

July 2024

Horizons

A Golden West Customer Newsletter
& Award-Winning Publication

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Serving a Community

Ice cream is his business and supporting
his community is his passion.



“The internet speed and reliability have just been there; those are the two main factors in our stores that we just can't live without.”

– LONNIE HEIER

Serving a Community

Ice cream is his business and supporting his community is his passion.



When Lonnie Heier was preparing to open a new Dairy Queen location a couple years ago, he and his family went all-in on the community of Hartford.

The town was ready for a drive-thru option,” he says. “They’ve always embraced us from the beginning.”

Lonnie, his wife Jackie, and their two teenage sons moved from Pierre to make Hartford their new home. In addition, Dairy Queen (DQ) has invested in Hartford just as Lonnie’s six other stores support their respective communities. This includes stores in two more Golden West communities, Martin and Winner. Since Lonnie has been in business, he has made sure people know he is there for the community.

“We’ve really made it a mission to give back to our communities in any way possible,” he says. “It creates a bond with the community because they know they can always count on you to do the right thing and help out when it’s needed.”

Together, Lonnie and Dairy Queen have raised funds for many causes,

including animal shelters, individuals fighting cancer, and families that have experienced other tragedies. Lonnie makes a difference where and whenever he can.

This past year, the Hartford DQ sponsored a high school basketball game, making admission free for students. A local manager also handed out coupons and gift cards as the cherry on top.

Lonnie has owned Dairy Queen locations for more than 18 years. But doing business in rural communities may be in his veins.

“I’ve been in retail my whole life,” he explains. “My parents owned the Ben Franklin store in Lemmon, and it was in our family for 65 years. Retail has kind of been in my blood.”

While his home is in Hartford, sometimes Lonnie’s office is his pickup. He often travels to his other six locations to help when needed.

He relies on his Golden West connection both when he’s onsite and at another location. Business consistently thrives with everything from Zoom calls with managers to camera systems inside stores.

“People don’t know this, but, you know, we can’t operate without the internet. I mean, if the internet goes down, we’re essentially out of business,” he says. “The speed and reliability have just been there; those are the two main factors in our stores that we just can’t live without.”

When Lonnie uses Golden West services at Dairy Queen, he says “it takes one more thing off our plate.”

And when everything is running smoothly, Lonnie has time to coach middle and high school basketball. Whether his sons are on the court or not, Lonnie takes time to show that Hartford is his home in all facets of his life.

Electing 4 directors to the board

Members of the Golden West Cooperative will elect four members to four-year terms on the Board of Directors. One incumbent seeks re-election in District II. Two candidates are running for one open seat in District III. One candidate is running unopposed for one open seat in District IV with another unopposed candidate running in District IX.



Tanner Handcock
District II, Unopposed Incumbent

Tanner Handcock grew up on a farm and ranch in southern Jackson County. He graduated from Kadoka High School in 1999 and received his bachelor's degree in business administration from Black Hills State University.

Tanner and his wife Kim moved back to Wall in 2009 when he started as a crop insurance agent with Crew Agency, Ltd, in Cactus Flat. Tanner has been a member of the Golden West Board of Directors since 2020, served on the Wall Community Golf Board for nine years, and as president for five years. He has also served as a volunteer coach for tee-ball, baseball, and basketball. He serves on the Greater Wall Foundation Board, the South Dakota Wheat, Inc. Board, and the legislative committee for the Crop Insurance Professionals of America.

Tanner and Kim have four children, Dawson, Hallie, and twins Reese and Davis. When he's not busy with his kids' activities, Tanner enjoys hunting, fishing, and golfing.



Terry Hand
District III, Candidate

Terry Hand farms and ranches in northern Haakon County with his two brothers near Hayes. They have a diversified operation raising many different crops and cattle.

Terry graduated from Stanley County High School. He then attended South Dakota State University where he obtained a Bachelor of Science degree in ag business. He has served on the South Dakota Wheat Commission for the last 11 years.

Terry and his wife Christi have three boys that keep them very busy. Terry enjoys hunting, fishing, and attending the boys' activities.



Jodi Smith
District III, Candidate

I am wife to Jim, mother to our three grown children, grandmother of four, and a recently retired nurse. I count myself lucky to live and work on our farm/ranch in rural South Dakota (SD). I have lived in Lyman County, near Vivian, for over 35 years.

Before returning to school and starting my career, I was active in our community as a member of different committees and boards including Community Club president, Lyman County Election Board, and Lyman County Lutheran Parish president to name a few.

As we grew our family and after earning my nursing degree, I started work as a registered nurse in Pierre. Throughout my career, I worked as the Lyman County health nurse, a nurse educator for the SD Office of Disease Prevention, and regional health manager for the SD Department of Health in Community Health Services offices. I ended my full-time career as the director of quality for Avera St. Mary's in Pierre. During my nursing career, I was active in my church, the Lyman School District, and served on the Lyman School Board of Education for 12 years where I was board president for my last term.

I have always loved to be involved in my community, meeting new people, helping others, and learning new things. As a retired, empty-nester, I have the time required to learn and be a hard-working board member. Additionally, I would love to serve as your District III representative on the Golden West Telecommunications Board of Directors.



Ken Tonsager, Jr.
District V, Unopposed Candidate

Kenneth “Ken” Tonsager, Jr. earned his Bachelor of Science degrees in health administration and biology from South Dakota State University in Brookings. Ken has an extensive background in business, being actively involved in general management operations including sales, marketing, and customer service while owning a retail store, managing an insurance agency, and serving as a funeral director.

Ken also enjoyed previously serving 15 years on your Golden West Telecommunications Cooperative Board of Directors where he previously served as the secretary for the Cooperative. Ken looks forward to rejoining the Golden West board and using this extensive background to provide the best service to the cooperative members and its highly trained and dedicated employees.

Ken and his wife Gayle have lived in Hot Springs for the past 44 years where they raised two children. They are now blessed with eight grandchildren. Ken is a member of the Hot Springs Rotary Club, Southern Hills Evangelical Free Church, Hot Springs Cemetery Board, and is a member and Chaplain of the Hot Springs Volunteer Fire Department. Ken’s current passions include being a “chaser” in a hot air balloon crew and helping where needed in the community.



Nate Jones
District IX, Unopposed Candidate

Nate Jones has lived in Dell Rapids for 20 years with his wife Andrea and four children (three sons and one daughter). He enjoys traveling and loves sports and outdoor activities. Nate currently serves as Heartland Energy’s chief operations officer where he manages the operational and energy marketing activities at the utility.

Nate grew up in Lake Preston, SD, and attended South Dakota State University where he received his undergraduate in electrical engineering. He later received his MBA from the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. Nate is a licensed professional engineer in South Dakota.

Nate is a graduate of the Leadership South Dakota program. In his spare time, he is heavily involved in organizing golf and basketball tournaments and currently serves on the Dell Rapids Booster Club as vice president.

Nate would like to take this opportunity to thank you for trusting in his qualifications for the Golden West Board of Directors in District IX. He is excited to apply his expertise in the electric utility industry to the telecommunications industry and help lead Golden West into the future.



How to vote in 2024 elections

Voting options depend on whether the member is a residential member or non-individual entity.

The Golden West Board of Directors voted to allow additional voting options for the 2024 directors election. The change was made possible by amendments to the organization's articles and bylaws that members approved in recent years.

As a result, this year residential members can vote in advance of the meeting online or by mail. Non-individual entity members (see page 6) have the option to vote before the meeting by mail. Members who do not vote in advance may vote in person at the annual meeting.

Residential members

Residential members include both single and joint memberships.

Here’s how to vote starting August 12:

- **Vote online.** Watch your mail for a letter coming the week of Aug. 12 with instructions for voting. To vote electronically, members will be authenticated by entering the last four digits of the primary account holder’s social security number. The primary account holder is the person whose name appears first in the member name. ***Only residential members with a social security number previously provided to Golden West may vote online.***
- **Request a paper ballot to vote by mail.** Contact Golden West between Aug. 12 and Sept. 10, 2024, to request a paper ballot be mailed to you. Complete the ballot and return it in the postage paid envelope provided. Be sure to allow enough mail time, so it arrives by Sept. 24.
- **Vote in person at the annual meeting.** Any residential member who has not voted in advance may cast a ballot at the meeting. The meeting will be held at 10 a.m. on Saturday, Sept. 28, at the community center in Wall.

All ballots cast in advance either electronically or by mail must be received by Tuesday, Sept. 24, to be counted.

See Non-Individual Entity Voting continued on page 6 ▶

How to vote in 2024 elections

Continued from page 5

Non-individual entity voting

Non-individual entities include businesses, churches, school districts, towns, etc.

Non-individual members must request an Authorization to Vote form from Golden West, complete the form, and return it to the cooperative. To vote by mail, the form must be returned by Tuesday, Sept. 10. To vote at the annual meeting, the form must be returned by 2 p.m. Tuesday, Sept. 24. Voting authorization forms received after the deadline or presented the day of the Annual Meeting will not be accepted.

Each non-individual entity shall designate a representative who is an officer, an LLC member, or other senior official with their organization to vote by mail or in person at the annual meeting. The Authorization to Vote form is not a Proxy Statement.

Keeping the election secure, accurate

The cooperative is working with Survey & Ballot Systems (SBS) to manage voting before this year's meeting. SBS provides dependable and secure voting systems for many types of organizations, including cooperatives.

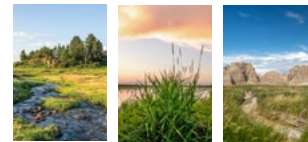
SBS will provide Golden West with certified election results from the electronic and mail-in ballots. Those votes will be combined with ballots cast at the annual meeting for a final count. A three-member balloting committee appointed by the Board of Directors supervises all ballot counting at the annual meeting.

For more information about voting and the annual meeting, visit goldenwest.com/annualmeeting. 

Focus on South Dakota and enter the photo contest!

Got a knack for capturing landscapes, portraits, and everything in between? Submit your photos from the Golden West service territory for a chance to win!

Visit theexchangesd.com/photo-entry to enter. All submitted photos will be posted to the Golden West Facebook page (@GoldenWestTelecom) where members choose the winners by voting for their favorites.



NOW OPEN FOR SUBMISSIONS!

Submissions are due by Sept. 2, 2024. Voting will take place Sept. 6-12, 2024.

The top three photos and photographers will win a prize:

1st Place
GoPro Camera

2nd Place
\$100 Visa Gift Card

3rd Place
\$50 Visa Gift Card

- All entries will be considered for inclusion in Golden West's large 15" x 11" business calendar or other marketing materials from Golden West.
- Only one photo per photographer may be featured in the contest, so show us your best shot! By entering, you grant Golden West permission to use your photo in social media and other platforms to promote the cooperative and the beautiful area it serves.
- To enter, complete the online form and upload your high-resolution photo at theexchangesd.com/photo-entry. **The larger the file size, the better!** Results will be announced on Facebook in late September.



Why do cable TV rates keep climbing?

While prices for Golden West internet and phone services have held fairly steady for many years even as speeds have gotten faster, two things have driven up the cost of cable TV. Programming costs have increased and retransmission consent fees have risen rapidly.

Golden West is not raising cable TV rates for increased profits. Rather, to continue providing video service and maintain fair practices for all members, the cooperative must pass along the cable TV increases it incurs.

Unfortunately, video customers will see a \$4.00 per month increase for cable TV programming beginning in August. Let's take a closer look at the forces behind these rising rates.

Programming and retransmission fees

Owners of cable TV channels like TBS, Discovery, Disney, ESPN, and more charge **PROGRAMMING FEES** for Golden West to carry their channel. Larger companies continually buy more channels; today six or seven companies own almost all the channels.

This leads to more demands and fewer options, which translates to higher rates. For example, these companies require Golden West to carry and pay for ALL of their channels – not just the one or two channels that are most widely watched.

Golden West regularly reviews its programming costs. While this can lead to increased rates for customers, it does not improve the cooperative's margins.

In addition to cable TV channels, Golden West passes along charges from affiliate broadcast stations (local ABC, CBS, NBC, and FOX stations). These stations charge **RETRANSMISSION CONSENT FEES** for passing, or transmitting, their signal to cable and satellite customers for over-the-air programming. If their demands

aren't met, each broadcaster can force the removal of their station from the lineup when agreements expire.

Retransmission fees go directly to the affiliate broadcasters and their out-of-state corporate owners. Golden West does not keep one cent of retransmission fees. Like ownership of cable TV channels, several national media conglomerates operate most affiliate broadcasters, including many stations in South Dakota.

Aren't the airwaves public?

Broadcasters use public airwaves at no cost, so local channels are broadcast for free. However, rural residents often live too far from a transmitter to receive reliable signals with an antenna. Due to outdated regulations, Golden West is required to include local broadcast channels – which come with retransmission consent fees – in every cable TV service offering.

Rural customers rely on cable TV to receive local news, weather, and sports. Still, the affiliate broadcasters choose to exploit and profit from people who want or need to receive local channels via cable or satellite TV.

Retransmission consent fees first appeared as a small, seemingly insignificant charge in 2009. The Federal Communications Commission requires rate renegotiations, which has led to costs rising exponentially every year since.

Other telecommunications cooperatives in South Dakota have discontinued cable TV due in large part to rising costs. Golden West appreciates your business and your understanding as we plan to continue to bring you quality cable TV programming you enjoy – even as charges increase.

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ENTER TO WIN 2 PASSES

to your choice of the
CENTRAL STATES or
SIOUX EMPIRE FAIR



Win Passes to Central States or Sioux Empire Fair!

Golden West proudly supports county fairs across our service territory every year, and this year we're giving four members two passes each to either the Central States or Sioux Empire fairs.

- **The Central States Fair & Rodeo** will be held **Aug. 16-24 in Rapid City**. The Premier Pass includes fair admission, special parking through the Cambell Street entrance, a tailgate party, and premier early seating access for all grandstand events including concerts, rodeos, and motorsports.
- **The Sioux Empire Fair** will be held **Aug. 2-10 in Sioux Falls**. The Siouxper Pass includes fair admission, most (but not all) grandstand entertainment, and unlimited carnival rides every day of the fair.

Visit theexchangesd.com/win, pick your preferred pass, and enter to win!

 **Golden West**
Connecting you to what matters most.

Must be a Golden West customer and be at least 18 years of age to enter. No purchase necessary and only one entry per household. Winners will be contacted and announced on Golden West's website and Facebook page. ENTER BY THURSDAY, JULY 25. DRAWING WILL BE HELD ON FRIDAY, JULY 26.



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