

January 2023

Horizons

A Golden West Customer Newsletter

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'Seedy' Reputation

Midland plant blends local seed
for birds across the country.

 **Golden West**
We're everywhere people connect.

‘Seedy’ Reputation

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You might consider bagging one million pounds of bird seed each week a tweet-worthy accomplishment, but it’s simply business as usual for Performance Seed in Midland. The company went through 70 million pounds in 2021 alone, making a lot of sparrows, finches, and cardinals very happy — not to mention the local farmers they support.

“I pride myself on buying as much as I possibly can locally from the farmers around here,” explains Plant Manager Melissa Fosheim. “We typically buy 90% of what we bag from farmers within about a 180-mile radius around us.”

That commitment to reinvesting in the local economy certainly isn’t ruffling any feathers in rural South Dakota.

Packaging & Treatment Innovations

Performance Seed got its start in Waite Park, Minnesota, selling lawn seed and wild bird seed, some 20 years ago. The family-owned company expanded to South Dakota, opening plants in Miller and Midland, the latter bringing in their first truckload of grain in February 2016.

While lawn seed is produced in Minnesota, both South Dakota facilities focus strictly on bird seed. They sell directly to stores, and create different blends based on the needs of those businesses.

“A lot of the companies we bag for have different specs and quantities as far as percentages they want in their mixture,” Melissa shares. “We bag straight

sunflower seeds, and we also make mixes that’ll have wheat, sunflower, safflower, peanuts, milo, and millet.”

A key selling point is Performance Seed’s patented Grab & Pour Packages. The unique design makes it easy for the consumer to top off a bird feeder without spilling seed all over the ground.

“Our 20-lb. and smaller bags have a handle that makes it convenient to pour in a bird feeder or storage container,” Melissa says. “People can pick them up and get them in their trunks.”

Another innovation is the company’s Moth-Guard treatment. The food-grade spray is applied to each bag of seed to inhibit the growth of moths and keep dust to a minimum and is completely safe.



“We’ve had some really good service guys from Golden West come down and take care of us, and that helps.”

MELISSA FOSHEIM
Plant Manager

Rail Cars Ease Transportation Crunch

When it comes to transportation, Performance Seed has a secret weapon: they own their own fleet of rail cars. This provides them with flexibility when it comes to shipping out bird seed.

Performance Seed employs eight people at the Midland plant.

“Trucking is very tough right now,” Melissa says. “There are times when we’d have 40 loads of product on the floor and couldn’t get a truck here to put it on. We can put four truckloads of product on a rail car and get it there in three weeks.”

Tracks are conveniently located just outside the back loading bay. Once the cars are filled, they move them in position for the railroad to pick up. Performance Seed currently averages two rail shipments per week. Looking toward the future, she’d like to utilize rail cars even more.

“Right now, we ship all the way to California by truck, which is hard to afford sometimes,” she says. “We hope to have more product going out on rail to reach those customers that are quite a ways away.”

Supporting the Local Community

In addition to buying the majority of their grain from local suppliers, Performance Seed makes other ▶



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'Seedy' Reputation

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efforts to support the community of Midland. They make financial donations to the local museum and occasionally donate bird seed to organizations holding benefits and fundraisers.

More than anything, Melissa views their employees as an essential means of giving back. They currently employ eight but would like to increase the staff to 12 in order to run split shifts in the future.

"We keep people employed and kept them busy during the pandemic," she explains. "Those people put money back into the gas station and other places in town."

Melissa is thankful for the service Golden West provides the company, including phone and internet service to communicate with the other plants, suppliers, and customers.

"You've got to have the internet, you know!" she says. "We've had some really good service guys from Golden West come down and take care of us, and that helps."

Melissa says drivers from out of the area often have to call for directions. "They've never been to little Midland, so they've got to be able to find where we're located!"

Out-of-state drivers might not know exactly where Performance Seed is located, but customers snatch up bags of bird seed from retail stores throughout the country.



Exemplify Success

25 Years of Scholarships Add Up to Over \$1 Million

Each year the Golden West scholarship program awards a \$1,000 scholarship to a qualifying student from each of the 45 Golden West area high schools. One at-large scholarship is also given to a student whose parents receive Golden West services, but the student is either homeschooled or attends high school outside of our service area.

The scholarship program, now in its 25th year, has awarded over \$1 million dollars to graduating seniors in our communities across South Dakota.

"At Golden West, we understand how important it is to invest in the latest technologies, but we also know the importance of investing in tomorrow's leaders," says Golden West General Manager and CEO Denny Law. "The scholarship program is one way Golden West helps strengthen and build the rural South Dakota communities we serve."

Applications Open for 2023 Graduates

All high school seniors who meet the following criteria are encouraged to apply for the regular or at-large scholarship:

- The student's parents or legal guardians must reside within one of Golden West's telephone service areas and subscribe to Golden West phone or internet service.
- Applicant must take the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), American College Test (ACT), or Accuplacer Vocational Entrance Exam by December 31 of their senior year.
- Applicant must be a high school senior.
- Recipient must take 12 or more classroom credits (or equivalent to a full-time course load) in the fall semester following high school graduation.
- Scholarship awards may only be applied to post-secondary institutions.

Students should contact their local high school to apply. The at-large application is available at goldenwest.com/scholarships. The application deadline is March 15, 2023.

Fiber Upgrades Continue

2023 Projects Involve 1,000 Miles of Cable & 2,000 Subscribers

Golden West continues its multi-year effort to update its entire service territory with fiber optic technology for broadband connectivity. Known as Fiber to the Home (FTTH), the massive project involves burying about 14,000 miles of fiber optic cable.

“To put that in perspective, it equates to a cable that would stretch from Wall, South Dakota, to the southern tip of South America and back – that’s 14,000 miles,” emphasizes General Manager and CEO Denny Law. “While the effort is significant, the need is enormous as broadband access plays an integral role in our lives today, both personally and professionally.”

Faster, More Reliable Connections

Fiber optic technology delivers faster broadband internet access and provides stronger connections for all services, including phone and cable TV (where available). Broadband technology is foundational for economic and community development. It allows local businesses to access global markets and allows residents access to remote work, telehealth, and online educational opportunities.

“One of Golden West’s members shared years ago that her fiber optic broadband meant she was able to work

where she wanted to live instead of having to live where she worked,” Law says.

Golden West began fiber optic cable construction and related electronics upgrades about a decade ago. The cooperative is working to bring the technology to its entire service territory within the next four or five years.

More Info Coming by Mail, Online

Start dates for the 2023 projects (*see box below for list*) are still being determined. The projects will take most of the year to complete, and customers will be transitioned to the fiber optic network late in 2023 or early in 2024. Customers scheduled to be upgraded should watch their mailboxes in the coming weeks for a letter from Golden West.

Additional information, including maps of the projects and lists of the contractors doing the work, will be shared online. Visit goldenwest.com/ftth for an overview of the upgrade process. Bookmark the site to revisit it often as periodic updates by community will also be posted on this webpage throughout the year as the projects progress.

For questions after visiting goldenwest.com/ftth, call **1-855-888-7777, option 3**, and ask for the Engineering Department.

6 Project Areas Across SD in 2023

In 2023, about 1,000 miles of new fiber optic cable will be laid for six project areas which will serve almost 2,000 additional Golden West homes and businesses. Areas scheduled for FTTH upgrades this year include:

- Colton (town) and the remainder of the Colton exchange (rural).
- Additional portions of the Custer exchange (rural), including areas east of Custer and continuing west of Custer, which will continue next year.
- The remainder of the Enning exchange (rural), including areas north, east, and south of Enning.
- The Humboldt-Montrose exchange (towns and rural).
- The remainder of the Maurine exchange (rural), including areas west, north, and east of Maurine.
- The remainder of the Murdo exchange (rural), including areas north, east, and south of Murdo.

WIN BIG
SHOP LOCAL
Customer Appreciation Giveaway

Congratulations

2022 Shop Local Giveaway Winners

\$100 Winners

Bonnie Meiers	Avon	Ron's Market
Dave Eggers	Avon	Ron's Market
Suzu Mosley	Bridgewater	Golden West
Nicole Perry	Canistota	Total Stop
Janet Lefers	Corsica	Corner Market
Jeffrey Edwards	Custer	Lynn's Dakotamart
Russell Perrigo	Custer	Lynn's Dakotamart
Paul Nelson	Custer	Ace Hardware
Kristie Rude	Custer	Ace Hardware
Ken Siemonsma	Dell Rapids	County Fair
Norene Frederickson	Dell Rapids	Golden West
Jo Colombe	Mission	Dollar General
Karen Koch	Plankinton	Ron's Market
Pat Knigge	Plankinton	Ron's Market
Dan Wood	Pringle	Do It Best Hardware & Lumber
Shirley Kitterman	Wall	De's Oil
Kathy Klein	Winner	Runnings
David Camin	Winner	True Value
Linda Calhoon	Winner	County Fair
Brenda Hofeldt	Winner	Computer Access

\$250 Winners

Barb Zorr	Dell Rapids	County Fair
Don & Lura Kirkpatrick	Midland	Maier Meats

\$500 Winners

Diane VanderMay	Norris	Lynn's Dakotamart
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*Watch for your chance to win in the
2023 giveaway starting in November!*



Easements Critical for Internet Access

It's already cliché to say that the internet has transformed the way almost everyone interacts with the world. According to Statista, a data and forecasting firm, roughly five billion people around the world access the internet each day.

That's a lot of people and it's growing exponentially every year. One of the first things that we at Golden West think about is the millions of miles of cabling required to serve five billion internet users. The next thing we think about is the number of approved easements needed to bury millions of miles of cable in the ground to serve billions of customers.

Easements play a critical role in getting internet access to customers, particularly in rural areas. In fact, if it wasn't for easements, it would be extremely difficult – and very expensive – to bring life-affirming services to people who want and need them. Water, natural gas, electricity and yes telecommunications, all need easements to connect homes or businesses.

An easement is an agreement that allows for crossing or using someone's land for a specified

purpose. For cooperatives like Golden West, obtaining private easements at no cost is the most common and by far the best approach to delivering services to rural areas while keeping prices competitive.

Accessing easements on private land can save a lot of time and money for a cooperative and its members. For example, burying cables in the public right of way like a road ditch can lead to outages as other utility companies dig to fix or add lines. Also, roads are often widened or rebuilt, requiring all utilities including telecommunications to move cables at their own cost. Not only does it raise the risk of outages, it costs the cooperatives a lot of money that can ultimately impact service rates for members.

Golden West starts obtaining private easements for its fiber-optic technology upgrades at least a year before homes or businesses can start using the new improved service. The cooperative and its contractors

have an excellent track record of working closely with landowners.

"We treat private easements with great care," says Marty Huether, manager of engineering for Golden West. "After work is completed, Golden West will do everything in our power to restore the easement portion to its original condition or better."

Private easements aren't always used just for the one individual who owns the land. They often make it possible to provide services to other family members or even adjacent neighbors. In fact, many people enjoy the internet and utility services today because their neighbor down the line allowed an easement through their land to make it happen.

Golden West is thankful for everyone who has provided private easements in the past. You have helped yourself and your neighbors get critical services to rural South Dakota. Thank you!

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Golden West
We're everywhere people connect.



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