

July 2021

# Horizons

A Golden West Customer Newsletter

## Sunshine Cures COVID Blues

Gear Up for Adventure at SD Outdoor Shop

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# Sunshine Cures COVID Blues

## Gear Up for Adventure at SD Outdoor Shop

Most people would shy away from opening a business during a global pandemic, but Bobbi and Jeremy Schmidt barely hesitated before signing on the dotted line. The owners of South Dakota Outdoor Shop in Custer took the plunge in May 2020 amidst turmoil and uncertainty.

Their gamble paid off: business has been going so well, they're expanding into a new building next spring. It's quite the feat for a couple whose own outdoor experiences were limited.

### Inching Their Way West

Growing up, neither Bobbi nor Jeremy were avid outdoor enthusiasts. Their first camping trips as a couple were basic.

"The little bit of camping we'd both done, we'd always just hung around the campfire all day – so that's what we did," Jeremy recalls. "In 20 years, we've learned a lot and fallen in love with it all."

The Black Hills are sort of new to them, too. They have been Custer residents since 2015, though Bobbi, who grew up on a farm near Gettysburg, always dreamed of living there.



“People would come in anxious and stressed out. They'd come back after a couple of hours on a bike as a different person.”

Bobbi Schmidt  
Co-Owner, SD Outdoor Shop

”

"The Black Hills were a family vacation spot," she says. "I remember driving the Needles Highway with my parents, in the back seat, nose pressed against the window.

I told myself 'don't blink; you need to remember this so when you get back to the farm you can picture the whole thing.' I was so enamored with the area!"

So much so that, when she first met Jeremy in 2000, she told him she planned to end up in the Black Hills and hoped he wanted to be there, too.

It took them a while to get there; they bounced around between Arizona; Jeremy's hometown in Appleton, Minnesota; and both Redfield and Gettysburg before finally landing in the Black Hills for good.

"We slowly kept making moves further west," Bobbi says. "This was always the eventual end game."

### March Madness Leads to May Opportunity

Bobbi was hired to manage South Dakota Outdoor Shop in January 2020 and quickly developed plans for the store.

"We came up with all these fun ideas and events," Bobbi says. "Then March hit and we realized none of those things were going to happen."

March, of course, is when COVID-19 was declared a pandemic. By the end of April, the store's owners – both of whom had other businesses that needed tending – made the Schmidts a proposition.



Kayaks and paddleboards let you take advantage of area lakes.



The shop specializes in fill-in gear – everything you need for outdoor adventure.

"They said, if you ever wanted to buy a business in the middle of a pandemic, now's your opportunity!" Jeremy says. "That happened on Friday. On Sunday, we said, okay ... why not?"

Though owning an outdoor shop was never on their radar, the Schmidts had previously owned a fitness center in Redfield and missed the interaction with customers.

"I've always loved owning my own business and being part of a small community," Bobbi says. "We loved all the fun festivities you get to be involved with in a small town and having roots within the community."

The sale was finalized on May 15, 2020, and the store reopened six days later.

### Too Busy to Dwell on Negatives

Opening the business then was challenging, but the couple never dwelled on the negatives. They just didn't have time.

"It happened too fast to think about," Jeremy says. "We were trying to get things ready to go and didn't sit down long enough to really let what was going on sink in. Next thing we knew we were open, so we just dove in and went with it."

South Dakota Outdoor Shop offers apparel and gear for outdoor enthusiasts, as well as bike rentals, trail passes, and kayak/paddleboard rentals. For visitors coping with the constraints of the pandemic, it filled a void.

"People would come in anxious and stressed out," Bobbi says. "They'd come back after a couple of hours on a bike as a different person. Moving, being in nature, is good for your mental health. Being there for them filled me with gratitude. You realize that everybody is connected and we're all in this together."

The Schmidts rely on Golden West to help run their business, from phone service to internet for credit card processing. They even offer free Wi-Fi to customers who enjoy beer and wine on their patio.

"It's nice knowing those things are consistent and allow us to communicate and do the business we do," Bobbi says.

### Bigger Building, Extended Season

Now that things are returning to normal, Bobbi and Jeremy are once again looking to the future. They'll move into their new downtown Custer location in spring 2022 and have a simple goal.

"We are hoping to grow our business in a way that helps the Custer community," Bobbi says. "We need to figure out what Custer needs from us year-round so we can extend our season. We want to be in this for the long haul!"





# Law Touts Fiber Networks in D.C.

Members of Congress heard from Golden West CEO and General Manager Denny Law on June 22 and discussed the different network options for meeting the nation's reliance on broadband.

"There is nothing superior to fiber on the market as it relates to technology performance," Law testified. "Fiber has been a great benefit for rural customers."



Law represented Golden West members and customers of all companies who are members of NTCA - The Rural Broadband Association. He served as a witness before the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Communications, Media, and Broadband on June 22 in Washington, D.C. The hearing focused on how best to provide resilient, redundant, and secure broadband networks.

## Fiber Optics Meet the Need

Law emphasized that fiber optic technology provides the connections Americans need. In addition, a fiber optic network also positions the United States for the future and for unexpected uses and situations, such as the pandemic.

"In the span of 90 days, from January of 2020 to April of 2020, Golden West's network usage overall increased 25%," Law testified. "Our upstream usage increased 40% in 90 days. Our network was able and capable of handling that type of capacity change, somewhat at a moment's notice, because 90 days in a network operator's world is indeed a moment's notice with no warning."

Golden West first added fiber optics to its infrastructure more than 30 years ago. The technology has held up, and the cooperative plans to bring fiber to all its remaining subscribers over the next six or seven years.

Other witnesses at the hearing included Harold Feld, senior vice president of Public Knowledge; Jonathan Adelstein, president and chief executive officer of the Wireless Infrastructure Association; and Jeff Johnson, chief executive of the Western Fire Chiefs Association.

## Thune Mentions Pandemic Demand

In his opening remarks, Sen. John Thune (R-SD), who serves as ranking member of the subcommittee, also mentioned the increased demands broadband networks faced during the pandemic. The networks performed better than those in other parts of the world, he said, but there is still work to be done.

"Reliable and resilient networks across all parts of the United States have never been more critical," Thune said. "As Congress considers a larger infrastructure package, this committee has an opportunity to support the deployment of reliable and resilient networks, and it's imperative that we get it right."

Golden West's network usage increased 25%. Our upstream usage increased 40%. Our network was able and capable of handling that type of capacity change.

Denny Law, General Manager / CEO

Law emphasized the need to not only build a network, but also to support the ongoing operation of it. He said the Universal Service Fund High Cost program has been foundational to the broadband buildout for much of rural America. It has helped ensure affordability, as well as sustainability.

## Senators Discuss Telecom Legislation

During the hearing, Congress members mentioned several pieces of proposed legislation designed to develop and strengthen telecommunications services moving forward. These included the Telecommunications Skilled Workforce Act and the Rural Connectivity Advancement Program Act, for example. Discussions continue around an infrastructure stimulus plan, as well.

"This committee which has jurisdiction over telecommunications policy has a real opportunity to support efforts to close the digital divide," Thune said.

Find a link to a recording of the full hearing at the bottom of the online article at [theexchangesd.com/law-testifies-062221](https://theexchangesd.com/law-testifies-062221).



Here are some of the photos that won a spot in last year's calendar. Send your entries soon!

# You SHOOT, You SCORE

## Your South Dakota photo could earn you long exposure.

South Dakota is the land of great faces and great places. Whether you're a digital devotee or fanatical for film, show us your photos showcasing what makes our state special. Pictures must depict people, places, or things within the Golden West service territory.

The Golden West Photo Contest gives you an opportunity to shine!

Selected photos will be posted online at [theexchangesd.com/photo-contest](https://theexchangesd.com/photo-contest) where members will have the opportunity to vote for their favorites.

Photos are due by September 1, 2021 to be eligible for the contest. Voting takes place September 8-14, 2021.

The top 12 photos will be featured in our small 2022 calendar.



We prefer high-resolution digital images be submitted, but we will accept hard copy photos in good condition. Only one photo per individual is eligible to be featured in the calendar. If multiple photos are submitted, the Golden West Marketing and Communications Department will select one for the contest. By entering, you give Golden West permission to use your photo(s) in social media and other mediums to promote the organization.

**To enter, complete the online form and upload your photo at [theexchangesd.com/photo-entry](https://theexchangesd.com/photo-entry).** Submit one form for each photo entry.

If you only have hard copy photos, mail them to:  
Golden West Marketing Department  
2511 North Plaza Drive, Rapid City, SD 57702





# Let Your Mouse Do the Walking

## Search Golden West Telephone Numbers Online

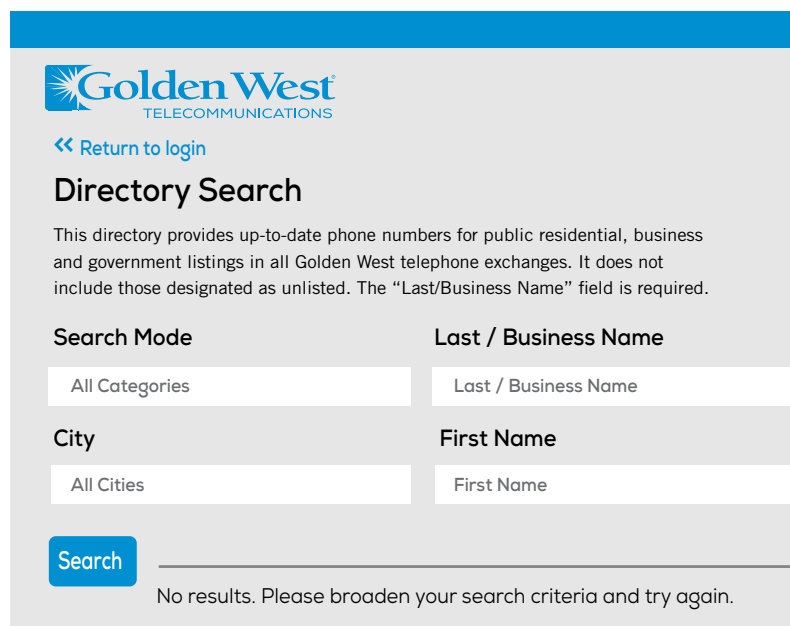
More people use the internet for information today instead of letting their “fingers do the walking” through the yellow pages, so Golden West has made its public telephone directory available online.

All phone listings that are part of any Golden West telephone exchange that are not designated as unlisted can now be found in a searchable directory on the Golden West website. This includes both residential and business phone numbers across the Golden West service territory. Listings can be searched by last name or business name and can be further filtered by city and first name.

“This is an additional resource that we have made available to our customers,” said Director of Member Services Jody Bielmaier.

Golden West plans to continue publishing the annual phone book covering many West River communities as long as there’s enough demand. And to our knowledge, the Dex phone books that cover other Golden West communities will also still be distributed moving forward.

“Unfortunately, we don’t have any input into those other phone books,” Jody said. “They seem to regularly drop



something or reduce print size. Not all phone books include residential listings, for example.”

In addition to the printed directories, now anyone can find any published Golden West residential or business phone number in the online directory anytime at [goldenwest.com/directory](https://goldenwest.com/directory).

# Congratulations to these STAND-OUT STUDENTS!

Golden West is excited to introduce the winners of our 2021 scholarships. Each year, we offer more than 40 \$1,000 scholarships to high school seniors across our service territory. These students exemplify the qualities of leadership, academic achievement, civic and extracurricular involvement, and the motivation to serve and succeed.

Now in its 23rd year, the scholarship program has given nearly 1,000 scholarships totaling about \$1 million.



“We are impressed with all the talented, involved youth in the Golden West service territory,” says Golden West General Manager and CEO Denny Law. “It’s an honor to help these students further their education. We consider it an investment in tomorrow’s leaders.”

## Golden West 2021 Scholarship Recipients by High School

Armour	Bailey Spaans	Little Wound	Shawnee White
Avon	Alexa Sees	Lower Brule	Shane Grey Owl
Bennett County	Hunter Laverack	Lyman County	Alyssa Jones
Bon Homme	Kaleb Kubal	Marion	Kristen Wieman
Bridgewater / Emery	Keesha Letcher	Menno	Madelyn Heckenlaible
Burke	Ramee Hanson	Montrose	Mesa Bartmann
Canistota	Logan Heinzmann	New Underwood	Ethan Tussing
Colome	Makayla Shippy	Olerichs	Keanna Short Bull
Corsica / Stickney	Corbin VanZee	Philip	John Piroutek
Crazy Horse	Trenton Bettelyoun II	Pine Ridge	Lacey Few Tails
Custer	Emma Helfer	Plankinton	Kristi Anderson
Dell Rapids Public	Rebecca Dorn	Red Cloud	Louis Pulliam Jr.
Dell Rapids Saint Mary’s	Maxwell Herber	Scotland	Kennedy Bietz
Edgemont	Elli Hollenbeck	Stanley County	Dylan Endres
Faith	Brayden Price	Todd County	Summer Romero
Freeman Academy	Titus Roesler	Tri-Valley	Vincent Mitchell
Freeman Public	Madeline Hofer	Wall	Lilly Wagner
Gregory	Samantha Timanus	West Central	Taylor O’Neill
Hot Springs	Jessi Schroeder	White River	Colbe Scott
Jones County	Brianna Smith	Winner	Hayley Hanson
Kadoka	Abigail Roghair	At Large	Everett Paul

The following high schools did not provide Golden West with information on scholarship recipients for 2021: Meade County Sturgis Brown, Lakota Tech, OLCSD Virtual, and St. Francis.

Learn more about the Golden West scholarship recipients at [GoldenWest.com/Scholarships](https://GoldenWest.com/Scholarships).

# Start 10-Digit Dialing Now



## 605+000-0000

= 10-Digit Dialing

- The FCC has mandated 10-digit dialing by mid-2022.
- All calls in South Dakota must include the area code.
- Start voluntarily dialing 10 digits now.
- Update programmed numbers and auto-dialing equipment like medical monitoring devices and security systems.



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Online payment methods are available for all customers at no charge. eStatement promotion runs from June 1 through July 31, 2021. Savings will be applied as a one-time bill credit. Limit one bill credit per account. You must maintain “web only” statements for six months. If you resume mailed paper statements sooner than 6 months, Golden West will bill the promotional offer back to your account.



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