teresa says. “So, when we travel, we take her wheelchair.”


Throughout all the uncertainties of her childhood, however, one thing remained constant — Marlana’s love of music. Teresa says she started humming as a toddler, and she always loved the gospel songs her great-grandparents sang. “When I was little, gospel music calmed me down,” Marlana says. “It was my lullaby.”

The songs also inspired her strong faith, says Marlana, who has never really gotten nervous even in the biggest venues. “I just feel great that God would help me,” she says. “He lets me use my voice for His glory. I just pour it out to him, and then I sing like I really mean it.”

TECH MATTERS

Marlana was introduced to the Braille alphabet before kindergarten, and she became more familiar with it during her time at the Kentucky School for the Blind in Louisville. Today she uses her Foothills Communications broadband connection to use an Orbit Reader.

The Orbit Reader is a Braille reading device that connects to computers and mobile devices to allow people with blindness to read websites, email and other digital documents. The Orbit Reader, which provides Bluetooth and USB connectivity, connects simultaneously to multiple devices. “I need the internet,” Marlana says. “I like to look up songs on YouTube and other sites.”



Marlana’s love of gospel and older music likely came from her great-grandparents, who sang gospel songs around the house.

WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS

In the coming years, Marlana hopes to record a Christmas album, and she hopes to fulfill a longtime dream of singing at the Grand Ole Opry. She also plans to continue performing to benefit Best Buddies International, an organization devoted to ending the social, physical and economic isolation of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. “We still have a ways to go until we really include all people,” she says. “The public often has trouble interacting with people with disabilities.”

Marlana also works with United by Music, a performance-based program and band for both neurodiverse and neurotypical people with exceptional musical talent. “It’s important to me because I want to be a leader,” Marlana says. “I want to help people, inspire them and bring inclusion. I want us all to work together.”

Finding Marlana

To find out more about Marlana VanHoose or to book her, visit littlemarlana.com. The website offers videos of her performances, a biography and more. Videos and performances can also be found on her YouTube channel.

“I want to be a leader. I want to help people, inspire them and bring inclusion. I want us all to work together.”

— Marlana VanHoose, singing sensation and Foothills Communications broadband subscriber

IN THE GAME

Esports growth offers students community and opportunity

Story by DREW WOOLLEY

The Texas Wesleyan esports program started with a 2017 conversation that wasn't about video games at all. Eugene Friar, who was then working in student affairs and is now director of esports and gaming, approached the vice president of his division to talk about what the university could do to be a fun and exciting option for prospective students.

"I was hoping he'd give me some answers, but he flipped it on me and was like, 'Bring me some ideas, and we'll discuss it,'" Eugene says. "I wasn't thinking esports at all, even though I've been a gamer since the Commodore 64 days."

While brainstorming, Eugene came across fledgling esports programs at places like the University of California, Irvine, Missouri's Maryville University and Robert Morris University in Pennsylvania. Groups of students were coming together to compete in multiplayer games like Overwatch, Super Smash Bros. and League of Legends.

Today, the National Association of Collegiate Esports, or NACE, recognizes more than 240 schools with competitive esports teams. The experience not only opens doors in the gaming industry but can also help students develop skills for a variety of careers.

Texas Wesleyan's esports team evolved from a group focused primarily on competition to one that welcomes anyone from casual hobbyists to hardcore gamers. For Eugene, it's an important community that supports students who might not share other interests on campus. But it's also a

Trojan horse for helping them find their path through school and beyond.

"We tell our recruits early in the process my job is to trick you into learning," Eugene says. "If you want to try out for one of our teams, hopefully we'll go to the stadium and play. But what's your major? What are you going to do after you graduate? How is this going to help you get there?"

LEVELING UP

As access to high-speed internet expands from urban centers to rural areas, competitive gaming's popularity has soared. A study by Pew Research Center found that about 70% of college students say they play video games at least once in a while.

While the Texas Wesleyan Rams have teams for the squad-based shooter game Overwatch 2 and the fighting game Super Smash Bros., it's also important for Eugene to appeal to that larger audience. When the program was more focused on competitive gaming, he found that some students with a casual interest in gaming felt like they didn't belong. That's why the



The Texas Wesleyan University Overwatch team reviews video for a match.

Photo courtesy of Eugene Friar



ABOVE: University of Kentucky students enjoy competing in the school's new esports lounge.

RIGHT: Students try out the gaming lounge at the University of Kentucky's Latinx Open House.

club includes a team that creates, edits and streams content for platforms like Twitch and YouTube, as well as groups for fans of anime, Dungeons & Dragons and more casual gaming.

Eugene says overall participation increased by slightly deemphasizing competition and offering more ways to participate with casual gaming clubs, a social media team and an event team. "We went from having seven competitive teams to two, and the number of students in our program has actually gone up a little bit because there's more ways for people to get involved," he says.



Bryce Edwards, a junior, received a scholarship to help run the esports program and became captain of the school's Smash Bros. team. He says the social and leadership skills he learned in that role will be invaluable as he pursues a career in marketing.

For Kelvin Coker, a senior criminal justice major and wrestler, it's been a new way to connect with people. "People need a place that allows them to be themselves and interact with people of different backgrounds so that they can develop the skills necessary to go through life," Kelvin says. "It was a different vibe than wrestling, which was extremely refreshing. It felt good to be among people who shared interests in things outside of sports."

Heath Price, associate vice president of partnerships at the University of Kentucky, found the same enthusiasm when he first met with an informal esports club on his campus in 2018. With school resources behind it, the UK Esports Club has grown to include hundreds of members who enjoy the university's recently completed gaming lounge, along with approximately 70 students who play competitively.

"What we've seen is that the idea of a gamer just being someone who might be interested in building games is kind of a misnomer," Heath says. "A lot of these

young people have varying interests. I think as much of a career builder as anything is giving people some of those opportunities for exposure and to do things in the community."

TAILOR MADE

Eugene takes a similar approach at

Texas Wesleyan. Whether it's a student who wants to start a clothing line designing the school's esports jersey or a mass communications major building the team's content roadmap for the year, he always looks for ways the program can help students pursue their larger goals.

"The content team isn't about making funny content.

It's about project management," he says. "The student organizations aren't just about talking about the things you love. They're leading a meeting and organizing people."

With the gaming landscape constantly changing, that may even mean meeting students somewhere other than esports. Texas Wesleyan's teams currently compete in the second division of the NACE Starleague, the biggest collegiate esports league in North America.

The Rams had a national championship-winning team for the FIFA soccer game series. Today, that team doesn't exist because the game no longer exists. Earlier this year, Electronic Arts, publisher of the FIFA series of games, ended its branding partnership with global soccer organization FIFA. That left some competitive players out in the cold and highlights a unique challenge for esports.

"You don't win a national championship in football and a few years later it's like, 'Remember when we used to have a football team?' So when the publishers get involved it's tricky," Eugene says. "It wouldn't surprise me if the esports part of what we do goes away in time and you see the more content creation and pop culture things last. It's about meeting the students' needs and matching their interests in a really positive way." 🗨️



The Texas Wesleyan University Super Smash Bros. team prepares for a competition.



Hurry down to Axe Country

Story by JEN CALHOUN



The sounds of destruction and a thunk of an axe are music to Jeff Pennington's ears. Throw in the clack of some billiard balls and shouts of victory, and the Johnson County native might just smile.



Photos by John Michael Laney

Jeff and Sherri Pennington own Axe Country and Rustic Oak Boutique.

Jeff is the owner of Paintsville's newest recreational center, Axe Country, which held its grand opening on Broadway in September. "It's about 10,000 square feet of arcade games, pool tables, cornhole boards, a rage room and nine lanes of axe-throwing," he says. "There's also my wife's boutique, Rustic Oak."

SOLVING A PROBLEM

Jeff got the idea for the multiactivity entertainment center around the time of the COVID-19 pandemic, when he saw entertainment options for children and teens dwindle to nearly nothing.

"My daughter was part of what I guess you'd call the COVID class," he says. "Everything in Paintsville had shut down. The bowling alley burned down, and then we lost the movie theater. There was really nothing for kids. They'd resorted to playing cornhole in parking lots."

But things are different now. Since opening, Axe Country has already hosted gatherings of people of all ages. "My son

is a senior in high school this year, and he and his friends actually have a place to shoot some pool and do things," Jeff says.

FROM LOGGING TO AXING

Prior to launching Axe Country, Jeff owned a business in the logging industry. Before that, he worked in the oil fields for about 20 years. His wife, Sherri, owned and operated Rustic Oak Boutique in Prestonsburg before moving it into the new space.

Jeff relies on Foothills Communications' high-speed fiber internet to power his business, whether he's using it for transactions or keeping up the Axe Country in Paintsville Facebook page. The page is popular, too. By late October, it had already gained 4,300 followers and 3,100 likes.

"If someone hits a bull's-eye with the axe, we put them up on the Facebook page," Jeff says. "We have Viking hats along with signs that we use take pictures of them, and they love seeing their picture on social media."



The Pennington family opened Axe Country to give young people entertainment options. From left are Jeff, Kelsi, Sherri and Dalton.



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: Pool tables and arcade games fill a portion of the space.

Visitors can also play cornhole.

Rustic Oak Boutique offers cute clothes and accessories.



He also appreciates the hard work and dedicated service he receives from Foothills. “Without Foothills, Johnson County would be off the map,” Jeff says. “We have to have them. I’ve lived here all my life, and they’ve always come through for us. I know a lot of them, and they’re just great people. They’re just like family. This community as a whole is good. Johnson County in general is just a good place to be.”

FUN FOR ALL

Jeff describes walking into Axe Country as an experience. As visitors walk through the doors, Rustic Oak Boutique is on the right, giving parents a place to pass the time while their kids play. “After that, it’s kind of sectioned off,” he says. “We’ve got six pool tables and an iTunes jukebox. There are a couple TVs on the wall and all kinds of coin-operated video games — race car games and anything else you can imagine. There’s probably 10-15 in here.”

From there, double doors open to a cornhole area and the axe-throwing lanes. “We’ve got the lanes divided off,” he says. “There’s wood halfway up the sides and chain-link fence on top. They’re secure once they’re in there.”

Axe throwers get their choice of two types of hatchets to throw. One is weighted and a little heavier, and the other is lighter and made of fiberglass. Hurlers must be at least 16 years old to throw the axes, but parents can opt to sign a waiver that allows younger people to give it a try.

RAGE ON

The facility’s rage room is also popular, Jeff says. Ragers are supplied with a baseball bat, a shop hammer, as well as a golf club when they’re available, and set loose in a room full of breakable items to let off a little steam.

“We get them suited up in protective gear and let them go to it,” he says. “There are different kinds of glass, dishes, flat-screen

TVs and computer monitors, stuff like that. People will donate stuff to us.”

But if the rage room releases pent-up feelings, the axe throwing inspires them. The competition can get fierce, Jeff says. “We have different ways to keep score, but so many of them just want to hit that bull’s-eye.”

Jeff enjoys seeing the community embrace the business. “Everybody sees that we’re trying to give back,” he says. “It’s pretty cool to see them come in and have a good time.” 📱

AXES AND MORE

Axe Country is at 531 Broadway in Paintsville. For more information and the latest updates, visit the Axe Country Paintsville Facebook page and the Rustic Oak Boutique Facebook page.

When one pot hits the spot

Simple, delicious and easy

Meals you can make in one pot are ideal for today's busy cooks for two reasons. For starters, little time is wasted going from one pot to another, making sure everything is cooking together nicely. Secondly, you're cooking in one pot, so there's minimal cleanup.

As the name implies, one-pot meals are just that. They are the secret to getting dinner on the table in a jiffy. Generally, the vegetables and protein are cooked together in the same pot. If any other side dishes are needed, it's usually nothing more than a green salad with buttery croutons or a nice piece of crusty bread.

One-pot meals are filled with comfort, something we all yearn for like a big, cozy blanket on a chilly winter's night.



**Food Editor
Anne P. Braly
is a native of
Chattanooga,
Tennessee.**

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

CHEESEBURGER PASTA

This is the perfect easy wintertime one-pot meal. It's like having a cheeseburger and spaghetti at the same time, and the kids will love it!

- 1 yellow onion
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1/2 pound ground beef
- 2 tablespoons flour
- 1 (8-ounce) can tomato sauce
- 2 cups beef broth
- 8 ounces pasta shells, uncooked
- 4 ounces cheddar cheese, shredded
- 2 tablespoons pickle relish
- 2 green onions, sliced

Finely dice the onion. Add the onion, olive oil and ground beef to a large deep skillet, and saute over medium heat until the beef is fully browned and the onion is soft and translucent. Drain off any excess fat, if needed.

Add the flour to the skillet and continue

to stir and cook for 1 minute more. The flour will begin to coat the bottom of the skillet. Be careful not to let the flour burn.

Add the tomato sauce and beef broth to the skillet and stir to dissolve the flour off the bottom of the skillet.

Add the uncooked pasta to the skillet and stir to combine. The liquid in the skillet may not fully cover the pasta, but that is OK.

Place a lid on the skillet, turn the heat up to medium-high, and let the liquid come up to a boil. Once it reaches a boil, give it a quick stir to loosen any pasta from the bottom of the skillet. Replace the lid, and turn the heat down to low. Let the pasta simmer, stirring occasionally (always replacing the lid), for about 10 minutes, or until the pasta is tender and the sauce has thickened. Turn off the heat.

Add the shredded cheddar to the skillet and stir until it has melted into the sauce. Stir the relish into the sauce, then top with sliced green onions. Serve warm.



FIVE-HOUR BEEF STEW

Delicious smells will fill your home as this stew cooks slowly in the oven.

- 1 1/2 pounds chuck roast, cut into bite-size pieces
- 1 cup celery, chunked
- 4 carrots, chunked
- 2-3 medium potatoes, chunked
- 1 onion, sliced or large dice
- 1/2 cup fresh bread crumbs
- 1 large can tomatoes
- 1 cup red wine, optional
- 1 tablespoon salt
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 4-5 tablespoons minute tapioca
- 2-3 generous splashes of Worcestershire sauce

Do not brown the meat. Combine all ingredients in a large baking dish with a tight-fitting lid or cover securely with foil. Bake in a 250 F oven for 5-6 hours. Do not hurry this stew. The slow oven is the key to success.



ONE-POT PRIMAVERA

- 4 skin-on, bone-in chicken thighs
- 1 pound small red potatoes, halved
- 1 pound Brussels sprouts, trimmed
- 1 teaspoon minced garlic
- 1 tablespoon olive oil, or as needed
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1/2 teaspoon dried thyme
- 1 (1-ounce) package of ranch dressing mix
- 6 slices bacon, chopped

Preheat the oven to 400 F. Place chicken thighs in a 9-by-13-inch baking dish.

Toss potatoes, Brussels sprouts and garlic together with olive oil in a bowl until vegetables are lightly coated. Add vegetables around and between chicken thighs in the baking dish. Season with salt, pepper and thyme. Evenly pour the entire packet of ranch seasoning over the chicken and vegetables. Sprinkle chopped bacon on top.

Bake until chicken is no longer pink at the bone and the juices run clear, 30 to 35 minutes. An instant-read thermometer inserted near the bone should read 165 F.

Set an oven rack about 6 inches from the heat source and preheat the oven's broiler. Place the baking dish under the broiler, and cook until chicken skin becomes golden brown and crisp, 2 to 3 minutes. 🍳

ONE-PAN CHICKEN PASTA

- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided
- 1/4 cup panko breadcrumbs
- 1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon minced garlic, divided
- 1 pound boneless, skinless chicken breasts, cut into 1/2-inch pieces
- 1 teaspoon Italian seasoning
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 3 cups chicken broth
- 1 1/2 cups crushed tomatoes
- 8 ounces penne pasta
- 1/2 cup shredded mozzarella cheese
- 1/4 cup shredded Parmesan cheese
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh basil

Heat 1 tablespoon oil in a large broiler-safe skillet over medium-high heat. Add panko and 1 teaspoon garlic. Cook, stirring, until the panko is golden brown, 1 to 2 minutes. Transfer to a small bowl and set aside. Wipe out the pan.

Heat the remaining 1 tablespoon oil in the pan over medium-high heat. Add chicken, Italian seasoning, salt and the



remaining 1 tablespoon garlic. Cook, stirring frequently, until the chicken is no longer pink on the outside, about 2 minutes. Add broth, tomatoes and penne. Bring to a boil and cook, uncovered, stirring frequently, until the penne is cooked and the sauce has reduced and thickened, 15 to 20 minutes.

Meanwhile, position an oven rack in the upper third of the oven. Preheat the broiler to high. When the pasta is cooked, sprinkle mozzarella over the penne mixture. Place the pan under the broiler. Broil until the mozzarella is bubbling and beginning to brown, about 1 minute. Top with the panko mixture, Parmesan and basil.



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A scenic photograph of an Appalachian landscape at dawn or dusk. The sky is filled with soft, orange and yellow light, with wispy clouds. Below, rolling hills and valleys are covered in dense green forest, with thick white fog or mist filling the lower elevations and valleys.

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