Speeding into the future

Luverne Public Library welcomes internet upgrade

By MATT HUTCHESON
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Access to high-speed internet is an ongoing struggle in rural areas. Lack of access can be detrimental to students, adults and everyone in between.

Local and state representatives gathered with library board members and reps from the Alabama Supercomputer Authority at the Luverne Public Library to mark the LPL’s new high-speed internet provided by the Alabama Supercomputer Authority.

From left: Crenshaw County Commission Chairman Charlie Samkey, Jr., ASA CEO Walter Overby, Rep. Chris Sells, Dr. Pat Walker, library director Kathryn Tomlin, Luverne Mayor Ed Beasley, Senator Will Barfoot and ASAs Deborah Wallace gathered to mark the LPL’s new high-speed internet provided by the Alabama Supercomputer Authority.

State Senator Will Barfoot, left, listens as state Rep. Chris Sells praises the ASAs high-speed internet implemented at the Luverne Public Library.

The LSU Supercomputer Authority (ASA) is expanding broadband internet to rural counties. The initiative to assist libraries with offering high-speed internet is part of their Alabama Research and Education Network (AREN) program, which “offers education and research clients in Alabama access to e-government services, online courses and research tools,” according to documentation provided by the ASA.

“We serve about 550,000 students in Alabama, and are happy to reach out and help the school systems and libraries,” she continued.

“Once we are finished, by the end of March, we will have over 170 libraries connected. That’s 77% of the total libraries in the state of Alabama,” Wallace concluded.

Senator Barfoot added his thoughts next.

“It’s important to the Governor’s initiative was to expand broadband access throughout the rural parts of the state and we passed several bills to help that. This is certainly a piece of that puzzle, to help students and adults who don’t have access to high-speed internet come to places like this, use it, be successful and take care of their business. It’s not ‘our’ money, it’s taxpayer money, and we’re happy to be able to put it to good use.” Barfoot said.

Sells followed up with a statement as well.

“It’s good to see money put to work (in this way). If you’re anywhere in a meeting, and can say anything to anyone about Crenshaw County; we need help with broadband internet down here, in some areas,” Sells said.

Library director Kathryn Tomlin thanked those involved for the help to the library.

“We have a lot of people and students who use our computers, for everything from searches to job applications,” Tomlin said.

“It’s a tremendous help to small libraries like us.”

Public Library last Monday, Feb. 10 to mark the library’s new high-speed internet capabilities.

State Senator Will Barfoot, Representative Chris Sells, County Commission Chairman Charlie Samkey, Jr. and Luverne Mayor Ed Beasley met with library director Kathryn Tomlin and board member Dr. Pat Walker and ASA CEO Walter Overby along with Deborah Wallace and Gary Hill.

Wallace spoke first to explain how the ASA came to team with legislators to begin the process of giving public libraries access to high-speed internet.

“We reached out to a majority of the legislators and they agreed this was a wonderful opportunity. In the last few months, over 100 new libraries have added high-speed internet access and we’ve also upgraded 65 of our libraries. This was made possible thanks to funding that Senator Barfoot and Rep. Sells pushed through the legislature… All of this is done at no cost to the libraries and no cost to the school systems,” Wallace explained.

She also pointed out that Crenshaw County Schools have internet access through the ASA.

The ASA provides internet access to a “majority” of public schools in the state, according to documentation provided by the ASA.

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