



## Directcom to offer first 100 Mbps residential broadband in southeast Idaho

Direct Communications will become the first major internet service provider in Southeast Idaho to offer 100 Mbps high-speed internet service to residential customers, when they roll out a 100 Mbps package to customers starting this month.

These unprecedented speeds have been made possible by the expansion of Direct Communications fiber optic cable to the home service, which the company began installing in 2006 to a limited number of new homes, where it made more sense to install new fiber than copper lines. However, over the past two years, Directcom has begun a systematic upgrade of all the lines in their telephone exchange areas, replacing aging copper lines with new fiber optic cable all the way to the individual customer homes. Once the fiber is in place, there is unlimited potential for more speed. 100Mb is about as much as most modern consumer-grade electronics equipment can handle.

Jeremy Smith, General Manager for Direct Communications operations in Idaho, explained why the company was aggressively pursuing converting to an all-fiber network: "I see fiber optic cable as being non-negotiable to ensure the economic future of rural America, not just for our customers but also for us to stay relevant as a communications provider. I simply don't agree with the current Federal Administration's philosophy that rural Americans don't need as much speed as people in cities. Everybody needs good Internet service; in fact I would argue that rural folks need high speed internet even more than their city counterparts because we are so remote, and fiber is the only way you can push a good broadband signal out far enough to reach all of our customers."

Brigham Griffin, Directcom Marketing Director stated: "The time is right for 100Mb in Idaho. What we have seen in the past is that each time we offered higher speeds, we had a certain number of customers willing to pay for that service, so the demand is there, even in rural Idaho. A couple of years ago some people in the industry thought we were crazy to offer 20Mb speeds in our very rural market, but custom-

ers will find a way to use it. We don't question why they need it—my job is just to help them to use as much broadband as possible, because that is what will keep them as our customer in the long-run."

Smith is excited for the future of the company. "We are building more fiber routes every day, all over southeast Idaho. We just installed a new all-digital switch that runs on Internet Protocol, and is built for the information age. We are directly interconnected by fiber to our next tier provider, and have access to as much bandwidth on the backbone as we need through Syringa Networks. We want our customers to enjoy their time online. We want them to be able to work from home. We want to provide a better experience than the wireless competition. Why not provide 100Mb speeds?"

The 100 Mb package will only be available to customers with fiber to their homes. Directcom previously offered speeds ranging from 1.5Mb to 20Mb, so the new 100Mb package is a significant jump in speed. However, Smith believes some customers will be eager to pay more for a 100Mb connection in rural Idaho. "Broadband has become the most important utility in many people's lives. Even when the power goes out, which sometimes happens in Rockland, my high speed internet still works, which is great, because at least we can keep watching Netflix on our laptops."

Farr says the only concern he has about launching this 100Mb package for residential use is that it will not yet be available to all customers, and he worries that will make people very restless to know when fiber will get to their home. "We have a 5-year plan to basically convert all of our exchange areas from Bear Lake to Rockland to 100 percent fiber to the home. Arbon is complete. We started on Rockland this year, and will be completely upgraded to fiber over the next 2 years. Bear Lake is the biggest project and that will take longer, but we already have a few subdivisions there completely converted to fiber, including The Reserve and Cottle Communities in Fish Haven. This summer we also

## BLHS remembers Sept. 11 victims

Marissa Budge and Cassie Sharp  
High school reporters

Bear Lake High School students started off last Tuesday morning with a short commemoration honoring the lost Americans of the 9/11 attack.

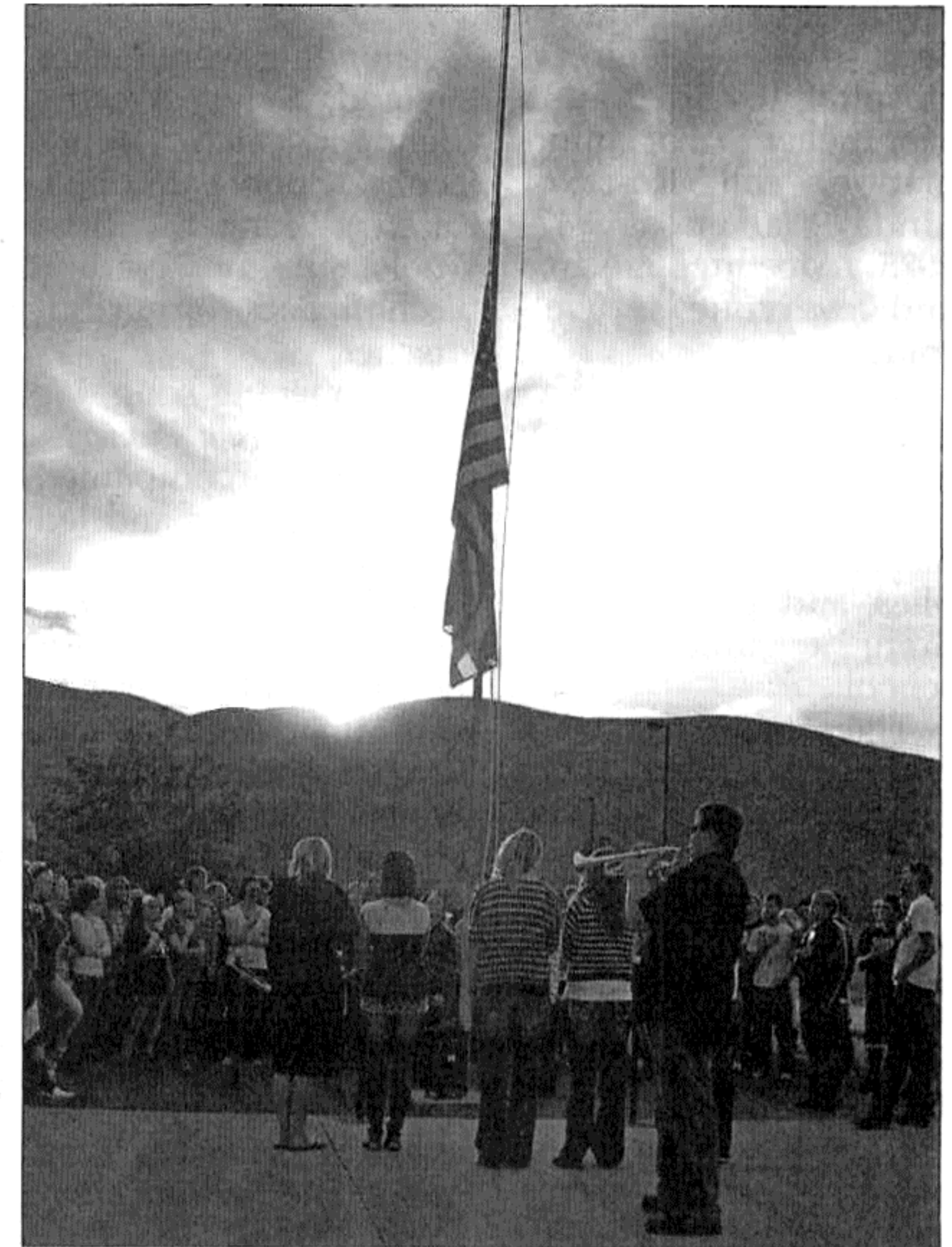
Marissa Budge, student body vice president, started the commemoration by singing *America, the Beautiful*.

Cassie Sharp, student body president, added a few of her thoughts about the attack and how Americans can work together to become a stronger nation. Denver Merritt then joined Budge in singing the National Anthem.

After that, Justin Hemmert played *Taps* while Garrett and Luke Brogan lowered the flag.

The silence of the student body throughout the program was amazing. It was evident that there was respect and reverence for those who gave their lives that terrible day.

Azdyn Bartschi, senior class president, remarked, "It was good



TAMMY STEPHENS/THE NEWS-EXAMINER

Students at Bear Lake High School began their day on Sept. 11 with a sunrise commemoration ceremony. With the sun coming up over the mountains, they stood at attention, hands over their hearts, and listened as Justin Hemmert played "Taps" and the flag was lowered to half-staff.

to reflect on the sacrifices made by others and see how far our country has come."

Student council advisor, Mrs. Tammy Stephens said this was

"one of the best commemorations that we have had. It was good to see the students of Bear Lake High School come together and honor our country."

buried new duct to about 30 homes in Canyon Estates in Fish Haven, and we hope to complete splicing the fiber there by the end of this year."

The most important factor that makes fiber a superior communications medium is bandwidth. Fiber optics are the future of communications, because copper and wireless will someday max out on the bandwidth people will require. Having fiber will soon be vital to compete in the information age. In the future, all communications and media will be delivered as internet data.

Smith concluded: "This is our community too, and we are committed to ensuring the economic vibrancy of the rural towns that we serve, and a great quality of life here. Having access to unlimited broadband is the future to both economic development and personal educational opportunity, and someday, each home that wants to be part of the global information economy will probably require minimum speeds of 100 Mbps. We just wanted to get a head start."