



MAKING CONNECTIONS

Just think of Texas Info Media, or TIM, as the Swiss Army knife of technology integration. Handy. Versatile. Ready to adapt to any given location. And pretty sharp, too. That's the duo of Cyndi Graves Fairbanks and Steve Fairbanks, who are the owners of TIM.

ABOVE: Steve and Cyndi Fairbanks, with their 11-year-old daughter Hannah, enjoy living the country life in Yantis while taking advantage of the state-of-the-art technology in which their business specializes.

In basic form, they marry cutting-edge computer technology, both hardware and software, with many other types of electronics to provide innovative media rooms, business electronics solutions, security systems, energy-efficiency tools and combinations of all of those, resulting in some “gee whiz” outcomes. Their solutions and audiovisual designs can end up being as grand and as elaborate as can be imagined and paid for, or as simplistic and practical, with cost and budgets attendant to both.

Almost every electronic device—phones, televisions and even household items—has a computer chip. And, increasingly, hardware and software engineers are developing ways for these devices to talk with each other and even work and play together. For the layperson, and even for businesses, the problem of figuring out how to make all of the technology work together, and why you would even want it to, can be insurmountable. That’s where TIM comes in. The company specializes in taking the mystery and drudgery out of technology

stranger, but Steve finally did call Cyndi and she was intrigued by his baritone voice. That phone call led to a lunch meeting and eventually a 1999 Lake Tahoe wedding.

Ultimately, both of their careers led them to Tyler. Steve took a position with MCI/WorldCom, and Cyndi was working for the J.C. Penney corporate office from their Holly Lake Ranch home. As was typical at the time with large corporations, the trend of outsourcing information technology positions affected both of their jobs, virtually at the same time. With a baby on the way and neither of them with a job, Steve vowed that he’d never be in a position to be laid off again, and he and Cyndi decided to start their own web development company. Now, while they still design, host and perform custom programming for websites and handle core web clients like the City of Quitman, Yantis Federal Credit Union and others, the bulk of their work has segued into integrating audio, video, phone, voice and data technology.

This aspect of the business got started when Steve was

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integration, and building and installing total solutions for businesses and individuals. They’ve been doing it since 2000. Both Steve and Cyndi have computing credentials and knowledge that span decades, which they apply to TIM.

Steve has some pretty hefty credits, including a Bachelor of Science in management information systems and a master’s in telecommunications management from Oklahoma State University. After graduating with his B.S. in the 1990s, Steve knew there would not be many high-tech jobs in his field in his hometown of Ponca City, Oklahoma. So he landed in Dallas, starting his career with HBS Systems as a hardware and software technician. He traveled extensively, gaining enormous amounts of hands-on experience. He then joined telecommunications giant Nortel Networks, where he worked in technical, managerial and executive positions.

During that time, he met Cyndi Graves, who was herself working with software and computers at various companies such as Enserch and Peerless. At the time, Cyndi’s friend had been trying to play Cupid and introduce her to Steve. As these things will go, neither were that enthusiastic about meeting a

designing and constructing an audiovisual setup for his own home. He asked friend and contractor Dale Beggs if he’d be interested in a company to do that type of work in a custom home he was building. The idea took off.

Over the years, TIM’s client list has grown, as has their experience and services. Steve works with building contractors from the outset of home design and develops technology solutions for new construction. He also works on existing buildings and homes. Every client is different, as are their requirements. The types of projects include dedicated home theater/media room design and installation, plus whole-house and -business audio and video, incorporating flat screens and surround sound. The business installs indoor digital signage systems for corporate clients and works with fiber optics and all of the cabling. They also install home management (or NEST) systems that allow monitoring and controlling temperatures and energy use in a home or business from anywhere in the world via wireless technology.

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watch TV and engage with others via social media, or how we take care of our business via apps. Steve aims to remain at the forefront of ever-changing and advancing technologies, as he's a member of the Custom Electronic Design and Installation Association. He regularly attends industry seminars and conferences that showcase the latest technology, systems and techniques.

The Fairbanks showcase many of these technologies in their state-of-the-art showroom at their home, which also serves as the business headquarters, in the rural environment near Yan-



Steve Fairbanks displays a NEST thermostat, which offers control from smartphones, computers and tablets, to allow a user to remotely operate and monitor their HVAC system no matter where they are.

tis. One would not think that such a rural location would exude cutting-edge technology. But in fact, it makes a beautiful point: No matter where a person is, the right combination of technology and equipment offers the ability to stay intimately connected with other people and places, even if they are across the world. For example, when Steve and Cyndi travel they can, by Internet or WiFi connection to an iPad, iPod or computer, see right inside their rural home through video cameras. They can

also see the inside and outside temperatures and even control the HVAC system from afar or collect usage data. Or, if one family member is traveling, the whole family, including 11-year-old daughter Hannah, can video conference. It's also pretty safe to say that the Fairbanks family has one of the sweetest media rooms anywhere in East Texas, boasting cushy theater seats, surround sound and acoustic panels, and it includes both flat screens and a remote-controlled projection screen for a "more authentic" experience if desired.

If that's not enough, an outdoor sound system at TIM headquarters serenades yard activities. Because technology is getting lighter, smarter, more capable, more rugged and more mobile, another trend is outdoor theater and sound. Increasingly, TIM is designing video and audio systems for outdoors. Imagine lounging around the pool, barbecuing on a Saturday afternoon, while watching the big game or a favorite movie. TIM has made that possible—they've even

Commanding your house to do tricks was only for the wildest dreamers, until now.

installed displays on boat docks.

For those thinking about investing in any type of home electronics system, the first thing Cyndi and Steve want to know is what the customer wants to accomplish, the type of environment where it will take place (new construction or existing, indoors or out), a general idea of the timeframe and budget and the customer's technological comfort level. Then Steve will make a personal visit for more thorough planning and to discuss options and products. TIM works directly with one of the largest certified electronics distributors in Dallas and has access to most

brands ideally suited for customization.

For most clients, TIM purchases the equipment through his distributor, but he also says his customers are welcome to buy equipment from any of the big-box stores. But if the product is purchased through TIM, you'll pay virtually the same and his company and his suppliers will support it. When a customer buys components off the shelf at a retailer and something goes wrong, they'll have to contact the manufacturer on their own.



Traditional inside activities like watching the big game are now possible outdoors, as this TIM mounted all-weather screen attests from this poolside open-air patio.

“We are a custom technology provider.”

Steve also says, “I am pretty proud of where we have been. We chose the lifestyle out here, and we are making it work. There are people that do what we do, but we add something. We take the extra steps.”

For example, he says it is the little touches that matter, like ensuring all construction debris is cleaned up after installation. When warranted, they also give their customers “the white glove treatment” donning paper covers on shoes to avoid tracking in dirt. And, after the sale, they understand and act on the

“We get you the same warranty,” Steve said. “It all comes down to the fact that we test every product before we install it in a customer’s home or office. If it fails, we get it replaced.”

urgency of customer deadlines if a system is having issues.

TIM was the provider of choice for a business in the iconic Bank of America building in downtown Dallas when it remod-

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Steve also says, “We pay attention to the customer. You will have all of the technology. But what you are getting is not just a product, but a service.”

Working with TIM, you’ll also get an expert driver on the superhighway of technology to help with picking the right product for the right application. It could boil down to something as simple as specifying a waterproof remote control for systems around the pool or understanding the right apps to download to take full advantage of certain features of a system. Even little things like the paint choice for a theater room can make a difference. Most would not know where to begin. And that is the greatest value of TIM—knowing what’s available and how to make it work seamlessly together.

From the boardroom to the classroom to the home theater or backyard, TIM connects their customers with the rest of the world. Or they can envelop them in a top-notch theater or give them the ability to command and control different home or office systems from anywhere. While all of these things may seem not to relate, they do, through the computer systems and platforms that run them. Steve sums up what they do by saying,

eled and upgraded technology for a conference room, and TIM has designed and installed systems for many other businesses throughout Texas and other states. The company has also designed and installed state-of-the-art media rooms in some of the most elite homes in Dallas-Fort Worth and East Texas.

Bringing a Hollywood box-office experience into your home has never been easier. Instantly talking with friends and businesses thousands of miles away has also never been so simple or so fun. And commanding your house to do tricks was only for the wildest dreamers, until now. Now, you only have to know what you want to accomplish, and who to call to help you figure it all out. Some of those people are Texas Info Media in Yantis. They may be remote, but then again, that makes the point exactly.

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Texas Info Media is a member of Wood County Electric Cooperative and is headquartered in Yantis with a second office location in Dallas. You can call the business at (903) 878-7004 or toll-free at 1-888-682-1098, or email information@texasinfomedia.com. The website is texasinfomedia.com.



Feathering Your Nest with Cash

Do you want to know how much money you'll save on your next electricity bill if you adjust your thermostat by a degree or two? There's now a smart gadget that can tell you. It's called NEST. In essence, it's just a thermostat. But it's an incredibly smart one. Maybe even genius.

When heating or cooling a home or building, most people just set the thermostat and leave it alone. But NEST, developed by one of the inventors of the iPod, learns about the energy use routines of the inhabitants of a building and programs itself to adapt. For example, if you prefer cooler temperatures while sleeping, after experiencing several temperature adjustments, "it gets it." Once NEST knows and stores that information, it will adjust the thermostat automatically so the user does not

need to. Further, the NEST can learn the occupant's time-of-use data, such as when a building is not occupied. It will make thermostat adjustments to use energy more efficiently at that time. NEST can also differentiate between weekends and weekdays, and it will make adjustments accordingly.

For the average home, HVAC accounts for about 50 percent of the energy used, equating to about 50 percent of the bill. Therefore, enhancing the energy efficiency of the HVAC can result in hefty cost savings. There are many types of programmable thermostats that will help save energy, but those are mostly static, meaning that a user programs in temperature settings for weekday and weekend use. But that data and the settings remain until the thermostat is physically reprogrammed. These types of thermostats may or may not have a "vacation" mode to adjust the thermostat for lower energy use for extended periods. The NEST, on the other hand, programs itself based on your habits, so you don't have to.

What's more, a NEST can be controlled and offers data analysis anywhere via a computer, smartphone or tablet. The app to do this is a free download and it offers unparalleled functionality. By logging in, a user can see all of the current settings, change any setting and review energy-use history. When changing the temperature remotely, it's just as if the user is at the location where the thermostat is. As a side benefit, a user can even change the temperature setting from bed with a smartphone. Energy conservation is made simple with the NEST.

A NEST unit starts at around \$250. The app is currently available for iPhone, iPod Touch, and iPad, and an Android version will be available soon. Learn more at nest.com.



From anywhere there is a connection, an iPhone user who employs a NEST thermostat can view their energy history and control the HVAC system.

WCEC's 2013 Scholarship Winners Announced

It's June, and lots of East Texas students are readying themselves for first-time fall classes at their new university. Ten of those students will have their financial load lifted, in part, through WCEC's scholarship program, which is funded entirely by unclaimed capital credit payments returned to WCEC by the State of Texas.

Three independent judges—WCEC members Darla Moss, Patricia Durst and Sam Mullen—selected the scholarship winners based on exceptional essays and applications. These students were each awarded \$2,000 toward their continuing education.

The 2013 scholarship recipients are: **SPENCER CAPPS**, Quitman; **HUNTER FAIR**, Hawkins; **JONATHAN HASKETT**, Quitman; **OLIVIA HEARD**, Mineola; **ALSTON JOHNSON**, Quitman; **KATHERINE KERWIN**, Harmony; **MARY MCCREIGHT**, Miller Grove; **HANNAH PINNELL**, Winnsboro; **DESTYN TAYLOR**, Grand Saline; and **MADELYN WOOD**, Mineola.

In addition, one \$5,000 scholarship was awarded to James McDonald from Ben Wheeler. He is currently studying electrical engineering at Texas A&M University.

"We had an outstanding group of applicants and a record number of submissions for the judges to choose from this year," said WCEC CEO/General Manager Debbie Robinson. "We thank all who applied as well as the judges who truly had a tough task to pick from such remarkable candidates. I look forward to seeing this outstanding group of scholarship recipients reach their educational goals with this scholarship help."

Give Grads Safety and Efficiency

Looking for a unique gift for a graduate heading off to college in the fall? Encourage electrical safety, even away from home.

Help the college students in your life avoid electrical and cooking fires by sending them off with electronics that bear a label from a reputable consumer product testing facility, such as Underwriters Laboratories, or UL.

Nearly three-quarters of dormitory fires result from cooking accidents, according to the National Fire Protection Association.

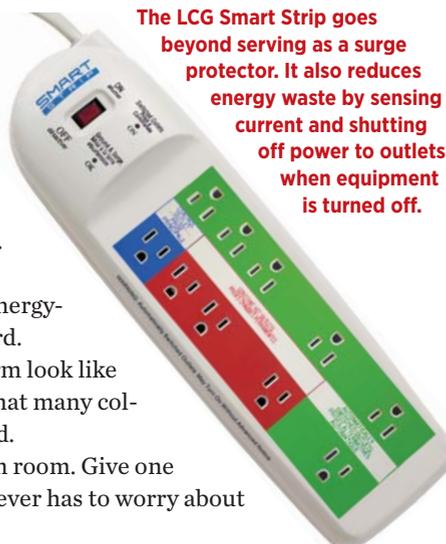
Consider these gift ideas for safer dorm living:

▶ With computers, stereos and MP3 players, your grad will head to college with more electronics than outlets. A power strip is a college must. Buy one with an overcurrent protector, which will shut off if the strip is drawing too much current.

▶ Instead of an electric hot plate, give a microwave for easy dorm cooking. These energy-efficient appliances pose less of a fire hazard.

▶ Candles are a quick way to make a dorm look like home, but they cause so many dorm fires that many colleges ban them. Give an LED candle instead.

▶ Coffeemakers are a luxury in the dorm room. Give one with an automatic shutoff so the student never has to worry about leaving the burner on.



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