

September 2026

Horizon

A Golden West Customer
& Award-Winning Publication

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The hive behind the honey

Second-generation beekeepers help environment
while producing honey-inspired goods.

The hive behind the honey

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Most people don't picture spending their summer working in full-body suits in the heat and traveling across nearly 1,000 square miles.

For Zach and Rheanna Pederson, it's just another day running Dakota Honey Company, a family-owned honey producer caring for nearly 3,000 hives across western South Dakota.

Dakota Honey Company sells honey and honey-based food products through its website and in stores statewide. Their products include premium-grade clover honey, honey barbecue sauce, hot honey, flavored spun honey, and more. As beekeepers, Zach and Rheanna make spreads and sauces from their bees' hard work, which also benefits agriculture around them.

"Bees help grasslands all year and increase crop yields for farmers. As with any livestock, it's a lot of work making sure the bees are going in the right direction," Zach says. "It's really fun and rewarding because you're actually helping the environment around you every day."

Hard work, quality honey

Beekeeping is a year-round job with changing duties throughout the seasons. During spring and early summer, plants pop up and bees pollinate and make honey for their hives.

Toward the middle of the summer, Zach collects and harvests the honey, which is then extracted and stored in barrels and holding tanks. The end result is a light-colored honey, a characteristic of honey produced by bees pollinating clover. Many people prefer its taste over store-bought honey that typically contains additives.

"People might think the lighter color of our honey is because it's watered down, but it's the opposite," Zach says. "Honey is the third most adulterated (diluted) product in stores. Honey on the shelves is usually blended with foreign honey that can be adulterated with things like rice syrup."

Rheanna occasionally tags along with Zach to their many colonies to take photos and videos for their social media. When she isn't capturing footage in a full beekeeping suit, Rheanna works behind the scenes sending out online orders, developing new honey products, keeping up on the books, and helping with other office duties.

Ideal environment for growth

Zach's father, Loren, jumped into the beekeeping business with two business partners in 1996. They acquired an operation that had relocated from Michigan to Winner after discovering the area would be perfect for bees.

"Western South Dakota is a very good area for honey," Zach says. "There's a lot of alfalfa ground and rolling hills along the river system that produce a lot of clover."

Zach and Rheanna met in 2017 and got married in 2019. Rheanna began working as an accountant and helping Zach as he took over his father's portion of the beekeeping business in 2022. Zach and Rheanna started Dakota Honey Company to ▶

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The hive behind the honey

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sell their honey directly to consumers. As the business grew, Rheanna went full time with the honey business to expand on their foundation.

“I had a vision for the business, so I started creating some honey products,” Rheanna says. “I did it on the side along with my full-time job, and there were a lot of weekends and late nights. I love messing with recipes and creating new things.”

Adding to the hive

Zach and Rheanna sell their products in stores around South Dakota and online. They appreciate how Golden West helps keep things running smoothly.

“When we took over the business, the Golden West technicians were always quick to help,” Rheanna says. “Everything is so simple. You can call and talk to somebody extremely fast.”

The couple worked for years to build an online following. Today they reach tens of thousands of followers on social media where they announce honey products, share photos and videos of their workday, and explain how beekeeping works. They can travel beyond their hives online to connect with people across the country.

“The internet has really allowed us to open people’s eyes to beekeeping,” Zach says. “It changed everything now because it gets our names out there for more exposure.”

Along with their online reach they also attribute much of their success to their community in Winner. The second-generation beekeepers appreciate how the community helps one another.

“You can’t really pick a better spot to build a business. Everyone locally treats us so well and constantly support and promote us,” Rheanna says. “The whole town is involved in community events, whether that’s attending high school football games or helping fundraise for a local benefit. Everyone just rallies behind each other to help,” Zach adds.

**In an average year,
Dakota Honey Company
produces around 200,000
pounds of honey.**

“When we took over the business, the Golden West technicians were always quick to help. Everything is so simple. You can call and talk to somebody extremely fast.”

- Rheanna Pederson



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BizWorks

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BizWorks Features	Recommended	
	Essentials	Pro
Speed / Bandwidth	500 Mbps	1 Gig
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VIP Business Support	✓	✓
No Annual Contract	✓	✓
Emergency On-Site Service	🕒*	✓
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Celebrating Excellence

with 2026 scholarship winners

Over the past 26 years, Golden West has awarded more than 1,000 scholarships to high-school graduates from over 40 schools across its service territory. The cooperative proudly invests in the education of tomorrow's leaders with the total contribution now exceeding \$1 million. Students are chosen by their respective schools for academic excellence, involvement in their schools and communities, and work ethic.

Golden West is proud to announce its 2026 scholarship recipients.

Armour High School	Alex Werkmeiser
Avon High School	Abby Gretschnann
Bennett County High School	Blair Loudon
Bon Homme High School.....	Luke Guthmiller
Burke High School	Kyrie Matucha
Bridgewater High School	Holden Wollmann
Canistota High School	Allison Leber
Colome High School.....	Gracie Rohde
Corsica High School.....	Cali Vanden Hoek
Custer High School	Keira Alfson
Dell Rapids High School	Sarah Schoolmeester
Edgemont High School	Raelee Curtis-Provorse
Faith High School	Cashley King
Freeman Academy	Alea Miller
Freeman High School	Thor Aanenson
Gregory High School	Madisan Graber
Hot Springs High School.....	Owen White
Jones County High School	Cyrus Hendricks
Kadoka High School.....	Shaylee Porch
Lakota Tech High School	Natalia Brave Heart

Lower Brule High School	Nathaniel Middletent
Lyman County High School	Benjamin Herman
Marion High School.....	Kallie Johnson
Menno High School.....	Izayah Ulmer
Montrose High School	Camren McGuire
New Underwood High School	Kingston Wulf
Oelrichs High School.....	Riley Bear Robe
Philip High School	Creston Burns
Pine Ridge High School	Riley Backward
Plankinton High School	Layce Bruns
Red Cloud High School.....	Jaedyn Crow
Scotland High School.....	Kailin Odens
St. Mary's High School	Madelyn Klein
Stanley County High School	Tessa Rasmussen
Sturgis Brown High School	Brooke LaMont
Todd County High School.....	Marcos Knox
Tri-Valley High School.....	Gracie Pedersen
Wall High School	Brand Hilgenkamp
West Central High School	BreAnn Heider
White River High School	Evan Krogman
Winner High School	Amanda Edwards
At-Large Scholarship	Braelyn Berens

For more information on this year's scholarship awardees, visit goldenwest.com/scholarships.

2025 Annual Meeting MINUTES

The Annual Meeting of the members of Golden West Telecommunications Cooperative, Inc., was called to order at 10 a.m., September 27, 2025, at the Wall Community Center in Wall, South Dakota by President Randy Koerner. Said meeting was held pursuant to notice thereof as required by law. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by President Koerner.

President Koerner then called upon Darla Pollman Rogers, attorney for the cooperative, who gave the Credential Report. A motion was made and seconded to approve a quorum. Motion carried.

Next, President Koerner called upon Kenneth Tonsager, Jr., secretary, to read the Notice of Meeting and the Proof of Mailing, after which a certified copy of each was duly filed as part of the minutes of this meeting.

President Koerner introduced the special guests in attendance at the meeting.

President Koerner asked that the minutes of the 2024 Annual Meeting be approved, if there were no additions or corrections, as written. On a motion duly made, seconded, and unanimously carried, the president declared the minutes approved.

A motion was made, seconded, and the financial report was approved.

President Koerner welcomed the cooperative members and introduced the present Board of Directors of Golden West.

President Koerner then delivered his presidential report. He spoke about how Golden West supports its members and the communities it serves, using Jones County as an example, and about the positive impact of fiber-optic technology. He emphasized the cooperative's mission to serve members through economic development, scholarships,

and other community programs.

Next, President Koerner called on General Manager/CEO Nick Rogness to present his management report. Mr. Rogness emphasized the cooperative's ongoing commitment to rural areas and the significance of Golden West's investment of more than \$550 million over the past 15 years to upgrade its network to fiber-optic technology. He also highlighted new service offerings for members. These included Ultimate Wi-Fi to help customers manage their home internet connection and two new products to help businesses thrive, BizWorks Internet Suite and Hosted PBX phone systems.

President Koerner once again called on Darla Pollman Rogers, attorney, to report on the nominating petitions for the Board of Directors. Vacancies on the Board of Directors were as follows:

District I – Jade Hlavka (four-year term) one vacancy with one candidate

District II – Lincoln Smith (one year of four-year term remains) one vacancy with one candidate

District IV – Dave Assman and Craig Lafferty (four-year term) one vacancy with two candidates

District VI – Murdock Arthur (four-year term) one vacancy with one candidate

District VII – Jason Birkeland (four-year term) one vacancy with one candidate

A motion was made, seconded, and passed to seat the uncontested incumbents and candidates:

District I – Jade Hlavka

District II – Lincoln Smith

District VI – Murdock Arthur

District VII – Jason Birkeland

Darla Pollman Rogers, attorney, introduced the director candidates for

District IV – Dave Assman and Craig Lafferty.

After sharing a prerecorded speech from each District IV candidate, Darla Pollman Rogers, attorney, advised the membership of the voting process and requested that the ballots be handed out. After the membership had the opportunity to vote, the ballots were collected and counted under the supervision of a three-member balloting committee appointed by the Board of Directors. The members of the balloting committee, who reported to the membership, were Michael Gebes, Mary Kay Wilson, and Duane Anderson.

Drawings were held to give away more than 25 door prizes and facts about the cooperative were shared.

President Koerner called for old business. One question was asked and fielded by Rogness. No action was taken.

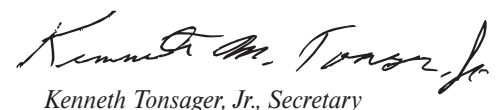
President Koerner called for new business. Five questions were asked and fielded by Darla Pollman Rogers, attorney, President Koerner, and Mr. Rogness. No action was taken.

Then, Darla Pollman Rogers, attorney, announced the election results: Craig Lafferty was elected director for District IV (four-year term).

Meal tickets were distributed to those in attendance.

The grand prize \$500 check went to Victor and Gloria Marma of Custer.

President Koerner adjourned the meeting at 11:19 a.m.



Kenneth M. Tonsager, Jr.
Kenneth Tonsager, Jr., Secretary

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 **Vote online
by September 22**
if you are unable to
attend the meeting!



HORIZONS – Volume 27, Number 5

Horizons is an award-winning customer newsletter published every two months by Golden West Telecommunications.

Can't attend?
VOTE ONLINE BY SEPTEMBER 22!

Members are invited to the

74th Annual Meeting

Golden West Telecommunications Cooperative, Inc.

**Saturday
September 26, 2026**

Wall Community Center,
501 Main Street, Wall, SD

Registration: 8:30 to 10 a.m.

Meeting called to order: 10 a.m.

**Voting on proposed amendments to the
Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws
and Board of Directors elections will
conclude during the meeting with
meal tickets distributed at the end.**

Many door prizes and a \$500 grand prize will be
given away to registered members during
the meeting. Must be present to win.

1-855-888-7777, option 3
goldenwest.com/annualmeeting

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