

## Why we should care about broadband

I don't remember exactly where or when I first signed on to the Internet, but I remember dialup access.

Who can forget the buzzing and beeping as your computer connected to the new world online? My family eventually got America Online, and when we signed in, everyone was excited to hear those words, "You've got mail."

In its infancy, there really wasn't much to do after you waited three or four minutes to connect to the Internet. Yes, there was email, some games and an ever-growing amount of information to read.

I credit America Online for being one of the first services to bring the wild, wild web together in a user-friendly format for the public. And a new revolution began.

Three years ago, Micha Koufman wrote in Forbes, "The Internet is bringing a revolution along with it. Access to information combined with global supply and demand is reshaping established conventions

and destroying old world definitions.

"Forty years ago, the average person followed an employment path largely determined by birth and education, often committing to one employer until retirement. Today you probably wouldn't even consider that a viable option. Success is no longer solely determined by the right educations, the perfect resume, or even your age and background."

A lot has happened since dialup. The Internet revolution Koufman referred to took off, and now a huge opportunity stands before Montrose.

Just a couple weeks ago I heard three speakers at The Forum at Heidi's Brooklyn Deli on the topic of broadband. Broadband had been used in the telecommunication business for decades.

In the late '90s, it became a marketing term referring to Internet access that was faster than dialup.

Speed matters in this Internet revolution.

Today the term broadband still refers to the capacity or speed at which networks carry Internet traffic.

In 2015, the FCC changed the definition to a minimum of 25 Mbps download and 3 Mbps upload speed. According to the NEO Fiber Broadband Blueprint for Region 10, "Given the growth trends in bandwidth needs and network traffic, this definition is conservative and barely meets the minimum needs for bandwidth consumption today and certainly does not address the needs that are forthcoming."

The Forum speakers were Michelle Haynes, Executive Director for Region 10; Jason Bronec, CEO DMEA; and Virgil Turner, Director of Innovation and Citizen Engagement, city of Montrose. They shared where their organizations were in bringing broadband to our area.

They weren't speaking about bringing the minimum speeds. Instead they discussed several organizations working together to bring us a network that can deliver up to a gigabyte of speed. One GBps (gigabyte per second) is equal to 8,000 Mbps (megabits per second).

The Blueprint outlines, "Leveraging existing fiber optic infrastructure and a cost effective approach to improving the availability, abundance and redundancy for the communities within Region 10. In order to do this each community within the region must have fiber optic or wireless access to one of the major Internet access points or hubs located in Grand Junction, Denver, Salt Lake City or Albuquerque."

You can see many more details in the 81-page document.

But the real question is why does it matter to us?

The Blueprint explains that the economic health and survival of this region depends in large part on the availability and affordability of advanced telecommunication service.

It highlights that Delta and Montrose counties experienced the largest decrease in population in the entire region 2010-13, mostly due to the outmigration for employment opportunities. Montrose had a 6.7 percent unemployment rate and Delta had a 7 percent rate, while the state of Colorado only declined to 4.2 percent.

Additionally, Montrose and Delta counties medium income is approximately 25 percent lower than the state's.

While our state's high school graduation rate is 90.2 percent, Montrose and Delta counties range between three and five percent lower, respectively.

Diane Kruse in her white paper, "Smart Infrastructure for our Future: Benefits of Advanced Networks and Why it Matters," explains it best:

"The Internet and its associated technologies have impacted wealth, work, government, health, public safety and education. Having equal access to advanced broadband networks bridges the digital divide and creates better equality between the haves and have-nots."

Our community needs to understand better the opportunity before us. We need to educate ourselves and support this cause.

How many business owners, community leaders and engaged citizens would support and attend a half-day economic outlook conference on broadband? If there's enough interest, the Montrose Daily Press will coordinate and bring together leaders to speak on this movement.

The Internet has created opportunities for everyone. While 15-year-old stock investors may capture the imagination, the Internet provides opportunities for 70-year-old entrepreneurs too.

It's a new world out there. Let's be pioneers.

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### Off the record

By Vincent Laboy

## Finding cause for thanks, celebration

In a world that sometimes seems more frightening and tragic every day, I find myself taking solace in reflecting on the things for which Community Options is thankful, and those which are cause for celebration.

In many ways it has been a remarkable year for our agency, and here are some of our highlights:

- We are thankful for the people that we support and their families who inspire us, encourage us and challenge us to do our best. On a daily basis we experience the power of love and the indomitable human spirit; we learn about perseverance and overcoming adversity; and we revel in the joy of successes large and small.
- We are thankful for our caring and dedicated staff who choose to do the important daily work of empowering people's abilities and enhancing their lives despite the fact that the rates the state pays for our services do not allow us to pay employees anywhere near what they are worth.

• We celebrate having played a major role in facilitating the continued growth of Colorado Mesa University's Montrose Campus by successfully negotiating their purchase of our three buildings directly across from them on South Third Street. We likewise celebrate

our purchase, remodeling and construction of new facilities on North Park Avenue, with our day program/medical/support-ed living services building scheduled to be completed on Dec. 8 and the new maintenance building scheduled to be completed in January.

• We likewise celebrate the fact that our capital campaign to assist with the expense of developing our new home is gaining momentum, and we are thankful for the generosity of those who have already contributed, and for those who will in the future.

• On a larger scale, we celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act that was signed into law by President Gerald Ford on Nov.

29, 1975. This landmark civil rights legislation opened the doors of public schools for millions of children with disabilities and laid the foundation of our country's commitment to ensuring that students with disabilities have opportunities to develop their talents and contribute to their communities along with all other students. Community Options is proud to carry on that commitment as these graduates become young adults.

• We also celebrate our agency's role in the fact that nationwide more than 340,000 infants and toddlers with developmental delays and their families are involved in Early Intervention Services, many of whom achieve age-level development and require no additional services past age three. That is always cause for huge celebration!

Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays from everyone at Community Options. May you also find many reasons to celebrate and for which to be thankful.

Tom Turner is executive director of Community Options in Montrose, which provides and coordinates services and supports to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.



### Community Options

By Tom Turner

## What goes into a county's budget?

My first year as a Montrose County Commissioner has afforded me the opportunity to observe and participate in the varied operations of our county government. The complexity of the organization and ongoing responsibilities that our elected officials and staff are charged with is significant.

One of the biggest tasks undertaken is the preparation and management of the annual budget. The budget preparation project begins in June and culminates with the commissioner's adoption of the budget in December.

During this time, the commissioners and staff review every line item in an annual budget that totals more than \$60 million. It is an exhausting and sometimes contentious process, but it is one that I and the other commissioners take extremely seriously as a matter of public trust.

As with any organization, we must strike a balance that accommodates labor costs, capital projects, operational expenditures and funding requests from other entities.

The complexity of this task is amplified by the fact that county governments deal with a diversity of items that includes airports, health and human

services, jails, roads and public lands to name a few.

As we near the end of this process, I want to share some of the highlights of the recommended 2016 budget:

• A \$599,000 reduction in labor expenses resulting from the elimination of 16-plus full time positions.

• A \$408,000 reduction in personnel and operating expenses for the dispatch center.

• Funding contributions to 23 community organizations including: Voices for Children (CASA), Crime Stoppers, CMU Montrose, Partners (youth men-

tors), Senior Community Meals (VOA), Region 10 Community Living Services, Montrose West Recreation, Olathe Community Center and the Basin Clinic. These 23 contributions total \$743,000 in community support.

• Budgeting \$2.5 million for the first phase of an arena and events center at the Montrose County Fairgrounds.

• Receipt of \$300,000 in grant revenue from the Colorado Water Conservation Board. This revenue is projected to offset nearly all 2016 expenditures required for diligence work on the county's conditional water right in the San Miguel Basin.

• Total nonpersonnel

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operating expenses for the 2016 recommended budget remain virtually flat as compared to 2015. The projected increase of 1.6 percent is less than the cost of inflation.

A full overview of the recommended 2016 budget is available on the county website at [www.montrosecounty.net](http://www.montrosecounty.net) I encourage any citizen with an interest to review the budget highlights and fund overviews in detail.

As always, I'm glad to answer any questions that you have with regard to the proposed budget. I can be reached at (970)249-7755.

Glen Davis represents District 2 on the Montrose Board of County Commissioners.



### Guest column

By Glen Davis

## LETTERS POLICY

The Montrose Daily Press welcomes "Letters to the Editor" and recognizes the publishing of them as an important forum for citizen opinion. We encourage participation. To that end, we have set a few rules as possible. They are:

■ Letters must be signed and include a

street address and daytime telephone number for verification. We will not publish the address or telephone number with the letter.

■ They should be no more than 300 words in length. While some lengthy letters are published, we reserve the right to edit or ask the writer to resubmit when necessary because of space limitations.

■ We reserve the right to limit frequent writers. We reserve the right to reject let-

ters. Letters will be edited for taste, brevity and legal reasons. Letters that attack other citizens won't be published.

■ Because of time and resources, we cannot research all information in letters. Therefore by publishing them, we neither imply nor guarantee the accuracy of information stated by writers. We won't publish letters regarding consumer issues, either pro or con.

■ We won't publish 'open' letters or letters with multiple signatures. Thank you letters will be considered a 'Card of Thanks' and will be directed to the classified advertising department.

■ Email works best for letters. Our email address: [editor@montrosepress.com](mailto:editor@montrosepress.com). Our mailing address: Letters to the Editor, Montrose Daily Press, 3684 N. Townsend Ave., Montrose, CO 81401.