

## Adirondacks hope to become 'forever wired'

By M. LISA MONROE  
For the Express

Clarkson University would like people to stop considering their front porches as places of leisure and instead look at the walk to the porch as a commute to the office. The dearth of well-paying jobs is a problem for communities in the Adirondack Park, and Clarkson is hoping people will consider telecommuting, instead of regular commuting, as a way to have a good paying job and live in the Adirondack Park.

"Superhighways were essential for the success of a manufacturing economy; for a knowledge economy good broadband connections will be essential," said Vice President for External Relations at Clarkson University Kelly Chezum.

Telecommuting is defined as working away from your company's central office by utilizing computer technology.

A conference scheduled for Sept. 8 will explore ways to make the technology that is necessary for telecommuting more accessible to Park residents and to show by example that it can be done.

According to Chezum, more than 75 people have already signed up for the free conference from noon to 5 p.m. at Clarkson University in Potsdam. More information is available at [www.clarkson.edu/adk](http://www.clarkson.edu/adk).

Chezum has been surprised by

the diverse types of people who have registered so far.

"We thought that it would be all economic development people from the towns, but we've had entrepreneurs, and business leaders, really a cross-section of people," she said.

Clarkson has been working on the idea of telecommuting since 2003 when they realized that they were exporting their knowledge base, in the form of graduated students, out of the upstate area.

"We were exporting so much of our knowledge all over the globe. We wanted to see what we could do to keep more of that at home," said Chezum.

The Common Ground Alliance named broadband access as one of the top three issues critical to economic development in the Park at its forum in 2008.

"It's green, clean, and makes it possible for professionals to telecommute while enjoying the small-town Adirondack lifestyle. Providing reliable high-speed broadband would have positive ripple effects across the Adirondacks. High-speed internet will also give our college grads the basic foundation they need to consider coming home and starting their professional careers in the Adirondacks. With the dramatic distances between communities and customers, broadband is a must for the rural areas of the country, including

the Adirondacks," said Lani Ulrich of the CGA.

There are some people who have come to Old Forge and have brought their jobs with them. Mary Savaria, who telecommutes and owns the Painted Loon shop on Main Street, was prepared to leave her job in the city to live in the Adirondacks.

"I worked there for 25 years. When I told them I was quitting, they wanted me to work from here," she said.

Savaria says that telecommuting has been wonderful for her. There's no 45 minute commute everyday; when she needs to go to the office she just goes upstairs.

Sheila Brady worked in Manhattan and had a summer place in Old Forge for years, but after 9/11 she decided to transfer her work to Old Forge.

"It was awful," Brady said of the city after the attack. "We didn't know where we were safe."

She talked to the bank and the post office to see if they could offer her the same services that she had been getting in the city, and when she found that they could, she made the move and hasn't looked back.

"People ask me where I am and I say 'The Adirondacks,' and they say 'Lucky you.'"

