

CONNECTION



Fabulous fun

The comforts of
Lickskillet Festival

COOPERATIVE
MONTH

FARM STAYS



By SHIRLEY BLOOMFIELD, CEO
NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association

Faster broadband benefits rural America

As the chief executive officer of NTCA—The Rural Broadband Association, I am proud to represent 850 small, independent broadband providers who are offering some of the highest possible broadband speeds to some of the most remote parts of the country. Thanks to NTCA members, many rural Americans have higher internet speeds than I have where I live just outside Washington, D.C.

We currently have a once-in-a-generation opportunity through billions of dollars of funding recently made available by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and other federal programs to bridge the digital divide and bring broadband to those who still lack it. As broadband is deployed thanks to this funding, we must ensure that recipients are using it to provide the best possible services.

Recently, Federal Communications Commission Chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel initiated a process to redefine what it means to have broadband-speed internet, raising the standard. This move continues us down the path needed to give rural residents the internet service they not only need but also deserve as they connect to vital resources like telemedicine, online education, employment opportunities and much more.

A new, more realistic, standard provides a range of benefits, including clarifying the true needs of rural areas and the funding required to serve them.

We have long advocated that, as a nation, we need to aim higher and do better when it comes to setting broadband objectives. We applaud Chairwoman Rosenworcel's efforts. We look forward to continuing to work with the FCC and other agencies to bridge the digital divide. 📶

A bridge to the future

Your communications provider is your link to vital resources

The digital world increasingly weaves its way into our lives, replacing formerly physical resources, tasks and tools. Consider restaurants, for example. For some, scanning a QR code with your phone to view the options online has replaced physical menus.

Rapid expansion of digital resources was a trend before the pandemic, but it's only accelerated in the years since.

In an article this year for Wired — “The Digital Divide Is Coming for You” — Bhaskar Chakravorti, dean of global business for The Fletcher School at Tufts University in Massachusetts, described having broadband and mobile internet as table stakes. Without those services, you don't exist digitally, he says.

Your rural internet service provider is committed to bridging the digital divide between you and vital resources like these:

BANKING



STREAMING TV



HEALTH CARE RECORDS



GOVERNMENT RESOURCES



EVENT TICKETS



WEATHER ALERTS



GAMING



HOME SALES AND PURCHASES



COLLEGE APPLICATIONS



What's the password?

How to build — and remember — strong passwords

It's difficult to do anything online without piling up a few passwords. Using the same one for multiple sites can leave your private information vulnerable to cyberattacks, and devising strong passwords full of random letters and symbols can make them impossible to remember.

A good password doesn't have to be unintelligible, but it does need to be random enough to avoid any clear patterns. Here are a few helpful tips for building passwords that will keep your online accounts secure without forcing you to hit the "Forgot my password" link every time you want to log in.

At least 12 characters — the longer your password, the more difficult it will be to crack. In general, you should create passwords with a minimum of 12 to 14 characters. But more is always better.

Change it up — using a mix of different characters like numbers, symbols, capital and lowercase letters makes your passwords stronger.

Avoid full words — using your favorite team's name as a password

doesn't cut it anymore. In fact, you should avoid using any full words you might find in the dictionary. That goes for any common phrases, too.

Diceware — one exception to the above rule is the Diceware method. By stringing truly random words together, you can build a secure passphrase that is easier to remember than a jumble of letters and numbers. To help with this process, search for the Diceware Password Generator. It can randomly select between two and eight words to build your passphrase.

Avoid obvious substitutions — "Password" doesn't become stronger if you change it to "P@ssword." Avoid substituting obvious symbols for letters. If it has occurred to you, it has probably occurred to a hacker.

Go to the manager — if you're having trouble keeping track of all your logins, a password manager can help. Programs like Dashlane, LastPass and Keeper manage your passwords across numerous sites and devices, making it easier to avoid repeats. All you need to remember is one strong password, and you're set. 🗂️



Tired of passwords?

Apple may have the answer

At its Worldwide Developers Conference earlier this year, Apple demonstrated a new "passkeys" feature that may spell the end for passwords.

Rather than inputting a password for every site you visit, passkeys would use a biometric sign-in like the Touch ID or Face ID that currently exists on iPhones and iPads. Websites and apps on non-Apple devices would provide a QR code that sends authentication to the user's phone or tablet.

Just a month earlier, Apple joined with Google and Microsoft to support the development of new passwordless logins on both mobile and desktop devices. So, even if passkeys don't crack the code, you may not need to juggle passwords for much longer.

The power of a cooperative

Your voice guides our mission

When it comes to a for-profit business, some would say a company is what it sells. The nature of the product defines the culture, the business's interactions with customers and how it spreads its message. For instance, a manufacturer with a production plant creating physical goods is fundamentally different than a local real estate agency or medical facility.



KELLY ALLISON
General Manager

The day-to-day realities of the many job roles and policies needed to make that product possible can shape how a business operates, how consumers view it and even how employees view themselves. For Colorado Valley Communications, there's no doubt about our products or the expertise needed to make them possible. Simply put, we know rural communications better than anyone. Our roots are in telephone networks. After all, not that long ago, copper wires strung from pole to pole throughout our area were our primary ties to the world. Fortunately, we've moved well past those days, and we're now far more than a telephone company.

Today, we're a true communications hub using fast internet service to link you to the information you need. Our systems keep pace with the latest innovations to create the best experience for you. Now, telephone services are only a single part of that product mix — one component of the complex, powerful and reliable infrastructure we've created to link our community to all the resources now at our fingertips. Streaming television and music. Telemedicine and online learning. Movies and social media. These are all modern necessities, and we make it possible for you to connect to them.

Our technical experts have the skills to maintain and support the latest systems. We train our staff to not only anticipate the questions you may have about your services, but also to have the knowledge to provide clear answers.

At a very basic level, the services we provide do define CVCTX — at least in part. You see, we're more than simply a communications company. We are also part of a national community of organizations responsible for bringing services to areas larger national companies would not serve.

Unlike businesses that put profit or stock values above all else, cooperatives proudly go a different direction. CVCTX is member-owned, and we put your needs and the needs of the communities we serve first.

Does that mean we're not worried about income? Of course not. We're vigilant stewards of the cooperative's finances. In a world of escalating costs and ever-changing technology, that's no small task.

As a cooperative, though, we're also governed by a board of directors elected by our members. Other communications companies can't say the same, particularly the large national providers. We are part of the community, devoted to making life here better for everyone. In fact, that's a central principle of every cooperative — concern for the community.

We support local organizations and businesses through donations, scholarships and more. The members of our team live here, shop here and enjoy our rural way of life just as you do.

Together we've created CVCTX, and we couldn't be prouder to serve you, our friends, our family, our neighbors and our cooperative members. Thank you. 📞



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Like us on Facebook

Follow us on Instagram



Sign up online

To sign up for fiber, view planned construction areas and learn more about the fiber project, visit cvctx.com.

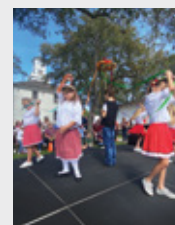
Customers in several parts of our service area can access fiber to the home, while expansion for access is in the works for other locations.

For more information on Colorado Valley's service area, visit cvctx.com/maps. The area served by the Cooperative can be seen in the link for Colorado Valley Exchanges. Fiber availability outside the Cooperative service area can be seen under the Colorado Valley Communications header.

Produced for CVCTX by:



On the Cover:



Young Czech dancers from a local school are among the many crowd-pleasing performers at Lickskillet Days in Fayetteville. See story Page 8.

Photo courtesy of Jerry and Joan Herring.



GET ALERTS ON OUTAGES

Internet interruptions have several causes. When they occur, our team is dedicated to resolving the issue. Sign up for Colorado Valley Communications Customer Alert Information and receive timely notifications about the nature of the outage.

Customers who sign up for alerts will receive updates they can use to plan ahead when routine maintenance projects will temporarily affect their internet service.

The CVCTX team diligently works to minimize the effects of routine maintenance on the network, though downtime is sometimes required.

CVCTX will also send notification emails when service is disrupted for other reasons, such as weather, power outages and fiber cuts. Customers who experience problems with their service not explained by a notification can call our 24/7 technical support line at 877-452-9035.

For more information, or to sign up for customer alert emails, visit cvctx.com/alerts.

OCTOBER IS CYBERSECURITY AWARENESS MONTH



As your internet provider, Colorado Valley Communications wants to raise awareness about the importance of protecting your personal information while you're online. Cybersecurity is a vital practice to combat phishing and social engineering attacks. Here are a handful of tips to implement:

- **Slow down** — Everyone is busy these days, but don't rush through clicking on unknown emails, and think twice before clicking unfamiliar links.
- **Keep software up to date** — Software companies frequently update their products once a vulnerability is found. Setting devices to automatically update ensures you have the latest, and most secure, version.
- **Ditch duplicated passwords** — Consider using a password manager to create unique passwords that help protect your data.
- **Add antivirus software** — To protect against malware and other email attacks, install antivirus programs and firewalls to defend against compromised web-sites and online threats.
- **Multifactor authentication** — Take this extra step in case a password could be compromised.



SAFE DOCUMENT DISPOSAL

October is National Cooperative Month, and in the spirit of caring for our community, Fayette Electric Cooperative and Colorado Valley Communications are teaming up for our annual Shred Day.

Bring all of those old documents you no longer need, and we'll have those professionally shredded on-site.

FRIDAY, OCT. 7

- 10 a.m. to noon at Fayette Electric Cooperative
- 12:30 to 2:30 p.m. at Colorado Valley Communications

For more information, visit cvctx.com or fayette.coop.

Unwind THIS WEEKEND

Colorado Valley Communications wishes you a relaxing **Labor Day weekend**. In recognition of the holiday, our **offices will be closed on Monday, Sept. 5.**



A night *on the* farm

Agritourism is booming
deep in the heart of Texas

Story by ANNE BRALY

In the Lone Star State, where vistas go on for miles unending and ranches extend into the sunset, there may be no better place to unwind and get away than a farm or ranch. Farm stays are a big thing these days with agritourism now an alternative to big theme parks and resorts.

It's a win-win for both guests and farmers. For guests, it gives them a few days off the beaten path.

"It's a way for farmers to show the inner workings of their farms, what it takes to grow food for their tables, who we are and the stories we hold. Also, it's nice to welcome city dwellers to our farm to bridge a growing urban-rural divide and offer them our countrysides for relaxation, calm, play and connection," says Scottie Jones, a farmer and founder of the U.S. Farm Stay Association.

And for small farmers, it's a way to make much-needed money for new equipment and for upkeep and repairs on old farm equipment and other needs. "In the last decade, the concept of hosting guests on one's farm has risen to the surface, especially as booking sites such as Airbnb and VRBO have made the daunting task of taking reservations much more easy to handle," Scottie says.

So if you're after a chance to unplug, here are some Texas farmers opening their gates to overnight guests.



BlissWood Bed & Breakfast Ranch Cat Spring, Texas

For animal lovers, this 350-acre ranch on the edge of Texas Hill Country is the place to go with its herds of bison, donkeys and antelopes.

"People have learned the connection to nature and animals is so important to our well-being," says owner Carol Davis.

Carol bought the ranch 27 years ago and two years later opened it to overnight guests who come from larger cities around the state, as well as out-of-state travelers and some international guests looking to disengage from everyday life.

"I wanted to share this lovely place with others who are frazzled and stressed out in the city, offering a place to slow down and relax a bit," she says.

Overnight accommodations include romantic cabins for the two of you with private hot tubs. Or there are two-bedroom cabins perfect for a small family and larger houses that will sleep up to 10 people. You can also "rough it" in a safari tent beneath the massive oaks complete with luxury appointments and a private bathroom. Two RVs located around the show barn with views of the lake offer a different kind of glamping experience.

Rooms come stocked with



Photos contributed by BlissWood



Left: Accommodations at BlissWood Bed & Breakfast Ranch, Cat Spring, Texas, include romantic cabins for two and houses that can sleep 10.

Right: BlissWood guests can stay in a log cabin.

Inset: The rustic charm of the BlissWood Bed & Breakfast Ranch has attracted visitors for about 25 years.

Below: The Cottages at Boldheart Farms, Dale, Texas, include one in the heart of the garden.



Photo contributed by Boldheart Farms

ready-to-eat breakfast fare — continental breakfasts are included in your stay — and special dining packages with things like pizza, beer and popcorn. Picnics on the ranch or chocolate-covered strawberries with champagne can be arranged.

More information: blisswood.net

Cottages at Boldheart Farms Dale, Texas

When was the last time you woke up to the scent of jasmine climbing the garden gate and the sounds of Arabian horses grazing peacefully in the nearby pastures? It's a scene that puts your soul in the right place.

There are two one-bedroom metal cottages — one in the garden, the other by the pond. Both have front porches where guests can hang out and read, write or even sleep. Owner Maggie Nicol opened the farm to guests with husband, Eric, just two years ago.

Picnic by the pond, learn to drive a tractor or tiptoe through the bluebonnets on a sunny spring afternoon.

The cottages offer comfortable bedding, air conditioning, kitchens and TVs, if you must. Guests can also enjoy a day on the farm with its ducks, hens, herbs, tomatoes and manicured gardens. A made-from-scratch breakfast is included in your stay each morning.

"I work diligently to give each guest a wonderful experience," Maggie says.

More information:
thecottagesatboldheartfarms.com

Scurlock Farms Georgetown, Texas

Frontage on the San Gabriel River turns the average farm stay into an adventure in the wilds of Texas Hill Country. Wildlife abounds on this 172-acre farm with good fishing, 9 miles of hiking and biking trails, or relaxation with a good book beneath

centuries-old majestic oaks.

Guests can interact with cattle, goats and horses or head into nearby Georgetown for shopping, art galleries or a meal at one of several charming restaurants in the nearby village of Salado.

Overnights are spent in one of two homes owners Sheron and Dan Scurlock have made sure will provide comfort for guests. One home has two luxurious king suites, and another is a one-bedroom house, formerly Sheron's mother's art studio. Kitchens come stocked with food basics and condiments.

Sheron and Dan have turned their farm into the perfect getaway for romance, work, vacation — whatever kind of escape you need.

More information: scurlockfarms.com

CZECH US

Fayetteville's favorite festival returns

Story by JAMIE BIESIADA

With a population around 250 and a single town square that time has forgotten, Fayetteville, Texas, is, indisputably, a poster child for small-town America. And what would a small town be without an annual festival, providing locals and visitors alike a chance to get together on the square, mingle and enjoy everything from dancing to food and a parade?

In Fayetteville, that's the Annual Licksillet Days Festival, returning this year

all weekend long — not just for these events, but to eat in the restaurants, shop in our stores downtown and just enjoy what we have to offer," says Sandra Borne, the chamber's president.

The term "licksillet" has different definitions around the U.S., but in Fayetteville, it references the old tale about food so good that the last person in from working the fields would lick the skillet just to get a taste, according to Pat Johnson, a chamber member who has helped

toric photograph and cleverly integrating skillets into the imagery (she also designs the tour T-shirts of musician Lyle Lovett, whom she's known since high school). For Licksillet one year, she based the poster off a historic photo of women standing in front of the Fayetteville Courthouse. She placed a skillet in each of their hands.

The festival celebrates the area's Czech heritage, which harkens back to the 1800s when a number of German and Czech immigrants made Texas their home. The Czech Singers, a local group that dresses in traditional garb, will contribute to the festivities with a performance this year. They have presented at Licksillet Days since the event's beginning.

This year, Licksillet Days will begin on Saturday, Oct. 15, at 7 p.m. with live music in the town square. Food and drinks will be available. The festival continues the following day starting with a parade at 11 a.m., followed by a barbecue dinner in the square, drinks, a country store, children's activities, and silent and live auctions.

Jerry Herring, a past president of the chamber, says the parade is a particularly fun part of the event. It features everything from tractors to floats to classic cars and more. "The way it works out here is if you're in other people's parades, they come and be in your parade," Jerry says. "So other little towns participate."

Once the parade is over, the barbecue meal begins. Jerry says he expects up to 450 people will enjoy dinner on the square. Last year, dinners completely sold out, even though Licksillet Days had experienced a pause the year prior due to



The Czech Singers & Dancers entertain the crowd with their traditional songs and attire.

Photography by Jerry and Joan Herring

on Saturday, Oct. 15, and Sunday, Oct. 16. The event, which the Greater Fayetteville Chamber of Commerce runs, is well into its fourth decade of existence. Like just about everything, the festival was put on hold in 2020 due to the pandemic, but after a successful event last year, Licksillet Days will return full force in 2022.

"Especially now that we're really back up and running full speed ahead since COVID, we really hope that people will come into town and stick around

organize Licksillet Days for years.

Before the event became Licksillet Days in 1976, it was called Harvest Fest. The chamber decided to rename it, and Pat, a visual artist with a ceramic studio in Fayetteville, got to work designing its poster. "It's just a great tradition, and I'm so pleased that we're still doing it and the chamber has stayed active," Pat says. "We just have a good community."

Pat has designed the event's poster every year, usually basing it off a his-

OUT



The food from vendors like Peters BBQ is a big draw for locals and visitors alike.

the pandemic. “It was a beautiful day, and everybody just needed to get together, so it was a real success,” Pat says.

Live and silent auctions will help the chamber raise money. Proceeds go to community projects or to help the chamber in its mission of assisting local businesses. The country store features local goods like honey, pickled okra, breads and cookies, she says. Also returning this year will be the Licksillet contest, a homage to the festival’s name. Attendees — mostly children — will compete to see who can lick whipped cream out of a cast-iron skillet the fastest, Pat says.

The festival offers not just entertainment, food and auction items, but a chance for friends to reconnect. Many groups of school friends even time their reunions

around the event, according to Pat. “It’s just a great time to meet and greet all their friends and family,” says Jerry.

The festival also offers visitors a chance to experience more of Fayetteville itself. “Just the fact that we have a festival on the square to celebrate the heritage — it’s a very close community,” Sandra says. “It’s just a fun place to go and celebrate the heritage, and see one another and hang out with one another, enjoy great music and food. It’s just a fun community event.”

Licksillet Days takes place in the town square, nestled between West Main Street and West Fayette Street.

The square’s centerpiece is the historic Fayetteville Courthouse. According to the chamber, the two-story building went up in 1880. Flanking it are a bandstand from 1932 and the town’s four-faced clock, which went in in 1934 before the Texas Centennial. “The slogan for the town is ‘The way Texas used to be,’ and it’s very much like that,” Jerry says. “It’s just a very quiet little rural town with one pristine, little square.”

Sandra hopes locals and visitors alike enjoy the festival and patronize local businesses and restaurants, which will be open for business during the event. Shoppers can enjoy several art galleries and antique and home design stores, among other merchants. For the hungry, Orsak’s Cafe, Joe’s Place and the Wine Bar at the Grand Fayette Hotel will be ready with food and drink.

“For a tiny town,” Sandra says, “we have a lot going on. 🍷

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MARK YOUR CALENDAR

SATURDAY, OCT. 15

7 p.m. — live music in the town square, food and drinks available

SUNDAY, OCT. 16

11 a.m. — parade, immediately followed by a barbecue meal, drinks, activities, auctions and more, all centered around the town square



The Greater Fayetteville Chamber of Commerce float carries the Licksillet Queen and her court.

Find your wavelength

Podcasts let you tune in to your passions



Podcasts have seen an explosion in popularity in recent years, thanks to their variety and the connections hosts forge with their listeners. If you've never listened to a podcast before, you can think of them like prerecorded radio shows on your favorite topics.

But, because listeners can download podcasts to a phone or computer and play them at any time, audiences can go as deep or as light as they want on a given topic. Podcasts also don't require the full attention video does, meaning you can drive to work, answer emails or cook dinner — all while continuing to enjoy your favorite programming.

In the early days of podcasting, following your favorite show meant navigating a technological obstacle course of downloads and synced devices. Today, the process is as easy as downloading an app.

Apps like Apple Podcasts and Stitcher make it easy to search thousands of the latest podcasts and subscribe to your

favorites for free. If you have the Spotify app, you're already set. Just go to the Search tab and choose "Podcasts & Shows" to start adding new discoveries to your list.

Not sure where to start? Here are a few of our favorites to get you going:

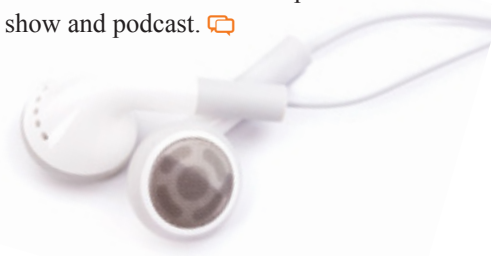
► **"Criminal"** — One of the first true crime hits, even before "Serial" hit the scene, "Criminal" tells the "stories of people who've done wrong, been wronged, or gotten caught somewhere in the middle." Going beyond tales of murder, it takes a critical look at the impact of crime on its victims and perpetrators.

► **"This American Life"** — "This American Life" has been on the air since 1995, so there are plenty of stories to catch up on. Described as little movies for radio, each episode is also a little different. But they all tell the true, entertaining and often surprising stories of the people and events shaping our American lives.

► **"The Big Picture"** — Struggling to keep up with the latest movie releases? Hosts Sean Fennessey and Amanda Dobbins run down all the movies you need to see while also discussing old favorites and interviewing the people behind them twice a week.

► **"Lore"** — Truth is scarier than fiction in this documentary podcast series that explores the dark corners of history. Gather around the audio campfire to listen in on true historical tales, legends and folklore biweekly.

► **"Sound Opinions"** — Chicago music critics Jim DeRogatis and Greg Kot know everyone's a critic. Each week, they get together to discuss music's greats, talk shop with artists and share their opinions on the latest releases on this independent radio show and podcast. 📻





The newest spectator sport

Streaming platforms like Twitch let gamers build massive followings

Gamers have thriving online communities, including platforms like Twitch, that give millions of fans from around the world a place to share their knowledge and experience, while also providing countless hours of entertainment.

WHY WATCH INSTEAD OF PLAY?

Staying up to date with the latest and greatest video games can be expensive and time consuming. Sometimes game descriptions and reviews aren't enough — it's better to see a game in action. Avid gamers can check out a Twitch stream to see if a game is right for them, gain insight into a game's features, and find updates and creative fixes to problems. Many people subscribe to Twitch channels just for the entertainment value.

It's also a way to engage with others in the gaming community. Live broadcasts

feature an interactive chat where viewers can talk with the streamer and other viewers. These connections with like-minded people and interesting personalities keep people interested and coming back for more.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF STREAMING YOUR GAMING?

There are many incentives for live-streamers. The revenue potential can be sky high — some streamers have built careers, earning millions and striking deals with game publishers to get exclusive early access to the newest games.

The higher a streaming channel's subscriber count, the more opportunities the streamer has for exclusive marketing partnerships. Viewers can also donate to the channel during the broadcast. The biggest Twitch streamers get most of their income from paid subscription fees. 💬

While the Twitch website and app are still the most popular, other platforms have sprouted up as well.

YouTube

YouTube's gaming section, youtube.com/gaming, has functions similar to Twitch, and it's gaining popularity with amateur streamers because its optimized search engine makes it easier for a beginner's content to get noticed.

The audience is shared with YouTube, so the potential pool of viewers is vastly greater than on Twitch. For streamers, YouTube has greater potential for earnings from advertisements.

Facebook Gaming

Facebook Gaming is growing as existing Facebook users check out the video gaming hub that can be easily accessed through the main social media site or FB.gg.

There's also a Facebook Gaming app enthusiasts can download to discover content, connect with other gamers and casually play mobile games. Like the other popular streaming platforms, Facebook allows users easy access to uploads from their favorite streamers. But, like its main site, Facebook Gaming users can join groups and like topics to tailor their timelines to their specific interests.





SERVING T TOGETHER

Story by PATRICK SMITH

It's hard to imagine modern life without electricity or telecommunication services. It would be a life without internet, television, smartphones, air conditioning, washing machines, lights, refrigerators and so much more.

Without the hard work of locals across rural Texas 85 years ago, Fayette Electric Cooperative wouldn't exist. The same is true for the work of farmers 74 years ago, when they traveled door to door, raising money to start Colorado Valley Telephone Cooperative, also known today as Colorado Valley Communications.

They are two businesses that differ from many others. They are both defined and guided by the last word in their name: "cooperative." Cooperatives aren't out to create the largest possible profits or please Wall Street investors.

Celebrating Cooperative Month each October, co-ops across the United States raise awareness of a trusted, proven way to do business and build communities. And for those that are cooperative members of FEC or Colorado Valley Telephone Cooperative, you're more than a customer — you're part owner — and you help FEC and CVTC fill a vital need in the community.

"We're not in it for the money," says Tracy Denton, FEC marketing and training coordinator. "We work to keep costs down and educate our members on how they can keep their costs down. We live and work in the same community as our members and work to provide for our community."

TIMES HAVE CHANGED

When the first poles went up and electricity ran from one farm to another, the innovation provided the ability to stop reading by candlelight and kerosene lamps. A few years later, telephone party lines began bringing together community members who were miles apart so they could connect on the day's events. "Today, an average residential customer uses about 1,100 kilowatt-hours of electricity," says Gary Nietsche, FEC general manager and 41-year employee. "Many, many years ago, members used to get 25 kWh for \$5 each month. It was a standard consumer charge at the time. People would watch the meter, and when it got to 24 kWh, they'd shut the power off until the next month. It's much different today. In fact, it wasn't uncommon to receive postcards from members to notify us their power was out. They'd write and ask us to stop by their farm whenever we had a crew in the area. Now, if the power's out, we immediately get hundreds of calls."

The work to connect people in rural areas decades ago and today is a testament to the importance of cooperatives. "We exist because big companies didn't want to go into rural areas," says Kelly Allison, CVTC general manager. "Our mission is to provide the best service we can for our customers — the big guys don't see it that

way, especially out in rural areas where it's very expensive to provide service."

Nietsche adds, "Big providers didn't think rural people would use enough power to cover the cost of the lines because it's such a long distance to the small farms. I can't imagine they'd say that. People who live in rural areas need power just like everyone else."



Fayette Electric Cooperative lineman Steven Kallus.

QUALITY SERVICES TODAY, AND EVERY DAY

Much like how electricity and telephones quickly became irreplaceable in our lives, the same holds true for CVTC's work to bring fast broadband internet and fiber services to the community. "All our infrastructure is tied together with fiber," Allison says. "We've been in fiber expansion mode to the end user since 2016, deploying fiber to get a robust broadband service to customers."

While building a new fiber network is no easy task, it also comes with many rewards.

THE COMMUNITY

CVTC and FEC celebrate Cooperative Month by giving back to members

One of which is NTCA—The Rural Broadband Association’s recognition of CVTC as a Smart Rural Community. To earn the SRC designation, providers must offer 100 Mbps broadband to 50% or more of their service area and demonstrate the ways this cutting-edge technology is improving their communities.

“From distance learning to manufacturing, fiber is an economic engine that helps drive the economy in the areas we serve,” Allison says. “In fact, during the COVID-19 pandemic, many people decided to leave cities and move into rural areas. They were surprised to find they could get fiber in rural Fayette, Lavaca and Colorado counties. Now, they can put their kids in a smaller school district, work remotely and have a better quality of life than they did in the city.”

Supplying power for fiber services is a mix of coal, natural gas, wind and solar energy. “You need all those services to make sure you can provide power 24/7/365,” says Nietzsche. “You can’t live without it.”

FULFILLING A COMMUNITY NEED

As a unique benefit for cooperative members, profits don’t go to investors. Instead, they go back into the cooperative as investments, or, after growing over time, they return to members as capital credits. “Employees care about the members,” says Nietzsche. “We want to make sure members have the services they need. They’re our boss. We want them to be served properly with the best services we can provide.”

Capital credits and the care of members



CVCTX General Manager Kelly Allison and Assistant General Manager Pat Zigal.

speaks to how cooperatives are an example of business done right. Not chasing profits and not in competition with one another, but working in a trusted, proven way to do business, cooperatives fulfill a vital community need. “We’re very fortunate to have such a good partnership with FEC,” Allison says. “We work extremely well together, and we’re very thankful we have the strong relationship we do. It’s a pleasure to work together.”

GET READY FOR SHRED DAY

To help celebrate cooperative month, FEC and CVTC will join together to once again host Shred Day on Oct. 7. Each cooperative will have a professional document shredding service on-site. The truck will visit FEC from 10:00 a.m. to noon and CVTC from 12:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.

Document shredding of the first three boxes for members is free. The fourth box or more requires a donation of \$10 per box, which is donated to a local charity.

Visit cvctx.com or fayette.coop for more details. 🗑️

Fayette Electric Cooperative employee Justin Whited helps PROSHRED’s Terry McCoy with another bin of documents.



It's time to go LOW AND SLOW



Cooking ribs at a low temperature for a long time tenderizes the meat and adds delightful flavor.

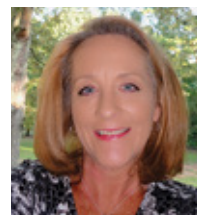
The aroma of smoke wafting through the air as meat slowly cooks goes hand in hand with a lazy summer afternoon. Smoking is not the same as grilling. There's a science to it that scares off some cooks, but break it down step by step, and you can become quite adept at making tender briskets and fall-off-the-bone ribs.

Smoking, more commonly known as barbecuing, takes time and patience. Defined simply, the technique takes a tough piece of meat and cooks it slowly over indirect heat for extended periods — often 12 to 16 hours and sometimes even more — while the smoke flavors the meat and gives it its mouthwatering flavor and texture. Any expert will tell you that the key to the best barbecue — that kind that wins competitions — is cooking it low and slow.

Cooking over high heat tends to dry the meat out very quickly. Any moisture within the meat is essentially blasted out, leaving it tough, dry and difficult to chew. Smoking meat slowly at a low temperature, on the other hand, keeps the moisture from evaporating too quickly, allowing you to achieve the perfect combination of tenderness and juiciness.

Here are two recipes that are good for beginners.

The 3-2-1 rib recipe is one many home smokers use. This method is easy and generally foolproof, creating ribs that are so tender you can pull the meat off the bone with your fingers. And pork butt is basically a no-brainer. Just rub it down with your favorite blend of seasonings or use the recipe that follows. Place it on the smoker and within just a few hours, you'll have tender pork perfect for sandwiches. Add a side of beans and some potato salad, and you'll have the makings of a beautiful, tasty summer dinner.



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

Photography by MARK GILLILAND | Food Styling by RHONDA GILLILAND

3-2-1 RIBS METHOD

1 rack of ribs
Your favorite rub
Your favorite barbecue sauce

STEP THREE:

Liberal­ly coat the ribs with rub and allow them to “marinate” while you bring the smoker to 225 F. Place the ribs in the smoker, and add whatever wood chunks you want — cherry or hickory are popular. Smoke the ribs for 3 hours, maintaining the 225 F temperature. If you are smoking thinner back ribs, you may want to smoke them for just 2 hours. Any longer, and you may find the ribs dry out too much.

STEP TWO:

The second stage is when the

meat tenderizes. Remove the ribs from the smoker and wrap them tightly in foil. This steams the meat and the result is tender, juicy ribs. Just before closing each rack of ribs in the foil, put a little bit of beer or apple juice in with the ribs. This helps the steaming process. Put the ribs, wrapped in foil, back in the smoker for 2 hours at 225 degrees.

STEP ONE:

This final stage is when you sauce the ribs. Use your favorite barbecue sauce to liberal­ly coat the ribs on both sides before placing them back in the smoker for a final hour. The result should be a rack of ribs you'll never forget.



SMOKED BUTT

Smoked pork butt is a good one for beginners. The meat is not expensive, and the result is a mouthful of summer.

- 1 (7-8 pound) bone-in pork butt
- Olive oil
- Water

Dry rub:

- 1/4 cup light brown sugar packed
- 2 tablespoons black pepper, coarsely ground
- 2 tablespoons kosher salt
- 1 tablespoon paprika
- 1 tablespoon garlic powder
- 1 tablespoon dried minced onions
- 1 teaspoon cayenne pepper

Spritz:

- 1/4 cup apple juice
- 1/4 cup apple cider vinegar

Prepare the smoker: Fill the hopper of your smoker with wood pellets, applewood, hickory, pecan or cherry. Start the smoker on the smoke setting for 5 to 10 minutes. Increase heat to 250 F.

Fill a small baking dish with water and set aside.

Prepare the pork butt: Place all dry rub ingredients in a small bowl and stir with a fork to combine. Place pork butt on a baking sheet and rub the entire butt with olive oil. Sprinkle the seasonings over it and rub them in, covering every bit of the butt.

Place the baking dish filled with water on the grate on one side of the smoker.

Fill a small spray bottle with the apple juice and apple cider vinegar and set aside.

Place pork shoulder on the grate and close the lid. Keep the smoker temperature around 250 to 275 F while smoking during these first several hours. Smoke for approximately 4 hours, spritzing with the spray bottle every hour.

Check the internal temperature of the pork using a meat thermometer. By this time, the pork should be at least 145 F.

Completely spritz the pork one last time and carefully wrap it in aluminum foil. Place pork back into the smoker and lower temperature to 225 F. Smoke pork about



A perfectly cooked pork butt is a great start to a summer sandwich.

another 4 hours, but do not spritz during this stage of cooking.

Check the internal temperature of the pork shoulder using a meat thermometer. You're looking for your pork shoulder to be about 200 F. Anywhere from 195 to 205 F is a good range. Remove pork from the smoker and let rest for at least 20 minutes but up to 2 hours. Shred or chop as desired. 🍴



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