

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2023

# CONNECTION



**Savor  
the flavor**

Fine dining at  
Prime Steakhouse

**SHADOW DANCING**

**WINTER ESCAPES**





By SHIRLEY BLOOMFIELD, CEO  
NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association

## Building the broadband workforce

Partnerships prepare for future growth

As we greet the new year, it's natural to look ahead to the next 12 months, which will again show our members supporting rural America by providing critical broadband internet service. It has been gratifying to see providers like yours working so furiously to build out broadband to communities still waiting for robust service while also serving existing customers. Yet, the work is never truly done.

Whether it is installations, upgrades or maintenance, there is certainly more than enough work to go around. That is why it is fitting that NTCA is stepping up to help broadband workers. Because retention and recruitment in rural markets is more challenging than urban areas, we are especially proud to work with some new partners to support the broadband providers we represent in creating a 21st century workforce.

We recently joined the White House's Talent Pipeline Challenge, a call to action for employers, education and training providers, and others to support equitable workforce development in critical infrastructure sectors like broadband. And we have partnered with Northwood Technical College, the National Rural Education Association and the Communications Workers of America to expand training and job opportunities for rural America's broadband workforce.

These efforts seek to prepare for immediate growth in the broadband industry because of significant funding for network deployment in the Infrastructure Investment & Jobs Act, as well as future demand for high-tech jobs.

It's an exciting time to work in broadband, and you are fortunate to live somewhere served by a committed community-based provider. As connections grow, so will the number and skills of broadband workers. Stay tuned for more information soon from your provider about these initiatives.

Happy New Year. 📶

# A nourishing change

## FCC embraces new broadband labels

Rural broadband providers have a deserved reputation for openness, but not every national company can say the same — shopping for service can be trying.

The Federal Communications Commission, however, intends to require internet providers to prominently display a “nutrition label” clearly detailing the specifics of each plan. The FCC passed a rule late last year clearing the way for this change, although implementation may take time and require additional input.

The intent is to eliminate hidden fees, confusion about data caps and uncertainty about speeds and generally to shine a bright light on what can be a confusing choice.

Each label will show key information — details wise consumers should consider now:

- Monthly price and contract length
- Whether that price will change after a certain period and, if so, what it will change to
- A complete list of monthly and one-time fees, as well as any early termination fee
- Whether the company participates in the Affordable Connectivity Program and a link to check if the consumer qualifies
- Typical download and upload speeds
- Data cap and price for exceeding that cap
- And more

The FCC must complete additional steps before implementing this change, and internet service providers will have time to update websites and other sales material. 🗨️

## THE INFORMATION YOU NEED

The FCC is working to limit confusion about broadband services by creating a “nutrition label” providers must display to consumers. While implementation might take time, the example label provided by the FCC offers a guide to information shoppers might consider now when choosing a service.

Broadband Facts	
Provider Name	
Service Plan Name and/or Speed Tier	
Fixed or Mobile Broadband Consumer Disclosure	
Monthly Price	[\$]
This Monthly Price [is/is not] an introductory rate. [If introductory rate is applicable, identify length of introductory period and the rate that will apply after introductory period concludes]	
This Monthly Price [does not] require[s] a [x year/x month] contract. [only required if applicable; if so, provide link to terms of contract]	
Additional Charges & Terms	
Provider Monthly Fees	[\$]
One-time Fees at the Time of Purchase	[\$]
Early Termination Fee	[\$]
Government Taxes	Varies by Location
Discounts & Bundles	
Click Here for available billing discounts and pricing options for broadband service bundled with other services like video, phone, and wireless service, and use of your own equipment like modems and routers. [Any links to such discounts and pricing options on the provider's website must be provided in this section.]	
Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP)	
The ACP is a government program to help lower the monthly cost of internet service. To learn more about the ACP, including to find out whether you qualify, visit <a href="https://affordableconnectivity.gov">affordableconnectivity.gov</a> .	
Participates in the ACP	[Yes/No]
Speeds Provided with Plan	
Typical Download Speed	[ ] Mbps
Typical Upload Speed	[ ] Mbps
Typical Latency	[ ] Ms
Data Included with Monthly Price	[ ] GB
Charges for Additional Data Usage	[\$/GB]
Network Management	Read our Policy
Privacy	Read our Policy
Customer Support	
Contact Us: <a href="https://example.com/support/">example.com/support/</a> / (555) 555-5555	
Learn more about the terms used on this label by visiting the Federal Communications Commission's Consumer Resource Center.	
<a href="https://fcc.gov/consumer">fcc.gov/consumer</a>	
[Unique Plan Identifier Ex. F0005937974123ABC456EMC789]	

# GONE PHISHING

## Don't get hooked by a ransomware attack



If you lost access to everything on your personal or work computer, how much would you pay to get it back? It's a question more people are asking themselves as ransomware attacks have continued to grow in number and severity.

About 21% of all cyberattacks in 2021 were ransomware attacks, according to IBM Security, costing individuals and businesses an estimated \$20 billion. From 2013 to 2020, the FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center saw a 243% increase in ransomware reports. That growth comes thanks to services that offer ransomware-for-hire and the increased popularity of cryptocurrency, which make untraceable payments to these services easier than ever.

The FBI does not recommend victims of these attacks pay the ransom. Victims rarely see their data returned, and payment only encourages future attacks. Instead, the best protection against ransomware is to understand how it works, where it comes from and how to protect your data from the start.

### WHAT IS RANSOMWARE?

Ransomware is a type of malware, or malicious software, which locks the victim

out of data on their computer until they pay for access to be restored. Most ransomware attacks target individuals, although attacks on large organizations with even bigger payouts have grown in popularity.

In the past, these situations largely involved attackers demanding a ransom to unlock the data. Today, most are "double extortion" assaults in which attackers demand payment for returning the data and to prevent it from being stolen again.

### WHAT CAUSES IT?

Ransomware can infect your computer in many of the same ways as any other virus:


- **Phishing emails** — These emails trick users into downloading a malicious attachment disguised as a harmless file or visiting a website that can download the ransomware through their browsers.
- **Software vulnerabilities** — Hackers can find holes in a piece of software's cybersecurity protection or buy information on these flaws to download the malware onto a device or network.
- **Stolen logins** — Whether they're obtained through phishing, purchased on the dark web or hacked by brute force,

stolen credentials give cybercriminals direct access to download malware onto a device.

- **Repurposed malware** — Some ransomware is actually malware developed for other attacks like stealing bank information, and it's reworked to encrypt and lock personal data.

### HOW CAN I AVOID IT?

Since paying attackers is not a reliable way to deal with ransomware, the best defense is to protect yourself and your devices before an attack can begin:

- Keep backups of any important data to eliminate most of the leverage an attacker might have.
- Update your computer's software and operating system regularly to protect against the latest threats.
- Update your computer's cybersecurity tools to help response teams detect and react to new ransomware attacks faster.
- Always be aware of phishing, social engineering and other strategies that can lead to a ransomware attack. 

**TO LEARN MORE**, visit [www.stopthinkconnect.org](http://www.stopthinkconnect.org).

# Are you ready for the future?

Embrace 2023 and beyond

**H**appy New Year! This is always an exciting time, because in so many ways the months ahead seem like a fresh canvas waiting to be filled with plans, hopes, dreams, accomplishments and more. But if you're like many of us, a little bit of 2022 may linger.



**KEVIN BEYER**

Chief Executive Officer

Maybe it's that credit card bill showing holiday purchases, some unfinished to-dos or paperwork needed for the march toward filing taxes, but last year's odds and ends tend to stick around. Really, how things went in the previous 12 months can inform how you approach 2023 because we rarely start completely fresh.

For example, as a business, our past performance informs us about our budget, the status of our infrastructure and the well-being of our staff. That's just a start, too. I imagine it's the same for most of you.

But, what if you relied on future-proof tools and strategies as a foundation you know will work not only today but for the next year? Even better, what if that system adapted as the rest of your life changes — a bigger family, a more demanding job or whatever else

comes your way? You're ready.

Well, for us at Farmers Mutual and Federated Telephone that bedrock system does exist. We've invested in core technologies that are as future-proof as possible. Naturally, I'm talking about our fiber optic internet network, which is a true wonder woven throughout our community. No matter the distance traveled, the quality of the digital signal doesn't diminish.

As you know, there are immediate benefits for every home and business connected to this lightning-fast internet network. From telehealth and work-from-home opportunities to digital music and streaming videos, fiber provides a conduit to the tools and resources you deserve. Those are the realities of today. Now, what about tomorrow? This is where an already exciting technology becomes even more magical. Fiber optic technology is built to stand the test of time. Our network already provides performance rivaling that found in metropolitan areas. That's today.

Changes happen fast. From connected TVs, appliances, home security systems and more, internet usage is only increasing. Fortunately, fiber has the capacity to grow along with the demand. Upgrades, maintenance and more will certainly be required, but that core technology is ready for the future.

Those fiber optic cables are tiny but powerful, which is why we've made a significant investment in the fiber serving you so well. We know it's also capable of growing to meet our needs. Faster speed. More overall capacity. We're ready for the online tools, services and new devices only now being dreamed up.

So, as Farmers Mutual and Federated Telephone head into 2023 and we wrap up the final few details from last year, we know the foundation is solid. We can confidently go forward with excitement and anticipation. Our investments of the past will pay dividends.

Best of all, we are taking this journey with you. I hope you're as excited about what comes next as we are. ☺

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### Farmers Mutual Telephone Company

301 Second St. S.  
Bellingham, MN 56212  
farmers@farmerstel.net  
320-568-2105

### Federated Telephone Cooperative

201 State Hwy. 9 S. • P.O. Box 107  
Morris, MN 56267  
emailftc@fedtel.net  
320-324-7111 or 320-585-4875

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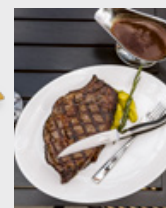
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On the Cover:



Prime Steakhouse has created a hand-crafted culinary experience in Morris. See story Page 9.

Photo courtesy of Prime Steakhouse

HAPPY

new year  
2023





## SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

### FRS Scholarship applications now available

The Foundation for Rural Service strongly supports the continuing education of rural youth. FRS will award more than 30 \$2,000 scholarships to graduating high school seniors from across the country. If a student from Farmers Mutual or Federated Telephone's service area receives an FRS Scholarship, Farmers Mutual or Federated Telephone will supply an additional \$500, bringing the total award to \$2,500.

To be eligible, students must have at least one parent or guardian who is a member of Farmers Mutual or Federated Telephone Cooperative at the time they submit their application and at the time they attend college.

Full application requirements are available online at [frs.org/programs](https://frs.org/programs). The deadline to apply is February 8, 2023.

### MTA Foundation to award scholarships

The Minnesota Telecom Alliance Foundation will award six \$2,000 scholarships to members of the Class of 2023. Recipients must attend postsecondary education at either a university, college or technical college.

To be eligible, applicants must be Minnesota residents, and their families must subscribe to at least one service from either Farmers Mutual Telephone or Federated Telephone.

The panel will review and score each application based on grades, academic achievements and extracurricular activities. Scholarships are awarded after students' successful completion of the first year of college or technical school.

For more information and a scholarship application, go to [mnta.org](https://mnta.org) or see your school guidance counselor.



### FRS Youth Tour

Each year, Farmers Mutual Telephone and Federated Telephone partner with the Foundation for Rural Service to provide an opportunity for two students — one from each cooperative — to tour Washington, D.C. This year's Youth Tour is scheduled for May 31 to June 4.

#### *Eligibility:*

- ▶ Students must be 16 or 17 years old at the time of the Youth Tour.
- ▶ Participating students must have at least one parent or legal guardian who is a member of Farmers Mutual or Federated Telephone Cooperative at the time they submit their application and at the time of the trip.

#### *Selection Process:*

Each student is required to submit an essay of 500 words or less explaining why they would like to attend the Youth Tour and why they are interested in learning more about rural broadband. The essay must include the student's name and a parent's name and telephone number. Essays must be received at Farmers Mutual or Federated Telephone by February 17, 2023.

For more information, go to [frs.org/programs/youth-programs/youth-tour](https://frs.org/programs/youth-programs/youth-tour).

## Career Milestones

Please help us congratulate these employees on reaching significant anniversaries serving our cooperative members.

#### CELEBRATING FIVE YEARS WITH THE TEAM ARE:



**KEVIN BEYER,**  
Chief Executive  
Officer, celebrates  
his 25 year  
milestone.



Customer Experience  
Manager MacKenzie  
Gilbertson



Customer Experience  
Specialist Kayla  
Hawkinson



Combination Technician  
Travis Nash

# Heading south for the winter

Southern Minnesota delights vacationers

Story by ANNE BRALY

**N**orthern Minnesota has always attracted outdoor lovers during the winter. Frigid temperatures and snowy days are just what avid skiers, snowboarders and other cold-weather sports enthusiasts love. But in recent years, vacationers have begun heading south.

Many folks are discovering Southern Minnesota is a wonderful place for getting winter off to a memorable start. And when they've had their fill of the seasonal chill, they can count on spring blooming just a bit earlier here. "Spring definitely arrives sooner with warmer temps and golf courses typically opening sooner than many others around the state," says Lisa Havelka, southern regional tourism manager for Explore Minnesota.

A recent Explore Minnesota survey found that the southern portion of the state is experiencing a marked growth in tourism compared to 2021. So what does that mean for visitors? A big welcome after the COVID years. "Businesses are really continuing to move into recovery or, in some cases, they are fully recovered," Lisa says.

Here's a little of what you can experience by heading south to visit the area's charming towns.

## SHOP LOCAL

When you need a break, go shopping and support local retailers in places like Red Wing on the bluffs of the Mighty Mississippi. Its downtown streets are lined with establishments like Pottery Place and the Uffda Shop with its extensive inventory of Scandinavian gifts. Red Wing is also home to the Red Wing Shoe



When visiting New Ulm, stop in at Domeier's German Store for a bit of shopping. Photo courtesy of Explore Minnesota

Company Museum, where you can see the world's largest boot.

What is it about big things in this part of Minnesota? It's also home to the Jolly Green Giant Museum, where the statue of the advertising icon stands 55 feet tall over the town of Blue Earth. Peruse the museum and see the world's largest collection of Green Giant canned goods and learn about the canning industry. Afterward, walk around town, shop its boutiques and enjoy the sights of the Blue Earth River.

Celebrate German heritage while shopping at the boutiques and specialty shops in historic downtown New Ulm. Also, be sure to stop into Domeier's German Store or the Guten Tag Haus for imported German gifts.

## RAISE A GLASS

Breweries and wineries are local attractions that help grow the hospitality and tourism industries of rural Minnesota towns, bringing enthusiasts into areas they may have never experienced.

Grab a pint at Red Wing Brewery or head over to Mankato for a growler at LocAle, whose logo celebrates the return of bison to the prairie at nearby Minneopa State Park. Here are some other places where you can raise a toast:

- Imminent Brewing has more than a dozen ales and specialty brews on tap in the heart of Northfield.
- Lines were out the door when Rochester welcomed Little Thistle Brewing Co. into its fold. Live music and a strong list of craft beers, including some rather



interesting sips like Rampant Scotch Ale, are offered in the taproom.

- Visit Schell's Brewery in New Ulm, the second-oldest family-owned brewery in the country, and learn how simple grains become the golden nectar loved by so many across the world.
- Half Pint Brewing Co. in Waseca has about eight beers on tap and offers root beer and sodas, too. Enjoy a cold one with an order of jerky or have a pizza from Pleasant Grove Pizza Farm delivered to your table.
- Enjoy an afternoon wine tasting at Chankaska Winery near Mankato and learn how a passion for wine grew into an award-winning business.
- Four Daughters Vineyard, a winery, cidery and restaurant in Spring Valley, has earned acclaim for its wines. Four Daughters was invited to be the official wine provider for the 2016 Sundance Film Festival, and brought home Double Gold from a recent Indy International Wine Competition. Sip wines on the tasting deck or snuggle up to a warm fire on the patio.

### TREAT YOUR TASTE BUDS

Food tours are popular worldwide, and Southern Minnesota plays its part in making this a favorite way to spend a vacation.

For a casual meal, stop in Sherburn for breakfast or lunch at the Cup N' Saucer Cafe, a restaurant known for its locally sourced ingredients and top-notch meals.

No culinary tour of Southern Minnesota is complete without a meal at Blooming Grounds Coffee House in the scenic river town of Winona, where tables are filled with customers enjoying fresh-made sandwiches, soups, salads, pizzas and baked goods. The restaurant offers breads it makes fresh daily on the premises, along with delicious coffees, frappes, local wines and beers.

For a little history, dine at The Hubble House in Mantorville. It started life as a saloon in 1856 and is now a fully restored restaurant serving sandwiches, burgers, seafood, steaks and a good selection of Midwest favorites.

### CATCH A SHOW

The Commonwealth Theatre Company is an artistic gem and one of the best theaters to visit during the winter. Placing a focus on actor-based storytelling, shows run the gamut from classics from the likes of Tennessee Williams to productions by emerging playwrights.

Other notable performance venues in Southern Minnesota include the Fairmont Opera House, built in 1902 and listed on the National Register of Historic

Places. And in the small southwest town of Dawson, the Dawson-Boyd Arts Association showcases live performances and entertainment. The theater season kicks off each fall and runs through the winter and spring.

And in the heart of historic Pipestone, the Pipestone Performing Arts Center continues its tradition of outstanding theater performances in its Sioux quartzite building, circa 1897. 📞

Shows at the Commonwealth Theatre Company in Lanesboro range from classics to productions by emerging playwrights.



# KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

## Smoothly navigate internet slowdowns



Your internet-connected devices are the last stops in a river of information bringing you entertainment, business services, communications tools and so much more. Sometimes, however, a clog upstream can turn a digital cascade into a trickle. Streaming movies lag. Websites become slow to load. File uploads take time. When slowdowns occur, it's helpful to understand potential chokepoints.



**KNOTTED UP:** It doesn't happen often, but there are times when the internet itself has difficulties. A storm might disrupt a massive data center — a place storing hundreds of computers. Or a technical glitch might cause the modern equivalent of a wrong phone number. It's doubtful all services will go out — the internet lives by redundancy. So, a quick Google search should give you the details. Then, a little patience is the cure.



**THE LOCAL LINK:** Cables carrying massive amounts of information connect our local systems to the broader internet. Our professionals work hard to keep everything up and running. If trouble does occur, we'll be on top of it. A check of our social media will give you the lowdown if there's a problem.



**THE NETWORK:** Fiber optic lines running through our community use beams of light to transmit digital information to homes and businesses. Rarely, an accident or storm might disrupt this network. Again, if there is a problem our social media will let you know. And remember, we'll make repairs as fast as we safely can.



**THE BOX:** On the outside of your home, you'll find a vital device. We call it the ONT, and it makes it possible to deliver services like voice and data. If you're having trouble, we may remotely reset the ONT to get you up and running again.



**THE WI-FI ROUTER:** Your router keeps you connected, wirelessly. Turning the router on and off can unclog a surprising number of internet logjams. But keep in mind, performance of your Wi-Fi network can be impeded by too many devices connecting at once; appliances, such as microwaves; the distance between the router and your devices; and more. However, we're here to help.

When in doubt, give us a call: Farmers Mutual at 320-568-2105 and Federated Telephone at 320-585-4875.





# For the love of flavor

## The savory experience of Prime Steakhouse

Story by ANNE BRALY

No kind of restaurant better captures all that is primal than a good steakhouse. And when it comes to making a steak, Chris Recore has a single-minded philosophy: It all comes down to the process — using just a bit of oil, some salt and pepper, and letting meat rest for a few minutes after removing it from the grill.

Chris, originally from Duluth, is the executive chef at Prime Steakhouse and, as an industry veteran, began working there at the opening in June 2022. His resume is impressive, with a list of restaurants that includes Odyssey Resorts, Leisure Hotel Companies and Lake Life Hospitality.

At Prime, Chris oversees and manages the kitchen, plans the menu, works alongside the meat inspector on slaughterhouse visits and tours farms from which the restaurant's meats are sourced. Steaks come from, primarily, 1855 Black Angus Beef, a USDA-certified company, respected by chefs across the country. "They've built a legacy producing pre-

mium beef using strict program specifications and partnering with family ranchers who have a passion for raising high-quality Angus cattle," Chris says.

### THE DINING EXPERIENCE

The decor at Prime Steakhouse is best described as industrial chic with exposed beams. The lighting is warm and helps set the mood for a memorable meal. The space is painted in shades of red with booths, tables and chairs in blacks and browns, giving the restaurant the look of a mid-century steakhouse.

The menu offers eight cuts nightly, from a 40-ounce tomahawk chop to a wagyu New York strip. Prime, like any top steakhouse, dry ages its beef to ensure tenderness and flavor with every bite. "When I bite into a good steak, I always think of the skill and timing it takes to make a perfect steak," Chris says.

But it's not just the steaks that make this a favorite restaurant for the folks in Morris. Other menu choices include Minnesota walleye crusted with parmesan and

almonds, cedar-planked salmon, apple-brie chicken, or spaghetti and meatballs.

Valentine's Day is one of Chris' favorite occasions. It's a time when a chef can create dishes not normally on the menu. "It's a day that a beautifully executed dish can really make or break an experience," he says.

For a little culinary romance this year, Chris is planning a three- or four-course meal based on classics like beef Wellington and lobster thermidor. "Dishes like that — with a modern twist," he adds. 🍷

### THE BROADBAND EXPERIENCE

When it comes to learning about specials and other happenings at Prime, diners need look no further than its website, [primesteakhouse.net](http://primesteakhouse.net). There is also the restaurant's Facebook page, where Chris can check for reviews like this recent post from a diner: "The food was delicious, and the steak was amazing!"

Online access also comes in handy when the restaurant adds new dishes to the menu and tools to the kitchen. "We also use the internet to search for new dining trends and sourcing new products and equipment," Chris says.



# 8 apps for every pet owner



Story by DREW WOOLLEY

New pets are always popular gifts around the holidays. But the new year is when the responsibility for all that feeding, walking and those never-ending bathroom breaks can really set in. Fortunately, technology is here to help you stay on top of all of your new best friend's needs, from training and wellness to games and socialization. Check out these apps to see how they can make pet care simpler, whether you're a new pet owner or an amateur zookeeper.



**Puppr** — Every new dog owner could use some help with training. With Puppr, you have access to training videos, over 100 lessons,

live chats with trainers, progress tracking and more. Celebrity dog trainer Sara Carson leads the programs, and your pup will be able to keep up with her “super collies” in no time.



**Cat Training Tips** — If you're looking to establish ground rules with a new feline friend, the more streamlined Cat Training

Tips app is a good reference for practical tips on common issues like litter box training and scratching.



**Pet First Aid** — Every pet owner worries about what to do in an emergency situation. The Pet First Aid app from the American Red

Cross has you covered. It offers step-by-step instructions for situations like your pet being attacked by another animal or eating something toxic. You can even learn how to give your pet CPR, check for warning signs and look up the closest veterinary hospital.



**11pets** — Keeping up with your pet's medical needs on top of your own can be a challenge, which is why it helps to have an app like

11pets to keep everything covered. Store your furry friend's medical history, medication and vet schedules, or track their weight and nutrition to make sure they're on the healthy path.



**Cat Fishing 2** — Humans aren't the only ones who enjoy a good mobile game. Cat Fishing 2 from Friskies is designed specifically for

cats, and you can download it to your phone or tablet. Start it up, place your device on the floor and let your cat kill time swiping at colorful fish on the screen.



**BarkHappy** — If you're looking for dog-friendly people and places in your area, BarkHappy is the app for

you. Use the interactive map to find hotels, restaurants, bars and more where your dog will be welcome. You can also send out the call if your pup goes missing or find nearby dogs with whom to set up a play date.



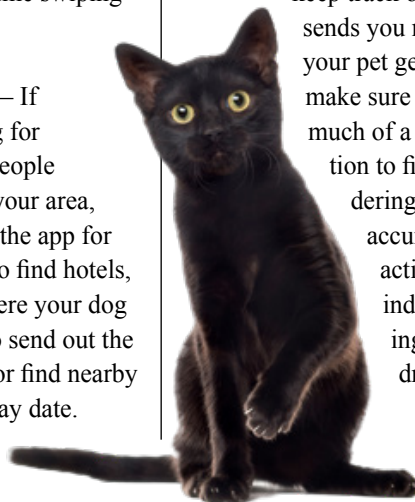
**Rover** — Rover is the top pet sitting app with over 200,000 caretakers in the U.S. and Canada. Rover's team handles the vetting,

and over 95% of reviewed services on the app have earned a five-star rating. Despite the name, Rover offers services for all kinds of pets, not just dogs. The app is also great for pet lovers looking for new job opportunities.



**Whistle** — You probably know an adventurous dog who likes to explore every chance it gets. With the Whistle app and accompa-

nying GPS tracker, it's never been easier to keep track of your pet. The app sends you notifications when your pet gets out so you can make sure it doesn't get too much of a head start. In addition to finding your wandering pet with pinpoint accuracy, the app tracks activity and wellness indicators like scratching, licking, eating and drinking. 🐾





# SIT, STAY, BINGE

Your furry friends might fetch the remote for these programs



**W**ith more TV shows streaming every day, there is more entertainment than anyone can keep up with. But did you know your pet might enjoy a good binge as much as you?

Programming for pets is on the rise but it's not a new idea. In 2012, the dog food brand Bakers began running a 60-second commercial targeted right at their canine consumers, complete with barking dogs to get their attention and high-pitched sounds human viewers couldn't hear.

If you're worried that your pets might get bored while you're away at work, or you just can't give them your full attention 24/7, consider some of this programming that can help stimulate, relax and even train your pet throughout the day.

## DOGTV

When it comes to man's best friend, there's a dedicated streaming service to keep your dog happy and occupied. Available on major streaming devices like Roku, Chromecast and Apple TV, DOGTV offers a variety of programming.

Some programs offer playful sequences to prevent boredom and provide mental stimulation, while others offer calming scenes to keep pooches relaxed. Training programs help dogs get used to common

noises like doorbells and car sounds. There are even a few shows available for their humans.

## SQUIRREL!

Think your furry friends might be getting bored while you're away from home? Many cats and dogs respond to videos of birds, squirrels and fish. Cats, in particular, are visual animals, making them more likely to be entertained and mentally enriched by watching the quick movements of prey across a screen.

Because dogs rely more on their sense of smell, breeds with better eyesight are more likely to show interest in the TV. They tend to respond to images of other dogs running or socializing and might try to interact as they would in real life by barking or sniffing. Fortunately, no matter what grabs your pets' attention, there are plenty of videos available on sites like YouTube designed to keep them occupied for hours while you're out.

## FOR THE BIRDS

Birds can be extremely smart and emotionally sensitive animals, making it especially challenging to keep them occupied. Many birds have a natural interest in new sounds and colors, making the TV a

good way to keep them engaged throughout the day.

If you're trying to expand your feathered friend's vocabulary, some programming might even help to train them while you're out. Repetition is key for helping any bird pick up a new word or phrase, and there are numerous videos available that will repeat common phrases for hours on end. Hit play and run, keeping your bird mentally engaged while you're away.

## FUN AND GAMES

If your cat likes to curl up next to you during a gaming session, consider adding "Stray" to your list. When BlueTwelve Studio released its cat-themed adventure game last year, it was an instant hit with cat owners. But it turns out the game was just as interesting to their feline friends.

Videos and photos of players' cats being entranced by the digital kitty on screen became so popular that PlayStation even put out the call for submissions for a charity event with the hashtag #StrayReactions. The best ones went into a digital photo book presented to the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals along with a \$25,000 donation. That's a win for everyone. 🐾

# Built to perform

## The dedication of the Shadows Dance Team

Story by KATIE TEAMS NORRIS

Performing with the Lac Qui Parle Valley/Dawson-Boyd Shadows Dance Team isn't just about being able to turn, leap or jump. While dancers must be in tiptop shape to be on this team, they're also smart, talented and graceful, says Ellie Jacobs, the coach for the junior varsity.

The Shadows Dance Team began in 1991 after schools in the Lac Qui Parle Valley consolidated. The Minnesota State High School League adopted dance as an athletic program and started creating tournaments in 1997. The team performs in the high kick and jazz styles, and judges score based on skill, choreography, difficulty, execution and routine effectiveness.

"We have to be really coordinated to be one of the top teams," Head Coach Carly

Wager says. The judges only see the "two minutes and 30 seconds out on the floor," but not the dancers' efforts off the court, she says.

"We're also judged on mistakes," a fact that can be nerve-wracking, she explains.

To combat the inevitable nerves, each dancer has a ritual or routine for pre-competition jitters. "We sit in a circle, and we put the music on, and they go through the routine in their head," says Wager.

Dancers must have intellectual strength, according to Lisa Johnson, who was the team's head coach for 19 years. "A lot of mental toughness is needed," she says.

The 49 dancers spend hours each week practicing. During the offseason, they attend strength training and go to camps

together. "They're in the weight room, and they're working out at the dance studio the other nine months of the year," says Johnson.

They're also responsible for arranging their dances. "The students and coaches have to choreograph the routines. We don't pay someone to do that," says Johnson.

So, they turn to online resources. The team watches videos from marching bands, figure skaters, cheer teams and other dance teams for inspiration. "YouTube is our best friend," says Wager.

The team also started watching livestreamed competitions. "We weren't livestreaming dance competitions three years ago," says Johnson. But following the COVID-19 pandemic, she says, "we could sit together and watch a live dance competition."

To garner community support, Shadows Dance Team is active on social media, including Facebook, Instagram and TikTok. Jacobs runs the team's accounts, and the team's pages recognize dancers on their birthdays and for other extracurricular achievements. "We really want these girls to feel like a family," she says. [🔗](#)



The LQPV-DB Shadows high kick team performs at the Target Center last February.



*Shadows Dance Team* isn't just training dancers — it's also growing the next generation of leaders. Meet the five team captains, who help mentor younger teammates and offer moral support:



**Emily Torstenson | senior, 17**

"As a team captain, I find it important to be a voice for all the girls and make everyone feel a part of the team and valued as a dancer. I try to give these girls what my captains gave me."

Emily plans to attend a four-year university.



**Anika Fernholz | senior, 18**

"I help choreograph the dances for the team, lead by example by working hard and building relationships to encourage the dancers. I like that my teammates can look to me for encouragement and guidance in dance and in life."

Anika plans to major in psychology and pursue a career in psychiatry and to take and teach dance classes while in college.



**Izzy Hjelle | junior, 16**

"I motivate the girls no matter what, help make positive choices for the team and act as a person who they can always go to and trust. Being a part of the Shadows Dance Team creates bonds that will last forever, and it truly gives you a second family."

She plans to pursue a career in law or psychiatry and teach at a dance studio while in college.



**Peyton Moe | senior, 17**

"Dance is tough work but so rewarding. We train for hours on end just to get our three minutes of fame on the dance floor. Dance is unlike other sports in the sense that you don't get to see the final score or time at the end, but you can see the hard work we've put in after we are done."

Peyton plans to study nursing at South Dakota State University and to become a nurse anesthetist.



**Reis Mitchell | senior, 18**

"We let the other dancers know that our space is a safe place for them to be themselves. I remember looking up to my team captains in the past, and they always made me feel included. I just hope to be that girl for them. Being a part of this team is truly something that I will cherish forever."

Reis plans to attend Southwest Minnesota State University to study elementary education with a minor in special education.



@shadowsdanceteam



LqPV-DB Shadows Dance Team



LqPV-DB Shadows Dance Team

# AIR FRYERS

## *can solve dinnertime dilemmas*

The savior of simple dishes and leftover pizza

**A**ir fryers have crisped their way into America's heart. Ranging from models with one knob and a basket to others with lots of bells and whistles, they've become as common in the American kitchen as toasters and coffeepots.

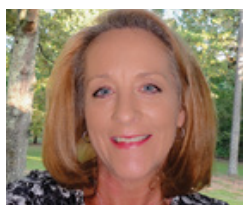
So how do you know which air fryer is the best fit for you?

You'll become a champion of the air fryer with the Ninja. Priced around \$150, it has a large basket and multiple settings that allow for dehydrating, reheating, baking and, oh yes, air frying. If you plan to do a good bit of cooking in your air fryer, this may be the model for you.

But if you're cooking for one, or just want to see if an air fryer is right for you, then a less-expensive option like Dash's air fryer — \$49.95 at online retailers — might be better. With just one setting and a compact size, it's perfect for one baked potato, a handful of French fries or a chicken thigh or two. It comes in multiple colors to add a little pizzazz to your kitchen counter.

It goes without saying that air frying is a healthier alternative to deep frying. Think of an air fryer as multiple appliances in one. It cooks quickly like a microwave, toasts like a toaster oven and fries like a deep fryer.

These kitchen wonders work magic on vegetables, proteins and baked goods because they're basically small convection ovens. They have a fan-and-exhaust system that blows hot air across your food for even cooking and browning. It works just as well whether you're making breaded onion rings from the freezer, roasting fresh broccoli or frying up some wings. Baking powder in the rub helps make air fryer wings crispy.



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

Photography by MARK GILLILAND | Food Styling by RHONDA GILLILAND



### AIR FRYER CHICKEN WINGS

- 12 chicken wings, whole
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper (optional)
- 1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 1 cup Buffalo hot sauce

black pepper. Toss wings until fully covered. Place the wings in a single layer — as many as will fit without overlapping — on the air fryer basket.

Air fry the wings at 380 F for 20 minutes, flipping them every 5 minutes. Increase the temperature to 400 F and cook an additional 2 minutes for extra crispy skin. Use a digital meat thermometer to ensure the internal temperature is 165 F.

Carefully remove the wings from the air fryer, cover with Buffalo sauce and serve with your favorite sides.

Cut the wings into pieces so you have 24 wings. Preheat the air fryer to 380 F. Spray the fryer basket after preheating. Place the wings in a large bowl and add olive oil, garlic powder, baking powder, salt, cayenne pepper and





## CRISPY AIR FRYER POTATOES

- 1 pound small Yukon Gold potatoes, halved
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon Italian seasoning
- 1 teaspoon Cajun seasoning (optional)
- Kosher salt
- Freshly ground black pepper
- Lemon wedge, for serving
- Freshly chopped parsley, for garnish

In a large bowl, toss potatoes with oil, garlic powder, Italian seasoning and Cajun seasoning, if using. Season with salt and pepper.

Place potatoes in basket of air fryer and cook at 400 F for 10 minutes. Shake basket and stir potatoes, and then cook until potatoes are golden and tender, 8 to 10 minutes more. Squeeze lemon juice over cooked potatoes and garnish with parsley before serving.

## AIR FRYER EGG ROLLS

- 1 tablespoon sesame oil
- 1/2 pound ground pork or ground chicken
- 4 cups coleslaw mix
- 1/2 cup matchstick-cut carrots
- 1/4 teaspoon ground ginger
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 3 green onions, sliced
- 2 teaspoons soy sauce
- 2 teaspoons rice or white vinegar
- 1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 1/4 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/8 teaspoon Chinese 5-spice seasoning
- 12 egg roll wrappers
- Nonstick cooking spray
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- Sweet chili sauce, duck sauce or hot mustard sauce, for dipping

Heat sesame oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the pork and cook until crumbled and cooked through, about 4 minutes. Add the coleslaw mix, carrots, ginger and garlic. Cook 2-3 minutes or until the cabbage has wilted.

Remove from the heat; stir in the green onions, soy sauce, vinegar, pepper, salt and 5-spice seasoning. Transfer to a plate and let cool slightly.

Place 1 egg roll wrapper flat on a work surface with the points of the wrapper facing up and down (like a diamond). Place about 1/3 cup of the pork/chicken mixture in the middle of the wrapper. Dip your fingers in water and dampen the edges of the wrapper. Fold the left and then right points of the wrapper in toward the center. Fold the bottom point over the center just like you would a burrito, rolling the wrapper toward the remaining point to form a tight cylinder. Press edges to seal. Place on a plate and cover with a dry towel. Repeat the process with remaining wrappers and pork/chicken mixture.

Preheat the air fryer to 375 F and spray the air fryer basket with cooking spray. Brush the tops of the egg rolls with olive oil. Working in batches, place the egg rolls in the basket and cook 7 minutes. Flip the egg rolls over and brush with more oil. Cook for an additional 2 minutes. Serve with your favorite dipping sauce. 📺







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