

BUSINESS connections



Sweet Success at Hole Lotta Doughnuts



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Additional Issues

Extra issues are available to business customers on a limited basis while supplies last. Contact Robin Miller at 1-844-SKYBEST.

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This issue celebrates the power of being innovative and unique.

As Albert Einstein said, "The person who follows the crowd will usually go no further than the crowd. The person who walks alone is likely to find himself in places no one has ever seen before."

SkyLine/SkyBest Supports Innovation, as you'll discover on page 3. For years we've sponsored the Entrepreneur Summit presented by the Transportation Insight Center for Entrepreneurship at Appalachian State University. It's a joy to help showcase the creative business ideas developed by the students as they begin their entrepreneurial journeys.

On pages 4 and 5, there's a **Business Spotlight on Hole Lotta Doughnuts**. This is definitely not your average doughnut shop. Its unique doughnuts are five inches in diameter, and the popularity of their big size has led to big business growth. SkyLine/SkyBest provides internet and phone services as well as surveillance at the West Jefferson, Lenoir and Boone stores.

Check out **Extra Special Ways to Thank Your Customers** on page 6 for inspiration on how to express appreciation with more impact. Then on page 7, we encourage you to **Be Vocal About Buying Local**, since small local businesses contribute to giving a community its unique character and personality.

SkyLine/SkyBest doesn't settle for following the crowd. We strive to deliver innovative solutions to our customers' communications challenges, and we're committed to maintaining a uniquely high level of customer service and support. Let us know how we can help your business.



Sincerely,

Kim Shepherd
Chief Executive Officer

ON THE COVER:

(L to R) Bob Taylor, SkyLine/SkyBest Field Representative; Hollie Brown, SkyLine/SkyBest Inside Sales Coordinator; Larisa Leapley (daughter), assistant at Hole Lotta Doughnuts; JoAnn Johnson (mother), partner at Hole Lotta Doughnuts; Elizabeth Still and Brooke Bratton, customer service representatives at Hole Lotta Doughnuts.

SkyLine/SkyBest Supports Innovation

We co-sponsor the annual Entrepreneur Summit at Appalachian State University

The creative ideas of an entrepreneur need to be nurtured and supported in order for them to develop a successful business. That's the work of the Transportation Insight Center for Entrepreneurship (CFE) at Appalachian State University, which provides mentorship and an array of resources to help entrepreneurs achieve their goals.

A highlight for the CFE each year is the Entrepreneur Summit. This event gathers future and current entrepreneurs to hear from inspiring speakers, network with others and watch the Big Idea Pitch competition.

Mark Your Calendars for November 5

The 2021 Entrepreneur Summit will be held at Appalachian State University on Friday, November 5. Here's the schedule:

10 a.m.

Clifton Taulbert will discuss his book "Who Owns the Ice House?" about the entrepreneurial mindset he learned from his Uncle Clive growing up in segregated Mississippi. Taulbert co-authored the book with Gary Schoeniger.

11 a.m.

Gary Schoeniger will talk about the importance of an entrepreneurial mindset and the ELI (Entrepreneurial Learn Initiative) program he developed based on his "Who Owns the Ice House?" book.

12 p.m.

Luncheon with speaker

Afternoon

The Big Idea Pitch competition showcases the amazing concepts for new ventures as presented by 10 student finalists. Judges will select the top business ideas, and a total of \$2,250 in prize money will be awarded, including a \$500 Audience Choice award.

Leading Through Challenges



Erich Schlenker is the Executive Director of the Transportation Insight Center for Entrepreneurship.

Schlenker is looking forward to the 2021 Entrepreneur Summit, since the pandemic forced the cancellation of the event in 2020. The challenges of the pandemic, however, are still creating a fluid situation.

He said, "We're tracking the COVID-19 protocols on campus to determine if we can include additional programming in the afternoon of November 5. Protocols will also determine the format of the Big Idea Pitch competition. We usually serve food and drinks to make it a celebration of student innovation and creativity, and we're cautiously optimistic that our plans can move forward."

SkyLine/SkyBest is a Valued Partner

How does Schlenker feel about the support SkyLine/SkyBest gives to the Entrepreneur Summit and the CFE?

He replied, "We're truly grateful for our friends at SkyLine/SkyBest. They've been a long-term partner of the Center for Entrepreneurship. In addition to their financial support, SkyLine/SkyBest delivers critical high-speed internet services to the High Country, which is the lifeblood of innovation in our digital world."

The community is welcome at the Big Idea Pitch, and there's no charge to attend. Learn more at entrepreneurship.appstate.edu/events/big-idea-pitch.



Hole Lotta Doughnuts

The only thing bigger than the doughnuts is the business' recent growth

You better come with a big appetite to Hole Lotta Doughnuts. Their handcrafted yeast doughnuts are famously large—five inches in diameter and over four ounces in weight—earning them the playful description of being wagon wheel size. One customer noted that the resulting doughnut holes were the “size of a tennis ball.”

Three Towns in Two Years

Butch and Karen Phillips opened the first Hole Lotta Doughnuts store in early 2019 at 1720 Highway 88 near West Jefferson and based the menu on Karen’s recipes. They originally served classic glazed doughnuts, chocolate glazed doughnuts, apple fritters and cinnamon rolls. The menu later expanded to include additional types of doughnuts, pastries, sweet breads, cookies, gourmet popcorn, ice cream cones, sundaes, shakes and floats, Cactus Creek Coffee and other beverages.

Demand quickly grew for the sweet treats. In May 2020, the first Hole Lotta Doughnuts relocated to downtown West Jefferson at 211 Backstreet. Two additional stores, at 308 Morganton Blvd. SW in Lenoir and 494 W. King St. in Boone, opened in fall 2020. The Boone shop is owned by partners Mark and Jackie Holland and JoAnn Johnson.

Handmade with Love

To what do the partners attribute this impressive growth? JoAnn Johnson replied, “Hole Lotta Doughnuts is unique to the market due to the five-inch size of our doughnuts, but it’s more than that. Each of our gourmet doughnuts is truly handmade with love, using limited automation, to achieve the highest quality possible. They’re pleasing to the palate and a true value for our customers. Hole Lotta Doughnuts is a destination where local families hang out and visitors can’t wait to see and taste our wagon wheel doughnuts.”

Hole Lotta Doughnuts offers a celebration room at the Lenoir store that can be booked for birthday parties, family gatherings, business meetings and more. The business also provides catering services for special events of all sizes, for when customers want to host a sweet celebration at their home, workplace or other location.

SkyLine/SkyBest Cares

While big doughnuts may keep everyone fueled, it takes technology to keep everyone connected. SkyLine/SkyBest provides Hole Lotta Doughnuts with internet and phone services as well as surveillance cameras at the West Jefferson, Lenoir and Boone stores.

Johnson said, “We couldn’t be more pleased with SkyLine/SkyBest services at our three stores. We truly feel SkyLine/SkyBest cares about us as a customer and listens to our unique needs and requests. They’re always there for us with customer care and provide the solutions required. We can count on fast response time, a personal touch and a high level of knowledge. That says it all from a user perspective.”

What Does the Future Hold?

It’s clear that Hole Lotta Doughnuts is achieving its stated mission: “To offer high quality and value with our sweet foods and drinks in a fun, family environment.” What does the future hold for Hole Lotta Doughnuts?

“Additional stores could be in our future. We’re a faith-based business, and our focus is on serving our current communities in a faithful manner and putting our customers first. If we have other business owners interested in Hole Lotta Doughnuts who share the same philosophy, we’ll entertain the opportunity to expand,” said Johnson.

Here’s something that could be in your future — a free glazed doughnut or a free cup of coffee from any Hole Lotta Doughnuts store. Whether you’re a frequent customer or have yet to experience its big advantages, be sure to clip out the coupon to the right.



Employee Brooke Bratton hands customer a banana pudding doughnut.



“We couldn’t be more pleased with SkyLine/SkyBest services at our stores. We truly feel SkyLine/SkyBest cares about us as a customer and listens to our unique needs and requests.”

— JOANN JOHNSON, PARTNER
HOLE LOTTA DOUGHNUTS

Free Doughnut or Cup of Coffee

There are a “hole lotta” reasons to visit Hole Lotta Doughnuts, and now you have one more. Bring in this coupon by October 31, 2021, and you’ll receive either:

- Free glazed doughnut
- Free cup of coffee

Location visited:

- 211 Backstreet in West Jefferson
- 308 Morganton Blvd. SW in Lenoir
- 494 W. King Street in Boone

Name of your business: _____

One free item per customer



Breakfast Food Drive September 1–October 31

For your safety and convenience, we are providing a Contact-Free Pick-up and Drop-off Station at all SkyLine/SkyBest Customer Center locations.

- Pick up a grocery tote with shopping list at any of our five Customer Center locations
- Fill it with non-perishable breakfast items
- Drop off the items in the Drop-off station bin

Suggested items:

- | | |
|---------------------|------------------------|
| Oatmeal | Granola Bars |
| Whole-grain Cereals | Fruit Juice Packs |
| Hot Cereals | Canned or Dried Fruits |
| Cream of Wheat | Jam |
| Grits | Powdered Milk |
| Gravy Mixes | Coffee |
| Pancake Mixes | Hot Chocolate |
| Muffin Mixes | Pop-Tarts |
| Syrup | |



Extra Special Ways to Thank Your Customers

As a successful business, you're no doubt saying "thank you" to customers on a routine basis—such as after in-person interactions or during phone calls. To take your customer service game to the next level, however, consider occasionally adding more impactful ideas like these:

Mail a handwritten note. If your customers are accustomed to getting emails from your business, a personal handwritten note on a paper card will be a delightful and welcome surprise. Use this approach after they make a large purchase, sign up for new service or are exceptionally patient during a challenging situation.

Give away brand swag. This could be any useful promotional product that features your logo, from a tote bag to a portable charger. Branded merchandise makes your customers feel appreciated and also serves as advertising.

Let customers sample new products. Is your business experimenting with new menu items, store merchandise or types of services? Ask some of your most loyal customers to sample those products for free. This will not only make the customer feel rewarded and part of an exclusive "club," it can also provide valuable feedback.

Support their businesses. The best relationships are mutual. Support your customers' businesses or side gigs as much as you can and give them shout-outs on social media. Be sure to refer people to your customers' businesses when an opportunity presents itself.

Celebrate birthdays or customer milestones. Many retailers use birthday programs to send well wishes to customers on their birthdays and perhaps offer a special discount. Another idea is to recognize the anniversary of when that customer started doing business with you.

Create a "thank you" video for social media. This could be something as simple as having each of your employees say a brief message of thanks into the camera, sharing what they value most about your customers.

Another thing you can do for your customers, which is less direct but still important, is work to retain your employees. A stable workforce means your best customers will see familiar faces when they visit your business and get served by people with more experience.

Be **Vocal** About Buying **Local**

Speak up to support our community's small businesses

SkyLine/SkyBest is a big believer in small businesses. If we work together as community members, we can help small businesses succeed despite the challenges of the pandemic and the increasing competition from online mega-retailers.

Given the prevailing emphasis on simply finding the cheapest price when making purchase decisions, it's important to remind our friends and neighbors of the substantial community benefits of buying local. These benefits include:

Improving Our Local Economy. Each dollar we spend at small local businesses returns three times more money to our local economy than one spent at a chain and almost 50 times more than buying from an online mega-retailer.¹

Creating Local Jobs and Opportunities. Not only do small local businesses employ more people directly per dollar of revenue, they also employ an array of supporting services by buying local themselves. They hire local architects, contractors, accountants, insurance brokers, computer consultants and attorneys. They also tend to carry a higher percentage of locally produced goods than chains, meaning more jobs for local suppliers. In contrast, a chain store is typically a clone of other units, which eliminates the need for local planning and uses a minimum of local goods and services.

Keeping Our Local Communities Unique. Small local businesses contribute to giving a community its distinct character and personality that's unlike any other. Conversely, communities all start to look alike when there's a preponderance of chain restaurants and stores. By supporting the one-of-a-kind businesses in our local communities, we help maintain the uniqueness that makes living here enjoyable and attracts visitors.



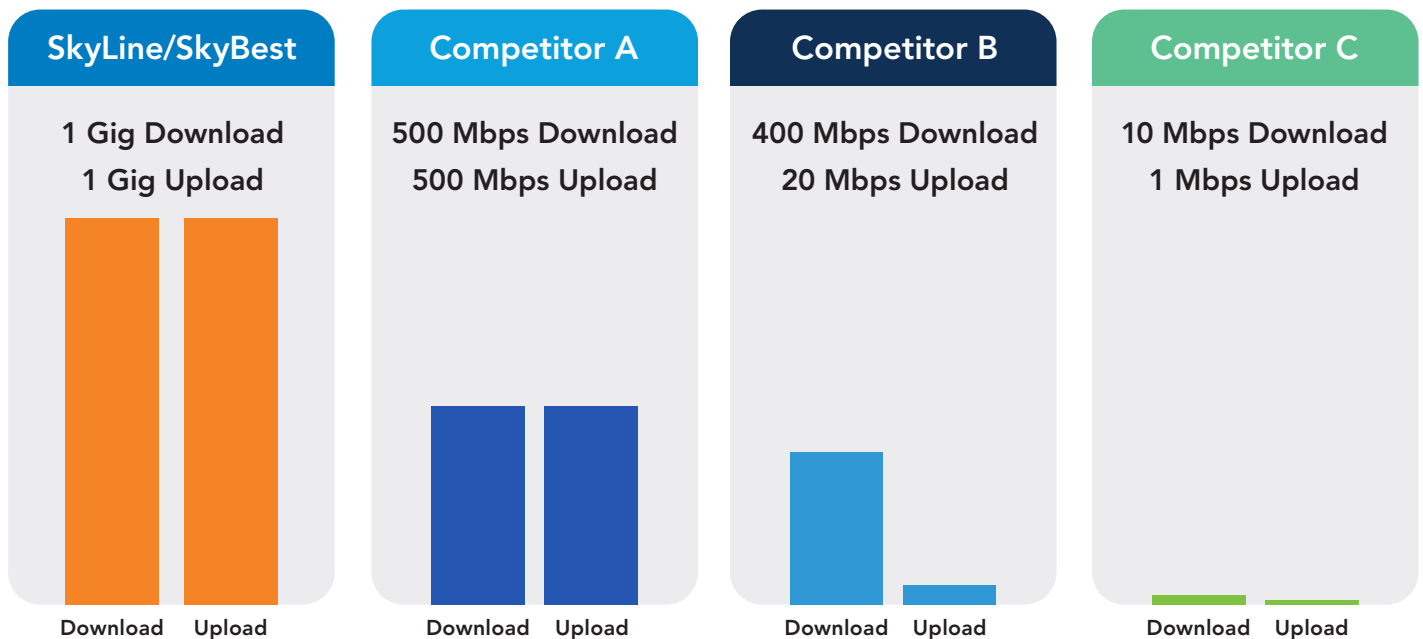
Giving More Support to Local Causes. In general, small local businesses donate more per sales dollar to local nonprofits, events and sports teams compared to big businesses. Their owners and employees are also more likely to "do good" through volunteering at community events and serving on local advisory boards.

Whenever possible, SkyLine/SkyBest encourages you to buy local (and dine local, play local and give local) and spread this message to others. It's up to all of us to keep our local communities thriving.

SkyLine/SkyBest remains dedicated to supporting the communities in our service areas through our purchase decisions, sponsorships, volunteer hours and event participation. To learn how we give back through our scholarships, youth programs, schools and the arts, local outreach and more, visit www.skybest.com/local.

¹<https://www.amiba.net/resources/localhero/>

Only SkyLine/SkyBest offers 1 Gig symmetrical speeds



With SkyBest symmetrical speeds, you'll have the upload speed to support applications including:

- Hard drive backups
- In-house web hosting
- Cloud applications such as Google Docs, Dropbox and iCloud
- Voice over IP (VoIP) telephone service
- Video conferencing
- Medical billing



To learn about our fiber internet offers, call 1-844-SKYBEST
or contact BusinessSolutions@skyline.org.