

Access Humboldt

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Access Humboldt Libraries to Participate in Statewide Summit Opportunity Online - to Improve Library Internet Connections

Eureka, CA - Humboldt County Library was invited to participate in a summit hosted by the California State Library to develop sustainable solutions for broadband Internet connections in local public libraries. As a local partner in providing free public Wi-Fi and in developing broadband media services, Access Humboldt was invited to serve as community representative for Humboldt County.

Sponsored by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the California Opportunity Online Broadband Summit will give library directors, national, statewide and local community leaders the opportunity to discuss solutions for improving Internet connectivity and to share strategies on how to collaborate in order to sustain quality Internet connectivity for public libraries and other community anchor institutions.

Humboldt County Library Director Victor Zazueta was invited to participate in the statewide summit on December 14 - 15 in Sacramento to examine the current state of Internet connectivity in California libraries and to help raise awareness about the need for increased Internet connectivity in libraries.

Zazueta invited the County's partner in the Access Humboldt Libraries project, Sean McLaughlin is executive director of Access Humboldt and a ZeroDivide Fellow. McLaughlin also represents the North Coast region of California in several national organizations, including Alliance for Communications Democracy, National Association of Telecommunications Officers and Advisors, Media and Democracy Coalition, and the Schools Health & Libraries Broadband Coalition (shlbc.org).

Humboldt County, North Coast, California -

California residents, especially those who live in remote rural communities such as the North Coast of California, rely on access to computers and the Internet in public libraries to find jobs, take online courses, and access important government services and forms. For the next generation of digital media, community broadband access will be the primary source of local information. Yet many local libraries do not offer fast enough Internet connections to meet the needs of their communities.

The California Opportunity Online Broadband Summit is hosted by the California State Library and sponsored by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The Summit is part of a grant program designed to help seven states, including California, improve and sustain high-quality Internet connections in their public libraries.

The program will also support the development of a state sustainability strategy for all California public libraries to ensure that all communities can continue to access

high quality Internet at their local library long into the future. Access Humboldt and the Humboldt County Library have the opportunity to support and shape the sustainability plan through participation in the summit.

"First, appreciation to Humboldt County Board of Supervisors for supporting this work, and special thanks to Liz Murguia, (Congressman Mike Thompson's local representative) for her leadership in support of public libraries – locally and at the state and national levels as well," said Sean McLaughlin. He continued, "through my work with the Schools Health and Libraries Broadband Coalition (shlbc.org), I've gained great respect for the leadership role of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, especially Jill Nishi, in helping to inform public policy that supports community anchor institutions." He continued, "and through projects like Access Humboldt Libraries, and our Digital Redwoods initiative (digitalredwoods.net) Access Humboldt is a nationally recognized leader in community broadband and media access, so I'm delighted to join the Summit and help to advance local community interests."

"It is my hope that by participating in this summit in Sacramento I can advocate for faster affordable Internet connectivity for the Humboldt County Library. I also want to push for development of a statewide plan to make broadband sustainable for public libraries serving rural communities such as those in Humboldt County."

"Everyday, our libraries see the direct impact of connectivity on the lives of their patrons," said Stacey Aldrich, State Librarian of California. "The California State Library looks forward to working with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and libraries across the state to improve connectivity in our public libraries. The connectivity needs of our communities continue to grow, and it is essential that California's public libraries keep up with their needs."

The California State Library will host the Opportunity Online broadband summit in Sacramento, December 14-15. For more information about the summit, please visit www.opportunityonline.org or call 1-866-882-3081.

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About Access Humboldt

"Local Voices Through Community Media" is the mission of Access Humboldt, which serves as a regional provider of broadband media access for public, education and government purposes for the North Coast (aka Redwood Coast) of California, USA. More information is online at <http://accesshumboldt.net>.

About the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Guided by the belief that every life has equal value, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation works to help all people lead healthy, productive lives. In the United States, it seeks to ensure that all people—especially those with the fewest resources—have access to the opportunities they need to succeed in school and life. Learn more at www.gatesfoundation.org.

About the California State Library

The California State Library advises, consults with, and provides technical assistance to California's public libraries. The State Library administers federal and state grants that support statewide programs and services including civil liberties education, historical preservation, library construction, connectivity, literacy, and volunteer programs.