

January 2025

Horizons

A Golden West Customer Newsletter
& Award-Winning Publication

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'Reels' on the Ranch

Filmmaker trades big city
lights for rural life.

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JUSTIN KOEHLER'S FILMOGRAPHY:

To watch some of Koehler's work, including *The Buffalo King*, visit vimeo.com/justinkoehler.

To watch his work for SDPB, visit listen.sdpb.org/people/justin-koehler.

- **The Buffalo King**, a PBS documentary which aired in over 7 million homes over a two-month period. It is about the life of James Scotty Philip, who is credited as, "the man who saved the American bison." Stream on Vimeo.
- **Floating Horses: The Life of Casey Tibbs**, a documentary about rodeo's greatest cowboy and South Dakota native whose talent and personality turned him into a household name during the 1950s. Stream with a free trial on horse.tv.
- **The Mochila**, a screenplay that was an Academy Nicholl Fellowships top 10% selection with three reads by the committee.
- **The Kunnecke Killings**, a short screenplay written by Koehler about suspected serial killer William Kunnecke.
- **NITA: Hotbed in Deadwood**, a documentary produced by Koehler telling the fearless story of call girl Nita Celaya and her pivotal role in the 1980 Deadwood brothel raid.



When Justin Koehler moved to Denver, he never thought the media career he wanted would allow him to return to South Dakota, much less to the family ranch.

“If you had asked me 20 years ago if I’d be sitting in my grandpa’s office doing work, creating stories on film, I never would have thought that I could have done it,” Justin says.

Today he and his wife, Sandie, work remotely from his grandparents’ old home along the Bad River. They moved to the ranch between Midland and Philip with their two children in 2022. From there Justin continues his film career telling what he describes as heart-and-soul stories on screen, some about South Dakota and the area where he grew up.

“The combination of the advancements of technology and how remote work became more acceptable after COVID made it possible for us to work out in the country and still do what we want to do,” he says.

Documentaries earn honors

Justin has garnered many accolades and film festival showings as a director, producer, videographer, and screenwriter. Known as the Academy Award for western genre, Justin received the Western Heritage Award for Best Documentary in 2018 for directing “Floating Horses.” The film is about the life of Casey Tibbs, fellow South Dakotan and champion bronc rider and all-around rodeo cowboy.

Justin graduated from Midland High School and went to Black Hills State University in Spearfish with the assistance of a basketball scholarship. He earned a bachelor’s degree in mass communication, planning to pursue sports broadcasting.

Justin moved to Denver after college and went in a slightly different direction. He first served as a photographer for a reality TV company, High Noon

Entertainment, where his work appeared on television networks such as HGTV. Next, he worked for their sister company, Great Divide, that produced historical films for the U.S. military and National Park Service. His work has also aired on PBS, History, Discovery, and Weather channels.

Different realizations

Over the years Justin returned to the ranch to help with brandings in the spring and working calves in the fall. Heading home after one trip, Justin told Sandie how with some work and creativity, Grandma and Grandpa’s house had a lot of potential. The seed he planted sprouted into a full-fledged plan during the pandemic.

“When COVID hit and things happened, we started having different realizations about life,” Justin explains. “We thought, ‘What if we put our kids in a smaller school and moved back here into the house?’”

Following a nearly two-year discussion, they sold their house and moved north. In the summer of 2022 Justin invested a lot of time and elbow grease preparing the house for his family. Thankfully, Justin’s parents had allowed Golden West to bring a fiber-optic internet connection to the house even though it had been vacant for several years.

Fast internet allows move

“Having fiber here at the house has made all the difference in the world; it was a big reason why we were able to move back,” Justin says. “We have better internet here out on the ranch than we did in suburban Denver.”

His grandparents lived a mile down the road and were like a second set▶

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"WE HAVE BETTER INTERNET HERE OUT ON THE RANCH THAN WE DID IN SUBURBAN DENVER."
- JUSTIN KOEHLER

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of parents to him and his sister, Melissa, he says. He recalls many childhood memories at their home, and now his kids have a similar arrangement with his parents, Mike and Cindy Koehler.

After fixing up the house, Justin produced films for South Dakota Public Broadcasting on a contract basis. He did all the work to tell one rural South Dakota story each month for almost a year.

Currently he tells stories about people for the South Dakota Department of Human Services. Sandie also works for the State of South Dakota, as a training specialist for the Department of Transportation. While Justin uses his grandpa's old office, Sandie works upstairs in an uncle's former bedroom.

Family enjoys Philip

With the Midland high school closed, the kids ride the bus 40 miles roundtrip to Philip for school four days a week. They participate in sports, and Justin has started coaching.

The family enjoys Philip's amenities, like the steakhouse, coffee shop, and movie theatre. They have settled nicely into the rural lifestyle.

"We can't thank the people of Philip enough for welcoming us into their town and school," he says.

Investing in tomorrow's leaders

27 years of scholarships add up to over \$1.1 million

Each year, Golden West awards \$1,000 scholarships to up to 45 qualifying students, helping offset tuition costs. Since launching in 1999, the program has awarded more than \$1 million dollars to graduating seniors in our communities across South Dakota.

One recipient is selected from each high school Golden West serves. One at-large scholarship is also given to a student who is either homeschooled or attends high school outside of the service area but whose parents receive Golden West services.

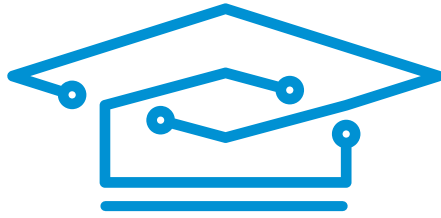
"Scholarships are an investment in the future," says Golden West General Manager and CEO Denny Law. "Supporting promising young leaders can help build a stronger, more vibrant rural South Dakota."

Applications Open for 2025 Graduates

Golden West encourages all high school seniors who meet the following criteria 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 have taken and received a score from the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), American College Test (ACT), or Accuplacer Vocational Entrance Exam before applying.
- Applicant must be a high school senior.
- Recipient must take 12 or more credits (or equivalent to a full-time course load) in the fall semester following graduation. Funds are shared for the spring semester.
- Scholarship awards may only be applied to post-secondary institutions.

Students should contact their local high school to apply. At-large applications are available online at goldenwest.com/scholarships. The application deadline is March 14, 2025.



Community education classes coming soon!

Phishing isn't the same as fishing. SPAM filters aren't new ways to prepare canned meat.

So how can you learn more about what is at your disposal using your Golden West service? Starting this winter, you can learn about email safety, online fraud prevention, cable TV's watchTVeverywhere feature, streaming options, and much more – for FREE!

You can do more with your internet service and be safer online with classes from Golden West. You might even surprise your friends and relatives with the skills you learn!

Attend one or both of the

free community classes – **Online Power: Explore More While Staying Safe Online** and **Your Guide to Home Entertainment**. The home entertainment class will cover cable TV and online options. Each session will last about two hours and will launch in five communities in February and March with more locations possible in the future. All class material is reviewed by Mitchell Technical College.

For more information or to register, visit goldenwest.com/classes.



Broadcasters increase retransmission fees

Prices have been rising each year for almost everything, and this includes costs associated with cable TV. One of these increases involves out-of-state corporations continually demanding more money through retransmission consent fees so subscribers can watch local network stations.

Retransmission consent fees are what affiliate broadcast stations – the local channels for NBC, CBS, ABC, and Fox – charge cable operators like Golden West to retransmit their signals. As much as Golden West fights it, the stations increase these fees each year.

In 2025 Golden West cable subscribers will once again pay more each month in retransmission consent fees. While Golden West would love to keep cable rates the same, forces beyond the co-op's control make this impossible. Golden West would not be allowed to broadcast the network signals without retransmission consent fees.

Golden West passes all retransmission consent fees collected on to the broadcast affiliates. The cooperative does not keep one cent of these fees. For more information about retransmission consent fees, visit goldenwest.com/retransmission.

CITY	CLASS	DATE/TIME	LOCATION
Hot Springs	Online Power	Feb. 3 – 1 to 3 p.m.	Mueller Center
	Home Entertainment	Feb. 10 – 5 to 7 p.m.	
Custer	Online Power	Feb. 3 – 5 to 7 p.m.	Custer Co. Library (Pine Room)
	Home Entertainment	Feb. 10 – 1 to 3 p.m.	
Hartford	Online Power	Feb. 12 – 1 to 3 p.m.	Pizza Ranch
	Home Entertainment	Feb. 19 – 5 to 7 p.m.	
Philip	Online Power	Mar. 18 – 1 to 3 p.m.	Haakon Co. Courthouse (Community Room)
	Home Entertainment	Mar. 25 – 5 to 7 p.m.	
Winner	Online Power	Mar. 19 – 1 to 3 p.m.	Tripp Co. Library
	Home Entertainment	Mar. 26 – 5 to 7 p.m.	



WIN BIG
SHOP LOCAL
Customer Appreciation Giveaway

2024 Shop Local Giveaway Winners

Congratulations

\$500 Winner

Cheryl Schroeder Winner County Fair Food Store

\$250 Winners

Nicole Miller..... Hartford Sunshine Foods

Iva Good Voice Flute Pine Ridge Buche Foods

\$100 Winners

Seth Fredrickson..... Hartford Central States Mfg, Inc.

Harlan DeJong Springfield..... Doug's Food Center

Carmen Eagle Pipe St. Francis Rosebud Exchange

Marcia Haaseth Dell Rapids County Fair Food Store

Jean Van Genderen Harrison Corsica Corner Market

Ron Ratzlaff Avon Ron's Market

JT Kass Scotland Central Farmers Coop

Harriet Bailey Bonesteel Cahoy's General Store

Stan Willmschen Pringle NAPA Auto Parts

Abraham Whipple Mission Buche Foods

Wayne Kayl Custer..... Lynn's Dakotamart

Mary Laycock Hot Springs Bomgaars

Deborah Kuhler Canistota..... Total Stop Food Store

Donna Burgess Hot Springs Lynn's Dakotamart

Jean Meiers..... Armour..... Krull's Market

Kelly Keffeler New Underwood FMG Feed & Seed

Nan Miller Wall..... Wall Food Center

Rachel Eisenbraun Quinn Wall Building Center & Constr.

Margie Peters Murdo..... Murdo Family Foods

Kaye Andrews..... Red Owl Nellie's Mercantile & Saloon

Watch for your chance to win the 2025 giveaway starting in November!

More fiber projects scheduled in 2025

Golden West will work throughout 2025 to bring fiber-optic infrastructure to about 600 more addresses in two areas of the Black Hills. The projects will provide subscribers with fast, reliable connections for what matters most.

First, addresses outside Hot Springs that are already served by Golden West will be upgraded from copper to fiber-optic cable. A second project will expand the Golden West service area by bringing a fiber-optic connection to homes and businesses south and east of Hill City.

“Fiber-optic technology gives people quick, easy access to so many important things,” says General Manager and CEO Denny Law. “It allows them to pursue education, work remotely, start businesses, access healthcare, and so much more – all from the comforts of home.”

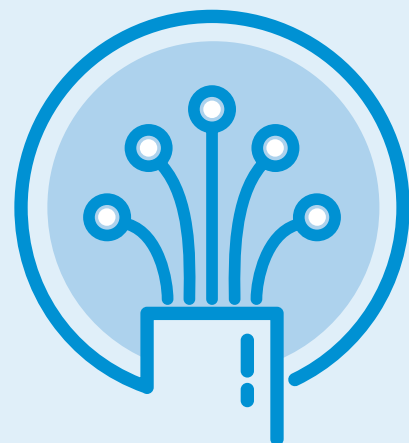
Work will go on all year

The work in Hot Springs and Hill City will take most of the year to complete, perhaps longer due to the rugged terrain and approvals needed from the U.S. Forest Service in some areas. Customers will be transitioned or added to the fiber-optic network after construction is complete in the next year or so.

Those scheduled to be upgraded or added should watch their mailboxes, social media, and their local newspaper in the coming weeks for information from Golden West. An open house will be scheduled soon in both Hot Springs and Hill City to review the projects and learn about what to expect.

Detailed information will also be shared online including project maps, lists of contractors working on them, and an overview of the construction process. Regular community updates will be posted throughout the year as projects progress.

For more information visit goldenwest.com/fiber or call 1-855-888-7777, option 3, and ask for engineering.



2025 Fiber Project Areas

Hot Springs Southeast

The cooperative will upgrade about 300 existing subscribers between Hot Springs and Angostura. The Hot Springs Southeast project involves burying 71 miles of fiber-optic cable to connect the remaining addresses in the Hot Springs exchange.

Hill City South & East

The work around Hill City will extend south of town along S.D. Highway 385 and east along Highway 323, also known as the Old Hill City Road. This will bring a high-speed internet connection from Golden West to about 300 new addresses. To see if your address is included in the project, for more information and to preorder service, visit goldenwest.com/hillcity.

Golden West began fiber optic cable construction and related network upgrades over a decade ago. Actual start dates for construction are still being determined.

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HORIZONS – Volume 26, Number 1
Horizons is an award-winning customer newsletter published every two months by Golden West Telecommunications.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Golden West, PO Box 411, Wall, SD 57790
Dee Sleep, Editor • goldenwest.com • 1-855-888-7777