

THE

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With all the chaos this year has brought, we've been fortunate to have such nice weather to finish up fall projects and keep spirits up.

Winter 2021

Business Spotlight: Triumph Incorporated

You may not have heard of “Triumph Incorporated,” but chances are you have seen the works of Triumph throughout the community. Triumph is an organization that provides an environment for individuals with disabilities to gain independence through activities like volunteerism or employment opportunities. Their mission: “to assist our individuals in achieving their specific goals. This being accomplished through a teamwork approach utilizing the talents and resources of the individual, the provider, the company, the community, and the employer.” With the help of direct support professionals and inclusive workplaces, individuals with disabilities can be involved in the community in ways they wouldn’t be otherwise. Beyond that, Triumph strives to create an all-inclusive environment for all individuals; an environment that is safe, fun and that feels like a family.

Triumph was founded 2009 by Ann Ede, Jennifer Barnard and Don Elstad. They started out small, or as they would say, “from humble beginnings.” Over the years the demand for their services in

the community has grown. Business Assistant/ Human Resources Hayley Wolf stated, “Without the support we’ve received from the community, we wouldn’t be where we are today.” As the company grew, so did the need for a larger facility. On March 8th, they purchased the new facility and on March 14th the state shutdown due to the pandemic. According to Hayley, it was a very trying time to completely move the business. “We’ve had to get creative with COVID restrictions and safety precautions while still providing services to the individuals, but we’re making it work.” Hayley said.

Many changes had to be made in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, as they are typically very hands-on by nature. “Pre-COVID, we would do weekly enrichment or education classes, yoga classes with the individuals, as well as fun games like bingo,” Hayley explained. “Zoom has been one of the most helpful tools we use daily, because it allows us to do those activities in a different way. It also helps us stay connected and maintain that family atmosphere we work hard to create.” Dakota Central provides Triumph with Internet service as well as business-class Managed Wi-Fi, which enables them to do all of those things online.

When moving to the new location they also quickly realized with more space the staff would be more spread out, so they would need an efficient way to communicate throughout the day. Dakota Central installed a Cloud Voice system throughout the facility, which is a voice-over IP based system. “Between eight administrative staff members we are constantly calling each other and transferring calls,” Hayley said. “Our new phone system has improved our operations immensely. It has been great.”

At Triumph, providing a safe environment for the individuals they work with is very important. “Because we moved to a new neighborhood and a larger facility, we also needed a security system,” Hayley said. Hayley also explained that because the move happened during such a hectic time, the staff at Triumph were happy Dakota Central was able to take care of the security system for them. “At one point we were going to have Ann and Jennie’s husbands do it, but we’re glad Dakota Central was able to take care of it all,” Hayley laughed. “Everyone at Dakota Central was great to work with and extremely helpful. It was nice to know we could pick up the phone and call whenever we needed help.”

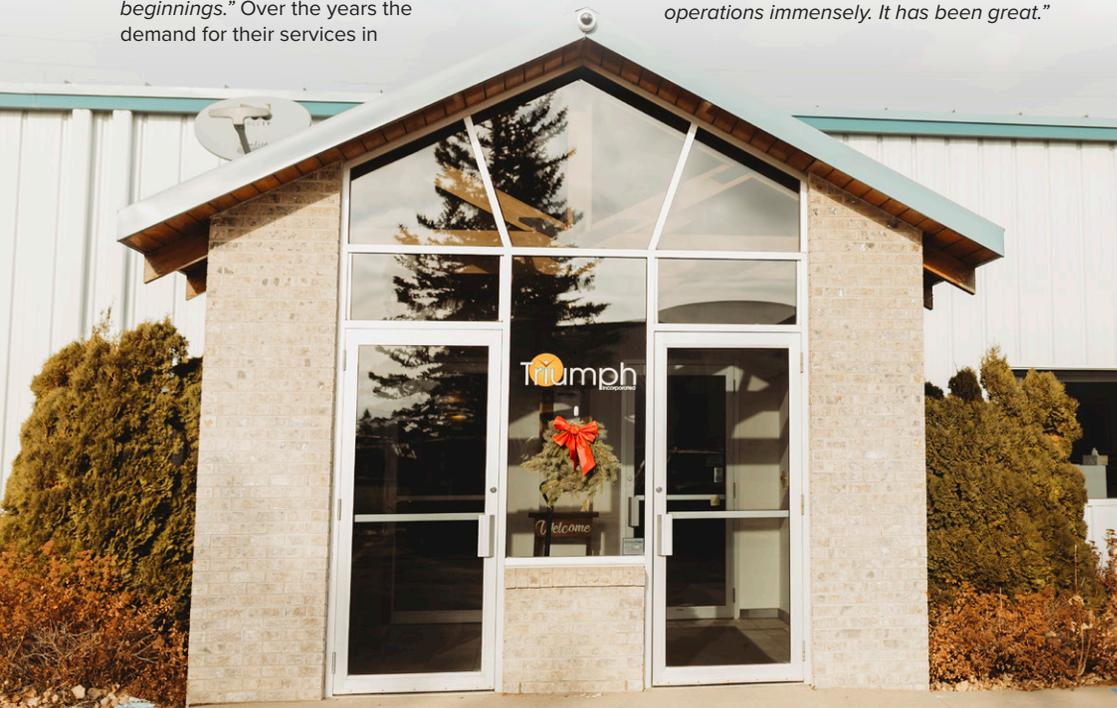
Now that they are settled into the new location, the staff and individuals at Triumph are getting used to the “new normal” and are happy with the additional space and tools available to them. Dakota Central is proud to serve such a great organization that gives back to the community as much as the community gives to them!



Dr. Dawn (left) is one of the employers in Jamestown that offers an inclusive workplace. Kelly (right) has a paid position at Dr. Dawn's Pet Shop, and loves working at her vet clinic!



(Left to Right) Ann Ede, Jennifer Barnard and Hayley Wolf





A letter from our General Manager

I think most of us have been ready to close out 2020 for quite some time and look forward to a new year. Around this time last year, there was no indication that we would be faced with one of the most catastrophic and stressful years many of us have ever experienced.

Very recently the vaccine has become available for our front-line health care workers, nursing home residents and the very elderly. There is still much to be learned regarding the COVID-19 virus, but we all remain hopeful the vaccine will be effective and provide a much-needed solution to the health and economic tragedy it inflicts.

With little direction as to how the year would play out, we bid contracts for our ReConnect project last March to construct fiber to an estimated 200+ locations mostly North of Jamestown. Bidding the project was a difficult decision as it was unknown, at the time, as to the impacts the virus may have on our customers and employees, as well as the contractor's health throughout the balance of the year.

Fortunately, after better than two months of postponing nonessential work, we were able to resume wiring premises during the month of June. Since we had planned to do this work during the winter months, we started off the project behind the eight ball and we remained there most of the year. In addition to the concern that we had regarding the availability of a healthy work force; fiber optic cable manufacturing was also behind schedule. As a result, our contractors were not able to begin construction until July 6. In a normal year, we would start projects by the middle of May.

Through the summer, the crews plowed 210 mainline miles and 33 drop miles to 232 locations in relation to the RUS ReConnect project. In addition, we constructed facilities to 123 new locations in our existing service area, as well as plowed 67 miles of a 144 fiber-count cable between Carrington and Jamestown for a planned upgrade of our transport network in 2021.

Although COVID-19 obstacles popped up occasionally with the crews, we were able to continue with our work for the most part. We were especially thankful for the mild weather in November as we were able to wrap up the groundwork on all our

construction projects on November 22. Finishing that late in the year would have been a real stretch in most years!

I give our employees and our contractors a lot of credit for working through all the unknowns, the numerous quarantines, and some pretty cold weather at times in order to finish the projects before freeze-up. There was much accomplished even though we were never quite sure what the next day might bring!

We wish you all good health and happiness in the new year!

- Keith Larson
CEO/GM

WELCOME TO PREMIUM MANAGED WI-FI

Why Premium? Manage your Wi-Fi network from the palm of your hand with Premium Managed Wi-Fi. The CommandIQ app is FREE to download for Premium Wi-Fi subscribers and gives you an instant snapshot of your home. If you are looking for network security and total control (including parental controls), sign up for Premium Wi-Fi today!

Introducing the FREE CommandIQ app!

- Upgrade to Premium and download the FREE app to see all the available features, like:
- Basic Parental Controls- providing the ability to set profiles, add devices to those profiles, and turn Wi-Fi on/off to devices.
- Ability to set up Guest Networks and receive alerts when new devices are connected to your networks. (Don't recognize a device? Kick them off your network!)
- Device list- showing all connected devices by type of device.

Enhance your service by subscribing to additional features that make sense for your lifestyle:

ProtectIQ provides protection against viruses, malware, and malicious websites, keeping your network and devices safe from cyberattacks.

ExperienceIQ provides you with the tools needed to enforce the Internet rules you've established for your home. Set up profiles for your children or devices, filter content, websites, and applications, and set appropriate time limits.

Add both for only \$5 per month!

Visit dakotacentral.com to learn more!





Scholarship Opportunities

Dakota Central offering over \$5,000 in scholarships!

The Dakota Central Board of Directors are pleased to announce the 20th year of the Dakota Central Scholarship Program, and the fourth year of the Jerry Eissinger Memorial Scholarship. Dakota Central awards five \$1,000 scholarships, and the top scoring applicant is also awarded the Jerry Eissinger Memorial Scholarship of \$500. That means High School seniors have a chance to be awarded a total of \$1,500 in scholarships! 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 use telephone, television or Internet service from Dakota Central.

APPLY ONLINE!

Applications MUST be completed online by visiting dakotacentral.com/scholarships, and supporting materials must be submitted online no later than March 1, 2021. Please call or e-mail Brianne with any questions at 652.3184 or bpartlow@dakotacentral.com.



FOUNDATION FOR RURAL SERVICE

Foundation for Rural Service Offers \$75,000 in Scholarships

Applications will be available January 1, 2021 for the Foundation for Rural Service (FRS) scholarship program. FRS is a national non-profit organization that helps educate the public on the telecommunications industry and improve the quality of life throughout rural America. FRS is an affiliate of the National Telephone Cooperative Association (NTCA), an Arlington, VA-based trade organization of 540 independent telephone companies across the country, of which Dakota Central is a member. As your local telecommunications service provider, it is our pleasure to participate in this scholarship program. Should a student from our service area be selected to receive one of the

30 national scholarships (\$2,000 each), we will contribute an additional \$500 to the scholarship, bringing the total one time scholarship award to \$2,500. It should be noted that preference will be given to individuals expressing an interest in returning to a rural area to work following graduation. For more information on the FRS Scholarship program and to download an application visit, www.frs.org and follow the link on the homepage. Applications can also be picked up at the Dakota Central office. Completed applications can be returned to our office to be signed by a Dakota Central representative no later than February 28, 2021.

THE DREAM TEAM

Pro Internet + Premium Managed Wi-Fi

Is your Internet connection holding you back? Upgrade to Pro Internet and get 5X the speed at no extra charge, plus experience one month of Premium Wi-Fi, FREE!

With Premium Wi-Fi you get powerful Wi-Fi 6 coverage, along with complete control of your network with the mobile app. Enable your guest Wi-Fi network, set parental controls, and secure protection from malware and viruses.

Call 952-1000 or 652-3184 to upgrade!

Your family will thank you.





Company News

What we've been up to!

With all the chaos this year has brought, we've been fortunate to have such nice weather to finish up fall projects and keep spirits up. Underground construction is complete in the USDA ReConnect grant area, and we are continuing to connect customers as services are installed. We expect to wrap-up installations by the end of January.

As we say hello to a new year, we will also say "see you around" to four of our team members, as they retire at the beginning of the year. Dan Wick, Doug Smith, Jon Slusser and Quentin Spitzer have all been with us for many years, and it will be hard to see them go! But, we wish them all good health, good times and the best of luck in retirement!



Doug Smith
34 years of service



Quentin Spitzer
20 years of service



Jon Slusser
24 years of service



Dan Wick
22 years of service

COURTENAY COMMUNITY HALL



Loan help provides place for community to gather

Courtenay, North Dakota, is the home of a new community hall, thanks in part to a \$135,000 community capital loan provided by the Rural Development Finance Corporation (RDFC). The low-interest loan provided half of the funding for the construction of the Courtenay Community Hall, which provides a place for friends and neighbors to come together.

"This community capital loan is an example of RDFC's commitment to help rural communities thrive," says RDFC President David Sigloh. "One of the advantages of living in rural North Dakota is its sense of community. RDFC is proud to assist projects like the Courtenay Community Hall, which improve quality of life in the places where we live, work and play. Support from member cooperatives, such as Northern Plains Electric Cooperative and Dakota Central Telecommunications Cooperative, helps ensure funding is available for these projects."

The new community hall replaces Courtenay's previous community hall, which was in need of major repair. Completed in the spring of 2019, the new building is bright, modern and convenient. It has a full kitchen and is fully accessible for people with disabilities.

Since the new facility opened, it's been a venue for weddings, family reunions, graduation receptions and community events. The building is also used for the community's annual Fourth of July and Christmas events, which always draw a crowd. And, throughout the year, people gather at the community hall to try their luck at Bingo. *"It's a gathering space for fellowship for not just the Courtenay community, but for people from Kensal, Spiritwood and Wimbledon. They all come," says Courtenay Mayor Angy Bartlett. "We used to drop in on our neighbors, but we don't anymore. This is a place for us to come together and visit with each other about our families and life. At the end of Bingo, it just feels very good, because*

we were together and caring about each other. I don't think we could survive if we didn't have people to care about us. That's the wonderful thing about Courtenay. It's very small, but our neighbors look out for each other."



Founded in 1994 by North Dakota's electric and telecommunications cooperatives, RDFC is a nonprofit corporation that provides low-income financing for projects in rural communities. Since its formation, RDFC has provided more than \$6.5 million in funding, supporting small businesses, emergency services and a variety of community projects. These loans have helped create jobs and provide access to essential services. Additionally, the corporation has provided \$285,000 in grant funding to nonprofits and community-based projects

Smart Home Tips

With all of the smart home technology on the market these days—from lightbulbs to door locks—it can be hard to know where to begin. In our latest Tech Tip blog, we'll walk you through the steps of setting up your smart home.

Check out our latest videos at <https://www.dakotacentral.com/smart-home/>



Help Us Locate These Members!

The following is a list of members that had a Capital Credit check or statement issued by Dakota Central Telecommunications Cooperative in May 2020 that remain unclaimed or uncashed. If your name is on the list or if you can help us locate someone whose name is on the list, please contact Dakota Central Telecommunications at 652.3184 or 952.1000, or contact Deedra Aasand at daasand@dakotacentral.com

2020 Capital Credit addresses needed:

Wayne Sisco

Ruby J Duciaome

Craig Scott

Danelle Anderson

Hurdsfield Housing

Keplin-Gracon

Rachel & Mickey Lankford

Delmer Wolff

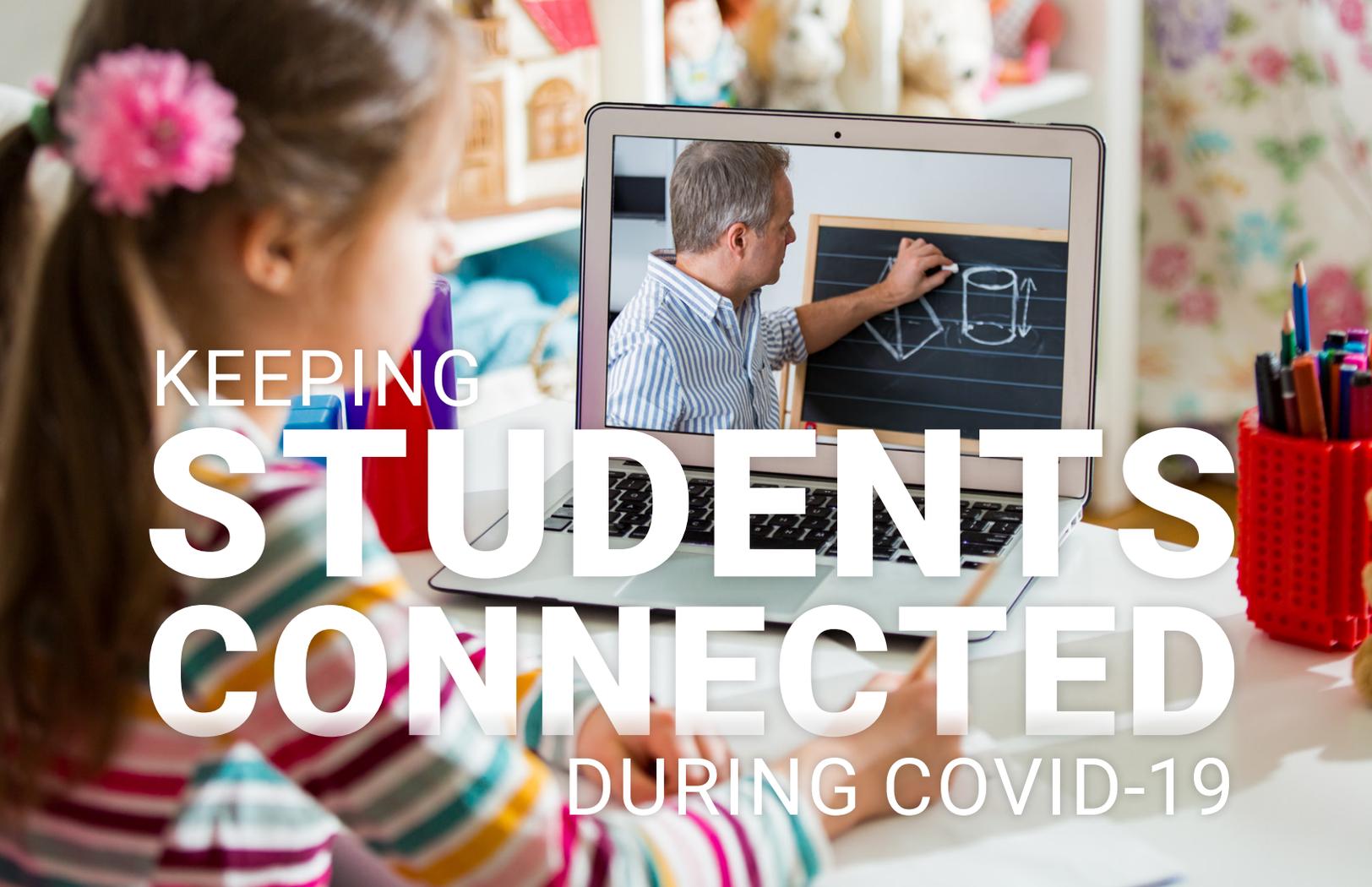


A Hero Among Us

Something Ryan Fisher never expected to see while driving to a service call was smoke rolling across the street, coming from a home. Not to his scheduled destination yet, he knew he needed to check on the house and see what was going on. After confirming there was a fire, he quickly called 911 then knocked on the door to see if anyone was home. There was an elderly couple in the home, unaware of the fire. Ryan assisted them out of the home along with their cats. The fire department arrived soon and was able to extinguish the fire. We are thankful Ryan was in the right place at the right time, and that no one was injured!

Atta Boy, Ryan, we're proud of you!





KEEPING STUDENTS CONNECTED DURING COVID-19

HOW BAND AND DCN GUARANTEED BROADBAND ACCESS FOR 99.8 PERCENT OF NORTH DAKOTA STUDENTS DURING THE PANDEMIC

It was still early in the COVID-19 pandemic when Governor Doug Burgum and Superintendent of Public Instruction Kirsten Baesler called the first press conference.

As of that Friday, March 13th, **North Dakota** only had one confirmed case of the novel coronavirus. Baesler and Burgum announced that schools would remain open, and provided administrators with guidelines to make the best decisions for their individual districts.

But the situation progressed dramatically over the weekend, and on Sunday, Governor Burgum ordered schools to close for the week. Teaching staff entered their schools for what would be the last time of the year to plan for remote learning—just in case. And on Thursday afternoon, the Executive Order was made: all

North Dakota school buildings would be closed to students, indefinitely.

“Thus began the saga of, how do we ensure that our students don’t stop learning just because our school buildings are closed?” said Superintendent Baesler.

The Executive Order issued by Governor Burgum that day included a stipulation that in order for schools to receive funding, they must submit a distance learning plan to be approved by the Department of Public Instruction.

“In those plans, we saw a heavy emphasis on technology—not only the platforms of communication between teachers and students, but also the delivery of actual learning mechanisms of math, reading, and writing lessons,” Superintendent Baesler said. *“And that led us to be a little bit concerned about whether*

our students were going to be connected, whether they would have access to that technology.”

In March 2020, school districts across the country were faced with the same question. Teachers scrambled to make plans to continue providing meaningful instruction for the remainder of the school year. News reports showed images of students gathered, six feet apart, in their schools’ parking lots just so they could access the Internet to complete their assignments.

But amidst the chaos, one unexpected state was able to transition to distance learning almost seamlessly. More than 99 percent of North Dakota students, over 120,000, were connected to the internet in a matter of days—all thanks to a spirit of collaboration, an investment in broadband infrastructure, and the legendary North Dakota work ethic.

Staying Safe by Staying Connected

For 21st century students, access to the Internet isn’t just a luxury—it’s a necessity. Today’s teachers rely on high-speed broadband connections to communicate with students, deliver assessments, and most importantly, help students become informed global citizens. Tools like virtual field trips and online pen-pal assignments keep students connected to their increasingly globalized world.

“It is absolutely essential for our students to have broadband access because the world is so big right now and they are so connected to it,” Superintendent Baesler said. “They can’t take a field trip to China, or to the oil fields of Saudi Arabia, but things happening in those countries are impacting their daily lives. So it’s important that they learn about them as

they become global citizens, and that is only possible through the Internet.”

The Internet became even more critical for schools during the COVID-19 pandemic. Suddenly, it was teachers’ only form of communication with students. And because social distancing plays such a vital role in preventing the spread of the virus, it also became a means of keeping teachers, students, and their families safe.

In order to ensure that all North Dakota students could participate in online school during the pandemic, districts first needed to understand where the need for Internet access lay. Working with local broadband providers and the North Dakota Information Technology department, Baesler’s team learned that student addresses were not protected information and could therefore be used to determine whether or not they had access to broadband. By overlaying student addresses with broadband customer addresses, they learned that a majority of students, approximately 70 percent, already had robust broadband access within their homes.

Next, it was a matter of delivering broadband to that last 30 percent—and quickly. Realizing the importance of keeping students connected during the pandemic, the 15 rural broadband providers that form the Broadband Association of North Dakota (BAND) went

to work immediately.

“Virtually all of the areas had fiber running by those home addresses,” said David Crothers, Executive Director of BAND. “It was just a matter of getting the equipment in the door and hooked up for those students in unconnected homes. So we were able to do that very, very quickly. And that’s how we ended up with



Kirsten Baesler
SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC EDUCATION
State of North Dakota

over 2,100 students online who otherwise wouldn’t have been able to participate in their education.”

For full story please visit
<http://broadbandnd.com>



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IT PAYS TO AUTO-PAY

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!

Win a \$25 credit on your next Dakota Central bill! Just return this coupon by February 28th, 2021 to be eligible for the drawing.

Congratulations to last issue's winner:
R'lene Tilbury, Hurdsfield

NAME

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630 5th St. N Carrington, ND 58421 p: 701.652.3184 f: 701.674.8121

JAMESTOWN OFFICE
604 18th St. SW Jamestown, ND 58401 p: 701.952.1000 f: 701.952.1001

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