



Groundbreaking Mecosta County Broadband Development Program Underway

Meeting for Connect Michigan's Connected program Thursday

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For Immediate Release
April 26, 2012

Big Rapids, MI - Mecosta County leaders are meeting today to continue broadband expansion planning. The county recently enrolling an innovative program that seeks to boost the local economy and quality of life for residents through increased access, adoption, and use of broadband.

Staff from Connect Michigan, the statewide nonprofit promoting broadband expansion, are leading Mecosta leaders through the steps of the new "Connected" community certification program that offers a comprehensive and localized way for communities to bridge the digital divide impacting many communities. The kickoff planning meeting was this past March, and a key benchmark meeting will be held today where county Chamber of Commerce leaders and executive board members will join the group discussion along with the program champions and other interested parties.

The project leaders have identified a number of broadband issues that they wished to address as a committee: broadband access issues in Sheridan Township as well as other rural areas of Mecosta County, low adoption of broadband especially among school children and elderly, access to broadband in the county's campgrounds, and increased usage of broadband in the county's agricultural community.

Those kind of issues led local officials to enroll in the Connected community certification program through Connect Michigan.

"We hope to achieve affordable broadband throughout the county," said Jennifer Heinzman, director, Mecosta County Area Chamber of Commerce and media leader for the committee. "We realized the benefits of broadband, not only to the businesses but to individuals, to keep us competitive and we need help in implementing our ideas."

The Connected certification program entails building a comprehensive action plan for

developing a technology-ready community by reviewing the technology landscape, developing regional partnerships, establishing local teams, and conducting a thorough community assessment.

The orientation meeting was deemed a success by the attendees, which included key members from the community. The group voted to form the Mecosta County Broadband Committee after the Connect Michigan presentation. There were 16 attendees at the kickoff meeting, including Linda Howard, Myrl Thompson, and Steve Wright, the team champions for the program.

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About Connect Michigan: As a public-private partnership, Connect Michigan partners with technology-minded businesses, government entities and universities to accelerate technology in the state. The work of Connect Michigan is made possible by support from the Michigan Public Service Commission. For more information about what Connect Michigan is doing to accelerate technology in Michigan's communities, visit www.connectmi.org.

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