

MAY/JUNE 2022

CONNECTION

LUNCHTIME
LEGACY

EXPLORE
MINDFULNESS

Living at the lake

Enjoying summer at Big Stone Lake



By SHIRLEY BLOOMFIELD, CEO
NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association

A partner to support RURAL AMERICA

The Foundation for Rural
Service makes a difference

Our members work hard to serve our nation's rural communities, but they do not do it alone. I'd like to shine a spotlight on an organization whose work I respect, appreciate and support.

The professionals of the Foundation for Rural Service, known as FRS, deserve praise for all the benefits they provide to thousands of people. Established as a nonprofit in 1994, they have made a positive difference for nearly 30 years.

Many of you may know their efforts to help educate young people in rural communities through scholarships and the popular Youth Tour trip to our nation's capital. FRS also annually takes key congressional staff out into our communities to see the challenges faced when deploying broadband.

In particular I want to give a special nod to the annual FRS Community Grant Program designed to benefit communities served by NTCA members. The goal is to support local efforts committed to improving and sustaining rural America. The grants have four areas of concentration: business and economic development, community development, education and telecommunications — the last is a chance to highlight a local plan to support broadband resources for telehealth, education and more. For more information about these programs, visit www.frs.org.

Just like the NTCA member serving you, a remarkable community partner where you live, FRS combines the resources and visibility of all NTCA members to benefit communities like yours across the country. 📞



Get your free annual credit report Spot scammers early

A free credit report is one of the quickest ways to spot identity theft — someone taking your name, date of birth, address, credit card or bank account information, Social Security or medical insurance numbers.

Scammers can quickly drain a bank account, run up charges on a credit card, get a new credit card in your name and more.

What is a credit report?

A credit report is a summary of your personal credit history, including identifying details such as an address, date of birth and information such as whether bills were paid on time or someone has filed for bankruptcy.

Three national credit bureaus — Equifax, Experian and TransUnion — collect and update this information.

The credit bureaus must:

- ▶ Make sure the information they collect about you is accurate
- ▶ Give you a free copy of your report once every 12 months
- ▶ Give you a chance to fix any mistakes

How do I order my free annual credit reports? The simplest solution is to visit AnnualCreditReport.com. It's fast and easy.

Cryptocurrency 101

A beginner's guide to the new currency

For many people, the idea of cryptocurrency, or digital money, is downright mysterious. Still, cryptocurrency has been around more than a decade, and a growing number of people are starting to use and invest in the world of virtual coins and tokens.

But what, exactly, is it? How does it work? And how do you get it?

CRYPTO BASICS

Put simply, cryptocurrency is digital money. There are no physical coins or paper dollar bills you can pull out and put in a billfold. But it's also not backed up by any asset. According to [bitstamp.net](https://www.bitstamp.net), cryptocurrencies are a tradable asset in and of themselves. Their price is determined by demand and the supply available.

Like gold, cryptocurrency's value is in its scarcity and its uses — or potential uses in crypto's case, according to an Investopedia article in December 2021. Bitcoin, which is the most valuable of the different cryptocurrencies, is limited to a quantity of 21 million bitcoins. And while gold is often useful for industrial applications and in valuable jewelry, crypto might be of service in a number of retail transactions one day.

HOW TO GET IT

Most people buy it online and store it in a virtual wallet. The easiest way to buy cryptocurrency is through one of many centralized exchanges that come up on an online search. There are several types of cryptocurrencies, including the three top ones: Bitcoin, Ethereum and Tether.

CRYPTO AND TAXES

The banking system and the government do not oversee cryptocurrency transactions. Instead, these transactions are supported by blockchain, a technology that tracks who owns what. But that doesn't mean cryptocurrency isn't taxable. In fact,

the Internal Revenue Service taxes cryptocurrency as either property, investment or earned income. Because of this, crypto dabblers should keep careful records of all their transactions.

UPS AND DOWNS?

Cryptocurrency is known for its volatile market. In one day in 2021, Bitcoin dropped by 30% — a huge fluctuation in any other trading market. As a new currency that's not legal tender and which any government can issue, crypto can move wildly up or down based on just about anything — perceptions, news articles or, most notably, a tweet from tech entrepreneur Elon Musk.

RESEARCH AND START SLOW

To find out more about cryptocurrency, make sure to do your research. Seek out sources crypto advertisers or others with vested interests in particular products aren't backing. Those determined to try it out should invest conservatively while learning more about the market along the way. 💬

Crypto lingo

Knowing more about cryptocurrencies requires learning new words and phrases. Here are a few that are sure to pop up frequently:

FUD — FUD is an acronym that stands for "fear, uncertainty, doubt." In the crypto world, FUD is negative information that can deter investors.

HODL — HODL is an acronym for "hold on for dear life," but internet lore jokes that its origins came from a typo for the word "hold." Either way, cryptocurrency investors use it to caution others against selling when the market is volatile.

NFT — NFT stands for non-fungible tokens. NFTs are pieces of digital content linked to the Ethereum blockchain. Non-fungible basically means that the digital content is unique and cannot be replaced. Because of this fact, NFTs make digital works of art and other items into one-of-a-kind assets.

Sats — Short for Satoshis, sats are the smallest fraction of a bitcoin that you can send — 0.00000001 of a bitcoin. Hard-core bitcoin traders look at sats, not the dollar amount of bitcoin. Note: Satoshi Nakamoto is the made-up name of the person or people who created bitcoin.



Congratulations, graduates

A bright future awaits

Throughout our community, young adults are experiencing a milestone — they're about to begin their first post-high school summer. It's a moment that deserves celebration — a cap on 12 years of hard work and accomplishment.



KEVIN BEYER
Chief Executive Officer

Even if you're like me and the high school years have been in the rearview for a while, the memories can still seem fresh. After all, this is such a vivid time, one often filled with excitement, hope and, quite possibly, trepidation. Each of these young people will soon make choices, many of which have been years in the making. Some of them will go on to higher learning. Others may breathe a sigh of relief to leave school behind and enter the workforce, start families or explore countless other possibilities. All graduates must choose their own paths.

Some of our young people have already faced adult challenges, working jobs or carrying responsibilities that, in an ideal world, would have waited until they were older. Life isn't the same for everyone, and it's often difficult. We appreciate that the circumstances for each high school graduate are unique, and we hope we can offer one consistent thread of support to all members of the communities we serve. At Farmers Mutual Telephone and Federated Telephone, we often discuss the principles that are the bedrock of what we do, one of which is concern for the community.

Our communications network — our fast, reliable internet service in particular — can open doors that didn't exist just a few years ago. Online learning, work-from-home jobs, support for employers and so much more are now available. We are in a rural area, but we have an immediate connection to resources needed to thrive in a modern world. The playing field is more level than ever between cities and communities like ours.

One example of success is the young people leaving high school today and the link they have, not only to the online world, but also to real-world resources once unheard of in rural communities. Imagine moving away for school or a job and being able to use a video call to connect with family back home. No matter how far our graduates roam, there's a convenient link to the people who have supported them every step of the way.

We believe, however, that helping the community goes beyond the services we provide, and we know many other local businesses feel the same. Scholarships, internships, support for athletic programs and first jobs are just a few ways we work to help students attending our schools and this current group of young graduates about to strike out on their own.

While this is a time of celebration for the Class of 2022 and their families, I believe it's also a time for us to celebrate as a community. Life will bring hurdles and triumphs. Many of these former high school students will go on to become part of the fabric of our communities, and others will venture away, carrying the values and lessons they learned here with them for the rest of their lives.

I wish to congratulate all the graduates and their families. Thanks to you, the future is bright, exciting and filled with possibilities. 📺

CONNECTION

MAY/JUNE 2022

VOL. 6, NO. 3

Connection is a bimonthly newsletter published by Farmers Mutual and Federated Telephone, © 2022. It is distributed without charge to all of our customers.



POWERED BY FARMERS MUTUAL TELEPHONE COMPANY
AND FEDERATED TELEPHONE COOPERATIVE

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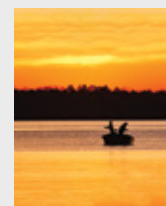
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On the Cover:



Travelers visiting Big Stone Lake are opting for unique and comfortable accommodations with local Airbnb hosts. See story Page 12.

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Annual Meeting Process for Farmers Mutual & Federated Telephone

Your 2022 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 7 — Farmers Mutual Telephone Company annual meeting
- June 9 — 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 and door prize entry

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. Registration will be divided into separate desks based on members' names. Bring your signed card to the appropriate registration desk. Your signed registration card complies with FCC privacy laws and qualifies you for meeting registration, a ballot and door prize drawings. Registration will be open from 4:30-6:30 p.m. only!

District Elections

Farmers Mutual Districts - June 7 at 6 p.m.

District I: Gerald Stensrud
District III: Scott Wittnebel

Vote on any amendment to the bylaws.

Federated Districts - June 9 at 6 p.m.

District 2: Tim Danielson
District 3: Lynn Swenson
District 6: Jon Hanson

Vote on any amendment to the bylaws.

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



**Know what's below.
Call before you dig.**

Memorial Day

In observation of Memorial Day the offices of Farmers Mutual and Federated Telephone will be closed on May 30.



Embracing *escapism*

Rural retreats offer creative ways to recharge

Story by ANNE BRALY

Wellness manifests itself in many forms when it comes to physical and mental health. Minnesota and its eastern neighbor, Wisconsin, are dotted with places to enjoy nature's beauty in surroundings intended to rejuvenate your spirit and make for a week away or just a quick weekend retreat.

"Minnesota is home to a handful of retreat centers reaching from Lake Superior to the greater Twin Cities area offering travelers a haven to reset," says Alyssa Hayes with Explore Minnesota. "The state's terrain is ideal for a nature-filled backdrop to accommodate a quiet and blissful escape."

Here are some suggestions for places to decompress and face the world with renewed vim and vigor.

ARC RETREAT CENTER, Stanchfield, Minnesota

The mission of ARC is to serve individuals and groups seeking time away for rest and spiritual renewal. ARC embraces people in their full diversity, including all faith traditions and spiritual beliefs. And this takes place deep in the white pine woods of central Minnesota, only an hour north of busy Minneapolis, but a world away.

ARC-sponsored retreats revolve around a certain theme and typically take place in the lodge, which accommodates a maximum of 18 guests in 12 single rooms and three double rooms. Guests can also plan private retreats for families and other groups with planned activities or time to read, write, knit, meditate, walk the nature trails or simply sit by the fireplace and look out on nature.

In addition to the lodge, the 90-acre campus features a cottage perfect for a small family and another tiny cottage for one, hidden in the woods for solitary contemplation.

For more information, log onto arcretreat.org.

GUNFLINT LODGE & OUTFITTERS, Grand Marais, Minnesota

Get your motor running and retreat into the great outdoors of Grand Marais. Gunflint Lodge offers a combination of stunning natural beauty, luxury accommodations and activities all at one resort. Spend your days flying through the trees on the zip line canopy tour, on a trail ride through the Superior National Forest, relaxing with a massage or exploring the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness that surrounds the resort. Spend the evening in the classic Northwoods lodge with a gourmet meal before retiring to a cabin.

Fishing, canoeing, activities for the kids, horseback riding, sea kayaking and hiking are among the myriad things to do. It's a retreat of a different sort that lets you commune with nature on your own or bring the entire family and have a memorable time together.



The gazebo at the Mount Olivet Retreat Center in Farmington, Minnesota, is just one of the resort's attractions, which include a 17-room lodge.

The resort has 23 lakeside cabins with one to four bedrooms, a full kitchen and a beautiful, stone fireplace. Some cabins also have hot tubs, washer/dryer units, and other comfortable amenities.

For more information, visit gunflint.com.

MOUNT OLIVET RETREAT CENTER, Farmington, Minnesota

Surrounded by woods, lakes and prairies, groups engage in creative conversation — with each other! No phones, no social media. Just talk. Or not — you can also just sit still and connect with nature, letting the beautiful surroundings inspire you.

Mount Olivet Retreat Center accepts both private and group retreats. There is a 17-room lodge with hotel-style rooms as well as four dorm-style rooms that sleep multiple people. Unwind and do your own thing — sit around the campfire and tell stories or go for a dip in the pool. Or, visit on a weekend with events — there are getaways for crafters, along with outdoor concerts and midweek worships.

The center also offers meals using produce from its gardens as well as locally sourced foods whenever possible. The expansive view of Chub Lake from the dining room fosters mindful eating and relaxing conversation during meal time.

For more information, visit mtolivetretreat.org.

Gunflint Lodge in Grand Marais is a luxurious resort surrounded by the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness.



SUNDARA INN AND SPA, Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin

Wisconsin Dells is a place filled with activity, from its water parks to its bustling shopping and restaurant scene. But just as many come for the Tranquility Garden, Meditation Trail and bath ritual at Sundara. Come for a day, or stay for a while. The inn, recognized as one of the top-10 Midwest Resort Hotels by Travel + Leisure, has suites and villas, all with luxury bedding and other appointments.


The spa offers massages, facials and other services, while others may choose from a full list of planned activities, such as guided hikes and water yoga.

There's a restaurant on-site offering breakfast, lunch and dinner with a menu that focuses on health. Sundara is an adults-only retreat, so plan on a relaxing escape.

For more information, visit sundaraspa.com.

BRIDGE CREEK COTTAGE, Augusta, Wisconsin

If you'd like to spend some time bringing out your artsy side and catch up on your scrapbooking or add more patches to your quilt, gather some friends and book Bridge Creek Cottage, a seven-bedroom facility in the beauty of the Amish community of Augusta. The cottage was designed with crafters in mind, so all you have to do is bring your crafting supplies. But the retreat is also a good place to break away from the busyness of life and leave your stresses behind to enjoy some time in the country. It's a peaceful retreat in an area with beautiful scenery, wonderful restaurants and bakeries, cheese shops and more. So, whether you're a foodie or an artist, you'll find this is a little piece of paradise.

For information, visit bridgecreekcottage.com. 



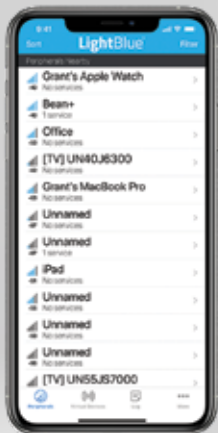
The seven-room Bridge Creek Cottage in Augusta, Wisconsin, was designed with creatives in mind, perfect for crafters. Just bring your supplies.



Hi! I'M JADE GEHRKE.

With this column, we're going to explore the digital world, specifically how you can get the most out of everything from computers and mobile devices to online services and apps. The possibilities are endless, and I'm here to help.

DEVICE OF THE MONTH



LightBlue

For those, hopefully, rare occasions when you can't find your Fitbit, earbuds or other Bluetooth-enabled devices, the LightBlue app can help. As long as your device has some charge left and was on when you lost it, the app can scan for Bluetooth devices and even tell you the signal strength, allowing you to pinpoint a more exact location. The app is available for free for Apple and Android devices.

Stay connected

Secrets to Bluetooth success

When you're shopping for a speaker, earbuds, headphones or even game controllers, if they have wireless connectivity, the odds are it will be through Bluetooth. But what is Bluetooth, and how can you get the most out of the technology?

BLUE RADIO

Put simply, Bluetooth is a short-range wireless technology standard that transmits data using radio waves.

Whether it's taking a call from your iPhone on your AirPods, pairing your Amazon Echo to a Windows PC or sending a document from your Android device to a waiting printer, Bluetooth is a generally secure way to send data or voice over short distances. Connections are encrypted, and the devices periodically switch radio frequencies to prevent easy interception.

The name for this pervasive technology comes from King Harald "Bluetooth" Gormsson, who, according to the official Bluetooth website, was known for two things: uniting Denmark and Norway in 958 and having a dead tooth, which was the dark, blue-gray color that gave him his nickname.

Bluetooth developed to allow products from different manufacturers to connect. Just as the Danish king united competing factions, so, too, did his namesake technology. In 1998, Ericsson, Intel, Nokia, Toshiba and IBM were the original Bluetooth adopters.

King Harald not only inspired the standard's name, but his initials — in runic form — also became the distinctive Bluetooth logo.

BLUE TIPS

While Bluetooth is an inexpensive, highly compatible wireless standard, it has some limitations. Follow these tips if you're having trouble with your connections or want to improve their quality.

- **Keep a clear signal:** While its low-power signals and frequency hopping abilities generally allow Bluetooth devices to avoid interference, it can still run into trouble from a host of devices, including baby monitors, cordless phones and microwaves.
- **Stay within range:** The Bluetooth range for most consumer devices is about 30 feet. Make sure you stay within range for uninterrupted transmission.
- **Expand that range:** If staying within 30 feet is not practical, Bluetooth routers can extend the range up to 1,000 feet in open air. With a router, you can leave your phone charging inside and still have a Bluetooth speaker going in the backyard.
- **Charge up:** This may seem obvious, but a device's charge impacts its ability to transmit wireless signals. Keeping your device properly charged will help keep a steady connection.

LAKE *living*

Randall's Milan Beach Resort provides classics and culture

Story By ANNE BRALY

Like a serving of cold ice cream on a hot summer day, a lake getaway offers its own solution to the busyness of life.

Randall's Milan Beach Resort is such a place. It's the only resort on Lac Qui Parle Lake, a reservoir along the Minnesota River in Milan. The resort opened nearly 100 years ago as a cafe with cabins where fishermen and hunters could spend the night after a day on the water or the surrounding wilderness. Today, not much has changed, although it's now a place for families. They sleep and play in the great outdoors, have a filling meal in the cafe and experience life on Minnesota's wild side.

Hosea Randall, a commercial hunter, trapper and fisherman, and his wife, Mildred, one of the best bakers west of the Mississippi, opened Milan Beach in the late 1920s. "Back in the day, the ducks and geese Hosea harvested were sent off for fine dining out East," says Jeff Randall, Hosea's grandson, who owns the

resort with his wife, Stephanie. "Hosea's daughter, Jane, would often talk about the trap lines that would need tending every day. They ran all the way to the twin bridges from the resort."

While the trap lines are gone and the 32-acre piece of paradise is now in the hands of the third generation of Randalls, the resort continues to draw lovers of the outdoors from the nearby area, as well as avid fishermen and hunters from farther afield. The resort boasts 40 campsites, 24 of them full hookup sites with water, sewer and electricity, and 16 with electricity only. All, however, offer easy access to Lac Qui Parle and its bounty of waterfowl and fish, including walleyes, northerns, crappies, catfish and sunfish. Milan Beach can also supply customers with bait, as well as hunting and fishing licenses.

The cafe, an institution in the small town of Milan, opens early for breakfast at 6:30 a.m. seven days a week and stays open until 1:30 p.m. daily for a late lunch. Housed in a white frame building from the 1940s, the cafe retains a good bit of its original charm with its hand-



Photos courtesy of Milan Beach Resort.

Jeff and Stephanie Randall continue a lakeside legacy serving comfort foods like caramel rolls and cheeseburgers.

some paneling and beautiful views of the lake. The menu is a cornucopia of Midwestern favorites. Start the day with a plateful of pancakes or French toast, scrambled eggs and hashbrowns. The lunch menu features a range of choices, too, including daily specials like meatballs, roast beef and a tater tot hotdish. You'll always find a hamburger on the menu, though. "Hands down, burgers are our most popular item," Stephanie says.

Daily specials go up on Milan Beach Resort's Facebook page, the resort's chosen vehicle for reaching the masses. With its miles of surrounding farmland and wildlife areas, plus a popular cafe, there's a lot of activity in this corner of Lac Qui Parle. Some things have changed since Hosea Randall opened his resort 100 years ago, but others have remained constant. There's great fishing year round, along with good hunting, thanks to surrounding wildlife areas and acres of farmland. There's good food, and best of all, there's a chance to reset your mindset. ☺

Randall's Milan Beach Resort
18095 Highway, 40th St. NW, Milan
320-734-4400 | Facebook



© AC Photography/Adobe

GAMING on the GO

Sure, mobile games may be a distraction many of us turn to while waiting in line or during a slow episode of our favorite TV binge. But that doesn't mean they have to be bad. As our mobile devices have evolved into tiny computers in our pockets, the visuals and clever design of mobile games have grown right along with them. If you're burned out on Angry Birds and Candy Crush, try one of these games to keep your idle thumbs busy.

Good Sudoku

There are plenty of sudoku apps available but only one that puts goodness right in the name. The game's designers set out with the goal of helping players fall in love with the familiar Japanese logic puzzles. Clear difficulty levels, helpful hints and coaching for new techniques at each level make it the perfect entry for the sudoku-curious out there. If you're already a logic master, it also has more than 70,000 puzzles to be conquered and a global leaderboard to chase.

THREES

You'd be hard-pressed to find a better puzzle game than Threes. It's easy to pick up since there are only four directions a player can swipe. But the task of pairing numbers into ever greater multiples of three can quickly become a challenge requiring players to think at least three moves ahead. Whether you're looking to pass 5 minutes or chase high scores on the leaderboard, Threes is worth checking out.

Among Us

Among Us became wildly popular in 2020 in part because it's easy to understand. A group of players attempts to prep their spaceship for takeoff while one imposter tries to pick the others off while no one is looking. It's a simple premise that can lead to chaotic hijinks as players try to smoke out the saboteur. Lying to your friends has never been so fun.

DEVICE 6

Who knew your phone could be the perfect platform for a clever noir story? Device 6 puts players in the role of Anna, a woman with amnesia trying to figure out how she woke up on a mysterious island. The game infuses the classic text adventure genre with modern style and engaging visuals as words move around the screen in unexpected ways. If you're looking for something a little different from the typical mobile experience, Device 6 is bound to have a few welcome surprises in store.

NYT CROSSWORD

Sure, you could pull out the newspaper and pen to fill out your crossword the old-school way. Or you could save yourself the ink stains and errors by tackling the daily crossword on your phone. The app offers Mini and Midi puzzles for a challenge you can knock out in minutes. Or take on the full crossword each day, along with the archive of over 10,000 puzzles. Now there's no excuse not to stay sharp.





Make the CONNECTION

The video game industry remains scorching hot, and not just because people turned to a virtual distraction during the pandemic. Certainly, they did. However, the trajectory of the gaming industry continues a yearslong trend of increased popularity.

Nielsen, a company tracking how various audiences use media, provided some insight last year into video game usage.

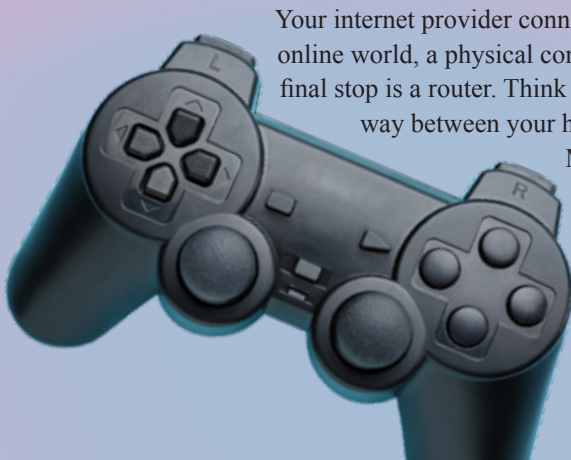
At one point during the pandemic, 55% of U.S. consumers reported playing video games. In fact, people were buying games at a fast clip, with sales rising about 14% during 2020.

There's a twist with modern gaming, too. People use it to connect with each other. The game Fortnite became famous for in-game live events, and more and more people began using services like Twitch to watch others play games, according to Nielsen.

Simply, gaming goes beyond, well, just a game. It's an experience, one made possible by fast, reliable internet.

But are you maximizing your connection for how you experience gaming?

THE CONNECTION



Your internet provider connects your home to the online world, a physical connection where the final stop is a router. Think of this as the gateway between your home and the internet.

Most modern routers allow two types of connections: Wi-Fi and Ethernet.

BENEFITS OF WI-FI

Wi-Fi uses radio waves to connect the router to your devices, eliminating the clutter of cables. Devices ranging from televisions to refrigerators can use this technology to connect online.

Gaming-related benefits of Wi-Fi include:

- Convenient for mobile games on phones and iPads.
- The ability to connect multiple devices without cables.
- Most devices, including computers, set-top boxes and more, have Wi-Fi connectivity. The same can't be said for wired Ethernet connections. Even some laptops lack the option for an Ethernet connection.
- For watching streaming content such as Twitch, Wi-Fi wirelessly takes devices ranging from TVs to tablets online.

BENEFITS OF ETHERNET — WHEN GAMING GETS SERIOUS

An Ethernet connection is a physical link between your device and router. With modern online gaming, success can depend upon how fast the twitch of a finger on a controller can be translated into actions in an online world living on a faraway computer server.

When speed matters, an Ethernet is often the right option.

- Consistency: Unlike Wi-Fi signals, which can be affected by walls or even signals from other devices, the wired connection's speed should remain consistent with that provided by your internet service.
- Lower latency, which is the time it takes a bit of data to leave your device, reach its online destination and then complete the round trip. With gaming, lower latency is critical, and Ethernet is a difference-maker.
- Simple and secure: Connect an Ethernet cable to your device and to your router and get playing. It's that simple. Unlike with Wi-Fi routers, you typically do not need to enter a password to connect.
- The downside is that cable clutter is real. Serious gamers in particular, though, will benefit from devices connected via Ethernet.

Live *like a* LOCAL



Staying with Airbnb hosts offers comfortable accommodations

Story by LUIS CARRASCO

Travelers have become more adventurous over the years, shying away from the usual, more touristy locations, in search of unique places and experiences off the beaten path. The internet, through services like Airbnb, has made discovering these hidden treasures a lot easier, both for potential guests and their hosts.

Two western Minnesota properties about an hour away from each other offer visitors the chance to take a break and are perfect for those who want to have fun as they relax.

LAKESIDE LIVING

Shorewood Castle Suites comes by its name honestly. The large brick house is nestled in a wooded area on the shore of Big Stone Lake and features an ivy-covered tower that wouldn't look out of place in a fairy tale.

Built around 1885, the two-story building is full of Old World-style woodwork. Guests can choose between one of two apartments on the second floor, each about 1,000 square feet. One side has the tower, while the other comes with a lake view and a deck. The homeowners live on the first floor, but there is a separate entrance for guests, and both apartments have private kitchens and bathrooms.

The property offers dock access to the water where guests can fish or sit out and watch the sunset, says owner Mary Taffe. "Because we're on the western side of the lake, it's beautiful almost every night," she says. "It's incredible."

The yard also features a smokeless fire pit where guests can cook or stay warm, and there is a small basketball court for kids. The home is also conveniently located up the street from historic downtown Ortonville. "We have a really charming main street. Guests can easily walk from my house to the cute little coffee shop or the antique store," Mary says.

Also nearby, and opening just in time for the summer, will be a rental business for kayaks, surfboards and canoes to take advantage of the lake.



Photo courtesy of Shorewood Castle Suites.



Mary and her husband started their business in 1988, shortly after they bought the house. A lot has changed since then, she says, especially how people travel. The internet has been revolutionary. “The amount of business we’ve gotten because of having broadband is night and day,” Mary says. “It’s raised our business level five or six times from what it was, because people didn’t know we were here.”

FARM LIFE

Down state Route 7 from Ortonville, The Broodio at Montevideo gives guests the opportunity to spend some time on a working farm. The one-room cabin is part of the Moonstone farmstead, which has been family-run since 1872.

The cottage derives its name from its previous role as a brooder house used to raise young chickens, says Audrey Arner, who runs the farm stay along with her husband, Richard Handeen. “I have very positive connotations of the verb to brood. It’s about taking time to mull things over and being productive,” she says. “Plenty of people who have spent time in our cabin write poetry or complete a novel or access the state parks that are near here.”

The Broodio is situated among gardens and woodlands, with access to a vineyard and a private beach on Moonstone Pond. Tours of the award-winning conservation farm are available for those who would like to know more about organic farming and Moonstone’s conservation ethic. The

cabin itself is kind of a glamping situation, Audrey says. There’s no running water, but plenty of fresh water is available, along with a refrigerator, microwave, toaster, coffee maker and enough space to play games and spread out. “It’s a smallish cabin, and some people say, ‘Wow, it’s smaller than I expected, but it turned out to be big enough for whatever I needed,’” Audrey says.

She and her husband have been hosting since the early ’90s and were one of the first farm stays in Minnesota. They were inspired by their own travels where they first got to know similar kinds of places as they stayed on farms in England, France and Italy. The farm had always been open to visitors, Audrey says, so it felt natural to open it up to guests. “We’re fairly social beings, so we also have a little farm store and a wide community of family and friends who make their way through our landscape,” she says. “We decided to just bump it up a bit and reach out to a broader community.”

Just like at the Shorewood Castle Suites, guests at The Broodio come from all over the world and from all walks of life. The common denominator is their desire to explore different places. “We’ve had a fair amount of people going from Spokane to New Hampshire, or New York City to Montana, or Seattle to Chicago — people taking a northern route that’s off the main highways and seeing a part of America that you don’t experience when you’re on the interstate,” Audrey says.

But while many of the farm’s guests are choosing a simpler getaway, technology is an important part of Moonstone — both in the solar power that runs the farm and the broadband internet that helps them stay connected. “We were among the first farms in the region to have a website, and almost all of our reservations happen online,” Audrey says. “It’s just so much easier.”

Still, it’s that serenity and desire to commune with the natural world that attracts visitors, including birders, naturalists and urbanites wanting to get away from the city.

“It’s sentimental for some folks, also,” Audrey says. “We’ve heard a lot of stories from people who grew up on farms and no longer have those farms to return to.”

Whatever takes travelers to one of these special places — a castle by the lake or an old-fashioned farm — they will be sure to have an experience worth remembering. 🌿



Audrey Arner and Richard Handeen are owners of the The Broodio.



The Broodio is named for a brooder house for chickens. This farm stay features a rustic cabin with eclectic furnishings and folk art.

So *fresh* and so

A unique technique locks more flavor in your veggies

The profusion of fresh vegetables coming our way this spring means it's time to learn a bit about blanching, a technique that brings out the beautiful flavors that only fresh produce can bring — a taste explosion.

Blanching can be a cook's best friend. It destroys enzymes that make green veggies turn brown and mushy, so it's ideal when you want to add green vegetables, such as peas and asparagus, to your risotto. Blanching also removes bitterness from some of our more bitter vegetables, like broccoli rabe. It's also a great way to skin tomatoes, as blanching loosens the skins without cooking the fruit, something that also works for peaches and plums. And if you're planning to prepare and serve a veggie platter, blanch the carrots, broccoli, pea pods and cauliflower. The veggies will retain their color, but your guests will find them much easier to chew.

Blanching is nothing more than boiling vegetables until they're just crisp-tender, then plunging them in an icy bath. It sounds like a simple process, and it is, but there are just a few steps to follow to bring out the best of spring and summer's bounties.

If you're a vegetable gardener, think ahead for the cold days of winter when the flavor of fresh vegetables is just a memory, that is, unless you've blanched in advance of freezing them. Not only does blanching preserve the color and texture of your vegetables, it will also preserve their nutrient content.

Now that you know why you should blanch, here's how:

In order to stop the enzyme action that breaks vegetables down, the food must reach 180 degrees.

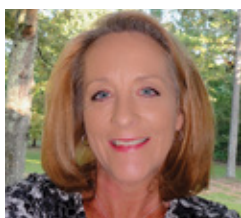
The time spent in boiling water and time spent in ice water should be roughly equal. If you're not able to prepare a cold immersion for your vegetables, putting them in a colander under cold running water will work.

Adding salt to your boiling water will help make green vegetables even greener. Steer clear of lemon juice or other acids, though; these will react with the

chlorophyll and turn your greens brown. And don't use baking soda — it will damage the nutrients found in vegetables.

Use 1 gallon of water for each pound of food to be blanched. If you overload the water with vegetables, it will lower the water's temperature and slow the cooking process, defeating the purpose.

Once the vegetables are crisp-tender, move them from the boiling water and into a large container of ice water. This will stop the cooking process. Then you're ready to bag them for freezing or use them right away in your spring and summer meals. 🍷



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

clean

SALAD NICOISE

- 2 hard-boiled eggs
- 1/2 pound of small potatoes
- 1/2 pound of green beans, blanched
- 1/2 head of green lettuce, washed and torn into bite-sized pieces
- 1 (7-ounce) can of tuna fish
- 4 ounces of tomatoes, diced, or cherry tomatoes
- 10 black olives
- 2 tablespoons of capers
- 1/2 cup of vinaigrette dressing (your favorite)

Cook the potatoes until tender and let cool.

Build each salad starting with a layer of lettuce, then add half the vegetables, including potatoes, tuna, eggs and olives to each plate. Sprinkle with capers. Serve with vinaigrette dressing. Makes 2 servings.



RISOTTO WITH BLANCHED ASPARAGUS

- 1 pound asparagus, trimmed, cut into 2-inch lengths
- 5 cups canned or homemade chicken broth
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1/2 cup chopped onion
- 1 1/2 cups arborio rice
- 1/2 cup dry white wine
- 6 tablespoons butter
- 3/4 cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese (about 3 ounces)

Blanch asparagus pieces in a large pot of boiling, salted water for 2 minutes. Drain. Rinse asparagus under cold water. Drain asparagus well.

Bring chicken broth to a simmer in a small saucepan. Reduce heat to low and keep broth hot. Heat olive oil in a heavy large saucepan over medium heat. Add chopped onion and saute until translucent, about 4 minutes. Add rice and stir for 3 minutes. Add dry white wine and cook until liquid evaporates. Continue cooking until rice is tender but still slightly firm in center and mixture is creamy, adding chicken broth 1 cup at a time and stirring almost constantly, about 20 minutes. Add blanched asparagus pieces and stir until heated through, about 2 minutes. Remove from heat. Add 6 tablespoons butter and stir until incorporated. Stir in grated Parmesan cheese. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Makes 4-6 servings.

WALNUT BROCCOLI SALAD

- 2 pounds broccoli florets
- 1/2 cup toasted walnuts
- 1/2 cup jumbo mixed raisins
- 8 strips bacon cooked and crumbled
- 1/2 red onion thinly sliced
- 1/2 cup mayonnaise
- 1 tablespoon rice vinegar
- Salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste

Bring a big pot of water to a boil and season it liberally with salt. It should taste like the ocean. Add the broccoli florets to the water and cook for 60 seconds, until they're bright green in color. Immediately drain the broccoli florets, then rinse with cold water for 2 minutes or place in an ice-water bath until the broccoli has cooled down.

Transfer the broccoli to a salad spinner, and spin the broccoli dry or drain well if you don't have a spinner. Then blot dry further with a kitchen towel to prevent any excess water from diluting the dressing.

Combine the broccoli with the toasted walnuts, raisins, bacon, onion, mayonnaise, vinegar and salt and black pepper, to taste. Stir well. Chill for at least 30 minutes, preferably an hour, before serving to allow the flavors to marry. Makes 6 servings.



YOU'RE INVITED

We look forward to seeing you!

*Tuesday,
JUNE 7*

The Farmers Mutual Annual
Meeting and Customer
Appreciation Picnic

*Thursday,
JUNE 9*

The Federated Telephone's
Annual Meeting and Customer
Appreciation Picnic

- Bring your registration card.
- Your registration postcard is used for entry into door prizes and to receive your free gift.

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



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