

207 E Cedar Street,  
Houston, MN 55943

**BUSINESS HOURS:**  
Monday - Friday  
8:00am - 4:30pm

**LOBBY HOURS:**  
Mondays & Thursdays  
8:00am - 4:30pm



MINNESOTA/IOWA ISSUE

# CUSTOMER NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER 2022



## SUSTAINABILITY AWARD RECIPIENT

AcenTek was recently awarded the Giant of Sustainability Award at Calix's yearly learning conference. Thousands of people attended the ConneXions 2022 conference, which took place in Las Vegas in October.

AcenTek has made several changes recently in an effort to provide the best service possible to our customers. The result of these changes was energy-saving, which was the reason we were the recipients of the award.

We replaced our legacy networks. We also began using Wi-Fi devices, called GigaSpire, in customers' homes. Both changes help reduce energy demand. We have eliminated 113 remote cabinets, which are the small enclosures which protect our cabling and equipment from environmental factors. These combined changes have cut the use of power by as much as 73%.

Corey Compagner, Operations Manager at AcenTek, was a presenter at one of the breakout sessions during the Calix conference. Corey spoke about how AcenTek chose Calix equipment to help us achieve our goal of providing unparalleled connections for our customers.

Calix is an equipment supplier and software developer for independent communications providers like AcenTek. We use Calix, a key vendor partner, to meet the technology requirements necessary to provide a better experience for our customers. This decision has helped us eliminate performance concerns related to our customers' increasing technology demands. We are proud to partner with Calix to deliver the best products and services the area has to offer.

### WHAT'S INSIDE

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- ▶ YOUR CO-OP: WHAT MAKES US DIFFERENT
- ▶ MORE GRANTS APPLIED FOR
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- ▶ OUR FIBER BUILD PROCESS EXPLAINED
- ▶ AN UPDATE ON OUR FIBER BUILDS
- ▶ WHAT YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT WI-FI
- ▶ OUR STAFF GIVES BACK TO LIBRARIES IN IOWA
- ▶ STAFF UPDATES

### BUSINESS CLOSED

**VETERANS DAY** | Nov 11  
**THANKSGIVING** | Nov 24, 25  
**CHRISTMAS** | Closing at noon on Dec 23; Closed Dec 26  
**NEW YEAR'S** | Jan 2  
**GOOD FRIDAY** | Apr 7  
**MEMORIAL DAY** | May 29



## WHAT MAKES CO-OPS DIFFERENT FROM OTHER COMPANIES?

- **YOU HAVE A VOICE:** Not everyone gets a say in how their internet provider runs their business, but you do. Our members are invited to vote for the Board of Directors every year. We exist to serve our members.
- **WE CARE:** The communities we serve matter to us. We live where you live. Your neighbors are our neighbors too. We want our towns to succeed; that's why we give back.
- **WE HELP THE ECONOMY:** The wellbeing of our local economy is one of our priorities. We employ 83 people in Minnesota and Iowa and encourage local spending. We want our economy to thrive.
- **WE'RE KEY TO RURAL:** Cooperatives have a long history of providing outstanding services to rural communities. We are helping to level the playing field when it comes to internet. That is why we are actively working to build fiber to all our customers.

## WE CELEBRATED WITH YOU: NATIONAL CO-OP MONTH

October was National Co-Op Month and this year we made a concerted effort to get the word out about why co-ops matter. Many people (possibly some AcenTek customers) do not fully understand the value of a cooperative. Last month AcenTek made an effort to fix that.

In early October, we started a Facebook campaign to educate people on the difference a co-op can make. We celebrated being part of this community by shining a spotlight on some area businesses who trust AcenTek to provide them with service. We also rewarded our customers and followers, by giving away three \$50 gift cards to these local businesses. At the end of the month, we gave away our grand prize: one year of internet, free of charge. Thank you to everyone who followed our giveaways and helped us celebrate throughout the month.

Our October radio ad also took on a co-op themed message, reminding our listeners that co-ops are often difference-makers in rural communities. We care about the community and so when we see a problem, we work towards a solution. That is the difference a co-op makes.



## TWO MORE GRANTS APPLIED FOR IN MINNESOTA: EITZEN & DAKOTA

In August, AcenTek applied for two grants through the Minnesota Broadband Grant Program. We applied for a grant to help cover the cost of building fiber to rural Eitzen and one for building fiber to rural Dakota.

Fiber is the best. Fiber means the fastest internet speeds for our customers. It means more reliable services. It means more services may be available at the customer's home, especially if that home is in a rural location. Copper has limitations, especially when homes and businesses are located far from the office providing them with services. With fiber, location and distance is no longer relevant.

The Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development has been implementing its Border-to-Border Grant program since 2014. The goal of this program is to increase access to high-speed internet for Minnesotans. We want to continue to provide the very best service to our customers, which means evolving our infrastructure to the newest technology. That means fiber. The grant program has helped us to be able to achieve our goal in a timelier fashion because of the financial assistance. The proposed project for Eitzen would include over 260 addresses, with an estimated cost of \$2.6 million. The estimated cost of bringing fiber to Dakota is \$8 million dollars and would include 608 addresses. For both grants, we are asking for 40% of the total build, leaving us with 60% of the cost.



To aid us in the application process, last summer we mailed information to these two areas, asking for letters of support. The response was impressive. Not only did we receive letters of support from residents and businesses in these areas, but we also received letters showing support from the local and state government.

Special thanks to all those who took time to share your thoughts with us. AcenTek should learn sometime in quarter 4 if we were successful in securing either grant.





## OUR INVOLVEMENT IN THE WAGON WHEEL TRAIL BRIDGE

The idea for a bike/pedestrian bridge to connect La Crescent, MN, to La Crosse, WI, was first dreamed of nearly 20 years ago. Many years of planning and work later, the Wagon Wheel Bridge is now open to the public.

On September 19th, the ribbon-cutting took place in La Crescent. It was a beautiful day for the well-attended event. Among those attending were Minnesota Representative, Greg Davids and Minnesota Senate Majority Leader, Jeremy Miller, voicing their support and congratulations. At the ceremony, select people and businesses were mentioned for their involvement in the project. AcenTek was proud to be among those recognized.

Mike Osborne, CEO, along with Ethan Webinger, COO, attended the dedication. AcenTek was presented an appreciation plaque for showing our support of the project. When asked about AcenTek's involvement in the project, Webinger stated, "We have had a friendly relationship with the Community Bike Shoppe for years. We are very proud of that relationship and are excited to see how this was the springboard for a project that is beneficial for entire community."

Our central office for La Crescent is located at the base of the bridge. Due to low customer foot traffic years ago, we closed our lobby at that building and used the space only for our technicians to work from. We no longer were utilizing the entire space in the building and considered what we should do with it. It wasn't long before we were approached by La Crescent Community Bike Shoppe, who was looking for a new location to run their business. AcenTek knew how important the Bike Shoppe was to the community. It was an easy decision to make, allowing them to operate their business out of our building and utilize the parking lot during the warmer months. The La Crescent Community Bike Shoppe, in partnership with the La Crescent Area Healthy Community, provides the area with an opportunity to learn about bikes, how to fix them, and encourage safe biking in the area. They accept donated bikes, repair, refurbish and resell gently used bicycles. Volunteers work at the shop, offering tune-ups,



*Mike Osborne, CEO at AcenTek, accepts appreciation plaque at dedication ceremony. Ethan Webinger, COO, also represented the company at the event. (Submitted photos; credit to Ken Truax and Curt Murray)*

overhauls, and repairing (or replacing) tires and tubes. The Bike Shoppe's goal of providing bikes to those who are unable to afford them is one of the biggest reasons AcenTek felt compelled to help them out with the space they needed.

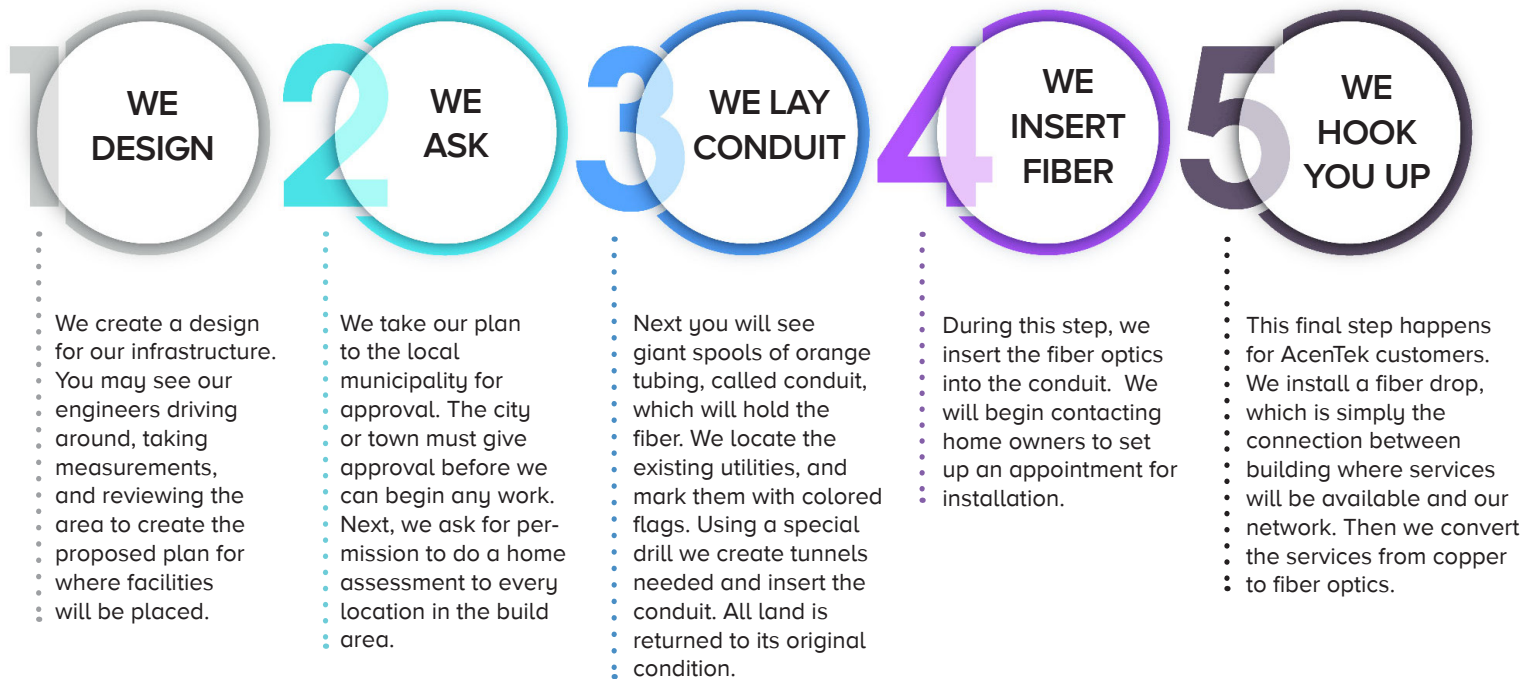
When the idea for the bridge was born it made sense to be located near the bike shop. Again, AcenTek had an opportunity to help. During the project, construction vehicles and equipment utilized our parking lot, making it convenient for workers. AcenTek is proud to have played a role in helping make this project happen.

The Wagon Wheel Trail Bridge provides a safe way for bikers or pedestrians to cross Hwy 14/61. It also provides a route for students to get more easily to school and allows for the future connection to the Root River State Trail System.





## OUR FIBER BUILD PROCESS:



## THE BENEFITS OF FIBER:

- **NO MORE LIMITATIONS WITH FIBER.** Distance from your home to our equipment will no longer decide what services are available to you. Fiber optics removes those limitations, allowing you to get Internet, Voice and Video services, regardless of your location.
- **BETTER SPEEDS WITH FIBER.** Get up to 200mbps internet, no matter what your address is. Fiber optics is more reliable than internet fed by copper, as weather will no longer impact the signal.
- **BETTER SERVICE AT A BETTER PRICE:** Enjoy the budget-friendly prices, along with new customer discounts. Plus, you'll enjoy unparalleled customer care.

### DID YOU KNOW? AcenTek offers scholarships.

Do you know a  
high school senior?

Tell them to visit  
[AcenTek.net/Scholarship](http://AcenTek.net/Scholarship)

Application deadline is March 1<sup>st</sup>.

### DID YOU KNOW? You can easily rate AcenTek online.

We'd love to hear what you think.

Review us to let others know what  
you like about AcenTek.

Leave us a review on  
Facebook or on Google

### DID YOU KNOW? AcenTek is on social media.

To stay caught up with all things  
AcenTek, follow along.

 Facebook/GoAcenTek

 Twitter/GoAcenTek





# WE CONTINUE TO BUILD FIBER TO YOU

## FIBER PROJECT UPDATES

### WATERVILLE NEARING COMPLETION

It was a busy spring and summer for us in Waterville, Iowa, as we finished up Phase 3 of our fiber build. This final phase included 445 addresses. In mid-April, we began construction. Work continued through the summer, and underground construction was completed the first week in September. Underground construction is the step in our process when the fiber is in place all the way to the home. Last, we connect the fiber to the home. This step, called installation, only happens for customers or those wishing to become customers. In Waterville, we have begun installation appointments, switching customers over to fiber services. Installations will likely finish up by the end of the year. The Waterville project, once complete, will bring fiber to approximately 660 customers in the Waterville serving area.

If you are a customer living in the Waterville area and have not yet set up your installation appointment, please give AcenTek a call today so you can begin enjoying the benefits of fiber.

### PROGRESS IN CLERMONT

We are getting closer to our goal of bringing fiber to every customer in Clermont, Iowa. Customers within the city limits are already fiber-fed, but the work continues for our friends outside of town. Construction began in October. We estimate that we will have all underground construction complete by the end of November. Splicing will follow construction, with some customers being converted to fiber services as soon as the end of this year. The rural Clermont fiber build includes over 300 homes.

### HOOK UPS BEGIN IN PETERSON

We also made some significant progress on our fiber build in Peterson, Minnesota, this year. This past spring, we began construction and by mid-September we finished up all underground construction. We are now contacting customers to set up their installation appointments. Once installation is complete, our friends in Peterson will enjoy more reliable, faster services, fed by fiber optics.

*PICTURED: Boring in rural Peterson, Summer 2022*



## WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW ABOUT WI-FI

We live in a world where Wi-Fi has become the standard in most homes. Many of the homes we serve have wireless internet. Some, however, do not have our Managed Wi-Fi service. It's easy to think that Wi-Fi is Wi-Fi and there really is no difference between buying your own router or subscribing to a managed service, like ours, but don't be fooled. There are many advantages to having AcenTek's Managed Wi-Fi service.

**THE PRICE:** To keep up with the most recent technology, buying your own router can cost you up to \$300. By settling for a cheaper model, you could be buying old technology that will prevent you from getting the full speeds and reliability of your internet services. With AcenTek Managed Wi-Fi, we provide the most current technology and keep it up to date so you won't have to worry about this. By subscribing to AcenTek's Managed Wi-Fi for only \$4.95 a month you are saving money. With our service you will get the newest Wi-Fi equipment. If you wanted to purchase the newest equipment in the store, it would cost you the equivalent of 5 years of AcenTek's Managed Wi-Fi service.

**THE BOTHER:** If you purchase your own router and there are issues with your service, AcenTek cannot diagnose and fix the issue. It is impossible for our team to become experts in every brand and model of wireless routers. If you purchase your own router, it will be up to you to troubleshoot the problem to figure out how to fix it if an issue arises. But with AcenTek Managed Wi-Fi Service, we quickly and easily figure out what the problem is, sometimes without even having to come to your home. The best part is there is no additional fee for this. Support for your router is included in the monthly rate of just \$4.95.

**THE LEARNING CURVE:** Do you know where the best place is to place your router? Did you know some walls, cordless phones, certain appliances (like microwaves or baby monitors) can also cause interference? We do. We know all the factors that could impact your Wi-Fi connection. We will come to your home and install our router in the optimal location at your home, ensuring you get the best coverage.



**Managed  
Wi-Fi Service**  
Through AcenTek  
**\$4.95/month**

## TO PROVIDE unparalleled CONNECTIONS & experiences


### AN EXTRA STEP IN CUSTOMER CARE

Have you answered our call? Or perhaps heard our message on your machine? If you have had any kind of trouble with your services, or recently became our customer, we have dialed your number. We do this to verify that you are pleased with the service we are providing you. We want to give you an opportunity to share feedback about your experience.

We go to this extra effort to ensure your satisfaction with AcenTek. Your feedback is used internally, as a learning tool. We can make improvements, when necessary, or simply to pass on compliments to specific team members you mention working with.

Our call-back program has been in place for over five years. However, it wasn't until we redefined our vision that we realized how this program fits nicely into our goal. We aim to provide unparalleled connections and experiences to all customers. Not only do we want your services to work flawlessly, but we also want the care you get from us to be unmatched.

Did you know there is another way to offer feedback to our crew? Visit our Facebook page or find us on Google to leave us a review. We'd love to hear what you think!



**REFER A FRIEND**  
to AcenTek and you  
both earn a \$50 credit  
on your account when they  
become our customer.

Visit **ACENTEK.NET**  
to learn more





### CLERMONT PUBLIC LIBRARY

Pictured: Library Director, Rebecca White with  
AcenTek Combination Technician,  
Andy Otterness



### HARPERS FERRY PUBLIC LIBRARY

Pictured: Library Director, Jody Delaney  
with AcenTek Combination Technician,  
Mark VanderKolk



### NEW ALBIN LIBRARY

Pictured: Library Director, Brittany Wallace  
with AcenTek Combination Technician,  
Mike Loken

## STAFF GIVES BACK TO LIBRARIES IN IOWA

This fall, AcenTek donated to six libraries in towns we serve in Iowa. Libraries in Clermont, Fort Atkinson, Harpers Ferry, Ossian, New Albin and Waterville were each awarded a \$600 donation. These donations are made possible by our Casual Day Fund and by the generosity of our board of directors. Non-uniform employees can choose to pay for the luxury of dressing casually for work. That money is then matched by the company and donated to non-profit organizations in the communities we serve. We rotate through a list of fire departments, EMS and libraries in both Minnesota and Iowa.

Part of our mission at AcenTek is to enrich the communities we serve. This is not just a suggestion, but part of our goal. We want to improve and support the towns where our customers live, and that includes area libraries. AcenTek understands that, even with all the technology available, libraries are a beneficial part of our communities. We commend all who manage these small-town libraries for all to enjoy.

**DID YOU  
SEE US  
IN THE  
PARADE?**



In support of area town festivals, AcenTek participated in six area parades this year. Volunteers loaded up the float, filled bags of candy and swag and headed to Eitzen, Rushford, Houston, Lanesboro and La Crescent to participate in the local festivities.





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## CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR RETIREMENT

**BONNIE BRUSS**  
PC TECHNICIAN



After 53 years, Bonnie said goodbye to AcenTek. Her career began in July of '69 when she was hired as General Clerk in our Houston office. Over the next three decades, Bonnie worked in many departments including Bookkeeping, Data Processing, and the warehouse. In '99 she accepted the position of PC Technician, where she remained for the last 23 years. Bonnie has been a loyal and committed employee, admired for her dependability and strong work ethic. In August, when Bonnie retired, she left a lasting impression on this company. It is with much gratitude that we wish her every happiness as she enjoys the years of retirement ahead.

*Thank you, Bonnie, for all  
you've given to this company!*

## WELCOME ABOARD!

**MARK  
GREENO**  
PC TECHNICIAN



**NATHAN  
HOPPE**  
PC TECHNICIAN



**HANNAH  
NELSON**  
CUSTOMER  
SERVICE REP

