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JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2013

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Committee Members Needed

As a member of West Central Telephone Association, you are eligible to serve on the Nominations & Election Committee. Members of the committee are responsible for appointing qualified candidates to run for directorship, collecting ballots and verifying election results at the annual meeting held in May.

If you are interested in serving as a committee member, please contact West Central at 218-837-5151 before February 10, 2013. You may also express your interest by emailing tonym@wcta.net.




West Central
 Telephone Association
We Connect You.™

Scholarship Opportunities from WCTA

As an investment in our youth, we're committed to the future of rural Minnesota. We're pleased to announce the following scholarship opportunities and invite all high school seniors to apply.

The FRS college scholarship program awards 30 scholarships in the amount of \$2,000 each to winning applicants across the nation, with a \$500 match by the sponsoring telco. By partnering with the FRS, West Central Telephone is able to make the scholarship program available to high school seniors in our area.

Applications for the Foundation for Rural Service (FRS) Scholarship are due in the WCTA office by February 22, 2013.

If an applicant is majoring in science, math, medicine or engineering, the student also qualifies for the FRS Staurulakis Family Scholarship award in the amount of \$5,000.

For applications and guidelines, see your high school guidance counselor or download the application from the FRS website at <http://www.frs.org>.

Additionally, high school seniors can apply for West Central Telephone's scholarship program which will award up to eight high school seniors a scholarship in the amount of \$1,000. **The deadline for the WCTA Scholarship applications is April 1, 2013.**

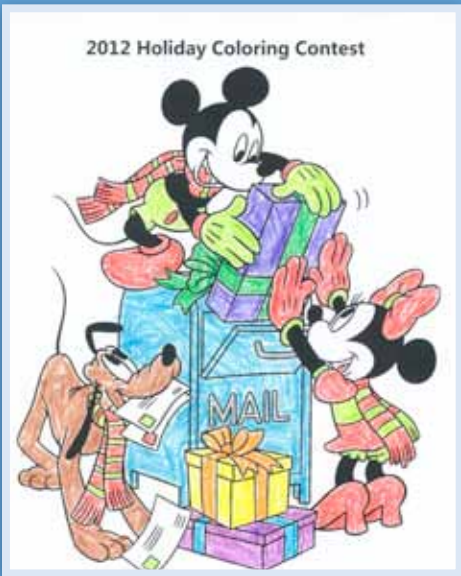
Our scholarship program has been established to encourage youth in our area to further their education after graduating from high school and is made possible through unclaimed capital credits checks. Because of our cooperative status, we are able to use these funds



to benefit the scholarship program. At this time, there is over \$63,000 funding the scholarship program.

These scholarships are another example of a cooperative member-benefit, and as such, would like to see all high school seniors apply — there are typically only 25 to 30 applicants each year. 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. Simply complete the online application, write a brief essay on your chosen topic and submit by the deadline. The scholarship can be found at www.wcta.net.

Remember, the deadline for the FRS scholarship is February 22, 2013, while the deadline for the WCTA scholarship is April 1, 2013. Please call Geri Salmela at 837-5151 or email your questions to geris@wcta.net.



Color Contest Winners

Five fabulous artists placed first in their age division in the annual WCTA Holiday Coloring Contest. The winners include Stuart Ruonavaara, Logan Helland, Elyse Ness, Hope Shepersky and McKenna Skoog.

A heartfelt thanks to all of the schools, parents and children who participated and make this contest special for our kids!



Fiber Optics Soon a Reality for Wolf Lake

In the November/December 2012 newsletter, we announced that the Fiber to the Home (FTTH) project for the Wolf Lake area has been approved, despite the uncertainty the FCC's new rules have caused for rural companies like ours. This is possible because all construction costs will be paid using internal funds rather than increasing our long-term debt through loans.

Construction bidding has begun with construction slated to start this spring. Members that live within the Wolf Lake project area, which includes the city, rural Wolf Lake and a few rural Menahga customers, can expect a call from customer service representatives in the coming weeks. They will be setting appointments for our technicians to pre-wire the approximately 320 homes included in the project. The pre-wire consists of hanging the shells for both outside equipment and inside equipment, and feeding the pigtailed fiber into your home. The pre-wiring will make it much easier and quicker for the contractors to connect the new underground fiber optics to your home this spring.



Being connected to a 100 percent fiber-optic infrastructure brings all things broadband and beyond to your home. Having a fiber optics connected community and home means that you can live, work and play in beautiful rural Minnesota without sacrificing big city technology! As a matter of fact, compared to some metro areas, West Central Telephone cooperative members are ahead of the broadband race. All of our services — telephone, Internet and digital TV are all delivered over your new fiber optic broadband connection!

2013 Winning Photo

Shelly Carpenter of Verndale submitted the winning photo featured on the cover of the 2013 WCTA Directory. Shelly sent several photos, as did many others, but the shot of the dog taking the time to smell the flowers was just too cute to pass up! Shelly won \$200 for her winning entry.

There were many wonderful photos — all sent digitally, which made the viewing and production easier, but choosing the winning photo more difficult. This year the majority of the photos were placed on the WCTA Facebook page and fans were allowed to "Like" their favorite finalists. The fans really helped narrow it down to the winning photo. **Thanks to all who participated in this year's contest!**





Lifeline Credit

You may qualify for discounted telephone service if your income level falls below 135 percent of the Federal Poverty Guidelines or if you are currently receiving benefits under one or more of the following programs: Medicaid, food stamps, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Federal Public Housing Assistance, or the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program.

For more information about the FCC Lifeline Program, call our office at 837-5151 or 800-945-2163.

Driving Tips for Winter Weather

Santa may be able to get around easily in any weather, but for the rest of us who must travel on roads, winter weather can be both frightening and dangerous. Safety experts offer these tips for driving in the snow:

Accelerate and decelerate slowly. Applying the gas slowly to accelerate is the best method for regaining traction and avoiding skids; don't try to get moving in a hurry. Also allow extra time to slow down since it takes longer on snow-covered roads than it does on dry pavement.

Know your brakes. Whether you have antilock brakes or not, the best way to stop is threshold braking. Keep the heel of your foot on the floor and use the ball of your foot to apply firm, steady pressure on the brake pedal.

Don't power up hills. Applying extra gas on snow-covered roads just starts your wheels spinning. Try to get a little momentum going before you reach the hill and let that momentum carry you to the top.

Don't stop while going up a hill. Get some momentum going on a flat roadway before you take on the hill.

Stay home if you really don't need to go out. Even if you can drive well in the snow, not everyone else can. Don't tempt fate.



Pirates! Band of Misfits!

Premiered
December 23rd

starz

An inept pirate captain and his comic crew sail the high seas as he attempts to win the coveted Pirate Of The Year award! Swashbuckling slapstick animation from the creators of Wallace & Gromit and Chicken Run.

Visit starz.com for airdates/times. STARZ, ENCORE and related channels and service marks are the property of Starz Entertainment, LLC. Pirates! Band of Misfits © 2012 SONY PICTURES ANIMATION, INC



Welcome, New Members

Aho, Alvin	538-6071
Aho, Maximilian	538-6053
Arthur, Jeremy	837-6169
Beck, Ronald.....	564-6723
Bingaman-Wuollet, Dale	837-6202
Bobst, Rodney	564-0003
Brown, Amy.....	564-2365
Bungert, Christopher	564-5097
Callahan, Matthew.....	445-5859
Carpenter, Shelly	837-5741
Cole, Susan.....	564-5962
Crist, Brandon.....	564-5961
Dailley, Russell.....	837-6176
Dircks, Ronald.....	472-8328
Emory, Johanna.....	564-5941
Gipson, Jewel.....	564-5951
Jahnke, Randy	445-5784
Johnson, Doug.....	564-6421
Jones, Brian.....	472-4328
Junes, Annette	564-5952
King, Nathan	445-5856
Knapp, Jr., Bill	564-1969
Kreidler, Charles	564-2205
Lake, Marlene.....	564-4728
Leritz, Ashley	564-4244
Lilleodden, Jacqueline	837-6179
McCoy, Adam.....	472-3175
Miller, Lee	445-5756
Muhonen, Braden.....	837-8138
Nelmark, Leann	538-2990
Rippentrop, Jonathan.....	564-8452
Schaefer, Gary.....	564-4343
Schmidt, Jackie.....	564-5948
Schmitz, Brittany	445-5872
Schuller Family Funeral Home.....	445-5191
Scott, David.....	472-3157
Smith, Thomas	837-6175
Thomas, III, Bert	837-6183
Vanalst, Janelle.....	472-3165



Call Completion Still an Issue

Some phone providers refuse to connect calls to customers served by small rural carriers, hurting businesses and consumers. Leaders in the telecommunications industry including WCTA General Manager, Tony Mayer have contacted key senators urging them to petition the FCC to take action. Call completion problems are a nationwide epidemic dramatically impacting households, businesses, and public safety. The inability of people in rural areas to receive phone calls greatly weakens the reliability of the telephone network and threatens the safety and well-being of rural Americans.

In a bipartisan letter to FCC Chairman Julius Genachowski, Senator Amy Klobuchar and 35 other senators called on the FCC to take swift action to restore quality service in rural areas to resolve call completion problems and work to preserve the basic integrity of the nation's communications network.

“Call completion problems have serious economic consequences throughout rural America,” Klobuchar said in the letter. “During this difficult economic period, small businesses cannot afford to lose business opportunities because of dropped calls and poor service quality. These problems have continued for far too long and it is only a matter of time before this situation leads to tragedy when a rural customer is unable to receive an urgent call. Small business owners and people living in rural areas are rightfully frustrated and deserve a resolution to these problems.”



Many rural areas suffer from inadequate and unreliable phone service and an increasing number of consumers experience calls that fail to complete, are delayed, have poor voice quality, lack Caller ID information, or are never connected because some originating providers refuse to connect calls to customers served by small rural carriers. This continues to plague our customers as well. Should you experience any of these issues, reference the call and contact our office.