

CONNECTION



Texas quilt museum

Part of community's fabric

TASTY
TRADITION

ADVENTUROUS
FUN



By SHIRLEY BLOOMFIELD, CEO
NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association

Fresh opportunities

New funding supports rural broadband

Closing the digital divide is an ongoing effort and not a one-time mission. Every month the diligent work of NTCA members helps to bridge these gaps. Even in the most remote areas, telcos are building world-class broadband networks and enabling critical, life-altering technologies and applications.

Our leaders here in Washington, D.C., continue to notice the gains being made in communities like yours. While the 118th Congress is still getting its feet under it, so to speak, we are seeing interest in several broadband-related bills that could help our members and their customers, and federal agencies continue to implement and execute on various broadband funding programs.

As community-based providers with a long history of service and successful performance, telcos are in a good position to vie for critical financial support for broadband deployment, such as the \$42.5 billion Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment Program. This year, we expect the National Telecommunications and Information Administration to announce allocation of this money to the states and U.S. territories, and, eventually, grants could be given out to providers like yours to serve even more people.

In anticipation of these distributions, we spent much of 2022 on Capitol Hill and with local, state and federal agencies to urge them to work closely with NTCA members. We also brought key decision-makers to NTCA meetings, conferences and webinars, and we provided members-only tools to help position telcos. 📞

Fiber internet

It makes a difference



Fiber internet makes essential tools and services possible: commerce, education, entertainment, personal communication and more.

Here are a few examples, highlighted by the Fiber Broadband Association, offering a detailed look at how fiber networks make a difference:



1 FASTER INTERNET: Creating a network capable of keeping up with growing consumer demand for videos, music streaming and online gaming is no easy task. Fiber, however, consistently outpaces the fastest download and upload speeds of older technologies like cable, DSL and wireless.



2 INCREASED HOME VALUES: Studies have shown that fast, reliable broadband is rated as the single most important amenity for rented or multifamily homes. Access to fiber broadband increased rental and property values by as much as 8%.



3 FIBER NETWORKS HELP LOCAL ECONOMIES: There's growing evidence fiber connectivity not only encourages businesses to stay in their locations but also helps them grow and become more productive. It even attracts new businesses, particularly in high-tech industries.



4 SUSTAINABLE: The glass that makes fiber work so well is made from sand, which is plentiful and requires less energy and creates less pollution to acquire than older technologies.

This could have been an email

How digital literacy is shaping communication in the workplace

Story by DREW WOOLLEY



Clear communication can be a challenge at the best of times. But particularly for remote workers relying on digital chat and email tools, it's never been easier for wires to get crossed, even during simple exchanges.

ALWAYS ONLINE

In some cases, the generation gap can rear its head even before the first word has been typed or spoken. While baby boomers and members of Generation X tend to prefer doing business face-to-face or over the phone, younger generations are much more digitally inclined.

According to research from Purdue University, both millennials and Generation Z or Zoomers — people born between the mid-1990s and about 2010 — tend to prefer communicating by email, instant message, text and social media. Having grown up with access to high-speed internet, Zoomers expect a rapid response to messages, based on a survey by marketing company LeadSquared.

THANKS.

It's no secret periods at the end of lone sentences are falling by the wayside in texts, chats and social media. For some, it's a punctuational pet peeve. But for younger colleagues, the reappearance of that little dot can carry extra meaning.

For example, while some millennials and older generations might put a period after a short message like "Thanks" or "Good job," for Gen Z, that hard stop can imply coldness or sarcasm. Younger professionals are more likely to use exclamation points to express enthusiasm. So don't worry, they aren't yelling at you.

TBH, IDK

For those who came of age texting before phones could predict what you're trying to type, quick abbreviations for common phrases were a must. BTW (by the way), TBH (to be honest), IMO (in my opinion), JK (just kidding) and IDK (I don't know) are just a few examples.

While many of these abbreviations are now part of the internet's vocabulary, they can be a stumbling block for anyone who didn't grow up seeing them daily. When clarity is a priority, consider taking the extra few seconds to spell it out. 🗨️

A picture's worth a thousand words

As platforms like Slack and Microsoft Teams become more popular, emoji are rapidly invading work chats. Many are self-explanatory and can help add some extra expression to a message. Others can be confusing or misinterpreted. So be sure you know what message you're sending.



While many people use the **smile emoji** to denote, well, a smile, some younger professionals interpret it more ironically. That may seem confusing, but just ask yourself if there's any warmth in that smile's cold, dead eyes.



By and large, the **thumbs up** should be saved as a response to a clear yes or no question, or to acknowledge that you've seen a comment that doesn't require a longer reply. Offering a thumbs up in conversations that are any more nuanced could cause confusion about whether any follow-up is needed or suggest you aren't giving the exchange your full attention.



This one is just a public service announcement. Despite — or maybe because — the **crying laughing emoji** is the world's most popular, according to Adobe, Gen Z has officially dubbed it cliché and uncool. If you're looking to stay up on the trends, consider changing things up with the skull emoji to let them know their joke really killed.

Working hard

Fast internet connects rural communities to new opportunities

One thing I very much appreciate about leading CVCTX is that we're here to support the communities we serve as powerfully and in as many ways as we can. One of the best examples of this is our fast and reliable internet network, which opens opportunities for individuals, businesses, government and just about anyone who uses it.



KELLY ALLISON
General Manager

This potential to help others is particularly on my mind after seeing a report that there were about 10 million job openings late last year across the nation. Now, those numbers do fluctuate, but I think it's fair to say we're in a time when opportunity exists — you just must be able to take advantage.

Fortunately, our fast internet service can be the key needed to unlock the world of work-from-home jobs, which can range from positions with call centers and medical records companies to careers in technology or marketing. Really, that's just scratching the surface. No matter the industry, the innovative communications services provided by CVCTX give you the opportunity to pursue these jobs.

Internet networks like ours can tie small towns and remote areas to national employers and well-paying professions. But having the resources and skills needed to do these jobs is just the beginning. After all, you still must land that new job.

The world of employment has changed rapidly in recent years, and tapping into all the opportunities requires fast internet and some new perspective. Really, it's a fascinating landscape.

Consider that many companies and job recruitment sites now use artificial intelligence to weed through resumes, screening them so a person only sees those who make the cut. It's something that changes how you think about applying for a job. For instance, a CNBC article suggested listing job titles in reverse-chronological order, because the machine-based screening systems appreciate clearly structured information. Similarly, when writing a bulleted list of work experience, the first one should tie into a specific job requirement.

Also, internet-based companies like Indeed, Glassdoor and Monster connect job seekers with employers. For job seekers, these companies can provide not only daily updates of potential jobs but also offer tips for succeeding in a competitive job market.

Simply, the rules of the employment game have changed and, fortunately, you have the resources to change with them. Our communications services can help sites like Indeed come to life. These companies provide daily updates on new jobs, email blasts, tips and more.

Then, when you make a connection with a potential new employer, fast internet service can add even more of a polish. When remote jobs are on the table, videoconference interviews are common. Thankfully, fast, reliable internet can create lag-free, professional connections that put you and your abilities in the best possible light.

If all of this seems like a challenge to navigate, this same internet network can help with that, too. YouTube has plenty of examples of experts offering advice. Meanwhile, professional social media sites like LinkedIn can help you boost your profile with potential employers.

All the resources and opportunities are made possible by fast internet service by CVCTX, and we're committed to always providing you with the services needed to succeed. ☑

Connection is a bimonthly newsletter published by CVCTX, ©2023. It is distributed without charge to all customers of the Cooperative.



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Sign up online

To sign up for service, to increase your bandwidth or to let us know where to build out our fiber network next, 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:



The Texas Quilt Museum was created to share women's history in quilting and handcrafted artwork.

Photography submitted by Terry Hagerty

See Story on Page 8

ATTENTION, HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS!

Colorado Valley Telephone Cooperative will be awarding \$5,000 scholarships to graduating seniors from local high schools.

To be eligible to receive the scholarship, students must live in a household that receives telephone service from the cooperative. For all the details, and to get an application, go to cvctx.com/scholarships. Applications must be received by **APRIL 3**.

Colorado Valley is proud to be an active member of the communities it serves and welcomes this opportunity to invest in the future of those communities by supporting higher education.



ALWAYS CALL BEFORE YOU DIG



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

Common Ground Alliance

stay informed

Wondering why your internet is down? If you sign up for Colorado Valley Communication's Customer Alert Information emails, the answer could be waiting for you in your inbox.

Customers who sign up to receive the email notifications are informed in advance of routine scheduled maintenance that will temporarily affect their internet service. While CVCTX takes great care to minimize the effects of routine maintenance on the network, 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**.

Sign up at cvctx.com/alerts.



Find us on **FACEBOOK** and **INSTAGRAM**.

HIGH-ADRENALINE ADVENTURES

Story by ANNE BRALY

Texas is a must-see destination for outdoor thrill-seekers

As the saying goes, everything's bigger in Texas, and that includes the adrenaline-pumping excitement the state delivers. From the Gulf of Mexico to the Panhandle, the Lone Star State is a playground for thrilling adventures.

"From world-class rock climbing at Hueco Tanks State Park and Historic Site to heart-racing mountain climbing at Big Bend Ranch State Park to 50 miles of hiking at San Angelo State Park, Texas State Parks have exciting adventures for everyone," says Tara Humphreys, director of interpretation for Texas State Parks.

So if you're looking for some Texas-size fun, here are a few places to get your heart racing and satisfy your need for speed and adventure.

PEDAL POWER

Texas' geography and topography make it a top choice for off-road biking. Cyclists can find any kind of terrain and level of difficulty they're looking for. Here are some trails that top the list of favorites:

Palo Duro Canyon in the Texas Panhandle is the second-largest canyon in the United States and home to several trails ideal for mountain biking. Among them is the Lighthouse Trail — 8 miles that are relatively challenging, but if you're up to the task, you'll be rewarded with some of the most stunning sights in the park, including the Lighthouse, a sandstone rock formation that gave the trail its name. For information, visit palodurocanyon.com.

San Angelo State Park offers a wide variety of mountain bike trails, but perhaps the most interesting is its Dinosaur Trail. Not only will you see ancient dinosaur tracks and informational markers identifying them, but you'll bike through terrain typical of West Texas. Think cacti and low-lying bushes. Word to the wise: bring water and wear a hat. There's little shade to be found. The Dinosaur Trail is just 3 miles long — a quick ride that's good for beginners. For more information, go to tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/san-angelo.

Mountain biking is a popular activity at Palo Duro Canyon State Park.

Photos courtesy of Texas Parks & Wildlife Department



▲ The Dinosaur Trail draws many mountain bikers to San Angelo State Park.

◀ Rock climbers of all skill levels can test their mettle at Enchanted Rock.

ROCK-SOLID ADVENTURES

There are a number of great rock climbing spots in Texas, from cliff faces close to popular cities to other spots in more remote regions. It's not hard to find an indoor climbing gym, but there's nothing like getting outside. Find your next favorite climbing destination among these popular outdoor spots in Texas:

Lake Mineral Wells State Park, about an hour outside of Fort Worth, has a strict policy when it comes to climbers. Participants must be at least 17 years old, sign a liability waiver and wear a park-issued wristband while climbing. But once you've cleared those hurdles, you can experience some of the best climbs in North Texas.

There are several routes that are good for beginners and challenging for intermediate-level climbers. They don't call the area Penitentiary Hollow for nothing. For more information, check out tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/lake-mineral-wells.

Enchanted Rock State Natural Area, near Fredericksburg, is widely known for outdoor recreation, with a great campground and trails ideal for hiking, particularly up the granite dome known as Enchanted Rock. But it's also a magical place for experienced climbers to navigate routes such as Enchanted Rock Fissure.

There are other climbs better suited for beginners and there are guides in the area to teach you the ropes. For more information, go to tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/enchanted-rock.

HANG TIME

Take to the skies at Cowboy Up, a fabulous place to hang glide and see Texas in a way you may have never before. There are no mountains in this part of Texas, about an hour southeast of Houston, but don't let that stop you. At Cowboy Up, a light aircraft tows a hang glider into the air before setting you free to fly with the birds.

Beginners attend ground school to learn the basics of hang gliding before taking off with a certified pilot. These are tandem flights, so the pilot conducts takeoffs and landings. There are several available packages starting at a short, 15-minute spin around the Texas skies.


Want to try your hand at hang gliding? Choose the Adventure ride, and the pilot will put the controls in your hands. If you decide hang gliding is for you, become a student of the sport and sign up for one of Cowboy Up's training packages and receive your United States Hang Gliding & Paragliding Association Hang 1 Beginner Rating. Details are online at cuhanggliding.com.

Fly Texas in the heart of the Hill Country offers a different kind of hang gliding experience. Trike flying marries hang gliding with a powered tricycle — an aircraft that can take off from a runway or a field, making it perfect for Texas terrain. Just be sure to wear shoes that won't fall off.

There are two packages available: a 30-minute flight for beginners and another one that takes riders up a mile high before the motor turns off and participants glide back down while taking in the views over Lake LBJ and other lakes along the chain of dams on the Colorado River. Learn more at flytexas.com.

RUN THE RAPIDS

Big Bend National Park is home to some of the most exciting outdoor activities in the state, including rafting or kayaking the Rio Grande. It's a calm river in some places but also has fast-moving currents flowing through deep-river canyons. Bring your own gear, rent equipment from local outfitters or take a fully equipped guided trip from two hours to 10 days.

Big Bend is a diverse region with endless possibilities for adventure and discovery with lodging possibilities that run the gamut from camping to luxury resorts. Learn more at nps.gov. 

WOVEN

La Grange Quilt Museum is a community of fabric *together*

Story by JAMIE BIESIADA

“There are fashions in quilting, just like there are in clothing,” says La Grange resident Kathi Babcock. “There are color sensibilities in the ’80s, like shoulder pads, that you can look at and you can say, ‘Oh, that quilt was made in the ’80s.’ There are trends that you can see.”

Kathi can trace her personal history through the quilts she’s made over the course of her life. For instance, she fixated for a time on historical reproductions of 19th century quilts with a more muted

color palette. But one day, she decided she wanted more color, and switched styles to use brighter, more bold hues. “It is kind of my own little retrospective,” she says of the collection of quilts she’s made.

Kathi started quilting in the 1970s. In fact, one of the first quilts she made still sits in a closet in her home, safe in a plastic bag. She really started quilting “maniacally” in the mid-1990s when stores started selling quilt-specific fabrics. “One project led to another, which led to

another, which led to another, which led to building houses with room for fabric storage,” Kathi chuckles.

SOUTHWEST STYLE

Today, Kathi and her fellow Colorado Valley Quilt Guild members do a variety of service-oriented projects. A number of her quilts go to residents of area nursing homes. Guild members also volunteer at the Texas Quilt Museum, a nonprofit dedicated to showcasing quilts as art.

“It’s the only thing of its type in Texas and one of less than 15 quilt museums like this in the United States,” Kathi says. “So, it’s a pretty big deal — and in La Grange, Texas, of all places.”

The museum is located in the town’s historic downtown in two buildings dating back to the 1890s. Originally a mercantile, the property has been restored to its original integrity, says Deborah Bradley, the Texas Quilt Museum’s managing director. It has longleaf pine floors, interior columns carved from individual trees and bricks that predate the structure itself.

While it functioned as a store for many years, the space was empty when co-founders Karoline “Karey” Bresenhan and Nancy O’Bryant Puentes decided to turn it into a museum. The Texas Quilt Museum falls under the umbrella of Quilts Inc., a company that produces

Some modern quilts take on a photorealistic quality.



Photos by Terry Hagerly



Quilter Kathi Babcock, left, describes her latest project to Texas Quilt Museum Director Deborah Bradley.



An array of colorful quilts are on display in the upper balcony.

several quilt shows. Karey is the Quilts Inc. founder and CEO.

“It’s always been a beautiful complement to our community, having something like the Texas Quilt Museum here,” Deborah says. “The Texas Quilt Museum was created to share how our history, particularly women’s history, has been impacted by quilting. It’s just been great having it, and it’s a very, very small town, so it brings a lot of tourism here. It helps our community thrive.”

WORLDWIDE REACH

Deborah estimates the museum has welcomed more than 70,000 visitors since it opened, showcasing nearly 100 different exhibitions. Exhibits change every four months.

Vicki Magnum, the museum’s curator, puts together all exhibits. Sometimes they are themed, maybe incorporating a certain color. An upcoming show will feature quilts that are predominantly red and white.

Through April 29, the museum will showcase the aforementioned “Rosie McCrady: Red Work” exhibit, “Places: A Celebration of the Human Hand: Works by Marilyn Henrion” and the winners of the 2022 International Quilt Festival in Houston.

The quilts on display are a form of fiber art and often transcend the

traditional notion of what a quilt is. Some quilters even paint on their creations. “It’s not your typical quilt like one we would go buy for a bed — it’s nothing like that at all,” Deborah says. “These are art pieces.”

Adjacent to the museum is Grandmother’s Flower Garden, a period garden typical of local gardens around 1890, the age of the museum’s buildings. There’s also a vivid, 13-by-85-foot outdoor mural called “Quilts ... History in the Making,” which depicts traditional, 19th century quilts.

SHARING CREATIVITY

The museum uses social media to get the word out on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter about its events and reach quilters around the globe.

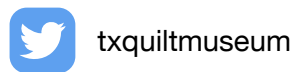
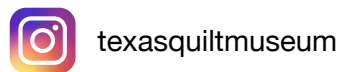
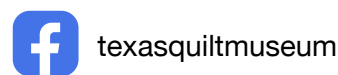
Deborah likes to feature a “visitor of the day” on the museum’s social media sites, sharing pictures of visitors with their favorite quilt and adding a bit about why it’s their favorite. She also tries to run frequent events to promote the museum. In December, for instance, the museum hosted Storytime with Santa on Saturdays.

Deborah herself is new to the museum. Her background is in interior design, marketing, public relations and event planning, and she’s been employing those skills to attract even more visitors.

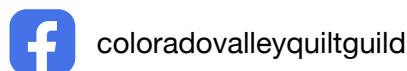
She’s also reaching out on a local level. This year for the first time, the museum participated in Schmeckenfest, a community wassail-tasting event. The museum itself was featured on the event’s tasting steins.

Early next year, Deborah plans to unveil an interactive children’s discovery exhibit where children can explore the art of quilting. “I want to inspire and teach kids to realize that this is art,” she says. “It’s another form of artistic expression. We hope to foster a new era of quilters to carry on the incredible legacy of quilting.”

The Texas Quilt Museum



The Colorado Valley Quilt Guild



Family TV night

Great family binges for all ages

With the wealth of streaming services available today, there have never been so many viewing options available at the tap of a few buttons. But the constant barrage of new TV shows and movies can make it difficult to sort the wheat from the chaff, especially if you're looking for something the whole family can enjoy.

While services like Disney+ come ready with a huge catalog of family classics, other major streamers are still building up their libraries of kid-friendly content. Here are a few suggestions to help your family start exploring the latest offerings.





AGES 4+

“Bluey,” Disney+ — Inexhaustible Blue Heeler dog Bluey turns everyday life into amazing adventures that stimulate her imagination and emotional resilience. Broken up into short, nine-minute episodes, the Australian animated show has garnered praise for providing constructive messages while remaining engaging for adults.

“Motown Magic,” Netflix — This feel-good series celebrates music, has colorful, eye-catching visuals and instills positive messages about self-confidence. For lovers of oldies, the soundtrack is also a great introduction to Motown and soul classics.

“Sesame Street,” HBO Max — Starting with the show’s 51st season in 2020, HBO Max became the official home of “Sesame Street.” Get access to new episodes immediately so your kids can experience the fun and entertaining brand of education that “Sesame Street” has offered for decades.

“Madagascar: A Little Wild,” Hulu — Drawing on the humor and animation that made the Madagascar movies popular, this musical comedy series follows four young animals in a rescue habitat in Central Park. The show celebrates being yourself and pursuing your dreams, no matter how wild.

“Shaun the Sheep,” Netflix — Adults and young kids alike can enjoy a laugh in this clay-mation series from the makers of “Wallace and Gromit.” Shaun’s barnyard misadventures with his cousin Timmy, sheepdog Bitzer, cat Pidsley and fellow sheep Shirley have even spun off into several movies available exclusively on Netflix.

AGES 7+

“Just Add Magic,” Amazon Prime Video — When Kelly discovers her grandmother’s mysterious cookbook in the attic, she and her best friends, Darbie and Hannah, find out there’s more magic to the recipes than just a secret ingredient. Loosely based on Cindy Callaghan’s popular book by the same name, the show offers magical fun for the whole family.

“Pokemon Journeys,” Netflix — This Netflix series is action-packed enough to grab the attention of new viewers and based on the anime series some parents may have watched when they were kids. Follow young trainer Ash as he travels the world learning about new Pokemon.

“Gravity Falls,” Disney+ — If your little

ones aren’t quite ready for shows like “Stranger Things” or sci-fi classics like “The X-Files,” “Gravity Falls” might be just the ticket. This show offers Pacific Northwest weirdness for the whole family as twins Mabel and Dipper Pines spend the summer with their great-uncle Stan investigating strange mysteries in Oregon.

“Star Wars: The Clone Wars,” Disney+ — Before there was a Disney series for every character in the Star Wars universe, “The Clone Wars” was filling in the gaps between the canonical Star Wars movies. The continuing adventures of Obi Wan, Anakin and young Palawan Ahsoka Tano feature enough surprisingly deep storytelling that parents might be as eager as their kids to hit play on the next episode.

“TrollsTopia,” Hulu — Picking up after the movie “Trolls: World Tour,” “TrollsTopia” follows Poppy as she attempts to unite delegates from the Country Western, Classical, Funk, Techno and Hard Rock tribes in one harmonious city. Watch as they learn to celebrate their differences with a variety of catchy tunes.

AGES 11+

“Raising Dion,” Netflix — Second grader Dion learns to balance super powers and villain battles with the everyday challenges of growing up. The mild violence and portrayals of bullying might be a little much for younger viewers, but tween audiences will find plenty to enjoy.

“The Hardy Boys,” Hulu — Based on the popular book series, this show follows Frank and Joe Hardy when they move from the city to their parents’ hometown of Bridgeport. When their dad takes on a secret investigation, it doesn’t take long for the Hardy boys to get drawn into the mystery.

“The Quest,” Disney+ — A new take on the reality competition series from the team behind “The Amazing Race,” “The Quest” drops eight teens into an immersive fantasy world where it’s their job to save the kingdom. Find out which contestant is The One while scratching that old “Legends of the Hidden Temple” itch.

“The Dark Crystal: Age of Resistance,” Netflix — This prequel to the 1982 dark fantasy movie from Jim Henson follows a group of Gelflings as they seek to stop power-hungry overlords from draining the life from their world. Parents who enjoyed the original will enjoy the shot of nostalgia, while younger viewers marvel at the stunning visuals. 📺

WIENER TAKE ALL!

There are no weak links at Schulenburg Sausagefest

Story by DREW WOOLLEY

Terri Wagner's first Schulenburg Sausagefest came with a lot of pressure. Her predecessor as executive director of the Schulenburg Chamber of Commerce had made a tradition of performing the opening call of the hog-calling contest, so Wagner knew there were high expectations as she entered last year's event.

"I thought, 'Alright, I'll give it a shot,'" Wagner says. "I'm originally from Iowa, which is a big hog state. So, I didn't want to let my ancestors down. Luckily, I did a good job, but I didn't get judged."

The hog-calling contest is just one part of what has become a favorite annual event for people around Schulenburg. Three local residents who wanted to find a new way to bring the community together started it a decade ago. Today, Schulenburg Sausagefest is a full-blown street festival, shutting down Main Street from Wolters Avenue to Lyons Avenue.

TAKING IT TO THE STREETS

The day's festivities start off with The Shortest Parade in Texas, in which local bands gather to march just one block. Then, the evening's headliners take the stage to lead the crowd in a Grand March, a traditional Czech and German dance most often seen at weddings. Next up is nonstop dancing in the street until 9:30 p.m. "They play until everyone is ready to go home, and there are plenty of refreshments — especially what I like to call bohemian soda water. That's beer," Wagner says with a chuckle.

Of course, it wouldn't be Sausagefest without the namesake food, and there is plenty to be found. Visitors can compete in the Sausage Toss or try each vendor's sausage to decide who should be named the Sausage Cook-off winner. "They all cook and smoke their sausage on-site.



The Florus family won a first-place trophy during the Sausagefest competition a few years ago.

Photo by Andy Behlen, Fayette County Record

You buy your tickets and use them to vote for the sausage you think tastes the best," Wagner says. "At the end of the day, we tally those and award a sausage champion."

Awards also go to the best homemade wine, pickles and sauerkraut. When visitors aren't tasting local fare, they can shop a variety of local crafts, something Wagner looks forward to doing herself this year. It's all in service of local nonprofits, which benefit from the proceeds of the festival. Wagner estimates that about 2,000 people showed up to last year's event, raising approximately \$43,000 for nonprofit organizations in the community.

She is especially thankful to the Schulenburg Police Department and Fayette County EMS for helping the chamber put on the event safely. She also recognizes Colorado Valley Communications for making it easy to spread the word. "I don't know what we would do if we didn't have our Facebook page and email," Wagner says. "It's really very vital to making sure that the event runs and runs smoothly in today's world. I think

it's successful, in part, because of that service." 📺

JOIN THE FUN APRIL 1 — NO FOOLIN'

The Schulenburg Sausagefest always takes place on Main Street on the first Saturday of April. For the eighth annual event, that will be April Fool's Day, but the fun is no joke.

Festivities start at 11:15 a.m. with The Shortest Parade in Texas.

The festivities also include:

- Sausage-making contests
- Homemade wine, sauerkraut and pickles
- Arts and crafts vendors
- Grand March
- Fun run
- Motorcycle ride
- Hog-calling contest
- Sausage Toss
- Live music from The Czechacholics, Mark Halalta and Taxavia, and David Lewis

DEPARTMENT SPOTLIGHT

Accounting, billing and purchasing teams keep CVCTX running

Story by DREW WOOLLEY

Over the next several issues, we'll be taking a closer look at the different teams within Colorado Valley Communications that help us bring customers the quality service they expect and deserve. This month, we're putting the spotlight on the hard work and dedication of those in the accounting, billing and purchasing departments.

ACCOUNTING

For many, managing accounting and finances can be a confusing and overwhelming process they have to force themselves to face. Chief Financial Strategist Kathy Norwood is not one of those people.

After nearly 30 years in the field, her work as a CPA still holds the same appeal it always has. "I have always loved accounting. It has a balancing component that is so comforting," she says. "When you get the debits and credits all to balance it's such a great feeling."

As part of her daily responsibilities, Norwood ensures unretired capital

credits for deceased members go to their legal heirs and that all of the cooperative's financials are in order so nothing stands in the way of its mission to expand fiber access.

"Fiber is vital for our customers to keep up in this fast-paced world," Norwood says. "I work alongside the cooperative's employees to extend our fiber footprint, and this requires a great deal of cash management."

BILLING

While accounting makes sure the cooperative's internal finances are in order, the billing department stays on top of customer charges for the services CVCTX provides.

As billing supervisor, Pam Gerik draws on her 22 years of experience with the cooperative to oversee that process. Alongside Connie Beseda, her partner in the department, Gerik reviews service orders to make sure everything is accurate and monitors the auto payment process that makes it easy for customers to pay their bills.

The highlight of the job for Gerik is

working with customers to help them understand their bills, even when the process is challenging.

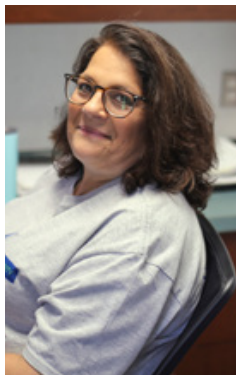
PURCHASING

Keeping a communications network up and running calls for lots of equipment, which is where Purchasing Coordinator Darla Kubala comes in. It's her job to find the best price on the equipment required by both the office staff and engineering departments so supply shortages don't hold them up. "I am a behind-the-scenes position, but I have the opportunity to work with almost every department here," she says. "My day is ever-changing and doesn't get boring."

Lately, supply cost changes related to the coronavirus pandemic have made predicting the cooperative's equipment needs challenging. But even when shipping and receiving for those supplies feels out of control, Kubala is still thankful for the 24 years she has worked with the cooperative. "I enjoy what I do, and I am very appreciative that I get to work in my community and raise my family here," she says. ☑



Chief Financial Strategist
Kathy Norwood



Customer Account and
Billing Specialist Connie
Beseda



Billing Supervisor
Pam Gerik



Purchasing Assistant Megan Wells,
left, and Purchasing Coordinator Darla
Kubala



Accounts Payable and Receivable
Associate Sandra Weyand, left,
Accounting Manager Dawn Supak
and Associate Accountant Kay Loehr

MEALS

that will make you

SQUEAL



Ham-bitious ways to use your leftovers

While much of the rest of the world celebrates the arrival of spring with lamb, in the U.S. pink, salty-sweet slices of cured pork, slathered in a sugary glaze, will fill many tables.

The problem, however, is that unless you buy a boneless ham by the pound or one of those small canned hams, you'll probably bring home a large bone-in ham from the market or treat yourself to one from the honey ham store. And more likely than not, after you serve dinner with a couple of side dishes, you're going to have a lot of leftovers.

There are so many ways to use up that ham that go beyond deviling or as a salad topper.

Here are three ideas to make the most of your leftover ham. They're wonderful by themselves, or just make a day of it and make them all, using up most, if not all, of that leftover ham. There's nothing better than a bowl of creamy ham soup with cheesy ham-studded biscuits and a delicious ham sandwich — with a twist.



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

Photography by MARK GILLILAND | Food Styling by RHONDA GILLILAND

CREAMY POTATO HAM SOUP

- 4 strips of bacon
- 1/2 cup onion, finely chopped
- 3-4 medium potatoes, peeled and diced (2-3 cups)
- 3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 4 cups chicken broth, preferably homemade (see note)
- 1 1/2 cups cooked ham, cut into 1/2-inch cubes
- 1 cup corn, canned (drained) or frozen (no need to thaw)
- 1/2 cup heavy cream
- 1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper
- Salt (to taste)
- 1 teaspoon fresh parsley, finely chopped

Saute bacon in a large stockpot over medium-high heat until crisp. Chop the bacon and set it aside on a plate, reserving bacon drippings in the pot. Add onion and potatoes to the pot and saute for 1-2 minutes until fragrant. Stir in flour and mix well until the flour is fully incorporated. Stir in chicken broth and mix until the soup is smooth and uniform. Bring the soup to a boil over medium-high heat. Cover and let it continue to boil for 10-15 minutes until the potatoes are fork tender.

Mash half of the potatoes in the



pot with a potato masher to help thicken the soup.

Stir in ham, corn, heavy cream and black pepper. Let the soup simmer over medium heat and whisk occasionally until thickened to a desired consistency, 5-10 minutes. If the chowder gets too thick, add a little water to dilute it. Add salt to taste. Serve topped with reserved crispy bacon and fresh parsley. Makes about 4 servings.

Note: To make homemade chicken stock, boil a whole chicken in water to cover with some chunks of onion and celery added. Simmer the chicken until tender. You can tell if it's tender by pulling on the leg. If the leg comes out easily, the chicken is ready. Save the chicken for chicken salad or a chicken casserole. But save the stock, too. Salt it, to taste, and use it right away for this soup, or let it cool, pour it into a gallon-size freezer bag and freeze it.



CHEESY HAM BISCUITS

These biscuits pull double duty as a side to soup or cut them in half, add a fried egg and make a breakfast biscuit.

- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 cup salted butter (1 stick)
- 1 1/4 cups buttermilk
- 1/2 cup chopped ham
- 1 cup shredded extra sharp cheddar cheese

Preheat the oven to 450 F.
Mix dry ingredients. Cut butter into thin slices and then cut it into the flour

until pieces of butter are small. Add in the buttermilk slowly and incorporate with the flour mixture. Don't overmix.

Sprinkle a small amount of flour on a work surface and place dough on top of it. Press down to make flat and then add the ham and cheddar cheese to the top. Knead dough a few times to incorporate the ham and cheese.

Press or roll out into 1/2-inch thickness. Use a biscuit cutter or rim of a glass to cut out biscuits.

Place biscuits on a baking sheet and bake for 10-12 minutes. Makes about a dozen biscuits.



BAKED HAM SANDWICHES

This is a favorite vintage recipe from Encore! Nashville, a Junior League of Nashville publication from the 1970s. Prepare ahead: These sandwiches are best made early in the morning or the day before to give time for the "custard" to soak into the bread.

- 8 slices bread
- 2 tablespoons butter, softened
- 4 slices ham
- 4 slices sharp cheddar cheese
- 1/2 teaspoon dry mustard
- 3 eggs, slightly beaten
- 2 cups evaporated milk or whole milk
- 1 teaspoon grated onion
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper
- Dash of Worcestershire sauce
- Dash of cayenne pepper

Trim crusts from bread and butter both sides well. Place 4 slices of bread

in a buttered baking dish. Place a piece of ham on each piece and cover with cheese, then top with remaining bread slices.

Combine remaining ingredients and pour over bread. Refrigerate all day or overnight. When ready to bake, spoon sauce over bread again and bake at 300 F, uncovered, until sandwiches are bubbly and golden brown on top, about 1 hour. Makes 4 servings.

Note: For a heartier sandwich, slices of tomato, avocado or bacon may be layered between the ham and cheese. 🍷





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