



Tennessee Welcomes First Certified Connected Communities

Contact: Jessica Ditto
jditto@connectednation.org
(202) 251-4749

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Jennifer Cobb
jcobb@connectednation.org
(615) 828-1017

Sullivan County, Morristown show commitment to economic development, quality of life with Connected certification

Nashville, TN – Sullivan County and Morristown have become the first and second certified [Connected](#) communities in the state of Tennessee. There are 165 communities across the country currently involved in some stage of the Connected program, but Sullivan County and Morristown are the first in the state to participate in the program and achieve certification.

The Connected program entails building a comprehensive action plan for developing a technology-ready community by reviewing the technology landscape, developing regional partnerships, establishing local teams, and conducting a thorough community assessment.

Sullivan County's certification was marked with a public event Wednesday at the TriCities Airport in Blountville where the Sullivan County Technology Team was presented with an official Connected trophy. Road signs announcing the county's certification will be posted at various locations in the community.

"Here in northeast Tennessee, the first frontier of our country, we have the perfect mix of cutting edge technology in a rural setting with all the urban

advantages. Our low cost of living and traditional values make it a great place to raise a family, start a business, or join a successful corporation,” said Richard Venable, NETWORKS Sullivan Partnership CEO and community champion. “Our challenge is to let the world know we’re here and ready to share our tremendous assets. Achieving the status of a certified Connected community will help us do that.”

Morristown celebrated its achievement earlier today at the Morristown Utility Systems/FiberNET’s monthly breakfast meeting with nearly 100 community leaders and members in attendance to share in the city’s celebration. State Senator Steve Southerland of Morristown was also on hand to show his support and congratulate the technology team on its efforts.

“Being certified as an official Connected community is a huge step for the city of Morristown,” said Marshall Ramsey, president of the Morristown Area Chamber of Commerce and Morristown’s Connected program community champion. “Participating in the Connected program was an excellent way to gain a better idea of the technology landscape and market the technology assets that exist in our community. I’m proud of the way our team came together representing every sector assisting with gathering the data to complete the assessment. Our team was dedicated to this project and we appreciate the recognition by Connected Nation and Connected Tennessee.”



There are 17 certified Connected communities nationwide, with Sullivan County and Morristown being the 13th and 14th communities to earn the certification, respectively.

The Technology Action plans of [Sullivan County](#) and [Morristown](#) unveiled at the communities’ events include projects to expand digital literacy, build awareness for the benefits of broadband, and assist businesses with websites and social media, as well as improving the online presence of local governments, among other entities.

Connected certification affords a community an avenue to discuss its success and pursue opportunities as a recognized, technologically advanced community. The broadband coverage of the areas was measured using Connected Tennessee broadband availability maps and survey research.

“Sullivan County and Morristown took on the assessment process with

enthusiasm,” said Connected Tennessee East Tennessee State Operations Manager Alyson Ferine. “The community technology teams that worked on compiling all of the necessary data and were diligent and thorough. Both communities recognize the value in not only the data but the complete picture of their community's broadband landscape and how that information could help them achieve even greater things in Sullivan County and in Morristown.”

The certification is an important benchmark as the teams now phase into working their newly established long-term community broadband plan. Residents are also encouraged to get involved by joining their local Connected technology team and using the free [Every Community Online](#) program to get training in computer and Internet skills which makes them eligible for discounted computers and home Internet service. Residents and businesses are encouraged to visit the [community technology profile](#) on the website and help project leaders continue to populate a directory of technology assets in the county.

The Connected program is part of the Connected Tennessee initiative funded by the U.S. Department of Commerce NTIA State Broadband Initiative program. Connected Tennessee is working to facilitate the access, adoption, and use of technology throughout the state to create a better business environment, more effective community and economic development, improved healthcare, more efficient government, enhanced education, and improved quality of life.

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About Connected Tennessee: *As a public-private partnership, Connected Tennessee joins with technology-minded businesses, government entities, universities and non-profit organizations to improve economic development and enhance quality of life by accelerating Tennessee's technology landscape. For maps, research or more information about what Connected Tennessee is doing to expand broadband access, adoption, and use, please visit www.ConnectedTN.org.*

To view the photos from this week's celebrations, follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).