

## Fiber Connect 2022 Showcased Fiber Industry Momentum

The 2022 show featured a series of workshops on network deployments, strategies, workforce training and multivendor proof-of-concept collaboration.

By Nadir Noon / *Fiber Broadband Association*

The Fiber Broadband Association (FBA) hosted Fiber Connect 2022 at the Gaylord Opryland Resort and Convention Center in Nashville, Tennessee, June 12–15, 2022. More than 3,000 attendees and exhibitors enjoyed four days packed with networking, informational demonstrations, great content and valuable insights to continue building upon the fiber industry’s momentum in 2022.

The event kicked off Sunday afternoon with five pre-conference workshops. Each workshop focused on a different track, including Fiber 101, the Broadband Starter Kit, Fiber Playbook for State Broadband Officers, Fiber Panels for Cable Operators, and the Future of Fiber Technologies BAsE workshop. Each track included a wealth of information for those seeking extra insight into the fiber broadband industry.

FBA President and CEO Gary Bolton kicked off Monday morning with the welcome ceremony alongside Fiber Connect Conference Chair Joseph Jones, FBA Board Chairman Kevin Morgan, and Tennessee Senator Bill Hagerty. Andy Berke of the National Telecommunications and

Information Administration (NTIA) delivered the opening keynote. He spoke about bringing dreams to reality and providing the internet to all. Monday also featured two specialty luncheons for network operators and for public officials, which allowed those respective attendees to connect and discuss topics relevant to their role in the fiber broadband industry.

Tuesday morning featured multiple keynote sessions, including two specialty keynote panels, Everywhere Fiber Connects and Fiber and the Social Good. The Women in Fiber Luncheon gathered nearly 200 attendees. Speaker Brittany Cole, Career Thrivers, touched on themes of diversity, networking, mentorship, entrepreneurship, continuous improvement and resilience.

Wednesday closed with another insightful keynote from Dr. Christopher Ali, a nationally recognized expert on broadband policy and author of the new book “Farm Fresh Broadband: The Politics of Rural Connectivity.”

### POC SHOWCASE, AWARDS

An exciting addition to Fiber Connect this year was the Proof of Concept (PoC) Showcase, which took place in the expo hall on Monday and Tuesday

of Fiber Connect 2022. It featured six demonstrations from FBA members that showed precisely why fiber is the most dynamic, essential technology to help close the digital divide. The showcase featured Nokia, Calix, Cena, Plume, Benu Networks, IP Infusion, DZS, COS Systems and Lit Communities demonstrations.

“The Proof of Concept Showcase was an exciting validation of the opportunities and possibilities that fiber creates,” said Gary Bolton. “Amazing things come from collaboration, so it was great to see [FBA] members and their partners come together to present the next wave of innovations that fiber can support.”

Fiber Connect has always been a place for leaders and innovators in the industry to be recognized. Every year, FBA presents the Chairman’s Award to an individual or a company that has shown tremendous effort to promote, educate or accelerate fiber to the home (FTTH). This year, FBA recognized Veronica Bloodworth, chief network officer of Frontier, for her actions.

The Photon Award recognizes individuals who, for their contribution through volunteering, demonstrate a high level of dedication to FBA and

to the broadband industry. This year, Stan Fendley, director of legislative and regulatory policy at Corning, received the award for his work serving on the frontline of the association's advocacy and policy initiatives on Capitol Hill.

This year's Star Award, which recognizes a person, community or company that has gone above and beyond what is expected in the advancement of FTTH, went to Tavistock Development Company, which will provide up to 10 Gbps FTTH services to 10,000 residents in Sunbridge and the Central Florida region.

New in 2022 was the Gene Scott Education Award honoring the late Gene Scott, community broadband advocate and an instrumental part of the fiber broadband industry, especially regarding education. This award recognizes a person, a community or an institution that has significantly impacted the advancement of education in the fiber industry. Greenlight Community Broadband was awarded the Gene Scott Education Award for supporting Scott's efforts to build workforce training programs over the past year, including FBA's OpTIC certification course launch.

### FOCUS ON EDUCATION

Regarding industry education, FBA also hosted and sold out the OpTIC Train the Trainer course at Fiber Connect 2022. The course prepares instructors to deliver FBA OpTIC Path course material. FBA quickly grew the

number of schools and organizations participating in the OpTIC Path program and announced at Fiber Connect 2022 that the program will expand throughout North America.

"Getting people trained to deploy fiber to the home has never been more important," said Deborah Kish, vice president of research and workforce development for the FBA. "We have a lot of very talented and experienced individuals out there with a passion for this industry who can step into the instructor role, and I am excited to rebuild the workforce and keep the pipelines filled."

Fiber Connect 2022 was a huge success; next year should not be missed. ❖



*Nadir Noon is the marketing manager for the Fiber Broadband Association.*

### SAVE THE DATE

Save the date for Fiber Connect 2023, June 12–15, at the Gaylord Palms Resort and Convention Center in Orlando, Florida.

FBA is also hosting smaller Regional Fiber Connect Workshop events later this year in Frisco, Colorado, on August 23 and Columbus, Ohio, on November 3.

FBA's LATAM Chapter is hosting Fiber Connect LATAM 2022 on July 11–12 in San José, Costa Rica, for professionals in the industry to join operators, ISPs, manufacturers of fiber equipment, and proponents of broadband and other solutions, in discovering how to become part of the telecommunications revolution in Latin America.

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