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Let's Talk About Broadband – In Person

The 2021 **BROADBAND COMMUNITIES** Summit brings together industry luminaries to talk face-to-face about emerging trends, challenges and opportunities.

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the ways broadband can support virtual platforms, but there's nothing like in-person meetings. That reality became clear to me during a conversation with Charlie Vogt, CEO of DZS, during the July Fiber Connect conference – one of the telecom sector's first big in-person shows after COVID-19 lockdowns lifted. He said remote meetings can't replace the "unexpected little meetings" that occur throughout the day in the workplace.

The same can be said about the upcoming **BROADBAND COMMUNITIES** fall Summit. Bryan Rader, president of UpStream Network, says that in addition to the informative sessions, the value of the Summit is in the face-to-face interactions. "It is the great conversations that happen over coffee in the hallway between sessions among vendors, property owners, and even competitors," he writes in his column on page 8).

The Summit offers something for everyone in the broadband industry, including panels on multifamily broadband, mapping, open-access networks, precision agriculture and tribal broadband. Once again, **BROADBAND COMMUNITIES** will also host a CLIC pre-conference program, the perennially popular "Owner/Legal Roundtable" in the MDU track, and two "Great Communities" panels highlighting Beckert's Park in Washington, D.C., and Desert Color in Utah.

We also are excited to welcome Hilda Legg, rural economic development consultant for Legg Strategies. Having spent more than four decades analyzing rural markets, she will host two panels on government

funding for broadband: "Financing: ABCs of Government Funding" and "Finance Wizards."

The time to talk about broadband is pressing. According to Kagan's latest industry estimates, the number of residential cable, telco and satellite broadband subscribers topped 109.2 million at the end of the second quarter, up 4.3 percent annually, with nearly 4.5 million net adds year over year. Consumer appetites pushed wireline broadband residential penetrations to more than 83 percent. Including satellite broadband services, residential penetration reached 84.5 percent.

Methods of delivering broadband are changing – as are the members of the broadband community. Incumbent carriers remain the dominant purveyors of broadband services. But a growing movement of new players – namely electric cooperatives and municipalities – is working to bring broadband into underserved and unserved areas.

These trends bode well for the broadband vendor community. Jeff Heynen, vice president of broadband access and home networking at Dell'Oro Group, wrote in a recent blog post that broadband equipment "spending will continue to grow this year as operators deal with continued subscriber additions, as well as competitors increasing their investments in fiber, hybrid fiber coax and fixed wireless networks."

So, let's get ready to talk about broadband – in person. I hope to see you in September. ❖

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