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Kankakee Valley REMC and Surf Internet Host Community High-Speed Internet Advocacy Workshop

Wanatah, Ind. (March 7, 2024) – Residents of La Porte County gathered at the Kankakee Valley REMC (KVREMC) in Wanatah, Ind., on Thursday, February 22, taking a significant step towards bringing high-speed internet to their communities. Hosted by the Kankakee Valley REMC in collaboration with Surf Internet, the event aimed to educate residents about the opportunities offered by the Indiana Connectivity Program (ICP) and guide them through the application process.

The statewide Indiana Connectivity Program is working to connect residents and businesses that lack access to broadband internet service with service providers and assist in the expense of extending broadband to those locations. Residents are required to apply to the program individually so that the ICP can verify eligibility and assess each address on a case-by-case basis.

Scott Sears, KVREMC CEO, applauded the event, saying “We take pride in contributing to our community and being a community-oriented organization. Acknowledging the underserved nature of rural communities in terms of broadband access, we were happy to host this event for the benefit of our residents.”

Indiana residents and businesses without access to internet services, or those with service speeds less than 100 Mbps download, 20 Mbps upload, are eligible to apply. Internet service providers, including Surf Internet, will later have the opportunity to bid on state Next Level Connections Broadband Grant funds to help provide high-speed internet to communities in need.

Gene Crusie, Surf Internet CEO, was at the event to lend his support and enthusiasm, saying “One of the best ways for communities to get access to high-speed internet is by making their voices heard. Applying to the ICP is a powerful way to directly communicate with the state and high-speed internet providers, ensuring their communities can bring home this transformational technology.”

Surf Internet team members were on hand to address questions and walk attendees through the application process at computer stations located throughout the community room at the REMC.

Director of Business Development for Surf Internet Scott Franko, added, “We appreciate Kankakee Valley REMC, who have been serving this area for a long time as the Electric Co-op, for hosting this together with Surf. The world needs more and more broadband because it is becoming just as essential as a utility, just like electricity. Just like co-ops worked with rural residents decades ago to deliver power, we are joining with communities and leaders like KVREMC to serve more people with high-speed broadband.”

Surf is working with KVREMC in a holistic way to design a fiber-optic broadband network across the entire KVREMC service area. With rural residents being spread out geographically, constructing the network can become prohibitively expensive, which is why Surf is committed to connecting as many rural residents as possible by utilizing every available funding mechanism. KVREMC is aiding the construction process by making their electrical system poles available to Surf and other providers to try to close the digital divide.

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Surf will begin the design process by identifying homes that can be reached using private funding. For homeowners who live in rural areas that are more expensive to build to, Surf will continue to encourage residents to sign up for the ICP. Surf is also comparing addresses along potential fiber-optic routes with grant databases to determine what rural homes are eligible for subsidies. Further, Surf is working with local elected officials to identify local funding opportunities.

Surf Internet is working to help underserved residents apply to this unique opportunity. To aid in the application process, Surf has a dedicated page for Indiana residents to apply at <https://surfinternet.com/icp>.

About Surf Internet

Surf Internet is an innovative fiber-optic internet company that serves as the essential gateway to connectivity across the Great Lakes region of Michigan, Indiana, and Illinois. The company is building a bridge to the wide-open future by delivering high-speed, reliable internet to homes and businesses in underserved, rural communities. Surf's 200-plus person team is local, giving them an edge when it comes to customer care and advocacy for the region. Headquartered in Elkhart, Ind., Surf also has offices in La Porte, Ind., Byron Center and Fowlerville, Mich., and Coal City and Rock Falls, Ill. Learn more at <https://surfinternet.com>.

About Kankakee Valley REMC

Kankakee Valley REMC, located in Wanatah, Indiana, is a distribution electric utility cooperative, dedicated to serving more than 18,000 members across portions of Porter, Lake, LaPorte, Starke, Pulaski, Marshall, and St. Joseph counties. With a network spanning over 2100 miles of line, the cooperative's mission is to exceed the expectations of the community through exceptional service, trust and innovative solutions. For more information on Kankakee Valley REMC, visit kvremc.com.

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Caption: From right, CEO of Surf Internet Gene Crusie, CEO of KVREMC Scott Sears, La Porte County Councilman Justin Kiel, La Porte County Commissioner Joe Haney, Juanita Haney, and Director of Business Development and Community Relations for Surf Internet Scott Franko pose next to a map showing Surf coverage in the local area.



Caption: Scott Franko, Director of Business Development and Community Relations for Surf Internet, assists a local resident in signing up for the ICP program online at one of the stations located throughout the KVREMC community room.

(Photo courtesy of GreatNews.Life)



Caption: A local resident puts a pin locating their home address on a map of the La Porte County area.
(Photo courtesy of GreatNews.Life)