

MONTHLY NEWS

July 2025



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

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Cooperation Among Cooperatives is the 6th principle of a Cooperative and advocates for Co-ops working together to improve community. VernonCom and Vernon Electric Cooperative hosted a member picnic at the Readstown Tourist park on June 11th. Our joint partnership of the two cooperatives was a fantastic success. Over 200 members joined us for a wonderful celebration on beautiful day with delicious food, engaging conversation, and camaraderie. We are so grateful to everyone who came out to support the cooperatives, and we would like to extend a special thanks to Vernon Electric Cooperative for their invaluable partnership for this event.

From The CEO

Greetings and welcome to July!

If you've been following along in previous newsletters, you know we've discussed the federal BEAD program, and we chose not to enter into the program due to stipulations we found to be prohibitive. You may also recall the program was under review with

the new administration in Washington D.C. On June 6th the NTIA released new guidelines for BEAD, removing much of the regulatory burden initially placed on the program. As of writing this, we have begun reviewing how the new program rules may allow the Cooperative to take part in the program. Participation is just the first step of course, the

way the program works is via application and reverse auction. In removing stipulations, one key change is the program must be, "technology neutral", meaning that any solution able to deliver 100x20 Mbps must be considered. On the surface this would seem to make sense and be a good rule by allowing more competition and perhaps lower bids, however, when we dig a little deeper we see there may be flaws in this approach. Both satellite and fixed wireless applications will now bid on equal footing with fiber providers. Again, this seems like a good thing initially, but when we look at longevity of products and capabilities, we see why investing in fiber optic is a better investment over time. Satellite service is provided by low-arch-orbit satellites, and the satellites currently produced for broadband delivery have about a five year lifespan. Conversely, a fiber optic cable placed today can reasonably carry service for the next 30+ years. Another key advantage of fiber is that the same fiber optic cable will be able to carry ever increasing data. There are long haul fiber optic cables that were placed in the 80's and 90's that initially were carrying 10's of megabytes of data per second, that are now carrying gigabytes of data per second. Fixed wireless is slightly better in longevity, but suffers from weather impacting data, along with obstacles obstructing signals between your location and the tower. Each of these technologies will struggle to deliver a true 100x20 Mbps to customers, especially as more people are added to them. Fiber optic on the other hand, such as the network the Cooperative has and is currently upgrading, is able to deliver speeds in excess of 1 Gbps (1,000 Mbps), both upload and download, to EVERY member of the Cooperative should they need it. We will do our best to compete with these technologies in the BEAD program. *Continued...*



On a personal note, the Cooperative lost Vice President of the Board of Directors, David Dregne in early June. David was in his 30th year of service to the Co-op and was an excellent Board member that I have enjoyed working with. He was always thoughtful and had the best interest of the Cooperative at heart. I will miss the good natured banter we enjoyed at board meetings and in social functions.

VernonCom Director Passes



It is with great sadness to announce the passing of a longtime friend and board of director. David Dregne was in his 30th year of serving on the VernonCom Board of Directors. David represented District 2 (Readstown/Liberty Pole) and has served the cooperative well. David was currently Vice President, and has also held the

position of Secretary/Treasurer. 30 years is a testament to the dedication David has shown for the cooperative. VernonCom extends its sincere condolences to his wife Rosey and his entire family. David's kindness, insight and knowledge will be greatly missed.



Our office will be closed on July 4th, but we will be at the La Farge 4th of July parade beginning at 10:30 am

See you there!

Employee News



On Monday, June 2, 2025, Scott Haakenson, VernonCom's Controller, left the building as an employee for the final time. For 34 years, Scott was instrumental in maintaining the cooperative's financial stability. He began his employment as summer help in 1986, burying copper cable for five summers. After getting his degree, he became a full-time employee in 1991. The rest is history as Scott has maintained the financial integrity of the cooperative ever since. A special thank you to Scott for his dedicated service of 34 years and we wish him a happy retirement.



After working as summer help in 2024, and now a full-time team member, we're excited to welcome Olivia Nelson to VernonCom, as our new Marketing Assistant! Olivia is a Westby High School alum and a recent UW-Eau Claire graduate with a degree in Marketing

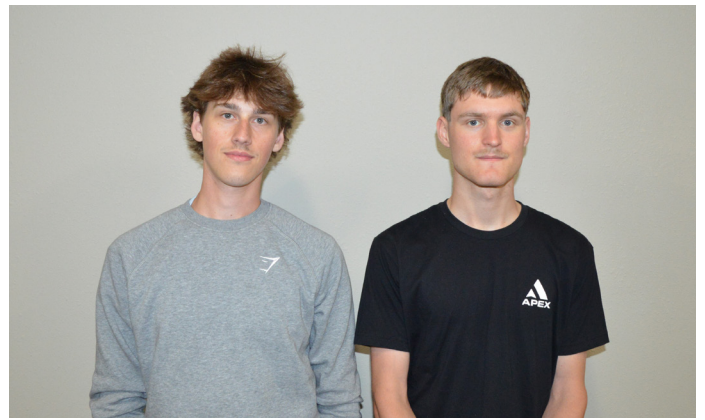
and Digital Marketing Analytics. Olivia is eager to learn and put her education to use in the world of technology and communications. Olivia will be a great asset to the VernonCom team.



Reggie Nelson has worked for the cooperative for 23 years and has made the decision to be a full-time stay-at-home dad. He started in 2002 on the plow crew as summer help. When IPTV was first introduced, Reggie was hired as a full time employee. He was in school at the time and

decided to finish his college classes at night. Reggie ended his career as the Broadband Operations Manager, while overseeing the Network Operations Center (NOC). We wish him all the best!

Summer Employees



Landen Starr (left) and Trent Rider (right) are VernonCom's temporary help for the summer. They will be working outside pulling pedestals and filling in where needed for the summer, and we hope it's a valuable learning experience for them.



Communication is key, and we are trying to stay better connected to our members. Emails and texts are another way for us to keep you informed. If we have your email or cell phone number we may on occasion send you information. If you are ever in doubt that it is from VernonCom, don't hesitate to contact us.



The 2025 Directory is in the mail! This year's cover photo is taken by Mike Leis from our "Heart of the Driftless" Photo Contest.

Business Spotlight



Brad Mellen and Jason Bohnert opened Triggers and Tackle three years ago on Hwy. 27 in Cashton. After becoming hunting buddies and sharing a passion for the outdoors, opportunity opened its doors and their dream became reality. The two had good, stable jobs, but they took a leap of faith and decided to follow their passion to open a hunting and tackle store. Knowing this region is a big attraction for outdoor sports such as hunting and fishing, they felt opening a store and investing in their passion would be a good idea. Brad worked with Jason's son and the two of them became friends after hunting together. Because there were not many small gun and tackle shops in the area, their passion flourished. Although open year round, the store's peak season runs from August through December, driven by Fall fishing and the start of hunting season. They sell a variety of fishing gear, and because of the streams in the area, trout fishing is their main focus. They are a Matthews Archery dealer and sell a variety of bows, cross bows, arrows and accessories. However, as with all of the products they sell, they can get almost any kind of hunting, fishing and archery equipment ordered with a quick turnaround. Advocating for youth hunting and fishing, they recognize the vital role these activities play in connecting young people to the outdoors. Their customers travel from all over, and with their expertise, they can help anyone get equipped with the gear they need. Whether you're just starting out or you are an experienced sportsman, they are your go to resource. Triggers and Tackle is also a DNR licensing agent for hunting and fishing. The use of Vernoncom's internet is vital for ordering supplies and point of sale.

Business hours are: Monday - Friday from 8 am - 5 pm and on Saturdays from 8 am - 4 pm. You can reach them by calling (608) 487-6076.

Go to our website and enter for a chance to win a \$35.00 gift card to Triggers and Tackle.

KnowB4

What Is Callback Phishing?

Have you ever received an email telling you to call a phone number? Calling a phone number may seem safer than clicking on a link, but that's what makes this tactic so effective. In callback phishing scams, cybercriminals will send you an email about something urgent, such as a fraudulent charge or a vital software update. What makes this tactic unique, is that the email includes a phone number that you are prompted to call.

What Happens If I Call?


Cybercriminals use callback phishing scams for their own malicious purposes. If you call the number in the email, cybercriminals will try to trick you into revealing your sensitive information. They may use an automated voice message that prompts you to enter sensitive information, such as your credit card number or social security number. Cybercriminals can also try to trick you into downloading malware. To do this, they'll actually answer the phone and walk you through the process of downloading malicious files onto your device.

What Can I Do to Stay Safe?

Follow the tips below to stay safe from callback phishing scams:

- Think before calling unknown phone numbers. Verify that a phone number is legitimate by navigating to the organization's official website.
- Before sharing sensitive information over the phone, ask the caller to tell you what information they have on file. If they can't prove they are legitimate, hang up.

Watch out for a sense of urgency in emails. Phishing attacks rely on impulsive actions. So, always think before you call.



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