

JULY/AUGUST 2020

CONNECTION

BROADBAND:
HELPING YOU FARM



A RETURN TO CLASSICS

Inherit Clothing creates timeless fashions

ON 'CLOUD NINE'

Nick Moser sets sights on Nashville skyline

GROWING THE FUTURE

Broadband revolutionizes agriculture





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

Taking the rural broadband story to the Senate

In mid-May, I appeared before the Senate Commerce Committee to discuss the status of broadband during this time of crisis that has so many Americans working, learning and socializing from home.

I have never been more proud of the broadband providers we represent, watching them move quickly and think outside the box to get the job done for their customers. It was a privilege to share with senators that NTCA's community-based broadband providers were well prepared to keep Americans connected during a crisis — thanks to their community commitment, their entrepreneurial spirit and the support of Congress, the FCC and RUS.

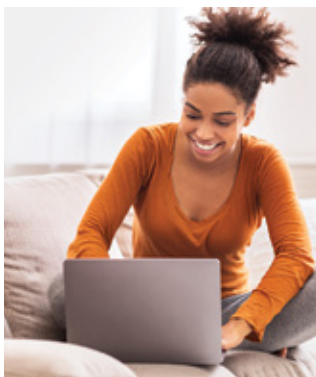
NTCA members have led the charge in building future-proof broadband networks for years and are doing all they can to keep everyone's internet lights on. But I reminded the committee that to do that, these providers need to keep their own lights on as well.

First, I reminded senators how important it will be to pass the "Keeping Critical Connections Act" to create a temporary emergency fund to keep Americans connected during the pandemic.

Moving forward, Congress should adopt a "Forever Connected" perspective when it comes to promoting broadband. No American should get second-class broadband service, or worse yet, no service at all.

I appreciated the opportunity to share with senators the story of NTCA members, the Smart Rural Communities they are helping to build, and what support they need to write the next chapter. 📺

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The six-second commute

Work from home policies boost productivity

Story by KALEIGH COX



According to a 2017 Gallup poll, 43% of employed Americans have spent at least some time working remotely. U.S. census data released in 2018 revealed that 5.2% of American workers are based entirely at home. Many employers, however, are reluctant to get on board with remote work. They worry that distractions at home and a lack of oversight could decrease productivity. But are those worries unfounded? One Stanford professor decided to find out.

In 2015, Nicholas Bloom conducted research as a Chinese travel agency tested a new work-from-home policy with half of its call center employees. Bloom found that productivity actually increased by an average of 13% thanks to fewer interruptions, shorter breaks and fewer sick days. With just a six-second commute to their laptop, employees were also less likely to start work late or leave early.

Little bits of time saved here and there added up to a big difference. Each employee completed roughly one extra shift's worth of work. And they were happier, too. Employee attrition, formerly a big problem at the company, decreased by an astounding 50%. The company in Bloom's study cut back on its office space in an expensive city and saved \$2,000 per employee.

Working from home is great for employers and employees alike, but there are challenges to keep in mind. At the end of the study,

over half of the work-from-home employees decided they wouldn't want to work from home 100% of the time, citing isolation as a challenge. Fortunately, there are several ways remote companies can help employees overcome isolation and reap the benefits of working from home:

- **Use technology to stay connected.** Video meetings allow for face-to-face time and are more engaging than audio-only conference calls. Platforms like Slack encourage steady communication, even between meetings.
- **Consider flexible policies.** Working from home doesn't have to be all or nothing. Some companies opt for a mix of in-office and at-home days or start new employees in the office for smoother onboarding. The key is to consider the unique needs of the team and experiment with creative options as needed.
- **Encourage team bonding.** A sense of community can combat feelings of isolation and encourage team cohesion. Non-work-related, group bonding activities — whether virtual or in person — can help teams feel connected and united even as they work from home.

Working from home can save companies time and money, improve employee satisfaction and improve retention rates — as long as they find ways to keep employees connected and engaged from wherever they call home. ☎

Stay focused with the Pomodoro Technique

Named after the creator's tomato-shaped kitchen timer, the Pomodoro Technique is a simple time-management strategy widely used by work-from-home employees who need help staying focused. Here's how it works:

- » Select a task to focus on.
- » Set your timer for 25 minutes and work until you hear the "ding."
- » Take a short five-minute break to stretch or grab a coffee.
- » Repeat three more times, then take a longer break of 15-30 minutes.

Even large tasks feel manageable when you only have to focus for 25 minutes at a time. Set a kitchen timer, use your phone's timer or download a Pomodoro app to try this "time-tested" technique for yourself.

Thank you to our farmers

There are many ways this year's pandemic is going to change the way America thinks about things. One of those ways, I hope, is that we remember those who keep our society running.



KEVIN BEYER

Chief Executive Officer

Last issue, I outlined how broadband has provided an essential service during the pandemic for the millions of people who've had to adjust to working or attending school online. But in this issue, we're focusing on something even more essential: the farmers, ranchers and other agricultural producers who put food on our tables, lumber in our houses and clothes on our backs.

A steady supply of food and other agricultural products at the store is something many of us frequently took for granted. But the spiking demand and supply chain disruptions this year have made me appreciate when there is chicken in the meat case, fresh vegetables in the produce department and stocked shelves on the paper products aisle.

I think our nation's farmers — including those right here in Minnesota — have become some of the most underappreciated but absolutely critical people in this country.

So in light of that, I want to take this space to say thank you.


Thanks to the dairy workers for getting up early for milking. Thanks to the row crop farmers for long days of plowing, planting and harvesting. Thank you to all the fruit growers and pickers in the orchards. A sincere thank you to those raising and butchering our beef, poultry and pork. Thank you to all of those growing and cutting timber. Thank you to all of the beekeepers tending to their hives, the hay farmers storing their bales, the egg farmers in their chicken houses and the grape growers in their vineyards. Thank you to all of the extension agents who help share knowledge between all of those groups.

Whether they're producing beef or beans, cotton or canola, pumpkins, or peanuts, our agricultural producers deserve our appreciation.

Every growing season they risk their financial future, and they must pray for the right weather and good yields. But they're also adapting to changing demands and industry trends.

For anyone who hasn't been out on a farm lately, you might be surprised to find how much technology is in the fields and barns. Farmers use sensors to check soil and moisture conditions, watch temperatures in chicken houses, monitor levels of chemicals in their tanks, order seeds and parts, keep up with commodity prices and find new markets to sell their products.

In this issue, we're happy to highlight the hard work farmers put in to keep America moving and the growing role technology plays in helping their operations run smoothly. It's important to remember that many of the founders of our cooperative were farmers who realized the need for telephone technology, just as they appreciate the need for broadband today.

I'm thankful for all of the members of our local agriculture community and proud to still be their technology partner. 

CONNECTION

JULY/AUGUST 2020

VOL. 4, NO. 4

Connection is a bimonthly newsletter published by Farmers Mutual and Federated Telephone, © 2020. It is distributed without charge to all of our customers.



POWERED BY FARMERS MUTUAL TELEPHONE COMPANY
AND FEDERATED TELEPHONE COOPERATIVE

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WORDSOUTH

A CONTENT MARKETING COMPANY

On the Cover:



Owner Amy Ekren and her husband, Anthony, have taken her classic concepts to amazing heights with Inherit Clothing Company. See story Page 12.

Thank you!

Farmers Mutual and Federated Telephone sincerely appreciate all of the members of our community who are hard at work keeping us safe during the COVID-19 crisis.



HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS



FIRST RESPONDERS



GROCERY STORE EMPLOYEES



PHARMACY EMPLOYEES



DELIVERY DRIVERS



PLUS SO MANY OTHERS

The dedication, bravery and sacrifice demonstrated daily are an inspiration to us all. You and your families are on our minds and in our hearts during these difficult days. **THANK YOU** for all you do to keep our community safe and healthy!

Summer experience

Farmers Mutual and Federated Telephone are providing summer internships for two area students.



MaKayla Wildung will work with the Customer Experience Specialists in the Bellingham office. She is in her second year at Lake Area Tech.



Ross Marty is interning with the Outside Plant Department in the Chokio office. He will be a junior at Chokio-Alberta High School.

Congrats to our 2020 scholarship winners

Earlier this year, the Minnesota Telecom Alliance received 110 scholarship applications from across the state. Two winning students are from the Stevens County area.



Carter deNeui, who will graduate from Chokio-Alberta High School, plans to attend St. Cloud State University. He is the son of

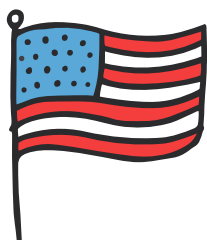
Lucas and Maggie deNeui of Chokio. He received a \$2,000 Information Technology scholarship.



Gideon Joos, who will graduate from Hancock Public School, plans to attend North Dakota State College of Science. He

is the son of Shane and Bridget Joos of Hancock. He received a \$2,000 General Scholarship.

"We're happy to have this chance to make an investment in these students' college education," says Kevin Beyer, general manager. "Rural communities need educated and talented young people to be our leaders of the future. It makes us all proud at Federated Telephone when we have a statewide winner selected from our area."



Farmers Mutual and Federated Telephone wish you a happy Fourth of July!

In recognition of Independence Day, our offices will be closed on Friday, July 3.



SWEET & SIMPLE

Gerbera daisies are a colorful burst of sunshine



They start out so colorful and add such a happy touch to your outdoor setting, but with the heat of summer, gerbera daisies begin to lose their appeal. Their healthy, green leaves brown as the heat rises.

But all is not lost — your daisies can come back to life with a little love and flower power on your part.

Gerbera daisies are a popular flower for both the home and garden. You can cut them and make a stunning, multicolored bouquet. They put on quite a show with their rainbow of colors, which is one of the most distinctive qualities of gerberas. They range from beautiful reds, cheery yellows, bright pinks and vivid whites to perfect purples, soft peach and more. And while you may see blue and green gerberas, those are most likely victims of artificial coloring.

“They really are a customer favorite,” says Cole Webster, general manager of The Barn Nursery in Chattanooga, Tennessee. “They’re bright, fun and an iconic bloom. When I think of summer and warm weather, I think of gerbera daisies.”

With proper care, though, these blooms can last well past spring and through the heat of summer — and possibly through the cold of winter.





HERE ARE SOME TIPS WEBSTER OFFERS TO ENSURE THEIR SURVIVAL:

- * Gerbera daisies should be watered every couple of days. It's easy to tell if they're desperate for a drink. The leaves sag, and the blooms wilt. "I like telling people to water them whenever you think about it," Webster says.
- * The best time to water is in the morning. But if you forget, water in the afternoon. Don't wait until the next day. If you're thirsty, you don't tell yourself you'll wait until tomorrow to get something to drink.
- * Fertilize every three weeks. For container plants, Webster recommends a product like Scotts Super Bloom or some other plant food that has a high phosphorus level to help promote big blooms. If you plant your daisies in the ground, a slow-release fertilizer is your best bet.
- * Gerberas are sun-loving plants, but sun is too much of a good thing when temperatures climb to 90 degrees and higher. This is the time of year you should

limit their sunning to mornings, moving them into the shade in the heat of the afternoon.

- * Gerbera daisies can come back next year if you winterize them. In the South, particularly those areas where mild winters prevail, mulch the daisies well, and they'll reappear next spring. In areas that suffer through freezing winter temperatures, bring the daisies inside and place them in a bright window or greenhouse, watering and fertilizing as needed. Note, however, gerberas are more likely to come back and rebloom if they are planted outdoors. They can last for two to three years.
- * Use gerberas in an arrangement for a stunning, colorful showpiece. Their stems are hollow, allowing a wire to be inserted into them if needed for stability.
- * If you plan ahead, you can start gerberas from seed, but it will take about six months for them to reach maturity. Plant seeds around Thanksgiving for spring blooms. 🌸

A few things you might not know about gerbera daisies

Not only are gerbera daisies among the most popular flowers, but they also have an interesting history. They enjoy longevity, have medicinal uses and are made up of a surprisingly complex structure.

- * Dutchman Jan Frederic Gronovius wished to honor a German botanist and physician, Traugott Gerber, when naming the genus *Gerbera* in the 1700s.
- * Gerberas can last in a water-filled vase for two weeks, making them among the longest-lasting cut flowers.
- * The plant is also believed by many to have health benefits, pulling carbon dioxide and other toxins found in the air and discharging oxygen. Some people even place gerberas by their bedsides.
- * The structure of the gerbera is complex. At first, the flower seems to be a single flower head with many small petals. However, the gerbera flower actually consists of a huge cluster of hundreds of tinier flowers.
- * Scientific researchers have examined the daisies as they study the formation of flowers. And the flower is resistant to fungal diseases.
- * Similar to sunflowers, gerbera daisies track the sun. The flower turns as the light moves from east to west.
- * About 40 documented species of gerberas exist.

Source: flowerweb.com



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



Oculus Quest

If you've been looking to take a very real plunge into virtual reality, you can't go wrong with the Oculus Quest. The key difference between the Quest and other headsets is that it doesn't require you to be tethered to a powerful PC to run, although there's an optional cable available for PC gamers. You can also share your VR experience with others who can follow what you see using a TV or smartphone. Its simple setup, wireless gameplay and comfortable hardware make the Quest the best all-around VR device. \$399 MSRP 64 GB version, \$499 for 128 GB.



Level up Match your speed with your need

The old saying “a watched pot never boils” speaks to how slowly time can seem to pass. A newer saying, “a watched file never downloads,” may mean you need to upgrade your internet speed. As more and more of us work from home, participate in videoconferencing, stream high-definition content and take up online gaming, a slow connection may become a bottleneck.

The Federal Communications Commission considers broadband internet to have a minimum download speed of 25 Mbps and a minimum upload speed of 3 Mbps. This is the standard you can use when you're thinking of what fast internet means.

So, how do you determine what speed is right for you? It really depends on the services you use and how many household members take advantage of them. If all you do is general browsing or email, you can get away with lower speeds. Demand spikes, however, once you start launching high-demand applications such as HD video, multiplayer games, or frequent file downloads and uploads.

Even with their baseline of 25 Mbps download speeds for broadband, the FCC recommends faster speeds if you have two or more users or devices running those high-demand applications at the same time. For example,

families need higher speeds if a parent in the living room watches Netflix while the kids play Fortnite or stream YouTube videos in their bedrooms. If you add more users or devices, the need for faster connections becomes higher, even if they aren't running those high-demand services.

As our homes become smarter and we have more and more devices connected to the internet — smartphones, tablets, digital assistants, security systems, game consoles, etc. — higher speeds are necessary to get the most out of those devices. [🔗](#)

TERMS YOU SHOULD KNOW: MBPS

Mbps means “megabits per second,” and it is how internet speed is usually measured, although it's best thought of as how much data may be transferred. Latency refers to the time it takes for information to get from one point to another. Your internet speed is a mix of both. When you're downloading a file, think of it broken down and packed into a fleet of delivery trucks. Even if the trucks are fast (low latency), more of them can get to you on a six-lane highway (high Mbps) than on a country road (low Mbps).



Hitting the right note

Moser taking his shot in country music

Story by JOHN CLAYTON

One of Ione Eul's garage sale finds sat silent in a closet until grandson Nick Moser pulled it out.

The bargain 1970s-era Alvarez acoustic guitar changed everything for Moser, helping him set a course as a singer-songwriter.

Moser, 30, was 15 when he discovered the old guitar that loved ones would from then on refer to as "vintage." Five years later, he started to write his own songs and perform beyond the familiar groups of friends and family. "It was nothing fancy, but it worked," Moser recalls. "It was something I could strum on. There were a lot of hours in my teenage years that I spent trying to learn how to make it sound good and figuring it out."

Family is among the themes Moser addresses in the songs he writes and hopes one day will translate from Minnesota to Nashville. "It's a part of me, who I've become. It's my roots, where I came from. But that's what matters the most to me. I sure am proud of my family tree," Moser said. He sings the line in his original composition "Family Tree."

Moser says his grandmother was a regular at local garage sales and would buy just about any item if she thought she or someone in the family could use it. There was no way she could have foreseen where that shopping would lead her grandson.

"I opened the case up, and there was a guitar book in there, and it had little chord charts," he says. "That's really how I figured out how to play. Back then, I was just trying to figure everything out and get everything to sound like what you hear on

the radio." Moser has since graduated to many other guitars, and his own band — aptly named the Nick Moser Band — often backs him in gigs across the region.

GETTING STARTED

Thirteen years after picking up that guitar for the first time and teaching himself to play, Moser played his first gig, at a local brewery, mixing in original songs with some popular country he had learned over the years.

"Usually, with breweries, it's kind of a different setting than a bar, so a lot of people actually go to breweries to listen to original music," he says. "So I had quite a bit of original music, and then I had some of the songs that were on the radio, and maybe a little early 2000s country, just a little of the older stuff. I tried to sprinkle in a little bit for everybody."

Since that debut, Moser has added the band for some performances and goes solo at others. He has also recorded original music, which can be found on his website, nickmosermusic.com, and his YouTube channel. During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, he recorded solo acoustic videos for his Nick Moser Music Facebook page. He can also be found on streaming services, such as Apple Music and Spotify.

Moser balances all of it — the road, the gigs, the recordings — with his job in the family construction business and his home life with his wife, Alli, and their three daughters, Raelynn, 4, Brinlee, 2, and infant Jana, who arrived on Valentine's Day. "It's challenging at times," he says of

the balancing act. "But, at the end of the day, music is what I love."

Affordable and available recording technology and high-speed internet connections have allowed aspiring country artists like Moser to thrive and network outside of Nashville. He is among the members of the Midwest Country Music Association, which connects artists and even gives out its own awards. "A lot of the writing I do here in Morris," Moser says, but he makes frequent trips to Nashville, the heartbeat and history of country music.

"If I have a project or something going on, I'll go down there," he says. "I'm just trying to get myself familiarized with the Nashville scene. I'm trying to expand and understand the way Nashville works, which is why I try to be down there as much as I can. The more people you meet, the better. Nashville is a community, and I really like the vibe when I'm there."

STRIVING FOR SUCCESS

Moser says his influences as a songwriter include country star Eric Church, who has had hits with songs like "Springsteen" and "Drink in My Hand."

That kind of success could be light years away or as easy as the right person listening to one of Moser's songs online or from an audience.

"I guess success is measured differently," he says. "Obviously, there's a fan's version of success, but as an artist or a songwriter, success can be something as simple as getting a good reaction to a song when you play it. I think part of success is that there's always a goal, which is, obviously, to sell records or write hit songs. But you have to have the little stepping stones of success to reach the pinnacle or where you actually want to arrive."

In some ways, Moser is already there. "One of my favorite things about music is even when I'm gone, the music will live forever," he says. "It doesn't matter whether you're family or a fan. If they pass away, the music will live forever. You will always be able to listen to them and hear their voice even though they're gone. You'll always have a way to listen to them again and hear their voice." 📺



Technology in the growing field

Innovations in automation help farmers work more efficiently

Story by LAZ DENES

Never has technology been more important to the agriculture industry than it is today. As farmers and ranchers face challenges such as diminishing sustainable farmland, rising costs of supplies and equipment, workforce shortages, and ever-changing consumer preferences, they must find ways to produce more without breaking the bank.

Fortunately, technology enables farmers to shave hours, days and even weeks off some of the most time-consuming tasks to make their operations more efficient than ever.

Corey Poss, an agronomist with the Rutherford Farmers Cooperative in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, oversees an operation that offers satellite and drone technology to help map, monitor and analyze crop fields. Another solution is a forecasting tool that can predict the yield of a particular crop to within 10% — before seeds are even planted.

“Crop ground is getting swallowed up every day, and we’ve got more people to feed, so we have to apply technology everywhere we can to be as efficient as

possible and not waste time and money,” says Poss, who is in his sixth year with the Rutherford co-op after graduating with an agribusiness degree from Tennessee Tech University.

“A lot of our larger growers are participating with us free of charge,” he says. “The technology originated in the Midwest — the Corn Belt. I don’t ever have to step in the field. We can get a much more accurate look from above. We can identify problems with water, nutrient deficiency and disease on a wide scale, and we can advise the farmer so he can apply his fertilizer accordingly. With our satellite and drone technology, we can cover as much as 1,000 acres a day.”



Andy Hacker serves as operations manager for Bonanza Bean in Morris, Minnesota.



Bonanza Bean, which processes millions of pounds of product, relies on broadband to aid in sales and marketing.

PRESCRIPTION FOR SUCCESS

Poss and his crew of four agronomists use the fast fiber optic network at their Woodbury and Smithville locations to process analytics that farmers then load into their automated equipment to enable a precise distribution of fertilizer, pesticides and nutrients on every square inch of a growing field.

It's a practice called "writing prescriptions," something with which Texas farmer Spence Pennington has become all too familiar. Five years ago, he returned to his family farm in Raymondville after serving as an Air Force aircraft maintenance officer. He and his family grow cotton, grain sorghum, corn, sugarcane and sesame seed. They also raise Brangus cattle in Willacy, Cameron and Hidalgo counties in the Rio Grande Valley. Pennington appreciates the ability to pinpoint the varying requirements of his family's farmland through technology.

"I have 10 to 12 systems — my tractors and all my equipment — and I can link them all together to make them all sync, thanks to the broadband at my house," he says. "I can run my agriculture systems, security systems, monitor my equipment. I can literally see the water temp in the radiator of one of my tractors, all from home. When I'm at home, I'm still connected to my farm."

Pennington and his wife, Emily, an Iowa native he met while on active duty in Ramstein, Germany, also rely on broadband technology to help them stay

on top of their continuing duties as Air Force reservists. Pennington is a lieutenant colonel and commander of the 433rd Maintenance Squadron at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio. His wife, a nurse practitioner at a local regional hospital, still serves as an Air Force major. Stationed at Scott Air Force Base near St. Louis, she is the chief nurse of the 932nd Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron.

"We live multiple lives, and we have to cover a lot of ground," Pennington says. "After working 12 to 13 hours a day on the farm, I come home and have to take care of business as commander of my unit. I'm responsible for 250 people remotely, and I'm logging into a very encrypted system."

"Having fast internet has literally changed our lives, and we've gotten so much family time back," he says. "No more headaches, and everything is so much quicker. We've been married just over three years, and we have two kids now, so we can really appreciate being able to take care of our military duties that much more quickly and efficiently."

MAKING THE GRADE

Reliable broadband service also is a valuable tool for the Bonanza Bean farming operation headquartered in Morris, Minnesota. The company processes black beans and three varieties of kidney beans and sells to national and international companies from its state-of-the-art facilities in Minnesota and Arizona.



Drone technology allows Corey Poss, of the Rutherford Farmers Cooperative, to monitor fields.

The company touts its magnetic dirt separator, which uses magnets to remove dirt with high concentrations of iron from the beans. It also sells a state-of-the-art, infrared-camera technology for sorting that can differentiate a black bean from a dirtball.

"That machine has really changed our industry," says Andy Hacker, Bonanza Bean operations manager. "The needle machine picks out anything that has a sprout or a skin defect or anything that we can catch with a needle. At Bonanza Bean, we never let anything leave our facility that doesn't make USDA Grade No. 1. With our cleaning facility, we're able to accomplish that."

About 60 million pounds of beans roll through its processing plants each year, with particular emphasis on international sales. Broadband service allows its sales staff to monitor up-to-the-minute market data and communicate with its vast array of customers. ☎

inherit

◦ CLOTHING COMPANY ◦

The team at Inherit Clothing Company strives to serve the community with humility, integrity and joy.



modestly speaking

Inherit Clothing finds its fashion niche

Story by JOHN CLAYTON

Amy Ekren was ready to slow the pace a little. Then, an email from a family member came out of the blue and changed everything.

Her wedding and event photography business was thriving, but it didn't always fit well with her main gig of full-time mom. She spent her weekends largely with other people's families. And now, her cousin had contacted her about the prospect of taking over a clothing company.

"My cousin lived in Illinois next door to the previous owner of the business, who had kids at home and just felt she didn't want to have the business anymore," Ekren recalls. "She wanted it to go into someone else's hands, and my cousin thought it would be a good fit, so he emailed me."

Despite Ekren's initial reticence, she was encouraged by her husband, Anthony, who is now the company's chief financial officer, to seriously consider jumping from photography to women's fashion. The more they discussed it, the more they agreed that the fit was perfect. So Ekren took on the challenge, uprooted the Eureka, Illinois, clothing business and moved it to Morris.

"At first, I was like, 'No way. I just decided to slow down,'" she says. "But my husband said that we should seriously think about it, which is



Founder Amy Ekren designs stylish clothing for women with an eye toward the timeless classics.



kind of funny because I'm generally the risk-taker in our relationship."

So, they took the risk. "We just jumped in," Ekren says, and soon they rebranded the operation as Inherit Clothing Co. and opened on Jan. 1, 2018.

SERVING A NICHE

Ekren admits her fashions aren't for everyone, and she's OK with that.

Inherit's clothing is modest: "Timeless designs that transcend the trends," its website says, citing the company's goal to "create common threads of positivity and inspiration for women everywhere who share our values."

The Ekrens are members of the Apostolic Christian Church, which encourages women to wear dresses and skirts. Ekren says her commitment to the church at the age of 24 changed the way she dressed, but finding modest clothing that looked young and fun was difficult.

"I couldn't find things that pertained to a 24-year-old dressing modestly or more trendy or in fashion," she says. "I had to go into my mom's closet, which was very humbling and good for me at the time, and that is not what I wanted to do. I wanted to be able to go into any store and get what I wanted that fit my modest style, but it was really hard.

"I know the struggle to try to shop and find something that fits how you want to dress and be true to you, and we have definitely found there is a market out there for

modest fashion, so that's exciting."

Ekren says there's no reason "modest" has to be matronly. It can still be fun and beautiful, and customers around the globe apparently agree. About 90% of Inherit's sales come through the company's comprehensive retail website, inheritco.com.

The couple also opened an Atlantic Avenue storefront in downtown Morris, something Ekren encouraged her husband to do despite the numbers not quite making sense to him. "I wanted to see people," she says. "I like that whole piece, and it really has gone well."

Customers from Canada and other states have made the trek to Morris to shop at Inherit Clothing Co. Online shoppers from numerous other countries have purchased fashions and other items, making Inherit a truly international brand.

The online business became particularly important during the COVID-19 crisis earlier this year. The Ekrens took over the entire operation while employees stayed home due to safety concerns. Their four children, ranging in age from 4 to 12, helped out as the Ekrens continued to fulfill internet orders. "It's a way that we can all be connected," Amy Ekren says. "We can connect to someone in Norway, for example. It's kind of mind-blowing, really."

Ekren put her photography skills to work immediately, adding photos to the website and social media outlets like Instagram, Facebook and YouTube. "We

have our email, and we also text with customers, so we can connect in so many different ways, which is even more important during a crisis," she says.


INHERIT: SOMETHING NEW

Despite the name, Inherit, which implies to some that the company deals in consignments, all the clothing is new.

In fact, Ekren works with employees and suppliers to design fashions for her customers.

Working to design conservative clothing is a necessity for Ekren as a retailer because the same difficulties she found as a shopper are there in the wholesale market. The former owner of the business included some designs, but that was only a starting point as the company has grown as Inherit.

"We design our own clothes, so that's a big piece for us because it's really hard to find modest clothing in the fashion market," Ekren says. "We go to market in Las Vegas or where have you, and to find things that fit modestly is a challenge.

"What we just keep expanding and working on is that process and the details in our design and that sort of thing," she says. "So, we have our online sales and our brick and mortar store. Then, we also wholesale to other brick and mortar and online stores, so we've been working on expanding that piece and honing in on all things and growing our customer base." 

Dense, sweet and tasty

Cool off with frozen custard

Summer in the Midwest is a fleeting thing, so as soon as the ice begins to melt and the great warming begins, Minnesotans race for their favorite chilly treat — frozen custard.

Even with the first nips of fall and winter, customers at Adele's Frozen Custard in Excelsior, Minnesota, line up for one of the more than 100 different flavors the

shop makes from scratch. But the lines are longest when the doors reopen on March 1 every year after being closed for an annual three-month hiatus between November and February.

People wait in anticipation of the frozen custard that's been served there since Adele Bernet opened her shop in what was a white frame house in 1986, introducing frozen custard to Lake Minnetonka. Since then, a charming, glass-enclosed room has been added so folks can sit and enjoy a scoop of deliciousness in a cone; in a dish; or as a sundae, malt or shake.

"Still, to this day, we are the only custard shop that services the much-loved Lake Minnetonka area," says Jack Nordeen, manager at Adele's.

Like most frozen custard shops around the state, Adele's uses its own special recipe to create its namesake products, and the formula hasn't changed since the doors opened more than three decades back. But one thing stays the same, and that's what makes frozen custard stand apart from ice cream. They may look the same, but they're not.

Instead of just milk and/or cream — the main ingredients in ice cream — frozen custard recipes call for the addition of egg yolks, "making for a much more velvety texture than ice cream," Nordeen says.

In order to keep and serve frozen custard as fresh as possible, Adele's serves only two flavors daily, the most popular of which, Nordeen says, is the Chocolate Raspberry Truffle custard. As the name suggests, it's a chocolate custard with raspberries and a chocolate hardening sauce mixed in. It's so well loved that Adele's made it into a sundae customers can get any day of the week.

Nordeen's favorite flavor, however, is Fat Elvis custard — something of which The King would have approved. It contains banana and peanut butter custards embedded with brownies. "It may sound a bit strange," Nordeen notes, "but it's a flavor our customers and employees love."

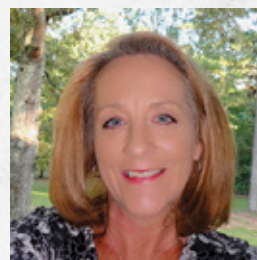
So how will you know if your favorite flavor is on the day's menu? Every month, Adele's releases a flavor calendar so customers can keep an eye on which ones are available. You can buy Adele's frozen custard by the pint or gallon to enjoy at home. It's the perfect solution to beating the summertime heat.

"You can throw in any candy or fruit topping you could imagine and mix it into frozen custard," Nordeen says. "Add some milk, blend it up quick in your blender at home, and enjoy!"



Zoe Crowell enjoys a frozen treat.

The staff at Adele's Frozen Custard in Excelsior, Minnesota, serves up 100 flavors of custard.



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

FROZEN CUSTARD PEANUT BUTTER PIE



- 9 chocolate graham crackers
- 2 tablespoons honey
- 1 tablespoon peanut butter
- 1 tablespoon evaporated milk
- 2 cups softened chocolate frozen custard
- 2 cups softened vanilla frozen custard

Sauce:

- 3/4 cup heavy cream
- 4 ounces semisweet chocolate
- 1/2 cup peanut butter
- 3 tablespoons corn syrup
- Chopped peanuts, for topping

Heat oven to 375 F. Spray a 9-inch pie pan with cooking spray and set aside. Pulse chocolate graham crackers in a food processor until they are fine crumbs. Add honey, peanut butter and evaporated milk. Pulse until combined. Place mixture in prepared pie plate. Press into the bottom and approximately an inch up the sides to form the crust. Bake for 8 to 10 minutes or until firm. Cool the crust completely on a wire rack, then freeze for 30 minutes. Scoop 2 cups of softened chocolate frozen custard into frozen crust, and spread in an even layer. Freeze for an additional 30 minutes. Scoop 2 cups of softened vanilla frozen custard on top of the chocolate layer and spread evenly. Freeze for at least 30 minutes before serving.

For sauce:

Combine heavy cream, chocolate, peanut butter and corn syrup in a saucepan over medium heat. Stir occasionally until the chocolate melts and sauce forms. Drizzle the sauce over the pie, and top with chopped peanuts.

FROZEN CUSTARD SANDWICHES

- 1 cup unsalted butter
- 2 cups chocolate chips
- 1 cup sugar
- 2 eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1/2 cup unsweetened cocoa
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 gallon (8 cups) home-style vanilla custard
- 1 cup mini chocolate chips

Heat oven to 350 F. Line two 18-by-13-inch rimmed baking sheets with foil and spray generously with nonstick cooking




spray. Set aside. In a large microwavable bowl, melt the butter and chocolate chips, stirring every 30 seconds, until melted and smooth. Let cool slightly. Whisk in the sugar, then the eggs and vanilla, until well combined.

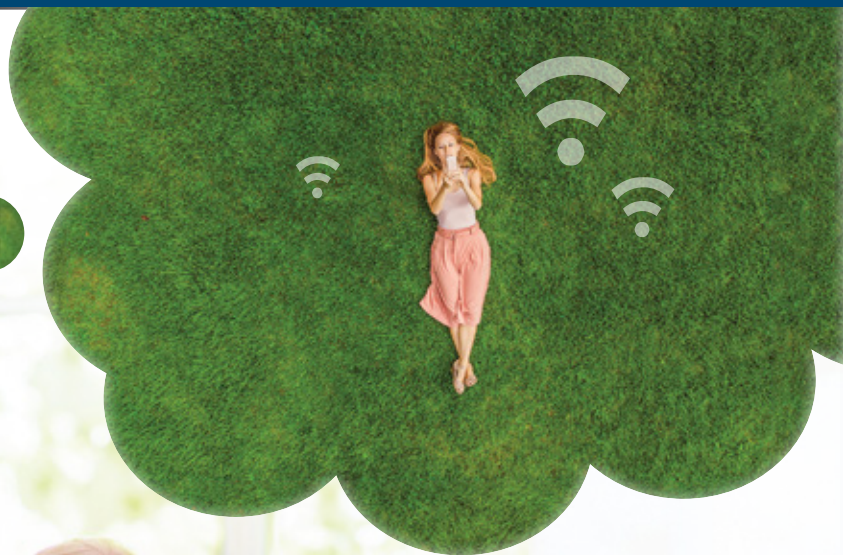
In a medium bowl, whisk together the flour, cocoa, baking soda and salt. Add to the chocolate mixture, stirring until thick and smooth. Divide the dough in half and press each half into the bottom of the prepared baking sheets. The dough should be thin and cover the bottom of the pan completely. Bake for 10 minutes, rotating the sheets halfway through. Let the baking sheets cool on a wire rack for 15 minutes and then put them in the freezer for an additional 15 minutes.

Meanwhile, beat the custard on the low speed of an electric mixer until smooth. Stir in the chocolate chips. Remove the cookie sheets from the freezer and spread one cookie completely and evenly with the frozen mix. Lift the opposite cookie from the pan with the sides of the foil. Flip the cookie over onto the frozen layer on the other cookie and press down gently. Remove the foil from the cookie that is now the top layer. Tent the cookie sheet with another piece of foil and return it to the freezer for at least 2 hours.

To cut the sandwiches, lift them from the cookie sheet with the foil and place on a flat work surface. With a sharp knife, cut into rectangles measuring about 2 1/2 by 4 inches. You should get about 20 custard sandwiches total.

Serve immediately, or wrap each sandwich tightly with plastic wrap to store in the freezer until ready to serve. 

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