

IN THE LOOP

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2022

gardonville
cooperative telephone association

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Hey Dave

BY DAVE WOLF, CEO/GENERAL MANAGER

Hello Gardonville patrons! I receive questions from cooperative members throughout the year. In this edition of "Hey Dave", I'll tackle a few questions that have arrived in my inbox.

Hey Dave, how has COVID affected Gardonville?

Gardonville, like every other business, has made significant changes to how we operate on a day-to-day basis. Doing our part to be mindful of public health and ensure the safety of everyone is a priority. Our technicians routinely enter subscriber homes and businesses. Our customer care team interfaces with patrons most every day. Increased demand for broadband happened almost overnight. Supply chain interruptions are a challenge. And, everyone is dealing with some type of struggle

or loss. I'd say this pandemic improved Gardonville in how we communicate as a team and how we respond to various challenges. Our resolve to upgrade, expand, and construct our fiber optic network was already in motion pre-pandemic, but we quickly tripled our investment rate in new plant construction and things are going well.

Hey Dave, is Gardonville still involved with the Millerville Co-op Creamery Association (MCCA)?

Yes, we are! We signed a ten-year management contract with the MCCA in 2018. Teams at both co-ops have been working a successful turnaround plan for three years. It's exciting to see the results of that effort.

continued...

Hey Dave Continued...

Getting involved in **local economic development projects** is part of Gardonville's DNA. We've completed over 46 projects in our co-op area to date. Our involvement isn't always some flavor of financing. Our efforts include daycare services, management services and participating on community boards and committees that are dedicated to the ongoing economic growth in our area.

Hey Dave, I don't think my internet is working correctly. What should I do?

Broadband is meant to be always on and highly available. Unfortunately, internet service doesn't always work the way we expect them to, and a lot of things can impact your experience. Our team is dedicated to working a solution and curing any issues anyone is having. Give us a chance to resolve any issues you are experiencing by calling 320-834-5155 or 888-934-0044 anytime. Our calling center receives about 1,800 calls per month.

What are typical problems? The wireless router in a home is typically the problem. If it's older, has never had a software update, and has 25 devices trying to push data through it, 9 out of 10 times this device will be the problem. We can help solve this issue with our Managed WiFi service!

Watching a lot of streaming videos? Have a gaming console? Subscribing to the smallest data package may be creating a problem. We can look at your connection and determine if you are congesting and need a little more bandwidth.

Hey Dave, is Gardonville going to build a data center in Garfield by the post office?

We purchased the Garfield lot and cleaned it up a few years ago because it's a great location for a data center. Our growth will eventually outpace the space and other capacities in our current building. We will be taking a closer look at all options for a Garfield area data center soon.

Hey Dave, how many people work at Gardonville?

There are just under 60 people getting payroll through Gardonville's headquarters in Brandon, but they are not all Gardonville employees. Some work for subsidiary organizations like Brandon Communications. Others work for our Daycare. Gardonville is part owner of other organizations that may have staff in Brandon, MN. Gardonville helps to manage organizations like the Millerville Cooperative Creamery. Their payroll runs through Brandon, MN as well. There is a lot of intercompany synergy and value created by having so much talent working closely together!



Hey Dave, when are you bringing fiber optic cable to my neighborhood?

We have a webpage dedicated to keeping people updated on our project areas: www.gctel.com/myfiber. On that page, you can request an upgrade to the cables feeding your neighborhood. As I've mentioned before in other "Hey Dave" articles, areas that are selected to be upgraded with fiber optic cable are typically ranked by need. Each week throughout the year, neighborhood by neighborhood performance data is analyzed. Areas with aging or failing cable plant are continuously targeted for replacement. Things like road moves, customer requests through our www.gctel.com/myfiber webpage, gopher chews and other cable-cut damage also impacts the ranking process.

Thank you for sending me these questions. I appreciate any feedback. Thank you for your continued patronage and Happy New Year!

Emergency Broadband Benefit

CHANGES YOU NEED TO KNOW

The first change is to the name of the program. Going forward, the name of the program will change to Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP). This program will replace the Emergency Broadband Benefit (EBB). Households enrolled in the EBB as of 12/31/21 will continue to receive their current monthly credit during the 60-day transition period.

The maximum benefit will change from \$50.00 per month to \$30.00 per month for households not located on qualifying tribal lands.

Households will have new ways to qualify for the ACP program such as receiving WIC benefits or having income below 200% of the Federal Poverty guidelines. Households who previously qualified for the EBB due to substantial loss of income due to job loss or furlough since February 29th, 2020 or by meeting the eligibility criteria for a participating providers Covid-19 program will have to reapply for the ACP.

Supporting Education

COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE

As your local communications service provider, we are proud to offer scholarship opportunities to graduating high school seniors whose family is a subscribing **cooperative member**. Here are the scholarship opportunities:

FRS Scholarship

In May of 2022, The Foundation for Rural Service (FRS) will award \$75,000 in the form of 30, \$2,500 scholarships to rural high school seniors across the United States. Awards are granted to students sponsored by a National Telecommunications Cooperative Association (NTCA) member such as Gardonville Cooperative Telephone Association.

The FRS is also offering four scholarships that are fully funded by Manny and Leo Staurulakis of John Staurulakis, Inc. (JSI) in honor of their parents, John and Chresanthe Staurulakis, and to celebrate 50 years of service to the rural telecommunications industry. The FRS Staurulakis Family Scholarships will provide four \$5,000 awards and will give preference to students in rural communities with an interest in science, math, medicine or engineering.

To apply, contact your high school counselor or go to www.frs.org for information and an application. This application

requires the signature of the CEO/General Manager of Gardonville. Please plan to obtain the signature in advance of the deadline due to possible scheduling conflicts. **Applications are due by February 25, 2022.**

MTA Scholarship

The Minnesota Telecom Alliance Foundation will award \$2,000 scholarships to high school seniors. To be eligible, applicants must be attending post secondary education at either a college, university or technical college, be a Minnesota resident and the applicant's family must be a subscribing cooperative member of Gardonville. A telecom alliance panel reviews each application and selects the finalists based on applicants' grades, academic achievements and extra-curricular activities. Preference to receive the scholarship is given to students who have an interest in telecommunications technology and rural communities.

Contact your school counselor to receive an application. **Applications must be submitted to Gardonville by the end of February (the exact date has not yet been released).**

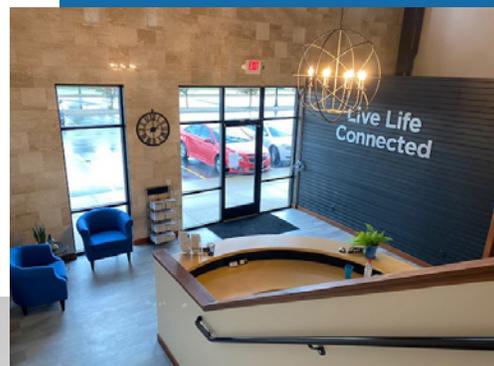
Lifeline Now Offered to Everyone

Lifeline is a federal program that lowers the monthly cost of phone and internet service. Lifeline is now available to those within and outside of our cooperative area! Go to www.lifelinesupport.org to see if you qualify.

Stream TV Channel Updates:

Big Ten Network Overflow has been added to the Expanded Package on channel 429.

DIY, on channel 82, has been renamed Magnolia Network.



Do Not Call Registry

A national Do Not Call Registry has been established to address unwelcome telemarketing calls. The registry applies to all telemarketers with the exception of businesses you have an existing relationship with, certain non-profit groups and political organizations.

Consumers can register their home phone number, including wireless numbers, by calling: 1.888.382.1222 (TTY

call 1.866.290.4236) or at their website: www.donotcall.gov. To register by phone you must call from the number you wish to register.

The Do Not Call Registry will be effective within 31 days of your registration and will remain on it unless the number is disconnected. You can also remove your name from the list at any time by calling toll free 1.888.382.1222 from the phone number you want removed.

Visit our Office in Alexandria

Our remodeled office in Alexandria was completed last spring, but COVID slowed us down from showing it off. Our lobby is now open, so stop by the Willow Creek Complex to check it out! You can also drop off payments or ask about services while you're there. 410 30th Ave E, Suite 106

Welcome New Members!

ALEXANDRIA/CARLOS

Maclver, Barbara.....762-5543
 Hedstrom, Dean & Mary.....759-1151
 Salvog, Ernest & Elaine.....460-8855
 Schlapkohl, M.....763-7531
 Fredman, M.....762-1714
 Slaamot, Ruth.....763-3865
 Sparklight Advertising.....762-2860
 Davids, S.....759-2464
 Ernst, Thomas E.....460-8858
 True Freedom Physical Therapy.....
391-5055
 Baker, E.....759-0701

EVANSVILLE

Halvorson, Linda.....948-2046



Brain Buster

At the end of the 2021 Jingle Bells Telethon, how much money had been raised?

Answer

Name - Please Print

Nov/Dec Brain Buster

Which Gardonville fiber project has 46 homes in it?

Tanglewood Road Project

Last month's winner is Dan Anderson. Stop in at either our Alexandria or Brandon office to get your goody bag, Dan!

Fishing for the Cure

JOIN US ON THE ICE ON FEBRUARY 19

Gardonville is excited to bring WiFi to the Alexandria Industries' 15th Annual Fishing for the Cure Ice Fishing Challenge. The event will take place on February 19, 2022. Go to their Facebook page for more info: www.facebook.com/aifishingforthecure



Customer Proprietary Network Information

In order to help protect your privacy regarding Customer Proprietary Network Information (CPNI), the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has taken measures to strengthen the rules of providing CPNI to our customer(s). In order for Gardonville to be in compliance with the FCC rules for CPNI, we require customer(s) fill out a form and return it to our office.

According to the FCC rules, we are only able to discuss account information with the person(s) listed on the account or proven power of attorney. If account information is requested by a customer over the phone and the call is initiated by the customer, that customer will need to provide a previously set personal identification number (PIN) in order for our customer service representative to supply the requested information. The PIN cannot be historical background information that would be available to someone else, such as the last four digits of your social security number, mother's maiden name, your address, etc. If this PIN is not supplied and back-up questions cannot be answered, there are only three ways for the customer to obtain this requested detail:

- Hang up and have the CSR call back the telephone number of record.
- Have the CSR mail the requested information to the address of record.
- The authorized customer on the account must come to the telephone office and show a valid government issued photo ID.

As mandated by the FCC, these rules are for the protection of your privacy as they ensure that no one other than the authorized person is receiving account information and making account changes.

Due to the FCC rule revisions, you will also receive a "Notice of Change/Activity" form at the address of record from our office anytime changes are made to your account such as an address change, password change, back-up question used for lost or forgotten password, etc. The notice will inform you of such change or activity and if this was not made by an authorized person, please contact our office immediately.

Thank you for your assistance in ensuring we are compliant with the FCC rules for your CPNI protection. If you have any questions regarding our procedures for CPNI compliance, please contact our business office at (320) 834-5151.

CPNI Opt-Out

You have the right to opt-out of receiving internal marketing from us. If you choose to opt-out, please return a written notification or contact our office to request a form to opt-out. Once you opt-out, you will remain on this list until otherwise requested. Please note information published in the telephone directory is not considered CPNI. You need to respond only if you choose the opt-out method.