BUSINESS CONNECTIONS

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Rainbow Communications Wins National Award

L to R: Scott Leitzel, Twin Valley; Melvin Massey, Rainbow Board Member; Jackie Petersen, Marketing Manager; Jason Smith, Assistant General Manager; Shirley Bloomfield, CEO NTCA; Angie Kreider, Sales Manager; Stacy Simmer, PR/Community Development Coordinator; and Mike Twombly, Station Manager

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How are you making your community a better place?

Don't feel bad if your answer is, "I'm not sure." It's never too late to start! In this issue of *Business Connections*, we explore different ways of contributing locally, including our own efforts toward making our area a better place to live by making it a Smart Rural Community.

So, **What is a Smart Rural Community?** On page 3, we explain how broadband technology can lead to improvements in education, health care, farming, citizen participation, safety, and utilities. Such strides make our local area a better place for those who already live here, and a more attractive destination for new business.

On pages 4 and 5, we are proud to announce: **Rainbow Communications Wins Smart Rural Community Award!** This honor was the result of our recent investment of $20 million to upgrade our broadband network, and our commitment to working with local customers to ensure positive outcomes for the whole community.

You'll read about **How Our Infrastructure Investment Has Paid Off** on page 6. Marketing Manager Jackie Petersen explains how being a Smart Rural Community provides support for the agricultural industry, economic incentives for companies to move to the area, and exciting opportunities for those that are already here.

Finally, on page 7, we talk about **The Business Benefits of Giving Back**. You probably already know that supporting local organizations feels great and is "the right thing to do." But, did you know it can also provide concrete business benefits?

Helping the community is an ongoing effort, and Rainbow Communications is always here to assist the businesses within it, including yours.

Sincerely,
Rainbow Communications
Sales Department

L to R: *Julie Bergman, Sales Representative; Amiee DeFore, Technology Solutions Clerk; Angie Kreider, Sales Account Manager, and Jerad Enneking, Sales Representative*

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What is a Smart Rural Community?

Broadband enables rural Americans to enhance competitiveness and quality of life

Our sales staff proudly celebrates Rainbow Communications being named a Smart Rural Community. Shown left to right are Amiee Defore, Jerad Enneking, Angie Kreider, Kasey Strube, and Julie Bergman

You've heard of smart homes, smart phones, and the smart grid, which all rely on broadband technology to operate more effectively and efficiently. The same technology can be used to enhance entire communities.

NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association has started an initiative—known as Smart Rural Community—that promotes rural broadband networks and related applications. The program encourages rural areas to use broadband to foster economic development, commerce, education, health care, government services, public safety and security, and efficient energy use. The program is based on the understanding that communities across the U.S. must be able to compete in a global marketplace, and that rural communities are often at a disadvantage in that they typically have less access to the tools and technologies that make it possible.

But, what makes a rural community "smart"? A truly smart community relies not only on technology, but also on the people who adopt and employ broadband-related services. According to NTCA, "A smart rural community should strive to create next-generation applications and platforms."[1] The organization offers several examples of outcomes that can be gained through use of broadband:

• **Customized learning environments** for students, including interactive and collaborative components

• **A dynamic health care infrastructure** capable of supporting such applications as electronic scheduling and patient monitoring

• **Precision farming tools** such as real-time weather reports and other helpful information that enable them to make better decisions

• **Platforms for connecting citizens** with local, state, and federal government resources

• **A next-generation 911 system** that allows first responders to communicate efficiently during emergencies

• **Modern utility networks** that give users more information and control

• **An energy-saving smart home network** that enables appliances and devices to connect with each other

Broadband provides a foundation that makes all of these developments possible. NTCA notes, "New innovative applications are created when there is a technological platform in place."[2] A good broadband infrastructure should be capable of supporting the initiatives listed above, and have the capacity to continue doing so long into the future. The organization suggests that communities provide capabilities of at least 20 Mbps to regular customers, and 1 Gbps to institutions such as hospitals, libraries, and schools. The Smart Rural Community should also offer reliable mobile access. In addition, broadband providers should have a strong cybersecurity plan in place.

The Smart Rural Community program acknowledges that there are differences in what makes each community smart. The key is for community leaders to work together to determine needs and interests, as well as specific goals and how to meet them, in each locale. As time goes on, each community's plans should evolve to meet its changing requirements.

[1]Source: ntca.org/smart-rural-community/what-makes-a-rural-community-smart.html

[2]Source: ntca.org/images/stories/Documents/Advocacy/Issues/Broadband/TheSmartRuralCommunity.pdf

Rainbow Communications
Wins Smart Rural Community Award

Our commitment to broadband is recognized with industry top honor

A Program of: THE RURAL BROADBAND ASSOCIATION®

On September 21 in Boston, NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association awarded Rainbow Communications with its highest honor — the 2015 Smart Rural Community (SRC) Showcase Award. An SRC uses broadband networks to enable economic development, top-notch education, superb health care, cutting-edge government services, robust security, and more efficient energy distribution and use.

Investing in Smart Technologies

"What set Rainbow Communications apart," says Rainbow Communications Sales Manager, Angie Kreider, "was our recent investment of $20 million to upgrade our broadband network." Included in the upgrades was a 100% Fiber to the Home (FTTH) network in our cooperative exchanges. We also installed a core fiber network for anchor institutions such as schools, hospitals, and government offices in Hiawatha, Sabetha, and Seneca, with Internet speeds up to 1 Gbps symmetrical (both download and upload).

Jason Smith, Rainbow Communications Assistant General Manager, says, "We are honored to be nationally recognized for our contributions to our communities. While we invest in our broadband networks, our rural communities are smart because businesses and organizations utilize our broadband in ways that inspire economic growth and social development. This is an honor for all of us to celebrate."

NTCA Leads Innovation

NTCA is the premier association representing nearly 900 independent, community-based telecommunications companies that are leading innovation in rural and small-town America. NTCA advocates on behalf of its members in the legislative and regulatory arenas, and provides training

and development; publications and industry events; and an array of employee benefit programs. In an era of exploding technology, deregulation, and marketplace competition, NTCA's members are leading the IP evolution for rural consumers, delivering technologies that make rural communities vibrant places in which to live and do business.

> **What set Rainbow Communications apart was our recent investment of $20 million to upgrade our broadband network."**
>
> —ANGIE KREIDER, SALES MANAGER, RAINBOW COMMUNICATIONS

Because of their efforts, rural America is fertile ground for innovation in economic development and commerce, education, health care, government services, security, and smart energy use. The SRC program is administered by NTCA with several third-party, non-telecom organizations that have interests in rural America. This latter group includes the American Farm Bureau Federation, Rural Schools and Community Trust, John Deere, and the U.S. Veterans Health Administration's Office of Rural Health.

Strong Community Benefits

In our application to be considered for this award, Rainbow Communications mentioned about 20 local businesses and organizations that utilize broadband to enhance growth and innovation. Here are a few highlights:

SAFETY – *Brown County Sheriff Department*

One of the many challenges faced by law enforcement agencies is maintaining safety. Rainbow Communications recently installed a third secure fiber optic line for the Brown County Sheriff Department's new body camera program. The body cameras act as an additional safety feature by extending sight beyond the patrol car camera lens. The footage continuously downloads; with dedicated fiber technology, it takes less time to download, view, and store videos. Having the ability to operate at a faster pace means a shorter response time.

The Brown County Sheriff Department also uses Nixle, a text and email messaging system that alerts citizens of incomings storms, floods, fires, or other dangers. Having fiber allows the Sheriff's office to push out notifications quickly and consistently. The messaging system is extremely important for people living in rural areas where tornado sirens are unavailable.

### RECRUITMENT – *Northeast Kansas Enterprise Facilitation*

The Northeast Kansas Enterprise Facilitation is a nonprofit organization that offers free and confidential business coaching in Northeast Kansas. Teresa McAnerney, the facilitator of NEKEF, works from home using Rainbow Communications' broadband service free of charge as a recruitment tool to research grants, industry trends, and regulatory processes for NEKEF clients. Rainbow Communications has served on the board since 2006.

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT – *AgJunction*

Until 2013, AgJunction, a company that makes GPS guidance systems for agricultural equipment, was headquartered in Calgary, Canada, with offices throughout the U.S. and other countries. The company was considering a move to Hiawatha, KS, but expected its broadband needs to increase significantly. Because of that and because of the needed scalability, the company's move depended on the broadband network available. Due to the bandwidth Rainbow Communications was able to provide, the company chose to make the move to Hiawatha, an opportunity that might have slipped by if Rainbow Communications had not built out our fiber network. With AgJunction came jobs; the company now employs 68 full-time workers at its Hiawatha location.

> "*While we invest in our broadband networks, our rural communities are smart because businesses and organizations utilize our broadband in ways that inspire economic growth and social development.*"
>
> —JASON SMITH, ASSISTANT GENERAL MANAGER, RAINBOW COMMUNICATIONS
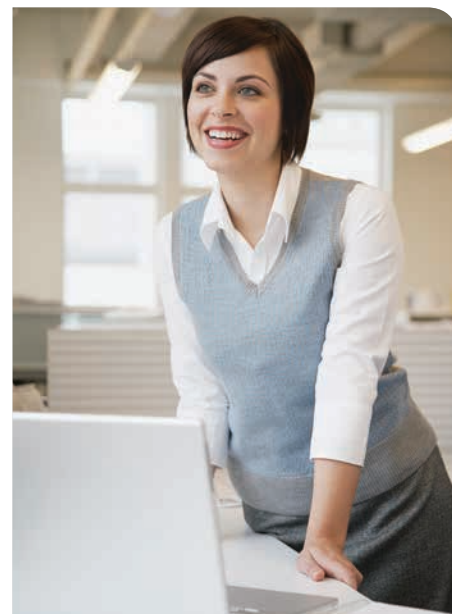
SMART TECHNOLOGY MOVES FOR YOUR COMPANY

Ready to take advantage of the broadband benefits in our community? Here are some ideas for how you can leverage it:

1. Accommodate more users. Broadband can handle the demands of more employees and more devices while keeping everyone productive.

2. Upload faster. Does your business send a lot of large email attachments or frequently access an online database? If so, you'll notice these tasks take much less time with broadband.

3. Collaborate more. With technologies like file sharing, instant messaging, and Voice over IP (VoIP), you can stay in closer contact with customers, vendors, and employees.

4. Work at home. Or, empower your employees to do so. A smaller office, or even no office, can save your company money.

Contact Rainbow Communications today at 800-892-0163 to learn more about speeding up your business.

How Our **Infrastructure Investment** Has Paid Off

The many dividends of Rainbow Communications' broadband network upgrade

Winning the Smart Rural Community Award from NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association has been great for Rainbow Communications, but even better for our customers and the community. Here, Jackie Petersen, Marketing Manager, explains why.

Q. **"Collaborative leadership" is a big part of a successful Smart Rural Community. Can you describe what it means?**

A. The Smart Rural Community concept offers a platform for collaboration between business owners, local organizations, and government leaders to think about how we can most effectively innovate and utilize the broadband network to improve the community.

Q. **Does the Smart Rural Community award serve as an incentive for companies to move to the area?**

A. Yes. For companies that may not necessarily want to move to an urban area, yet might be dissuaded by the lack of infrastructure still found in many rural areas in the U.S., the award serves as a signal that they can do everything they need to do from here.

Q. **How does broadband technology impact the agricultural industry?**

A. A lot of people don't realize how much agriculture is dependent on technology. Often, government representatives don't understand that those who live in rural areas need the same level of technology as those in urban areas. The award brings these issues to the surface and enables us to tell this story on a national level.

Q. **What's on the horizon in terms of new technologies and opportunities?**

A. One opportunity we have with this technology is to keep more of our young people in the community. In previous generations, they've left because there wasn't enough work here to support them. We hope to bring community leaders together to think about how we can retain them—for example, within new businesses that might be attracted here, or in work-from-home arrangements.

Another possibility is creating mentorship programs between schools and businesses to ensure students are being trained in all relevant aspects of technology. We're currently working on that.

Finally, we're pleased that this award brings awareness to the issue of what's needed in the nation overall to strengthen rural America. Our children deserve the best education possible, our families deserve the best health care available, and our loved ones deserve the best public safety.

Q. **Is there anything else you would say specifically to local businesses?**

A. We want them to know the broadband network is there for them, and ready for any kind of application or new techniques they want to try. Local businesses can innovate, create, and grow, and the infrastructure can grow with them. There are so many possibilities. This is just the beginning!

> *Local businesses can innovate, create, and grow, and the infrastructure can grow with them. There are so many possibilities."*
> —JACKIE PETERSEN, MARKETING MANAGER, RAINBOW COMMUNICATIONS

The Business Benefits of **Giving Back**

Now is a great time to get involved with local organizations

Rainbow employees show some of the shoeboxes they filled with Christmas gifts for children in need.

Giving back to the community feels great, and many companies see it as "the right thing to do." But did you know it can also be a profitable thing to do? Here are just a few of the benefits of volunteering for and donating to local organizations:

- **Improved image.** Companies that give back are perceived as having integrity and a community spirit. This goodwill can translate into more business.

- **Stronger employee engagement.** Studies have shown that most employees aren't fully engaged with their jobs. But, the good news is, company giving can contribute to fuller engagement. More engaged employees provide better service, leading to more business for you.

- **More networking opportunities.** Through the process of volunteering or donating, you get to know others in the community. Expanding your network is a great way to spread the word about your company.

Companies can help local organizations in multiple ways. Be creative to come up with ideas that work for your company and local organizations. Here are some suggestions to get you started:

1. Donate and/or match employee donations.
Organizations that help those in need are always looking for donations. Your company can contribute directly, provide a match when your employees make a donation, or do something fun like throw a party for employees if a certain dollar amount is reached.

2. Volunteer and/or help employees to volunteer.
Discuss with organizations you want to assist how your company or team could put in hours as a group to help. For example, your team could spend an afternoon working on a Habitat for Humanity house. Or, allow employees to choose their own organizations, and give them time off to volunteer.

3. Offer services.
Providing your products for free or at a reduced rate is another great way to contribute to local organizations. Basic services like health care, food, and clothing are especially useful to offer.

4. Serve as a "middle man."
You could make your business a drop-off location for needed items, such as school supplies or hygienic items. Or, collect donations from your customers to benefit your favorite organizations.

5. Use social media.
Use your Facebook, Twitter, and other social media accounts to announce fundraising events, suggest donating to a particular organization, or simply tell a wider audience more about what they do.

Through our Gift of Giving program, Rainbow Communications was able to donate $6,685.00 to local charities in 2015 — our largest year yet!

To find organizations that might be a good fit for your company to help, contact your local Chamber of Commerce, or check out websites like volunteermatch.org, allforgood.org, and idealist.org.

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