



# The Line

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FROM HILL COUNTRY TELEPHONE COOPERATIVE, INC.

## HILL COUNTRY TELEPHONE RECEIVES \$12.2 MILLION GRANT/LOAN

Hill Country Telephone Cooperative, Inc. (Hill Country) is proud to announce that they are the recipient of a \$12.2 million Rural Utilities Service (RUS) Broadband Initiatives Program (BIP) Grant/Loan.

Funded under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (Recovery Act) which was signed into law in February 2009, RUS and the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) announced 43 awards totaling \$518 million. These funds will be used for new broadband infrastructure projects in 27 states and Native American tribal areas. An additional

\$34.1 million in private investment will also be committed to these projects.

Intended to modernize our nation's infrastructure so that our country can thrive in the 21st century, the Recovery Act investments in broadband are expected to create tens of thousands of jobs in the near term and expand economic development and job opportunities in communities that would otherwise be left behind in the new knowledge-based economy, providing a platform for rural economic growth for years to come.

The \$12.2 million award will allow Hill Country to extend broadband service to remaining portions of its

service area where broadband is currently unavailable with speeds of up to 20 Mbps over copper and up to 100 Mbps over fiber. Delbert Wilson, General Manager of Hill Country Telephone, stated, "We are excited about the new opportunities that the RUS BIP Grant will bring to the Hill Country Telephone service area and its subscribers. New construction via the grant will provide access to broadband for virtually 100 percent of the Cooperative's service area. At Hill Country Telephone we believe broadband is the key to future rural economic development of our area."

## U. S. REPRESENTATIVE LAMAR SMITH VISITS HILL COUNTRY



U. S. Representative Lamar Smith visited with Staff members of Hill Country Telephone Cooperative, Inc. (Hill Country) at the Headquarters Office in Ingram on October 15, sharing his positions on the new health care bill, the economy, border security and the National Broadband Plan (NBP). Representative Smith personally commended Hill Country General Manager Delbert Wilson on his testimony before the U. S. Senate on Universal Service Funding Mechanisms and the effects of the NBP on rural telephone cooperatives and companies. Pictured (left to right) are Wilson and Representative Smith.

## BOARD AUTHORIZES RELEASE OF CAPITAL CREDITS

### IT TRULY PAYS TO BE A MEMBER OF HILL COUNTRY TELEPHONE!

Capital credits are probably one of the most misunderstood aspects of cooperatives, but they are also one of the most distinctive differences between member-owned and investor-owned businesses. As a Hill Country Telephone Cooperative consumer, you not only receive telecommunications services and a say in how your cooperative is governed, but you also receive a return on your investment (the money you pay for service) in the form of capital credits.

As a nonprofit organization, any money left over after paying all expenses in a given year is credited to each member's capital credit account, according to the amount the consumer purchased in that year. However, capital credits are not in the form of available cash. They represent member equity or ownership in the form of hard

assets (i.e., plant infrastructure, trucks, equipment and buildings) that provide your telecommunications service. Since this money is reinvested into the telecommunications system, these amounts are not immediately available for payment to you, and cannot be applied to your telephone bill. However, members benefit because their cooperative has to borrow less money which means less interest on operating loans that ultimately would result in increased telecommunications rates.

Reviewed each year by the Hill Country Telephone Cooperative Board of Directors, cash repayments of capital credits are returned to members when and if finances permit. This year the Hill Country Telephone Board of Directors elected to return an additional \$404,000 in funds.

Released in mid-September 2010, this brings the total disbursements to more than \$35.2 million since 1976.

Upon the death of a member, the family should provide the cooperative with copies of legal documents that indicate how the capital credits of the deceased individual should be dispersed as well as a completed Request for Release of Capital Credits form. If you move or no longer have service with Hill Country Telephone, your address still needs to be kept current with the cooperative for you to receive your capital credit notices and/or refunds in the future.

Being paid for patronizing your own telephone cooperative is just another benefit of purchasing your telecommunications services from Hill Country Telephone Cooperative, where your dollars are put to work.

## IFIX BACKUP TIPS

Computer tips brought to you by iFix, a mobile tech support service from Hill Country

What would you do if your computer crashed and you lost everything on it right now? What if the building burns to the ground? How much work would be lost? What would you have to do to replace it? Hours of irreplaceable work can be destroyed in a flash unexpectedly. "Backup" is the most practical means of protection, which means keeping one or more extra copies of your document, preferably in separate places.

- Compose your document with frequent saves to your computer's hard disk.
- When you stop for the day, or when you reach a milestone representing a level of work that needs extra protection, "back up" by saving the file(s) to removable media.
- Store the backup in a separate physical location.
- If you can't immediately store the backup media in another physical location and the document isn't too big, consider emailing it to a friend or colleague. You can also email it to yourself. That way, the document is safely stored on your email server until the next time you check your email.
- Consider doing a backup of the entire hard drive. Many programs are sold for this purpose, but they are more practical if you have high capacity removable media, such as a DVD-RW drive or a USB hard drive. If you are using a computer with Windows XP Professional, a backup program is available under Accessories, System Tools.
- If you do have media suitable for full system backup, periodically use the Windows XP backup program and choose the option to back up "all information on this computer." This creates what is called an "ASR" (automated system recovery) backup.

Finally, make your backup efforts proportional to the value of the document. If you are doing something simple and short that could easily be reproduced, you may not wish to back up at all.

## CUSTOMER APPRECIATION DAY

Ingram exchange customer Sharon Doster of Wash and Wag receives cookies, and Luma her canine friend gets a pat on the head from Ken Ruark, Sales & Customer Relations Manager of Hill Country Telephone. We enjoyed Customer Appreciation Day with our customers.



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Here we are in the words of Yogi Berra, "De Ja Vu all over again." Last year at this time I reported on the concerns of HCTC directors and management, about the political and economic situation facing our great country. Well, here we are one year later still concerned, as much if not more, than we were at this time last year because of some proposed changes by the U.S. Congress and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). These changes would have a tremendously adverse effect on telecommunication cooperatives and small telecommunication companies.

The present administration in Washington D.C. has mandated that all Americans will have equal access to broadband services. The FCC has come forth with the National Broadband Plan. "Equal access to all Americans", sounds great doesn't it? Not so fast my friends. It is amazing what you can hear by just listening. So, how can anyone say that 4 is equal to 100? The FCC proposed plan contends that 4 mega bytes for rural folks is equal to 100 mega bytes for urban folks. There is something inherently wrong with that kind of thinking. On top of that, Congress is debating doing away with the funding mechanism that has made it possible for cooperatives and small companies to provide high cost rural

areas with comparable telephone services at comparable rates to urban areas. This change in funding would be a major setback for cooperatives, small telephone companies, and rural America in general. This funding mechanism change is part of the National Broadband Plan. There is no common sense in any plan that mandates a major project and then does away with the funding to make it feasible and viable. Congress and the FCC don't understand the dynamics and needs of rural America.

Because of the situation in Washington D.C., Hill Country Telephone Cooperative, along with the NTCA and some other organizations, has taken on a lead role to try to educate Congress and the FCC. HCTC General Manager Delbert Wilson has traveled to Washington D.C. on multiple occasions to testify before the U.S. Congress and the FCC about the needs and requirements for telecommunication services in rural America. The HCTC directors, who represent each of you as coop members, have been attending conference meetings to gain new education and insight and to influence industry leaders who represent and make decisions on what is best for all rural cooperatives such as HCTC.

In spite of the situation in Washington D.C., your Hill Country Telephone

Cooperative continues to expand its service offerings, its service area through its subsidiary Hill Country Telecommunications, and make progress towards its goal of becoming a totally fiber optic network company. Reaching this goal will allow HCTC to provide television service superior to the many satellite services available. This goal will soon be a reality, and will solidify HCTC's place among the leaders in telecommunication service providers. In this time of uncertainty, rest assured that your Hill Country Telephone Cooperative is working harder than ever to provide the very best service possible, stay on the cutting edge of technology, and represent and convey your needs, as rural coop members, to the rest of the world. HCTC will lead you into the future of telecommunications.



Randy Bass, Board President and Director

## BASS RECEIVES DCC CERTIFICATION

Randy Bass, Board President and Director of District #2 (Hunt Exchange), was recently awarded the Director Core Curriculum (DCC) Certificate by the National Telecommunications Cooperative Association (NTCA).

Designed to expose directors to the principles and concepts that will help them become highly effective members of the board, the certificate program offers seminars in rotation at NTCA meetings. Directors of commercial companies must complete eight

required courses while directors of cooperatives must take two additional courses, "Reviewing and Updating Your Bylaws" and "Understanding Capital Credits," which are deemed essential to understanding their role as members of the Cooperative's board.

## INCUMBENT DIRECTORS RE-ELECTED

In what was declared an uncontested election, and deemed as consent of the nominees by the members, incumbent directors in three districts will serve another 3-year term on the Board of Directors of Hill Country Telephone Cooperative, Inc.

Declaration of consent of the director nominees was announced at Hill Country's Annual Membership Meeting held in Kerrville on October 4. Unopposed directors are Bob Trees (District #1A-Ingram); Charles Loeffler (District #5-Fredonia, Katemcy, Pontotoc and Streeter); and Burt Seidensticker (District #6B-Comfort & Sisterdale).

Attended by approximately 850 persons, members enjoyed a barbeque dinner catered by Buzzie's Bar-B-Q. In addition to regular

business, members and guests also enjoyed a short video production specifically created for presentation to the Federal Communications Commission on "Together We Are Rural America", (Video can also be viewed on our website at hctc.net under Current News.) The evening ended with more than 100 lucky members winning prizes, including gifts donated by GVNW Consulting, Inc., John Staurulakis, Inc., and TRC Engineering Services, Inc.

In an executive session immediately following the meeting, officers re-elected for 2010-2011 were: Randy Bass, President (District #2-Hunt); Kathy Bohn, Vice President (District #6A-Comfort & Sisterdale); and T. H. Rocchio, Secretary-Treasurer (District #9-Frio Canyon).

## BECOME ACQUAINTED WITH YOUR CUSTOMER RIGHTS

### YOUR RIGHTS AS A CUSTOMER

The Substantive Rules, Section 26.31(c), of the Texas Public Utility Commission, requires all telephone companies to inform subscribers of "Your Rights as a Customer". Your rights have been published in the 2010 Telephone Directory and can be found on pages 36-40. In addition, the Cooperative's Bylaws have been published in the back of the directory for your convenience.

### SUS DERECHOS COMO UN CLIENTE

Las reglas substantivas, seccion 26.31(c), del Comision Utilidad Publico de Tejas, requiré todas las companias de teléfono a informar suscriptores de <Los Derechos Como Un Cliente>. Sus derechos han publicado en la quia telefonica de Mayo 2010 y pueden encontrarlos en las paginas 41 a 44. En adicon, Los Reglamentos del Cooperativo se han publicado de atras de la quia para sus conveniencia.

## WATER SUPPLY ENHANCEMENT PROJECT

The Water Supply Enhancement Project is a state funded cost-share incentive program with the goal of providing an increase in the recharge of our streams, aquifers and reservoirs. The way this increase in water supply is achieved is through the selective removal of Ashe Juniper (cedar). Thanks to the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board and your local Soil and Water Conservation District, money has been allocated towards implementing this project. Landowners must have an agricultural or wildlife exemption on their property and be located in an eligible watershed to qualify for assistance. If you would like more information about this program or would like to know if you qualify, please contact the Water Supply Enhancement Project office at (830) 868-2506.

## SPECIAL THANKS

SPECIAL THANKS to all medical staff onsite at the Annual Membership Meeting that assisted one of our members in a medical emergency situation. A mentor to many community members, we are glad to report that Father John is doing well.



## UPGRADE YOUR INTERNET SERVICE AT NO CHARGE FOR THE NEXT 3 MONTHS

Hill Country Telecommunications has the Internet upgrade deal you've been waiting for. Upgrade your Internet service to the next higher speed (up to 5Mb) and you won't pay for the upgrade for 3 months.

Here's how it works.

If you currently subscribe to our 512kb Internet service and upgrade to the 1.0Mb speed you will continue to pay only \$39.95/mo for the next three months. After that you'll pay the regular rate for the 1.0Mb speed—\$59.95/mo with no commitment.

And remember, this is a limited time offer from Hill Country Telecommunications—your Internet service provider from Hill Country Telephone Cooperative.

LIMITED TIME OFFER

HILL COUNTRY. IT'S OUR FIRST NAME.



**hctc.net** 830.367.5333  
800.292.5457

\* Free Internet speed upgrade for three months from installation date. Advertised speeds reflected are the maximum and not available or guaranteed in all service areas. Offer valid November 1, 2010 through January 31, 2011. Subject to change without notice. Must upgrade to at least the 512kb package. Hill Country Telephone Cooperative, Inc. is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Hill Country Telecommunications is an affiliate of Hill Country Telephone Cooperative.

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## TV AND VIDEO SERVICE IS COMING



New satellite receivers have been installed at the Comfort Fiber Regen Station as we prepare for our new TV and video service.

## DIRECTORY CLOSING DATES NEARING

Any changes or additions to your listing(s) in the May 2011 Telephone Directory must be made soon. Please contact us prior to the deadline date(s).

### Deadline dates

White Pages — January 21, 2011  
Yellow Pages — January 21, 2011

### Contact info

830.367.5333  
800.292.5457  
[busofc@hctc.net](mailto:busofc@hctc.net)

Applicable charges may be applied to your telephone bill.

## FCC Consumer Advisory

### CALLS FROM 809, 284, 876, 649 AREA CODES - BEWARE

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has recently learned that an old long distance phone scam that leads consumers to incur high charges on their phone bills may now affect wireless consumers. In the past, consumers have been fooled into making expensive international calls by scam artists who leave messages on consumers' answering machines or their e-mail accounts. The messages urge consumers to call a number with an 809, 284, 876, 649 or some other area code to collect a prize or find out about a sick relative. Wireless consumers are now receiving similar calls from phone numbers with three-digit area codes that appear to be domestic, but are actually associated with international pay-per-call phone numbers.

### WHAT YOU CAN DO TO MINIMIZE THE RISK OF THIS HAPPENING TO YOU:

- Check any unfamiliar area codes before returning calls.
- Be aware that there are many 3-digit area codes (mostly in the Caribbean) that connect callers to international telephone numbers.
- If you do not otherwise make international calls, ask your local or wireless phone company to block outgoing international calls on your line.

### FILING A COMPLAINT WITH THE FCC

If you are billed for a call you made as a result of this scam, first try to resolve the matter with your telephone company. If you are unable to resolve it directly, you can file a complaint with the FCC. There is no charge for filing a complaint. You can file your complaint

using an FCC on-line complaint form found at [esupport.fcc.gov/complaints.htm](http://esupport.fcc.gov/complaints.htm). You can also file your complaint with the FCC's Consumer Center in one of the ways below.

**E-mail:** [fccinfo@fcc.gov](mailto:fccinfo@fcc.gov)

**Call:** 1-888-CALL-FCC  
(1-888-225-5322) voice  
or 1-888-TELL-FCC  
(1-888-835-5322) TTY

**Fax:** 1-866-418-0232

**Write:** Federal Communications  
Commission  
Consumer & Governmental  
Affairs Bureau  
Consumer Inquiries and  
Complaints Division  
445 12th Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20554

# FREE 60 MINUTE PREPAID CALLING CARD

## Get your FREE 60 Minute Prepaid Calling Card.

2011 will mark our 60th year serving the Hill Country with telecommunication services and we're starting the celebration now. We're giving the first 60 customers who come by one of our area locations a FREE 60 Minute Prepaid Calling Card.\* A Prepaid card is great for travelers, students and people who need to make long distance and overseas calls. Come in today, card expiration date is December 15, 2010.

\* LIMIT: ONE PREPAID CARD PER MEMBERSHIP

## Stuff all of your Christmas stockings with a Postpaid Calling Card from Hill Country.

Calls placed with Postpaid Calling Cards are billed to your telephone account. No advance purchase is required and there is no expiration date which means you won't lose any money on an unexpired card. So if you're looking for a good quality card you can just stick in your wallet or purse and forget about until you need it, these are the cards for you.



**FREE 60 MINUTE CALLING CARD**

### POSTPAID

- No advance purchase
- No expiration date
- Billed to your telephone account

### PREPAID

- No bill
- Available balance information

Hill Country Telephone Cooperative, Inc. is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

www.hctc.net

830.367.5333 • 800.292.5457

P.O. Drawer D, Ingram, Texas 78025  
Hill Country Telephone Cooperative, Inc.



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 830.367.4000  
 M-F, 8-5  
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 1700 Sidney Baker, Ste. 320  
 830.896.5010  
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