



Photo by Al Cornell



## MONTHLY NEWS

WORLD-CLASS TECHNOLOGY. UNRIVALED LOCAL SERVICE.

### July 2023

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#### The NEW 2023 telephone directory will be here soon!

If you have telephone service with Vernon Communications you should be receiving your new directory very soon. Our new publisher is Pinnacle Marketing, based in Bimidji MN. The above photo is the cover photo of the new directory and was taken by VC Co-op member Al Cornell. The photo was received from our "Heart of the Driftless" photo contest. The directory has shared information with Coon Valley Farmers Telephone Company and is an abundant resource for our members with information that goes beyond telephone numbers. An online directory will also be available. If you do not have our phone service and would like a copy of this directory, stop by our office.

#### CEO ELECTED TO WSTA



Pictured left Garin Mayer, and WSTA Board President Scott Nyman

We are proud to announce Garin Mayer, CEO was elected to the Wisconsin State Telecommunications Association (WSTA) Board of Directors! Over the next several years, there is a lot of work to be done across the state to close the digital divide and the work the WSTA is doing is critical in those efforts! For the next 3 years, Garin will serve on the board to make essential decisions for broadband in Wisconsin.



## FROM THE CEO



Hello and welcome to Summer! As I'm writing this, the temps have repeatedly jumped over 90 degrees. A recent rain brought some much-needed moisture to the area. A little rain really helps with construction, as it makes it easier for the plow to place the fiber and more importantly it helps with construction cleanup. If you've recently ventured toward

Mt Sterling or Seneca you've likely come across our crews busy completing the Crawford County grant. As previously stated, this is a grant from the PSC that Crawford County partnered with VC Co-op. We hope to be done with this construction project later in the summer, which will be slightly ahead of schedule! Completing this will give us a chance to move into the Monroe County grant project. We have two grants in that area that we'll build simultaneously and should complete in late 2024.

On a sad note, I would like to take a minute to remember Miles Bohland, our director from District 5, (De Soto). Although I didn't have a long time to get to know Miles, I appreciated the conversations we did have, and his input representing his district. We will miss having him on the Board.

## CYBER SECURITY



One of the easiest ways bad guys trick you into falling victim to their fraudulent scams is to exercise a sense of trust by pretending to be someone you know. More than likely, you receive emails from your place of employment on a frequent basis. Scammers take advantage of this constant communication by crafting spear phishing attacks using emails that spoof your employment.

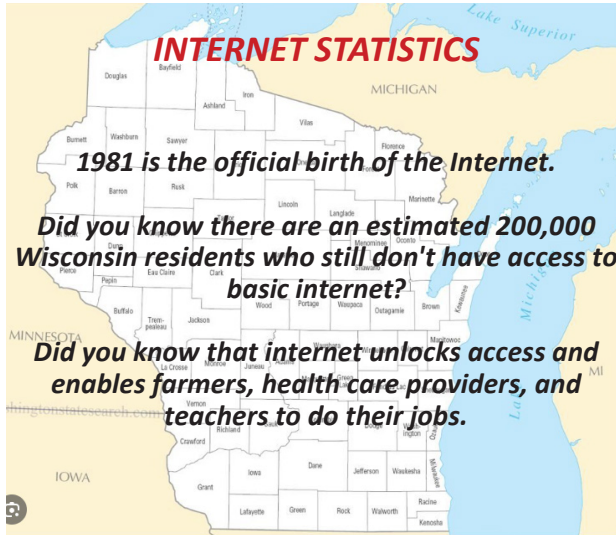
Spear phishing attacks are email scams that typically target an individual or organization by spoofing, or appearing to come from a trusted sender. Don't blindly trust emails that seem to come from your HR department or other sources you are familiar with.

*See the tips below to learn more about these types of scams.*

### How Do I Spot a Fake?

Does this sound like typical communication?

- Pay attention to the context in the body of the email.
- Look for spelling errors, grammar errors, and odd sentence structure.
- Are you being asked to review unfamiliar policies or procedures?
- If you're being asked to download an attachment or click a link to review a policy you've never heard of, think twice before you click.
- Are you being asked to do something that wouldn't typically be addressed via email?
- Beware of emails containing an attachment for your "paid bonus" or any other matter that seems out of the ordinary for email communication.
- Who sent the email?
- Does the sender's email address appear to be from an unfamiliar domain or a third-party company?
- If the domain of the sender's email address is generic, for instance, "humanresources.com", the email may not be from your internal HR department. Ensure the email is from an address that your HR team typically uses to send mail. But remember, even if the domain is from your organization, it could be spoofed.
- Does the email signature make sense?
- Ensure the signature in the body of the email matches the name and job role of the sender. Some HR phishing scam emails have unusual, or inaccurate job titles in the email signature—or have no signature at all.
- When in doubt, always pick up the phone and call someone from your HR team to confirm the email is safe and legitimate. They'll be thankful you used your resources, rather than putting your organization at risk.



**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!!**

## VC COMMUNITY CHANNELS

After a long and careful assessment of our VC Co-op community channels, we would like to inform our members they will be discontinued on July 31, 2023. This decision was not made lightly. After careful consideration, we based this decision on the following:

- Low viewership across our subscriber base. In recent years, we have seen a significant decline in the number of people watching these channels. *This is likely due to the evolution of streaming platforms that are now available.*
- High costs. The cost of maintaining these channels has become increasingly prohibitive. We have taken steps to reduce costs, but are not able to continue these channels without investing a significant amount in the new equipment needed to keep these channels running.
- Evolution of streaming platforms. As mentioned above, there are now a number of streaming platforms available to our viewers. These platforms offer a more streamlined approach to getting your content published and viewed by a wider audience. During our evaluation, it appears several of our content contributors are now utilizing these streaming platforms as an alternative.

The channels that will be turned down are: channels 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 14, 15, 302, 303, 305, 306, 307, 314, and 315.

We understand this may be disappointing news, but for the greater good of the cooperative, we feel this decision is fiscally responsible. We strive to make good, sound decisions for our members and this was carefully researched and thought out. We appreciate your understanding and support as we continue to provide great service to our members.

*We would like to thank everyone who has sent content throughout the years to keep these channels running.*

## BROADBAND LISTENING SESSION



Garin Mayer, CEO attended the Broadband Listening Session put on by the Public Service Commission (PSC) in May. Wisconsin Governor Tony Evers proposed a \$750 million investment for the Broadband Expansion Grant Program. The PSC is developing the state's 5-year plan to get high speed internet to underserved communities. Because the internet affects everyone, the commission wants to make internet access more affordable.

## NEW BILLBOARD



Our new billboard on the North side of Viroqua displays VC Co-op employee Josh Fanta, OSP Engineer, portraying the hometown, local service that VC Co-op provides.

## Meet our Board of Directors



From left, Steve Woodhouse, District 1 (Genoa), Dan Nelson, District 7 (Westby City), Trudy Wallin, District 4 (Viroqua) Brad Gabrielson, District 8, (La Farge), Daren Matthes, District 3 (Viola/Yuba), David Dregne, District 2 (Liberty Pole/Readstown), Marty Stenslien, District 6 (Westby Rural).



## CONTEST WINNER



Jackie Pertzborn pictured left with Member Support Technician Patty Johnson, is the winner of the swag from our customer satisfaction survey. Thank you to everyone who took the survey and gave the feedback we needed to continue to help meet the needs of our members.

## WESTBY SYTTENDE MAI

**Everyone loves a parade!** The Westby Syttende Mai parade was on Sunday, May 21, 2023. VC Co-op was well represented by our employees and their families. People were anxious to get out and enjoy the Norwegian celebration on the warm, sunny spring day.



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

**Gigaspire Wireless Router**

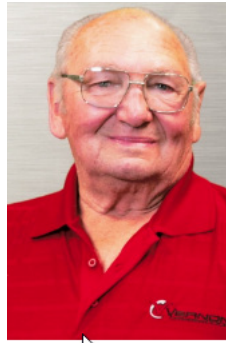
**\$6 per month**

### Advantages:

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



## MILES BOHLAND



It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of our beloved board member, Miles Bohland. Miles passed away on May 23, 2023. Miles has been a Board of Director for Vernon Communications Cooperative for 11 years, representing District 5 (De Soto). Miles was currently serving a 3 year term and was a very dedicated board member who always put the cooperative first. Our condolences to his wife Eloda and his entire family. He will be missed.

## EMPLOYEE NEWS

Konner Krause was recently hired as a Member Service Technician, after completing the **Broadband Service Technician Apprenticeship program** through the Department of Workforce Development, Wisconsin Technical College System. Konner has completed the course work online and hands on instruction provided by our staff. Konner has developed the skills needed for this position. The education he has received from this program will serve the cooperative well and he will be a great asset to the VC Co-op team. We would like to extend a warm welcome to Konner.



## Water Challenge



Konner Krause and Tracy Thelen

VC Co-op employees participated in a water challenge to create an atmosphere of healthy living. Konner Krause was the winner of the challenge! He drank at least 64 ounces of water everyday in a 2 week time frame.

The benefits of drinking water are essential for a healthy body. It helps maintain a normal body temperature, lubricate and cushion joints, protects your spinal cord and other tissues, and many more.



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



**Lobby Hours:**

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

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