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BVU OptiNet Recognized As Broadband Fiber Network of Year by NATOA

BRISTOL, Va. – OptiNet, Bristol Virginia Utilities’ prize-winning all-fiber-optic network, has been named the 2009 Community Broadband Fiber Network of the Year by the National Association of Telecommunications Officers and Advisors (NATOA).

OptiNet, which extends from Bristol Virginia approximately 850 miles through eight Southwest Virginia counties, was recognized for “pioneering community fiber to the home and for demonstrating how true broadband can bring jobs and economic development to rural America.”

In 2003, BVU became the first municipal entity in the United States to build and successfully maintain a fiber-to-the-premises broadband network offering phone, cable and data services.

In addition, MI-Connection, the BVU OptiNet-managed system that operates a cable, voice and broadband system owned by the North Carolina towns of Davidson and Mooresville, was named the NATOA Community Broadband Project of the Year.

“We are delighted that both BVU and MI-Connection are being recognized by a distinguished organization such as the NATOA,” says BVU Board Chairman Paul Hurley. “This just reiterates the important work that BVU and the City of Bristol Virginia have accomplished over the past decade. If rural Southwest Virginia can invest in fiber-optic technology and build partnerships for sustained growth, then so can other communities across America. We are proud to have led the way in nationally promoting community broadband.”

Wes Rosenbalm, BVU’s president and CEO, received an “honorable mention” in the Community Broadband Hero of the Year category.

Award winners will be formally recognized at NATOA’s 29th Annual Conference to be held in New Orleans, La., Sept. 30 through Oct. 2.

Based in Alexandria, Va., the NATOA is a national trade association that annually honors exceptional leaders and innovative programs in six categories that have resulted in extraordinary efforts, achievements and innovation in community-based approaches to broadband. The winners are chosen based on their ability to ensure that more American communities and citizens benefit from new technology.

With this NATOA honor, OptiNet replaces last year's fiber network winner, the UTAH Telecommunications Open Infrastructure Agency or UTOPIA, which was an all-fiber network that serves 16 communities in northern Utah.

More about BVU

Bristol Virginia Utilities is a city-owned public utility that provides electric, water, wastewater, cable and advanced fiber-optic broadband services to customers in a 125-square-mile area that includes Bristol, Abingdon and Washington County, Va. The utility also manages digital data and phone services for CPC OptiNet, serving business customers in Dickenson, Tazewell, Buchanan and Russell counties in Virginia. For more information, visit www.bvu-optinet.com.

BVU and the city of Bristol Virginia were included on the 2009 global list of Top7 and Smart21 "intelligent communities of the year" by the Intelligent Community Forum, a New York City-based think tank that studies the economic and social development of the 21st century community. The city and BVU have also received the 2008 National League of Cities' Gold Award for Municipal Excellence; Governor's Technology Award (2008) from Virginia Gov. Tim Kaine; the Cornerstone Award for Outstanding Customer Service (2007) from *Broadband Properties Magazine*; the Smart Community Award (2008) from *Last Mile* magazine; and the American Public Power Association Community Service Award (2008).

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