



Mountain Telephone

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2023

# CONNECTION



## Knives out

Crafting the perfect blade

SPRETV APP  
IS HERE

DOLLY PARTON'S  
IMAGINATION LIBRARY





By SHIRLEY BLOOMFIELD, CEO  
NTCA—The Rural Broadband Association

## Committed to service and security

I always love hearing stories from the NTCA members who are bringing fast, reliable internet service to communities throughout rural America. It's exciting to see our providers pave the way for new jobs, better health care, fresh educational opportunities and so much more.

But their commitment to serving you goes beyond simply providing an excellent broadband network — they also want to help you navigate that online world safely.

Much of that work happens behind the scenes on their systems before you ever turn on a computer or search for something on your phone. But that's just the first line of defense in a world where your personal data — and, yes, even your money — are targets.

The experts at the National Cybersecurity Alliance, a nonprofit organization devoted to creating a more secure interconnected world, can help you figure out where to begin.

Multifactor authentication is a valuable way to add an extra layer of security to your online accounts but many people are unaware. Password manager software makes using complex and secure passwords easier, while keeping software updated and being aware of phishing attempts are also wise strategies. 📧



## Add a layer of protection to your online journeys

The nonprofit National Cybersecurity Alliance is focusing its efforts in four specific areas: multifactor authentication, password management, software updates and phishing awareness.

### HERE ARE A FEW OF OUR TIPS FOR YOUR SECURITY:



**Multifactor authentication:** For your online accounts, you likely have a password. But if there's an option for using multifactor authentication, go for it. Once activated on an account, you'll still need a password. But access will also require a one-time code delivered by text message or email.



**Password management:** Rather than trying to remember long, complex passwords, consider using software designed to not only store passwords but also make them easily accessible. There are several options, and most work in a similar fashion. You only need to remember one master password to unlock the rest.



**Software updates:** Both hardware and software manufacturers prioritize protecting you. Often when there's a potential problem discovered, they roll out software updates. So, it's important to be mindful of those changes and install updates regularly.



**Phishing awareness:** Whether it is a fake website or a bogus email that seems reputable, there is a range of phishing strategies designed to capture your personal information, money or both. They can be convincing, too. So, be cautious when receiving unsolicited messages, and verify requests for sensitive information before responding.

To learn more about online safety visit the National Cybersecurity Alliance at [staysafeonline.org](https://staysafeonline.org). 📧

# Capture the season

## Learn to make your photos pop

**W**hether it's Apple or Android, the photo technology in modern smartphones can create stunning images, complete with automatic adjustments for lighting and other effects. You don't have to look hard in the world of social media to see the results.

But give those images a closer look. Are they as good as they can be? While mobile software can clean up many of the more technical trouble spots, a few tried-and-true tips from the world of traditional photography can upgrade your seasonal or holiday photographs from passable to truly memorable.

**SEEK THE LIGHT:** For photography, there's a magical time just before sunset or after sunrise — the golden hour. The warm, soft light adds a natural artistic element, whether you're shooting a landscape or a portrait. So, when possible,

avoid the harsh light of the hours around noon and seek the golden rays instead.

**KNOW THIS RULE AND WHEN TO BREAK IT:** The idea of the rule of thirds is an artistic standard. An image is framed using two horizontal and two vertical lines to create nine equal parts. One strategy is to place the subject of the photo at one of the intersections to create a balanced composition. But you can also use the idea to know when to break the rule, shift the frame and take a unique photo.

**GET THE CLOSE-UP:** Don't be shy. Most phone cameras have a zoom feature. But you've got a better choice. Physically get closer to your subject, whether it's a person, flower or delicious dinner dish. Proximity not only makes it easier to frame the image but it also adds a sense of intimacy.

**STEADY AS IT GOES:** The latest phone cameras do well even when light is scarce. But there are limits, and sometimes when you're shooting in a dim room or when the sun is fading the resulting image can turn out blurry. A small tripod — there are plenty of phone-sized options — can help keep your photos sharp.

**GIVE 'EM A BOOST:** There's nothing wrong with a little editing, and most phones have great software built in. There are options for automatic adjustments, but don't be shy about exploring the possibilities. A little creative cropping or adjustments to settings like brightness can make a difference. You can even consider converting a photo to black-and-white for a classic look. 📱



Photos by JenKoltaman and MayatiniStudio/Adobe Stock



# As real as it gets

As our community celebrates, MRTC is here for you

We're entering a special time of the year, when the air becomes crisp and there are gatherings with co-workers, friends, family and the community. Yes, there's even time for reflection, moments to consider the blessings from the last year.



**SHAYNE ISON**  
General Manager

It's a busy few months. The hustle and bustle of the holidays all feels so real, and that's welcome. Because we live in a world where reality can, at times, become fuzzy. I'm sure many of you have heard about how artificial intelligence has found a voice, responding to questions or prompts with text responses that seem human. Or close to it.

That's just the beginning, too. There are tools that allow you to describe an image you wish to see and then AI creates it for you — including notoriously adding the occasional hand with six fingers to a person's photo.

You see, AI isn't perfect. Don't misunderstand me, it's amazing technology that's correct a shocking amount of the time. But it's not always right.

The buzz around AI might even make technology seem daunting, an example of online tools whose inner workings only a scientist can understand. Here's what I hope you remember — technology changes, and we adapt. With a little care, AI will find its place. More importantly, it will never replace people interacting with one another.

During this season of celebration, keep that in mind as you share your time and experiences. Whether you're shopping, working, searching for a holiday recipe or any of the thousands of other reasons we spend time online, the internet provides invaluable resources. But it doesn't replace the people and businesses of our community.

I imagine your email inboxes have a fair number of messages touting sales, promising savings and can't-miss deals. Some are legitimate and useful. Many are not. Even text messages can be filled with, well, junk. At times, digital communications can start to feel similar to the current AI creations — just a little off.

As your internet provider, everyone at MRTC considers it a privilege to help you navigate many of these waters, and the pages of this magazine often include great tips for both staying safe online and maximizing your digital experience.

More importantly, there's no doubt we are real, created for the sole purpose of supporting these communities. We are not a national company headquartered hundreds, or even thousands, of miles away. Has anyone not been lost in a telephone or email maze trying to find the person at one of those companies who can solve a problem?

At MRTC, that's not how we operate. Our office is local, and we really do welcome you to stop by any time. We enjoy doing business face-to-face, and you'll be greeted by people whose children go to school here, whose families shop locally and who share the same day-to-day joys of living in this place we call home.

So, let's celebrate not only this season but also our wonderful people and businesses. There's no doubting the very real power of neighbors coming together. And we're proud to serve you, in the most authentic way possible. 📞



## CONNECTION

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2023

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### Mountain Telephone

Mountain Rural Telephone Cooperative, Inc., is a member-owned cooperative dedicated to providing communications technology to the people of Elliott, Menifee, Morgan, Wolfe and a section of Bath counties. The company covers 1,048 square miles and supplies service to nearly 11,500 members.

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UTILITY RESOURCES

On the Cover:



Harv Holbrook  
handcrafts knives  
from his shop in  
Sandy Hook.  
See story Page 8.

Photo by William LeMaster



*Merry*  
**CHRISTMAS**

from MRTC!

Make your holiday merry and bright with these great specials.

Add the SpreeTV by MRTC app, any of our broadband packages or a security package, and get **ONE month free PLUS a special gift!**

Call us at 606-743-3121 to find out more.

## ONLINE SECURITY



**No phishing allowed!**

Never give your personal information over email — even if it seems to be from a company you trust!



**Not so fast ...**

Never answer unsolicited texts or click on links in them. That text claiming to be from your bank or another big company just might be a scammer looking to steal your personal information.



**Stop thieves in their tracks**

Always protect your smartphone with a secure passcode or fingerprint login.



**A scammer liked your survey!**

Protect your personal information. If it's the answer to an account security question, it doesn't belong in a Facebook post.



**If you can remember it, they can hack it**

Use a secure password manager to generate and save random, unique passwords for every account you have online.

*Holiday closure reminders*



From all of us at MRTC, we wish you and your family the happiest Thanksgiving, the merriest Christmas and the most prosperous New Year!

In observance of these holidays, we will be closed on the following days:

- **Veterans Day** — Friday, Nov. 10
- **Thanksgiving** — Thursday, Nov. 23 and Friday, Nov. 24
- **Christmas** — Monday, Dec. 25
- **New Year's Day** — Monday, Jan. 1



# Seeking a dose of CHRISTMAS CHEER?

## These towns embrace the holiday spirit

Story by ANNE BRALY

The annual tree-lighting is a favorite event during Christmas celebrations in Childersburg, Alabama.



Southerners celebrate Christmas in a big way. Whether it's light displays so outrageous they'd impress the Griswolds or picture-perfect trimmed trees, no time or expense is spared to make sure the holidays are truly magical.

Every town celebrates the holidays a bit differently, but one thing they all have in common is an undeniable spirit of the season. Here are several Southern towns that roll out the red carpet during the holiday season.

### CHILDERSBURG, ALABAMA

"There's something special about small towns in Alabama, like Childersburg, during the holiday season," says Brooklyn Lundy, public relations manager for the Alabama Tourism Department.

During the holidays, Childersburg takes advantage of its natural features, primarily the limestone caves found around this central Alabama town in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains, including Majestic Caverns. It becomes a magical fantasyland during the holidays as it's transformed into Adventus, an event filled with Christmas shows, performances and holiday characters around every corner. It's a fun event for the entire family that happens for four evenings only — Dec. 9, 10, 16 and 17 from 5-9 p.m. Tickets can be purchased at [majesticcaverns.com](http://majesticcaverns.com).

There's more to Christmas in Childersburg, though. The annual tree lighting, scheduled for Nov. 28 at 6 p.m. at the Butler-Harris Rainwater Museum, is a town favorite with hot chocolate and carriage rides offered to all those who attend. And the Christmas parade brings St. Nick to downtown on Dec. 21 starting at 6 p.m.

### FRANKLIN, TENNESSEE

Franklin turns Christmas into a monthlong celebration. "Every weekend is a special event or festival in its own right in Franklin," says Matthew Maxey, director of public relations for the city of Franklin.

One of the most popular events, the two-day Dickens of a Christmas festival — set for Dec. 9-10 — draws at least 100,000 people to town each year.

Santa greets the crowds at the Christmas parade in downtown Franklin, Tennessee.



Photo courtesy of the Alabama Tourism Department

Photo courtesy of Visit Franklin





Downtown Helen, Georgia, lights up for the holidays.

Photo courtesy of Helen CVB



The good citizens of Mercer County sing carols on the streets of Harrodsburg, Kentucky.

Photo courtesy of Harrodsburg-Mercer County

“Franklin’s charm, relaxed pace and Hallmark-movie feel throughout the historic downtown are a significant draw for visitors,” he says. “From window shopping the holiday displays along Main Street to catching holiday movies at our 1930s-era Franklin Theatre, visitors are able to step back in a simpler, classic holiday time.”

On Dec. 1 there will be a tree lighting, and the city will shine with local celebrity talent — this year hosted by popular Christian artist Matthew West — followed by the Christmas parade down the town’s historic Main Street on Dec. 2. For more ideas to fill your holiday weekends, log onto [visitfranklin.com](http://visitfranklin.com).

## HELEN, GEORGIA

The population of this small mountain town in north Georgia swells from 256 to more than 2,500 during the holiday season as visitors clamor to enjoy an Alpine Christmas.

The Lighting of the Village will be held on Nov. 24 at 6 p.m., followed by the 16th annual Christkindlmarkt in downtown Helen on Nov. 25-26 and Dec. 2-3. The traditional German event features gifts, decorations and assorted foods, both sweet and savory. The Mistletoe Market is another favorite event and ideal for checking things off your Christmas list. It takes place Dec. 2-3 at the Helen Arts & Heritage Center.

And what would Christmas in Helen be

like without its annual Christmas parade? That takes place on Dec. 9. For a list of all Christmas happenings in Helen, go to [whitecountychamber.org](http://whitecountychamber.org).

“Helen has quickly become one of the top Christmas towns in the United States,” says Jerry Brown, executive director of the Alpine Helen/White County Convention and Visitors Bureau. “During the holiday season, the town turns its amazing village into a Christmas wonderland with a sprinkle of Bavarian charm that heightens the Christmas spirit.”

## HARRODSBURG, KENTUCKY

“Santa’s elves are busy this year in Kentucky’s oldest town, trying to make Harrodsburg feel as much like a Hallmark movie as possible,” says Daarik Gray, executive director of Harrodsburg-Mercer County Tourist Commission. “One of the special things about being in a small town is that it truly does feel like you’re stepping into a Christmas movie, as everyone’s spirits seem to be a little higher, and the overall general mood of the community is jolly.”

Stores come alive with their windows decorated for the season. This year, the season kicks off on Dec. 1 with Christmas on Main, an event with food trucks, caroling, live music and more, including the Christmas parade at Anderson-Dean Community Park. The annual tree lighting happens on Dec. 2.

For more on Harrodsburg’s holiday festivities, visit [mercercountyky.com](http://mercercountyky.com).

## GREER, SOUTH CAROLINA

Downtown Greer, best known as Greer Station, transforms itself into a Christmas fantasyland come the holiday season. With brick-paved streets and lampposts wrapped in garland and twinkling lights, as well as the two main roads leading into town festooned with candy canes, Christmas trees and shooting star lights, the city looks like a movie set, says Lindsey Shaffer, tourism specialist for the city of Greer.

The holiday season kicks off with Christmas in Greer, a one-weekend celebration that begins with arts, crafts, roaming carolers, s’mores and more before Santa comes to town and reads “T’was the Night Before Christmas.” Then the countdown to the lighting of the tree begins. It all happens at Greer City Park on Dec. 1.

The City of Greer will host Breakfast with Santa on Saturday, Dec. 2, and the Greer Farmers Market will be open Dec. 2-3 with local artisans so you can check off some items on your gift list.

Christmas in Greer weekend comes to a close with its annual Christmas parade on Sunday, Dec. 3.

For a complete rundown of all holiday festivities, go to [discovergreer.com](http://discovergreer.com). 📱



# A CUT ABOVE

## Sandy Hook native crafts knives into art

Story by JEN CALHOUN

Photography by WILLIAM LEMASTER



Harv's knives are engraved with an autograph, and he is happy to sharpen them when the blades get dull.

Photo contributed by Harv Holbrook



Harv Holbrook drills holes to prepare the knife for its handle.

Harv Holbrook was flipping through a local magazine one day when he stopped short on an article about the Greenup-based knifemaker J.D. Clay. The story intrigued Harv, especially since he'd recently run across an old book about knifemakers.

He was 26 or 27 at the time and serving as a trooper with the Kentucky State Police in a career that would span a couple more decades. The Sandy Hook native always held a passing interest in knives — collecting the odd pocketknife here and there just like his mother had done before him.

Seeing the people who actually made them changed everything, however. "Shortly after that, I received one of J.D. Clay's knives as a gift," he says. "I was just fascinated. I'd sit and look at it, and I'd think, 'How does he do this?'"

### LEARNING THE CRAFT

That curiosity led Harv to reach out to J.D., who was happy to help his young protegee get started. "He taught me the basics and what kind of machines and tools to buy," Harv says. "I bought my first belt grinder and got started in the garage. I used a cheap drill press and eventually a cheap band saw. I'd grind a few blades out and finish them.





Two of Harv's dogs, Isabella, left, and Roosevelt, have taken up residence on the shelf of his workbench.

## Need a good knife?

Harv Holbrook's knives are custom made for each client. He primarily makes small- to medium-sized hunting or utility knives and everyday carry knives, known as EDCs. To see his work or get in touch with him, visit his Instagram page, @hholbrookknives, or visit his Facebook page, H.L. Holbrook. His work is also featured in the July 2021 issue of Knife Magazine. You can find the article at [knifemagazine.com](http://knifemagazine.com).

Then, I'd show them to J.D. It just went from there."

Not long after that, however, Harv took a promotional exam and moved up in the ranks of the KSP and away from his home. It wasn't until he was transferred back home in 1994 that he could focus again on his favorite pastime. "We built a house here in Sandy Hook, and I built a little shop on the farm where I was raised," he says.

### THE PROCESS

Most of the knives Harv makes are everyday carry knives, often called EDCs. They range from small- to medium-sized hunting knives and utility knives. All are fixed blades.

To make them, he starts with some flat stock steel, a bar of steel that hasn't been heat treated. Then he creates a template for the knife by drawing it out on paper, and he cuts and shapes the steel to match the pattern on the paper.

"A lot of people use computers now to design their knives," he says. "I still do it the old-fashioned way — a pencil and an eraser and maybe some French curves to come up with my patterns."

Once he gets the blade nearly to the right size, he heat-treats it for a few days. "Ever since the TV show 'Forged

in Fire,' came out, the first thing people think is that I forge these knives," he says with a laugh. "But I don't really forge anything. That's too much like work." He's quick to point out, however, that he occasionally uses Damascus, a steel made with a wavy surface pattern that is forged. He buys that from commercial Damascus steelmakers.

Another part of the job is making the handles. Those can be made of something as ornate and precious as bone from a woolly mammoth dug up in Siberia to synthetic materials.

After the work is complete, Harv encases the knife in a hand-stitched leather sheath. "Half of the people who buy my knives are hardcore users," he says. "We've got a lot of white-tail deer hunters around, and these work pretty well for that. But there's probably a good percentage who are collectors, too. I'd say it's evenly split."

### CUTTING EDGE

After retiring from the state police in 2002, Harv worked his previous job as a pipefitter and welder for five years before serving on Kentucky's roadside assistance program, the SAFE Patrol. Now, he makes knives and sells them through his social media pages powered

by MRTC's high-speed fiber internet service.

The orders keep coming in, and he's pretty well-known in the knife-making community for his skills. If a blade gets dull over time, Harv is happy to freshen up the edge.

"Everything I sell is word of mouth and through Instagram mostly," he says. "I also have a Facebook page. I've got enough orders for the next few years, to be honest. People commission me, and I work down the list and contact them when I'm ready. Sometimes they change their mind about it, but they usually don't. Then I'll talk to them and figure out what they want, and I'll do it." 🗨️



# Passion project

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library program  
inspires a love of learning



Story by JEN CALHOUN

**G**etting a book in the mail always made Andrea Robertson's children hop with joy. "Kids hardly ever get mail, so they just loved it," says the Lafayette, Tennessee-based educator and mother of three. "I think that excitement most definitely helped fuel their interest in reading and learning."

Andrea's children received the monthly books through Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, a program that sends free books to children from birth to 5 years old no matter the family's income.

Although her children have aged out of the program, Andrea believes it has had a positive impact on their futures. "Having books from an early age helps children build content knowledge that they might not get otherwise," she says. "It helps give them a foundation that's so important when they get to school."

## FOR THE LOVE OF BOOKS

Today, more than 2 million children are enrolled in Dolly Parton's Imagination Library.

The programs, which are established and maintained locally, are available in all 50 states, including 15 statewide programs — with more starting up every year.

The Macon County Education Foundation in East Tennessee was one of the earliest adopters of the program, says Linda McCrary, one of the founders of the foundation and its president at the time. "Our board was approached by a member of the Tennessee Library Association Board to be a champion for this new program that the library board was sponsoring," says Linda, a former educator and the program's local coordinator.

The foundation's board agreed readily, she says. Soon after in 2004, then-Gov. Phil Bredesen and the Dollywood Foundation partnered to create the Tennessee Governor's Books from Birth Foundation. The governor's foundation paid 50% of the program's costs while local organizations funded the rest in their communities. Today, the Macon County Education Foundation also receives help paying for the program from the county commission and school board.



## Set it up!

If your city or county does not offer an Imagination Library program, there are ways to set one up. Visit [imaginationlibrary.com](https://www.imaginationlibrary.com) to learn out more or to find a program in your area.



## POSITIVE PARTNERSHIPS FOR A BETTER COMMUNITY

These partnerships are good for the community at large, says Nora Briggs, executive director of the Dollywood Foundation, which launched the first program nearly 30 years ago. “Simply getting books into the home changes the trajectory of children, families and communities,” she says. “Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library is an accomplished, simple and effective way to make communities better places to live by supporting and nurturing a love of books, shared family time and early learning.”

While the goal is to inspire a lifetime love of reading to give children opportunities to succeed, research shows an even greater impact. The program has led to significantly stronger reading skills and a better understanding of letter and word concepts when children start school. In addition, the establishment of reading routines has been found to bring about increased stability, emotional well-being and an improved family atmosphere, according to summaries of research distributed by The Imagination Library.

## ON A MISSION

Dolly Parton started the book-gifting program in Sevier County, Tennessee, in 1995, as a tribute to her father, Robert Lee Parton Sr., who worked as a sharecropper and went on to farm his own acreage. Despite his lack of education, he had a knack for turning a profit. “He was the smartest man I have ever known, but I know in my heart his inability to read probably kept him from fulfilling all of his dreams,” Dolly says.

Now, Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library has gifted nearly 200 million books to children in the U.S., Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia and the Republic of Ireland. More than 24 million books were gifted in 2022 — a nearly 12% increase over 2021.

And while the program started small, Dolly’s ambitions for it grew as other organizations and volunteer groups implemented the Imagination Library

concept in their own communities. “Inspiring kids to love to read became my mission,” she says.

## WORKING ON A DREAM

Communities that invest in children from a young age show a commitment to bettering their cities and towns, says Linda, who was an educator for 37 years and founder of the Macon County Education Foundation.

To make sure education ranked high in children’s minds, they need a strong foundation from birth. Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library fit the bill. “Placing books in the hands of children is the basis of educating children,” Linda says. “It’s the basis for preparing them for school.”

The importance of the work done by volunteers, government officials and local businesses isn’t lost on Dolly. “The seeds of dreams are often found in books, and the seeds you help plant in your community can grow across the world,” Dolly says. 📖



Photos contributed by Dolly Parton's Imagination Library

## Dolly's daddy



Robert Lee Parton, Dolly Parton's late father, never learned to read or write — not because he didn't want to, but because he needed to work to help his family survive. His parents raised 15 children in the mountains of East Tennessee, where food was scarce and the one-room schoolhouse was more than a mile away, Dolly wrote in her 2020 memoir, “Songteller: My Life in Lyrics.”

As an adult raising 12 kids of his own, Robert planted tobacco in the rugged and rocky hills of East Tennessee but often took on construction jobs to make ends meet. Money was always tight. When Dolly was born, he paid the doctor with a sack of cornmeal instead of cash.

“He was such a smart person. I always thought that if Daddy had an education, there's no telling what he could have been,” Dolly wrote. “Because he knew how to barter, he knew how to bargain. He knew how to make everything work, and he knew how to count money. He knew exactly what everything was worth, how much he was going to make from that tobacco crop, what he could trade and how he could make it all work.”

While he was embarrassed about his lack of literacy skills for most of his life, Robert took pride in Dolly's efforts with the Imagination Library. “I got him involved helping me with [the Imagination Library], and he felt so great about that,” she wrote. “I told him, ‘Daddy, there are probably millions of people in this world who don't know how to read and write, who didn't get the opportunity. Don't be ashamed of that. Let's do something special.’”



# SpreeTV

MRTC's  
new way to  
watch TV

Story by JEN CALHOUN

**W**ant to drop the dusty set-top box and watch your shows on your own terms? Mountain Telephone's got you covered.

On Sept. 1, MRTC launched SpreeTV, an app-based television service that allows its customers to watch all their favorite networks and local TV stations without the hassle of traditional set-top boxes. The SpreeTV app can be loaded onto television sets, computers, phones and tablets in a few easy steps, letting viewers stream live TV from anywhere they have an internet connection.

Ricky Pennington, MRTC's special equipment and business solutions supervisor, says MRTC added the app because it's an easy, portable way to watch traditional cable TV networks.

"We kept looking for options for our customers, because so many services are app-based now," Pennington says. "Many people have already been using streaming apps, like Netflix and Hulu, to watch television shows and movies. We wanted a product that would be similar for all the TV packages we offer." Customers who already have MRTC's television services that use a set-top box

can keep it or switch to the SpreeTV app. But any new television subscribers will use the app.

## BENEFITS AND SAVINGS

SpreeTV is tiered by package, starting with the basic service. Packages cost the same as MRTC's traditional set-top box service. "SpreeTV has all the channels and all the local TV networks that our traditional cable services offer," Pennington says. "But there are benefits that SpreeTV offers that our regular TV service doesn't."

One benefit is savings. With SpreeTV, customers can add extra devices without paying for additional set-top boxes like they do with traditional cable TV. "It also allows for up to three concurrent streams at one time," Pennington says. "So, you can have it on different devices and watch at the same time."

Since the SpreeTV app includes multiple networks, live TV and local channels, many customers won't need other streaming services. "All these apps, like Netflix, keep increasing their prices,"

Pennington says. "By the time you purchase three to five streaming services, you're paying as much — or more — as what you'd pay for SpreeTV."

SpreeTV also offers a variety of features that allow users to record their favorite programs, watch live or use On Demand from anywhere. "I'm really impressed with how smoothly it works and how intuitive it is," Pennington says. "It's easy to use, and it doesn't take long to figure out." 📺





# MRTC's new way to watch TV

## SpreeTV from Mountain Telephone

Mountain Telephone customers can reap big benefits by subscribing to SpreeTV, MRTC's streaming platform for live TV, networks and more.

### NO SET-TOP BOX REQUIRED

SpreeTV is an app, so customers don't pay for extra set-top boxes if they have multiple TVs. Also, you can watch TV from your Spree app on your laptop, mobile phone or tablet.

### DROP THE OTHER APPS

Since SpreeTV includes all your favorite network television channels and local TV stations, you can cut out some of your other streaming apps and save money.

### THREE CONCURRENT STREAMS AT ONCE

Each SpreeTV account allows three devices to stream at the same time.

### Intuitive features:

- Video playback
- Live TV access
- Recording shows and movies
- Scrolling show guide
- Video-on-demand options
- Local TV access



## Setting up SpreeTV

**MRTC customers interested in finding out more about SpreeTV should call customer service at 606-743-3121 to get started.**

Setup is simple and hassle-free, but it requires an internet connection. To use the app on any of your devices, it needs to be downloaded from an app store. For customers without a smart TV, a good way to access the app is by purchasing a streaming device like Roku, Amazon Fire TV Stick or Apple TV. Once the app is downloaded, users will be directed through the setup.

**SpreeTV**  
by MRTC



# A tasty tradition

Whether in your PJs or your Sunday best, holiday brunch hits the sweet spot

**A** holiday brunch has two musts: The time served — just a bit later than the usual morning rush hour. Then, there's the menu with dishes that put a little flair into the typical breakfast fare.

A brunch can be quiet and cozy or a grand seated affair that shows off all your culinary talents and best china. You can make it whatever you want it to be. After all, there's a special connection between brunch and the holidays — a wonderful combination that satisfies the stomach and the soul. Whether you're hosting or joining friends for brunch, the magic of this midmorning meal will weave its spell.



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

Photography by **Mark Gilliland**  
Food Styling by **Rhonda Gilliland**

## STUFFED FRENCH TOAST

- 8 ounces cream cheese, softened
- 1 tablespoon plus 1/2 teaspoon vanilla, divided
- 1/2 cup chopped pecans or walnuts
- 1 (16-ounce) loaf French bread
- 4 eggs
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 1/2 teaspoon nutmeg
- Butter for frying
- 1 (12-ounce) jar apricot preserves
- 1/2 cup orange juice

Beat together cream cheese and 1 tablespoon vanilla until fluffy. Stir in nuts. Cut bread into thick, 1 1/2-inch slices. You should get 10-12 slices per loaf. Cut a pocket in the top of each slice and fill with 1 1/2 teaspoons of cream cheese mixture.

Beat together eggs, heavy cream, 1/2 teaspoon vanilla and nutmeg. Dip stuffed slices into egg mixture.

Melt butter in frying pan and fry slices until golden brown on both sides.

Heat together preserves and orange juice and serve alongside the hot toast. Makes 5-6 servings.





## EGG BRUNCH

- 4 slices bacon, diced
- 2 packages (4 1/2 ounces each) sliced dried beef, cut into thin strips
- 2 small cans sliced mushrooms, drained
- 1/2 cup butter, divided
- 1/2 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/8 teaspoon pepper
- 4 cups whole milk
- 16 large eggs
- 1 cup evaporated milk
- 1/4 teaspoon salt

In a large skillet, cook bacon until almost done, then add dried beef, mushrooms and 1/4 cup butter. While hot, add flour, then stir in milk. Simmer sauce, stirring constantly, until thick and smooth.



In a large bowl, whisk eggs, evaporated milk and salt. In another large skillet, heat remaining butter until melted. Add egg mixture. Cook and stir over medium heat until eggs are completely set, but not dry.

Add all ingredients to a casserole dish and bake, covered, at 275 F for 1 hour.

**Note:** May be made a day ahead and refrigerated, covered, then baked as directed. Very good served with baked curried fruit.

## MAMA'S CINNAMON ROLLS

Easy and delicious, these cinnamon rolls make a mouthwatering addition to your holiday table and are perfect for brunch or any meal.

- 5 tablespoons butter
- 3/4 cup brown sugar
- 1/4 cup water
- 1/2 cup chopped pecans
- 2 (8-ounce) cans crescent rolls
- 3 tablespoons butter, softened
- 1/4 cup granulated sugar
- 2 teaspoons cinnamon

Heat oven to 375 F. In a 9-by-13-inch baking pan, melt the 5 tablespoons of butter. Stir in brown sugar, water and pecans.

Separate each can of crescent roll dough into four rectangles; seal perforations. Spread the rectangles with the 3 tablespoons of softened butter. Combine granulated sugar and cinnamon; sprinkle over butter dough rectangles. Roll up each rectangle from the short side. Cut each roll in four slices and place in prepared pan over butter-pecan mixture cut side down.

Bake for 20-25 minutes. Invert immediately onto rectangular serving platter or sheet of aluminum foil. Spoon any remaining sauce on top of rolls. Makes 32 small cinnamon rolls.



## CURRIED FRUIT

Rich, buttery, sweet and savory, this baked fruit dish is a delicious change of pace as a side dish for brunch.

Maraschino cherries in green and red add a holiday touch.

- 1 can peach halves (see tip)
- 1 can apricot halves
- 1 can pear halves
- 1 can pineapple chunks
- 10-12 maraschino cherries (red or green or a combination of both)
- 1/2 cup pecan halves
- 1/3 cup butter
- 3/4 cup brown sugar
- 2 teaspoons curry powder

Drain fruits and arrange in baking dish. Add nuts. Melt butter and stir in brown sugar and curry powder. Bake, uncovered, at 325 F for 1 hour, basting every so often with drippings in dish. Makes 8-10 servings.

**Tip:** Whole fruit makes a lovely presentation, but cutting the fruit into bite-sized pieces makes it easier to serve and eat. 🍷





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