November 2026

Horizons

A Golden West Customer Newsletter
& Award-Winning Publication

74th Annual Meeting recap
PAGE 5

Photo contest winners
PAGE 6

New uses for AI
PAGE 7

Win Big Shop Local
PAGE 8



A mission for microgreens

Farmer plants seeds, forages, and cooks for a healthier, tastier future.

Golden West
Connecting you to what matters most.

A mission for microgreens

After seeing limited nutritious food options near his home in Mission, Fred Fast Horse started Rick's Micro Farm to provide fresh, high-quality microgreens and mushrooms.

"People can get more nutrients from a small serving of microgreens than from a larger salad," Fred says. "I want Rick's Micro Farm to be a place people can get themselves some produce and good food, experience farm life, and eventually help grow fellow vendors in the area."

Building on his cooking and foraging background, Fred launched his business as part of a 10-year plan to develop a commercial farm and expand access to fresh food for his tribal community. He randomly named it "Rick's" for creative flair with a personal touch.

Fred attends many farmers markets selling sweet pea and purple radish microgreens along with oyster, porcini, lobster, and morel mushrooms. His produce also makes it into restaurants and grocery stores around the region.

Microgreens are small vegetables harvested soon after sprouting, when the plants have the highest nutritional value. Fred grows the low-light crops in specialized sheds near his home as they require carefully controlled conditions and unique trays for different stages of growth. Each week, he produces large quantities to keep up with customer demand.

Cooking and cultivating knowledge

During the school year, Fred also works at Wakanyeja Ki Tokeyahci Wounspe Oti, which translates from Lakota to English as "Children First Learning Center." He prepares meals for nearly 75 students and staff members at this Lakota immersion school. His mornings begin at 6 a.m. as he uses local produce and bison to create meals inspired by Indigenous traditions.

"The kids eat 100% home cooked meals for breakfast and lunch," Fred says. "A lot of the ingredients are from me and local farmers. The school has a large-scale garden that provides a lot of produce that I can prepare food within the school's commercial-grade kitchen."

Outside school hours, Fred uses the facility to process and package foraged mushrooms for restaurants throughout the state. He also teaches hands-on foraging classes, spending several days with participants as they learn how to identify edible fungi and prepare them safely.

"I find it helpful to share knowledge with a human connection," Fred says. "Books can be helpful but going out and learning how nature works in person helps me bring more knowledge to others and helps them understand what they are looking at." ▸

Continued on page 4



Fred grows a variety of microgreens and mushrooms that he uses in recipes, sells at farmers markets, and offers to restaurants and grocery stores.

A mission for micorgreens

Continued from page 3

Fresh food path started early

Many of Fred's skills come from experiences that began at a young age and continued throughout his life. Through Lakota Youth Development, he learned about foraging and connecting with the natural world. Throughout high school, Fred spent three summers in Chicago doing carpentry and working in restaurants, where he expanded his culinary skills.

Along the way, he met Alessandro Martire, an Italian who is also a member of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe. Martire invited Fred and his wife, Felisha, to live in Italy a few years later, where he gained experience working on an olive farm, developing culinary techniques, and incorporating locally grown and foraged ingredients into meals.

In 2023, Fred took another step toward his long-term vision after receiving a $10,000 grant from the First Nations Development Institute. The funds helped him purchase farmland outside of Mission where he will expand his operation.

Expanding online community

Fred appreciates his Golden West service as his online presence helps him grow. Through social media and his internet connection, Fred shares updates, promotes products, and stays connected with customers throughout the state.

"Wi-Fi helps me survive in the online world," Fred says. "I used to drive places, and it was difficult to get one sale. Now, I can post online, and people will show up anywhere. I have an online store that I can promote for people to see exactly when my products are available."



"Wi-Fi helps me survive in the online world. I used to drive places, and it was difficult to get one sale. Now, I can post online, and people will show up anywhere."

– Fred Fast Horse









74th Annual Meeting brings votes and voices together

Over 150 members attended Golden West's 74th Annual Meeting on Sept. 26 in Wall to hear cooperative updates, vote on articles and bylaws amendments, and formally elect directors to the board.

President and CEO emphasize strong connections

President Randy Koerner led members in the Pledge of Allegiance before introducing the Board of Directors. He welcomed guests in attendance, reflected on Golden West's cooperative roots, thanked members for their trust, and highlighted the role neighbors play in building strong rural communities.

Koerner then introduced Golden West General Manager and CEO Nick Rogness, who shared updates on the cooperative's commitment to delivering fast, reliable internet across rural South Dakota. He highlighted fiber-optic expansion, community investment, employee dedication, and Golden West's strong financial position.

"As we celebrate 110 years of service, we look back with gratitude, and we look forward with confidence," Rogness said, with the organization first offering telephone service in 1916. "The need for strong connections will only continue to grow, and Golden West is ready to meet that need because of the foundation we have built together."

Directors elected, amendments passed

After hearing prerecorded speeches from candidates and a prerecorded overview covering the proposed amendments to the Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws, registered members voted on the amendments and in the board elections.

The membership elected four candidates to four-year terms on the Board of Directors. This included Angela Simons of Enning for District I, Lincoln Smith of Philip for District II, Penny Svenkeson of Hot Springs for District V, and Randy Koerner of Freeman for District VIII.

In addition, the membership approved the proposed amendments of the cooperative's Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws. The changes improve readability and clarify how entity members are eligible to serve on the Board of Directors in alignment with South Dakota Codified Law. Visit **goldenwest.com/bylaws** for more information.

Prizes and wrap-up

Before the meeting concluded, dozens of prizes were given out including gift cards, beef certificates, and cash. The $500 grand prize went to David and Arla Olson of Wall. The cooperative's 75th Annual Meeting will take place on Saturday, Sept. 25, 2027.



Four Directors Re-elected
L to R: **Randy Koerner** of District VIII, **Angela Simons** of District I, **Penny Svenkeson** of District V, and **Lincoln Smith** of District II were each elected to another four-year term on the Board of Directors.

Framing local landscapes

Over 220 customers submitted entries to the Golden West photo contest this year.
Adults and teens entered their images of local landscapes and candid nature moments from their area for others to review and vote.

ADULT DIVISION



1 **Rezty Gapuz** of Lower Brule won a GoPro Camera.



2 **Bob Newland** of Hot Springs won a $100 Visa gift card.



3 **Amy Hendrix** of Hartford won a $50 Visa gift card.

TEEN DIVISION



1 **Colter** of Wood won a $60 check.



2 **Taylor** of Bonesteel won a $40 check.



3 **Remington** of White River won a $20 check.

In each division, the three entries receiving the most "likes" on Golden West's Facebook page were selected as winners.

Miss the online classes?

Missed the live classes? Watch both sessions on demand!

Watch Online Power for tips on navigating the digital world and Home Entertainment to get the most from your Golden West cable TV and learn more about streaming.

Visit **goldenwest.com/classes** and complete the form to get links to watch the recordings before Dec. 30, 2026.

Four uses for AI you may not know about

We all wish we had a clone of ourselves to do our work so we can sit back and relax.

You can get one step closer to that with artificial intelligence (AI) platforms like ChatGPT, Google Gemini, and Microsoft Copilot.

You may have already used AI to help you write an email or plan a trip, but there are so many more ways AI can help. Here are four ways you can put it to work on everyday tasks.

1. **Convert photos of type and handwriting into editable text.** Find a recipe in a magazine you want to save? Take a photo and ask AI to turn it into text that you can save or print. The same works for handwritten information. Students, for example, can turn photos of notes into editable text that can be searched without flipping through pages.

2. **Look up things you can't quite remember.** Can't recall the title of a song or book? Describe what you remember, and AI can help narrow down possible matches. The more context you give, the quicker AI can locate it.

3. **Track down original sources.** If a news story references a study or you need a specific page that's buried on a large website, AI can find a link to the original source. This way you can get right to the original without clicking all over a website.

4. **Determine what you may have overlooked.** If you're planning to travel or host an event, you can give AI your completed checklist and relevant details, then ask what you may be missing. You might catch forgotten socks or a meal option for someone with an allergy before making a last-minute purchase.

You don't have to change how you do things to make AI useful. Turn tedious tasks into simple prompts and let AI handle some of the busywork while you get to focus on what matters most.



Stay safe as AI scams escalate

While AI can make everyday tasks easier, it comes with risks, too. Scammers use it for things like sending phishing emails or texts and impersonating people.

27%
of people targeted by AI scams fall victim to them – more than one in four.*

AI also makes fraudulent activity harder to recognize, so protect yourself by verifying requests before acting. Do so by calling the source at a previously known phone number or talking to them in person.

When using AI or the internet, do not share personally-identifiable information or sensitive data. A good rule of thumb is to only give AI information you would be comfortable sharing publicly.

** Sift, Q2 2025 Digital Trust Index*

PRESORTED
STANDARD
US POSTAGE
PAID
RAPID CITY, SD
PERMIT NO. 618

Golden West®
TELECOMMUNICATIONS
PO Box 411, Wall, SD 57790

Electronic Service Requested

2026 GOLDEN WEST HOLIDAY HOURS

Happy holidays from Golden West!

Thanksgiving
Nov. 26–27 · Closed

Christmas Eve & New Year's Eve
Dec. 24 & 31 · Closed noon to 5 p.m.

Christmas & New Year's Day
Dec. 25 & Jan. 1 · Closed

Technical support is always available at 1-855-888-7777, option 1.

WIN BIG SHOP LOCAL

Customer Appreciation Giveaway

Win a Local Shopping GIFT CERTIFICATE UP TO $500

1 Grand Prize	$500 Gift Certificate
2 Runners-Up	$250 Gift Certificate
20 Winners	$100 Gift Certificate

Register to WIN!
theexchangesd.com/giveaway

Those without internet access can call 1-855-888-7777, option 3, to register.

You must be a Golden West residential customer at least 18 years of age to register. Only one entry allowed per household. No purchase necessary. **You must list a retail or service merchant in a Golden West community along with their phone number when you enter. Entries close at 8 a.m. Monday, Dec. 7, 2026.** Drawing will be held and winners posted on the Golden West Facebook page and website by 5 p.m. that day.

Golden West®
Connecting you to what matters most.

SMART RURAL COMMUNITY

HORIZONS – Volume 27, Number 6
Horizons is an award-winning customer newsletter published every two months by Golden West Telecommunications.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to
Golden West, PO Box 411, Wall, SD 57790
Dee Sleep, Editor • goldenwest.com • 1-855-888-7777