

CONNECTION

Quilting Queens

Local women craft for
their community

**CUSTOMER
APPRECIATION**

CONTROL APP



By Shirley Bloomfield, CEO
NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association

An Ongoing Mission

NTCA supports rural broadband

As we begin a new year, our NTCA members are on my mind, specifically how they do so much to create a better tomorrow by deploying and sustaining reliable broadband networks that connect rural communities to the world.

We've come a long way since the creation of NTCA in 1954, and I wanted to start 2025 with a reminder—or possibly an introduction—to who we are and how we serve the people who work so hard for you.

We represent about 850 independent, family-owned and community-based rural telecommunications companies. Without NTCA members, many communities would continue to be left behind by larger, national internet providers. So, we strive to advance policies that help these companies close the digital divide. This includes supporting programs like the Universal Service Fund, which helps rural consumers get and stay connected to high-quality, affordable internet.

I'm proud to note how well our NTCA members do their jobs. The robust and reliable broadband they provide enables businesses to connect to customers, doctors to patients and teachers to students. And the work they do in their communities goes beyond providing internet service. Many host digital literacy classes, sponsor STEM and esports initiatives at schools, support economic development initiatives and so much more.

In short, NTCA members are dedicated to improving the communities they serve.

As we enter a new year, we continue to support our members as they work to make your lives the best they can be. 🗨️

HIDDEN CONNECTIONS

BROADBAND NETWORKS SUPPORT YOUR COMMUNITY

Your fast, reliable internet connection connects you to the internet, bringing you a seemingly endless number of services. Whether you enjoy streaming entertainment, gaming, video calls and more, this essential service adapts to your needs.

Did you know, however, that same network may also underpin a range of other services essential to your community? While the specifics may vary from place to place, fast internet networks create a foundation for rural America.



PUBLIC SAFETY

The communications systems serving first responders often rely on broadband-speed internet.



GOVERNMENT

From informational websites and apps to the computer networks and databases needed to operate, local governments require excellent connectivity.



EDUCATION

School systems send large amounts of data and offer classrooms access to online resources.



HEALTH CARE

Whether transmitting medical records or for telehealth visits, medical providers increasingly rely on digital tools.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Fast broadband networks provide a community resource attractive to both businesses and homebuyers, creating a keystone for growth.

A Safe Place to Stay

Isaiah House provides comfort for foster children



Television host Mike Rowe, center, surprises Isaiah 117 House co-founder Ronda Paulson and her family for a taping of his Facebook show “Returning the Favor.”

Story by MELANIE JONES

When Ronda and Corey Paulson met their first foster child at the back door of the Carter County, Tennessee, Department of Children’s Services, he was wearing too-small pajamas. The clothes he was wearing when he was removed from his unsuitable home were filthy, and DCS was unable to provide any that fit him properly.

The 9-month-old was fortunate the couple could come get him quickly. Some foster children spend hours—if not days—at overwhelmed and understaffed DCS offices, sometimes sleeping on the floor.

That situation has begun to change, however, thanks to a far-reaching program the Paulsons were inspired to establish in 2018. Thanks to word of mouth and a 2020 feature by “Dirty Jobs” host Mike Rowe on his Facebook page, their effort is spreading nationwide.

When the couple took the baby boy, Isaiah, home they lavished him with love and everything else an infant could need. But the Paulsons couldn’t stop thinking about something they learned in their

foster-parenting classes—the DCS office is usually the only place for a child to go on removal day.

They thought of little Isaiah. And they started studying the Bible’s book of Isaiah, including part of one verse in particular, Isaiah 1:17, which calls on people to “take up the cause of the fatherless.”

Then they thought, “What if there was a home?” Corey says.

BUILDING A MOVEMENT

So, that’s what they set out to create. Ronda put together a board and worked with the local DCS office to come up with a workable concept. They raised money, bought a house and renovated it to DCS specifications. They painted the door red, and they called it Isaiah 117 House.

The house provides space for DCS workers who now bring children there instead of an office building. Children and teens have access to baths and showers. They get brand-new clean clothes and

toys. They have beds to sleep in if the placement takes more than a few hours. Volunteers cook them nutritious meals and comfort food.

That was 2018, and it was supposed to be one and done. “Clearly, we’ve learned that God had other plans,” Corey says.

Word of mouth spread. Soon neighboring Tennessee counties wanted their own Isaiah 117 Houses. Then, in 2020, Ronda and the Isaiah 117 House were featured on Mike Rowe’s Facebook show “Returning the Favor.” Two million people saw that episode on March 9, 2020. Then the calls really started coming in. Corey says they heard from people in 41 states and four countries wanting to start their own Isaiah 117 Houses. Now about 30 are open and more are in the works across 12 states.

“On March 13, the world shut down,” Corey says of the COVID-19 pandemic. “But our mission kept growing. We say Mike Rowe and Jesus are building houses for children.” 📺

LEARN MORE

Interested in learning more about Isaiah 117 House or how to establish one in your area? Visit isaiah117house.com.

New Opportunities

Leadership for Progress in Rural Connectivity

Leadership in the telecommunications industry is about more than providing technology—it's about understanding and addressing the unique needs of rural communities. Growing up in a small rural community, I witnessed firsthand how access to essential services like telephone and internet could transform daily life. It's this understanding that has shaped my approach to leadership and my commitment to making a difference in the lives of the customers and communities we serve.



KAREN JACKSON-FURMAN

Chief Executive Officer

My journey to the telecommunications industry began not far from where I grew up in southern Illinois, just down the road from the local telephone cooperative. Although my family home was outside its service territory, I later discovered that my grandparents were among the cooperative's first advocates, working tirelessly to sign up members and bring telephone service to their rural community.

Years later, as a recent college graduate, I started my career as an accountant at that very same cooperative. I quickly saw how a rural telephone provider could become more than just a business—it could be a partner in progress. By delivering reliable communication services, fostering innovation, and staying focused on the customer, companies like ours play a vital role in shaping vibrant

rural communities. Cooperative principles inspired me from the beginning, and more than 30 years later, they remain a priority for me.

Today, I am honored to bring that experience to my role as CEO of ATC. I am deeply grateful to our board of directors for their trust and support, and I look forward to working with them, our dedicated team, and our customers to advance the company's mission.

I would also like to extend my heartfelt thanks to our outgoing CEO, Trevor Bonnstetter, whose leadership and vision have positioned ATC for continued success. Trevor's invitation for me to join ATC marked a pivotal moment in my career. Serving first as ATC's Chief Information Officer, then Chief Financial Officer, and later as the Chief Operations Officer allowed me to apply my experience and contribute to a company with an exciting growth mindset.

As I step into this new role, my focus remains on serving our customers and community with excellence. I am committed to ensuring ATC's continued financial health while delivering cutting-edge technology to keep us all connected to what matters most. I look forward to collaborating with our talented staff to build on the company's strong foundation, explore new opportunities, and find innovative ways to serve you even better.

Thank you for trusting ATC to be your partner in connectivity. Together, we will continue to grow, adapt, and innovate to meet the needs of today and tomorrow. 📶



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Ardmore Telephone Company
P.O. Box 549
Ardmore, TN 38449
Telephone: 256-423-2131
or 800-830-9946
www.ardmore.net

Ardmore Office:
30190 Ardmore Ave.
Ardmore, AL 35739
Monday - Friday
8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.



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On the Cover:



The Quirky Quilters share a love of their favorite craft, but they also take on several community projects each year. See story Page 8.

Photo courtesy of Bonnie Harris

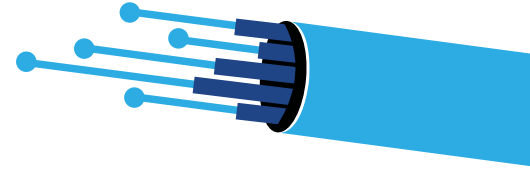


Karen Jackson-Furman

WELCOME OUR NEW CEO, KAREN JACKSON- FURMAN

ATC is excited to welcome its newest CEO, Karen Jackson-Furman. With more than 30 years of experience in the telecommunications industry, she has served in leadership roles on both the financial and operations sides of the business. She takes over for Trevor Bonnstetter, who will transition into a governmental affairs role.

FIBER IS COMING TO A NEIGHBORHOOD NEAR YOU!



Learn where ATC's fiber-fast internet will be available next at www.ardmore.net.

ATC provides matching upload and download speeds, smoother streaming and a stable connection so your family can simultaneously work remotely, learn virtually, check in with the doctor and game online.

To learn more about ATC's fiber-fast internet or sign up, call 800-830-9946.*

*Fiber-fast internet is not yet available in all areas served by ATC.

SCHOLARSHIPS

SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE

Each year, the Foundation for Rural Service offers multiple scholarships to graduating high school seniors across the country to help with the rising costs of college tuition.

FRS is accepting applications from members of the Class of 2025, with preference given to those planning to return to work in a rural community after college.

Applications and information packets about the program are available from high school guidance counselors or at

www.frs.org. To be eligible, an applicant's parent or guardian must have service with ATC. **The application deadline is March 1.**



Roll Out the Red Carpet

Fans play key role in film festivals' success

Story by KATHY DENES

The new year brings film fans front-row access to the latest—possibly greatest—in movie entertainment. Surprising plot twists, emotional turbulence, enlightenment, wild outdoor adventures, horror, invasions from space and even close encounters with celebrities are all in store. The 2025 film festivals are ready for their close-up.

These festivals in communities large and small offer great destinations. There's something for everyone. For example, the Lookout Wild Film Festival is a staple in Chattanooga, Tennessee. "Our festival has always been about the films, but to thank our audience, we're

trying to bring in more of the festival aspect," says Steve Rogers, event director for Lookout Wild Film Festival. "It's about creating a welcoming and inclusive festival culture. You get to be in a room where every person around you shares a love for adventure and the craft of storytelling. Exploring amazing locations, cheering for stunning visuals and tearing up at touching moments become shared experiences that stay with you long after the credits roll."

FAN FOCUS

Almost every film festival relies on fan participation. Screenings and special events are typically open to the public.

Fans at film festivals often rub elbows with industry insiders, filmmakers and actors as they get an inside look at the movies and topics that will shape the entertainment scene in the coming year. They also get to see impactful projects that



Festivalgoers pack a Chattanooga venue for the Lookout Wild Film Festival.

REGIONAL FESTIVAL FARE

The Lookout Wild Film Festival, Chattanooga, Tennessee: The festival season in the Southeast starts out on the wild side when this returns to Chattanooga, Jan. 16-19, for its 13th year. The festival welcomes guests to its new venue, The Signal at the historic Choo Choo complex, to screen films capturing the thrill of outdoor adventures and the importance of environmental conservation. Live music is thrown in for good measure before screening sessions and during intermissions. Find details on the festival focused on "wild places and the people they inspire" at lwff.org.

The Chattanooga Film Festival, named after its host city: The festival is June 21-28 at the historic Read House. The films are a treat for fans of horror, and the festival touts itself as a summer camp for cinephiles. Actor and producer Elijah Wood won the Moonstruck MoonPie Eating Contest back in 2015.

The Southern Fried Film Festival, Huntsville, Alabama: This festival combines independent film, music and technology.

The Lindsey Film Fest, Florence, Alabama: The University of North Alabama hosts the Lindsey Film Fest, Feb. 27 to March 1. Created in 1988 by George "Goober" Lindsey of "Andy Griffith Show" fame, the festival is free.

The Beaufort International Film Festival, Beaufort, South Carolina: The festival returns Feb. 18-23 for its 19th run. Last year fans saw actor Gary Sinise receive the Pat Conroy Lifetime Achievement Award as the festival celebrated the 30th anniversary of "Forrest Gump." Beaufort served as a backdrop for the film.

Cosmic Holler Film Fest, Ashland, Kentucky: An out-of-this-world experience is guaranteed. This one-day fall film festival at the Paramount Arts Center is a celebration of all things science fiction. Last year's festival kicked off with a visit from Capt. Kirk himself, William Shatner.

may never make it to their neighborhood theaters. But beyond that, fans meet people with similar interests, making the festivals social events involving much more than just cramming in as many screenings as possible.

Finding a great festival to attend is easy—they are plentiful. One great resource for starting your search is filmfreeway.com.

HIT THE MARK

A festival's website is the best resource to find everything from ticket availability to screenings info, schedules, parking and even lodging. Online ticket sales for the public often start well in advance, and popular festivals can sell out quickly.

A great option for the adventurous film buff is to sign up as a festival volunteer. Many festivals are staffed by volunteers, and even the largest festivals rely heavily on volunteer workers. Duties range from greeting patrons and taking tickets to helping at evening parties. Volunteers often reap the rewards such as free admission and sometimes even access to industry professionals.

Another option is to become a member of the organization putting on a festival, which can bring year-round benefits. Some festivals also offer members the option of in-home streaming of films throughout the year, while others have affiliations that provide discounts at movie theaters throughout the country.

Once at the festivals, attendees can easily navigate their many options through schedules continually updated on the event's website or even through an app. Take, for example, the Sidewalk Film Festival, which will take over the Historic Theatre District in downtown Birmingham, Alabama, Aug. 18-24. Spread across about a dozen venues, it offers more than 200 film screenings, plus educational and Q&A sessions. To help attendees stay on track, the festival's website, sidewalkfest.com, has maps and an interactive schedule. 📱



Photos courtesy of LWFF

Outdoor adventure gets top billing at the Lookout Wild Film Festival.



Stitching Friendships Together

Quirky Quilters share a love of
their craft and each other

Photos courtesy of Bonnie Harris

Story by MELANIE JONES

The third Saturday of every month, about 12 to 15 women gather in Bonnie Harris' basement in Pulaski, Tennessee, to talk about what they love best—quilting. Confident beginners collaborate with advanced quilters to plan beautiful works.

The beautiful work the group does isn't just creating the quilts themselves, but the intention behind them. The group, known as

the Quirky Quilters, completes three community projects each year. They make one quilt for the first baby of the new year born in Giles County and another to be auctioned off for charity. They donate a third quilt to a nonprofit to sell as a fundraiser.

The club held three quilt shows before the COVID-19 pandemic hit. This year, the quilters are planning a show for May, though the dates and location are yet to be decided. In the



Quilt group members stitch together works of art.

meantime, quilt enthusiasts can see the Quirky Quilters' creations on display at the Giles County Public Library, which hosts an exhibit each March in honor of National Quilt Month.

SEWING THE SEEDS OF FRIENDSHIP

Quirky Quilters started in November 2013 when Roni Curry led a pumpkin rag quilt class in the basement of Pulaski's STAAR Theater. That first meeting drew four participants, three of whom are still part of the group. These days, Bonnie leads the gathering, beginning with an update on any news, followed by talk of new projects and a show-and-tell and demonstration by a member. "Plus, there's lots of talk and laughter," Roni says. The club holds classes on different types of quilt crafts.

There are 33 members on the books with an average monthly attendance of about 15. "People will come, and some will stay 10 years," Bonnie says. Others decide they just don't have the time and pledge to come back after retirement. "It just sort of ebbs and flows," she says. Since many Quirky Quilters get actively involved after retiring, the age range for most meetings is early 60s to 80s.

Newcomers are always welcome. While Bonnie describes most of the members' skill levels as intermediate or advanced, anyone can join, regardless of their experience. "What you don't know, someone here can show you," she says. "We have good teachers."

While some of the quilters learned at their grannies' knees, others learned as adults. Bonnie's been sewing for about 60 years, but she's only been quilting for half that time. Her aunts quilted, but her mother and grandmother did not. "I took a class and fell in love with it from there," she says.

Bonnie's aunts handstitched every quilt. "That was too slow for me," Bonnie says. Even now, she uses a machine and, while



A quilt top is ready for the backing, batting and band.

she does the quilt tops, she pays someone to machine quilt the backing, batting and band.

That's the route most of the members go, she says. While they love creating something beautiful for the quilt tops, they leave the actual quilting—sewing together the three layers—to someone with a machine. Some, like Bonnie, don't have the patience, others may have arthritis.

A PATCHWORK OF STYLES

A mix of traditional and modern will make for an interesting quilt show. Bonnie says she assigns a block for each month of the year, so quilters end up with 12 blocks with a theme. "If you like them, make a quilt with them, if you don't, don't," she says. It's up to the members.

But those who do use them put their own spin on the blocks. Some are traditional, some are bright and bold. "I can give the same pattern to each and every person, and they choose the fabric and they come out totally different," she says. "It's amazing how they turn out."

So, in a part of the quilt show, she says, people will be amazed to learn some of the quilts were made from the same pattern because they look so different.

Bonnie recommends quilters add a label to their piece that includes their name and the year it was completed. Just like an artist signing their work, which they are. It's not unusual to find an old quilt, an old work of art, "and there's nothing on there to tell you who made it and when," she says.

That's the kind of advice shared in Bonnie's basement as the quilters discuss fabrics and patterns, the trials of quilting and the trials of life. "We're just here to share our love of quilting," she says. ☺

A SMOLDERING SITUATION

Volunteer fire departments face dwindling numbers, aging workforce



Illustration by Adobe Stock

Story by MELANIE JONES and JEN CALHOUN

When a crisis strikes in a rural community, the first people on the scene are usually friends and neighbors who sacrifice their time and safety because they want to help, not to draw a paycheck. They put out the fires. They drive the rescue vehicles. They save lives.

According to the National Volunteer Fire Council, nearly 19,000 of the nation's 29,452 fire departments are all-volunteer, and the number of volunteers has been shrinking. In 2020, the number of volunteer firefighters reached a record low. On top of that, more than half of those volunteers in smaller departments are aged 40 or older, and 34% are 50 and older.

That doesn't mean older firefighters can't get the job done, says Steve Hirsch, NVFC chairman. At 62, Steve is the training officer of the fire department in Sheridan County, Kansas. He recalls a man once asking him the age of the oldest firefighter in his department. He told the man 93. The man laughed and said, "No, I mean the age of your oldest firefighter that's still responding to calls." The man was shocked when Steve again replied, "93."

"But you know, that was out of a station that might get one or two calls a year," he said. "He'd grown up in that area his entire life. He knew where every hole and every gate was in his neighborhood. He wasn't out there pulling hose or doing entry, but he was able to drive a pickup. It worked out nice."

A HEALTHY MIX

Steve doesn't believe older firefighters are a bad thing. He sees the importance of having all ages.

"We can't let the fire department get all old," he says. "Nothing wrong with a good mix. That's pretty important. But we still have to have young people to get out there and do the work. Is there a safety factor in having everybody that's older? Probably, because

the older we get, the more likely we are to have heart attacks and other health issues."

Depending on the state, county or even the fire district, firefighters may not have to meet physical requirements. "A lot of places, they're hard up enough for people that if you've got a pulse, you're probably qualified," Steve says.

Not all volunteer fire departments are having trouble recruiting younger volunteers, however. The Vincent Volunteer Fire Department in Owsley County, Kentucky, maintains a squad of 17 or 18 members between the ages of 25 and 55. That's not too bad for a small, unincorporated community in a county of about 4,000 people.

"It's hard to find younger people, because a lot of times, the tradition just doesn't carry," says Capt. Billy Long, who heads the department. "There's just not a lot of involvement with it. But here lately, we've had a lot more involvement with the community. It's been good this past five, six, seven months."

BENEFITS AND SACRIFICES

Billy, who is 41, understands the benefits and the difficulties of becoming a volunteer firefighter. On the one hand, the job is rewarding, especially in a small town like Vincent. "You get to know everybody," he says. "Also, the involvement—it can open up other doors. I've been a volunteer firefighter since 2002, and I've also been an EMT for 12-13 years now."

But it's also a tough, time-consuming job. "I guess a lot of it is the time, the effort, the training," Billy says. "You've got to attend training every year. It's a lot of effort to do something without pay."

Steve says his best recruitment tool is his existing firefighters. He also says his department is probably the only one in a

“A lot of places, they're hard up enough for people that if you've got a pulse, you're probably qualified.”

—Steve Hirsch, chairman of the National Volunteer Fire Council

Photo courtesy of Steve Hirsch



National Volunteer Fire Council Chairman Steve Hirsch has been training firefighters for 25 years.

Photo by Adobe Stock/Teerapong23

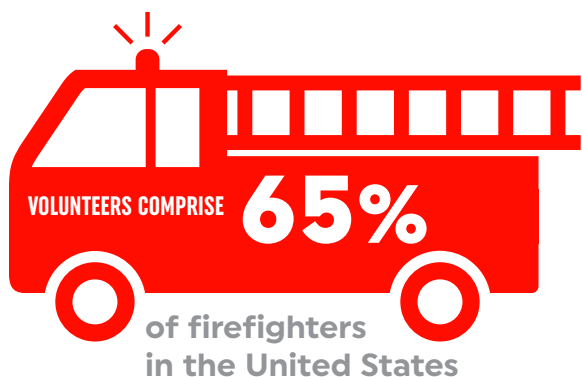


multicounty region that has an aerial ladder. Park that on the street, and people start coming in. Being active on social media is a good way to recruit younger people, he says. But having a good attitude is a big part of it.

He hears a lot of negative comments about the younger generation, how they're always on their phones. “What I find is, most of the time, they're checking to make sure that I know what I'm talking about, and that's OK,” Steve says.

It's important to keep recruiting, he says, because we can't let the fire departments die.

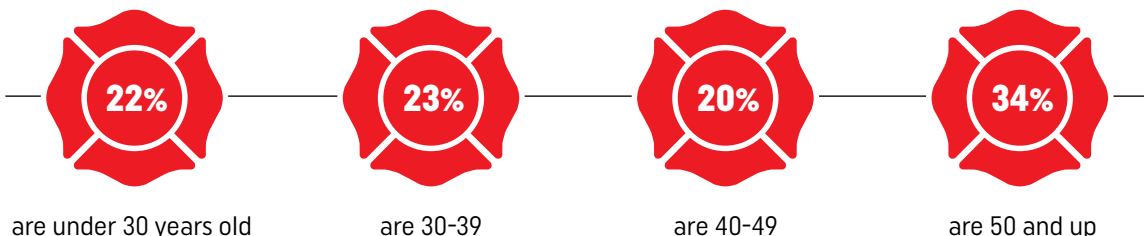
“What is a community going to do when they don't have a fire department?” he says. “That's probably the newest, biggest building in that town of 80-some people. People use that fire station for all sorts of events in the community. A lot of our small towns have lost their school, they've lost their grocery store. A lot of them have lost their banks. Some of them don't have cafes anymore. So that fire department becomes the glue that binds that community together. And, you know, you lose one more glob of glue, and pretty soon, things just fall apart.” 📱



The number
of volunteer
firefighters reached
a record low of
676,900
in 2020

200%
Increase in call
volume in the
last 35 years

The volunteer
fire service is an
aging population.
In communities
under 2,500:



Source: National Volunteer Fire Council

Thank You for Celebrating With Us!

ATC hosts Customer Appreciation Day at Mildred's

Thank you to everyone who joined us for our Customer Appreciation Day on Oct. 10. This year, we tried something new. We left our headquarters to host all of you at Mildred's Restaurant for a meal on us.

We were delighted to see so many of you come out for great food, special appreciation gifts and drawings for gift cards and even a 55-inch smart TV.

We appreciate all of our customers for your loyalty and support. We look forward to continuing to bring you the affordable and reliable service you've come to expect day in and day out. ☺



ATC Control App



Living Connected

Fiber for the speed of life!

Take your home network performance to a new level

The ATC Control app gives you easy access to a snapshot view of your home network. Through the app, you can view all the connected devices on your network, set up parental controls or a guest network, change your Wi-Fi network's name and password and more. The ATC Control app puts you in charge!

CUSTOMIZE YOUR NETWORK

Connect devices with specific people or places throughout your home to fit your network to your needs. Set parental controls, content filters, time limits and more for individual users or optimize Wi-Fi performance by pausing internet access to devices in rooms that don't need to be connected.

PARENTAL CONTROLS

The "People" tab on the home screen makes it easy to create profiles for each member of your household and tailor settings to each individual. Toggle internet access on or off, limit internet access to specific times of day, whenever a device is connected to your Wi-Fi network.

MANAGE YOUR DEVICES

The "Things" tab shows you a list of each device on your network by name, signal strength and internet usage. Tap on a device to rename it to something easier to remember or see a chart of how much data it uses throughout the day. If an unused device is taking up too much bandwidth, you can use the app to easily turn off internet access.

GUESTS WELCOME

Setting up a guest network has never been easier. Simply choose the "My Network" tab, where you can customize the guest network name, password, how long it will be available and even share it by text, email or other messaging services.

CHECK YOUR SPEED

The easiest way to run a bandwidth test is by tapping into "My Network" and then the "Bandwidth Test" icon. Then simply tap the "Run Test" button to check the connection between your router and its outside connection, as well as the router and any mesh units. 📶



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Note: Fiber internet is not yet available in all ATC service areas.

All the Comforts of Home

Classic trio's widespread appeal endures

The definition of comfort food depends on your region. In the Midwest, it might be a bubbly hot dish just pulled from the oven. In the Southwest, comfort may come in the form of a steaming bowl of chili, while Southerners might look toward biscuits and gravy with a side of grits.

Three simple dishes, however, bring together the entire culinary country—tomato soup, a gooey grilled cheese sandwich and a warm slice of apple pie with a scoop of vanilla ice cream.



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

CREAMY TOMATO SOUP

- 4 tablespoons butter
- 3 cups yellow onions, finely chopped
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 (28-ounce) cans tomatoes
- 2 cups chicken stock
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh basil or 1 1/2 tablespoons dried basil, plus more to serve
- 1 tablespoon sugar, or to taste
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper, or to taste
- Dash of Worcestershire sauce
- 1/2 cup heavy whipping cream
- 1/3 cup grated Parmesan cheese

Heat a nonreactive pot or enameled Dutch oven over medium heat. Add butter, then add chopped onions. Sauté

10-12 minutes, stirring occasionally, until softened and golden. Add minced garlic, and sauté 1 minute until fragrant.

Add crushed tomatoes with their juice, chicken stock, chopped basil, sugar, pepper and a dash of Worcestershire. Stir and bring to a boil then reduce heat, partially cover with lid and simmer 10 minutes.

Use an immersion blender to blend the soup in the pot or transfer to a blender in batches and blend until smooth—being careful not to overfill the blender with hot liquid—then return soup to the pot over medium heat.

Add heavy cream and grated parmesan cheese and return to a simmer. Season to taste with salt and pepper, if needed, and turn off the heat.

Ladle into warm bowls, and top with more parmesan and a sprinkle of basil.



GROWN-UP GRILLED CHEESE

Makes 4 sandwiches

- 3 tablespoons butter, divided
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 2 yellow onions, diced
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 1 teaspoon fresh thyme or 1/4 teaspoon dried
- 2 teaspoons fresh rosemary or 3/4 teaspoon dried, divided
- 1 teaspoon brown sugar
- 8 slices artisan sourdough bread
- Mayonnaise
- 12 ounces Gruyere cheese, grated at room temperature
- 6 ounces sharp white cheddar cheese, grated at room temperature
- 4 thin slices Muenster cheese, at room temperature

Add 1 1/2 tablespoons butter and olive oil to a skillet and heat over medium-low heat. Add diced onions, salt, pepper, fresh thyme and 1 teaspoon of fresh rosemary to the hot skillet and saute about 10 minutes, stirring often, until onions are soft and

starting to brown. Stir brown sugar into the onions and cook another minute. Transfer onions to a plate.

For each sandwich: Spread one side of two pieces of bread with a little bit of mayonnaise.

To the same skillet, add remaining butter and rosemary and heat over medium heat. Add both pieces of mayonnaise-coated bread, mayonnaise side down, and cook until bread is golden brown and crunchy, 2-3 minutes.

As soon as you add the bread to the skillet, add a bit of cheese to the top of each piece. Once it starts to melt a little, sprinkle a couple tablespoons of the caramelized onions over the top of one of the pieces of bread.

When the bread is golden brown, sandwich the pieces of bread together and cook on low heat until the cheese is fully melted. Transfer to a plate and repeat with remaining slices of bread and ingredients.

GRANDMA'S SIMPLE APPLE PIE

- 1 double-crust pie pastry
 - 1 large egg, beaten
- Filling:**
- 6-7 cups apples, about 2 pounds
 - 1 tablespoon lemon juice

- 1/2 cup granulated sugar
- 3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/8 teaspoon nutmeg

Preheat the oven to 425 F. Peel the apples and cut them into quarters. Remove the core and slice the apples 1/4-inch thick.

In a large bowl, combine the apple slices with lemon juice, sugar, flour, cinnamon and nutmeg. Toss apple mixture well and set aside.

Roll out half of the pastry dough into a 12-inch circle. Line a 9-inch pie plate with the dough and fill it with the apple mixture.

Roll out the remaining dough and cover the apple filling. Pinch the edges to seal, trimming any excess. Style the edges as desired by crimping or pressing with a fork.

Cut four to five slits on top of the crust to allow the steam to release. Whisk the egg with 2 teaspoons of water or milk and brush over the crust.

Bake at 425 F for 15 minutes, then reduce the temperature to 375 F and continue baking for another 35-40 minutes or until the crust is golden and the apples are tender.

Remove from the oven and let rest for at least 30 minutes before serving. Serve with vanilla ice cream, if desired. 🍷





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