

BUSINESS connections

See the Focus of
Western Carolina
Eye Associates



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Additional Issues

Extra issues are available to business customers on a limited basis while supplies last. Contact Robin Miller at 1-844-SKYBEST.

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BUSINESS connections

We build stronger communities by helping local businesses thrive.

SkyLine/SkyBest has always been committed to supporting our local communities, so we decided to give this issue of *Business Connections* a local theme.

It begins on page 3 with **Technology Helps Small Businesses Grow Anywhere**. We're proud to be the local internet provider of fiber internet in our rural service areas, which enables small businesses in small communities to have access to "big city" technology.

Be sure to take a look at the **Business Spotlight on Western Carolina Eye Associates (WCEA)** on pages 4 and 5. For 46 years, this eye care provider has served three counties in the High Country. It's locally owned by Dr. Daniel Krantz and remains focused on helping local patients as well as local communities. SkyLine/SkyBest keeps WCEA's three offices connected with multiple communications solutions.

On page 6, we urge you to **Be Vocal About Buying Local**. It's up to all of us to remind people to buy local and help keep our community thriving. Then on page 7, we answer this question: **Why Choose a Local Internet Provider?**

SkyLine/SkyBest believes in the power of local teamwork. As your neighbor, what can we do for you?



Sincerely,

Kim Shepherd
Chief Executive Officer

ON THE COVER:

(Front row) WCEA's Suni Kerr, Office Manager; Daniel Krantz, MD, Owner; and Brenda Warren, Practice Administrator (Back row) WCEA staff members are joined by SkyBest Business Sales team members Hollie Brown (in green), Haleigh Hogg (second from right) and Zara Worley (far right).

Photo credit for local images: Todd Bush



Technology Helps Small Businesses Grow Anywhere

A big city isn't required to access big solutions

Just because a small business is located in a rural area, it doesn't mean it can't reach customers and resources from all over the world. Today's technology—from high-speed internet over fiber to cloud-based solutions—offers the opportunity for the owners of these businesses to enjoy the best of both worlds. They can live and work in the small communities of their choice and still have access to the “big city” communications services required to work efficiently and remain competitive.

SCORE, a source of free and confidential small business advice for entrepreneurs and small businesses, suggests employing these strategies:

Use technology to connect with new markets, collaborators and customers.

Cloud-based communication tools such as VoIP, Hosted PBX, online portals and social networks help small businesses build stronger relationships and more satisfied customers. They also support the rise of the virtual workforce, allowing employees to work from home (or anywhere with an internet connection).

Capitalize on technology's scalability and flexibility.

A small business that experiences a surge of orders, for example, can use pay-as-you-go cloud services to quickly scale to handle the traffic and prevent the website from crashing. Cloud services can also be easily downscaled when IT requirements change. The use of on-premise software and hardware is becoming less popular due to the availability of cloud-based solutions such as Microsoft Office 365. These solutions offer greater scalability, security, efficiency and flexibility than their on-premise counterparts.

Store data in the cloud.

The cloud is a safer, more secure place to store business data than on-premise servers. It also keeps small business owners and their computer networks from getting bogged down with files.

The massive growth of mobile is another important technology factor for small businesses to consider. Pew Research Center reports that 97% of Americans now own a cellphone of some kind, and 90% own a smartphone. This is up from just 35% in Pew Research Center's first survey of smartphone ownership conducted in 2011.¹ With more people accessing the web via mobile devices, small businesses should have a mobile-friendly version of their website and explore the use of mobile apps and mobile payments.

SkyLine/SkyBest is well equipped to provide the broadband technology that small businesses in our rural service areas require. To discuss the specific needs of your small business, call 1-844-SKYBEST.

¹<https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/fact-sheet/mobile>

Western Carolina Eye Associates

The High Country sees progress because of this provider

WCEA Office Manager Suni Kerr utilizes SkyLine/SkyBest services while assisting a patient.



The motto of Western Carolina Eye Associates (WCEA) is “We Care, You’ll See.” It clearly communicates the patient-focused vision of this eye care provider.

Founded in 1978, WCEA is owned by Dr. Daniel Krontz and is the largest provider of its kind in the High Country. WCEA has three North Carolina offices—in Jefferson, Banner Elk and Boone—to provide care for patients in Ashe, Avery and Watauga counties.

WCEA’s services include:

- **Comprehensive Eye Care** - Routine vision examinations, treatment of eye diseases, surgical and laser procedures, low vision aids and dry eye treatment
- **Contact Lenses** - Thorough exams to fit patients with the right lenses for optimal comfort and vision
- **Optical Shop** - A large variety of affordable frame styles, including designer lines

Seeing Eye to Eye on Customer Service

WCEA has been a loyal SkyLine/SkyBest customer for over 18 years. According to Suni Kerr, Office Manager, the two businesses share a similar philosophy.

Kerr explained, “Above all else, Dr. Krontz values the excellent customer service from SkyLine/SkyBest. On the rare occasion we have an issue, they send someone to our practice the same day, often within hours, to get us back to running at full capacity.

SkyLine/SkyBest knows the importance of taking care of its customers, just like WCEA takes pride in caring for our patients. The ‘good neighbor’ way of doing business has proven to be the cornerstone of WCEA, and SkyLine/SkyBest has repeatedly demonstrated that it feels the same way. We couldn’t be happier.”

Multiple Locations, Multiple Solutions

To keep WCEA connected at its multiple locations, it uses multiple solutions from SkyLine/SkyBest:

- Super-fast broadband internet service
- Telephone service provided by the reliable SkyLine/SkyBest fiber network
- A Mitel PBX phone system capable of IP/Digital/Analog extensions
- SkyBest maintenance—including support, equipment replacement and labor—for systems installed by SkyLine/SkyBest to make them worry-free and protect WCEA’s investment

What’s been WCEA’s experience with SkyLine/SkyBest internet service? Kerr replied, “It’s reliable, and the speed meets our high demands. WCEA has offices in three counties, and the internet service must support five doctors and over 50 employees who are using the internet at the same time. We’ve rarely experienced any

issues or delays in internet service. Our practice relies on SkyLine/SkyBest to keep us moving forward efficiently.”

Kerr and other staff members are also pleased with the Mitel PBX phone system, which allows extension-to-extension dialing between WCEA’s three offices. She noted, “We love the extension-to-extension and messaging features, which provide added convenience when we’re communicating between our offices. These features streamline the work process, allowing our employees to contact one another within seconds rather than play phone tag. The Mitel PBX phone system has greatly improved our office-to-office efficiency when rescheduling patients and getting test results to our doctors and staff members in a timely manner. Although our offices are in three different counties, it feels like we’re under one roof when using the Mitel PBX phone system from SkyLine/SkyBest.”

“Although our offices are in three different counties, it feels like we’re under one roof when using the Mitel PBX phone system from SkyLine/SkyBest.”

— SUNI KERR, OFFICE MANAGER, WESTERN CAROLINA EYE ASSOCIATES

Caring for Communities

The “We Care” portion of WCEA’s motto goes beyond patient care to include a caring commitment to local communities. The practice is locally owned, and Dr. Krontz enjoys supporting local community efforts throughout the service areas.

“WCEA offers free vision screenings at health fairs and back-to-school events, and participates in many fundraisers, parades and community giveaways. We also partner with local food banks and animal shelters to encourage donations to help people and pets in need,” Kerr said.

She continued, “Semi-annually, we research current vision and insurance plans to offer as many of them as possible to our patients. Dr. Krontz also believes in supporting other local businesses by purchasing office supplies locally and using local radio marketing and caterers for WCEA events. He and other staff members participate annually in outreach programs, both local and abroad. WCEA works with Lions Clubs International, and our doctors offer free vision checks and glasses to low-income families. Additionally, we offer eye exams through the Community Care Clinic and other need-based programs.”



WCEA Optical Techs Kattie Krips (left) and Courtney Bingham-Isaacs work with a patient.



Maximize Productivity With the Right Business Phone System from Mitel

When you choose wisely, a business phone system can improve productivity in ways you might not have considered — from enhancing the efficiency of call management to fostering more collaboration among staff. That’s why SkyLine/SkyBest offers a comprehensive portfolio of Mitel solutions from key systems to PBX to cloud-based hosted VoIP.

For example, a Mitel IP phone system is an innovative platform that’s powerful, affordable and scalable:

- Instantly scale your communication capabilities up or down without touching your infrastructure. You can effortlessly add additional lines and extensions.
- Minimize abandoned calls, voice messages and customer frustration with a system that intuitively knows where every employee is and how to reach them.

Our business sales team is ready to review your needs and help you choose the right phone system to meet them. Call 1-844-SKYBEST.

Be Vocal About Buying Local

*Speak up to support our
community's small businesses*



SkyLine/SkyBest is a big believer in small businesses. If we work together as community members, we can help small businesses succeed despite the increasing competition from national chains and online mega-retailers.

Given the prevailing emphasis on simply finding the cheapest price when making purchase decisions, it's important to remind our friends and neighbors of the substantial community benefits of buying local. They include:

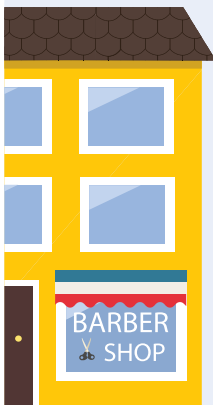
Improving Our Local Economy – Studies show that for every \$100 spent at a locally owned business, \$45 goes back into the community and our tax base. By comparison, for every \$100 spent at a chain store, only \$14 comes back.

Creating Local Jobs and Opportunities – Not only do small local businesses employ more people directly per dollar of revenue, they also employ an array of supporting services by buying local themselves. They hire local architects, contractors, accountants, insurance brokers, computer consultants and attorneys. They also tend to carry a higher percentage of locally produced goods than chains, meaning more jobs for local suppliers. In contrast, a chain store is typically a clone of other units, which eliminates the need for local planning and uses a minimum of local goods and services.

Keeping Our Community Unique – Small local businesses give a community its distinct character and personality. Conversely, a preponderance of chain restaurants and stores create communities that all start to look alike. By supporting the one-of-a-kind businesses in our community, we help maintain the uniqueness that makes living here enjoyable and attracts visitors.

Giving More Support to Local Causes – In general, small local businesses donate more per sales dollar to local nonprofits, events and sports teams compared to big businesses. Their owners and employees are also more likely to “do good” through volunteering at community events and serving on local advisory boards.

Whenever possible, SkyLine/SkyBest encourages you to buy local (and dine local, play local and give local) and spread this message to others. It's up to all of us to keep our community thriving. To see highlights of our company's community donations and volunteer activities, visit www.skybest.com/about-us/in-the-community.



Get Ready to Celebrate Small Business Week

Since 1963, the Small Business Administration (SBA) takes the opportunity each year to highlight the impact of outstanding entrepreneurs, small business owners and others from all 50 states and U.S. territories. This year, Small Business Week takes place April 28 - May 4.

More than half of Americans either own or work for a small business, and they create about two out of every three new jobs in the U.S. each year. During National Small Business Week, the SBA recognizes the millions of small businesses that drive our nation's economy and showcase the resources and services the SBA provides to entrepreneurs at every stage—whether they're just starting up, expanding or getting through a tough time.

If you own a small business, take a moment during Small Business Week to remind your customers and supporters why you started your business by sharing your story on social media. For more ideas, visit www.sba.gov/nsbw.

Why Choose a Local Internet Service Provider?



Living and working in the same community as your internet provider may be even more beneficial than you realize. A local Internet Service Provider (ISP) can offer many advantages over national competitors including these:

Knows the Community

A local ISP is deeply rooted in the community and has the connections, relationships and local knowledge other nationally owned companies simply do not have. It knows how the community operates, what it needs and how to get things done efficiently. It's also invested in the success of its residents and fellow businesses. A local ISP will be the first to advocate for your needs and the last to put profits before customer satisfaction.

Lends a Hand When People Need It

Because a local ISP is such an integral part of the community, it recognizes when a helping hand is needed. When the community is facing challenges, the management and employees of a local ISP jump in and help people move forward. For example, it may use community partnerships, grant funding and its own investments to ramp up fiber installation in rural areas to foster economic growth.

Provides Personal Customer Service

A national ISP might have a fleet of technicians, but if they're subcontractors managed through a cumbersome bureaucracy, you could wait a long time to get service. By contrast, a local ISP will have local technicians and other local employees who

can provide responsive customer service and faster turnaround on installations and maintenance. The staff at a local ISP is also more likely to develop an ongoing relationship with your business, which means you'll spend less time explaining things before your problem gets solved.

Creates Flexible Solutions

A local ISP isn't limited by the red tape and restrictions often found at a large corporation. This means a local ISP has the flexibility to spend whatever time is required to fully understand your needs and develop the best solutions to meet them.

Cares About Your Success

To a local ISP, you're not just a customer. You're also a neighbor, and someone its employees will run into at the grocery store or at community events. As a result, a local ISP will genuinely care about you, your satisfaction and your success.

SkyLine/SkyBest is proud to be a local ISP and honored to serve you. To learn more about our community involvement, follow us on Facebook and Instagram or visit us online at www.skybest.com.

Support Small Business!




SkyLine

SkyBest

We are happy to support local businesses and encourage everyone to Shop Small.

Contact us for all of your internet and business phone needs.

1-844-SKYBEST
www.skybest.com