

iMAN poised to grow

By Mike Marturello

mmarturello@kpcmedia.com | Posted: Friday, July 18, 2014 11:00 pm

ANGOLA — The Indiana Metropolitan Area Network fiber optics system keeps growing.

And it is about to complete a journey west into LaGrange County so it can reach to a hub that will connect it to the Global Access Point in South Bend and therefore making an important connection that's been 10 years in the making. The connection will be complete next month.

“We're now part of the rest of the country. We're no longer an island,” said Jennifer Danic, president and CEO of the Steuben County Community Foundation. iMAN is a subsidiary organization of the Community Foundation.

The iMAN system is a nonprofit organization that was formed by the Community Foundation some 10 years ago. The goal was to provide high-speed broadband service to the community because such an investment would not be feasible by private business.

“We're very confident that things are where they need to be and are prepared for growth of the system,” Danic said.

The iMAN system has grown to the point that its assets, at \$2.7 million, now represent just more than 10 percent of the Foundation's total assets of \$24.2 million.

To better accommodate the needs of the iMAN system, its board has been expanded to eight people. Chairman of the board is local attorney James Burns.

“Short-term, the board of directors and I are looking forward to the completion of the current building phase to see iMAN realize its full potential. Long-term we think iMAN is an important project to help with economic development in Steuben County. We appreciate all the local government support, especially the Steuben County Government who saw the value of iMAN years ago with a \$2 million dollar investment. I am excited about the prospects for the iMAN fiber network for Steuben County and its residents,” Burns said in a statement emailed to The Herald Republican.

iMAN has grown to 85 miles of fiber installed throughout Steuben County. Danic said it is important to point out that iMAN operates

only for the benefit of Steuben County residents.

“By design, iMAN can only be for the benefit of Steuben County,” Danic said. If connection fees are generated from entities outside of Steuben County, Danic said, that money would benefit the community through reinvestment in the Foundation.

This past fiscal year, which ended June 30, iMAN generated \$167,225 in revenue. That money was reinvested in the system. iMAN received an investment of \$410,000 from the Foundation to do the build to connect with the Global Access Point.

Also, in partnership with a service provider, iMAN is going to do build outs to 11 cell towers that will enable the cell carriers to provide 5G service. This would only be possible with fiber connections. This will generate revenue for iMAN.

The iMAN system now serves 41 government and business customers constituting 70 total connections to the network.

The total investment in the system has been about \$3.16 million.