

September 2025

# Horizons

A Golden West Customer Newsletter  
& Award-Winning Publication

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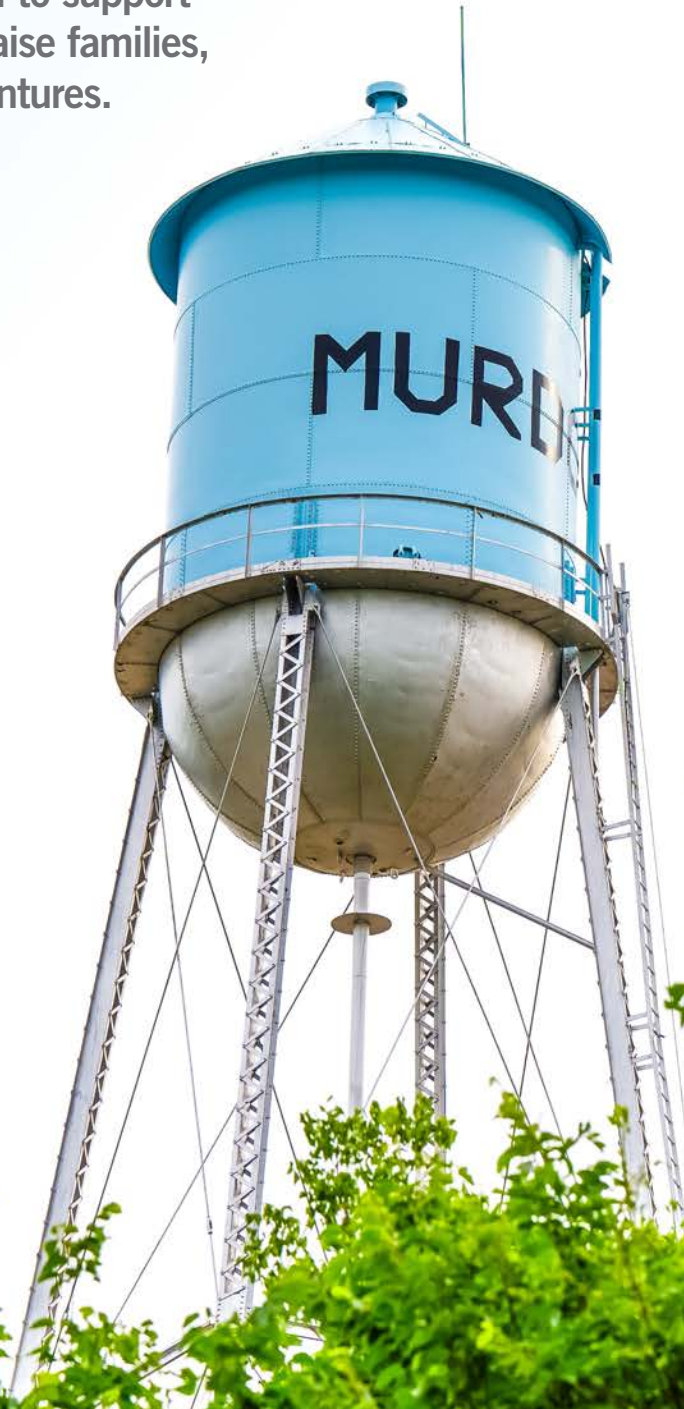
# Hometown Heartbeat

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their community, raise families,  
and launch new ventures.



# Hometown Heartbeat

Three sisters return to support their community, raise families, and launch new ventures.



## Sisters Ashley Geigle, Sophie McKenzie, and Kamaria Labrier may have taken different paths early in life, but they all returned to build a life in Jones County.

Together, they represent different parts of the community they love and use their talents to help it thrive.

Each chose the county – and specifically Murdo – not only for their own hometown but also to be their children’s hometown. They contribute to the community by encouraging businesses and investing in economic development, baking and selling cookies from a commercial kitchen, and running a boutique selling modern fashion.

### More opportunities in Murdo

The sisters each spent time away from Murdo after high school. The oldest of the three, Ashley Geigle, left for college, graduated, and lived in Hawaii for a year before returning home. She and her husband, Seth, raise their children where she feels most connected.

“I always felt like I was going to come back,” Ashley says. “I didn’t know exactly what I wanted to do with my degree, but I always had a vision for Murdo. When I heard about the position for economic development director, I wanted to go for it.”

As Murdo’s first economic development director, Ashley works to attract new residents to the area and support local businesses. She also hopes visitors see the value of life in Murdo and choose to make it their home.

In 2025, Ashley earned the Governor’s Rising Tourism Star Award for her work to help the community embrace the strengths of tourism and visitors in the community. She wants to see the continued success of

the city and help improve the economy.

In May, Ashley and Seth purchased a building downtown with hopes of transforming it into a community meeting and study area. While much work remains, Ashley hopes it will become a place for people to gather and connect.

### Baking smiles from home

Sophie McKenzie, the youngest, lives with her husband, Craig, on their family ranch north of Murdo. She also spent time abroad in New Zealand, Canada, and Australia but always knew she wanted to live in Murdo.

Sophie first taught high school but shifted paths after her second child was born. Wanting more time with her sons, she returned to her passion for baking and decorating cookies in 2017. The next year, she created Sugar Coated by Sophie, a full-time business that allows her to work from home while caring for her children.

She personalizes every order, designing a collection of cookies with different shapes around a theme. In her commercial kitchen on the ranch, she also hosts occasional instructional baking classes for all ages.

### Local clothing where it counts

Unlike Sophie, Kamaria Labrier didn’t think she would return after college. She interned in Washington, D.C., for six months and considered staying there but ultimately came home because she missed ranch life. Soon after graduating, Kamaria married Chauncey, and the couple ranches south of Murdo with their four children.

*Continued on page 4*



Ashley Geigle



Sophie McKenzie



Kamaria Labrier



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Kamaria opened Prairie Chic Boutique in 2013 and began selling clothing. Since then, Chauncey built a space for her shop above their garage, allowing her to work from home while offering a valuable online service for the community.

"I enjoy helping local guys purchase gifts for their wives and styling outfits for customers," Kamaria says. "I can also provide in-town delivery to cut customer shipping costs."

### Caring for each other

For the sisters, Murdo is a place where people take care of each other. In addition to Ashley's work with the city, Kamaria serves on the school board, helping to shape the future for Jones County schools. Sophie has also provided her services and space for the South Dakota Board of Tourism, annual community events, and more.

Their dedication to the community is a sentiment echoed by many Murdo residents. "There's nowhere better to raise a family than in Murdo," Kamaria says. "We're a close-knit community and we all take care of each other's kids. For a small town, there are so many opportunities."

### Reliable hometown service

High-speed internet plays a big role in helping the sisters focus on what matters most. Kamaria says the fiber-optic upgrade that her ranch received in late 2022 transformed her business, changing uploads from an overnight process to seconds.

"Everything relies on the internet these days," Kamaria says. "Golden West makes it possible for me to run my boutique and still be here for my family and my community."

Murdo sits at the intersection of Interstate 90 and SD Highway 83. The area boasts tourist stops, award-winning food, and more.

Ashley depends on reliable service to collaborate with people and promote Murdo's assets to potential residents and visitors. Sophie uses Golden West to manage her website, connect with customers, and share her work on social media.

"I do most of my business online, especially now with the rise of the internet," Sophie says. "I built my website, sell cookies, and run my social media with my Golden West service. The internet is how I grew my business and was able to get people to learn about me."

With Golden West's service, Ashley also knows what people around the community say. When the fiber upgrade came to Murdo, she says it was monumental for many people. It allows the three sisters – and the people in the town they love – to focus on what matters most with their families and their work.

"Everything relies on the internet these days. Golden West makes it possible for me to run my boutique and still be here for my family and my community."

- Kamaria Labrier



# 2024 Annual Meeting MINUTES

**The Annual Meeting** of the members of Golden West Telecommunications Cooperative, Inc., was called to order at 10 a.m., September 28, 2024, at the Wall Community Center in Wall, South Dakota by President Jeff Nielsen. Said meeting was held pursuant to notice thereof as required by law. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Jeff Nielsen.

President Nielsen 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 Nielsen called upon Tanner Handcock, 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 Nielsen introduced the special guests in attendance at the meeting.

President Nielsen asked that the minutes of the 2023 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 Nielsen welcomed the cooperative members and introduced the present Board of Directors of Golden West.

President Nielsen then delivered his presidential report. He reported the continued financial success of the cooperative. Nielsen noted the services and improvements made by the cooperative aid members in accessing their technological needs.

He thanked the employees and members of the cooperative for their hard work and feedback to build a brighter future for Golden West.

Next, President Nielsen called on General Manager/CEO Denny Law to present his annual report. Mr. Law highlighted the investments Golden West makes, including \$500 million put into fiber-optic technology since 2011, which improved the speed and reliability and increased opportunities for connecting members to what matters most. He outlined the advantages of fiber, including improved service offerings and reliability, more options for local businesses and education, improved healthcare access, and its future-ready capabilities. He closed by thanking customers and members for their involvement and support, noting they are the neighbors, friends, and family who make up the cooperative.

President Nielsen 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 II** – Tanner Handcock (four-year term) one vacancy with one candidate

**District V** – Ken Tonsager, Jr. (four-year term) one vacancy with one candidate

**District IX** – Nate Jones (four-year term) one vacancy with one candidate

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

**District II** – Tanner Handcock, incumbent

**District V** – Ken Tonsager, Jr.

**District IX** – Nate Jones

Darla Pollman Rogers, attorney, introduced the director candidates for the

**District III** – Terry Hand and Jodi Smith

Next, 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 Mary Simington, Marvin Van Kekerix, and Jerry Johannesen.

Drawings were held to give away more than 25 door prizes.

President Nielsen called for old business. There was none.


President Nielsen called for new business. There was none.

Then, Darla Pollman Rogers, attorney, announced the election results with Jodi Smith elected director for District III (four-year term).

Meal tickets were distributed to those in attendance.

The grand prize \$500 check went to Terry and Barbara Wentz of Philip.

President Nielsen adjourned the meeting at 11:08 a.m.



Tanner Handcock, Secretary

# Empowering tomorrow's leaders

## with 2025 scholarship winners

Since 1999, Golden West has awarded over 1,000 scholarships to high-school graduates from over 40 schools across the service territory, totaling more than \$1 million. The cooperative is proud to support future leaders recognized for their academic excellence, extracurricular and civic involvement, and dedication.

### Golden West is excited to introduce the 2025 scholarship winners.

Armour High School.....	Isaac Wunder
Avon High School .....	Carmindy Ferwerda
Bennett County High School.....	Wyatt Huber
Bon Homme High School .....	Nevaeh Myers
Bridgewater High School .....	Candice Stahl
Burke High School .....	Kiana Liewer
Canistota High School.....	Bailey Spicer
Colome High School.....	Westlie Cahoy
Corsica High School.....	Tate Tolsma
Crazy Horse High School.....	Ben Osite
Custer High School .....	Kayda Hanis
Dell Rapids High School.....	Dawson Hohn
Edgemont High School.....	Katelyn Lauritsen
Faith High School.....	Emilee Smith
Freeman Academy .....	Jada Buse
Freeman High School.....	Lindsey Maske
Gregory High School .....	Cole Serr
Hot Springs High School .....	Brylee Grill
Jones County High School .....	Taya Iversen
Kadoka High School.....	Don Schofield

Lakota Tech High School .....	Jerrick Thompson
Lower Brule High School .....	Martina Desphy
Marion High School .....	Finley McConniel
Menno High School.....	Ellyana Ulmer
Montrose High School .....	Makarie Wiebersick
New Underwood High School.....	Addison Larson
Oelrichs High School.....	Zachary Hudspeth
Philip High School .....	Josie Jones
Pine Ridge High School.....	Martina Watters
Plankinton High School .....	Abby Davis
Red Cloud High School .....	Justice Whalen
Scotland High School.....	Trinity Bietz
St. Mary's High School.....	Jodie Klein
Stanley County High School.....	Sarah Fosheim
Sturgis Brown High School .....	Porter Deering
Todd County High School .....	Harold Heinert
Tri-Valley High School .....	Savannah Schulte
Wall High School .....	Jace Blasius
West Central High School.....	Lillian Goehring
White River High School.....	Riley Bouman
Winner High School .....	Jackson Bachmann
At Large Scholarship.....	Josie Brouwer

For more information on this year's scholarship awardees, visit [goldenwest.com/scholarships](https://goldenwest.com/scholarships).





# Back to busy?

*Upgrade your speed  
and save* **\$75**

Back-to-school season is in full swing, bringing more devices, more screen time, and more demand on your Wi-Fi. Whether it's homework, Zoom calls, or streaming a game, when everyone's online, speed matters.

**ADDED SAFETY**

Raising kids in the digital age just got easier.

**Get Ultimate Wi-Fi FREE for six months.**

**Want more control over your home internet?** Golden West's Ultimate Wi-Fi lets you manage screen time, pause access, and keep your family safe — right from your phone.

**Try one or both offers!**

**[goldenwest.com/backtobusy](https://goldenwest.com/backtobusy)**

*Sign up through October 20, 2025. Restrictions and limitations apply.*

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Scan for info  
or to Vote!

 **Last chance  
to vote before  
the meeting!**  
Vote online by September 23!



**HORIZONS – Volume 26, Number 5**

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

Can't attend?  
VOTE ONLINE BY SEPTEMBER 23!

Members are invited to the

# 73<sup>rd</sup> Annual Meeting

Golden West Telecommunications Cooperative, Inc.

**Saturday  
September 27, 2025**

Wall Community Center,  
501 Main Street, Wall, SD

**Registration:** 8:30 to 10 a.m.

**Meeting Called to Order:** 10 a.m.

**Board of Directors election voting 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](https://goldenwest.com/annualmeeting)

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