



CONNECTION



HEALTH CARE AT HOME

Dialysis treatment made easier with broadband

CONNECTED COMMUNITY

Bledsoe Erlanger Hospital utilizes telemedicine

HIGH-TECH LIFELINE

Telemedicine improving rural health care



— By SHIRLEY BLOOMFIELD, CEO —
NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association

A good way to start the New Year

NTCA members make a real difference in their communities, and in the lives of the people they serve. I was reminded of this a few weeks ago when the Foundation for Rural Service announced it had awarded \$100,000 in FRS Community Grants to groups throughout the U.S. FRS is the nonprofit arm of NTCA that supports rural telecom companies, consumers and policymakers with educational information, products and programming.

Each year, community organizations apply for FRS grants to help them tackle challenges ranging from accessing technology and improving educational offerings to providing telemedicine and first-responder services to rural areas. Applications are sponsored by their local telco.

It was also exciting to see the USDA award several ReConnect grants and loans to NTCA members toward the end of the year. This program represents yet another option for rural broadband funding, as well as an example of public/private partnerships at work to extend broadband to unserved communities.

After all, investments by federal and state agencies, coupled with the commitment of rural broadband providers, are key to our nation's progress in connecting the millions of citizens still without access to fast, reliable internet service.

These programs, as well as the engagement we saw among policymakers at our Telecom Executive Policy Summit in November, provide a strong start to 2020 and give me great hope for a strong new year for rural broadband. ☑



Are you ready for a telehealth future?

Story by STEPHEN V. SMITH

The presence of reliable broadband service holds great promise for rural America. While it touches many facets of life, broadband's greatest impact may very well be in the area of health care. Consider this statement from the Federal Communications Commission:

“Advances in telemedicine are transforming health care from a service delivered solely through traditional brick and mortar health care facilities to connected care options delivered via a broadband internet access connection directly to the patient's home or mobile location.”

While reliable access to a broadband network is still out of reach for millions of rural Americans, hundreds of cooperative and independent telecommunications companies across the country are delivering world-class internet service, often over a fiber connection. If you received this magazine in the mail, your local telco is one of those leading-edge providers.

If access to broadband is becoming less of the challenge to telehealth's wide-scale availability, what is the greatest challenge? The FCC recently tasked the Intergovernmental Advisory Committee with studying and reporting on telehealth barriers and incentives. The report stated that “people-based” issues offer the most significant challenges to telehealth adoption. While this includes many factors, such as policy and licensing, broadband adoption is a leading concern.

In other words, the technology is there. Now, people need to embrace it.

“Increasing support must be given to rural and disadvantaged communities so that digital literacy and adoption does not exacerbate the digital divide,” the IAC report states. Quite simply, the presence of broadband doesn't mean patients and doctors are ready to put it to use as part of their health care program.

Are you ready? Do you understand the implications of telehealth? What steps can you take toward enjoying its benefits?

Begin by asking your doctor what programs are available. This could include connected medical devices in your home or something as simple as remote monitoring via an app on your smartphone or tablet. Of course, access to telehealth starts with subscribing to broadband service that will support this life-changing technology. And once in place, broadband has the potential to enhance your life in many other ways as well. ☑

Knowledge is power

Does your digital know-how stand up?



Story by NOBLE SPRAYBERRY

Convenience and power. Internet services bring both. Online bill pay eliminates a tedious task. Social media can keep family ties strong or reconnect you with old friends. Streaming services bring a wealth of music, books and more.

But when it comes to digital tools, knowledge is power, and the Pew Research Center's recent "Americans and Digital Knowledge" report found that a majority of adults in the U.S.

could not correctly answer half of the survey's 10 multiple-choice questions.

Questions touched on security and a general understanding of technology. Here are a few of the queries, edited for clarity, focused on security and privacy — good information to know. The answers do include additional context and tips not included in the report.

Q If a website uses cookies, it means that the site ...

A: Cookies allow websites to track user visits and site activity. They are common, and you are often tracked across the websites you visit.

Q Where might someone encounter a phishing scam?

A: Phishing scams can occur on social media, websites, email or text messages. Each form of communication offers an avenue for exploitation. For additional tips to improve your online security, visit [FCC.gov/consumer-guides](https://www.fcc.gov/consumer-guides).

Q What is the largest source of revenue for most major social media platforms? (Several possible options were listed.)

A: Advertising is the largest source of revenue for most social media plat-

forms. Often advertising is personalized to you by information gathered from not only your activities on a social media site but also your actions on other websites.

Q When a website has a privacy policy, it means that the site ...

A: Privacy policies are contracts between websites and users about how those sites will use their data. Often long and legalistic, the agreements may outline how your private information can be used to target advertising or whether or not your information can be shared with other companies.

Q What does it mean when a website has "https://" at the beginning of its URL, as opposed to "http://" without the "s"?

A: "https://" in a URL means that

information entered into the site is encrypted. Look for "https://" before completing any financial transaction on a site.

Q Many web browsers offer a feature known as "private browsing" or "incognito mode." If someone opens a webpage on their computer at work using incognito mode, who will be able to see their online activities?

A: Private browsing mode only prevents someone using the same computer from seeing one's online activities. In most cases, your internet provider, including your phone wireless provider, can see all digital traffic passing from your device to the internet.

Want to see the entire report?

Do a Google search for "Pew Research Center and Americans and Digital Knowledge."

We've arrived in the future

Welcome to 2020! I sincerely hope you and those close to you had a superb holiday season and that this new year is off to a wonderful start.

Something about starting not only a new year, but also a new decade makes 2020 feel like a year especially full of promise. For so long, the 2020s have seemed like the distant future. Now, we have arrived!



CHARLIE BORING
General Manager

It's entertaining to look back and see what Hollywood, science fiction authors and big thinkers predicted for the future.

While I'm still waiting on the flying car and weekend trips to the moon that science fiction promised us, I catch myself from time to time thinking about how some of the things we take for granted every day would seem so futuristic to us just 20 or 30 years ago.

Here in the future, all of us carry around personal communication devices in our pockets that allow us to make video calls with people all over the world.

We can instantly download practically any book, movie or song in the world right to our tablets.

While we don't exactly have Rosie from "The Jetsons," we do have robots that vacuum our floors, manufacture products and even help perform surgeries.

We have software that can share photos around the world, alert us to emergencies and order almost anything we need for home delivery. Our watches can help detect heart problems. Our cars can give us directions to anywhere we want to go. And our homes can turn on lights, lock doors and change the temperature with just the sound of our voice.


Many of these things are becoming a normal part of our daily routine, but the 1980 or 1990 version of myself would have seen them as straight out of science fiction.

For those of us at BTC Fiber, it's rewarding to know our network is what brings the future to our part of Tennessee. Whether it's our broadband service at your home or our network providing vital infrastructure to businesses, we're right at the heart of all of this futuristic technology. We worked hard to make that network and our company even better in 2019. It was certainly a year of meaningful accomplishments and noteworthy milestones for us.

- We completed a 54-mile fiber optic construction project to bring gigabit-speed internet services in and around Dunlap.
- We received a grant from the Appalachian Regional Commission to support a fiber optic project in and around Fall Creek Falls State Park.
- Following Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee's executive order to better serve Tennessee's distressed counties, we applied for grants in Bledsoe County through the Tennessee Broadband Accessibility Grant Program.
- We completed multiple fiber optic projects in communities throughout our service area.

Turning the page to 2020, we have some significant goals in mind in order to serve you better.

- We will begin construction on a second major project in Sequatchie County.
- Similarly, we will finish the Fall Creek Falls Appalachian Regional Commission grant project.
- In communities throughout the area, additional construction projects will continue.

Knowing that the only thing certain about the future is change, I think BTC Fiber is primed to accomplish these things and more. We're thankful for the opportunity to serve you in 2020 — and in the future. 

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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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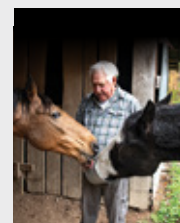
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On the Cover:



Charles Layne has been able to get back to enjoying time with his horses since he began upgraded dialysis treatment at home. See story Page 12.



Broadband Association working on Rural Telehealth initiative

The Tennessee Broadband Association is studying ways to support telehealth. "Our members are building advanced broadband networks into some of Tennessee's most rural areas," says Levoy Knowles, executive director of the TNBA. "That infrastructure is a critical first step to enabling telehealth services."

The association, comprised of cooperative and independent broadband providers across the state, is developing the Tennessee Rural Telehealth Initiative as a way to support and encourage telehealth services in the state. The association is working with a health care technology company to help rural health providers connect with and serve their patients. TNBA has met with Department of Economic and Community Development staff to discuss the program, and in November participated in the state's rural health association annual conference that coincided with National Rural Health Day.

"The fiber infrastructure is there," says Knowles, "and this initiative is the next step toward putting broadband to work to bring better care to rural Tennesseans."

Submit applications for scholarships



BTC Fiber, in partnership with NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association, will soon award annual scholarships, including \$2,000 from the Foundation for Rural Service. BTC Fiber will add \$500, for a total award of \$2,500.

FRS scholarship applicants are also eligible for a named scholarship: one \$7,000 Everett Kneece Scholarship, four \$5,000 JSI Staurulakis Family Scholarships, one \$1,500 TMS scholarship and three \$500 Roger Alan Cox Memorial Scholarships.

School guidance counselors will distribute applications for the FRS scholarships, or download them from FRS.org. Submit applications online at FRS.org by March 6.



LIFELINE IS A FEDERAL PROGRAM TO HELP LOW-INCOME AMERICANS PAY FOR PHONE OR BROADBAND SERVICE

You are eligible for Lifeline benefits if you qualify for and receive one of the following benefits:

- SNAP
- Medicaid
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Federal Public Housing Assistance
- The Veteran's Pension or Survivor's Pension benefit.

Additionally, consumers at or below 135% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines will continue to be eligible for a Lifeline program benefit. (State determinations of income will no longer be accepted.) There are no changes to the eligibility criteria for Tribal programs.

NOTE: Some states have additional qualifying programs, allowances and stipulations. Check with your local telecommunications provider for information about benefits that may be available in your state.

DO YOU QUALIFY? Apply today!

To find out whether you qualify for Lifeline assistance, please visit www.lifelinesupport.org or call your local telecommunications provider.

NOTE: Your telephone company is not responsible for determining who qualifies for these programs or who receives assistance. Consumers must meet specific criteria in order to obtain assistance with their local telephone and/or broadband service, and qualifying is dependent upon government-established guidelines.



TAKE THE RIDE

Follow the Hank Williams Trail

Story by ANNE BRALY

The road between Georgiana and Fort Payne along the Hank Williams Trail is a journey lovers of country music should make at least once in their lifetime. It tells a story of one of Alabama's most famous sons, from his beginnings as the child of a railroad engineer who was mostly absent from his son's life to the glamour of stardom and Williams' tragic demise at the young age of 29.

Over the span of Hank Williams' life, he recorded more than 165 songs. Though he could not read a note of music, he was a wordsmith when it came to writing hits that have become part of the American songbook.

The trail is a 250-mile trip through history that includes a visit to Williams' boyhood home and ends at a barber shop where he made one of his last stops before dying in his car in West Virginia on his way to perform at a concert in Ohio. "The Alabama Tourism Department has done an incredible job with the Hank Williams Trail, and it's a great way to experience some of my dad's life story," says his daughter, Jett Williams.

Here are some trail highlights

GEORGIANA

Thousands of newspaper clippings, photos of family and friends, record albums and 45s, royalty receipts, clothes, one of Williams' early guitars, the old wooden bench he stood on to sing at Mount Olive Baptist Church in nearby Greenville, Alabama — there are too many items to list, and it will take a couple of hours to take in the scope of the collection at the Hank Williams Boyhood Home & Museum.

Williams lived here from 1931 to 1934. It was in this house at 127 Rose St. that he played his first guitar, having bought it by selling peanuts and shining shoes at the town depot.

Among the more unusual items in the small house is a stage light used in the Municipal Auditorium for the show "Louisiana Hayride." The Hank Williams Festival is on the grounds the first Saturday each June.

Online: www.hankmuseum.com

MONTGOMERY

Montgomery is ground zero for Hank Williams. He called it home from 1937 to 1948 and moved back in 1952. He lived there at the time of his death.



LAKE MARTIN, ALEXANDER CITY

Hank Williams' Cabin on Lake Martin is a small, white frame affair where Williams and Fred Rose, his friend and a giant in the music publishing business, wrote blockbusters "Kaw-Liga" and "Your Cheatin' Heart."

The cabin is now on the property of Children's Harbor, a camp for sick and disabled children. The two-bedroom building is available for rent.

Online: childrensharbor.com

Kowaliga Restaurant, 295 Kowaliga Marina Road

This restaurant, now serving a menu of cheeseburgers and catfish, sits at the water's edge of Lake Martin. Inside, a carved statue of the Indian Kowaliga, whose story was the inspiration for Williams' song "Kaw-Liga" guards the entrance.

Online: www.kowaligarestaurant.com

BIRMINGHAM

The Redmont Hotel, 2101 Fifth Ave. N., is the place where Hank Williams spent his last night in 1952 and is also the oldest hotel in Alabama still in operation. Remodeling a few years ago reconfigured many of the guest rooms, but Williams' room was on what is now the third floor, somewhere around what is now room 304.

Step off the elevator on the third floor and you'll see a wooden plaque with four of Williams' records. This is the only floor displaying any Hank Williams decor and is a silent tribute to one of the hotel's most famous guests.

Online: www.redmontbirmingham.com

FORT PAYNE

On the eve of his death, Hank Williams stopped by Carter's Barber Shop for a haircut and a shave from barber Howard Simpson. He also had a sip or two or three — maybe more — of moonshine while there. When Simpson died, he left the chair that Williams sat in to local barber Alton Beason, who opened his shop at 1719 Gault Ave. It's now on display in a corner of the shop, carefully roped off for all to see but not sit in. ☞



Carter's Barber Shop in Fort Payne, Alabama.



Chris' Hot Dogs in Montgomery, Alabama.

Chris' Hot Dogs, 138 Dexter Ave.

This shotgun-style eatery is the oldest restaurant in the city and was Williams' favorite place to eat — and drink.

"He'd order two hot dogs all the way — mustard, sauerkraut, onions and Chris' famous chili sauce — and a Budweiser and a shot of Jack," a server said when asked about Hank Williams' favorite dog. Williams' seat isn't marked, but it was one of 12 stools along the counter. There are also booths and tables, so it's not hard to find a seat and eat where the Hillbilly Shakespeare once dined.

Online: www.chrishotdogs.com

D'Road Cafe, 121 Montgomery St.

This cafe, the former location of the Elite Cafe, is worth at least a drive-by to see where Williams made his final public performance just four days before he died. The Elite opened in 1911 and was a Montgomery institution before it closed in 1990. Now reopened as the D'Road Cafe, the restaurant allows visitors to sit in the place where Williams last performed.

Online: droadcafe.com

Hank Williams Museum, 118 Commerce St.

This museum is the tell-all of Williams' life — both public and private. The collection includes thousands of pieces of not only his, but also of his wife's, Audrey's, past — furniture from their house in Nashville and suits, including several handmade Nudie suits. There are guitars, bills and other receipts, and artwork. The collection is massive, but its crowning jewel is the baby blue 1953 Cadillac in which Williams died. It's on loan from his son, Hank Williams Jr.

Take your time touring the museum, but when you're done, browse the gift shop — ticket and shop sales and private donations fund the museum.

Online: hankwilliamsmuseum.net

Hank Williams Gravesite, 829 Columbus St.

On your way out of town is Oakwood Cemetery. It's here, high atop a hill, that Hank and Audrey Williams are buried. Incriptions at the base of Hank's headstone remind visitors of his most well-known songs, such as "Kaw-Liga," "I Can't Help It" and "Jambalaya."



Telemedicine technology

Fiber internet means more options for patients at Erlanger Bledsoe Hospital

Story by LISA SAVAGE | Photography by MARK GILLILAND

Before telemedicine, a patient hospitalized at Erlanger Bledsoe Hospital for complications from an injury and in need of specialized wound care faced a transfer from Pikeville to an out-of-town facility.

Now, however, nurses at Erlanger Bledsoe Hospital use a computer on wheels that is equipped with remote-control cameras

designed for telemedicine. A specialist in Chattanooga can guide the treatment, and patients receive the same care as they would in a more specialized facility.

It's just one of the ways Erlanger Bledsoe utilizes technology and access to fast, reliable internet. "Access to telemedicine helps keep our people close to home, and that makes it easier for them," Dr. Andrew Smith says.

Smith joins Dr. David Sapp and Dr. Scott Dibrell as staff physicians serving patients at local nursing homes and at Erlanger Primary Care – Bledsoe, based at the hospital.

TELEMEDICINE

Access to more health care options through telemedicine is a game-changer for those living in rural areas like Bledsoe County, Smith says.

Erlanger Bledsoe Hospital is part of the Erlanger Health System. Local patients have access to some of the best specialists in the region, and technology makes that connection much easier, Smith says.

Within the last two years, the fiber optic internet expansion through BTC Fiber has allowed the Bledsoe location to expand the telemedicine technology to include access for wound care, behavioral health and health-related nutrition and dietary consultations.

Telemedicine is also used for telemetry for cardiac care and cardiac or pulmonary rehabilitation. Data is recorded and transmitted in real time to specialists at Erlanger's main location in Chattanooga. "From electronic medical records to telemedicine, technol-



Dr. Andrew Smith

ogy helps provide state-of-the-art patient care in our rural area,” Smith says.

Behavioral health is the field that most frequently utilizes telemedicine. Prior to access to telemedicine, a patient brought to the emergency department with behavioral or mental health issues sometimes had to wait hours for access to a mental health professional for evaluation or transfer to another facility.

Now, the emergency department personnel at Erlanger Bledsoe Hospital can use the cameras on the computer for a mental health professional on call at the main facility to see and talk to the patient on the screen and make an assessment for treatment. “In an acute psychiatric situation, there isn’t a wait for transfer to another facility,” Smith says. The evaluation provides immediate care.

Improvements in wound care is an unexpected benefit of telemedicine. “We don’t have anyone here who specializes in wound care, and we can use the telemedicine that allows the specialists to look and guide treatment for our nurses,” Smith says.

In most cases, the patients require in-house treatment because of a complication to a wound. Treatment might include intravenous antibiotics, advanced wound care or both.

“Those specialists guide the nurses here with exact instructions on how to care for that wound,” Smith says. “Through the cameras, they can record measurements and look at the wound. It’s very beneficial for the patient, who doesn’t have to travel for this daily required care or be hospitalized at a facility farther from home.”

Patients in need of a nutritionist and dietary guidance related to health issues now have access to the specialists in the Erlanger Health System.

“Our patient volumes are variable,” Smith says. “Sometimes, we might have one or two patients who need a dietary consult, and sometimes we might have eight. But by being able to utilize the specialists, it allows our facility to meet their needs as if that patient were sitting there with the dietician, face-to-face, without having to have someone on staff all the time.”



Dr. Andrew Smith and Kathy Swafford, registered nurse, prepare a telemedicine consultation.

ELECTRONIC MEDICAL RECORDS

Improvement in the technology for electronic medical records truly does connect the Erlanger Bledsoe Hospital to the main hospital and other Erlanger locations, as well as the University Medical Center. Other hospital medical systems are expected to be linked in the future, as well.

Information in a patient’s records such as scans, blood work and other test results are accessible by almost any doctor at any facility in these systems. Previously, a doctor at the Erlanger Bledsoe Hospital might send a patient to a specialist in a larger city, and records would be faxed or emailed. Now, with access to all the records immediately, the specialist might make a recommendation for treatment by looking at the records and make an assessment, conferring with local physicians.

“That might save some of the travel time for those patients, and not as many trips would be required,” Smith says.

The faster internet connection also makes a difference in pulmonary and cardiac rehab. “The goal of pulmonary and cardiac rehab is to push the patient to their max and build their endurance, and it must be monitored while they’re doing the rehab,” Smith says. “This access allows

our patients to seek the rehab locally without driving, and it’s our goal to provide access to our patients that they would get in a bigger city.”

Telemedicine is key in keeping local residents close to home for treatment, says Stephanie Boynton, vice president and CEO of Erlanger Bledsoe Hospital.

“Telemedicine is an avenue that brings state-of-the-art medical care to the residents of our local communities,” Boynton says. “It’s our goal to continue to increase access to advanced medical care in our area, and this is a tremendous way to do that.”

Erlanger Bledsoe Hospital

Erlanger Primary Care – Bledsoe – where Dr. Andrew Smith, Dr. David Sapp and Dr. Scott Dibrell practice and see patients daily – is across the street from the hospital. The clinic provides services for all ages and is open five days a week.

Erlanger Primary Care – Bledsoe
136 Wheelertown Ave., Pikeville
423-447-3524
8 a.m.-5 p.m., Monday-Thursday
8 a.m.-noon, Friday



Telemedicine changes the health care landscape

Broadband makes a difference daily

Imagine a world with greater health care accessibility, as convenient as contacting a physician from your home. Or consider a medical system where rural communities can easily connect in real time with specialists based dozens, if not hundreds, of miles away.

Broadband technology provides the key link between you and medical providers needed to make those innovations and others possible. That more convenient, healthier world is becoming a reality for rural communities across the nation.

The systems are not yet what they one day may become, but every day more and more people are receiving the benefits of telemedicine. And the results are often profound.

Kentucky veterans have easier access to important care. Changing laws in states such as Texas allow greater access to telemedicine. Telestroke programs in Minnesota and North Dakota save vital minutes when patients most need care. And those are just a few examples of broadband technology changing health care for the better.

KENTUCKY VETERANS

In rural Kentucky, getting to and from an appointment at any medical specialist can often require hours of travel. But when you're a veteran trying to get to a Veterans Administration Medical Center in a metropolitan area, travel times can increase even more. And a veteran might need multiple doctors and have multiple appointments scheduled on different days.

An innovative pilot program in a mountainous section of eastern Kentucky is helping to change that. The Virtual Living Room program, which started in 2017 in McKee, offers vets a comfortable and private room in their local library complete with high-speed internet access to visit with VA health care providers located more than an hour's drive away.

The program, available for setup at other qualifying sites, not only illustrates the potential of telemedicine but also shows the efforts being made to create a system capable of benefiting as many people as possible.

The McKee Virtual Living Room is a collaboration among four organizations: the VA, NTCA—The Rural Broadband Association, the rural telecom provider Peoples Rural Telephone Cooperative and the Jackson County Public Library. The VA has provided telehealth services for several years, but it can't happen if vets don't have access to high-speed internet connections either in their homes or nearby.

"The rest of the country, like us, really admires our veterans," says Keith Gabbard, chief executive officer of PRTC. "Before the project, we saw veterans spending the day in a waiting room at the hospital, and when they live an hour and a half away, it's pretty much an all-day event for a veteran to get health care."

Fast fiber optic internet networks make telemedicine a realistic option for more and more communities, and the cooperative was a leader in establishing the Virtual Living Room at the Jackson County Public Library.

"We've done a lot to promote it, and the library staff and the veterans are really proud of it," Gabbard says. "It's a source of pride for our community, and it continues to grow. The Virtual Living Room is a beautiful area where veterans, even



◀ From left, Veterans Donald Barrett, Jim Bryant, Mike Montgomery, Bobby Lakes and Danny Robinson attend the ribbon cutting for Virtual Living Room in McKee, Kentucky.

if they don't have a doctor's appointment, can go and read a book. It feels like it's their home."

CHANGING LAWS

While faster internet may provide the foundation for telemedicine services, the legal and regulatory framework of each state can play a role in determining the effectiveness of the programs.

In May 2017, Texas Gov. Greg Abbott signed a bill into law that leveled the playing field for telemedicine physicians and doctors who work in traditional office settings. In part, the law eliminated a requirement for a patient to first visit a physician in person before receiving care through telemedicine.

"The bill removed a lot of barriers, and we've seen an increase in queries about telehealth," says Becky Bounds, program manager for the TexLa Telehealth Resource Center in Lubbock, Texas. The federally funded center works to provide resources and technical assistance to telehealth programs in Texas and Louisiana.

Bounds says the internet-based tools offer key services. For example, Lubbock is home to the Timothy J. Harnar Regional Burn Center, which often receives patients injured while working in the industries of West Texas. After treatment and returning home, follow-up visits to Lubbock could require drives of five to six hours. However, a telemedicine-equipped clinic on the campus of Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center in El Paso allows patients to virtually visit with specialists in Lubbock.

"About 12% of the state's population lives in West Texas, and telehealth matters,"

Bounds says. "We are producing cotton, beef, oil and more, and we need health care for the workforce producing those products for the rest of the state and the nation."


THE GOLDEN HOUR

When it comes to treating a stroke, doctors have a saying: Time is brain. It's a reminder that every minute that passes between the event and treatment can lead to irreversible damage. Fortunately, telemedicine technology already gives doctors a fighting chance to begin treating patients before the critical "golden hour" passes.

One of the leaders for this technology in the Midwest is Essentia Health, which established telemedicine capabilities in each of its 17 hospitals, 70 clinics and eight nursing homes throughout Minnesota and North Dakota. With its telestroke program, emergency medical technicians can identify stroke patients on the way to the hospital and even begin treatment.

Essentia Director of Telehealth Services Laurie Hall recalls an ambulance picking up a rural patient nearly 90 minutes from the nearest hospital. In the past, serious brain damage would have been a near certainty for such a patient. But thanks to telestroke technology, EMTs diagnosed a stroke and began treatment about 45 minutes after the stroke occurred.

"The goal is to shorten that window from the time the patient has the event to the time they actually get those

clot-busting medications or the clot is removed," Hall says. "Getting that done so quickly is profound when you think about the injury that could happen from just those few extra minutes. It helps these patients get out of the hospital much quicker and to get on with their normal lives." 





'It's been life-changing'

DUNLAP MAN RECEIVES DIALYSIS AT HOME, THANKS TO BTC'S FIBER INTERNET

Story by LISA SAVAGE | Photography by MARK GILLILAND



Charles and Joyce Layne



Nurse Judy Hopkins, of U.S. Renal Care, checks in on the Laynes.

Charles Layne appeared to be the picture of health — retired but still working some as a diesel mechanic — when he noticed swelling in his hands and feet a few years ago.

The Sequatchie County man's kidneys were failing, and he spent six months going through medical tests and treatments. Experts never determined exactly what caused his kidney failure, but treatment eventually required three trips a week to McMinnville for dialysis.

Now, Layne requires dialysis, but thanks to fiber optic internet through BTC Fiber, the treatment occurs daily while he sleeps at home. "It's been life-changing," Layne says. "It's absolutely been a blessing for me and my wife not to have to make that drive for dialysis."

A FIBER CONNECTION

Layne and his wife, Joyce, have lived on a small farm in the rural Dunlap area for almost 50 years, but their lives changed drastically after his kidneys failed. The travel for dialysis treatment drained them both. Their home had internet, but it was slow. When BTC Fiber began fiber optic expansion, the Laynes' location was in the area for the updated service.

A bluff near the Layne's farm made fiber installation there difficult. "They wanted to cross my property, and they asked me if that'd be OK," Layne says. "They came across the field right by our house." When BTC technicians learned about Layne's health issue and that there might be an option for him to do complete dialysis treatment from home, they started looking for ways to make it work.

It all started with Layne providing entry to the BTC crew. "This all came about because Mr. Layne gave us access to cross his property," says BTC Fiber Engineering Manager Matt Boynton. "He was excited to be getting fiber, but even then, he didn't realize how life-changing this could be, and neither did we."

FASTER, MORE RELIABLE INTERNET

At the time, at-home patients of U.S. Renal Care in McMinnville who did daily peritoneal dialysis could use the system's cleansing cyclers at home. However, they still had to take the 18-pound device and all the connections to the McMinnville facility periodically for its data to go into the medical facility's records.

The data transfer required an internet connection for the machine at U.S. Renal Care, says Judy Hopkins, the renal care facility's registered nurse over home therapy. U.S. Renal Care provides home therapy dialysis treatment and services the surrounding counties, including Sequatchie. The company also has a location in Manchester.

The process could utilize home internet if the connection speed was fast enough, which the Laynes' old internet was not. Without a signal strong enough at the couple's home, the transmission of the information from the home to the clinic wasn't possible, requiring them to bring the cycler in.

Once the Laynes gained fiber access and its higher internet speeds, Russ Camp, manager of information technology at BTC, coordinated with the renal center to come up with a solution to make the cycler machine work. The machine connects directly to the fiber network, bypassing the home's Wi-Fi, and providing an even stronger connection.

Layne became the renal care facility's first patient to successfully connect through the fast and reliable fiber. "The phone company was instrumental in making this happen,

and they did a great job," Layne says. "They said they thought we could make this work, and it's worked wonderfully. I was a little like a guinea pig, but maybe now, somebody else can benefit from this, too."

HOW IT WORKS

With help from his wife, Layne connects to the cycler each night, and the machine pumps a solution through the dialysis system for eight to nine hours as he sleeps. The machine controls the treatment time, temperature, fluid removal and pressure. The report from each night's treatment transmits to the dialysis center for evaluation, and health care providers can monitor the treatments.

"It gives us the ability not only to monitor the treatment, but make adjustments as needed," Hopkins says. "We can see if something goes wrong, see if the machine isn't connected correctly, if they skip a treatment, and we can tailor the whole treatment to meet their specific needs."

Not only can the Laynes send the information to the dialysis center, but the center can also make changes through the connection. Now, Layne goes in for an appointment about once a month and no longer has to take the cycler. Before he was able to undergo the at-home peritoneal dialysis, when Layne and his wife traveled to McMinnville three times a week, the treatment and travel were exhausting. "It took so much of my energy away," Layne says.

Now, it's a different story. "I feel so much better every day, and I'm back to doing some of the things I love," he says. "It's been a blessing, and I'm healthy enough to be on a transplant list. Now, we're just praying for a kidney." 📞



Judy Hopkins, a registered nurse with U.S. Renal Care, left, and Joyce and Charles Layne.



Charles Layne loves time with his horses, Duke, left, and Cash.

Ooey gooey chewy — Pizza

Warm up a cold day with a perfect slice



Chris Stone and Andrea Clark make the Lookout Mountain Pizza Company a dining destination.

Pizza is one of those foods where when a craving hits, nothing else will do. It's been an American favorite for decades. And now, people in the Rising Fawn area of Lookout Mountain, Georgia, are satisfying those cravings at Lookout Mountain Pizza Company.

A pilot for American Airlines for 32-plus years, Chris Stone jettisoned himself into a new career as a pizza maker. And it's not just any pizza. It's the artisan pizza that brings people from as far away as Atlanta and Birmingham, and as close by as Chattanooga and Mentone, Alabama. "It's really become a little destination place," Stone says.

When asked how he jumped from piloting to pizza, Stone says he's always loved to cook. "Before 9/11, I was based in Washington, D.C., but after 9/11, I ended up in New York for about five years, and one night, I ended up taking a pizza class."

He was hooked then, although he waited to turn it into a career. "It took me about 10 years to figure out exactly what I wanted to do with it," he says. Stone continues to fly European routes weekly Monday through Wednesday. On Thursdays, he's home to open his pizzeria with the help of a well-trained staff. They know how to make the pizza dough from scratch and heat up the wood-fired pizza oven to

its optimum heat: 750 F at its base and 1,000 degrees at its dome. The oven bakes pizza to perfection in under two minutes.

The class he took in New York, under renowned bread baker Jim Lahey, owner of Sullivan Street Bakery, taught the art of making Roman-style pizza crusts. On his many trips to Europe — Italy is on his route — he learned about Neapolitan pizza and began working with the dough at home. "I ended up building a pizza oven in my kitchen at home," he says.

In 2016, he found a location for his pizzeria, an old building that had housed an art shop, church and mechanic's shed at different times through the years. After spiffing the place up with some paint, a new roof and other renovations, he opened Lookout Mountain Pizza Company in July 2017, and it quickly became the place for pizzas that feature quality ingredients like wheat flour from Naples, Italy, along with canned tomatoes from a town near Italy's Mount Vesuvius and Wisconsin cheese. "It's not the cheapest pizza to make, but you need to use good ingredients to make a good pizza," Stone says.

The dough is a simple mixture of flour, water, salt and a little yeast. The pizza sauce is made from scratch. Onions roast in the wood-burning oven and function as a topping for pizzas named after Italian women. Sophia is the house favorite, with

Here are some helpful hints for home pizza cooks:

- Use a good flour, such as King Arthur. "Some people use bread flours with plain flour and stuff like that, but I've found it really makes no difference. But you'll need to add a little oil to the dough to get it to brown up," Stone says.
- Do not overwork the dough. You want the dough to "pop," and overworking it will make it tough. You want the dough to be airy. Pizza dough is a very dynamic thing. It changes with the humidity and temperature. The texture won't be the same from one day to the next.
- Get your hands on a copy of Lahey's book, "My Pizza: The Easy No-Knead Way to Make Spectacular Pizza at Home," and watch some of his cooking videos on YouTube.

wood-roasted onion tomato sauce, fontina cheese, Italian sausage and Peppadew peppers. The Maria, with pepperoni, onions and portobello mushrooms, is another top seller. All pizzas are 13 inches and have a marvelous crispy, blackened edge to the dough that softens as you reach the center.



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



Artisan Pizza

Though this is not Lookout Mountain Pizza Company's recipe, it's a good one for beginners.


- 3 cups plus 3 tablespoons lukewarm water (100 F or below)
- 1/3 cup olive oil
- 1 tablespoon granulated yeast
- 1 1/2 tablespoons kosher salt
- 7 1/2 cups unbleached all-purpose flour

Combine warm water, olive oil, yeast and salt in a 5-quart bowl, preferably a lidded, but not airtight, plastic container. Measure the flour using a "scoop and sweep" method. Reach into the flour bin with your measuring cup, scoop up a full measure all at once, and sweep it level with a knife. Mix until all of the

flour is incorporated (kneading is not necessary) using a wooden spoon or a food processor with a dough attachment. Cover with a non-airtight lid. Allow to rise at room temperature for 2 hours. Do not punch down. You want to retain as much gas in the dough as possible. A reduction in gas will make your pizzas and flatbreads dense. Refrigerate and use over the next 14 days. Refrigerate at least 3 hours before using.

To make: A half-hour before you're ready to bake, place a pizza stone in the bottom third of the oven and heat it at your oven's highest temperature. Prepare and organize your toppings. Dust a pizza peel or a large cutting board/flat cookie sheet with enough flour or cornmeal to easily transfer the pizza over to the hot stone. Pull up and cut off a

1/2-pound (orange-size) piece of dough. Using a little flour (enough so it won't stick to your fingers), stretch and shape the dough into a ball. Sprinkle your work area with a little flour. Using your hands or a rolling pin, roll out and stretch the dough until it is approximately 1/8-inch thick and 12 inches wide.

Place the finished dough onto the prepared pizza peel. Then, add the toppings of your choice. Carefully slide the pizza onto the hot stone. If it isn't sliding, sprinkle more flour or cornmeal between the pizza and the pizza peel until the pizza moves. Check for doneness after 8-10 minutes — it may take a few minutes longer. Turn the pizza around if one side is browning faster than the other. Allow to cool slightly on a wire rack before serving. 



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