

Oregonfast.net

and the future of Internet accessibility

George Rogato on the potential for fiber optics in the community.

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Oregonfast.net president George Rogato says he is a next big thing junkie. And Rogato wants to see fiber as the next big thing for the Florence community.

Back when Oregonfast.net started in 1999, when George's sons Michael and Patrick bought Florence's original ISP, Winfinity, fiber was an expensive endeavor, wireless was the next big thing and 56k was a fast connection.

"I was connected to a dial-up modem, and I would come over to their house for their T1 line," said George. "I wanted to figure out how I could connect to their line and still get fast service."

George was an electrician before he'd ever heard of wireless and broadband. He had owned George's Reliable Electric Service for 10 years. Even then he was keeping an eye out for anything modern and innovative. How could he do his job better and more efficiently to provide more convenient and affordable service for his customers? That commitment to customer service is evident in his work today with Oregonfast.net.

"I started learning about telecommunications and connectivity," said George.

He consumed everything he could about the industry. Wireless was still a futuristic idea, but he wanted to see total connectivity for the central coast. He wanted people to have options and choice, even if that choice was not Oregonfast.net.

Back then fiber was more expensive than wireless, so they did not pursue it as a viable option.

"Fiber was extremely expensive when we started. The components on the ends of fiber are the expensive parts," said George.

But the key influencing factor between then and now in fiber affordability, said George, was the decreasing cost of glass.

"There's a falling price of glass and an increase in the purchase of it," said George. "The components on the end of fiber connections are now commonplace. Their prices have come down considerably, making fiber today much more affordable."

When the Rogato family started Oregonfast.net, their first concern was getting wireless connectivity to the area. First they took baby steps.

"We experimented with wireless from the ISP at Michael's house to my house and it worked pretty well," said George.

When using wireless there's no third party such as a telephone company to deal with, said George. The wireless customer can be independent.

Wireless connectivity in the area started out in the woods at Sutton Lake Road.

Today over 1,000 premises in the area, from small businesses to industry to private residents, are connected to the central coast's broadband infrastructure.

There are over a hundred Wifi hotspots in the area and Wimax is becoming a significant presence as well.

"We're nearly the most advanced wireless area on the West Coast,"

said George. "The speed, the ease of use and the efficiency are all benefits of Wifi, and the coast has that."

Wireless connectivity, especially in more remote, rural areas, has become a recent national priority. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has been lately supporting the idea that telecommunications accessibility should reach rural as well as cosmopolitan areas

tomers, together with their personal interest and involvement in the area, can afford to be more innovative.

"We didn't go into this business to make a lot of money," said George. "Our goal is to bring better connectivity to the area. We're involved in the community and we're going to be here for the long term."

George said the final piece of that overall better connectivity is fiber

makes home-based Internet more independent, and wireless means people can access the Internet anywhere in the area through mobile applications, said George.

"Fiber allows people to have choice since it is not controlled by any single company," said George. "I think fiber is the future of Internet access."

"It will allow people to relocate to Florence, to continue benefiting

that's willing to invest in a long-term endeavor that doesn't have a quick profit," said George. "Sometimes in the business world the smallest companies will create their own path."

But he said they would not be in that position without community support.

"One of the keys to our success has been our customers and the community supporting us," said

of money," said George. "I specifically want to target small businesses to invest in VOIP."

As part of his commitment to connecting the coast to the most advanced telecommunications out there, George has been active on an FCC committee that brings together ISP providers and small businesses as well as a variety of other entities to testify before the communications regulatory commission on a



The faces of Oregonfast.net. Clockwise from top left: Patrick Rogato and Travis Virili; George Rogato; Michael Rogato.

across the country. George said Florence, Mapleton and surrounding areas on the Oregon coast are ahead of the game in that respect.

"A lot of communities around the country are trying to find a way to make wireless accessible to their area," said George. "People in Florence have had wireless connectivity for seven years. We have taken the lead in terms of what other communities are looking at."

Wireless starts in small towns and with small businesses that have a deep investment in their local communities, said George. Large, national companies get stuck in traditional ways of thinking. Small businesses, with their ready-made user base of loyal community cus-

access.

"The idea behind fiber is to bring the newest and most advanced telecommunications options to our area at prices and speeds that are affordable and the most efficient for people to come here and set up shop."

Oregonfast.net's immediate goal is to bring fiber access from their office in Kingwood Street and the industrial area in that part of town out toward Ninth Street. They want to see fiber extend out to the intersection of Highway 126 and Highway 101.

Ultimately, George's vision is to see the power and accessibility of wireless coupled with the independence and convenience of fiber. Fiber

to our city and creating jobs here in a new industry. It will add hi-tech to Florence by bringing affordable connectivity to the area."

The idea of fiber is old hand to George, who as an experienced electrician has 30 years' experience putting wire in the ground.

"As an electrician I did a lot of underground wiring," he said.

"Tomorrow's world will be fiber at home and wireless access outside of the home. The dual system of fiber and wireless will work together. That's where I see the future of telecommunications."

George said Oregonfast.net is the company to bring that future to Florence.

"What it takes is a company

George.

And they retain that community service by providing personal service on a consistent, local basis, said George, always keeping affordability and efficiency at the top of the equation.

"We provide dedication and loyalty to our customers," said George. "Every day we're helping people understand their computers and connect to the Internet."

Along with fiber access, George said that Oregonfast.net plans to offer voice-over IP (VOIP) telephones with enhanced 911 functionality, according to new FCC regulations that modulated what was provided through VOIP access.

"I think this will save people a lot

regular basis. George has visited Wash., D.C., a few times and has personally met Michael Powell, head of the FCC and son of Secretary of State Colin Powell; Powell's big push has been getting behind charting the future of the telecommunications industry.

George calls himself not only the president but the "chief evangelist" of Oregonfast.net, and efficient, reliable, affordable Internet access is his company's priority.

Oregonfast.net can be contacted at 902-1566. The business is located at 1735 Kingwood Street Suite A in Florence.