



Katherine Alderson
Cashton



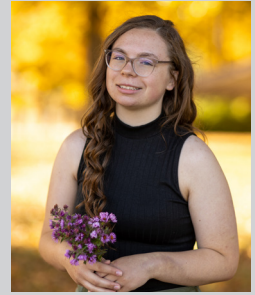
Mara Anderson
Viroqua



Madyson Benson
La Farge



Lilly Geary
Kickapoo



McKala Huebsch
La Farge



Aubrey Jothan
Westby



McKinley Ray
Kickapoo



Zackry Mlsna
Cashton



Olivia Nedland
Westby



Bethany Roethel
Westby



MONTHLY NEWS

WORLD-CLASS TECHNOLOGY. UNRIVALED LOCAL SERVICE.

May 2023

Top News Inside

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Vernon Communications is committed to giving back to its members and the communities we serve. As a cooperative, our members come first. For many years, Vernon Communications has issued scholarships to students and members of the cooperative. This year, the 2023 scholarship recipients will be awarded \$1000.00 each to further their secondary education. These students were selected by an outside committee of cooperative members.

Here are the scholarship recipients for 2023:

Katherine Alderson plans to attend University of Wisconsin Madison, majoring in psychology on a pre-med path. Her hope is to become a child and adolescent psychiatrist.

Mara Anderson will be attending University of Minnesota Winona to pursue a degree in Human Services.

Madyson Benson plans to attend the University of Wisconsin La Crosse, majoring in Biology.

Lilly Geary will be attending University of Wisconsin La Crosse for exercise and sports science and nutrition.

McKala Huebsch has plans to attend either University of Wisconsin Madison or La Crosse and major in biochemistry to pursue a career in genetics.

Aubrey Jothan will be attending the University of Wisconsin Platteville in agriculture.

Zackry Mlsna will attend the University of Wisconsin Madison majoring in business, and possibly looking into a career in sports business.

Olivia Nedland is attending the University of Wisconsin Madison to major in Nutritional Sciences and Dietetics.

McKinley Ray hopes to pursue a career in research related to Biocemistry.

Bethany Roethel will attend Concordia University in Chicago and major in Health Science with a concentration on nutrition.

FROM THE CEO



Hello everyone and welcome to Spring, contrary to the snowstorm we just had! Now that spring has finally arrived, we can jump back into our construction projects. If you recall, we're building fiber-to-the-home (FTTH) in Crawford County as part of a recent grant. This project started in 2022 and we hope to complete it before summer's end. This will extend FTTH to over

800 new customers! The next major project we have in queue is our expansion into Monroe County. The cooperative received two grants in 2022 to expand fiber to residences in Monroe County. The timeline for these grants is 2023-24. We will begin this construction as we finish Crawford County and will complete in 2024, expanding FTTH to another 1,100 + locations. The cooperative will continue to review and apply for state and federal grants that help expand fiber to rural Wisconsin locations. The importance of fast dependable broadband for our rural areas cannot be overstated and we're proud of our ability to expand into areas that don't have it.

Another topic I'd like to remind everyone of is, digging safely. ***Please call 811 prior to digging in your yard or ditch.*** We've already experienced one fiber hit this Spring that could have been avoided by calling 811. Another way to help the cooperative preserve it's network is being very careful of our hand holes when burning ditches. Burning ditches can damage our hand holes and the fiber within them, causing loss of service and the necessity to replace fiber. Calling 811 prior to digging, and being very careful where you burn are two easy free ways to help preserve the cooperative's fiber network.

Lastly, I hope you were able to join us for our 2023 Annual Meeting and that you found the meeting to be informative. We will continue to review our options for the Annual meeting with the focus on trying to reach as many members as possible.

Garin Mayer, CEO

Remember.... Call Before You Dig



A fiber cut can wipe out service to you and your neighbors for extended periods of time. The cost of a fiber cut can be devastating.



Call 811 or scan the qr code- before you dig!!



CYBER SECURITY



KnowB4

How to Safely Shop Online

Do you regularly use your debit card for online purchases?

Do you have payment information saved on online shopping accounts? Do you use autofill to enter your payment information?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, your payment information may be at risk. Online retailers are a popular target for cybercriminals, which makes your information vulnerable to a data breach. A data breach is when a cyberattack results in the theft of private user information.

If you shop online and want to secure your payment information from a data breach, consider the following tips:

Avoid Making Payments With Debit Cards

When you make purchases online, always use a credit card instead of a debit card. Debit cards are linked to your bank account, so if a bad guy can access your debit card information, they can access your entire bank account. Because debit cards use the cash available in your bank, disputing a charge can lead to the long and complicated process of replacing stolen funds. Credit card purchases add to your debt, which means that a fraudulent charge won't immediately impact your finances. Using a credit card for online purchases allows you to dispute a charge, without losing access to your cash.

Avoid Saving Payment Methods for Future Purchases

When you shop online, many retailers offer to save your payment information for future purchases. While this option is more convenient than entering your payment information every time you shop, always decline saving this information. Unfortunately, data breaches happen and even the most reputable online retailers are vulnerable to a breach. Avoid saving your payment method altogether so that your information is not at risk during a cyber attack.

Avoid Saving Payment Methods for Autofill

When you make purchases online, internet browsers such as Chrome, Edge, and Firefox offer to save your payment information for autofill. Even if it is more convenient to use the autofill feature, always decline saving this information. If bad guys physically or remotely gain access to your browser, they can steal any information that your browser stores for autofill purposes. It may be inconvenient to manually enter your payment information every time you shop online, but the inconvenience is worth keeping your information secure.

MEMBER SURVEY

We're on a mission to be the best communications provider possible and we would love to hear from you! Please scan the QR code and take our 5-minute survey to let us know how we're doing. Everyone who completes the survey will be put into a drawing for a chance to win an Amazon Firestick and a swag bag valued at over \$100. We'll randomly draw one lucky winner on May 15th. **Thank you for participating in this survey!**

Vernon Communications Survey



"I am a new customer thanks to the new high-speed internet recently installed in my area. The customer service provided by VC is awesome!"

Sharon

CEO ADVOCATES FOR BROADBAND



Vernon Communications CEO, Garin Mayer, attended the Wisconsin State Telecommunications Association (WSTA) Government Relations Seminar at the state capital. During the seminar, Garin was able to meet with Representative Loren Oldenburg, Representative Steven Doyle, and Senator Brad Pfaff to advocate for broadband access to underserved Wisconsin communities. In today's ever-changing world of technology, quality access to high-speed internet is critical for rural communities, like ours, to unlock potential for commerce, health care, education, agriculture and more! Internet is the backbone of today's world. It powers education and economy, supports our health and well-being and it connects us to our neighbors and family. Roughly 1 in 5 American households aren't connected to the Internet. That's a fifth of our country that's unable to fully participate in modern life. According to a Wisconsin Public Radio article published in December of 2022, it is estimated that 16% of Wisconsin homes lack access to quality internet (speeds above 100/20 Mbps). We hope our work, along with the WSTA, can change that!

INTERNET SECURITY TIPS

- Don't forget to reboot your WiFi routers. A simple reboot is often enough to considerably improve your WiFi speeds. A reboot clears the router's memory and allows updates to install.
- Cut off WiFi leeches - Today an encrypted, password-protected WiFi is a must. More people than ever rely on WiFi, and the hunger for open, fast WiFi networks is real. Don't think that your neighbors won't use your WiFi network just because they have their own.
- You should encrypt your WiFi and protect it with a strong password that can't be easily guessed.
- Include a combination of upper and lowercase letters, symbols, and numbers.
- Don't use common passwords like 123456.
- Make sure the password is at least 8 characters long. Short passwords can be easily guessed.
- Use a unique password and don't write it on a piece of paper. If you can't remember it, use a password manager.



FACEBOOK WINNER



Left, Kim Burke and Tracy Budworth-Director of Marketing

Congratulations to Kim Burke, the lucky winner of our Easter Ham Giveaway. The question was asked why you choose Vernon Communications on our Facebook page and every member who answered was put into a drawing for a FREE ham for Easter.

EMPLOYEE NEWS



Tracy Thelen has seen a lot of changes at the cooperative in the last 20 years. Tracy was recognized at a recent employee meeting for her time and dedication in her 20 years of representation to VC Co-op. Tracy works as a Member Support representative. Tracy and her husband Chad live in rural Viroqua, with their

two St. Bernard's Leo and Bruno. In her spare time, Tracy likes camping, gardening and being outdoors.

Construction Begins....

Our first shipment of conduit has been delivered and we will soon begin fiber construction. The final phase in Crawford County will be our first priority and then we will move on to Monroe County, which will begin this fall.




SAVE A STAMP AND GO GREEN!



As the price of stamps continue to rise, it may be a good time to consider Ebill and Electronic Fund Transfer (EFT)

Get a \$5.00 credit for first time Ebill and/or EFT members

Fiber Fast HIGH SPEED INTERNET 	50 Meg	5-10 devices simultaneously streaming, 4K Video Streaming, Gaming, Smart Home	\$54.95
	100 Meg	Best Value - 10-25 devices streaming simultaneously, Home or Small Business, Telecommuter	\$84.95
	500 Meg	25+ devices simultaneously streaming, Large Business, Commercial Enterprise	\$299.95
	1 Gig	Impossibly Fast	\$499.95

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



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Lobby Hours:

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

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