

THE *Progress* NEWSLETTER

In this issue
Volume 30 Issue 5
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Holiday Open House
PRTV Channel 1
Holiday Closing
Cable Fees
FRS Scholarship
FRED Scholarship
Caller ID

A newsletter for customers of Park Region Telephone, Otter Tail Telcom and Valley Telephone Company.



FREE PHONES

& 3 MONTHS FREE SERVICE*

**The Local Choice,
The Better Choice.**

Our Offices:



Park Region Telephone
PO Box 277 100 Main St
Underwood, MN 56586
218-826-6161
800-247-2706



Otter Tail Telcom
230 West Lincoln
Fergus Falls, MN 56537
218-998-2000
888-716-8837

Valley Telephone
Browns Valley, MN
Call 800-247-2706
for 24 hour service.

Or
simply dial 611 to
reach your local office!

www.parkregion.com



FRS Scholarship

Park Region Telephone has teamed up with the Foundation for Rural Service (FRS) to offer a scholarship to our members' high school seniors. The FRS college scholarship program will award thirty (30) scholarships in the amount of \$2,500 to winning applicants across the nation. Applicants must be a graduating high school senior and receive local telephone service from Park Region Telephone in addition to other eligibility requirements as specified on the application.

Visit www.frs.org for more information and to download an application.

Completed applications must be brought to Park Region Telephone **no later than February 20, 2012**, to allow enough time for our general manager to complete the NTCA Member Sponsor Certification portion of the application.

We encourage students to take advantage of this opportunity and apply today!

Caller Identification

Caller Identification or "caller ID" is a telephone feature that allows you to identify a caller before you answer your telephone. This service also lets you identify yourself to the person you are calling. Unfortunately, caller ID service is susceptible to fraud. Using a practice known as caller ID spoofing, "disreputable parties can deliberately falsify the telephone number relayed as the caller ID number to disguise the identity and originator of the call. Congress is currently considering new laws that would make this practice a crime and permit law enforcement authorities to take action against spoofer.

Federal Communications Commission (FCC) rules prohibit telemarketers from blocking caller ID information and require them to pass accurate caller ID numbers. FCC rules specifically require that a telemarketer: 1) display its telephone number or the name and telephone number of the company for which it is selling products or services; 2) display a telephone number that you can call during regular business hours to ask to no longer be called. This rule applies even to companies that already have an established business relationship with you.

For violations of these rules, the FCC can seek a monetary fine. If the violator is not an FCC licensee, the FCC must first issue a warning and the telemarketer may be fined only for violations committed after the warning.

If you have caller ID and receive a call from a telemarketer without the required caller ID information, if you suspect that caller ID information has been falsified, or you think the rules for protecting the privacy of your telephone number have been violated, you can file a complaint with the FCC. There is no charge for filing a complaint. You can file your complaint using an on-line complaint form found at esupport.fcc.gov/complaints.htm or by calling 1-888-CALL-FCC.



Watch LIVE Otter Winter Sports!

Go to www.prtv1.com for a complete schedule of sporting event coverage on PRTV1



Also catch replays of select Underwood, Ashby, Rothsay, and Hillcrest Boys and Girls Basketball games.

New this year . . .

Game DVD's available for \$10 each

Instant Replay

Available exclusively through



FRED

Foundation for Rural Education and Development 2012 Scholarship Program

FRED is the Foundation for Rural Education and Development, a 501(c)(3) charitable foundation established in 1989 by the Organization for Promotion and Advancement of Small Telecommunications Companies (OPASTCO), a trade association for small rural telecommunications companies and the vendors that service these companies.

Each year, the FRED Scholarship Selection Committee convenes to evaluate the FRED scholarship applications. Scholarships range from \$1,000 - \$5,000 and an estimated \$75,000 is available in 2012. As your local telecommunications service provider and a member of OPASTCO, it is our pleasure to offer this national scholarship program to the students in our serving areas. To be eligible, the student must be nominated by an OPASTCO member company and be attending or planning to attend an accredited college, university or trade/vocational school. Also, their family must have local telephone service with Park Region Telephone, Otter Tail Telcom, or Valley Telephone.

The FRED web site, www.fred.org, contains further information on scholarships available and the application may be downloaded from this site as well.

Students should submit applications to Park Region Telephone by January 30, 2012, so a letter of nomination by our general manager may be prepared. We will be happy to send the application in on the student's behalf so that it reaches FRED by their February 13, 2012, deadline.

For further information, refer to www.fred.org or contact Sue Jensen, Park Region Telephone, at 218-826-6161 or email her at sue.jensen@parkregion.com

Retransmission Fee Likely to Increase Cable Fees

What is Retransmission Consent? The U.S. Congress has authorized broadcast stations, such as those that air ABC, NBC, CBS, and FOX programming, to grant or deny permission (provide “consent”) for a cable television operator to “retransmit” the signal to its customers. In order to acquire consent the owner of the television station will demand some form of compensation from the cable operator, which is typically re-negotiated every three years. Frequently, a broadcaster demands the smaller cable operators pay an exceptionally higher per-customer fee than other larger operators in the same market. Broadcasters charge smaller cable operators retransmission consent fees as much as twenty times more than what the largest distributors pay. There is no justification for the price discrimination faced by small cable operator because the retransmission is costless for the broadcast station owner. The burden to a broadcaster of having its signal carried on a large system or a small one is identical.

Cable operators who refuse to accept the higher charge (as it frequently would result in higher rates for customers) face retaliation from the broadcaster - a dropped signal and the refusal to allow a cable operator to deliver its programming to customers.

Making matters worse, federal rules and regulations hinder small cable operators serving small and rural markets to offer broadcast signals from neighboring television markets, even when the neighboring broadcast is willing to offer the same network programming at a more reasonable rate.

How Does Retransmission Consent Harm Consumers? When independent cable operators are dealt disproportionately higher per-subscriber fees to broadcast a signal, the result is increased costs for consumers and reduced competition by undercutting smaller companies’ ability to compete on price. Notably, independent cable providers often have to redirect investment that should go towards increasing system capacity and improving infrastructure for broadband to instead line the pockets of big broadcasters and programmers, putting already under served markets even further behind the Digital Divide.

Throughout the negotiation process, Park Region will keep our customers updated via our website. We will do our best to obtain fair pricing for our customers.

Your help is needed! An online petition was recently posted by an ACA Member Company at “We the People,” a website hosted by WhiteHouse.gov, that could result in the Obama Administration reviewing the current retransmission consent and broadcast carriage rules, and issuing an official response.

Specifically, this online petition says;

It has been nearly 20 years since the laws and regulations governing broadcast television have been updated. Since that time, the way Americans consume and view television has changed dramatically. Even though technical barriers have been eliminated, consumers remain trapped by artificially drawn geographic boundaries that give broadcast stations monopoly powers over network and syndicated programming in their respective markets. This government constructed marketplace has stifled competition and innovation, limited consumer choice, led to threatened and actual blackouts of must-have programming, and dramatically driven up the cable and satellite rates. We urge the Obama Administration to initiate a process to update this outdated regime.

“We the People” petitions are citizen-made initiatives to spur policy action on important issues. If a petition gets enough support, White House staff will review it, and ensure it is sent to the appropriate policy experts and issue an official response.

Currently the petition has about 1,500 signatures, and 23,500 are needed within 30 days to move it forward. ACA encourages its members, employees, friends, families, associates and your subscribers to sign the petition, and then encourage others to do the same. Please do your part to help obtain as many signatures to this petition as possible.

The deadline to ensure that the petition receives the 25,000 signatures is December 8. Don’t let this opportunity pass to let your voice be heard! A WhiteHouse.gov account is required to sign a petition. To create your account, review and sign the petition following this <https://www.whitehouse.gov/petitions#!/petition/reform-outdated-broadcast-television-laws-and-regulations/LpbJk6hc>.

Say “Do Not Call” To Unwanted Telemarketers

A national Do-Not-Call Registry has been established to address unwelcome telemarketing calls. The registry applies to all telemarketers, with the exception of businesses with whom you have an existing relationship and certain non-profit and political organizations. Commercial telemarketers are not allowed to call you if your number is listed on the registry.

Consumers may register their residential telephone number, including wireless numbers, on the national Do-Not-Call Registry at no cost, either by telephone or via the Internet. To register by telephone, call 1.888.382.1222. For TTY, call 1.866.290.4236. You must call from the telephone number you wish to register. You may also register or obtain additional information via the Internet at www.donotcall.gov. Inclusion of your telephone number on the national Do-Not-Call Registry will be effective three months following your registration. Your number will remain on the registry for five years, at which time you may re-enter your number on the list. You can also remove your name from the list at anytime.



We extend our best wishes for a warm and happy holiday season and a peaceful new year. Our offices will be closed on Monday, December 26th, and Monday January 2nd, so our employees can enjoy the holidays with family and friends.



Below is an update of changes and additions to current directory listings.



New Listings

- BROWNS VALLEY**
 Kenney, Ruth.....695-2797
 Mueller, Don694-2911
 Raw, Tami695-2801
 Spindler, Leo.....695-2803
- DALTON**
 Millbrandt, Tom589-7812
 Prior, L.....589-7820
- ERHARD**
 Thyself, Alex & Tia842-5551
- FERGUS FALLS**
 Ballweg, Lonnie & Danielle.....998-2997
 Direct Asset of Minnesota.....998-3060
 Foss, Diane.....998-2989
 Gagner, Ken & Jill998-3398
 Gilbertson, Lavonne998-3565
 Jacobs, Todd.....998-2968
 Kummrow, Scott.....998-2903
 Ledoux, S.998-3589
- MAINE**
 Meyer, Paul.....998-3104
 Olson, James C. & Doris.....998-2987
 Prairie Wetlands Learning Center.....998-4480
 Ryan, Kimberly.....998-3192
 Skrove, Sidney.....998-3881
 Uhlig, Joyce.....998-3722
 Wezecha, C.....998-2959
 Williams, Larry.....998-2961
- UNDERWOOD**
 Giarum, Doug & Nancy.....495-2285
 Mathstad, Larry & Denise495-2404
 Sebens, Mitch & Tyera495-2325
 Chewning, Bill.....826-6568
 Lind, P & T.....826-6582
 Stroud, Michele.....826-6598
 Zickur, Emily.....826-6561
- VINING**
 Doering, John & Tammy.....769-4527