



Cooperative Extension
University of Wisconsin-Extension

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PORTAGE COUNTY TO CONDUCT SURVEY ON HIGH-SPEED INTERNET NEEDS

Portage County UW-Extension educator Nathan Sandwick and leaders of the Broadband Task Force for Portage County strongly encourage residents who receive a survey in the mail to fill it out and return it. The survey will arrive by mail at about 4,800 randomly selected households throughout Portage County. It asks residents about access to high-speed internet service where they live and how that may be important to them. It is funded by Portage County and is being conducted by the UW-River Falls Survey Research Center with input and guidance from the Broadband Task Force for Portage County. The task force involves several community leaders in local government, education, and the business community working together on a vision to guide the development of high-speed internet in Portage County and is chaired by John Holdridge of the Town of Hull.

The results of the survey will be shared with local government officials, internet service providers and the general public. Results may help guide future expansions and quality improvements for internet in Portage County. Todd Kuckkahn, Executive Director of the Portage County Business Council, has been part of the task force guiding the effort. "Broadband and connectivity are important to our students, families, visitors, businesses and our community if we hope to grow and offer a great place to live, work and play," Kuckkahn explains. "This survey will help drive policy and potential funding, both of which are challenges for our community and Wisconsin." Last year AT&T and CenturyLink, whose service areas include eligible parts of Portage County, accepted federal funding through the Connect America program to provide affordable internet service in those areas and to do so within six years. This August the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin selected Amherst Telephone Company, in a Public-Private Partnership with the Town of Hull, to receive a State Broadband Expansion Grant of \$150,000 to expand internet service to portions of the Towns of Hull, Dewey, and Sharon. The countywide survey may shed light on households' interests and service needs that remain. More information about the task force and this survey is available at the Portage County UW-Extension website (<http://portage.uwex.edu/>).

Another survey, the Wisconsin High Speed Internet Access Demand Survey, is underway at the state level through November 23rd. All interested residents and business owners may visit <http://www.link.wisconsin.gov/> or call toll free (877)360-2973 to complete the statewide survey from LinkWISCONSIN and the Wisconsin State Broadband Office.

For information contact the Portage County UW-Extension office, 715-346-1316.

Our Mission: To bring University of Wisconsin unbiased, research-based educational information to the residents of Portage County.