# **BTC** Fiber

**NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2019** 

**BROADBAND: GAMING EDITION** 

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THE SPEEDS YOU NEED The love of gaming connects a Dunlap family

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> **A MILITARY LEGACY** A Sequatchie County park honors veterans



BY SHIRLEY BLOOMFIELD, CEO NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association

# We need better mapping data

everal states have adopted loan and grant programs to help extend service to those areas of rural America still lacking a reliable broadband connection. Beyond its traditional programs, the federal government continues looking for ways to invest in this critical infrastructure.

A challenge associated with deciding where to invest these dollars is identifying where service is or is not already available. The FCC's broadband maps are the determining resource.

The FCC issued an order over the summer that will move away from the overly broad use of census blocks for reporting broadband coverage, instead requiring providers to submit "shapefiles" showing where they actually offer broadband service.

I had the opportunity to appear before a Congressional committee in September, where I shared a few key steps to move us toward more accurate mapping.

First, we need standardized reporting. It is also important to have a back-end validation process.

Finally, a robust challenge process is needed to allow providers and policymakers to do one last "sanity check" on the accuracy of the maps before decisions are reached.

Providers like yours are making great progress in connecting rural America. But if we hope for a future where everyone has broadband access, we must have better mapping data.



## Celebrate rural health on Nov. 21

Despite the challenges of serving rural America, health care professionals are delivering quality care, embracing technology and finding creative ways to encourage wellness among their rural patients. On Nov. 21, rural health offices will honor these providers — along with the partners and communities who support them — by sponsoring National Rural Health Day.

#### How can you celebrate National Rural Health Day?

Find free, downloadable resources for many of the activities below by visiting **www.powerofrural.org/nrhd-tookit.** 



**PARENTS:** Prepare a healthy meal for dinner, and talk with your kids about the blessings — and the challenges — of living in rural America. Mention the health care providers who service your rural community.



**PATIENTS:** Write a note to your health care team, thanking them for their help and their commitment to serving a rural population.



**PHYSICIANS:** Display National Rural Health Day posters in your office. Provide a staff appreciation lunch. Visit www.WalkWithADoc.org and consider starting this fun, active outreach in your community.



**FACEBOOK USERS:** Share a story about your doctor, a nurse or other health care provider who has made a positive impact on your life.



**TEACHERS:** Give your students coloring book pages. Sponsor a rural health-themed poster contest. Invite physicians or nurses from local hospitals and clinics to speak to students.



**BROADBAND USERS:** Search for health information over your broadband connection. Ask your physician if there are telehealth resources that could help you maintain or improve your health.



**SMALL BUSINESSES:** Show appreciation to your local rural health professionals by providing them with discounts or special offers.



**YOU!:** Make healthy eating choices. Take a walk. Avoid tobacco products. Schedule an appointment to have your cholesterol and blood pressure checked.

Share your experiences across social media using the hashtags #powerofrural and #nationalruralhealthday.

# **Gaming** generation Millennials – the first lifelong gamers

he U.S. launch of the Nintendo Entertainment System in late 1985 helped create an entertainment revolution. The oldest millennials at the time were about 4 years old, and that generation would be the first to make gaming a common pastime.

Members of this group, also known as Generation Y, are closely tracked by experts such as The Nielsen Company to monitor entertainment and technology trends, because the habits of millennials shape those industries.

Today, millennial gamers are finding new ways to play. There are mobile games and online, community-based games. Some people compete, and others enjoy the movielike experiences of modern games. And for millennial gamers, the male-to-female ratio is roughly even.

Thanks to games that emphasize social features, about 70% of millennial gamers and the generation following, often known as Gen Z, turn to multiplayer gaming for the social component.

Also, the pastime remains a critical entertainment choice even when the competition ends. About 70% of gamers turn to YouTube or Twitch to watch online videos about gaming. On average, this form of viewing totals nearly six hours weekly. Millennial gamers are willing to pay those who create the content they enjoy, either through subscriptions or by donating directly.

A Nielsen report concluded that millennials will not quickly outgrow this form of entertainment, and they will become the first generation of lifelong gamers. 💭

#### Games have become a social activity for millennials

Thanks to social features that let connected gamers chat and play with each other, a large share of millennials and Gen Zers play multiplayer games to virtually hang out with their friends and families. Members of Gen X and up are, in contrast, far less likely to play multiplayer titles.



#### **Millennial gamers** are a wide-ranging demographic group

#### 54% with full-time employment

pay for a movie/TV streaming service

76%

#### 38%

pay for a music streaming service

46% with children

43%

with a bachelor's

degree or higher

\$58,000

average household income

# Like Nintendo, we go beyond technology

t first glance, BTC Fiber and Nintendo don't have a lot in common. Nintendo is a video game giant based in Japan, and we are a small broadband provider in rural Tennessee.



**CHARLIE BORING** General Manager

But a quote I ran across recently made me realize we may have more in common than you'd think.

In the pages of this issue, you'll see a focus on gamers. And though I'm not much of a gamer myself, I know there are hundreds or even thousands of our members who enjoy playing video games on our network. As I hope you'll read, gaming has certainly become mainstream — to the point where there are college scholarships for team gamers.

For decades now, one brand has been synonymous with gaming: Nintendo. It's a company with an interesting history. Like BTC Fiber, it evolved over the years to meet customer demand. In fact, many people don't know that Nintendo started off in 1889 as a

small manufacturer of playing cards. Nearly a century and a half later, it's changed the world with its electronic gaming systems, handhelds and characters like Mario.

Similar to the way Nintendo developed, we've evolved from party line phone systems to lightning-fast broadband. But a quote from former Nintendo President Satoru Iwata drove home another similarity our two companies share.

In discussing his company's success, the late Mr. Iwata stated that in order to be successful, Nintendo had to look beyond the hardware and software it developed. "Please understand, I am not saying that technology is unimportant," he told an interviewer. "But if we are just focusing on technology ... we will not succeed."

In order to succeed, Nintendo had to focus not on the processors, electronics and equipment driving its games but instead on what the games did for people. Similarly at BTC Fiber, we constantly remind ourselves that the technology our business provides is only part of the equation. What matters most is how our members use that technology and the ways their lives are improved because of it.

Maybe it's when a young adult can enroll in distance learning classes because of our network. Maybe it's when an entrepreneur connects to markets around the world through our services. Or maybe it's simply when a customer gets to play a video game online with friends.

Just like with Nintendo, the bits and bytes of our business are secondary. Our primary focus is on the difference that technology can make for you.

#### BTC Fiber CONNECTION NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2019 VOL. 1, NO. 4

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# **BTC** Fiber

is a member-owned cooperative dedicated to delivering advanced telecommunications technology to the people of Bledsoe and Sequatchie counties and portions of Van Buren, Cumberland and Hamilton counties.

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#### **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

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Tommy Hickey, president of the Sequatchie County Veterans Memorial Park, reflects on the etching of his own image from his younger days during the Vietnam War. See story Page 12.

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### **BTC FIBER AWARDED ARC GRANT**

A grant from the Appalachian Regional Commission will help BTC Fiber extend a fiber optic network throughout the Fall Creek Falls State Park area, as well as the New Martin community near the park's northern entrance.

The grant benefits a 20-mile area of Van Buren County, including 374 residential locations and 39 business locations, says Matt Boynton, engineering manager at BTC Fiber. The project is expected to also include four additional Wi-Fi access locations in the park.

The purpose of the project is increasing visitation at the popular state park, which has over a million visitors annually. "More and more people choose to vacation at the park for multiple days, and the demand for internet availability increases," Boynton says. "With broadband availability, people will be more willing to extend their stay at Fall Creek Falls, boosting tourism dollars for Van Buren County."

The project also includes fiber optic network availability for the Fall Creek Falls Volunteer Fire Department, the Fall Creek Falls Community Center and the Upper Cumberland Human Resource Agency's Van Buren County Head Start. The project will provide broadband speeds of 1 Gbps to those locations.

The grant covers \$500,000 of the project, with BTC Fiber contributing \$162,400, Boynton says.



During the holidays, BTC Fiber offices will close on the following schedule:

- Thanksgiving: Thursday and Friday, Nov. 28 and 29.
- Christmas: Tuesday and Wednesday, Dec. 24 and 25.
- New Year's Day: Wednesday, Jan. 1.

For emergencies related to your service during holiday closings, call for assistance: 423-447-6815.

# **CPNI:** UNDERSTANDING YOUR RIGHTS

## HOW BLEDSOE TELEPHONE COOPERATIVE, INC. PROTECTS YOUR PERSONAL INFORMATION

#### Important notice to subscribers regarding your Customer Proprietary Network Information

Bledsoe Telephone Cooperative Inc. wants you to understand your rights to restrict the use of, disclosure of and access to your Customer Proprietary Network Information, or CPNI. You have a right and Bledsoe Telephone has a duty, under federal law, to protect the confidentiality of your Customer Proprietary Network Information.

#### WHAT IS CPNI?

It is the information that Bledsoe obtains that relates to the quantity, technical configuration, type, destination, location, and amount of use of the telecommunications service you subscribe to from Bledsoe. It includes the information that is found in your bills, but it does not include subscriber list information (name, address and telephone number). Examples of CPNI would be the telephone numbers that you call, the times you call them, the duration of your calls or the amount of your bill.

#### **USE OF YOUR CPNI**

CPNI may be used by Bledsoe to market services that are related to the package of services to which you currently subscribe or when marketing "adjunct to basic" services, such as Call Waiting and Caller ID. CPNI may also be used for the provision of customer premises equipment ("CPE") and services like call answering and voice mail and to protect Company property and prevent fraud. Bledsoe offers additional communications-related services. We seek your approval to access your CPNI so that BTC Fiber can provide you with information on new services and products that are tailored to meet your needs or may save you money.

#### IF YOU APPROVE OF OUR USE OF YOUR CPNI AS DESCRIBED ABOVE, NO ACTION IS NECESSARY ON YOUR PART

You have the right to disapprove this use of your CPNI by contacting us in writing at P.O. Box 609, Pikeville, TN 37367, or by telephone at 423-447-2121. If you disapprove of our use of your CPNI, you may not receive notice of new services or promotions, but your existing services will not be affected. If you do not notify us of your objection within thirty-three (33) days, we will assume you do not object and may use your CPNI for these purposes. You have the right to notify us at any time to object to the use of this information. Your election will remain valid until you notify us otherwise.

History comes alive NORTH CAROLINA MUSEUM HONORS SOLDIERS THROUGH THE YEARS

The birth of the U.S. Army Airborne units came about in 1940 with the aid of a batch of borrowed Riddell football helmets from the United States Military Academy at West Point. The helmets, which were used to protect the heads of aspiring paratroopers, came with instructions, however. The team needed them back when football season returned.

With that bit of information, visitors can enter the Airborne & Special Operations Museum in Fayetteville, North Carolina. Situated just a few miles from Fort Bragg, the museum honors the sacrifices of all airborne and special operations units with an extensive collection of memorabilia and military equipment dating from World War II to the present day.

#### WHY FAYETTEVILLE?

Now-retired Gen. James Lindsay led a push for the museum. He served as the first commander of the U.S. Army Special Operations Command, which is located on



Fort Bragg and oversees various unconventional warfare units. The Army post also serves as headquarters for the XVIII Airborne Corps, which has long presided over some of the most storied Army units in the nation's history, including the 101st Airborne and the 82nd Airborne All American Division, which is still located on Fort Bragg. "But our museum represents more than the 82nd," says Jim Bartlinski, museum director. "We represent all U.S. Army Airborne troops and Special Operations. So we tell those histories here."

#### FROM PAST TO PRESENT

The exterior design of the museum features soaring metal beams that play on the looks of the jump towers paratroopers use to practice. An imposing Iron Mike statue greets entering visitors. Various monuments commemorating American soldiers bear the nickname. This Iron Mike details the look of a World War II-era paratrooper, but it represents all paratroopers and special operations soldiers, Bartlinski says.

Inside the museum, visitors get a chronological look at the world of paratroopers and special forces soldiers — from their first test jump in Fort Benning, Georgia, in 1940 to today's missions in Afghanistan.



There is a special emphasis on World War II, which saw not only the beginning of the Airborne but also the most concentrated use of airborne operations. During that time, paratroopers dropped behind enemy lines to work with groups resisting the Nazi invasion of their countries. They also landed in Normandy just before the D-Day invasion of Europe.

Displays include artifacts, true-to-life dioramas, the various types of aircraft used for missions, specialized Jeeps and other equipment used for airborne drops and specialized missions behind enemy lines. One glass-encased display shows a card with an early version of the special forces' red arrowhead insignia. The cards sometimes turned up conspicuously on the uniforms of dead Nazis as a chilling warning.

### Hooah!

The Airborne & Special Operations Museum is at 100 Bragg Blvd., about 8 miles from Fort Bragg, in the heart of historic downtown Fayetteville, North Carolina. It is within walking distance of the North Carolina Veterans Park, a variety of local shops and restaurants, and the new baseball stadium of the Houston Astros' minor league farm team, the Fayetteville Woodpeckers. For more information, including hours of operation, visit the museum's website at asomf.org or its Facebook page.

Interactive displays are also scattered throughout the museum, including one that gives visitors a chance to sit in the hard, metal seats of a C-47 fuselage and then experience a simulation of jumping out of the cargo carrier. In addition, the museum's theater shows movies several times a day, and a 25-seat simulator room offers virtual reality experiences that mimic those of paratroopers.

The museum offers visitors a chance to refresh their history knowledge and see it in the context of the ongoing military operations of the times. But it also gives them a chance to better understand history from the eyes of a soldier, Bartlinski says. "What we do here commemorates the service of all these paratroopers," he says. "It points out all their sacrifices in the past and the ways they've continued to make sacrifices. It's important to remember that our troops are still out there in harm's way."

Military museums continue to fill visitors with respect and appreciation for the men and women of the U.S. armed forces. But today's military museums feature dazzling interactive activities, exciting simulations and realistic visual displays that bring history to life and educate visitors about the people who fought. Looking for an inspiring military museum in the Southeast? **Here are just a few of the greats:** 

VISIT A MILITARY MUSEUM THIS VETERANS DAY

#### NATIONAL NAVAL AVIATION MUSEUM

#### Pensacola, Florida

The National Naval Aviation Museum is the world's largest Naval aviation museum. It explores the rich history of Naval aviation with more than 150 beautifully restored aircraft representing Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard aviation. These historic and one-of-a-kind aircraft are displayed both inside the museum's nearly 350,000 square feet of exhibit space and outside on its 37-acre grounds. For more information, visit navalaviationmuseum.org.

#### **NATIONAL INFANTRY MUSEUM & SOLDIER CENTER**

#### Fort Benning, Georgia

With thousands of artifacts, monuments, interactive exhibits and video presentations on display, the National Infantry Museum is one of the nation's leading military history destinations. Visitors of all ages can experience firsthand the American infantryman's journey to defeat tyranny around the globe. For more information, visit nationalinfantrymuseum.org.

#### **U.S. ARMY AVIATION MUSEUM**

#### Fort Rucker, Alabama

Life-sized dioramas of aircraft and personnel capture the rich heritage of Army aviation, which started during the U.S. Civil War with hydrogen-filled balloons that directed artillery fire. About 50 different aircraft fill this cavernous museum and tell the wild and uplifting stories of U.S. Army pilots. For more information, visit armyaviationmuseum.org.

# **Tis the season**

# BTC FIBER HOSTS 12 DAYS OF CHRISTMAS -

#### **BY LISA SAVAGE**

#### here's nothing like holiday festivities to get people in the Christmas spirit. BTC Fiber will again host the 12 Days of Christmas, giving customers a chance to win gifts and enjoy refreshments.

"We've been doing this for several years, and it's popular with our members," says Charlie Boring, general manager at BTC Fiber. Beginning Dec. 5, customers can visit the BTC Fiber offices and register for gifts to be given away each business day for 12 days. The event concludes Dec. 20.

A name will be drawn at the end of each day. The member doesn't have to be present to win. Prizes, which will range in value from \$25 to \$50, include items such as a Roku box and Yeti cup.

At the end of the 12 days, all registrations will be combined for one grand-prize drawing. "This is our way of saying thanks to our members and spreading some Christmas cheer," Boring says.

Visit either of the BTC Fiber office locations to enjoy the 12 Days of Christmas event. Locations include 338 Cumberland Ave., Pikeville and 122 Cherry St., Dunlap. 💬

## **Enjoy other local holiday events**

#### **PIKEVILLE CHRISTMAS PARADE**

In keeping with tradition, the Pikeville Christmas Parade is set for the Saturday after Thanksgiving, Nov. 30, at 5 p.m. The parade route goes through downtown.

The parade theme picked by Frostbite Church of Prayer, last year's grand-prize float winner, is "Home for Christmas," and the entry fee is \$10. Floats must be gas- or diesel-powered, or they can be powered by a horse or mule if decorated. Four-wheelers are not allowed unless decorated.

Lineup starts at 3 p.m. at the old high school's walking track, and floats not in line by 4:45 p.m. will not be judged. Note, all times are Central Standard Time.

The Pikeville Farmers Market on Main Street will be decorated for the holidays and feature music and refreshments.

#### **DUNLAP CHRISTMAS PARADE**

Plan to attend the Dunlap Christmas Parade on the first Saturday in December. It's set for late afternoon, about 4 p.m., on Dec. 7.

Participants should line up at the high school for the parade route along Rankin Street and ending at Harris Park.

Following the parade, Christmas in the Park festivities begin at Harris Park, with hot dogs, popcorn, music and pictures

#### **CHRISTMAS ON THE MOUNTAIN AT FALL CREEK FALLS STATE PARK**

Join the fun at Fall Creek Falls State Park for Christmas on the Mountain, Dec. 6 and 7.

The event includes holiday music, storytelling, Christmas crafts for the kids, a visit with Santa and a Christmas tree lighting. It also features mountain crafts, showcasing the region's best craftsmen.





# **Game on** Fiber provides best gaming experience

#### BY LISA SAVAGE

lison Prater started gaming about two years ago as a way to spend time with her husband, Joey. He played on traditional gaming systems like PlayStation when he was younger and then didn't play for several years. When he eventually got back into gaming, Prater joined him.

Prater, a BTC Fiber customer service representative, lives in Dunlap and has two children, a 19-year-old daughter and a 15-year-old son who has autism. Many of the games Prater and her husband play involve superheroes, and their son watches videos about those characters on YouTube while they play. Sometimes he watches them play the games, and occasionally he joins in. "He doesn't have a long attention span," she says. "We don't get out much, and it's a great way for my husband and I to spend time together and spend time with him."

#### **FIBER MAKES THE DIFFERENCE**

Prater and her husband like playing games that allow them to be on the same team. "We learned that without teamwork, you're not going to do as well," she says.

Prater enjoys a wide range of games, and her diverse collection includes about 460 games that she owns and plays. "I'm not just an occasional gamer," she says.

She now has BTC Fiber at home, and she finds a significant improvement from her previous service. Prior to getting fiber, when her daughter streamed from Netflix, it usually kicked Prater, her husband or both off the gaming system. "It would make it really hard to do everything at the same time," she says. "Now, everybody can do what they want without any problems."





#### THE SPEED YOU NEED

- Up to 6 Mbps Lightly stream, surf, email and use social media on up to three connected devices at the same time.
- Up to 10 Mbps Stream and download shows, music and photos on up to four connected devices at the same time.
- Up to 15 Mbps Stream and download shows, music and photos on up to five devices at the same time. Recommended for online gaming and smart homes.
- Up to 30 Mbps Stream, share and download HD content on up to four connected devices at the same time.
- Up to 50 Mbps Stream, share and download for higherquality HD content on up to six connected devices at the same time.
- Up to 100 Mbps Download TV shows swiftly, download large files and enjoy multiplayer gaming with little to no buffering on up to eight connected devices.
- Up to 1,000 Mbps Download at nearly 1 gigabit per second using any number of connected devices.

Note: The speeds are "where available" and intended as guidance to determine what speeds meet your needs. Due to varying factors like hardware, networking, software and PC issues, the plan a user goes with does not guarantee support for the listed activities.

# Esports go mainstream

High-speed connections create winners

BY JOHN CLAYTON

dozen gaming computers provide an ethereal green glow along the stage at Lander University's Abney Cultural Center in Greenwood, South Carolina, as esports competitors prepare for an early round at the 2019 Peach Belt Conference League of Legends Championship tournament.

In traditional sports, the PBC is a member of NCAA Division II and composed of small colleges and universities in the Carolinas and Georgia. But as esports begins to find a larger niche, this is something different and new. While the video game industry has been around for decades, esports continues to evolve with college and professional teams, increasingly stunning games and graphics, and more platforms on which to play.

"I grew up playing stick-and-ball sports, and I never saw the difference in intensity between those sports and esports," says J.T. Vandenbree, associate college esports manager at Riot Games, the creator and distributor of the battle arena game League of Legends. "In esports, all the competitors play the same games, and they all have the same experiences. And they all get to chase the same dream."

Vandenbree spoke during a forum on esports hosted by Lander University during the 2019 PBC tournament. Members of the forum's panel agreed that esports and video gaming are expected to continue to broaden their reach and market shares.

Georgia high schools are now involved in sanctioned esports leagues. Dallas Cowboys owner Jerry Jones bought a stake in professional esports team Complexity Gaming in 2017 and moved its training center to the Cowboys complex in Frisco, Texas. In 2017, 240 colleges and universities competed in esports. That number grew to 357 in 2019, and many of those schools offer scholarships to promising video gamers.

Despite the growing popularity of esports on college campuses and beyond, the NCAA has not sanctioned esports. Instead, the National Association of College Esports serves as its primary governing body, and the NCSA — Next College Student Athlete recruiting service — has added esports to its portfolio.

ESPN signed on as sponsor of the Collegiate Esports Championship and plans to continue its support of the genre across its platforms, John Lasker, ESPN's vice president of digital programming, told Cheddar Esports during a regular show dedicated to gaming and esports.

"The conversion is happening right before our eyes," Lasker says. "Sports teams and franchises are evolving into esports franchises and esports teams. As that continues to happen, ESPN expects to continue to be there as we have been in other sports."

#### THE NEXT BIG THING

Gaming consoles such as Xbox and PlayStation have long incorporated internet connectivity into its gameplay, but Google is taking gaming one huge





step outside of the console. Google was to introduce its much-anticipated Stadia online gaming platform — described as a sort of Netflix for gamers — in November. With the cloud-based Stadia, gamers will not even need a gaming console or PC to play. The cost is \$9.99 per month in the U.S.



"Google may have just unveiled the future of gaming," wrote Tom Warren, a senior editor for TheVerge.com, following

UNC Pembroke's Crystian Amaya and teammates competed at the Peach Belt Conference League of Legends Tournament.

Google's introduction of Stadia's beta version at the Game Developers Conference in March.

The cloud-based technology, which relies on fast internet speeds, an array of servers placed around the world and special game controllers that relay commands quickly to the servers, puts more pressure on internet companies and cooperatives to deliver.

High-speed internet connections make it possible for gamers to compete, and the expansion of broadband services into rural areas makes it possible for more people to enjoy the games and to take advantage of the potential opportunities they offer.

In Kerrville, Texas, first-year Schreiner University esports coach Ryan Lucich says he often suffered through frustrating internet speeds and iffy connections while a student and esports competitor at Texas Tech in Lubbock, Texas.

"Obviously, the biggest challenge in running a wide, multiplayer online game is the internet connection," says Riot Games' Vandenbree. "We have dozens of people at our company who work with telecommunications providers to try to figure out the best way to make our game packets work. Anything that makes our infrastructure stronger in our country, and any other country, is good for the game."

## Gaming old school in new ways

Using internet connections to play traditional games is an updated take on an old norm. "People used to play chess by mail or by messenger," says Chris Bellinger, a Staunton, Virginia, resident and avid gamer. He participates in role-playing games with friends and family from across the miles thanks to internet connections and gaming platforms that allow real-time communication and play.

Bellinger says members of his groups, which total about eight people in each, are involved in Pathfinder, Dungeons & Dragons and Star Wars role-playing games. He participates in Pathfinder and D&D games with old friends and runs another D&D game with members of his family. Group members include people in Virginia, Florida, South Carolina and Iowa.

"We're pretty spread out, so now it's pretty cool," Bellinger says. "It allows us to stay in touch. I don't know that I would have much contact with my friends otherwise."

One of the current games now played through the popular Roll 20 gaming platform originated from one that Bellinger and his friends started at the College of Charleston in South Carolina. "That game ran for about eight years with different people coming in or going out," he says.

Roll 20 makes game play smooth and easy when coupled with a communications platform called Discord that allows for group chats and messaging.

While those platforms are relatively new, Bellinger says traditional gamers have been taking advantage of internet connections since the introduction of the World Wide Web. And before that, players used text-based multiuser dungeons, or MUDs, to meet up online for a gaming experience once confined to table tops or living rooms. "So, there's always been ways to game online," Bellinger says.

A view of the Sequatchie County Veterans Memorial Park from above.

# a display of patriotism PARK PAYS TRIBUTE TO LOCAL VETERANS

#### **BY LISA SAVAGE**

The cemetery was overgrown, and the Revolutionary War gravesite had only a small headstone. But the name of the soldier buried there is among about 1,800 engraved on the veterans wall at the Sequatchie County Veterans Memorial Park in Dunlap.

The park is a tribute to local veterans and the military branches in which they served. Displays include planes, helicopters, vehicles and anchors. At the park's center, the veterans wall is the focal point. Made of stacked stone, the wall is 8 feet tall at its highest point and stretches 90 feet. It holds marble tablets etched with the nearly 1,800 names of local veterans.

James Kelly, who served in the Coast Guard during World War II, went to every cemetery in Sequatchie County, making notes about all the veterans he could find. He devoted a lot of time to gathering the names of those who had served. "That's how we got a lot of the names that are on the veterans wall," says Tommy Hickey, president of the Sequatchie County Veterans Memorial Park. "It covers everything from the Revolutionary War to the present day."

Kelly was among the local veterans who helped establish the park. He passed away in 2016 at the age of 93, but he saw the efforts of his research realized with the unveiling of the veterans park and wall in 2011.

#### A VISION

A vision for the park came to Hickey after he retired in 2009 and was recuperating from a motorcycle accident. Hickey, a Vietnam veteran, had joined the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars and took an interest in similar parks around the country.

MARINES

He drew up a plan and approached some of his military buddies from the American Legion and VFW with the idea. They quickly put together a 12-man committee to establish and develop a plan for a nonprofit organization. "We each put a \$100 bill on the table, and from there, the money kept rolling in from the community," Hickey says.

Much of the materials and labor came from local businesses as donations, and construction began on the wall. The park is located on land the Sequatchie County Board of Education owns near Highway 28 and Cordell Drive, just below the school board office.

The idea and preliminary drawings came together in the fall of 2009, and work was underway by February 2010. "We dedicated the wall and the park on Veterans Day, Nov. 11, 2011, at 11 o'clock," Hickey says.





veterans day activities MONDAY, NOV. 11, 2019

Events begin at 9:30 a.m. at Sequatchie County Courthouse in Dunlap with a short ceremony remembering the fallen soldiers, followed by the parade down Rankin Avenue, on to Highway 28 and ending at the Veterans Memorial Park. Events at the memorial park begin promptly at 11 a.m. **878 Cordell Drive, Dunlap** For more information: 423-949-9000

#### **REPRESENTING THE MILITARY BRANCHES**

While it was important to remember the veterans from Sequatchie County who served their country, it was also important to the group to commemorate the military branches. Hickey and the others began searching for planes, helicopters and other vehicles, and large representative items.

The first piece arrived at the park in September 2011 on a flatbed truck from Texas. The A-4 Skyhawk fighter jet, on loan from the Department of the Navy, had flown several bombing missions in Vietnam. "They were taking it down at a military park in Texas and replacing it with another jet," Hickey says.

The group found a Huey helicopter that had been on several missions in Vietnam. It was in Oregon and listed in a magazine's auction advertisement. "I called them and asked them if they'd like to donate it to us," Hickey says. "After they worked out the details, several people flew out, disassembled it, and a local trucker hauled it back on a flatbed truck. It took us 27 months to build it and put it back together."

An M59 armored personnel carrier on loan from the Army saw use during the Korean and Vietnam war eras, Hickey says.

The organization was still looking for something representing the Navy when Dunlap Police Chief Clint Huth, retired from the Navy Reserve, was in Norfolk, Virginia. "He was strolling through a warehouse and saw some large ship anchors," Hickey says. "He said he knew right away the anchors would be perfect for our park." The year 1943 is stamped on the anchors, and rumor has it they were mounted to a Liberty ship that transported troops back and forth during World War II. The group also acquired a Mighty Mite Marine Jeep, an amphibious vehicle equipped with flotation devices. It was designed to be used going back and forth across the rivers in Korea and Vietnam.

The Air Force was the only branch not yet represented when they found a T-33 Shooting Star jet in Douglas, Georgia. A group from Dunlap spent several days in Douglas taking the aircraft apart over two months. "It took us 24 months to rebuild it and get it on display," Hickey says.

#### **COMMUNITY SUPPORT**

The organization hopes to add a museum, along with other military items as they become available. The community provides overwhelming support, from cash donations to materials and labor for the displays. "If we would have had to pay for all this it would have been between \$400,000 and \$500,000," Hickey says. "As it is, donations of money, materials and labor covered about 90% of the cost, and we've only had to come up with the rest through fundraisers."

The park is possible because of the hard work from the board of directors and the community. "We have a patriotic community, and it's amazing what they can do when they set their minds to it," Hickey says. "Everybody came together to see this through."

A holiday delight Baking Christmas cookies

# makes for a strong tradition

t's the most wonderful time of the year, when cooks around the country take to their kitchens to bake Christmas cookies.

"It's a tradition in families," says Stephany Houston, baker and owner of WildFlour Bakehouse in Sevierville, Tennessee. "Ours was that we would go to my grandmother's house — all of us girls — and make cookies. Then we would have them for the whole week before Christmas."

Houston recalls her grandmother, Alva Dell, using an old pastry press to create beautiful shapes for her German spritz cookies. That press is now long gone, but a new "old" one has taken its place. A friend found it at an antiques auction and brought it to Houston so she could re-create that experience she fondly remembers in her grandmother's kitchen years ago.

Spritz cookies are just one confection filling bakery cases during the holiday season, tempting customers as they walk through the bake shop doors. This is only Wild-Flour's second year in business, but as word spreads, a



growing, loyal customer base has taken root.

"Most every neighborhood has their baking lady," Houston says. "That's what I am — the neighborhood baking lady, who also has a storefront." In a previous life, before opening WildFlour, Houston was a 911 operator and "had a lot of downtime," giving her the opportunity to watch YouTube videos about cookie decorating. "I pretty much taught myself," she says.

Now, she teaches others at classes at the bakery and makes cookies for customers who bring in their own recipes. "Everybody has their own little cookie recipe they want to have in their homes over the holidays," she says.



#### lips for GREAT COOKIES

Stephany Houston, owner of WildFlour Bakehouse, teaches baking classes, where she stresses important steps to take before getting started:

- Read the entire recipe before you begin. A lot of people don't, and they skip important steps.
- Always cream the butter and sugar together. That's very important. Then, mix the dry ingredients and incorporate the two together.
- Do not overmix the batter, which will result in tough, dry, crumbly cookies. Stop mixing when the ingredients are just mixed together.



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

#### **STEPHANY'S GINGERBREAD MEN**

- 3/4 cup butter
- 3/4 cup brown sugar, packed
- 3/4 cup molasses
  - 1 teaspoon salt
  - 1 teaspoon Chinese five spice
  - 2 teaspoons cinnamon
  - 2 teaspoons ground ginger
- 1/4 teaspoon cloves
  - 1 large egg
  - 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 3 3/4 cups all-purpose flour

In a saucepan over low heat, melt butter, then stir in brown sugar, molasses, salt and spices. Transfer the mixture to a mediumsized mixing bowl, let it cool to lukewarm, then beat in the egg.

Whisk the baking powder and soda into the flour, then stir into the molasses mixture. The dough will be very soft and sticky, but don't be tempted to add more flour. It will firm up once it's chilled.

Divide the dough in half and pat each half into a thick rectangle. Wrap well and refrigerate for 1 hour or longer. The dough may be sticky and hard to roll if not thoroughly chilled, so make sure it's chilled before continuing.

Heat oven to 350 F. Once the dough has chilled, take one piece of dough out of the refrigerator and flour a clean work surface. Roll the dough to a thickness of 1/8 to 1/4 inch. The thinner you roll the dough, the crispier the cookie. Flour both the top and bottom of the dough if it starts to stick.

Cut out shapes with a floured cookie cutter, cutting them as close to one another as possible to minimize waste. Transfer cookies to ungreased cookie sheets. Bake the cookies until slightly browned around the edges — 8 to 12 minutes — or until they feel firm. Let cookies cool on baking sheet for several minutes until set. Then, remove to a wire rack to cool completely. Repeat with remaining dough. Decorate cookies as desired.



#### **ALVA DELL'S CHRISTMAS SPRITZ**

As you can tell by reading, Alva wrote this recipe for her family.

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1/2 cup granulated sugar
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1/2 teaspoon almond extract
  - 1 large egg
- 1/2 pound unsalted butter at room temperature, cut into small cubes Decorations of choice

Heat oven to 350 F. Whisk together the flour, sugar and salt in a large bowl, then sprinkle with vanilla and almond extracts. Crack the egg in the center of the bowl, then dot the flour mixture with the pieces of butter. Mix everything together with your clean hands until you get a dough. Try not to knead too much, as this makes tough cookies. You just want the dough to come together cohesively.

Press the dough through a cookie press to make traditional spritz. Put on the die of your choice — star and snowflake patterns are good for the holidays. Then, load the press with the dough. Ratchet out the dough onto an ungreased cookie sheet. This takes practice, so be prepared to mess up at first. Just return the notso-good ones to the dough ball and start again. Some people like larger cookies that require two or three cranks. Others like a more dainty cookie that requires just one crank of the cookie press. My mum sometimes twisted her wrist a little when making these to get a swirly pattern going on.

Bake the cookies at 350 F for 10-12 minutes. As they bake, get your decorations ready, because you'll need to act fast once they come out of the oven.

The cookies will not brown, so don't wait for that to happen. As soon as they come out of the oven, start decorating them. My favorite toppings are colored sugar and pieces of walnuts stuck in the center of the star pattern.

Cool the cookies on the sheet for 5 minutes, then carefully remove them to a rack. Let cool completely before putting them away. These cookies freeze well. 😋



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