ALWAYS ON CALL
Remote specialists are only a click away

T&H Laboratory embraces new technology

A HIGH-TECH LIFELINE
Telemedicine powers rural health care
A good way to start the New Year

TCA members make a real difference in their communities, and in the lives of the people they serve. I was reminded of this a few weeks ago when the Foundation for Rural Service announced it had awarded $100,000 in FRS Community Grants to groups throughout the U.S. FRS is the nonprofit arm of NTCA that supports rural telecom companies, consumers and policymakers with educational information, products and programming.

Each year, community organizations apply for FRS grants to help them tackle challenges ranging from accessing technology and improving educational offerings to providing telemedicine and first-responder services to rural areas. Applications are sponsored by their local telco.

It was also exciting to see the USDA award several ReConnect grants and loans to NTCA members toward the end of the year. This program represents yet another option for rural broadband funding, as well as an example of public/private partnerships at work to extend broadband to unserved communities.

After all, investments by federal and state agencies, coupled with the commitment of rural broadband providers, are key to our nation’s progress in connecting the millions of citizens still without access to fast, reliable internet service.

These programs, as well as the engagement we saw among policymakers at our Telecom Executive Policy Summit in November, provide a strong start to 2020 and give me great hope for a strong new year for rural broadband.

Are you ready for a telehealth future?

The presence of reliable broadband service holds great promise for rural America. While it touches many facets of life, broadband’s greatest impact may very well be in the area of health care. Consider this statement from the Federal Communications Commission:

“Advances in telemedicine are transforming health care from a service delivered solely through traditional brick and mortar health care facilities to connected care options delivered via a broadband internet access connection directly to the patient’s home or mobile location.”

While reliable access to a broadband network is still out of reach for millions of rural Americans, hundreds of cooperative and independent telecommunications companies across the country are delivering world-class internet service, often over a fiber connection. If you received this magazine in the mail, your local telco is one of those leading-edge providers.

If access to broadband is becoming less of the challenge to telehealth’s widespread availability, what is the greatest challenge? The FCC recently tasked the Intergovernmental Advisory Committee with studying and reporting on telehealth barriers and incentives. The report stated that “people-based” issues offer the most significant challenges to telehealth adoption. While this includes many factors, such as policy and licensing, broadband adoption is a leading concern.

In other words, the technology is there. Now, people need to embrace it.

“Increasing support must be given to rural and disadvantaged communities so that digital literacy and adoption does not exacerbate the digital divide,” the IAC report states. Quite simply, the presence of broadband doesn’t mean patients and doctors are ready to put it to use as part of their health care program.

Are you ready? Do you understand the implications of telehealth? What steps can you take toward enjoying its benefits?

Begin by asking your doctor what programs are available. This could include connected medical devices in your home or something as simple as remote monitoring via an app on your smartphone or tablet. Of course, access to telehealth starts with subscribing to broadband service that will support this life-changing technology. And once in place, broadband has the potential to enhance your life in many other ways as well.
Convenience and power. Internet services bring both. Online bill pay eliminates a tedious task. Social media can keep family ties strong or reconnect you with old friends. Streaming services bring a wealth of music, books and more.

But when it comes to digital tools, knowledge is power, and the Pew Research Center’s recent “Americans and Digital Knowledge” report found that a majority of adults in the U.S. could not correctly answer half of the survey’s 10 multiple-choice questions.

Questions touched on security and a general understanding of technology. Here are a few of the queries, edited for clarity, focused on security and privacy — good information to know. The answers do include additional context and tips not included in the report.

**Q** If a website uses cookies, it means that the site …

**A:** Cookies allow websites to track user visits and site activity. They are common, and you are often tracked across the websites you visit.

**Q** Where might someone encounter a phishing scam?

**A:** Phishing scams can occur on social media, websites, email or text messages. Each form of communication offers an avenue for exploitation. For additional tips to improve your online security, visit FCC.gov/consumer-guides.

**Q** What is the largest source of revenue for most major social media platforms? (Several possible options were listed.)

**A:** Advertising is the largest source of revenue for most social media platforms. Often advertising is personalized to you by information gathered from not only your activities on a social media site but also your actions on other websites.

**Q** When a website has a privacy policy, it means that the site …

**A:** Privacy policies are contracts between websites and users about how those sites will use their data. Often long and legalistic, the agreements may outline how your private information can be used to target advertising or whether or not your information can be shared with other companies.

**Q** What does it mean when a website has “https://” at the beginning of its URL, as opposed to “http://” without the “s”?

**A:** “https://” in a URL means that information entered into the site is encrypted. Look for “https://” before completing any financial transaction on a site.

**Q** Many web browsers offer a feature known as “private browsing” or “incognito mode.” If someone opens a webpage on their computer at work using incognito mode, who will be able to see their online activities?

**A:** Private browsing mode only prevents someone using the same computer from seeing one’s online activities. In most cases, your internet provider, including your phone wireless provider, can see all digital traffic passing from your device to the internet.

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**Want to see the entire report?**

Do a Google search for “Pew Research Center and Americans and Digital Knowledge.”
We’ve arrived in the future

Welcome to 2020! I sincerely hope you and those close to you had a superb holiday season and that this new year is off to a wonderful start.

Something about beginning not only a new year but also a new decade makes 2020 feel like a year full of promise. For so long, the 2020s have seemed like the distant future. Now, we have arrived!

For those of us at HCTC, it’s rewarding to know our network is what brings the future to our part of Texas. Whether it’s our broadband service at your home or our network providing vital infrastructure to businesses, we’re right at the heart of all of this futuristic technology. We worked hard to make that network and our company even better in 2019. It was certainly a year of meaningful accomplishments and noteworthy milestones.

2019 was one of the most productive years on record at HCTC. We invested nearly $12 million in our engineering and construction activities, deploying an additional 200 miles of fiber and improving the broadband capabilities for our members.

HCTC took a renewed focus on its customer service in 2019. We truly view you as part of the cooperative family! We want to ensure we’re treating you like family in all of our interactions. So, when you come into one of our offices, call us on the phone, or choose to do business with us online, we want your interaction with us to be second to none. We want you to feel as though you are speaking with a family member who just happens to work for the cooperative.

2019 has also seen a focus on providing improved services and pricing. As with our customer service, HCTC prides itself on providing quality services at affordable rates. However, we don’t think that is good enough. That is why you have seen us providing new service offerings, such as our broadband-only service, at extremely competitive rates.

HCTC also began a comprehensive review of our service delivery processes in 2019 in an effort to provide you with the service you want when you want them. This is why we have introduced our “white glove service.” We want to make sure that when you order a service from HCTC that you’re receiving what you ordered. Once the initial installation of your broadband service is complete, one of our technicians will stay with you to make sure that the level of broadband service you’ve ordered is delivered, as well as making sure all of your devices are connecting to your broadband network. We want to make sure that when we leave your home or business that you are completely satisfied with your service.

Turning the page to 2020, HCTC will continue to aggressively invest in construction and the expansion of our broadband network. We understand the importance of broadband in our communities and appreciate the role that we play to deliver this much-needed service to you. In fact, we believe broadband is the lifeblood of our rural communities. At HCTC, we want to make sure all of our members stand on equal footing with their counterparts in larger metropolitan areas. We want to make sure our business customers can compete globally, as we truly are living in a global society. Likewise, we will remain committed to improving our services, pricing, customer service and service delivery to our members.
2019 SERVICE RECOGNITION

We would like to thank our dedicated employees for their years of excellent service to the cooperative and to our members.

Pictured (Left to Right):
- Steve Shavers – 5 years
- Samantha Rathke – 5 years
- Joe Kinnison – 5 years
- Marc Hess – 10 years
- Patrick Tinley – 10 years
- Rose Petmecky – 10 years
- Nisha Robson – 10 years
- Kerry Sutton – 10 years
- Bob Harris – 10 years
- Donna Brock – 15 years
- John Ivy – 20 years
- Margie Dominguez – 20 years
- Newell Stewart – 20 years
- Denise Salter – 25 years
- Dean Oates – 35 years
- Bernice Fischer – 40 years

Not Pictured:
- Shawn Hulce – 5 years
- Bridget McKiddie – 5 years
- Norman Jackson – 15 years
- Chris Lindemann – 40 years

HCTC is accepting applications for the 2020 HCTC scholarships available to graduating seniors who will attend a college or a technical school during the 2020-2021 school year. Above-average grades are not mandatory. A student’s leadership qualities, community involvement, extracurricular activities and teacher recommendations will be considered.

“HCTC believes the rural economic development of communities is dependent upon the education of our youth,” HCTC CEO Craig Cook says. As many as 20 area seniors may be awarded a $1,500 scholarship, representing an annual $30,000 commitment to the future of the Hill Country community.

Students may obtain an application online at htc.net. Applications are due Feb. 28.

UPDATE YOUR LISTING FOR THE 2020 DIRECTORY

Any HCTC member who wishes to change or add to listings in the 2020 telephone directory must act soon. The latest version will be out in May 2020. Please contact us before Jan. 16 for Yellow Pages and Jan. 22 for white pages.

APPLY FOR A FREE TRIP TO WASHINGTON, D.C.

Students between the ages of 16 and 17 may qualify for the 2020 Foundation for Rural Service Youth Tour, which brings together students from across rural America to visit Washington, D.C. The trip offers a chance to learn about rural telecommunications and to observe the legislative and governmental processes. Interested students should speak with their guidance counselor or visit htc.net to download an application. Completed applications must be submitted by Feb. 28. Winners will be announced by April 1.
While Mother Nature takes her long winter’s nap, San Antonio’s Botanical Garden awakens a desire to see what beauty lies not only at the back door but also in regions around the world.

In the midst of winter, the gardens are a place of wonder. At the entrance, there’s a sign letting you know what flowers are in bloom and where you can find them. “The months of January and February are a great time to visit,” says Eliana Rodriguez, the garden’s director of marketing. She says it’s the best time to see winter-blooming plants like snapdragons, pansies, violas and lots of colorful kale, as well as some of the grasses native to the Lone Star State, such as yellow Indiangrass, little bluestem and others.

“Walking on a carpet of fallen leaves along the trails can give visitors an appreciation of the form and shape of our beautiful deciduous native trees,” she says. And, she adds, the winter months are a great time to bring binoculars to see the birds that migrate to the San Antonio area during the cooler months of the year.

The birdwatch structure has benches for comfort and special viewing portals for birding. You might see a painted bunting, black-chinned hummingbird or a purple martin. “Each season brings a variety of animals and plants to the garden,” Rodriguez says.

San Antonio Botanical Garden opened in 1980 on land that was a waterworks and reservoir in the latter part of the 19th century. Remnants of a limestone wall from the old reservoir now form a natural outdoor amphitheater where performances, events and classes regularly take place. Today, the San Antonio Botanical Garden welcomes guests to colorful floral displays true to Texas native areas and futuristic glass pyramids filled with exotic plants from around the world.

A recent expansion with free parking includes the Zachry Foundation Culinary Garden and an outdoor Chef Teaching Kitchen located in the Goldsby Foundation Pavilion, both of which tie into the city of San Antonio’s recent designation by UNESCO as a Creative City of Gastronomy. Only two cities in the United States have gotten this honor, and San Antonio is the first city in Texas to receive it. The garden’s culinary programming encourages guests to discover local fruits, vegetables and herbs that grow in Texas.
In the garden, there is much to see, ranging from the common to more unusual plants from around the world. Some of the latter are:

- The silk floss tree in the Conservatory Courtyard. Notice its spiky trunk and, in the spring, its beautiful, large hibiscus-like flowers.
- The screw pine with its eye-catching stilt-like prop roots and a swirl of foliage. It doesn’t look like a pine at all.
- The ponytail palm with a bulb-like trunk and long, curling leaves.
- Located on the garden’s Texas trail is the tiny limoncillo, perhaps the rarest of all trees in America.

Programming is a big part of life in the garden. Adults can register for classes on art and culture, gardening, health and wellness, and cooking. There’s a nice choice of activities for the children, too:

- Little Sprout Mondays offer crafts and lots of hands-on explorations for kids ages 3 to 5.
- Children ages 7 to 16 can get their hands dirty in the Children’s Vegetable Garden Program.
- Summer day camps immerse children in cooking and gardening.

The Family Adventure Garden occupies 2.5 acres of the garden and is one of the most exciting parts of the new expansion. It’s a place where children and adults can have fun, safe, hands-on play, tumbling down a hillside, snaking through a tunnel, and discovering creeks and ponds. It’s also a place to use your imagination and explore the “regions” of South Texas from an urban backyard to the Texas Hill Country and the many plants found in those areas.

Rodriguez says the staff at the botanical garden wants people to realize it’s more than a place to see pretty plants.

“We want people to realize that this is a place to learn about the different types of plants that can help and preserve our local ecosystem and the way plants can improve our health and mental wellness,” she says. “They can learn where our food comes from or simply use it as a place to reconnect with nature while having fun and gaining a new appreciation for the natural world.”

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**Gardens around Texas**

The Lone star State shines with botanical gardens featuring plants from around the globe.

- **Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden**: This botanical garden in Dallas is more than just a beautiful garden. It’s also a leading horticultural research spot and plays host to a number of educational programs and events. On the shores of White Rock Lake, this botanical garden spans 86 acres and is home to 19 unique gardens.

- **Zilker Botanical Garden**: Located in the heart of Austin, Zilker Botanical Garden features a number of different gardens with ponds and trails connecting them. A visit to this botanical garden in Texas’ capital city is free, so it’s a popular place to visit for those on a budget.

- **Fort Worth Botanic Garden**: This garden in Fort Worth, the oldest of all botanical gardens in Texas, lies on 109 sprawling acres and features a rose garden, rainforest conservancy, a boardwalk with native plants and more. Admission to most of the garden is free. Only the Japanese garden requires a small admission fee to enter.

- **Hermann Park Japanese Garden**: Peace and tranquility are the order of the day at this Japanese garden in Houston. It’s complete with a wide variety of Japanese plants, such as Japanese maples and cherry trees, and you’ll feel complete serenity as you walk through the winding paths and bridges leading to bubbling ponds and even a teahouse.

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**If You Go**

**Where:** San Antonio Botanical Garden, 555 Funston Place, San Antonio, Texas.
**Hours:** 9 a.m.-5 p.m.
**Information:** 210-536-1400 or online at www.sabot.org.
YOU'RE INVITED!

WHAT: Lunch & Learn
WHEN: First Wednesday of each month
TIME: Noon-1 p.m.
LOCATION: HCTC Community Room

JANUARY TOPIC: What's in our Data Center? postponed until January 8 due to New Year's holiday
FEBRUARY TOPIC: What does a NOC do?
MARCH TOPIC: How do we engineer our network?

DEVICE OF THE MONTH

YubiKey 5
Are you serious about two-factor security? Take the next step and purchase a hardware authentication device such as the YubiKey 5. Then, register the key with your personal accounts and services. The key works with a variety of authentication standards, including those used by Google and Facebook. It also works on Windows and Mac computers and, depending on the model, can be used with apps accessed on your phone. Available at www.yubico.com $45-$70 MSRP.

Protect yourself
Great passwords make a difference

Passwords — the dirty little secret is that no matter how many numbers you put in them or how many uppercase/lowercase combinations you use, they are vulnerable.

So, what can you do to better protect your information? The easiest way is to use two-factor authentication.

HOW DOES TWO-FACTOR AUTHENTICATION WORK?

After you use your password, you will be asked to provide a second form of identification. You might need to access an app on your phone, input a one-time-use code from a text message or email, or, if you have one, use a hardware security key. The idea is that this other piece of identification is something that only you can access. For example, a hacker who has your iCloud password still won’t have your phone or the password to your email.

While two-factor authentication grants additional security, it isn’t foolproof. Verification through text message or email is the most common form, but those messages are also the easiest to crack by someone with time and dedication.

An app on your phone or a hardware key offers more protection, but you’re also stuck if you lose those devices. This usually means a call to customer service unless you remembered to save the backup codes that you can use to disable two-factor authentication, which, of course, you put in a safe, easy-to-remember location, right?

WHY MUST TWO-FACTOR AUTHENTICATION BE SO ANNOYING?

Whether it’s waiting for that email or text to arrive or just having to input the passcode, it takes longer to access your account than when you’re using a single password.

Conversely, it seems not a week goes by without news of a data breach. The best way to approach the disruption caused by two-factor authentication is accepting it as the cost of doing business online.

HOW DO I START USING TWO-FACTOR AUTHENTICATION?

For most of the consumer services that you use, turning on this extra layer is as easy as opting in. Most of the time, the option will be under security settings. On Facebook, for example, you would go to your settings, then select Security and Login. Once you are on that screen, you will see a box that allows you to turn on two-factor authentication. For Google, go to your account and click on Security. Then select 2-Step Verification.

Using two-factor authentication is simple, only mildly inconvenient and will help keep your private information secure. Why not give it a try? 😊
Patients in need of a dental appliance are getting out of the dentist’s chair and back to their lives faster than ever before thanks to advances in 3D printing technology. “3D printing is going to change the industry,” says Kyle Harrison, certified dental lab technician and manager of T&H Laboratory Inc. in Kerrville.

T&H Laboratory specializes in removable dental prosthetics like dentures, partial dentures and night guards and has had a 3D printer for about a year. While 3D printing isn’t quite perfect yet, Harrison says, it’s already beneficial. “So right now, the only holdup would be the material,” he says. “You can get exactly the appliance that you’re looking for, but you want that material to be strong, you want it to be FDA cleared, and you want it to hold up in a patient’s mouth.”

While manufacturers work to improve the materials, the printer is upping Harrison’s productivity. “Something that might take me an hour to fabricate by hand, I can go over and spend 20 minutes on the computer designing it and then I get to do something else,” he says. “The printer might take 40 minutes to print, but I get to do something else while that’s being made. It’s saving me time, so that way, the patient doesn’t have to wait or may not need to go into the office so many times.”

Efficiency should increase as more dentists start replacing traditional molds with digital scans of patients’ mouths. Generally speaking, a patient would need to see a dentist an average of five times to complete the process. “With this technology of 3D printing and scanning, you’re able to skip some steps,” Harrison says. “It’s basically like another employee, because right now, with dental lab techs, it’s hard to find one, especially when you live in a small area and not a big city.”

Smiles are the family business

T&H Laboratory started as Turner Dental Lab in 2008, when Robert Dwain Turner hung out his shingle. Following Turner’s death in 2014, his family decided to honor his memory by keeping the business going.

Turner’s grandson, Kyle Harrison, began helping his grandfather when he was in high school. It wasn’t long before Harrison found himself making the three-hour drive from Portland to Kerrville a couple of times a month. “I cared for my grandfather, and I didn’t really like the fact that he had to work weekends because he didn’t really have help,” Harrison says. “It grew to me driving pretty much every other weekend coming to work. Some weekends, I would put in 30 hours from a late Friday to a Sunday.”

After graduating high school, Harrison received special dispensation from San Antonio College to complete the dental technician program simultaneous to his required classes. His grandfather’s health was failing, and Harrison wanted to finish his certifications as quickly as possible.

Harrison is a certified dental lab technician and now serves as the company’s treasurer and lab manager. His grandmother, Mona Turner, is the secretary, and his mother, Jennifer Harrison, is the company president. The business’s current name is short for Turner & Harrison Laboratory, an homage to its founder.
Telemedicine changes the health care landscape

Broadband makes a difference daily

Imagine a world with greater health care accessibility, as convenient as contacting a physician from your home. Or consider a medical system where rural communities can easily connect in real time with specialists based dozens, if not hundreds, of miles away.

Broadband technology provides the key link between you and medical providers needed to make those innovations and others possible, and that more convenient, healthier world is becoming a reality for rural communities across the nation. The systems are not yet what they one day may become, but every day more and more people are receiving the benefits of telemedicine. And the results are often profound.

Kentucky veterans have easier access to important care. Changing laws in states such as Texas allow greater access to telemedicine. Telestroke programs in Minnesota and North Dakota save vital minutes when patients most need care. And those are just a few examples of broadband technology changing health care for the better.

KENTUCKY VETERANS

In rural Kentucky, getting to and from an appointment at any medical specialist can often require hours of travel. But when you’re a veteran trying to get to a Veterans Administration Medical Center in a metropolitan area, travel times can increase even more. And a veteran might need multiple doctors and have multiple appointments scheduled on different days.

An innovative pilot program in a mountainous section of eastern Kentucky is helping to change that. The Virtual Living Room program, which started in 2017 in McKee, offers vets a comfortable and private room in their local library complete with high-speed internet access to visit with VA health care providers located more than an hour’s drive away.

The program, available for setup at other qualifying sites, not only illustrates the potential of telemedicine but also shows the efforts being made to create a system capable of benefiting as many people as possible.

The McKee Virtual Living Room is a collaboration among four organizations: the VA, NTCA–The Rural Broadband Association, the rural telecom provider Peoples Rural Telephone Cooperative and the Jackson County Public Library. The VA has provided telehealth services for several years, but it can’t happen if vets don’t have access to high-speed internet connections either in their homes or nearby.

“The rest of the country, like us, really admires our veterans,” says Keith Gabbard, chief executive officer of PRTC. “Before the project, we saw veterans spending the day in a waiting room at the hospital, and when they live an hour and a half away, it’s pretty much an all-day event for a veteran to get health care.”

Fast fiber optic internet networks make telemedicine a realistic option for more and more communities, and the cooperative was a leader in establishing the Virtual Living Room at the Jackson County Public Library.

“We’ve done a lot to promote it, and the library staff and the veterans are really proud of it,” Gabbard says. “It’s a source of pride for our community, and it continues to grow. The Virtual Living Room is a beautiful area where veterans, even

From left, Veterans Donald Barrett, Jim Bryant, Mike Montgomery, Bobby Lakes and Danny Robinson attend the ribbon cutting for Virtual Living Room in McKee, Kentucky.
if they don’t have a doctor’s appointment, can go and read a book. It feels like it’s their home.”

CHANGING LAWS
While faster internet may provide the foundation for telemedicine services, the legal and regulatory framework of each state can play a role in determining the effectiveness of the programs.

In May 2017, Texas Gov. Greg Abbott signed a bill into law that leveled the playing field for telemedicine physicians and doctors who work in traditional office settings. In part, the law eliminated a requirement for a patient to first visit a physician in person before receiving care through telemedicine.

“The bill removed a lot of barriers, and we’ve seen an increase in queries about telehealth,” says Becky Bounds, program manager for the TexLa Telehealth Resource Center in Lubbock, Texas. The federally funded center works to provide resources and technical assistance to telehealth programs in Texas and Louisiana.

Bounds says the internet-based tools offer key services. For example, Lubbock is home to the Timothy J. Harnar Regional Burn Center, which often receives patients injured while working in the industries of West Texas. After treatment and returning home, follow-up visits to Lubbock could require drives of five to six hours. However, a telemedicine-equipped clinic on the campus of Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center in El Paso allows patients to virtually visit with specialists in Lubbock.

“About 12% of the state’s population lives in West Texas, and telehealth matters,” Bounds says. “We are producing cotton, beef, oil and more, and we need health care for the workforce producing those products for the rest of the state and the nation.”

THE GOLDEN HOUR
When it comes to treating a stroke, doctors have a saying: Time is brain. It’s a reminder that every minute that passes between the event and treatment can lead to irreversible damage.

Fortunately, telemedicine technology already gives doctors a fighting chance to begin treating patients before the critical “golden hour” passes.

One of the leaders for this technology in the Midwest is Essentia Health, which established telemedicine capabilities in each of its 17 hospitals, 70 clinics and eight nursing homes throughout Minnesota and North Dakota. With its telestroke program, emergency medical technicians can identify stroke patients on the way to the hospital and even begin treatment.

Essentia Director of Telehealth Services Laurie Hall recalls an ambulance picking up a rural patient nearly 90 minutes from the nearest hospital. In the past, serious brain damage would have been a near certainty for such a patient. But thanks to telestroke technology, EMTs diagnosed a stroke and began treatment about 45 minutes after the stroke occurred.

“The goal is to shorten that window from the time the patient has the event to the time they actually get those clot-busting medications or the clot is removed,” Hall says. “Getting that done so quickly is profound when you think about the injury that could happen from just those few extra minutes. It helps these patients get out of the hospital much quicker and to get on with their normal lives.”
Accessing specialized medical care can be challenging for patients living outside large metropolitan areas, which is why Peterson Regional Medical Center invested in technology that allows patients to see hard-to-find specialists without ever leaving the Texas Hill Country.

Peterson Health has three telemedicine carts — one in the emergency department, another rotating as needed throughout the 124-bed hospital and the third stationed at the ambulatory care center. “Thanks to advanced IT technology and the service that we get from HCTC, this is just an added benefit that we are able to provide this to patients and keep their care close to home,” says Lisa Winters, Peterson’s director of marketing and community relations.
The robots have been used in infectious disease cases since last June, with service available for hospital patients seven days a week from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. and at a monthly wound care clinic for outpatients. “They’re able to provide a more specialized look at some of the things that we see here at Peterson, such as bone infections that we might have or abscesses that are difficult to heal or an off-the-wall pathogen or bug that’s difficult to treat,” says Pam Burton, infection prevention registered nurse.

“They actually are here to assist in the treatment of our patients, but another added benefit of that is that the patients don’t have to travel to San Antonio for a lot of their treatments,” Burton says. “That prevents a lot of traveling for the majority of our population, which eases the burden on them and also will help their healing process.”

Infectious disease physicians are increasingly hard to come by. Fewer doctors are choosing the specialty, and many who do are focusing their practices on treating HIV in large cities. Having the availability of these physicians every day is a great benefit to Peterson patients. “It also ensures we are treating the patient appropriately for whatever infectious process they may have going on that might be difficult to manage, like, ‘Are we giving the right drug at the right dose for the right duration?’” Burton says. “So many factors come in to medication administration, and if we underdose we can run into problems and not treat correctly. If we overdose we can run into problems and potentially cause the patient further harm or potentially an extended period of stay.”

Patients have received the robots well, and Burton says they are very well-educated about how the process works. “The patients have reacted very positively, in part because these physicians are trained on how to look on camera, what the background needs to look like, how to share that empathy through a screen, how to look at the patient and give it that personal touch,” Griffith adds. “They can look through their own computer and directly at that patient, so they’re not looking away at their computer and trying to type at the same time.”

Telemedicine patients are also spared the hassle and expense of traveling long distances for a traditional doctor’s appointment. “We’re rural out here, so Peterson Health treats a lot of these little communities,” Burton says. “To save them that time and travel, it’s a cost benefit to them, as well. Our population is more the retired population, so to provide them with this convenience is great.”

BROADBAND MAKES IT ALL POSSIBLE

None of the benefits of Peterson’s telemedicine services would be possible without a strong and reliable broadband connection like the one HCTC provides. “Without an internet connection, this wouldn’t be possible. We just wouldn’t be able to provide the service at all,” Griffith says. “The broadband service that is provided to us has been, in my experience, an exceptional connection, clear and easy to see and hear the person on the other side. It is truly like the physician is in the room, and it’s all because of that wireless service.”

Philip Wheeler, IT manager, configures the servers in the data center.
Daniele Panella, a former culinary teacher at New York University and now an accomplished personal chef in Austin, well remembers his first attempt at making pizza. “I was 18, and it was a complete disaster,” he recalls. “I burned the crust. Wood-fired ovens take a lot of time and testing to get used to.”

But he tried again, and soon he found himself in his hometown of Florence, Italy, conducting cooking classes and catering private dinners and special events. Once he landed on American soil, he started teaching his students at NYU the art and secrets of Italian cooking using techniques he learned from his father.

“He was my earliest and biggest influence in the kitchen,” Panella says. “He was so creative and would make pizza, pies and lasagna every weekend.”

The family didn’t have a lot of money to spend on food, but what they did have was a lot of love and knowledge for what goes into a healthy meal. “One of my favorite memories is going to the market on the corner and picking the freshest ingredients with my father and going home and making the most beautiful eggplant parmigiana,” he says.

And it was this inherited passion that inspired Panella to master many Italian classics, pizza among them.

Panella teaches cooking classes in Austin and says his pizza class is one of the favorites. And before his students leave, they’ll know all about the proofing process when making an artisan pizza crust. “Some people have trouble proofing the yeast,” he says. They’re confused as to how many hours you should let the pizza dough rise and how much yeast to put in. I see some recipes that tell you to use as much as 2 1/2 tablespoons of yeast per pound of flour. That is way too much! I suggest using 4 cups of flour and no more than 1/4 of a teaspoon of regular yeast.

“And it takes patience. Dough is definitely a baking product, and as such, you have to be as scientific as possible. It’s really a labor of love — something you have to be passionate about to get it done correctly.”

But it doesn’t take a lot of fancy equipment to do it right. A pizza stone makes a good investment, along with a pizza peel, measuring cups, bowls and lots of elbow grease.

Here are some more tips Panella says are good to remember when making a pizza from scratch:

- Use flour with a high gluten content — 12 to 14%. Bread flour does a nice job.
- Use the best plain crushed or pureed tomato sauce you can find. Mix 16 ounces of sauce with one tablespoon of extra virgin olive oil, four or five chopped basil leaves, and salt and pepper, to taste. This makes a good pizza sauce.
- If you’re using it for a margherita pizza or other pizzas, cut the mozzarella into 3-inch-long strips and place them in a colander with a weight on top of them and a bowl below the colander. Let the mozzarella drain in the refrigerator for one hour before baking. This will prevent most of the water released by the cheese from ending up in the pizza, which makes it a soggy mess.
- Make your own pizza peel with two semicircles cut from cutting boards or by using two small plastic cutting boards. That way, you can easily release the pizza on the stone without messing up the toppings.
- Use a pizza stone, and put it in the oven before turning it on. Allow the stone to heat up for at least 30 minutes before you start baking.
- Instantly cover your pizza with a pot or a pan for 3 to 5 minutes after it is cooked. This will allow the crust to soften, yielding a pizza crust that is crunchy on the edges and chewy inside.
Artisan Pizza

Though this is not Panella’s recipe, it’s a good one for beginners.

3 cups plus 3 tablespoons lukewarm water (100 F or below)
1/3 cup olive oil
1 tablespoon granulated yeast
1 1/2 tablespoons kosher salt
7 1/2 cups unbleached all-purpose flour

Combine warm water, olive oil, yeast and salt in a 5-quart bowl, preferably a lid-ded, but not airtight, plastic container. Measure the flour using a “scoop and sweep” method. Reach into the flour bin with your measuring cup, scoop up a full measure all at once, and sweep it level with a knife. Mix until all of the flour is incorporated (kneading is not necessary) using a wooden spoon or a food processor with a dough attachment. Cover with a non-airtight lid. Allow to rise at room temperature for 2 hours. Do not punch down. You want to retain as much gas in the dough as possible. A reduction in gas will make your pizzas and flatbreads dense. Refrigerate and use over the next 14 days. Refrigerate at least 3 hours before using.

To make: A half-hour before you’re ready to bake, place a pizza stone in the bottom third of the oven and heat it at your oven’s highest temperature. Prepare and organize your toppings. Dust a pizza peel or a large cutting board/flat cookie sheet with enough flour or cornmeal to easily transfer the pizza over to the hot stone. Pull up and cut off a 1/2-pound (orange-size) piece of dough.

Using a little flour (enough so it won’t stick to your fingers), stretch and shape the dough into a ball. Sprinkle your work area with a little flour. Using your hands or a rolling pin, roll out and stretch the dough until it is approximately 1/8-inch thick and 12 inches wide.

Place the finished dough onto the prepared pizza peel. Then, add the toppings of your choice. Carefully slide the pizza onto the hot stone. If it isn’t sliding, sprinkle more flour or cornmeal between the pizza and the pizza peel until the pizza moves. Check for doneness after 8-10 minutes — it may take a few minutes longer. Turn the pizza around if one side is browning faster than the other. Allow to cool slightly on a wire rack before serving.
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