

Aeneas to hook up Southwest electric customers



HELEN COMER/Gannett News Service

Jonathan Harlan, owner and CEO of Aeneas Internet and Telephone, has entered into a marketing agreement with Southwest Tennessee Electric Membership Corp. No money has been exchanged. By late February and early March, STEMC members

Aeneas, STEMC strike a deal

By JAMIE PAGE
jpage@jacksonsun.com

There are no new wires to route and no money has been exchanged, but a local telephone and Internet service provider will soon make its services available to customers of the largest electric cooperative in West Tennessee.

Aeneas Internet and Telephone has entered into a two-year marketing agreement with Southwest Tennessee Electric Membership Corp., allowing STEMC to offer Aeneas services.

"Southwest can now offer residential, business and industry one-stop shopping for basic utility needs like electricity, telephone and Internet," says Allan Glidewell, operations engineer for Southwest. "Aeneas can offer our members quality, leading edge telecommunication services at low pricing. It is a win-win relationship."

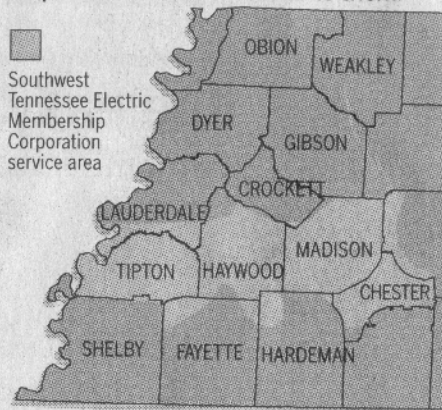
By late February and early March, Southwest electric members and non-members will be able to sign up for Internet and local and long-distance telephone services at one place, said Jack Fox, president and general manager of STEMC.

"We have had a service relationship with them for six years now already, and hopefully down the road we hope to bring fixed wireless Broadband Internet delivery into these communities with their assistance," said Jonathan Harlan, owner and CEO of Aeneas.

Last year when Jackson officials agreed to put \$60 million of taxpayer money on the line to help start a Jackson Energy Authority telecommunications business venture, Harlan

Expanded Internet, phone services

The Southwest Tennessee Electric Membership Corporation service area covers nine counties, but only the bulk of about four. The nine-county service area will now have Aeneas Internet and telephone services available to them.



Source: State of Tennessee General Assembly handbook.

The Jackson Sun

sharply opposed the idea. Soon after, Aeneas filed a suit against JEA claiming the utility's business plan was unconstitutional and violated the city's own charter. In August, Aeneas filed with the state a "motion to intervene," against Broadband Innovations, claiming the group had worked out a deal with JEA to provide technical services without allowing other companies to bid competitively.

Please see AENEAS, 2D

About Aeneas

- Aeneas Internet and Telephone, based in Jackson, has been in business since 1996.
- It serves more than 10,000 businesses and residents in 21 counties with Nationwide Internet access, local and long distance telephone services, commercial Web hosting and design and Internet backbone connectivity for businesses and other Internet services, such as DSL.
- For more information, call (800) 470-7288 or visit: aeneas.net.

About STEMC

- Southwest Tennessee Electric Membership Corp. is a consumer-owned nonprofit electric distribution cooperative, which provides electric service to parts of Chester, Crockett, Fayette, Hardeman, Haywood, Henderson, Madison and Tipton Counties.
- It started in 1936.
- Of the 22 electric cooperatives in Tennessee, Southwest, with more than 45,000 customers and approximately 3,400 miles of line, ranks sixth in number of customers and seventh with respect to miles of line.
- It's the largest electric cooperative in West Tennessee.
- For more information, call 772-1322 or visit: stemc.com.

What's next

- Under a two-year marketing agreement, Aeneas Internet and Telephone will make its services available to customers of STEMC.
- For more information on the combining of the two services, visit: southwesttelephone.com

Aeneas

Continued from cover

The suit, which also claimed that the public entity brought unfair competition to a public market, was dismissed in Madison County Chancery Court in October.

Now, after Harlan's suit and two failed petition drives by Jackson residents, officials have begun to look for other ways to fund the project. In mid-2002, they formed the West Tennessee Alliance for Broadband to solicit federal funding for the project, which would mean a broadband network for 17 West Tennessee counties, centered in Jackson.

Harlan said the marketing agreement with Southwest has nothing to do with competing against JEA and has been in the works for nearly a year, predating the incident.

"This is not connected to that in any way," Harlan said. "We are looking to the future, not the past. There is plenty of room for providers in West Tennessee. Aeneas is committed to excellence, and we are comfortable in any market."

STEMC, and a number of other utility companies, including JEA, have been Aeneas customers for years, Harlan said.

"It's a great idea for Southwest customers to get their utilities and telecom all in one," said JEA communications coordinator Marquetta Hunt-Beard.

Southwest customers may soon see notices in their billing for the added Aeneas services. Some lower pricing of the extra services also has been worked out, Harlan said.

Both Harlan and Fox said billing would be kept separate for now.

"The biggest advantage is simply the time involved in setting up these different services when you move into town, and they will be able to get four services at one place," Fox said.