

# TSTCI INFORMATION

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FOR TSTCI MEMBER COMPANIES

JANUARY 2008

[www.tstci.org](http://www.tstci.org)

Texans Helping Texans

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Texas Statewide Telephone Cooperative, Inc. is a statewide telecommunications non-profit organization representing the interests of Texas rural independent telephone systems. All member companies are regulated by the Public Utility Commission of Texas.

## TEAM 2008

### *A message from Delbert Wilson, TSTCI President*

Let me start by stating I hope you enjoyed the holidays and wish you the best in accomplishing your personal and company goals for 2008. I want everyone to know how much I appreciate the opportunity to serve as TSTCI President. It is a distinct honor and I pledge to work hard to meet our association's goals and objectives.

In January, TSTCI held its first Board of Directors meeting of the year in Dallas. TSTCI is very fortunate to have such a talented and dedicated group of members serving on our Board.

During the Board meeting, Bill Stinson, our governmental affairs consultant, presented a number of advocacy programs to help educate, communicate and motivate our members to become more involved in the governmental affairs process. The driving force behind our motivation to become more involved in 2008 stems from the uncertainty of our economy. Should we slide into a recession, the Texas Legislature could be facing a major reduction in revenue, which would begin their search for additional revenue vehicles to balance our state's budget. Certain potential revenue alternatives could be devastating to our customers and our industry. Any modification of the Universal Service Fund or changing present tax exemptions would bring a tremendous hardship to rural Texas.

We are often so preoccupied in our daily activities in serving our customers that we forget we have accepted more responsibility than just providing the best and most up-to-date telecommunications to our areas. We are also tasked with serving as the "Voice of Rural Communication" in Texas. The TSTCI Board realizes that, in order to successfully protect our industry's rights we must develop a broad advocacy platform. The platform must be able to deliver the necessary support or opposition on targeted issues affecting our industry.

Realizing that actions speak louder than words, the Legislative Committee and Board of Directors approved an action program for 2008 to keep our members and their employees informed on the importance of involvement and investment. Involvement means communication with the members of the Legislature to express the professional opinions of our membership on business issues affecting our industry and participation in the political affairs process. Investment means supplying resources to our political action committee – TSTCI PAC – so the funds will be available to support those candidates that uphold our industry's position on critical issues. We must remember the candidates elected in 2008 will become the upcoming 81st Legislative Session "decision makers" on issues which could impact our industry in a positive or negative manner.

Our theme – **TEAM 2008** – includes the following individual programs:

- ✪ **Advocacy Communications Program** to educate and communicate the importance of involvement and investment to our membership and to keep everyone aware of actions in the legislative or regulatory process that affect our industry.
- ✪ **TSTCI PAC Investor Program** which will encourage everyone to invest in the PAC; participants will be recognized in our newsletter and at association meetings.
- ✪ **Corporate Action Program** that will provide materials for our members to help in the education process of their employees as well as recognize those firms that excel in the implementation of TEAM 2008.
- ✪ **Political Affairs Program** includes three areas of involvement which will promote participation in a Contact Network for the Legislators, a Voter Impact program for the companies and a Political Advocacy program for the candidates up for election.
- ✪ **Coalition Building Program** will provide a forum for those members of the agricultural community as well as all other industries represented in rural Texas to become united in a coalition to support economic development, transportation, health care and communications for rural Texas.

All members will soon receive more information on the different programs and how their implementation will benefit our industry.

I am pleased to announce that the Coalition Building Program is already off to a great start. The first forum is February 26 in Kerrville, hosted by Hill Country Telephone Cooperative, Inc. Commissioner Todd Staples will deliver a message to all in attendance, “Rural Texas – The Foundation of Our Great State”. Later that week, Santa Rosa Telephone Cooperative, Inc., Brazos Telephone Cooperative, Inc. and Community Telephone Company join forces to host our second forum in Vernon on February 28. These are exciting times!

Members who were present for the annual membership meeting learned that, by using the TEAM concept, we can achieve our needed goals and objectives. After seeing everyone standing together and holding hands, I have decided to use the phrase as our motto for TSTCI this year. Thank you again for allowing me the opportunity to serve you and remember...

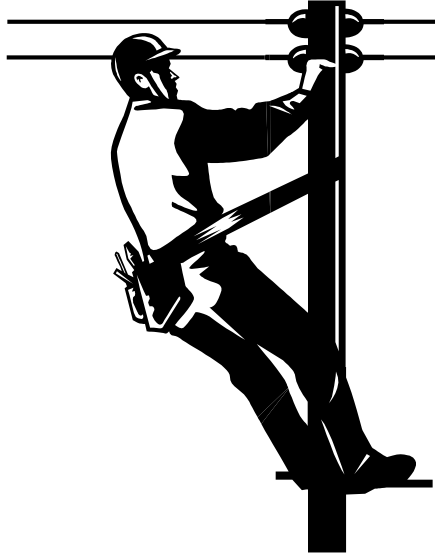
## **Together Everyone Accomplishes More!**

### **THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!**

**Robby Allen** of Alenco Communications, Inc., showed his support of the TEAM concept with an investment of \$1,000 this month! In addition, the Cap Rock Telephone Cooperative Board of Directors, **Edward S. Murray, Roger Holley, Stanley Degan, Beryle Murdoch, Eric Swenson, Jeff Thacker, Jerry Smith, Billy D. Hale and Joe Smith**, invested \$450 in the TSTCI PAC this month. The TSTCI Board appreciates the investment these individuals have made in support of the rural telecommunications industry!

## 2008 TSTCI PLANTMEN'S CONFERENCE – MARCH 5-7

*Time to Register & Make Your Reservations!*



The 2008 TSTCI Plantmen's Conference is being held at the Omni Austin Hotel Downtown, 700 San Jacinto Street in downtown Austin, Texas – right at the heart of Austin's famous entertainment district. Reservations can be made by calling 800-843-6664. Be sure to ask for the TSTCI Plantmen's Conference group rate of \$164. The deadline for our group room rate is February 12, so be sure to call right away. Reservations requested after that date will be on a space and rate available basis.

This year's conference includes a golf tournament on Wednesday March 5, at the PGA Signature Series course, Falconhead Golf Club. Participants will enjoy lunch at 11:30, with the tournament shotgun start at 1:30 p.m.

Be sure to check out the agenda on the TSTCI website ([www.tstci.org](http://www.tstci.org)) to see the great lineup of speakers. You won't want to miss this valuable program or the Tabletop Trade Show on Thursday evening.

Registration information was sent by e-mail January 18. If you have not received the information and would like to attend, contact Martha Shepperd at 972-243-8705 or by e-mail: [martha@tstci.org](mailto:martha@tstci.org). Printable registration and sponsorship forms are also available on our website.

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## TSTCI TO HOST MARKETING CONFERENCE



You spoke, and we listened! With the ever-changing telecommunications environment, rural telcos must find new ways to get the attention of their customers. To help our members with this challenge, TSTCI is hosting a Marketing Conference April 3 at the Embassy Suites Outdoor World in Dallas, Texas. "Marketing 101", employee incentives, and marketing requirements are just a few of the topics that will be covered.

The TSTCI Marketing Committee is finalizing the agenda to ensure this one-day conference is packed with information that will prove to be invaluable to your company.

***Mark your calendars for April 3!*** Information on the conference will be provided by e-mail in February.

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## *News from Associate Members*

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### *Mapcom Announces the Newest M4 Solution for Telecommunications Providers*

January 15, 2008 – RICHMOND, VA – Mapcom Systems, developers of the M4 Solutions Software Suite, announces the availability of the latest release in its line of geographical operations management software. The launch of M4 Solutions Version 7.5 includes enhanced fiber management tools, comprehensive network equipment tracking, and improved dispatch management capabilities.

M4's enhanced fiber tools facilitate the design, implementation and management of passive and active fiber-based networks. In Version 7.5, splice reports have been expanded into color-coded splice diagrams which graphically depict buffer tubes and fibers by color for easy-to-read splicing analysis and restoration. New signal path tracking tools for fiber-to-the-home networks and new functionality for tracing mid-span splices are also included.

In Version 7.5, Mapcom introduces its new Network Equipment Manager (NEM). Combining the power of its former Central Office module with new Rackbuilder technology, the NEM enables users to design, map, and manage their entire inside plant operation. Typically used in conjunction with the M4 Data Integration Engine linking the NEM to existing network monitoring and element management applications, the NEM features new "report affected" tools which graphically display which customers are affected by outages to specific pieces of inside plant equipment.

"This ability to know immediately who is affected by outages and have instant, geographically-based access to fiber cut locations and splicing priorities will significantly reduce outage times and require fewer escalations to higher-level technicians," adds Chuck Flournoy, Mapcom's Chief Operating Officer.

Enhanced technician scheduling functions within the M4 Dispatch Manager now enable dispatch personnel to see a full day view of each technician and their appointments. This facilitates the process of maximizing load and balance among available resources in order to enhance customer satisfaction and operate more efficiently. In conjunction with a previously-announced value-added reseller relationship with Fleet Management Solutions (FMS), which integrates an Iridium-based satellite GPS tracking and communications system into M4, the M4 Dispatch Manager is one of the most robust dispatch systems available to telecommunications providers today.

"As telecommunications offerings and networks become more complicated, it is vital to provide solutions that enable companies to take the information they already have and make it more useful and more powerful," concluded Flournoy. "The release of M4 Version 7.5 gives telecommunications providers the ability to maximize their existing software investments while dramatically increasing their utilization of the information warehoused throughout the telecom organization."

#### *About Mapcom Systems*

Mapcom Systems is the developer of M4 Solutions – a map-based Geographical Operations System (GOS) software suite that allows telecommunications providers to enhance their information flow by displaying data in a geographic view. The open-system approach enables users to integrate and correlate data from existing billing, accounting, GPS tracking and network monitoring applications with a geographically-correct land base map of all network elements in M4. Since 1971, Mapcom has developed one of the strongest reputations in the industry working with independents, cooperatives, fiber communities, and campus telecommunications providers of all sizes across North America and the Caribbean. For more information, visit the Mapcom website at [www.mapcom.com](http://www.mapcom.com).

## ***Eugene McCord Joins Martin Group as Vice President of Operations***

(Mitchell, S.D.) – Martin Group, the nationwide leader of Software, Business Services, and Engineering for communications providers, today announced that Eugene McCord has been appointed to Vice President of Operations. Mr. McCord will be responsible for managing the company's customer-facing operations including activations, software support, business services, IT, quality assurance, and training. In this position, Mr. McCord will determine and formulate policies and business strategies and provide overall direction for Martin Group. He will plan, direct, and coordinate operational activities at the highest level of management with the help of subordinate managers. He will report to Martin Group's CEO, Jim Odom.

Mr. McCord has a strong track record of success in building and managing high-growth organizations. "Mr. McCord is a results-oriented leader who has consistently demonstrated the ability to deliver revenue growth across all customer and product line segments while also improving profitability," said Jim Odom, CEO of Martin Group. "I am delighted to have his help in the operational management of the company and his focus on our business processes."

Prior to his current responsibilities, Mr. McCord was a founding stockholder of PrairieWave Communications and served as its Chief Information Officer and Vice President of the company until it was acquired by Knology in the spring of 2007. During his tenure at PrairieWave, Mr. McCord spearheaded two separate conversions of PrairieWave's operation to Martin Group's BSS/OSS Software Suite. Mr. McCord lead several initiatives at PrairieWave to develop procedures that emphasized work flow management, operational efficiencies gained by flow-through provisioning and consolidating information while making it available to cross-functional departments in a single system.

His vast communications experience includes leadership and operational positions with entrénet, NetSource Communications (formerly MTC Telemanagement), DialNet, Grand River Mutual Telephone Corporation, Midstate Telephone Company, N.E. Missouri Rural Telephone Co-op, and Martin Group (formerly Martin & Associates).

### ***About Martin Group***

Martin Group is the nationwide leader of Software, Business Services, and Engineering that address operational and marketplace challenges faced by communications providers. Martin Group is headquartered in Mitchell, SD and has regional offices spanning across the US. For additional information, visit [www.martin-group.com](http://www.martin-group.com).

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## ***JSI Announces 2008 Seminar Series***

GREENBELT, MD - January 3, 2008 - John Staurulakis, Inc. (JSI) has announced the dates for its popular 2008 seminars. The seminars, particularly the Management Seminars, will focus on the recent events in the telecom arena, including the Federal-State Joint Board recommendations on universal service and access reform, intermodal and VoIP local number porting requirements, and the 700 MHz wireless auctions. Once again we find ourselves drawn to the importance of education and awareness in light of industry uncertainty. To reflect the magnitude of the policy issues and business questions that define the industry's reality this year, JSI has developed a comprehensive Seminar Series for 2008.

JSI's 2008 Management Seminars include an overall review of key industry developments providing the insight and analysis designed to help companies focus on core strategies, emerging opportunities, and pro-active decisions. And for the first time this year, JSI plans to include several "tracks" to allow attendees to pursue policy discussions more directly related to their specific areas of interest. Two areas of emphasis are being considered -- Business/Financial, and Network/Technology -- which will be presented seminars in April in San Antonio, Texas and Atlanta, Georgia then in May in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

The Management Seminar is not the only session that JSI intends to enhance in order to better respond to company needs. For 2008, JSI has taken a close look at their two traditional financial seminars, the Accounting Seminar and the Separations & Access Seminar, to see how JSI might increase the value to attendees. JSI's spring Accounting Seminar will be offered in its traditional stand-alone fashion May 19-20 in Baltimore, Maryland. To accommodate the companies that try to attend both the Accounting and Separations & Access seminars, the seminars have been scheduled consecutively -- Accounting on October 14 and Separations & Access on October 15-17 in Nashville, Tennessee. This will provide attendees the opportunity to register for one or both seminars. For more information, visit the Seminar & Events page of JSI's website at [www.jsitel.com](http://www.jsitel.com).

#### *About JSI*

JSI provides a full array of financial, management, regulatory, business development, marketing/public relations and strategic services, as well as education and training. Established in 1962, JSI today provides these services, and more, to hundreds of companies across the nation. JSI also offers analysis and review of such competitive-focused issues as pricing and bundling, VoIP and IPTV assessment, CLEC and video/cable operations, strategic partnerships, image and identity, and mergers/ acquisitions. With more than 95 professionals on staff, JSI remains a leader in offering business solutions to independent providers. In addition to its Greenbelt, Md., headquarters, JSI has regional offices in Atlanta, Minneapolis, Austin, and Salt Lake City.

## **Upcoming Events**

### **February 2008**

- 7 PUC Open Meeting
- 7 Technology Futures, Inc. Broadband Futures Seminar – Austin, Texas
- 8 Technology Futures, Inc. Asset Valuation Conference – Austin, Texas
- 10-13 NTCA Annual Meeting & Expo – New Orleans, Louisiana
- 22 PUC Open Meeting
- 26 FCC Commission Meeting
- 26 Coalition Building Forum – Kerrville, Texas**
- 28 Coalition Building Forum – Vernon, Texas**

### **March 2008**

- 5-7 TSTCI Plantmen's Conference - Austin, Texas**
- 19 FCC Open Meeting
- 27 PUC Open Meeting