



Simons- New Job Title

Brent Simons graduated from Faith High School and attended Mitchell Technical Institute. He was hired by WRCTC as a 1,000-hour employee in 2010. Brent previously worked at Golden West, and then was hired full-time by WRCTC as a Combination Technician on May 16, 2016. In May 2017, Brent was promoted to Journeyman 509 6th Ave W Apt 1, Lemmon; Combination Technician, and effective October 1, 2024, Brent's title has changed to Central Office Technician. Congratulations, Brent!

New Employee

Wendi McCall started at WRCTC as Cashier/Receptionist on October 14th. She previously worked at Perkins County for 4 ½ years as a Deputy Finance Officer. Wendi attended Athens High School in Athens, TX, TVCC in Athens, TX, and East Texas State University in Commerce, TX.

Wendi and her husband, Will, live near Lodgepole and have two grown sons, Rawlin and Cody. As a hobby/side business, she runs Wendi's Out West Designs from her home. Originally from Texas, she has called South Dakota home since 2011. Welcome to the Cooperative, Wendi!



ROUND-UP

The West River Cooperative Telephone Company's Round-Up Program was designed to help those in need! By donating a few pennies every month, you could give a helping hand to those who have fallen on hard times. If you know of someone who could benefit from this program, please contact one of WRCTC's Round-Up Committee members:

Cheryl Turbiville - Camp Crook - 605-797-4436
Pat Dalzell - Lemmon - 605-374-5562
Paula Reedy - Vale - 605-456-2926

If you would like to sign up for the Round-Up Program, please submit the form below, call our office at 605-244-5213 or submit your request online at www.wrctc.coop/contact.

The Power of Change

As a WRCTC member, you have a unique opportunity to support Round-Up, a program that provides financial support 20627 116th St, Keldron; to Community members facing hardship or an organization in need of financial support.

GIVE A LITTLE....GAIN A LOT!

By signing this form you authorize WRCTC to Round-Up your telephone bill each month to the nearest dollar.

Send this form back with your monthly bill or mail to:
WRCTC, PO Box 39, Bison, SD 57620

Name on Account _____

Signature _____

Phone Number _____

New WRCTC Members

Lemmon

Davison, Jane 605-374-4409
Kuntz, Cheryl 605-374-8519

Cooperative Appreciation Month \$50 Bill Credit WINNERS

- Judith Lang - Vale
- Kermet & Cindy Kahl - Shadehill
- Scott & Lori Besler - Reva
- John & Noreen Green - Lodgepole
- Walt & Linda Stephens - Buffalo
- Kelly & Kandy Britton - Buffalo
- Vicki Stark - Nisland
- Patsy Wilkinson - Prairie City
- Rhonda Lensegrav - Meadow
- Gary & Marilyn Philipsen - Vale

Business Trick-Or-Treat



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.

\$20 bill credit

Deadline is December 27, 2024.

National Do Not Call Registry Q&A

Don't let Telemarketers Ruin your Day!

Why would I register my phone number with the National Do Not Call Registry?

The National Do Not Call Registry gives you an opportunity to limit the telemarketing calls you receive. Once you register your phone number, telemarketers covered by the National Do Not Call Registry have up to 31 days from the date you register to stop calling you.

Who manages the National Do Not Call Registry?

The National Do Not Call Registry is managed by the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), the nation's consumer protection agency. It is enforced by the FTC, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), and state law enforcement officials.

How soon after I register will I notice a reduction in calls?

Telemarketers covered by the National Do Not Call Registry have up to 31 days from the date you register to stop calling you.

When I register my phone number, how long until it shows up on the National Do Not Call Registry?

After you register, your phone number will show up on the registry by the next day. Telemarketers have up to 31 days to get your phone number and remove it from their call lists.

What if I change my mind? Can I take my number off the National Do Not Call Registry?

You can delete your phone number only by calling toll-free 1-888-382-1222 from the telephone number you want to delete. After you contact the registry to delete it, it will be removed from the National Do Not Call Registry by the next day. But telemarketers have up to 31 days to access information about your deletion and add your number back to their call lists, if they choose to.

I have more than one personal telephone number. How can I register all of those numbers?

You may register up to three telephone numbers (including cell phone numbers) at one time on the National Do Not Call Registry website. You will receive a separate confirmation email for each number you wish to register online. You must open each email and click on the link in each one to complete the registration process. If you have more than three personal telephone numbers, you will have to go through the registration process more than once to register all of your numbers. There is a limit on the number of phone numbers you can register in this manner. If registering via telephone, you can register only one number at a time and you must call from the telephone number you are registering.

How do I get more information about the registry?

You can visit the website for the National Do Not Call Registry at www.donotcall.gov or call the registry's toll-free number (1-888-382-1222).



West River Cooperative Telephone Company will be closed December 24 & 25 in observance of Christmas, and January 1 in observance of New Years Day. Happy Holidays!



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West River Cooperative Telephone Company

Calling on You

Win a FREE Trip to Washington, D.C.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE: All 15, 16 & 17 year olds (at the time of tour) whose parent or guardian is a member of West River Cooperative Telephone Company.

WHAT DOES IT COST? Airfare, hotel and meals are FREE. The only expense to attendees are extras such as snacks, souvenirs and shopping.

WHEN: June 2 - June 6, 2025

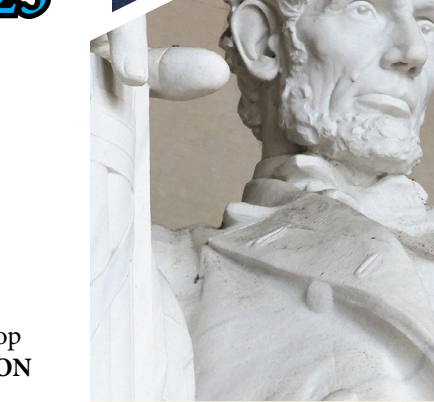
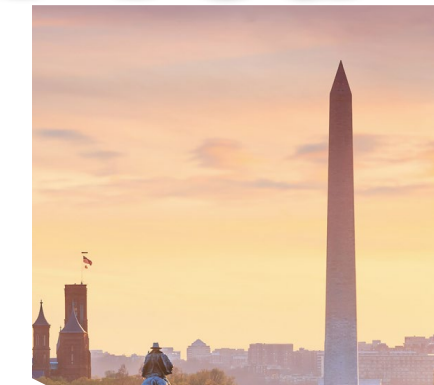
HOW DO I ENTER TO WIN A FREE TRIP?

- Must be a dependent of a WRCTC Member.
- Must be 15, 16 or 17 at the time of the tour-18 year olds are ineligible.
- Write an essay, no more than 500 words, on the topic of:
How does your local Telephone Cooperative keep you "connected"?
- Cover page including your essay's title, your name, address, phone number, email, name of your parent/guardian, name of your school, the grade you are currently in, your age, your T-shirt size and a photo of yourself! Email to: bschecher@wrctc.coop
- Essays will be judged and 2 applicants will win a FREE trip to D.C.!

DEADLINE TO ENTER IS FEBRUARY 12, 2025



For more information, contact
Brooke Schecher at 605-244-5213
Email bschecher@wrctc.coop or Visit www.wrctc.coop
VISIT OUR WEBSITE FOR TRAVEL INFORMATION



June 2 - June 6, 2025



FOUNDATION FOR RURAL SERVICE

FRS YOUTH TOUR

www.FRS.org/youthtour

Appreciation Luncheons

October was a busy month for West River Cooperative Telephone Company. We had three Appreciation Luncheons to say "Thank You" to our member-owners! On October 11th, members were invited to join WRCTC in Meadow at the Indian Creek Lutheran Church. On October 18th, a luncheon was held at the Slim Buttes Lutheran Church in Reva. Lastly, members were invited to the Buffalo Rec Center on October 29th, for a lunch served by the Harding County 4-H Leaders. Employees and Board Members were available at the luncheons to answer questions regarding the Cooperatives, and General Manager Eric Kahler spoke to attendees about Cooperative happenings.

Two \$25 bill credits were up for grabs at each event. The Meadow Luncheon winners were Sharon Anderson and Iris Day; the Reva Luncheon winners were Patsy Wilkinson and Vicki Wilkinson, and the Buffalo Luncheon winners were Larry Lyons and Holly Moseley.

We appreciate our members and their support of the Cooperative! Thank you to everyone who stopped by to chat, ask question, and enjoy yummy food and good company. Happy Cooperative Month!



Pay-By-Phone Number Change

On November 26th, West River Cooperative Telephone Company's Pay-By-Phone number will change to **855-960-3237**. The old number will be deactivated after billing for the month of December has been completed.

Statement of Nondiscrimination

West River Cooperative Telephone Company is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs).

Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Person with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202)720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800)877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available PO Box 54, Bison; in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

- (1) mail:
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary
for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
- (2) fax:
(202) 690-7442; or
- (3) email:
program.intake@usda.gov

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

Annual Recap



Eric Kahler
General Manager

On behalf of West River Cooperative Telephone Company, I will report on the Cooperative's 2023 operations. 2023 was an excellent financial year for our cooperative. West River Cooperative Telephone Company had a positive

year-end consolidated margin of \$3,036,814. Total revenue for West River Cooperative Telephone Company in 2023 was \$8,825,048 as compared to \$8,947,556 in 2022. This was a decrease in revenue of \$122,508. \$4,279,886 of WRCTC's 2023 total revenue came from a federal Universal Service Fund (USF) support program called the Alternative Connect America Cost Model. This funding is for providers like WRCTC, which provides communications services in high-cost rural areas. Expenses for 2023 were \$7,121,211 as compared to \$7,864,471 in 2022. This was a decrease of \$743,260. The main factors for this decrease were decreased depreciation, plant-specific expenses, and customer operation. In April this year, the Board of Directors voted to allocate \$2,587,497 of the 2023 year-end margins back to the members. Then, in July of this year, the Board of Directors approved the retirement of \$914,259 capital credits back to the membership. This amount represents the retirement of the remaining patronage from 2010. Operationally, 2023 was another busy year for West River Cooperative Telephone Company. We added 19 new services and 70 new internet customers. At year-end, WRCTC had 3,001 miles of fiber in service, which serves 6,209 square miles and 2,537 members. We are proud that 100% of our members have fiber to their homes. As you know, every day we strive to ensure the members have a reliable and always-on communication network that ensures the businesses in our area stay connected to their stakeholders and the members remain connected to their loved ones. The result of keeping your businesses connected to their stakeholders is increasing the economic strength in our communities; the result of keeping you connected to your loved ones is improving relationships and providing you with access to technology that enhances your quality of life, which cumulatively increases human flourishing within the Cooperative's service territory. There are a few ways we ensure your Cooperative maintains a proper level of reliability for all your communications. The first is to periodically conduct network traffic analysis to evaluate the cooperative's communications network's overall capacity and identify any congestion points and their remedies before they impact the services that your businesses and families rely on. In my manager's report at last year's annual meeting, I shared with the members the Cooperative's network capacity analysis, which indicated that the nine-year-old transport equipment would be near total capacity sometime in 2024 or 2025. So, as part of the Cooperative's 2023 and 2024 budget, we began

proactively installing a higher-capacity communication transport platform. I am pleased to announce that by the end of 2024, all the Cooperative's traffic will be migrated to this new equipment. The new transport platform should provide adequate capacity for the membership's communication growth demands for the next 8-10 years as it has forty times the capacity of what 21278 139th St, Glad Valley; the Cooperative has today. Believe it or not, we will need this much additional capacity because Cooperative's members' internet usage has increased yearly since 2015. The Cooperative's members' internet utilization is rising, and our forecasts indicate it will continue to grow exponentially in the coming years. This is mainly due to the advancement of new technologies like artificial intelligence (AI). The second way we help ensure you always have access to a reliable connection is by cooperating with our fellow cooperatives, which is one of the seven principles all cooperatives operate by. We work together with our neighbors to improve one another's networks and, ultimately, each other's members' lives. How do we do this? West River Cooperative Telephone Company is one of seventeen member-owners of a statewide network operated by South Dakota Networks, more commonly known as SDN Communications in Sioux Falls. Together, we provide telecommunications services to over 85% of South Dakota's land mass. In addition to being a member-owner of SDN along with our fellow South Dakota cooperatives, we have connected all our communications networks for the mutual benefit of carrying one another's traffic. You might be asking yourself, "Why would they want to do this, and how is this mutually beneficial?" In the communication industry, when you deliver high volumes of critical communication traffic for society, you never want only one connection to the rest of the world; you want multiple connections to travel in different directions to provide geo-redundancy. So, by connecting our networks, we mutually provide one another with a diverse set of backup routes to the rest of the world to ensure all our respective memberships stay connected should any of our links to the outside world stop working, which happens from time to time. WRCTC connects its network on its southern service territory border with our friends from Golden West Telecommunications Cooperative out of Wall. On the northeastern service territory border, we connect the Cooperative's network with West River Telecommunications out of Hazen, ND. Then, those two cooperatives connect to their neighboring cooperatives on the other side of their service territory, and so on. Ultimately, we end up with a robust and diverse statewide network, which is the envy of almost every statewide telecommunication network in our nation. Like the farmers and ranchers who joined their resources 71 years ago to form telecommunication cooperatives across this great state, we, too, have joined our communication resources with our neighbors to help one another. We are proud that seven decades later, we are still operating in the true spirit of a cooperative and what the founders of the Cooperative envisioned. We work with and for one another for the mutual benefit of improving all the lives of our members and the members of our neighboring cooperatives because, simply put, "we are all in this together," and by committing to working together, we can accomplish extraordinary things. As mentioned, connecting our networks to increase our

Annual Recap Continued:

reliability allows West River to ensure that your phone, internet, and TV services are always on and there when you need them. In addition to those services we provide, West River also provides connectivity for all the cellular towers in the Cooperative's service territory. When you use your cellular device, did you know that your cellular call, text message, or social media post travels from your smartphone to the nearest cell tower? If that cell tower resides within our service territory, it uses WRCTC's fiber optic network to connect your cellular-based communications to the rest of the world. I point this out because most folks believe their cellular provider carries all their cellular traffic from end to end. However, in reality, that is not the case. Only a tiny portion of cellular traffic is on the cellular provider's network. In addition to connecting people's smartphones, either through our Managed Wi-Fi service or their cellular connection, we also play an essential role in supporting our public school efforts in Bison, Lemmon, Buffalo, and Newell in educating over 1,000 of our K-12 youth by connecting those schools to the state's Department of Education network. Furthermore, West River also provides connectivity for the Perkins, Harding, and Corson County courthouses in their efforts to support the essential civic institutions that were important to our founding fathers, such as our elections and legal proceedings. Also, regarding your health and safety, West River provides connectivity for three clinics and all your 911 calls, whether from your landline or a cell tower. We help ensure that should you ever need to make a 911 call, it makes it to a 911 call center operator to get you the help you need when you need it the most. When you stop and think about it, without West River Cooperative Telephone Company's communications network, no communications would be possible in our 6,200 square miles of northwest South Dakota. That is a rather dark and scary thought. But thankfully, for the past 71 years, because of the many people willing to serve as directors to represent the membership, the many people who have served the members as employees, and most importantly, our member-owners, who through your continued support by purchasing our products and services, we have been able to ensure that our communities aren't dark or scary or disconnected from the rest of the world. Instead, they are a shining beacon for others to see what coming together for a common purpose can do to improve human flourishing. As part of keeping our communities a shining beacon, one item we are doing to ensure all of you stay connected is continually maintaining your Cooperative's network so that it is always in maximum operating condition. I want to take a moment to thank the operations department. The employees on the network operations team work hard for all of you every day to ensure that your internet is there when you need it, your call to 911 goes through should you ever need it, or your favorite TV show or channel works when you want to sit down and take a minute to relax. They ensure that all 3,000 miles of fiber in the Cooperative's service territory are well maintained. In addition to our operations team, we have fantastic office professionals who answer over 10,000 of your phone calls yearly, make over 4,000 service orders, and process a staggering 700,000 financial transactions yearly. Between these folks and our other support staff, we all work together collectively as one unit, allowing West River to keep your business connected to your business stakeholders and your families connected to your loved ones. As the years have progressed and technology has evolved, we

have become ever more reliant on social media to help us stay connected to the rest of the world and informed about the things that are essential to our lives. If you have Facebook or Instagram, please follow our social media accounts. WRCTC uses these platforms to inform the membership about Cooperative news 11151 White Butte Rd, Lemmon; or outage-related information. On the regulatory front, one issue that could present a risk to West River Cooperative Telephone Company and all rural telecommunication service providers in the United States is USF Funds. As previously mentioned, your Cooperative receives \$4.2M annually in federal USF funds from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to provision, maintain, and upgrade the Cooperative's facilities to ensure that you have the same quality of communications services in rural America as in urban America. In 1996, through the Telecom Act, the FCC delegated its administration duties of the USF fund to the Universal Service Administration Company (USAC). USAC's primary purpose is to collect and administer the distribution of USF funds to rural providers, like WRCTC. On July 27, 2024, the Federal Fifth Circuit Court ruled that the FCC's delegation of the administrative duties of the USF fund to USAC was unconstitutional. Ironically, this ruling occurred after two other federal courts ruled it was constitutional in similar cases. While the verdict is very concerning PO Box 83, Newell; amongst the industry about the future of USF's certainty, it does not mean USF support will stop today. In response, this ruling is being challenged by our national trade organization, NTCA, and many others from across the industry. Most recently, on August 23, in response to the Fifth Circuit Court's ruling, the FCC filed a Motion to Stay with the Fifth Circuit. The Fifth Circuit granted the FCC's Motion to Stay three days later. Then, on September 30, the FCC filed with the SCOTUS to have the case heard and ultimately seek a reversal of the lower court decision. Suppose the US Supreme Court reverses the lower court's decision. In that case, it will likely remove the threat of your Cooperative losing \$4.2M in annual federal support, allowing the Cooperative to continue providing you with reliable world-class communication services at affordable rates. In terms of the potential impact on your Cooperative's rates, the impact of the loss of \$4.2M annually is \$143/member/month. This case is crucial for rural Americans who depend on their high-speed communication networks for their business and families. Our industry constantly communicates our concerns regarding this issue to our federal delegates. We eagerly await, hoping the United States Supreme Court will hear and ultimately overturn the lower court's ruling. If it does not, we will need a quick response from Congress to deliver a solution that sustains the USF support mechanism. West River Cooperative Telephone Company, SDTA, and NTCA are committed to continuing to be your advocates and ensuring you have access to reliable and affordable communications services for decades. That is what we are doing now and what we will continue to do because IT IS OUR MISSION! On behalf of the Board of Directors and employees, I thank you for your continued support and look forward to serving you in the future.