



# inter face

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2016

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## Serve on the Nominations & Election Committee

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 January 11.**




**West Central**  
Telephone Association  
*We Connect You.™*

## WCTA is Gig Certified

NTCA—The Rural Broadband Association, the premier association representing nearly 900 independent, community-based telecommunications companies that are leading innovation in rural and small-town America, recently recognized us as a Certified Gig-Capable Provider for delivering gigabit broadband speeds and enabling technological innovation in the Sebek, Menahga, Nimrod, Aldrich, Verndale and Wolf Lake communities.

As a Certified Gig-Capable Provider, WCTA joins a national campaign to build awareness and industry recognition of community-based telecom providers that have built communications networks capable of delivering Internet speeds of up to 1 gigabit per second, which is 100 times faster than those currently available in many U.S. households.

“I applaud WCTA for its commitment to delivering the Internet’s fastest speeds—an accomplishment worthy of much praise considering the unique and challenging circumstances small, community-based telecommunications providers operate under every day in serving some of our country’s most rural and remote communities,” said NTCA Chief Executive Officer Shirley Bloomfield. “By building a gigabit-capable network, WCTA has not only overcome

these challenges, but also shattered conventional benchmarks for broadband speed to enable cutting-edge technologies that drive innovation and promote economic development in their communities, region and nationwide.”

To achieve certification, telecommunications companies must show that gigabit technology is currently commercially available within 95% of one or more exchanges within its serving territory and that such service can be provided without new trenching or stringing new aerial facilities. This statement must be confirmed by a letter from an engineering firm or other independent source involved in the company’s network planning, deployment or operation.

Gigabit service has been available to about 90% of members since October 2015. With the rural Sebek fiber to the home project wrapping up, Gigabit service is a reality for all members.

**More information about the NTCA Gig-Capable Provider certification program is available at [www.ntca.org/gigcertified](http://www.ntca.org/gigcertified).**





# Congratulations to Our Contest Winners

## Directory Photo Contest:

Angie Bartels of Menahga submitted the winning photo featured on the cover of the 2016 WCTA Directory. Angie's photo perfectly captured the silhouettes of two horses off in the distance. With the sun shining down, the horses look almost ethereal in the background. It certainly made for a beautiful cover! Angie won \$200 for her winning entry.

## Holiday Coloring Contest:

Five fabulous artists placed first in their age division in the annual WCTA Holiday Coloring Contest. The winners were Rykynn Aho, Leona Heller, Jetta Byman, Megan Hillukka and Leah Weaver.



Jodi Sjolje, WCTA sales consultant (left) presents a check to Angie Bartels of Menahga, winner of the directory photo contest



CURL UP &

**Come in from the cold and curl up with hot cocoa and hot entertainment.** West Central Telephone's TV service offers everything you need to make the most of winter evenings at home:

- Whole-Home DVR to record, pause, and rewind your favorite programs
- HDTV service for best picture quality from your high definition TV
- Premium movie channels such as HBO, Cinemax, Starz! Super Pack, and Showtime
- Watch from anywhere on your mobile devices for free with watchTVeverywhere
- Plus, now it's available to all members in all exchanges!

Sign up for any new TV package or service and get **FREE** installation! Plus, find out how you can get a **FREE** Onkyo Home Theater Sound Bar, which gives you big concert hall sound in a tiny space!

**Call 837-5151 now for all the details.\***



## HD Upgrade—First Month Free

Get the HD version of your favorite channels in your tier! Over 80 HD channels available. First-month equipment fee waived. Call for details!



**Avengers:  
Age of Ultron**  
Premiering January 22

**starz**

As the U.S. government creates a force known as Ultron, The Avengers are told they are no longer needed. But when Ultron turns against humanity, it's time for The Avengers to assemble once again for their most dangerous challenge yet.

Visit [starz.com](http://starz.com) for airdates/times. STARZ and related channels and service marks are the property of Starz Entertainment, LLC. Avengers: Age of Ultron © Marvel. All Rights Reserved.

\*Certain restrictions apply. Contact us for details. Offer good through January 31, 2016.



## Scholarship Opportunities

As an investment in our youth, West Central Telephone is committed to the future of rural Minnesota. We're pleased to announce the following scholarship opportunities and invite all high school seniors to apply.

### FRS College Scholarship Program

The FRS College Scholarship Program awards thirty scholarships in the amount of \$2,000 each to winning applicants across the nation, with a \$500 match by the sponsoring telco (for a total of \$2,500 each). FRS Scholarship applications are due in the WCTA office by February 19.

Students may also be eligible for four FRS Staurulakis Family Scholarships valued at \$5,000 each or two TMS Scholarships for \$1,500 each. Students who are majoring in math, science, engineering, or medicine are given preference for the FRS Staurulakis Family Scholarships. Additional scholarships include the Everett Kneece Return to Rural America Scholarship, valued at \$2,500, and back for a second year—the Colt Ford Scholarship, awarding up to \$15,000.

**For applications and guidelines, see your high school guidance counselor or download the application from the FRS Website at <http://www.frs.org>.**

### Minnesota Telecom Alliance Foundation Scholarships

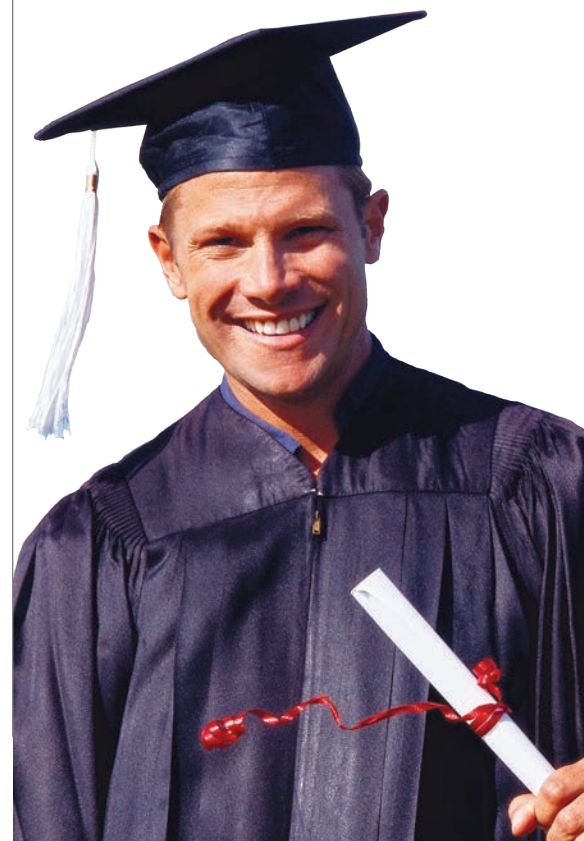
The Minnesota Telecom Alliance Foundation is offering five \$2,000 scholarships to high school seniors who graduate in 2016. Scholarships are awarded after the student demonstrates successful completion of the first year of college or technical school. The application deadline is February 26. Applications must be returned to WCTA for signature.

## WCTA Scholarship Program

High school seniors can also apply for one of eight scholarships in the amount of \$1,000 each. The deadline for the WCTA Scholarship applications is April 8.

Our scholarship program has been established to encourage youth in our area to further their education after graduating from high school and is made possible through unclaimed capital credit checks. Because of our cooperative status, we are able to use these funds to benefit the scholarship program.

Remember, the deadline for the FRS scholarship to be in our office is February 19. The MTA scholarship must be in our office by February 26 and the deadline for the WCTA scholarship is April 8. Links to all scholarships are found on [www.wcta.net](http://www.wcta.net) under the Scholarships tab. **Please call Geri Salmela at 837-5151 or email your questions to [geris@wcta.net](mailto:geris@wcta.net).**



## Welcome, New Members

Culbreath, Ashley .....	445-0753
Fisher, Tyler.....	445-6008
Grossinger, Grant .....	445-2104
Ismil, Daniel .....	445-8471
Koeneman, Dale.....	445-6013
Koob, Paul .....	445-6010
Ludovissie, Zach.....	445-9724
Sharma, Elena .....	445-9404
Trout, Russell.....	445-7208
Wiese, Eli.....	445-4818
Clements, Jeff .....	472-3972
Pederson, Brock.....	472-7778
Puttonen, Tera .....	472-3227
Guggenberger, Julie .....	538-8470
Wuollet, Hans .....	538-2236
Aaa Roloff Services.....	564-4743
Anderson, Howard .....	564-7713
Daniels, Eva.....	564-8143
Davidson, John .....	564-0454
Dissmore, Chris.....	564-5879
Ervasti, Nicole.....	564-6117
Gatewood, Mackenzie.....	564-8352
Lausten, Jeff & Shannon .....	564-7573
Jones, Jessica.....	564-9461
Kananen, Lily.....	564-9113
Kiphuth, Miles.....	564-4804
Liimatta, Steven.....	564-6505
Milbradt, Brady.....	564-0817
Niska, Michelle .....	564-0552
Palmer, Joshua.....	564-8893
Sayer, George.....	564-8708
Simonson, Ryan .....	564-6701
Torgerson, Joe .....	564-8703
Vogel, Angela .....	564-8220
Burke, Duane .....	837-9492
Chapman, Cathy .....	837-6337
Garcia, Tracy .....	837-9852
Hart, Emily.....	837-7562
Hoyhtya, Nicholas.....	837-6634
Leritz, Abby .....	837-9804
Naddy, Megan .....	837-0168
Rentz, Jordan.....	837-3131
Robles, Melissa .....	837-8343
Roes, Matthew .....	837-6126
Venneman, Tara.....	837-1770



## BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT: Caring Hands Home Care, Inc.

113 Minnesota Ave, Sebeka, MN

Caring Hands Home Care Inc. has been in business since 1994. Owners Gary and Pat Johnson started the business to give people choices in the area for home healthcare. Caring Hands was a natural fit for the couple since Pat, an RN, also had experience in home healthcare, and as Gary noted, “There was a need for these types of services in the area.”

When Caring Hands began, there were about 800 Medicare certified agencies in Minnesota; that number has dwindled to around 400 or so. The decrease could be attributed to the ever-changing rules and regulations regarding Medicare and VA, insurance issues, and the State of Minnesota’s requirements. Caring Hands works hard to ensure that their clients receive the best care, and as a result have received a “no deficiencies” survey from the State and Medicare again this year.

Gary spoke highly of their staff; in particular he praised Marion Hanson for her hard work training staff and working with the surveyors, showing them all of the changes made in their business to stay current and compliant. This kind of dedication comes from all of the employees at Caring Hands, and that’s one of the reasons they are still a top provider of home healthcare service when other businesses have failed.

Caring Hands has our high speed Internet service, which helps them with state reporting requirements, insurance company submissions, and communication with clients and staff. They also have a business phone system from us, and a dedicated fax line. With an RN on call 24/7 365 days of the year, those phones get used a lot!

**For more information on home healthcare, contact Caring Hands at 837-5572 or 732-0088. For more information on ways to use technology in your business, give West Central Telephone a call at 837-5151.**