



UPCOUNTRY

JULY/AUGUST 2022

CONNECTED

Trail Blazing

Clemson 4 Wheel Center's off-roading experts



COMMUNITY
REACH

GO GLAMPING



By SHIRLEY BLOOMFIELD, CEO
NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association

Any room can be a classroom

Broadband opens a world of new educational opportunities

Soon, students will end summer break and return to classrooms and, in communities fortunate enough to be served by a member of NTCA—The Rural Broadband Association, they will have advantages once thought impossible in rural areas.

While fast, reliable broadband service creates opportunity for everyone, our students benefit significantly. Resources that were simply unavailable before are now only a few clicks away.

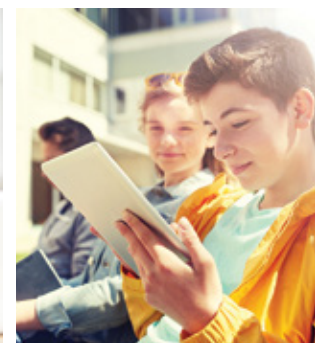
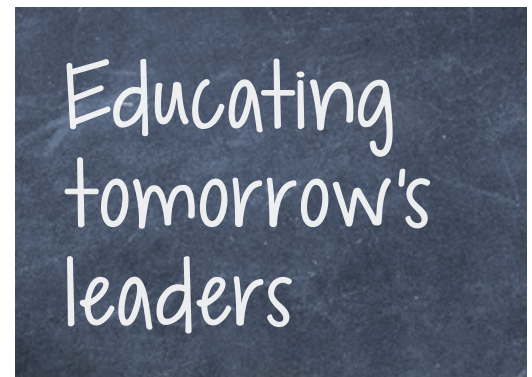
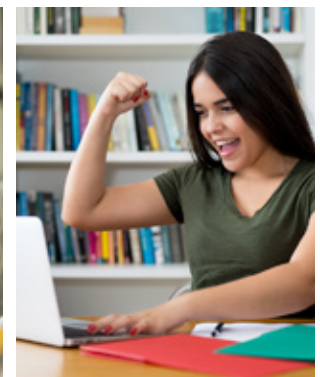
Once, learning about great art meant gazing at photos in a book. Now, students can take virtual tours through the greatest museums on Earth and, hopefully, find inspiration in the masters of the art world. Resources like Project Gutenberg make classic books a click and download away.

Digital resources also go far beyond virtual libraries and museums. Thanks to distance learning — real-time sessions connected through video — students in the most remote communities can tap into advanced or specialized classes otherwise unavailable in their area.

One key focus, and an acronym, you may have heard a lot about is STEM — science, technology, engineering and math. The skills learned in classes such as these are foundational. They can open the door to a range of jobs, higher education opportunities and more.

At the NTCA, we hear stories of these successes daily, because our members, including your communications provider, make a tangible difference in the lives of those they serve. The more tools we provide our students — the people who will become our future leaders and innovators — the richer our communities will become.

Every day, our NTCA members work to make that future a reality. 📺



Welcoming clouds

Digital storage brightens the day



Whether sharing work files, snapping photos with your phone or dozens of other actions, your digital data most likely doesn't remain solely on your device. Instead, those files were probably shared through a cloud-based service. Similarly, most phones default to backing up your photos to the cloud.

In fact, the cloud is one critical presence in our digital lives, an experience often so seamless you might not even realize it's there.

But, exactly what is the cloud, and how does it work? Think of it as a collection of computers designed not only to store critical data, but also to back it up securely and deliver it on demand to whatever device you choose. That's how you're able to work on the same file at home as you would at school, at an office or just on the go with a mobile device.

HOW IT WORKS

When you subscribe to a cloud provider such as Apple, Dropbox, Google, Microsoft or many others, you can upload files to a data server managed by that company. In some cases, the files are both on your device and in the cloud. Or, they may strictly be in the cloud, saving room on your device. These files can be photos, videos, documents with text, emails or more. As long as your device is connected to the internet and you are logged into the service, you can access this digital library. The cloud providers work hard to make it all as seamless as possible.

CLOUD ADVANTAGES

Cloud storage saves space on your devices. It's also a good way to preserve files as a backup. Rather than keep one copy of

your data, cloud services keep multiple copies on many machines to create as reliable a system as possible.

Many businesses use cloud storage to offload the responsibility of managing physical servers or running complex software. Another benefit of using the cloud is that you can increase or decrease storage based on how much you need, matching the price of the service to your requirements.

EXAMPLES

Apple's iCloud, Microsoft's OneDrive and Google Drive are popular cloud storage options for individuals. Cloud storage is also used by social media and entertainment companies to provide services to the public. For example, Facebook manages its own private cloud services and data centers. Instagram and Pinterest are also cloud-based. If you've ever used Netflix to watch movies, then you were also using a cloud computing service.

Popular personal use of cloud storage includes family photos and important financial documents such as tax returns. Businesses might use cloud storage for employee files, financial data such as payroll and to store customer data.

BACK UP THE CRITICAL FILES

Cloud storage provides a range of benefits, but with vital information — anything from wills to family photos, digital art and beyond — consider the cloud as just one part good digital housekeeping. Consider creating three versions of these files: one in the cloud, a second on a computer hard drive and a third on an external drive. Rely on the cloud for convenience, but keep backup for, well, a rainy day. ☔



Connected by fiber, bonded by community

Welcome to the second issue of Upcountry Connected! In our first edition, we explained the partnership that resulted in the game-changing high-speed fiber internet service coming to the Upstate.



JEFF WILSON
Chief Executive Officer
WCFIBER

We're thrilled to be here, and we understand that while Upcountry Fiber may be a new name to you, the heart of our service is steeped in history and a deep commitment to this area's communities, businesses and people.

What makes us different? In short, we are built on three pillars: exemplary service, commitment to our communities and quality service.

Our roots lie in this area. Created by Blue Ridge Electric and WCFIBER, we have a combined 150 years of service in South Carolina. More importantly, both organizations have embraced the cooperative business model.

Why does that matter?

It matters because we live here. We work here. Our success is YOUR success. We may be delivering high-speed fiber internet, but that isn't our mission. Our mission is much deeper — to serve you and our communities, making them vibrant, thriving homes where lives are built and memories are made. That's why the same technician who hooked up internet in your home can also be seen coaching your child's team or volunteering in the community.

In fact, one of our priorities after forming Upcountry Fiber was to establish a charitable foundation to give back to our communities — through financial investments, volunteerism and more. We're in the early stages of finalizing details, but you'll learn more in subsequent issues of the magazine.

We recognize that, while all of this is important to you, having reliable, fast internet is crucial. Upcountry Fiber is in the early stages of deploying high-speed broadband throughout the area. While this takes time, for many of you, you've been waiting for a long time. This is a significant undertaking, one that, when complete, is going to connect us all with lightning-fast speed, rivaling even the most urban of areas. We're committed to doing this the right way. Building out a robust and redundant network takes time, but please know we're working hard for you. We're here to stay, and we're here to serve.

Updates on our progress can be found on UpcountryFiber.com/Updates. Interested in receiving our service? Register your interest on the site. From there, we'll notify you when we're getting closer to serving you and again when construction is beginning.

Thank you for your partnership. We couldn't be happier to serve you.

JEFF WILSON
Chief Executive Officer
WCFIBER

JIM LOVINGGOOD
Chief Executive Officer
Blue Ridge Electric



JULY/AUGUST 2022

VOL. 1, NO. 2

The Upcountry Connected is a bimonthly newsletter published by Upcountry Fiber, ©2022. It is distributed without charge to all its customers.



is a high-speed fiber internet provider to the five counties of Anderson, Greenville, Oconee, Pickens and Spartanburg. Founded by Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative and WCFIBER, Upcountry Fiber was created to bridge the digital divide across rural areas of South Carolina. Offering symmetrical internet speeds up to 1 Gbps over a fiber network, Upcountry Fiber offers the fastest and most reliable high-speed internet in the area.

UpcountryFiber.com
888-760-2111
Email us at info@UpcountryFiber.com

Construction Updates & FAQs:
UpcountryFiber.com/Updates

24/7 Repair Line:
888-760-2111 – select option for repair

BUSINESS CONTACTS:

Max Crawford
Area District Manager
Max.Crawford@wctel.com

Brandon Smith
Business Solutions Consultant
Brandon.Smith@wctel.com

Carter Burton
Broadband Deployment Manager
Carter.Burton@wctel.com

Produced for Upcountry Fiber by:



On the Cover:



Rodger Dalrymple and his wife, Rene, are industry leaders in off-road accessories at Clemson 4 Wheel Center. See story Page 12.

Why routers matter to WiFi

When WCFIBER Network Operations Manager Troy Mack mows his 1-acre yard on weekends, he often wears headphones streaming his favorite podcasts, usually “Aaron Mahnke’s Cabinet of Curiosities” or “The Alex Rudd Fishing Podcast.”

He also listens to his favorite band, Mt. Joy, while navigating the mower around the large yard and his workshop. With a metal outbuilding on an acre property, Troy opted to install a mesh network, combining the Calix GigaSpire u6 router with a u4 mesh extender. “The devices seamlessly transition throughout the property,” Troy says. The system automatically makes adjustments to provide the best service possible.

Troy is responsible for ordering all of the Calix equipment Upcountry Fiber installs in homes and businesses. Calix is an industry leader known for high-performance equipment.

“The reliability of these Calix routers and our local 24/7 repair service absolutely make our WiFi plans the best choice for our customers,” he says.

The signal strength provided by the Calix GigaSpire u6 router means many users won’t need additional equipment to receive service throughout their home or office. Routers depend on radio waves to send data, and this system offers six radios to maximize their reach. “Our technicians test the coverage when installing routers,” says Troy. “This creates the ultimate WiFi 6 experience for customers who sign up for WiFi Standard.”

However, some larger U- or L-shaped homes can have more walls to interfere with the signal. In those few cases, technicians may suggest the WiFi Extended plan adding the Calix u4 BLAST router to create what is known as a mesh network. This type of system uses multiple devices to create a seamless internet experience.

The newest Calix routers even come with advanced features to keep your devices online even if you’re moving from room to room. And the latest security standards keep all of your data and home or business network well protected.

“Another great function of this system is the work-at-home network,” Troy says. “You can set the system to maintain prioritization for your connection while you work and limit the bandwidth for the kids gaming in the other room when you download the WiFi Hub app included with the WiFi plans.”

“With more and more people working, learning and accessing

entertainment from home, getting their services up and running as efficiently as possible while ensuring that they have the right services for their needs is crucial,” says Jeff Wilson, WCFIBER chief executive officer.

WiFi Standard advantages

- Calix Gigaspire Router included
- Local technicians available for phone support 24/7
- Worry-free WiFi with automatically downloaded router updates
- Only \$4.95 a month
- Other WiFi plans offered include WiFi Extended and WiFi Premium


Free WiFi Hub app

- Download from the Apple App Store or Google Play Store for free
- Requires Upcountry Fiber WiFi plan subscription
- Enable a guest network, manage basic parental controls, and access accurate speed tests directly from your router

u6 router features

- Certified 802.11AX (Wi-Fi 6)
- Dual band with 2.4 GHz and 5 GHz
- 20-30% more range than WiFi 5

u4 router features

- Ideal for apartments
- Stand-alone router or mesh extender
- One minute setup time 

LET freedom
RING

We wish everyone a safe and happy Independence Day. Our offices will be closed **JULY 4** for the holiday weekend.

Glamping IN THE SOUTH: *a luxurious getaway*

Story by ANNE BRALY

The concept means all the comforts of home in a rustic setting

Glamping has become a huge trend for those who want the thrill of getting back to nature without the hassle of backpacking and sleeping on the cold, hard ground.

That experience is what you'll find at Wildwood Resort and Marina on Cordell Hull Lake in Middle Tennessee's Upper Cumberland region. A newly renovated resort, it offers glampers the best of both worlds — a place to enjoy nature but in resort-style accommodations with a full range of activities. It's summer camp all grown up, with horseback riding, hiking, canoeing, paddle boarding and kayaking, but a bed with luxury linens awaits at the end of the day.

Mornings begin peacefully at Wildwood in an area called The Woods. Glamping is the focus there in the beautifully appointed, fully restored retro Airstream trailers amid tall pines and

hardwoods with a view of Cordell Hull Lake. The trailers offer beds with nice linens, a Keurig to brew your coffee in the morning and a long list of things to do throughout the day. At night, light a fire — each Airstream has a fire pit — and enjoy the peace and quiet of your surroundings. Don't forget the marshmallows.

The Airstreams, six in all, are named for the queens of country music. There's Dolly from 1960; June, circa 1971; Emmylou from 1983; Patsy and Reba, both 2012 models; and Loretta, circa 1985. They have outdoor grills, microwaves and refrigerators, so you can prepare your own food if you desire. If not, Wildwood offers two dining venues. Grab a snack, breakfast or a quick lunch at Holston Cafe, open seven days a week. Timberloft Lakeside Restaurant, open on weekends, offers cozy seating inside and outdoor dining on a deck overlooking the water.

John and Natasha Deane and Kevin and Donna Jones bought the old marina in Granville, Tennessee, in 2018 and reopened it as Wildwood Resort and Marina. After some major renovations



©Marina/Adobe Stock



and additions, the resort now boasts a houseboat with two bedrooms, a new lakeside lodge with 14 guest rooms, lakeside cabins, a state-of-the-art conference center and the six vintage Airstreams.

You can tailor your stay at Wildwood any way you want. Hop on a paddleboard or in a kayak or canoe and make your way across Cordell Hull Lake to explore its nearby tributaries — Indian Creek and Martin’s Creek. Or, let someone else do the driving by taking a breakfast, brunch or dinner cruise at sunset aboard a pontoon boat. Just make arrangements ahead of time with the staff. You can also simply wet a line and fish from the boardwalk along the jetty — bring your own bait and tackle.

Off-site, there’s more to keep you busy. The area is known for its wineries and waterfalls, so grab a map and get moving. You can also arrange a guided tour. Trails abound through the area, so be sure to bring your hiking boots. Or hop on a horse and take a ride along a designated trail that skirts the lake. One-hour and two-hour rides are available. Tired muscles after a day of fun? Put your name down for a massage.

The town of Granville, Tennessee, has a population of 300 that swells to 10,000 during the Heritage Day Festival every Memorial Day weekend. It’s one of seven festivals that take place in the small downtown. Granville is also home to T. B. Sutton General Store, established in 1880. Every Saturday night, the store hosts a bluegrass dinner with live music on the small corner stage. The music goes out to radios across the world in a broadcast.

“Granville has a ton of history, and the town has embraced it,” John says, adding that visitors can take tours that showcase the history. Again, check with the resort for reservations for all activities.

Music is a part of life at Wildwood, too. There’s live music on Fridays and Saturdays with bands playing covers May through September. Prominent Nashville musicians come in for singer-songwriter night the second Saturday of these months. Every Thursday night is Pickin’ on the Porch, open to all who want to pick up an instrument and join in or just sit back and listen.

“Wildwood is an irresistible destination for discovering the Tennessee wilderness,” John says. And glamping is a fun way to do it.

Reservations: www.wildwoodresorttn.com.



Far left: Lodging at Wildwood Resort and Marina in Tennessee includes restored Airstream trailers.

Left: Cummins Falls State Park creates a scenic destination for a daytrip.



Kayaking on Cordell Hull Lake is another of the pastimes at the resort.

Glamping around the South

River Ranch, Florida — Enjoy glamping at an authentic dude ranch in a rare, untouched piece of Florida wilderness. Westgate River Ranch Resort & Rodeo lies on 1,700 acres an hour south of Orlando. It can accommodate a couple’s getaway, family bonding or a group of friends. Glamping includes a fully furnished, air-conditioned tent with access to a private bath, campfire with a s’mores kit, warm cinnamon rolls and personalized concierge service. Weekend guests can also return to the days of “Old Florida” by attending a rodeo in the 1,200-seat arena, followed by a variety of Florida cowboy-themed activities.

Reservations: westgateresorts.com/hotels/florida/river-ranch

Gulf Shores, Alabama — Gulf State Park is the perfect destination for exploring the white sand beaches of Gulf Shores. The campground is set up with three glamping-style safari tents that sleep up to four people. While glamping here is more rustic than in some other places, you’ll still sleep in comfort off the ground on cots. A communal wash station is nearby, and there are full bathroom facilities a little farther away. It’s all about combining backcountry camping with convenience and privacy — and a gorgeous beach.

Reservations: alapark.com

Walhalla, South Carolina — You’ll need to make reservations early to sleep in a treehouse on a South Carolina farm that’s a stone’s throw from the Chattahoochee National Forest. Walls of windows will make you feel like a bird high in the trees with views all around. The property boasts gardens, forests of hardwood trees and trails galore. The treehouse has luxury bedding, a fireplace and dining room, a barbecue grill and a hammock for relaxing. Bring your own food or, for an extra fee, have dinner delivered to your door.

Reservations: boltfarmtreehouse.com

FEELING THE

Making connections in Oconee

Story by JOHN CLAYTON

Soon after Upcountry Fiber announced its presence in the westernmost areas of Upstate South Carolina, the inhabitants of two prominent developments in Oconee County decided to lead the way in their communities with internet service from a new cooperative partnership, one they knew they could count on.



Nancy Aden spends an afternoon tending to her garden.

After struggling to find consistent internet service and desired speeds, residents of Chickasaw Point in Westminster and Stillwater in Seneca quickly signed up for the new, high-speed internet from Upcountry Fiber, a partnership between the cooperatives WCFIBER and Blue

Ridge Electric. “When Upcountry Fiber decided to come into Chickasaw Point, our residents were more than happy to make the switch because they knew that Upcountry Fiber was going to stay,” says Nancy Aden, a member of the Chickasaw Point Community Association Board of Directors. “We felt Upcountry Fiber wasn’t coming in here to make this investment for five to 10 years and then get out. They’re here to stay.”

TAKING THE PLUNGE

Chickasaw Point and Stillwater sit about 20 miles apart, but both have been part of Upcountry Fiber’s initial construction phase in Oconee County. “Starting here was a great tone setter, and there was a real need in these communities,” says Max Crawford, area district manager for Upcountry Fiber.

“Offering faster speeds like we do is really a life-changer. It’s the difference between being able to work from home if you need to and going into the office. It’s the difference between being able to do homework at home for students.”

And for some, it was the difference between having internet service in the home and nothing at all.

Nancy says about as many as one-third

of Chickasaw Point’s 500 residences had little or no reliable internet service before Upcountry Fiber arrived willing and able to run fiber-optic cable to every home. “Having faster speeds has become a necessity for folks,” she says. “We had quite a few residents who were given the option to work remotely during the pandemic, and they were going to McDonald’s or someplace. We have a community center in Chickasaw Point where they could go and the internet worked correctly most of the time, but they still weren’t in the comfort of their home. I think we probably lost a few home sales because we didn’t have reliable internet service for everyone.”

Bob Medlin, president of the Stillwater Homeowners Association, says Blue Ridge Electric’s reputation and due diligence researching WCFIBER in Greenwood and Abbeville counties helped sell Stillwater residents on being the first to sign up with Upcountry Fiber. The calls he made alleviated worries that putting in fiber cables could damage property. “I thought we’d go ahead and push the button with Upcountry Fiber,” Bob says. “The construction technique they used caused minimal disturbances of people’s yards. I was one of the first people to get connected, and I got a knock on my front door after they had connected me, and there were two guys outside wanting to know how they’d done and what I thought about their service. Turns out it was WCFIBER CEO Jeff Wilson and Board President Wes McAllister. How many companies send out their CEO and

FIBER IMPACT

County communities

board president to check on an install like that?”

So far, 104 of the 143 homes at Stillwater now have their internet service with Upcountry Fiber.

At Chickasaw Point, Upcountry Fiber crews had to overcome challenges from the local geography, including rocky and hilly terrain, which made construction difficult. But that’s exactly what they did, Nancy says. “I just cannot stress enough that there was a good fourth of the community that had no internet at all,” she says. “And then there was another portion that only had it sometimes — if they stood in the corner and propped their leg up. You know, that kind of craziness that would get a signal. There’s no other way to say it. The internet improves the quality of everybody’s life in the 21st century. You need to have that connection.”

BETTER TIMES

Routine service calls to Stillwater’s former provider would sometimes take as long as two weeks, but Bob says that has changed with Upcountry Fiber.

Every call is answered locally and any problem is solved quickly, he says.

“My service has been outstanding,” Bob says. “I can’t complain at all, but the nice thing is if you have a problem you can find somebody locally, and they’ll be at your house in 30 minutes or an hour or so, and they’ll help you fix whatever is going on. I told them to never change that part of how they do



Bob Medlin enjoys summer days on the porch with his dog, Trigger.

things. When you call, a person answers the phone, and it should stay that way.”

The improved service and connectivity at Chickasaw Point add up to a better quality of life for residents there, whether they use their internet services for streaming, social media, business or school.

“Those people who were working remotely in our community and who continue to work remotely have been thrilled with Upcountry Fiber,” Nancy says. “It’s just made life a lot easier for everybody. I haven’t heard from a

single person who has been dissatisfied with the service.”

Stillwater residents also have no regrets since coming on board, and Bob says Upcountry Fiber’s commitment to the area for the long haul has put its newest customers at ease.

“They told us at the beginning that they’re not going away,” he says. “They want to be a part of barbecues and things like that that we have, and we’ve had one since then, and they were right squarely in the middle of it.”



Back to School

Story by LISA SAVAGE



★ Make sure you have adequate internet speeds for students studying at home

Many schools now offer more options for virtual days and online learning, whether it's for severe weather outbreaks, sick days or a family that has discovered that online learning works best for their child.

As a result, a reliable home internet service is more important than ever, whether it's for students who need to access online assignments, parents working remotely or for streaming movies and shows.

The Federal Communications Commission offers some tips to optimize your home network performance:

CHECK YOUR INTERNET PLAN

Check with your internet provider to find out the speed in your plan. Make sure it's enough to handle all the devices that might be connected at the same time, as well as any additional devices that could be added, such as televisions for streaming, laptops and more. FCC consumer guides provide information about household broadband use and broadband speeds.

TEST YOUR SPEED

In many cases, your internet provider has a speed test on the company website, or you can download broadband speed test apps or visit speed test websites, to check your current broadband download and upload speeds. Many providers, especially rural telecommunications cooperatives, strive

to keep download and upload speeds close to the same, which is important when it comes to online meeting platforms, which require higher upload speeds. Some national providers offer deals to get new customers, advertising high speeds. In reality, they may be referring only to download speed.

TROUBLESHOOTING

In most homes, internet service comes to the house and then operates through a wireless signal called Wi-Fi, which distributes the broadband throughout the home on a device called a router. Using multiple wireless devices on the same Wi-Fi network can impact performance.

Sometimes, rebooting the router — turning it off and then turning it back on — can resolve the problem.

If your internet provider doesn't supply the router, make sure it isn't outdated. Check the model number on the router to see if it's capable of providing the speed you're paying for. If your internet speed seems slower than it should be, contact your provider for troubleshooting tips, or ask if there are any outages or disruptions that could impact speed.

Whether they're in the classroom or learning virtually, almost all students need access to the internet to reach their potential. Making sure your broadband network provides the speeds they need is a big step in the right direction. 📧

Connected classrooms

Teachers maximize communication with students and parents

Story by LISA SAVAGE



How many times has this happened, parents?

You're running late as you get ready to leave home and drop the kids off at school as you rush to work.

As you go through your mental checklist, you think you're doing OK, and then your child says, "I forgot to study for my spelling test." The teacher sent the list of spelling words home on a note that's shoved deep into your child's backpack.

Now, the educational world is changing, using apps for classroom reminders, school activities and even payment in advance for athletic and other school events.

While many teachers still send notes and schedules home on paper, they also communicate the same information through apps.

Apps like Remind allow teachers and coaches to send out information about class assignments or practice schedules. Messages can be sent to a group or to individuals. About 80% of schools in the United States use Remind to connect students, teachers and families. It's designed for grades K-12 to communicate with everyone at once, and it has 20 million monthly active users across the United States.

Parents like the app because they receive early closing notifications instantaneously. All parents don't always see reminders that go out on social media.

The app reminds parents of homework assignments, dress up days and more.

It can lead to more participation in the classroom when parents get reminders because not all students show notes to their parents, and not all parents go through their children's backpacks to find them.

ClassDojo has typically been used for younger students and has group messaging and individual options, so the group may not necessarily see responses.

The app has messaging for group story posts, as well as individual student portfolios where teachers can assign work and students can turn in assignments. It also translates into over 35 languages.

Talking Points also features translation and options to communicate with families in their home languages to build strong partnerships during the school year.

Many school systems utilize platforms like Google Classroom, which also has access to such options as Google Voice for communication with students and their parents. For extracurricular activities like athletic events or stage performances, some school systems utilize GoFan, an app that offers online ticket purchases.

More and more schools are opting for the app purchase to avoid cash transactions. Some schools no longer even accept cash payments at the gate for events.

Since 2001, GoFan and its parent company, Huddle Tickets, have worked with over 10,000 schools selling over 20 million tickets — more digital high school tickets than any other company.

Other companies offer similar purchase availabilities through an app.

Parents, as another school year is about to begin, make sure you have the tools necessary to make meaningful connections with your child's teachers and school system.

Remind



GO FAN

TalkingPoints

From classroom reminders to athletic tickets, apps are increasingly essential.



Photos contributed by Clemson 4 Wheel Center.

Upgrading and overhauling

The building blocks of Clemson 4 Wheel Center's success

Story by LAZ DENES

Not all rock stars travel the world entertaining huge throngs of adoring fans from under a sensory overload of sound, lighting and special effects. The husband-and-wife team of Rodger and Rene Dalrymple, who run a well-known, decades-old business on Clemson Boulevard in Seneca, are rock stars in a completely different arena.

Clemson 4 Wheel Center has been a household name among off-road enthusiasts the world over, dating back to 1970. That's when, on the heels of a family trip to Colorado and back in a Jeep CJ5, Rene's dad, Fred Perry, fell in love with off-roading and decided to turn the focus of his automotive repair business to fabricating, modifying and distributing parts and pieces to beef up Jeeps for the toughest demands of hardcore off-roaders — navigating treacherous rock formations and steep trails. "I started working here after I finished school in 1983. Rodger has been working here since shortly after we were married in 1990, and we've been here ever since," Rene says. "It's funny how we met. My dad was sponsoring a local racer,

and I decided to go to the track one night in 1988. My dad's team had made friends with this other team, and they introduced me to all their guys. Rodger was one of them, and the rest is history."

Rodger had been involved with cars and racing most of his life until then, but not so much with off-roading. That situation changed rather quickly. "I had a background in automotive and racing, so it wasn't foreign to me, except for the fact nothing involved four-wheel drives. But I did grow up in the dirt with tractors and on a farm," he says. "So knowing about performance and accessories and hot-rodding type of engines, it all just fit together. Hardcore off-roading involves big horsepower and things. We just use those things at slower speeds, defying gravity more or less, climbing rocks and things rather than trying to go fast."

Fred, Rodger and Rene have been highly active and visible among the off-roading community via their website, clemson4wheel.com, and social media channels, as well as their presence at the two biggest events each year — the Easter Safari in

Moab, Utah, the mecca of off-roading, and the All4Fun gathering in Colorado. Both events draw thousands of enthusiasts. They also host a local poker run each year and are title sponsors of the Off-Road South Carolina Annual Run.

Upcountry Fiber's high-speed internet helps keep the online presence fresh and new and also helps the staff stay in close touch with customers. "We're highly dependent on our internet," Rodger says. "We send customers pictures and video to show the progress we're making with their vehicles. We're having to track down parts and accessories all the time. All of our credit card processing is on the internet. The Upcountry Fiber service is so fast and reliable."

In a time when print products are becoming more scarce, that access is more and more important. "Manufacturers don't even print catalogs, anymore. So you are completely reliant on the internet for parts and pricing and all that goes with that," Rene adds. "Our service is just so fast and reliable." 📞

Learn more at clemson4wheel.com

Building broadband in the Blue Ridge

Upcountry Fiber will span the digital divide, providing high-speed internet access to underserved areas. The company combines the expertise of Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative and WCFIBER. Together, they will grow Upcountry Fiber to provide the services you need and deserve. The new service launched in 2021 and continues to grow rapidly this year.

www.upcountryfiber.com/updates

Fiber construction projects underway or completed:

- ▶ North Pickens (add cumulative mileage totals for each on client proof)
- ▶ Central Pickens County
- ▶ Central Anderson County
- ▶ Port Bass
- ▶ Friendship
- ▶ Six Mile



Employee Spotlight



MAX CRAWFORD is the area district manager in the Upcountry Fiber region. He took the position upon his promotion in 2021 and is involved in everything from construction to business sales. He previously helped with the Greenwood and Newberry expansions as the regional market

manager, and has worked for WCFIBER in various capacities.

Max is a 2008 Citadel graduate with a degree in business management. After a brief stint as a commercial insurance agent, he began as a contracted installer for WCFIBER in 2009. “Starting my career as a contracted installer really helped me see the business from all sides and gain an appreciation of all the blood, sweat and tears that goes into a well-built fiber optic network,” Max says. His dedication during the Columbia County expansion led to his hiring at WCFIBER in 2018.

With that 2021 promotion, Max and his family moved to the Seneca area, to be a part of the community and for him to help manage the fiber deployment. He and his wife, Ramey, have two boys — 6-year-old Law and 2-year-old Sam. Ramey and Max are both Abbeville natives. “We both knew of each other growing up,” Max says. “I finally wore her down, and we got married in 2013.” The family’s latest addition is a 1-year-old beagle-English bulldog mix named Daisy.

Max describes himself as a “terrible golfer, that loves to play.” He loves spending time with family, and goes on the occasional bow hunting trip. His favorite movies are “The Other Guys” and “No Country for Old Men,” and preferred shows he’s streamed are “Severance,” “The Office” and “Downton Abbey.”

He also likes to use productivity apps to their maximum efficiency. “I use Microsoft Teams daily to connect with our team here at Upcountry Fiber,” Max says. “Todoist is great to declutter and keep yourself on task.”

Relishing SOMETHING NEW FOR veggies?

Extending shelf life may leave you in a pickle

For thousands of years, we've relied on pickling as a means of food preservation and storage. Since then, it's evolved into a culinary trend that extends well beyond the standard spears and slices that make up dill or bread-and-butter pickles. You can pickle almost any fruit or veggie to create briny snacks, colorful relishes and tasty garnishes.

We all know cucumbers can become delicious pickles. But watermelon rind is wonderfully sweet pickled. Turnips, asparagus, beets, bell peppers, parsnips, peaches and peppers can taste great after the process, too.

Pickling extends the harvest season well into winter when we long for the flavors of the summer garden. So, don't throw away the watermelon rinds from your summer picnic, and when you pick that peck of peppers, don't forget to pickle a few. 🗨️

PICKLED PEACHES

- 3 cups sugar
- 2 cups distilled white vinegar
- 12 cinnamon sticks, divided
- 36 whole cloves, divided
- 18 soft peaches

In a large stainless steel stockpot over medium heat, bring 1 cup water, sugar, vinegar, 6 cinnamon sticks and 18 cloves to a boil, stirring to dissolve sugar. Reduce heat to medium-low and add peaches. Gently simmer, without boiling, until peaches are heated through and a fork pierces the fruit with no resistance, 10 to 15 minutes.

Using a slotted spoon, divide peaches among six sterilized, 1-pint canning jars, placing peaches pit-side down. Add 1 of the remaining cinnamon sticks and 3 of the remaining cloves to each jar. Ladle cooking liquid into jars, filling each to within 1/2 inch of rim. Wipe the lip of each jar rim with a clean, wet cloth to remove any syrup or bits of fruit. Then, top each jar with a flat lid and screw on a threaded ring band without tightening completely. Roll jars on their sides to release any air bubbles that might be trapped in the peach cavities. Turn upright. Remove ring bands and lids, and add more cooking liquid, if needed because of settling, to fill jars to within 1/2 inch of rim. Replace lids and threaded ring bands, tightening completely to seal. Store pickled peaches in refrigerator for up to eight weeks.





WATERMELON RIND PICKLES

- 2 pounds watermelon rind
- 1/4 cup pickling salt
- 4 cups water, divided, plus more for boiling
- 2 cups granulated sugar
- 1 cup white vinegar
- 1 tablespoon broken-up cinnamon stick
- 1 1/2 teaspoons whole cloves
- 1/2 lemon, thinly sliced
- 5 maraschino cherries, halved — optional

Trim the dark green and pink parts from the watermelon rind and discard. Cut rind into 1-inch cubes and measure out 7 cups.

Put the watermelon rind in a large container with the pickling salt and 3 cups of the water. Add more water to cover the rinds, if necessary. Soak overnight.

Drain and rinse watermelon rind.

Cover the rind with cold water in a large saucepan. Simmer just until tender, about 10 minutes.

Meanwhile, in a nonreactive 6- to 8-quart kettle, combine the sugar, vinegar, cinnamon, whole cloves and remaining 1 cup water. Simmer the mixture for 10 minutes. Strain and discard the solids.

Pour the strained liquid back into the pan. Add the drained watermelon rind, lemon slices and maraschino cherries. Simmer the mixture until the watermelon rind is translucent, about 30 minutes.

Fill half-pint jars with the hot watermelon rind and syrup mixture, leaving 1/2 inch of headspace. Add the lids. Process in a boiling water bath for 5 minutes, and remove jars. Let the jars cool on a rack. Serve and enjoy. Properly canned, watermelon pickles will keep in a cool, dark, dry place for at least a year.

Note: If your jars didn't seal properly or you don't want to process them in boiling water, they will keep for about a month in the refrigerator.

REFRIGERATOR PICKLES

- 5 1/2 cups, about 1 1/2 pounds, thinly sliced (about 1/2-1/4-inch) pickling cucumbers
- 1 1/2 tablespoons kosher salt
- 1 cup thinly sliced sweet onion
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1 cup white vinegar
- 1/2 cup apple cider vinegar
- 1/4 cup light brown sugar
- 1 1/2 teaspoons mustard seeds
- 1/2 teaspoon celery seeds
- 1/8 teaspoon ground turmeric

Combine cucumbers and salt in a large, shallow bowl. Cover and chill 1 1/2 hours. Move cucumbers into a colander and rinse thoroughly under cold water. Drain well and return cucumbers to bowl. Add onion to bowl and toss with the cucumbers.

Combine the granulated sugar, white vinegar, apple cider vinegar, brown sugar, mustard seeds, celery seeds and ground turmeric in a medium saucepan. Bring to a simmer over medium heat, stirring until the sugar dissolves.

Pour the hot vinegar mixture over cucumber mixture. Let stand at room temperature 1 hour. Cover and refrigerate 24 hours. Store in an airtight container in refrigerator up to one month.



PICKLED BRUSSELS SPROUTS

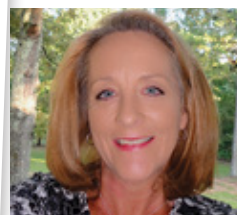
- 1 pound Brussels sprouts
- 1 1/2 cups apple cider vinegar
- 1 cup water
- 1 tablespoon pickling salt
- 20 peppercorns, divided
- 1/4 teaspoon yellow mustard seeds, divided
- 2 garlic cloves
- 2 bay leaves

Trim the sprouts and cut them in half. Set aside. Combine vinegar, water and salt in a stainless steel pot and bring to a boil.

Divide the peppercorns, mustard seeds, garlic cloves and bay leaves between two prepared pint jars. Pack sprouts into jars and pour brine over the sprouts. Use a wooden chopstick to remove air bubbles from jars.

Wipe rims, apply lids and rings and process in a boiling water bath for 10 minutes.

When time is up, remove jars from canner and let cool on a folded towel. When jars are cool, test seals. If seals are good, jars can be stored in the pantry (any unsealed jars should be refrigerated). Give pickles at least 48 hours before you eat them, so that the brine fully penetrates the sprouts. Sealed jars will keep up to one year on the pantry shelf.



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

Photography by MARK GILLILAND | Food Styling by RHONDA GILLILAND



233 Highway 28 Bypass
Abbeville, SC 29620

PRESORT STD
US POSTAGE PAID
PERMIT #6
RAINSVILLE, AL

IN IT TO WIN IT WITH SYMMETRICAL SPEED

Whether you are gaming, working, learning or searching—symmetrical speeds mean that your upload speed matches your download speed. That's important when you need to get data as fast as you send it. Don't miss another moment with slow upload speeds.



GET IN THE GAME
WITH FIBER INTERNET TODAY

(888) 760-2111 | UpcountryFiber.com



PARTNER OF

