

BUSINESS connections



From In-Person to Virtual Collaboration

Vision Northwest North Carolina held an in-person summit in 2019 (shown here) but moved to a five-part virtual series in 2020-2021.



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BUSINESS connections

Let's focus on supporting each other in 2021. If there was ever a time to increase collaboration with other businesses in our region, it's now. We've always been able to achieve more together than we can individually, but that's especially true as we navigate the pandemic's continuing impacts.

On page 3, we offer reasons why you can **Feel Good About Choosing Us**. Your decision to choose SkyLine/SkyBest for your internet, voice and related services is truly a win-win situation, since we in turn give back to many community organizations.

Regional collaboration and mutual support is the theme of our **Business Spotlight on Vision Northwest North Carolina** on pages 4 and 5. This initiative evolved from an in-person event in 2019 to a series of virtual sessions called Focus On Our Future, which run through May 2021. SkyLine/SkyBest is proud to be a presenting sponsor and encourages you to join these important discussions about taking a coordinated approach to economic recovery.

Supporting each other needs to take place within businesses as well as between them. On page 6, you'll find **Strategies for Building a Top-Notch Team**. Then on page 7, we share the story of how **Carolina West Wireless is Part of the SkyLine/SkyBest Family**.

SkyLine/SkyBest looks forward to supporting your business with robust communications solutions in 2021. The challenges we all face may be great, but our determination is even greater.



Sincerely,

Kim Shepherd
Chief Executive Officer



Feel Good About Choosing Us

SkyLine/SkyBest does good work for businesses, communities and families

SkyLine/SkyBest knows your business has options when it comes to selecting the best source 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 SkyLine/SkyBest for internet, voice, television, security and network solutions. Why? Because this decision leads to good things for many:

- **It's good for your business.** No matter what communications challenges you may experience, you'll get powerful solutions from SkyLine/SkyBest—the kind of solutions that increase efficiency and productivity. Plus, you can also count on getting responsive technical support and customer service from our local staff.
- **It's good for economic development.** Our companies employ area residents and the dollars you spend with us stay close to home. In addition, we're investing in fiber networks and providing the advanced communications services required for economic development. Future business growth and the very survival of our rural areas depends largely on technology, and SkyLine/SkyBest has the most advanced fiber network in the High Country.
- **It's good for community organizations and events.** SkyLine/SkyBest is actively involved in the communities we serve through membership in local chamber organizations as well as participation in local charitable events. We're humbled to be among the legion of churches, local organizations and businesses to help make a difference and build stronger communities. For example, SkyLine/SkyBest developed SkyChange as a way to change lives through customer-funded "round up" donations to local, non-profit charitable organizations in our service areas. Each fall, our "Rise & Shine" Breakfast Food Drive helps address food insecurity by collecting donations for local pantries. And our employees remember those less fortunate in our community during the holidays with Christmas gifts.
- **It's good for schools.** Through our technology grants, we work closely with area school systems to meet pressing technology needs in the classroom. This includes providing nearly a half million dollars to equip classrooms with smart technology, support 1:1 initiatives and work collaboratively with school systems to mitigate economic barriers for students lacking access to technology.
- **It's good for students.** Since 1987, the Frank James-SkyLine Scholarship has awarded more than a half million dollars in college scholarships to deserving high school graduates. Our state and national association affiliations provide additional scholarship opportunities to our region's youth, including the Foundation for Rural Service (FRS) Scholarship. SkyLine/SkyBest provides youth leadership opportunities and helps expose young people to the possibility of realizing career opportunities in telecom locally through our growing internship and Career Day programs. Area high school students have the chance to apply for summer leadership programs through the Cooperative Council of North Carolina and the Foundation for Rural Service Youth Tour to Washington, D.C.

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



Vision Northwest North Carolina

Join the conversation about regional collaboration and the outdoor economy

As you can see pictured above, Vision Northwest North Carolina began in 2019 as a one-day, in-person summit in Boone. Due to the pandemic, it became a five-part virtual series, Focus On Our Future, that began in November 2020 and continues through May 2021. Discussions center on the rebound and recovery of our current economic conditions through a coordinated approach toward the outdoor economy.

Presenting sponsors of Vision Northwest North Carolina are SkyLine/SkyBest and Carolina West Wireless. Organizers are the Appalachian State Career Development Center, Boone Area Chamber of Commerce, the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina (EDPNC) and the Watauga County Economic Development Commission.

Focus On Our Future

The November 16 session in the Focus On Our Future series was headlined by Dr. Mandy Cohen, Secretary of Health and Human Services for the State of North Carolina. Dr. Cohen explained the metrics behind North Carolina's County Alert System and advised employers to take a look at the health of their staff more broadly, not just through the lens of the pandemic. Participants chatted questions on topics such as how to deal with the COVID-19 impacts on staffing and employee management.

Andrew Davis, best-selling author and keynote speaker, led the January 19 session about recruiting and retaining outdoor-related businesses that specialize in manufacturing and product development. *(See the sidebar on page 5 for a list of the remaining sessions in the series.)*

David Jackson, President/CEO of the Boone Area Chamber of Commerce, noted, "Prior to the pandemic, growing the outdoor economy was a major topic of conversation in the state. Since North Carolina offers a diverse outdoor landscape, the goal of growing tourism and outdoor adventure opportunities is always relevant. Add to that the product development and manufacturing projects going on, and you quickly see that the outdoor economy is a broader topic than just hiking, biking and skiing. The goal of our series is to dial this conversation in on northwest North Carolina. This will lead to enhanced understanding about

what we do well and what we can work together to attract in terms of jobs and opportunities that could serve as a needed shot of adrenaline in our local economic picture as we rebound out of the pandemic-induced recession.”

SkyLine/SkyBest Partnerships

This is the second year SkyLine/SkyBest has been a presenting sponsor of Vision Northwest North Carolina, which involves the 12-county region that comprises the Northwest Prosperity Zone. The sponsorship is part of a much broader commitment by SkyLine/SkyBest to economic development.

Karen Powell, Public Relations Administrator of SkyLine/SkyBest, explained, “As a regional telecom provider and cooperative organization, SkyLine/SkyBest has a history of supporting economic development initiatives through local and regional partnerships as well as through our own Revolving Loan Fund and corporate support. Our Revolving Loan Fund, for example, has provided more than \$1.8 million in zero-interest loans to support job creation, job retention and essential community services across our service area. Our investments in technology infrastructure, including fiber deployment, are key to helping attract future business development and growth.”

Powell continued, “SkyLine/SkyBest is glad to be affiliated with, and to support, the Focus On Our Future series that spotlights the economic challenges and opportunities of the Northwest Prosperity Zone. We know regional collaboration will continue to be essential to our rural communities’ future economic stability, and we’re honored to be among the partners of this important initiative. We’re also delighted to team up with all of the Chambers of Commerce in our service area to help them achieve their goals.”



“At Our Best When We Support One Another”

Regional collaboration was also on the mind of Jackson when he shared this message for *Business Connections* readers: “People from northwest North Carolina are tough and have weathered many challenges over the last several decades, from deep recessions to massive storms. This resiliency has also been on display during the pandemic response. Many businesses are still here because our local citizens took an interest in making that extra purchase or sharing online posts to keep the spotlight on these businesses. Point being—we’re at our best when we support one another and work together as a region to advance what we do well.”



Andrew Davis

Upcoming Events in Focus On Our Future Series

Make plans now to attend the Focus On Our Future series virtually, featuring the following topics and keynote speakers:

- **Creating a Regional Tourism Framework** – Wit Tuttle, Executive Director for Visit NC, and Amy Allison, Director of the Outdoor Industry Recreation Office for the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina (EDPNC), will discuss current trends in the tourism and attraction industries, and how regional collaboration can attract guests who see recreation opportunities beyond county lines. Scheduled for March 1, 2021 from 1:00 – 3:00 pm.
- **Public Lands: Strategies from Conservation to Access** – Michael S. Regan, Secretary of the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality, will present on strategies surrounding land conservation and making public lands available to people in a responsible and collaborative manner. Scheduled for April 21, 2021 from 1:00 – 3:00 pm.
- **Moving the Public Policy Needle** – Scott Hamilton, President/CEO of the Golden Leaf Foundation, will discuss best practices related to public policy, and how businesses and municipalities can best present projects and ideas to funders and decision makers. Scheduled for May 25, 2021 from 1:00 – 3:00 pm.

For more details and to register, visit www.boonechamber.com/events/focusonourfuture1.



Brent Keith



Charity Shatley



Robin Miller



Hollie Brown

5 Strategies for Building a Top-Notch Team

SkyLine/SkyBest is a big believer in teamwork

Successful businesses depend on strong teamwork, and the Business Sales Team at SkyLine/SkyBest is an excellent example of this. Its members work closely together, and with other company employees, to provide our business customers with the best communications solutions to meet their needs.

Customers aren't the only ones that will benefit from strong teamwork, however. Businesses can also look forward to better morale, an enhanced sense of shared purpose and greater accountability.

The hard part can be figuring out how to build that team mentality. Techniques for teambuilding have included everything from completing obstacle courses together to paintball competitions. There remains some debate over whether these tactics translate into positive teamwork back at the office. So what really works? Here are five strategies:

- 1. Define the team.** You may have several internal teams, each made up of representatives from different departments—or if your business is relatively small, your entire group may be working together on a special project. Either way, do your best to ensure that each team can provide a well-rounded viewpoint of the challenge at hand.
- 2. Set clear goals.** Goals may be set by managers or by team leaders. Either way, it's important to make sure that each team member understands why the group was formed and what the expectations are for the group as a whole. Be sure to encourage collaboration, while giving ownership of specific tasks to individuals based on skill and interest. A collective

vision that gives team members an opportunity to make a real difference in the workplace—from improved processes to expanding product and service lines—will help them stay motivated. Plus, it helps them know when they've succeeded.

- 3. Build trust.** When team members can trust each other and their managers, they're better able to commit to meaningful change and to supporting their colleagues in their efforts. Great teams allow each member to voice their opinions and ideas without fear of retribution.
- 4. Model the behavior you seek.** Everything starts at the top. When leaders act professionally and with positive work habits, it's easier for staff to follow suit. It's critical that senior managers demonstrate qualities of good teamwork, including:
 - Helping others when they need support to complete a task;
 - Listening to input without judgment or criticism;
 - Commitment to meeting challenges and finding effective solutions.
- 5. Reward great teamwork.** Bonuses, gifts and public acknowledgement should be given as much for positive teamwork as for individual performance. Showing appreciation encourages continued team efforts and makes employees feel valued.

To get advice from our Business Sales Team, call 1-844-SKYBEST or email BusinessSolutions@skyline.org.



is Part of the SkyLine/ SkyBest Family

Carolina West Wireless, headquartered in Wilkesboro, is the premier wireless carrier in western North Carolina. It offers high-speed data and mobile services, the latest wireless devices and competitive wireless plans with national coverage. Formed in 1991, Carolina West Wireless is owned by a partnership of SkyLine/SkyBest and Surry Communications.

A Unique Partnership

Todd Elledge, Director of Marketing for Carolina West Wireless, said, "As an affiliate company, Carolina West Wireless has a unique partnership with SkyLine/SkyBest. Our two businesses provide complementary communications solutions, and our teams often collaborate and share recommendations to meet the needs of businesses and schools. We support each other, and by doing so, are able to develop great total solutions for customers."



Nick Wehrmann and
Jamie Stone, Carolina West
Wireless Business Pro Sales
Representatives

Elledge added, "We also partner with SkyLine/SkyBest in support of community organizations and events. For example, Carolina West Wireless and SkyLine/SkyBest are co-sponsors of Vision Northwest North Carolina and local Chambers of Commerce golf tournaments. We're always looking for new initiatives to work on together that are in support of the betterment of the local communities we serve."

Best Network Experience

The foundation of any wireless carrier is its network, and Carolina West Wireless gets high marks in this area. Although the North Carolina mountain topography creates challenges, Carolina West Wireless understands the area and places more network equipment in the right places. The company is committed to giving customers the best local and nationwide high-speed network experience possible. In fact, it's been the recipient of numerous annual awards for Best Mobile Phone Service Provider from local news publications.

What's ahead for Carolina West Wireless? Elledge responds, "We're making network enhancements including Voice over LTE (VoLTE) and Wi-Fi Calling services. We'll also roll out 5G soon. Carolina West Wireless is planning to move into Internet of Things (IoT) solutions during 2021. For example, using our network, a restaurant could have sensors monitor the cooling of food storage and send alerts if there's a problem. This will provide a real-time connection to the parts of business that keep you in business."

Visit www.carolinawest.com to learn more.

Get a Customized Wireless Solution for Your Local Business

Carolina West Wireless has a highly specialized Business Pro team, trained to help local businesses succeed. They can customize a wireless plan solution to help your business save time and money.

With Carolina West Wireless, both your business and your community benefit:

Local Support

Carolina West Wireless believes it's important to support local people and local businesses. When you spend your dollars with Carolina West Wireless, the money stays here in the area.

Personal Customer Service

Contact your Business Pro representative today to schedule a face-to-face review of your wireless needs. Carolina West Wireless also has a locally-staffed Customer Care Call Center ready to support you.

Customized Solutions

Choose from customizable wireless rate plans to meet the needs of your business. Business and Association discounts for your employees also may apply.

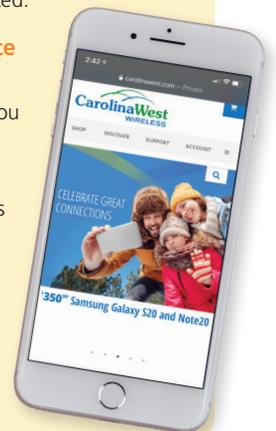
Devices and Accessories

Carolina West Wireless offers the latest Apple iPhone and Android smartphones, feature phones, connected devices and tablets—everything you need to stay connected.

Nationwide Service

As a Carolina West Wireless customer, you get reliable wireless service here in western North Carolina as well as nationwide.

For complete
details, call
1-800-235-5007.





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

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