

WK&T

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2024

CONNECTION

Published for the members of West Kentucky & Tennessee Telecommunications Cooperative



A Legacy of Service

WK&T CEO caps
26 years



5-STAR
QUALITY

MESH
EXTENDERS



By Shirley Bloomfield, CEO
NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association

A Winning Game

Esports brings fun, competition and a future

NTCA members are committed to doing more than providing fast, reliable internet service. They strive to enrich the community, including finding new opportunities to help everyone as technologies and online trends evolve.

For example, a growing high school sport unlocks all the traditional benefits of competition, such as team building, while enhancing skills applicable to modern careers. Known as esports, competitive gaming can make a difference in the lives of students.

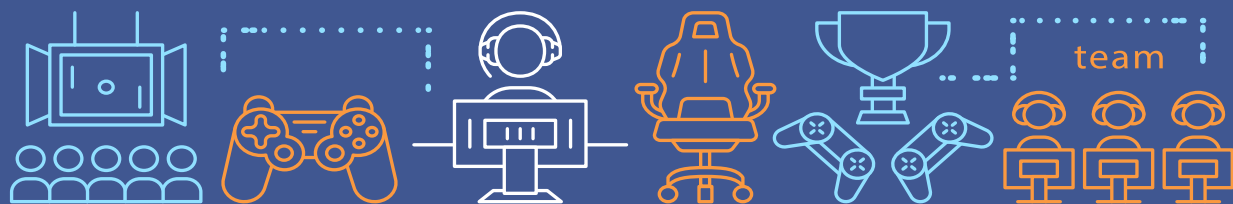
High schools across the nation have embraced esports, and the National Federation of State High School Associations includes esports alongside basketball, football, volleyball and more. Without fast, reliable internet services, however, rural students wouldn't have access. That's the power of providers like yours—they break down barriers and open doors to new opportunities.

Many of the competitions may seem familiar to gamers, ranging from sports games and racing simulations to strategy

and multiplayer battle titles. A growing number of colleges recognize esports and field teams. There's even professional-level competition.

The benefits of esports resemble those found in traditional high school sports. Success relies on teamwork and cooperation. Participants learn life skills and gain a deeper understanding of technology needed for careers ranging from software development to marketing. The broad world of gaming also brings people together, and 61% of gamers say they've met someone they otherwise would not have ever encountered.

Every day broadband uplifts rural America, and we look forward to seeing what innovations and opportunities come next. 



ESPORTS

ESPORTS STATS

Esports is increasingly popular, turning gaming into team competitions at high schools, colleges and even in professional competitions. Some online streaming services offer live coverage of competitions.

WHO ARE GAMERS?

- 24%** are younger than 18 years old
- 36%** are between the ages of 18-34
- 13%** are between the ages of 35-44
- 12%** are between the ages of 45-54

WHO ARE ESPORTS SPECTATORS?

- 50%** are between the ages of 25-41
- 26%** are between the ages of 16-24
- 20%** are between the ages of 42-56

BUILDING SKILLS

Esports creates skills today's students will find marketable.

- Computer network and hardware proficiency
- Digital literacy
- Broadcasting
- Soft skills
- Leadership
- Teamwork
- Problem-solving
- Team building

Source: NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association

A Sound Investment



System upgrade takes listening to next level

Whether you're gaming, watching a movie or listening to music, a high-quality sound system can take you from casually listening to feeling like you're part of the action. If you've thought about installing a sound system in your home, 'tis the season, to treat yourself to one that easily meets your needs and budget.

All sound systems have two basic components. First, there's the source providing the audio signal. This can be a TV, gaming device or digital music player, like your phone or computer. The second component is the amplifier, which boosts the audio signal. More than just volume, the amplifier improves the overall sound quality with more detail and clarity.

When it comes to speakers, music formats only require two, but the more speakers you have, the more immersive the sound will be. A soundbar, sometimes called a media bar, has multiple speakers enclosed in a single horizontal unit, usually placed above or below the TV. A surround sound system is much more complex, with speakers strategically placed around the room to deliver the best possible sound.

SOUNDBAR VS. SURROUND SOUND

Soundbars are ready to go right out of the box. They're relatively inexpensive, sleek and easy to install. Soundbars are ideal for smaller spaces because of their minimal visual impact.

When shopping for a soundbar, pay close attention to the number of speakers hidden inside. A larger soundbar doesn't

necessarily mean better sound quality. Look to manufacturers like Bose, Sonos or Vizio for reliable options.

Surround sound is the choice for high fidelity and full dynamic range of sound—think of your listening area as a movie theater with booming audio. It considers factors like room size, acoustics and listening positions to determine the number of speakers and locations. If you already have a basic speaker system at home, upgrading to surround sound might be as simple as adding an extra speaker or two.

PRICE OF PERFECTION

Very simple sound systems can still deliver a fantastic listening experience, so don't worry if you're starting on a smaller budget. But if you're designing your own setup and need advice on speaker placement or hiding wires behind walls, you'll need an electrician for expert guidance. Installers charge an average of \$50-\$100 an hour, so remember to budget for that.

The most common format for surround sound systems is the 5.1, with six audio channels, five speakers and a subwoofer that delivers the deep, rumbling bass frequencies. A 5.1 setup can cost between \$300 to \$1,700.

A more extensive option is the 7.1 surround, with two additional audio channels and two more speakers. Comparable to the audio setup found in large cinemas, the cost of this configuration runs anywhere from \$400 to \$4,000. [🔗](#)

Honoring Those Who Served

Veterans Day is a holiday for all

I always look forward to the holidays, celebrating the bustle, hustle and joy that come with Thanksgiving and Christmas. For many of us, these are happy weeks, and I'm appreciative of every one of them. But there's also another holiday this season deserving of reflection, gratitude and remembrance.



TREVOR BONNSTETTER
Chief Executive Officer

Every Nov. 11, Veterans Day honors the men and women who served in the armed forces. It's a day that carries a great deal of weight in communities like ours, where many families know intimately about all that our veterans face.

Perhaps there are stories handed down from generation to generation about someone who served decades ago. Or maybe a family member recently served or is currently active in the military.

At WK&T, we are honored to employ five military veterans. Their discipline, strong sense of duty and invaluable skills make our cooperative better every day. I hope you'll join me in recognizing their service this Veterans Day.

I see daily examples of how our communications services connect us. Even though they've changed over the years, beginning with telephone service and continuing with our fast and reliable broadband network, the thread is still the same—we help you make connections.

Veterans Day gives another opportunity to make a connection that may have a deeper meaning. Consider taking a few minutes to reach out, listen and learn about those who served.

One of the best ways to honor our veterans is by ensuring their stories are never lost. In today's digital-infused world, we have more communications tools than ever. Many online resources allow you to learn more about the experiences of our veterans and contribute to preserving their stories.

For example, the Library of Congress' Veterans History Project is a great resource. The project collects and preserves personal accounts of American war veterans so future generations can hear them. If you have a veteran in your life, consider recording their story and sending it to the project. It's a powerful way to ensure their legacy endures. Visit loc.gov and search for the Veterans History Project for all the details.

Another valuable resource is the National Archives, archives.gov, which has a wealth of information about military records and veterans' service histories. You can request records, which is particularly useful for those doing genealogy work. Similarly, The Virtual Wall, found at virtualwall.org, collects and displays the names and details of service members who gave their lives in Vietnam.

Thank you for joining me in celebrating these valiant men and women. Have a wonderful holiday season and a merry Christmas. 📺

The WK&T Connection is published by West Kentucky and Tennessee Telecommunications Cooperative, © 2024. It is distributed without charge to all members of the cooperative.



is your cooperative serving West Kentucky and Northwest Tennessee across nearly 24,000 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:



WK&T CEO Trevor Bonnstetter closes a career at the co-op defined by cooperation, innovation and dedication to his community. See story Page 8.



HOLIDAY CLOSINGS

WK&T offices will observe the following holidays:

Veterans Day, Nov. 11—The Mayfield office will be open. The Murray and Martin offices will be closed.

Thanksgiving Day, Nov. 28—Closed

Christmas Day, Dec. 25—Closed

New Year's Day, Jan. 1—The Mayfield office will be open. The Murray and Martin offices will be closed.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

WK&T is excited to join our friends and neighbors for the Martin Christmas Parade again this year. The parade is always one of the highlights of the holiday season, so join us on Dec. 2 to celebrate.



WK&T employees and their family members have a blast at the 2023 Martin Christmas Parade.

Meet one of WK&T'S NEWEST EMPLOYEES



JACOB WARD

DIRECT SALES REPRESENTATIVE

Where are you from? I'm originally from Linden, Tennessee, but now I live in Martin.

What do you like to do when you are not working? My spare time is spent with my girlfriend, Ryleigh, or my friends.

What is your favorite use of technology? Staying in touch with long-distance family and friends.

Blast Off

Go on a holiday adventure at the U.S. Space & Rocket Center

Story by DREW WOOLLEY

Looking for an out-of-this-world family experience this holiday season? The U.S. Space & Rocket Center in Huntsville, Alabama, will capture everyone's imagination, from kids to adults.

The center was first conceived as Wernher von Braun and his team of rocket scientists were in the final months of refining the Saturn V rocket that would send Apollo astronauts to the moon. As director of the nearby Marshall Space Flight Center, von Braun saw the need for a permanent exhibit to showcase the hardware of the space program.

He petitioned the Alabama Legislature to create a museum with the help of the U.S. Army Missile Command and NASA. The U.S. Army donated land for the museum, and the U.S. Space & Rocket Center opened its doors in 1970, the year after Apollo 11 successfully carried astronauts to the moon and back.

Since then, the center has hosted more than 650,000 visitors each year from as many as 64 different countries. Visitors can get an up-close look at an authentic Saturn V rocket, one of only three in the world, as well as Pathfinder, the world's only fully stacked space shuttle display.

SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE TO EXPLORE

Not only is the USSRC an affiliate of the Smithsonian Institution, but it is also the official NASA Visitor Center for Marshall Space Flight Center. The museum offers regular bus tours highlighting the facility where the Space Launch System is in development to carry astronauts to Mars, asteroids and even deeper into space.

In addition to exhibits detailing the most complete chronology of launch vehicles in the country, the center's Apollo 16 command module, real Apollo 12 moon rock and daily STEM on Stage performances let visitors interact with artifacts and exhibits.

Children under 8 can explore an International Space Station-themed playground at Kids Cosmos, and every Saturday kids 12 and up are invited to the Maker Lab for hands-on projects that incorporate lessons on topics like solar energy and robotics. Adrenaline junkies can ride the G-Force Accelerator to experience three times the force of gravity or take the Moon Shot to see what a rocket launch feels like as you fly 140 feet straight up in 2.5 seconds.

"The Space & Rocket Center is really an amazing feast for the eyes. It's a place to learn about the past, the present and the future of space exploration."

—Pat Ammons, senior director of public and media relations

AN ASTRONOMICAL CHRISTMAS

One of the USSRC's most popular attractions is the INTUITIVE Planetarium, which features a state-of-the-art digital dome theater. Each screening is unique as a team of live astrophysicists takes visitors on a tour of the solar system.

"It is truly an extraordinary, absolutely world-class planetarium," says Senior Director of Public and Media Relations Pat Ammons. "It's all live and interactive. They take you on a personal tour, you can ask questions and it's highly interactive."

Throughout the holidays, the planetarium also screens a special feature called "The Star of Bethlehem," which explores both the science and religion behind the famous celestial phenomenon. 📺

A HELPING HAND

While the holidays often bring hope and happiness, for many people achieving those peaceful goals are elusive. That's particularly true this year, as communities throughout the Southeast strive to recover from damaging winds and devastating floods.

Dolly Parton, Walmart and countless others have contributed to organizations supporting these rural areas in need. If you wish to contribute, consider these options:

American Red Cross: [redcross.org](https://www.redcross.org)

The Salvation Army: [salvationarmyusa.org](https://www.salvationarmyusa.org)

Photos courtesy of the U.S. Space & Rocket Center

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LEFT: The U.S. Space & Rocket Center in Huntsville, Alabama, is a holiday destination for the family.

Photo courtesy of Ash Agency



ABOVE: Finn Cushing, 2, tries an astronaut's suit on for size.

LEFT: See a piece of the moon, a rock brought home by astronauts.

STRONG FOUNDATIONS

Trevor Bonnstetter leaves a legacy of innovation

Trevor Bonnstetter's peers see him as a supportive leader in the industry.

Story by DREW WOOLLEY

The people who worked with Trevor Bonnstetter over his 26 years as WK&T CEO agree on many things. He is a leader who cares about his community. He isn't afraid to chase down new opportunities if they can help the membership, and he's always there to support other cooperatives.

But the trait that most sets him apart has always been his vision for what a cooperative could be. Tennessee Broadband Association Executive Director Carrie Huckeby compares Bonnstetter, a member of TNBA's government affairs team, to a clever skyscraper engineer who could look over a set of finished blueprints and point out a simple way to add 10 more floors to the building.

"It could be a bit frustrating when you were patting yourself on the back for completing something," she says. "But I discovered it normally led me down a path to improve whatever project I was working on."

Bonnstetter brought that same approach to each day as the head of WK&T. As a result, the cooperative pioneered collaboration with other co-ops to bring down prices for all. It was among the first cooperatives in the country to build a full fiber network for its members and even built a

tech park that has served both WK&T and its community for years.

Together, those accomplishments have set up WK&T's membership with advanced technology and high-speed internet access that will help it continue to thrive well into the future.

"Through his leadership, we've been able to bring fiber connectivity to a lot of underserved and unserved areas," says WK&T Chief Operating Officer Karen Jackson-Furman. "He's leaving a great legacy and an incredible corporate culture that he's built."

THINKING AHEAD

Bonnstetter started as WK&T CEO in February 1998, and he spent much of his tenure pursuing new ideas. In the early 2000s, he formed Telecom Management Services for telephone companies to share employee expertise, reduce operational costs and save by buying shared services together to better expand broadband in their communities. The partnership ultimately led to WK&T acquiring Ardmore Telephone Company in 2009.

But one of his most lasting accomplishments came in 2010, when WK&T

secured the largest grant in the country for fiber deployment through the American Recovery and Reimbursement Act. The previous year, WK&T's system was devastated by a severe ice storm. Bonnstetter saw the grant as an opportunity to not just rebuild the system but to upgrade it with more advanced technology.

"What that did was future-proof his network," says TNBA Government Affairs Director and former Ben Lomand Connect CEO Levoy Knowles. "And that's proven time and again to be to WK&T's advantage."

One advantage of being among the first 100% fiber networks in the country was that WK&T no longer needed to catch up with other systems. Instead, Bonnstetter could focus on innovative opportunities as they arose, like the closure of Mayfield's Mid-Continent University in 2014. Rather than let the space sit unused, WK&T purchased the campus, converting it into the cooperative's new headquarters and the WK&T Tech Park.

"I think that was ingenious and really a way to redeploy assets and upgrade them into a huge campus for the benefit of the local community," Knowles says.





Bonnstetter updates members on the state of the cooperative at the 2010 Annual Meeting.

In addition to creating a space for existing and new companies to operate, the park proved to be invaluable in the wake of deadly tornadoes that ripped across Kentucky and Tennessee in 2021. With few places in Graves County for large businesses to settle, many were facing the prospect of moving to a nearby city like Paducah.

"I don't know if the tornado had really lifted off the ground yet, and Trevor was already trying to help relocate people to Tech Park," Jackson-Furman says. "By him being proactive, it kept a lot of jobs in the county that probably would have left. And who knows if they ever would have come back?"

HIGH EXPECTATIONS

For all of those accomplishments, it's Bonnstetter's dedication to his community, promotion of continuing education and his forthright demeanor as a partner that the people who worked with him most closely will remember.

"He demanded and expected a lot," says Susan Staley, retired WK&T chief information officer. "He pushed everyone to make WK&T the best it could be. He understood where we needed to be

to bring our members the best internet experience."

Having served as both chief financial officer and COO over the past several years, Jackson-Furman will step into the role of CEO as Bonnstetter transitions to a governmental affairs role with the cooperative. Between her own experience and his guidance, she's confident she can continue the good work Bonnstetter started.

"In my opinion, he's been a leader in the industry nationwide," Jackson-Furman says. "He's an out-of-the-box thinker, and he's led this cooperative well. I'm absolutely honored that he threw his support behind me to be his successor."

While the cooperative will inevitably face difficult times at some point, Huckleby hopes staffers will take to heart the advice Bonnstetter gave her whenever they faced challenges together: "Be sure when you look in the mirror, you're good with what's looking back at you." She knows the work he has done at WK&T will stand up to that test.

"His area has been through terrible devastation from ice storms and tornadoes," Huckleby says. "The buried network is a foundational tool that gives the community the ability to bounce back. That's a strong legacy to leave." 



TOP: Bonnstetter joins WK&T employees for a photo at the 2010 Annual Meeting.

BOTTOM: Bonnstetter with Director of Human Resources Ellen Thomas, left, and Executive Assistant Davida Bridges at this year's WK&T Annual Meeting.

THE ART OF SELF- RELIANCE

Rural writers get a boost from the internet

Story by JEN CALHOUN



Photo courtesy of Shawna Holly

Shawna Holly was researching how to publish her first novel when she ran into a type of writer's block she'd never experienced. This particular block had nothing to do with plot holes or mental tangles. Instead, it centered around the relatively slow-moving churn of books through the nation's traditional publishing houses.

"The industry—from my perspective—is very busy, like so many other businesses right now," Shawna says. "There are very few literary agents and acquisitions editors compared to how many debut authors are seeking representation, and they're all overworked. As a result, the path to traditional publishing is slow. For authors seeking a faster solution, self-publishing is the answer."

So, that's what she did. In June 2023, the Boerne, Texas-based writer published her first novel, "The Stories We Keep," via a self-publishing platform that distributes paperbacks and e-books all over the world. Her second book, "When We're Broken," came out earlier this fall. Both books are in the genre of women's literary fiction.

TAKING CHARGE

Shawna is among a growing number of writers embracing self-publishing

platforms to bypass traditional gatekeepers and speed up the book publishing process. This is especially true for writers from small or rural towns who may have a harder time finding an agent or fostering connections to publishing houses in larger cities.

"Agents receive thousands of queries a year, and they're only taking on maybe two or three new authors in addition to the clients they already have to manage," Shawna says. "It just makes it darn near impossible to find that magic match. I just thought, 'I'm in my 40s and have more stories to write. I don't want to wait.'"

Best-selling authors who famously self-published before landing big book deals and film adaptations include Amanda Brown, who wrote "Legally Blonde," and Andy Weir, who wrote "The Martian." Colleen Hoover, the East Texas author of the blockbuster "It Ends with Us," also self-published her first book, "Slammed," in 2012. She increased her audience by giving away free books and by posting regularly on social media.

Even those self-published writers who don't reach traditional literary heights have profited in the world of self-publishing. The Alliance of Independent Authors published a survey in 2023 reporting that

self-published authors earned a median income of \$12,749—more than double that of traditionally published authors. They also made up more than 50% of Kindle's Top 400 books of 2023, the survey found.

UNTANGLING THE WEB

Self-publishing isn't the only internet tool that sparks creativity, however. Connie Clyburn is an East Tennessee-based writer of several books, including "Wisdom from the Doublewide" and the devotional "Aging Fabulously." Connie found fellowship online through video calls with other writers from as far away as Ireland.

From her home in Telford, Tennessee—which she describes as "a little wide place in the road between Jonesborough and Greeneville"—she also uses the internet to connect with others through her online magazine. Called *ah law, y'all*, the quarterly publication highlights the Southern Appalachian area.

"You don't always think about how vital the internet is as a writer," says Connie, who infuses her writing with scripture and ways to apply it to everyday life. "But, as a rural writer, it has opened up a big world. Anything that I come up with



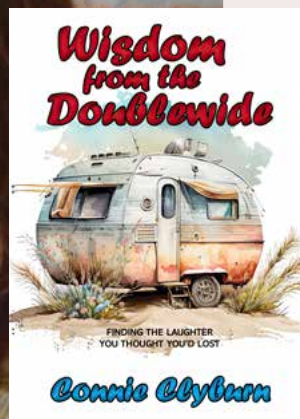
that I want to read about or research or just connect with is right there at your fingertips.” 🗨️

Photo courtesy of Connie Clyburn

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

For more information on Connie Clyburn, look up her blog, “Wisdom from the Doublewide,” and the online magazine *ah law, y'all*.

Find out more about Shawna Holly and her books at shawnaholly.com.



LEFT: Connie Clyburn got her start as a journalist, and now she writes books, a blog and a newsletter from her home in East Tennessee near Jonesborough. Connie turned her blog into the book “Wisdom from the Doublewide.”

OPPOSITE PAGE: Shawna Holly lives outside of San Antonio, in a town of about 15,000 people. An Air Force veteran, Shawna self-published her book, “The Stories We Keep,” to avoid the sometimes long and tedious process of finding an agent and a publisher.

GET A START WITH SELF-PUBLISHING

Most writers learn quickly that finding a publisher is often harder than writing the book itself. Books are meant to be read, but the steps involved with finding an agent and publisher can waste valuable time and resources. As a result, many writers self-publish. The comprehensive book and writers' blog “What We Reading” lists several self-publishing platforms. We've listed a few resources here for e-books. Visit whatwewereading.com for more information on self-publishing print books.

Amazon Kindle Direct Publishing, also known as KDP

- Highest market share and sales in the self-publishing industry.
- Writers earn royalties of between 35% and 70% depending on the price of the book.
- It's important to note there's another option called KDP Select, which is different than KDP. KDP Select users get certain marketing perks that can help sell their books. In exchange, they can't publish their work with any other self-publishing company.

Apple Books

- Writers earn royalties of 70% on all e-books.
- Second-biggest player in the industry after Amazon's KDP.
- No upfront fees for authors once they have an iTunes account.

Barnes & Noble Press, also known as B&N

- Writers earn 70% on e-books above 99 cents.
- B&N is considered one of the easiest platforms to use.
- Completely free to use, and it does not require exclusivity.

Other platforms include Kobo Writing Life, Draft2Digital, StreetLib, IngramSpark and PublishDrive, some of which have different pricing models and royalty distributions. Each of these platforms generally offers distribution to all the major e-book retailers, so it's important to research all options.

Source: “15 Best Self-Publishing Platforms for Your Book” from the blog “What We Reading.”

5-Star Service



WK&T fiber keeps Sherrye Clark connected after 70 years



A crew lays a fiber line to bring WK&T's lightning-fast internet to more homes and businesses.

Story by DREW WOOLLEY

Sherrye Clark has been a WK&T member all her life. The 70-year-old Gibson County resident can still remember the days of picking up the phone to hear an operator connecting her to a caller or sharing a party line with several other households.

"I remember my great-aunt being on the line with us," she says. "She thought I talked too long, but she just kept gossiping on our line."

In the decades since, technology and the quality of service have transformed so much that they're almost unrecognizable. Today, Sherrye can use her high-speed

fiber connection to browse the news, learn about the climate in parts of the country where she has family and even see the excitement on her 11-year-old grandson's face during a birthday video chat.

"His name is River, and he has a lot to say," she says. "It was nice to see him and hear him because he can really tell some tales."

THE IMPORTANCE OF CONNECTION

As someone who is largely homebound, that connection is especially important to Sherrye. Using a wheelchair and unable to drive, she doesn't have many opportunities to get out. But with her high-speed internet service she doesn't have to feel cut off from the world.

"It's important to me because I can stay in contact with everybody and feel like I'm still part of what's going on," she

says. "I don't feel left behind because I can contact anybody at any time and talk to them privately or in a group. It's a big, big deal."

When these new technologies first started to appear, she had some concerns about being able to learn and adapt to them. Despite how much the tools have changed, Sherrye discovered she is more than capable of picking them up.

"I think about all the different things that have come across in my lifetime. From party lines to dial-up internet to fiber optic internet," she says. "It's just unbelievable. I never would have thought I could have made the transition so smoothly, but it wasn't hard."

Sherrye credits that, in large part, to the help of WK&T employees who set up the new equipment well and are always courteous while explaining how it works.

"I rarely have problems, maybe once every year or two. But when I do, I know that I can call, and I know that they're going to help me out," she says. "I just listen to them and do what they say, and everything goes great." 📞



How a mesh network can keep you covered



Ideally, a powerful Wi-Fi router can provide internet service throughout your home. But, whether it's the size of the space, thick walls in the way or other equipment interfering with the signal, we've all experienced a weak Wi-Fi signal in some corner of the house.

While Wi-Fi extenders can provide a quick fix, they're far from a perfect solution. By simply repeating your primary router's signal and effectively layering another Wi-Fi network on top of your existing one, extenders are often inefficient. They might slow down your overall connection speed, require complicated software to work with your router and lead to the hassle of switching between networks any time the signal gets weak.

A mesh network, on the other hand, provides one continuous Wi-Fi network throughout your whole house that is easy to use and simple to expand, if needed.

HOW DOES A MESH NETWORK WORK?

A mesh network functions as one unified network. Rather than a single access point with a traditional router, a mesh network uses several "nodes" that provide multiple access points to the same network.

One node typically acts as the base station, much like a router. The other nodes can then be spread throughout your home while still communicating with the base station wirelessly, providing comprehensive Wi-Fi coverage over a wider area. Each node is made by the same manufacturer, so they can easily communicate with each other without slowing down your experience.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF A MESH NETWORK?

Excellent coverage for large spaces—A mesh network is the ideal way to maintain a strong Wi-Fi signal across

a large household. WK&T can help you find the best placement for nodes in your home, so you never wander into a dead zone again.

No switching between networks—Unlike a Wi-Fi extender, each node in a mesh network lets you connect to the same base station. That means you don't have to worry about connecting to different networks in different parts of your home.

Ease of use—Since mesh network nodes are all made by the same manufacturer, you don't have to worry about cumbersome software or multiple updates to keep them secure. And growing your coverage is as simple as getting an additional node. 📶

TROUBLESHOOTING A WEAK SIGNAL

Test your signal strength—Free tools can help you map your home's signal strength to show where it starts to degrade.

Test your connection—If your measured connection speed matches the package on your bill, you could need a higher speed package. If the measured speed is significantly lower, you probably need to boost the signal.

Move your router—One of the simplest ways to improve coverage is to move the router away from walls, heavy-duty appliances, electronics or other objects that could block the signal.

**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!**



877-954-8748 | www.mywkt.net

Holiday Simplicity

Breakfast casseroles are a gift for busy hosts

Make-ahead casseroles can make the difference between holiday stress and satisfaction. From sweet to savory, there are many choices. Here are several to try this season.



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

SCRAMBLED EGG BAKE

- 4 slices bacon
- 8 ounces dried beef
- 2 4-ounce cans mushrooms, drained
- 1/2 cup butter, divided
- 1/2 cup flour
- 4 cups whole milk
- 16 eggs
- 1 cup evaporated milk

Saute the bacon until almost done. Add dried beef, mushrooms and 1/4 cup butter. While hot, add flour and stir in whole milk. Simmer sauce until thickened and smooth, stirring constantly.

Beat eggs with evaporated milk and salt. Scramble in remaining 1/4 cup butter.

Grease a 9-by-13-inch baking dish. Ladle a layer of sauce into the dish followed by a layer of scrambled eggs. Repeat layers, ending with a layer of sauce. Garnish with mushrooms and bacon. Cover with foil and bake at 275 F for 1 hour.

To make ahead: Make casserole, cover and refrigerate. Bake as directed.

BLUEBERRY PANCAKE CASSEROLE

Crumb Topping:

- 1/2 cup flour
- 3 tablespoons brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted

Pancakes:

- 2 1/2 cups flour
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 1/2 tablespoon salt
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 2 large eggs
- 2 cups whole buttermilk
- 1/2 cup milk
- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
- 1 1/2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 1-2 teaspoons finely grated lemon zest
- 2 cups blueberries
- Maple syrup, for serving

Crumb topping: The day before, in a medium bowl, combine flour, sugars, cinnamon and salt. Add melted butter and stir until fully incorporated. Cover and refrigerate.

Pancakes: Preheat the oven to 350 F. Grease a 9-by-13-inch baking dish and set aside.

In a large bowl, combine flour, sugar, salt, baking powder and baking soda.

In a separate bowl, combine eggs, buttermilk, milk, melted butter, lemon zest and vanilla extract. Whisk wet ingredients until well combined. Add wet ingredients to the dry ingredients and stir until just combined. The batter will be lumpy. Do not overmix.

Pour the batter into the greased baking dish. Sprinkle the blueberries over the top. Remove the crumb topping from the fridge and crumble over the top of the blueberries and batter. Bake for 35-45 minutes, until puffed and light golden brown. Use a toothpick to check the center for doneness. Serve warm with maple syrup.



FRENCH TOAST CASSEROLE

- 1 12- to 14-ounce loaf French or sour-dough bread. Stale bread works great.
- 1 8-ounce package full-fat cream cheese, softened
- 2 tablespoons powdered sugar
- 3 teaspoons vanilla extract, divided
- 8 eggs
- 2/3 cup packed brown sugar
- 3/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 2 1/4 cups whole milk

Topping:

- 1/3 cup packed light brown sugar
- 1/3 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 6 tablespoons unsalted butter, cold and cubed
- Maple syrup and/or powdered sugar for topping

Grease a 9-by-13-inch casserole with nonstick spray. Either cut the bread into 1-inch cubes or tear it into preferred size. Spread half of the cubes into prepared baking pan.

Using a hand-held or stand mixer with a whisk attachment, beat the cream cheese

on medium-high speed until completely smooth. Beat in the powdered sugar and 1/4 teaspoon vanilla until combined. Drop random spoonfuls of cream cheese mixture on top of the bread. Layer the remaining bread cubes on top of cream cheese. Make sure some cream cheese is still exposed on top. Set aside.

Whisk the eggs, milk, cinnamon, brown sugar and remaining vanilla together until no brown sugar lumps remain. Pour evenly over the bread. Cover the pan tightly with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 3-4 hours or up to 24 hours. Overnight is best.

When ready to bake, remove from the refrigerator and uncover while you make the topping.

Mix the brown sugar, flour and cinnamon. Then, use a pastry cutter or your hands to cut the cold butter into the topping mixture until crumbly.

Bake at 350 F for 45-60 minutes. You can use a knife to check the French toast—it should come out mostly clean when the dish is ready. Avoid putting the knife into the cream cheese dollop, which could give a false reading.

SAVORY RICE CEREAL CASSEROLE

- 2 pounds pork sausage
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 2 cups cooked rice
- 3 cups Rice Krispies
- 3 cups shredded sharp cheddar cheese
- 6 eggs
- 2 cans cream of celery soup
- 1/2 cup milk



In a skillet, cook sausage with onion until meat is no longer pink and onions are tender; drain. Transfer mixture to a lightly greased 9-by-13-inch casserole. Top with layers of rice, cereal and cheese. In a bowl beat the eggs with the soup and milk. Spread mixture on top. Cover with foil and refrigerate overnight.

Preheat oven to 350 F. Remove foil and bake for 45 minutes to 1 hour or until a knife inserted in center comes out clean. Let stand for 5-10 minutes before serving.

Note: Making this a day ahead helps to soften the cereal. It can be baked right away, but the cereal may still be crispy. 📺



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