



Bell Ringer

Volume 56, No 6 October 2022
Clear Lake, South Dakota 57226

OCTOBER IS COOP MONTH

October is Coop Month, so it's the perfect time to celebrate why Coops are great! If you received this newsletter, you are most likely a Coop member of ITC. Being a part of a Coop has many benefits; here are a few.

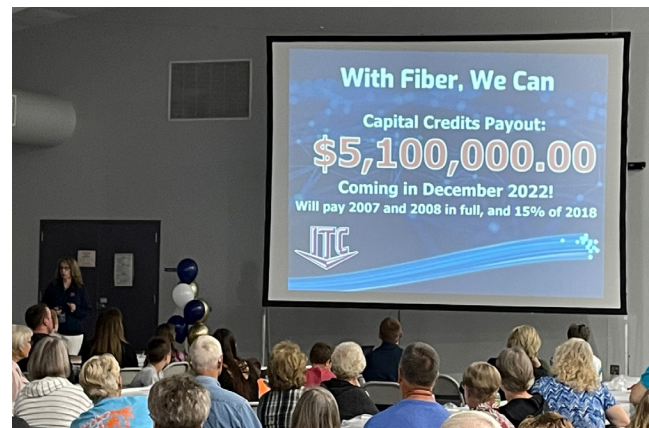
Cooperatives have been around for many years, but the important values of years ago remain the same. These core values have provided guidance when making important decisions for ITC.

When you join a Coop, you are a member. You have a voice. You also have a vote regarding changes made in the Coop or the directors representing our communities. Not many companies can say that.

One of the top benefits is capital credits. ITC has been paying out capital credits to its members for years and has paid out \$22 million dollars since 2006! ITC is able to provide capital credits to the members because you support the products and services provided by your Coop. Your support also makes it possible to offer the latest technologies at affordable rates. For those of you who could not attend the Annual Meeting in September, Tracy Bandemer, ITC's CEO, announced that approximately 5.1 million dollars in capital credits would be paid out again this December. These checks will include 2007 and 2008 in full and 15% of 2018. It is our biggest payout yet! What a great Christmas present!

Besides being a Coop, ITC's employees and Board of Directors help make this Coop what it is today. They live in the same communities as you, making it their business to bring you the latest technologies possible.

Thank you for supporting ITC, your local Cooperative. Happy National Coop Month!



PICTURE RECAP OF ANNUAL MEETING



GRAND PRIZE WINNERS: Julie Donahue (ITC) presented Joel Larson with his new iPad (pic to the left). Jim Canaan (ITC) congratulates Rachel Pfaffendorf as she won the smart TV (pic to the right).



ITC Employees getting ready for the meeting.

Tracy Bandemer, CEO, giving her Manager's report.



Many were in attendance at the 35th Annual Meeting of your Cooperative.



Your ITC Board and their spouses chatting before the meeting.

With Fiber, We Can!



TECH SUPPORT FRAUD

By Michael Martinell, Network Broadband Technician

No, that big-name company didn't just call you to let you know you are having computer problems. No, they didn't send you an email or pop up a webpage for you to find either. They aren't contacting you any other way. Whether they claim to come from Microsoft, Facebook, Google, Apple, or another well-known company, typically, the claims are not real. Scammers use scare tactics to trick people into paying money to fix a computer that was never broken in the first place. According to the FBI, scammers stole \$350 million from victims in 2021 alone. That is over twice as much as what they stole in 2020 and six times more than what they stole in 2019.

If you do call the phone number or respond to one of their legitimate-looking calls, the scammer may ask you to install a program on your computer that gives them access to your machine. Once they do that, they tell you that common messages and errors are signs of trouble. Sometimes they even display fake messages once they are on the computer. These fake messages are easily generated by preinstalled tools.

All the while, the scammer will seem like a very friendly and pleasant person. They might not even ask you for your credit card number right away and do a "free diagnostic." Eventually, they will ask you to pay for their service and may ask to set up a recurring payment plan. It isn't until later that, best case scenario, you discover that you paid for free products created by somebody else. Other criminals may steal your credit card information and make unauthorized purchases.

To protect yourself against scams such as these, know that companies will not directly call you about a computer problem on your computer that they detected. Instead, if you need assistance from help desk companies, you should contact them directly. Never call a phone number listed in an unsolicited message, and always assume that any mysterious message that appears on your computer with a phone number is fake. Only download software from websites you trust and have a good reputation. It would be best to look for the "https" in the web address and the lock icon at the bottom of the browser. Use different passwords on different accounts.

Suppose you have already allowed one of these criminals onto your computer. At a minimum, you should immediately uninstall any programs they had you install, run antivirus programs, and apply all security updates. You should also change all your passwords immediately and contact your credit card company if you paid them money. You can also report the scam at reportfraud.ftc.gov or www.ic3.gov.

Remember to be careful and do not trust any random message on your computer, even in email. If you are in doubt, contact the company using the methods you normally use. You can also call the ITC help desk to help determine if a phone call, pop-up, or email is real or a scam.

ONLINE CLASSES

By Holly Stormo, Marketing Communications Specialist

ITC University will be starting back up with an online class to watch anytime. This class will be available on our website. You will also find our previous online class about Facebook. If you are looking for new classes on the website, go to the "News" tab at the top and then click "ITC University" in the Category Filters on the right side. You can also scan the QR code below.

For the October class, we are talking about Security. There are so many scams out there, so we thought it was an excellent class to revisit. Some of the best advice we can give you is to keep your devices up-to-date, and if you are unsure of something, don't click. Keeping these tips in mind will help keep you safe.

Join us for this online security class and learn more about keeping your devices and yourself safe from online or over-the-phone threats. This class will be posted on October 10.

If you have any questions or ideas for future classes, please call ITC at 1.800.417.8667.



ITC'S NEW EMPLOYEE!

ITC is happy to welcome Jessica Williams to the ITC team! In July, Jessica joined the customer service department working out of the Clear Lake office.

Jessica attended Lake Area Technical College and received a degree in accounting. She previously worked in Bryant at WW Tire, where she was an AP Specialist and managed the inventory.

Jessica currently resides in Estelline with her husband, Ken, and two children. Her hobbies include reading, baking, and attending her kids' activities. Jessica and her husband also love to travel.

You will find Jessica sitting at the front desk in Clear Lake, so if you see her, say hello!



QR CODE WINNERS

This summer, ITC had a contest involving parades and QR codes! If you scanned our vehicle or frisbee, you could enter to win a FREE month of Internet service! Here are the lucky



winner: Patti Ward (Estelline parade), Kathy Fick (Lake Benton parade), Tamara Pommer (Clear Lake parade), Marty Spilde (Gary parade), Kevin Olson (White parade), Sarah Kasuske (Milbank parade), Jim Johnson (Clark parade), Bram Vantzelfde (Castlewood parade), Amanda Beer (Ivanhoe parade), and Larry DeZeeuw (Elkton parade). Congratulations!