

BUSINESS connections



Teaming Up at Ashe Assisted Living

**Craig Poe, Robin Miller and Graham Brown from SkyLine/SkyBest;
Jane Banks, Bill Clark and Leslie Worth from Ashe Assisted Living.**



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Looking forward and looking back—we all need to do a little bit of both, don't we? It's important to anticipate what's coming down the road in order to best prepare for it, while reflecting on the past emphasizes the changes that have taken place over time and enables us to celebrate growth.

This June issue of *Business Connections* begins on page 3 with a look back as SkyLine celebrates its 60th anniversary. I hope you take a minute to visit www.skyline60.com to register to win prizes and take part in the many special activities going on in 2011.

Speaking of long histories, Ashe Services for Aging (ASA) has been serving the needs of seniors and disabled adults in Ashe County, North Carolina since 1977. We profile them on pages 4 and 5 and take a look at their new Ashe Assisted Living facility. SkyLine/SkyBest provided the phone and Internet services to this facility while helping them maximize cost-efficiency and productivity. We wish them well as they expand their continuum of care.

Looking ahead, keep your eyes out for new service offerings from SkyLine/SkyBest in your community. We are in the midst of a multi-year fiber-optic expansion that will bring higher Internet speeds, digital television and other cutting-edge services to our members and customers. If you'd like to discuss the future of your communications services, just give us a call. We're here to help.

Sincerely,

Jimmy C. Blevins
Chief Executive Officer



Cover photo provided by Todd Bush Photography



60 Years of Great Connections

Join the celebration now at www.skyline60.com

You Could Win One of 60 Prizes

To celebrate our 60 years of great connections, SkyLine is giving away 60 great prizes to our valued members/customers. These prizes include HDTVs, digital cameras, iPads, iPods, Kindles, laptops and more! From March through December 2011, six prizes will be awarded each month. One winner will be selected from each county served by SkyLine—Alleghany, Ashe, Avery and Watauga counties in North Carolina and Johnson County, Tennessee. Plus, one lucky winner will be selected from all five counties to receive the monthly grand prize valued at approximately \$500. This is our way of saying thank you; we appreciate your business.

Every SkyLine member and SkyBest customer is automatically entered once per month to win simply by having active telephone service at the time of the drawing. You can earn extra chances to win by participating in certain activities, including:

1. Creating a free BLUEaccount at www.skyline60.com now through November 30, 2011. It's a quick and simple process.
2. Voting for your favorite nonprofit organization.
3. Submitting a recipe for SkyLine's commemorative cookbook.

Vote for Your Favorite Nonprofit

SkyLine Membership Corporation plans to make a \$1,000 commemorative donation in December 2011 to a nonprofit organization in each of the five counties served by the

cooperative (previously mentioned). An additional \$1,000 will be donated to the organization that receives the most votes overall among those cast across the entire five-county region. No one knows the reach and influence of these organizations better than SkyLine members and SkyBest customers who live in the communities they serve. What nonprofit organization do you think should receive the 2011 SkyLine Commemorative Donation?

To vote, go to www.skyline60.com to create a BLUEaccount. You'll see a brief list of nonprofit organizations in your county. Choose one or use the write-in box to vote for another nonprofit. You can vote once per day, and voting continues until 11:59 p.m. on November 1, 2011.

Submit a Recipe to Support Area Food Banks

We're building a commemorative cookbook and invite our members and customers to submit their favorite recipes to include in it. Our goal is to donate proceeds from the sale of the cookbooks to local food banks in our five-county service area. We'll also hold a drawing each month to give away area restaurant gift certificates/gift cards among those who submit recipes. We plan to offer the cookbooks for sale in September, and we'll provide more details about the commemorative cookbook in coming months.

Again, thanks for being part of our 60th anniversary celebration. We couldn't do it without you.



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BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT: Opening New Doors for Seniors

Ashe Services for Aging adds Assisted Living to extend its continuum of care

This page: Ashe Assisted Living building.

Page 5: (Left) Craig Poe and Bill Clark in phone room.

(Middle) Jane Banks and Carolyn Johnson.

(Right)
Residents enjoy
a lighthearted
moment in the
congregate area.

Since 1977, Ashe Services for Aging (ASA) has provided a broad range of services to seniors and disabled adults in Ashe County, North Carolina, such as Home Delivered Meals, Adult Day Care, Child Day Care, Respite and In-Home Aide. ASA also operates a Senior Center where older adults can directly access activities and services including health screenings, exercise classes, games and trips. Generations Day Care, adjacent to the Senior Center, is one of three intergenerational day care programs in North Carolina. Elderly housing is also available within walking distance of the Senior Center.

Most recently, ASA added Assisted Living to this list with the opening of the Ashe Assisted Living facility at 182 ChattyRob Lane in West Jefferson. On March 30, 2011, the first residents moved into this new facility, which has a total of 55 beds:

- 31 Regular Care Unit beds
- 24 Special Care Unit beds for persons with Alzheimer's and dementia-related disorders.

The building's footprint totals about 40,000 square feet which includes two courtyards—one for each unit.

Bill Clark, Director of Information and Housing, notes, "Assisted Living was the next logical step for ASA to take in terms of providing senior services. People typically start out coming to the Senior Center

and then may require the services of an In-Home Aide. After that, they're often ready to move to an assisted living facility. Now ASA is able to provide this level of care."

With SkyLine/SkyBest, I knew exactly what our costs would be for our phone and Internet services. I appreciated this attention to detail.”

— BILL CLARK, DIRECTOR OF INFORMATION AND HOUSING,
ASHE ASSISTED LIVING

Jane Banks, Executive Director, adds, "We're excited about the opening of Ashe Assisted Living, particularly because we know it will enhance the lives of our residents."

SkyLine/SkyBest Masters the Details

During construction of the Ashe Assisted Living facility, ASA faced a choice of communications providers, one of which was SkyLine/SkyBest. Clark recalls, "We determined our requirements and put the Ashe Assisted Living project up for bid. SkyLine/SkyBest came in with a competitive bid, and also provided us with a more thorough bid presentation with exact costs for items including taxes and fees. With SkyLine/SkyBest, I knew exactly what our costs would be for our phone and Internet services. I appreciated this attention to detail."



SkyLine/SkyBest was awarded the project and installed seven phone lines for staff use, a Nortel Norstar business phone system and 4.0 Mbps broadband service. Because of the fiber connectivity in the facility, the residents' rooms were equipped to provide them with SkyLine/SkyBest services should they choose to subscribe to them—personal telephone service and broadband connectivity.

Keeping Costs Down

Ashe Assisted Living's goal to achieve the most for the least amount of money was fully supported by SkyLine/SkyBest. Says Clark, "SkyLine/SkyBest helped us choose the Norstar phone system and it's working well for us. Their salespeople looked at our needs and presented equipment recommendations that met those needs. This included telling us about some refurbished equipment that would help us hold costs down. They didn't try to oversell us."

Clark continues, "We did purchase some brand new equipment because for certain things it made sense, such as the new control box for our phone system. But, our handsets are refurbished. SkyLine/SkyBest really helped us save money."

We're excited about the opening of Ashe Assisted Living, particularly because we know it will enhance the lives of our residents."

— JANE BANKS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ASHE ASSISTED LIVING

Increasing Flexibility and Productivity

The SkyLine/SkyBest team that works with Ashe Assisted Living

includes Robin Miller, Inside Sales Coordinator, and Graham Brown, Outside Sales Executive. Says Clark, "I have a very good impression of SkyLine/SkyBest. Graham looks out for our interests and Robin is also very good to work with. Both are easy to get a hold of when I call or e-mail them with a question. They get back to me quickly with the answers I need."

He adds, "For example, Graham helped us get portable handsets for our aides to use. He showed us that we could use standard cordless phones with the Norstar system, which saved us money. This way, our aides can answer phone calls even when they are away from the desk, moving about the building. Our phone system also has intercom and voice mail features that help with productivity. In addition, after-hours visitors to the building can push a button at the door that rings the portable handsets so aides can see who's at the door and respond accordingly."

Future plans for the facility include the installation of WiFi in public areas including the library, living room and dining room. Says Clark, "We'll also provide one public computer for use by residents and guests. There will be an Internet password for visitor access to this wireless Internet connection."

"As we settle into the new building, we're realizing that some of our communication needs are changing. SkyLine/SkyBest is helping us with programming, and teaching us how to use the many features of the phone equipment. It's a great working relationship," he notes.

For more information about any of the products mentioned, please call 1-800-759-2226 and speak with any member of the SkyLine/SkyBest Business Sales Group.

Optimize Your To-Do List



Better prioritize for greater productivity in challenging times

Maximizing productivity is always important, but even more so in a down economy. With staff cuts, you likely have a heavier workload than usual and need to function at peak efficiency. You also want to demonstrate, now more than ever, your value to the company. Here's how to more effectively plan and prioritize your tasks:

Start With Long-Term Planning

Though it may feel like just one more thing to do, prioritizing your tasks starts with careful planning for long-term goals. The idea is to work toward them gradually so they don't take you by surprise, causing you to become less productive as a result. Think of the steps you need to take to achieve your goals, and schedule them into your weekly routine. For example, if you have a speaking engagement coming up, set aside some time each day to plan your presentation.

Focus on Results

Now that you've planned for the larger goals, fill in your time with key smaller ones. How do you know which activities are most important? Try using the 80/20 rule, which states that 20 percent of the activities you engage in produce 80 percent of the results you want to achieve. Adjust your time to focus on the activities and tasks that bring desired results.

Write It Down

Compile your long-term and short-term list of to-do items and prioritize them each day. Start with the activities whose lack of completion will result in undesirable consequences. Honoring important deadlines, preparing for key meetings and responding to critical requests all fall into this category. Rank remaining tasks according to

penalties versus rewards for yourself, your team and your company. Repeat this process each day, incorporating tasks that didn't get done the previous day.

Stay Focused

Productivity and efficiency are increased when you stay focused. In order to do so, try the following strategies:

- **Eliminate clutter.** The more things you have on your desk, the more likely they are to distract you. Take some time to clean up your workspace, leaving behind only those items you really need.
- **Use the “one touch” system.** Strive to “touch” each physical or electronic document only once, at which time you (1) act on it, (2) file it away to be acted on later, (3) delegate it to someone else or (4) trash it.
- **Discourage distractions.** Include “productivity time” in your schedule, and ask others to honor it by not disturbing you during these hours.
- **Reward yourself.** Stay on task by promising yourself a treat upon completion of important tasks.

Changing habits is not easy, so schedule one more to-do task: a weekly check-in with yourself to see how much you've accomplished and how much closer you are to meeting your goals.



“what DoYOU Do?”

Mastering the art of conversation at networking events

If you're looking for opportunities to connect with other business people in your area, you may be familiar with this scenario: You've identified a networking function to attend. You've armed yourself with business cards; you've located the event; and you've signed in and affixed a nametag to your shirt. You see a roomful of people, and have no idea what to do next.

Networking functions can be intimidating, but engaging in meaningful conversations at these events is a learnable skill. Here are a few strategies to try:

1. Don't just be interested in getting business. Instead, focus on starting and nurturing business relationships.
2. Have an informal “elevator speech,” or 30-second commercial ready to deliver when people ask what you do. It should include the products or services you provide, your target market and what makes you unique.
3. Find common ground with the person you're speaking with. A great place to start is the event you're both attending. Ask if the other person has been to the event before, if he or she knows many people there, or the person's reason for attending.
4. Ask questions. Find out what the other person does, and comment on anything you find interesting or that might indicate a starting point for doing business together.
5. When someone hands you a business card, read it carefully to see if anything catches your attention or interest.
6. Have a goal for each event (e.g., meet five new people), but be open to other possibilities (e.g., reconnecting with a former co-worker).
7. Don't be shy. Remember, everyone is there for the same reason—to connect—so it's perfectly fine to approach other individuals or groups.

Even if networking doesn't come naturally to you, the effort is worthwhile since attending these events may lead to significant business relationships. So get out there and get talking.

Supporting Community Connections

SkyLine recognizes the value of community events, both in terms of their business network opportunities and their ability to raise money for worthy causes. That's why we actively support area Chamber activities as well as a wide variety of other programs.

For example, SkyLine recently participated in the Boone Chamber Adult Spelling Bee. A total of 120 spellers competed in the event, representing 30 teams from local businesses and schools, and the winning team was from the Boone Kiwanis Club. Event proceeds go to Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, a program presented by the Watauga Education Foundation.

In April and May, SkyLine also participated in home/business shows including the Boone Business Expo, the Ashe County Sweet Home Show, the High Country Home Builders Home & Remodeling Exposition and the Alleghany Business Expo. If you didn't make it to any of this year's events, we look forward to seeing you next year.



SkyLine/SkyBest's Michelle Scott, Brent Keith, Robin Miller and Karen Powell participated in the Boone Chamber Adult Spelling Bee.



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