

We are actively looking for new Round-Up Committee Members! Please call the office if you are interested in helping select the Round-Up Recipients!

See page 2 for more details!



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West River Cooperative Telephone Company

Calling on You

WRCTC Celebrates Being Named a Smart Rural CommunitySM Provider

West River Cooperative Telephone Company was recently named a Smart Rural CommunitySM provider by NTCA—The Rural Broadband Association. NTCA's Smart Communities are powered by innovative rural broadband providers that believe by being connected to fiber broadband we achieve more together. The program promotes rural broadband and its role in supporting innovative economic development, effective education, efficient energy distribution, and use state-of-the-art health care and other important issues for rural America.

In 2020, WRCTC finalized the fiber-to-home initiative, linking all members to cutting-edge equipment. In order to receive recognition as a Smart Rural CommunitySM provider, WRCTC was required to affirm that it was 100% fiber to all members, offers 100 Mbps broadband to at least 50% of its service area; that it has broadband subscription rates of at least 50% of the membership; and that it is committed to program principles of collaboration and innovation.

These connections enable our members to fully participate in today's connected society. Because of access to fiber broadband, West River Cooperative Telephone Company members have educational and economic opportunities PO Box 52, Bison; on par with those in the most connected regions of America.

NTCA Chief Executive Officer Shirley Bloomfield also recognized WRCTC for this achievement, noting, "We are so excited to welcome another Smart Rural Community provider into this growing network of innovative broadband providers delivering the Internet's fastest speeds in some of the most remote and rural communities of our country. I applaud West River Cooperative Telephone Company for their commitment to enabling cutting-edge technologies that drive innovation, improve quality of life, and promote economic development in their region and nationwide."

About NTCA—The Rural Broadband Association:

NTCA—The Rural Broadband Association is the premier association representing nearly 850 independent, community-based telecommunications companies that are leading innovation in rural and small-town America. NTCA members are leading the technological evolution for rural consumers, delivering robust and high-quality services over future-proof networks that make rural communities vibrant places in which to live and do business.



Round-Up: Pennies Make a Difference

It is amazing what a few pennies every month can do for families in need! The Round-Up Program is one way of showing others in your community that you care.

Sometimes it only takes a few pennies to make someone's day! In December, the WRCTC Round-Up committee selected six members to receive donations from the Round-Up funds.

Receiving funds were: Daniel Block, Lemmon; Trent Turbiville, Buffalo; Deb Long, Camp Crook; Brenda Even, Keldron; Cody and McKenna Bernstein, Bison and Phil and Erica Larson, Lemmon. Each family was very appreciative of the monetary donation.

When faced with medical bills or other hardships, every penny makes a difference. The most it can cost is .99 cents a month, and you never know 101 US Hwy 85 Apt #3, Buffalo; when it might be you or a member of your family who could benefit from this program.

If you would like to nominate someone for Round-Up funds, please call the office at 605-244-5213 and ask for Sara.

We are currently seeking new Round-Up Committee Members! New committee members will serve for a two term and engage in two meetings each year, one in January and one in June. Committee members will take nominations from their surrounding community members and bring those names to the meetings.

Want to round your bill up to the nearest dollar? Fill out the form below or call the office to speak with a Member Services Representative at 605-244-5213.



General Manager Eric Kahler presents the Bernstein Family with their Round-Up check.

WRCTC'S ROUND-UP PROGRAM THE POWER OF CHANGE

As a WRCTC member, you have a unique opportunity to support Round-Up, a program that provides financial support to Community members facing hardship or an organization in need of financial support.

By signing this form you authorize West River Cooperative Telephone Company to Round-Up your telecommunications bill each month to the nearest dollar. Send this form back with your monthly bill or mail to: PO Box 39, Bison, SD 57620.

Name(s) on Account _____

Phone Number _____

Signature _____



Kashton Schecher poses on the float before the Bison Parade of Lights.



Bonnie Sanders, Tally Seim, Janelle Goddard, Lyle Reiff and Tommi Jo Rice came to the Christmas Coffee with their best Christmas attire!

Christmas at the Cooperative

December was a busy month at Grand Electric Cooperative, Inc. We participated in the Parade of Lights in Bison, decorated the office, inside and out, threw a Christmas Coffee 809 2nd Ave E, Lemmon; get together and decorated the main streets of Bison and Buffalo.

On December 1, Grand Electric Linemen and West River Cooperative Telephone Company's Technicians decorated the outside of the Bison Office building. Once the building was decorated, they took the bucket trucks downtown to decorate main street!

On December 17, Brooke Schecher and her son, Kashton, drove the Christmas float in the Parade of Lights in Bison. The theme of the float was: "I'm dreaming of a White Christmas – as long as the power stays on!" Many employees pitched in to help decorate the float this year and it turned out beautifully.

On December 21, Grand Electric and West River Cooperative Telephone hosted the Annual Christmas Coffee get together, with an Ugly Sweater Party theme. Employee's came dressed in their best Ugly Christmas attire and brought their favorite holiday treats to share with everyone who stopped by. The food was fabulous, but the company was even better! Thank you to everyone who stopped by the Annual Christmas Coffee!

We hope that participating in events in our territories remind members how the smallest gestures can make a difference in our small communities. As Dr. Suess once wrote, "Maybe Christmas doesn't come from a store. Maybe Christmas, perhaps, means a little bit more." We are so thankful for our members and hope you all had a wonderful Holiday Season with friends and family.

Legislative Forum

On December 19, 2023, West River Cooperative Telephone Company, Grand Electric Cooperative, Inc., and Moreau-Grand Electric Cooperative, hosted a forum 19297 Echo Rd, Vale; at the Two R Bar in Faith.

The meeting was intended for local Cooperatives to educate Legislators on key issues Cooperatives are facing and answer our District Legislator's questions before they head into Legislative Session.



Kara Semmler, Executive Director of South Dakota Telecommunications Association, speaks on the importance of broadband in rural areas.



New WRCTC Members

Meadow

Bell, Lee

605-788-2221

COME VISIT US!

WRCTC & GRAND ELECTRIC WILL BE AT THE KBJM FARM & HOME SHOW

**MARCH 18, 2024,
10AM-6PM**

**BEELEER COMMUNITY
CENTER, LEMMON**

SECURE PAY

**Make a payment on your bill
over the phone using a
debit/credit card or check.
Available 24/7!**

844-252-5267

Find Your Address

Five addresses were hidden in the last newsletter. Hidden in this issue are five new addresses. If you find YOUR address, all you have to do is notify our office. The \$20 will then be deducted off your next telephone bill. Changes of address in the New WRCTC Members section do not count. **Deadline is February 27, 2024.**

\$20

bill credit

SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE!!!

\$750 Scholarships

ATTENTION High School Seniors from Bison, Buffalo, Lemmon, Faith and Newell: Here is your chance to win a \$750 scholarship! One senior from each school district will be awarded a scholarship from WRCTC and Grand Electric for the upcoming 2024-2025 school year! Applications are available online at www.wrctc.coop, through the Guidance Counselor at your school or from WRCTC in Bison. Please email your completed application and any extra documents to: bschecher@wrctc.coop OR mail it to: WRCTC, Attn: Scholarship Program, PO Box 39, Bison, SD 57620.

Applications must be returned by March 8, 2024.

\$750 Tech Scholarship

Are you currently enrolled or planning to attend a Telecommunications Program, Electrician Program or Powerline Program? Qualified programs listed below:

Telecommunications, Information Systems Technology, Heating & Cooling Technology, Electrical Construction & Maintenance, Utilities Technology – Powerline, 609 4th Ave W, Lemmon; Utilities Technology – Heating & Cooling, Powerline Construction & Maintenance, and Electrical Utilities & Substation Maintenance.

Applications must be returned by March 8, 2024.

Seven FRS Scholarships

The Foundation for Rural Service (FRS), along with WRCTC, is offering seven different scholarships! One application will enter you into all scholarship opportunities. Preference will be given to individuals expressing an interest in returning to work in a rural area following college graduation. More information is available online at www.wrctc.coop, through the Guidance Counselor at your school or from WRCTC in Bison.

Completed applications require the signature of the manager, board president or designated employee PRIOR to February 16, 2024. All applications need to be postmarked by February 16, 2024 to be considered for the scholarship.