

MADCoNews
a bi-monthly report from the Media and Democracy Coalition

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR
Beyond Broadband Stimulus

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Colleen Landkamer, the Minnesota State Director of the USDA's Rural Development program tells of an elevator company in St. Clair that could no longer remain in this small MN town that lacked adequate broadband access. Faced with losing an important employer, town officials had an antenna mounted on a water tower to bring wireless broadband to the company. Ms. Landkamer shared that story last week at the Midwest Rural Assembly, held in Sioux Falls, SD.

Broadband was an important theme at this gathering of rural advocates from our nation's heartland. At a breakout session on broadband, my fellow panelists and I heard all-too familiar stories from health care providers, residents of Tribal lands, and educators that were desperate for broadband access in their rural communities.

While some were preparing to apply for broadband stimulus funds, it was obvious few lacked the resources needed to complete a well-crafted application. Some experts estimate completing an application will take hundreds of hours of staff time, not to mention advice from lawyers, engineers and technical experts.

It's unfortunate that so many community institutions for which broadband stimulus funds are designed have little chance of seeing a dime without more resources to

pull together applications. Broadband advocates in our community have been calling attention to this problem since the Recovery Act was passed in January, but the tough economic climate -- not to mention enormous demand for assistance -- has made it difficult to address.

Despite the lack of resources in local communities, it's likely some excellent projects will still get funded through NTIA and USDA's broadband programs. Making those projects successful is important to our long term policy goals. But we should also pay close attention to the projects that don't make the cut.

Communities that walk away empty handed should not be considered failures, nor a waste of time. Rather, they are critical places to engage a broader constituency in the need for a public interest national broadband policy.



-- Beth McConnell, bmccconnell@media-democracy.net

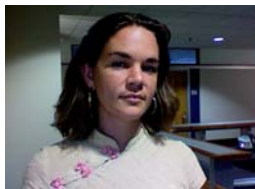


MDC is supporting three regional organizing projects in Pennsylvania, Native lands, and Washington state. The groups are doing local organizing and advocacy on issues such as public access, digital inclusion, media ownership and others; what holds them together is the need to build lasting, grassroots media advocacy organizations at the local level.

In Pennsylvania, **Media Mobilizing Project** in partnership with the Free Library of Philadelphia and dozens of other community organization submitted the first piece of the three-part Digital Philadelphia Broadband Initiative: a multi-pronged adoption initiative that spans the digital divide with media production labs linked up with Philadelphia's new public access network, hardwire and instruction in the home, teaching HIV-positive Philadelphians where to find health info online, and many other methods. It is the outgrowth of an eight-month planning and organizing process led by **MMP's Todd Wolfson** and **Bryan Mercer** that involved, at last count, 87 organizations.

Native Public Media filed comments with the FCC arguing for the establishment of the Tribal Priority in spectrum allocation, and **Loris Taylor** served on a panel at the Midwest Rural Assembly in Sioux Falls August 10-11 on: "Broadband and Rural Communities: Creating a Healthy Digital Ecology and a Community Vision for Federal Funding" with Edyael Casperalta, Amalia Deloney, Josh Breitbart and Beth McConnell. Loris presented preliminary findings from their Blueprint Broadband Survey.

In **Washington**, **Reclaim the Media** has been grantwriting, authoring proposals for **Zero Divide** and the **Seattle Foundation** for the development of a digital literacy curriculum, a program that **RTM** has been advocating for in state capital Olympia earlier this year. In addition, **Jonathan Lawson** is prepping a proposal for progressive foundations involving a media-justice response to coverage of the healthcare reform debate, building on relationships created at a funder briefing earlier in the year.



- Hannah Miller, hmill@media-democracy.net

MEET THE COALITION

Steve Renderos



Steven Renderos, the new Media Justice Organizer with Main Street Project in Minneapolis, grew up as a child of Salvadorean parents living in the Koreatown section of Los Angeles. Renderos made his first foray into media in high school, making two films about tagging and breakdancing.

Renderos moved to Minneapolis to go to Hamline University, got involved in organizing on campus after a column of his in the student newspaper provoked anti-Latino hate mail that ran in the newspaper.

After college, Renderos organized for the All Parks Alliance for Change, a tenants' union for mobile home residents in MN, confronting issues of gentrification, poverty, and racism. For the last two years, he worked at the Dept. of Chicano Studies at the Univ. of MN analyzing newspaper coverage of Latinos, then organizing accountability sessions with newspaper editors, which resulted in changes in coverage.

His first major project at Main Street will be developing and implementing a digital literacy curriculum, and teaching Minnesotans to use a digital storytelling program called Place Stories. Music is a passion for Renderos, and he's known as DJ Ren, spinnin' funk and disco, with some reggae, salsa, cumbia and merengue. His other passion is organizing for immigrant's rights, motivated by his family's immigrant experience.

"I don't blame people in the middle – they are being fed propaganda that serves the interest of the few," he said. "At the heart of this, immigration is an international issue – we need dialogue which acknowledges immigration's historical context, and we need to work in partnership with other countries towards a realistic solution."

He can be reached at steven@mainstreetproject.org.

-- Hannah Miller, hmiller@media-democracy.net

CHANCE'S NOTES

Direct Service in the District

When I moved to Washington, DC I understood that I was entering a rarified space where national policy dominates, but I was curious to see how this interacted with the local. I'm not talking about inside versus outside the beltway, but rather how the people who live in the beltway solve the problems that are unique to their own community. I wondered if this space peopled with those who concern themselves with national policy ever concern themselves with community service, if there was any interaction?

As I began work to coordinate the local Washington, DC celebration of OneWebDay for MDC, I found the perfect opportunity to answer my own question. This year's OneWebDay theme – One Web. For All. – was a natural fit for the Coalition because we can bring national broadband policy experts together, however, we also facilitate interaction between local and national organizations. This was an opportunity to connect with local Washington, DC groups that drive digital inclusion efforts in the place where policy is made.

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I immediately found two groups that do this work. The first of these, Mi Tierra, promotes the participation of Latino immigrants and their families in the formal financial system. They have found that basic computer skills and Internet access are essential to this work. The second, Byte Back, provides training for under- and unemployed workers so they have the marketable skills necessary to obtain employment in today's job market. Unsurprisingly, this means hands-on computer training that allows these workers to keep pace with the rest of society.

Both of these organizations are tackling big issues, and both recognize that digital inclusion is imperative to their progress. If not for these groups many of our fellow citizens in Washington, DC would not have access to the technology we all know is imperative to opportunity and progress in the modern world. And sadly, in city where there is a wealth of expertise and brainpower that could be of service, both of these organizations still struggle to recruit volunteers.

During OneWebDay's service week – September 14-18 – we will encourage Washington residents to seek out these organizations and take advantage of the many volunteer opportunities they provide. As we all continue to work on national media and telecommunications policy, it is vitally important that we continue to engage with our immediate community on these issues.

--- Chance Williams, cwilliams@media-democracy.net



UPCOMING EVENTS

Aug 15-19: Southern Legislative Conf.- 63rd Annual Mtg, Winston-Salem, NC
Aug 18: FCC Broadband Workshop: International Lessons, Washington, DC
Aug 18: FCC Broadband Workshop: Opportunities for Disadvantaged Businesses, Washington, DC
Aug 19: FCC Broadband Workshop: Adoption/Utilization - Fixed, Washington, DC
Aug 19: FCC Broadband Workshop: Adoption/Utilization - Low Utilization Areas, DC
Aug 19: FCC Broadband Workshop: Adoption/Utilization - Mobile, Washington, DC
Aug 20: FCC Broadband Workshop: Disability Opportunities, Washington, DC
Aug 20: FCC Broadband Workshop: Education, Washington, DC
Aug 22-24: Southern Governors' Assoc. (SAG) Annual Mtg., Williamsburg, VA
Aug 25: FCC Broadband Workshop: Public Safety and Homeland Security, DC
Aug 25: FCC Broadband Workshop: Energy, Environment, and Transportation, DC
Aug 26: FCC Broadband Workshop: Economic Growth, Job Creation, and Private Investment, Washington, DC
Aug 26: FCC Broadband Workshop: Job Training, Washington, DC
Aug 26-29: National Alliance for Media Arts and Culture, Boston, MA
Aug 27: FCC Open Commission Meeting, Washington, DC
Aug 27: FCC Broadband Workshop: Technology/Applications and Devices, DC
Aug 27-29: Society of Profess. Journalists Convention & N'tl Journalism Conference, Indianapolis, IN
Sep 2: FCC Broadband Workshop: Benchmarks, Washington, DC
Sep 3: FCC Broadband Workshop: Best Practices/Big Ideas, Washington, DC
Sep 9: FCC Broadband Workshop: Broadband Consumer Experience, DC
Sep 10 - Sep 12: Int'l Labor Communications Assoc. Convention, Pittsburgh, PA
Sep 15: Can News Media Survive the Internet Age? Competition, Consumer Protection, and First Amendment Perspectives, Washington, D.C.