

BUSINESS connections



Museums Reopen!

Caldwell Heritage Museum – Executive Director Cindy Hedrick Day (left) and Robin Miller from SkyLine/SkyBest



Museum of Ashe County History – Robin Miller from SkyLine/SkyBest and Don Long, Museum of Ashe County History Curator



Blowing Rock Art & History Museum – (L to R) Lee Carol Giduz, Executive Director, Sharon Caldwell, Office Manager and Gabe Wilson, Curator of Exhibitions & Collections from BRAHM and Brent Keith from SkyLine/SkyBest



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BUSINESS connections

Let's look back at history and look forward to the future. This issue of *Business Connections* includes both content that recognizes the accomplishments of the past and content that celebrates the progress we can expect down the road.

History is the focus of the **Business Spotlight on Museums** on pages 4 and 5. It includes Blowing Rock Art & History Museum, Caldwell Heritage Museum and the Museum of Ashe County History—all joyfully back to welcoming visitors after pandemic-related closures. SkyLine/SkyBest provides broadband and phone services to these three museums to keep them connected to their communities.

When we think about the future, whether in the short term or long term, the topic of fiber inevitably comes up. You'll learn about **Fiber Grants for Avery and Caldwell Counties** on page 3, including how they'll help more North Carolinians in rural and remote areas have access to high-speed internet. Also on page 3, you'll get the answer to the question, **How Does Fiber-Optic Cable Work?** Then on page 6, we share an infographic on **Benefits of SkyBest Fiber Optic Internet.**

I think many of us are ready for more activities than we could safely do last year. So be sure to **Get Out and Enjoy High Country Events** as featured on page 7.

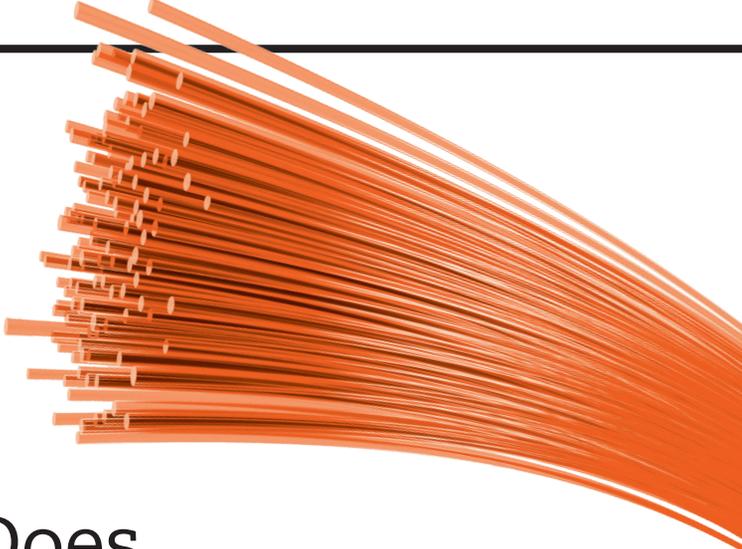
SkyLine/SkyBest looks back with gratitude at our supportive customers and looks forward to continuing to serve you in the years ahead. Please contact us if you need assistance.



Sincerely,

Kim Shepherd
Chief Executive Officer





How Does Fiber-Optic Cable Work?

Over the last 20 years or so, fiber-optic lines have taken over the telecommunications industry, primarily to increase the speed of digital information transmission. When fiber-optic cable replaces copper wiring, it also lowers maintenance costs, increases the data-carrying capacity of internet connections and improves phone clarity and TV reception.

To help you understand the basics of how a fiber-optic cable works, we'll start with this example: Imagine a flexible plastic pipe that's several miles long with its insides coated with a perfect mirror. Now imagine you are looking into one end of the pipe and several miles away at the other end, a friend turns on a flashlight and shines it into the pipe. Because the interior of the pipe is a perfect mirror, the flashlight's light will reflect off the sides of the pipe and you will see it at the other end. If your friend were to turn the flashlight on and off in a Morse code fashion, your friend could communicate with you through the pipe. That is the essence of how a fiber-optic cable works.

However, making a cable out of a mirrored tube would be bulky and difficult. That's why fiber-optic cable is actually composed of incredibly pure glass, so pure so that even though it is several miles long, light can still make it through. This glass is drawn into a very thin strand with a thickness comparable to that of a human hair, and then coated in two layers of reflective plastic. A light source—typically a laser—switches on and off rapidly at one end of the cable to transmit digital data. The light travels through the glass strands and continuously reflects off of the inside of the mirrored plastic coatings in a process known as total internal reflection. Systems based on fiber optics can transmit billions of bits of data per second, and they can even carry multiple signals along the same fiber by using lasers of different colors.

To learn about the availability of fiber services to your business, call 1-844-SKYBEST or email BusinessSolutions@skyline.org.

Fiber Grants for Avery and Caldwell Counties

More North Carolinians in rural and remote areas will have access to high-speed internet thanks to grants received by entities including SkyLine for fiber construction in Avery and Caldwell counties.

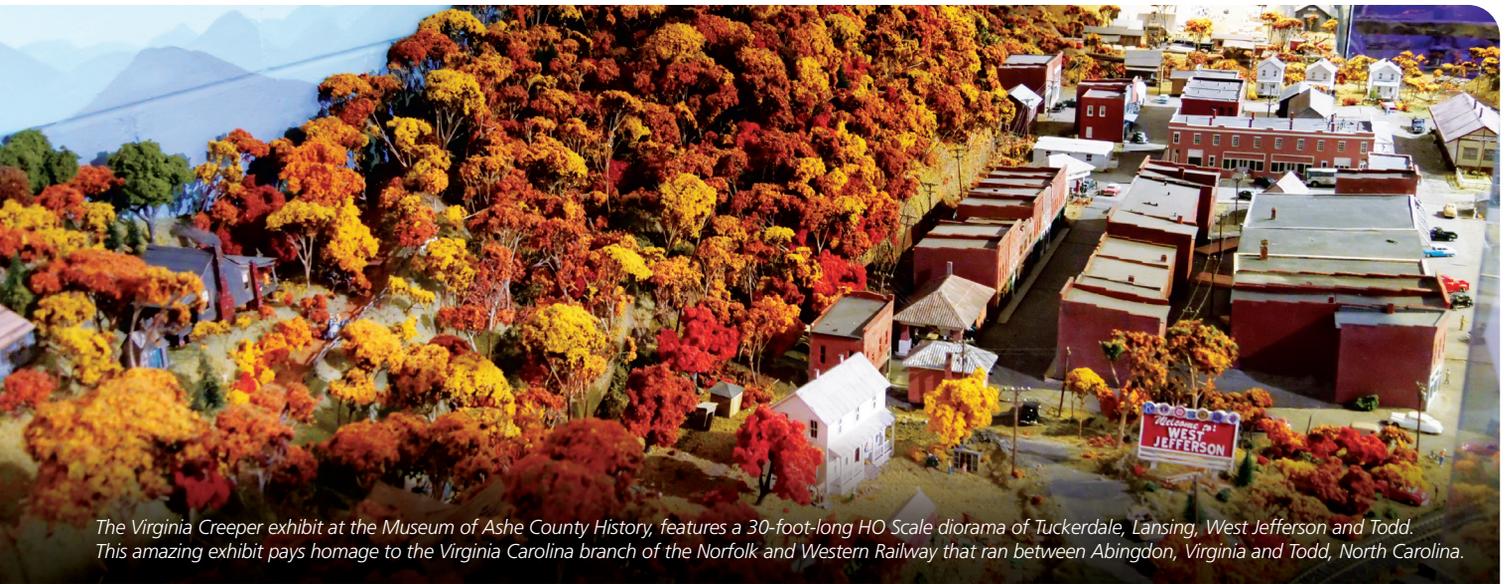
SkyLine was awarded a \$97,000 partner grant through the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) and the Avery Chamber of Commerce to extend broadband connectivity to identified unserved and underserved parts of Avery County. SkyLine will bring fiber-to-the-premise (FTTP) connectivity to the Riverside area, with services provided by SkyBest.

SkyLine also will benefit from a GREAT (Growing Rural Economies with Access to Technology) grant from the North Carolina Department of Information Technology. Blue Ridge Energy is leading the engineering and construction of fiber-optic infrastructure in parts of northern Caldwell County. As construction is completed, SkyBest Communications will provide high-speed internet service to customers.

The grant-funded area in Caldwell County includes more than 400 homes and businesses located off Highway 268 from Indian Grave Road to the Wilkes County line where no internet service other than satellite or cellular is currently available. The project will be implemented in phases with these projected timelines for completion: Phase 1 by spring 2022, Phase 2 by fall 2022 and Phase 3 by early 2023.



Photo by Todd Bush, bushphoto.com



The Virginia Creeper exhibit at the Museum of Ashe County History, features a 30-foot-long HO Scale diorama of Tuckerdale, Lansing, West Jefferson and Todd. This amazing exhibit pays homage to the Virginia Carolina branch of the Norfolk and Western Railway that ran between Abingdon, Virginia and Todd, North Carolina.

Museums are Back Open!

Blowing Rock Art & History Museum, Caldwell Heritage Museum and the Museum of Ashe County History

The historic COVID-19 pandemic temporarily closed these three history museums, preventing them from having visitors inside to tour their amazing exhibits. But through resourcefulness and determination, they maintained ties to their communities despite the challenges, and they're now open again. SkyLine/SkyBest encourages you to check out their websites and make plans to visit soon with family and friends.

Blowing Rock Art & History Museum (BRAHM)

blowingrockmuseum.org

BRAHM invites visitors to experience art and discover history. In addition to being a museum that connects people to the rich heritage of the Southern Appalachian region, BRAHM also serves as a community cultural center with a focus on engagement, enrichment and education.

Even during the period when BRAHM was closed to visitors due to the pandemic, it still found ways to connect with its members and supporters. "We offered online programs about our exhibits, BRAHM at Home online outreach and art lessons for children," noted Office Manager Sharon Caldwell. In conjunction with the Kennedy Herterich Foundation and other donors, BRAHM also

gave free art supply kits to all Watauga County K-3 students in 2020 and K-4 students in 2021 to use at home.

Now fully open, BRAHM is preparing for events including the Summer Exhibition Celebration on July 16 and the Plein Air Festival from August 18 through 21. October 2021 will mark the 10th anniversary of BRAHM, and additional events will take place then to celebrate.

Caldwell appreciates that with the increased level of activity at BRAHM, one thing she doesn't have to think about is the performance of BRAHM's communications services. SkyLine/SkyBest provides phone lines, a phone system and broadband.

“We’ve been very happy with our transition to SkyLine/SkyBest. The sales and technical side was supportive and kept us informed as to when each step of the changeover would happen. The broadband internet from SkyLine/SkyBest is reliable and fast, and the phone service has been great. My dealings with the customer service and support employees have also been positive. They’re helpful and respond in a timely manner,” said Caldwell.

Caldwell Heritage Museum

caldwellheritage1841.weebly.com

All kinds of people visit Caldwell Heritage Museum for all kinds of reasons. Executive Director Cindy Hedrick Day remarked, “The museum is a great place to learn about Caldwell County, its communities and its people. People ask us where they should visit in the area, and about restaurants and places to stay. We love our summer visitors, many of whom are from far away. Recently we had a Texas family stop by. The dad knew about Caldwell Heritage Museum and brought his parents, who live here but weren’t familiar with us. It was a win-win for all! We even had a man from Sweden come to do research for a book of fiction he was writing.”

Caldwell Heritage Museum is located in the last remaining building of the former Davenport College in Lenoir. Its exhibits, artifacts and photographs teach visitors about the early years and formation of Caldwell County and feature topics including Native American artifacts, Fort Defiance, the Keyhole House, railroad history and furniture.

While Caldwell Heritage Museum’s focus is on the past, its board keeps its eyes on the future. This includes looking for the best values in phone and internet services moving forward. After considering various options, it determined that SkyLine/SkyBest best met the museum’s needs.

Hedrick Day said, “The SkyLine/SkyBest team has been incredible—from Robin Miller who answered all our questions, to the engineer who made sure we had access to the fiber optics, to the tech crew who installed the necessary components. They’ve all walked beside us as we began this new journey. What’s more, having wonderful internet service from SkyLine/SkyBest enabled us to provide virtual programs that helped fulfill an NC CARES grant.”

Museum of Ashe County History

ashehistory.org

The Museum of Ashe County History is dedicated to the preservation of the historic Ashe County Courthouse building as a county heritage museum. Built in 1904 by local craftsmen using materials

including handmade bricks, local timber and local soapstone, it functioned as the Ashe County Courthouse until being turned over to the Museum of Ashe County History in 2000.

Executive Director Ramona Renfroe said, “We’re a go-to spot for locals to bring out-of-town family and friends. Visitors are often surprised that a small community has such a detailed and professional museum.”

Renfroe saw a silver lining in the seven months the Museum of Ashe County History had to be closed due to the pandemic. She explained, “Our staff continued to work behind the scenes during this period on collections including our exquisite new Native American exhibit. It focuses on the Native people in Ashe County—mostly Cherokee and Shawnee—and features interesting artifacts such as an effigy mask made of stone. This exhibit benefited from the extra time we had to prepare it.”

It’s vital to the functioning of the Museum of Ashe County History to have reliable communications services. SkyLine/SkyBest provides broadband, phone lines and an security system.

“I can’t say enough good things about the service and support from SkyLine/SkyBest. They’re always friendly, professional and quick to respond. For example, the tech who set up our security system was very thorough as well as patient about training employees and board members on how to use it. I also feel a strong sense of community from SkyLine/SkyBest. Their people pay attention to what our community needs,” Renfroe said.



An art class at Blowing Rock Art & History Museum



Don't Forget About Upload Speeds

Download speeds often get the most attention when people talk about internet service. While important, they aren't the only metric to consider when determining which plan would be best for your business. Robust upload speeds are also required to support activities like these:

Collaboration Applications

When doing business in the cloud, the data you download and edit needs to be uploaded back to the cloud to be saved and accessed by others. That's why collaboration applications such as Google Drive and Google Docs, which allow multiple people to work on the same files, need an upload speed fast enough to update files nearly instantaneously.

Cloud Backup

Most backup solutions offer an off-site, cloud solution. The faster your upload speeds are, the faster you can back up your data and store it safely and securely. This is particularly key during initial data retrieval processes which may involve uploading huge amounts of data.

VoIP Phone Calls and Video Conferencing

These services are two-way streets, meaning both download and upload speeds need to be fast. If your speeds are too low, your voice and/or video data could lag and cut out.

Call 1-844-SKYBEST or visit www.SkyBest.com for details on our business internet plans.

BENEFITS OF SKYBEST FIBER OPTIC INTERNET

»»» GIG!

We secured Gigabit-capable status in 2015, ahead of such cities as Miami and Atlanta. 1 Gig is 1000 Mbps!



Friendly, local customer service reps who live and work in your community!



SkyLine/SkyBest offers symmetrical Internet speeds.

3%

Research shows that FTTH availability increases home values by as much as 3%.



Community commitment:

- More than half million dollars in scholarships awarded
- \$500,000 in tech grants for area public schools
- Awarded more than \$1.8 million through the Revolving Loan Fund to support business and economic development

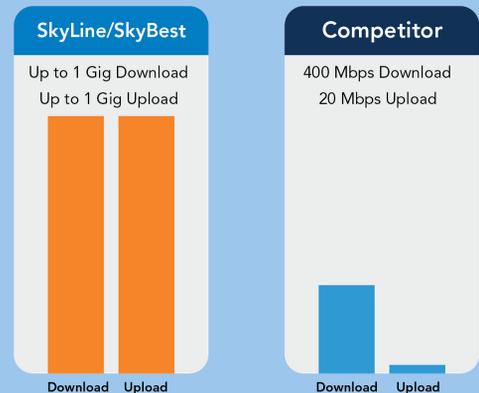
99% FIBER

99% of SkyLine's service area has access to fiber-optic internet service.



Fast and reliable internet service is a must for anyone wanting to work from home, and that's what our company provides.

OUTPERFORMS COMPETITORS MORE THAN 2X THE SPEED!



SkyLine SkyBest

Restrictions apply. Not available in all areas.

Get Out and Enjoy High Country Events

There's something for everyone in the months ahead

You'll find plenty to do as community events throughout the High Country kick into high gear.

An Appalachian Summer Festival

July 2-31

appsummer.org

Presented by Appalachian State University's Office of Arts & Cultural Programs, this annual celebration of the performing and visual arts is held in venues across the university campus. It features an eclectic mix of music, dance, theatre, visual arts and film programming, and will include live performances, plus livestreams and virtual events.

SkyLine/SkyBest is proud to be a corporate sponsor of this event.

Ashe Arts

Events throughout the year

ashecountyarts.org/events.php

The Ashe County Arts Council is committed to promoting the arts as a hallmark of an active, engaged community. Upcoming events include:

- Gallery Crawl in the Arts District of downtown West Jefferson, which is held on the second Friday of the month, now through October. Crawlers can see new and innovative works by Ashe County's leading artists.
- Fridays in the Park Concert Series in Ashe Park. Concerts are free, but registration is required.



Heritage Hall Theatre

Events throughout the year

heritagehalltheatre.org/calendar-2

Heritage Hall Theatre is located in Mountain City, Tennessee, and is well worth the short drive. It presents a diverse group of performances—from blues and rock music to plays and pageants. On the stage in the coming months will be:

- "The Kody Norris Show," July 17
- "The Stranger: Billy Joel Tribute," July 31
- Trinity River Band, August 7
- Richard Lynch Band, August 21
- The Quebe Sisters, September 11
- John McCutcheon, September 25
- "The Return, Live in Concert – A Tribute to the Beatles," October 9

Lees-McRae Summer Theatre

July 25-August 1: "America's Artist – The Norman Rockwell Story"

lmc.edu/community/summer-theatre

After spellbinding performances in "The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee" in June, the company is taking the stage in July with "America's Artist: The Norman Rockwell Story."

For more than three decades, Lees-McRae Summer Theatre has been providing high quality, professional theatre to local residents and summer visitors. Referred to as the "Gem of the High Country," it specializes in musicals.

SkyLine/SkyBest is proud to be a corporate sponsor of this event.

Take a Break from the Interstate

July 23-25

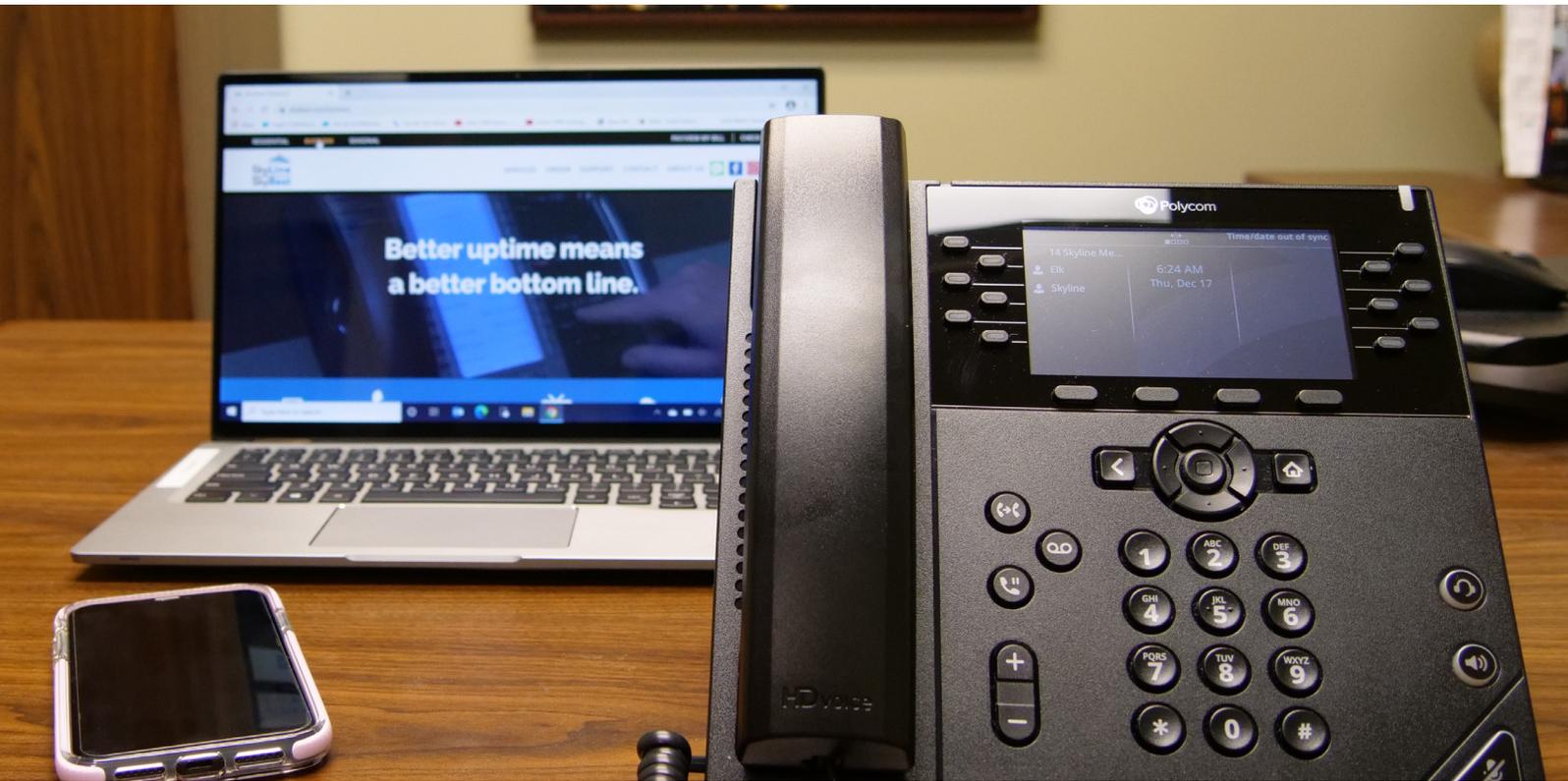
takeabreakfromtheinterstate.org

Experience a more peaceful journey along two-lane roadways as you travel Historic U.S. Highway 21 through Alleghany and nearby counties in northwest North Carolina and Southwest Virginia. Take a Break from the Interstate is a tourism initiative and an arm of the Miles J.O.B. Fund, Inc., a 501c3 charity. Make plans now to admire the gorgeous Appalachian countryside, shop at quaint stores, enjoy local restaurants and experience other unique attractions along the way.



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