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TELECOM COLLABORATION SAVES SCHOOL CONNECTIONS

ICN and Ameritech Team Up to Keep The Lamp of Learning Burning

Springfield, Ill. (May 29, 2001) – Students in nearly 340 K-12 schools in northeastern Illinois are still enjoying the benefits of Internet access thanks to the remarkable teamwork and collaboration between the Illinois Century Network (ICN) and Ameritech. Governor George H. Ryan signed the Illinois Century Network Act in June 1999 and the network has since grown to connect almost 5,000 schools, colleges, universities, libraries, museums, state agencies, municipalities, and other constituents.

Last week, 339 schools were scheduled to lose their Internet service. So, ICN partnered with Ameritech to come to the rescue. The K-12 schools were at risk of losing service because the Internet service provider that provided connections to the Internet for the previous five years announced a change in its business plan that resulted in a May 20 end of service date. Through the combined efforts of ICN and Ameritech, all schools were cut over and service continued before that deadline. In addition, ICN also cut over three libraries, 12 municipalities and one university.

"Education is, and has always been our first priority," said Neil Matkin, Director of the Illinois Century Network. "As soon as we learned of this situation we knew we had to mobilize our resources to ensure that the schools would experience the least possible disruption to their

service in the last two or three weeks of the school year." According to Matkin, ICN partnered with Ameritech to complete an extraordinary number of installations in a time period of less than two weeks.

"To complete a project of this magnitude in such a short period of time is a real testament to our employees, and it underscores just how important our customers are to us," said Carrie Hightman, president of Ameritech Illinois. "We dedicated more than 100 employees to this project to ensure success."

Four ICN Regional Technology Centers that serve the affected areas also worked around the clock during the last two weeks to ensure that the equipment and lines necessary were in place and ready for the connection to the Illinois Century Network.

The ICN network operations center in Springfield was also involved in the implementation of this transition plan.

According to Matkin, the ICN has an "excellent staff that is 100 percent dedicated to keeping the ICN a world-class network offering world-class service befitting of Illinois education and other partners." He cited the leadership of Robin Woodsome, Chicago Regional Coordinator, and Doug Jurewicz, Senior Telecommunications Analyst, as being key parts of the successful transition to the ICN. "The staff response to this recent crisis is testimony to their commitment and a tribute to Governor Ryan's vision for the ICN," Matkin said.

Illinois Century Network (www.illinois.net) is an initiative of Governor George Ryan and partnership between the Illinois State Board of Education, the Illinois Board of Higher Education, and the Illinois Community College Board. The Network is a high-speed telecommunications network providing reliable communication links to and among Illinois schools, institutions of higher education, libraries, museums, research institutions, State agencies, units of local government, and other local entities that provide services to Illinois citizens. The Network is a teaching network, allowing colleges and universities to share the expertise of their faculty with students, businesses, farmers, health professionals, and others in an efficient, timely, and cost-effective way; a knowledge network, opening up to students vast reservoirs of knowledge at libraries, museums, art galleries, research centers, and governmental agencies; and a training network, helping workers to upgrade their skills, assisting industry in targeting education to particular needs, and sharing the most up-to-date information, techniques, and technology. To date the ICN is providing services to more than 4,980 constituents statewide.

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