



Dear Smart Rural Community Provider,

As we kick off a new school year, I'm reminded once again how far small broadband providers will go to serve Smart Rural Communities in the farthest reaches of our country, and what resilience truly looks like. One such provider – Venture Communications Cooperative (Highmore, S.D.) – recently managed through 130-mph winds (comparable to an EF2 tornado) and the unfortunate power outages and devastation to homes and businesses in its 10,000-square-mile footprint to make sure its customers stayed connected. The broadband Venture provided in those frightening moments – and the broadband you deliver every day – provides a foundation for connection, education, workforce development and AI-powered tools that are changing how people learn, work and do business.

On this topic, I'm excited to highlight NTCA's [AI Opportunity Hub](#), which continues to provide practical resources to help broadband providers explore and implement AI in meaningful ways. *Now That's Smart!* features a [blog by SRC-Alumna Elizabeth Brown of PTCL](#) (Guymon, Okla.) who shares how AI can help strengthen marketing teams by streamlining content creation, maintaining brand consistency and giving staff a stronger starting point for everyday communications.

This issue also marks an exciting new milestone for the Smart Rural Community (SRC) program, as we approach 300 providers. Each designation represents a commitment to strengthening local communities through reliable broadband, meaningful partnerships and lasting impact. Thank you for helping make this achievement possible!

Looking ahead, we hope you'll join us [September 13-16 in Nashville, Tennessee](#), for the 2026 NTCA Fall Conference. It's a great opportunity to connect with fellow providers, exchange ideas and celebrate this year's Smart Rural Community Showcase Awardees. Until then, we appreciate your hard work showing the lasting impact of local broadband.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike Romano".

Mike Romano
CEO, NTCA–The Rural Broadband Association



Using AI to Strengthen Your Marketing Team

Elizabeth Brown, Marketing Manager, PTCI

This blog is part of a series highlighting perspectives from NTCA committee chairs who contributed to [NTCA's supplemental papers](#) exploring the opportunities and practical applications of AI.

You're staring at the blinking cursor like an antagonizing, yet hypnotizing, countdown to a looming deadline. A social post is due, an email needs to go out, a campaign needs a fresh angle and new website copy still needs one more review. As marketers, we're constantly attempting to do more with less, all while squeezing numerous other tasks into a tidy eight-hour day.

Enter AI. While AI will not, and should not, comprehensively complete all your tasks, it can give your team a stronger starting point.

[READ MORE](#)



Connecting Over 11,000 Square Miles in Kansas to Reliable High-Speed Internet

Nex-Tech (Lenora, Kan.) recently celebrated the completion of its world-class underground fiber broadband network with a ribbon-cutting ceremony at Dane G. Hansen Scout Reservation in Kirwin, Kansas. The network connects over 11,000 square miles in Kansas with reliable high-speed internet access, providing opportunities for education, remote work, online healthcare, contact with family and friends, and local communities.

Nex-Tech CEO and General Manager Jimmy Todd spoke at the event, explaining how "fiber broadband is essential for rural America. Partnerships with communities

and the State of Kansas make projects like this possible, and we are excited about the opportunities this investment will create for Kirwin and future generations.”

[READ MORE](#)



Kanokla: Expanding Broadband Service and Building More Smart Rural Communities

Broadband is the foundation for education, healthcare, economic development and everyday life for those in Medford, Oklahoma, and Kanokla (Caldwell, Kan.) is continuing to make that happen. On July 17, members of the community joined together to celebrate the completion of a major fiber broadband expansion and Medford's designation as a Smart Rural Community.

Kanokla's symmetrical gigabit fiber service extension brought service to 104 additional homes and businesses within Medford, supporting the town's economic success and quality of life. Their SRC designation reinforces an ongoing commitment to people, business partnerships and new opportunities that will benefit future generations.

[READ MORE](#)

| Education Development

As we place greater focus on back to school and education this month, we are spotlighting a few providers doing exceptional work in their communities. See how your company can make a lasting impact on your community beyond broadband alone.



PTCL

PTCI (Guymon, Okla.) spoke with local students about the benefits of activity and healthy lifestyle habits at their Panhandle Cares Backpacks and Beyond Community Health Fair event. They handed out jump ropes and goodies for their backpacks. Two kids even won light-up scooters! Explore the event [here](#).



GRM Networks

GRM Networks (Princeton, Mo.) donated \$100,000 to Decatur County Iowa's Fair Board, furthering education by supporting construction of a new goat and sheep barn at the county's fairgrounds. The new barn will provide opportunities to learn, grow, and support the community through livestock showing and participating in the county fair. Find out more about GRM Networks' impact [here](#).



Nortex

Nortex (Muenster, Texas) is giving back to local teachers to kick off the 2026-2027 school year. The company set a goal to clear Amazon wish lists for 10 teachers in the community, providing items that directly impact students and enhance their learning environment. See the lucky winners [here](#).



Garden Valley Technologies

For more than 10 years, Garden Valley Technologies' (GVT; Erskine, Minn.) local broadcast channels have worked with students to build confidence, develop their announcing voice and operate cameras. From athletic competitions and concerts to graduations and special events, local students work with GVT to help neighbors stay connected to the moments that matter most. Learn more about their work [here](#).

Program Resources



Gear Up for Fall Conference

The 2026 NTCA Fall Conference is quickly approaching: Join us September 13-16 in Nashville. We'll discuss emerging broadband technologies, engage in discussions about future issues through educational sessions, policy and regulatory outlooks, and celebrate the annual Smart Rural Community Showcase Award winners.

Register [today](#) to reconnect with peers and take part in meaningful conversations that help you move your organization and community forward this fall.

Schedule Spotlights:

- Monday, September 14
 - Showcase Awards Ceremony: 8:15 – 10:45 a.m.
 - Community Connections Stage, "Stories of Impact from Rural Communities": 1:00 – 3:45 p.m.
 - SRC Provider Reception: 5:30 – 6:30 p.m.

- Tuesday, September 15
 - Community Connections Stage, "Data Centers and Rural Communities: Strategic Considerations for Boards": 8:30 – 10:30 a.m.
 - Wednesday, September 16
 - Closing General Session: 8:00 – 10:30 a.m.
-



Connect with SRC Office Hours

Join us on September 30 to connect with fellow providers, exchange ideas and explore practical ways to put SRC tools and resources to work in your community. Come with questions, and we'll bring answers!

[REGISTER](#)

SRC Community Engagement Toolkit

Looking for new ways to strengthen community connections and showcase the value of local broadband? The SRC [Community Engagement Toolkit](#) offers practical ideas you can customize for your community. From local events and partnerships to digital skills programs and funding opportunities, see how you can strengthen your community beyond internet service.

With this month's spotlight on education, check out [Step 4](#) for information on how to connect with community partners like local school and library administrators. Together, you can explore opportunities to assist with career awareness, remote learning and digital literacy.

Cybersecurity Awareness Month

This October, build confidence and teach online safety skills among the older adults in your community using the SRC three-part [Senior Safety Series](#). Host a training session and watch the educational videos to help your customers create strong passwords, recognize phishing attempts and know how to manage a data breach. Reach seniors across media with workshops, community events and social media content.

[LEARN MORE](#)

| SRC Providers in Action

Glenwood Telephone Co.
June 24 · 🌐

BIG NEWS FOR RURAL GEORGIA! 🇺🇸

Glenwood Telephone Company is officially Gig-Certified by NTCA, recognizing our ability to deliver gig-capable broadband service across the communities we serve.

For over 125 years, we've been committed to connecting our neighbors. Today, that commitment continues through a fiber network built to support the future of rural South Georgia.

This certification means our network is ready to power:

- ✔ Remote Work
- ✔ Online Learning
- ✔ Streaming & Gaming
- ✔ Telehealth Services
- ✔ Small Businesses
- ✔ Smart Homes

While we're proud of this national recognition, we're even prouder of the communities we serve every day.

World-class internet doesn't belong only in big cities. It belongs right here in Glenwood, Alamo, and throughout rural South Georgia.

Thank you for trusting your local broadband provider.

Powered by Fiber. Rooted in Community.

📞 912-623-5111
🌐 gtc-online.com

#GigCertified #RuralBroadband #FiberInternet #GlenwoodTelephoneCompany #SouthGeorgiaBroadband #WelcomeToTheFiberhood #SmartRuralCommunity #RuralStrong #BuiltForTheFuture #LocalISP



Citizens Telephone Coop
July 15 at 12:01 PM · 🌐

As a proud Smart Rural Community Provider, Citizens is committed to connecting our rural neighbors with lightning-fast Fiber Internet—empowering healthier, happier lives right here at home. Did you know the CDC reports that rural Americans are often older and face greater health challenges than those in urban areas, including higher risks of heart disease, cancer, and chronic conditions? That's why reliable internet matters more than ever. With Citizens Fiber, you can access life-changing telehealth services, connect with healthcare professionals, and take charge of your well-being—all from the comfort of your home. We're honored to help bring these vital opportunities to our community!



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Mountain Rural Telephone Cooperative's Post

Mountain Rural Telephone Cooperative updated their cover photo.
July 20 at 3:32 PM · 🌐



👍 🗨️ 🔄

300 Member Milestone

SRC is approaching 300 members! As we anticipate this achievement, we want to extend a huge thank you to every provider who's joined our growing community. Your commitment expands access to broadband every day, helping people live rich, healthy lives in rural communities across the country.

Please give a warm welcome to our new providers:

- Coon Valley Telephone Company (Menlo, Iowa)
- GVTC Communications (New Braunfels, Texas)
- MT Networks (Madison, Kan.)
- Relyant Communications (Washington, Ga.)
- Runestone Telecom Association (Hoffman, Minn.)
- Southwest Texas Communications (Rocksprings, Texas)
- Syntrio (Vernon, Texas)

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