



SPECIAL EDITION

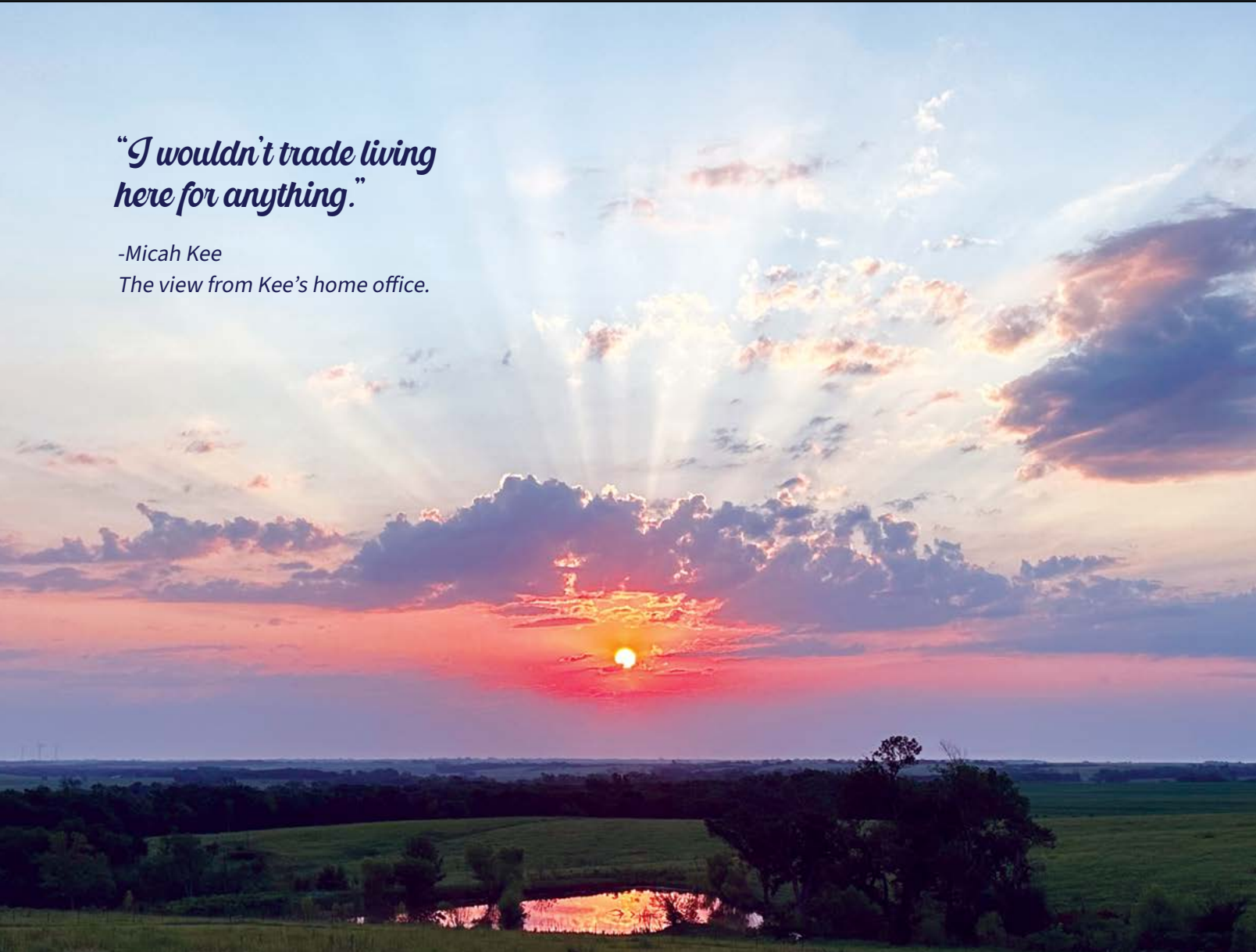
THE HOME PAGE

AN INFORMATIONAL PUBLICATION FOR BVT CUSTOMERS

"I wouldn't trade living here for anything."

-Micah Kee

The view from Kee's home office.



1559 Pony Express Hwy · Home, KS
bluevalley.net · 877.876.1228

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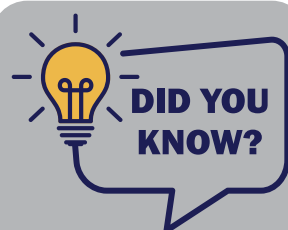
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79%
of Americans
use the internet
as a job
resource.

22
million
people work
from home.

Strong Infrastructure Strong

Communities



Candace Wright, CEO of Blue Valley Technologies

It is an absolute pleasure to share with you this special edition of Blue Valley Technologies' Home Page publication. Blue Valley continues working hard to connect our rural corner of the world to a robust broadband connection... specifically, a fiber connection. Rural communities have endless opportunities to thrive when they are connected, and Blue Valley is committed to making this happen for our rural friends and neighbors.

As someone who is rural by choice, I am very proud of the connectivity BVT provides and the possibilities it offers. When people think of infrastructure, they often only consider roads, bridges, water, electrical, etc. While those are obviously important to any area, broadband infrastructure is now increasingly seen as something equally critical. A strong fiber internet connection brings industry to town, supports educational opportunities, allows the use of smart ag applications, and increases home values. It can also mean bringing our children back home to raise their families.

This special edition highlights a unique class of employees – the remote workers. Remote workers diversify rural communities, impacting the local economy immensely. Many bring specific and unique skills to the area and are extremely involved in their communities. In this edition, you'll read the stories of eight individuals who, like many of us, value living rural. As you read about their experiences, we hope you'll be inspired by the opportunities this has for your community. I'm sure you'll agree that we have a lot to be proud of in our small section of the world, and I couldn't be more excited to share their stories with you.

It is my hope that with this edition, you will be able to better understand the impact a strong infrastructure provides. From slowing down the declining population, to boosting local business and increasing school enrollment, new local jobs can subsequently be created. As your local broadband provider, Blue Valley will continue to do our part to ensure our service area has the tools it needs to remain viable and sustainable for many years to come.

Thank you!

Candace Wright



From the East Coast

Micah Kee

to the Midwest

Growing up in Greenville, S.C., Micah Kee never imagined he would land in Frankfort, Kan. Upon graduating from Georgia Tech, Kee landed a dream job with Procter & Gamble (P&G) in Cincinnati, Ohio. This is where he met his wife, Sonya, and his introduction to Marshall County, Kan. through her extended family.

When P&G outsourced his job 25 years ago, a world of opportunities opened. He created *The Caplan Group* and contracted with P&G to design manufacturing plants. The Kee family then relocated to Georgia. As founder and managing principal, Kee found himself traveling nearly 75% of the year.

"I lived 65 miles north of an international airport," said Kee. "Atlanta traffic required me to leave by 6 a.m. for a noon flight. The commute was oftentimes bumper-to-bumper traffic."

All Roads Lead to Kansas

In 2009, Kee was in Kansas visiting his wife's family when they saw a crew of BVT technicians. The techs explained fiber-to-the-home and current speeds available. Kee knew that moment his family could

relocate without any negative impact to his company.

"I now live 135 miles from an international airport," he said. "That's twice the distance from when I was in Atlanta, but my commute was cut in half!"

About Caplan Group

The Caplan Group consists of 12 to 15 employees/contractors, all of whom are 100% remote.

"Traveling as much as we do, it doesn't make sense to have a common base," said Kee. "I want my employees to live where they want to live."

Working globally, from Canada to Europe to Asia, the team was traveling most of the year with weekly Microsoft Teams meetings to review projects.

When the pandemic shut the world down, Kee's team was working on a project in Vietnam when all travel ceased. Thanks to creative ingenuity and adequate technology, his team was able to work remotely.

"We had 45 overseas Teams calls in a row," he said. "GoPro cameras were placed on forklifts, plant tours were conducted remotely, everything was livestreamed."

Previously, Kee's team traveled to every job site. Now, many tasks can be done remotely by prioritizing their days based on different time zones.

"Asia is 12 to 14 hours different, so we



Owner/Operator

Micah Kee

The Caplan Group

schedule calls for early morning here and late afternoon evenings there," said Kee. "I could not do my work if I didn't have the internet connection I have. My work PC is actually in a Microsoft server farm in Houston and has little to no latency."

Family Life

As a father, Kee recalled the days his children were in school activities.

"Technology afforded me the opportunity to attend their events," he said. "I could take a call or handle an issue from the event. It gave me the best of both worlds. I didn't have to trade one for the other."

Kee uses technology to stay connected to his daughters and parents on the East Coast.

"During COVID-19, we celebrated the holidays with family," Kee said. "They were just projected onto the wall instead of being there in person."

"We have better internet speeds than many in urban areas. I wouldn't trade living here for anything."

"I could not do my work if I didn't have the internet connection I have."

-Micah Kee



Navigating Remote Work

Tyler Warren

as an Extrovert

Tyler Warren grew up in Silver Lake, Kan., graduating from Kansas State University with a bachelor's degree in civil engineering. Upon graduation, he accepted a position with SCS Engineers and moved to Kansas City. In 2019 his wife, Liz, was offered a position with Edward Jones in her hometown of Marysville, Kan. Warren recalled that he excitedly told her, 'Let's do it', without a second thought.

"Marysville has so many more opportunities in a small town than most," said Warren. "I try to be involved and contribute my time as much as I can." Warren helps with Big Blue River Days and serves on Marysville Convention and Tourism Board of Directors.

SCS: Ahead of the Curve

SCS had implemented Microsoft Teams prior to the pandemic and was prepared for its employees to live anywhere with a strong internet connection.

SCS, headquartered in Long Beach, Calif., is an environmental consulting and construction firm that designs and implements sustainable environmental solutions. They specialize in solid and hazardous waste management, landfill gas, site remediation, renewable energy,

and regulatory compliance for air, water, and soil.

As a Senior Project Professional, Warren says it is vital to his daily responsibilities that he has a strong internet connection. He appreciates the symmetrical speed offerings from Blue Valley Technologies (BVT), as he spends a considerable amount of time uploading and downloading files for the company.

"I rarely have downtime with BVT, which is extremely beneficial," said Warren. "If I do have any issue, I am able to text a friend who works there [BVT] or call the customer service representatives and get an answer or resolution almost immediately. The bigger companies make you wait on hold for hours and even then, you may not know anything more than there is an outage."

Adapting to a New Normal

One of the biggest obstacles Warren encountered moving to a remote work climate was working alone. As an extrovert, Warren depends on Microsoft Teams to feel connected to his coworkers and clients.

"Being able to talk face-to-face with someone, even if it is virtual, makes a significant difference in feeling



Civil Engineer

Tyler Warren

SCS Engineers

connected," he said. "Talking to someone over the phone or through emails gets the job done, but you lose a lot of nonverbal communication you get from actually seeing them."

Warren noted that when setting up your home office, "It's imperative you don't feel isolated or trapped inside four walls. Working 45-50 hours a week can be daunting if you don't have the tools and resources you need," Warren said. "I love what I do and the opportunities it has afforded me. It took me a little while to get adjusted to the remote work lifestyle, but five years later, I will attest it is much more efficient than traveling to the office every day."

Warren is thankful for the opportunity to work for an amazing company in a place he now calls home.

Hometown Roots

Macy Trimble

Growing up on a farm, Macy Trimble was a well-rounded student-athlete. She was active in athletics and FFA.

"I have always been very active with a wide array of interests, but I always knew that I wanted to work in the agricultural industry," Trimble said.

While at Kansas State University, majoring in agri-business, Trimble earned the opportunity to intern with two corporations, Frito-Lay and Cargill. At the end of her internship, Cargill relocated her to Pennsylvania.



Trimble participated in a rotational program where she worked in every role, including making feed.

Trimble has now been with Cargill Animal Nutrition for nine years. She was hired into the Management Associates Program which is a two-year rotational opportunity to work with every role in the company. She worked in two production facilities in New York making feed, did finance and accounting, logistics, and buying and selling commodities. She relocated to the Kansas City office where she finished out the program with customer service, formulation, pricing, and supply planning. Kansas City is where she remained for four

years as an invoicing supervisor and then moved to Order Management Process Implementation Lead for North America. When the opportunity to work remote came up in 2019, Trimble and her husband, Cody, moved back to Waterville, Kan.

Importance of Community

Trimble keeps busy working a full-time job, helping on the farm, raising two children Rosa (4) and Rhett (1), and is a community volunteer. She is the Vice President of the Waterville Community Connection Board, a board member for the Endow Waterville Partnership Funds, serves on the Valley Heights Agriculture Education Advisory Team, and the Valley Heights Early Childhood Leadership Team. Her husband, who farms and ranches, is the head coach for the Valley Heights football team and a volunteer fire fighter.

"I just embrace the chaos," she laughed. "Working remotely has allowed me the flexibility to do these things." She attributes her passion for community to her mom, Tammy Parker, who had her volunteering at a young age.

"I learned quickly that if you want to see your community thrive, you have to get involved and be willing to help out where you can," said Trimble.

A Day in the Life...

Thanks to a robust internet connection Macy does not have to travel much for work. "Everything I need to do I can do right here from Waterville," she said. Her day consists of back-to-back video calls and working in very large, shared files.



Order Management Lead

Macy Trimble

Cargill Animal Nutrition

"Understanding the demands of working remote and the image you want to create is key," Trimble said. "It's important to have a quiet and professional environment when you are conducting business."

Building a strong team requires knowing your coworkers, good communication, and conducting engagement activities through meetings. There is value to breakroom conversations and with a little effort you can replicate that in a virtual environment.

Also serving as a recruiter for the company, Trimble has noticed a shift in the upcoming workforce. Remote work is becoming more and more valued by the next generation.

"The talent pool is exponentially larger when a company is willing to consider remote terms," noted Trimble. She emphasized the importance of employers having boundaries to ensure all parties understand the expectations.

"The remote work lifestyle isn't for everyone," said Trimble. "But, it has been a great fit for me."



BVT connected its first fiber-to-the-home customer in 2007.



A Family
Who Works

Together

Stays Together

Remote workers occasionally feel isolated and miss the intraoffice relationships that are nurtured in the breakroom or around the proverbial water cooler. Typically, remote employees combat this by connecting through Microsoft Teams and other virtual platforms. But, what if the remote employees are sisters who are also neighbors?

Kaylor, Kendra, and Marissa all work for the same government agency housed out of Topeka, Kan. The three young women, two sisters and their brother's significant other, make up a team that provides educational training opportunities for medical staff. Marissa and Kaylor work in a hybrid environment, working remotely, and conducting on-site visits. Kendra works remotely and provides the technical and administrative support for the group.

Kaylor and Kendra's mother, Michelle, is the daycare provider for their children and occasionally dogs. The ladies confessed they have lunch at their mom's house many days and family dinners every Friday. Kendra laughed, "I think the three of us spend 10-15 hours together every week outside of work. We are very close!"

Marissa Corwin

Marissa grew up in a rural community in Western Kansas. She earned her

associate's degree from Manhattan Area Technical College and worked as a pharmacy technician after graduation. Unfortunately, Marissa found herself unfulfilled in that role and shifted to the retail world, managing Marshall's in Manhattan, Kan. When she met Kaylor and Kendra's brother, Mytchel, she made the choice to relocate to Beattie, Kan. - a location where the need for a retail manager was not high. Knowing her personality was geared toward customer service, Marissa found her home with the organization she currently works for. The cherry on top: this job could be done from anywhere with a strong internet connection.

Kendra Griffiee

Kendra graduated from Kansas State University with a degree in human development and family science. She and her husband, Brandon, knew they wanted to raise their children in Beattie. Kendra also knew that she wanted to find a job that would afford her the flexibility to be home for her family.

Offering support to the other two, Kendra is an invaluable resource for the team. Kendra is online all day building accounts, scheduling training, creating and issuing certificates, and managing the reports. But, she has the flexibility to leave work to take her daughter to dance class on Tuesdays.



Kaylor, Marissa & Kendra hanging out after-hours.

Kaylor Foley

Kaylor, Kendra's sister, grew up in Beattie and had no intentions to leave her beloved hometown. The challenge of finding full-time employment with benefits and a livable wage can be a struggle though. When a hybrid position on Marissa's team opened up, Kaylor didn't waste any time applying for the job.

As a single mother who had been working two jobs, the opportunity was life changing for Kaylor and her daughter.

It's the Little Things That Matter

When Marissa talks about work, her voice is full of enthusiasm and pride. She enjoys helping people and it shows. She emphasized that this job would not be possible without a robust internet connection.

The advice she offers for someone new to the remote work lifestyle is to be proactive.

"Make sure your equipment is adequate before you start working," said Marissa.

"Don't cut corners here. Also, don't be afraid to move your office around until it feels right for you. I think it is important to occasionally even move your laptop to a completely different location if you need a change of scenery!"

While the trio participates in Teams calls with their coworkers in Topeka, they also meet up locally.

"Some afternoons we will meet at the library or even on someone's deck to work," said Kendra. "It helps keep us engaged and on track."

Balancing the work-home life is extremely important to this team. With



Three members of the Foley family from Beattie, Kan. make up a remote-working team.

fiber-optic technology they have the tools they need to do their jobs and stay connected to headquarters. With rural roots, they share values that help them maintain a healthy balance.

"We support each other professionally and emotionally so that the job gets done," said Kaylor. "We also ensure we have time and energy left at the end of the day for the important things in life - like family."

Nothing Beats Fiber

Fiber Internet
Increases the Value
of your Home



1 Gig Powers
20-40 Devices



Fiber Internet
Downloads
45x Faster



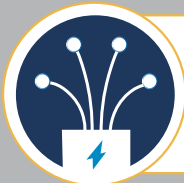
Farming Connectivity Has
a Potential Economic
Impact of \$500 Billion



215 Million Americans
Play Video Games



Only Fiber Can Offer
Symmetrical Gig Speeds



Fiber Is the
Most Weather-proof
Technology Available



37% of Adults
Use Telehealth





Opportunity
Brought to

Rural Kansas

Michelle Whitesell left her hometown of Marysville, Kan. for college with no aspirations of moving back. She graduated with her bachelor's degree from Kansas State University in mass communications with an emphasis in public relations. She was hired by Turner Construction to work in their Kansas City office while her fiancé, Joe, was completing his residency at Kansas University Medical Center.

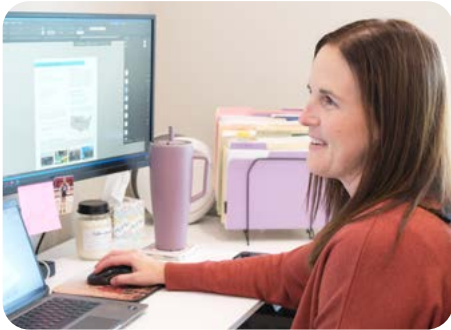
Joe completed his residency and expressed his desire to move home. While Whitesell wasn't opposed, she was concerned what that would mean for her career.

"There are only so many marketing and public relations positions in Marshall County," Whitesell said. She believed she would be looking at jobs with a commute or a job outside of her degree.

Whitesell spoke to her superiors at Turner Construction about a remote position. She was granted a three-month probation to test the waters. This led to a permanent remote position, and she was eventually promoted to assistant marketing manager for the Kansas City office.

Symmetry Matters

She recalls the early days in Marysville.



Whitesell, in her element, at her home office.

"I struggled to upload and download the exceptionally large files I needed," said Whitesell. "We're talking 300 MB files that were not feasible, so I would do all my transfers late at night when no one else was competing for the bandwidth."

The fiber-to-the-home deployment to Marysville residents provided Whitesell with symmetrical speeds, helping her efficiency.

"My job requires me to be creative," said Whitesell. "It is helpful when I can stream background music, have multiple files open at a time, and work on shared files with my team."

Living in a rural community while working for a corporation who employs over 10,000 people nationwide has afforded Whitesell more opportunities than she ever imagined.

"My children have both sets of grandparents here," she said. "Joe was able to nurture his career as a physical therapist, and I was able to continue utilizing my degree with a company I have so much respect for. If I didn't have access to a robust internet, my job would not be possible. My career path would look a lot different."

Personal Connections

Whitesell travels periodically for work; otherwise, her team meets each morning via Microsoft Teams.

"Sometimes those calls are only four minutes long, but it's great for me because I get to see everyone," said Whitesell. "Nonverbal communication is a critical component when it comes to keeping coworkers connected."



Assistant Marketing Manager

Michelle Whitesell

Turner Construction

She agrees breakroom conversations are important, but also emphasized the efficiencies gained from not having in-office interruptions.

"I am at my desk before 8 a.m. each morning," she said. "If I'm not careful I will work through lunch without realizing it." While this can be a double edge sword for remote employees, Whitesell says, it's a nice benefit for her coworkers. "I am always at my desk, so no one needs to spend time tracking me down."

Help is exactly what Whitesell does. She is a wife, and mother of three; Hannah (15), Luke (12), and Jack (8). She serves on church and school committees, Marshall County Tourism, and is a board member for the Bulldog Boosters.

"Working remotely has opened so many more doors," Whitesell said. "I can have a career, contribute to my community, and chase my kids to their events. I never wanted to sacrifice time with my family for the sake of having a career, and thanks to Turner Construction, I don't have to."

A 9-Second
Commute

Tress Jacobson

Tress Jacobson grew up in Vermillion, Kan. in the 60s. She graduated from Kansas State University with her bachelor's degree in ag communications. After working in Manhattan, Kan. for eight years, she worked at BlueCross BlueShield Kansas (BCBS) in Topeka, Kan. but wanted to move home.

After working in Topeka for a year, Jacobson applied for remote work. She was granted the opportunity if she could meet the certain requirements; which included internet speed, climate control, dedicated office space with locks on the doors, and fire extinguishers.

Finding a Balance

"It no longer takes me 90 minutes to get to work; it's more like nine seconds," Jacobson joked about walking down the hall to her office. Jacobson gets dressed each day as if she is heading to campus.

"When you dress for success, you are ready for success," Jacobson said. "It helps me differentiate that I am at work ready to tackle the day. If I dressed the same way I lounge, it would be more challenging to balance the home-work life."

Jacobson is an assistant small group sales representative and licensed insurance agent for BlueCross BlueShield Kansas. There are seven remote employees in her department and one hybrid employee.

"One of the best things about my job is being able to flex my time," said Jacobson.

"It allows me to better serve my customers when I can adjust my schedule to coordinate with theirs."

Better Broadband, Better Efficiency

Having a fiber internet connection has been significant for her efficiency. She is the envy of her urban coworkers.

"I have a coworker who lives in Topeka, and she is in awe that I have such fast internet living a mile outside of Vermillion," said Jacobson.

Spending her day preparing proposals for health and life insurance policies, Jacobson said working remotely ensures confidentiality and privacy.

"When you deal with sensitive medical information it can be difficult to keep things private in an office," said Jacobson. "I am more comfortable having these discussions when no one is sitting next to me, and my clients feel the same way."

Transferring data to the company's mainframe is effortless with a fast and secure connection. As someone who depends on her connection, she is thankful she has a dedicated team for troubleshooting, at both Blue Valley Technologies and BCBS of Kansas.

Jacobson focuses on delivering the highest quality care and attention to those she serves, earning her the Client Service Representative of the Year award.



Tress Jacobson

BlueCross BlueShield Kansas

Her devotion doesn't end with her clients. Jacobson is involved in multiple organizations across the State of Kansas. She serves as a community representative on the Kansas Community Empowerment Board of Directors, is president of the Friends of Vermillion PRIDE organization, a board member for Marshall County Partnership for Growth, and on the Marshall County Development Corporation.

"I believe it is my responsibility to do what I can to serve my community," she said. "If my community has a need, I'll do my best to help."





BVT Hosts

STEM Day

Science • Technology • Engineering • Mathematics

for Marysville High School Students

11.12.25

CyberSecurity



The students learned about cybersecurity jobs available at BVT's wholly-owned subsidiary, Networks Plus. They were given statistics pertaining to cybercrime and learned about the future of cybersecurity. They also competed in an online game for an opportunity to win prizes.

Combo Technician



Students experienced a mock-up of how fiber comes out of the ground to a tap on the pole, then how it feeds the house with internet. They learned how to splice it and feed it inside the house to the electronics and router. They even built their own ethernet cables and connected them.

Construction



Students got hands-on experience splicing fiber optics and learned about the large equipment used for construction projects at BVT. They also learned how to locate buried cables and fiber.

LiveStream Video



The students split their time between playing pickleball and running three video cameras and the tricastor to learn how BVT live streams local sporting events to both their legacy BVtv platform and on YouTube.



Christmas Magic

The BVT Giving Tree

The BVT Giving Tree is an annual charity Christmas program coordinated by Blue Valley Technologies. Founded in 1995, the program partners with local businesses, agencies, and schools and is supported by the generosity of donors from all across the service area and beyond.

Many local families are forced to decide to put food on the table, pay the electric bill, or buy gas for their car to get to work. When Christmas arrives, their children are not exempt from having the same wishes as children from more affluent families. This creates a financial burden for many homes who struggle to meet their childrens' basic needs.

With the help of many generous donors, this program assists families in more than 22 communities - an average of over 400 children each year. Thousands of children have received Christmas gifts from the BVT Giving Tree over the years.

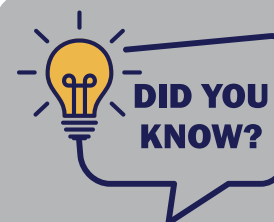
The program, designed to act as a supplement for parents, offers families peace of mind there will

be gifts under the tree. BVT staff coordinate the program, spending countless hours working with local agencies and schools to collect applications, prepare wish lists, deliver cards to partnering businesses, solicit donors, collect, wrap, and sort gifts, and shop for any cards not selected off the Giving Tree. BVT ensures every child in the program receives gifts.

The final days leading up to Christmas are the most enjoyable, as that is when the gifts are packed and distributed to the families. Giving is a powerful way of proving the magic of Christmas is very much alive and real.

If you'd like information on how to brighten a child's Christmas, email givingtree@bluevalleyinc.net, visit bluevalley.net/givingtree, or scan the QR code to give today.

Give Now



BVT is bringing fiber-to-the home to
Hanover, Frankfort, Washington, Waterville & rural areas in Marshall County in 2025!



Proudly keeping our communities connected!

Check out the beautiful mural, painted and designed by April Spicer, on our Westmoreland Central Office. Beattie Central Office also has a mural, freshly painted this Fall. Be on the lookout for more locations in 2025 and beyond!



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WORRY-FREE WIFI

Whether you're a parent, professional or someone who simply wants their internet to function at the highest-level, Worry-Free WiFi from BVT helps you to manage your home network without the frustrations.



▸ 24/7 Tech Support



▸ SECURE WiFi Network



▸ Parental Controls



▸ Prioritize Devices



▸ Router Replacement

Maximize Your Moments

- Create work & school hours for your home
- Enjoy buffer-free quality family time
- Back-up your screen goals with downtime hours, schedules, and time limits
- Block inappropriate content to devices on your network
- Optimize your bandwidth where you need it most

*Start to simplify your home network today.
Call 877.876.1228.*