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LOCAL PARTNERS COLLABORATE TO ENHANCE OHIOPYLE

Uniontown, PA – The Fayette County Commissioners, in cooperation with the Fayette Chamber of Commerce, Ohiopyle Borough Council, Ohiopyle State Park and QCOL, have helped bring high-speed internet to Ohiopyle, PA. The \$60,000 project is a prime example of local partners banding together in an effort that would benefit Fayette county residents, businesses and visitors alike.

Ohiopyle Mayor Mark McCarty and his daughter Liz McCarty, General Manager of the Laurel Highlands River Tours and Outdoor Center, spearheaded the project, helping to get it off the ground in 2009.

Liz McCarty said she and her father worked diligently to bring some type of service to Ohiopyle. The pair reached out to Verizon, Comcast, as well as the Pennsylvania Environmental Council and the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources in Harrisburg to approach the project from a higher level.

“After not having any success with the larger companies, we decided to approach some of the local media companies,” McCarty said. “(QCOL) had committed to expanding service to Ohiopyle.

“They were successful in working with West Penn Power to use power poles to bring their cable from the end of their lines on Dinnerbell - Ohiopyle Road, down state Route 381 and into Ohiopyle, but the lines then go underground and into the Ohiopyle State Park before coming back out above ground in the borough.”

McCarty said Ohiopyle Borough Council committed \$15,000 toward the project and they were very fortunate to receive the remaining \$45,000 toward the total cost from the Fayette County Commissioners.

She said QCOL also provided fiber optic cable directly to each customer, providing service equivalent to Verizon Fios and better than DSL. QCOL also provides telephone and digital television service packages, which helps cut costs while providing much better services than were previously available.

“We have been very happy with QCOL’s service. It is nice to be able to support a local company based in nearby Markleysburg, instead of a larger national corporation,” McCarty said. “We are able to maintain much higher speeds of service, which has been great for the businesses.



“Businesses in Ohiopyle are now able to easily network multiple locations so we can operate much more efficiently.”

McCarty said the new broadband internet service has also been great for Ohiopyle visitors, especially overnight guests.

“We were not formerly able to offer any wifi services to visitors,” she said. “But now several restaurants, as well as the Yough Plaza Motel and Ohiopyle Guest Houses, are offering public wifi connections, which is very beneficial in an area with extremely limited cell phone reception.”

McCarty said she made the project a priority after becoming president of Ohiopyle Borough Council eight years ago.

“It is very refreshing to finally see all the hard work pay off,” she said.

Joel Means, President and CEO of the Ohiopyle Trading Post, said high-speed internet is necessary for day-to-day business and communication.

“It feels like we’re coming out of the Stone Age. QCOL coming in here was crucial to our existence and for the sale of our products,” Means said. “We upload hundreds of photos of our guests daily. We couldn’t do that before because it just took too much time, and sometimes I’d take work home with me at night.

“The faster internet allows all of us in the Ohiopyle Outfitters Co-op to be more efficient as businesses. It’s been very lifesaving to us, and we’re very thankful we have it now.”

Markleysburg based media company, QCOL, got behind the effort, ultimately providing fiber optic cable directly to each customer, with owners Doug Friend and Brian Frazee at the helm.

Friend said QCOL is pleased to have played an instrumental role in bringing a seemingly out-of-reach solution to the Ohiopyle community.

“Thanks to the cooperation of the state, county, Laurel Highlands Tourism Bureau, [Fayette County] Chamber, DCNR and the tireless work of Ohiopyle Borough Council, we are now able to provide broadband internet and other services to the local businesses and residents via our fiber to the home/business network,” Friend said. “This project had its challenges and obstacles, but with everyone working together, we were able to come up with reasonable solutions. We believe this process could become a model for extending broadband to remote and rural communities throughout the region.”

Ohiopyle is home to 28 full-time residents and more than 1.5 million visitors travel to Ohiopyle State Park each year.



Fayette County Commissioner Dave Lohr said he often hears about the importance of having an accessible internet system during statewide commissioners meetings.

“QCOL stepped up to the plate,” Lohr said. “They’re a local company working to try to give benefits to anybody that needs them by providing a service that’s deeply needed in our community and our county.”

Lohr said the high-speed internet has the potential to cause a positive chain reaction which starts with Ohiopyle business owners.

“Everything about it makes it easier for them to do their business, which then builds their business, which builds the community, which builds county tourism, which gives everyone access to international connections,” Lohr said. “Ohiopyle is very much an international site, so by offering a better system, you’re improving that far-reaching communication more than anything else.”

“In this day and age, high-speed internet is a must,” said Fayette County Commissioner Angela Zimmerlink. “And especially in Ohiopyle, because of what Ohiopyle brings to Fayette County in the way of tourism.”

Fayette County Commissioner Vincent Vicites said expanding rural broadband is one of the county’s top priorities.

“The QCOL project is an example of the focus on Broadband expansion,” Vicites said. “QCOL was the first step, and hopefully the countywide expansion will continue. If we’re successful, we can help existing businesses expand and attract new businesses to Fayette County.”

This project was funded as a cooperative effort between the Fayette County Commissioners, The Borough of Ohiopyle, QCOL and the Fayette County Hotel Tax 2% marketing initiative.

To learn more about Fayette County, visit www.fayettecountypa.info.

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