

The

Communicator

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2018

FURNITURE REHAB

Breathing new
life into aged
items

NURTURING LOVE

A local agency provides
resources to foster kids

DRESSING FOR DINNER

A classic Southern dish
gets a makeover





BY SHIRLEY BLOOMFIELD, CEO
NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association

Rural broadband is on our wish list

The federal government is not usually known for moving quickly. That said, the Rural Utilities Service, an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, has been working at a fast and furious pace the past several weeks on its e-Connectivity Pilot Program. This program could make \$600 million available in loans and grants to bring broadband to rural areas where service is desperately needed.

Now, let's hope the USDA is just as fast and furious when it comes to releasing funds to rural broadband providers who can continue to build networks in areas where connectivity is sorely needed.

Many of you reading this enjoy access to a reliable broadband network thanks to your local telecommunications provider. The cooperative and independent telcos who are part of NTCA have done a tremendous job of connecting their members and customers to some of the fastest internet service available in the country. Even so, rural America is home to many communities that are so remote, isolated and sparsely populated that extending service to them is a serious challenge.

Through NTCA, telcos like yours share their opinions and concerns with elected officials and agencies. We sent a letter to RUS stating that the rules of the e-Connectivity Pilot Program should be set in a way that makes sense and that prioritizes the most productive use of limited federal dollars.

Seeing progress that releases new dollars for rural broadband is definitely on our wish list this season. [📄](#)

Groups study impact of broadband on rural prosperity

Several national associations, nonprofits and government agencies joined forces throughout 2018 to examine the impact of broadband on life in rural America.

The Farm Foundation, a nonpartisan agricultural policy institute, launched a project entitled "What's on the Horizon for E-Connectivity in Rural America." As part of this project, the group organized a series of E-Connectivity Listening Sessions in collaboration with CoBank, NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association, the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

"We want to identify the challenges rural communities now face in providing quality broadband services, as well as the innovative options being used to address those challenges," said Constance Cullman, Farm Foundation president and moderator of the listening sessions.

One of the sessions was in Birmingham, Alabama, in August. Among the panelists was Fred Johnson, executive vice president and general manager of Farmers Telecommunications Cooperative in Rainsville, Alabama. Johnson also serves on the board of directors for NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association.

Johnson applauded the effort to bring stakeholders together to share the accomplishments of small, rural broadband providers. "Closing the digital divide is a goal we all share, and creating partnerships to reinvest in our networks is an important component of achieving that goal," he said.

Also speaking at the Birmingham session was Jannine Miller, USDA's senior advisor for rural infrastructure. She discussed the Interagency Task Force on Agriculture and Rural Prosperity that was formed in 2017. The task force identified over 100 recommendations for the federal government to consider in order to help improve life in rural America. The recommendations centered around five areas, with e-connectivity being central to all components (see illustration below).

More information about the listening sessions — including videos of the events — can be found at www.farmfoundation.org. [📄](#)

RURAL BROADBAND: A KEY TO AMERICAN PROSPERITY



Source: USDA. The agency's full report can be found at www.usda.gov/ruralprosperity.

Always on

More than one-quarter of adults constantly online



Social media, text messages, gaming, weather reports, email and much more are daily parts of busy lives. But just how connected are we really to the online world?

For about 26 percent of the U.S. population, the answer to that question is dramatic — just more than a quarter of adults say they are online “almost constantly,” according to a Pew Research Center study released earlier this year.

The widespread use of smartphones and mobile devices has helped drive the sense of being online all the time, a result that is up from 21 percent in a similar 2015 poll.

While not everyone feels constantly connected, about 77 percent of Americans still go online daily. Forty-three percent go online several times a day, and about 8 percent go online only about once a day. Meanwhile, 11 percent connect several times weekly, and a similar percentage does not use the internet at all.

The biggest indicator of the time spent online is access to a mobile device. Of those who possess a smartphone or similar device, 89 percent go

online daily and 31 percent report almost constant use.

Meanwhile, of the people who do not have a mobile device, only 54 percent report daily online usage and only 5 percent are constantly connected.

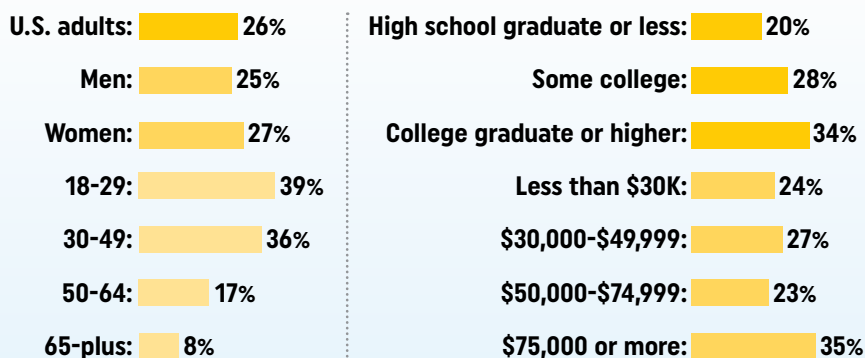
But when the poll added age into the mix, the results grew more interesting. Age matters less than it did three years earlier. Americans between the ages of 30 and 49 indicated the same rate of almost constant online use as younger adults: 36 percent to 39 percent for the younger generation. Meanwhile, the percentage of those between the ages of 50 and 64 who report constant online use has spiked from 12 percent to 17 percent since 2015.

Households with higher incomes and those who live in urban and suburban areas report almost constant online usage at a rate that is nearly double that of residents of rural areas, where only 15 percent report the highest usage.

As online tools become more useful and services better connect friends and families, the importance of access to fast, affordable internet connections continues to increase. 📱

A connected nation

The chart represents the percentage of Americans who describe themselves as being online “almost constantly,” according to a Pew Research Center poll.



Source: Pew Research Center analysts Andrew Perrin and Jingjing Jiang reported results of the study.

Thankful for world-class broadband in rural America

Recently, I've seen many commentators and public officials paint our nation's digital divide with a broad brush. "Urban areas have great internet connectivity, and rural areas don't," they say. I'm thankful those people are wrong.



JIM COOK
General Manager

I always enjoy taking time at Thanksgiving to look back on the year and appreciate what we have, both personally and at New Hope Telephone Cooperative. We are truly blessed.

I'm thankful we live in a country where we can put so much energy into things like holidays, family get-togethers and football games instead of worrying about clean water or our general safety. Our country may not be perfect, but I'd certainly rather be here than anywhere else.

When I think about where we are, I'm thankful for our community. I appreciate the scenic beauty of our area and the genuine, hardworking and caring people who make up the backbone of the communities we serve.

I'm truly thankful for the team we have at New Hope Telephone Cooperative and the work they do every day to make sure we serve you the best way we can. This year in particular, I appreciate their hard work in converting 100 percent of our subscribers to the new fiber optic network. The completion of this project allowed NHTC to become certified as a "Gig-Capable Provider" by NTCA – The Rural Broadband Association. It also allowed NHTC to become one of the first companies to receive an "All-Fiber Certification" from the Fiber Broadband Association.

I also appreciate our team's hard work and progress in the removal of old network pole attachments. The removal of these attachments will provide significant savings to the cooperative for years to come.

I'm also thankful for the modern conveniences our network provides. Whether it's streaming an unlimited catalog of quality entertainment, running a smart home or connecting with loved ones hundreds of miles away, we have amazing technology that previous generations could not have imagined.

It is clear to me that we need to continue telling this story, because I've seen or heard an oversimplification many times where a political leader or supposed expert talks about the disparity between the wonderful internet service found in urban areas and the primitive connections of rural America. Such a sweeping generalization is simply not accurate.

While it's true many communities in rural America are suffering from slow broadband speeds as a result of neglect from big corporate internet providers or isolated terrain, the fiber optic connections we offer are world-class. And we're working hard every day to bring those connections to more people in our region.

There are apartment complexes in Los Angeles and New York stuck with slower internet speeds than those we provide to farmers in our community. Some businesses in Chicago and Seattle do not have the same access to high-speed broadband as small businesses in our service areas.

Broadband has become essential for modern life, and I don't believe people should have to sacrifice their connectivity just because they want to live in a rural area like ours. That's why our mission is the same as it's always been — to connect you with the best technology available today.

I'm thankful for the opportunity to help create such a network in our community, and I'm thankful for the trust you place in NHTC. 📧

The Communicator is a bimonthly magazine published by New Hope Telephone Cooperative, ©2018. It is distributed without charge to all cooperative members/owners.



is a member-owned corporation dedicated to providing communications technology to the residents and businesses of New Hope, Grant and Owens Cross Roads.

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On the Cover:



Cassie Woody taught herself how to repair and distress furniture. She now sells her work online.
See story Page 12.



From left are, Jonathan Martin, Tyler Rush, Barbara Dickens (teacher), Sara Anderton, Leann Easton and Tabitha Green

Congratulations to 2018 GED graduates from New Hope!

New Hope area residents overcame many obstacles to earn GED diplomas this year. The students earned the certificate through classes taught by Barbara Dickens, adult education instructor at Calhoun Community College in Huntsville. Students attended classes in New Hope, studied at home and went to Calhoun's campus to take the required tests to graduate.



THANK YOU!

NHTC would like to express a heartfelt thank-you to all members for choosing to rely on the cooperative's services.

NHTC is dedicated to honoring that choice now and in the future.

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR!



HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

The NHTC office will be closed to allow employees time to enjoy the holidays with their families:

- Thanksgiving: Nov. 22-23
- Christmas: Dec. 24-25



The **New Hope Christmas parade** is at 6 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 8. The lineup starts at New Hope High School at 5 p.m. Refreshments and a visit by Santa will follow at the New Hope City Hall.

The **Grant Christmas parade** is at 1 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 8, along Main Street.

A salute to veterans!

Everyone at NHTC would like to honor every man and woman who has served in our nation's armed forces. You have helped keep us safe and protected the freedoms we hold dear.

"Our debt to the heroic men and women in the service of our country can never be repaid. They have earned our undying gratitude. America will never forget their sacrifices."

— President Harry S. Truman

Ober Gatlinburg in Tennessee, a classic Southern destination, offers great skiing and, possibly, even better views.



Let it snow Time to hit the slopes

Ski resorts can offer hours or even days of entertainment. From the most daring skiers to those preferring the bunny slopes, winters in the South play host to some fun adventures. The destinations offer a flurry of activities to maximize the time you spend on the slopes, whether skiing, snowboarding or tubing.

Ober Gatlinburg

1339 Ski Mountain Road, Gatlinburg, Tennessee

Expect to find restaurants; a multitude of shops; a play area for the little ones; one of the largest trams in the country; a coaster full of dips, zigzags and turns through the treetops; and more. Then, stay in one of a dozen partner hotels, campgrounds or rental cabins.

Oh, and don't forget the 10 trails and three lifts, plus the Mighty Carpet lift in the ski school area for skiing and snowboarding. There's snow tubing, too. While Ober Gatlinburg is an exciting way for skiers to satisfy their cravings for the slopes, non-skiers can shop until they drop. And everyone can enjoy hot food and cold drinks on a cold winter's day.

- **Lift tickets:** Adults: \$36. Juniors (ages 6-11) and seniors: \$30. 5 and under: Free with paying adult. Rates may be higher on weekends and holidays. Look for discounts after 3 p.m. and twilight skiing until 10 p.m.
- **Phone:** 865-436-5423
- **Online:** obergatlinburg.com

Cloudmont Ski Resort

721 County Road 614, Mentone, Alabama

High atop Lookout Mountain, Cloudmont has offered hours of fun for skiers for more than 40 years. The resort has two 1,000-foot beginner and intermediate slopes. And while they may not be the biggest in the South, the slopes are a good place to learn the sport or to practice for the big leagues. When weather permits, you'll ski on natural snow.

Rental gear, including snowboards, is available in the ski lodge. Lessons are offered as well. Call ahead for snow reports.

If you're hungry, pack up your skis and head 3 miles down the road into the heart of Mentone, where you'll find a number of restaurants, including the Wildflower Cafe, the Greenleaf Grill and the Plowshares Bistro.

- **Lift tickets:** Adults: \$29. Children: \$22.

Prices are higher on weekends and holidays. Half-day tickets are available.

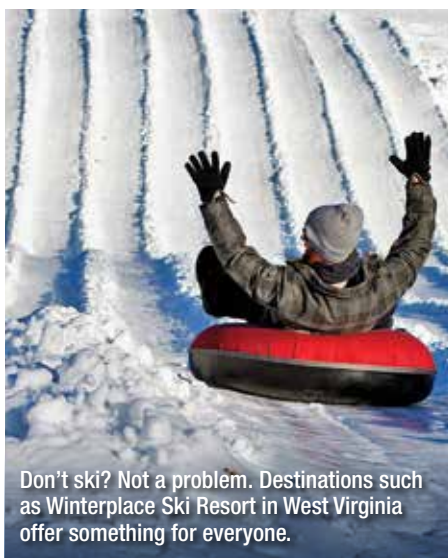
- **Phone:** 256-634-4344
- **Online:** www.cloudmont.com

Winterplace Ski Resort

100 Old Flat Top Mountain Road
Ghent, West Virginia

Almost the entire state of West Virginia is in the Appalachian Mountain range, making the Mountain State a great one for skiing, and it boasts a large number of ski resorts. Winterplace is the southernmost resort, and it offers 90 acres of fun. The longest run of the 27 trails is more than a mile long, and the views of the surrounding mountains are beautiful. There are 10 lifts to take you to the top. All but one of the slopes are open for nighttime skiing, as are the two terrain parks and the largest snow tubing park in the state. There's also a snow tubing park for children who are under 45 inches tall.

When you've had your fill of the snow, warm up with a cup of hot chocolate in front of a roaring fire at The Mountain House, one of several eateries. The Cabins at Winterplace offer lodging right on the property, and they include a free,



Don't ski? Not a problem. Destinations such as Winterplace Ski Resort in West Virginia offer something for everyone.

hearty breakfast designed to provide fuel for your day in the snow.

- **Lift tickets:** Adults: \$54. Students and seniors: \$35. Prices are higher on weekends and holidays.
- **Phone:** 304-787-3221
- **Online:** www.winterplace.com

Sapphire Valley Ski Resort

127 Cherokee Trail
Sapphire Valley, North Carolina

Just a hop, skip and a jump across the South Carolina border, Sapphire Valley is a gem of a resort for snow lovers. Take a ride up the mountain on a state-of-the-art quad lift. Then, ski down a heart-stopping 1,600-foot run with a 200-foot vertical drop. For the less-skilled, there's a learning slope as well as a park for tubing with multiple lanes that will give you the thrill of downhill action at a safe pace. A magic carpet-style moving sidewalk will get you to the top. You can also enjoy the thrill of a zip line that will take you racing over the valley in its wintertime beauty.

Sapphire Valley is a resort for all seasons, with plenty of homes available for rent, as well as hotels and restaurants. Sapphire Valley Ski Resort also offers lessons, and there's a rental shop for all your equipment needs.

- **Lift tickets:** Adults: \$40. Children: \$23. Complimentary for skiers over 65.
- **Phone:** 828-743-7663
- **Online:** www.skisapphirevalley.com

Wolf Ridge Ski Resort

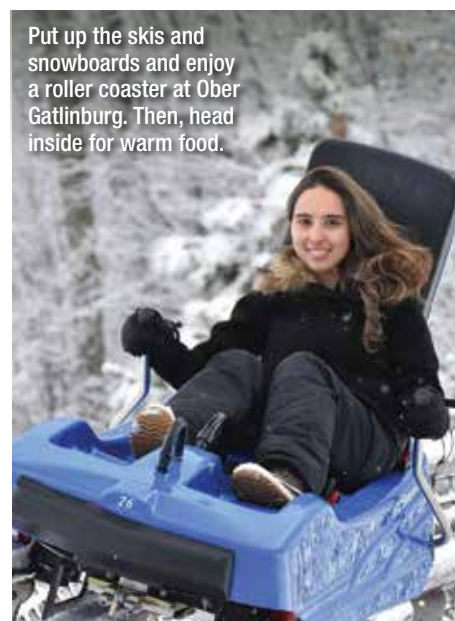
2578 Valley View Circle
Mars Hill, North Carolina

Nestled in the scenic Blue Ridge Mountains, Wolf Ridge is smaller than the nearby resorts at Beech Mountain and Sugar Mountain. But if you're looking for a laid-back experience that still offers tremendous challenges, this is the place. Just 30 minutes north of Asheville, Wolf Ridge, at an elevation of 4,700 feet, has 72 acres of skiable terrain. Ski and snowboarding equipment is available to rent. Wolf Ridge's Snow Sports School offers private lessons to people ages 5 and over and group lessons to ages 8 and over.

There are 15 runs, a terrain park, two seated lifts and two surface lifts. When you get to the top, take a second to enjoy incredible views. When you come down, warm your toes in front of a crackling fire in one of the two lodges.

Wolf Ridge is right off Interstate 26, the first road in the state to be designated a scenic highway. Stay the night in one of the luxury townhomes, each of which has amazing views.

- **Lift tickets:** Adults: \$42. Students: \$33. Free for skiers 65 and over and for children under 5. Rates are higher on weekends.
- **Phone:** 828-689-4111
- **Online:** www.skivolfridgenc.com



Put up the skis and snowboards and enjoy a roller coaster at Ober Gatlinburg. Then, head inside for warm food.

Julie Reyburn, communications director for Kids to Love, fulfills Christmas wishes from the organization's office and warehouse in Madison, Alabama.



FOREVER FAMILIES

Kids to Love grew from a mission to find homes for foster children

BY LISA SAVAGE

Early in life, Lee Marshall learned her parents adopted her from foster care. They always said she was chosen. “I wore adoption as a badge of honor,” she says.

As an adult, Marshall realized not all foster children go to such loving and nurturing homes. Soon after moving to Huntsville in 1998 to take a job as a reporter at TV station WAFF, she started a segment featuring foster children in search of loving homes.

She founded Kids to Love in 2004 as part of her mission to help find forever families for foster children and to create lifelong bonds by recruiting adoptive parents. She eventually left the television station and now dedicates all her time to Kids to Love, where she is the CEO.

Now, the organization has grown to include programs that provide school supplies, Christmas gifts, job training and other

resources, as well as the operation of a home for girls in foster care near Ardmore.



Lee Marshall

Through the Kids to Love website and social media, Marshall shares the stories of children waiting for adoption. Of the 350 children who have been featured in the weekly segments, 300 have found forever families. The number of children in foster care has decreased 30 percent statewide since the Kids to Love segment first launched.

A GROWING NEED

Soon after Kids to Love began, Marshall encountered a lot of foster children and parents and realized many of their basic needs were not covered. Marshall met one foster parent with six kids and asked her what she needed most. It was almost time for school to start, and the woman said she could use some help with school supplies.

So, Marshall gathered backpacks and all the school supplies each child needed and provided them for the family. “She started



crying and was so thankful for the help,” Marshall says.

Since those first backpacks filled with supplies, Kids to Love has distributed more than 231,000 backpacks. The organization expanded services during its second year to include Christmas for the Kids, a program which provides wish-list gifts for foster children.

Each year, the organization helps an average of 1,500 foster children at Christmas who aren't receiving help from some other charitable organization, and it has also awarded more than 500 college scholarships to area high school seniors in foster care.

HEADQUARTERS

Marshall, with help from her father, started collecting school supplies and filled the first backpacks from her garage at her home in Huntsville. As Kids to Love grew, so did the need for a larger space.

Many volunteers worked countless hours from different locations to handle the backpacks and wish lists. In 2015, a generous donor provided a building that now serves as headquarters for Kids to Love.

A large warehouse contains enough bicycles and new clothes hanging on racks to help grant each child's wishes each Christmas.

“The current warehouse inventory will go fast when we start filling lists, and we

depend on public donations beginning in November to help us meet the need,” Marshall says.

Throughout the year, the warehouse looks much like a large store, with the Christmas gifts and piles of notebooks, glue and other school supplies boxed and ready for the backpack distribution. The backpack program now provides school supplies for foster children across Alabama and parts of Tennessee.

“We couldn't do it without our volunteers,” Marshall says. “We have hundreds of volunteers who donate thousands of hours every year.”

The Madison location is also home to KTech, a training program that Marshall launched in 2016 for mechanical, electrical and computerized technologies for manufacturing industries. It started as Marshall's dream to provide training as children aged out of foster care. It now has expanded and is open to anyone, regardless of age.

“Our main goal is still to find forever families for children in foster care, but we want to do everything we can to fill the unmet needs of the foster children still waiting,” Marshall says. 🗨️

KIDS TO LOVE

140 Castle Drive
Madison, AL
256-880-3455
www.kidstolove.org

FOSTER CARE STATISTICS

There are about 6,000 children in foster care in Alabama. Some simply need foster care for a matter of days. Others may need foster care until they go back to their biological or adoptive families.

WHO ARE THE CHILDREN WHO NEED FOSTER CARE?

- Children from all ethnic and economic groups.
- Children with backgrounds or experiences that have placed them at risk.
- Brothers and sisters who need to stay together.
- Teens with various degrees of mental, physical or emotional problems.
- Children of all ages who cannot live with their birth families due to the risk of neglect or physical or sexual abuse.

Families or individuals interested in providing foster care for children are subject to an approval process. The main requirement is to have the ability and desire to provide the type of care that serves children's needs.

TO BE A FOSTER PARENT, ONE MUST:

- Be at least 19 years old.
- Provide a safe, comfortable atmosphere for the child.
- Provide a home that conforms to Alabama minimum standards for foster family homes.
- Have enough space for the child and his or her belongings.
- Confirm all family members are willing to share their home with a child who needs care.
- Confirm all family members are in good health.
- Undergo a thorough background check, including one for criminal history.

Source: The Alabama Department of Human Resources



Kids to Love Creative Director David Wood, left, and Program Director Kristi Jones prepare backpacks for children at the organization's office and warehouse in Madison.



RELEASE YOUR INNER *Fashionista*

The latest styles are only a few clicks away

BY PATRICK SMITH

Sometimes it's tough to find the latest designer clothes around town. And remember the last time you hit the mall? It was miles away, you couldn't find anything that matched your style, and you searched endlessly to find your size. If that scenario rings a bell, it's time for an online fashion subscription. You'll get your perfect style and fit every time without the drive.

The latest fashion trends you see online and in magazines can be delivered to your doorstep with no hassle. And if you don't like what came your way in the latest shipment, relax. Most of the time you can return or exchange it. It's stress-free shopping.

Whether you live in a fashion capital like New York City or a rural town that barely makes it onto a map, the power of a high-speed internet connection means you can always dress to impress.

In the past two issues, we featured several food and pet subscription services — look back if you missed it. If you're curious about other online subscriptions out there, don't wait on us. Check them out for yourself. Everything from hot sauces to geeky toys and candles to kids' school kits is shipping out daily.

HERE ARE A FEW OF OUR FAVORITE ONLINE FASHION SUBSCRIPTION SERVICES:



Typically
\$100+
per box

TRUNK CLUB

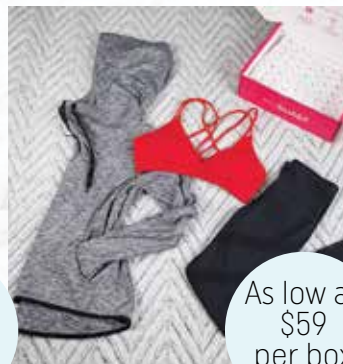
Operated by Nordstrom, Trunk Club provides high-quality fashion without the struggle of putting together an impeccably matched outfit. Professional stylists for men and women fill your box with everything you need: shirts, earrings, belts, jackets, shoes, sunglasses, handbags and more. You choose your style, price range and frequency, and they do the hard work for you.



Typically
\$100+
per box

STITCH FIX

Stitch Fix brings you five hand-selected clothing items that match your personal style profile in every box. There's no subscription required, and you'll find a mix of familiar brand names, along with new ones, to keep you up to date with the most popular trends for men and women. The service includes free returns and has options for children.



As low as
\$59
per box

YOGA CLUB

Honestly, what's more comfortable than yoga pants? Keep up with the newest styles by ordering through Yoga Club. You'll save up to 60 percent off retail prices. From just pants to full outfits for your workout, Yoga Club keeps you feeling stylish and comfortable for your next trip to the gym.



Typically
\$100+
per box

RACHEL ZOE

Ladies, start planning your seasonal wardrobe around Rachel Zoe's Box of Style. With a new shipment of several items each quarter, Rachel Zoe brings you everything you need to stay on the cutting edge of sophistication and glamour. A typical box may include a necklace, fragrance, makeup and beauty items, wallet clutch, and more. *Note: Items from Rachel Zoe cannot be returned. ☹️

GET SMART

The latest connected devices supercharge your home

The holidays are the perfect time to stock up and make your home "smarter" with a variety of devices that allow you to automate and remotely control door locks, lights, household systems and more.

SMART HUB: You can control many smart devices through individual phone apps, but to truly take advantage of a smart home setup, you need a hub. While some hubs run everything through an easy-to-use app — such as the Wink Hub, \$69 — there's something cool about controlling your devices with voice commands through an Apple HomePod, \$349; Google Home, \$129; or Amazon Echo, \$99.99.

The hub you choose will determine the other smart gadgets you buy since there are competing communication standards.



Here are five gadgets that can make your life around the house easier — or at least more fun. Remember, the smart home experience is better with a high-speed broadband connection.



SMART THERMOSTAT: A smart thermostat is not only handy — the devices are capable of learning your routine and effectively program themselves — but it can help you save money by heating and cooling your home more efficiently. One of the most popular options is the Nest thermostat, which starts at \$169. With its new temperature sensors, which can be placed in different rooms, you can tell the thermostat a specific area of the home, such as the baby's room or the kitchen, to maintain a specific temperature.

SMART LOCK: The many features that smart locks offer include unlocking with your phone, responding to voice commands and linking to other devices, such as unlocking the door if the smoke detector goes off. The new Kwikset Kevo, \$314 for all features, also adds a neat new option. To open your door, you just need to touch the lock — even with the side of your finger or your elbow. It's a lifesaver if you're juggling kids or some last-minute gifts.



SMART LIGHTS: If you want remotely controlled outdoor Christmas lights, the easiest solution is to connect them to something like the iHome iSP100 Outdoor SmartPlug, \$39.99. The plug connects through your Wi-Fi network, is compatible with all digital assistants and is resistant to dirt, dust and rain. If you have an Echo, the company Light Rhapsody makes indoor holiday lights, \$59.99, that use Alexa to set different colors, add effects, change brightness, dance to music and turn the lights on or off.



SMART TOY: Speaking of gifts, how about the DropMix Music Gaming System, \$69.99, by Harmonix, the people who created "Rock Band." The DropMix Music Gaming System is played by placing color-coded cards on the board and building musical tracks using elements from songs. The game comes with 60 cards with music by popular artists, and more packs are available in different genres, including hip-hop and rock. 🎮

A tale of two artisans

Furniture refurbishing sparks a trend

BY LISA SAVAGE

Outside the box

Current trends breathe new life into old pieces

Maria Barnette never lost her childhood fascination with Marilyn Monroe, whose memorabilia she collects. So it was only natural to combine her love for the Hollywood icon with another of her interests.

She cut two posters apart and applied the pieces to the front of a chest of drawers using the decoupage technique. She sealed it all with Modge Podge, an all-in-one glue, sealer and finish used to attach paper and fabric to various surfaces.

Now, the finished chest with Monroe's face adorning the front is just one of the unique pieces Barnette sells. She has followed the trend of refurbishing furniture and turning old and broken items into stylish pieces of art.

Barnette, who moved to New Hope 14 years ago to be near her husband's family, always had a passion for art and furniture. Her mother reupholstered and refinished furniture. "I was helping her out by the time I was 11 or 12 years old," she says.

Barnette collects, buys and refurbishes furniture at home. Many pieces are given to her because they're in such bad shape. "I can fix just about anything," she says.

Barnette focuses on unique items, such as the Marilyn Monroe chest. "I get a vision and know what it's going to look like before I start," she says. "I usually think outside the box." She created a bar from an old radio cabinet, and it's one of her most elaborate pieces.

Her favorite style is midcentury modern. "I can take a bedroom suite from the 1960s and make it look stylish and brand new," Barnette says.

NEW LIFE

The reason she repairs and resells is two-fold. "It keeps it out of a landfill, and it breathes new life into an old piece of broken-down furniture," she says.

Barnette loves chalk paint and makes her own, using plaster, water and latex paint. "It's very cost-effective," she says. She also creates her own glazes, using tinted acrylic paint to achieve the color she wants. Many of the pieces she creates have a whitewashed, farmhouse look. "It's what people want right now," she says.

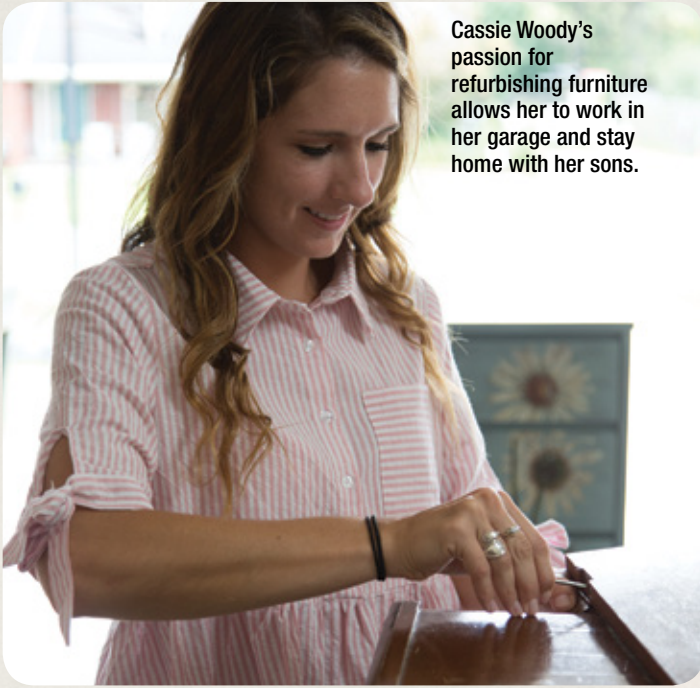
Barnette sells most of her work in New Hope at both locations of the Royal Roosters shops, which offer antiques, furniture and other items on consignment.

She says selling her furniture at the local businesses works for her, and both locations market their items through social media. She helps out with the online marketing and works in the store as part of the consignment agreement.

Barnette's mother, an Alzheimer's patient, recently passed away. Barnette's work keeps her mother close at heart. "I cherish what she taught me," Barnette says. "It makes me feel close to her, and it's something I won't ever lose." 📷

Maria Barnette displays her Marilyn Monroe chest of drawers at Royal Roosters, where she sells her refurbished furniture.





Cassie Woody's passion for refurbishing furniture allows her to work in her garage and stay home with her sons.



Home sweet home

Rehabbing old furniture gives New Hope woman a chance to work from home

Cassie Woody wanted to stay home with her young children and was looking for ways to make some extra money when she discovered refurbishing old furniture. It's something she could do in the garage at her home in New Hope while the kids napped.

Her introduction to the concept came years earlier. When she was growing up near Harvest, her father loved antiques and refinished furniture, but she didn't have much interest and didn't really pay attention.

Woody never dabbled in painting and crafts, but she loves the distressed look that's now popular. She did some research and learned that the latest techniques meant she did not have to sand pieces down to the bare wood as her father did.

To create the desired look, she used chalk paint. But at first, she didn't know a lot about the process. "On that first piece, I just threw some paint on there and hoped for the best," she says of the dresser she refurbished. "I painted it cream and roughed it up."

She sold it on an online buy-and-sell site. "I posted it, and it sold within a couple of hours," she says. "So I tried another and did it again." But it wasn't quite as easy as it might sound, she says.

DRESSER-ED FOR SUCCESS

Her venture was successful, and she enjoyed it, so she worked hard and kept improving. She researched better, easier ways to create the pieces that would appeal to customers. "Everybody loves the shabby, distressed, farmhouse look," she says.

But that first dresser she painted inspired her to learn more. "It sparked all this," she says. Now, she finds old pieces that are broken, given to her or purchased at a low price. "Some pieces I might have to gut and build the drawers or repair the sides or bottom," she says. "I take pieces that really aren't usable and make them into something pretty."

Once the repairs are made and the piece is painted, she takes a picture and posts it online. She uses her Facebook page, called Lanie Axel, a name taken from the letters in the names of her children. She also uses several buy-and-sell websites.

"This is something I've come to love,"

she says. "It's a lot of work, but it gives me an opportunity to stay home with my kids while they're young and turn something old and worn into something fresh and beautiful." 📱

Maria Barnette's pieces are available at:

Royal Roosters Trading Post

10199 U.S. Highway 431 S.
New Hope
256-725-2415

Royal Roosters Auction House

127 Merritt Drive
New Hope
256-723-8903

Cassie Woody sells her pieces online at various buy-and-sell Facebook pages and on her business Facebook page, **Lanie Axel**.

Stuffed for the holidays

Enjoy a classic side dish

You could say Mindy Merrell is an expert when it comes to making holiday dressing. Not only is it one of her favorite side dishes during the season, but she also worked for a dozen years as the director of culinary services for Martha White's public relations company. One of her responsibilities was working in the test kitchen to create new recipes using the company's cornbread mix.

"It was fun. I love test kitchen creativity and working within parameters," she says. "Why don't we make dressing more often? It's so delicious and easy to make ahead."

"Traditionally, many families in the South had chicken and dressing for Sunday dinner, so it wasn't just relegated to the holidays. In fact, we were always reminding folks that cornbread dressing is a wonderful side dish for any meat."

Merrell is such a fan of dressing that she actually considers turkey the side dish. "Dressing is an economical vehicle for making something wonderful with leftovers and stretching the menu," she says. "And there's so much room for creativity. I know lots of families must have the same recipes for the holidays, but not me. I'm always tinkering and using what's on hand or what sounds fun at the moment."

And here's a word of advice: "Do not use those bags of

crumbs," she says. "And I don't like my dressing sweet, so there's no using a sweet cornbread mix or putting sugar in the batter."

Follow the instructions on a bag of any Southern, self-rising cornmeal mix and make a pan of real cornbread. Everyone living in the South should absolutely know how to do this.

"I've heard that an iron skillet is one of the most popular wedding gifts now, so there's no excuse for young folks not knowing how to make it."

"Also, whenever we have leftover cornbread, I just put it in a bag in the freezer and use these leftovers for a pan of dressing later. I do the same with biscuits and any other kind of bread. They all work. It just depends on which you like."

Merrell says it's OK to use more than one type of bread in a bowl of stuffing and that adding wheat bread gives it a softer texture. Once you've



More on Mindy ...

In 2014, Mindy Merrell was the winner of TV Food Network's popular cooking show "Chopped." She and her husband, R.B. Quinn, are both food writers in Nashville. You can follow them on their recipe website: www.rbandmindy.com.

combined the bread, decide on the seasonings.

"Traditionally, that would be lots of sauteed celery, onions and sage," she says. "Moisten it with broth and beaten eggs to hold it together, bake and that's it. You can't get any easier than that, so why overdo?"



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

MINDY MERRELL'S FAVORITE STUFFING

- 1 1/2 sticks butter, divided
- 2 cups chopped onion
- 2 cups chopped celery
- 5 to 6 cups crumbled cornbread from a skillet of cornbread made with 2 cups self-rising cornmeal mix or self-rising cornmeal
- 3 cups stale, toasted or fresh bread cubes. Regular bread helps hold the dressing together and gives it a softer texture. You can also use leftover biscuits. A handful of fresh chopped parsley
- Other fresh herbs as you like — fresh chopped sage, marjoram, thyme and/or rosemary. If you go with dried herbs, use about 1 teaspoon each of rubbed sage, marjoram, thyme and/or rosemary.
- A generous amount of black pepper
- 3 to 4 cups chicken or turkey broth, homemade or canned
- 2 eggs, beaten

Melt 1 stick of the butter in a large skillet. Cook the onions and celery in the butter over medium heat until soft and caramelized, about 20 minutes.

Combine the crumbled cornbread and bread cubes in a large mixing bowl. Stir in the cooked vegetables, parsley, herbs and black pepper. Blend well. Taste it before you add the eggs and broth to test for seasonings. Stir in the broth and eggs. Add enough broth so that the mixture is moist, but not soupy.

Grease a 9-by-13-inch baking pan with 1-2 tablespoons of the remaining butter. Pour the dressing into the prepared dish. Dot with the remaining butter.

Bake the dressing right away, or cover and refrigerate overnight and cook the next day. Cover lightly with foil and bake in an oven heated to 375 F. Baking time



will vary — if baked right away it should take about 45 minutes. If it's just out of the refrigerator, it will take closer to an hour. If you have other things in the oven, a lower temperature won't matter. Just make sure you brown at the end by removing the foil during the last 15 minutes for a nice crispy brown top.

To be sure the dressing is cooked through, check the internal temperature with an instant-read thermometer. It should read at least 165 F.

Leftovers reheat well in the microwave or oven. Or, crisp them up in an iron skillet for breakfast and serve with runny eggs! 🍳

Dressing add-ins

Mindy Merrell says dressing is one of those dishes that opens itself up to versatility. "It's a blank canvas, so change it up to match the theme of your menu," she says.

- Italian — Add a pound of cooked and crumbled Italian sausage. Add some rosemary, red bell pepper and pine nuts.
- Sausage, apple and pecan — Add a finely chopped apple, 1 pound of cooked and crumbled sausage, and 1 cup of toasted pecans to the mix.
- Leek and country ham — Use leeks instead of onions and add bits of country ham.
- Clams or oysters — Add fresh chopped clams or oysters to the mix and a sautéed green bell pepper.



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