

# CONNECTION

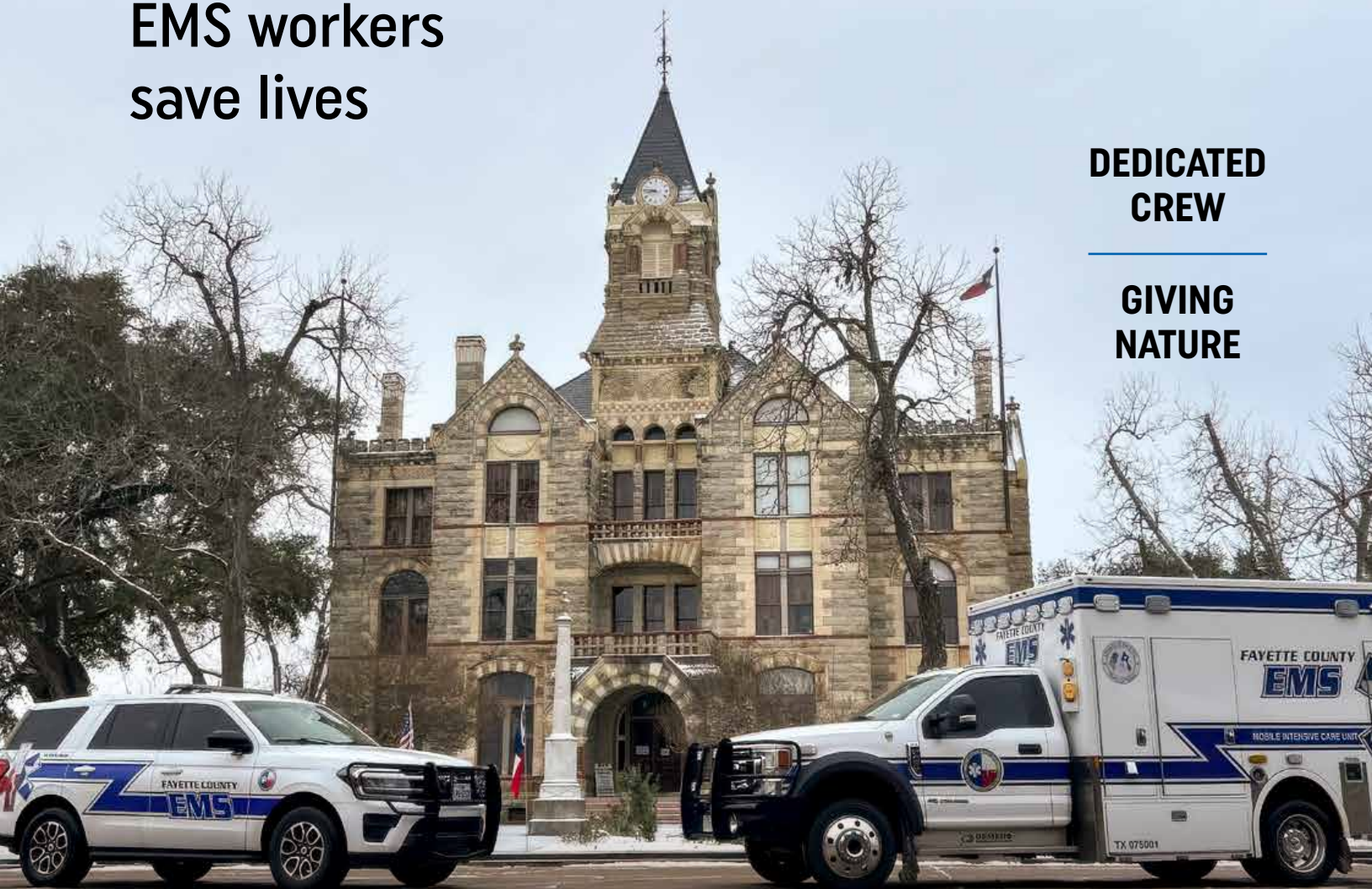
## Heroes at Work

EMS workers  
save lives

**DEDICATED  
CREW**

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**GIVING  
NATURE**





By Shirley Bloomfield, CEO  
NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association

## The Journey to Connectivity


**N**TCA members create broadband networks so fast and reliable that it's easy to take for granted the effort and expertise needed to bring these services to homes and businesses. These professionals do amazing work, particularly when considering the intricate, multi-step journey to build, expand and maintain a network.

It begins with detailed research and careful planning. The broadband provider must learn exactly how many homes and businesses might want service, as well as the challenges posed by the landscape. Then, a thorough review of the numbers determines if the project makes financial sense. It's a puzzle where the pieces are population density, infrastructure costs and potential demand for the service.

Then there's the engineering—design, build and inspect. Detailed maps identify routes for cables, permitting, environmental regulations and access to land. Some of these projects can take two to four years from the first engineering drawing to the first connection.

The work doesn't stop when the network goes live. These networks require maintenance, technology upgrades and customer support.

These networks are lifelines connecting rural communities to telehealth, education, remote work and cutting-edge technologies. With the help of service providers like yours, we're building broadband to last and ensuring no community gets left behind in our increasingly digital world.

To learn more, check out the Foundation for Rural Service and JSI's latest report, "Delivering Broadband From Beginning to 'End,'" at [frs.org/delivering-broadband-beginning-end](https://frs.org/delivering-broadband-beginning-end). 



## Safe Searches

### Tips to avoid scams

When you need information fast, a quick check of Google is often the first stop. In fact, some people find it easier to search online for everything, including the addresses for a specific website like a bank, trusted repair service or health care provider.

Unfortunately, scammers know this, too, so they sometimes create bogus sites with addresses confusingly close to the real thing.

Google is aware of this trend, and it touts advanced systems that keep users' search results 99% spam-free. The company also offers a few tips for closing the final security weaknesses.

- Pay close attention to the URL—the specific web address—before clicking any unfamiliar link. Typically, in an email, hovering the cursor over the address will show the complete link. Don't click the link if it looks suspicious.
- The three dots next to the search results in Google can be used to find more details about the webpage, store or business you're considering. You can find clues indicating if the site is legitimate before clicking the link.
- When you're looking for official resources, watch out for unusual address formatting. For example, there's typically only one correct customer service number for a larger company. But not all businesses have customer service numbers, and searching for them requires you to be mindful. Watch for strange formatting in the website address, including unexpected symbols or emojis.



# A Rockin' RECIPE

## Hannah Dasher cooks up an online storm



Performer Hannah Dasher created a countryfied niche for herself on social media.

Photo courtesy of Jeremy Ryan Photography

Story by BRANDI DIXON

**H**annah Dasher is a blast of classic country and rock 'n' roll paired with social media influencer. Stepping into the home she calls “Honky-Tonk Graceland” and features on her social media is, as Hannah says, like going back in time to “your meemaw’s house.”

“Avocado green canisters, gold salt and pepper shakers, brass pots. I love my retro kitchen, and I love that the fans feel right at home,” she says, adding that she enjoys entertaining.

Music and songwriting are Hannah’s first loves. “I was rehearsing my acceptance speech for best new female vocalist of the year in my mirror at age 10,” she says. “I grew up listening to ’90s country radio, and knew I wanted to be an entertainer.”

Hannah pursued music professionally, taking her big hair and a heaping helping of Southern charm to Nashville, Tennessee. She started out writing songs for other artists, getting some big accolades thanks to collaborations with Brad

Paisley, Lainey Wilson and Ian Munsick, to name a few. She continued performing whenever she had the chance.

### STAND BY YOUR PAN

In 2020 during the pandemic, Hannah found herself stuck. “All the stages shut down, and I needed a stage,” she says. “Talking with some friends I learned a lot of girls my age couldn’t cook, so I stumbled into the world of social media, and it was the perfect storm.”

Hannah took to TikTok to share her

family’s beloved recipes and a few of her own, all while sprinkling in a bit of her signature rockin’ country flavor. The recipe produced the now-viral Stand By Your Pan social media accounts. More than 1.5 million followers join Hannah daily in her retro kitchen.

“I love that this brought country and noncountry music fans together,” she says. “It’s hard to pigeonhole into just one world, and I’m glad that I can be this representative of the past and the future via a semicelebrity chef.” 🗨️

### ALL THE RIGHT INGREDIENTS

When Hannah Dasher isn’t cranking out content, she’s picking up a guitar and writing music.

“God always sends it from the left side of the sky and out of my mouth,” she says of her process. “Sometimes it’s melody and lyrics simultaneously, but you just never know, and you always have to be looking for it.”

Hannah is on the road this year with her band on The Wanted Tour, featuring stops across the United States, the United Kingdom and Sweden. She encourages fans to spread the word and come see her and her “boys.”

# Unmatched Performance

## No technology beats the speed of our network



**KELLY ALLISON**  
General Manager

There's something magical when technology becomes so advanced that it simply works, without muss, fuss or the need for advanced skills. Most likely your smartphone is a great example, particularly whatever app you prefer for photos. Looking for an image of your cat or dog, a mountain or a beach? Just ask and the search will likely provide shockingly good results.

That app simply does the job, and our internet service is much the same—it simply works. It's fast, reliable and resilient. Thanks to the long-term investments to create a robust fiber optic network supported by a team of local professionals, we can provide services that unlock the online world. If you consider internet access essential, there's no better option.

Whether you're working from home, attending virtual classes or binge-watching your favorite shows, our team makes sure everything runs smoothly. Do you have multiple devices online at once, rely on video calls or enjoy challenging online games? No problem. The performance is there whenever you need it.

It's important to remember, not all technologies such as satellite have the same benefit. With those other systems, storms might block signals or otherwise create interruptions. However, compared with other technologies, our network is designed to not only stay online more reliably but also bounce back more quickly if there is an outage.

Not every community gets to enjoy this type of internet service. We designed our network for today with features capable of handling future online tools and resources. Considering how quickly technology is advancing, an adaptable network is vital for our community to stay competitive in an increasingly online world.

After all, high-speed internet is more than a nice-to-have luxury. From telehealth services to online education, fiber optic networks give us access to essential resources that fundamentally improve our quality of life. Similarly, reliable, fast internet energizes our economy. From established area businesses to new entrepreneurs, the internet provides the tools needed to compete.

We're committed to bringing these benefits to every corner of our community. And please remember, Colorado Valley Communications is about more than the physical network. The dedicated professionals making up our team live here, believe in our area's future and are committed to providing unparalleled support.

So, this year let's celebrate the progress we've made and look forward to a future where everyone can enjoy the advantages of cutting-edge technology. Our goal is to ensure that everyone in our service area has access to the opportunities high-speed internet provides.

Thank you for your continued support and trust. Together, we're building a brighter, more connected future. 📶

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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](http://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](http://cvctx.com/maps). To learn about the service available at your address, visit [cvctx.com/signup](http://cvctx.com/signup).

Produced for CVCTX by:



### On the Cover:

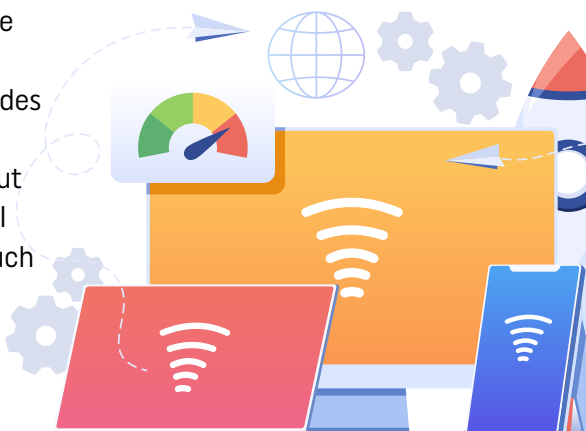


The staff of Fayette County EMS works in cooperation with other agencies to provide ground and air ambulance services. See story on Page 8.

Photo courtesy of Fayette County EMS

# Welcome to High-Speed Internet, Ellinger!

We are excited to welcome the city of Ellinger to the CVCTX family. CVCTX provides excellent high-speed internet service throughout its territory, including rural areas and communities such as Fayetteville, La Grange, Round Top, Schulenburg, Weimar and now Ellinger.



## MEMORIAL DAY

Colorado Valley Communications will close **MONDAY, MAY 26**, in observance of **MEMORIAL DAY**. Take time to recognize and remember the men and women who gave their lives while serving in the U.S. military, so we can continue to live in freedom.

## Broadband Glossary

Understanding broadband terms can sometimes feel like trying to decipher a foreign language. Here are a few definitions to help you understand how we serve you.

**MESH NETWORK:** Walls, appliances and more can block your Wi-Fi signal, meaning every room may not have the same quality connection. A mesh network can help. Mesh networks use multiple devices working together to bring reliable internet service to every corner of your home.

**MULTI-GIG INTERNET:** It's the internet on superhero mode. While regular internet might feel like walking, Multi-Gig internet is like running at top speed. Download huge files, have multiple people streaming videos at once, play online games without annoying lag and more. It's so fast everyone in your house can be online and no one's connection slows.

**BANDWIDTH:** Imagine bandwidth like a water pipe. The wider the pipe, the more water can flow. So, in the case of your internet service, greater bandwidth means more data can move at once. If you live in a home with multiple connected devices, sufficient bandwidth is critical.

**5G:** This is a common type of mobile internet that's much faster than earlier versions. It's like upgrading from an old bicycle to a super-powered electric bike—everything moves quicker. It is, however, limited by availability.

## For Peak Performance, Restart and Update



We all want our electronic devices to work quickly and stay secure. But did you know that leaving them running constantly isn't the best approach? Regular restarts and updates are keys to maintaining your devices' performance.

### Here's why:

- Restarting clears out temporary files and frees up memory, helping your device run more efficiently.
- Software updates are crucial for security. They patch potential vulnerabilities and protect against cyberthreats.
- A weekly restart can help recalibrate battery management and prevent minor system glitches.

Think of these simple maintenance steps as a quick tuneup. By taking a few moments to restart and update, you'll keep your devices running at their best—faster, smoother and more securely.





Photo Illustrations by Mark Gilliland

# Minor Leagues

## MAJOR FUN

Road trip to  
baseball's most  
entertaining  
destinations

Story by JOHN CLAYTON

**R**ic Sisler admits he misses the annual spring-to-fall marathon of a baseball season. “When it’s in your blood, it doesn’t matter what you’re doing. You’re always going to be pulled toward that industry, and I’m certainly no

exception,” he says. “Going to the ballpark, the camaraderie and being around the yard was just a thrill for me.

“I certainly don’t miss tarp pulls and some of those types of things,” he says with a laugh, referring to the backbreaking

work of getting protective tarps on and off the diamond during rainy weather.

The national pastime is most certainly in Ric’s blood. He played for three seasons in the New York Yankees minor league system before running several

### WHAT’S IN A NAME?

Marketers and merchandisers will say quite a lot. Creative—some may say outlandish—nicknames, mascots and logos are part of the landscape of minor league baseball. Here are a couple of our Texas favorites:

The Sugar Land Space Cowboys became the Triple-A affiliate of the neighboring Houston Astros in 2021, changing the team name from the Skeeters, a reference to mosquitos. The new name fits with the Astros and Houston’s history with NASA and may be familiar to rock fans as a classic tune by the Steve Miller Band.

When the San Antonio Missions moved to Amarillo in 2019, the team went in a different direction and became the Amarillo Sod Poodles. Sod Poodles won a name-the-team contest over Boot Scooters, Bronc Busters, Jerky and Long Haulers. Sod poodle is a reference to prairie dogs in West Texas.

Fun fact—in 2015, the then-Skeeters signed former Major Leaguer Rafael Palmeiro to a contract so he could play alongside his son, Patrick. The father-son duo, batting 2-3 in the order, combined to drive in five runs in a 10-4 win over the Camden Riversharks.



Rocky, the Midland Rockhounds' mascot, poses with fans during a 2024 Texas League game in Midland, Texas.

minor league organizations as a front office executive and as vice president/general manager of the independent South Coast League based in Georgia. His father, Dick Sisler, was a Major League Baseball manager and All-Star player, and his grandfather, George Sisler, is enshrined in the National Baseball Hall of Fame.

Ric, who is still involved in athletics as director of corporate sponsorships at Western Carolina University, says many fans of the game come back season after season.

"Minor league baseball has been part of the fabric of our society in a lot of smaller towns," he says. "It was kind of a binding agent for folks to come watch baseball with their friends and neighbors and just have a wholesome time."

While the minor leagues are about family fun and community pride to many fans, the game is a balance of business and player development for the teams and their MLB affiliates. The minors have long relied on fan-friendly, creative promotions and player interactions to sell tickets, and all of that comes with an affordable price tag.

"I think people have always gone to minor league games because it's affordable," Ric says. "You had great entertainment and could see some potential big-league players there at an affordable price.



The sun sets behind Rio Grande Credit Union Field at Isotopes Park, which is known to fans as "The Lab," home to the Triple-A Pacific Coast League's Albuquerque Isotopes.



You're very close to the field and close to the players. It was a different setting from the Major League parks. I don't want to see that change."

Planning a trip this summer—or maybe even a baseball pilgrimage? There's a game, sports history and tradition, as well as a bunch of fun waiting for you. 📺

## STEPPING UP TO THE PLATE IN THE LONE STAR STATE

The Texas League has been in business since 1902 and is a Double-A league with its five South Division teams based in Texas.

North Division teams are in Arkansas, Missouri, Oklahoma and Kansas. The Houston Buffaloes, who played in the Texas League from 1903-61 and originated in 1888, won a league-record 16 championships.

Texas League alumni include MLB Hall of Famers Roberto Alomar, Willard Brown, Dennis Eckersley, Hank Greenberg, Chick Hafey, Willie McCovey, Joe Medwick, Joe Morgan, Brooks Robinson, Al Rosen, Ron Santo, Don Sutton, Billy Williams and Dick Williams.

### FUN FACTS

John Robert "Red" Murff, a native of Burlington, made his 1956 MLB debut with the Milwaukee Braves as a 35-year-old rookie. He was named Minor League Pitcher of the Year by The Sporting News and Texas League Pitcher of the Year in 1955 after going 27-11 for the Dallas Eagles. He threw a no-hitter for the Texas City Texans in 1951 and pitched 19 2/3 innings of a 3-2 20-inning loss to the Texarkana Bears in 1952.

Homer Peel, originally from Port Sullivan, hit .300 for more than a dozen minor league seasons during the 1920s and '30s and was known as "the Ty Cobb of the Texas League." He won a World Series title with the New York Giants in 1933.

A Texas League team called the Atz Cats, managed by namesake Jake Atz and playing out of Fort Worth, won six straight league titles from 1920-25. Cats player John "Ziggy" Sears became a Major League umpire and also appeared in two movies, "The Stratton Story" and "The Babe Ruth Story," in 1948 and 1949, respectively, playing umpires in both films.



# Life Savers

## CVCTX helps EMS workers advance

Story by MELANIE JONES

**F**or two days, a complete 48 hours, Fayette County emergency medical workers live at their respective stations. They sleep, eat and train—and when the alarm sounds, they go to help. They respond to falls, car accidents, heart attacks, strokes, fires and so many more emergencies. Then, there are four days of peace. Four days with family. Four days of fun. Afterward, the cycle starts again.

“It’s a super rewarding job, and you always feel like you’ve made a difference,” Fayette County EMS Director Josh Vandever says. “Every day you go home, and you feel pretty confident that you made a difference in someone’s life. That’s a super impactful thing.”

The freedom of a schedule that includes four days off is rewarding. “You get a lot of free time,” Josh says.

The pay, based on the certification achieved, is also a lure of the job, Josh says. Texas has three certification levels: EMT-Basic, EMT-Advanced and paramedic.

### SHAPING THE FUTURE

Colorado Valley Communications partnered with Fayette EMS to provide scholarships to EMS employees interested in advancing their level of certification. So far, about a third of the people CVCTX has helped were promoted to leadership positions in the department.

“The impact of that partnership we have with Colorado Valley

has been really instrumental in providing for the community,” Josh says.

The department also actively encourages young people to become EMTs and paramedics by talking to high school students about working in EMS and staying in the county to serve their community. Josh also touts the benefits of the job to students.

“You get a lot of time off, a lot of opportunities to do really cool stuff,” he says.



Patients can be transported by ground ambulance or by air ambulance through cooperation with partners like Washington County EMS.



Fayette County  
EMS provides  
training sessions.

There are negatives, like the difficult things emergency workers sometimes see, but Josh says more than 80% of the job is routine for the people doing it.

"You get to work and live with really cool people at the stations, and you make good money," Josh says. "So, it's a great career. You have a high level of satisfaction. You feel like you've come to work and made a difference most days. It's kind of a no-brainer. It's a really fun gig."

### BROAD COVERAGE

Fayette County's five full-time EMS stations, all with CVCTX service, cover 960 square miles. At least one paramedic and one EMT go on each call. Between the five stations, the department runs about 4,000 calls a year. That's an average of about 77 calls weekly.



Fayette County EMS members train workers in advanced techniques using a dummy.

EMS professionals are also on standby at a range of events, including many of the county's antique fairs and ballgames. They encourage event organizers to have them on hand for all local festivals.

Not only are we active in the community, but we are representative of the community, which is something we're really proud of here.

—Josh Vandever, Fayette County EMS director

Fayette County EMS also offers CPR, first-aid and "stop the bleed" classes for community members and medical professionals who need continuing education credits. "We have a really robust internal training team and try to keep the cost of admission pretty low," Josh says. "People can still get a valuable education at a reasonable cost, so that's been a really successful program for us over the years."

### COMMUNITY CULTURE

Most EMS team members live in the community they serve or in the surround-

ing area. "Not only are we active in the community, but we are representative of the community, which is something we're really proud of here," Josh says.

Members also are involved in a variety of nonprofit and civic organizations, and Josh says many, like he is, are volunteer firefighters in addition to working as professional EMTs and paramedics.

Josh is a Rotary Club member, and he speaks at Rotary, Lions Club, Sons of Hermann and other organizations' meetings about the role of EMS in the community.

"We try, especially at the leadership level, to be available and have our people out there supporting things that are good for the community," he says.



## Heroes by Definition

Someone certified as an EMT-Basic can perform first aid, do CPR, bandage wounds, splint injured limbs and administer some medications such as an antihistamine tablet.

Someone certified as an EMT-Advanced can do everything an EMT-Basic does, plus start IVs, give fluids and administer a broader range of medicines. They also receive training so they can work on a patient's airway if needed.

Paramedics also learn pharmacology and cardiology, advanced work on airways and more.



## Fayette County EMS

In case of emergency,  
**DIAL 911.**

**CALL 979-968-8991**  
for classes or standby  
services.

**fayettecoems.org**

EMS Chief Josh Vandever, left,  
his son, Mason, and Assistant  
EMS Chief Gary Daniels are on  
standby at a local event.

# LOOK TOWARD THE

# Light

Whatever you call them, fireflies mesmerize

Story by **SARA DIAMOND PATTERSON**

**C**atching lightning bugs in a Mason jar with holes punched in the lid is a summer ritual for kids across the country. Watching their light show together is often a time for families to slow down, which is what Lynn Frierson Faust's family began doing in the Great Smoky Mountains during the 1960s.

They marveled for years at the unique light display, as the flying beetles blinked on and off at the same time for several hours after dark. When Lynn heard the August 1991 edition of *Science News* magazine featured an article on fireflies that blink in unison, she figured she would finally find out why and how they made their magic.

"I remember thinking, 'Oh cool, a lightning bug feature. It'll talk about our light show.' Only it didn't mention one thing," she says. In fact,

the authors said the Western Hemisphere had no species of fireflies that blinked synchronously.

Lynn let them know they were mistaken and invited them to come to the Smokies to see the show for themselves. The scientists did and agreed Lynn was right, lighting the way for her life's work.

## 'JUST SO DARN FUN'

As "The Lightning Bug Lady," Lynn is internationally known for her research on the ecology and habits of the more than 125 species of U.S. fireflies, helping

## THE LOWDOWN

**HOW:** Fireflies produce their magical flashes through bioluminescence, a chemical reaction.

**WHY:** Each of the more than 125 species of fireflies in the United States—2,000 worldwide—has a unique signature flash pattern the males use to attract females of their specific type.

**WHERE:** Everywhere. Many Western species do not flash or fly, but they're out there.

**WHEN:** Warm summer nights.



AI-generated artwork by Firefly



## LEND A HAND

Pesticides and habitat reduction have taken a toll on firefly populations. Maintaining a "wild" area of your yard with a little water, native vegetation and undisturbed soil will make your home more firefly friendly. But the easiest way to help is simply by turning out the lights during their active period. Visit [xerces.org](http://xerces.org) or [firefly.org](http://firefly.org) for more tips.

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Photo courtesy of Lynn Frierson Faust



A BBC crew takes a break from filming in 2019. Naturalist Lynn Frierson Faust examines equipment she and Mark Zloba, ecological manager at the Edge of Appalachia, use to gather fireflies at the preserve outside of Cincinnati.

to raise awareness of their unique life cycles and importance within ecosystems.

She scrambles to 14 states each year to catch them emerging during their eight-week active season, usually early June to late July. For 18 years, she has been the worldwide go-to on the subject, serving as on-site scientific consultant for BBC Earth, Discovery, National Geographic and other international film crews. Lynn's 2017 book, "Fireflies, Glow-worms, and Lightning Bugs," was the first-ever comprehensive firefly field guide and shared the results of her nearly three decades of research on behalf of museums, universities, state and national parks and nature centers.

"I'm not a scientist per se, but I've done the research, a whole lot of research," she says. "I'm just a regular person obsessed with these and fortunate to have the time and a little knowledge to build on."

Throughout history, fireflies have symbolized hope and mystery, serving as transient reminders that life is fleeting. In some cultures, people see them as their lost ancestors, a sacred connection between the earthly and spiritual worlds.

When she began, Lynn didn't have much research to start with. "There were just a bunch of dusty old scientific papers, but that's about it," she says. "There's just not been that much research done on them since they aren't harmful or helpful to people or crops."

They are, however, a great indicator species for the health of ecosystems. "When they disappear, we have to know why and where to look." And

## HERE THEY ARE!

No matter where you are, you don't have to go far to find the magic. You can look for lightning bugs anywhere from your own woods or backyard to wildlife management areas or wooded parks, avoiding light pollution and areas that spray for mosquitoes.

"I've always said Texas needs its own guidebook," firefly expert Lynn Frierson Faust says. "It's such a huge state and they have so many habitats, an adult firefly species is probably active year-round."

Houston's 2,500-acre urban wilderness, Armand Bayou Nature Center, is one of the best places in the country to catch light shows and learn more about their purpose.

"Three amazing ladies just became interested in the fireflies there on their own and began documenting them and leading firefly walks," Lynn says. They are among the many amateur researchers throughout the state who work with Lynn.

"It's just so big, but I have a really good glimpse into at least seven little spots throughout the state, and everywhere I go, I'm amazed," she says.

Lynn once found a "super rare" firefly along the banks of the Steinhagen Reservoir and says, "Caddo Lake is the ultimate spot. They have all sorts of good stuff there."

Lynn says they will always serve as a nostalgic reminder of days gone by.

"Lightning bugs are fantastic ambassadors leading people back into nature and to a better understanding of the connectedness of it all," she says. "Plus, they're just so darn fun." 🐞

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## NAME GAME

Officially known as Lampyridae, worldwide fireflies are called blinkies, glowflies, moon bugs, peeney wallies, blinkin' bees, hoturu, fire beetles and candle flies. Here at home, "lightning bug" is more common in the South and Midwest, while "firefly" is typically heard in the West and large cities in the East. Some researchers attribute the differences to weather. While lightning is most active in the South and Midwest, the West sees the most wildfires.

# Marking Milestones

CVCTX employees' longevity benefits their co-workers and communities



Colorado Valley Communications has several 30-year employees on staff including, from left, Field Engineer Gary Becker, Accounting Manager Dawn Supak, Associate Accountant Kay Loehr and Field Engineer Mike Hensel.

Story by MELANIE JONES



CVCTX employees celebrating 25 years with the company include, clockwise from top left, Outside Plant Supervisor Greg Janda, Executive Administrative Assistant Laurie Boehm, Purchasing Coordinator Darla Kubala and Billing Supervisor Pam Gerik.

People are the engine powering Colorado Valley Communications, serving as accountants, customer relations assistants, field engineers and more. They drive success and growth.

Their work helped CVCTX earn the title of the Best Internet Service Provider in Fayette County seven years in a row, as chosen by the readers of The Fayette County Record. In 2024, the company completed 404 miles of mainline fiber construction and installed fiber in more than 860 locations. Multi-Gig internet service is available in many parts of the service area, and CVCTX has been recognized by NTCA—The Rural Broadband Association as a Gig-Certified Provider and Smart Rural Community provider.

Thanks to these dedicated professionals, CVCTX provides critical services throughout the community, including at schools, libraries, health care clinics and state and county offices.

## GREAT ENVIRONMENT

Field Engineer Gary Becker and Accounting Manager Dawn Supak started their careers at Colorado Valley Communications

just more than 30 years ago, and they've never looked back. Both say friendly co-workers and a great work environment have a lot to do with their staying power.


Dawn, who has worked in accounting since starting with CVCTX, cites consistent opportunities to learn and grow within a supportive environment as one reason she's stayed for three decades. "The company's dedication to innovation is aligned with my personal values, and I feel proud of the ongoing success," she says. "Additionally, I value the close relationships I have built with my colleagues, who have become more like family over the years."

Gary says CVCTX offered hands-on training when he transitioned from work in the oil fields, but that isn't the only thing he likes about Colorado Valley. "I love working with my employees. I enjoy my job and meeting new customers," he says. "I try to make everybody happy, and that makes me want to keep working for a great company."

He encourages others to pursue careers with CVCTX. "Come work for a great company with good benefits and great people to work with," he says. "Meeting our great customers and making them

happy with our service. That's what keeps me here."

General Manager Kelly Allison says the company is honored to have such loyal employees and proud of the service they provide.

"It is great to celebrate our longtime employees' service milestones," he says. "This demonstrates their dedication in serving our customers. Colorado Valley is a family of great employees whose purpose is to serve our customers and community, and it makes me proud of those that have been here so long." 

## HONORING DECADES OF SERVICE

### Other 30-year Colorado Valley Communications employees are:

- Kay Loehr, associate accountant
- Mike Hensel, field engineer

### 25-year employees are:

- Greg Janda, outside plant supervisor
- Pam Gerik, billing supervisor
- Darla Kubala, purchasing coordinator
- Laurie Boehm, executive administrative assistant



# Community Boosters

## Employee charity helps area nonprofits

Story by MELANIE JONES

More people in Fayette County can get the help they need through The Red Door Fund for Mental Health, which pays for internships with local counselors. Adults on the autism spectrum or those with learning challenges get support from And Then a New Day, which teaches work and social skills. And kids have a place to go after school where they can have fun and learn responsibility in a safe environment at the Boys & Girls Club of Champion Valley.

The Colorado Valley Communications Charity Fund helps make all these things possible.

The fund—bankrolled by voluntary payroll contributions by CVCTX team members—supports local nonprofit organizations. Since the program's inception in 1995, the group of employees has donated about \$65,000 to local communities.

### HELPING CLOSE TO HOME

In 2024, the charity fund gave money to The Red Door Fund for Mental Health,

And Then a New Day and the Boys & Girls Club of Champion Valley.

"The vision of The Red Door Fund for Mental Health is for those struggling with mental illness and their loved ones in this rural region to not only have access to the resources they need and be able to navigate those resources, but also be able to turn to any person for support and feel accepted, understood and unashamed," says Angela Taylor, representative of the Colorado Valley Communications Charity Fund.

The Colorado Valley Communications Charity Fund's contribution to Red Door can fund peer support programs in local schools, where students are trained to talk with their classmates who are struggling and turn to adult leaders in serious situations. The program funds interns for local counselors to improve access to mental health care in the area and training for therapy dogs.

Red Door also distributes yard signs and door hangers for Red Door Day on Feb. 12, so community members can let their neighbors know they are a safe

space, says Ashleigh Parks of the Greater Fayette Community Foundation, which founded the program.

And Then a New Day provides meaningful work, social and life opportunities for young adults who are on the autism spectrum or have learning challenges. One way it does that is through Jack & Mary's General Good, a coffee shop staffed by clients of And Then a New Day.

And the Boys & Girls Club of Champion Valley enables all young people—especially those who need the community the most—to reach their full potential as productive, caring, responsible citizens, Angela says.

CVCTX supports the groups' visions or mission statements and is committed to giving back to the community. "These organizations are always very appreciative and honored that they were chosen for a donation from the CVC Charity Fund, and in return it makes the charity committee feel good knowing that they were able to help make a difference for that organization," Angela says. ☎



Pictured are, back row from left, April Brossmann, Ty Janak, Presley Foster, Amy Machac and Logon Carrol. Front from left are CVCTX Customer Relations Assistant Faith Stork, Brooke Shimek, Amy Vaculik and CVCTX Central Office Tech Kyle Marek.



CVCTX recently donated \$1,000 to the Gardenia E. Janssen Animal Shelter. On hand for the check presentation are W.O. Wood, CVCTX Purchasing Coordinator Darla Kubala, Teresa Brown, Animal Shelter Board President Frank Reichert and CVCTX Maintenance Technician Deric Weyand.

# Fantastic Frying

Flavorful chicken with the finest sides

Many say munching on piping-hot, crispy fried chicken is a joy like no other. Whether it's juicy white meat from the breast or the wings or the deep, engaging flavors of the dark meat found in thighs and legs, when it comes to fried chicken, most everyone has a preference. But there are a few things that good pieces of fried chicken have in common—the skin must stay on, and it must be crispy.

That's not too much to ask, but it's something that many cooks cannot achieve. There's a knack to it that may take a few extra steps, but the endgame is well worth it.

Serve the chicken alongside a big spoonful of potato salad and finish with a bowl of banana pudding and you have a meal fit for a beautiful summer evening.



**Food Editor  
Anne P. Braly  
is a native of  
Chattanooga,  
Tennessee.**

Photography by **Mark Gilliland**  
Food Styling by **Rhonda Gilliland**

## CRISPY FRIED CHICKEN

- 1 (4-pound) chicken, cut into pieces
- 1 cup whole milk buttermilk
- 2 cups all-purpose flour for coating
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 2 quarts vegetable oil for frying

Dry chicken with paper towels. Put the flour in a large plastic bag. Let the amount of chicken you are cooking dictate the amount of flour you use. Season the flour with paprika, garlic powder, salt and pepper to taste. Paprika helps to brown the chicken.

Dip chicken pieces in buttermilk then, a few at a time, put them in the bag with the flour, seal the bag and shake to coat well.

Place the coated chicken on a cookie sheet or tray, and cover with a clean dish

towel or waxed paper. Let sit until the flour reaches a paste-like consistency. This step is important to ensure that the skin will be crispy and adhere to the chicken.

Fill a large skillet (cast iron is best) about 1/3 to 1/2 full of vegetable oil. Heat until very hot.

Put in as many chicken pieces as the skillet can hold. Brown the chicken in hot oil on both sides.

When browned, reduce heat and cover the skillet. Let cook for 30 minutes (the chicken will be cooked through but not crispy). Remove cover, raise heat again and continue to fry until crispy. Drain the fried chicken on paper towels. Depending on how much chicken you have, you may have to fry it in a few batches. Keep the finished chicken in a slightly warm oven while preparing the rest.





## LOADED BAKED POTATO SALAD

- 4 pounds russet potatoes
- 1-2 tablespoons olive oil
- 3 tablespoons apple cider vinegar
- 1 cup mayonnaise
- 3/4 cup sour cream or full-fat Greek yogurt
- 1/2 cup cheddar cheese
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 12 ounces bacon, cooked, cooled and chopped
- 6 green onions, whites and green parts, chopped

Preheat the oven to 400 F. Place cleaned potatoes on a baking sheet and pierce four to five times with a fork. Lightly coat with olive oil, sprinkle with kosher salt and cook for 50-60 minutes or until easily pierced with a cake tester or skewer. Remove from the oven and let cool for 5 minutes. When cool enough to

handle, peel the potatoes and cut into 1-inch chunks, discarding the potato skins. The potato flesh may crumble and get shaggy, and that's OK—transfer it all to a large mixing bowl. While still warm, sprinkle the potatoes with the apple cider vinegar. Set aside for 15-30 minutes or until the potatoes are cooled.

Meanwhile, cook the bacon in a large skillet or in the oven, drain and let cool. Crumble into bite-size pieces.

In a small bowl, mix the mayonnaise and sour cream. Season with the kosher salt and pepper.

When the potatoes are cool, pour the mayonnaise mix over them with the crumbled bacon, green onion and cheddar cheese. Gently fold the ingredients together. Season with more salt and pepper to taste. Refrigerate for 3 hours up to overnight before serving. Store in the refrigerator for up to four days.

## NUTTER BUTTER 'NANA PUDDING

- 8 ounces softened cream cheese
- 1 (14-ounce) can sweetened condensed milk
- 2 (3.4-ounce) boxes instant vanilla pudding
- 2 3/4 cups cold milk

- 8 ounces whipped topping divided
- 1 (1-pound) package Nutter Butter or other peanut butter sandwich cookies
- 5-7 ripe bananas, sliced



In a large mixing bowl, beat the softened cream cheese until smooth. Add the condensed milk and mix until there are no lumps.

In a second bowl, mix the pudding mix and milk together until smooth. Pour the pudding into the cream cheese mixture and mix until completely combined. Fold in half of the whipped topping.

Line the bottom of a trifle dish with a layer of Nutter Butter cookies. Add a layer of banana slices on top of the cookies. Spread a layer of the pudding mixture evenly over the bananas. Repeat 1-3 times, depending on the size of your dish.

Spread the remaining whipped topping on top of the pudding. Cover and chill for at least 4 hours but overnight is best.

Crush a few Nutter Butters on top of the whipped topping immediately before serving. 🍪



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