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JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2011

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Committee Members Needed

As a member of West Central Telephone Association, you are eligible to serve on the Nominations & Election Committee. Members of the committee are responsible for appointing qualified candidates to run for directorship, collecting ballots, and verifying election results at the annual meeting held in May.

If you are interested in serving as a committee member, please contact West Central at 837-5151 before February 14, 2011. You may also express your interest by emailing tonym@wcta.net.




West Central
 Telephone Association
We Connect You.™

Broadband is “Can’t Live Without” Technology

Think back to when cell phones were first introduced. Did you say you weren't going to get one since you didn't think you'd use it very often? How about digital cameras? Did you drag your feet before taking the leap to digital photography?

Fast forward to today. How often do you use your cell phone and digital camera? And could you imagine living without them? Technology often progresses from something we don't see much need for to something that's an integral part of our routine.

Broadband, or high speed Internet access, falls under this category. Broadband is becoming essential to participate in modern life. Many job applications, for instance, are not available on paper anymore. And health records and information are increasingly moving online. Those who don't have broadband access are at an increased risk of being left behind.

In addition, the speed difference between dial-up connections, which uses telephone wires to transmit signals, and those that travel through fiber-optic broadband cables is significant. That's because the Web is increasingly designed for broadband connections, to accommodate photos, video, and Flash

animations. The result is that dial-up connections have actually gotten slower over time. Even if you were a contented dial-up user five years ago because you only checked e-mail and read a few headlines, you're probably no longer satisfied with the slow performance of dial-up access with websites that are now optimized for broadband.

Almost two-thirds of people in the U.S. have broadband at home, according to a 5,005-person survey published by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) in February 2010. If you're not yet one of them, West Central Telephone urges you to consider signing up for broadband. It will give you access to the highest quality Internet services, many of which require the transfer of large amounts of data that may not be technically feasible with dial-up service. Broadband is your ticket to taking advantage of the full range of resources available online — and once you try it, you'll probably wonder how you ever got along without it.

For more information about our broadband services, call us at 218-837-5151 or check us out on the web at www.wcta.net.



Don't Forget the Extras

Christmas is over, the wrapping paper has been cleared and the New Year has begun. Did you purchase or receive a new computer, digital camera, or Playstation® 3? What about the little extra gadgets that make those items more enjoyable to use, or more accessible for the whole family? You can shop locally with West Central Telephone for many items that complement your new electronics—and at a great price!

Get a Netgear Wireless router for only \$49.95 and connect your new

gaming consoles, laptops, computers, and other Internet-capable devices wirelessly to the Internet. Shop here for your SD cards for digital cameras and computers, micro-SD cards for cell phones, USB flash drives, special cables like HDMI for gaming consoles and LCD TVs, iPod speakers, Smart Strip surge protectors, digital cameras and HD camcorders, and even Playstation 3 accessories. There's still a great selection of items all available at either the Sebeka or Menahga office. Stop in and see what's in store for you!

DON'T FORGET
Netgear Wireless
router for
only \$49.95

Computer Classes for Business

The Blandin Foundation, an independent, private foundation that works to create healthy rural communities through grants, scholarships, and community leadership training received \$4.86 million in federal stimulus funds under the broadband initiative. These funds will support a two-year grant project called Minnesota Intelligent Rural Communities (MIRC), whose function is to “help create technologically and economically vital rural communities, competing and thriving in the broadband economy.”

A total of 18 communities, including Sebeka and Menahga, were chosen to participate in the two-year project. One of the first opportunities MIRC brings to our region is computer training classes that will be taught by Community Vitality Extension Educators from the U of M Extension Service. Sebeka and Menahga will be co-hosting two upcoming classes:

January: Mapping Your Business— Assess your business's online presence on digital maps like Google Maps and various GPS devices, learn how to fix inaccuracies, and how to get the most out of your listings.



February: Doing Business Online— Explore what businesses similar to yours are doing online, learn some ways to get your business online, and discover Internet resources your business can use.

Details are still being worked out, so check our website at www.wcta.net for more information as it becomes available.

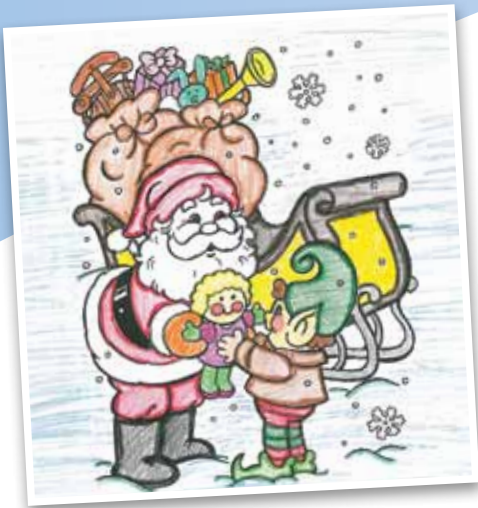
Kathy Wellmann Wins \$200

Kathy Wellmann of Verndale submitted the winning photo featured on the cover of the 2011 WCTA Directory. Kathy sent several stunning photos, as did many others, but the beautiful horse and colt was chosen as the winner. Kathy won \$200 for her winning entry.

There were many wonderful photos—all sent digitally—which made the viewing and production easier, but choosing the winning photo more difficult! Other photos that made the finals included the reflection of a young child standing in water, a frost-flocked pine cone, juniper berries, autumn pictures at the river, and a couple of fawns in a grassy field.

Thanks to all who participated in this year's contest!





Holiday Color Contest Winners

Six fabulous young artists placed first in their age division in the annual WCTA Holiday Coloring Contest. The winners include Juliana Owen, Devon Haverinen, Dallas Anderson, Jayde Alyssa Petersen, Maria Huhta, and Abbie May McManigle.

A heartfelt thanks to all of the schools, parents, and children who participated and made this contest special for our kids!

Protect Your Home Before Your Vacation

You see your vacation as an opportunity for fun and relaxation. Unfortunately, burglars see it as an opportunity to more easily get inside your house and take off with your valuables.

You can do a lot to reduce your chances of being a property crime victim by taking simple precautions to protect your home before you leave town:

- Inform trusted neighbors that you will be gone and for how long. Ask them to keep an eye on your home.
- Stop mail and newspaper deliveries or have a neighbor pick them up each day.
- Depending on the season, make arrangements to have your lawn mowed or snow shoveled so that your house appears occupied. Also use timers on lights, setting them to go on at different times.
- Double-check that you've locked all doors and windows, including all doors in the garage. You may want to unplug the cord to the garage door opener so it can't be opened with a code.
- Don't announce your absence on your answering machine or voice mail message.
- If you have a security system on your house, make sure it is working and on.
- Don't leave a key hidden outside. Leave it with a friend or family member instead.



- Install digital network cameras. West Central Telephone can design and install a net-cam security system that will allow you to literally keep an eye on your home and property while you're away. All you need is a broadband connection and computer or mobile device to view your live cameras over the Internet.

Call West Central at 837-5151 for more information about the network cameras. With these steps, you can rest easy while you are away.

Plan to Keep Right-of-Ways Clear

It's the middle of another Minnesota winter, and while we know that spring and construction season is still a couple of months out, we want to remind you of our upcoming construction. This spring, we will be breaking ground in the Wolf Lake and rural Menahga areas to continue on the next phase of our Fiber-to-the-Home (FTTH) project.

Our construction process involves the placement of protective conduit in the right-of-ways to house fiber lines. With little or no damage to yards, the fibers will then be delivered to homes underground and attached to the Network Interface Device (NID) – a box attached to the house that holds electrical equipment. Once inside the home, wires are fed through the attic, basement, or walls so that the advancement in technology leaves no physical scars on the house itself.

Travis Floyd, plant superintendent for WCTA, said that construction will begin as soon as the ditches are clear of snow and the frost has gone out. Floyd would like to remind everyone to keep the right-of-ways clear so that when the construction begins, there are no obstacles or other issues.





FRS \$2,500 Scholarship Opportunity

West Central Telephone has teamed up with The Foundation for Rural Service (FRS) to offer the FRS Scholarship to our members' high school seniors. The FRS college scholarship program awards 30 scholarships in the amount of \$2,500 each to winning applicants across the nation. By partnering with the FRS, West Central Telephone is able to make the scholarship program available to high school seniors in our area.

- Express an interest to return to a rural community following graduation.
- Be sponsored by a contributor to, or supporter of, The Foundation for Rural Service.

Application forms have been mailed to guidance counselors at all area high schools. The applications are easily reproduced and can also be downloaded from the FRS website at <http://www.frs.org>.

Welcome New Members

- Alwin, Shane 837-9645
- Anderson, Delphine 564-5471
- Bahr, Gregory 445-5359
- Blank, Richard 445-5302
- Casavan, Joshua 564-1970
- Colsen, Vic 837-5853
- Funk, Verna 837-3362
- G & L Service 445-5188
- Hannu, Dennis D. 837-5871
- Harju-Byrd, Marilyn 564-5428
- Heern, Douglas 445-5440
- Jensen, Robert 837-5886
- Jose, Edward 445-5436
- Krueger, Violet 837-5855
- Lathrop, Kathy 837-3487
- Line, Jamie 445-0202
- Ludovissie, Raye 445-5439
- Matson, Clarence 564-4240
- Nelson, Luke 445-5393
- Niskanen, Dorothy 564-5483
- Pearson, Duane 472-3142
- Rautio, Linda 564-5489
- Tangen, Mildred 564-5481

Applicants must:

- Be a graduating high school senior.
- Receive local telecommunications service from a current NTCA member (except for students sponsored by an associate member company) and be from a rural area.
- Be accepted by an accredited two- or four-year college, university or vocational-technical school.
- Have at least a C grade point average (GPA). FRS scholarships will be awarded to deserving students whose academic credentials fall within an average to above-average range.

Completed applications must be returned to our office by February 18, 2011, so that we may complete the Sponsor Certification and forward the applications to FRS. Please call Geri Salmela at 837-5151 or 800-945-2163 with questions. You may also e-mail your questions to geris@wcta.net.

We are proud to once again support the FRS in this worthy endeavor. It should be noted that this scholarship opportunity is in addition to the regular West Central Telephone Scholarship Program, which will be featured in the next newsletter.

