

ALPINE COMMUNIQUÉ

Real Access. Real Value. Real People.



Q4 2020 Newsletter

Meet the Crew

Alpine Communications asks you to join us in welcoming three new employees to the team.

WELCOME!



Dalton Hall –
Customer Service Representative



Justin Jacobsen –
Data Technician



Chris Boesker –
Broadband Technician

Alpine Communications Receives \$2.89 Million Grant for Fiber Expansion Project

Broadband connections are vital for the growth and quality of life in rural Iowa. Alpine Communications is excited to announce we are investing \$5.79 Million to expand the Fusion Network, a 100% fiber-optic network, to rural areas of McGregor, Guttenberg, and Garnavillo exchanges in Clayton County. (426-5290)

The total estimated project cost is \$5,799,956.78. The CARES Act and the State of Iowa funded 50% or \$2,899,987.39 of the estimated project cost. In August 2020, the Empower Rural Iowa Emergency Broadband Expansion Program awarded \$33.6 Million for 56 infrastructure projects in Iowa. The program will benefit residents and businesses as the need for distance learning, telework, telehealth, and other remote services continue due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

continued on page 4



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 December 31, 2020, and we'll apply a \$5 credit to your account!



We believe access to fiber-optic broadband enables our area to thrive now and far into the future.”

- Chris Hopp, COO

Faces of the Brand – Brian Williams

Brian Williams takes his job as Alpine’s underground facility locator seriously because he knows that one misstep in his duties can result in a widespread service outage. He is passionate about his role in connecting customers. “After a big construction project is complete that I’ve done a lot of locates for, it’s somewhat empowering to see that nothing was damaged and no services were disrupted,” said Williams. He describes how he goes the extra mile to ensure safety and continuity for customers during excavating projects, “I’ve located cables where there is a lot on the line. I’ll get right down in the hole with contractors to ensure they don’t damage our facilities.”

If you’ve seen orange paint or an orange flag in a yard or along the roadside, Williams likely placed it there. He estimates that he locates numerous miles of underground cables each year in the hot sun, rain, and grass up to his waist.

During his 3-year tenure, Brian’s most significant work accomplishment is becoming familiar with the massive network he’s responsible for locating. “I’ve become intuitive with how cables are routed and what to do if things don’t locate right. It’s not all cut-and-dried,” he shared.

The importance of calling Iowa One Call – 811 before digging is paramount because of the disruption of services and the expense of replacing or repairing fiber. “If you interrupt someone’s services, you could take a business down, or it could impact a life or death situation by limiting access to 911. A cable cut can disrupt so many aspects of things since more people rely on the internet.”

Brian likes to best connect with customers as he is out in the field locating facilities. “During one locate yesterday, two customers approached me with questions, which happens a lot. I give them the best answers I can, tidbits of advice, or direct them to Customer Service,” explained Brian.

He’s known around the office for being thorough and following through. “I’m kind of the go-to guy for miscellaneous projects and being a helping hand. I enjoy the variety in my job during the winter months when locates slow down,” described Williams. (873-1005)

Three words that describe Brian are: honest, diligent, and hardworking. Those close to him also know he’s reliable and has a great sense of humor. “I try to get people to laugh and lighten up the mood a bit,” he said with a chuckle.

Messy, lazy, and negative are three words that never describe Brian. He also has an adventurous side, too. He recalls a time in Mexico where zip-lining was a near-death experience, “It wasn’t safe at all! There were little platforms on giant trees, no safety equipment, it was crazy.”

Something unique about Brian is his attention to detail. “I see things most don’t notice. The other night on my way home, I noticed a blackbird was bouncing on the head of a deer, so I snapped a photo on my phone. I’ve never seen anything like that before.”



“Be tenacious about getting it right” is the Alpine standard Williams most closely identifies with. “I’ve had contractors tell me that if they see my locates, they know I did them correctly, and they don’t even question them,” he explained confidently.



IN THE LOOP:

- ✓ *Hometown: Elkader, Iowa near Motor Mill*
- ✓ *Hobbies: Fishing, motorcycles, ATVs, and snowmobiles*
- ✓ *What makes Brian laugh: Gullible people*

From Mumbai to Elkader: An Entrepreneur's Vision for Culture and Connections in Rural Iowa

Ketaki Poyekar-Hauber journeyed halfway across the world from Mumbai, India to San Francisco, California, to pursue higher education. Ketaki and her Iowa-native husband, Tony Hauber, settled in Elkader in 2017 to realize their dream of starting a business. Due to their business's nature, the couple's success story would not be possible without broadband services. "Fast and reliable internet from Alpine Communications has made my online business possible," shared Ketaki.

"I didn't know that (working remotely as an entrepreneur) was even possible when I moved here. Because Alpine existed, it made my job easier to connect through the internet," she explained. Ketaki is the owner and designer of Studio K8Ki. "I style and build brands, websites, apps, murals, and more. I also consult with businesses to help them operate in the online world." You may recognize Ketaki's work if you've seen the "Stay Wild" mural in downtown Elkader. The vibrant wall painting was part of an "art in the alley" community beautification project in 2019 and has been a popular backdrop for photos on social media ever since.

When asked how Ketaki uses technology in her business, she shared how it keeps her connected locally and globally. "Since I run

my business remotely from home, I communicate via email, video call, Slack. I share files via Dropbox. My project management service is also online so that I can send proposals, invoices, and take payments online." Studio K8Ki's primary marketing and customer relations channels are digital platforms." I use Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, and email marketing for my business," shared Ketaki.

The internet is a "huge part" that connects Ketaki to her clients from all over the world. She also contracts with a unique startup company, Scorbit, that is bringing pinball gaming into the internet era. Ketaki explains how broadband connections and web applications enables Scorbit's team of developers and designers to connect 24 hours a day, seven days a week. "Our team is spread around the world. Some are in the Bay Area, New York, France, Ukraine, UAE, Uzbekistan, and I'm here in Iowa. We all are working at our convenient times around the clock and sometimes working simultaneously on the same thing, but online."



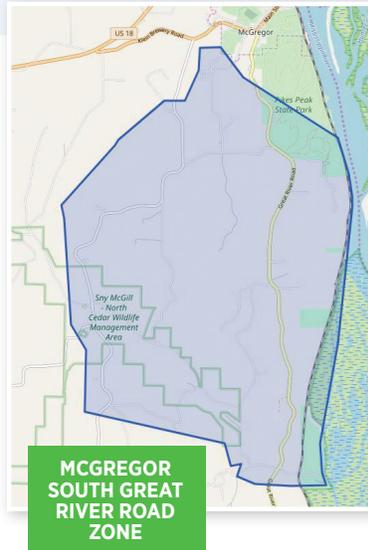
Ketaki and Tony appreciate the quality of life, close-knit community of the Midwest versus the Silicon Valley. "We had big dreams with a small-town budget, so we moved to Elkader to start our businesses." She continues, "We didn't know anyone in San Francisco, we didn't know our neighbors. Here, everyone waves, and we love that." There are trade-offs for living in rural Iowa, such as missing her favorite cuisines and public transportation. "The flexibility of working remotely gives me time actually to live life, too. Now we participate in more activities. Kayaking, hiking, and biking have been a huge part of my life since moving to Midwest," said Ketaki.

Technology keeps Ketaki's business thriving but also connects her to her family in India. "I communicate with them through the internet as well. We do video calls, share photos, send money, and I pay my student loan from India online. I also play online games with my friends. Technology has reduced the distance between us and keeps us connected."

With the rise of the "flexible economy" and the rapid growth of remote workers, Ketaki Poyekar-Hauber demonstrates how broadband technology is key to rural communities and entrepreneurs' success.



GREAT NEWS!



We believe connected communities become thriving communities. Together, we will work with you to build a growing and thriving region for the future. It all starts with the transformative power of rural broadband networks.

Visit join.alpinecom.net and show your interest in Alpine's 100% fiber-optic Fusion Network today.



Fusion Network Construction Update

Great news! Alpine Communications is in the final phase of the Guttenberg West Kale Zone fiber-to-the-home project. Crews are also wrapping up construction in the McGregor South Great River Road Zone. Alpine expects to launch services by the end of 2020, connecting over 250 locations access to 100% fiber-optic Fusion Network. Furthermore, Alpine high-speed Internet customers will experience significantly faster broadband speeds for no extra charge once they activate their fiber-optic connection.

Fusion Network activation is FREE for current customers. FusionTV will also be available to Fusion Network customers. If you live in the Guttenberg West Kale or McGregor South Great River Road Zones (pictured above) and would like more information about the Fusion Network, please call **(563) 245-4000** or visit join.alpinecom.net.

continued from page 1

Alpine Communications Receives \$2.89 Million Grant for Fiber Expansion Project

Chris Hopp, Alpine's general manager, described how the grant would impact the region. "Alpine Communications has invested millions of dollars in constructing the Fusion Network into our communities. The final phase is to take fiber to the sparsely populated areas of our network, also known as the "last mile." The investment and time to connect customers to fiber are significantly more per customer in rural areas than in town. We are grateful for the OCIO's grant to help carry the burden of this investment. We believe access to fiber-optic broadband enables our area to thrive now and far into the future."

Fiber-to-the-home construction commenced in September 2020, and Alpine Communications with their contractors will complete the project by July 2020. More than 350 locations in the most remote parts of Alpine's exchanges are part of the project.

Alpine Communications promises personal, timely, reliable service from people who live here. When you choose us, we all thrive. Visit <https://join.alpinecom.net> to follow the progress as Alpine Communications expands the 100% fiber-optic Fusion Network to new neighborhoods.

*The project was supported by federal funds made available through the CARES Act and State of Iowa, acting by and through the Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO). Points of view expressed herein are those of the author or speaker and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the United States Government or State of Iowa or endorsement of the project.

Clayton County 4-H and FFA Achievement Show Leverages Broadband to Thrive Despite Pandemic Woes

Clayton County ISU Extension and Outreach had a few worries as they pivoted from the traditional county fair to an Achievement Show format in August 2020 – but internet connectivity was not one of them. As they have done for previous county fairs, the organization turned to Alpine Communications for broadband and telephone services for quality connections. (245-2794)

Holly Loan, Clayton County Extension Director, shared why Alpine Communications broadband services are integral to the event's success. "Clayton County Extension and Outreach Staff and volunteers use broadband to check-in 4-H and FFA projects, create show programs and record awards. Without internet access, we would not be able to run our event from the fairgrounds. We can have many people working with us in our internet-based system to make the event a success. We are even able to start printing show programs at our office from the fairgrounds!"

Holly worked with Alpine's broadband techs to ensure WiFi service was available for the staff to use throughout the Clayton County Fairgrounds, including the show ring, Barn A office, and the Exhibit Hall for exhibit judging and livestock check-ins. Despite the challenges that COVID-19 presented to Clayton County ISU Extension and Outreach, the show attracted over 1,700 exhibits for the six-day competition in National, Iowa.

As the "Official Communications Provider" to the Clayton County Fair for over 20 years, the Alpine team had the facilities, equipment, and expertise to help the staff and participants connect the way they wanted to.

The support of Clayton County 4-H extends beyond the annual fair for Alpine Communications. Loan shared why she values connecting with a local company that is invested in the community. "We enjoy all of the support Alpine gives Clayton County Extension and Outreach. They installed a new phone system in our office that has worked well. They have provided our internet access at the fair for five years, which allowed us to transition and use our



Pictured are: Holly Loan, Peggy Schilling, Michelle Moser, Margo Friedlein, Tammy Muller

web-based program to more efficiently run our event at the fairgrounds," explained Holly.

She continued, "Alpine Communications has been accommodating whenever we have needed assistance at our office or the fairgrounds."

Coordinators, community members, 4-H clubs, FFA chapters, and families devote countless hours of preparation to Clayton County ISU Extension and Outreach events throughout the year. Alpine believes agriculture and youth programs thrive with connectivity. **How can Alpine Communications help you succeed?**



Alpine Communications has been accommodating whenever we have needed assistance at our office or the fairgrounds."

- HOLLY LOAN,
Clayton County Extension Director





CONNECT WITH US:

923 Humphrey St.
PO Box 1008
Elkader, Iowa 52043

Hours: 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

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

Technical Support:

1-888-264-2908

SecureIT Tech Support:

1-877-373-3320



Choosing the Best Location for Your Router

To get the best performance from your WiFi network, one of the most important things to do is pick the optimal location in your home for your router. This is because the wrong location can sometimes cause the internet connection to fail or drop intermittently.

FOLLOW THESE GUIDELINES TO HELP YOU FIND THE RIGHT SPOT:

- **Install your router in a central location.** Routers send the signal out in all directions, so if it's left in the corner of your home, a significant percentage of your wireless coverage is being sent outside. It's best to move the router to a central location to optimize the signal.
- **Avoid physical obstructions.** Plaster or brick walls tend to have the most negative impact, but any obstruction, including cabinets and furniture, weaken the signal to some degree.
- **Go high.** Routers tend to spread signal downward, so it's best to mount the router as high as possible to maximize coverage. Try placing it on an upper shelf or mounting it on the wall in an inconspicuous place. (252-2220)
- **Avoid reflective surfaces.** Some WiFi signals bounce off windows, mirrors, metal file cabinets, and stainless steel countertops, lessening both network range and performance.
- **Avoid installing the router near appliances that send wireless signals.** Keep the router at least three feet away from any appliance that sends wireless signals in the same 2.4 GHz frequency range. These include microwave ovens, cordless telephones, baby monitors, and home automation equipment. Appliances that transmit in this frequency range are most likely to generate WiFi interference.
- **Don't settle prematurely on a location.** Try placing your router in several different promising locations and note the internet performance in each. While this trial-and-error method may not be the most scientific way to find a good spot, it can end up being an effective one.

Article Courtesy of Cornerstone Group



If you'd like help setting up and managing your home's WiFi network, call **563-245-4444** and ask us about **Alpine WiFi Connect**, available for just **\$5.00 per month for a limited time.**



*Limited time offer through December 31, 2020. Offer valid for current customers with residential internet service. After 6 months, the regular rate for Alpine WiFi Connect for Gold or Platinum subscribers is \$9.95 per month. 12-month agreement required.