

# Gallipolis Daily Tribune

GALLIPOLIS, OH

Wednesday, December 20, 2006

Last modified: Tuesday, December 19, 2006 8:50 PM EST

## Broadband access set for Vinton

By Michelle Miller

VINTON — They call themselves “technology plumbers,” a group of people dedicated to providing high-speed Internet to remote areas that would normally fall through the technological cracks.

“We’re coming in here and putting a ‘pipe’ into the community,” said Dr. Alan Escovitz, director of external affairs for the Office of the Chief Information Officer of Ohio State University.

Escovitz explained how broadband Internet access will bring greater resources, educational programming and workforce development to the village of Vinton through the Connecting Rural Ohio project, a partnership between local, regional and state education and government institutions.

Unlike dealing with a private company, once the project is complete, ownership will be turned over to the village, who will serve as the Internet service provider.

“Once we finish our work, the network becomes yours. We turn it over to the community and it becomes part of your resources in Vinton,” said Escovitz.

A U.S. Department of Agriculture grant secured through the American Distance Education Consortium (ADEC) will cover the technology installation costs for the village and a secondary grant through the Governor’s Office of Appalachia (GOA) will allow the village to purchase computers and turn the village hall into a learning center for the community, complete with wireless Internet.

Connection to the network will depend on the user’s distance from the main receiver, which, as of right now, will be located on top of the village water tower. Some residents will be able to access it straight from their computer with just a wireless card, while others will need to purchase a receiver or larger antenna, which should be at a reasonable cost according to Escovitz.

Dr. Robert S. Dixon, chief research engineer for the OSU Office of the Chief Information Officer and for Oarnet, and Gabriel Moulton, technology engineer for the OSU office of the Chief Information Officer, were on hand to discuss how the system operates and answer questions.

According to Mayor Sam Sowards, the village will try to keep monthly costs down for residents and will hold a public meeting once the particulars are worked out.

As a land grant institution for Ohio, OSU is required to participate in community outreach programs, Escovitz said. The Connecting Rural Ohio project is how their department chooses to participate in community outreach, by helping rural areas gain funding for projects and by donating their time and expertise to those projects.

“One of the ways we feel we can give back to the community is by engaging communities in projects like this,” Escovitz said.

The educational advantages of broadband internet are the driving force behind the project. A representative from the Ohio Learning Network, an online catalog of courses and degrees available online from various Ohio colleges and universities, discussed how the group will be able to assist Vinton residents in continuing their education.

Through the University of Rio Grande/Rio Grande Community College, the village hopes to offer courses to Vinton

residents on basic computer skills, according to Kingsley Meyer.

According to Escovitz, the deadline to spend the grant money is March 31, 2007.

"We look at this (project) as a partnership with Vinton; as a collaborative effort with a number of organizations," Escovitz said.

Those organizations include the Governor's Office of Appalachia (GOA), the Ohio State University (OSU), the American Distance Education Consortium (ADEC), the Ohio Supercomputer Center (OSC), Washington State Community College (WSCC), the Ohio Learning Network (OLN), Ohio University (OU), Rio Grande Community College and the University of Rio Grande, the Gallia County Commissioners, the Ohio State University Extension Office in Gallia County, the county and city school districts, and numerous other agencies and individuals.

Additional public meetings will be held as the project continues to ensure all concerns are answered and residents are provided with up to date information regarding installation and service costs.