



ONE VOICE Changes Format

Welcome to our new 2009 Newsletter One Voice. Beginning with this issue, we'll be sending you the cooperative news six times each year in your monthly billing statement. Our goal in changing the format and timing is to ensure that the information you receive is timely. Also, by sending you the newsletter in our bill, we'll be saving money on separate postage. As always, we welcome your comments and feedback on the newsletter and know you'll enjoy reading the cooperative news in each issue. Thanks again for your patronage. ❖

Channel Changes and Additions

- The CW Madison – was added as Channel 11.
www.madisonscw.com
- RTN (Retro Television Network) – was added as Channel 28.
www.myretroTV.com

PUBLIC BROADCASTING STATIONS

- WHLA was changed to Channel 21.
The Wisconsin Channel was added as Channel 22.
Create and Wisconsin PBS Kids was added as Channel 23.
www.wpt2.org/schedule.cfm
- WQEG (LaCrosse) moved to Channel 923. kqegTV.com

SPAM: Stay away from my inbox!

Offered FREE with all Internet plans (dial-up & high speed), our new Junk Mail Manager filters your incoming and outgoing emails for SPAM and virus carrying messages. It is not intended to be complete virus protection, but will definitely help avoid unwanted emails.

To get started, go to the Junk Mail Manager log-in box found at www.mwt.net. Enter your MWT email address & password.

Quarantined messages are listed for you to “delete” or “deliver.” You can control the strength of your filter under the Controls option, add or remove blocked or allowed senders by clicking on those options, and sign up for a reminder email under the Summaries option so you don't miss an important email. Check “Trash” if you think you deleted an email in error.

We hope you will take advantage of this FREE service provided by the cooperative. ❖

Annual Meeting Attendees Hear Report from GM Brad Welp

Annual meetings are a place for member owners to find out what's happening at their cooperative. The Richland-Grant meeting was held on Saturday, March 28th at the Blue River Community Building. Board President Larry Jewell presided over the meeting which included Dr. James Heersma, thanking the Cooperative for supporting the InHealth Community Wellness Clinic in Boscobel, the 2008 financial report given by Accountant Lori Thomas, and election of directors. Director Keith Chamberlain from the Sabin exchange and, Directors Donald Olson and William Meyer, both from the Soldiers Grove exchange, were all re-elected.

Brad Welp, General Manager since April 1, 2008, introduced the employees and reported on activities at the Cooperative during 2008. Seven new electronic cabinets were installed, adding 7 areas where customers are now able to have our video and high speed internet. The cooperative also invested in power plant equipment and batteries in order to maintain quality of service. Brad unveiled plans for 2009, including the replacement of damaged copper with

fiber on Highway 60 in Blue River, upgrading copper to fiber in the Solar Town area of Soldiers Grove, and installing more emergency power back-up equipment.

Video services will continue to expand and mature. The new High Definition video package currently has 18 channels, but will have more channels added soon, including Madison local stations and some of your other favorite channels. Our own local channel, Channel 2ForYou, will hopefully be adding more local programming content, such as area school activities, and will continue to offer community service content and advertising for local businesses.

Brad noted that as we all struggle with the economic recession it is very important to remember that the Cooperative is here to provide the services to the members at competitive prices while continuing to look at advancing technology options that will keep us competitive with more urban areas.

The meeting concluded with drawing for door prizes and a lunch served by the Blue River United Methodist Church. ❖

Cooperative's Broadband Services Give BAPI Global Reach

Ritch and Vickie Stevenson grew up amongst the picturesque hills and sculpted valleys of the Kickapoo River in Gays Mills. Kickapooeons are known for developing a lifelong love of the land, so it probably came as no surprise when the couple returned to the region calling it home once again.

Besides bringing their family, they also brought the family business. Building Automation Products (BAPI) now occupies a sizeable chunk of real estate north of the village in the Applewood Business Park. BAPI's headquarters is both an attractive office building and a manufacturing facility with 70 hardworking employees. The business designs, manufactures, and assembles products for the heating, air conditioning, and ventilation industry.

While BAPI products are now sold worldwide; it was a different story back in 1993 when the fledgling business was incorporated. At that time the world headquarters consisted of two small offices, a mechanical room, and a two car garage. "It must have been a whopping 300 to 400 square feet altogether," Ritch says of his company's humble beginnings. That stands in stark contrast to the 26,000 square foot BAPI facility of today. Construction began in 1999 and was completed in January 2000.

Richland-Grant Telephone Cooperative extended fiber optic facilities into BAPI last summer to provide cutting edge services. Stevenson says the new fiber facilities keep his business on the forefront of technology and competitive in the global marketplace. "The high speed internet introduces many opportunities for us like remote employees and video conferencing. Side benefits include getting rid of the desktop appliance," he said noting that just staying in touch has become easier.

BAPI's Information Technology Specialist, Jason Smith, says the new fiber line has worked very well. "We see almost no downtime plus

improved performance on the quality of incoming and outgoing phone calls." In addition to digital phone lines and special high speed Internet connections, the fiber also allows customer access to BAPI's web store. There, customers can request an online account, ask technical questions, or initialize a real-time text chat with one of the customer service representatives; all from an internet browser.

BAPI's global presence requires Ritch to make annual visits to the Middle East, Asia and Europe to give presentations on the company's product line. The first part of the presentation is about where Gays Mills, WI is located. The concept of state-of-the-art products coming from the rural upper Midwest raises more than a few eyebrows. "People really enjoy that part of the presentation," Stevenson says.

For the future, Stevenson says wireless technology will play an increasingly important role in the HVAC industry. "BAPI is a partner to the industry in this effort and we expect to remain at the forefront of this technology." ❖

Lifeline and Link-Up Programs

Telephone service is considered a necessity for daily modern life, yet the cost of activating and maintaining such service may be prohibitively expensive for low-income consumers. Under Congressional mandate, the Federal Communication Commission's (FCC) Federal Universal Service Fund includes Low-Income Program discounts on telephone services to qualifying consumers. Your Cooperative participates in this telephone discount program.

Applying for Benefits

For complete program details, please contact your cooperative telephone office.

Applicants need to certify their eligibility to receive the program's benefits by proving participation in any of the following programs:

- Healthy Start, Medical Assistance
- Food Stamps
- Badger Care
- W2 Wisconsin Works
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)
- Wisconsin Homestead Tax Credit

Applicants simply complete an Information Release Authorization Form which is available in the business office. We then verify all applications with the necessary government office: Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services, Department of Workforce Development and the Department of Revenue. Once verified, we will provide a single telephone line service (one per household) to the customer at the program's monthly discounted rate. ❖

