

January 2021

Horizons

A Golden West Customer Newsletter

Committed Employees Strive to Provide Exceptional Service

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Golden West employs 172 people with service ranging from less than one year to 50 years. Collectively, the group has served Golden West for 2,142 years, which averages to 12.5 years per employee.

Committed Employees Strive to Provide Exceptional Service

Golden West prides itself on longevity in terms of service, customers and employees. As of December 2020, employees have a combined 2,142 years of service; that's great for the company and even better for its customers.

Longevity Benefits the Customer

Long-term employees develop a better understanding of available products and services and the role they play in customers' lives. By getting to know customers personally, Golden West staff provide better service.

Director of Human Resources Savannah Williamson believes relationship building is key. "Because our employees immerse themselves in the communities, they're recognizable," she explains. "They get to know our customers, and our customers get to know them. People are more comfortable asking questions, calling for assistance, and having them come into their homes."

General Manager and CEO Denny Law tells about a member who worked from home and was dependent upon a reliable

broadband connection. He says Golden West employees repeatedly made sure to contact her well in advance of any planned service upgrades so she could plan accordingly.

"That's a function of a company that knows and understands its customers," Law says. "Long-term employees provide that kind of knowledge and benefit."



Amy Tomes
Member Service Associate

Recipe for Longevity

Law attributes employee longevity to multiple factors. "It's a testament to what individuals bring to Golden West and what they want to accomplish in their careers in terms of work that interests and motivates them," he says. "It's also a testament to the organization; we have a long history of proving we're a quality employer who treats

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Savannah Williamson
Director of Human Resources

employees well and provides opportunities for growth. Add those together, and it can be the right fit for a lot of people."

Golden West employs 172 people with service ranging from less than one to 50 years. The group averages an impressive 12.5 years of service to Golden West per employee.

Williamson believes culture is a motivating factor, as well – particularly in terms of corporate social responsibility. "We give back to our communities, which ties in with our Golden West culture," she says.

Member Service Associate Amy Tomes recently celebrated her 20th anniversary with Golden West, and she echoes many of those sentiments. "I love my coworkers," she says. "Everyone cares about each other and the customers we serve. The company is very generous to the communities we serve and provides the employees competitive benefits. Golden West is my family, and I can't say enough positive things about it."

Always Looking For New Team Members

Even with many employees devoting significant portions of their careers to the organization, Golden West routinely looks for new team members. Dalton Richter will testify to that. He joined Golden West as a full-time field service technician in 2017.



Dalton Richter
Field Service Technician

"Golden West offers competitive wages and benefits that allow me the opportunity to raise my family in the same small town I grew up in," Richter says.

Recruitment efforts include high school and community job fairs and programs at universities and technical schools, like one for first-year students at Mitchell Tech seeking internship opportunities. These interns gain valuable real-world experience by accompanying service technicians for a couple of weeks before heading out on their own to complete service calls.

"We want them to develop their skills, whether they go to work for us or somebody else," Williamson says. "A lot of them go back to school and serve as student ambassadors for Golden West, sharing their positive experience."

Hire for Attitude, Train for Skill

It's all part of an ongoing effort to attract quality candidates. This process involves looking not just at needed skills, but also how well an individual will function as part of a team.

"'Hire for attitude, train for skill' is an adage we subscribe to," Law says. "We don't expect people to know everything from A to Z; we'll train for that. We look at a wide variety of factors – your skills and talents, yes, but also what drives you and how those attributes will serve the team and our customers."

The Golden West formula isn't magic, but it is working. Law explains, "The people, the culture, and the mission ... how we are able to connect those dots to provide a necessary service to customers spread across the state has been key."

We have a long history of proving we're a quality employer who treats employees well and provides opportunities for growth. Add those together, and it can be the right fit for a lot of people.

Denny Law, General Manager / CEO

Patient-Driven Care During the Pandemic

Broadband Allows Winner Hospital To Expand Telemedicine Offerings

COVID-19 has posed a challenge to healthcare systems in South Dakota and across the country, but the Winner area has weathered the storm with care from Winner Regional Hospital.



Julie Hennebold

The facility, located in south-central South Dakota, has managed to keep its doors safely open for patients in need of clinical, long-term, and hospital care throughout the pandemic. Chief Nursing Officer Julie Hennebold attributes this success to the efforts of staff members who implemented extra screening precautions and cleaning measures in March 2020, when coronavirus restrictions were just starting to go into effect.

Taking such a proactive approach aligns with the mission of the hospital. “We are totally patient-driven,” Julie explains – a sentiment echoed by others at Winner Regional Hospital.

Serving Rural Communities

Director of Communications Leigha Dempsey says because they cater to a largely rural population, the focus has always been on the patient.

“We like to provide convenience to our patients and try the best we can to find that specialist through our system, so they don’t have to drive so far,” she says. “We’re so focused and centered on our patients, we give them peace of mind whether they come into the clinic or use telehealth. We are being very diligent.”

Registered Nurse and Outpatient Nurse Supervisor Linda Schueth says that while Winner Regional Health physicians naturally prefer face-to-face interactions with patients, they understand that COVID-19 has changed many aspects of healthcare. They remain committed to providing a quality experience regardless, and



Linda Schueth

“We’re so focused and centered on our patients, we give them peace of mind whether they come into the clinic or use telehealth.”

Leigha Dempsey, Director of Communications



Julie Hennebold, Chief Nursing Officer

outpatient virtual visits have been well received as follow ups to the initial physician-to-patient consultations.

The healthcare system has offered telemedicine options for the past 10 years through a referral arrangement with several healthcare networks. During the pandemic, outpatient telemedicine options have increased, and more patients are taking advantage of them.

Technology & Medicine

New digital platforms for online appointments are another pandemic-driven addition. Director of Clinical Operations Nikki Olson says user platforms have been dependent upon patients’ comfort levels, devices, and home broadband systems. Live video conferencing is now available through Zoom, Google Duo, and Skype.



Nikki Olson

May 11, 2020, marked a milestone when Winner Regional Health initiated its very first telemedicine visits directly into patients’ homes, an option made available once the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services began to support them. COVID-19 prompted the clinic to offer in-home televisits for non-urgent, non-emergent, and non-acute situations, especially for the most vulnerable patients: infants and the elderly.

Hennebold says broadband access is critical to offering telemedicine in a rural setting and is instrumental in providing essential support to the overall telehealth process.

“We want to extend our appreciation from Winner Regional and our community to Golden West Telecommunications, because we really need this technology in the rural clinic, hospital, and outpatient areas,” she says.

Scholarship Helps Recipient Return Home

Tim Hartmann realized the benefits of a scholarship even before graduating from Custer High School in 2010.

“Secondary education is not cheap,” he says. “I was very grateful to have the financial assistance to help me pursue my college endeavor.”

Tim is one of the nearly 1,000 graduating seniors who have received a \$1,000 scholarship from Golden West Telecommunications over the past 22 years. After presenting 40-plus scholarships to seniors graduating in 2021, Golden West will surpass \$1 million in total scholarship contributions.



Tim Hartmann

Tim attended South Dakota State University and earned a bachelor’s degree in construction management and minored in business. After graduating in 2014, he worked for the South Dakota Department of Transportation as a technician responsible for testing and inspection of large construction projects. A few years later he returned to his hometown as planning administrator for the City of Custer, where he handles a wide variety of construction and administrative work.

“It’s all directly related to my degree,” he says. “I’m amazed how my scholarship helped out in so many different ways.”



2021 Graduates Encouraged to Apply

Scholarship recipients are selected from each of the 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 a high school outside our service area.

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

Students should contact their local high school to apply. At-large applications are available online at goldenwest.com/scholarships. The application deadline is March 15, 2021.

8 Ways Cable Simplifies TV Viewing

Even as streaming services have expanded viewing options over a high-speed internet connection, cable service remains the simplest way to view TV.

Cable TV has been a mainstay in American homes for decades, and this stability is one of the platform's biggest advantages. Cable service from Golden West remains an excellent choice for both casual and diehard viewers. Here are eight ways cable simplifies TV viewing.

- 1. Get all your channels in one place.** With cable TV, you don't have to switch back and forth between different services to access your favorite channels, and the sheer variety of programming eclipses that available elsewhere.
- 2. You eliminate subscription fatigue.** Competition for programming means you'll have to subscribe to multiple streaming services to access all your favorite shows. With over 270 streaming options available, it's difficult to keep track of which service offers what.
- 3. You only have one bill to pay.** Multiple streaming providers send multiple bills, and costs add up quickly. What seems like a good deal initially often ends up being more expensive than cable.
- 4. You'll be able to watch live TV.** Cable competitors rarely offer live television, and those who do usually charge extra for it. Live TV is essential if you want to watch the news, sporting events, awards shows, and more.

- 5. You have flexible viewing options.** Digital Video Recording (DVR) service allows you to record shows for viewing later. With certain set-top boxes, DVR allows you to restart any program within the last 24 hours or more without the need for prerecording.
- 6. You can still watch TV everywhere.** Golden West subscribers can also watch live and prerecorded programs on phones, computers, and tablets for free anywhere there is an internet connection with watchTVeverywhere. It's like a streaming service without the cost.
- 7. You have access to customer and technical service.** Golden West representatives are available for questions and troubleshooting. Dedicated staff located within South Dakota are trained thoroughly on our products and services and committed to resolving issues quickly.
- 8. We're a local company.** Unlike giant corporations such as Amazon, Disney, and Apple, Golden West is a member-owned cooperative that provides jobs and pays taxes in your community. You can feel good about doing business with us.

For more information on Digital Cable TV and channel listings, visit goldenwest.com/cable.



FIBER UPGRADES Continue in 2021

Golden West will bring fiber to more customers in 2021 as part of our ongoing Fiber to the Home (FTTH) project. Areas scheduled for FTTH upgrades this year include:

- The **Armour** exchange (town and rural).
- The **Canistota** exchange (town and rural).
- The rest of the **Creighton** exchange.
- The rural area west of **Edgemont** including Dewey, Burdock and west to Mule Creek Junction.
- The first of a two-year project for the **Kyle** exchange, which includes the communities of Kyle and Allen and rural areas east of there. The remainder of the exchange, including the Sharps Corner area, is scheduled for 2022.
- The rest of the **Milesville** exchange.
- The rest of the **Pine Ridge** exchange including the Porcupine and Wounded Knee areas.

"By replacing existing copper cables with fiber optics, Golden West is positioning the communities and customers we serve for an even brighter future," said General Manager and CEO Denny Law.

Fiber optics deliver faster broadband internet and provide stronger connections for all services, including phone and cable TV. Golden West is working to upgrade its entire service territory to fiber within the next eight or nine years.

Start dates and timelines for the 2021 projects are still being determined. Instead of holding open houses this year, detailed information will be shared online in order to keep customers safe and adhere to current health guidelines. Visit goldenwest.com/ftth for an overview of the upgrade process. Periodic updates by community will also be posted on this page throughout the year and the duration of the project.

Should you have any questions after visiting goldenwest.com/ftth call 1-855-888-7777 and ask for the Engineering Department.

Congratulations

2020 Shop Local GIVEAWAY WINNERS

\$500 Winner:

Name	From	Local Merchant
Diane Sullivan	Custer	Lynn's Dakota Mart

\$250 Winners:

Name	From	Local Merchant
Deborah Mathis	Colome	Winner Super Foods
Stephen Upton	Edgemont	Sonny's Super Foods

\$100 Winners:

Name	From	Local Merchant
Josh Anker	Murdo	Corky's Auto
Charlotte Diesburg	Marion	Donlan's Foodland
Jonathan Dillon	Gregory	Buche Foods
R E Dustman	Custer	Dakota Cowboy
Deb Eberly	New Underwood	Wall Drug
Ruth Haynie	Hot Springs	Lynn's Dakota Mart
Emily Kroetch	Phillip	Phillip Hardware

\$100 Winners *continued*:

Name	From	Local Merchant
Kassie Kukal	Kadoka	People's Market
Melissa Kurtz	Bonesteel	Cahoy's General Store
Robert Lee	Hot Springs	Lynn's Dakota Mart
Paula Livermont	Martin	Lynn's Dakota Mart
Jim R. Mehlhaff	Kaylor	Scotland Cash Smart
Sarah Myers	Winner	Mead Lumber
Peggy Nervig	Custer	Walk in the Woods
Brennan Parsons	Phillip	Phillip Hardware
Karen Reimnitz	Armour	Krull's Market
Jim Rezek Jr.	Armour	Bomgaars
Richard Rockafellow	Phillip	Coyle's Super Valu
Frank Schartz	Humboldt	Farmers Elevator
Marcia Smith	Marion	Donlan's Food Land
Sharon Vosika	Winner	True Value
Oonagh Wood	Pringle	Ace Hardware

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New Website is For, About and By Members!

For years Golden West has been sharing stories of the people and areas we serve and offering information to enhance your experience using our internet, phone and cable TV services.

We've primarily done that here - through our bi-monthly newsletter. We expanded on the limited printed space during the pandemic by sharing even more stories and information through regular customer emails.

Access Articles & More Anytime

Now, we're adding an online site where you can access the information we share anytime - even after its initial publication. Find and bookmark it at theexchangesd.com.

The site features stories about the people and communities we serve. It also provides even more information about how to get the most out of your internet, phone and cable TV services, and includes other extras such as current weather for your area and a calendar of events.

Submit Story Ideas

The goal is to provide engaging, valuable information, and we welcome your input to accomplish this. If you have a story idea or a suggestion about content to include, complete and submit the form that can be found at theexchangesd.com under the "Contact" tab.

In addition to the printed Horizons newsletter, moving forward we will also send you an e-newsletter twice a month. Each issue will contain links to a few articles as part of a growing collection available at theexchangesd.com. Sending a regular e-newsletter will result in fewer emails hitting your inbox as Golden West was previously emailing full articles to you almost weekly.

We look forward to adapting the site to meet the informational needs of the customers and communities we serve. It seems only fitting for a cooperative that has evolved from solely providing telephone service to exchanges across southern South Dakota to one that also provides broadband internet and cable TV services as telecommunication needs changed.



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