

ABE Workshop

by Mike Rostad

They gathered around that Goliath of the Age of Technology, preparing to be overwhelmed by its complexities. But as Tricia Griffing, Kodiak Community College instructor, demonstrated the functions of the computer, the women felt at ease. Soon they were in control, mastering a skill that at one time seemed unobtainable.

Learning how to operate a computer was one of many topics covered at an Adult Basic Education workshop at the College. The ladies are ABE instructors from the six villages on Kodiak Island.

The ABE program, provided by the KCC, with partial funding coming from the Kodiak Area Native Association, is administered by the village instructors.

It offers adults assistance in preparing for their GED's (general equivalency diploma), improving basic skills in English and math; the program also provides workshops on life skills, such as first aid, basket weaving and food processing. In the villages there are no students who take English as a Second Language, another feature of the ABE program.

However, a number of people in the city of Kodiak have signed up for that class.

John Mahoney, ABE administrator, says the village instructors are "unique"; they assume a myriad of responsibilities, including recruiting students, setting up classes, giving tests, keeping records and corresponding with the College.

"They're the directors of their own local programs," says Mahoney.

A pressing question that came up at the workshop was "How do

you keep students in the program?"

Linda Amodo, ABE instructor in the village of Akhiok, didn't have any secret formulas to share, but she noted that 12 students are enrolled in the program in her small community.

The group meets Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday evenings. "We have pretty good attendance," she said. "I have high hopes for them."

Linda, who has worked for the Kodiak School District 10 years, also has noble aspirations for herself. She wants to be a public school teacher. Being an ABE instructor is providing Linda with valuable training.

Ginger Ward, Port Lions ABE instructor, enjoys her work. Yet, it can be difficult. "The hardest part is to get people to understand how important education is. It

wasn't a priority" in the past, "but now it is," notes Ginger.

In many cases, ABE students meet at a central location, such as the school library or the community hall. Sometimes instructors will either go to the homes of their students or invite the students to their place.

Chris Jamin, ABE instructor at the College, and speaker at the workshop, could identify with the village teachers. She was an ABE instructor in Old Harbor in 1969.

A successful ABE program depends on communication between village instructors and College representatives. Bringing the teachers together in town is certainly one way of maintaining open communication. Site visits is another.

Several times during the semester, Jane Petrich-O'Brien, (Continued on Page Nine)

Kodiak ABE

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outreach coordinator, goes to the villages, visiting with ABE students and instructors. She also answers questions people have about the college. She sees herself as a public relations person.

"The Community College is making efforts to share resources with the village," says Jane. "There's more of an emphasis on credit" courses. Villagers can remain in their community while taking classes from the college by way of teleconferences. This year English, psychology and social studies classes were taken in this manner.

John, who worked strictly with the village program for four years, says the ABE program

helps villagers improve basic academic and life skills, but it carries other benefits. It helps students to "become better members of the community."

There's no doubt that the ABE program is also very valuable to the instructors. The ladies were generally enthusiastic as they talked about their jobs. One of the benefits of being an ABE instructor is apparently getting together in Kodiak for the workshop. Beamed Karluk ABE instructor, Betty Lind, "The workshop was terrific, especially the computer."

Other ABE instructors are Janet Tunahon from Old Harbor; Jean Carlson, Larsen Bay; and Cheryl Christofferson, Ouzinkie.