

Government Technology **Magazine Honors Prestonsburg** **Wireless Network**



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For Immediate Release

The city of Prestonsburg was recently awarded Most Innovative Use of Technology for Local Government during the Kentucky Digital Government Summit. Hosted by *Government Technology* Magazine, the Summit recognized the city's wireless mesh network during the Best of Kentucky Awards.

"I'm honored to receive this award," said Brent Graden, Economic Director for the city of Prestonsburg. "This project has been a tremendous success for the city and a welcomed addition for our residents."

After conducting residential surveys and focus groups, city officials and stakeholders determined residents of Prestonsburg wanted easier access to government, improved tourism, increased business opportunities, telemedicine services and distance learning.

Beginning in 2007, the *wireless downtown* project was born. Graden received \$8,500 from the city council for two years of broadband access across downtown Prestonsburg. With the help of ConnectKentucky, Graden sifted through multiple estimates – all far too expensive for his small-town budget.

"I knew there was a better mousetrap out there," he told himself. He was right. While reading a magazine article, Graden stumbled across a west-coast company called Meraki. Their Dashboard system offered an affordable alternative. This mesh network also allowed the city to manage the system without additional computers, servers and staff members. Graden chuckled, "If you can plug in a light, you can run this system."

René True, Executive Director for ConnectKentucky stated, "ConnectKentucky is extremely proud that the City of Prestonsburg is recognized with a Best of Kentucky award for using wireless broadband technology as an economic development tool, creating opportunities and enriching the lives of its citizens. We were happy to be a small part of the project."

Originally starting with one indoor and three outdoor routers, the network will soon consist of 70 repeaters and three DSL access points throughout the area.

The results have been phenomenal. Since going live, Graden said they have already captured over 2,600 unique users and 243 GB of information have been downloaded from the network. More importantly, the system has also helped attract over 20 new businesses, including multiple restaurants, national retailers and light industrial companies.

With the help of this network, Graden hopes to build a technology business park in the area and attract more import/export business in the future.

"This has helped us stop the brain drain and given people a reason to live and raise a family

locally,” added Graden. “We want to continue advancing technologically, while still maintaining our Appalachian heritage.”

To learn more about ConnectKentucky, visit www.connectkentucky.org.

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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.

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