

Vernon Communications Cooperative Annual Meeting

DATE: April 11, 2024

TIME: 1:00 PM



VC Co-op Board of Directors

Left, Steve Woodhouse (District 1, Genoa/De Soto and Crawford County Grant), Dan Nelson (District 7, City of Westby), Trudy Wallin (District 4, Viroqua), Brad Gabrielson (District 5, La Farge & Cashton), Daren Matthes (District 3, Viola/Yuba), David Dregne (District 2, Readstown/Liberty Pole), Marty Stenslien (District 6, Westby Rural/ Monroe County Grant)



MONTHLY NEWS

WORLD-CLASS TECHNOLOGY. UNRIVALED LOCAL SERVICE.

March 2024

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The Vernon Communications Annual Meeting will be held **virtually** on Thursday April 11, 2024 at 1:00 pm.

The meeting will inform our members the state of the cooperative, financials from 2023, announce the 2024 scholarship recipients and board elections for 2024. Virtual meetings have allowed us to reach more members due to the flexibility and convenience of schedules.

If you wish to attend the virtual annual meeting, pre-registration is required. Go to: www.vernoncom.coop after March 1, 2024 to register and a link will be sent to your email address before the annual meeting so you can join. Requirements for pre-registration are: *Member's name, account number, email address and contact number.* Any member that attends the annual meeting will receive a \$25.00 bill credit, which will appear in the May statement (one per household).

This year, director positions for District 4 (Viroqua) and District 6 (Westby rural and Monroe County grant area) are up for election. Ballots will be sent to members in those districts in mid March and will be counted on April 10, 2024 by an outside committee. The results will be announced at the annual meeting.

Also this year, there will be 10 scholarship recipients who will receive \$1000.00 each towards their college education. Due to the burden of financial student debt that can be acquired for college education, this opens a great opportunity for our local students.

We look forward to serving you in 2024 and we hope you can attend the virtual annual meeting.

CALL DIGGERS HOTLINE



This has been an unusually mild winter and if the weather continues to be mild there is a great possibility of an early Spring! When the weather turns nice we all want to get out and start home projects. The cost of an unwanted bill due to cutting a fiber optic line or any utility could ruin your budget. It is important to call Diggers Hotline if you are doing any kind of digging.

Here are some things to consider when digging:

- Fiber optics can be buried just below the surface. Never assume they are deeper than you are digging.
- Damages to communication lines can take out cellphone and 911 service along with internet connections to you and your neighbors.
- Immediately report any damaged lines to the facility owner so they can initiate the repair process. The cost to repair a fiber optic line is much greater than repairing other communications lines.
- Damages to a fiber optic line can cause delays in work, not only for you and your crew, but also for business owners. The cost of repairs and any 3rd party claims add to the total cost of the damage.
- **Never look into the end of a damaged fiber optic line.** Laser lights can cause eye injury.

Here are the safe steps to follow when digging:

- Plan ahead. Notify Diggers Hotline by calling 811 or making an online request 3 business days before the work begins.
- Wait 3 business days for utility operators to respond to your request.
- Confirm that all affected utility operators have responded to your request by comparing the marks to the list of utilities Diggers Hotline notified.
- Respect the marks. The marks provided by the affected utility operators are good for 10 days. If you are unable to maintain the marks during your project, contact Diggers to relocate.
- Dig carefully within 18 inches on all sides of the markings.

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BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT



In coming months, Vernon Communications will highlight local businesses, and how they use our internet service. This is an opportunity to spotlight the businesses in our area and their mission. We hope you enjoy learning about the great people behind the organizations and businesses they serve along the way.

Our first business spotlight is the Kickapoo Valley Reserve.

Their mission is: *The land in the Kickapoo Valley Reserve shall be protected, preserved, and enhanced so that its unique environmental, scenic, and cultural features provide opportunities for the use and enjoyment of visitors to the Reserve. The Reserve will be promoted as a unique example of the Driftless Area Eco-region and as a destination for low-impact tourism and education.*

If you have never been to the Kickapoo Valley Reserve, you are missing a great opportunity to hike, bike, cross country ski, snowshoe, fish, hunt, and horseback riding. It is truly one of the best kept secrets in our area with the Kickapoo River flowing through it, along with bluffs, rock, scenic hills and wildlife. The beauty of the reserve is magnificent and if you are a nature lover, this place is for you. There is a long history of how it came into what it is today and how the Federal Government purchased 149 farms to prevent flooding. The plan came to an end in 1975 and the 8,600 acres are currently managed by the Ho Chunk Nation and the State of Wisconsin as one property.

The Reserve provides nature education, 15 different summer camps for children of all ages, land management activities which include, a reforestation project planting large trees in fallow fields and much more. They are currently running a pollinator project on 160 acres of fields, planting wild flowers and also the "Dark Sky" initiative.

Another unique aspect of the Reserve is the Kickapoo Valley Forest School, which is a charter school to the La Farge School District. The school offers daily outdoor activity, which allows children to engage in life skills through immersion in the natural elements of the outdoors.




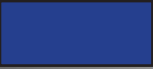

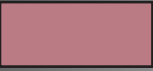

Jason Leis, a longtime employee of the Reserve was recently promoted to Executive Director, after his position of Law enforcement and Land Manager since 2004. Jason oversees the day to day operations of the Reserve, providing leadership in preserving the ecological landscapes. Jason states "the internet connection they receive from VC Co-op is important for daily operations, virtual meetings and WiFi for the public".

Vernon Communications will give away one annual family pass for 2024 to the Kickapoo Valley Reserve. Go to <https://verncom.coop/spotlight/> for a chance to win.

Here is the information you will need to call Diggers Hotline:

Contact Information <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Your name, phone & email• Address, Street, City, State, Zip code• Field contact and phone number• Who is the work being done for
Dig Site location <ul style="list-style-type: none">• City/place and County• Address of the dig site• Side of the street• Nearest intersecting road
Dig Site Information <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Start date• Work type• Marking instructions

Once Diggers Hotline has been called and the utility companies have marked your property, their lines are indicated with flags. The flags are color coded with the respective utility as follows:

	<i>Electric</i>
	<i>Gas, Oil, Petroleum or Gaseous Materials</i>
	<i>Communication, Cable TV, Alarm or Signal</i>
	<i>Water, Irrigation and Slurry Lines</i>
	<i>Sewer and Drain Lines</i>
	<i>Temporary Survey Markings</i>
	<i>Proposed Excavation</i>

Although controlled or prescribed burns can be good, it is important to get a permit or consult your local municipality for regulations. Make sure there are no hand holes in ditches and never leave a burn unmanaged. Consider the safety of people and property and watch for weather conditions, wind, and smoke.



Have you ever seen an article with a dramatic title, but the article content was completely unrelated? This is called “clickbait” and it is a common example of how cybercriminals take advantage of large-scale media platforms to distribute disinformation campaigns that confuse and mislead audiences.

- Let’s take a look at different types of disinformation campaigns to look out for:
- **Fabricated Content:** Content that is completely untrue.
 - **Manipulated Content:** Content, imagery, or videos that have been edited or distorted.
 - **Imposter Content:** Content that pretends to be from a reliable source.
 - **Misleading Content:** Content that presents information in a misleading way.
 - **False Context by Connection:** Content that contains both facts and untrue information.
 - **Satire and Parody:** Humorous stories that exaggerate facts and may be used to fool readers.

- Now, let's look at some methods you can use to combat disinformation.
- **Consider the Source** - Always consider the reliability of the source and author of the content you are viewing. Ask yourself: What is this author or source known for? Where was the information retrieved from? Credible news sources typically cite where their information came from and their cited sources are credible as well.
 - **Fact-Check and Educate** - Stay informed about current events by following local news, government websites, and other trusted sources. Also be sure to check more than one source when researching, to ensure you’re getting the full story from different perspectives. You can also use a trusted third-party, fact-verifying site to check the validity of the content that you find.

FAMILY INTERNET PRICE REDUCED

The price of the 100 Mbps is now **\$75.00**



EMPLOYEE NEWS



Matt McGarry, Director of Operations has served the cooperative for 33 years and as of February 2, 2024, he has entered into retirement. Matt began his employment when he was 22 years old as a trouble shooter for the Westby exchange. Matt has worked through many positions at VC Co-op including Network Engineer. He was promoted to Director of Operations in 2016, which oversees all activities outside the business office, including member service, construction, procurement, and network operations. During his time with the cooperative he served on the Wisconsin State Telecommunications Association (WSTA) Engineering committee and was currently acting as chairman. He served on the (Wisconsin State Telephone Cooperative Association (WSTCA) serving on the plant conference planning committee for 17 years. Matt has helped make instrumental decisions for the cooperative such as the implementation of 911 systems, installation techniques on fiber plants and large networks that were built for businesses. Matt has also been active in civic responsibilities throughout the years serving on different economic development committees in the community, as well as Vice President of the Viroqua Hills Golf Course, and Treasurer for the Brush Hollow cemetery. Matt has been an impactful employee for the cooperative and is known for his incredible memory with years of valuable experience! His reputation, knowledge base and background of the industry will be missed for years to come. Congratulations Matt.

March

- March 1 - **National Employee Appreciation**
- March 2 - **Read Across America**
- March 10 - **Daylight Savings**
(Move your clocks ahead 1 hour)
- March 17 - **St. Patrick's Day**
- March 19 - **First day of Spring**
- March 29 - **Good Friday**
- March 31 - **Easter**

DIRECTORY SALES



It is that time of year when Directory advertising sales begin. People from Pinnacle Marketing will reach out to businesses for advertising. Pinnacle Marketing is the publisher of our Directory and they are located in Bemidji, MN. Any business that has advertised in our directory in the past will be contacted to renew their contract.



103 N Main Street
Westby, WI 54667



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

(608) 634-3136 • www.vernoncom.coop

PAYMENT OPTIONS

Go To: www.vernoncom.coop and click "Pay Now"
Call (844) 827-4766 (Have your account number)
EFT (Automatic Payment) - Sign up and get a one time \$5.00 credit.