



H-W Photo/Jennifer Coombes
Adams County Director of the University of Illinois Extension Carrie Edgar, right, and Tim Gobble of the Lee County (Iowa) Economic Development Group, left, watched and gathered information packets today for those who were arriving to attend the Tri-State Development Summit at Culver-Stockton College in Canton, Mo. Edgar and Gobble worked as hosts at the registration table handing out name tags and packets of information about the summit.

Transportation task force report touts road progress

By Doug Wilson
Herald-Whig Senior Writer

CANTON, Mo. — Much has changed since October 1996 when the Tri-State Development Summit held its first gathering in Canton.

Dan Wiedemeier of Burlington, Iowa, said 1,149 miles of highway projects that were listed as priorities in 1996 have been completed, are under construction or are scheduled for construction in the summit region. Only 370 miles remain to be addressed from the summit group's original priority list.

"We have completed 75 percent of our target miles," Wiedemeier said.

More than 400 people attending the summit traveled along U.S. 61, which is still being upgraded to four-lanes as the Avenue of the Saints project. Wiedemeier said a four-lane U.S. 61 bypass near Hannibal is the only section of the 410-mile Avenue of the Saints that is not on a construction schedule.

During his transportation task force report, Wiedemeier also noted that Illinois, Missouri and Iowa all lack the funds to adequately complete several highway projects.

"We are committed to do whatever is necessary to assist in getting badly needed funding for

our departments," Wiedemeier said. "The status quo will never ever bring progress to our region."

Paul Rohde, vice president of Midwest Area Waterways Council Inc., hopes the same kind of progress that has marked highway construction will be felt along area waterways.

Rohde believes the Water Resources Development Act has a good chance of approval in Congress this spring. The legislation would provide about \$1.9 billion for construction of 1,200-foot lock chambers at five sites on the Mississippi River and two on the Illinois River.

"It's been a long time coming," Rohde said.

Douglas Dougherty, president Illinois Telecommunications Association, have the connectivity task force report with something else that has changed greatly.

"We're looking at something called Connected Nation ... and closing the digital divide and making broadband Internet available to everyone," Dougherty said.

Congress and the Illinois Legislature are both working on broadband access legislation, Dougherty said.

In addition, the connectivity task force is working on getting telephone companies in the three

states to prepare for emergencies and phone outages by working together. Dougherty said phone companies and Internet operations also have been working more closely with federal officials who may investigate Internet traffic.

Earl Bricker, a community economic development educator with the University of Illinois Extension Service, was excited to see that a task force on entrepreneurship would be unveiled at the summit meeting. He's part of the core group that's guiding the task force.

"We're looking for communities and the region to have the mentality to grow your own businesses," Bricker said.

Entrepreneurs often become big success stories for communities that focus on helping business startups as much as helping large, outside firms to locate. Bricker said Jim Mentesti and the Great River Economic Development Foundation are already ahead of the curve and Fairfield, Iowa, is "a hotbed" of entrepreneurship. Bricker hopes there are many more success stories for his task force to share in coming years.

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Obama pulls in \$25 million, rivals Clinton in fundraising

By The Associated Press

DAVENPORT, Iowa — Democrat Barack Obama raked in \$25 million for his presidential bid in the first three months of 2007, placing him on a par with front-runner Hillary Rodham Clinton and dashing her image as the party's inevitable nominee.

The donations came from an eye-popping 100,000 donors, the campaign said in a statement.

The figure was the latest evidence that Obama, a political newcomer who has served just two years in the Senate, has emerged as the most powerful new force in presidential politics this year. It also reinforced his

status as a significant threat to Clinton, who'd hoped her own \$26 million first quarter fundraising total would begin to squeeze her rivals out of contention.

The campaign reported that the figure included at least \$23.5 million that he can spend on the highly competitive primary race. The Clinton campaign has yet to disclose how much they can use for the primary versus money that is designated for the general election.

While Clinton has honed a vast national fundraising network through two Senate campaigns and her husband's eight years as president, Obama launched his bid for the White House with a relatively small

donor base concentrated largely in Illinois, his home state. But his early opposition to the Iraq war and voter excitement over his quest to be the first black president quickly fueled a powerful fundraising machine.

More than half the donors contributed via the Internet a total of \$6.9 million, the campaign said.

"This overwhelming response, in only a few short weeks, shows the hunger for a different kind of politics in this country and a belief at the grassroots level that Barack Obama can bring out the best in America to solve our problems," said Obama finance chairwoman Penny Pritzker.

Cable

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that about 63 percent of Quincy area households are connected to cable.

"We have a great track record when it comes to integrating cable systems we have acquired," Ruggiero said.

Ruggiero said Comcast has normally added to existing entities by offering more on-demand services, including high-definition programming.

The deal between the cable operators gives Comcast control of 684,000 cable subscribers and 300,000 high-speed Internet customers in parts of Illinois and Indiana. In turn, Insight takes over 639,000 cable customers and 308,000 Internet subscribers in parts of Kentucky, Indiana and Ohio.

Arguably the biggest change connected with the transaction related to Internet subscribers will be the inevitable change of e-mail address. Those "insightbb.com" addresses will change to reflect Comcast ownership.

"This is a logistical split for both companies," said Michael Willner, Insight's chief executive officer, in a news release. "Comcast already has significant properties in Indiana and Illinois, so it makes sense for them to assume control over the systems in these states."

Before this agreement, Insight and Comcast shared those customers through the Insight Midwest partnership that was a result of Comcast acquiring AT&T Broadband in 2002.

In terms of customers, Comcast is the nation's largest cable provider with a combined 24.2 million customers. Insight is No. 9 with a 1.4 million customers.

In addition to Quincy, Comcast now owns the markets serving Bloomington-Normal, Peoria, Springfield, Champaign-Urbana and Rockford.

Summit

(Continued from Page 1A)

"He's got an energized and upbeat message about what other communities have done and done well," Mentesti said.

Mentesti, who has helped oversee the summit since its inception, believes the Tri-State region is doing well.

"We've still got people who call and ask about the summit and its history because they want to take it back home and talk about regionalism and coordination and collaboration," Mentesti said.



H-W Photo/Steve Bohnstedt
Insight Communications representative Arduth Sapp helps a customer at the Quincy office Tuesday. Comcast and Insight Communications agreed to a deal Monday to split their Midwest partnership, effectively giving Comcast control of cable and high-speed Internet customers in parts of Illinois and Indiana.

Insight has a service agreement with the city that runs through 2027. While the contract is not exclusive, Quincy Mayor John Spring said no other company has expressed interest in providing cable television service.

Spring said he is anxious to talk with Comcast representatives about cable programming available in Quincy, feeling the city has not received an adequate lineup compared to nearby towns such as Macomb and Springfield.

"This is meant as no disrespect toward Insight, but we just haven't had the programming available to us other areas have," Spring said. "I was always told, 'We're working on it,' and that's just not a satisfactory answer."

Spring said he also disagreed with some of Insight's choices for the channels/networks included on its basic package, feeling certain public-service stations/networks such as CNN should be on the lineup.

Spring also found himself in

the middle of a 2006 battle with Insight when the company said it would be pulling a St. Louis channel that carried a portion of Cardinals baseball games off its lineup. Ascone said all Cardinals games are available this year through Insight channels.

"I'm also disappointed with Insight in that we were not contacted about this," Spring said. "We're a franchise city. This just goes hand-in-hand with how we have been treated."

"The biggest thing (with Comcast), though, will be the channel lineup — and will it change?"

Reuters news service has reported that Craig Moffett, an analyst at Sanford Bernstein, is reporting there is the possibility that Time Warner Cable might be interested in acquiring the remainder of Insight's subscribers.

Time Warner is the No. 2 U.S. cable operator with 13.4 million subscribers.

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News in Brief

Iranian president says captive British sailors, marines to be freed

TEHRAN, Iran — President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said Iran would free the 15 detained British sailors and marines Wednesday as an Easter holiday "gift" to the British people.

He said the captives, who were seized while on patrol in the northern Persian Gulf on March 23, would be taken to the airport following his news conference, but Iranian state television reported they would leave Iran on Thursday. An Iranian official in London said they would be handed over to British diplomats in Tehran.

After the news conference, state television showed Ahmadinejad meeting with the British crew, dressed in business suits, at the presidential palace. He shook hands and chatted with them through a translator, and a caption to the video said the meeting was taking place as part of the "process of release."

"We appreciate it. Your people have been really kind to us, and we appreciate it very much," one of the crew could be heard telling Ahmadinejad in English.

Another said: "We are grateful for your forgiveness."

Ahmadinejad responded in Farsi, "You are welcome."

In London, the office of Prime Minister Tony Blair said it welcomed the news.

Iranian state media says envoy will meet 5 Iranians detained in Iraq since January

TEHRAN, Iran — Iranian state media reported Wednesday that an Iranian envoy will be allowed to meet the five Iranians detained in January by U.S. forces in the northern Iraqi town of Irbil.

There was no immediate confirmation of the report in Baghdad, where neither Iraqi government nor a U.S. military spokesman said they knew that permission had been granted for such a meeting.

"A representative from the Iranian Embassy in Baghdad will meet" the detained Iranians, the official Islamic Republic News Agency said.

U.S. troops detained the five Iranians when they raided their office in Irbil, the capital of the Kurdish autonomous zone, on Jan. 11. The troops also confiscated computers and documents.

The United States accused the Iranians of having links to an Iranian Revolutionary Guard network that was supplying funds and weapons to insurgents in Iraq. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said President Bush had approved the strategy of raiding Iranian targets in Iraq as part of efforts to confront the government in Tehran.

Aid comes slowly to tsunami survivors in the Solomon Islands

MUNDA, Solomon Islands — Men perched on rocks peered out to sea through binoculars at a camp near the Solomon Islands town of Munda on Wednesday, watching for another deadly wave.

The camp is one of many that have sprung up in hills behind towns hit by Monday's tsunami and earthquake. With strong aftershocks still jolting the region, the 40 families huddled there were afraid to come down, though some had run out of water.

"There's no water to wash, no water to drink," said Esther Zekele, who fled with her husband and five children to the camp on Monday as the sea surged into Munda, on the western island of Gizo.

On Wednesday, they ventured back for a sack of rice to replace the one they brought with them, now half gone. But when they heard a rumor that another wave was coming, they took to the hills again.

The fears of another tsunami have made it difficult for officials to determine the number of victims and get aid to the homeless. And aftershocks were pushing some survivors even deeper into the hills.

— The Associated Press

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