



For Immediate Release

Contact: Tara Lidstone

tlidstone@vitlink.org

802.446.2672 Office 802.345.0092 Mobile

Photo Attached

VIT (Vermont Interactive Television) Wins Prestigious Distance Learning Award

The United States Distance Learning Association (USDLA) presented VIT with the 21st Century Award for Best Practices in Distance Learning. This award is presented annually to a demonstrated pioneer in the field of distance learning, for developing innovative approaches to the delivery of distance learning programs and for demonstrating a capacity to adjust to the evolving nature of the field.

VIT has been delivering distance learning services to Vermonters since 1988 and continues to expand its infrastructure to stay ahead of technological advancements, and to give Vermonters the best distance learning tools available.

Barbara Grimes, long time Chair of the VIT Coordinating Council noted, "VIT pioneered this technology in Vermont and as the award demonstrates, VIT continues to be a leader in distance learning." She added, "VIT's technical and operational expertise gives Vermonters access to quality opportunities worldwide."

VIT Executive Director Tara Lidstone said, "Our team is very proud, but many deserve credit for the award. Among them, past and present Administrations and Legislators who supported the infrastructure development, the VIT Council and staff for their hard work, and the Vermont organizations that have used VIT so often and so well to deliver quality education and training."

About the Award

USDLA 2011 International Awards Presented for Excellence in Distance Learning for Individuals, Organizations and Companies Honoring their Outstanding Achievements.

These prestigious International Awards are presented annually to organizations and individuals engaged in the development and delivery of distance learning programs.

The USDLA International Awards are closely followed by the distance learning industry. "As a premier organization for the entire distance learning profession, we enjoy honoring some of the leaders in the industry," said Dr. John G. Flores, Executive Director of USDLA. "Each year these winners raise the bar and exceed best practice expectations for the industry as a whole and we are truly honored by their contributions to the distance learning industry."

The USDLA Awards were created to acknowledge major accomplishments in distance learning and to highlight those distance learning instructors, programs, and professionals who have achieved and demonstrated extraordinary results through the use of online, videoconferencing, satellite and blended learning delivery technologies.

"USDLA takes great pride and responsibility in recognizing excellence and quality that benefit the entire industry. Through distance learning, education, and training we can provide access to the world's best award winning opportunities for school children, connect higher education students globally and transform the lives and careers of working adults. We are truly on the edge of something great and these winners clearly demonstrate and confirm the transformative powers of distance learning globally," said Dr. Denzil Edge, President of USDLA.

Reggie Smith III, Chair of USDLA Board of Directors noted that, "This year's award winners represent many of the most innovative leaders in the field of distance learning."

About VIT

Vermont is the second least-populated state in the US, and much of that population resides in extremely remote towns, some with less than 250 residents. Vermonters prize their largely rural way of life, complete with dirt roads and covered bridges. Unfortunately, that often means sacrificing access to opportunities beyond the borders of their towns or state. This can be a threat to the state's competitiveness because, while every community needs access to higher education, workforce training, and businesses expertise, many of these rural towns lack the resources, the infrastructure, the budget, and the people to have those things available locally. Add to that rugged terrain and harsh, dangerous winter weather and access to a variety of educational opportunities can be a real challenge.

A population that is better prepared to compete in the job market has a substantial impact on both the individual and the economy and the viability of Vermont's small towns. If highly-skilled jobs leave the state due to lack of training, it threatens the Vermont way of life.

To close the educational opportunity gap, the state launched Vermont Interactive Television (VIT) in 1988. VIT's mission is to support the economic health and development of the state and its citizens by providing the technical infrastructure and operational expertise necessary to deliver education, training and information equally to all areas of Vermont.

Since then, the network has grown in size and sophistication. Today, there are 17 room-based locations throughout Vermont, plus 4 mobile systems which can be brought into an organization on demand, and a desktop service, all capable of connecting to each other and to anywhere in the world. And, unlike other video conferencing networks that belong to one company, one school district, or one government agency, VIT is available to ALL Vermonters. VIT enables people to collaborate face-to-face across the state and around the world, without requiring them to purchase or maintain video equipment. VIT also provides document sharing and collaboration, DVD recording, audio and video archiving, an audience response system, presenter training, and the technical support needed to ensure success.

The broad range of education and training opportunities offered through the VIT network includes degree programs, continuing education classes, professional training and certification, enabling Vermonters to continue and expand their skills, building a better workforce through education.

Last year's utilization, which logged close to 19,000 hours, paints an impressive picture of the numerous and varied benefits the state of Vermont and Vermonters reap from the existence of VIT. In an average year VIT saves Vermont and Vermonters \$4.3 million. The average VIT videoconference costs 70 percent less than in-person meetings and saves an average of 150 miles of driving per conference. Last year, that meant more than 32,700 participants were spared 4.8 million miles of travel while reclaiming 90,000 hours by meeting over video. Use of the system also prevented emissions of 190 tons of air pollution and 2,500 tons of greenhouse gases. Businesses are more competitive, colleges and technical schools reach more students, government is more efficient, and non-profits can do more with less. VIT saves time, money and vehicle emissions. Throughout the state and beyond, VIT continues to transform the way people learn, work, govern and contribute.

About United States Distance Learning Association (USDLA)

The United States Distance Learning Association (USDLA) is a non-profit association formed in 1987 and is located in Boston, Massachusetts. The association reaches 20,000 people globally with sponsors and members operating in and influencing 46% of the \$913 billion dollar U.S. education and training market. USDLA promotes the development and application of distance learning for education and training and serves the needs of the distance learning community by providing advocacy, information, networking and opportunity. Distance learning and training constituencies served include pre-k-12 education, higher and continuing education, home schooling as well as business, corporate, military, government and telehealth markets. The USDLA trademarked logo is the recognized worldwide symbol of dedicated professionals committed to the distance learning industry. <http://www.usdla.org>

-End-