

**From our CEO:
70 years and only getting faster**

Originally published in the July-August issue of Connected Magazine

Welcome to Connected Magazine! This is a special edition for me, because it not only marks our 70th anniversary, but it also marks a major milestone in our history of service to you: We are now 100 percent fiber-based Internet. That means that you have access to lightning-fast internet that rivals some of the most urban of areas.

This feat was made possible only by you, our WCTEL members, who will always be at our core – the “why” behind every decision we make.

Our history is a rich one. It’s rooted in our community – a story of individuals who came together and wanted to provide telephone service to the community, so they could have the same access that metropolitan areas offered. Together, we’ve grown, expanded our territory and innovated – but driven by that same mission to connect you, so your homes, our communities and businesses could thrive.

We’ve often been asked why we have grown. Perhaps this question has been fueled by concern that we’ll forget our roots, the people who formed us and the community that sustains us. Simply put, that will never happen. You drive our mission. You drive our success.

When I step back and look at our growth and our future projections, the scenario facing our original areas of Abbeville, McCormick, Starr and Iva is not unlike many rural areas across the country. The sustainability and growth of our communities is crucial. By expanding into Greenwood, Newberry and most recently in the Upstate, we are not only serving others who need our high-speed internet, but this expansion allows us to experience the economies of scale that allow us to make needed investments in our infrastructure and develop more services, so that businesses will succeed, and our economies can be developed, attracting new commerce and residents.

Yes, our history is a rich one. But it’s also a predictor of our future. The same mission drives us. The technology and scope of our services may have changed, but the heart remains the same.