

MARCH/APRIL 2021

CONNECTION

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Blogger Danielle
Green shares
tasty dishes

CARING COMMUNITY

Morris Area Women of
Today serves the need

CONNECTING CREATIVES

Artists and artisans unite
through broadband





—By SHIRLEY BLOOMFIELD, CEO—

NTCA—The Rural Broadband Association

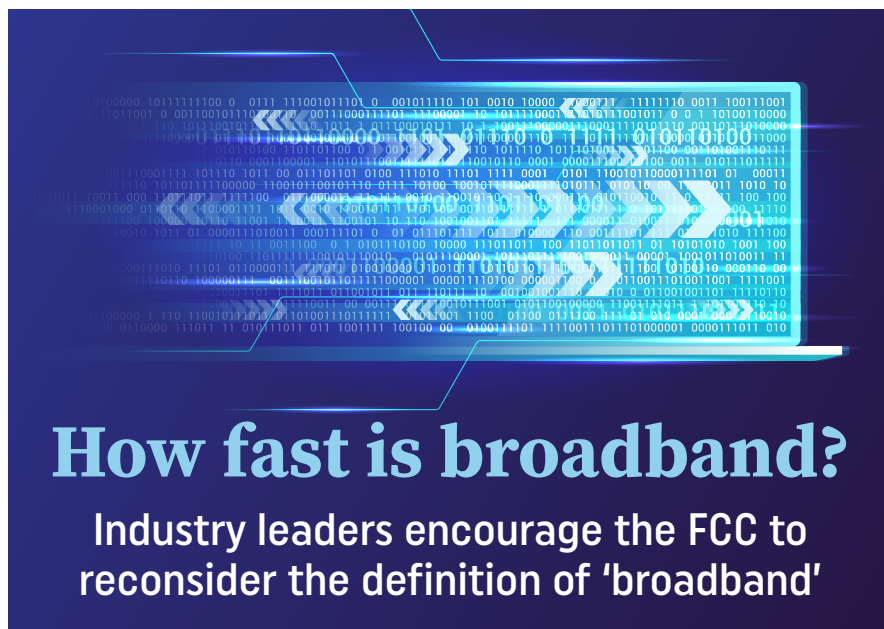
Here's to hope in 2021

The pandemic has made it clear that every American needs broadband to thrive. We need it for work, for school, for health. And we need it for accessing government services, for growing businesses and for building communities. If there is a silver lining to 2020, which was a hard year for so many, it's that more people are now acutely aware of the essential nature of broadband services.

The new year brought new challenges, many of them playing out at our Capitol, a building I've had the honor of visiting many times to talk to members of Congress about the need to support broadband for all of America. But I choose to have hope that better angels of our nature will guide us to rebuild, and I believe NTCA and our members have an opportunity to help that rebuild with the work that we do supporting broadband connectivity and other critical services for rural communities.

The hard-working members of NTCA have made so much progress in the past decade toward solving the rural broadband challenge. There is much work yet to do, but I have hope in the progress they are making. Through federal and state funding programs, coupled with local investments by providers themselves, we are on our way as a country to connecting everyone.

There is a day in our future when we can say that everyone who needs or wants a broadband connection has access. That day is coming, sooner than later. I have hope. 📶



By STEPHEN V. SMITH —

We as a nation need to rethink what is considered true broadband connection speeds. That's the message telecom industry leaders recently sent to the Federal Communications Commission.

NTCA—The Rural Broadband Association joined with the Fiber Broadband Association in sending a letter to the FCC in December addressing the definition of broadband. The letter came as the FCC prepares its next report to Congress on the state of broadband deployment in America.

For the past five years, the FCC has considered any connection speeds of 25 Mbps download and 3 Mbps upload to be the benchmark for broadband.

“By any measure, this benchmark does not reflect what American consumers need today, let alone tomorrow,” wrote NTCA CEO Shirley Bloomfield and Fiber Broadband Association President and CEO Gary Bolton.

In urging the FCC to redefine what speeds are considered broadband, Bloomfield and Bolton wrote that “while all Americans would be best

served by the Commission adopting a gigabit symmetric benchmark ... it should at least raise the minimum broadband performance benchmark for the Sixteenth Broadband Deployment Report to 100/100 Mbps.”

Raising the definition, a benchmark that impacts funding decisions and technology choices, would put the country on a path toward ensuring all Americans have broadband access that actually meets their needs, the letter states. With millions of people using broadband at home to work, participate in school and attend doctor appointments, broadband has become essential to everyday life.

Bloomfield and Bolton further concluded that redefining broadband would allow the FCC to “keep pace with broadband service that Americans both need and want,” while providing “a benchmark the Commission can then use to ensure that we build our networks right the first time by driving investment in future-proof broadband infrastructure.” 📶



To hear an interview with Gary Bolton on this and related topics, visit www.RuralBroadbandToday.com, or search for “Rural Broadband Today” on your favorite podcast app, Spotify or Amazon Music.

The price of entertainment

Consumers can tap into a rushing stream of content delivered across devices ranging from TVs to smartphones. Sports, news, movies, comedies, dramas, music — the list of options is seemingly endless.

But there is a cost. And for many consumers that price increases each spring. If you have it handy, take a moment to review a bill for your TV programming from three years ago. Compare it to today, and in most cases the difference is obvious — television programming is pricier.

The increases are not limited to traditional cable TV providers either. Streaming services have seen prices spike, too. When Google launched YouTube TV, the monthly price was about \$35. Now, it's \$65.

In cases such as Google, as well as other providers, adding new, desirable content channels helps drive the increases. For traditional networks, investment in higher-quality programming has become essential to compete with streaming services like Netflix, Amazon and HBO Max. Those costs are then passed on to cable providers and their customers.

But more content is not always the root

cause of the higher prices. In fact, for many providers, such as the rural communications companies serving much of America, the increasing cost of content is an annual struggle to hold prices down. It's not a push to increase profits, and their efforts to control prices illustrate the give and take behind what you see on your bill.

For these companies, only a small portion of a monthly television subscription fee goes to personnel costs, equipment upgrades and tasks such as equipment maintenance. So, where does all the money go?

Much of the cost is wrapped up in agreements allowing TV providers to bring content to you. Networks like ABC, NBC, CBS and Fox regularly renegotiate these agreements. In many cases, these are annual negotiations.

A 2019 analysis of cable TV rates by Consumer Reports found that while advertised rates generally increased by 3% to 4% annually, fees for the major networks and channels airing live sports climbed between 8% and 10% each of the previous four years.

How are those rates determined? Essentially, the TV provider must pay

networks a fixed fee for each subscriber of the service. But each year there are fewer traditional TV subscribers to carry that load. In 2020 alone, about 6.3 million people dropped their cable or satellite TV service, according to investment research firm Moffett Nathanson.

Without an expanding subscriber base to offset these increasing costs, TV providers often pass the expense on to consumers in the form of fees added to advertised prices, according to the FCC's 18th Annual Video Competition Report.

When it comes to these hidden costs, there is one bright spot for consumers. The Television Viewer Protection Act passed at the end of 2019 requires cable and satellite companies to disclose the total monthly price of subscribers' TV bills, including all individual fees and charges, when they sign up.

That transparency won't make your bill any lower. But it will give you an accurate picture of the full cost of your monthly TV bill. 🗨️



Equipping and enabling vibrant rural communities

The 2020 census data will be coming out this year — and despite what the headlines may say, I'm here to tell you that rural America is alive and well.

As you may remember, I urged everyone to participate in the 2020 census. The population counts go a long way in determining our representation in Congress and the statehouse, as well as funding for state and federal programs.



KEVIN BEYER
Chief Executive Officer

According to the 2020 census website, 2020census.gov, the census will shape the future of our community for the next 10 years. While that timeframe may be a bit of an overstatement, there's no doubt that an accurate population count is critically important.

While census numbers will contribute to the allotment of funding and political clout, they will also help to tell the story of rural America. The 2020 census should provide definitive evidence of the trends shaping communities like ours. But as you probably know, I'll be the first to say that whatever trend lines on a graph from the U.S. Census Bureau suggest, parts of rural America are more vibrant and offer more opportunities today than ever.

Some communities have no doubt fallen on hard times. But many others, including ours, are very much alive. According to experts at places like the USDA and the National Council of State Legislators, about one-third of rural counties are growing, one-third are stable and one-third are shrinking. Researchers point to 2016 and 2017 as years where many rural areas began showing growth after many years when the number of residents diminished.

Will all the news and research taken from information contained in the census be positive for everyone in rural America? Most likely, it will highlight some of the challenges communities like ours face. Events such as the pandemic, though, have left some city dwellers intrigued by the many benefits of living in rural areas.

We'll know for sure once the data is released, but the 10-year scope of the census may well show a continuation of the gradual, decades-long shift to fast-growing cities and suburbs from small towns and rural areas. It's possible statewide and national news outlets will use a broad brush to highlight this demographic trend as they cover the census statistics over the next few months.

A few troubling statistics, however, should not be sufficient to raise concerns about the future of rural America and our small-town way of life. Census numbers — a comparison across decades that may not fully acknowledge recent positive changes — do not tell the whole story. In many ways, the people of rural America have more opportunities now than ever before for business, education, health care, entertainment and overall quality of life. And I'm proud to say broadband makes many of those chances possible, although I'm not sure how much coverage they'll see.

In fact, our confidence in that vitality and belief in the future is why we've invested millions of dollars into improving the telecommunications infrastructure in our communities. You'll never find a stronger group of advocates for our communities than our team here at Acira.

We're proud of the rural areas and small towns we connect to the world — and we work hard every day to make our communities even stronger. 📶

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WORDSOUTH

A CONTENT MARKETING COMPANY

On the Cover:



Danielle Green has dished her favorite recipes, meal planning secrets and printable projects for several years on her blog. See story Page 9.

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Employee Milestones

Please help us celebrate Combination Tech Brian Staebler's five-year anniversary and Administrative Assistant Karin Jahnke's 20-year anniversary with Farmers Mutual Telephone and Federated Telephone.



Brian Staebler



Karin Jahnke

Happy anniversary!

Lifeline Service

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

You are eligible for Lifeline benefits if you qualify for and receive one of the following benefits:

- SNAP
- Medicaid
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Federal Public Housing Assistance
- VA Veterans Pension or Survivors Pension

Additionally, consumers at or below 135% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines will continue to be eligible for a Lifeline program benefit. (State determinations of income will no longer be accepted.) There are no changes to the eligibility criteria for tribal programs.

Some states have additional qualifying programs, allowances and stipulations. Check with your local telecommunications provider for information about benefits that may be available in your state. To find out whether you qualify for Lifeline assistance, please visit **www.lifelinesupport.org** or call your local telecommunications provider.

NOTE: Your telephone company is not responsible for determining who qualifies for these programs or who receives assistance. Consumers must meet specific criteria in order to obtain assistance with their local telephone and/or broadband service, and qualifying is dependent upon government-established guidelines.

FOLKLORE LEGEND

Mighty tall tales from rural Minnesota

Paul Bunyan — the lumberjack of lumberjacks, the mythical figure of many a campfire and the subject of many tall tales — is depicted in several statues of him and his beloved blue ox, Babe. None, however, are as popular as that in the northwest Minnesota town of Akeley.

His likeness is hard to miss, kneeling 25 feet high — standing, he would be his normal 60 feet tall. He extends a welcoming hand beckoning folks to have their picture made in his palm along Minnesota state Route 34 right outside the Paul Bunyan Museum.

Paul Bunyan was born in Akeley, according to legend. The town's claim is solid, as it was the headquarters of the Red River Lumber Company where, in 1914, publicist William Laughead allegedly penned the first Paul Bunyan story in a company brochure. But Bunyan's story began well before that. Tales about a tall man who performed amazing feats began in the 19th century around logging camps, and like many a campfire story, they grew bigger with embellishments as the years went on. It wasn't until Laughead, a lumberjack himself, documented the story that it became a national treasure.

It didn't take long for the story to spread, and the tale of the man and Babe spread like butter on flapjacks. There are now statues and memorabilia of Paul Bunyan in several locations around the state — from Akeley to Bemidji, Hackensack, Brainerd, Pequot Lakes and Ortonville. The Paul Bunyan Trail connects them all. It's 121 paved miles ideal for walking, biking, snowmobiling and fishing on one of many lakes along its length.

Though the Red River Lumber Company closed in 1944, the lumber industry remains an important one in Minnesota. The state's more than 17 million privately and publicly owned acres of forestland equal about one-third of Minnesota's land, says Anthony Hauck, forestry communications coordinator at Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. And that fact



Paul Bunyan's statue greets visitors to Akeley, Minnesota.

makes trees very important to keeping everything in balance — creating jobs, habitat, scenery, clean air and more things vital to life on this planet. “Beyond their beauty, forests provide shade and wildlife habitat,” Hauck says. “They are nature’s water purification system, absorbing pollutants and trapping sediment before they pollute our lakes, rivers and drinking water supplies.”

Minnesota is home to 53 native tree species. In northern Minnesota, you'll find elegant pines, along with spruce, fir and tamarack. In much of the northern forest, the conifers mingle across the land with deciduous trees — those that lose their leaves at the end of each growing season — particularly aspen, birch, sugar maple and basswood.

Deciduous forests characterize central and southeast Minnesota. These woodlands include sugar maples in areas where lakes, rivers and rugged terrain protect them from fire at the prairie's edge where fires are common and oaks dominate.

In order to maintain an abundance of trees, the state has a model of cooperation among its wide range of forest interests — including logging, wildlife conservation and environmental protection — that gives all Minnesotans an opportunity to care for their forests ensuring economic, ecological and social sustainability, Hauck says.

The Sustainable Forest Resources Act, one of Minnesota's most significant forestry laws, is now 25 years old. "The act established use and management of our state's forests," Hauck notes. "Sustainability means meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Sustainable forestry is a proactive form of management that provides for the multiple uses of the forest by balancing a diversity of both present and future needs."

But as hard as Minnesotans work to keep their forests healthy, there's no fighting Mother Nature. Like much of the world, Minnesota's climate is changing. Average temperatures have risen across the state by 2 degrees Fahrenheit since the early 20th century. Since 2000, Minnesota has seen a significant increase in extreme rainstorms where rain amounts exceed 3 inches in 24 hours, and that fact means increased flooding. "These changes affect where trees will thrive," says Hauck.

Then, what would Paul Bunyan do? 📱

5 TALL TALES

It's well known that Paul Bunyan's footsteps created Minnesota's 10,000 lakes. That seems like a perfectly good explanation — how else would they have gotten there?

BUT DID YOU KNOW THAT:

- 1 When he was born, it took five storks to deliver him, and it took a whole herd of cows to keep him fed?
- 2 At just a week old, he was big enough to wear his father's clothes?
- 3 He once bent a crowbar and used it as a safety pin to hold his pants together?
- 4 He turned a hollowed-out log into a whistle?
- 5 He was able to cut down trees an acre at a time?



The Paul Bunyan State Forest is more than 105,000 acres of excitement and beauty. Its terrain is both rough and hilly, making it perfect for hiking, snowmobiling, cross-country skiing and rough-riding on your ATV. There are:

- ▶ **18 miles for hiking**
- ▶ **37 miles of Class-1 ATV trails**
- ▶ **37 miles of Class-2 ATV trails**
- ▶ **87 miles of trails for off-road motorcycling**
- ▶ **60 miles of trails for snowmobiling**

The forest has many tiny ponds and bogs, and its hundreds of miles of trails wind among magnificent pines.

TOP TRAILS INCLUDE:

- ▶ **The Paul Bunyan State Trail.** It's good for ATV riders as well as snowmobiling, hiking and off-road motorcycling.
- ▶ **The North Country National Scenic Trail.** It's part of an approximately 800-mile long segment of the 4,600-mile long North Country National Scenic Trail, a non-motorized footpath that's a favorite path for backpacking, fishing, hunting and snowshoeing.
- ▶ **The Martineau OHM Trails.** They are made up of multiple loops, providing miles of single-track trails for off-highway motorcycles including tight, wooded technical trails for more experienced riders and miles of smooth trails for beginners.
- ▶ **The Round River Drive ATV Trail.** It offers twists and turns that the Akeley Paul Bunyan ATV Trailriders and the Timberland Dirt Devils clubs maintain.



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



Canon PIXMA TR4520


Whether printing color photos or records for filing taxes, a great printer offers a must-have resource. Consider the Canon PIXMA TR4520, which connects wirelessly, has Canon's color accuracy for photos and allows you to print from your phone. Widely available for about \$80.



Get a sweet office suite

From free to pro-grade, find the tools you need

A good office suite with its three core applications — a word processor, a spreadsheet and a presentation program — is essential for handling school assignments and personal finances and for getting the most from your home computer in general. But which suite should you choose?

- **Google** has its own office suite that's especially attractive for those who want an easy way to work collaboratively across a variety of platforms. Through Google Docs, Sheets and Slides, the search engine giant offers free word processing, spreadsheets and presentation applications that run in any browser and integrate into Google Drive. For basic use, Google's office suite is tough to beat, especially when it lets you start writing on your home PC, keep working on your phone while waiting at a coffee shop and finish the job on your friend's MacBook. Get it free at [google.com](https://www.google.com).
- **iWork** is what Apple calls its supergroup of free productivity apps: Pages for word processing, Numbers for spreadsheets and Keynote for presentations. As with most things Apple, the apps are elegant and user-friendly, but they don't always play well with others in their native format. You can export to Microsoft Office, but opening an iWork document on a non-Apple machine is cumbersome. The apps are free on Apple computers and mobile devices through the App Store.
- **Microsoft Office** is the gold standard for a reason, offering the best productivity software on the market. Most users don't need the many advanced features included in Word, Excel and PowerPoint. Feeling competition from Google, Microsoft offers a free version of its basic applications online, which work with cloud storage OneDrive. If you find you need more advanced functionality, you can always subscribe to Microsoft 365. Review your options at [office.com](https://www.office.com). 
- **LibreOffice** is free — the result of years of development by a worldwide community of hundreds of programmers — and is almost as feature rich and polished as any paid application. Along with word processing, spreadsheets and presentations, the suite also includes database and graphics programs. It works well with Microsoft Office files and can save to popular formats, including PDF. It's available for Windows, Mac and Linux, but there is no mobile version or an option to work online. It's free at www.libreoffice.org.
- **WordPerfect Office** is only available for Windows and has no online version, and its spreadsheet and presentation applications are not particularly impressive. And yet, many people swear by its powerful word processor. It's one of the few options for those who want a program that doesn't try to copy Microsoft. Its ability to show a document's formatting codes allows for the kind of fine tuning and changes to the way a document looks that can still frustrate many Word users. The Standard Edition is \$249.99 from www.wordperfect.com.



Creating a foodie following

Danielle Green cooks up a hit with 'The Creative Bite' blog

Story by JOHN CLAYTON

The thought of starting a blog that could be a little slice of internet heaven for foodies everywhere seemed a bit fanciful for a grounded Minnesota girl who has always loved cooking.

Danielle Green grew up like so many others, helping her mother and grandmother in the kitchen. Those days at her mother's knee ignited a lifelong passion that she has turned into TheCreativeBite.com, a food blog that serves up recipes, advice and reviews and now has more than 100,000 followers across various social media platforms including Instagram, Pinterest and Facebook, among others.


"I had a friend who was in food blogging before me, and she encouraged me to give it a try," Green recalls. "When I saw that she was making a full-time income from it, I thought, 'Well, hey, if I could make a living doing this, that sounds like a dream' — and I am living the dream."

Her passion for cooking started in her family kitchen, but it didn't stop there. Back then, farm-to-table meant from the family's Graceville farm to their kitchen table. The meals were traditional and delicious, but Green has since learned to put her own twist on recipes that she shares with her followers or anyone who stops by her blog.

Want to check out Green's take on sloppy joes? Or something healthier like banana protein pancakes? Or maybe rustic Italian chicken cacciatore? There are recipes for every taste and every skill level in the kitchen.

Green's recipes reflect her Midwestern roots and her willingness to experiment with different recipes for more adventurous palates. "When I went off to the Twin Cities to go to college and started working in fine-dining restaurants as a waitress, it kind of opened my eyes to a different world of food," she says. "I really enjoyed different kinds of food, and I also became a portrait photographer at one point, so then, the two kind of melded together perfectly in this world of food blogging."

Building a successful and financially viable food blog from scratch took more than dreams, good recipes and slick photographs for the single mother of twins. Green had to learn vital lessons in e-commerce and audience building online. "I try to block out those days," she says. "There are so many technical things when you get started that seem really overwhelming."

Now Green is able to hire technical support to take care of that end of her business so that she can concentrate on new creations and her now 3-year-old twins, Cooper and Madelyn, as a stay-at-home mom. "It's evolved into a full-time income, but it definitely doesn't start out that way," she says. "In the beginning, you're putting in a lot of hours. I was just hoping and dreaming that it might turn into something someday." 



For several years, Danielle Green has dished her favorite recipes, meal planning secrets and printable projects.



CREATIVE SPACES

Artists and craftspeople find community online

Story by DREW WOOLLEY



Jessica Sanders, left, and Addie Moore keep ETX Creatives running along with Lisa Horlander, who is not pictured.



The online community is home to 350 artists and creatives.



ETX Creatives welcomes artists and visitors at in-person events.

Addie Moore just wanted to know a schedule for local art shows. A mixed media artist and art teacher at Chapel Hill High School, she and her friends knew there was a need for better communication among creatives in Tyler, Texas, and beyond.

“I heard it enough times that eventually I realized, ‘OK, I guess I have to do it,’” she says of her commitment in 2018. “Our first meeting we just went out for a beer and decided to make a Facebook group.”

That group became ETX Creatives, an online community of artists and artisans throughout East Texas. Today, the curated Facebook group is home to 350 creatives who use the space to share their work, offer inspiration and encouragement, or share news about upcoming exhibitions.

“We’re a largely rural area, so you have your friends from high school, church or that you’ve met over time. But it tends to happen in pockets,” says Moore. “There aren’t a lot of public spaces, so the internet provided a space for us to connect, express what we’re doing artistically and to let people know you’re not alone in Edom or your small town. You have a community.”

BREAKING THE BLOCK

Having a community of people who understand the struggles of the creative process has been especially important over the last year when artists and creatives have been hit hard by the economic challenges of the coronavirus pandemic.

“It’s a great place for us to say, ‘I’m having some creative block,’ or ‘How are you staying positive during this

time?’” says Moore. “I think having this creative community that knows what we’re going through and can give suggestions if we’re stuck or having trouble with a particular process has been a great support.”

ETX Creatives also hosts a blog on its website, etxcreatives.com, where visitors can find updates on the latest events and shows across East Texas. The site also allows promotion of items ranging from handmade ceramics and jewelry to clothing and one-of-a-kind paintings. The group also produces the “ETX Creatives Podcast” to showcase local artists and to delve into the creative process.

Before the pandemic, ETX Creatives hosted in-person exhibitions and workshops where hundreds of visitors from throughout the state could try their hand at printmaking or creating their own T-shirts. While those meetups have been put on pause, the group has continued to raise funds for local artistic projects.

And the best may be yet to come. Along with her ETX Creatives partners Jessica Sanders and Lisa Horlander, Moore is working to organize their informal group into an official non-profit. Once established, they can raise money for their own space, where they aim to continue hosting public events, have a permanent gallery and provide studio space for short-term artist residencies.

“My ultimate goal is to influence an economy among the creative community so people want to buy from local artists,” says Moore. “It can create appreciation and community support beyond just a space for us to talk to each other.” 📱

THE FUTURE OF ART

When it was founded in 1961, the Kentucky Guild of Artists and Craftsmen promoted local creators with a traveling "Guild Train" that exhibited their work across the state. The Guild Train no longer runs, but the organization still brings artists, craftsmen, collectors, galleries and other interested parties together.

In recent years, the guild's transformation has seen it harness the power of the internet to build social media communities and host online collections, where visitors can view and purchase work from member artists. Greg Lakes, who joined the guild after he and his wife opened the Clover Bottom Bed and Breakfast in McKee, hopes organizations like the guild continue to see the value of online communities for their members.

"Those places are where you have to be now to be viable as a selling artist," he says. "We have a lot of great artists in the area who come to the guild, and I think the groups that are going to survive are the ones who develop their online presence."

For more information, visit kyguild.org.



CREATIVE VOICES

Access to fast internet services creates fresh opportunities for creators in rural communities throughout the nation.

"I've never had to advertise. I just use Facebook to let people know when the classes are, and people usually use that to save a spot."

— Tammie Franklin, owner and teacher at Tammie's Treasures Painting Classes in River, Kentucky

"It helps us stay connected, and we reach a larger audience. It's one of the best ways we have to spread the word about what we do."

— Debra Ruzinsky, director of the Appalachian Center for Craft in Smithville, Tennessee





Members attended a Founder's Day Breakfast.



A boot drive benefitted Morris Area Public Schools.



Marie Hansen learned about potting plants.

Distaff dedication

Morris Area Women of Today making a difference

Story by JOHN CLAYTON

After Naomi Skulan arrived in Morris in 2016, she started to look for a way to become involved in the local community. She found the Morris Area Women of Today, a local chapter of an international civic organization whose roots run deep in the area.

"I joined this group because I really enjoy volunteering and feeling connected to the community I live in, and I wanted to get to know other women in the area," says Skulan, who is now chapter president. "I wanted to make friends, get to know the community and give back to this place that we now call home."

Skulan adds that those missions have been accomplished. Through the Morris Area Women of Today, which began in 1950 as a local chapter of the Mrs. Jaycees of Minnesota and the Morris Jaycee Women, Skulan has found lasting friendships and fulfilled her desire to serve.

"I feel so much more connected to this town and all the people in it," Skulan says. "I love being able to chair an event like

the Easter egg hunt and see firsthand that all the work that goes into it is so incredibly worth it. I love being a part of the good work that this organization is doing for our community."

And when Skulan's child was born, her new friends were right there for the growing family. "It is also so nice to have a safety net of women who I now know and who are willing to help each other out," she says. "The other members of the Morris Area Women of Today made dinner for us when our baby was born, and it was a nice feeling that others had my back in this new town."

LOOKING BACK

A U.S. Supreme Court ruling in 1984 changed the direction of the local Jaycees, opening up memberships in previously all-male organizations to women. At its national convention in 1985, the Jaycees voted to dissolve its women's organization.

Some of those women's groups, including the one in Morris, voted to reorganize,



Angela Vetsch, left, Naomi Skulan, Karin Jahnke and Kelly Borkenhagen enjoyed a team building exercise.

and the Morris Area Women of Today was opened in 1985. “Over the years, the Morris chapter has been one of the biggest and most active chapters in the state,” says longtime member Marie Hansen.

At the end of 2020, the Morris chapter had 26 active members, and it has boasted as many as 50. “Many of our members over the years have held district, state and national leadership positions in the Women of Today organization,” Hansen says.

There are more than 50 Women of Today chapters in Minnesota alone. Thirteen states are home to local chapters, as is Cyprus, Greece.

The Morris chapter meets every second Tuesday of each month at the Morris Public Library. During the pandemic, the group held virtual meetings via Zoom and continued to remain active. “We vote at our meetings on what projects to do,” Hansen says. “Our group has always tried to raise money or educate the community on areas like March of Dimes, lupus, kidney disease and people with developmental challenges, to name a few. Looking back at our history, we have always done events or fundraising at Prairie Pioneer Days, the Stevens County Fair and a Mother’s Day recognition.”

WORKING TOGETHER

The members of Morris Area Women of Today team up to tackle a number of volunteer projects, but they also work with other civic organizations. Through the years, the organization and other volunteer groups raised funds with the help of the city of Morris for the purchase of park equipment for five area parks. In 2019, the group undertook one of its largest projects and opened the Pomme de Terre Dog Park.

“We try to cover a large spectrum of projects,” Hansen says. “We choose projects depending on the group’s interest and time availability. Members can be as involved as they want to be. Besides helping out our community, we also are interested in bettering ourselves and having fun. There is something for everyone, and new ideas are always welcome.”

As president of the Morris Area Women of Today, Skulan has grown as a leader, while acting on her passion for volunteerism. “This has been a great leadership experience for me,” she says. “I’ve learned how to chair events and do event planning. I’ve learned a lot about running an organization and leading meetings as the president this year. It’s been a great growth opportunity for me.”

But the most important emphasis for Skulan and the organization’s other members is continuing to build on 70 years of service to the people in and around Morris. “If you look around our community, you will see that there are plaques saying that things were funded by the Morris Area Women of Today and you can see the impact that this organization has had on the area,” Skulan says. “I think the community does recognize that we are a civic organization dedicated to helping improve our community for all.” 📞



Naomi Skulan, right, teams up with other volunteers to serve the public.



Jones Anderson starts on a recipe for a community meal.



The group volunteers for numerous local causes, including Feed My Starving Children.



Sunny side up?

Mix it up in the morning

Ham and eggs just go together — you rarely think of one without picturing the other. And they are so often seen together on an Easter menu.

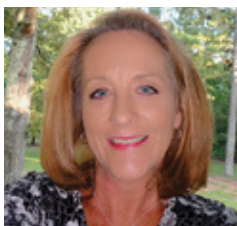
But what do you do once the Easter lunch is over and you're faced with left-over ham and lots of eggs?

For starters, make sure that you've handled all the food safely. With a lot of cooks in the kitchen prepping so much food, sometimes safe food handling practices fly out the window. Make sure you're preparing — and storing — food properly, so all of your guests leave with a full tummy and not a sick stomach.

While you're boiling eggs to dye for Easter, boil some extras, and make sure you keep them in the refrigerator until you're ready to use them.

Don't serve or eat any eggs that have been at room temperature for more than two hours.

As for your ham, if it's ready to eat then, you simply have to warm it up. But if you have to roast it yourself, make sure the internal temperature reaches 145 F.



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

HAM AND EGG CASSEROLE

- 2 medium cooked potatoes, peeled and sliced
- 4 hard-boiled large eggs, chopped
- 1 cup diced fully cooked ham
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper
- 1 large egg
- 1 1/2 cups sour cream
- 1/4 cup dry bread crumbs
- 1 tablespoon butter, melted

In a large bowl, combine the potatoes, eggs, ham, salt and pepper. Combine the raw egg and sour cream. Add to potato mixture and gently toss to coat. Transfer to a greased 11-by-7-inch baking dish.

Toss bread crumbs and butter. Sprinkle over casserole. Bake, uncovered, at 350 F for 20 minutes or until bubbly and cooked through.

CREAMED HAM AND EGGS

- 3 tablespoons butter
- 3 tablespoons flour
- 1/2 teaspoon dry mustard
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/8 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 2 1/4 cups milk
- 1 cup diced cooked ham
- 4 hard-boiled eggs, chopped
- 4 biscuits

Melt butter in a large saucepan over low heat. Stir flour, mustard, salt and pepper into butter until mixture is smooth and bubbly. Remove from heat and add milk. Return to heat and bring to a boil, stirring constantly. Boil until mixture thickens — about 1 minute.

Stir ham and eggs into milk mixture and cook until heated through. Spoon creamed ham and eggs onto biscuits and serve.

PUFFY HAM AND EGG QUICHE

- 1 (17 1/3 ounce) box frozen puff pastry
- 8 ounces ham, chopped
- 4 hard-boiled eggs, sliced
- 8 ounces mozzarella cheese, shredded
- 1 beef bouillon cube
- 1/4 cup evaporated milk, warm
- 1 tablespoon parsley, chopped
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 4 tablespoons Parmesan cheese, grated

Preheat the oven to 375 F. Roll one sheet of puff pastry into a pie dish. Sprinkle ham on the bottom of the pie. Add a layer of sliced hard boiled eggs and a layer of the mozzarella cheese.

Dissolve the beef bouillon in the warm milk and mix with parsley, beaten eggs and Parmesan cheese. Pour over ham, eggs and cheese. Cover the pie with the second puff pastry. Bake for 45 minutes or until golden brown. Let it sit for 5 to 10 minutes before cutting and serving.



Hard boiled eggs benedict

- 4 hard boiled eggs
- 2 English muffins (split half)
- 4 slices ham
- Chopped parsley (optional)

Hollandaise Sauce:

- 4 large egg yolks
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1/2 cup butter (very slightly softened, cut into 5 pieces)
- Pinch of salt
- Dash of cayenne pepper (optional)

Prepare hollandaise sauce by placing a heat-proof bowl over a pan of gently simmering water (about 1 1/2 inches of water). The bottom of the bowl should not be touching the water. Alternatively, a double boiler set can be used. Add egg yolks and lemon juice to the bowl and whisk vigorously until the mixture becomes shiny/glossy and thickens. Whisk in

one piece of butter until fully incorporated into mixture. Repeat with remaining pieces, one at a time.

Whisk in a pinch of salt and a dash of cayenne, if using. If mixture is too thick, whisk in a bit of warm water, a tablespoon at a time. Remove from heat and use immediately.

In a hot skillet, over medium heat, heat the ham. Toast the English muffins until lightly browned. Cut each hard-boiled egg into fourths. Assemble by placing an English muffin half on a plate (cut side up), topping with 1 slice of ham, 1 egg (cut into fourths), and drizzle with 1/4 of the hollandaise sauce. Topped with chopped parsley, if desired, and serve warm.

Alternately, to make this dish a little easier, buy an envelope of Knorr's hollandaise sauce mix and follow package directions.

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