

Spring has finally arrived, and summer is just around the corner.

Dear Members,

I write this report after looking at the one I sent this same time last year, and sadly I find one of my topics is the same. We are still waiting to get the Environmental release from USDA on the Reconnect 2 grant that we were awarded in February 2021. In addition, USDA is now requiring we do environmental steps on the Reconnect 3 grant that was awarded in August 2022. Over the past six to nine months, we have been trying to get our US congressional leaders involved in this delay. There are three telephone companies in Missouri fighting the same battle with USDA and the Osage Nation Indian Tribe. We have banded together and are working with Senator Eric Schmitt, Senator Josh Hawley, and Representative Blaine Luetkemeyer, to put pressure on USDA to release the grants. In all three cases, the State Historical Preservation Office (SHPO) has released the areas for construction. The added cost for archeologist expense is just an abuse of funding and we want our congressional leaders to step in and do something about it. During a call with USDA, they admitted that there is bad blood caused by a former USDA administrator and Osage Nation, so we are caught in the middle of an old grudge. Materials for these grant areas are finally being delivered. Fiber which was ordered June 2021 and pedestals that were ordered October 2021 are trickling in, but we should be ready to go once we get clearance and finalize the last steps in the process. In all reality if we got clearance on Reconnect 2 area this week, we still must get contractors to bid on the project and get the winning bid approved by USDA, so the timeline is at best late summer or fall. I will be pleasantly surprised if we get construction going in the 2023 season. I hope that with the help of these three congressmen, I won't be talking about environmental clearances the next time I send a report.



Renee' Reeter
Chief Executive Officer

Last quarter we had our third virtual Annual Meeting and electronic vote. I am happy to report that we had 517 ballots cast. This gives all of our members the opportunity to have a say in the election and bylaws changes if any. The major voting spikes were centered on the day's right after emails were sent to our members with their voting credentials. The opening day of voting, Sunday, February 17 we had 98.6% of our quorum met because members with valid emails on file received the information via email. The hard copy letters didn't start reaching people until the next day. On March 3, another email reminder went out which caused another spike. We will continue to ask members to update their email addresses throughout the upcoming year so more efficiency can be achieved. The virtual meeting was held Thursday, March 9. The meeting was live streamed and recorded for later playback. We had one grand prize winner who won a year of free internet credit and we gave away 100- \$20 bill credits. Two of the incumbent directors, Jake Baumgartner (Auxvasse) and Butch Richards (Tebbetts), were uncontested so each will serve an additional three years. Gene Eldringhoff, a 24-year veteran of our board retired this year. Brenda Bader of the Big Spring exchange was elected to fill that vacancy.

In other news, Kingdom awarded two college scholarships this year. These students had to submit an application, a 500-800 word essay on "How your life would be affected if you didn't have access to the Internet?" In addition, they collected two letters of recommendations, and submitted 7 semesters of transcripts to the selection committee.

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We had nine submissions and awarded \$1,000 scholarships to Sarah Chapman, daughter of Michael and Debbie Chapman, in the Auxvasse exchange and Rylie Blankenship, daughter of Chris and Amy Blankenship, in the Tebbetts exchange. Sarah plans to attend college at Southeast Missouri State University and Rylie has been accepted to Drury University. Congratulations to both and we hope they keep up the hard work!

In addition, we try to send two students to Washington DC each year on the FRS Washington Youth Tour. For over twenty years, Kingdom has joined the FRS in providing a forum for teens to interact with their peers from other rural communities as well as key legislative, regulatory and government figures. Visits to famous historical sites, including the Lincoln Memorial, the U.S. Capitol, Mount Vernon and Arlington National Cemetery, will round out the tour. We were happy to award Caitlyn Sobba from North Callaway High School and Jackson Poehlman from Hermann High School, the trip to Washington DC from May 31st to June 4th.

Not much more to report for now, so until next time: enjoy your summer and keep your families safe and healthy!

Lifeline Assistance

LOW INCOME OR DISABLED? STRETCH YOUR COMMUNICATION DOLLARS WITH LIFELINE

The Lifeline Program

Eligible low-income and disabled consumers can receive up to \$24.00 in reductions on their bill as a credit against monthly charges. The disabled service program is only available for voice subscribers. The lifeline service program discount is based on both voice and broadband subscribers. There is a federal lifeline discount available in the amount of \$9.25 for broadband only lines with a speed of 25 Mbps(down)/3 Mbps (up) or higher.

Eligibility

To qualify for Low-Income Lifeline in Missouri, you must participate in one of the following programs: MO HealthNet (f/k/a Medicaid), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance (SNAP), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Federal Public Housing Assistance (FPHA), Veterans Pension and Survivors Benefit Program or have household income at or below 135% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines.

To qualify for the Disabled Lifeline in Missouri, you must participate in one of the following programs: Federal Social Security Disability Benefits, Veterans Administration Disability Benefits, State Blind Pension, and State Aid to Blind Persons or State Supplemental Disability Assistance.

The Benefits

Qualifying consumers will receive a discount on home phone service, which includes voice grade access to the public switched network, single-party service, access to emergency services, access to operator services, access to inter-exchange service, access to directory assistance, and voluntary total toll blocking, which prevents the placement of any long distance calls OR a service bundle of home phone service and broadband internet.

For further details, call to speak with a Customer Service Representative or visit our website at kingdomtelco.com