

JULY/AUGUST 2019

CONNECTION

BROADBAND:
MAKERS EDITION

NEW BARN QUILTS

Traditional rural art
comes to Stevens County

MENTORING MATTERS

RUSC Kinship provides
active outlet for kids

HONORING MAKERS

Broadband empowers creativity



BY SHIRLEY BLOOMFIELD, CEO
NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association

Celebrating 65 years

This spring telco leaders from across the country gathered in Washington, D.C. We met with regulators and elected officials to not only champion the success of rural broadband providers who are expanding their reach with the support of good public policies, but also to advocate for all the good work our member companies do.

We also celebrated our strong legacy of success and commitment to rural America through service excellence, kicking off a number of activities that led up to our big day: On June 1, NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association celebrated its 65th anniversary.

While the early rural telephone program was born out of the rural electrification program in the mid-1940s, local providers began to realize that a national organization was needed to represent the unique needs of those new companies (many of them cooperatives) that were borrowing federal dollars to build critical communications services to rural parts of the nation. On June 1, 1954, NTCA was born.

We have seen many changes in the ensuing 65 years. Membership in NTCA has grown considerably, with cooperative and independent telcos serving an ever-expanding portion of the population. Regulations and funding mechanisms that impact how communications services are deployed have changed considerably. And, of course, the technology and ways people connect have gone from party lines to broadband.

As a member of NTCA, your telco is part of a large family that connects homes and businesses, farms and small towns, country roads and growing cities across rural America. And that's a reason to celebrate! 📶

Precision agriculture

Rural broadband creates opportunities



BY NOBLE SPRAYBERRY

The difference between success and failure for those who work in agriculture is, as it has ever been, small and frequently dependent on unpredictable factors: Too much rain. Not enough rain. Fickle prices. And more.

The goal is to manage the challenges in the best way possible, maximizing opportunity and limiting risk. Increasingly, internet-based technology can better balance the margin between losses and gains.

A recent report by the U.S. Department of Agriculture made the case for further extending broadband internet services to rural areas by highlighting the benefits of fast internet for agribusiness.

The report "Insights on Rural Broadband Infrastructure and Next Generation Precision Agriculture Technologies" offered a broad look at the possibilities for broadband to make use of data-driven tools to improve results.

Farmers and ranchers can follow the path of other modern businesses by using digital tools across the production cycle, according to the report. These new tools can support decision-making with integrated data. Automation can increase efficiency. Real-time insight can improve productivity. And entering into global markets becomes more attainable.

The trend can benefit farmers, ranchers and others in agriculture while also supporting technology companies leveraging these new or expanded markets. In fact, they have an opportunity to capture a portion of a global digital agriculture market projected to be between \$254 billion and \$340 billion.

New tools are needed to help farmers and ranchers better estimate the potential profit and economic risks associated with growing one particular crop over another. They may help with decisions about which fertilizer is best for current soil conditions or provide guidance on the best applications for pesticides. There are opportunities to create better water management strategies and to provide ways to use sensors to monitor animal health and nutrition.

"Connected devices equip farmers with a clear picture of their operations at any moment, making it possible to prioritize tasks more effectively and to triage the most pressing issues," according to the report.

Rural broadband capable of supporting these data-intensive tools makes it all possible, and the financial potential of the market emphasizes the need to continue to expand broadband networks throughout the nation. If fully realized, fast internet services paired with new "precision agriculture" technologies have the potential to add \$47-\$65 billion annually to the U.S. economy. 📶



LIFELINE IS A FEDERAL PROGRAM TO HELP LOW-INCOME AMERICANS PAY FOR PHONE OR BROADBAND SERVICE

FAQ:

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% 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 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.

Apply today!



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.

Building communities locally and globally



KEVIN BEYER
Chief Executive Officer

The internet has changed the way we define community.

Sure, we'll always have the community where we live. Many of us have a community of faith through our church or a school community with our kids.

But one of the things people discovered early on with the internet was the amazing ability to connect people with similar interests into an online community. If no one else in your town was into quilting or vintage motorcycles or jewelry-making, there were thousands of enthusiasts online who shared those hobbies.

Unique, long-distance relationships formed during those early days of group email lists, message boards and online forums.

Whatever our hobbies or interests, many of us have benefited from sharing ideas, swapping stories and soliciting advice with fellow enthusiasts.

As you'll read in the pages of this magazine, creative folks like artists, bakers, photographers, carpenters, seamstresses and metalworkers all use broadband to enhance their skills or to even turn their passions into moneymakers.

Even if your hobbies don't involve creating anything tangible, your broadband connection from Farmers Mutual Telephone Company and Federated Telephone Cooperative has likely helped you find joy in your interests.

There are hundreds of active online communities for gaming, hunting, hiking, gardening, music, genealogy, sports and more just waiting for new members to plug in. Many of these are global groups that would be impossible to assemble if not for the reach of broadband networks like ours.

Personally, I'm gratified to know that artisans and craftspeople from our region have a chance to share work that celebrates our local culture. Through their skill, they hopefully earn money to support themselves, as well as export our culture to the rest of the country to help ensure our way of life thrives.

There is more good news for anyone wanting to learn those old ways — or something new. Whether it's refinishing furniture, replacing a headlight, or learning to play the trombone, there are probably videos from experts on YouTube to walk you through the learning process step by step. This is the kind of skills library that has never before been available. Thanks to broadband, it's right at our fingertips.

While I normally use this space to tout the big-picture societal benefits of broadband — such as economic development, educational opportunities or telemedicine — I think it's important to remember the hundreds of small ways a broadband connection makes our lives a little better.

Whether you're learning a new skill or sharing community with fellow enthusiasts, we're proud to be the company in the middle that helps you make those connections. ☎

CONNECTION

JULY/AUGUST 2019

VOL. 3, NO. 4

Connection is a bimonthly newsletter published by Farmers Mutual and Federated Telephone, © 2019. It is distributed without charge to all of our customers.



POWERED BY FARMERS MUTUAL TELEPHONE COMPANY
AND FEDERATED TELEPHONE COOPERATIVE

Farmers Mutual Telephone Company

301 2nd St. South
Bellingham, MN 56212
farmers@farmerstel.net
320-568-2105

Federated Telephone Cooperative

201 State Hwy. 9 S. • P.O. Box 107
Morris, MN 56267
emailftc@fedtel.net
320-324-7111 or 320-585-4875

FARMERS MUTUAL TELEPHONE COMPANY BOARD

Gerald Stensrud, District I, Vice President
Dean Olson, District I
Michael Sorenson, District II
John Plathe, District II, Secretary
Scott Witnebel, District III, President
Troy Hoyles, District III
Jerome Kallhoff, District IV

FEDERATED TELEPHONE COOPERATIVE BOARD

Roger Gerdes, District 1, Vice President
Tim Danielson, District 2, Secretary
Lynn Swenson, District 3, President
Dan Smith, District 4
Nancy Taffe, District 5
Michael Schroeder, District 6
Marcia Greiner, District 7

Produced for Acira by:

WORDSOUTH

A CONTENT MARKETING COMPANY

On the Cover:



Ward Voorhees has inspired Stevens County residents to create traditional barn quilts, and he organized a showcase for them. See story Page 12.



Don't forget that all Farmers Mutual and Federated Telephone offices will follow summertime hours from June 3 to Aug. 30.

MONDAY-THURSDAY
7:30 a.m.-5 p.m.

FRIDAYS
8 a.m.-noon



JOB WELL DONE!

Please help us congratulate Shaun Ripley. An information technology technician, he is celebrating 20 years of dedicated service.

DEDICATED TO SERVING OUR COMMUNITY

We are proud to celebrate these board member milestones.

Farmers Mutual board
members celebrating

5

years of service

**TROY HOYLES
JEROME KALLHOFF
JOHN PLATHE
MICHAEL SORENSON**

Federated Telephone board
member celebrating

15

years of service

TIM DANIELSON

Have a
happy
holiday!

Farmers Mutual
and Federated
Telephone
offices will close
on July 4 for
Independence
Day.

BEAT The HEAT

Slip and slide through summer

BY ANNE BRALY

The start of summer means travelers will flock to beaches and lakefronts in droves. When it comes to enjoying the purity of a dip in the water, there's no better way to do it than by taking the plunge into a Minnesota water park that sparkles with fun. So grab a towel — don't forget the kids — and slip-slide your way to a day of excitement.

Great Wolf Lodge has reopened after an extensive, 10-month renovation and caters to all ages. It offers a water park, hotel suites and multiple dining options all under one roof in Bloomington, Minnesota. The indoor water park is open year-round but is particularly nice in the summer when you want to stay out of the sun but have the water, too.

Kids and parents will have a howling good time on the Wolf Rider Wipeout, a bodyboard simulator. Visitors can tube four stories down Alberta Falls and slide their way down Totem Towers. The Cub Paw Pool was specially designed for toddlers and features a zero-depth-entry pool, kiddie slides, rainbow-colored watercraft, water cannons, a fountain and spray features — perfect for Great Wolf's smallest cubs.

But the lodge really sets itself apart

from other water parks with dining experiences that appeal to every age and palate.

"This ensures our guests will never be more than a few feet away from a delicious meal, snack or treat," says Angela Reed, general manager at Great Wolf. After a full day of watery fun, chow down on a mouthwatering burger or fresh sandwich. Visit a buffet-style restaurant or share a pizza.


Guests typically arrive at the resort from towns within a three- to four-hour drive, spending the night at Great Wolf Lodge and making it a family vacation, Reed says. Rooms range from standard to suites designed to continue the wolf theme, complete with bunk beds and character theming. Every overnight reservation comes with a wide array of complimentary kids activities ranging from interactive learning to craft projects and nightly dance parties.

Families can enjoy the fountains and tubing options at Great Wolf Lodge in Bloomington, Minnesota.



Photos courtesy of the Great Wolf Lodge.

Family fun is at the core of all offerings, but after an active day, put the kids to bed early and take advantage of the water park's Wine Down Service that includes a bottle of wine and a sweet or savory snack to go with it, like dark chocolate-covered strawberries or a cured meats platter.

Admission to the indoor water park is included as part of each overnight stay and is exclusive to resort guests, limiting lines. For more information, log on to www.greatwolf.com. 



BUNKER BEACH WATER PARK

Coon Rapids, Minnesota

Online: bunkerbeach.com

Bunker Beach is Minnesota's largest water park and boasts a dozen water features to keep you entertained all day.

A wave pool that brings the ocean to Minnesota is a welcome dip after a cold winter. Splash Cove has six waterslides that offer twists and turns on your way to the water. Use your body, or sit on an innertube and then slide on in. Have more fun by keeping your balance crossing the water of the Plunge Pool, which is aptly named as you're just as likely to take a plunge as you try to hop from lily pad to lily pad without falling.

There are climbing walls in the water as well as basketball goals. And if you just want to relax, grab a tube and go around the Lazy Loop, a 900-foot, slow-moving river that circles the Big Island. Up for a game of beach volleyball? Land-based sports are offered, too. And when you get hungry, there are two concession stands selling hot dogs, pizza, ice cream and drinks. If you bring your own food, picnic facilities are nearby. You'll need to get a hand stamp for readmission into the water park.

In the heat of the day, there's lots going on, so the park allows parents with pre-K-aged children to come in an hour before the facility opens to avoid the crowds.

General admission: \$11-\$15 (discounts for seniors and small children)

NISSWA FAMILY FUN WATER PARK

Nisswa, Minnesota

Online: nisswaoutdoorwaterpark.com

What this water park lacks in size, it makes up for in family fun. There's a 480-foot body slide that twists and turns its way into a huge heated pool — just in case the Minnesota summer sun doesn't do the job. More thrills arrive as you slide down a 65-foot drop into the water. For those wanting a little less excitement, try the 12-foot family slide or relax in one of two hot tubs. The park provides lounge chairs, so don't forget the sunscreen. Umbrellas are available if you need some shade.

There's a barbecue/Mexican restaurant if you get hungry, or bring a picnic and spend the day.

General admission: \$11 (free for children under 2)



HASTINGS WATER PARK

Hastings, Minnesota

Online: www.hastingsmn.gov

Less than an hour's drive southeast of Minneapolis, the small town of Hastings offers big fun at the city's water park. There are a variety of different water features:

- The Lazy River is just that, so sit back and relax as a soft current moves you downriver.
- A wave pool offers just a little more excitement as waves come rolling in from a different angle every 30 minutes. You never know where the next one will come from.
- Slide down a chute and drop down into the water, or be daring and jump from the high dive at the diving/tube slide area.
- Try your luck at one of the oldest water activities of all: logrolling. Don a pair of resistance fins — they're like training wheels for the novice logroller — and try your luck. Newcomers are welcome.
- The watery playground includes a swivel water curtain, silly spray, jets and a pod mist portal.
- All that, plus a splash pad for the wee ones.

Admission: \$6-\$8 (free for children 4 and under)

CHANGING CHILDREN'S LIVES

RUSC Kinship mentors making a difference

BY JOHN CLAYTON

During his career as a Stevens County social worker, Louis Folkman did what he could as young people came into the system. They were sometimes neglected or abused. Almost always, they were in trouble.

"I worked in child protection for 17 years, and I've seen a lot of kids in bad situations," Folkman says. "I know that having a lot of supportive adults in a child's life really is beneficial, even if it's a supportive teacher — just someone who cares."

Two years ago, Folkman became one of those supportive adults when he joined the Raising Up Stevens County (RUSC) Kinship Mentoring program. Folkman is among around 20 volunteers who are currently paired with local children — or mentees — and spend at least one day each month with them in addition to participating in activities that Kinship leaders plan.

"This was something that some of our local schools have done, and we decided to implement the mentoring program as an overall community," says RUSC Kinship Director Erin Koehntop, who works with the organization's 10-person governing board. RUSC Kinship began in 2015 as a vehicle to support overly stressed human services agencies in the area. A commu-



nity needs assessment in partnership with the Center for Small Towns at the University of Minnesota-Morris sowed the seeds for the nonprofit mentoring program.

Koehntop, a former victim advocate, came on board as director in December 2017, helping to pair children and adolescents ages 5 to 17 with adults who volunteer their time as mentors and role models. Since the inception of the mentoring program, RUSC Kinship has expanded its scope to include a "Lunch Buddies" program as another way to connect with children in the community. Volunteers eat lunch at school with their second-grade lunch buddies and then spend around 20 minutes reading with them.

"We like to match kids with adults who have similar interests," Koehntop says of the mentoring program. "We've been able to survey the parents of our kids, and we've found through some of the responses that the kids have become more outgoing, have more self-confidence, and they're more willing to try new things."



The volunteers of RUSC Kinship host a monthly “Mentor & Mingles” gathering, with a golf outing at the Pomme de Terre Golf Course.

COMMON GROUND

Vicky Dosdall was among the first to join Kinship as a mentor. She had raised two sons but says she always wanted “somebody to do the girly things with.” Dosdall’s mentee enjoys those things, too. The pair scrapbooks together. They bake cookies and pretzels, filling Dosdall’s kitchen with mouthwatering aromas. Her mentee loves to dance, and Dosdall is there for most every performance.

“The biggest thing for the kids to know is that someone cares about them outside of their parents and their grandparents,” Dosdall says. “Things in our society are different now with parents. Everyone is so busy, and the youth need to have one-on-one time with someone.”

Dosdall is admittedly a bit old-fashioned. She stresses manners and decorum, which will later on become important social skills. “I think it’s important to know how to set a table — to know which side of the table the fork goes on. My sons know that, and we need to teach young people those skills. There are proper ways of doing things.”

Most of all, Dosdall says, she wants to “do things with my little gal that are fun.” And when they get together, the cell-phones are set to the side and the television is off unless the two are engrossed in a movie or special program together. So far, the mentoring program — to paraphrase a line from an old movie — has been “the beginning of a beautiful friendship” between Dosdall and her mentee.

“I’m hoping to continue to see her, and see her as she goes through elementary, junior high and senior high,” she says. “I hope the relationship she and I are building will be a lifetime relationship and we stay in touch with one another.”

BONUSES

Folkman began volunteering as a mentor in 2017. He’s into snowboarding, snow skiing and other outdoor activities like kayaking, and he found himself paired with a boy, now age 12. For Folkman, it’s sometimes a package deal. “He’s got a brother about the same age,” Folkman says. “So sometimes the two boys will come with me. If there’s an activity and both boys are available, they’ll both come along. It’s fine with the Kinship program, and they both enjoy it.”

Folkman says he and his mentee or mentees usually go out four or five times a month outside of scheduled Kinship activities like the Mentor Mingle held each month. “I didn’t want to be one of those folks who just came home in the evening, sat down and watched TV all night,” he says.

Folkman had seen too many boys like his mentee end up in the social services system, and he decided he would try to help at least one kid — or two — toward an easier path. He says a little support from the mentoring program has gone a long way with his mentee in particular.

“I’ve seen a lot of leadership grown in him since we started,” Folkman says. “He

went kayaking with one of the groups he belonged to last summer, and the director of the program came up to me and said he took a real leadership role with the younger kids. He explained how the paddle worked and took the lead in getting the boats to the lake. I’ve been very impressed with his leadership capabilities in that situation.”

Koehntop says Kinship is always looking for more volunteers to pair with mentees as well as for the Lunch Buddies program. The time given is as rewarding for the volunteers as it is for the children, she says. “We could certainly use more mentors, I know that,” says Folkman, who notes that one of the most important roles of mentors is to listen to their mentees.

The cycling, snowboarding, tennis and other activities are just the backdrop for the connection between mentor and mentee. “I took both the boys deer hunting last November,” Folkman says. “We didn’t shoot any deer, but we saw a mom and a couple of fawns. There was a beautiful sunrise that morning, and we got to see other animals running around out in the prairie. It was a great morning.” 🐾

RUSC Kinship

Learn more about RUSC Kinship Mentoring programs by visiting rusckinship.org.

There, one can:

- Download applications to become a mentor, refer a child, enroll a child or become a lunch buddy.
- Learn about upcoming events, including fundraisers and social events like the annual Garden Gala and Quarter Kraze.
- Find out how to donate to the nonprofit organization with links to GiveMN.

RUSC Kinship

215 Atlantic Ave.
Morris, Minnesota 56267
320-585-7872

Office hours:

Monday-Thursday
9 a.m.-noon and 1-4 p.m.

Visit online: rusckinship.org and facebook.com/RUSCKinshipMentoring





MAKING ART

and a living

How the internet helps creative people thrive

BY JEN CALHOUN

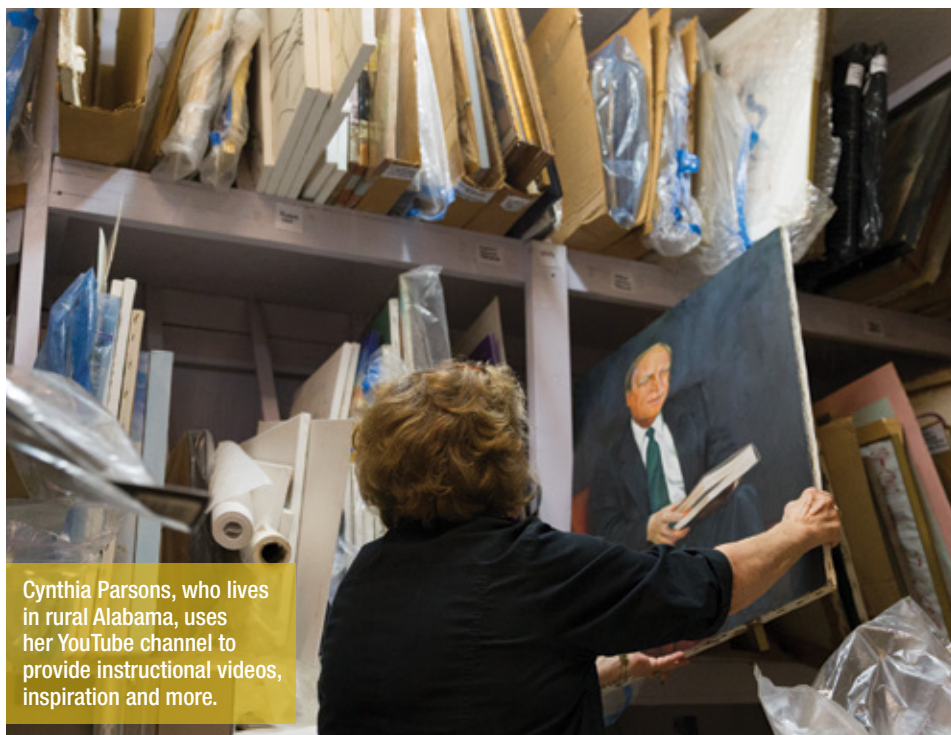
For centuries, artists gathered in big cities to share ideas, sell their art and connect with other creatives. But with greater access to faster internet, more and more creative people are choosing to live in rural areas where the cost of living is low and connectivity is just a click away.

Take John George Larson, for example. He, an accomplished sculptor and painter from rural Minnesota, chose to live with his family in a nearly century-old farmhouse about three hours east of Minneapolis. “Part of my process as a ceramic sculptor involves working with a kiln that uses wood as fuel,” Larson says. “These kilns are kind of dirty and large, and I can’t really do that in a residential area.”

INTERNET EQUALS OPPORTUNITY

Larson is one of a growing number of rural residents who use the internet to help fuel creative careers. From candlemakers to photographers to musicians, millions of people have found a way to share their talents and make a living online.

According to a recent article on the website The Motley Fool, Etsy, the online marketplace that offers artisans and



Cynthia Parsons, who lives in rural Alabama, uses her YouTube channel to provide instructional videos, inspiration and more.

crafters a place to sell their handmade items, continues to grow. Revenue in its fourth quarter of 2018 came in at \$200 million — an increase of more than \$63 million from the previous year’s fourth quarter. The company’s chief executive officer, Josh Silverman, expects more increases through 2019.

If it sounds unbelievable that artists are no longer mostly starving, think again, says Mark McGuinness, a poet, podcaster and creative coach. The internet has not only opened doors to creativity, but it’s also opened the doors for artists of all kinds. Period.



While sculptor and painter John George Larson lives a rural lifestyle outside Minneapolis, the internet connects him to other creatives.

"We are now living at a time of unprecedented opportunity for artists and creative professionals," McGuinness writes in a blog post on his website, wishfulthinking.com. "Once upon a time, if you wanted to get your work in front of an audience, you had to submit it to an editor, agent, manager, curator, talent scout, whoever. A gatekeeper who had the power to open the gate and usher you through, or slam it in your face."

The gateway shouldn't close anytime soon, either. According to the 2018 Global Digital report, more than 4 billion people around the world now use the internet, making the possibility of sharing ideas and selling creative goods greater than ever before. Today, musicians from Texas can share music or give lessons to someone in Tanzania. Folk artists in Alabama can sell paintings to a collector in Albania.

COUNTRY IS COOL AGAIN

For Larson, a rural area offers other benefits. His work requires some solitude, not to mention the natural clay found in the area where he lives. "I don't use that clay in all my work, but I try to incorporate it as much as possible," he says. "That's kind of a big reason why we chose to live in a rural area."

But Larson, who studied ceramics at Utah State University and under the tutelage of a sculptor in Japan, is far from being isolated from other artists or even art buyers. Thanks to a fast fiber optic internet connection provided by a rural broadband company, he learns new things and explores new ideas every day through online articles. He also connects with others and showcases his craft through his Instagram account, @johngeorgelarson, and his website, johngeorgelarson.com.

"When we moved here, we didn't realize this kind of high-speed internet was already offered at the house," Larson says. "I don't even think I realized how important it would be until after we started using it. Now, we use it every day, all the time. I use it for research for my own work or commission work that I do for other people and businesses. I read a lot of research

articles about different topics, and it helps me develop a project or a design."

While marketing his work used to tire him, Larson is finding ways to make art through apps. "I just started doing animation of my artwork on Instagram," he says. "One of the things I've been thinking of lately is motion and movement in my work. Some of my pieces are made to be viewed from a variety of different angles. So, if you place them on a shelf one way, they'll look different than if you place them another way. It's an allegory for our lives and human experience because we can experience life from different perspectives."

SPREADING THE WORD

Cynthia Parsons, an award-winning artist and painter who lives in a rural region of northern Alabama, says the internet has opened a whole world of connectivity and possibility.

On her YouTube channel, Open Art Studio of Cynthia Parsons, she offers videos of students working through challenges during class or clips of cotton fields at sunset so others can paint them. She might film a farmer harvesting his corn or make an instructional video about how to save old watercolor paint. She also records regular videos of her son, Elbert, as he recovers from an injury that nearly took his life years ago.

Parsons, who regularly sells her artwork and has taught classes everywhere from Birmingham, Alabama, to France, believes art is everywhere. "You can't look through your eyes and not see art or the potential of some kind of creation," she says. "It might be someone doing crafts and using popsicle sticks or carving a bar of soap. All those things are art, and all that creative energy we use when we do it resounds through the universe."

Parsons finds joy in moving her work and the work of others through time, space and physical boundaries. "For me, the internet is about sharing," she says. "That's what it's been able to do for me. It lets me share these moments of decision-making from my students. The videos of

my students are about one minute or two minutes or maybe three. When I show people what they're dealing with, it lets others see how they might solve any problems they might be having with their work." 📺

Get creative

Creative industries and people make jobs for Americans. Here are a few facts:

- The value of arts and cultural production in America in 2015 was \$763.6 billion, amounting to 4.2% of the gross domestic product. The arts contribute more to the national economy than do the construction, mining, utilities, insurance, and accommodation and food services industries.
- Artists are highly entrepreneurial. They are 3.5 times more likely than the total U.S. workforce to be self-employed.
- Arts and cultural goods and services drive industries primarily focused on producing copyrighted content, accounting for just over half of their combined \$1.17 billion value.
- 97% of U.S. employers say creativity is increasingly important to them. Of the employers looking to hire creatives, 85% say they are unable to find the applicants they seek.

Sources: National Endowment for the Arts, Artists and Arts Workers in the United States, 2011, The Conference Board, Ready to Innovate, 2008, National Endowment for the Arts, The Arts Contribute More Than \$760 Billion to the U.S. Economy, and U.S., Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, Value Added by Industry as a Percentage of Gross Domestic Product, 2017, U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, Data for 1998-2015, 2018



Barn Quilts

Decorating
Stevens County
countryside

BY JOHN CLAYTON

A drive through Stevens County has become more than a daytrip through the countryside.

The Stevens County Museum began an organized driving tour of the area's barn quilts in 2018, turning country roads into a winding artisan museum. The tour allows visitors and locals alike to take in examples of folk art that decorate county roads.

"It's evolved into something more than just a quilt being mounted on a barn," says Ward Voorhees, president of the Stevens County Historical Society and a volunteer at the county museum.

He says barn quilts got their start in the Appalachian Mountains as farmers started to make their barns stand out with the unique patterns of quilts on their beds. But the colorful designs hanging on the sides of barns, homes and occasional mailboxes are not actual sewn quilts. They are inspired by quilting patterns and painted onto wooden panels. The practice of mounting the patterns on barns and other buildings spread to the Midwest, and Minnesota now has seven official



Ward Voorhees has three barn quilts on his workshop. The panel with tulips, left, symbolizes his Dutch ancestry, a 3D blue panel reflects the volunteerism he and his wife pursue, and one with the many colors of the earth is a reminder of his career as a soil scientist.

barn quilt tours, including the driving tour of Stevens County.

"They're becoming tourist attractions," Voorhees says of the barn quilts. "Some places have a lot of them in a town, while other driving tours may be 50 to 60 miles. Some of them are spread out enough that you could take the whole day to see them.

"There's a website that lists every last barn quilt trail in the United States, and people plan their vacations around them. People travel to see certain things. Some go to museums. Some go to ballparks, and some people go to see barn quilts."

The term "barn quilt" can be a misnomer because not every barn quilt is on a

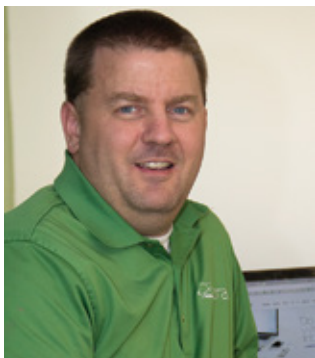
barn. Voorhees also sees them in all sizes. "The biggest one I've seen is 8 feet by 8 feet," he says. "I've also seen one 1 foot by 1 foot, hanging from a mailbox."

Voorhees contracted with a local artist to create his barn quilt, which honors his three brothers' World War II service. The American flag inspired the quilt's design, but the idea came out of Voorhees' love for his brothers, Leonard, Norman and Max. Max died after serving in Germany near the end of the war. "All three of them served. One of them made the ultimate sacrifice and didn't come home, and that's the main reason behind it," Voorhees says.

That's one story, but it isn't the only one attached to a barn quilt on the Stevens County trail. "Just about every one of them has a story about why people chose their designs," Voorhees says.

He says some residents who display their barn quilts are happy to share those stories, but the displays are on private property, so visitors are asked to be respectful. The tour in Stevens County could grow from 22 barn quilts to more than 40 by the end of summer. "There's no maximum. The more the better," says Voorhees. "The bigger the attraction becomes, the more it benefits the economics of the county." 📍





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



The website Wirecutter spent more than 100 hours testing surge protectors to come up with its recommendations. Their top pick is the Tripp Lite 12-Outlet Surge Protector, which features plenty of outlets, coaxial and telephone connectors, an 8-foot cord, a right-angled flat plug that doesn't jut out from the wall, and the important auto-shutoff feature. Price: \$37 on Amazon.

POWER ON

Guarding against a surge

All big-ticket pieces of electronic equipment are at the mercy of power spikes: your desktop computer, your big-screen TV, your audio system and more. Fortunately, surge protectors offer relatively low-cost solutions that can help keep your gear and your data safe.

POWER STRIPS

The most basic models of power strips offer little surge protection. So, consider them as nothing more than multi-outlet extension cords. While often equipped with a circuit breaker, they aren't very effective in shielding your gadgets from harm. A true surge protector comes with a rating, typically measured in joules, that shows how much energy it can absorb before failing. Generally, a strip with a higher joule rating will offer greater protection.

SURGE PROTECTOR

Surge protectors come in many shapes and sizes, ranging from a large block with more than a dozen connectors to a single-outlet travel version. Consider a joule rating of 2,000 and above for your expensive or delicate equipment. Any wire that goes into your devices can produce a power surge, so a good surge protector for your home office will also include connections for a phone line or network cables. For your cable system or TV, some surge protectors also come with a coaxial cable connection.

Surge protectors work by absorbing excess voltage, so protection will degrade over time, depending on how much voltage has been absorbed. Once that protection is gone, it's



gone. While some devices have lights that indicate they are no longer working as intended, they are impossible to see when they're behind the furniture. So, make sure you choose a surge protector with an auto-shutoff feature. Once it is unable to provide protection, the surge protector will stop providing power.

UNINTERRUPTIBLE POWER SUPPLY

Commonly known as a UPS, uninterruptible power supplies offer surge protection and keep your equipment working when the power goes out. A blackout won't damage your devices, but if a sudden power outage occurs while you're saving a computer file, it can lead to data corruption and render the file inaccessible. A UPS can buy enough time to save files and shut down equipment properly.

A UPS, however, cannot take the place of a generator for long-term use during an outage. It's still a battery, and its cost is typically tied to its capacity for providing power. If you only need enough time to save your work or power your internet for an hour, there are options starting under \$100 that can do the job.

Whatever you choose, a surge protector is a wise investment that more than pays for itself. ☑

Mad for grilling

From Twinkies to brats, it all goes on the grill

Cousins Mark Mathewson and Gary Merrill, better known as Mad Dog & Merrill Midwest Grill'n Buddies, have been grilling since the late 1970s. In that time, they've traveled millions of miles across the United States and hosted a popular TV show, demonstrating a rather unconventional style of grilling and gaining the support of hundreds of thousands of fans. They draw you into the backyard experience with their tales of the grill, while also encouraging creativity. Thinking outside the box is what it's all about.

"We want to make people better grillers and make sure that people pass traditions on," says Mathewson, "Mad Dog," from his home in New London, Wisconsin, the town where he was born and raised. Earlier this year, he and Merrill were readying for another road trip, this time to Duluth, Minnesota. But it never gets old — and neither do their shows.

"It's our occupation," Mathewson says. The partners have a line of barbecue rubs and other products. Their weekly television show, "Mad Dog & Merrill Midwest Grill'n," airs in more than 50 markets throughout the U.S., and they are on the road several days a week throughout the year promoting their love of grilling in front of live audiences.

Mathewson says he took to the grill around the age of 16 after tailgating parties sparked his interest. "Merrill started grilling early on because he's liked to eat ever since he was born," he says.

There's really nothing they won't try to grill — they believe most everything edible can be cooked on a grill. And that includes Twinkies. "I like to grill Twinkies and then put them on a platter topped with red cherry pie filling and some blueberries.



Mark "Mad Dog" Mathewson, left, and Gary Merrill are Mad Dog & Merrill Midwest Grill'n Buddies.

Photo courtesy Mad Dog & Merrill Midwest Grill'n Buddies.

Then I top that with whipped cream," Mathewson says. "It's an All-American red, white and blue dessert."

GAS VS. CHARCOAL

Mathewson likes to cook with gas, while Merrill's a charcoal man. "I like to cook fast, and he likes to cook slow," Mathewson says. Whatever your grilling medium, Mathewson says the No. 1 thing you need to guard against is overcooking the meat, particularly leaner cuts that, when overcooked, come out dry, tough and tasteless.

"Keep an eye on the meat, and use an instant-read meat thermometer," he says. "Also, sprinkle meat with a little oil before putting it on the grill." This, he says, will help with moisture and keep the meat from sticking.

HERE ARE SOME IDEAS FOR PORK:

- **Cedar plank, bacon-wrapped pork tenderloin:** Soak a cedar plank in water for eight hours for a cool, smoky flavor. Lightly oil and season a pork tenderloin.

Wrap it with bacon, and secure it with toothpicks. Preheat grill to medium-high and place soaked cedar plank over direct heat and place bacon-wrapped loin atop. Grill over direct heat for 30 minutes or to 145-150 F. Let rest for a few minutes, then slice and serve.

- **Cedar plank, stuffed pork chops:** Soak a cedar plank in water for eight hours for a cool, smoky flavor. Mix dried bread cubes, some diced onion, diced celery, a touch of sage and a bit of celery salt to taste. Moisten with chicken broth and



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

stuff into nice, thick chops that have been cut partially through to allow stuffing. Preheat grill to medium. Place soaked cedar plank over direct heat and top with stuffed chops. Cook for 30 minutes or to 145-150 F.

- **Dry-rub pork tenderloin:** Mix your favorite dry-rub seasoning together. Lightly oil a large pork tenderloin, rub with seasoning mixture and grill over direct heat 4 to 5 minutes, turning to brown meat, move to indirect heat, till desired doneness, at least 145 F.

YOU SAY TO-MA-TO, I SAY TO-MAH-TO

In the Midwest, you say “grilling,” and in the South, they say “barbecuing.” The method is the same, however you say it, but what you throw on the grill differs from region to region. In Texas, it’s beef, primarily brisket. In the South, you see a lot of pork, mostly ribs and butts. But in the Midwest, it’s all about the brats, Mathewson says.

“Walk into any butcher shop, and you’ll find 40-plus flavors of brats,” he says. “There’s mushroom-Swiss brats, pineapple-habanero brats, Cajun brats, spinach-and-cheddar brats and even ones that are fajita-flavored.”

Mathewson is a purist, however: “I like mine plain.”

Here are some of the duo’s favorite recipes from “The Best of Mad Dog & Merrill Midwest Grill’n Recipe Book.” 📖



TURN AROUND, I'M DRESSING ITALIAN CHICKEN BREASTS

- 1/4 cup Mad Dog & Merrill Certified Organic Sunflower Oil (or your favorite brand)
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon basil
- 1/2 cup white wine
- 4 garlic cloves, crushed
- 4 skinless chicken breasts

Mix sunflower oil, lemon juice, basil, wine and garlic cloves. Marinate chicken in a plastic bag with marinade mixture for 1 hour in the refrigerator. Sear chicken 1 minute on each side with the grill hood open. Close hood and grill chicken on medium heat 4 to 5 minutes on each side or until juices run clear. If you'd like, baste chicken with your favorite barbecue sauce during the last 2 minutes of grilling.

GRILLED TWINKIES

- 8 Twinkies
- 1 can of your favorite fruit pie filling
- Whipped cream

There is nothing like a grilled Twinkie. Set your grill on a low direct heat. Grill the Twinkie for about 1 minute, turning it every 15 seconds, until lightly browned. Place Twinkie on plate, and top with pie filling and whipped cream.

MIDWESTERN BRATS

- 1/4 cup melted butter
- 1 (27-ounce) can sauerkraut
- 1 green pepper, chopped
- 15-20 brats
- 2 onions, chopped
- 2 cans of beer

Mix together butter, sauerkraut and green pepper; set aside. Brown brats on grill over direct heat. Place brats in aluminum drip pan and add butter mixture, onions

and beer. Simmer over indirect heat for 45 minutes to one hour or until peppers and onions are tender.

PIG CANDY

- 1 pound thick sliced bacon
- 1/2 cup brown sugar

Coat bacon with brown sugar and grill using indirect heat for 20 minutes.

Time to address **THE MESS?**



Streamline with the **Happy Home bundle**
— complete with Integrated Wi-Fi

Get a 100 Mbps internet package
and Home Integrated Wi-Fi,
including router, for only **\$79.95**
monthly.*



Bonus: A local phone line is
included. A Wi-Fi extender is just
\$6.95 monthly. Each additional
extender is only **\$4.95 monthly.**

Call us today at **585-4875 or 568-2105**
to schedule your Happy Home install.

*Taxes and governmental surcharges apply.