

BUSINESS

connections



More Customer Convenience is Coming

Ashlyn Jordan will work at the new SkyLine/SkyBest Customer Center in Boone, a location offering easy accessibility for Watauga County residents.



Feel Good About Choosing Us **3** // Our New Customer Center in Boone **4**
 Switch to SkyBest and Keep Your Same Numbers **5** // Word-of-Mouth Marketing **6**
 SkyLine's Rise & Shine Breakfast Food Drive **7**



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BUSINESS connections

You can count on us to bring a lot to the table. Whenever you meet with SkyLine/SkyBest, your business benefits not only from the knowledge of the professionals in the room but also from our company-wide expertise, many years of service in this area and broad range of communications solutions.

This issue of *Business Connections* showcases what SkyLine/SkyBest brings to our customer relationships and how it benefits you. We start on page 3 with a reminder of why you can **Feel Good About Choosing SkyLine/SkyBest**, based on our support of community organizations, students and more.

On pages 4 and 5, we invite you to learn more about the **New SkyLine/SkyBest Customer Center to Open in Boone**. Since customer convenience is one of the things we like to bring to the table, we chose this location due to its easy accessibility for our Watauga County customers and as part of our service expansion efforts. Plans call for this SkyLine/SkyBest Customer Center to be open before the end of this year.

SkyLine's Rise & Shine Breakfast Food Drive is featured on page 7. We began this community program in 2014 as a response to the sad reality that not all families have enough food. We urge you to check out the list of needed breakfast food items and pitch in to help us fill the shelves at area food pantries.

What does your business bring to the table compared to your competitors? Are you looking for technology to increase your efficiency and productivity? Give SkyLine/SkyBest a call, and we'll help you find solutions.

Sincerely,

Jimmy C. Blevins
Chief Executive Officer



Cover photo by Bernie Carpenter

Feel Good About Choosing SkyLine/ SkyBest



SkyLine/SkyBest knows your business has options when it comes to choosing a provider for communications services. So we want you to know how much we appreciate your loyal support. It's truly a win-win situation when a local business like yours chooses a local provider like us for internet, TV, voice, hosting and security solutions:

- **It's good for your business.** No matter what communications challenges you have, you get reliable, cost-efficient solutions from SkyLine/SkyBest. Plus, you can count on responsive technical support and customer service from our local staff.
- **It's good for economic development.** SkyLine/SkyBest employs area residents and the dollars you spend with us stay close to home. In addition, SkyLine/SkyBest is providing the advanced communications services and infrastructure required for economic development and for future business potential and growth in our rural areas.
- **It's good for community organizations and events.** SkyLine/SkyBest is actively involved in the communities we serve through membership in local chamber and civic clubs as well as participation in, and sponsorship of, many area events. They include: Ashe Heart Walk, Children's Christmas Program, Project Star, Project Teamwork and Relay for Life events across the region.
- **It's good for volunteering and donations.** SkyLine/SkyBest gives generously each year, through volunteer hours and financial donations, to a wide variety of local community organizations.
- **It's good for area students.** We offer the Frank James-SkyLine Scholarship program to local high school seniors. We also send local high school students on an all-expense paid trip to Washington D.C. for the Foundation for Rural Service Youth Tour and to Co-op Camp, a five-day summer leadership program at White Lake.

Thanks again for choosing SkyLine/SkyBest. Good things happen when we work together.

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

Charity Shatley Business Sales Executive

Charity Shatley began working for SkyLine/SkyBest in early January of 2016. She notes, "The month before I started, I was finishing up my marketing degree from the Walker College of Business at Appalachian State University. Go App! I feel very blessed to have found such a wonderful company to work for right out of college."

As Business Sales Executive, Shatley is responsible for sales of products and services to multi-line business customers. "I make sure our customers get the most appropriate and beneficial tools from us in order to help them maximize their success. I want our customers to feel valued and appreciated. Their success is our success," Shatley explains.

She adds, "I love developing relationships with different people and learning about new technology. I also really enjoy the work culture at SkyLine/SkyBest. I'm surrounded by hardworking and great-hearted people."

Shatley believes in giving back to the community: "I'm currently on the Relay for Life team for SkyLine/SkyBest. I've also volunteered with the American Heart Association since I was a young girl." In her free time, Shatley enjoys getting together with her "very entertaining" family, playing basketball, hanging out with her dog and listening to good live music. She also took up flower gardening this year, which has become a growing interest—literally.



NEW SkyLine/SkyBest Customer Center to Open in Boone

Location offers greater convenience and accessibility for Watauga County

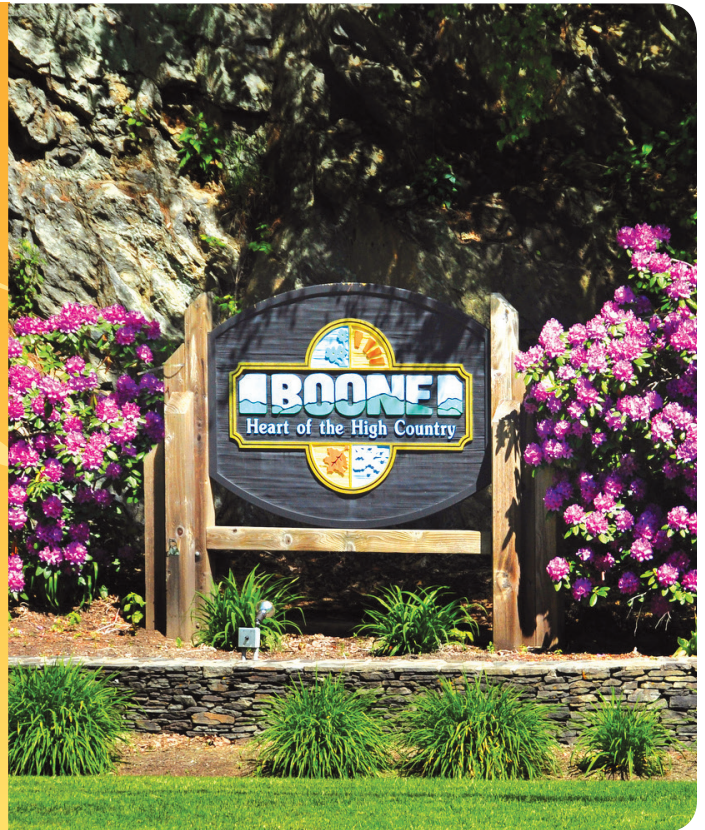


Photo by Todd Bush, www.bushphoto.com

SkyLine Membership Corporation will soon move the SkyLine/SkyBest Seven Devils Customer Center operations to the former Village Laundry location on Wilson Drive, just off Highway 105, in Boone. The new location is convenient to Highway 105, which leads to the Foscoe community, and it also intersects with the 105 Bypass, which connects SkyLine members from the Sugar Grove, Vilas and Zionville communities. In 2013, SkyLine established a Customer Center location in Banner Elk, which has drawn more Avery County traffic away from the Seven Devils location, and the close proximity of these two facilities led company officials to find a location closer to Boone that could better serve all of the cooperative's Watauga customers, as well as its subsidiary's business customer base in downtown Boone. With the new location, SkyBest will expand its service territory along 105 near Wilson Drive and on Business 321.

Jamey Jenkins, Retail Sales Manager, notes, "As the commerce center of Watauga County, Boone is the ideal location for our SkyLine/SkyBest

Customer Center. It will make it more convenient for customers to stop by, get a hands-on look at our telecommunications solutions and get their questions answered by our friendly staff."

New Address, New Opportunities

You can look forward to a full-service retail Customer Center in Boone, with standard weekday business hours and a half-day schedule on Saturdays. Customers will be able to take care of many tasks here including:

- Sign up for services offered by SkyLine/SkyBest —broadband internet, digital TV, local and long-distance phone services, bundles, home/business security and automation/surveillance, and medical alert systems—all at competitive prices
- Drop off SkyLine/SkyBest bill payments
- Receive one-on-one assistance and advice on communications needs
- Get customer service for Carolina West Wireless
- Drop off Carolina West bill payments

This location will be staffed initially by a mix of full-time and part-time employees working various shifts and days. In total, six retail sales representatives and a supervisor will work out of the new Boone location.

He adds, “We certainly have a lot to celebrate with our customers in these communities. So we’re planning a grand opening event to invite everyone to the new SkyLine/SkyBest Customer Center and allow them to check out our wide variety of service offerings.”

As the commerce center of Watauga County, Boone is the ideal location for our SkyLine/SkyBest Customer Center.”

— JAMEY JENKINS, SKYLINE/SKYBEST RETAIL SALES MANAGER

Celebration to Come

Renovations to the 3,500-square-foot Wilson Drive facility are underway, and the new SkyLine/SkyBest Customer Center should be open for business before the end of 2016. Jenkins says, “The response so far has been positive from our existing customers, as well as those Boone area business owners who can soon choose SkyBest as their telecommunications provider. We’re meeting a real need in the area by offering the convenience of the Boone location and the expansion of our service area.”



Photo by Todd Bush, www.bushphoto.com

(L to R) Retail Sales employees Cindy Powers, Paige Phillips and Teresa Shook assist a customer at the SkyLine/SkyBest Banner Elk Customer Service Center. Customers will enjoy the same great local service at the new Boone Customer Service Center location later this year.



Switch to SkyBest and Keep Your Same Numbers

Thinking about SkyBest Communications for your phone service, but concerned a switch would mean having to replace your business phone numbers? Well, we have good news! SkyBest Communications can port your numbers from your current provider and provide excellent customer service during the process.

LNP, or local number porting, is a system that allows end-users to keep their phone number(s) when switching from one communications service provider to another. This ability is important to businesses for reasons including:

- Well-established business owners don’t want to change their numbers, since they have used them for many years.
- Business phone numbers may appear in many places—directory advertising, websites, social media, signage, vehicles, letterhead, business cards, company brochures and other printed materials—so it can be expensive and time-consuming to change them.

There is a nominal monthly charge of \$3.50 per number for LNP.

If you’re interested in switching your phone service to SkyBest Communications and have numbers you want to retain, give us a call at 1-844-SKYBEST. We’ll be glad to assist you with the transition.

Make the Most of Word-of-Mouth Marketing

Greatly exceed expectations to get your customers talking

Word-of-mouth marketing is highly valued because of its power to bring in new customers without the expense of paid media. It's also one of the most credible forms of marketing, since people tend to trust recommendations made by their friends and family. Once limited to in-person conversations and phone calls, word-of-mouth marketing now has much broader reach thanks to consumer-generated content on social media such as Facebook and Twitter as well as product reviews on websites.

What can your business do to help trigger positive comments about your products and services? It all boils down to providing a customer experience that goes far beyond what's expected. Just slightly exceeding expectations isn't enough. You must truly go the extra mile if you want customers to freely recommend your business to others. Here are some proven techniques to consider:

- **Create special spaces.** Some businesses make themselves unforgettable through distinctive buildings or spaces. One dramatic example is the erupting volcano outside the Mirage in Las Vegas. But this principle can be employed on a simpler scale — such as a very comfortable and well-furnished waiting room at a car repair shop or a restaurant located in a former schoolhouse or factory.
- **Provide memorable experiences.** The tossing of fresh fish from one employee to another at Pike Place Market in Seattle is a famous example of a business that offers customers a unique shopping adventure. Other examples include the hotel that passes out freshly baked chocolate chip cookies to guests, the electrician that offers to do a free safety inspection of each customer's home or the retail store that follows up on major purchases by sending a handwritten thank you note.

- **Be thoughtful and generous.** Businesses with a strong customer-service culture are proactive and look for ways to deliver even more than the customer expects. Perhaps this means staying late to help a customer meet a tight deadline, patiently explaining how to use new technology, offering a toy or snack to a mother with a fussy child, or sending a book or article to a client that you think they'd enjoy reading. While it's common to over-deliver to new customers, the key to success is to exceed expectations consistently, for all customers, in all areas of interaction, over the long haul.

In addition, you can simply ask your happy customers (perhaps at the end of their visit to your business) to tell their friends and family about the experience. Many people are willing to spread the word, but just need to be prompted.



Thanks for Supporting SkyLine's Rise & Shine Breakfast Food Drive



In 2014, SkyLine established a Rise & Shine Breakfast Food Drive to help fill a void in the communities we serve. Breakfast items are among the most-needed food items at area food pantries but they're often in short supply. So our goal for this program is to collect breakfast food donations to fill the shelves of these pantries as well as the school backpacks of children in need.

Our 2nd Annual Rise & Shine Breakfast Food Drive last year was a big success thanks to the generosity of our directors, employees and you—our members and customers. More than 2,000 breakfast items and cash donations totaling \$600 were collected to distribute to area food pantries. We have no doubt these donations helped make mornings sunnier for area families.

We hope you'll help SkyLine with our 3rd Annual Rise & Shine Breakfast Food Drive and make it an even bigger success. It begins this month and continues through October, which is National Cooperative Month.

To participate, simply drop by any SkyLine/SkyBest Customer Center location during September or October to pick up a free Rise & Shine shopping tote. Then fill it with non-perishable breakfast food items, return these items to any of our locations, and keep the shopping tote for your own future shopping.

Breakfast food items needed include:

- Oatmeal
- Whole-grain cold cereals
- Hot cereals
- Pancake mixes
- Granola bars
- Syrup
- Fruit juice packs
- Jam
- Hot chocolate mix
- Coffee

This effort helps SkyLine demonstrate the seventh cooperative principle, "concern for community." Thank you for sharing in that concern by helping families across our mountain communities get a healthy start to their days.

Mark Your Calendars for These Upcoming Events

Rise & Shine Breakfast Food Drive

- Please donate non-perishable breakfast food items for local pantries
- All SkyLine/SkyBest Customer Service locations
- September 1 – October 31

Ashe Chamber's Outrageous Customer Service Breakfast

- Honoring nominees who deliver exceptional customer service
- Sponsored by SkyLine/SkyBest
- Wednesday, October 12
- Boondocks' Brew House

Customer Appreciation Day

- All SkyLine/SkyBest Customer Service locations
- Thursday, October 13 during regular business hours
- Enjoy a snack and pick up a free SkyLine/SkyBest souvenir
- Register for a chance to win great door prizes

Contact Us for All Your Business Needs

Your SkyLine/SkyBest team appreciates the opportunity to work with you, our customer. In order to receive the best support, please reference our key contacts below for business services.



Brent Keith
Strategic Sales Supervisor

- Business Sales Team Leader
- Technical Product Expertise
- Business Solutions Consultations



Charity Shatley
Business Sales Executive

- Outside Sales Representative
- Primary Onsite Interface for Customers
- Business Solutions Consultations



Graham Brown
Outside Sales Executive

- Outside Sales Team Support
- Product Demonstrations
- Business Solutions Consultations



Robin Miller
Inside Sales Coordinator

- Inside Sales Team Support
- Primary Point of Contact for Business Solutions



Hollie Brown
Inside Sales Coordinator

- Inside Sales Team Support
- Primary Point of Contact for Business Solutions



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