

High speed Internet arrives in Deming



Mark Reimers

Wed, August 03, 2011

DEMING — In a ceremonial kickoff to broadband internet access, the Deming Library hosted a celebration on Monday, Aug. 1, capping a new milestone in rural broadband expansion in Washington State.

The project was funded through a \$140 million grant as part of the Federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to the Northwest Open Access Network (NoaNet), which was represented at the celebration by CEO Greg Marney.

NoaNet is leading construction of more than 1,300 miles of new fiber capable of delivering enhanced, affordable broadband service to 55 economically depressed communities across 25 of Washington's 39 counties.

The Deming project is the first of about five rural broadband infrastructure projects funded by the grant in Washington.

Marney said the Washington project is the largest participant in the federal grant program, mainly due to the high level of local community cooperation to be found all over the state.

The Deming broadband project provides the expensive infrastructure that would otherwise not exist, due to its high up-front cost which would discourage private investment in a limited market area. Other cooperating companies and agencies include Black Rock Cable, Washington State Library and the Whatcom County Library System.

Local dignitaries on-hand Monday to congratulate local residents included Whatcom County Executive Pete Kremen, Whatcom County Councilwoman Barbara Brenner, Washington State Librarian Rand Simmons, Mount Baker schools Superintendent Richard Gantman and Whatcom County Library System Director Joan Airoidi.

U.S. Rep. Rick Larsen was originally scheduled to attend but had to cancel due to the impending vote on the United States debt ceiling, but was represented by a member of his staff.

A letter from U.S. Sen. Patty Murry was also received and read aloud to mark the occasion.

Black Rock Cable President Bob Warshawer spoke, in his remarks, about his admiration and respect for the late Linda Dorsett, who died recently in a tragic road roller equipment accident.

Dorsett had been a vocal proponent and focal point of efforts to bring fast and reliable internet service to the foothills, where most individual homes are still serviced by dial-up connections.

Dorsett's efforts and foresight in this matter spanned 10 years, long before the opportunity of the federal grant materialized.

The Deming Library had previously served as one of the few high-speed portals in the foothills, with public WiFi service available for patrons.

The new fiber optic access now in service is much cheaper to run and can carry the bulk of the traffic load, said library IT specialist Geoff Fitzpatrick. In addition, the reliability of the library connections are vastly improved due to the diversified options.

Extending broadband access to Deming was the first phase of the foothills project, said Warshawer. Phase 2 will extend the line into Kendall in order to serve the elementary school, library branch and East County Resource Center, as well as local residents in that area.

The Kendall project may take more than a year to complete since the phases are state-wide processes with all communities involved needing to complete environmental impact assessments, Warshawer said. — Lynden Tribune