



UPCOUNTRY

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2022

# CONNECTED

## Building momentum

Fiber expansion  
is key for new  
development



POPULAR  
PODCASTS

FARM STAYS





By SHIRLEY BLOOMFIELD, CEO  
NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association

## Faster broadband benefits rural America

**A**s the chief executive officer of NTCA—The Rural Broadband Association, I am proud to represent 850 small, independent broadband providers who are offering some of the highest possible broadband speeds to some of the most remote parts of the country. Thanks to NTCA members, many rural Americans have higher internet speeds than I have where I live just outside Washington, D.C.

We currently have a once-in-a-generation opportunity through billions of dollars of funding recently made available by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and other federal programs to bridge the digital divide and bring broadband to those who still lack it. As broadband is deployed thanks to this funding, we must ensure that recipients are using it to provide the best possible services.

Recently, Federal Communications Commission Chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel initiated a process to redefine what it means to have broadband-speed internet, raising the standard. This move continues us down the path needed to give rural residents the internet service they not only need but also deserve as they connect to vital resources like telemedicine, online education, employment opportunities and much more.

A new, more realistic, standard provides a range of benefits, including clarifying the true needs of rural areas and the funding required to serve them.

We have long advocated that, as a nation, we need to aim higher and do better when it comes to setting broadband objectives. We applaud Chairwoman Rosenworcel's efforts. We look forward to continuing to work with the FCC and other agencies to bridge the digital divide. 📶

# A bridge to the future

## Your communications provider is your link to vital resources

The digital world increasingly weaves its way into our lives, replacing formerly physical resources, tasks and tools. Consider restaurants, for example. For some, scanning a QR code with your phone to view the options online has replaced physical menus.

Rapid expansion of digital resources was a trend before the pandemic, but it's only accelerated in the years since.

In an article this year for Wired — “The Digital Divide Is Coming for You” — Bhaskar Chakravorti, dean of global business for The Fletcher School at Tufts University in Massachusetts, described having broadband and mobile internet as table stakes. Without those services, you don't exist digitally, he says.

Your rural internet service provider is committed to bridging the digital divide between you and vital resources like these:

### BANKING



### STREAMING TV



### HEALTH CARE RECORDS



### GOVERNMENT RESOURCES



### EVENT TICKETS



### WEATHER ALERTS



### GAMING



### HOME SALES AND PURCHASES



### COLLEGE APPLICATIONS



# What's the password?

## How to build — and remember — strong passwords

It's difficult to do anything online without piling up a few passwords. Using the same one for multiple sites can leave your private information vulnerable to cyberattacks, and devising strong passwords full of random letters and symbols can make them impossible to remember.

A good password doesn't have to be unintelligible, but it does need to be random enough to avoid any clear patterns. Here are a few helpful tips for building passwords that will keep your online accounts secure without forcing you to hit the "Forgot my password" link every time you want to log in.

**At least 12 characters** — the longer your password, the more difficult it will be to crack. In general, you should create passwords with a minimum of 12 to 14 characters. But more is always better.

**Change it up** — using a mix of different characters like numbers, symbols, capital and lowercase letters makes your passwords stronger.

**Avoid full words** — using your favorite team's name as a password

doesn't cut it anymore. In fact, you should avoid using any full words you might find in the dictionary. That goes for any common phrases, too.

**Diceware** — one exception to the above rule is the Diceware method. By stringing truly random words together, you can build a secure passphrase that is easier to remember than a jumble of letters and numbers. To help with this process, search for the Diceware Password Generator. It can randomly select between two and eight words to build your passphrase.

**Avoid obvious substitutions** — "Password" doesn't become stronger if you change it to "P@ssword." Avoid substituting obvious symbols for letters. If it has occurred to you, it has probably occurred to a hacker.

**Go to the manager** — if you're having trouble keeping track of all your logins, a password manager can help. Programs like Dashlane, LastPass and Keeper manage your passwords across numerous sites and devices, making it easier to avoid repeats. All you need to remember is one strong password, and you're set. 🗝



## Tired of passwords?

### Apple may have the answer

At its Worldwide Developers Conference earlier this year, Apple demonstrated a new "passkeys" feature that may spell the end for passwords.

Rather than inputting a password for every site you visit, passkeys would use a biometric sign-in like the Touch ID or Face ID that currently exists on iPhones and iPads. Websites and apps on non-Apple devices would provide a QR code that sends authentication to the user's phone or tablet.

Just a month earlier, Apple joined with Google and Microsoft to support the development of new passwordless logins on both mobile and desktop devices. So, even if passkeys don't crack the code, you may not need to juggle passwords for much longer.



# To Serve and Connect

## Upcountry is here to stay

Welcome to the third issue of Upcountry Connected! As we evaluate content for each issue, we strive to feature customer experiences, the faces behind Upcountry Fiber and educational content to help break down the language of broadband. In short, we're providing the Upcountry Difference.



**JEFF WILSON**

Chief Executive Officer  
WCFIBER



**JIM LOVINGGOOD**

Chief Executive Officer  
Blue Ridge Electric

We had a very busy summer and are quickly looking ahead to fall as we continue our quest to connect unserved and underserved parts of the Upstate with high-speed fiber broadband. A partnership of Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative and WCFIBER, Upcountry Fiber has the backing of local employees, a long-standing history in the area and a shared commitment to bring high quality and excellent service to the area.

Earlier this summer, we attended the Smart Rural Communities Conference, hosted by NTCA—the Rural Broadband Association. NTCA is our national voice, representing nearly 850 independent, family-owned and community-based telecommunications companies. They are committed to advancing policies to help close the digital divide.

There was significant discussion about broadband funding, and our team has been busy advocating at the state level. We're gaining traction, and most importantly, we're pleased to be part of a joint effort to connect rural America. The most potential for progress exists in federal, state and private entities working together for the collective good.

In March 2021, the federal government passed the American Rescue Plan Act that created additional funding for state and local governments to help with COVID relief. The bill also contained incentives to increase broadband infrastructure, bring high-speed broadband infrastructure into rural areas and address the digital divide.

Additionally, this past spring, the South Carolina Legislature passed H. 4408, a bill that appropriated \$400 million to the Office of Regulatory Staff to create a competitive grant application process to aid in broadband deployment across the state in rural areas. The agency has been working to finalize the competitive grant application process, and

it hopes to start awarding grants later this fall.

While these grants will help make service to you more economically feasible, it's important to know that our commitment to connecting the Upstate is unwavering. When complete, this project will encompass 6,000 miles of fiber and cover 1,800 square miles through remote, hilly and woody terrain.

While this is a five- to seven-year project, it's important to note that on average, each month, we typically build out 100 miles of fiber. So far this year, we have built 650 miles with another 200 miles coming into service soon. To put the numbers in perspective, we've built out more fiber this year than we did in the past five years. The pace is fast. The stakes are high. We know many of you have waited for a long time. We see you, and we're working hard for you.

Each week, our engineering, construction and management teams meet to discuss progress. The differences from week to week are staggering. These teams are working at a rapid pace, and they are driven by a mission that runs much deeper than the work itself: to serve. It's life-changing work, after all. We don't take it lightly, nor do we take your needs lightly.

We're committed to you. To serve. To connect. To make your lives and your communities simply better. ☑

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



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

UpcountryFiber.com  
888-760-2111  
Email us at [info@UpcountryFiber.com](mailto:info@UpcountryFiber.com)

Construction Updates & FAQs:  
[UpcountryFiber.com/Updates](http://UpcountryFiber.com/Updates)

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

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Produced for Upcountry Fiber by:



### On the Cover:



Rush Thrift is a general contractor building commercial and residential properties in Oconee County. See story Page 8.



# The UPS & DOWNS of Internet Speed

When you select an internet service package, your package will come with a maximum download speed and a maximum upload speed.

## 1 GIG / 1 GIG

1,000 Mbps      1,000 Mbps

**Download speed**      **Upload speed**

### What is download speed?

The first number, your download speed, describes how much capacity you'll have to download things from the internet. The more download speed you have, the more you can do things like:

Stream on Netflix



Log on to a webinar for work



Watch your teacher in a virtual class



Download music and movies



Browse the internet



### What is upload speed?

The second number, your upload speed, describes how much capacity you'll have to upload things to the internet. The more upload speed you have, the more you can do things like:



Go live on social media



Use telehealth services



FaceTime with family



Have your camera on for a Zoom meeting



Upload videos and photos

## HOW MUCH SPEED DO I NEED?

If you're only running a small number of devices on your connection, our lowest speed tier might fit your needs. But if your household enjoys streaming television, browsing on their phones, working from home, and more—all at the same time—you'll need more speed to keep every device running smoothly.

Still not sure what's right for you?  
We're happy to help!

UpcountryFiber.com | (888) 760-2111



## October is cybersecurity month

As your internet provider, Upcountry Fiber wants to raise awareness about the importance of cybersecurity while you're online. Cybersecurity is a vital practice to combat phishing and social engineering attacks. Here are a handful of tips to implement:

- **Slow down:** Everyone is busy these days. Don't rush through the inbox clicking on unknown emails, and think twice on those unfamiliar links.
- **Ditch duplicated passwords:** Consider using a password manager to create unique passwords that help protect your data.
- **Use multifactor authentication:** Take this extra step in case a password is compromised.
- **Keep software up to date:** Software companies frequently update their products once a vulnerability is found. Setting devices to automatically update ensures you have the latest version.
- **Add antivirus software:** To protect against malware and other email attacks, install antivirus programs and firewalls to defend against compromised websites and online threats.

## Congrats to Miss South Carolina!

The 85th Miss South Carolina competition took place Saturday, June 25, in famously hot Columbia. Upcountry Fiber was proud to serve as the presenting sponsor, aiding in the awarding of over \$260,000 in scholarships to 42 Miss and 34 Teen candidates at the 2022 competition. The Miss America organization is the largest scholarship provider to young women in the country, with South Carolina providing the most total dollars in scholarships within the organization. Miss South Carolina 2022, formerly Miss Hartsville, Jill Dudley, was the recipient of a \$60,000 scholarship, and Miss South Carolina Teen 2022, formerly Miss Clemson Teen, was the recipient of a \$10,000 scholarship. Dudley is a cum laude graduate from Coastal Carolina University with a degree in English and a minor in political science. She plans to further her education at the University of South Carolina School of Law. Holt is an incoming freshman at Clemson University majoring in psychology with plans to be a special needs-focused occupational therapist.

## Unwind this weekend

Upcountry Fiber wishes you a relaxing Labor Day weekend. In recognition of the holiday, our offices will be closed on **Monday, Sept. 5.**



# GETTING AWAY

## *to the farm*

A few days in a pastoral setting can do wonders for the heart and mind

Story by ANNE BRALY

The South's diversity of rolling pastures, mountain vistas, natural springs and lakes makes it an appealing getaway. But why book a hotel stay when you can wake up to the call of a rooster and go to bed with the hoot of an owl?

Farm stays are one of the best ways to absorb nature, eat home-grown food and learn about rural life. Farmers are welcoming guests by turning their barns and unused dwellings into overnight accommodations for a vacation you're likely to remember for years to come. And who knows? Maybe you'll realize farm living is the life for you.

It's a win-win for guests and farmers. These stays give guests a few days off the beaten path, and they allow landowners to bring in income while educating the public about working the land. "It's a way for farmers to show the inner workings of their farms, what it takes to grow food for their tables, who we are and the stories we

hold. Also, it's nice to welcome city dwellers to our farm to bridge a growing urban-rural divide and offer them our countrysides for relaxation, calm, play and connection," says Scottie Jones, a farmer and founder of the U.S. Farm Stay Association.

And for small farmers, it's a way to make much-needed money for new equipment and for upkeep and repairs of old farm equipment. The extra funds also help with costs like insurance, retirement savings and college funds.

"In the last decade, the concept of hosting guests on one's farm has risen to the surface, especially as booking sites such as Airbnb and VRBO have made the daunting task of taking reservations much more easy to handle," Scottie says.

So, if you're considering something different for your vacation this year, here are some Southern farms opening their gates to overnight guests.



Photo courtesy of By Faith Farm



Devoted to feeding the hungry, By Faith Farm creates opportunities for visitors to pitch in and help.

Photo courtesy of Lori Birkhead





Photo courtesy of Lori Birkhead



Photo courtesy of Kokovoko Breeding Farm

## REVIVAL HILL FARM

### Cullman, Alabama

Milk cows, pick herbs from the garden, gather eggs from the henhouse or just sit back and enjoy life at Revival Hill Farm. The farm stay has one bedroom and a roomy living area with couch, television chairs and kitchenette. It's attached to the farm store/milking parlor with a private outdoor entrance and access to farm animals, garden, fire pit, pond, pasture and woodlands with numerous trails for hiking. If you need more space, Revival Hill also has a house you can rent. This three-bedroom, two-bath accommodation is located across the street and has a full kitchen, laundry room, open-concept living area and beautiful covered back porch.

The farm is a stone's throw from Smith Lake Park, so tow your boat. There's plenty of boat parking at the farm.

*Nightly rate: \$172*

*Reservations: Airbnb*

## STONEWOOD FARM

### Ridgefield, South Carolina

Enjoy life at a slower pace at this farm with its menagerie of goats, chickens, horses, dogs and friendly felines. The farm offers overnights, glamping-style, in a 14-by-20-foot tent on a raised platform with an outdoor dining area set up for roasting s'mores at night or for drinking your coffee in the morning. The tent sleeps six and comes complete with lanterns, heaters, snacks, a coffee maker and a television with a large selection of movies.

The farm is located in the South Carolina Lowcountry, not too far from Charleston and Hilton Head, so you can

spend a day touring the city and then come back to the country to unwind.

*Nightly rate: \$95*

*Reservations: Airbnb*

## BY FAITH FARM

### Joelton, Tennessee

This farm works a little differently than some others. With a mission to grow healthy food for those in need, 100% of your nightly rate will go toward feeding the hungry in surrounding communities. It's a farm stay with a purpose.

Stay in a 1,500-square-foot, two-bedroom, two-bath modern loft apartment with kitchen and living room above a red barn. Wander the fields, hike the trails or sit beside a pond and reflect on your peaceful surroundings just 15 miles outside the busyness of Nashville.

Pick vegetables from the donation gardens or help harvest food for By Faith Farm's food bank collections.

*Nightly rate: \$275*

*Reservations: Airbnb or byfaithfarm.com*

## KOKOVOKO BREEDING FARM

### Corinth, Kentucky

Pop a tent out in the open fields or make reservations for the carriage house. Either way, you'll spend time in the beautiful outdoors of Central Kentucky's horse country.

Swedish Gotland ponies and Lincoln Longwool sheep graze over 150 acres of Kentucky rolling hills and forest. It's unspoiled. It's organic. It's totally natural. Bring your binoculars — the bird-watching is great. Or sign up for a fiber workshop. And helping out with the farm chores is always appreciated.

**Left: Visitors to By Faith Farm enjoy an interactive experience.**

**Middle: At By Faith Farm in Joelton, Tennessee, the goal is to grow healthy food for those in need, and money raised from visitors helps feed the hungry.**

**Above: The carriage house at Kokovoko Breeding Farm can sleep five — perfect for families or friends traveling together.**

The carriage house can sleep five, so bring the family — but leave your electronics at home. They won't work here. This is a chance to immerse your family in a totally different way of life. Stroll down the country roads, look for wildlife, play in the creek, baa at the sheep and visit the ponies — they always love a good brushing.

*Nightly rate: \$50-\$200*

*Reservations: farmstayus.com*

## THE SHAGGY GOAT

### Waleska, Georgia

Pet the goats, feed the chickens, learn about beekeeping, try your hand at gardening or hike or bike the nearby mountain trails. Or just spend the day lolling in your hammock. It's up to you. Your time is your own at The Shaggy Goat, a farm in the beauty of the Southern Appalachians of North Georgia.

Overnight accommodations are in a one-bedroom cottage on the property with views of the working farm, so join in and learn a thing or two. There's a pool just a few yards from the cottage — don't forget your bathing suits. On warm days, take your pillow outside and nap on the sleeping porch. Bring your own food, but don't be surprised to find the makings for s'mores in the evening or fresh-from-the-farm eggs and honey for breakfast. 🐐

*Nightly rate: \$226*

*Reservations: Airbnb*



# SUPPORTING GROWTH

Oconee developer encouraged by Upcountry Fiber's arrival

Story by JOHN CLAYTON

**R**ush Thrift has seen the impact of improved internet service in his own family's home life.

Even before the arrival of Upcountry Fiber in the region, Rush was a self-described advocate for the high-speed internet offerings from the new partnership between Blue Ridge Electric and WCFIBER.

As a resident, Rush says the positives at home, from homework to entertainment to business, have been tangible. "I can do all of my work from home now without the children being upset that they can't watch Netflix or use their computers," Rush says. "Now everybody can do everything they need to, and there's no issues."

As a general contractor and leader in the Oconee County Economic Alliance, he says the possibilities for the future with Upcountry Fiber are immeasurable. "In the next 20 years, I think you will see development defined by the internet," says Rush, an Oconee County native who is now vice president and general counsel for family-owned Thrift Development, Thrift Group and Tri-County Ace Hardware.

## THE BIG PICTURE

The things many people in more urban areas have taken for granted over the past decade — streaming without buffering on multiple devices and speeds fast enough for entertainment and school and work projects — are now in parts of rural Oconee County. But as a member of the Oconee Economic Alliance Board of Directors, Rush also sees the broader effects of Upcountry Fiber's improved connectivity and speeds across the region. "Internet is a utility now," he says. "It's something our area has to have for business, for economic growth. Everything is going to revolve around the internet — it already is revolving around the internet."

That's why Rush says he's been behind Upcountry Fiber since the announcement of the partnership between Blue Ridge

Developer Rush Thrift, left, and his general superintendent, Charles Lee, discuss the progress on a large project.



Right: Developer Rush Thrift, center, holds a meeting with his crew.

Below: Thrift stands at a project in Clemson, near the botanical gardens, due to be complete in 2023.



Photos by John Clayton



Electric and WCFIBER. He says he has seen firsthand that the area's residential and business growth is intrinsically connected to its ability to offer quality internet service. "We have a tremendous amount of people moving into our area that work remotely, from an engineer from Amazon to somebody in the tech industry," Rush says. "They're going to need internet like Upcountry Fiber's to be able to do business from home."

It's also big business for the region, which is in a high-stakes competition to attract industry. With industry comes jobs and, of course, more residents.

High-speed fiber can be the deciding factor for some industry leaders, Rush says. "An industry may have a choice between two different sites in two different counties, and it may very well come down to an industrial park or a piece of land with high-speed internet," he says. "They know that it would cost so many dollars to build that fiber infrastructure themselves versus a county or

municipality that's already invested or partnered with somebody like Upcountry Fiber to build it and attract that type of development."

### VOICE OF EXPERIENCE

Rush, speaking from experience in his professional role as a developer and in his volunteer role in local economic development, says Upcountry Fiber is the game changer the area has needed. "They're a company that already knows how to handle a utility — and internet is now a utility," Rush says. "It's almost a perfect marriage between the electrical provider and telecommunications provider to say, 'Let's do the same thing with internet.' I think one of the best things our state and other states have done is to allow that to be possible — to allow electric cooperatives to also provide internet service."

Rush figures decisions that foster the growth of quality internet services will impact development for decades to come. "The past 20 to 30 years, development was driven by sewer systems. If you wanted to develop a portion of a county or a city, you were looking for water and sewer. Today, development is driven by internet access and infrastructure," he says.

To a large extent, this change is already taking place. "I've already seen it from a development standpoint. We've worked with developers, and their first pitch — where they used to be asking you about sewer and zoning — now, they're asking you about internet," Rush says. "What is the bandwidth of the internet in this area? Will I have enough capacity to run my facility on high speed internet here?"

Now, that answer is, "Yes." 📶

## RUSH THRIFT: Quick facts

- » Thrift Development Group, vice president and general counsel
- » Oconee Economic Alliance Board of Directors secretary
- » 2011 B.S. Building Construction from Auburn University
- » 2015 J.D. Cumberland School of Law, Samford University
- » Selected to Oconee County Top 20 Professionals Under 40 in 2019
- » Lives in Seneca with wife, Blaire; son, Clayton; and daughter, Ayers

# Find your wavelength

Podcasts let you tune in to your passions



Podcasts have seen an explosion in popularity in recent years, thanks to their variety and the connections hosts forge with their listeners. If you've never listened to a podcast before, you can think of them like prerecorded radio shows on your favorite topics.

But, because listeners can download podcasts to a phone or computer and play them at any time, audiences can go as deep or as light as they want on a given topic. Podcasts also don't require the full attention video does, meaning you can drive to work, answer emails or cook dinner — all while continuing to enjoy your favorite programming.

In the early days of podcasting, following your favorite show meant navigating a technological obstacle course of downloads and synced devices. Today, the process is as easy as downloading an app.

Apps like Apple Podcasts and Stitcher make it easy to search thousands of the latest podcasts and subscribe to your

favorites for free. If you have the Spotify app, you're already set. Just go to the Search tab and choose "Podcasts & Shows" to start adding new discoveries to your list.

Not sure where to start? Here are a few of our favorites to get you going:

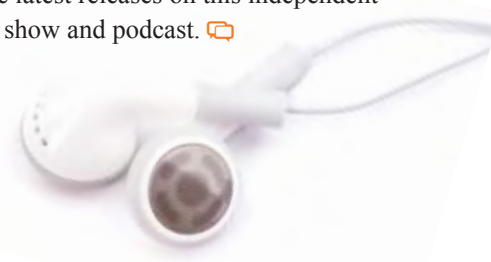
► **"Criminal"** — One of the first true crime hits, even before "Serial" hit the scene, "Criminal" tells the "stories of people who've done wrong, been wronged, or gotten caught somewhere in the middle." Going beyond tales of murder, it takes a critical look at the impact of crime on its victims and perpetrators.

► **"This American Life"** — "This American Life" has been on the air since 1995, so there are plenty of stories to catch up on. Described as little movies for radio, each episode is also a little different. But they all tell the true, entertaining and often surprising stories of the people and events shaping our American lives.

► **"The Big Picture"** — Struggling to keep up with the latest movie releases? Hosts Sean Fennessey and Amanda Dobbins run down all the movies you need to see while also discussing old favorites and interviewing the people behind them twice a week.

► **"Lore"** — Truth is scarier than fiction in this documentary podcast series that explores the dark corners of history. Gather around the audio campfire to listen in on true historical tales, legends and folklore biweekly.

► **"Sound Opinions"** — Chicago music critics Jim DeRogatis and Greg Kot know everyone's a critic. Each week, they get together to discuss music's greats, talk shop with artists and share their opinions on the latest releases on this independent radio show and podcast. 📻







# The newest spectator sport

Streaming platforms like Twitch let gamers build massive followings

Gamers have thriving online communities, including platforms like Twitch, that give millions of fans from around the world a place to share their knowledge and experience, while also providing countless hours of entertainment.

## WHY WATCH INSTEAD OF PLAY?

Staying up to date with the latest and greatest video games can be expensive and time consuming. Sometimes game descriptions and reviews aren't enough — it's better to see a game in action. Avid gamers can check out a Twitch stream to see if a game is right for them, gain insight into a game's features, and find updates and creative fixes to problems. Many people subscribe to Twitch channels just for the entertainment value.

It's also a way to engage with others in the gaming community. Live broadcasts

feature an interactive chat where viewers can talk with the streamer and other viewers. These connections with like-minded people and interesting personalities keep people interested and coming back for more.

## WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF STREAMING YOUR GAMING?

There are many incentives for live-streamers. The revenue potential can be sky high — some streamers have built careers, earning millions and striking deals with game publishers to get exclusive early access to the newest games.

The higher a streaming channel's subscriber count, the more opportunities the streamer has for exclusive marketing partnerships. Viewers can also donate to the channel during the broadcast. The biggest Twitch streamers get most of their income from paid subscription fees. 💬

**While the Twitch website and app are still the most popular, other platforms have sprouted up as well.**

## YouTube

YouTube's gaming section, [youtube.com/gaming](https://youtube.com/gaming), has functions similar to Twitch, and it's gaining popularity with amateur streamers because its optimized search engine makes it easier for a beginner's content to get noticed.

The audience is shared with YouTube, so the potential pool of viewers is vastly greater than on Twitch. For streamers, YouTube has greater potential for earnings from advertisements.

## Facebook Gaming

Facebook Gaming is growing as existing Facebook users check out the video gaming hub that can be easily accessed through the main social media site or [FB.gg](https://fb.gg).

There's also a Facebook Gaming app enthusiasts can download to discover content, connect with other gamers and casually play mobile games. Like the other popular streaming platforms, Facebook allows users easy access to uploads from their favorite streamers. But, like its main site, Facebook Gaming users can join groups and like topics to tailor their timelines to their specific interests.



# BROADBAND GLOSSARY

## Technology terms you should learn

Choosing an internet service that meets your family's needs starts with understanding your options. If all the broadband lingo is making it hard to do that, we're here for you! Check out this glossary of good-to-know terms, so you can select and use your internet service with confidence.

**4K** — Refers to ultra-high-definition video, named for the nearly 4,000 pixels of horizontal resolution. This ultra-clear video is becoming the new standard on streaming platforms and will require a faster internet connection than other videos.

**Bandwidth** — The capacity your internet connection has for uploading or downloading data. You can think of this like a pipe that carries water. A large pipe can move big quantities of water much more quickly than a small straw. Similarly, increasing your internet bandwidth enables you to upload and download data more quickly.

**Bytes vs. Bits** — Units of size and speed. Bytes are used to measure file size — for example a 10-megabyte file — while bits are used to measure the speed of your connection — for example 100 megabits per second or Mbps.

**The Cloud** — Refers to the way some data, software and services are located on internet servers rather than individual devices. When something is in "the cloud" rather than on your computer, you can access it from any device with a mobile connection. Examples include

your email account, Google Docs and online photo storage services.

**Fiber** — The fastest, most reliable network infrastructure available. Built with cables made of thin strands of glass rather than copper, fiber optic networks can provide speeds of 1 Gbps and beyond.

**Gbps** — Gigabits per second, a standard of measurement for very fast internet that can download or upload billions of bits of data per second. Most internet connections are measured in Mbps, or megabits per second, but fiber connections can be significantly faster and measured in Gbps instead. 1 Gbps = 1,000 Mbps.

**"The Gig"** — Often used to describe internet services that can provide at least 1 Gbps of speed. This is an extremely high-speed connection for both homes and businesses.

**Mbps** — Megabits per second, a standard of measurement that describes how many bits of data your internet connection can upload or download per second. The higher the number, the faster the connection.

**Router** — A unit that links the devices in your home to your internet connection and to one another via an ethernet cable or WiFi. A router is often paired with a modem, another device that brings the internet from our network into your home.

**WiFi** — The technology that makes wireless internet possible. Because WiFi uses radio waves to transmit your internet signal, you no longer have to plug your devices into an Ethernet cable to get online.

**Streaming** — Downloading media a few seconds at a time so that you can enjoy a podcast, music or video even as it downloads. This enables you to enjoy live video in real time and to consume media without having to fully download it to your device first.

**Upload and Download Speeds** — Measured in Mbps or Gbps, this tells you how fast you can upload data like when you're posting a photo or video to social media. And it lets you know how quickly you can download data when you're loading a website or streaming music. 📶

### Our customers' favorite features:

- Upload speeds are as fast as download speeds
- No data caps
- No contracts!
- First month is FREE!

Still have questions about your Upcountry Fiber internet connection? Our customer service team is local and always happy to walk you through your options. Call us anytime at 888-760-2111.





# Building broadband in the Blue Ridge

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

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## Fiber construction projects underway or completed:

- North Pickens
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- Central Anderson County
- Port Bass
- Friendship
- Six Mile



## Employee Spotlight



**ELIZABETH EDWARDS MARTIN** is the vice president of government and community relations at Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative.

“While my office is in Pickens, I spend time in all of the counties in the Blue Ridge service area,” she says. “I lobby for the cooperative at the state level and maintain relationships with elected officials at all levels across the Upstate. I also represent BREC in the community and on several local boards.”

Elizabeth began with BREC in January 2018 after working in and around government and politics for more than 15 years.

After growing up in Oconee County, she graduated from Clemson University in 2006 with a Bachelor of Science in marketing. She received her Master of Arts in communication from Purdue University in 2021. “I started my career working in Congress on Capitol Hill and have worked in local district offices for the House of Representatives and the Third District of South Carolina,” Elizabeth says. She also spent nearly five years as the manager of government relations for the Greenville Chamber of Commerce.

She and her husband, Matt, have been married for three years and live in Greenville with their cat, Sammy Watkins, and a Labrador retriever, Penny. “I love to cook and bake in my spare time,” she says. “I’m also an avid reader and enjoy watching sports, especially Clemson football and Braves baseball.”

She loves watching movies like “Top Gun,” “Dirty Dancing,” “Notting Hill,” “Father of the Bride” and “Sweet Home Alabama.” “We watch ‘The Office’ and ‘Friends’ a lot, but we recently became obsessed with ‘Yellowstone’ and ‘Ted Lasso,’” she adds. Elizabeth is a big fan of apps that help with shopping. 📱

# It's time to go LOW AND SLOW



Cooking ribs at a low temperature for a long time tenderizes the meat and adds delightful flavor.

The aroma of smoke wafting through the air as meat slowly cooks goes hand in hand with a lazy summer afternoon. Smoking is not the same as grilling. There's a science to it that scares off some cooks, but break it down step by step, and you can become quite adept at making tender briskets and fall-off-the-bone ribs.

Smoking, more commonly known as barbecuing, takes time and patience. Defined simply, the technique takes a tough piece of meat and cooks it slowly over indirect heat for extended periods — often 12 to 16 hours and sometimes even more — while the smoke flavors the meat and gives it its mouthwatering flavor and texture. Any expert will tell you that the key to the best barbecue — that kind that wins competitions — is cooking it low and slow.

Cooking over high heat tends to dry the meat out very quickly. Any moisture within the meat is essentially blasted out, leaving it tough, dry and difficult to chew. Smoking meat slowly at a low temperature, on the other hand, keeps the moisture from evaporating too quickly, allowing you to achieve the perfect combination of tenderness and juiciness.

Here are two recipes that are good for beginners.

The 3-2-1 rib recipe is one many home smokers use. This method is easy and generally foolproof, creating ribs that are so tender you can pull the meat off the bone with your fingers. And pork butt is basically a no-brainer. Just rub it down with your favorite blend of seasonings or use the recipe that follows. Place it on the smoker and within just a few hours, you'll have tender pork perfect for sandwiches. Add a side of beans and some potato salad, and you'll have the makings of a beautiful, tasty summer dinner.



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

Photography by MARK GILLILAND | Food Styling by RHONDA GILLILAND



## 3-2-1 RIBS METHOD

1 rack of ribs  
Your favorite rub  
Your favorite barbecue sauce

### STEP THREE:

Liberal coat the ribs with rub and allow them to “marinate” while you bring the smoker to 225 F. Place the ribs in the smoker, and add whatever wood chunks you want — cherry or hickory are popular. Smoke the ribs for 3 hours, maintaining the 225 F temperature. If you are smoking thinner back ribs, you may want to smoke them for just 2 hours. Any longer, and you may find the ribs dry out too much.

### STEP TWO:

The second stage is when the

meat tenderizes. Remove the ribs from the smoker and wrap them tightly in foil. This steams the meat and the result is tender, juicy ribs. Just before closing each rack of ribs in the foil, put a little bit of beer or apple juice in with the ribs. This helps the steaming process. Put the ribs, wrapped in foil, back in the smoker for 2 hours at 225 degrees.

### STEP ONE:

This final stage is when you sauce the ribs. Use your favorite barbecue sauce to liberal coat the ribs on both sides before placing them back in the smoker for a final hour. The result should be a rack of ribs you'll never forget.



## SMOKED BUTT

*Smoked pork butt is a good one for beginners. The meat is not expensive, and the result is a mouthful of summer.*

- 1 (7-8 pound) bone-in pork butt
- Olive oil
- Water

### Dry rub:

- 1/4 cup light brown sugar packed
- 2 tablespoons black pepper, coarsely ground
- 2 tablespoons kosher salt
- 1 tablespoon paprika
- 1 tablespoon garlic powder
- 1 tablespoon dried minced onions
- 1 teaspoon cayenne pepper

### Spritz:

- 1/4 cup apple juice
- 1/4 cup apple cider vinegar

**Prepare the smoker:** Fill the hopper of your smoker with wood pellets, applewood, hickory, pecan or cherry. Start the smoker on the smoke setting for 5 to 10 minutes. Increase heat to 250 F.

Fill a small baking dish with water and set aside.

**Prepare the pork butt:** Place all dry rub ingredients in a small bowl and stir with a fork to combine. Place pork butt on a baking sheet and rub the entire butt with olive oil. Sprinkle the seasonings over it and rub them in, covering every bit of the butt.

Place the baking dish filled with water on the grate on one side of the smoker.

Fill a small spray bottle with the apple juice and apple cider vinegar and set aside.

Place pork shoulder on the grate and close the lid. Keep the smoker temperature around 250 to 275 F while smoking during these first several hours. Smoke for approximately 4 hours, spritzing with the spray bottle every hour.

Check the internal temperature of the pork using a meat thermometer. By this time, the pork should be at least 145 F.

Completely spritz the pork one last time and carefully wrap it in aluminum foil. Place pork back into the smoker and lower temperature to 225 F. Smoke pork about



A perfectly cooked pork butt is a great start to a summer sandwich.

another 4 hours, but do not spritz during this stage of cooking.

Check the internal temperature of the pork shoulder using a meat thermometer. You're looking for your pork shoulder to be about 200 F. Anywhere from 195 to 205 F is a good range. Remove pork from the smoker and let rest for at least 20 minutes but up to 2 hours. Shred or chop as desired. 🍴



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