

ConnectKentucky Supports Unserved Area in Fight for Affordable Broadband



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Thanks to Grassroots Efforts and Public-Private Partnership, New Broadband Service has Been Extended for Unserved Area in Greenup County on Brookefield Farm Road

In Greenup County, Kentucky, Melinda Spears and her two teenage daughters have never had an opportunity to connect to affordable high-speed Internet.

“I have a daughter in high school and, well have you tried to do anything on the computer via dialup lately?” Spears wrote to ConnectKentucky. “It’s excruciatingly slow if it even works at all. Needless to say, she is unable to do any of her computer based schoolwork at home. In this day of technology, citizens are literally handicapped without the use of the Internet for everything from entertainment to information to education to contacting your representatives.”

However, thanks to grassroots efforts from public officials, private industry, local residents, and ConnectKentucky, Spears, her daughters, and her neighborhood are now benefiting from affordable high-speed Internet.

In a time where connectivity continues to be an issue in many rural areas in all states, Spears’ story is all too common. Her neighborhood is small — just 17 or so families. It’s on the border of two counties — Greenup and Boyd. Spears called her neighborhood, which runs along Brookefield Farm Road, the “Bermuda Triangle of Greenup County.”

Based on a suggestion from State Rep. Tanya Pullin (D-District 98), Spears contacted ConnectKentucky.

“Is there any way you can help us few, honest, hard working citizens, to be a part of and enjoy the benefits of this new, incredible, digital society and not be left behind?” Spears wrote. “I realize this may seem trivial to some, what with all the problems in our country and the world beyond, but if nothing else, it will benefit the future and the education of our children who deserve the same chances that

urban children have. Thanks for your time and your work you do for our community and the Great Commonwealth of Kentucky. I am proud to be a Kentuckian.”

René True, executive director of ConnectKentucky, suggested that Spears gather a group of neighbors interested in broadband service. Spears did just that — 16 families in her area said they would subscribe to affordable broadband service if it was offered. True then contacted Foundation Telecommunications, Inc. (FTI) about the need and opportunity to provide broadband service to Spears’ neighborhood.

Starting in late May, FTI started providing Spears and her neighbors with high-speed service. Since the service began, FTI has had seven new subscribers.

For FTI, a ConnectKentucky Steering Committee partner, providing service to unserved areas is part of its mission.

“This community only had dial-up available prior to FTI installing this network,” said Bud Coburn of FTI. “Many had complaints about how long the downloads would take on dial-up for their kids to accomplish school work at home. With the faster speeds they were excited about the opportunity for their kids to learn their school work over the FTI network.”

George Livergood, president and chief executive officer of FTI, agreed.

“While it is certainly true that the new broadband service to the broadband ‘Bermuda Triangle of Greenup County’ is as a result of a public-private partnership with FTI, the project could never have become a reality without the cooperative efforts of the local community,” Livergood said.

For ConnectKentucky, helping Spears, her daughters, and her community become connected in an affordable way is a key component of the nonprofit’s work that continues to change the lives of Kentuckians.

“We are pleased to have helped Melinda and her daughters. Although the area served is a small one, we are privileged to have assisted Brookefield Farm residents in gaining the connectivity they deserve,” said True. “We applaud our friends at FTI and Rep. Pullin for their commitment to helping the communities they represent and serve. The broadband service offered by FTI provides hope for other Kentucky residents living in unserved areas.”

“I have been working to expand broadband service to our area for years. Because we are largely a rural area, several different ways to deliver high-speed Internet are needed to meet the needs of the residents here. Since FTI’s technology seems to work well, it may help to provide high-speed Internet to other rural parts of our county, too,” Rep. Pullin said.

Pullin continued, "I applaud Mrs. Spears and her neighbors for taking an active role in making this solution work. I also commend ConnectKentucky for their creativity in finding this high-speed Internet solution."

For Spears and her neighbors, the new broadband service is working beautifully and they couldn't be more excited.

"We were at the end of our rope. Our daughter had a new computer, but she was not using it. We are really happy with the new broadband service and others I have talked with are also pleased," Spears said. "FTI was very persistent in dealing with the weather challenges in setting up the system. It is a whole different world being able to use broadband."

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About ConnectKentucky: ConnectKentucky is leading the way into a new economy for Kentuckians. As an independent technology-based economic development organization, ConnectKentucky works to ensure that Kentucky remains the place of choice to live, work, and raise a family. ConnectKentucky is an alliance of technology-minded businesses, government entities, and universities working together to accelerate technology in the Commonwealth. www.connectkentucky.org.