



# The Communicator

Your Complete Communication Services Provider  
Telephone, Long Distance, Wireless, Cable Television, Paging, Internet, Web Hosting

December 2017 19th St. & Cyclone Ave., Harlan, IA 51537 • (712) 744-3131 • fmctc@fmctc.com • www.fmctc.com

## FMCTC returning \$647,037 to members

Congratulations, FMCTC members! You will share in a \$647,037 patronage dividend allocation this year. (627-4229)

If you had communications service the years of 1994 - 2012, a capital credit check will arrive in the mail this month. This check is yours to cash and spend as you wish.

"We are glad to once again be in a position to return patronage to our members," says FMCTC General Manager, Tom Conry.

Each year, FMCTC members are allocated their share of the margins earned. As funds are available, and, at the Board of Directors' discretion,

**OVER \$10 MILLION**  
in patronage dividends have been returned to FMCTC members since 1993.

dividends are paid to the members. This year's cash dividend payments represent:

- **\$400,000** – a cash payment of the allocated dividends for the year 2004
- **\$136,105** – a partial payment (1/13th) of the special allocation for the Rural Telephone Bank stock redemption. Members who received service between the years 1994-2006 will receive their share of this special allocation. (2006R)
- **\$110,932** – a partial payment (1/13th) of the special allocation for the sale of the Verizon cellular partnership. Members who received service 2000-2012 will receive their share of this special allocation. (2012V).



We wish you and your family a Merry Christmas.

Stop by our office December 18-21 and enjoy Christmas goodies and coffee from 9 AM-3 PM.

### HOLIDAY CLOSINGS:

- Friday, December 22 at 12 Noon
- Monday, December 25
- Monday, January 1, 2018

**Go Make Memories**  
Our TV will wait for you!

**NEW! Restart TV**  
**NEW! Remote DVR Scheduling**  
**Whole Home DVR**

Happy Holidays from FARMERS MUTUAL COOPERATIVE TELEPHONE COMPANY  
**FMCTC**  
Your Total Communications Provider

Included with your Digital TV with FREE HD & Whole Home DVR service.

Call or visit our office for full details.



- Go Make Memories
- We're returning \$647,037 to you
- Christmas Toy Drive
- The #1 mistake when purchasing a TV
- Our favorite tech gadgets
- Dead spots? Get another router.
- Holiday office hours
- Your nominating committee it set to meet
- College scholarship info
- Washington D.C. trip info



## Donate to the FMCTC 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Toy Drive

Help Santa fill our boxes full of toys.

Drop off a **NEW, unwrapped toy** at one of our drop off sites before December 15th.

**FMCTC Office: 801 19th Street, Harlan**

**Manilla City Hall: 443 Main Street**

We'll deliver the toys to local organizations which will distribute the toys to deserving kids in our area just in time for Christmas.

Thanks for joining us in the gift of giving. (799-4420)



## From the Desk of Tom Retransmission Negotiations of Local Television

It is that time again to negotiate with the local television stations in Omaha and Des Moines that we carry on our Cable TV systems of analog and digital. This occurs every three years and we have been working to keep the rates closer to cost of living or more reasonable to increase every year of the contract since August. We have until January 1, 2018 to complete these negotiations and have engaged our attorney and national organizations to assist in the process. Even with our team and their hard work, we are expecting the rates to increase anywhere from 30% to 40% over the next three years.

This directly impacts your cable television rates and we take this very seriously. We are working to keep rates as close to current as possible and will have to make the determination how to handle these increases when we are done. We hope we are able to hold the line or not pass along too much this go around as we have seen good growth in the services to cover costs and have cut other costs as we can.

More in later months on our results that we able to pass along as information without breaking our Non-Disclosure agreements and what that will mean for you as subscribers and members. Thank you again for your patronage and we work hard to meet your expectations.

## 2017 Favorite Tech Gadgets

Here comes the 2017 holiday season, and that means it's time to round up our favorite tech gifts and gadget stocking stuffers. Here are some of the coolest ideas we've come across.

### Google Home

Do you ever dream of having a personal assistant? The Google Home could definitely qualify as one. Using a voice recognition system, the Google Home can hear you from across the room. By using the wake words "Hey Google," you can ask it just about anything and it will tell you, including the weather forecast or news of the day. You can set timers and reminders, convert tablespoons to cups, and play your favorite music. You can find it on Amazon for \$129.99.



### Pix-Star Frame

Digital photo frames are the perfect gift idea for parents and grandparents because they make it easy to enjoy their children's and grandchildren's pictures. However, loading and updating pictures to the frame is usually not convenient. The Pix-Star Wi-Fi frame addresses this issue in a very simple way, by using email. The frame has the ability to receive photo-emails directly to the frame over a Wi-Fi connection. Friends and family can email photos directly to the Pix-Star frame from their computer, Smartphone, or tablet. The frame checks for new incoming photo emails automatically. You can find it on amazon.com for \$155 (10.4" screen) or \$199.99 (15" screen.) (782-3162)

### Samsung SmartThings Hub

The Samsung SmartThings Hub is an easy way to turn your home into a smart home where you can monitor and control your home from anywhere. Begin by connecting smart devices including lights, speakers, locks, thermostats, sensors and more to your Hub. Then use the SmartThings app on your smartphone or tablet to monitor and control your smart home. You can find it at Best Buy for about \$50. (744-3167)

## Nominating committee is set to meet this month

The nominating committee will meet at 10AM on Tuesday, December 5, 2017, at the Farmers Mutual Cooperative Telephone Company office in Harlan. This committee will nominate candidates for three open positions on the FMCTC board of directors.

Directors whose terms expire in 2018 are:

- ✓ Ted Chamberlain, Earling
- ✓ Paul Nelson, Jacksonville
- ✓ Brandt Ferry, Kirkman

Nominations made by the committee, along with any nominations by petition from the members in accordance with Cooperative bylaws, and any nominations from the floor at the annual meeting, will be voted on by the members present at the annual meeting to be held in March 2018. (654-5044)

Contact the FMCTC business office at 744-3131 if you would like more information concerning the nomination process.

### Nominating Committee Members

- Westphalia – Denny Gaul
- Hancock – Gerald Rold
- Harlan Town – Verl Arentson
- Harlan Rural – Dallas Klindt
- Kirkman – Julienne Ferry
- Irwin – Kenneth Juhl
- Jacksonville – Edward Andersen
- Defiance – Robert Kloewer
- Manilla – Jeremy Stangl
- Earling – Robert Finken

## Have you returned your Notice of Payment Authorization?

If you were a FMCTC member anytime in 1994 through 2012, you recently received a *Payment Authorization Notice* in the mail. This notice listed your share of patronage dividends which will be returned to you this month. (733-8645)

Many of our members have returned their Notice with the necessary information. If you have not returned

your Notice, please take a moment to complete the information requested and return it to us at PO Box 311, Harlan, Iowa, 51537. Or, drop it by the business office. We will then send you a check for the amount of dividends listed on your Notice.

If you have any questions about patronage dividends, give us a call.

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# What is a wireless 'dead spot' and how to eliminate it

We take Wi-Fi Internet for granted, but it's not magic – it's radio waves. These radio waves can be interfered with or obstructed, producing wireless "dead spot" or "dead zones." Wireless signals won't penetrate these dead spots, so wireless devices won't receive a Wi-Fi signal within them.

## WHAT IS A WIRELESS DEAD SPOT?

A dead spot is simply an area within your house that's supposed to be covered by Wi-Fi; but it doesn't work there – devices aren't able to connect to the network. If you take a device into a dead spot – maybe you're using a smartphone or tablet and walk into a room where there's a dead spot – the Wi-Fi will stop working and you won't receive a signal. (741-3280)

## WHAT CAUSES WIRELESS DEAD SPOTS?

Anything that interferes with Wi-Fi radio waves can produce a dead spot. If you have a large house and have your wireless router in one corner of the home, there may be a dead spot in the opposite corner of the home where the Wi-Fi signal can't reach.

Most houses were built before Wi-Fi was developed, so they may be constructed in ways that interfere with Wi-Fi. Old houses may have thick plaster walls that contain chicken wire for support, and this metal wiring can block Wi-Fi signals. Large metal objects like file cabinets or metal walls may also block Wi-Fi signals.

Other devices may also interfere with Wi-Fi signals – we've seen old cordless phones interfere with Wi-Fi signals when used and a microwave oven block Wi-Fi signals when running. Baby monitors, wireless security systems, wireless sound systems – these are all types of devices that have been known to cause problems.

If you're in an area dense with wireless networks, such as an apartment block where every unit has its own wireless router, your Wi-Fi coverage may also be hurt by interference. If your nearby neighbors have their Wi-Fi networks configured on the same wireless channel as yours, this may result in interference, reducing your network's signal strength, possibly producing dead spots.

## HOW TO DETECT WIRELESS DEAD SPOTS

Let's be honest: You don't really need fancy software to identify dead

spots. Just pick up your smartphone or another wireless device, connect to your wireless network, and walk around your house. Pay attention to the Wi-Fi signal indicator on your smartphone. If signal strength drops to zero, you've found a dead spot. If it drops to a very low level, that may also be a concern – unreliable signal strength may result in lower speeds and some devices may not be able to connect on the fringes of your Wi-Fi network. Different devices have different tolerances for low signal strength.

Remember that the Wi-Fi indicator doesn't update immediately, so don't sprint while holding your phone. Walk slowly and pause in areas where you might conceivably use Wi-Fi.

Of course, you can also use software to help detect wireless dead spots. On Android, the free **WiFi Analyzer app** will show you more detailed information about the strength of your Wi-Fi signal. Open the app, select the Signal meter screen, and pick your Wi-Fi network. Walk around with the app open and you'll see the signal strength change as you move from location to location. (747-2051)

Apple doesn't allow third-party apps to access this information on iOS, so iPhone and iPad users can't use an app for more detailed information – they'll have to pay attention to their device's standard Wi-Fi indicator.

## HOW TO FIX WIRELESS DEAD SPOTS

Here are some tips for improving your Wi-Fi coverage in your home:

**Call our Internet Help Desk Monday – Friday, 8AM-5PM** and we will troubleshoot your Wi-Fi signal with you over the phone. We will suggest tips to improve your coverage.

**Add another router.** If none of our tips help, you could set up another router to extend your coverage over a larger area. This may be essential in large houses. See information about this new offering in this newsletter.

Whether or not you have wireless dead spots will depend on your router, its positioning, your neighbors, what your home's walls are made out of, the size of your coverage area, and the types of electronic devices you have. There's a lot that can cause problems, but trial and error can help you pin down the culprit.



Our Internet Help Desk is here to help you get more from your FMCTC High-Speed Internet and take the frustration out of Wi-Fi dead spots in your home. Call us Monday – Friday, 8AM -5PM and we'll troubleshoot your signal issues and suggest ways to improve it.

If none of our tips help, an inexpensive way to improve your home's Wi-Fi signal is to add another router. And now, FMCTC is offering additional routers at very inexpensive prices so you can!

- ➔ **We will come to your home, troubleshoot signal issues** inside your home and advise you on the best location of another router.
- ➔ **You choose whether to rent or buy the router:** Rent another router for \$2.99/mo or purchase a router with a 90 day warranty for \$135.
- ➔ **Professional installation:** Our technicians will install your router,

## The number one mistake to avoid when purchasing a new TV

We've been getting comments from customers who find out that their new TV they just purchased did not come with a built-in tuner. **A QAM tuner is required to watch TV unless the TV is hooked up to a set top box.**

How can this be?

### TV VS. MONITOR

The answer is that the manufacturer is selling you a "Monitor" or "Display" and not a TV. This allows them to save a few bucks and get rid of the broadcast TV tuner. This can be very misleading to the consumer. (748-3561)

### HOW TO AVOID THIS PITFALL

Here are some tips to help you be sure you're getting a TV with a tuner included:

- Make sure the word "TV" is in the product title, as opposed to "Monitor," "Display," "Home Theatre Display." TVs must contain a broadcast TV tuner, by Federal law.

## Have a wireless dead spot in your home? Put in another router!

Extend your Wi-Fi experience throughout your home with a **Calix 844 GigaCenter router** **NOW**

**AVAILABLE for rent or purchase at FMCTC**  
\$2.99/mo Rent or  
\$135 Purchase



ensure your Wi-Fi is working properly and set up your network ID and password.

- ➔ **Technical support:** Receive technical support from our Help Desk M-F 8-5 for assistance with resetting your password, adding new devices to your network or troubleshooting signal issues.



single round connector, not the set of two or more colored round connectors

- Be extra careful when purchasing a Vizio-branded TV.



## FMCTC is pleased to announce the 17th year of the FMCTC Scholarship Program

Young people are considered a very valuable resource at FMCTC. This program has been established to encourage youth in our area to further their education after graduating from high school. (766-3231)

### \$500 Scholarship

The FMCTC Scholarship Program will award one \$500 scholarship to high school seniors whose parents are members of FMCTC.

- ➔ 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 be a member – use telephone from FMCTC.
- ➔ To be considered for this year's scholarship, applications must be turned in to the FMCTC office by 12 NOON on February 2, 2018.
- ➔ Applications are available at Guidance Offices at area high schools, or the application can be downloaded at [www.fmctc.com](http://www.fmctc.com).

### \$2000 and \$5000 Scholarship

The FMCTC Scholarship Program will again participate in the national scholarship program for the Foundation for Rural Service (FRS). All FMCTC scholarship applicants will automatically be entered for these national scholarships:

- ➔ 30 one-time \$2000 scholarships to students for their first year of college, university, or vocational-technical school.
- ➔ Four one-time \$5000 FRS Stauralakis Family scholarships to students with a preference who are majoring in math, science, engineering or medicine.

Applicants do not need to complete an additional application for the FRS scholarships. FMCTC will automatically send all FMCTC college scholarship applications to the national level to compete for the FRS scholarships. Eligibility, application and materials are exactly the same for the FMCTC and FRS scholarships.

Call our office at 744-3131 if you have any questions.

## FMCTV SPORTS HITS THE COURTS



FMCTV Sports will be on the courts with the local high school basketball teams this season. KNOD 105.3FM or FMCTV Matt Gubbels will be doing the play-by-play and FMCTV Sports will be filming all the action. Check our website and Channel 48/448 for the programming schedule.

## 2018 Youth Tour to Washington, D.C.

### Attention High School Juniors! Win an all-expenses-paid trip to the nation's capital

FMCTC will sponsor one area student to attend the Foundation for Rural Service (FRS) Youth Tour of Washington D.C.

The Youth Tour will bring together 100 high school students from rural America for an educational and exciting experience in our nation's capital.

#### The Youth Tour:

- Offers students an inside look at the telecommunications industry
- Educates students about the legislative and governmental process
- Gives students the opportunity to experience the nation's capital
- Offers lots of fun activities like dinner at famous restaurants and night tours of the city
- Allows students to meet other kids from rural communities across the country and to form friendships that last a lifetime



- ➔ The FRS Youth Tour runs June 2 – June 6, 2018
- ➔ Student's parent(s) or guardian(s) must be a member – use telephone from FMCTC
- ➔ Student must be a high school junior
- ➔ Student must be under 18 years of age at the time of the trip

Applications are due February 2, 2018 at 12Noon to the FMCTC office. Youth Tour applications are available at the FMCTC office or may be printed online at [fmctc.com](http://fmctc.com).

## TIPS for our Digital TV with FREE HD & Whole Home customers

### How to get the Closed Caption display off your tv screen

Has the 'Closed Caption' feature suddenly appeared while you were watching tv? Just push the # button on your remote and the closed caption should disappear.

**Remote DVR Scheduler:** Call our Help Desk Monday – Friday, 8-5 to add Remote DVR Scheduler to your FMCTV account. Then you can schedule your FMCTV DVR when you're away from home using your smartphone or computer.

**Remote DVR Scheduling:** Easy set-up instructions for your smartphone or computer are online at [fmctc.com](http://fmctc.com), or call or stop by our office for a quick tutorial.

**Restart TV:** Watch a tv show already in progress from the beginning. Or, if you are browsing channels and see a show you wanted to watch that has already begun, RESTART it and DVR it so you can watch it later.



All Restart TV programs are indicated by the green and white icon next to the channel information on the on-screen guide. Highlight the program and push the **GREEN** button on your remote control. The program will RESTART from the beginning immediately.