

# XIT Connections

Volume XV, Number 1, Winter 2013

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This is a photo of the chapel at Boys Ranch in the wintertime. The non-demoninational chapel was built back in 1972. This photo is courtesy of Jim Costin.

## Long Distance Call Completion Problems ... A Nationwide Issue

In recent months, XIT Communications and many other rural telephone companies have experienced an increase in problems with the completion of long distance and wireless calls. Some calls do not complete at all – you hear dead air or can't hear the caller's voice; others are noisy and of very poor call quality. So what is going on? Let us explain what is happening with these calls.

First of all, we understand the problems occurring are very frustrating to you as our customer, and we are truly sorry for any inconvenience they have caused you. A lot of these calling problems are not being caused by XIT Communications and therefore, unfortunately can't be fixed by us. This is especially true if your long distance service is being provided by another carrier, other than XIT. The problem calls appear to be occurring in a lot of rural areas where long distance carriers may pay higher charges to complete the calls. These charges are part of the decades-old system of "access" charges that help to pay the costs of rural networks. To minimize these charges, some long distance carriers are using third-party routing providers which attempt to connect calls to their destination at the lowest possible costs. Sometimes, however, the calls appear not to be connecting at all and if they are, sometimes are of very poor call quality, which are causing problems for everyone involved.

In early December, a bipartisan group of more than 30 senators led by Sen. Tim Johnson (S.D.) sent a letter to the FCC saying that call completion problems plaguing rural communities have continued for far too long and must be addressed with additional investigation to put an end to the epidemic once and for all.

NTCA Chief Executive Officer, Shirley Bloomfield, issued the following statement: "I want to thank Sen. Johnson and all of the senators who signed this letter to the FCC for their leadership on this issue, which has serious economic and safety consequences for rural Americans. Tests conducted by NTCA and our rural partners have proven what I hear over and over again from small carriers all over the country: that instances of calls not completing or resulting in 'dead air' are rampant in rural communities and in many cases are getting worse. While the FCC's declaratory ruling nearly 10 months ago was a positive step, it has become obvious that more investigation and actual enforcement is necessary to put an end to the bad practices underlying this problem."

Here are examples of the problems you may be experiencing:

**Continued on page 5**

### Look & Win!

The last Look & Win contest we did in our Fall Newsletter went over so big, we decided to do it again! We have placed several of our customer's XIT home telephone numbers somewhere within the articles. If you find your home telephone number (Ex. 244-XXXX), call our XIT office at 384-3311 to claim your prize! Enjoy the newsletter and good luck!





## In Remembrance ...

Claude Michael Slatton worked for XIT Rural Telephone Cooperative, Inc. for almost 34 years as a Switching Technician. He was a vital part of our team and will be dearly missed by all who knew him. He loved people and always went out of his way to help his fellow employees, friends and customers. Mike ... you will never be forgotten ...

## XIT Announces Online Billing & Bill Pay

XIT is pleased to announce the addition of our online billing and bill pay now available to all XIT customers! You now have the ability to go online and pay ANY XIT bill (one-time payment or recurring payments), view bills and usage, obtain payment history and even report a trouble problem, all from the comfort of your home! We've made it easy and safe to access, convenient to operate, and best of all ... it's FREE to use!

Here are some commonly asked questions about online bill pay and the answers that can help you make an informed decision:

*Does it cost anything?* No, it's absolutely free to use online billing/bill pay. In fact, it will save you the cost of a stamp each month, having to drive to one of the offices and having to hassle with writing a check. It's much easier!

*How do I pay my bill online?* The service allows you to easily pay your bill with a major credit card or debit card.

*Is my credit/debit information safe?* Yes! Your information is protected with a high level of encryption. Card information cannot be accessed or viewed by our staff either. You can be assured that your information is safe.

*Will my bill look the same online?* Your bill is a copy of the paper bill, so it will look and read just like the one you get in the mail.

*What information do I need to get started with online billing/bill pay?* You will need to know your XIT account number and your CPNI password on the account before you start.

So, if you are ready to get started ... let's go! Go to our XIT website address [www.xit.net](http://www.xit.net). Click on the 'Bill Pay Login' to start the registration process or you can click on 'More Information' to go to an online information and directions page first, which will explain what is available in online billing and the steps to get you connected.

A couple things to keep in mind ... First, you will have to register your account before logging in for the first time. Secondly, you will need to (366-2130) know your XIT account number and the CPNI password on your account in order to register online. If you have this information on hand, then you are ready to go!

Go to the 'Bill Pay Login' screen and click on 'Click Here to Register' under the New Customers listing. You will then be prompted to put in your XIT account number, Account Password (CPNI password in lower-case letters, no capital letters) and the Account Name. On the same screen, you will also enter your email address and create a user name and password for the online account.

**Note:** User name can have no special characters or symbols in it. (Ex. @!\$#\*&) Password must be a minimum length of 6 characters, a maximum length of 8 characters. It must have at least 5 letters and at least 1 number in it. Make sure to keep a record of your user ID and password for future reference.

Then click the Register Button. You will then (366-2586) be prompted to answer 2 additional security questions. When you are finished, click on the save button. Once you have finished registering, you will have 2 options on the screen, to go directly into My Account or to Set Up Bill Pay. You can also set up bill pay options from My Account.

If you choose My Account, it will take you directly into your online billing information screen and you are ready to go from there! It's that fast and easy! If you happen to encounter any problems or have questions with the online billing or bill pay, please feel free to contact us at 806-384-3311 or 1-800-232-3312 and one of our Customer Care Representatives will be happy to assist you!

## Bundle Up & Save!!!

With all the holiday bills starting to pile in, why not combine all your communication (244-6248) services with XIT Communications and save a bundle of money! With our Simply Packages ... you can bundle your home phone, high speed Internet and IPTV service with HD, Video on Demand and DVR together for one low, monthly bill. Come by XIT ... we will keep you connected and entertained this winter and no having to go outside in the cold to scrape snow off the dish or to go get a movie! Give us a call today at 806-384-3311 or 1-800-232-3312 for prices and package information.



# XIT Regional Directory Photo Contest Winner

The winner of the 2013 XIT Regional Telephone Directory Photo Contest is Kylie Ford! The winning photograph is a three generation photo of her father-in-law, David Ford; her husband Kevin and their son, Grant, walking hand in hand in a cotton field which David & Kevin farm in Hartley County.

Kylie has won \$100 in addition to having the bragging rights for the cover of the XIT Regional Phone Directory, which will be published and (396-2494) distributed in August 2013.

Thank you to all who participated. All the photographs submitted were beautiful and picking a winner was difficult!



August 2013

• Adrian • Amarillo • Boys Ranch • Bunkerhill • Cactus/Etter  
• Canyon • Channing • Coldwater • Dalhart • Dumas  
• Hartley • Kerrick • Lantz • Middlewater • Stevens  
• Stratford • Sunray • Texline • Vega • Wildorado

**XIT** Communications  
Regional Directory

100394

## Stay Connected During Snow Season

With winter season upon us and the possibility of snow and ice storms and other emergencies are on the increase, it is very practical and smart to have a landline phone in your home.

Landline, or corded phones, work in power outages and never need to be charged ... a big plus over cellular phones that require batteries and work off of wireless towers. These towers can easily go down since wireless carriers are not required to keep battery backups and towers can reach capacity quickly, allowing no more calls to connect. Experts say that these reasons make a landline phone the best way to call in case of an emergency than any other form of communication. It also keeps us connected to our family and friends no matter what the weather is outside. Experts say to keep at least one corded phone that plugs into the phone jack on the wall at all times. This is recommended so if cordless phone batteries deplete, you still have reliable phone service available to you at any time.

Since 911 calls on a landline phone can be traced and (396-2285) emergency responders dispatched at any time, landline phones are also the most reliable way of getting help in the case of an emergency or health issue. While wireless phones can also be used, unless the caller can talk and communicate with the emergency personal to inform them of where they are at, valuable time can be wasted as responders "look" for the caller. Wireless phones do not pin point the exact location of the caller, just a generalized area which they are calling from. Unfortunately, this can have fatal outcomes for the callers at times. Also, remember to have (244-0700) extra food, water, flashlights, blankets and other emergency items on hand during winter storms, in case you get snowed in for a day or two.

Landline phones also help save families money. Companies like XIT offer discounts for "bundling" services together, which basically offer customers a landline phone for little or no cost. You can't say that about wireless phones!

XIT is a local, home-town company, with employees who live in the communities we serve and who have a vested interest in providing quality products and excellent customer service to our neighbors and friends. When you call to our office, you talk to a real person every time, no voice mail trees or answering machines. We genuinely care about our customers and about making sure you have the most reliable and high-tech communications services we can offer! Stay with XIT, and we will keep you connected!

## What's Cookin' at XIT

Santa Fe Soup by Cathy Taylor

2 lb. hamburger

1 c. chopped onion

2 cans stewed tomatoes, chopped fine

2 cans Ro-Tel tomatoes

Brown hamburger with onion. Add remaining ingredients and stir until melted.

1 can corn

1 can ranch style beans

1 lb. mild Mexican Velveeta, cubed

The recipe featured above is from our new 2012 Country Cookin' Cookbook now available for sale at any of our XIT offices for only \$14.95 each. The new cookbook is made up of 709 of the tastiest recipes from the finest cooks in our area! We still have our original cookbooks for sale for \$14.95. Grab one of each!





# XIT Board of Directors & Employee Christmas and Service Awards Luncheon

XIT held their annual Board of Directors and Employee Christmas & Service Awards Luncheon on December 19, 2012 at the Dalhart headquarters office. Darrell Dennis, XIT General Manager, recognized a total of 12 employees and 1 board member for their many years of service to XIT and its customers. A delicious prime rib meal, service (249-2389) awards presentation and door prize drawings were enjoyed by all the board of directors and employees who attended.



Receiving their 5 year service awards are (left-right): Mari-sol Wheeler, Jessica Sanchez, Lupe Duarte and Darrell Dennis, General Manager.

Sandy Reynolds and Brian McCoy received their 10 year service awards from Darrell Dennis, General Manager.



Those receiving 15 year service awards include (left-right): Kathy Bailey, David McCollum, Jonathan Wyatt, Russell Routon, Mark Stilwell and Darrell Dennis, General Manager. (244-2243) Not pictured is Simon Dahlsad.



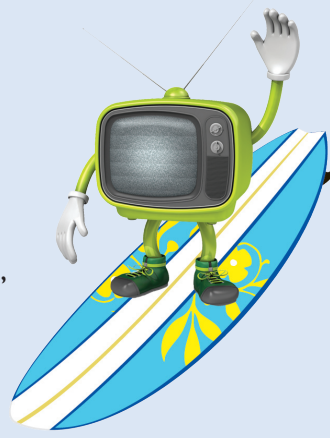
Jerry Dorsett was presented with his XIT 35 year award and his NTCA plaque by Darrell Dennis, General Manager.



Gary Finch, XIT Board of Director, received his 40 year service award from Darrell Dennis, along with his 40 year plaque from the National Telephone Cooperative Association (NTCA).

# SMART SURFING...

**Mastering the SAT** - Mastering the SAT, which is now available on Video on Demand, is a series of 6-30 minute training sessions that provide the best tips and tricks on taking the SAT tests from one of America's leading tutors. The instruction is based on extensive research of over 40 of the latest SAT & PSAT exams. These lessons monitor every rule, topic and question type, in every variation, and in the frequency they have appeared on previous SAT exams. Students will also enjoy the On Demand benefits of the sessions by using the "pause" function to conduct independent work in sync (361-0000) with the programs. This program is great for high school students who will be taking the SAT tests this school year. Where normally 6 sessions would cost over \$1,000, XIT is pleased to present this content to its customers at an affordable price of \$9.95 per session and includes a 72-hour-viewing window for each session. The sessions are available in SD and HD versions. The program includes training for the math, writing and reading portions of the exams. The sessions can be found in the IPTV Video on Demand Category under Events/Education/Mastering the SAT. Check it out today!



**Trip of a Lifetime** - The Travel Channel will be presenting the first "Trip of a Lifetime" special on Sunday, January 27th at 8p.m. This (365-0067) special includes an ultimate two-week travel itinerary to great destinations and features mind-blowing excursions, jet-set travel and unprecedented exclusive access to once-in-a-lifetime experiences. Look for the Travel Channel on XIT IPTV Channel 36 in SD viewing or Channel 536 for HD viewing.

**Dance Moms** - Dance Moms leaps back into the world of competitive dance alongside famous instructor Abby Lee Miller, who rules her talented students with an iron tap shoe, while dealing with doting mothers who will do anything to help their children's dreams come true. The new season starts in January on Tuesday nights on Lifetime Channel 47 or 547 for HD viewing.

**Hotel Impossible** - Competition is fierce in the hotel business. Online sites like Trip Adviser can kill a business' reputation with one bad review. This new show features Anthony Melchiorri, one of the most sought after hotel "fixers" in the country. Each episode features a hotel fighting for its life. Anthony comes in and secretly (366-2726) scouts the property and identifies its biggest problems. He then meets with the staff and comes up with a plan to transform the hotel and return it to its 'hotel glory'. Watch for this new program, Monday nights at 10p.m. on the Travel Channel 36 or Channel 536 for HD viewing.

## Continued from page 1

- Long distance or wireless callers tell you they repeatedly hear nothing or "dead air" for 10 seconds or more after they dial your number.
- Long distance or wireless callers tell you they hear a recording such as "the number you have dialed is not in service" or "your call can't be completed as dialed" when they know they called the correct number.
- Long distance or wireless callers tell you they hear nothing but dead air before hearing ringing and the phone being answered.
- Long distance or wireless callers tell you they hear prolonged ringing (ex. 10-20 times or more) before you answer, when you are sure the phone actually only rang a couple times before being answered on your end.
- Voice quality being very choppy, one person can't hear the other, there are long transmission delays or your call has a bad echo on the line.

These issues are all part of the ongoing problem. Rural telephone companies have presented these issues to the Federal Communications Commission and have urged them to investigate (249-0193) and to solve these problems. A large portion of rural telephone companies in the country are experiencing these issues, so the FCC are taking these complaints seriously and trying to rectify the situation. They have made some strides in reducing the problems with new rulings and regulations, but are still actively working on the issues.

In the mean time, if you encounter any of these call issues, we ask that you contact your long distance provider, and let them know what is happening. Make sure to give them as much information on the call as possible (ex. date and time of call, number call originated from, issue of call and any other information that would be helpful for troubleshooting). If you did not originate the call, ask the caller to also contact their long distance provider or their wireless carrier about the problem.

The Federal Communications Commission can be contacted by phone toll-free at 1-888-225-5322 or by mail at: Federal Communications Commission, Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau, Consumer Complaints, 445 12th Street, SW, Washington, D.C. 20554. We share your concern about these problems, and XIT is dedicated to provide you with the best telephone service possible. We will keep you informed on this situation as we are updated!



# Protecting Our Kids

## Social Networking Websites

*(2nd article in the series)*



Facebook, Twitter, My Space ... ask any child or teen, and they can tell you everything you want to know and more about these social networking websites. These websites are popular with kids because it gives them an easy way to communicate with their friends and family, anytime and anywhere they want. It also gives them a chance to play with different “identities” and explore new friendships and interests. And, with most of the older children and teens having cell phones these days, keeping up with their friends on these sites is easier than ever.

But, with all these positives, also comes some risk. Some kids have a tendency to share too much personal information about themselves on these sites, which leaves them vulnerable to predators and cyberbullies. They can also (366-2584) post inappropriate content without thinking of the consequences, which can destroy future college prospects or job opportunities. Once something is posted on the internet, it becomes information the whole world sees and knows about ... it doesn't disappear, and they can't “take it back”.

A lot of predators seem to like these kind of networking sites because it allows them to get to know someone without actually having to show their “true” identity. They can be a 14-year-old teen online, allowing them to become “friends” with children and share information with them that may not be true, thus allowing them to obtain information about the child without them even realizing it is happening to them. Some predators then like to arrange meetings to meet face-to-face and this is when problems arise. Parents, make sure your child or teen is aware not to give out personal information to people they meet on line and tell them they are under no circumstance to meet up with these so-called friends. Prevention is the key to safety for our young people.

Most social sites have several different components which help to keep the user on line longer than if they were just surfing on the web. Most social sites contain some of the following features to keep users coming back to their site day after day:

- Blogs - online diaries of the writer's life, a lot of time with personal details.
- Email - users can communicate privately or with select groups of people.
- Friend's Lists - these contact lists include people the user knows offline, but also friends they have met while online.
- Instant Messaging - allows users to chat privately in a real-time “live” format.
- Pictures & Videos - allows users to post pictures and videos to their on-line albums for viewing by others.
- Status Updates - Users can post current happenings in their lives, events, feeling or whatever else they want others to know about them.

Most older kids and teens now have a social page ... a lot of them have several different pages. Parents need to be aware of what sites your child or teen are active on and what information they are putting on those sites that others can view about them. It is your responsibility to keep them safe and out of harm's way.

Also, make sure your child or teen does not lie about their age on these sites. My Space members needs to be 14 years of age. Facebook members must be at least 13 years old. Both sites take extra measures to protect their younger members, but they have to know their true age in order to do this. Many social sites will delete users whom they find to be younger than 13, or those lying about their age.

Make sure kids don't post things on their pages showing current locations or hangouts as this would make it easier for a (244-2815) predator to find them if they wanted to. Members can also adjust privacy settings to control who can see and view their information.

Inappropriate content such as harassment, hateful or threatening comments and stalking should be reported immediately to the site's reporting link or to local authorities. Let children know these are unacceptable and will not be tolerated by you or any adult. Ask children or teens to see their page occasionally and check out what is being said and posted on their child's page. This is one way for parents to ensure that rules are being followed and that there are no problems they need to be aware of.

By taking the appropriate steps, you can help insure your child's safety and make their online experience fun, but secure. Now, talk it up kids!

# Senior Citizens Online ...

## The Facts & The Fiction

Today, Internet usage by people over the age of 65 is growing at a steady rate. More people over the age of 65 are on the Internet than those who are not. The Internet is steadily becoming a regular part of daily life for senior citizens, with a whopping 82% of seniors going online daily. Many access the Internet each day to get email, chat with family and friends, go on Facebook and to surf the web. For most, the Internet is not as scary as they once thought.

As Internet usage in seniors continues to increase, the benefits for them are numerous. Many use Facebook and email to communicate with family and friends who live far away, and it's cheaper than picking up and using the phone on a daily basis. Some even video-chat with family for face-to-face contact. This has not only proven to help seniors to combat loneliness and depression, but also allows them to reduce the feelings of isolation and improves mental alertness. Since many senior citizens may not be able to get out of their homes on a daily basis due to physical and health issues, the Internet provides them a way to communicate with the world outside. And, the seniors love it!

Becoming an Internet user for the first time at an older age can be a scary thing. Many feel they are "too old" to learn something new or are afraid they won't be able to learn how to use it without looking foolish (244-4911) to the younger generation. This is fiction ... not the facts! Seniors should not feel this way, and there are many websites that now offer different programs to help senior citizens become more confident Internet users and give basic instruction for beginners. Here are a couple of those sites:

One great free site for seniors on the Internet is <http://www.microsoft.com/enable/aging/tips.aspx>. This site helps seniors get the most out of their computer by helping them customize their computer without downloading or having to buy programs. Seniors can be shown how to increase the font size of wording so they can view things on the screen more easily, how to keep the cursor on the screen so they can find it readily or how to turn up the volume so they can hear better. There are many things that can be done to help make the computer easier for any age senior to use.

Another great site for seniors just starting on the computer is Internet Basics for Seniors, which can be found on the web at <http://bestnetguru.com/internetbasics>. This site is even dedicated to "every single elderly person in the world who needs a little help using the Internet". It instructs seniors how to use a web browser and navigate the Internet, along with other basic computer knowledge. It is very well written and very easy for any age person to follow and learn from.

One last site that would be very helpful is GFC Learn Free at <http://www.gcflearnfree.org/topics>. This site has loads of free tutorials and videos about computers, the Internet and even everyday life activities, like using an ATM machine for the first time or having a fire escape plan for the home.

These are just a (249-4864) few of the many sites available to help any senior citizen to become more confident and comfortable with their computer and the Internet. Check them out and enjoy!



## Watch a Movie Tonight with XIT!

We are pleased to report that our Video on Demand equipment is now back from its recent trip to Israel. After being repaired and returned back to us, we are now in the process of reloading all of the content and obtaining new hit movies that are coming out! We want to Thank You for your patience during this time and hope you will give Video on Demand a try soon! Once you give it a try, you'll be hooked by the speed and convenience at which you can watch a hit movie!

Why stand in long lines, have to brave the cold or rainy weather, or go from store to store to try to find the new hit movie you want to see. With XIT Communication's Video on Demand you can (249-4077) watch new hit movies right from the convenience of your living room couch at home. Video on Demand is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week ... and is generally less expensive than going to the movies or buying that new release at the store. Video on Demand has the latest titles and most movies are usually available at least 28 days before Red Box or Netflix, so you don't have to wait to watch that movie you've been dying to see. So, check out Video on Demand ... and watch a movie tonight with XIT!



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## HAPPY RETIREMENT

Rick Heiskell retired November 30, 2012 from XIT Communications after 24 years of dedicated service. A morning breakfast was held in his honor in the break room of the corporate office. He began his career with XIT on March 1, 1988. Rick was a construction foreman and performed his job well.

Rick is married to his wife Sandy, who is employed at Dalhart Federal Savings & Loan in Dalhart. Retirement plans for Rick include spending time with his family, some projects at home and going fishing a lot more! Happy Retirement Rick!!!

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## NEW MAGIC MAIL PASSWORD CRITERIA

Due to more and more email accounts on the Internet these days being compromised, XIT has implemented some new criteria for log-in passwords in Magic Mail. If you are an XIT customer and want to change your email password, here is the new criteria that the password needs to have in order to be accepted in our system:

Password must be a minimum of 5 characters in length and has to contain both letters and numbers. Passwords need to be secure. Try to make it something people won't readily think of.

For example, instead of using the word "fifty" make it something like "f1i2f3t4y5" so that it is more difficult to figure out.

Also the password can't have the user name in it at all. For instance, if you use the user name of "chloe" then the word chloe can't be in the password at all, or it will be denied.

Please remember this new criteria if (366-2035) you change your email password in the future. We feel like this will make it more difficult for hackers to compromise email accounts on our system. We strive to make sure our customer information is always protected and secure, and this is just one more way we can do that!