

IN THE LOOP

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2026



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Gardonville is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Coming Together for Backpack Attack

A Volunteer Effort Supporting Local Students

In December, the Gardonville team joined forces with an incredible group of community volunteers to pack 800 Backpack Attack bags. With many motivated hands working together, the entire effort was completed in 21 minutes.

Backpack Attack is a weekend food support program for eligible Brandon-Evansville students. Each Friday, students discreetly receive a bag filled with simple, easy-to-eat food to help ensure they have what they need for the weekend. Since launching in November, it has already received strong support from teachers, families, local businesses, and community clubs.

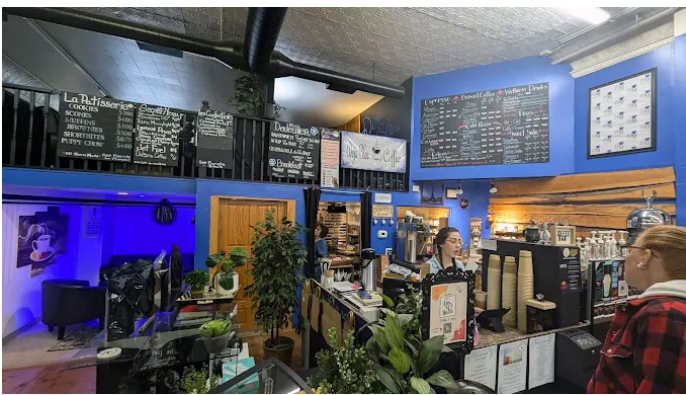
We're grateful to partner with United Way Lakes and Prairie to help keep this important work moving forward. Programs like Backpack Attack are funded directly through donations to UWLP, and every dollar truly makes a difference in the lives of local students and families.



Business Profile

Deja Bleu House of Coffee: Where Coffee, Community, and Conversation Meet

Deja Bleu did not begin with a plan to open a brick-and-mortar store. Instead, it grew naturally from owner Patty Dusing's lifelong love of rock hunting. As a child, she collected rocks, and as an adult she returned to that passion through rock tumbling and jewelry making. With help from her niece, Angelica, who modeled Patty's necklace designs and even walked in fashion runway shows, Patty began sharing her work on Facebook. As interest grew and their home filled with inventory, Patty rented a small space in the Cedar Building. That first step eventually led Deja Bleu to its current home on Broadway Street in Alexandria.



The move to Broadway marked a turning point for the business. While Patty expanded the shop with clothing, her husband, Shawn, began roasting coffee. Today, Shawn sources only specialty-grade coffee, the highest grade available, and has trained across the country to refine his skills. Quality and intention extend to the entire team. Deja Bleu employs four regular staff members and 11 summer employees, with a strong focus on mentoring young adults and encouraging them to think critically and confidently.

Angelica has been part of Deja Bleu for eight years and continues to shape its unique personality. A lifelong book lover, she asked if she could sell books in the shop. That idea grew into a successful addition and eventually inspired Angelica to launch her own mobile bookstore, which she operates alongside her role at Deja Bleu.

Patty's background is in nursing, and her genuine care for people is at the heart of everything she does. Three years ago, she stepped away from healthcare to focus on the store full time. Since then, Deja Bleu has become a welcoming community space, including a fully equipped podcast studio available for local creators. Patty hosts her own podcast, *Grounds for Discussion*, available on YouTube, where she interviews small business owners and community members, sharing their stories, challenges, and lessons learned.

Beyond coffee, Deja Bleu is known for breakfast offerings, homemade egg bakes, and baked goods made by Robbie, a talented baker on the autism spectrum. The team also operates a mobile coffee shop at the Saturday Art Market, Minnesota State Trap Shooting events, and the Douglas County Fair. Deja Bleu continues to be a place where hard work, creativity, and community come together.



Follow them on Facebook and Instagram for specials, new drink releases and good laughs @dejaBLEUhouseofcoffee.

Behind the Scenes: Jingle Bells

The Jingle Bells Telethon was once again a meaningful way for the community to come together in support of local families during the holiday season. Gardonville was proud to help produce the live stream, as well as donate the phone lines for the phone bank and network connectivity.



Members of the Gardonville team played important roles before, during, and after the telethon. They supported technical operations, monitored the live production, answered calls at the phone bank, and helped shop for and assemble baskets for families.



Thanks to the generosity of donors, sponsors, performers, volunteers, and everyone who tuned in, this year's telethon raised a total of \$92,334.28. That support will make a difference for families in our area and continues the strong community effort behind the Jingle Bells Telethon each year.

Scholarships Available

For High School Seniors

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:

MTA Scholarships

The Minnesota Telecom Alliance Foundation is awarding scholarships ranging from \$1,000 to \$2,000 to eligible Minnesota high school seniors pursuing post-secondary education. Applicants must be Minnesota residents, plan to attend a college, university, or technical college, and come from a family that subscribes to Gardonville services.

Two scholarship opportunities are available. The \$2,000 Jon Tollefson Technology Scholarship is open to students planning to major in Telecommunications or Information Technology. In addition, five \$2,000 General Scholarships will be awarded to students pursuing any field of study. The Bud Morrow Scholarship will be awarded to the highest-scoring applicant in the general category.

Applications are reviewed by a Minnesota Telecom Alliance panel, with preference given to students interested in telecommunications technology and rural communities.

For full details and an application, visit www.mnta.org/page/Scholarship. Completed applications must be submitted to Gardonville by February 13, 2026.

FRS Scholarships

The Foundation For Rural Service (FRS) Scholarship Foundation annually awards \$2,500 scholarships to an exceptional group of rural students for their first year of college or vocational school. Additionally, several other scholarships are given to a select group of the over 1,500 applicants. FRS has awarded over \$1 million in scholarships since its inception; empowering rural students throughout the country to advance their communities with invaluable skill sets and experiences.

There are a variety of scholarships available, and one application qualifies a student for the scholarships they are eligible for. To apply, contact your high school counselor or go to www.frs.org for information and to apply.

These applications may require 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 14, 2026.

That's a Wrap: 2025 Fiber Construction

We are grateful for the opportunity to bring faster, more reliable connectivity to our communities. This year, we've reached some exciting milestones: over 80 miles of fiber-optic cable have been put in the ground, and more than 590 homes have been constructed with fiber-optic connections.

These achievements wouldn't be possible without the dedication of our team, the support of our partners, and the trust of the communities we serve. Every mile laid and every home connected represents not just infrastructure, but the ability for families, students, and businesses to thrive in a more connected world.

Thank you for being part of this journey with us. We're proud to keep building the future, one connection at a time.



Fishing for a Good Cause

Join Us on the Ice February 21st

Gardonville is excited to once again bring WiFi to the Alexandria Industries 19th Annual Fishing For the Cure Ice Fishing Challenge. The event will take place on February 21, 2026. It's a great ice fishing event for the whole family! Go to their Facebook page for more info: facebook.com/aifishingforthecure



Phone Books Coming Soon

The 2026 Vikingland Regional Directory will be in your mailbox soon. Please remember to recycle your old phone book!

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.

Brain Buster

I have keys but no locks. I have space but no room. You can enter, but you can't go outside. What am I?

Answer

Name - Please Print

Nov/Dec Brain Buster

Board games was the theme for the United Way's Chili Cook-Off. Can you guess which game our team chose?

Candy Land

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

Financial Assistance

Lifeline Program

Lifeline is a federal program that lowers the monthly cost of phone and internet service. Eligible consumers can get up to \$9.25 off the cost of phone, internet, or bundled services. Go to lifelinesupport.org to see if you qualify or call our office to request assistance.

TAP Program

Minnesota's Telephone Assistance Plan (TAP) offers a monthly credit of \$10.00 on your landline phone service. If you qualify for Lifeline and have phone service, you qualify for TAP. Go to mn.gov/puc/consumers/telephone for more info or call our office for support.

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.