

## Spring Grove Communications Demonstrated Experience

Spring Grove Communications is a cooperative which was formed in 1959. The company's over 60 years in the communications industry has shown its dedication by the board of directors for providing continuing resources to enhance the experiences of its members. As a rural independent local exchange carrier we have extensive knowledge of all communications services and regulatory compliance required in the provisioning of these services. As a USDA Rural Utilities Service loan recipient and OCIO Grant Award recipient for both expansion and adoption, we have experience in understanding funding requests and compliance reporting documentation.

Broadband services have been provided by Spring Grove Communications since 2002. First deployed via digital subscriber line services over copper facilities and upgraded to fiber services in 2009.

The team at Spring Grove Communications has the experience and dedication to support the Dorchester Rural FTTP Project. This build will utilize a GPON network design and can offer speeds up to 1G symmetrical. We provide Calix equipment that provides customers network protection and the ability to prioritize devices, filter content per device – creating another layer of safety for families, and the ability to schedule times devices can access the internet. Spring Grove Communications prides itself on 100% network availability. If the network goes down for an extended amount of time, the customer will be credited appropriately. The mission for Spring Grove Communications is to provide broadband services and the best possible customer experience to enrich lives where residents and businesses are currently unserved or underserved and eliminating the rural broadband gap. The entire staff has a passion for helping consumers meet their broadband needs.

**Chief Executive Officer, Jill Huffman** – Jill began her career in telecommunications in 2004 as an accountant and was subsequently promoted to Vice President of Operations and in 2018 joined Spring Grove Communications as Chief Executive Officer.

**Director of Business and Community Affairs, Jacqui Van Minsel** – Jacqui joined Spring Grove Communications in 2005 as the Office Manager and was promoted to Director of Business and Community Affairs in 2019. With extensive knowledge of customer service and regulatory affairs, Jacqui supports all regulatory compliance standards as well as enhancing the partnerships within the community we serve.

**Customer Experience and Marketing Manager, LeAnn Kraus** – With 19 years experience at Spring Grove Communications, LeAnn is poised to handle all the customer service and marketing tasks this project incorporates. LeAnn has extensive knowledge of all customer support platforms in order to ensure compliance and knowing that future customers will have a hassle-free customer experience.

**Accounting Manager, Marsha LaFreniere** – Marsha’s accounting position is shared across three broadband providers giving her excellent exposure to not only financial accounting but compliance with program grants and loans. As a controller with her previous company Marsha has an in-depth understanding of the need for compliance with all grant and loan award terms as well as the compilation of data for reporting and financial statement completion.

**Technical Staff** – The technicians for Spring Grove Communications have several years of experience within the communications and technology industry. Since the fiber facilities have been active for more than 10 years, we are able to quickly and efficiently connect any new subscribers as well as provide optimal support for existing subscribers both in terms of service delivery and ongoing performance. Our technicians also help customers with set up inside the home and connecting devices. The customer experience is truly valued at Spring Grove Communications.

**Customer Experience** – Our customer experience representatives have the benefit of our lead representative working on her 18<sup>th</sup> year of service with Spring Grove Communications. Our representatives are extremely knowledgeable in all of our customer management platforms and are well versed in ongoing service support and can assist subscribers with all their broadband inquiries. Quality customer service is a top priority at Spring Grove Communications where it will remain.

As you can see, our staff is knowledgeable and dedicated to the broadband initiative for the unserved and underserved in the State of Iowa. The customer experience does not end with the installation of service for the customer. Spring Grove Communications offers technology assistance for all things related to their broadband connection. Whether it be help with email, installing software or cleaning up a slow computer, keeping the customer educated and their devices in top working condition is our priority.

The following references are a testament to the commitment we bring to providing high quality broadband services in the rural area we serve. We strive to work with our members and community to understand their needs, obstacles they may face and assisting with developing solutions to resolve these.



# SPRING GROVE SCHOOLS

113 2nd Ave NW • Spring Grove, Minnesota 55974 | 507.498.3221 | Fax 507.498.3470

July 15, 2021

Office of the Chief Information Officer of the State of Iowa  
200 E. Grand Avenue  
Des Moines, IA 50309

RE: Empower Rural Iowa, Emergency Broadband Grant Program – NOFA #006

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to inform you of my recommendation for Spring Grove Communications services. They have a successful history of providing state of the art broadband speeds, as well as a strong reputation for reliability, excellent customer service, and a dedicated community commitment. I am confident in their capabilities of expanding their remarkable services.

Customer service and tech support is a priority for each customer interaction. Their employees take the time to find out the root of the challenge and not just find a temporary solution, but the best solution. They value the relationship with all customers.

Spring Grove Communications is a pillar of our community, as well as an outstanding service provider. I can think of no better example of their commitment to our school community, than their quick response during COVID-19 when we need to move to an online education for our students. When I called to see what the district might do to get internet to families who did not have it, SGC decided that they would provide this service for free for all students who did not have it. When I inquired about setting up a homework hotline, SGC had it up and running within 2 hours. SGC's commitment to the students, and families in Spring Grove made it possible for our staff to continue meaningful connections with our students and support them both academically and emotionally during a very difficult time. We know that not all communities were able to do this and are so grateful that SGC made it possible in Spring Grove.

Thank you for considering Spring Grove Communications.

Sincerely,

Rachel Udstuen  
Superintendent  
507-498-3221

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## INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT 297



## *Spring Grove Soda Pop, Inc.*

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Fax 507-498-3429

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July 16, 2021

Office of the Chief Information Officer of the State of Iowa

200 E Grand Avenue

Des Moines, IA 50309

RE: Empower Rural Iowa, Emergency Broadband Grant Program – NOFA #006

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to inform you of my recommendation for Spring Grove Communications services. They have a successful history of providing state of the art broadband speeds, as well as a strong reputation for reliability, excellent customer service, and a dedicated community commitment. Spring Grove Communications have spear-headed many projects in our community that have positively impacted our community with new opportunities in our education system, leisure activities for our residents, and technology advancements. I am confident in their capabilities of expanding their remarkable services.

Customer service and tech support is a priority for each customer interaction. Their employees go out of their way to resolve any issues we may have in a timely manner, always in a professional manner. They value the relationship with all customers.

Thank you for considering Spring Grove Communications.

Sincerely,

Robert Hansen, VP

Spring Grove Soda Pop, Inc.

[sgsoda@springgrove.coop](mailto:sgsoda@springgrove.coop)

July 2021

Office of the Chief Information Officer of the State of Iowa  
200 E. Grand Avenue  
Des Moines, IA 50309

RE: Empower Rural Iowa, Emergency Broadband Grant Program – NOFA #006

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I am writing to inform you of my recommendation for Spring Grove Communications services. They have a successful history of providing state of the art broadband speeds, as well as a strong reputation for reliability, excellent customer service, and a dedicated community commitment. I am confident in their capabilities of expanding their remarkable services.

We have been part of the Spring Grove Community for the past 16 years. During this time, we have been customers of Spring Grove Communications for multiple services that they provide. I can attest that they have always gone above and beyond with helping us get the services that we need and making sure things are working as best as possible. What they have been able to deliver with their broadband is second to none. This obviously touched our family the most over the past 17 months due to the pandemic. My office closed March 13, 2020 forcing me to work from home. Also, during this time, my children were also at home for school or doing other pastime activities like gaming and entertainment streaming. There was not one time where they were not able to attend online school or I wasn't able to meet my obligations for work (video conferences, delivering online global training sessions, etc). We were able to make our deadlines and continue trying to be as "normal" as possible. If it wasn't for the great service that was provided by Spring Grove Communications, we wouldn't have made it through the past months and I wouldn't have an option to move to working full time from home once our offices open up.

The broadband service has been wonderful, but you can also tell the customer service and tech support is a priority for each customer interaction. Their employees take the time to find out the root of the challenge and not just find a temporary solution, but the best solution. They value their relationship with their customers and they continuously build trust with them through each interaction. We have had nothing but exceptional support from them.

Thank you for considering Spring Grove Communications.

Sincerely,  
Shari Wennes