

MAY/JUNE 2019

CONNECTION

A WRITER'S LIFE

Columnist and author
content in second career

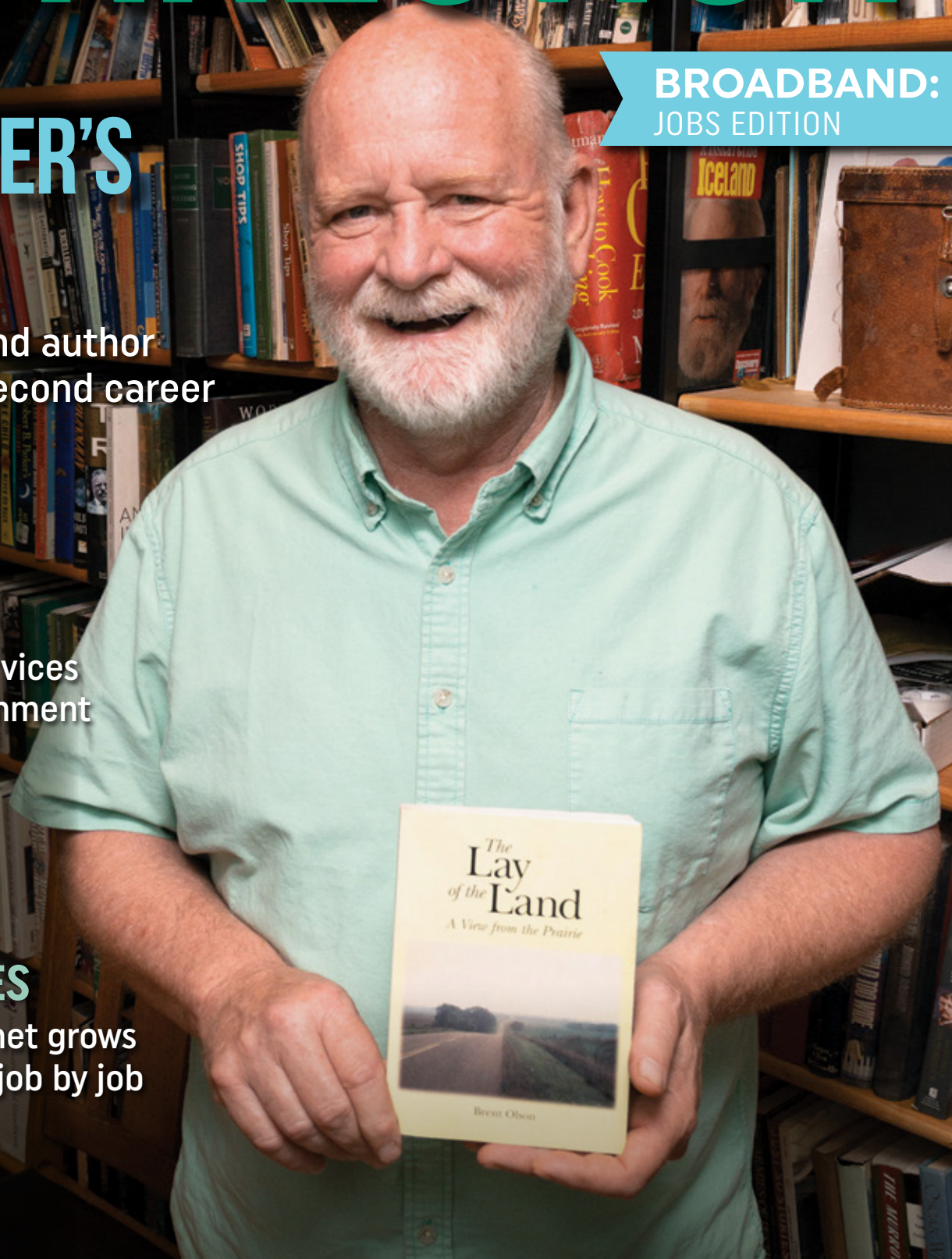
BROADBAND:
JOBS EDITION

CUTTING THE CORD

Streaming services
offer entertainment
options

BUILDING BUSINESSES

A faster internet grows
the economy job by job





BY SHIRLEY BLOOMFIELD, CEO
NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association

Broadband drives rural and urban jobs

With this issue's focus on the impact of broadband on jobs, I was reminded of a report our Foundation for Rural Service and the Hudson Institute released three years ago. Entitled "The Economic Impact of Rural Broadband," this report estimated the direct and indirect economic effects of the rural broadband industry on gross domestic product.

The report showed that rural broadband companies like yours contributed \$24.1 billion to the economies of the states in which they operated. Even more interesting is the fact that \$17.2 billion of that total was through their own operations. The rest, \$6.9 billion, was through the follow-on impact of their operations. Those are impressive numbers under any financial index.

Sixty-six percent, or \$16 billion, of that total economic impact actually flows to urban areas. That means the U.S. jobs market needs rural broadband to remain strong and healthy.

The impact of rural broadband goes far beyond the service areas of rural telcos. The study showed that the rural broadband industry supported 69,600 jobs in 2015 — and I'm sure those numbers are even higher today. These jobs not only come from broadband providers themselves, but also from companies that supply goods and services to the industry. And more than half of those jobs, 54 percent in fact, are actually in urban America.

The truth is in the numbers. Rural broadband creates jobs and helps drive our economy — in rural and urban America alike. ☎

Fighting robocalls

BY STEPHEN V. SMITH



TRACED Act would help stop unwanted, illegal calls

Your phone rings. Even though you're in the middle of dinner, you answer because the Caller ID information shows the call is coming from a local number. Maybe it's someone you know.

"Congratulations!" the recorded voice exclaims. "You have been selected to receive a free cruise."

You just answered one of the estimated 130 million automated calls placed every day.

While there are legitimate uses of autodialing, illegal robocalls have become a plague that impacts everyone with a phone. Lawmakers have worked on the issue for almost three decades. Yet despite laws and fines designed to stop the practice, criminals — armed with ever-advancing software and technology — continue to find ways to flood our nation's phone network with unwanted calls.

Earlier this year, Sen. John Thune, R-S.D., and Sen. Ed Markey, D-Mass., introduced the TRACED Act, short for Telephone Robocall Abuse Criminal Enforcement and Deterrence Act. It gives the FCC and other agencies more power in enforcing existing laws governing robocalls.

"Unwanted robocalls that utilize spoofed phone numbers or falsify information are a problem in urban

and rural America alike," says Shirley Bloomfield, CEO of NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association. She says the TRACED Act "seeks to tackle this problem while also recognizing the transitions necessary to implement new technologies and network connections that will help achieve this goal."

In March, the attorneys general of all 50 states, plus four territories, signed a letter in unanimous support of the TRACED Act, sending it to the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee. A group of 10 U.S. senators representing several states and both political parties later issued a press release pledging their support for the bill as co-sponsors.

"With bipartisan support growing, the time to pass legislation to stop the scourge of robocalls has come," said senators Markey and Thune in that press release. "The groundswell of support for our TRACED Act — from state and territory attorneys general, to FCC and FTC commissioners, to leading consumer groups, to major industry stakeholders — shows just how much the American people want Congress to act to stop harassing robocalls."

As of press time, the bill remained in committee. Before becoming law, it would require support by both houses of Congress and the president. ☎



**HEY
TELEMARKETERS:**

DO NOT CALL!

The Federal Trade Commission and the Federal Communications Commission established a National Do Not Call Registry. Joining this registry can drastically reduce the number of telemarketing calls you receive.

JUST THE FACTS ABOUT DO NOT CALL:

- Once you've registered, telemarketers have 31 days to stop calling your number.
- Register as many as three nonbusiness telephone numbers. You can also register cellphone numbers — there is not a separate registry for cellphones.
- Your number will remain on the list permanently unless you disconnect the number or you choose to remove it.
- Some businesses are exempt from the Do Not Call Registry and may still be able to call your number. These include political organizations, charities, tele-

phone surveyors and businesses with whom you have an existing relationship.

Strict Federal Trade Commission rules make it illegal for telemarketers to do any of the following, regardless of whether or not your number is listed on the National Do Not Call Registry:

- Call before 8 a.m.
- Call after 9 p.m.
- Misrepresent what is being offered
- Threaten, intimidate or harass you
- Call again after you've asked them not to



IT'S EASY!

Add your number to the
Do Not Call Registry

Register online at
www.donotcall.gov
or call 888-382-1222.
For TTY, call 866-290-4236.

You must call from the telephone
number you wish to register.

**ATTENTION LOCAL
BUSINESS OWNERS:**


**MAKE SURE YOU FOLLOW
THE DO NOT CALL RULES**

No matter if you're a one-person shop or a beloved company, local business owners should remember that National Do Not Call Registry rules and regulations apply to you. After all, you don't want to upset a loyal customer, or frustrate potential new customers, with unwanted phone calls.

If you are a company, individual or organization that places telemarketing calls, it is very important that you familiarize yourself with the operations of the National Do Not Call Registry. Unless you fall under one of the established exceptions, such as telemarketing by charitable organizations or for prior business relationships, you may not make telemarketing calls to numbers included in the National Do Not Call Registry.

For information regarding National Do Not Call regulations, visit the National Do Not Call Registry at www.telemarketing.donotcall.gov. You can find the Federal Communications Commission and Federal Trade Commission rules governing telemarketing and telephone solicitation at 47 C.F.R. § 64.1200 and 16 C.F.R. Part 310, respectively.

OFFICIAL NOTIFICATION:

The Do Not Call initiative, regulated by the Federal Trade Commission and the Federal Communications Commission, requires telephone service providers to notify customers of the National Do Not Call rules and regulations. 

Broadband builds business

At Acira, our daily business is providing reliable service for our customers — but in the big picture, we're also in the jobs business.



KEVIN BEYER
Chief Executive Officer

Our broadband network is foundational to our area's economic well-being and crucial to keeping and growing job opportunities locally. We all want fulfilling and meaningful jobs that provide for ourselves and our families, and broadband is becoming critical to making them possible.

Reliable, high-speed internet access allows our region to remain competitive and viable in four major economic areas.

INDUSTRY

Whether it's an agricultural operation, an industrial plant or a hospital, businesses rely on broadband to order materials, coordinate logistics, manage supply chains and communicate with other facilities. When a manufacturer or other big business considers a

rural area like ours for a new facility, they are always concerned about broadband access. I've seen more than a few companies surprised by the quality of connections we provide.

I'm happy to say that Farmers Mutual and Federated Telephone can provide fiber optics to our area's main industrial parks. We frequently work with local officials to recruit new businesses and to help existing businesses expand.

SMALL BUSINESSES

It's no stretch to say small businesses are the backbone of our community. Whether it's providing Wi-Fi for their customers, giving access to online marketplaces or just ordering supplies online, those same small businesses benefit from our broadband and our phone network. In an age where it's easier than ever for small businesses in our community to reach a national or worldwide audience, Acira is proud to support them as they grow.

TELECOMMUTERS

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, nearly a quarter of Americans do at least some of their work from home. Rural areas like ours are increasingly attractive to telecommuters who may not want the expense and stress of living in cities. While it's easier to overlook the impact of telecommuters compared to a manufacturing plant spread over several acres, these remote workers play a role in our area's economy. These talented folks are able to have the best of both worlds, with good-paying jobs from top companies while living a rural lifestyle. Most of these jobs are only possible because of the broadband and phone networks we provide.

ENTREPRENEURS

Many of the brave souls who chase the dream of starting their own business used to face steep disadvantages by launching their startups in rural areas. Entrepreneurs would frequently have to move to cities to find customers, workers or the communications infrastructure to help them launch and grow their businesses. Now, with our broadband, they can engage remote workers, network with other entrepreneurs and reach distant markets like never before.

Those four groups of employees and employers make up a significant portion of our local economy. They do great work producing quality products and services for their customers throughout the ups and downs that any business or economy will have. But as they move forward, I'm happy that they can be confident in having a reliable, supportive communications partner growing right along with them. ☎

CONNECTION

MAY/JUNE 2019

VOL. 3, NO. 3

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:



Brent Olsen writes columns and has penned several books, including a recent mystery novel, from his home in Big Stone County.
See story Page 12.



DISTRICT ELECTIONS

The following board seats are up for election:

<p>Farmers Mutual Districts</p> <p>District I — Gerald Stensrud</p> <p>District III — Scott Wittnebel</p>	<p>Federated Districts</p> <p>District 2 — Tim Danielson</p> <p>District 3 — Lynn Swenson</p> <p>District 6 — Michael Schroeder</p>
--	--

If you are interested in being a board member, please see your cooperative bylaws for information about the qualification process.

Annual meeting process for Farmers Mutual & Federated Telephone

MAIL BALLOTS/MEETING NOTIFICATION

Your 2019 annual meeting notification will include the following:

- Annual meeting notice.
- Absentee ballot, if applicable — In the event there is only one candidate for election to a Director position, no election is required. The single candidate shall be deemed elected by acclamation as an unopposed candidate.
- Candidate profiles, if applicable — A profile of the candidates vying for election in each district.
- June 4 - Farmers Mutual Telephone Company annual meeting.
- June 6 - Federated Telephone Cooperative annual meeting.

Your FMTC or FTC membership allows you to vote for each district or bylaw amendment on your cooperative's ballot.

MEMBER REGISTRATION CARD AND DOOR PRIZE ENTRYW

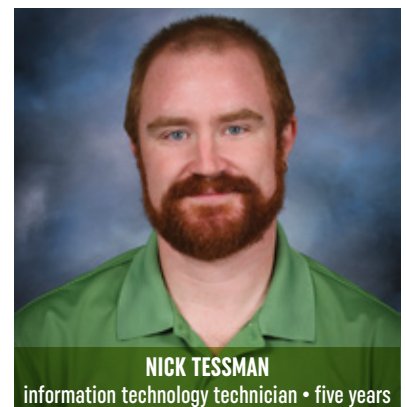
Each member will receive a member registration card in the mail prior to the annual meeting. Please sign the card and bring it with you to the meeting. Registration will be divided into separate registration desks based on members' names. Bring your signed card to the appropriate registration desk. Your signed registration card complies with FCC privacy laws and qualifies you for meeting registration, a capital credit refund check if available, a ballot, if applicable, and door prize drawings. Registration will be open from 4:30-6:30 p.m. only!

SECRECY ENVELOPE

If an election is required, you will receive a ballot and a "secrecy envelope" for absentee voting. Once you have completed your mail ballot, insert the entire ballot into the secrecy envelope. Place your sealed secrecy envelope in the mailing envelope. Sign the mailing envelope, affix postage to the mailing envelope and mail. Do not include any payments or other documents in this envelope.

JOB WELL DONE!

Help us congratulate these dedicated employees who have reached career milestones.





Old campers are given new life and turned into “glampers” at the Wunderbar Eatery & Glampground.

Go glamping!

Enjoy camping with all the comforts

BY ANNE BRALY

Let's face it: Camping is not for everyone. The thought of hiking into the outback with a heavy pack — only to spend the night in the open on the cold hard ground or in an old, cramped tent — may not be your idea of a relaxing vacation.

On the other hand, glamping, or glamorous camping, gives you the best of both worlds. It allows you to experience the great outdoors while sleeping on a comfortable bed with luxury linens and other amenities at your fingertips.

The Wunderbar Eatery & Glampground, a resort on the shores of Lake Superior in Grand Marais, Minnesota, is a wonderland of fun for all ages. Teri and Chris Downing opened the Wunderbar restaurant in August 2016 and added glamping two months later. “My husband has an affinity for repurposing old campers, so it just came naturally,” Teri Downing says. “People absolutely love it.”



The town of Grand Marais has several other interesting sites, such as the Grand Marais Maritime Museum. In a salute to the lightkeepers of the Great Lakes, guides will describe the area's history and more. The town is also the gateway to several good parks, including Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore, which demands a visit to the bottom of Sable Falls where you can pick up a trail to Lake Superior.

Glamping at Wunderbar is a fun experience. In addition to five vintage campers, there are two large tents. At check-in, glampers receive a basket filled with goodies, including coupons to local businesses, snacks, passes to the local YMCA and a bottle of champagne to toast your getaway.

And don't worry about cooking. You're on vacation, after all. The Wunderbar restaurant is just a stone's throw from the glampground. The restaurant has everything you need to satisfy your hunger throughout the day, starting with your morning coffee and some mouthwatering, irresistible doughnuts at sunrise. For those who do wish to cook, refrigerators and coolers are in the campers and tents. Grills are outside.

There's always something going on to keep you busy, with live music most weekends, fish fries some Friday nights and a popular brunch with a Bloody Mary bar on Saturdays and Sundays.

For a complete list of activities, reservations for glamping and more information, visit wunderbarmn.com. 📱



Lotus Belle is one of two glamping tents available at the Wunderbar resort.

More glamping getaways

RIVERSIDE RESORT

464 Ernie's Road, Ely, Minn.

Online: www.elyriverside.com

This retreat is perfect for couples wanting a weekend alone or families looking for a fun way to entertain the kids. It offers an island all to yourselves, complete with a large-walled, 12-by-20-foot tent for glamping. The tent has a separate cooking space and screened area equipped with table, cookstove and all the cooking and eating utensils you'll need.

The bedroom comes with either a twin- or king-sized bed with cozy linens. Outside, there's a fire pit where you can roast marshmallows and make s'mores, or just sit back with a glass of wine and enjoy the peace and quiet, along with breathtaking sunsets over White Iron Lake.

Cabins are also available for rent. And a Finnish-style, cedar sauna offers a warm way to relax at this remote island camp.

Kids will enjoy frisbee golf, the water slide and a splash mat. Explore the island or rent a fishing boat and wet a line. Riverside also offers the opportunity to experience the Boundary Waters Canoe Area through convenient daytrips or overnight excursions.

EDENWOOD RANCH AND PRESERVE

W5734 Chicago Ave., Wautoma, Wis.

Online: www.edenwoodranch.com

Rustic luxury awaits you in this piece of paradise on 500 acres in Central Wisconsin. Overnight guests can choose from rooms in one of two lodges, a separate cabin suite or the newest sleeping quarters: a huge glamping tent. You'll find a plush king-sized bed, kitchen, bathroom, heaters, fans, Wi-Fi, electrical outlets and a Keurig coffee maker.

This is a hunting preserve, so you can hunt your nightly dinner or fish it out of a private lake. Then, your private chef will prepare a meal and deliver it wherever you wish to dine. If you want your chef to do the "hunting," he will prepare anything you're hungry for.

If hunting isn't your thing, hop on a horse, a UTV or a mountain bike and explore. Summer activities also include swimming, kayaking and canoeing.

The preserve is an all-inclusive experience.

KICKAPOO STUMP DODGER CAMPGROUND

388 Railroad St., Gays Mills, Wis.

Online: www.ksdcampground.com

Relax with the comforts of home but in the natural splendor of the Kickapoo River Valley. Each tent is large with a full-sized bed complete with linens. Amenities include a refrigerator, coffee maker, microwave and private patio with table and chairs.

The owners of Kickapoo Stump Dodger Campground don't expect you to do a thing but relax and enjoy the nature around you while they do all the work. Just let them know in advance, and they'll get things set up for you to enjoy your glamping experience. Concerts are scheduled throughout the summer. In May there's an antique tractor pull, and early July brings the annual Stump Dodger Bash Country Music Festival. Daytime activities at the campground include boating and swimming.



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



If you're ready to take the plunge into a mesh network, try the **Calix 804 Mesh Extender**. It compliments the Calix Gigacenter providing a consistently fast signal. It also automatically uses the least-congested channel and the fastest band for your devices. Its cloud-based security keeps itself updated, and you can control who uses your network, as well as when the kids can or cannot access the Internet. It is available for \$6.95 per month or customers can purchase for \$109.95.

Is your Wi-Fi slowing you down?

A minor adjustment could be the answer

Has this ever happened to you? You're on the couch ready to enjoy your new ultra-high-definition television, or by your computer set to download a large file, or you're simply on the porch trying to read on your tablet and ... it's ... all ... so ... slow. You have fast internet service, so what gives? In many cases, it comes down to your router and how well the Wi-Fi signal is reaching your wireless devices.

If you're running into this problem, or just want a little extra speed out of your connection, here are a few tips that can help.

THE RIGHT SPOT: Location, location, location is not only the No. 1 rule in real estate, but it's also first when it comes to getting the most out of your router. Ideally, a router should be close to all your internet-connected devices because the signal strength diminishes as distance increases. Also, obstacles such as walls or even doors can cause interference. The router should be positioned near the center of the house and as high as possible since radio waves travel best downward and laterally. Depending on the layout of your home or where your data connection is physically coming into

the house, an ideal router location may not be practical. But even small changes can help, such as putting the router on a high shelf or moving it from behind the TV or out of a cabinet. Also, try to keep your router away from common sources of interference, such as computer wires, wireless phones, microwaves, power cords and baby monitors.

FIDDLE WITH IT: If your router has antennas, they are not for show. Move them around and see if they affect the signal strength. If the router doesn't have an external antenna, then it is inside. If that's the case, try rotating the router to find the best signal. Another trick is the old computer standby of rebooting, which also works for routers.

USE A RANGE EXTENDER: If no flipping, moving or fiddling improves the connection, you may need to rent or buy a range extender or create a "mesh network." Plug an extender into an outlet between your router and the area you need to reach. For a larger home or property, a mesh network may work best. While an extender simply rebroadcasts the signal it receives from your router, a mesh network's devices communicate with each other and act as individual wireless routers to provide better coverage. Contact our office about renting or purchasing a mesh extender at 320-568-2105 or 320-324-7111. ☎



CUTTING CORD IS NOT JUST FOR 'COOL KIDS'

STREAMING NUMBERS CONTINUE TO INCREASE

BY JOHN CLAYTON

Cutting the cable cord isn't just for the "cool kids" anymore. Or maybe just more and more people are becoming the "cool kids."

According to a January report from Nielsen, the company most famous for determining ratings for television programming, the number of homes across the U.S. that have cut the cord on their cable subscriptions has grown by 48 percent over the past eight years.

Nielsen says 14 percent, which translates to about 16 million homes across the country, have cut the cord, opting for a variety of internet streaming services and over-the-air television. The cord-cutting trend may have started with millennials looking for increased mobility and a la carte entertainment options, but since then, a variety of streaming options and devices have joined the market. Those options give consumers more variety for their entertainment along with more price-point options.

According to Nielsen, as of May 2018, about 6.6 million U.S. homes have chosen free over-the-air television with no streaming services. Another 9.8 million homes in the U.S. have at least one streaming service, which depends on high-speed internet, such as the services provided by Farmers Mutual and Federated Telephone. Tools like Roku and Amazon Fire TV are among those helping people cut the cord and access online streaming services for live TV and other entertainment like stalwarts Netflix and Amazon Prime.

The land of live TV streaming services has become more crowded as additional people have cut the cord. Prices range from \$15-\$50 per month, which is significantly less than typical cable or satellite bills.

HERE IS A LOOK AT SOME STREAMING SERVICES FOR LIVE TV



PLAYSTATION VUE

Playstation Vue can be accessed using Roku, Amazon Firesticks, and more — no Playstation is required! The service starts at \$45, with premium channels available at an additional cost.



DIRECT TV NOW

As DirecTV's attempt to keep cord cutters in the fold, DirecTV Now packages start at \$50. But they can incrementally increase for additional channels.



YOUTUBE TV

YouTube parent company Google more recently entered the livestreaming crowd with YouTube TV. The service offers a solid channel lineup including top sports channels like the Big Ten Network, ESPN and FSN in addition to local channels in most areas. It comes in at about \$50 per month. One disadvantage is that YouTube TV does not currently work with Amazon Fire TVs.



SLINGTV

SlingTV, one of the first live TV streaming services, offers packages that cater somewhat to customers' tastes. Sling Orange and Sling Blue have some common channels, but only Blue offers sports channels, such as ESPN and the NFL Network. Getting both Orange and Blue costs about \$45 per month.

Other choices include Hulu Live along with relatively new entrants like Philo, Fubo TV and AT&T Watch. Philo and AT&T Watch are mainly for the budget-conscious. AT&T Watch costs \$15 per month and comes with a limited lineup. Philo includes basic cable options and is \$16 per month.

Fubo TV is geared toward sports fans, offering a bevy of regional sports networks, which means a lot of professional baseball, basketball and hockey games are on the menu. This streaming service starts at \$45 per month.

If you are unsure which option is best for you, supposetv.com is a great resource for making comparisons. 🗨️



Bringing Economic

HOPE

Broadband networks recharge rural communities

BY JEN CALHOUN

When Bud Layne engineered a new design for conveyor belts back in 1989, the internet was hardly a thought in most people's minds. Relatively few had heard of it, and even fewer used it. So, as technical as his Glasgow, Kentucky-based company may have been, internet access didn't matter.

But all that's changed. Today, the Span Tech founder and CEO depends on high-speed internet from his local rural telecommunications cooperative to send engineering design files across the world in the time it takes to sip coffee.

Without that kind of access, Layne couldn't sell his conveyor belts to multinational food producers like Kraft. He also couldn't employ between 80 and 90 people in a town of less than 15,000. "Every design layout we do has to be redone, on average, five times," he says. "All this stuff moves back and forth digitally over our network. These are some big drawings I'm talking about."

Rural-based companies like Span Tech are still an exception, however. The U.S. Census Bureau's 2016 American Community Survey found that only 17 percent of businesses operate in rural communities, defined as nonurban towns of fewer than 50,000 residents and sparsely populated



Corey Nohl, owner of the Minnesota company Above All Aerial, deploys a drone to map crops in need of improvement.

regions. The number of companies working in rural areas, however, could increase if high-speed internet networks continue to appear in all regions of the country.

GOING COUNTRY

Entrepreneurs are taking note of rural success stories, according to a June 25, 2018, story from the business website Fundera.com. Survey data from the 12 Federal Reserve Banks found that rural communities outperform urban centers on many metrics of successful entrepreneurship.

"Rural businesses are smaller and grow more slowly, the data from the Small Business Credit Survey shows," the article says. "But they're also more likely to be profitable than their urban counterparts and have longer survival rates. Plus, entrepreneurs in rural areas have an easier time getting business financing, which is an important factor in scaling a business."

Small and large companies have either popped up in rural regions across the country or, like Span Tech, stayed put thanks to expanded digital access. One example is Above All Aerial in rural Min-



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

nesota. The company uses drone technology to help farmers across the country scout crops and provide damage assessment. Another is Big Tex Trailers, based in Mount Pleasant, Texas. With a workforce of about 2,000, it serves clients throughout the United States and as far north as Western Canada. Also, a U.S. Army veteran turned his love of pop culture into his business, Tennessee Toys and Comics, in a town of about 5,000 people. Now, he sells to collectors around the world.

THE HIGH COST OF DIGITAL DARKNESS

If high-speed internet access fails to expand in rural areas, however, jobs and the economy can't grow, says Wally Tyner, an agricultural economics professor at Purdue University. Tyner is one of the authors of a detailed 2018 policy brief that shows the economic benefits gained from installing broadband networks in rural areas of Indiana. Through intensive research, Tyner's team found that the economic benefits outweighed the costs of fiber networks at a ratio of 4:1.

"I always like to ask my audience this question when I'm presenting this policy brief: 'Is there anybody in this room who thinks rural electrification was a bad idea?'" Tyner says, referring to the Rural Electrification Act of 1936 that offered low-cost government loans to rural electric cooperatives so people outside of the


nation's cities could have access to safe, reliable and affordable electricity.

The answer, Tyner says, is always no. "I don't care how conservative or how liberal you are. No one will say it was a bad idea, even though it's the government getting involved," he says.

Without the initiative, large areas of the country — as well as millions of people — could have gone without electricity for decades, leaving them literally and figuratively in the dark as their city-dwelling counterparts progressed without them.

So what does this have to do with high-speed internet access? Everything, says Tyner, who headed a detailed 2018 policy brief that shows the economic benefits gained from installing broadband networks in rural areas of Indiana.

The Purdue brief found that if rural communities can access the type of broadband networks available in larger cities, there will be more jobs, more industry, better education, more medical opportunities and a host of other benefits.

And while installation of this kind of fiber optic equipment is expensive, the result is that the fiber networks end up paying for themselves many times over. "Today, the economy runs on digits," Tyner says. "If you're on the other side of the digital divide, you're up that creek without a paddle. It's really important for rural areas to have." 

Digital dollars

It's no secret that almost every business and government entity relies on high-speed internet. Farms, manufacturing firms, schools and cottage industries depend on the internet for everything from relaying and retrieving information to marketing and sales. But high-speed internet also brings money to local, state and federal economies. The Hudson Institute, a research organization, released a report in 2016 called "The Economic Impact of Rural Broadband." The report found that rural broadband providers across the country directly added \$24.1 billion to the states in which they operated in 2015 alone. Of this, \$17.2 billion was through their own operations and \$6.9 billion was through the follow-on impact of their operations, the report says.

Economic effects of the rural broadband industry in Minnesota in 2015

DIRECT IMPACT
\$659 million

INDIRECT IMPACT
\$251 million

TOTAL IMPACT
\$911 million

EMPLOYMENT
2,527 jobs

→ Source: The Hudson Institute's "The Economic Impact of Rural Broadband," 2016.

'Independently Speaking'

Olson finds latest chapter as a writer

BY JOHN CLAYTON

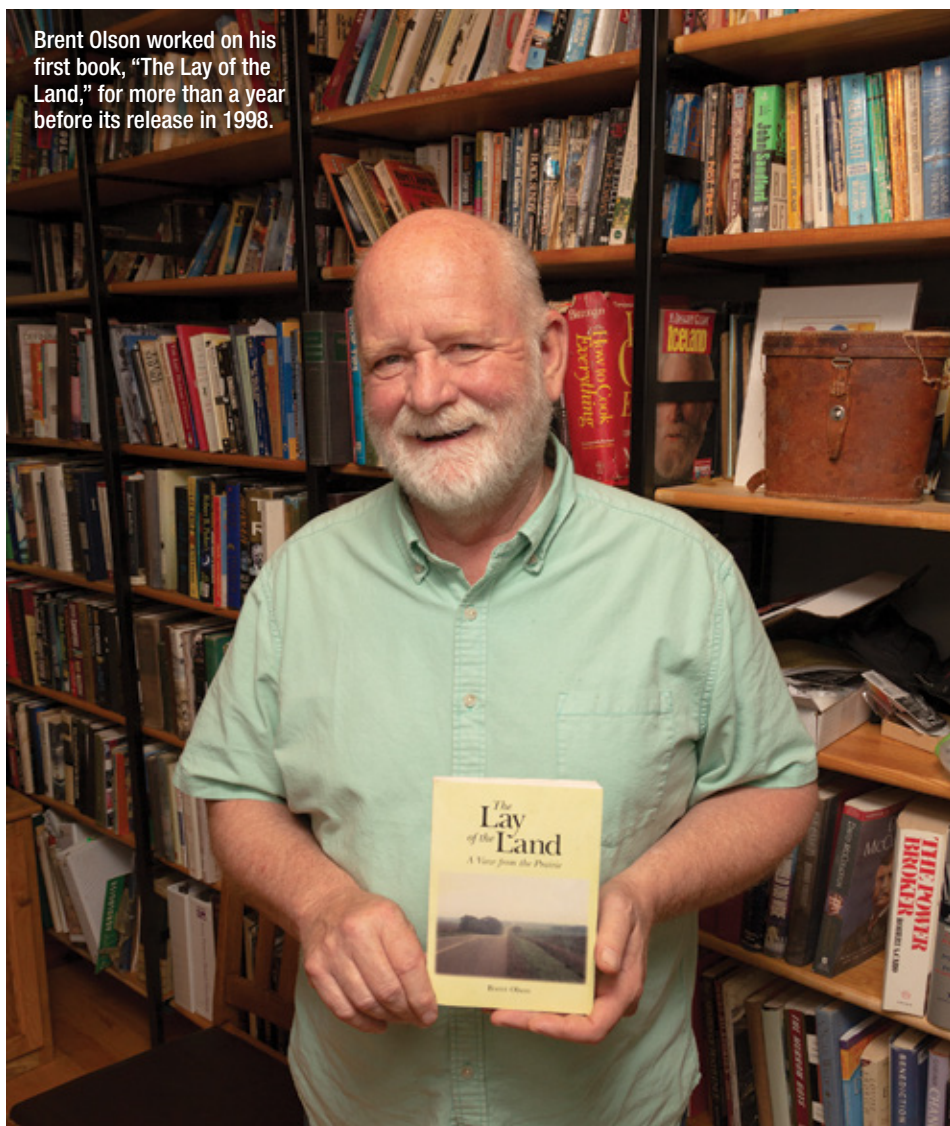
Among the achievements listed on Brent Olson's website is the notable fact that the late folk singer Pete Seeger kept a copy of Olson's book, "Letters from a Peasant," in his bathroom.

"Somewhere in my files I have a note from him that reads, 'I read your good book and left it in the bathroom for the rest of the family,'" Olson says. "The fact that I have committed it to memory shows either my respect for him or my lack of positive input from celebrities."

Rock & Roll Hall of Famers aside, Olson has gotten plenty of positive input from readers since embarking on an unexpected journey as a writer more than 20 years ago. His first bylines appeared with his now widely distributed "Independently Speaking" columns for the local newspaper, The Northern Star, in his hometown of Clinton, Minnesota, in 1996. But a love affair with words began when Olson worked as a youth minister. All the teens under Olson's watch received a handwritten letter from their mentor when they graduated high school.

"My column is, and has always been, letters to a friend," Olson says. "That's the way it started. It's just that now, there are a half-million of them. What I hear from most people is that my column is 'just like talking to you,' and I take that as a real compliment."

Brent Olson worked on his first book, "The Lay of the Land," for more than a year before its release in 1998.



BIG CHANGES

Olson spent 30 years as a farmer in Big Stone County, working the same land his great-grandparents did and living in the house they built. But eventually, his old life came face to face with his new one in the form of an old farmhouse updated with high-speed fiber internet. A writer with a once-small audience was suddenly able to reach hundreds of thousands.

"I have spent my entire life living where I want to live and doing what I want to do," Olson says. "That wouldn't be possible now without broadband. Traditionally, the course for a writer is you pull up stakes and move to New York City or someplace like that. I'm not at the Algonquin Round Table or anything, but now I have access to all those people."



Olson's dog, Frances, relaxes on the front steps as Olson researches toward a series of articles on what agriculture will look like in the 22nd century.

Brent Olson works on a weekly blog post for his website, independentlyspeaking.com.



In addition to writing the blogs that appear on his website, independentlyspeaking.com, and the regular columns distributed by the DTN, a news wire which Olson describes as “a Reuters for agriculture,” Olson is a Big Stone County commissioner. He says Federated Telephone and other cooperatives like them don’t get the credit they deserve for delivering services to rural America.

“Because we have broadband in Big Stone County, people can live where they want to live and still have a viable career,” he says. “We have a patent lawyer who moved here because he wanted to be on the water. Even 10 years ago, that wouldn’t have been possible, and now, it’s a perfectly reasonable choice. I can’t express the depth of my gratitude for an organization like Federated and what they’ve made possible for the people here.”

BY THE BOOK

Since breaking in with DTN, Olson has written thousands of columns and blogs. He offered DTN a six-month free trial to get on board with the agriculture wire service and began receiving payment four months later.

All the while, Olson says he has stayed

true to what he wanted to write and to the way he wanted to write it.

“I try to understand what people are going through,” he says. “I want my column to be a bright spot in people’s lives. I try not to write about starving children in Haiti too often, but I’ve done that, too. I like writing about the dumb things I do, and there are a lot of those. But my essential job is to be a break for people to enjoy themselves for a few minutes. I’m not Paul Krugman or Thomas Friedman or anything like that.”

Olson is free to publish his columns on his own website, social media and other outlets following their first run on DTN.

Olson has published five books in the same vein as his columns, including the most recent, “The Inadvertent Café,” and the late Seeger’s favorite, “Letters from a

Peasant.” At 64, Olson is trying his hand at fiction with a completed mystery novel he plans to self-publish called “Ice on Fire.” Not surprisingly, it is set in small-town, rural Minnesota.

“It’s two different kinds of writing,” Olson says of his novels. “You need to write in complete sentences, but other than that, it’s two completely different crafts, so it feels like I’m trying to do better at something that I’ve never done before.

“My sister has told me before that every now and then, it’s important to do something that terrifies you, and this terrifies me.”



WORKS BY BRENT OLSON

Online:

www.independentlyspeaking.com and at facebook.com/brent.olson.12

Nonfiction (available on Amazon.com and IndependentlySpeaking.com):

- “The Inadvertent Café”
- “Letters from a Peasant”
- “The Lay of the Land: A View from the Prairie”
- “Papa: Figuring Out What Matters”
- “Still Whistling: The Only Sane Response to a Complicated World”

It's the season for juneberries

Thirty years ago, Jim and Analene Torgerson offered a new dessert at their restaurant at Lund's Landing Marina along the shore of North Dakota's Lake Sakakawea. The pies were filled with Juneberries, a fruit unfamiliar to their diners in the late 1980s. The filling looked a little like blueberries. "Our customers described it as sweet, not tart — just an elegant little berry," Jim Torgerson says.

Now, the Torgersons sell anywhere from 35 to 50 of the pies every week during the summer months. Juneberry pies are sliced and served with a cup of coffee or as dessert following a dinner of pan-fried walleye fished from nearby waters. The recipe was given to the Torgersons by their neighbor, Ara Hartsoch, a woman whose baking skills are legendary in this area northwest of the state capital.

Juneberries get their name from the month in which they ripen, and the window for harvesting the sweet, juicy fruit closes quickly. The shrubs blossom in May and are ready to pick by late June. By early July, the season is over.

Lund's Landing sources its berries from farms in the Souris River Valley, Des Lacs



River Valley and White Earth River Valley. The Torgersons buy in bulk, finding the berries good for freezing, so they can offer their famous pies all year. They offer customers a taste of summer even when the lake is frozen and snow covers the ground.

You can substitute blueberries, but if you can pick up a gallon of Juneberries, you'll find the pie has a wonderfully lighter flavor.



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

JUNE BERRY JAM

- 4 cups Juneberry pulp (see note)
- Juice of 2 lemons
- 2 oranges, peeled, seeded and cut into small pieces
- 3 cups sugar

Combine all ingredients in large pot and simmer for 20 minutes. Pour jam into hot, sterilized jars with two-piece, self-sealing lids. Adjust lids, then process in a boiling water bath canner for 5 minutes at altitudes up to 1,000 feet or 10 minutes at altitudes 1,001 feet and above.

NOTE: To make pulp, wash berries and put through coarse food chopper or grinder.

Recipe courtesy of North Dakota State University Extension Service

GOOD FOR YOU!

Juneberries are one of nature's superfoods, loaded with fiber and antioxidants. They are also a good source of vitamin E, magnesium and manganese.

"We've introduced customers to a local berry that has a hint of almond flavor, is unique geographically and is high in naturally occurring antioxidants, which all equals healthy berries," Jim Torgerson says. "That's a great selling point."

JUNEBERRY MUFFINS

- 1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1/2 cup packed brown sugar
- 1/4 cup white sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/3 cup vegetable oil
- 1/3 cup milk
- 1 egg
- 1 cup fresh or frozen Juneberries

Heat oven to 400 degrees. Grease a 12-cavity muffin tray or line it with muffin papers. Mix the flour, brown sugar, white sugar, salt, baking powder and baking soda in a small bowl and make a well in the center. Add oil, milk and egg to this hole and mix until just combined. Carefully fold in the Juneberries. Fill each muffin cavity to the top. Bake for 20-25 minutes or until golden brown. Do not overbake.

JUNEBERRY CRISP

- 4 cups Juneberries
- 1/3 cup sugar
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/2 cup brown sugar
- 4 tablespoons butter
- 1/3 cup flour
- 3/4 cup oatmeal
- Vanilla ice cream or whipped cream (optional)

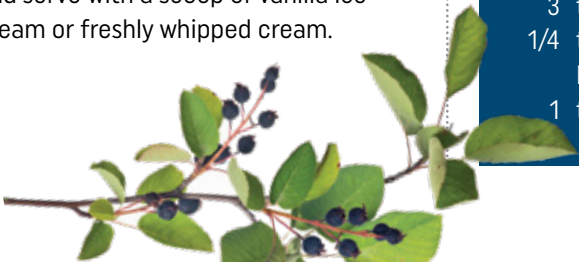
Heat oven to 375 degrees. Lightly grease a 9-by-9-inch cake pan. Mix Juneberries, sugar and lemon juice. In a small bowl combine cinnamon, brown sugar, butter, flour and oatmeal until crumbly. Spread half of the oatmeal mixture in the bottom of the pan. Add the Juneberry mixture. Cover with the remaining oatmeal mixture. Bake 35-40 minutes and serve with a scoop of vanilla ice cream or freshly whipped cream.



LUND'S LANDING JUNEBERRY PIE

- 3 cups Juneberries (or substitute blueberries)
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1/2 cup water
- 2/3 cup sugar
- 3 tablespoons flour
- 1/4 teaspoon cinnamon
- Pie crust for double-crust pie
- 1 tablespoon butter

Put washed berries in bowl; add lemon juice and water. Blend sugar, flour and cinnamon; add to the berry mixture. Pour into unbaked pie crust. Dot with butter and cover with top crust, cutting small slits in crust for steam to escape. Bake at 350 degrees for 45-60 minutes or until crust is nicely browned and juice begins to bubble through slits in crust. 🍴



Farmers Mutual **ANNUAL MEETING** CUSTOMER APPRECIATION PICNIC

June 4, 2019 | Lac qui Parle High School

Federated Telephone's **ANNUAL MEETING** CUSTOMER APPRECIATION PICNIC

June 6, 2019 | Morris Area Elementary School

**BRING YOUR
REGISTRATION CARD**

**REGISTER FOR
DOOR PRIZES**

**RECEIVE A
FREE GIFT**

APPRECIATION PICNIC: 4:30 P.M.
BUSINESS MEETING: 6:30 P.M.