

ALPINE COMMUNIQUÉ



Real Access. Real Value. Real People.

Q2 2019 Newsletter

Why Community Involvement Matters to Us

By Chris Hopp, General Manager/COO

If there is one thing I'd like you to understand about Alpine Communications, it's this: being a part of the community is essential for us. It always has been throughout our history.

Communities are important. We believe connected communities become thriving communities. Without communities, we would miss the opportunity to connect with one another. We wouldn't have the chance to share joy, happiness or celebrate each other's successes. Without community, we would be very lonely human beings.

As a business leader in rural America, I especially understand the need for community. We have a way of connecting with one another that can be more meaningful than those living in bigger cities. Living in a smaller community means we can show up to a picnic or art show in town and know most of our neighbors. We are more likely to share similar lifestyles and common interests.

At Alpine, the health of the communities we serve is extremely important to us. For starters, we all live here and want to see our communities succeed. But it goes much deeper than that. We want to be so engrained in our communities that we're constantly making it better by the way we do business.

It starts by understanding the culture of the communities. Let's say one of the neighborhoods we serve is keenly focused on tourism. Alpine wants to support that collective goal of getting more visitors to that area, so perhaps we would choose to underwrite a beautification effort. Another community may be more focused on becoming a gathering spot for neighboring communities. In this case, we would choose to sponsor a portion of their next big event.

We support fire departments, museums, art councils, summer events and anything else that's important to the communities. Each of our staff members, especially ones who meet with residents, keep their eyes and ears open for ways Alpine could better serve our communities. We also try to pay attention to each community's influencers, like chamber of commerce leaders or other civic leaders.



As a corporate citizen, Alpine Communications also makes monetary and in-kind donations to local economic development groups, booster clubs, community events, and more. Alpine offers educational opportunities to our customers through free internet, social media, and personal fraud protection workshops.

We also practice what we preach. To be good community stewards, we ensure our Alpine Communication property always looks visually pleasing by keeping the area neat and adding beautification whenever we see an opportunity. Alpine Communications has invested over \$13 million dollars since 2006 when we began building the 100% fiber-optic Fusion Network.

Overall, our goal is to always make our communities more livable. This can be a continuous work in progress. However, when we hear that people choose to stay instead of relocating elsewhere, we're proud if we can say we played a small part in that. Do you have an event or a community initiative that you would like Alpine Communications to be involved in? We try to support as many causes as we can. Email us at alpine@alpinecom.net.

If your phone number appears in parentheses (XXX-XXXX) in this edition of the Alpine Communiqué, please give us a call at 563-245-4000 by June 30, 2019, and we'll apply a \$5 credit to your account!



Faces of the Brand – Josh Funk

Do you know how to react when you encounter a mamma grizzly bear and her two cubs deep in the forest with nowhere to escape? Just ask Josh Funk, Alpine's broadband tech. He would advise you to relax, set up your tripod and camera, and begin taking the photos of a lifetime - as he experienced while vacationing in Lake Louise, Alberta, Canada.

By day, Josh has been helping customers connect with technology for nearly 10 years as one of Alpine's broadband technicians. By night and weekend, Josh has an adventurous side. Notably traveling with his friend, Marie, and crafting his art as a locally-renowned landscape nature photographer.

When asked what about his work ignites the most passion, Josh said, "Seeing customers get excited about new services and talking to them about fiber-to-the-home projects. Customers seem to be pretty excited about the Fusion Network because they appreciate faster broadband speeds and FusionTV delivered over fiber-optics."

Some of Josh's favorite moments at work are when he spends time with customers listening to their past experiences with other providers and knowing we will be tenacious about getting it right for them.

In the future, Josh sees his role as a broadband technician transforming from installing services to helping customers manage their experience in the home. "You've got to have a good wireless router and I see our role as building the best WiFi network for their home so they can have a good experience."

Recalling the early days of his career at Alpine, Josh described how his role has changed. "Compared to where I first began, I spent most of my days running troubles, installs, and locates. Now I'm involved in construction projects, prepping fiber cabinets, splicing fiber, T1 circuits, and whatever is needed. Chad Ruegnitz has taught me so much and he's never left me hanging."

Josh admits a quirk he has is being particular about almost everything. Josh's desire to be very organized, neat and tidy is an advantage to customers. "That is one thing that I definitely take pride in because it's all about the customer and making them happy."



Good-natured, funny, caring, and helpful are how those close to Josh describe him. It's no surprise that he uses humor when connecting with clients and coworkers. "I find humor to be the best way to break the ice with a new customer. It's easy to be that way around my coworkers because I know them." (873-1002)

Now, back to the bear encounter. "Photography relaxes me especially when I'm in the mountains, but I had one experience that didn't go so well. I went into Moraine Lake early one morning while it was dark. I was on top of a rock pile taking pictures and a couple from New Jersey was there, too. We decided to walk back to our vehicles at the same time. On our return, we came across the sow grizzly bear with two cubs. The bear looked at me and she continued eating. I thought it was strange because the cubs were small, and she didn't pay any mind to me at all. So, I set my tripod up and my camera and I start taking pictures of her and the cubs because I had nowhere to go. We were caught between a huge rock pile and a marsh to get back to the car. I was taking pictures for about 10 minutes when the little ones started crying. They sounded just like little babies. The sow grizzly nursed the cubs but never took her eyes off me the entire time."

Josh's advice for budding amateur photographers is to start small and work your way into your hobby. "I started with a point-and-shoot disposable camera, moved up to a Fuji digital camera my mom purchased from QVC, and now I shoot with a Nikon D800. Take your time to compose the photo and frame it up perfectly."

IN THE LOOP

- ✓ One thing most don't know about Josh: Favorite vacation is Grand Teton National Park.
- ✓ Three words that always describe Josh: Prompt, funny, reliable.
- ✓ Three words that never describe Josh: Late, messy, mean.

WiFi Calling Eliminates Poor Cell Service In Your Home

Problem – you pay for cell phone service and it works in 90 percent of the places you go – except for your home.

Why is that, you ask? You live in a hole. Not an actual hole, but a cellular hole. Who would complain about living in a valley or along the hillside of the scenic hills and dales, bluffs and valleys of Northeast Iowa? There is peace, tranquility, and beauty in our rural lifestyle. However, the terrain is not as favorable for cellular technology in many areas and that can be a challenge for folks who rely on a cell phone for their work. Additionally, the need for reliable connections is a primary reason why most rural residents in our area value home phone service. (245-1310)

Alpine Communications has a solution for customers who need to make or receive calls on their cell phones in their home where they have poor cellular reception. New, groundbreaking technology called WiFi Calling enables you to make calls on your cell phone – even when you have no cellular signal at all! WiFi Calling is exclusive to Alpine Wireless customers and is no extra charge. Customers need a compatible cellular device and WiFi in their home, outbuilding, barn, or office.

WiFi Calling has been especially helpful to Alpine employees who have had difficulty with getting cell phone service in their homes. Darrin Smith, broadband technician, lives in a valley a few miles north of Guttenberg. “I had just enough cellular coverage to get a text message on my cell phone. I usually had to walk outside and up the hill to make a call,” described Darrin.



*Darrin Smith,
Broadband
Technician*

The challenge for Darrin is that he was unable to get good cellular reception to receive important text messages, support calls, and escalated when he is on-call.

“None of the wireless carriers in our area have cellular reception where I live. We were looking for solutions such as wireless boosters so my cell phone would work, but those can be

costly and unreliable. Then Alpine launched WiFi Calling and the problem was solved. It’s pretty much just like making a regular call on my cell phone since I have great WiFi coverage in my home,” noted Darrin.



*Lori Keppler,
Customer
Service*

Alpine’s customer service manager, Lori Keppler, experienced a similar challenge living in rural Saint Olaf in a valley. “Cell service at my home is very poor. It was rare that I could complete a call on my cell phone before WiFi Calling. Now WiFi Calling allows me to receive and place calls on my Alpine Wireless phone. The other area cellular provider’s phones don’t get reception, but Alpine does!”

Both Darrin and Lori agree that while WiFi Calling enables them to use their cell phone in their homes, they still prefer their home phone to cell phones for voice calls.

Do you live in an area with little or no cellular reception? Do you have WiFi in your home? Are you tired of paying for cell phone service that won’t work at your home? If you answered yes to these questions, you should consider switching your cellular service to Alpine Wireless to get full bars and take full advantage of WiFi Calling. While cell phones have an important place in our world, their benefits do not rival home phone service for quality and dependability.

Our goal is to help you connect the way you want to.

Visit our office in Elkader, shop our plans and phones at www.alpinecom.net/wireless, or call 563-245-4000. We are the only full-service cellular provider in Clayton County, and we offer telephone service, too!



Welcome Kristie

Please join us in welcoming Kristie Austin as Alpine’s Customer Connectivity Advocate. Kristie is from Garnavillo and joined the team in March. She specializes in helping customers connect the way they want to while providing a positive experience. Her passion is helping businesses find the best solutions and greatest value so they can thrive.



Elkader Uses Housing Incentives to Grow and Thrive

Since 1836, when Elisha Boardmann and Horace Bronson settled on the banks of the Turkey River, Elkader has been a vibrant hub for commerce in Northeast Iowa. Elkader reached its peak population of 1,688 in 1980 but it has been steadily declining over the past 40 years due to urbanization and a changing agriculture economy. As a result, enrollment has also declined at Central Community Schools. The challenge is how to keep the small, rural community thriving.

Jennifer Cowser, Elkader City Administrator, connected with communities, such as Independence and Nashua, to jumpstart ideas on how to sustain, and ideally grow, Elkader's population. The City identified housing incentives as one way to attract new residents and improve the inventory of quality homes. The Elkader Housing Incentives Program was born soon after, the result of a joint effort between the City of Elkader, Elkader Development Corporation, and Alpine Communications.

The Elkader Housing Incentives includes free water and sewer base rates for a period of time, city property tax rebates, a family pool pass, and recycling. Alpine Communications kicks in free installation of services connecting to the Fusion Network.

Elkader launched the housing incentives program in 2017 and deems it a success. Since then, 21 residents have either built new homes, purchased a home, or renovated their current single-family home thus improving Elkader's housing inventory. Jennifer Cowser noted that the majority of the incentives have gone to residents who have purchased a home in Elkader. "Some people have been moving in from the country. Others have moved here for a job and we've had people move to Elkader from other states including Colorado."

"I think our residents appreciate the quality of life. We are a friendly small town that's safe, so kids can walk to school without worry. We have a variety of activities offered at the school and in the community," explained Cowser.

One amenity the City of Elkader can boast is Alpine Communications' 100% fiber-optic network within the city limits. Access to quality broadband places Elkader at a competitive advantage among other small Midwest towns. Cowser sees the access to Alpine's Fusion Network benefitting residents. "It's huge. I see other economic development leaders in the Midwest trying to get fiber in their communities. The lack of broadband is a problem for many. I'm grateful we don't have to worry about it



Pictured are: Jennifer Cowser, Elkader City Administrator; Katie Lower, Main Street Elkader/Elkader Development Corp. Director; and Amanda Hostetler, Deputy City Clerk

because our telephone company invested in fiber over ten years ago." Cowser plans to target telecommuters and home-based businesses as an "untapped market" for housing incentives, too.

Elkader Economic Development's Executive Director Kate Lower believes access to affordable housing, quality of life, outdoor recreation, culture, and high-tech services is attractive to young professionals. Katie said, "We need to attract young people to our community and one way is by bringing in the arts." Elkader hosts various arts and culture events throughout the year, which draws thousands of visitors and adds to the local flavor.

The City of Elkader is counting on community members to help get the word out about housing incentives. Cowser urges residents to talk about it to people they know. "The best way to help is by word-of-mouth. Everyone can be an ambassador to people they know or family members that might come back to Elkader and share why they love living here."

Are you looking to build a home, buy a house, or renovate your current home? The City of Elkader encourages you to visit www.elkader-iowa.com to download the Elkader Housing Incentives application or visit their office in the basement of the historic Elkader Opera House on Main Street.

We believe connected communities become thriving communities. Join in the movement and share why you love living in Elkader and inspire others to make Northeast Iowa home.

Help is at Hand with a Personal Emergency Response System

Did you know one in every three Americans over the age of 65 will fall each year, and less than half of them will tell anyone that it happened? Did you know one in five falls will cause a severe head injury or broken bone? And did you know a Personal Emergency Response System will provide you and your loved one peace of mind knowing help, in the event of a fall, is one call away?

Since 2010, Alpine Communications has served the area with a full-array of security services including Personal Emergency Response Systems (PERS). We believe when PERS is installed and utilized correctly, it protects people by connecting them to emergency services when a phone is not always nearby to use to call for help.

Alpine Communications takes the worry and confusion from the process of placing a PERS unit in your home. The first step is to contact Alpine Communications and we gather the information needed such as which neighbors and family members should be contacted if and when the button is pushed on the PERS device.

Next, Kelly Blockhus and Eric Kovak, Alpine's certified security installation technicians, will install the PERS unit and train the customer along with a helper on how to use the service. Finally, Alpine Communications receives daily reports from the central monitoring station to ensure the PERS unit is functioning properly.

Jean Maehl of Elkader chose Alpine Communications as her PERS provider last summer. She was thrilled with the personalized service from Kelly and Eric. "You can't beat those guys. They are nice people," noted Jean. Jean's friend, Dianne Finley, is on her contact list in the event of an emergency and was present when Alpine installed the PERS unit. Dianne described her experience, "They were very efficient, spoke very highly of Alpine, and certainly did a wonderful job explaining the equipment to Jean."



Customers can have the option of wearing the pendant on their wrist like a watch or around their neck on a lanyard. Jean prefers the comfort of wearing the pendant on her wrist. (252-2981)

"I feel very secure and I wear it all of the time in the house," said Mary Wildman of Elkader. She is grateful for the local customer service and expertise provided by Alpine since purchasing her PERS service in 2014. "I test the equipment once in a while and they are quick to answer when I press the button on my pendant. They are helpful people and Kelly is a nice guy." Mary is very independent and has peace of mind knowing help is nearby using her PERS service. "I wouldn't be without it and I can't imagine anyone living alone not having one," shared Mary.

No matter what your age or lifestyle, you can benefit from having a direct line to help with just the push of a button. The ability to stay connected to help in a crisis is simple and effective, but it saves lives.

Choose a PERS whether you're looking for a way to keep your loved ones safe or if you're just looking out for yourself. Give us the chance to assist you in finding the perfect device for you, and your peace of mind by connecting with Alpine Communications today. Call 563-245-4000 or visit our office at 923 Humphrey Street, Elkader.



Save the Date for Alpine's 14th Annual Customer Appreciation Celebration

Thursday, September 12, 2019 | 4:30 - 7:00 p.m.
Johnson's Reception Hall, Elkader



Aureon Provides Quality Charity Grants to Iowan Communities

Aureon and Alpine Communications are pleased to announce that Aureon Charity Grants have been awarded to area non-profit organizations in Northeast Iowa. The grants were presented in conjunction with Alpine Communications who sponsored the grant applications. Upon reviewing an abundance of applications, the Aureon Charity Grant Committee delegated funds to projects committed to the betterment of local Iowa communities. (964-8466)

- **Elgin Historical Society** - \$500.00 towards a new laptop and Past Perfect Software system at the museum.
- **City of McGregor** - \$750.00 towards building a pocket park next to the Public Library.
- **Garnavillo Community Day Care** - \$300.00 towards a new computer and software.
- **Clayton County Freedom Rock Project** - \$250.00 towards funding a Freedom Rock in Guttenberg.

“Alpine Communications appreciates the efforts of the Elgin Historical Society, City of McGregor, Garnavillo Community Day Care, and the Clayton County Freedom Rock Project. Their passion and dedication to advancing our community greatly impacts us all,” Chris Hopp, General Manager, Alpine Communications. “We are proud to partner with Aureon to make this grant possible.”

CONNECT WITH US:

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PO Box 1008
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Hours: 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Monday - Friday
563-245-4000
or 1-800-635-1059
www.alpinecom.net

Internet Tech Support:

1-888-264-2908

SecureIT Tech Support:

1-877-373-3320



City of McGregor: Pictured are Duane Bollman, Lynette Sander, and Joan Burns, City of McGregor; Lisa Stannis, Aureon; Lara Duff, Alpine



Clayton County Freedom Rock Project: Pictured are Sara Hertrampf, Alpine; Dick Eilers, Nancy McClellan, Robert Moser, and Jim Eglseder, Clayton County Freedom Rock Project; Lisa Stannis, Aureon



Elgin Historical Society: Pictured are Tammy Sylvester, Alpine; Marilyn Schaer and Deanna Walvatne, Elgin Historical Society; Lisa Stannis, Aureon



Garnavillo Community Day Care: Pictured are Josh Funk, Alpine; Amanda Stewart and Lisa Robinson, Garnavillo Community Day Care; Lanette Schutte, Alpine; Lisa Stannis, Aureon