Iowa Communications Network

ICN Insider

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Innovation for Public Safety's Future

ICN's fiber-optic infrastructure is assisting in the public safety initiative with the Iowa State Patrol (ISP).

A new audio-streaming application at the ISP's Communication Centers will provide the redundancy that is critical for public safety communications across Iowa.

Currently, ISP records all radio traffic that is transmitted on state frequencies and telephone lines at separate communication centers.

With ICN's Internet, the technology offers all centers the ability to play back not only their own traffic immediately, but also radio traffic from other centers. Having this ability allows the ISP the flexibility during a natural disaster or routine maintenance to shift responsibilities and resources to alternative centers.

"Implementing an application like this has been very challenging in the past and is a huge step forward for ISP Communications," said Lieutenant Larry Grant, ISP's Planning & Technology Officer.

"Using this technology along with the new ICN circuits that were installed into three communications centers allows shared dispatching capabilities between the centers. If one center has a failure because of technical difficulties, a communication center can switch or transfer phone lines and radio traffic to another center," Grant said.

With this new application, ISP personnel can install the software onto their desktop computers and laptops across the state and have the ability to listen to any streaming-audio frequency selected by using the bandwidth provided by ICN.

ICN Receives FONSI Notification for BTOP

ICN achieved an important milestone in receiving the approval to move forward with its federal broadband infrastructure grant on February 22, 2011.

The ICN team received the Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) notification for its Environmental Assessment (EA) that

was submitted to the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) one month before the deadline of December 30, 2010. The EA assists NTIA in determining the extent to which the BTOP project may impact environmental, cultural, or historic resources.

The FONSI allows ICN to begin executing the project and drawing down the federal funds.

ICN will begin to release Request for Proposals (RFPs) for vendors to bid on projects relating to equipment and construction elements. Vendors interested should visit ICN's Bidding Opportunities page.

Eight Months into the BTOP Initiative

With eight months into the three year BTOP project, ICN is moving forward with the elements needed for the federal broadband infrastructure project.

ICN's Finance Department is reviewing an asset management system to assist in the transparency and recording required for this exciting and beneficial project for all Iowans.

To assist with the storing capabilities, ICN recently expanded its warehouse facilities located in the Grimes Building basement on the Capitol Complex. The space was vacated due to the recent move of the Printing Services of the Department of Administrative Service.

The space will be used to assist with holding large quantities of equipment and will become a testing environment prior to the on-site implementation.

Look for added information on ICN's broadband web page.

What House File 45 Means to the ICN

On March 7, 2011, Governor Branstad signed House File (HF) 45, also known as the Taxpayers First Act, into law.

Language within the bill directed ICN's governing body, the Iowa Telecommunications and Technology Commission, to implement a request for proposal (RFP) to sell or lease the ICN. The sale is required to be concluded or lease to commence by June 31, 2012. Successful bidders will be required to offer the services currently provided by the ICN at lower overall long-term cost when compared to the anticipated operation and maintenance costs of the state.

ICN functions in a fee-based environment, which means that the Network operates by the fees that are collected from our customers. Within that fee-based environment, ICN has continued to operate with low customer prices.

ICN views the RFP request as an encouraging opportunity. ICN know that the state-wide fiber-optic Network is a valuable and cost-savings asset, and we believe that the RFP will demonstrate that position.

IWD Benefits from Savings Received

The Iowa Workforce Development (IWD) Center's video site conducted 47 active video sessions during fiscal year 2010. Eighteen of the sessions were originated by IWD staff. Approximately 1,191,463 staff and other individuals participated in the sessions with an estimated total cost savings of $199,444.

Local IWD staff, board members, and the general public throughout the state are more likely to be able to participate in training or actively serve on IWD committees if the sessions are held over ICN's fiber-optic Network.

Using ICN's video technology for a two-hour meeting means that productivity is not lost for an entire day. Agencies save by not having employees' travel (gasoline, driving time and other expenses: rooms and meals). This savings is reported each year as required by Iowa Code Section 8D.10, which requires state agencies to submit a written report specifying the savings by using ICN's video conferencing technology.

Message from Dave Lingren, ICN's Executive Director

ICN's infrastructure represents important investments that have allowed deployment of broadband capacity to educational facilities. These investments should be used to help local telephone companies build additional capacity to K-12 schools and private companies. Partnerships between the ICN, as the Iowa Telecommunications and Technology Commission, and the private sector would allow for the exploration of new opportunities for growth and economic development.

The Cycle of Learning Using the Network

Julie Navratil, a third-grade teacher at Central Springs Elementary in Nora Springs, Iowa, has integrated the technology into her current teaching practices that she relied on to complete her Special Education endorsement through Buena Vista University.

The convenience of having a video site connection to the ICN in all of Iowa's 99 counties provided Navratil the tool needed to help balance her family and pursue an educational endorsement, which opens additional teaching opportunities.

Being familiar with ICN's technology has assisted Navratil to incorporate Iowa Public Television's (IPTV) *K-12 Connections* video sessions into her curriculum, so her third-grade students can enjoy learning through the ICN network video sites.

Embracing ICN's video conferencing service has enhanced Navratil's curriculum by bringing field experts into her classroom.

"To be able to hear all kinds of people speak on different subjects, and be given the opportunity to discuss topics with people all over the state has really deepened the learning," said Navratil. "When we have discussions with schools across the state, students/teachers bring up valid points, which get students to think outside their rural areas."

K-12 Connections sessions are provided by ICN and IPTV at no cost to PK-12 students and the adults working with, or on behalf of, PK-12 students in Iowa.

The ICN, a state agency, is the country's premier fiber-optic Network, committed to continued enhancement of distance learning and providing Iowans with convenient, equal access to education, government, and healthcare.

Employee Spotlight: Julie Johnson

In 1989, Julie Johnson worked on a project with the Narrowcast department for IPTV to write the RFP (Request for Proposal) to establish the Iowa Communications Network. Julie has worked as a video scheduler since 1993. In 1998, the video schedulers moved from IPTV to the ICN. She is now the Video Administrator for the ICN.
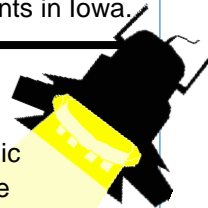
Julie's primary duties include video scheduling, which involves verifying the daily video schedules to make sure they are ready to run and all sessions are validated. She responds to inquiries concerning scheduled sessions; working closely with regional schedulers, local schedulers and training new schedulers on video software, policies and procedures. In addition to serving as the back-up State Operator, Julie also serves as a member of the Video Services Project team (VSP) working to upgrade the ICN Network to the IP platform.

Julie thinks of some of her video customers as family being that she has worked with so many of them for many years. For new customers, Julie works hard to make them feel comfortable and assist them the best she can. She enjoys working with various people throughout the State of Iowa.

Julie enjoys music and singing. She sings in the "Franklin Avenue Quartet" for her church, Franklin Avenue Christian Church. Julie also enjoys working on puzzles of all kinds. She loves spending time with her family and siblings. Julie has one son, Tyson, who is 24.

She was also a Sergeant Major in the Marine Corps JROTC (Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps) in high school. In her time in JROTC, she learned very important life skills such as respect, discipline, friendship, loyalty, problem solving, and teamwork. She feels this experience helped her tremendously as she grew into an adult.

Iowa Communications Network
Grimes State Office Building
400 East 14th Street
Des Moines, IA 50319

Phone: (515) 725-4692
Toll Free: 1-877-426-4692
www.icn.state.ia.us

Upcoming Video Session for Students and Educator through Iowa Public Television's K-12 Connections

To Be a Seed

Monday, April 11, 2011; 12:30 PM - 1:20 PM and 1:30 PM - 2:20 PM
Audience: **Grades K-2**

Experience the awakening of life as students learn about seeds. The parts of a seed will be explored by dissecting a seed during the session. Students will learn what is needed to get a seed to grow and the basic parts of a plant. A seed story will be read and many types of Iowa seeds will be explored.

Registration Deadline - Tuesday, April 5, 2011

Arbor Day and Earth Week Activities for Students

Tuesday, April 19, 2011, multiple sessions
Audience: **Grades 2-5**

Engage your students with Iowa Author Joan Klostermann-Ketels in this session for nature lovers, artists and writers alike. Students will view photos and quotes from her books, PersonaliTrees and HumaniTrees. Joan will lead students in several activities, as well to get their creative juices flowing. A special guest from the Iowa DNR will provide additional ideas for students and teachers in relation to outdoor activities.

Registration Deadline – Thursday, April 13, 2011

Meet Environmental Author Joan Klostermann-Ketels

Wednesday, April 20, 2011; 10:30 AM - 11:30 AM and 3:30 PM - 4:30 PM
Audience: **Librarians, Media Specialists, Educators**

In this session, meet author Joan Klostermann-Ketels and listen to her describe the life-changing experience of seeing trees through new eyes. Participants will learn the surprising way in which Joan found a publisher, view photos from her books, PersonaliTrees and HumaniTrees, discuss the deeper meanings of the words and quotes chosen for the photos, and participate in a discussion of her work. Environmental ideas for the classroom and community based on her books will be shared.

Registration Deadline – Thursday, April 15, 2011

For More Information about Upcoming K-12 Connections Contact:

Marcia Wych or Abby Brown
Educational Services
(800) 532-1290 or (515) 242-4181
abby@iptv.org
www.k12connections.iptv.org