

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2020

# CONNECTION

**BROADBAND:**  
HELPING YOU THRIVE



## MAKING HER MARK

Liz Rackl creates  
artwork from stone

## COMFORTS OF HOME

Ronald McDonald House  
helps families in need

## A HIGH-TECH LIFELINE

Telemedicine powers up  
rural health care





— By SHIRLEY BLOOMFIELD, CEO —  
NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association

## A good way to start the New Year

**N**TCA members make a real difference in their communities, and in the lives of the people they serve. I was reminded of this a few weeks ago when the Foundation for Rural Service announced it had awarded \$100,000 in FRS Community Grants to groups throughout the U.S. FRS is the nonprofit arm of NTCA that supports rural telecom companies, consumers and policymakers with educational information, products and programming.

Each year, community organizations apply for FRS grants to help them tackle challenges ranging from accessing technology and improving educational offerings to providing telemedicine and first-responder services to rural areas. Applications are sponsored by their local telco.

It was also exciting to see the USDA award several ReConnect grants and loans to NTCA members toward the end of the year. This program represents yet another option for rural broadband funding, as well as an example of public/private partnerships at work to extend broadband to unserved communities.

After all, investments by federal and state agencies, coupled with the commitment of rural broadband providers, are key to our nation's progress in connecting the millions of citizens still without access to fast, reliable internet service.

These programs, as well as the engagement we saw among policymakers at our Telecom Executive Policy Summit in November, provide a strong start to 2020 and give me great hope for a strong new year for rural broadband. ☑



## Are you ready for a telehealth future?

Story by STEPHEN V. SMITH

**T**he presence of reliable broadband service holds great promise for rural America. While it touches many facets of life, broadband's greatest impact may very well be in the area of health care. Consider this statement from the Federal Communications Commission:

"Advances in telemedicine are transforming health care from a service delivered solely through traditional brick and mortar health care facilities to connected care options delivered via a broadband internet access connection directly to the patient's home or mobile location."

While reliable access to a broadband network is still out of reach for millions of rural Americans, hundreds of cooperative and independent telecommunications companies across the country are delivering world-class internet service, often over a fiber connection. If you received this magazine in the mail, your local telco is one of those leading-edge providers.

If access to broadband is becoming less of the challenge to telehealth's wide-scale availability, what is the greatest challenge? The FCC recently tasked the Intergovernmental Advisory Committee with studying and reporting on telehealth barriers and incentives. The report stated that "people-based" issues offer the most significant challenges to telehealth adoption. While this includes many factors, such as policy and licensing, broadband adoption is a leading concern.

In other words, the technology is there. Now, people need to embrace it.

"Increasing support must be given to rural and disadvantaged communities so that digital literacy and adoption does not exacerbate the digital divide," the IAC report states. Quite simply, the presence of broadband doesn't mean patients and doctors are ready to put it to use as part of their health care program.

Are you ready? Do you understand the implications of telehealth? What steps can you take toward enjoying its benefits?

Begin by asking your doctor what programs are available. This could include connected medical devices in your home or something as simple as remote monitoring via an app on your smartphone or tablet. Of course, access to telehealth starts with subscribing to broadband service that will support this life-changing technology. And once in place, broadband has the potential to enhance your life in many other ways as well. ☑

# Knowledge is power

Does your digital know-how stand up?



Story by NOBLE SPRAYBERRY

**C**onvenience and power. Internet services bring both. Online bill pay eliminates a tedious task. Social media can keep family ties strong or reconnect you with old friends. Streaming services bring a wealth of music, books and more.

But when it comes to digital tools, knowledge is power, and the Pew Research Center's recent "Americans and Digital Knowledge" report found that a majority of adults in the U.S.

could not correctly answer half of the survey's 10 multiple-choice questions.

Questions touched on security and a general understanding of technology. Here are a few of the queries, edited for clarity, focused on security and privacy — good information to know. The answers do include additional context and tips not included in the report.

## **Q** If a website uses cookies, it means that the site ...

**A:** Cookies allow websites to track user visits and site activity. They are common, and you are often tracked across the websites you visit.

## **Q** Where might someone encounter a phishing scam?

**A:** Phishing scams can occur on social media, websites, email or text messages. Each form of communication offers an avenue for exploitation. For additional tips to improve your online security, visit [FCC.gov/consumer-guides](https://www.fcc.gov/consumer-guides).

## **Q** What is the largest source of revenue for most major social media platforms? (Several possible options were listed.)

**A:** Advertising is the largest source of revenue for most social media

platforms. Often advertising is personalized to you by information gathered from not only your activities on a social media site but also your actions on other websites.

## **Q** When a website has a privacy policy, it means that the site ...

**A:** Privacy policies are contracts between websites and users about how those sites will use their data. Often long and legalistic, the agreements may outline how your private information can be used to target advertising or whether or not your information can be shared with other companies.

## **Q** What does it mean when a website has "https://" at the beginning of its URL, as opposed to "http://" without the "s"?

**A:** "https://" in a URL means that

information entered into the site is encrypted. Look for "https://" before completing any financial transaction on a site.

## **Q** Many web browsers offer a feature known as "private browsing" or "incognito mode." If someone opens a webpage on their computer at work using incognito mode, who will be able to see their online activities?

**A:** Private browsing mode only prevents someone using the same computer from seeing one's online activities. In most cases, your internet provider, including your phone wireless provider, can see all digital traffic passing from your device to the internet.

**Want to see the entire report?**

Do a Google search for "Pew Research Center and Americans and Digital Knowledge."



# We've arrived in the future

Welcome to 2020! I sincerely hope you and those close to you had a superb holiday season and that this new year is off to a wonderful start.



**KEVIN BEYER**

Chief Executive Officer

Something about beginning not only a new year but also a new decade makes 2020 feel like a year especially full of promise. For so long, the 2020s have seemed like the distant future. Now, we have arrived!

It's entertaining to look back and see what Hollywood, science fiction authors and big thinkers predicted for the future.

While I'm still waiting on the flying car and weekend trips to the moon that science fiction promised us, I catch myself from time to time thinking about how some of the things we take for granted every day would seem so futuristic to us just 20 or 30 years ago.

Here in the future, all of us carry around personal communication devices in our pockets that allow us to make video calls with people all over the world.

We can instantly download practically any book, movie or song in the world right to our tablets.

While we don't exactly have Rosie from "The Jetsons," we do have robots that vacuum our floors, manufacture products and even help perform surgeries.

We have software that can share photos around the world, alert us to emergencies and order almost anything we need for home delivery. Our watches can help detect heart problems. Our cars can give us directions to anywhere we want to go. And our homes can turn on lights, lock doors and change the temperature with just the sound of our voice.

Many of these things are becoming a normal part of our daily routine, but the 1980 or 1990 version of myself would have seen them as straight out of science fiction.

For those of us at Farmers Mutual and Federated Telephone, it's rewarding to know our network is what brings the future to our part of Minnesota. Whether it's our broadband service at your home or our network providing vital infrastructure to businesses, we're right at the heart of all of this futuristic technology. We worked hard to make that network and our Cooperatives even better over the last decade. It was certainly a decade of meaningful accomplishments and noteworthy milestones for us.

- We completed a fiber-to-the-premise network to every member in our traditional territories, which allows gigabit speeds to every member who requests it.
- We expanded our territories using federal grants, state grants and loans to double the size of our cooperatives. The expansion provides 100% fiber to the premise.
- We partnered with five other cooperatives to build and maintain a fiber ring with two data centers, which allows extremely reliable, fast connections to the internet.

Turning the page to 2020, we have some significant goals in mind in order to serve you better.

- We plan to build additional fiber rings to make sure there is capacity to handle the demands of a more connected world.
- We plan to partner with other telcos to build a statewide network that will then connect us directly to all 50 states and Canada.
- Our employees will continue to be technology experts who will help our members through the next evolution of technology.

Knowing that the only thing certain about the future is change, I think Farmers Mutual and Federated Telephone are primed to accomplish these goals and more. We're thankful for the opportunity to serve you in 2020 — and in the future. ☎

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**WORDSOUTH**

A CONTENT MARKETING COMPANY

On the Cover:



Ortonville's Liz Rackl, who found a new creative outlet etching stone artwork, discovered an opportunity in Big Stone City.  
See story Page 9.

## MTA SCHOLARSHIP

The Minnesota Telecom Alliance Foundation awards six \$2,000 scholarships to high school seniors graduating in 2020.

- 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](http://www.mnta.org) or see your school guidance counselor.

## FRS 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.

Eligibility:

- Student must be age 16 or 17 years old 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. 17, 2020.

## FRS SCHOLARSHIPS

The Foundation for Rural Service, through its partnership with the National Telecommunications Cooperative 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 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](http://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 February 17, 2020 to allow time for the signature to be obtained.



The deadline for submitting applications for the MTA Scholarship, FRS Scholarship and Youth Tour is Feb 17.

# A winter tradition

## Challenging The Birkie

Story by ANNE BRALY

The trails are eerily quiet until the woosh of skis interrupts the silence — albeit quickly — as a lone skier races past. There are no interruptions and no long lift lines or crowded bunny trails to block the sheer joy of being out in nature. That joy is one of several things that attracts cross-country skiers to what is considered one of the most demanding physical regimens known to man.



“It’s all about the thrill and enjoyment of knowing you’re working out and, at the same time, enjoying the solitude with nature and the landscape around you,” says cross-country skier Kris Sperstad. “You are, in fact, double dipping.”

After a two-year sabbatical from the American Birkebeiner, Sperstad will join thousands of competitors in the world’s largest cross-country ski race. The event also includes two shorter races, the Kortelopet — 25 kilometers — and the Prince Haakon — 15 kilometers. This year marks Sperstad’s 20th American Birkebeiner. He’s also participated in two Kortelopet races.

The Birkie Trail runs through the hills between the Wisconsin towns of Cable and Hayward, both of which typically receive enough snowfall to accommodate the action. “Cross-country is an endurance sport, which requires a high intensity of aerobic activity and energy expenditure,” Sperstad says.

Most cross-country ski races are marathons covering distances between 15 and 35 kilometers over various types of terrain. The Birkie is 55 kilometers long. “As a result, the energy consumption and aerobic capacity is significant and over twice what downhill skiing typically requires,” Sperstad says.

But it’s not all about competition. “It’s also about the camaraderies and the friendships that develop each year. Then, you finish the race on Main Street in Hayward at the end of the race and celebrate with a beer or two,” Sperstad says.

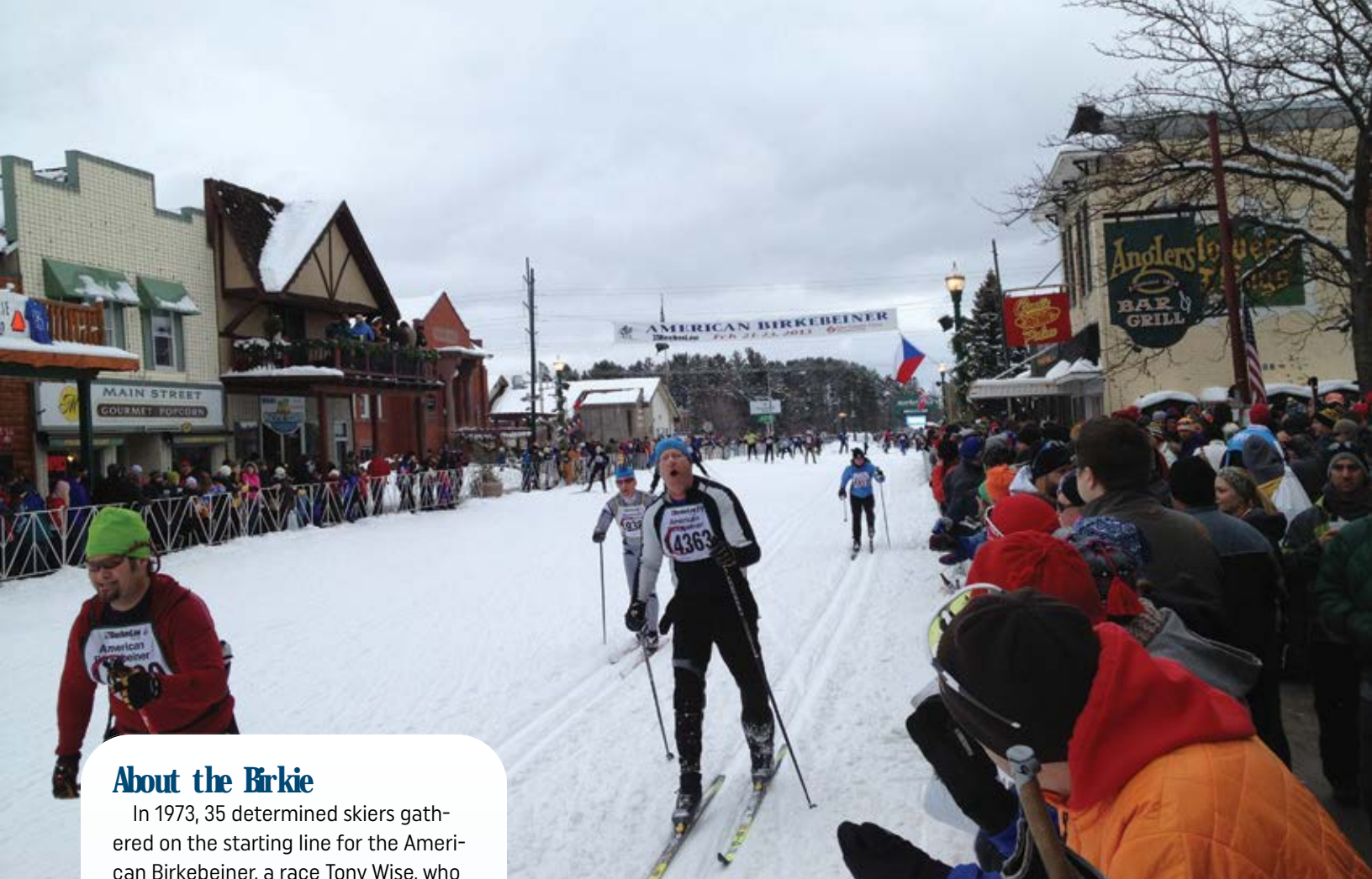
He first took to the trails in college, spending a winter weekend at a friend’s cabin in Hayward. Now in his 60s and preparing to retire from a teaching career at Chippewa Valley Technical College, cross-country skiing is something he plans to continue.

“It’s a sport that you can compete in well into your 60s and 70s,” he says.

Though she’s never taken part in The Birkie, Wisconsinite Patty McGown says the annual race is “a big deal and a commitment to train and a way for people to get into cross-country skiing.”

McGown, though, skis just for the love of it, not the competition. “Even when it’s cold outside, skiing warms me up, and I can be outside and enjoy the wonders of winter,” she says. “It’s good for my soul.”





## About the Birkie

In 1973, 35 determined skiers gathered on the starting line for the American Birkebeiner, a race Tony Wise, who developed the Telemark Ski Area in Cable, Wisconsin, began. At 55 kilometers, The American Birkebeiner is the largest and one of the longest cross-country ski races in North America.

This year, the race season will begin with the Kortelopet and Prince Haakon races on Friday, Feb. 21, followed by the American Birkebeiner on Saturday, Feb. 22. But The Birkie isn't just about skiing. Events happen year-round, even when the weather warms.

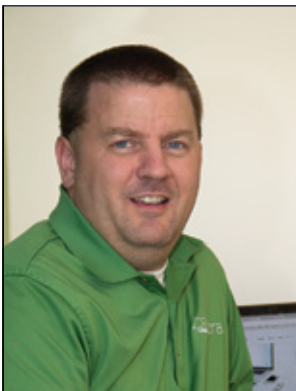
The Fat Bike Birkie, scheduled for March 6 and 7, is the premier on-snow bike event in North America. Riders test their skill and endurance on the professionally groomed American Birkebeiner Ski Trail. Competitors choose from three events: a 47K, 21K or 10K.

There are programs for kids year-round that range from teaching children to ski to mountain biking camps for kids in the summer. For a complete list of events and more information on The American Birkebeiner 2020, visit [www.birkie.com](http://www.birkie.com).

## On the trail

Here are a few trails in the area that cross-country skiers love.

- ▶ Kris Sperstad, of Eau Claire, Wisconsin, and 19-time participant in The Birkie, says the Rib Lake ski area in Rib Lake, Wisconsin, is "groomed well and provides thick woods and great views of the area."
- ▶ Randy Schullo of Bloomer, Wisconsin, and four-time participant in The Birkie, enjoys Timberland Hills in Barronett, Wisconsin. "It's well-groomed, beautiful and has challenging trails, plus it has a lighted west-side loop for after-dark training," he says.
- ▶ Patty McGown, of Rice Lake, Wisconsin, is a skate skier and a back-country skier who loves to ski the trails in her state's Blue Hills. "There are miles and miles of trails that wind their way through trees, big and little hills, dales, lakes, and ponds. I can drive out and ski for an hour or a day and clear my mind while strengthening my body," she says.
- ▶ Lorne Majewski is a science teacher and athletic director at Cumberland High School in Cumberland, Wisconsin. This year will mark his 20th American Birkebeiner. He does all of his training at Timberland Hills. His favorite trail is the loop that takes him over Odden's Ridge. "What I really like to do is to ski a figure eight through the trail system. It gets me to hit a lot of the big hills, and the terrain is very similar to what a person skis when they do The Birkie," he says.
- ▶ Bill Cutsforth of Rice Lake, Wisconsin, has raced the American Birkebeiner 11 times and looks forward to his 12th trip this year. Leading up to the competition, he trains at Blue Hills and at the local high school, Barron High School, where there's a 3K track that's lighted, so "you can ski all night long." 📺



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



##### YubiKey 5

Are you serious about two-factor security? Take the next step and purchase a hardware authentication device such as the YubiKey 5. Then, register the key with your personal accounts and services. The key works with a variety of authentication standards, including those used by Google and Facebook. It also works on Windows and Mac computers and, depending on the model, can be used with apps accessed on your phone.

**Available at**  
**[www.yubico.com](http://www.yubico.com)**  
\$45-\$70 MSRP.



# Protect yourself

## Great passwords make a difference

**P**asswords — the dirty little secret is that no matter how many numb3rs you put in them or how many uPperCase-loweR-case combinations you use, they are vulnerable.

So, what can you do to better protect your information? The easiest way is to use two-factor authentication.

#### HOW DOES TWO-FACTOR AUTHENTICATION WORK?

After you use your password, you will be asked to provide a second form of identification. You might need to access an app on your phone, input a one-time-use code from a text message or email, or, if you have one, use a hardware security key. The idea is that this other piece of identification is something that only you can access. For example, a hacker who has your iCloud password still won't have your phone or the password to your email.

While two-factor authentication grants additional security, it isn't foolproof. Verification through text message or email is the most common form, but those messages are also the easiest to crack by someone with time and dedication.

An app on your phone or a hardware key offers more protection, but you're also stuck if you lose those devices. This usually means a call to customer service unless you remembered to save the backup codes that you can use to disable two-factor authentication, which, of

course, you put in a safe, easy-to-remember location, right?


#### WHY MUST TWO-FACTOR AUTHENTICATION BE SO ANNOYING?

Whether it's waiting for that email or text to arrive or just having to input the passcode, it takes longer to access your account than when you're using a single password.

Conversely, it seems not a week goes by without news of a data breach. The best way to approach the disruption caused by two-factor authentication is accepting it as the cost of doing business online.

#### HOW DO I START USING TWO-FACTOR AUTHENTICATION?

For most of the consumer services that you use, turning on this extra layer is as easy as opting in. Most of the time, the option will be under security settings. On Facebook, for example, you would go to your settings, then select Security and Login. Once you are on that screen, you will see a box that allows you to turn on two-factor authentication. For Google, go to your account and click on Security. Then select 2-Step Verification.

Using two-factor authentication is simple, only mildly inconvenient and will help keep your private information secure. Why not give it a try? 



# Rock Solid Art

## Local artist cuts new path in granite

Story by JOHN CLAYTON

All artists want their creations to be remembered, but the work of Ortonville's Liz Rackl is quite literally etched in stone.

Rackl worked in more traditional mediums like watercolors and acrylics over the course of her 30-year career in Minnesota's Twin Cities. When she and her husband, Cal, moved to a quiet farm away from the cities in 2007, she accepted the very real possibility that she wouldn't be able to find work as an artist so far out.

"I was still going to need to work part time," Rackl says. "I started to look for a job and didn't anticipate that I would find anything in my field."

But a job opening a few miles away in Big Stone City not only provided Rackl with the part-time work she needed, but it also opened the door to a new medium. When the resident artist at Rausch Granite Monuments retired, Rackl seized the opportunity to use her artistic skills.

### SOLID ART

Rausch Granite Monuments, with its beginnings in Ortonville dating to 1932, also has a countertops division, but Rackl's focus began with the monuments and creating art for the memorials to stand the test of time. "It was fascinating," she says. "It was also a challenge and fun. It was basically that I got to take my skill set to a different medium. I wanted to see where and how far I could push the envelope with a piece of stone as far as making our work go on it."

In 2012, her employers asked if she'd ever attempted hand etching, which would expand her ability to work with the stones and be more creative. "They told me to just let them know what I needed," she recalls.

Later that year, Rackl applied for and received a Southwest Minnesota Arts Council Individual Artist: Developing Artist Grant, which she used to travel to Elberton, Georgia, to study granite etching techniques under artist Anne Jensen.

Rackl says the diamond etching process she learned uses a rotary cutting tool with a diamond tip to remove the polish from the granite's surface. After that, special paint can go on the unpolished areas. She soon began showing her new medium at regional shows and galleries.

"It really was unique and different," she says. "I think it's more common in the Southern states, but not so much up here, so it was a curiosity for people."

### HELPING OTHERS

In addition to producing the art itself, Rackl has given demonstrations and put together programs for children and adults so they can get hands-on with the medium. "They can create a piece of art and take it home with them," she says.

She creates most of the custom art for Rausch Granite Monuments with a new tablet that allows her to create her designs electronically, and she often works from home. Rackl also launched a website for her Yellow Mustard Seed Studio in October, [wildmustardseed.com](http://wildmustardseed.com). "That wouldn't be possible at all if we didn't have access to high-speed internet through Farmers Mutual," she says.

Rackl, who has done commissioned pieces for the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and firefighter groups, says her favorite piece is usually the last one she did, such as an owl she recently created for a retiring staffer at MDNR. "They're 12-by-12 framed pieces that they give as gifts to people who are retiring," she says. "The owl had a skink lizard, which is a Minnesota lizard, in his claw and prairie flowers below it. That one turned out pretty cool I thought."



It can take many hours for Rackl to etch fine details into the stone slabs.





# Telemedicine changes the health care landscape

## Broadband makes a difference daily

Imagine a world with greater health care accessibility, as convenient as contacting a physician from your home. Or consider a medical system where rural communities can easily connect in real time with specialists based dozens, if not hundreds, of miles away.

Broadband technology provides the key link between you and medical providers needed to make those innovations and others possible, and that more convenient, healthier world is becoming a reality for rural communities across the nation. The systems are not yet what they one day may become, but every day more and more people are receiving the benefits of telemedicine. And the results are often profound.

Kentucky veterans have easier access to important care. Changing laws in states such as Texas allow greater access to telemedicine. Telestroke programs in Minnesota and North Dakota save vital minutes when patients most need care. And those are just a few examples of broadband technology changing health care for the better.

### KENTUCKY VETERANS

In rural Kentucky, getting to and from an appointment at any medical specialist can often require hours of travel. But when you're a veteran trying to get to a Veterans Administration Medical Center in a metropolitan area, travel times can increase even more. And a veteran might need multiple doctors and have multiple appointments scheduled on different days.

An innovative pilot program in a mountainous section of eastern Kentucky is helping to change that. The Virtual Living Room program, which started in 2017 in McKee, offers vets a comfortable and private room in their local library complete with high-speed internet access to visit with VA health care providers located more than an hour's drive away.

The program, available for setup at other qualifying sites, not only illustrates the potential of telemedicine but also shows the efforts being made to create a system capable of benefiting as many people as possible.

The McKee Virtual Living Room is a collaboration among four organizations: the VA, NTCA—The Rural Broadband Association, the rural telecom provider Peoples Rural Telephone Cooperative and the Jackson County Public Library. The VA has provided telehealth services for several years, but it can't happen if vets don't have access to high-speed internet connections either in their homes or nearby.

"The rest of the country, like us, really admires our veterans," says Keith Gabbard, chief executive officer of PRTC. "Before the project, we saw veterans spending the day in a waiting room at the hospital, and when they live an hour and a half away, it's pretty much an all-day event for a veteran to get health care."

Fast fiber optic internet networks make telemedicine a realistic option for more and more communities, and the cooperative was a leader in establishing the Virtual Living Room at the Jackson County Public Library.

"We've done a lot to promote it, and the library staff and the veterans are really proud of it," Gabbard says. "It's a source of pride for our community, and it continues to grow. The Virtual Living Room is a beautiful area where veterans, even



◀ From left, Veterans Donald Barrett, Jim Bryant, Mike Montgomery, Bobby Lakes and Danny Robinson attend the ribbon cutting for Virtual Living Room in McKee, Kentucky.



if they don't have a doctor's appointment, can go and read a book. It feels like it's their home."

### CHANGING LAWS

While faster internet may provide the foundation for telemedicine services, the legal and regulatory framework of each state can play a role in determining the effectiveness of the programs.

In May 2017, Texas Gov. Greg Abbott signed a bill into law that leveled the playing field for telemedicine physicians and doctors who work in traditional office settings. In part, the law eliminated a requirement for a patient to first visit a physician in person before receiving care through telemedicine.

"The bill removed a lot of barriers, and we've seen an increase in queries about telehealth," says Becky Bounds, program manager for the TexLa Telehealth Resource Center in Lubbock, Texas. The federally funded center works to provide resources and technical assistance to telehealth programs in Texas and Louisiana.

Bounds says the internet-based tools offer key services. For example, Lubbock is home to the Timothy J. Harnar Regional Burn Center, which often receives patients injured while working in the industries of West Texas. After treatment and returning home, follow-up visits to Lubbock could require drives of five to six hours. However, a telemedicine-equipped clinic on the campus of Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center in El Paso allows patients to virtually visit with specialists in Lubbock.

"About 12% of the state's population lives in West Texas, and telehealth matters,"

Bounds says. "We are producing cotton, beef, oil and more, and we need health care for the workforce producing those products for the rest of the state and the nation."

### THE GOLDEN HOUR

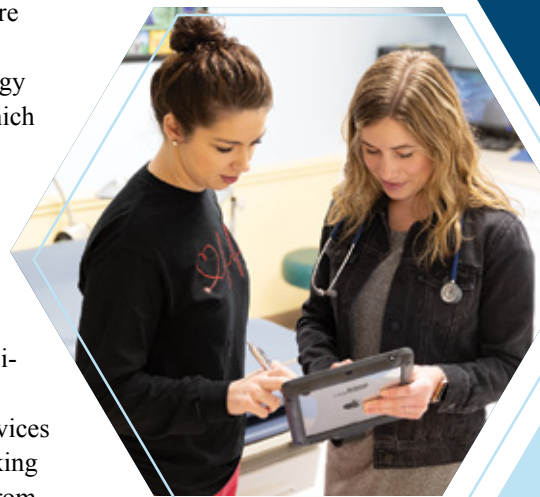
When it comes to treating a stroke, doctors have a saying: Time is brain. It's a reminder that every minute that passes between the event and treatment can lead to irreversible damage. Fortunately, telemedicine technology already gives doctors a fighting chance to begin treating patients before the critical "golden hour" passes.

One of the leaders for this technology in the Midwest is Essentia Health, which established telemedicine capabilities in each of its 17 hospitals, 70 clinics and eight nursing homes throughout Minnesota and North Dakota. With its telestroke program, emergency medical technicians can identify stroke patients on the way to the hospital and even begin treatment.


Essentia Director of Telehealth Services Laurie Hall recalls an ambulance picking up a rural patient nearly 90 minutes from the nearest hospital. In the past, serious brain damage would have been a near certainty for such a patient. But thanks to telestroke technology, EMTs diagnosed a stroke and began treatment about 45 minutes after the stroke occurred.

"The goal is to shorten that window from the time the patient has the event to the time they actually get those

clot-busting medications or the clot is removed," Hall says. "Getting that done so quickly is profound when you think about the injury that could happen from just those few extra minutes. It helps these patients get out of the hospital much quicker and to get on with their normal lives." 📞







Casie Weeding touches the hand of her newborn son, Leif.

# BIG SHOES TO FILL

Ronald McDonald House was there when Weedings needed it most

Story by JOHN CLAYTON

John Weeding collected pop tabs for years to benefit Ronald McDonald House Charities in the Twin Cities.

A container always sat on his desk, continuing a tradition his grandfather started and his father carried on. He just never dreamed he would need the Ronald McDonald House at Children's Minneapolis hospital.

Then, the nightmare came, along with a flurry of joy, celebration and near tragedy in the hours following the arrival of son Leif four years ago. "Within 24 hours after he was born, he was Life Flighted to Minneapolis," says Weeding, an IT technician with Acira, Farmers Mutual Telephone Co. and Federated Telephone Cooperative. "I was driving to Minneapolis and left my wife there at the local hospital. It was our first child, so that was a roller coaster of emotions."

## A PLACE OF HOPE

Weeding's wife, Casie, joined her husband and newborn at Children's Minneapolis soon thereafter. The couple would spend many nights at the hospital's Ronald McDonald House or in a hotel room nearby, which the charity had been able to arrange.

As young Leif fought his battle with persistent pulmonary hypertension — a condition that limits the oxygen flow in the bloodstream and can be deadly — the young couple relied on the Ronald McDonald House as a place to temporarily call home while helping to care for their newborn son.

"We were doing everything from trying to nurse and formula supplementation at the hospital and then staying in Ronald



Families are able to find comfort at the Ronald McDonald House.

McDonald House or wherever we could get lodging at the time," Weeding says. "A good portion of our visit there was in the Ronald McDonald House. We'd have to check out every morning and check in every evening because they'd have to weigh cases — one family versus another — and factor in how long they'd traveled and the seriousness of the condition. There were only so many rooms, and they had a lot of people in need."

Leif's hospital stay, which included time in an oxygen chamber, lasted for around three weeks. Weeding says the Ronald McDonald House gave them a base of operations even when he and his wife were unable to stay there.

“The kitchen area was always open to us, 24/7,” he says. “We could always go back there and figure out what we had to do for the day and talk without having to do all of that right beside our son’s bed. At the time, you’re just in the moment trying to think about everything you need to do for your son.”

### A PLACE OF PEACE

Weeding says the Ronald McDonald House not only provided shelter and comfort to the couple while they were in the Twin Cities, but the program allowed them to have some peace of mind after the ordeal was over and Leif came home as a happy and healthy infant. “With all the insurance claims and everything, you have to process all that when everything is said and done,” he says. “Because you’re dependent on insurance and what it covers and doesn’t cover, it can become a huge burden, and that burden was really offset by the Ronald McDonald House there, for sure.”

The Weeding family has since grown to five with two younger children, and Leif is healthy thanks to the quick work of the local hospital and Children’s Minneapolis.

“He’s a perfectly healthy 4-year-old boy now,” Weeding says. 📞

Casie and John Weeding with their eldest son, Leif; younger son, Alaric; and daughter, Maeve.



## HOW YOU CAN HELP

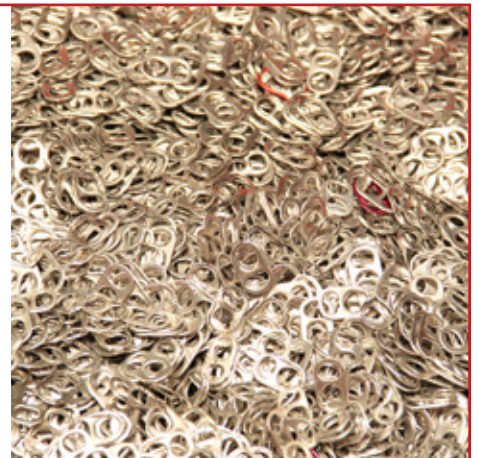
Each individual Ronald McDonald House Charities chapter, including the Twin Cities Ronald McDonald Houses and Family Rooms, collects its own pop tabs in support of its programs.

Although a seemingly small gesture, collecting pop tabs can make a big difference. Since its founding in 1987, the Pop Tab Collection Program has raised more than \$800,000 for the Twin Cities chapter, which serves more than 6,600 families annually.

Schools, churches, scout troops, businesses and other organizations, along with families and individuals, can collect pop tabs. To learn more about how to help, visit [rmhtwincities.org](http://rmhtwincities.org).



Deric Radermacher, left, has collected pull tabs for many years, inspired by Ron Nelson, a family friend with polio.



## RADERMACHER DEDICATED TO CAUSE

**Deric Radermacher says he's addicted at this point**

Radermacher, 21, has been collecting pop tabs for the Ronald McDonald House Charities, Upper Midwest, since the age of 10. He's handed over around 1,500 pounds over the years to support the charity, which provides 48 rooms for patients and their families at Children's Minneapolis and the University of Minnesota Children's Hospital.

Even as a cadet at the University of North Georgia, one of a half-dozen military colleges in the country, Radermacher has stayed dedicated to his annual pop tab collections.

“Even when we’re at the beach on vacation, we can’t help but pick up a tab if we see it, and we take them home with us,” Radermacher says, adding that the practice has sparked some interesting conversations with airport security.

Now, the Ortonville native says he has to balance his charity work with Ronald McDonald House with school, which is preparing him for a future career as a U.S. Army officer. “This whole summer, I’ve been home and I’ve cleaned out garages, and I still collect on Wednesday evenings,” he says. “My family owns a restaurant and bar, so the whole year it’s kind of a drop-off point.”

Though he’s often away for college, Radermacher says he has a small group of volunteers who help with his collections throughout the year. But when he returns home for the Christmas holidays, Radermacher says he will make his annual delivery to the Ronald McDonald House to help fund the program that provides free lodging to families going through medical crises.

“It’s been a huge part of me,” Radermacher says of his pull-tab collecting. “There’s been kids in my community who have needed help, and we live three-and-a-half hours away. So, it’s almost essential that the parents have some place to stay when their kids are in the hospital, and this helps provide a place for them.”



# Ooey gooey chewy — *Pizza*

## Warm up a cold day with a perfect slice

**P**izza has been a favorite food of Americans for decade upon decade. From Super Bowl parties and birthday bashes to date nights and busy weeknights, children and adults devour slice after slice. When you are craving pizza, there is just nothing else that will do.

And that's what Minnesotans are doing when they're in Minneapolis.

Ann Kim and her husband, Conrad Leifur, opened Pizzeria Lola 10 years ago. It didn't take long for the restaurant to gain national attention. Just two years after opening, the world saw Kim's pizzas on an episode of Guy Fieri's popular Food Network show, "Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives."

Restaurant manager Emily O'Brien says business picked up after the show aired, but Minnesotans, including local and national Food Network celebrity Andrew Zimmern, already knew how good the pizza was. "Minneapolis was falling in love with us organically at the same time," O'Brien says. "But we're so happy that the show helped us reach a group of people in the nation — and world, I suppose — that we may not have reached on our own."

Kim was already used to the spotlight. Before opening her first restaurant, she was an actress. Leifur was in finance. The couple now owns two more restaurants — Hello Pizza and Young Joni. They were each ready for a new adventure, however, after passing a corner grocery store and seeing its potential as a neighborhood pizza place. They spent their last bit of savings to rent, renovate and open it as Pizzeria Lola.

The restaurant now packs customers in. There's dining outside on nice days. Inside, a huge round copper-sided,

wood-fired pizza oven dominates the dining room, and workers with long paddles move pizzas around the flame, getting the artisan crusts to their perfect, mouthwatering state — crispy and slightly burned on the edges.

The actress-turned-pizza chef traveled to San Francisco to study the art of making artisan pizza under famed Italian pizza chef Tony Gemignani, a 13-time world pizza champion. There are major differences between artisan pizzas and those found in national chains. It starts with the crust. "Our dough is made with a delicate hand, the best ingredients, and is treated like a living, breathing thing, which it is," O'Brien notes.

Toppings, too, are important. Even the simplest pepperonis are of the highest quality, not to mention some of the more unusual toppings, such as that found on the Korean BBQ pizza — beef short ribs, mozzarella, scallions, arugula, sesame and soy-chili vinaigrette. It's quickly become a house favorite.

That dedication to quality and consistency is part of what made O'Brien James Beard's Best Chef Midwest for her work at Young Joni.

Is it possible to make a good, artisan pizza at home? O'Brien gives a hearty "yes!" "Good pizza is possible anywhere with heart, balance and creativity," she says.



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



**Chef Ann Kim**  
masters the art  
of a great pie at  
Pizzeria Lola.

## *Get a piece of the pie*

**Where:** Pizzeria Lola, 5557 Xerxes Ave., Minneapolis

**Hours:** 11 a.m.-10 p.m. seven days a week

**Contact:** [www.pizzerialola.com](http://www.pizzerialola.com) or 612-424-8338

### A few tips:

- Don't put on too many toppings. Keep your crust, cheese, sauce and toppings balanced — just enough of each in every bite.
- Use the best quality ingredients you can find.
- Leave room for failure. Extra pizza that's not quite perfect is a huge perk of making pizza — the cook's treat!

—Emily O'Brien





## Artisan Pizza

*Though this is not Pizzeria Lola's recipe, it's a good one for beginners.*

- 3 cups plus 3 tablespoons lukewarm water (100 F or below)
- 1/3 cup olive oil
- 1 tablespoon granulated yeast
- 1 1/2 tablespoons kosher salt
- 7 1/2 cups unbleached all-purpose flour

Combine warm water, olive oil, yeast and salt in a 5-quart bowl, preferably a lidded, but not airtight, plastic container. Measure the flour using a "scoop and sweep" method. Reach into the flour bin with your measuring cup, scoop up a full measure all at once, and sweep it level with a knife. Mix until all of the flour is incorporated (kneading is not

necessary) using a wooden spoon or a food processor with a dough attachment. Cover with a non-airtight lid. Allow to rise at room temperature for 2 hours. Do not punch down. You want to retain as much gas in the dough as possible. A reduction in gas will make your pizzas and flatbreads dense. Refrigerate and use over the next 14 days. Refrigerate at least 3 hours before using.

**To make:** A half-hour before you're ready to bake, place a pizza stone in the bottom third of the oven and heat it at your oven's highest temperature. Prepare and organize your toppings. Dust a pizza peel or a large cutting board/flat cookie sheet with enough flour or cornmeal to easily transfer the pizza over to the hot stone. Pull up and cut off a 1/2-pound (orange-size) piece of dough.

Using a little flour (enough so it won't stick to your fingers), stretch and shape the dough into a ball. Sprinkle your work area with a little flour. Using your hands or a rolling pin, roll out and stretch the dough until it is approximately 1/8-inch thick and 12 inches wide.

Place the finished dough onto the prepared pizza peel. Then, add the toppings of your choice. Carefully slide the pizza onto the hot stone. If it isn't sliding, sprinkle more flour or cornmeal between the pizza and the pizza peel until the pizza moves. Check for doneness after 8-10 minutes — it may take a few minutes longer. Turn the pizza around if one side is browning faster than the other. Allow to cool slightly on a wire rack before serving. 🍷



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