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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Literary initiative celebrates Digital Inclusion Week in NM

ALBUQUERQUE – New Mexico's broadband office is joining in celebration of Digital Inclusion Week from October 4-10, part of an annual effort organized by the National Digital Inclusion Alliance (NDIA) to highlight community events, action policies, and solutions dedicated to closing the digital gap and ensuring equitable broadband access and digital literacy skills.

The special week advocates for reliable, affordable broadband and digital training programs and features community-driven successes in these areas across the country.

Over the past year in New Mexico, the Office of Broadband Access and Expansion (OBAE) launched a digital navigator program with the Department of Workforce Solutions to deploy a corps of trained digital navigators to help thousands of residents in rural, low-income and older communities build the internet skills needed to access jobs, healthcare and education online. And in June, OBAE completed a State-funded project with Adelante DiverseIT called TechUp! to distribute laptops and provide training to close the digital divide.

Next week, OBAE is participating in a coordinated statewide outreach and reading campaign to educate and inspire communities about the work and marvel of fiber optics. It's a children's book called "Follow the Light: A Fiber Optic Adventure." The simple but inspiring STEM adventure explains and demonstrates to readers how fiber optics light up our world.

“This book will open the eyes of children across New Mexico and teach them about the wonders of fiber optics and technologies that permeate our world,” said **Jennifer Nevarez**, a member of OBAE’s support team who organized the reading campaign.

Advocates say this STEM adventure book makes fiber optics and digital connectivity exciting for young readers, sparking curiosity about the technologies that quietly shape our everyday lives.

More than 500 “Follow the Light” books will be donated across the state. Every New Mexico library will receive a copy, and the book will also be distributed to schools, community organizations and agencies during Digital Inclusion Week. The author, broadband engineer and mother Alli Bone, and volunteers will be reading the book to students and others in communities throughout New Mexico.

Volunteer readers include New Mexico Workforce Solutions Secretary Sarita Nair, mayors and other local leaders.

The author will attend “Follow the Light” events on the following dates:

- Monday, October 5 - Santa Fe
- Tuesday, October 6 - Albuquerque
- Wednesday, October 7 - Los Alamos
- Thursday, October 8 - Taos

Bone will also be available for in-person or remote media interviews on TV or radio starting early Sunday morning, October 4th. To reach her for interviews you can contact her at: oandmcollective@gmail.com

For more information on the literary campaign, dates, times and locations of all book readings and guest reader appearances, visit OBAE’s website.

Digital Inclusion Week began in 2017 and is organized by the National Digital Inclusion Alliance.

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The Office of Broadband Access and Expansion is dedicated to serving New Mexico with a commitment to make high-speed broadband accessible to all New Mexicans. OBAE’s mission is to expand and improve high-speed internet service with passionate leadership that drives bold, equitable, affordable and inclusive broadband solutions. OBAE seeks results that honor the state’s rich heritage and elevate quality of life for all.