Previewing the Summit

This issue of the magazine offers an advance look at 2019 Summit program highlights.

As I write this column, the **BROADBAND COMMUNITIES** team is putting the finishing touches on what promises to be our biggest and best Summit ever, which will be held April 8–11 in Austin. Topics range from smart apartments to smart cities, from the future of work to the future of wireless, from funding to policy, from small electric co-ops to big carriers. Plus, of course, everything you've always wanted to know about fiber to the home.

All these subjects boil down to two big questions: How can my community get great broadband? Once my community has great broadband, what should we do with it? The Summit will provide plenty of answers to both questions.

SUMMIT TALKS IN THE MAGAZINE

For those of you who won't be there (and those who will), this magazine issue features several advance looks at important Summit presentations.

Our Cornerstone Awards luncheon keynoter, Jannine Miller of USDA, sat for a long interview with us (p. 44), in which she explained how her department promotes rural broadband. I was interested to find out what, exactly, the Rural Broadband Pilot Program (ReConnect) is piloting. Turns out USDA is experimenting with new ways to incentivize great broadband in unserved areas – and to identify those areas correctly despite the lamentable state of the national broadband maps, which Miller's boss, Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue, recently called "fake news."

Thursday's keynoter, Susan Crawford of Harvard Law School, allowed us to reprint an excerpt from her new, bestselling book, "Fiber" (p. 50), which she'll discuss – and sign – at the Summit. Crawford spent five years studying successful fiber cities in the United States and around the world, and she believes fiber connections are critical to U.S. competitiveness. She also thinks a new mindset is needed to keep the United States from lagging in the broadband race.

Craig Settles of CJ Speaks contributed an article (p. 62) about telehealth's contribution to combating substance abuse. After 70,000 drug overdose deaths were logged in 2017, telehealth may be the most critical reason for communities – especially in rural areas – to promote universal broadband coverage.

Most of the experts Settles interviewed for the article will speak in his Monday workshop about creating telehealth hubs using community broadband; he will also host a panel on Wednesday on why telehealth and community broadband are a match made in heaven.

See you at the Summit! ❖

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