

MCNC's annual NCREN Community Day highlights current, future efforts of high-speed connectivity in the state

RALEIGH, N.C., Nov. 22, 2013 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- [MCNC](#), the non-profit operator of the North Carolina Research and Education Network (NCREN), today announced that more than 250 educators, researchers, government officials, and business leaders from all over the state gathered to discuss the future of high-speed internet, networking, and the applications broadband enables during [NCREN Community Day 2013](#) held at the James B. Hunt Jr. Library at NC State University.

For more than 30 years, North Carolina has set the pace for national research and education networking by leveraging NCREN, which provides true high-performance broadband connectivity for community institutions in K-20 public and private education, non-profit health care, public safety and many federal, state and private research institutions. Each year, MCNC recognizes and celebrates the progress and achievements from the NCREN community with this event.

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Written by Australian Business

This year is significant for MCNC as the organization celebrates the completion of the [Golden LEAF Rural Broadband Initiative](#)

, which over the past three years has expanded the fiber-based network to cover more than 2,600 linear miles spanning the entire state. After completing this historic \$144 million

expansion through the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP) in August, North Carolina

has become one of just a handful of states with an open access, middle-mile fiber network available to economic developers, businesses and broadband service providers.

"*The Connected State* theme this year acted as the creative catalyst on expanding networks, increased bandwidth, and the horizons of our research teams," said Todd Broucksou, senior director of NCREN Community Support. "The expanded NCREN is a totally new infrastructure for the state that affordably and effectively removes the bandwidth restraints and connection barriers our schools, non-profit health care and other institutions have experienced in the past. For the next several generations, broadband infrastructure will be a highway to innovation in North Carolina for these institutions."

MCNC also announced the winners of this year's annual NCREN Community Awards during the two-day event.

The Robyn Render Endeavor Award was presented to [Mladen Vouk](#), department head, professor of computer science and associate vice-provost for information technology at NC State University. This year's Empower Award recipient was

[John Graham](#)

, adjunct assistant professor of the Public Health Leadership Program and senior investigator at the NC Institute for Public Health. Finally,

[Dan Noonan](#)

, manager of Distance Education and Video Network Services at UNC Wilmington

, was selected by his peers for the Community Choice Award.

Other event highlights included a [training session](#) on values-based leadership featuring [Don Welch](#)

, president and CEO of

[Merit Network](#)

. Other presentations included the growth rate of NCREN heading into 2014 as well as active

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discussions on Gig.U and the N.C. Next Generation Network, innovation through network connectivity, digital learning in

North Carolina

featuring former

North Carolina

Gov.

Bev Perdue

, the state of rural broadband, bandwidth and public safety, and an update on the health of the network by MCNC staff.

Event sponsors included: (Zettabyte Sponsor) [Cisco Systems](#) ; (Gigabyte Sponsors) [ECC Technologies](#)

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About MCNC MCNC is a technology non-profit that builds, owns, and operates the North Carolina Research and Education Network (NCREN). For more than a quarter century, a growing number of research, education, non-profit health care, and other community institutions have connected to NCREN to utilize this leading-edge broadband highway. Today, NCREN

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serves the broadband infrastructure needs of more than 450 of these institutions including all K-20 public education in North Carolina. The recent expansion of NCREN and its capabilities allows us to customize network services and applications for each of these institutions more than ever before as we also look to further enable private-sector providers to bring cost-effective broadband infrastructure to rural and underserved areas of North Carolina. Our business and partnering strategy gives our state a real competitive advantage and is driving the new broadband economy in

North Carolina

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www.mcnc.org

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Photography Photos from the event and this year's award winners are available on the [MCNC website](#)

and

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