



PO Box 182255
Chattanooga, TN 37422

NEWS RELEASE



Media Contact: Scottie Summerlin, EPB Public Relations Coordinator, summerlinsg@epb.net, (423) 805-0058
Tobias Sellier, APPA Senior Director of Media Relations & Communications, tsellier@PublicPower.org, (202) 467-2927

EPB and partners receive national APPA award for community service

Chattanooga, TN (June 30, 2021) - EPB and our HCS EdConnect partners received the American Public Power Association (APPA) "Sue Kelly" Community Service Award on June 22 at the APPA National Conference in Orlando, Florida. This award recognizes "good neighbor" activities that demonstrate the commitment of the utility and its employees to the community.

Not long after the COVID-19 pandemic began, EPB joined with Hamilton County Schools, the City of Chattanooga, Hamilton County, The Enterprise Center and other public and private community partners to address a rising crisis – the need for at-home learners to have access to high-speed internet regardless of their financial position. The result was the formation of HCS EdConnect, a program that provides fiber optic internet services to every economically disadvantaged K-12 student in the Hamilton County School system at no charge.

The program officially launched in July of 2020. Qualifying families receive broadband internet, that is at least twice as fast as typical educational access offerings from other providers, with symmetrical upload and download speeds and no data caps provided through EPB's 100 percent fiber-optic network. As part of the program, EPB also professionally installs a WiFi router at no charge and helps set up each student's learning devices.

"EPB stepped up during the pandemic to prove that they are more than a local utility service provider," said APPA President & CEO Joy Ditto. "They are a community partner that is deeply invested in Chattanooga. That's what this award is all about."

More than 14,000 students so far have been connected to HCS EdConnect at no charge - more than one third of all Hamilton County Schools students in the district and including their families, represents more than 25,000 individuals. These families are able to keep their high-speed internet connection year-round for up to 10 years as long as they continue to qualify for the program. EPB and our HCS EdConnect partners have already begun enrolling new students to join the program for the 2021-2022 school year.

"We're proud that Chattanooga is being recognized nationally for decreasing the digital divide in our Gig City using a model that other cities can replicate," said Evann Freeman, EPB Director of Government Relations. "Our HCS EdConnect partners are happy to share our process with other municipalities to help them decrease the digital divide in their communities."

Funding partners have provided \$7.9 million to cover upfront infrastructure costs including additional equipment, fiber optic drops and wireless routers. HCS EdConnect partners include Hamilton County, City of Chattanooga, Hamilton County Schools, The Enterprise Center, BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee, Benwood Foundation, Community Foundation of Greater Chattanooga, Footprint Foundation, Lyndhurst Foundation, Maclellan Foundation and CARES funding from the State of Tennessee.

APPA recognizes excellence in electric utility operations and public power leadership at its annual awards ceremony. EPB was one of 11 utilities and 22 individuals recognized for service in the public power industry.

About EPB

EPB serves the greater Chattanooga area by providing world-class energy and connectivity solutions as a means of promoting economic development and enhancing quality of life for our community. We deliver electricity to more than 170,000 homes and businesses across our 600 square mile service area which includes most of Hamilton County as well as parts of surrounding counties in both Tennessee and Georgia. In 2010, EPB Fiber Optics, which offers internet, TV, and telephone services, became the first provider in the United States to deliver up to 1 Gig (1,000 Mbps) internet speeds utilizing a community-wide fiber optic network which is accessible to every home and business in its service area. In 2015, EPB became the first, and to date, only American ISP to make up to 10 Gig (10,000 Mbps) internet speeds accessible to all of its residential and commercial customers as a standard offer.

EPB has also utilized its community-wide fiber optic network to deploy the most advanced and highly automated smart grid power management system in the nation. In recognition of EPB's groundbreaking infrastructure, the Department of Energy and Oak Ridge National Laboratory are utilizing EPB's smart grid as a national model for researching and developing best practices. EPB is also the first major power distribution utility to earn the USGBC's PEER certification for having a highly automated, modernized electric power grid.

EPB is an independent board of the City of Chattanooga which began serving customers in 1939. Visit EPB.com for more information.

About APPA

The American Public Power Association is the voice of not-for-profit, community-owned utilities that power 2,000 towns and cities nationwide. We represent public power before the federal government to protect the interests of the more than 49 million people that public power utilities serve, and the 93,000 people they employ. Our association advocates and advises on electricity policy, technology, trends, training, and operations. Our members strengthen their communities by providing superior service, engaging citizens, and instilling pride in community-owned power.

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