Kodiak Libraries Connect With Faster Internet and Teleconferencing

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Jennifer Canfield/KMXT

Ninety-seven libraries across the state are being equipped with video teleconferencing equipment. For some rural libraries the grant-funded equipment comes with super fast broadband internet. The Chiniak library held an open house on Saturday to celebrate the new technology which is paid for with an Online With Libraries grant funded by the state, the Rasmuson Foundation, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Department of Commerce. As part of the grant, the library has been able to hire Alana Tousignant as a technology aide. She's been learning the new technology and says the community is already very excited about its potential.

"It's great. There's so much educational opportunity now with this. A lot of us out here, we had dial up for the longest time and we were guaranteed a certain speed but it's been exceeding that. It's been instant."

While Chiniak residents enjoyed a potluck lunch, Tousignant chatted with Josh Watts, a video conferencing technician with the University of Alaska. He says communities will find the technology useful for more than just educational conferences.

"So our hope is to use it for things like people who have family members out of state or maybe they're in the military and station overseas somewhere they can talk to them from their library. We also have some folks using them for medical consults with hospitals in the Lower 48. We're using it for all kinds of cool stuff."

The Kodiak city library as well as libraries in Ouzinkie and Pt. Lions are also being equipped with the new teleconferencing equipment.