

**BROADBAND:**  
MILLENNIAL EDITION

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2019

# CONNECTION

## BETWEEN THE PIPES

Brandon Wildung  
earns spot as  
goalie in ECHL



## TALES FROM THE LAKE

Secretive and secluded  
sport of ice fishing

## SIMMERING SATISFACTION

Slow-cooker recipes warm  
winter tables



BY SHIRLEY BLOOMFIELD, CEO  
NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association

## What is your broadband story?

We just closed out a year when rural broadband was a continuing news item, and I believe that will hold true in 2019. This is good news for those of you reading this magazine, and even better news for the millions of rural Americans not served by a progressive broadband provider like yours.

It's easy to get caught up in the policy behind the issues. After all, the bills Congress debates become the laws that govern rural broadband. It's so important that rural broadband providers like yours stay involved in the process to ensure that public policy encourages investment in building reliable broadband service to our rural regions. That's a key function of NTCA as the unified voice of nearly 850 independent, community-based telecommunications companies.

But we must always remind ourselves that the reason we work for good public policy is to help communities build the networks needed to support an improved quality of life for real people. In every issue of this magazine, you read stories of people who are using broadband to make a difference in their lives, businesses, families and communities. That is what drives our work.

With funding programs in the news, USDA efforts and FCC initiatives — not to mention new providers getting into the telecom business — 2019 is going to be another big news year for broadband. Help us keep our eyes on the human impact by sharing your broadband stories on social media using the #ruraliscool hashtag. 📱



## Fighting cyberthreats together

**NTCA continues a collaboration with the Department of Homeland Security to provide telcos with critical cyberthreat information**

Small telecommunications providers mount a strong defense against advanced security threats from criminal elements and overseas enemies. Beyond the professionals on its local staff, your internet provider benefits from the cybersecurity efforts of hundreds of similar companies across the U.S.

NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association represents nearly 850 independent, community-based telecommunications companies, helping them collectively work toward solutions to industry challenges and better serve their members and customers.

The association recently announced that, in partnership with the Department of Homeland Security and National Institute for Hometown Security, it will explore creating a forum for small, rural telecom operators from across the country to share and receive timely, actionable and relevant cyber information.

Bob Kolasky, director of the National Risk Management Center, presented NTCA with a National Infrastructure Protection Program Security & Resilience Challenge award for 2019 to support the project, which will include the creation and beta test of a daily cyber intelligence report. This will be curated to meet the unique needs and interests of community-based telecommunications broadband providers.

This new award follows NTCA's successful collaboration with DHS to create the 2018 Cyber Wise Program that provided free, industry-focused risk management training to rural telcos.

"NTCA is proud to support small, rural operators as they navigate an increasingly complex cyber landscape," says NTCA Chief Executive Officer Shirley Bloomfield. "As we all know, cyberattacks are truly a matter of 'when,' not 'if,' and this new partnership with DHS and NIHS will help explore a new forum to ensure rural broadband providers are both aware of threats and equipped with the information and tools that they need to respond. I'm grateful for this continued collaboration and look forward to seeing its results." 📱



# Lifeline SERVICE

Lifeline is a government assistance program that can help pay a portion of your telephone, mobile phone or internet bill each month. Consumers are allowed only one Lifeline program benefit per household.



## How much will Lifeline save me?

If you qualify for Lifeline, you will receive a credit of \$9.25 each month on your bill.



## What services are covered by this credit?

You have the choice (where applicable) of applying your benefit to one of three types of service offerings:

- Fixed or mobile broadband
- Fixed or mobile voice-only
- Bundles of fixed or mobile voice and broadband

NOTE: Lifeline can only be used for one source of communication from the list above.



## Can I receive more than one Lifeline credit?

No, consumers are allowed only one Lifeline program benefit per household.



## How do I qualify?

You are eligible for Lifeline benefits if you qualify for and receive one of the following benefits:

- SNAP
- Medicaid
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Federal Public Housing Assistance
- The Veteran's Pension or Survivor's Pension benefit.

Additionally, consumers at or below 135 percent of

the Federal Poverty Guidelines will continue to be eligible for a Lifeline program benefit. (State determinations of income will no longer be accepted.) There are no changes to the eligibility criteria for Tribal programs.

**NOTE: Some states have additional qualifying programs, allowances and stipulations. Check with your local telecommunications provider for information about benefits that may be available in your state.**



## How do I enroll in the Lifeline program and start receiving this benefit?

To find out whether you qualify for Lifeline assistance, please visit [www.lifelinesupport.org](http://www.lifelinesupport.org) or call your local telecommunications provider.

**NOTE:** Your telephone company is not responsible for determining who qualifies for these programs or who receives assistance. Consumers must meet specific criteria in order to obtain assistance with their local telephone and/or broadband service, and qualifying is dependent upon government-established guidelines.



## DO YOU QUALIFY?

**Stay connected with a Lifeline discount.**



## FRS YOUTH APP CHALLENGE

Students, it's time to start thinking about the Foundation for Rural Service's challenge and the app that could pave the way to your future.

**WHO:** Students enrolled in grades seven to 12. A single student, or teams with as many as five students, may compete.

**WHAT:** Develop a concept for a mobile app to address a problem or improve a process in your rural community or in rural America at-large. The challenge is concept-based only, and entries will be judged based on how well-researched and well-presented the app is. It must be possible and not already an app in existence.

**WHEN:** The submission deadline is March 1, 2019.

**WHY:** The winning team will receive \$1,000 in gift cards and Codecademy scholarships.

**HOW:** Visit [FRS.org](http://FRS.org) for more information about submissions.

# Service for all generations

One thing that's great about our business is how our network can have a positive impact on so many people. Broadband benefits everyone from children to seniors — even if they use it for different things.



**KEVIN BEYER**

Chief Executive Officer

In many instances, Farmers Mutual & Federated Telephone have served four, five, six or even seven generations of families in our area. How many companies can say that? Obviously, times have changed, and the communication needs of your grandparents or great-grandparents were very different than yours are.

This issue of the magazine is focusing on one particular generation that seems to grab a lot of headlines: the millennials. While experts vary slightly on the parameters, “millennial” is the name given to people with birth dates from the mid-1980s through about 2005.

Depending on what article you've read most recently, you may feel millennials are either ruining everything or likely to save us all. But I believe one thing is certain: With millennials becoming

the largest segment of our population, they are going to change the way companies operate and the way our society works.

One of the primary traits most millennials share is the pervasiveness of technology in their lives. In fact, most members of this generation — especially those in their teens and early 20s — have never known a world without internet-connected technology.

It may be easy to sit back and worry about the shifts this generation is already creating. But to me, it's important to remember that these millennials are the future of our community and of our Cooperatives.

Think about it with me.

- Their complex lives frequently play out in a mix of social media and text messages, rather than face-to-face interactions.
- With the advent of digital photography and phones with cameras, they are the most photographed generation in human history.
- They aspire to jobs working remotely, like coding, web design or other careers that couldn't have existed a decade or two ago. And if they create their own companies, the business world — especially in rural America — doesn't present nearly as many obstacles for startups as it once did.
- For entertainment, many of us grew up with only a few channels on the television set, but millennials are accustomed to hundreds of channels and programming on demand right on their tablets.
- They take classes online, apply for jobs through mobile apps and often lead the way on digital innovation, whether smart home, telemedicine or other technology.

The tastes and preferences of millennials are already having an impact. Millennials are some of our most frequent users of services like online bill pay. They are more likely to only want a cellphone, rather than a landline which is why we are working to offer broadband-only packages that do not require phone service. Most importantly, they need a robust internet connection to handle all of their devices, and we are working hard to deliver and improve that service every day.

Personally and professionally, I'm excited to see the way these young people make an impact on our Cooperatives, our community and our world. And we're going to adapt and work hard to continue meeting their communication needs just like we have for the generations before them. 📞

## CONNECTION

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POWERED BY FARMERS MUTUAL TELEPHONE COMPANY  
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On the Cover:



Before his rookie ECHL season, Brandon Wildung minded the net as goalie for the Mercyhurst University Men's Hockey team in 2017. See story Page 12.

## FRS Youth Tour

Farmers Mutual Telephone and Federated Telephone partner with the Foundation for Rural Service to provide an opportunity for two selected students to tour Washington, D.C., during a summer trip.

- Applications must be received at the Farmers Mutual Telephone or Federated Telephone main office by Feb. 25, 2019. Please see a guidance counselor for an application.
- Applicants must be 16 or 17 years of age and live in the Farmers Mutual Telephone or Federated Telephone service area, and their parent or legal guardian must be an active customer.
- Applicants must be a rising high school senior, graduating in 2020, and must be under the age of 18 at the time of the tour.



### FRS Scholarship

Farmers Mutual Telephone and Federated Telephone reinvest in the community by donating to a scholarship fund with the Foundation for Rural Service.

- Applications must be received at the Farmers Mutual Telephone or Federated Telephone main office by Feb. 27, 2019.
- Download applications at [frs.org](http://frs.org), or see your guidance counselor.
- Applicants must live in the Farmers Mutual Telephone or Federated Telephone service area, and their legal guardian or parent must be a customer.

## MTA SCHOLARSHIP

The MTA Foundation awards six \$2,000 scholarships to high school seniors graduating in 2019.

- To be eligible, applicants must attend postsecondary education at either a university, college or technical college. They must be a Minnesota resident, and the applicant's family must subscribe to at least one service from either Farmers Mutual Telephone or Federated Telephone.
- The panel will review each application and score the applications based on applicants' grades, academic achievements and extracurricular activities.
- The scholarships are awarded after the student's successful completion of the first year of college or technical school.



## EXPANDING OUR REACH

Farmers Mutual started installing services into the expanded areas of southwest Lac qui Parle County and the city of Watson. In September, families enjoyed a bratwurst lunch, and new subscribers completed applications for service during an open house at the Watson City Office.



Jackie Jessen



Larry Ascherman

## Dedicated to service

Please help Acira recognize two employees who have reached career milestones: Jackie Jessen, a customer service representative, has answered many calls during 15 years of service. Larry Ascherman, a combination technician, has connected countless customers during his 20-year career.



## SERVING RURAL AMERICA

Congratulate Acira General Manager/CEO Kevin Beyer for being elected chairman of the board of directors for NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association for the coming year.





Brrrrr... It's cold!

Warm up with dog sledding, one of the season's hottest activities

Lori and Anya dog-sled across White Iron Lake on Wintergreen's dog-sled vacation for mother-daughter pairs.

Photo courtesy of Wintergreen Dogsled Lodge.

BY LISA SAVAGE

**W**restling a snowmobile or strapping on a pair of skis and heading cross-country can be fun, but these activities may be more adventure than many people desire. That's why dog sledding has become a favorite winter activity in Minnesota's Northwoods.

"Dog sledding is accessible for everyone," says Paul Schurke, who has 38 years of experience in the sport. There's really no age limit. Anyone from a toddler to a senior can hop aboard a sled and feel the rush of the wind as a musher guides the dog team through the snow-covered terrain.

Wintergreen Dogsled Lodge owners Paul and Susan Schurke fell in love with dog sledding many years ago. The couple, when just out of college, offered canoe and camping adventures in summer for people with disabilities. The trips were wildly popular, but inquiries kept coming for something fun to do in winter. Dog sledding proved to be the answer, providing an invigorating experience regardless of skill level.

The Schurkes learned that the sport is all about the animals. Their beautiful, friendly Canadian Eskimo dogs are the focus of any sled trips near the Canadian border outside Ely. The stunning Northwoods trails provide a spectacular backdrop.

Wintergreen dog-sled daytrips are hands-on experiences. You can drive your own sled if you wish. Guides accompany you on skis to help out as needed.



Adventures range from half-day and full-day trips to weeklong, overnight camping excursions. Many daytrips, though, are limited to Sunday and Monday, because other days are booked with overnight vacations.

Overnight trips include stays in a Northwoods cabin and gourmet meals provided by a professional chef. The three- or four-night itineraries are available in standard or deluxe packages.

A five-night comprehensive winter camping trip includes the first two nights at the Wintergreen lodge, dog sledding lessons, snowshoeing, skiing and an introduction to winter camping. Accompanied by guides, visitors enjoy a three-day, two-night try at exploring the wilderness, capped with a festive evening back at Wintergreen.

Advanced camping trips take you deeper into the wilderness by dog sled and are suited for someone who has previous camping experience. These trips are often led by Paul Schurke.

After the season ends, usually in March or April, Schurke also leads Arctic treks to the North Pole.

- 1101 Ring Rock Road, Ely, Minnesota
- **Phone:** 877-753-3386
- **Online:** [www.dogsledding.com](http://www.dogsledding.com)

## Wolfsong

100 Rittenhouse Ave.  
Bayfield, Wisconsin

Jen Dale bought her first husky dog when she was 12 years old. With a passion for the outdoors and dogs, her pack quickly grew from one dog to six, and she became an avid musher.

She joined Wolfsong, nestled in the Northern Wisconsin hills overlooking Lake Superior, in 2009 as a guide and bought the business from the original owners in 2017. Dale and the guides at Wolfsong have mushed thousands of miles and trained hundreds of new mushers.

With an average of 150 inches of snow, conditions are ideal for dog sledding from Christmas through late March. Wolfsong offers trips for all ages and abilities, but each begins and ends with the dogs.

“We have 39 dogs, and you get to meet them all,” Dale says. “They’re like humans. They all have different personalities. It helps to establish a relationship, which gets them so that they want to take you out. The sledding is almost secondary.”

For some, helping harness the dogs and riding in the sled is enough. Others want to learn everything they can about mushing and driving a team. Options for the hands-on excursions include a four-hour trip with lunch or two half-hour trips.

At the conclusion, you sled back to the kennel and help unharness and feed the dogs. “That’s your way to say thanks to them,” Dale says. “Then you really are a musher.”

- **Phone:** 715-779-5561
- **Online:** [wolfsongadventures.com](http://wolfsongadventures.com)

## Positive Energy Outdoors

4757 Datka Road  
Duluth, Minnesota

It started with 16 dogs and a dream. Now, Positive Energy Outdoors is recognized as one of the premier outdoor experiences on the North Shore of Lake Superior outside Duluth.

Positive Energy Outdoors is a not-for-profit outdoor education program,

Newlyweds Angie and John enjoyed a Wintergreen Dogsled vacation for their honeymoon.



Photos courtesy of Wintergreen Dogsled Lodge.

providing varied opportunities for low- and moderate-income youth.

The dog sledding adventures are popular, and any money the organization makes goes to scholarships to help pay for many of the year-round programs, says Stephanie Love, one of the organization’s founders.

“People come here from all over,” she says. “It gives kids in the city a chance to experience the outdoors in a way they would not otherwise be able to.”

Dog sledding is a magical experience, Love says.

Since 1993, she and director Blake Cazier have introduced thousands of people to dog sledding.

They offer everything from custom overnight dog sledding to half-day, high-quality, hands-on dog sledding experiences. It’s the only dog sledding kennel in the region that also offers horse-drawn sleigh rides.

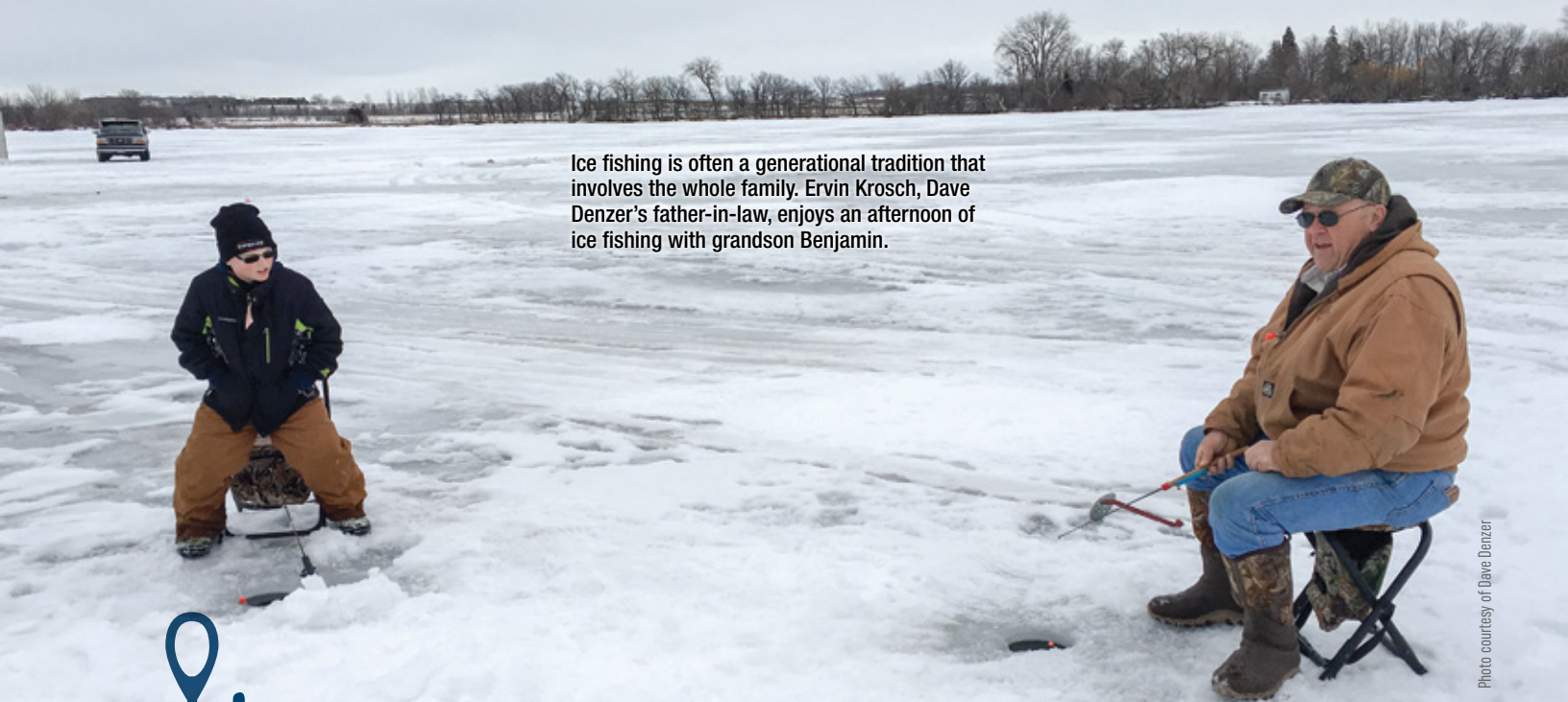
Sleds carry one to two adults or one adult and up to three children.

If you can’t make it to them, they can take the dog team to your location for a special event or program.

- **Phone:** 218-391-0147
- **Online:** [outdooreadventures.org](http://outdooreadventures.org)



Wintergreen guest Jaycee shares some “TLC” with Gabe, her favorite sled dog.



Ice fishing is often a generational tradition that involves the whole family. Ervin Krosch, Dave Denzer's father-in-law, enjoys an afternoon of ice fishing with grandson Benjamin.

Photo courtesy of Dave Denzer

# HOOKED ON ICE FISHING

Wintertime anglers flock to Minnesota lakes

BY JOHN CLAYTON

**J**im Schmidgall has learned many a fishing lesson since he first took to the ice with his father and uncles nearly 50 years ago.

But the most important one seems simple enough: Never tell anyone where the fish are biting.

"You either tell them you're catching them in the mouth or at a lake you weren't on," says Schmidgall, 56. "You tell them where they're biting, and you end up with nine fish houses around you the next morning."

Morris residents like Schmidgall and Dave Denzer are part of an ice-fishing culture that often brings fathers and sons together on Minnesota lakes and millions of dollars into the state's economy as the temperatures dip.

For the vast majority of their lives, both of the veteran fishermen have been, well, hooked on ice fishing.

Like Schmidgall fishing with his father and uncles all those years ago, Denzer is taking his sons — Alex, 15, and Ben, 12 — onto the ice.

"The boys have kept me pretty active, but now they're both getting a desire to start ice fishing," Denzer says. "Fishing was always my time to relax for that time of year. You go out on the lake and get a lot of quiet time."

Both Schmidgall and Denzer started out spear fishing but have been hook-and-line angling for the most part. With his sons in tow, Denzer says he will be teaching them spear-fishing techniques as they chase walleye and northern pike in the frozen lakes.

"I just love old-school fishing," Denzer says. "Usually, the season starts around the end of December, depending on the ice. I used to go up and spend a week on Leech Lake up in the northern part of Minnesota."



Like many ice fishermen, Jim Schmidgall is secretive about his favorite spots for the season.

Schmidgall sees ice fishing as a solitary endeavor, as well. "You can just go out with the dog, and the dog don't care," he says.

## NEW SCHOOL

While fathers and sons still take to the ice each year as the Schmidgalls did a half-century ago, the sport has evolved even if some of the old-school fishermen have not.



Technology has made its way to the frozen lakes with an assortment of gadgetry to help enthusiasts catch fish and be more comfortable while they're doing it. Ice fishermen can use underwater cameras and digital depth indicators that display the exact depth of the hook and the fish. The underwater cameras broadcast directly to a big-screen TV inside the fishing hut via a mobile Wi-Fi hot spot.

"I've yet to buy the cameras and all of that," Denzer says.

Schmidgall says he doesn't need them. "I know how to fish, and I know where they are," he says.

The fish house has also evolved. Several companies in Minnesota are building and selling 21st-century fishing huts that have come a long way from the tiny houses traditionally dragged or pushed onto the lakes. Mounted on trailers that fold down to the ice, the new structures are moved easily on and off the lakes and, although small, offer the comforts of home, turning a weekend of ice fishing into something closer to "glamping" — a mashup of "glamour and camping."

With kitchenettes, bathrooms and generators for electricity, those modern fish houses have changed the game, says Henry Drewes, a regional fisheries manager with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.

"They have actually transformed ice fishing into more of a family event," Drewes says. "These are travel trailers on the ice, so now there are entire families going out on the lake for a weekend. It's really amazing."

## COLD FACTS

With about 1.4 million licensed anglers in the state of Minnesota and another estimated 500,000 unlicensed enthusiasts, fishing is part of the culture for Minnesotans, and ice fishing is the wintertime extension of that passion. The 1.9 million people fishing in the "Land of 10,000 Lakes" translates into about 30 percent of the state's population.

Drewes says sport fishing creates close to \$6 billion in economic impact for the state. "I don't have hard numbers on ice



Anglers of all ages can catch a fish from the frozen lakes.

fishing alone, but ice fishing is huge business in Minnesota, period," says Drewes, who has been with the state DNR for 31 years.

He estimates about 40 percent of the total anglers in Minnesota are also ice fishermen, meaning around 760,000 people take to the ice each winter. "If you're a serious angler here, winter means there are four months of your year that you can't fish unless you go ice fishing."

During the winter months, three of the most popular ice fishing lakes in the state — Mille Lacs, Upper Red Lake and Lake of the Woods — each average 2 million hours of ice fishing. "That means 6 million total hours on those three lakes each winter," Drewes says. "These lakes have small cities of anglers on them as soon as the ice is safe."

## WINTER COMMUNITY

Schmidgall has several trophies — three big walleyes and a 15-pound northern pike — mounted on his wall, reminders of jobs well done. "You usually don't get that size fish around here. Usually you have to go to Canada," he says.

The stories behind catches such as those are some of Denzer's favorite elements of ice fishing. A community camaraderie is renewed each winter, he says.

"One of the things I've really enjoyed since I was younger through the years is listening to everybody's stories," Denzer says. "You may hear it 20 times over the years, but it's always a great story. When we have a fish fry, then the stories start to fly." 🗨️

## STAYING SAFE ON FROZEN LAKES



New ice is usually stronger than old ice. Four inches of clear, newly formed ice may support one person on foot, while a foot or more of old, partially thawed ice may not.

Ice seldom freezes uniformly. It may be a foot thick in one location and only an inch or two thick just a few feet away.

Ice formed over flowing water and currents is often dangerous. This is especially true near streams, bridges and culverts. Also, the ice on outside river bends is usually weaker due to the undermining effects of the faster current.

The insulating effect of snow slows down the freezing process. The extra weight also reduces how much weight the ice sheet can support. Also, ice near the shore can be weaker than ice that is farther out.

Booming and cracking ice isn't necessarily dangerous. It usually means that the ice is expanding and contracting as the temperature changes.

Schools of fish or flocks of waterfowl can also adversely affect the relative safety of ice. The movement of fish can bring warm water up from the bottom of the lake. In the past this has opened holes in the ice, causing snowmobiles and cars to break through.

— Source, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources



# Rethinking rural

How some millennials are re-evaluating life in rural communities

BY DREW WOOLLEY

As a ceramic sculpture artist, John Larson traveled far outside his hometown of Clarkfield, Minnesota, to learn his craft. But in his time studying in places like Utah and South Korea, he never quite got used to life in the city.

“I grew up in a rural area, so I’m really used to the quiet and having my space,” he says. “I’ve built my small business on reusing bent nails and foraging for materials. But in metropolitan areas, you generally have to dumpster dive or pay more for those materials.”

As a millennial, Larson is part of a generation that rural communities have had difficulty retaining. But there’s reason to believe more millennials may come around to his way of thinking.

For many, the term millennial has become synonymous with the silly and derogatory stereotype of any young person eating avocados while staring at their phone. But the Pew Research Center works with a more precise definition. They define millennials as anyone born from the years 1981 to 1997.

That means even the youngest millennials have likely already entered the



Photo courtesy of Kristin Lindstrom.

Living in a rural community gives John Larson the chance to share the countryside with his daughter.

workforce, while the oldest probably have a mortgage and kids. Now raising his own family outside Milan, Minnesota, Larson is shaping his business in a way that is only possible there.

“Ceramics is a product of its location. If you use local materials, it will be a reflection of its place,” he says. “There’s just so much material here for me to explore. It’s really a life’s work.”

## WIDE-OPEN SPACES

Even if millennials are no longer the youngest generation, several characteristics set them apart from those before them. They tend to value experiences over

possessions, get their news online, rather than from TV, and value work-life balance in their careers.

Perhaps most importantly, millennials are the first generation to grow up in the internet age, meaning they have a natural comfort with technology previous generations have not had. That could make them a predictor of how future tech-savvy generations will behave.

Millennial trends are of particular interest to Dr. Roberto Gallardo, assistant director of the Purdue Center for Regional Development. While the mainstream consensus has been that millennials are flocking to cities, Gallardo believes improved



internet connectivity could provide new opportunities in rural areas.

“If you have a young family, you may consider moving out of an urban area because of rising housing prices,” he says. “Rural areas have a natural ambiance that can attract younger families if their job allows them to telework.”

That draw depends heavily on rural communities building a high-speed internet connection, and there is reason to believe doing so could have a significant impact.

A population analysis by Gallardo and two colleagues published in *The Daily Yonder* shows that while rural counties across the country are seeing declines in millennial populations, those with high-speed internet service saw millennial populations increase by 2.3 percent from 2010 to 2016.

That may not sound like much, but Gallardo points out that this is a process just getting started as millennials grow older.

“Younger folks always flock to cities, so if you’re a very rural community, broadband is not a silver bullet,” says Gallardo. “But it is a very key ingredient to attract or retain millennials or younger families.”

### CROSS-GEN COMMUNITIES

Chase Rushing’s is one such family. Six years ago, he and his wife lived in San Marcos, Texas, between San Antonio and Austin. With access to entertainment and a burgeoning tech scene, they had no intention of leaving.

But once they began talking about starting a family, the idea of returning to his hometown of Yantis, Texas, lodged itself in Rushing’s mind. “It was important for me that my son got to experience what I did growing up,” he says. “Being around all your family, the friendships, the bonds you form over that time. It’s like nothing else.”

Rushing was fortunate to find a job in his field as a systems administrator. But he admits that the lack of career opportunities near his hometown was a concern.

Fostering more rural development programs is one step Rushing believes communities like his could take to better

promote the opportunities that already exist, as well as to help business owners collaborate and learn from one another.

As the generation that now makes up the majority of the workforce, millennials will have an important say in those efforts. But Rushing believes that if his generation is going to open rural communities to more young people, they will have to do so without losing sight of what makes the rural lifestyle special. It may be necessary to break down generational divides altogether.

“I think we need to be asking what we can do to impact our community,” he says. “It’s not millennials versus baby boomers or anyone else. It’s about all of us as a community.” 📶

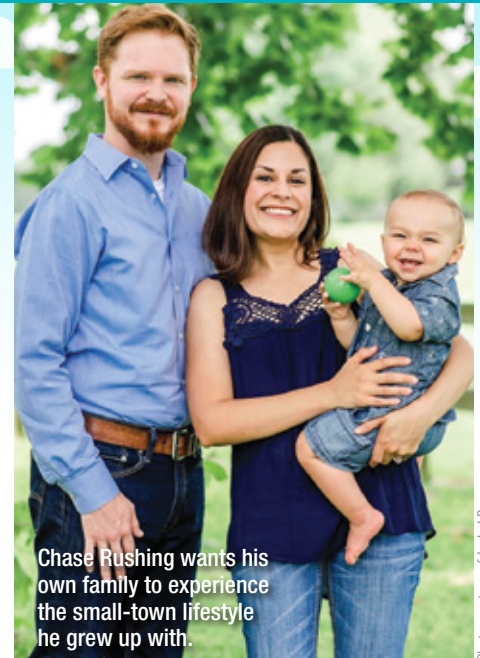
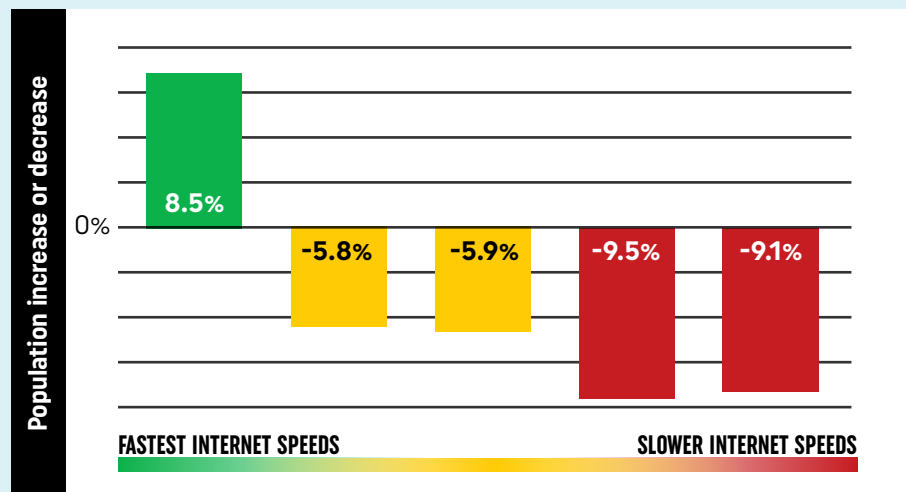


Photo courtesy of Isabel Reyna

## Rural America online

### Millennial population change in North Dakota and Minnesota



Nationwide population data shows that rural communities are losing younger residents to larger metropolitan areas. When looking at rural counties that have invested in high-speed internet connections, however, the picture changes significantly.

The graph above shows how millennial populations changed in the most rural Minnesota and North Dakota counties from 2010 to 2016. Counties were ranked based on their internet connection, with the column on the far left showing those with the fastest internet speeds and the column on the far right showing the slowest.

Over that time, counties with the fastest internet connections saw millennial populations grow by more than 8 percent, while counties with slower connections saw their millennial populations drop by 5 percent or more.



# MINDING THE CREASE

Wildung chasing professional hockey dreams

BY JOHN CLAYTON

Just days after the 2017-18 hockey season ended for Mercyhurst University, senior goalie Brandon Wildung was packing his bags and boarding a flight toward the future he had dreamed of since he was a boy.

The Utah Grizzlies, of the East Coast Hockey League, had offered Wildung an amateur tryout contract as the Grizzlies' season wound to a close. After four years in goal with the Lakers, this was Wildung's shot.

"If you think about it, it's a high-stress situation," Wildung says. "It's a new league and my first professional opportunity."

Perhaps fortunately, the Nassau native, son of Jeff Wildung and Jody Van Drunen, didn't have time to think about the stakes. He was sending emails to Mercyhurst professors en route to the airport, hoping they would work with him while he was chasing his professional hockey dreams in Salt Lake City.

"I just knew I could play at that level and I deserved to be there," he says. "I put the work in to get there, so I was enjoying it, honestly. I tried to make the most of it. If you're overthinking it, you're fighting against yourself more than anything, I just strapped on the big boy pads and tried to have fun."

The Grizzlies, a minor-league affiliate of the NHL's Colorado Avalanche, agreed that Wildung deserved to be in the ECHL, signing him to his first professional contract for the 2018-19 season. He played in four games under his amateur tryout contract last

season and signed an offseason contract to be with the Grizzlies when their season began Oct. 12 at home against Rapid City.

After years of struggling to find a fit in junior hockey leagues

across the U.S. and Canada, Wildung's travels and travails continued in the ECHL. After opening the season on Utah's roster, he was released but quickly signed by the ECHL's Manchester Monarchs, more than 2,000 miles away in New Hampshire. The moves were proof of something Wildung has known all along – reaching the NHL comes with long odds. There are few spots between the pipes in the pros and even fewer for 24-year-old rookies. In some ways, all of the struggles he went through as a junior player may have helped him prepare for the sudden and sometimes heartbreaking twists and turns in the professional game.

"You've got Joe Schmo me walking in there after four years in school, and I'm looking for a place to play," he says. "I got lucky or blessed or whatever you want to call it. They've got guys who are NHL-ready not getting chances, and they've got draft picks down there. They've got projects they think they want to work on ... I've just got to get there and go to work."

If the end of his college career, which included a trip to the Atlantic Hockey Conference semifinals, and his first professional shot were a whirlwind, Wildung's amateur career prior to college was part marathon and part roller coaster.

Utah Grizzlies goaltender Brandon Wildung stopped 23 of 27 shots in his professional debut, which went to overtime against the Colorado Eagles.

Photo courtesy of Tim Broussard/Utah Grizzlies.





# "I kind of had to scratch and fight. I've always tried to go to work for everything I've got, and I never thought twice about it." —BRANDON WILDUNG

He says he bounced around the world of junior hockey, sometimes on its outskirts, in places such as New Mexico and Bismarck as he attempted to find the right fit. Finally, he landed with the Flin Flon Bombers of the Saskatchewan Junior Hockey League. The Bombers produced Philadelphia Flyers center Bobby Clarke, the leader of the infamous Broad Street Bullies. For Clarke, Flin Flon was the start of what would become an NHL Hall of Fame career. For Wildung, the Bombers gave him a chance to get his skates back on solid ice.

"We loaded up my pickup truck like I was going to be there for a year," Wildung says. "But I wasn't sure if I was going to even be there for a week."

The tryout camp went well, and Wildung stuck with the Bombers. "I played well, I thought, and I got some good bounces."

A year later in 2013-14, Wildung moved to the Minot Minotaur in the North American Hockey League, playing in 35 games and getting the attention of the Mercyhurst coaching staff. "It was a great year and the year that I needed to have," he says. "I committed in December and was at Mercyhurst for four years. It was definitely nice to unpack and stick around in the same place with the same group for four years. I was blessed to go there and play Division I hockey, for sure."

Even during the lowest points in his young career, Wildung says he never lost faith in his dreams or his abilities in goal, and his goalie coach, Dave Rogowski, never wavered in his support. "I kind of had to scratch and fight," he says. "I've always tried to go to work for everything I've got, and I never thought twice about it."

This past summer, Wildung's work continued at the Velocity Training Center in Edina, which he says has become a hub for established NHL stars and hockey hopefuls from around the world. He began offseason workouts there after his sophomore season at Mercyhurst.

"It's a world-class training center," he says. "It's introduced me to a whole new level of off-ice training I never really knew about."

Velocity also introduced him to a new level of competition, complete with NHL-level talent and speed.

As the ECHL season began in October, he was hoping the off-ice training — along with a wide-open, high-scoring, four-on-four summer league — would pay off, even if his ego had taken an occasional hit against some of the game's top scorers during summer-league play. "Us goalies all know one another, and it's fun, but we say it can sure hurt a goalie's feelings," he says. 📺



Brandon Wildung worked hard on and off the ice to make it to the ECHL and now will be playing his first season with the Manchester Monarchs.



Wildung stretches out to make a save against the Idaho Steelheads.

Photo courtesy of Tim Broussard/Utah Grizzlies.

# The joy of COOKING SLOW

Soothing meals warm  
cold winter days

**D**uring the long days of winter, slow cookers come out of their hiding places and begin appearing as fixtures on countertops. There's something about long, slow cooking that creates comfort food.

But it's not just for comfort's sake, says Minnesotan Jen Haugen. "I use it for any meal that I can prep ahead during a busy time, and that's pretty much all the time."

Haugen, 40, wears many hats. She's a mom, wife, registered dietitian, nutritionist,

culinary educator, speaker and author of "The Mom's Guide to a Nourishing Garden." To say she's a busy woman is an understatement, so she appreciates the convenience of slow cooking.

"I think it makes me a better mother," she says. "When I

prep my meals and have supper ready for my family, I can feel good about what I am feeding them." Plus, she says, having dinner ready when she gets home allows more time to spend with family.

"I think people can appreciate that," she says. "They like the fact that they can set their Crock-Pots to 'low' for six to eight hours and have dinner ready when they get home."

Slow cookers have come of age. When they first became popular in the late 1960s, choices were limited to the colors of harvest gold or avocado green and only two temperature settings. Today's slow cookers are all about convenience, including timers, automatic shut-offs and a range of temperature settings.

Haugen's slow cooker is a Rockcok from Pampered

Chef, for which she is a consultant. The pot can even go in the microwave, on the stove, in the oven, on the grill or under the broiler, making it an extremely versatile addition to her kitchen.

"They are certainly a dinner helper," she says, adding that some of her favorite meals to prepare in her slow cooker are fajitas, soups, chilis, sloppy Joes and roasts. Many of her favorite recipes can be found on her website: [jenhaugen.com](http://jenhaugen.com).



Jen Haugen considers slow cookers essential kitchen tools. They save time while creating delicious meals.



Slow cookers are perfect for everything from roasts to tasty homemade granola.



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



## HOMEMADE GRANOLA IN SLOW COOKER

### 6 servings

- 2 1/4 cups old-fashioned oats
- 1/4 cup chopped glazed walnuts (see note)
- 1/4 cup shredded sweetened coconut
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/8 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 cup honey
- 2 tablespoons melted butter
- 1/4 cup dried cranberries
- 1/4 cup chopped dried mango

1. In a large bowl, mix oats, walnuts, coconut, cinnamon and salt. In a separate bowl, stir together honey and melted butter. Pour over oat mixture.
2. Pour mixture into slow cooker and set to high. Leave lid slightly open to allow moisture to escape. Cook for 1 1/2-2 hours, stirring every 1/2 hour.
3. Remove from slow cooker and let cool for 15 minutes. Gently stir in cranberries and mango. Allow to cool completely and store in an airtight container. Note: Preglazed walnuts are readily available in most supermarkets.

## AFRICAN PEANUT SOUP

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 1/2 pounds chicken tenderloins
- 1 onion, chopped
- 2 red bell peppers, sliced
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 (28-ounce) can crushed tomatoes
- 2 sweet potatoes, peeled and cut into bite-size pieces
- 3 cups sliced carrots
- 4-6 cups chicken broth, or more as needed
- 1/2 teaspoon curry powder
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1/4 teaspoon chili powder
- 1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1/4 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 1 cup brown rice
- 1 1/2 cups crunchy peanut butter

Roasted peanuts, chopped, for garnish (optional)

Heat olive oil in a skillet over medium heat. Then, brown the chicken. Cut tenderloins into large, bite-sized pieces and place in the slow cooker. Cook the onion, red bell peppers and garlic in the hot skillet until the onions are translucent, about 5 minutes. Transfer the cooked vegetables into the slow cooker. Stir the crushed tomatoes, sweet potatoes, carrots, chicken broth, curry powder, cumin, chili powder, cayenne pepper, red pepper flakes, cinnamon and black pepper into the slow cooker. Set the cooker to high and cook for 5-6 hours. Or cook on low for 8-10 hours. If needed, stir in additional chicken broth during cooking. Mix in the brown rice 3 hours before serving, and mix in the peanut butter at least 1 hour before serving.

## SLOW COOKER BEEF BRISKET

- 3 tablespoons olive oil, divided
- 4 pounds beef brisket
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 1 teaspoon black pepper, or to taste
- 2 medium onions, sliced into thick strips
- 1 pound fresh mushrooms, thickly sliced
- 6 medium garlic cloves, peeled and chopped
- 2 cups low-sodium chicken or beef broth/stock
- 2 1/2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce
- 2 1/2 tablespoons low-sodium soy sauce

Generously season brisket with about 2 teaspoons salt and 1 teaspoon black pepper. Heat a large heavy skillet or cast iron pan over high heat. Add 1 tablespoon olive oil and, when hot, add brisket, fat side down. Sear 4-5 minutes per side or until browned on both sides. Transfer to slow cooker with the fat side facing up. In the same pan, add 1 tablespoon olive oil and sliced onions. Sauté 5-7 minutes

or until onions are caramelized. Place onions over brisket in slow cooker. In the same pan, add more oil, as needed, and sauté mushrooms until softened, which requires about 5 minutes. Place mushrooms into the slow cooker over brisket. Sprinkle chopped garlic over the mushrooms. Combine chicken or beef broth with Worcestershire and soy sauces. Pour the mixture over the meat. Cover and cook on low 7-9 hours or until cooked through and easy to pull apart with forks. Turn off slow cooker and rest for 15 minutes with the lid on. Remove and discard excess fat from the top. Then, pull the beef apart with forks and keep it in the slow cooker to soak up the juices. Serve beef brisket and mushrooms, spooning the slow cooker brisket juices over the top. Delicious served on its own or on buns as a sandwich. 🍷

## Slow cooker do's and don'ts

- ▶ When choosing a slow cooker, the shape you need — either round or oval — depends on what you plan to cook in it. Oval is better for larger, horizontally shaped meats like chickens, chuck or pot roasts. Taller, rounder slow cookers can be better for soups or stews. When deciding which shape is best for you, consider the number of people you are cooking for and the amount of storage space in your kitchen.
- ▶ To clean your slow cooker, make sure it's turned off and completely cool. Then, wipe the base — inside and out — with a warm, soapy washcloth. Let the cooker air dry. Remember to never submerge the entire base in water, which could ruin the electric wiring.
- ▶ A slow cooker was designed to be left on and unattended. It is safe to use when you are not at home and overnight. Because the slow cooker uses such a low level of power, it can be left on for long periods of time without using much energy.

—Courtesy of Hamilton Beach

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