

WK&T

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2024

CONNECTION

Published for the members of West Kentucky & Tennessee Telecommunications Cooperative



**Creative
new ideas**

Tuck's offers
custom services

**MAKE GREAT
VIDEOS**

**BEAUTY
BENEATH**



By SHIRLEY BLOOMFIELD, CEO
NTCA—The Rural Broadband Association

Supporting the Universal Service Fund

For more than 100 years, America has embraced the belief that everyone should have reliable access to reasonably priced communications services. Today, the federal Universal Service Fund, known as the USF, continues its vital role in this mission. The fund helps rural consumers access services comparable in price and quality to those in urban areas, making services more affordable for low-income families. It also supports critical connections important to schools, libraries, health care and businesses.

As we work with NTCA members daily, we see the good the USF does for rural America. We proudly support the continuation of the USF even as new broadband programs expand access to unserved areas. Simply, it makes a practical difference.

Consider, for example, the economic value of broadband, which exceeds \$1.5 trillion annually. It sustains hundreds of thousands of jobs and adds billions of dollars to local economies. With the growing demand for broadband, the USF supports the advanced, sustainable services rural businesses need to compete globally.

Similarly, fast and reliable broadband access helps narrow health care disparities between rural and metropolitan communities. The USF expands the reach of medical services through telehealth and fosters improved patient communication as well as the adoption of electronic health records.

Join us in support of the USF and its essential mission to provide broadband access to all rural residents. I encourage you to learn more about the critical role of the USF by visiting ntca.org/universalservice. 📞



Help may be a click away

Thanks to telehealth services, a trip to a physician's office isn't always necessary, and when you're fighting a winter bug, that convenience counts. Here are a few tips to make your telehealth visit as productive and easy as possible:

CHOOSE THE RIGHT SPOT: Find a quiet, well-lit space for your telehealth session. It's not a Broadway audition, but good lighting helps your doctor see you better. Eliminate background noise as much as possible — you don't want the family pet stealing the spotlight during your appointment!

HAVE YOUR INFO READY: Make a mini cheat sheet with your symptoms, questions and any medications you take. It's easy to forget things during a virtual visit. Plus, it makes you look like a pro patient!

DRESS APPROPRIATELY: Pajamas might be comfy, but consider saving them for bedtime. Dressing appropriately can not only help your doctor assess your physical condition but also put you in the right mindset for a serious health chat.

BE HONEST AND OPEN: Telehealth works best when you're open about your symptoms and concerns. Don't be shy. Doctors can only help if they know the whole story. 📞



Tugging at your purse strings

Online romance scams can break more than just your heart

Falling in love can make anyone vulnerable. Shady cybercriminals know this and are all too eager to steal hearts and much more.

According to the FBI, a romance scam occurs when someone creates a fake online profile and fakes romantic interest to gain trust to steal the victim's money or personal information. Also known as "catfishing," romance scams can be devastating, both financially and emotionally.

Nearly 70,000 people reported being the victim of catfishing in 2022, and losses hit a staggering \$1.3 billion, according to Federal Trade Commission statistics. But actual losses are likely much higher — romance fraud is grossly underreported due to its sensitive nature.

Romance scammers often prey on older people, who may be divorced or widowed. Online dating apps are just one place they lurk. They also reach out through popular social media sites like Facebook and Instagram. They target victims' insecurities and work to develop intimacy as quickly as possible — a practice known as "love bombing." Scammers attempt to make the victim feel special or like they're the "only one who gets" the culprit.

Sometimes a scammer will ask for a short-term loan to get out of a bad situation and start a new life with the victim. Or, they'll say access to a credit card would smooth the way to a relationship. Other gifts include asking for money to cover the customs charges for an expensive gift, or a crypto investor who wants to help the victim cash in on the trend.

Despite the warning signs, victims are often too lovestruck to realize it's a swindle.

Romance scam victims can be male or female, young or old. Their only common denominator is that they believe in true love, and they feel they have found it. 

Follow your head, not your heart

- Allow relationships to develop slowly and naturally.
- Set up a video chat to verify the identity of the person you are messaging.
- Research the person you are messaging.
- Conduct a reverse image search to make sure the person you are talking to is really the person in the photo.

If you've been scammed

Falling victim to a scammer can happen to anyone. Talking about your experience can lessen feelings of shame and help protect others from being victimized.

- Immediately contact your bank or financial institution.
- Report it as soon as possible to the FTC at reportfraud.ftc.gov.
- Alert the FBI's fraud division — the Internet Crime Complaint Center — at ic3.gov. Be prepared to share any records of your communication with the scammer.
- Contact the platform where the scammer first contacted you, so it can prevent others from being victimized.

A fiber network built for today and tomorrow

When WK&T committed to bringing a fast, reliable fiber internet network to our community, we understood the work would be equal parts challenging and rewarding. Also, it would require a significant investment. Our decisions are always guided by fiscal responsibility, and we've built a fiber network with an eye on today's needs while planning for tomorrow's innovations.



TREVOR BONNSTETTER
Chief Executive Officer

While no systems are futureproof, the technology and infrastructure that make our fiber-based services possible are as ready for the future as we possibly can be.

Our network offers symmetrical speeds — with uploads as fast as downloads — and that's impossible without a fiber network. Often, when you see an internet service provider lacking a fiber system offer 100 Mbps for downloads, the upload speeds will be significantly slower. With our fiber network, those speeds are the same.

The start of 2024 is an opportunity to appreciate all the work that's gotten us this far. It's also a time to look at the exciting possibilities ahead. Our Gig fiber internet has grown substantially, and we are close to the introduction of 2 Gigs for residential service and up to 10 Gigs for business services, allowing our members to

“Live Life Connected.”

It doesn't mean a home equipped with 2-Gig service has all that bandwidth for one computer. That's the potential bandwidth for 20 devices having access to 100 Mbps each. It means family members can be online at the same time, streaming a movie and playing video games. Or, more than one person can work from home, which could require plenty of bandwidth.

Businesses often exchange large files or rely on videoconferencing to keep teams connected, meet with clients and collaborate. Even an industry such as agriculture — which at first seems far removed from the digital world — relies on the internet and connected devices to monitor machinery, soil moisture, weather conditions and more.

These are just a few of the ways services like those provided by WK&T are woven into all the fundamental parts of our lives. But that's just the beginning. Our homes are increasingly tied to the digital world. Streaming music and video services are popular options. Countless songs, TV shows, movies, short films and more are just a click away.

Many new appliances can connect to the internet, and it's often very handy. Keep watch on a slow cooker simmering away while you're at work, thanks to a home Wi-Fi connection and smartphone app. Also, internet-connected security and camera systems let you keep an eye on your world, even if you're away for a few days.

Gaming — including the use of virtual reality devices offering elaborate, immersive communities — is extremely popular. The key to the best performance and most enjoyable experience? A fast, reliable fiber internet connection just like the one available to you from WK&T.

As the number of connected devices expands and cloud-based tools become even more important, experts forecast an ever-growing need for internet services capable of moving greater amounts of information even faster.

The fiber network created by WK&T — one many major cities would envy — is capable and prepared to serve you in 2024 and beyond. Thank you for being part of WK&T. 📶

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is your cooperative serving West Kentucky and Northwest Tennessee across nearly 21,000 network connections. The company is dedicated to using technology to keep its members connected through local and long-distance calling, high-speed internet, digital television and beyond.

WK&T is an equal-opportunity employer and provider.

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On the Cover:



Jordan Taylor is the lead cabinet designer at Tuck's Discount Sales in Martin. See story Page 8.

Photo contributed by
Tuck's Discount Sales

Introducing some of WK&T's newest employees



MATT RAGSDALE, fiber combination technician

Where are you from?

Murray, Kentucky.

What do you like to do when you are not working?

Spending time with my wife and two kids enjoying the outdoors.

What is your favorite use of technology?

The ability to stay connected with family.



JAMES REYES, fiber combination technician

Where are you from?

Originally from Nashville, Tennessee, but I decided to move to Kentucky for job opportunities and the less expensive cost of living.

What do you like to do when you are not working?

I either work in my garage on projects such as motorcycles or project cars. I like to do motocross on the weekends if the weather allows, or ride my street bike. I take my dogs on walks, or sometimes play video games.

What is your favorite use of technology?

The computer in general and the internet that comes with it. Without that, the scale of technological advancements that we have today wouldn't be possible. The internet is everywhere and it's essential in today's world.



JARRED WARTA, fiber combination technician

Where are you from?

Originally from Nebraska, I currently live in Puryear, Tennessee.

What do you like to do when you are not working?

I'm an automotive mechanic and a VFW member, so I spend the majority of my time associating with other veterans.

What is your favorite use of technology?

With my cybersecurity degree, I like to expand my knowledge, so I like writing code.



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 2024, 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 www.frs.org. To be eligible, an applicant's parent or guardian must have service with WK&T. The application deadline is Feb. 16.

Fiber is coming to a neighborhood near you!



Find out where WK&T's fiber-fast internet will be available next at www.mywkt.net.

WK&T 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 or game online.

To learn more about getting WK&T's fiber-fast internet at your home or business, visit www.mywkt.net or call 877-954-8748.

Cumberland Caverns
near McMinnville,
Tennessee

BEAUTY LIES BELOW

Area caverns contain
links to the past

Photo courtesy of Cumberland Caverns

Story by KATHY DENES

Bones and footprints of prehistoric jaguars and their prey are preserved within many caves across the Southeast, but that's just the beginning. There are also works of art, as well as artifacts and writings of indigenous peoples — from the ancients to those who would face a Trail of Tears. There are even tools left behind by those who mined saltpeter used in multiple wars.

There are colonies of bats, ever-growing stalactites and stalagmites, as well as flowing underground waters. Some caves are easily found, offering entry through a vast visible gash in a mountainside. Others remain hidden until their accidental discovery, perhaps by a passerby on a hot day who notices cool air seeping out through a wall of rock. They range in size from shallow squeezes to soaring cathedrals, and their passages can stretch for hundreds of miles.

KENTUCKY



Kentucky's Mammoth Cave is the world's longest known cave system, with over 400 miles of its corridors mapped and surveyed. Within a short drive of Mammoth are numerous other caves with their own claims to fame, making the Park City area one of the most popular cave tour destinations in the country. Popular neighboring attractions include Diamond Caverns, a World Heritage Site and International Biosphere Reserve that has offered public tours for more than 160 years. A good resource for learning more about these and other notable caves across the state is worldofcaves.com/the-best-list-of-caves-in-kentucky.

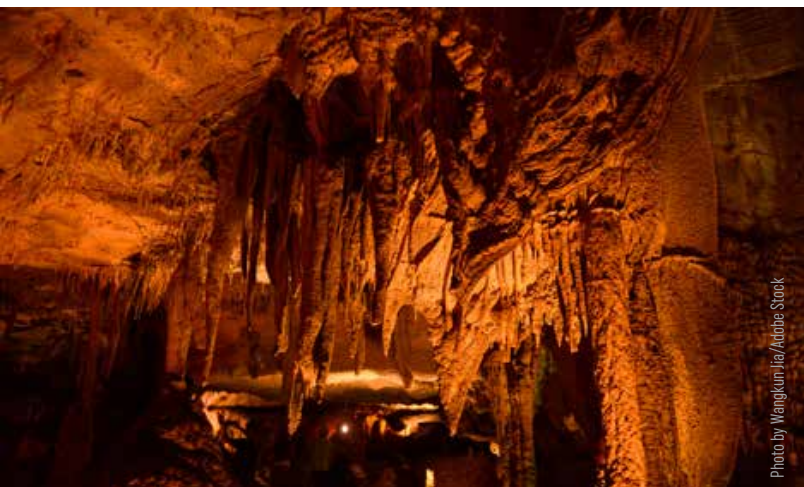


Photo by Wangkun Jia / Adobe Stock



Photo by K.A. / Adobe Stock

In Kentucky's Mammoth Cave, stalactites create a memorable natural spectacle.

The National Park Service manages Mammoth Cave.

TENNESSEE



Tennessee's caverns are spread far and wide. Near McMinnville are Cumberland Caverns, open daily year-round, and Big Bone Cave, named for the giant sloth bones found near where Civil War-era saltpeter vats remain. In the Chattanooga area, visitors can descend by elevator deep into Lookout Mountain to witness the beauty of Ruby Falls or can cross the interstate to visit Raccoon Mountain Caverns. A drive up I-75 brings visitors to Sweetwater, where boats glide across The Lost Sea in artifact-rich Craighead Caverns, open every day except Thanksgiving and Christmas. Continue toward the Great Smoky Mountains to find the Forbidden Caverns of Sevierville and impressive Tuckaleechee Caverns in Townsend. Read about some of these and more at explorationjunkie.com/caves-in-tennessee.

ALABAMA



Alabama is home to hundreds of caves stretching along the Appalachian foothills. Of those, six are touted by onlyinyourstate.com as among the very best and included in its Alabama Cave Trail. These renowned subterranean destinations include Russell Cave, Neversink Pit, Sauta Cave, Cathedral Caverns, Rickwood Caverns and Majestic Cave, formerly called DeSoto Caverns. Find information about these and other popular Alabama caves at enterthecaves.com/best-caves-in-alabama. 📖



TO SAVE A CAVE

Protecting the fragile ecosystems and histories of caves large and small is the mission of Southeastern Cave Conservancy Inc. The nonprofit has worked since 1991 to acquire and sustainably manage endangered caves. Through cave purchases and its EduBat and Project Underground programs, among others, SCCi has preserved historic Cherokee syllabary, written characters serving as an alphabet, found on cavern walls and created compelling curriculum and educator workshops. Check out the group's ongoing projects at saveyourcaves.org.

DIG DEEPER

- » cavern.com/directory
- » worldofcaves.com/the-ultimate-list-of-caves-in-america
- » abackpackerstale.com/best-caves-in-the-united-states
- » Also, visit tripadvisor.com and search for "caves" to find options in your area and beyond.



Photo courtesy of Cumberland Caverns

Cumberland Caverns near McMinnville, Tennessee, offers unique adventures, including a lantern tour.

Blueprint for success

Tuck's Discount Sales has everything for your dream home

Story by PATRICK SMITH



Kitchen displays at Tuck's Discount Sales offer ideas for remodeling or new construction projects.

Turn on the television and you'll quickly find there's no shortage of home-buying, building and renovation shows. Looking around their own homes many viewers are inspired to tackle new projects — both large and small.

However, while the idea of making a change is easy, the design and execution often require expert help. That's where Tuck's Discount Sales comes in. A family-owned business in Martin, Tennessee, Tuck's works to offer customers the best possible price and provides personalized and custom services for restorations, renovations and new builds.

"We always try to keep our prices really competitive, or better than the big box stores," says Jordan Taylor, a lead cabinet designer at Tuck's. "We're always looking to find the best products and the best deal for the customer."

While Tuck's has always had a loyal following, as most Americans stayed home during the COVID-19 pandemic, Jordan noticed a trend begin that has yet to wane. "We saw a lot of people who were stuck at home, so they decided they wanted to remodel," she says. "We started to get very busy and it hasn't ever slowed down since. People want a fresh, clean look with a new perspective in their home. We help a lot of people with remodels, but we also see a lot of new construction because people have decided they want to start fresh and build their dream home."

BUILDING WITH STYLE

Founded in 2004 by James Tuck, and currently run by his grandson, Dustin Forsythe, Tuck's initially focused on discount secondhand products and restoration.



Shoppers can find solutions for all their home-building and renovation projects at Tuck's Discount Sales, including fixtures, sinks and a wide array of flooring options.

As demand increased, Tuck's expanded its offerings to include custom cabinets, flooring, countertops, laundry and bathroom renovation needs, accessories and more. The store prides itself on providing a personalized experience to ensure customers — weekend warriors and experienced builders alike — have everything they need to successfully complete their job.

"We feature several different kitchen setups throughout the store," Jordan says. "We have an extensive showroom so people can see what's possible for new home construction and remodels. We can do special orders, but mostly we want to make sure people can come in, see the product and take it home to start their project the same day."

The interest in home renovation TV shows isn't just entertainment. It's having a measurable impact. Studies like a recent



Photos contributed by Tuck's Discount Sales

survey from Realtor.com consistently highlight that 80% of homebuyers place the kitchen on their list of the most important spaces in their home. That's why it's no surprise a kitchen remodel, or a well-designed and constructed new build, can significantly increase a home's value. The enthusiasm is something Jordan sees firsthand when helping to bring customers' ideas to life.

"We definitely have people who ask for assistance to put things together and make sure certain colors will go with their flooring," she says. "We also have a lot of people who bring in ideas they've seen on TV or through social media, and we do our best to make sure the changes will all flow well together."

UNLIMITED POTENTIAL

If you just can't picture what a new kitchen or bathroom might look like, Tuck's has you covered. With 3D-rendering programs, customers can plan, test and make changes long before the first screw goes in the wall.

"We can go through the entire build and give the customer ideas of what they can do to broaden their horizons and help them see something they may not be able to picture on paper," Jordan says. "Our technology allows us to be creative and give customers plenty of new ideas."

Also assisting with new ideas are Tuck's social media pages and television advertisements, including the ever-popular

before-and-after photos. "People love to see how we can remodel a space," Jordan says. "If we start a project in a really old home and then share the results of a new kitchen, it's amazing to see the transformation. We also use social media to advertise new products or special sales. There are a lot of items we'll buy in bulk and we're looking for somebody to buy it all up at once."

After years of success, countless remodels and new builds, Tuck's is sure to continue attracting customers from both near and far as it celebrates its 20th anniversary this year.

"Looking ahead, we're always planning for what's trending and working to find the latest products to stay up-to-date for our customers," Jordan says. "Whether it's new cabinet lines, flooring or anything else, don't be surprised as you continue to see us grow this year." 📱

If you go

Tuck's Discount Sales

1198 Elm St., Martin, Tennessee
731-588-0456

tucksdiscountsales.com

Monday to Friday 8 a.m.-5 p.m.
Saturday 8 a.m.-3 p.m.

IN THE GAME

Esports growth offers students community and opportunity

Story by DREW WOOLLEY

The Texas Wesleyan esports program started with a 2017 conversation that wasn't about video games at all. Eugene Friar, who was then working in student affairs and is now director of esports and gaming, approached the vice president of his division to talk about what the university could do to be a fun and exciting option for prospective students.

"I was hoping he'd give me some answers, but he flipped it on me and was like, 'Bring me some ideas, and we'll discuss it,'" Eugene says. "I wasn't thinking esports at all, even though I've been a gamer since the Commodore 64 days."

While brainstorming, Eugene came across fledgling esports programs at places like the University of California, Irvine, Missouri's Maryville University and Robert Morris University in Pennsylvania. Groups of students were coming together to compete in multiplayer games like Overwatch, Super Smash Bros. and League of Legends.

Today, the National Association of Collegiate Esports, or NACE, recognizes more than 240 schools with competitive esports teams. The experience not only opens doors in the gaming industry but can also help students develop skills for a variety of careers.

Texas Wesleyan's esports team evolved from a group focused primarily on competition to one that welcomes anyone from casual hobbyists to hardcore gamers. For Eugene, it's an important community that supports students who might not share other interests on campus. But it's also a

Trojan horse for helping them find their path through school and beyond.

"We tell our recruits early in the process my job is to trick you into learning," Eugene says. "If you want to try out for one of our teams, hopefully we'll go to the stadium and play. But what's your major? What are you going to do after you graduate? How is this going to help you get there?"

LEVELING UP

As access to high-speed internet expands from urban centers to rural areas, competitive gaming's popularity has soared. A study by Pew Research Center found that about 70% of college students say they play video games at least once in a while.

While the Texas Wesleyan Rams have teams for the squad-based shooter game Overwatch 2 and the fighting game Super Smash Bros., it's also important for Eugene to appeal to that larger audience. When the program was more focused on competitive gaming, he found that some students with a casual interest in gaming felt like they didn't belong. That's why the



The Texas Wesleyan University Overwatch team reviews video for a match.

Photo courtesy of Eugene Friar



ABOVE: University of Kentucky students enjoy competing in the school's new esports lounge.

RIGHT: Students try out the gaming lounge at the University of Kentucky's Latinx Open House.

club includes a team that creates, edits and streams content for platforms like Twitch and YouTube, as well as groups for fans of anime, Dungeons & Dragons and more casual gaming.

Eugene says overall participation increased by slightly deemphasizing competition and offering more ways to participate with casual gaming clubs, a social media team and an event team. "We went from having seven competitive teams to two, and the number of students in our program has actually gone up a little bit because there's more ways for people to get involved," he says.



Bryce Edwards, a junior, received a scholarship to help run the esports program and became captain of the school's Smash Bros. team. He says the social and leadership skills he learned in that role will be invaluable as he pursues a career in marketing.

For Kelvin Coker, a senior criminal justice major and wrestler, it's been a new way to connect with people. "People need a place that allows them to be themselves and interact with people of different backgrounds so that they can develop the skills necessary to go through life," Kelvin says. "It was a different vibe than wrestling, which was extremely refreshing. It felt good to be among people who shared interests in things outside of sports."

Heath Price, associate vice president of partnerships at the University of Kentucky, found the same enthusiasm when he first met with an informal esports club on his campus in 2018. With school resources behind it, the UK Esports Club has grown to include hundreds of members who enjoy the university's recently completed gaming lounge, along with approximately 70 students who play competitively.

"What we've seen is that the idea of a gamer just being someone who might be interested in building games is kind of a misnomer," Heath says. "A lot of these

young people have varying interests. I think as much of a career builder as anything is giving people some of those opportunities for exposure and to do things in the community."

TAILOR MADE

Eugene takes a similar approach at

Texas Wesleyan. Whether it's a student who wants to start a clothing line designing the school's esports jersey or a mass communications major building the team's content roadmap for the year, he always looks for ways the program can help students pursue their larger goals.

"The content team isn't about making funny content.

It's about project management," he says. "The student organizations aren't just about talking about the things you love. They're leading a meeting and organizing people."

With the gaming landscape constantly changing, that may even mean meeting students somewhere other than esports. Texas Wesleyan's teams currently compete in the second division of the NACE Starleague, the biggest collegiate esports league in North America.

The Rams had a national championship-winning team for the FIFA soccer game series. Today, that team doesn't exist because the game no longer exists. Earlier this year, Electronic Arts, publisher of the FIFA series of games, ended its branding partnership with global soccer organization FIFA. That left some competitive players out in the cold and highlights a unique challenge for esports.

"You don't win a national championship in football and a few years later it's like, 'Remember when we used to have a football team?' So when the publishers get involved it's tricky," Eugene says. "It wouldn't surprise me if the esports part of what we do goes away in time and you see the more content creation and pop culture things last. It's about meeting the students' needs and matching their interests in a really positive way." 🗨️



The Texas Wesleyan University Super Smash Bros. team prepares for a competition.



Better-looking videos are just a few steps away

Here are some tips to help make sure your next video is your best one yet

Thanks to smartphones, recording and sharing videos has never been easier. Whether you're capturing precious memories to share with friends and family, showcasing your talents or documenting a moment the rest of the world needs to see, a high-quality video helps get your message across loud and clear.

CLEAN THE LENS — Sometimes it's easy to overlook the obvious. We're touching our phones constantly. We're taking them out of our pockets and purses multiple times a day, so they're bound to pick up a few fingerprints and smudges along the way. Take a second and give the lens a couple of swipes with a moistened cleaning wipe. No wipes? No worries — a quick breath and a swab with your shirttail can get the job done, too.

ORIENTATION — Make sure to turn your phone horizontally when shooting videos. Shooting horizontally, also called landscape orientation, results in a more aesthetically pleasing experience for viewers, and it looks great across multiple platforms, especially on wide screens. Shooting this way also allows you to capture more of the surroundings in the video.

STABILIZATION — Nothing is harder to watch than a shaky video. A simple way to make your video better is by using two hands to hold the phone steady. Instead of extending your arms, tuck your elbows in close to your sides and hold the phone closer to your chest. If a professional-quality video is what you're after, consider investing in a tripod or a gimbal to give your arms a rest. Also, many newer phones now include image stabilization features that can correct for inadvertent movements during shooting.

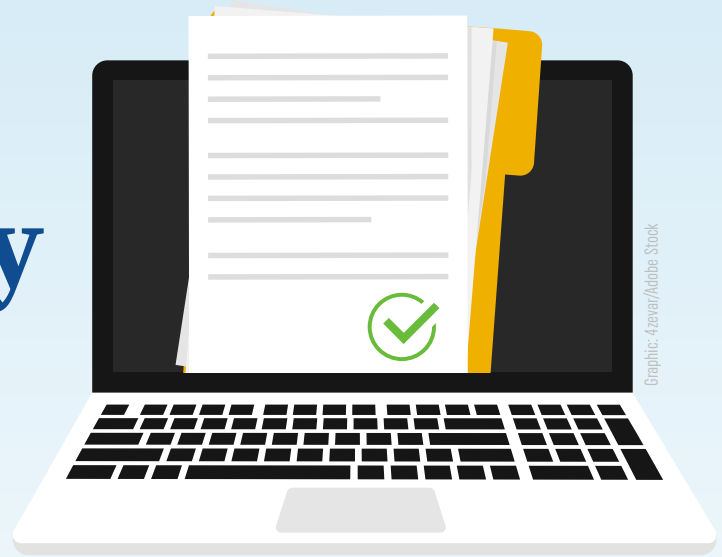
COMPOSITION — Take a moment to compose your shot before pressing the record button. For example, if you are making a video in a controlled environment, perhaps filming a tutorial in your home, look around and make sure the background is clear of anything you wouldn't want people to see.

LIGHTING — When recording indoors have the subject face a window if possible. If there is no natural light, consider purchasing an LED light ring. Light rings have become very popular and are an inexpensive way to make your video look professional. Avoid backlit settings, which can erase a person's features on video and replace them with a dark figure instead.

ZOOM CAUTIOUSLY — While the digital zoom option is a nice feature to have, using it while recording can result in an awkward-looking video. Instead, to keep the image crisp, take the time to frame the shot before recording and avoid using the zoom. Unless you're planning to use the zoom distortion as an effect, get as close to the subject as you safely can to preserve the image quality. 📺

Digital Literacy Training

Bringing documents to life



WK&T's Digital Literacy Training, spanning topics such as learning to use a computer and the internet, navigating the web safely and avoiding scams, concludes with a session about creating and managing digital content.

Through its website, www.mywkt.net, WK&T provides access to the licensed Microsoft Digital Literacy Course. The course is free and available to anyone who wants to learn the fundamentals of using digital technology.

The six lessons, each with easy-to-understand instructional videos, are designed to help you get the most out of your internet connection. The digital literacy courses work best with the most up-to-date web browser, such as Microsoft Edge, Google Chrome, Firefox or Safari, and a good internet connection — like the fast and reliable service WK&T provides — is required.

And the best part — you won't have to leave your home and the lessons won't cost anything except a little time.

The training begins with an in-depth explanation of the key tools needed to create content, providing information that will make using a desktop, laptop, tablet or smartphone easier. These are the devices allowing you to process, store and retrieve data. And with that foundation, you'll have a better understanding of how to write documents, send emails, attend videoconferences, play games, browse the web, watch movies and more.

By the time users reach courses five and six, they've also learned about software programs that create documents and the many options available to bring those documents to life. Formatting text, spell check, drawing shapes, formatting shapes and inserting pictures are just a few of the skills discussed.

For example, the course includes information about syncing files between a device and cloud-based storage, converting files to PDFs and working either online or off.

While the course focuses on Microsoft products, most similar software from other brands operates in generally the same way. So, the information will likely be relevant to your favorite digital-creation tools. Also, Microsoft Word works with most desktop and mobile devices produced by other companies.

THE POWER OF OFFICE

Microsoft's Office tools are a staple for many businesses, from corporations to one-person shops. The class provides an introduction to using those tools to create digital content, including PowerPoint, which creates presentations, and Excel, the leading spreadsheet software.

Also, the sessions extend beyond the software needed to create content to consider options like OneDrive, a cloud-based storage service that stores files accessible from any device. Tools like OneDrive and similar services can fundamentally change how you work.

For example, once if you wanted to send a document to multiple people, you might attach it to an email. With OneDrive, you can send a link to that document. Not only can those with access view the document at the same time, they can edit it collaboratively.

WK&T hopes these six courses have been helpful. The best part — any course can be accessed at any time. If you need a refresher on something specific, take a few minutes and review the course with the information you need. 

Experiencing internet issues? LET US HELP!

If you're having any issues with your internet, please call us so we can work through any service issues together. We are committed to making your connection an outstanding experience.

Fiber-fast internet is the future. And it's here!

WK&T
WEST KENTUCKY AND TENNESSEE
TELECOMMUNICATIONS COOPERATIVE

877-954-8748 | www.mywkt.net

When one pot hits the spot

Simple, delicious and easy

Meals you can make in one pot are ideal for today's busy cooks for two reasons. For starters, little time is wasted going from one pot to another, making sure everything is cooking together nicely. Secondly, you're cooking in one pot, so there's minimal cleanup.

As the name implies, one-pot meals are just that. They are the secret to getting dinner on the table in a jiffy. Generally, the vegetables and protein are cooked together in the same pot. If any other side dishes are needed, it's usually nothing more than a green salad with buttery croustons or a nice piece of crusty bread.

One-pot meals are filled with comfort, something we all yearn for like a big, cozy blanket on a chilly winter's night.



**Food Editor
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CHEESEBURGER PASTA

This is the perfect easy wintertime one-pot meal. It's like having a cheeseburger and spaghetti at the same time, and the kids will love it!

- 1 yellow onion
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1/2 pound ground beef
- 2 tablespoons flour
- 1 (8-ounce) can tomato sauce
- 2 cups beef broth
- 8 ounces pasta shells, uncooked
- 4 ounces cheddar cheese, shredded
- 2 tablespoons pickle relish
- 2 green onions, sliced

Finely dice the onion. Add the onion, olive oil and ground beef to a large deep skillet, and saute over medium heat until the beef is fully browned and the onion is soft and translucent. Drain off any excess fat, if needed.

Add the flour to the skillet and continue

to stir and cook for 1 minute more. The flour will begin to coat the bottom of the skillet. Be careful not to let the flour burn.

Add the tomato sauce and beef broth to the skillet and stir to dissolve the flour off the bottom of the skillet.

Add the uncooked pasta to the skillet and stir to combine. The liquid in the skillet may not fully cover the pasta, but that is OK.

Place a lid on the skillet, turn the heat up to medium-high, and let the liquid come up to a boil. Once it reaches a boil, give it a quick stir to loosen any pasta from the bottom of the skillet. Replace the lid, and turn the heat down to low. Let the pasta simmer, stirring occasionally (always replacing the lid), for about 10 minutes, or until the pasta is tender and the sauce has thickened. Turn off the heat.

Add the shredded cheddar to the skillet and stir until it has melted into the sauce. Stir the relish into the sauce, then top with sliced green onions. Serve warm.



FIVE-HOUR BEEF STEW

Delicious smells will fill your home as this stew cooks slowly in the oven.

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| 1 1/2 pounds chuck roast, cut into bite-size pieces | 4-5 tablespoons minute tapioca |
| 1 cup celery, chunked | 2-3 generous splashes of Worcestershire sauce |
| 4 carrots, chunked | |
| 2-3 medium potatoes, chunked | |
| 1 onion, sliced or large dice | |
| 1/2 cup fresh bread crumbs | |
| 1 large can tomatoes | |
| 1 cup red wine, optional | |
| 1 tablespoon salt | |
| 2 tablespoons sugar | |

Do not brown the meat. Combine all ingredients in a large baking dish with a tight-fitting lid or cover securely with foil. Bake in a 250 F oven for 5-6 hours. Do not hurry this stew. The slow oven is the key to success.

ONE-PAN CHICKEN PASTA

- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided
- 1/4 cup panko breadcrumbs
- 1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon minced garlic, divided
- 1 pound boneless, skinless chicken breasts, cut into 1/2-inch pieces
- 1 teaspoon Italian seasoning
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 3 cups chicken broth
- 1 1/2 cups crushed tomatoes
- 8 ounces penne pasta
- 1/2 cup shredded mozzarella cheese
- 1/4 cup shredded Parmesan cheese
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh basil

Heat 1 tablespoon oil in a large broiler-safe skillet over medium-high heat. Add panko and 1 teaspoon garlic. Cook, stirring, until the panko is golden brown, 1 to 2 minutes. Transfer to a small bowl and set aside. Wipe out the pan.

Heat the remaining 1 tablespoon oil in the pan over medium-high heat. Add chicken, Italian seasoning, salt and the



remaining 1 tablespoon garlic. Cook, stirring frequently, until the chicken is no longer pink on the outside, about 2 minutes. Add broth, tomatoes and penne. Bring to a boil and cook, uncovered, stirring frequently, until the penne is cooked and the sauce has reduced and thickened, 15 to 20 minutes.

Meanwhile, position an oven rack in the upper third of the oven. Preheat the broiler to high. When the pasta is cooked, sprinkle mozzarella over the penne mixture. Place the pan under the broiler. Broil until the mozzarella is bubbling and beginning to brown, about 1 minute. Top with the panko mixture, Parmesan and basil.



ONE-POT PRIMAVERA

- 4 skin-on, bone-in chicken thighs
- 1 pound small red potatoes, halved
- 1 pound Brussels sprouts, trimmed
- 1 teaspoon minced garlic
- 1 tablespoon olive oil, or as needed
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1/2 teaspoon dried thyme
- 1 (1-ounce) package of ranch dressing mix
- 6 slices bacon, chopped

Preheat the oven to 400 F. Place chicken thighs in a 9-by-13-inch baking dish.

Toss potatoes, Brussels sprouts and garlic together with olive oil in a bowl until vegetables are lightly coated. Add vegetables around and between chicken thighs in the baking dish. Season with salt, pepper and thyme. Evenly pour the entire packet of ranch seasoning over the chicken and vegetables. Sprinkle chopped bacon on top.

Bake until chicken is no longer pink at the bone and the juices run clear, 30 to 35 minutes. An instant-read thermometer inserted near the bone should read 165 F.

Set an oven rack about 6 inches from the heat source and preheat the oven's broiler. Place the baking dish under the broiler, and cook until chicken skin becomes golden brown and crisp, 2 to 3 minutes. 🍳



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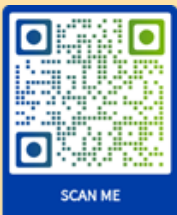
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