

The logo for PRTC, featuring the letters 'PRTC' in a blue, sans-serif font with a green swoosh above it.

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2021

CONNECTION

A NEW DIRECTION

Dr. Willie L. Todd, Jr.
leads at Denmark
Tech



IN HIS NAME-COLLETON

Putting the focus on
homelessness

FILLING A NEED

Davis-Bailey Park named
for area leaders



By SHIRLEY BLOOMFIELD, CEO
NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association

Committed to a fiber future

For several years, NTCA has encouraged policymakers to think with a hand in the present but an eye toward the future. But in Washington, D.C. — where every technology and every interest has lobbyists and political champions — that mission is easier said than done.

Many of the nation's internet providers believe in a fiber-or-bust approach. As long as it's physically possible, which is not always the case in rural areas, fiber should be the goal. As lawmakers weigh infrastructure investments, why should internet providers settle for less?

Many NTCA members are working diligently to extend fiber optic networks, despite challenges like slow supply chains limiting access to the materials needed to build these robust networks. They are making strides.

In our most recent broadband survey, 70% of NTCA members' customers enjoyed fiber to the premises. It's a technology that makes it possible for internet providers such as yours to easily scale their services to meet demand.

Fiber infrastructure is also a key component of building a better future that includes higher-performance services, real-time applications, smart communities, precision agriculture, 5G superiority and better access to health care and education. To achieve our goals as a nation, we need a strong foundation of fiber connectivity.

Connecting rural communities to the rest of the nation and to the resources they need to excel matters. Broadband matters, because its speed and capacity are the new baselines for working, learning and growing the economy — from wherever we might be. Investment in fiber optic internet ensures rural America will not be relegated to second-class status. It's more than a worthy investment in infrastructure development, it's an investment in our nation's future. 

SOS

FBI program helps keep kids safe online

The holidays often bring new gadgets and devices, as well as some free time for kids enjoying a break from school. This time of year is a good opportunity to remind younger technology users of the risks of being online and to share strategies to keep themselves safe.

The FBI offers tools to help build a digital defense to protect kids online. These tools include the agency's free computer literacy program, Safe Online Surfing, or SOS. Designed for children in grades three through eight, it's available to teachers, administrators and parents, who can introduce children to the concepts one-on-one.

The program engages children through a series of online games that mix fun with education on a variety of topics, including online etiquette, managing cyberbullying, the importance of strong passwords and double authentication, and more. Visit sos.fbi.gov to access the guide. 

The FBI offers a few additional tips for parents:

- Discuss with your children what kind of information, photos and videos are appropriate to post online — and what's not.
- Emphasize that kids should limit the information they post on social media platforms, such as their full name, date of birth and school information.
- Teach that, while free software and apps seem enticing, using them may open phones and computers up to malware or worse.



Tech the halls

GIVE GREAT GADGETS

Great tech gifts don't have to be expensive. There are plenty of options under \$50 that will make the holidays merry. We've got some suggestions, whether you're shopping for a more budget-friendly gift for that gadget-crazy person on your list or a fun stocking stuffer that won't break the bank.

\$29.99

MSRP at
us.tomy.com



KIIPIX PORTABLE PHOTO PRINTER

This one's a neat gadget that reproduces images from your smartphone without the need for Wi-Fi or even batteries. You just place your phone on top of the KiiPix, and it takes a picture of your screen and prints a photo in minutes. Reviews point out that the device can be finicky with ambient light, and the quality will be closer to those instant Polaroid pictures from the '70s than a professionally printed photo, but the retro look is part of the fun. Available in pink, blue and black.

8BITDO SN30 PRO+

Any gamer would appreciate the SN30 Pro+, a customizable controller compatible with a variety of systems. Featuring rumble vibration, motion controls and 20 hours of play off a four-hour charge, the controller can also be used wired through USB or wirelessly via Bluetooth. Compatible systems include Windows, macOS, Android, Steam, Nintendo Switch and Raspberry Pi. Free software allows you to customize buttons, adjust stick and trigger sensitivity, and create macros with any button combination. The controller is available in black and in color combinations reminiscent of the classic Nintendo Entertainment System and the Super Nintendo.

\$49.99
amazon.com



POWERUP 2.0 PAPER AIRPLANE CONVERSION KIT

Even if your design skills are more Wright brothers than Boeing, you can still transform a regular paper airplane into a dream flying machine, while kids can learn about basic principles of physics and working with simple electronics. The POWERUP 2.0 kit includes two sheets of high-quality paper to get you started, a charger, a carbon fiber propeller shaft and an ultratough rear propeller — for those inevitable crash landings. The POWERUP 4.0 model, which is \$69.99, comes with stabilization technology and can be controlled with your smartphone. Either way, get ready to take to the skies!

\$69.99

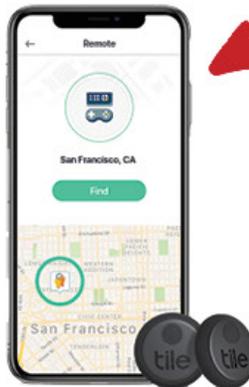
poweruptoys.com



TILE

The best Bluetooth finder on the market, the Tile line of products can be attached to your keys, backpack, purse or TV remote — anything that can be lost or misplaced. A free app for iOS or Android can then be used to find the missing Tile within 150 to 400 feet — depending on the Tile size — or you can ask Siri, Google Assistant or Alexa for help. When outside of Bluetooth range, the app will show the Tile's most recent location, which is updated whenever another Tile user comes within range of your device. You can also subscribe to Premium service, which includes free battery replacement and smart alerts that warn you when you've left something behind, or Premium Protect, which reimburses you up to \$1,000 if Tile can't find your things.

\$24.99
thetileapp.com



Giving thanks

Find reasons for appreciation in day-to-day excellence

As the year winds down, this is the season when the pace of everyday life just seems to pick up. Family gatherings, sports, special events, shopping — the list of chores, commitments and celebrations gets long. It's always a whirlwind, and 2021 is no different. While time is at a premium during the holidays, I think it's important to find a few minutes for reflection, to make time to take stock and to give thanks.



JASON DANDRIDGE
Chief Executive Officer

There's plenty to be thankful for. I could list the projects we've accomplished, the services we've provided and all the work we've done this year. I am thankful for all of those, and they're all important parts of keeping our community current and connected. But this year, I'd like to offer thanks for the often unsung day-to-day interactions, people and services at the core of who we are as a company. Because when quality performance is the norm, it's easy to take it for granted.

For example, I'm thankful for our team of customer service representatives, a group whose role is to make your lives and the business you do with us as seamless as possible. They answer questions, solve minor issues and initiate new services — seemingly basic tasks that make a big difference every day. By being

the professionals they are, they make others' lives better.

We have another team of professionals that you might rarely notice. On any given day, there's likely a crew hard at work somewhere near you maintaining the physical infrastructure that allows us to provide the services you rely upon. Often, these crews work in inclement weather and the most trying of conditions. After a storm, they lead the effort to restore service so you can get back to living your life and conducting business as quickly as possible.

At the office, we have others with the financial expertise needed to keep our house in order, and they do the painstaking work needed to make us what we are now. There are also technical experts, sales professionals and so, so many more. Thank you, everyone. You and your efforts are valued and appreciated.

There are also the members of our board of directors, volunteers who contribute their time and expertise to creating the oversight that defines us as part of this community. We do not serve outside investors. Instead, our board is the link to you, and board members are charged with ensuring we keep your needs at the forefront.

Now, let me ask you something. The last time you picked up the phone, did you consider all the miles of cable, the sophisticated hardware and human expertise needed to make that call happen? Or, when you connected your computer to the internet, did you think about the complexity of the network needed to link your home to the online world? Of course you didn't, and we wouldn't expect you to.

The services we provide should be out of the way, even invisible. They should just work, and all the people I've described make that possible.

Because everyone at PRTC performs well, it's easy to take our team's work for granted. Often, it isn't flashy. It's not going to make news. But every day, their work benefits those around them. When you're helping others, can there be a better reason to be thankful?

From everyone at PRTC, we are thankful for you. Enjoy the holidays. 📧

PRTC Connection is a bimonthly newsletter published by PRTC, © 2021. It is distributed without charge to all member/owners of the cooperative.



is a member-owned cooperative providing a complete telecommunications solution (internet, video, voice, wireless and security) to the homes and businesses in the Lowcountry of South Carolina.

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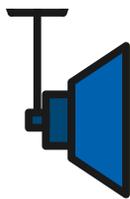
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On the Cover:



Willie Todd Jr., president at Denmark Technical College, embraces the mantra, "Putting the tech back in Denmark Tech."
See story Page 8.



EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT Meet Jason Cook

Q: What do you do at PRTC?

A: I am the video producer for TV shows for PRTC Channel 57 and broadcast commercials for the networks.

Q: How long have you worked at PRTC?

A: Five years full time and three years as a contractor.

Q: What do you enjoy about your current position?

A: Meeting people and not being in one place all the time and bringing an idea to life.

Q: Please tell us about your family.

A: I've been married for 20 years to Lisa. We have two dogs, Daisy and Luna.

Q: Have you ever met any famous people?

A: Tom Wopat, known for his role as Luke Duke on the "Dukes of Hazard" stands out most.

Q: What do you like to do in your spare time?

A: I am a singer/songwriter, touring the Southeast. Last year I released my debut album, "My Kind of Country," and won the World Songwriting Award for Best Modern Country Song Summer of 2020, "Country to the Bone."



Recently, I won the International Singer Songwriter's Association U.S. Male Vocalist of the year.

Q: What app do you use to help with your daily routine?

A: When I sing, I use my iPad and the app SongSheet. It allows me to put lyrics of cover songs in and time them, and they scroll while I am playing them.

Q: Do you have a saying or motto that you live by?

A: Let your yes be yes and your no be no. I strive to live by that.

FIBER UPDATE

COLLETON COUNTY

Hendersonville area 3, which includes Ashepool, Cloverhill and Bennett's Point; Hendersonville area 4, which includes Wiggins and Greenpond and the towns of Williams and Ruffin; are close to completion and ready for fiber conversion.

WALTERBORO

Bay Street area is ready for fiber conversions. Savage and North Lemacks Street areas are in the final stages of construction.

CHARLESTON COUNTY

Ethel Post Office and Toogoodoo Road fiber areas are ready.

BAMBERG COUNTY

The Clearpond area is under construction and includes Hadwin, Lemon Creek and Orange Grove roads. Work is underway in the city of Erhardt and surrounding areas.

DORCHESTER COUNTY

Fiber is ready on Quaker and Old Spell Roads. Reesville is ready for construction.

HAMPTON

The area between Helen Street and Shaw Drive is in the final stages of construction and splicing.

VARNVILLE

The areas of Smith, Charles and Gooding streets are in construction.

YEMASSEE

The area between Cameron Drive and Josselson Street is under construction.

JASPER COUNTY

Fiber construction is underway in the Bee Creek area.

HAMPTON COUNTY

Fiber construction is underway in the Nixville area.

VIDEO ON DEMAND



For a small fee, PRTC's Video on Demand service gives you access to new releases as early as eight weeks before Netflix or Redbox. To access Video on Demand, press the "VOD" or "On Demand" button on your remote or press the "Menu" button and look for "On Demand."



Space Jam: A New Legacy

When LeBron James and his son are trapped in digital space, it's Toons vs. Goons in a high-stakes challenge.



Time Is Up

An accident forces a young couple to reevaluate their lives and start living in a more exciting present. Starring Bella Thorne and Benjamin Mascolo.



The Wonderful: Stories from the Space Station

This is the story of the International Space Station told by men and women who made the Space Station their home 250 miles above the earth.

Don't miss these other releases coming soon to Video on Demand:

- Held for Ransom
- Snake Eyes: G.I. Joe Originals
- Hudson
- Stillwater
- Paw Patrol: The Movie
- Weekend Warriors
- Reminiscence

Starry, starry nights

Story by ANNE BRALY

The evening sky over Clear Creek was speckled with clouds. But as darkness settled across Tennessee's Cumberland Plateau, the clouds parted and the Big Dipper came out, nodding to the moon as its halo crept closer to Orion and his belt.

This scene is played out regularly near Wartburg, Tennessee, at the Obed Wild and Scenic River, a 5,100-acre park with 45 miles of waterways snaking their way through canyons guarding the banks of the Obed River, Clear Creek, Daddy's Creek and Emory River. In 2017, the park was designated as an International Dark Sky Park by the International Dark Sky Association, making it one of only two in Tennessee and one of 69 in the United States.

Getting the designation was a five-year process, says Rick Ryan, an interpretive ranger at the park. "It required a lot of patience and persistence," he says.

The process involved, first and foremost, the obvious — being dark. That may sound simple, but a sky-quality meter was used to determine whether or not the park had too much ambient light from neighboring towns. It didn't. So the park passed that test. "It's not enough to be dark, though," Ryan says. "You have to be committed to preserving the night sky."

That's done through street lighting and lighting paths and parking lots using only dark-sky-friendly lighting fixtures, something that was easy for Obed Wild and Scenic River since there is no outdoor lighting.

A Dark Sky Park must also be committed to providing educational programs to teach visitors about the importance of darkness as a resource for plants and animals like owls and other night hunters.

A good place to stargaze at Obed Wild and Scenic River is the Lilly Bluff Overlook boardwalk found at the end of the Overlook Trail, a well-marked route once you pass through Wartburg. There's plenty of parking, and it's a short walk over to the bluff overlooking the gorge of Clear Creek. There are two boardwalks with platforms where you can set up your chairs and any stargazing equipment you may bring.

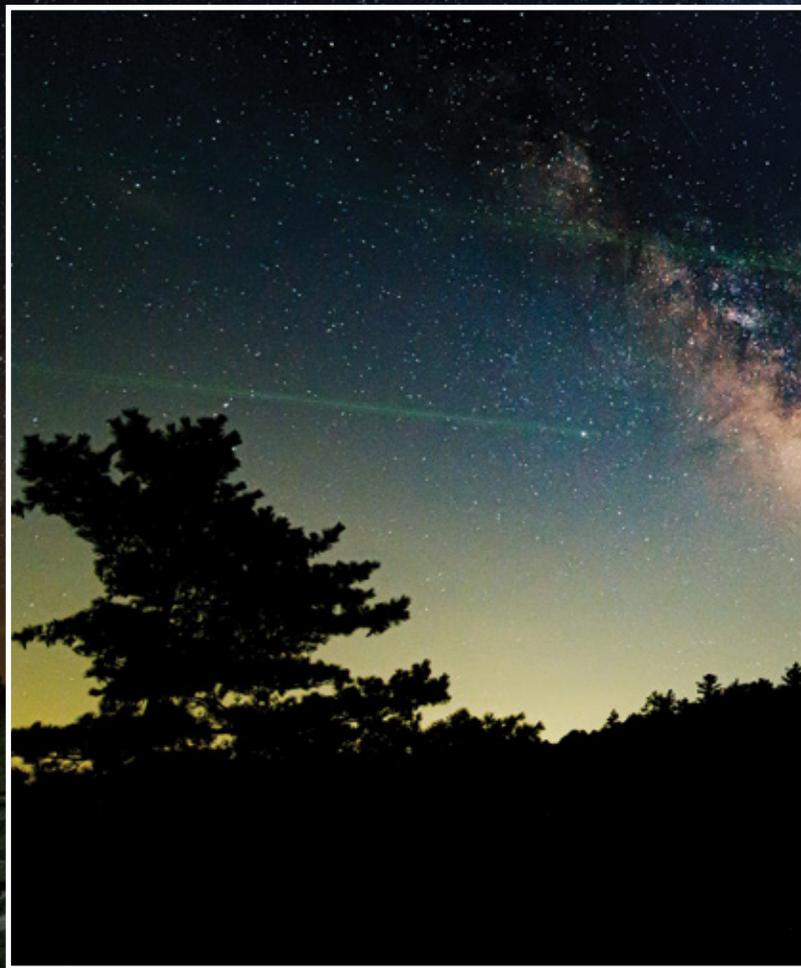
Before the COVID-19 pandemic, Ryan and a team of volunteers held regularly scheduled stargazing opportunities, providing telescopes and everything needed for visitors to see the universe up close and personal — craters on the moon that look as though you can reach out and touch them, rings

of Saturn so vivid you could feel as though you can make the planet spin, the "spot" on Jupiter brilliant with color.

COVID put a stop to that, but not permanently. Ryan says he hopes to get the programs up and running again as soon as possible.

Now, though, the park is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Stargazers can go on their own, bringing binoculars or a telescope and maybe a chair, blanket and some hot chocolate to keep them cozy as they marvel at the night sky.

The sky changes with the seasons, and winter offers a wonderland of stars and constellations, such as Orion the Hunter and Canis Major — the big dog. And Dark Sky Parks are the best places to see them due to their verified lack of ambient light.



In the West, dark skies are easier to find because there are more deserts and less urbanization. “You know, in places like Utah and Nevada,” Ryan says. “But in the Eastern half of the U.S., up and down the East Coast, you can look at a satellite photo and it looks like a big white blob with cities like New York, Atlanta, Philadelphia and D.C. It’s kind of sad, really.

“But when you zoom in a little bit closer, you see there are regional pockets of darkness,” he continues. “It’s important for people in the East to have Dark Sky locations so that those who don’t get to travel out West will have places like this here to experience.” 📱



Rick Ryan is the interpretive ranger at the Obed Wild and Scenic River.

National Park Service

Stargazing Apps

Several good stargazing apps are available to download on your smartphone, as well. With most of these apps, all you have to do is point your phone toward the night sky and the app will demystify what’s in front of you, be it stars, planets, constellations or man-made objects like satellites, including the International Space Station. Many of them can even alert you to upcoming celestial events, so you’ll never miss another meteor shower again.

- ★ **NASA app:** Not only can you get the latest NASA photos, videos and features — and watch NASA events in real-time — you can look back down at the earth from the International Space Station.
- ★ **Star Walk 2:** This app uses your GPS to find the exact position of celestial bodies. Just point your phone at the stars and let it do the work. If you’re stargazing with young children, there’s also Star Walk Kids for iPhones and Android. Star Walk 2 is free for Android users but costs \$3 for iPhone users.
- ★ **SkyView Lite:** Track your favorite constellations as they move across the sky. This is a preferred app (free) for people who only want to see the major stars overhead and not the ones you can’t see.
- ★ **Star Chart:** Like the others, point this free app at the sky to see what’s above you. But then, when you’re done, point it down on the ground to get a view of the sky on the other side of the world. Pretty cool, huh?
- ★ **SkySafari:** SkySafari has all of the tools you expect in a stargazing app — and you can even control them with your voice. Tell it to find Venus and it will. SkySafari is free for Android users and \$3 for those with iPhones.

Reach for the stars

Stargazing programs will be held at Obed Wild and Scenic River as soon as groups are allowed to gather again. For updates on when this will happen, check the park’s Facebook or web page at [facebook.com/ObedNPS](https://www.facebook.com/ObedNPS) or [nps.gov/obed](https://www.nps.gov/obed).

A college for the COMMUNITY

Denmark Tech serves students and the public

Story by LISA SAVAGE

Whether it's for a stylish haircut or access to the internet so a child can do homework, Denmark Technical College makes its resources available to the community in addition to providing a quality education for its students.

"We realize the important role this college plays in the community," says Willie L. Todd Jr., president at Denmark Tech. "We are rebranding and rebuilding, and we want to be a resource for our community. We want the public to come to our library, enjoy some of our outdoor spaces or get a haircut in our cosmetology department."

Opening the college's doors to the public offers much-needed assistance in one of the poorest counties in South Carolina, Todd says. The institution, which bears a designation as a Historically Black College, primarily serves Bamberg, Barnwell and Allendale counties. However, as one of the only technical colleges with housing available on campus, it welcomes students from all over the state. "We're making our presence known," Todd says.

Major updates to the college's fiber optic network through PRTC ensure excellent connectivity for students, staff and visitors. "Our access to the technology and broadband internet gives our students and the community access to the world," he says.

A NEW DIRECTION

It's important for the community to know about the campus and feel welcome. At the same time, the students

and the curriculum at Denmark Tech remain a priority. "We're using the mantra, 'Putting the tech back in Denmark Tech,'" Todd says. "We have some of the best technical programs available."

Todd joined the staff at Denmark Tech in 2019 as the vice president for academic and student affairs and became president in January 2020. A native of Decatur, Georgia, Todd comes to Denmark Tech with more than 26 years of experience in the post-secondary educational field.

Todd's goals include updating equipment in classrooms and in areas like the barbering and cosmetology department. "Some of the furniture in that department predates me," he says.



Dr. Willie L. Todd, Jr. is president of Denmark Tech.



Improvements so far include a new culinary arts lab, updates to ventilation and air conditioning and several classrooms, and expansion of the nursing area. “In our nursing program, we had space for 20, and now it’s up to about 50,” Todd says. “That’s an increase of 150%, and it’s going to make a big difference in the programs we can offer and the number of students we can serve.” There were also upgrades to the area for the school’s very strong welding program to make it even more functional, as well as to the computer lab.

The college utilized virtual classes at the height of the pandemic in 2020, but it worked to get students back on campus as soon as possible. “Our classes are not designed for online instruction,” Todd says. “You can’t have a student learning virtually how to cut someone’s hair. It’s important for our students to utilize a hands-on learning experience.”

Wi-Fi access throughout the campus, including residence halls, classrooms and offices, keeps the college connected. “Having access to such a robust internet provider like PRTC is life changing for us,” Todd says. “It ensures students in rural communities have the same access as students in bigger cities.”

PRTC did a complete upgrade at Denmark Tech a few years ago, linking the college campus to a fast fiber optic network, says Mark Davenport, PRTC’s project coordinator. “Prior to PRTC working with them, they did not have an adequate

wireless network solution,” he says. “Now, they have internet speeds that can address any need they have.”

ABOUT THE COLLEGE

The two-year technical institution opened in 1947 as the Denmark branch of the South Carolina Trade School System after the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina authorized its establishment. At its inception, the institution functioned under the authority of the South Carolina Department of Education and a mandate to educate black students in various trades.

In 1969, control of the college, then named Denmark Area Trade School, went to the South Carolina Advisory Committee for Technical Training, which acted under the supervision of the State Board for Technical and Comprehensive Education. During the same year, the name of the college was changed to Denmark Technical Education Center.

In 1979, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools issued accreditation for the institution, and it officially became Denmark Technical College.

Since 1947, the college has experienced significant growth and a host of changes on its way to becoming a comprehensive two-year college offering a broad range of programs and services. But providing affordable post-secondary education culminating in associate degrees, diplomas or certificates in various technical fields remains the goal.

The staff works to ensure the success of each student. That’s why recent graduate Luke Pickering believes Denmark Tech makes such a difference. After Pickering suffered a traumatic brain injury in a car accident three years ago, he was in the hospital on life support for weeks. He recovered from his injuries, but he still has memory loss. “I had to relearn how to walk, talk — how to do everything,” Pickering says.

With the help of his family and extra effort from his Denmark Tech instructors, Pickering made the dean’s list and graduated with an associate degree in engineering. “They’re very strict and want you to learn, and you’ve got to work for it,” he says. “They’re not going to just give it to you. I had to work hard for my degree.”

Success stories such as Pickering’s motivate Todd to work even harder to keep the school moving forward. “We are really excited about the possibilities,” Todd says. “We’re seeing our staff, our students and the community become more energized about Denmark Tech. We’re preparing our students to be competitive in a 21st century economy.”

For more about classes and enrollment, go to denmarktech.edu. 🗨️





NaNoWriMo

November challenge helps writers write

Story by JEN CALHOUN

Growing up in rural East Tennessee, Dani Honeycutt dreamed of writing for a living. She devoured books and wrote poetry as a teen. She'd even study the encyclopedia to pack as much knowledge into her brain as she could. Writing was the natural next step. It was a place to put all her thoughts — a place to create.

Then she learned about NaNoWriMo, a nonprofit organization that grew out of an international creative writing event of the same name. Short for National Novel Writing Month, NaNoWriMo gives participants a goal of writing a 50,000-word manuscript during the month of November.

"I liked the challenge," says Honeycutt, who grew up in the small town of Rogersville and now lives in Greeneville, Tennessee. "Even though 50,000 words is more like a novella, I liked the challenge of saying, 'OK, you have 30 days to do this.' I felt like there was an accomplishment there."



Writers gather at a local NaNoWriMo write-in at a Florence, South Carolina, coffee shop.

Dani Honeycutt and Ashley Long

For a few years, she participated in the event but couldn't quite reach the 50,000-word goal. Until she did. So far this year, Honeycutt has published three nonfiction books through Amazon Self-Publishing.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

NaNoWriMo events primarily take place online — especially during

pandemic times — but official subgroups are generally paired off regionally within states in the U.S. Honeycutt volunteers as a municipal liaison for one of NaNoWriMo's East Tennessee groups. In that role, she markets the program regionally, organizes in-person and online events, and generally serves to support other writers in her group.

Ashley Long, another municipal liaison who lives in a small community near Morristown, Tennessee, says she first tried the NaNoWriMo challenge in 2010. “I wasn’t very successful,” she says. “I didn’t go to meet-ups, and I didn’t take advantage of all the resources the nonprofit offered.”

But in 2011, things changed for Long. “I was able to write 50,000 words in 30 days,” she says. “It wasn’t a full novel, but it was a good beginning.”

Since then, Long has written two rough drafts for two different stories, she says. “NaNoWriMo helps with motivation,” she says. “Writing is a very solo thing. But with this, there’s a collective energy when you do a virtual or in-person event.”

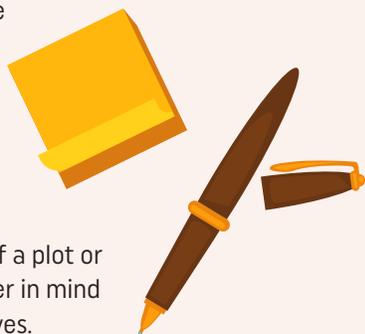
THE BENEFITS OF TRYING

While writing 50,000 words in 30 days sounds like it could be difficult, Long believes the event itself can be freeing for burgeoning writers. “NaNo is about getting the words on the page,” she says. “You write as much as you can in those 30 days. It’s about getting something that’s valuable in front of you that you can actually work with instead of having it run around your brain.”

NaNoWriMo is also a great way to make lasting friendships, Long says. She and Honeycutt became friends after meeting through the organization. “You get to meet like-minded people with the same goals and interests as you,” Long says. “Some of my best friends now are people I’ve met through NaNo over the years.” 

Writing tips for National Novel Writing Month

- **Just write** — Don’t worry about editing, reading and rereading your words. Just get them down.
- **Don’t listen to THAT voice** — You know the one — that overly critical voice of doubt that tells you nothing’s good enough. While constructive criticism is important, there’s no place for THAT voice.
- **Read** — Reading what other writers write can help you structure and build your own words. It can also free up your imagination and allow you to see how they develop characters and move a plot.
- **Prep** — Whether you’re what NaNoWriMo calls a “plotter” or whether you’re a “pantser” who flies by the seat of their pants, it’s generally best to have a scrap of a plot or even a vague character in mind before November arrives.



Finding the muse

NaNoWriMo and the Great American Novel

Writing is hard. It’s time-consuming and solitary, and it can fill a person with more doubt in their intelligence and abilities than they’ve ever known. But it can also help stretch the limits of the imagination and bring a sense of accomplishment like nothing else.

Chris Baty, the founder of NaNoWriMo, realized this after struggling to write his own book. So, back in 1999, he and a group of friends with similar goals decided to focus on getting words on the page. They gave themselves one month to write a novel. “That was the genesis of the movement,” says Tim Kim, programs director at NaNoWriMo. “Then, word just spread.”

Internet spreads the word

As the internet grew, so did NaNoWriMo. In 2006, the annual writing event also became a nonprofit, Kim says. “We were seeing so much energy behind National Novel Writing Month, and so many people wanted to give back. So, we started thinking about how we could do so much more.”

Now, in addition to National Novel Writing Month for adults, the nonprofit offers a Young Writers Program that serves about 100,000 students and educators across the world in about 2,000 classrooms. In addition, the organization offers Come Write, which helps libraries, bookstores and community centers to double as creative writing centers.

Since its beginning, many books that got their start during National Novel Writing Month have gone on to become bestsellers, including “Water for Elephants” by Sara Gruen, “Fangirl” by Rainbow Rowell and “The Forest of Hands and Teeth” by Greenville, South Carolina, native Carrie Ryan.

One of the things the NaNoWriMo organizers are proudest of is how it’s helped writers from all walks of life to find their voices, Kim says. “In places like New York City or Los Angeles, there are so many resources for people being creative and writing novels,” he says. “But we’ve seen with our programs that writers are coming from all over the U.S. — urban places and rural places, and across the world, as well.”

Getting started

National Novel Writing Month challenges people to write 50,000 words in 30 days. Some finish, some don’t. But everyone involved makes more progress than they may have otherwise. It happens every November and is open to everyone. Find more tools, pep talks, help with structure and a writing community near you at nanowrimo.org.

A hand up

In His Name-Colleton addresses homelessness

Story by LISA SAVAGE

Homelessness isn't defined only by living on city streets. Even in rural areas, homelessness is a bigger problem than most people realize, says Amanda Herndon, director at In His Name-Colleton.

As an interdenominational Christian-based nonprofit organization since 2013, In His Name-Colleton works to address the needs of the homeless, displaced individuals and families, and those suffering from lack of food, clothing, shelter and supportive programs in Colleton County and surrounding areas, says the organization's founder, Stacy See.

"Our goal is not to just have a homeless shelter but to be able to offer a hand up, not a handout," See says.

Headquartered in Walterboro, In His Name-Colleton relocated last summer, moving from Hampton Street to 214 Wichman St. The organization originally planned to establish a homeless shelter at its Hampton Street location, but plans changed.

Now, the group plans to purchase several smaller houses, ideal for six to eight people, throughout Colleton and surrounding counties. Instead of having to get someone from one of the outlying areas to a shelter in Walterboro, the smaller shelters will provide assistance at more convenient locations. "It will be more efficient and keep them in the area where they might be from, with a better opportunity to find work," See says.

The new Wichman Street site provides a main office in a visible location for those who need help or want to volunteer. "It is important for our community and supporters of In His Name-Colleton to know that we haven't closed. We just moved our location to be better stewards of God's resources," Herndon says.

The search is ongoing for a mission center, overnight shelter and housing to bridge the gap. "We want to raise awareness of the homelessness in our community, and we are looking for support from our community to fulfill this mission," she says. 



Amanda Herndon, left, serves as director at In His Name-Colleton, and Stacy See founded the organization in 2013.

Statistics

Statistics from the 2020 South Carolina State of Homelessness report show that from October 2018 to September 2019, there were 10,986 persons in the homeless management information system in South Carolina receiving housing or homeless services.

"These are statewide statistics, but it shows the magnitude of the problem," says Amanda Herndon, executive director at In His Name-Colleton.

In His Name-Colleton offers support and resources such as:

- Free community meals to anyone in need, specifically the homeless, the elderly and those without transportation
- Emergency food pantry
- Hygiene bags for all ages and genders
- Food bags
- Household items for those transitioning into their own homes after being homeless or getting on their feet, families suffering from house fires, etc.
- Clothing
- Applications for jobs and assistance with obtaining vital documentation, such as social security card/identification card
- Foster care kits to children entering foster care
- Free monthly laundry day
- Resources for domestic violence and sexual assault victims
- Mental health and drug addiction resources

In His Name-Colleton

214 Wichman St., Walterboro
843-217-5661

Follow the organization on Facebook



A place to play

Davis-Bailey Park opens in St. George

Story by LISA SAVAGE

Davis-Bailey Park is a great place for a walk or a game of basketball, a birthday party under the pavilion or a safe place to connect to the Wi-Fi for homework. It opened last summer in St. George, adjacent to the county courthouse.

“This is a rural area, and we had no public park of this size,” says Eric Davis, the former director of Dorchester County Parks and Recreation who worked on the project to plan and build the park. “We’re very fortunate to have this.”

VISIONARIES

The Davis-Bailey Park honors two local visionaries — the late Councilman Willie R. Davis and current Councilman George H. Bailey Sr.

City and county officials first talked about the park in 2008 and 2009, and plans were more concrete by 2014. In November 2019, voters approved a bond referendum providing \$38 million for Davis-Bailey Park and other county recreational endeavors. The Davis-Bailey project cost \$6 million. “I think it speaks of the need for voters to approve a tax to pay for the park,” Eric Davis says.

The County Council adopted a resolution naming the park in honor of Councilmen Davis and Bailey, both lifelong

leaders in the county and community. The two men were instrumental in making the park and associated recreational opportunities a priority for their districts.

“Mr. Davis and Mr. Bailey had the foresight and leadership to bring this park to fruition,” Davis says. “The park will provide recreation and community building opportunities for all ages and abilities for decades to come.”

CONNECTED

The multiuse park features an event pavilion, splash fountain and pond, playground, multipurpose field, lighted youth baseball fields and full basketball courts, and a paved walking trail.

The 17-acre facility also has Wi-Fi access installed by PRTC. The service is ideal for the apps used by sports teams and for internet-based gaming. It also makes the park a safe place to simply get on the internet for homework or school activities for those who don’t have access at home.



“We have a lot of grateful people in our community,” Davis says. “This park fills a major need in this area, and access to Wi-Fi provides a vital connection for those who don’t have access to the internet at home.”

About Davis-Bailey Park

If the pavilion is not reserved, pavilion picnic tables are available on a first-come, first-served basis. To reserve a pavilion or a field, call 843-563-0193. Learn more about the park at dorchestercountysc.gov/dbp. 5190 E. Jim Bilton Blvd., St. George 7:30 a.m.-9:30 p.m. daily Follow on Facebook and Instagram.

A tasty tuber

Sweet potatoes offer a holiday treat

Sweet potatoes evoke strong feelings, bringing back tasty memories for some and not-so-good memories for others. It all depends into which camp you happen to fall — pro-marshmallow or anti-marshmallow.

Those white, fluffy confections are the go-to topping for many cooks. But have you tried a savory version? Sweet potatoes aren't necessarily sweet until you begin adding all that sugar and butter to the mix. Instead, consider some recipes that take your holiday sweet potatoes in a different direction.

Try adding cream cheese and chipotle peppers to your sweet potatoes, along with onions and celery. Or jazz them up with garlic, herbs and a sprinkling of parmesan. And don't forget to bake a couple alongside your turkey — mashed and mixed with the turkey drippings, they make an incredible, gluten-free gravy.

No matter the recipe, sweet potatoes are one of nature's superfoods, loaded with an alphabet of vitamins — A, C, B1, B2, B4 and B6 — not to mention fiber, potassium and other minerals important to our diets.

Here are some recipes for putting savory into your sweet potatoes this season. 📖

Roasted Parmesan Sweet Potatoes

- 2 1/2 pounds (about 3 medium) sweet potatoes, peeled and diced into 1-inch cubes
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 3-4 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 1/2 tablespoons chopped fresh thyme leaves
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1/2 cup melted butter
- 1/3 cup finely grated parmesan cheese
- 1 1/2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley leaves

Preheat the oven to 400 F. Place diced sweet potatoes on a baking sheet. In a small mixing bowl, stir together olive oil, garlic and thyme. Then pour the mixture over the potatoes. Season with salt and pepper to taste, and toss to evenly coat. Spread into an even layer.

Roast in the oven until tender, tossing once halfway through, about 30 minutes total. You may want to broil the potatoes during the last 1-2 minutes for more golden-brown, crispier potatoes. As soon as you remove the potatoes from the oven, drizzle and toss them with the melted butter, sprinkle them with parmesan and parsley, and serve. Makes 4 servings.



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





SAVORY MASHED SWEET POTATOES

- 1 stick butter
- 2-3 stalks celery, diced
- 1 yellow onion, diced
- 1 (8-ounce) package cream cheese
- 1-2 chipotle peppers, chopped, or to taste
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 6-7 sweet potatoes, peeled, cooked and mashed

Melt butter in a skillet and add the celery and onion. Saute until tender. Add cream cheese and stir until melted. Add chipotle peppers a little at a time. You don't want the mixture too spicy. Add salt and pepper to taste, then combine the mixture with the mashed sweet potatoes. Serve warm. Makes 6-8 servings.



TWICE-BAKED GOAT CHEESE & BACON SWEET POTATOES

- 4 large (about 3 pounds) sweet potatoes, scrubbed and halved lengthwise
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 8 ounces bacon, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 2 tablespoons evaporated milk or heavy cream
- 1/2 teaspoon each salt and pepper
- 5 1/2 ounces fresh goat cheese, divided
- 3 tablespoons maple syrup, divided
- 1 tablespoon chopped chives

Preheat the oven to 350 F. Prick the cut side of the potatoes with a fork in a few places. Rub the potatoes all over with oil and put them on a baking sheet, cut side down. Roast the potatoes until they're tender when pierced with a fork, about 45 minutes. Let them cool until you can handle them easily — about 15 minutes.

Meanwhile, cook the bacon in a large frying pan over medium-high heat, stirring often, to very crisp. Drain the bacon on a paper towel, and then roughly chop half of it.

Scoop the sweet potato flesh out of the skins and into a bowl, and reserve the skins. Mash the flesh with a fork until smooth. Add the chopped bacon, milk or cream, salt, pepper, half the goat cheese and 1 tablespoon maple syrup to the mashed potatoes. Stir just until blended. Spoon the mixture into the reserved sweet potato skins, dividing evenly and using all of it. Chill.

When ready to serve, bake the potatoes at 350 F until they are warm in the center, 15 to 20 minutes. Sprinkle the warmed potatoes with the unchopped bacon, crumbles of the remaining goat cheese, drizzles of the remaining maple syrup and the chives. Makes 8 servings.



Sweet potato rolls

- 1 cup mashed sweet potatoes, unseasoned
- 3/4 cup milk, divided
- 2 1/4 teaspoons active dry yeast
- 1/2 teaspoon plus 1/4 cup granulated sugar, divided
- 4 1/4 to 4 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 1/2 teaspoons salt
- 2 large eggs
- 6 tablespoons unsalted butter, partly melted
- 2-3 tablespoons melted butter (for brushing)

If using a whole sweet potato: Peel the potato, chop it into 1-inch cubes and put the cubes in a small saucepan with water to cover. Cook over medium-high heat for 20-30 minutes or until fork-tender. Drain. Mash the potatoes with a few tablespoons of milk. Measure out and set aside 1 cup of the mashed sweet potatoes.

Heat the rest of the milk to 115-120 F. Dissolve the yeast and 1/2 teaspoon sugar in the warm milk. Allow to proof for 5 minutes.

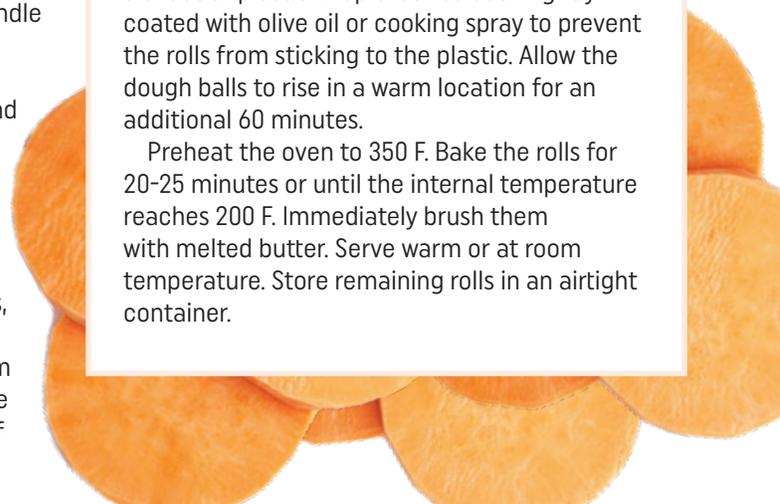
Meanwhile, combine 1/4 cup of sugar, 4 cups of flour and the salt in the bowl of a stand mixer. With the dough hook attachment in place, turn the mixer on low. Add the eggs, one at a time, followed by 6 tablespoons of butter, the mashed sweet potatoes and the yeast mixture. Increase the mixer speed, mixing until the dough pulls away from the sides of the bowl. If necessary, add up to an extra 1/2 cup of flour.

Transfer the dough to a lightly greased large bowl. Cover, and allow the dough to rise in a warm location until doubled in size, 1 to 1 1/2 hours.

Grease a 9-by-13-inch pan. Set aside.

Divide the dough into 12 equal portions and shape each portion into a ball, pinching the seams together. Place each ball, seam-side down, into the prepared pan. Cover the rolls with a sheet of plastic wrap that has been lightly coated with olive oil or cooking spray to prevent the rolls from sticking to the plastic. Allow the dough balls to rise in a warm location for an additional 60 minutes.

Preheat the oven to 350 F. Bake the rolls for 20-25 minutes or until the internal temperature reaches 200 F. Immediately brush them with melted butter. Serve warm or at room temperature. Store remaining rolls in an airtight container.





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