



NEWS RELEASE

USDA RURAL DEVELOPMENT CELEBRATES 60th ANNIVERSARY OF RURAL UTILITIES SERVICES

Anita J. (Janie) Dunning, Missouri State Director for USDA Rural Development, was joined by Jessica Zufolo, Deputy Administrator for Rural Utilities Service in announcing the 60th anniversary of the Rural Utilities Services program delivering broadband, telecommunication and distance learning services to people in rural areas of Missouri.

Zufolo said, "Today, we highlight 60 years of connecting rural residents, businesses, and communities with telecommunication technologies that supported enhanced quality of life and improved economic opportunities. The experiences gained from that last 60 years becomes invaluable as rural communities prepare to compete in the world of 21st Century economies. We are proud to have played a role in the history of rural telecommunications, and look forward to continuing to play a vital role in the future."

"The vision of the telecommunication program is that rural America will have access to affordable, reliable, advanced communications services to provide a healthy, safe and prosperous place to live and work," said Dunning. "During the span of sixty years the agency has assisted many communities, individuals and families in Missouri with an investment of \$634,533,514 in loans and grants."

The rural utilities telecommunication program is designed to provide financing to eligible applicants in rural areas. Funds can be used for the following purposes: infrastructure loans to local telephone companies for improving telecommunications service in rural communities; broadband access (high-speed Internet) loan program and community connect grant program in eligible communities; distance learning/telemedicine loan and grant programs to rural residents. In addition to regular funding, for this year the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009 Broadband Initiatives Programs have additional funds available for loans, grants and loan/grant combinations for broadband in rural communities.

Part of the celebration included three success story presentations by NEMO.Net with North Shelby School District, a distance learning project; Texas County Memorial Hospital, a telemedicine project; and Worth County R-III School District for a distance learning project.



Pictured left to right: Cindy Hall, representative of Senator Claire McCaskill's office; Llana Weiss, representative of Senator Claire McCaskill's office; Jessica Zufolo, Deputy Administrator for Rural Utilities Service, and Janie Dunning, Rural Development State Director for Missouri.

During the celebration, announcements were made to the 2009 recipients of four Distance Learning and Telemedicine (DLT) Grants plus one Community Connect Grant. The DLT funding included: Citizens Memorial Hospital District in the southwest Missouri community of Bolivar received a \$500,000 to connect nine clinics and five long-term care facilities to the hospital with access to equipment providing tele-diagnostics in the areas of pulmonology (sleep diagnostics), cardiology, wound care, radiology, and orthopedics; Worth County RIII School District in the northwest Missouri community of Grant City received a \$321,931 grant to install one distance learning computer lab in each of eleven elementary schools so that they can participate in the Missouri Virtual Instructions program and to use other distance learning resources; McDonald County R-1 School District in extreme southwest Missouri in the community of Anderson received a \$143,001 grant to interconnect four schools with video-conferencing so that they can share resources to English language learners and at risk youth; and Scotland County Memorial Hospital District in northeast Missouri in the community of Memphis received a \$62,622 grant to connect a hospital, two clinics and a pharmacy with the primary purpose of telepharmacy plus upgrades to the existing video-conferencing system which supports remote consultation. In addition, a Community Connect Grant for \$471,905 was announced for Lake Communications in the central Missouri town of Brownington to provide broadband services to the community using hybrid fiber coaxial technology. A community learning center will also be established where local residents will receive free broadband Internet access for two years.

Approximately 60 people attended the celebration in Columbia, Missouri and 18 different broadband providers were recognized with a Certificate of Participation for providing broadband services for rural areas of Missouri.

Richard (Ric) Telthorst, President of Missouri Telecommunication Industry Association and Robert M. Clayton III, Chairman of Missouri Public Service Commission were in attendance and recognized for their outstanding partnership in providing telecommunication services in Missouri.

“I want to truly thank the providers and their organizations and their staff for partnering with USDA Rural Development to deliver the rural utilities services programs throughout Missouri,” Dunning added. “I know there are many more rural communities that can benefit from broadband and telecommunication programs. I invite you to contact USDA Rural development to discuss your situation and financing needs. Over \$1.2 billion in additional funds have been included by the Obama administration for the broadband programs for fiscal year 2010 so the time is never better than now to pursue broadband financing.”

For information on applying for a broadband loan you can visit <http://www.usda.gov/rus/telecom/broadband.htm> for loan and grant application guides. The community connect grant program information can be found by visiting <http://www.usda.gov/rus/telecom/commconnect.htm> and for the distance learning/telemedicine visit <http://www.usda.gov/rus/telecom/dlt/dlt.htm>

USDA Rural Development's mission is to increase economic opportunity and improve the quality of life for rural residents. Rural Development fosters growth in homeownership, finances business development, and supports the creation of critical community and technology infrastructure. Further information on the broadband and telecommunication program or any of the rural development programs is available by contacting Chris Collins, General Field Representative at the Missouri USDA Rural Development state office, 601 Business Loop 70 West, Suite 235, Columbia, Missouri 65203, chris.collins@wdc.usda.gov or calling 573-876-9304 or visiting the Missouri Rural Development homepage at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/mo/>.

“Committed to the future of rural communities.”

“USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender.”

To file a complaint of discrimination write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Ave., S.W., Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD).