



## MONTHLY NEWS

WORLD-CLASS TECHNOLOGY. UNRIVALED LOCAL SERVICE.

### February 2024

#### Top News Inside

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We want to see your photos! For the last several years VC Co-op's "Heart of the Driftless" photo contest has been a popular contest among our members. It is with great pleasure to announce we are once again having the photo contest. The contest will run until April 5, 2024. This year we have replaced the Events category with Kids. The categories are: Animals, Kids, Landmarks and Scenic Views. Grand Prize is a \$100.00 bill credit. One entry from each category will be awarded a \$50.00 credit on your VC Co-op bill. We love to see all the beautiful photos taken by our members and not only can you win a nice surprise on your bill, but some photos have the chance to be in our yearly calendar.

Go to our website: [www.vernoncom.coop](http://www.vernoncom.coop) for contest rules. Winners will be announced in June. We look forward to seeing the beautiful photos taken by our talented community.



"Safer Internet Day" is February 6th and is a day to create awareness for a safer internet experience for everyone. In this digital world we live in it is important to make the best possible use of online

technology and keep everyone safe, especially our children. From cyberbullying to social networking to digital identity, each year Safer Internet Day aims to raise awareness of emerging online issues and concerns. Educating our youth and teaching them safety while online is the best way to keep them safe from cyber criminals. **Here are some tips for a safe internet experience:**

- Keep a clean device - Update all software
- Create long and unique passwords
- Think before you click
- Enable multi-Factor authentication
- Use secure Wi-Fi

## FROM THE CEO



Greetings to you on what has turned out to be a fine Winter. We were really enjoying the mild winter right up until two snowstorms in early January and a splendid cold spell reminded us what Wisconsin winters are suppose to be like. Let's all cross our fingers for mild weather from here on out! Unfortunately, with the storms came some not so fun news

with regards to rates. In your January bill you should have received a notice giving you a heads up that video rates will be increasing. At the time of that notice, we had not yet finished negotiations with the programmers, and as such, we didn't have final numbers to pass along to you. As I write this today, we are still in negotiations with one network to agree on the new rates. Once we've settled on the final rate changes we will post them on our website. I'm sorry this is now what seems like an annual occurrence, as I know it's frustrating to see rates increase. It's frustrating for the Cooperative as well, as we hate to be the bearer of bad news. When programmers raise their rates, we're forced to pass those increases along to you, the consumer.

We do have some positive news to share. We've lowered our rates on the 100 x 100 Mbps, 500 x 500 Mbps and 1 Gbps x 1 Gbps broadband offerings. We know that as video rates increase, you may be looking to add or switch to alternative streaming options in your household for your video needs, and we want to support you as best as we can. If you're a 50 x 50 Mbps customer, and you're adding devices, or alternative streaming services, you may want to consider upgrading your internet speed package, and we're hoping with these new rates, the transition will be a little easier for you.

As I previously mentioned, once video rates are final we'll post them to our website. A new feature on our website will be a rate calculator. This will allow you to select from VC Co-op's service offerings and see what your monthly charge would be. This puts that decision-making power of your monthly charges at your fingertips with no surprises.

Thank you for being a member of the Cooperative.  
Garin Mayer, CEO



*Because of the recent video increase we have created a rate calculator to help you determine the new video pricing. If you choose to make changes, this will give you an idea of what you will paying.*

## STREAMING



### ***There are many options for Streaming***

Because linear TV has become so expensive, many households are cutting the cord and switching to Streaming. Streaming by definition is technology used to deliver content to TV, computers and mobile devices over the internet without having to download it. There are so many options when it comes to streaming and it really comes down to personal preference. Everyone has their favorite shows, movies or series, so choosing the right streaming platform requires some research. We now have a place on our website that gives you alternative streaming options.

Visit our website : <https://vernoncom.coop/streaming-options/> and you can view different options in one click.

**Another resource:** My Bundle.TV (<https://mybundle.tv/>)

VC Co-op also offers a streaming product which you can also find on our website. This offers the same channel line up as our cable TV. The difference is there is no need for a set-top-box. All you need is a streaming device and an internet connection. This can cut down on the cost if you have more than one set-top-box.

### ***What do I need to Stream TV?***

- A Streaming device such as a Firestick TV, Roku, or AppleTV
- Internet Service

### ***Coming Soon...***

In this newsletter and in social media posts each month beginning in March, VC Co-op will highlight businesses within the communities we serve and how they use VC Co-op's internet service. *Political and/or religious businesses will be exempt.*



# SAVE THE DATE

## 2024 Annual Meeting

### April 11, 2024

#### SEEKING NOMINATIONS FOR VERNON COMMUNICATIONS COOPERATIVE DIRECTOR POSITIONS

Vernon Communications Cooperative (VC Co-op) announces that the director terms will expire in April for District 4 (Viroqua) and District 6 (Westby Rural & Monroe County Grant areas). Each district will elect one director. All members who receive service from VC Co-op and reside within the district boundaries are eligible for nomination for the director seat. Nominating committees are meeting and will select candidates to fill the three-year terms that will expire in 2027. Ballots will be prepared and mailed to each member in these districts by mid-March. A committee will tabulate the ballots and the results will be announced at the Annual Meeting on April 11, 2024. Any member wishing to run for one of the board positions should contact VC Co-op at (608) 634-3136 for a list of the nominating committee members before February 23, 2024.



**February 2 - Groundhog Day**

**February 2-3 - Snowflake Ski Tournament**

**February 6 - Safer Internet Day**

**February 11 - Super Bowl LVIII**

**February 12 - Lincolns Birthday**

**February 14 - Valentines Day**

**February 14 - Ash Wednesday**

**February 16 - Scholarship Deadline**

**February 19 - Presidents Day**

**February 29 - Leap Day**

## CYBER SECURITY



### *Be Cautious When Traveling*

It is common for people to travel during the winter months, whether it's to explore a new country or visit family in a familiar space. Cybercriminals can take advantage of travel to trick you into revealing your sensitive information. Don't let cybercriminals ruin your plans! Learn how to protect yourself and others from cybercriminals.

### **Protect Your Belongings**

Cybercrime isn't limited to a digital space, it can also happen in physical locations. Traveling often means using your phone or laptop in new or unfamiliar places. If you leave your device unlocked or your bag unattended, cybercriminals could uncover your sensitive information. Being aware of your physical space can also help you prevent cybercriminals from eavesdropping on important conversations or spying on your device screens.

### **Avoid Public Wi-Fi Networks**

While public Wi-Fi networks are convenient, cybercriminals can take advantage of them to steal your sensitive information. One common attack method cybercriminals use is to hack a public network and create a fake login page. The fake login page will ask for personal information, like your full name and email address. If you share this information, cybercriminals can use it to target you in future phishing scams.

### **What Can I Do to Stay Safe?**

Follow the tips below to stay safe from travel scams:

Always use a Virtual Private Network (VPN). VPN's create a secure connection between your device and the internet, making it harder for cybercriminals to steal your information.

- Ensure you lock your devices when you're not using them. Leaving your devices unlocked can cause your sensitive information to fall into the wrong hands!
- When traveling to new places, be aware of your surroundings. Cybercrime can happen in digital and physical environments.

### **Save the Planet with Automatic Payment**



## SCHOLARSHIPS

### SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE!



Get your  
applications in by  
February 16, 2024.

Go to:  
[www.vernoncom.coop](http://www.vernoncom.coop)

## DO-NOT-CALL

In 2003, the Do-Not-Call Act was signed into law. The 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 telemarketing, 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 phone numbers, including wireless, on the Registry by telephone or internet at no cost.

To register consumers may call 1-888-382-1222. For TTY, call 1-866-290-4236. You must call from the phone number you wish to register. Or register online at [www.donotcall.gov](http://www.donotcall.gov). Inclusion of your number on the National Do-Not-Call Registry will be effective 31 days after registration. Your number will remain on the registry permanently and can be removed at any time.



## UNDER CONSTRUCTION

Beginning in the spring of 2024 and into 2025, Westby will be under a major road construction project. This will effect the entire downtown Main Street with a roundabout constructed by WCCU, new road, street lights, sidewalks and more. Traffic will be one-way headed South on Main Street and one-way going North on Bekkedal Avenue. This will remarkably impact the flow of traffic and downtown businesses. Westby will be open for business and it will be very important to support our small local restaurants, retail stores, and businesses to make them thrive. The end result will give Westby a whole new look and the road will be a tremendous change upon completion. An update will be given when the project gets closer on how this will effect our office. Our primary concern is the safety of our members and any decisions will be made with that goal as a priority.

## EMPLOYEE NEWS



Terri Koteck spent her last day at VC Co-op on January 2, 2024. Terri has worked in Member Support for the last 10 years serving our members with the respect, courtesy and service our members deserve. We will miss her attention to detail, smile, organization and her professionalism. Terri and her husband are travelers and are excited to be making many exciting trips in the future.

*Thank you Terri and we wish you many fun adventures in retirement!*

## 5 YEARS OF SERVICE



**Stacie Ziegler** has served our members for the past 5 years in the Network Operations Center as a Level 2 Technician. Stacie's infectious smile, attitude, knowledge and professionalism show in the ways she interacts with our members. She spends time to make sure our members are satisfied, happy members. Congratulations Stacie.



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)

### BILL PAYING OPTIONS

#### PAY ONLINE

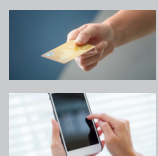
Go To: [www.vernoncom.coop](http://www.vernoncom.coop)  
and click "Pay Now"



#### AUTOMATIC PAYMENT

#### PAY BY PHONE

(Debit or Credit, Checking/Savings)  
Call (844) 827-4766



#### PAY BY MAIL OR DROPBOX

