

Emphasizing the Infrastructure

By Tom Schuman

Small Town, Big Broadband Pipe

“U.S. Struggles to Keep Pace in Delivering Broadband Service” was the headline on a story *The New York Times* published at the end of 2013. A variety of studies and technology experts have warned that the country is “falling dangerously behind” in offering high-speed, affordable broadband.

In Indiana, companies have made significant investments since telecommunications reform legislation passed in 2006. The challenge, however, is a local one. Each individual community requires access to the fiber-optic networks that offer companies and citizens the opportunity to benefit.

Expanding rural service is often a challenge. Smithville Communications met that one head-on earlier this year by including the Posey County community of Griffin (population of 172 in the 2010 Census) in its \$90 million initiative to replace all copper-based “twisted-pair” platforms in its service areas.

Darby McCarty, Smithville president and CEO, states, “The Griffin area now has ‘Google-quality’ gigabit Internet capacity (Google has implemented similar initiatives in Austin, Texas; Kansas City and Provo, Utah). This high-speed connectivity provides all kinds of opportunities for small business expansion and quality of life issues for the Griffin area.”

In a study of the largest economies worldwide, doubling a country’s broadband speed consistently resulted in an increase in gross domestic product. Despite its small size, Griffin’s location near Interstate 64 “could result ultimately in new economic development opportunities for the region,” McCarty contends.



RESOURCE: Smithville at www.smithville.net

Protecting Our Water

Stories of state and local water woes around the country continue to “spring” up on a more frequent basis. One of the goals of *Indiana Vision 2025* – and an Indiana Chamber statewide water resource study that is nearing completion – is to keep Indiana out of those “dry” headlines.

Bad puns aside, here’s why the issue is so important:

- Indiana’s economy (now and in the future) depends on an affordable, dependable and safe water supply
- The drought of 2012 revealed that demand can, on a local basis, exceed supplies
- A lack of monitoring wells does not currently provide enough information on water available in aquifers

Water supplies are not evenly distributed throughout the state and there has been a lack of coordinated planning among the many providers and sources. Those leading the study indicate that growth in Central and Southern Indiana could be stifled by a lack of such planning.

The Indiana Chamber Foundation commissioned the study. It is being conducted by Jack Wittman, Ph.D., a leading groundwater scientist and hydrogeologist for more than 30 years, with a task force engaged in guiding the progress. Results and recommendations for next steps are expected to be released this summer.



Task force members receive an update on the water resources study at the April meeting.

RESOURCE: *Indiana Vision 2025* at www.indianachamber.com/2025

Adding to the Fuel Mix

One year ago *BizVoice*[®] reported on a growing number of companies making the switch to compressed natural gas (CNG) to meet their transportation needs. Earlier this year, that effort became easier with CountryMark announcing plans to add CNG to its lineup of American-made transportation fuels.

In a press release, CountryMark President and CEO Charlie Smith, said, “Our mission is to produce and supply market leading energy products and services. As we look at future Midwestern transportation fuel needs, we feel confident it will include CNG, and we and our branded dealers are excited about building the CNG infrastructure needed to bring this reliable and domestically produced fuel to the marketplace in the most convenient and cost-effective manner possible.”

The Indianapolis-headquartered company has more than 180 fuel delivery routes and 100-plus CountryMark branded fuel stations in Indiana and surrounding states. In addition to the distribution channels, it will work directly with customers.

“Our teams are being trained to provide a high level of multi-fuel knowledge that will help bus and truck fleets analyze their transportation fuel options and make the best possible fueling decision to reach their fleet goals,” offers Jon Lantz, CountryMark’s vice president of marketing.



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RESOURCE: CountryMark at www.countrymark.com