

Village learning centers established

By Dan Bloom
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Four villages now have Village Learning Centers in them, thanks to the cooperative efforts of Kawerak and Northwest Community College.

Construction began in June and continued all summer. In Gambell, Savoonga, Shishmaref and Unalakleet, the Village Learning Centers are almost complete and will be officially dedicated this month.

The construction of the four learning centers was funded by the state Legislature last year and construction was done this past summer by locally hired carpenters and laborers in each village.

Northwest Community College carpentry instructor For-dyce Logan supervised the building in each village. James Milligrock, a student of Logan's since 1979, was the project foreman in Gambell, Savoonga and Shishmaref. Ken Kristenson was foreman in Unalakleet.

"We hired about 20 workers during the entire summer," says Logan. "Each worker put in about 10 hours a day five days a week for two months, and they were all paid \$10 an hour."

In addition, the learning center construction workers earned eight college credits in carpentry and construction from the community college in Nome.

Kawerak purchased the books for the workers and all of them learned about hand tools and power tools, as well as learning new techniques for building and insulation, especially in a cold climate.

The four buildings in each village were constructed with the latest in energy-efficient material. The learning centers are super-insulated with 12 inches of insulation in the walls and 20 inches in the ceilings and floor. The buildings measure 24 feet by 40 feet, and contain a large library area, a conference room for modern telecommunications equipment for audioconferences and videotaping. Heated by a new Japanese heater that burns fuel oil or kerosene, each village learning center will be a warm and comfortable place to study and learn.

Frank DiConstanzo of Kawerak coordinated the administrative functions of the entire project and he feels good about the way the work went.

"The centers will be owned by each city government in each village and operated by Kawerak," DiConstanzo explains. "Each center will contain a library and will be used by Kawerak's Adult Basic Education (ABE) programs, including General Equivalency Diploma study. Also, the community college will use the learning centers for their Eskimo Teacher Education Program (ETEP) which trains village residents in teacher education. The Cross-Cultural Educa-

tion program from the University of Alaska in Fairbanks will also be using the village learning centers."

With Fluorescent lights, carpeted floors, thick insulation and modern furniture, the village learning centers will be

quiet and comfortable places for study and teaching. Plans are underway to build two more learning centers in Shaktoolik and Stebbins next year.

The success of the construction of these learning centers just goes to show how cooper-

ation between different agencies can help improve the educational and economic opportunities in the villages of this region of the state. Kawerak helped, Northwest Community College helped, and each of the villages helped. Cooperation

equals success.

Soon the doors to these Village Learning Centers will be opened and residents of Gambell, Savoonga, Unalakleet and Shishmaref will have something to look forward to.