SIGNAL

ONLINE LEARNING
IS SMART AT ANY AGE

DISAPPEARING
PHOTOS ARE JUST
THE START WITH
SNAPCHAT

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NEW INTERNET SERVICE
FOR ROCK COUNTY

SIGNAL

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USING AN OUTDATED WIRELESS ROUTER IS LIKE DRIVING AN OLD RUSTY TRUCK

You might get where you want to go, but it will be a rough trip. Alliance Internet provides a fast connection over fiber optics. But if you're using an outdated router, you're in for a rough ride. It's time for an upgrade if your router is more than 3-4 years old.

Alliance's new Router Support Plan provides all this for just $7.95/month:

• **Exclusive AC wireless router:** Alliance uses a high-grade router not available in retail stores. Its dual-band design supports fast download speeds and provides wide coverage.

• **Free, easy installation:** We'll help connect your devices to your new router when we deliver it.

• **Free, convenient tech support:** Just call if you have WiFi issues. Using remote assistance tools, we can usually fix the problem without having to make an on-site visit.

• **More security:** We'll update your router's software to the latest security enhancements, giving you extra protection from hackers. We'll also secure your router to block neighbors from stealing your Internet connection.

• **BONUS:** Should you ever need help with your router that requires another visit, you'll receive top priority as a Router Support Plan customer and only be charged $25 for on-site assistance.

Make your Internet experience hassle-free and get the Router Support Plan today.

Dial 611 from any phone with Alliance service or call (605) 582-6311 from your cell phone.

ALLIANCE
COMMUNICATIONS™

Alliance is offering a dual-band AC router that supports 2.4 GHz and 5.0 GHz. This router remains the property of Alliance Communications. If you disconnect services, you must return the router or you will be billed $200. This router is not available in retail stores.

ONLINE LEARNING IS SMART AT ANY AGE

Study these notes on 32 great educational sites

"Live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if you were to live forever." This inspiring quote from Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) points to the inherent value of learning throughout our lifetimes. While we sometimes associate learning with our school years spent in classrooms, in reality, most people are lifelong learners who gain skills and knowledge from a variety of sources.

Pew Research Center recently released results from a study about lifelong learning. The findings include the following:

- 73 percent of adults consider themselves lifelong learners.
- 74 percent of adults are personal learners (those who participate in activities to advance knowledge about something that personally interests them).
- 63 percent of working adults are professional learners (those who have received training to improve their job skills).[1]

The study reveals that people get a wide variety of benefits from both personal and professional learning including feeling more capable and well-rounded, making new friends, and expanding their professional networks. It also shows that digital technology plays a notable role in educational endeavors.

Though much learning still takes place in physical locations, there are many sources to help learners of any age pursue an almost endless variety of topics online. Here, we've compiled a collection of some of the top resources. For example, check out Funbrain, which makes learning fun for kids with entertaining online games. Stop by TEDEd to find fascinating videos for quick learning sessions. Or explore Khan Academy, with classes for learners at all stages of life.

In addition to these great educational sites, this article also covers study tools, places to explore new careers, and helpful information about new learning trends. We hope you'll learn something just by reading the following pages. (Don't worry. There's no quiz at the end!)

[1]*John B. Horrigan, Pew Research Center, "Lifelong Learning and Technology," http://www.pewinternet.org/2016/03/22/lifelong-learning-and-technology/.*

Videos, Games, and Puzzles Make Learning Fun for Kids

Anything that seems like play is fun for kids — even if they end up learning something along the way. These sites provide creative activities to help kids learn the three Rs and so much more.

Funbrain
funbrain.com

Small children can play while they learn with games designed to teach math, reading, and logic skills; books that parents and kids can read together; and other education-based activities. Resources are colorful and feature animals and other characters that appeal to young learners.

ABCYa
abcya.com

Using games and apps, this award-winning grade-based site offers hundreds of engaging educational activities for children. Fun categories include letters, numbers, holidays, skills, and strategy. Kids can try the Avian Alphabet, Fraction Fling, Halloween Word Search, or Keyboard Invasion.

e-learning for kids
e-learningforkids.org

This site is intended to supplement the learning kids do in school. Grade-appropriate topics include math, science, reading, computer skills, health, and language arts, as well as life skills like choosing a career and dealing with bullying.

Education.com
education.com

Parents and teachers can narrow down the many game choices here by choosing grade, subject, and type of activity. Kids can learn about the math topics of addition, counting, geometry, sorting, patterns, and numbers, or the language topics of alphabet, spelling, and phonics. Colorful graphics and kid-friendly narration make learning more fun.

STEM Skills are Critical for the Next Generation

While the number of jobs in science, technology, engineering, and math (known in the education field as STEM) is increasing, fewer students are learning the critical skills needed to fill them. This situation has become so dire that President Obama set clear goals for improving STEM education in the U.S. Here are a few resources to help:

NASA for Students
nasa.gov/audience/forstudents/index.html
Information and activities to help kids of all ages learn about aeronautics and space.

eGFI
egfi-k12.org
Using a fun interface, this site helps readers understand actual careers in STEM fields.

Kinetic City
kineticcity.com
This site offers fun science experiments, games, activities, challenges, and more.

Exploratorium
exploratorium.edu/explore
The "explore" section of the Exploratorium Museum website lists science-related activities, apps, blogs, videos, and websites.

Engineer Your Life
engineeryourlife.org
Women are underrepresented in STEM jobs, so this site helps high school girls explore careers in these fields.
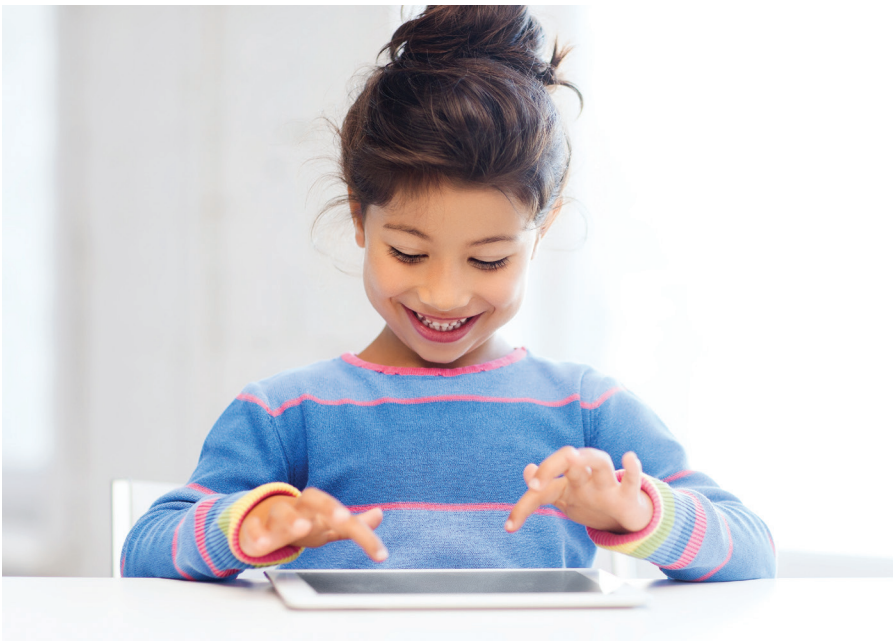
Many Roads Can Lead to College Success

College students now have many options for whether or how to earn their degree, and there are just as many resources to help. Whether you're going the traditional site-based route, taking an online direction, or a combination of the two, these sites can help you reach your higher education goals.

Best Online Bachelor's Programs
usnews.com/education/online-education/bachelors/rankings?int=999208
This comprehensive list of the best online education programs comes from a respected source—*U.S. News and World Report*—which has been putting out similar rankings for traditional degree programs for many years. Check to see where your selected school falls or start your search here.

Saylor.org
saylor.org
Saylor Academy is an online learning site with courses available in many areas of study including business administration, professional development, and sociology. The site is not meant to offer degrees, but enables you to work at your own pace to supplement a degree program.

Rate My Professors
ratemyprofessors.com
Getting to know your prospective professors is key to a good education. This site makes it easy to find instructors you're considering taking classes from or to rate them yourself. Rankings include helpfulness, clarity, and easiness. Search by school or professor name.

StudyStack
Studystack.com
Few learning tools are as tried and true as flashcards, and this site lets you use existing decks on a variety of subjects, or create your own. The interface is easy and you can study from anywhere with the StudyStack app. To begin, just create a free account and start creating cards immediately.

The Rise of Gamification

"Gamification" is the use of game-like elements — such as leaderboards, badges, trophies, point systems, and levels — in other areas of life. These elements are showing up in such fields as business and medicine. Educators at all levels are also quickly learning how they can be used to increase student engagement and motivation. Of course, these elements are easily incorporated into online environments but they can be used offline as well.

Instructors can use gamification to encourage slower learners, provide immediate feedback, or simply make the learning process more fun. For example, an instructor could set up a way for students to go through an online learning module, picking up points and bonuses, leveling up, and climbing the leaderboard along the way. A similar concept can be used to encourage behaviors that aren't strictly academic such as attendance, completing homework, collaboration, or participating in class. Early studies show that gamification can be highly effective, depending on how it's used and who's using it.

Adding Knowledge to Wisdom: Learning Later in Life

As we age, we develop many skills that make us great students and improve our ability to learn — patience, time to spare, and not being distracted as much by careers or kids. Check out the sites below to start the next phase of your educational journey.

Education for Senior Citizens
seniorresource.com/senioreducation.htm
One of the first steps in thinking about education during your senior years is finding out where you can go. This site provides a listing of opportunities in each state and notes that some states offer tuition waivers and discounts based on age and number of credits.

Free Online Courses
seniorplanet.org/learn-all-you-can-free-online-courses
Senior Planet has compiled a list of some of the most interesting online courses for seniors. They include topics such as art, finance, design, and psychology. Not challenging enough? How about "String Theory, Black Holes and the Fundamental Laws of Nature" from Harvard University?

AARP
aarp.org
Of course, the organization devoted to seniors has something to say about seniors and education. Search the site for "higher education," and you'll find a number of articles devoted to learning in later years. Information includes discussion of the costs, the benefits, and the meaning of "third stage education."

OEDb
oedb.org
This site enables learners to explore over 10,000 free online classes in the arts, business, education, math, science, and more. Class materials come from well-known institutions like the University of Michigan and Johns Hopkins University. OEDb encourages visitors to prepare for new careers or simply learn something new.

Lots of Benefits to Lifelong Learning

Education is important for people of any age, but especially for seniors. Learning can help you live more fully and comfortably in these ways:

- **Personal satisfaction.** As a senior, you likely have more time to learn and can add to your skills and accomplishments by taking a single class or pursuing a degree.

- **Memory improvement.** Taking part in educational opportunities helps you activate your mind to stay sharp and focused.

- **Social engagement.** Education involves a social component that can benefit you. Just as in your college years, classes can be a great place to make friends.

- **Physical fitness.** How about taking a hiking or swimming class? These types of physical activities are great for staying healthy.

- **Self-expression.** Learning a creative skill you've always wanted to explore can be rewarding and fulfilling. Consider learning how to play the piano, paint, write, sing, or dance.

- **Self-confidence.** Perhaps you made it into your senior years without finishing a college degree. Now's your chance to graduate and validate your abilities.

Who knows? Learning may be the fountain of youth. If not, it's still fun to jump in and make a splash.

Disappearing Photos are Just the Start with Snapchat

This fun app offers a multimedia chat experience

If you're not yet familiar with the social media app Snapchat, it's likely you soon will be. Experts say Snapchat has reached a tipping point that will propel it from a fringe app used primarily by millennials to a standard app used by the culture at large. A recent *Wired* article states, "Snapchat is on the verge of its 'mom moment,' the point at which a social media platform tips from niche network to mainstream sensation and becomes the type of thing your mother will start using."[1]

What is Snapchat?

Snapchat is like other social media apps in that it allows you to share in-the-moment photos and videos, mixed with other media. But it differs because with Snapchat, these shared bits are meant to disappear upon viewing. When you send a "snap," you set the time it will remain for the receiver to view it—up to just 10 seconds.

However, there are exceptions to this rule. One feature allows you to create "stories," which are multiple videos and photos strung together to create a longer narrative; upon receipt, they last for 24 hours. In addition, it's possible to take a screen shot of a snap sent by a friend and store it in your phone, or to use other workarounds to save it. So, Snapchat users who might feel safer

Nearly **9** photos per second are shared on Snapchat.[6]

sending a risky photo or items they don't want to last forever online should use caution.

Why It's Fun

Snapchat users enjoy the informal experience of sharing small moments from their day or life that might not be appropriate within other apps. For example, those "what I had for breakfast" photos may get eye rolls from your Facebook friends, but are perfectly fine and fun on Snapchat, especially when you embellish them with drawings, emojis, and text. The app includes a messaging function, so you can also share random thoughts, such as, "Can't sleep!" Like Snapchat photos and videos, these messages are designed to disappear after just a few moments.

18%
of all U.S. social media users use Snapchat.[6]

A study conducted by researchers at the University of Washington and Seattle Pacific University found that users aren't necessarily bothered by the potential for snaps being saved by others, because they don't use Snapchat to share sensitive content. Rather, the app is seen as more of a creative outlet, particularly with the ability to draw on photos. The most common types of content study respondents reported sending via Snapchat were "funny things," "myself," "people," and "what I'm up to."[2]

Behind the Snaps

Snapchat was started by Evan Spiegel, Reggie Brown, and Bobby Murphy, who met as students at Stanford University. The three launched Snapchat, then known as Pictaboo, in 2011. The same year, the name was changed to Snapchat, and the app began to take off, with 1,000 users by the end of the year and 100,000 users just a few months later. In 2012, the app launched on Android and started allowing video snaps. By 2013, users were sending 150 million snaps per day, and Snapchat launched the Stories feature. In 2014, the app added messaging and video chat, and was cited by comScore as the third most popular social app among millennials.[3] As of early 2016, Snapchat has grown to 100 million daily users and is valued at $16 billion.[4]

From 2014 to 2015, Snapchat's revenue jumped from $3 million to $50 million.[6]

The media-sharing app has historically been viewed as a trend that will quickly die out, as have other social media sites in the past. However, according to investment advice site The Motley Fool, Snapchat users view 7 billion videos per day, which approaches the 8 billion per day viewed on Facebook. This is especially impressive considering that Snapchat is only a mobile application, with no desktop functionality, and that the number of daily active users on Snapchat is just a fraction of Facebook's.[5]

[1]Source: wired.com/2016/01/hey-millennials-your-mom-is-about-to-be-on-snapchat
[2]Source: homes.cs.washington.edu/~yoshi/papers/snapchat-FC2014.pdf
[3]Source: techcrunch.com/gallery/a-brief-history-of-snapchat
[4]Source: fortune.com/2016/01/12/snapchat-facebook-video-views
[5]Source: fool.com/investing/general/2016/01/17/snapchats-threat-to-facebook-in-1-impressive-numbe.aspx
[6]Source: expandedramblings.com/index.php/snapchat-statistics

Talking to Teens About Snapchat

The minimum age for using Snapchat is 13 and, since its inception, the app has been very popular among teens. As you do with all new things in your children's lives, talk to your kids about how they use the app and warn them against its potential harm.

Snapchat isn't known for the bullying that takes place on other social media sites, but that doesn't mean it couldn't happen. Kids should be made aware of this and encouraged to tell a trusted adult if it occurs. Other dangers include: hacking if the teen reveals their password, receiving inappropriate snaps from strangers, and snaps the teen sends being saved and used against them.

The same Internet safety rules that apply to other sites are also relevant here:

- Treat others respectfully.
- Choose your friends carefully.
- Manage your privacy settings.
- Don't share anything you wouldn't want your friends, teachers, parents, or future employers to see.
- Keep your password private.

The good news is that bad stuff is the exception. Talk with your kids about Snapchat and then let them snap away.

Local Networks Want to Increase Your Cable TV Bill

Alliance Communications explains the challenges and offers options

By Ross Petrick,
General Manager

As fall approaches, I want to call attention to something that will likely cause pocketbook pain when snow hits the ground.

What is Retransmission Consent?

Every three years, the 1992 Cable TV Act requires cable and satellite companies to receive permission from local broadcasters to retransmit their signals to customers. We want to provide you with advanced notice that in a few months, Alliance Communications will be negotiating with four local broadcasters (KELO-CBS, KSFY-ABC, KCAU-ABC and KDLT-NBC) over the future cost of retransmission fees.

Customers in South Dakota and Minnesota already pay $11.21/month in retransmission fees for their local channels, while those in Iowa pay $12.51/month. If history repeats itself and industry analysts' predictions are correct, broadcasters will be asking you to pay even more. Frankly, we think you already pay WAY too much for these channels, which are available for free over the airwaves.

Who Owns KELO, KSFY, KCAU and KDLT?

Large media companies own the local channels. Nexstar Media Group, which owns KELO-CBS and KCAU-ABC, operates 170 stations across the county, reaches 38.7 percent of U.S. households, and is estimated to earn $2.3+ billion in pro-forma revenue. Gray Media, based in Atlanta, Ga., owns KSFY-ABC and Red River Broadcasting in Fargo, N.D., owns KDLT-NBC. While retransmission revenue should be used to improve local content, those dollars often go back to the parent company and their stockholders.

### Why Do I Have to Pay for Channels That I Can Get for Free With an Antenna?

TV stations use the public's airwaves, which they get at NO cost through the federal government as a gift from taxpayers like you. Anyone with an HD antenna can pull in local channels for free if they're within range of the broadcast tower.

To earn goodwill from viewers in 2015, KELO promoted free TV by giving away

free HD antennas to those looking for relief from high TV bills. It's ironic that local broadcasters promote free TV, yet they charge viewers who don't use an antenna. In fact by charging retransmission fees, they're a top culprit in creating expensive TV bills.

Local broadcasters began demanding retransmission fees in 2009. Prior to that time, Alliance Cable TV customers weren't charged anything to receive local channels, but now broadcasters have decided to take full advantage of this regulation-backed revenue-generating opportunity. Consumers pay billions of dollars in retransmission fees every year. Have you seen enough improvements in local broadcasters' services, quality or content to justify those fees?

Rise of Retransmission Fees
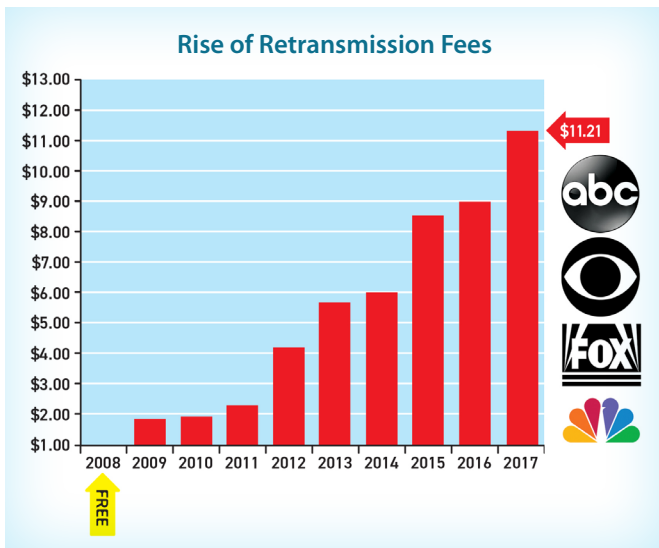
Why Do Blackouts Happen?
Broadcasters often have a take-it-or-leave-it attitude during negotiations, and they will put you in the middle of this fight. During contract renewals, broadcasters typically want 1) drastically higher fees, and 2) heavy restrictions on consumer choice. We simply want broadcasters to charge fair rates, and we want them to allow to you purchase only the channels you want.

If we don't agree to their demands, however, broadcasters will initiate a blackout. They will require Alliance to remove their channels from your lineup, preventing you from viewing their programming. This is designed to get you angry, which broadcasters hope will pressure us into accepting their demands.

So Why Haven't Retransmission Rules Been Updated?
Broadcasters have lobbied hard to keep current Retransmission

Consent rules in place because it's an easy way for them to generate quick cash. Despite tremendous innovation in how consumers watch video, the rules governing the video marketplace haven't changed since 1992. Congress and the FCC made some attempts to address this issue in recent years, but they haven't made any changes that benefit consumers.

What's Next?
Alliance Communications has been advocating for local choice and à la carte programming for some time now. Regulations and contracts, however, prevent us from giving you flexibility with your programming. I hope Congress and the FCC will step in and provide some relief during our next round of negotiations.

Alliance Communications wants to reach a reasonable agreement with KELO-CBS, KSFY-ABC, KCAU-ABC and KDLT-NBC prior to the end of the year. We will update you as this process continues, and we will work diligently on your behalf to keep costs down. Because of these broadcasters' national reach and ownership platform, Alliance is even considering joining a national group to negotiate these fees.

If you're looking for alternative viewing options, you might want to consider an over-the-air HD antenna. Alliance also offers the Limited Choice package, which contains just the local networks and a few other channels for $9.95/month plus the retransmission fee of $11.21 in South Dakota and Minnesota and $12.51 in Iowa. In addition, you can watch many TV shows on Internet streaming services. We can help you select the right Internet package to ensure you have an enjoyable viewing experience. We're also researching options for offering you programming choices with or without local broadcast channels.

Stay tuned. We appreciate your business, and we'll keep you updated over the next few months.
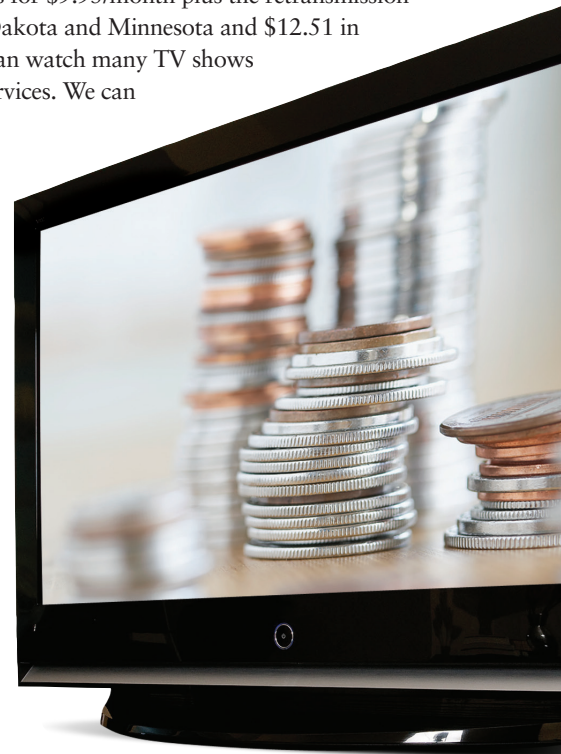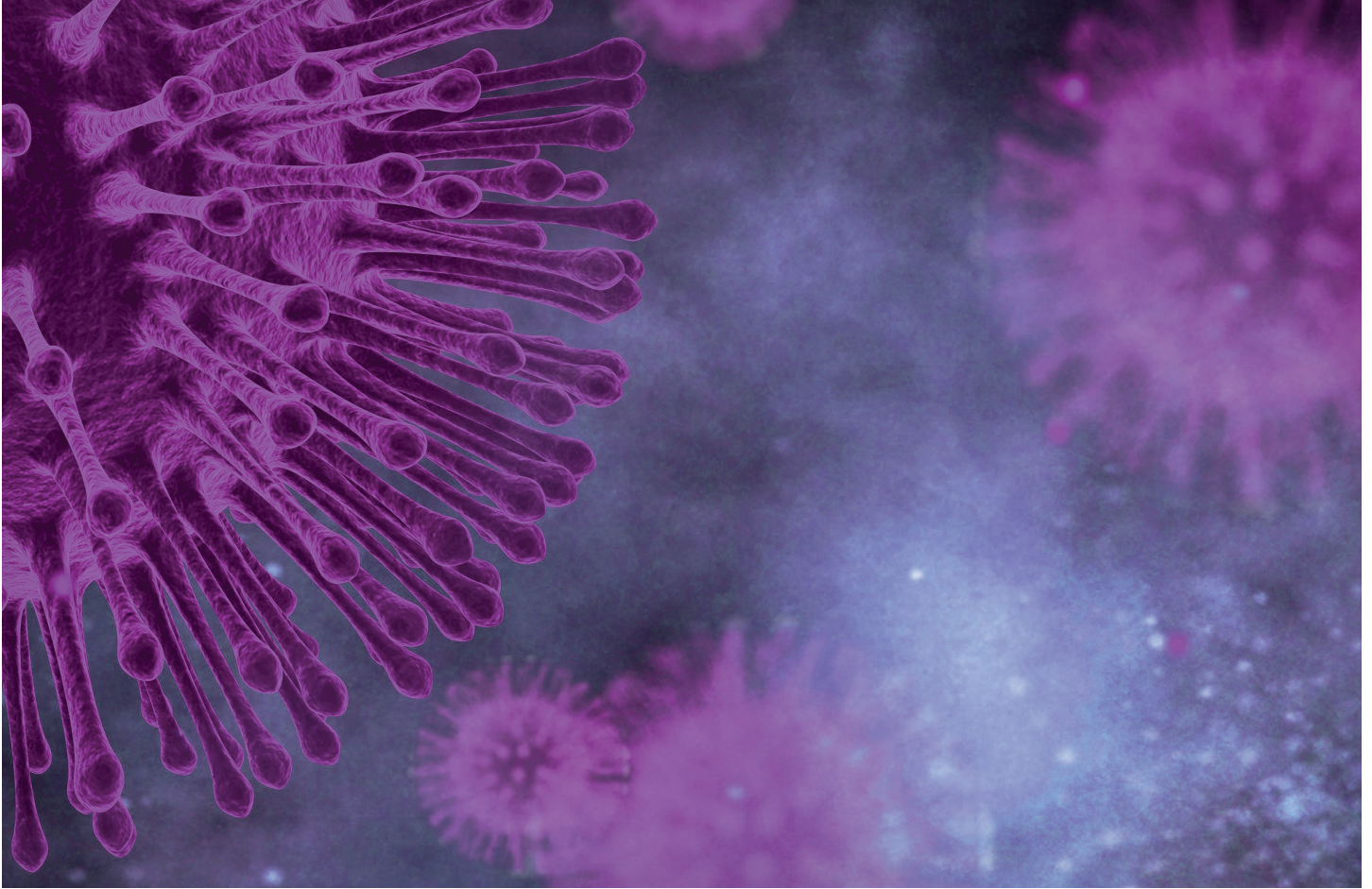
Watch Out for Computer Viruses

These infections can be sneaky and have serious consequences

Computer viruses can infect your computer in the blink of an eye, and many can do some serious damage to your system. Hackers are creative criminals, and they're constantly releasing more sophisticated viruses designed to spread to your connections and steal your information.

To keep your computer healthy and your information safe, watch out for these nine warning signs:

1. Strange and frequent pop-ups
Today's internet browsers are designed to block annoying pop-up ads. If you're still seeing them, your browser might not be configured properly. But if you're getting bombarded by them, this may be a sign that your computer is infected by a virus.

Other pop-ups that may be symptoms of a virus are unusual alerts, ads that advertise anti-virus products, or pop-ups that appear even when your browser is closed. Whatever you do, don't click on them. They'll often download more malware onto your computer.

2. Sluggish performance
If certain actions—such as opening a program or file, or browsing your documents folders—take a lot longer than usual, your computer may have a virus. Some viruses multiply your files and overcrowd your disk space, causing your system to slow down. Run an anti-virus scan to check.

3. Messages you didn't send
If a friend notifies you that they received a fishy email, instant message or social media message from you, consider it a wake-up call. Computer viruses are designed to spread and infect as many computers as possible, so they often use your own electronic communication systems to extend their reach.

4. Lockdown warning
This might be the scariest virus symptom you'll ever see: a pop-up message saying you're locked out of your computer. This is commonly called ransomware. The virus blocks your programs from running or encrypts your files so you can't access them, and then tells you to send money (a ransom) to unlock your system. Paying the scammer will not usually fix the problem, so put your checkbook away and contact an IT professional for help.

5. Frozen or crashing computer
If your computer freezes or crashes spontaneously, it might mean you need to clean up your hard disk. Or, it may be a symptom of a virus, especially if this happens in conjunction with other symptoms listed here.

6. Unusually slow startup
If your computer takes forever to boot up and you've done all the usual troubleshooting such as reducing the number of programs that launch at startup, it may be a symptom of an infection.

7. Missing files
If programs that worked recently suddenly stop working, you get a warning that says "critical file is missing" when you try to open a program, or you notice that some of your personal files (documents, pictures, etc.) have gone missing, pay attention. Some viruses will delete computer files.

8. Strange files on your computer
If you notice new files or programs you don't recognize on your computer, this can also be a sign of a computer virus. Same goes for personal files that have duplicated themselves.

9. Unusual error messages
Real error messages will tell you what to do to fix the problem or provide an error code that will help you troubleshoot. If you are seeing new error messages that are poorly written and don't make sense, don't click on them. Your computer may be infected, and clicking on the message could cause more problems.

How to Help Prevent and Fix Computer Viruses

Keep your anti-virus program up-to-date.
A good anti-virus program is your first line of defense against computer viruses. If you don't have anti-virus software running on your computer right now, download it immediately.

Anti-virus software companies update their programs constantly. But if you don't keep your anti-virus software updated on your computer, it can't do its job.

Run an anti-virus scan.
If you suspect that your computer might be infected with a virus, first make sure that your anti-virus software is up to date, then run a thorough scan. This should catch most viruses and quarantine the infected files.

Most anti-virus software programs give you the option to schedule regular scans that will run in the background. Schedule it to run at least once a week, but preferably more often. If you're worried about the scan slowing down your system, schedule it to run at a time you're not usually working on your computer.

Secure your information and wireless connection.
Make sure you have a strong password for every online account. A strong password contains a combination of letters, numbers and symbols, and is unrelated to your personal information. Secure your home Wi-Fi network with a strong password, too, so hackers can't access your home Internet connection.

Change your account password.
If you think one of your accounts has been hacked, go directly to the company's website and change your password.

Hackers sometimes send "phishing" emails saying that your account has been compromised. Some of those phony emails are easy to spot, but some of them look legitimate. As a rule of thumb, if you get an email saying that your account has been compromised, don't click on any links within that email. Go directly to the website or program where your account is located.

Call in the professionals.
When you've tried all the basic troubleshooting steps, but you think your computer is still infected with a virus, it's time to call in professional tech support. If you don't know whom to call, we can provide you with some names, or you can visit your local computer store.

Rock County has abundant quantities of quartzite, one of the hardest stones in the world, and required special boring equipment.

Alliance buried 531 miles of fiber-optic cable to roughly 1,100 residences in 2016. The total project cost $12.5 million, and the cost of bringing fiber to each customer was approximately $11,500.

New Internet Service Boosts Quality of Life in Rock County

Benefits are seen for agriculture, education, health care and more

Residents in portions of Rock County have experienced a dramatic increase in quality of life following a broadband initiative that brought high-speed Internet to underserved areas.

"If you would have told me this much technology would come to a rural setting, I never would have believed it a few years ago," said Jim Veldkamp during a tour of his farming facility. "We use it every day. I can't imagine the farm functioning without it. It's not a luxury, it's a necessity."

Prior to the fiber-optic expansion, businesses and residents relied on Internet services that were slow, expensive or had frequent outages. A lack of fast, reliable broadband service was strangling the county's economic growth potential and was limiting educational opportunities.

In 2013 county officials contacted Alliance, which was already serving the Hills and Steen communities, about expanding its fiber-optic network to additional areas.

Broadening Alliance's network became financially feasible after the company received a $5 million Border-to-Border State Grant and a $1 million Rock County grant. Alliance began burying 531 miles of fiber-optic cable to roughly 1,100 residences in 2016.

General Manager Ross Petrick, right, meets with Rock County Commissioners Jody Reisch and Stan Williamson in spring 2016 to finalize paperwork prior to construction of Rock County's new broadband network.

Chief Financial Officer Kari Flanagan said Alliance and the county had to overcome significant obstacles to expand service throughout Rock County. The total project cost $12.5 million, and the cost of bringing fiber to each customer was approximately $11,500. Since the average monthly customer bill is $100, it would have taken Alliance 9.5 years to recoup the investment if not for the grants, she said.

"No company would've been able to do this without grant funds from Minnesota DEED (Department of Education and Economic Development) and Rock County," Flanagan said.

The landscape contributed to the high cost. "They call it Rock County for a reason," said Andy Hulscher, Alliance's technical equipment supervisor.

Named for its Sioux Quartzite outcroppings and deep bedrock, the Rock County fiber deployment required special boring bits because quartzite is one of the hardest stones in the world. Contractors broke many expensive bits during plowing. Still, in this or other rural projects, distance plays the most significant role in cost. Rock County customers can be miles apart versus in a city where hundreds of customers may live within a mile.

Installations at homes and businesses began in April 2016 and concluded this summer. Jim Veldkamp's crop and pork production facility in Rosedell Township near Jasper was one of the first locations to receive service. A fiber-optic line ties together his home, feed mill and machine shop.

In the feed mill, computers measure almost 80 tons of feed per week used in his multiple wean-to-finish confinement barns. The improved Internet connection gives Veldkamp the ability to instantly communicate with veterinarians and measure feed ingredients down to the ounce.

Brad Bergman, general manager of Skattum Confinement Systems in rural Luverne, said a reliable Internet connection also helps farmers receive early warning notifications in confinement barns. Maintaining the correct temperature in a hog confinement is critical, he said.

Alliance technicians Tom Chase, Dave Wirkus and Andy Hulscher discuss plans for installing a building for housing electronic equipment.

"If the controller goes down, pigs can suffocate," Bergman said.

Nighttime failures are the most common, he said, and with a reliable Internet connection, producers receive early notifications that temperatures are rising to dangerous levels in a specific barn.

"From a cell phone, you can change what is happening in a barn," Bergman said.

In a letter to state and county officials, Dr. Richard Morgan with Sanford Luverne Clinic said broadband Internet improved his profession. He said patient charts were computerized a decade ago, and on average a Minnesota family physician spends more than two hours a day updating patient charts. Previously his residence was served by a dial-up Internet service and later by three different wireless providers.

"I was unable to do any clinic work from home," Morgan wrote.

With Alliance's broadband service, Morgan said more local physicians can continue working at home after clinic hours.

"Allowing us to work from home gives us more flexibility in the quest for that elusive work/family balance," Morgan wrote.

Radio station manager Steve Graphenteen said broadband has improved his ability to broadcast programming in an efficient and cost-effective manner. Bills from his wireless provider reached as high as $2,000 each month.

"Now we pay $85 a month and it's three to five times faster," Graphenteen said.

Hill-Beaver Creek Public Schools Superintendent Todd Holthaus said the school waited to launch its one-to-one computer initiative for 370 students in grades 3-12 until the fiber-optic project was completed. Prior to Alliance's network

Jim Veldkamp of rural Jasper talks about how broadband Internet service has made his farming operation more efficient.

Manager Steve Graphenteen says his radio station drastically reduced its monthly bill after switching from a wireless Internet provider to Alliance's fiber-optic service.

expansion, only students in Hills and Steen had access to fast Internet, while those in Beaver Creek had limited options.

"We were living a world of haves and have nots," Holthaus said. "We had families that didn't have Internet access. Even if they wanted to, they couldn't get the access."

Now all families in the Hills Beaver Creek School District have the option of connecting to reliable Internet.

Alliance's business motto *Wired Differently* is more than just a marketing tagline, said Alliance's CFO Kari Flanagan in a presentation to the State of Minnesota's Broadband Taskforce.

"We really, truly believe we are wired differently," she said. "We want to bring the best service we can to these customers."

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$30 – Ben and Elaine Kringen

$30 – Beach United Methodist Church of Howard

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