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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Knight Center of Digital Excellence Launches Connect Akron Initiative and
*Community Participation is Imperative for the City to go Global***

(Akron, OH) April 13, 2009 – The Akron-based Knight Center of Digital Excellence announces the launch of Connect Akron, formerly the Greater Akron Broadband Initiative to expand the availability and speed of broadband Internet in Akron. Connect Akron, made possible through a grant from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation and run by OneCommunity, will usher in the twelve mile Akron wireless corridor serving downtown Akron and all ten wards.

Connect Akron transcends the deployment of hardware and software by establishing meaningful objectives for the network and the community. Creating programs, training and tools that encourage use and adoption will enable a new level of communication; a new competitive advantage for Greater Akron in a growing global environment.

In an effort to assist in transformation efforts, as businesses and community organizations strive to take advantage of this opportunity the Knight Center of Digital Excellence, in partnership with Strategic Networks Group, Inc., is launching a multi-phase study that:

- Maps the current infrastructure for delivering Internet services and compares it to existing demand – ensuring funds invested in broadband infrastructure are used wisely while meeting a requirement for communities that plan to access federal funding;
- Circulates a questionnaire to over 16,000 local businesses and organizations to determine how broadband is being utilized – identifying the most productive e-businesses solutions, as well as barriers to their adoption; and
- Invites a number of local stakeholders to participate in a Community Broadband Readiness Assessment of Greater Akron’s capacity and readiness to undertake a sustained broadband initiative.

The Knight Center of Digital Excellence encourages local businesses and community organizations to participate in the questionnaire, which will be circulated during the week of

April 13 through a combination of emails and postcards. Those participating will also be entered into a drawing for one of five \$100 gift certificates to local Summit County restaurants.

The Knight Center of Digital Excellence serves 26 U.S. communities and is operated by Cleveland-based technology non-profit OneCommunity, in partnership with The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation. The organization is dedicated to creating connected communities through strategies that utilize information technologies to drive civic progress and economic development.

Strategic Networks Group, Inc has been in the forefront of broadband planning for economic development for communities, regions and industries since 1995. SNG's extensive economic and broadband consulting with community and industry leaders is designed to identify opportunities that stimulate economic growth and community vitality. Our gap analysis, planning for high-speed Internet networks (broadband) and e-business initiatives help prepare leaders for all stages of regional and community development projects.