

***Broadband providers honored for efforts to deliver advanced technologies that enable innovations in agriculture, health care, public safety and education***

CHICAGO, Sept. 16, 2013 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- NTCA–The Rural Broadband Association, the premier national association representing nearly 900 independent, community-based telecommunications companies, today recognized seven communities in rural areas of \_\_\_\_\_ the United States that have earned the title Smart Rural Community as part of a first-of-its-kind initiative to highlight efforts that make rural hometowns vibrant places in which to live and do business.

(Logo: <http://photos.prnewswire.com/prnh/20130910/DC77128LOGO> )

The goal of the NTCA Smart Rural Community initiative is to foster the development of smart communities throughout rural America by recognizing trailblazers, providing a road map and identifying resources to assist other broadband providers and connected industries. In the first phase of this multifaceted initiative, NTCA recognized and awarded communities served by its members that embody the title Smart Rural Community by promoting access to next-generation applications and platforms such as distance learning, telehealth services, public safety and security.

The following broadband providers received national recognition:

- Blue Valley Tele-Communications, Inc. (Home, Kan.)
- DRN (Ellendale, N.D.)
- ITS Telecom (Indiantown, Fla.)
- Mutual Telephone Company (Little River, Kan.)

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- Nex-Tech, Inc. (Hays, Kan.)
- Park Region Telephone/Otter Tail Telecom (Underwood, Minn.)
- West Central Telephone Association (Sebeka, Minn.)

NTCA Smart Rural Community award recipients were recognized at a gathering of more than 1,000 rural telecom leaders in Chicago. In addition to receiving national and local recognition for their extraordinary efforts, the selected Smart Rural Communities will receive tools to facilitate ongoing development and deployment of broadband-enabled applications that support and foster innovative solutions to challenges facing remote communities of the United States

"These communities are proof that distance and geography do not have to be handicaps to innovation, growth and prosperity," said NTCA Chief Executive Officer Shirley Bloomfield. "By showcasing their efforts, we are opening doors for many more communities to chart their own paths to a more prosperous future with the help of reliable broadband communications and the steadfast commitment of hometown telecom providers."

For more information about the initiative, visit [www.ntca.org/smart](http://www.ntca.org/smart) .

*NTCA–The Rural Broadband Association is the premier association representing nearly 900 independent, community-based telecommunications companies that are leading innovation in rural and small-town America. NTCA advocates on behalf of its members in the legislative and regulatory arenas, and it provides training and development; publications and industry events; and an array of employee benefit programs. In an era of exploding technology, deregulation and marketplace competition, NTCA's members are leading the IP evolution for rural consumers, delivering technologies that make rural communities vibrant places in which to live and do business. Because of their efforts, rural America is fertile ground for innovation in economic development and commerce, education, health care, government services, security and smart energy use. Visit us at [www.ntca.org](http://www.ntca.org) .*

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