

JANUARY - FEBRUARY 2012



NineStar CONNECTION

VOLUME 1
ISSUE 1

MASTER YOUR METER

All the answers to your
frequently asked questions

PAGE 6

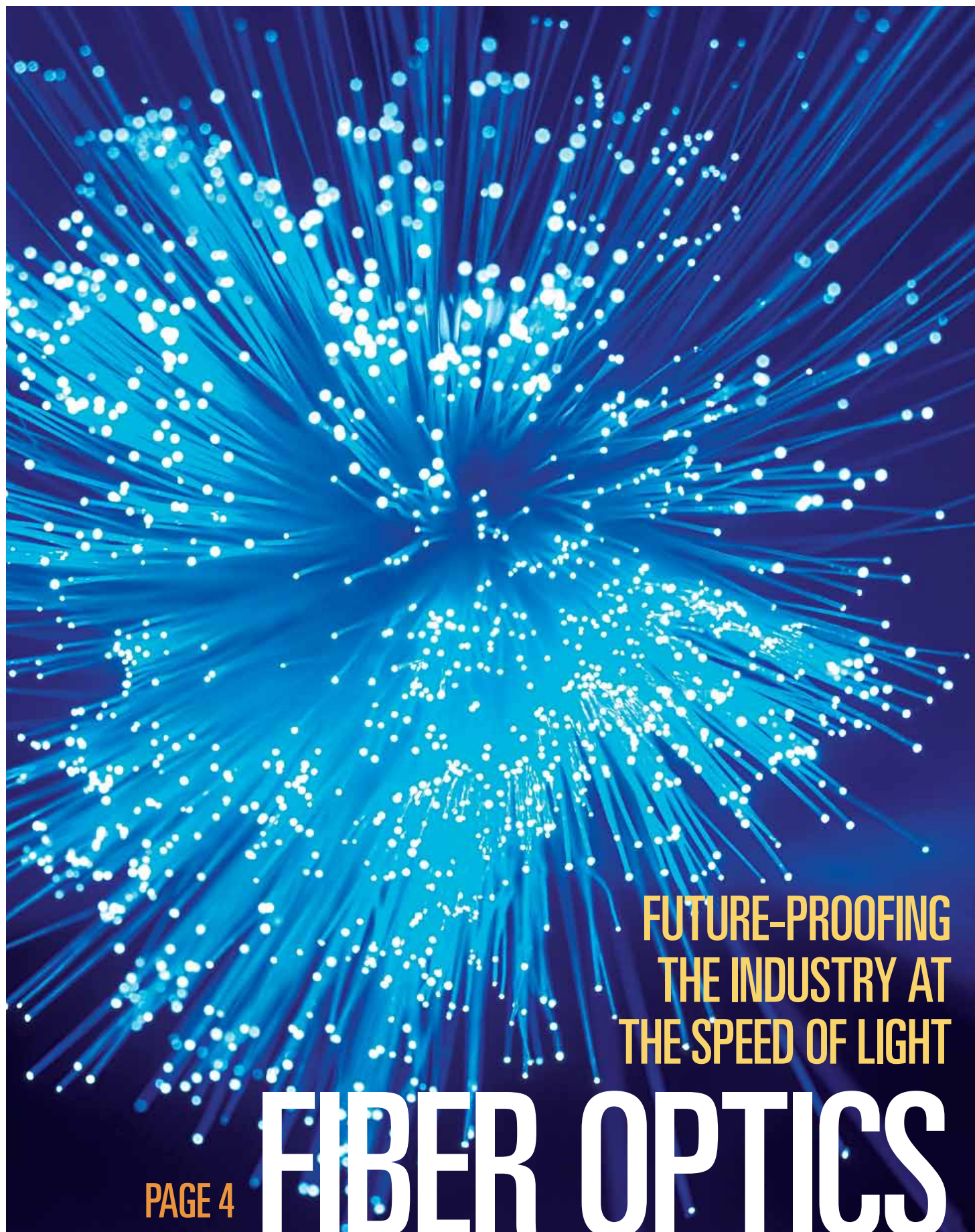
SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITY

NineStar Connect is looking
for 15 talented students

PAGE 12



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**FUTURE-PROOFING
THE INDUSTRY AT
THE SPEED OF LIGHT**

PAGE 4

FIBER OPTICS



OUR EMPLOYEES MAKE THE DIFFERENCE. HERE'S A CUSTOMER REVIEW FOR OUR MULTIMEDIA INSTALLER, ASHLEY

A CUSTOMER CALLED IN TO EXPRESS HIS APPRECIATION FOR THE GOOD JOB THAT ASHLEY DID WITH THE INSTALLATION OF VIDEO & BB SERVICES. HE WAS ALSO VERY GRATEFUL TO ASHLEY FOR ASSISTING THEIR ELDERLY NEIGHBOR WHO HAD FALLEN

HAVE A STORY IDEA?

Contact David Spencer at dspencer@ninestarconnect.com or Rachel Anderson at randerson@ninestarconnect.com

TOUCHSTONE ENERGY CAMP PAGE 5
NineStar Connect offers a unique children's camping experience for the 10th year.

MASTER YOUR METER PAGE 6-7
Learn about the new smart meter, including the many benefits it has to offer.

NINESTAR RETIREMENTS PAGE 8
Read about the lives of Don Youngs and Karen Corn, two longtime employees.

COUNTY CROWNS PAGES 10-11
Read about the athletic accomplishments of local, NineStar Connect-supported teams.

CONCERT SERIES PAGE 12
Get the critical information on the inaugural Riley Spring Concert Series.

ON THE COVER

FIBER FUTURE
The demand to move more data at faster speeds sparked the need for a new backbone for the communications industry. Fiber optics is that backbone, and it promises to carry us into the future.

PAGES 4-5



The **NineStar Connection** is a publication of NineStar Connect servicing retail and residential customers. Nearly 15,000 families and businesses receive this newspaper as part of their membership. **NineStar Connection** provides news, information and features about people, places and issues related to readers.

Volume 1 ■ Edition 1

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WELCOME TO THE NINESTAR CONNECTION

I'd like to take the opportunity to welcome you to our new-look newsletter... the NineStar Connection. Our company has many exciting things going, so we decided to expand the newsletter to better share with you all of the activity. In this inaugural edition you will learn about smart meters, the Riley Spring Concert Series, a visit from the Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission (IURC) and so much more. We hope you enjoy the newsletter and that it helps you stay better connected with your cooperative. It is truly an historic and exciting time at NineStar, and we want to share that excitement with you.

Spring is just around the corner, and that means our annual meeting can't be too far off. The date has been set for April 13 at Greenfield-Central High School. Please save the date and watch for additional information in the coming months. I look forward to seeing you then.

In closing I would like to take a minute to recognize two long-term employees who have recently retired. Karen Corn and Don Youngs started their tenure at NineStar Connect in the 1980s when it was still Hancock County REMC. They have worked many years for the cooperative in the accounting and finance departments. Their retirement is well earned, and I wish them nothing but the best as they start this new chapter in their lives.

PRESIDENT & CEO



TIM HILLS

NineStar Connection STAFF

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David Spencer, Rachel Anderson

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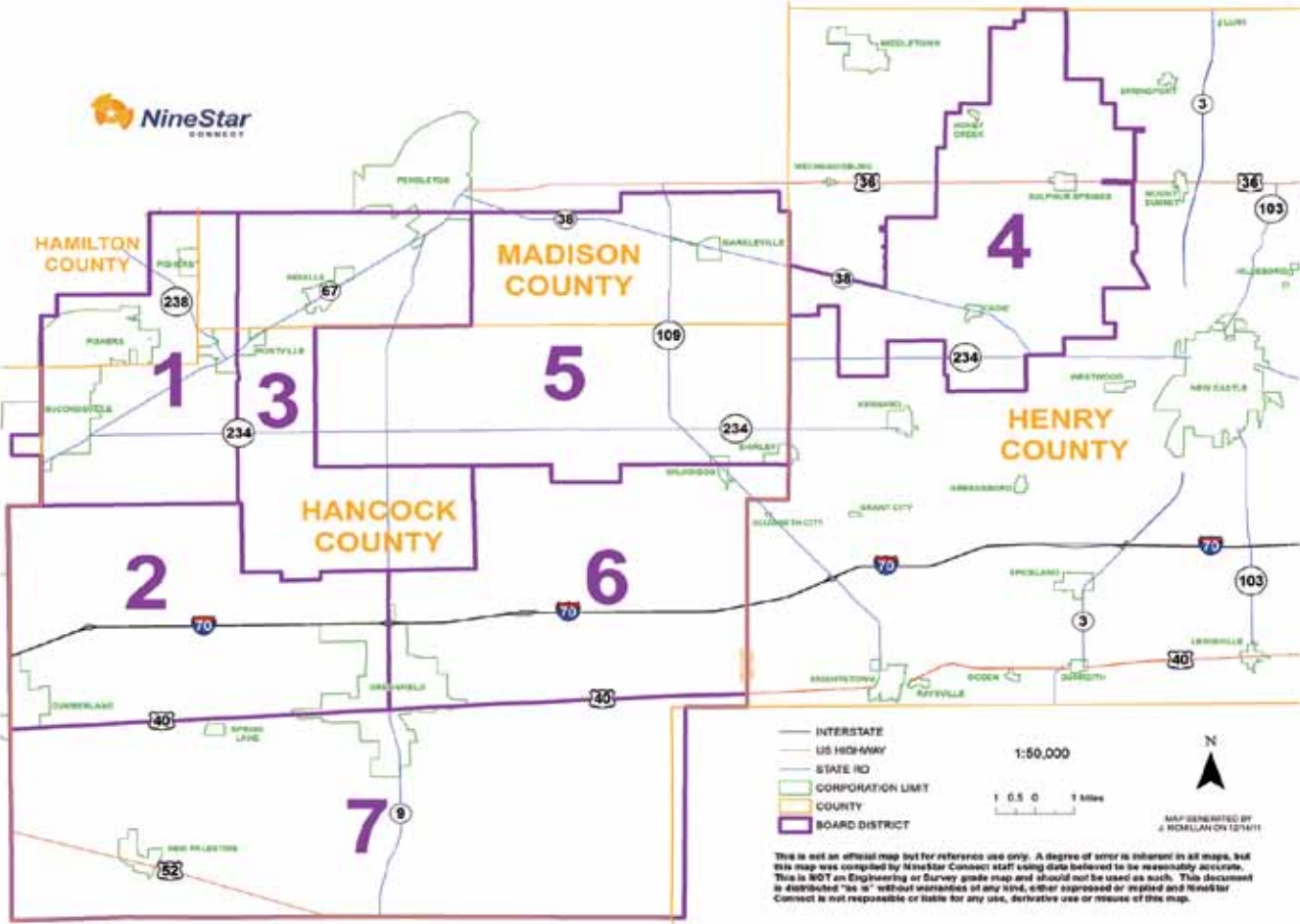
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RETIRING APRIL 2012



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CONNECTION

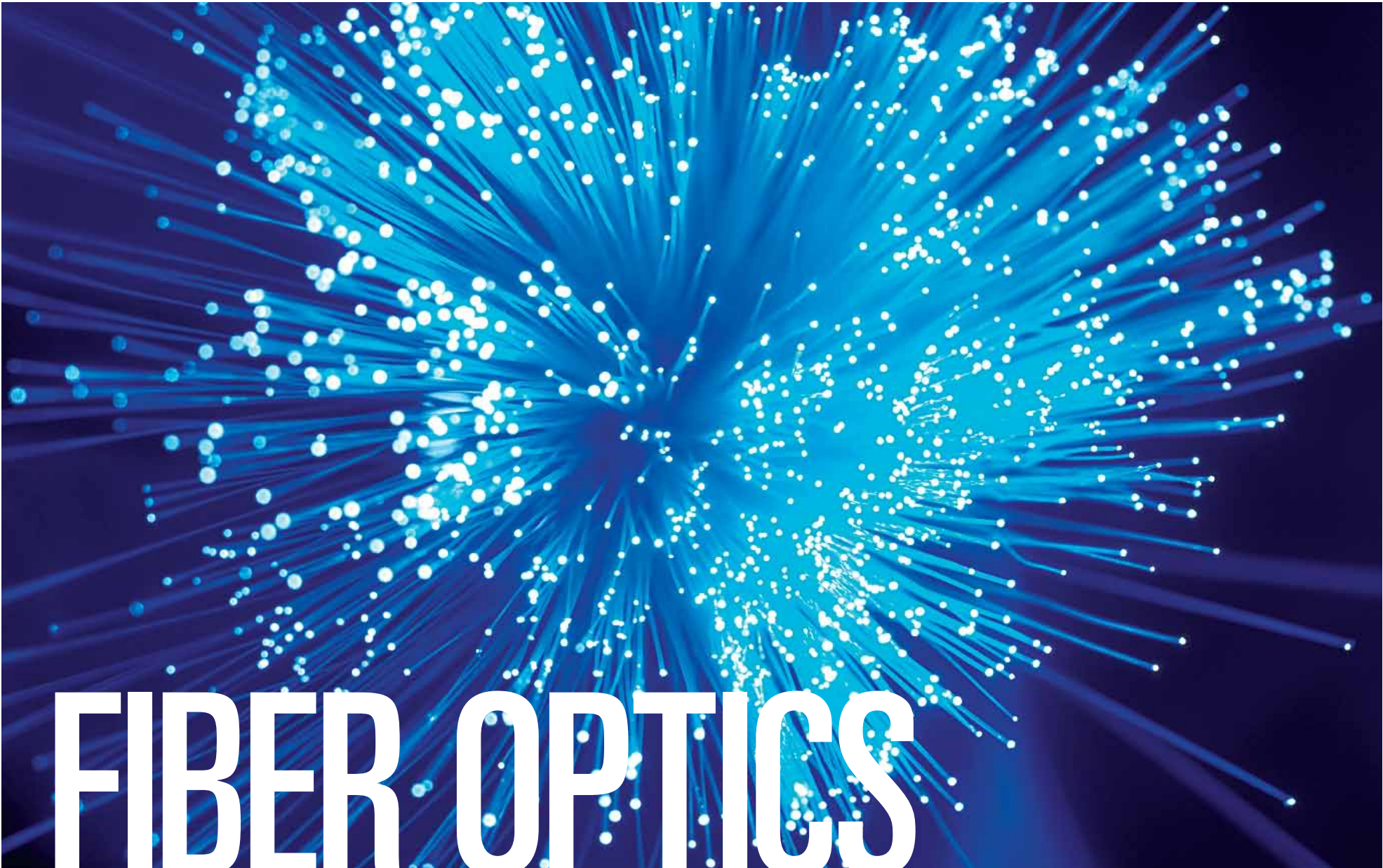
NINESTAR HOSTS ANNUAL MEETING

Join us at the 2012 Annual Meeting of NineStar Connect April 13, 2012, at Greenfield-Central High School located at 801 N. Broadway in Greenfield. Both dinner and registration begin at 5 p.m. for NineStar Connect and NineStar Communications customers.

- Join us for a free dinner, music and prizes!
- \$17,000 in scholarships will be drawn
- \$5,000 in cash prizes will be drawn
- (Must be present to win)
- Child care available

Save the Date





FIBER OPTICS

FUTURE-PROOF THE INDUSTRY

BLUE RIVER FIBER

With spring quickly approaching it will not be long before the weather turns warm enough for the NineStar engineering department to kick off its 2012 activity. While a final decision has not yet been made on what parts of Blue River Township in Hancock County will receive fiber this year, the entire area will be engineered. Once these plans and cost estimates are returned, a decision will be made on what areas will receive fiber in 2012. Yates Engineering Services will be in the area working with NineStar Connect to stake the area and develop cost estimates. If you see activity in this area by Yates, please know they are working with NineStar Connect to help bring you the best communication services possible in the near future.

When it comes to transmitting information at lightning speeds without signal degradation, fiber optics are the fast pass of the communication highway. Smaller than a

human hair and difficult to see with the human eye, these threads are state-of-the-art, economical and far superior to any other broadband communication used today.

“They really future-proof the industry as far as technology is concerned,” said Tim Hills, president and CEO of NineStar Connect.

WRITTEN BY
JULIE YOUNG

AT THE SPEED OF LIGHT, LITERALLY

In 1880, Alexander Graham Bell and his assistant created the photophone, a device that enabled signals to be transmitted via a beam of light. He conducted the first wireless telephone transmission between two buildings 213 meters apart and called the advancement his most important invention. However, it wasn’t very practical for the time, and his innovation was sidelined by more traditional data transmission, which involved sending an electromagnetic signal from one end of copper wire to its destination at the other end. Signal degradation, congestion and the demand for faster connectivity encouraged the development of a better “wire” in the 1970s. The result was fiber optics, miniscule tubes of light that Bell knew to be a superior conduit for transmis-

sions and that have been steadily replacing copper wire communication throughout the world – first in cable television, then in the medical field and now in a number of consumer electronics. With the advent of widespread Internet usage, research companies and developers recognized the increased reliance on bandwidth and copper’s inability to effectively keep up with the demand while maintaining quality. While users initially marveled at the speed of a 28 Kbps dial up modem, an increase in subscribers demanded the development of a 56 Kbps line. Before long, the DSL line fulfilled the need for speed, and alleviated signal weakness and congestion problems – but it created other challenges in terms of geographic availability. The introduction of fiber optic cables not only preserves signal strength and can be continuously upgraded to ac-



“THIS IS THE TECHNOLOGY OF THE 21ST CENTURY.”

MICHAEL BURROW, VICE PRESIDENT AND GENERAL COUNSEL OF NINESTAR CONNECT

commodate ever advancing speeds, it also is a cost-effective innovation that can reach more consumers than ever before.

FIBER TO THE HOME

NineStar Connect is committed to offering its customers the best access, the best quality and the best communication service available connected right to their homes. This is why the company has been investing so heavily in fiber optic technology and deploying Fiber To The Home (FTTH) in its territories. It serves as a dedicated communication pipeline to the home, bundling

data, voice and video services more effectively and securely than copper transport services. “We are at the dawn of some amazing applications that will be available, giving our customers optimum bandwidth. This is the technology of the 21st century,” said Michael Burrow, vice president and general counsel of NineStar Connect. Burrow said since 9/11, when heavy traffic caused stalls and shutdowns across the country, there has been a push to deploy more and more fiber optic cables into the backbone of electronic communication. It is believed these

tubes will be a future-proof data delivery method for years to come, even when technology changes. “As technology evolves, the electronics on either end of the fiber will allow for the continued improvements in the customer experience,” Hills said. “However, it’s the cable that will get them there. The fiber will be used no matter what. It’s just a superior product and it will be the wave of the future for a long time to come.”

END-USER BENEFITS

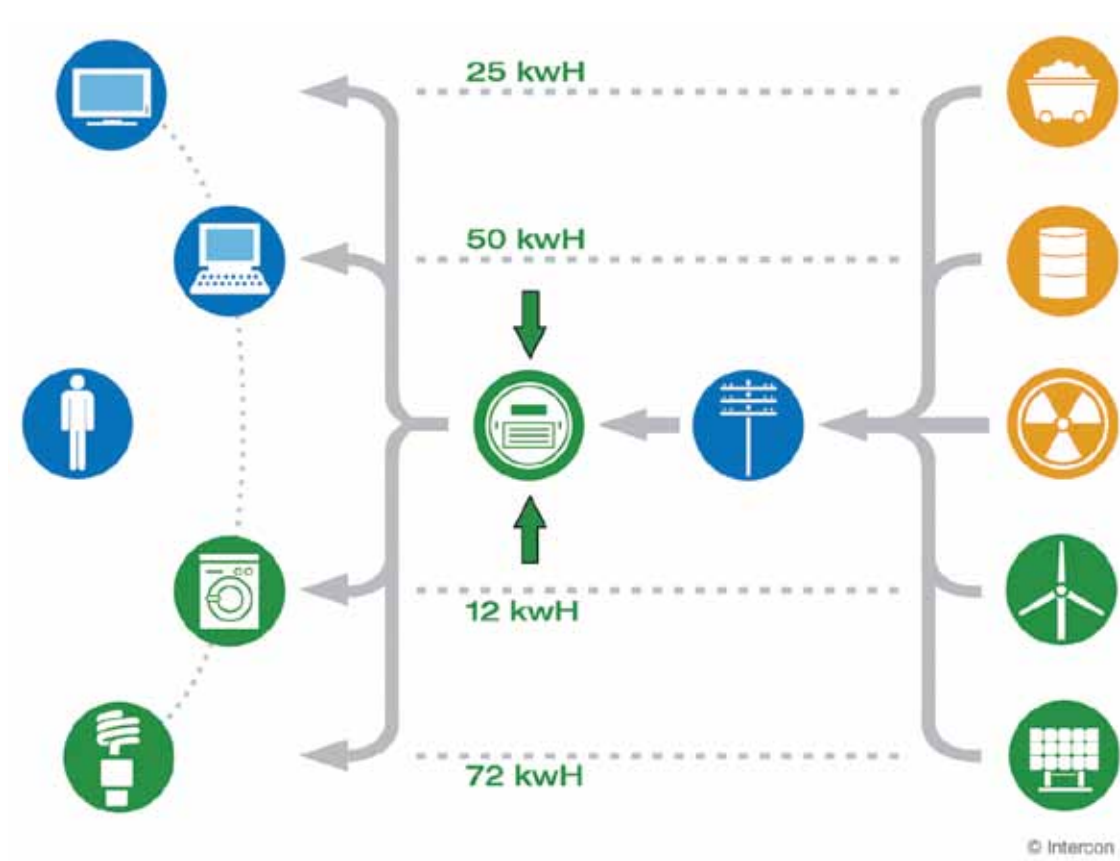
So far, fiber optics have proven their mettle not only in the amount of information they can transmit, but also economically as fiber’s silica is considerably less expensive to manufacture than wire’s copper. Also, as research in the fields of photonic switching and optical computing continues to expand and evolve, the light strands and colors may change, but the packaging will remain, eliminating the need to “reinvent the wheel.” Burrow said communication is no longer governed by the laws of physics but by how fast you can turn on and off a switch, and it is this type of capability that will be critical in the future. “We are on the cutting edge of this technology and we don’t know how far it will go. Its capacity is amazing.” For the consumer, this means NineStar’s advances in fiber optic technology will enable it to reach more residents, offer faster speeds than previous systems, maintain consistent signal strength and offer customers the highest quality for a competitive price. Wireless customers will feel secure knowing that the same technology powering their cell phone towers will also offer them premium data, video and voice services in their home. Kathy Hall, broker/owner of Prudential Elsbury in Greenfield, said with more and more residents relying on high speed connectivity and Smart Home technology, she sees it as an important marketing tool in terms of home resale value. “There are so many more people working from home, and they want that accessibility,” she said. “It’s something that they want and expect in their home, and I think it is a trend we will continue to see.” NineStar’s Chairman of the Board Bob Glazier said customers are thrilled with the new fiber optic connectivity and excited to have state-of-the-art technology at such a low price. “It’s faster, easier and more reliable than anything they have had in the past,” he said.

YOUTHS

NINESTAR CONNECT ACCEPTING APPS FOR ENERGY CAMP

In the past 10 years Touchstone Energy Camp has helped to keep more than 900 sixth-grade students safe around electricity, while also enjoying outdoor camp activities. Once again NineStar Connect will continue this time-honored tradition and sponsor two students to attend the 10th Anniversary Touchstone Energy Camp to be held June 6-9 at Camp Tecumseh in Brookston, Ind. Sixth-grade students eligible to attend should fill out an application and return to NineStar Connect by Feb. 29. Two students will be selected to participate in the three-day program. Students will enjoy traditional outdoor camp activities such as horseback riding, zip lining and swimming, while also receiving a lesson in safe electricity, a live line safety demonstration and bucket truck rides. “This is a fun and exciting way for students to learn about electric safety and the role of electric cooperatives in their community. On top of that, they get to experience all the fun of camp,” said Tim Hills, president & CEO of NineStar Connect. Applications can be found at www.ninestarconnect.com under the “Our Community” tab or by visiting any of NineStar Connect’s four convenient locations. The Touchstone Energy Camp program was developed by a committee of electric cooperative employees from across Indiana. It is funded in part by Hoosier Energy, Wabash Valley Power Association, Indiana’s Rural Electric Cooperatives, Indiana Statewide Association of RECs, and local sponsors.





MASTER THE METER

EVERYTHING CUSTOMERS NEED TO KNOW

NineStar Connect began installing smart meters in portions of our electric territory in early 2011. By the end of the year we had converted more than 5,300 meters. Our initial deployment took place primarily in the areas served by both the electric and telecom divisions, where we already have fiber to the home. With the fiber construction projects NineStar is planning for 2012, we expect to be able to deploy another 2,800 smart meters. Included here is a list of frequently asked questions regarding the installation of smart meters throughout our network. If you have any other questions regarding smart meters, please call the NineStar office.

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OPEN AROUND THE CLOCK.
317-326-HELP
NINESTARCONNECT.COM

WHAT ARE SMART METERS?
Smart meters are digital devices that collect energy-use data and, unlike traditional meters, transmit and receive data, too. Electric energy use will be recorded every 15 minutes at your home or business. Unlike traditional electric meters, Smart meters will enable you to monitor your consumption more precisely so you can make more informed energy choices.

HOW DO SMART METERS WORK?
Smart meters securely transmit electric usage data through

900 MHz radio frequency to predesigned collector sites. Collector sites then send data via NineStar's fiber network to NineStar Connect's data center, where computing systems gather and process the data electronically without sending a truck.

WHY ARE YOU INSTALLING SMART METERS?
To encourage consumers to take control of their energy use and to modernize the electric grid. Smart meters can help show consumers how much electricity they are using and

how much they are spending on it as they use it. This can encourage them to save energy, which is good for the consumer, the cooperative and the environment. Smart meters also can warn NineStar of potential problems with the distribution system before an outage occurs and notify the company automatically when your power goes out, which allows the company to prevent power interruptions and restore your power sooner when interruptions do occur.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF SMART METERS?
This innovative technology should encourage electric consumers to use energy more intelligently by giving them the ability to better monitor and manage their electric use more frequently and in greater detail. Smart meters make possible a new energy future:

- **Remote meter reading:** NineStar Connect will be able to read smart meters remotely, virtually eliminating the need to go house to house to read electric meters. This means trucks are dispatched less frequently, which in turn saves the company money and helps to better control the cost of electric power to the consumer.
- **Smoother transactions:** Remote connection and disconnection of electric service should reduce the time it takes to process service orders at most homes.
- **Automatic outage and voltage notification:** Smart meters will automatically notify NineStar Connect about power outages as well as sags and swells in voltage monitoring to help us restore and maintain power quality more efficiently.
- **Preventive maintenance:** Smart meters sometimes report anomalies to NineStar, which allows the company to dispatch line crews to fix a problem before it results in a power outage. Without this technology, the company would not have known of the problem until the consumer reported the power was out.
- **Energy efficiency and savings:** Consumers can more closely monitor their electricity use to better manage energy costs by making small changes such as adjusting their thermostat.

• Environmental benefits: If consumers conserve energy, less power may have to be produced, which is good for the environment.

WHO'S RECEIVING SMART METERS?
All NineStar Connect electric customers will receive smart meters. This includes residences and businesses. This is a mandatory service upgrade; NineStar Connect is upgrading all customer meters and meter-reading technology. You'll be notified by mail a few weeks prior to your smart meter installation.

WHEN WILL MY SMART METER BE INSTALLED?
Smart meter deployment began in March 2011 and will continue at least through 2013. To find out when your meter will be installed, visit www.ninestarconnect.com. You should receive a door hanger and a packet of information when your meter has been installed.

HOW IS MY SMART METER DATA MANAGED?
Protecting our customers' information is a top priority. NineStar Connect applies the same privacy protection standards to all data collected by the company from customers, including the usage data collected by the Smart Meter. We treat each customer's personal information and data as confidential, consistent with all federal and state regulatory requirements. Often NineStar's confidentiality requirements are more stringent than regulations require.

WILL MY SMART METER INVADE MY PRIVACY?
No. Smart meters do not present privacy issues to the consumer. In fact they lessen privacy issues by allowing meter reading to be conducted remotely rather than having a NineStar Connect employee come onto your property monthly to read the meter.

WHO'LL BE INSTALLING MY SMART METER?
Either NineStar Connect employees or our authorized representatives from HD SUPPLY CO will install the new smart meters throughout NineStar Connect's service territory.

HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE TO INSTALL MY NEW METER?
Installation of your smart meter will take about 10 minutes, during which you will experience a brief power interruption. If your current meter is accessible, the installation can be completed even if you are not at home. Can smart meters help me save money? This depends on several factors, including wholesale electricity prices, retail service offerings and your energy consumption habits. Smart meters make more information about your energy use available to you. If you choose to use that information to lower your energy consumption, you could save money.

WHAT HAPPENS TO THE OLD METERS?
The old meters are recycled. Any newer, electronic meters we replace (such as solid state meters and off-site meter read) are refurbished, tested and recycled back into the meter population until smart meters are installed in the area in which they are recycled. The older, electromechanical (dial) meters we replace are dismantled and all their components – such as aluminum, copper, and glass – are recycled.

CAN I REFUSE TO HAVE A SMART METER INSTALLED?
No. NineStar's ability to provide you with electrical service requires access to meters for purposes of maintenance and obtaining consumption information. NineStar will be standardizing its smart meters and its continued ability to provide safe, affordable and efficient power. If installers are unable to access a meter to make an exchange, they will leave a door hanger with a phone number you can call to schedule the installation.

HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT THE BILLING USAGE DATA IS ACTUALLY MINE AND DOES NOT BELONG TO MY NEIGHBOR?
When data is collected from a meter and transmitted to NineStar Connect, the data contains specific unique identifiers associated with each customer's meter number, module number and service address.

AT WHAT FREQUENCY DOES THE SMART METER OPERATE, AND WILL IT INTERFERE WITH OTHER WIRELESS DEVICES IN MY HOME?
The frequency communicating to the electric meter is 900 MHz (megahertz). It will not interfere with any wireless devices in the home.

HAVE THE HEALTH EFFECTS OF RADIOFREQUENCY EMITTED FROM SMART METERS BEEN ASSESSED?
The technology being used in the smart meter system, RF exposures from smart meters, and other devices used in the system, are far below the FCC exposure guidelines. The FCC's guidelines for human exposure to RF electromagnetic fields were adopted from limits recommended by the U.S. National Council on Radiation Protection and Measurements and the C95.1-1992 guidelines developed by the American National Standards Institute and Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers.

HOW DOES THE RADIO FREQUENCY FROM THE SMART METER COMPARE TO APPLIANCES IN MY HOME OR OTHER ACTIVITIES?
The radio frequency from a smart meter is far below that of most household appliances. A microwave oven generates 550 times more radio frequency energy than a smart meter, a cell phone generates up to 1,100 times more, and a walkie-talkie or baby monitor generates up to 4,600 times more.

WILL I NEED TO REPLACE OR UPGRADE MY ELECTRIC METER PANEL FOR THE NEW METERS?
No. The smart meters are the same size as the existing electric meters. Meter panels should not need to be upgraded or replaced.

HOW CAN I LEARN MORE ABOUT NINESTAR CONNECT AND ITS DEPLOYMENT OF SMART METERS?
You can learn more about NineStar Connect's smart meter deployment by visiting www.ninestarconnect.com and watching a five minute video they have put together on the project. If you have additional questions, please call 317-326-3131.

RIGHT-OF-WAY MAINTENANCE ESSENTIAL FOR RELIABLE SERVICE



Although NineStar Connect has no control over severe weather that can cause power outages, the cooperative can reduce the frequency and duration of outages through a vigilant right-of-way maintenance program.

Tree trimming and other parts of right-of-way maintenance are essential to ensuring reliable electric service. A major portion of all electric blinks occur when a limb comes in contact with power lines or equipment, causing a momentary short circuit. Besides trees naturally growing into the electric lines, wind, ice and tree decline can also cause a limb to come in contact with the lines. If the limb is not cleared from the line properly, a complete loss of power can result.

NineStar Connect has an extensive right-of-way maintenance program that utilizes several methods of tree and brush control; two of these methods include trimming trees to arborist standards (ANSI

A300) and mechanically clearing brush with an industrial mowing machine. NineStar Connect is committed to a right-of-way maintenance program that looks to the future by employing contractors and practices that offer long-term clearance solutions. For example, by trimming all trees to current arborist standards, NineStar Connect can ensure these trees are left in a healthier condition. Trees trimmed to arborist standards do not grow back into the power lines as fast or as extensively; limb failure from decay is also reduced dramatically.

NineStar Connect has set forth several goals within the right-of-way maintenance program: providing safe, reliable electric service and reducing current and future maintenance costs. NineStar Connect's right-of-way maintenance program is well on its way to achieving these goals as we move into the 2012 maintenance year.

DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS

JAMIE
BELL

TELEVISION

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The NBC Sports legacy countinues with unmatched storytelling, best-in-class production quality, and coverage of the NHL, MLS, 2012 Olympic Games, Tour de France, Izod IndyCar Series, all-new original shows and more. Get the NBC Sports Network through NineStar Connect on channels 48 and 948 HD.

MEETING



IURC OFFICIAL VISITS NINESTAR

Recently Bob Veneck, executive director of the Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission (IURC), met with officials from NineStar Connect. After the meeting Mr. Veneck was given a tour of NineStar Connect’s north campus. Pictured are Veneck (left) and NineStar Connect President & CEO Tim Hills in the company’s 24/7 support center.

SECURITY

NINESTAR HOME SAFETY TIPS

Many people this time of year become snowbirds and travel south during the long, harsh Indiana winter. While it is good to beat winter’s wrath in a warmer climate, there is still worry that comes with leaving your house and possessions behind. Below are some tips to help ease your mind.

- Temperature and flood monitoring from NineStar Security will help ensure pipes will not freeze.
- Make sure dark areas are well lit.
- Keep lights on inside the house.
- Make arrangements for your mail and newspapers to be gathered so they do not pile up.
- For more information, call Matt at 326-SAFE.

RETIREMENTS

DON YOUNGS



Don Youngs was born in New Castle, Indiana, and started first grade at Cadiz Elementary before moving to South Bend and Plymouth, where he completed first through fourth grades. His mother wanted to be closer to family so Don was on the move again and the family relocated to Cambridge City, Indiana starting the fifth grade and where I graduated high school. A proud alumnus of Cambridge City Lincoln High School, Don pointed out that thus far his mother, sister, daughter, son and he all graduated from the school. He also has two grandkids who attend Western Wayne Schools in Cambridge City.....go Golden Eagles!

Upon graduation from high school, Don worked a few factory jobs before deciding to go to college. He attended night classes in the IU system at IU East in Richmond and IUPUI in Indy. He graduated from IU in 1976 with a B.S. in business majoring in accounting. With his degree in hand Don went to work for the Public Service Commission of Indiana, now called IURC, where he worked as a staff accountant for three years examining electric co-op and municipal rate cases in Indiana. He then joined the firm of Walter J. Mussmann, CPA, for one year, where he worked on 24 electric co-op audits throughout the state of Indiana. In 1980, he accepted the newly created position of assistant manager at Fayette-Union Co. REMC (now Whitewater Valley REMC) in Liberty, Ind.

Don finally made his way to Hancock County in June 1985, when Gene Ruesch, general manager of Hancock County REMC (later known as Central Indiana Power) offered him the position of manager of office services. During reorganization in the mid-1990s, the position expanded to vice president of finance and administration. Most recently, Don was the director of electric operations until his retirement on Jan. 13, 2012. Don cited the most significant changes through

the years have been the name and image change to Central Indiana Power and then the historic merger between Hancock Telecom and Central Indiana Power, as well as rapid changes in technology. In 1985 the company had three computer terminals that were shared by all employees. The company purchased the first two PCs (286s) in 1986.

Don has been married to Penny for 29 years. They have one daughter, Kristi, married to Jim with two children; a son, Justin, married to Amy with two children; a stepdaughter, Lori, married to Billy with four children; and four great-grandchildren.

Don’s retirement plans include relaxing, catching up on some jobs around the house, spending time with family, camping (Monday to Thursday), and volunteering in the community. In addition Don enjoys motorcycle touring, NAS-CAR & NHRA, IU basketball, golf and music. Already in the works is a motorcycle trip to Colorado and Utah, his and Penny’s two favorite states.

KAREN CORN



Karen Corn was born and raised in Wabash, Ind., (Wabash County). She graduated from Southwood High School in 1967, and during her time there she received the Outstanding Business Award. While on vacation in Pennsylvania, she received a call from her mother with some possible great news. Her mother explained that she should return home because Wabash County REMC had called and wanted to interview her for a possible position with their organization. The call came about because of Robert Dawes, a guidance counselor at school, who also happened to be the son of Harold Dawes, director at the REMC. The guidance counselor knew Karen was interested in finding a job in accounting and helped make the connection. She started to work June 23, 1967, as a capital credit clerk, moved to bookkeeper in 1972, and the rest was history. In all she

worked at Wabash County REMC for 25 years.

Her next move would be to Hancock County. In July of 1992 Karen noticed a job opening at Hancock County REMC in accounting. After an interview, Donald Youngs hired her to start work Nov. 1, 1992, as bookkeeper/accountant under the new name of Central Indiana Power, which took effect Oct. 1, 1992. Karen first met Don when he worked for Walt Mussmann audit firm that did Wabash’s audit. Over the years she has learned to truly value Don’s opinion as he has helped her understand the utility business. While at CIP Karen was an accounting specialist for eighteen and a half years before being promoted to accounting manager-electric division on Jan. 1, 2011, under the new name of NineStar Connect. Karen stated that she has truly enjoyed working in the utility business for forty-four and a half years, having met and worked with lots of wonderful and interesting people during that time.

Karen has seen many changes in the industry during her career. When she started most everything was done by hand. Customers read their own meters, electric bills were figured by hand and posted to journals. Transitioning to computers was difficult at first, but now they are a must-have. Having workpapers on computer saved so much time – no more adding down and across. Karen remembers calling Youngs when she was at Wabash REMC and they were starting with CADP (now NISC) about using the accounts payable system for printing checks. Karen had lots of questions (what if’s) and Don told her to just do it, it would work, and it did.

Karen completed her career on Jan. 13 and has begun the next chapter in her life. While Karen doesn’t have any special retirement plans, the first thing she plans on doing is rest and relaxation. She plans on turning the alarm clock off and having no schedule. When it comes to travel, Karen has plans to visit Minnesota, Arizona and Florida for starters and having the ability to go when the mood hits her (this, she said, is the best feeling in the world). Karen plans to spend more time with family and her two grandchildren. She also enjoys IU basketball, Colts football, flowers and of course, shopping. In closing, Karen stated that it has been a great ride. She said she will miss all the co-workers and people she has meet over the years.

JANUARY - FEBRUARY RECIPE

INGREDIENTS

2 sticks unsalted butter at room temperature, plus melted butter for pans

1 pound almond paste

1 cup sugar

1 teaspoon pure almond extract

6 large eggs

1 cup all-purpose flour

Pinch fine sea salt

1 1/3 cups raspberry preserves, recipe follows, or strawberry jam with seeds

8 cups tinted Royal Icing, recipe follows, or store bought; and

Decorative dragees, silver, gold, etc., for garnish

DIRECTIONS

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees F. Brush 3 (12 1/2- by 9-inch) rimmed baking sheets (otherwise known as quarter sheet pans) with melted butter. Line the pans with parchment paper, leaving a few inches of overhang on opposite sides. Butter the top of the parchment paper as well, then set aside.

In the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat the almond paste and sugar on medium speed until well combined, about 5 minutes. Add the almond extract. Roughly cut the room temperature butter into pats and gradually add to the almond paste-sugar mixture. Beat until light and fluffy, about 2 minutes, scraping down the sides of the bowl if needed. Add the eggs, one at a time, beating to combine after each addition. Add the flour and salt and beat until just combined.

Divide the batter evenly among the prepared baking sheets, about 2 1/4 cups each sheet, smoothing the batter out with an offset spatula. Gently tap the baking sheet on the table to remove any air pockets in the batter. Air pockets will cause holes in the baked cake. Bake until just set, but not browned, 15 to 20 minutes. Give the baking sheets a turn halfway through baking, after about 8 minutes, for even baking, if needed, but don’t worry too much because we’re covering the cakes. Test with a toothpick or skewer and if clean, remove from the oven and transfer to wire racks to cool.

To make the jam easier to spread and to prevent tearing the cake, puree the raspberry jam in a food processor. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Turn 1 cake layer out onto the lined baking sheet. Spread half of the raspberry jam in an even layer over the cake. Carefully flip the cake out of the baking sheet and top with a second cake layer. Spread with the remaining jam. Carefully flip the final layer out of the baking sheet and top the cake. Place a piece of parchment paper over the final layer and top with a second baking sheet. Weigh down with 2 large (28-ounce) cans. Chill in the refrigerator for at least 1 hour and or even overnight.

Remove the cake from the refrigerator and cut into 1-inch squares. Place onto wire racks over at least 2 baking sheets, leaving at least 1-inch between each cake piece.

Place each of the tinted royals icings in a heatproof bowl set over a pan of simmering water, with the bottom of the bowl not touching the water, until pourable. You should have about 8 cups total. You’ll be using about 1 heaping tablespoon icing on each. Carefully place a cut cake on a



chocolate fork/dipper (or a small fork). Place the cake over the icing and spoon the icing onto the cake. If the cake drops into the icing, carefully pick it up with your spoon and place back onto your fork/dipper. Place back onto the wire rack using another dipper or fork to slide onto the wire rack. Top with decorative dragees, as desired. Repeat with the remaining icing and cakes. Alternately, for each tinted frosting, set 3 cooling racks over baking sheets and divide the cut cake pieces evenly among the racks. Pour the tinted frosting slowly over the cake pieces. If you need extra frosting, just remove the cooling rack, scrape the excess frosting from the baking sheet, melt or microwave until pourable and touch up any area the frosting didn’t coat the first time.

Let stand until set, about 30 minutes at room temperature, or cover and place in the refrigerator for up to 1 week until ready to serve.

RASPBERRY PRESERVES

1 quart raspberries

1 tablespoon lemon juice

1 3/4 cups sugar

Put your raspberries and 1/4 cup water in a saucepan over medium heat. Once it’s at a simmer, partially cover and cook 8 to 10 minutes. Pass the berry mixture through a food mill and measure the liquid that remains. You need 3 1/2 cups. Add more water if there isn’t enough.

Put the berry liquid into a new saucepan over medium heat and bring to a simmer again. Once it simmers, start adding your sugar in 1/2 cup increments. Give it a stir to incorporate and bring it back to a simmer before adding of the next 1/2 cup sugar. Once the last 1/2 cup is added, bring the liquid to 216 to 218 degrees F on a candy thermometer. Stir constantly.

Let this cool to room temperature prior to using. If not using right away, refrigerate for up to 1 week.

Yield: 2 cups.

ROYAL ICING

6 tablespoons corn syrup

2 tablespoons plus 1 teaspoon almond extract

17 1/2 cups confectioners’ sugar (about 5 boxes)

Green and violet food coloring (or your favorite colors)

In a large heatproof bowl, combine 1 1/4 cups plus 1 tablespoon water, corn syrup and almond extract. Once incorporated, slowly whisk in the sugar until fully combined. Alternately, slowly mix together in a stand mixer and transfer to a heatproof bowl prior to icing cakes.

Divide the icing into 3 heatproof bowls. To make a pale green color, add a little less than 1 drop green food coloring to the first bowl. To the second bowl, add 1 drop purple coloring for a lavender color. Leave the final bowl white, or add another color, as desired.

PETIT FOURS

DELECTABLE DESSERTS SET HEARTS A-FLUTTER

Valentine’s Day is synonymous with candlelight dinners, romantic movies and delicious desserts. Although chocolate is often standard fare for the day of love, many other treats, including petit fours, can win the heart of a special person.

Although people often believe the term *petit four* refers to a particular recipe for a dessert, it actually denotes a variety of small desserts. Petit fours are bite-size pastries generally eaten at the end of a meal or at tea time. The name is comprised of French terms meaning “small oven,” which generally means the desserts are cooked at a low temperature in an oven. Petit fours may be “secs,” meaning “dry” desserts, including biscuits and puff pastries. Most are “glaces,” or “iced” desserts, such as tiny cakes. These are often the desserts people associate with the name “petit fours.”

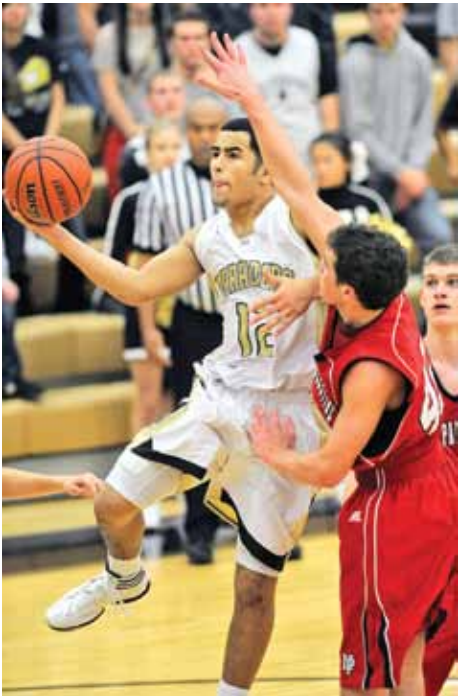
Cake-type petit fours are traditionally made from an almond-flavored sponge cake or an almond genoise. Other types of cake, such as pound cake, can be used, but the consistency must be firm enough to handle cutting and filling. The options in fillings and coatings is as endless as the imagination. Some prefer to coat them in fondant, a sugary dough that hardens upon standing and produces a firm, flat surface for decorating. Others like their petit fours covered in chocolate or another candy material.

These desserts are available from many bakeries and retailers. For those who want to treat a Valentine to home-made petit fours, one trick is to bake the batter in mini loaf pans and then cut in half, or use small cupcake tins to achieve the desired bite-size shape. Or bake the batter in a sheet pan and then use cookie cutters to make small shapes. Jams, fruit preserves, frosting, icing, almond paste, and any other fillings can be used in between the layers.

Fondant can be purchased from party and craft stores or specially ordered from cake decorating retailers. An easy fondant can be made from a confectioners’ sugar and marshmallow recipe.

After a romantic meal, serve petit fours with a dessert liqueur for the perfect Valentine’s Day dessert.

PHOTOS BY
TOM RUSSO/
DAILY REPORTER



COUNTY CROWNS

MV GIRLS CLAMP DOWN IN 4TH TO BEAT NEW PALESTINE

For three and a half quarters, the Mt. Vernon girls' basketball team was a shell of itself. The Marauders were playing an uptight brand of basketball, one characterized by turnovers and poor shot selection. Then, the switched flipped and one of the state's top-ranked teams played up to its lofty billing. 3A No. 3 Mt. Vernon picked up its third consecutive Hancock County Tournament title by defeating New Palestine 47-31. MV embarked on a 21-0 fourth-quarter run to first take the lead and then put the game out of reach.

CONSOLATION G-C 78, EH 47

Behind 22 points from Sara Jones and 14 points from LaRae Cruz, Greenfield-Central downed Eastern Hancock 78-47 in the consolation game.

Courtney Wolfe supplied 10 points and Emily Koers chipped in with seven for G-C. EH was led by Kaytlin Eastes' 14 points. Kristin Eischen notched 13 points and eight rebounds. Alora Marshall had nine points, five rebounds and five assists.

MORRIS, COLLINS POWER DRAGONS PAST MT. VERNON

Some basketball players pout when their starting spot is taken from them. Often, a starting position is seen as status symbol, something to brag about. Luckily for New Palestine, Brandon Collins isn't that type of player. When Collins lost his starting position after he missed the team's first game against Greenfield-Central on Dec. 9 — an illness kept Collins out of the lineup — he didn't sulk. He did the exact opposite.

And with Reid Clark, the team's leading rebounder, in foul trouble for most of the Hancock County Tournament championship game, Collins seized the moment in a literal sense. The senior guard/forward pulled down a game-high 11 rebounds to help New Palestine overcome a halftime deficit and win its second-straight county title 61-55 over Mt. Vernon.

CONSOLATION EH 63, G-C 26

Jared Pyle and Victor Vincz scored 16 points apiece to lead the Royals over the Cougars in the consolation game.

The score was level at 10 after one quarter, but EH outscored G-C 32-8 over the next two frames to pull away.

Pyle also had eight rebounds and three steals while Vincz handed out five assists. Isaiah McCormick added 12 points for EH.

Jordan Keener and Grant Wolfe led G-C with six points each. Hunter Althoff, Tyler Batton, Zach Batton, Drew Dougherty, David Johnston, Jake Kauth and Cole Oleksy each recorded two points.



H O M E T O W N

NINESTAR SPONSORS ANNUAL TOURNAMENT

Local Hancock County company NineStar Connect was the title sponsor for the 2011-12 Hancock County Basketball Tournament. NineStar has emerged as a company that will become a leader in smart grid deployment with the ability to provide advanced communications services to unserved and under-served areas.

NINESTAR PROUD OF NEW UPDATES

Customer service representatives are proud to offer quality services such as digital cable, high speed Internet and phone to those customers who now have Fiber to the Home available in their area. Those areas include customers in Springs of Cambridge, Highland Springs North and South, and Deer Crossing, just to name a few. We are also concentrating our efforts in the smart meter Rollout Areas between 300 N. and 1000 N. and 600 E. to 1125 E.

Our efforts in 2012 will be concentrated on Fiber To The Home in the McCordsville South area, Blue River Township and smart meter rollout areas between CRs 150W and 1050E and U.S. 40 and I-70.

If you are a current electric customer and are interested in any of our services, please feel free to give a customer service representative a call to see if we can offer you any of our quality services listed above. You can also visit our website at www.ninestarcconnect.com.

In addition, in an effort to continually improve our service to our customers, we encourage you to take a moment and fill out the How Can We Improve survey located on our home page.

DIRECTOR OF CUSTOMER CARE



REGINA BEVER

NOMINATING COMMITTEE MEETS

The NineStar Connect Nominating Committee recently met and approved the candidates who will be running for director positions at the annual meeting. In all, six applications were received, and all six were approved. The candidates are as follows by district; 1A Darrell Thomas, 3A Steve Vail, 4A Don Shaw, 5A Richard Parker and 7A Jim Cherry & Dennis DeCapua. Please watch for the March-April edition of the NineStar Connection, which will include candidate biographies as well as candidate statements.

EYES ON DUPLICATE MAILINGS

NineStar Connect has been working diligently to eliminate duplicated addresses which results in members receiving multiple mailings. If you receive duplicate items in the mail please call Julie Mitchell at 326-3131 and she will address the situation. We appreciate your assistance in helping eliminate these duplications.

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NINESTAR TO OFFER 2012 SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM FOR 15

The 2012 Scholarship Program provides 15 \$1,000 scholarships for children of NineStar Connect members. As of March 1, 2012, the student's principal residence must be with said student's parent or legal guardian who is a member in good standing of NineStar Connect.

- The student must be a 2012 graduating high school senior.
- The student must have a seven (7) semester minimum cumulative grade-point average of 2.75 on a 4.0 scale or its equivalent at the time of application.
- Application forms must be submitted to NineStar Connect by 3 p.m. April 6, 2012.

Application forms are available at ninstarconnect.com under Our Community and at all local high school guidance offices. They may also be picked up at either of NineStar Connect's business offices.

NineStar North Campus
2331 E 600 N
Greenfield, IN 46140

NineStar South Campus
2243 E Main St
Greenfield, IN 46140

For more information call
(317) 326-3131 or (765) 533-4303



S U D O K U

Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes.

					3			
		5		9				
			6			5	4	
6						2		4
	3							6
	8	7	1					
		2			1			
	6	9			7	3		
1			5			8	2	

Level: Intermediate