



# BTES NEWS

**Bristol Tennessee Essential Services**

*Electric • Internet • Telephone • Cable*

*Winter 2025 - For customers of Bristol Tennessee Essential Services*

## BEHIND THE SCENES: HOW BTES STRIVES FOR RELIABLE SERVICES

At BTES, we pride ourselves on delivering reliable services to our community. While you may only see the end results - reliable electricity, high-speed Internet, and responsive customer service - the work that goes into keeping our services running smoothly is complex and requires a dedicated team. Here's an insider's look at how the BTES team works to enrich our community.



### **A Commitment to Excellence**

Our employees work tirelessly to keep BTES' facilities in top condition. From routine inspections of lines and substations to emergency repairs, our skilled professionals keep the BTES system up and running. Regular maintenance helps prevent issues before they arise, ensuring consistent service and minimizing disruptions. Our employees undergo rigorous training to stay current with industry standards and safety practices, so you can trust that your services are in capable hands.

### **Embracing Innovation**

Staying ahead in the utility industry means continually looking for ways to improve our products and services. BTES invests in advanced systems to enhance service reliability and efficiency. For instance, our Automated Switching System allows for real-time monitoring and quicker responses to outages. Similarly, our fiber optic network provides you with the fastest and most reliable Internet speeds available in our community.

### **Emergency Preparedness Strategies**

At BTES, we know that emergencies can happen at any time. Our emergency preparedness plans are designed to ensure that we can respond swiftly and effectively to unforeseen events, such as severe weather. We have comprehensive plans in place, including load curtailment plans, emergency response teams, and coordination with other agencies. Regular drills and scenario planning keep the BTES team prepared to handle emergencies with minimal disruption to your service.

### **Customer-Focused Approach**

We believe that keeping our community informed and involved is crucial to maintaining a high standard of service. Our Customer Experience Team is ready to assist with your questions or concerns, and your feedback helps us improve. Whether it's through surveys, community events, or direct communication, we value your input and use it to enhance our services.

Behind every BTES service is a commitment to excellence and a network of dedicated employees working to ensure that you receive the best possible experience. From technology upgrades to emergency preparedness, we're here to keep your services running smoothly and reliably.

#### **IN THIS ISSUE**

**Virtual Reality in Schools**

**40 Under Forty**

**Nutty's Activity Page**

## NEW YEAR, NEW COMMUNICATIONS



As we usher in a new year, it naturally creates an anticipation of things that may be new or exciting.

At BTES, we are always looking for ways to get better in how we serve our customers and this community. One way we hope to engage with you more this year is through a new blog with weekly updates on practical information we believe our customers will find useful and informative. This blog is available on our website at [btes.net/blog](https://btes.net/blog), and for your convenience, we are also offering it as a free subscription via email. This way, you'll have relevant updates delivered right to your inbox, so you don't miss out on valuable information.

We hope that having easy access to this information will be helpful for you. The blog will feature updates covering a variety of topics, including frequently asked questions, troubleshooting tips, and insights on subjects like energy savings, Internet connectivity, and the services we provide. Whether you're curious about how to reduce your energy usage, learning more about how the Internet works, or understanding your electric bill, you'll find clear and actionable advice in these posts. From common questions like "Why do my lights flicker?" to "What is the best way to boost my Wi-Fi signal?", we will cover a variety of interests and concerns. We want this blog to serve as a go-to resource for you, answering both everyday questions and more in-depth topics that might not be addressed elsewhere.

We also want to use this blog as an opportunity to keep you informed about important updates, community events, and the ways we're working to improve the services we offer. Whether it's an exciting new program, a public safety initiative, or a look behind the scenes at the work BTES does to keep things running smoothly, you'll find updates right there.

We encourage you to subscribe and check back regularly for helpful insights. If there's a topic you're particularly interested in or a question you have that you'd like us to address, please don't hesitate to reach out at [btes.net/blogrequest](mailto:btes.net/blogrequest). We're here to be a trusted resource for you, and we look forward to this new way of communicating with you throughout the year.

I am excited for what 2025 brings and the continued opportunity we have to serve you this year.

Blessings to you,



Clayton Dowell  
Chief Executive Officer

## BTES News

Owned and published by Bristol Tennessee Essential Services, serving more than 34,000 electric customers and approximately 19,000 fiber customers.

**Clayton Dowell, P.E.**  
Chief Executive Officer

Address changes, news items and suggestions should be sent to:  
PO Box 549, Bristol, TN 37621

Editor: Leslie Blevins

### Our Mission

To provide essential services that enrich our community while striving to make tomorrow better than today.

### Our Vision

To be our community's trusted resource for energy and connectivity.



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CHANNEL**

**@BTESVIDEOS**

## BRIDGING THE SKILLS GAP WITH TRANSFR'S VIRTUAL REALITY

Securing well-paying jobs in high demand fields often hinge on the practical skills individuals possess. Unfortunately, a significant skills gap exists in key sectors like manufacturing, automotive, and construction. This gap can be attributed to outdated perceptions of skilled trades and a lack of awareness about the opportunities available in these industries. With over half of the current manufacturing workforce set to retire by 2030, millions of job openings are expected, and many of these roles do not require a four-year degree. The solution to filling these vacancies lies in empowering individuals with the right skills—skills that can be developed through hands-on, simulation-based training like the Transfr Virtual Reality Platform.

BTES Business Development Manager April Eads explains, "To support collaborative efforts in training and education, BTES and the Community Team applied for and received Workforce Invest Grants from the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) to purchase the Transfr VR Platform for the Bristol Tennessee City School System and Sullivan County Schools."

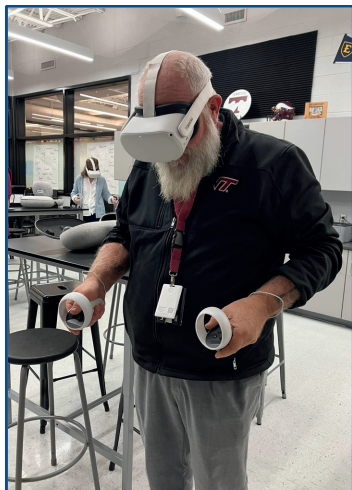
Transfr's innovative platform offers a unique opportunity to equip individuals with practical skills in industries such as welding, automotive repair, electrical, healthcare, and information technology.

Eads continued, "By incorporating the Transfr VR Platform into Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs throughout the BTES service area, we can provide students with valuable skills that directly translate to the workforce. Investing in these programs can lead to increased employment opportunities, economic advancement, and a stronger local economy, particularly for individuals facing barriers to employment."

With Transfr VR, students can engage in realistic career simulations, gaining practical experience.

"Since Transfr VR was introduced to Bristol Tennessee Middle and High School last year, the results have been impressive. Hundreds of career exploration simulations have been completed, demonstrating the growing interest and effectiveness of this training model. By continuing to invest in workforce development initiatives like the Transfr VR Platform, we strengthen partnerships between education, industry, and economic development," said Eads.

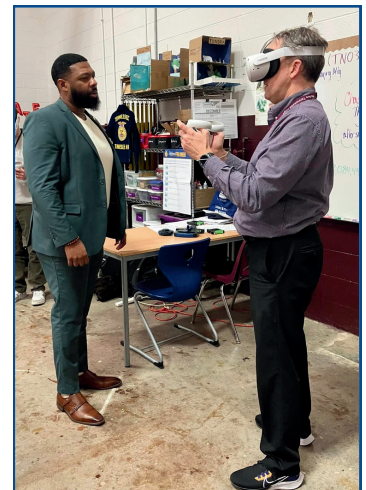
Teachers and others from the Sullivan County School System were trained in December and students will begin using the devices to explore career opportunities this month.



*THS Culinary Arts Teacher Cary Sauls tries out the Transfr VR Platform.*



*Career and Technical Education teachers and others from Sullivan County Schools were trained on the Transfr VR Platform. Part of the training consisted of using the virtual reality headsets and participating in a career exploration module.*



*Transfr offers a range programs to help CTE programs and show students career pathways.*

## DEREK ANDERSON NAMED TO TRI-CITIES 40 UNDER FORTY CLASS OF 2024



BTES extends our congratulations to Working Foreman of Transmission and Distribution Derek Anderson who was recently named to the Tri-Cities 40 under Forty class. Each year, nominees are solicited by The Business Journal of Tri-Cities Tennessee/Virginia for the 40 Under Forty program. Nominees are judged on their professional success and achievements as active members of the community.

Derek started his career at BTES in 2012 as a Groundman. Now serving as a Working Foreman in the Transmission and Distribution Department, he plays a crucial role in overseeing the construction and maintenance of electric facilities. He has led several major projects including essential upgrades to a substation and installation of fiber and electric infrastructure for a subdivision to help increase housing opportunities. Derek has also provided mutual aid assistance to utilities in Santee Cooper, SC, and Knoxville and Chattanooga, TN.

Derek is a certified CPR and First Aid instructor and oversees and trains BTES' employees. He also holds a limited explosives blaster license. His Associate Degree in Electrical Technology from Northeast State Community College and his current endeavor to obtain a bachelor's degree from ETSU further highlight his commitment to ongoing professional development.

Beyond his technical expertise, Derek is deeply involved in his community. His dedication extends to his church where he serves as a Deacon, Interim Music Director, Sunday School Teacher, and VBS Leader. He has traveled to Nicaragua on multiple mission trips and volunteers with Holston Habitat for Humanity, the South Holston Lake Cleanup, Hope Haven Homeless Ministry, and the United Way of Bristol.

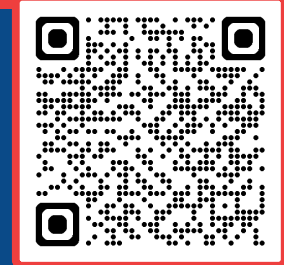
Derek joins several other BTES employees who have been honored with the 40 under Forty award. These include System Engineer Chris De Troye (2022), Network Specialist Cody Cornelius (2021), Working Foreman of Transmission and Distribution Cole Morgan (2019), Director of Fiber Services Jessica Waterman (2018), Supervisor of Customer Experience Diane Smith (2014), Supervisor of Accounting Heather Jenkins (2013), Supervisor of Technical Operations and Purchasing Cody Johnson (2013), Public Relations and Communications Manager Leslie Blevins (2012), Chief Executive Officer Clayton Dowell (2011), Vice President of People Operations Tara Ellis (2010), Supervisor of Networks Michael Parker (2010), and Business Development Manager April Eads (2003).

## BTES POWER 7 RECEIVES NATIONAL RECOGNITION



BTES Power 7 received the Award of Merit from the American Public Power Association (APPA) for our video highlighting our employees' efforts in restoring services to our customers following Winter Storm Heather. APPA's Excellence in Public Power Communications awards program recognizes excellence in raising awareness of public power and telling the public power story.

You can watch the video on BTES' YouTube Channel: @BTESvideos





# Unlock your home's hidden money-saving secrets.

Take our free DIY Home Energy Assessment.

When you save energy you save money. If you're ready to boost your home's energy efficiency but don't know where to start, TVA EnergyRight® and your Local Power Company are here to help. Our free, self-guided DIY Home Energy Assessment lets you explore the ins and outs of your home's energy use at your own pace, at the time that's best for you.



## Customized info to help you save.

- Free, easy-to-read report with customized energy improvement recommendations for your home.
- Free energy-saving kit with LED light bulbs, insulated socket sealers and more.
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# WINTER SAFETY

## DRESS WELL

Dress in layers. If you get too warm, you'll be able to shed a layer and still be comfortable. Avoid cotton such as jeans, flannel, and sweatpants as cotton stops providing warmth when its wet.

## WEAR SUNSCREEN

The sun still produces ultraviolet radiation during the colder months and snow on the ground can reflect the sun's harmful rays onto your face and skin. Use at least SPF 30.

## HYDRATE

Drinking water is key. Even though it is cold, you may still sweat and get dehydrated while participating in winter activities.

## WARM UP

To lower the risk of injury, don't jump straight into winter activities without first warming up your muscles.

*Tips from familysafetyhealth.com*

## The Lighter Side

WHY WAS THE SNOWMAN  
LOOKING IN A BAG OF  
CARROTS?



HE WAS PICKING HIS NOSE!

# Favorite Recipes

## Hamburger Soup

- |                                 |                            |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 tbsp olive oil                | 5 cups beef broth          |
| 1 lb ground beef                | 15 oz diced tomatoes       |
| 1 onion, diced                  | 8 oz tomato sauce          |
| 1 stalk celery, diced           | 2 tsp Worcestershire sauce |
| 2 cloves garlic, minced         | 1 tsp Italian seasoning    |
| 2 medium peeled potatoes, diced | salt and pepper (to taste) |
| 3 cups frozen mixed vegetables  |                            |

In a medium-sized soup/stock pot, heat the olive oil and brown ground beef, onion, celery, and garlic. Drain any excess fat. Add potatoes, broth, tomatoes, tomato sauce, Worcestershire, Italian seasoning, salt, and pepper. Simmer for 10 minutes. Add frozen vegetables and simmer for 15-20 minutes or until potatoes are tender.

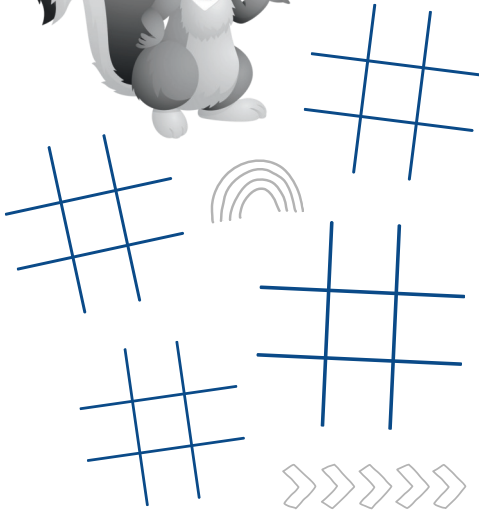
## Dutch Oven Minestrone Soup

- 2 cans (14-1/2 oz each) beef broth
- 1 jar (24 oz) marinara sauce
- 3 cups frozen mixed vegetables, thawed
- 1 can (15-1/2 oz) navy beans, rinsed and drained
- 24 frozen fully cooked Italian meatballs, thawed
- 5 oz frozen chopped spinach, thawed and squeezed dry
- 1 package (9 ounces) refrigerated cheese tortellini
- Shredded Parmesan cheese

In a Dutch oven, combine broth, marinara sauce, and mixed vegetables. Bring to a boil; add beans, meatballs, and spinach. Simmer, uncovered, for 5 minutes. Stir in tortellini; cook 7 minutes longer. Serve with Parmesan cheese.



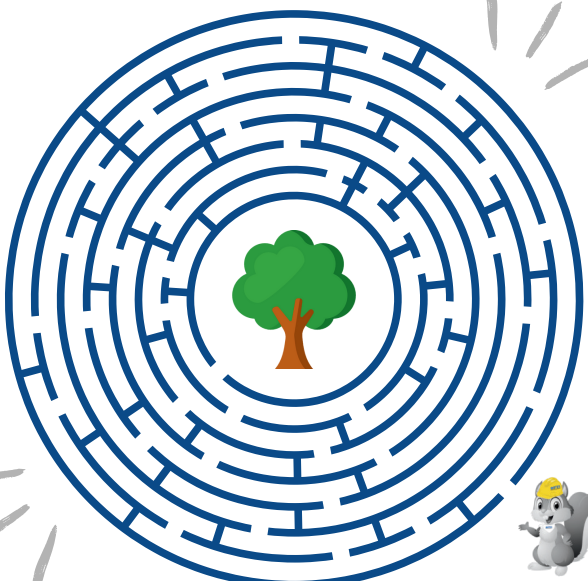
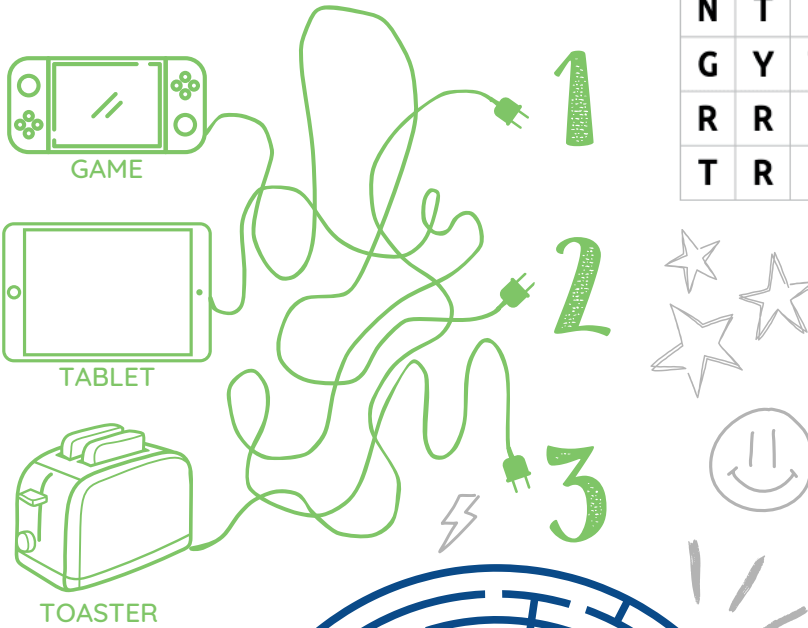
# NUTTY'S ACTIVITY PAGE



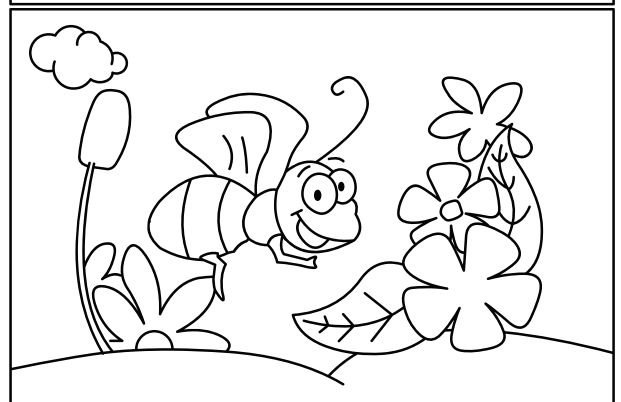
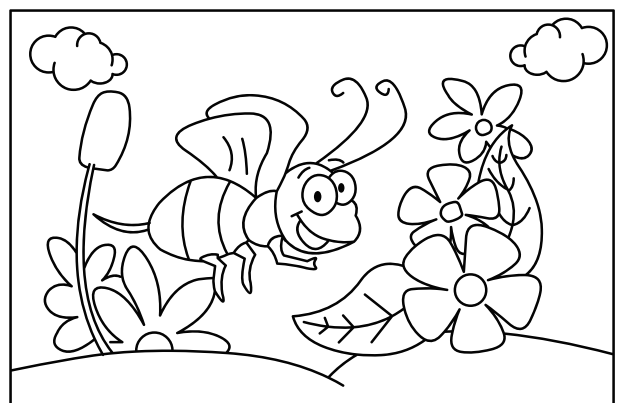
BTES  
POWER  
PLANTING  
NUTTY  
TRIM  
ELECTRICITY  
VINES  
TREES  
LANDSCAPING  
VEGETATION  
SQUIRREL  
RELIABILITY  
SAFETY

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WHICH PLUG GOES WITH WHICH ELECTRONIC?



Nutty's friend, Buzkie, loves buzzing around flowers and other vegetation. Find the 7 differences in the pictures below.





**Bristol Tennessee Essential Services**

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### YOUR COMMENTS ARE IMPORTANT

Please list the articles you found most interesting in this issue of BTES News, then clip out this form and mail it to the address below. (Winter 2025)

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

Other comments, story ideas or questions:

Please return to:  
BTES News, PO Box 549, Bristol, TN 37621

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name and address (optional)

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