



Mountain Telephone

MARCH/APRIL 2026

CONNECTION



To the Rescue

Volunteers protect the Red River Gorge

LOCAL CULTURE

BUDGET-FRIENDLY DESSERTS



RURAL CONNECTIONS

By Shirley Bloomfield, CEO
NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association

A Grateful Goodbye

This column is different than the others I’ve written over the years, because it’s my last as CEO of NTCA. When I began working at NTCA nearly 40 years ago, “broadband” wasn’t a household word. “Universal service,” while a longtime national goal, was a concept more than a mission. And “rural America” was too often an afterthought in conversations about connectivity.

Over the course of my career, I have watched the industry transform and a movement grow, powered by NTCA’s small, community-based providers. These providers are determined to bring advanced broadband to the communities they call home, even in places where the maps say it couldn’t be done and the economics didn’t work. Every day they do the extraordinary, proving what is possible when community comes first.

I’ve been honored to witness that perseverance firsthand. I’ve seen providers work through the night after storms so families could reconnect with loved ones. Thanks to their hard work building Smart Rural Communities, students in small towns can access educational opportunities far beyond their county lines. Farmers, small businesses and entrepreneurs use their fiber connections to grow, compete and thrive—without leaving the places they love.

Broadband is about more than technology. It’s access to health care, education, safety and economic opportunities. It’s the ability to stay rooted while reaching outward. And at its core, it’s about people, the NTCA members who make connectivity possible and the customers they proudly serve.

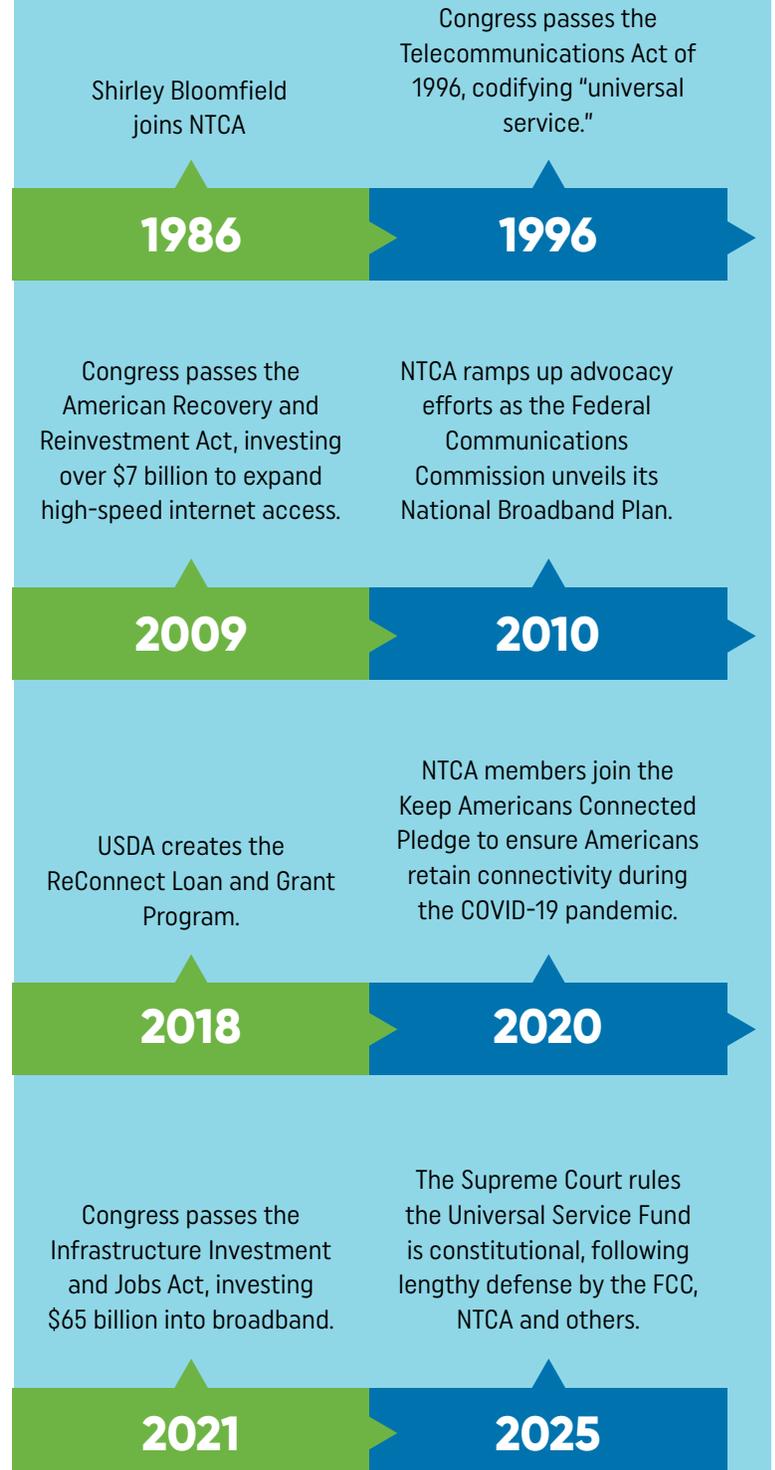
When I reflect on my many years with NTCA, I think about all of the people who shaped not only my journey, but the story of rural America itself. The CEOs who started out on construction crews or at finance desks, the family-owned companies now in their fourth generations, co-op boards that hold community meetings in gymnasiums, NTCA staff who pour every ounce of passion into serving members and the federal partners who understand what makes rural broadband so special.

As I step into my next chapter, I do so with deep gratitude, for the providers who serve with heart, communities that refuse to settle for “just good enough” and Americans who know that high-quality connectivity is not a luxury, but a necessity.

Thank you for reminding me every day why this work matters. [📧](#)

ADVANCING BROADBAND IN RURAL AMERICA

NTCA–The Rural Broadband Association works to build a better broadband future for rural America, representing about 850 independent, family-owned and community-based telecommunications companies. The tenure of Shirley Bloomfield, named CEO in 2010, highlights a time of significant industry achievement.





Adobe Stock image by Primex Legacy

Keep Your Health on Track

Apps can be a helpful tool for managing medications

Story by MELANIE JONES

People who take just one pill a day may find it easy to remember. Adding in a few supplements makes the process a little more complicated. It's not hard to understand how individuals who take multiple prescriptions may need some help keeping up with it all.

It isn't simply a matter of remembering to take the pills or administer the injection. Some medications need to be taken at certain times of the day, while others require multiple, precisely timed doses. Certain drugs should be taken before eating, other treatments are taken with a meal, and still others instruct patients to take them on a full stomach.

Managing medications correctly is vital to staying healthy and living life to the fullest. Fortunately, there are digital tools that can help. Many of these apps also allow users to keep track of their vital signs and make notes about changes they notice in their health. With all this information at hand, doctor appointments can go much more smoothly.

Several free apps are available that not only remind users when to take their medicine but also offer information on how different drugs interact, track symptoms and even prepare a report for doctors. One warning—because they are free, some apps ask permission to share your data with drug companies so they can research drug compliance and effectiveness.

MY THERAPY

The My Therapy app has attracted attention in the last year, including being featured on ABC and in Wired magazine. The app allows users to set reminders, log when they've taken medicine or skipped it and track weight, blood pressure, blood sugar and other health indicators.

MEDISAFE

In addition to tracking prescriptions, schedules and health indicators and warning about potential drug interactions, Medisafe users can name a "Medifriend," someone who will be notified if a dose is

missed. Users can also keep tabs on their children's or other dependents' medication information separately from their own. When adding medications to their Medisafe profiles, users can specify the shape and color of the drug, helping them keep straight which pill or capsule is which.

DOSECAST

For people who have multiple medications to take at different times of the day, Dosecast may be the best choice. The app assigns a sound to each medication, so users receive prescription-specific reminder notifications. It also keeps track of when it's time to order refills. Like the other apps, Dosecast also allows users to track key health indicators.

All these apps are on Google Play or Apple's App Store. They also can interact with the health apps built into phones to provide a better overall picture of your health. [📱](#)

Spring Cleaning

Practical advice for broadband success

Spring cleaning might include tidying up the garage, preparing for a garden or organizing a cluttered closet. It often takes some strategic planning and at least a little elbow grease. But there's another type of annual cleanup that can make life easier, and it doesn't even need much, if any, physical effort.



SHAYNE ISON
General Manager

Over the past few years, how we use the internet has changed, expanding in ways that may seem surprising. The rise of artificial intelligence is a prominent example. So, the internet services that once supported email and basic web browsing now handle schoolwork, video calls, online shopping, security systems, streaming media and, yes, even AI-driven tools and resources.

This is the world Mountain Telephone's service was designed to serve—robust, reliable and scalable. We have the infrastructure to grow with your changing needs. But if you want to get the most out of your internet connection, you can help too. This is where a little digital spring cleanup comes in, and it's easy.

Start with a practical step. Take stock of the number of connected devices you have. Include phones, tablets, smart televisions and security systems. Even look in places like the kitchen because a surprising number of appliances connect to Wi-Fi. Generally, when idle, none of these devices stress your high-quality internet service. You have plenty of capacity.

But when everyone is home and those devices are in heavy use, you may notice a slowdown. Imagine a couple of kids gaming in one room, someone else streaming a high-definition movie down the hall and a student busy with homework on her laptop in another room.

After listing the number of devices on your network, consider if your internet service meets that demand. We're happy to help. Contact Mountain Telephone, and we'll discuss your needs in order to identify the most appropriate broadband package to satisfy the demands of all your services. In many households, it's key to providing the best experience.

Once that is complete, there's a second task. Consider the location of your Wi-Fi router, which works best when strategically placed with few obstructions. Think of Wi-Fi as a radio signal rich with data transmitting throughout your location. Thick walls, devices like microwaves with disruptive signals of their own and simply the distance between the router and devices can make a significant difference in performance. As devices are added and moved, this could change your Wi-Fi coverage needs. There are solutions for any space, and we are happy to discuss what options we have.

And that's it, two steps to a broadband spring cleaning. It shouldn't take more than a few minutes, and the gains can be profound. The goal is an internet service that fits seamlessly into the background. Students can focus on learning instead of waiting on screens to load. Families can easily stay connected with loved ones and access services. You're even prepared if work comes home with you.

Enjoy the spring. Please let us know how we can help you make the most of our service. And thank you for being part of the Mountain Telephone family. 

The Mountain Telephone Connection is a bimonthly newsletter published by Mountain Rural Telephone Cooperative, © 2026. It is distributed without charge to all member/owners of the cooperative.



Mountain Telephone

Mountain Rural Telephone Cooperative Inc., is a member-owned cooperative dedicated to providing communications technology to the people of Elliott, Menifee, Morgan, Wolfe and a section of Bath counties. The company covers 1,048 square miles and supplies service to nearly 11,500 members.

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UTILITY RESOURCES

On the Cover:



Members of the Wolfe County Search & Rescue Team volunteer their time to help those lost or injured in the Red River Gorge.
See story Page 8.

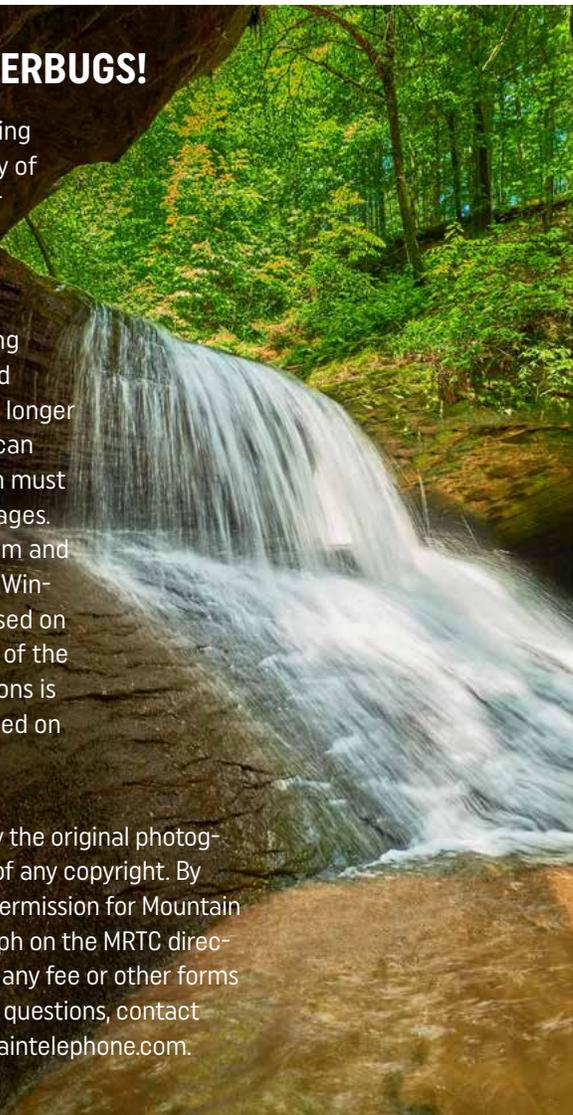
Photo courtesy of Wolfe County Search & Rescue

CALLING ALL SHUTTERBUGS!

Have you captured a breathtaking snapshot that shows the beauty of Bath, Elliott, Menifee, Morgan or Wolfe counties? If so, we want to hear from you.

Mountain Telephone is accepting photos for its next directory and calendar. Printed photos will no longer be accepted. Each submission can include up to two photos, which must be digital, high-quality JPEG images. To submit photos, go to mrtc.com and select the "Photo Contest" tab. Winning photos will be selected based on creativity, quality and portrayal of the area. The deadline for submissions is June 1. Winners will be announced on or before Sept. 30.

All entries must be submitted by the original photographer who has sole ownership of any copyright. By entering the contest, you give permission for Mountain Telephone to use your photograph on the MRTC directory or annual calendar without any fee or other forms of compensation. For additional questions, contact Hope Potter at hpotter@mountaintelephone.com.



ATTENTION, HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS!

Now is the time to apply for scholarships through Mountain Telephone and the Foundation for Rural Service. With as much as \$9,000 available, don't miss out on these opportunities.

"These scholarships can be so important for our local high school students," Mountain Telephone General Manager Shayne Ison says. "I encourage everyone to take the time to review the application. If you qualify, apply!"

Mountain Telephone and Morehead State University Scholarships

Since 1988, Mountain Telephone has offered a four-year renewable scholarship for high school seniors planning to attend MSU. Currently, Mountain offers four renewable awards for students at each high school in Elliott, Menifee, Morgan and Wolfe counties and one in Bath County. The application deadline is March 15. Learn more at mrtc.com/scholarships.

Mountain Telephone and Kentucky Community & Technical College System Scholarships

Mountain will award two scholarships—valued at up to \$1,500 each—to high school graduates who live in the cooperative's service area and will present one scholarship in Bath County. Recipient can attend any of the four campuses: Licking Valley, Maysville, Montgomery and Rowan. These scholarships can be renewed for one additional year as long as minimum renewal criteria are met. Scholarship recipients are evaluated each semester and must maintain at least a 2.0 GPA. The application deadline is April 15. Learn more at mrtc.com/scholarships.



Enjoy a safe and fun Easter. In observance of Good Friday, our office will be closed Friday, April 3.

Walk This Way

Enjoy the pedestrian-friendly side of Greenville

Story by LAURA MCGILL

Located in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains with unique urban views and abundant natural hues, Greenville, South Carolina, offers plenty of ways to set your own pace. Enjoy a laced-up, fresh-air visit when you create your personal walking itinerary with choices for foodies, art lovers, sports fans, history buffs and nature enthusiasts.

DOWNTOWN DIRECTIONS

Perfect for a stroll, the wide and welcoming sidewalks of Main Street invite

visitors to explore the local scene. Start at NOMA Square and fuel up with a hearty breakfast at Roost Free Range Kitchen. Then it's time to start walking. Venture south to Falls Park on the Reedy to enjoy an urban waterfall. Get the best views from Liberty Bridge. Look up to appreciate the bridge's unique single-suspension construction. Be sure to check the schedule for the Greenville Drive, the High-A affiliate of the Boston Red Sox. They play home games on Main Street's Fluor Field, which is modeled after Boston's famous

Fenway Park, complete with its own Big Green Monster left-field wall.

TRAIPSING THE TRAIL

With design and etiquette guidelines to safeguard children and those with mobility challenges, the Prisma Health Swamp Rabbit Trail provides 28 miles of natural beauty for all fitness levels. Take a casual walk, a jog or a bike ride to discover area parks, attractions, shops and eateries. Didn't bring a bike? No problem. Greenville has several bike rental options.



Photo courtesy of VisitGreenvilleSC/Chelsey Ashford Photography

Wide shady pathways beckon cyclists to explore.

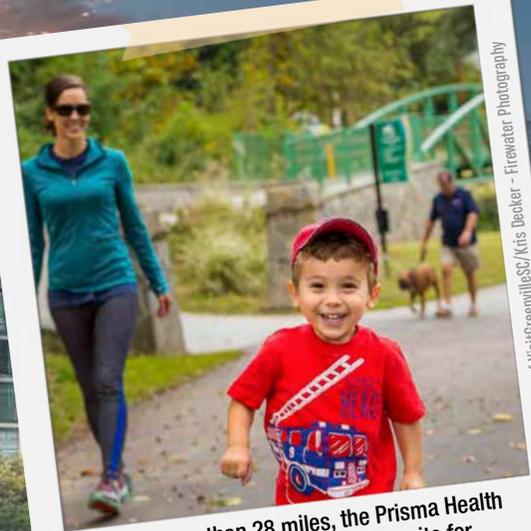


Photo courtesy of VisitGreenvilleSC/Kris Decker - Firewater Photography

Covering more than 28 miles, the Prisma Health Swamp Rabbit Trail Network is a favorite for walking, running and cycling.



Photo courtesy of VisitGreenvilleSC

Middle Wildcat Falls is a quick and easy hike from the roadside lower portion. Continue upstream with some moderate hiking to view Upper Wildcat Falls.

Urban waterfall at Falls Park

Plan to spend several hours at Cleveland Park, home to the Greenville Zoo, Rock Quarry Falls and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Treat yourself to a scratch-made pastry and a craft coffee at Swamp Rabbit Cafe & Grocery, a popular spot along the trail.

FUN FESTIVALS

Celebrate scientists, chefs, pitmasters and painters. On April 4, iMAGINE Upstate STEAM Festival spotlights science, technology, engineering, arts and math. Remember to grab extra napkins to savor the dishes at Southern

Roots: A BBQ Reunion on April 11. The culinary experiences continue April 16-19 at Spring Fest with a series of foodie events. Catch your breath and get ready for Artisphere, May 8-10, featuring the works of visual artists representing many different mediums.

WONDERFUL WATERFALLS

Within an hour's drive from downtown Greenville, enjoy the beauty of six more waterfalls. Easy views can be found at Wildcat Wayside Falls, a roadside pull-off. The middle portion of those falls is an easy hike, while the upper section calls

for moderate hiking. For those who are feeling energetic, the 1,200-foot change of elevation at Rainbow Falls offers a strenuous hiking challenge.

Greenville-area waterfalls are part of the Blue Ridge Escarpment, a geological feature where the Blue Ridge Mountains dramatically drop 2,000 feet to the Piedmont below. In total, the area is home to more than 50 waterfalls.

Plan your Greenville, South Carolina, trip at visitgreenvillesc.com or on Facebook @visitgreenvillesc. 

Preparing for the Unexpected

Search & Rescue volunteers save lives in remote locations

Story by LAURA MCGILL

Imagine being miles deep in the wilderness of Kentucky's Red River Gorge. It is truly a beautiful place to relax and connect with nature among the towering cliffs and sandstone arches. For the vast majority of the more than 1 million people who visit the gorge each year, the story ends there with wonderful memories of hiking and climbing.

However, a few stories from the Red River Gorge end differently. Some hikers

venture off the marked trails and get lost. Others suffer medical emergencies.

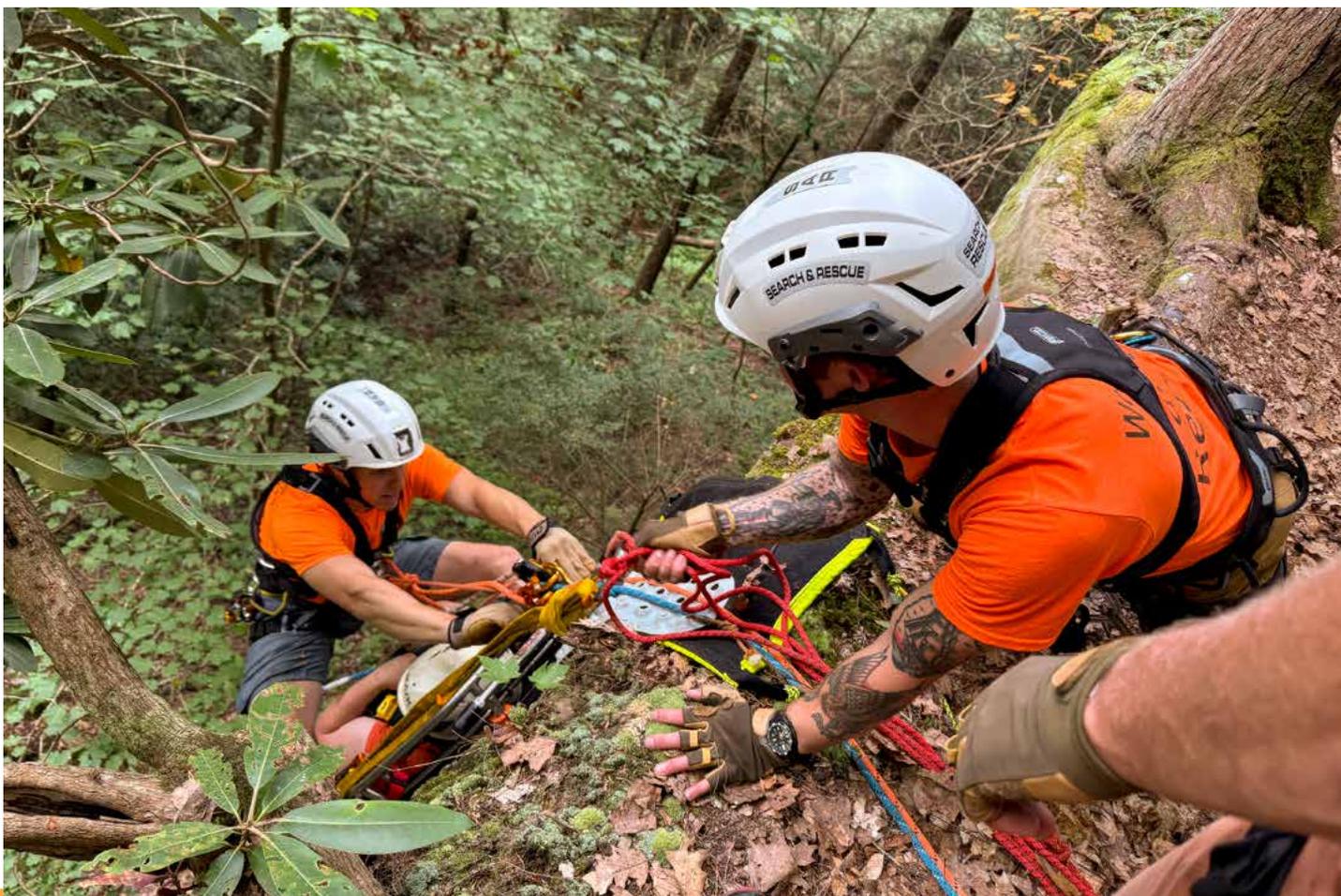
For many of those, the call for help is answered by the Wolfe County Search & Rescue Team, a group of 55 volunteers that performs 60-80 rescues each year.

DEDICATED VOLUNTEERS

WCSART was formed in 2003 with fewer than 10 volunteers in response to the pending retirement of Don Fig of the

U.S. Forest Service. During his 44 years as a ranger, Fig led rescue efforts for thousands in need. With his retirement, the Forest Service decided to train local teams to take over.

According to John May, WCSART chief and founding member, the team started from the ground up. "Over the years we've built the team up," he says. "We've worked on grants, fundraising and donations to equip the team and



Rope Tech Erik Kloeker, left, and Travis Sapp, both world-class climbers, practice a rescue at Muir Valley in the gorge.

Photos courtesy of WCSART

secure vehicles and boats. We've come a long way."

Some members of today's all-volunteer WCSART come from medical and first responder backgrounds. Others are factory workers, government employees and retirees. Many are climbers. All make the commitment to stay physically fit, undergo hours of training each year and be available 24/7.

"We all like that adrenaline side of it. The other side of it is everyone on the team just really likes helping people. It's very fulfilling to go out and make a difference," May says.

TECHNOLOGY AS A TOOL

Cellphone advancements have vastly improved the team's ability to perform rescues. In some cases, those rescues can even be managed without deploying team members. "If we don't have to send people into the woods, we're just that much better off," May says.

What allows his team members to help lost hikers without putting themselves in danger are tools such as Apple Emergency SOS and navigation apps like CalTopo and Gaia. With a phone's location-sharing feature enabled, the team can track callers' positions and give detailed directions to lead them out.

For those who need in-person rescue due to dangerous conditions or medical needs, that same technology allows the team to know the precise location and get

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

The Red River Gorge continues to grow in popularity among hikers and climbers. The Wolfe County Search & Rescue Team offers these tips in hopes its services are not needed.

- Know where you are going. Bring a map and compass. Use navigation apps such as Gaia or CalTopo.
- Stay on the marked trails and at least 10 feet away from cliff edges.
- Tell someone where and when you are hiking. Check back in when you are out safely.
- Bring the essentials. Pack water, food, first-aid kit, flashlights, matches, extra clothing and an emergency blanket.
- Charge your phone fully, bring a backup charger and enable the location feature. Your phone is your lifeline when you need help.
- Know your own ability and limitations. Stay hydrated and take breaks as needed.

to the person in crisis as soon as possible. It also allows May to keep an eye on his team members, tracking on-screen in real time to make sure they get out safely.

MEDICAL EMERGENCIES

People who suffer from a traumatic injury or health emergency in the Red River Gorge are often located long distances from a trailhead. To reach them, WCSART volunteers must hike in carrying all the gear and medical equipment they will need. Those hikes can cross challenging terrain and take place any hour of the day or night during any weather condition.

To provide the emergency services needed on scene, WCSART has skilled volunteers working under medical direction. This is vital because the nearby ambulance service cannot divert its

personnel to help with rescues that could take several hours.

"We are able to provide BLS, which is Basic Life Support, from the EMTs, paramedics, doctors and nurses on our team," May says.

After they provide initial care, WCSART volunteers then must hike back out, often with the person in a Stokes basket, a stretcher designed for search and rescue operations. The longest distance hiked in and out for a rescue has been 14 miles.

HELPING THE HELPERS

Outfitting a team for this work does not come cheap, and the need for financial support is constant. WCSART receives crucial funding from the Kentucky Division of Emergency Management Search and Rescue Aid Fund. That is supplemented with donations and fundraising efforts.

Kentucky residents can show their support with a special Red River Gorge license plate designed by a group led by WCSART team member Kevin Osbourn. It depicts Sky Bridge in Wolfe County. Ten dollars from each purchase and renewal helps fund the team.

Learn more about these dedicated volunteers at wcsart.com, and find WCSART on Facebook @WCSART. 

WCSART members watch as teammate Erik Kloeker works to free a climber whose knee got stuck in a crack at Duncan Rock Climbing area. Kloeker helped her rappel, uninjured, 30 feet to the ground.



ALWAYS PREPARED

Scouting America readies kids to protect themselves online

Dozens of Scouts attend a Department of Homeland Security event about online safety.

Story by DREW WOOLLEY

In his days as a Scout, Justin Williams was always drawn to outdoor skills. He excelled at building fires and tying knots. He struggled more with identifying plants, and, even today, he says he still hasn't picked up the knack for it. But as he got older, the leadership skills he was learning every step of the way stood out to him.

"Those are all important skills, but the thing we're really coaching is how to work within a team, be good citizens for the future and make good, ethical decisions," he says. "I thought I was just having fun. But I was really learning a lot of leadership skills that have benefited me throughout my life."

Today, as scout executive for Scouting America's Palmetto Council in South Carolina and den leader for a group of second graders, Justin is amazed at the technology available to young children. There's even technology that could have helped him identify plants as a Scout.

As a result, while Scouting America, formerly the Boy Scouts of America, still emphasizes the importance of getting outside and working with others, the organization is increasingly recognizing the need to meet kids where they are with technology.

Just last year, it introduced its first merit badges for cybersecurity and artificial intelligence. Others, like the Know2Protect badge, are specifically aimed at teaching Scouts about the importance of personal safety online.

"While we know there are a lot of benefits to technology, we also know that, unfortunately, there are people online who do not have our kids' best interest at heart," Justin says. "We need to help our kids recognize who is an ally, who is trying to do them harm and what to do when they encounter those types of people."

THE NEW NORMAL

For Scouting America's Chief Safeguarding Officer Glen Pounder, that work starts with the adults around each Scout. His office in Irving, Texas, provides training for all Scout leaders around the threats kids may face online—from cyberbullying and body image issues to pornography and sexual exploitation.

"One of our key mottoes is be prepared for life. There's no life these days without the online space," he says. "Our new normal as an organization is we have to be comfortable always looking for what is next, particularly with technology. I think it's about landing the message in a way that is not creating fear. That this is just part of preparing for life."

Starting from kindergarten, Scouting America encourages parents of new Scouts to have their own conversations with their children about general safety practices. As kids earn their annual ranks, they must complete six core components, one of which is additional safety training. Starting in fourth grade, that training includes lessons on what information they should not give out in online settings.

In addition, Scouting America partnered with the Department of Homeland Security in 2024 to build an awareness campaign about the risks kids face online. Scouts and their families can join in-person training sessions and activities or online presentations to learn how to prevent and report online abuse, earning them an exclusive Know2Protect patch.

Glen's hope is that more widespread awareness and training within Scouting America troops can even help protect kids who are not part of the program.

"There's a ripple effect outside of scouting. Each Scout has

friends, siblings and other non-Scouts around them that they share things with,” he says. “So, if you’ve got a million trained Scouts out there it makes it much harder for anyone who’s thinking about abusing their position of trust to get away with it.”

MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER

While preventing these abuses from happening in the first place is the top priority, Glen emphasizes it is just as important for kids to feel comfortable speaking with an adult, whether it’s a parent or a Scout leader, if they do find themselves in one of these situations. If not, the outcome can be tragic.

Justin cites the example of an Eagle Scout in Spartanburg, South Carolina, in the last few years who took his own life. He had connected with someone online and shared compromising photos, only to have those photos used to exploit him.

“He didn’t think there was any other option, so he decided to take his own life,” Justin says. “When you think about the perfect kid, this is the kid that would come to mind. So, this isn’t something that only targets dysfunctional families. Criminals are getting smarter every day, and we just can’t take anything for granted.”

For Glen, that comes down to preparing kids for dangerous situations, trusting them to use the tools available to them and offering understanding if they find themselves in trouble.

“If we haven’t empowered these kids correctly, then the fear stays with them. We need to take that fear away,” he says. “Our focus is on prevention first. But then, if something happens, take a breath and then we’ll move forward. We know what to do, we’re going to get there. You’re not alone in this.” 📱

BADGE OF HONOR

Scouting America badges aren’t just for archery and pioneering anymore. Here are a few tech-savvy badges and patches today’s Scouts are collecting.

Cybersecurity Merit Badge

Introduces Scouts to various cyberthreats, including viruses, worms, social engineering and denial-of-service attacks. They learn to protect themselves with strong passwords, firewalls, antivirus software and encryption.



Artificial Intelligence Merit Badge

Helps Scouts explore what AI is, different types of AI and how to use it in everyday life. They are also challenged to discuss issues around data privacy, bias in AI systems and the ethics of this new technology.



Know2Protect Patch

Serves as a symbol of the Scout’s commitment to online safety and digital citizenship through participation in the Department of Homeland Security’s Project iGuardian training. The training provides knowledge and skills to protect themselves against online abuse.



A Scout tries on a Homeland Security investigations vest.

Photos courtesy of Scouting America



The Laurel Gorge Dulcimer Club performs at the center.

Elliott County's Hidden Gem

Laurel Gorge Cultural Heritage Center is a community hub

Story by LAURA MCGILL

You might not expect to find guided hikes offered at the same place you can join a quilting group. Or a gift shop featuring local artisans in the same spot where you can launch a kayak. These diverse opportunities and more live in harmony at the Laurel Gorge Cultural Heritage Center in Sandy Hook.

The natural beauty of the Laurel Gorge attracts many visitors. With a stop at the LGCHC, they can explore the main trail system, which covers approximately 3 miles. Additional primitive trails add more than 2 more miles of exploration. Along the trails, hikers can enjoy views of cliff walls, rock shelters, creeks and waterfalls.

For those looking to learn more about the area, volunteer Camila Haney conducts free guided hikes throughout the year. Her popular spring hike includes identification of more than 20 different blooming plants in the gorge. The Spring 2026 Wildflower Walk is planned for Saturday, April 11. Elliott County Extension Agent Jacob Ison occasionally joins Camila in the fall to lead a tree identification hike.

Kayakers can take in the scenery along Laurel Creek with a convenient launch near the center. And everyone is welcome to use the picnic tables on the center's deck and along the hiking trails.

STEP INSIDE

In addition to providing information to travelers, the Laurel Gorge Cultural Heritage Center showcases local history with a small museum. Visitors can view tributes to local musicians and artists and exhibits highlighting artifacts, memorabilia and nature.

The Foothills Artisan Center is well-stocked with locally crafted products.

Visitors can up their souvenir game from the selection of paintings, photographs, fabric crafts, carvings and specialty food items, such as honey, jams, fruit butters and a wide array of candies.

With an impressive collection of historical documents, the Elliott County Historical Society is a helpful stop for genealogy buffs. Independent research can be conducted anytime the LGCHC is open. Help



Beautiful wooden bowls are available for purchase at the LGCHC Foothills Artisan Center.

from a society volunteer can be scheduled in advance.

STRINGS AND THREADS

The Laurel Gorge Dulcimer Club, led by Doris Tolliver, offers classes on most Wednesday evenings, and beginners are welcome. The center also hosts frequent sewing and quilting workshops. Some teach basic skills while others, like the multiweek Quilt-Along Series, allow participants to complete a larger project. A recent series worked on a double wedding ring quilt design.

The quilting group, led by Lillebit Quilts owner Liz Turner, works on community service projects, including quilts for veterans and members of law enforcement. “Our group makes quilts and other items for local veterans, foster care kids, nursing home residents and others in need,” says Christy Lewis, LGCHC director. “It is our way of supporting our local community.”

Community members who do not quilt often help by donating fabric and supplies to the projects.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Seasonally, the LGCHC hosts craft and vendor fairs to help showcase local craftspeople, artisans and small business own-

ers. At last year’s annual Christmas fair, the center was overflowing with nearly 20 vendors, featuring everything from floral designs and ceramic work to hand-woven baskets and intricate wood workings.

The Spring Craft & Vendor Fair is scheduled for Saturday, April 4. “Beginning in late March, we will be posting a preview of the vendors on our Facebook page,” Christy says. “I know people will get excited when they see the beautiful, handcrafted items and the homemade baked goods.”

The LGCHC Facebook page is also the best place to find information about guided hikes, dulcimer practice, crafting classes and quilting and sewing workshops.

STAYING CONNECTED

The Laurel Gorge Cultural Heritage Center relies on Mountain Telephone. Phone and internet services allow LGCHC staffers to respond to questions over the phone, via email and on the Facebook page. “As a county entity, we do not receive any funds for our events or for advertising,” Christy says. “We promote our activities on Facebook and monitor closely for questions.”

The center’s isolated location in the gorge makes Mountain Telephone’s

LAUREL GORGE CULTURAL HERITAGE CENTER

182 Cultural Center Road, Sandy Hook

606-738-5543

lgchcenter.com

Follow the Laurel Gorge Cultural Heritage Center on Facebook.

The center is open Monday, Tuesday and Thursday, 12-4 p.m. and Wednesday and Friday, 12-5 p.m. Saturday hours are seasonal. School groups are welcome with advance notice.

To schedule an appointment with the Elliott County Historical Society, call 606-794-2183.

MRTC Secure service a vital part of operations. Cameras and sensors help Christy monitor any concerns. “The app for the security system allows for monitoring the cameras, and notifications come through when something out of the ordinary is detected,” she says. 📱



ABOVE: A butterfly pauses to enjoy a blooming wingstem in Laurel Gorge.

RIGHT: A double wedding ring pattern is the most recent Quilt-Along Series project.



Photos courtesy of Laurel Gorge Cultural Heritage Center

Treat Yourself

WITHOUT BREAKING THE BANK

Rich desserts shouldn't cost a fortune

For many Americans, going to the grocery store can be stressful since prices don't seem to be coming down. But we still want to have our cake and eat it too. So, it's nice—and entirely possible—to treat ourselves to something sweet at the end of the meal without breaking the bank.

There are some tricks to keep in mind to help you stay on budget while still satisfying your sweet tooth. For example, if a recipe calls for pecans, walnuts, a less expensive alternative, can be substituted. And use store brands whenever possible—a cost-saving practice that always saves pennies.



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

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

CHOCOLATE BANANA BARS

- | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1/2 cup butter | 1 teaspoon baking powder |
| 1 cup sugar | 1 teaspoon baking soda |
| 1 egg | 1/2 teaspoon salt |
| 1 teaspoon vanilla | 1/4 cup baking cocoa powder |
| 1 1/2 cups mashed banana | 1 cup chocolate chips |
| 1 1/2 cups flour | |

Preheat oven to 350 F.

Mix the butter, sugar, egg, vanilla and banana. Then add the flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt. Put half of the mixture into a separate bowl and add the cocoa powder.

Grease the bottom of a 9-by-13-inch pan and pour in the cocoa mixture. The mixture will be thick, just try and spread a thin layer across the bottom. It will rise and make a beautiful, thin bar. Use a smaller pan if you want a thicker bar, however, it will need to bake longer to get the middle done.

Spread the rest of the batter on top of the cocoa mixture. Sprinkle the top with as many or as few chocolate chips as you like.

Bake for about 30 minutes or until the top is browned and a toothpick comes out clean.



BLUEBERRY COFFEECAKE

- 2 cups white sugar
- 1 cup butter, softened
- 2 eggs
- 1 cup sour cream
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 cup plus 10 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup fresh or frozen blueberries
- 1/2 cup brown sugar
- 1/2 cup pecans
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 tablespoon powdered sugar for dusting

Preheat the oven to 350 F. Grease and flour a 9-inch Bundt pan.

Beat sugar and butter together in a large bowl with an electric mixer until light and fluffy. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Beat in sour cream and vanilla extract. In another bowl, combine flour, baking powder and salt. Stir into butter mixture until just blended. Fold in blueberries.

Spoon half of the batter into the prepared pan. Combine brown sugar, pecans and cinnamon in a small bowl. Sprinkle half of the mixture over the batter in the pan.

Spoon remaining batter on top, then sprinkle on remaining pecan mixture. Use a knife or thin spatula to swirl the mixture into the cake.

Bake until a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean, about 1 hour to 1 hour 15 minutes. Let cake cool in the pan for 15 minutes before inverting. Invert carefully onto a serving plate. Dust with powdered sugar just before serving.



TROPICAL TWISTER

- 2 cups frozen pineapple chunks
- 4 ounces pineapple juice
- 2 scoops vanilla ice cream

Combine all ingredients in a blender and blend until smooth. If it's too thick, add a bit more pineapple juice. Scoop into bowls and, if desired, garnish with additional chopped pineapple and a dollop of whipped cream. Serve immediately. Makes 3 servings.

STRAWBERRIES AND CREAM PIE

- 1 prepared 9-inch pie shell, graham cracker or pastry crust, baked and cooled
- 1 8-ounce package cream cheese, softened
- 1/3 cup granulated sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon almond extract
- 1 cup whipped topping, thawed
- 4 cups fresh strawberries, washed, hulled and halved
- 1/2 cup semisweet chocolate chips
- 1 tablespoon shortening

Bake crust at 350 F for 15 minutes or until light golden brown. Cool completely.

In a large bowl, beat the softened cream cheese until it is fluffy. Gradually add the sugar and almond extract, beating until fully combined. Gently fold the whipped topping into the cream cheese mixture until smooth.

Spread the cream cheese mixture evenly into the cooled pie crust. Arrange the strawberry halves, cut side down or pointed side up, over the filling.

In a small, microwave-safe bowl, combine the chocolate chips and shortening. Microwave in 30-second intervals, stirring in between, until the chocolate is melted and smooth. Drizzle the melted chocolate over the top of the strawberries and cream filling.

Refrigerate the pie for at least 1-2 hours or until it is set and chilled before serving.



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