

MONTHLY NEWS

August 2024



Connecting our members with exceptional communication solutions with ease and integrity.

Top News Inside

[New Truck Wraps](#)

[Stuff the Bus](#)

[National Night Out](#)

[Business Spotlight](#)

VernonCom trucks are getting a makeover and we are excited about the creative way to showcase them and the Driftless region. You will soon see VernonCom trucks featuring some of the photos that were submitted from the "Heart of the Driftless" photo contest. Each of these pictures were placed inside the V logo of each truck portraying the natural beauty of our region, along with some local iconic scenic views. The submissions of the photo contest may not have won the grand prize, but it is our pleasure to be able to show them off in other ways. Here are the photos chosen for each truck:



From the CEO

Greetings to you all, I hope your summer has been excellent and you were able to enjoy Independence Day. July 8th created quite a bit of excitement for us all in this region of Wisconsin, as it seems there were widespread outages. Unfortunately, we experienced one of the largest disruptions to service the cooperative has ever seen. A piece of equipment failed, but not in the typical manner we sometimes see. Our network is built to be very robust, with protection and redundancy



to prevent something like a fiber cut, or a failure on a piece of equipment. Normally, when those things occur, you as a member don't even know it is happening. This failure was peculiar, rather than it failing and the system moving to the backup, the piece of equipment threw errors into the system, which were then replicated within the network. This replication of errors began overloading the network, basically creating so much

noise that the good traffic, your traffic, couldn't pass. Our Network Operations Center (NOC) team worked quickly with our network partners and managed to have the network restored in a matter of hours. Although no one likes to see their service drop for even a second, and we take great pride in our reputation of reliability, these things can happen. Fortunately, we were already slated to replace the type of equipment that failed. We have escalated that project and by the time you read this, we hope to have removed all of it from our network.

I want to say thank you for your patience and understanding. Our team came together and handled this with great professionalism.

We have also reviewed the issue and have determined that it was not in any way an outside attack or a malicious event.

Prior to this happening, we saw outages on long distance that were a result of issues outside of our network, basically on a partner provider downstream. We also received notifications of additional outages outside of our network. It seems that the Monday after the 4th of July was a Monday of Mondays.

On a far more positive note, we continue to make good progress with the Monroe County Grant project. We anticipate completion in September, which is slightly ahead of schedule, barring more of the extra rain we've all received.

I hope in next month's update we'll all be talking about how great our summer was, how fast it went, and how excited we are for school to be back in session!

Thank you.

Cyber Security – KnowB4

What's the Deal With Data Breaches?

Data breaches are becoming more and more common these days. You hear about them in the news all the time. So you might be wondering: what exactly is a data breach? A data breach is when secure information is taken from a trusted environment without permission. The bad guys can use this information to steal your identity, hack into your online accounts, or use the information for targeted phishing attacks to gather even more information about you.

However, just because the data was exposed does not necessarily mean it's already being used by the bad guys. It only means that bad guys can easily gain access to it. There are steps you can take to protect your information even if you were exposed in a data breach.

How do I protect my information?

- Use secure passwords. You may also want to try using a password manager.
- Set up two-factor or multi-factor authentication.
- Keep your personal information secure. Never share your passwords or personal information with anyone you don't know. Shred documents with your personal information on it before throwing it away.

What do I do if my information was already exposed in a breach?

- Don't panic! Take a moment to assess the situation. Ask yourself: What sort of information was exposed? Do I need to notify my bank or other entities? What steps should I take to make my information more secure now?
- If your password was exposed, we recommend changing your password for all online accounts associated with that password immediately. Make sure the password is complex or use a password generator to create one for you. For extra security, you may want to set up two-factor or multi-factor authentication.
- If your credit card number or bank account number was exposed, we recommend calling your bank or cardholder and canceling your card(s) immediately. Let them know that your information was exposed so they look for charges that may be fraudulent.
- If your social security number was exposed, immediately report your social security number to the police, credit-reporting agencies, and the IRS. You may also want to sign up for a service that can monitor your identity or credit for added protection.



Photos Continued from pg. 1...



National Night Out

National Night Out is a community-building campaign that promotes police-community partnerships and camaraderie with other first responders. It fosters relationships and brings a sense of community. This year the event will take place on August 6, 2024. You can see us at the Vernon County Fairgrounds to help support our local law enforcement and first responders. The FREE family event begins at 5 pm.



POLICE • COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS



Stuff the Bus Program

School is just around the corner and supplies are a necessity for every student. This can be very costly for parents, especially those with large families. Vernon County and the McIntosh Memorial Library "Stuff the Bus" program can help. Local libraries such as De Soto, Hillsboro, La Farge, and Westby are distributing back packs with school supplies the first week in August. Bethel Home and Services are helping distribute supplies for McIntosh Memorial Library in Viroqua. "Our goal is to ensure that every child has the resources they need to succeed in school, regardless of their circumstances," said Maggie Strittmater, Adult Programming and Outreach Coordinator at the McIntosh Memorial Library. "By providing essential supplies through "Stuff the Bus", we are helping to level the playing field and empower students to reach their full potential."

Every child has the right to a great education, so join VernonCom and help donate to "Stuff the Bus", so children in our local communities can have the resources they need to succeed.

For questions regarding this program call Maggie Strittmater at (608) 637-7151 Ext. 7 or go to: <https://mcintoshmemoriallibrary.org/stuff-the-bus-program/>

Business Spotlight



The Westby Cooperative Creamery, located in downtown Westby, Wisconsin, has been a cornerstone of the dairy industry since it was established in 1903. Founded by a group of family dairy farmers, the creamery's mission has always been to provide a reliable market for farmers' milk. For over 120 years, Westby Creamery has been providing the community with fresh, award-winning cultured dairy foods, crafted with quality milk sourced from local family farms. Quality is of utmost importance at Westby Creamery, and it is evident in every product. Their products are developed in small batches to ensure freshness and quality in every bite. The cooperative consists of around 140 farmers who supply milk daily. These farmers, who operate small family farms, are the true owners of the co-op. They are committed to producing rBST-free milk and participate in a farm animal care program, ensuring the highest standards of animal comfort, health, and happiness. On the other hand, the creamery has a full staff of 140 people across its distribution center, retail store, and production plant. The operation runs 24/7 with four shifts, ensuring that 90% of their production is organic. This dedication to round-the-clock production helps maintain fresh, quality products. Westby Creamery is famous for its delicious dairy product line, which includes: *cottage cheese, sour cream, french onion dip, cheese curds, hard cheese, butter, yogurt, and string cheese.*

Westby Creamery products are distributed regionally under the Westby label and nationally under private labels. Customers can easily locate Westby Creamery products through the store locator on their website, or in their retail store. The retail store is open Monday through Thursday from 9 AM to 5 PM, Friday from 9 AM to 6 PM, Saturday from 9 AM to 5 PM, and Sunday from 11 AM to 4 PM.

The Westby Creamery uses VernonCom's internet services across its three locations. The internet service is used continuously for various operations around the plants. In the store, it is used for the point-of-sale system and Wi-Fi for customers and business use. Additionally, the internet is used for data management, shipping, and other services to ensure seamless operations for the company. Westby Creamery is a locally owned business that is committed to providing consumers with nothing but the best quality dairy products.

Employee News



The rain held out for the La Farge 4th of July parade. VernonCom employees and their families were delighted to be able to participate at the Independence Day celebration with the community of La Farge.

Go Green!



- Easy access to your VernonCom account
- View and pay your bill
- Access billing and payment history
- Update account information
- Go to: **vernoncom.smarthub.coop** to get started



103 N Main Street
Westby, WI 54667

Lobby Hours:

7:30 am - 4:00 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.