

MAY/JUNE 2021

CONNECTION

STEADY GROWTH

Patience and
planning are key
at 3B Vineyard

RECIPE FOR SUCCESS

Professor Gary Wahl's new
path with Morris cafe

SCREEN TEST

Online tools help filmmakers
break boundaries





By SHIRLEY BLOOMFIELD, CEO
NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association

Broadband is critical for working from home

Nearly all of us have spent at least some time this past year working from home. And while remote work surged during the pandemic, it certainly isn't a new idea. Between 2005 and 2017, according to Statista, there was a 159% increase in remote work. Today 11.2% of Americans are working from home, up from 5.7% in 2019. And many are growing to prefer it — 22% of workers say they'd like to work from home permanently. I believe full-time remote work makes it difficult to create and maintain a collaborative work culture, but I do think that work is likely to have a new face when we get back to "normal."

The Foundation for Rural Service recently published a white paper entitled "Rural America's Critical Connections." (You can download it for free at www.frs.org.) The report cites a Global Workplace Analytics report that states, "Our best estimate is that 25-30% of the workforce will be working from home multiple days a week by the end of 2021."

What does this mean for broadband, that critical connection that helps us work remotely? It certainly means our country needs to continue the work to get broadband to everyone — and that in doing so we must build robust networks using technology proven to support the speeds and synchronous connections that working from home requires. Regardless of the work patterns and flexibility we see in the coming year, one thing is for certain: NTCA members such as your provider will continue to be at the forefront of connecting rural America. 📶

ASCENT — ELEVATE YOUR BUSINESS

A free online resource helps female entrepreneurs



About 45% of businesses are owned or co-owned by women. Spanning a range of industries, most of these businesses are small with potential for growth. The federal Small Business Association wants to provide support.

The free, information-packed online Ascent program offers a range of helpful resources.

TAKE A JOURNEY

Experts in women's entrepreneurship created informational Journeys. Participants can choose any Journey, opting out of sessions with information they already know. Each Journey includes Excursions filled with resources needed to master a topic.



Exercises and tools



Fireside chats



Infographics



Success stories



Discussion guides



Videos



Key insights



Self-assessments

DO YOU NEED HELP WITH YOUR BUSINESS?

Visit ascent.sba.gov

Secure your Internet of Things

The Instant Pot, a pressure cooker, is one of the most popular small kitchen appliances of recent years. Naturally, there's a model capable of connecting to the internet via Wi-Fi — an example of the Internet of Things, or IoT.

Smart thermostats, door locks and security cameras are just a few devices on the IoT spectrum. Refrigerators, toys and a range of whimsical gadgets are all on the bandwagon. And businesses and industry, including agriculture, manufacturing and medicine, take advantage of connected devices.

Like the connected Instant Pot, which lets a cook control it via a smartphone app, IoT devices provide convenience, useful data and new ways of using technology. Cisco, a leader in networking systems, estimates that more than 75 billion such devices will be in use by 2025.


The utility of what is sometimes described as the fourth industrial revolution is balanced by the need for mindful caution. These devices offer people with bad intent potential doorways into private homes and businesses that use the internet-dependent gadgets.

Meanwhile, companies are finding new ways of leveraging these systems. One example is Amazon Sidewalk, which rolled out earlier this year. Here's how Amazon described the innovation: "Amazon Sidewalk is a shared network that helps devices like Amazon Echo, Ring security cameras, outdoor lights and motion sensors work better at home and beyond the front door."

Essentially, Sidewalk links your Amazon devices to those of your neighbors through a specialized network. Why? Well, imagine your internet goes down while you're out of town, making your security-focused Ring Doorbell useless. With Sidewalk, however, your internet-connected doorbell would keep right on working, relying on the internet connections of your neighbors to power the system. Everyone on the Sidewalk

system gives up a little bit of their internet bandwidth to this network. Instead of a smart home, Sidewalk can create a smart neighborhood.

Amazon released a detailed white paper outlining the system's security features. And while security experts have been quoted praising the company's efforts, others have expressed concern about privacy and the potential for hackers to target the system. Amazon Sidewalk can be turned off in the settings section of the company's smartphone app.

As IoT devices proliferate and offer new, practical ways to leverage the power of the internet, knowledge and a few practical security steps can offset possible risks. In the past, the FBI noted the need for IoT caution. "Unsecured devices can allow hackers a path into your router, giving the bad guy access to everything else on your home network that you thought was secure," Beth Anne Steele wrote for the Portland FBI office. 

Security tips for IoT devices

- Change the device's default password. Consider a different device if instructions for changing the password aren't readily available.
- Long passwords — as long as possible — work best. Make them unique to each IoT device.
- Many IoT devices connect to smartphone apps. Take a few minutes to understand the permissions granted to these apps. An internet search will help here, too.
- If possible, have a separate network for devices, such as an internet-connected refrigerator and a laptop containing sensitive information.
- Regularly update the devices, and turn off automatic updates.



A legacy of service

Together, we've created a foundation for the future

Connecting a rural community such as ours to the world has never been easy. Decades ago, crews first strung telephone lines across a landscape that large nationwide companies chose to ignore, deeming the places we call home too rural and unworthy of the effort.



KEVIN BEYER
Chief Executive Officer

Naturally, we never felt that way. After all, no one understands the importance of our home and places like it better than we do. The countless hours of work to create that first telephone system proved invaluable, opening new doors for businesses and individuals. All of that effort gave us a foundation for the future.

As new technologies appeared, we continued that original commitment to serving you by bringing you those innovations. Today, our internet services rival — and often greatly exceed — those found in metropolitan areas. Just as those first crews did when they engineered a telephone system, we've built and maintained a robust internet network.

The depth of my appreciation for the men and women who make these essential services possible only increases from year to year. No matter the challenge, they adapt and overcome. I'd like to, humbly, suggest that you benefit daily from those efforts.

Can you imagine not having an option to link a computer or mobile device to the internet? Work, entertainment, medical care, education and more rely on rock-solid service. In just a few decades, we've gone from marveling at the idea of being able to speak one-on-one to someone miles away via phone to having a world of information at our fingertips. We've never been so connected. In fact, internet services are as essential for many of us as water and electricity.

Despite our best efforts, though, no communications and technology company such as ours avoids adversity. It's how you overcome adversity that matters most. After all, no one escapes the power of nature. Across the nation, we've seen tornadoes, hurricanes, fires and more leave communities without the utilities many of us take for granted.

Every season of the calendar brings the possibility of an event capable of disrupting our systems. But our team maintains detailed plans to both avoid disruptions and to respond quickly if they do occur. Often, long hours of work are required to restore services after an outage. The environment in the field after an event like a severe storm may be dangerous. Yet, our crews always answer the call. Our office staff willingly puts in long hours to support the efforts. Everyone helps. And they do it gladly, because we understand how much you rely on the services we provide. They're essential, as is our commitment to you.

Our investment in not only expanding our services but also in maintaining existing infrastructure is significant and ongoing. The mission that began with construction of the first telephone lines continues. We believe in you, and our community. We prosper together. Regardless of the challenges, we embrace our commitment to serving you.

Everyone at ACIRA is proud of our heritage, a sentiment we wish to carry over to future generations that will continue to provide you the communication tools needed to thrive. Thank you for letting us be part of this community. ☺

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AND FEDERATED TELEPHONE COOPERATIVE

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WORDSOUTH

A CONTENT MARKETING COMPANY

On the Cover:



Hollie and Jerry Thompson own 3B Vineyards in Dawson. The company is named after their sons Braxton, Braden and Blake. See story Page 12.

Serving our **COMMUNITY!**

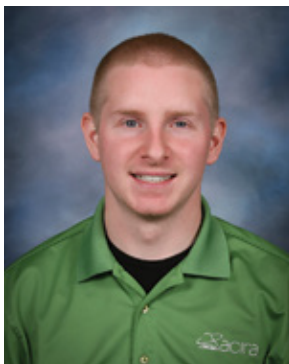
Please help us recognize three dedicated employees who have reached career milestones.



Donna Eul
40 Years



Brad Motz
10 Years



John Weeding
10 Years

DISTRICT ELECTIONS

Farmers Mutual Districts

June 8

District I: Dean Olson

District II: John Plathe

Vote on amendment to the bylaws

Federated Districts

June 10

District 1: Roger Gerdes

District 5: Nancy Taffe

Vote on amendment to the bylaws

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



Mark your Calendar

Farmers Mutual and Federated Telephone's offices will be closed on May 31 in observance of Memorial Day.

Happy Mother's & Father's Day!



Publication clarification

The March/April edition of the Connection magazine unintentionally omitted photo credits for the image used on the cover and in the story "Creating a foodie following." We thank Stephanie Foto for the images.

Annual Meeting Process for Farmers Mutual & Federated Telephone

Your 2021 Annual Meeting notification and absentee ballot will include the following:

- Annual Meeting notice.
- Absentee ballot — If you are unable to attend the meeting, you can vote by mail ballot.
- Candidate profiles — A profile of the candidates vying for election in each district.
- June 8 - Farmers Mutual Telephone Company Annual Meeting
- June 10 - Federated Telephone Cooperative Annual Meeting

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

Secrecy envelope

Along with your ballot/notification, you will receive a "secrecy envelope" for absentee voting. Once you have completed your mail ballot, insert the entire ballot into the secrecy envelope. Place your sealed secrecy envelope in the mailing envelope. Sign the mailing envelope, affix postage to the mailing envelope and mail.

Member registration card

Each member will receive a member registration card in the mail prior to the annual meeting. Please sign the card and bring it with you to the meeting. Bring your signed card to the appropriate registration desk. Your signed registration card complies with FCC privacy laws and qualifies you for meeting registration.



Lavender Love

Wisconsin's fields of wispy wonder

Story by ANNE BRALY

When the lavender farms of Door County, Wisconsin, are in full bloom, it's a feast for the senses. See the fields of purple as they wave across Washington Island, a prime spot. Smell the aroma of sweet lavender that wafts through the air. Experience the tranquility and peacefulness from breathing in the essence of a plant with so many uses.

"It really will delight your senses," says Martine Anderson, founder and co-owner of Fragrant Isle Lavender Farm, the largest lavender farm in the Midwest with 20,000 lavender plants in bloom by late July — the height of the season. She and her husband, Edgar Anderson, planted their first lavender plants just eight years ago, fulfilling a lifetime dream for Martine Anderson, who was born and raised in the south of France, where lavender farms are an emblem of the region.

Upon their move to Washington Island as young retirees, the couple looked for a business in which to invest. Martine felt that Washington Island's pristine beauty would be a great fit for lavender, so Edgar did weather studies, took soil samples and planted a test garden at their home. The test was successful, and the Andersons realized their dream of creating a lavender business and contributing to the economic growth of Washington Island.

At the same time, they opened a gift shop that now stocks more than 250 products from the farm's lavender fields, such as lotions, therapeutic-grade essential oils, soaps, perfumes, body butter, jams, syrup, honey, ice cream and myriad other products that show the flowering herb's versatility.

A year after opening, the Andersons moved their farm to a larger location and added Fragrant Isle's Le Cafe to its lineup of lavender love. The cafe overlooks the lavender fields, and among its menu items from the farm, lavender lemonade is a favorite. When the plants are in bloom, tables on the outdoor terrace are in demand.

Fragrant Isle uses the latest in technology to cultivate its plants in an all-natural environment for sustainable and pesticide-free growing. No chemicals go into the process, which is an important fact, as lavender is not only useful for therapeutic purposes but in cooking, as well. The land of the Niagara Escarpment, especially in Door County, is a very fragile ecosystem, Edgar Anderson explains. The bedrock, without the benefit of a natural soil filtration system, allows water to run freely. This is good for lavender, which prefers soil that is sandy with excellent drainage.



Edgar and Martine Anderson own the Fragrant Isle Lavender Farm, the largest such farm in the Midwest.

WHAT IS LAVENDER, EXACTLY?

You'll see lavender in mixtures of potpourri and diffusers to scent a home, and you can find it in the spice department at your local grocery store. But what is it — a spice, a room freshener or what?

Lavender is a perennial herb, part of the mint family. You'll find it on the same family tree as oregano, rosemary, sage, thyme and basil. "Its use goes back many centuries, when it used to be part of the 'medicine cabinet' due to its ability to help with skin problems and other antimicrobial and antifungal properties," Martine Anderson says.

Today, lavender is used more and more in the culinary world, she says, as it adds a second dimension to many recipes. You'll find it infused or steeped into sauces and ground and mixed with other spices. Also, she says, its oil is used directly to ramp up the flavor of many foods because it blends well in both savory and sweet dishes.

GROWING LAVENDER

Lavender is one of those plants that appreciates bad soil — rocky with few nutrients, the kind you might expect to find in parts of Africa and southern Europe. It's little wonder, since this is where the plant originates.

There are 450 different varieties of lavender, but due to the colder temperatures, growing it in the Midwest presents challenges and limitations as far as which varieties one can grow. Your garden center will carry the best varieties for your area. Once you get the plants home:

Plant them in the sunniest place in your yard. Full sun is best.

The soil should be well drained. The drier the better. Water once or twice a week until the plants are established and then once every two to three weeks until buds form, then once or twice weekly until harvest. Cut back on the watering if it's a rainy summer.

Lavender is excellent for rock gardens and makes a great backdrop for smaller flowering plants. 📌



Put it to good use

Lavender is well known in the aromatherapy world for its calming and relaxing properties. You just need to make sure you are using therapeutic-grade lavender, like that at Fragrant Isle, for this purpose. And that's not all.

According to HGTV, it can also relieve sore muscles and release a tension headache with application at the temples. It can also ease the pain from a burn and help soothe the wound when users dilute lavender oil with a little water and spritz it over the burned skin. Another use for lavender oil is to treat insect bites. And don't forget Fido. Before he dons his bandana, treat it with lavender oil to help keep the fleas at bay.

Dried culinary lavenders, such as English lavender, can flavor baked goods and compound butter. Users can make them into tea for a floral burst of flavor. They're also a nice addition to meat marinades and rubs. This summer, try tossing some lavender stems on charcoal to infuse meat and give it a delicious, smoky, herbal kick.

A day on the farm

As farmers around the world work to diversify their crops and increase profits and awareness of the place of agriculture in our lives, they've opened their farms to the outside, making agritourism one of the top trends in tourism. Fragrant Isle is one of Wisconsin's top destinations for a day on the farm, educating visitors about lavender, its many benefits and uses, as they enjoy the farm's beauty and phenomenal aroma.

Visitors have the opportunity to learn firsthand from the lavender experts how they cultivate, harvest, process and steam-distill the lavender during harvest. July and August will be the time to visit the farm's U-pick field and pick your own lavender bouquet. For more information, visit fragrantisle.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



Kindle Paperwhite

Do you want to do a bit of summer reading on the go, or is that stack of books by the bedside becoming unwieldy? Amazon's Kindle Paperwhite is a proven winner for digital books. The devices, easily held in one hand, have space for multiple books, offer screens readable even in bright sunlight and are designed for convenience. Amazon even touts the latest models as being waterproof.

Available from Amazon for \$129.99. Note this version includes ads on the device home screen.

Make the connection

Wi-Fi links your devices to the internet

We search for it. We ask for it. Sometimes, we even share it. But what exactly is Wi-Fi?

At its most basic, Wi-Fi is a wireless networking standard that determines how devices communicate with one another. The term was developed by an international association of companies that emphasized security, reliability and interoperability. Now, everything from refrigerators and slow cookers to gaming consoles and streaming devices relies on Wi-Fi connections and those standards.

So, that's the definition of what Wi-Fi is. But what is it not? A Wi-Fi connection alone isn't the internet. Instead, it's one route between your devices and the internet.

With Wi-Fi, your devices are typically accessing a router that transmits and receives wireless signals. It's that router that has a physical link to the internet. It seems simple enough. Your devices transmit signals picked up by the Wi-Fi router connected to the online world. Well, there are a few other points to consider. Not every Wi-Fi router is equal.

As new technologies develop, they are added to the next generation of Wi-Fi routers. Decoding some of these details can help you match your devices to your Wi-Fi setup. You may have seen the number 802.11 followed by a letter or two — a, b, g, n, ac, ax — in reference to Wi-Fi routers. Each newer standard is faster and more reliable. If you have an older device using the

older 802.11n standard, it will work fine with a newer 802.11ax router. However, that older device likely would not be able to take advantage of the latest features.

A basic understanding of these standards can prove useful when connecting smart home gadgets like security cameras, light switches and more. Review the documentation for each device to make sure it's compatible with your Wi-Fi setup.

POWER UP

Most computers and mobile devices can communicate through Wi-Fi, giving you a reliable, wireless internet connection. There are some potential drawbacks, however, such as limited range, disruption by large metal objects — even something like a refrigerator — or stone walls.

It's always best to place your router as close as possible to the devices that need to connect. Generally, the center of a home is ideal. There are options, though, if obstructions block the signal or access is needed in multiple rooms. Extenders or Wi-Fi systems that create a mesh of small connected Wi-Fi access points throughout a house are among the possibilities.

And please remember one thing if your internet-connected devices seem to be lagging. A great trouble-shooting technique is to unplug your router, wait a minute and reconnect it. That won't solve every problem, but it's a great starting point. 📶





Keeping it local

Farm to fork restaurant serves a purpose, along with delicious meals

Story by ANNE BRALY | Photography by BROOKE KERN

Gary Wahl has made a career in the arts, first as an art professor for 16 years, now as the owner of Stone's Throw Cafe in Morris. He opened the cafe in May 2018 in an old downtown building — once an auto parts store and then a dance studio — where he combines a love of the culinary arts with a passion for the visual arts. The cafe is decorated with pieces from local artists, but his connection with the community doesn't stop there.

"We also have local music, and our trivia nights often showcase local trivia," Wahl says.

The food, too, has a strong connection with local farmers and other food purveyors. "I'm interested in helping small-sized farmers and ranchers find a market for their goods," Wahl says.

Beef for the cafe's brisket and its burgers, such as the classic Pub Burger with two slices of hickory smoked bacon

and house-made beer cheese, comes from Prairie Horizon Farms just 20 miles away. "We like to say we have the best burger and fries for 100 miles," Wahl says. "In the summer, we feature lots of produce grown in our area. I make weekly purchases at the farmers market and often get calls from farmers and gardeners who have more produce on hand than they can manage."

And when rhubarb season is at its height, Wahl and his wife and business partner, Anne Barber, enjoy visiting local rhubarb patches to pick their own for use in desserts and Stone's Throw's signature strawberry rhubarb margarita.

Foods like barbecue, chicken Alfredo, spaghetti with red sauce and Italian sausage, falafel items and banh mi — a pork tenderloin sandwich in a baguette with cilantro, cucumber and pickled radish, onions and carrots — are just a few of the other items on the diverse menu.

As restaurants have struggled through the COVID-19 pandemic, Stone's Throw, too, has seen its share of challenges. Sunday brunch was once a popular meal, but the cafe reduced its operating hours to lunch and dinner Wednesday through Saturday only.

"We expected our business to drop far more than it did," Wahl says. "Familiar faces kept ordering and adapting to each new challenge and guideline. That level of community support is so important and perhaps a little unexpected. We know there are still folks out there who have not given us a try recently. Our challenge is to find out how to meet their needs and bring them in without losing the things that have attracted our current regulars."

"Now, we focus on using social media, like Facebook, Instagram, and our loyalty program to speak directly to our existing customers," Wahl says.

In return, spreading the word about Stone's Throw via social media has had the added benefit of improving the cafe's search engine optimization, so when new customers search online for a restaurant in Morris — one that's nice enough for a special event or just lunch with the family — Stone's Throw appears in the top choices. 📍

Stone's Throw Cafe

506 Atlantic Ave, Morris, MN 56267
stonesthrow.cafe



From veggies to proteins, Gary Wahl locally sources many of the ingredients for meals.

Final cut

How the freedom of the internet is transforming filmmaking

Story by DREW WOOLLEY

Some filmmakers learn their craft by making home movies in the backyard. Others go to film school. Madelaine Turner likes to say she got her education on YouTube.

“That’s essentially where I got my film degree,” she says. “Movies were my first love, but filmmaking wasn’t something I pursued for a long time. Until quarantine started.”

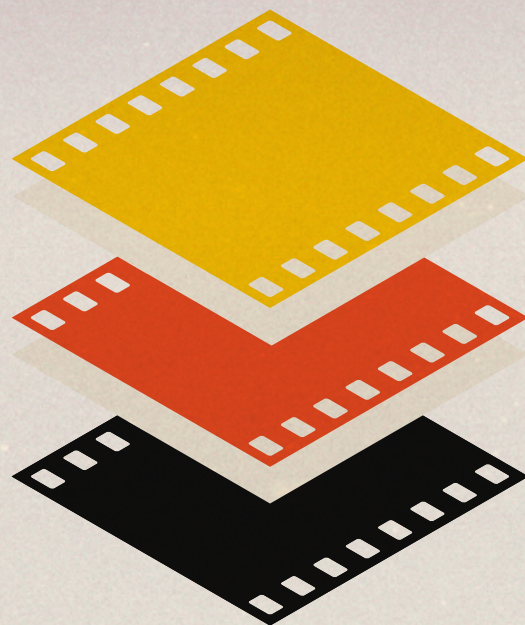
At 27 years old, the California native considers herself a senior by the standard of apps like TikTok. Of the app’s 500 million active users, nearly half are estimated to be in their teens and early 20s.

Originally, Turner’s quick videos were just a way to stay connected with her younger siblings. But she began to view the platform as a way to genuinely flex her creative muscle after a positive response to her Wes Anderson tribute video, “The Anderson Guide to Surviving a Global Pandemic,” filmed using only objects she had in her apartment.

“It gives you really specific boundaries with the content you’re allowed to create, which is 59 seconds,” she says. “So the challenge and excitement as a storyteller, director and creator is getting your point across and making those 59 seconds really enjoyable for your audience.”

Within those confines, Turner has explored her wide-ranging creative interests, from short films paying homage to Jane Austen costume dramas and French heist movies to abstract dream sequences and a cyberpunk take on “The Wizard of Oz.” Each new style gives her a chance to learn more about the filmmaking process both during and after filming.

“I’d never really used a green screen or After Effects before,” she says. “Now, taking on a new genre is really exciting because it allows me to push the boundaries of what I know how to do and challenges me to figure out how I can convey this effectively without having a whole production crew.”



Her growth as a filmmaker hasn’t gone unnoticed. As a freelance screenwriter, Turner has been able to point to her online portfolio and hundreds of thousands of followers to build connections within the movie industry. And thanks to the algorithms of apps like TikTok, Instagram and YouTube, more people are discovering her work every day.

“It allows you to come across content from someone with virtually no following,” Turner says. “And from my perspective, I was putting my stuff out there and very quickly engaging an audience that gave me the permission to go bigger, further and more creative.”

That audience is one of the reasons Turner doesn’t expect she’ll ever stop making short-form videos online, even as she pursues her larger filmmaking dreams. The real-time feedback she receives on those platforms has already shaped her as a filmmaker and may come to shape the industry itself.

“A traditional filmmaker might go years in between films, whereas on TikTok you get this microenvironment of trying new things and getting that quick feedback,” she says.

“So I think I’ve been lucky to hyper-develop my style as a filmmaker because of that feedback loop. Hopefully I can be part of a generation of filmmakers that is able to bridge that gap between the internet and the mainstream.”



Madelaine Turner puts her spin on genres ranging from French heist movies to cyberpunk.



Long distance

For every film festival that was able to pivot to digital in 2020, there were many more that had to be canceled altogether. With so much of the industry on hold, a team of five cinephiles in Brooklyn started the entirely online Long Distance Film Festival, harnessing the power of broadband to give rural and urban filmmakers around the world an outlet for their creativity.

"There was a certain freedom to starting an all-online festival," says Festival Director Elias ZX. "It was much cheaper than doing it in person. We didn't sell tickets and had unlimited capacity so friends, family and fans of the filmmakers were able to join from around the globe and watch the festival in its entirety."

To pull it off, the team partnered with the independent Spectacle Theater and Kinoscope to stream its 15 selected short films to hundreds of viewers around the world. Plans for a second edition of the festival are already underway, with submissions open for 2021.



Industry standard

Oxford Film Festival Executive Director Melanie Addington was making last-minute arrangements for the Mississippi-based event when the state's governor banned gatherings of more than 100 people. Using Eventive's brand-new online festival platform, she quickly pivoted to take the event virtual.

"We were one of the first virtual festivals with Eventive and had to learn a lot very quickly, mostly that a lot of our community doesn't have good internet access," she says. "That was restricting in some ways, but it also expanded who could see them to a new audience."

Moving forward, Addington anticipates OFF will have a hybrid format, combining the accessibility of a virtual festival with the in-person experience of a live event.

"This will be what we do from here on out," she says. "Not everyone can travel to Oxford, but they can still take part in the experience. It makes absolute sense for this to become a standard in our industry."





Bottling success

Pouring on the effort in the grapes business

Story by ANNE BRALY | Photography by BROOKE KERN

There was a time when grape growing was a big industry in Minnesota. By 1900, growers were harvesting more than 600,000 pounds a year, according to the Minnesota Grape Growers Association. But rail transportation and the expanding wine industry in California brought those glory days to an end.

However, it wasn't exactly on a wing and a prayer that Hollie and Jerry Thompson planted their first grapevines on their Dawson farm. They'd done their homework. Plenty of it, in fact.

"We consulted our neighbors, Jon and Sue Roison, who'd been growing grapes for several years," Hollie Thompson says, adding that Jon Roison lent his expertise during their first vineyard planting. Plus, Thompson says, she and her husband researched a number of wineries to learn more about the best vines to buy and plant in the sandy, loamy soil on the farm. This type of earth, they learned, was a little better for grapes than for the corn and soybeans they also grow.

"We were looking for some other crops to plant," she says regarding what prompted the couple to consider growing grapes. "We wanted to be different and try to do something different to add to our farm and not have to rely on corn and soybeans."

So in 2012, the Thompsons planted the first vines for their new venture, 3B Vineyard — all cold-hardy varieties proven to withstand the brutal Minnesota winters. They first planted an acre of La Crescent grapes, an acre of Frontelac blanc and a few vines of Somerset seedless table grapes and King of the North. The following year, they planted more Frontelac blanc grapes and added Brianna vines to the vineyard, bringing 3B's total acreage of grapevines to 6. Each variety produces differently, but Brianna appears to be most prolific, Thompson says.

As the farm-to-table trend grows, enabling consumers to indulge in foods from growers and other food providers near home, interest in producing grapes in Minnesota has grown, according to the Minnesota Grape Growers Association. Wineries are growing at a rapid pace, and the demand for locally grown grapes is increasing.

Unlike many vineyards, 3B Vineyard — named after the Thompsons' three sons, Braxton, Braden and Blake — does not produce wine but sells most of its grapes to area wineries. "Selling grapes is a lot different from selling corn and soybeans," Hollie Thompson says. "You have to have a good relationship with the wineries."

In order to make their wines, wineries expect all grapes to be of excellent quality, so a relationship between grower and buyer is essential, she says. This same kind of interpersonal relationship doesn't happen with the sale of crops such as corn and soybeans that buyers get through a grain elevator.

While 3B Vineyard doesn't produce wine, the Thompsons hold back enough of the King of the North harvest for another enterprise — a lemonade stand.

It's not the kind most people imagine, set up in a front yard with homemade signs reading "Lemonade for Sale" and a drink that comes from a powdered mix in small paper cups. Instead, the 3B Vineyard stand is manned by the family at their local county fair, among other places, where they sell their popular grape lemonade by the glass or in refillable growlers, says Thompson, an early childhood education teacher for the Minnesota Public School System.

The family also makes and sells grape freezes, table grapes, grape jelly and their popular Jump Back grape jelly, which is best over a block of cream cheese with crackers. For years, their lemonade stand has been nothing more than an old, converted chicken coop in which they keep their food products cold in a large cooler. By next season, Thompson says, they plan to upgrade to a modern refrigerated truck.

"We don't sell in stores, because that would mean having a commercial



Hollie and Jerry Thompson are the owners of 3B Vineyards in Dawson. The company is named after their three boys Braxton, Braden and Blake.

license," she says. So, how do they market their products? They use the same method an increasing number of small retail businesses are taking advantage of: social media.

3B Vineyard has a strong presence on Facebook, utilizing beautiful photos that help tell its story. In addition to spreading the word about their farm, Facebook is also the Thompsons' method for selling their products. They post what's for sale, whether it be fresh grapes, grape lemonade, jelly or other freshly made goods. Orders come in via the "comments" tab, and customers can pick them up at a specified time.

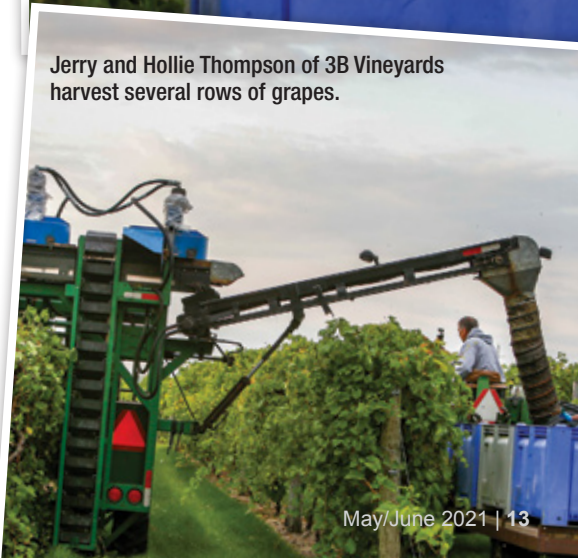
Pick-your-own experiences are also available at the vineyard, and the farm is open for tours, making a fun family outing for families who come for the day and pack a picnic to enjoy among the vines. School field trips offer an educational experience for students who come to learn about farming and pick grapes to take back to school for use in the school's lunch program. 3B Vineyard has also been the backdrop for the Dawson-Boyd Arts Association's annual Wine & Dine dinner, raising money for the county's visual and performing arts programs.

Although 3B Vineyard's 6 acres of grapevines make it small by wine industry standards, there are no plans for expansion. "We try to do all the work ourselves," Thompson says. 🍷

3B Vineyard
2174 291 Ave. Dawson, MN 56232
507-829-1334. Be sure to look for their page on Facebook.



Jerry and Hollie Thompson of 3B Vineyards harvest several rows of grapes.





Perfectly pleasing peas

Enjoy a surprisingly flexible legume

If you're denying yourself the simple beauty of peas, it's time to rethink your weekly menu. Full of healthy benefits and flavor, they should be a part of everyone's diet.

Peas' nutrition profile includes manganese, protein, fiber, vitamin A and folate, with lots of lesser vitamins to boot. And their neutral flavor allows them to go from smoothies at breakfast to salads for lunch and pot pies for dinner. They're inexpensive and add a lot of texture and color to any plate.

Try tossing them with pasta and a creamy Alfredo sauce. Or use peas as a topping for a baked potato with cheese and sour cream. You can also make an incredible pesto sauce for buttery rounds of crusty bread. Simply add a bag of

frozen peas to a handful of mint leaves and a half cup of Parmesan cheese, blend them together in a food processor and add olive oil as the machine is running until you get a smooth, thick consistency.

If you're lucky enough to have a garden full of the green pods filled with fresh peas, you've done yourself a favor. Just go outside and grab a handful of taste and nutrition. If not, grab a bag of frozen peas — they're just as good for you.



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



PEA SALAD WITH SMOKED ALMONDS

- 2 (16-ounce) packages frozen peas
- 6 ounces smoke-flavored almonds, finely chopped
- 1/2 a sweet onion or more, to taste, finely chopped
- 1/2 cup mayonnaise (reduced fat OK)
- 1/2 cup sour cream (light OK)
- Ground black pepper, to taste
- 1/2 cup shredded cheddar cheese

Place frozen peas in a colander and rinse them under cold water until thawed. Drain and transfer them to a large bowl. Add the almonds and onions. Mix well. Fold mayonnaise, sour cream and black pepper into the pea mixture until evenly coated. Transfer to a serving container and top with shredded cheese. Cover and refrigerate until serving. Before serving, you may want to blend cheese into the mixture, or leave it on top for a prettier presentation.





GREEN PEA BANANA SMOOTHIE

- 1/2 cup frozen green peas
- 1 frozen banana
- 1 cup spinach
- 4 mint leaves or more, to taste
- 1 1/2 cups almond milk
- 1 tablespoon almond butter, optional

Combine all ingredients in a blender. Blend until smooth, about 1 minute. Add more almond milk if needed to achieve your desired consistency.

CREAMY CHICKEN POT PIE

Peas add taste, color and texture to this creamy dish.

- 2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup cold unsalted butter, cut into cubes
- 1/2 cup cold buttermilk
- 1 or 2 tablespoons cold water
- 1 large egg, beaten, for the egg wash

For the pot pie filling:

- 1/4 cup unsalted butter
- 1/3 cup diced onion
- 2 medium carrots sliced (about 1 cup)
- 1 stalk celery sliced (about 1/2 cup)
- 2 cloves garlic minced
- 1/3 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 1/2 teaspoons minced fresh thyme
- 1 tablespoon minced fresh Italian parsley
- 1 3/4 cups chicken broth
- 1/2 cup heavy cream
- 3 cups shredded chicken or turkey
- 1 cup frozen peas

First, make the pie dough. Combine the flour, sugar and salt in a large bowl. Add the cubed butter and toss to coat.

Dump the mixture out onto a clean surface and use a rolling pin to roll the butter into thin sheets, combining it with the flour. Use a bench scraper to scrape the rolling pin and to bring the mixture back into a pile as necessary. Continue until all of the butter is incorporated into the flour. The mixture will be very flaky. Return the mixture to the bowl and place it in the freezer for 15 minutes to chill the butter.

Remove from the freezer and add the buttermilk. Use a spoon, and then your hands, to stir the mixture until it comes together into a ball. If the mixture is too dry, add the water a tablespoon at a time. Divide the dough into 2 parts and flatten them into disks. Wrap each disk in plastic wrap and chill in the fridge while you make the filling.

To make the filling, heat the butter over medium-high heat in a large skillet. Add the onions, carrots, celery and garlic and cook until tender, stirring occasionally. Whisk in the flour, salt, black pepper, thyme, parsley, chicken broth and heavy cream. Whisk until there are no flour lumps, then simmer over medium-low heat for 10 minutes or until the sauce has thickened. Stir in the shredded chicken or turkey and frozen peas. Remove from heat and set aside.

Preheat the oven to 400 F. Remove the pie dough from the refrigerator. On a lightly floured surface, use a rolling pin to roll out the dough into a 12-inch circle. Dough should be about 1/4 inch thick. Transfer the dough to a 9-inch pie pan. Pat with your fingers, making sure it is smooth. Trim the extra overhang of dough with a knife and discard.

Pour the filling into the dough-lined pie pan. Roll out the second disk of dough and carefully cover the pie. Trim the extra overhang off the sides. Seal the edges by crimping with a fork or your fingers. With a sharp knife, slice a few small slits in the center of the top crust. Using a pastry brush, brush the crust and edges with a beaten egg.

Bake for 45 minutes, or until the crust is golden brown. Cool for 10 minutes, allowing the filling to settle and thicken a bit. Cut into slices and serve.



Thank you **WE CAN'T WAIT TO SEE YOU!**

The Farmers Mutual Annual Meeting

Tuesday, June 8, at Lac qui Parle High School.

The Federated Telephone's Annual Meeting

Thursday, June 10, at Morris Area Elementary School.

- **Bring your registration card**

Please watch your mail and check the Acira - Powered by Farmers Mutual & Federated Telephone Facebook page for further details and times.



Call 320-585-4875 or 320-568-2105 today to learn more.