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MARCH/APRIL 2021

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Annual Meeting Date Set

We've scheduled this year's annual meeting for Monday, May 10. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is unknown if we will be able to hold an in-person meeting. We are reserving the school for a 7pm meeting on that date, but are also planning other options for the business portion of the agenda.

The nominations and elections committee will meet March 3 to appoint official candidates who wish to serve on the board. Bruce Kinnunen is seeking re-election; contact a committee member if interested in running for the board. Committee members are Hazel Yliniemi, David Anderson, Rose Bakke, Patricia Pederson, Annette Peterson, and James Runyan.

Watch for more information regarding the annual meeting.



FCC Approves 988 for National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

The 24/7 National Suicide Prevention Lifeline provides free and confidential counseling to those in suicidal crisis or emotional distress. People currently reach the hotline by calling the 10-digit number: 1-800-273-8255 (TALK).

In July 2020, the FCC approved 988 as the three-digit abbreviated number to reach the Lifeline. All phone service providers are required to implement the 988 dialing code by July 16, 2022. West Central Telephone has already implemented the 988 number in our switch, but you may also continue to dial the 1-800-873-8255 number to reach the Lifeline.

Get Ready for 10-Digit Dialing for Local Calls

To facilitate implementation of the 988 abbreviated number for Lifeline, area codes in 37 states where the 988 prefix is a working prefix and which now use 7-digit local dialing must switch to 10-digit local dialing. This includes our 218 area code.

Beginning April 21, 2021, you should start dialing 10-digits for all local calls — the 218 area code plus the 7-digit phone number. If you forget to do so during this transition period, your calls will still be completed. **But starting January 1, 2022**, you'll be required to dial 10-digits when making a local call. Failure to do so will prompt a reminder recording.

In addition to changing your dialing routine, you'll also have to reprogram 7-digit local numbers to 10-digit numbers in any device that automatically makes calls for you, including:

- Speed dial feature on a phone
- Personal emergency response system
- Home security equipment

A local call now will remain a local call regardless of the number of digits dialed, and will remain free of charge. For long distance calls, you'll continue to dial 1+ the area code + telephone number. Other three-digit dialing codes will remain in effect including 211, 411, 511, 611, 711, 811 and 911. **For more details, visit www.wcta.net.**



Regarding Customer Information

WCTA maintains the security and confidentiality of Customer Proprietary Network Information (CPNI). We never sell or share your private account information to outside companies for any reason. The protection of your information is important to us, and we have procedures in place to ensure your privacy.

We'd like to continue to offer you new products and services, or improve your existing service offerings, based on information about your account, or CPNI, unless you should choose to "Opt Out" by calling 218-837-5151. Your approval or denial of CPNI use remains valid until you notify us.

To further protect your privacy, please remember that we may ask for a photo ID when visiting in person to discuss your account. We can only discuss account information with people authorized by the account

owner. For some routine customer service issues, we can address CPNI if you have the bill or call detail information you wish to discuss. When you call with account questions, we must authenticate you by asking for your pre-established password, calling you back at the phone number related to your account, or sending the information to your street or email address of record.

Please contact us at 837-5151 with questions.

Scholarship Deadlines

The deadline for high school seniors to apply for a \$1,000 WCTA Scholarship application is April 2. The scholarship is not income- or need-based, and although applicants should have at least a "C" GPA, they do not need to be top of class. Completion of the application and a brief essay on the student's chosen topic are required.

For more information and an application, contact your area high school counselors or visit www.wcta.net and click on Scholarships.

2nd Year or Beyond Scholarship Opportunity

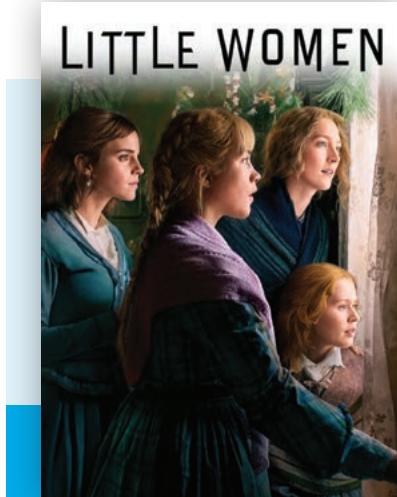
Current college students are urged to apply for a \$1,000 2nd Year or Beyond Scholarship. Students who graduated from high school and are from any one of the five telephone exchanges of WCTA currently attending 2nd year or beyond higher education are eligible. **Past scholarship winners are also eligible.**

The deadline to apply for this scholarship is May 28. For more information and the application, visit www.wcta.net and click on Scholarships. You may also contact Geri Salmela at 218-837-5151 or geris@wcta.net with questions.

WCTA Receives Broadband Grant

Thousands of Minnesotans previously without fast, affordable internet will soon have it thanks to \$20 million in grants from the state. The Office of Broadband recently announced that 39 (out of 64) projects were funded.

West Central Telephone was among the grant recipients. Our project will build broadband out to unserved areas of Wadena and Cass Counties north of the city of Staples, where typically only expensive satellite internet has been an option. This broadband will provide advanced, high-speed services up to 1 Gbps to households, businesses, and farms in the project area.



Little Women
Premiering March 26
@ 7:00pm

STARZ

In the years after the Civil War, Jo March lives in New York and makes her living as a writer, while her sister Amy studies painting in Paris. Amy has a chance encounter with Theodore, a childhood crush who proposed to Jo but was ultimately rejected. Their oldest sibling, Meg, is married to a schoolteacher, while shy sister Beth develops a devastating illness that brings the family back together.

Starz® and related channels and service marks are the property of Starz Entertainment, LLC. Visit starz.com for airdates/times. Little Women © 2019 Columbia Pictures Industries, Inc. and Monarchy Enterprises S.A.r.l. and Regency Entertainment (USA), Inc.

If You Have a Hearing or Speech Disability, Minnesota Relay Can Help with Phone Calls

Minnesota Relay is a free telephone service that uses specially trained communications assistants to facilitate telephone calls between people with hearing and speech disabilities and other individuals. Calls can be made to anywhere in the world, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. All calls are completely confidential. To make a Minnesota Relay call, dial 7-1-1. Once connected to the relay service, tell the communications assistant the type of relay call you wish to make. Or, you may dial the specific toll-free number for the type of relay service. For information on Minnesota Relay Services: www.mnrelay.org or 1-800-657-3775.

Types of Relay Services

Captioned Telephone Service (CTS)

CTS uses a special telephone with a text display screen so that a person who is hard of hearing can listen to and read captions of everything the other person on the call says. You speak directly to the other person on the call, and a relay communications assistant transcribes everything the other person says into captions, which appear on the display screen of your CTS phone.

Internet Protocol Captioned Telephone Service (IP CTS)

Internet-based forms of CTS are available for those who would like to use CTS on a computer, tablet, or smartphone. Go to: www.fcc.gov/consumers/guides/internet-protocol-ip-captioned-telephone-service.

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

Computer users can 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.

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

HCO allows a person who can hear clearly but who has very limited or no speech capability to make and receive phone calls. Using a special text telephone, you type your conversation for the relay communications assistant to read to the other person, and listen directly to the other person's response.

Hearing User: 1-800-627-3529

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

Internet Protocol (IP) Relay:

IP Relay combines text-based relay service with the ease of the internet — no need for a TTY. You

are able to make your relay call using a computer, laptop, tablet, or smartphone. Go to: www.sprint-relay.com/sprintiprelay.

Spanish Relay: 1-877-627-5448

Spanish speaking persons with a hearing or speech disability are able to make relay calls. This is not a translation service — both parties must speak Spanish, and at least one party must have a hearing or speech disability.

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

STS 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 relay communications assistant revoices your words so that the other person on the call can understand them, and the other person speaks directly to you.

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

This service allows a person who is deaf, deafblind, or speech disabled to use a TTY to communicate with the other person on the call.

Video Relay Service (VRS)

The VRS user connects to the relay communications assistant via an internet-enabled device with a video camera. The communications assistant relays the conversation back and forth between the parties — in ASL with the VRS user and by voice with the called party. Go to: www.fcc.gov/consumers/guides/video-relay-services.

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

VCO allows a person with a hearing disability, but who wants to use his or her own voice, to speak directly to the other party. The communications assistant then types the other party's response, which is displayed on the VCO user's text telephone.

For More Information on Minnesota Relay Services

www.mnrelay.org

1-800-657-3775

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.

To file a Complaint Regarding Minnesota Relay

Email your complaint to mn.relay@state.mn.us or call 1-800-657-3775. When filing your complaint please provide:

- Date and time of the relay call
- Calling from and to phone numbers
- CA's identification number
- Nature of your complaint

You may also file a complaint with the Federal Communications Commission:
Website: consumercomplaints.fcc.gov
Voice: 1-888-225-5322
TTY: 1-888-835-5322
ASL via VP: 1-844-432-2275

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:

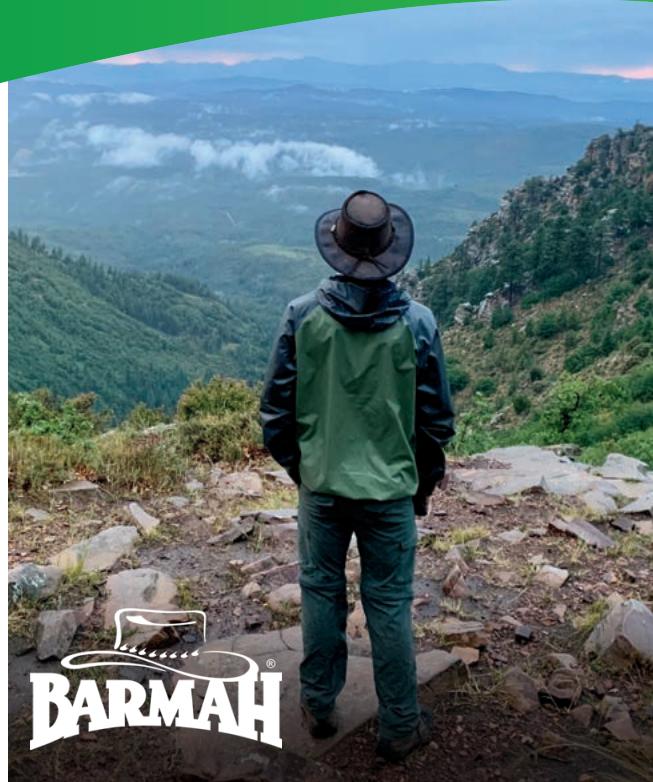
[Website: mn.gov/deaf-hard-of-hearing](http://mn.gov/deaf-hard-of-hearing)

Voice: 1-800-657-3663

ASL via VP: 651-964-1514

Welcome New Members

Arent, Carol 414-6355
BHB Excavating LLC 414-6893
Domeno, Herb & Pearl 894-0190
Draper, Faustine 837-6439
Enyart, Lee 894-1510
Goodwater, Marvin 414-6291
Hillukka, Kevin 564-4444
Hoemberg, Steven & Karen 894-3886
Janson, Mitchell 837-5025
JR Construction Inc 631-1947
Lelwica, Ted & Marge 894-1723
Leritz, Eric 564-5409
Liimatta, Jimmie 472-3213
Meyer, Orville & Marjorie 894-1972
Nevala, Zach & Dianne 837-5989
Odden, Larry & Jeanne 894-2409
Quincer, David & Lynn 629-1085
Raiden, O'Brien Stacy 414-6795
Reck, Jerry & Jane 894-2756
Reed, Danny & Sondra 894-2110
Robb, Randy & Margaret 894-2316
Showalter, Leslie 564-9151
Thoele, Barry & Bonnie 894-3638
Triebenach, Jason
& Amanda 445-8634
Walters, Dwayne & Lois 894-5019
Whispering Pines
Log Homes 631-1974



BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT: Barmah Hats

For over 30 years, Barmah Hats has built a reputation for innovative hat design. They are known for manufacturing the toughest outdoor head wear on the market. This is because Barmah Hats commits to using only the finest materials and handcrafts each hat with care. Barmah Hats has production sites in Staples, Minnesota and Melbourne, Australia.

So how did an Australian hat company get a foothold in rural Minnesota? Andreas Vogel was living in California when the opportunity arose to take over the Barmah Hats, USA division. Andreas and his wife Michelle wanted to raise a family in a less populated area. Andreas, with family near Verndale, knew Minnesota was a great place to live and they made the move. Barmah Hats now has five employees, a robust online business and a manufacturing and retail location in Staples.

Located within our expanded fiber network area, Barmah Hats now enjoys broadband access over a fiber optic line. In fact, they wrote letters of support to the MN Border to Border Broadband committee on our behalf. They needed broadband to stay competitive, lower costs and be more flexible. Andreas said, "Fast internet is a must since a large majority of our sales are online."

If you are looking for quality hats made in the USA, visit Barmah Hats at 1240 Prairie Ave. NW in Staples or online at www.barmahhats.com.

Call West Central Telephone at 218-837-5151 to learn about broadband and other technology solutions for your business.