



THE Connection

Cover Photo: GBT's NCK Tech Telecommunications & Network Technology Program Sponsorship student Jadon Copeland smiles for the camera during a Fiber installation in St. John.

RURAL RESURGENCE: GBT'S COLLABORATIVE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE

Technology companies across the U.S. have been facing a critical challenge – the imminent retirement of a generation of employees who have been with these companies for the last few decades. Recognizing the need to address the workforce shortage and attract new talent, General Manager Beau Rebel of GBT and other visionaries from the industry initiated a revolutionary partnership with North Central Kansas Technical College (NCK Tech). Their collaborative efforts have led to the development and revival of the Telecommunications and Network Technology Program, aimed at fostering local talent interested in the technology industry and providing them opportunities that extend far past a secondary education.

In early 2021, GBT acknowledged the pressing need to address the impending workforce shortage. As a strategic solution, the conversation to bridge this gap began. Rebel recalls, “We identified workforce development as a critical short-term concern due to impending retirements and the challenge of maintaining an adequate workforce to fill those positions. That’s where the conversation began.”

Rebel and Michael Pollock, the COO of Nex-Tech, joined forces to tackle this shared challenge. Together, they conceived the idea of engaging with local colleges to establish a secondary education program.

Following this, key leaders in the initiative, including Rebel, visited several local colleges and eventually connected with NCK Tech. GBT and Nex-Tech actively collaborated with the college, offering curriculum suggestions, and assisting in the recruitment of qualified teachers for the program.

Reigniting Interest & Support

The Telecommunications and Network Technology Program was not entirely new to NCK Tech; it had been attempted before but faced a lack of interest. However, with the support of GBT and other key telecommunication providers, the program was successfully reestablished and has already demonstrated significant growth and success.

The program’s accomplishments have been further bolstered by GBT’s sponsorship of local talent for the program.

GBT's NCK Tech Student Sponsorship Program

GBT's sponsorship program has a clear objective: providing local talent with the necessary resources and financial support to attend the program, with the ultimate goal of having graduates employed at GBT upon completion. The sponsorship recipients are granted a comprehensive two-year, four-semester all-inclusive scholarship, along with valuable internship opportunities, and mentorship from GBT Leaders.

Jean Kerr, the HR representative at GBT, has taken on the crucial responsibility of recruiting local talent for this program. Over the last two years, GBT has sponsored two outstanding local students: Jadon Copeland from Ness City and Preston Ross from Otis.



Building Success through Local Recruitment & Local Expertise

One of the critical aspects of the program's success lies in its emphasis on recruiting local students. Rebel emphasized this, stating, "Our workforce is predominantly made up of local people. When we seek out potential candidates, we not only prioritize a strong work ethic but also a connection and care for our local area."

GBT not only supports the program by sponsoring students, but also demonstrates its commitment through the active

involvement of experts employed at GBT. Shane Broyles, GBT's Director of Operations, proudly serves on the program's Advisory Board. Expressing his enthusiasm, Shane states, "I'm thrilled to be a part of this committee and contribute my 32 years of industry experience. With the substantial investments being made in broadband and the ambitious goal of connecting all Americans to reliable Internet, our industry requires highly skilled technicians, precisely what we believe this exceptional program offered by NCK Tech will provide."

Ongoing Efforts

The success of the collaborative partnership between GBT, Nex-Tech, and NCK Tech has garnered significant interest from telecommunication providers nationwide, many of whom are facing similar workforce challenges. Rebel has been invited to share insights about this remarkable alliance at industry events, as telecommunication providers and colleges across the nation are now creating programs inspired by the achievements already accomplished through this partnership.

When asked, one key takeaway that Rebel would like GBT's customers to understand about this program and the efforts being made is that, "As parents read about this initiative, it presents an opportunity for their children that they might not have been aware of before. We are committed to offering strong local support, and the best individuals to achieve that are the local youth who understand our customers and the community. These young individuals are already deeply invested in our communities, so we are building upon that foundation by investing in their potential and future."

If you know a local student that would be a good fit for this program, please contact Jean Kerr, GBT HR, at HR@gbtlive.com.

UPCOMING DEADLINE

Directory Photo Contest - August 13: Every year GBT holds a contest to choose the new cover for our Directory. The contest pays \$100 to the winner and is open to all GBT customers and their families. 10 photo limit. This year's theme is "Innovation." Photos need to be taken in the GBT service area. Please include name and where the photo was taken on all submissions. Submit questions and photos to marketing@gbtlive.com.



GBT, YOU'VE COME A LONG WAY!

As we continue to celebrate our 70 years of connecting and serving the needs of our rural Kansas customers, we thought it would be fun to see how the employees have grown and changed through the years!

Golden Belt Telephone Association, Inc. started as a telephone cooperative in 1953 with a General Manager and handful of employees. By 1969, GBT had grown to 12 total employees—6 Office and 6 Plant Technicians, providing the most up-to-date telephone service available!

Employees included: General Manager Dave McKay, Office Manager Wendell Brozek, Plant Manager Arlyn Solomon, Central Office Manager Melvin Hemken, Cashier Kay Fiala, Office Staff Ramona Brozek, and plant technicians Steve Phelps-Lewis Exchange; Gerald Washburn-Ransom Exchange; King Mason-McCracken Exchange; and Art Wagner, Don Liggett, Larry Wiedeman-Rush Center Exchange.

As needs have changed over 70 years, GBT has adapted in order to bring the latest technology and ultimate services for today and in the future, creating a lasting impact for the betterment of the communities we serve. GBT—bringing THE BEST user experience to our customers through reliable, state-of-the-art communication services!



Pictured: Kay Fiala



Pictured: Dave McKay



Pictured: Arlyn Solomon



INTERNSHIP SPOTLIGHT: PRESTON ROSS

Preston Ross has been chosen as the 2023 Telecommunications and Network Technology Program Sponsorship Recipient. During his summer internship with the GBT Team, he gained valuable hands-on experience, including fiber splicing and customer installations.

Throughout his internship, Preston had the opportunity to learn from skilled GBT technicians, and he particularly enjoyed working in the town of Stafford, where he discovered the best snow cones at the Frosty Bean!

With the fall approaching, Preston eagerly anticipates the start of his college journey at NCK Tech, fueled by his lifelong interest in technology. Preston's passion for technology was ignited when he got involved in filming and streaming school events, leading him to explore open broadcasting software, building his own computer, and investing in a 3D printer. This journey eventually led him to discover the exciting field of Telecommunications and Network Technology. Preston was also a member of the 2022-2023 GBT Junior Board.

Looking ahead to college, Preston's enthusiasm remains high. He shares, "I am excited to learn more about the network side of things and how they work. Learning about switches and how we build our infrastructure out, and getting to know more about fiber rings."

Aaron Grumbein, GBT's Plant Operations Supervisor serving as Preston's supervisor and mentor, has been impressed by the skills and talent Preston has displayed throughout the summer. He proudly remarks, "Since Preston began his internship, he has surpassed any expectations that could have been asked of him." This accolade extends to Jadon, who is completing his second summer internship with GBT and has worked alongside Preston throughout the season.

Aaron's admiration for both young men is evident as he highlights their ability to conquer every situation that has been presented to them, embracing challenges with confidence and determination. Their resilience and eagerness to take on new challenges speak volumes about their dedication and potential for success in the telecommunications and network technology industry.

Superior security comes from a company you know & trust.

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Camera Systems

GBT offers a wide range of customized camera systems allowing you to view your cameras locally or remotely on your phone.

Security Systems

- Motion
- Carbon Monoxide
- Moisture
- Glass Breakage
- Temperature
- Fire and Smoke



Recipe of the Month:

Garlic Butter Creamed Corn Chicken

Oh my gosh, is there anything better? This chicken is made in under an hour, uses just one skillet, and is beyond delicious. It's creamy, garlicky, packed with corn, and finished with fresh herbs and parmesan. Perfect cozy, summer dinner for any night of the week.



Ingredients

- 1 1/2 pounds boneless, skinless chicken breasts or thighs
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 1 tablespoon fresh chopped thyme, plus more for serving
- kosher salt and pepper
- 1/4 cup all-purpose flour
- 4 slices thick cut bacon, chopped
- 1 small yellow onion, chopped
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 4 ears corn, kernels removed from cob
- 2 cloves garlic, minced or grated
- 1 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
- 3/4 cup dry white wine, such as Pinot Grigio or Sauvignon Blanc
- 1/2 cup heavy cream, canned full fat coconut milk, or whole milk
- 1/2 cup grated parmesan or Asiago cheese
- fresh basil

Directions

1. Rub the chicken all over with 1 tablespoon olive oil, thyme, and season generously with salt and pepper. Sprinkle the flour evenly over the chicken and toss to coat, adding more flour if needed to cover the chicken.
2. Heat a large skillet over medium high heat and cook the bacon until crisp. Remove the bacon from the pan and drain onto paper towels.
3. Add the chicken to the pan and sear on both sides until golden, about 5 minutes per side. Remove the chicken from the pan.
4. Add the remaining 1 tablespoon olive oil. When

- the oil shimmers, add the onion and cook until fragrant, about 5 minutes. Add the butter, corn, garlic, and red pepper flakes. Cook another 5 minutes or until the corn is golden.
5. Reduce the heat to medium low and pour in the wine and 1/2 cup water. Add the chicken back to the skillet and bring to a simmer over medium heat. Simmer the chicken for 10-15 minutes until cooked through. Stir in the heavy cream and parmesan, cook another few minutes until warmed through. Remove from the heat and top with bacon.
6. Serve the chicken topped with fresh thyme and basil. Enjoy!



785-372-4236
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Ellis
101 W 9th | Open: Mon., Wed., Fri.
8 am - 12:30 pm; 1:30 pm - 5 pm

Ness City
114 W. Main | Open: Mon.-Fri.
8 am - 5 pm

St. John
602 N US Hwy 281 | Open: Mon.-Fri.
8 am - 1pm; 2pm - 5pm

Larned
122 W. 5th | Open: Mon.-Fri.
8 am - 11:30 am; 12:30 pm - 5 pm

Rush Center
103 Lincoln St. | Open: Mon.-Fri.
8 am - 5 pm



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