

BEACON

BEK COMMUNICATIONS COOPERATIVE MAY/JUNE 2020

NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING NO IN-PERSON MEETING IN STEELE, ND, THIS YEAR

Thursday, June 11, 2020

Notice is hereby given that the 68th Annual Meeting of the members of BEK Communications Cooperative will be broadcast Thursday, June 11, 2020, on the following channels and media streams:

BEK Digital Television Channels:

- 25, 26 and 2/1002 in the West
- 25, 26 and 4/1004 in the East

BEK TV Over the Air:

- Bismarck/Mandan: KNDB 26.1
- Minot: KNDM 24.1
- Fargo: KRDK 4.1

BEK is also live streaming the meeting on Facebook, YouTube and on the BEK website. Members are encouraged to ask questions during the meeting using the comments section on the Facebook Live broadcast.

The meeting will be called to order at 7:00p.m.

The purpose of the meeting is to review reports, receive election results, and review activities.

SIGN UP FOR THE KIDS DRAWING!

It's a huge tradition to give away awesome kids prizes at every Annual Meeting. This year is no different, and it will go a little something like this:

First, registration for the "I MIGHT BE FAMOUS" Kids Prize Giveaway! Make sure you register your child by June 9th. All kids who are registered get a FREE "I MIGHT BE FAMOUS" t-shirt! Next, we'll pick 20 random names from the list to be FAMOUS during the kid's portion of the annual meeting broadcast. Finally, from those 20 kids, we'll draw for the kid's prizes AND one lucky winner for the GRAND PRIZE!

Good luck and check the bek.coop/coop/famous for registration information.



DATES TO REMEMBER

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

JUNE 5

WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY

JUNE 11

BEK VIRTUAL ANNUAL MEETING

JUNE 14

FLAG DAY

JUNE 20

SUMMER BEGINS

JUNE 21

FATHER'S DAY

JUNE 30

WORLD SOCIAL MEDIA DAY

JULY 1

INTERNATIONAL JOKE DAY

JULY 3

BEK OFFICES CLOSED IN OBSERVANCE OF INDEPENDENCE DAY

JULY 4

INDEPENDENCE DAY

JULY 8

NATIONAL VIDEO GAME DAY

JULY 14

COW APPRECIATION DAY

JULY 15

TAX DAY

JULY 17

WORLD EMOJI DAY

JULY 26

NATIONAL PARENT'S DAY

JULY 30

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF FRIENDSHIP

AUGUST 2

NATIONAL FRIENDSHIP DAY

AUGUST 9

NATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

AUGUST 12

INTERNATIONAL YOUTH DAY

AUGUST 19

WORLD HUMANITARIAN DAY



BEK FIBER: INVESTING IN THE COOPERATIVE'S SUCCESS

DERRICK BULAWA
Chief Executive Officer

At the beginning of 2020, heartbreaking news was reported about Frontier Communications, a major national internet provider. Bankruptcy seemed inevitable. Too many customers had left for other providers who offered higher speeds and more reliable service.

In April, the company followed through with the Chapter 11 filing, leaving remaining customers worried about the future of their internet, television and phone service. To Frontier's credit, they pressed on and ensured those customers stayed connected while working through reorganization.

By their admission, Frontier hemorrhaged customers due to "significant under-investment in fiber deployment and limited enterprise product offerings, creating headwinds that the company is repositioning itself to reverse." Simply put, the company failed to invest in the future-proofed infrastructure that customers expect and need.

At the time of the bankruptcy filing, Frontier internet and other services were available to about 14 million homes across 29 states. However, barely 3 million of those homes had fiber. The other 11 million were only offered DSL service on aging copper infrastructure. The actual number of homes taking that DSL service was much lower and had been steadily declining for years.

We're not here to cheer the hardship of another internet provider. We feel for the customers and employees at Frontier. But here are lessons in this story that show us why BEK is so successful by comparison.

In the early 2000s, the future was clear. Residential bandwidth requirements would increase by orders of magnitude, new connected products and online destinations would flood the market, and businesses would quickly follow in their enterprise needs.

BEK began to build the BEK Fiber network in 2004. This early investment replaced old copper lines that simply couldn't handle the amount of traffic required for the internet, television, phone, home security, and the other services in high demand by our rural residents.

More than 15 years later, the BEK Fiber network now sprawls an area larger than the state of Massachusetts. Fiber-to-the-home (or business) not only ensures reliability through the harsh North Dakota weather, but it also improves the long-term value of business and residential properties.

The lowest tier on BEK Lightband Gigabit internet is 500 Mbps. The next step up is 1 Gbps with WholeHome Wi-Fi (WHWF) included. At the top is 2.5 Gbps with WHWF. These internet plans are the fastest in North Dakota, and easily surpass most internet speeds in larger cities nationwide.

Doubling our customer count and growing beyond the boundaries of our



MAY/JUNE 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 58501

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cooperative would not have been possible unless BEK invested in a state-of-the-art fiber network. We could not offer popular cloud-based products like BEK Protect and BEK Watch if our infrastructure were still made up of antiquated copper lines.

The BEK Fiber network is the backbone of our ability to serve our members and customers and compete in the modern marketplace. Every product that BEK offers today has at least three competitors. The landscape

for Frontier is no doubt very similar, which is why this bankruptcy is a hard and avoidable lesson.

Frontier's lack of infrastructure investment is equivalent to telling their customers to find faster, more reliable internet elsewhere. And that's exactly what happened. Thankfully, the BEK board of directors understood the changing landscape 20 years ago and invested when it counted.

WELCOME TO THE NEW RURAL

HOW BROADBAND MAKES IT POSSIBLE FOR DIVERSE INDUSTRIES TO THRIVE IN RURAL NORTH DAKOTA



What do you see when you picture rural North Dakota?

Perhaps a farmer stepping down from his tractor cab, gazing upon acres of outstretched wheat fields, or the silhouette of an oil rig emerging from the horizon.

But what about a long-haired rocker-turned-guitar instructor teaching millions of musicians from his home in Kindred? Or a woman working to save the small-town newspapers across the state?

While they may not come as quickly to mind when envisioning rural North Dakota, industries like music and media are rapidly becoming as integral to our state's landscape as agriculture and energy.

They are the New Rural, and they are powered by broadband.

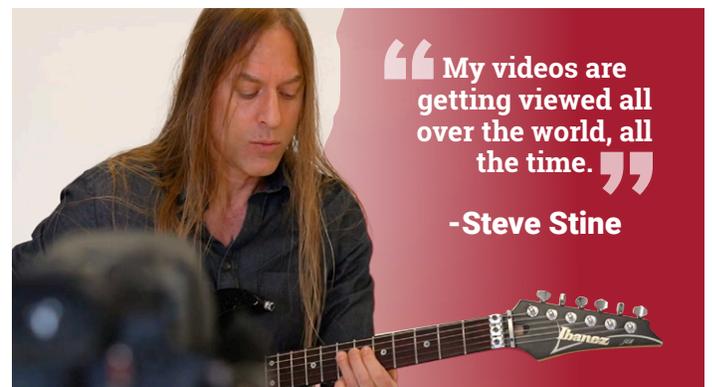
Reaching a Global Audience

Steve Stine's childhood home in Fargo was filled with music: his mother was an avid country fan, while his father gravitated toward rock. From a young age, Steve had an affinity for the great hair bands like KISS.

"That's what I wanted to do when I got older," Steve said. "So my parents on my 13th birthday wound up buying me my first guitar."

By the time he graduated high school, Steve was teaching lessons to other aspiring musicians, mentoring as many as 100 students a week. He went on to study at Minnesota State University Moorhead and later taught at Red River Valley Academy, Elevate Rock School, and North Dakota State University, all while playing in a number of local and international rock bands.

Today, Steve is teaching a much larger audience. As the face of GuitarZoom, an instructional website for which he leads beginner-level to advanced



guitar classes, Stine has amassed what can only be described as a cult following: almost a million subscribers across two YouTube channels. Steve has become one of the world's most influential online music instructors and a mentor to some of music's biggest stars, like pop sensation Shawn Mendes.

"My videos are getting viewed all over the world, all the time," Steve said.

In 2015, Steve and his family moved 30 miles southwest of Fargo to Kindred, North Dakota. The 700-person town was a perfect fit and a welcome change for the Stines. They could enjoy a larger yard and more space to roam, build closer relationships with their neighbors, and enroll their two children in a smaller school system.

There was just one hitch: Steve was already teaching online lessons, and he needed to be able to do so from his new home in rural North Dakota.

"I do a lot of live-streaming webinars, guitar lessons, stuff like that, so it's important that my video and my audio is not glitchy on the other side for whoever's viewing it," Steve said. "Having good broadband is absolutely imperative and it was a little bit worrisome for us moving to Kindred, whether or not we would have that capability."

A Story to Tell

Jill Friesz didn't always have a passion for journalism. She enrolled at the University of Mary in Bismarck intending to pursue a career in public relations; while there, she met a small-town farmer. The two married, and in 1996, moved onto a farm north of New Leipzig, North Dakota.

Jill's employment options were limited. Luckily, her husband's best friend's mom just so happened to work as a typesetter for the paper in nearby Elgin.

"She quit her job so I could come and work here," Jill said. "I started working here three or four days after we got married, worked here for eight years with the publishers and when they got ready to retire they said, 'Do you want to buy the business?' So that's how it happened, and I took over the business 15 years ago."

Today, Jill is the owner of GS Publishing, the publishing house that prints and distributes the Grant County News as well as the Carson Press, Adams County Record, and Hettinger County Herald. She's on a mission to save small-town newspapers from going



extinct: in the 15 years since Jill took over the Grant County News, more than one in five papers in the United States has shuttered.

"Nobody else in the entire world cares who is the Homecoming King and Queen. Nobody else cares if your basketball team made it to second place," Jill said. "There's a lot of big stories around here. There's a lot of people who have a story to tell. Nobody else is telling that story. That's my job to get that out there to the community."

More Content, Faster

When Steve relocated from Fargo to Kindred with his family, he experienced frequent problems with his internet. Four hours worth of video content would take up to four days to upload. His connection would cut out altogether in the middle of a live stream, leaving hundreds of unsatisfied students behind.

Desperate for a solution, Steve contacted his local internet provider and Broadband Association of North Dakota (BAND) member, MLGC.

"They actually put in a new fiber optic line for me," Steve said. "They had to crawl up the telephone pole in the middle of winter and put in a new line and run it into our house. And ever since then we've had a really great relationship with everybody at MLGC."

The impact was immediate. With his new high-speed internet connection, Steve has not experienced a single interruption to his live lessons. Large video files that once took days to upload now take mere hours, allowing Steve to produce more content, faster.

To Steve, MLGC's willingness to go above and beyond to meet his connectivity needs—to install a fiber optic line in his yard in the dead of a North Dakota winter—was unheard of. But to President and General Manager Tyler Kilde, it was just one of countless examples of MLGC's commitment to their customers.

“We want to make sure that the rural customers have the same type of access as metropolitan areas such as Minneapolis,” Tyler said. “This is a world economy, and the ability to have Steve reach tens of millions of people and reside in rural North Dakota, that’s huge.”

News That Matters, When it Matters

Over the past 15 years, Jill has witnessed a dramatic shift in the way newspapers operate. When she took over the Grant County News, her staff had to manually print, cut, and paste each individual article onto the makeup sheet—a delicate and time-consuming task. Then Jill would take the makeup sheet, make a negative of it, and drive all of the negatives to the printing plant. Creating a newspaper was a day-long process, not including the actual reporting, writing, and distribution.

But now, thanks to high-speed internet from local BAND member WRT, GS Publishing can create and distribute a paper in a fraction of the time.

“Broadband has completely changed the newspaper industry. I can lay everything out on the computer and all I have to do is click a button and it’s at my printer,” Jill said. “It has saved so much time for me...and it makes so many less mistakes in the newspaper”

The internet could be seen as the largest threat to print journalism, as more and more Americans are turning online for their news. But Jill isn’t running from the internet—she is using it to her advantage. To ensure that her neighbors have access to accurate reporting on the news that matters to them, Jill has increased GS Publishing’s online presence through social media and an electronic version of their papers.

“A couple of years ago, we had a very large equipment dealership fire in town. It happened to be the night of New Year’s Eve,” Jill said. “Through Facebook Live, I was able to get that out to our readers so people could watch that happen. I have used Facebook Live for basketball games, championships, things like that. Right now I’m using it for all of the breaking news that’s happening with the coronavirus. So it really has become essential for me to be able to do more day-to-day reporting than just the weekly reporting.”

In an era when access to timely, accurate news is more important than ever before, Jill is working day and night to keep her community informed. And with broadband from WRT, she is able to reach more readers, faster.

The New Rural

The 16 member organizations that form BAND are making it possible for diverse industries, from music to journalism, to thrive in our rural communities. But even as North Dakota’s identity as a state is shifting, our values remain the same.

“I’ve lived in a rural community my entire life,” said Troy Schilling, CEO and General Manager of WRT. “People here are friendly. People are trusting in ways, but they’re more than that. They’re helpful to others. We always live by the ‘lend a hand and be a good neighbor’ mentality. North Dakota has always been that way.”

Steve and Jill both moved to rural North Dakota from larger cities. Whether they moved for marriage or a better education for their children, it was these values—trust, kindness, and generosity—that made them stay. And with access to high-speed internet, they do not need to leave the rural communities they’ve grown to love in order to run their businesses.

“I’m able to do things that a lot of my friends that live in bigger cities can’t even do. They don’t have those speeds at their homes,” Steve said. “So for me it’s the perfect combination. I’m able to do what I do and send it out to the world yet maintain this relaxed environment of living in the rural community.”

Jill agrees.

“The sky’s the limit for us,” Jill said. “We can really do anything that anybody else can do, especially now that we’re connected to the world.”

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/



VIDEO PROVIDER CUSTOMER NOTIFICATION

Products and Services Offered - BEK Communications offers a variety of video programming packages and services. The Limited package includes both local television and BEK broadcast stations. The Expanded and Variety packages include everything from the Limited package as well as many additional digital cable channels; additional services for the Expanded and Variety packages include a digital programming guide, digital music channels, video on demand, and access to pay-per-view and Premium movie channels. Premium channel options include HBO, Showtime, Starz and Cinemax and are charged separately from BEK's video programming packages.

Navigation Devices - For a monthly fee, BEK offers HD and/or DVR set-top boxes needed to access programming services. BEK's cable includes a remote control, free of charge, with its digital set-top box. To ensure your service operates properly and to control your programming, select the "set-top box" button on your remote.

Parental Controls - BEK Communications understands there may be certain television programs that some customers find unsuitable for a member(s) of their household. A parental control option is available to customers who have a set-top box connected to their TV.

Installation and Service Maintenance Policies - An adult, 18 years of age, or older, must be present during any installation or repair of BEK's cable television service. Our team will make every reasonable effort to reschedule a missed service appointment at a time convenient for you.

Access to Customer Premise - By ordering service you agree to allow BEK employees, and/or subcontractors, access to your premises at reasonable times to inspect and maintain the cable equipment at your service address and upon termination of service to remove the equipment. Failure by BEK Communications to remove equipment does not deem it abandoned.

How to Use Your Cable Services - At the time of installation our service technician will provide instruction on how to use BEK's video service. You can find further instruction in BEK's Digital TV User Guide.

Pricing, Channels and Programming Options - At the time of sale, scheduling and again at installation, you will receive pricing and be offered a list of our channel line-ups.

Billing and Miscellaneous Fees - Your monthly BEK Communications invoice provides the charges, due date, payment due, and applicable credits for your account. It also contains monthly "bill messages" meant to update and educate customers. Accounts that remain unpaid after BEK's payment due date (twentieth (20), day of each month), will be assessed a \$30 late fee. If payment is returned as "insufficient funds" a \$35 NSF Fee will be assessed.

Changes in Service or Prices - If any change in services offered or pricing are planned, notification is provided no less than 30 days in advance of the change. Notice may be

provided on a customer's monthly bill, as a bill insert, as a newspaper legal notice, by separate mailing, online at bek.coop or some other written form.

Delinquent Accounts/Reconnection of Service - Nonpayment of part or all your bill may result in interruption or disconnection of all BEK Communications provided services. If service is disconnected for non-payment and you wish to reconnect service, BEK requires the total outstanding balance be paid-in-full plus an additional \$45 Reconnect Fee.

Cancellation or Termination of Service - A request to disconnect cable service can be made at any time. Billing will stop on the day the request is made, subject to applicable fees and outstanding balances on video and/or other services. Equipment provided to you must be returned upon disconnecting or appropriate charges will be applied. In some cases, you may be requested to return the equipment to the nearest BEK Communications Business Office.

Theft of Cable Services - Unauthorized cable hook-up or cable theft is a crime that is punishable by fines and/or imprisonment.

Complaint Procedures - Billing or service complaints should be directed to BEK Communications at 888-475-2361 or by email at bekcomm@bektel.com. If you believe BEK Communications has not properly resolved your issue, you may contact your local franchise authority (listed below) or the FCC.

Assistance from BEK - For any questions regarding your cable service and/or for technical assistance, please call us at 888-475-2361. Most questions, such as remote guides, channel guides, parental controls and more can be found by clicking the "Resources" tab at bek.coop and/or in the BEK Digital TV User Guide.

Filing a complaint with the FCC - File a complaint online at consumercomplaints.fcc.gov

By phone: 1-888-225-5322 or TTY 1-888-835-5322

By mail (must include your name, address, contact information and details of your complaint)

Federal Communications Commission

Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau
Consumer Inquiries and Complaints Division
445 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20554

Franchise Authorities -

City of Lehr, PO Box 127, Lehr, ND 58460 • 701.378.2525
City of Linton, PO Box 57, Linton, ND 58552 • 701.254.4267
City of Napoleon, PO Box 31, Napoleon, ND 58561 • 701.754.2266
Valley City, PO Box 390, Valley City, ND 58072 • 701.845.1700
City of Wilton, PO Box 278, Wilton, ND, 58579 • 701.734.6707
City of Wishek, PO Box 306, Wishek, ND 58495 • 701.452.2414
City of Zeeland, PO Box 3, Zeeland, ND 58581 • 701.288.5146

LIFELINE ASSISTANCE

Lifeline is a federal program that offers a discount to qualified customers on their monthly telephone or internet service.

Home Telephone or Broadband Assistance:

Lifeline provides up to a \$9.25 discount on your monthly bill for broadband service, or up to a \$7.25 discount on your telephone service.

This program is available to all BEK Communications Cooperative exchanges (excludes: most of rural Bismarck, rural Morton/Oliver County and Valley City area exchanges).

Do you qualify for Lifeline assistance?:

To be eligible for Lifeline, you must be enrolled in a qualifying program. Qualifying programs include: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Medicaid, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Federal Public Housing Assistance (FPHA), Veterans Pension and Survivors Benefit if your income is 135% or less than the federal poverty guidelines.

Apply Online:

You can apply online by going to CheckLifeline.org and

creating an account. Once you complete the form, you will learn if you qualify for Lifeline assistance.

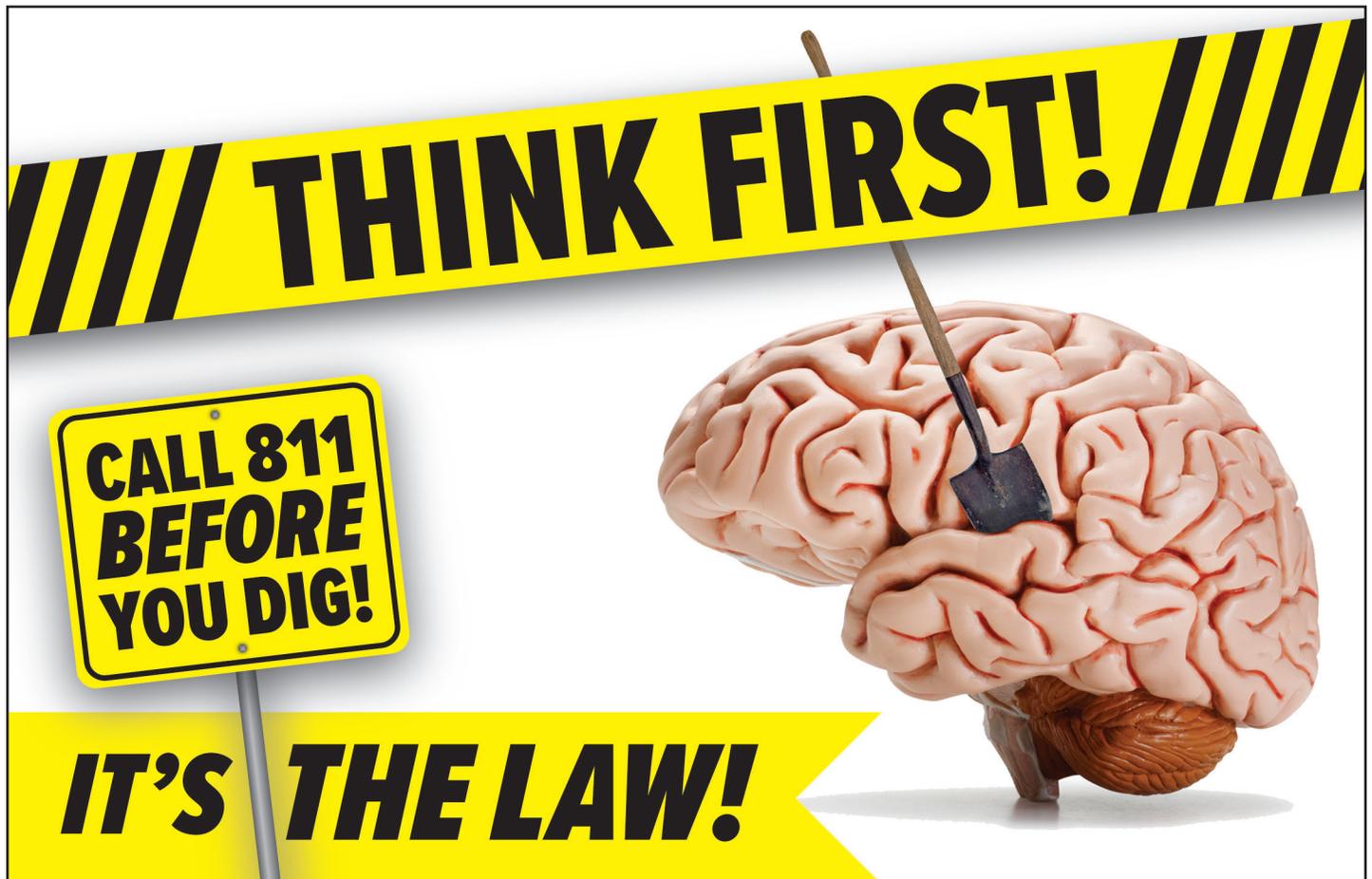
You will need the following information to apply online:

- Full legal name
- Date of birth
- Last 4 digits of your SSN
- Address

Apply by mail:

You can also send an application by mail. You will mail in your finished Lifeline Application (English or Spanish), Household Worksheet, and copies of your proof of eligibility to the Lifeline Support Center. USAC will contact you by mail to let you know if you qualify for Lifeline. The Lifeline Support Center's mailing address is:

Lifeline Support Center
PO Box 7081
London, KY 40742





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

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BEACON TRIVIA

- 1** Your ballot must be and postmarked by June 5th in order to be counted for the election.
- 2** There is no in-person annual meeting or supper at this year.
- 3** Which district does not have an election this year?

TRIVIA ENTRY

ENTRIES MUST BE RECEIVED BY JULY 15, 2020.

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 MARCH/APRIL WINNERS.

Cheryl Jewett, Rogers
 Evangeline Mueller, Wishek
 Mildred Entzi, Lehr
 Ann Hornung, Pettibone
 Lou Schuler, Baldwin
 Redwood Village, Wilton
 Suzanne Butler, Page
 Darlyn Kunz, Bismarck
 Shirley Berg, Tappen
 Doris Jansen, Steele
 De Etta Gibbons, Bismarck
 Marge Horner, Napoleon
 Rudy Tesky, Valley City
 Gerard Jacob, Linton
 Diane Boyle, Alice
 LaRae Madsen, Embden
 Albert Saylor, Wishek
 Gil Schnase, Tower City
 Eric Wilson, Sterling
 Myron Weigel, Zeeland