

# EXPERIENCE YOUR NATION'S CAPITAL WITH THE FRS YOUTH TOUR

SPONSORED BY  **Paul Bunyan COMMUNICATIONS**

## JUNE 1-5, 2022

Area High School Students age 16 or 17 are encouraged to enter the Paul Bunyan Communications Essay Contest for a chance to attend the 2022 Youth Tour in Washington, D.C. June 1-5, with all expenses paid by Paul Bunyan Communications.

Students interested in attending the Youth Tour need to submit a short essay, no more than 500 words in length, on why they would like to attend the Youth Tour. Students must be 16 or 17 years of age and in high school with their parent/guardian a member of Paul Bunyan Communications Cooperative.

Entries can be dropped off at the Paul Bunyan Communications office in Bemidji or Grand Rapids, or they can be mailed to:

Paul Bunyan Communications Essay Contest  
1831 Anne St. NW  
Bemidji, MN 56601

**THE DEADLINE FOR ENTRIES IS FRIDAY, MARCH 4**

The trip features a comprehensive overview of the telecommunications industry, including careers in telecom, the critical role telecommunications plays in rural America, and how legislative and regulatory decisions affect the industry. The tour allows youth to meet with members of Congress who represent rural constituents. They also participate in educational sessions about the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). Students visit some of the nation's most historic sites, including Mount Vernon, the Smithsonian Museums, and a beautiful night tour of our Washington D.C.



**FRS YOUTH TOUR**  
25<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY

[www.FRS.org/youthtour](http://www.FRS.org/youthtour)



TELE U WHAT

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### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Tracy Mistic-Schaar, District 3**  
*Inger-Wirt, Squaw Lake, Deer River, Dora Lake, Kelliher, Northome, Blackduck, Ash River, Big Falls*

### Mark Matteson, District 4

*Cohasset, Grand Rapids, Coleraine, Warba, Marble, Nashwauk*

### President Randy Frisk, District 5

*Becida, Bemidji, Laporte, Itasca State Park, Lake George, Park Rapids*

### Glenda Martin, District 6

*Ponemah, Red Lake*

### Secretary Bruce Campbell, District 7

*Bemidji, Solway*

### Vice President Jim Sutton, District 8

*City of Bemidji*

### Treasurer Tim Hins, District 9

*Cass Lake, Puposky, Turtle River*

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Bemidji, MN 56601

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 **Paul Bunyan COMMUNICATIONS**

COOPERATIVE NEWS AND INFORMATION • JANUARY 2022

# TELE U WHAT

## Celebrating 70 years on January 29

In the late 1940's many areas of northern Minnesota still didn't have access to landline telephone service, they were too far away from a "city". That was about to change. In 1949, the United States Congress enacted legislation to add a new program to improve rural telephone service in the U.S.

On February 28, 1950 the first public organizational meeting to explain the new telephone program was held at the Bemidji Armory and less than two years later on January 29, 1952, the bylaws to establish the cooperative were incorporated, making that the Cooperative's official first day.

After incorporation of the bylaws, our founders worked endlessly to make the cooperative a reality, including selling memberships for \$40 each (\$40 in 1949 is equivalent to about \$465 today).

To qualify for the new federal loan program, the Board had to operate an existing telephone system before



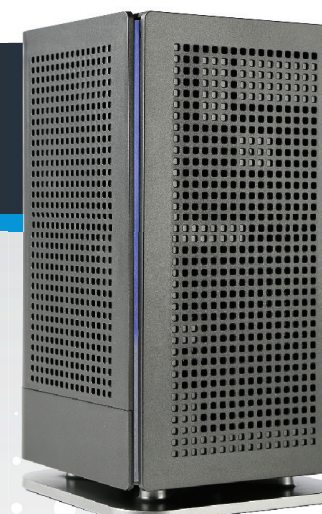
the loan could be approved so in early June of 1954, the Kelliher Telephone Company and Hendrickson Township Telephone's system in Hubbard County were purchased. Days later, on June 14, 1954, the first REA Telephone Program federal loan was approved. Four years and countless hours of effort had finally paid off. The cooperative was open and operating.

On February 22, 1955, Paul Bunyan Telephone opened its first business office at 207 4th Street in Bemidji behind what is now Tara Thai Restaurant. The cooperative's first full year of service ended with a total of 208 members.

What was started by a few farmers from Kelliher and Laporte has grown into the largest broadband cooperative in Minnesota with over 23,000 members and providing services over one of the largest rural all-fiber optic gigabit networks in the United States!



To learn more about the history of our cooperative, visit the history section of our website at [paulbunyan.net/cooperative/our-history](http://paulbunyan.net/cooperative/our-history)



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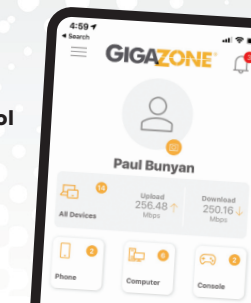
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[paulbunyan.net/gigazoneblastwi-fi/](http://paulbunyan.net/gigazoneblastwi-fi/)

Available on the  



NOVEMBER

Paul Bunyan Communications Board of Directors conducted its monthly meeting on November 1, 2021. Also attending were CEO and General Manager Gary Johnson, CFO Dave Schultz and Administrative Assistant Kalsie Vanasse.

- Financial reports, delinquent accounts, member lists, and other service reports were reviewed and approved.
- The CEO provided an update on our COVID-19 operations and plans.
- The CEO updated the board on the contract negotiations with the Communications Workers of America (CWA) labor union. After discussion, a motion was made, seconded, and carried approving the new three-year contract as presented pending union ratification.
- Long-time District 3 Director Kathy Peterson announced her upcoming retirement from the Board of Directors effective January 1, 2022. Director Peterson was elected in 1995 and served as President from 1998-2019. The Board appointed Tracy Mistic-Schaar, pending confirmation of eligibility, to serve as District 3 Director until an election is held next year.
- Network Operations Manager Rob St Clair provided a construction update and plans for 2022 construction and expansion.
- CFO Dave Schultz reviewed Olsen Thielen's Agreement for Services for conducting the 2021 audit and related services.
- The 2022 NTCA Rural Telecom Industry Meeting was discussed. Attendees and voting delegates were appointed.
- The CEO gave his monthly report. He reviewed meetings he attended and upcoming meetings. He gave an update on the federal Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF) approval process and status.

DISTRICT 3 • DISTRICT 7 • DISTRICT 9  
**BOARD OF DIRECTOR ELECTIONS**

As a cooperative, Paul Bunyan Communications is governed by a seven-person member-elected Board of Directors. In 2022, there are Board of Directors positions up for election representing Districts 3, 7, and 9.

Article III, Section 3 of your Cooperative's Bylaws requires any member interested in serving as a Director to submit a candidate packet to the Cooperative headquarters at least 25 business days prior to the Caucus Election date. This enables the Cooperative to properly verify the eligibility of all candidates to serve as a member of the Board if elected. Members interested can find the candidate application packet and related information online at [paulbunyan.net/cooperative/documents](http://paulbunyan.net/cooperative/documents)

**THE DEADLINES FOR COMPLETED CANDIDATE PACKETS TO BE RETURNED TO THE COOPERATIVE ARE:**

**DISTRICT 7  
FEB. 17**      **DISTRICT 9  
FEB. 22**      **DISTRICT 3  
FEB. 24**

If there are less than two pre-qualified candidates seeking election/re-election to the Board of Directors from the same district (an uncontested district election), no in-person Caucus and Caucus Election for that district will be held.

If there are two or more pre-qualified candidates seeking election from the same district, the in-person Caucus will be held and all members residing within the district will be notified by mail of the caucus date, time, and location. The purpose of the in-person Caucus is to select two pre-qualified candidates to seek election/re-election to be the district's representative on the Paul Bunyan Communications Board of Directors. Directors serve a five-year term through 2027, however in the case of District 3, the election will fill the remaining four years of the existing term ending in 2026.

**THE CURRENT DIRECTOR FOR DISTRICT 7 is Board Secretary Bruce Campbell and he has expressed his intent to seek re-election.**

**THE CURRENT DIRECTOR FOR DISTRICT 9 is Board Treasurer Tim Hins and he has expressed his intent to seek re-election.**

**THE CURRENT DIRECTOR FOR DISTRICT 3 is Tracy Schaar and she has expressed her intent to seek re-election.**

Based on the results of any contested Caucus Election, the names of two candidates are listed on the ballot to be voted on by the general membership of the Cooperative. Votes are tallied at the Annual Meeting, scheduled for May 25, 2022. The candidate from each respective district with the greatest number of votes from the general membership is elected/re-elected as the Director for such district.

DISTRICT 3 DIRECTOR

*Kathy Peterson*  
**RETIRES AFTER 26 YEARS**

At the monthly meeting in November, the Paul Bunyan Communications Board of Directors accepted Kathy Peterson's retirement notice and appointed Tracy Mistic Schaar to fill the District 3 seat.

We thank Kathy for her dedication by serving over 25 years on our cooperative's Board of Directors! Kathy was first elected in 1995 and led our cooperative as Board President for an incredible 20 years from 1998-2018.

*“Kathy’s sincere dedication to our cooperative and membership has been incredible and we can’t thank her enough”*

So much has been accomplished in the two and a half decades Kathy has been on the Board of Directors it is hard to put into words. Our cooperative has grown significantly in membership, employees, and the technology and services we offer. When Kathy first started on the Board, Paul Bunyan Net was just formed to offer dial up Internet service, cellular service was transitioning from bag phones to flip phones, and there was no such thing as Paul Bunyan Television, high speed Internet, or the GigaZone. It was under Kathy's leadership that Paul Bunyan Communications developed into one of the most progressive communications cooperatives in the United States now providing an industry-leading multiple gigabit Internet service across 6,000 square miles of northcentral Minnesota.

“Kathy is very humble and I know she won't take any personal credit for the many accomplishments and progress our cooperative has experienced over the past 25 years, but her steady leadership has played a pivotal role in all of our growth and subsequent suc-



*Kathy Peterson (left) and new District 3 Director Tracy Mistic-Schaar*

cess. She and fellow board members had the foresight to diversify our service offerings and to boldly authorize the construction of one of the largest rural all-fiber optic networks in the country nearly a decade before most other service providers. Recognizing the critical role broadband now serves in education, healthcare, work, e-commerce, government, and entertainment, you cannot overstate Kathy's impact on the lives of thousands across our region. Her sincere dedication to our cooperative and our members has been incredible and we can't thank her enough. We are going to miss her leadership, support, and positive attitude, but wish her the very best in retirement,” said Gary Johnson, Paul Bunyan Communications CEO/ General Manager.

As is called for in the Cooperative's bylaws, the Board has appointed District 3 member Tracy Mistic-Schaar as the new District 3 Board Member. We look forward to working with Tracy and appreciate her willingness to serve on behalf of the members of District 3. That position is up for election/re-election this year. Tracy has expressed her intent to seek re-election.

**2022 SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITIES**

Paul Bunyan Communications is committed to the communities we serve and provides over \$40,000 annually in scholarships to local students within our service territory. We also offer local students the chance to apply for one statewide industry scholarship and one national industry scholarship. If you are a current high school senior or a student at one of the local post-secondary institutions, you can apply to win a Paul Bunyan Communications Scholarship!

**HIGH SCHOOL**

Each year, our cooperative provides at least two \$500 scholarships to 12 area high schools within or near our service territory. The application process, winners, and distribution of funds are handled by each high school independent of Paul Bunyan Communications.

|                   |                          |
|-------------------|--------------------------|
| Bemidji           | International Falls      |
| Bigfork           | Kelliher                 |
| Blackduck         | Laporte                  |
| Bug-O-Nay-Ge-Shig | Nashwauk-Keewatin        |
| Cass Lake         | Northome                 |
| Deer River        | Park Rapids              |
| Grand Rapids      | Red Lake                 |
| Greenway          | Walker-Hackensack-Akeley |

To apply for the Paul Bunyan Communications Scholarship at one of these high schools, please speak to the counselor or career service office.

**INDUSTRY SCHOLARSHIPS**

*Please note the applicant or their parent/legal guardian must be a member of Paul Bunyan Communications (PBC) Cooperative to apply through PBC and that a signature of a PBC employee is required to be considered eligible.*

Paul Bunyan Communications participates in the MTA's scholarship program which awards five \$2,000 scholarships to Minnesota high school seniors each year.



The application for 2022 can be downloaded at <https://www.mnta.org/page/Scholarship> and **must be turned in to Paul Bunyan Communications no later than February 24, 2022.**

The Minnesota Telecom Alliance is a trade organization representing 86 telephone companies and cooperatives in the state.

Paul Bunyan Communications participates in the Foundation for Rural Service (FRS) scholarship program which awards 30 \$2,500 scholarships to high school seniors throughout the country each year.



Applications can also be downloaded from the FRS web site at <https://www.frs.org/programs/youth-programs/scholarships>

**Completed applications should be sent directly to FRS, postmarked no later than February 22, 2022.** Applications postmarked to FRS after this date will NOT be accepted.



**ENROLLMENT NOW OPEN ON FCC AFFORDABLE CONNECTIVITY PROGRAM**

The Affordable Connectivity Program is a Federal Communications Commission program that helps connect families and households struggling to afford internet service. This new benefit provides a discount of up to \$30 per month toward broadband service for eligible households and up to \$75 per month for households on qualifying Tribal lands. Eligible households can also receive a one-time discount of up to \$100 to purchase a laptop, desktop computer, or tablet from participating providers\*.



Eligible households can enroll through Paul Bunyan Communications or directly with the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) using an online or mail in application.

You can learn more about the benefit, including eligibility and enrollment information, by visiting [www.fcc.gov/ACP](http://www.fcc.gov/ACP) or by calling 877-384-2575.

\*Paul Bunyan Communications is a participating broadband service provider but we do not sell laptop, desktop computers, or tablets and therefore are not a participating provider for that portion of the program.