



**OFFICE
CLOSED**

West River
Cooperative
Telephone Company
will be closed Friday,
July 4, 2025 in
observance of
Independence Day.



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West River Cooperative Telephone Company

Calling on You



Peacock Memorial Scholarship

PICTURED ABOVE: GENERAL MANAGER KAHLER, EUGENIO MARTINEZ, AND WENDY AND BRETT PEACOCK

Following the unexpected passing of Grand Electric employee, Jason Peacock, in December 2024, the Boards of Directors of both WRCTC and Grand Electric wish to honor his memory and that of his father, Russ Peacock, a former WRCTC employee who also passed unexpectedly in 2021. In recognition of their dedication and contributions, the Boards established the Peacock Memorial Scholarship.

Applicants were evaluated based on GPA, ACT scores, two essays, a scoring rubric, and two letters of recommendation, with priority given to those pursuing a certificate or associate degree in Powerline Construction and Maintenance, Electrical, or Telecommunications at a technical school.

On May 5th, the first \$2,000 Peacock Memorial Scholarship was presented at Bison High School (BHS). In attendance were General Manager Eric Kahler, Jason's wife, Wendy, and son, Brett. Manager Kahler spoke to the audience about Jason and Russ's legacy, and emotions ran high as Jason's family presented the scholarship to Bison senior, **EUGENIO MARTINEZ**.

Eugenio Martinez, son of Daroll and Sarah Aukland of Bison, will be attending Mitchell Technical College in the fall of 2025 to pursue a degree in Powerline Construction and Maintenance.

BHS Librarian Joyce Waddell shared, "This is a very appropriate choice of a post-secondary educational program for Eugenio, as he has taken 206 6th St E #24, Lemmon; several steps to learn the requirements to become a successful power lineman."

BHS Counselor Christy Kolb added, "Eugenio's plan to pursue a degree as a lineman at Mitchell Technical College aligns perfectly with his experiences and strengths. His hands-on work experience, academic success, and strong personal qualities make him an excellent candidate for this program."

On behalf of the Peacock family, WRCTC, and Grand Electric, we extend our heartfelt congratulations to Eugenio and wish him all the best in 17064 134th St, Prairie City; his future endeavors!

BISON HIGH SCHOOL SENIOR EUGENIO MARTINEZ



2025 Scholarship Winners

WRCTC and Grand Electric Cooperative joined forces for the 24th consecutive year to award \$1,000 scholarships to graduating seniors from local school districts. This scholarship program reflects their ongoing commitment to investing in the economic future of our rural communities. It honors and encourages the academic accomplishments of students within the areas they serve. Scholarship recipients received their certificates during the Academic Awards ceremonies at their respective schools. Congratulations to the Class of 2025!!



GAGE ANDERSON, son of Jack and Kim Anderson, graduated May 17, 2025, from Lemmon High School. Ranked 1 of 20 in his class, Gage graduated with a 4.0 GPA. He plans to attend Northern State University where he will major in Math Education with a minor in coaching. Gage participated in many extracurricular activities throughout his high school career such as Academic Olympics, Close Up, FFA, Cross Country, Quiz Bowl, National Honor Society, One Act Play, Oral Interpretation, Student Council, Track and Field, Wrestling, and Youth Group. Upon college graduation, Gage plans to return to earn his graduate degree in Education Administration. With the skills he acquires, he plans to return to a small community where he will teach high school math and coach wrestling.

KELSI COSTELLO, daughter of Jake and Holly Costello, graduated from Harding County High School on May 10, 2025. Kelsi ranked 1 of 16 in her class and graduated with a 4.130 GPA. She plans to attend University of Montana Western to major in Pre-Vet/Biology. Kelsi participated in many activities during high school such as Rodeo, Basketball, FFA, and National Honor 92 US Hwy 85, Buffalo; Society. Once Kelsi graduates, she plans to advance to graduate school to obtain her Doctorate in Veterinary Medicine. She would like to start working at a practice with hopes of one day opening her own, focusing on equine or bovine reproductive systems.



DREW HARPER, son of Brian and Darci Harper, graduated May 17, 2025, from Faith High School. He ranked 6 of 22 in his class and graduated with a 3.923 GPA. Drew will be attending Gillette College in the Fall where he will major in Industrial Technology: Diesel and Electrical Tech. Drew spent a lot of time in extracurricular activities including High School Rodeo, National Honors Society, Quiz Bowl, Academic Olympics, National History Day, Student Council, Football, Basketball, Track and Field, and various other activities. Once Drew finishes his undergraduate, he plans to return to the Faith Community, own a mobile diesel/electric repair business, continue to ranch with his family, and train horses.

Scholarship Winners Cont.



ETHNEY SIMMONS, daughter of Mikal Simmons and Sarah and Terry Shinabarger, graduated May 10, 2025, from Bison High School. Ranked 1 of 21 in her class, Ethney graduated with a 3.912 GPA. She plans to attend Black Hills State University and will major in Elementary Education/ Biblical Studies. Ethney was involved in many activities during high school such as Cheerleading, Choir, Student Council, Yearbook, FCCLA, Volleyball, Color Guard, Marching Band, National Honor Society, One Act Plays, School Plays, Feeding South Dakota, Youth Group, and other volunteer work. Once she graduates, she plans to move back to a small community, perhaps even Bison, to teach. She would also like to use her degree some day to do mission work in the unreached parts of the world.

HAILEY McCANN, daughter of Timothy and Cheryl McCann, graduated May 24, 2025, from Newell High School. Ranked 1 of 14 in her class, Hailey graduated with a 4.076 GPA. She plans to attend University of South Dakota to work towards her Nursing Degree. Kimberly has been involved in many extracurricular activities such as National Honor Society, Student Council, Basketball, Track and Field, and Volleyball. Once Hailey obtains her nursing degree, she would like return to a rural area to help a 19098 Rolling Hills Rd, Meadow; community in need and make the world a better place one patient at a time.



Arthur Celebrates 20 Years

ANDY ARTHUR recently celebrated an impressive milestone—20 years in the telecommunications industry. He currently serves as the Bison Area 601 3rd Ave W, Lemmon; Journeyman for West River Cooperative Telephone Company.



A native of Philip, South Dakota, Andy graduated from Philip High School before earning a degree in Telecommunications from Mitchell Technical Institute. Before joining WRCTC in May 2007, he gained valuable experience working as a Telephone Area Technician for Venture Communications in Onida, South Dakota.

In his role at WRCTC, Andy is responsible for maintaining telecommunication services for members in the Bison area and troubleshooting any service outages that arise.

Andy and his wife, Kaye, are proud parents of three children, Coby, Colt, and Emma. Outside of work, he enjoys hunting, fishing, and spending quality time with his family.

Congratulations, Andy, on 20 years of dedicated service to the Cooperative!



Find Your Address

Five addresses were hidden in the last newsletter. Hidden in this issue are five new addresses. If you find YOUR address, all you have to do is notify our office. The \$20 will then be deducted off your next telephone bill. Changes of address in the New WRCTC Members section do not count. **Deadline is June 25, 2025.**

\$20
bill credit

New WRCTC Members

Camp Crook

White, Tami

605-797-4496

Lemmon

Card, K & B

701-376-3373

Hilkemeier, Danielle

605-374-6563

Lifeline: Affordable Telephone Service for Income-Eligible Consumers

Lifeline is the FCC's program to help make communications service more affordable for low-income consumers. Lifeline provides subscribers a discount on monthly telephone and/or broadband services purchased from participating providers in the marketplace. The discounts, which can be applied to stand-alone broadband, bundled voice-broadband packages - either fixed or mobile - and stand-alone voice service - will help ensure that low-income consumers can afford 21st-century broadband and the access it provides to jobs, education, and opportunities.

The History of Lifeline

The FCC established the Lifeline program in 1985 to ensure that qualifying low-income consumers could afford phone service and the opportunities and security it provides. Congress supported and strengthened Lifeline in the Telecommunications Act of 1996, requiring that affordable service and advanced communications be available to low-income consumers across the country. In March of 2016, the FCC modernized Lifeline for advanced services by beginning a transition toward support of broadband service.

How Lifeline Works

Lifeline provides an eligible customer with broadband internet at a discount of up to \$9.25 per month. Eligible voice only subscribers will receive a discount of \$5.25 per month. Subscribers may receive a Lifeline discount on either a wireline or a wireless service but may not receive a discount on both services at the same time. Lifeline also supports broadband-voice bundles. FCC rules prohibit more than one Lifeline service per household.

Lifeline is available to eligible low-income subscribers in every state, territory, commonwealth, and on Tribal lands.

To participate in the program, subscribers must either have an income that is at or below 135% of the federal Poverty Guidelines or participate in certain assistance programs. You can see if you are eligible with the Lifeline Eligibility Pre-Screening Tool on the Universal Service Administrative website at <https://www.checklifeline.org/lifeline>.

How Do I Qualify?

The following is a list of assistance programs that qualify a participant for Lifeline:

- Medicaid
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (Food Stamps or SNAP)
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Federal Public Housing Assistance (FPHA)
- Veterans Pension or Survivors Benefit Program

How Tribal Link Up Works?

Tribal Link Up provides eligible low-income consumers living on Tribal lands with a one-time discount of up to \$100 on the initial installation or activation of a wireline or wireless telephone for the primary residence. Tribal Lands Link Up also allows consumers to pay the remaining amount that they owe on a deferred schedule, interest-free. Federal rules prohibit eligible low-income consumers from receiving more than ONE Link Up discount at a primary residence. Eligible consumers may be eligible for Link Up again only after moving to a new primary residence. Link Up support is only offered to carriers who are building out infrastructure on Tribal lands so not all carriers may discount their activation fee. Enhanced benefits are provided to low-income consumers who live on a federally recognized Indian Tribe's reservation.

Tribal Lifeline takes up to an extra \$25 off your monthly bill, for a total Lifeline discount of up to \$34.25 per month. You can get Tribal Lifeline if you live on Tribal lands. Tribal lands include any federally recognized Indian tribe's reservation, Pueblo, or colony, including former reservations in Oklahoma, Alaska Native regions, Hawaiian Home Lands, or Indian Allotments. The following is a list of Tribal assistance programs that also qualify a participant for Lifeline:

- Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) General Assistance
- Tribally-Administered Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
- Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations
- Head Start (if income eligibility criteria are met)

How Do I Sign Up for Lifeline?

If you qualify for any of the above programs, you must complete a Lifeline Assistance Application. You can find the application online at www.wrctc.coop.

Submit applications to:

USAC
Lifeline Support Center
P.O. Box 7081
London, KY 40742