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HORIZONS – Volume 18, Number 5  
Horizons is an award-winning customer newsletter  
published bimonthly by Golden West Telecommunications



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# HORIZONS

*A Special Annual Meeting Edition*

September 2018

## Reaching Beyond RURAL



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Golden West is a Member of the SD Telecommunications Association

# Reaching Beyond RURAL

Online access and opportunities for rural communities continue to increase every day. Shopping online or video chatting with a relative are common practices. However, South Dakotans are using their broadband Internet in many other interesting ways, as well.

In Golden West's 2018 Annual Report, we briefly introduced Tara Currier-Hofer, JT Rickenbach and Joyce Wheeler. Let's take a closer look at this teacher, rancher and great-grandmother to see how they use their broadband Internet connections to reach well beyond their rural locations.

## Tara Currier-Hofer

Bridgewater, SD: Teacher & Magician

While Bridgewater resident Tara Currier-Hofer isn't a magician in the traditional sense of the word, what she does on a daily basis really is quite amazing. Each morning, Tara takes 60 steps from the back door of her farmhouse to work. Her office is a simple building, much like the others in the farmyard, except for the old school bell hanging by the door.

"I used to play school with my stuffed animals in my bedroom as a child," recalls Tara. "I was not funny enough to be a comedian, not flexible enough to be a ballerina, and I couldn't stand the sight of blood, so being a dentist was out of the question."

Perhaps even more incredible than pulling a rabbit out of a hat, today Tara uses the Internet to teach Spanish to high school students across South Dakota.

"Having Golden West services in rural Bridgewater means that I am able to teach from my home office. I instruct hundreds of students, who otherwise would not have the opportunity to learn Spanish," explains Tara. She teaches via the Dakota Digital Network (DDN), reaching students through Northern State University's E-learning Program.

In her 26th year of teaching and her sixth with DDN, Tara will teach Level 1 and 2 Spanish to over 100 students in 14 high schools this year. She'll do it all from home, in a small office located on a farmyard in rural Bridgewater. Tara the magician indeed.

## JT Rickenbach

Oelrichs, SD:  
Rancher & International Businessman

Born and raised in Oelrichs, JT Rickenbach is all rancher. He's got the hat and pearl-snap buttons on his shirt, and his wife, Sara, owns and operates Rancher Feed & Seed in nearby Buffalo Gap. All initial signs point toward a typical ranch family, but this one has international connections.

Learn more about this distance education program at [northern.edu/academics/elearning](http://northern.edu/academics/elearning).

## Joyce Wheeler

Philip, SD: Great-Grandmother & Author

Longtime Philip area resident Joyce Wheeler has lived on a South Dakota ranch her whole life. She and her husband, Justin, operated a cattle ranch and raised four kids. Today their family has grown to include 10 grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

"From being a rancher's daughter to a rancher's wife, I've been involved in the challenges of raising cattle, ranch work and the variables that nature brings," says Joyce. Raising children and running cattle took time – a lot of time – with little left for hobbies. She began to pursue her lifelong dream of writing christian/western fiction novels about 10 years ago.

"I actually kept the manuscript of my first book in a drawer for over a year before I contacted a publisher," says

Joyce. After the first two publishing-houses she used closed their doors, Joyce decided to self-publish. She works one-on-one via the Internet with a company in Florida called BookLocker. "For the first time, I can directly contact the cover designer or the publisher, making the whole process simple and quick," she says.

While she receives publishing help from Florida, Joyce relies on local help for marketing her books and website. "I have a great web designer that lives in Rapid, and while I've never met him, we communicate easily because of the reliability of emails," says Joyce.

Joyce fully embraces her passion for writing and selling books, and her location on a cattle ranch outside of Philip does not stand in her way.

As Joyce puts it, "In this beautiful and sometimes frustrating age of technology, writing and publishing books are somewhat easy in our rural area with the aid of Golden West Internet."

Learn more about Joyce's work at [prairieflowerbooks.com](http://prairieflowerbooks.com).

## JT Rickenbach continued:

"I went to the South Dakota School of Mines and got a Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering," says JT. "My second job out of school was with Midcom in Watertown manufacturing electronic components for telecommunication and data communication companies."

This led JT back home to start his own company. His idea was to build the same type of electrical components as a contractor for Midcom and other similar companies.

"In 2002, I started WESTROM in Hot Springs, while still being able to live and ranch with my family in Oelrichs," says JT. "WESTROM builds electronics, cases and housings for electronics, and the machines to build electronics. We build electronics. We don't design electronics."

WESTROM boasts two locations – one in Hot Springs and another in Hong Kong. "Most electronic component

manufacturing and consumer electronics are built in south China," explains JT. "It's similar to gold prospecting in that you have to go where the gold is."

As you can imagine, most of JT's business is outside of South Dakota and the United States, but there are

advantages to operating a business from Hot Springs. "Western South Dakota has good Internet, commercial airline service out of Rapid City, and the School of Mines has good university support if I need it," details JT.

Despite the distance to most of his customers, JT knows he made the right decision to live and work in South Dakota. "I wanted to raise my kids with the same idea of normal as I did. They all graduated from Hot Springs High School and think of this area as home. It has all worked out pretty well."

These are just three of the many extraordinary stories we hear about Golden West customers using the Internet in rural South Dakota. We also hear from customers that love how easy it is to stream movies or keep up with friends on social media. However, it's inspiring to know that if you've got your sights set on educating the next generation, doing business in Hong Kong or writing novels – or some other grand plan – you can do that from rural South Dakota, too.

# DIRECTOR ELECTIONS Four-Year Terms

Golden West Cooperative members will elect four members to the Board of Directors. To vote, members must be present at the September 22nd annual meeting and may vote for a candidate in each district that has a director opening.

## DUANE WOOD, District I – Unopposed



Duane has been on the Golden West Board of Directors since September 1984. Duane and his wife, JoAnn, live on the family ranch west of Faith. The Woods have three daughters.

Duane attended Black Hills State College before completing a two-year Ranch Management course at Western Dakota Vo-Tech Institute in Sturgis. He is an agent for the Harding and Perkins Farm Mutual Insurance Company and 1st Auto and Casualty. Duane is a member of the Opal Community Church.

## JOHN KNUTSON, District II – Incumbent



John joined the Golden West Board of Directors in September 2010.

John owns and operates a ranch in southwestern Haakon County. He and his wife, Arnis, live on the same quarter homesteaded by his grandfather in 1906. They have three grown children. John attended Alfalfa Valley

rural school through the eighth grade, then attended and graduated from Philip High School.

John earned an associate's degree in agriculture from South Dakota State University. He served as a director and president of the Farmer's Union Co-op in Philip, president of the Haakon County School Board, supervisor and chairman of the Haakon County Soil Conservation District and is a member of the First Lutheran Church.

## GERRY SLOAT, District II – Challenger



Gerald (Gerry) Sloat is a Brookings County native, South Dakota State University graduate and U.S. Army veteran. Gerald worked as a circulation manager for daily newspapers in Minnesota, Iowa and Pennsylvania. He also owned a small business, was president of the Exchange Club of

Johnstown, PA, served on the West Hills Regional Police Commission and was mayor of Southmont Borough, PA, for eight years.

Gerry and his wife, Bobby (a Philip native), have lived in Philip for the past seven years. They own Bad River Enterprises, LLC, which does business as Gerry's HomeWorks performing home improvement and renovation projects. Gerry and Bobby's children and grandchildren live near Rapid City and Black Hawk.

## KENNETH TONSAGER, JR., District V – Unopposed



Kenneth joined the Golden West Board of Directors in September 2007. Kenneth is a graduate of South Dakota State University. In 1979 he moved to Hot Springs as an insurance agent for Farmers Union and then managed the Community First Insurance Agency. In 2004, he returned

to school at Arapaho Community College in Denver where he received his Mortuary Science Degree. In 2005, Ken joined McColley's Chapels of the Hills as a funeral director.

Ken is a member of the Southern Hills Evangelical Free Church, the Hot Springs Volunteer Fire Department and is a charter member of the Hot Springs Rotary Club. Ken and his wife, Gayle, have two children and six grandchildren.

## RODNEY DALLY, District VIII – Challenger



Rodney began his career in Armour as an industrial technology for education teacher in 1989 and joined the Armour Volunteer Fire Department. Rodney was part of the South Dakota Wiring the School's Project and helped grow the Armour School District's network. In 2006,

he was hired by the Wagner Community School as a technology coordinator.

Rodney lives in Armour. He is a member of the Armour United Church of Christ and has served as board president. Currently, Rodney is an alderman on the Armour City Council and volunteers for a host of events and fundraisers. Rodney enjoys spending time with his wife, Wanda, and their three children. He likes the outdoors, working in his vineyard, cooking, barbeque, smoking meats and making wine, beer and vinegar.

## RANDY KOERNER, District VIII – Incumbent



Randy joined the Golden West Board of Directors in February 2010.

Randy is the owner of Koerner Construction in Freeman, SD. He has been in business since 1979. He graduated from Freeman High School and the University of South Dakota. He has served as a volunteer fire fighter and EMT. He currently sits on the City of Freeman Planning and Zoning Commission and is a member of the Freeman Development Corporation Business Retention Committee. He is an active member of the St. Paul Lutheran Church. Randy and his wife of 35 years, LeeAnn, enjoy yard work, cooking and camping.

Please Join Us for the

# 66th Annual Meeting

Golden West Telecommunications Cooperative

**Saturday, September 22nd, 2018**

**Wall Community Center, Wall, SD**

Registration: 10:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Free Lunch: 11:00 a.m. to 12:45 p.m.

Meeting Called to Order: 1:00 p.m.

**Register for the \$500 grand prize plus numerous cash and merchandise prizes.**

*You must be present to win.*

*Entertainment by local country band, Midnight Sun.*



## AUTHORIZATION TO VOTE

Non-individual members of Golden West Telecommunications Cooperative, Inc., such as school districts, towns, churches and corporations may vote at the annual meeting by completing this form and presenting it at the registration desk on September 22, 2018. Each member organization should designate a representative who is an officer, stockholder or member of their organization.

***This form must be signed by an officer or member of the governing body.***

This is to certify that \_\_\_\_\_ is hereby designated the delegate to the Golden West Telecommunications Cooperative, Inc., Annual Meeting on September 22, 2018, from \_\_\_\_\_ whose phone number is \_\_\_\_\_.

Named delegate is authorized to vote on all issues that may come before the meeting including election of directors.

By: \_\_\_\_\_ Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

# 2017 Annual Meeting MINUTES

The Annual Meeting of the members of Golden West Telecommunications Cooperative, Inc., was called to order at 1:00 p.m., September 23, 2017 at the Wall Community Center, Wall, South Dakota by President Jeff Nielsen. Said meeting was held pursuant to notice thereof as required by law. The Nesters sang the National Anthem. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by President Nielsen.

President Nielsen called upon Darla Pollman Rogers, Attorney for the Cooperative, who gave the Credential Report. A motion was made and seconded to approve a quorum. Motion carried.

Next, President Nielsen called upon Kenneth Zickrick, Jr., Secretary, to read the Notice of Meeting and the Proof of Mailing, after which a certified copy of each was duly filed as part of the Minutes of this meeting.

President Nielsen introduced the special guests in attendance at the meeting.

President Nielsen welcomed the Cooperative members and asked that the minutes of the 2016 Annual Meeting be approved, if there were no additions or corrections, as written. On a motion duly made, seconded and unanimously carried, the President declared the Minutes approved.

A motion was made, seconded and carried to approve the financial report.

President Nielsen then delivered his presidential report. He introduced the Golden West Board of Directors, and gave an update on the services and history of Golden West. He talked about the progress of Golden West and the many connections that the cooperative shares with its members.

Next, President Nielsen called on Denny Law, General Manager/CEO, to present his annual report. Mr. Law welcomed all in attendance. He reported on the advantages of fiber optics and the upgrades that will strengthen Golden West's broadband services in the future. Mr. Law then reported on Golden West's advocacy for its members, as well as FCC Chairman Pai's visit to Golden West. He then highlighted the importance of Golden West's scholarship and economic development grant programs. Mr. Law also spoke about how Golden West employees are involved in their communities through civic and volunteer participation.

President Nielsen called on Darla Pollman Rogers, attorney, to report on the nominating petitions for the Board of Directors. Vacancies on the Board of Directors were as follows:

District I – Jade Hlavka (four-year term) one vacancy with one candidate

District IV – Kenneth Zickrick, Jr (four-year term) one vacancy with one candidate

District VI – (four-year term) one vacancy with two candidates – Dale Guptill and Sam O'Rourke

District VII – Bart Birkeland (four-year term) one vacancy with one candidate

A motion was made, seconded and carried to seat the uncontested incumbents:

District I: Jade Hlavka

District IV: Kenneth Zickrick, Jr

District VII: Bart Birkeland

Darla Pollman Rogers, attorney, introduced the director candidates for District VI: Dale Guptill and Sam O'Rourke. Each candidate was allotted three minutes to address the membership. Next, Darla Pollman Rogers advised the membership of the balloting process and requested that the ballots for the election of directors be handed out. After the membership had the opportunity to vote, the ballots were collected. A three-member balloting committee was appointed by Darla Pollman Rogers to oversee the ballot counting and report to the membership. The members of the balloting committee were Earle Geide, Cynthia Plenty Bull and Betty Zolnowsky.

President Nielsen called for any old business. There was none.

President Nielsen called for any new business. A question was asked about battery life on fiber optics equipment. A former employee inquired about current employee benefits. Rosebud Tribal Utilities Commissioner Ronald Neiss complimented Golden West on its annual meetings.

Next, President Nielsen called on Member Services Manager Jody Bielmaier to introduce the entertainment for the afternoon, the Black Hills area folk duo, The Nesters.

Following the entertainment, Darla Pollman Rogers announced the election results: Dale Guptill was elected director for District VI (four-year term).

During the course of the meeting, several drawings were held to award prizes. The grand prize of \$500 went to Carol Hahn of Wall.

President Nielsen adjourned the meeting.

*Kenneth Zickrick Jr.*

Kenneth Zickrick Jr. - Secretary



Leo Bald Eagle, Tom Sitzler, Chip Bradley and Gary Hargens

The Midnight Sun Band out of Rapid City, SD has been playing music in South Dakota, Wyoming, North Dakota and Montana for over 30 years. The combined musical experience of the four band members is fast approaching 210 years! Now, let's meet the band.

**Lead Guitar – Leo Bald Eagle.** Leo began playing guitar at the St. Francis Mission School on the Rosebud Reservation. Leo is a member of the South Dakota Legends of Country Music Hall of Fame.

**Drums & Vocals – Tom Sitzler.** Tom started playing drums in Cleveland, Ohio. A veteran of the U.S. Air Force, Tom settled near Rapid City after being stationed at Ellsworth Air Force Base. Tom is in South Dakota's Rock'n Roll Hall of Fame as a member of DD & the Fayrohs.

## The Midnight Sun Band

Always Have Fun, That's Why It's Called "Playing" Music

**Bass – Chip Bradley.** Chip started his career as a rhythm guitarist touring throughout the U.S. and Canada, picking up the bass later in his career. Now Chip is a member of the South Dakota Legends of Country Music Hall of Fame and a member of the South Dakota Country Music Hall of Fame.

**Rhythm Guitar & Lead Vocals – Gary Hargens.** Gary started playing music at age 14 with his dad's band in Miller. An electrical engineering graduate from the School of Mines, Gary is also a member of the South Dakota Legends of Country Music Hall of Fame.

## Brian Meyer Scholarships Available for 2019 Spring Semester

The South Dakota Telecommunications Association (SDTA) is now accepting applications for the Brian Meyer Memorial Scholarship. Two scholarships in the amounts of \$1,250 and \$500 will be awarded for the 2019 spring semester. These scholarships can be used for any major at any post-secondary educational institution in South Dakota including public and private universities, and technical schools.

The scholarship is available to students who have completed at least two semesters of course work at an accredited post-secondary school in South Dakota. The student or student's family must be a subscriber of a SDTA member company, such as Golden West.

To apply, students must complete an application, write a short outline of their career plans, and submit an essay on enhancing the future of small town South Dakota through technology. Also needed are a copy of the applicant's most recent transcript and at least two letters of recommendation.

**The deadline to submit an application for the Brian Meyer Memorial Scholarship is October 30.**

For more information on the Brian Meyer Memorial Scholarship from SDTA:

Call – 605-224-7629

Email – [admin@sdtaonline.com](mailto:admin@sdtaonline.com)

Online – [www.sdtaonline.com/resources/scholarships](http://www.sdtaonline.com/resources/scholarships)

