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The close-knit community of Stahlstown, Pa., located 50 miles southwest of Pittsburgh in Westmoreland County, has a population of 1,252. The town consists of farmers, small business owners and generations of working class families, nearly all of whom have a cell phone or access to a computer for everyday life. The internet is what keeps this small, rural community connected to the rest of the world. It is critical for people who work remotely, students who complete schoolwork online, farmers who communicate with their suppliers and small business owners who look to attract urban tourists to nearby seasonal resorts. Reliable connectivity is what powers this community, from the local mom-and-pop store to day schools and emergency services.

The technology that this rural community relies on to function is difficult for most network providers to supply. Communities like Stahlstown are often not deemed worthy of the investment of time, effort and resources, primarily due to the fact that they are rarely profitable. Because of this, even when they are supported by Universal Service Funds from the FCC, rural operators struggle to stay afloat. Budgets are tight, employees are difficult to find and customers are slower to adopt emerging technologies. Remote rural network infrastructure is also serviced and replaced far less frequently than urban networks, meaning operators in these areas must rely on technology that is often outdated. Undeveloped terrains can also present challenges to installing reliable network infrastructure at all.

Though they may face challenges, network vendors for rural operators must remain committed to providing them with consistent and reliable services. One vendor has been a supportive and dependable partner to these communities as they strive to keep pace technologically with the rest of the world: Huawei.

Huawei has a proven track record of providing reliable network services in remote locations, from Montana to Belize and South Africa to villages in rural China. Huawei has been able to supply over 20,000 network nodes of varying types, including over 60 networks in the US, 40 of which are wireless. Additionally, Huawei's network costs are

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Harrisburg Patriot-News
Pa. legislation aims to build on low number of roads, bridges named to honor women

Philadelphia Inquirer
Support by the dollar: How Philadelphia-area donors are diving into the 2020 presidential race

affordable for these remote network operators, which are often functioning on shoestring budgets. Without Huawei, some of these locations simply would not be served and would be forced to rely solely on equipment that is outdated and underperforming.

After the United States government banned the usage of Huawei technology in the U.S., rural operators are now forced to stall projects and stop using the equipment they rely on to function. The federal government has promised funding to carriers who need to replace Huawei infrastructure, but this would take years, and billions of dollars more than the government has anticipated. Another issue for these rural providers is that many of the advanced functions and features of Huawei gear are not available, nor supported by other suppliers. A multi-vendor solution will create more complex networks and subsequently costly integrations, costs that rural carriers are already struggling to cover.

Even in the face of a Huawei blacklist, it is outstandingly unfair of the U.S. government to punish these operators for trying to survive and serve the communities that rely on them. Huawei networks are often the only affordable option for rural communities with lean budgets and tricky terrain. They essentially have one choice for broadband services, and it is being taken away. These rural communities are commonly referred to by U.S. politicians as “the backbone of America.” This is true, not only in an emotional sense, but an economical one. Almost two-thirds of land in the U.S. is considered to be rural, and approximately 14% of the U.S. population lives in rural communities. Healthy rural communities are vital to the health of the national U.S. economy; threatening their access to technology threatens their ability to survive and thrive.

When you think of Huawei, don’t think of a massive, foreign corporation that isn’t relevant to people’s day to day lives. Think of the 1,252 people living in Stahlstown and the technology they are relying on every day to function as citizens of the 21st century. – **Op-ed in *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* by Joy Tan, senior vice president of public affairs for Huawei.**

Montour County employees who are first responders and those aiding first responders will soon be using FirstNet. FirstNet is a "nationwide, broadband network that equips first responders to save lives and protect U.S. communities," according to its website. The commissioners on Tuesday approved an arrangement with AT&T for the wireless phone service starting July 31. Thirty-two new phones will be involved at a cost of 99 cents each, said AT&T representative Jeff Molinaro. The county will save $360 a month compared with Verizon charges, Commissioner Trevor Finn said.

The Montour County Emergency Management Agency, the East Central Emergency Center, which is the 911 center serving the county, and Mahoning and Riverside police are already using the system, Finn said. If there is an incident on the county level or nationwide, there is 100 percent connectivity along with data, hot spots and text messaging, Molinaro said. While Finn said it doesn't replace a radio system, it can be used during an emergency. Molinaro said it can be used in areas where radio coverage is poor.

Molinaro said some faculty and bus drivers in the Danville Area School District are expected to use the system. Most Danville ambulance personnel have FirstNet devices, he said. Commission Chairman Ken Holdren said Finn, emergency management agency personnel and sheriff deputies tested the phones in different areas of the county both inside and outside of buildings. They found the coverage to be better than Verizon. – ***Danville (Montour Co.) News***

AT&T Inc. lost nearly one million pay-TV customers in the second quarter as cord-cutting continued to take its toll, while the company's wireless and media businesses helped to offset the losses. The Dallas company posted a net loss of 778,000 "premium video" subscribers, most of whom subscribe to DirecTV, and shed 168,000 streaming DirecTV Now accounts. Chief Executive Randall Stephenson earlier this year told investors the company expects to keep losing pay-TV customers through 2019 as it cut backs on promotions.

Revenue in the company's television unit fell slightly to $11.4 billion in the latest quarter, but the division's profits improved from a year ago. Overall, the company had $45 billion in second-quarter revenue, boosted by the addition of Time Warner, owner of HBO, Warner Bros. and cable channels such as CNN. The Time Warner business, renamed WarnerMedia, had quarterly revenue of $8.4 billion.

The wireless business added 72,000 valuable postpaid phone customers and 283,000 subscribers on prepaid phone plans. Total revenue in the wireless business was $17.5 billion, which included a 2.4% increase in service revenues. Overall, AT&T posted a second-quarter profit of $3.7 billion, or 51 cents a share, down from $5.1 billion or 81 cents a share, a year earlier. The lower profit included asset sales, prior-year merger and integration costs and other accounting changes in both quarters. On an adjusted basis, AT&T said it had a profit of 89 cents.

AT&T's Time Warner acquisition last year pushed its net debtload above $180 billion, prompting executives to spend much of 2019 reducing the company's obligations. The sale of AT&T's stake in Hulu and the sale and lease-back of the media unit's new Manhattan headquarters earlier this year gave it a cash jolt. The second quarter brought in $8.8 billion of free cash flow, $6.8 billion of which went to pay down debt The company said it is on target to slash its net debt load to about $150 billion this year and raised its annual free cash flow forecast to $28 billion. Other 2019 financial forecasts were unchanged.

The company ended the quarter with 22.9 million video connections, including 1.3 million at DirecTV Now, a streaming service that provides a cablelike package of channels over the internet. As competition for video customers intensifies, AT&T is preparing to launch an on-demand streaming service called HBO Max next year. It will join Walt Disney Co. and Apple Inc. in a market dominated by Netflix Inc. AT&T has spent heavily to expand into media, but the company's wireless business remains its profit engine. The business, including consumer and business accounts, generated more than half of the $15 billion of quarterly adjusted earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization. AT&T has benefited from less generous promotions in the wireless market and used tie-in deals with HBO and other media offerings to keep its cellphone customers from leaving. – ***Wall Street Journal***

The Justice Department is poised to approve T-Mobile US Inc.'s merger with Sprint Corp. under a divestiture plan that would equip satellite-TV operator Dish Network Corp. with the building blocks for a new wireless network, according to people familiar with the matter. The companies have spent weeks negotiating with antitrust enforcers and each other over the sale of assets to Dish to satisfy concerns that the more than $26 billion merger of the No. 3 and No. 4 wireless carriers by subscribers would hurt competition, the people said. The department could announce a settlement with the companies as soon as this week, but the timing remains uncertain, some of the people said. The merger still faces a legal challenge from several state attorneys general.

The arrangement provides for Dish to acquire prepaid subscribers and wireless-spectrum licenses from the merger partners, the people said. Dish would also get a multiyear agreement to use the wireless companies' network while it builds dedicated infrastructure, the people said. T-Mobile has scheduled its quarterly earnings release for Thursday evening. The union of T-Mobile and Sprint, years in the making, would create a third major U.S. wireless company with more than 80 million customers, closing the gap with industry leaders Verizon Communications Inc. and AT&T Inc. U.S. carriers have been battling for customers in the $180 billion market for voice and data revenue, where growth has slowed now that the companies have rolled out unlimited data plans and most Americans have upgraded to smartphones.

The deal brokered with Dish is intended to maintain competition by creating a fourth national player, though the satellite-TV provider would be dwarfed by the others in terms of both subscribers and revenue. Dish had $13.6 billion in revenue last year and has about $13 billion in net debt. Dish has amassed vast amounts of wireless spectrum over the years that it needs to put to use or risk losing its licenses. Justice Department officials are focused on giving the company the remaining pieces needed to build a fourth nationwide mobile network.

The expected federal approval caps an unusual 14-month review of a combination that had fallen apart twice in the past five years over terms of the deal or fears that the Justice Department would object. When T-Mobile last year unveiled the latest plan to take over its smaller rival in an all-stock deal, executives said the pact would get a warm reception in Washington because their combined resources would dramatically cut the cost of mobile data, making the wireless industry more competitive.

A panel of **national security officials and the chairman of the Federal Communications Commission have already blessed the deal** subject to certain conditions. But Justice Department officials tasked with reviewing the deal solely on its antitrust effects **demanded more concessions** to preserve the U.S. wireless market's four-provider structure. The merger partners still face a legal challenge. A group of attorneys general from 13 states and the District of Columbia have filed an antitrust lawsuit seeking to block the combination, saying it would harm consumers. The companies' altered merger plan means a trial originally scheduled to start Oct. 7 in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York will likely be delayed. – ***Wall Street Journal***

BCAP
Broadband
Cable Association
of Pennsylvania
127 State Street Harrisburg, PA 17101
717-214-2000 (f) 717-214-2020
bcapa.com
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