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Bristol Virginia Only American City Named to 2009 Top 7 List of Intelligent Communities

BRISTOL, Va. – Bristol Virginia is the only American city to make the Top Seven list of “most intelligent communities” worldwide. The announcement was made Wednesday during the international PTC’09 conference, sponsored by the Pacific Telecommunications Council in Honolulu, Hawaii.

Bristol Virginia and its 64-year-old utility company, Bristol Virginia Utilities (BVU), were honored for their pioneering work in the area of municipal broadband, both in the city and throughout remote areas of Southwest Virginia during the past five years. BVU is acknowledged as the first municipal utility in the United States to deploy an all-fiber network offering the triple play of voice, video and data services.

“To be selected as one of seven finalists, and the only U.S. city from a field of more than 450 international applicants for this prestigious technological award, speaks volumes about the professionalism and foresight of our personnel and their dedication to the improvement of the quality of life for Bristol and the Southwest Virginia region,” Bristol Virginia City Manager Bill Dennison says.

The international competition is sponsored by the Intelligent Community Forum (ICF) based in New York City and involves a 10-month global search to find locations that are building “prosperity and social inclusion” in what the judges call an emerging Broadband Economy. The win keeps Bristol Virginia in the running to achieve the highest designation – being named the 2009 Intelligent Community of the Year. Last year’s winner was the Gangnam District of Seoul in South Korea.

List of “Top Seven 2009”

Bristol, Virginia; 17,500

Eindhoven, Netherlands; 297,000
Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada; 50,535
Issy-les-Moulineaux, France; 61,000
Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada; 125,000
Stockholm, Sweden; 795,000
Tallinn, Estonia; 400,000

In October 2008, Bristol was one of five American communities named to a list of global Smart21 communities. This honor required the city to submit a detailed questionnaire about the area’s demographics and its broadband achievements, including its CPC OptiNet build-out, which brought world-class technology to remote areas of Southwest Virginia. The fiber-optic build-out is a partnership between BVU and Cumberland Plateau Company, a nonprofit branch of the Cumberland Plateau Planning District Commission headed by Andrew Chafin.

"To be among this group of broadband finalists is humbling," states Bristol Virginia Utilities CEO Wes Rosenbalm. "It reminds us of just how far we've come in only five years with our communications infrastructure in Bristol and beyond. I am proud of the BVU staff and its leadership, and I'm grateful for the city's commitment to this project."

The Top Seven were selected by an independent team of academic researchers based on six indicators. On May 15, after months of further assessment and review by two independent groups of researchers and voters, one of the seven will be named Intelligent Community of the Year. Last year’s awards luncheon was held at Steiner Film Studios, the largest movie studio east of Hollywood.

“This award confirms that our community – and our region – have so much to be proud of,” says Stacey Bright, BVU’s executive vice president and chief financial officer. “What we have accomplished is a desired model for many worldwide.”

In a statement released by ICF co-founder Louis Zacharilla, he says: "Each of these communities has demonstrated a commitment to improving their communities through innovative broadband applications. The ingenuity of these communities is exemplified in their investments in the future of the young, the growth and progress of job-creating businesses, and economic security. An overarching theme of the 2009 honorees has been the dedication to putting people first and building a 'talent inventory' that will thrive with technology and innovation."

More information on each Top 7 community is available at ICF's Web site

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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. BVU also manages cable and broadband services for MIConnection, which serves the towns of Davidson, Mooresville and Cornelius in North Carolina.

For more information, visit .

Other awards received by the city or BVU include 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).

About ICF

The Intelligent Community Forum () is a think tank that studies the economic and social development of the 21st century community. Whether in industrial or developing nations, communities are challenged to create prosperity, stability and cultural meaning in a world where jobs, investment and progress increasingly depend on broadband communications. For the 21st century community, connectivity is a double-edge sword, threatening established ways of life on the one hand and offering powerful new tools to build prosperous, inclusive economies on the other. The Intelligent Community Forum seeks to share the secrets of success of the world's Intelligent Communities in adapting to the demands of the Broadband Economy by conducting research, hosting events, publishing newsletters and producing an international awards program.

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