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## **EMPIRE STATE DEVELOPMENT ANNOUNCES NEW BROADBAND RESOURCE AND 2015 AWARD WINNERS AT THIRD NYS BROADBAND SUMMIT**

*New Broadband Deployment Support Center Will Serve As Statewide Database & Facilitate Broadband Infrastructure Projects*

At the Third New York State Broadband Summit, Empire State Development (ESD) announced a new resource, the NYS Broadband Deployment Support and Resource Center website and the 2015 Broadband Champion Awards were also announced, recognizing high-achieving leaders working to expand broadband access across the state. The new website will help implement Governor Andrew Cuomo's commitment to substantially increase broadband access to the thousands of unserved families, schools and businesses statewide. At the 2015 State of the State address, Governor Cuomo set an ambitious goal to substantially expand high-speed broadband service within New York State by the end of 2018. In order to accomplish this goal, the Governor launched the largest and most aggressive state investment in broadband in the country, with a \$500 million commitment of capital. The program will partner with private sector providers to expand high speed broadband access in unserved communities.

"Under Governor Cuomo's leadership, New York residents and businesses are gaining access to high-speed Internet to pursue economic opportunity, spur job creation and strengthen our economy at every corner of the state," said ESD President, CEO & Commissioner Howard Zemsky. "Industry leaders are working hard to build on the Governor's broadband strategy and leverage state resources to achieve statewide access by the end of 2018. I am confident our private and public partnerships will meet this goal and bring broadband access to all New Yorkers."

The 2015 NYS Broadband Summit brought together more than 350 broadband stakeholders from New York and around the country to forge partnerships, discuss policy issues related to broadband deployment and adoption, and to hear best practices from nationally recognized broadband leaders and elected officials. The summit featured updates from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) and included several breakout sessions ranging from regional broadband strategy development, broadband and economic development and broadband adoption, to rural broadband challenges and workshops on how to form effective partnerships.

The Summit included keynote addresses by: Howard Zemsky, President, CEO & Commissioner, Empire State Development; Patrick Hooker, Deputy Secretary, NYS Department of Food and Markets; NYS Senator Betty Little; Gregg Sayre, Commissioner, NYS Public Service Commission; Kathy M. Sheehan, Mayor of the City of Albany; Gigi Sohn, Counsel to FCC Chairman Tom Wheeler; Emy Tseng, Program Officer, NTIA Broadband Opportunities Program; and Maya Wiley, Counsel to New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio.

At the summit, ESD officials unveiled a website designed to facilitate broadband infrastructure deployment in New York State, the NYS Broadband Deployment Support and Resource Center. The website includes a case management system for submitting, tracking, and resolving issues related to broadband deployment. Stakeholders can report issues that could potentially impact or delay broadband infrastructure projects, and those issues will be routed to the NYS Broadband Program Office and other stakeholders to seek a resolution. The site also includes a central data repository designed to enable users to more quickly and efficiently find documentation related to broadband expansion.

Additionally, at the Summit, the 2015 Broadband Champion Awards were announced. The winners, representing exemplary broadband leadership and collaboration throughout the state, are as follows:

#### **Best Broadband Adoption Initiative: CFY Digital Learning Program**

The *Best Broadband Adoption Initiative Award* recognizes a project that has had a great impact on computer digital literacy training or increases statewide Internet use. This year's award recipient, CFY Digital Learning Program, is a nationally recognized, innovative program designed to increase the adoption of home broadband services by low-income families. Working in partnership with high poverty schools, this program combines family services and professional development to drive broadband adoption. The CFY Digital Learning Program serves more than 22,000 families of middle school students (increasing broadband subscribership from 50 to 93 percent), and 5,000 families of high school students (increasing broadband subscribership from 52 to 95 percent) in the NYC region.

#### **Most Innovative Broadband Project: The Town of Thurman White Space Program**

The *Most Innovative Broadband Project Award* recognizes an innovative product, service, application, project or program that has an emphasis on fueling New York's digital economy, while allowing citizens to be connected. This year's joint award recipients, The Town of Thurman, Rainmaker Network Services and Frontier Communications, used cutting-edge White Space technology to provide high-speed Internet to this rural community in the Adirondack Park. White Space technology has only been licensed for use in recent years by the FCC to provide broadband service. By implementing a White Space system, the Town of Thurman found a way to supply

Internet service to an area without the need for costly infrastructure. Where there was once only dial-up and satellite Internet service, citizens now have reliable high speed Internet at affordable rates.

### **Most Collaborative Broadband Project/Program (TIE)**

The *Most Collaborative Broadband Program Award* acknowledges a project or program that has increased statewide Internet use and/or promotes digital literacy, while increasing broadband subscription rates in New York State.

- **Legislator Lynne Johnson of Orleans County and Legislator David Godfrey of Niagara County of the Niagara-Orleans Regional Alliance (NORA).** Legislator Johnson and Legislator Godfrey spearheaded a multi-county, cross-regional initiative to expand broadband coverage into lower population density areas in their counties. These two legislators provided critical executive leadership and conducted stakeholder outreach to build support for the project across multiple counties and towns. This effort helped to identify the Internet needs of 17 towns and identified 4,000 unserved rural address points that formed the basis for a profitable business case that ultimately attracted a service provider to the two counties in the Western region.
- **Development Authority of the North Country (DANC) and Slic Network Solutions** have engaged in multiple efforts to deliver broadband to rural communities in the North Country Region. This most recent partnership was created as a means to provide broadband access to homes and businesses in rural areas where middle-mile fiber already existed but residential service had not yet been established.

Their partnership allowed both providers to expand their service footprints rapidly, while limiting up-front costs, and generating revenue on unused assets. As a direct result of this collaboration, small, rural communities in the North Country region are now enjoying the benefits of broadband.

### **Most Collaborative Broadband Adoption Program: Computers for Children, Inc., in partnership with First Niagara Bank, and the John R. Oishei Foundation**

The *Most Collaborative Broadband Adoption Program Award* recognizes an initiative that has had a great impact on digital literacy through the combined efforts of two or more organizations. This year's award winners celebrate a successful collaboration between Computers for Children, Inc. (CFC), First Niagara Bank, and The John R. Oishei Foundation.

CFC is helping to bridge the digital divide by providing reconditioned computers and digital literacy training to schools, nonprofit agencies, and at-risk youth and families. First Niagara Bank donated computer equipment to CFC under their refurbishing and re-distribution program. This donation of computer equipment to CFC is the largest donation ever made by First Niagara Bank.

The John R. Oishei Foundation has also supported CFC's mission through substantial financial contributions.

The combination of partner expertise, computer equipment, and funds helped make this program a great success. Together, these partners made it possible for more than 100,000 students to receive digital literacy training, and installed more than 30,000 computers into schools, agencies, and high need populations to help bridge the digital divide in the Western region.

### **Economic Leadership Award: Frontier Communications – Hamilton County Broadband Project**

The *Economic Leadership Award* celebrates the successful implementation of innovative, economically promising broadband project or program in a community or region that enhances the social and economic fabric, and quality of life for its residents. Broadband is a powerful tool to stimulate economic growth and development, especially in New York's rural communities. Hamilton County is a rural county with a small population, located partly in the Adirondack Park. Even though improved broadband access was a top priority for the county, its small and widely-dispersed population made it economically difficult for providers to see the business case to expand into the county. However, Frontier Communications stepped up to the challenge by providing access and increased broadband reliability to most hamlets within the 1,700 square mile portion of the Adirondack Park. By serving approximately ninety percent of the households and businesses in the county, Frontier Communications is helping to grow this local economy in the North Country region.

### **Extraordinary Broadband Team Award: ECC Technologies**

The *Extraordinary Broadband Team Award* recognizes an exceptional broadband team that has proved to be a major influence on the direction and success of broadband development in New York State. This year's award recipient, ECC Technologies, is considered a pioneer in the development of community-based broadband. This ECC team has unparalleled experience in conducting broadband and telecommunications infrastructure inventories and finding solutions through projects in more than 60 counties in the eastern United States. In New York State alone, this team is responsible for helping deploy nearly 600 miles of open-access fiber built throughout five counties in Upstate New York. ECC Technologies also introduced the open-access model to many regional and local officials throughout the state, as a type of network to help solve

issues related to lack of affordable and reliable broadband services in urban, rural, and unserved areas across Upstate New York.

**The Extraordinary Broadband Leadership Award: Jim Becker of ION and the Middleburgh Telephone Company**

The *Extraordinary Broadband Leadership Award* is presented to an individual or company that has provided a major influence on the direction and success of broadband development in New York State. The 2015 recipient, Jim Becker, has been instrumental in bringing several large projects to fruition in order to expand broadband services to many rural areas in New York State. Mr. Becker spearheaded ION's multi-million dollar project to bring broadband services to rural areas with federally-funded programs. He is currently working with Schoharie County through his affiliation with Middleburgh Telephone Company to expand broadband access. Mr. Becker has also been a valuable source of information and guidance to the New York State Broadband Program Office and the New York State Telecommunications Association, where he serves as Chairman.

For more information about Empire State Development, New York State's economic development agency, please visit [www.esd.ny.gov](http://www.esd.ny.gov).

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