

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2018

CONNECTION

A TWIST ON TRADITION

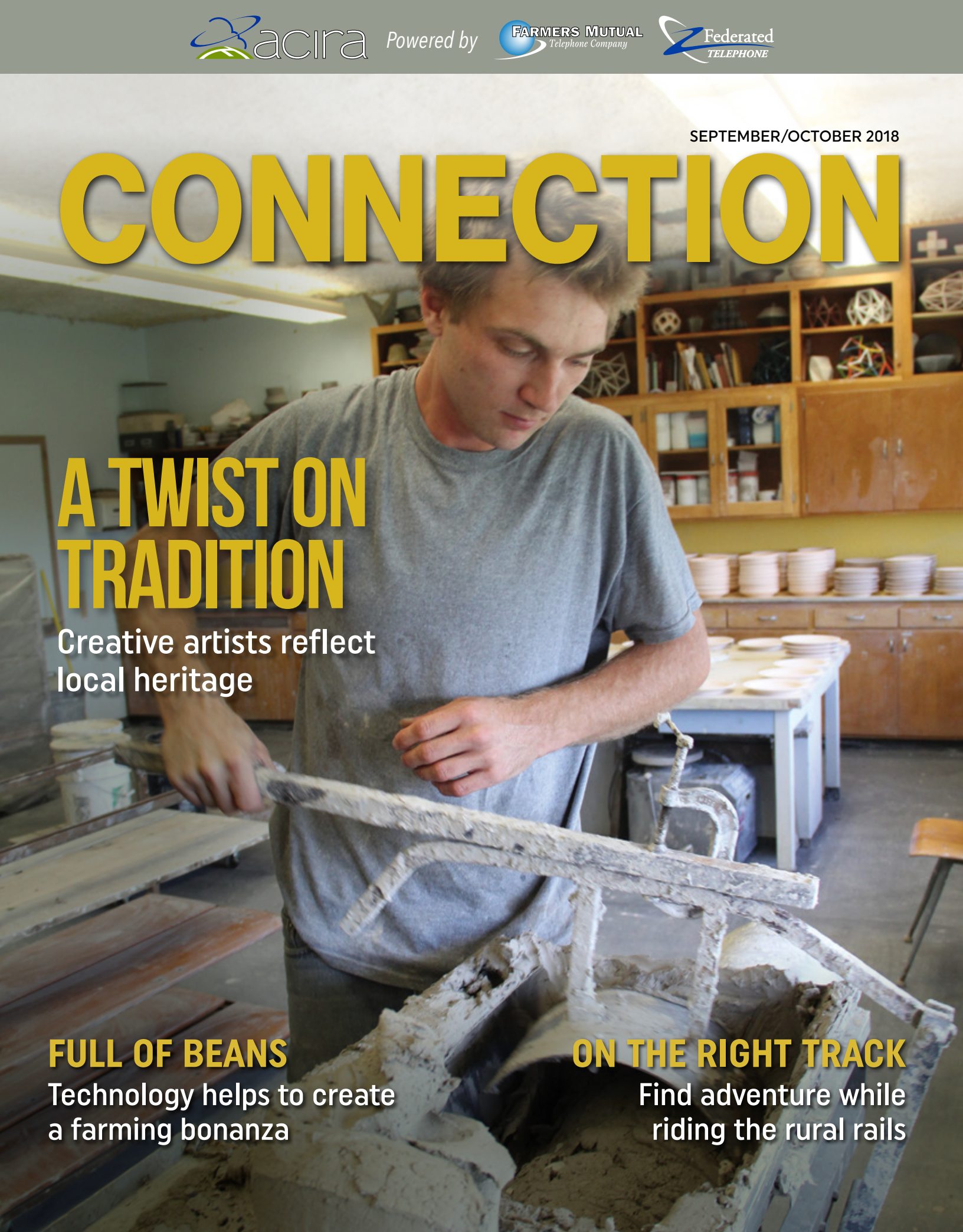
Creative artists reflect local heritage

FULL OF BEANS

Technology helps to create a farming bonanza

ON THE RIGHT TRACK

Find adventure while riding the rural rails





BY SHIRLEY BLOOMFIELD, CEO
NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association

Working together for rural broadband


With few exceptions, we can accomplish more by working together than when we stand alone.

People impact others through churches and community organizations. Businesses support one another through chambers of commerce and trade associations. Your telecommunications provider joins forces with other independent and cooperative telcos through NTCA.

These examples show people acting jointly to ultimately improve the quality of life for those around them. Across the U.S. we are seeing this spirit play out in new ways to make real progress on the issue of rural broadband.

We have seen this before. Creating a nationwide electric grid and connected landline telephone network that included rural America was an enormous undertaking. The same was true for our network of highways that connects us from coast to coast and all parts in between. Now, our greatest challenge is connecting all of America — urban and rural — to a reliable broadband network.

NTCA member companies are uniquely positioned to tackle this challenge, and increasingly we are seeing them partner to develop creative solutions. For example, telecommunications providers are developing partnerships with one another to serve new areas and operate more efficiently. We are even seeing electric providers join with telecommunications companies to deliver broadband to unserved rural areas.

These efforts are encouraging, and NTCA is focused on supporting such cooperation among providers. After all, that spirit is the very foundation on which our industry is built. 

Farm bill will impact future of broadband for rural America

BY STEPHEN V. SMITH

The legislation known as the “farm bill” making its way through Congress affects far more than farmers. It will also impact access to internet service in rural America for years to come.

The farm bill, which is reauthorized every five years, governs how food is grown in America by legislating farm subsidies, trade, conservation, research and related issues. The Rural Development portion of the bill includes funding and guidelines for the Rural Utilities Service and its Rural Broadband Program.


This program makes funding available to help service providers bring broadband to rural areas.

The U.S. House of Representatives passed its Agriculture and Nutrition Act of 2018 on June 21, with the U.S. Senate passing its version a week later. There are many differences between the two bills on issues such as food stamps, conservation programs and farm subsidy payment limits. These will be addressed as part of the conference committee process.

In speaking with the publication Hoosier Ag Today in July, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue said, “The farm bill has always been bipartisan, and it will be so at the end.” He added that lawmakers “don’t want to go back and face midterm elections in November without having a farm bill” in place.

Members of NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association were among those testifying before Congress as the bills were debated. Shirley Bloomfield, CEO of the association, says rural telecommunications providers shared the importance of investing for the long term and “looking to providers with a proven track record of success deploying and maintaining services in rural communities.”

Bloomfield says rural broadband providers have deployed robust broadband networks in rural areas through a combination of community commitment, entrepreneurial spirit, private capital, the FCC’s Universal Service Fund and “critical programs like those made available through RUS.”

NTCA members will remain engaged in the process. “We look forward to building upon this early progress, and making the best possible use of the valuable resources through programs such as those contained in the farm bill to advance and sustain rural broadband,” Bloomfield says. 

What happens next?

1



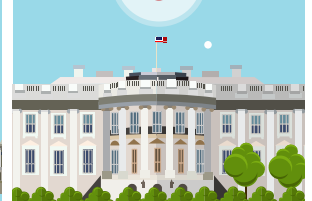
The Senate and House versions go to a conference committee to work out the differences and create one bill.

2



This combined bill goes to the full House and Senate for a vote.

3



The final bill goes to the president for his signature.

Deadline for action: Before the current farm bill expires on Sept. 30

Rural Broadband Matters to America

Internet-based transactions drive half the U.S. economy, and rural residents—who make up almost 20 percent of the population—have the same vital need for internet access as urban dwellers.



Internet Usage

Compared to urban areas, rural residents:



use Wi-Fi in their homes at the same rate



connect the same types of devices to the internet



use the same types of broadband access (although urbanites have greater access to fiber-based service)



use the internet for approximately the same amount of time each day



use smartphones to connect at nearly the same rate

Internet-Driven Commerce

The Numbers

→ **15.5%** ←

Rural America is responsible for 15.5% of all consumer, internet-driven transactions.

10.8 billion Rural transactions per year

The Money

\$1.4 trillion
value of rural online transactions

14%
of all internet-driven transactions

7%
of the U.S. nominal gross domestic product (GDP)

The Future

TODAY

50% GDP

Internet-driven transactions = 50% of U.S. GDP (\$9.6 trillion)

2022

65% GDP

Internet-driven transactions = 65% of U.S. GDP (\$14 trillion)

Rural Broadband Investment

Rural consumers depend on their broadband connection for online transactions, which drive the U.S. economy. This highlights the value of continued investment in rural broadband for the good of all Americans.



FOUNDATION FOR
RURAL SERVICE

Source: Foundation for Rural Service white paper "A Cyber Economy: The Transactional Value of the Internet in Rural America," by iGR

Cooperatives carry a remarkable legacy

Imagine the headlines if this happened today — a group of rural Minnesota residents raises money to build their own internet network because corporate internet providers determined their area didn't deserve coverage.



KEVIN BEYER
Chief Executive Officer

Such a story would get coverage from coast to coast and go viral on social media. Internet service has become essential to modern life, and recent media trends emphasize grassroots efforts to fill in where investor-controlled corporations fall short.

But that seemingly sensational situation is how Farmers Mutual and Federated Telephone got started decades ago with the technology of the day. It's tough to get more grassroots than the story of our founding, and we're proud to have built on that legacy to continue serving you today.

October is National Cooperative Month, supported by the National Cooperative Business Association and recognized by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. That designation always leads me to reflect on our remarkable story. When these companies were

founded, the farmers, merchants, teachers and other community members knew this area needed telephone networks capable of keeping up with the rest of the country. For reasons of safety, economic growth and convenience, they wanted phone service, and they took it upon themselves to make it happen. Meanwhile, the big phone companies wouldn't build here because they said it wasn't profitable enough.

Creating a cooperative wasn't easy. Each founding member pledged money up front and then provided continued support in order for the new cooperatives to get started. Each individual took a risk — but it was a risk worth taking because they knew they needed a modern communications network.

Today, broadband is the dominant communications need for our area, and we have evolved to bring that connection to the farmers, merchants and other residents of our community.

Our history and structure as cooperative businesses make us different from other companies. Like the more than 40,000 other cooperative businesses in the U.S., we are member-owned. That means the people we serve are more than just customers — they are invested in our companies in the same way we are invested in the communities we share. While most other telecom and cable providers exist to enrich their corporate investors or owners, we are fundamentally different. Our purpose is to improve the quality of life in the communities we serve — and to ensure we can do that today and in the future.

We've built our networks in areas so difficult to reach or so sparsely populated that no other provider would think of connecting. We're here because we carry the legacy of our founders and our members. 📶

COOPERATIVE FACTS:

- There are 40,000 cooperative businesses with 343 million members in the United States.
- Cooperatives generate \$514 billion in revenue and more than \$25 billion in wages.
- National Cooperative Month has been a nationally recognized celebration since 1964.
- Agricultural cooperatives are the most common type of cooperative in the U.S., but there are also cooperatives specializing in housing, electrical distribution, retail and, of course, telecommunications.

—Source: National Cooperative Business Association

CONNECTION

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2018

VOL. 2, NO. 5

Connection is a bimonthly newsletter published by Farmers Mutual and Federated Telephone, © 2018. It is distributed without charge to all of our customers.



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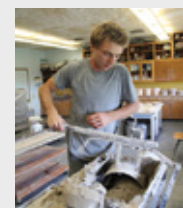
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WORDSOUTH
A CONTENT MARKETING COMPANY

On the Cover:



John Larson embraced pottery as a creative outlet to explore scientific principles and his vivid imagination. See story Page 12.

COOPERATIVE MEMBERS ENJOY 2017 ANNUAL MEETINGS

In June, both Farmers Mutual Telephone Company and Federated Telephone Cooperative hosted annual meetings. General Manager and CEO Kevin Beyer shared details of the progress made in 2017. The cooperatives have continued to expand their service areas as a strategic way to offset declining federal support. Having a larger customer base will lessen the need for support funds and allow more services to be offered.

Highlights of the past year:

- Both Farmers Mutual and Federated Telephone were rated above the 80 percent industry average for overall telephone company satisfaction.
- Beyer was elected to the NTCA–The Rural Broadband Association board as vice president for the next term.
- After purchasing the old Valu Ford building in Morris, Federated Telephone expanded and renovated the building to make it the new office for Federated Telephone.
- Two major projects were completed in Big Stone and Swift during 2017.
- The Farmers Mutual board decided to continue to expand into new service territories, utilizing a Minnesota Border to Border Grant that began in June 2018 for the City of Watson and southwest Lac qui Parle County.



Acira employees served food and answered questions from members during the annual meetings for Farmers Mutual Telephone Company and Federated Telephone Cooperative.



Federated Telephone Cooperative sends a student to annual FRS Youth Tour

In July, the Odessa Exchange of Federated Telephone Cooperative sent Jason Helgeson, son of Harley and Ellie Helgeson, to Washington, D.C., during the annual Foundation for Rural Service Youth Tour.

Helgeson attends school in Ortonville, and he is active in trap shooting, drama, knowledge bowl, band, choir, 4-H and the Boy Scouts of America.

The trip was the first time that Helgeson had flown. While in the nation's capital, he toured historic sites and monuments with 110 students from across America. They visited the Arlington National Cemetery, the Smithsonian museums, Mount Vernon, the Lincoln Memorial, the Vietnam War Memorial, the Korean War Memorial, the Jefferson Memorial, the FDR Memorial and the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial.

"Visiting all of these was a great learning experience, and they all were very interesting to me," Helgeson says. "Meeting all these people gave me a unique perspective on what is different about living in rural Ortonville, Minnesota, compared to many other areas of the country."

Statement of Nondiscrimination

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North Shore Railroad's Zephyr rolls along the tracks next to the Lakewalk at Fifters, Minn.

All Aboard!

Go rambling on the rails

Railroads played a significant role in the development of areas west of the Mississippi River, including Minnesota and North Dakota. Thanks to the spirit and dedication of history buffs, you can hop aboard authentic railway cars and see what life was like when riding the rails was the primary mode of transportation across the prairie.

"Now, the allure of traveling on a historic train is the only way to travel back in time," says Melissa Loftin, director of development for the Minnesota Transportation Museum. "And perhaps the most attractive aspect of riding the rails is that you can see historic locomotives in motion, and you can begin to understand the influence the railroad industry had on America. It opened the door to the West, either for leisure, personal travel or business opportunities. Almost everyone has a story of how the rails influenced their family's story."

The North Shore Scenic Railroad

506 West Michigan St., Duluth, Minnesota

Let this historic railroad take you on a trip that's both exciting and dramatic. The journey is full of potential for awe and discovery as you sit in the comfort of a restored coach taking in the scenery as The Duluth Zephyr pulls you deep into the majestic woods along the shore of Lake Superior. Several trains depart daily from the historic Duluth Union Depot, going as far as Two Harbors — an all-day trip — where ticket holders can spend a couple of hours touring and having lunch. There are shorter excursions, too. Tours are fully narrated and tell the history of Duluth and its harbor, as well as its importance to the logging business.

The Lake Superior Railroad Museum operates the railroad, and there are special pizza excursions on Friday and Saturday evenings May through September. The two-and-a-half-hour trip includes an 8-inch pizza and soft drink with every ticket. The first part of the ride is narrated as the train passes by all the sights of Duluth. The return ride features live music from local musicians. Information about more fun for all ages, including dates and times for Thomas the Tank Engine, is on the railroad's website. Hours, dates and prices vary according to the trip.

- **Phone** — 218-722-1273
- **Online** — northshorescenicrailroad.org
- **Reservations** — Recommended

Minnesota Transportation Museum — Osceola & St. Croix Valley Railway Train Excursions

114 Depot Road, Osceola, Minnesota

Hop on board and ride the rails just as people did 100 years ago. When you book a coach ticket, be prepared to step back in time as you travel through the beautiful St. Croix River Valley. Stroll through the cars and learn more about them and the railroads from one of the car hosts. An educational experience for kids and adults, the train departs every Saturday and Sunday from the Osceola Depot. The round trip takes you to Marine, Minnesota, along the St. Croix River — a 90-minute excursion — or to the depot in Dresser, Minnesota, which takes just under an hour.

If you'd like to make a day of it, there are brunch trains, dinner trains and a pizza train. Hours and prices vary, depending on the ride you choose.

- **Phone** — 651-228-0263
- **Online** — transportationmuseum.org
- **Reservations** — Mandatory

Lake Superior & Mississippi Railroad — St. Louis River scenic train ride

6930 Fremont St., Duluth, Minnesota

You may not realize this when looking at it, but this railroad was the first one into Duluth, and it opened up a new way to transport goods from the West to



The Magic City Express is a scaled-down model of a traditional train, but you can ride it nonetheless.

Photo courtesy of Railroad Museum of Minot.



As with many rail adventures, the North Shore Scenic Railroad provides a fun, educational look at history.

Photo courtesy of North Shore Scenic Railroad.

the East. Today, you'll only experience a section of the route, but it will give you insight into the glory days of railroading.

There are two closed, circa 1912 coach cars as well as an open-air flatcar converted for passenger use. You'll ride the rails along the river pulled by a locomotive built in 1946.

The train departs the station at 10:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays. There is also a fall color ride on Saturdays at 4:30 p.m.

- **Admission** — Adults: \$15. Children 4 and older: \$8. Children 3 and younger: Free
- **Phone** — 218-730-4312
- **Online** — www.lsmrr.org
- **Reservations** — Not needed

Fort Lincoln Trolley

4480 Fort Lincoln Road
Mandan, North Dakota

While a trolley isn't a train, the two do have a few things in common. For one, they move on rails. Second, they were a primary means of transportation in cities and towns across America. So hop aboard the restored streetcar from the 1890s and ride like they did in the good old days

on the trolley at Fort Abraham Lincoln State Park. It's a mile round-trip from the Third Street Station along the Heart River to Fort Lincoln State Park. Ride nonstop, or make a day of it by enjoying all the activities in the park before leaving on a later trolley.

- **Admission** — Ages 5 and older: \$9. Kids under the age of 5: Free when accompanied by paying adult
- **Phone** — 701-663-9018
- **Online** — www.ndtourism.com
- **Reservations** — Not needed

Magic City Express

1215 E Burdick Expressway
Minot, North Dakota

Experience a mile-long ride on a train that is on a two-fifths scale of a Great Northern F-8 steam locomotive. There are three rail cars and a caboose on which you can ride. Magic City Express is an extension of the fun you can have and things you can learn by visiting the Railroad Museum of Minot just a few blocks away in Roosevelt Park. There are hands-on exhibits the kids will love, as well as artifacts and photos from the days when the rails ruled the West. It's a place for train buffs of all ages.

- **Admission** — Adults: \$4. Children 5 to 12: \$3. Kids 4 and under: Free with paying adult
- **Phone** — 701-852-7091
- **Reservations** — Not needed, but call ahead for exact times the train will run. 🚗



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



HP LaserJet Pro M281fdw

This all-in-one printer is ideal for a home office. It's a color laser printer that can scan, copy and fax. It outputs up to 22 pages per minute, and it can handle two-sided printing. You can print from your iOS or Android device wirelessly. It also comes with a touchscreen for setup and use, as well as printing directly off a USB drive. MSRP \$349.99.

Pick the right tool

Tips for choosing a printer and scanner

A home printer is indispensable, whether you need a book report, a bake sale flyer, a photograph or a special recipe. Similarly, having a scanner to bring a physical object into the digital world can be just as important.

But selecting the right printer or scanner can be daunting, so it's key to ask yourself a few basic questions before you make a choice. Let's start with the printer.

If you're like most home users, your printer will be a jack-of-all-trades. An inkjet printer uses color ink cartridges to produce final images. Most inkjets can handle text and images well, although results often vary depending on the quality of the paper. These printers are usually inexpensive, with many models starting at less than \$50. But you can run out of ink quickly, and replacing the cartridges can cost more than the printer.

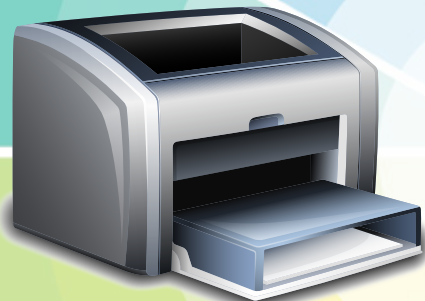
If you only need to print text, a laser printer may be a better purchase. Laser printers use toner, which is a powder fused to the paper during printing. And while toner can be more expensive than ink, it will generally need to be replaced less frequently. There are also color laser printers, but they are more expensive than an inkjet. Expect to pay about \$100 for a black-and-white laser printer and about \$200 for a color laser printer.

If you like to print your photos at home, some printers specialize in providing the best image quality. Some are inkjet, but if you're willing to spend more, you can go with a dye sublimation printer, which will give you professional-quality prints.

Choosing a scanner may be easier. For often less than \$100, a traditional flatbed scanner can handle most things a home user may need. Tasks might include text, images and optical character recognition, which transforms a scanned document into editable text. Pricier models can handle scanning slides and film, too. Portable scanner models, including handheld or wand scanners, allow you to capture documents on the go and can transfer information wirelessly.

Unless you're doing very specific work, you don't need to worry about resolution when buying a modern scanner or printer. They all do a good job with general tasks.

Some alternatives: If you need to save on desk space, a combination printer and scanner is a good choice because it also functions as a copier. ☒





Dan Schaefer, right, heads up the family-run Bonanza Bean business with brother-in-law and operations manager Andy Hacker, left, and father-in-law and sales manager Cork Fehr, center. Pictured with their sons, Ashdon Hacker, left and Emery Schaefer, right.

Bean bonanza for Bonanza Bean

Quality at the forefront of growing operation

BY JOHN CLAYTON

The beans first rolled through Bonanza Bean's Stevens County processing facility 10 years ago, and they haven't stopped. The company handles three varieties of kidney beans, as well as black beans, that are sold to national and international companies from a state-of-the-art facility in Morris.

"We feel the business has been good to us," Bonanza Bean Operations Manager Andy Hacker says. "There are struggles in every business, but we feel our expectations have been exceeded. It's been nice for our farming community. It's a nice additional crop for them to have in their crop rotation, the edible beans. Not everybody had the option of raising edible beans."

A NEW MARKET

While the need to transport crops more than 100 miles for processing once kept some smaller farmers from raising kidney beans, Bonanza's presence changed the equation. The company processes crops of dark red, light red and white kidney beans, as well as black beans, grown locally on about 18,000 acres.

The company recently purchased the Bonita Bean Company in Wilcox, Arizona, and it processed its first crop in October 2017. About 60 million pounds of beans roll through the Bonanza and Bonita processing plants after each annual harvest.

Hacker says the company made a commitment to international sales about three years ago, adding a dedicated salesperson. In addition to domestic buyers, Bonanza sells to companies across the European Union.

MODERN SYSTEMS

Bonanza Bean's systems are efficient, benefitting from having its equipment wired to a programmable controller that communicates with each motor and starts and stops all applications in sequence. This allows an operator to stay in one location and watch each machine start.


Bonanza has also added new equipment over the past few years, which has been game-changing for the company. A magnetic dirt separator, which uses magnets to remove dirt with high concentrations of iron from the beans, is part of the initial cleaning process.

Hacker says the company added an "electric eye" about two-and-a-half years ago. This full-color infrared camera is another tool used for quality control. "These cameras can identify the differ-

ence between a black bean and a dirt ball," Hacker says. "They're both black, but it's accurate enough to see that one is a little darker color than the other one with the infrared camera. That machine has really changed our industry."

After going under the electric eye, which Hacker says far surpasses the black-and-white imaging technology of even a decade ago, the beans go through the "needle machine" to finish the process.

"The needles pick out anything that has a sprout or a skin defect that we'd be able to catch with a needle," Hacker says. Three people on staff at the Morris facility are Safe Quality Food-certified.

Bonanza instituted procedures to ensure safety and quality from the beginning. "At Bonanza Bean, we never let anything leave our facility that doesn't make USDA Grade No. 1," he says. "With our cleaning facility, we're able to accomplish that." 



The magnetic dirt separator initially cleans thousands of beans on the production line.

PAMPERED PETS

THE BEST DOGGONE ONLINE SERVICES THAT WON'T BREAK THE BANK

BY PATRICK SMITH

From top-shelf food to all-organic goodies and toys galore, we love to spoil our pets. But if you're tired of outdated playthings and boring treats, look into an online subscription for your most cherished friends. Toys and treats help pets focus and develop to improve their mental and physical well-being.

And while online subscription boxes for dogs and cats are the most common, don't fret if you have another type of pet. The internet has thought of everything. Search online and you'll find boxes for horses (SaddleBox), fish (My Aquarium Box), birds (ParrotBox) and more.

More than anything else, online shopping means one thing: convenience.

That's what's great about rural living powered by high-speed internet. You have the benefits of rural, hometown life with the convenience of staying connected. Internet-based subscriptions can bring deliveries of the products you need most.

In the July/August issue, we featured several food subscription services — look back if you missed it. If you're curious about other online subscriptions out there, don't wait on us. Check them out for yourself. Everything from shaving products to jewelry and coffee to mystery boxes is shipping out daily. In the next issue, we'll feature a few popular online fashion subscriptions.



BARKBOX BARKBOX.COM

Put the pep back in Fido's step with BarkBox. It's a fun, dog-themed delivery service with unique toys, treats and more for your four-legged friend. Choose a theme for your box, like New York City. This one comes complete with a miniature fire hydrant and "I Love NY" T-shirt. A Chewrassic Bark box comes with dinosaur-inspired treats and a lava-spewing chew toy.



BULLYMAKE BULLYMAKE.COM

Is that old toy rope past its prime? Bullymake to the rescue! Billed as the box that's designed for "power chewers," Bullymake gives you durable toys and healthy treats to keep your dog entertained for hours and hours. They also specialize in goods specifically tailored to your dog's weight and allergies.



PUPBOX PUPBOX.COM

Not much is cuter than a young pup learning to navigate life. And with all the work we put into helping our kids succeed, why not help our puppies thrive? Based on your dog's age, PupBox has training guidelines to help them navigate puppyhood with a nonstop wagging tail. PupBox brings training tips, treats, toys, chews and more to your mailbox each month.

KITNIPBOX KITNIPBOX.COM

Don't turn your frisky kitty into a grumpy cat. KitNipBox keeps your cat entertained with several quality toys and all-natural treats in each box. It'll leave your friend purring for more. Best of all, KitNipBox helps support several animal welfare organizations with your purchase.

What's getting in
the way of your

Wi-Fi SIGNAL?

Wi-Fi makes internet service available to a wide range of devices without physically connecting them to your router. However, it's important to remember that the strength and quality of your signal can be influenced by several factors:



The age of your device and its capabilities

Some computers and gaming consoles may use older technology that can't take advantage of today's higher speeds.



Other electronics in your home

Common, non-connected electronic items can sometimes interfere with your Wi-Fi strength. These include microwave ovens (the major offender), cordless phones, Bluetooth devices and even fluorescent lights.



Home construction materials between the router and your device

Some materials used in home construction can weaken your Wi-Fi signal strength. Metal in particular can cause interference because it can reflect and scatter Wi-Fi signals. Culprits include metal framing, ductwork, electrical panels and metal roofs.



The distance between the router and your device


A computer in a second-floor bedroom, for example, may have a weaker connection than a computer on the first floor where the router is located.



The number of devices sharing your Wi-Fi connection

Every device connected to your Wi-Fi is sharing the total bandwidth of your home's internet connection. If people in your home are streaming a movie on a tablet, playing a gaming console, watching a smart TV, sharing photos online and searching the internet all at the same time, some users could notice slower performance compared to times when fewer devices are used.

Not Enough Speed?



If you have a number of devices fighting over your Wi-Fi signal, you may want to consider increasing your internet speed. Give us a call. We'll walk through how you use your broadband internet connection and talk about the right package to meet your needs.

Too Far Away?

If you use Wi-Fi enabled devices in rooms far away from your router, you may want to consider adding one or more network extenders to your home. Give us a call and we can discuss ways to boost your Wi-Fi signal strength to extend better connection speeds to more rooms — or even to a patio or deck.

Tempered by FIRE

BY DREW WOOLLEY

John Larson's love for sculpture and pottery was born out of a benign pyromania. Growing up, before the engineering challenges and aesthetic qualities of ceramic sculpture appealed to him, it was the fire that captured his imagination.

"At 16, I built this really crude kiln that was able to achieve high enough temperatures to turn clay into ceramic," he says. "From that point on, after seeing the white-yellow glowing inferno that 2,300 degrees looks like, I was hooked."

Throughout his career, Larson has been just as fascinated by the process of creation as the final product itself. He continues to sculpt, creating pieces that explore abstract concepts like time as well as the simplicity of straightforward geometric shapes. Meanwhile, his interest in the firing process and the ovens that create those pieces has also provided a practical outlet for his creativity.

Larson first encountered ceramics through local artists and the Saint John's Pottery Studio in St. Cloud when he was 14. He pursued that passion to Utah State University, where he studied ceramics. But after graduation, he wasn't yet ready to enter the academic or business worlds.

Instead, he traveled to South Korea where he continued to learn under the tutelage of Oh Hyang Jong, a sculptor specializing in functional storage jars used for fermentation. Larson learned Jong's craft and helped him build a traditional kiln able to fill an order of 120 jars.

Those diverse influences mean the creation process often matters more to Larson than any particular sculpting style. "I've never been attached to one particular method," he says. "I always just had a

general interest in engineering and how things fit together. I like solving problems and figuring out puzzles, and that's sort of what ceramics is."

Today, that interest in problem-solving has led Larson to tackle larger projects like brick ovens and masonry heaters. He recently completed work on a traditional ceramic masonry heater, known as a Kachelofen, for which he handmade every tile and did all the custom design work.

As with most of his commissioned work, Larson's process for the heater was methodical. He built a series of five smaller test heaters in his workshop to ensure his design would hold up under varying circumstances.

But Larson also continues to craft artistic works, and his favorite pieces are the ones created organically through a wood-firing process that can take weeks to complete. While he hand-sculpts each piece, that firing process marks them in ways Larson never could, changing the appearance of the final products, depending on the type of wood used or the pieces' placement in the kiln.

"What I love about that ceramic process is that, ultimately, I'm just a cog in that system," he says. "It doesn't depend on my hand to make it beautiful. It's a combination of different materials, time and other people, in many cases. I'm just setting it all in motion." 🗨️



John Larson dips a batch of plates into a glazing solution to give the ceramic a glossy finish.



Using different glazing colors allows for variety in the finished product.



Larson also builds ovens and heaters from the ground up, like this modern Kachelofen.



The Tokheims' studio used to be an old chicken house, and their work reflects those agricultural roots.



Gene Tokheim turns a batch of bowls on the pottery wheel in his home-based studio.

A heritage in STONE

BY DREW WOOLLEY

Gene and Lucy Tokheim aren't the only artists in Minnesota inspired by Scandinavian folk art, but they might be the only ones translating those influences into clay. Now in their 45th year running Tokheim Stoneware, the married couple has found a comfortable niche by applying a traditional style to an unusual medium.

"We got excited about the folk art other people in the area were making and decided to translate that into clay," Gene Tokheim says. "Clay is not a traditional Norwegian thing because Norway is a wooded country and has very little clay in it because it's all rock. It doesn't have that tradition."

The idea originated when the two met at Southwest Minnesota State University, where Gene Tokheim earned his studio arts degree. Lucy Tokheim had always had an interest in art, but she wasn't entirely sure how to make a career out of it. "I was

an art student and was intrigued by Gene's vision of creating a rural pottery," she says. "It gave me a chance to develop as an artist while helping to make our living."

The two started Tokheim Stoneware in 1973, and they have never stopped learning about their craft. They studied books about Scandinavian folk art, visited the Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum in Iowa and learned firsthand from local artists. In 1989, they even spent most of the year in Norway honing their skills.

Over time, the Tokheims have neatly divided the creative process to fit their

individual strengths. Gene Tokheim handles spinning and sculpting the clay, while Lucy Tokheim puts the finishing design touches on each piece, including painting, calligraphy and rosemaling, a uniquely Norwegian form of decorative art.

After years of showing their work at art fairs and local events, they broke through in the late '90s and early 2000s when their creations were featured in the New York Museum of Folk Art and were later sold in the Smithsonian Institute's Museum Store during the "Vikings" exhibit.

"It was a big leap for our collaborative work to be included in major folk art exhibits," Lucy Tokheim says. "It brought a wider audience for our work, and it affirmed to our local buyers that our pottery was worth collecting."

For Gene Tokheim, who also makes traditional Norwegian knives and does silverwork, the appeal of that Scandinavian folk art tradition has always been about being able to reach out and touch his heritage. Lucy Tokheim doesn't share that heritage, but she feels an innate appeal in the connection folk art has to its surroundings.

"There's just a wonderful match to the climate here from the Nordic tradition," she says. "Our long winters give people time to work on making things for beauty and use in their homes." 🏡

Living the low-carb lifestyle



Like many people wanting to lose weight, Jim Manney tried several diets. He limited his daily intake of calories and lost some weight several times, but he gained it back. But giving up was not in his game plan, and after discovering the benefits of reducing his consumption of carbohydrates, he's a winner. He has lost 30 pounds and only has five or 10 more to go.

"I feel good at my current weight," he says. "I feel best when I eat low carb, and I'm fascinated by the research being done on low-carb diets right now. Researchers are finding health benefits far beyond

weight loss, and I'm excited to see what the future holds for low-carb eating."

Reducing the intake of carbohydrates can lower glucose levels. Glucose is found in all foods high in carbs: grains, starchy vegetables, some fruits and even seeds and nuts. Once glucose from carbs is unavailable for energy, our bodies burn stored fat and the pounds come off.

In addition to losing weight, following a low-carb regimen may have the added benefit of decreasing central obesity — i.e., your stomach size, according to the National Institutes of Health. That benefit,

in turn, can reduce the risk of heart disease.

Manney, a native of Fargo, North Dakota, and director of video content for the Forum Communications Company, says he felt sluggish and a little foggy before committing to a low-carb lifestyle.

"I noticed my joints were stiff and painful from the constant inflammation," he says. "I wasn't sleeping well, and my mood followed the ups and downs of my blood sugar. In a word, I felt unhealthy."

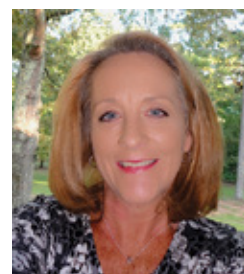
"Now, I feel so good! My energy level has increased, along with my mental clarity. I didn't notice it at the time, but the clock ruled my eating habits. I would eat at noon and again at 6 p.m., even if I wasn't hungry. Now, I often eat only twice a day without being hungry."

Following a low-carb diet is much simpler and less expensive than relying on other diets that require a specific plan or fee to subscribe to a program or depend on points to track calories. You just need to know what foods you can eat and which you should avoid.

"It can be easy to follow if you enjoy eating foods that are higher in fat, such as eggs, avocados and high-fat salad dressings like ranch," Manney says. He admits, however, that low-carb eating can be more difficult if you're cooking for family or traveling. "With a little planning, you can make it work," he adds.

So what advice would he give to someone just starting out? "Don't just do it for the weight loss," Manney says. "There are so many great benefits to eating low carb that the weight loss becomes a secondary motivation. The first few weeks are difficult, but it will get easier."

Besides omelets and frittatas, here are a couple of recipes Manney found online and has now made part of his dietary routine.



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



MEATLOAF CUPCAKES

with cauliflower mash frosting

Meatloaf:

- 3 pounds ground beef
- 3 eggs
- 1/2 cup onion, minced
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1/2 cup grated parmesan cheese
- 1/2 teaspoon chili powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon pepper

Sauce:

- 1/2 cup reduced-sugar ketchup
- 2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce
- 1 tablespoon yellow mustard
- 1/2 teaspoon pepper

Cauliflower mash:

- 1 head cauliflower, chopped
- 3 ounces cream cheese
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 3 ounces shredded cheddar cheese
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon pepper
- Dried parsley, garnish

Meatloaf cupcakes: Heat oven to 350 degrees F. Put all ingredients for the meatloaf in a large bowl and mix with hands until blended well. Spray two (12-cup) muffin tins with cooking spray. Evenly distribute meat mixture between the 24 cupcake cups.

Sauce: In a small bowl, mix all the sauce ingredients. Top each meatloaf cupcake with about 1 teaspoon of sauce.

Place the meatloaf cupcakes in the oven and cook until the cupcakes are cooked through, about 35 minutes.

Cauliflower mash frosting: Bring a large pot of water to a boil. Add cauliflower and cook until fork tender, about 15 minutes. Drain cauliflower and add to a food processor or blender. Add cream cheese, butter, cheese and seasonings. Mix until smooth.

Assembly: When meatloaves have finished cooking, remove from oven. Turn on broiler. Remove each meatloaf from the cupcake pan and place on a sheet pan. (There will be a lot of excess grease to drain.) Load a piping bag with the cauliflower mash, using the large star tip if you want a frosting-like swirl on top. Pipe "frosting" onto the meatloaves and sprinkle with parsley. Place frosted meatloaves under the broiler until they begin to brown. Remove from the broiler and serve.

Nutrition: Each cupcake has 3 grams of carbohydrates.

— From *ketogenic.com*

MOLTEN CHOCOLATE LAVA CAKES

- 2 ounces dark chocolate (minimum 70 percent cocoa solids)
- 2 ounces butter
- 1/4 teaspoon vanilla
- 3 eggs
- 1 tablespoon butter (for greasing four to six ramekins)

Heat oven to 400 F. Grease the ramekins with butter. Divide or chop the chocolate into smaller pieces and place in top of a double boiler. Add 2 ounces butter and stir to melt and blend. Remove from heat and stir in vanilla. Allow the chocolate to cool to lukewarm. You don't want it to get firm. Crack the eggs into a bowl and beat with a hand mixer until light and fluffy — 2 to 3 minutes. Pour in the chocolate batter, stirring with a wooden spoon until the batter is smooth. Divide the batter between the ramekins and place in the oven. Immediately lower the heat to 350 F. Bake for 5 minutes for four ramekins and 7 minutes for six ramekins. Remove from oven and serve lukewarm with a dollop of whipped cream or sour cream if desired.

Nutrition: 4 grams of carbohydrates per serving.

Note: These cakes will continue to bake in the ramekins after you remove them from the oven. Pulling them out at 5 or 7 minutes may seem early, but it will keep the lava flowing when you cut into them. 🍴

— From *www.dietdoctor.com*



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