

Fiber optics link Steuben to future

By Jennifer Decker jdecker@kpcnews.net | Posted: Thursday, March 31, 2011 12:00 am

ANGOLA — Sharon Stroh called fiber optics the greatest and most innovative invention since electricity.

Stroh, a spokesperson for the Indiana Metropolitan Area Network, said once fiber optics stretch further across Steuben County communities, there will be more than 75 miles of the technology that's a way of the future.

iMAN is community-owned and a non-profit arm of the Steuben County Community Foundation. Fees paid for accessing the fiber optic system are returned to the foundation.

Fiber optics “provide speed and security. It's cheaper than a T-1 line,” Stroh said and added it's a quicker and cheaper form of technology. “Fiber is secure. It's a kind of infrastructure we haven't seen since electricity in the 1800s.”

Recently, iMAN connected Fremont Community Schools, Fremont Public Library, the Carnegie Public Library of Steuben County and the Metropolitan School District of Steuben County to the fiber optics system. The connection stretching to Fremont was funded by a \$200,000 grant from the Steuben County Community Foundation.

In the future, new connections for iMAN are expected to happen in Ashley, Hudson, Orland and Hamilton. Those connections are expected to be financed in part by the Steuben County Commissioners approving \$2 million in Major Moves Transportation funding last fall.

“We will probably go to Ashley because of construction (of a distribution center),” she said.

Cameron Memorial Community Hospital, along with its doctors' building and Urgent Care center have fiber optic connections, with



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What are fiber optics? Fiber conveys information in the form of light pulses through a hair-like strand of extruded glass; only the transmission equipment limits it from moving at faster than the speed of light. Fiber touches all industries and effects business and personal communication. Photo contributed

speedy transmission of data that could potentially save lives.

“The first day of connection, an MRI transmitted to Cameron took 17 seconds to arrive,” Stroh said.

The city of Angola was iMAN’s first customer in Steuben County.

Fiber optics are not yet available to home subscribers.

It costs \$45,000 a mile to install fiber optics.

“Those who have fiber (optics) will be more competitive. We know there’s places that could use fiber for public safety in Metz and there’s a communication link in Flint,” Stroh said.

Stroh expected iMAN to have a website in the next few months.

On May 20, Stroh said there will be a meeting for technology professionals in Steuben County to explain options. The time and location will be announced once confirmed.

In 2009, Congress directed the Federal Communications Commission to develop a National Broadband Plan ensuring every American has access to affordable broadband capability.