

Tennessee CONNECTIONS

FALL 2024 | CUSTOMER FOCUSED  COMMUNITY DRIVEN

EU's Power Grid Keeps You Connected

Page 4

Erwin Utilities
linemen work to
maintain the
power grid in any
and all types of
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MOVE OVER

to Protect Lineworkers

Electric utility line crews have one of the most dangerous professions in the nation. These dangers increase when they are working along the road. Do your part to protect them.

If you are driving and see crews working on the side of the road, slow down and move over. It's the law. More importantly, you will help ensure those lineworkers return home safely to their families and continue to be there when you need them.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, hundreds of utility workers, law enforcement officers, first responders and other public service workers are injured or killed each year in roadside accidents that could have been prevented.

The Move Over law states that when motorists approach stopped vehicles with flashing emergency lights or stopped recovery vehicles, highway maintenance vehicles, solid waste vehicles or utility service

vehicles along the roadside, drivers must slow down and, if it is safe to do so, move out of the lane closest to the workers.

Give workers the space they need to stay safe while doing their jobs. Like you, they have families waiting for them to clock out and return home.

As you are driving, stay alert. If you come upon roadside crews and cannot safely move over, slow down to at least 20 mph less than the posted speed limit. If you fail to do this, you can put workers at risk.

Protect our crews. They are on the job for you, ensuring reliable power. ■



ADOBE STOCK PHOTO BY JACQUELIN



Ghost Town in the Sky

Elkmont transports visitors to Smokies' Past
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Building a Brighter Future

Everything and everyone is connected... *thanks to the power grid.*

Electricity is used by schools, hospitals, grocery stores, homes—even by Erwin Utilities, the very utility company that helps maintain the electric grid. Electricity is a fundamental part of everyday lives and creates connections among individuals. More than 270 miles of primary power lines serve Erwin Utilities' customers. The power grid runs as far north as Carter County and as far south as Clear Branch, bringing power to nearly 9,000 homes and businesses.

It's up to Erwin Utilities' engineers and lineworkers to ensure the power stays on and runs smoothly for those thousands of customers depending on the power grid.

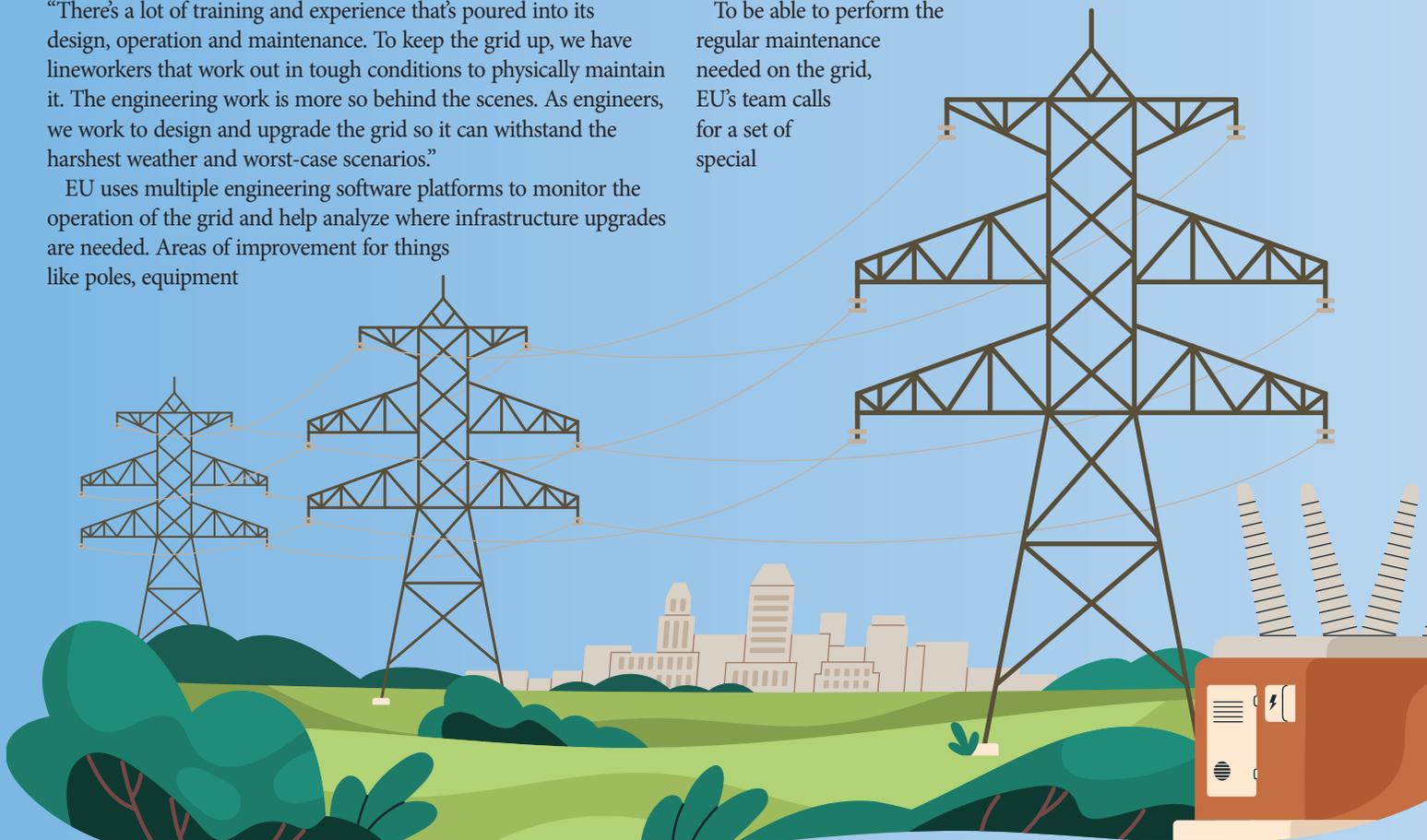
"We have this complex grid that needs professional attention to function properly," Electrical Engineer Joseph Wigington says. "There's a lot of training and experience that's poured into its design, operation and maintenance. To keep the grid up, we have lineworkers that work out in tough conditions to physically maintain it. The engineering work is more so behind the scenes. As engineers, we work to design and upgrade the grid so it can withstand the harshest weather and worst-case scenarios."

EU uses multiple engineering software platforms to monitor the operation of the grid and help analyze where infrastructure upgrades are needed. Areas of improvement for things like poles, equipment

and distribution lines are identified through inspections that are performed weekly, monthly and annually. Maintenance and repairs are performed by lineworkers out in the field. This work includes everything from replacing poles and power lines to troubleshooting and restoring power. EU also enlists tree-trimming procedures to keep trees and tree limbs from falling on the power lines.

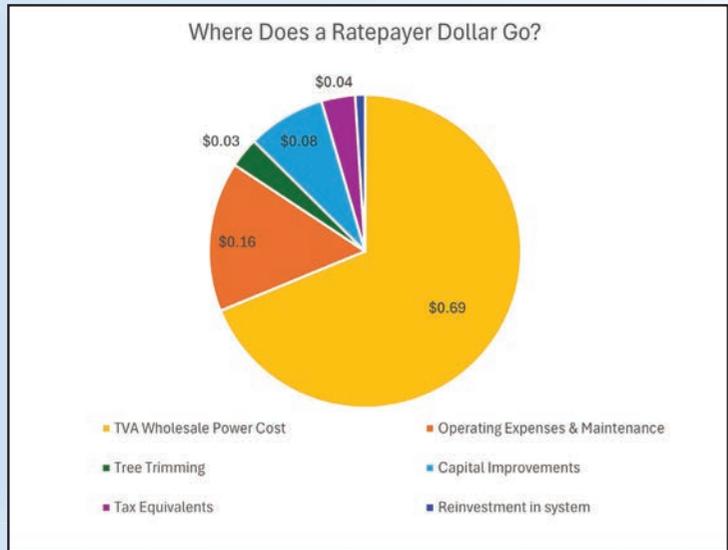
"We're analyzing data in the office and in the field to make sure everything looks right," Wigington says. "If we don't regularly invest to maintain the grid, you'll have power quality go down, experience more customer outages and incur expensive costs to get the grid back up to good working condition."

To be able to perform the regular maintenance needed on the grid, EU's team calls for a set of special





Erwin Utilities follows tree-trimming procedures to keep trees and tree limbs from falling on power lines.



skills and dedication to the job at hand. Careers in engineering and linework include years of studying and training. For lineworkers, the training is years-long through an apprenticeship. Both engineers and lineworkers need to be prepared for work in any and all types of settings.

“We always have to prepare for the worst,” Lineman Luke Blackmon says. “Even if it’s pouring rain or snow, or if the wind is blowing, we are out in adverse weather. When the power is out, our customers depend on us.”

Ensuring service is safe, reliable and efficient is at the forefront of

Erwin Utilities’ mission. Engineers and lineworkers are trained to follow necessary safety protocols in the field to ensure they and utility customers remain safe.

“Safety rules are written in blood,” Blackmon says. “In this job, I can’t take shortcuts, nor do we allow anyone to do so. We do safety briefings before every task to ensure the whole crew is on the same page.”

Erwin Utilities’ lineworkers and engineers work tirelessly to keep the lights on for the community they serve and live in. From your home to the grocery store where you shop, the dependability of electricity coming on is thanks to the work of dedicated engineers and lineworkers. It’s a job EU’s team says takes pride in. The vision of Erwin Utilities is to build a brighter future for the community.

Why not start with the lights? ■



ABOVE: Erwin Utilities’ engineers use software platforms to monitor the operation of the grid and help analyze where electric infrastructure upgrades are needed.

RIGHT: Erwin Utilities’ lineworkers pictured in front of the power grid at an area substation.



ghost in

Elkmont transports
visitors to Smokies' past

Story and photos by
Sara Diamond Patterson

Elkmont's "ghost town" features 17 restored cabins, giving visitors a glimpse into a bygone era.

TOWN the Sky

Veering off the main road through the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, especially during the spooky season, you might think you've stumbled upon a portal to another time. In many ways, you have.

There, the Elkmont Historic District "ghost town" sits ready to take visitors on a journey to an age gone by. Restored cottages offer a link to its life 100 years ago as a vibrant, thriving resort community whose eventual demise began with the formation of the park itself.

Timber to Tourism

Around the mid-1880s, small-scale homesteaders and other white settlers began venturing into the area. Its abundant forest proved a dream spot for hunting, trapping and fishing for adventurous outdoorsmen from Knoxville and other established cities. At an elevation of 2,150 feet, it provided a cool respite from the heat and humidity. But the main lure was logging its lush landscape.

In 1901, Pennsylvania entrepreneur Col. Wilson B. "W.B." Townsend bought 80,000 acres along the Little River and launched the Little River Lumber Co.

After establishing a railway to transport his logs the 18 harsh mountain miles to his sawmill in the valley, W.B. tacked on a passenger car, giving greater access from the towns below the

mountains. Around 1910, he sold 50 acres to the Knoxville Elks Club for the benefit of its Appalachian Club, a social subgroup of sporting business owners. They began visiting regularly, built a lodge and called the area Elkmont as a nod to their club in the valley.

This was the catalyst for transforming the area into the vacation paradise it was to become, according to Dan Paulin, historian and author of the book *Lost Elkmont*.

"He was a brilliant businessman and saw that in exploiting the landscape, he had the potential for tourism," Dan says. "Giving the Elks Club that land—it was really the start of ecotourism."

It wasn't long before the Appalachian Club members began constructing cottages that could accommodate their families on extended visits.

"These were men who liked to hunt and fish, and I'm sure they'd play a little poker and get involved in all kinds of things," Dan says with a laugh. "It wasn't long before their wives started getting a little jealous and suspicious and told them, 'We want to go up there, too.'"

That social group led to another, whose lodge became the popular Wonderland Hotel, as more people began discovering the mountain paradise.

Continues on page 8

Eyes of the World Turn to Elkmont

Elkmont drew the world's interest in the early 1990s with the discovery of a strain of fireflies that illuminate in a synchronized flashing light pattern.

Synchronous fireflies, *Photinus carolinus*, were previously found in only one spot in Southeast Asia, according to a 1991 *Science News* article. Amateur naturalist Lynn Frierson Faust knew she had witnessed the phenomenon at Elkmont, where her in-laws had a cabin and had been enjoying their light shows since the early '60s. She invited the *Science News* researchers to Elkmont, where they confirmed her findings.

Word started spreading, drawing thousands to the secluded mountain retreat to experience the spectacular mating ritual, a "flash train" that sees the males in flight together, lighting five to eight flashes every few seconds.

Interest in the insects has grown, and now more than 20,000 people each year enter a National Park Service lottery drawing months in advance for viewing spots during two weeks, usually in early June, depending on temperatures and soil moisture. Driving and parking are strictly limited, with only 140

temporary passes issued each night. The park service runs shuttles that can have a four-hour wait.



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Daisy Town Encounter Sparks Lifelong Passion

Dan and Karen Paulin grew up within 70 miles of each other along the Ohio River in southern Indiana. They met in college and, in 1977, honeymooned in Gatlinburg, where they each had fond memories of childhood visits.

"We decided right then and there we would retire to Gatlinburg," Dan says.

They bought a timeshare and made the seven-hour trip down to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park with their family as often as they could manage. It was in the late '80s, after they had "done everything in the park we thought there was to do," that Dan filled up the gas tank, and they decided to drive every road in the national park that they had never taken.

"We drove down that road to Daisy Town, and it opened up a whole new world," Dan says.

People were still living in that area of Elkmont, and they seemed friendly. The yards were neat, the cabins were pristine, and people were tossing horseshoes, laughing, playing cards and generally having a great time.

"I told Karen, 'Honey, this is wonderful. We've got to get one of these,'" he laughs. "I had no idea they were private, and we'd have no way of renting one."

From that day forward, discovering everything he could about the community of Elkmont became his life's passion. It kicked into high gear when he and Karen moved to Sevierville in 2010.

"I made it my mission to know everything there is to know about it that I could," he says. "My basement looked like something out of the TV show *Hoarders* with the piles and piles of newspapers and magazines and other research on the floor."

He wrote the book "Historic Elkmont," and he and Karen are Elkmont Rovers, a group of uniformed and well-informed volunteers who share the historic village with the world. Dan and Karen are still enchanted with Daisy Town and set up a table there each week with information and photos to share.

At the end of their shifts, Rovers make note of each "contact," an encounter with a visitor, whether to answer questions, share information or just chat.

"Interest just keeps growing, and we're seeing more and more people," Dan says. "For the past three weeks or so, I have had upwards of 200 contacts each day.

"Not a Wednesday goes by that we don't hear someone say, 'I've camped and been coming up here for 40 years, but this is amazing. I never knew these things were up here.'"

Continues from page 7

From Parties to Park

During its heyday in the 1920s, the settlement included 70-80 structures, two thriving private clubs and an active social scene. Three distinct areas—Millionaires' Row, Daisy Town and Society Hill—sprung up to make Elkmont the second-largest town in Sevier County. In the summer, tourists would ride the trains up to enjoy the cool mountain air and lush scenic beauty.

Elkmont summers meant socializing in the tight-knit mountain community. They spent lazy days enjoying swimming, horseshoes, card games, horseback riding, lawn tennis, canoeing and dances. The Appalachian Club porch was the gathering spot for poetry readings and children's pageants. Festive dinner gatherings would often end with everyone joining in rowdy rounds of the local theme song, "Elkmont Will Shine."

By the early 1930s, as the Little River Logging Company's operations began winding down, the people of Elkmont became concerned about

preserving the land as a refuge for future generations. The Appalachian Club served as the center of operations for those hammering out the details that would establish the Great Smoky Mountains National Park in 1934.

Ironically, the move to conserve the land as a national park would lead to the demise of the community itself. The National Park Service gave residents a choice: Sell your property at full price now or sell for half its worth and lease it for a time.

"The average full-price appraisal was usually around \$1,200," Dan says. "If they decided to take the \$600 offer, the property would remain in the family through the lifetime of the last immediate member."

Destructive Limbo

Life continued in the mountains—the Elkmont vacationers thrived, and tourists kept coming to the Wonderland Hotel. In 1952, the park service restructured the leases, and in 1972, an organized and



Dan and Karen Paulin share their extensive knowledge of the area as Elkmont Rovers.

The Appalachian Club's porch has been a treasured spot for nearly a century.



Stacked stone chimneys and cement foundations are the only remnants of what was once a vibrant community.

persuasive campaign by the leaseholders brought another 20-year reprieve.

As the leases began expiring in 1992, the people of Elkmont reluctantly said goodbye. With pressure to return the land to its pristine condition before it had become a playground for the rich, the park service slowly began dismantling the cabins, leaving only cement foundations and stone chimneys. In 1994, however, a National Register of Historic Places designation forced suspension of the demolition.

Elkmont sat in limbo until 2009. Those years took a toll on many of the cabins. Some owners suspected the park service was stalling and letting nature take its course. The refusal to maintain the structures—or allow anyone else to do so—brought “demolition by decay” for many.

“They sat there for 15 years waiting for a decision while the cabins were falling down,” Dan says.

“When they finally finished all the years of studies and research and findings, they had come up with a list of seven options.”

After more delays narrowing those down, the park service decided that 18 of the structures and the Appalachian Club would be restored and maintained as the Elkmont Historic District. The remaining 34 structures would be demolished. The Wonderland Hotel collapsed in 2005 and was torn down in 2006.

Progress was slow, but funding in 2017 brought the full restoration of the 19 structures. Today, the spirit of Elkmont’s social past lives on in the ghost town, as the restored Appalachian Club and Spence Cabin are once again available for private functions.

“Just a few weekends ago, there were two weddings there,” Dan says. “It was so neat seeing so many people walking around Elkmont dressed in their fancy clothes just like it must’ve been back then.” ■

‘Everyone Just Had a Great Time Together’

Cousins Mebbie Jackson and Jimmy Dudley remember the Elkmont summers at their grandmother’s cottage on Millionaires’ Row.

“It was called ‘Millionaires’ Row,’ but it was actually so cozy and rustic, with the big iron beds piled with quilts and other mountaineer decor,” Mebbie says.

Summers for the cousins and the other kids of Elkmont were a dream.

“We all grew up together playing kick the can, digging nightcrawlers for fishing, catching fireflies,” she says. “We all just learned so much and had so much fun. It’s just a special place to be, with the woods as your teacher.”

The folks of Elkmont knew their nightly light show courtesy of the unique synchronous fireflies was special. They just didn’t realize how unique it was.

“We always just thought it was kind of odd there were so many more fireflies there than anywhere else any of us had ever seen. We just had no idea it was the synchronized firefly capital of the world,” Jimmy laughs.

“We always loved to sit out and watch them. I always just thought that’s the way all lightning bugs were,” Mebbie says.

In the back of their minds, they knew Elkmont was a paradise that couldn’t last.

“I think we all knew that owning private property inside a national park was an unusual situation that couldn’t go on,” Jimmy says. “I think everyone knew it couldn’t last forever. It was just so sad when it was gone.”

A coordinated effort in 1972 brought one last extension of the leases.

“I remember my mother saying what a huge deal it was that we were given another 20 years,” Jimmy says. “Of course, to me, it seemed like a lifetime, but before you knew it, it was gone.”

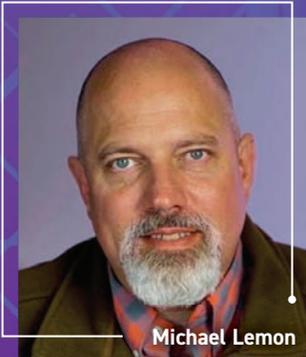
Elkmont will always remain a part of their lives, the cousins say. Though they both love exploring and hiking in the area, neither has been back to the homesite—where just a stacked stone chimney and concrete slab remain.

“It was just such a cool little place to grow up,” Jimmy says. “The people were just incredibly fun and cordial and kind and everyone just had a great time together.”

“It was just a beautiful moment in time,” Mebbie agrees. “It was just so very wholesome. Everyone knew and supported each other, played together, socialized together. It was just a treasure of a place.”

cyber safe

Keep your family protected online



Michael Lemon

By Drew Woolley

For many parents, the biggest challenge to protecting their children online is feeling like they can't keep up with the pace of new technology. It isn't easy to teach children how to navigate a childhood with social media and online gaming when they never had that experience.

"Really, since the iPhone put social media in our pocket in 2008, our children are finding their identities online," says Michael Lemon, founder of the Cyber Safe Families Facebook group and a 20-year veteran of the Bowling Green, Kentucky, Police Department. "They're being put in adult situations, and they're not ready for that."

Often, the solution for protecting children from these situations is as simple as only allowing them to download apps with appropriate age ratings or making sure their social media accounts are set to private. But even navigating these constantly changing technologies can leave many parents feeling overwhelmed.

"They didn't grow up with it. So, it's not like when I was growing up and my parents knew how to drive, so they taught me how to drive," Michael says. "Parents can't teach kids how to be online and around social media and gaming because they didn't grow up with that. So, there's a disconnect, and they feel like their children are so far ahead of them."

Fortunately, you don't have to be an expert to protect your children. Here is Michael's advice for keeping children safe online.

Social Media

One of the most important aspects of social media for parents to remember is that while children are allowed on the platforms, they are not necessarily designed with children in mind. And like any business, social media has its own priorities.

"You have to understand that their primary concern is not your child's

safety," Michael says. "Their primary concern is to make money, and their secondary concern is keeping your kid safe enough that there aren't lawsuits or the federal government climbing down their neck."

With that in mind, Michael urges parents to familiarize themselves with the parental control tools available on each platform. Many social media apps allow parents to limit the time children can spend on the app, who they can communicate with and whether commenting is allowed on their posts.

"It starts with a mindset. You don't need to let your child go any farther than you're comfortable with," Michael says. "TikTok and Snapchat are not great about parental controls, so know that going in before you say, 'Yeah, you can have it.'"

Gaming

While games often have better parental control settings, many also offer the added concern of voice chat.

"Online predators know if they're sending messages back and forth that can be found, and the social media site could be alerted to it," Michael says. "But when it's just voice, they know that's not recorded. That can never be used against them."

It's also possible for adult content to find its way into games such as Minecraft and Roblox, where players have broad freedom to create anything they want inside the game. In these situations, managing a child's connectivity level in the game is important. Most gaming devices can be set to play online with other players, play online but not connect with other players or be completely offline.



Michael has led in-person training sessions for thousands of parents, students and staff.

Michael counsels parents that keeping kids safe online is about setting solid rules, not being a techie. PHOTOS COURTESY OF MICHAEL LEMON



Michael's solution to this problem for his own family is to pay for a private Minecraft server, where his children can invite friends and explore the game away from public online spaces.

"They can still be on Minecraft, but they're not accessible to other people," he says. "You have to have that plan to say, 'This is as far as I want them to go. They're not ready to be on Minecraft with everyone else.'"

Identity Theft

We often think of identity theft as a digital threat for adults. But because they're less likely to notice credit cards being opened or loans being taken out in their names, children can be prime targets for identity theft.

Often, the information thieves need can be found right on social media channels. A birthday photo can provide their name and birth date, while back-to-school posts might share their school, class or even their bus number.

That doesn't mean parents shouldn't celebrate big moments in their child's life. But Michael recommends only making these posts visible to friends on parent's and a child's social media.

"The No. 1 thing is to make your child's account private," he says. "Because so many of these predators I've talked to, when they're scrolling through Facebook, Instagram, whatever, they've told me the same thing: If the kid's account is private, they just keep on scrolling. And if that happens, then your child is not approached."

Artificial Intelligence

As new artificial intelligence technology continues to emerge, adults aren't the only ones confronted by it. Snapchat has already launched its My AI chatbot that can field whatever questions its users might ask it.

"Think about who has the most influence over your children," Michael says. "It's the people they spend the most time with. If an AI is who they spend the most time with, then you really have to be concerned with who holds the keys to that. Cause the AI is just giving you answers based on the algorithm."

Other social media channels have followed suit with their own AI companions. With controls and standards for this use of AI still up in the air, as with so many applications of the technology, his recommendation for now is to hold off on introducing children to their new AI best friend.

Most importantly, Michael says the good news is that parents don't need to be techies to keep their children safe. They just need to apply some of the same rules they would turn to in more traditional parenting situations.

"You're not going to drop your kid off at a mall you know nothing about. But that's kind of what we do when we let them have an app where they interact with other people," Michael says. "If you give your kid TikTok, understand the benefits and the downsides. You need to decide if you are ready for it and your children are ready for it." ■

Flavorful Fall Sandwiches

By Anne Braly

The foods of autumn are highly anticipated: crunchy apples fresh from the orchard, colorful winter squashes and savory root vegetables. Add them to your favorite fall sandwiches to get unexpected flavors,

interesting textures and beautiful hues for toasty and ever-so-tempting dishes.

There's no end to the options for hot sandwiches. You can have basic grilled cheese or sandwiches with slow-cooked meats and an array of gourmet fillings.

Sandwiches can be grilled in a cast-iron

pan, toasted under the broiler or baked in the oven. Think beyond an everyday sandwich and create a scrumptious snack or a fabulous feast between two slices of bread—from crusty ciabatta to soft hoagie rolls.

Enjoy!

CLASSIC MONTE CRISTO

This sandwich is such a classic that it's even honored with a national date: Sept. 17. Gather your ingredients and celebrate the deliciousness. Deli meats make prep easy.

1 clove garlic, peeled and minced	Salt and pepper, to taste
2 tablespoons mayonnaise	4 slices sturdy white bread
2 eggs	1½ cups Gruyere cheese, shredded
2 pieces deli ham, sliced thin	2 tablespoons Dijon mustard
2 pieces deli roast turkey, sliced thin	2 tablespoons butter

Stir the garlic into the mayonnaise. Beat the eggs with a pinch of salt and pepper.

Place one slice each of turkey and ham between two slices of bread. Top with ¾ cup of cheese, 1 tablespoon of mustard and 1 tablespoon mayonnaise. Repeat with the remaining sandwich ingredients—everything but the butter and egg. Flatten the sandwiches to compress the filling.

Dip and coat each sandwich in the beaten egg. Melt the butter in a nonstick skillet over medium heat. Cook the sandwiches in the melted butter for 3 minutes on each side until they are golden brown and the cheese is gooey and melted.



SLOW COOKER FRENCH DIP SANDWICHES

Get out the slow cooker and have these delicious dippers ready for dinner tonight.

1 2-pound sirloin tip roast	2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce
¾ teaspoon salt	3 garlic cloves, minced
3 cups beef broth	6 sub rolls, sliced
1 yellow onion, peeled, halved and thinly sliced	6 slices Swiss or Gruyere cheese

Place the roast in a slow cooker, and sprinkle with salt. Add the beef broth, onions, Worcestershire sauce and garlic. Cook on low for 5 to 6 hours or until tender.

Remove the roast, and let it cool slightly. Cut the roast thinly with a knife. Add the meat back to the slow cooker to stay warm.

Preheat the broiler to high.

Divide the meat and onions evenly between the French rolls, then top the meat with a slice of cheese. Place the sandwiches open-faced on a sheet pan. Broil until the cheese melts, about 1 minute.

Ladle the juices from the slow cooker into small bowls for dipping. Serve the sandwiches hot.



Sandwiches

SOUTHERN HOT TOMATO SANDWICHES

If frost hasn't gotten to them, vine-ripe tomatoes are best for this sandwich. Barbecue pork rinds make a delightful bacon-barbecue crunchy addition. Think of it as a souped up BLT.

3 large or 4 medium tomatoes, sliced	1 egg yolk
2 tablespoons malt vinegar	2 teaspoons Cajun mustard
2 tablespoons olive oil	1 cup canola or vegetable oil
1 tablespoon minced shallot	½ teaspoon salt
1 garlic clove, peeled and minced	Pinch of black pepper
1 tablespoon chopped basil	8 tablespoons salted butter
1 tablespoon chopped chives	8 thick slices sturdy sourdough bread
2 tablespoons bread and butter pickle juice	1 cup barbecue pork rinds, crushed

Place the sliced tomatoes on a large plate, and drizzle them with vinegar and olive oil. Season the slices with shallot, garlic, basil and chives, flipping them over a couple of times to thoroughly coat, then set aside.

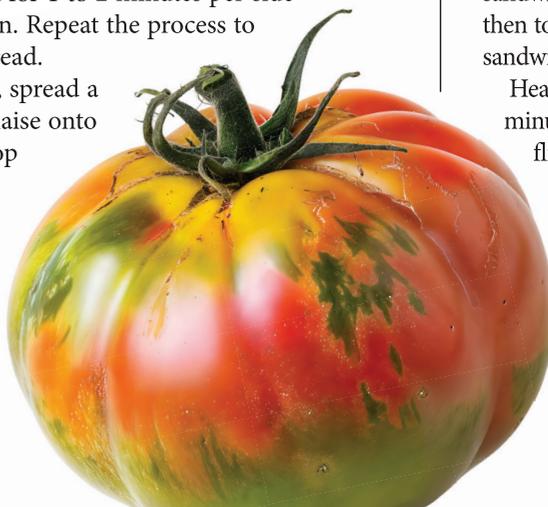
Make the mayonnaise: Add the yolk, pickle juice and mustard to a medium bowl, and whisk until frothy. Slowly add the oil in a thin stream while whisking vigorously, stopping occasionally to whisk until thick. Season with salt and pepper. Cover and refrigerate until you are ready to assemble the sandwiches.

Working in batches, melt about 2 tablespoons of butter per sandwich in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the bread slices, turning them over a couple of times to thoroughly coat them in butter.

Toast the bread in the skillet for 1 to 2 minutes per side or until crisp and golden brown. Repeat the process to toast the remaining slices of bread.

To assemble the sandwiches, spread a heaping tablespoon of mayonnaise onto each toasted bread slice, and top with a few slices of marinated tomatoes.

Generously sprinkle with crushed pork rinds, top with the second slice of bread, cut the sandwich in half, and serve.



HOT PASTRAMI SANDWICHES

2 slices rye or pumpernickel bread
1½ tablespoons butter, divided
4 ounces deli pastrami, sliced thin
½ cup coleslaw, *see note
1 slice Swiss cheese
2 tablespoons Russian or Thousand Island dressing

Warm pastrami by placing it in a steamer basket or strainer over boiling water. Flip the slices of pastrami to ensure they heat evenly. This should take less than a minute per side.

Lightly toast the slices of bread to firm them up, then coat one side of each slice with butter. To assemble the sandwich, place pastrami on the bottom piece of bread, then top with cheese, coleslaw and dressing. Place the sandwich in a skillet set over medium heat.

Heat the sandwich in the skillet for roughly 2 minutes or until the bread turns golden brown, then flip and repeat.

Remove sandwich from the frying pan, cut it in half on a cutting board and serve.

*Note: For a different taste, more like a Reuben, swap out the coleslaw for sauerkraut and add a smear of mustard to the bread.



When to Hire a Pro

By Robin Howard

There are times when you can save money by doing a job yourself, and times when hiring a pro can save you time, money, heartache and other problems down the road.

For example, repainting your living room yourself is relatively low-risk, but attempting to remove a diseased 80-foot tree from your front yard is seriously dangerous if you don't know exactly what you are doing.

Whatever the project at hand, consider these questions:

- Is it safe?
- Do I know the pertinent laws or codes?
- Do I have the time?
- Is my time worth more than what it would cost to pay a pro?
- Do I have the skills?
- Do I have the tools, or will I need to buy or rent them?
- Do I have someone to consult if I run into a problem?
- Will I enjoy it? If not, do I have the persistence to finish?

Painter

If you just have a few interior rooms to paint, doing it yourself is a good idea. If you need to repaint the whole house, hiring a pro can make short work of the job. Doing it on your own can take all of your free time for days or weeks.

For exterior painting, a one-story house should be pretty straightforward. However, a two-story home will require tall ladders, safety equipment and experience.

Accountant

To manage personal or household expenses, inexpensive accounting software will probably suffice. If you own a small business, hiring an accountant to keep your books and file taxes for you will keep you on track financially—and keep you out of hot water with the IRS.

Speaking of taxes, if you file 1040EZ, you probably don't need an accountant. However, if you own property, a business, have dependents or there's any other situation that makes filing taxes complicated, hiring an accountant at tax time can save you thousands of dollars and save a significant amount of time. Having an accountant do your taxes may also lower your risk of an audit and costly mistakes you will have to pay for later.

Financial Adviser

Financial planners counsel people on how to manage their money so they can reach their goals. If you enjoy learning about saving and investment tools and strategies, there is no shortage of DIY educational materials out there.

However, if you want to ensure you're on track for retirement, you have inherited money, need help managing money as a couple or want a second opinion about the financial plan you've devised for yourself, it pays to hire a financial planner, even on a one-time basis.

Financial planners can also advise you on estate planning, funding your child's college education and other significant financial life events. Some advisers charge an hourly rate or a fixed fee for certain services, while others take a commission on every transaction they make on your behalf. Today's robo-advisers, which work via computer algorithms, have low fees but don't offer customized advice.

The actual decision point is this: Your money needs managing, no matter how much of it you have. If you really will manage it yourself, you may not need an ongoing relationship with a financial planner. However, if you know you won't put the time into managing it, it's worth it to meet with an adviser to create a plan.

Lawyer

There are times you definitely need to hire a lawyer instead of trying to hack your way through the legal jungle yourself. For example, when:

- You could go to jail.
- You could lose a lawsuit.
- You have been injured in a car accident or any other incident.
- You are going through a complicated divorce.
- You want to ensure you have a solid will.
- Someone else has hired a lawyer to oppose you.
- You could lose a significant amount of money.
- You're adopting a child.

There are times you can likely avoid hiring a lawyer, such as if you are:

- Forming a small business.
- Creating a basic contract.
- Making a simple will or living will.
- Going through an amicable or cooperative divorce.
- Changing your name.

Other times, it depends on the situation. For example, you can create a living trust, a power of attorney or a living will online, but if your situation is complicated—or there is a chance the documents could be challenged at some point—hiring a lawyer is worth the peace of mind.

Website Designer or Developer

If you're starting a small business, you will need a website. With all of the advanced DIY tools available, you may not need to hire someone to build it for you. However, if you need to develop a complex website from scratch, you may need a designer and a developer. A web designer creates a vision for how your website looks and will function. Developer make it happen.

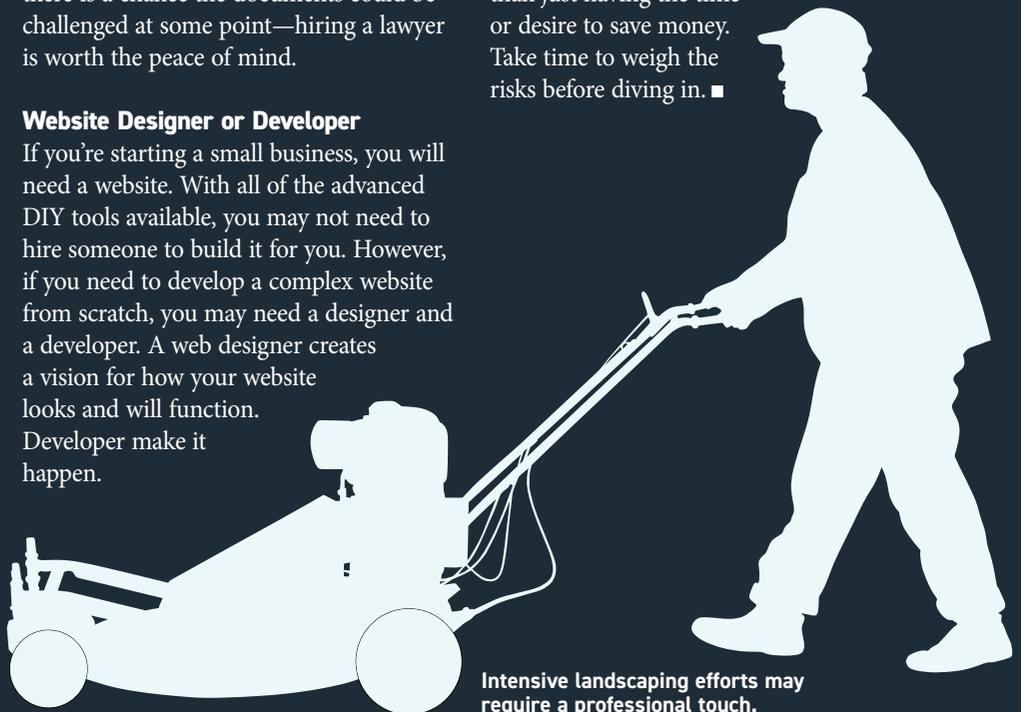
Creating a website on your own is relatively simple, so unless your business is complex, needs to meet specific demands, needs to be highly secure or you don't like learning basic technology, you can DIY this one.

Building it yourself can keep you in control of how it looks and works and will allow you to update it frequently without incurring further costs. However, there are situations—such as getting hacked because your security settings aren't configured properly—that can make consulting with a pro worth every penny.

Landscaper

It pays to hire a landscape designer in almost every scenario if you have outdoor space you know can look better or function better, but you don't know what to do. Landscape designers may charge an hourly rate or a flat rate to draw up a plan for you. If you are willing and able to do the heavy lifting yourself, a landscape designer is always worth their salt when it comes to design.

Whatever the task at hand, in most cases, the question of whether to attempt a job yourself can be a lot more complicated than just having the time or desire to save money. Take time to weigh the risks before diving in. ■



Intensive landscaping efforts may require a professional touch.



TENNESSEE CONNECTIONS

PLANNER

Fall in love with Tennessee on a scenic hike, a road trip to see trees bursting with color, a family get-together at a pumpkin patch or farm, or by listening to bone-chilling ghost stories at haunted destinations.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF UNICOI COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

ERWIN

Oct. 4-5

47th Annual Unicoi County Apple Festival

The Unicoi County Chamber of Commerce hosts this festival, which draws more than 110,000 attendees annually. The two-day event, from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. both days, offers something for everyone—handmade crafts, antiques, entertainment, a large children's area, a Blue Ridge Pottery show and sale, live music, contests and a smorgasbord of food. The craft festival, featuring more than 400 vendors from around the country—showcasing their unique arts, crafts and foods—lines the downtown streets of Erwin. The event spans a five-block section of downtown Erwin and includes adjoining side streets. unicoicountyapplefestival.com

DICKSON

Through Sept. 30

Civitan Nut Sales

A popular annual fundraiser, Dickson Civitan members sell pecans, cashews, pistachios and more to support multiple community projects. Call to order or contact any Civitan member.

615-671-7806

BROWNSVILLE

Sept. 27-29

10th Annual Tina Turner Heritage Days

Join fans from all over the world at West Tennessee Delta Heritage Center as they remember and share their love for the Queen of Rock 'n' Roll, while exploring her hometown. The three-day event features special guests and tours of Nutbush.

tinaturnerheritagedays.com

TULLAHOMA

Oct. 3

Public Power Week Celebration

Join Tullahoma Utilities Authority in celebrating all our electric workers do. Lineworkers give a live line demonstration, and we keep the sodas and ice cream cold, the pizza hot and the prize wheel spinning from 3-5:30 p.m.

facebook.com/profile.php?id=100063650106967

MORRISTOWN

Sept. 13

Run for Cover

A Morristown cover band performs a range of Rush, Boston, Genesis, Kansas, Toto, Elton John, Billy Joel, Paul McCartney and The Police at the Rose Center. Advance tickets are available. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. for general admission, and the show starts at 7 p.m.

rosecenter.org/events

TOWNSEND

Sept. 28-29

Railroad and Heritage Days

Journey back in time during the Little River Railroad and Lumber Co. Museum's two-day celebration, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. It's a perfect outing for history buffs and families alike. Step into the past as you explore the rich heritage of Tuckaleechee Cove. Engage with local artisans and vendors, experience the thrill of riding a hand-pump car and marvel at the reproduction of the Elkmont observation car. Savor a delightful Steam Cream homemade ice cream, a treat as unique as its history. Don't miss the chance to see exclusive exhibits and rare artifacts that are unveiled only during this special event. Admission is free.

littleriverrailroad.org

KINGSTON SPRINGS

Oct. 5

Art in the Park

More than 70 arts and crafts vendors, plus a local art exhibit, live music, food trucks and a kid zone gather in the beautiful setting of Burns Park from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. It's free to park and free to attend this annual event, so load up the car with family and friends.

www.facebook.com/ksartinthepark

CLARKSVILLE

Sept. 15

Hispanic Heritage Festival

Launched in 2021 to celebrate and educate about the diversity of different Latin American cultures, this free event features international food and product vendors. Enjoy a magic show, musical entertainment and cultural dancers.

www.hispanicheritageclarksville.org



HUMBOLDT

Oct. 19

15th Annual Downtown Fall Festival

This fun-filled day includes food vendors, activities for children, music, artisans, crafts booths, merchandise vendors, information booths and much more. Join the fun—admission is free.

humboldtchamber.com/fallfestival

MORRISTOWN

Oct. 25-27

Mountain Makins Festival

Held on the grounds of Rose Center for the Arts, this award-winning event is a weekend folklife festival. The festival honors the rich traditions of the past and supports modern interpretations of those traditions. More than just a fine arts and crafts show, the family-friendly festival offers visitors two stages for mountain music, storytelling, prize-winning dancers, regional authors and children's activities. One special feature is the live demonstration of traditional crafts such as blacksmithing, basketmaking and wood turning.

visitmorristorynntn.com/annual-events

GREENEVILLE

Nov. 7

Knoxville Symphony Orchestra

Free community concert series tickets are available on a first-come, first-served basis Oct. 4 beginning at 10 a.m. Hear the Knoxville Symphony Orchestra perform selections from "Titanic," "E.T." and "Grease," among many others, at Niswonger Performing Arts Center. npcagreeneville.com

RED BOILING SPRINGS

Nov. 21-23

A Christmas Marketplace

Celebrate the holiday season at Acres of Grace Farms. This festive event is packed with holiday cheer and activities for the entire family.

www.asouthernmarketplace.com

BROWNSVILLE

Dec. 7

Annual Christmas Parade and Tree Lighting

Beginning at 3 p.m., children are invited to gather on the Haywood County Courthouse lawn for Santa's Children's Parade. Dress festively and bring your bikes, tricycles, scooters or children's electric vehicles. Immediately following the parade is storytime with Mrs. Claus and pictures with Santa. Then, join your friends and neighbors on the courthouse lawn at 5 p.m. for the community Christmas tree lighting. The parade begins at 6 p.m. and features more than 50 entries with floats, classic cars, bands and more—all spreading Christmas joy.

visitbrownsvilletn.com/calendar

Include Your Upcoming Event

Want to share an event with the readers of Tennessee Connections? Please visit tinyurl.com/TennesseeEvents to submit the details. Thank you.



PHOTO BY STACI WARDEN

CENTERVILLE

Oct. 5-6

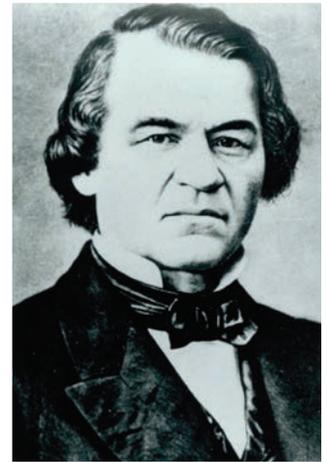
National Banana Pudding Festival

In its 15th year, this festival celebrates the ultimate Southern treat: banana pudding. Guests enjoy two fun-filled days of entertainment on two stages, arts, crafts, food, games, activities for children of all ages and—of course—banana pudding. The nation's banana pudding champion is selected at the live cook-off Saturday morning, followed by an auction of competing cook-off puddings. Stroll through the Puddin' Path and taste up to 10 different banana puddings made by local nonprofit organizations. Proceeds benefit local nonprofits. bananapuddingfest.org

For a complete list of what's happening in Tennessee, visit tnvacation.com/calendar.

ADVENTURE AWAITS

Learn about presidential history in Greeneville at the Andrew Johnson Historical Site



PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL PARKS SERVICE

What Is It?

Walk into history at the Andrew Johnson National Historic Site in Greeneville. The site includes a visitor center, the homestead where Johnson lived both before and after serving in the White House, and the cemetery where he is buried.

Who Was Andrew Johnson?

Andrew Johnson was the 17th president of the United States. He was Abraham Lincoln's vice president and assumed the presidency in 1865 after Lincoln's assassination. Before becoming president, Johnson was the only senator from a seceding state to remain in the U.S. Congress. Johnson is largely remembered for his role in shaping reconstruction policies after the Civil War—including returning land under federal control to prior owners.

In the Site

The historic site includes two of Johnson's homes—the early home and the homestead. Johnson grew up in poverty and was apprentice to a tailor. He ran away and eventually opened his own tailor shop in Greeneville. The early home—where he lived while first entering politics—and his larger homestead are available to tour. They showcase Johnson's journey, and detail the business and political landscape of the time.

Take a Tour

Visitors can tour the first floor of the early home during park business hours. The home has exhibits on Johnson's family and political career, as well as his first purchase of enslaved people. The larger homestead has guided tours, typically at 10 and 11 a.m., as well as 2 and 3 p.m. Tours are offered on a first-come, first-served basis with a maximum of 10 guests per tour.

More Info

The site is typically open daily 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. April through November. It operates those same hours Wednesday through Sunday from December through March. All areas of the site are free. To learn more, or to start planning your trip, call 423-638-3551 or visit [nps.gov/anoj](https://www.nps.gov/anoj).

Rethink Raking This Fall

In Tennessee, many home landscapes are adorned with trees. Trees can provide many advantages to your property, such as reduced energy costs, habitat and, of course, a place to build the time-honored tree house.

Trees can also present a challenge as the cooler weather rolls in and the leaves begin to pile up. You might be tempted to dust off that leaf-vac or rake and start cleaning the leaves from your yard. Before you do, it is important to understand some of the wonderful benefits leaves can provide to your soil, landscape and pollinators.

Benefits of Fallen Leaves

Leaves can provide many benefits to your yard and the environment when managed properly. These include increasing overall soil health, acting as a mulch and providing habitat for pollinators.

When talking about soil health, fallen leaves are a great source of organic matter, which is released as the leaves break down and make their way into the soil profile.

This natural process allows nutrients to be recycled and increases the organic content in the soil, leading to soil that has better water-holding capacity, more biodiversity and supports healthier plant growth. As a mulch, leaves act similarly to hardwood mulches, suppressing weeds and helping retain soil moisture.

Fallen leaves also provide a winter habitat for many types of butterflies, moths and some bumblebees. Additionally, fallen leaves support many kinds of insects, which are a valuable food source for chipmunks, birds, turtles and more.

Management of Fallen Leaves

First, it is important to decide on your goals, as they dictate the next steps. If you want to manage leaves to improve the soils in your lawn, landscape beds or garden, then it is best to shred them with your mower and leave them in place or add them to your compost pile.

If you plan to use them as mulch for your garden or landscaping, try to collect them without shredding them, then add them where needed.

Finally, if you are planning to use the leaves as a habitat, keep them intact and move them to an area of your property that will not be disturbed or to a location where they can stay until late spring after the pollinators emerge.

Leaves vs. Lawn

One big misconception is that you must completely remove your leaves to have a lush, green lawn.

In fact, according to the University of Wisconsin-Madison, if leaves cover 20% or less of your lawn, you do not need to do anything at all. They will eventually break down without intervention. If you have about 50% of your lawn covered by fallen leaves, you can either move them to a different location for reuse or use your lawnmower to chop them up into smaller pieces, which helps them break down quicker and prevents them from shading out your grass.

If you have a thick layer of leaves, to the point you can no longer see your grass, then you may want to rake about half of them from your lawn and chop up the rest with your mower or remove them for reuse. ■

Sources: Xerces Society publication 18-014 – Nesting and Overwintering Habitat For Pollinators & Other Beneficial Insects and University of Wisconsin-Madison article "Leave the Leaves. To Rake or Not to Rake?"



Rylan Thompson is a Tennessee State University Agriculture and Natural Resources/4-H Extension agent in Knox County. He specializes in residential/consumer horticulture and 4-H and is the Knox County Master Gardener coordinator.

No Trash November in Unicoi County

It's that time of year again—when we give thanks and clean up our county.

Each year, Erwin Utilities employees team up with Keeping the Valley Beautiful to participate in the statewide No Trash November campaign. It's a partnership KVB President Karen Dunlap says has been instrumental.

“Alongside KVB, Erwin Utilities was the very first and only business that participated in the 2022 NTN campaign,” Dunlap says. “They really set the stage for others to follow. Fast forward to 2023 and once again, EU was our No.1 supporter.”

During the county-wide 2023 No Trash November campaign, there were 19 cleanups with 237 volunteers of all ages in Unicoi County. Workers properly disposed of more than 2,500 pounds of litter. Volunteers from all five of Erwin Utilities' departments participated.

“EU's leadership and presence in Unicoi County are quite notable and we are incredibly thankful to them,” Dunlap said.

KVB's goals are focused on educating and inspiring litter reduction; reduce, reuse, recycle; and beautifying the community. For more information on KVB and upcoming clean up events, contact Keeping the Valley Beautiful at KeepingTheValleyBeautiful@yahoo.com or on Facebook. ■



Last year, employees from all five Erwin Utilities departments volunteered for Keeping the Valley Beautiful's No Trash November.



Apple Dumplings

- | | |
|--|-------------------|
| 2 Granny Smith or any tart apple, peeled and quartered | 1 cup sugar |
| Cinnamon | ½ stick butter |
| 1 can crescent rolls | ¾ cup water |
| | Vanilla ice cream |

Spray a 9x9 or small baking dish with cooking spray. Roll each apple quarter with a crescent roll and place in the pan. You should have eight crescent rolls for your eight apple slices. You can double the recipe for a larger crowd as well.

Place sugar, butter and water in a small pot on the stovetop. Bring to a boil while stirring to mix and melt ingredients together. Once at a boil, remove immediately from heat. You do not want it to continue to boil or caramelize. Pour hot mixture over dumplings. Sprinkle cinnamon, dusting all tops. Place in the oven at 350 for 20 to 30 minutes, depending on the softness of the apples. Do not cover. Serve warm dumplings with vanilla ice cream and enjoy.

Employee Spotlight

JOSE DIAZ
 Job Title: Operations Crew Member
 Years at EU: 24 years



Favorite part of the job:
 "I know my job is important to the community. If I don't do the maintenance and the pumping, people in the town would not be happy."

SHANE BUCHANAN
 Job Title: Meter Technician
 Years at EU: 23 years



Favorite part of the job:
 "The best thing about my job is not knowing what task you will be doing each day. Things can change at any moment."

JOSH PETERSON
 Job Title: Water/Wastewater Technologist
 Years at EU: 14 years



Favorite part of the job:
 "My favorite parts about my job are not knowing what each day will bring and not doing the same thing everyday."

WELCOME TO OUR TEAM



Samara Waldrop
Customer Service Representative



Jackson Adams
Water Crew Member



Michael Kincheloe
Water Crew Member/
Water Distribution Operator



Noe'l Bailey
Executive Assistant

CUSTOMER SERVICE WEEK OCT. 7-11



Erwin Utilities' customer service representatives are ready to help.



GET OUTSIDE

A striped bass takes the bait on Norris Lake near LaFollette. The lake offers some of the best striper fishing in Tennessee.
PHOTO BY JOHN N. FELSHER

Striped Powerhouses

Mountain lake offers good fishing variety in scenic setting

By John N. Felsher

Norris Lake snakes through the mountains of northeastern Tennessee like two large writhing millipedes engaged in battle. Actually more of a mountain riverine system, the lake covers 33,840 acres due north of Knoxville.

Two major river systems flow into the deep reservoir, which plunges to more than 200 feet deep in places. Dating to 1936, the lake spreads along 73 miles on the Clinch River and 56 miles on the Powell River.

At its widest point, the serpentine system stretches less than 1½ miles across. The lake touches parts of five Tennessee counties—Anderson, Campbell, Claiborne, Grainger and Union—as it twists between mountains. The two rivers create countless coves, creeks and tributaries, with more than 809 miles of shorelines dotted by limestone and red clay cliffs.

Rich nutrients coming down the Clinch and Powell rivers create excellent conditions for many fish species. The turquoise waters hold good populations of largemouth bass, spotted bass, catfish, crappie and various sunfish species. The lake produces some excellent smallmouth fishing, with some in the 3- to 5-pound range.

However, many people fish the lake because of its outstanding striped bass fishery. The state first stocked stripers in the lake in the 1960s. Look for big stripers roaming the main river channels terrorizing baitfish. Most stripers run in the 10- to 35-pound range, but some top 60 pounds.

Striped bass typically like cooler water. Fortunately, the deep, mountainous lake provides abundant places for stripers to cool off. Many anglers troll assorted live or artificial temptations in

the depths along the main river channels. Often, stripers hang just above the thermocline, an invisible membrane where two layers of water mix. The warmer top layer contains the most oxygen. Below the thermocline, the cold, denser layer doesn't hold enough oxygen to support life. A good sonar unit can detect this invisible line.

Many people prefer live bait to catch big stripers. For some of the best action, use threadfin shad. Alewives, a baitfish similar to a menhaden, can also be used to tempt big stripers.

When trolling, put out six to eight rods in holders and spread baits out with planer boards to slowly work multiple baits simultaneously at different depths. Some people dangle baitfish from balloons used as floats. Others use free lines with little or no weight, so baitfish swim around naturally. When fishing with live bait, anglers might also catch walleye, smallmouth or largemouth bass, and possibly catfish.

For artificial temptations, either for trolling or casting, try diving plugs, bucktail jigs, grubs or swimbaits that look like shad. As temperatures cool in the fall, stripers fatten up for the winter and frequently chase shad to the surface. When this happens, throw topwater baits that mimic shad into the commotion. ■



John N. Felsher is a professional freelance writer, broadcaster, photographer, editor and consultant. An avid sportsman, he's written more than 3,600 articles for more than 170 different magazines on a wide variety of outdoors topics. He also hosts an outdoors tips show for WAVH-FM Talk 106.5 radio station in Mobile, Alabama. Contact him at j.felsher@hotmail.com or through Facebook.

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Apple Festival: Oct. 4
Veteran's Day: Nov. 11
Thanksgiving: Nov. 28-29

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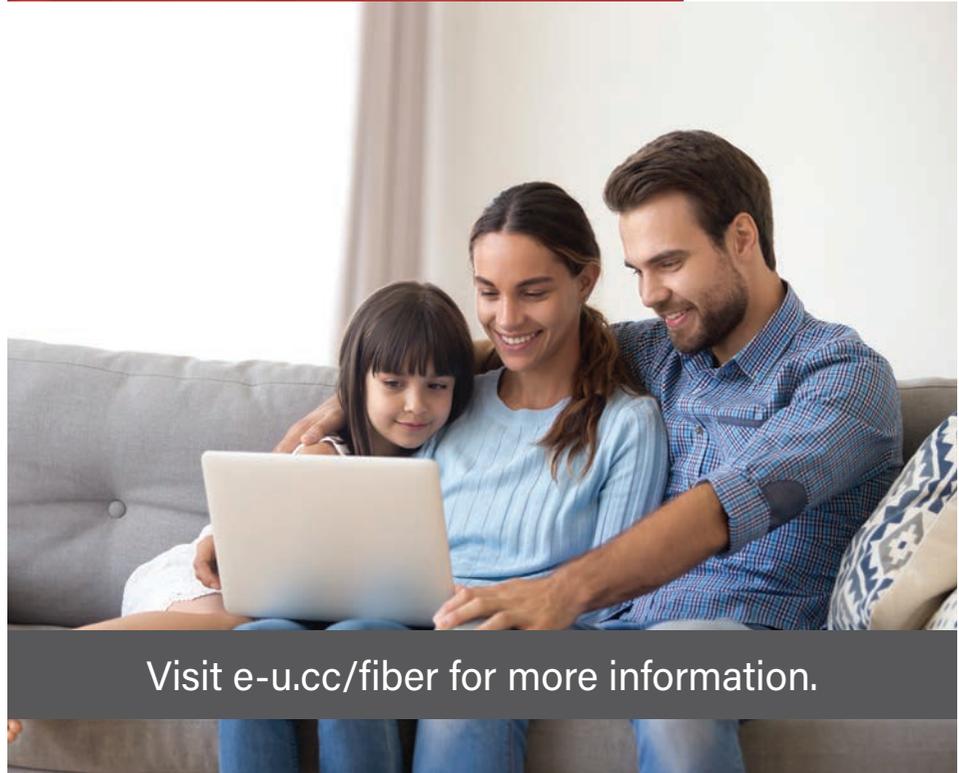
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