

Connections

FEBRUARY 2026

Handy Reminders

- Conveniently pay your bill with eBill and AutoPay.
- Pay your bill by the 20th of the month to avoid late fees and disconnection. Please don't use staples to attach your checks.

Office Closure

Our office will be closed on Monday, February 16th for a staff meeting. On-call technicians will be available should you experience trouble issues.

Contact Us

100 Runestone Drive / PO Box 336
Hoffman, MN 56339
Phone: 320-986-2013

Office Hours: M-F 8 am to 4:30 pm

Email: rtaoffice@runestone.com

24/7 HelpDesk for Internet
Outages and Technical Support:
320-986-6655
helpdesk@runestone.net

Visit Us: www.runestone.net

Find Us:   

Runestone
Telecom Association



You deserve to find your
TRUE CONNECTION

**LIVE HAPPILY EVER AFTER WITH
INTERNET YOU'LL LOVE**

Life's no bed of roses if you settle for Internet that you know in your heart can't meet your needs. Fortunately, Runestone Telecom can pair you with the technological equivalent of your soulmate — the perfect Internet with beautifully fast speeds and wonderfully reliable service.

After all, a true connection is easy to be around and consistently supports what's important to you, from streaming and gaming to working and chatting.

**WILL YOU ACCEPT
THIS ROSY OFFER?
CALL 320-986-2013 FOR
AN INTERNET UPGRADE!**

Happy Valentine's Day!



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AI Is a Helpful Tool, Not a Takeover Plot

Artificial intelligence (AI) has had its share of dramatic headlines over the past few years — some are positive and enthusiastic, and some are scary enough to keep you up at night. In reality, today's AI is less "robot overlord" and more "personal assistant."

Used well, AI is one of the best practical tools a workplace or household can have. Just like the Internet, smartphones, or cloud storage, AI becomes beneficial (and safe) when people understand what it is, how it works, and how to use it responsibly.

AI is not replacing people. It's amplifying them. Modern AI shines at the things that drain human time, such as repetitive tasks, writing drafts, research projects, summarizing documents, analyzing patterns, language translation, tech support, and answering everyday questions. AI doesn't replace human judgment, creativity, or experience.

AI is not trying to take your job. It's trying to give you back an hour of your day. You won't have to waste time on spreadsheets, emails, or writing the same paragraph five times. In most workplaces, AI helps people write clearer emails, get quick answers to tech questions, translate information, turn rough notes into polished drafts, learn new skills, organize projects, and brainstorm ideas.

AI is not here to take over the world. It's here to take over the annoying parts of your to-do list. With a little education and guidance, AI becomes a tool for good — a creative partner, a patient explainer, a brainstorming buddy, and a second set of digital hands that never gets tired.

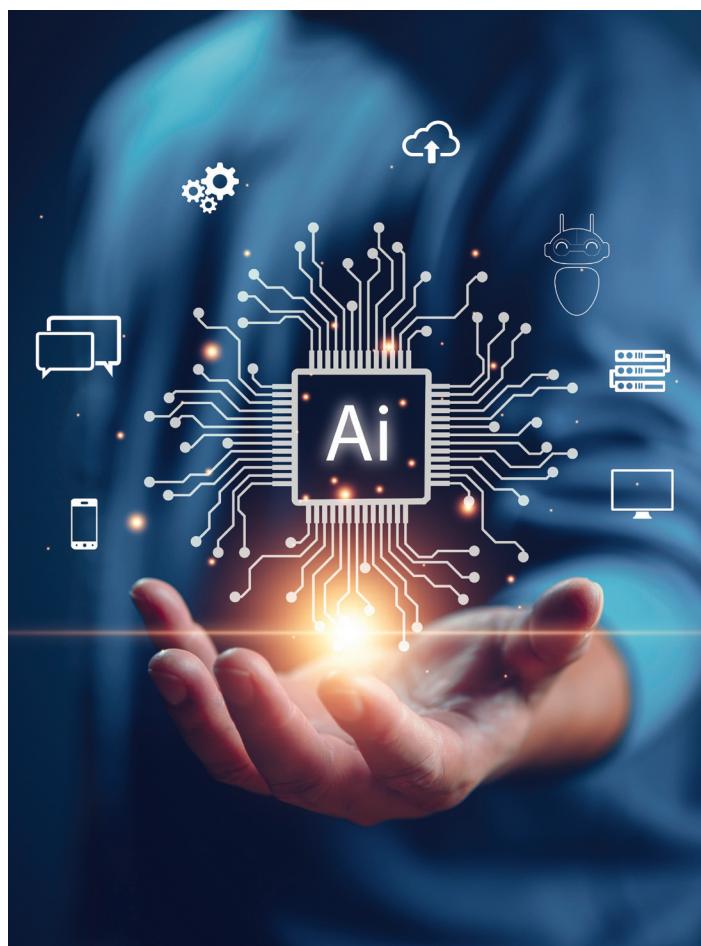
AI is already woven into everyday life in simple, helpful ways. It helps people understand confusing legal or medical documents, practice new languages, get tutoring support, create accessible materials, outline business ideas, troubleshoot tech issues, and prepare for interviews or presentations. It's making knowledge easier to reach.

It takes a little practice to learn how to guide AI. However, the results can be outstanding when you stay in control. For example, ChatGPT will suggest options that you take in whatever direction that you see fit. Your job is to ask detailed questions, consider its responses, and combine them with your real-life knowledge. It's less about learning a new system and more about learning how to delegate smarter.

Here are tips for successfully and safely using AI:

- Always protect your personal information. Avoid sharing anything sensitive in an AI prompt like bank details, Social Security numbers, medical information, or private account data.
- Keep in mind that AI can sound very confident in its answers but isn't always correct. So, if you use it for subjects that you aren't familiar with, it's best to check the responses using other sources.

AI can increase your confidence, boost efficiency, and reduce the pressure of managing tasks at work and at home. If you haven't used AI yet, we encourage you to give it a try in 2026.



Scholarship Opportunities for 2026 High School Seniors

We're excited to offer these scholarship opportunities to families with high school seniors in our service area:

Minnesota Telecom Alliance (MTA)

Runestone Telecom, along with other local telecom companies across Minnesota, is partnering with area high schools to identify strong candidates for these scholarships. Applications will be reviewed by an MTA panel and evaluated based on academic performance, achievements, and extracurricular involvement. Preference is given to students who express an interest in telecommunications, information technology, or supporting rural communities.

For 2026, six MTA scholarships will be awarded statewide. They include:

- **One \$2,000 Jon Tollefson Technology Scholarship**

Eligible applicants must be Minnesota residents who are high school seniors planning to major in Telecommunications or Information Technology (IT) at a university, college, or technical college.

- **Five \$2,000 General Scholarships**

Eligible applicants must be Minnesota residents who are high school seniors planning to attend a post-secondary institution (university, college, or technical college). Additionally, the applicant's family must subscribe to at least one service from an MTA member company.

Note: The Bud Morrow Scholarship will be awarded to the highest-scoring applicant in this category.

MTA applications must be returned to Runestone Telecom Association by February 13th, 2026. A signature from our general manager, a member of our board of directors, or a designated employee of Runestone Telecom is required, so please apply early. Visit www.runestone.net for more details and the application.

Foundation for Rural Service (FRS)

Runestone Telecom offers scholarship opportunities through the FRS, in cooperation with the NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association. These organizations seek to enhance the quality of life in America by increasing awareness of rural issues and strongly supporting the continuing education of rural youth.

Each scholarship applicant must:

- Be a graduating high school senior
- Be a U.S. citizen
- Be accepted by an accredited two- or four-year college, university, or vocational-technical school
- Have at least a C grade point average (GPA)
- Express interest in returning to a rural community following graduation
- Have a parent/guardian with at least one Runestone Telecom service

The application materials must be submitted online and received by FRS no later than February 14th, 2026. Visit www.runestone.net for the scholarship flyer with more details and <https://apply.mykaleidoscope.com/program/FRSScholarships2026> to log in to apply. Call our office at 320-986-2013 if you have questions.

Runestone Telecom Director Election

This year there will be a director elected for a five-year term on Runestone Telecom's Board of Directors from District 1 (Donnelly, Norcross, Tintah, Beardsley, Campbell, Graceville, Herman, Wheaton). If you're a member from this District and are interested in running for this position, please submit a petition signed by at least 10 other members. The petition form can be obtained at our office or from our website.

Please visit runestone.net and click on "About Us > The Cooperative" for more information, including the qualifications to be a director, and the definition of members in the By-Laws.

If there's a contested race, directors are elected by ballot and the winner is announced at the Annual Meeting. Petitions may be submitted between January 9th, 2026, and March 10th, 2026, for any interested parties.

New Members

Welcome to Runestone Telecom! We're pleased to have you with our cooperative.

Elbow Lake

Gerber Anderson & Mark LTD 218-685-5314
Krusemark, Deborah J 218-685-4951
Lohse, Carol 218-685-4509

Herman

Satter, Roger & Deanna 320-378-3007
Spaulding's North 320-677-2345

Wheaton

Rinke Farms (Shop).... 320-563-8383

2026 Directory Coming

Watch your mailbox in February for the 2026 Viking Regional Directory. You may also pick up a copy at our office. Minnesota law requires all discarded telephone directories to be recycled. Please return your directory to our office, put it in your normal recycling bins, or bring it to your local recycling center. Thanks!



Do Not Call Registry

If your phone rings a little too often with calls you don't want, there's a simple solution. The National Do Not Call Registry lets you register your home and mobile phone numbers for free at donotcall.gov. After 31 days, most telemarketing calls should stop. If they continue, you can easily report them on that website. Visit www.donotcall.gov or call 1-888-382-1222.

Cable TV Update

If you use Titan TV, the online TV schedule on our website, you may have noticed that some channels are not complete in the listing. We apologize for this inconvenience, as we know you may depend on Titan TV when planning your viewing. We're working with our Channel Lineup associate to get this remedied as soon as possible. Thank you for your patience.

Here's the Latest About Tech Support Scams

Tech support scammers try to trick consumers into believing there's a serious issue with their computer, either through a pop-up message or a call supposedly from a customer support employee of a major tech company like Microsoft or Apple.

The goal of these scammers is to gain remote access to your computer—for purposes of identity theft or the downloading of ransomware—and/or to convince you to send money for fake tech support to “fix” the non-existent problem.

While these scams have been around for years, there are new developments you should know about it:

- **Tech support scams are evolving with AI.** Artificial Intelligence (AI) has provided cybercriminals with new tools to con people. Scammers can use AI to create more convincing messages, deepfake videos, and spoofed phone numbers.
- **Cryptocurrency is being requested for payments.** For example, one man reported getting a call that claimed to be from Apple Technical Support, which demanded he send thousands of dollars through a cryptocurrency ATM to pay for the cost of fixing his computer virus problem.
- **Several generations are being victimized.** You may assume it's aging baby boomers who are most susceptible to tech support scams, due to having less experience and knowledge of technology. However, recent studies show that younger generations, specifically Gen Z and Millennials, are now the most frequent victims of tech support scams. This is attributed to more online exposure, overconfidence in tech skills that can lead to riskier habits, and the merging of personal and professional life in their devices and accounts.

Keep this in mind: If your computer screen becomes frozen and a pop-up message about a security problem appears, do not call the phone number given to “fix” the problem. All you need to do is turn off your computer and restart it. (The pop-up message may claim you should not shut down or restart your computer because it would cause serious damage. However, ignore this scare tactic.)

Should you need help dealing with a tech support scam or similar issue, turn to a local computer service provider you trust.

