

National Leadership Visits Oklahoma

Jim Andrews, National Administrator for USDA Rural Development's Rural Utilities programs paid a visit to Oklahoma in January. During his stay, Mr. Andrews kept an aggressive schedule meeting with various organizations and visiting a recently funded broadband project in Stroud, Oklahoma.

Mr. Andrews presented Central Cellular Incorporated a plaque commemorating their \$5,133,000 broadband loan from USDA Rural Development. Central Cellular will use the funding to provide broadband service to the Stroud area. Mr. Andrews expressed his belief that the broadband service component of economic development is as critical to modern infrastructure as the establishment of highways and railways were to history's thriving communities. The plaque cited Central Cellular's continued commitment to providing cutting edge technologies to rural Oklahoma.

The Oklahoma Rural Water Association hosted a luncheon creating an opportunity to discuss the key issues facing their industry with Mr. Andrew. Following the luncheon, Mr. Andrew addressed a manager's meeting of the Oklahoma Association of Electric Cooperatives (OAEC). In addition to the general discussions regarding utility programs, a special emphasis was placed on the Rural Economic Development Loan/Grant (REDLG) program available to local utility organizations. The program provides funding to these organizations which in turn provide assistance to local businesses for projects which will create and retain employment in rural areas. Several of the managers delivered reports of successful REDLG projects in their service area while Larry Watkins, General Manager of OAEC reminded the attendees of Congressman Frank Lucas' proactive efforts supporting the REDLG program.

USDA Rural Development wishes to thank our key partners for the warm welcome and professional courtesy given to Mr. Andrews during his visit.



Jim Andrew, Rural Utility Service Administrator



State Representative Danny Morgan, Steve Gilbert, Stroud City Manager, Rural Utility Service Administrator Jim Andrew, Steve Guest Central Cellular Inc., Brent Kisling USDA Rural Development, and Blu Halsey, Field Representative for Sen. Inhofe cite Central Cellular for their Broadband project serving the Stroud Area.



Jim Andrew addresses an Oklahoma Association of Electric Cooperatives Manager meeting in Oklahoma City.

Dec-Jan 2008

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Dates to remember!

- Feb 5 NW Day (State Capital)
- Feb 15&16 American Farmers & Ranchers Annual Convention
- Feb. 21-22 Agricultural Outlook Forum Arlington, Virginia
- Mar. 4-8 Washington International Renewable Energy Conference (WIREC 2008)
- Mar. 13 Communities of Excellence Day State Capital
- Mar. 25-26 OCI's 9th Annual Conversations on Community Renewal Conference Reed Center, Midwest City

Application Deadlines!

Attention Farm and Small Business Owners:

Notice of Funding Availability for the Section 9006 Program (Energy Efficiency/Renewable Energy) soon to be issued. Act quickly, only 45 day application period expected. Contact Jody Harris at jody.harris@ok.usda.gov or 405-742-1036 for more information.

Staff Changes

Congratulations

Position Changes:

Teena Gwinn - Ada, OK
Area Specialist

Tommy Earls - Stillwater
Housing Program Director

Anita Kinyon-Stillwater
Administrative Program Director

Jerry Tucker - Antlers
Reassignment

Larry Ledford - Chandler
Reassignment

Technology grants awarded to several projects throughout the state.

- Northwestern Oklahoma State University received a \$256,390 Distance Learning Grant to provide an electronic link between their new Woodward campus and the Alva campus.
- Choctaw Electric Cooperative combined \$1,252,632 in federal broadband grants with \$186,781 of their funds to establish broadband networks in Rattan, Hayworth, and Smithville.
- Central Cellular Inc., applied \$5,133,000 in federal funds toward their broadband project serving the Stroud area.



Steve Guest with Central Cellular provides technical information about the company's new broadband system and fiber optic setup to Area Directors Tom Barber, Jerry Tucker, and Jerry Efurud.



Janet Cunningham of Northwest Oklahoma State and Hugh Jones of the Woodward Development Foundation receive a ceremonial check from USDA Rural Development State Director Brent Kislung and Senator Coburn's Field Representative Matt Ball. The check represents the Distance Learning Grant being awarded to link the Woodward and Altus campuses.



Choctaw Electric Cooperative's Derek Martin and Pine Telephone's Lee Brown display a new workstation powered by the new broadband network available in Rattan, Oklahoma. The service was launched in Rattan and soon coming to Hayworth and Smithville thanks to \$1.2 million in community connect grants.



Central Cellular Inc. was awarded this plaque representing the financial partnership shared by the company and USDA Rural Development to provide broadband service to the Stroud area.



Choctaw Electric Cooperative celebrates USDA Rural Development's partnership in establishing the new broadband network.

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