

January 2026

# Horizons

A Golden West Customer Newsletter  
& Award-Winning Publication

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## Kickflips and Community

Pine Ridge skateboarder turns his  
passion into a space for local youth.

 **Golden West**  
Connecting you to what matters most.



"I WANT TO GIVE PEOPLE CONFIDENCE AND HELP THEM BE IMPACTFUL. SOME PEOPLE DON'T REALIZE HOW MUCH THEY CAN IMPACT THEIR COMMUNITY – EVEN I FELT LIKE THAT BEFORE."

- KYLE MESTETH

# Kickflips and Community

Pine Ridge skateboarder turns his passion into a space for local youth.





Skateboarders from around the state attend the third skateboarding competition that Kyle coordinated at the Lakota Nation Invitational in December.



## Kyle Mesteth's passion for skateboarding started young, and the sport's Olympic recognition helped inspire him to develop a place where local youth can kickflip and kick back.

Today he leads Ground Control, a non-profit indoor skate park and creative space in his hometown of Pine Ridge. The space gives kids a place to be active, express themselves, and feel a sense of belonging. In addition to skating, Ground Control provides a gathering spot for playing music, recording videos, sharing small performances, and more.

"I want to continue to build opportunities and encourage the next generation to be better than us," he says. "I want to give people confidence and help them be impactful. Some people don't realize how much they can impact their community - even I felt like that before."

### Growing from the ground up

The free skate park grows participation by coordinating events and mentoring youth. It helps develop leaders through programs like Thrasher School, where experienced skaters teach newcomers.

Ground Control increases its exposure through social media with growing audiences on Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. Kyle loves hearing how kids support each other and says it makes the kids' day when they're recognized around town from a skating video. Kyle loves hearing how kids support each other and says it makes the kids' day when they're recognized around town from a skating video.

Kyle built Ground Control during the pandemic after he helped hand out donated skateboards at the direction of community elders Tiny Decory and Eileen Janis, and young skaters kept coming back. He noticed the positive impact on his community and knew he wanted to do more.

"I had the idea to get the building for Ground Control to organize more skate competitions with winter closing in," Kyle explains. "I have gotten lots of help to upgrade the building and make changes."

### Family comes full circle

Kyle started skateboarding in the 90s, and his father built his first ramp. He attended Pine Ridge High School and still jokes about the "no skateboarding" sign he used to see there. Now, he coaches the school's skateboarding team.

After his father passed, Kyle says his skateboarding experience came full circle. He bought power tools to build ramps for other kids learning to ride, including his now 10- and 2-year-old sons. Kyle's younger sister, Tiara, also regularly visits Ground Control after he encouraged her to start skateboarding.

Kyle's interest in Olympic sports came naturally. His maternal grandfather was a first cousin to 1964 Olympic gold medalist Billy Mills, who Kyle also viewed like a grandfather. More than 60 years later, Mills is still the only man from the Western Hemisphere to have won gold in the 10k race.

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After falling in love with skateboarding at Ground Control, Ezra Beaver shows off tricks in the competition.

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### Wi-Fi meets wheels

Ground Control relies on Golden West's high-speed internet connection for its daily business operations and to connect them to creative software and digital content. All the skateboarders also use the location's Golden West service to learn new tricks, make their own skating videos, and more.

"All our skaters are connected right now. They come in and use our Wi-Fi," Kyle says. "Our internet wasn't good until we got hooked up to fiber-optic. When I started building ramps, we didn't have internet access and now it powers our computers for editing, office work, and more."

### A future for skaters

Thanks to Kyle, skateboarding has also been part of the Lakota Nation Invitational for the past three years. He coordinates the Shredd Nation Skate Tournament during the large, annual multi-sport and cultural event in Rapid City which includes a fashion show in addition to recognition for the best skaters.

In May of this year, Kyle will travel to the Netherlands following a museum exhibit that displayed vests he designed and made for himself and other Ground Control skaters. He hopes to open more locations to inspire youth worldwide to stay active and create art, starting with a skateboard.

# Advancing educational opportunities

## Don't miss your chance to earn a scholarship

Golden West awards \$1,000 scholarships to about 45 qualifying students every year to help offset tuition costs. Since the program began in 1999, the cooperative has awarded more than \$1.1 million to graduating seniors in Golden West-served communities statewide.

One recipient is selected from each high school Golden West serves. One at-large scholarship is also awarded to a student who is either homeschooled or attends high school outside of the service area but whose parents receive Golden West services.

"Education plays a critical role in the future of our communities," says Golden West General Manager and CEO Nick Rogness. "Scholarships help students pursue their career goals, so they can build a strong future for rural South Dakota."

## Applications open for 2026 graduates

Golden West encourages all high school seniors who meet the following criteria to apply for the regular or at-large scholarship:

- The student's parents or legal guardians must reside within one of Golden West's telephone service areas and subscribe to Golden West phone or internet service.
- Applicant must be a high school senior.
- Scholarship awards may only be applied to post-secondary institutions.
- Applicant must have taken and received a score from the American College Test (ACT) or the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) before applying.
- Recipient must take 12 or more credits (or equivalent to a full-time course load) in the fall semester following graduation. Funds are shared for the spring semester.

Students should contact their local high school to apply. At-large applications are available online at [goldenwest.com/scholarships](http://goldenwest.com/scholarships). The application deadline is March 16, 2026.

# Free TV?



**Bargain streaming devices can  
bargain with your security**

**Third-party streaming boxes promise free access to movies, TV shows, and live channels, but they come with many other significant costs.**

**W**hile these unlicensed media players have grown in popularity and may look harmless, they rely on illegal sources for content and create serious security risks and legal liabilities for both you and Golden West. They can cause big issues not just for the household using them, but for everyone connected to the Golden West network and beyond.

## **Meeting legal obligations**

While owning these media players isn't illegal, using them to stream copyrighted content without permission is. Many people may not realize they are pirating programming, but once Golden West is notified a device is violating copyright laws, the cooperative must require that the activity stops.

Along with legitimate streaming services, Golden West works closely with trusted content partners to provide reliable, high-quality TV entertainment. Allowing piracy devices to operate unchecked undermines those partnerships and threatens future viewing opportunities.

Golden West cannot fix or troubleshoot these devices. To protect your connection and personal information, you should use licensed streaming services with trusted equipment such as Roku, Amazon Firestick, and Chromecast devices.

## **Think twice before connecting**

These gray-market streaming devices appeal to customers by offering access to content at discounted prices. But the trade-offs are steep: legal exposure, cybersecurity threats, and unstable performance. If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.



### **Protecting your network and you**

To avoid detection, some of these off-brand streaming boxes frequently change their device name on the Wi-Fi network. They often send and receive content from unverified overseas servers and run outdated software with known vulnerabilities.

#### **As a result, these devices can:**

- Spread malware
- Launch denial-of-service attacks, flooding networks
- Scan other devices on the home network
- Create backdoors for hackers



# 2025 Shop Local Giveaway Winners Congratulations

Golden West gave these 23 customers a little extra money in December. Their names were drawn to receive a gift certificate to the local merchant of their choice in the 2025 Win Big, Shop Local giveaway.

## \$500 Grand Prize Winner

Julie Ellingson ..... Dell Rapids ..... County Fair Food Store

## \$250 Runners-up Prize Winners

Christina Decker ..... Winner ..... Dollar General  
Katherine Hunter ..... Kyle ..... Kyle Grocery

## \$100 Prize Winners

Nicole Hanisch .....	Humboldt .....	Friendly's Fuel Stop
Mike Pischke .....	Bridgewater .....	Meyer Motor
Janet Vander May .....	Kadoka .....	People's Market
Renee Engelland .....	Armour .....	The Country Florist
Karla Vanden Berge .....	Corsica .....	Corsica Hardware
Ann Foley .....	Philip .....	Philip Hardware
Norma Olson .....	Witten .....	Winner Super Foods
Ronda Dennis .....	Belvidere .....	People's Market
Marilyn Drewitz .....	Wall .....	Golden West
Tell Sanderfur .....	Hill City .....	Krull's Market
Inez White Hawk .....	Manderson .....	Abe's
Cindy Long .....	Enning .....	Cammack Ranch Supply
Kyrie Helseth .....	Hartford .....	Sunshine Foods
Barb Jons .....	St. Charles .....	Cahoy's General Store
Clara Gruber .....	Freeman .....	Jamboree Foods
Jodi Brisk .....	Burke .....	Brun's Market
Jack Kyriss .....	Lesterville .....	Ron's Market
Tracy Buckley .....	Oelrichs .....	Sonny's Super Foods
John Buss .....	Colton .....	Dollar General
Norm Oney .....	Hot Springs .....	Lynn's Dakotamart

**Shopping local supports your neighbors and strengthens your community every day. Watch for your chance to enter the 2026 giveaway starting in November!**

# State official shares easy ways to avoid cyber scams

Scams can happen anytime, and criminals continue to find new ways to target people.



"It is important for people to stay educated, so they can spot scams before they become a victim."

**A**ccording to Jody Gillaspie, the director of consumer protection with the South Dakota Attorney General's Office, education is the most important way to avoid common scam tactics.

"The strategies of scammers have changed in the last seven years," Jody says. "They target people by spoofing phone numbers to local area codes or by using information found on social media to impersonate loved ones."

Jody says people should be cautious but explains there are ways to protect yourself. If something sounds too good to be true, it likely indicates a scam. If anyone asks you for money, be sure to ask questions or use other resources to confirm the legitimacy of their request.

Some scammers may pretend to be a charity or ask for donations to a cause. Jody recommends giving to local causes you know or visiting [give.org](http://give.org)

or [charitynavigator.org](http://charitynavigator.org) to check the legitimacy of a charity. You can also refer to the IRS if you are unsure, since most charities must be registered.

There are other warning signs to watch for. Scammers often ask for money through untraceable methods such as gift cards. They may do this by posing as a romantic interest or pretending to be a grandchild in need, but things like gift cards can also be used in other scams.

"There are more scams being developed each day, some involving cryptocurrency, investment opportunities, and more," Jody says. "It is important for people to stay educated, so they can spot scams before they become a victim."

By slowing down, verifying information, and knowing the red flags, you can better protect your personal and financial information.



## Broadcasters increase retransmission fees again

Prices have been rising each year for almost everything, and this includes costs associated with cable TV. One of these increases involves out of state corporations continually demanding more money through retransmission consent fees so subscribers can watch local network stations.

Retransmission consent fees are what affiliate broadcast stations – the local channels for NBC, CBS, ABC, and Fox – charge cable operators like Golden West to retransmit their signals. These same stations raise these fees annually for cable operators and their cable TV customers.

In 2026, Golden West cable subscribers will once again see an adjustment in monthly retransmission consent fees. While the cooperative would love to keep cable rates and fees the same, forces beyond the co-op's control make this impossible.

Golden West passes all retransmission consent fees collected on to the broadcast affiliates. The cooperative does not keep one cent of these fees and would not be allowed to broadcast the network signals without paying retransmission consent fees.

For more information about retransmission consent fees, visit [goldenwest.com/retransmission](http://goldenwest.com/retransmission).

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- Hot Springs  
*Mueller Center // Annex Room*  
*Tuesday, Mar. 17*  
*9:30-10:30 a.m.*



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