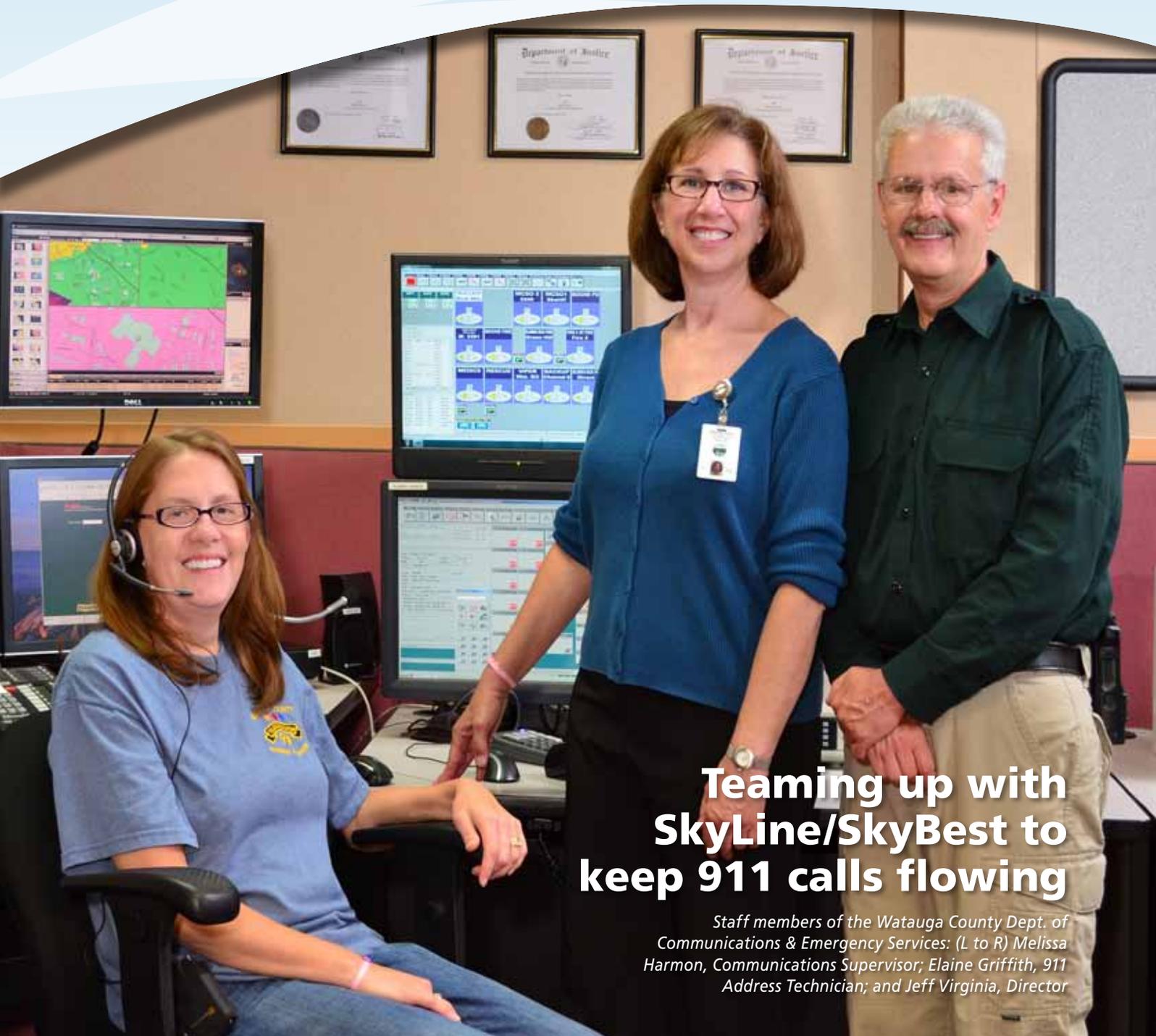


BUSINESS connections



Teaming up with SkyLine/SkyBest to keep 911 calls flowing

Staff members of the Watauga County Dept. of Communications & Emergency Services: (L to R) Melissa Harmon, Communications Supervisor; Elaine Griffith, 911 Address Technician; and Jeff Virginia, Director



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BUSINESS connections

The connections you make can be lifesavers both literally and figuratively. When you need to connect to your emergency department, you rely on it to quickly bring the personnel and equipment needed to care for the sick or injured. Similarly, a call to SkyLine Support Services will produce the troubleshooting tips or technician visits required to get essential services operating again at your business.

In this September issue, the importance of these connections takes center stage. In the Business Spotlight on pages 4 and 5, we feature the **Watauga County Department of Communications & Emergency Services**. Few organizations have as high a need for reliable connectivity as this one, given the **critical importance of 911 calls**. SkyLine/SkyBest worked closely with the Watauga County Dept. of Communications & Emergency Services to provide the **redundant Metro Ethernet** pipe required to connect the two sides of its new call processing equipment.

We understand how frustrating it is to experience an outage with communications service. That is why repair calls to SkyLine/SkyBest receive prompt and professional assistance. Read more about our **Repair Services** team on page 7.

On other topics, this issue includes an interesting discussion of **today's social shopping trend** along with an invitation to participate in our **September Facebook promotion**. You'll also want to check out the list of upcoming events on page 6 as you plan your fall schedule.

We always look forward to connecting with customers like you and welcome the chance to help businesses work more efficiently and effectively.

Sincerely,

Jimmy C. Blevins
Chief Executive Officer



SHOPPING

is Now More Social

Purchasing decisions are strongly influenced by feedback on social media

Spread the word—consumers are increasingly turning to social media to access product information and recommendations from other consumers. While buying has long involved social aspects (such as asking your neighbor if he likes his new mower), social media and related technologies have greatly amplified the importance and impact of these conversations.

Research from trendwatching.com shows five key influences:

Discovery

Consumers discover new products and services through recommendations from friends on their social networks. Social media sites and tools help consumers discover products in a variety of ways; these include combining “Likes” from friends and creating virtual scrapbooks of products gleaned from around the Web.

Ratings

Consumers can now find personalized recommendations from friends about products they want to buy. Targeted ratings and reviews are also becoming more popular in increasing awareness of products and services.

Feedback

The majority of consumers now go online to research purchases and part of that research entails reading reviews. Online

reviews have been part of retailers’ websites for years, but buyers trust reviews more when they come from their social networks. Consumers are expected to increasingly ask their friends and followers to comment on their buying decisions.

Shopping Together

Online retailers like Amazon.com have made wish lists shareable for years. Purchasing habits are expected to become increasingly social, with the Web becoming the virtual equivalent of shopping at a mall with peers.

Personalization

Users of social networks can now manipulate and organize their content. Apps and Web services let users package content into personalized magazines and home pages, which can then be turned into products and services.

Given this growing force in consumer purchases, your business really needs to be “Liked.” How can you make this happen? By providing such an exceptional customer experience and outstanding product quality that people will feel compelled to recommend your business to others.



Every Business Wins With Our SkyLine / SkyBest Facebook Promotion

You can't lose with the latest SkyLine/SkyBest Facebook promotion. And you just might win big!

All of our business customers who participate in this promotion will receive a shout-out wall post on the SkyLine/SkyBest Facebook page—valuable exposure for your company. Plus the grand prize winner will receive:

- A FREE ad in the SkyLine/SkyBest e-newsletter
- A one-week feature on the SkyLine/SkyBest Facebook page

One lucky participant (either a residential or business customer of SkyLine / SkyBest) will win a \$50 Visa Gift Card.



Simply go to **www.facebook.com/SkyLineSkyBest** and click on the “Register and Win!” box. From there, you can register to be a part of this Facebook fan promotion. Don't delay; entry deadline is September 30, 2012.

Watauga County

Dept. of Communications & Emergency Services

A SkyLine/SkyBest redundant Metro Ethernet pipe helps keep 911 calls flowing



The Watauga County Department of Communications & Emergency Services is faced with the critical task of making sure 911 calls always go through, even in the event of a catastrophe. To meet this requirement, it has new Patriot 911 call processing equipment connected by a redundant Metro Ethernet pipe from SkyLine/SkyBest.

A Better Backup Plan

Len Hagaman, Watauga County Sheriff, notes, “As in any law enforcement operation, it’s essential to have a backup plan in place in the event of the unknowns that periodically occur. The redundant pipe from SkyLine certainly meets that criteria. It’s no secret that more and more, we’re having to rely on systems rivaling NASA in terms of backup plans. With SkyLine, all of our eggs are not in one basket. There’s a built-in redundant system in that we’re not tied specifically to one phone system, but have two.”

It’s no secret that more and more, we’re having to rely on systems rivaling NASA in terms of backup plans.”

— LEN HAGAMAN, WATAUGA COUNTY SHERIFF

The need to replace the department’s backup 911 system became clear after an incident several years ago. Hagaman recalls, “One day we had no 911 service; it simply was not working. We had to resort to our antiquated backup 911 system, which thankfully worked, but only because we had our backup plan in place. Following that incident,

we knew we needed to explore more sophisticated call processing equipment.”

New Call Processing System

Elaine Griffith, 911 Address Technician of the Watauga County Dept. of Communications & Emergency Services, says, “Customers will not notice a difference in how their 911 calls are processed. However, there is security built in that should assure them that their 911 call will always go through. With our new Patriot system, there are two sides which can receive 911 calls, and they’re connected by a Metro Ethernet connection. The main side is located at our facility in Boone. If for any reason the main side goes down, all calls route to side B of the system in Beech Mountain. Should both sides go down simultaneously, 911 calls would overflow to neighboring 911 answering points at Avery Communications or the Boone Police Department.”

Jay Hefner, Beech Mountain Chief of Police, notes of the Metro Ethernet connection, “It just opens us up to the world and gives us the opportunity to chase down information fast. We get dependable service with good speed.”

In addition, the Watauga County Dept. of Communications & Emergency Services now has double the number of 911 lines to handle the increased volume of calls during a catastrophic event. The department also has five portable answering positions which can be set up anywhere there is a wireless hot spot, giving it the ability to take even more calls.

Pictured (L to R): Jay Hefner, Beech Mountain Chief of Police, and Sergeant Renee Carpenter; Len Hagaman, Watauga County Sheriff; David Holman, SkyLine Data Technician, and Danny Harmon, SkyLine Central Office Technician; Watauga County Emergency Management Center & Communications building.



Redundancy, Stability and Speed

Perhaps the most important piece of the successful implementation of the Patriot system was the connection between the two sides. Explains Griffith, “Callers had to be able to get through to 911. So we needed a stable connection with technical support that we could reach quickly for fast resolution of any problems we encountered. After considering different entities, we chose the redundant Metro Ethernet pipe from SkyLine/SkyBest.”

Brent Keith, Business Sales Executive with SkyLine/SkyBest, has been actively involved with this project from the start. He says, “We provided Watauga County Dept. of Communications & Emergency Services with a fiber-fed 10 Mbps Metro Ethernet pipe that provides the connectivity needed to communicate effectively between the Watauga County Law Enforcement Center and the Beech Mountain Police Department. For redundancy, we engineered a diversely routed connection that traverses a totally separate path at both locations and within the SkyLine/SkyBest Metro Ethernet network. This builds superior reliability into the connection to make sure E911 is there when Watauga needs it most.” The SkyLine/SkyBest Metro Ethernet network is capable of providing very high-speed connectivity from 3 Mbps to 1 Gbps symmetrical between two locations (point to point) or several different locations (point to multipoint).

SkyLine / SkyBest Contributes to Success

Griffith was impressed with SkyLine/SkyBest during the installation process of the Patriot system and Metro Ethernet pipe. She says, “Every technician who came to

our facility was courteous, knowledgeable and friendly. They kept in touch with us to let us know what was going on each step of the way. SkyLine/SkyBest also worked with us to meet our stringent schedule. The installation steps had to be done in an exact order at an exact time to make the total project a success. Even our equipment vendor’s Project Manager commented that anyone he called at SkyLine/SkyBest, no matter how often or at what time, was always ready and willing to help. He works with many different telephone companies, so that was a real compliment.”

“Callers had to be able to get through to 911. So we needed a stable connection with technical support that we could reach quickly...”

— ELAINE GRIFFITH, 911 ADDRESS TECHNICIAN, WATAUGA COUNTY DEPT. OF COMMUNICATIONS & EMERGENCY SERVICES

She adds, “Once the installation was complete, testing began. SkyLine/SkyBest faithfully worked with us for an extended period of time as we made sure each part of the process was working correctly. They responded quickly to my urgent trouble calls as we worked the bugs out. Our Patriot system was the first backup system of its kind to be approved by the N.C. 911 Board. This in itself is quite a feat as it has stringent guidelines that must be met. I can truthfully say that part of our success can be attributed to each person at SkyLine/SkyBest who worked with us to put this system together.”

This Team Helps You Win Customers

We're pleased to introduce you to the Directory Sales Team from YP Real Yellow Pages. These are the talented professionals that are currently calling on businesses to plan advertising strategies for the 2012-2013 SkyLine Telephone Directory which will be published in December.



Yellow Pages advertising is a proven way to reach people who are ready to buy and help build your customer base. Make sure your business appears in the Real Yellow Pages. Contact a Yellow Pages representative by calling locally in Watauga County or by placing a collect call to 828-262-3779. The sales period ends in October so act now.



1. Jessica Mullis, Advertising Consultant
2. Nathan Johnson, Advertising Consultant
3. Abraham Cannon, Advertising Consultant
4. Alex Vogl, Advertising Consultant
5. Tina Miles, Advertising Consultant
6. Greg Harrison, Area Sales Manager
7. Tiffany Durst, Performance Manager
8. Abby Bogdon, Performance Manager
9. Ricky Haidar, Internet Account Manager

MARK YOUR CALENDARS for These Fall Events

The colors of leaves aren't the only things changing this fall. Later in September, please join us at the SkyLine Annual Meeting to hear about changing technology in telecommunications and our role in it. Then in October, enjoy a change of pace by taking part in these fun community activities.

SkyLine Annual Meeting

- Ashe County High School, West Jefferson, NC
- Saturday, September 29
- Member Registration at 9:30 a.m.
- Business Meeting at 10:30 a.m.

Autumn at Oz

- Beech Mountain
- Saturday, October 6 and Sunday, October 7
- Tours of Auntie Em's and Uncle Henry's farm
- Mini-museum, bluegrass bands and local dancers

Shady Valley Cranberry Festival

- Shady Valley in Johnson County, TN
- Saturday, October 13
- Free tours of Nature Conservancy cranberry bog restoration sites
- Community pancake breakfast
- Parade through Shady Valley

34th Annual Valle Country Fair

- Valle Crucis Conference Center, NC Highway 194
- Saturday, October 20
- Fine art and crafts, food and mountain music
- Proceeds go to fund High Country organizations which serve people in need.



35th Annual Woolly Worm Festival

- Downtown Banner Elk, NC
- Saturday, October 20 and Sunday, October 21
- Worm races with cash prizes
- Crafts, food and rides
- Proceeds are given back to the community to benefit Avery County schools and children's programs and to promote local businesses and tourism.



Pictured are a few members of the SkyLine Repair Services Team that you may know (L to R) Hollie Brown, Repair Services Specialist; Angie Sexton, Repair Services Specialist; Melanie Buchanan, Support Services Supervisor; Donya Graham, Repair Services Specialist; Sandy Liddle, Repair Services Specialist

Repair Services Team – The Ones to Call for Local Troubleshooting

If your phone or Internet services aren't working properly, you want the problem solved quickly. After all, so much depends on being connected. That's why it's good to know you can call SkyLine/SkyBest and reach a live person 24/7.

Melanie Buchanan, Support Services Supervisor, notes, "Our team provides live customer support. You'll talk to SkyLine/SkyBest employees who specialize in troubleshooting our services."

The Repair Services team serves as the front line of SkyLine's larger support services group. They work with customers to troubleshoot equipment issues, often resolving problems while still on the call to eliminate the need for an on-site visit from a technician.

Says Buchanan, "We have a wealth of knowledge about SkyLine/SkyBest services and can provide step-by-step troubleshooting. Our Repair Service Specialists train frequently and are always seeking new information to better assist our customers. In addition, our team members work closely with other employees involved with plant assignment, scheduling and internal engineering to ensure that customers receive the best service possible."

During a typical day, a Repair Service Specialist will take calls from customers with repair issues, dispatch technicians to homes and businesses, troubleshoot problems, assist technicians in the field and monitor SkyLine/SkyBest equipment for performance. Says Buchanan, "We receive calls that vary from customers needing help with a voice mail question to programming a remote control or reaching the Internet. Our days are busy, but we enjoy talking to customers and making sure they can use the technology SkyLine/SkyBest brings to them."

Check This List Before You Call

Review the items below before calling SkyLine/SkyBest Repair Services team at 611 or 1-877-475-9546. Customers often find that these tips allow them to troubleshoot on their own. But, if not, you can count on the SkyLine/SkyBest Repair Services team to provide you with the help you need.

With Any Service Trouble, please note the answers to the following questions:

- When did the trouble begin?
- Were there any changes before the service began to malfunction such as a storm, digging in the area or computer changes?

With DSL Issues:

- Power down your modem, router and computer and turn them back on one at a time. Sometimes a piece of equipment simply needs to reboot to re-establish communication with the next piece of equipment correctly.
- If you are using a wireless router, you can follow these simple steps to determine if it is causing your problem. First, bypass the wireless router. Copper customers should run the cord from the modem directly to the computer. Fiber customers should run the cord from the wall jack directly to the computer. If your broadband issue is resolved, the problem is related to your wireless router.

With Phone Issues:

- Copper customers, do you have filters on the line if the line carries DSL and voice?
- Have you checked the batteries for the phone if it's portable?
- Have you unplugged each of your cordless phones and tried to use a corded phone only?



Secure your Business with



Monthly monitoring starts at only \$19.95 per month.

1-800-759-2226 | SkyBestSecurity.com

*Some restrictions apply. Advertised price is for broadband subscribers. Non-broadband subscribers pay \$24.95 per month.