



A MONTHLY
NEWSLETTER

Services

All around communications.

WTS Connection

Broadband makes for smart rural communities

WTRT and WT Services, Inc. afford economic and societal gains to rural schools, health care providers, public safety institutions and commercial entities by providing broadband suited to their varying needs.

WTRT and WT Services equip smart rural communities with broadband networks supporting innovative economic development and commerce, high quality distance education, topnotch health care and efficient government services.

Schools with high speed Internet can take advantage of distance learning to offer courses otherwise

unavailable.

Within the Friona ISD, served by WT Services of Friona, students can take online dual credit classes.

"Dual credit classes are via our WT Services link with Amarillo College," explains Darla Hutchins, director of technology with the Friona ISD. "Students must be at least juniors in high school to participate. They receive dual credit for classes at Amarillo College without having to leave Friona."

Dr. Bill McLaughlin, superintendent at Walcott School in western Deaf Smith County since 1986, says Walcott takes full advantage of broadband from WTRT for administrative matters, teacher workshops and report submissions.

"Fiber from WTRT lets us use Internet for contact with other schools, the Texas Education Agency, and for teacher participation in workshops. This saves travel and allows

timely submission of reports. Reports that we used to mail go via the Internet now," said McLaughlin.

The Hereford Independent School District's primary Internet through WT Services, Inc. allows distance learning for students K-12.

"Years ago we introduced distance learning and remote sites, working with a Texas Tech medical site in the Hart ISD. The program began as a means for school nurses to diagnose illnesses. Soon afterward, we offered services into classrooms. Primarily we do field trip type learning," explains Joe Mendez, director of Technology at Hereford ISD.

Distance learning is available at the Bluebonnet, Northwest, Hereford Junior High and Hereford Preparatory Academy campuses.

"We have mobile laboratories that we can leave at one campus for part

of the year, and rotate to another campus. When we don't have enough equipment for all of the schools we can move classes to schools with the distance learning equipment," said Mendez.

Virtual instruction via broadband helps fill the gap between educational needs and availability. Continuing education opportunities can include job and technical training to support a knowledgeable work force.

Distance learning via broadband and high speed Internet permits electronic data sharing between administrators, teachers, and parents, allowing for a responsive educational process.

Rural providers are beefing up broadband as online activity increases and more schools resort to remote or distance learning.

While 19 percent of the U.S. population lives in rural areas, less than nine (See BROADBAND, Page 2)

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percent of physicians have rural practices, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Broadband can help bridge the gap between health care availability and rural patient needs.

Telemedicine allows remote diagnosis and treatment of illness or injury. Hospitals expedite transfer of images and diagnostic information. Some rural hospitals are also using data centers to store information rather than relying on in-house servers. Remote home health monitoring also has great potential to accurately intervene in patient care before reaching the doctor's office or hospital. Remote patient monitoring is poised for exponential growth that will include rural health facilities.

Mike Prather, director of network and information systems says many of Parmer Medical Center's critical functions rely on high speed Internet from WT Services of Friona.

"We use remote radiology CAT Scans and Xrays that travel via broadband to High Plains Radiology in Amarillo. Radiologists examine them and send their findings back to us. We have a telemedicine unit with the Texas Tech

Medical School remote clinic. A doctor in Lubbock can view an otoscope image of the inner ear live, or examine wounds via this technology. We're very high on the service we receive from WT Services that makes remote medicine possible for us," says Prather.

Brent Harrison, former Deaf Smith County Sheriff and current Hereford Police Chief, is familiar with the Internet-based technology used by both departments.

"Speed is important for anything involving graphics, and much police and Sheriff's Office work does. Patrol cars have video to download. Fingerprints can be sent across the state by distance technology," says Harrison.

Laptop computers in patrol vehicles allow law enforcement to chat and run license plates and other information between agencies.

"Our next step in technology is a license plate reader that will allow checking with a warrant data base via Internet. Deputy Ricky Prisk at the Deaf Smith County Sheriff's Office is trained in scanning fingerprints and can scan fingerprints when

suspects are being booked. It's a more efficient method that provides the Department of Public Safety with the more detailed fingerprints that they desire," said Harrison.

The Hereford Police Department uses WT Services Internet inside its building, and another firm for Internet outside.

On the agriculture front, farmers and ranchers have long been taking advantage of the most current communications technology to help their businesses function more profitably.

Internet connections let country elevators, cattle feedyards and dairies track commodity prices at their offices, while farmers and ranchers can do the same from their home computers to let them make the best decisions in buying inputs and marketing their crops and livestock.

Today's farmers and ranchers can even check markets, weather, and input prices from the tractor or pickup cab, and manage distant sprinklers from a laptop computer.

Fast, sophisticated communications are in high demand in rural areas. WTRT and WT Services are challenged to evolve Internet Protocol and

transition their networks to broadband Internet that meets medical, educational, public safety and business and agriculture needs. WTRT and WT Services are striving to turn up broadband Internet to provide members and customers state-of-the-art smart services on a par with urban America.

Bank draft customers get 1% discount

WT Services customers in Hereford can take advantage of a one percent discount by paying their bill by bank draft.

Customers who authorize this form of payment agree to have their bank account drafted for the amount of their outstanding balance on their account with WT Services. Drafts will occur between the 20th and 23rd of each month.

To arrange for payment of your WT Services bill via bank draft and net the one percent savings, contact the WT Services office in Hereford at 119 East 4th to obtain the necessary authorization form that includes bank routing and account information.