

# NEWS RELEASE

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## **UNITY FOUNDATION TO OFFER FREE CLASSES, LOW/NO COST DEVICES TO LOCAL COMMUNITY TO ENCOURAGE BROADBAND USE; CORRESPONDING BROADBAND SURVEY FORTHCOMING**

UNITY, MAINE – The Unity Foundation (UF) will be offering local communities opportunities to enhance the impact of the recently awarded ConnectME grant to local broadband provider, UniTel. As the grant will be used for the expansion of UniTel’s community-wide, best in class, Fiber to the Home (FTTH) network, UF will be offering free educational courses to maximize residential and business use of this updated broadband network. These opportunities are not limited to customers of UniTel and will be accessible to the entire community. They are the first of their kind in Maine and are intended to stimulate local economic development and enhance quality of life. Lawrence Sterrs, Chairman and CEO of the Unity Foundation, says, “The Unity Foundation has brought this partnership together with the goal of capitalizing on the superior new network available to the community. By offering free training and equipment, we hope to drive additional economic development for our community.”

Key to this effort is the partnership formed by the Unity Foundation including UniTel, The Sewall company, Axiom Technologies & Training Center, Skills Inc. and ConnectME to fund and manage these opportunities. In cooperation with its partners, UF will be offering Digital Literacy Training to all residents and business in Albion, Dixmont, Knox, Newburgh, Thorndike, Troy, Unity, and surrounding communities. In addition, low or no cost equipment/devices (computers etc.) will also be provided as need is established.

In order to assess need and finalize the information to launch this community investment, UF will be conducting a community-wide survey. The purpose of the survey is to collect data that will allow UF and its partners to appropriately tailor the training and equipment availability to meet the community needs. Residents will be receiving surveys in the coming weeks and are encouraged to respond with their feedback to assist in the implementation of this investment and the crafting of training courses.

The training courses, which will begin this the fall, will be provided free of charge to every resident and business in the community regardless of their current service provider.

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**About The Unity Foundation:** The Unity Foundation (UF) was founded in 2000 by Bert and Coral Clifford, long-time Unity, Maine residents dedicated to improving the viability of their town. The Clifford’s were firm believers in providing incentives and support for economic development and civic improvement. They encouraged community stakeholders to invest in and maintain local playing fields, education, arts and culture organization and business infrastructure – all of which continue to enhance life in Unity.

Today, UF invests in building the capacity of nonprofits that serve both local Maine communities and statewide needs. UF supports mission-driven nonprofits in Maine through capacity-building initiatives organizational assessment, programmatic grant making and nonprofit management education. UF’s goal is to promote strong, sustainable nonprofits that reliably serve Maine communities. For more information, visit [www.unityfdn.org](http://www.unityfdn.org).