

# BUSINESS CONNECTIONS

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Downtown Boone Welcomes  
SkyBest Communications



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# BUSINESS CONNECTIONS

*Business Connections* is a quarterly publication of SkyLine/SkyBest created for our business customers. As a local, member-owned cooperative, SkyLine Membership Corporation was established in 1951 to bring telephone service to rural residents of Alleghany, Ashe and Watauga counties. Today, SkyLine is the second-largest of eight telephone cooperatives in North Carolina. In 1998, SkyLine established SkyBest Communications, Inc. as a wholly-owned subsidiary to assume operations of SkyLine's deregulated businesses. Today, SkyLine/SkyBest provides a wide variety of telecommunications services—from basic dial tone services to advanced business systems and networking solutions.

#### Management

**Jimmy C. Blevins**

*Chief Executive Officer*

**Kim Shepherd**

*Customer Service Manager*

#### Business Sales Department Contact Information

Customer Service: 800-759-2226

**Robin Miller**

*Inside Sales Coordinator (Alleghany/Ashe/Johnson)*  
robin.miller@skyline.org

**Michelle Scott**

*Inside Sales Coordinator (Avery/Watauga)*  
michelle.scott@skyline.org

#### Corporate Offices

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#### Additional Issues

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#### Postmaster Send Changes To

Myla Farmer  
Marketing & Promotions Coordinator  
SkyLine/SkyBest  
P.O. Box 759  
West Jefferson, NC 28694



Buying local, it could be argued, is a win-win proposition. It's good for the seller. It's good for the buyer. It's also good for our local economy. And it's good for the environment. What's not to like about buying local goods and services? As a locally owned and operated business, SkyLine/SkyBest is proud to play an active role in helping our communities grow and prosper. That's why we chose to feature the "buy local" message in this September issue of *Business Connections*.

In this issue, we bring you a review of the key advantages of buying locally. We are fortunate to live in an area that offers a wide variety of locally owned businesses that provide top-quality products and services. SkyBest is committed to serving local businesses, so we recently extended our service footprint to downtown Boone. We are pleased to offer businesses in this area the choice of a truly local communications service provider. In serving the local market, we don't want you to miss the advertising opportunity to reach local customers through SkyLine's regional consolidated directory with AT&T Real Yellow Pages™, which is highlighted on page 7.

Remember—when you do business close to home, everyone benefits. You don't have to go far to get exactly what you need.

Sincerely,

**Jimmy C. Blevins**

*Chief Executive Officer*



*On the cover left to right: Dan Meyer, President/CEO of Boone Chamber of Commerce; Loretta Clawson, Mayor of Boone; John Cooper, Mast General Store Owner; Brent Keith, SkyLine/SkyBest Business Sales Executive.*

*Cover photo by Todd Bush Photography, www.bushphoto.com.*

# Why Buy Local?

We all benefit by boosting our local economy

Every time you choose where to purchase goods or services, you have a powerful opportunity to make a difference in this community. When you choose local businesses and locally produced goods and services, you're reinvesting money right here and helping to create a stronger local economy. Here are some of the top reasons to buy local:

## Greater Economic Vitality

The money you spend in locally owned stores has two to three times the economic impact of dollars spent at national retailers. Studies show that for every \$100 spent at a locally owned business, \$45 goes back into the community and our tax base. By comparison, for every \$100 spent at a chain store, only \$14 comes back.

## More and Better Jobs

For every two jobs a national retailer brings to a community, three higher-wage jobs are lost due to local businesses closing. Small local businesses are the largest employer nationally and in our community, and they provide the most jobs to our residents.

## Protection of Unique Culture

Local, one-of-a-kind businesses reflect our unique culture and character, contributing to the success of tourism.

## Improved Product Selection

A multitude of small businesses, each selecting products based on the needs of their local customers rather than a national sales plan, results in a much broader range of product choices.

## Environmental Benefits

Big-box stores and other national retailers usually require large undeveloped land to accommodate their needs. Buying local



*Spin a Yarn, Weave a Web, located on the backstreet in West Jefferson, sells everything from locally produced jams, jellies, grains and meat to handcrafted clothing items. Pictured here are owner Nancy Weaver-Hoffman and her daughter Christy.*

means shopping closer to home, which means less sprawl and the resulting habitat loss. It also will reduce consumer driving and dependence on oil.

## Increased Support for Community Groups

Local non-profit organizations receive an average of 250 percent more support from smaller, locally owned business owners than they do from national companies.

## Efficient Use of Taxes

Local businesses typically require a much smaller infrastructure investment as compared to nationally owned stores that enter a community. This makes for a more efficient use of public services.

While it may not always be possible to buy local, please make it a goal to try.

## How the Chamber Supports Local Buying

Dan Meyer, President/CEO of the Boone Area Chamber of Commerce, lists their key initiatives in support of the "buy local" message. "Our everGREEN Committee sends articles to the local papers promoting all types of sustainable efforts, such as buying local food at the farmers market and shopping at locally owned businesses. During the holidays, we do radio and TV PSAs (public service announcements) that ask, "Why leave the mountain to shop?" The Chamber also has a Member-to-Member Discount program that encourages local businesses to offer specials to each other, as well as a Member-to-Member advertising program that sends e-blast messages to its member list.

Meyer adds, "Buying local simply makes great sense—it keeps the dollars circulating in our local economy. Plus, local businesses support local non-profits which greatly enhances the quality of life in our community."

*For more information, call 828-264-2225 or contact [info@boonechamber.com](mailto:info@boonechamber.com).*



Original Mast General Store, located in Valle Crucis.

IMAGES PROVIDED BY TODD BUSH PHOTOGRAPHY, WWW.BUSHPHOTO.COM

# Mast General Store

The store that has everything gets everything it needs from SkyLine/SkyBest

“If you can’t buy it here, you don’t need it.” This popular saying can be traced back to the Mast General Store, which tried to carry everything local residents might need — from cradles to caskets. Henry Taylor built the first of the store’s many rooms in 1882 in Valle Crucis, North Carolina, and the store opened for business in 1883. In 1897, half interest in the store was sold to W.W. Mast, and it was known as the Taylor and Mast General Store until 1913, when the remaining half of the enterprise was purchased by Mast.

For the next 60 years, the store was owned and managed by the Mast family. Operation of the store was passed from W.W. Mast to his son Howard, who passed it along to his son, “H.” The Mast family sold the store in 1973 to a doctor

in Atlanta and a professor at Appalachian State University. Around that same time, the site was named to the National Register of Historic Places as one of the finest remaining examples of an old country general store.

“They’ve always been very responsive to our needs and find solutions to whatever situations we face.”

— SHERI MORETZ, COMMUNITY RELATIONS MANAGER, MAST GENERAL STORE

In November of 1977, the doors were closed presumably just for the winter season with hopes of reopening in April of 1978. However, plans did not pan out. Many residents of Valle Crucis banded together in an effort to save the old store

and Exxon even helped with the drive to preserve the landmark. John and Faye Cooper purchased the Mast Store and reopened it in June of 1980. Since that time, the store has regained its reputation as “the store that has everything,” and there are now six retail locations besides the Original Mast General Store in Valle Crucis.

SkyLine/SkyBest has provided communications solutions to the Valle Crucis store since 1980. The Boone store will soon be added to the mix with SkyBest telephone service for its Norstar business system and other business lines, as well as high-speed broadband connectivity.

Sheri Moretz, Community Relations Manager of Mast General Store, is impressed with the customer service

they receive from SkyLine/SkyBest. She says, “They’ve always been very responsive to our needs and find solutions to whatever situations we face—like linking together three of our locations that are separated by two miles so we can operate on the same phone system. Any request or problem that we’ve had has received prompt attention and resolution from SkyLine/SkyBest. I appreciate their personal service.”

Brent Keith, SkyLine/SkyBest Business Sales Executive, adds, “Now that the Mast General Store in Boone has added SkyBest fiber to their business, the possibilities are endless.” As endless, perhaps, as the variety of inventory you’ll find at the Mast General Store.



### Mast General Store Looks Locally First

Sheri Moretz, Community Relations Manager of Mast General Store, notes, “The Mast General Store has a policy to look locally for products and services first. You can’t get any more local than our SkyLine cooperative. Of course, when we need to purchase a service or change one, we look at several criteria—two of those high on our list are service and price. SkyLine/SkyBest is very competitive in both of these areas, and when you add the local component, it’s even more attractive.”

Moretz continues, “In sourcing our merchandise for the store, we look locally, then regionally, then nationally and finally internationally for our products. As a company, we feel it is very important to support our local communities. By providing a local entrepreneur an outlet for his/her goods, we are continuing the finest traditions of a general store.”

## The Gathering Place

In times past, the general store was always the hub of the community. Residents would stop by to pick up the mail, chat around the stove, buy a few things for home and maybe barter some eggs or chickens. It was where people learned what was happening in the community—who was ill, who died, or who welcomed a new addition to their family through marriage or birth.

The Original Mast Store in Valle Crucis still serves as the post office for the Valle Crucis community. (This was one of the first things that residents asked for when John and Faye Cooper re-opened the store in 1980. When a community loses its post office, it’s not long until it loses its identity and spot on the map.) Today, there are about 200 P.O. boxes in the front room of the Original Mast Store where locals stop by daily to pick up their mail. Many stay to have a 5¢ cup of coffee, paid for on the honor system, or come at lunchtime for a “slug of bologna” and a Yoo-hoo drink. It’s

also common for locals to bring their visitors from “off the mountain” to see the store and enjoy live music on the weekends, play a game of bottle cap checkers by the pot-bellied stove, or just browse the store’s vast number of items and see the memorabilia displayed on the walls.





# Stay Safe Online

SkyBest Internet Guardian provides complete, automatic protection

As the Internet becomes more sophisticated, so do the ways in which it can be used to harm users. Potential threats to your computers, and to your small business, include: viruses, worms, Trojan horses, hackers, phishing attacks, spyware, identity theft and Wi-Fi and firewall intrusion. Small businesses may be at greater risk, largely because owners frequently do not make Internet security a priority. Doing nothing, however, can result in data damage, loss or theft.

All computers should be equipped with a reliable security system. SkyBest Internet Guardian provides automatic protection for our small business customers:

- Prevents e-mail and image spam from reaching your inbox.
- Halts access to dangerous Web pages.
- Stops Web sites from installing dangerous downloads on your computer.
- Prevents unauthorized users from changing your critical applications.

- Detects and removes malicious threats from your computer, e-mail, instant messages and downloads.
- Secures your network with a firewall and Wi-Fi patrol.

SkyBest Internet Guardian is powered by TrendMicro, an industry leader in protecting computers. It is a complete solution that is automatically updated and easy to use. A help feature assists you with the installation and, once installed, the product is easy to configure. Our technical support staff is available 24/7 at 866-759-7591 to answer your questions.

*At just \$2.95 per month for up to three computers, this service is a great solution for small businesses. (SkyBest Internet Guardian is not recommended for commercially networked applications.) To find out more about SkyBest Internet Guardian, call our customer service representatives at 800-759-2226 or visit [www.skyline.org](http://www.skyline.org).*

## Common Security Threats

Information systems are among a company's most vital assets, yet they are sometimes left vulnerable to threats that could damage or destroy them. In addition to computer viruses, common threats for larger businesses include:

### Denial-of-Service Attacks

A denial-of-service attack (DoS) is an attempt to make a computer resource unavailable to its intended users. It generally involves preventing an Internet site or service from functioning efficiently or at all.

### Cyber Extortion

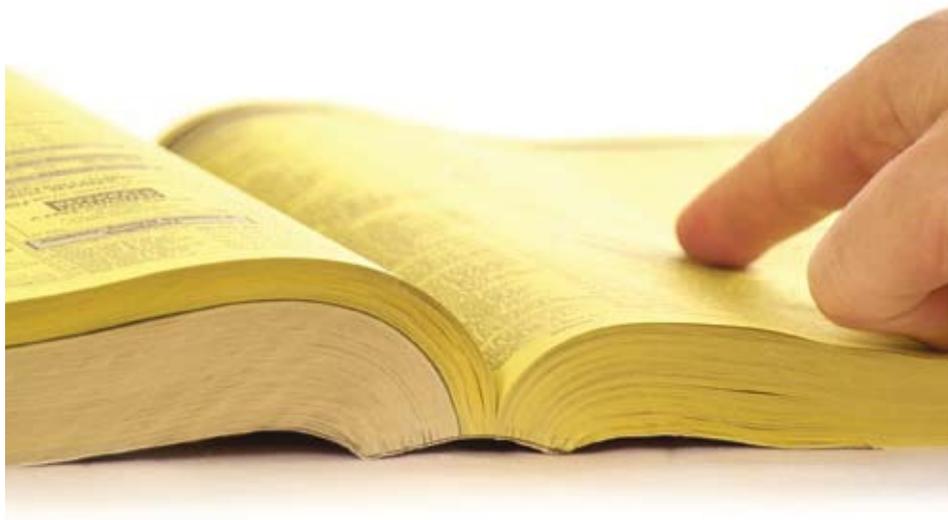
Cyber extortion is a new twist on an old racket— "Give us money or we'll shut you down." Methods vary but can include a denial-of-service attack (DoS), theft of confidential data, defacement of your Web site, or an attack that locks up or encrypts your data.

### Unsecured Wireless Access Points

An unsecured Wireless Access Point (WAP) or an Access Point that is using old, out-dated technology for security (such as WEP) provides a hacker with an easy route into your network.

### Rootkit

A rootkit is a set of software tools intended to conceal running processes, files or system data from the operating system. Rootkits have been used increasingly by malware to help intruders maintain access to systems while avoiding detection.



## Include Your Business in the Real Yellow Pages™

The advertising sales campaign is well under way for SkyLine's regional consolidated directory with AT&T Real Yellow Pages™. Placing your ad is just one step. You also want to create an ad that generates business and the experts from AT&T Advertising Solutions are eager to help.

Here are a few tips to increase your ad's effectiveness:

- Use large and clear headlines that answer a consumer's need.
- List bullet points of information rather than less helpful paragraphs.
- Identify the benefits of your business.
- Include complete and relevant information.
- Use graphics and pictures that are easy to identify.
- Provide consumers a reason to do business with you.

Once you've created your ad, placement becomes critical. AT&T Advertising Solutions offers all the necessary search

platforms for connecting businesses and customers including print, YELLOW-PAGES.COM, mobile, search engine marketing and Digital Express.

Advertising in the AT&T Real Yellow Pages continues to be an excellent strategy, because it is still the primary source for consumers to find local business information. The AT&T Real Yellow Pages are the most-used print directories in our markets with a distribution of about 173 million books that receive about 3.3 billion searches per year. On average, in our markets, consumers turn to AT&T directories more often than any other directory and AT&T Real Yellow Pages print ads yield an average return on investment of \$12 in revenue for every \$1 invested.

*To advertise your business in the Real Yellow Pages, contact an AT&T Advertising Solutions sales representative at 828-262-3779 (locally in Watauga or collect). This year's sales team includes: Greg Harrison, Area Sales Manager; Troy Walden, Jeff Mangle, Ricky Haidar, Ron Fulcher and J.P. Carlin.*

### Are You LinkedIn Yet?

What do you get when you mix one part online social network, one part business networking tool, and one part expert advice resource? You get LinkedIn.com—a popular way to connect with friends and business colleagues alike.

Launched in 2003, LinkedIn plays to the "six degrees of separation" theory that anyone on the planet can be connected to any other person on the planet through a chain of acquaintances. In other words, we're all connected to each other by friends of friends (or co-workers of co-workers). The site already has more than 20 million members worldwide that work in 150 different industries.

LinkedIn allows you to maintain an online list of contact details for those you know and trust in the business world. As you build your list of contacts and they build theirs, you'll soon find yourself with opportunities to network with more people than you could possibly do alone.





## Metro-Ethernet Connects Multiple Locations With Multiple Benefits

Metro-Ethernet from SkyLine/SkyBest makes sharing information between computers across town as simple as sharing information between computers across the hall. Call the Business Sales Group to find out more.

