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More than 120 guests from leading organizations in Monroe County rallied together for affordable Gigabit internet technology. The Broadband Rally was hosted by the Monroe 2030 Action Team, Pocono Mountains Economic Development Corporation, and East Stroudsburg University. Industry speakers included Dellicker Strategies, Business Information Group, York Exponential and Lewis Strategic.

A state-of-the-art incubator and company-accelerator located on Interstate 80, the East Stroudsburg University Innovation and Entrepreneurship Center, is located 500 yards from Interstate 80. The Broadband Rally launched actions to push Monroe County to Gigabit City status. Gigabit City status enables buyers to purchase one Gigabit internet connections for \$1,000 or less, annually.

Already, 120 U.S. cities have achieved Gigabit City status and Monroe County hopes to be among the first regions in the New York/New Jersey/Pennsylvania tri-state area to deliver \$1,000 Gigabit. Monroe County is strategically located at the intersections of Interstate 80, routes 33, 611, 209 and the

Northeast Extension of the Pennsylvania Turnpike, connecting Philadelphia, New York, New Jersey, the Lehigh Valley, central Pennsylvania and Wilkes-Barre/Scranton.

“Seventy years ago, Monroe County business and government leaders worked together to get interstate highway 80 to run through Monroe,” added Kelly Lewis, of Lewis Strategic. “Now a new generation must do everything possible to get the Gigabit information highway here, as fast as possible, at the most affordable prices in the United States. “Young people and companies are moving to Gigabit cities like Chattanooga and St. Louis because of ultra-affordable Gigabit broadband. To compete, the Monroe \$1,000 Gigabit project will require engagement by business and government leaders, at least 23 participating buyers and authorization by the county commissioners to go forward to launch the project on Jan. 13 and finish it by May 12.”

The Broadband Rally at East Stroudsburg University featured broadband and innovation industry leaders who offered immediate solutions and strategies to maximize job growth in Monroe County. “We are very pleased to facilitate the Monroe County Broadband Rally,” said Marcia G. Welsh, Ph. D., president of East Stroudsburg University. “This Rally was designed as a serious wake-

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up call for leaders in government, business and healthcare to see why \$1,000 Gigabit broadband is essential for companies and citizens, and what immediate steps need to be taken to position Monroe County to create jobs in the new economy.”

Monroe Broadband Rally speakers included:

- John McElligott, president, The Fortress Initiative and CEO, The Fortress Academy and York Exponential.
- “Embracing Disruption,” Kevin Dellicker, Dellicker Strategies, LLC. Its work last year helped 50-plus schools improve academic achievement by 20 percent.
- “Why \$1,000 Gigabit Matters,” Kelly Lewis, Lewis Strategic (recently led Pennsylvania Gigabit Revolution with 265 participating organizations, and Philadelphia Acceleration Summit).
- The Monroe County \$1,000 Gigabit Acceleration Project.

Monroe Broadband Rally greetings and introductions were provided by:

- Marcia G. Welsh, Ph.D., president, East Stroudsburg University.
- State Sen. Mario Scavello, 40th Senatorial District.
- Chuck Leonard, executive director, Pocono Mountains Economic Development Corp.

Organizations interested in \$1,000 Gigabit are being asked to complete a brief survey by visiting [goo.gl/forms/4LQakQXtOnvrU2yz1](http://goo.gl/forms/4LQakQXtOnvrU2yz1) in order to become a participant. Future Monroe County \$1,000 Gigabit meetings will be held as follows: Feb. 13, March 13, April 13 and May 12. – **Hazleton Standard-Speaker**

More than 50 journalists, lawyers, media rights advocates, and First Amendment stakeholders came together in Washington last week with a common interest in protecting freedom of the press and securing rights granted by the First Amendment. In discussing top priorities as the Trump administration takes shape, the group agreed that countering legal threats to reporters – such as leaks investigations, libel suits, and a disregard for the Freedom of Information Act – and promoting a public policy in support of the public’s right to know are crucial areas that require a unified response.

“We met at an unprecedented time in the history of the American press,” said Mike Cavender, RTDNA Executive Director. “As we move forward, it is imperative that we, as journalists, clearly explain to Americans that our interests lay in protecting their right to understand what their government is doing.”

“This past election year has left the press’ standing with the American public at its lowest point, caused many of us to question ourselves and each other over mission and methods, and now finds us facing a new president who expresses not only disregard but disdain for many of the rights and freedoms journalists have long taken for granted,” said David Boardman, chairman of the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press (RCFP) which, along with the American Society of News Editors, organized the event. “But I hasten to remind you all that this is not a partisan struggle. The president who leaves office next week, while far less strident in his comments about the press, was no champion for our rights.”

In addition to prioritizing protections for reporters from government interference in newsgathering, the group considered how best to strengthen the press’ public image and discussed forming a coalition to document intimidation of the press. It also agreed on the importance of leading a coordinated response to these challenges while rallying the public in support of the First Amendment.

“It is critical that we work together and do all we can to leverage our combined power to safeguard freedom of the press and protect reporters’ rights,” said RCFP Executive Director Bruce Brown. “This includes promoting the significance of the First Amendment and the media’s essential role in a functioning democracy.” – **Radio Television Digital News Association**



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