



The Connection

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Published monthly for members of SkyLine Membership Corporation.



50th Annual Meeting Scheduled for October 7

The 50th Annual Meeting of SkyLine Membership Corporation is scheduled for Saturday, October 7, at Ashe County High School in West Jefferson.

Member Registration begins in the commons area at 9:30 a.m., followed by the business meeting at 10:30 a.m. in the auditorium. Items of business will include the Report of Officers, Directors and Committees and the election of directors. The following youth program participants will be recognized: 2006 Frank James-SkyLine Scholarship winners, FRS Scholarship winners, and the Cooperative Leadership Conference and Foundation for Rural Service Youth Tour participants.

At the close of the business meeting, several door prizes will be awarded. SkyLine mementos will be available during registration, and special displays will feature the latest products and services of SkyLine, SkyBest and Carolina West Wireless. Activities for children, ages four to 11, will be scheduled from 10 a.m. until the close of the business meeting.

Following the meeting, a barbecue lunch will be served by Smoky Mountain Barbecue, and the Ashe County Bluegrass Band will perform during registration and lunch.

James F. Shepherd
Secretary



Nortel's Paul Fleming, who worked with SkyBest in establishing wireless network services for its business customers, is shown demonstrating the software to assign wireless Internet access to guest rooms with Ernest O'Banion and innkeeper Sherry Barker of Nation's Inn.

Business Spotlight

Nation's Inn Brings Wireless Internet to Guests

Business travelers and other guests staying at the local Nation's Inn can now get wireless Internet access in their rooms thanks to a new service provided through SkyBest Communications.

Ernest O'Banion, who is a part of the ownership and management groups for the local independent inn, has been wanting to provide this service to his guests for some time. "We were one of the few counties where service wasn't available until now, and I was glad for Nation's Inn to be SkyBest's first commercial application of this new service."

SkyBest, through a partnership with its communications services vendor Nortel, completed the installation of a basic Wi-Fi network for the Inn last month. The new service is part of the company's plan to offer data network solutions to its customers including the installation of wireless networks.

Wi-Fi is short for "Wireless Fidelity," which is used to commonly describe the underlying technology of wireless local area networks (WLAN). Wi-Fi is intended to be used for mobile computing devices, such as laptops, and is now often used for increasingly more applications, including Internet access and gaming, and basic connectivity of consumer electronics such as televisions and DVD players.

According to Brent Keith, Sales Engineer with SkyLine/SkyBest, the new Wi-Fi service at Nation's Inn was installed utilizing its current DSL (Digital Subscriber Line) service through SkyBest, along with a router, a security switch for the location's two networks, and multiple wireless Access Points (AP)

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Ernest O'Banion, who has been in the hospitality industry for over 50 years, says, "It is the most rewarding business I can think of."



Nation's Inn has introduced wireless Internet service to its guests through a new service offered through SkyBest Communications.

to provide coverage for the entire facility. "The combination of the security switch router and Access Points connect a group of wireless or Wi-Fi enabled devices such as a laptop in the same way a wired local area network (LAN) would allow connectivity," Keith said. This technology also allows for security from outside interference. Along with guest room access, Nation's Inn has a computer set up in the lobby for guests to access the Internet.

For each new guest to the Inn, the staff will provide a username and password to be connected to the guest network, which gives them free, unlimited access to the Internet through the duration of their stay. The Wi-Fi access is provided by Nation's Inn to guests at no additional charge.

"We really appreciate Mr. O'Banion and Nation's Inn being our first field trial and application for this new service," Keith said. In addition to the support provided by his colleagues at SkyLine/SkyBest on this project, Keith credited Paul Fleming, an electrical engineer with Nortel, for providing on-site support as the project progressed from configuring to installing the new service. "Paul and Nortel showed great interest in helping us establish this new service line," he said. Nortel, which caters to service providers such as SkyLine/SkyBest, is a recognized leader in the telecommunications industry in the delivery of innovative technology solutions.

"We are pleased to be the first local inn to offer this new service to our guests," said O'Banion. "We've already had many of them to request Internet access in their rooms." Nation's Inn is also in the process of becoming a recognized 'hotspot' by registering through the Wi-Fi Alliance, a global, non-profit organization that works toward a single worldwide-accepted standard for high-speed wireless local area networking.

Providing friendly service and hospitality has been the goal of O'Banion, whose career in this industry spans over 50 years. A native of Pelzer, South Carolina, O'Banion discovered that the hospitality business was the ideal career choice for him while working with food service during a two-year stint in the U.S.

Marines. "That got me started in the most rewarding business I can think of," he said. He returned to college after the military, completing his bachelor's degree in Hotel Administration with a minor in Restaurant Administration. Over the next several years, he managed hotels ranging from 200 to 400 rooms in Michigan, North Carolina and South Carolina for Travelers Management Corp. and the Jack Tarr Corp. He also worked with Holiday Inn for 10 years in Virginia, North Carolina and Tennessee.

His connection to Ashe County came as a visitor who camped with his family at Greenfield in 1970. "After one week of camping at Greenfield, we fell in love with Ashe County," he said. He and his wife Frances moved here full-time in 1988. O'Banion is active in organizations which promote travel and tourism, including the N.C. Hotel/Motel Association and the N.C. Travel Industry Association, where he has served each as president. He also is currently president of New River Community Partners.

Nation's Inn, a 48-room facility, which is owned by JEB Corp., of which O'Banion is a partner, and managed by JEB Management, opened its doors in September 1994. JEB Corp. owns the trademark for Nation's Inn, and has considered expanding into other areas.

O'Banion says that 60 percent of Nation's Inn's business is commercial. "People who come to West Jefferson to do business stay here and most of those guests are based on reservations made by local companies," he said. "We also get a lot of people who are coming home for family reunions as well as tourists. From April through October, most weekends are booked."

Now that WiFi services are available to his guests, O'Banion expects an even busier fall season for both business and domestic travelers. "We chose SkyBest above other providers because of the history of good service from the telephone company. I appreciate the fact that on this first opportunity that their staff has not only worked hard to get the project completed, but they have communicated with me to provide exactly what I needed."

Nominating Committee Meets

A nominating committee, appointed by the Board of Directors, met on Tuesday, August 8, at SkyLine Membership Corporation in West Jefferson. The committee members are: Amos Wagoner, Jr., Alleghany County; Richard Roe, Ashe County; Roscoe Townsend, Avery County; Tommy Joe Ward, Watauga County; and Olan Bentley, Johnson County.

The committee nominated the following members of SkyLine to be voted upon for directors at the Annual Meeting on October 7, 2006: Alleghany County-James L. Shepherd; Ashe County-I.S. Cooper; Avery County-D.C. Smith; Watauga County-Ray Ward.

Changes Due for White Page Listings Include Your Business in the Yellow Pages™

Now through mid-October, representatives of BellSouth Advertising & Publishing Company (BAPCO), SkyLine's authorized Yellow Pages™ sales agent, are visiting and calling on business members across our service area to coordinate their advertising for the 2006-07 telephone directory, which will be published in December.

To make sure your business is advertised in the Yellow Pages, contact a BellSouth sales representative locally in Watauga County or collect (828) 264-3710.

Residential or business members who need to make any changes to their listing(s) in the White Pages should contact SkyLine at 1-800-759-2226 no later than **Monday, September 14**, to be included in the directory.

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