

CONNECTION



Cannon County Creatives

The arts take center stage in Woodbury

FOOTBALL
ALL-STARS

ADAPTIVE
SPORTS



By Shirley Bloomfield, CEO
NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association

Broadband Built to Last

How the Universal Service Fund Helps Keep Americans Connected

When we're connected, America thrives, and for rural communities, the federal Universal Service Fund (USF) helps community-based providers deliver broadband built to last for generations. This fund is critical for ensuring high-quality, affordable broadband services are available for families, schools, libraries, health care facilities and so much more.

The idea behind the USF is that all Americans should have reliable access to communications services at a reasonable cost—it's been a national objective for over a century and was codified into law in the 1996 Telecommunications Act. Today, the USF enables providers to make a business case to invest in many rural areas, sustain networks once they are built and keep service rates affordable.

Unfortunately, the USF is at risk of disruption. Last summer, a federal circuit court declared that the way the USF is funded is unconstitutional, and the case is now before the Supreme Court for review.

According to an August 2024 survey of more than 200 NTCA members across 35 states, the loss of USF support could be catastrophic for rural consumers. Respondents reported that rural consumers could see their monthly bills increase by \$72. And 68% of respondents said they may need to cancel over \$1 billion in deployment projects.

These survey results highlight the importance of the USF in both getting and keeping rural consumers connected to high-quality, affordable services. You can learn more at ntca.org/universalservice.



Adobe Stock Illustration by Julien Eichinger

The Buzz

An internet roadmap

The online world moves fast, and it's a rich, helpful place. In fact, there are so many opportunities and so many resources that keeping up with the latest can prove daunting. Here are a few hot topics:

VIDEO SHORTS

These bite-sized videos usually last a few seconds. They're often lighter in tone. Many are great for showing fun or helpful ideas quickly, such as cooking tips, telling a joke or sharing engaging facts. Others are simply silly fun. Most social media services offer some version of these videos.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE OR AI

AI is appearing in more and more places. It may help complete a text message, edit and sort photos on a smartphone or even create an image from scratch. And that's only the beginning. Think of AI as a smart, learning system capable of processing tremendous amounts of information—and it's changing and growing daily.

CRYPTOCURRENCY

This digital currency is stored and managed on secure systems. Bitcoin is a famous example, but there are many others. Some people use cryptocurrency to buy goods or services, and others consider it an investment. It's another growing, diversifying part of the digital world.

VIRTUAL REALITY OR VR

With the right hardware, such as VR goggles, virtual reality can be like stepping into a video game or movie. It's also a rapidly growing technology, expected to become more affordable and accessible over time.

Wading Into the Stream

Catch the current to entertainment

The arrival of streaming entertainment services brought the promise of simple, affordable access to deep, rich libraries of content.

So, how are these increasingly popular

services, ranging from Netflix to YouTube TV, doing? Seemingly endless content? Check. Simple and affordable? Well, that gets a little complicated.

With care, though, you can find the

services that not only meet your needs but also your budget. Live sports, ad-free options, high-definition streams and so much more are a few clicks away. 📺

DEFINE YOUR PRIORITIES

With so many possibilities, first consider what you generally want to watch. Do you love original dramas? Perhaps classic sitcoms and movies are your favorites? Are live sports or kids' programming your go-to shows? Or maybe it's a mix of all of the above. Here are a few options:

For exclusive originals: Netflix, Hulu and Max—formerly HBO Max—are standouts. They mix fresh shows and movies with a wealth of older favorites. And Hulu gives access to TV episodes the day after they air on traditional TV.

For family and classics:

Disney+ shines. And Peacock and Paramount+ serve up plenty of long-time favorites, as well as new shows.

AD TIERS

When it comes to pricing, streaming services increasingly offer a range of options—along with some tradeoffs.

Many services have lower-cost plans, but they come with ads. If you don't want interruptions, be prepared to pay extra. Similarly, Netflix offers a more expensive choice for high-definition content. Meanwhile Disney+ emphasizes the ability to bundle added services like Hulu.

Netflix: A lower-priced ad tier was introduced in 2023 to go along with the more expensive ad-free option.

Disney+ and Hulu: The price difference between ad-supported and ad-free versions is significant, so be aware when considering such services.

Amazon: Members of Amazon Prime must now pay an extra fee to remove ads from streaming content.

So, the price considerations of comparing streaming services to traditional cable television is more complex. But the system offers consumers greater choice—after all, many people don't mind ads. Pricing and offers can change quickly, so check each service for the current rates and offers.

LIVE SPORTS

Traditional TV networks are still the biggest player in the live sports world, but services like YouTube TV and Sling allow you to tap into many of those channels. However, the streamers are catching up.

Services like ESPN+, Peacock and Paramount+ have exclusive sports content. Amazon Prime hosts NFL games on Thursday nights. Even Netflix recently showcased a live night of boxing.

Then, there are also the direct-to-consumer options, like the NFL's Sunday Ticket or MLS Season Pass on Apple TV. Fans can binge-watch their favorite leagues.

Be a DIY VIP

Online resources and communities can help conquer many projects

Even though it doesn't always feel like it, spring is replacing winter, and I can't wait. It's time to get outside for fun and maybe a little bit of work, too. This is the time of year when many of us plan to spruce up the yard, plant a garden or tackle overdue home chores.



STEVE JOHNSON
Interim CEO

Whatever task you need to get done or hobby you enjoy, there are likely internet-based resources that can help. At DTC Communications, we see firsthand examples of how access to high-speed broadband empowers you to learn, plan and confidently execute projects.

Consider gardeners, for example. It doesn't matter if someone is a beginner or a seasoned green thumb, they can use the internet to research plant varieties suited to their climate, find layout ideas for vegetable gardens and even order seeds and supplies online. YouTube tutorials provide step-by-step guides for building trellises, creating compost bins and improving soil quality. Websites like the Farmers' Almanac and our fantastic state extension offices are also

great resources that can provide planting calendars and pest management tips.

Even better, online communities let gardeners share advice and troubleshoot problems in real time. From identifying mysterious weeds to diagnosing yellowing leaves, having access to expert advice—or a crowd of helpful fellow gardeners—can make all the difference.


Or perhaps you struggle with keeping a lush, green lawn. Those never happen by accident. Fortunately, you don't need to be a landscaping expert to achieve one. Go online to find lawn care schedules tailored to your region and learn about the right fertilizers, grass seed mixes and weed treatments. Online video tutorials show how to aerate your soil, reseed patchy areas and properly mow for healthy growth.

Tech-savvy homeowners can even use smart irrigation systems connected to Wi-Fi to control watering systems from a smartphone. These tools improve water usage and keep your lawn looking great, even during hot, dry spells.

There are plenty of other ways modern digital tools can make life a little easier. From fixing leaky faucets to repairing drywall, the internet has become a go-to resource for home repair solutions. With access to instructional videos, product reviews and downloadable manuals, you can tackle many common repairs.

While the internet can help you dream big about your spring projects, it's important to make safety a priority—especially if your plans involve digging. Before you break ground for a new garden bed, fence or deck, call 811 to have underground utilities marked. It's free. It's easy. And it could save you from costly repairs—or worse, a dangerous accident.

Broadband internet has made it easier than ever to plan and execute DIY projects, but some tasks still require a little extra preparation. As you gear up for a productive spring, let the web be your guide—but don't forget to make that crucial call before you dig.

Here at DTC, we're proud to keep our communities connected and equipped for success, whether you're planting tomatoes or building a new patio. Happy spring—and safe digging! 

The DTC Connection is published by DTC Communications, © 2025. It is distributed without charge to all members of the cooperative.



DTC Communications is a member-owned telephone cooperative established in 1951. The cooperative supplies communication, entertainment, and security products and services to residential and business customers primarily throughout Middle Tennessee.

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UTILITY RESOURCES

On the Cover:



The Cannon County Center for the Arts provides a stage for regional theater productions and hosts performing and visual arts classes.
See story Page 12.

Photo courtesy of Beth McCrary

DTC EMPLOYEES HONORED

Each year, DTC Communications bestows employee honors, presenting one team member with the Chester Patterson Award and another with Employee of the Year Award.

CHESTER PATTERSON AWARD

This award is given in memory of Chester Patterson, better known as "Mr. Pat." Mr. Pat was the first employee of DTC, and he worked for the cooperative until July 1990, when he retired at the age of 94. He passed away after his 99th birthday. His memory and dedication to DTC is commemorated each year through the award named in his honor.

The award winner is decided by nominations from co-workers, and the recipient must have a minimum of 10 years of service.

Leah Gregory, this year's recipient of the Chester Patterson Award, began her career with DTC on June 23, 2004, in customer service. She also worked as a dispatcher, and she currently serves as an engineering clerk.



Board President Bennie "Buck" Curtis presents Leah Gregory with the Chester Patterson Award.

EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR

The Employee of the Year Award is decided by nominations from the senior management team.

The 2024 Employee of the Year recipient, Santanna Ferrell, joined the Customer Experience Team on Sept. 8, 2022.



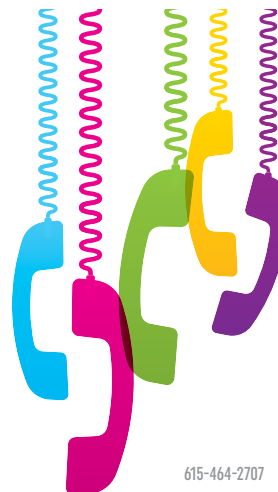
Board President Bennie "Buck" Curtis awards Employee of the Year Santanna Ferrell.



IT'S DAYLIGHT SAVING TIME

It's time to spring forward. Don't forget to set your clocks an hour ahead by 2 a.m. on Sunday, March 9. That's also a good time to change the batteries in your smoke detectors.

615-273-1093



FIND YOUR NUMBER!

A prize may be waiting for you in this issue! We have randomly selected the telephone numbers of 10 lucky DTC members and hidden them through this publication.

Find your number and call 615-683-1010 to claim your prize!

615-464-2707

ALONG FOR THE RIDE

Roller coasters take thrill-seekers to the limit

Story by KATHY DENES

It's a rite of passage—a child in the roller coaster line steps up to the mark, stands up straight and finally hits that magical measurement, tall enough to be welcomed aboard for a lifetime of adventure.

The thrill of roller coasters never grows old, whether they're modern rockets of cold, sleek steel or creaky, wooden rides that are a nostalgic nod to yesteryear. Around 1,000 coasters in the United States and thousands worldwide offer limitless options for destination vacations.

“At this point, I've been on just under 1,200 unique coasters at over 300 different amusement parks,” says James Nocito, a CoasterNerds contributing writer whose hobby of “chasing down rides” has taken him to 38 countries on four continents.

“Sometimes, I do actually think the hobby is ridiculous, but it's also given me a chance to visit all sorts of places I probably wouldn't have otherwise, like all 50 U.S. states. I guess I've always compared it to people who try to see a baseball game at every Major League Baseball stadium or such.”

Roller coaster fans seeking out the fastest ride, wildest twists and turns or just a new experience have created a community. Numerous websites, like coaster101.com, and social media pages, like Facebook's CoasterNerds, are dedicated to informing and connecting enthusiasts.

“There's this whole community within the parks and coasters fandom, and some of the best people I met from internet chatrooms or online message boards when I was a teenager are people I know 20-plus years later, now hanging out in person,” James says.

He hesitates to cite one roller coaster as his favorite, “but if I were going to suggest to someone some of the biggest, baddest or craziest rides in the U.S., I'd probably start with Fury 325.” That ride at Carowinds in Charlotte, North Carolina, is North America's tallest, fastest and longest giga coaster—one with a height or drop of at least 300 feet. 📺

IF YOU'RE GOING

- For a selection of the country's top 100 coasters, consult coasterbuzz.com/rollercoasters/top100.
- If taking younger travelers along, be sure to check height requirements for the coasters you hope to experience.
- To check real-time waits before you go, visit queue-times.com.
- Concerned about motion sickness? Snack on something fairly bland 30 minutes to an hour before jumping in line.





PLANNING A COASTER VACATION?

Consider visiting these thrill rides:

The Beast broke all records when it opened at Kings Island in Mason, Ohio, in 1979, and it still reigns as Guinness World Records' longest wooden roller coaster.

The Voyage at Holiday World in Santa Claus, Indiana, is the world's second-longest wooden coaster, running for 1.2 miles and featuring a world-record five underground tunnels.

It's always coaster weather at the Mall of America in Bloomington, Minnesota, where the 7-acre center court offers five unique options.

Two record-breaking coasters—the nation's first tilt coaster, the Circuit Breaker, and Palindrome, a one-of-a-kind infinity coaster—are set to open in Texas this year at Austin's COTALand.

Also opening this year at Cedar Point in Sandusky, Ohio, is the Siren's Curse, expected to break records for height, speed and longest tilt.



Photo courtesy of Lake Winnepesaukah



Adobe Stock photo by Panosk18

TOP: The Cannon Ball at Lake Winnepesaukah is the oldest wooden roller coaster in Georgia.

ABOVE: The Six Flags family of parks is known for exciting roller coasters, like the Joker at Six Flags Great Adventure in Jackson Township, N.J.

LEFT: Southern California's mild weather means rides like the roller coaster and Ferris wheel at Pacific Amusement Park on the Santa Monica Pier can be enjoyed throughout the year.

FIND YOUR THRILL

Look for CoasterNerds on Facebook and visit these websites for more information: coasterforce.com, aceonline.org, coaster101.com and coasterbuzz.com.



Adobe Stock illustration by Wasum

Season's Best | DTC honors 2024 football All-Stars

DTC Sports has named its fourth annual DTC Communications All-Star Team, honoring the best local high school football players from the 2024 season.

The team includes 25 student-athletes from area high schools, including Cannon, DeKalb and Smith counties, Gordonsville and Watertown. 615-215-1976

DTC Communications and DTC Sports celebrate each of our area team's success and are proud to recognize the outstanding student-athletes from the DTC service area, including the 2024 DTC Communications Player of the Year Blake Waldorf, of Watertown High School. 615-765-1880

DTC ALL-STAR TEAM



Chandler Hale
Cannon County



Zae Odom
Cannon County



Jake Rogers
Cannon County



Brayden Smithson
Cannon County



Zeke Walkup
Cannon County



Jarett Hamilton
DeKalb County



Cecil Ketchums
DeKalb County



Ryan Lyons
DeKalb County



Jordan Parker
DeKalb County



Ty Webb
DeKalb County



Will George
Gordonsville



Mason Greer
Gordonsville



Dalton Hancock
Gordonsville



Spencer Pipes
Gordonsville



Jemario Williams
Gordonsville



Jermaine Cason
Smith County



Cole Hackett
Smith County



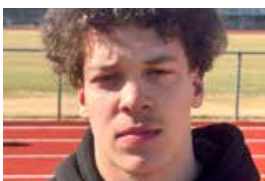
Paxton Hix
Smith County



Riley Martin
Smith County



Ethan Montgomery
Smith County



Jesse Bratcher
Watertown



Will Burns
Watertown



Marcus Reynolds
Watertown



Eli Scurlock
Watertown



Blake Waldorf
Watertown



Photo courtesy of Gabby Bartlett

Clothes, baby food, formula and more are available at the Pregnancy Resource Center of Smith County.

PARTNERING WITH PARENTS

Resource center helps during pregnancy and beyond

Story by MELANIE JONES

When a 23-year-old man came to the Pregnancy Resource Center of Smith County seeking help as he prepared to take custody of his baby, the center's staff leapt into action even though the circumstances were not typical.

In addition to providing traditional resources like parenting classes and infant car seats, the center helped the young father get in the Empower program, which is paying him to work and get an education at the same time. "He's doing a wonderful job of being a parent," Director Martha Hinton says.

The majority of the center's clients are mothers and expectant moms. The center offers free pregnancy tests and ultrasounds for gauging the stage of pregnancy during the first and second trimesters.

A medical director and two nurses on staff can prescribe prenatal vitamins. The center offers prenatal and parenting classes and can connect women with smoking cessation programs. Everything needed to ensure a healthy pregnancy is available through the center.

The resource center doesn't provide adoption services, but it works with two nearby agencies that connect expectant mothers with families who want children. "We just have a plethora of resources that we can get to these moms if they have any kind of need,"

Martha says. 615-597-7940

Because the center is a limited medical facility, once staff members confirm a pregnancy, they can help clients sign up for the federal supplemental nutrition program for women, infants and children, known as WIC, and for the state's Families First program. "That's probably about two or three months earlier than they otherwise could do it," Martha says.

HUNDREDS OF CLASSES OFFERED

The resource center's services don't end when the baby arrives. It can provide new infant car seats, manual breast pumps, other baby supplies and even clothes. Parents receive help until the child is 2 years old.

"We have more than 250 parenting classes, everything from first trimester all the way to life skills like budgeting," Martha says. With the help of early assistance, one first-time mom was able to develop a birth plan detailing what medication she was willing to accept and other vital information.

Moms aren't the only ones getting help. Both parents can be engaged, and in some cases, single dads come to the center. "We just do anything that they might need that we can help them to have a successful pregnancy and to be a successful parent," Martha says. 📞

615-529-1293

Empowerment Through Sports

Adaptive competitions and

Story by DREW WOOLLEY and JEN CALHOUN



ADAPTIVE CLIMBERS FESTIVAL

After Shane Farver's lower-level spinal cord injury, the rock-climbing enthusiast realized he needed to learn new ways of moving through the world, whether scrambling up rocks or making his way through shopping malls and office buildings.

"Early on in my recovery, a friend of mine said, 'A cool thing about climbing is the problem-solving aspect of it. You have to figure out how to get from this hold to that hold as efficiently as possible using your body as it is and kind of figuring those things out,'" Shane says.

It's the same for people with disabilities, he says. "We have to be problem-solvers, because—very often—the world is not made for us."

Today, Shane is communications director and a member of the organizing committee for the Adaptive Climbers Festival. The three-day event offers people with disabilities a chance to learn rock climbing and other outdoor skills while camping and communing in Eastern Kentucky's Red River Gorge.

"We really emphasize the notion that we do not take people with disabilities rock climbing," Shane says. "We teach people with disabilities how to rock climb. The nuance there is we're not here to take you on a ride. We're here to empower you and help you see what's possible in rock climbing and hopefully provide some confidence elsewhere in your life."

SWEET SETUP

The idea for the Adaptive Climbers Festival came about during a hot tub hang with a few adaptive climbers and their allies. "They were talking about the fact that outside of the competitive environment, there aren't a lot of opportunities for people with disabilities to rock climb," Shane says.

The first Adaptive Climbers Festival was in 2018 at a climbing area in northwest Alabama, but by 2022 the event found its home at Lago Linda Hideaway, a 410-acre wonderland that offers cabins, RV sites and campgrounds surrounding a 5-acre lake.

"We have our run of the place," Shane says. "Once we figured out that setup, we didn't want to hold it anywhere else. We also have other partners who help us out, including the local search and rescue folks. It's a huge coordinated effort."

MOVING MOUNTAINS

The event offers about 30 clinics, including courses on rappelling and anchor-building, which shows attendees how to set up their ropes for climbing. Most of the courses are led by people with disabilities.

"That's kind of our ethos—the idea that we're here to empower people and to give people opportunities to grow and lead," Shane says.

The Adaptive Climbers Festival has grown from about 30 participants to about 150 in 2024, including attendees from across the country, as well as some from Australia, New Zealand, Canada and Spain. 📍

events shatter barriers



Photos courtesy of Beth King



ABOVE: Training to succeed in new sports, like javelin, cycling, powerlifting and rowing, gives Beth King the confidence to overcome life's other challenges.

OPPOSITE PAGE: Participants in the Adaptive Climbers Festival come from all over the world to enjoy a weekend of rock climbing, fellowship and fun in Eastern Kentucky's Red River Gorge area.

RESTORING FREEDOM

The first time Beth King saw a recumbent tricycle, she thought it was a joke. She rarely left the house for anything other than doctors' appointments after retiring from the military in 2014 due to injuries she sustained three years earlier when a rocket-propelled grenade brought down her Chinook helicopter in Afghanistan.

Then, after battling a traumatic brain injury, rehabbing for permanent damage to her spine and back and undergoing a bilateral joint replacement for severe pain in her jaw, Beth's occupational therapist wanted her to hop on what to her looked like a child's toy.

"When she showed me a picture, it looked like a Big Wheel from when I was a kid," says Beth, who was not happy about the idea. "But halfway through my first ride, I realized I'm out here by myself, no one's running after me to catch me. And I really found that

liberating. I felt a sense of independence I hadn't felt in years."

She then took part in the Wounded Warrior Project's Soldier Ride, introducing her to the world of adaptive sports. Now based in Missouri, Beth has trained in javelin, rowing, discus and powerlifting, even competing at the 2022 Invictus Games in the Netherlands. She hopes to qualify for the Paralympics in 2028.

"It's what saved me. I was really struggling with depression, suicidal thoughts and isolation. I just couldn't deal with anything. And it gave me something to train for, to get out of bed for," Beth says. "Sports made me realize that I could still do all the things that I thought I lost."

FINDING INSPIRATION

Realizing she was losing almost all function in her feet, in 2023 Beth decided to have her right foot amputated, allowing her to begin learning to walk with an artificial one. Last year, she completed her first year of welding school, a goal she set after retiring from the military.

"I think sports really gave me the confidence to advocate for myself. To believe that I didn't really lose as much as I thought I had," she says. "If you had asked me a year ago if I'd be welding right now, I would have said, 'No way.' I couldn't see a life bigger than the box I had put myself in with my injuries."

Once she finishes school, Beth hopes to be able to make adaptive equipment for more people. "I don't think people always understand that it's not just sports equipment. It's freedom," she says. "It's a regular life and feeling like you're a part of things. To have a place where people can go and just have fun and play a sport, even if it might look different. I think people are starting to realize that it really does matter." 🗨️

Young at Art

Theater lovers' dream started something big

Story by MELANIE JONES

Forty-five years ago, a group of theater-loving friends staged a play at the Cannon County Lions Club building—a production of “Harvey” they fondly remember. Those humblest of beginnings were the first steps toward the creation of a premier Middle Tennessee arts showcase.

The Arts Center of Cannon County includes a 222-seat theater, two art galleries and an arts and crafts gift shop. Performances and exhibits are meant to engage everyone. For example, The Young at Art productions typically cast children from the community.

“A lot of times, these kids that come from schools may have never been in a theater before, have never seen a live performance,” Arts Center Chief Operating Officer Beth McCrary says. “So, we feel like it’s important to expose them to something different, to pique their interest.”

But that’s only the beginning. The center hosts fairs, performances and much more. And many of the people who were there at the beginning continue their support.

SHOWS ON TAP FOR 2025

Be prepared for the upcoming theater season at the Arts Center of Cannon County.

- Rodgers and Hammerstein’s “Oklahoma!”—March 28-April 12
- Disney’s “Newsies”—June 13-28
- “Sweeney Todd”—Aug. 1-16
- Agatha Christie’s “The Mousetrap”—Sept. 26-Oct. 11
- “Million Dollar Quartet Christmas”—Dec. 5-21

2025 season tickets, which include admission to all shows, are \$80 for adults and \$75 for students. Season tickets do not include concerts, Young at Art performances or classes.



FIRST STEPS

It all started because a few friends wanted an outlet for the performing arts in Cannon County.

After the play at the Lions Club more than four decades ago, the group converted the basement of an old school gym into a theater, Beth says. They were there for about 10 years before raising enough money to build the current facility in 1991. It’s been expanded several times over the years.

“Some of those folks are still active in it,” Beth says of the founders. “Some have passed on, but we still have a few that are active and coming or participate in some way.”

One of the founding members who is still active is Darryl Deason, who directs at least one show per year at the arts center.

In a speech on the 40th anniversary of the arts center, Richard Northcutt, who was instrumental in its founding, recognized several of his cohorts, including Bill Smith, who donated the land for the center. “Bill offered it as soon as he heard the idea. All of his life he was a champion and a visionary. The place we are tonight rests squarely on the broad and generous shoulders of Bill Smith.”

Another legend of the arts center is Wilma Francis Adams. Wilma played a major role in establishing the theater and continued to work there until her death in 2013. She did everything from coordinating ticket sales to performing in plays and



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: The cast of “Bright Star” performs at the Arts Center of Cannon County, a potter shows her craft and a band performs at the White Oak Craft Fair.

musicals. She was also a life member of the board of directors, and in 2000 the arts center honored her efforts by naming the theater for her.

Richard had this to say about her: “Wilma. There’s only one and she was one of a kind.” He recalls the two of them sometimes being the only two working on sets and how she was always ready to answer any call to serve. “The night we dedicated the cultural park to Bill and the theater to Wilma, she pulled me aside and said, ‘You know, your name is the one that ought to be up there.’ I said, ‘Wilma, without you and Bill, there wouldn’t be a wall here to put anybody’s name on.’ I still firmly believe that.”

Today, Wilma’s sisters come to shows and her niece and her husband are involved in productions.

AN ARTS SHOWCASE

While theater enthusiasts started the arts center, it is also a showcase for visual arts. In addition to two galleries and the gift shop, in September the center stages the White Oak Craft Fair, a juried event featuring the works of about 75 craftsmen and women. It also holds a holiday craft fair that runs annually after Thanksgiving until just before Christmas, serving seven Tennessee counties.

But the staff members never forget the art center’s roots. “The performing arts do provide the income for other things,” Beth

says. “That part of our mission is to promote visual arts, also. Artists and education. We’re big into the education portion.”

The center also offers summer programs, including a camp for younger children where they learn acting, singing, dance and movement. Older kids get in on the performing arts with the Senior Youth Summer Conservatory, taught by conservatory staff and guest artists.

Instructors also offer individual classes in performing and visual arts. [📞](#)

615-563-1530

Pasta Supremo

Italian translates to a great meal

Italian cuisine, with its fresh ingredients and age-old techniques, has woven itself into the fabric of American culture.

Pizza, spaghetti and Alfredo are all favorites, but lasagna may top the list. It's simply hard to resist. Keep the Italian theme going with an Italian chopped salad and a cannoli poke cake. Loosen your belt and get ready to embark on your Italian culinary experience without leaving home.



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

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

ITALIAN LASAGNA

- 1 pound sweet Italian sausage
- 3/4 pound lean ground beef
- 1/2 cup minced onion
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed
- 1 (28-ounce) can crushed tomatoes
- 2 (6.5-ounce) cans tomato sauce
- 2 (6-ounce) cans tomato paste
- 1/2 cup water
- 2 tablespoons white sugar
- 4 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley, divided
- 1 1/2 teaspoons dried basil leaves
- 1 1/2 teaspoons salt, divided, or to taste
- 1 teaspoon Italian seasoning
- 1/2 teaspoon fennel seeds
- 1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 12 lasagna noodles
- 16 ounces ricotta cheese
- 1 egg
- 3/4 pound mozzarella cheese, sliced
- 3/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese

Heat the oven to 375 F.

Cook sausage, ground beef, onion and garlic in a Dutch oven over medium heat until well browned.

Stir in crushed tomatoes, tomato sauce, tomato paste and water. Season with sugar, 2 tablespoons parsley, basil,

1 teaspoon salt, Italian seasoning, fennel seeds and pepper. Simmer, covered, for about 1 1/2 hours, stirring occasionally.

Bring a large pot of lightly salted water to a boil. Cook lasagna noodles in boiling water for 8 to 10 minutes. Drain noodles, and rinse with cold water.

In a mixing bowl, combine ricotta cheese with egg, remaining 2 tablespoons parsley and 1/2 teaspoon salt.

To assemble, spread 1 1/2 cups of meat sauce in the bottom of a 9-by-13-inch baking dish. Arrange 3 to 4 noodles lengthwise over meat sauce to cover. Spread with 1/2 of the ricotta cheese mixture. Top with 1/3 of the mozzarella cheese slices. Spoon 1 1/2 cups meat sauce over mozzarella, and sprinkle with 1/4 cup Parmesan cheese.

Repeat layers, and top with remaining mozzarella and Parmesan cheese. Cover with foil. To prevent sticking, either spray foil with cooking spray or make sure the foil does not touch the cheese. Bake for 25 minutes. Remove the foil and bake for an additional 25 minutes. Remove lasagna from oven, and let it rest for 15 minutes before slicing and serving.



CANNOLI POKE CAKE

1 (15.25 ounce) yellow cake mix, plus ingredients on box to make the cake as directed

Topping:

- 1 1/2 cups ricotta cheese, well drained
- 2 cups mascarpone cheese
- 1/2 cup powdered sugar
- 1 (3.4-ounce box) instant vanilla pudding mix
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 teaspoon fresh orange zest
- 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/8 teaspoon salt
- 1 1/2 cups milk
- 10 ounces mini chocolate chips

Make sure ricotta cheese is well drained—overnight is best, if possible, because it needs to be thick.

Prepare and bake cake according to directions on the package for a 9-by-13-inch baking dish. Remove cake from oven

and poke holes all over it using the handle of a wooden spoon, large wood skewer or a straw. Set cake aside to cool.

In a large bowl, beat the ricotta and mascarpone cheese with an electric mixer on medium speed until well combined. Beat in the powdered sugar and dry pudding mix. Then beat in the vanilla, orange zest, cinnamon and salt. Once well combined, slowly beat in the milk a little at a time.

Spread about 1/3 of the topping over the cake, making sure it gets into holes. Then continue spreading the remaining topping, and sprinkle on the mini chocolate chips. Cover the cake and refrigerate for a few hours or overnight. Cut and serve well chilled.

Note: This cake is especially good with a little chocolate syrup drizzled over the top.

ITALIAN CHOPPED SALAD

Make the dressing in advance to allow flavors to marry.

Lemon Vinaigrette:

- 1/2 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 3 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- 1 shallot, finely chopped

- 2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 2 tablespoons dried oregano
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- Freshly ground black pepper

Salad:

- 1 head iceberg lettuce
- 1 head radicchio
- 1 small red onion, thinly sliced

- 1 pint cherry tomatoes, halved or quartered
- 1 can chickpeas, rinsed and drained
- 4 ounces fresh pearl mozzarella, drained
- 4 ounces provolone cheese, diced
- 5 pepperoncini peppers, stemmed and sliced
- Kosher salt and pepper, as needed
- 1 teaspoon fresh oregano, for garnish

Make the dressing. In a small bowl, whisk together the olive oil, lemon juice, vinegar, shallot, garlic, oregano, salt and pepper. Set aside.

Cut the iceberg lettuce in half, then cut out the core. Slice the lettuce lengthwise into 1/4-inch strips. Repeat with the radicchio.

In a large bowl, combine the lettuce, radicchio, onion, tomatoes, chickpeas, mozzarella, provolone and pepperoncini. Drizzle with the dressing and toss gently to coat. You may not need all of the dressing, so serve any leftover vinaigrette on the side. Season salad with salt and pepper and toss again. Garnish with oregano, if desired, and serve. 📺





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