

## Broadband Success Stories

*Results from the broadband partnership between Blandin and Iron Range Resources & Rehabilitation to help the region's rural communities develop high speed internet that is critical to economic development, education, healthcare and quality of life.*

**Bois Forte, Cook, Orr:** Basic computer and internet classes were offered through community education at Cook's North Woods School. In addition, PCs for People (a non-profit based in Minnesota) donated approximately 50 refurbished computers to Bois Forte Band.

**Chisholm:** The Chisholm area launched a new landing page that includes a shared community calendar, social media feeds from several community partners, and direct links to each partner's individual website. The city, chamber of commerce, economic development authority and the school district worked together to create the centralized portal that promotes their town. In addition, the city's public school district installed free Wi-Fi on two school buses with longer afternoon routes, enabling students to have internet access. Chisholm is an excellent example of how advancing broadband forges partnerships within communities.

**Chisholm, Cook & Hibbing Libraries:** The Cook, Chisholm and Hibbing public libraries offer personal portable hotspot devices that may be checked out just like a book for up to seven days at a time. The hotspots can connect up to 10 devices to the internet at 4G speed enabling homes and people in rural areas to have high speed internet access where it is not yet available. Demand for the hotspots has been high at the three libraries.

**Ely:** A new website showcasing life in and around Ely was developed as an information resource to guide people in their relocation to Ely. The site features images and videos of outdoor activities and scenery, video testimonials of people who live and work in Ely (Elyites, pronounced Ee-lee-ite), as well as information on regional heritage, lifestyle, recreation, child care, community resources, employment, area schools and colleges. The website was developed by a collaboration between the City of Ely and volunteers to centralize information for those Minnesotans and Americans who are worn down from the urban rat race and are looking for a different, more adventurous and serene way of life.

**Hibbing/Access North:** 50 senior citizens and people with disabilities received free computers and computer classes through a technology outreach initiative led by Access North Center for Independent Living. Founded in 1985, Access North serves 10 counties in northeastern Minnesota. Its Hibbing office partnered with Hibbing Area Chamber of Commerce, PCs for People and Blandin on this initiative. Each recipient received a hard drive, monitor, keyboard and mouse from PCs for People. In addition, Access North assisted these citizens with acquiring subsidized home Wi-Fi connection when possible and provided them free printers donated by Target Corporation.

**Palisade:** Palisade is the first town in northeastern Minnesota to offer free Wi-Fi along its entire main street corridor. Prior to 2018, the rural community in Aitkin County had very limited options for high speed internet. Community stakeholders and activists partnered with broadband providers to work through fiber access barriers. One of the providers, SCL, assisted Palisade with planning 'Fiber To The Home' for all Palisade residents. Several Iron Range communities have hot spots that provide free Wi-Fi within a certain distance or range, for example at a public library. What Palisade did is unique in that the city strategically placed many hot spots that created a larger reach covering its main street corridor which is about the size of two football fields.