

WE CONNECT YOU, ONE NEWSLETTER AT A TIME.

THE LINK

SEP/OCT
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Solar Outage May Affect TV Signals

If your TV picture turns snowy or blurry around September 22, the date of this year's fall equinox, it's probably from a solar outage. This is a natural phenomenon which occurs when the receiving antenna on Earth, the satellite and the sun are in direct alignment.

Fortunately, a solar outage lasts only about 15 minutes — just enough time to fix yourself a snack before resuming TV viewing.



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75 YEARS 1950-2025

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Celebrating Our 2025 Scholarship Recipients

West Central is proud to announce the recipients of the 2025 Second Year or Beyond Scholarship, a program dedicated to supporting continuing education for students from our five-district service areas. This year, eight outstanding students have each been awarded a \$1,000 scholarship in recognition of their academic achievements, leadership and commitment to their communities.

The Second Year or Beyond Scholarship is available to students who have graduated from high school in any of the five West Central districts and are currently enrolled in their second year or beyond at a college or university. Notably, previous scholarship recipients are encouraged to reapply each year. Selection is based on a combination of academic performance, leadership qualities, financial need and a demonstrated interest in contributing to rural communities.

Applications include a college transcript, letter of recommendation and a short essay.

West Central remains committed to helping our youth pursue their educational dreams while encouraging them to return and invest their talents in our local communities. We extend our sincere congratulations to this year's scholarship winners and wish them continued success in their academic journeys.



Maci Lake



Macey Goeden



Kayla Meeks



Sarah Elfstrum



Mackenzie Nelson



Mackenzie Kuschel



Katie Blaha



Dalton Moyer

Are There Ghosts of Technology Past in Your Attic?

Many people have dusty old computers, keyboards, monitors, printers and phones lurking around the house, perhaps tucked away in a dark corner of the attic. You loved them once, but they've since been replaced by the latest and greatest models.

What do you do with your old electronics? First, make sure to completely erase all personal information. Then find a place to take them for recycling in your area. Old electronics should not be simply thrown out with the trash since they often contain toxic substances such as lead, mercury and cadmium, which must be disposed of carefully.

These websites are a great place to start your recycling research:

- www.epa.gov/recycle/electronics-donation-and-recycling
- www.cta.tech/advocacy/greener-gadgets/
- www.e-stewards.org/find-a-recycler

Remember, West Central offers a variety of computer repair and maintenance services for machines that have not yet "given up the ghost." For more details, go to www.wcta.net or call 218-837-5151.

Carve Out Lots of Time for Fun

Happy Halloween from West Central! We hope you enjoy a frightfully fun time with friends and family that includes turning pumpkins into jack-o'-lanterns.



Enter the 2026 Directory Cover Contest!

We're getting ready to print the 2026 Directory and need a fabulous photo for the cover.

If yours is chosen, you'll win a \$200 cash prize. Scan the QR code for rules, submissions and voting. Or go to www.woobox.com/7uqfnz. You can also visit our Facebook page at facebook.com/WestCentralTelephone.



Follow these rules to enter:

- Open to amateur photographers only. No logos, trademarks or ads allowed.
- Must be a West Central customer to enter — employees, directors and their households aren't eligible.
- Up to 10 digital photos per household — NO PRINTED PHOTOS.
- Must be 300 dpi minimum resolution, preferably in JPG format.
- Put your full name and number of entries on each file, such as: JohnSmith1.jpg, JohnSmith2.jpg, etc. Also say where it was taken and why it deserves the spotlight.
- Photos must be taken within West Central territory, and people in photos must not be easily identifiable. No photo editing or enhancements.
- Entries become property of West Central and may be used in future promotions.

You must submit your entries by Friday, September 26.



Have You Received Your Capital Credit Check?

One of the benefits of joining a cooperative is that each year we are successful, members are rewarded with cash back in the form of capital credits. Some members move out of the area but forget to give us an updated address, or a member may no longer be living. In either case, the checks are returned to us.

Are you one of the many individuals whose capital credit check has been returned to us due to an outdated address? If you are a former customer of our cooperative, we may have your money.

Check our website at www.wcta.net/returnedcapitalcredit-checks2025 to see if you have unclaimed money from returned capital credit checks waiting for you.

Deepfake Voice Scams Can Sound Convincing

Did you know cybercriminals use voice cloning technology, such as AI speech software, to create voice recordings of celebrities, athletes, political figures, company employees and even individuals' friends and family members?

All it may take to create a convincing impersonation is a short audio clip of the targeted person's voice, pulled from a video posted to a social media platform. The technology uses AI tools that analyze millions of voices and spot patterns in elemental units of speech (called phonemes). A person simply types in what they want the targeted voice to say, and a deepfake audio can be made.

In deepfake voice scams, cybercriminals call people and use AI-generated voice recordings to try and gain personal information or money. Here are examples of who's being impersonated and why:

- Recently deceased individuals to collect welfare checks and other funds
- Company executives to fool the listener into providing a password or other sensitive information
- Young family members supposedly in trouble — such as in jail and needing bail — to get grandparents to send money
- Famous music artists to sell fake audio clips online
- Famous actors to use their “voice” to hawk products in commercials

Because AI-generated recordings sound realistic, it can be hard for people to realize they're being scammed. The FTC recommends you follow these tips to avoid becoming a victim:

- Don't answer calls from unknown numbers.
- Never give out personal information such as account numbers or Social Security numbers in response to unexpected calls.
- Be suspicious if a caller is pressuring you for information or money immediately.
- If the caller claims to be a family member or friend in distress, hang up and reach out to that person directly to confirm they need help.
- If you get a call from someone saying they represent a company or a government agency, hang up and call the phone number on your account statement or on the organization's website to verify the authenticity of the request.

Cybercriminals are adept at technology and deception. Your best defense is to stay informed.



These Horror Films Won Acclaim and Scared Audiences

Horror films don't get as much recognition from the Academy Awards as other genres. The Silence of the Lambs (1991) is the only horror film to win Best Picture. It starred Jodie Foster as Clarice Starling, a top student at the FBI's training academy. She interviews Dr. Hannibal Lecter (Anthony Hopkins), a brilliant psychiatrist who's also a violent psychopath.

Just five other horror films received Best Picture nominations

- **The Exorcist (1973)** – A worried mother seeks help for her daughter who's acting strangely.
- **Jaws (1975)** – A resort community is terrified after a young woman is killed by a shark.
- **The Sixth Sense (1999)** – A boy is haunted by the dark secret that he's visited by ghosts.
- **Black Swan (2010)** – A rivalry between the two ballet dancers transforms into a twisted friendship.
- **Get Out (2017)** – A meet-the-parents weekend getaway leads to disturbing discoveries.

In the mood for a scary movie night? All of these movies are available for streaming.



BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT:

A Bit of Tack: Your One-Stop Western Shop

Nestled in Verndale, Minnesota, A Bit of Tack is more than a retail store. It's a destination! Part of the R&J Arena and Event Center and Sundby Trailer Sales, this family-run gem was built on a love for horses and a vision for something bigger.

Ron and Judy Sundby started in 1987 with horse sales over in Motley, moved to Verndale in 1994, and had the vision of adding to the arena in 2002. Shortly after, Sarah Madsen helped expand with a tiny corner of western products, A Bit of Tack, which became a 10,000-square-foot western retail store offering boots, clothing, saddles, tack, hats and accessories. What started as a modest operation has grown into a full-service experience featuring over 400 climate-controlled stalls, indoor and outdoor arenas, a café and a trailer dealership.

Even bigger than the impressive footprint is the heart of this store. The Sundby family and their dedicated staff have created a culture of warmth and community.

"Getting to run it with my family and enjoy all our customers has been the biggest reward," said Madsen. Staying united as a family and growing together has been their proudest achievement. Thanks to West Central's reliable internet, phone and security systems, operations run smoothly. "West Central

has definitely helped our business in so many ways," Madsen adds. "Anytime we need anything, they're always there to help."

Looking ahead, the mission remains the same: to offer exceptional service, quality products and a welcoming space for everyone — whether you're a horse enthusiast and seasoned rider or simply looking for everyday wear. There's something for everyone at A Bit of Tack — where the West isn't just worn, it's lived.

A Bit of Tack is located at 16498 US-10 in Verndale and is open Monday through Friday, 9AM to 5:30PM; Saturday, 9AM to 5PM; and Sunday, 10AM to 3PM. Learn more at www.abitoftackmn.com or call them at 218-445-5849.

We're proud to support A Bit of Tack with reliable high-speed internet, advanced security and phone systems. Want to see how West Central can help your business thrive? Call us at 218-837-5151 to learn more.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Erickson, Floyd.....	218-629-1265
Erkenbrack, Daniel.....	218-629-1022
Menahga Hardware.....	218-564-4121
Schmith, Rosalie.....	218-837-5223
UpNorth Ranch.....	218-564-4643

EDITOR Thalen Zimmerman

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