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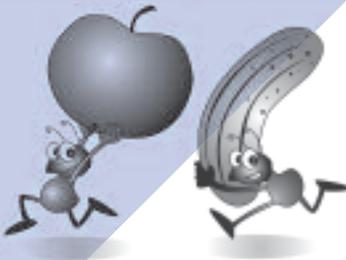
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## SUMMER CO-OP PICNICS

LaValle Picnic  
 Wed., July 16 in Ironton at the  
 Jason Berberich Memorial Park

Richland-Grant Picnic  
 Thurs., July 17 in Soldiers Grove at  
 the Village Park



## A public service announcement regarding the 2009 Digital TV transition:

On February 17, 2009, the Digital TV Transition and Public Safety Act of 2005, requires broadcast television stations to stop analog broadcasting and complete the transition to digital broadcasting. For those viewers using an antenna, preparing for the DTV transition is easy and requires one of three steps by February 17, 2009:

Option 1) Purchase a new television set with a built in digital tuner.

Option 2) Subscribe to a digital TV service.

Option 3) Purchase a digital-to-analog converter box that plugs into an existing analog television. These converter boxes will allow you to continue to watch free over-the-air television on an analog set. The converter boxes cost between \$40-70 and are available for purchase at electronic retailers such as Wal-Mart, Radio Shack, and many others. The U.S. Department of Commerce coupon program is designed to assist in this transition. U.S. households can request up to two coupons valued at \$40 each. Each coupon can go toward the purchase of a single set-top converter box that will allow you to continue watching free television. Coupons will be mailed by the U.S. Postal Service, and consumers will have three months to redeem them. You may apply for these coupons at [www.dtv2009.gov](http://www.dtv2009.gov) or by calling the National Telecommunications Information Administration at 888.DTV.2009, or you may mail in an application. Please check our website for a copy of the application and mailing address.

For more information on the digital transition, you may want to visit [www.DTVtransition.org](http://www.DTVtransition.org).

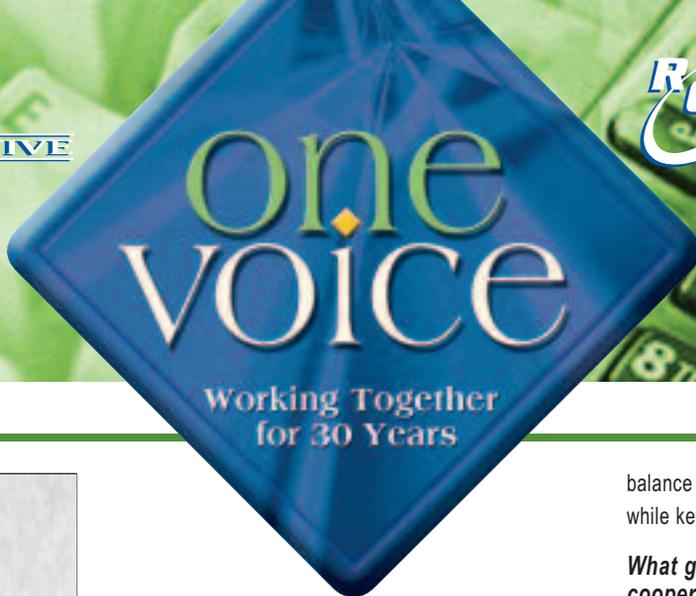
If you subscribe to our digital TV product you should not be affected by this transition, and do not need to apply for coupons or purchase a digital-to-analog converter box. This message has been provided for your information only.

## New Home & Business Monitoring and Security Services

Our Co-ops are pleased to introduce a new Monitoring and Security Service called Xanboo. It combines the convenience of remote, interactively controlled devices in your home or business, with the peace of mind you receive from 24 hour-a-day surveillance. Imagine being able to turn up the thermostat at your cottage in Wisconsin before leaving your suburban home in Milwaukee or Chicago. That is the benefit of Xanboo.

Xanboo's technology is useful for a wide range of needs from simple security and monitoring, to managing energy efficiency and moisture detection, to home healthcare assistance.

Devices that integrate with the Xanboo system include cameras (static and controllable), water sensors, temperature sensors, motion sensors, window and door sensors, electric outlet controllers, wireless sirens, and home thermostats. With Xanboo, you control and monitor your home or office with cameras and devices, such as sensors and controllers, simply by using a wireless router system and your Internet-based network. Contact us today for more information.



Bradley Welp

**A BIT ABOUT BRAD,  
OUR NEW GENERAL MANAGER:**

The LaValle and Richland-Grant Cooperatives have hired a new General Manager, Bradley Welp. Brad replaced Dave Lull, the manager since 1996, who retired April 1, 2008. All board members and staff welcome Brad and are looking forward to working with him. We asked Brad some questions about himself.

**Brad, what professional experience do you bring to the cooperatives?**

I have worked with telecommunications cooperatives for over 19 years, starting my career as the Office

Manager at Splitrock Telecom Cooperative in 1988. Now called Alliance Communications Cooperative, it is a fast growing cooperative located outside of Sioux Falls, SD. My responsibilities ranged from accounting to internet development.

In 1999 I had an opportunity to become the Director of Operations for Heart of Iowa Communications Cooperative in Union, Iowa. Heart of Iowa, where I was responsible for the daily operations, is a progressive cooperative that has expanded into neighboring communities to provide state-of-the-art communications services as a CLEC. From there I accepted the General Manager position for Clay County Rural Telephone Cooperative in Cloverdale, IN. Clay County is the largest cooperative in Indiana serving diverse areas from bedroom communities of Indianapolis to very rural areas in the south central part of the state.

I moved back to Iowa in 2005 to work for the National Rural Telecommunications Cooperative, covering the areas from Iowa to the Pacific Northwest promoting and supporting communications products provided to the NRTC membership.

**What challenges do you currently see in the telecommunication industry?**

I enjoy my work because each day brings a new challenge. If the technology is not changing, then it's a day when regulations are in flux. The co-ops will see faster change in the coming years than in the last decade. The greatest challenge we face today is deciding when to adopt the latest technology. We must

balance the need to stay current with technology, while keeping our rates affordable for our members.

**What goals do you have for the cooperatives?**

The Boards of Directors and employees have worked hard to take advantage of the changes in technology that deliver state-of-the-art communications to our members. The cooperatives need to leverage this technology and expand the services we bring to our members. We will continue to evaluate those opportunities, keeping us competitive with urban areas in Wisconsin.

**What changes do you foresee happening in the next few years at the cooperatives?**

Our managers are finishing the deployment of our current plant design, while preparing a design for the next generation of technology. Fiber-to-the-premise is the future of our communications infrastructure. This fiber technology will give our members the needed bandwidth to support applications and services for the future.

I would also like to expand our communications products by finding a wireless service we could bundle with our members' current products.

**How do you spend your time when you're not at work?**

In my spare time, I like to explore new communities and spend time outdoors. I look forward to spring and summer and the opportunity to explore Southwest Wisconsin, with its many interesting areas and sights.

**Why do you want to work for the Cooperatives and live in a rural area?**

I believe in the cooperative philosophy and am determined to provide the best possible service to the rural areas. I like being an active member of the community and am committed to giving back to the members. I believe the best way to maintain the vitality in our rural communities is to provide communications services that rival those available any place in America.

What I value in our cooperatives is their focus on delivering the best service to the members.



# Safe Online Shopping

Perhaps the fear of credit card fraud or identity theft has kept you from online shopping. Now, with gasoline nearing \$4.00 per gallon, many of us are considering online shopping instead of driving miles to a shopping center. We suggest you visit the Web site, safeshopping.org, which is a project of the ABA Section of the Business Law Committee/Consumer Protection Working Group. This organization offers the following suggestions:

- Look for the picture of the unbroken key or closed lock in your browser window to verify that security is operative.
- Make sure the web address, on the page that asks for your credit card, begins with https instead of just http. Do not send your card information in an ordinary email, especially if you receive an inquiry for personal information.
- Notice the words "Secure Sockets Layer" or a pop-up box indicating that you are entering a secure area. If you are still uncomfortable with the security on a specific site, you may choose to take the following actions:
  - Order online, but also call the company to give your credit card information over the phone.
  - Track your online transactions easily by using a separate credit card just for online transactions. In this case, should you have a problem; you'll still have the use of your other credit card.

- Ask if your credit card company offers "virtual" credit cards. On the card issuer's Web site, you are assigned a number to use for your next transaction. This number is not your card number, so should there be a security breach, your only information at risk would be your assigned number for this transaction.

Finally, consider the following tips:

- Trust your instincts. If you feel uncomfortable or pressured to order, don't do it.
- Be vigilant by reading and understanding the rules and policies of web-based auctions.
- Double check pricing and be alert when it seems to be too good to be true.
- Review and consider printing a Web site's privacy policy, return policy, shipping and handling policies, terms, conditions, warranties, company information, and confirming e-mails. You may want to specify the shipper so your purchase can be delivered when and where you want it.
- Inspect your purchase promptly upon delivery and contact the seller immediately if there is a problem.

## Avoid the Zap on Your Phone

Every year we hear from rural customers who have a distinctive "tick-tick" noise on their telephone line. This noise is typically a grounding problem with the electric fence used to secure livestock. Here's why it happens: Dry ground conducts the electric current to the buried telephone cable causing the noise.

Here's what you can do: You can save yourselves or your neighbors from this noise nuisance by (1) placing your electric fence away from tall ditch weeds, (2) using good quality insulators on your posts to securely hold the wire in place, and (3) checking or unplugging the fence to resolve the problem. We appreciate your cooperation in helping our technicians determine the source of the trouble.

### Digger's Hotline 811 or 1-800-242-8511

As another spring reminder to help "avoid the zap" on you, please call Diggers Hotline before doing any digging. The cable you cut could be dangerous electric wire or the cable that brings you telephone, video, and internet service. Call first. It's easy and it's FREE!

## Go Green this Spring: Electronic Billing Now Available

Convenient for you and good for the environment, both co-ops NOW have electronic billing available. Your account can be viewed online, you can choose to go "paperless" so that you only receive your bill online, and you can pay by check or credit card online. Strict Web site security and an account password make your information safe. To sign-up for LaValle's e-bill go to [www.ltc.coop](http://www.ltc.coop) or <https://ebill.ltc.coop>. For Richland-Grant's sign-up visit [www.rgtc.coop](http://www.rgtc.coop). Call your cooperative office at 611 if you have questions.



## Annual Meetings Summaries

The Richland-Grant Telephone Cooperative annual meeting was held on March 15th, 2008 in Blue River.

The LaValle Telephone Cooperative meeting was held on April 5th, 2008 in LaValle.

Retiring General Manager, Dave Lull, summarized our 2007 activities. He introduced Brad Welp, the Assistant Manager, who became the GM effective April 1. Brad discussed the many services our co-ops offer because of our business partnerships. These services include off-site data storage for residential and business use, data security programs for business, anti-virus protection, and expanded video offerings, including high definition channels. Brad reviewed Midwest Telnet's Japanese video services initiative to military bases.

Attendees for both co-ops received gift bags and enjoyed a delicious lunch. The Blue River United Methodist Church served for Richland-Grant and The Summit House served for LaValle. Customers also received door prizes including cash and gifts.

**Director Elections at Richland-Grant:** Directors Robert Olson and Darrel Clark from Richland-Grant, running unopposed, were re-elected and Director Byron Hillberry, who defeated Thomas Francois, will also serve another term.

**Director Elections at LaValle:** Directors Robert Roloff, Paul Bodendein, and Sarah Wheeler from LaValle, running unopposed, were all re-elected for another term.

## Shaping the Community:

Hartje Lumber Company, a LaValle Business Treasure Since 1968.

### **Service makes the difference**

Some 40 years ago, the rolling hills two miles east of La Valle along Highway 33 were sprouting field corn. It's a different story these days as the land is sprouting yet another industrial building for Hartje Lumber. The local business now sports 23 buildings occupied by 55 hardworking souls churning out everything from prefab building panels to precision engineered trusses. It all started with a bang.

Virgil Hartje, a lifelong resident of the La Valle area, became a steelworker for the Wisconsin Bridge and Iron Company after graduating from Wonewoc High School. He helped build the addition to the Webb (Middle) School and the huge Cassville coal fired power plant. One day on a job site Hartje was injured when a welder blew up and put him in the hospital. The incident changed the course of his life. He began running jobs in Detroit and Milwaukee for the company. Things were going well for Hartje but he had dreams of going out on his own. He decided to sell agricultural buildings.

"The first year I wasn't sure if I'd made the right decision," Hartje says, "I used to have my wife call the office to make sure the phone was working."

### **Business continued to grow**

But Virgil's hard work paid off. He worked with his crew during the day erecting buildings, made sales calls after work and tended his corn fields after that. The agricultural building business blossomed into a full-featured lumber yard, a lumber brokerage business and transportation company. Later came engineering services and more recently the wall panel business. Business is not limited to these American shores: the company sells products on foreign soil including Taiwan, Japan and Russia. Today Hartje's various business enterprises account for annual sales of \$33 to \$50 million.

A true believer in supporting his community, Hartje was instrumental in the construction

of the American Legion Honor Roll in the Village of La Valle. In 1986 he donated acreage between LaValle and Reedsburg to the School District of Reedsburg to be used as a learning center for students. Today the Hartje Nature Learning Center comprises 160 acres of forests, ponds and well marked trails used to educate students on earth sciences and instill an appreciation for nature.

### **Hartje keeps pace with technology**

Hartje has found a technology partner in La Valle Telephone Cooperative. The Co-op has worked alongside Hartje's during its growth, providing needed telecommunications expertise.

Hartje uses the co-op's local and long-distance service, high-speed Internet and leases multi-line telephone equipment. But if you ask Virgil what the biggest asset that La Valle Telephone provides, the answer is a little old fashioned. "La Valle (Telephone) is out here sometimes before we know we have a problem," Hartje says. "I've heard stories of businesses waiting two weeks to get a fax machine connected (in other communities). I got my fax machine at 2 p.m. and by 4 p.m. it was hooked up. They treat me excellent."



Virgil Hartje