

MARCH/APRIL 2026

CONNECTION



Forward Momentum

Carrie Tollefson's
Olympic journey

PUST
LIVESTOCK
EQUIPMENT

DIGITAL
SPRING
CLEANING

Spring Cleaning

Practical advice for broadband success



KEVIN BEYER
Chief Executive Officer

Spring cleaning might include neatening up the garage, preparing for a garden or straightening out a cluttered closet. It often takes some strategic planning and at least a little elbow grease. But there's another type of annual cleanup that can make life easier, and it doesn't even need much, if any, physical effort.

Over the past few years, how we use the internet has changed, expanding in ways that may seem surprising. The rise of artificial intelligence is a prominent example. So, the internet services that once supported email and basic web browsing now handle school-work, video calls, online shopping, security systems, streaming media and, yes, even AI-driven tools and resources.

This is the world Farmers Mutual and Federated Telephone's service were designed to serve—robust, reliable and scalable. We have the infrastructure to grow with your changing needs. But if you want to get the most out of your internet connection, you can help too. And this is where a little digital spring cleanup comes in. And it's easy.

Start with a practical step. Take stock of the number of connected devices you have. Include phones, tablets, smart televisions and security systems. Even look in places like the kitchen because a surprising number of appliances connect to Wi-Fi. Generally, when idle none of these devices stress your high-quality internet service. You have plenty of capacity.

But when everyone is home and those devices are in heavy use, you may notice a slow-down. Imagine a couple of kids gaming in one room, someone else streaming a high-definition movie down the hall and a student busy with homework on her laptop in another room.

After listing the number of devices on your network, consider if your internet service meets that demand. We're happy to help. Contact Farmers Mutual or Federated Telephone, and we'll match the most affordable services to your needs. In many households, it can make a big difference.

Once that is complete, it's just as important to make sure all of your devices are up to date. Keeping phones, computers, smart TVs and other connected devices on the latest operating systems and firmware helps fix bugs, close security gaps and improve overall performance. Most devices let you set up automatic updates, so you don't have to think about it, but we are always available for advice and support.

And that's it. Two steps to a broadband spring cleaning. It shouldn't take more than a few minutes, and the gains can be profound. The goal is an internet service that fits seamlessly into the background. Students can focus on learning instead of waiting on screens to load. Families can easily stay connected with loved ones and access services. You're even prepared if work comes home with you.

Enjoy the spring. Please let us know how we can help you make the most of our service. And thank you for being part of the Farmers Mutual and Federated Telephone family. 📞

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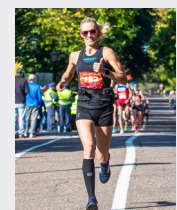


Photo courtesy of Paul Phillips

Carrie Tollefson's career milestones include joining Team USA as a middle-distance runner at the 2004 Olympics in Athens and becoming a broadcaster. See story Page 8.

2026 Board Elections

Farmers Mutual Telephone Company and Federated Telephone Cooperative annual meetings are approaching. The following districts are up for election in 2026. The Board of Directors are responsible for representing their cooperative membership by helping to develop policies and objectives for their cooperative.

FARMERS MUTUAL TELEPHONE COMPANY

Annual Meeting:
• Tuesday, June 9

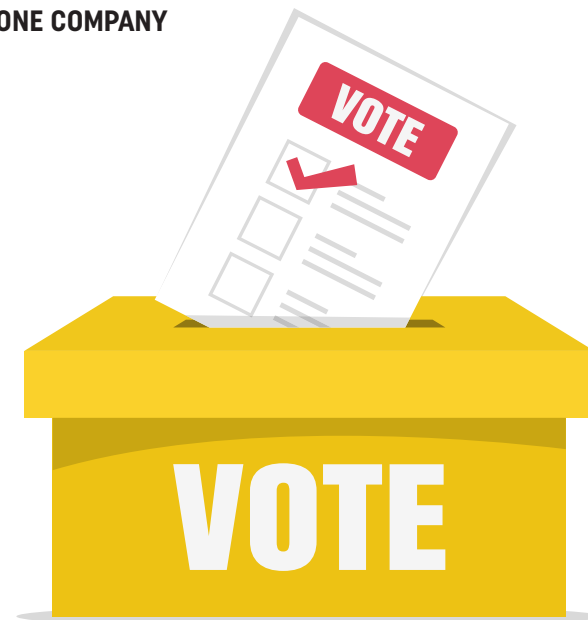
Districts up for election:
• District II
• District III
• District IV

FEDERATED TELEPHONE COOPERATIVE

Annual Meeting:
• Thursday, June 11

Districts up for election:
• District No. 4
• District No. 7

If you are interested in being a board member, please see your cooperative bylaws for information about the qualification process.



Call Before You Dig



Underground utilities are closer than you think. Before driving that shovel into the ground for your new garden or backyard fence, call 811, and we'll come out and mark the locations of buried lines before you dig.

Minnesota law requires homeowners to contact 811 and wait two business days—excluding weekends and holidays—before digging, even if you're working in your own backyard.

Respect the marks, and call for a re-marking, if needed.

Learn more about digging safely at gopherstateonecall.org, or start a marking request by calling 811 or 800-252-1166.



Lifeline is a federal program that lowers the cost of phone or internet services.

To find out if your household qualifies for Lifeline assistance, please visit lifelinesupport.org or call your telecommunications provider.

Still Dodging Robocalls?

You're not alone. Robocalls are still a problem, even with stronger Federal Communications Commission rules in place. Stay one step ahead with these simple tips:

- Register your number on the National Do Not Call Registry.
- Let unfamiliar numbers go to voicemail.
- If you pick up a robocall, hang up right away. Don't press any keys or answer questions.
- Gift cards, cryptocurrency and urgent payment demands are common scam tactics.
- Report scam calls and texts to the FCC Consumer Complaint Center.



From Dawson to Athens and Beyond

Carrie Tollefson runs across the world

Story by MATT LEDGER

Growing up in Dawson, Carrie Tollefson looked up to her older sisters, Kammie and Stacey. The Tollefson girls played sports year-round and were known for their hustle. “Sports were important to all of us, and it was a blast together,” Carrie says. “We all kind of pushed each other. I just kind of wanted to do all the things my big sisters did.”

MAKING STRIDES

In seventh grade, Carrie discovered running as Kammie competed in hurdles and the 400 meters at Dawson High School. Training alongside her older sister accelerated Carrie’s athletic development. Carrie ended her first competitive running season by placing ninth at the Minnesota State Championships. “I remember I was the first person on the floor after the race,” she says. “The top eight all had their own little block to stand on, and that was what bugged me. It wasn’t that I got beat. It wasn’t that I fell in the race. It was that I didn’t get my own block that showed my place. I remember going home and saying to my mom, ‘I’m not going to stand on the floor next year. I want to stand on that top block.’”

The following season, she did just that, notching a first-place finish at the state championships. Her dominance grew in high school, competing for Lac Qui Parle Valley and Dawson-Boyd. “I learned early on the drive that it takes to be great at something,” Carrie says. She won eight individual state track championships between the 1,600 and 3,200 meters, the most in Minnesota history. She also set a national record in cross-country with five consecutive state titles from 1990-94.

PATH TO THE PODIUM

Carrie’s high school success made her a top collegiate recruit. She chose Villanova University, a powerhouse in distance running. “Supposedly I was the No. 1 recruit in the country, and to be the No. 1 recruit from little Dawson, Minnesota, in farm country, was pretty cool,” she says. Villanova was a long way from home. “My parents told me they would visit when they could, but that I needed to go where the best runners go,” Carrie says. “It was an awesome opportunity.”



ABOVE: Carrie and Charlie spent a week touring Greece after she competed in the 2004 Summer Olympics. RIGHT: Carrie is interviewed as a member of Team USA.



ABOVE: Carrie, right, is a frequent commentator for national and international running events, including the live broadcast of the New York City Marathon, with ESPN’s John Anderson, left, and British broadcaster Tim Hutching.

Carrie placed seventh at the NCAA Cross-Country Championships as a freshman, making her mark at the elite level. Aches and pains are common in competitive sports, but tests triggered by persistent, nagging soreness discovered a benign tumor in her heel in 1997. She continued running despite the diagnosis, competing and winning her first individual NCAA title as a junior. In 1998, her heel was surgically replaced with donor bone, sidelining her from even walking for three months. “My career was saved because someone donated a part of themselves,” she says. The experience led her to become an advocate for organ donation. Carrie returned to win four more individual NCAA championships, also taking an NCAA championship with the Villanova cross-country team. By the time Carrie graduated in 1999, she was a five-time national champion. She turned pro in 2000, running for Adidas for 14 years.

LOCAL TO GLOBAL

By 2003, Carrie felt her training and timing align. “I knew I was coming around at the right time, and things were starting to click,” she says. A spot on Team USA requires a top-three finish at U.S. Olympic Trials. “I actually placed sixth in the 5,000-meter event that we all thought I would make the Olympic team with,” she says. Two days later, she earned the right to represent the U.S. in the 1,500 meters at the 2004 Summer Olympics in Athens, Greece. During the opening ceremony, Carrie mingled with sports stars including LeBron James and Michael Phelps. “One of my favorite

memories was going into the cafeteria in the Olympic Village and seeing all the athletes,” Carrie says. “I was at the table for the Americans, sitting across from Serena and Venus Williams. We looked up and here comes Yao Ming, who is huge, and he is walking in front of the American women’s gymnasts, who are compact, powerful women. It was a really special time.” The Athens Games became a celebration for her family, with her husband, Charlie Peterson, serving as tour guide. Though Carrie did not medal, the experience marked a career peak.

‘GET AFTER IT’

At Villanova, Carrie studied communications with an emphasis on broadcasting. She began working as commentator in 2002 with the Rock ‘n’ Roll Running Series and has since covered major marathons including New York, Boston and even the 2024 Paris Olympics. After becoming a mother, she launched the YouTube channel C Tolle Run in 2009. “There weren’t a lot of women becoming mothers and then returning to being a professional athlete,” she says. She shifted to podcasting in 2016 and continues public speaking and motivational coaching. In 2025, she revamped her YouTube channel, posting weekly for more than 20,000 followers with a simple closing message—Get after it. She still finds time to run on weekdays, joking, “I’m too busy running my mouth, rather than my legs at all these races.”



Carrie Tollefson and husband Charlie Peterson, left, catch up with her Villanova teammate and Canadian Olympian Carmen Douma-Hussar and her husband, Chris.

Photos courtesy of Carrie Tollefson

Built on Know-How

Farming experience, engineering expertise drive Pust Livestock Equipment

Story by LAZ DENES

Tim Pust knows livestock from the ground up, from the engineering side and from the practical realities of a fourth-generation family farm. The owner of Milan-based Pust Livestock Equipment has been immersed in the business for nearly two decades. He spent 16 years in the industry before launching his company in 2023. “I really liked it and knew we needed to move forward by doing it on my own,” he says.

ENGINEERING MEETS AGRICULTURE

Farming is still “the other half” of Tim’s life. He raises corn, soybeans, cattle and sheep. Growing up, he was hands-on in both the field and the barn. The equipment sales path came to fruition after he graduated from North Dakota State University with an agricultural engineering degree. He began designing ventilation systems and providing technical support for poultry, hog and dairy operations, a technical foundation that shapes how he works today.

“A lot of things that might seem scary, like controllers, cameras and data monitoring, are familiar to me,” he says. “I like helping producers connect to the solutions that make the most sense.”

Tim initially sold beef cattle equipment, a natural choice given the makeup of his own farm. Before long, other companies approached him about incorporating their products. Tim’s offerings quickly expanded to include Sioux Steel equipment and hoop buildings, Ritchie waterers, PWA Poly bins and ventilation, Rotem ventilation controllers and RosTech camera systems.

It’s mostly a one-man operation with Tim leaning on a trusted contractor for installations, and his daughter, Leila, a recent North Dakota State University graduate, assisting with marketing and design work. His wife, Natalie, also springs into action for trade show support.

What sets the business apart, Tim says, is the breadth of his expertise. “I don’t know another livestock equipment dealer that has experience in as many types

of livestock as I do,” Tim says. “That includes poultry, hogs, dairy, beef cattle, sheep, goats, horses.”

FOCUSED ON PRODUCT INTEGRITY

Tim’s business motto reflects his philosophy: “Only the best for your farm, because it has to work first.” It’s born from experience with equipment that fails and a firm resolve never to sell something he can’t stand behind.

Technology and reliable, high-speed internet, Tim says, play ever-increasing roles in the livestock industry. Camera systems for calving and lambing barns, for instance, rely on wireless links that can reach up to 2 miles. Ventilation controllers can be monitored and adjusted from a mobile phone.

None of it works without strong connectivity. Tim says his broadband service not only enables him to serve his customers but also keeps his own operation running. “I couldn’t do everything the way I do without it,” he says.



A smartphone logged into a poultry farm through the internet monitors current environmental conditions.



Do you ever feel as if your digital life is as cluttered as an overstuffed closet? Old photos pile up, unused apps linger and inboxes overflow. A digital spring cleanup can help, and it might even make your world seem lighter, faster and a little less stressful. And you don’t need to be techy to make a big difference. Try these five simple tips.

1. TIDY UP YOUR EMAIL INBOX.

First, don’t try to read every message. Instead, turn to the search function and look for words like “unsubscribe” or “sale” to find all the ads you’ve received. Delete large batches at once instead of opening emails one by one. Also, look for email newsletters and unsubscribe from the ones you no longer want. Fewer incoming emails means less clutter going forward and fewer distractions every day.

2. DELETE UNUSED APPS.

Scroll through apps on each of your devices, from phones to computers. Ask yourself, “Have I used this in the last month?” If not, it’s probably safe to remove. Unused apps not only take up space but removing them makes your devices easier to navigate and simpler to use.

3. ORGANIZE PHOTOS AND VIDEOS. EVEN A LITTLE BIT HELPS.

Don’t try to sort every photo you’ve ever taken. Start small by deleting blurry images, screenshots you no longer need and

duplicate photos. Create one or two simple albums like “Family” or “Favorites” and move your best memories there. Even a quick cleanup can free up space and make photos easier to enjoy.

4. UPDATE PASSWORDS.

Spring is a great time to refresh passwords for important accounts like email, banking and shopping. Choose passwords that are easy for you to remember but hard for others to guess. There are several great software tools to manage passwords, and a good starting place to find the one right for you would be the support pages for your devices. Apple, Microsoft and Google all have options, and there are also secure third-party tools.

5. BACK UP WHAT MATTERS MOST.

Make sure your important photos, documents and contacts are backed up somewhere safe. This way, if a device is lost or damaged, your memories and information aren’t gone with it. Think of backups as insurance for your digital life. Ideally, store these files on a cloud-based service, such as Apple’s iCloud or Microsoft’s OneDrive, as well as locally on an external hard drive in your home.

Digital spring cleaning doesn’t have to happen all at once. Even 15 minutes can make a noticeable difference. A tidier digital world can help you feel more organized, more in control and ready for whatever a busy life brings.



A 40-foot-wide hoop building is used for feeding cattle.



Pust Livestock Equipment

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Follow Pust Livestock Equipment on Facebook.

Tim Pust poses with his family, from left, daughter Makiah, wife Natalie and daughters Leila and Adelyn at their booth during the Swift County Fair last year.



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