

U.S. Rep. Jim Ryun tours Chanute municipal communications facility

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U.S. Rep. Jim Ryun (R-KS) toured Chanute municipal communications facilities Thursday morning and discussed the city-wide communications network with city staff.

Ryun was greeted by members of the Integrated Community-Area Network partnership; the city, Neosho County Community College, USD 413, as well as Sega, Inc., Stilwell.

As city staff led Ryun on a tour of facilities that house the ICAN group's servers and available space to store private back up servers and equipment, they explained how the communications network came to existence.

"What's really brought this group together is a partnership," Randy Riggs, Chanute city manager, said. Riggs explained that the three entities of the ICAN group felt they could get more "bang for their buck" by sharing resources.

Mikel Kline, Planning & Economics Studies manager, Sega, Inc., explained that while the entities have been discussing plans for a comprehensive network for approximately nine years, it has only been the last two years that the city has started to extend fiber, and only the last five months that schools have been connected.

Currently, city departments, schools and community college are hooked up to the city-wide fiber optic and wireless network and are receiving Internet service. The ICAN group also purchased a new e-mail server and staff is in the process of transferring current e-mails to that server.

In addition, the city is moving forward with establishing a Technology and Innovation Center in Power Plant 1, east of the Memorial Building. The center will be an incubator program designed to accelerate the growth of entrepreneurial companies through shared business support resources and services, such as phone service, internet access and conference space.

In way of additional security, the city is working to establish a connection with the 911 Emergency Department in Erie to serve as a backup if for any reason that system should fail. Security cameras have also been installed at the Memorial Building to view the surrounding outside areas.

Kline told Ryun that there is stability in the city providing this network. "We've had Internet providers come and go," he said. Through this network, the city is increasing its Internet capabilities and looking to expand to other city facilities, such as the airport and the Public Library, and to businesses.

Ryun was impressed with the cooperation between city entities to establish the network. "It's wonderful to see how a community has chosen to pool their resources," he said. "It's needed in small communities as you look to the future for ways to keep younger generations."

Ryun added that this type of working together opens possibilities and he hopes to see this model attempted in other communities.

Riggs felt that the importance of inviting Ryun to view the communications facility was to give him a first hand experience of Chanute's progressive attitude.

Chanute city staff will be working with Ryun's staff to explore grant and funding options for future progress on the network.

In other business, Ryun announced that the Kansas Legislature passed a Transportation Bill that will allocate \$1.2 million to the Lincoln Avenue Overpass Project on Kansas Highway 39. The State of Kansas plans to install a new bridge over the railroad tracks from Ash to Walnut Streets. Construction is scheduled to begin in 2006 and is expected to take at least one year. The funding is split for the project; 80 percent paid by the Federal Government and 20 percent paid by the State Government. The city will pay for features not included in the project.

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