

## New Point Indiana's Latest Hot Spot

**Elizabeth Bailey**

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— Months of hard work culminated in a fiber-splicing ceremony at the New Point Community Center Friday. The EcO15 program coordinated its efforts with the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs, ETC, the Economic Development Corporation, One Economy Corporation and the Decatur County Community Foundation to bring the project to fruition. As of Friday, the town of New Point now has access to a hot spot - a computer lab with broadband internet access.

Not only have the computers and necessary fiberoptic cables arrived in New Point, but the project - Bring IT Home Decatur County - will also develop a group of technology ambassadors gleaned from the area's youth.

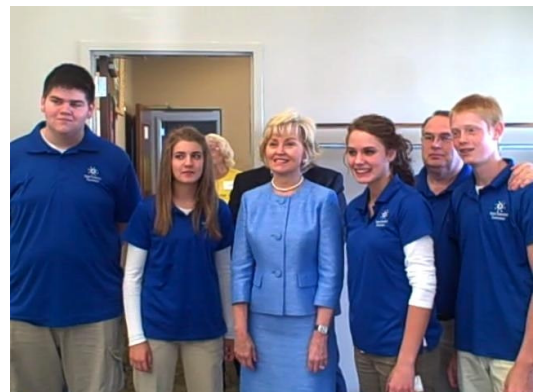
Lt. Gov. Becky Skillman joined in the celebration of the milestone. "This helps the state take one more step forward in our economic recovery," she said. "The lack of access to technology hinders growth."

While many in metropolitan areas have come to consider high-speed internet access a given, rural communities have not managed to keep up with the fast pace of developing technologies. This is another issue Skillman is glad to see addressed. "We cannot be a state of haves and have nots," she said.

By extending technological access to all areas of Indiana, opportunities for growth are built, she noted. New Point is the second Indiana community to launch a pilot project based in elements of programs from One Economy Corporation, a global not-for-profit, as well as the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs. The first of these programs began in Charlestown, and its effects have become obvious to the students acting as Digital Connectors, a group of youths acting as ambassadors to create a culture of technology and digital information use.

A handful of the students involved in the program spoke to those in attendance about the many projects they have undertaken since being trained in technological skills. The students have created commercials and websites for businesses in their communities as well as teaching senior citizens basic computer skills. While their program has a head start on the new Decatur County counterpart, it continues to grow, the students noted.

A group of South Decatur High School students joined in the crowd that gathered at the New Point Community Center and took time to talk with their peers from Charlestown. They felt excited about the prospect of a leadership role in bringing the community together through technology, although they did



admit that training will be required to enable them to take up the task.

EcO15 coordinator Lisa Deck explained that access to technology not only helps to prepare the area's youth for the future but grows the community as a whole. For New Point, local access to digital information and training has the potential to strengthen the skills and enrich the lives of the area's residents. ETC president and CEO Chad Miles expressed his company's pride in being able to play a role in creating the internet hot spot. The local company donated fiber and labor to bring the project from dream to reality. For Miles, it is a continuation of the mission ETC has upheld for more than 70 years - bringing the latest and greatest technology to rural southeastern Indiana.

Countless hours led to the creation of the computer lab that will now be available to New Point's residents, and work will continue as Digital Connectors are trained and begin the process of enhancing the technological culture of the area.

Students interested in participating as technology ambassadors can contact Lisa Deck at 222-2520. An application process will be required.

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Photos



Lori Feldbauer of ETC, Lt. Gov. Becky Skillman and EcO15 coordinator Lisa Deck celebrate the opening of a hot spot at New Point by “splicing fiber,” setting a chain of lights aglow. Greensburg Daily News