

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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UniTel Receives National Broadband Award

UniTel one of 12 companies nationally to receive Smart Rural Community designation

UNITY, MAINE – Shirley Bloomfield, CEO of NTCA – The Rural Broadband Association, visited UniTel this month to formally present the Unity-based telecommunications company with its Smart Rural Community award. Bloomfield, joined by Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Commissioner Jessica Rosenworcel and U.S. Senator Angus King, presented the award in front of an audience at the Unity College Center for the Performing Arts, before a listening session on improving broadband infrastructure.

“Historically enjoying Maine’s quality of life has come at a price,” said Laurie Osgood, CEO of UniTel. “Now technology has changed so much that it is possible to do the work traditionally performed in the big city from the most rural parts of Maine. Our role is to make sure that our infrastructure can support anyone who wants to live and work here. The leadership of Senator King and FCC Commissioner Rosenworcel has been vital in realizing the goals of closing the digital divide. The Smart Rural Community designation is a direct reflection of our team’s hard work. We live and work in these rural communities, so this award means a lot to us.”

UniTel received word nearly a year ago that it had earned the designation as a Smart Rural Community. Such a designation put the Maine-based company in an elite class with other broadband providers in rural areas. The Smart Rural Community designation was only awarded to eleven other companies nationally, and UniTel is the first Maine-based company to receive the award.

“Rural broadband powers innovation and keeps our rural communities globally connected,” said Bloomfield. “It’s an honor to spend this time with Senator King and Commissioner Rosenworcel in Maine as we shine a light on the collaborative efforts of UniTel to bring high-speed broadband to the communities it serves and recognize its national achievement as a Smart Rural Community Showcase Awardee.”

The 2016 Smart Rural Community award follows UniTel’s construction of nearly 100 miles of its Bluestreak fiber to the home (FTTH) network in its service area

and beginning late last year in downtown Belfast. Other selection criteria of note included UniTel's lead role in promoting and sponsoring free digital literacy training in the areas it serves. This is the second national award received by UniTel in as many years for its efforts to expand access to broadband in rural Maine.

"A broadband connection is more than a technology – it's a platform for opportunity," said Commissioner Rosenworcel. "No matter who you are or where you live, you need access to modern communications to have a fair shot at 21st century success."

"Reliable rural broadband access is essential to strengthen and diversify Maine's economy," said Senator King. "Rural broadband can help entrepreneurs grow their business, enable farmers to practice precision agriculture and access new markets, and help students learn in an expanding digital world. By building these bridges between Maine's rural communities and a 21st century economy, we can help Maine business and people grow and thrive."

In addition to the award presentation and listening session, the delegation also sat in on a digital literacy class, which are regularly offered free-of-charge through UniTel and the Unity Foundation.

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About UniTel: UniTel, locally owned and managed, was established in 1902; and since then, has been providing unparalleled customer service and technology to Albion, Dixmont, Knox, Newburgh, Thorndike, Troy, Unity and surrounding areas including downtown Belfast.. In addition to their dedication to customer service, UniTel is committed to maintaining and expanding its BlueStreak high speed broadband technologies. UniTel has invested over \$10 million in the past 10 years to expand its digital fiber network. UniTel is also a devoted community advocate supporting a host of local charities and organizations. For more information, please visit www.unitelme.com.

NTCA–The Rural Broadband Association is the premier association representing more than 800 independent, community-based telecommunications companies that are leading innovation in rural and small-town America. NTCA advocates on behalf of its members in the legislative and regulatory arenas, and it provides training and development; publications and industry events; and an array of employee benefit programs. In an era of exploding technology, deregulation and marketplace competition, NTCA's members are

leading the IP evolution for rural consumers, delivering technologies that make rural communities vibrant places in which to live and do business. Because of their efforts, rural America is fertile ground for innovation in economic development and commerce, education, health care, government services, security and smart energy use. Visit us at www.ntca.org.