

# Connected

MARCH/APRIL 2015

Published for  
customers of



## LAUNCHING THE GIG

FTC's communities  
now have access to  
Alabama's fastest  
Internet service

## FYFFE WINS STATE TITLE

Coach Paul Benefield's  
long-sought championship

## REBEL ROAD TRIP

A Civil War journey  
down U.S. 41





# FTC becomes state's first provider to launch gigabit Internet service

BY STEPHEN V. SMITH, EDITOR

## What is a gig?

The rate at which information (photos, movies, music) flows from its source to your device (computer, tablet, gaming console) is measured in bits per second.

- One megabit, or Mb, is 1,000 bits.
- One gigabit, or Gb, is 1,000 megabits.

Internet speeds of 10 megabits per second (or Mbps) are commonly available throughout the U.S.



**1 Gbps is 100 times faster than 10 Mbps!**

## That's fast!

Downloading a typical HD movie:



- 10 Mbps connection = 3 hours, 30 minutes
- 1 Gbps connection = 2 minutes

## Economic Impact



A study released by the Fiber to the Home Council found that communities with

widely available access to gigabit Internet service have a per capita GDP (gross domestic product) that is 1.1 percent higher than communities with little to no gigabit service. In the 14 gigabit communities studied, this meant a difference of approximately \$1.4 billion in additional GDP!

When the President of the United States spoke recently about the need for greater broadband speeds in our country, he showed a chart listing cities where gigabit Internet access is available: Hong Kong, Paris, Chattanooga and Kansas City were among them.

Now you can add Geraldine to that list.

In fact, thanks to the fiber network FTC is building in DeKalb and Jackson counties, most of the cities and towns in the area can list gigabit Internet access among the benefits they can offer prospective businesses and families looking to relocate.

With its launch of gigabit Internet service in February (see story next page), FTC put northeast Alabama on the map as one of the areas with the most advanced broadband networks available. Those connected to FTC's fiber system can enjoy speeds up to 100 times faster than the 10 megabits per second (Mbps) once considered typical, and 40 times faster than the new definition of broadband — 25 Mbps — adopted by the Federal Communications Commission in January.

## THE GIG: HOW?

In order to join the short list of U.S. providers offering gigabit speeds, FTC first had to build "a world-class fiber network," says Fred Johnson, executive vice president and general manager of FTC. "This network is the backbone for a new era of economic infrastructure in our entire service area, including those commercial areas such as Fort Payne that are essential to the overall economic well-being of the region."

With the construction of its fiber network essentially complete, FTC decided last year to begin the work of making gigabit speeds available. "As electronics and customer demand evolved, we had confidence

in the integrity of our network and the electronic technology that supports it to handle the demands of gigabit service," says Johnson.

## THE GIG: WHY?

Only a small percentage of consumers today actually need the capacity of a gigabit connection. But as with any type of critical infrastructure, FTC's network has been built with the future in mind.

"People continue to find new ways to use their broadband connection, and they are demanding more and more bandwidth," says Brandi Lyles, FTC's manager of marketing and public relations. "We have customers connecting computers, TVs, video-streaming devices, smartphones, tablets, gaming systems, security systems and more." That trend, she says, is expected to continue at an accelerated rate.

## THE GIG: WHEN?

With FTC's announcement came the good news that gigabit Internet speeds are available immediately throughout the entire area served by the cooperative's fiber network.

For the foreseeable future, Johnson has certain expectations. The presence of the gig, he says, will mean students will access advanced learning tools, families will take advantage of new entertainment options and home automation technology, and businesses will use the ultra-high connection to compete and grow.

Beyond that lies a future that cannot be foretold. "Gigabit Internet access will undoubtedly inspire great innovation," Johnson says, "as people create new ways to harness the power of such incredible bandwidth and put it to work — to improve our communities and our overall quality of life."

# First area family with telephone is now the first in Alabama with gigabit Internet

BY MATT LEDGER

**G**eraldine Mayor Chuck Ables was a boy when his parents became the first members of Farmers Telephone Cooperative on February 20, 1955. R.E. Ables, the mayor's father, was the first to receive a telephone line — party line number 9-5722 — in his home across the road from Geraldine School.

Sixty years later, the Ables' home was once again the first in town to get a new form of telecommunications service.

FTC officially launched the gig Internet services on Feb. 6 — once again at the Ables' home. "The symbolic nature of us being back here to celebrate this milestone for customer No. 1, means that we have remained committed to our mission," said Fred Johnson, general manager of FTC.

Ables, 64, spoke emotionally about his late father's own communication interest as a HAM radio operator. R.E. Ables was instrumental in improving the Sand Mountain region and bringing Northeast Alabama Community College to the area. That campus, along with all DeKalb and Jackson county schools served by FTC, will benefit from FTC's new Internet capabilities.

In 2007, FTC board members committed to building a world-class fiber optic network, which is nearly complete. When all phases are finished in June, approximately 84 percent of all residences in the FTC coverage area will have access to the highest Internet speeds in Alabama. All municipality and industrial parks in DeKalb County, and those east of the Tennessee River in Jackson County are served by the FTC optical fiber network, except Mentone. "(Mentone) is my hometown, and we'll get there sooner or later," Johnson said, joking.

Keith Adams, assistant administrator for telecommunications of USDA Rural Utilities Service, spoke about the ways that enhanced broadband capacity enables opportunities like telemedicine and distance



**TOP:** Geraldine Mayor Chuck Ables along with his sisters (from left) Katherine Brewer, Janie House and Ann Sisco during the FTC Gig Internet launch event.

**BOTTOM LEFT:** FTC's Executive Vice President and General Manager Fred Johnson spoke about the economic development potential that having Gig Internet service provides.

**BOTTOM RIGHT:** More than 50 people were present on Feb. 6 during the FTC Gig Internet Services launch at the Ables' home.

learning programs. "It means economic development, educational opportunities and access to the world," Adams said. "When we fund projects in rural America, it makes the world much smaller to people who don't have the same opportunities, in most cases."

This major milestone for FTC puts the co-op in an exclusive club of telecom pro-

viders offering gigabit Internet service.

"It was accomplished by the members of the Farmers Telecommunications Cooperative, which are those men and women who have lived, worked and raised their families on this mountain," Johnson said, proudly. "Those communities that have this kind of communications infrastructure will thrive in years to come." 📺



P.O. Box 217 • 144 McCurdy Ave. N.  
Rainsville, AL 35986

Presort STD  
US Postage PAID  
Permit #21  
Freeport OH

YOU'RE IN



## Home of Alabama's Fastest Internet

This nation was built on the power of connection. From railroads and riverboats to telegraphs and highways, we have a tradition of developing new ways to connect in order to expand our horizons and build a better life for our families and communities.

Today, Internet connectivity is the infrastructure that is shaping our society, defining this new century. When the people of our region formed Farmers

Telecommunications Cooperative more than six decades ago, they brought to their communities a reliable telephone connection. This was important and necessary technology for that time. **Today, we are proudly building on that heritage by introducing the fastest, most advanced Internet connection in the entire state of Alabama — true gigabit access.**



Connecting Northeast Alabama with advanced telecommunications technology since 1954



256-638-2144



[farmerstel.com](http://farmerstel.com)



[facebook.com/farmerstel](https://facebook.com/farmerstel)



[twitter.com/ftctv](https://twitter.com/ftctv)