

# THE TIMES

## Gary leaders discusses benefits of Wi-Fi

By Rob Earnshaw  
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**GARY** | For those who don't believe the city of Gary is a hot spot, it literally could become one.

The Knight Foundation was founded by James and John Knight, one-time owners of local newspapers in 26 cities, including Gary. In an effort to "give back," Knight funds those communities, with digital inclusion being one of those opportunities. A Gary "Community Convening" Conference was held Wednesday at Dusties Buffet to discuss that opportunity.

"Gary is fortunate to be in the early round of the Knight Foundation's work around the digital inclusion -- one of the first five or six cities that will benefit from our national work in this particular area," said Brenda Price, Knight Foundation program director.

The conference, with a theme of "Think Differently, Think Transformationally," was a way to give community leaders and residents the opportunity to learn about transformational ideas for Gary, according to O'Merrial Butchee, director of the Lamkin Innovation & Entrepreneurship Center.

"We'll have the opportunity to learn about wireless technology - networks called Wi-Fi. That is one of the projects Ivy Tech is looking to take on so that we can bring Wi-Fi to the community and along our educational corridor," Butchee said.

The keynote speaker was Milton Irving of One Economy Corporation based in Washington, D.C., which uses innovative approaches to deliver technology and information to communities worldwide. One Economy is a global nonprofit which "leverages the power of technology," Irving said.

Irving spoke about the benefits of having Wi-Fi in a community, using his college days as an example. Irving recalled spending "countless" hours in Starbucks taking advantage of its Wi-Fi capability in order to complete his work and communicate with fellow students and the community.

"That was important because it created this hub ... to talk to each other about what was going on in the class or what's going on in the neighborhood or in the community" Irving

said. "So that's another part of Wi-Fi -- bringing people together so they're able to connect and break down barriers." I

Other local panelists and audience members shared their visions and ideas for Gary. Kevin Smith, a 17-year-old senior at Wirt High School and intern with the Gary Sanitary District, said having Wi-Fi in all the schools would benefit students when it came to research and "going to a lot Web sites." Smith also said the wireless broadband connection would help the city with faster communication and create better business opportunities.

The conference was organized by the Gerald I. Lamkin Innovation & Entrepreneurship Center and sponsored by Ivy Tech Community College of Indiana Northwest. Other speakers included Gary Mayor Rudy Clay; State Sen. Earline Rogers, D-Gary; and Chancellor J. Guadalupe Valtierra, of Ivy Tech Community College of Northwest Indiana.