



BLACK HILLS AREA COMMUNITY FOUNDATION
825 St. Joseph Street PO Box 231
Rapid City, South Dakota 57709
605.718.0112 www.bhacf.org

CONTACT:

Regina Jahr, Executive Director
Black Hills Area Community Foundation
605-718-0112
rjahr@rushmore.com

For Immediate Release

*Director of the Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project Speaks to
Black Hills Community Leaders on June 9, 2011*

How do Black Hills residents receive local information? How do they learn about regulations and policies, like snow removal days? Increasingly, many people search the Internet only to find that local information is the hardest to find.

Lee Rainie, director of the Pew Research Center's Internet and American Life Project, is speaking to community leaders on June 9 about the importance of local information to a community and a well-functioning democracy.

Local Information Today

According to the Pew Research Center's Internet and American Life Project, 42 percent of American adults get at least some local news and information on their cell phone or tablet computer.

“What’s changed is the consumer is much more anxious to get the material they want, when they want, and on the device they want it on,” Rainie said.

People are searching the Internet for their local information. They are using new technologies to connect with their communities, but this doesn't help if the information cannot be found. What many consumers experience is an overload of information, but not the local answers they need. Through some effort, communities can develop information systems so every citizen can participate.

The Knight Commission on the Information Needs of Communities in a Democracy outlined three goals every community should pursue to become an “informed community” and meet citizen needs:

- Maximize the availability of relevant and reliable information to all Americans and their communities.
- Strengthen the ability of individuals to engage with information.
- Promote individual engagement with information and the public life of the community.

Democracy is successful when all demographics and groups are active participants. Lack of information prevents that process.

-more-

How to Fix the Problem

The first step in fixing a problem is to define the problem: a lack of connection to Black Hills information. The answers to local questions are out there. The goal is to make them accessible.

The Black Hills Knowledge Network is one solution to the problem.

The Black Hills Knowledge Network is an online, library-based information service that connects people to ideas and **local information**. The goal is to strengthen the community and grow the regional economy.

In September 2010, the Black Hills Area Community Foundation received a grant from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation to develop the Knowledge Network. With the Rapid City Public Library and support from other area libraries, the Black Hills Knowledge Network collects and organizes content produced by various groups including local media, government, non-profit organizations, businesses, service clubs, and community members.

The Knowledge Network serves as a single source to find reliable resources that help Black Hills communities identify problems, reach agreements for policymaking, and accelerate innovation in the economy and society.

Lee Rainie, the former managing editor of *U.S. News & World Report*, will speak about the importance of local information at the Community Leaders Forum on the Black Hills Knowledge Network at 12:00 p.m. Thursday, June 9, 2011 at the University Center, 4300 Cheyenne Blvd., Rapid City. He will also speak to the public at the Rapid City Public Library, 610 Quincy Street, Rapid City at 5:00 p.m.

About Lee Rainie

Lee Rainie is the Director of the Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project, a non-profit, non-partisan "fact tank" that studies the social impact of the Internet. Since December 1999, the Washington D.C. research center has examined how people's Internet use affects their families, communities, health care, education, civic and political life, and work places. Rainie is speaking Thursday, June 9, to community leaders on the benefits of local information and the Black Hills Knowledge Network, an online, library-based information service that connects people to ideas and local information to strengthen the community and grow the regional economy. For more information, visit www.blackhillsknowledgenetwork.com.

###