



## Broadband crucial to rural health care

While celebrated as a tool for economic development and distance learning, Broadband Internet can also be a vital key to better health care, according to a report in the American Journal of Managed Care. A study by Kaiser Permanente revealed that a third of patients with chronic conditions who exchanged secure e-mails with their

### Workplace violence, threats not tolerated

Given the predominance of violence in today's world, the management of West Texas Rural Telephone Cooperative and its WT Services subsidiary emphasize that violence or threats in our workplace, either from employees, customers, or others will not be tolerated. WTRT and WT Services employees need to know that we have their backs and their well-being. "We will file charges on anyone that threatens management or employees. There is enough violence going on in our world just now. We will not tolerate it in our own workplace," said Ms. Amy Linzey, CEO and General Manager.

doctors said these communications improved their overall health. Nearly half of those surveyed had used e-mail as their first method of contacting doctors for various health issues.

Surprisingly, 20 to 30 percent of medical office visits could be conducted just as effectively and with far less time and travel expended through telemedicine.

A reliable broadband connection could save countless hours and millions of dollars, particularly in rural areas where travel to medical facilities can often impose a hardship.

Last year, 12 states adopted compacts to expedite physician licensing for telemedicine.

"As more patients gain access to online portal tools associated with electronic health records, emails between patients and providers may shift the way that health care is delivered and also impact efficiency, quality, and health outcomes," says Mary E. Reed, DRPH, staff scientist with the Kaiser Permanente Division of Research.

Such online tools may

also play a role in controlling health care costs.

Of those patients who use email and have higher out-of-pocket medical expenses, 85 percent reported choosing email as their first method of contacting their doctor.

Among patients who had emailed their health care provider 42% said emailing had reduced phone contacts, 36% said it had reduced in-person visits and 32 percent said it had improved their overall health.

With broadband already improving rural health care where it is available, the future holds great promise for advances in this area.

There is a huge limiting factor, however. Lack of broadband service indeed proves a bad thing.

As broadband impacts more areas of our lives, people are placing greater value on broadband as a necessary service.

According to a survey by Pew Research Center, 69 percent of Americans believe that people with no Broadband connection are at a major disadvantage in at least one of five major

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### Get drafted into saving money on bill

WT Services Friona/Bovina customers can get a one percent discount by paying their bill by bank draft.

Customers who authorize draft 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 Friona at 1010 Columbia to obtain the necessary authorization form that includes bank routing and account information.

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areas: (1) Finding out about job opportunities or gaining new career skills; (2) learning about or accessing government services; (3) Learning new things that may enrich their lives; (4) Getting health information; (5) Keeping up with news

and information.

“Fiber will be the difference between economic viability and economic decline, between enjoying the advantages of broadband, or going without, as we move forward. We are striving to provide broad-

band internet at speeds that meet the needs of our WTRT and WT Services customers now and far into the future. We have installed approximately 422,000 feet of fiber in the WTRT service area to date with fiber to the premise

as the long-term goal, so that WTRT and WT Services customers can take full advantage of things like telemedicine for rural health,” says Amy Linzey, Chief Executive Officer and General Manager.

## Telcos should build rural Broadband infrastructure

Without question, Broadband Internet service is vital to economic and community development, particularly in rural America. According to Shirley Bloomfield, CEO of NTCA—the Rural Broadband Association, the best path to continue building the nation’s connected infrastructure in rural America is to leave the work in the hands of community-based independent telephone cooperatives such as West Texas Rural Telephone.

### **DON'T TRY TO “FIX” WHAT'S NOT BROKEN**

“If our leaders are looking for an excellent model of what can be accomplished, they should turn to the experts who have decades of experience deploying and maintaining modern telecommunications infrastructure—the rural telcos. There are about 1,400 technology providers like WTRT and WT Services that serve over 4 million

households in the most sparsely populated pockets of our country, deploying high-speed, high-quality broadband services,” said Ms. Bloomfield.

“For decades, these rural providers have gone above and beyond to build the infrastructure that allows our country’s most rural markets to access the same technologies found in our largest cities—and they’ve done it all under the extremely difficult financial and physical conditions that come with deploying technologies in rural and remote communities.

### **GOING ABOVE AND BEYOND**

Ms. Bloomfield says thanks to the hard work and commitment of providers such as WTRT and WT Services, rural America is gaining access to affordable broadband in some of the most remote locations. However, the sustainability of these rural networks is

at risk should the Universal Service Fund pass from the scene.

### **DANCE WITH THE ONE WHO BROUGHT YOU**

“Politicians seeking answers to the communications challenges of rural America should turn first to those who have shown they can get the job done time and again, rather than creating regulatory uncertainty and putting at risk significant investments already made in existing networks through the prospect of redundant or wasteful overbuilding.

### **BUILDING UPON A GREAT SUCCESS STORY**

“There’s already a great broadband success story out there in rural America and it is being written by community-based telecom providers like WTRT. As our national broadband story progresses, we should strive to build on proven initiatives and le-

verage existing efforts that are working, rather than pursue new, uncharted pathways,” she said.

### **Customized Systems**

Telephone systems customized to your needs are available from WT Services.

Systems can be designed for your unique business and office needs.

A representative from WT Services will visit your location to determine needs, including multi-line service, paging, call waiting or forwarding, determine what equipment would best serve those needs, write a proposal, and arrange for installation by WT Services team members once a plan receives customer approval.

WT Services is experienced in providing telephone systems for business offices, school systems and government offices, among other applications.

Contact Doug Baker at WT Services, 364-7311.