

# Johnson County Government

*New technology leads to a future full of possibilities*



*Tim Watson, SkyLine/SkyBest Field Services Supervisor; Brent Keith, SkyLine/SkyBest Strategic Sales Supervisor; Robin Miller, SkyLine/SkyBest Inside Sales Coordinator; Dustin Shearin, Johnson Co Gov't Purchasing Agent; Charity Shatley, SkyLine/SkyBest Business Sales Executive; Graham Brown, SkyLine/SkyBest Business Sales Executive*

As an entity that continuously seeks to provide the best services possible for its residents, Tennessee's Johnson County has in recent years seen the need to upgrade its technology. Last year the County updated its internet speeds, which helped reduce wait times for citizens and paved the way to offer new services.

## Immediate Improvements

Prior to the upgrade, the phone and internet systems at the County were "subpar," according to Purchasing Agent Dustin Shearin. "We weren't able to help residents in a timely and efficient manner," he says. "Employees had to wait for things, and items would take up to 30 minutes to upload." In addition, no wireless service was available for court and office visitors. Shearin worked with other government officials to find a solution. The process eventually led to choosing SkyLine/SkyBest to upgrade the County's service.

The process to find a provider involved meetings with various companies, and the County selected SkyLine/SkyBest because of its ability to deliver what the County needed at a price they could afford.

The County now has 120/120 Mbps broadband internet service in nearly all of its offices, as well as a VoIP phone solution and wireless internet. Shearin states, "The phone/internet upgrade has helped to improve drastically the quality and speed of our

internet and phone service. We immediately noticed a major reduction in work orders for phone and internet issues." Another benefit is simple billing through a monthly invoice that's easy to read and understand.

## Responsive Service

One County service that can now be offered is passport application processing, says Shearin. In addition, the County has been able to accept credit card payments for various fees, both onsite and online. Also, the Senior Center can now offer computer classes to its members. "Based on these technological advancements, we are beginning to provide improved services to current and future generations of Johnson County citizens, who will continue to rely more on these types of solutions," he said.

In addition to the services themselves, Shearin appreciates the responsiveness of the SkyLine/SkyBest team. He says, "You call them and they're on it. Usually we get the person who can help within a minute or two. It's clear that SkyLine/SkyBest wants to make sure we're taken care of. They don't want to leave us

with any kind of mess. Plus, the people who work there are friendly. They're our neighbors." SkyLine Strategic Sales Supervisor Brent Keith concurs, "Since we began working closely with the County, we have developed several relationships within the community and truly appreciate the value of this partnership."

## The people who work there are friendly. They're our neighbors.

— **DUSTIN SHEARIN**, PURCHASING AGENT, JOHNSON COUNTY

While new solutions will continue to be needed in the coming years, Shearin stresses the importance of frugality within the County. "We always want to be aware of what's needed to efficiently operate the government versus the amount of available tax dollars," he states. "We anticipate continued economic growth, but will also continue to seek outside funding, such as state dollars and federal grants, to provide even further advancements for our people."

### A Great Place to Live

Johnson County provides numerous resources for its residents including the Senior Center, Public Library, Doe Mountain Recreation Area and the Trade and Forge Creek Community Centers. It also offers joint ventures such as the Mountain City/Johnson County Community Center, as well as various programs jointly funded by Johnson County and the Three Start grant.



*Tim Watson, SkyLine/SkyBest Field Services Supervisor*

These programs contribute to residents' preference for living in the County rather than surrounding areas. Shearin says other factors include the peaceful small town lifestyle and the beautiful landscape, which includes Watauga Lake. The lake is surrounded by a forested mountain and sits at 1,959 feet above sea level; it is accessible only by winding mountain roads. In addition, 30 miles of the Appalachian Trail are located in Johnson County.

The County currently has 116 employees, not including the school system. Employees know that their efforts are making the County a great place to live for residents now and for future generations. "Being able to feel good about our accomplishments when we overcome major hurdles is a reason I personally like working for the County," remarks Shearin.



## Dustin Shearin Wins 2017 Innovation Award

For his efforts in upgrading the technology of Johnson County, Dustin Shearin was awarded the inaugural 2017 East Tennessee Purchasing Association (ETPA) Innovation Award.

In a letter to members announcing the award, the ETPA writes, "Because of the remote location and nature of their entity, [Johnson County was] unable to take advantage of what many others had realized in years past with reliable, high-speed internet connectivity for their region... Think of your entity today, where would you be without the ability to send/receive fast, secured emails? How would you survive today, if you didn't have the automated actions you enjoy through the use of your entity's website, your online catalogs and having the world at your fingertips? Now imagine that you helped bring this new technology to your entire organization... This is the magnitude of change and the spirit in which we now give this award."

**Congratulations, Dustin!**