

BUSINESS connections



AppalCART Keeps the High Country Moving



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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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What route will you take in 2022 to get where you want to go?

The start of a new year is the traditional time to set goals and make plans to achieve them. Let SkyLine/SkyBest help by connecting you to the resources you'll need along the way.

Perhaps one of your goals is to regularly educate your employees about computer threats. **Cyber Security Essentials** on page 3 is a quick refresher course on the basics.

You'll find a **Business Spotlight on AppalCART** on pages 4 and 5, which was the transportation inspiration for this issue's route theme. AppalCART Director Craig Hughes explains how its bus routes and van services provide transportation to community members who would otherwise not have access to key goods and services. SkyLine/SkyBest enables AppalCART to efficiently transport voice and data through our hosted VoIP, security and internet services.

On page 6, you get to **Meet the Team**—the newly expanded SkyLine/SkyBest Business Sales Team: Brent Keith, Robin Miller, Hollie Brown, Haleigh Hogg and Zara Worley. Whatever route your business takes with communications technology, this team will provide excellent solutions and support. If call management is an issue, you may want to **Make Your Next Phone System a Hosted VoIP**, which is discussed on page 7.

Your business may travel smoothly on its route or face unexpected detours. Either way, SkyLine/SkyBest will journey with you.

Sincerely,



Kim Shepherd
Chief Executive Officer

ON THE COVER:

(L to R) Zara Worley, Business Sales Executive at SkyLine/SkyBest; Judy Arwood, Finance Officer at AppalCART; Patrick Nelson, Human Resources/Administrative Coordinator at AppalCART; Craig Hughes, Director at AppalCART; Hollie Brown, Inside Sales Coordinator at SkyLine/SkyBest and Haleigh Hogg, Business Sales Executive at SkyLine/SkyBest.



Cyber Security Essentials

Is your business taking these important precautions?

You've invested so much time and money into building your business. To protect it, you buy property insurance, put locks on the doors and install fire alarms. Have you made cyber security a similar priority?

Every computer can be vulnerable to a cyber attack, and the consequences range from simple inconvenience to a devastating data loss. Today's businesses face three major online threats: spam, viruses and phishing. Fortifying your company against these threats is critical in order to prevent valuable information from falling into the wrong hands or your computers from malfunctioning.

Taking these small steps today will go a long way toward avoiding future trouble:

1. Use antivirus and anti-spyware software and keep it up to date.

New threats are discovered daily and keeping your software updated is one of the easiest ways to protect your business from an attack; simply set your computers to automatically update. Also activate your firewall and regularly download the security protection updates (known as patches) that are released by most major software companies.

2. Educate your employees to not open email attachments from unknown sources.

Computer viruses are commonly spread through email attachments so it's vital to pay attention to the source before opening them. In addition, make sure your employees don't click on links within unsolicited email messages or install any software programs unless they're from a reputable source.

3. Use strong passwords.

Lock your online accounts, computers and other devices with passwords of at least eight characters that contain a mixture of uppercase and lowercase letters as well as numbers. Keep passwords secret and change them frequently.

4. "Look before you leap" with sensitive information.

Make it a policy to check for signs that a webpage is safe before you or your employees conduct online transactions. Check for an "https" at the beginning of a web address (URL) and a closed padlock icon beside it. This indicates that the website has taken extra security steps to protect your information. Never give sensitive information in response to an email or instant message (IM) request.

5. Take special precautions with laptops and mobile devices.

It's a good idea to have written cyber security practices that address the use of laptops and mobile devices. For example, when public Wi-Fi is used, train employees to confirm the exact spelling of the wireless network they're connecting to and watch out for clever, slightly misspelled fakes. In addition, remind them to keep laptops or mobile devices with them at all times, even if they intend to be "right back." Unattended equipment in public places is an invitation for theft and access to your company's information.

For more information about cyber security, visit staysafeonline.org/cybersecure-business.



Beware of Phishing Emails Claiming to be from SkyLine/SkyBest

Our company has received recent reports from customers of an email regarding their "Skybest" email accounts. This email claimed the customers' webmail version was outdated and needed to be upgraded or their accounts would be closed. It included an "UPGRADE NOW" link.

If you receive an email like this, know that it is NOT from SkyLine/SkyBest. DO NOT click on any links or provide any information. Here are two signs it's fraudulent:

- The email is NOT coming from a skyline.org email address.
- It uses a lowercase "b" in "Skybest."

Emails such as these are phishing scams. They try to get you to share personal data—such as account numbers, Social Security numbers or your login IDs and passwords—to steal your money, identity or both. Scammers also use phishing emails to gain access to your computer or network to install programs like ransomware that can lock you out of access.

Please call us at 1-800-759-2226 should you ever be suspicious of an email claiming to come from SkyLine/SkyBest.

AppalCART

High Country transportation
for a higher quality of life



One of AppalCART's buses departs from its base location on NC Highway 105 in Boone.

Since 1981, AppalCART has been Watauga County's Public Transportation Authority, committed to keeping the High Country moving with sustainable, high-quality transportation. Its services began as Appalachian Campus Area Rapid Transit, and thus, it became AppalCART.

A Variety of Services

AppalCART provides 13 fare-free, fixed bus routes with most stops within the Town of Boone limits. In addition, AppalCART offers 10 routes via its van services (Paratransit, Rural General Public and Project on Aging):

- Paratransit Service uses wheelchair-accessible vans and operates within three-quarters of a mile from the fixed bus routes.
- Rural Service is for those outside of the Town of Boone limits but within Watauga County. All routes are open to the public, and specific fare-free routes are available to those who qualify with Project on Aging.

Sunway Charters provides regional travel to areas outside of the High Country such as Wilkesboro, Winston-Salem, Greensboro, Lenoir, Gastonia and Charlotte.

Making a Difference in the Community

There's much more to AppalCART than simply transporting people from point A to point B. Its services enable riders to enhance their quality of life.

AppalCART Director Craig Hughes said, "AppalCART provides transportation for a large portion of the population who would not have access to key goods and services without us. The transit system has provided fare-free fixed route (bus) service since 2005. It allows anyone accessing the buses at one of our stops to ride anywhere in our fixed route system without paying a fee or showing an ID card. We also offer a complimentary paratransit (van) service for those with disabilities that might prevent them from accessing a bus stop or riding on the bus. The complimentary paratransit service is free to those seeking access to locations within three-quarters of a mile of our fixed routes. There's an application process for the service, but it's very straightforward."

He continued, "AppalCART works with the Watauga County Project on Aging to provide access to the Lois E. Harrill Senior Center and the Western Watauga Community Center. This allows many seniors to get out and engage with the community without worrying about transportation. There's also a partnership with Watauga County that allows us to provide transportation for the elderly and disabled populations in Watauga County to vital medical appointments they may not otherwise be able to access."

With funding from N.C. Department of Health and Human Services, AppalCART has also been providing free transportation to COVID-19 vaccination appointments.



AppalCART Director Craig Hughes works with SkyBest technology at the front desk of the AppalCART Office.

SkyBest Services Enhance Efficiency

While AppalCART is the expert at transporting people, SkyLine/SkyBest knows a thing or two about transporting voice and data. AppalCART benefits from our communications expertise as a business customer of SkyBest Hosted VoIP, SkyBest Security and SkyBest Business Class Internet.

Hughes is especially pleased with the advantages offered by SkyBest Hosted VoIP compared to the previous phone system used by AppalCART. “The voicemail system is more user friendly and easily tailored to our needs. The ability to see previous calls from previous days and to put several people on hold are both convenient features, and the upgraded VoIP phones provide much improved sound quality,” he said.

“The SkyLine/SkyBest customer service has been outstanding. The installation for the new SkyBest Hosted VoIP system went smoothly and the training they provided answered all of our questions.”

— CRAIG HUGHES, DIRECTOR, APPALCART

How would Hughes describe the customer service and tech support from SkyLine/SkyBest? He replied, “The SkyLine/SkyBest customer service has been outstanding. The installation of the new SkyBest Hosted VoIP system went smoothly and the training they provided answered all of our questions. The tech support from SkyLine/SkyBest has also been first rate. When we did have a service interruption due to an internet outage, the folks at SkyLine/SkyBest resolved the problem within minutes of notification.”

Electric Vehicles Down the Road

What does the future hold for AppalCART? Hughes said, “Electric vehicles are going to be key to our future operations. Our first electric bus will arrive in April 2022, and we’re looking to move further in that direction. NCDOT is partnering with us to prepare a fleet electrification plan to help us figure out our next steps.”

Double-Decker Bus Trial Run Was a Hit

For the first half of October 2021, Boone residents were seeing double—as in a double-decker bus on AppalCART’s Pop 105 route. It was a test run to see if the double-decker bus might replace existing buses in the future.

AppalCART Director Craig Hughes said, “It was interesting to see the looks on everyone’s faces as the double-decker bus went down the road. It wasn’t what many people were expecting to see in Boone, but that doesn’t mean we don’t have a need for that type of vehicle. There don’t appear to be any major issues that would prevent us from introducing a double-decker bus or two to our fleet someday.”

Hughes added, “The double-decker bus costs about \$900,000 compared to a typical AppalCART bus that costs \$500,000. But if it can carry the same number of passengers as two buses, then the fuel, maintenance and labor costs could save AppalCART a significant amount of money. Plus, a double-decker bus may attract people to use public transportation who may not have considered it in the past.”

Meet the Team

We're ready to serve you with over 90 years of collective telecom experience



(Back Row, L to R) Hollie Brown, Brent Keith and Robin Miller
(Front Row, L to R) Zara Worley and Haleigh Hogg

Brent Keith, Strategic Sales Supervisor, had been searching for the right people to join the SkyLine/SkyBest Business Sales Team. He finally found them — Haleigh Hogg and Zara Worley.

“We’ve been recruiting for our Business Sales Executive positions for several months and were excited to be able to fill them with two outstanding candidates! Haleigh Hogg and Zara Worley are very motivated and enthusiastic about joining the SkyLine/SkyBest Business Sales Team, and we’re delighted to welcome them,” said Keith.

He continued, “Haleigh and Zara are well-educated professionals and bring many competencies to their roles. They’re excited about working with our business customers to make sure we understand their communications needs. Both are originally from the High Country and have a community-oriented focus.”

The SkyLine/SkyBest Business Sales Team also includes experienced, long-time members Robin Miller and Hollie Brown, each excelling in the position of Inside Sales Coordinator and setting the standard for business customer service.

Fully staffed and moving forward, the SkyLine/SkyBest Business Sales Team will continue its commitment to excellence. Keith noted, “We’re always dedicated to our customers and to building new and better relationships within the communities we serve. Our goal is, and has always been, to work together to provide our customers with the best communications technology and follow that up with the best customer service in the industry.”

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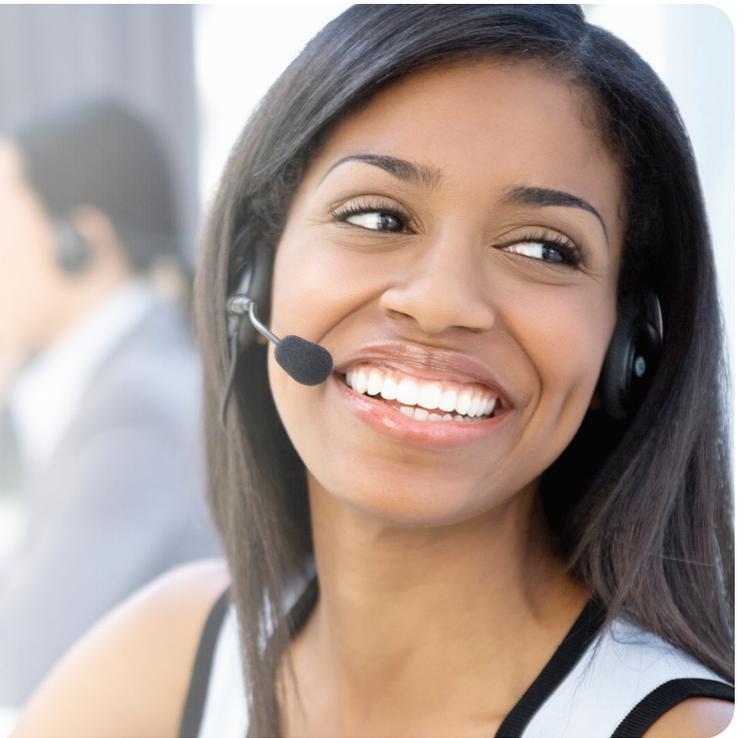
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SkyLine  SkyBest

Make Your Next Phone System a **Hosted VoIP**

It offers the flexibility to accommodate changes in workforce and aid in business continuity



What kind of a phone system does your business currently use? Perhaps you have a few phone lines that connect to a key system or private branch exchange (PBX). And, perhaps this on-site equipment was installed years ago and is starting to become a challenge to maintain. If so, you may want to re-evaluate your unified communications needs and consider making the switch to SkyBest Hosted VoIP.

What is Hosted VoIP?

Hosted VoIP (also known as Hosted Voice, Virtual Voice and Remote PBX) is a service provided by a telecommunications provider and hosted in the cloud. This means SkyBest Hosted VoIP subscribers don't have to purchase, set up and maintain an onsite PBX. They get to enjoy all the features and capabilities of a best-in-class, unified communications system available without the need for a big upfront purchase.

With SkyBest Hosted VoIP, your business will have the ability to be accessible anytime, anywhere.

Configure as Needed

The flexible, scalable infrastructure of SkyBest Hosted VoIP can easily grow as your business grows. Because it's a cloud-based system, you can add new users and new equipment at anytime.

SkyBest Hosted VoIP is also a feature-rich phone system, and the features can be personalized for each user, with no on-site IT expertise required.

Maintain Calls After an Outage

SkyBest Hosted VoIP offers superior disaster recovery attributes as compared to a premise-based system and can play an important role in business continuity planning. Since it's a cloud-based system, events at your business location—such as a power outage, fire or other interruption—would not prevent incoming calls. Users can quickly route their calls to an alternate location or mobile device, enabling business to proceed.

A phone is a lifeline for business. Strengthen this lifeline with SkyBest Hosted VoIP.

Call us at 1-844-SKYBEST to discuss how SkyBest Hosted VoIP can benefit your business.



SkyBest Hosted VoIP



SkyBest Hosted VoIP allows your business to leverage the capability of full-feature business telephones across multiple locations without maintaining core equipment onsite.

- Offers accessibility and flexibility
- Customizable and intuitive, making communications efficient and effective
- Expert installation and training from a local team that you know and trust

www.SkyBest.com

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