

BUSINESS CONNECTIONS

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Becky and Company makes security part of style

Becky Absher, Owner of Becky's Hair Boutique/The Lady Bug, along with Tim Watson, Field Services Supervisor from the SkyBest Security team



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Becky Absher and daughter Allison Langdon, owners of Becky's Boutique/The Lady Bug

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.

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Security is a concern for every business, and the number of potential threats against security continues to grow. The financial strains of today's economy have created a climate more conducive to property crimes such as burglary and robbery. And sophisticated criminals, armed with advanced technology, are figuring out new ways to steal data and disrupt online communications.

In this issue of *Business Connections*, we take a look at the topic of security in several different articles. On page 3, you'll find tips on business security including a quiz to help you assess your risk for property crimes. On pages 4 and 5, we feature Becky and Company (Becky's Hair Boutique and The Lady Bug). These successful businesses were convinced of the need for a security system after they experienced a break-in in November 2009. SkyBest Security was added to the other SkyBest services they already used, and they're now equipped for more peace of mind.

Password policy is the focus on page 6. This article is an important reminder to make sure your business has procedures in place to help prevent hackers from stealing important data and resources.

Finally, on page 7, we've included a survey for you to complete in order to find out more about your communications needs. By doing so, your name will be entered in a drawing for a \$500 Visa gift card. Thanks in advance for your participation. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Brian D. Tester
Plant Manager



Security Tips for Your Business

Assess your vulnerability to property crimes and reduce your risk

Businesses are robbed 10 times more often than individuals, but taking appropriate precautions can reduce your chance of becoming a victim and the amount of money taken if you are robbed. Take this quiz to assess the vulnerability of your business:

Cash Practices

Do you...

- keep only small amounts on hand and advertise this fact?
- make frequent bank deposits?
- count cash only in a private area?

Lights, Locks & Alarms

Do you...

- have exterior and interior lighting that allows visibility into the store from the street?
- have an emergency alarm system that works?
- use mirrors, cameras or one-way glass to observe all areas of the store?

Employees

Do you...

- have more than one person to open and close?
- carefully screen employees before hiring?
- train employees on how to handle a robbery situation?



Planning

Do you...

- arrange your stock to allow clear visibility in the store?
- have a signal set up for the police officer in case of problems?
- regularly conduct risk analyses with the local police or sheriff's department?

If you answered “no” to some questions, your business should consider taking corrective action now. There are many ways to reduce your vulnerability to crime. For example, you can start by installing high quality door locks and bright exterior and interior lighting to make your establishment less attractive to criminals.

Another key way to help keep your business and employees safe is with an effective alarm system. SkyBest Security offers a full line of customizable security equipment for businesses. This equipment includes wired or wireless control panels, break-in detection, motion detectors, glass break detectors, key chain remotes for arming and disarming the system, and sensors to detect fluctuating temperature and rising water to help guard against frozen or leaking pipes.

SkyBest Security systems are monitored 24/7 by a UL-certified central monitoring station, whose highly qualified staff works with local authorities to provide quick response to all alerts. Our local technicians are licensed and trained on the latest systems and technologies, and are dedicated to delivering the highest level of customer service available. SkyBest Security can also offer businesses the ability to receive logs of when the system was armed and disarmed.

Randy Neaves, SkyBest Security Consultant, reminds customers of the benefits of choosing SkyBest Security. “We are local; our friendly and knowledgeable customer service staff is right here to answer questions and help you before, during and after your purchase. SkyBest Security also offers very competitive rates and the simplicity of one bill for multiple services,” he notes.

To request a free security consultation and learn about the equipment available from SkyBest Security, call 800-759-2226. A Security Consultant will come to your business, conduct a walk-through, discuss your security needs and give you a quote for a system to meet those needs.



PHOTO BY TODD BUSH PHOTOGRAPHY, WWW.BUSHPHOTO.COM

Becky Absher enjoys Wi-Fi inside her place of business. Pictured are Becky, her husband Jerry Absher and their daughter Allison Langdon (also an owner).

Becky's Hair Boutique and The Lady Bug

These stylish businesses rely on SkyBest Security services and more

Becky Absher owns Becky and Company (Becky's Hair Boutique and The Lady Bug), and recalls the humble beginnings of her business. "It all started in 1976 with a hair salon that I ran out of my garage at home. We outgrew that arrangement and after moving a couple of times, bought the building at our current location at 424 East Main Street in Jefferson," she says. This building houses four businesses in addition to Becky's Hair Boutique and The Lady Bug.

A Salon That Offers More

Becky's Hair Boutique offers a full selection of hair and nail services. As a Paul Mitchell Focus Salon, it has access to continuous education programs to teach stylists about the latest products and what works best for different hair types. The salon has eight styling stations and

seven stylists. A unique feature is the Lather Lounge—a relaxing, candlelit area with body-conforming chairs where customers enjoy five- to ten-minute shampoo massages. Becky's Hair Boutique also has private rooms for body and face waxing, manicures and pedicures.

Trendy Fashions and Home Décor

Once Becky Absher had established her successful hair salon, she was joined in the business by her daughters, Allison Langdon and Paige Fairchild. They decided to branch out and also sell clothing, jewelry and home accessories. Called The Lady Bug, the shop caters to women of all ages.

Absher notes, "Allison, Paige and I go on buying trips to shows in Atlanta and Las Vegas to stay current on the latest

styles in fashion and home décor. When customers walk into The Lady Bug, they sometimes say it looks like a New York



PHOTO BY TODD BUSH PHOTOGRAPHY, WWW.BUSHPHOTO.COM

Stylists do their magic at Becky's Hair Boutique.

shop. They love the fun selection of items we carry, and also the fact that they can stay and enjoy something to drink at our little coffee bar.”

Break-in Shows Need for Security

In November 2009, Becky’s Hair Boutique and The Lady Bug hosted a grand opening at their new location. The celebration was short lived, since soon afterwards, the businesses experienced a break-in and robbery.

It was a Sunday, and Absher was home when she got the call about a break-in from another business owner at the building. In all, four of the six businesses in the complex experienced break-ins that day. At Becky’s Hair Boutique and The Lady Bug, the burglars broke the front door and stole some cash, but fortunately, there was no other damage to the property.

The crime was a wake-up call for Becky and her husband, Jerry. She explains, “Unfortunately, we did not have a security system in place, and knew we needed to add one quickly. Since we already had a great relationship with the people at SkyBest—they provide our phone and Internet services including Wi-Fi—I gave them a call right away. A SkyBest Security technician came out to our building and went over everything with us. We now have a security system at Becky’s Hair Boutique and The Lady Bug that meets our needs very well.”

Jerry Absher says they’re very pleased with the new security system. It includes sensors at all doors and compression sensors on all windows, plus motion detectors inside the space. He adds, “This security system gives us the ability to set the alarm via a phone call, which is so convenient. It’s a 24-hour service, and if the alarms go off, pre-determined



The Lady Bug features a colorful collection of accessories to make women (and their homes) look beautiful.

PHOTO BY TODD BUSH PHOTOGRAPHY, WWW.BUSHPHOTO.COM

emergency numbers are automatically called. Becky and I both feel a whole lot more secure since we had the SkyBest Security system installed. We rest easier at night.”

Worry (and Costs) Go Down

Worry about property crime isn’t the only thing that’s been reduced for Becky and Company thanks to SkyBest. So have their communications costs.

“The bundle includes all of our SkyBest services, including our security system, and it’s saving us a lot of money.”

—BECKY ABSHER, OWNER
OF BECKY AND COMPANY

Becky explains, “When we were discussing the installation of the new security system, we also went over our other communications services with our SkyBest representative, Robin Miller. She came back to us with a proposal for a business bundle. The bundle includes all of our SkyBest services, including our security system, and it’s saving us a lot of money. Plus, it’s so convenient to do business with just one provider.”

SkyBest is happy to play a part in the continuing success of Becky’s Hair Boutique and The Lady Bug. After all, these two businesses are helping to make local residents look and feel better. Now that’s a job well done.

Pink Raises Green for Charity

Becky and Company (Becky’s Hair Boutique and The Lady Bug) donated \$1,580 to the Women-In-Touch Endowment Fund in October 2009. The funds were raised by applying a pink streak into the hair of women and young girls in Ashe County in celebration of Breast Cancer Awareness Month. This was the third time that Becky and Company has held an October event to help the fund grow.

The Women-In-Touch Endowment Fund began in 2000, founded on the belief that persons facing cancer who have no insurance or fail to qualify for other programs should have a source of financial assistance.





Building Strong Teams

In business, and in sports, strong teamwork is essential to success. The challenging part can be building that team mentality. Here are five essentials:

1. **Define the team.** Do your best to ensure that each team can provide a well-rounded viewpoint of the challenge at hand.
2. **Set clear goals.** Make sure that each team member understands why the group was formed and what the expectations are for the group as a whole. Encourage collaboration, while giving ownership of specific tasks to individuals based on skill and interest.
3. **Build trust.** Great teams allow each member to voice his or her opinions and ideas without fear of retribution.
4. **Model the behavior you seek.** Everything starts at the top. When leaders act professionally and with a spirit of teamwork, it's easier for staff to follow suit.
5. **Reward great teamwork.** Bonuses, gifts and public acknowledgment should be given as much for positive teamwork as for individual performance. Showing appreciation encourages continued team efforts.

Password Policy is Critical to Security

Common employee lapses leave businesses vulnerable

It's estimated that more than a third of employees write down or electronically record their passwords. This is the equivalent of leaving the key under the mat, and creates significant security risks for businesses. Hackers are a clever bunch and will stop at nothing to get into your network for its resources and data.

A comprehensive password policy is your first line of defense against these attacks. To be most valuable, such a policy should include these elements:

Education of Employees

Employees don't always realize the importance of creating and safeguarding passwords. Instruct your users to never write down passwords and leave them in work areas, and to be particularly careful when entering passwords while strangers are nearby.

Creation of Strong Passwords

Mandate that passwords require certain combinations of letters, numbers, non-alphanumeric characters and case sensitivity. Your policy could also dictate that passwords may not contain personal data, dictionary terms, organizational terms and user-related words. Remember that each character added to a password increases the protection. It should be eight or more characters in length; 14 characters or longer is ideal.

Regular Changing of Passwords

Get all operating systems, client-server applications and other resources set to



make users change their passwords on a periodic basis such as every 30 to 90 days.

Response to Invalid Login Attempts

Using operating system software, specify the number of times an account can attempt to authenticate before being locked out.

Enforcement Through Software

It's not enough to simply create a policy and expect users to stick to it consistently. Password requirements need to be enforced by the software that employees utilize throughout a network.

Safe Storage

Plan for the unexpected, such as a sudden or unplanned transition within your network administration staff. Consider keeping a copy of all critical passwords in your company's safe.

Complete This Survey for a Chance to Win a \$500 Visa Gift Card

As a business owner or manager, your opinions are important to SkyLine/SkyBest. Mail the completed survey to the address below by March 31, 2010, and **you could win a \$500 Visa gift card**. Only one entry per business, please. Prefer to complete the survey online? Simply visit www.skybest.com/businesssurvey.

Owner/Manager Name: _____

Business Name: _____

Primary SkyLine/SkyBest Business Phone Number: _____

1. Would your business benefit from a monitored security system?
 Yes No Not Sure
2. Do you have a company Web site?
 Yes No, but I need one No, I don't need one
3. Is your company Web site hosted locally?
 Yes No I don't have a Web site
4. How satisfied are you with your service from SkyLine/SkyBest?
Local Telephone Service
 Very Satisfied Satisfied Somewhat Satisfied Not Satisfied
 I do not have local service with SkyLine/SkyBest

Long-Distance Service
 Very Satisfied Satisfied Somewhat Satisfied Not Satisfied
 I do not have long-distance with SkyLine/SkyBest

High-Speed Internet
 Very Satisfied Satisfied Somewhat Satisfied Not Satisfied
 I do not have high-speed Internet with SkyLine/SkyBest

Business Telephone System
 Very Satisfied Satisfied Somewhat Satisfied Not Satisfied
 I do not have a business system with SkyLine/SkyBest
5. Are there any new services that you wish SkyLine/SkyBest could provide for your business?
Please list them here:

6. How many minutes of long-distance does your business use each month?
 0 – 499 500 – 999 1,000 and up
7. How often does your business upload large files to the Internet?
 Often Sometimes Rarely Never
8. Do you need to access higher Internet speeds to download large applications, photos and files?
 Often Sometimes Rarely Never

Thank you for participating.

Mail this survey to:

SkyLine/SkyBest • Attn: Marketing Department • PO Box 759 • West Jefferson, NC 28694

SkyLine/SkyBest Events

Directory Drive Through

March 31, 2010

Now that you've received the new 2009-10 regional telephone directory, please save your old SkyLine/SkyBest directory for the



18th Annual Directory Collection Drive sponsored by SkyLine. Nineteen area public schools are participating in this year's drive, and for each old directory collected, SkyLine will donate 25 cents to the participating schools. Since the program began in 1993, SkyLine has donated over \$78,000 to the schools for their recycling efforts.

Directories can be dropped off at any of the participating public schools in our five-county service area or at any SkyLine/SkyBest Customer Service Center. For more information, contact your local SkyLine Customer Service Center at 118.

[In addition, please come see us at these upcoming local business events:](#)

Avery Business Expo

April 13, 2010

The Parks and Recreation Complex, Newland, NC

Ashe Home Sweet Home Show

April 17, 2010

Ashe County High School Gymnasium, West Jefferson, NC

Boone Business Expo

April 29, 2010

Boone Mall, Boone, NC

High Country Home and Remodeling Expo

May 21 & 22, 2010

ASU Holmes Convocation Center, Boone, NC

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