

JULY/AUGUST 2023

CONNECTION

Shared goals

Soccer builds a community

CAREER CALLING

GOURMET GADGET



By SHIRLEY BLOOMFIELD, CEO
NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association

Take a BOLD step

A new toolkit opens doors

Summer is finally here! That means barbecues, days at the pool and, if you have kids, reminding them to tackle their dreaded summer reading list before it is too late.

As they are doing their homework, I have an assignment for you. But don't worry, it's only a dozen pages.

The past few years have shown the world that broadband access is a necessity, not a luxury. As the demand and investment in broadband increases across rural America, so does the need for a skilled workforce to build and maintain these broadband networks.

NTCA's Smart Communities program recently teamed up with the National Rural Education Association to create the Broadband Opportunities and Leadership Development (BOLD) K-12 Career Awareness Toolkit, which is chock-full of new and creative ways to engage students and get them excited about careers in the broadband industry. Whether your student is interested in computer science, engineering and even accounting or marketing, there are opportunities for everyone in the broadband industry.

From guidance on organizing hands-on internships and site visits, to working with schools to develop curricula, or even ways to get involved with local esports and robotics teams, this toolkit is a wonderful resource for parents, educators and community-based broadband providers alike.

Summer may be in full swing, but back-to-school season will be here before you know it. Make sure you add the Smart Rural Community K-12 Career Awareness Toolkit to your summer reading list today! Read it here: ntca.org/BOLDToolkit. 📄



Avoid QR mischief

Scammers co-opt this handy code

QR codes — it stands for Quick Response — pop up frequently. TV ads, restaurant menus and much more rely on these little squares of blocky lines to quickly link a smartphone user to handy information, a download or as a way to digitally send money to someone.

The FBI, however, has warned that cybercriminals may tamper with the codes. The FBI offers a few tips so you can take advantage of QR codes while staying safe and secure:

- After scanning a QR code, check the URL to make sure it is the site you want. A malicious domain name may be similar to the intended URL but with typos or a misplaced letter.
- Be cautious when entering login, personal or financial information.
- If scanning a physical QR code, ensure the code shows no signs of tampering, such as a sticker placed over the original.
- Do not download an app from a QR code.
- If you receive an email asking you to complete a payment through a QR code, call the requesting company to verify. Look up the company's number on a trusted site — don't use a number from the email.
- Do not download a QR code scanner app — the built-in phone camera is a safer option.
- If you receive a QR code you believe to be from someone you know, contact them through a known number or address to verify.
- Avoid making payments through a site navigated to from a QR code. Instead, manually enter a known and trusted URL to complete the payment. 💳



Seeding the future

THE CLOUD UPLIFTS EDUCATION

©Visual Generation/Adobe Stock

The arrival of fast, reliable internet service in rural areas sparked innovation across businesses, health care providers and government resources, leading to more options and richer services. When it comes to education, how students interact now with schools and each other has evolved at a similarly blistering pace.

First, there was the growth of cloud-based services — multiple remote networked computers that handle storage and processing of information. Then, since the cloud was doing the heavy computing work, an entire class of low-power, lower-cost devices sprang up.

Together, this combo — low-cost Chromebooks, as well as similar devices, and cloud-based tools — have changed how many students learn.

Collaboration: The cloud allows students to work together on group projects after school or other times they're not physically in the same room. Cloud-based storage systems, such as Google Drive, Microsoft's OneDrive and others, allow the creation and sharing of documents, spreadsheets and presentations in real time — you can see the work of other members of your team as they're making changes.

Collaboration and brainstorming are easier than ever.

Accessibility: With their Chromebooks or similar devices students can access their work from any location, at any time. All their work is saved on the cloud, making it easily accessible and organized.

Efficiency: In many school systems, teachers use the cloud to grade assignments more efficiently and even easily share the results with parents. Students might receive immediate feedback, allowing them to improve their work and better understand the material.

Personalization: These cloud-based systems create the option for personalized learning experiences. Students can access online resources and tools that cater to their specific needs and learning styles. For families that home-school, online communities with similar educational interests and other resources also become more accessible.

Productivity: Thanks to the cloud and low-cost computing devices, students can be more productive, organized and collaborative. And because the tools are far less expensive than traditional computers, more people can affordably access them. 🗨️

Looking ahead to a new school year?

Make sure you're prepared.

- **The essential computer:** If your student needs a basic laptop to do homework and access online learning platforms, try the Lenovo Flex 5i Chromebook. "It's comparatively inexpensive, and it offers fast performance plus an excellent keyboard and trackpad. The Flex 5i is also compact and light, and its 1080p touchscreen is vivid and bright," according to a review by Wirecutter, a website operated by The New York Times offering reviews of a range of devices. Prices vary, but expect to pay about \$350.
- **Quality web cam:** From education to work, video calls are common. If your computer isn't already equipped, consider adding a camera. The Logitech C270 HD, often available for less than \$30, is a good choice for students required to attend lessons online. It delivers quality and clarity.

Is your Wi-Fi getting walloped?

Your home network might be busier than you think

Would you mind answering a question for me — how many devices connect to your Wi-Fi? It may be more than you realize.



KEVIN BEYER
Chief Executive Officer

Consider starting in the room where you watch television. Do you have a smart TV or a device like a Roku that lets you stream services such as Netflix? If you're streaming music or podcasts, do you have a smart speaker like the ones from Google, Amazon or Apple? If you enjoy online gaming, please count those devices, too.

Next, let's move to the kitchen. Many appliances — everything from refrigerators to pressure cookers — have the option of using your Wi-Fi to connect to an app. Even some outdoor grills let you check in wirelessly. While you're thinking about the outside, do you have a security system, smart locks or smart devices? They use Wi-Fi, too.

Also, don't forget about the major systems of your home, such as heating and cooling. Smart thermostats can help you customize settings to your needs and schedules while helping you save money. Even some water heaters have smart options so you can monitor and manage usage.

Finally, count the big ones. How many computers connect to your Wi-Fi? What about tablets like iPads? Does your phone use Wi-Fi for calling or as a speed boost over the cellular connection?

The numbers add up, don't they? In fact, there are studies that indicate the typical U.S. household has more than 20 Wi-Fi-connected devices.

Just a few years ago, many of the now-common devices simply didn't exist. I suspect if you do this same exercise a few years from now you'll find more devices, and likely even entirely new classes of technology, using your home network.

This connected world is the reason we've committed to bringing you a fast, reliable internet connection, one not only capable of managing your needs today but also powerful enough to accommodate the demands of tomorrow. It's the type of forward-thinking innovation and investment at the heart of how Farmers Mutual and Federated Telephone have always operated.

You see, the more connected devices added to your network, the more robust it needs to be. Imagine that instead of cables moving bits, your internet is a large water pipe. Then, each device on your network is a faucet. Every faucet you turn on would reduce available volume and water pressure. Also, the bigger the faucet, the more resources that specific pipe uses.

That last point becomes critical when considering your internet service — not all devices are equal. An intense gaming session or uploading large work files requires more speed and bandwidth than someone streaming music on a smartphone or checking in on social media. So, it's important to match your internet service not only to the number of devices connected to your network, but also to how they're used.

Did you count more connections than you anticipated? Well, if this exercise left you with questions about your service or what you need to do to get the most out of your internet connection, our team is always available to help.

Thank you for letting us serve you. ☎

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On the Cover:



Morris-based West Central Soccer Association has built a league that bridges communities.
See story Page 12.

Adobe StockPhoto by
Francesco Scatena

Wishing everyone a safe and happy
Fourth of July!

Farmers Mutual and Federated Telephone offices will be closed on Tuesday, July 4, in observance of Independence Day!

New for 2023

Farmers Mutual and Federated Telephone will distribute Capital Credit Dividends in a new streamlined manner this year.

Current members with an amount **less than \$500 and an active billing account** will have their capital credit dividend applied directly to their FMTC/FTC billing account.

Any member with an amount **more than \$500 or an inactive billing account** will receive their capital credit dividend check by mail.



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

NEED HELP PAYING YOUR INTERNET BILL?

The Affordable Connectivity Program is a Federal Communications Commission initiative that assists households struggling to afford internet service. The ACP provides a discount of up to \$30 per month. To see if you qualify and to apply, call 877-384-2575 or visit affordableconnectivity.gov.



SHIVER ME TIMBERS!

Fun sets sail at pirate-themed attractions



A swashbuckling crew gets ready for the annual International Tall Ships Pirates Ball in Bayfield, Minnesota.

Photo courtesy of Mason Jar Productions

Story by ANNE BRALY

Pirates once ruled the Great Lakes. Said to be among the most fearsome marauders in the Midwest, they navigated the waters in search of furs, lumber and other treasures. Though names like Calico Jack and Roaring Dan Seavey have faded into history, there are still plenty of places where you can live out your fantasies of living the pirate life.

Stepping into the pirate world for an hour or two can bring out the Peter Pan in us all — allowing us to indulge in fantasies of experiencing the romance of the sea and those bad-boy buccaneers

we read about in our youth. Daydreams of being a pirate let us leave our mundane landlubber existence for a little while, says Seth Chmelik of the Geek Partnership Society, an organization that sponsors an annual pirate cruise fundraiser on Minnesota's St. Croix River.

"It's about letting your inner child fly," he says.

If you're looking for some ideas for some swashbuckling fun — the kind where you can be swept away in some salty adventures — here are some options.

PIRATES BALL

Bayfield Pavilion in Bayfield, Minnesota

Don yer finest pirate fashions, matey, and sail on over to Bayfield for the annual Pirates Ball. The event is a fundraiser for Lake Superior Tall Ships, an organization dedicated to teaching area youth about seamanship while helping to build self-esteem and personal responsibility. There'll be a bounty of fun at the ball with live music, dinner and libations, a raffle, an auction and dancing. The evening concludes with the crowning of the Pirate King and Queen.

- Date: Oct. 14, from 5-11:59 p.m.
- Tickets: \$60
- Information: lakesuperiortallships.org

PIRATE'S COVE ADVENTURE GOLF

Brainerd, Minnesota, and Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin

From the moment you take your first swing at this minigolf course, you'll be engulfed in pirate lore. Bright blue water runs through two courses with waterfalls at the end of the stream. Swashbuckling props include secret coves and sunken treasures — even a pirate ship to climb aboard for photos. After a round of pirate

golf, make your way over to Billy Bones Raceway, the area's best go-kart complex where you can speed along twists, curves and dips on a track of your choosing — there are three that zoom past pirates and buried treasures. All in all, it makes for an afternoon of family fun.

Or, if you happen to be in the Wisconsin Dells area of Wisconsin, plan for a day of fun on one of five different courses, each with its own tales of pirate adventures.

- Admission at Brainerd: \$8.95 for kids, \$9.95 for adults for 18 holes. There is an additional charge for go-karts.
- Admission at Wisconsin Dells: \$8 for kids, \$11 for adults
- Information: piratescove.net

PIRATE'S PLUNGE

Edina, Minnesota

Walk the plank of the Shipwreck Express and shout aargh! as you ride a zip line 10 feet above the swimmers in the pool below before making a splash of your own. Pirate's Plunge visitors can also swoosh down 207-foot body slide into a plunge pool, and grab a friend — or two — to enjoy the 300-foot tube flume. It's the ideal way to cool off on a hot summer's day.

- Admission: \$13 for ages 1 and up; \$10 after 5 p.m.
- Information: edinamn.gov/431/Pirates-Plunge



Take the plunge at Pirates Plunge in Edina



Photos courtesy of City of Edina

GPS PIRATES CRUISE

Stillwater, Minnesota

Walk the gangplank matey, and get onboard for a cruise along the scenic St. Croix River. Dress in your favorite pirate garb and join other geeks to support the Geek Partnership Society, an organization that supports science education for kids around the Twin Cities.

Sorry kiddos, this is an adults-only cruise since alcohol is served — every pirate needs a grog or two along the way! There will be entertainment, too, along with live music and a raffle. Costumes aren't required — but they are appreciated and dressing up will come in handy at the photo booth where you can capture images of your true pirate spirit.

- Date: Aug. 6, 5 p.m.
- Tickets start at \$60
- Information: geekpartnership.org

SLEEP LIKE A PIRATE

Lyndon Station, Wisconsin

Wondering what it was like to settle in for the night on the high seas? Make reservations for a rather authentic experience by booking a Caribbean pirate ship close to Wisconsin Dells and find out. Though it's dry-docked in the woods, this tiny home rests on blue stones that give it a watery look. There's nothing fancy about this bare-bones rental, but that's the way pirates lived. The host suggests you bring pirate garb with you to fully appreciate the experience.

There are two sleeping spaces below deck — two bunks in one bedroom and a queen bed in the other. There's no interior gathering space, but the deck is ideal for sunbathing. Bring all your own gear, including towels, sheets, pillows and food. And clean up when you leave, otherwise, you'll pay a hefty price. Be forewarned: You'll be out in nature, so expect mosquitos, mice and other creatures of the night.

- Information: To book this experience, log onto airbnb.com and search for Lyndon Station, Wisconsin. 📱

Pirates Plunge in Edina, Minnesota, is a watery world of pirate fun.

The mysterious cloud

And other internet storage enigmas



You've likely heard: "That document is in the cloud." Or, "I saved those pictures in the cloud." But what exactly is the cloud?

Simply, the cloud is the concept of using someone else's computer server to store, host or process data. If you use a computer, smartphone, smart TV or other devices that connect to the internet, you've likely taken advantage of cloud services. Netflix is one example. So are Google Drive, Apple iCloud, Yahoo Mail, Dropbox and Microsoft OneDrive. There are many, many more.

WHY DOES THE CLOUD MATTER?

The cloud allows us to access large amounts of information on any device with an internet connection. Think about streaming a movie or episode of a Netflix show. Now, imagine trying to store every movie or show available on Netflix on your home computer. It would stop working! So, cloud technology is how we can choose from tens of thousands of movies to watch at the touch of our remote.

Cloud services also allow a child to write a paper on a laptop in a Google Doc that can be edited by a parent or teacher from anywhere with an internet connection. The cloud's remote servers handle most of the computing and the storage.

The cloud also allows you to store and back up data. For instance, you can store and view documents, videos and your entire photo collection on a cloud service without overloading your computer or smartphone's internal storage. If you use cloud services, anything you save is backed up and accessible from anywhere, provided you remember your usernames and passwords. A fire, network outage or even a power surge might destroy your devices, but your information can still be secure in the cloud.

WHERE IS THE CLOUD?

The cloud is not actually in the clouds. Cloud services are right here on Earth on com-

puter servers inside giant, temperature-controlled facilities full of computers that store and transmit information. Think of rows of huge black boxes with blinking lights.

NOT-SO SILVER LININGS

There can be downsides to storing and accessing information remotely, however. Cloud services cost money. Some devices, like iPhones, offer free cloud storage for up to a certain amount of data. After that, you'll need a subscription. Business cloud services often charge per gigabyte of storage.

Also, cloud services only work with internet access. Without the internet, you can't connect to the cloud — a fast, reliable connection is essential. ☞





Photo courtesy of Maxxed Out Guides

Focused effort

Maxxed Out Guides share their experience

From left, guides Garret Suchanek and Tyler Aune, owner Graham Greseth and guide Taylor Schmidt form a victory formation after a September goose hunt.

Story by LAZ DENES

Growing up on the family farm just a stone's throw from La qui Parle State Wildlife Management Area, Graham Greseth was exposed to the wonders of duck and goose hunting at a very young age. People would flock to the property each fall to shoot geese coming off the many wildlife refuges that surround the area, some even pulling in with their recreational vehicles and staying the entire 30-day goose hunting season.

Not surprisingly, Graham grew quite fond of the sport himself, and that affinity quickly evolved into a lifelong passion. He is the driving force behind the successful Dawson-based enterprise Maxxed Out Guides, set to begin its 18th season this fall.

While Graham says the waterfowl hunts, originating from Maxxed Out Guides' nine-bedroom main lodge in Dawson, remain the bread and butter of the operation, he and his staff of 20 professional guides also offer waterfowl hunts in South Dakota and Kansas. The company recently added white-tailed deer

hunts in winter and turkey hunts in the spring. Graham's wife, Andrea, caught the hunting bug several years ago and now leads a handful of waterfowl hunts for women each season.

All hunts are turnkey, which means the guides do all the prep work, including scouting the fields, setting the decoys and blinds, doing the calling and alerting customers when to squeeze the trigger.

"I started running some clients on our property in 2007 just to help me fund my hobby, and things really took off," says Graham, who left his corporate job in sales and marketing to turn his full attention to the business in 2016. "Now, this is all we do year-round, either guiding hunts or getting ready to guide hunts."

Maxxed Out Guides' customers are typically business owners and executives who used to hunt regularly but no longer have the time to do the necessary scouting and prep work. Graham credits his corporate sales and marketing background — as well as an intensive communication effort throughout the booking and hunting

experience — for finding those customers and keeping them coming back year after year. Lodge Manager Ashley Sundlee helps bolster the communication effort, and the company's website and social media channels are key.

Graham also realizes the importance of having reliable, high-speed internet available to customers once they arrive on the property. He's proud to offer that service in the Dawson main lodge thanks to Farmers Mutual.

"A lot of our clients are business owners and professionals, and they have to take calls and meetings while they're at the lodge, so it's important they have good, high-speed internet to do the work they need to do when they're on vacation," he says. ☎

Maxxed Out Guides

651-335-0780

maxxedoutguides.com

For the latest updates and offers, follow the business on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, @MaxxedOutGuides.



FELLOW TRAVELERS

Digital communities keep travelers connected on the go

Story by DREW WOOLLEY



The internet was a much different place when Peter Daams started Travellerspoint.com with his brother, Samuel, in 2002. Back then, they were looking at sites like FriendsReunited and classmates.com for inspiration — places for people who had lost touch to reconnect.

“We wanted to make something similar for travelers who had lost track of people they met on trips,” Peter says. “Our tagline was ‘Travel Friends Reunited.’ Our initial launch included a service to help with that, as well as a very basic trip log and a basic travel diary feature.”

The site attracted some attention, but it soon became apparent that Travellerspoint wasn’t giving visitors many reasons to hang around after they had searched for or found their missing travel buddies. The next year, the brothers added travel forums to the site, with a little extra help from a Geocities project that was about to be shuttered.

“That really kick-started the community side of the site and has set the tone for how it’s grown since then,” Peter says. “The owner of that project agreed to let us take it over, so we instantly were able to kick-start our forums with a great group of users who were experts on many travel destinations.”

Today, the site has grown into one of the largest and most active travel communities on the internet with more than 1 million users sharing photos, blog posts and mapping trips. Travellerspoint and other online travel communities like it are also the perfect hubs for the growing number of travelers looking to share their adventures with other enthusiasts.

NEW DESTINATIONS

Since the end of travel restrictions around the COVID-19 pandemic, Americans have been eager to get out and see more than their backyards. Data from the U.S. Travel Association showed that travel spending in March 2023 was up nearly 10% over the previous year and 5% over spending in 2019.

That enthusiasm shows no sign of slowing down as more than half of Americans say they plan to make travel a priority this year. But how they travel is starting to change. More travelers are putting an emphasis on finding destinations that are off the beaten path, family-friendly and environmentally responsible.

Online communities provide the perfect place for travelers to research these new adventures and get recommendations from others who have tried them. Many of these communities have migrated to social media platforms like Facebook, where they can cater to the specific needs of different groups.

Communities like Wanderful and Girls Love Travel, for example, provide a network of women who can support and even join other women in their travels. The TravelAwaits community offers stories, deals and advice geared toward travelers ages 50 and up. Digital Nomads Around the World, on the other hand, offers inspiration and advice for younger travelers living and working on the go.

While many of these groups rely on social media to maintain their communities, Peter still sees sites like his playing an important role for dedicated travelers. The rise of Facebook initially saw some of the more off-topic banter on Travellerspoint forums shift to the social media channel. But as other communities have shut down, Travellerspoint has become a haven for hardcore travelers looking for a place to discuss their passion.

“Many of those members are now very active on Travellerspoint,” Peter says. “We became something of a refuge for the people who lost their previous online communities.” 🗨️



TRAVEL TROUPES

Whether you never stop traveling or you're planning each course for your next foodcation, you can find a community that has the same passions.

Digital Nomads Around the World — Digital nomads are people who travel freely while using the internet to work remotely. They tend to travel light and live out of temporary housing while they're on the move. It isn't a lifestyle for everyone, but if it piques your interest this group can answer your questions.

TravelAwaits — Traveling in your 50s and beyond often comes with the benefit of more time and resources to explore your interests. But it can also present unique challenges. TravelAwaits is a community by and for older travelers, so you can trust that every deal, recommendation and discussion keeps your needs in mind.

Wanderful — Whether you're a woman eager to explore solo or looking for a supportive group of fellow travelers, Wanderful has everything you need. Learn about safe travel practices, pick up inspiration for your next excursion or connect with other adventurous women at online and offline events.

Food Travelist — Everyone loves a great meal on vacation. But for some travelers, the food is the point. If that's you, Food Travelist has your back with tasty recommendations and mouth-watering photos. When your wanderlust kicks in back home, you can even find recipe ideas to take your taste buds on a trip instead.



Loon U-14 player
Joshua Hernandez, front,
strikes the ball to a teammate.

Pitch perfect

WCSA setting new tone, expectations for soccer in Morris

Story by JOHN CLAYTON

The Morris-based West Central Soccer Association has always been about more than just the game. Since its establishment in 2013, WCSA leaders intended the adult and youth leagues to build bridges in the community.

“Almost immediately our conversation was, ‘Let’s create something that supports soccer as a way of developing community,’” says Chris Richards, pastor at Trinity Lutheran Church and founding member of the WCSA. “Just about everybody could agree that they enjoy the sport, and they don’t have to agree on anything else. That might be a good way to get conversations going. So, we wrote that right into our charter from the very beginning.”

Two years after those initial conversations between Chris Richards and Juan Cid, a local restaurateur who owns Mi

Mexico restaurants and food truck, the WCSA was chartered as a nonprofit organization. Since then, it has operated adult and youth tournaments, sponsored travel teams, started indoor winter leagues and run educational clinics.

In 2019, the WCSA joined the Minnesota Youth Soccer Association and the Northern Sports Soccer League. The NSSL includes teams from northern Minnesota and North Dakota.

Over the past few years, the WCSA youth program has nearly doubled in size. More than 70 players were registered in April for the spring and summer travel teams.

The youth program backs three age groups of travel teams — Under 9-10, U 11-12 and U 13-14 — all of which are known as the Loons. This year, the WCSA added the Little Loons U 7-8 program.

Juan, who coordinates the WCSA adult program, says the co-ed youth teams can be building blocks for local high school programs. The WCSA raised \$15,000 toward a \$45,000 project to build soccer and football practice fields at Morris High School that are expected to be ready for use by the association this year.

“We have more people interested, and they’re wanting to help. The more people and more hands we have help us find a way to make the WCSA function better,” Juan says. “Everyone has their jobs, their lives and things, but everything is coming together, and it’s getting better.”

AT HOME ON THE PITCH

Juan’s story isn’t unlike that of other Mexican immigrants who have found their way to the Morris area. From the earliest



Contributed photos by Christina Pederson

Clockwise from top: Area kids are finding community through sport with the West Central Soccer Association. West Central Soccer Association founders Juan Cid, left, and Chris Richards. The West Central Soccer Association includes a very competitive men's league.

days of his childhood, Juan and his friends played soccer the way American kids play pickup baseball or basketball games.

So, for Juan, bringing “futbol” to Minnesota was both a reminder of home as well as a way to connect with new people and share cultures and passions. “It was affordable,” Juan says, recalling his childhood. “There are other sports, but for the majority of kids in Mexico, they’re playing soccer, or futbol. It’s what has the attention of all the kids.”

And now it has the attention of the community in and around Morris, bringing together people who may not ever cross paths if not for the game and the WCSA. “Some of the people in Morris had never played soccer before,” Juan says. “But once they understand the game, it makes it way more fun, and they don’t just see a person running behind the ball.”

And a funny thing happened on the way to the pitch — people began seeing and hearing one another, regardless of language barriers and cultural differences.

Chris’ children are involved in the youth program and he says they want to learn more Spanish to understand their new

friends and teammates better. Chris was an experienced soccer player just looking for a way to stay active when he met Juan. He found a lot more than that as the WCSA gained a foothold in the local sports scene.

“You’ve got immigrant kids in third, fourth, fifth grade who are just starting to learn English, and here’s the sport they know that they can go play,” Chris says. “There are kids who speak English and there are kids who don’t, but they all understand the game. It’s a great unifying factor. No matter how you frame that, it does a good job of bringing some light, focusing on community and feeling a safe space to talk and get to know people.”

LEARNING SKILLS AND MORE

The goals of the association remain the same even as it welcomes more players and more families into the fold. “We want to create kids with great character — kids who work hard, kids who make good decisions, kids who play as a team,” says WCSA Youth Coordinator and Board Secretary Christina Pederson. “Yes, soccer is the sport, but our vision is so much bigger. It’s about providing these

kids with a way to develop into great people. These lessons they learn on the soccer field can be applied to so much of life. And it’s about bringing our communities and our families together through soccer.”

Mission accomplished, says Chris, who has watched and learned from new neighbors who love the game like he does, but perhaps approach it differently.

“I’m just a German-Norwegian kid from this area, and in our culture it’s just not that common for everybody to come out and watch family members play a game,” he says. “But if you go to a winter league game, you see 30-40 people sitting on the side watching their kids play or watching their parents play, and that’s a new experience for me. I continue to be a little bit jealous of that, so it’s always fun to see. There’s just a strong family cohesion that’s spilling over.”



Time-saving devices

Gourmet gadgets can make meals manageable

Instant pots became a “thing” in the 2010s, and people fell instantly in love with them. Combining an electric pressure cooker, slow cooker, rice cooker and yogurt maker in one, multicookers save space and cook meals quickly. What better time to hop on the bandwagon than now, when summer produce is at its height?

If you’re old enough to remember your grandmother’s pressure cooker, you may know horror stories of it blowing up and causing injuries. But don’t worry! Today’s electric pressure cookers have a slew of safety features, including sensors to monitor temperature and pressure.

The price of multicookers has come



down from north of \$500 to under \$65, an excellent price for beginners. If you want more functions or higher wattage, expect to spend upward of \$100. Here are some recipes to get you started.



SUMMER VEGETABLE SOUP

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 4 teaspoons minced garlic
- 3 medium ears fresh corn, kernels removed (or 2 1/4 cups frozen corn)
- 2 pounds tomatoes, peeled, seeded and chopped
- 1 sweet bell pepper, seeded and diced
- 2 medium zucchini, diced
- 1 cup fresh or frozen lima beans
- 8 ounces sliced mushrooms
- 1 small eggplant, peeled and diced
- 4 cups low-sodium vegetable broth
- 1 tablespoon vinegar (red wine, balsamic or white)
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1 tablespoon Italian seasoning
- 1 teaspoon salt, or to taste
- Ground black pepper, to taste

Press the saute button. Add olive oil to the stainless steel insert. Wait 2 minutes for it to preheat.

Add onion and garlic. Saute, stirring frequently, just until onion is tender (about 5 minutes). Press off/stop button. Add remaining ingredients. Place lid on the cooker and make sure the valve is set to sealing. Press soup and set the timer for 12 minutes.

The cooker will beep and start cooking. It may take about 20 minutes for it to come to pressure before the timer starts. When the cooking is done, allow the pressure to naturally release for about 5 minutes, then quick release any remaining pressure by switching the valve to venting. Carefully remove the lid, away from your face, and set aside. Stir and season with salt and pepper. Let cool a bit before serving.



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Photography by **Mark Gilliland**
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VEGGIE TOMATO SAUCE

Using canned tomatoes rather than fresh in this recipe from Instant Pot makes this recipe a breeze.

- 4 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 medium onion, diced
- 2 small to medium carrots, diced
- 2 celery sticks, diced
- 3 teaspoons salt
- 1 teaspoon thyme leaves
- 2 bay leaves
- 2 small beets (canned or fresh), diced
- 1 cup diced red bell pepper
- 5 mushrooms, diced
- 1/2 of a medium zucchini, diced
- 2 cups fresh spinach leaves
- 5 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 jalapeno red chili (Use half or less if you don't like some heat.)
- 3 cans whole tomatoes in juice
- 1/2 cup water

Turn the multicooker on and press the saute key. Once hot, add the olive oil, onions, carrots and celery and cook for 5 minutes, stirring a few times.

Add the rest of the ingredients. Press cancel to stop the saute process. Stir the contents and pop the lid on top.

Lock the lid, making sure the top valve points to sealing. Set to manual/pressure cook on high pressure for 10 minutes. The cooker will take 5-10 minutes to build up the pressure and the timer will begin.

Once finished, allow the pressure to release naturally for 10 minutes and then move the top valve to venting to quickly release of the remaining pressure.



Open the lid and stir. Using an immersion blender, puree into a thick sauce. You can also do this in a blender or a food processor, but make sure to cool the sauce down slightly and do this in batches. Pour the sauce into containers or mason jars for storage or use right away as a sauce for pasta, pizza, enchiladas, meatballs and more.

INSTANT POT ROAST

This recipe from Instapot is a cooker full of comfort.

- 1 tablespoon canola oil
- 1 (4-4 1/2-pound) boneless chuck roast, excess fat trimmed and cut into 6 pieces
- 1 cup beef stock
- 6-8 jarred pepperoncini salad peppers, plus 1/4 cup liquid from jar
- 1 (1-ounce) package dry onion soup mix
- 2 tablespoons dried parsley flakes
- 1 tablespoon dried chives
- 2 teaspoons dried dill
- 1 1/2 teaspoons onion powder
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 3 tablespoons cornstarch

Set a 6-quart cooker to the high saute setting. Heat oil then add beef and cook until evenly browned, about 2-3 minutes per side. Set aside.

Stir in beef stock, scraping any browned bits from the bottom. Stir in pepperoncini and liquid, onion soup mix, parsley flakes, chives, dill, onion powder, garlic powder and pepper. Return beef to the pot.

Select manual setting, adjust pressure to high, and set timer for 45 minutes. When finished cooking, naturally release pressure according to manufacturer's directions, 20-30 minutes.

Remove beef from the pot, then shred, using two forks.

In a small bowl, whisk together cornstarch and 3 tablespoons cold water and set aside.

Select high saute setting. Bring to a boil, stir in cornstarch mixture and cook, stirring frequently until slightly thickened, about 3-5 minutes. If the mixture is too thick, add more beef stock as needed until desired consistency is reached. Serve immediately. 🍴



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