

# BUSINESS connections



## A Growing Business With Deep Family Roots

  
SkyLine  
SkyBest



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Hosted VoIP Works Wherever Your Employees Work **6** // Show Customers You Care **7**



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**We reap rewards when we nurture growth.** In order for any business to achieve long-term success, it must carefully nurture relationships with employees, customers and the community at large. You can't plant a seed and then leave it unattended.

The inspiration for this issue's theme came from the **Business Spotlight on Bottomley Evergreens and Farms** on pages 4 and 5. This family business is all about growth, as a major supplier of Christmas trees, fresh produce, pumpkins and beef cattle. I think you'll enjoy reading how Bottomley Evergreens and Farms got started and what keeps its employees busy throughout the year. To keep them connected, SkyLine/SkyBest provides broadband internet, managed Wi-Fi and Hosted Voice.

SkyLine/SkyBest actively nurtures relationships with the communities we serve, which is one reason to **Feel Good About Choosing Us**, as you'll learn on page 3. Then on page 6, we explain why **Hosted VoIP Works Wherever Your Employees Work** and meets the growing list of requirements for today's businesses.

You're encouraged on page 7 to **Show Customers You Care**, since customer appreciation builds loyalty and helps your business grow. Check out the nine ideas this article shares and consider implementing at least one of them.

Spring is here. How will your business grow in the months ahead? We're here to help with productivity-boosting communications solutions.



Sincerely,

Kim Shepherd  
Chief Executive Officer

**ON THE COVER:**

*Back row (L to R): Drew Meeks, Christian Hernandez, Shane Stoker, Jane Frazier, Tina Evans, Nallely Siordia, Jean Pierre and Justin Dalton*

*Front row (L to R): Michelle Blevins, Martha Bottomley, Nancy Phillips, Haleigh Seamon, Zara Blevins and Mack Osborne*

*Photo credit for local images: Todd Bush*



SkyLine/SkyBest knows your business has options when it comes to choosing a provider for communications services. So, we want you to know how much we appreciate your loyal support. It's truly a win-win situation when a local business like yours chooses a local provider like us for internet, voice, business systems, hosting and security solutions:

- **It's good for your business.** No matter what communications challenges you have, you get reliable, cost-efficient services from SkyLine/SkyBest. Plus, you can count on responsive technical support and customer service from our local staff.
- **It's good for economic development.** SkyLine/SkyBest employs area residents and the dollars you spend with us stay close to home. In addition, we provide the super-fast and reliable fiber internet services required for economic development and for the very survival of our rural areas.
- **It's good for community organizations and events.** SkyLine/SkyBest is actively involved in the communities we serve through membership in local chamber and civic clubs as well as participation in, and sponsorship of, many area events.
- **It's good for volunteering and donations.** SkyLine/SkyBest gives generously each year, through volunteer hours and financial donations, to a wide variety of local community organizations. We also sponsor our own Project Teamwork, SkyChange and Rise & Shine Breakfast Drive to help those in need.
- **It's good for area students.** SkyLine/SkyBest funds local scholarships, offers youth leadership programs, gives technology grants and supports local schools and the arts. We also sponsor high school juniors for a once-in-a-lifetime educational experience in Washington D.C. for the Foundation for Rural Service Youth Tour.

**Thanks again for choosing SkyLine/SkyBest. Good things happen when we work together.**



Robin Miller

Katie Eldreth

### New Chapters for Business Sales Team

After 28 years of dedicated service, we congratulate Robin Miller on her well-earned retirement from SkyLine/SkyBest. Robin has been a cornerstone of our Business Sales team, and we deeply appreciate her contributions over the years. We wish her all the best in her next chapter!

As we say goodbye to Robin, we are excited to welcome Katie Eldreth as our new Inside Sales Coordinator. With nearly a decade of experience in customer service at SkyLine/SkyBest, Katie is well-prepared to bring the same level of personalized attention that defines our commitment to business customers. She joins Hollie Brown on Inside Sales, to continue delivering exceptional support to our business community.

Together, our team is ready to assist you with all your communications needs and looks forward to serving you with excellence. Please reach out if you have questions.

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Mack Osborne from Bottomley Evergreens and Farms and Zara Blevins from SkyLine/SkyBest



# Bottomley Evergreens and Farms

*This family business has its roots in Christmas and cabbage*

In 1980, 8-year-old Mitchell Bottomley would tie evergreen garlands with his grandpa, Bunk Roten, to earn a little extra Christmas money. When his grandpa died in 1990, Bottomley took this childhood memory and developed a business idea with his father, Blan Bottomley, a cabbage grower. The result later that year was Bottomley Evergreens and Farms.

Today, Mitchell and his mother, Martha Bottomley, own the family business and operate it along with Mitchell's brothers, Tracy Bottomley and Kelly Bottomley, and the rest of the management team. Bottomley Evergreens and Farms has about 100 full-time workers and is the largest employer in Allegheny County. During its Christmas evergreen season, the business adds more than 800 temporary workers.

## Producing Holiday Decor Plus Healthy Food

The Blue Ridge Mountains of Northwest North Carolina and Southwest Virginia, where rain is abundant and the air is cool, provide ideal growing conditions for the Frasier Fir. Known as the "Rolls Royce of Christmas trees," the Frasier Fir has two-tone soft needles, stiff branches and a pleasant aroma — making them a treat to decorate. Bottomley Evergreens and Farms grows approximately 6,000 acres of these trees, and is now the largest shipper and supplier of Christmas trees and Christmas greens in the U.S.

In addition to Christmas, other segments of this diversified business include:

- **Fresh Produce** – Bottomley Evergreens and Farms grows high-quality produce including cabbage, broccoli, kale, collards, mustard, turnips, parsley, cilantro, green beans and sweet corn to transport nationwide.
- **Pumpkins** – Each fall, the fields of Bottomley Evergreens and Farms are dotted with thousands of pumpkins — heirloom, carving, white and pie pumpkin varieties — as well as decorative gourds.
- **Beef Cattle** – Bottomley Evergreens and Farms produces natural grass-fed and grass-finished Angus beef and currently has 15,000 beef cattle.
- **Trucking** – This division uses refrigerated and dry van trucks to pick up vegetables from growers out west, drop off the shipments to retailers, and bring back vegetables to the East Coast.



***All of us at Bottomley appreciate the reliable performance of our SkyLine/SkyBest internet and phone services. We heavily depend on having great Wi-Fi and being able to efficiently manage the many calls we receive daily.***

— MACK OSBORNE, SALES MANAGER, BOTTOMLEY EVERGREENS AND FARMS

### Growth Requires Strong Connections

Sales Manager Mack Osborne has been with Bottomley Evergreens and Farms for 17 years and seen a lot of growth and change in the industry. “I stay in touch with buyers across the country and work on pre-book orders, price negotiating and store forecasting for many companies. You have to be a great multitasker in my line of work and be willing and ready to do whatever it takes to make a difference. My greatest pleasure in this role is to have customers and consumers happy with our products and service at the end of each season,” Osborne said.

How do Osborne and the rest of the staff stay connected to each other and to their many customers? Since 1996, SkyLine/SkyBest has provided Bottomley Evergreens and Farms with advanced communications solutions which currently include broadband internet, managed Wi-Fi and Hosted Voice at several locations.

“All of us at Bottomley appreciate the reliable performance of our SkyLine/SkyBest internet and phone services. We heavily depend on having great Wi-Fi and being able to efficiently manage the many calls we receive daily. It’s very important to have services that enable us to work well and stay in communication,” Osborne said.



(L to R) Zara Blevins, Mack Osborne, Haleigh Seamon and Justin Dalton

### Shifting Focus Throughout the Year

He added, “The work changes from month to month. Bottomley Evergreens and Farms is a year-round shipper of produce. During January through March, we’re sourcing seed, plants and hardgoods. In March, we start land prep and planting for crops. By May, we’re cropping and shipping to our customers. It’s a continuous cycle up to when we harvest our fall pumpkin program in late August through the week of Halloween. Then we shift our focus to the Christmas trees and greenery which is a super busy time of the year for us. We start shipping the first of November for Christmas, and it lasts until approximately December 10th. Bottomley currently ships all over the United States and Canada, and is a one-stop shop for most customers.”

### Bottomley by the Numbers



Farms a total of  
**45,000+ acres**



Farms  
**3,000 acres+ for fall**  
pumpkins and gourds



**7–8 million trees**  
are in the ground



Has a trucking company with  
**175 semis**



Manufactures about  
**3 million Christmas items**  
annually including wreaths and garlands



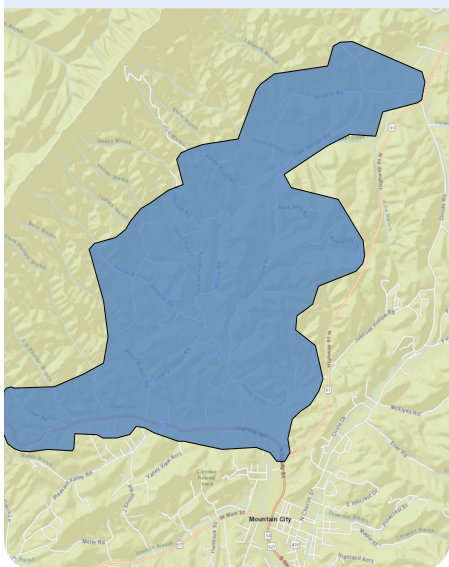
Grows  
**20 types of produce**

## We're Expanding Our Reach in Cold Springs

At SkyLine/SkyBest, our mission is to keep communities connected through the best communications and technology solutions, and we're thrilled to expand our reach even further in Johnson County, TN. Our latest project brings fiber-optic connectivity to the areas surrounding Cold Springs Road—an exciting extension just southeast of our incumbent area of Shady Valley and north of our existing service footprint in the Mountain City business district.

This natural expansion includes more than 34 miles of state-of-the-art infrastructure, bringing high-speed fiber internet to over 900 homes and businesses in the region. We are now taking orders, and with our new lower rates on our fastest speeds, there has never been a better time to experience the reliability and performance of Sky-Line/SkyBest fiber internet.

As we continue to grow, we remain committed to delivering exceptional service, unbeatable speed and the local reliability you can trust. Stay connected with us and be part of the robust future of Johnson County! For details, visit [fiber.skybest.com](http://fiber.skybest.com).



# Hosted VoIP Works Wherever Your Employees Work



These days, fewer businesses function solely from one location. It's more common for work to sometimes take place in different places, depending on the employee and the demands of the day. You may have employees who always work from home, for example, or employees who frequently work on the road.

Unlike a wired PBX system with physical phone lines, Hosted VoIP uses Voice over Internet Protocol to provide a location-independent solution that enables employees to bring their business phone line with them anywhere they go. VoIP transforms voices into digital data packets, which are transmitted through the internet. Calls can be made through a computer, smartphone, tablet, IP phone or even a traditional phone connected to an adapter.

SkyLine/SkyBest calls our VoIP solution Hosted Voice, and it's an excellent choice if your business includes one or more of the following:

- **Remote Employees** – They can make and receive calls at home using their normal work number and have access to all the same calling features available at the office.
- **Flexible Teams** – Do you add temporary employees during your busy season or regularly hire new employees? Hosted Voice makes it easy to generate and discard numbers, so each employee has a unique account with no mix-ups with previous number holders.
- **Multiple Locations** – If you've opened a second store or have office locations in several cities, Hosted Voice provides the same unified phone system to all locations. Employees who work in multiple locations can keep the same personal business number no matter what office they're in when they answer the phone.
- **Vehicle Fleets** – Hosted Voice offers communications mobility for teams on the road such as home service technicians or delivery drivers.
- **Business Travel** – It's easier for your traveling employees (and their callers) if the same personal business number is always used. With Hosted Voice, they can log into their business phone from anywhere.

To learn more about Hosted Voice from SkyLine/SkyBest, call 1-844-SKYBEST or visit [skybest.com/HostedVoice](http://skybest.com/HostedVoice).

# Show Customers **You Care**

*Customer appreciation builds loyalty and grows businesses*

You probably know that retaining existing customers is less costly than attracting new ones. But what are you doing to encourage them to stick around? Excellent customer service is a good start, but you can gain even greater loyalty by adding tangible expressions of customer appreciation. Here are a few ideas to consider:

**Offer your expertise.** Be helpful by sharing your knowledge in regular newsletters, on your website or through social media. Address customers' changing needs in the information you provide. For example, a landscaping company might provide tips for planting bulbs in the fall and how to nurture the flowers they become in the spring.

**Hold a customer appreciation event.** Whether it's a party, a presale or an educational seminar, customers will feel valued when you invite them to a special gathering.

**Create customer categories.** Categorize customers who spend a certain dollar amount, visit a certain number of times or refer your business to others. Then give them category-specific rewards.

**Give a true gift.** Honor long-time customers with a free gift every year or so. Select items that convey thoughtfulness and personal attention (such as unique, locally made items or a gift card to your store) rather than items that seem more like marketing ploys (such as mass-produced pens with your logo or a gift card that only works if the customer refers a friend).

**Offer discounts.** Reward customers who sign up for your email list with frequent discount codes that can be redeemed at your store or website.

**Partner with other businesses.** If you're a dry cleaner, partner with a tailor; if you're a bookstore, partner with a card store. Ask your partner business to give you coupons, discounts or freebies to include with your own.

**Create a "wall of fame."** Either at your physical location or on your website, recognize and feature your best customers with a photo and a brief description. If your customers are other businesses, this is a welcome promotional benefit.

**Send a card.** There are many opportunities to recognize customers by sending cards — including birthdays and holidays or following a major purchase. The best cards include a handwritten note about your specific experience with each customer.

**Pick up the phone.** Take the time to check in with customers and ask if there's anything additional you can do to improve your products or services.

Remember, customer loyalty is good for business. When you show customers you appreciate them, they are more likely to refer you to others. And with so many social media sites available to share information, spreading the word is easier, and more impactful, than ever.



# *Support Small Business!*



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encourage everyone  
to Shop Small.

Contact us for all of  
your internet and  
business phone needs.

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