

## ConnectKentucky Success Spurs the Addition of New Staff and the Formation of a National Organization

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BOWLING GREEN, Ky., Aug. 9 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- Since the launch of Kentucky's Prescription for Innovation in late 2004, ConnectKentucky has facilitated efforts garnering unprecedented success in broadband deployment and technology advancement. Utilizing what is becoming known as the Connected Nation model for technology expansion, ConnectKentucky has helped the Commonwealth become a national leader in technology adoption and planning with a #1 ranking for growth in broadband technology.

America is watching Kentucky's success story and as a result, states are considering the possibility of replicating the Connected Nation model to close the digital divide that exists in communities across the nation. The digital divide refers to the gap that exists for communities without adequate technological resources or in some cases -- communities yet to be served with high-speed Internet. Additionally, the United States Congress has numerous efforts underway to establish a national initiative to replicate Kentucky's success that has resulted from ConnectKentucky's implementation of the Prescription for Innovation. The bipartisan Connect the Nation Act of 2007 has been filed by Senator Dick Durbin (D-Illinois) to encourage the rapid deployment of affordable broadband Internet service, particularly in rural areas. The legislation supports a grant program that would enable states to implement an initiative similar to ConnectKentucky, a public-private partnership leading efforts to accelerate broadband availability and technology literacy throughout the Commonwealth.

In response to the growing demand for technology planning in the Commonwealth and for increased requests for planning assistance from other states, the leadership of ConnectKentucky is adding senior level staff and has formed a national umbrella organization called Connected Nation. Connected Nation assists with statewide comprehensive technology expansion efforts across America that effectively enhance the supply of available broadband while dramatically increasing demand through state and local grassroots awareness/adoption campaigns. Connected Nation specializes in increasing technology access and literacy towards greater digital inclusion for all. This technology expansion improves economic development, healthcare, education and public safety, in addition to providing a better way of life for Americans.

The Connected Nation model in Kentucky has been very successful. Currently, 94 percent of Kentucky households are able to subscribe to broadband compared to only 60 percent in 2001. At the end of the year, Kentucky will be the only state in the nation to have full broadband coverage -- meaning every citizen in the state will be able to subscribe to some form of high-speed Internet.

High-speed Internet has quickly become the necessary foundation for economic development. With broadband Internet, Kentucky communities can engage the world with their goods and services. Industries reliant upon traditional manufacturing can use the Internet to expand their markets and make their operations even more efficient. Broadband brings educational opportunities, improved healthcare, more effective and efficient government services and ultimately a better quality of life for all Kentucky residents.

The closing of the digital divide is already yielding dividends in the quality of life for Kentuckians. In the Commonwealth, computer literacy has increased, the growth rate of high-tech jobs is outpacing the national average and Kentucky communities are enjoying the return of their offspring as more students remain in Kentucky to begin their careers. At an increasing rate, companies are locating to Kentucky, entrepreneurs are developing businesses in Kentucky and jobs are increasing thanks to a rich technology infrastructure and an expanding technology-savvy workforce equipped to support business growth.

The national interest the Connected Nation model has received spurred the creation of two senior leadership positions to explore and manage the implementation activities of Connected Nation and ConnectKentucky. Mark McElroy, Senior V.P., Operations and Communications for Connected Nation, recently announced the addition of Rene' True as Director of Operations for ConnectKentucky and Brent Legg as Director of State & Local Initiatives for Connected Nation.

"The Prescription for Innovation initiative that began in Kentucky is creating an impression all over America. The ConnectKentucky partnership has provided for the rest of the nation a model of success that Connected Nation is happy to share. Great work attracts great people," McElroy said. "These two individuals will further complement our staff during this development and provide new insight into the overall mission of technology growth for interested states. Kentucky, as the clear leader in technology planning, will continue to lead the nation as we demonstrate what is possible when a state has 100% broadband availability."

Rene' True joins ConnectKentucky as Director of Operations and will provide primary management for ConnectKentucky, while also demonstrating leadership and vision to accelerate the growth of technology in the Commonwealth.

"It is an honor to work alongside individuals who are dedicated and passionate in regards to the mission of broadband development in the Commonwealth," True said. "I am eager to play a part in continuing the success of the Prescription for Innovation and positioning Kentucky as the foremost choice in which to call home."

Prior to joining ConnectKentucky, True served as Executive Director of the Office of Research and Information Technology in the Kentucky Cabinet for Economic Development. In addition to managing a 20 person staff, his responsibilities included coordinating the agency's strategic planning efforts and overseeing the Cabinet's IT functions. Before joining the agency, Rene' served over three years as Deputy Secretary of the Kentucky Revenue Cabinet, where he helped develop and implement the Cabinet's first strategic plan. True holds a Master's of Business Administration from the University of Kentucky.

Brent Legg serves as Director of State & Local Initiatives for Connected Nation. In this role, he provides primary management of Connected Nation's national (state-by-state) strategy coordinating the work of the organization as it expands its engagements in, and to, other states concentrating specifically on states lacking a statewide technology public-private partnership.

"ConnectKentucky is now widely recognized as the nation's best model for enhancing broadband development at the state level," Legg said. "I am thrilled to have the opportunity to work for an organization that is truly pioneering these efforts nationwide."

Immediately prior to joining Connected Nation, Legg served as Field Director for United States Congressman Geoff Davis (KY-4), where he oversaw the Congressman's four field offices and served as a liaison for constituents and local elected officials. Prior to that assignment, he acted as Senior Legislative Liaison for the Secretary of the Kentucky Education Cabinet and Assistant Policy Advisor for the Fletcher for Governor 2003 Campaign. Legg is a 2003 graduate of Transylvania University with a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science.

True and Legg will be valuable additions to the Connected Nation team as the organization continues to answer the broadband needs of the nation by encouraging investment, driving technology adoption and empowering grassroots- led community development.

About ConnectKentucky: As a non-profit technology-based economic development organization, ConnectKentucky is working to ensure that Kentucky remains the place of choice to live, work and raise a family. As a public- private partnership, ConnectKentucky partners with technology-minded businesses, government entities and universities to accelerate technology in the Commonwealth.

About Connected Nation: Connected Nation, Inc. is a national non-profit organization known for its ability to close the digital divide. Through its partnerships, programs and policies Connected Nation makes technology work for previously underserved communities and markets, improving community life and economic development while enhancing markets for technology providers. Connected Nation's proven methodologies are delivering dramatic results that translate into more efficient public services and enhanced quality of life. Connected Nation's work in Kentucky, ConnectKentucky, has been identified as a national model for the expansion of broadband.

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