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Bristol Virginia Captures National League of Cities Gold Award

BRISTOL, Va. – Bristol Virginia has received one of the most prestigious accolades a city can acquire – a Gold Award for Municipal Excellence from the National League of Cities (NLC) and CH2M HILL, a global engineering firm based in Meridian, Colo.

Bristol Virginia was selected over 18 other finalists in the “Less than 50,000” population category for work achieved by its city-owned utility, Bristol Virginia Utilities (BVU), and BVU-OptiNet, the utility’s award-winning fiber-optic division. Representatives from BVU and the city were honored this afternoon at the NLC’s annual Congress of Cities and Exposition in Orlando, Fla. A video of the awards ceremony was shown live on NLC TV and is available for viewing online at <http://www.nlctv.org/>.

“To get this kind of national recognition is very exciting,” says Bristol Virginia Mayor Jim Rector. “What we have done is a perfect example of how any small community can position for growth and improve quality of life through fiber optics. Our partnerships have helped transform rural Southwest Virginia into a technology hub.”

The city launched the nation’s first municipally owned fiber-to-the-premises (FTTP) broadband network offering voice, cable and data services in 2003. BVU OptiNet also partnered with the Cumberland Plateau Company, a division of the Cumberland Plateau Planning District Commission representing the counties of Russell, Buchanan, Dickenson and Tazewell, to bring digital voice and advanced broadband services to remote areas of Southwest Virginia.

“It is gratifying to be counted among such an elite group of cities,” confirms Bristol Virginia City Manager Bill Dennison. “Our decision to link our economic future to advanced technology was daring and progressive. This move has and will continue to reap rewards.”

Bristol Virginia was named one of eight 2008 NLC winners – four gold and four silver – that a panel of judges believed had carried out model, innovative programs for improving quality of

life in their respective communities. In addition to being widely publicized, the four gold winners received \$2,000 each to donate to a nonprofit organization of their choice. BVU matched its award monies, resulting in a \$4,000 donation, which was given to the "Help Your Neighbor Program," part of the local United Way initiative.

“Investing in OptiNet has improved the quality of life for citizens in Southwest Virginia,” says BVU Board Chairman Paul Hurley. “And it is our goal to continue providing the best customer service and most advanced telecommunications possible.”

BVU and the city of Bristol Virginia were also recently named to the Smart21 semi-finalist list of communities by the Intelligent Community Forum, a nonprofit organization based in New York City that recognizes geographic locations worldwide that can serve as 21st-century models for economic development.

In the past two years, Bristol Virginia and BVU have garnered several other prestigious awards, including the 2008 Governor’s Technology Award from Virginia Gov. Tim Kaine; the Smart Community Award (2008) from *Last Mile* magazine; the American Public Power Association Community Service Award (2008); and the Cornerstone Award for Outstanding Customer Service (2007) from *Broadband Properties Magazine*.

About BVU

BVU 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. BVU also manages cable and broadband services for MI-Connection, which serves the towns of Davidson, Mooresville and Cornelius in North Carolina. For more information, visit www.bvu-optinet.com.

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