

iMAN offering loans to connect to fiber

By Mike Marturello

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ANGOLA — The Indiana Metropolitan Area Network fiber optics system that's part of the Steuben County Community Foundation is working toward adding more commercial customers in the next fiscal year, said a report presented to Steuben County Commissioners.

One of the ways toward reaching this end is a no-interest loan program that is funded through Steuben County economic development funds.

“Thanks to funding approved by the Steuben County Commissioners to the Steuben County Economic Development Corporation, iMAN is now able to offer customers an interest free loan to make the connection to the network.

The goal is to connect at least 14 businesses as new customers to the system, which provides high-speed connectivity to a variety of users in Steuben County.

New customers to iMAN must be located in Steuben County. The company has to provide \$500 up front and may receive loans of up to \$2,500. The customer must sign a three-year contract with iMAN.

As of June 30, iMAN had 100 connections in the community. The goal of the program is to turn a profit that can be turned back to the community in the form of grants through the Community Foundation.

“We believe with 180 connections iMAN will be able to grant back to the community,” said Jennifer Danic, president and CEO of the Community Foundation.

The iMAN network currently serves every public and government entity located within Steuben County.

“We can confidently say iMAN impacts every single resident of Steuben County — through the public schools, libraries, the hospital, public communications (911), city and town halls and many commercial businesses,” Danic said.

The iMAN system was started some 15 years ago by the Foundation because it was believed that commercial communications providers would not invest in a fiber optics system in a rural community such as Steuben County.

Since its inception, iMAN is now connected to the Global Access Point in South Bend so world wide communications can take place.