

Editorial Contact

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

MCNC Community Day proves power of broadband in NC

RTP nonprofit's signature event returned to Durham to facilitate connections, accelerate action, and drive innovation throughout in North Carolina

DURHAM, N.C. (Nov. 9, 2021) – [MCNC](#), the non-profit operator of the North Carolina Research and Education Network (NCREN), today hosted more than 200 technology, government, and business leaders (virtually and in-person) for its signature event – [MCNC Community Day](#) – at the Durham Convention Center.

Formerly NCREN Community Day, the annual event was put on hold last year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This year's theme was *Facilitate Connections. Accelerate Actions. Drive Innovation*. The format featured keynotes, breakout sessions, and panel discussions covering a variety of technology topics such as digital equity and inclusion, broadband for health care, cybersecurity, education, and building successful digital economies.

Highlights included keynote presentations from Shayla Rexrode, education solution architect at Lenovo, and education thought leader Rich Henderson, former Lenovo director driving global education strategy and solutions. A featured panel on the topic of *Education Disruption - the Positive Side of COVID*, included North Carolina Community Colleges System President Thomas Stith, III, Dr. A. Hope Williams, President of North Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities, and Dr. Kimberly van Noort, Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Chief Academic Officer of UNC System. This discussion was moderated by Capital Tonight Anchor Tim Boyum at Spectrum News 1.

One of the key moments of the day actually kicked-off the event with [Meta presents Network Moments](#) – a virtual event showcasing the collaboration and co-investments in new high-speed, scalable broadband connectivity made by MCNC and Meta (formerly Facebook) over the past year to help close the digital divide in western North Carolina counties of Rutherford, Burke, Caldwell, Wilkes, and Surry. This important work continues to ensure communities in this part of the state have affordable broadband in education, health care, community colleges, charter schools, treatment facilities, and government offices.

MCNC closed the day with their MCNC Community Awards, which recognize individuals and stakeholders for their outstanding work, dedication, and understanding of how technology and broadband can grow educational opportunity, local economies, and innovation for all citizens in North Carolina.

Curtis Wynn, President and CEO at Roanoke Electric Cooperative, was acknowledged with the 2021 Robyn Render Endeavor Award, celebrating his distinguished service and commitment to the mission of MCNC. N.C. Secretary of Commerce Machel Baker Sanders was honored with the 2021 Empower Award, recognizing her as a new member of the MCNC Community who has made an immediate impact. And new in 2021, the Innovation Award, which highlights, promotes, and celebrates excellence in innovation and collaborative technology-based projects and initiatives that positively impact the MCNC Community. Ray Zeisz, Director of the Technology Infrastructure Lab at The Friday Institute, received this inaugural award.

Editorial Contact

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

This year's event is made possible by generous sponsors, which include – **Terabyte:** AT&T and Cisco/Presidio; **Gigabyte:** North Carolina Telehealth Network Association (NCTNA), Truist Bank, Carahsoft/Veritas, and Winston Partners; **Megabyte:** LCG Associates, Sentinel Risk Advisors, and Spectrum Enterprise; **Bytes:** AWS, Batchelor, Tillery & Roberts LLP, CrowdStrike, DataWatt Solutions, Duke University, ECC Technologies, Financial Directors, Fountainworks, NETSCOUT, SAM LLC, and Zscaler.

Learn more about our sponsors and supporters [here](#).

###

About MCNC

MCNC is a 501(c)(3) non-profit client-focused technology organization. Founded in 1980, MCNC owns and operates the North Carolina Research and Education Network (NCREN), one of America's longest-running regional research and education networks. With over 40 years of innovation, MCNC provides high-performance services for education, research, libraries, healthcare, public safety, and other community anchor institutions throughout North Carolina. NCREN is the fundamental broadband infrastructure for over 850 of these institutions including all public K-20 education in North Carolina. As one of the nation's premier middle-mile fiber backbone networks, MCNC leverages NCREN to customize protected Internet, cybersecurity services, and related applications for each client 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](#), [YouTube](#), [LinkedIn](#).

Graphics, Photos, Video

- [Download](#) MCNC Logo
- [Download](#) the official MCNC Community Day Logo
- [Watch](#) Meta presents Network Moments

**Media Note: Photos of award winners can be made available upon request.*

Keywords and Tags

MCNC, NCREN, Meta, Facebook, Lenovo, Community Day, Broadband, Networking, Cybersecurity