

BUSINESS connections



AT THE HEART OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Adam Johnson (SkyLine Field Services Technician), Ginny Campbell, Wysteria White, Tanis Trivette and Dan Meyer.

Photo by Todd Bush, bushphoto.com



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“Individual commitment to a group effort—that is what makes a team work, a company work, a society work, a civilization work.” These words were spoken by renowned football coach, Vince Lombardi, and clearly express the vital role each person plays in the success of a group. In the business world, building strong groups enables us to accomplish far more than we could do alone.

The power of working together for a common goal is demonstrated in this issue of *Business Connections*. On page 3, we take a look at the role of cooperatives in our country as we celebrate Co-op Month in October. As a co-op, SkyLine Membership Corporation is owned by our members so our success is your success. Whether you are a SkyLine member or a SkyBest customer, you are supporting our work in this community by using SkyLine/SkyBest products and services.

The Business Spotlight on pages 4 and 5 features the Boone Area Chamber of Commerce, another example of what can be achieved when a group works toward a common goal. I know many of you are members of your local Chamber of Commerce and do your part to help further our region’s economic development. SkyLine/SkyBest is proud to have a strong relationship with each area Chamber, including the Boone Chamber, both as its communications provider and as active participants in leadership roles.

Your business is not alone. SkyLine/SkyBest is on your side and ready to do whatever we can to contribute to your productivity and efficiency. We’re in this together, so let’s put our heads together to find solutions.

Sincerely,

Jimmy C. Blevins
Chief Executive Officer



SkyLine Celebrates Co-op Month

Working together to benefit members and communities



Each October, co-ops all across America (including SkyLine) celebrate the role, accomplishments and contributions of our nation's cooperative businesses. According to statistics from the University of Wisconsin Center for Cooperatives Research, co-ops have a significant economic impact. There are more than 29,000 cooperative businesses in this country that generate more than two million jobs, create more than \$74 billion in wages and account for more than \$654 billion in revenue.

Co-ops uphold the internationally accepted values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others. As member-owned enterprises, they're run largely by the people who live and work in the communities served. Co-ops don't have to answer to shareholders; they can maintain their values and focus on meeting members' needs.

Cooperative businesses also show a special loyalty to their communities and strive to enhance the quality of life for residents. For many years, SkyLine has supported our communities through a variety of educational, economic development and charitable activities. This is a tradition of giving that is often echoed by our staff on an individual basis after regular business hours.

For example, SkyLine employees started a crisis relief fund in 1997 that lessens the financial burden to families in our service area when tragedy strikes. Each year, employee teams raise thousands of dollars to support organizations such as the American Cancer Society's Relay for Life and the American Heart Association. Our co-op has also supported economic development projects in Allegheny, Ashe and Watauga counties that provided essential community services or created jobs for area residents.

SkyLine Commemorative Cookbook

As part of SkyLine's 60th year celebration, we're delighted to introduce our third SkyLine Commemorative Cookbook. It follows in the tradition of two previous cookbooks, also produced through Project Teamwork—a crisis relief program established by our employees in 1997.

This special commemorative edition includes recipes submitted by our customers and members, and we thank each and every one who took time to contribute to it. All proceeds from the sale of these cookbooks will be contributed to food banks in our five-county service area of Allegheny, Ashe, Avery, Watauga and Johnson counties. The SkyLine Commemorative cookbook goes on sale in September. Be sure to pick up a copy for you and a few more for gifts.

**FOR PRICING AND AVAILABILITY,
CALL 1-800-759-2226.**

About the cover: The photo features a picturesque view of our service area and four of our Field Services personnel in Allegheny County: (top to bottom, left to right): Dustin Sheets, Dustin Weaver, Gary Brown and Justin Dalton. It was taken courtesy of Tom Edwards.



STOP BY ON CUSTOMER APPRECIATION DAY

Please join us for an open house to celebrate Co-op Month and SkyLine's 60th year, to be held Thursday, October 13, at all SkyLine Customer Service Centers from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. We'll be offering refreshments and SkyLine/SkyBest mementos while they last!



Boone Area Chamber of Commerce

A new location plus community support make it “bullish on Boone”

In June of this year, the Boone Area Chamber of Commerce moved to a new location at 870 West King Street in Boone, N.C. This 2,400-square-foot building puts the Chamber right in the middle of the action on the city’s main street and is adjacent to the Watauga County Courthouse.

Left to right: Dan Meyer, President/CEO; Former Board Chairs—Scott Eggers, Joedy Eller and Jeff Parlier; Current Chair—Omer Tomlinson; Ginny Campbell—BACC Director of Operations; Former Board Chair—Harry Davis; Chair-Elect—Daniel Minton; Wysteria White, BACC Administrative Associate and Tanis Trivette, Assistant.

Better for Visitors and Members

Dan Meyer, President/CEO, describes the benefits of the move this way, “Our new location on King Street helps visitors find us, and it’s more convenient for them; there’s parking available both under the building and behind it. The building is only about four years old and the chamber occupies one of six office suites. Its two-story design includes a lobby that’s perfect for displaying the chamber’s promotional materials, and an upstairs area with conference rooms and offices. Balconies overlook King Street so we can literally keep our eyes on what’s happening in our community.”

Meyer adds, “This location is actually smaller than our previous one of 20 years. We right-sized by making the move, since before, we had more space

than we needed. It’s also very nicely appointed, so members can take pride in it. I believe our new location makes the statement that we’re bullish on Boone and committed to investing in this community.”

The mission of the Boone Area Chamber of Commerce is to advance economic prosperity and to encourage public/private cooperation that will broaden the economic base and enhance the quality of life. It’s a voluntary membership association that serves as the unified voice of the business community, joining together companies, professionals, organizations, groups and educational institutions that are committed to building a better community. Most of the approximately 750 members are small businesses interested in making a big impact by creating and fostering a healthy business environment.

Connections With SkyLine/SkyBest

When it came time to make plans for the communications equipment and services at the chamber’s new location, Meyer contacted Brent Keith, SkyLine/SkyBest Business Sales Executive. Meyer recalls, “I told Brent that we wanted a basic phone system that was simple

and user friendly. We also wanted to be able to manage the phone system ourselves by making in-house changes. He helped us develop our specifications, and recommended an ESI system with on-board directions.”

Brent Keith notes, “The new ESI system that we installed for the Chamber will easily serve their needs now and in the future, with the ability to grow both in capacity and functionality with its Voice over IP backbone.”

ESI phone systems are integrated and self-contained, known for providing advanced capabilities while remaining simple to operate. The Boone Area Chamber of Commerce was the first purchaser of an ESI phone system from SkyLine/SkyBest. This system offers a wide variety of features including voice mail, call transfers and conference calling. Says Meyer, “Everything is working great with our ESI phone system. Brent is our go-to guy, and he supplied training for our staff when the system was installed to make sure the transition went smoothly.”

Our new location on King Street helps visitors find us, and it's more convenient for them.”

— DAN MEYER, PRESIDENT/CEO, BOONE AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



The Boone Area Chamber of Commerce also gets its Internet service from SkyLine/SkyBest. Explains Keith, “The Chamber has SkyBest Communications fiber-optic broadband service that is delivered via Ethernet right to their network — no modem necessary. It’s the same high-speed broadband service that they enjoyed at their old location.”

This broadband service will be put to good use. Meyer says, “Soon we’ll have a kiosk set up in the building’s lobby, so visitors will be able to easily access our site at www.boonechamber.com and get information about business-to-business activities, tourism, relocation and so on.”

The relationship between the Chamber and SkyLine/SkyBest is not limited to phone and Internet services. The two organizations share a strong community commitment and SkyLine/SkyBest is an active member of the Boone Area Chamber of Commerce. Meyer says, “SkyLine/SkyBest assists with our annual membership drive by allowing us to use their Seven Devils office to make recruitment calls and providing us with extra phones for this purpose.”

Meyer sums it up like this, “Everyone at SkyLine/SkyBest does an outstanding job with customer service; they’re always very responsive to our needs and ready to give us suggestions and options. It’s a good example of the benefits of doing business with other local companies; as we say on our stickers — SHOP LOCAL. CLOSER IS BETTER.”



Pictured are Dan Meyer, Robin Miller and Brent Keith.

Robin Miller Receives Outrageous Customer Service Award

Customer service is a vital component of business success. So the Boone Area Chamber of Commerce believes in recognizing those individuals who manage to take customer service past the ordinary and elevate it to the level of outrageous. Each year, during the Small Business Week, it gives the Outrageous Customer Service Award to one deserving member.

In May 2011, one of our own from SkyLine/SkyBest was recognized. Robin Miller, Inside Sales Coordinator for Ashe/Alleghany/Johnson counties, received the Outrageous Customer Service Award. Miller said of the honor, “I was thrilled to have been selected to receive this award through the Boone Chamber. To be nominated was an honor, to be chosen was extraordinary.”

Log Homes of America nominated Robin for this award. The Outrageous Customer Service Award is based on nominations submitted by businesses to the Boone Area Chamber of Commerce. Contact info@boonechamber.com for more information.

Drive Down Vehicle Costs

Save money with proper planning, maintenance and fuel smarts



Saving money is always a smart move, and even more critical in today's economy. Your business vehicles can be a significant expense, whether you have two cars or a whole fleet, so it makes sense to do what you can to cut costs. Try following these tips:

1. SAVE ON GAS COSTS

How you drive can also greatly affect gas consumption, so keep in mind this advice from the Drive Smarter Challenge:

- **Drive Calmly** - Speeding, rapid acceleration (jackrabbit starts) and rapid braking can lower gas mileage by 33 percent at highway speeds.
- **Avoid Idling** - Idling gets 0 mpg.
- **Combine Trips** - If you combine errands into one trip, you drive fewer miles and use less fuel.
- **Use Cruise Control** - Cruise control cuts fuel consumption by maintaining a steady speed during highway driving.
- **Telecommute** - A worker who telecommutes twice a week saves about \$275 a year in gasoline costs.

2. HAVE A PROCESS FOR PLANNED MAINTENANCE

Remember, a well-maintained car or fleet is safer, resulting in fewer accidents. This can help your business save on vehicle and health insurance premiums. Here are some items to check regularly and replace as needed: Fluids (including engine oil, coolant, brake fluid, transmission fluid and power steering fluid), air filter, belts, hoses, battery, tires and spark plugs.

3. BE PROACTIVE

Each vehicle has a life cycle that determines how long it should be kept. Plan ahead, and when replacement time approaches, shop around to get the best deal on a new vehicle.

4. CONSIDER FUEL-EFFICIENT VEHICLES

Hybrids, plug-in hybrids and all-electric cars are more fuel efficient.

5. EXPLORE ALTERNATIVE FUELS

With many new fuels on the market, some of them may cost less than what you're using now. For updates, check out the latest Alternative Fuel Price Report from the U.S. Department of Energy at www.afdc.energy.gov/afdc/price_report.html.

Using these strategies can save your business money today as well as down the road.

SLOW DOWN AND SAVE

Driving fast may get you to your destination more quickly, but it will cost you in fuel efficiency. According to the U.S. Department of Energy website, you can assume that each 5 mph you drive over 60 mph is like paying an additional \$0.24 per gallon for gas. That's because fuel economy drops significantly as speeds increase.

ADDED GAS COSTS FOR SPEEDS OVER 60MPH





Four C's of **Creativity**

How to encourage creative thinking at your company

When the going gets tough, the tough get creative. Historically, periods of economic decline tend to create opportunities for those with innovative minds. During the Great Depression, for example, several companies made huge bets that led to fame and fortune. One of them was DuPont, which told a star scientist to set aside basic research and pursue potentially profitable innovation—he came up with nylon.

How many times have you said, “Why didn’t I think of that?” We’re often surprised by, or envious of, great ideas we see at trade shows or in industry publications. While new ideas can turn up “out of the blue,” successful companies actively and consistently foster creativity. To encourage the creative process at your workplace, keep in mind the four C’s— Culture, Conditions, Context and Collaboration.

CULTURE – Establish a business environment where creativity is solicited, rewarded and celebrated. Let your employees know that creativity is valued. Reward employees when they come up with ways (big or small)

to increase efficiency, improve service or reduce costs.

CONDITIONS – Give your employees the resources they need to be creative. This can be as simple as allotting time during the business day for discussions, research and brainstorming.

CONTEXT – Provide a clear target for creativity by asking your employees to develop solutions for specific challenges. Give enough direction to point the way but resist being too directive, since that could actually inhibit creativity. Even “crazy” ideas frequently contain a bit of brilliance in them that can lead to practical applications.

COLLABORATION – Diverse groups tend to generate the most creative ideas since a range of expertise and viewpoints stimulates the kind of discussion that leads to innovation. To take advantage of this dynamic, establish teams composed of people from different departments. You may also want to involve customers, vendors and key stakeholders in the creative process to bring outside perspectives to the process.

Update on **60 Great Prizes**

To celebrate our “60 Years of Great Connections,” SkyLine is giving away 60 great prizes to our valued members/customers. The giveaways started in March and will continue through December, with six prizes awarded each month. One winner is selected from each county served by SkyLine— Alleghany, Ashe, Avery and Watauga counties in North Carolina and Johnson County, Tennessee.

Prizes awarded so far have included digital cameras, HDTVs, iPod Touches and Kindles. What’s more, the winners have not been limited to residential customers of SkyLine; business customers have walked away with prizes as well. For example:

- William Leonard from Ski Country Sports in Avery County won a digital camera in March.
- Ruth McCloud from McCloud Masonry Inc. in Avery County won a Kindle in April.
- Bernadette Zimmerman from Ashe County New Beginnings won a digital camera in June.

Every SkyLine member and SkyBest customer is automatically entered to win simply by having active phone service at the time of the drawing.

You can earn extra entries at www.skyline60.com.

Good luck!

SkyLine/SkyBest Makes it Easy to Communicate with *esi*

SkyLine/SkyBest has added a new communications system to its line of business solutions that is perfect for small to medium-sized companies. These exceptional systems, providing digital and IP communications, are easy to use, yet packed with advanced capabilities to enhance your competitive edge and increase efficiencies within your office. Plus, these systems come in a wide range to fit any budget. To learn more about the new ESI communications system, contact your local Inside Sales Coordinator.

Robin Miller - Ashe/Alleghany/Johnson
336-876-6231 robin.miller@skyline.org

Michelle Scott - Avery/Watauga
336-876-6155 michelle.scott@skyline.org

Wysteria White, Administrative Associate with the Boone Area Chamber of Commerce, greets callers on her new ESI phone.

