

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2021

CONNECTION

STORMING THE ICE

A home for
hockey in Morris
and Benson

FROM TURKEY TO JERKY

The Country Butcher
serves up tasty meats

KEEP THE RHYTHM

Broadband connects
musical creators



NTCA

THE RURAL
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RURAL CONNECTIONS

By SHIRLEY BLOOMFIELD, CEO
NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association

To expand broadband access, we must protect our supply chains

We at NTCA are encouraged to see rural broadband take center stage as people talk about how to improve our nation's infrastructure. While grappling with a pandemic, more people than ever — especially in Washington, D.C., and in the policy arena — are realizing that robust and reliable broadband is essential for people to work and learn from home and for our country to move forward. It has been encouraging to see federal and state resources being put toward addressing gaps in broadband coverage.

However, the job is only beginning when the funds start to flow. While NTCA member companies are eager to keep building broadband networks, lead times for fulfillment of orders of telecom supplies are approaching deeply concerning levels. One member recently received a quote that projected an eight-month delay for fiber, and another was told it would take one year for fulfillment of a fiber order. We're hearing stories of delays of several weeks or months for routers and other gear.

These supply chain delays could have real implications on American consumers — and they could present real problems when it comes to provider compliance with things like buildout deadlines and performance testing obligations.

It's terrific that resources are being made available to ensure every American has access to sufficient broadband. But it's going to be equally important that policy-makers pay attention to whether the supply chain can keep up and consider what steps must be taken to ensure that happens. 🗨️

BROADBAND: Connecting your life



Telehealth

Broadband connects you with doctors and health care services



Work From Home

Broadband connects you with servers and applications to work remotely



Remote Learning

Broadband connects your children with their teachers and study resources



Shopping

Broadband connects you with grocery stores, restaurants and retailers for pickup and home delivery



Family & Community

Broadband connects you with your people over video calls and social media



Small Business

Broadband connects your business with customers and suppliers



How did your broadband connection help you through 2020? How will it support you in the new year? Share your story with the hashtag **#MyBroadbandStory**.



Don't ZOOM into trouble

Do learn the secrets to a great virtual meeting

There are some gaffes co-workers never forget. And with the likes of Zoom, GoToMeeting and FaceTime bringing business gatherings into many homes, the potential for memorable pitfalls only increases.

“Don’t take your phone with you to the bathroom during a video call” should most likely be the first rule to remember for any team shifting to virtual gatherings. A quick search on YouTube will show you the wisdom of that policy.

While there’s potential for unintentional blunders during video calls, the tools also offer an indispensable resource for teams. In many cases, productivity would grind to a halt without the ability to connect virtually through broadband.

So, here are a few “Dos” and some “Don’ts” to consider before your next virtual meeting:

DO dress fully. A work shirt on top and running shorts or pajamas on the bottom can prove embarrassing if you forget to turn off the camera before standing up. It happens, often.

DO take a few minutes before the meeting to confirm you know how to turn the microphone and camera on and (likely more importantly) off in the software you’re using. It’s also a good policy to stay muted unless speaking.

DON’T leave your notifications turned on when screen sharing during a meeting. Otherwise, everyone attending might see the message from your hungry spouse regarding the takeout lunch you promised to deliver.

DO have a clear, detailed agenda and stick to it. The attention of participants can wander, and a well-paced plan can keep everyone focused.

DON’T ignore the background. People will judge you on the contents of your bookshelves. Also, if there’s a forgotten not-safe-for-work bit of kitsch visible on a shelf or wall, don’t expect your co-workers to spare you embarrassment. They may just enjoy the humor.

DO consider lighting. Everyone looks better with good lighting, and a great presentation can not only set the tone for how others perceive you but also boost your self-confidence.

DON’T forget to take the time before the meeting to get a glass of water or cup of coffee.



DO jot down any notes about points you wish to cover, and keep a pen and paper handy. Know the steps you need to take to help you be more present during the meeting, and repeat the formula every time.

DO remember to inform other household members you’re joining a video call. More than one relative or friend has taken an unintended star turn during a serious discussion.

DON’T leave the cats and dogs free to wander. Disembodied voices may draw their attention, usually at the most inopportune time. While a stray tail or untimely howl might add levity to a meeting, know your audience and prepare accordingly.

DO remember that the most important thing of all is to laugh. Isolation and, often, stress can counterbalance the freedom of remote work. Every meeting, take a moment to appreciate your co-workers, share a joke, smile and laugh. Enjoy the virtual time together. ☺

That’s a formula for a great, productive meeting.

Resolve to master streaming TV in 2021

Each year at this time, I usually find myself looking ahead at all of the promise of the new year. Many of us will consider resolutions we can make to improve ourselves as the calendar turns to 2021.



KEVIN BEYER

Chief Executive Officer

After the year we've all just been through, I think we could likely use that fresh sense of optimism. But just as admirable as it is that we will resolve to lose a little weight or get organized this year, it's also unfortunately predictable that many of us will drop those diets, exercise regimes or organizational systems by spring.

That's why I have a suggested resolution for many of our members that can be accomplished from the couch.

If you're one of the roughly 1 in 4 Americans who hasn't tried streaming video service through platforms like Locast, Netflix, Hulu or Amazon Prime, I'd urge you to consider resolving to give it a try in 2021.

According to the researchers at Nielsen, many older TV watchers did just that in 2020. Spurred on in a hunt for programming while staying home during the pandemic, older viewers now account for 26% of all streaming minutes viewed, up from 19% a year ago, according to the Nielsen data.

While there is a little bit of a learning curve on the new platforms, the amount of shows and movies to watch at your command is astounding.

While Netflix, Amazon Prime Video and Hulu are the dominant providers, new streaming services like Disney+, Peacock and HBO Max have debuted in the last 18 months. Paramount+, due out this year, promises to offer an immense catalog of shows from CBS and other Viacom networks, as well as decades' worth of hit movies produced in the Paramount Studios. The summer Olympics alone are expected to provide hundreds of hours of programming for NBC's Peacock.

And thanks to our work building and maintaining the Farmers Mutual and Federated Telephone broadband network, this vast world of programming is available right in your living room.

Here are my suggestions for how to give it a try:

- 1. Start small.** Most streaming platforms offer a free trial of up to 30 days. Beyond that, basic plans for Disney+, Hulu and Netflix are priced at under \$10 per month so you can try the service without a huge financial commitment. Locast is also available in our area which provides networks such as NBC, ABC, etc. to rural areas at no charge.
- 2. Pick the right box.** Your TV may already have some streaming capabilities built in to get you started. If not, you'll need a Roku device or Amazon's Fire TV Stick connected to your Wi-Fi to get you started.
- 3. Ask for help.** Whether it's a friend, family member or one of our friendly staff, don't hesitate to reach out and ask for advice on navigating this exciting new world of streaming video.

I'd like to wish each and everyone of you a happy and prosperous new year. 📺

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AND FEDERATED TELEPHONE COOPERATIVE

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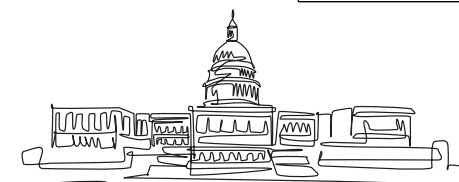
WORDSOUTH

A CONTENT MARKETING COMPANY

On the Cover:



MBA Storm hockey players from Morris and Benson take the ice at the Lee Community Center and the Benson Civic Center.
See story Page 12.



Youth Tour

Farmers Mutual Telephone and Federated Telephone partner with the Foundation for Rural Service to provide an opportunity for two students, one from each cooperative, to tour Washington, D.C., June 5-9.

Eligibility:

- ▶ Student must be age 16 or 17 at the time of the Youth Tour.
- ▶ Student must have at least one parent who is a member of Farmers Mutual or Federated Telephone Cooperative at the time they submit their application and at the time of the trip.

Selection Process:

- ▶ Each student is required to submit an essay of 500 words or less explaining why they would like to attend the Youth Tour and why they are interested in learning more about rural broadband.
- ▶ Essay must include the student's name, their parent's name and telephone number.
- ▶ Essay must be received at Farmers Mutual or Federated Telephone by Feb. 15.

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SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

2021 FRS Scholarship

The Foundation for Rural Service, through its partnership with NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association, promotes, educates and advocates to the public rural telecommunications issues in order to sustain and enhance the rural way of life throughout America. Through its various programs, the foundation strongly supports the continuing education of rural youth.

\$2,500 scholarships are available for high school seniors! FRS will award more than 30 national scholarships in the amount of \$2,000. Should a student from Farmers Mutual or Federated Telephone's service area be selected, Farmers Mutual or Federated Telephone will supply an additional \$500, bringing the total scholarship award to \$2,500.

Eligible students must have at least one parent who is a member of Farmers Mutual or Federated Telephone Cooperative at the time they submit their application and at the time they attend college.

Applications can be printed or completed online at www.frs.org. A signature from Kevin Beyer, general manager of Farmers Mutual and Federated Telephone, will be needed to complete the application. Please have the form to our office by Feb. 15, 2021, to allow time for the signature to be obtained.

MTA Scholarship

The MTA Foundation awards six \$2,000 scholarships to high school seniors graduating in 2021. 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 them based on 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.

Download an application at www.mnta.org or see your school guidance counselor.

A NORTHERN MYSTERY

Discovering the aurora borealis

Viewing the northern lights is a stellar experience and one of the best light shows on Mother Earth. Possibly the best place to see the lights in the Lower 48 is in Cook County, Minnesota. That's because the county is in a rural area, far from the lights of cities that diminish one's ability to best see the night sky.

"In some places in the state, even the Milky Way is barely visible," says Kjersti Vick, marketing and public relations director at Visit Cook County. "Being a rural destination, there is little to no light pollution due to the nearby Lake Superior and the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness."

Curtain call for the show begins after the sun goes down — sometimes in the wee hours of the morning. Some lights may appear as early as 7 p.m. "In the winter, the sun can set as early as 4:30 p.m. and rise as late as 8 a.m., allowing for maximum darkness," Vick says.

What makes the lights so fascinating? Visitors have their own reasons for driving into this rural northeastern part of the state. Meteorologists can tell us when we'll get rain, snow, sleet, hail, tornadoes, hurricanes and beautiful sunny days.

But the ability to predict the northern lights evades modern technology, which is part of their intrigue.

"They are a delicate, natural phenomena that can appear vividly or faintly and last mere moments or for hours," Vick says. "But that is part of the magic of experiencing the northern lights — you never know when or how long or how brightly they will appear."

That fact doesn't stop thousands of visitors from traveling to Cook County every year to get a chance view of the lights and experience the vast dark sky. Many make the journey for the first time, and others repeat the joy and see the lights again and again.

Each glimpse of the lights is a different experience, Vick says.

"One of my favorite sightings was driving home from a dinner party in early December and catching a glimpse," she says. "It was a cold night, and when I arrived at a nearby lake to view, the ice was just beginning to form. New ice 'sings' as it settles, and while the northern lights danced above my head, the ice sang. The experience was very special and one I will never forget." 📺





How to photograph the northern lights

The northern lights are a natural phenomenon occurring when electrically charged particles from the sun enter the Earth's atmosphere. The particles collide with the atmospheric gas, causing friction that creates colorful streaks of light. The most common color seen is green. However, reds and purples are visible during a high-intensity storm or with a camera.

Smartphones have come a long way in their capacity to take great photos, particularly some of the newer iPhones and Samsung's Galaxy S20. But don't count on your phone capturing the alluring night sky. Visit Cook County recommends bringing a camera with manual mode.

"You'll need to be able to adjust your aperture, ISO and exposure time by hand," Vick says, adding some other suggestions:

Pack a wide-angle lens. You'll be shooting some of the darkest skies in the country. A wide-angle lens will allow your camera to pick up more light and create more dramatic photos.

While not essential, a tripod and a camera with a timer are helpful. Longer exposure times allow you to capture the celestial movements of the elusive aurora borealis, and a tripod will help you stabilize for clearer images.

Learn from the pros. There are several local photographers who frequently capture the northern lights, and some of them even offer classes.

For more information and tips, go to www.visitcookcounty.com.

Viewing Tips

- **Check the forecast.** The best viewing is during clear nights with little to no moonlight. That means Minnesota's long, dark winter nights present the perfect opportunity to hunt for the northern lights. You'll be amazed at how well your eyes adjust to the soft starlight, making finding your way easier than you might expect.
- **Stay up late.** Night owls have the best chance of catching this incredible phenomenon. The best time to see the lights is often between 9 p.m. and 4 a.m., so hot coffee or tea may be just what you need to warm your toes and keep you alert.
- **Bundle up.** Northern Minnesota nights get chilly. If you're not used to the cold, or if you come unprepared, it could become dangerous. A warm jacket, hat and good pair of mittens or gloves are a must, as is a blanket.
- **Look to the north.** Grab a compass and find a spot with a good view to the North — someplace without hills or trees blocking your line of sight. Forgot your compass? The night sky has you covered. The Big Dipper can help. Look for the two stars on the far edge of the Dipper's bowl — they point directly to Polaris, the North Star.
- **Turn off the lights.** Artificial light will make it more difficult to see the northern lights, and your eyes need time to adjust to the natural darkness. Once they do, you'll be able to see more than you ever thought possible. Be sure to turn off car lights and flashlights, and keep your cellphone screen dim. Any exposure to artificial light could disrupt your night vision and jeopardize your chance to see the northern lights.
- **Be patient.** Part of the mystique of the northern lights is the absolute unpredictability of their occurrence. Sometimes, you wait all night for the tiniest flicker of movement in the sky. Other nights, you're privy to a wondrous dancing display of intense color across the sky. Catching a glimpse of the lights takes dedication, patience and a good friend to keep you company.
- **Know what to look for.** The northern lights appear in a broad spectrum of colors, so you never quite know what to expect. A faint green-yellow or white-gray display is most typical, and watchers can almost confuse it with bonfire smoke or clouds. However, deep purples and vivid reds have also been known to regularly appear in Cook County.
- **Tell a friend.** When venturing into the woods to find that perfect spot, be sure to let someone know where you are going and when you expect to return.
- **Scout your location.** During the day, be sure all roads are open, accessible and safe.



HI! I'M JADE GEHRKE!

In this column, 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



Leopold FC900R

Take the leap to a mechanical keyboard such as the Leopold FC900R. Available in a wide selection of colors — including the retro, two-tone white — and a variety of styles, the full-size keyboard is solidly built and works on both Windows and Mac. There are more expensive mechanical keyboards that come with additional bells and whistles, but the Leopold offers a top-rated experience at a reasonable price. MSRP \$99-\$129.

Taking a shortcut

Master your keyboard

Scientist George Washington Carver famously said, “There is no shortcut to achievement.” However, if you’re tired of using your mouse to hunt through menus looking for basic computer commands or you simply want to get your work done more efficiently, then keyboard shortcuts are, well, key.

Let’s start by looking at some essentials, move on to advanced shortcuts and then consider the much-forgotten keyboard itself.

For simplicity, let’s assume you’re using a Windows machine. That means you have a Win key, which is the key with the Windows logo on the left side of your spacebar. There is an Alt key. And you have a control key, which is labeled Ctrl on your keyboard.

Note that Macs also have a Ctrl key. But when using the following shortcuts, substitute the Mac Command key.

THE BASICS

Specialized applications may have their own shortcuts, but the basics work the same not only for text editing but also across most programs. They are usually intuitive.

Hit Ctrl+B to make your text bold, Ctrl+U to underline or Ctrl+I for italics. Ctrl+C will copy any text selected, while Ctrl+X will cut it. You can select text with your mouse, of course, but you can also hold down the Shift key and then select text with the arrow keys. If you need to

select a large block of text, you can use Ctrl+A to select all, and then Ctrl+V will paste the selected text.

If you’re wondering why “V” for paste and not Ctrl+P, which lets you print, it’s because the letter is similar to the proofreading mark for “insert.” Another useful shortcut is Ctrl+Z, which undoes whatever you did last, from typing the wrong word to accidentally erasing your entire document — just make sure you didn’t hit Ctrl+W and close your window before you saved with Ctrl+S.

Another shortcut that comes in handy is Alt+Tab, which cycles through open applications — Command+Tab on Mac. Ctrl+N opens a new window. Win+left arrow or Win+right arrow snaps windows to the side of your screen, which is great for quickly having two windows open side by side without fiddling with sizing them to fit your monitor.

NEXT STEPS

Once you’ve mastered the essentials, show off some of these less-common Windows shortcuts to get your work done faster:

- » Ctrl+F will let you find words in a text or browser window.
- » Alt+F4 will shut down any application.
- » Win+D will minimize all open windows and show you a clean desktop. ☒

A cut above

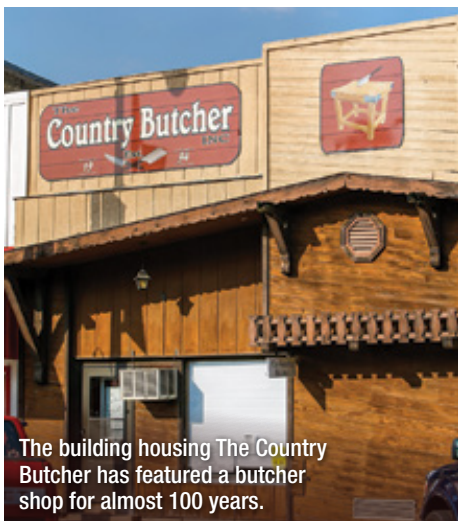
The Country Butcher adds flavor to Dawson

Story by JOHN CLAYTON

The Country Butcher in Dawson isn't the only traditional butcher shop around, but people come from miles around for a taste of the shop's fresh meats, unique recipes and personal service.

Owners John and Jill Storlien opened The Country Butcher in 1994, and Jill Storlien says the business has grown and evolved since then with new takes on a traditional food service. The Country Butcher cuts its own meats and sells them fresh, doing everything from grinding sausages to slicing top-notch steaks like most any traditional butcher shop. But the Storliens have also changed with the times and adapted to the wants and demands of modern consumers.

"We have seen an exponential demand for variety," Jill Storlien says. "People want to try more things, so we make so many more foods than we made, say, 22 years ago for retail. We have so many more items. We've started out with different flavors for marinating and have added them because people don't want to have just the same old things. That's something we really like to do. We take the time to introduce new things to our customers, and they go over well."



The building housing The Country Butcher has featured a butcher shop for almost 100 years.




John and Jill Storlien make The Country Butcher a worthwhile destination.

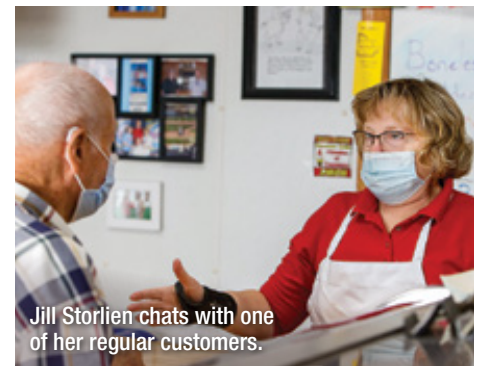
Whether it's a Texas-inspired flat-iron steak or a sweet, marinated kabob Storlien calls "meat candy," The Country Butcher helps stock freezers for several months or even a year at a time and helps complete family meals during the busy holiday seasons with hams, turkeys, specially seasoned prime rib or anything customers want to serve their families and friends.

Some of those items come with simple instructions and can turn just about anyone into a good cook, Storlien says. It helps that she enjoys cooking and sharing her recipes with her customers. The shop's Facebook page keeps customers up to date on weekly specials, and Storlien uses it to pass on her recipes. "I love to cook, and we don't sell anything that I don't know is really good," she says.

The Country Butcher offers custom butcher services to individuals. The meat in its retail business is all local, and the Storliens know exactly where each slice of meat — whether it's beef, pork or poultry — comes from. "We've always been farm-to-table," Jill Storlien says.

She says more and more consumers have recognized the value of shopping locally for their food, something that increased during the 2020 pandemic. "We have seen so many people that are really into doing that farm-to-table," Storlien says. "They know what they get is locally grown. Plus, the food chain is much smaller here. We get it from the farmer.

It comes to us, and it goes directly to the consumer. There are no other warehouses. There is no big factory. It's just us handling everything." 



Jill Storlien chats with one of her regular customers.



John Storlien shows his butcher skills.

The Country Butcher

Address: 760 Sixth St., Dawson, Minnesota

Phone: 320-769-2238

Facebook: [Facebook.com/The-Country-Butcher](https://www.facebook.com/The-Country-Butcher)

Hours: Tuesday-Friday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.



Come together

Story by DREW WOOLLEY

Broadband brings together musicians across the world

As the pandemic stretched on last year, drummer Mike Kosacek and other members of the band Cosmic Singularity started kicking around the idea of recording a second album. With most music venues shut down and more time to write, it was a familiar story for bands and musicians across the world. But there was one key exception: Kosacek has never actually met any of his bandmates in person.

"Without high-speed internet, we just couldn't do this," he says. "I live in Round Rock, Texas. The keyboard player lives in Florida. The bass player is in Utah, and at the time, our singer and guitar player was living in Scotland."

The globe-spanning collaboration would have been impossible just a decade ago. The songwriting process is a sort of musical relay. One member of the band will share a demo of a song he created, and the others will add their parts one by one.

"We'll start stripping off the individual parts, and everyone will add in their own instruments to build up the song," Kosacek says. "Once we've got all those parts, they'll send it to me, and I'll do the mixing in my studio."

A NOD TO THE DRUMMER

Kosacek built his home studio, DoubleDog Recording, in 2009. He had been recording in his bedroom for several years, but the situation wasn't ideal.

"In terms of sound, that wasn't optimal. Plus, I have a family, so the noise wasn't optimal for them, either," he says. "When I decided I really wanted to make money off of my music, it had to be better."

The stand-alone, 475-square-foot recording space gives him room to play without driving his family from the premises and provides Kosacek the option of recording bands live. Normally, he estimates, about a fifth of his business would come from mixing and mastering recordings for live bands. The rest is his Studio Drum Tracks business, where he records drum parts for Texas-based groups and artists like Black Dirt Tango, ThemThatKnow and Mike Hamilton, as well as others from across the globe.



Broadband technology underpins drummer Mike Kosacek's business.

“At least half of it is mind reading,” Kosacek says. “But for me, I find that a lot of it is just experience playing and listening to a lot of music. So, when someone sends me a song that needs drums, I have some idea of where to go with it. A lot of times, it’s right the first time, and people are wowed at the difference, which is, of course, my goal.”

These days, with bands unable to record in person, all of Kosacek’s work comes from the drum tracks business. But internet connections have come a long way since he started, making the transition an easy one.

“I actually saw an uptick in business, because people were stuck at home writing songs that needed drums,” he says. “Ten years ago we would have to mail CDs, DVDs, even hard drives back and forth, because sometimes it was faster and more reliable than internet transfers. Being able to do this digitally and share files online — that’s what makes it happen.” 📱

Remote mastery

From his earliest memories, Serge Espitia was in love with music and how it comes together. He eventually moved to New York, where he had the chance to work as a producer with artists including James Iha of Smashing Pumpkins and Adam Schlesinger of Fountains of Wayne, as well as producers for artists like David Bowie, Beyonce and John Legend.



But in 2016, Espitia and his wife were tired of the city, so they moved to New Jersey. There, he set up his own home studio for mastering — the art of touching up songs to achieve professional sound quality.

“There’s a lot of fear of the mastering process, but it’s really about your personal taste and appreciation for music,” Espitia says.

His mastering business is completely online, and that’s the way Espitia likes it. Operating remotely allows him to work faster compared to in-person sessions with artists that can take hours longer. The key, he says, is making a human connection with artists to better understand what they want.

“A lot of people I work with are very sensitive, so they have a good understanding of their musical influences and what they want to draw from,” Espitia says. “So, that part of the business really hasn’t changed.”

Home schooling

- ▶ **Education** — Books, magazines, online tutorials and more are available to help developing artists learn their trade. Online collaboration groups can also provide a supportive community and opportunities to hone your craft.
- ▶ **Know what you want** — Understand what kinds of sounds you want to create for yourself or others. These preferences will guide the type of recording environment you need and the equipment you use.
- ▶ **Learn your tools** — Having the best gear isn’t the be-all and end-all. Whether you’re using GarageBand or Pro Tools, knowing how to use what is at your disposal effectively and efficiently is crucial.
- ▶ **Listen** — Spend a lot of time listening to music. The more you can develop a critical ear, the better you’ll be at identifying the sounds you want to create and others want to achieve.

Thinking of building your own home studio? Take some advice from the pros.

gear list 🎙️

- **Microphone** — Beginners can get by recording on a smartphone, but serious musicians will want to invest in a quality mic.
- **Headphones** — Always opt for wired over wireless to prevent delays and unexpected interruptions to your connection.
- **Studio monitors** — These speakers play back unenhanced sound so you can be confident how your mix will sound on different systems.
- **Audio interface** — This converts the sound from your mic to digital sound on your computer.
- **Software** — There are many programs available to mix and export your music. GarageBand is free and a good starting place for beginners.
- **Soundproofing** — Keeping your sound in will make the neighbors happy. Keeping their noises out will make you happy.

FOR LOVE OF THE GAME

MBA Storm players and leaders have passion for hockey Story by JOHN CLAYTON

The passion for hockey in rural towns in western Minnesota like Morris and Benson runs as hot as the ice is cold.

It has long been a rite of winter for kids who lace up their skates tight and grab their sticks with dreams of Gretzky, Crosby, Ovechkin or Bergeron dancing in their heads. The dreams are always there, but sometimes in small towns, the youth population isn't large enough to support organized play. Such was the case in Morris and Benson, friendly neighbors and athletic rivals who combined forces in 2000 to create the Morris-Benson Area Storm, a youth hockey organization that sponsors teams from the toddling Mini-Mites all the way to varsity high school squads for boys and girls.

"The partnership was kind of born out of necessity," says Morris Hockey President Jordan Staples. "We had to keep the game alive and keep hockey going for the young people. That's our main goal." The Benson and Morris associations — both nonprofit organizations — operate with autonomy but also have a combined board to govern the MBA Storm's joint hockey operations.

The youngest participants still play in their hometowns to cut down on travel, but as they get older, they move into combined teams. The towns have their own rinks — the Lee Community Center in Morris and the Benson Civic Center, a converted corn storage barn that has become a hidden gem in the world of Minnesota hockey.

"It's worked out pretty good," Benson Hockey President Jeff DeHaan says of the now 20-year-old partnership. "We work together really good. If there are disagreements, we always seem to work it out. From high school on down, we couldn't survive with the numbers we would have alone. We had to get in a joint partnership with Morris to be able to have competitive teams and be able just to play hockey."

MAKING THEIR MARK

Staples was a "rink rat." His father operated the ice rink in Morris when Staples was a kid, so he grew up with skates on. He played football and baseball, too, and went on to play club hockey in college.

"People in the state of Minnesota know who we are now, and I'm pretty proud of that. We might not win every game, but we're going to play you right up until the end."

— MBA hockey coach and board member Jeff DeHaan

Any rivalries between Morris and Benson, which are less than 30 miles apart, were put away during hockey season, he says. “I think, for the most part, we always had that in our mind that we were rivals here and there, but we always came together during hockey season to play,” Staples says. “We had fun, and we knew we were there to play together.”

The ice generally opens in late October for MBA Storm hockey, which operates at the high school level under the auspices of the Minnesota State High School League. The seasons for all age divisions run through mid-March. This season, around 130 players are participating in MBA Storm hockey.

Those are hearty numbers for a small area, but DeHaan says the Storm is in a different situation than the larger metro areas like St. Cloud, which can choose from pools of hundreds of players to put powerful teams on the ice each season.

“Some of the bigger towns can pick from 200-300 people to form a competitive team,” says DeHaan, who is an assistant for the high school team as well as a youth coach with the Storm.

The volunteer coaches try to teach life lessons alongside the game. Players often arrive as teammates with varying skill levels. “We’ve got kids who haven’t played hockey and some who have played since they were 3 or 4,” Staples says. “They’re all mixed in, so we try to teach them that sometimes there will be challenges and you want to overcome them and become a leader. We want to teach them to have fun while they’re doing that, because hockey is meant to be fun, that’s for sure.”



Benson Hockey Association President Jeff DeHaan, left, and Morris Hockey Association President Jordan Staples.



Even with a limited pool of players, the Storm sent a Pee Wee team to the state tournament a couple of years ago and a Bantam team after that. “We compete pretty good at the high school level, too,” DeHaan says. “People in the state of Minnesota know who we are now, and I’m pretty proud of that. We might not win every game, but we’re going to play you right up until the end.”

DEDICATED KIDS

The “A” in MBA Storm stands for “Area,” and Staples recalls his own teammates driving for 40 minutes to practice when he was a player. Some players and their parents make similar treks now. “We have players from Wheaton, which is about 40 minutes from here. We have kids coming from Montevideo. We have kids from Herman, Minnesota, and Graceville. There are five to 10 area towns where we are getting kids coming in to play hockey.”

DeHaan says this is the reason the old corn barn has become a hockey show-place and why he has coached since the 1990s. “The kids strive to be on the ice,” he says. “They push hard. They go hard, and they’re having fun. That’s the most important thing. They’re having fun.”



MBA STORM

For online details about Morris-Benson Area Storm hockey, visit MBAStorm.com.

Where they play:

- **Benson Civic Center**
2300 Tatges Ave.
Benson, Minnesota
Watch live or stream hockey from the Benson Civic Center at @LiveBarn for \$14.95 per month.

- **Hilfred & Estelle Lee Community Center**
101 S. County Road 22
Morris, Minnesota
Phone: 320-589-4585
Email:
morrishockeyassoc@gmail.com or
morris.hockey@mbastorm.com

MBA Storm teams for 2020-21:

Benson Mini-Mites, Morris Mini-Mites, Benson Mites, Morris Mites, Squirts, Pee Wee A&B, Girls 12-and-Under, Bantam, Junior Varsity Boys, Varsity Boys and Varsity Girls





TUSCAN WHITE BEAN SKILLET

- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil, divided
- 8 ounces brown mushrooms, sliced
- 1 1/2 cups diced yellow onion (about 1 large onion)
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 2/3 cup drained and chopped oil-packed sun-dried tomatoes
- 2 (14.5-ounce) cans fire-roasted diced tomatoes
- 2 (14.5-ounce) cans drained and rinsed cannellini beans
- 2 (14.5-ounce) cans quartered artichoke hearts, drained
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1/2 teaspoon dried thyme
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- Parsley for garnish

Heat 1 tablespoon of the oil until shimmering in a 10-inch, cast-iron skillet over medium-high heat. Working in batches, add the mushrooms to the pan in a single layer. Brown for 1 to 2 minutes per side. Transfer to a bowl and repeat with remaining mushrooms.

Add the remaining tablespoon of oil to the pan. Add the onions and saute until lightly browned, about 3 minutes. Add the garlic and sun-dried tomatoes and cook until fragrant and softened, another 2 minutes.

Add the diced tomatoes to the pan, along with the beans, artichoke hearts, salt, pepper, oregano, thyme and sugar. Cover the pan and turn the heat down to medium. Let cook for about 10 minutes, until hot. Return the mushrooms to the pan and cook for another 1 to 2 minutes to warm them up.

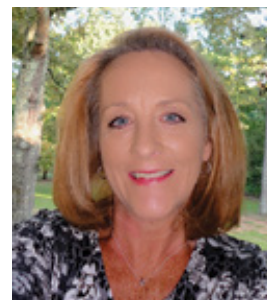
Healthy & hearty

Beans are perfect for cold days

With the holiday season behind us and winter in full swing, it's time for a bit of comfort. And there's perhaps no better way to create a feeling of warmth than with a steaming bowl of bean soup, or chili with beans, or, for that matter, any type of bean dish.

Beans can also pull double duty, offering wonderful taste and texture while being a delicious meat substitute.

Whether they are black, red, white or brown, beans are a great source of fiber, protein, iron, B vitamins, potassium, magnesium and many other beneficial nutrients. And if you choose dried beans over canned, you'll save money as well as reduce your sodium intake. If you do use canned beans, be sure to rinse them to reduce excess salt.



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

To serve: Spoon the bean mixture into bowls and garnish with chopped parsley, if desired. Be sure to serve with plenty of crusty bread for sopping up the tasty juices.

BLACK BEAN ENCHILADAS

- 2 large portobello mushroom caps
- 1/2 medium red onion
- 1 orange bell pepper
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 (15-ounce) can black beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 2 teaspoons cumin
- 1 teaspoon onion powder
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 2 tablespoons lime juice
- 1/2 cup vegetable broth or water
- 3 cups red enchilada sauce, store-bought or homemade
- 1 1/2 cups guacamole, store-bought or homemade
- 12 (8-inch) corn tortillas

For the garnish: 1 cup thinly sliced romaine lettuce; 1 to 2 radishes, julienned; 2 tablespoons minced red onion; and torn cilantro or parsley

Sour cream or Greek yogurt, optional

Preheat the oven to 400 F.

Remove the stems from the mushroom caps and thinly slice the caps. Thinly slice the red onion. Thinly slice the bell pepper.

In a large skillet, heat the olive oil over medium high heat. Sauté the sliced veggies for 6 to 7 minutes until tender. Add the drained and rinsed black beans, garlic powder, cumin, onion powder, paprika, kosher salt, lime juice, and vegetable broth or water. Cook for 2 minutes until the liquid is thickened into a sauce.

Spread 1 cup of the enchilada sauce in the bottom of a large baking dish.

Brush both sides of each tortilla lightly with olive oil. Heat a large griddle to medium-high heat. Cook the tortillas in batches for 15 seconds per side until lightly browned.



Fill each tortilla with 1/4 cup of the vegetable filling and about 2 tablespoons guacamole, running in a line down the center. Roll it up and place it in the baking dish, seam side down. Once all of the tortillas are in the dish, pour the remaining 2 cups of enchilada sauce over the top.

Bake for 5 minutes until warmed through. Top with garnishes and serve.

NUTTY WHITE BEAN, WILD RICE SOUP

- 1/2 cup cashews
- 1 medium yellow onion
- 2 celery stalks
- 3 medium carrots
- 8 ounces baby bella mushrooms
- 6 cloves garlic
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 tablespoon dried thyme
- 1 tablespoon dried oregano
- 8 cups vegetable broth
- 1 cup wild rice (not a wild rice blend)
- 2 teaspoons kosher salt, divided
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- 2 (15-ounce) cans white beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 cup water
- 2 teaspoons dried sage
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce, tamari or liquid aminos

Place the cashews in a bowl and cover them with water. Leave them to soak while you make the recipe.

Dice the onion. Thinly slice the celery. Cut the carrot into rounds. Slice the mushrooms. Mince the garlic. In a Dutch oven, heat the olive oil and sauté the onion, celery and carrots, stirring occasionally, for 5 minutes or until lightly browned. Add the mushrooms and sauté for 2 more minutes. Add the garlic, thyme and oregano and stir for another 2 minutes.

Add the broth, wild rice, 1 1/2 teaspoons kosher salt and black pepper. Bring to a simmer and cook, uncovered, for 20 minutes. Add the drained and rinsed beans and continue to simmer, uncovered, for 30-35 minutes more, or until the rice breaks open.

Using a liquid measuring cup, carefully remove 2 cups of the hot soup, including broth, veggies and rice, and put it in a blender, along with 1 cup of water. Drain the cashews, then add them and the dried sage to the blender. Blend on high for about 1 minute, until creamy. Pour the creamy mixture back into the soup. Add the soy sauce. Taste and, if needed, add the remaining 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt. Adjust seasonings as desired. Garnish with freshly ground pepper. 🥄

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