

# MONTHLY NEWS

February 2025



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

## Top News Inside

Digital Wellness

Tech Tips

Safer Internet Day

Business Spotlight

## Digital Wellness



Much like wellness for your body, digital wellness is important too. In today's digital age, screens have become deeply integrated into almost every aspect of our lives. Technology is amazing and in many ways it has made life easier, but staying safe online should always be a top priority. Phishing, for instance, is a form of social engineering where scammers deceive people into revealing sensitive information or installing malware such as viruses, worms, or ransom-ware. Never give out personal information such as credit card numbers, bank information or passwords on websites that appear legitimate. **Here are some circumstances in which fraud could take place:**

- Scammers could say they've noticed some suspicious activity or log-in attempts on an account
- They could claim there's a problem with your account or your payment information
- Tell you that you need to confirm some personal or financial information
- Want you to click on a link to make a payment
- Say you're eligible to register for a government refund or offer a coupon for something free

Getting active and staying healthy can sometimes be difficult for those with a sedentary lifestyle. Good News! There is an app for almost everything. After the holidays, the desire to get healthy is a common resolution and one we would all like to keep.

**Here are just a few apps to help you on your journey to a healthier lifestyle:**



**My Water Reminder + Tracker** is a popular water tracking app that sends reminders to drink water throughout the day. Drinking water regularly helps to prevent kidney stones, promote weight loss, resolves dry skin, relieves fatigue, flush out toxins, improves your mood and aids in digestion. It allows you to monitor your hydration levels by setting daily water intake.



**Sleep Cycle** tracks and analyzes your sleep. It breaks down sleep stages, supplies sleep sounds, tracks snoring and even dreaming.



**Mealime** is an app that helps with mealtime planning, provides healthy recipes, food tips, and a guide for every meal. For those busy evenings and families on the go, it provides easier prep time when you have no time. It also allows you to prepare meals with a personal meal plan from the history of your previous meals. This app takes the stress out of mealtime planning.



**Yuka** is a food & cosmetic scanner app that scans barcodes providing a detailed analyses of their ingredients and its impact on your health.



**Apple Fitness** is an exercise tracking app by Apple that tracks your workouts and daily habits to help you stay active and mindful. Apple Fitness + also offers, yoga and workout sessions.

Digital wellness is the practice of using technology in a healthy way to support your mental, physical and emotional health. Be mindful of how technology impacts your life and take steps to protect your privacy and safety.

## From the CEO, Garin Mayer

Greetings to you in the shortest month of the year! I'm sure you've stopped writing 2024 on things by now and have adjusted to 2025.

If you are looking at your billing information, you'll see the notice of the 2025 video rate change. Those rates will go into effect March 1st. I would recommend taking a look at our VernonCom streaming packages if you'd like to enjoy video for a little less per month than the traditional set-top-box packages.

Your next question may be, "Why the increase?"

Video services are relatively complex when considering the agreements and the amount of entities involved to deliver the services to your home. There are programmers, affiliates, middle ware, hardware, and software entities all involved. Each level requires a negotiation of their costs. Those negotiated costs end up on your bill. The cooperative is the last entity used to deliver these services. The final rate you see on your bill is a reflection of this. We

utilize larger partnerships to negotiate on our behalf in an effort to minimize the increases. We've also created the streaming platform to eliminate some of the overhead costs, in an effort to provide you the entertainment you'd like, for a little less.

On a much more exciting note, I'm pleased to inform you, we have re-opened the front doors of our office! The road construction has progressed to allow parking in front of the building. I will ask that you remain vigilant when you park on the street as traffic traveling on the new road hasn't seemed to slow down any.

If you're reading local news, you may have come across a lot of chatter concerning Broadband Grants. It would seem that everyone, everywhere are receiving these grants! I will caution a lot of what you're reading are pieces of information explaining grants that are being applied for, but have not yet been awarded. The main theme of these grants is the Federal Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) grant, which I've written about previously. The BEAD grant has not yet progressed to the point of applications or awards. With the changes in leadership in Washington DC, there may be a review of how the BEAD grant ultimately proceeds. Here at the cooperative, we will continue to review buildout opportunities that utilize grants when they make the most sense for us. Some grant programs and their stipulations are simply too burdensome or restrictive to be feasible for the cooperative.

I hope you got a chance to enjoy the "Snowflake Ski Jump", in Westby. The annual ski jump competition is a unique event in the area, and is a fun festivity to enjoy in the winter. February also allows us to begin thinking about Spring. If you're like me, it can't come soon enough!

*Take care, and thank you for being a member of the cooperative.*

Garin



## Tech Tips - KnowB4

Social media offers cybercriminals ample opportunities to social engineer or manipulate people to their nefarious advantage. Many do not consider how much personal information is available online and waiting to be used against you.

### Social Media - Not Just for Socializing

Social media platforms are also a breeding ground for fake profile personas waiting to take advantage of you. For instance, LinkedIn has a professional influence unlike other social media sites, often making users less cautious when connecting with strangers. When people willingly make these connections under the assumption of making professional networking contacts, criminals can lure them into divulging personal details and direct them to malicious sites. Social Engineering is a never-ending weapon for cyber criminals and social media hands them most of the information they need for successful attacks.

Cybercriminals can use a quick company search on LinkedIn to find several contacts from a company, including information such as their job positions and email addresses. This quick search gives the attacker a new list of targets to familiarize themselves with for better spear-phishing attempts. If an attacker wanted to target you personally, they could easily find your favorite hobbies or activities from one or more of your social media profiles. They could then craft a relevant spear-phishing email or text message spoofed to look as if it is coming from a company or person that you commonly interact with. Always be aware of the information you share with the world, and be cautious of how that information can result in you, or your organization being more susceptible to a compromise.



FEBRUARY 11

# SAFER INTERNET DAY 2025

Together for a better internet

Safer Internet Day raises awareness about the benefits and risks of connected technology. ConnectSafely offers resources to parents and teachers to build awareness about the safety of the internet. This year's slogan is, "Together for a better internet" #SID2025. The message is that we all respect each other, create a safe and positive online experience where people can feel safe, and explore and create great memories together.

## Save The Date

VernonCom's virtual Annual Meeting will be held on April 15, 2025. More information will come in March, along with a link for you to attend the meeting. Board elections for Districts 5 (La Farge & Cashton) and 7 (Westby City) are up for election. If you wish to run for a board seat, please contact the nominating committee in each district. Each district will elect one director. Any member who resides and has service within the district boundaries are eligible for nomination. Nominating committees are meeting and will select candidates to fill the three-year terms that will expire in 2028. A committee will tabulate the ballots and results will be announced at the Annual Meeting on April 15, 2025. Any member wishing to run for one of the board positions should contact VernonCom at (608) 634-3136 for a list of the nominating committee members before February 23, 2025.

## Scholarship Opportunities

### REMINDER:

VernonCom is offering ten scholarships to members with graduating seniors and students who are continuing their education. Go to our website [www.vernoncom.coop](http://www.vernoncom.coop) for details.



**Completed applications are due by February 14, 2025.**

## Channel Number Changes:

Effective February 10, 2025 the following channels numbers will be changed to:



Channel 179



Channel 184

## Our front office entrance is now open!

Due to road construction in Westby, our entrance was shifted to the side of our building for the summer. Main Street is complete until Spring, so you can now enter through the front door!

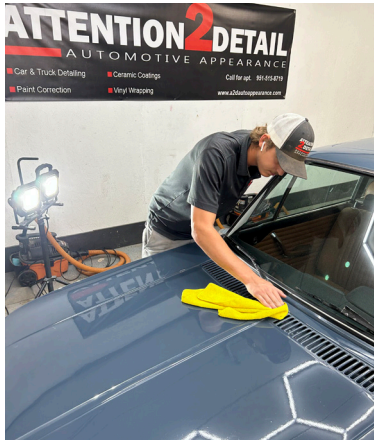


## Go Green!



- Easy access to your VernonCom account
- View and pay your bill
- Access billing and payment history
- Update account information
- Go to: [vernoncom.smarthub.coop](http://vernoncom.smarthub.coop)

## Business Spotlight



This month we're highlighting "Attention 2 Detail Automotive Appearance", a trusted automotive detailing and restyling shop in Viroqua, Wisconsin. Founded by Ryan Zemla in 2021, the business offers a wide range of services. From tinting and vinyl graphics to ceramic coating and odor removal, Attention 2 Detail is quickly

becoming a go-to destination for vehicle owners seeking quality care and service.

The "Full Detail", is the most popular request from clients, offering a complete interior and exterior refresh. Whether it's removing grime or restoring shine, this service ensures every aspect of the vehicle gets attention. As more people seek to protect their vehicles from UV rays and enhance their car's appearance, window tinting has also become a highly sought-after option. With years of experience and dedication to automotive excellence, Ryan is able to assess each customer's needs and recommend the best solutions with confidence. Passion is evident in everything this shop does, and it's this drive for perfection that keeps clients coming back.

Like many small businesses, there are challenges. One major hurdle is balancing the cost of high-quality materials with affordable pricing for clients. This business is also impacted by the seasonality of the industry, with winter being particularly slow. However, the founder stresses the importance of vehicle maintenance during colder months.

Looking ahead, Attention 2 Detail plans to expand into a larger location to accommodate more vehicles and serve a wider clientele – with the goal of continuing to serve the area with automotive excellence for years to come.

VernonCom proudly provides high-speed internet for Attention 2 Detail Automotive Appearance. Reliable internet is essential for operating specialized equipment; for clients looking to book appointments, all scheduling and bookings online are handled through VernonCom's service. Business hours are Monday-Friday 9 AM to 6 PM, with flexible scheduling available by appointment.

Go to: <https://www.vernoncom.coop/spotlight> for a chance to win a \$40 gift certificate to Attention 2 Detail Automotive Appearance

## Employee News



**Jason Landrath** was recognized for his first five years of employment with the cooperative. Jason is one of our cable locators and is in the elements during all kinds of weather. Because Diggers Hotline allows utility workers three business days to mark the affected digging location, Jason's job can get very busy. You may see him in any one of our serving areas.



**Konner Krause** goes the extra mile to give the customer experience VernonCom is known for. He was recognized by several of our members for providing excellent customer care. The compassion he shows for our members was recognized at a recent employee meeting.



In order to serve our members in a more efficient manner, VernonCom's Member Service Representatives are now all located in one area of the building. Our receptionist will greet and direct you to the person who will serve you best for your specific needs!



**Lobby Hours:**  
8:00 am - 4:30 pm  
(M-F)  
(608) 634-3136  
[www.vernoncom.coop](http://www.vernoncom.coop)

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



**Payment Options**  
Go To: [www.vernoncom.coop](http://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.