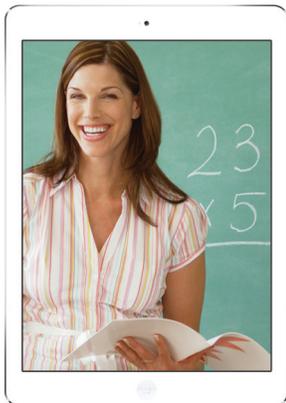


The Connection

AUGUST 2020



This School Year Will Include New Lessons for All

Given the pandemic, the 2020/2021 school year will be unlike any other. Runestone Telecom applauds the hard work of local administrators, teachers, and parents to continue providing learning opportunities while taking appropriate steps to help everyone stay safe.

These challenging times require all of us—whether in school or not—to learn lessons of patience and resilience as we navigate the uncertainty ahead. Please contact us if you need help with your communications technology.

Contact Us

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Hoffman, MN 56339
Phone: 320-986-2013

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Email: rtaoffice@runestone.net

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Runestone
Telecom Association



The New Normal may call for an old phone favorite

Are you spending more time at home these days, juggling a new mix of parenting, teaching, and work responsibilities? The last thing you need is more stress, which unreliable cell phone service can give you.

The solution is to get home phone service from Runestone Telecom. A home phone offers much more reliable call quality than a cell phone, particularly in rural areas. It will also keep working during a natural disaster, unaffected by overwhelmed or downed cell towers.

**CALL 320-986-2013 NOW
TO ADD A HOME PHONE**

Certain restrictions apply. Contact us for details.



Common Misconceptions About Calling 811

At least a few days before you dig on your property, you must call 811 to get underground utility lines marked. This helps prevent unintended consequences such as injuries, damage to your property, utility service outages to the neighborhood, and potential fines and repair costs.

Some homeowners, however, are confused about when they need to call 811. So we're clearing up some common misconceptions here:

"It's just a small project. I don't need to call." Wrong! Every digging job requires a call—even "small" projects like planting trees and shrubs. Some utility lines are buried just a few inches underground.

"I am digging in a spot that was previously marked." You still need to call. Erosion and root system growth can alter the depth or location of buried lines, or your utility companies may have completed work on their lines since the last time you dug.

"I assume my contractor or landscaper will call." Don't assume. Check with the company before digging begins to make sure a call to 811 has been placed.

Runestone Telecom thanks you for helping prevent damage to our underground infrastructure.



How to Help Others from Home During the Pandemic

Due to social distancing, your options for giving back to your community may be more limited than in the past. However, there are ways to remain in the safety of your home and still help provide needed resources.

Sew and donate masks. If you know how to sew, put your skills to good use by making fabric masks for friends, family members, and neighbors. These face coverings can help reduce the spread of COVID-19 and may be required to gain entry into some buildings.

Check on your elderly neighbors. Call or text them to see how they're getting along and ask if they need any grocery items. Let's say your next-door neighbor says she could use a box of tissues. You could offer to leave them on her front porch so no direct contact is needed.



Make a donation. Nonprofit organizations across the country are facing more requests for services while simultaneously dealing with fewer donations. If you have the financial ability, consider making donations to your favorite nonprofit organizations. They need you now more than ever to continue their important work.

Say thanks to those on the front lines. There are many people who are going above and beyond to keep essential services operating during the pandemic despite higher levels of risk to themselves. They include health care professionals, grocery store clerks, domestic workers, police officers and fire fighters, delivery drivers, and more.

Think about ways you could express gratitude to these dedicated individuals. Here are a few ideas to get you started:

- Place a "Thank You" sign in your front lawn or write a similar message in sidewalk chalk.
- Call your local police or fire department and ask if they'd be willing to accept a delivery of a few pizzas as a small token of your appreciation. (This supports a local pizzeria, too.)
- Put a box of packaged snacks and bottled water next to your front door with a message thanking delivery people and encouraging them to help themselves.

You can get more ideas from local community service organizations or your social media networks.

Get Creative and Add More Zing to Your Zoom Calls

Zoom calls are being used for virtually everything from A to Z these days. There are team meeting Zooms, happy hour Zooms, dinner party Zooms, surprise birthday Zooms, gender reveal Zooms, book club Zooms, and family chat Zooms. While these video calls provide much-needed socialization, they can sometimes use a little boost to avoid being boring.

Here are some fun ideas to try:

Give your virtual gatherings a specific direction. This could be a specific theme, challenge, event, or activity. For example, you could have a weekly cooking challenge, where friends have to make the most creative dish possible using one common ingredient. The winner of the challenge picks the ingredient for the next week.

Ask questions to prompt fun conversations. What's your favorite vacation memory? What restaurant do you miss going to the most? Which coffee cup is your favorite and why? What do you think will be the most different thing about you when the pandemic is over?

Play a game. You have many options for games that work well on Zoom. They include Charades, Bingo, Scattergories, Pictionary, Heads Up, and Psych. Look around online for details on these and other games, then experiment to see what you and your Zoom groups enjoy most.

Have a scavenger hunt. This takes advantage of your separate locations and provides the opportunity to move around a bit. The host names an object and everyone else has a certain amount of time (maybe 30 seconds) to find it in their own house.

Add a custom background. Why have everyone stare at a wall in your home when they could be looking at a more interesting background instead? Zoom enables you to add a custom background during the call. Simply click the up arrow next to the "Stop Video" button in the bottom left corner of the screen. After you click the arrow, click "Choose Virtual Background..." to be taken to the settings screen, where there are some preset backgrounds and a "+" button where you can upload any image saved to your computer.

Fast internet and a strong Wi-Fi connection will also enhance Zoom calls. To learn more, call Runestone Telecom at 320-986-2013.



Tech Giants Celebrate Major Anniversaries in 2020

It may seem like these companies have been around forever, but it's only been 15, 25, and 45 years!



YouTube – 15 Years

YouTube was registered on February 14, 2005, by Steve Chen, Chad Hurley, and Jawed Karim — former employees of PayPal. They had the idea that ordinary people would enjoy sharing their "home videos," and they were certainly right. Almost 5 billion videos are watched daily on YouTube.



eBay – 25 Years

Originally called AuctionWeb, eBay was launched by founder Pierre Omidyar as a site "dedicated to bringing together buyers and sellers in an honest and open marketplace." The first item Omidyar listed on the site in 1995 was a broken laser pointer, which sold. Today, there are 1.5 billion live listings on the eBay Marketplace.



Microsoft – 45 Years

Microsoft was formed in 1975, at a time when most Americans used typewriters, by childhood friends Bill Gates and Paul Allen. The company name came from "microprocessors" and "software." Microsoft grew to become the biggest software company in the world.

In 2020, Runestone Telecom celebrates 70 years in business. Thanks for being part of our success!

Strategies for More Secure Online Shopping

Remember to take these precautions:

- **Only do business with reputable vendors.** That means sticking to sites you've heard of or have a high percentage of positive reviews.
- **Make sure your information is encrypted.** You can tell the site uses encryption if its URL includes "https" instead of "http."
- **Use company apps.** Even better than secure websites are apps, which many retailers now provide.
- **Don't shop when using public Wi-Fi.** Only conduct financial transactions on a secure connection (such as your home network).
- **Use a credit card.** Though debit cards are handy, they don't provide the same kind of protection that credit cards offer (such as getting money back for illegitimate purchases).
- **Check your credit card statements.** If you see any charges you don't recognize, contact your credit card company immediately.

New Members

Elbow Lake

Harstad, Jack 218-685-2261
Mickelson, Frank & Ethel.. 218-685-4068
Mohagen, Jonathan L..... 218-685-5139
Scheffler, J & T..... 218-685-6173
Sebek, Jane 218-685-2057

Hoffman

Anderson, Carol 320-986-2940
Combs, Brady..... 320-986-2161
Schultz, Sarah 320-986-3130

Kensington

Gardner, Tom & Amy 320-965-2085

Lowry

Craig Farms Trucking LLC ..320-283-2151
Stensrud, Eric..... 320-283-2050

What Does the Changing TV Landscape Mean for You?

Cable TV has been around longer than you might think. (The first broadcast was in the late 1940s.) Eventually it provided subscribers with lineups of 100+ channels to watch on their TVs, thanks to set-top boxes. While cable TV is still offered today, the TV landscape is changing dramatically and will continue to evolve in the years ahead.

New technologies, most notably streaming content over an internet connection, have caused a growing number of people to "cut the cord" and drop their cable TV subscriptions in favor of streaming services. Some of the most popular cable TV replacers (meaning they offer a lineup of live TV shows) include YouTube TV, Sling TV, FuboTV, and Philo. For even more extensive libraries of TV show and movies, many viewers turn to streaming services such as Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, and Hulu.

Clearly, the TV industry has been forever disrupted. People now have virtually unlimited options for viewing entertainment on their internet-connected devices — smartphone, tablet, or laptop — whether at home or away. No longer confined to a weekly episode schedule, people can also use streaming services to binge watch an entire season over a single weekend.

In response to these developments, some telecommunications companies across the country are abandoning their TV offerings all together, while others are replacing their cable TV service with an app-based streaming service to give customers added convenience and flexibility.

You can think of the transition from cable TV to streaming services as a little like what you experienced when going from paper books to online books or flip phones to smartphones. Sure, there may have been a few bumps during the initial learning curve, but it wasn't long before the new technology was old hat. Now you wonder how you ever got along with it.

Runestone Telecom wants to help ease the transition to using streaming services. Call our office at 320-986-2013 to get answers to your streaming questions or learn about the fast internet speeds we offer for the best streaming experience.

