

inter face

MARCH/APRIL 2011

THIS ISSUE

- 01 WCTA Scholarships
- 02 Creating Strong Passwords
- 03 New HD Service Available
- 04 MIRC Business Computer Classes

Plan to Attend the 61st Annual Meeting

Annual meetings are important events in the calendar year at the cooperative. The meeting is an opportunity to meet the staff and directors and to learn what's happening at the member-owned company.

This year's meeting is scheduled for Monday, May 16, 2011, at the Sebeka High School Auditorium. The meeting will begin at 7pm. Naomi Moyer and Hazel Yliniemi representing the Verndale and Wolf Lake exchanges respectively, intend to seek re-election; the nominations and elections committee will meet mid-March and announce official candidates who wish to serve on the board.

Kai and Bridget Allen with Skalmusik will entertain the crowd before and after the meeting. There will be prize drawings, with a light meal following the business meeting. All members of the cooperative are welcome!



\$8,000 Earmarked for 2011 Graduates

West Central is committed to the future of rural Minnesota, and therefore invests in our youth. We believe that academic achievement in high school and service to one's community should be recognized.

Our scholarship program has been established to encourage youth in our area to further their education after graduating from high school. We invite all area high school seniors to apply for a scholarship; a total of eight \$1,000 scholarships will be awarded.

The scholarship program is made possible through unclaimed capital credits checks. Because of our cooperative status, we are able to use these funds to benefit the scholarship program. At this time, there is over \$44,000 funding the scholarship program.

Our scholarship program is another benefit available to cooperative members. We would like to see more members apply — there are typically only 25 to 30 applicants each year. If you know a deserving high school senior, please encourage him or her to apply. There are no income guidelines or GPA requirements to meet. Simply complete the online application, write a brief essay on your chosen topic and submit it by the deadline. For more detailed

information and applications, contact your area high school counselors. You may also contact Geri Salmela with additional questions at 837-5151 or by e-mail at geris@wcta.net.

Scholarship candidates must complete the application online and write a short essay on one of the recommended topics. Some tips to keep in mind are:

- Applications can be found online at www.wcta.net.
- Check your spelling and grammar usage carefully.
- Write what *you* know, and how *you* feel about the topic.

There is still time to apply — the deadline for applications is April 8, 2011. Good luck!

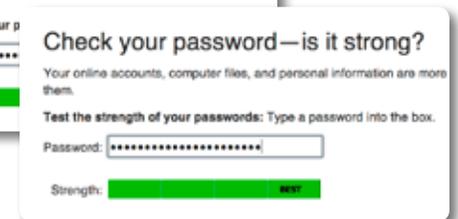
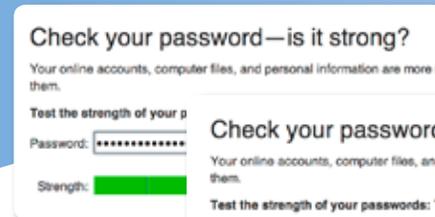
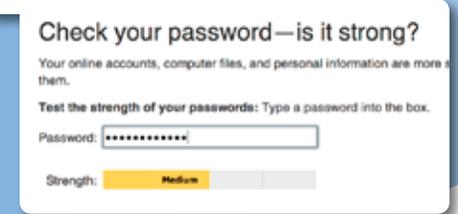
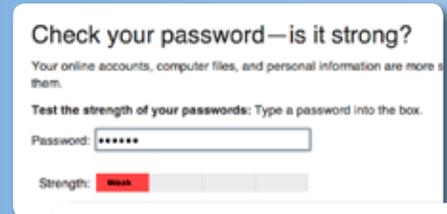


Comerstone Group © 2011

Test Your Password Instantly

Once you've created a new password, find out just how strong it is by visiting: www.microsoft.com/protect/yourself/password/checker.msp#x

Simply type in the password you're considering, and Microsoft's Password Checker will instantly rate it from Weak to Best. If yours doesn't rate well, it's back to the drawing board. Keep testing new passwords until you find one that rates highly.



Creating Strong Passwords

Imagine the vulnerability of losing your wallet or purse, knowing that someone could gain access to your identity and financial accounts. The same holds true if criminals steal your online passwords. They could open new accounts and max out your credit limit. Change your mailing address and have items (and bills) sent to them. Withdraw money from your bank accounts. Apply for loans under your name. In many cases, you may not notice these attacks until it is too late.

Think of your passwords as if they were keys to your home and everything you own. Given their importance, it just makes sense to create strong passwords and then take precautions to protect them. Be aware that password-cracking tools continue to improve and the computers used to crack passwords are more powerful. Network passwords that once took weeks to break can now be broken in hours.

Fortunately, it's not hard to create strong passwords — it just takes a little extra effort. The goal is to make a password appear to be a random string of characters to hackers, but easy for you to remember.

HERE'S WHAT TO DO:

Make it lengthy. Each character added to your password increases the protection. It should be 8 or more characters in length; 14 characters or longer is ideal.

Combine letters, numbers, and symbols. The greater variety of characters that you have in your password, the harder it is to guess. Choose from all the symbols on the keyboard, not just the most common characters.

Use a sentence as the starting point. Think of a memorable sentence, take the first letter of each word, then mix up lower case and upper case, and replace some letters with numbers and symbols.

No sequences or repeated characters. Passwords such as "12345678" or "222222" do not make secure passwords.

Don't use dictionary words. Criminals use sophisticated tools that can rapidly guess passwords that are based on words in multiple dictionaries, including words spelled backwards, common misspellings, and substitutions.

Have different passwords for different places. Create strong passwords for any online transaction where your credit is at stake, and one "lightweight" password for online access to resources like magazines and newspapers.



HD Service Available*

Experience TV like never before with new high definition (HD) service from West Central Video. Although the programming at this time is limited to the five Minneapolis networks and four Fargo networks, you'll be able to watch your favorite shows like American Idol, 30 Rock, Desperate Housewives, and your favorite news and sports in HD.

There are many benefits to viewing programs in high-definition including:

Clarity. The digital signal is crystal clear and noise-free.

Wide-screen picture. Traditional televisions use a 4 by 3 aspect ratio. HDTV uses a wider 16 by 9 aspect ratio, which delivers movies with less "edge cropping" and provides a more intense viewing experience.

Sharpness. In addition to clarity, HDTV provides a much sharper picture than

analog television. Just like a digital camera, more pixels means sharper pictures.

Digital sound. HDTV's digital audio sounds better than a standard television's analog sound, just like digital CDs are superior to analog radio. All HDTV programs use Dolby Digital sound, which is also used on DVDs. This format is used to transmit two to six channels of audio depending on the program.

Call 800-945-2163 to upgrade to HDTV.

**Monthly fee of \$9.95 applies; may not be available in all areas. \$65 activation fee may apply; fee will be waived with a one-year service agreement. Call for more information.*

Keep Right-of-Ways Clear

Now that spring will soon be here, we want to remind you of our upcoming construction and ask that you keep the right-of-ways clear. As soon as the ditches are clear of snow and the frost is gone, we will be breaking ground in the Wolf Lake and rural Menahga areas continuing our next phase in the Fiber-to-the-Home (FTTH) project.

Because our construction involves the placement of protective conduit in the right-of-ways to house fiber-optic lines, we want to remind you to keep the right-of-ways clear. According to the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MN DOT) website, encroaching on highway right-of-ways violates state law. The violation is a misdemeanor punishable by a maximum \$700 fine and/or 90 days in jail. Highway rights of way include driving lanes, inside and outside shoulders, ditches, and back slopes.

Keep in mind that utility companies are permitted to use highway right-of-ways to install gas lines, power lines, telephone lines, and fiber-optic cable. So plowing and tilling can damage these



lines underground, create a potentially dangerous situation for workers and area residents, and cause possible service interruptions.

Thank you for keeping these areas clear. If you have any questions regarding the boundaries of highway right-of-ways, landowners should look for metal posts about three to four feet high with either green and white or black and white diamond-shaped plates at the top, or contact the MN DOT at 800-657-3971.

New Channels Added to Lineup

ANNOUNCING: Three highly anticipated TV channels are now included in our basic lineup— **Lifetime**, **Lifetime Real Women**, and **The Lifetime Movie Network**.

We've worked hard to add the Lifetime trio to our lineup, and at an affordable price. At this time, we're able to add Lifetime without a rate increase. Lifetime can be found on channel 65, Lifetime Real Women on channel 66, and Lifetime Movie Network on channel 67.

Lifetime

Lifetime features original series like Army Wives, Drop Dead Divas and more, including the new Seriously Funny Kids. Seriously Funny Kids features host Heidi Klum as she interacts with kids and the hilarious and sometimes insightful things they say.

Lifetime Real Women

Lifetime Real Women is a network on which every series is about what's real to the contemporary woman.

Lifetime Movie Network

Lifetime Movie Network offers viewers an array of more than 250 movies and miniseries each month, including exclusive film and cable premieres.





Winter MIRC Business Computer Classes

All classes are offered free through the Minnesota Intelligent Rural Communities (MIRC) programs in Sebeka and Menahga, and will be taught by University of Minnesota Extension Service instructors. Light refreshments and door prizes will be provided by West Central Telephone Association.

Call WCTA at 837-5151 to register, or your MIRC community coordinator for more information:

Menahga area MIRC coordinators:

Steve Peterson, 218-564-6420 or speter@wcta.net
Linda Peterson, 218-564-4620 or lindyjo@wcta.net

Sebeka area MIRC coordinators:

Monica Quaschnick, 218-837-5151 or monica@wcta.net
Pam Mahling, 218-837-5151 or pamm@wcta.net

Welcome New Members

- Carpenter, Shelly 445-5505
- Dailey, Russell..... 472-3143
- Eckman, Adrian 837-0470
- Hendrickx, Jacob..... 564-5494
- Hepokoski, Raphael..... 564-5531
- Johnson, Rania 837-5899
- Kopkie, Seth..... 564-5512
- Leonard, Ryan L 445-5483
- Mix, Kenneth C..... 564-5437
- Peace, Preston..... 564-5431
- Skare, Alan..... 564-5452
- Strobel, Dustin J..... 445-5263
- Tangeman, Sara..... 837-5938
- Weaver, Jolynn..... 837-5876
- Wikman, Harry 472-5202

Did You Know?

The Oprah Winfrey Network (OWN) replaced the Discovery Health network on channel 140 and Fit TV is now Discovery Fit & Health on channel 166.

How to Use Social Media in Business

March 28, two sessions available to choose from:

1-4pm session at Sebeka School Computer Lab

OR

6-9pm session at Menahga School Computer Lab

This workshop will explore technologies being used to correspond with a new generation of customers that use social media and networking tools to communicate and interact with others. While the Yellow Pages and traditional websites are still useful for advertising information about your community or business, many business owners are beginning to interact with their customers with websites such as Facebook and LinkedIn to reach out to new and hard-to-reach audiences. This workshop will explore basic fundamentals of popular social networking sites, examples of use for, and the potential benefits it could bring to your business and community.



Cornerstone Group © 2011