



SkyLine CEO Jimmy Blevins addresses the audience after receiving the NTC Manager Lifetime Achievement Award on February 28.



With members of the SkyLine Board of Directors and Chief Management Officer (CMO) Kim Shepherd, SkyLine CEO Jimmy Blevins holds the Manager Lifetime Achievement Award he received at the Annual Meeting of NTC – the Rural Broadband Association in Austin, Texas.

## Blevins Awarded National Manager Life Achievement Award at NTC Annual Meeting

The Rural Broadband Association recognized six rural telecommunications industry leaders for their achievements and service to the industry during the 2018 Rural Telecom Industry Meeting & EXPO in Austin, Texas, on February 28, and Jimmy Blevins, SkyLine Chief Executive Officer, was among the six awardees.

Blevins received the "Manager Life Achievement Award" for his leadership in establishing a company culture that is both forward-looking and customer-centric. Now in his 32nd year with SkyLine, Blevins began his career with the cooperative in 1985 as a staff engineer. He was promoted through the ranks, becoming Engineering Manager in 1988, Plant Operations Officer in 1997, and Chief Technology Officer in 2004. Blevins assumed his current role as Chief Executive Officer in July 2008. As the architect of SkyLine's present-day network, Blevins established early on in his tenure that the company remain at the cutting edge and reflect the very latest in technology, while also forging strategic alliances with peer cooperative organizations to ensure that SkyLine's regional network connections are just as robust. SkyLine has invested more than \$200 million into its network since the late 1980s, culminating in the Fiber-to-the-Premise (FTTP) initiative which began in 2004 and concluded (engineering and construction) in 2016.

Blevins has introduced and implemented several visionary initiatives during his time as CEO, which includes being the founder of The Video Exchange (thevideoexchange.com), an e-commerce business for exchange of video programming, developing a special 'weekender' internet service plan for weekend-only residents, creating the concept for utilizing a log cabin as a 'Smart Home' retail center, and developing a solution to help connect low-income students with their school network, which won a North Carolina Governor's education award in Alleghany County.

Under his leadership, SkyLine and its subsidiary SkyBest Communications, Inc. have introduced new, diversified service offerings, including monitored security and medical alert, automation and surveillance, streaming TV, hosted VoIP and hosted data storage. Over the past

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Know what's below.  
Call before you dig.

## April is National Safe Digging Month

Each year, lives are endangered, money and time are wasted and property is destroyed because individuals fail to follow safe digging practices.

The "One-Call" system, which is free to the excavator as well as the homeowner, helps those who dig comply with the safety rules and regulations of the construction industry.

In a typical neighborhood, a complex web of utility lines are buried under lawns, sidewalks and driveways. When digging, one wrong move might cause the community of residents to be cut off from heat, electricity, telephones, water, 911 calls and other vital services. When you make the free call to the One-Call Center, the One-Call staff notifies their member utilities to mark the ground with color-coded paint. After the utilities are marked in your work area, you have taken the first step to avoid damage or injury.

In fact, North Carolina state law requires homeowners, contractors and excavators to contact the One-Call Center at least two business days before digging. "Taking care where you dig with a shovel or backhoe can not only prevent damage to underground utilities, but the potential loss of life as well," says Brantley Davis, SkyLine Plant Manager and a member of the Ashe County Utility Coordinating Committee.

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## Thanks for Supporting Our Directory Collection Drive



Thank you all for supporting SkyLine and area public schools in our 26th annual Directory Collection Drive. This annual initiative has been a popular way for area residents to support schools in their community by giving them their old SkyLine directory. We've enjoyed a great response to the program again this year and will announce results when all school collection reports are received.

As a reminder, SkyLine also will receive out-of-date SkyLine directories throughout the calendar year at our five office locations in Boone, Banner Elk, Sparta and West Jefferson, and we'll give credit to area schools for those we collect here.

## Directory Omission White Pages Omissions/Corrections

Mountain Advantage Tree & Landscape  
502 S. Jefferson Ave, West Jefferson 336-846-6286



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ASHE

336-982-3111

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JOHNSON

739-4500

LENOIR

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### WORTH NOTING:

Wednesday, April 11  
Ashe Heart Auction –  
Family Central

### STAFF:

Jimmy Blevins  
Chief Executive Officer

Kim Shepherd  
Chief Management Officer

Brian Tester  
Executive Director of  
Customer Operations

Angie Poe  
Customer Service Manager

Jamey Jenkins  
Retail Sales Manager

Karen P. Powell  
Public Relations Administrator  
& Editor



few years, Blevins led expansion efforts to provide fiber communications services to the business communities of Lenoir, Boone and Mountain City.

In light of the ever-changing landscape of the telecommunications industry, the company's current strategic efforts have included the pursuit of growth opportunities while further strengthening its financial position. Blevins and his senior staff commenced with acquisition activities to secure the purchase of Chesnee Telephone Company in late 2017 through SkyBest Holdings, LLC, a new subsidiary of SkyBest Communications. A second company acquisition is forthcoming this year with a stock purchase agreement signed in February. During his tenure as CEO, SkyLine/SkyBest has nearly doubled its service territory through expansions and acquisitions.

Under Blevins' leadership, SkyLine has received multiple national awards and recognitions over the past few years specifically tied to the company's efforts to complete a fiber-optic overbuild of its cooperative service footprint. In 2015, SkyLine was among the first rural-based communications providers in the U.S. to be certified as a "Gig-capable" Internet provider by NTCA – the Rural Broadband Association. In 2016, SkyLine received the "Smart Rural Community (SRC) Showcase Award" for being a top-performing broadband provider and for having a robust fiber network that communities can leverage to support innovative economic development, education, healthcare, government services, public safety and other vital public functions. Also in 2016, Blevins received the "Management Innovation Award" from NTCA for his ongoing efforts to make innovative changes to diversify the company's revenue opportunities and place the focus on the needs of the customer.

And in 2017, SkyLine was an NTCA Smart Rural Community (SRC) grant award recipient for using innovative technology deployments through the SRC's Collaborative Challenge program. With matching funds through the grant program, Blevins identified a local need that SkyLine could help address through its surveillance service to enhance the level of care for residents at Ashe Assisted Living and Memory Care in West Jefferson.

Regionally, SkyLine has been recognized in recent years with the Alfred Adams Award for Economic Development by the Boone Area Chamber of Commerce, and the Business of the Year by the Avery County Chamber of Commerce.

#### Recipe of the Month

### Cristy's Peanut Butter Cookies

#### Ingredients:

1 package yellow cake mix  
1 cup peanut butter  
1/2 cup crisco oil  
2 tablespoons water  
2 eggs

#### Instructions:

Preheat oven to 350°. Combine all ingredients and mix well. Roll into one-inch balls and place on ungreased cookie sheet. Press a crisscross on each cookie with fork. Bake for 10-12 minutes. Cool on cookie sheet for one minute.

Recipe Submitted by Dorothy Cline of Ashe County



The Annual Heart Fund Auction will be held on Wednesday, April 11, at Family Central, with daylong radio coverage of the event provided by WKSK Radio (580 AM and 93.5 FM) and live video updates on SkyZhone Channels 1 and 1001. Volunteers from the 2017 event included (l-r): Lannie Landry, Jerry Roten, Jeff Sheets, June Weaver and Rick Price.

### In the Community Join us for the 2018 Ashe County Heart Auction

SkyLine will again provide the phone bank for the Ashe County Heart Auction this year, scheduled for Wednesday, April 11, at Family Central. This is one of the local chapter's largest fund-raising events for the year, as individuals and businesses across the county contribute numerous auction items for bid, including home-baked goods from Ashe County kitchens.

WKSK Radio (580 AM and 93.5 FM) will air the auction beginning around 9 a.m., with continuing updates through the afternoon, and SkyBest TV's SkyZhone HD, Channels 1 and 1001, will complement WKSK's radio coverage with live video throughout the day.

The 2017 Heart Auction drew a big crowd and hundreds of calls, raising more than \$16,000 to support the American Heart Association.

The "Dig Safely" campaign is the centerpiece of the North Carolina Utility Notification Center's efforts to increase public awareness of North Carolina excavation laws and safe digging practices.

The North Carolina One Call Center provides a toll-free telephone number, 8-1-1, to help reduce damages to underground facilities, thereby reducing the loss of service to the public and the loss of time and money to excavators, utilities and taxpayers. And, our Shady Valley and Mountain City customers also can contact the Tennessee One-Call Center by dialing 8-1-1 from their homes or businesses served by SkyLine/SkyBest.

When you contact the One Call System, you will need the following information when you call:

- County and town
- Location of work – street address
- Nearest cross street
- Area to be marked
- Date and time of excavation or digging
- Type of work
- Your name and number or the contractor's contact information

So, be safe, not sorry: Know what's below... Call before you dig... Dial 811.

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