

**CELEBRATING 60 YEARS OF FINANCING
TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND BROADBAND NETWORKS AND SERVICES
THROUGHOUT RURAL AMERICA**

October 28, 2009 marks USDA Rural Development's Rural Utilities Service (RUS) 60th anniversary of telecommunication loan and grant programs.

Created with the support of President Harry S. Truman, USDA's telecommunications loan program was established to continue the Rural Electrification Administration's (REA) success in delivering new technology to rural America. The REA was a predecessor to Rural Development.

In 1949 only one in three farms in rural America had access to telephone service. As it did with the rural electrification program, the Telephone Loan Program revolutionized the lives of millions of rural families and businesses by providing connectivity, access to emergency services and business activities that fueled economic growth.

Today, the RUS is currently working to meet our nation's next great challenge – deploying universal broadband access throughout rural America. Through our mandate under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, we are now embarking on the next chapter in the Agency's 75 year continuum of financing new technology in rural regions.

To carry out this mandate, the Obama Administration has provided over \$2.5 billion to the RUS for broadband infrastructure investments in rural communities. These funds will be targeted toward stimulating local economic growth and job creation across rural America.

Throughout the 60-year history in funding telecommunications expansion and adoption, communities benefitting from loans have advanced from operator assisted-party line calls to next generation fixed and mobile broadband services. Since the beginning of the program about \$18 billion has been invested in a wide array of infrastructure projects and services in communities in all 50 states, territories, tribal and Native village areas. In recent years, RUS also began providing loans and grants to support deployment of technologies, equipment and infrastructure for distance learning, telemedicine and community-based broadband.

On October 28th, USDA will celebrate this important milestone in history. Targeted outreach/press events will be hosted in communities throughout the country. If you would like additional information on the 60th anniversary activities, please contact Jessica Zufolo, RUS Deputy Administrator at 202-720-0696, or Kathie Klass, Outreach Manager 202-720- 2284.

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, D.C. 20250-9410 or call (800) 795-3272 (voice), or (202) 720-6382 (TDD).