



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
October 4, 2002

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**MORE THAN \$74,000 AWARDED IN AN EFFORT TO
CLOSE THE "DIGITAL DIVIDE"**

WASHINGTON, D.C.-- With the generous sponsorship from Rural Telephone Finance Cooperative (RTFC), the Foundation for Rural Education and Development (FRED) awarded more than \$74,000 in grants to rural schools and rural educators across the United States.

For the second year, grants were awarded to public schools that are working to increase the use of technology to enhance the learning experience. Eight schools received grants ranging from \$4,000 to \$10,000. Funds were also awarded to public school teachers who are seeking to supplement and expand learning opportunities in the classroom through the use of technology.

More than \$775,000 in funding was requested. Of the 92 applications submitted, eight schools received technology grants, and of the 12 applications submitted for the teacher education portion of the program, five teachers received funding.

"Technology can be a powerful tool to improve learning in the classroom. Many rural public schools cannot utilize this tool to its full potential because of their limited resources," said Hank Buchanan, vice-president for industry affairs at RTFC. "We are very proud to work in cooperation with FRED and OPASTCO telephone members to help these schools meet the growing need for innovative technology in the classroom."

More information about the winning applicants and how to apply for next year's program is available at www.fred.org.

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FRED Announces 72 Winners of \$60,000 in Scholarships

Washington, DC, -- June 7, 2002 - The Foundation for Rural Education and Development (FRED) recognizes the best and the brightest rural America has to offer by awarding over \$60,000 in scholarships. FRED selected 72 award winners from rural areas around the United States and Canada to receive \$60,000 in scholarship funds. The awards range from \$500 general scholarships to a "Rural Round Trip Ticket" scholarship worth \$20,000.

The Rural Round Trip Ticket scholarship is awarded each year to one student who shows strong rural ties and a commitment to return to a rural area in the United States or Canada after completing his or her studies. The recipient receives \$5,000 each year for up to four years. If the student decides not to return to a rural community after his or her studies are completed, the scholarship serves as a no-interest loan.

The Foundation received over 200 outstanding applications sponsored by more than 70 rural, independent telecommunications companies and cooperatives. The 2001 class of FRED Scholars is the Foundation's largest number of winners to date. This year's recipients hail from 26 different states and provinces in the US and Canada.

FRED, a national 501(c)(3) charitable foundation located in Washington, DC, was founded in 1989 by the Organization for the Promotion and Advancement of Small Telecommunications Companies (OPASTCO). The FRED Scholarship Program is made possible through the generosity of more than 1,000 small, independent telephone companies operating in rural areas across the United States and Canada. Companies that are OPASTCO members sponsor students applying for scholarships.

FRED and its supporters strive to promote education and development in rural areas. The Foundation's mission is to promote educational, social and economic development in rural America and Canada.

"The primary interest of the foundation is to assist students with high potential for success and a strong desire to return to a rural community upon graduation. We were overwhelmed by the tremendous qualifications of the applicants this year. Each of the FRED Scholars is very bright and extremely active in the community and has strong ties there. We hope that every FRED Scholar will return to their hometowns some day to contribute to the community that clearly gave them a fine, productive start in life," Foundation Director Melissa Korzuch said.



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
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Contact: Stephanie Patton, 202/659-5990
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FOUR OPASTCO MEMBER TELEPHONE COMPANIES RECEIVE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT GRANT

WASHINGTON, D.C.— The Foundation for Rural Education's (FRED) Ethyl Grants Program, sponsored in part by Siemens ICN, awarded a total of \$6,000 in community development matching grants. The program provide matching funds ranging from \$500—\$2,500 to OPASCTO member telephone companies that have developed projects aimed at bettering the communities they serve. Grants are awarded twice a year in May and October.

More than \$36,000 in funding was requested from telephone companies all over the country. Of the 18 applications reviewed by the volunteer selection committee, four telephone companies received funding.

Columbus Grove Telephone Company of Columbus Grove, Ohio is working to provide the people in their service area an innovative way to participate in the activities of the youth in the community. Students, mentored by telephone company employees, will produce videos of educational extracurricular events and then community members will be able to watch them on the local station. The goal of this project is to cultivate intergenerational community relationships and encourage students to participate in community service. The \$2000 in funds from the Ethyl Grant will be used to purchase modulation equipment and supplies.

Newport Telephone Company, located in Newport, New York purchased land adjacent to its main office and then removed a dilapidated building that detracted from the business district. Members of the community came together and decided to create a park in the empty lot. The \$2,500 Ethyl Grant will go towards the purchase of benches, a walkway and gardens.

In Gretna, Virginia Peoples Mutual Telephone Company is committed to aiding the Gretna Volunteer Fire Department raise more than \$700,000 for a new fire station. The Ethyl Grants committee recognized the value of such a project with a grant of \$750.

Pine Telephone Systems Inc. in Halfway, Oregon nominated an application on behalf of the Pine Eagle Economic Development Corporation, a non-profit organization working to build a non-profit assisted living center. Because the project is still in the planning stages and the application requested funds for predevelopment costs, the selection committee decided to only partially fund the request with a grant of \$750.

More information about the winning applicants and how to apply for the 2003 May Ethyl Grants Program is available at www.fred.org.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
December 10, 2002

Contact: Stephanie Patton, 202/659-5990
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OUTSTANDING JUNIORS TO PARTICIPATE IN 2003 LEADERSHIP THROUGH LEARNING PROGRAM

WASHINGTON, D.C.— The Foundation for Rural Education (FRED) is pleased to announce that for the second year, high school juniors from around the country will participate in the Leadership Through Learning Program, sponsored by NECA.

This weeklong program provides students with an all-expense paid trip to Washington, D.C. Activities are organized by the Close Up Foundation, a non-profit with 30 years of experience hosting youth programs. Students will learn about American history, federal government and current events; meet with government officials and members of Congress; visit historic landmarks and attend social events with other Close Up participants.

More than 40 students, from almost 20 OPASTCO member telephone companies, submitted applications. The volunteer selection committee was pleased with the increase in the number of applications and very impressed with the quality of all the applications.

2003 Leadership Through Learning Program Participants and Nominating Telephone Company

Matthew Berry- Massachusetts, *Granby Telephone Company*
Erin Bilodeau- Maine, *Northland Telephone Company of Maine*
Laura Denker- Missouri, *Mid-Missouri Telephone Company*
Megan Duet- Louisiana, *Lafourche Telephone Company*
Kitty Edelman- Oklahoma, *Canadian Valley Telephone Company*
Jason Eubanks- Oklahoma, *Salina Spavinaw Telephone Company, Inc.*
Charlie Hall- Oregon, *Mt. Angel Telephone Company*
Vanessa Hitchcock- Tennessee, *United Telephone Company*
Benjamin Nelson- Georgia, *Public Service Telephone Company*
Kathryn Padilia- Nebraska, *Great Plains Communications*
Melissa Rich- Missouri, *Oregon Farmers Mutual Telephone Company*
Melanie Rivas- Idaho, *Fremont Telcom Company*
Amelia Schroeder- Ohio, *Columbus Grove Telephone Company*
Erica Vesco- Oklahoma, *Salina Spavinaw Telephone Company, Inc.*
Shae Wallin- Minnesota, *Sherburne County Rural Telephone Company*

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Alternates

Justin Crook- Oklahoma, *Canadian Valley Telephone Company*

Melanie Martin- Alabama, *Blountsville Telephone Company*

Kevin McCarthy- New York, *WVT Communications*

Ashley Milton- Nebraska, *Great Plains Communications*

Amy Predeek- Oregon, *Mt. Angel Telephone Company*

Ashley Tidwell- Alabama, *Brindlee Mountain Company*

FRED is a charitable 501 (c) (3) foundation, as determined by the IRS, affiliated with the Organization for the Promotion and Advancement of Small Telecommunications Companies (OPASTCO). More information about the 2003 Leadership Through Learning Program and other FRED Programs is available at www.fred.org.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
October 23, 2002

Contact: Stephanie Patton, 202/659-5990
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**FOUNDATION FOR RURAL EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT
OFFERS OPPORTUNITY FOR HIGH SCHOOL JUNIORS**

(Washington, D.C.) – The Foundation for Rural Education and Development (FRED) provides high school juniors who live or attend school in an OPASTCO-member service area an opportunity to attend an all-expense-paid trip to Washington, D.C. The Leadership Through Learning Program is sponsored by NECA and will be held in conjunction with the Close Up Foundation, a non-profit with over 30 years experience hosting youth programs.

Students will spend their days participating in study visits to Washington landmarks, seminars with national leaders and social events with students from all across the United States. In addition, students will attend a special workshop about the telecommunications industry at the OPASTCO offices. The program will be held from March 23 – March 29.

To find out how to nominate a student in your service areas, contact Melinda Atwood, FRED program coordinator. All applications must include a letter of nomination from an OPASTCO-member company and must be received in the FRED offices by November 1, 2002.

FRED is a charitable 501 (c) (3) foundation, as determined by the IRS, that is affiliated with the Organization for the Promotion and Advancement of Small Telecommunications Companies (OPASTCO). Additional information about FRED and the Leadership Through Learning Program is available at www.fred.org.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Date

Contact: *telco contact name*

Telco contact phone #

**FOUNDATION FOR RURAL EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT OFFERS
\$75,000 IN GRANTS TO PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) – The Foundation for Rural Education and Development (FRED) is working in cooperation with Rural Telephone Finance Cooperative (RTFC) to improve the quality of rural public education, particularly in the area of technology. A total of \$75,000 in grants is available to K-12 public schools and K-12 public school teachers.

Technology Grants will be awarded in the range of \$1,000 - \$10,000 to public schools that are working to increase the use of technology as a means to enhance learning. Teacher Education Grants will be awarded in the range of \$500 - \$2,000 and are intended to provide teachers with the opportunity to expand their knowledge and use of technology in the classroom.

To apply, contact *TELCO CONTACT PERSON* at *TELCO COMPANY NAME*.

Applications also can be downloaded at www.fred.org. All grant proposals must include a letter of nomination from an OPASTCO-member company and must be received in the FRED offices by September 13, 2002.

FRED is a charitable 501(c)(3) foundation, as determined by the IRS, that is affiliated with the Organization for the Promotion and Advancement of Small Telecommunications Companies (OPASTCO). Additional information about FRED and the Teacher Education and Technology Grants program is available at www.fred.org.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
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**RURAL TELCOS AND THEIR EMPLOYEES RAISE \$58,987
TO SHOW THAT RURAL AMERICA CARES**

Shanksville Pa. Volunteer Fire Department To Receive 9-11 Disaster Relief Funds

WASHINGTON -- With a desire to show that rural America cares, small telephone companies across the country rolled up their sleeves and raised a total of \$58,987 for a 9-11 disaster relief fund to help those who were affected by the terrorist attacks. The Shanksville Volunteer Fire Department, the closest fire department to the crash scene of United Flight 93, has been chosen as the recipient of the fund, which closed January 31.

The fundraising initiative was administered by OPASTCO's 501(c)(3) nonprofit affiliate, the Foundation for Rural Education and Development (FRED). "When the attacks first happened, we wanted to do something to show the world that rural America stood together in support of the relief efforts," said FRED President Hank Buchanan. He went on to say, "Once the membership learned about our campaign, they immediately began fundraising drives in their communities. Their efforts included employee contributions, community donations, and matching company contributions." In total, the telephone companies, their employees, and their customers contributed \$43,987, with an additional \$15,000 donated by FRED.

"The Shanksville Volunteer Fire Department is overwhelmed by the generosity," Shanksville Fire Chief Terry Shaffer said. "We are looking forward to meeting some of the fundraisers and using the money to help our community fire department." The funds will help the volunteer fire department pay for a new tanker truck, which will be dedicated in memory of those who lost their lives on September 11, 2001. Once the tanker truck is delivered in late spring, individuals representing the OPASTCO membership will visit Shanksville to present the donation to Shaffer.

"With the OPASTCO membership comprised mainly of independent telecommunications companies located in rural areas throughout the U.S. and Canada, the decision to support this rural town was not a difficult one," Buchanan said. "In the face of tragedy, Shanksville came together as a community, and we are proud to salute their efforts."

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September 11 Fund Donation to Shanksville, Pa./2-2-2

Note to Editors: The Organization for the Promotion and Advancement of Small Telecommunications Companies (OPASTCO) represents more than 500, small, independently owned, local telecommunications companies serving primarily rural areas of the United States and Canada. The association has an affiliate 501(c)(3) nonprofit, the Foundation for Rural Education and Development (FRED). Visit the FRED Web site at www.fred.org.

OPASTCO membership includes both commercial companies and cooperatives, which range in size from fewer than 100 to 100,000 access lines and collectively serve more than 2.6 million customers. OPASTCO represents rural telecommunications interests before federal regulatory bodies and Congress, provides publications, and holds two conventions annually in January and July of each year, addressing the needs of the small telecommunications industry. Visit the OPASTCO Web site at www.opastco.org.