



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
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COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT GRANTS AWARDED TO PROJECTS IN THREE STATES

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Through its Ethyl Grant program, the Foundation for Rural Education and Development (FRED) awarded three community development grants to projects in Montana, Nebraska and Oregon. This program provides funds to worthy community development projects that are located in areas served by local telephone companies that are members of the Organization for the Promotion and Advancement of Small Telecommunications Companies (OPASTCO). Grants are distributed twice a year in October and May. A total of \$5,000.00 was allocated to the three projects.

The project nominated by Hemingford Cooperative Telephone Company in Hemingford, Neb. is headed by Hemingford in Progress (HIP), a community organization that contributes to the town's economic development and beautification. The grant of \$1,000.00 will purchase 50 gallons of paint and supplies, provided at-cost by the local hardware store, for an effort known as "Paint the Town." Through the work of volunteers from the telephone co-op and the local high school, buildings will get a free new paint job. The effect is a revitalized downtown. The grant will be matched with donations from HIP, the telephone co-op and in-kind donations of labor.

The second project to receive funding was nominated by Ronan Telephone Company in Ronan, Mont. Each year the local graduating seniors complete a community service project together. This year the seniors voted to help build a multi-purpose sports arena that will serve as a soccer field, an ice rink and a rodeo area. The Ethyl Grant of \$1,000.00 will help purchase construction materials and fund the documentation of the structure's construction on film. Ronan Telephone Company will match the grant and donate the use of its equipment.

The third project to receive an Ethyl Grant in this round of awards is located in Halsey, Ore. Nominated by Roome Telecommunications, Inc., the grant of \$2,000.00 will fund a project to finish making Halsey Memorial Park ADA-accessible. The city, the nominating company, local businesses, the Brownsville Recreation Center and several other volunteer-based organizations are combining efforts to raise money and provide labor for the project. A local contracting company has pledged in-kind labor and the concrete will be provided at a deeply discounted price. The Ethyl Grant will be recognized by a plaque to be placed in the park.

FRED is a 501 (c) (3) foundation, as determined by the IRS, affiliated with the Organization for the Promotion and Advancement of Small Telecommunications Companies (OPASTCO). For information about FRED or the Ethyl Grant program, go to www.fred.org. For more information about OPASTCO, go to www.opastco.org.



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
November 10, 2003

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\$75,000 AWARDED IN TECHNOLOGY AND TEACHER EDUCATION GRANTS FOR RURAL PUBLIC SCHOOLS

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Thanks to a generous donation from Rural Telephone Finance Cooperative (RTFC), the Foundation for Rural Education and Development (FRED) awarded \$75,000 in grants to rural public schools and rural educators across the United States.

“Use of technology in the classroom can greatly enhance the learning experience,” said Hank Buchanan, vice-president for industry affairs at RTFC. “Many rural public schools lack the funding resources to purchase technological equipment. We, at RTFC, are committed to helping close the digital divide in America by providing, through FRED, funding for technology grants for schools and educators.”

The grant program, now in its third year, awards funds to public schools that are working to increase the use of technology to enhance the learning experience. Of the more than sixty applications submitted, 10 schools and three teachers were selected to receive funding. The technology grants ranged from \$1,500 to \$10,000. Funds were also awarded to public school teachers who want to supplement and expand learning opportunities in the classroom through the use of technology. More than half a million dollars in funding was requested.

“These grants provide vital opportunities to our rural communities’ most precious resource, their children,” FRED President Diana Gradert said. “We very pleased with the cooperation the grants foster between OPASTCO member telephone companies and local schools and are grateful for RTFC’s continued support.”

More information about the winning applicants and how to apply for next year’s program is available at www.fred.org. FRED is a charitable 501(c)(3) foundation that is affiliated with the Organization for the Promotion and Advancement of Small Telecommunications Companies (OPASTCO). More information about OPASTCO can be found at www.opastco.org.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Date: September 8, 2003

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Bennet & Bennet, PLLC Shows Its Appreciation for Rural America

(Washington, D.C.) – August 1, 2003 was “Rural America Appreciation Day” at the law offices of Bennet & Bennet, PLLC. To celebrate, the firm donated all of the day’s revenue to the Foundation for Rural Education and Development (FRED). The idea for this day was generated during a retreat for the firm’s partners where one of the key priorities identified for the firm was to give back to rural America in some way.

“We wanted to somehow support the rural communities our clients serve. The goal is not just to give back to rural America but also to challenge other OPASTCO members that work with OPASTCO companies to do the same,” explained Carri Bennet, one of the firm’s founding partners.

The FRED Board of Directors chose to use the donation for three community development projects. The beneficiaries of this donation to FRED are the Richmond Elementary School playground project, nominated by Waitsfield and Champlain Valley Telecom in Waitsfield, Vt.; the Cut Off Youth Center, nominated by Lafourche Telephone Company in Larose, La.; and Atkinson Veterans Memorial project, nominated by Henry County Telephone Company in Geneseo, Ill.

“OPASTCO’s associate members are great assets to FRED’s mission of supporting rural communities in our telco members’ service areas,” said Diana Gradert, FRED president. “We are extremely grateful to Bennet & Bennet for this innovative and generous donation.”

The Foundation for Rural Education and Development (FRED) is a 501(c)(3) charitable foundation located in Washington, D.C. and affiliated with the Organization for the Promotion and Advancement of Small Telecommunications Companies (OPASTCO). FRED's mission is to promote activities that improve rural educational, social, and economic conditions. More information about the Foundation is available at www.fred.org.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Date: September 4, 2003

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New Projects Encourage Involvement

(Washington, D.C.) – The public relations and marketing committee for the Foundation for Rural Education and Development (FRED) recently completed two projects aimed at increasing awareness of the valuable programs FRED offers to all OPASTCO members. The members of the committee created a marketing kit that profiles the programs offered by the Foundation. The second project was completed thanks in large part to Ken Pyle of Viodi, LLC. This California based firm that works to help the independent telco learn about, acquire and promote VOD and iTV content donated all services for the production of the FRED video.

The 70+ page marketing kit outlines each of FRED's programs and provides tips on how to apply for the more than \$200,000 of funding that is available each year. The kit was written with the goal of demonstrating the many ways in which the Foundation can help telco members fulfill their roles as community leaders. "As the introduction to the publication states, FRED is committed to OPASTCO members and their communities," Foundation Director Melissa Korzuch said. "Our goal is to provide programs that promote community involvement, business cooperation and improved rural education and economic development in our members' service area."

The video, "FRED: Supporting the OPASTCO Community" premiered at the 2003 OPASTCO Summer Convention and was greeted with a very positive reaction. The 12-minute video chronicles the origins of FRED, including the efforts of men like Everette Kneece of PBT Telecom and Hobart Rand of Granite State Telephone. It also highlights the history of the programs that are available to OPASTCO members.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Date: May 30, 2003

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Scholarships Awarded to Students in Rural Service Areas of OPASTCO Members (Washington, D.C.) – The Foundation for Rural Education and Development (FRED) awarded more than \$74,000 in scholarships to some of the most outstanding students rural America has to offer. FRED selected 79 scholarship recipients from rural areas around the United States and Canada to receive scholarships ranging from \$5,000 to \$500. “This year, we awarded more than \$74,000, thanks to the extraordinary generosity of our member companies and we hope that number will continue to increase because the number of and quality of applications increases each year,” Foundation Director Melissa Korzuch said.

For the first time in the history of the scholarship program, the Everette Kneece “Return to Rural America Scholarship was awarded in the amount of \$5,000. Along with an outstanding history of grades and extra-curricular activities the recipient had to demonstrate a strong desire to return to a rural area in the United States or Canada after completing his or her studies. This year’s recipient is Nicholas Ellering from Melrose, Minn. Nick was nominated by Melrose Telephone Company and will be attending the University of Minnesota in the fall to major in biomedical engineering.

The volunteer selection committee reviewed more than 200 outstanding applications sponsored by more than 80 rural, independent telecommunications companies and cooperatives. The 2003 class of FRED Scholars is the Foundation's largest number of winners to date. This year's recipients hail from 27 different states and provinces in the United States and Canada.

FRED is a national 501(c)(3) charitable foundation located in Washington, D.C., and was founded in 1989 by the Organization for the Promotion and Advancement of Small Telecommunications Companies (OPASTCO). The mission of FRED and its supporters is to promote educational, social and economic development in rural America and Canada. The FRED Scholarship Program is made possible through the generosity of more than 1,000 small, independent telecommunications companies operating in rural areas across the United States and Canada and the companies that provide goods and services to these companies. Only OPASTCO member companies are eligible to nominate a student.

“Small telephone companies are a valuable asset to their rural communities. Our goal is to work with all OPASTCO members to create educational opportunities for rural America’s best resource—its young people,” FRED President Diana Gradert said.



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Stephanie Patton, 202/659-5990

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Date: April 24, 2003

(Washington, D.C.) – The FRED 2002 Annual Giving Campaign has come to a very successful conclusion. More than \$37,000 was raised to support FRED's Ethyl Grants and Scholarship Programs. Each year the number of outstanding applications for both of these programs grows, highlighting the importance of the many donations that come from OPASTCO Telco and Associate Members.

New to the Annual Giving Campaign this year was the opportunity to “Sponsor a Scholar.” Companies or individuals that donated more than \$1,000 were able to be listed as funding the scholarship or name a scholarship after an individual. The following scholarships are a result of that option:

\$2,500 Scholarship- funded by a donation from CoBank;

\$2,500 Scholarship- funded by Association of Communications Engineers;

\$1,500 Scholarship- funded by a donation from BCK & Associates

\$1,000 Scholarship- funded by a donation from the Eddy Family Foundation;

\$1,000 Scholarship- funded by a donation from Lukas, Nace, Gutierrez & Sachs;

\$1,000 Charles Zinser, Jr. Scholarship- funded by a donation from RTFC; and

\$1,000 Scholarship- funded by a donation from CDG.

In addition, a \$1,000 Scholarship will be awarded in recognition of the tax preparation and audit services Warriner, Gessinger & Associates provides to FRED each year.

The FRED Board v. OPASTCO Board Challenge served as another motivating force in the Campaign. Both Boards accepted the challenge and arrived at 100 percent participation. In recognition of their generous leadership, FRED will award two \$1,000 scholarships in recognition of 100 percent participation in the 2002 Annual Giving Campaign by FRED and OPASTCO Board members.

“I am pleased but not surprised with the results of this year’s Annual Giving Campaign,” Diana Gradert, FRED President said. “Thanks to the extraordinary generosity of OPASTCO members, funding for all programs will remain the same or exceed the level of support as last year. Given these turbulent times and the state of the economy, this is an accomplishment we are very proud and excited about.”

Every single dollar raised from this effort will be returned to an OPASTCO member’s community in the form of a scholarship or a community development grant. Only OPASTCO members and their customers are eligible to apply to FRED programs. For a full list of donors, please visit <http://www.fred.org/donors.html>.

FRED is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization that is affiliated with the Organization for the Promotion and Advancement of Small Telecommunications Companies (OPASTCO).



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Date: April 15, 2003

FIFTEEN HIGH SCHOOL JUNIORS TAKE PART IN FOUNDATION FOR RURAL EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

(Washington, D.C.) – During the week of March 23 – 29, 2003, the Foundation for Rural Education and Development (FRED) welcomed 15 high school juniors from rural America to Washington, D.C. As participants in FRED's Leadership Through Learning Youth Program, the students attended study visits to Washington landmarks, met with their congressional representatives and attended daily workshops, debates and lectures on international relations, the war in Iraq, the media, the judiciary system and lobbying. They also had an opportunity to take in cultural activities and attend social events throughout the week.

NECA, a not-for-profit membership corporation formed by the U.S. Government, sponsors the program. Students were selected to attend the all-expense paid trip based on their academic achievements, leadership potential and the quality of an essay they submitted to the review committee. Additionally, each student was required to obtain a nomination by an independent telephone company belonging to OPASTCO, a D.C.-based telecommunications trade association.

On Friday, March 28, the students visited the OPASTCO offices and attended a workshop that focused on the telecommunications industry. Dave Lauerman and Joe Douglas, both of NECA, presented information about rural telecommunications and the role NECA plays in that industry. “NECA is pleased and proud to support this program and we hope it will serve to enhance awareness about government, civic affairs and telecommunications regulation,” said Dave Lauerman, director of corporate communications for NECA.

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Lisa Zaina, senior legal advisor to Commissioner Jonathan S. Adelstein of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), met with the students during the telecommunications workshop. Ms. Zaina gave a general overview of the FCC and spoke specifically about the relationship that tied the Commission to the students, their telephone service provider and their hometown communities.

FRED is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization 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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