

THE **LINK**



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Letter from our General Manager:

As we head into another season, we hope you stay safe and healthy. We appreciate your business and continued support!

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Business Spotlight

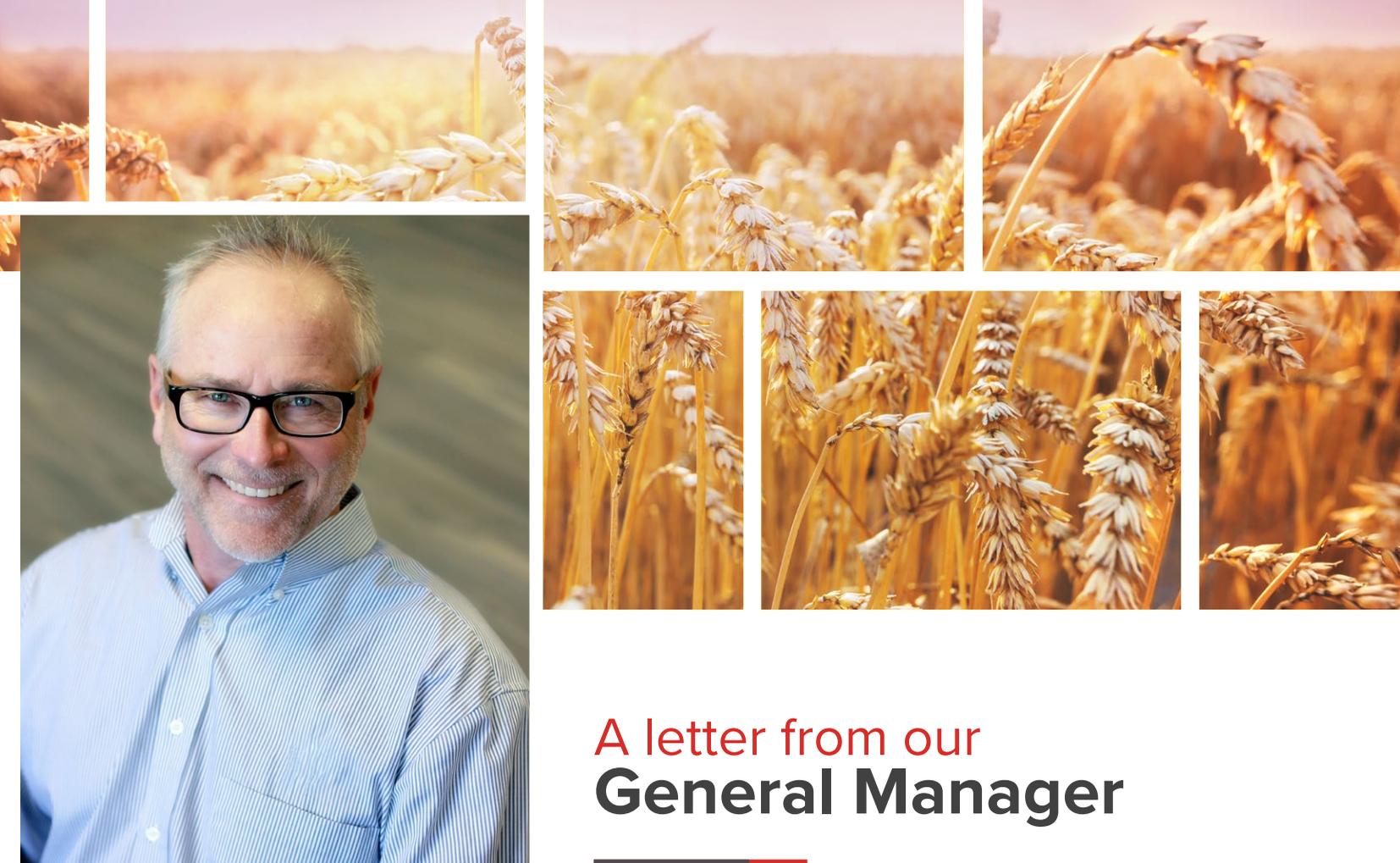
The vision of Jamestown/Stutsman Development Corporation is to be the premier catalyst in economic development and growing our community.

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Promises Kept, Even in a Pandemic

How Broadband providers are keeping North Dakota connected during COVID -19

Fall 2020



A letter from our General Manager

As we move closer to fall, we continue to monitor the COVID-19 pandemic. We were hopeful that the level of risk would subside, and we would be able to hold our annual membership meeting this fall. With the safety of our customers and employees in mind, we still do not believe the timing is right to hold a large gathering of our members. At this time, the Board of Directors has indefinitely postponed the annual meeting; however, we continue to monitor the level of risk in the case we would feel comfortable with scheduling the meeting.

Another thing COVID-19 has impacted significantly is live sports on TV. Many customers subscribe to TV service for live sports, and without those events subscribers are feeling like they are not getting the full value out of their TV subscription. We understand your frustration

and are fighting for networks and leagues to do the right thing and give refunds for the sports they are failing to deliver. Any decision to offer refunds to our customers will need to start with the leagues and those networks that carry live sports. As you can imagine, it is very complicated and will take months to resolve. We want you, our customers, to know that we are on your side and are fighting for the networks to refund you for the live events that did not take place. Updates on the situation can be found at www.tvonmyside.com.

On another note, construction season is in full swing as the crews work to get everything done before the ground freezes. We usually plan to be wrapped up with construction by November, but we are always uncertain what kind of weather October will bring. We are making progress on the USDA ReConnect project in the rural Spiritwood, Pingree and Buchanan areas. Out of 222 homes on the list to get service, we have roughly 50 of those completed and ready to be turned up when splicing is done. We expect to start connecting customers in the ReConnect area mid-September on the first of three fiber routes. As the second and third routes are spliced into service, we will continue to connect customers into late fall and early winter.

Unless we would have a very early freeze, we are still anticipating the completion of the project this year.

In addition to the ReConnect grant project, we are replacing our existing optical transport route as we have reached maximum capacity on the current route. The Fiber transport route connects our exchanges together and carries all our network traffic. As we see overall data and video usage continue to increase, it is necessary to update our network infrastructure to handle that.

As we head into another season, we hope you stay safe and healthy. We appreciate your business and continued support!

- Keith Larson
CEO/GM

Business Spotlight: Jamestown/Stutsman Development Corporation

The vision of Jamestown/Stutsman Development Corporation is to be the premier catalyst in economic development and growing our community. The JSDC is the heart of growth for Jamestown and Stutsman County. Staying up to date with projects and always looking for new ways to grow Jamestown, the crew at JSDC has their pulse on the community as it relates to business and industry. Connie Ova, CEO of JSDC, explained how the organization participates in various state and local programs and meetings to stay in touch with opportunities for funding that would benefit current and potential businesses in Jamestown. A program to support workforce recruitment that they recently joined is the ND Career Builders Scholarship & Loan Repayment Program. Employers can utilize this program

to recruit talented employees by matching state dollars. The JSDC also focuses on economic development programs, Spiritwood Energy Park, Airport Business Park, housing, and community development.

In order to keep up with the ever-changing landscape of business and technology, Connie said a majority of the work JSDC does is online. They are constantly keeping their own website- www.growingjamestown.com- up to date with the latest news and information, as well as researching trends and news around the state and nation. Having a strong web presence is one of JSDC's top priorities, according to Connie. "Research has shown that 60% of people that contact economic development departments find them online first," she explained. If that's where most people get their first impression of Jamestown, they want to make sure it is positive and informative.

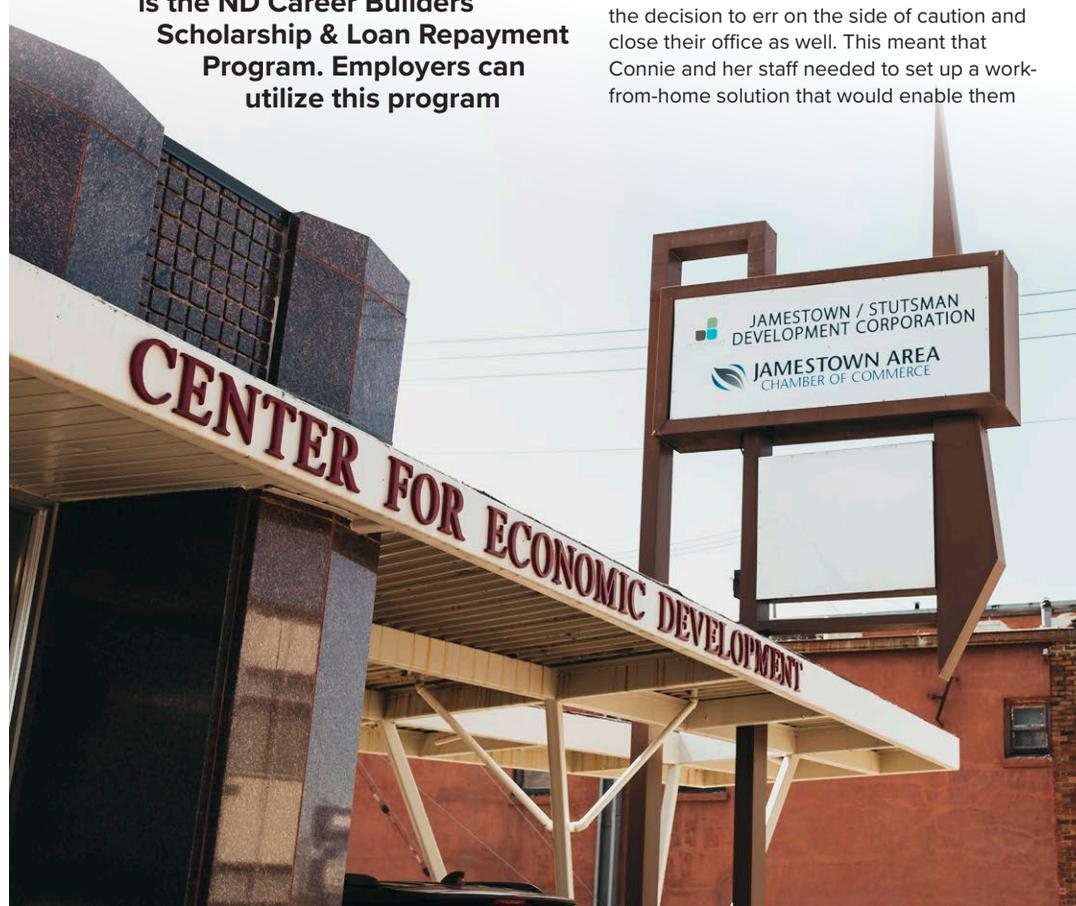
Earlier this year when the COVID-19 pandemic caused other establishments to close by order of the state, JSDC's board of directors made the decision to err on the side of caution and close their office as well. This meant that Connie and her staff needed to set up a work-from-home solution that would enable them

all to do their job from home. To maintain their online presence while not physically in the office, the staff at JSDC needed a safe and reliable broadband connection that would also help them stay connected with each other.

That's where we come in. Dakota Central installed a Managed VPN Firewall system for JSDC, which gives them a secure connection back to the office with encryption, along with three SSL certificates allowing their staff to connect to their office desktop from home. Included with the Managed Firewall service is the Advanced Gateway Security Suite, which will stop virus's spyware, and other security threats before they enter your network with comprehensive network protection. This is essential when using a VPN connection to ensure your network is secure.

Connie mentioned that getting the VPN service set up helped them create a telecommuting policy for emergency situations, like inclement weather or health-related situations. "In the future it will be easier for our staff to work from home if needed, now that the technology is in place," said Connie.

As the JSDC continues to recruit and support local businesses and industry, we will make sure they are connected, and their network is secure. As a local business ourselves, Dakota Central appreciates JSDC's commitment to growing Jamestown and Stutsman County!

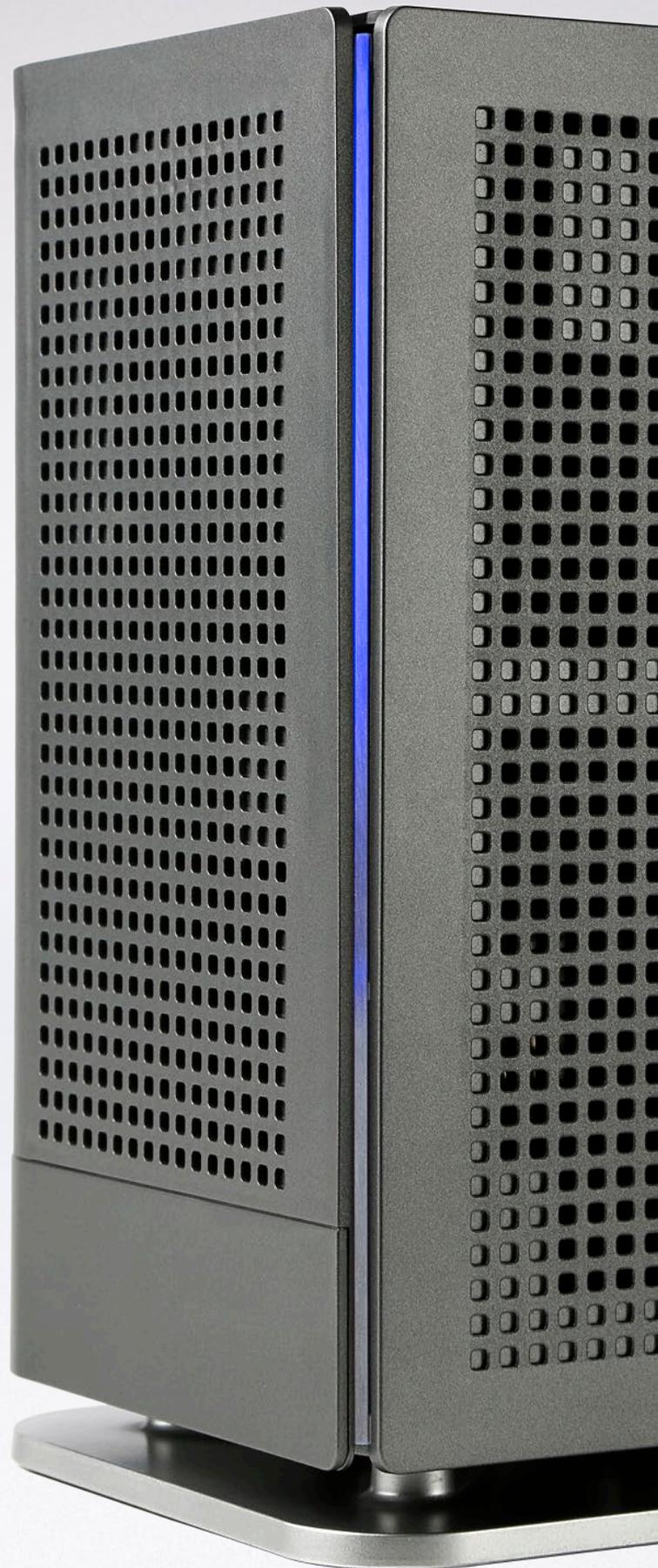


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UJ Place

What we've been up to!

As most of you have probably experienced, life has slowed down considerably in terms of events and travel, which means our summer was fairly quiet compared to normal activity. We participated in the Carrington 4th of July parade, as well as the Buffalo Days parade in Jamestown. We had a great time sponsoring Kid's Night at the Jamestown Speedway on July 18th!

We missed holding our Annual Membership meeting in June, fairs, the community Block Party, and hosting a night at the Downtown Arts Market in Jamestown! However, we hope everyone is staying safe and making the best out of an otherwise quiet summer in terms of events.

We continue to be busy with construction for the USDA ReConnect grant project in which we are burying fiber to the rural Spiritwood, Pingree and Buchanan areas.

We expect to start connecting the first customers in early September and will continue to connect as construction is completed.

Another exciting project happening in Jamestown this summer was the UJ Place complex on campus, near the Harold Neuman Arena. This 56-unit apartment building will also contain retail space on the ground level, including Knight and Day Coffee house, an exclusive Starbucks distributor.

Dakota Central technicians have been working hard this summer to get all 56 units wired and ready for UJ students to move in the beginning of August. UJ Place tenants get free 60x6 Mbps Internet

with their rent, with the opportunity to upgrade their speed for an extra fee if they desire.

Dakota Central welcomes all University of Jamestown students to town; we are excited for the addition of UJ Place!



Rylee, daughter of Dakota Central employee Brianne Partlow, enjoying Kid's Night at the Speedway.



Brianne Partlow, Janell Lynne and Denice St. Michel hand out "Fandanas" to the crowd at the Speedway.

PROMISES KEPT, EVEN IN A PANDEMIC



HOW BROADBAND PROVIDERS ARE KEEPING NORTH DAKOTA CONNECTED DURING COVID-19

Teachers using video conferencing to educate their students. Companies closing doors, their employees relying on home Internet to perform their jobs. Healthcare providers utilizing telehealth to care for their patients. All of us depending on broadband to stay in touch with our loved ones.

COVID-19 has changed the way we work, learn, and live—not just for a few months, but for the foreseeable future. And when it became clear that the pandemic would not spare our state, the 18 member organizations that compose the Broadband Association of North Dakota (BAND) knew that they had a responsibility: to keep customers connected.

This March, more than 700 service providers across the country, including many of our own, signed the Federal Communication Commission’s “Keep Americans Connected” pledge. They agreed

to not terminate service to any residential or small business customers because of their inability to pay their bills, and to waive any late fees that they may incur because of economic circumstances related to the coronavirus pandemic.

But BAND organizations went above and beyond the FCC’s call. From laying fiber past their service territories to doubling speeds at no cost, rural broadband providers have stepped up in incredible ways to ensure that their customers have the connectivity they need to serve their communities and adapt to this new normal.

BEK + Bison Booties

Bison Booties was born out of what Erica Hager calls a “*happy accident*.” In October 2010, the longtime hobby quilter was experiencing the universal struggle of new parents: nothing would stay on her squirmy baby’s feet. With the chill of an impending North Dakota winter on the wind, Erica set her sewing

machine and a box of scrap fabric on a folding table in her unfinished basement and got to work. After a few failed attempts, the first pair of Bison Booties—soft-soled baby shoes that stay on even the kickiest feet—was born.

“My daughter wore them and they were great,” Erica said. “I realized that maybe if I like them this much, my friends that were having babies might also like them.”

Fast forward almost a decade, and Bison Booties is a thriving e-commerce business and Erica’s full-time job. That unfinished basement is now her studio, where she designs and creates batches of 400 pairs at a time, selling them on a website that she has designed and maintains herself.

Erica’s business ships around the world and has been featured by publications like Martha Stewart Living and Country Living Magazine. She has expanded her product offerings to include onesies, sunglasses, and adult booties. And when COVID-19 hit North Dakota this spring, she added yet another product to her inventory.

“During the pandemic, I was able to serve the community by making cloth face covers,” Erica said. “It’s hard to pivot a business, and it was difficult to pivot mine, but there are a few things that made it easier. One, I already sew with

fabric, so that part was very natural. The second was that I had a way of quickly getting these face covers out to the people that need them.”

In order to meet the rising demand for face covers and get them to her customers as quickly as possible, Erica depended on high-speed, dependable broadband from BEK Communications Cooperative.



“Bison Booties has been able to keep our family and our community safe, and we wouldn’t be able to do it without the high-speed service that we have from BEK,” Erica said. “If I had any doubt in my mind that the Internet might not work tomorrow, or it might not be fast enough for me to upload these photos [of my products], it would have slowed that system so greatly. I don’t know that it

would have been worth it to make them.”

Erica knows from experience the toll that poor Internet connectivity can take on an e-commerce business. In the early days of Bison Booties, the only way Erica could access the Internet was via a satellite on the roof of her home. It was unreliable at its best, and nonexistent at its worst. Her connection would frequently time out as she tried to upload new photos to her

website. When it was rainy or snowy, too hot or too cold, her Internet would go down completely, meaning she could not fill and ship orders on time. When she couldn’t take it anymore, Erica called BEK.

While Erica’s home was technically outside of BEK’s service area, BEK CEO Derrick Bulawa negotiated with Erica and the two decided on a nominal fee to allow BEK to lay fiber to her home.

“It’s amazing to see a lady with that kind of energy and excitement given the right access to technology, how she can just flourish,” Derrick said. “She went out of her way and figured out how to manufacture these masks and sell and distribute them over the Internet to hundreds and hundreds of people. She’s protecting the community, and we feel like we’re an important part of that.”





DCN + Starion Bank

Just a few miles east of Bison Booties headquarters, Starion Bank was also grappling with how to care for their community in the midst of a pandemic.

The family-owned bank, based in Bismarck, has 16 branches and thousands of customers across North Dakota and Wisconsin. And in early March, they suddenly had more than 200 employees needing to work from home.

“We started discussing what impacts COVID might have on our business, and within the next week or so we started making decisions on closing branches, sending people home to work,” said Kevin Valleroy, IT Manager and VP at Starion Bank. *“And one of the things that we recognized is that, with the number of people working from home, we could potentially need some more internet bandwidth.”*

Kevin worried that the sudden influx of teammates accessing Starion’s network from home would lead to a bottleneck, preventing them from providing their customers with the service they needed

“At DCN, our main priority is keeping our customers connected. During COVID-19, that connection has been more important than ever before.”

- Seth Arndorfer
CEO of DCN

when they needed it. Starion reached out to their broadband provider, Dakota Carrier Network (DCN), to see if they

could help ease the transition.

Starion Bank and DCN have a longstanding relationship rooted in collaboration and innovation. Founded in 1996, DCN is owned by 14 independent rural broadband companies (all of which are also BAND members) and was created to help support the local broadband companies and statewide enterprises. When Starion became DCN’s first commercial customer in 1997, the only way the bank could communicate with its more rural branches in Oakes and Ellendale was through copper lines laid by DCN.

And as technology has evolved, so has the relationship between these two growing companies. Over the past six years, DCN and its member owners have connected every single one of Starion’s 16 branches, even as far as Sun Prairie, Wisconsin, to their extensive fiber optic backbone.

As they have so many times in the past,

DCN stepped up this spring to ensure that their customer, and their customer's customers, stayed connected.

"At DCN, our main priority is keeping our customers connected," said Seth Arndorfer, CEO of DCN. "During COVID-19, that connection has been more important than ever before."

In less than a week, DCN was able to increase Starion's Internet speed from 200Mbps to 500Mbps—so that neither employees nor customers would experience congestion due to the pandemic.

"Just imagine how frustrating it would have been to be in an isolation or a quarantine environment and not have the connectivity," Seth said.

"Starion's financial viability would have been impacted, their ability to service their customers would have been impacted, and the ability of their employees' students to receive a quality education during the COVID pandemic would have all been impacted very greatly."

This increase in speed has allowed Starion employees to work safely from home for the duration of the pandemic and provide their customers with the quality of service they have come to expect. Most importantly, it has given them peace of mind.

"With our COVID response, we had a lot of other things going on that we had to worry about," Kevins said. "And with DCN providing the extra bandwidth, we didn't have to worry about that. It just gives us a little bit more comfort level and security on not having issues with the number of people working from home."

Working Together — The North Dakota Way

As the COVID-19 pandemic has created unprecedented demand for broadband across our state, the 16 member organizations that form BAND have all stepped up in unprecedented ways to support their customers.

While there remain more questions than answers about the future of the virus, one thing remains certain. As North Dakotans, we will continue to work together to bring education to students wherever they are, support businesses as they move online, and to empower the people of North Dakota to do what they do best: innovate and collaborate.

"We've done it for centuries here in North Dakota, whether it's getting over a harsh winter, or the original farmers and ranchers that worked to form these cooperatives to install the first lines of communication across the state. "That's how we got through COVID-19, is by working together."



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/

BAND
broadband association of north dakota



DCN
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GIVE \$50. GET \$50.

Invite your friends to sign up for Dakota Central service and you'll each receive a \$50 bill credit! Simply tell your friend to name drop and give Dakota Central Customer Service your name when signing up, or get a referral card from us to hand out! You'll see a credit on your bill once that customer has been connected, and they'll see a credit after three months of service. It's a win-win for everyone!

Stop by our office to pick up your referral cards today, and start sharing the love!





Managed VPN Firewall

Stop viruses, spyware, worms, Trojans, key loggers and more before they enter your network, with all-in-one, comprehensive network protection.

Block threats before they enter your network

Entry points into your network may now include employees' laptops, desktops, and smartphones. Secure your network and data against sophisticated, modern-day threats with comprehensive protection that includes intrusion prevention, gateway anti-virus, antispyware, content/url filtering, enforced client anti-virus, and anti-spam services.

Eliminate bottlenecks

The amount of traffic being scanned by your firewall, as well as the increasing amount of threats and malware attacking it, is quickly becoming more than many firewalls can handle. SonicWall is designed to protect organizations of every size without slowing down your network — providing you with fast, reliable performance.

Keep your network productive

Your network performance can be bogged down by spam, unauthorized web activity and social networking traffic that have nothing to do with getting work done. Ensure your business-critical applications have the bandwidth they need with content and application control tools.

Provide secure mobile access from any platform

Your employees need access to email, files and applications wherever they are. Now you can allow mobile users to access your network with secure VPN remote access for Windows, Apple iOS, Android, Mac OS X and Kindle Fire devices and be assured that it is safe, secure, and free from threats.

Get an all-in-one solution

Combine the features of traditional firewalls, gateway anti-malware products, intrusion prevention systems and content filtering software in a single solution. All of these security technologies are installed, configured, deployed, and managed as one unit. Detailed event data is available through one reporting system so it is easier to identify threats early and take appropriate measures BEFORE your network has been compromised.

Protect your network with comprehensive security at a small business price

Block viruses, Trojans, worms, rootkits and polymorphic “zero-day” malware at the gateway, before they reach your network

- Prevent “drive-by downloads” from infected websites
- Mitigate denial-of-service and flooding attacks
- Detect protocol anomalies and buffer overflow attacks
- Stop network traffic from geographical

regions and IP addresses associated with cybercriminals

- Block outbound cybercriminals botnet “command and control” traffic from stealing your customer lists, engineering designs, trade secrets, and other confidential information
- Control access to websites containing unproductive and inappropriate content.
- Ensure high-priority applications (CRM, order processing) receive more bandwidth than less urgent applications (chat, video streaming)

Advantages of a managed security service

- Outsource your network security to an experienced security provider
- Firewall expertly configured by SonicWall-certified engineers
- Turn-key solution delivered to your doorstep
- Proactive monitoring and alerting
- Updating of firmware, software, and security updates
- Automated weekly network and security reports
- Report analysis by SonicWall-certified engineers
- Weekly off-site SonicWall configuration backup
- Upgrade appliance as future business and technology changes dictate

If your business is in need of a secure, reliable VPN connection, contact Angie at Dakota Central for more information!





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Sign up for Auto-Pay by bank or credit card, and your Dakota Central bill will be paid automatically each month. No more wondering whether you paid your bill or not! You will then automatically receive an e-bill, unless you choose to continue to receive a paper bill statement. It's a no-brainer!

Bonus! Sign up for paperless statements AND auto-pay to receive a \$15 bill credit!



WIN CREDIT ON YOUR DAKOTA CENTRAL BILL!

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Just return this coupon by November 30th 2020 to be eligible for the drawing.

Congratulations to last issue's winner:
Mike Balvitsch, Carrington

NAME

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