By Dave Vrbas

The Wauneta Breeze

Wireless INet is bringing the information superhighway to the dirt road.

Providing high-speed wireless broadband internet service to in-town and rural Palisade for more than a year now, owner Jared Blackman has completed the tower work needed to go 'live' in the Grant area during the past several months.

As of today, Wireless INet is live in Grant, Elsie, Wallace, Venango, Madrid, Grainton, Brandon, Wauneta, Palisade, Hamlet, Enders, Hayes Center, Stratton, Trenton and Roscoe. By the end of the year, plans are to have service available in Imperial and Champion.

By the end of 2011, the Wireless INet service area has plans to expand services as far southwest as Haigler, as far west as Holyoke and Julesburg, as far north as Oshkosh and as far east as Sutherland and to include every rural area and small town in between.

Humble Beginnings

in Palisade

Blackman, the owner of Palisade-based JC's Computers for the past nine years, said he started providing the service to rural and in-town Palisade residents in October 2008 after completing a questionaire of local residents and their current internet service.

"People wanted better, faster internet," Blackman explained.

After quite a bit of research, paperwork and some help from the Small Business Administration, Blackman got the funding needed to begin providing high-speed wireless broadband to Palisade — where he and wife, Missy, live and raise their five kids.

After providing the service to Palisade for a few months, Blackman made the decision to purchase McCookNet's operations in Stratton and Hayes Center. Since then, he has expanded north to the Grant area and received great response.

"The response and support from the entire Grant area has been wonderful," Blackman said of his venture's expansion to the highline region.

As word spread about Wireless INet's high-quality internet and affordability, it became clear that the venture should become a full-time job for Blackman. He recently resigned from his position as computer network administrator at Educational Service Unit 15 in Trenton to concentrate his efforts on the family business.

Hiring his father-in-law, Jerry Vrbas, as business manager, Blackman said they are now doing at least three installations per week.

Growing from a handful of towers and customers at the beginning of 2009 to 11 towers across southwest Nebraska and 130-plus customers now in 2010, Blackman said he and Vrbas remain busy but are at a position where they feel comfortable taking on more customers.

Rates and Pricing

Blackman said one of the biggest obstacles he has faced is local residents who 'bundle' their services with other providers.

 "Once people do the research and realize their landline phone is an unnecessary expense because of cell phones, and that satellite television is cheaper and has more to offer than cable, we get a lot of customers on board and they are happy to save money," Blackman said.

 Rural customers have been especially pleased by the service. "They basically had dial-up before and once we hook them up with our internet, they are very pleased with the faster speed," Blackman explained.

 He urges internet users to log on to www.speakeasy.net/speedtest to check the current speed of their internet connection to decide if changing over to Wireless INet is right for them.

 Faster than DSL service, Blackman said his rates range from $45 a month for one megabyte of downloading and one megabyte of uploading to $99 a month for 5 megabytes of downloading and 1.5 megabytes of uploading.

 Commercial rates are available, as well as network support and design, PC repair and installation. During internet installation, which takes about an hour-and-a-half, a white receiver is attached to the customer's house where they can receive optimal service. The charge for installation is $100.

 For more information, Blackman can be reached at 308-883-1014 or 308-285-3312, or Vrbas at 308-883-0798. The business website is available at www.wirelessinet.com.