

JULY/AUGUST 2022

CONNECTION

Staying Connected

Tuning in with the
Morris Genius Team

TENDING
CROPS

GO GLAMPING



By SHIRLEY BLOOMFIELD, CEO
NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association

Any room can be a classroom

Broadband opens a world of new educational opportunities

Soon, students will end summer break and return to classrooms and, in communities fortunate enough to be served by a member of NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association, they will have advantages once thought impossible in rural areas.

While fast, reliable broadband service creates opportunity for everyone, our students benefit significantly. Resources that were simply unavailable before are now only a few clicks away.

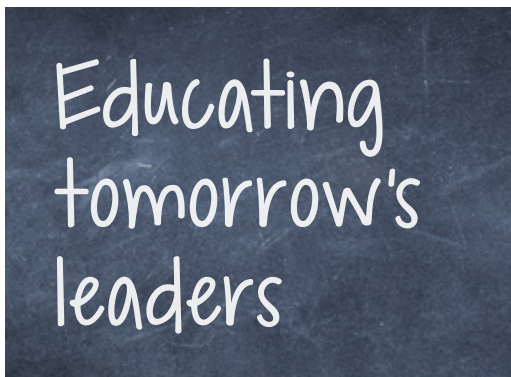
Once, learning about great art meant gazing at photos in a book. Now, students can take virtual tours through the greatest museums on Earth and, hopefully, find inspiration in the masters of the art world. Resources like Project Gutenberg make classic books a click and download away.

Digital resources also go far beyond virtual libraries and museums. Thanks to distance learning — real-time sessions connected through video — students in the most remote communities can tap into advanced or specialized classes otherwise unavailable in their area.

One key focus, and an acronym, you may have heard a lot about is STEM — science, technology, engineering and math. The skills learned in classes such as these are foundational. They can open the door to a range of jobs, higher education opportunities and more.

At the NTCA, we hear stories of these successes daily, because our members, including your communications provider, make a tangible difference in the lives of those they serve. The more tools we provide our students — the people who will become our future leaders and innovators — the richer our communities will become.

Every day, our NTCA members work to make that future a reality. 📞



Welcoming clouds

Digital storage brightens the day



Whether sharing work files, snapping photos with your phone or dozens of other actions, your digital data most likely doesn't remain solely on your device. Instead, those files were probably shared through a cloud-based service. Similarly, most phones default to backing up your photos to the cloud.

In fact, the cloud is one critical presence in our digital lives, an experience often so seamless you might not even realize it's there.

But, exactly what is the cloud, and how does it work? Think of it as a collection of computers designed not only to store critical data, but also to back it up securely and deliver it on demand to whatever device you choose. That's how you're able to work on the same file at home as you would at school, at an office or just on the go with a mobile device.

HOW IT WORKS

When you subscribe to a cloud provider such as Apple, Dropbox, Google, Microsoft or many others, you can upload files to a data server managed by that company. In some cases, the files are both on your device and in the cloud. Or, they may strictly be in the cloud, saving room on your device. These files can be photos, videos, documents with text, emails or more. As long as your device is connected to the internet and you are logged into the service, you can access this digital library. The cloud providers work hard to make it all as seamless as possible.

CLOUD ADVANTAGES

Cloud storage saves space on your devices. It's also a good way to preserve files as a backup. Rather than keep one copy of

your data, cloud services keep multiple copies on many machines to create as reliable a system as possible.

Many businesses use cloud storage to offload the responsibility of managing physical servers or running complex software. Another benefit of using the cloud is that you can increase or decrease storage based on how much you need, matching the price of the service to your requirements.

EXAMPLES

Apple's iCloud, Microsoft's OneDrive and Google Drive are popular cloud storage options for individuals. Cloud storage is also used by social media and entertainment companies to provide services to the public. For example, Facebook manages its own private cloud services and data centers. Instagram and Pinterest are also cloud-based. If you've ever used Netflix to watch movies, then you were also using a cloud computing service.

Popular personal use of cloud storage includes family photos and important financial documents such as tax returns. Businesses might use cloud storage for employee files, financial data such as payroll and to store customer data.

BACK UP THE CRITICAL FILES

Cloud storage provides a range of benefits, but with vital information — anything from wills to family photos, digital art and beyond — consider the cloud as just one part good digital housekeeping. Consider creating three versions of these files: one in the cloud, a second on a computer hard drive and a third on an external drive. Rely on the cloud for convenience, but keep backup for, well, a rainy day. ☔

Balancing act

Virtual and real-world connections build communities

Connections make our lives richer. Whether it's a friend, family member or just a person offering a helping hand or a smile while you're out running errands, positive interactions can lift our spirits and enhance our sense of community.



KEVIN BEYER
Chief Executive Officer

But it's also possible to build meaningful relationships virtually — through social media, video calls or shared experiences like streaming the same music or movies as your friends and sharing your thoughts about it. For example, gamers build rich, interactive communities. Online dating services are responsible for thousands of solid relationships. Career-focused sites promote networking among professionals. The potential can seem limitless.

While there are many ways to make those critical human connections online, balance is still important. After all, there really can be too much of a good thing.

Nielsen, a company that tracks how Americans watch TV and consume other media, recently released a report with some striking numbers. Between February 2021 and February 2022, the average

time spent streaming television in the U.S. increased by 18%. That translates into an average of just less than 170 billion minutes of weekly video viewing.

As a company that works hard to provide high-quality internet service to make that viewing experience as seamless and enjoyable as possible, those numbers reflect a clear success for our industry. But there was an interesting twist — 46% of people responding to the survey found it hard to find the content they want and said there are too many streaming services. Have you ever had a friend raving about a show you've never heard of because you don't have access to the one service where it is available? You're not alone.

What do streaming TV and personal connections have in common? To me, that study shows that more is not always better, and there may well be a need to take a mindful approach in accessing all the online resources. In fact, consider how you strike a balance between the virtual world and the physical world.

Streaming movies and TV, particularly on a steamy summer day when it's too hot outside, can be a perfect pastime. But too many options can lead to decision paralysis. Boredom might not be too far behind.

The same idea applies to many online destinations. At its best, social media can be informative, engaging and create real ties to those who might otherwise be lost to the passing of time or long distances. But social media can also be a platform for people to simply draw attention to themselves, and not always with the best motives or positive results. Also, thanks to digital tools, work can become ever-present, even during hours meant for rest or family.

The McClean Hospital, an expert mental health organization affiliated with Harvard Medical School, addresses this digital burnout. It suggests occasionally taking time to power down. Don't respond immediately to all messages. Unplug completely from work during off-hours. Cull your online accounts and keep the only ones that add true value. Most importantly, when you can, opt for face-to-face interactions.

Our community is rich and vital, because of the people who live and work around us. If we're thoughtful, the wealth of digital tools only a click away will make us even stronger and allow us to build and maintain the connections that matter. 🗨️

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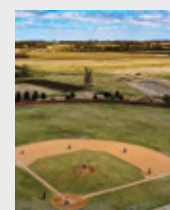
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On the Cover:



A group of students, known as the Morris Genius Team, has helped keep fans connected virtually during the pandemic.
See story Page 12.

Welcome, *Lexy!*

We are pleased to announce that Alexis Adelman has joined the Acira team as a Customer Experience Specialist. Lexy grew up in the Big Stone County area and resides near Bellingham, Minnesota. She likes to be active in the community and enjoys the outdoors. In her free time, she enjoys attending rodeos, baseball games, and spending time with her family.



Summer Hours

Don't forget that all Farmers Mutual and Federated Telephone offices will follow Summer Hours from June 6 to Sept. 2.

Lobby hours are Monday-Thursday 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. and Friday 8 a.m. to noon, or by appointment.

We offer phone support 24 hours a day, seven days a week.



Wishing everyone
a safe and happy

**4TH
OF** *July*

Our offices will be closed July 4
for the Fourth of July holiday.

Safe digging is no accident.

**ALWAYS CALL
BEFORE YOU DIG**



Know what's below.
Call before you dig.



Escape to the

Riverside camping

Story by ANNE BRALY

The main campground at Wild River State Park is on a hillside and just a short walk from the river. The backpack and paddle-in sites on the river fill up quickly and are booked every weekend through the camping season, so Kris Backlund, park manager, advises campers to book early. Visitors can make reservations up to 120 days in advance at dnr.state.mn.us or with the park office at 651-583-2125.

Camping in the great outdoors is a wonderful way to leave the busyness of life behind. But double your pleasure and make it an even more outstanding experience by finding the perfect spot beside the water. In many camping areas, a place beside a river or lake is the catbird seat when it comes to a good night's sleep with the sound of water going by after a day of adventure paddling, fishing or hiking along its banks.

With the many state parks and bountiful wilderness areas along rivers and lakes in Minnesota and Wisconsin, there is no shortage of watery spots to pitch a tent.

Wild River State Park is just that — wild, wonderful and full of promise when it comes to a memorable camping experience. The

Campers enjoy pleasant nights at Wild River State Park just off the St. Croix River.

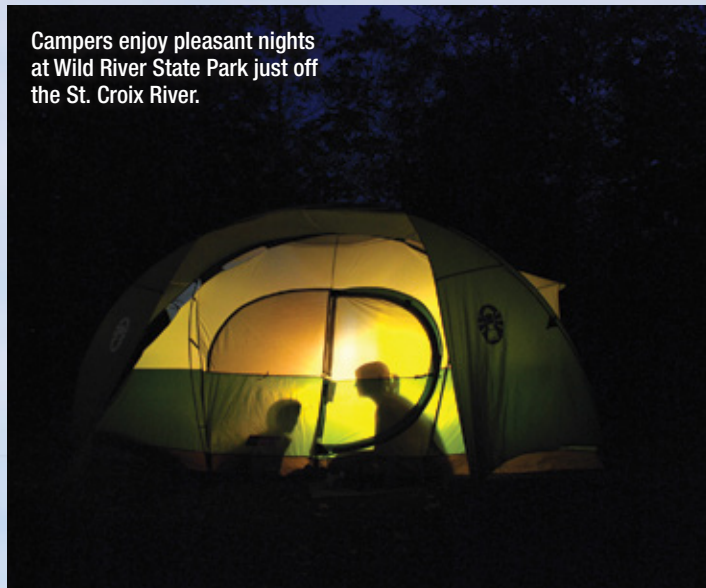


Photo courtesy of William O'Brien.

park, located on the banks of St. Croix River, is the 10th largest in Minnesota with almost 7,000 acres of forests and prairies, as well as 18 miles of shoreline along the St. Croix to explore, so it offers an abundance of activities once your tent is up and your sleeping bags are unrolled. “At Wild River, the river campsites are more secluded and offer a peaceful reprieve from everyday life,” Kris says. “There’s easy access to get out onto the water, fishing from shore. Or just the beautiful backdrop while cooking a meal or sitting around a campfire make camping by the water especially memorable.”

Wild River State Park opened its doors to the public in October 1978, offering year-round camping with six heated camper cabins, 18 equestrian-only campsites, a guest house and 94 drive-in campsites, 34 of which have electricity. But it’s the campsites by the river that are often in high demand.

Split Rock Lighthouse State Park in Two Harbors, Minnesota, offers stunning views on Lake Superior's north shore.

Photo courtesy of the Minnesota Department of Resources

great outdoors

Settle in on the shore

SPLIT ROCK LIGHTHOUSE STATE PARK **Two Harbors, Minnesota**

Stretching from Duluth to the Canadian border, the north shore of Lake Superior provides endless adventure. Activities range from cross-country hiking to sailing in the frigid waters of Lake Superior, along which lies Split Rock Lighthouse State Park.

It may take some doing to get there, but campers are awarded with some of the best views found in the state. You must use a cart to bring gear to one of the 20 campsites, and carts are provided. Reservations for campsites on the rugged shoreline are recommended.

►Online: dnr.state.mn.us

JAY COOKE STATE PARK **Carlton, Minnesota**

With more than 80 camping sites, some of which are along the St. Louis River, this is a popular place for getting away from it all for a night or longer. Bring your tent or your RV — sites with electricity are available.

The 8,125 acre-park has more than 50 miles of trails. The 300-mile Superior Hiking Trail originates at the Minnesota and Wisconsin border near Jay Cooke State Park. You're also near the popular Silver Creek Trail. A section of the trail crosses

a scenic bridge that swings above the St. Louis River.

►Online: dnr.state.mn.us

BRUNET ISLAND STATE PARK **Cornell, Wisconsin**

This picturesque state park contains 1,200 acres, 169 of which are an island in the Chippewa River. Campsites overlook either

the river or two of its lagoons, and tent campers will prefer the north side of the island. Hike by day, stargaze by night and be sure to get out on that water — canoe and kayak rentals are available in nearby Cornell. 📍

►Online: dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/parks/brunetisland



Photo courtesy of Minnesota Department of Resources.



Photo courtesy of Jay Cooke.

Top: Wild River State Park's many amenities include riverfront camping.

Bottom: Dramatic scenery is easy to find at Jay Cooke State Park, which includes campsites along the St. Louis River.



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



The Fujitsu ScanSnap iX1600

The Fujitsu ScanSnap iX1600 is for those who are looking for a home office scanner with plenty of bells and whistles. The duplex scanner can process up to 40 double-sided sheets per minute and features automatic image rotation and color cleanup. While it is Mac and PC compatible, it can also scan directly to any mobile device, a printer or a variety of cloud platforms, including Dropbox and Google Drive. MSRP \$495, but available for a lower price at several retailers.

Speedy scanning

Conveniently copy any document



PHYSICAL SCANNER

If you have to scan multiple pages and images or smaller text, even a high-quality app such as Adobe Scan can feel underpowered — and try holding a smartphone

steady for more than a few minutes. The best way to choose what kind of physical scanner you should buy is to consider your needs.

Think of what kind of documents you'll be scanning and how many. Flatbed scanners are great for photos and unbound documents — basically anything that can lay flat on the scanner glass and should be handled with care. Some flatbed scanners even have a lid that allows for easier scanning of bound books or magazines.

If you regularly scan multiple documents, you should opt for a scanner with a sheet feeder. Much like having to hold the phone steady, having to manually place page after page in a flatbed scanner can be difficult. For large jobs, you will want a scanner equipped with an automatic document feeder that can handle stacks of pages at a time.

One other consideration is whether you'll be scanning double-sided documents. In that case, look for a device that offers duplex scanning. The fastest options scan a document on both sides at the same time, but they are also usually a more expensive choice.

As for resolution, you don't need to worry too much. For most documents and photos, 300 dpi — or dots per inch — is enough. You may want to scan images at 600 dpi to capture smaller details but anything beyond that — unless it's for a very specific use — is overkill. Modern scanners have no trouble with any of these levels of resolution. ☎

With all-in-one printers that come equipped with scanning capability and the smartphone in your pocket getting better and better at capturing images and documents, fewer people need a dedicated scanner. Of course, there are tradeoffs with each option, and as with any device, it's important to choose what's right for you.

Before you spend money on a scanner you don't need or find out too late that an app on your phone isn't enough, consider the following before deciding.

SMARTPHONE APPS

There are more than a dozen apps available for your scanning needs, and the ever-improving camera on most smartphones means that results can rival a physical scanner. However, if you need anything more than the occasional copy of a document or photo, you should consider looking beyond an app.

If your scanning is of the once-in-a-while variety, then you can't go wrong with a free app like Adobe Scan. The same folks behind Photoshop made it, and the app offers a simple interface and produces high-quality scans of documents, images, business cards and forms. It can export documents as PDFs and save them to the Adobe Document Cloud, or it can save them as a JPEG image file on your phone. It also offers good optical character recognition, or OCR, and allows you to copy and edit text taken from an image. It's available for iOS and Android devices.

Touch and go

The fast-paced business of aerial spraying during growing season

Story By LUIS CARRASCO

For almost seven decades, the Schwenk family has been in the business of agricultural aviation with three generations having served the needs of local farmers. It's a strong legacy that's set to continue for years to come.

Schwenk Aircraft Company traces its roots back to 1954 under Philip Schwenk in Murdock. His son, John, picked up the mantle in 1988, launching Aero Spray in Appleton. The company eventually expanded from spraying crops to aerial firefighting. When that side of the business sold — taking the Aero Spray name with it — Schwenk Aircraft Company was reborn, ready to concentrate on serving growers and co-ops in Appleton, Morris, Madison, Ortonville and surrounding areas.

The company operates six aircraft — bright yellow Air Tractors — which apply pesticides and fungicides that help keep crops viable. Their clients include corn, soybean and sugar beet producers, as well as bean and carrot growers. Most of the turboprop planes have a 500-gallon capacity, but once the busy season gets going around July and August, it feels as if the days aren't long enough to meet demand, says Tony Schwenk, operations manager, pilot and John's nephew. "We operate through a drive-thru hangar. So, there's two bifold doors, and you taxi in and you get your load pumped. You get some fuel,

wash the window, and you go again," he says. "It only takes about three minutes to get a load and then taxi out to the runway. You go spray the field and come back and do the whole thing over again until the sun goes down."

When he considers the potential monotony of the process, Tony compares the work to what farmers themselves do. "If you talk to a lot of farmers, I think a lot of them, most of the time, really enjoy being out in the field. They enjoy planting and harvesting, even though it is long days and stressful," he says. "It's all in your blood in a way."

Able serving customers and being a part of the community is how his uncle has remained successful, Tony says, with clients regularly returning, as well as new ones coming on board every season. "John's been here in Appleton a long time, and word of mouth is probably our best selling point," he says. "We provide a quality service to our customers, and that goes a long way."

As John gets ready to retire from running day-to-day operations, Tony is happy to be waiting in the wings, so to speak. Now 27, he started working at the company when he was 19 and has spent his time learning every aspect of the business. "I'm shadowing John and everything he does — how he manages everything, how he talks to farmers, how he takes phone



John Schwenk, right, will hand off the leadership duties to his nephew Tony Schwenk.

calls," Tony says. "He definitely has a wealth of knowledge."

The learning process goes beyond logistics. Like his uncle and grandfather, Tony has also taken to the sky. This will be his fifth season in the cockpit. "I'm super excited that I have this opportunity to keep the tradition going. I grew up always liking airplanes. I never thought I'd actually fly," he says. "It feels really good to keep it in the family." 📺

Photos contributed by Schwenk Aircraft Company.

Back to School

Story by LISA SAVAGE



✦ **Make sure you have adequate internet speeds for students studying at home**

Many schools now offer more options for virtual days and online learning, whether it's for severe weather outbreaks, sick days or a family that has discovered that online learning works best for their child.

As a result, a reliable home internet service is more important than ever, whether it's for students who need to access online assignments, parents working remotely or for streaming movies and shows.

The Federal Communications Commission offers some tips to optimize your home network performance:

CHECK YOUR INTERNET PLAN

Check with your internet provider to find out the speed in your plan. Make sure it's enough to handle all the devices that might be connected at the same time, as well as any additional devices that could be added, such as televisions for streaming, laptops and more. FCC consumer guides provide information about household broadband use and broadband speeds.

TEST YOUR SPEED

In many cases, your internet provider has a speed test on the company website, or you can download broadband speed test apps or visit speed test websites, to check your current broadband download and upload speeds. Many providers, especially rural telecommunications cooperatives, strive

to keep download and upload speeds close to the same, which is important when it comes to online meeting platforms, which require higher upload speeds. Some national providers offer deals to get new customers, advertising high speeds. In reality, they may be referring only to download speed.

TROUBLESHOOTING

In most homes, internet service comes to the house and then operates through a wireless signal called Wi-Fi, which distributes the broadband throughout the home on a device called a router. Using multiple wireless devices on the same Wi-Fi network can impact performance.

Sometimes, rebooting the router — turning it off and then turning it back on — can resolve the problem.

If your internet provider doesn't supply the router, make sure it isn't outdated. Check the model number on the router to see if it's capable of providing the speed you're paying for. If your internet speed seems slower than it should be, contact your provider for troubleshooting tips, or ask if there are any outages or disruptions that could impact speed.

Whether they're in the classroom or learning virtually, almost all students need access to the internet to reach their potential. Making sure your broadband network provides the speeds they need is a big step in the right direction. ☑

Connected classrooms

Teachers maximize communication with students and parents

Story by LISA SAVAGE



How many times has this happened, parents?

You're running late as you get ready to leave home and drop the kids off at school as you rush to work.

As you go through your mental checklist, you think you're doing OK, and then your child says, "I forgot to study for my spelling test." The teacher sent the list of spelling words home on a note that's shoved deep into your child's backpack.

Now, the educational world is changing, using apps for classroom reminders, school activities and even payment in advance for athletic and other school events.

While many teachers still send notes and schedules home on paper, they also communicate the same information through apps.

Apps like Remind allow teachers and coaches to send out information about class assignments or practice schedules. Messages can be sent to a group or to individuals. About 80% of schools in the United States use Remind to connect students, teachers and families. It's designed for grades K-12 to communicate with everyone at once, and it has 20 million monthly active users across the United States.

Parents like the app because they receive early closing notifications instantaneously. All parents don't always see reminders that go out on social media.

The app reminds parents of homework assignments, dress up days and more.

It can lead to more participation in the classroom when parents get reminders because not all students show notes to their parents, and not all parents go through their children's backpacks to find them.

ClassDojo has typically been used for younger students and has group messaging and individual options, so the group may not necessarily see responses.

The app has messaging for group story posts, as well as individual student portfolios where teachers can assign work and students can turn in assignments. It also translates into over 35 languages.

Talking Points also features translation and options to communicate with families in their home languages to build strong partnerships during the school year.

Many school systems utilize platforms like Google Classroom, which also has access to such options as Google Voice for communication with students and their parents. For extracurricular activities like athletic events or stage performances, some school systems utilize GoFan, an app that offers online ticket purchases.

More and more schools are opting for the app purchase to avoid cash transactions. Some schools no longer even accept cash payments at the gate for events.

Since 2001, GoFan and its parent company, Huddle Tickets, have worked with over 10,000 schools selling over 20 million tickets — more digital high school tickets than any other company.

Other companies offer similar purchase availabilities through an app.

Parents, as another school year is about to begin, make sure you have the tools necessary to make meaningful connections with your child's teachers and school system.

Remind



GO FAN

TalkingPoints

From classroom reminders to athletic tickets, apps are increasingly essential.

On top of their game



21A



21

21A



21

21A

Genius Team brings livestreamed sports to Morris Area High School

Story by BROOKE KERN

Multiple cameras, instant replay and on-screen graphics created by the Morris Area High School Genius Team and available on your devices are an example of how livestreamed events can highlight community happenings.

Back in 2015, Morris Area began using a single iPad at the top of the bleachers to livestream events through The Cube. Viewers needed to download The Cube app on their device and search for Morris Area to watch live events. “The Cube is very similar to what YouTube is,” says Austen Miller, who was then a second grade teacher at Morris Area Elementary and is now the Technology Coordinator for Morris Area Schools.

Those initial streamed events were limited to the volleyball and basketball games played in the gymnasium. Morris Area used freshman athletes, who played prior to the varsity game, to push the button to start and stop the livestream and pan the camera back and forth during the game. “In 2017 or 2018, The Cube went to a paid model, and Athletic Director Mark Ekren didn’t want fans to have to pay, so that began our search for a new option,” says Austen.

That was August of Austen’s first year as technology coordinator, and he was a little green when it came to livestreaming. “It was very, very early in my time as the tech person,” Austen says. “I’ve never done anything with livestreaming at this point.”

Another West Central Conference school nearby was using YouTube to stream games and it seemed like a good option. “YouTube is everywhere. People know how to use it and probably already have it on their smart device,” says Austen.

So, the Morris Area Tigers Live YouTube channel was created. Morris Area was still able to use iPads to stream games while they were happening. Then, YouTube threw another curveball. “YouTube went from, ‘Everyone can stream live from an iPad’ to ‘Only those channels with 1,000 subscribers can stream live from iPads,’” says Austen. “That was a really big ‘What do we do?’ moment for us.”

LEARNING ON THE FLY

The answer, while working to gain subscribers on YouTube, was to revert back to livestreaming 101. The school pur-

chased an inexpensive video camera and connected it to a computer to livestream events. In addition to the camera, Austen began using Open Broadcaster Software Studio, which allowed for on-screen graphics, transitions and more.

“What we wanted to do for games was have one camera as the full view and another camera on the scoreboard and then do a picture-in-picture. OBS was the answer to that,” says Austen. “That was my first interaction with Logan Michaelson. Logan was the original guy. He was in sixth grade at the time and he knew his stuff like you wouldn’t believe.”

The push for 1,000 subscribers intensified because the setup and tear down of equipment — sometimes up to four nights a week — was a pain. Once the channel reached 1,000 subscribers, he and Logan had some flexibility to try new locations outside the varsity gym. “The nice part about that was then we could livestream events where there wasn’t a great infrastructure in place for cameras to be set up,” says Austen. “We could do gymnastics and go over to UMM pool and do swimming, junior high games.”

“We’re always actively thinking of ways to produce a better experience for home viewers.”

—Austen Miller



The YouTube channel Morris Area Tigers Live shares selected high school sporting events each week. Members of the Genius Team film the games, while others update on-screen scoring graphics, just like the big league pros.

BUILDING A TEAM

More locations added another wrinkle — Austen and Logan couldn’t do it alone. They needed help. “Logan wasn’t going to be at every event, and I wasn’t going to ask that of him, and I didn’t want to be at every single event,” says Austen, who has a wife and three daughters. “Streaming was complex enough that you needed somebody that knew what they

were doing. The Genius Team started out of that need for kids to help out with livestreaming and also help out technology needs in the classroom.”

A 2017 referendum funded a renovation of the high school auditorium, and thanks to Austen’s suggestion, the project took place with livestreaming in mind. “Part of that auditorium remodel was supposed to be this expensive camera recording system

that was going to be hard-wired and mounted to the auditorium,” says Austen. “Not only was it hard-mounted, but all the plays are copyrighted, so even if you did record it, you could only play it back for the cast, and that’s it. You can’t stream it. You can’t do anything. So, I said, ‘Let’s scratch that idea and build something I can put on a cart.’”

By summer 2019, the Genius Team was ready with its two-camera setup for the 2019 fall football season. “We were well on our way before the pandemic even hit,” says Austen.

With the restrictions on gatherings in the fall of 2020, the Genius Team brought the games to fans through their computers or TV screens. “People wouldn’t have gotten to experience the livestream that much if it wasn’t for the pandemic,” Logan, now a freshman, says.

Thanks to a 2020 referendum and community donations, the Genius Team now has multiple cameras, instant replay with on-screen graphics and its own basketball broadcaster in volunteer Scott Arndt. All the team’s efforts have quality woven in. “We’re always actively thinking of ways to produce a better experience for home viewers,” says Austen. 📺



Photography contributed by Morris Genius Team.

A few members of the Morris Genius Team have learned to fly a drone at select events.

Relishing SOMETHING NEW FOR veggies?

Extending shelf life may leave you in a pickle

For thousands of years, we've relied on pickling as a means of food preservation and storage. Since then, it's evolved into a culinary trend that extends well beyond the standard spears and slices that make up dill or bread-and-butter pickles. You can pickle almost any fruit or veggie to create briny snacks, colorful relishes and tasty garnishes.

We all know cucumbers can become delicious pickles. But watermelon rind is wonderfully sweet pickled. Turnips, asparagus, beets, bell peppers, parsnips, peaches and peppers can taste great after the process, too.

Pickling extends the harvest season well into winter when we long for the flavors of the summer garden. So, don't throw away the watermelon rinds from your summer picnic, and when you pick that peck of peppers, don't forget to pickle a few. 🥒

PICKLED PEACHES

- 3 cups sugar
- 2 cups distilled white vinegar
- 12 cinnamon sticks, divided
- 36 whole cloves, divided
- 18 soft peaches

In a large stainless steel stockpot over medium heat, bring 1 cup water, sugar, vinegar, 6 cinnamon sticks and 18 cloves to a boil, stirring to dissolve sugar. Reduce heat to medium-low and add peaches. Gently simmer, without boiling, until peaches are heated through and a fork pierces the fruit with no resistance, 10 to 15 minutes.

Using a slotted spoon, divide peaches among six sterilized, 1-pint canning jars, placing peaches pit-side down. Add 1 of the remaining cinnamon sticks and 3 of the remaining cloves to each jar. Ladle cooking liquid into jars, filling each to within 1/2 inch of rim. Wipe the lip of each jar rim with a clean, wet cloth to remove any syrup or bits of fruit. Then, top each jar with a flat lid and screw on a threaded ring band without tightening completely. Roll jars on their sides to release any air bubbles that might be trapped in the peach cavities. Turn upright. Remove ring bands and lids, and add more cooking liquid, if needed because of settling, to fill jars to within 1/2 inch of rim. Replace lids and threaded ring bands, tightening completely to seal. Store pickled peaches in refrigerator for up to eight weeks.





WATERMELON RIND PICKLES

- 2 pounds watermelon rind
- 1/4 cup pickling salt
- 4 cups water, divided, plus more for boiling
- 2 cups granulated sugar
- 1 cup white vinegar
- 1 tablespoon broken-up cinnamon stick
- 1 1/2 teaspoons whole cloves
- 1/2 lemon, thinly sliced
- 5 maraschino cherries, halved — optional

Trim the dark green and pink parts from the watermelon rind and discard. Cut rind into 1-inch cubes and measure out 7 cups.

Put the watermelon rind in a large container with the pickling salt and 3 cups of the water. Add more water to cover the rinds, if necessary. Soak overnight.

Drain and rinse watermelon rind.

Cover the rind with cold water in a large saucepan. Simmer just until tender, about 10 minutes.

Meanwhile, in a nonreactive 6- to 8-quart kettle, combine the sugar, vinegar, cinnamon, whole cloves and remaining 1 cup water. Simmer the mixture for 10 minutes. Strain and discard the solids.

Pour the strained liquid back into the pan. Add the drained watermelon rind, lemon slices and maraschino cherries. Simmer the mixture until the watermelon rind is translucent, about 30 minutes.

Fill half-pint jars with the hot watermelon rind and syrup mixture, leaving 1/2 inch of headspace. Add the lids. Process in a boiling water bath for 5 minutes, and remove jars. Let the jars cool on a rack. Serve and enjoy. Properly canned, watermelon pickles will keep in a cool, dark, dry place for at least a year.

Note: If your jars didn't seal properly or you don't want to process them in boiling water, they will keep for about a month in the refrigerator.

REFRIGERATOR PICKLES

- 5 1/2 cups, about 1 1/2 pounds, thinly sliced (about 1/2-1/4-inch) pickling cucumbers
- 1 1/2 tablespoons kosher salt
- 1 cup thinly sliced sweet onion
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1 cup white vinegar
- 1/2 cup apple cider vinegar
- 1/4 cup light brown sugar
- 1 1/2 teaspoons mustard seeds
- 1/2 teaspoon celery seeds
- 1/8 teaspoon ground turmeric

Combine cucumbers and salt in a large, shallow bowl. Cover and chill 1 1/2 hours. Move cucumbers into a colander and rinse thoroughly under cold water. Drain well and return cucumbers to bowl. Add onion to bowl and toss with the cucumbers.

Combine the granulated sugar, white vinegar, apple cider vinegar, brown sugar, mustard seeds, celery seeds and ground turmeric in a medium saucepan. Bring to a simmer over medium heat, stirring until the sugar dissolves.

Pour the hot vinegar mixture over cucumber mixture. Let stand at room temperature 1 hour. Cover and refrigerate 24 hours. Store in an airtight container in refrigerator up to one month.



PICKLED BRUSSELS SPROUTS

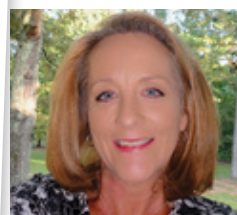
- 1 pound Brussels sprouts
- 1 1/2 cups apple cider vinegar
- 1 cup water
- 1 tablespoon pickling salt
- 20 peppercorns, divided
- 1/4 teaspoon yellow mustard seeds, divided
- 2 garlic cloves
- 2 bay leaves

Trim the sprouts and cut them in half. Set aside. Combine vinegar, water and salt in a stainless steel pot and bring to a boil.

Divide the peppercorns, mustard seeds, garlic cloves and bay leaves between two prepared pint jars. Pack sprouts into jars and pour brine over the sprouts. Use a wooden chopstick to remove air bubbles from jars.

Wipe rims, apply lids and rings and process in a boiling water bath for 10 minutes.

When time is up, remove jars from canner and let cool on a folded towel. When jars are cool, test seals. If seals are good, jars can be stored in the pantry (any unsealed jars should be refrigerated). Give pickles at least 48 hours before you eat them, so that the brine fully penetrates the sprouts. Sealed jars will keep up to one year on the pantry shelf.



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