



The Patrons Chain

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE NATIONAL GRANGE

HAPPY JUNIOR GRANGE MONTH!



DID YOU KNOW THAT JULY IS JUNIOR
GRANGE MONTH?

HOW ARE YOU CELEBRATING THE JUNIORS IN YOUR COMMUNITY?



July 23, 2021

Grange Revival in Sturgis South Dakota

By Betsy Huber, National Grange President

We have arrived at Grange Revival, Sturgis, South Dakota! Over 135 Grangers came from all corners of the country, Washington to Florida, Maine to California, to enjoy five days of fun, relaxation, and fellowship together. What a blessing, especially after sixteen months of isolation! Many drove here, some flew, but all met together at the Days End Campground.

Grange Revival is a recreational activity organized by a group of Grangers led by National Lecturer Christine Hamp and other members who volunteer their time to plan this fabulous event for everyone to enjoy. It is not a National Grange-run event but National certainly promotes and approves it. Five staff members and an intern are taking our vacation to participate and make sure you get a full report.

You don't need to be a Granger to attend, guests are welcome. South Dakota was chosen because of its central location in the country, and the full service campground here. We have cabins, tents, RVs, hotels—any option you might choose. Every night we meet together for a shared dinner and conversation. During the day groups are touring the many sights in the area, from the Badlands to the Black Hills to the Motorcycle Museum and Hall of Fame. Friday evening we are bussing to Mount Rushmore as a group to see the light show.

Grange Revival happens every two years, and plans are already made for July 2023 in Curtis Michigan. Put this in your calendar now so you don't miss this great gathering of Grangers. It will revive your Grange spirit!

Broadband Funding Prioritization Needed

This week, National Grange President Betsy Huber drafted a letter that is going to several key senators and representatives to discuss the continued need for broadband funding and prioritization needed for those individuals who cannot access broadband. Read it below.

At the National Grange, our mission is to strengthen individuals, families, and communities through grassroots action, advocacy, education, service, and agricultural awareness. A critical component to our work is ensuring the economic well-being of our community members, which requires access to reliable, affordable, high-speed broadband. More than [14 million Americans](#) across the country, including nearly [1 in 5](#)

[rural Americans](#), continue to lack access to high-speed broadband. Without broadband access, our farms, ranches, schools, health clinics, small businesses, families and other rural community members are unable to utilize the precision technology tools needed to compete and remain competitive in today's global economy.

While we are glad to see the broad bipartisan support for an infrastructure bill that includes expanding broadband access throughout our country – particularly within rural communities – it is critical that Congress consider solutions to address the impediments that currently stand in the way of successful broadband deployment. Only then can we ensure that both public and private funding for broadband infrastructure is maximized for actual and timely deployment, and that truly unserved Americans receive access to broadband.

The priority for any new broadband deployment must be to connect the unserved first. This means traversing longer distances to reach fewer people in rural areas. Rights-of-way and utility pole access are critically important for enabling rural connectivity across the nation. Right now, however, the process of adding new broadband infrastructure is complex, costly, time consuming, and inconsistent. This oftentimes creates needless obstacles and delays to bringing broadband to the communities that need it most.

The current infrastructure bill presents a significant, once-in-a-generation opportunity to bridge our nation's digital divide, but Congress may need to consider right-of-way and utility pole access reform that ensures timely access, fair cost sharing, and expedited resolution of disputes. Only then can we maximize the public and private dollars devoted to deploying rural broadband and ensure that all currently unserved households, small businesses, anchor institutions, and farms and ranches across our country are connected without delay.

We look forward to working with you to help to connect more Americans.

Thank you,

Betsy Huber, President
National Grange

Paper Communications Bridge the Digital Divide. So Why Are Companies and Policymakers Removing Them?

Courtesy of Jim Haigh, Keep Me Posted

If we care about closing the digital divide, we should also be concerned about the assault on paper options that millions need to cross over it.

Over 11 years ago, the United States Federal Communications Commission (FCC) released the National Broadband Plan as a comprehensive roadmap to close the digital divide. The realities of pandemic life exposed how deep and wide the digital divide remains.

Policymakers, consumer advocates and media have been ringing the alarm bells over the social and economic impacts of widespread and persistent digital exclusion. Emergency funding

has been made available to help subsidize costs for those who have broadband access but cannot afford it, and even more public investment for buildout in underserved communities is in the works.

But the question nobody is asking: why are the same vulnerable and disadvantaged populations having their access to paper-based communications removed, even while they remain trapped in the digital divide? The critical attention to digital disenfranchisement routinely ignores the active role that regulators and corporations are playing to diminish consumers' existing communications options, stripping them of control against their will.

Back when the FCC released the National Broadband Plan, many corporations initiated cost-cutting efforts by peddling dubious greenwashing claims, while imploring consumers to opt in to e-billing and e-notices. As voluntary adoption of digital notices grew, some companies began charging additional fees for paper, aka "bills to get a paper bill" that became increasingly burdensome, a practice prohibited only in New York.

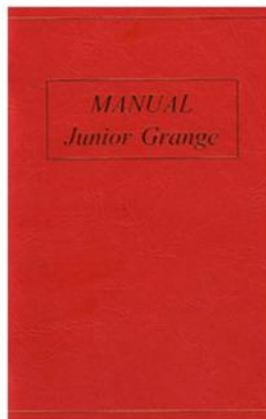
Over the last year, under all manner of COVID-19 and other pandemic pretexts, a staggering number of companies suddenly began switching their customers to electronic delivery without express consent. Some industries were even invited to do so by the regulators who oversee them. In just the last several months, the industries removing or hindering paper options grew to include banks and financial services, telecommunications and broadband providers, health insurers, investment and retirement plans, auto insurers, and even utilities.

According to a just released survey, nearly eight in 10 consumers believe that they should have the right to choose paper communications from their service providers, and 67% believe they should not be charged more to receive paper communications. The pandemic lessons of the vast digital divide show that people need more options in how they send and receive important information, with the default being the most easily and universally accessible option – paper. Those who cannot or choose not to access the internet, for whatever reason, should not be disadvantaged. The societal and economic costs of exclusion are just too high to ignore.



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Are you a Grange Enthusiast?

By Amanda Brozana Rios, National Membership and Leadership Director

New Granges in Nevada, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Washington.

Informational meetings set for Holt, Weston and Kansas City, Missouri; Reno, Nevada, and Billings, Montana to name a few.

There is a revival of sorts going on - not just what's happening in South Dakota right now with more than 140 members gathering to enjoy fellowship.

Individuals across the country are finding a longing for something, and for some, that something is the Grange. With all we offer, aligning with some of the most fundamental concerns and needs of our neighbors - often young adults and young families - this is the prime time to be working on Grange development and growth.

Some Granges, though, are set in their ways or exist only for a specific set of events or programs, and new individuals may be seeking to take part in other facets of our Order.

For this reason, we must not only work to tell our story and show the importance of our Granges already in our communities, but be willing to establish new Granges to carry the torch.

Even without halls (yes, Granges exist and sometimes thrive without their own building), new Granges can be chartered and usher in a new era of excitement.

Do you know of a community in your state that would be ripe for a Grange? Do you have the contact information for your State Grange Membership Director or President saved in your phone and ready to dial when you see a story about someone from an area without a Grange but covered by the local news doing a great thing and proving they are worthy of being a Grange member?

This is exactly what we did with my new Grange in Pennsylvania - and now we are continuing to use that as a way to identify individuals who may want all the Grange has to offer. We found a young woman who had established a community garden and was working to revitalize the greenhouses at the local high school. She is 16. This wasn't her first effort at organizing something big - she had done so with another garden in her community and started her own business growing and selling plants when she was in 8th grade.

She was a get - and we got her. We offered to pair her skills and interests with what we had already planned as part of our outreach for the Grange that was reorganizing anew.

This is a simple but effective way to identify and create a prospect list.

If you are a Grange enthusiast, you can help your State Grange (or another area, say over the state line where there is no Grange, as Kansas has done for us in Missouri) to see where we can start the next chapter of Grange in a hometown that needs us.

If you'd like to be part of a team helping to identify prospective communities in states without State Granges, please contact me.

Training will be available in 2022 on identifying prospective members and building a core group to start new Granges. You can be in on the ground floor by emailing membership@nationalgrange.org.

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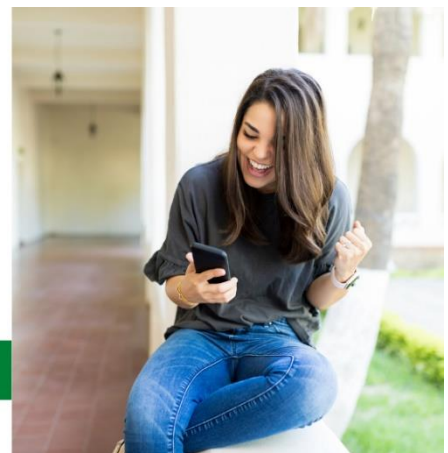
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