

September 2022

Horizons

A Golden West Customer Newsletter

RAILROAD CROSSING

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HORIZON HEALTH CARE

Serving Rural Needs Across the State

The year 1978 is most closely associated with polyester pants, Laverne & Shirley, and an endless stream of chart-topping disco hits by the Bee Gees. That same year concerned citizens in several rural South Dakota communities formed Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC) to ensure continued access to health care.

In 1998 the citizen groups merged to form a single FQHC, Horizon Health Care, Inc. Today, Horizon provides medical, dental, and behavioral health care services to 22 rural communities across the state. With the addition of telemedicine, their reach continues to grow.

Removing Barriers to Care

Horizon Health Care Chief Development and Strategy Officer Lexy Eggert is quick to point out the sheer scope of the organization's range.

"We have one of the largest rural service areas as a federally qualified health center in the nation," she says. "We serve a 28,000-square-mile footprint, so we're kind of unique."

Until the early 2000s, Horizon Health Care provided medical services only. Dental and behavioral health followed. They record about 110,000 patient encounters annually in communities from Howard and Faith to Mission, Bryant, Plankinton, White River, and others. While not every clinic offers the full suite of services, there is one common denominator: each is located in a rural community where access to essential resources is often lacking.

"Horizon's mission is to remove barriers to care," Lexy continues. "One of those barriers may be where you live. Some of our more remote locations might not have a nearby hospital for two

hours. So, we are there to ensure access to care."

Other barriers include transportation and affordable care. Horizon Health Care tackles these by offering sliding fee programs, discounted services to qualifying individuals based on annual income, and the newest component to their lineup: telemedicine.

Telemedicine Gains Popularity

Telemedicine gained popularity nationwide during the pandemic, but Horizon Health Care offered it long before COVID-19 became a household name. The strategic decision to offer telehealth enabled patients in communities without clinics to still utilize those services.

Chief Information Officer Scott Weatherill explains that telehealth has been part of the organization for

a long time. “We’ve been involved in telemedicine since I started back in 2002, mainly providing access to specialty care services through larger health systems,” he shares. “When the pandemic hit, even though we touted ourselves as being experienced with telemedicine, it was a whole new world. It was the first time we saw patients in their living room, on their iPad, connecting to our providers. We had to shift gears and leverage some of the technology we already had in place.”

Telemedicine does have some constraints. Horizon’s efforts primarily focus on providing behavioral health and acute care services; there’s no way for providers to virtually put their hands on a patient, so they are limited to conditions that don’t require in-person care. Despite this, patient response has been favorable.

Investing in Local Communities

Supporting local communities is a key mission for Horizon Health Care.

“Health care is an important part of Main Street and keeping people local,” Lexy explains. “It’s like a ripple

effect among the businesses. When someone goes shopping, they buy groceries, they get an oil change, buy gas, all those things. That’s why it’s important for us to remain in those local communities. That’s something our CEO is very passionate about, as well — that we are an integral part, and we will continue to be committed to our rural communities and keeping them alive.”

Those efforts include utilizing local contractors and businesses and recruiting local employees rather than contracting out. Telemedicine plays a role, as well.

“By connecting patients to a specialist we’re saving them from having to travel,” he says. “We’re keeping them in the community in those situations, so they’re not doing their shopping elsewhere. It ensures a lot of their business stays local — so, in a way, telemedicine has helped reinvest in the communities we serve.”

“We have several clinics in Golden West’s service area, and connections are rock solid. It’s been great service, too.” - Scott Weatherill

Providing Additional Support

One of the programs Horizon has recently launched is the Horizon Health Foundation. The nonprofit organization was founded in 2016 to create a permanent funding base for rural patients in need.

“It’s an opportunity to empower and inspire our patients, to invest in them, and to help Horizon continue to remove those barriers to care,” Lexy says.

The Foundation supports programs like Smiles for Miles, which provides free dental care to children throughout the month of October. It’s also played a crucial role in improving infrastructure and expanding technology. The Foundation approached several local South Dakota telecommunications companies, asking them to consider investing in Horizon’s telemedicine program.

“Golden West and other telecoms have stepped up and invested in our telemedicine program to help offset expenses for the equipment we use for acute care and behavioral health services,” Scott adds. “They’ve also helped on the larger capital investment side. We’re greatly thankful for that.”

The cooperative has helped in other ways ... especially relating to infrastructure.

“Connectivity is important as it relates to transmitting patient information and delivering care via telemedicine technologies,” Scott says. “We have several clinics in Golden West’s service area, and connections are rock solid. It’s been great service, too. I think Horizon’s fortunate in that South Dakota has a great fiber footprint for a rural state. When I’m talking with CIOs in other states, they can’t believe that even rural residents have fiber to their homes!”



Scott Weatherill and Lexy Eggert stand outside the Aurora County Community Health Center, one of 22 rural South Dakota communities served by Horizon Health Care.

HORIZON
Health Foundation



BILL PAYING JUST GOT A WHOLE LOT EASIER

Automated Pay by Phone System

Paying bills might not be at the top of your Favorite Things to Do list, but it's one of those tasks you can't escape short of ending up stranded on a deserted island. Golden West is committed to making the process as easy as possible by providing you with a new 24/7 option that is easy, convenient, secure, and free.

You can now pay for Golden West services using our automated pay by phone system. There's no need for a mobile phone or a separate app – payments can be made from any phone* at any time using your phone's keypad. **Simply call 1-855-888-7777, option 2, and follow the prompts.**

To take advantage of this convenient new service, you will need to have a credit card or bank account on file with Golden West. You can call ahead and add this information to your account, so it's available should the need arise for an after-hours payment.

The automated pay by phone system offers options in both English and Spanish.

**OK, in all fairness, a rotary dial phone won't work.*

Members Will Vote On Bylaws

In Golden West's ongoing efforts to enhance its governance practices, the Golden West Board of Directors is again recommending

amendments to Golden West's bylaws at the 70th Annual Meeting of Members.

At last year's annual meeting, the members approved amendments that addressed general language cleanup and qualifications and eligibility of directors. This year's proposed amendments to the bylaws address: 1) membership qualifications, 2) rights and liabilities of the cooperative and its members, and 3) notice and conduct of member meetings. The changes impact Articles I, II, and III as follows:

- In the section of **Article I, Section 1**, of the bylaws dealing with **Requirements for Membership**, the proposed amendments seek to: 1) conform Golden West's language with state law definitions of "individual" and "entity," 2) clarify that eligibility for membership commences upon receipt of retail communications services from Golden West at a location within its established service territory, and (3) clarify that purchasers of wholesale services are not eligible for membership.
- The proposed amendments to **Article II, Section 1**, dealing with **Rights and Liabilities of the Cooperative and Members** ensure cooperation between Golden West and its members for allowing access for and provisioning of communications services.
- In **Article III, Sections 1-6**, dealing with **Meeting of Members**, the proposed amendments add flexibility by authorizing virtual meetings that are not tied to a geographic location, sending electronic meeting notices, postponing meetings if necessary, and authorizing alternate methods of voting. Before a virtual meeting can take place, it would require: 1) approval by the Board of Directors, 2) proper advanced member notice, and 3) allowance for participation.

Golden West mailed every member a document indicating the proposed changes to the bylaws. It arrived in mailboxes earlier this month in the same envelope as the annual report, which serves as the official annual meeting notice. For more information, visit goldenwest.com/annualmeeting.

2021 Annual Meeting MINUTES

The Annual Meeting of the members of Golden West Telecommunications Cooperative, Inc., was called to order at 10:24 a.m., September 25, 2021, at the Wall High School, Wall, South Dakota by President Jeff Nielsen. Said meeting was held pursuant to notice thereof as required by law. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Jeff Nielsen.

President Nielsen then 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.

President Nielsen proposed amending the agenda, in the interest of time, to move the President's Report and General Manager's Report to follow Balloting. A motion was made and seconded to amend the agenda in this way. Motion carried.

Next, President Nielsen called upon Kenneth Tonsager, 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 asked that the minutes of the 2020 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 passed to approve the financial report.

President Nielsen welcomed the cooperative members and introduced the present Board of Directors of Golden West.

President Nielsen called on Darla Pollman Rogers, attorney, to report on the proposed amendments to the Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws of Golden West Telecommunications Cooperative, Inc. The proposed amendments covered many changes that were divided into four ballot items: Article Amendments, Member Bylaw Amendments, Director Amendments, and Cooperative Amendments.

Following limited audience discussion, Darla Pollman Rogers advised the

membership of the balloting process and requested that the ballots for the proposed amendments to the articles and bylaws be handed out. After the membership had the opportunity to vote, the ballots were collected by a three-member balloting committee appointed by the Board of Directors to count the ballots and report to the membership. The members of the balloting committee were Raymond Berry, Teresa Palmer, and Barbara Wentz.

Next, Darla Pollman Rogers, attorney, discussed 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 VII – Bart Birkeland (four-year term) one vacancy with one candidate.

A motion was made, seconded, and passed to seat the uncontested incumbents: District I: Jade Hlavka; District VII: Bart Birkeland.

Darla Pollman Rogers, attorney, introduced the director candidates for District IV: Dave Assman, Kenneth Zickrick, Jr., and Amanda Antoine, and for District VI: Murdock Arthur and Dale Guptill. 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 director be handed out. After the membership had the opportunity to vote, the ballots were collected. The same three-member balloting committee was used to oversee the ballot counting and report to the membership.

While ballots were being counted, President Nielsen delivered his presidential report, discussing the tough times everybody faced in 2020 due to the pandemic. He talked about how hardships caused by the pandemic were overcome through network access to keep members, students, and business owners going and connected to the rest of the world. While the future is unknown, we can remain connected together.

Next, President Nielsen called on Denny Law, general manager/CEO, to present his annual report. Mr. Law spoke about how Golden West is improving infrastructure. He discussed increased capacity of broadband internet, including hot spots that were provided to students free of charge. Upgrades continued, increasing internet access. He said that 14,000 miles of fiber were connected, representing \$356 million in total capital investments. Full fiber coverage is expected in the next 6 to 7 years. Mr. Law also talked about how increased speeds help productivity and thanked Golden West employees on the front line for keeping things running.

Drawings were held to give away more than 25 door prizes. Meal tickets were distributed to audience members in attendance.

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

President Nielsen called for any new business. Denny Law answered a few questions from the audience; no action was taken.

Following new business, Darla Pollman Rogers announced the election results: Dave Assman was elected director for District IV (four-year term), and Murdock Arthur was elected director for District VI (four-year term).

Darla Pollman Rogers also announced the balloting results regarding the proposed amendments to the Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws. The amendments to the Articles of Incorporation, Ballot Item #1, passed. The Amendments to the Bylaws, Ballot Item #2, did not pass. The Amendments to the Bylaws, Ballot Item #3, passed. The Amendments to the Bylaws, Ballot Item #4, passed.

The grand prize \$500 check went to Dan Paulson.

President Nielsen adjourned the meeting at 12:31 p.m.


Kenneth Tonsager, Jr. - Secretary

VOTE IN FOUR DIRECTOR SEAT ELECTIONS

Members of the Golden West Telecommunications Cooperative will elect four members to four-year terms on the Board of Directors. To vote, members must be present at the Sept. 24 annual meeting. See back page for meeting details.



Angela Simons – District I, Challenger

Angela (Annie) Simons grew up in Faith and graduated from Faith High School. After high school she worked in Sturgis for five years. She married Doug Simons in 2004 and moved to Enning to work alongside her husband on his family ranch. Together with Doug’s parents, the couple runs about 500 head of Black Angus cattle. They have one son Morgan and one daughter Amber.



Duane Wood – District I, Incumbent

Duane Wood has been on the Golden West Board of Directors since September 1984. He currently serves as vice president of the board and is a past president of the former South Dakota Association of Telephone Cooperatives. A graduate of Western Dakota Vo-Tech Institute, Duane and his wife, JoAnn, live on the family ranch west of Faith. They have two daughters and three grandsons.

Duane is a member and elder of the Opal Community Church, serving as the board chairman. He is also an agent and director of the Harding & Perkins Farm Mutual Insurance Company. He and JoAnn enjoy attending as many of their grandsons’ sporting events and activities as possible. These trips to Sundance, WY, and surrounding towns seem to serve as their “vacations.”

HOW TO VOTE

Individual members may vote for a candidate in each district that has a director opening. Non-individual members, such as a school district, town, church, corporation, or LLC, must request, complete, and return an Authorization to Vote form by 2 p.m. Tuesday, Sept. 20.

The form designates an Authorized Voting Representative who is an officer, LLC member, or other senior official with the member entity. The Authorized Voting Representative may vote after showing a photo ID. For more information, visit goldenwest.com/annualmeeting.



John Knutson – District II, Unopposed Incumbent

John Knutson 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 of land 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.



Kenneth Tonsager, Jr. – District V, Incumbent

Kenneth "Ken" Tonsager, Jr., moved to Hot Springs in 1979 after graduating from South Dakota State University. After successful careers in four different businesses in the Hot Springs area over the next 40 years, Ken retired in 2018.

Ken and his wife Gayle raised two children and have eight grandchildren. He is a member of the Southern Hills Evangelical Free Church, Hot Springs Volunteer Fire Department, Hot Springs Cemetery Board, as well as a member of the Caster Vets Board. Ken keeps busy helping where needed in the community.



Penny Svenkeson – District V, Challenger

Penny Svenkeson is a 42-year veteran of the computer and technology industry working for Unisys, most recently as a platform architect. Her team was located around the world, and Penny served as the technical interface to oversee design and collaboration. She graduated from the University of Minnesota with a degree in computer science.

Penny and her husband Paul have owned and operated a ranch west of Hot Springs for 30 years. They raise Scottish Highland and Red Angus cattle. Penny retired in 2021 and is currently a member of the Minnekahta Volunteer Fire Department. She also enjoys donating her time to deliver food as part of the Meals on Wheels program and provides information technology (IT) and computer technical support at the Hot Springs Public Library.



Randy Koerner – District VIII, Unopposed Incumbent

Randy Koerner is a lifelong resident of Freeman. He graduated from Freeman High School and the University of South Dakota. He began Koerner Construction in 1979 and continues to operate it today, along with his wife of 39 years, LeeAnn.

Randy is a former volunteer fire fighter and EMT. He currently serves as Freeman city building inspector, sits on the city planning and zoning board, and is a member of the Freeman Community Development Corp. He and LeeAnn are members of St. Paul Lutheran Church. They enjoy home projects, gardening, and camping when time allows. Randy has been a member of the Golden West Board of Directors since 2010 and currently serves as the treasurer.

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Members are invited to the 70th Annual Meeting

Golden West Telecommunications
Cooperative, Inc.

Saturday September 24, 2022

Wall Community Center,
501 Main Street, Wall, SD

Registration: 8:30 to 10 a.m.

Meeting Called to Order: 10 a.m.

Come hear updates on the cooperative, vote for directors and on proposed bylaw changes, receive a \$20 bill credit for a registration gift, enjoy free lunch afterwards, and register to win a \$500 grand prize plus numerous other prizes.

Must be present to win.

1-855-888-7777, option 3
goldenwest.com/annualmeeting

ATTENTION BUSINESSES, CHURCHES, SCHOOL DISTRICTS, TOWNS, ETC.

Authorization to Vote Changes For Non-Individual Members

The process for voting authorization that enables non-individual members to vote at the Annual Meeting has changed this year. Non-individual members must contact Golden West to request an Authorization to Vote form, complete it, and return it back to Golden West by 2 p.m. Tuesday, Sept. 20, 2022.

Examples of a non-individual member include a school district, town, church, corporation, LLC, etc. Each non-individual

member shall designate a representative to vote who is an officer, an LLC member, or other senior official within their organization. The Authorization to Vote form is not a Proxy Statement.

Sole proprietor businesses and residential customers are individual members and cannot use the form. They must vote in person at the Annual Meeting. For more information about this change, visit goldenwest.com/annualmeeting.



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