

**SOUTH DAKOTA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
LIFELINE/TRIBAL LINK UP ADVERTISING/OUTREACH
ANNUAL REPORT
JULY 1, 2022**

Company: Venture Communications Cooperative

Address: 218 Commercial Ave SE

Highmore, SD 57345

Telephone number: 605-852-2224

Company contact: Janelle Jessen

Study Area Code: 391680

Lifeline/Tribal Link Up Advertising/Outreach Activities:



Advertise in media of general distribution.* (See attached advertisement(s).)



Letter to existing and new customers regarding the availability of Lifeline/Tribal Link Up within 1st 30 days of service.* (See attached letter.)



Company's Lifeline/Tribal Link Up information in directory.



Company's Lifeline/Tribal Link Up information available on Company website. www.venturecomm.net



Company's information posted on USAC website.



Other (describe):

*Required

Happy New Year!

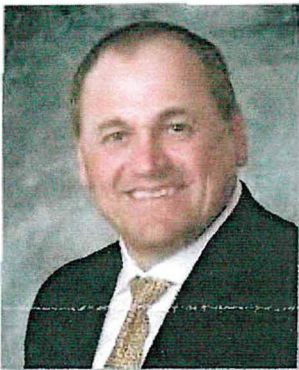
2021

KEEPING YOU...

In Touch

January 2021 ■ Volume 45 ■ Number 486

**"Hello 2021,
what do you have
in store for us?"**



Message from
Fay Jandreau
Assistant
General Manager

I think that is the question we are all asking, and of course, expecting no answer in return. We all seem to be looking into 2021 with wandering eyes and wondering hearts, just hoping for any glimpse of a sign as to where we are headed. Well, I promise I won't help with any of that, I sure don't have any secrets or incredible insight into the future. But, amongst the challenges of 2020, I have noticed a few behavior shifts and trends that just might hang around for 2021. For starters, I can tell you for the first time ever, Venture has more broadband connections than voice or video connections. Yup, the Internet is in more Venture served homes than the telephone. Kind of unbelievable really. And wow... are we using those Internet connections! We have seen classrooms, board rooms, churches, and offices all move into our homes thanks to these broadband connections. It feels like the phrase "you are on mute" has replaced "hello" as a common greeting. Video meetings are replacing our face-to-face encounters and while they seem to lack the punch of a good ol' handshake and hearty "how ya doing", it's sure nice to have the option available.

The adaptability of our society is just amazing. Sure, some of us "buck" the masks and social distancing; but we are all learning to deal with it. Adapting and overcoming, finding ways to keep moving forward. We experienced a little rationing, like the toilet paper fiasco and a lack of social engagements like going to church in person or catching a ball game. But, there too we have adapted and overcome finding ways to fill our needs and the needs of others. One year ago, I couldn't have imagined walking into my bank with a mask on and receiving a simple hello rather than a quick call to the police, some metal bracelets, and ride down town. I have always seen a "rise to the challenge" mentality here in the Dakotas, but this year it seems to be more prevalent than ever! Everywhere I look people are rising up, taking on big tasks and helping others in need. I never dreamt we would call upon UPS to deliver so many items to meet our daily needs AND the COVID vaccine too!

I'm not sure what 2021 will bring, but I do know we have some solid fiber fed broadband connections in place and some pretty incredible people who can use them to adapt and overcome any challenges that may come their way. I'm proud of this co-op and all that we have accomplished over the years, but I know that none of it would be possible without you the customer owners.

So, I will close by saying "Thank you" to all for giving us the opportunity to serve your communication needs in 2020, and reassure you that Venture is right here beside you, pushing forward into 2021. Here's to a prosperous new year!

venture
communications

Utility Scam Awareness!

Utility customers all over the country are targeted by imposter utility scams on a nearly daily basis. Scammers typically use phone, in-person, and online tactics to target customers. In many cases, the caller will pose as utility company personnel and use false threats to persuade consumers to provide payment or personal identification information.

"Scammers posing as utility company personnel typically threaten service disconnection or a financial penalty hoping to make the target panic and react in haste. That's why we tell South Dakotans to identify threatening language and an urgent need for action as warning signs," said PUC Chairman Gary Hanson. "The way a payment is requested can be another red flag. No legitimate utility company will insist on immediate payment specifically through pre-paid debit cards or other untraceable methods," he continued.



When it came to scam calls in the past, the most vulnerable groups were usually older and less tech-savvy. While these groups are still vulnerable, the development of new, more sophisticated scams have changed the risk outlook in recent years. According to the Federal

Trade Commission, in 2019,

millennials in the 20s and 30s were 25% more likely to report losing money to fraud than those 40 or older.

"The PUC wants to help South Dakotans protect their information, assets and identities. Learning to identify signs of a scam call and react appropriately are the first two steps to ensuring that you and your loved ones don't fall victim to scammers. If you receive a suspicious phone call, hang up and contact your utility company using the phone number found on your utility bill. The company can verify if the call was legitimate and advise other customers not to fall for the same scheme," states Vice Chairman Chris Nelson.

Scam calls can come in many shapes and sizes. Some versions have been around for years, but other newer versions may be more difficult to identify. Callers posing as tech support, claiming you've overpaid your utility bill, offering to restore power more quickly following a big storm and contacting you through text or SMS messages that you never signed up for are all common scams to be aware of.

"Telephone scammers are criminals who want to defraud and trick consumers. Unfortunately, they're also very difficult to catch. That's why, when it comes to avoiding scams, knowledge is power. Educating yourself about scam calls happening in your area, identifying resources available to you, and understanding how you should respond to a call if you receive one are great steps to take now," said Commissioner Kristie Fiegen.

Submit your application for the federal programs!

Lifeline & Link-Up Programs

Venture Communications is proud to have helped many customers this past year through the FCC's Lifeline Link-Up Program, providing discounted installation and monthly telephone service to qualifying consumers.

Lifeline Program:

You may be eligible for the Lifeline Program and it's up to \$9.25 monthly savings if you are a participant in at least one of the following programs: Medicaid, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as food stamps), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Federal Public Housing Assistance (Section 8), or Veterans Pension and Survivors Benefit.

Enhanced Lifeline Program:

The Enhanced Lifeline Program provides telephone service to anyone who lives on tribal lands. It expands the eligibility requirements listed under the Lifeline Program to also include participation in: Bureau of Indian Affairs General Assistance programs, Tribally Administered Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Tribal Head Start, or the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations. In addition, you may be eligible for the monthly savings if your household income is at or below 135% of the federal poverty guidelines. Qualifying income levels for the year 2020 range from \$17,226 for a single person household to \$59,562 for a family of eight.

Link-Up Program:

Another Federal Program, Link-Up, provides for financial assistance with no connection charges for new customers living on tribal land. If you meet the eligibility requirement, you can apply 1 of 3 ways:

1. For a quicker response – enter your application online at www.checklifeline.org.
2. Mail your paper application to the Lifeline Support Center.
3. Fill out and submit your application online at the Venture Communication office. Applications are available online at www.lifelinesupport.com or at your local Venture Communications office.
4. If you have any questions about Lifeline or Link-Up, call us at 852-2224.

Happy New Year!

2022

KEEPING YOU...



In Touch

January 2022 ■ Volume 46 ■ Number 498

Brad Ryan & Kay Burnham *Retirement:*



Brad Ryan

Our heartfelt appreciation and sincere thanks to Brad Ryan and Kay Burnham for their many years of service to Venture Communications. Collectively, the two have dedicated over 43 years to the cooperative – both starting when the company operated as Sully Buttes Telephone Cooperative. Kay and Brad joined the cooperative team at a time of major company growth and have experienced significant change in technology and the services provided to our members.

Brad Ryan joined the cooperative in 1994 as a central office technician. In 1997, he transitioned to the position of central office supervisor – a position he held until his retirement. Throughout his years at Venture, he played an instrumental role in developing quality products for our members such as the first internet services, a top-notch video product, and hosted PBX services just to name a few. The technology of the communications industry is ever-changing. During his 27 years at Venture, Brad successfully managed the many changes and challenges set before him. His expertise in the central office field was exceptional and his willingness to share his knowledge has left the cooperative in good hands.



Kay Burnham

Kay Burnham began her duties at Venture in the fall of 1995 as a customer service representative. Kay provided exemplary customer service to our members on a daily basis for 26 years. Throughout her years at Venture, Kay played a significant role in transitioning new customers to the Venture system. In 1996, Kay was part of the team that transitioned 6900 new subscribers included in the purchase of seven US West exchanges. In later years, she also helped convert the purchased exchanges of Sisseton, Faulkton, Cresbard, and Orient. Kay's knowledge of the Venture services was impeccable and a huge asset to both Venture and its members.

We extend our sincere gratitude to Brad and Kay for their many years of dedicated service to Venture Communications. While both will certainly be missed, we wish them the very best in their retirement years.

venture
communications

Congratulations Brad Ryan & Kay Burnham!



ATTENTION Students: Don't miss this opportunity!

Venture Communications Scholarships Increase:

The Venture Communications Board of Directors has an exciting announcement to make! Students who apply for the 2022 Venture Scholarship will have the chance to be awarded one of fourteen \$750.00 scholarships. After 23 years of presenting twelve \$500.00 scholarships to numerous students the board felt that it was time for an increase in the amount of the scholarship and the number of scholarships awarded. Investing in the future of our customer's children has always been one of the priorities of Venture Communications. To be considered for the Venture Communications Citizenship and Community Service Scholarship a student must:

- ✓ Graduating High School Senior in 2022
- ✓ The student's parent or legal guardian must be and active subscriber of a Venture Communications service.
- ✓ Student must have a cumulative B average or above.

Guidelines for this year's scholarship can be obtained from the high school guidance counselor, or by visiting www.venturecomm.net.

Lifeline & Link-Up Programs:

Venture Communications is proud to have helped many customers this past year through the FCC's Lifeline Link-Up Program, providing discounted installation and monthly telephone service to qualifying consumers.

Lifeline Program:

You may be eligible for the Lifeline Program and it's up to \$9.25 monthly savings if you are a participant in at least one of the following programs: Medicaid, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as food stamps), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Federal Public Housing Assistance (Section 8), or Veterans Pension and Survivors Benefit.

Enhanced Lifeline Program:

The Enhanced Lifeline Program provides telephone service to anyone who lives on tribal lands. It expands the eligibility requirements listed under the Lifeline Program to also include participation in: Bureau of Indian Affairs General Assistance programs, Tribally Administered Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Tribal Head Start, or the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations. In addition, you may be eligible for the monthly savings if your household income is at or below 135% of the federal poverty guidelines. Qualifying income levels for the year 2020 range from \$17,388 for a single person household to \$60,291 for a family of eight.

Link-Up Program:

Another Federal Program, Link-Up, provides for financial assistance with no connection charges for new customers living on tribal land. If you meet the eligibility requirement, you can apply 1 of 3 ways:

1. For a quicker response – enter your application online at www.checklifeline.org.
2. Mail your paper application to the Lifeline Support Center.
3. Fill out and submit your application online at the Venture Communication office. Applications are available online at www.lifelinesupport.com or at your local Venture Communications office.
4. If you have any questions about Lifeline or Link-Up, call us at 852-2224.

venture
communications

Jan 2021 Lifeline Article in Monthly Venture Newsletter

August 2021 Insert Lifeline Ad in Newspapers

Marshall County Journal	8/6/2021
Rosholt Review	8/3/2021
Onida Watchman	8/5/21
Bowdle Pride of the Prairie	8/5/2021
Potter County News	8/5/2021
Faulk County Record	8/4/2021
Hoven Review	8/4/2021
Roscoe-Hosmer Independent	8/4/2021
Sisseton Courier	8/3/2021
Highmore Herald	8/5/2021

Need help paying your phone bill?

Many low-income families qualify for assistance with phone charges, but don't realize that this help is available. You are allowed only one Lifeline discount per household. You cannot transfer your Lifeline discount to someone else, even if he or she is eligible.

Lifeline is a federally funded program created to provide every customer the opportunity to have affordable internet and/or telephone service. Lifeline provides qualified customers with a monthly discount if you are enrolled in one of the following:

- Food Stamps (SNAP)
- Federal Public Housing Assistance
- Supplemental Security Income
- Medicaid
- Veterans Pension or Survivors Pension

Individuals who live on a federally recognized reservation or trust land may qualify for a discount if they receive assistance from one of the following:

- Bureau of Indian Affairs general assistance program
- Tribally Administered Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
- Tribal Head Start (meeting income qualifying standards)
- Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR)

If you do not participate in one or more of the programs listed above, you may qualify for Lifeline if your household income does not exceed 135% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines (see table to the right).

APPLY 1 OF 3 WAYS:

1. For a quicker response - enter your application online at www.checklifeline.org.
2. Mail your paper application to the Lifeline Support Center.
3. Fill out and submit your application online at the Venture Communications office.

HELPFUL INFORMATION:

Applications are available online at www.lifelinesupport.com or at your local Venture Communications office.

Number in Residence	135% Guideline (Annual)
1	\$17,388
2	\$23,517
3	\$29,646
4	\$35,775
5	\$41,904
6	\$48,033
7	\$54,162
8	\$60,291

For each additional person, add \$6,129.

venture
communications
852-2224 cooperative

Lifeline

Lifeline and Toll Blocking support is available from Venture Communications. These programs provide discounts to eligible low-income consumers to help them establish and maintain telephone service.

Lifeline assistance lowers the cost of basic, monthly broadband and/or local telephone service. Eligible consumers can receive up to \$9.25 per month in discounts. In addition, the Federal Universal Service Charge is not assessed to consumers participating in Lifeline.

Toll Blocking prevents the placement of all long distance calls for which a subscriber would be charged. Toll Blocking is available to eligible consumers at no cost.

Customers are eligible if they, one of their dependents or their household participate in one of the following programs:

- Federal Public Housing Assistance (Section 8)
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), f/k/a Food Stamps
- Medicaid
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Veteran's Pension or Survivors Pension

In addition, consumers are eligible if their household income is at or below 135% of the federal poverty guidelines.

Venture Communications voice and broadband services are Lifeline-supported services. Only eligible consumers may enroll in the Lifeline program. Lifeline applicants must present documentation demonstrating eligibility either through participation in one of the qualifying federal assistance programs or through income-based means. Lifeline recipients are required to recertify their eligibility every year. The Lifeline program is limited to one benefit per household, consisting of either wireline or wireless service. A household is defined for purposes of the Lifeline program, as an individual or group of individuals who live together at the same address and share income and expenses. Lifeline is a government benefit program, and consumers who willfully make false statements in order to obtain the benefit can be punished by fine or imprisonment or can be barred from the program.

To apply for this low-income assistance, please go to the National Lifeline website at www.nv.fcc.gov, or contact Venture Communications at 800-824-7282 for further information.

directory page

CUSTOMER SERVICE

**TO APPLY FOR NEW SERVICE
OR CHANGE YOUR SERVICE PLEASE CALL**

Venture Communications Cooperative

1-605-852-2224 or Toll Free 1-800-824-7282

Visit www.venturecomm.net to view services available in your area.

To Report Trouble

When reporting trouble to our service desk or off-hours answering service, please provide the following information:

1. Your full name and street address.
2. Your telephone number or account number.
3. What the trouble is.
4. If possible, a telephone number where you can be reached.

Report Trouble Immediately

If you experience service trouble, call our business office by dialing 605-852-2224 or 800-824-7282 as soon as possible. Venture will not know you are without service unless reported. Outside of our normal business hours, our headquarters telephones are answered by an After Hours Service who will notify the specific personnel "on call" for that area. All attempts are made to repair telephone trouble within the first 24 hours of being reported.

Customer Assurance Plan

Nobody likes to worry about what might happen. That's why we have developed our **Customer Assurance Plan** to protect you in case of the unexpected. If you have trouble with the telephone wiring or installed jacks inside your home or business, our technicians will repair the problem at no cost to you. Without this protection, a problem in the wiring within your house will cost you time and materials, which can quickly run into a large sum of money. Don't wait!! Call our office today at 605-852-2224 or 1-800-824-7282 to have our **Customer Assurance Plan** placed on your line.

LIFELINE & ENHANCED LIFELINE DISCOUNTS

The federal government, through Venture Communications offers a program to its low-income subscribers that results in a rate reduction on monthly services. Subscribers who participate in any of the following programs also qualify for participation in the federal Lifeline program:

Medicaid (e.g. Title XIX/Medical, State Supplemental Assistance)
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
formerly known as Food Stamps
Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
Federal Public Housing Assistance (Section 8)
Veteran's Pension or Survivor's Pension



In addition, a subscriber may qualify for this program if their household income is at or below 135 percent of the Federal Poverty Guidelines.

Participation in any of the above programs as well as some tribal assistance programs will qualify a subscriber living on tribal lands for the Enhanced Lifeline program.

For additional information and applications form, please go to www.checklifeline.org or contact our office at 800-824-7282.