

Independent Telcos and FTTH

Our monthly summary of news of special interest to independent telephone companies

By Masha Zager ■ *Contributing Editor*

Bicoastal Communications

(www.bicoastalinc.com), which operates a CLEC in Grand Junction, Colorado, is in negotiations with FiberSphere Communications, a national fiber infrastructure developer, to begin testing approximately 800 fiber-connected homes for digital phone service deployment in Bicoastal's home market. With successful completion of these tests, the company expects to expand its deployment to include more than 25,000 residential homes in multiple communities.

Indiantown Telephone System, an ILEC based in Indiantown, Florida (772-597-2111; the website, www.itst-telecom.net, is under construction), is reportedly spending about \$4 million bringing fiber to the home to new housing developments in its service area.

Richland-Grant Telephone Cooperative (www.rgtelecom.com), a Blue River, Wisconsin-based ILEC, will deploy fiber to the home in five exchanges in Southwestern Wisconsin, using ADC OmniReach Multipoint Service Terminals and fiber drop cables. The company will use FTTH to deliver Internet access, wide-area paging, voice mail, IPTV, local-area and wide-area networks in rural areas. Adding triple-play high-speed Internet, video and voice services to its product line required Richland-Grant to update its network design. The company's engineers attempted to reuse existing copper cables to the fullest extent, but experienced bandwidth limitations. As an alternative, RGTC opted to use fiber. RGTC's telecommunications projects are approved and partially funded by the Rural Development Utilities Program (RDUP).

Nortel and Broadstream Offer IPTV Solution for Rural Telcos

TORONTO – Telecom vendor Nortel (www.nortel.com) and IPTV pro-

vider Broadstream Communications (www.broadstream.com) are teaming up to provide an end-to-end IPTV solution for rural telcos that includes both video infrastructure and television programming.

Nortel's IPTV solution enables service providers to deliver video services over an IP infrastructure, including on-screen instant messaging, mobile-to-TV picture sharing, and on-screen caller ID. Its partnership with Broadstream adds more than 200 channels of IPTV-ready video content that can be transmitted directly to any service-provider location in the United States.

The turnkey solution proposed by the two companies is intended to enable telcos to introduce new revenue-generating services more rapidly and cost-effectively, by greatly reducing the complexity of acquiring content and by providing significant cost savings to telco providers.

Broadstream provides TV channels that are prepackaged in an IPTV-ready format by pre-encoding them into high quality MPEG-4 format and delivering them via a single satellite to the telco video headend – eliminating telcos' need for encoders and satellite receivers. Nor-

tel then interconnects the content into its IPTV solution to create a complete IPTV service.

AT&T Combining Broadband, Dish TV

NEW YORK – Taking a cue from the many independent telcos that use satellite TV as part of their triple-play offerings, AT&T launched Homezone, a service that combines its broadband Internet connections with EchoStar's Dish Network. Homezone is now available in San Antonio and Ohio and will be available elsewhere in AT&T's service area by the end of 2006. DirecTV is offering similar services through local broadband providers, but AT&T hopes to outpoint DirecTV on features.

AT&T has invested \$500 million in Dish Network satellite TV and has been a Dish reseller since 2002. The new set-top box used with Homezone will allow users to download movies, music files and photos. Homezone will be pushed especially hard in areas where AT&T's FTTN/VDSL U-verse is not available. U-verse will reach about half of AT&T's service area by late 2008. Homezone costs \$9.99 a month on top of customers' Dish and DSL subscriptions.

Vendor Spotlight

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| 2Wire | www.2wire.com |
| ADC | www.adc.com |
| Alcatel | www.alcatel.com |
| AT&T | www.att.com |
| EchoStar Dish Network | www.dishnetwork.com |
| FiberSphere Communications | www.fibersphere.com |
| Nortel | www.nortel.com |
| Broadstream Communications | www.broadstream.com |