

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2018

CONNECTION

CREATIVE PURSUITS

Learning a craft at
Milan Village Arts
School

A STABLE SOLUTION

Barn-monitoring tech
eases winter's chill

ROMANTIC RENDEZVOUS

A vacation destination for
Valentine's Day



RURAL CONNECTIONS

BY SHIRLEY BLOOMFIELD, CEO
NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association

Promoting rural entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurs, those brave individuals willing to take a chance on an idea to start a business, are an important part of any thriving economy. We've seen rural entrepreneurship in particular become a key to sparking development in downtowns and invigorating communities.

Indeed, attitudes are changing about where someone can be an entrepreneur. When people think of startups, they often envision cities like New York, Austin or San Francisco. Big cities are no longer the only locations where startups can thrive thanks to low costs, an eager workforce and the availability of broadband.

Networks like the one your local telco has built provide a critical link for new and existing businesses. Through the power of broadband, any rural area is a possible hotbed for entrepreneurial activity.

New rural businesses can connect with suppliers, customers and peers in ways that were impossible just a few years ago. Robust fiber optic networks allow for companies to hire remote workers, share big files with designers or engineers, and hold virtual meetings through videoconferences.

Being an entrepreneur is not for everyone. It takes patience, drive and energy, a positive attitude, and a high tolerance for risk. But I'm glad that today when those type of people look at rural America, they now see opportunities thanks to hardworking NTCA members like your local telco. ☎



Stream on!

More than half of U.S. homes use streaming for never-ending entertainment

Regardless of location, high-speed internet brings endless entertainment options. More so than ever before, viewers have options for high-quality programming through streaming devices and services.

Streaming is an entertaining addition to traditional television services. Nearly 60 percent of U.S. TV homes have at least one internet-enabled device capable of streaming to a TV set, according to a recent survey by The Nielsen Company.

HOW POPULAR ARE STREAMING DEVICES?

Since June 2016, streaming devices have grown by 12 percent.

WHAT IS A STREAMING DEVICE/STREAMING SERVICE?

A streaming device is a gadget that uses the internet and allows viewers to connect to content online. A streaming service is a downloadable app that lets users watch content online.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

While traditional TV services are still crucial, at the touch of a button, streaming offers limitless entertainment. Streaming allows viewers to watch whatever content they choose, when and how they want.

WHAT'S SO GREAT ABOUT IT?

Variety: Whether you're looking for reruns of "The Dick Van Dyke Show" or original streaming-only content like Netflix's "Stranger Things" and Amazon Prime's "All or Nothing," it's all online.

Simplicity: Streaming devices and streaming services are simple to set up and require little to no technical knowledge.

Affordability: Streaming devices like AppleTVs are typically less than \$180, while some Roku models are about \$40. Streaming services like Netflix and Hulu are about \$10 per month or more. ☎

STREAMING DEVICE EXAMPLES:

Apple TV, Google Chromecast, Amazon Fire TV, Roku, a video game console or smart TV.

STREAMING SERVICE EXAMPLES:

Netflix, Hulu, Amazon Prime, YouTube and HBO Now.

69.5 MILLION U.S. TV homes have at least one internet-enabled streaming device.

39 MILLION U.S. TV homes have an internet-enabled game console.

6.5 MILLION U.S. homes have a streaming device, game console and smart TV.

Source: The Nielsen Company

More Americans are getting their news to go




BY DREW WOOLLEY

In today's world, everyone is connected all the time. That's changed the way we communicate, shop and even get our news. A recent report from the Pew Research Center took a closer look at how people's news habits are changing and the surprising groups driving the growth of mobile news.

Online news is closing the gap with TV. Today, 43 percent of Americans get their news online, just 7 percent fewer than those who say they get it on TV. That's less than half of the 19-point gap that existed in 2016, meaning the internet could soon become most people's primary news source.

News on mobile is still growing. In 2017, 45 percent of adults in the U.S. regularly got news from a mobile device, a 9 percent increase from 2016 and more than double the percentage in 2013. And while many of those people also turn to a desktop or a laptop computer for news, nearly two-thirds prefer a mobile device.

Mobile news growth is being driven by older adults. About 85 percent of adults get news from a mobile device, an increase of 13 percent from 2016. That increase is mostly made up of those 65 and older whose mobile news consumption jumped 24 points to 67 percent in 2017. For those aged 50 to 65, 79 percent of people get news from a mobile device, about twice as many as in 2013.

Two-thirds of the country gets news from social media. A small increase in the overall consumption of news on social media from 2016 to 2017 was spurred by a significant uptick among people 50 and older. Now, more than half of Americans older than 50 get news on social media. 

WATCH OUT FOR FAKE NEWS

One of the biggest drawbacks of online news is that it can be difficult to tell which sources are reliable and which are not. Since the FBI announced Russia's efforts to spread false stories during the 2016 election, it's more important than ever to protect yourself against unreliable information.

» Start with the facts.

A recent BuzzFeed analysis of CNN, ABC News and Politico found the vast majority of the news outlets' reporting to be truthful. Subscribing to a reputable newspaper or magazine can be a good first step to inoculating yourself against fake news.

» Step outside your bubble.

People tend to consume media inside echo chambers that confirm their beliefs. Whether it's a group of friends or your social media feed, take some time to break out of your normal news habits and challenge your views.

» Think like a fact-checker.

The best way to get to the bottom of any subject is to dig deep. Read as many sources as you can and check sites like Snopes or Politifact that specialize in verifying popular news stories.

TV networks won't stop increasing their fees

Imagine you run a delivery company and you charge \$100 to bring goods to a business in our region. Then, consider how a new toll booth would affect your business.



KEVIN BEYER
Chief Executive Officer

You already spend much of your \$100 on gas, wages for your driver and maintenance for the truck. Imagine how it would affect your operation if a new toll booth charging \$10 each way opened up directly on the route.

Suddenly, instead of \$100 to cover wages, fuel and maintenance, you now only have \$80. A delivery company that spends more to deliver something than it charges is not going to be in business very long. You would have to charge customers more to cover the new costs.

This is the situation small rural telcos like Farmers Mutual and Federated Telephone find ourselves in when it comes to the rates we have to pay television networks to provide their programming.

You see, if you are one of our many TV subscribers, Farmers Mutual and Federated Telephone have to pay a fee for virtually every channel in your TV package (except the shopping channels). While sports channels are by far the most expensive, even the less popular channels charge from a few nickels to a few dollars per subscriber to carry their programming. Some of the more expensive channels can be up to \$9 per subscriber. If you multiply those fees by every channel in your package, you can see what we're up against. Almost all of your monthly television bill goes directly to those networks. The days of commercial breaks covering the networks' financial demands are long over.

This hasn't always been the case. Only a few years ago, local channels did not require a fee for Farmers Mutual and Federated Telephone to retransmit their programming. Now, however, not only are they requiring us to pay a fee, but they are also increasing that fee every year. This year, for instance, many local stations are doubling the fees TV providers like Farmers Mutual and Federated Telephone have to pay for each television subscriber.

In addition to fees, many popular cable channels require that providers carry — and pay for — less popular channels owned by their corporate parent companies.

Like the delivery business in my story above, these new "tolls" keep popping up and have greatly affected what we have to charge for television service. This is why — despite the pretense of having negotiations — TV networks with the unchecked power to charge whatever they want creates an unfair fight for us and other small rural telcos working on behalf of our members.

Our only choice is to keep increasing fees or to drop channels. We know you are counting on us to deliver quality television programming at an affordable price. Our staff works every day to control our overhead expense and to be as efficient as possible in everything we do. I hope this metaphor of the delivery company and the increasing toll road helps you understand why we will be forced to raise the rates or fees we charge members for television service. As your trusted local telco, we were able to absorb the cost of the first few retransmission rate increases. However, the board and I are charged with ensuring the long-term continued financial viability of the cooperative, and with that in mind we have to pass these costs along to our subscribers or drop channels. Customers can expect to see a notification on the new pricing sometime in January.

We appreciate the opportunity to be your trusted provider for broadband, video and phone service today — and well into the future. ☎

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POWERED BY FARMERS MUTUAL TELEPHONE COMPANY
AND FEDERATED TELEPHONE COOPERATIVE

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WORDSOUTH
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On the Cover:



Larry Longtine began carving in 1979. He's one of several students in an Acanthus carving class at Milan Village Arts School. See story Page 12.

Marking a milestone

The staff at Acira would like to thank everyone who visited during the open house last fall for the unveiling of the remodeled Morris office on Highway 9. There was plenty to celebrate.

"We are the first in the nation to have built a fiber-to-the-premise network to 100 percent of our cooperative territory, and we've now completed our expansion to Big Stone and Swift County," Acira CEO Kevin Beyer announced during the event. The project was made possible with a Minnesota Border-to-Border grant and the support of county officials and residents.



CEO Kevin Beyer VP of national board

Kevin Beyer, general manager of Farmers Mutual and Federated Telephone, has been elected vice president of the board of NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association. The national board is made up of more than 800 telcos from around the nation. Beyer was also appointed to NTCA's Retirement and Security Program/Savings Plan Trust committee from a pool of several applicants.



COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

A college education is expensive, and Farmers Mutual Telephone Company and Federated Telephone Cooperative hopes to make it a little more affordable. Qualifying high school seniors may apply for two scholarship opportunities.

FOUNDATION FOR RURAL SERVICE SCHOLARSHIP

The cooperatives are accepting applications from eligible seniors for the Foundation for Rural Service scholarship. Eligible students must have at least one parent who is a member of either cooperative at the time they submit their application and at the time they attend college.

If selected, candidates will receive a \$2,000 scholarship from FRS. Should a student from Farmers Mutual or Federated Telephone's service area be selected, FMTC/FTC will supply an additional \$500, bringing the total scholarship award to \$2,500.

Interested students can obtain an application from their high school or from www.frs.org. Completed appli-

cations must be signed by General Manager Kevin Beyer well in advance of the application deadline which is **Feb. 23**.

For more information, visit frs.org or contact the Farmers Mutual Telephone Company or Federated Telephone Cooperative office.

FARMERS MUTUAL AND FEDERATED TELEPHONE AND MINNESOTA TELECOM ALLIANCE SCHOLARSHIP

A one-time, \$2,000 scholarship is open to applications from high school students who graduate in 2018 and who have at least one parent who is a Farmers Mutual or Federated Telephone member at the time of application and college attendance.

Contact your school counselor for an application. Return completed applications to Farmers Mutual or Federated Telephone no later than **Feb. 23**.

A telecom alliance panel will select finalists based on grades, academic achievements and student's interest in telecommunications technology and rural communities.



*Apply for
a trip to
WASHINGTON, D.C.*

Farmers Mutual and Federated Telephone each will sponsor one student from their cooperative to attend the Foundation for Rural Service Youth Tour in Washington, D.C., June 2-6.

The tour offers students an inside look at the telecommunications industry and educates students about governmental processes. The trip includes the cost for the student's registration and airline transportation.

Students must be 16 or 17 years old at the time of the Youth Tour and must have at least one parent who is a Farmers Mutual or Federated Telephone member at the time they submit the application and at the time of the trip.

Each student is required to submit a 500-word essay explaining why they would like to attend the tour and why they are interested in learning more about the telephone industry.

Essays must include the student's name, their parents' names and telephone number. It must be received at Farmers Mutual or Federated Telephone offices by **Feb. 23**.



Grand Ely Lodge resort is your entrance to wintertime fun and romance.

Photo courtesy of Grand Ely Lodge.

Romantic GETAWAYS

Romance can occur wherever you happen to be. But add a wonderful dinner and beautiful surroundings, and you've upped the ante. Here are a few suggestions for hotels, inns, lodges and resorts that know how to create a memorable getaway, whether for a Valentine's retreat or simply for some much-needed time away to recharge.

The Hotel Donaldson

101 Broadway N., Fargo, North Dakota

Modern inspiration meets links to the past at The Hotel Donaldson, a 17-room boutique hotel on the corner of Broadway and First Avenue. It's a prime example of downtown Fargo's resurgence. Room decor is art-inspired, with works from regional artists. The restaurant, HoDo, serves artisanal creations, featuring local foods and dishes from trained chefs.

Add a little romance by requesting a package that includes a dozen long-stemmed roses, chocolate-dipped strawberries, and wine or champagne.

- ▶ **Where to eat:** Reservations are suggested at HoDo, located inside The Hotel Donaldson. Or, walk to Mezzaluna, 309 Roberts St. N., for upscale American fare. Visit Pounds, 612 First Ave. N., for a retro hangout with burgers and beer. Vinyl Taco, 520 First Ave. N., serves Mexican street fare.
- ▶ **The Hotel Donaldson rates and reservations:** \$184-\$345. Add \$120 for the romance package. 701-478-1000 or www.hoteldonaldson.com

Dakotah Rose

510 Fourth Ave. NW, Minot, North Dakota

Your relationship will bloom at this historic inn located in the heart of Minot. The inn is a century-old home with all the modern amenities. Suites feature luxury linens, period furnishings and cable television, and several rooms come with views of the Souris River. Guests are treated to breakfast in the main dining room, or they can sleep in and enjoy room service by choosing the special romance package offered

all year. Various packages include items such as a bottle of champagne, a bouquet of beautiful roses, chocolate-dipped strawberries, a meat-and-cheese tray or in-room breakfast.

► **Where to eat:** Great sandwiches and other pub fare can be found at Ebenezer's Eatery Irish Bar, 304 E. Central Ave. Pick up an artisanal pizza at The Starving Rooster, 30 First St. NE. Or, settle into a seat at Off the Vine wine bar, 15 Main St. S.

► **Dakotah Rose rates and reservations:** \$85-\$95.50/night. Packages range from \$79-\$130/night. 701-838-3548 or www.dakotahrose.com

Lost Lake Lodge

7965 Lost Lake Road, Lake Shore, Minnesota

With two beautiful lake shores, 14 cozy cabins and world-class dining, the all-inclusive Lost Lake Lodge is the perfect place to make memories. Newly renovated cabins are rustic but modern, and some have private docks. All have fireplaces. Choose the "Fall in Love at Lost Lake" package and find a box of chocolates and a bottle of wine in your room — one-room cabins only — at check-in.

► **Where to eat:** The lodge has its own restaurant, but if you want a change of scenery, Bar Harbor Supper Club, 8164 Interlachen Road, has views of the

lake and a menu that features steaks, chops, pasta and seafood. For a more casual venue, Cowboy's of Lake Shore, 8385 Interlachen Road, is the place to go for wings, burgers, cheese curds and other pub-style fare.

► **Lost Lake Lodge winter rates and reservations:** \$250/night, one-bedroom cabins. "Fall in Love" package: \$250/couple per night, prices go up on holiday weekends. 218-963-2681 or www.lostlake.com

Grand Ely Lodge

400 N. Pioneer Road, Ely, Minnesota

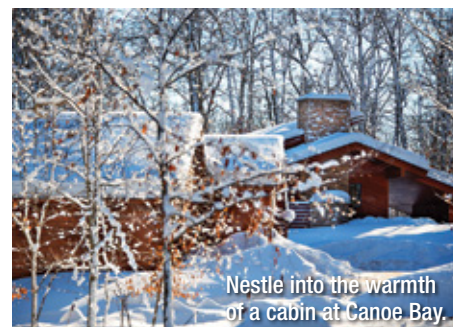
Pack your bags and get ready for romance in the woods. The resort is on the shores of Shagawa Lake and provides a true "Up North" Minnesota experience. All rooms, from queen doubles to suites, offer views of the lake and have whirlpool baths — a soothing way to relax after a day of dog-sledding (guides are available), skiing or snowshoeing.

Enjoy a romantic getaway with the Romance Package, which includes two nights' lodging in a king whirlpool room with a view of the lake, breakfast for two both mornings, and dinner one night in the Evergreen Restaurant. A bottle of wine and complimentary wine glasses, gel picture frame, and a grand welcome basket will greet you on your arrival.

► **Where to eat:** Evergreen Restaurant and Antlers Lounge are at the resort,

both offering delicious fare in a casual setting with stunning views of the lake. Or head into Ely for dinner at Insula Restaurant, 145 E. Sheridan St., for braised beef shanks or chicken and waffles. Or, choose the three-egg omelet with hash browns for breakfast at Britton's Cafe, 5 E. Chapman St.

► **Grand Ely Lodge rates and reservations:** Winter rates begin at \$139.95. 218-365-6565 or www.grandelylodge.com



Nestle into the warmth of a cabin at Canoe Bay.

Photo courtesy of Layne Kennedy


Canoe Bay Resort

Just off Highway 53, near Chetek, Wisconsin

Chosen by travel experts at Conde Nast as the No. 1 resort in the Midwest and one of the best in the United States, Canoe Bay is a resort for couples only. Every room has a fireplace, and you can snowshoe on the property, with skiing not too far away.

There are 27 guest accommodations on the 300-acre forested estate spaced around a picturesque, spring-fed lake. A nearby four-lane highway leads you to the town of Chetek. The solitude and breathtaking surroundings are sure to bring the romantic out in both you and your loved one

► **Where to eat:** Popular dining options at Canoe Bay include candlelit dinners in The Inn and in the wine cellar and chef table dinners. In town, the prime rib sandwich at Mary's Cafe & Pub, 208 Knapp St., garners rave reviews. The Friday night fish fry at Phil's Bar and Grill, 519 Second St., is also a favorite.

► **Rates and reservations:** \$350 (lodge room)-\$900 (villa) per night. 715-924-4594 or www.canoebay.com 



With its cozy fireplace and a bit more privacy since it's at the end of the line, Cabin 6 at Lost Lake Resort is one of the best cabins for a romantic getaway.

Photo courtesy of Lost Lake Resort.

All Wi-Fi routers are not the same

Make sure you get the performance you need

Streaming movies, listening to online music services, sharing files between work and home, and completing school assignments are only a few of the ways high-speed broadband can make life better.

A weak or out-of-date Wi-Fi router can turn fun and productivity into frustration and irritation.

A Wi-Fi router makes it possible to wirelessly connect to the internet with computers, smartphones, televisions, game consoles and more. But it's important to realize all routers are not the same — far from it.

“Buying the wrong router can mean you do not have access to the full speeds available through a service such as Farmers Mutual Telephone Company and Federated Telephone Cooperative’s internet bundles,” says Information Technology Specialist John Weeding. “In order to achieve faster speeds, your device needs to support 5 GHz radios.”

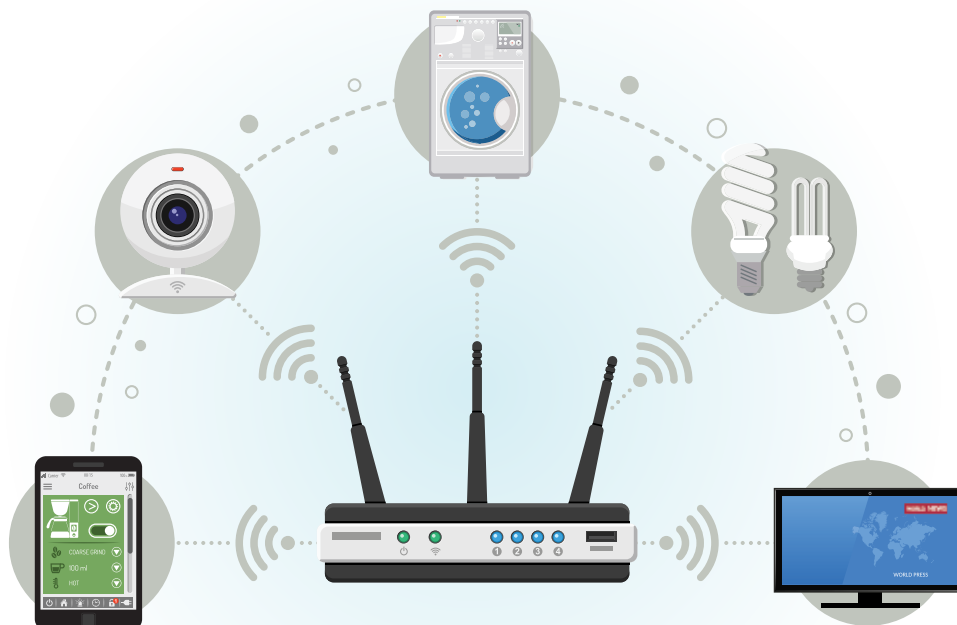
Farmers Mutual Telephone Company and Federated Telephone Cooperative’s Wi-Fi service is designed to keep a home’s internet moving fast and offers the greatest Wi-Fi range. Farmers Mutual Telephone Company and Fed-

erated Telephone Cooperative recently started deployment of the GigaCenter in the newly expanded areas of Big Stone and Swift County. Built for performance, these new routers are dramatically faster than those typically found at big-box stores.

GigaCenter routers are capable of handling gigabit speeds. For comparison, the common Netgear N300 Wi-Fi router can handle speeds no faster than 300 Mbps.

There are other key differences between a GigaCenter router and lower-performing units.

GigaCenter routers rely on the latest technology, such as the ability to broadcast at 2.4 GHz, 5 GHz and 802.11ac speeds. That means the GigaCenter routers with 5 GHz radios can support the fastest wireless speeds available today with less interference than most older routers. For example, many discount routers offer only 2.4 GHz, limiting their usefulness. 📶



HI, I'M JOHN WEEDING!

In this column, in each issue, you'll learn about technology and read simple tips to get the most out of your electronics. For more tips or help with your devices, be sure to read this column in future publications. I'm always happy to help!



Some factors that may affect wireless internet speeds include:

- Placing your wireless router centrally in your home — doing so will help to maximize coverage and speed throughout the house.
- Remembering to check your device manual for maximum speed and Wi-Fi technology — each wireless device has different speed capabilities.
- Distance between your router and your device.
- Other wireless devices — these may cause interference.
- Number of walls or obstacles between the router and your device.



Tracy Rheingans, left, and her parents, Elizabeth and Roger, tend to their flock in preparation for winter, when they'll be watching for newborn lambs.



A house-mounted antenna completes the Ubiquity Monitoring System, with the Wi-Fi camera system in the barn.

A lambing dilemma

Monitoring system solves cold-night problem

BY JEN CALHOUN

Late winter and early spring can be a tough time for Roger and Elizabeth Rheingans. That's when the lambs are born on their farm just outside Correll, Minnesota.

The demands are great, but the nights are cold, says Elizabeth Rheingans, who adds that lambing season is a little like tending dozens of sleepless, newborn children at once.

"We typically have to go out there about five times a night to make sure they're OK," she says. "The goal is to be there as soon as the lambs are born so we can make sure they're clean and breathing."

SPRINGING INTO ACTION

This year, however, the family decided to take control with a monitoring system through Farmers Mutual Telephone Company and Federated Telephone Coopera-

tive. The Wi-Fi camera system, once fully installed, will let them check the lambing barn and the surrounding area with their tablets and smartphones from the comfort of their home.

"Typically, the ewes will take care of their lambs, but not all the time," Elizabeth Rheingans says. "We've got several breeds, and usually they'll have twins. Sometimes the ewes can be kind of drama queens and ignore the first lamb that's born while they're in labor with the other one. So, we have to make sure they get cleaned off and get going."

The Rheingans raise sheep for show and for commercial use. The couple's son and daughter compete with the show lambs in county and state fairs. Because of this, the show sheep are generally scheduled for birth in February so they are large enough for the competitions later in the year.

BEATING THE COLD WITH FIBER

"It's still below zero here in February," Elizabeth Rheingans says. "So that means we have to put on all our clothes and

trudge out to the barn a few times a night to go check on the sheep that are lambing. It's definitely a chore. But this way, we can be in our bed and stay there if nothing's happening."

Lambs for commercial use are born later in the spring, often outside the barn. They still need the same attention, so the monitoring system has also been installed outdoors, too, she says.

Elizabeth Rheingans looks forward to seeing the system in action once it's fully installed and the lambing season starts in February. Farmers Mutual Telephone Company and Federated Telephone Cooperative's fiber network will allow for clear, real-time images of the livestock, making it easier for her to know when it's time to go and when they can stay in bed.

She realizes not everyone in the country has access to fiber internet. "We're really lucky to have it," she says. "That's the thing about being part of a cooperative. We take care of each other. If we don't take care of us, nobody's going to." 📞



Spend smart in 2018

Your guide to the latest apps for coupon clipping

BY LUIS CARRASCO

If one of your New Year's resolutions is to finally start clipping coupons, or to just be smarter with your shopping budget, don't even bother taking out the scissors — take out your smartphone instead. Whether you like flipping through digital sales circulars or getting cash back on your purchases, the path to savings has never been smoother.

Here's a quick look at some of the services and apps available. All apps are compatible with iOS and Android devices.

COUPONS

Flipp allows you to browse through weekly sales ads from your favorite retailers — including Home Depot, Toys R Us and Walmart — or just search to see if an item you want is on sale. You can also make a shopping list and the app will point you to any existing deals. It also notifies you about expiring coupons and nearby discounts.

If you still enjoy searching for bargains in the newspaper, the **SnipSnap** coupon app lets your phone's camera do the clipping.

You can snap a picture of a printed offer and the app will capture the pertinent information so that you can use it at your favorite retailer. It also allows you to share coupons with your friends or find coupons other users have digitized.

Many retailers — including Target, Hobby Lobby, Michaels and Walgreens — also have their own apps that offer coupons.

'TEXTING CLUBS'

Hundreds of companies participate, so odds are that your favorite retailer, convenience store or chain restaurant is ready to send you coupons or deal alerts through a text. Simply check their website or ask a representative the next time you visit. Standard texting rates apply, though, so be careful of signing up for too many if you don't have unlimited texting.

Here are two to get you started: text SUB to 782929 for deals at Subway; text JOIN to 527365 for discounts at JC Penney. Any service you sign up for may be canceled anytime by texting the word STOP.

MONEY BACK

Both **Ibotta** and **Ebates** give you cash back for shopping, but they each take a different approach. When you shop through the Ebates website or app, the company receives a commission from the retailer and you get a part of that money, which you can then receive through a check or PayPal.

With Ibotta, you can either find cash-back rebates before you shop or check the app after you come back from the store. Either way, you watch a brief commercial or answer a survey and then take a photo of your receipt. The app recognizes the products on sale and deposits the money into your account, which you can then receive through PayPal, Venmo or a gift card.

Whichever app or service you choose, enjoy being a savvy shopper in 2018! 📱

Learning the language of tech

Enjoy a translator for today's essential tools

When people ask me what I do for a living, one of my favorite responses is that I am a translator. I translate between the technicians who build our networks, fix our computers, and sell us the latest in technology and those people who do not consider themselves “techie.” I think learning how to use technology is very much like learning a new language, so having a translator is always helpful.

In 2018, my plan is for this column to be your translator, helping you gain a better understanding of everyday technology. I will cover some basic things you need to know,

and I will introduce you to some of my favorite gadgets that you might find helpful.

In the meantime, here are some tips to get you started on using technology in your golden years.

- ▶ Remember, it is not your fault that you struggle to understand the language of technology. The lingo is not your native language, and it takes time to learn it. However, it is up to you to take the opportunity to learn whenever you can.
- ▶ Ask questions. You may think your question is trivial, but you will never learn if you don't ask. We all know that a child who speaks French

because they are raised in France is not smarter than someone who cannot speak French. We all have knowledge, and kids today have a better understanding of technology because it is part of their everyday lives.

- ▶ Start by picking technology that allows you to do what you love. If you enjoy playing cards or games, choose a tablet that allows you to play games. If you love creating crafts, sign up for sites such as Pinterest to look up ideas for woodworking, quilting or scrapbooking.

I have so much respect for those of you in your golden years. You have so many skills

and so much knowledge that many of us will never know or understand. However, I want you to have the same opportunities to learn how to go online safely and enjoy using technology. There are things out there that can help keep you safe and make your life a little easier. I am looking forward to introducing you to some of these things and teaching you about the language of technology. 🗨️



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



Do you want to learn the basics on how to use your smartphone or computer? Are you interested in signing up for a Facebook or Pinterest account? **Check out www.gcflearnfree.com for free tutorials on how to do all this and more.**

OLD COUNTRY SPIRIT

Scandinavian folk arts are alive and well at the Milan Village Arts School



Marilyn Hanson pays close attention to the acanthus carving technique by instructor Hans Sandom.



Instructor Tom Johnson, right, demonstrates silver broom casting to a group of students.



BY DREW WOOLLEY

Today, Jon Roisen can only remember a few words of Norwegian. But growing up in Milan, it was the only language he heard during the day.

“Even my mother, she never spoke English until she started going to school,” he says. “You could get by living up here right up until about the 1950s without speaking English as your first language.”

Like many people in the area, Roisen’s family arrived in Minnesota in the late 1800s. He can trace his heritage back to an area of Norway called Trondheim, but

search Milan and the surrounding farming towns and you’ll find similar stories of families whose roots go back to Sweden, Iceland, Belgium and Czechoslovakia.

But in the late ’80s and early ’90s, as farms began consolidating and the population started dwindling, that proud heritage was at risk. That’s when a dedicated group of citizens founded the Milan Village Arts

School, a place for local artists to teach their crafts to anyone who wants to learn.

The school’s classes are not just afternoon art lessons, though. Many of the classes run for three full days, and some for a week. They teach students knife making, silversmithing and woodworking, among other skills.

“The people who used to participate in these activities probably wouldn’t even consider them folk art,” says Roisen, the school’s chairman and knife-making instructor. “They’re just the things they did to get by.”

For Bob Kempe, a member of the school's board and a student in the acanthus carving class — an ornate Scandinavian form of scroll carving used to decorate everything from cheese boards to shelves — that hands-on element is important for connecting both locals and visitors to the region's heritage.

"Everybody's heritage, unless they're royalty, includes making utensils or other things for the home," he says. "Most art is just that. It beautifies the home, but it also helps people keep track of where they're from and, I think, gives them more of a worldview."

POUNDING METAL AND POWER TOOLS

To some people, learning to solder, pound silver and mount your own stones might seem like a lot of work to put into a piece of jewelry. But for Marilyn Hanson, who teaches silversmithing at the Arts School, it's cathartic.

"I had a high-stress job working at a bank. Everything was black and white," she says. "Doing something like needlework just didn't take care of the frustration, and I'm not the type of person who will go jog for 45 minutes. But I love pounding metal and using power tools."

Hanson was a student of the craft for years, taking classes at the Arts School with her father and later her sister. Eventually, her instructor asked if she would take over the basic silversmithing class, and when he retired the advanced class passed to her as well.

Since then, she's felt firsthand the support of the community in keeping the nonprofit school running. In addition to contributions of time and money, the school relies on donated tools and equipment to keep going.

The school building itself is perhaps the clearest example of how important the giving spirit of the people of Milan has been from the very start.

The building was originally a country schoolhouse built in 1950. The Arts School purchased it for \$50 in 1995 and placed it on city-donated land. Volunteers then spent hundreds of hours helping to refurbish the old schoolhouse; the effort



Working side by side, students and instructors spend hours learning their craft during a class at the Milan Village Arts School.

included a restoration of the building's bell tower in a traditional Norwegian style.

The school completed construction of a basement where instructors and students from out of town will soon be able to stay as an alternative to local hotels.

But despite its shoestring budget, the Arts School still provides a quality of instruction that has attracted many students from Minneapolis-St. Paul and even from outside the country. For Hanson, that's a result of the expertise and individual attention on display in Milan — the same reasons she continues to return as a student.

"People just have so much fun. It doesn't matter if I'm sitting next to a doctor or a dentist, we're all in the same boat," she says. "We're all learning the specific thing in this class and are on the same playing level."

PAST AND PRESENT

While no one project is capable of revitalizing an entire city, the Milan Village Arts School has, at the very least, helped the area stand out. It has given the townspeople something they can be proud of that is, at once, both old and new.


"Visiting students are always so surprised that something like this exists in a tiny little town," says Hanson. "I had one

lady from Chicago who was expecting a big town, big entertainment and just had no clue what a small town out in the prairie was like."

And while the school may not be able to create a booming economy on its own, Roisen has had out-of-town students who tell him they can spend as much as \$800 on local hotels and restaurants over a three-day weekend.

"They used to say any dollar spent in your community goes around seven times," he says. "If that's true, then the school does bring some needed money into the economy."

For Kempe, the feeling of working with his hands and the sense of accomplishment when he's finished a piece is value enough for the school. And for the Scandinavian descendants across the region, it's a way to honor the past while keeping their feet planted firmly in the present.

"Sometimes I think my great-grandpa would probably have gotten quite angry about emphasizing the old country too much," Roisen says. "There was a real good reason they left the old country. It wasn't a very easy place to make a living, and this was the land of opportunity. But in the same breath, you don't want to turn your back completely on where you're from." 

Hotdish hoedown

Every Midwesterner knows what hotdish is — comfort food with every bite. It's stick-to-your-ribs fare consisting of meat and vegetables, usually canned, but fresh is permissible. There are potatoes, too — with tater tots a popular choice. And then hotdish includes a cream-of-something soup, usually mushroom, to bind the ingredients and mingle the flavors.

Hotdish is a tribute to prairie practicality invented by budget-conscious farm wives back in the early 1900s. It's a mainstay at church dinners and potluck suppers.

Each year, Faith Lutheran Church in Morris, Minnesota, opens its doors to hotdish-bearing cooks competing in the annual Warm Hearts and Hotdishes contest, a benefit for Raising Up Stevens County Kinship. The program mentors youth in the five cities that make up Stevens County.

The nonprofit program serves youths in need of positive role models. Adult volunteers commit to spending at least four hours weekly with a young person. It's a nationwide program, but this is only the third year of existence for the RUSC chapter, says Andrea Dosdall, executive director. And, as a fledgling organization, it's in need of funds. Having a food contest seemed like a tasty solution, and there is no better way to raise money than to seek out the best hotdish cooks.

Last year, more than 20 people entered the competition, and more are expected to put their hotdish recipes to the test this year. "You're typically able to feed a lot of people with a hotdish, so it's practical," Dosdall says. "And you can pretty much throw



Sarah Moulton, left, and Laura Ennen were the top winners in last year's Warm Hearts Hotdishes contest in Morris, Minnesota.

Photo courtesy of Anne Braly

anything together and create a hotdish, so the options just go on and on."

Every hotdish brought to Warm Hearts and Hotdishes last year was different, whether it called for chicken, turkey, ground beef or pork.

"We have winter at least six months out of the year, and winters are typically brutally cold and snowy, so hotdish is the perfect thing on a cold winter day," Dosdall says.

The most unusual entries in last year's hotdish hoedown were Reuben Hotdish and Sauerkraut Hotdish. When it comes to hotdish, the rules are simple: meat, sauce and veggies.



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

Warm hearts and hotdishes

**This year's contest is
Tuesday, Jan. 23,
from 4:30-7 p.m. at Faith
Lutheran Church,
108 W. Eighth St.
Morris, Minnesota.**

Enter in advance or simply bring your prepared hotdish to the church on the day of the contest. Dishes will be judged by food professionals in the Stevens County area. All money raised supports the RUSC Kinship program. Winners receive bragging rights as well as awards for Best Hotdish in Stevens County and a People's Choice Award.

**For more information
about the contest and
the program, visit
www.rusckinship.org.**



PIZZA HOTDISH

This was the 2017 People's Choice Award-winning dish from Stevens County's Laura Ennen.

- 1 pound ground beef, browned
- 1 can cheddar cheese soup
- 1 jar pizza sauce
- 1/2 bag wide egg noodles, cooked al dente

Topping:

- Mozzarella cheese, shredded
- Pepperoni slices

Combine hamburger, cheddar cheese soup, pizza sauce and egg noodles in casserole dish. Top with cheese and pepperoni, cover and bake at 350 degrees for 45 minutes. Uncover and bake for an additional 15 minutes.

Tater Tot Hotdish



TATER TOT HOTDISH

This is the 2017 Best Hotdish in Stevens County, won by Sarah Moulton of Morris, Minnesota.

- 2 pounds ground beef
- 1 family-sized (22.6-ounce) can of cream of mushroom soup
- 1 regular (10.5-ounce) can of cream of mushroom soup
- 1/4 cup heavy whipping cream
- 4 cups (depending on how much you love veggies) frozen vegetables (see note)
- 2 teaspoons onion powder
- 2 teaspoons garlic powder
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 1 32-ounce bag of tater tots

Heat oven to 350 degrees. Brown the beef in a large pot; drain grease. Turn heat down to medium-low. Add both cans of soup and cream; stir until combined. Stir in the vegetables of your choice. Add onion powder, garlic powder, salt and pepper. Taste to check for seasonings, adding more if desired. Transfer mixture to a glass 9-by-13-inch baking dish. Lay tater tots over the entire top of the

mixture to create a solid layer (you may or may not use the entire bag). Bake for 45 minutes or until mixture is bubbly and tater tots are golden brown. Let sit for 5 minutes before serving.

NOTE: Moulton used a vegetable mixture of corn, peas and carrots in her winning dish.

TURKEY HOTDISH

Recipe by Vicky Dosdall of Morris, Minnesota.

- 6 cups herb stuffing mix (not croutons)
- 1 1/4 cups melted butter
- 4 cups diced turkey
- 2 cans cream of chicken soup
- 1 can evaporated milk
- 1/2 cup milk
- 2 tablespoons chopped onion
- 1/2 cup finely chopped celery
- 1 can sliced water chestnuts, drained
- Salt and pepper, to taste

Mix stuffing mix with melted butter and put half of mixture in the bottom of a

well-buttered 9-by-13-inch glass baking dish. Mix turkey, soup, evaporated milk, milk, onions, celery, water chestnuts, and salt and pepper, to taste. Pour and spread over half of the crumb mixture. Sprinkle the remaining crumb mixture over the top and bake at 350 degrees for 45 minutes.

NOTE: You may make ahead and refrigerate, but allow 15-20 minutes of extra baking time due to hotdish being cold.

CHICKEN HOTDISH

Recipe by Kongsvinger Church Ladies.

- 1 cup celery
- 1/2 cup chopped onion
- 1/4 cup chopped green pepper
- 8-10 ounces wide egg noodles
- 3-4 cups cooked, chopped chicken
- Fresh broccoli florets
- 1 can cream of mushroom soup
- 1 pint half-and-half
- 8 ounces sour cream
- 1 cup (or more) Velveeta cheese, cut into chunks
- 1 cup stuffed green olives, sliced
- 1 4-ounce can mushrooms, drained

Topping:

- 1 can cream of chicken soup
- 2 cups dry stuffing mix
- 1/3 cup margarine, melted

Saute celery, onion and green pepper in a little butter until tender. Cook noodles according to package directions and drain; rinse in cold water. In large bowl, combine vegetables and noodles with chicken, broccoli, soup, half-and-half, sour cream, cheese, green olives and mushrooms. Transfer to 9-by-13-inch casserole dish. In medium bowl, combine topping ingredients and spread over top of hotdish. Bake in oven at 350 F for 1 hour or until bubbly. Makes 10-12 servings. 📖

In the November-December issue of your magazine, the name of Jennifer Rohrich was misspelled in the article "Californian on the prairie." We regret the error.

Happy New Gear!

Start the year off with a plan that fits all of those shiny new gadgets.

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