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Dover to participate in broadband project

by Christian Avard

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MONTPELIER- On Tuesday, the e-Vermont Community Broadband Project selected 12 communities to participate in a rural broadband initiative. The town of Dover was among them.

E-Vermont is a national broadband adoption initiative focused on rural needs. The project will bring digital tools and in-depth Internet training to areas lacking broadband access. They will benefit from the expertise and resources of e-Vermont's statewide partners as the local groups develop ways to take full advantage of the Internet for creating jobs and innovative schools, providing social services, and increasing community connection. Also selected were Bridgewater, Calais, Castleton, Fairfield, Hardwick, Jay/Westfield, Middletown Springs, Moretown, Morristown, Richford, and Vergennes.

Dover Economic Development Specialist Patrick Moreland spearheaded the effort to include Dover in the broadband project. Moreland said the e-Vermont program will improve the quality and efficiency of local government communications; empower the local civic, business, and educational sectors; and assist them in achieving their goals through digital skill building. "There's a breadth of services available. Let's see how we can engage them," said Moreland.

According to Moreland, Dover has a high concentration of commercial entities in the hospitality sector, making it an ideal community to receive e-Vermont's assistance. Many local businesses are small family-based operations and Moreland said that e-Vermont will help local businesses develop the necessary marketing skills to grow their businesses via digital advertising or web-based marketing.

Part of the e-Vermont program entails providing a location for in-depth Internet training. Moreland said the town is working with the Dover Elementary School to identify classroom space that could be adapted for computer literacy instruction and specialized business training classes. Dover School principal Bill Anton said it was "fantastic" news that Dover was selected and he is looking forward to working with e-Vermont. "I think the ability for targeted technology integration in a rural community can only benefit its citizens. We have a nice infrastructure at the school and it would be great for the community to use it," said Anton.

According to Moreland, town libraries will also benefit from e-Vermont programs. Like the Dover School, the Dover Free Library will participate in the programs to obtain greater Internet access. The library may also provide computer literacy and training programs that will help residents develop their professional skills. Dover Free Library director John Flores said he is looking forward to working with e-Vermont partners to improve Dover's broadband capabilities. "We're always excited to be involved in what will help the community. It would be good for the town, the school, and the library," said Flores.

According to project director Helen Labun Jordan, e-Vermont officials will meet

with Moreland, Anton, and Flores in January and design broadband projects suitable for Dover's needs. In the spring, e-Vermont will hold a forum with local leaders from the 12 towns and they will discuss strategies for greater broadband implementation.

“As we work with rural communities to support the best use of high speed Internet tools in business, government, community and education, we are bringing Vermont one step closer to truly eliminating the digital divide,” says Jordan, “Rural regions can't be left behind in digital skills– we may be receiving high speed Internet later than more urban areas, but we're going to make up for lost time through programs like e-Vermont.”

For more information visit www.e4vt.org or call (802) 225-6091.

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