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In The Heart Of The Beautiful Cumberlands - Where Virginia Begins

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NEWS SOURCE SINCE 1920Wednesday, February 3, 2010  
Pennington Gap, Lee County, Virginia

## St. Charles Launches Broadband Service Location

Ninth District U.S. Congressman Rick Boucher joined St. Charles residents and officials from Lee County and others to launch the St. Charles Broadband network and to open the St. Charles Community Computer Center, located at the former site of the Black Lung office across from the community health center.

Glen A. "Skip" Skinner, executive director of the Lenowisco Planning District Commission, introduced the congressman, Mark Carter, a member of the Commissioner's board of directors and the Lee County Board of Supervisors, and St. Charles Mayor Teresa Webb.

A ribbon-cutting ceremony at the entrance to the building followed remarks by the officials inside the center where computers were displayed and their use demonstrated.

Boucher welcomed the group for the "symbolic turn of a switch" to open the center, saying he couldn't think of a better place or better use of the federal funding in the 27 counties he represents - from Lee County to Roanoke. He said the project is a part of the Community Connects broadband grant program.

He said in a written statement, "I am pleased to return to St. Charles to mark another major success in our effort to expand high-speed Internet services throughout Southwest Virginia. Today we formally launch the St. Charles community's new broadband service, a project which will enable residents to receive affordable, high-speed Internet services. Additionally, a new public Internet access site connected to the new broadband network has been established at the St. Charles Community Computer Center."

More than fifteen years ago, he said, he encouraged local governments throughout the Ninth District to find a means of deploying broadband networks so that affordable high-speed Internet access would be available to businesses and residents throughout the region. His goal in making that recommendation was to set the region apart in comparison to other rural areas of the nation, to make the area more attractive than the typical rural region to industries looking to expand their operations into new locations, and to create technology-based jobs for Southwest Virginians.

"Today," he said, "I am pleased to note that many of the communities in our re-

gion are making great strides in the deployment of broadband networks, and the new broadband services that begin today will mark another major step forward in our ef-

forts to ensure high speed Internet access is available to residents throughout Southwest Virginia."

The broadband services now available in St. Charles

have been established with the assistance of a grant of \$594,000 provided at Boucher's urging by the U.S. Department of Agriculture through its Rural Utili-

ties Service's Community Connect broadband grant program. "For the past several years," he said, "I have encouraged communities throughout our region to

seek federal funds from this program. I am pleased to report that, as a result of these funds, three communities have received grants totaling more than \$2 million to build new broadband networks, which we will activate later this year." In addition, last year five communities have activated broadband networks with the assistance of nearly \$4 million in federal funds.

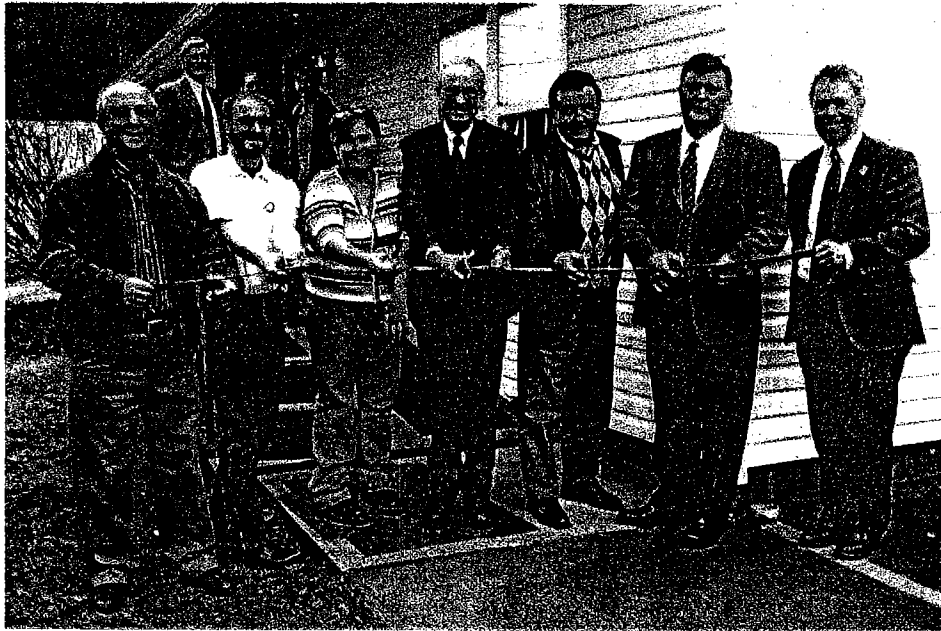
"Today, he said, "we mark the launch of another broadband network in the region, which will provide high speed Internet services to the St. Charles community. With assistance of the federal grant of \$594,000, residents and businesses in the St. Charles community now have access to high-speed Internet services. In addition, the St. Charles Community Computer Center, which opens today, has been established to provide free high speed Internet access to residents at convenient times."

The St. Charles Community Computer Center includes 10 new computer workstations outfitted with the latest computer equipment. The Center provides high-speed Internet services to residents six days a week. Additionally, the new Center provides free classes for those with limited computer experience on Tuesday afternoons at 2 p.m. and Thursday evenings at 7 p.m.

With the benefit of the federal grant, Lenowisco has deployed more than eight miles of fiber optic cable from its Internet backbone to the homes and businesses in St. Charles. The new services became available in the summer, and already 35 homes and businesses have connected to the network, according to Boucher.

In addition, he said, high speed Internet services have been provided at no cost for the next two years to the St. Charles Rescue Squad, the

See St. Charles Page Two



### Ribbon Cutting

Officials cutting the ribbon to open the St. Charles Community Computer Center Friday, January 29, 2010, were, left to right: Paul Elswick, Matt Taylor, Teresa Webb, Rick Boucher, Larry Vickers, Mark Carter and Glen "Skip" Skinner.

St. Charles Fire Department, and the St. Charles Health Clinic as well as the Dental Clinic and Black Lung Clinic. The new broadband service has also been provided to the St. Charles Elementary School.

"Just as first canals, then railroads and then highways were the major arteries of commerce in earlier eras, in the 21st Century, access to broadband will be a defining feature of economic success for rural communities. Step-by-step, our expanding broadband infrastructure is assuring that Southwest Virginia's communities will be at the center of economic opportunity," all according to Boucher.

He expressed appreciation for their help on the St. Charles project to Skinner and his staff for the expansion; to Paul Elswick and his son, Ryan, of Sunset Digital Communications, for their key role in bringing Internet services to the region; to Matt Taylor, president and CEO of Taylor Industries, who will manage the computer center; Town Clerk Pauline Smith for her "tireless efforts to see the project to completion," the mayor Teresa Webb and the members of the St. Charles town council for providing matching funds in the amount of \$90,000 to assist with the project.

Congressman Boucher

also recognized his Deputy Chief of Staff Laura Lee for the work she performed for the project. He said he told Lee four years ago to work to determine the eligible counties and to develop an application. Those IDs led to a currently up-and-running computer center at Ewing, an upcoming inauguration for a center in Blackwater, and a list for other grants this year, he said, adding that of the \$13 million funded, Lee County received \$5 million and Lee is to be commended for it.

Carter expressed his pride in being a part of the celebration, saying the new center should be an incentive to the residents, service providers and businesses to further communications and education in the area. He expressed appreciation to the Elswicks for constructing the line, to Stone Mountain Health Services for making space available for the center, to the funding agencies, the town, the mayor and the councilmen.

Mayor Webb expressed thanks to everybody who had anything to do with the realization of the broadband services and the computer center, saying the service is a great benefit to St. Charles. She said people keep asking, "Why are you still fighting for St. Charles?" - to which she says, "Because St. Charles is worth fighting for."

Skinner spoke again, saying that when he attended a meeting years ago relating to electronic villages, computers and such, he thought it only a pipe dream. He recognized others in attendance Friday afternoon, including Larry Vickers, Nickelsville Lenowisco Board member; District 4 Supervisor Claude Ray; Lee County Administrator Dane Poe; new St. Charles councilman Samantha Campbell; Taylor Industries representative Tina Pelphrey, director of finance; and Jamie Taylor, vice-president of marketing and development; Lee County Commissioner of the Revenue Tommy D. Livesay; Lee County Treasurer Rita McCann; Sarah Williams from the Tobacco Commission; Richard Jenkins with the Rural Utilities, USDA; Malcolm Perdue, CEO at Stone Mountain Health Services; and Bob Bost, director of the Lee County Area Chamber of Commerce.

Other employees of Taylor Industries, Inc., are technicians Rex Bailey (senior technician), Ed Lawson, Cody Phipps, and Jim Wright (finance officer), who work at the centers and at jobs related to the courthouse computers.

Congressman Boucher said the wireless broadband service now available in St. Charles is an example of what can be achieved when government officials at the local and federal levels work together and cooperate in

for the St. Charles community. He said, "I want to commend all here and offer special congratulations to the residents who are receiving this service."

The St. Charles Computer Center and the Center at Ewing, can be reached at 276-445-5532 or 877-408-4324, Route 2, Box 278, Rose Hill, VA 24281.

## Area Clinics Offer Shots

The Stone Mountain Health Clinics of Lee County will have H1N1 vaccinations available, at no charge to the patients and the public.

Individuals who have questions or need information concerning the vaccinations are asked to contact the following clinics:

Pennington Family Health Center at 276-546-3001;

St. Charles Community Health Clinic at 276-383-4428;

Western Lee County Health Clinic at 276-445-4826.

## Supervisors' Feb. Meeting

The Lee County Board of Supervisors' meeting for February will be Tuesday, February 16, 2010, 5 p.m., in the General District Courtroom of the Lee County Courthouse in Jonesville.



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