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NEWS

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New Broadband Technology to be Tested in Turney, MO Improved Internet access for students and entrepreneurs expected

PLATTSBURG, Mo., April 22, 2021—Clinton County residents in the Village of Turney will soon have an opportunity to participate in a high-speed broadband experiment. An interdisciplinary research team has announced that their first project will focus on the general area in and around Turney thanks to an agreement signed with Wade Farms in neighboring Stewartsville, Mo. earlier this week. The team's novel technology that relies on RF over Fiber (RfF) and intelligent routing to provide wireless access is dependent on being able to mount some of their equipment at a high elevation making the Wade Farm's grain elevator an ideal point of broadcast. The goal is to test a wireless method in areas not yet served by fiber infrastructure that can reduce costs and simultaneously expand broadband service.

"If our approach works in this small area of Clinton County, it may be something that can be replicated in many rural areas," said Dr. Casey Canfield, assistant professor of engineering management and systems engineering at Missouri Science and Technology University.

That broad vision is exactly what the National Science Foundation and Schmidt Futures through US Ignite's Project OVERCOME national grant is banking on. At least 17 million U.S. residents lack the basic Internet access necessary for remote work, online learning, and telemedicine. This reality of inequity became even more critical over the past year's challenges with COVID-19 according to US Ignite's website where they announced seven similar awards across the U.S. including Puerto Rico. The goal of Project OVERCOME is to select, launch, and oversee multiple proof-of-concept efforts to deploy novel broadband technology solutions to both rural and urban underserved communities.

"Having parents working from home for their jobs, kids doing online schoolwork, and even Zoom meetings with healthcare professionals for things that could be handled remotely over the past year has

elevated the desperate need for more reliable Internet access. We need broadband speeds that can handle the activity that is now a part of normal life. It's not just about being able to download or stream movies in the evenings. It's about job security, education, and health," said Christel Gollnick, a Maximize NWMO Navigation Team member and president of JUPER Communications, in Clinton County.

The \$300,000 one-year grant award is being leveraged by a collaborative group of partners responding to the call for more help with filling the gaps of broadband coverage. Canfield who is at Missouri S&T in Rolla, Mo. is working with co-leads Dr. Alex Wyglinski and Dr. Shamsnaz Bhada, both of who are on the electrical and computer engineering faculty at Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) in Massachusetts. Darren Farnan and Andrew Aeschilman from United Electric Cooperative's subsidiary United Fiber, Dr. Sarah Low and Carlee Quinn with University of Missouri Extension and Exceed, and Gollnick on behalf of The Clinton County Initiative, which is a part of Maximize NWMO, also serve on the project's senior team.

In addition to the broadband experiment itself, The Clinton County Initiative is calling all residents to help the team map the coverage in the county as well as think about what other challenges could be solved by working together. They invite anyone living and/or working in the county to check out their web pages and take a quick survey at <https://www.maximizenwmo.org/clinton-county> or <https://www.maximizenwmo.org/broadband-project-overcome>. You can also jump directly to the survey at https://www.maximizenwmo.org/clinton-county/survey_tools/dreaming-big-survey-in-clinton-county.

Maximize NWMO serves the region in a neutral role providing administrative, communications, data access, and coaching support on systems-thinking and community wealth building for individuals, communities and the region. The initiative's Navigation Team supports leaders and communities who want to *dream big, decide wisely, and maximize our region's potential by growing together*. Maximize NWMO is the regional vitality initiative of The Community Foundation of Northwest Missouri. It is made possible through partnerships with Communities of Excellence 2026, the United States Department of Agriculture – Rural Development (USDA-RD), University of Missouri Extension, Missouri Department of Economic Development, Northwest Missouri State University, Evergy, and private donors.

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