Good afternoon and thanks for joining us I am Judy Simpson. For the past year E. Vermont has been providing digital tools and training in small towns across the state. That eVermont project has reached thousands of Vermonters and now comes to an important next step. This a Saturday, May 21 E. Vermont hosts its citizen leadership and connected age conference. It will mark the first time leaders from the business nonprofit technology and education sectors come together to share the common goal of using broadband to keep Vermont’s communities vital. The conference is being organized by one of the E. Vermont partners at the Snelling center. This afternoon I want to welcome two members of the Snelling center it’s the president mark Snelling and community coordinator Joanna Cummings welcome to both of you. I know there are a lot of overlapping pieces we can fit together but Joanna maybe you can start with a brief overview of the conference and what is going to happen?

Joanna.: Okay as you said its innocent leadership in a connected age and it's going to be held on May 21 at Vermont technical college. It is an all-day conference. The conference is about what great things that E. Vermont program project is doing in Vermont’s towns and rural towns in Vermont but also bringing that information across Vermont. This is a statewide conference and we're inviting Deja leaders and community leaders and business leaders nonprofit leaders and people that are interested in providing more broadband outreach in their towns. Like I said it's all day. Matt Dunn is going to be our keynote speaker and you can go register at EVT conference.org.

Judy.: What's the cost?

Joanna.: It's only $20.00. It's a great deal and that includes lunch refreshments courses.

Judy.: I know the conference has been building on what’s been learned in the past years but mark can you bring us up to speed on the E. Vermont community broadband project?

Mark.: The E. Vermont project is overall sponsored by the Vermont council on rural development and it is taking advantage of the $2.5 million Federal broadband development grant that was matched by over $1,000,000 worth of local foundation money and partners. There are eight partners working on the project and the goal is to try and narrow the digital divide if you will that the state and the Federal gov't are working on expanding the
physical infrastructure of broadband. This is really to get people in communities civic groups, local governments, local businesses, and so on, schools all into using broadband so they can get over any divide there might be of people not being used to using broadband in their projects.

Judy.: Why is it so important?

Mark.: Vermont as you know is a wonderful place and one of the great fears that I have and many other people have is that Vermont is distant from some of the pieces of the world and that makes it difficult to get as much connection as possible. All of our lives are busy and changing. Children have different activities today than we're used to. The idea is to try and make sure that everyone has access to broadband and that's the infrastructure piece. Ours is to get familiar with using it and to see the tools and how they can use it to build their communities in the future.

Judy.: And you're actually one of the partners. Can you tell me a little bit about why it is you have partnered with this group?

Mark.: We have partnered because one of our particular efforts has been to encourage people to participate in their local communities and to get involved in civic organizations to work with their fire departments to work on issues and so on and that is a core of the Snelling center. Our mission is to I think I can say it correctly is to Foster and encourage public participation by private citizens. To encourage ethical and responsible civic leadership and those things are key. We need leadership and we're bringing those that leadership together at the conference and we need people to participate. All give you a quick for instance. My town, Starksboro has decided they're not going to send out their town reports everybody by mailing address. They're going to make them available to you if you want to get them or they're going to be online. That would start having people not having it show up on their door they're going to have to take one step if they want to get involved to see what's going on in their town. It's very important that people have access. Understanding and awareness of how to get the information.

Judy.: I think that's a big point the understanding and awareness because I think it's very generational for our children it's a no brainer and they used to having everything in their fingertips for me and for my parents not so much.

Mark.: That's correct the Vermont project as partners working both on civic organizations schools, businesses right down the list of ways of ways the entire community get involved in the process. So far it has been very effective working with 24 towns and the goal was to take what we learn from the 24 towns and then be able to spread that to the other 220 some are towns across a state of Vermont.

Judy.: So these 24 towns are really figuring out?

Mark.: Absolutely. There's no exact route.

Judy.: Then that can be the map for other towns.

Mark.: Yes. And we're bringing together hopefully a lot of participants from the 24 towns at the conference but there also the other people that are interested in taking what we've
learned and learning about at the conference and going back to their towns and sharing the information with their community.

Judy.: The event is called citizen leadership in it and it's the age. Who should think about attending and Wednesday going to be light?

Joanna.: The day is going to be really exciting because we have a lot of really great speakers for all the sessions we're offering plus the fact that Matt Dunn who has really embody for us the role of community and leadership in bringing what we're helping to bring in terms of models and documentation practices two all towns in Vermont. We're hoping to attract leaders in the business community and the nonprofit community in education and community but also uses for people that maybe there the early adopters in their towns of technology. The people that like to do community organizing or that they want to learn more about how to use tools to communicate with their family. Or to organize projects so we're really encouraging leaders and potential leaders to attend the conference because I think everyone will get a lot of it.

Judy.: Exactly. What are some of the workshops going to be like?

Joanna.: For example in the community track we're offering a course in public Wi-Fi so townspeople that would like to get public Wi-Fi access for the downtown and there are several towns in the project that we're working with now would like to have the ability for everyone to go downtown that may not have Wi-Fi access or Internet access and home which is still common in rural Vermont there's still a lot of people that do not have access so we're providing in helping the towns to figure out a way to provide access and libraries or a cafe or a public outlet in towns. For the education track it's going to be all about how schools can build 1 to 1 computer education into their curriculum. It is a really exciting model that one of the organizations in our project is bring forward with all kinds of information on how to get funding how to get the hardware and software how to set up the program in your school. We're going to be addressing the digital divide which is access for Vermonters through the nonprofit track and for businesses we're going to be talking about mobile web. The mobile web has been around for a while and we have not all of us but we have smart phones droids and I pads there's a lot of folks that are quite up to speed in terms of all so it can be seen or use on mobile application. That's going to be about developing mobile labs.

Mark.: It's particularly important for rural communities. If you think of some towns in Vermont that are somewhat distant from where we currently consider and employment center or for large businesses that the opportunity to get broadband first off and second to understand that one of the partners is Vermont small business association so someone to understand they can connect to the whole world from any remote town in Vermont and be able to do business that will bring a possibility of economic development some of our more rural more difficult towns and it's clean development have somebody in an office selling something using the Internet and selling worldwide.

Judy.: Let's talk a little bit about that because Vermont is known for its small cottage industries. But you really have to be connected worldwide to be seen. You have to have a website they have a web page you have to be able to sell things over the Internet that has to be a little daunting I would imagine for smaller business people? On top of trying to make a product and trying to get out there.
Mark.: Yes it's just on that's what I'm doing these days to make a living is I'm selling a product worldwide using the infinite to do the so Internet e-mail telephone I don't have a physical product. There is physical product I just don't actually ever touch it so was really just distribution over the Internet but you're right a lot of people don't have the tools do that they don't know how to do that to get that extra step forward. If we can start bringing them together in the 24 towns and have business success stories which we already having in the 24 towns. Then we can have those people go out and start talking to people in the other towns.

Judy.: Because it would be very attractive for people who maybe want to get away from the rat race relocate to a rural area but you have to have the access to the Internet.

Joanna.: It's also encouraging for towns that really want to keep the young people. We hear this over and over again that our young people are leaving they do not have any opportunities so by learning how to use broadband resources and being able to build your own business in your town in your home which a small business development center is helping folks in these towns that we are working with do. That there are possibilities of opening up for younger people to one Tuesday. The Snelling center works with town gov't for this project and were helping towns develop what we're calling or what is called e gov't. That is an open gov't experience for the citizens in the town to be able to get access to information about regulations out to buy a dog license where to get a permit from. Being able to pay your taxes on time. All of those types of online transactions that we're helping towns to build through a template that we have developed and also access to other resources that would get them there.

Mark.: The goal is we believe we can make town gov't more affective more efficient more open more transparent and give people greater access. I would say the last thing we're going to do is get rid of town meeting but if we could have greater participation at town meeting and those people that show up at greater knowledge about the pieces to the puzzle the town history and ramifications then we're going to have a better democracy if we're able to do that. I think the way it gives us unbelievable opportunity to do that if people come to the conference and learn how to do it.

Judy.: Right and I think goes back to what you're saying about the town report. Rather than having a big town report you have to look through and look of whenever it is you're interested in if you're savvy an infinite you can click a few key words and have the information right there.

Mark.: There's an awful lot of people in our busy society that don't have time to go to select for meeting on Tuesday night. But if they can go online read the minutes to select or ANSI reactions to select or took then they can be in touch an onto the issue even if their time schedule doesn't exactly fit.

Joanna.: Also mark one of the courses were offering for the conference is about how you can build community online but not replace community not replace the face to face action so it's going to be a great opportunity for people to learn about online resources a lot for free that you can use to help organize meetings or do all kinds of gatherings and make announcements online but still be able to keep that community and actually bring community people get more people involved in community through online resources.
Judy.: Because there are neighborhoods that have that kind of connections and this proves very important to be able to know small things like have you seen my dog too big issues like we need to do something about whenever the issue might be.

Joanna.: Front porch forum is one of our partners and they have brought an incredibly easy to use resource to all the citizens in the town's we work with. It's an e-mail type of system but it's like open community. And senior in action in grand isle the towns in grand isle are one of the towns in our project and they're using it extensively to talk about what roads are flooding how can we get from one part of the island of Isle la Motte to the other so it's become an important resource in terms of communication.

Judy.: One more tool for people to use in the community. You mentioned Matt Dunn as the keynote speaker. What is he going to be talking about?

Joanna.: He's going to be talking about how Vermont is doing bringing online resources how we are bringing online resources to Vermont but how Vermont is a leader in terms of grassroots community organizing around broadband. Like mark just mentioned there is an extensive broadband infrastructure development going on right now and in concert with that the eVermont project is bringing resources knowledge information about how to use broadband so Vermont is a leader being able to make that access available to all the communities and outreach into rural communities specially.

Judy.: Before we go a final reminder about Saturday's conference the citizen leadership in a connected age conference is part of the E. Vermont partnership. The Vermont is bringing three 21st century tools to help Vermont Communities. For more information about the conference is it EVT conference.org or you can call 802922 7101. Thanks so much for joining us again. That's our program for today I'm Judy Simpson we will see you again next time on across the fence.

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