



Bell Ringer

Volume 60, No 6 October 2026
Clear Lake, South Dakota 57226

SmartTown®

BRINGING CONNECTIVITY BEYOND YOUR FRONT DOOR

Staying connected has become an important part of everyday life, whether you're attending a community event, spending time outdoors, or simply on the go. That's why ITC is excited to introduce SmartTown®, a free benefit designed to extend your Wi-Fi experience beyond the home.

SmartTown® offers several benefits for eligible ITC subscribers:

- No additional cost to participate
- Secure connectivity beyond the home
- Automatic connection for enrolled devices
- A simple and seamless Wi-Fi experience
- Access to a growing community Wi-Fi network designed specifically for ITC subscribers



Participating in SmartTown® does not give others access to your personal devices, home Wi-Fi network, or Internet activity. SmartTown® uses secure authentication technology called Passpoint, along with ProtectIQ® and ExperienceIQ®, to help provide a private, secure, and safe connection experience. In fact, SmartTown® is designed to provide a more secure experience than many traditional public Wi-Fi networks because users are authenticated before connecting.

Your home network remains private and secure, and other SmartTown® users cannot access your devices or personal data. SmartTown® simply extends a secure Wi-Fi experience beyond the home while maintaining the protections you expect from your ITC Internet service.

ITC will continue expanding the availability of the SmartTown® network in all ITC communities through the end of the year. Eligible subscribers in those areas will be notified when it has been turned up. Upon activation, if the Passpoint profile has been added to your device, you will automatically connect to the SmartTown® network, creating a seamless and secure Wi-Fi experience. SmartTown® is designed to help subscribers stay connected in areas where cellular coverage may be limited while building on the broadband investments already serving our communities.

As your local broadband provider, we're committed to helping our communities stay connected while protecting the privacy and security of our members. If you have questions about SmartTown®, our local team is always happy to help.

Free. Secure. Connected. That's SmartTown®.

ITC University will be teaching a class on SmartTown® in October!

During this class, we will discuss what SmartTown® is and why it is useful to you. We will also cover security and answer any questions you have about this new, free service.

For more information on dates and to sign up for class, please visit our website at www.itc-web.com/itcuniversity. The classes are taught in Clear Lake, Milbank, Brookings, Ivanhoe, and Webster. If you have any questions or ideas for future classes, please call ITC at 1.800.417.8667.



PROTECTING YOUR ACCOUNT

By Michael Martinell, Network Broadband Technician

Most of us have learned to be suspicious of a strange email with bad spelling, odd wording, or a poor-quality logo. For years, those little mistakes were helpful warning signs. But lately, some scam messages have become much harder to spot.

One reason is artificial intelligence (AI). AI is not “bad” by itself, and many people use it for normal tasks like organizing information. Unfortunately, criminals can use the same technology to make scams look cleaner, sound more natural, and reach more people.

That matters because a lot of personal information is already out there from past account break-ins and data compromises. Scammers can use those details to make fake messages feel more specific and convincing.

AI can help a scammer write a message that sounds like it came from a real company. It can clean up awkward grammar and make the message believable. The goal of this is to get you to click a link, scan a QR code, enter your password, or share a one-time security code.

The scam may look like a delivery notice, payment problem, password reset, bank alert, or message from a service you use. It may not look “fake” at first glance, and that is exactly the point. This doesn’t mean you need to fear AI or be suspicious of every message. It means “look for bad spelling” is no longer enough. Scammers still rely on urgency, fear, confusion, trust, and curiosity. AI helps those tricks look more polished.

The good news is you don’t have to be a technology expert to protect yourself. A few extra seconds of checking can prevent most of these scams from working.

These habits can help protect your personal accounts:

- Do not trust a message just because it is well written or looks professional.
- Go to the company’s website or app yourself instead of clicking unexpected links.
- Be careful with QR codes in emails, texts, or attachments.
- Use different passwords for important accounts, especially email, banking, shopping, and social media.
- Turn on multi-factor authentication when it is available.
- Never share a password, one-time security code, or verification code, even if someone asks for it.

AI is a useful tool, but it can be misused. The best response is to not panic; it is slowing down. If a message asks you to hurry, click, scan, pay, or sign in, stop and verify first by going directly to the official website or app. If a message claims to be from ITC and you are unsure whether it is legitimate, contact the ITC Help Desk at 1.888.217.5718 before clicking a link or sharing account information.

RECAP OF ANNUAL MEETING

By Holly Stormo, Marketing Communications Specialist



The ITC Annual Meeting took place on September 9, 2026, with the theme of “Lighting the Way Forward for a Bright Future.”

A big crowd turned out to hear all the updates of the Coop.



Staff gave members rides from their cars to make attending easier.



CEO, Tracy Bandemer, announced another round of Capital Credits.



CSRs checked memberships before the meeting and handed out our free gift.



There were two booths for customers: one to sign-up for Auto-Pay and another to ask questions about ITC Stream and SmartTown®.

Thanks for attending!



NOTICE: The 50Mbps/10Mbps Internet package has been updated to a current Fiber-Fast Internet package. Members who had this package are receiving a monthly upgrade credit through December 2026. The standard pricing (\$54.95) for the upgraded service will take effect on January 1, 2027.