



NEWS RELEASE

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USDA AWARDS \$28 MILLION FOR DISTANCE LEARNING AND TELEMEDICINE GRANTS

Almost \$1.9 million to be Awarded to six Alaska Recipients

WASHINGTON, September 18, 2008 – Agriculture Under Secretary for Rural Development Thomas C. Dorr today announced the selection of 105 recipients in 41 states for Distance Learning and Telemedicine grants totaling \$28.2 million. Six of the recipients are in Alaska.

“These funds will increase the range of educational opportunities available to students in rural communities and improve access to health care for countless numbers of rural Americans,” said Dorr. “The projects will also open the door to the expansion of technology, increasing rural economic opportunities, promoting strong and vibrant communities.”

Three of the Alaska grants are for telemedicine services and the other three are to school districts for distance learning purposes. For example, the Anchorage-based Southcentral Foundation will receive a grant for a telemedicine and telepharmacy network. Residents in 40 rural communities will benefit. The project is being undertaken in conjunction with Alaska Native Corporations. Telemedicine grants are also being awarded to Chugachmiut and to the Southeast Alaska Regional Tribal Health Consortium.

Distance Learning grants will be provided to three Alaska school districts: The Southeast Island School District, based in Thorne Bay; the Cordova City School District and Wrangell Public Schools. The districts will use the funds for interactive videoconferencing and on-line learning. The grants also fund equipment purchases.

“Alaska faces unique challenges because of the distance between communities and the lack of roads,” said Acting Alaska State Rural Development Director Chad Padgett. “These funds will enable more Alaskans to obtain prompt medical services in local communities and will improve educational opportunities for students in many rural areas.”

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The Alaska recipients include:

Cordova City School District	\$475,289
Southcentral Foundation	\$361,220
SE Alaska Regional Health Consortium	\$267,885
SE Island School District	\$286,009
Wrangell Public Schools	\$329,681
Chugachmiut	\$146,841

Of the grants announced nationwide today, 47 will provide access to medical services; 58 will be used to improve educational opportunities. Funding of each recipient is contingent upon their meeting the conditions of the grant agreement. A complete list of the selected recipients is posted on the USDA Rural Development web site:
<http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rd/newsroom/2008/09-18-2008-DLTrl.pdf>.

USDA Rural Development has its State Office in Palmer with Area Offices in Sitka, Kenai, Fairbanks, Dillingham, Bethel and Nome. Further information on rural programs is available at any of these USDA Rural Development offices or by visiting our web site at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/ak/>

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