

# THE CONNECTION

FEBRUARY/MARCH 2019

**Runestone**  
Telecom Association

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## Speed for Internet Video

If streaming video is popular at your household, we invite you to make sure your internet connection is fast enough to enjoy good quality and no buffering. The FCC considers 25 Mbps sufficient,

but many households can benefit from 50 Mbps or more. Call today, for a free, no pressure chat from your local staff at Runestone Telecom. Thank you for being our customer.

## Scholarships Available

The Minnesota Telecom Alliance Foundation is giving away six \$2,000 scholarships to students attending post-secondary education at a university, college or technical college. You must be a Minnesota resident and the applicant's family must receive one service from Runestone Telecom. You can find the application on our website: [www.runestone.net](http://www.runestone.net)



**Applications must be submitted to Runestone Telecom no later than February 22, 2019.**

100 Runestone Drive  
PO Box 336  
Hoffman MN 56339  
Phone: (320) 986-2013  
Fax: (320) 986-2050  
Hours: Monday-Friday  
8:00 am-4:30 pm  
[www.runestone.net](http://www.runestone.net)

Development Partner:  
Cooperative Network Services

Runestone Telecom Association is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

# GM's Update

## By Kent Hedstrom, General Manager

**Happy New Year Co-op Members!** I would like to thank all of you who attended our Holiday Open House and Retirement Celebration for Carolee Haack In December. We appreciate that you took the time to visit the office. We welcome you to stop by the Runestone Telecom office any time.

With every New Year there are new opportunities and changes. One big change this year will be with our Cable TV System. To be clear, we are not completely exiting the video business as we will continue offer our Broadcast and Basic CATV packages. We have however, made the decision that at the end of 2019 Runestone will no longer offer the Choice or Works package, and will no longer offer the premium channels which include HBO, Showtime and Cinemax.

This decision also means that the set top boxes including the Digital Video Recorders (DVRs) that Runestone provided customers will no longer be functional at the end of the year. We began offering digital television in the year 2000 and the set top boxes and DVR's we use are becoming obsolete and are only available on the used market making them difficult to obtain. Additionally, the quality of some of the used equipment has been problematic, causing not only an inconvenience for us, but more importantly an

inconvenience to you our customers. The investment to implement a replacement technology to our digital offering and DVR's is cost prohibitive given the small profits margins we have in CATV.

If you are one of Runestone Telecom's Internet subscribers there are several Over the Top (OTT) options that could serve as a replacement to these services, DirectTV Now, Hulu, YouTube TV, and Sony VUE to name a few. A cloud DVR is either

an option or is included with some of these services. We are announcing this early to give you ample time to find an alternative. If you have questions about any of the available online viewing options, please contact the Runestone office or stop in so that we can demonstrate these services.

It is important to remember that your online satisfaction is impacted by the Internet speed that you subscribe to. If you are streaming

video, participating in online gaming, have numerous devices, or multiple people accessing your wireless Internet, an increased Internet speed will enhance your experience. If you would like an assessment of your Internet use regarding speed, Runestone's Internet department can help you make the most efficient decision.



## Cable TV Rate Change

### EFFECTIVE MARCH 1ST

Some rates for our Runestone Cable TV will be changing as of March 1st, 2019. The price for programming continues to go up with each renewal. We are trying to keep any increases to a minimum while still offering a variety of channels to you.

\* Note: The following channels are no longer available to new customers: Choice, The Works, HBO, Cinemax, HBO/Max Plus and Encore Starz Plus. If needed, please call our office for guidance on where you can purchase these services through internet streaming services.

Pricing	Currently	March 1st
Basic Broadcast	\$28.27	\$29.78
Expanded Basic	\$66.23	\$70.23
Choice	\$8.00	\$8.00*
The Works	\$107.95	\$113.13*
HBO	\$15.95	\$15.95*
Cinemax	\$7.95	\$7.95*
HBO/Max Plus	\$23.90	\$23.90*
Encore/Starz! Plus	\$10.95	\$10.95*

# Telecommuting on the Rise Nationally

Working from home partially or full time, whether telecommuting or owning a home business, is a growing reality.

Benefits such as getting more done (with limited interruptions from chatty coworkers), saving time with less commuting, and flexibility for family needs are just a few of the benefits people enjoy. And what better place to telecommute than from beautiful rural Minnesota. It's a dream scenario for many employees.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 1 in 4 employed people now do some or all their work at home. And that trend has been increasing steadily.

Yet, working from home would not be possible with poor internet connectivity. Being able to work productively means fast file transfers, quick search, high-quality video & conferencing, and voice over the internet, which are essentials to any home office. So, what makes this possible?

## Fast Fiber Optic Internet Direct to Local Residents

The speed and reliability of modern communication is best met with a fast fiber-optic internet connection, right to your door. And for those lucky enough to live in our service area, Runestone Telecom makes this possible. For telecommuters it means:

**Speed:** Direct fiber offers lightning fast internet speeds.

**Privacy:** Every fiber-optic connection is exclusive; you don't share a connection with the entire neighborhood.

**Unlimited:** With fiber internet, use your connection without limits. No worries about data overages or slow-downs.

**Multiple Device Friendly:** Fiber internet connections are designed to accommodate many devices. Easily connect and use them all!

A major key to modern rural living and telecommuting is fast fiber internet. Contact us for a connection to your doorstep today!

## Holiday Open House Prize Winners

Congratulations to the following people attending our open house on December 14th, who each won a Roku Express Streaming Media Player.

- Brent Anderson, Hoffman
- Joan Kopacek, Donnelly
- Kris Telkamp, Hoffman

## Office Closed

Our office will be closed on Monday, February 18th.

## Communications and Video Accessibility Act (CVAA) Waiver

Runestone Telecom Association qualifies for a waiver from the FCC that relieves Runestone Telecom Association of the requirement to ensure that on-screen text menus and guides for the display or selection of multichannel video programming provided by navigation devices that it leases, or sells are audibly accessible in real-time upon request by individuals who are blind or visually impaired. Therefore, customers who are blind or visually impaired using Runestone Telecom Association will not be able to audibly access any of the functions in the display or selection of multichannel video programming via on-screen text menus and guides. Other television providers in your area may offer navigation devices with audibly accessible features. For more information, contact Runestone Telecom Association at 320-986-2013 or email us from our website at: [www.runestone.net/contact](http://www.runestone.net/contact).



## New Directory Coming Soon

The 2019 Vikingland Regional Directory will be delivered to your mailbox in early February. You may also pick up a copy at our office.

## Recycle Old Directories

Minnesota law requires all discarded telephone directories to be recycled. Please return your old directory to our office or bring it to your local recycling center. Grant County Recycling does accept old directories.

## REELZ Channel New on January 1st

REELZ is a leading independent cable and satellite general entertainment network that is home to factual entertainment, television events, miniseries, movies and series featuring big stories and big stars.



## DMX Music Now Stingray Music

Stingray Music Replaces the DMX Music Channels on January 7th. Check out our website for the lineup.

You can enjoy high-quality, commercial-free music throughout your home. There's sure to be a channel that will become a favorite. Thank you for choosing Runestone TV service.

## Welcome New Customers!

### BARRETT

Newberry RW & CC.....320-528-6204

### ELBOW LAKE

Myron, Melissa.....218-685-6405

Smart Grain Solutions .....218-685-4973

### HOFFMAN

Carter, Dakota .....320-986-3031

Gelling, Joanne.....320-986-2980

Hammitt, Janice .....320-986-4181

### KENSINGTON

Bostrom, James & Amanda.....

.....320-965-2054

Tischer, Tyler & Cassie .....320-965-2101

### LOWRY

Hernandez, Monico.....320-283-2126

### WENDELL

Wuollet, Nena.....218-458-2323

# You Can Become a Director

This year there will be an election for a 5-year term of the Kensington/Cyrus exchange. If you are from that exchange and interested in running for Runestone's Board of Directors, submit a petition signed by 10 other members. The petition can be obtained at our office or from our website. There you can also find qualifications for being a

director and definition of members are listed in the By-Laws at: [www.runestone.net](http://www.runestone.net)

If there is a contested race, directors are elected by ballot, and the winner(s) is announced at the Annual Meeting. Completed petitions are accepted from January 18th to March 19th.

## Be Sunspot Aware

What are sunspots? This occurs when the orbital positions of the satellite and the sun are in one line. We receive signals from both. When the sun's rays are more powerful, we may have a "loss of signal" appear on your TV as we have lost the signal from the satellite. Your TV may experience fuzzy TV channels,

sparkles, total loss of the channel, channel tiling or freeze frames on some channels. Sun spots occur every spring and fall for about 2 weeks lasting anywhere from a few minutes up to 15 minutes a day. These occur in early March and early October.

## Cable TV Bills

### Why Do They Really Increase?

Did you know that in 1983, 90% of American media programming was owned by 50 companies? Compare that to today when, by some estimates, just five conglomerates (including Comcast, The Walt Disney Company, AT&T, CBS Corporation and Viacom; source Forbes) control 90%.

Besides the issues of press freedom and independent viewpoints, this dramatic consolidation impacts price since there is less market-based competition.

### What We're Doing to Keep TV Affordable

- We're members of the National Cable TV Cooperative. We partner with many rural cable companies to advocate on your behalf.
- We assess the value of channels. Surveys may lead us to consider dropping channels that are too costly for the value they bring. Unfortunately, sometimes dropping unpopular channels requires removal of popular programming due to contract requirements from broadcasters.
- Also, with product research we look for new technologies as cable TV moves toward on-demand and streaming services.
- Finally, we also work to educate about these issues with articles like this one.

