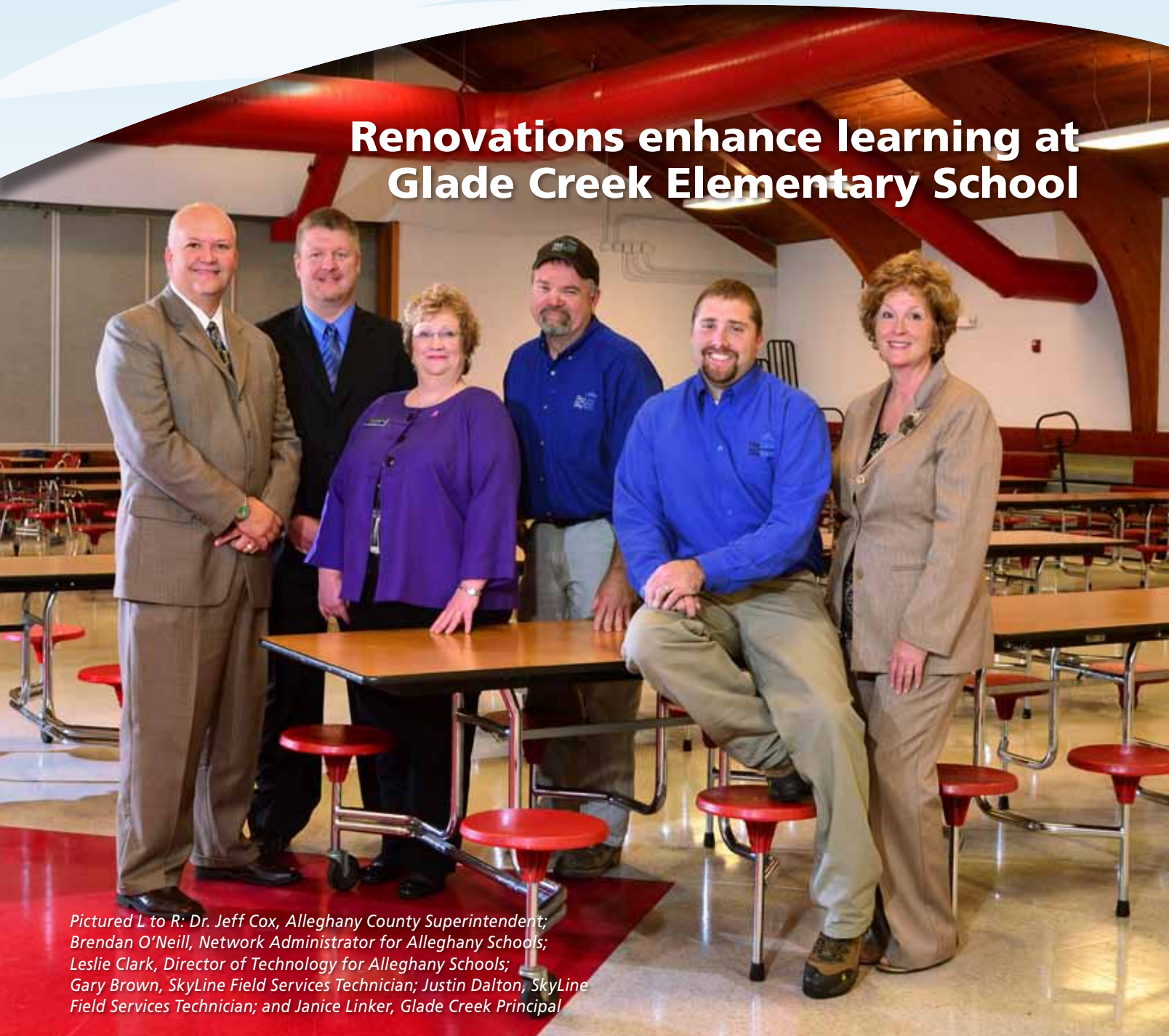


BUSINESS connections

Renovations enhance learning at Glade Creek Elementary School



Pictured L to R: Dr. Jeff Cox, Allegheny County Superintendent; Brendan O'Neill, Network Administrator for Allegheny Schools; Leslie Clark, Director of Technology for Allegheny Schools; Gary Brown, SkyLine Field Services Technician; Justin Dalton, SkyLine Field Services Technician; and Janice Linker, Glade Creek Principal



Management
Jimmy C. Blevins
Chief Executive Officer

Tim Grosse
Executive Director of Competitive
Operations

**Business Sales Department Contact
Information**
Customer Service: 1-800-759-2226

Robin Miller
Inside Sales Coordinator
(Alleghany/Ashe/Johnson)
robin.miller@skyline.org

Michelle Scott
Inside Sales Coordinator
(Avery/Watauga)
michelle.scott@skyline.org

Corporate Offices
1200 NC Hwy 194 N, West Jefferson,
NC 28694. No part of this publication
may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval
system or transmitted in any form,
electronic, photocopying, recording,
mechanical or otherwise without
the prior written permission of
SkyLine/SkyBest. All rights are
reserved.

Trademarks
All brand names and product names
used in this publication are trade
names, service marks, trademarks or
registered trademarks of their
respective owners.

Additional Issues
Extra issues are available to business
customers on a limited basis while
supplies last. Contact Robin Miller
at 1-800-759-2226. Copyright ©2012
by SkyLine Membership Corp. and
SkyBest Communications, Inc. and
Cornerstone Publishing Group, Inc.

Postmaster Send Changes To
Myla Farmer
Marketing & Promotions Coordinator
SkyLine/SkyBest
PO Box 759
West Jefferson, NC 28694



BUSINESS connections

Alleghany County is one of four North Carolina counties served by SkyLine/SkyBest, with the other three being Ashe, Avery and Watauga. Among these four counties, Alleghany, like many rural areas, certainly has had its share of economic challenges in recent years. However, I'm pleased to help spread the word about the **progress being made there in education, business development and job creation.**

This December issue of *Business Connections* pays special tribute to Alleghany County and the hard work of its residents. For example, the Business Spotlight on pages 4 and 5 features **Glade Creek Elementary School**, part of the Alleghany County School district. A recent **building expansion, combined with a technology upgrade** from SkyLine/SkyBest, has enabled this school to enhance its learning opportunities.

Another source of good news in Alleghany County is the **Miles J.O.B. Fund**, which helps entrepreneurs develop businesses and create local jobs. This fund, started in 2008, has already assisted in the **addition of 82 jobs in Alleghany County** and is continuing to expand its efforts to promote business growth. You can read more about it on pages 6 and 7, along with a brief look at the **SkyLine Revolving Loan Fund** that also helps support area businesses.

I want to take this opportunity to wish you a joyous holiday season and a very successful 2013. All of us at SkyLine/SkyBest are honored to play a role in your business endeavors and to continue our partnership with you in the coming year.

Sincerely,

Jimmy C. Blevins
Chief Executive Officer



Cover photo by Todd Bush, www.bushphoto.com.



Does your business use an American Express card? Some SkyLine/SkyBest customers have reported receiving emails that appear to be legitimate and sent from American Express. In reality, these emails are one of many phishing scams designed to gain personal information (credit card numbers, bank account information, Social Security number, passwords or other sensitive information) from unsuspecting victims.

According to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), phishers send an email or pop-up message that claims to be from a business or organization that you may deal with—for example, an Internet service provider (ISP), bank, online payment service or even a government agency. The message may ask you to “update,” “validate” or “confirm” your account information. Some phishing emails threaten a dire consequence if you don’t respond. The messages direct you to a website that looks just like a legitimate organization’s site. But it isn’t. It’s a bogus site whose sole purpose is to trick you into divulging your personal information so the operators can steal your identity and run up bills or commit crimes in your name.

If you receive emails like this, do not reply and do not click on the link in the message. Credit card companies or other businesses with which you have an established relationship will not need to contact you by email to verify your personal information. Should you be concerned about your account, contact the business directly by phone using the number on the back of your credit card or other source that you know to be genuine.

It’s also important to remember to use antivirus and anti-spyware software, as well as a firewall, and update them all regularly. Some phishing emails contain software that can harm your computer or track your activities on the Internet without your knowledge.

To learn other ways to avoid email scams and deal with deceptive spam, visit the Federal Trade Commission’s website at ftc.gov.

Allegheny County Helps Light Up the Holidays

SkyLine/SkyBest is pleased to periodically devote space in *Business Connections* to promote community activities in our service areas. In this issue, we turn your attention to Allegheny County, home to many wonderful holiday traditions including High Country Lights.

Northwest North Carolina’s premier animated light show, High Country Lights, features over 100,000 lights choreographed to popular Christmas tunes. Hosted by Glade Creek Volunteer Fire Department in Ennice, N.C., it can be seen nightly from 6:00 to 10:00 p.m. through New Year’s Day. While a free show, donations to High Country Lights are encouraged and all money collected is returned back to the community through the Glade Creek Volunteer Fire Department.

Visit sparta-nc.com often to find out what’s on the calendar for Allegheny County. There’s always plenty of fun and recreation in the Blue Ridge Mountains.



Glade Creek Elementary School

Renovations of the building and its technology are enhancing learning



Photo by Todd Bush, www.bushphoto.com.

Glade Creek Elementary School, located in Ennice, N.C., serves grades Pre-K through 8 in the Allegheny County School district. Walk through the building today and you'll see dramatic changes compared with a few years ago — changes enthusiastically welcomed by teachers, students, administrators and parents.

Part of the transformation took place in the building itself. Leslie Clark, Director of Technology at Allegheny County Schools, says, "Glade Creek Elementary School went through a major expansion project. What used to be the cafeteria is now office space; the old gym is now the cafeteria; and a new gym, six classrooms and a hallway were added. There's also a new front fascia for the building. The project was formed to accommodate increased student enrollment and to update the building where needed."

Wireless connectivity combined with laptops and iPads opens up a whole world of resources for the teacher and provides terrific opportunities for students."

— DR. JEFF COX, SUPERINTENDENT, ALLEGHENY COUNTY SCHOOLS

New Phones, Paging and WiFi

This renovation coincided with a major update to the school's communications systems. Clark continues, "Before, Glade Creek Elementary School was trying to function with rather antiquated technology. It was using a small digital phone system, an older paging system and WiFi service that covered only part of the building. SkyLine/SkyBest worked with us to move forward with technology."

Brent Keith, Business Sales Executive for SkyLine/SkyBest, says, "Allegheny County Schools requested a solution for a future-proof business system that would allow for phones in every classroom as well as paging and WiFi equipment to support the school's new additions. These upgrades required a data-switching platform capable of providing a solid backbone for these communications systems. SkyLine/SkyBest worked closely with the IT staff of Allegheny County Schools to meet that need by installing a new MITEL PBX that provides business system functionality for the office staff and equips each classroom with phones. The new Valcom paging system we installed offers a reliable platform for both bell ringing control and paging. Glade Creek Elementary School's data network was

also augmented during this process, allowing for additional data access and WiFi coverage to encompass the new classrooms and gymnasium.”

Giving teachers ready access to phones is vitally important. Dr. Jeff Cox, Superintendent of Allegheny County Schools, explains, “Safety during emergencies is the primary issue related to phones in classrooms. But even on a day-to-day basis, they’re an efficient way for necessary calls to take place. For example, if Johnny is having an issue, the teacher can use the classroom phone to call his mother to discuss it. If Susie forgot her uniform, she can call home from the classroom and not have to miss class time leaving to use the office phone.”

Laptops and iPads in Classrooms

The expanded WiFi service at Glade Creek Elementary School has opened the door to the use of laptops and iPads in its classrooms. Says Dr. Cox, “Teachers always struggle to differentiate instruction in order to cover the different learning needs of their students. It’s a real challenge. Wireless connectivity combined with laptops and iPads opens up a whole world of resources for the teacher and provides terrific opportunities for students. Individualized learning allows each student to go at his or her own pace and not be held back or pushed based on the capabilities of the other students in the classroom.”

Model Classroom Initiative

The Model Classroom Initiative, funded in part by a \$1.1 million grant from the Golden LEAF Foundation, enabled Glade Creek Elementary School to purchase iPads for student use in the classroom. This program gives teachers the opportunity to ask for the new technology they need in order to enhance learning.



L to R: Jessica Perry, NCWise Data Manager; Laurie Baremore, Treasurer; and Mrs. Janice Linker, Principal

In addition, Allegheny County Schools purchased 64 SMART Boards for use in all its schools thanks, in part, to the Technology Education Grant program established in 2006 from SkyLine/SkyBest. Dr. Cox notes, “It started with a couple of SMART Boards years ago, and now every classroom has one. The idea for this project came from SkyLine/SkyBest and we’re grateful for their support.”

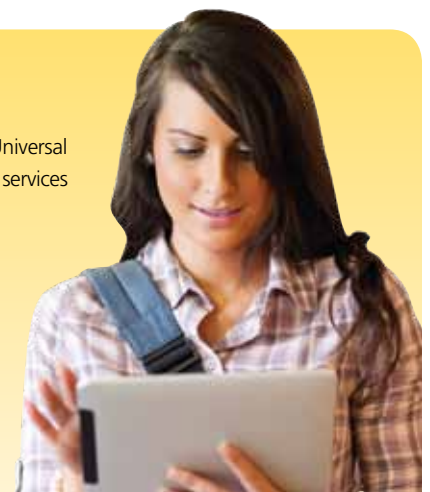
He adds, “We value our partnership with SkyLine/SkyBest. Their people are willing to sit down with us and help come up with solutions.”

One challenge faced by the Allegheny County School system at large is helping avoid dropouts among particularly at-risk students. Dr. Cox explains, “Last year, we identified about 40 such students, half of whom did not have Internet service at home. We partnered with SkyLine/SkyBest through its Technology Education Grant program to provide Internet to these homes and purchased laptops for some of the students as well. This helped close the gap between the ‘haves and have nots.’ It made a difference to these kids; they could access assignments online and do research. Of these 40 at-risk students, 39 have either graduated or are still in school working towards graduation.”

eRate Funds Help Pay for Technology

Glade Creek Elementary School received financial assistance from the Schools and Libraries Program of the Universal Service Fund, commonly known as eRate. This program helps provide affordable access to telecommunications services for all eligible schools and libraries, particularly those in rural and economically disadvantaged areas.

Leslie Clark, Director of Technology at Allegheny County Schools, was involved with the eRate application process. She explains, “Glade Creek Elementary School applied for eRate funds during the 2009-2010 school year and was accepted. This money paid for the wiring and access points of the new WiFi network that SkyLine/SkyBest installed during the 2010-2011 school year. The amount of money allocated depends on the percentage of students receiving free and reduced lunches at a school. At the time of Glade Creek Elementary School’s eRate application, that number was around 75 percent.”



Miles J.O.B. Fund is True to its Name

This program is helping Allegheny County residents start businesses and create jobs



Denise Brooks and daughter Crystal Lockey, successful co-owners of Innovative Occasions and Miles J.O.B. Fund, Inc. loan recipients

The N.C. Department of Commerce annually ranks the state's 100 counties based on economic well-being and assigns each a Tier designation. The 40 most distressed counties are designated as Tier 1, the next 40 as Tier 2 and the 20 least distressed as Tier 3. Allegheny County is a Tier 1 County, meaning it's one of the most distressed—largely due to the loss of manufacturing jobs.

A boost to economic development in Allegheny County is coming from the Miles J.O.B. Fund. (J.O.B. stands for Job Opportunity Base.) Donald "D.W." Miles and his late wife, Barbara Miles, established the Miles J.O.B. Fund in 2008 by donating \$100,000 in seed money as a way to give back to the community in which they found business success. D.W. Miles began his career with a car lot in 1958, and later owned and operated a successful real estate firm and worked as a builder and developer. As he personally experienced, it can be difficult to gain access to the capital needed to start, expand or operate a business.

Dollars and Direction

The mission of the Miles J.O.B. Fund is to assist deserving and qualified entrepreneurs of various skills and trades to develop a self-sustaining business and create jobs in Allegheny County. This fund helps provide start-up money, primarily through revolving loans.

It works like this: The Miles J.O.B. Fund uses the monies to guarantee loans, which are made by banks. The bank charges interest on the loan, set at five percent, and the Miles J.O.B. Fund's seed money is returned when the loan is repaid. This system helps qualified applicants in Allegheny County borrow money not just based on their credit, but on their plan to create successful businesses with sustainable jobs.

The Miles J.O.B. Fund loans have helped fund and collaborate:

- Tools and equipment
- Business plans
- Advisory resources
- Education
- Guidance through the application process
- Support and advice



D.W. Miles Miles J.O.B. Fund Motto: For success, be honest and positive, stay focused and confident, and don't quit

Photo by Todd Bush, www.bushphoto.com.

Golden LEAF Grant

The Golden LEAF Foundation recently awarded a \$75,000 grant to the Miles J.O.B. Fund. Golden LEAF's mission is to promote the social welfare of North Carolina's citizens and to receive and distribute funds for economic impact assistance to economically affected or tobacco-dependent regions of North Carolina. The Foundation awards grants to 501(c)(3) nonprofits and governmental entities across North Carolina. Golden LEAF's grants-making focuses on three priorities: agriculture, job creation and retention, and workforce preparedness.

Karen Leys, Treasurer of the Miles J.O.B. Fund, notes, "The Miles J.O.B. Fund's Board of Directors are very appreciative of the Golden LEAF Grant. This funding will enable more local entrepreneurs to get the assistance and opportunities they need to be successful in business."

82 New Jobs and Counting

Since its inception, the Miles J.O.B. Fund has made or facilitated 18 loans and helped to create 53 full-time and 29 part-time jobs in Allegheny County. One business that contributed to these job-creation statistics is Sparta Family Entertainment and River Rock Grill, owned by Mike and Katie Hettleman. This venture—greatly needed by Sparta—was a collaboration between the Hettlemans, the Miles J.O.B. Fund and the N.C. Rural Center. The Miles J.O.B. Fund was the facilitator for a \$72,000 N.C. Rural Center grant given to the business for the purpose of creating jobs. Through hard work and collaboration, Sparta Family Entertainment and River Rock Grill now has nine full-time and 22 part-time employees. But the business has done more than just give jobs to local residents; it also returned \$100,000 back to the community in sales tax and payroll taxes in 2011.



L to R: Katie Hettleman, Michael Hettleman, Emily Fry, Dylan Edwards and Steva Tucker

What's ahead for the Miles J.O.B. Fund in 2013? Leys responds, "In addition to managing our revolving loans, the Miles J.O.B. Fund will also be working on a new program with the marketing tagline, "Take a Break from the Interstate." The goal is to

direct tourist traffic off Interstate 77 in order to promote tourism and create jobs along the Historic U.S. Highway 21/Lakes to Florida Highway including Elkin/Jonesville to Sparta, Independence and Wytheville, Va."

Clearly, Allegheny County can continue to expect a positive impact from the Miles J.O.B. Fund's available funds and strength to collaborate with Golden Leaf and other revenue sources. The Board of Directors welcomes all potential entrepreneurs to call (336) 372-5646 with ideas to create local businesses and jobs.



Pictured L to R: Harold Church, Wayne Miles, D.W. Miles, John Spicer, Jackie Billings, Tom Gentry, Donna Shumate, Dr. Jeff Cox, LeAnn Gambill, Karen G. Leys and Susan MSR Miles

SkyLine's Revolving Loan Fund Gives Boost to Businesses

In 1994, SkyLine received a \$400,000 grant from the Rural Utilities Service (RUS) to establish a Revolving Loan Fund. To receive this grant, SkyLine had to commit \$80,000 to the fund—an indication of our company's dedication to fostering local business development. The Revolving Loan Fund provides zero-interest loans to organizations that supply essential community services and create or retain local jobs. Examples of qualifying projects include:

- Rural development activities resulting in the creation or retention of job opportunities for rural people;
- Construction and installation of needed community facilities or services that support rural economic development and result in the creation and/or retention of job opportunities;
- New business development and/or existing business expansion within the areas served by SkyLine.

Since its inception, SkyLine's Revolving Loan Fund has provided more than \$1 million in loans to benefit a variety of economic development projects. They've included site improvement to the Allegheny County Industrial Park by the Allegheny Economic Development Corporation and a building addition to Tri-State Components of Allegheny County.

Merry Christmas



It may be a winter wonderland outside, but our hearts are filled with warmth as we reminisce about the wonderful year we've had serving all of you.

1-800-759-2226

www.skybest.com