

BEACON

BEK COMMUNICATIONS COOPERATIVE

NOV/DEC 2020

BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT: PRAIRIE HEATING & AIR

Like many of the world's great businesses—Microsoft, Google, even Disney—Prairie Heating & Air began in a garage. Strasburg, North Dakota native Steve Gefroh had been working for a contractor in Bismarck when, in 1992, he made the decision to return to his hometown and begin his own HVAC business. Prairie Heating & Air was founded in his garage, while he farmed on the side to bring in some extra money—but he quickly learned that there was more work to be done than one man could handle.

In 1994, he was joined by his brother, Glen Gefroh, who had been working in Sioux Falls before returning to the area to start a family with his wife. But the business continued to grow, and soon, the demand for HVAC services in their rural community grew too large for the Gefroh brothers to manage on their own.

"In a lot of these small towns, there's just a one-man shop," Glen said. "Those businesses are great, and we need them. But if you are looking into building a new house, it takes more manpower. You're going to have service calls. You need a service department, you need an install department."

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DATES TO REMEMBER

BEK BILL PAYMENTS ARE DUE
ON THE 20TH OF EACH MONTH

DECEMBER 21

Winter Solstice

DECEMBER 24

Christmas Eve

DECEMBER 25

Christmas Day (BEK offices Closed)

DECEMBER 27

National Fruitcake Day

DECEMBER 28

Pledge of Allegiance Day

DECEMBER 31

New Year's Eve

JANUARY 1

New Year's Day (BEK offices Closed)

JANUARY 6

National Technology Day

JANUARY 15

Humanitarian Day

JANUARY 17

Customer Service Day

JANUARY 18

Martin Luther King Jr. Day

JANUARY 20

Inauguration Day

JANUARY 28

Data Privacy Day

FEBRUARY 1

National Freedom Day

FEBRUARY 2

Groundhog Day

FEBRUARY 14

Valentine's Day

FEBRUARY 15

Presidents' Day

FEBRUARY 17

Ash Wednesday
Random Acts of Kindness Day

FEBRUARY 22

George Washington's Birthday

FEBRUARY 28

National Science Day



BROADCAST NETWORKS WON'T STOP GOUGING CONSUMERS

DERRICK BULAWA
Chief Executive Officer

Once again, BEK Communications and our customers face a sharp rise in retransmission fees for television packages.

Retransmission fees are the fees that small providers like BEK must pay to large broadcasters like ABC, NBC, CBS and FOX for access to their signals. Simply put, BEK must pay a per-subscriber fee for nearly every channel in your TV package. Some popular content, like sports, may cost close to \$10 for a single channel. Less popular channels may cost only a dollar or two.

Retransmission fees are what's known as a pass-through. As your local provider, we are charged with collecting those fees and passing them on to the broadcast companies. BEK Communications does not keep any part of those fees. We also work hard to limit the overhead expenses of tracking our subscriber numbers, collecting the fees, and sending them up the broadcast ladder.

Worsening the situation, corporate broadcasters often force providers to carry large bundles of channels. In order to deliver the popular content our customers want, we are also required to include, and pay for, the less popular channels. When you multiply those fees by the number of channels in your television package, you understand why small telecoms fight so hard to keep costs down for our customers.

Years ago, the big networks supported themselves through advertising revenue alone. However, with the rise in popularity of streaming services came a drop in revenue for the traditional networks. They now rely more and more on the fees collected from millions of subscribers across the country.

We work hard to negotiate lower fees on behalf of you, our members and customers. However, the networks wield unchecked power to raise the retransmission fees, and smaller telecoms like BEK are at their mercy. When negotiations get down to the wire, large networks frequently threaten to simply blackout the channels and take the content away, forcing telecoms to pay the fees or risk losing subscribers.

While this rise in retransmission fees is frustrating, especially in a year of so much economic hardship across the country, there is reason to be optimistic.

A significant number of you do not want ABC, NBC, CBS, or FOX. BEK Communications is currently developing new products that deliver the content you want while leaving out the large networks. The result is a substantially cheaper television package that still provides a wide variety of channels.

We're thrilled to bring you the next evolution of BEK television products. *Look for more exciting announcements soon!*



NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2020

The BEK Beacon is a bimonthly newsletter published by BEK Communications, © 2020. It is distributed without charge to all customers.

BEK COMMUNICATIONS COOPERATIVE

was founded in 1952 as a local telecommunications cooperative serving Burleigh, Emmons and Kidder Counties. Since then, we've invested in state-of-the-art infrastructure, developed new products and services, and expanded to also serve Morton, Oliver, McLean, Logan, McIntosh, Barnes, Griggs, Cass, and Steele counties. BEK has changed quite a bit in 68 years, but we're still a small-town cooperative at heart.

BEK COMMUNICATIONS COOPERATIVE

888-475-2361

P.O. Box 230
200 East Broadway
Steele, ND 58482

325 2nd St. NW
Valley City, ND 58072

923 East Interstate Avenue
Bismarck, ND 58503

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Linton
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Hague

DISTRICT IV

William (Bill) Becker
Wishek
Gerald Burlack
Wishek

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The two brought on more full-time employees, and opened their new business space a mile south of Linton—just off Highway 83 and centrally located to the towns they served—in 1998. When Steve left the business in 2011 to pursue farming full-time, Ryan Hulm joined Prairie Heating & Air as Co-Owner and General Manager.

Secure Data, Day & Night

Today, Prairie Heating & Air equips south-central North Dakota with HVAC services ranging from furnace installation and duct cleaning to geothermal heating and cooling—anything it takes to “control the weather on the inside.” They also offer annual maintenance agreements for many customers.

One such customer is their internet service provider, BEK Communications.

“BEK has outposts in all of their service areas and we do maintenance on all of those, traveling as far as Minot,” Glen said.

“We are a customer of BEK, and they are a very good customer of ours as well. It’s mutually beneficial for both of us.”

The internet and telephone services they receive from BEK allow Ryan and Glen to perform basic tasks that keep Prairie Heating & Air up and running, like making calls to customers and sending out receipts via email. But BEK’s high-speed internet also keeps them connected to the rest of their industry, even from rural North Dakota.

“A lot of the industry meetings that we attend are across the state, so it would be hard to attend all of those if we had to physically drive to them,” Ryan said. “With the internet we get from BEK, we are able to attend those meetings virtually. So without those high speeds, I don’t think we would be able to be engaged from a small town.”

And perhaps the most crucial service BEK provides Prairie Heating & Air is BEK Cloud Backup. Day and night, their information is securely transferred to the cloud, where it can be easily accessed, managed, and recovered.

“Before, we were doing manual backups on our server twice a week. Now it gets backed up automatically every day,” Ryan said. “Being in business for as long as we have, our server is our wealth of knowledge. All of our customer information is in there, not only our customer list but the history of equipment we have in their home,

what we have done for them over the years. That in a nutshell is our whole company, and if we lost that information, it would be devastating. Now, if we have a catastrophic event, like a tornado or fire, our information is going to be safe.”

Supporting Each Other, Serving the Community

BEK counts on Prairie Heating & Air to provide much-needed maintenance on their outposts across North Dakota; in turn, Prairie Heating & Air relies on the internet, phone, and data back-up services from BEK to support their customers and stay engaged with their industry. Together, these two businesses are able to better support the rural North Dakota communities that they call home.

An important part of this relationship is the knowledge that when one business is in need, the other will be there to help. On the rare occasion that Prairie Heating & Air’s internet has gone down, all Ryan and Glen have had to do is call BEK. Within an hour, a service tech has been dispatched and their internet is back up and running.

“BEK has an employee named Joe, and he’s been sort of a godsend to us,” Ryan said. “When I call Joe directly, it doesn’t matter what time of day, it could be nine at night and he’ll answer the phone. He goes above and beyond what he would have to. That’s really, really fantastic.”

From humble beginnings in a Strasburg garage, Prairie Heating & Air has grown into a thriving business and an invaluable member of the Linton community. And as they continue to grow, BEK will be there.

BEK is proud to support local businesses, big and small. To find out what BEK Communications can do for your business, visit BEK.coop or call 701-475-2361.



BAND

broadband association of north dakota

CAPTURING HISTORY: NCC ASHLEY SEVRE PHOTOGRAPHY SPOTLIGHT



Ashley Sevre has always enjoyed taking pictures, but it was one film photography class at Minot State University—taken on a whim, as she was pursuing a degree in information management systems—that ignited her passion for the craft. She purchased her first DSLR camera shortly after, and began teaching herself the basic techniques of digital photography.

Soon, friends and family began to take notice of her work.

"People were like, 'Oh, those are so cute. Can you come take my family pictures?'"

Ashley said. *"And it just kind of spiraled from there."*

Today, Ashley operates a photography and videography business from her family's third-generation grain farm just outside of rural Wildrose, North Dakota. She launched **Ashley Sevre Photography** as a part-time side hustle in 2010 and made it her full-time career in 2017, capturing senior photos, family portraits, newborn sessions, and more, and dedicating her weekends to photographing and filming weddings.

While Ashley's work primarily focuses on weddings and portraits, she is also using her craft to capture a piece of history: the annual Sevre Farms film.

Preserving Family History Through Film

Every year, Ashley films her family's farm season from planting to harvest. She flies a

drone to capture aerial footage of the equipment in the field, and attaches a GoPro inside of tractors and on the backs of trucks to see three generations of farmers hard at work. In the winter, she sifts through hundreds of hours worth of footage, selecting the best shots and adding music to create a ten-minute film.

These films are not just advertisements for Sevre Farms; they are mementos that Ashley and her husband, Logan, hope to pass on to their children one day.

"My kids hear their grandpa talking all the time about, 'Oh, when I was 10, my father had...' and he'd ramble off some name of a tractor. And I wonder, what was that like? What did that look like driving through the field?" Ashley said. "My kids are one and four. They may not remember riding in the tractor with Dad. I want them to have something to look back on, years down the road."

In 2018, Ashley decided to place a GoPro inside the cab of a tractor for a change,



and ended up capturing a memory that the family will cherish forever: then two-year-old Stella riding next to her dad, sharing PB & J sandwiches and taking turns talking on the radio.

"They're both just shoving their faces, and she's pointing out the window," Ashley chuckled. "It's adorable. And we wouldn't have that if the camera hadn't been running."

Small Businesses Run on Broadband

Like any modern business, and especially any small-town business, Ashley Sevre Photography depends on the Internet. Ashley is constantly emailing clients and uploading photos to her website, frequently participates in online photography webinars, and also takes care of online banking for the farm—none of which would be possible without the broadband she receives from her local Broadband Association of North Dakota (BAND) member, **NCC**.

"The internet just makes my job possible. I don't know where I would be without it, but I certainly wouldn't be where I am," Ashley said. "I use it in every aspect of my life, truly every day."

The internet just makes my job possible. I don't know where I would be without it

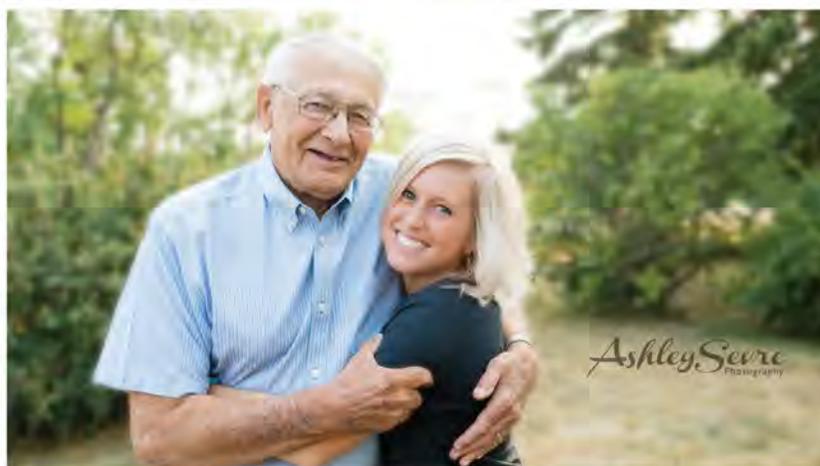
- Ashley Sevre
Ashley Sevre Photography

Stories like Ashley's are a reminder of why quality broadband is crucial to creating a thriving business community. In an effort to empower North Dakotans and the small businesses they own, BAND members like NCC are constantly implementing new broadband technology and laying fiber lines across the state. In fact, Ashley has had a fiber optic line on the farm since 2016—almost four years before the nearest town, Wildrose, just one mile away.

With access to this high-speed broadband, Ashley does not have to live in a metropolitan area to pursue her passion of running a successful photography business. She can do it all right from rural North Dakota, while preserving the history of the farm that she and her family call home.

"I've thought before that, you know, it'd be nice to be in a bigger

city, with more people and more potential for jobs," Ashley said. "But then I sit back and I think, I really love this farm. And then I think one day down the road, you know when I'm super successful, I can say I did it all living on a farm."



Welcome to the New Rural. Contact your local BAND member to learn how upgrading your broadband can better your business:

www.broadbandnd.com/our-members/association-members/

BEK NEWS

Real People.
Real News.

Weekdays
4:00 PM



Weekdays
4:30 PM



Weekdays
5:30 PM

**Down
the
Road**
with Joel Heitkamp



Weekdays
9:00 PM

NO APOLOGIES
with Becker



Weekdays
10:00 PM

NO FILTER
with Debbie



BEK News

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KNDB CH.26
Bismarck | Mandan | Dickinson

KNDM CH.24
Minot | Williston

KRDK CH.4
Fargo | Grand Forks

NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

The BEK Board of Directors has chosen four cooperative members to serve on the 2021 Nominating Committee. These individuals will meet at BEK's office in Steele on Wednesday, February 24, 2021 at 11:30am to make their selections for board of director nominees.

Director Leo Meier, District III, is retiring at the end of his term. The BEK Board of Directors have chosen with an affirmative vote not to fill that seat, and will instead reduce the board to eight members, in accordance with Article IV, Section 1 of the BEK Communications Cooperative Bylaws.

INCUMBENT DIRECTORS FOR DISTRICTS II and IV ARE;

DISTRICT I – No Election

DISTRICT II – Brett Stroh, Tappen

DISTRICT III – No Election

DISTRICT IV – Gerald Burlack, Wishek

MEMBERS OF THE 2020 NOMINATING COMMITTEE ARE:

DISTRICT II

(Pettibone, Tappen, Robinson, Steele and Tuttle)

Randy Kapp – (Medina) 327-4403

Christ Gerr – (Tuttle) 867-2899

DISTRICT IV

(Lehr, Zeeland, Wishek and Napoleon)

Steve Fettig – (Wishek) 452-2813

Sara Gross – (Wishek) 452-2736

BEK Cooperative members will cast their district vote during BEK's annual meeting on June 10th, 2021. If you are interested in serving on the BEK Communications Cooperative Board of Directors, please contact your Nominating Committee representative.

LET'S STAY CONNECTED Follow us on Social:

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NEW PHONE LISTINGS

NAME	PHONE	CITY	NAME	PHONE	CITY
211 Sweets @ Eats	945-5850	Hope	Lacy, Charles	223-1156	Baldwin
Almost Home	273-9393	Pettibone	Lettenmaier, Brandon	646-6102	Sanborn
Alridge, Isaiah	943-2854	Wing	Lindemann, Derrick & Teresa	223-4407	Bismarck
Anderson, Lyndon	255-1606	Baldwin	Masset, Myron	254-5545	Linton
Betting, Richard	845-4905	Valley City	Nunn, Deland	327-8366	Dawson
Bjerke, Kelly	668-0302	Page	Our Saviors Lutheran Church	845-1328	Valley City
Eslinger, Franklin	769-2529	Hannaford	Phat Shack	254-5820	Linton
Fricke, Ronald	255-0677	Baldwin	Pyatt, Robert	336-2465	Strasburg
Haugen, Lynn	769-5458	Hannaford	Roorda, Perry	845-3684	Valley City
Hinkel, Cory & Jessica	595-7706	Baldwin	Russell, Cherie	490-3634	Valley City
Hirning, Kimberly	595-7708	Baldwin	Velure, Arlene	490-3616	Valley City
Hopfauf, Blaine & Tammy	415-0331	Mandan	Wheatland Colony	749-5301	Tower City
Huber, Tim & Carol	490-3640	Valley City	Wheatland Steel & Trim	749-5307	Tower City
Johnson, Jill	490-3625	Valley City	Wright, Dawn	845-4673	Valley City
Jose, Layne J	557-7844	Bismarck	Young, Debra	595-7200	Bismarck
Kantola, Butch	490-3636	Luverne			
Kraft, Jeanie & Casey	355-4268	Baldwin			



BEK COMMUNICATIONS COOPERATIVE
200 East Broadway, PO Box 230, Steele, ND 58482

PRSR STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
BISMARCK, ND
PERMIT NO. 433

ECRWSS
LOCAL POSTAL
CUSTOMER

BEACON TRIVIA

1 Name one of the large broadcast networks.

2 What day is Data Privacy Day?

3 What town is Prairie Heating & Air from?

TRIVIA ENTRY

ENTRIES MUST BE RECEIVED BY JANUARY 29, 2021.

Name: _____

Phone Number: _____

Town: _____

Clip and send to BEK at:
PO Box 230, Steele, ND 58482.

You can also email answers to bekcomm@bektel.com.
We will be drawing for twenty **\$5.00** credits to be applied to the winners' bill.

CONGRATS! TO OUR BEACON SEPT/OCT WINNERS.

Tom Bailey - Sutton
Vicki Jackson - Valley City
Sharon DeWitz - Tappen
Sharon Clauson - Kathryn
Lyle Hanson - Linton
Heidi Kalberer - Hazelton
Jean Swanson - Braddock
Miriam Fetzer - Wishek
Bryce Weber - Linton
Donald Hottman - Napoleon
Jesse McCormack - Wilton
Bryan McNeal - Strasburg
Aaron Subart - Robinson
Eric Wilson - Sterling
Suzette Trenda - Tower City
Sharon Jutila - Kintyre
Shirley Brusven - Steele
LaRae Madsen - Embden
Jeremy Twete - Bismarck
Ron Punton - Ayr