



## A Look Back at 2022



# MONTHLY NEWS

WORLD-CLASS TECHNOLOGY. UNRIVALED LOCAL SERVICE.

## January 2023

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**2022 was filled with lots of activity and changes to VC Co-op.**

This year our fiber construction was completed in the rural areas of Viroqua and the first year of a 2 year project in Crawford County began.

3 employees retired in 2022, bringing a long employment history with the cooperative and an accumulative 66 years of work experience. Garin Mayer CEO/General Manager, replaced Rod Olson upon his retirement from the cooperative after 23 years. Jeanne Mueller retired in May after being employed for 23 years, while Jen Krings replaced her as the Member Support Supervisor. John Hickok (Network Technician) retired in September after 20 years of employment. Besh wishes to them in retirement.

Wisconsin Governor Evers paid us a visit to present a grant for 5.7 million dollars for our fiber construction project and Representative Loren Oldenburg from the Wisconsin State Assembly was recognized in our office as "Legislator of the Year".

We were active in our local communities representing the cooperative in parades, the Vernon County Fair, National Night Out, school functions and many more public events.

10 scholarship recipients received \$1000.00 each for continuing education. Many nonprofits, schools and organizations were also the recipients of monetary donations throughout the year. A toy drive and food pantry donations were given to 6 local food pantry's.

*As we look back at 2022, we are thankful for our members and we look forward to serving you in 2023.*



## FOOD PANTRY DONATIONS

One of the 7 principles of a cooperative is giving back to the communities they serve and is part of VC Co-op's mission. Giving back is what makes our work truly meaningful and supports our objective. Food pantry donations have been a part of our annual giving for many years and makes an impact on the communities we serve. In December, 6 food pantry's (Cashton Cupboard and Closet, Bethel Butikk, La Farge Free Methodist, Living Faith Food Pantry, New Hope Food Pantry (Missing from photo), and Viola Methodist Food Pantry) were given \$1000.00 each to support their cause.



Cashton Cupboard & Closet



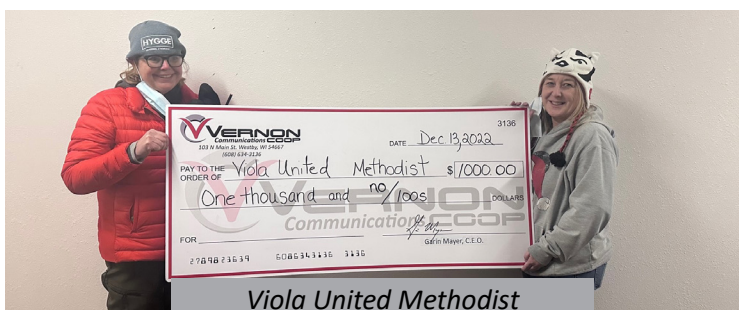
Bethel Butikk



Living Faith Food Pantry



LaFarge Free Methodist



Viola United Methodist

## CYBER SECURITY



Social engineering is when someone tries to manipulate you into performing an action or sharing confidential information. Unfortunately, cybercriminals use social engineering to access computer systems, gather information, or make money. Most successful social engineering attacks are caused by human error. If you familiarize yourself with common social engineering methods, you may be able to recognize and stay safe from an attempted social engineering attack.

### Social Engineering Tricks

*Cybercriminals can use several different methods to trick you with a social engineering attack. Here are three common social engineering methods that you may encounter and examples of each method:*

**Malicious Links:** Cybercriminals may use malicious links to trick you into downloading dangerous software or opening an unsafe webpage. They may send you a phishing email, which is an email that may try to convince you to share sensitive information, click an unsafe link, or download a malicious attachment. For example, you could receive an email that contains a link to access shipping information for an order. Because the email seems legitimate, you may be tempted to click the link. Then, the link could download malicious software that allows the cybercriminal to control your computer.

**Fake Web Pages:** Cybercriminals may create fake web pages to trick you into logging into the page or entering sensitive information. For example, you could receive a phishing email that contains a link to log in to LinkedIn. Because the email seems legitimate, you may be tempted to click the link and enter your login credentials. Once you've entered your login credentials, the cybercriminal can log in to your LinkedIn account, view your personal information, and change your password so that you can't access your account.

**Impersonation:** Cybercriminals may impersonate someone you know to trick you into revealing sensitive information, clicking an unsafe link, or downloading a malicious attachment. For example, you could receive a phone call from a cybercriminal posing as your internet provider. The cybercriminal could tell you that your monthly payment is overdue and mention your account number and date of birth. Because the call seems legitimate, you may be tempted to provide your payment information. Keep in mind that impersonation attacks can also occur over email, text message, or social media.

### Tips for Staying Safe from Social Engineering

- Before clicking a link, hover your mouse over the link to make sure the link is secure and matches the website you're looking for.
- Instead of clicking a link or a button in an email to navigate to a website, navigate directly to the website by entering the URL into your address bar.
- Before sharing sensitive information such as your birth date or your payment information, verify that the source you're sharing the information with is legitimate.
- If someone you know messages you to ask about your organization or sends you a link, call or text the person directly to make sure the request is legitimate. If a message seems suspicious, it likely is suspicious.



## SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE



Every year, VC Co-op accepts applications for students pursuing their education post high school. We are now accepting scholarship applications for the 2023 school year for continuing education. If you are a member or have a student living in your household that will be attending college in 2023, visit our website at [www.vernoncom.coop](http://www.vernoncom.coop), for the application and instructions. **Please have the application to us by February 17, 2023.**

## 2023 CALENDAR



The 2023 VC Co-op calendar is available! The 2022 VC Co-op "Heart of the Driftless" photo contest had many talented photographers submit photos and some of those photos from the contest are in our new calendar. *Stop by our office and pick up your 2023 calendar while they last.*

## January 2023 Highlights

**January 1, 2023** - Happy New Year

**January 2, 2023** - *Our office will be closed*

**January 16, 2023** - *Martin Luther King Jr.*

## DO-NOT-CALL

### **\*\*RESTRICT UNWANTED TELEPHONE SOLICITATIONS\*\***

In 2003, the Do-Not-Call Act was signed into law. This legislation allowed for the establishment and enforcement of a national Do-Not-Call Registry giving consumers a choice regarding telemarketing calls. If your number is listed on the registry, all commercial telemarketers, except for businesses with whom you have an existing relationship or certain non-profit and political organizations, are not allowed to call you.

Consumers may register their residential telephone number, including wireless numbers, on the national Do-Not-Call Registry at no cost. You can register on-line for the national Do-Not-Call Registry via the internet at <https://www.donotcall.gov>

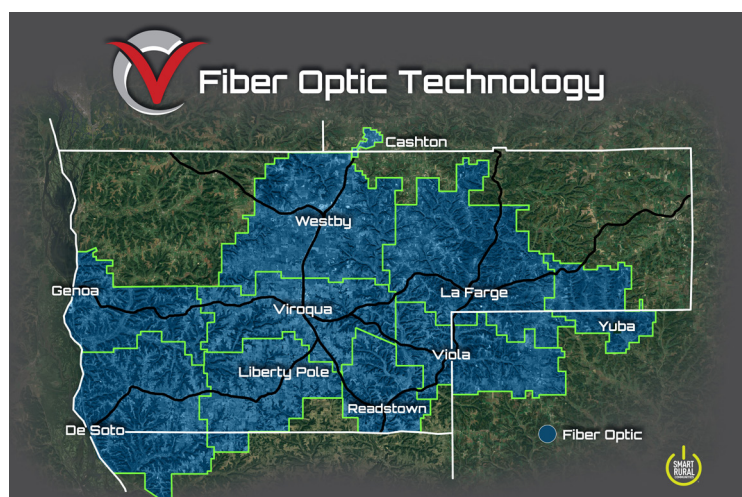
**To contact the registry by telephone, consumers may call 1-888-382-1222. For TTY, call 1-866-290-4236.**

Inclusion of your telephone number on the national Do-Not-Call Registry will be effective 31 days after registration. Your number will remain on the registry permanently. You are allowed to remove your number from the registry at any time.

## NEW BILLBOARD



Check out our new billboard located on the North side of Viroqua. **For Fast, Reliable, and Secure Internet, give us a call.**



**The current map of our 100% fiber complete serving area.** Stay tuned for more fiber construction in 2023.



## ENTERTAINMENT

**starz**

*For Just \$10.00 Per Month*



**HBOmax**

*HBO and Cinemax Free Preview:  
February 3 -6, 2023*

## WASB HONOR ROLL



*Gerald Roethel, Garin Mayer, Steve Michaels*

Vernon Communications was nominated and is honored to accept the "2022 WASB Business Honor Roll", from the Wisconsin Association of School Boards and Westby Area School District. This award is for our active roll in supporting the school in donating time and money to sports, robotics, FFA, the arts, clubs, career days and more. VC Co-op is a proud supporter of all our local schools.

**For the best internet experience, make sure you have a good working router.**

**Gigaspire Wireless Router**

**\$6 per month**

### Advantages:

- Receives Gigabit broadband data
- High-performance system (Wi-Fi 6)
- 6x6 streams of Wi-Fi



## EMPLOYEE NEWS

Over the last several years, the employees of Vernon Communications have taken a collection to give to a family in need at Christmas. VC Co-op employee, Tracy Thelen oversees the donations and buys, wraps and works with Vernon County, so they can distribute the gifts to a given family. The joy of seeing how much we can make a difference this time of year is very rewarding.



*Tracy Thelen pictured with Vernon County Employees*



*VC Co-op Employee Soup Lunch*

A soup lunch not only benefitted our employees, but the Salvation Army received a donation at Christmas. Several employees made soup on Wednesday, December 14th and any employee that reaped the benefits of the soup donated money towards the lunch. The donation was given to the Salvation Army for their annual Christmas drive.



**103 N Main Street  
Westby, WI 54667**

**Lobby Hours:**

**8:00 am - 4:30 pm (M-F)**

**(608) 634-3136 • [www.vernoncom.coop](http://www.vernoncom.coop)**