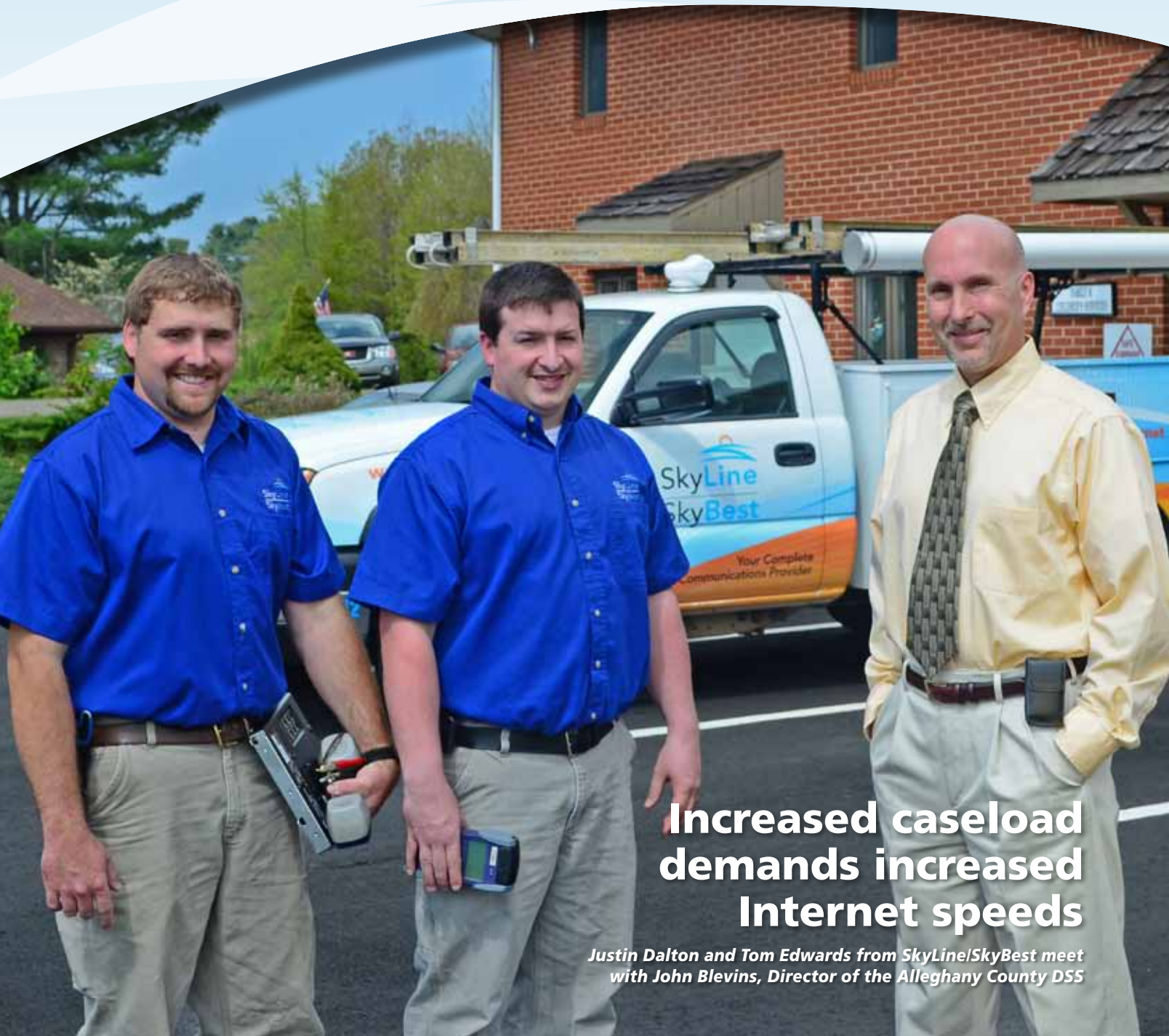


BUSINESS connections



Increased caseload demands increased Internet speeds

*Justin Dalton and Tom Edwards from SkyLine/SkyBest meet
with John Blevins, Director of the Allegheny County DSS*



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BUSINESS connections

Growth is widely recognized as a sign of success in the business world. Having more customers, products, and locations means you're doing something—or more accurately, many things—right.

We're pleased to feature several examples of growth in this issue of *Business Connections*. On pages 4 and 5, we feature the **Alleghany County Department of Social Services** and its use of SkyLine/SkyBest fiber services to accommodate its growing bandwidth requirements. Due to our fiber network, we were able to offer the department a solution that gave them a **higher Internet speed, through a metro pipe, for a lower cost**. We are seeing growth throughout our area. Ashe and Watauga County Public Libraries are currently upgrading metro pipes from 10 to 20 Mbps. And, Avery County is poised for new business growth with the opening of the Avery County Professional & Retail Incubator Development Enterprise located in the former Banner Elk Elementary School.

You'll really see growth on page 6, where we help **kick off the season of farmers' markets** and urge you to continue your commitment to support local businesses. When we buy local, we all win.

I want to introduce you to a new member of our team who will undoubtedly help SkyLine grow. **Tim Grosse is now Executive Director of Competitive Services**, and brings 25 years of telecommunications experience to this role. During his career, Tim has held positions in Regulatory, Operations, Business Development and Product Management, predominately with independent telecommunications companies in Illinois and North Carolina. Tim shares, "My goal is to maximize the capabilities of the network by introducing new services for our customers and to bring the best technology to the communities we serve. **Top-notch technology combined with our superior customer service** will continue to place SkyLine a step above our competitors."

We look forward to the exciting period of growth ahead, and to helping your business grow.

Sincerely,

Jimmy C. Blevins
Chief Executive Officer





Facebook

MEANS BUSINESS

*A Facebook Page can
be a new chapter
in your marketing*

If you've used Facebook to connect with old friends, share news or post photos of your kids, you already have some idea of how it can be used to promote your business. The functions within your personal Facebook Profile are also available within a business Facebook Page, the "home base" from which companies build relationships with customers and promote products and services.

Using Facebook for business can be a smart move for several reasons: (1) it includes powerful tools to spread your brand and expand your online presence, (2) it's widely used, and viral by nature, (3) your target market is easy to find and (4) it's free.

Here's how Facebook Profile functions translate to Facebook Pages:

Home Page and Feed - When you create a Facebook Page for your business, you will be the administrator of that Page, but the home page and feed that you normally see will still be visible when you log in.

Posting on the Wall - Just like each Facebook Profile, each Page has a Wall. You can post updates to the Wall, and anyone who expresses an interest in your Page (by clicking "Like") can also contribute. When an update is posted, anyone can "Like," "Comment" or "Share."

Advertising - Ever notice how the ads you see on Facebook match the interests you've mentioned on your Profile? Facebook ads are designed to reach users who have listed keywords specified by the companies that place the ads. You can use this feature to your advantage when your business is the one placing the ad.

Applications - A wide variety of Facebook business apps make it possible to make phone calls, share slide presentations, upload videos, collect testimonials and more.

Using these functions, you can promote your business by delivering news, announcing events or special offers, running contests, posting videos or initiating conversations. To make the most of your Facebook Page, remember these tips:

- Facebook is not the place for a hard sell. Instead, use it to build a community, keep in touch and let people get to know your business.
- Your promotional success will depend on your content. Be sure it's valuable to your online community.
- Make it worthwhile to be part of your Facebook community by posting items not found on your blog, website or Twitter page.
- Be consistent and update your content regularly.
- When someone comments, comment back, and "Like" his or her Page in return.

Connect With SkyLine/SkyBest

SkyLine/SkyBest is on Facebook to interact directly with our customers. We invite you to join us to see sneak previews of services and special money-saving offers.



www.facebook.com/SkyLineSkyBest

Alleghany County Department of Social Services

Fiber services accommodate increased caseload and online applications

The recession of recent years has, not surprisingly, meant that more people need help. As a result, the Alleghany County Department of Social Services (DSS) has seen a significant increase in the number of requests for its social, economic, community education and resource development programs.

MORE ACTIVITY, MORE CHALLENGES

John Blevins, Director of the Alleghany County DSS, notes, “People are hurting. From July 2009 to February 2012, there has been a 48-percent increase in Food Nutrition Service cases. That’s a big jump.”

Located in Sparta, N.C., the Alleghany County DSS provides a broad range of assistance including Children and Family Services, Income Maintenance Services and Child Support Enforcement Services. Adding to the challenges of serving a growing number of clients was the IT change prompted by state budget cuts in 2010.

Blevins explains, “The State of North Carolina used to provide IT support through a state server. Due to budget cuts, the state withdrew IT support from the counties in 2010. So our department had to set up its own network. We spoke with Robin Miller (Inside Sales Coordinator) and Brent Keith (Business Sales Executive) about the options for connectivity that SkyLine/SkyBest could offer us.”

SKYLINE/SKYBEST OFFERS FIBER SOLUTION

To meet the new network needs of the Alleghany County DSS, Miller and Keith recommended utilizing the SkyLine/SkyBest fiber network and installing a metro pipe. A metro pipe is a unique Ethernet connection that provides business-class reliability and connectivity to the Internet. This specific connection consists of a 3 Mbps symmetrical Ethernet connection to SkyLine/SkyBest with direct access to the Internet. This would replace the costly T-1 line from the state that the department had been using.

Accepting the metro pipe proposal from SkyLine/SkyBest was an easy decision for the Alleghany County DSS. Says Blevins, “Making the switch to a metro pipe doubled the speed of our



John Blevins in his office at the Alleghany County Department of Social Services

“Making the switch to a metro pipe doubled the speed of our Internet service while giving us a 34-percent cost savings.”

— JOHN BLEVINS, DIRECTOR, ALLEGHANY COUNTY DSS

Internet service while giving us a 34-percent cost savings. Those are extremely valuable benefits, and we were sold.”

By August 2010, the department was up and running with SkyLine/SkyBest fiber services via the metro pipe. According to Blevins, it was a smooth and seamless transition. He says, “The best thing about it was once our new metro pipe was put in, I didn’t have to think about it anymore.”



Jennifer Dowell, Processing Assistant V

NEED FOR SPEED

One reason the doubled Internet speed was so important to the Allegheny County DSS is the state's ongoing move to implementing more Internet-based applications. They include:

- **NC FAST (Families Accessing Services Through Technology)**—This application is coming out in October 2012. It's designed to improve the way the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services and county departments of social services do business. NC FAST will enable workers to spend less time on administrative tasks and more time assisting families. Rather than a client having to speak to multiple people to discuss several different benefits, eventually clients will tell their story once and receive all the benefits they are eligible to receive. In addition, NC FAST will make it possible to send files between counties and go across the whole system to see what benefits the client is eligible for.
- **ePASS (Electronic Pre-Assessment Screening Services)**—This is a quick and easy way for people to get information about benefits and services that may help them. By using ePASS, people can start the process of exploring benefits while they're still at home by entering their information online to find out what programs they may potentially be able to receive.

In addition to the enhanced performance provided by its fiber services, Blevins also appreciates the attentive service the department receives from SkyLine/SkyBest. He notes, "SkyLine/SkyBest is local; that's number one for me. They're in our area, and their people are very responsive and quick to answer our questions. I'm really not a tech person, so I especially appreciate the fact that they're willing to explain everything to me. I can count on SkyLine/SkyBest to work hard and put forth the effort."

Benefits of Fiber Keep Growing

SkyLine has invested aggressively in fiber-optic technology over the last few years in order to meet the changing needs of our customers. (The Customer Spotlight on Allegheny County Department of Social Services illustrates the impact fiber services have on efficiency and productivity.)

Fiber-to-the-Premise (FTTP) technology allows SkyLine to provide high-speed Internet, high-definition TV and voice over an advanced Internet Protocol (IP) network. SkyLine has already deployed FTTP technology to several communities, consisting of more than 12,800 living units, and now has more than 3,900 subscribers served by fiber.

Optical fibers are flexible, hair-thin strands of glass that use light instead of electricity to carry a signal. They are unique in their ability to carry high bandwidth signals over long distances. Fiber has a much longer lifespan than cable or copper systems and is up to 1,000 times faster than DSL or cable modems.

The growth of FTTP has been tremendous since it was first introduced. In 2001, market analyst RVA, LLC reported that about 19,000 homes in North America were connected with end-to-end fiber; today it is available to more than 20 million homes. Given that Cisco recently predicted that more than 15 billion (twice the world's population) network-connected devices will be in operation by 2015, this growth trend is likely to continue.

Fiber offers many benefits:

- **Homeowners and business users enjoy better, faster services.**
Users gain increased bandwidth quality, quantity and capacity. Additionally, fiber offers a way to future-proof homes and businesses in anticipation of new communications and entertainment services on the horizon.
- **Developers command premium prices.**
Homes in FTTP-connected communities command premium prices compared to homes in communities without optical connectivity.

As bandwidth demand continues to increase, SkyLine remains committed to a future with fiber.

A Fresh Look at **Farmers' Markets**

Renew your commitment to buy local and help our local communities



Every time you choose where to purchase goods or services, you have a powerful opportunity to make a difference in our communities. When you choose local businesses and locally produced goods and services, you're reinvesting money at home and helping to create stronger local economies. One easy way to do your part is by supporting the Farmers' Markets that begin to "crop up" in April. Here's an overview:

ALLEGHANY FARMERS' MARKET

Located in Crouse Park in Sparta / Runs from May to September / Saturdays from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. and Thursdays from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. / Call 336-372-5597

ASHE FARMERS' MARKET

West Jefferson location is on the Backstreet in downtown / Runs from April 14 to end of October, Saturdays from 8 a.m. – 1 p.m. / Starting July 11, open Wednesdays (same time) through September 29 / www.ashefarmersmarket.com / Call Market Manager, John Smyre, at 336-877-4141 or Assistant Manager, Amanda Wineberg, at 336-977-3187

Lansing location is in Creeper Trail Park behind Lansing Fire Department / Runs from May 3 to September 13 / Thursdays from 1 p.m. to 6 p.m. / Agriculture products only—no crafts / www.explorelansingnc.com / Call Ann Rose at 336-977-2535

AVERY FARMERS' MARKET

Banner Elk location is on Tate Lawn at Lees-McRae College / Runs from April 19 to September 21 / Thursdays from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. / Call Kaci Nidiffer at 828-733-4938 or email troslyfarm@att.net

Newland location is in Newland Town Park beside CVS / Runs June 16 to September 15 / Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. / Call Kaci Nidiffer at 828-733-4938 or email troslyfarm@att.net

JOHNSON COUNTY FARMERS' MARKET

Located at County Courthouse, 110 Court Street in Mountain City, TN / Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. / www.johnsoncountyfarmersmarket.org / Email johnsoncountyfm@gmail.com

WATAUGA FARMERS' MARKET

Located in Horn in the West parking lot in Boone / Saturdays from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m., May to October / Wednesdays from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m., June to September / www.wataugacountyfarmersmarket.org / Call 828-355-4918 or email info@wataugacountyfarmersmarket.org

Of course, shopping at farmers' markets not only helps improve local economies; it can also help make your meals more delicious and nutritious. Plus, you can meet the person who grows the food. Most of the time, farmers are more than willing to share their growing methods and even a recipe or two.

SkyLine/SkyBest believes strongly in the importance of buying local and helping other local businesses succeed. No matter what we each bring to the table, whether it's tomatoes or telephones, we're all in this together.



Teaming Up for Communities

SkyLine employees regularly team up to contribute their time and talents for the good of our communities. This reflects our mission statement, which states in part, "we will be good corporate citizens and strive to enhance the quality of life in the areas we serve." Here's a snapshot of some recent and upcoming community activities:



WE WIRED, WE PAINTED, WE HELPED HABITAT FOR HUMANITY

On March 3, 2012, several SkyLine employees volunteered to help wire Ashe County's first Habitat for Humanity home for telephone, Internet and TV service. Our group also helped local volunteers with other exterior work on the home, which is located in the Buffalo Meadows community of Ashe County.

Habitat for Humanity organizers plan for the home to be completed by late Spring, thanks to the scores of volunteers who have donated hundreds of hours toward the project. SkyLine was proud to be part of the process.



SKYLINE ANSWERS THE CALL OF THE ASHE HEART AUCTION

SkyLine provided telephone service and the telephone bank for the annual Ashe County Heart Auction on March 7 at Family Central in Jefferson. Now in its 49th year, the auction aired throughout the day on 580 WSKS, and scores of volunteers helped man phones, work the boards and announce bids to benefit the American Heart Association.

As of press time, the Heart Auction had raised a record high of \$20,251. Thanks to all who contributed in various ways to support this important charitable event.



RELAY FOR LIFE WILL AGAIN GET SKYLINE SUPPORT

As in years past, SkyLine will be actively participating in Relay for Life events in our area. Relay for Life raises funds for the American Cancer Society to support a variety of programs for cancer patients and their families. The events also provide an opportunity for survivors to celebrate, for caregivers to be recognized and for lost loved ones to be remembered.

SkyLine looks forward to taking steps to benefit this important cause, and encourages your business to join the walk as well. The schedule for this summer's Relay for Life events is as follows:

- Alleghany County – June 8
- Watauga County – June 15
- Ashe County – July 13
- Johnson County – July 20
- Avery County – July 27

SkyLine applauds the contributions of all community volunteers and encourages your business to lend a hand whenever possible.

The North Carolina and Tennessee One Call Centers provide a toll-free telephone number, 8-1-1, to help reduce damages to underground facilities. This reduces the loss of service to the public and the loss of time and money to excavators, utilities and taxpayers.

Be sure to call the One Call Center at 811 before you dig.



**Know what's below.
Call before you dig.**

Pictured: SkyLine Cable Splicer
and Locator, Steve Hart