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**McKenzie River Reflections**  
Thursday, March 10, 2016

# Need speed? Broadband access on the agenda next week

LEABURG: Narrowing the digital divide that separates rural areas from high speed internet connections will be the focus of a March 17th meeting at McKenzie Fire & Rescue's Leaburg Training Center. Organizers of the meeting include several McKenzie area residents who attended a Rural Broadband Conference convened by the Oregon Rural Development Council in Bend last month. That conference offered information on an array of federal, state and local initiatives that were designed to reach unserved, and under-served rural residents.

The first hour of the Leaburg meeting, beginning at 5 p.m., will cover alternative approaches and programs that might be applicable to Valley residents. At 6 p.m., Karen Stewart, CenturyLink Director of Local Government Affairs, will lead a discussion of a federally funded program that will bring enhanced broadband speeds to local areas that are considered "high delivery cost locations." While CenturyLink is currently in the early planning stages of this program, information about the rollout and impact on individual locations should be available.