

# Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

## Northern Exposure: The Beltway Visits Alaskan Peninsula for NCTA Project

When we spotted **NCTA** Strategic Communications SVP *Brian Dietz's* photos from an Alaska trip on social media recently, we could tell they weren't from the typical tourist spots frequented by cruise ship passengers. Turns out, he was there on a cable association mission to document **GCI's** challenging work of building broadband infrastructure in the remote location of King Cove, Alaska.

"The trip was part of an ongoing effort to highlight the hard work that's going on in communities all over the country to connect rural Americans to broadband. We've traveled over the past couple of years to Florida, South Dakota, Pennsylvania and Arizona to spotlight some of those projects that are going on," Dietz told us. "We thought about what is perhaps the hardest place in the world to connect someone to broadband infrastructure, and it didn't take too long to think it was probably Alaska, and certainly the Aleutian Islands where GCI is working out there and has been for the past year or so."

GCI's [efforts](#) to connect the Aleutian Islands includes \$33 million of its own money to lay more than 800 miles of fiber undersea and includes a \$25 million grant from the **USDA's** RUS program. It has provided regular updates on the initiative, with crews currently working in King Cove and Sand Point, preparing each community for their own launches of 2.5 gig internet later this year. But there's something espe-

cially illuminating about getting an outsider's perspective on the project.

Dietz is a Washington policy guy by way of the Midwest, with the 4,000-mile journey all foreign territory for him. After getting to Anchorage, it took two more small planes to get to King Cove, with the final flight a six-seater. The last airport had a gravel runway. "These communities are small, but they're vibrant. People work hard, they provide seafood for a huge number of people in the country and it's just a whole different world."

And they really want reliable internet. That was made apparent as Dietz checked into his hotel and was warned that it had WiFi, but it was unreliable and barely met dial-up standards. The hotel staff "was very excited that GCI was going to deliver it and asked us about when it was going to be completed," the NCTA exec said. "Everyone knows GCI is doing this. They've done great outreach to the homes and businesses in the community. Clearly, it will be a life-changing experience for some people."

Dietz wasn't traveling alone. There was a film crew in tow. He's a bit cagey about what they were doing, but given the emphasis on bringing broadband to every American and NCTA's role as the industry trade association, we can make some guesses.

"I can't tell too much, but we're planning to put together a more intense feature about the challenges of building broadband infrastructure in the nation's most rural and remote regions," he teased, adding that more areas of the

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country will be visited in the coming weeks and months. “It’s really all part of the messaging and advocacy about ensuring that this \$40 billion of new NTIA money and existing money that’s being spent on building broadband is really dedicated to work needed most, which is these unconnected communities.”

Helping the NCTA team navigate the area was *Jenifer Nelson*, GCI’s Director of Rural Affairs and a King Cove native, who Dietz said seemed to know everyone. Multiple times people would come up to her and say, ‘Hey! Haven’t seen you in 10 years!’—yet another difference from Capitol Hill.

The trip home was dramatic as well. First, there was the issue of whether they’d be able to fly out of King Cove. It’s pretty common to get fogged in and have to delay a flight by a day or more. Dietz and the crew lucked out and were able to leave on time. When they got to Anchorage, there was a short sight-seeing stop through a National Wildlife Refuge. “We saw three grizzly bears. They were very far away, but that was good,” quipped Dietz. “Our film director had a drone so we stopped and flew over them with his camera and you can see how scary they are.”

No word on whether the bears are hoping for broadband.

## ESPN GEARS UP FOR MLB DRAFT, DERBY

It’s baseball’s time to shine as the heat of the summer rolls on. **MLB** is preparing for its midsummer events, and **ESPN** will be the go-to destination for coverage. It’ll begin with the 2023 MLB Draft on Sunday, where ESPN will televise the first round starting at 7pm and **ESPN+** will stream the entire first night. The Draft isn’t just about the young players entering the league, though. Commentator *Karl Ravech* noted college baseball’s growing popularity among younger demographics, and he sees the MLB Draft as a bridge for fans to get hooked to the professional ranks. “So many of the consumers of the College World Series through the course of each round did it through a digital operation,” Ravech said Thursday on a call with media. “They did it through ESPN+. They did not necessarily all come to linear ... I think ESPN+ is another way that you tap into [younger audiences].” The Home Run Derby will follow Monday at 8pm, and fans can expect to see some enhancements on the big screen. “This is going to be the most aggressive approach we’ve ever taken with experimentation,” VP, Production *Phil Orlins* said. “We have actually chosen not only what we did last year to show exit velocity and launch angle in real time on one side of the screen, but we will actually replace the somewhat fragmented ball-follow coverage with multiple balls in the air with a virtual,

three-dimensional replication—more like you probably see on golf coverage.” The primary broadcast will be on ESPN with Ravech and *Eduardo Perez* leading the commentating duties, but **ESPN2** will have an alternate StatCast telecast as well with *Kevin Brown*, *Jessica Mendoza* and *Mike Petriello*.

## SHAKEUP AT NBCU

**Comcast** President *Mike Cavanagh* is making his mark at **NBCUniversal** as he unveiled a new leadership structure for the company. Cavanagh won’t name a new CEO for NBCU, but rather he’ll continue to lead it and hand responsibilities to the main leadership team. The team will have four operational heads: *Donna Langley* as Chairman, NBCU Studio Group & Chief Content Officer; *Mark Lazarus* as Chairman, NBCU Media Group; *Cesar Conde* as Chairman, NBCU News Group and *Mark Woodbury* as Chairman/CEO, Universal Destinations & Experiences. Langley will oversee content across NBCU’s portfolio while also guiding creative teams including Universal Filmed Entertainment Group and Universal Studio Group. *Pearlena Igbokwe* will remain Chairman, Universal Studio Group. Lazarus’ new role will have him lead NBCU’s TV and streaming platforms, distribution and monetization, and he’ll continue to operate its TV networks, DTC business and **NBC Sports Group** and NBC affiliate relations. Reporting to him will be *Frances Berwick*, who will assume the role of Chairman, NBCU Entertainment after *Susan Rovner* stepped down. For Conde, his expanded duties include overseeing NBCU Local and NBCU **Telemundo** Enterprises Group. Woodbury will manage the company’s destinations worldwide and its consumer products and merchandise group.

## VYVE BROADBAND MAKES A DEAL

**Vyve Broadband** will acquire Oklahoma-based **Community Cable & Broadband**, describing it as a tuck-in acquisition that will expand its presence in the state. Established in 1979, CCB serves eight communities around Skiatook, OK. Once the acquisition is finalized, Vyve will upgrade the network to deliver Vyve Gig Internet speeds and offer mesh WiFi.

## NC’S GREAT GRANTS

North Carolina Gov. *Roy Cooper* announced nearly \$80 million in grants will go toward providing households and businesses in the state with high-speed internet. Recipients include **Charter**, **Brightspeed** and **AT&T**. The funding comes from the Growing Rural Economies with Access to Technology (GREAT) program and it’ll impact 25,825 households and

862 businesses across 33 counties. Eligible recipients must participate in the Affordable Connectivity Program or provide a comparable low-cost option, and the ISP must provide speeds of at least 100 Mbps download and 20 Mbps upload.

**CARRIAGE**

**LIV Golf** is growing its presence in airports across the U.S. The organization struck a deal with **ReachTV** to have live Friday tournament coverage and non-live past tournament coverage air non-exclusively in the U.S. Reach will distribute LIV content to more than 2,500 screens inside airports as well as more than 500,000 hotel rooms in North America.

**FIBER FRENZY**

**Metronet** launched its fiber network to residents and businesses in the initial construction areas throughout Findlay, Ohio. Residents will have access to multi-gigabit speeds up to 2 gigabits; and businesses may access speeds up to 10 gigabits.

**PROGRAMMING**

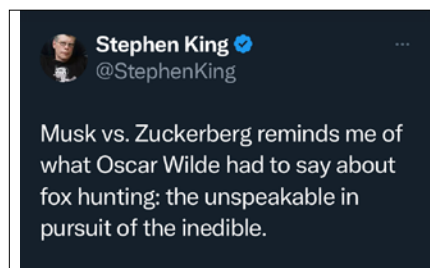
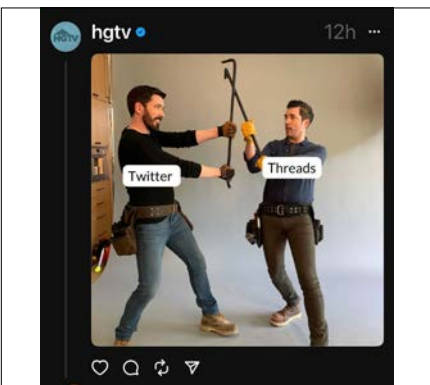
**HBO** is canceling “Game Theory with *Bomani Jones*” after two seasons. – Season 2 of “Luxury Hunting Lodges of America” will premiere Monday on **Fox Nation**. – **Discovery Channel’s** new series “Naked and Afraid Castaways” will begin July 30 at 8pm. The “Naked and Afraid” spinoff will have nine competitors use their skills to navigate a remote tropical island with no maps or tools. – Former **HLN** meteorologist *Bob Van Dillen* is joining **Fox Weather** as an on-air host. He’ll begin Monday. Van Dillen was the meteorologist for HLN’s morning show “Morning Express with Robin Meade” for more than 20 years.

**PEOPLE**

**Dan Sormaz** was hired by **Fubo** as SVP, Design, where he’ll head up the vMVPD’s product design operations. He joins from the digital collectibles and fantasy sports startup Sorare, and prior to that he spent 10 years at **Spotify** and ultimately rose to VP, Design. There, he built and led design organizations and launched consumer products.

**CABLEFAX DASHBOARD**

**Social Media Hits**



**Research**

(Source: [Vox Media and The Verge’s Hope, Fear and AI report, a survey of 2,000 consumers](#))

- > One in three Americans over the age of 18 has already used generative artificial intelligence tools.
- > 78% of consumers surveyed want AI usage to be clearly disclosed in digital content.
- > 44% of those surveyed have asked AI to copy an artist’s style, while 70% believe artists should be compensated when AI copies their work. Another 43% believe companies should ban copying artists.

**Up Ahead**

**JULY 20-23:** [Comic-Con International](#), San Diego

**JULY 30-AUGUST 2:** [The Independent Show 2023](#); Minneapolis, MN

**AUGUST 7-8:** [C2HRCOn](#), Brooklyn

**AUGUST 20-23:** [Fiber Connect 2023](#); Orlando

**SEPT 18-19:** [The WICT Network Leadership Conference](#); NYC

**SEPT 19-20:** [NAMIC 37th Annual Conference](#); NYC

**Quotable**

“We have a pretty significant number of bets that we’re making and they’re long-term bets. But you always have to look at whether you’re allocating the resource as efficiently as you possibly could even when you’re making bets and you’re pursuing them over a long period of time. In the case of Prime Video, I’m very bullish on where we’re headed. As we continue to grow the number of people watching Prime Video content, the content continues to get better and better.”  
 - Amazon CEO Andy Jassy on analyzing Prime Video content costs during an interview on [CNBC’s “Closing Bell: Overtime”](#)

