

# Plattsburgh State grad is broadband coordinator

By **DAN HEATH**

Staff Writer

— PLATTSBURGH -- As progress continues toward creation of a tri-county broadband network, its coordinator brings her information-technology expertise to push it forward. In November, Julie West was named project coordinator for the Community Broadband Network Connect, the new name for the broadband network planned for Clinton, Essex and Franklin counties.

The project is a collaboration between the Plattsburgh State Technical Assistance Center, the Research Foundation of SUNY and a large Advisory Board.

## MONEY SECURED

West said that thanks to \$545,000 secured last year by U.S. Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton and U.S. Rep. John McHugh, she's working with Stratum Broadband and XIT Telecom to conduct a needs and market analysis.

Once that's done, the companies will come up with a conceptual design of the network, with that expected by the end of July.

"I will take that information and work on a formal business plan," West said.

The U.S. Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration has provided a \$250,000 matching grant.

"We're working on getting the matching funds," West said. "If we are able to, we can go into engineering design this fall."

West said Clinton, McHugh and U.S. Rep. Kirsten Gillibrand have supported the project and have been asked to continue.

"We put in a \$6 million request to fund the start of construction. We want to be ready for construction in 2008. They all believe in this and know how important it is for economic development in this area."

## FILLING A GAP

Construction of the 500-mile network is expected to cost about \$20 million and take three years.

The tri-county area is one of the last remaining gaps in the region, with networks already built or planned on virtually every side of this area.

The network will be an open-access network.

"Telecom providers can all use it. We would be a carrier's carrier," West said. "I strongly believe this needs to be a public-private partnership to happen."

## CAREER ROUTE

West brings a diverse background to the job. She was born in Wisconsin and lived in New Jersey and the Finger Lakes region before she went to Plattsburgh State. She graduated in 1987 with a degree in psychology.

After an internship, West was named sports information director at Plattsburgh State, which evolved into a full-time position during her time there. While she liked the work, it came with long hours.

"You're always the last to leave," she said, "You have to get all the information to the media."

When she graduated, West planned to work in the public-relations field. She said she just

kind of stumbled on a career in information technology.

It started at CVPH Medical Center, where she worked on both the application and technical side of the Information Technology and Telecommunication departments from 1992 to 1998.

West took her first job with Bombardier in 1998, when it was still fairly new in town.

"They were hiring an IT (information technology) manager at the time. I was originally responsible for two sites. Within a year, I was responsible for 26 sites in the U.S."

#### TRIPS TO EUROPE

As she worked her way up the ladder at Bombardier Transportation, she was, at one time, in charge of 330 sites in 42 countries.

In 2002, she was asked to be part of a global project to outsource Bombardier's information-technology operation. She was soon spending every other week in England, and later Berlin, when the Transportation Division headquarters was moved there.

In 2003, that was reduced to every fourth week until she left the company last fall.

"I really enjoyed working in Europe. It was a great job, a great opportunity."

#### FAMILY TIME

Bombardier told her last year they wanted to move her position to Berlin full time. The desire to spend more time with her family was a factor in taking her new job.

"This (broadband) opportunity came up at the right time. I was a good fit for it," West said.

Her husband, Keith, is a technical education teacher at Stafford Middle School in Plattsburgh. Her sons, Luke, 10, and Josh, 13, are students in the Plattsburgh City School system and very involved in athletics.

West said Luke is ready to start competing as a figure skater this year, while Josh is active in soccer and swimming. Her new job will allow her to be more involved in supporting her children in those endeavors.

It's also a chance for her to be more involved in the community. She is now a member of the Plattsburgh Sunrise Rotary Club and the Mountain Lake PBS Board of Directors.

"I believe both of these help the community. Before, with the amount of travel, I wasn't able to commit to things like that."

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Community Broadband Network Connect Project Coordinator Julie West brings information-technology experience from CVPH Medical Center and Bombardier Transportation to her new job. It is hoped construction of the 500-mile, \$20 million broadband network will begin next year