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Plan to Attend the 63rd 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 20, 2013, at the Sebeka High School Auditorium. The meeting will begin at 7pm. David Kriens, representing the Menahga exchange, and Dave Pulju, representing the Nimrod exchange, both 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!



NTCA and OPASTCO Unify

The National Telecommunications Cooperative Association (NTCA) and the Organization for the Promotion and Advancement of Small Telecommunications Companies (OPASTCO) have merged their operations into one common organization. The new organization will be called NTCA, The Rural Broadband Association.

As a combined entity, the new group will serve 952 smaller telcos, including 580 NTCA and 372 OPASTCO members, respectively.

"All rural telecom companies and the communities they serve will benefit from the policy strength we gain as a unified industry," said Shirley Bloomfield, CEO of NTCA.

Following many months of discussion and negotiation, NTCA and OPASTCO conducted member votes for unification at the Rural Telecom Industry Meeting &

EXPO in Lake Buena Vista, Fla. The two organizations serve rural telecommunications companies nationwide.

NTCA and OPASTCO said in a release announcing the merger that the new organization will give its smaller rural telco members a bigger voice in shaping regulatory issues like Universal Service Fund (USF) reform. Another issue relevant to the members of these organizations is the Connect America Fund (CAF).

In 2011, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) developed a proposal to realign the Universal Service Fund (USF) and the Intercarrier Compensation (ICC) structure by refocusing the Universal Service Fund toward funding new broadband rollouts. Last April, the FCC proposed a number of changes to rework Phase I of the Connect America Fund, including the definition of "underserved" areas and how to best allocate the remaining \$185 million in broadband funds.



Need Help Paying for Telephone Service?

WCTA is authorized to provide two federally-funded and one state funded telephone service discount programs that were designed to promote universal service by providing low-income individuals with new telephone service installations and monthly telephone service discounts.

The Link-Up program provides a discount on connection charges when installing new telephone service. The Lifeline and Telephone Assistance Plan (TAP) programs provide a monthly discount on your local service telephone bill.

For eligibility guidelines, please refer to the information pages in the West Central Telephone Directory. Call 1-888-830-6392 to apply. Once approved, you will receive the applicable credit(s) on your telephone bill. Please do not call the business office; you must call 1-888-830-6392 to apply.

Rising College Tuition Costs? Apply for WCTA Scholarship

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 maximum 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 \$65,000 funding the 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 high GPA requirements to meet; simply complete the online application, write a brief essay on your chosen topic, and submit 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 email 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 1, 2013. Good luck!**



**The Amazing
Spider-Man™**
Premiering March 2
starz

The original story of the amazing Spider-Man—young Peter Parker, bitten by a radioactive spider, navigates high school and a crazed mutant professor as he comes to terms with his powers.

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Minnesota Relay

Minnesota Relay is a free service that uses a specially trained communications assistant (CA) to facilitate the telephone conversation between a person who has a hearing loss or a speech disability and the person with which they wish to speak. Calls can be made to anywhere in the world (long distance charges apply), 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. All calls are completely confidential.

To make a Minnesota Relay call, just dial 7-1-1

Once connected to the relay service, tell the CA the type of relay call you wish to make. Or, you may dial the specific toll-free number for the type of relay service.

Types of Relay Services

Captioned Telephone (CapTel™)

CapTel is an amplified telephone and relay captioning service that allows people who are hard of hearing to see word-for-word captions of their telephone conversation on a bright, easy-to-read display window built into the CapTel phone, while also listening to what is being said using their residual hearing (much like TV captioning). Requires a CapTel phone. If you wish to contact a person who uses a CapTel phone, dial: 1-877-243-2823.

Voice Carry Over (VCO): 1-877-627-3024

Allows a person who has difficulty hearing on the phone to voice their conversations directly to the other person on the call. The CA then types the other person's response to the VCO user. Requires a special telephone.

Two-Line VCO: 1-866-855-4611

Allows a VCO user to use one telephone line for speaking directly to the other person, while the second line is used to receive the CA's typed response from the other person. This enhanced feature provides a more natural flow of conversation without the pauses of single-line VCO calls. Additional service and equipment requirements.

Hearing Carry Over (HCO): 1-800-627-3529

Allows a person who can hear but who has very limited or no speech capability to make and receive phone calls. The HCO user types his/her conversation for the CA to read to the other person, and listens directly to the other person's response. Requires a special telephone.

Text Telephone (TTY): 1-800-627-3529

Allows a person who is deaf, hard of hearing, or speech disabled to use a TTY to communicate with the other person on the call.

Standard Telephone: 1-800-627-3529

A hearing person may use a standard telephone to place a relay call and easily converse with a person who is deaf, hard of hearing, or speech disabled.

Speech-to-Speech (STS): 1-877-627-3848

Allows a person who has difficulty speaking or being understood on the phone to communicate using his or her own voice or voice synthesizer. The CA revoices the words of the person with a speech disability so the other person on the call can understand them. No special telephone is required.

Computer (ASCII): 1-800-627-3529

Computer users can also access Minnesota Relay. Set your communications software to the following protocols: speeds ranging from 300 to 2400; 8 Bits; No Parity; 1 Stop Bit; Full Duplex. When calling at a rate of 300 or below, follow the above using Half Duplex.

Spanish Relay: 1-877-627-5448

This allows a Spanish speaking person to use Minnesota Relay. The CA relays calls between a Spanish speaking person with a hearing or speech disability and a Spanish speaking hearing person.

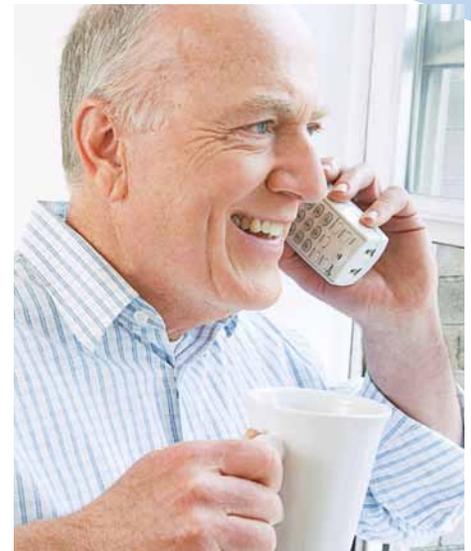
900 Pay-Per-Call Services: 1-900-230-3324

Allows a relay user to connect to any pay-per-call service.

Important Information

Emergency Assistance

TTY callers should dial 9-1-1 directly in an emergency. All 9-1-1 centers are equipped to handle



TTY calls. Minnesota Relay can process emergency calls, but this may delay the response to your call.

Billing Options for Long Distance Relay Calls

- Direct
- Collect
- Pre-paid calling card
- Carrier calling card
- Third-party billing

Filing a Complaint

If you would like to file a complaint regarding Minnesota Relay, please call 1-800-657-3775. You will need to provide the date and time of the relay call, the CA's identification number, and the nature of your complaint. To file a relay complaint with the Federal Communications Commission call toll free at 1-888-225-5322 (voice)/1-888-835-5322 (TTY), or file on line at www.fcc.gov/complaints

Telephone Equipment Distribution (Ted) Program

The TED Program provides free specialized telecommunications equipment to income eligible Minnesotans who are having trouble using the telephone due to a hearing, speech, or physical disability.

For more information on the TED Program:

1-800-657-3663 (voice)
1-888-206-6555 (TTY)
www.tedprogram.org

For More Information on Minnesota Relay Services
1-800-657-3775 or www.mnrelay.org



Welcome, New Members

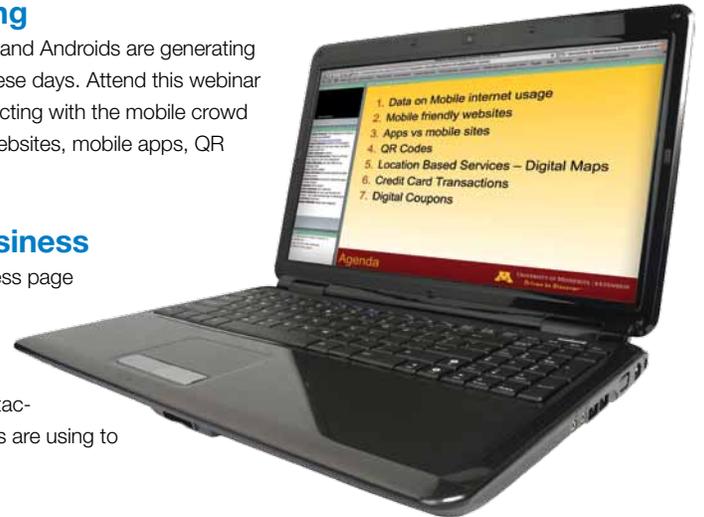
Aho, Rosten	538-6058
Anderson, Roberta	445-5871
Becker, TJ	564-3123
Callahan, Matthew	445-5859
Cannon, Michelle	445-7968
Dahlvang, Gary	445-1189
DBH Concrete LLC	564-0508
Doroff, Gary	445-4279
Ferguson, Janice	564-7008
Frie, Amanda	445-4835
Gonska, Joseph	564-0303
Hames, Kenny	472-3419
Hendrickson, Alex	564-9701
Kern, Seth	472-2563
Lehto, Aaron	564-7834
Morrison, Rebecca	564-1860
Nading, David	564-3765
Peterson, Crystal	564-8868
Redetzke, Kimberly	564-8081
Root, James	564-2582
Schaefer, Gary	564-4343
Stoecker, Linda	445-5860
Tichy Stone & Brick	564-3590
Velde, Aron	538-6077
Vonada, Benjamin	564-2139
Waaraniemi, Dustan	564-5964
Waaraniemi, Neil	564-3134
Wyland, Heather	837-6189

Online Webinars Still Available

The University of Minnesota Extension offers free online webinars to teach small business owners and managers about using various online tools strategically and having a more effective online presence. Check the Community Education tab at the top right of the www.wcta.net website for more information about these classes and others.

Mobile eMarketing

Mobile devices like iPhones and Androids are generating the bulk of Internet traffic these days. Attend this webinar to learn strategies for connecting with the mobile crowd with such tools as mobile websites, mobile apps, QR codes, and digital coupons.



Facebook for business

You have a facebook business page but are struggling to make good use of it. Attend this workshop to learn examples of strategies and tactics various small businesses are using to engage with customers.

Using Pinterest for market research

Pinterest is the hottest new social media tool. Find out how and why people are using it. We will explore several ways businesses can use Pinterest to discover market trends and for marketing. We will also discuss business uses of Twitter in this webinar.

Commercials to be Quieter Thanks to the CALM Act

If for years you've been thinking that commercials were louder than TV programs, you weren't imagining things. COMMERCIALS OFTEN WERE LOUDER. In fact, enough people complained about this annoying practice that action was taken.

Federal Communications Commission (FCC) rules now require commercials to have the same average volume as the programs they accompany. In the Commercial Advertisement Loudness Mitigation (CALM) Act, Congress directed the FCC to establish these rules, and they went into effect on December 13, 2012. Hopefully, this means you won't have to grab the remote to lower the volume every time a commercial comes on.

But if you continue to hear commercials that seem overly loud, you can file a complaint with the FCC's Consumer Call Center at 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322).