



Blandin Foundation grants to Kanabec area will put broadband to work for community

GRAND RAPIDS, Minn. (May 31, 2013)—Blandin Foundation announced today that it has awarded 29 grants totaling \$401,631 that assist rural Minnesota communities in advancing high-speed Internet access and use in their communities. Kanabec County will benefit from three of these grants, through which local communities will leverage high-speed Internet (broadband).

Projects chosen by local residents during a community meeting held this spring, and which will be supported in part through Blandin Foundation Community Broadband grants, are:

- Community Portal/Starter Websites: \$7,000 to Kanabec County will support training for Internet marketing to area businesses, non-political organizations and government and create a community portal for a greater online presence.
- Life Enrichment with Technology: \$20,000 to Housing Redevelopment Authority (HRA) of Mora in support of broadband and technology improvements to the Mora Housing and Redevelopment Authority's Life Enrichment Center.
- Joined for Health: A grant of \$16,944 will support a partnership between the College of St. Scholastica and FirstLight Health System (Mora Clinic) to use telehealth technology to provide pre-surgical patient education and continuing education to the health system's staff.

Kanabec County was named a Blandin Broadband Community in November 2012, one of nine selected across rural Minnesota. Since that time, the County has convened a leadership team and engaged the community in a two-year project to make the best use of information and services that broadband can deliver.

“These projects help to prepare Kanabec County businesses and organizations for a future that increasingly is connected,” said Karen Amundson, Mora Area Chamber of Commerce and spokesperson for the Kanabec Broadband Initiative. “By focusing on health care, business and community marketing and all those served by the Life Enrichment Center, we will take some exciting and meaningful steps that bring our community closer to the full promise of broadband.”

“We were delighted to see how Kanabec Broadband Initiative leaders engaged a range of organizations and interests to imagine possibilities that come with high-speed Internet,” said Dr. Kathleen Annette, CEO of Blandin Foundation. “Hopeful leaders make ambitious choices, and Kanabec County residents will benefit from this collaborative effort. We’re excited by this work, and the vibrancy it will bring to the region.”

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About Blandin Foundation: Blandin Foundation works for vibrant rural Minnesota communities by investing in community leaders and working with partners to expand opportunity for all residents. Located in Grand Rapids, Minn., it is one of only a handful of foundations in the U.S. focused exclusively on rural communities and the largest rural-based, private foundation in Minnesota. Information on Blandin Foundation grant-making, leadership development programs and public policy initiatives: www.blandinfoundation.org. Information about the Blandin Broadband Communities program: <http://broadband.blandinfoundation.org/programs/programs-detail.php?intResourceID=3168>

About Kanabec Broadband Initiative and Kanabec County: Initiated by the concerns of local businesses, Kanabec Broadband Initiative is an ad hoc group of community stakeholders, formed in January 2011, that recognize the importance of broadband to the economic competitiveness and quality of life of Kanabec County residents, businesses and institutions. Information about KBI can be found at www.kanabecbroadband.org. Kanabec County, with an estimated 2010 population of 16,239, is a largely rural county, covering approximately 525 square miles, in east central Minnesota. It is located approximately 70 miles north of the Minneapolis/St. Paul metropolitan area. More information can be found at www.kanabeccounty.org.

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