

THE

LINK



DAKOTA
CENTRAL



PAGE 2 | GENERAL MANAGER REPORT

**Wishing you magic
and cheer this year**

PAGE 6 | BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

The Farmstead



A letter from our General Manager

As we find ourselves already entering the holiday season, I can't help but reflect on the many changes and blessings that have occurred throughout the year. This is the time to look back not just at the things that have changed, but to look with gratitude to the people who have been there through it all. As the saying goes it takes a village—and I believe the village is what makes our rural communities so special.

The holidays bring a sense of joy, excitement, and togetherness. At Dakota Central, our greatest wish is to help bring a little extra magic to your planning and festivities. Whether you are streaming your favorite Christmas classic movies, playing a great holiday playlist on Spotify (at my house, our holiday playlist is titled "Twas the Nizzle b4

Christmizzle," curated by my daughters), or utilizing your broadband connection to find the perfect present on the kids' Gifful lists, we aim to make your life a little easier and a lot more connected. The Gifful app is a great way to create the perfect wishlist to share with family and friends this Christmas; we encourage you to try it out!

At the end of the day, it is all about people. We are extremely grateful for the relationships we have built with you, our customers, over the years. We hope you always know that we care and are here to help. In this edition of the Dakota Central Link, we share the story of The Farmstead, a local café and coffee shop bringing people together in rural Medina. We understand each of us has a need to connect with our neighbors, family, and friends, and what a wonderful way to keep our small rural communities vibrant! Speaking of vibrant rural communities, we are proud to be an NTCA Smart Rural Community Provider! Learn more about what that means for your community on the following page. We are happy to provide our local businesses with small business managed Wi-Fi, secure guest networks and point of sale connections so

operations run smoothly, allowing the focus to remain on the people.

I would like to extend a special thank you to the hardworking, dedicated team we have here at Dakota Central. They are truly committed to making your experience positive and stress-free. I am also grateful for the vision and support of our board of directors. It has been a joy to see everyone come together during this year of transition and to look with excitement toward what the New Year holds.

Your trust and support mean the world to us. We will continue to work hard every day to ensure that you are connected to the things that matter most. While I know this is often a busy, hectic season, I hope that you can find a quiet, peaceful moment to take it all in. It is with a grateful heart and a joyful spirit that I wish you all peace and happiness.

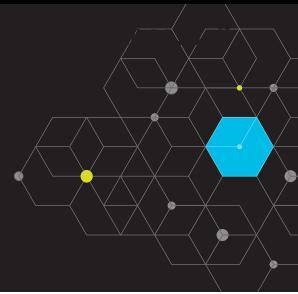
With warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Holly Utke".

Holly Utke
Chief Executive Officer/
General Manager



WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO LIVE IN A SMART RURAL COMMUNITY?



A **Smart Rural CommunitySM** is about connection—neighbors to friends, teachers to students, doctors to patients, new businesses to customers, and a community to the world. **Connected by fiber broadband we can achieve more, together.**

Smart Rural Communities are made possible by fiber-based broadband providers and the teachers, farmers, doctors, businesses (large and small), and others who are committed to driving growth and creating opportunities that help their communities thrive.

As leaders in broadband technology, Smart Rural Community providers deliver cutting-edge communications services in rural spaces throughout the country. Their services open new opportunities for students and business owners, enabling remote regions to remain competitive in expanding national and global markets.

SMART RURAL COMMUNITYSM BROADBAND CHANGES THE GAME ACROSS THE BOARD.

AGRICULTURE: Fiber broadband from Premier Communications (Sioux Center, Iowa) allows local farmers to use broadband-enabled sensors to monitor livestock and soil conditions. Precision ag tech decreases labor costs while increasing operational efficiencies.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: Jefferson Telecom (Jefferson, Iowa) partnered with local and state leaders to attract a digital think tank to bring technology jobs to the area, made possible because of high-speed broadband access. In an age where every business needs internet, SRC providers are key partners in revitalizing rural America.

EDUCATION: In 2020, Smart Rural Community providers across North Dakota banded together to ensure that schoolchildren had internet access at home so they could learn remotely. Thanks to them, 99.8% of rural students in North Dakota have broadband access at home. SRC providers like Mountain Telephone (West Liberty, Ky.) and Shawnee Communications (Equality, Ill.) also partner with local high schools to provide equipment and offer digital training.

HEALTH CARE: Roper St. Francis (RSF) Moncks Corner Medical Plaza uses broadband from Home Telecom to call on telepsychiatrists at any time, reducing the average stay at the hospital from 36 to 4 hours. Rural telehealth enables, on average, more than \$30,000 in savings per medical facility in avoided travel expenses, lost wages and hospital costs.

SMALL BUSINESS: Broadband access from YK Communications (Ganado, Texas) has allowed local boutique Ruby & Yaya's to grow from a vendor booth retail market to its own brick-and-mortar store. Having high-speed internet service has allowed small businesses to stay local to Smart Rural Communities and sell products online.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT: Gila River Telecommunications, Inc., (Chandler, Ariz.) is developing a future workforce with its subsidiary nonprofit Digital Connect Initiative (DCI), which works with local schools, community colleges and employers to create a career pipeline for tech jobs.



SMART RURAL COMMUNITIES ARE SERVED BY PROVEN PROVIDERS WHO:

- Offer 100 Mbps broadband to 50% or more of service territory
- Have broadband subscription rates of at least 50%
- Commit to SRC's mission of collaborative innovation

To learn more about NTCA's Smart Communities, visit:
www.smartruralcommunity.org

Company News

Harvest Highlights

This fall was a whirlwind of exciting events, and we've loved every moment of connecting with our communities and amazing customers. We kicked off the season by joining the lively homecoming parades at Jamestown High School and the University of Jamestown, as well as the University of Jamestown's career fair.

In October, we proudly supported the Great Plains Food Pantry in Carrington, making a positive impact on our community. Mark your calendars for the next mobile food pantry on December 13th at 10 a.m., hosted at the Dakota Central location in Carrington.

We had a blast sponsoring a University of Jamestown football in October. Tailgating and cheering for our team created lasting memories, and we're already eagerly anticipating doing it all over again next year!

Let's not forget the spooktacular Trunk or Treat in Carrington. If you struck a pose for a photo at the Carrington Trunk or Treat, check out our Facebook page to find your snapshot!

As we bid farewell to this fantastic fall, brimming with interaction and community engagement, we're eagerly looking forward to the upcoming events in the next month and beyond into the new year. Thank you for being an integral part of our community journey!



Community Classes

Streaming TV 101 with Laura

This fall, we proudly hosted five community classes to empower our valued customers with complete knowledge about Streaming TV. Guided by our knowledgeable and patient help desk representative, Laura, these classes have proven to be an invaluable resource. While the initial three sessions in September were held at our offices, we have expanded our reach into neighboring communities.

In November, we took our classes to both Medina and Courtenay. Recognizing the inevitable shift toward streaming as the future of television, our goal is to equip individuals in our communities with essential information to navigate and thrive in this evolving landscape.

Whether you're a seasoned streamer or a newcomer to the exciting realm of streaming television, our classes are designed to provide you with the essentials to elevate your streaming experience. From fundamental setup to advanced features, our topics cater to a diverse audience, ensuring that everyone gains valuable insights. Keep an eye out for our upcoming classes as we continue to enhance the streaming television experience for everyone in our community.





Welcome to the team!

As the trend has been, we have again welcomed two new employees. Here's to embracing more change and growth together!

Dion Schlenker

Field Technician, Jamestown

Hometown: Kulm, ND

Experience: "I attended NDSCS and have a degree in electronic technology. I worked as an office equipment technician for the last 30 years."

Looking forward to on the job/favorite part so far: "I look forward to learning new skills and the challenges of new technology. I also enjoy the team atmosphere among my new coworkers."

Fun Fact: "I enjoy fishing and golfing whenever I can and also play on a Jamestown dart league."

Brandan Schmitz

Network Technician, Jamestown

Hometown: Inver Grove Heights, MN

Experience: I've done two internships at NASA's Langley Research Center in Virginia developing deep space satellite communications software (being used with the Artemis missions). I am also a Site Reliability Engineer with Intellective Consulting in Burnsville, MN.

Looking forward to on the job/favorite part so far: "My favorite part of the job so far is that it does not involve sitting at a desk all day long like my previous jobs. Instead, I get to be out in the community supporting the needs of the local businesses and working with great people who have a lot of knowledge and experience I can learn from!"

Fun Fact: "Some of my biggest fears include drowning and extreme heights, yet I am a scuba diver and enjoy sky diving. I enjoy coaching the high school robotics team and have been doing that since founding the team in 2018."

If you were a superhero, what would your superpower be: "Superspeed: I tend to pack so much into my days, the ability to do things faster would really be hand"





THE FARMSTEAD



To check out The Farmstead visit [101 2nd Ave NW, Medina, ND](https://www.the-farmstead.com)

Business Spotlight: The Farmstead

The Farmstead, founded by Bonnie Hofmann, has quickly become more than just a local eatery; it's a manifestation of dreams and a hub for community connection. Since its doors swung open in May 2023, this quaint Medina café has been serving up not just delicious treats but also a unique atmosphere that sets it apart from the rest.

Inspired by personal challenges and the desire to better her community, Bonnie's journey led her to dream beyond just a café—a dream she's had since she was a kid. Her dream began to feel more like a reality when the opportunity arose to purchase the old Medina General Store. With the building being large enough for multiple businesses, Bonnie decided to tackle the growing need for childcare first by renovating the larger area of the building with her husband and kids. Now, since the continuation of the renovations has been completed, Bonnie's dream of having a café has come to life. The building, now housing both The Farmstead and the Country Kids Corral daycare, forms a harmonious relationship; each business contributing to the other's sustainability.

"It was my desire to serve in my community that really pushed me to pursue this," Bonnie said.

What sets The Farmstead apart is a commitment to being more than just a place to grab a quick bite. Bonnie's journey, from a chef's assistant at a Colorado dude ranch to experiences in burger and ice cream

shops, forms the culinary backbone of The Farmstead. A Bachelor of Applied Science degree in Energy Management adds a business perspective. The menu, inspired by Bonnie's travels, boasts specialty drinks, espresso delights, and a diverse array of breakfast and lunch options different from the other choices in town.

"I also wanted the full coffee experience," Bonnie explained. "I know how much the teachers in Medina love coming to get a specialty coffee and it makes my heart so happy."

At The Farmstead, it's not just about the food; it's about creating an atmosphere where the community thrives. The peace that permeates the space makes it an ideal spot for both a casual latte catch-up and a cozy meal.

Despite quickly becoming a local gem, The Farmstead faces the typical challenges of a small business. Establishing brand recognition in a new market proves to be a difficulty, with passing foot traffic often oblivious to the café's existence. Bonnie is also juggling multiple responsibilities, from being a parent of four to ensuring the success of more than one business—a delicate dance of time management that has

kept Bonnie on her toes. Striking the right balance between being adequately staffed and maintaining a consistent schedule is an ongoing concern. Bonnie is hopeful that by summer, with the help of high schoolers, she will be able to go back to being open five days a week. Until then, she has decided to always be open on Thursdays and Fridays. Check out The Farmstead's Facebook page for schedule updates and specials.

Behind the scenes, Dakota Central plays a pivotal role in The Farmstead's operations.

"Dakota Central set up a network in my building to add both security and public Wi-Fi," Bonnie explained. "I told them what I needed, and they were able to install it. From multiple computers, TVs, and a POS system, to multiple phone lines, everything works flawlessly."

Peering into the future, Bonnie has grand plans for The Farmstead. Beyond just being a café, retail sales featuring floral arrangements and a boutique are on the horizon. This expansion aims to transform the café into a one-stop local shop, offering not only delectable treats but also a curated selection of gifts, fashion, and décor.

For Bonnie, the joy of running The Farmstead is deeply rooted in connecting with customers and letting creativity flow into the culinary creations. After pouring so much time and energy into it, the café is more than a business; it's a canvas for expression, where every recipe tells a story, and every customer interaction adds a stroke of color.



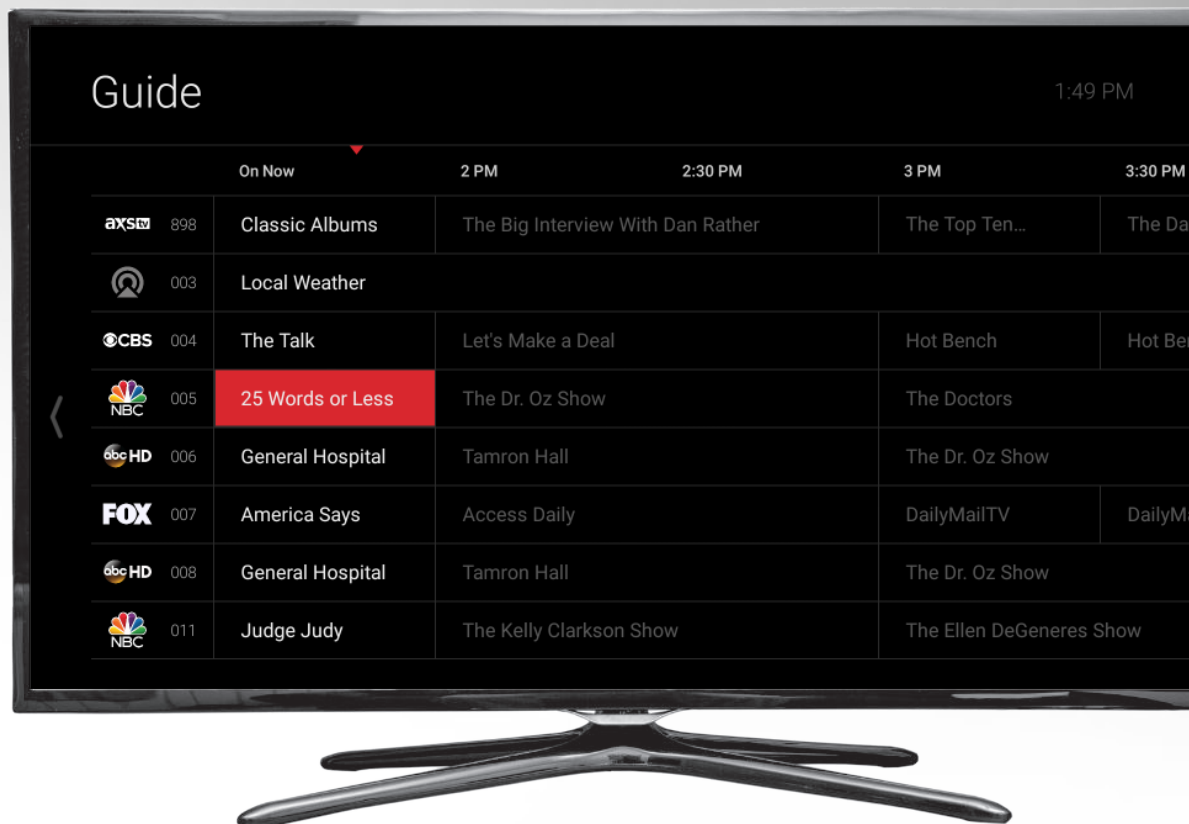
UPGRADE YOUR TV!

Trade in your TV boxes for a new experience! Go beyond the basics with one easy upgrade. Enjoy the TV experience you know, plus new features you'll love—all for the same price. Access some of your favorite shows and movies on demand, and still catch your local news and sports live! And it's all available on the TV, laptop or mobile device of your choice. Watch your favorites when, where and exactly how you want. It's the best of both worlds!

Benefits of Streaming TV

- **Seamless and simple (no switching TV inputs!)**
- **Includes local channels and familiar guide**
- **DVR features: record and playback live TV; start over and catch up in real time**
- **Search for live TV, plus recorded and on-demand programs**
- **Voice control: Use Google and Alexa to find shows and channel-tune**
- **Watch wherever you want, on your preferred device; enjoy a multi-screen experience**

It's the perfect time to try streaming TV! Stop by one of our locations during business hours for a demo of the Dakota Central TV app or give us a call for more information!



Scholarship Opportunities

Dakota Central Offering \$8,000 in Scholarships!

The Dakota Central Board of Directors is pleased to announce the 23rd year of the Dakota Central Scholarship Program and the eighth year of the Jerry Eissing Memorial Scholarship. The Dakota Central awards consist of five \$1,500 scholarships, and the Jerry Eissing Memorial Scholarship is one award of \$500. The Jerry Eissing Memorial Scholarship will be awarded to an individual with plans to attend a tech school or obtain a degree in a tech-related field. That means high school seniors have a chance to be awarded a total of \$2,000 in scholarships! To be eligible, the applicant must currently be a high school senior who plans to attend a college, university, vocational or technical post-secondary school. The student's parent(s) or guardian(s) must use telephone, television, or internet service from Dakota Central.

APPLY ONLINE!

Applications MUST be completed online by visiting dakotacentral.com/scholarships and supporting materials must be submitted online no later than March 1, 2024.

Please call or e-mail Brianne with any questions at 701.652.3184 or bpartlow@dakotacentral.com.

Foundation for Rural Service Offers \$75,000 in Scholarships

Online applications are now available for the Foundation for Rural Service (FRS) scholarship program. FRS is a national non-profit organization that helps educate the public on the telecommunications industry and improve the quality of life throughout rural America. FRS is an affiliate of the National Telephone Cooperative Association (NTCA), an Arlington, VA-based trade organization of 540 independent telephone companies across the country, of which Dakota Central is a member. As your local telecommunications service provider, it is our pleasure to participate in this scholarship program. Should a student from our service area be selected to receive one of the thirty national scholarships (\$2,000 each), we will contribute an additional \$500 to the scholarship, bringing the total one-time scholarship award to \$2,500. It should be noted that preference will be given to individuals expressing an interest in returning to a rural area to work following graduation.

For more information on the FRS Scholarship program or to apply online, visit www.frs.org/programs/youth-programs/scholarships.



Tech Tips: Internet Security FAQs, Answered



Explaining Endpoint Security

In today's digital age, where organizations rely heavily on technology and remote work has become the norm, protecting your data and network has never been more crucial. Endpoint security is a vital component of any comprehensive cybersecurity strategy. Let's dig into what endpoint security is and why it's so important for safeguarding your business.

First things first, what is "endpoint security"?

Endpoint security, also known as endpoint protection, refers to the practice of securing individual devices, or "endpoints," within a network. These endpoints can include computers, laptops, smartphones, tablets, and other devices that connect to your network. Endpoint security focuses on protecting these devices from a wide range of threats, including malware, ransomware, phishing attacks, and data breaches.

Key components of endpoint security include:

Antivirus and Antimalware Software: This software is designed to detect and remove malicious software, such as viruses, Trojans, and spyware, that could infect endpoints.

Firewalls: Firewalls help filter incoming and outgoing network traffic to prevent unauthorized access and protect against cyber threats.

Encryption: Encryption secures data on endpoints and during transmission, ensuring that even if a device is lost or stolen, the data remains inaccessible to unauthorized individuals.

Patch Management: Keeping software and operating systems up to date is critical to closing vulnerabilities that cybercriminals may exploit.

Endpoint Detection and Response (EDR): EDR solutions monitor endpoints for suspicious activities, providing real-time threat detection and response capabilities.

Why Is Endpoint Security Important?

Endpoint security is vital for several reasons:

Protection Against Evolving Threats: Cyber threats are constantly evolving. Malware and cyberattacks become more sophisticated with each passing day. Endpoint security helps detect and thwart these evolving threats, safeguarding your network and data.

Data Security: Endpoints often store sensitive and confidential data. Without proper security measures, this data is at risk of being stolen or compromised. Endpoint security ensures that your data remains safe and protected.

Remote Work Security: In the era of remote work, employees access company networks from various devices and locations. Endpoint security is essential to maintain a secure connection and protect corporate assets.

Compliance and Regulatory Requirements: Many industries have strict compliance requirements regarding data protection. Endpoint security helps organizations meet these standards, avoiding costly penalties and reputation damage.

Business Continuity: A successful cyberattack can disrupt your business operations, leading to financial losses and reputational damage. Endpoint security minimizes this risk and ensures business continuity.

Cost Savings: Investing in endpoint security is cost-effective in the long run. Preventing a security breach is often much more cost-effective than dealing with the aftermath of an attack, which can involve legal fees, fines, and reputation repair.

Endpoint security is a critical element of modern cybersecurity strategies. It safeguards individual devices, protecting against a wide range of threats and ensuring the security of your data and network. Given the ever-evolving threat landscape, the importance of robust endpoint security measures cannot be overstated. By implementing strong endpoint security practices, your organization can reduce the risk of data breaches, financial losses, and reputational damage, providing peace of mind and maintaining business continuity in an increasingly digital world. If you're interested in learning how endpoint security can specifically benefit your business, contact us at 701-952-1000!

GADGET GIFT GUIDE

Portable Projector

For the movie lover

An affordable option for home use, the TOPTRO portable projector can help you create your dream home theater. Using an ultra-fast 5 GHz Wi-Fi connection, it makes movie night a breeze. Popcorn not included. **Currently available at Walmart for \$99.99.**



Oura Ring

For the health nut

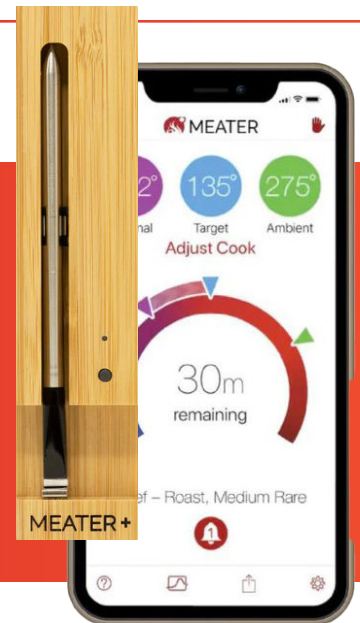


One of the smartest health wearables on the market, this ring accurately tracks heart rate, sleep cycles, and activity, then provides insight and guidance based on what it tracks. Considering how discreet it is, that's quite a feat of engineering. **Available from ouraring.com for \$299.**

Meater Smart Thermometer

For the grill master

This wireless thermometer takes incredibly accurate readings in two seconds and, paired with the mobile app, will have you cooking like a pro. With suggested cook times to reach desired results, you'll achieve grilling perfection every time! **Available at meater.com for around \$80.**



Bird Buddy Smart Bird Feeder

For the avid birdwatcher

See bird friends up close and personal with this smart bird feeder. With a high-resolution smart camera and bird arrival notifications, the AI bird species recognition and in-app learning experience will make them the bird expert they've always strived to be. **Available from Amazon for \$209.**



AeroGarden Harvest Indoor Garden

For the (not so) green thumb

It's nearly impossible to accidentally kill anything growing in this self-watering, self-lit planter. The AeroGarden Harvest is an indoor hydroponic gardening system that grows vegetables, herbs and flowers in water without the mess of soil. **Available on Amazon for \$118**

Hatch Restore

For the night owls

Hatch's sound and light machines help even the worst sleepers catch some quality zzzz's. Or choose the Rest version, made specially for littles. Everyone will wake up feeling refreshed and ready to take on the day! **Available from hatch.co starting at \$69.99.**



DAKOTA CENTRAL

604 18th St SW,
Jamestown, ND 58401

'Tis the season for devices!

Ensure all your connected holiday gifts are secured with ProtectIQ network security and Dakota Central's Premium Wi-Fi service.

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**CONNECT
MORE!**

WIN CREDIT ON YOUR DAKOTA CENTRAL BILL!

Win a \$25 credit on your next Dakota Central bill!
Next drawing date: **February 28th, 2024**

NAME

PHONE NUMBER

Scan here to sign up online



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630 5th St. N Carrington, ND 58421 p: 701.652.3184 f: 701.674.8121

JAMESTOWN OFFICE

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OFFICE HOURS

8 A.M. - 4:30 P.M. M-F To report trouble call your local office and follow prompts

INTERNET HELP DESK HOURS

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