

INSIDE AcenTek

Inviting you inside to learn more

OFFICE CLOSED:

MAY 26 | Memorial Day
JULY 4 | Independence Day
SEPT. 1 | Labor Day
NOV. 11 | Veterans Day

TOP STORIES

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WELCOME TO THE TEAM!



**JASON
BAILEY**

PC Technician



FIBER WORK RESUMES: SPRING WORK AND SUMMER PLANS

Our crew has been preparing for the upcoming busy season of fiber builds. One of the first steps we must take in a fiber build is to get all the appropriate permits. This is happening with our Rural Canton Grant project, which we expect will get underway by the middle of June. To prepare for the project, a preconstruction meeting will be held in late May. This meeting between AcenTek staff, our contractors and permitting entities (city, county, state) is the foundation for ensuring a successful project. At the meeting, all involved parties gather to review all aspects of the project prior to beginning. The rural Canton fiber build will bring fiber to 211 locations.

Another project that is fast approaching is the fiber build which will include Dakota, Dresbach and a portion of Ridgeway. We are in the process of obtaining all the necessary permits for this project. Our contractor for this project, West Union Trenching, is anticipating a start date of early July. This project will bring fiber to 297 locations.

PICTURED: Construction Crew prepares to unload equipment and begin work in Dakota.



SAFETY AWARD WINNER SECOND YEAR IN A ROW

For the second straight year, AcenTek was honored with the Company Safety Award at the Minnesota Telecom Alliance (MTA) Conference in Prior Lake in March. Chief Operating Officer, Ethan Webinger, accepted the award on behalf of AcenTek.

The honor is awarded annually to a company that meets or exceeds the safety criteria defined by MTA. They make the decision based on the company's safety training attendance, by performing facility inspections and by making field observations. With the use of various tools and processes, they verify that a company is compliant with OSHA regulations throughout the year.



The staff at AcenTek attend safety classes throughout the year, covering topics that help keep them safe both at work and at home. Some of the topics include CPR, fire extinguisher training, electrical safety, disaster recovery, confined spaces, poisonous plants, insects and rodents, load securement, power tool safety, and bloodborne pathogens. These classes are available to all staff, with certain topics offered specifically to our outside crew. The information learned and skills acquired because of these classes have proven to be essential for our workers when in challenging situations, both at the workplace and in their personal lives. We are grateful to have these learning opportunities during the convenience of the workday.

CASUAL DAY DONATES IN IOWA

This spring donations were made to 5 area Emergency Management Systems in the Iowa communities we serve. Ambulance Services in Clermont, Harpers Ferry, New Albin, Ossian and Waterville each received \$600. AcenTek staff visited the EMS locations who were available and delivered our donation in person. Those who were unable to meet received their donation by mail.

While visiting with our friends at these departments, we heard about some possible plans for using the donation. Some of the departments will use the donation for stocking supplies within the ambulance, as that is an ongoing and expensive task. New Albin Ambulance explained they would use the donation towards their newly purchased ZOLL defibrillator with a 12-lead monitor. This will be an essential tool for patients having chest pains, allowing ambulance staff to determine the problem and make the hospital aware for best preparation when the patient arrives.

Visiting with these emergency workers and hearing the details of what they voluntarily do proves how essential these departments are. If you are interested in making a life-changing difference in the community you live, please reach out to your local EMS. AcenTek is proud to support these organizations.



Mark VanderKolk of AcenTek, presents Rebecca Cappussi with donation for the Harpers Ferry Ambulance.



Paul Whalen accepts donation on behalf of the New Albin Ambulance from AcenTek's Cole O'Heron.

REQUIRED HOME ASSESSMENTS

WHAT ARE THEY? WHY DO I NEED ONE?

Each fiber project includes a step where AcenTek reaches out to homeowners to set up a time for a visit. This visit, which is referred to as a home assessment, only takes a few minutes and is very beneficial – not only to AcenTek, but also to the homeowner.

Home assessment visits are beneficial to us because we can gather important information needed to complete the fiber build. At the visit, we will take a quick look around to observe specific details about the property as they relate to our fiber build. For example, we look for things like septic systems, sprinkler systems or invisible fences. Our team takes notes and makes drawings of each property. Those notes are used by our engineering team who create a detailed plan for the fiber build which includes the specific details to each location. We also take a look at where existing services enter the home to evaluate if this is the best location. Our goal is to choose the spot that will provide the optimal service once fiber optics are hooked up to the home. Details are also noted about this location and this also becomes part of the plan.

Home assessment visits not only benefit us, but they are also in the best interest of the homeowner. Having a home assessment done ensures that the details of your property are known and planned for when the fiber construction begins, thus eliminating any challenges that were unknown to our team. The visit also ensures that when a home is hooked up to fiber, the customer will not only be getting the fastest speeds but will also have the best coverage in your home because that was planned for during this stage.

If the homeowner is not interested in AcenTek service, having a home assessment done is still beneficial to them for the following reasons:

1. The fiber drop is free. There is no cost to the homeowner if they agree to have the fiber drop put during the fiber project. If they decline and then change their mind about wanting fiber services, there may be a substantial charge applied.
2. Even if the homeowner isn't interested in fiber services through AcenTek, having fiber at your home makes it more valuable. Should you ever choose to sell your home, this is an asset many home buyers look for.
3. You may be happy with your service provider today and have no reason why you'd consider switching to AcenTek. However, in 6 months or a year, things may change. While having the fiber drop installed does not force you to subscribe to AcenTek services, it does give you the option of switching to them in the future, should you so choose.

Home assessments are an important part of our fiber build process. We contact you to schedule a time for our visit that best suits your schedule. The brief visit is the step we take to ensure we are planning for the details of every property, and can provide the home the best experience with AcenTek services.

“We'd like to commend Mark for his attention to detail, communication, and promptness in providing us with new fiber service this week. He is personable, communicated his plans effectively and carried out the plan without an issue. Mark is a valuable asset to AcenTek and we were very pleased with his service.”

- Dennis L.





MAKING THE BEST WI-FI CHOICE: MANAGED WI-FI

Reliable Wi-Fi at your home is essential. Whether you work from home or not, everyone depends on their wireless connection to be strong and reliable when they need it. You have two options when it comes to Wi-Fi: purchase your own router, saving yourself from paying the monthly fee, or go with AcenTek's Managed Wi-Fi.

Option 1: Purchase your own router (\$60 - \$400, dependent on technology and age). When shopping, consider your internet speed. Older routers cannot handle the speeds. Older routers, along with some inexpensive routers, will only allow for up to 100 meg of traffic at any given time. You will want to replace your router on a regular basis to keep up with the updates in technology. If you are an AcenTek customer experiencing issues with your service, and you have your own router, it may be challenging for our team to troubleshoot and fix the issue. We are unable to access customer-owned equipment and therefore have no ability to see how well the coverage is working. In addition, our technicians cannot work on your router.

Option 2: Sign up for Managed Wi-Fi from AcenTek for just \$4.95/month, and we'll take care of everything for you. We will provide you with a router which we regularly update to stay current with technology, plus this gives you greater security. Managed Wi-Fi takes the responsibility of managing your network off your shoulders and allows us to help. This means a quick solution if there is ever a problem. Our technicians will make sure that the router is placed in the optimal location, guaranteeing you the best coverage.

5 reasons to choose AcenTek Managed Wi-Fi:

1. GREATER SECURITY:

Our routers are kept up to date with regular firmware updates, meaning we do a better job protecting your home against unwanted access and cyber-attacks.

2. BETTER COVERAGE:

Our technicians will make sure that the most important areas of your home are covered. We can even add another unit if needed to ensure you get the coverage you need.

3. CUSTOMER SUPPORT:

We offer 24/7 support. We are here to help all our customers, even those who own their own router. However, we are very limited to what we can see and do when you own your own unit. If you have our Managed Wi-Fi, we are able to make changes remotely to the router settings and can better serve you. We can check each device to see signal levels and find potential issues.

4. LATEST TECHNOLOGY:

We are current with the latest technology, offering customers the Wi-Fi 6 router.

5. APP TO MANAGE & CONTROL:

With the AcenTek MyHome free app, you can easily manage your SSID and password, add guest networks, see all connected devices and more. Add on Experience IQ or Protect IQ for even greater control and security.

“ My wife and I wanted to say thank you for the terrific customer service we received this week from AcenTek and your service technician Matt. Our WiFi went out due to some construction going on in our home. Matt came at the end of his shift and within an hour of our calling AcenTek. He quickly diagnosed the problem and figured out a way to move the system to a new location. He replaced our WiFi unit which was aging and assisted us getting up and running on our TV, laptop, PC and phones. He went beyond what was expected helping with passwords and suggesting we stop using boosters we were using for a security camera. We really appreciate the great service from AcenTek and Matt. Thanks again. ”

- Gary V.



Congratulations Winners!

Each of the winners were contacted and chose where they would like their gift card to. Options included: Best Buy, Target, Walmart, Kwik Trip, Casey's General Store, Bauer's Market, Cox True Value Hardware, Caledonia True Value Hardware, Rushford Hardware, Quillin's, Root River Market or Rushford Foods. Below is the list of winners with their corresponding exchange area.

\$50 Gift Card Winners:

- ♦ David Bissen (La Crescent)
- ♦ Richard Danielson (La Crescent)
- ♦ Nick & Janet Frank (Caledonia)
- ♦ Thomas & Mary Ellen Fuchsel (La Crescent)
- ♦ Gerald Hafner (La Crescent)
- ♦ Scott & Mary Hepker (Shellsburg)
- ♦ Michael Jones (Winona)
- ♦ Twyla Thorson (Houston)
- ♦ Terry White (Houston)
- ♦ Sandra Wood (Waterville)

\$100 Gift Card Winners:

- ♦ Robert R. Thompson (Lanesboro)
- ♦ Terry Stremcha (Dakota)
- ♦ Mitchel Seekamp (Houston)
- ♦ Mary Kingsley (Houston)
- ♦ Michael Cunningham (La Crescent)

\$250 Gift Card Winners:

- ♦ Jean Zweibahmer (Ossian)
- ♦ Larry & Sharol Haagenson (Dakota)
- ♦ Maria Kreidermacher (Lanesboro)

\$500 Gift Card Winners:

- ♦ Vernon Groen (Lanesboro)
- ♦ Maynard La Fleur (Rushford)



75th ANNUAL MEETING RECAP: ELECTIONS, NUMBERS, WINNERS

Celebrating 75 years of business, our annual meeting of members took place on April 29th via Zoom. At the meeting, CEO, Mike Osborne, highlighted the continued efforts taking place to reach the goal of bringing fiber to all customers. He also reflected on all the changes that have occurred in the industry since its birth, emphasizing that the common thread through all 75 years was the determination to provide the best service to our customers.

Our annual meeting has always been the ideal time to show our gratitude to our members. Every member who attended the meeting received a \$10 credit on their June bill. Over 490 members attended the online meeting to hear a summary of 2024 and hear election results. Thank you for taking the time to attend online, proving you care about your cooperative. From those who attended, ten winners were randomly chosen and awarded a gift card to the area merchant of their choice.

Congratulations to Joseph Thesing for being re-elected to continue representing Houston County. Congratulations also to incumbents, Garth Zenke (Winona County) and Lesa Moose (Iowa area) who were re-elected by acclamation. This was the first year that members were given the option of voting online or by mail. This year, 1,477 votes were cast. Special thanks to all who took the time to place their vote. In appreciation, ten winners were randomly chosen and will be awarded gift cards to the area merchant of their choice.

The purpose of our annual meeting is to provide a summary of last year's activities to our members and to plan for the future. Besides being informative, the meeting gives us a chance to celebrate our successes as they relate to you, our customer. Transparency is one of the cornerstones of a cooperative. The annual meeting provides that clarity and, in doing so, helps build trust. We look forward to sharing this annual recap with you and are so pleased to see so many of our members attending and voting. Thank you for caring about your cooperative.



REFER A FRIEND

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

Visit [ACENTEK.NET](https://www.acentek.net) to learn more

Congratulations

2025 SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS

For the past 26 years, we have supported young adults as they pursue post-secondary education. AcenTek has given out \$462,000 in scholarships to deserving area graduates. We feel passionate about the education of our youth and are proud to support them by offering a scholarship opportunity in the communities we serve. If you know an area high school student graduating in 2026, point them to AcenTek.net/scholarships. There they can learn details and deadline information for applying.

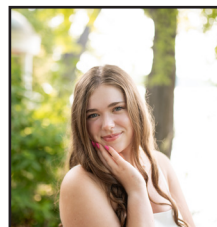
It is with great excitement that we announce this year's scholarship recipients, each receiving \$1,000 to go towards their continued education. These deserving seniors have been accepted into a tech school, college, or university to fulfill their future aspirations. Congratulations to this year's winners! AcenTek wishes you all the best as you follow your dreams.



CAITLIN BRAND
Houston
High School
MINNESOTA



WILLIAM CARLSON
Houston
High School
MINNESOTA



JULIA CARR
Houston
High School
MINNESOTA



LAINey HOSTING
Mable-Canton
High School
MINNESOTA



LIVIA KABELE
La Crescent-Hokah
High School
MINNESOTA



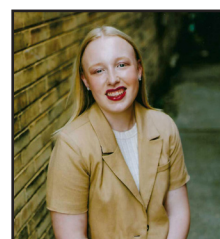
ISAAC MOSDAL
St. Charles
High School
MINNESOTA



DYLAN SCHROEDER
Caledonia
High School
MINNESOTA



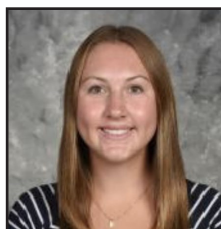
ADDISON THOMPSON
Rushford-Peterson
High School
MINNESOTA



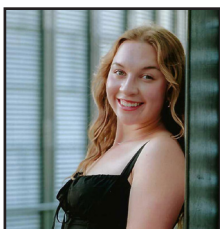
ROSE WIESER
La Crescent-Hokah
High School
MINNESOTA



MARI DELANEY
Waukon
High School
IOWA



AVERY DONNELLY
North Fayette
Valley High School
IOWA



REESE MCCORMICK
Waukon
High School
IOWA



KELSEY TIMP
South Winneshiek
High School
IOWA



SUMMER WALLESER
Kee High
School
IOWA



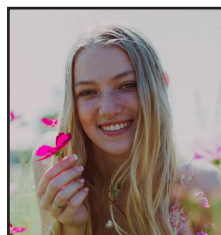
GREYSON CONVERSE
Benzie Central
High School
MICHIGAN



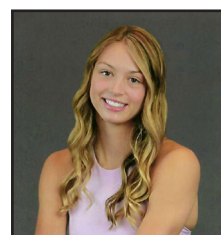
LEAH DUFFEE
Forest Area
High School
MICHIGAN



ANDREW KURMAS
Allendale
High School
MICHIGAN



NAOMI SMOES
Coopersville
High School
MICHIGAN



HANNAH STROEBE
Zeeland West
High School
MICHIGAN



TAYLOR VENEMA
Zeeland East
High School
MICHIGAN



GRANT WORK APPLYING FOR FOUR GRANTS IN TWO STATES

With our goal of getting fiber to every customer, we keep a close eye on grant opportunities. Grants help us build fiber faster than we

could do without them. That is why the first part of 2025 has been filled with work on grant applications.

The federal grant program, Broadband Equity, Access and Deployment (BEAD), announced they will provide \$42.45 billion dollars to expand high-speed internet across the U.S. Each state is awarded an amount based on a mapping system which determines need per state based on the number of unserved and underserved locations. Michigan will receive \$1.6 billion dollars, Minnesota will have \$652 million available, and Iowa will receive \$415 million in grant dollars. With that knowledge, AcenTek began planning for where we could apply for those grant dollars.

In April our team began compiling information for two separate grant applications for fiber projects in Minnesota. The first application was for Ostrander and included 207 locations. The second application included our Brownsville and Hokah serving areas. This project would bring fiber to 663 locations. These two grant applications were submitted in late April. In addition to the two grants AcenTek applied for in Minnesota, two grants were also applied for in Michigan. AcenTek should learn sometime in Quarter 4 if we are successful in securing either grant.

We are not alone in applying for BEAD grants to help with the cost of our fiber projects. We are among many other providers, some much larger than us, who are fighting to win those dollars. Showing such support helps us during the scoring portion of the process. Special thanks to all the residents, business owners, farmers and government officials who have assisted AcenTek by sending in your letter of support. Part of the grant application is proving community support for bringing fiber. Those of you who sent in your letters of support helped us in showing that support. We appreciate your help in attempting to secure these grants.

While grants are helpful with the expense of these fiber builds, most of the cost of each build is ours. While roughly 15% of the total price is swallowed by grants, the remaining 85% of that price tag is ours. We know that our customers are worth every penny and that is why AcenTek continues to make progress on our goal of fiber for all.

Congratulations!



MIKE LOKEN
COMBINATION TECHNICIAN

After 44 years of service, Mike Loken retired in January. Mike has been a huge asset to the Installation and Repair team, working primarily as a Combination Technician. He is known for his outstanding customer care in our Caledonia, Brownsville, Eitzen and New Albin serving areas. He also spent 7 years working out of our office in Mesick, MI.

His expertise, professionalism and friendliness have been essential to area businesses and residential customers alike. Mike has been a reliable, dependable and honest worker, and built strong relationships with many of his coworkers.

Congratulations Mike, we wish you all the best as you enjoy your next chapter. Thank you for all you gave to AcenTek and congratulations on your retirement!



ANGIE • CUSTOMER SUPPORT



MIKE • TECHNICIAN

“Just wanted to send a note of thanks to Angie and Mike. Working from home requires reliable internet access. Angie was able to determine the issue just from the phone call and sent a tech out within a few hours. Mike was wonderful - even had a dog treat in the vehicle as I wasn't able to get both dogs sequestered and instantly became friends to our pup. I appreciate the speed and professionalism in getting things back up and running so quickly. Thank you!”

- Joy R.



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Houston, MN 55943



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In Sympathy



**CHRIS
HOILAND**

OCTOBER 10, 1978 - APRIL 22, 2025

Our hearts were broken this spring as we said goodbye to our co-worker and friend, Chris Hoiland. We are so grateful for getting the pleasure of working beside him and for being able to know this incredible human being.

Chris was hired in 2008 as a Network Operations Specialist. Five years later he was promoted to Supervisor. Last May, Chris was promoted again, this time to IT/Network Operations Manager.

Known for his character, Chris knew how to make everyone smile. He was a dedicated worker, contributing so much to AcenTek over the years, but he also had a gift for keeping things light. His dedication and knowledge were the ingredients needed, plus a couple of jokes and a sprinkle of sarcasm. He had a way of making even a stressful situation a bit more enjoyable.

While he regularly demonstrated his work ethic and abilities to all who worked beside him, there was so much more to Chris. Family mattered most to him, and it was apparent in nearly every hallway chat. You could not visit his office without picking up on the fact that he was a dad; a dad who loved his family very much. Whether you noticed the Lego figurine by his computer, the painted rocks on his desk, or the many photos of his family tacked to his bulletin board, you knew these people were his top priority. His love for his wife and kids was very evident.

The staff at AcenTek is grateful that our lives were touched by Chris. We were fortunate enough to get to know him, as he drew us in with his entertaining personality. His knowledge, dedication, kindness and charisma will leave an indelible mark on AcenTek.