

The Connection

FEBRUARY 2023



Make the Shortest Month Long on Fun

February can be a challenging month as the cold and darkness of winter drags on. To add more fun to its 28 days, consider activities like these: Make snow ice cream. Build a snowman (or snowwoman or snowpet). Take a walk in the dark with headlamps or flashlights. Enjoy an indoor picnic. Or explore a new creative hobby.

Contact Us

100 Runestone Drive / PO Box 336
Hoffman, MN 56339
Phone: 320-986-2013

Office Hours: M-F 8 am to 4:30 pm

Email: rtaoffice@runestone.net

Visit Us: www.runestone.net

Find Us:   

Review Us: 

Runestone
Telecom Association

LOVE STREAMING MOVIES?

YOU'LL LOVE OUR INTERNET! What's not to love about streaming movies at home? You get to pop some popcorn, cuddle up on the couch, and watch whatever your heart desires — whether that's drama, comedy, action, fantasy, adventure, sci-fi, or romance.

The last thing you need as a movie buff is buffering. To avoid the dreaded buffering wheel showing up on the screen, switch to super-fast and reliable Internet from Runestone Telecom.

**CALL 320-986-2013
FOR FASTER SPEEDS**

**HAPPY
VALENTINE'S
DAY!**

Speed availability varies depending on location. Contact us for details.



You Can Become a Runestone Telecom Director

This year there will be a director elected for a five-year term on Runestone Telecom's Board of Directors from the Lowry exchange. If you're a member from this exchange and interested in running for this position, please submit



a petition signed by at least 10 other members. The petition form can be obtained at our office or from our website. Visit runestone.net and click on "The Cooperative" for more information including the qualifications to be a director and the definition of members in the By-Laws.

If there's a contested race, directors are elected by ballot and the winner is announced at the Annual Meeting. Completed petitions are accepted between January 20th, 2023, and March 21st, 2023.

New Members

Cyrus

Driggins, Lorna L.....320-795-2776

Elbow Lake

Bah, Carren218-685-4902
Clark, Theresa.....218-685-4555
Jennen, Nathan.....218-685-5218
Lake Region Healthcare Elbow Lake Medical Center.....218-685-7300
United Truck & Trailer Inc.....218-685-6450

Hoffman

Lake Region Healthcare Hoffman Clinic.....320-986-2038

Kensington

Akervik, Jean.....320-965-2225

Protect Yourself from Social Security Scams

The Social Security Administration (SSA) wants you to know that scammers are pretending to be government employees. They may threaten you and demand immediate payment to avoid arrest or other legal action. They may claim there's been identity theft or another problem with your Social Security number, account, or benefits. Or they may offer to increase benefits, protect assets, or resolve identity theft. Don't fall for it!

If you owe money to Social Security, the SSA will mail you a letter with payment options and appeal rights. Payments are only accepted electronically through Pay.gov, Online Bill Pay, or physically by check or money order through their offices. The SSA will never:

- Threaten you with arrest or legal action because you don't agree to pay immediately.
- Suspend your Social Security number.
- Promise a benefit increase in exchange for money.
- Ask you to send gift cards, prepaid debit cards, wire transfers, Internet currency, cryptocurrency, or cash through the U.S. mail.



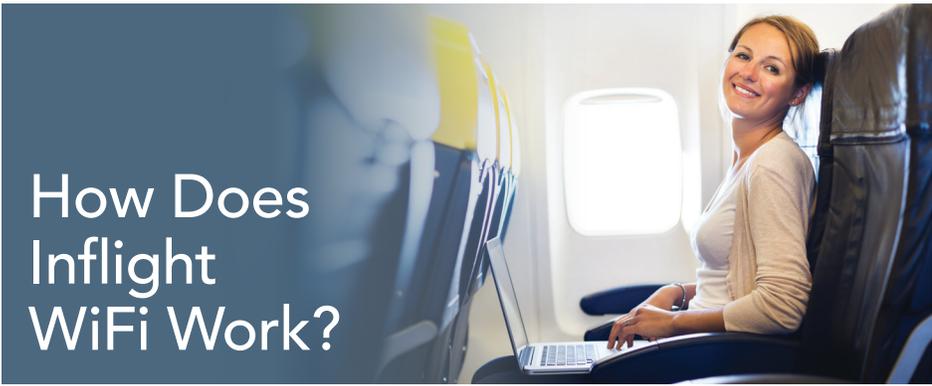
The SSA only sends emails or text messages if you opt in to receive them and only in limited situations, such as when you've subscribed to receive Social Security updates and notifications by text or email or as part of enhanced security when accessing your personal *my* Social Security account.

Look for these "red flags" of a possible Social Security scam:

- The caller or sender says there is a problem with your Social Security number or account.
- You receive a call, text, or email asking you to pay a fine or debt with retail gift cards, wire transfers, pre-paid debit cards, Internet currency, or cash.
- Callers threaten you with arrest or other legal action.

Keep in mind that scammers may use "phishing" emails to try and trick you into revealing personal information by clicking on malicious links or attachments. They may also spoof the SSA phone number in Caller ID or create documents that look official but are fake.

If you receive a questionable call, hang up and report it to the SSA's Office of the Inspector General at oig.ssa.gov.



Technology Can Help Seniors Live Alone More Safely

While many seniors prefer to spend their golden years at home, declines in physical abilities or cognitive function can make living alone an unsafe option. Thankfully, devices are available to help seniors enjoy greater independence and give their families more peace of mind. They include:

- **Smart stove alarms** alert older adults to potentially dangerous situations in the kitchen.
- **Smart bath monitors** detect potential overflow issues and shut off water before the bathtub overfills.
- **Smart medication pillboxes** provide audible or visual cues to prompt users to take their meds.
- **Smart doorbells** show a video picture of visitors to help older adults decide whether to answer the door.
- **Smart home security systems** can be programmed to automatically lock doors, arm security systems, and alert homeowners and caregivers remotely if issues arise.
- **Personal emergency response systems (PERS)** provide a personal help button that's worn around the neck or wrist.

How Does Inflight WiFi Work?

Gone are the days when there was nothing to do during a flight but read a paperback, take a nap, or watch the inflight entertainment system. Now most airlines offer inflight WiFi so passengers can have a more productive and enjoyable flight.

Ever wonder how WiFi works at 36,000 feet? The answer depends on which type of WiFi an airplane is using.

Air-to-ground WiFi

With air-to-ground WiFi, the airplane has an antenna installed on its belly, which links up with land-based cell towers. As it travels, it simply connects to the nearest transmitter on a rolling basis. Air-to-ground is the slowest types of inflight WiFi but sufficient to access things like emails and social networks. However, this system can't work when the airplane is flying over large expanses of water, such as on transatlantic routes.

Satellite WiFi

With this operating system, the airplane uses a satellite antenna on the top of the aircraft to pick up WiFi signals from a network of orbiting satellites. These satellites are linked to ground stations, and the airplane connects to whichever satellite is nearest. There are two types of satellite WiFi:

- **Ku-Band** is the most consistent type of satellite WiFi, since there are hundreds of Ku-Band satellites orbiting the earth. This means the plane's antenna will be more likely to maintain a signal. Providers such as Gogo, Panasonic, and Global Eagle Entertainment provide connectivity to airlines using Ku-Band.
- **Ka-Band** provides the most advanced high-speed satellite WiFi, boasting up to 80 Mbps per airplane. However, there are significantly fewer Ka-Band satellites in orbit with a smaller geographical coverage, so it's currently only suitable for some airlines.

Before you travel, check with the airline to see what type of WiFi will be available on the flight. You'll want to understand WiFi coverage areas, prices, and any WiFi restrictions. For example, an airline may block access to specific high-bandwidth applications, websites, and video conferencing services.

When you're back on the ground, make sure the WiFi you come home to has the speed and coverage you need. Call 320-986-2013 and ask about our managed router leases that include WiFi troubleshooting.

Devices which help seniors age in place can increase the bandwidth demands of a home's Internet connection. Call Runestone Telecom at 320-986-2013 if you have questions.





Phone and Internet Rate Decreases

We have good news about Runestone Telecom services:

- The TAP Surcharge will decrease from \$.07 per line to \$.03 per line effective February 1st, 2023.
- The 75-100 Mbps Internet rate will decrease from \$99.95 to \$95.95 effective February 1st, 2023.

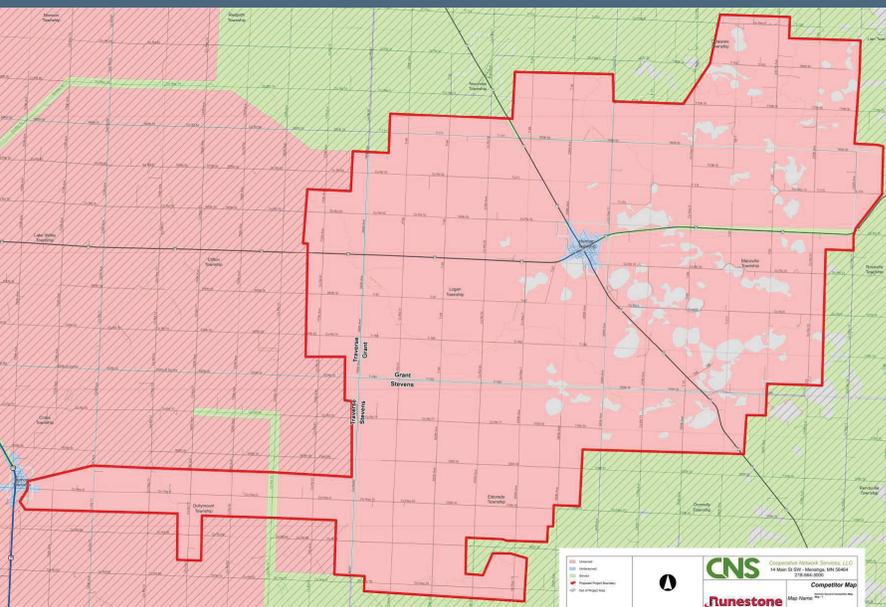
Applications Now Open for MTA Foundation Scholarships

The MTA Foundation will award six scholarships to high school seniors graduating in 2023. Each scholarship will be a one-time amount of \$2,000. There are two types of scholarships this year:

1. One \$2,000 Jon Tollefson Technology Scholarship: To be eligible, applicants must be a high school senior with plans to major in either Telecommunications or Information Technology (IT) at a university, college, or technical college and be a Minnesota resident.

2. Five \$2,000 General Scholarships: To be eligible, applicants must be a high school senior with plans to attend post-secondary education at a university, college, or technical college; be a Minnesota resident; and be in a family that subscribes to at least one service from an MTA member company.

You can find more information and the application on our website at www.runestone.net. Applications must be submitted to Runestone Telecom no later than February 17th, 2023.



Runestone Telecom Received Broadband Grant for the Herman-Dumont Area

We're excited to announce that Runestone Telecom received a \$2,493,637 State of Minnesota Border-to-Border Grant to help bring fiber broadband service to unserved and underserved locations in the Herman-Dumont area. This area will encompass nearly 410 households, businesses, farms, and community institutions within Grant, Stevens, and Traverse counties in rural West Central Minnesota.

Through a funding partnership with the State of Minnesota and Grant County, we'll bring broadband speed levels up to 1 Gbps (1,000 Mbps). We hope this project — with a total eligible cost of \$4,987,273 and a local match of \$2,493,636 — will increase economic development in our area and facilitate current and future video conferencing and distance learning options.

Live in the Herman-Dumont area and want fiber broadband service? Visit www.runestone.net, click on INTERNET, select SERVICE INFORMATION, select SERVICES MAP, type your address in the search bar in the top-left corner, and press ENTER to submit your application for service.