Editorial Contact
Noah Garrett, NGC Communications, on behalf of MCNC: (252) 423.1277 or press@mcnc.org

MCNC celebrates 35 years of 'magic' on the North Carolina Research and Education Network

As NCREN turns 35, the RTP-based nonprofit now looks beyond high-speed internet connections by adding, upgrading advanced technology services on a world-class network

DURHAM, N.C. (Nov. 14, 2019) – MCNC, the nonprofit operator of the North Carolina Research and Education Network (NCREN), this week celebrated the 35th anniversary of the state's largest broadband network and recognized two technology leaders for their contributions to connectivity in North Carolina during NCREN Community Day 2019 on Thursday and Friday at Durham Convention Center.

MCNC's mission is to advance education, research, health care, public safety, agriculture, and the overall levels of broadband connectivity in North Carolina by providing a world-class network necessary for innovation, collaboration, and economic development.

More than 200 top education, government, and technology executives participated in discussions around this year's theme: *The Magic of NCREN*. Today, according to MCNC President and CEO Jean Davis, the organization now operates more than 4,000 miles of high-speed fiber that serves communities in all 100 counties of North Carolina.

"This network was built by and for the community we serve, and together we will continue to grow and expand to meet the technology needs of our students, public servants and citizens in North Carolina," said Davis. "NCREN is a powerful network with limitless potential operated by professional engineers and staff. As we look ahead to the next 35 years, we want to leverage what we've built together and continue to provide solutions in connectivity, education, cloud, telehealth, cybersecurity, consulting, and other managed services."

MCNC also announced winners of this year's NCREN Community Awards during the two-day event.

The Robyn Render Endeavor Award was presented to North Carolina Rep. Craig Horn of Union County. This recognition honors a devoted North Carolina leader who understands how technology can grow educational opportunity for all citizens. It is presented to one or more persons who continually champion leadership, engagement, and support of MCNC's overarching mission and goals for North Carolina.

"I am deeply honored to receive this award named after Robyn Render, who worked diligently and effectively with diverse groups holding diverse points of view to enhance the delivery of education," said Rep. Horn. "The success of the collaborative efforts of MCNC with the General Assembly has resulted in opening dramatically diverse options for education, both in delivery and in content."

MCNC introduced the Empower Award in 2008 to recognize individuals who were not long-time members of the NCREN user community but made an immediate impact upon engagement. This year's Empower Award was presented to Jeff Whitworth, Associate Vice Chancellor for Enterprise Infrastructure and Chief Infrastructure Architect at UNC Greensboro.

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"MCNC has been an exemplary leader in broadband connectivity and networking across North Carolina for many years, and I'm honored to receive this award for our work on UNC Greensboro's Cloud Infrastructure Project," said Whitworth.

NCREN Community Day 2019 event sponsors included: Zettabyte Sponsor: Cisco + Presidio; Terabyte Sponsor: Red Hat / Carahsoft; Gigabyte Sponsors: Amazon AWS and Fortinet; Megabyte Sponsors: Akamai / Carahsoft, Spectrum Enterprise, and Zscaler; Byte Sponsors: BalsamWest, DataWatt Solutions, ECC Technologies, Financial Directions, Kenna Security, Sentinel Risk Advisors, and Smith Anderson.

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About MCNC
MCNC is a technology nonprofit that builds, owns and operates the North Carolina Research and Education Network (NCREN), which has successfully served research, education, nonprofit health care, public safety, libraries, and other community institutions with Internet connectivity and services for 35 years. NCREN is the fundamental broadband infrastructure for 750 of these institutions including all K-20 education in North Carolina. As one of the nation's premier middle-mile fiber networks, MCNC leverages NCREN to customize Internet services and related applications for each customer while supporting private service providers in bringing cost-efficient connectivity to rural and underserved communities in North Carolina. Visit www.mcnc.org. MCNC Social: Facebook, Twitter @MCNC, YouTube, LinkedIn.

Photography and Cutlines

Photo: Rep. Craig Horn of Union County receives the Robyn Render Endeavor Award with MCNC President and CEO Jean Davis on Wednesday at NCREN Community Day 2019 in Durham. *(photo courtesy of MCNC)*

Photo 2: Jim Whitworth with UNC Greensboro receives the Empower Award with MCNC President and CEO Jean Davis on Wednesday at NCREN Community Day 2019 in Durham. *(photo courtesy of MCNC)*

Photo 3: Rep. Craig Horn (left) of Union County and Jim Whitworth (right) with UNC Greensboro, accept awards from MCNC of Thursday in Durham. Rep. Horn received the 2019 Empower Award Winner. Whitworth received the 2019 Empower Award. Both awards were presented by MCNC President and CEO Jean Davis during NCREN Community Day at the Durham Convention Center. *(photo courtesy of MCNC)*

Event Graphic: Master graphic for NCREN Community Day 2019.

Keywords and Tags
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