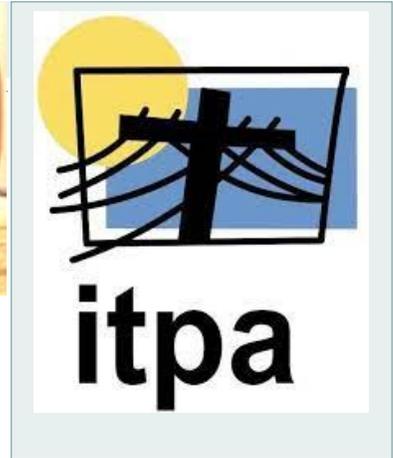




Carotel Club / Tar Heel Chapter
Quarterly Newsletter



CAROTEL'S ELIZABETH BLAND MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS ACCEPTED THROUGH AUGUST 1, 2023

Scholarship applications are being accepted for Carotel's 2023 *Elizabeth Bland Memorial Scholarship*. Applicants must be enrolled in a graduate or undergraduate program in any field at an accredited college or university and must have maintained a 3.0 GPA for the most recent completed year (high school or college.)

Carotel Pioneer Club members and families of club members are eligible to apply. Carotel members must be current on their annual membership dues in order to apply or to sponsor an applicant. Completed applications must be sent to the scholarship committee chairperson with a **postmark date no later than August 1, 2023**. See additional information and application on Page 9.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- Pioneer Excellence Award
- Recipient Ronnie Cashwell.....2
- Tar Heel Chapter 54th Annual Meeting3
- National Project Awards.....4
- Message from Carotel President Janet Cashwell.....5
- Kindness Matters.....6
- Clinton Retiree Gathering7
- Former CTT President
- Wayne Peterson Honored8
- VEBA v. Life Insurance8
- Carotel Scholarship Application.....9

SAVE THE DATES

August 1

Carotel Scholarship Applications Due to Carol Harrell

August 25-26

Tar Heel Chapter Annual Assembly at the Aberdeen Hampton Inn, Aberdeen, NC

October 27-29

Carotel Convention at the Inn at Pine Knoll Shores

If you know of a retiree or employee gathering or event, we'd love to hear about it and share your photos in our newsletter! Send updates to:



ITPA AWARDS PIONEERING EXCELLENCE AWARD TO RONNIE CASHWELL

Ronnie Cashwell is well known and well loved by Carotel Pioneers and at the state chapter and national ITPA levels. Ronnie has been a dedicated ITPA Pioneer for decades. And during the ITPA's annual spring assembly, his dedication and selfless service to the ITPA and to his community was honored when he was awarded the Pioneering Excellence National Award.



A surprised Ronnie, accompanied by wife Janet Holliday-Cashwell, accepts the Pioneering Excellence Award. Ann Beck, Awards Committee Chairman announced the award, which was presented by ITPA President Daniel Barnhardt. The Pioneering Excellence Award is the highest honor awarded to individuals by the ITPA. Recipients are Pioneers who have consistently over a period of years made significant contributions to his or her community

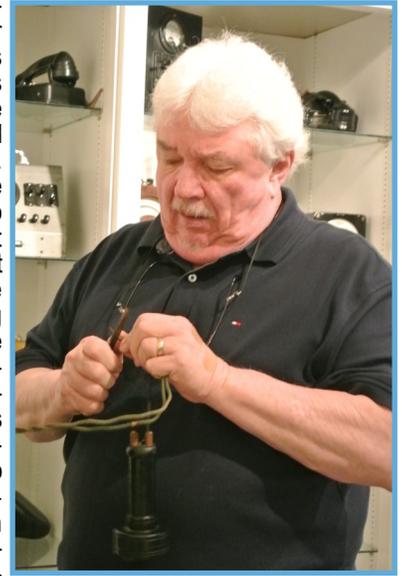
Ronnie has been a Pioneer since 1985 and is a member of the Carotel Pioneer Club. His telephony career began at Carolina Telephone in 1972, and during his 32 year tenure he held several positions, from Central Office Repairman, to A/V specialist, to video sales engineer. Ronnie has continually served his community through his local, state chapter and the national ITPA. He was the Carotel club president in 1998 and has served with tireless dedication as a director on the Carotel board nearly continually since the early '90's. He has also served the state Tarheel chapter continuously since 1994 in various roles, including entertainment committee, chairman and president. He was the Tar Heel Chapter president in 2003.

At the national level Ronnie has served as 1st Vice president (2012-2013), national president (2013 -2014), nominating chair (2015-2016) and has served as the national by-laws chairperson since 2016. Ronnie planned and hosted the 23rd Annual Assembly in New Bern, NC. He has repeatedly served on the national assembly committee to help make the annual assembly a success for other ITPA presidents.

Ronnie currently serves on the ITPA awards committee, is on the board of directors for the ITPA Charitable Foundation, is President of the ITPA Historical Foundation, Vice President of the Tar Heel Chapter and is Entertainment chairman for both the Carotel Club and Tar Heel Chapter.

Ronnie doesn't merely hold positions to fill a slot. He tirelessly works in whatever capacity he is asked to serve in. If there is a phone meeting, he's on the line. If there is an in-person meeting, he drives the distance to be there. If there is a community project, a club or chapter event, or a presentation in honor of other club members, Ronnie does what it takes to lend his support. Club and chapter members across the nation know that involving Ronnie means an involved and caring contributor.

Ronnie is particularly passionate about preserving our telephony history and has spent hundreds of hours setting up displays for the museum, repairing and maintaining equipment. Despite the distance, he makes regular trips to Hinesville, GA to assist not only with the museum but with a myriad of things at the national level, including events in support of the Hinesville community. Ronnie contributes to the museum's success in numerous ways and his technical expertise has equipped him to get the old, donated equipment to work. Often when traveling, Ronnie has purchased items that the museum does not have and has donated those to the museum. Ronnie has particularly enjoyed seeing kids and adults react to demonstrations of old AE step switches or turning the dials on old rotary phones.



For decades, Ronnie has been responsible for arranging accommodations for Tar Heel Chapter meetings and the annual Carotel convention. He has also arranged and/or provided entertainment for all chapter/club meetings. He has consistently hauled and set up his sound equipment for these events, saving the clubs many thousands of dollars over the years. Ronnie's honorary title should be "Ghost Buster" because often our answer to "who you gonna call?" is "Ronnie Cashwell!"

Most of the work Ronnie has done for and on behalf of Carotel and the ITPA is behind the scenes. He avoids the spotlight while undertaking critical back stage tasks that go unseen by most. Ronnie generally arrives a day ahead of any event he helps with, typically pulling a trailer full of equipment and supplies. He spends many hours setting up and preparing for events, so that by the time people begin arriving everything looks perfect. He also negotiates contracts and rates with the facility where Carotel and Tar Heel Chapter meetings are held and spends months prior to annual meetings working with the hotel's management and staff to ensure everything is perfect for event attendees.

Ronnie's A/V knowledge has led him to consult for churches in their audiovisual needs for many years. He not only has designed systems but has found the best pricing and purchased the equipment for those churches. He followed up by going into the churches to help with the installations. The only charges he has ever passed on to the church was for most of the equipment and supplies, never his time, most often donating any remaining equipment cost to the church projects. He designed, installed and purchased the system used at Oakview Christian Church, to which he belonged, when the congregation constructed its first building. Ronnie did not merely oversee or supervise the installation of the sound system – he pulled the cable, placed the wiring, and made the connectivities himself.

Ronnie's A/V knowledge has led him to consult for churches in their audiovisual needs for many years. He not only has designed systems but has found the best pricing and purchased the equipment for those churches. He followed up by going into the churches to help with the installations. The only charges he has ever passed on to the church was for most of the equipment and supplies, never his time, most often donating any remaining equipment cost to the church projects. He designed, installed and purchased the system used at Oakview Christian Church, to which he belonged, when the congregation constructed its first building. Ronnie did not merely oversee or supervise the installation of the sound system – he pulled the cable, placed the wiring, and made the connectivities himself.

Congratulations to Ronnie on this well deserved recognition, and a heart felt thank you for years of tireless dedication and hard work as a Pioneer.

REGISTER NOW FOR THE TAR HEEL CHAPTER'S 54TH ANNUAL MEETING



The Tar Heel Chapter's 54th annual meeting will be held on August 25-26, 2023 at the Hampton Inn & Suites, 200 Columbus Drive, Aberdeen, NC. Carotel and Tar Heel Chapter Pioneers and guests are invited to attend.

To receive the special room rate of \$139 per night (plus tax) please make your hotel reservation by midnight on July 28th using the following link:

<https://www.hilton.com/en/book/reservation/deeplink/?cityhocr=SNPNCHX&groupCode=CHHITP&arrivaldate=2023-08-25&departuredate=2023-08-27&cid=OM,WW,HILTONLINK,EN,DirectLink&fromId=HILTONLINKDIRECT>

You may contact the hotel directly to book your room at 910-693-4330. You must request the Tar Heel ITPA meeting rate to receive the special rate. Hotel amenities include free hot breakfast, free parking, free Wi-Fi, non-smoking rooms, an indoor pool, and a fitness center. Assembly registration is \$60 per person, and the registration fee includes dinner on Friday and Saturday nights. You may contact the hotel directly to book your room at 910-693-4330. You must request the Tar Heel ITPA meeting rate to receive the special rate. Hotel amenities include free hot breakfast, free parking, free Wi-Fi, non-smoking rooms, an indoor pool, and a fitness center. Assembly registration is \$60 per person, and the registration fee includes dinner on Friday and Saturday nights. **Please send an email to Ronnie Cashwell (bigronc1313@gmail.com) to let him know the number of attendees in your party. You may pay upon arrival during registration on Friday afternoon from 3pm to 5pm. Attendees are encouraged to bring items for the auction.** Proceeds from the auction fund the chapter's scholarship program. Food and toiletry items donated by attendees will be donated to local charities.

Proceeds from the silent auction fund the chapter's scholarship program. Food and toiletry items will be collected to assist local non-profit organizations in serving others in the community. The Carotel Pioneer Club is in the Tar Heel Chapter, which is a Region 3 chapter of the Independent Telecommunications Pioneer Association.

There's plenty to do in the Southern Pines-Pinehurst area. There are nearly 40 golf courses within a 15-mile radius, including the host courses for the 2024 U.S. Open. In fact, the Pinehurst, Southern Pines, Aberdeen area is known as the "Home of American Golf®".

July 2023
Issue 5

THINGS TO DO IN THE ABERDEEN/PINEHURST/ SOUTHERN PINES AREA

Visit some of the numerous thrift stores, consignment shops and antique stores in the Southern area.

Play a round of golf! Pinehurst was the first U.S. Open anchor site, and will host the 2024 championship. In Aberdeen, Legacy Golf Links was voted in the Top 50 Public Golf Courses in the United States for its high-quality rough and fairways.

First-time players and beginners are welcome to try their hand at putting green since their courses are suited to entertain players of all skill levels! Their courses are routed around the lake, adding a hint of difficulty for the seasoned players.

When you're hungry or thirsty... There is no shortage of great restaurants with varied cuisines. You can quench your thirst at any number of pubs.

The Railhouse Brewery, founded by military veterans with a passion for flavorful and tasty craft brews, Railhouse sells some of the finest and most creative taps and liquors! The menu includes a wide range of growlers, kegs and cocktails.

Learn about Aberdeen's history at Malcom Blue Farm. This historic home, built in 1825 and located in the heart of Aberdeen, has been added to the list of the US National Register of Historic Places.

Get some exercise or just enjoy nature at the Aberdeen Lake Park, which features a 1.5 mile path that circles around the surrounding woods.

TAR HEEL CHAPTER OFFICERS/ DIRECTORS

President : Carolyn Thompson

Vice President: Ronnie Cashwell

Treasurer: Carol Harrell

Secretary: Janet Holliday-Cashwell

Auditor: Bill Twyman

Directors:

Janet Holliday-Cashwell, Danny Dennis, Nat Goss, Evelyn Hayes, Jim Jolly, Mike Outlaw, Martha Poole, Darlene Terry

Committee Chairs:

Carolyn Thompson-Publicity/Historical
Carol Harrell-Scholarship
Ronnie Cashwell-Entertainment

CAROTEL AND TAR HEEL CHAPTER RECEIVE NATIONAL PROJECT AWARDS

During the ITPA's annual awards presentation, the Carotel Pioneer Club received the Class B 1st Place Award in the Human Services category for its project "Honoring Our Protectors." Carotel Pioneers and volunteers participated in the project, and they recognized and rewarded more than 150 first responders and other care-givers in several eastern North Carolina communities. Individuals recognized included fire and rescue/EMS personnel, healthcare workers, law enforcement personnel and animal shelter employees and volunteers.

Volunteers donated and delivered bagels, wrote thank you cards, provided Starbucks gift cards, gave specialized Christmas ornaments, candies, and key chains, provided monetary donations, and presented certificates of appreciation.



The Human Services category includes service projects which provide a tangible service in the form of products or devices. It could also include building or work performed on an existing structure or device. This could include the provision of clothing or food, building reconstruction, or any project where a physical product exists. Financial support is also appropriate, as long as the fund-raising efforts are documented. The donation of items such as food, clothing, vehicles, or toys would come under this category.



The Carotel Pioneer Club also received the Class B 1st Place Award for its project "Feeding Hungry Souls and Nourishing Spirits" in the Pioneer Choice category. Club members collected and donated non-perishable foods and toiletries which

were sent to Martha's Mission Cupboard and the Ronald McDonald House of Eastern NC to help citizens in the communities surrounding the location of the club's annual convention. The club donated 154 lbs. of food to Martha's Mission Cupboard and provided toiletry items and non-perishable food items to the Ronald McDonald House.

The Pioneer Choice category includes projects that are unique and do not fit into one of the five categories but are worthy of recognition.



The Tar Heel Chapter received the Class A 1st Place Award in the Pioneer Choice category for its project, "Paying it Forward Times Two." This project benefited the Sandhills Branch Food Pantry and the Life Center Collection of Davidson County. Tar Heel Pioneers donated 120 lbs. of food to the pantry and provided items to the Life Center Collection to help provide high-quality care, support, relief, respite, and counsel for older and impaired adults.

The Sandhills Branch of the Food Bank serves four counties: Lee, Moore, Richmond, and Scotland.

The mission of The Life Center of Davidson County, Inc. is to provide high quality day time care to older and impaired adults and to help improve the quality of life for them and their caregivers by offering support, relief, respite and counsel. The center serves both participants and their families from all areas of Davidson County.

The ITPA Awards Committee meets in March each year to review awards applications for projects from the prior year. Project applications are grouped based on club size and each class is judged by project category.

- Class A Clubs = 1 to 30 members
- Class B Clubs = 31 to 100 members
- Class C Clubs = 101+ members.

In addition to the Human Services and Pioneer Choice categories, project applications may be submitted under the following categories:

The **Community Enhancement** category includes projects that help the entire community, not just one group or individual. Public education, community awareness, health fairs and health screenings are examples of projects that fall into this category as well as various fund-raising events such as Relay for Life or Alzheimer's Walks.

The **Life Enrichment** category includes projects that entertain or provide the element of "human touch" or one-on-one interaction.

The **Spirit of Service** category includes projects that publicly promote the value of telecommunications.

The **National Project** category includes projects that foster a sense of unity throughout the organization. This category recognizes innovative and special efforts to support national projects. While monetary contributions are important, greater emphasis is placed on ingenuity and participation. National projects include those which support Alzheimer's, blood drives, disaster relief efforts, education and troop support.

A NOTE FROM CAROTEL CLUB

PRESIDENT

JANET HOLLIDAY-CASHWELL

2022-23 CAROTEL OFFICERS/DIRECTORS

President

Janet Holliday-Cashwell

Vice President

Brenda Smith

Treasurer

Carol Harrell

Secretary

Mary McLamb

Directors:

Ray Brock (1-year term)
Wendy Davis (2-year term)
Chester Harrell (2-year term)
Darlene House (1-year term)
Mary McLamb(3-year term)
Larry Newsome (3-year term)
Judy Satterwhite (1-year term)
Doug Sibbett(3-year term)
Barbara Smithson (1-year term)
Darlene Terry (2-year term)

Committees:**Scholarship Committee**

Chairman—Carol Harrell

By-Laws Committee

Chairman—Ronnie Cashwell
Mike Outlaw
Carol Harrell,
Doug Sibbett
Ray Brock

Hello Carotel friends,

Happy 4th of July and watermelon season to you! Yes, it's hot but that's what we get in NC in the summertime!

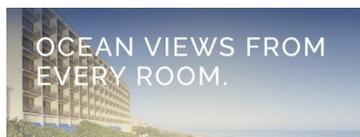
Ronnie and I had the opportunity to join a group of retirees in Rose Hill last Thursday. It was a wonderful reunion with them and the wives who attended. Some 25 past employees were there! Lots of stories swapped and pics snapped - along with a delicious home-style meal. If you've not been to Rose Hill Restaurant, you owe it to yourself to take a drive there to enjoy the food.

The Carotel convention will soon be here (October 27- 28 at The Inn at Pine Knoll Shores). So that you can go ahead and reserve your room, please use the following information to do so. The planning team will meet again soon so be looking for the convention registration in your email box in the next month or so. Meanwhile, you can go ahead and get your room secured. The room rate is \$99/night plus tax based on single occupancy and is an additional \$10/night/person for more than one person per room. While the room rate is the same as last year, this additional fee is new for 2023.

Stay cool like Sampson and enjoy the rest of your summer. Ronnie and I hope you have a safe and fun-filled summer season with family and friends and look forward to seeing you in October! Fall is a-comin'!

Janet

Hotel information: Inn at Pine Knoll Shores



Special room rate: \$99 plus tax for single occupancy.

\$109 plus tax for double occupancy.

The hotel has graciously provided us with a steeply discounted room rate for several years. To receive this great price on your room, convention attendees must contact the front desk directly prior to September 27th at 252-247-4177 and reference "Carotel Club Convention."



THE BENEFITS OF KINDNESS

Kindness is more than just an act or a behavior. Kindness has been shown to increase self-esteem, empathy and compassion, and can improve the mood, not only on the person to whom the kindness is bestowed, but also just as much or more so for the person bestowing the kindness.

People who give of themselves in a balanced manner tend to be healthier and live longer.

“Physiologically, kindness can positively change your brain. Being kind boosts serotonin and dopamine, which are neurotransmitters in the brain that give you feelings of satisfaction and well-being, and cause the pleasure/reward centers in your brain to light up. Endorphins, which are your body’s natural pain killer, also can be released.”

Source: “The Art of Kindness” by Steve Siegle, a licensed professional counselor in Psychiatry & Psychology

Need help to kickstart your kindness habit? Check out the Mayo Clinic Health System’s “Kickstart Kindness” website at <https://www.mayoclinichealthsystem.org/wellness/kindness>

“Be kind whenever possible. It is always possible.”

Dalai Lama

KINDNESS ROCKS!

Aesop, the ancient Greek storyteller, is credited with saying, “No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted.”

Several Carotel Club members have undertaken a year-long kindness campaign in their communities that started in February when Carotel Pioneers wrote letters and visited others with Valentine’s Day greetings. Carotel Club members and volunteers are finding ways in their communities to make a difference either individually or collectively.



On behalf of the club, one Pioneer has been visiting a local skilled care nursing facility each month and recognizes both the patients/residents and staff members with small gestures. It’s always a big hit when the visit includes a little karaoke by one of the volunteers, and when the Pioneer’s grandchildren come along for the visit.

Another club member has sponsored a “Kindness ROCKS” community campaign. Participants painted rocks and left them at random locations. A note on the back of the rocks encourages finders to post their finds and either keep the rock they found or rehide it. This Carotel kindness project began after a Carotel Pioneer found a rock with a note about the “feeling groovy rocks” Facebook page. The Carotel member who found the rock said, “Something as simple as a small painted rock can prompt a smile and continue a kindness movement. It’s been fun to hide rocks and see that they’ve been taken. Even when they don’t get posted on social media, I know they prompted a smile.”



Please let us know what you’ve done or plan to do to spread a little kindness. Even apart, we can work together to help our communities, even if it’s only to prompt a smile!



RETIREE GATHERINGS

Retirees from the Clinton, NC area held their semi-annual luncheon in early July. Everyone had a good time talking about old co-workers and the good old days working with Carolina Telephone.



Several years ago, this gathering began with six retirees, and over the past few years the group has grown to more than 30 attendees. Unfortunately, as time marches on we have also lost some members of the group. James Murphy passed away earlier this year and Leslie Smith passed away on July 1st. This faithful group of former co-workers and friends remember their deceased cohorts and make the most of the time they have with one another.



The Clinton retirees plan to meet again in December. The exact date has not yet been determined.

If you have had a retiree gathering or are planning a gathering, we'd love to share your photos and hear about your time spent together in an upcoming newsletter.



RETIRED CT&T PRESIDENT WAYNE PETERSON HONORED

On Sunday, March 28, 2023, Mr. D. Wayne Peterson was formally inducted into the National Independent Telecommunications Pioneer Association Hall of Fame. Mr. Peterson is a 2021 inductee but was unable to attend the national assembly in Washington, DC for this honor in April of 2022. Therefore, he was inducted in early 2023 in Raleigh. Ronnie Cashwell gave remarks on Mr. Peterson's tenure in telecommunications particularly that at Carolina Telephone and Telegraph (CT&T) and presented the Hall of Fame Album to Mr. Peterson.

Mr. Peterson also received the 100-year ITPA celebration coin (1920-2020) and the ITPA national coin. Additionally, cards of appreciation written to him by former and current CT&T employees were also part of the presentation. Attending were his wife, Billie Ann Peterson; Janet Holliday-Cashwell, and Jan Dempster, Retired CT&T Director of Corporate Communications. Jan graciously hosted this event in her home.

There was much reminiscing of the old CT&T days that afternoon. Mr. Peterson and H. Dail Holderness are the only CT&T employees ever inducted. As he received the presentation, Mr. Peterson was truly humbled, remarking, "This honor belongs to the Carolina Telephone employees that he had the pleasure of working with."



THOUGHTS FROM RETIREES:

1. I've learned that saying "oh, this old thing?" isn't an appropriate way to introduce an elderly relative.
2. It's paradoxical that the idea of living a long life appeals to everyone, but the idea of getting old doesn't appeal to anyone.—Andy Rooney
3. The Company gave me an aptitude test and I found out the work I was best suited for was retirement.
4. To be old and wise you must first be young and stupid.
5. I was thinking about how people seem to read the Bible a whole lot more as they get older. Then it dawned on me—they were cramming for their finals.
6. How many retirees does it take to change a light bulb? Only one, but it might take all day.

VEBA – “BENEFIT” OR “LIFE INSURANCE”

For years, the retirement package for Carolina Telephone and Telegraph Company retirees has included a VEBA benefit. To be eligible, certain criteria must be met, such as age of retirement and or tenure, as well as being employed on certain landmark dates, along with several varied union negotiated eligibility requirements. For years, this benefit, payable upon the death of the retiree, was positioned as just that, a “death benefit” rather than a life insurance policy. Due to the way the fund for this benefit was established, retirees were not taxed on the benefit and never received W2 forms. In 2023, that changed and many retirees, who had a benefit worth over \$50K, received W2 forms and began asking questions. Why, when Human Resources for years had carefully referred to VEBA as a “benefit” rather than a life insurance policy, was it now being taxed? One Lumen representative explained the change as follows:

The company made the decision, in agreement with Labor, to change the funding of the CTT VEBA Life Benefit from the trust to a Basic Group Life Plan in 2022 which is why the imputed income applies now. Lumen no longer maintains the actual CTT VEBA Trust because it was conveyed to Brightspeed. However, this does not change the benefit itself, the funding changed but the benefit did not. Retirees also received the letter that accompanied the W-2. If anyone has additional questions, Lumen is asking that they submit a ticket via the HR ticketing system to HRconnect-NA@lumen.com.

Retirees have expressed concern as to whether, in light of these changes, the benefit could be discontinued altogether. If the Company can shift the money that funds this benefit from one type of account to another, could the Company in the future use those funds for another purpose and discontinue the benefit? Concerned retirees are banding together to review this issue. A Facebook page, “CTT VEBA Trust and Pension Group,” has been created. Retirees, who are under the VEBA benefit, are eligible to join the group when they answer a series of questions intended to keep the group secure. Several retirees have dedicated many long hours to this issue. An important update was posted for the CTT VEBA Trust and Pension Group on May 10th. That announcement is summarized as follows: The reviewers' unanimous conclusion is that the group can not make a legal case at this time since the life insurance coverage equal to the same amount as the “death benefit” is allowed under plan provisions.

If you know a VEBA eligible CT&T retiree who does not have a Facebook account, please share this information. Documents filed with the federal government indicate there are about 2600 VEBA eligible retirees, but there are fewer than 700 group members on Facebook.