

JULY/AUGUST 2018

# CONNECTION

## A GOOD BARN RAISING

See what's new at  
the 2018 Stevens  
County Fair

### BUSINESS IS BUZZING

Cory Nohl's side venture  
flies high in the sky

### MAKING A SPLASH

Escape the summer heat  
in the coolest of ways







BY SHIRLEY BLOOMFIELD, CEO  
NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association

## Telemedicine is key to rural health

**B**roadband internet access is making a real difference in the lives of people across rural America. I see it whenever I travel to the states where telecommunications companies like this one are building advanced networks to reach those in hard-to-serve regions.

Broadband supports efforts that are vital to a community's well-being, such as economic development, education and small-business growth. But broadband's greatest impact is perhaps seen in the delivery of health care.

Robust and sustainable broadband infrastructure is necessary for expanding access to health care in rural America. NTCA has been looking into telehealth applications for a number of years. We have hosted events on our own. We have worked with health care groups to learn about their challenges and to introduce them to our member telcos' capabilities. We have assisted our members in launching pilot projects of their own.

Telemedicine in rural America is truly a win-win proposition. Access to advanced services in a local community brings greater health care options to its residents. As a bonus, telemedicine also makes it easier to attract high-skilled labor, industry and economic development. NTCA is passionate about the role that our member telcos play in telemedicine — and I think we have only scratched the surface of possibilities.

Your local telecommunications provider, like hundreds of similar companies across rural America, is building the advanced broadband network that makes telemedicine possible. ☎

# Money from home

## Using the internet to start cottage industries

**E**ver been told you can sell those knit caps or great jewelry pieces you've made but don't want to invest the money it takes for a brick-and-mortar location? Look to the internet.

More and more people are finding ways to earn a living by building online businesses from their homes. According to Forbes, more than 52 percent of all small businesses in the U.S. are home-based, and most rely on the internet. These jobs can offer flexibility, independence and a way to skirt the traditional 9-to-5.

As more Americans board the microbusiness train, the economy is taking notice. While small, these microbusinesses employ 55 million people in the U.S. They also contribute more than \$1 trillion in earnings to the U.S. economy, according to Etsy, a global online marketplace for handcrafted and vintage pieces.

Many of these entrepreneurs are young, female and live in rural areas, too. Etsy recently polled its network of 1.7 million sellers around the world, and the results are eye-opening. Check out a few of these statistics from the 2017 Etsy Seller Census:



# STUDY: **Social media use is growing**

But so are privacy concerns

BY JEN CALHOUN

About seven out of every 10 American adults use some kind of social media, but it doesn't mean they don't have worries about it.

A recent Pew Research Center study found that more Americans than ever use Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and other social media platforms as part of their daily lives. They keep in touch with friends and family. They participate in civic and political activities. They even use social media for work or to share health and science research.

But the study found that as the number of likes and shares grows, so do concerns about privacy.

## PRIVACY ANXIETY

Last year, only 9 percent of social media users were “very confident” that social media companies would protect their data, Pew research found. In fact, about half of the users polled “were not at all or not too confident their data were in safe hands.”

And while many users said they wanted to do more to

protect their privacy, nearly two-thirds worried that current laws weren't good enough to do the job. In addition, nearly 65 percent said they support more regulation of advertisers.

It's not just privacy that worries them either. Pew research found that only 5 percent of users trust all of the information that comes to them on social media. They also don't like the harassment, political bickering, disrespect and incivility that can come with a day in the life of Twitter or Facebook.

## HARD HABIT TO BREAK


But if social media is so troublesome, why are people sticking with it?

Maybe it's because they feel like they have to, Pew experts suggest. Let's face it; social media is an easy and convenient way to stay connected to our friends, families and the organizations we love. As a

result, some users find it hard to stop. Social media is part of their everyday lives.

## NEW RULES

However, some privacy advocates say change is coming. One example is the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation, which was adopted in April 2016 and went into effect in May of this year.

The regulation offers data protection and privacy for all those in the European Union, but it could also have a positive effect on U.S. social media users. Pew experts say the GDPR “will give users — even Americans — greater protection about what data tech firms can collect, the data that can be used and how consumers can be given more opportunities to see what is happening with their information.” 



## Social media use has grown dramatically

Percent of adults  
who say they use social  
media sites, by age

## 18-29 year olds

**56% → 88%**  
2008 2018

### 30-49 year olds

**18% → 78%**  
2008 2018

## 50-64 year olds

6% → 64%

2008 2018

## 65+ year olds

2% → 37%

2008 2018

# Are you well-connected?

Stop and count with me for a moment. How many internet-connected devices do you have in your home?



**KEVIN BEYER**  
Chief Executive Officer

For many of us, smartphones and computers are the first obvious devices that come to mind, but what other devices are there? How about tablets? Any smart TVs or streaming boxes like Roku or Amazon Fire TV? If you have children at home, what about their game systems, computers and other devices? Maybe you've gotten into the smart home technology and have some of the bulbs, security cameras, thermostats or outlets.

When you think about all of the things we use regularly that depend on the internet, the answer to my question can grow quickly.

In fact, depending on which source you use, most North American households have between five and 10 connected devices. Some experts believe that number will grow to as many as 50 devices in less than five years!

Whatever your number of connected devices happens to be, know this: There is no better network to handle a family downloading and uploading over multiple connected devices than the type of fiber optic network Farmers Mutual and Federated Telephone have built for our members.

We have invested millions of dollars in our region to build a world-class fiber optic network. While there are many benefits to a fiber connection — including reliability and increased home value — I'd like to discuss the capacity your fiber connection will afford your family.

While we often talk about an internet connection's speed, we really mean the speed at which things download. The bits and bytes are moving at the same speed no matter your connection, but it's the capacity (how many bits and bytes can pass through each second) that matters.

I often tell people to think of internet service like plumbing. Each file you are trying to download is like a bathtub filling up. The bits of data that make up the file flow through your modem and router just like water into a tub. Filling a tub from the spout is much faster than filling it with a sink sprayer because the spout has more capacity to let more water through. Similarly, a smaller connection is going to limit the amount of data that can pass through when compared to a bigger connection.

To follow that analogy, it's also important to consider how many faucets you're going to be using at the same time. If you open all of your faucets, the water pressure is going to dip significantly, and it's going to take a lot longer to fill each tub or sink. For broadband, the same thing happens with multiple devices on a network. If you have three tablets, a game system, two computers, four phones and a streaming TV using your connection, each one is going to be slower — unless you have a high-capacity connection via fiber optics.

Finally, consider that this explanation of capacity applies to both downloading and uploading. Download speeds measure the capacity for bringing information to your devices. Upload speeds measure the capacity for sending information out — whether that's sharing photos, backing up files to the cloud, sending documents or publishing videos. Unlike many providers, our system was built for what's called "symmetrical speeds," meaning you get the same fast, reliable upload speeds that you get while downloading.

As we continue to improve our network, we're looking down the road at the future. We see families in our area continuing to add the latest technology in their homes, which drives up the demand for broadband capacity. The fiber network we've built is the only way we can be sure we have the capacity to serve you today and in the future. ☎

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POWERED BY FARMERS MUTUAL TELEPHONE COMPANY  
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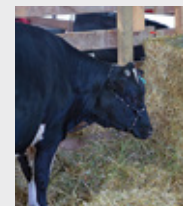
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### On the Cover:



A variety of farm animals is only one attraction that draws large crowds to the Stevens County Fair, now in its 145th year. See story Page 12.



## Nelson earns FRS Scholarship



Emma Nelson, daughter of Barry and Sandra Nelson, was the recipient of a \$1,000 NISC Community Leadership Scholarship from the Foundation for Rural Service. Presenting the check are, from left, Acira Customer Service Representative Tammy Marquart, Marketing and Customer Service Manager Donna Eul and scholarship winner Emma Nelson.



## CUSTOMER SATISFACTION REACHES NEW HEIGHTS

Acira recently authorized an independent customer satisfaction survey of the Farmers Mutual Telephone Company and Federated Telephone Cooperative service areas. The report discovered that both areas have incredibly positive customer satisfaction, with the Federated area at 93 percent and the Farmers Mutual area slightly higher at 94 percent. Both scores are well above the industry average of 80 percent.

The quality of service and the absence of problems with Acira's services were the top two reasons for that level of satisfaction, according to the survey. Three-quarters of Federated members are completely satisfied with Federated as their TV provider. Members gave the highest overall ratings for Acira as an internet service provider, with an extraordinary 93 percent customer satisfaction.



## ACIRA REPRESENTED IN D.C.

Acira General Manager Kevin Beyers testified on behalf of small, rural broadband providers during discussions on April 25 about American infrastructure and the small-business perspective at the House Committee on Small Business hearings in Washington, D.C.

## Summertime Hours

**DON'T FORGET THAT ALL ACIRA OFFICES WILL FOLLOW SUMMER HOURS**

**Monday through Thursday 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. | Fridays 8 a.m. to noon**

## Please welcome our newest employee

Chris Johansen started working as a combination technician at Farmers Mutual Telephone and Federated Telephone in April. "I'm very excited to be working with the Acira team and helping meet the needs of our rural communities and members," Johansen says. He grew up in Slayton, Minnesota, and attended the Jackson campus of Minnesota West Community and Technical College.

Johansen has worked in telecommunications for 21 years: three years at a telephone company in Murray County and 18 years in Yellow Medicine County. He and his wife, Stacy, have four adult children, all of whom graduated from Canby High School. In his free time, he likes to hunt, fish and ride his motorcycle.





# Go jump IN THE LAKE

Gull Lake, Minn.

Photo courtesy of Sunny Augustine.

**S**ummer is synonymous with the nation's many shores, but if you're only looking to our coasts to wiggle your toes in the sand and cool off on a warm day, you're missing out on some glorious water holes: our lakes.

Minnesota is known as the land of 10,000 lakes — 11,842 to be exact. With so many from which to choose, how do you narrow your choices down to just two or three? And North Dakota is packed with lakes that beckon you into their sparkling waters. The two states combined are perhaps the country's best destinations for a vacation at the lake.

"Residents and visitors alike flock to our lakes year-round, with fishing and boating among the most popular activities spring through fall," says Erica Wacker, communications manager for Explore Minnesota. And after a full day on the water, you can visit the charming resorts, restaurants and local stores that line many of the lakes, she adds.

So get ready to enjoy the waters of the Midwest this summer. Here's a look at some of the most popular places to kick your shoes off, get a little sand between your toes, or wet your line and pull in a big one.

## Gull Lake

*Near Brainerd, Minnesota*

The Brainerd Lakes area is a popular vacation destination in central Minnesota, and one of the biggest draws is its largest lake — Gull Lake. With several resorts along its shores, Gull Lake attracts anglers, families and anyone else looking for some fun on the water. Hop on a jet ski, pontoon, paddle board or cruise ship. Or come for the Ice Fishing



Extravaganza, which is touted as the world's largest charitable ice fishing tournament held every January to benefit the Brainerd Jaycees.

The Brainerd Lakes are home to some terrific beaches, one of which is near the Gull Lake Dam. So pack your towel and head on down. There are picnic tables, bathrooms and a boat ramp. The entry fee is \$3 per car.

**Stay the night:** Cragun's Resort is right on the lake and offers dining, golf, a marina, a private beach with a playground for the kids, beach volleyball and bonfires.

## Lake Minnetonka

*In Hennepin and Carver counties in Minnesota*

Located just 20 miles southwest of downtown Minneapolis, Lake Minnetonka is one of the largest lakes in the state and a favorite daytrip for those in the area. A number of cruise lines and restored antique boats offer daily tours of the lake. Dozens of public parks and beaches, as well as numerous lakeside restaurants with docks for boaters, line its shores. There are also a number of islands perfect for picnicking. Quaint town centers, such as Excelsior and Wayzata Bay, are scattered along the shoreline, attracting families with local shopping and dining options.

**Where to stay:** The Hotel Landing in Wayzata, a luxury boutique hotel, offers a lovely lakeside retreat with a full-service restaurant and spa.

## Lake Pepin

*Lake City, Minnesota*

What better place to hone your water skiing skills than the sport's birthplace? In 1922, Ralph Samuelson invented water skiing on Lake Pepin, the widest spot on the iconic Mississippi River. But there's more to the lake than skiing. There are many public beaches great for swimming and sunning, such as the beach at Point Douglas Park in Prescott. It has a shady area with picnic tables, a volleyball court and restrooms. It's also within walking distance of some great shops and restaurants, which you'll find near the

lake. You'll be faced with a reservoir of delicious temptations — bakeries, bistros and wine bars.

Or you can take a riverboat cruise aboard the Pearl of the Lake. It's a 90-minute cruise that will take you back to the glory days of river traffic on a replica of the grand boats that once traveled the Mississippi.

**Stay the night:** John Hall's Alaskan Lodge offers all-suite accommodations, many of which include kitchenettes and whirlpools — all offer spectacular views of the lake.

## Lake Sakakawea

*West of Bismark, North Dakota*

Lake Sakakawea is a destination that includes plenty of beaches, including Lewis and Clark State Park on one of the lake's upper bays. The sandy beach is guarded by the towering backdrop of the rugged buttes of the North Dakota Badlands.

The lake is a busy place on hot summer days, but with 382,000 surface acres, you won't have any trouble finding a place to get your feet wet.

**Stay the night:** The cabins at Lund's Landing Marina and Lodge are nothing fancy with bunk beds and a bring-your-own toiletries setup, but what you'll get is a cozy, memorable overnight overlooking the lake. The restaurant offers homestyle fare breakfast through dinner. Anchor your boat at the dock and go jump in the lake.

## Devil's Lake

*Near Devil's Lake, North Dakota*

North Dakota's largest natural lake is perfect for all sports: swimming, boating, fishing, jet skis, water skis, pontoons, canoes, kayaks ... you name it. There's plenty of lake access, including swimming beaches. So go ahead and take the plunge, and if you stay a little too long, just say the devil made you do it, because there are plenty of reasons to stay just a little bit longer at Devil's Lake.

From boogie boarding to skiing, there are some great areas to become an acrobat on the water, such as Creel Bay and Six Mile Bay. For swimming, though, there's one public beach at Graham's Island State Park. Admission per car is \$7.50. The swimming area is roped off for safety's sake, and you can pick up food or supplies at a bait shop and convenience store.

If you're a fisherman, there are plenty of catches to be had. In fact, Devil's Lake is the perch capital of the world during the winter months. But in the summer, the lake is all about the white bass, walleye and northern pike. Marinas are open to the public for a fee at resorts around the lake.

**Stay the night:** Woodland Resort has cabins, a lodge for groups and a 15-unit motel on the lake. There's a restaurant and lounge, plus a convenience store, boat launch, pontoon rental, marina and swimming area, too — everything you need to make a vacation out of it. 🏡



Photo courtesy of Ben Threinen



**HI! I'M JADE GEHRKE!**

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!

## DEVICE OF THE MONTH



### Pioneer BDR-XS06

Most new laptops have ditched the optical media reader, but there are still plenty of CDs, DVDs and Blu-rays in the world. The Pioneer BDR-XS06 can read and burn to all these formats using a USB 3.0 connection. It is also compatible with both Mac OSX and Windows operating systems. MSRP \$119.99.

# Going mobile

## Choosing the right laptop for you



**G**oing to college presents a series of choices. There are the big ones: Which school should I go to? What's my major? And there are lesser ones: Should I eat at the cafeteria? Can I wear pajamas to class?

One choice is usually the selection of a laptop: a Mac or Windows-based PC? Either can be a considerable investment, so you want to make sure that your choice is right for you.

If you're getting ready to go off to school — or just want to do some computing on the go — here are a few things to consider before buying.

### PRICE

Apple computers are generally more expensive than comparable Windows-based laptops. In a way, you are paying for the Apple name, but part of that brand is its commitment to offering solid technology, ease of use and quality design. Apple's lowest-priced offering is the MacBook Air, which starts at \$999. A similar PC will sell for \$799 or less. On the higher end, a fully loaded MacBook Pro sells for \$2,799, while a comparable Microsoft Surface laptop comes in at \$200 less.

### UNDER THE HOOD

Laptop prices vary depending on how much processing and graphical power you want, as well as the amount of memory and hard disk space available. Most laptops have limited, or no, upgrade options, and this is especially true with Macs. You always want to purchase as much as you can so that your machine doesn't become obsolete sooner than expected. Some PC laptops can take memory and hard drive updates, which may lengthen their lifespans.

### DESIGN

There is only one Apple, which means the company controls the way all their laptops look. The sleek, lightweight and elegant designs are what other companies seek to emulate. On the PC front, the variety of manufacturers means you have more choice, and competition has produced some stylish options from Dell, HP and Microsoft.

### SOFTWARE

If you have a piece of software that you use all the time, make sure there is a version for the operating system that comes with your laptop. Most major software programs, such as Microsoft Office or Adobe's applications, can be used with both Apple and Windows-based computers.

### EASE OF USE

While Macs are not perfect, Apple computers tend to be a better choice for people who are not tech savvy or who don't enjoy fiddling with systems settings and drivers. On the other hand, PCs have gotten much better at guaranteeing plug-and-play compatibility and easier software installations.


### GAMING

If you want to play the latest games on your laptop, you will want to buy a PC. While Mac users can play games, this is the area where Apple cannot compete with Windows-based devices. There are more games available for PCs, and more are developed all the time. Gamers may also want to invest in a dedicated gaming laptop from a specialty company like Origin or Razer. Also, Dell has its Alienware line for gaming.

### SECURITY

Even the best-protected PC is more at risk of viruses and malware than a relatively unprotected Mac. PCs are so prevalent that it makes sense for hackers to focus on that market rather than target OSX. For most Mac users, the system's built-in security is more than enough to ensure peace of mind — never forget security upgrades for either, though. ☞





Corey Nohl's farm as seen from the drone he uses to check crops.

# Bird's-eye view

## Hancock drone business helps farmers scout crops

BY DREW WOOLLEY

**W**hen Corey Nohl bought his first drone six years ago, he was just another guy looking to have fun with new technology. Then it occurred to him that his new-found hobby could prove useful on the family farm.

"I was trying to figure out a better way to scout my crops," he says. "I'd been playing with the drone, put two and two together, and started using it to get a better view. After about a year of doing that for myself, other people started asking me to do it for them."

Those requests turned into a full-fledged business — Above All Aerial — which Nohl operates part time while continuing to work the farm. Founded in March 2017, the drone business has served a need in the marketplace that has taken its owner as far as California in its first year.

"There aren't a lot of commercial drone pilots out there, so people tend to reach pretty far out to find us," Nohl says.

### FLYING FOR FARMERS

Above All Aerial mostly serves other farmers by providing crop scouting and

damage assessment information that can then be interpreted by an agronomist or insurance agent. But Nohl has also taken jobs doing aerial inspections of structures and aerial photos of large real estate properties. He has even generated 3D models for potential construction sites.

However, before Nohl could charge for his services, he first had to get a commercial drone pilot's license. Preparing for the test took a month of studying many of the same principles recreational airplane pilots have to master before they can fly.

"We have to know weather patterns, how to talk to air traffic control, safe flying conditions, elevation — pretty much everything but the physical part of flying a plane," says Nohl.

### A SUCCESSFUL LAUNCH

Despite drone technology still being relatively new, the response from customers in Above All Aerial's first year has been encouraging for Nohl. And while a drone survey can't replace the expertise of a trained crop scout, he believes Above All Aerial can provide much-needed information.

"I don't consult farmers with information like what to spray. So we work very well with crop scouts who can give that

analysis," Nohl says. "We are there to provide information on crop health and how the field is doing. Then farmers can take action on that with their crop scout or agronomist."

Nohl's biggest challenge in his second year of the business is finding the time to grow Above All Aerial while still tending to the farm. His brother, Taylor, recently earned his commercial license to lend a hand. But in the coming years, Nohl only sees the demand for drone services increasing.

"I remember someone on a webinar said drones are at the same place today that computers were in the '80s," he says. "That's how much upside potential there is right now. We're just at the tip of the iceberg." 📱



Nohl deploys his drone over a neighbor's farm to map out which crop areas need improvement.



# Good & EASY EATS!

**Subscription services provide first-class meals and convenience**

## BLUE APRON

Blue Apron delivers everything you need for a gourmet-quality meal you can cook at home. The step-by-step recipes are paired with unique ingredients to help you feed your family for a fraction of restaurant prices without sacrificing taste. Menu items include spicy smoked trout sandwiches, Caribbean chickpea curry and Mexican-spiced pork.

As low as  
\$9.99  
per serving!



## HELLO FRESH

Much like Blue Apron, Hello Fresh is a competitor with a twist. While you'll still find high-end meals, Hello Fresh specializes in simple home cooking. But the meals don't skimp on flavor. The plates include tasty recipes for winner winner chicken orzo dinner, pineapple poblano beef tacos and slow cooker smoky beef chili.

As low as  
\$8.74  
per serving!



## FRESHLY

If you're tired of cooking on the stove but still want to put a satisfying meal on the table every night, Freshly is the perfect option. Packed with protein, Freshly meals can be cooked in the microwave. The natural ingredients are also gluten free. The options don't disappoint; each chef-prepared meal is ready in under three minutes. You'll find Sicilian-style chicken parmesan, homestyle meatloaf, and spaghetti squash and meatballs on the menu.

As low as  
\$8.99  
per serving!



## MUNCHPAK

If you're not in the mood for a full meal but you're curious about what our neighbors across the pond reach for in their pantries, MunchPak is the answer without the cost of the flight. With snacks from around the world, you choose the size of your delivery and customize its contents. Try out Japanese hard candy, wacky new potato chip flavors, drink options and more.

As low as  
\$9.95  
per serving!





# Your personal 'techtionary'

## Learn the internet lingo basics

Sometimes the language of technology can seem complex, but it's an increasingly common, and important, part of day-to-day life. Hopefully, this column will make your use of technology a little smoother.

I often describe myself as a translator, and I want to help you create your own "techtionary." I'll define some common words associated with the internet and related services, and, hopefully, this will give you a simple reference you can keep handy.

► **BROADBAND:** This term is meant to define fast internet. The fastest broadband services come from providers that rely on fiber optic networks, although some companies do offer broadband plans through networks reliant on copper cables. I like to think of broadband as a garden hose delivering water. The higher the water pressure — how many megabits per second your plan provides — the faster the speed!

► **OVER-THE-TOP (OTT) VIDEO:** This term refers to media delivered through an internet connection — often with the help of a smart TV, Roku, Apple TV or other streaming device — as opposed to your standard cable TV or satellite TV.

► **WI-FI:** This is the way you can connect a computer, television or other device to the

internet without using a wire. From your home to the coffee shop, Wi-Fi is increasingly essential as more and more people rely on mobile devices or connected devices, such as a Roku, Amazon Echo or gaming box. Keep in mind, Wi-Fi can be either open for all to access or protected with a password. If you have a home Wi-Fi network, consider using a secure password.

► **WIRELESS ROUTER:** This device converts a broadband connection into a Wi-Fi signal. Routers need to be maintained and updated regularly to have the best connection. Many broadband providers sell routers or offer plans where they manage the router. Using a router recommended by your broadband provider is a good idea because they typically help

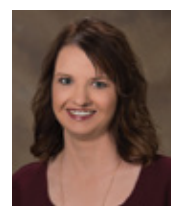
maintain the device and keep it updated. I think of a router as a sprinkler head attached to the end of the garden hose. It distributes the broadband signal to a wider area, much like a sprinkler distributes water.

► **STREAMING:** This term refers to accessing content, such as television shows or music, over the internet. If you like to watch a video using applications such as Netflix or YouTube, you are streaming video. If you listen to music online through Pandora or Spotify, you are streaming audio. The content is stored online as opposed to you downloading it to your device.

► **VOICE OVER INTERNET PROTOCOL (VOIP):** While the phone seems to work as it always has, VoIP technology is very different from that used

when copper wires transmit phone calls. With VoIP, calls go through your internet connection. VoIP is becoming more and more common, and in most cases you don't even know you are using an internet-based phone.

These are just a few of the words you may hear in regards to your internet service. Don't hesitate to ask questions when speaking to your internet service provider, which is a great resource. The internet network can seem like magic at times, but it's not as mysterious as it may appear. ☎



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



Hopping on a few rides with friends is one of the quintessential experiences that the Stevens County Fair offers each year.

# A FAIR SHAKE

4-H members build new dairy barn and shake shack for the Stevens County Fair

BY DREW WOOLLEY

Dave Lonergan still remembers when a good night for the Stevens County Fair meant attracting a few hundred visitors. When he joined the fair board 38 years ago, the fairgrounds didn't have the bandshell for major musical acts or the hockey arena for local exhibitors that it does today.

Now, Lonergan estimates the County Fair can draw as many as 6,000 people in a single night, a stark contrast to most other fairs in Minnesota.

"It started out in the earlier days as a three-day fair, and now it's six days," he says. "Most fairs around the state have gone the other way, from maybe four days down to three, or they don't even have one anymore. It's probably the biggest fair west of the Minnesota State Fair."

That growth is thanks in large part to support from the rural community. Local 4-H members still take center stage to compete and show off their accomplishments to friends and family, while schools, sports teams and other organizations from the area set up booths or sell food and drinks. When the weekend comes around, visitors show up by the thousands to cheer on and even participate in a long-distance car race and demolition derby.

But of all the main events, Lonergan's favorite part of the fair is seeing young kids experience the fair for the first time. It takes him back to a time when Stevens County residents didn't have the Valleyfair amusement park to visit or endless TV programming.

"It was a big event when the County Fair came around," Lonergan says. "Now, every year, you get that youngster who was in diapers two years ago and now is able to walk around. He comes as a new fairgoer, and it's all a new experience to that young kid."

## A BARN FOR ALL SEASONS

One of the highlights of this year's fair is a new dairy barn constructed for the county's 4-H program. Federated Telephone Cooperative contributed to the



new barn with a donation from the Cooperative's unclaimed capital credits fund.

Previously, the county 4-H had leased or bought cattle from local farms with decreasing numbers. Over the past three years — through a leasing program with Riverview LLP, Little Brook Dairy and Jer-Lindy Farms — the number of cattle on display at the fair quadrupled, and the group looked for another option.

The new AgCountry Farm Credit Services Dairy Barn will not only accommodate the growing dairy program but also rival a similar attraction at the Minnesota State Fair.

"We wanted to have a dairy barn where people could learn about the whole dairy process at the fair," says Kirstin Koch, 4-H program coordinator for Stevens County. "It will house our dairy cattle, but it's also going to have a demonstration herd of cows that will be milked twice a day and viewing windows on the outside where fairgoers can watch."

The barn also features a dairy parlor like the ones used on farms across the state, an ag education space and hands-on activities for visitors to participate in. There will even be room for the St. Mary's Catholic School Shake Shack, giving

fairgoers a taste of what the dairy industry provides.

While 4-H has partnered with the County Fair board in the past on a horse barn and sheep barn, the new dairy barn will be the program's largest project by far. Riverview LLP has contributed design and layout expertise for the barn, which Koch expects to be especially useful when the weather gets cold.

"The 4-H members will benefit from having a facility to use all year instead of cramming all of our animal science activities and shooting sports into the summer," she says. "Now we can do those throughout the year."

### COME TOGETHER

For Ryan Sleiter, the new County Fair chairman, the dairy barn is part of a continuing tradition of promoting agriculture and rural culture in Minnesota to people who might not have other opportunities to experience it in a hands-on way.

"Whether it's garden produce or livestock or the quilts that grandma made, we want to bring those to the fair and show where they come from," he says. "Your corn flakes actually come from corn, not just from the grocery store. Someone has

spent long days and early mornings trying to grow that corn or milk those cows or raise that pork."

This year's fair, running from Aug. 7-12, features the same demonstrations of local food and culture and provides a chance for 4-H and FFA members to show off the work they've done over the past year. The event kicks off with a Fair Appreciation Supper before the carnival arrives on Wednesday night.

The week will also feature a strong man, hypnotist, magic acts, extreme bull riding and a performance by the Blues Brothers Revival, in addition to an ATV challenge, the enduro race and demolition derby.

Like any good fair, Stevens County will also have a number of local favorite foods. Beef and pork producers will be selling steak sandwiches and pork chops, and the Hockey Association's homemade french fries are always a hit.

"Any time you can put food and people together they're going to have a good time," says Sleiter. "This is the spot where people come and see their neighbors maybe once a year, and it's at the County Fair. It's about bringing the community together, and it's the largest event in Stevens County to do that." 🍌



Brother and sister Bradley and Morgan Rohloff show their hogs during the 2017 Stevens County Fair.



Andrew Hennessey washes a dairy calf that he leases through a 4-H dairy leasing program that started in 2016.



# Canning 101

It's about this time every summer that Jolene Moen can be found in her Glenwood, Minnesota, garden, dirt under her fingernails, mud on her jeans and a smile on her face. Harvest time is nearing, and her garden is filled with treasures: tomatoes, green beans, cucumbers and other vegetables ready for picking and canning — a time-honored process that Moen admits she once took for granted.

"I didn't start canning until after my first year of marriage in the summer of 2001," she says. "I was never compelled to can before that or to learn anything about it."

After all, she had access to her parents' pantry every time she paid a visit to their home a few miles down the road in Sartell, Minnesota. The only stipulation for her "pantry raid" was that she return the canning jars once emptied. But then came the day when her father challenged her to a competition to see who could grow the biggest tomatoes and the best beans — in other words, to find out who had the most prolific garden. As the summer progressed, Moen realized she was born with a green thumb.

"As gardens grow, mine did well," she says. In fact, she remembers collecting 25 gallons of beans in one picking. That's when she was struck by the realization that it would be nice to know how to process and can her harvest. But who would mentor her? There weren't any young people in her circle of friends who knew

how to can. And her parents figured she'd learned through osmosis, picking up tricks and techniques through years of watching it done at home, she says.

"They even gave me a canner for a wedding gift," she says. "But I had no idea how to use it."

## NEW SKILLS

As her garden grew, Moen realized the necessity of preservation, and through trial and error — plus troubleshooting with her family — she learned how to can.

"I've been gardening and canning or freezing everything my family eats every year since," she says. "Nothing in a store-bought can compares to the goodness found in a mason jar from the pantry. Nothing."

Moen now grows and makes enough to feed her family for a year. And by sharing her produce with others, as well as selling it at local markets and through a Community Supported Agriculture organization, she has created closer ties to her community.

"I've made some great friendships," she says. But she admits canning can be a lonely, tiring task.

"So each year, my girlfriend and I come together with our harvests and can together," she says. "Then we split the goods at the end of each season."

## FULFILLING WORK

Each woman performs a different function, whether preparing the produce for can-



Jolene Moen enjoys canning for her family: husband Jason, daughter Janel and son Carter.

Photos courtesy of Jolene Moen.



Green beans are prolific in the Moen garden every summer.

ning or sterilizing jars and lids for processing.

"We can spaghetti sauce, salsa, chili, beans, chicken soup, pumpkin, stewed tomatoes, pickles, peaches, pears, apple juice, jellies and my mom's tomato soup that tastes way better than Campbell's. Our motto is, 'There is nothing that can't be canned, so just can it,'" she says.

Here are several of Moen's favorite recipes using both a canner and a pressure cooker, two items you may want to invest in to make your canning

job easier. Mixtures with low acidity levels should be pressure cooked, while high-acid level mixtures can be canned in a traditional water bath canner.



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



Jolene Moen uses both a pressure cooker and water-bath canner to make canned soups, fruits, vegetables and other foods to enjoy all year.



## SPAGHETTI SAUCE

- 16 cups raw tomatoes, blemishes and stems removed
- 3 cups diced onions
- 4 garlic cloves, chopped
- 3/4 cup sugar
- 2 teaspoons pepper
- 2 tablespoons parsley flakes
- 2 tablespoons seasoned salt, such as Lawry's
- 2 tablespoons dried oregano
- 4 teaspoons dried basil leaves
- 1/2 teaspoon Italian seasoning
- 4 (12-ounce) cans tomato paste
- 4 beef bouillon cubes
- 4 chicken bouillon cubes
- 3 tablespoons Parmesan cheese
- 4 bay leaves

Place tomatoes in a blender and process to liquefy. Combine tomatoes with remaining ingredients in a heavy kettle and simmer for 2 hours. Remove bay leaves and seal in clean, dry quart jars. Pressure cook according to manufacturer's instructions at 10 pounds for 30 minutes. Store jars in cool, dark cabinet or pantry.

## HEARTY CHICKEN SOUP

- 1 stewing chicken, cut up
- 2 quarts water
- 1 large onion, quartered
- 1 cup chopped, fresh parsley, stems removed
- 1 celery rib, sliced
- 5 chicken bouillon cubes
- 5 whole peppercorns
- 4 whole cloves
- 1 bay leaf
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 1/2 teaspoon pepper
- Dash of dried thyme
- 6 carrots, thinly sliced

In a large kettle, combine all ingredients except carrots; bring to a boil. Reduce heat; cover and simmer for 2 1/2 hours or until the chicken is tender. Remove chicken from broth; cool. Debone chicken; cut into chunks. Strain broth and skim fat; return to kettle and add chicken pieces and carrots.

Place contents in hot jars and pressure cook according to manufacturer's instructions for 1 hour 15 minutes at 10 pounds of pressure. Store jars in cool, dark cabinet or pantry.

## MOM'S BEST TOMATO SOUP

- 6 onions, chopped
- 1 bunch of celery, chopped
- 8 quarts fresh tomatoes
- 1 cup sugar
- 1/4 cup salt
- 1 cup (2 sticks) butter
- 1 cup flour

Place chopped onions and celery in a large kettle with just enough water to keep them from burning and bring to a simmer. While they simmer, cut tomatoes (remove the stems if not using a strainer). Add tomatoes to kettle with onions and celery and cook until tender. Put vegetables through a food mill, then return to kettle. Add sugar and salt. Remove 2 cups of juice and allow to cool slightly. In a blender, cream butter and flour together and mix thoroughly with cooled juice until mixture is smooth. Before soup in kettle gets too hot, add butter/flour mixture. This will prevent lumps from forming. Stir well. Heat just until hot. If it boils, it will scald and can form lumps. Place warm soup into clean, dry, hot jars and process in a water bath for 20-30 minutes at a rolling boil. Store jars in cool, dark cabinet or pantry. [🔗](#)

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