

MAY/JUNE 2023

CONNECTION



Trail rated

Off-roading in Appleton

FRESH FLOWERS

FUNKY FESTIVALS



By SHIRLEY BLOOMFIELD, CEO
NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association

Training broadband professionals

New NTCA partnership will make a difference

As rural communities like yours experience the life-changing benefits of fast, reliable internet service, the NTCA is proud to expand its support of the professionals making these innovations possible.

We are partnering with Northwood Technical College, which will offer remote workforce training opportunities exclusively for NTCA members. This agreement is one example of how we are pulling out the stops to help providers like yours bridge the digital divide.

Building a robust internet network requires a range of skills, but the work doesn't end after the first connections are installed. Maintaining the systems that power work-from-home jobs, telehealth and so much more demands highly skilled workers.

This new initiative with Wisconsin-based Northwood Tech will help NTCA members secure the expertise needed to not only accelerate broadband deployment but also sustain future-proof technologies.

Northwood Tech has several decades of innovative telecommunications and broadband training experience, but its Broadband Academy's focus extends beyond network systems, hardware and software. The consumer experience, and how communications professionals can better serve their customers, is also a priority.

Northwood Tech President John Will says the partnership with NTCA allows the school to reach and train more students and upskill employees who will gain industry-recognized digital badging credentials.

Also, the remote classes mean NTCA members and Northwood Tech will use broadband technology for broadband training. It's just one more example showing how fast internet service can make a difference in the nation's rural communities. 📶

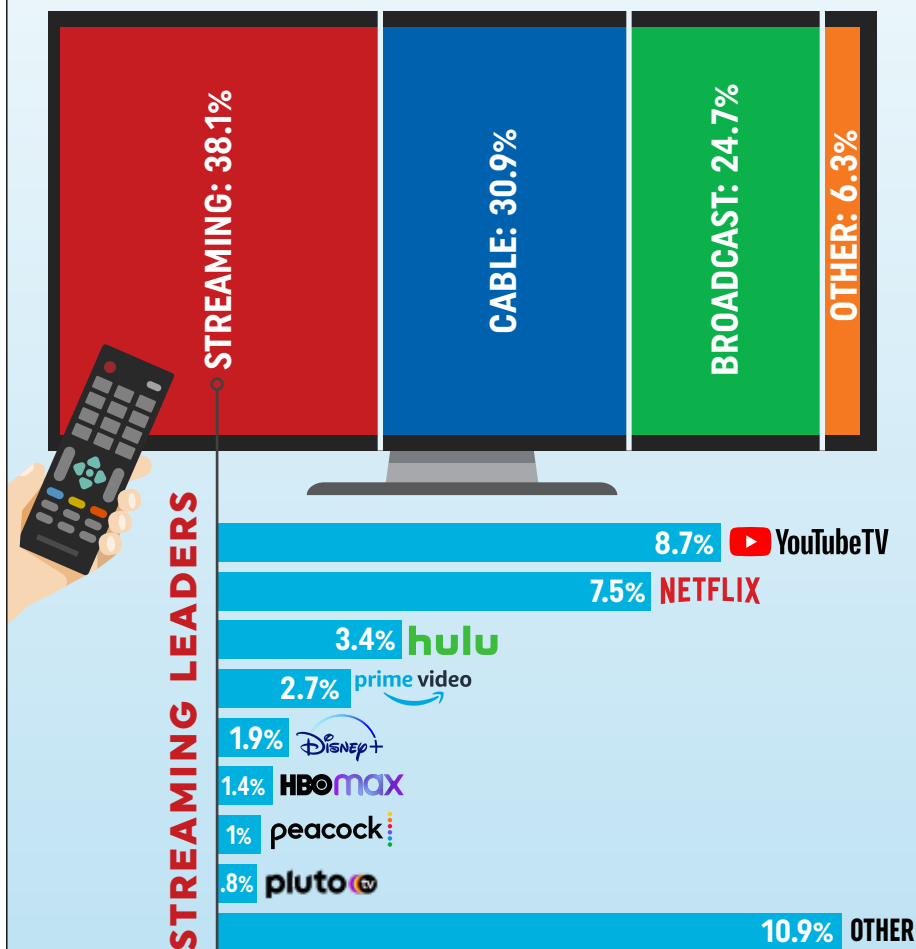
Entertainment riches

Viewers match their interest to the service

Whether you enjoy the predictable pace of a baseball game, catching a 30-minute comedy viewed when your schedule allows, watching a movie from your favorite genre — or just about any other entertainment choice — there's a wealth of options.

And today, you can design the viewing experience you want.

Nielsen, a company that measures audiences to provide important research to advertisers, released a report earlier this year that gives a peek into our viewing habits:



GAMING FAVORITES

For many people, a little screen time means something more interactive than a show or movie — they play video games. Nielsen identified some of the top games from recent months, so here are a few to consider if you're looking for fresh options.

- ▶ Hogwarts Legacy
- ▶ The Legend of Zelda: Tears of the Kingdom
- ▶ Resident Evil 4
- ▶ Diablo IV
- ▶ Minecraft



Home security

KEEP YOUR DATA SAFE
WHILE WORKING REMOTELY



Story by DREW WOOLLEY

Working from home is no longer uncommon. As access to high-speed internet and tools for remote collaboration become more widespread, employers are increasingly warming to the idea of letting people get out of the office at least a few days a week.

The comfort and accessibility of remote work mean it isn't likely to go away anytime soon. But it can also introduce new challenges like security concerns. Whether you're taking your laptop to the nearby coffee shop or setting up a work station at home, keep these guidelines in mind to make sure your work is secure wherever you are.

STAY UPDATED

When you see an alert about a new software update, don't wait to install it. Among other things, these updates often close security loopholes that malware can use to get access to your data. It's also important to have an antivirus program installed that can protect your devices from the latest viruses, spyware and phishing scams.

DON'T TAKE THE BAIT

Speaking of phishing scams, it's important to be extra alert when working remotely. Bogus emails can hit an office just as easily as your home computer, but it's easier to spot a fake when the co-worker supposedly asking for sensitive information is in the same room as you. Always make sure your devices are secure outside the office, and be sure to double check any suspicious requests directly.

PROTECT WORK DEVICES

Working from home often means exposing your work devices to kids or other family members who may not be as careful about security measures as you are. Take steps to make sure others

aren't using your work devices or accidentally seeing sensitive information. Also, try to avoid doing work on personal devices that may not be as well-secured.

KEEP YOUR VPN ON

Many companies use virtual private networks, or VPNs, to help employees communicate securely via an encrypted network. If your employer does the same, it's important to stay connected for as long as you're working. Dropping that virtual defense could open the door for someone to steal important information.


STAY IN THE CLOUD

Not only do cloud applications receive regular security updates, but saving your work to cloud storage creates a shared backup of all your work. That way, even if local files on your device are lost, corrupted or stolen, you'll still have access to everything.

MAKE VIDEOCONFERENCES PRIVATE

The popularity of videoconferencing apps like Zoom has skyrocketed in recent years as more teams collaborate from afar. But a digital meeting space comes with additional security considerations. To prevent unwanted visitors from listening in or even trying to intimidate people, consider requiring a password for calls or keeping any new arrivals in a waiting room.

UP YOUR PASSWORD GAME

Strong passwords are always important, but they're even more crucial when you're working remotely. A password manager can help you keep track of numerous strong passwords, which should generally be at least 12 characters and contain letters, numbers and symbols. If that's too much to keep up with, consider using favorite song lyrics, movie quotes or other phrases that are easy to remember but more complex than your dog's name. 

Ready to serve

There for you when needed most

One of the pleasures of my role at Farmers Mutual and Federated Telephone is the honor of working alongside some of the most dedicated and hardworking professionals in our industry. We are blessed to have an experienced, committed staff devoted to serving you.



KEVIN BEYER
Chief Executive Officer

Their efforts are most visible — and most critical — when times are the hardest. Sudden storms, flooding and so much more can disrupt not only the services we provide, but also the lives of individuals and productivity of businesses. We know you depend on our communications tools, especially in critical moments such as the need to call for emergency help.

So, even in the most trying of conditions, our crews go into the field as our front line in the effort to keep you connected. They work tirelessly for as long as needed to restore service to you.

I'm always appreciative as these crews go out into environments most of us wish to avoid, including in the middle of downpours,

high winds or extreme heat. The challenges change by season and are as unpredictable as the weather itself. But our commitment to excellence means your service is as consistent and reliable as possible.

If you've ever wondered why someone would work so hard, the answer is simple. Each member of our crews — truly our entire staff — has roots in this area. We know we're working to help our friends, our families, our neighbors and our entire community. They genuinely care about those they serve.

When an outage does occur — and no matter the preventive steps we take they sometimes will — we ask for your patience as our crews hit the road to restore service. Also, as you're driving please keep in mind to take note of repair vehicles on the roadside. Please slow down and give them a little extra space. They're working to help everyone, and in return you can help keep them safe.

While repair crews are some of the most visible members of the Farmers Mutual and Federated Telephone team, others play equally critical roles. When problems arise, everyone helps. But I'd like to also mention a unique challenge unimagined when the first telephone calls crossed our lines.

The fast internet network we manage requires care, and our professionals work daily to keep it safe and secure. Farmers Mutual and Federated Telephone is your local hub on the global internet, connecting you to resources needed for health, education, employment, entertainment and far more.

Our teams keep that connection solid, a highly technical, always-evolving role. After all, cyberthreats are real, and we follow industry best practices to secure our network. But the responsibilities extend to the needs of individuals and business users. If you have an internet problem, our customer-support experts and technical staff are committed to helping.

Whether it's the immediate recovery after an event such as a storm or the day-to-day aid to keep critical services like internet access working, everyone at Farmers Mutual and Federated Telephone makes your needs the priority.

Thank you for letting us serve you and be a part of this wonderful community. 📞

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POWERED BY FARMERS MUTUAL TELEPHONE COMPANY
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On the Cover:



Clarissa Blake takes a turn rock crawling over boulders, a popular obstacle at the Appleton OHV Park. See story Page 12.

Photo by Jorden Roggenbuck

MEMORIAL DAY

REMEMBER & HONOR

Mark your calendar

In observance of Memorial Day, the offices of Farmers Mutual and Federated Telephone will be closed on Monday, May 29.

You're invited!

Join us at the 2023 Annual Meeting



Farmers Mutual Telephone Company Annual Meeting and Customer Appreciation Picnic

will be held Tuesday, June 13, at Dawson-Boyd High School.

Registration: 4:30-6:30 p.m.
Call to Order: 6:30 p.m.
Customer Appreciation Picnic served from 4:30-6:15 p.m. Drawing will be held for door prizes.

Federated Telephone Cooperative Annual Meeting and Customer Appreciation Picnic

will be held on Thursday, June 15, at Morris Area Elementary School.

Registration: 4:30-6:30 p.m.
Call to Order: 6:30 p.m.
Customer Appreciation Picnic served from 4:30-6:15 p.m. Drawing will be held for door prizes.

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 and door prize drawings. Registration will be open from 4:30-6:30 p.m. on the day of the annual meeting.



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



Congratulations, 2023 graduates!

You accomplished so much to reach this milestone. Farmers Mutual Telephone Company and Federated Telephone Cooperative wish each of you the best in all your future endeavors!

UFF DA!

Festivals that are uniquely Minnesotan



Ice Box Festival on opening day.

Photo courtesy of Explore Minnesota

Story by ANNE BRALY

Traditional craft and music festivals are fine, but can they compare to those that offer mashed potato wrestling, turtle racing or a spirited game of bingo on a bridge at midnight?

“From snow boot season to flip-flop weather, Minnesota’s wacky festivals and events keep the fun going all year long,” says Alyssa Hayes, senior public relations officer for the Minnesota Department of Tourism. “We celebrate the state’s four unique seasons from frozen turkey bowling and golfing on ice in winter to turtle racing when the weather turns warm again.”

Here are some of the wackiest festivals that prove there’s something for everyone looking for a little eccentricity in their lives:

The city of Barnesville hosts the annual **Potato Days** festival, a celebration of the humble spud grown throughout the area. It’s such an iconic event that Wanderlust Magazine named it one of its Top 9 Strangest Food Festivals in the World. There’s all kinds of potato play — a contest to pick the best potato peeler, a scavenger hunt for a prize golden potato, mashed potato wrestling and the crowning of Miss Tater Tot.

- Date: Aug. 25-26
- Where: Downtown Barnesville
- For more information: potatodays.com

Perham Turtle Fest is eight days of celebrating the reptile better known for moving at a slow pace than sprinting through Turtle Race Park. The event brings turtle

racers from around the world to Perham each summer. Also on deck: trolley rides, a dunk tank, a pizza-eating contest, rib fest, pet parade and much more.

- Date: June 14-18
- Where: Locations around downtown Perham
- For more information: perham.com/turtlefest

Even if you’re not a fan of fermented cabbage, **Henderson’s Sauerkraut Days** is well worth visiting. Visitors can test their strength against a champion arm wrestler, compete in the World Champion Kraut Eating Contest or see just how far they can hurl a cabbage.

- Date: June 23-25
- Where: Bender Park in Henderson.

Mashed Potato Wrestling draws a crowd at Barnesville Potato Days.



Photo courtesy of Explore Minnesota

- For more information: kraut.hendersonmn.com.

The Wild West comes alive in Northfield at the **Defeat of Jesse James Days** festival. One of the state's biggest festivals, it features a reenactment of one of the bandit's many shoot-em-up bank robberies, a championship rodeo, car show, horseshoe hunt, parade and carnival.

- Date: Sept. 6-10
- Where: downtown Northfield
- For more information: djjd.org

Be sure to put this one on your planning calendar: **Aitkin's World Famous Fish House Parade**. Each November, thousands parade down Minnesota Avenue along with brightly colored fish house floats. It's an event touted by USA Today as one of the top winter festivals in the country. "It's pure Minnesota fun," Alyssa says. Along with the parade, there's the Fish House 5K, a vintage snowmobile display, the popular Sip N' Stroll with suds from local brewhouses and more.

- Date: Nov. 24
- For more information: aitkin.com

LOOKING AHEAD

Winter, interestingly enough, is the top season for funky festivals in Minnesota. Here are some not-to-be-missed festivals on tap for early 2024:

The beloved **Grumpy Old Men Festival** is held in Wabasha, where the event's namesake movie took place. The town turns out every February to celebrate its claim to fame. It's best known for its ice plunge, so if you're a brave soul, jump on into the icy waters of the Mississippi River. There's also a fishing tournament, ice bar, wagon rides, a hot dish luncheon, bingo and bonfires.

- Online: wabashamn.org

Huge crowds visit Walker every February to celebrate one of the state's ugliest fish at the **International Eelpout Festival**. The slimy bottom dweller is loved by some, hated by others, but any excuse for a festival, right? Try eelpout curling and a jalapeno-eating contest.

- Online: Check out the Facebook page for International Eelpout Festival.

International Falls is better known as the Icebox Capital of the Nation, so what better way to celebrate the winter season than with a rousing round of turkey bowling? Or better yet, there's the smooch races where a team of four participants strap themselves onto two-by-fours and attempt to travel 25 yards, swing around a barrel and be the first team to make it back to the start/finish line.

- Online: ifallschamber.com



Guests to the Spam Museum will learn the history of the versatile product and the variety of flavors.

Photo courtesy of Andy Johns

Offbeat destinations

Does your complicated schedule make visiting a festival tough? Here are some places to find some offbeat, quirky fun when it's convenient for you:

- » Learn all about the history of America's favorite canned meats at the Spam Museum in Austin. **Online:** spam.com/museum
- » In Darwin, you can find the largest ball of twine rolled by one man, Francis Johnson. **Online:** roadside-america.com/story/2128
- » Feel the need to crush a car? You can do just that and drive a tank at the same time in Kasota. **Online:** driveatank.com
- » Have you ever been in a place so quiet you can hear your own heartbeat? That's exactly what you'll get at Orfield Laboratories' Anechoic Chamber in Minneapolis. It's recognized as The Quietest Place on Earth by Guinness World Records. **Online:** orfieldlabs.com

Winter is chili season, but golf in February? You betcha — on one of three nine-hole courses plowed out on Lake Minnetonka at Wayzata Chili Open with more than 1,700 golfers and their hockey sticks and golf clubs hitting and putting tennis balls.

- Online: chiliopen.wayzatachamber.com 📱

SOCIAL SAFE

Share memorable moments,
not private details

As spring wraps up and we're on the cusp of summer, memorable events are happening, and fun journeys are about to begin. From graduations to summer vacations, there are moments worth capturing in an image or as a written note.

And if an instant in time is worth noting, many people also choose to share it online through social media. There are many options, and most people have a favorite social media service. Each is a little different, though, in how it manages your information.

Following a few basic safety tips will keep your personal details safe as you share the adventures you enjoy.

1 Choose strong passwords and an additional form of authentication

A good password guideline is to include a mix of uppercase and lowercase letters, numbers and special characters. Another strategy is to use a long phrase you find memorable but can still confound hackers. Also, if available, enable two-factor authentication, which uses a unique code sent to your phone or email as an additional layer of security.

2 Don't overshare

Some information should always be off limits, including phone numbers, email addresses, places of employment and more. Review your social media account profiles to clarify exactly what information is visible on your accounts and who can see it. Is it everyone, family and friends, or no one? Choose the level right for you.

3 Be photo shy

Carefully choose the photos you post. Images can often provide details such as a place of work, child's school and more that you might find best left private. Also, keep in mind that uploading an image taken with a mobile phone might contain location information. Review the settings specific to your device to learn how to control these details.

4 Treat strangers with care

Sadly, not everything on social media is as it seems. Scammers will even create bogus accounts to entice you to give up personal information. So, before you accept an interaction with someone on social media, first verify who is contacting you. When in doubt, block or ignore the request.

5 Wait until the end of the trip

While it's fun to share images of a trip during the journey, consider waiting until you are home. That way, you avoid broadcasting that your home is vacant. It's an easy, practical step.



FARM Road

A seasonal batch of flowers includes asters, dahlias, zinnia, celosia, yarrow, false Queen Anne lace and sunflowers.

Personal growth

Business is blooming for Farm Road Flowers

Story by KATIE NORRIS

After Kristen Grimm and her husband, Lafe, started a family, she didn't plan to pursue a career. But the experience of touring a flower farm in Kansas planted a seed. "I thought the flower farm was interesting and that it looked crazy busy," she says. "But I had no intention of flower farming after the visit."

However, the idea took root, and weeks later, Kristen, who has a degree in horticulture from Michigan State University, says her two oldest daughters asked, "Mom, are we going to do that flower farm that we visited?" Kristen hesitated at first, but her daughters' excitement encouraged her to embark on a new venture. "It's kind of fun that I can share my love for flowers with my kids," she says.

Kristen and Lafe have five children ages 5 through 11, and "they are truly learning and growing right next to us," Kristen says. She comes from a family of farmers who raised livestock and crops. The Grimms bought their farm

from her parents in 2014 — it's located in Hancock, where Kristen grew up.

When she launched her business, Farm Road Flowers, in 2021, Kristen says, "we found that people just want fresh flowers every week." Flower subscriptions constitute the bulk of Farm Road Flowers' business. From mid-July through early October, subscribers can get a bouquet every week, every other week or once a month.

In order to get flowers ready in July, Kristen and her family start sprouting seeds in February. "We'll grow that here in our garage until the weather is ready for planting," she says. During the summer, the family has a rhythm. Mondays and Wednesdays are for harvesting the flowers and making bouquets. Tuesdays and Thursdays are delivery days. "Friday, Saturday, Sunday were kind of rest days for the kids," Kristen says.

A GROWING FAMILY

While Kristen is nurturing her horticulture skills, her children are also

growing from the experience. "They're not only learning the plant names, they learn how to care for them. They're learning how to make bouquets," she says. "They are also learning how to track their hours."

Additionally, Kristen is encouraging her oldest daughters' creativity by allowing them to share ideas for Instagram. For example, they used the song "My Favorite Things" from "The Sound of Music" as inspiration to make a song about green drops, an ornamental grass, with the lyrics, "green drops and roses," says Kristen.

While running a cut flower farm is hard work, the rewards are worth the effort for the Grimms. "Flowers are just one of those things that seems to always bring people joy," Kristen says.

Purchase subscriptions and sign up for Farm Road Flowers' U-Picks and other special events throughout the summer online at farmroadflowers.com. Follow @farmroad.flowerfarm on Instagram. 📱

HOW DOES YOUR ONLINE GARDEN GROW?

Digital communities revolutionizing backyard agriculture

Story by SARA D. PATTERSON

Starting a garden in your own backyard isn't something you have to do alone. While you're unlikely to find help digging holes, putting in plants or moving mulch on the internet, you can find countless friends online to offer advice and support.

Online communities have revolutionized gardening, according to Adriana Copaceanu, whose 2016 gardening blog grew into the website backyardgardenlover.com. More than 100,000 gardeners also turn to its Facebook page where they can exchange tips and experiences. "By making it easier for people to find information and connect with others online, gardening communities have made gardening more accessible and appealing to a wider audience," Adriana says. "In the last few years, the amount of information online on gardening and resources has absolutely skyrocketed."

More than half the country — 55% of American households — gardens, according to findings by Scotts Miracle-Gro. The average garden measures 600 square feet, and tomatoes are the most common plant grown, appearing in about 85% of U.S. gardens. In addition to providing produce for a healthier diet, gardening has many other positive impacts including stress relief, promoting exercise, fighting dementia and staving off loneliness, to name just a few.

CULTIVATING COMMUNITIES

While gardening has always offered opportunities for interactions at garden centers and at farmers markets, the online gardening community now presents limitless forums for collaboration. "I get daily emails with questions," Adriana says. "Sometimes, it's a quick answer, and other times I need to do some research because I'm not familiar with their specific location."

More than 5 million gardening enthusiasts have forged connections with other green thumbs through Reddit, a website that's home to thousands of online communities where users can anonymously discuss their interests and hobbies, seek support and share tips. They can also post photos and find immediate answers to questions like "I just pulled this dead squirrel out of my garlic patch, can I still eat the garlic in the summer?" or "Is this snake dangerous?"

"As the size of the gardening community has grown, there are more dumb and wrong answers; unfortunately, that's the nature of a platform that encourages participation," Reddit contributor kirbs2001 says. "The flip side is that more people are gardening and want to share what they know, or think they know, with others, and that's cool."

Still others just want a place to enjoy the outdoors in a community setting. "The gardening season is pretty short where I am, so



ONLINE RESOURCES ARE IN FULL BLOOM

Gardening apps

- * **From Seed to Spoon Gardening** — Created by new gardeners struggling to find all the right information for growing their first gardens, this covers it all.
- * **SunCalc** — This is a sun-finder for garden placement. Enter an address and the app will tell you where to plant.
- * **Homegrown with Bonnie Plants** — America's most-trusted vegetable company provides all the answers to questions about what to grow for specific conditions.
- * **Planty** — Not sure what you've grown? This cute, simple app will identify and offer care tips for plants.
- * **Garden Answers** — This extensive identification app provides garden and horticulture experts at your fingertips. The app identifies more than 20,000 plants and answers more than 200,000 commonly asked care questions.

Websites

- * The National Gardening Association's **garden.com** offers courses, gardening guides, a database and much more.
- * The Old Farmer's Almanac has tips, daily facts and information, and other tried-and-true suggestions at **almanac.com**.
- * Through its website **ahsgardening.org**, the American Horticulture Society promotes healthy, sustainable gardening practices and the critical role of plants.

“In the last few years, the amount of information online on gardening and resources has absolutely skyrocketed.”

— Adriana Copaceanu, founder of backyardgardenlover.com

I like to live vicariously through other people's gardens to get me through winter, lol,” says Calamity 0o0, another Reddit member who's active in the site's garden community.

Other gardening websites — including gardening-forums.com, gardenweb.com and gardenstew.com — offer all kinds of answers to all kinds of questions. Gardeners can also find like-minded friends on Twitter, and if it's easier to learn from videos, YouTube is for you.

The holy book of gardening and all things outdoors-related, The Old Farmer's Almanac, now offers a comprehensive website, almanac.com, full of valuable tips, along with a daily newsletter. The National Gardening Association formed in 1971 simply to promote gardening, and is now the largest

social media website dedicated exclusively to gardening. The group's garden.org offers online tools “to help gardeners connect, teach, share and trade with each other.”

Websites are great resources, but apps truly can be a gardener's best friend. First-time gardeners will find everything they need to start their plots through the Seed to Spoon app. Based on a home address, the SunCalc app designates the perfect location for plants to thrive, and Homegrown with Bonnie Plants has a “Help Me Choose” section to help gardeners determine which plants to grow, as well as one to help schedule tasks like sowing, watering, weeding and fertilizing.

So, while you may be on your own physically, you'll never lack for company along your gardening journey. 🌱

Adventures in mud

An off-road wonderland awaits at Appleton Area OHV Park

Story by PATRICK SMITH

Some communities are known for beautiful golf courses and others for the natural charm of the beach. Situated three hours west of Minneapolis, the tiny town of Appleton is on a mission to become monumental for mud.

With hundreds of people visiting the Appleton Area OHV (Off-Highway Vehicle) Park each weekend and the park's plans to expand, the small town of barely 1,400 is well on the way to achieving its goal. "We're definitely limited in resources here, and it's a pretty incredible park," says local resident Jorden Roggenbuck, who visits the park five to six times a year with his off-road Jeeps and motorcycles. "There's everything from rolling hills to sand dunes, rock crossings, log walls, a motocross track and more. It's an outdoor sanctuary."

Jorden can look out the bay window of his home overlooking U.S. Highway 7 and see scores of trucks and trailers hauling muddy off-road vehicles from the park. He sees it as a testament to how the park is helping revitalize Swift County after its largest employer, the Prairie Correctional Facility, closed in 2010.

UNIQUE REGIONAL ATTRACTION

Opened in 2004, the 330-acre park has become a popular destination for off-road enthusiasts — not just those from the area, but for many who travel hours to explore its trails. It's not uncommon to see license plates from Iowa, North and South Dakota and across Minnesota.

While a Minnesota Department of Natural Resources registration sticker is required for off-road vehicles, there's no fee to enter the park. "It's such a unique place," says Kody Fossum, park supervi-

Steve Roggenbuck ascends a series of boulders at the Appleton OHV Park.



Photo courtesy of Jorden Roggenbuck

sor for Swift County. "I was doing maintenance one day, and I happened to run into people from the Black Hills of South Dakota seven hours away who decided to take a long detour on their way home. They said they'll definitely come back."

The park is also an especially popular destination with snowmobilers in the winter and for hunting during the season. "We see a lot of people during hunting season because a lot of trails are closed during that time," says Devon Savage, Swift County parks and drainage technician. "Appleton is one of the only places open for ATVs during hunting season."

Appleton's OHV-friendly road rules also draw visitors. Those who stay at the municipal campground near downtown Appleton can drive their ATVs and motorcycles on roads to the park without the hassle of transporting them by trailer.

PRAIRIE THUNDER OFF-ROAD RALLY

Years ago, during a meeting to discuss how to better promote the park, local resident Chris Aasland had an idea. He found inspiration in the popular Sturgis Bike Rally, which regularly draws more than 500,000 people to the small town of 7,000 in western South Dakota. "I decided that if Sturgis can have a bike rally, why can't Appleton have a OHV rally to bring people to town?" says Chris. "I took the torch and tried to get something going."

His idea has morphed into the Prairie Thunder Off-Road Rally, a free family-friendly event that brings people to the park each year. The day starts with the Blindfolded Barrel Run during which an ATV passenger attempts to guide the blindfolded driver through the course as quickly as possible. "People laugh and laugh because they'll go left when they



Photos courtesy of Chris Asland and Jordan Roggenbuck



Photos courtesy of Chris Asland and Jordan Roggenbuck



FROM LEFT: Members of the Prairie Off Roaders Club prepare to hit the trail. Dustin Roggenbuck and his son, Graham, prepare for a ride. Competitors in the Prairie Thunder Off-Road Rally navigate plenty of mud and water on the obstacle course.

should go right, and then they drive and run into a barrel,” Chris says. “It’s a safe and funny event.”

Attendees then set off for a scavenger hunt across the park. By the afternoon, it’s time for door prizes and the mud run, which often leaves the participants covered in muck from head to toe.

MORE TRAILS AHEAD

The Appleton Area OHV Park is already the second largest facility of its kind in Minnesota, but an expansion is in the works. Swift County hopes to develop recently purchased land with the possibility of creating a competitive motocross track, restrooms and a beach for swimming and

kayaking. The plans would eventually expand the park to 700 acres. But for now, there’s no shortage of interest in the park as it is.

“Even if there’s a downpour, the tracks firm up fast because it’s a sand-based area,” Jordan says. “No matter what kind of weather you get, you can be back out there playing on every single trail within a matter of hours.”

Regardless of what the future holds for the park, it continues to cater to all ages and skill levels. “When you see people out there having a good day of family fun, that’s the rewarding part,” Chris says. “Hopefully, it helps put the Appleton community on the map for visitors, and they’ll come back.” 📍



Follow Appleton OHV Park on Facebook to learn more about the upcoming Prairie Thunder Off-Road Rally, usually corresponding with the Swift County Fair.

prairieoffroaders.org
swiftcounty.com
swiftcountyfair.org

Bite-size brilliance

A not-so-spicy meatball!

Few foods have the versatility that meatballs offer. They're perfect for parties served with toothpicks, but they can also be your dinner tonight served over pasta or mashed potatoes.

What makes a good meatball? Some recipes call for chicken or veal while others rely solely on ground beef. Some recipes call for frying them in a skillet while others send them straight to the oven.

No matter the approach to the finished product, most everyone can agree on one thing: Meatballs are a blessing in the culinary world all wrapped up in a ball of meat.



SWEET-AND-SOUR MEATBALLS

Sauce:

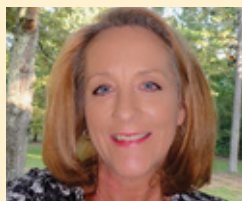
- 1/2 cup brown sugar
- 3 tablespoons white vinegar
- 2 tablespoons ketchup
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce
- 1/3 cup pineapple juice
- 1/4 teaspoon Chinese five-spice
- 2 teaspoons cornstarch

Place the brown sugar, vinegar, ketchup, soy sauce, pineapple juice and Chinese five spice in a saucepan over medium heat. Simmer for 5 minutes or until the sugar has dissolved. Stir in cornstarch and simmer for 2 minutes more to thicken. Remove from heat and set aside.

Meatballs:

- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 (1-pound) bag frozen meatballs
- 1 onion, sliced
- 1 red or green bell pepper, cut into bite-sized pieces
- 1 cup diced pineapple
- 4 green onions, cut into 1-inch pieces

Place a wok or large frying pan over high heat. Add the oil and the meatballs and cook, turning every minute or so, for 4-5 minutes or until almost cooked through. Add the onion and stir-fry for another 2 minutes. Add the bell pepper and stir-fry for another minute, then add the pineapple and the sweet-and-sour sauce. Stir-fry until well combined. Remove from heat and toss in the green onion.



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Photography by **Mark Gilliland**
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SALISBURY STEAK MEATBALLS

- 1/4 cup grated onion
- 2/3 cup panko bread crumbs
- 3/4 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon onion powder
- 2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce
- 2 teaspoons soy sauce
- 2 teaspoons ground mustard
- 1 egg
- 2 tablespoons ketchup
- 1 1/4 pounds ground beef
- 1 tablespoon olive oil (plus more, if needed)

Gravy:

- 3 tablespoons butter, divided
- 6-8 medium mushrooms, chopped
- 1/2 cup onion, sliced 1/4-inch thick
- 4-6 cloves garlic, minced

- 3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 2 cups beef stock
- 2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce
- 2 teaspoons Dijon mustard
- 2 teaspoons soy sauce

In a medium bowl, combine grated onions, breadcrumbs, salt and all the remaining ingredients except the ground beef and oil. Allow the mixture to stand for 5 minutes, then add the meat and mix until just combined and divide the mixture into about 20 meatballs.

Add oil in a large skillet and heat to medium-high. Add the meatballs in a single layer and cook for about 10 minutes, flipping halfway through, until all sides brown evenly. Remove to a plate. If needed, add additional oil and cook any

remaining meatballs the same way.

For the gravy, add 1 tablespoon of butter to the skillet. When melted, add mushrooms and cook 3-4 minutes. Add the onions and saute for 3 minutes, add the garlic and let cook for 30 seconds or until fragrant. Add the remaining butter to the skillet. When melted, add the flour and stir to combine and cook for 1 minute, stirring constantly. Gradually pour in the beef stock, still stirring constantly. Stir in Worcestershire sauce, Dijon and soy sauce and simmer for 3 minutes or until it thickens slightly. Add the meatballs to the skillet along with any juices that may have collected on the plate and cook for 4 minutes. If the gravy thickens too much, add a splash of water. Taste and adjust seasonings as desired.

BUTTERY CHICKEN MEATBALLS

- 1/2 medium onion, grated
- 1/2 cup panko breadcrumbs
- 1 1/2 pounds ground chicken
- 1 egg
- 2 teaspoons garam masala
- 2 tablespoons freshly chopped parsley
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon pepper
- 1 tablespoon olive oil

Butter sauce:

- 1/2 cup butter
- 5 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 1/2 teaspoons ground ginger
- 1 cup tomato sauce
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- 1 tablespoon garam masala
- 1 tablespoon smoked paprika
- 1 teaspoon turmeric
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon ground coriander
- 1 cup chicken broth
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 1 tablespoon freshly chopped parsley

Mix the onion and bread crumbs together in a large

mixing bowl. Let the mixture sit for 2-3 minutes. Add the rest of the meatball ingredients, excluding the oil, to the bowl. Mix everything together well. Form the mixture into meatballs.

Heat the olive oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the meatballs, working in batches if needed. Cook for 2-3 minutes per side until well browned. Transfer the cooked meatballs to a plate and set aside.

For the sauce, add the butter to the skillet, then stir in garlic and ginger and cook for 1 minute. Add the tomato sauce, tomato paste, garam masala, smoked paprika, turmeric, cumin, coriander and chicken broth. Bring the sauce to a boil, then reduce to a simmer and cook for 10 minutes or until slightly thickens. Stir in the cream. Return meatballs to skillet and let them simmer in the sauce until heated through. Garnish with parsley and serve. 🍽️



NO RESERVATION REQUIRED

Join us for supper —
and the 2023 Annual Meeting

JUNE 13

Farmers Mutual Annual
Meeting and Customer
Appreciation Picnic

JUNE 15

Federated Telephone's Annual
Meeting and Customer
Appreciation Picnic

Bring your appetite and registration card for entry,
door prizes and to receive your free gift.

Check for updates, locations and times at the Acira - Powered by
Farmers Mutual & Federated Telephone Facebook page.

