

MARCH/APRIL 2022



VTX1 Companies

COMPASS

VOL. 3, NO. 2



Celebrating 70 years of service!



RURAL CONNECTIONS

By SHIRLEY BLOOMFIELD, CEO
NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association

Strengthening ties

Rural internet providers gain ground

No matter the challenges, NTCA members have a long history of stepping up to extend fast internet service to rural America, allowing residents to work, learn and engage with family and friends online.

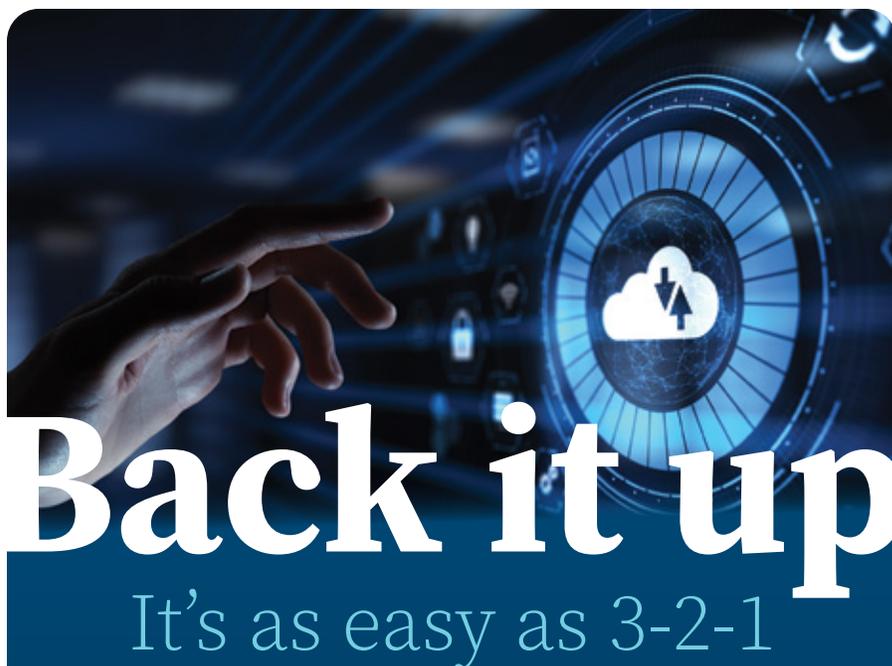
Recently, we released our 2021 Broadband/Internet Availability Survey Report, reaffirming the commitment to rural broadband as the industry stands on the cusp of once-in-a-generation investment to bring connectivity to all Americans.

NTCA members responding to the survey indicated that nearly 76% of their customers can receive downstream speeds of at least 100 Mbps. That's up from 67.8% in 2020. Similarly, 55.4% of customers have access to gigabit downstream speed, up from 45.1% in 2020.

A year earlier, 28% of respondents subscribed to services with 100 Mbps broadband or better. Last year, that number was 37%.

These gains appear throughout the communities NTCA members serve, including in critically important broadband service to libraries, community colleges, state universities and extensions. There are 911 call centers and medical facilities that benefit, as well as nearly all primary and secondary schools, along with police and fire departments.

Despite the successes, NTCA members continue to face pandemic-related supply chain issues, leading to slowdowns in installing services for customers and delayed network construction. Still, these companies serving rural America continue to put your needs first, building networks that can change lives and communities for the better. As the 2021 Broadband/Internet Availability Survey Report shows, they're making a difference. [📄](#)



Back it up

It's as easy as 3-2-1

The reliability of technology, from computers to smartphones, is steadily increasing, which is good because we depend on it more now than ever. From personal photo libraries to essential financial records, digital archives have replaced physical filing and storage systems.

In fact, this information is so important, consider taking a lesson from corporations and data-intensive industries — back it all up with multiple copies in strategic locations.

3

Your goal should be to have at least three copies of your important data — but you'll put each copy in a different location.

2

Two copies of your data should be stored at your home or office. Separate them, though. Keep one copy on a device such as a computer. But keep the second version on an external hard drive. Prices begin at less than \$100 and then go up, based on the amount of data you need to store.

1

Send the final copy to the cloud, which can be both convenient and a hedge against a disaster damaging your home or business. Apple, Google, Microsoft and many other companies offer cloud-based storage solutions. For a few dollars a month, you can get digital peace of mind.

Coordinating those steps is also easier than ever. Modern computer operating systems offer options to automate most of the details.



Are blue light glasses hype or help?

According to the American Optometric Association, the average office worker spends seven hours a day in front of a computer — and that’s only when they’re on the clock. In our off-hours, we’re often squinting at our smartphones, using tablets to catch up on the news or following the twists and turns of the latest best-seller on an e-reader.

After so much time staring at screens, many people experience digital eye strain, also known as computer vision syndrome. Symptoms can include everything from dry and tired eyes to blurry vision, neck pain, headaches and more.

Some folks are turning to blue light-blocking glasses for relief. Available in a variety of styles and a wide range of prices, these glasses purport to reduce eye strain by filtering out the blue light emitted by digital screens.

But are these lenses really all that they’re cracked up to be? According to experts, maybe not.

WHAT IS BLUE LIGHT?

All visible light contains the entire spectrum of wavelengths, from red to violet, and each wavelength has its own specific energy level. Blue light has the highest energy level in the visible spectrum.

The sun is the source of most of the blue light we encounter, but blue light is also emitted by fluorescent and incandescent light bulbs and the screens of electronic devices. However, no measurable harm done by the light from digital devices has been documented.

Studies have shown that it’s not the screens themselves that are causing eye strain but, rather, how we use them. We blink less frequently when looking at screens and we tend to hold electronic devices, particularly mobile phones, much closer to our eyes than paper documents. Also, glare, reflections and existing uncorrected or undercorrected vision problems can contribute to discomfort, as does focusing on screens for extended periods of time.

So, if blue light glasses won’t help, what will? Believe it or not, taking breaks. Most symptoms of eye strain will resolve themselves when you stop using the computer. When you have to be in front of a screen for an extended period of time, experts like those at the American Academy of Ophthalmology recommend the 20-20-20 rule — after every 20 minutes of continuous screen time, look at something 20 feet away for 20 seconds.

BLUE LIGHT AT BEDTIME

While there isn’t scientific evidence that blue light is responsible for digital eye strain, experts say there isn’t any harm in wearing blue light glasses, and they may help at bedtime.

Blue light affects the body’s natural waking and sleeping cycle, known as circadian rhythm. During daylight hours, blue light wakes us up and keeps us alert. But when it’s time for bed, the blue light from screens can stimulate the brain just when you’re trying to wind down for the night. This is why many devices have nighttime settings to minimize blue light exposure after dark. Experts recommend limiting screen time two to three hours before bed, but if you must use your devices in the hours leading up to bedtime, blue light glasses could help ensure a solid night’s rest. [📄](#)



Better connected

Why rural broadband outshines the big guys

It wasn't so long ago that living in a rural community meant embracing an isolated lifestyle where — distanced from the outside world, finding a human connection to ask for help, celebrate a milestone, or even just chat with a friend could be difficult.



DAVE OSBORN

Chief Executive Officer

Today, that era feels far removed. It was only 70 years ago that many parts of Texas were completely cut off from communications services. That's when Valley Telephone, a cooperative founded for the community and guided by residents, started to make a difference.

The telephone network our founders built was a wonder in its time, even though it would seem basic by our standards today. A simple corded telephone connected to the wall was life-changing for many residents. Finally, isolated farms, ranches and homes had a link to their neighbors, nearby towns, and the world beyond.

Today, as we approach our 70th anniversary on April 22, we haven't forgotten the spirit of that mission that began in 1952. The tools and technology we use to accomplish it have changed. We've certainly come a long way from the copper lines that ran across the poles of that early network, but our goal is the same today as it was when that first call was placed in 1957: connecting South Texas with the world.

Reflecting on that provides a great perspective on just how much our cooperative has grown. As transformative as those early telephone lines were, they allowed for a simple phone call and that's all. Today, our modern networks enable essential phone services that those first members couldn't have imagined, like caller ID, call waiting and voicemail.

I like to think of us as a crucial link to the worldwide web that threads its way through our region. Broadband extends into homes, businesses, and anchor institutions, connecting them all to the world beyond. Today's technology would be unrecognizable to those cooperative leaders who built our first system. VTX1 Companies remains at the center of this interconnectivity. What has never wavered is our commitment to providing the best communications service possible in South Texas, and beyond to Central Texas, where recent acquisitions have extended our roots.

That means today our customers don't have to compromise. Choosing to enjoy the advantages of living in rural Texas no longer means sacrificing that human connection. Our customers can live and do business in the places they love, while still having access to a communications network that rivals metropolitan areas.

In fact, many city residents would probably be envious, not only of the broadband services available to you, but also the friendly customer support and honest communication VTX1 provides. When neighbors help neighbors, that makes all the difference.

Sincerely,

Dave Osborn
CEO, VTX1 Companies



VTX1 Companies

Contact Us: 800-446-2031

Hours of Operation:

- Business Offices:
Mon.-Fri. • 8 a.m.-5 p.m.
- Customer Service:
Mon.-Fri. • 8 a.m.-7 p.m.
- Technical Support:
Mon.-Sun. • 24/7

Raymondville Corporate Office

881 E. Hidalgo Ave. • Raymondville, TX 78580

Dilley Office

1489 W. FM 117 • Dilley, TX 78017

Falfurrias Office

300 N. St. Mary's St. • Falfurrias, TX 78355

George West Office

510 Bowie St. • George West, TX 78022

Jourdanton Office

511 Main St. • Jourdanton, TX 78026

San Antonio Office

6884 Alamo Downs Pkwy • San Antonio, TX 78238
888-651-6080

Board of Directors:

- Chief Executive Officer — Dave Osborn
- District 1 — J.T. Mayo Jr. (Port Mansfield & San Perlita) — VP
- District 2 — George Bennack (Stillman)
- District 3 — Matthew Kiefer (Lasara)
- District 4 — Margie Pollock (Encino & Hargill) — SECRETARY
- District 5 — Dr. Adalberto Garza (San Isidro)
- District 6 — Idalia (Dolly) Villarreal (El Sauz & McCook) — PRESIDENT
- District 7 — Christopher R. Meyer (Annarose & Artesia Wells)
- District 8 — John Barnes (Fowlerton & Millett)
- District 9 — James Mann (San Miguel & Tilden)
- District 10 — Frank Weaver (Concepcion & Mirando City) — TREASURER

Produced for VTX1 by:



On the Cover:



VTX1 celebrates its platinum jubilee. Valley Telephone Cooperative Inc. began serving members in South Texas on April 22, 1952. See story Page 8.

*We hope
to see
you soon!*



VTX1 Companies

Remember our 2022 Annual/Member Meetings happen in March — make sure to get your RSVP mailed back to us to reserve your spot.

Call our Customer Service Department at, 1-833-YES-VTCI, if you need any further information.

San Isidro Member Meeting: Saturday, March 12

Hebronville Member Meeting: Saturday, March 19

Tilden Member Meeting: Saturday, March 26

Raymondville Annual Meeting: Tuesday, March 29

SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS ARE NOW AVAILABLE

Applications are being accepted for Valley Telephone Cooperative, Inc. 2022 Scholarships. Graduating high school seniors residing within one of the VTCI exchanges whose families are active cooperative members in good standing, are eligible. The scholarships are worth up to \$3,000 per year and, if requirements are met, can be renewed annually for up to four years.

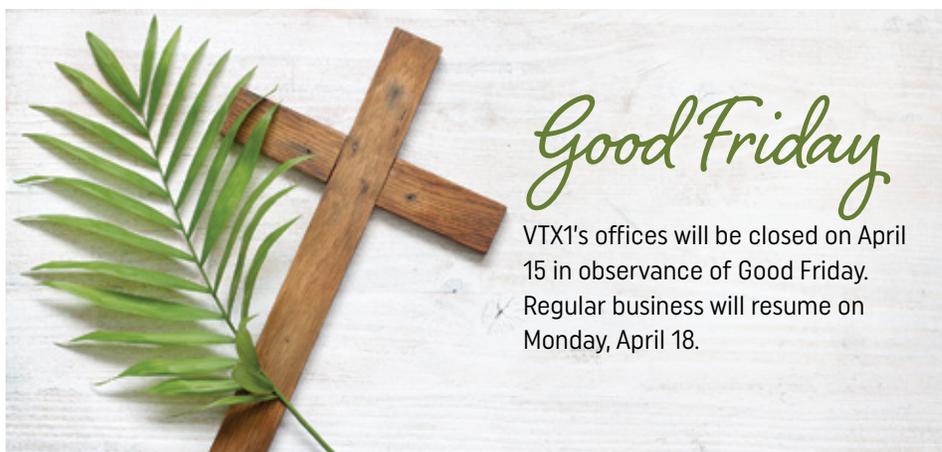
Visit our website, vtx1.net, click the Community button and scroll to the Commitment to Education section, click on the Scholarship E-application link to apply. The deadline to apply is Friday, March 18, 2022. Don't miss out on this exclusive opportunity for our cooperative members!



We want to hear from you!

We want to know more about your interest and readership of Compass magazine!

Please participate in our survey, which can be found on our website at vtx1.net/compass-magazine. We would appreciate your feedback by answering a few short questions about our magazine that will help us learn more about what you think of our bimonthly publication.



Good Friday

VTX1's offices will be closed on April 15 in observance of Good Friday. Regular business will resume on Monday, April 18.

Lone Star RHYTHMS

Texas honors its music in its many forms

Story by ANNE BRALY

Everything's big in Texas, and that goes for its music. It's as diverse as the state's geography and as vital as its people. The variety of genres makes for a musical patchwork quilt of country, blues, jazz, spirituals, gospel, rock 'n' roll, Tex-Mex and Cajun.

Texas is the birthplace of Western swing, which incorporates elements of country, blues, pop, big-band jazz and Latin rhythms. The state is also home to conjunto, which combines traditional Mexican music with polkas and other European forms. Texas has nurtured zydeco, the music of French-speaking Black people, which has increasingly incorporated elements of rhythm and blues.

So, it's time to take a road trip to uncover the rhythm of the Lone Star State.

THE HEART OF COUNTRY MUSIC MUSEUM

1701 S. Bridge St., Brady

Disc jockey Tracy Pitcox has been a huge fan of country music since he was in his teens, when he started "Hillbilly Hits" on KNEL, a radio show that continues today in Brady. From those humble beginnings has grown a museum honoring more than 125 country music artists, with memorabilia that includes Buck Owens' guitar, George Strait's hat and Nudie-designed rhinestone suits that Lefty Frizzell, George Jones, Ray Price and others wore.

The museum started in the radio station but soon outgrew that small space. It's now a 1,200-square-foot museum jam-packed with memorabilia that ranges from autographs to automobiles like Jim Reeves' tour bus, Pitcox says. Coming in second might be Tammy Wynette's limo or Ernest Tubb's Cadillac. "Our guitar-shaped Webb Pierce mailbox does get a lot of attention, though, as do our extensive Hank Thompson, Loretta Lynn and Mel Tillis displays," Pitcox adds.

The 1,000-member Heart of Texas Country Music Association operates The Heart of Country Music Museum, and there has never been an admission charge. For more information go to www.hillbillyhits.com.

ROY ORBISON MUSEUM

213 Hendricks Blvd., Wink

Blink twice and you may miss it, but if you happen to be in Wink — or if you're a fan of Roy Orbison — a stop at the museum is a must. Just like the town, it's a small place,



Museums honor the rich musical heritage of Texas, including, from left, the Heart of Texas Country Music Museum in Brady — it features a suit worn by Roy Rogers — the Buddy Holly Center in Lubbock and the Lefty Frizzell Country Museum in Corsicana.

but it carries a huge legacy for its hometown musician who put Wink on the map. Though Orbison wasn't born in Wink, he did spend several of his early years in town. Thus, the Roy Orbison Museum on East Hendricks Boulevard, a museum dedicated to the man who wrote songs that remain popular for all ages, including "Only the Lonely," "Dream Baby (How Long Must I Dream)" and "Oh, Pretty Woman."

The museum, which opened 20 years ago, is a one-room showplace of memorabilia that holds treasures from the time Orbison spent in Wink. One of the items that brings the biggest "WOW" factor is Orbison's dark glasses. According to museum volunteer Debora Carter, he wore the dark glasses for one show simply because he couldn't find his clear ones. "They just stuck," she says. "But people who visit the museum love to try them on and get their pictures taken."

The museum is also the caretaker of Orbison's first guitar. It lay forgotten in a storage locker for years. Upon its rediscovery, it went to the museum.

To find out more about the museum, go to its Facebook page.

BUDDY HOLLY CENTER

1801 Crickets Ave., Lubbock

Buddy Holly was only 22 when his life came to a tragic end as his plane crashed to the ground near Clear Lake, Iowa. But visitors to the Buddy Holly Center can get a glimpse into his life and the impact he made on music.

Before "the day the music died," Holly and his band, The Crickets, hit the charts with "That'll Be the Day," followed by "Peggy Sue" and more hits that reached the Top 10. In fact, he became the first musician to score a posthumous No. 1 hit with "It Doesn't Matter Anymore."

The museum, in the historic Fort Worth and Denver South Plains Railway Depot, is a testament to Holly's life. It features a gallery shaped like a guitar and serves to preserve and promote the legacy of Buddy Holly and the music of Lubbock and West Texas. Among the displays are items Holly crafted as a young man and artifacts from his musical career, as well as his famous eyeglasses and other exhibits from the tragic Feb. 3, 1959, airplane crash.

The center, which also houses the Texas Musician Hall of Fame and the Lubbock Fine Arts Gallery, features a wide array of programs encompassing music and music history. The restored

home of Crickets drummer J.I. Allison, husband of Peggy Sue, was relocated to the Buddy Holly Center complex and is open for self-guided tours.

For more information, visit www.buddyhollycenter.org.

LEFTY FRIZZELL MUSEUM

912 West Park Ave., Corsicana

Merle Haggard once said William Orville "Lefty" Frizzell was "the most unique thing that ever happened to country music." Following that statement were accolades from other greats, including George Jones, Roy Orbison, George Strait and more. Now visitors to the museum named in his honor can see what the fuss was all about.

Frizzell, the son of an oil worker, was born in Corsicana and knew from a young age that he didn't want to follow in his dad's footsteps. Rather, he chose to step onstage and play his guitar, eventually becoming a country music sensation with "If You've Got the Money, I've Got the Time" and "I Love You a Thousand Ways," among other chart-topping tunes. In the early 1950s, Frizzell had four songs in the Top 10 at the same time.

The Lefty Frizzell Museum is in Corsicana's Pioneer Village, made up of buildings that represent the pioneer era. The museum is home to many of Frizzell's personal items, including some of his gold records, photos, costumes and other mementos from his years on the road in the 1950s. Frizzell died young at age 47, but his legacy lives on in Corsicana. For more information, visit Pioneer Village's Facebook page. 

Other genres and artists

Museums dedicated to the music and musicians of Texas are scattered across the state. Here are several of note:

- ★ The Freddy Fender Museum, 210 E. Heywood St., San Benito. It's also home to the Texas Conjunto Music Museum Hall of Fame. www.cityofsanbenito.com
- ★ The Sherman Jazz Museum, 201 E. Lamar St., Sherman. www.shermanjazzmuseum.com
- ★ Texas Polka Museum, 712 Lyons Ave., Schulenberg. www.texaspolkamuseum.com
- ★ Tex Ritter Museum at the Texas Country Music Hall of Fame, 310 W. Panola St., Carthage. www.tcmhof.com

70 YEARS OF SERVICE

VTX1 celebrates its platinum jubilee

Story by ANDREA AGARDY



Zelda and J.T. Mayo Sr.

Never underestimate a mother's determination. In the fall of 1950, a pregnant Zelda Mayo lived on a remote farm in Willacy County, without a telephone, spending hours at home while her husband was out working. Rather than worrying about possible

pregnancy complications and whether she could reach anyone for help if needed, the mother-to-be decided to do something about the situation.

After reading about federal programs to help communities start telephone cooperatives, she sent her husband, Julian Talmadge "J.T." Mayo Sr., to a meeting to learn more. When he returned, the couple began a petition to sign up prospective members. Valley Telephone, the cooperative the Mayos helped found, came to be on April 22, 1952, and has flourished in the 70 years since. Now known as VTX1, the company provides phone and internet service across a huge swath of South Texas.

It took longer than Zelda Mayo had hoped, but the family's first phone went into the house in 1957, when their son was 6 years old. J.T. Mayo Sr. went on to serve on Valley Telephone's board of directors for 50 years. And the family's close ties to the cooperative endure today. Since 2003,

J.T. Mayo Jr. has held the seat his father originated, and remembers when their home was first connected. "We were one of the last ones to get built out," he recalls with a chuckle. "We're way out in the middle of nowhere."

CONNECTING COMMUNITIES

The cooperative's first board of directors secured funding to build the system, including leveraging the Universal Service Fund. This federal initiative, dating to the 1930s, ensures all Americans have equal access to communications services. Through subsidies and fees the Federal Communications Commission manages, discounts go to rural communities as well as to low-income families, schools and libraries.

By the time current CEO Dave Osborn joined the company in 2005, uncertainty about the future of federal and state funding prompted the creation of additional revenue streams. The cooperative expanded beyond its traditional areas of service. In 2013, Valley Telephone combined its holdings and became known as the VTX1 Companies. By the end of last year, VTX1's footprint spanned 47,500 square miles, serving about 42,000 customers.

"We grew quite rapidly. The last five years or so, we've been growing through acquisitions," Osborn says. "We've got to have a machine to support our parent company, and that's why we're doing all of this expansion. It's building a

The Valley Telephone Cooperative Board of Directors holds one of its first meetings in Raymondville.



VTX1 staff members attend a groundbreaking for a warehouse in Lasara.



profitable company sufficient to carry the mother company. We have to make up for the lost state and federal funding that Valley Telephone had previously received.”

NEIGHBORS HELPING NEIGHBORS

In addition to Osborn and the executive team, a 10-member board of directors leads the company. None of the current directors has a background in telecommunications, but all share a deep, abiding interest in the field and a commitment to making sure their communities have access to the latest technology. “My fellow directors are awesome people,” says Board President Dolly Villarreal. “They’re very laid back. Most of them own their own business. They’re intelligent and very, very giving to their own community. I’m happy to serve along with them.”

VTX1’s services have made a lasting impact on rural South Texas. Access to high-speed broadband holds benefits for health care, education, entertainment, business and more. Osborn cites a 2016 study by NTCA—The Rural Broadband Association that looked at the economic impact of rural consumers. Nationwide, the study found, rural communities accounted for \$24.6 billion in commerce, with Texas amounting to roughly 10% of that total.

“For these people, it’s an hour to the nearest Walmart or anywhere else they spend money,” Osborn says. “Having the power of the internet at their disposal, these are Amazon’s best customers. It lets them shop, receive goods and services and conduct commerce without spending half the day in the car.”

A TEAM EFFORT

VTX1 wouldn’t thrive without its body of dedicated workers.

“We have grown immensely, and I give that credit to every single employee,” Villarreal says. “Had it not been for them, there’s no way we could have had this amount of growth. We’ll never be able to repay them for their hard work and dedication to the company.”

One of those employees is Checo Benavides, who started working for Valley Telephone in 1978 as a telephone installer and repairman. Across more than four decades, he has seen many changes. Today, as a senior wireline network technician, he travels the service area, working mostly on broadband issues.

The rapid advancement of technology keeps Benavides excited about going to work. “I’ve enjoyed the ride. They’ve been a very good company,” he says. “I’ve had a lot of offers throughout the years to leave this company and go with AT&T and stuff like that, but these guys always treated me well. They don’t just think of the big guys. They think of their own personnel. They know that the employees have built this company.”

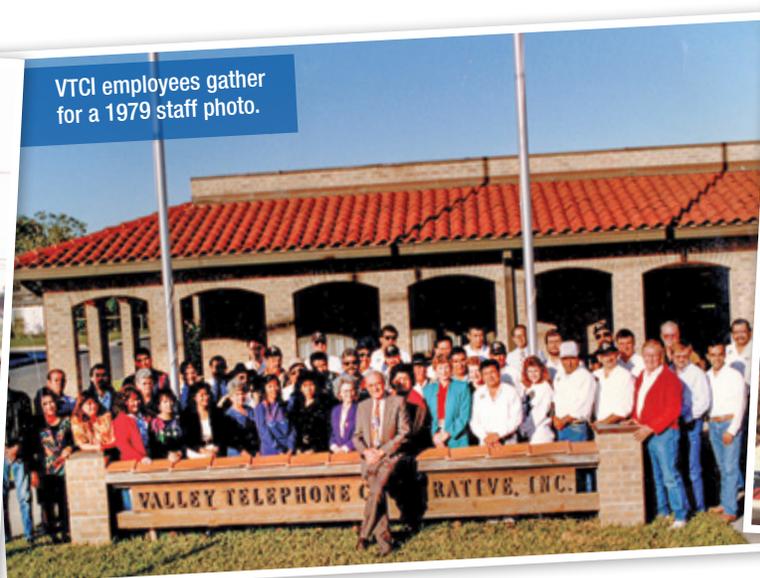
“I couldn’t do this if I didn’t believe that what we were doing was making a difference in people’s lives, and it does. It connects them and lets them do things they couldn’t have done otherwise or would have taken much longer to accomplish.”

— VTX1 CEO Dave Osborn

LOOKING AHEAD

The future looks bright for VTX1, and Osborn is optimistic the recent push to expand rural broadband access will benefit South Texas. Additional expansion is on the horizon in the form of more fixed wireless and fiber projects, as well as other initiatives aimed at ensuring VTX1 customers have access to the fastest and most reliable broadband service available.

“This industry keeps evolving,” Osborn says. “While it’s become more challenging, it’s also become much more rewarding. I couldn’t do this if I didn’t believe that what we were doing was making a difference in people’s lives, and it does. It connects them and lets them do things they couldn’t have done otherwise or would have taken much longer to accomplish.”



VTX1 employees gather for a 1979 staff photo.



VTX1 members and customers get annual updates at member meetings, like this one held in 2019 in San Isidro.

HIT *the* TRAIL

These apps can help you plan your next outdoor adventure

Looking for new adventures this spring? A good internet connection can come in handy when you're planning your next excursion into the great outdoors. From discovering your next destination to sharing every step of the journey, these digital tools make it easier than ever to get out there and start enjoying our world.

Yonder

Yonder helps people find nature-rich destinations off the beaten path. Search the more than 20,000 locations across the United States to find your new favorite hidden gem. Each listing puts just as much focus on the experiences guests can expect during their stay as it does on the price tag. Those experiences can include trekking through a canyon, sampling grapes off the vine or enjoying nearby views. Travelers can book online or in the Yonder app available for iOS and Android.

Tripcast

Share more than just the highlights of your trip with the people who matter most. With Tripcast, available on iOS and Android, you can add friends and family to an interactive photo album that puts every traveler's pics in one place. Post notes, photos and real-time updates that are all automatically added to a trip map. Make your trip public or only invite those who want to share in every step of the journey.

AllTrails

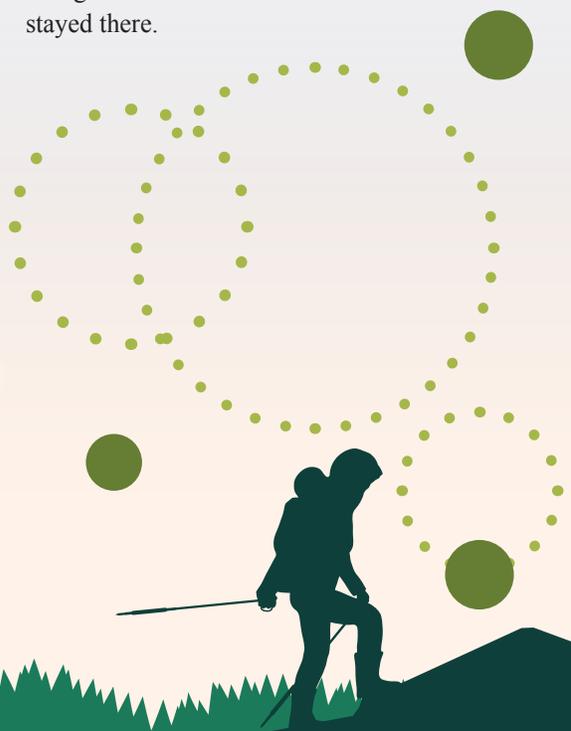
You might be surprised how many great trails there are right in your own community, and AllTrails can help uncover them all. Whether you're looking for a relaxing hike, an invigorating trail run or a challenging, off-road bike ride, you're bound to find something that fits your needs. Browse nearby trails based on their length, difficulty and popularity to find exactly what you're looking for. You can even search for trails that are dog-friendly, have great views or are suited to a fun family outing. You can download the app in iOS or Android.

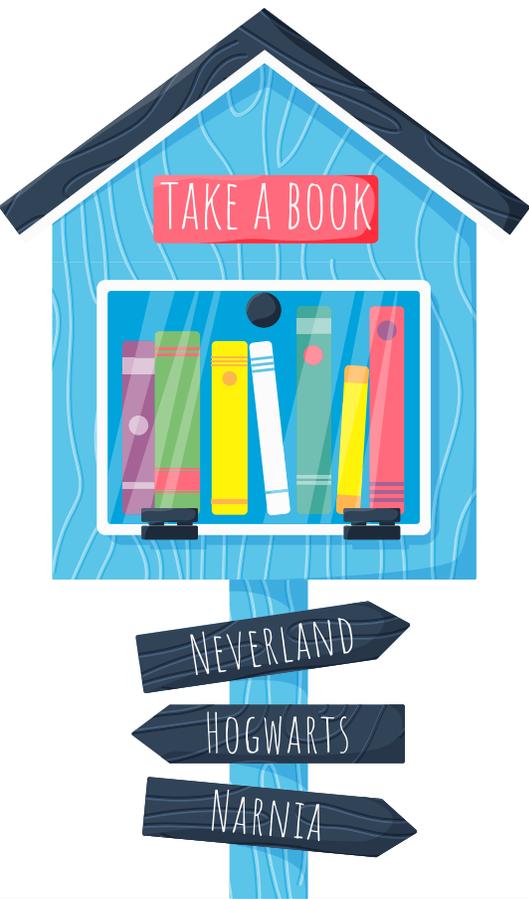
Star Walk

Make a night under the stars even more exciting with this augmented-reality star chart that tracks over 200,000 celestial objects. Open the app and point your phone at the night sky to see constellations traced right before your eyes and learn about the mythology behind them. Track planets or the International Space Station, and even get notifications for major astronomical events on iOS and Android devices.

Recreation.gov

For those seeking an extended stay in the wild, Recreation.gov is a great starting point. The site and its official app are both built to help travelers find and reserve campsites at national parks, forests and other federally designated properties across the country. Browse amenities and nearby activities for each site, as well as ratings and reviews from those who have stayed there.





Find your Little Free Library

An online map guides readers to book boxes

Take a book. Leave a book. That's the simple, powerful idea behind more than 100,000 Little Free Libraries scattered across the globe.

Todd H. Bol, who created the first Little Free Library in 2009, founded a nonprofit of that name to help people access books at no cost, no matter where they live. A key goal of the Little Free Library organization is the promotion of literacy.

The effort is driven by volunteers who build small, waterproof library boxes, find the libraries a home in their yards or other appropriate spots, and seed them with books. You don't have to share a book before taking one, and you don't even need to return the book you take. It's all on the honor system. But, please do consider contributing a book or two, because that's how the library system grows.

**Do you want to find a Little Free Library near you?
For a searchable map, visit littlefreelibrary.org/ourmap.**

E-READERS

Are you the type of avid reader who enjoys keeping a couple, or maybe even a couple dozen, reading options handy at all times? E-readers were made for you.

E-readers' screens are more eye-friendly than those of do-everything tablets like iPads. And there's another key advantage to e-readers — fewer distractions. There are no notifications, social media, games or email.

While the screens of phones and tablets emit light to create bright, clear images, those of e-readers, such as the Kindle, direct light toward the screen instead of sending it outward. Eye strain is lessened, and the e-readers typically are easy to view even when in direct sunlight.

Amazon remains the e-reader leader. The company is on the 11th version of the Kindle Paperwhite, which was updated late last year. The price is about \$140, with slightly more expensive and less pricey versions also available.

With a Kindle, you can tap into the Amazon library to purchase and store online books. While companies such as Apple offer bookstores, those are not available on Kindle devices.

There are also non-Kindle e-readers, like the Clara HD by Kobo. The company has its own e-book store. You can't reach the Amazon bookstore through a Kobo device, but you can get books through software such as OverDrive, which is used by many library systems. A Clara HD is available for about \$118 from online sites such as Walmart.



Bonus tip: Do you ever want to read the classics, for free? Project Gutenberg makes it possible, providing digital versions of books whose copyrights status allows free distribution. Visit gutenberg.org for details and to browse the library.

Caring for our communities

VTX1 gives back

VTX1 is dedicated to helping its neighbors live better lives and enriching the communities it serves. The company sponsors projects such as the renovation of the Premont Chamber of Commerce auditorium, the Southern Brooks Volunteer Fire Department and Ronald McDonald House. Cooperative members are also appreciated, with prizes awarded at annual member meetings.

“Maybe it’s because I’m a Boy Scout at heart, but from my perspective, a good corporate citizen gives back to the communities that make it successful,” says CEO Dave Osborn. “To me, it’s just baked into our culture that we give back. We look at it as a responsibility.”



70th Anniversary

Memorable dates throughout VTX1 Companies history.



2022

Number of Fiber Miles

Over 3,476 route miles of fiber in our ILEC Exchanges and 2,338 route miles in our CLEC Exchanges

New Headquarters

VTX1 Companies completed the construction of its new corporate headquarters located at 881 E. Hidalgo Ave. in Raymondville, TX.

2012



2005

First Fiber Optic Powered Community

VTCL implemented Fiber-to-the-Home Connectivity in the 755 Country Estates development, located north of Rio Grande City.

Formation of VTXC

Grand River Communications, Inc. was activated and operates today as VTX Communications, LLC.

1992



1957

First Phone Call

First phone call from the Stillman Tract by Board President J.B. Pinson to his mother in Oklahoma.

Cooperative Established

Valley Telephone Cooperative, Inc. was established in Raymondville, TX.

1952



Roasting

can yield the perfect taste and texture

Explore the nuances of a common cooking technique

A perfectly roasted cut of beef is a thing of beauty. A deliciously roasted chicken surrounded by colorful roasted vegetables is Instagram worthy. But how do you get these cuts of meat to reach these levels of perfection?

Roasting is an age-old culinary technique that takes relatively tough cuts of meat and, like magic, turns them into tender, mouthwatering bites. It all has to do with cooking low and slow. There's a marked difference between roasting and baking. Baking transforms liquid — batter — into solids like cakes and cookies. Roasting does the opposite, taking meats and vegetables and breaking down their sinewy fibers into a near-gelatinous state.

Here are some simple tips to consider when roasting.

Bring food to room temperature before roasting: Tempering food is a simple but critical step that involves bringing an ingredient to room temperature so that it cooks more evenly. When roasting whole chickens, turkeys, Cornish hens and other birds, keep in mind that white and dark meat are best cooked to different temperatures.

To ensure your bird is roasting properly, position different parts toward hotter or cooler parts of the oven, or cover the breast with foil. It's important to rest meat after roasting, particularly larger cuts that continue to cook after you take them out of the oven. Letting the meat rest for 10 to 20 minutes is usually sufficient. Rested meat will cut more easily.

Remember that size matters: When roasting vegetables, cut veggies into pieces of the same size to ensure even cooking. The best meats to roast are large, tough cuts, such as pork shoulder. Don't roast thinner, less fatty cuts of meat such as boneless, skinless chicken breasts — they'll dry out. Good vegetables to roast are the heartier ones like beets, carrots, potatoes, squashes, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts and sweet potatoes. 🍴



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PERFECTLY ROASTED RIB-EYE

- 1 (4- to 5-pound) rib-eye roast
- Olive oil, optional
- 1 tablespoon kosher salt
- 1-2 teaspoons black pepper, crushed or ground

Before roasting, bring the meat to room temperature. Preheat the oven to 325 F. If the roast is very lean, you may want to drizzle 1 to 2 tablespoons of olive oil over it. Sprinkle salt and pepper over the roast, then place it on a wire rack on a baking sheet. Keep in mind that your cooking time depends on the size of your roast.

Bake for approximately 25 to 30 minutes for every pound of meat for the roast to be cooked to medium. Adjust accordingly for your preferred level of doneness.

You should use a meat thermometer to determine when the roast is done. Push the thermometer all the way into the center of the roast. The ideal temperature for medium is 140-145 F, and the meat may become tough if cooked to well done, which is 155 F and above. Remove the meat from the oven when the inside temperature is about 10 degrees less than your desired level of doneness, because it will continue to cook as it rests.

Let the roast rest for at least 15 minutes, tented in aluminum foil to keep it warm, before carving to serve. Makes about 10 servings.

GARLIC BUTTER ROASTED CHICKEN

- 1 (4-pound) whole chicken, at room temperature, giblets and neck removed from cavity
- 1/4 cup unsalted butter, melted
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1/2 cup dry white wine
- 1 lemon, halved
- Salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste
- 2 tablespoons fresh chopped parsley
- 4 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 whole head of garlic, roughly peeled and cut in half horizontally through the middle crosswise
- 3 fresh whole rosemary sprigs

Preheat the oven to 425 F. Line a baking tray with foil, or lightly grease a roasting pan. Pat the chicken dry with paper towels.

Pour the melted butter, olive oil, wine and juice squeezed from one of the lemon halves over the chicken, under the skin and inside the cavity. Season the chicken liberally with salt and pepper on the outside and inside the cavity, then sprinkle the parsley over it. Rub the minced garlic over the chicken, mixing all the ingredients together over the chicken and under the skin.

Stuff the garlic head into the chicken cavity, along with the rosemary sprigs and the squeezed lemon half. Tie the legs together with kitchen string. Place the chicken, breast-side up, onto a baking sheet or roasting pan and roast for 1 hour and 15-20 minutes, basting halfway through cooking time, until its juices run clear when you pierce the chicken thigh with a skewer.

Baste again, then turn on the broiler to high and broil the bird for 2-3 minutes or until the skin is crisp and golden. Keep an eye on this process, because it can burn quickly.

Remove the chicken from the oven, cover it with foil and allow it to rest for 10 minutes before serving. Drizzle it with the pan juices, and serve it with the remaining lemon half cut into wedges or slices.



Roasted Vegetable Medley

- 3 zucchini squash, cut lengthwise into fourths, then sliced into bite-sized pieces
- 3 yellow squash, cut lengthwise into fourths, then sliced into bite-sized pieces
- 1 red bell pepper, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 1 red onion, cut into wedges
- 8 ounces whole mushrooms
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar, or more to taste
- 1 tablespoon rosemary leaves
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt

Preheat the oven to 450 F. Spray a large baking sheet with cooking spray.

Mix all of the cut-up vegetables and garlic in a large bowl. Add olive oil and balsamic vinegar. Toss until all the vegetables are covered. Add rosemary leaves and salt, and toss again.

Roast the vegetables for 30-40 minutes, stirring once, until they are brown on the outside edges and tender on the inside. Makes 6-8 servings.





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