Conference Highlights Latest Tech Developments, Connect South Carolina Forms New Advisory Council

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IT-oLogy Connections 2013 in partnership with Connect South Carolina Draws More than 150

Columbia, SC – To kick off the "IT-oLogy Connections 2013 in partnership with Connect South Carolina" conference Thursday, Connect South Carolina hosted the first meeting of the newly formed South Carolina Broadband Advisory Council. Soon after, more than 150 community, business, and industry leaders assembled at the IT-oLogy Theater in downtown Columbia for a day filled with highlighting the use of IT and broadband and their impact on our everyday lives.

"Connections 2013 was the perfect environment to have the first meeting of the South Carolina Broadband Advisory Council and I am pleased with the members we've assembled, and in seeing their passion for expanding broadband in our state," said Connect South Carolina Program Lead and Community Technology Advisor Heather Jones.

The council will, among other things, oversee all necessary duties and responsibilities to reach the goal of expanding broadband technology through application for federal funding/grants, grant compliance, mapping, and data management.

Connect South Carolina works daily to facilitate the access, adoption, and use of technology throughout the state to create a better business environment, more effective community and economic development, improved healthcare, more efficient government, enhanced education, and improved quality of life. Today, twenty-two counties in South Carolina are enlisted in some phase of the Connected program that prepares communities for the opportunities to come through increased connectivity. And, as part of the Connect South Carolina breakout session,

community technology advisors Lindsay Conrad and Jones encouraged attendees whose communities were not in the Connected program to step up and take advantage of the program.

Connected Nation President/COO Tom Ferree hosted a morning keynote session titled "Connected Communities: A Model That Works," where he said that 1.2 million South Carolinians are still not connected and that there are huge economic benefits to be gained if just 1% were added. "It's hard to believe that nearly one-third of the state remains offline, but that is changing through locally-driven planning, public-private collaboration, and targeted adoption programs," said Ferree.

One of the highlights during the event came when Connect South Carolina honored three of the twenty-two counties with Broadband Hero Awards: Saluda County for being the first county in the state to complete the Connected Nation Connected technology assessment; Greenwood County for collaborative success; and Anderson County for being the first certified Connected community in the state of South Carolina.

Acting FCC chairwoman Mignon Clyburn also appeared by video reiterating the importance of the adoption of broadband in South Carolina and a congratulatory letter from Governor Haley was read to the Broadband Heroes.

Greenwood County Champion Catalina Valencia, who was on hand to accept Greenwood's award, offered insight to the Connected program and praised the process.

"We've learned a lot about how much we need to do in our county in order to be able to have the infrastructure that we need for our companies, for our schools, our people … to have good access to Internet and to be able to utilize it to its full potential," she said. "What we learned, especially these days, is that we take Internet for granted. We think these days that Internet is there and is supposed to work just fine and that's what we assume. Well, that is not the case. And especially for communities like ours, rural communities very early in the process, we found out that we had certain issues we needed to work on."

"We devoted a lot of hours through this process, and what we found out is that it is worth it," Valencia said. "Finding out that what you are doing and your effort is going to help a community improve its broadband access, its broadband capacity, makes sense."

In case you missed "IT-oLogy Connections 2013 in partnership with Connect South Carolina," be sure to check out the photo gallery at www.connectsc.org/broadband-summit. To get your community Connected with Connect South Carolina, please contact Jones at hjones@connectsc.org or Conrad at lconrad@connectsc.org.

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About Connect South Carolina: As the State Broadband Initiative grantee, Connect South Carolina is leading the effort to increase high-speed Internet access, adoption and use to

ensure South Carolina's competitiveness in the connected global economy of the twenty-first century. Connect South Carolina is a public-private partnership designated by the state to work with all broadband providers to create South Carolina's first interactive map of broadband coverage. This work serves as a foundation for addressing remaining service gaps while also engaging state, regional and local leaders in workforce development activities designed to bridge South Carolina's digital divide. For maps, research or to get involved with efforts in your community please visit: www.ConnectSC.org.

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