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[goldenwest.com/refer](http://goldenwest.com/refer)

Offer applies when you refer a friend or family to the service of their choice. To be considered a new customer, person must have been without Golden West service for six months. Offer ends January 17, 2020. Golden West customers may combine the Refer a Friend and Christmas offers.

**Golden West**  
TELECOMMUNICATIONS  
PO Box 411, Wall, SD 57790

## Customer Appreciation Giveaway **WIN BIG - SHOP LOCAL**

**1 GRAND PRIZE**  
**\$500 Local Shopping**

**20 WINNERS**  
**\$100 Local Shopping**

### Win a Local Shopping **GIFT CERTIFICATE**

You must be a Golden West residential customer and be at least 18 years of age to register. Only one entry and prize awarded per household. No purchase necessary. **You must list a local merchant's name when you register. The retail or service-based merchant must be in a Golden West community.** The value of the gift certificate must be spent with only one merchant. Entries close at noon and drawing will be held at 4 p.m. MT on Friday, December 13. It will be broadcast LIVE on the Golden West Facebook page.

Register to **WIN** at:  
[goldenwest.com/giveaway](http://goldenwest.com/giveaway)  
You can also stop by a local office to register.

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November 2019

# Horizons

A Golden West Customer Newsletter

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## New School on the **Prairie**

Union Center Students  
Learn STEAM Skills



**Golden West**  
Telecommunications Cooperative, Inc.

# New School <sup>on</sup> the Prairie

## Union Center Students Learn STEAM Skills

Armed with white paper, colored markers and a color code reference sheet, second and third graders in Union Center work to create a track that a small Ozobot robot will follow.

“The plan is to use the Ozobots more in the curriculum,” says teacher Luke Erfman. “This year is filled with ‘firsts’ for everyone.”

The students working with the Ozobots were in their third week of the 2019-20 school year in the newly opened Central Meade County School. What sounds like play is actually hands-on learning in the school’s STEAM Lab (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math).

“Young people are very concrete thinkers and learners,” Erfman says. “They need to hold and see what they’re doing, and this classroom is perfect for that.”



Luke Erfman teaches second and third graders how to work with Ozobot robots.

“The classrooms are roomy and bright, students each have a locker and the kids really like their lunch period where they sit together to eat.”

■ **Theresa Hanzlik,**  
Paraprofessional –  
Administrative Assistant

The Central Meade County School is one of five rural schools in Meade County. The newly built school sits 46 miles northeast of Sturgis and combines students in grades K-8 previously split by grade between Union Center and Enning five miles further east.

### Building Improvements

“We were in two-room modulars, and now we’re in bigger, modern classrooms

with smartboards,” explains Meade School District Business Manager Brett Burditt. “New buildings are easier to maintain, and they provide more opportunities and efficiencies. We have a large multi-use center in the middle of the building that provides our teachers the flexibility and creativity to teach new things or teach them in new ways.”

Theresa Hanzlik, the rural school’s paraprofessional and administrative

Paraprofessionals (left to right) Francie Brink, Shilo LaMont and Theresa Hanzlik see students off for the day.



Amy Wilcox teaches fourth and fifth grade students.



Kim Smiley (pictured far left and on the cover) teaches sixth, seventh and eighth grade students.

assistant, says students and staff enjoy the new building.

“The classrooms are roomy and bright, students each have a locker and the kids really like their lunch period where they sit together to eat,” Hanzlik says.

### High-Speed Internet

The new school also features other less-obvious, but equally important improvements, including a water filtration system and an improved heating and cooling system. The school also has a stronger internet connection.

“Before this year it seemed we were always having internet and connection problems, but we seem to have much-improved connectivity in our new building,” Hanzlik says.

That’s because the new school is connected to Golden West’s high-speed, fiber-optic infrastructure.

“We worked with the district when the new school was being planned,” says Golden West Plant Engineering Manager Marty Huether. “Fortunately, we had some fiber in the area, and we only had to add another 1,700 feet to connect the school. We were happy to be able to add advanced broadband technology to the modern facility.”

Erfman takes advantage of the updated amenities and improved internet connection in the STEAM Lab. The lab is a relatively new concept not just in Union Center but in education as a whole.

“STEAM is important for everyone,” Erfman says. “It’s a new way of giving our students the opportunity to acquire and build skills that are and will be critical in this time of rapidly changing technology.”

The lab features a variety of project areas including computer programming, robotics (like the Ozobots), scientific data collection and film, to name a few. One group of students can create a Claymation stop-motion video in one area of the lab while another can remotely collect data from sensors that measure air temperature and pH balances in soil.

### STEAM Fits Ranch Life

Erfman likens the variety of creative problem-solving skills kids learn in the lab to those of a rancher living out in the country.

“Living on a ranch, you need to be a jack and jill of all trades, mechanic one day electrician the next,” he explains. “The STEAM Lab provides students with a means to learn and discover these hands-on skills at a young age.”

Students in the lab recently created a vehicle with a working winch using Lego robotics equipment. Then they modified it to feature a forklift. Then – because they’re kids – they changed it into a working catapult.

“The coolest part about my job is being immersed in all of the creativity and neat ideas that students come up with each day,” adds Erfman.

“Living on a ranch, you need to be a jack and jill of all trades, mechanic one day electrician the next. The STEAM Lab provides students with a means to learn and discover these hands-on skills at a young age.”

■ **Luke Erfman,**  
STEAM Teacher



### Country-School Feel

As the year of ‘firsts’ continues at the Central Meade County School, Erfman says one thing that hasn’t changed is the country-school feel.

“In my four years in the country setting, I think that what makes a country school special is the people that occupy it. And we have the same parents, staff and most importantly, we have the same wonderful students.”

# Weather or Not Keeping Customers Connected

**“T**he Golden West employees were very efficient, and they took the situation very seriously. They kept us informed and even made phone calls outside of normal business hours. It was pretty impressive.”

■ **Jessica Grimes**  
Member/Telecommuter

## Flooding Impacts Calving and Internet

Last year’s long, cold winter with above average snowfall was challenging for Austin and Jessica Grimes. Then came the mid-March bomb cyclone that dropped 18 inches of snow on their ranch that sits along the White River south of I-90.



Jessica and Austin Grimes with children (left to right) Owen, Elsie and Jace.  
Photo by Elsie Fortune Photography

But the couple’s most challenging time actually came as temperatures warmed and the snow melted. The resulting runoff and ice jams overwhelmed the White River, which reached historic flood levels in late

March. Spring and summer brought additional precipitation and more flooding.

“This year the river actually flooded three times,” Jessica said. “The flooding created tons of havoc for us during calving. We had to move everything from the river to an area up on top.”

The flooding also washed out the Golden West fiber connection and interrupted internet and phone services for the Grimes and about a dozen other members north of Long Valley. Golden West quickly initiated and deployed an unusual wireless workaround and restored service fairly quickly. Fast, reliable internet service is essential for Jessica who works remotely from her home.

“The Golden West employees were very efficient, and they took the situation very seriously,” Jessica said. “They kept us informed and even made phone calls outside of normal business hours. It was pretty impressive.”

*Several severe weather events have hit Golden West communities in 2019. Winter was harsh everywhere and caused major spring flooding not just along the White River, but also in Trent and Dell Rapids along the Big Sioux River. Custer experienced torrential rain and a flash flood in late July, and a tornado caused significant damage in Burke in early August.*

*To top it off, many areas experienced repeat and new flooding in September, and the 2019-20 winter has already given many a sneak peek. Through it all, Golden West continually monitored services and restored any resulting outages as quickly as possible.*



**“I** don’t have to call in any of my employees when bad weather hits. They just show up. More times than none, we tell them if it’s unsafe, don’t do it. But our employees are determined to get customers back up and running.”

■ **Jim Fritz**  
Central Region  
OSP Supervisor

Golden West employees deployed a wireless solution to restore services to about 15 customers north of Long Valley in March. The solution, which is still in place due to continued flooding, uses line-of-sight wireless radios to keep customers connected.

## Overcoming Mother Nature

Employees from all Golden West departments work together to keep customers connected, but two groups play essential roles during severe weather events – the Network Operations Center (NOC) and Outside Plant (OSP). Here’s a glimpse at how these departments work to overcome Mother Nature.

The NOCs are staffed 365 days a year, 24 hours a day, seven days a week to oversee Golden West’s network and infrastructure. When the weather hits, they also monitor the National Weather Service for storm updates and the South Dakota Department of Transportation for road conditions and travel advisories.

“Our communication, teamwork, and preparation checklists are critical attributes and tools used by NOC, OSP and Engineering employees to prepare and protect Golden West customers, our network and employees,” says NOC Manager Jake Fox.

### Emergency Preparedness

In the anticipation of severe weather, the NOC coordinates with OSP to prepare. This requires fueling portable generators, preparing vehicles, confirming staff assignments and more.

With the NOC team monitoring everything from inside the office, OSP technicians gear up and head out for whatever situations may arise.

“I don’t have to call in any of my employees when bad weather hits. They just show up,” explains Central Region OSP Supervisor Jim Fritz. “More times than none, we tell them if it’s unsafe, don’t

do it. But our employees are determined to get customers back up and running.”

Technicians work diligently to keep Golden West cabinets and central offices running out in the field when the power goes out, using either back-up batteries or gas-powered generators. Cabinets are the “middle men” equipment relaying services between customer homes and the central offices, which are the hubs for Golden West servers and equipment.

“We can’t just pull up to cabinets and hook this stuff up,” adds Fritz. “We’re dragging heavy generators through ditches, through snow, and then our techs have to return and keep the generators full of gas until the power is restored.”



Mike Wilson  
OSP Foreman, Mission

Depending on the severity of the weather, technicians may need to monitor and refuel as many as 50 cabinets until the storm subsides and power is restored.

“These guys often don’t have power at their houses, yet they work 12- to 14-hour days running generators and eating gas station food instead of being home with their families,” says Eastern Region OSP Supervisor Dave London. “They are out there working for our customers.”

# Retran\$mi\$\$ion Reminder

## Rising Fees From Broadcasters Cost Rural Viewers More

Golden West General Manager Denny Law recently testified before the U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation about the outrageous retransmission fees charged by local affiliate broadcast stations (ABC, CBS, NBC and Fox).

“Rural viewers should not have to pay for a broadcaster’s failure to provide a signal throughout its licensed area, and distributors should not have to pay for the right to carry a broadcast signal that would not otherwise reach viewers,” Law told the senators at the hearing.

**What are retransmission fees?** Federal regulation allows affiliate broadcast stations to charge cable customers for passing – or retransmitting – their signal to customers. This legislation is up for renewal at the end of 2019.

**How much have fees increased?** In 2009, Golden West customers paid less than a dollar a month for all four local stations combined. Today, Golden West customers pay \$16 to \$17 a month in combined retransmission fees.

**Where do the fees appear on my bill?** Retransmission fees are added under “Other Charges” on page 3 of each Cable TV customer’s monthly invoice from Golden West.

“Rural viewers should not have to pay for a broadcaster's failure to provide a signal throughout its licensed area.”

■ **Denny Law,**  
Golden West General Manager

**Why do customers pay for local broadcast channels?** Local channels are transmitted over the air for free, a gift from tax-payers. However, only those with an HD antenna who live close enough to a broadcast tower can receive a signal. A majority of Golden West video subscribers cannot receive at least one of the four major broadcast networks via an off-air signal; one-third cannot receive any of the four major networks off air.

**Who profits from retransmission fees?** Out-of-state corporate stockholders. A handful of national media conglomerates operate the majority of affiliate broadcasters, including most of the broadcast stations in South Dakota. It is estimated that broadcasters will collect nearly \$12 billion this year in retransmission fees from cable and satellite customers across the country.

All retransmission fees collected go directly to affiliate broadcasters. **Golden West does not keep any portion of retransmission fees.**

## 67th ANNUAL MEETING: A Fine Event, Despite the Rain!

The fall weather moved in briskly the morning of the 67th Annual Meeting on Saturday, September 28. Hundreds of members attended in spite of the cold, steady rain.

Board President Jeff Nielsen opened the meeting at the Community Center. He told members about the many connections provided by their cooperative and how these connections enrich our lives.

“Through internet, cable TV and phone services, our cooperative connects us and our communities to the rest of the world,” said Nielsen. “Because of the need for these services, our cooperative’s reach extends well beyond South Dakota. We truly are everywhere people connect.”

Golden West General Manager Denny Law followed with an overview on the status of the cooperative. He focused on the cooperative’s infrastructure upgrades, customer advocacy and investments in communities and employees.



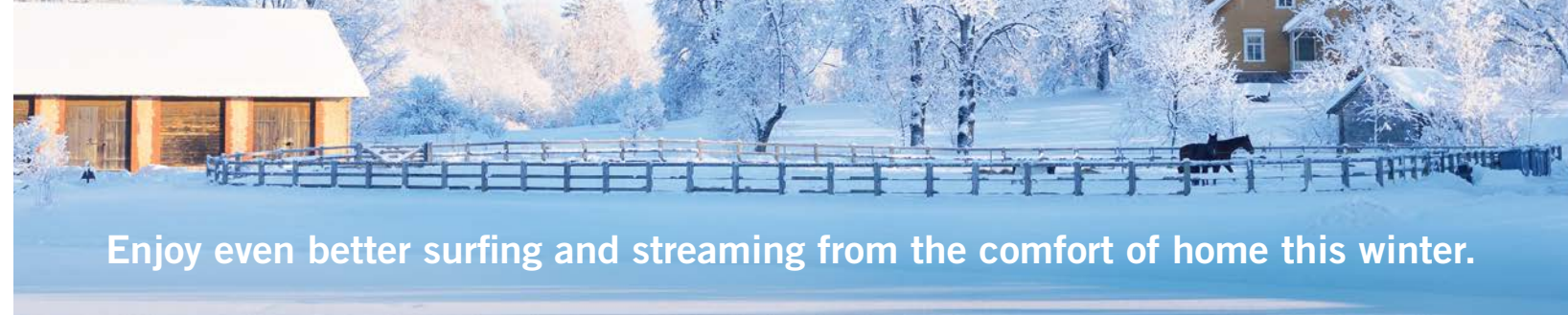
Following Law’s address, three board of director seats were filled at this year’s meeting. The following (pictured left to right) were re-elected to new four-year terms: District IV, Kenneth “Buddy” Bolzer, District VI, Ansel Wooden Knife and District III, Arnie Hill.

“While it’s great to live in rural South Dakota and be able to easily check email or stream a movie, having access to broadband internet means so much more,” Law told the audience. “High-speed internet helps strengthen our families and improve our communities through better healthcare, educational advancements and work opportunities.”

Local music group Dakota Beat entertained the crowd with a great mixture of country and rock-and-roll. Vernon and Carol Omdahl of Philip won the \$500 grand prize drawing.

Thanks to all the members who attended this year’s meeting. The 68th Annual Meeting will be held on September 26, 2020.

## It's the most wonderful Deal of the Year!



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Increase Speed or Add Service

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Recommended for 5 to 9 devices in your home.\*

**50 Mbps**

Recommended for 10 plus devices in your home.\*

**100 Mbps**



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**DIGITAL CABLE TV**

Up to 125+ Digital Video & 50+ Music Channels



**HOME PHONE**

150 Min. of Long Distance & 5 Calling Features



**BUNDLE SERVICES** For Added Monthly Savings

Additional service must be added to get ONE MONTH FREE.

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\* There is no limit to the number of connected devices. Bandwidth is shared among connected devices. Depending on activity, connecting additional devices may negatively impact performance. This offer is for new or upgrading customers who add a new service (phone, cable TV or Internet) or increase internet speed. To be considered a new customer, you must have been without Golden West service for six months. This promotion can be combined with the Refer a Friend offer and expires January 17, 2020. The new service must be maintained for 12 months. Discontinuing any service included in the free month will void the offer and result in the cost of the offer and the installation being billed back to your account. The free installation doesn't include additional jacks. This is an advertisement. Golden West shall not be held liable for errors or omissions in pricing. In the event of an error we will make every effort to accommodate our customers. Some restrictions may apply. Golden West is an equal opportunity employer and provider.

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Offer good through January 17, 2020.