

every time you surf through all the channels now available in most homes today.

The downside has been the number of channels that depend on these subscriber fees to cover their cost, and the wholesale cost paid for this large volume of programming has been the primary reason for rising subscriber fees.

National Cable Television Cooperative was formed to help operators battle these rising wholesale costs. NCTC represents more than 1,000 independent cable operators, their 7,000 individual cable systems and more than 14 million subscribers nationwide. Of those 7,000 systems, about 6,000 serve fewer than 1,000 customers, most of whom are found in rural communities, Mulvenon said.

NCTC, which celebrated its 20th year of service last year, deals only with cable operators and has no rights to sell programming or equipment to home subscribers.

Faced with a seemingly constant wave of new technology and programming choices, rural cable operators have asked that NCTC be more than just a programming cooperative.

“The Co-op will continue to work to achieve fair and equitable programming rates that are commensurate with our size. That’s the backbone of the cable business,” said Michael L. Pandzik, NCTC’s president and CEO since created it was created in 1984. “But we also have to help members launch new services like high-speed Internet because that’s how they’ll stay competitive and keep their customers satisfied.”

To meet those challenges, the Co-op also



*Mike Pandzik, president and CEO*

helps member companies buy the equipment needed to build, rebuild, and expand existing cable systems. To add Internet service, digital channels, video on demand, and other new services, members turn to NCTC for their equipment purchases. Member companies can even buy their service trucks through the Co-op.

The value of the NCTC to members was noted last year in a special 20th Anniversary booklet. “The Co-op began as an aggregate for purchasing power,” said Patrick Knorr, general manager of Sunflower Broadband, an original NCTC member. “And for that alone the small cable industry owes its existence to the Co-op for its viability. However, in the past five years, the Co-op has demonstrated the ability to evolve, positioning it for continued success beyond this decade and probably for another 20 years.”

RFD-TV has been available to all NCTC members through a master agreement that was signed between the companies in 2003. “We are proud of our affiliation with NCTC and the operators that have chosen to carry this rural television network as a

basic channel,” stated Patrick Gottsch, Founder & President of RFD Communications, Inc. “It’s our goal to serve the needs and interests of every home in rural America. If there ever was a television network designed specifically for the rural cable operator, its RFD-TV.”

NCTC systems carrying RFD-TV seem to agree:

“RFD-TV has helped us in many ways,” said Jim Lynn of CC Communications in Nevada. “The programming is definitely appealing to our 30,000 subscribers. We are very glad we made the decision to carry RFD-TV.”

Dave Lull of Lavalle Long Distance in Wisconsin said “The customer helped us find RFD-TV. We had a lot of complaints when we didn’t carry RFD-TV,” he said. “Since we’ve added RFD-TV we have had no complaints whatsoever.”

Janell Hansen of Marne and Elk Horn Telephone in Iowa agreed. “We get more positive comments about RFD-TV than any other station that we have added. RFD-TV is very appealing to our subscribers.”

Jody Graham of TCT West in Wyoming said her customers like the channel as well. “Our subscribers love the cattle auctions and the shows on trains and antique tractors. RFD-TV is very popular with viewers in Wyoming.”

Consumers wishing to have RFD-TV added to their cable system should contact their local cable operator and request that the network be added to their channel lineup. Requests from the local cable system’s subscribers are most influential as these operators determine which channels to carry or add to their system through the NCTC.