



HORIZONS

A Golden West Customer Newsletter
March 2017



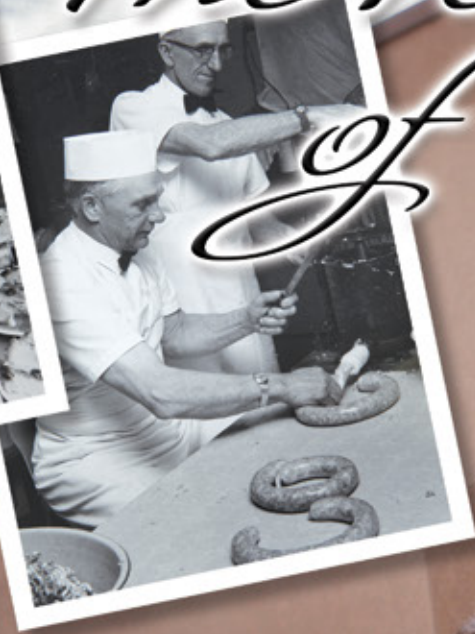
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Dell Rapids



Custer



The Festival of Tasting

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2nd Annual

Pay it Forward

During March, Golden West will make a

\$50 DONATION

to your community's elementary school when you upgrade or subscribe to one of these services:

- High-Speed Internet Service
- Digital Video Recording
- Faster Internet Speed
- Home Phone
- Digital Cable TV: 70+ or 115+ Channel Options

BUNDLE SERVICES & SAVE!

Last year, Golden West customers donated nearly \$10,000 to local schools.

Pay It Forward to Local Students Today – Call 1-855-888-7777

The upgraded or new service must be maintained for six months. If you should discontinue this service it will result in \$50 and the installation costs being billed back to your account. Golden West Internet speeds may vary based on network infrastructure and service availability. SmartPAKs may not be available in all areas. Leased modems/routers, receivers and remotes remain the property of Golden West and must be returned if the service is canceled. Monthly costs do not include local, state or federal charges or end-user fees. Golden West is an equal opportunity provider and employer.



Freeman's Schmeckfest Organizers:
Marnette Hofer, Will Ortman and Vernetta Waltner



Making the Famous Sausage



Family Style Servings



A Community Favorite, Cheese Pockets



Buying Homemade Noodles

The Festival of Tasting

The first time you hear the word Schmeckfest, you immediately want to know more. What is it? Where is it? What does Schmeckfest mean?

At first glance, Schmeckfest is the annual fundraiser (now in its 59th year) held in the farming community of Freeman, SD to benefit the Freeman Academy, a private school. Look again and you will see that Schmeckfest is more than a fundraiser; it is the celebration of a small town beaming with community pride. Gaze deeper and you'll see that Schmeckfest pays homage to the Germans from Russia immigrant groups that settled in the Freeman area.

What is Schmeckfest?

In 1959, the Freeman Junior College Women's Auxiliary decided to celebrate their ten-year anniversary with a potluck type meal celebrating the three Mennonite ethnic groups in the area: the Low Germans, Hutterish and Swiss. Each member would bring a traditional dish for everyone to taste, leading to the naming of the event – Schmeckfest (from the German *smecken* – to taste). The Auxiliary planned to host about two-hundred guests.

Over 1,000 people showed up and Schmeckfest has been a Freeman tradition ever since.

Transforming over the years, Schmeckfest has grown from one to three days, and (since 2005) now stretches five days over two weekends. In 1967, Schmeckfest added a musical production each evening to display the talents of local community members. Local artisans joined in and began teaching attendees how to weave willow baskets and make rope. Presently, Schmeckfest features cooking and craft demonstrations, a country kitchen market, historical presentations, the musical, and a family-style meal. Altogether, this annual event raises around \$150,000 for the Freeman Academy's operating budget, an impressive feat for a rural community with a population of 1,300.

Will Ortman, the father of three boys who attend Freeman Academy and a fourth generation farmer from nearby Marion, is the event chairman of Schmeckfest 2017. He joined the Schmeckfest board three years ago because of his passion for the musical staged each year. "I've directed, acted and worked on the technical side of the musicals; in fact, my first memory from Schmeckfest is watching 'Pirates of Penzance' and being impressed by the pirates," said Will. He added that the family-style meal is something to behold.

"The sheer amount of food we make and serve each day is just impressive, it's all really good but the *kuchens* and poppy seed rolls are my favorites."

Where is Schmeckfest?

As partial as he is to the musical, the community pride Will feels is most evident when he talks about the good Schmeckfest does for the area. "It's what we're known for. It adds visibility to Freeman, brings in visitors and provides an economic boost to the broader community." Putting on Schmeckfest does come with the usual challenges associated with large events. Generating awareness to folks outside of the Freeman area is one of these challenges, but thankfully, help is just a mouse-click away. "Our online presence is growing with the new website and we've sold quite a few tickets that way. I've noticed that traveling to festivals is a growing trend with young families and having an Internet presence definitely increases our reach outside of local circles," said Will.

Going online to market Schmeckfest and promote Freeman is a passion shared by Vernetta Waltner. Currently serving as the chair of the publicity committee, Vernetta helped launch the first Schmeckfest website seven years ago. Vernetta is the perfect spokesperson, as you could say she has Schmeckfest running through her veins. Vernetta's grandmother was a member of the Women's Auxiliary that hatched the idea for Schmeckfest back in 1959.

Vernetta attended that first year when she was five years old and has been heavily involved since. "I've waited tables, did a few musicals during college, coordinated the food and workers, and served on most of the committees; I've never known life without Schmeckfest," recalls Vernetta. Her favorite part of Schmeckfest, she says, is the stewed beef, sauerkraut, and fried potatoes together. "I can make them at home, but it just doesn't taste as good as it does at Schmeckfest."

A lifelong resident, minus her college years in Sioux Falls, Vernetta might as well be Freeman's goodwill ambassador. "I married a farmer and I enjoy the close-knit family ties of this community. It can drive you crazy at times with everyone knowing each other's business, but that's because the people here truly care about one another," said Vernetta. "We encourage the folks coming for Schmeckfest to get here early to check out the stores in our community because we couldn't put this on without the support of the people and businesses."

"We'd love for people to come back the rest of the year to see all that we have to offer. We have some wonderful shops and restaurants, and we put on a bank robbery reenactment from 1935 the second weekend in July!" However, Vernetta did concede that Schmeckfest is Freeman's biggest draw. "It's created an identity for us, a recognition of all that we've achieved together as a community."

What Does Schmeckfest Mean?

To figure out the meaning of Schmeckfest, you have to look at the immigrants that settled in the Freeman area. You would be hard-pressed to find a more knowledgeable person on this subject than Tim Waltner. Tim is the contributing editor for the local newspaper, the Freeman Courier, and previously served as its publisher and editor before moving into his current role. Tim has been covering Schmeckfest as a reporter since 1973 and like Vernetta, attended the very first Schmeckfest in 1959. Tim provided a condensed history of how the three Mennonite ethnic groups that serve as the inspiration for Schmeckfest made their way to Freeman.

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Select photos courtesy of Freeman Courier and the Heritage Hall Museum.

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Then and now, Freeman ladies make delicious poppy seed rolls



Schmeckfest's 2016 musical, "The Music Man"



This One is for the Kids!

We are happy to announce that on or before April 1, we are adding PBS KIDS (channel 108) for all our Golden West Cable TV customers! With programming designed to educate and entertain, PBS KIDS is a great channel the whole family can enjoy.

From pbskids.org: "PBS KIDS is committed to making a positive impact on the lives of children through curriculum-based entertainment with positive role models and content designed to nurture a child's total well-being. PBS KIDS encourages children to interact as respectful citizens in a diverse society."

PBS KIDS features classic programs teaching timeless lessons alongside new shows that educate and address the topics of today. From "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood" and "Sesame Street" to "Webonauts: Internet Academy," PBS KIDS will have shows that youngsters love!

Golden West has always believed that investing in today's youth to be tomorrow's leaders is a wise investment. We are happy to welcome PBS KIDS, a channel dedicated to the well-being of all children, to the Golden West Cable TV lineup.

Channel 108



Continued From Page 3

The Festival of Tasting

"In the 18th century, Katherine the Great recruited German people to farm Russian land by promising them their own schools and churches, and no military service. As the Russian's view of this arrangement began to change, the Germans looked for a new home. In the 1870's the Homestead Act was passed and they saw this opportunity and many of them headed for America. A small percentage of these Germans from Russia were Mennonites, and three of these Mennonite groups, the Low Germans, Hutterish, and Swiss settled in the Freeman area. The only place in the world where these three groups lived together."



Freeman ladies, checking sausage and making cheese buttons



In the late 1800's, ethnic groups lived and worked amongst themselves, finding comfort in the familiar. The fact that these three groups chose to settle and interact in the same area is what makes Freeman such a unique town. As their families began to intertwine, they embraced this new identity and infused their shared values into the community. Together they created Freeman, building churches, homes, and (what is now) the Freeman Academy, a school that Schmeckfest has supported since 1959.

Schmeckfest is many things and means something different depending who you ask. Vernetta Waltner has a Hutterish/Swiss family and she loves supporting the education at Freeman Academy. "The school here works to educate the whole child, preparing and nurturing them to become good citizens that will help their community, wherever they live." Tim Waltner's family has Swiss roots and he admires how Schmeckfest unites the community. "There is an incredible blend of people working side-by-side; it's had a profound impact and is very rewarding for the community." Will Ortman comes from a Swiss/German family and likes the idea of being able to retain the old way of doing things. "The quality of what we make here is special, you get the story behind the food and can see the face that made the craft; there is a personal aspect, a human connection not found elsewhere."

Schmeckfest is a school fundraiser, a community's pride, and an homage to immigrants all rolled into one. However, the best way to learn about Schmeckfest is to head to Freeman and see for yourself!

Schmeckfest 2017 will take place March 24-25, and March 30-April 1. For tickets, a schedule of events, and more information visit schmeckfest.com.

KNOW WHAT'S BELOW

Digging without calling 811 can be life-threatening.

If you hit an underground utility line while digging, you can harm yourself or those around you, disrupt service to an entire neighborhood and potentially be responsible for fines and repair costs.





Speed Traps & Tricks

Broadband services are a key part of our everyday lives, both in our homes and at work. At Golden West, we strive to keep up with the increasing need for faster, more reliable Internet. On February 1st, 2017, we adjusted our broadband offerings, providing access for our customers to receive faster Internet speeds, where available. We did this without raising the rate of our 25 Mbps x 3 Mbps speed and were even able to lower the costs of our 50 Mbps x 5 Mbps and 100 Mbps x 10 Mbps speed offerings.

You may have noticed that our Internet offerings are listed as “up to” speeds. This is because there are multiple factors that can affect the speed of Internet service at your home or business. Here are the most common “traps” causing slower Internet speeds:

- **Old Hardware:** The age of your devices and modem/router can affect the speed of your Internet connection. It does not always make financial sense to purchase a brand new PC or modem/router, but older models have a harder time adapting to increasing Internet speeds.
- **Distance from Wi-Fi Modem/Router:** The further your devices are from your wireless modem/router, the greater chance your Internet speed will not be optimal. Physical obstacles in-between your device and modem/router can also come into play, such as metal boards and aquariums.
- **Computer Health:** Ignoring the status of your antivirus software can lead to any number of performance issues, including the speed of your Internet connection.

The good news is there are ways to help fix many of these Internet speed issues. Use these “tricks” to try to optimize your Internet speeds:

- **Power Down and Check Cables:** Restart your devices, unplug then plug in your modem/router, and double-check that power chords and cables are connected. Seems too easy, but simple solutions are often overlooked.
- **Update Antivirus Software:** Make sure your devices are running the latest versions of the antivirus software of your choice. We recommend VIPRE Antivirus, free when you bundle services with Golden West Internet.
- **Upgrade Devices:** It might finally be time to get a new computer or tablet that is better equipped for current technology. On Golden West’s end, we are upgrading our network infrastructure with the Fiber to the Home project (pg 7), bringing faster, more reliable Internet to our customers.

These are just a few of the “traps” and “tricks” that affect Internet speeds. Should you need assistance diagnosing any issues that arise, Golden West’s Internet Help Desk is available twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. The Help Desk can be contacted by dialing 611 from your Golden West telephone or by calling **1-866-833-6683**.

Fiber to the Home

Fiber to the Home (FTTH) is our investment in the communities we serve, preparing businesses, schools, and homes for advancing technology. Fiber optics, which use light instead of electricity to transmit information, will provide customers with faster, more reliable Internet speeds and a host of new products in the future.

This year, we will bury almost five-hundred miles of fiber with projects in Avon, Custer, Quinn, Scotland, Wall and Wasta. We recently hosted Open Houses in these communities to explain the Fiber to the Home construction, the benefits of fiber, and answered questions.

Benefits of Fiber:

- **Greater Bandwidth:** Fiber provides more bandwidth than traditional copper, allowing for more data and fewer problems.
- **Speed and Distance:** Fiber carries faster speeds that travel greater distances with very little signal loss.
- **Reliability:** Fiber provides extremely reliable data transmission. Due to its glass makeup, it is immune to many environmental factors that affect copper cables.
- **Long Term Capability:** Fiber is future proof and prepared for the long-term growth of the communities we serve.



Fiber to the Home is part of Golden West’s commitment to ensuring the best telecommunication services possible for our customers. Strong, reliable services, especially high-speed Internet, are vital to helping our customers and communities thrive. Replacing roughly 14,000 miles of copper lines with fiber optics will take time, but it’s an investment in our communities that we’re proud to make. This year’s projects will bring us one-step closer to our goal of having a 100% fiber optic network.

If you live in one of this year’s FTTH construction areas and have questions on the project, please call 1-855-888-7777 and ask for the Engineering Department.