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NEW INTERNET ACCESS POINTS ADDED THROUGHOUT RACINE COUNTY

Improving connectivity identified as key community need through Digital Counties initiative

Racine – Racine County Executive Jonathan Delagrave announced today a number of new internet access points throughout Racine County as part of an ongoing County initiative to improve internet connectivity.

“Everyone in Racine County deserves internet access. For far too long, too much of our County has been without high-speed internet coverage,” County Executive Delagrave said. “This so-called ‘Digital Divide’ has become even more glaring during the COVID-19 pandemic, when accessing information and resources is pivotal. We are pleased to take a step forward in closing the Digital Divide with the addition of several new internet access points in both Western and Eastern Racine County.”

Improving connectivity was identified as a key community need through Racine County’s Digital Counties initiative. The greatest concentration of residents without internet are also disproportionately ethnic minority, living in poverty, lacking access to health care, lacking a post-secondary credential, and unemployed. No-cost internet means more and better access to public-health information and employment opportunities, especially during COVID-19, for Racine County residents.

To help expand internet access, Racine County partnered with Gateway Technical College and Higher Expectations for Racine County to collectively commit over \$100,000 to fully fund at least 15 additional internet access points across Racine County high-need areas. The County partnered with a local company, Franksville-based e-vergent, as the internet service provider for these access points.

The sites were strategically chosen to achieve a 100-yard coverage from the access point and to optimize the locations coverage area. The first 10 sites being announced today are located at:

- Greater Mount Eagle Baptist Church, 929 State St., Racine
- Raymond Elementary School, 2659 76th St., Raymond
- Wayman Church, 424 N. Memorial Drive, Racine
- HALO, 2000 DeKoven Ave., Racine
- Kingdom Builders Fellowship Center, 2707 Rapids Drive, Racine

- Racine Police Department Sixth Street Cop House, 1522 W. Sixth St., Racine
- Racine Police Department Geneva Street Cop House, 1140 Geneva St., Racine
- Sturtevant Village Hall, 2801 89th St., Sturtevant
- SAFE Haven of Racine, 1030 Washington Ave., Racine
- Norway Town Hall, 6419 Heg Park Road, Norway – ***NOTE: expected to be online in late February**

More sites will be announced at a later date.

“It may surprise many that the Town of Norway has areas that are not served by high-speed internet. Rural areas like ours are not served adequately because of the distance between homes, farms, and businesses. Thanks to this initiative, we will take a first step toward providing a service to our residents that the majority of our residents take for granted every day,” said Town of Norway Chairwoman Jean Jacobson.

“Kingdom Builders Fellowship Center is excited to be a host site for internet access in the City of Racine, as we know the positive impact it will have on families,” said Ron Tatum, Kingdom Builders Fellowship Center Director of Community Outreach. “The pandemic has highlighted the importance of internet access, particularly for communities of color. Increased connectivity will significantly improve access to educational resources, health care information, and make many other important connections. We are proud to be part of this initiative with Racine County.”

FACTS AND FIGURES:

12,000 households in Racine County lack internet access. The top-5 census tracts without internet are, on average:

- 72% ethnic minority (2.5 times higher than the County);
- 28% living in poverty (2.5 times higher than the County);
- 7% without health insurance between 19-34 years old (3.4 times higher than the County);
- 9% bachelor’s degree attainment (2 times lower than the County);
- 9% unemployment rate (2.2 times higher than the County).

Internet access is also strongly correlated to many social determinants of health.

Organizations interested in supporting this initiative, including hosting and funding opportunities, should contact Shuchi Wadhwa, Racine County Information Technology Department Director, at shuchi.wadhwa@racinecounty.com or (262) 636-3776.

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