

LAKE COUNTY NEWS-SUN

**Waukegan library opens  
Telehealth Booth providing  
greater access to doctors;  
'Libraries can play an important  
role in bridging this gap'**



A frosted front door assures privacy inside the new Telehealth Booth. (Steve Sadin/For the Lake County News-Sun)



By **STEVE SADIN** | Lake County News-Sun

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Expanding its services to the community, the Waukegan Public Library just added virtual visits to the doctor's office — with total privacy and a strong internet connection.

The library opened its Telehealth Booth Wednesday in downtown Waukegan offering anyone who enters during regular hours the opportunity to connect with any medical provider who provides virtual services, including the Lake County Health Department.

Library Executive Director Tiffany Verzani said she knew offering telehealth was something she wanted to institute when she began her tenure two years ago. She knew libraries in other parts of the country were winning awards for offering the service.



Molly Coyle demonstrates the blood pressure monitor in the Telehealth Booth. (Steve Sadin/For the Lake County News-Sun)

“Our new Telehealth Booth aligns with the library’s focus on digital equity and access to technology, health and wellness supports and providing new ways for community members to connect with leaders, experts and each other in a safe and welcoming environment,” she said.

A collaboration with Abbott Laboratories’ foundation, the North Chicago-based global healthcare company provided funding and know-how to develop the booth, complete with a laptop computer with strong connection and medical equipment.

Kathryn McKenzie, Abbott’s divisional vice president of global citizenship and sustainability and the fund’s vice president, said the booth offers access to virtual healthcare to a significant portion of the northeast Lake County population who cannot access it from home.

“For too many, reliable access to the internet and technology remains a challenge,” she said. “We know this digital divide is an unfortunate reality. Community hubs like libraries can play an important role in bridging this gap.”

Though the library has computers available for use by the public free of charge and an internet connection without cost, Verzani said it is not an ideal situation for talking to a medical provider about a health condition, which should be confidential.

“If they were using the computers in the public-access areas, they do not have privacy,” she said. “The internet connection is not as good as it is in the Telehealth Booth. There, the connection is much stronger.”



Library Executive Director Tiffany Verzani talks about the new Telehealth Booth. (Steve Sadin/For the Lake County News-Sun)

Molly Coyle, the library’s adult services manager, said anyone who wants to use the booth for a telehealth consultation can either make an appointment to use it over the phone, or walk into the library during its regular hours and ask someone at the front desk to schedule time for a remote doctor visit.

Walking into the booth, the patient will see the laptop computer enabling them to see the provider during the consultation, headphones to help assure privacy and an array of medical equipment including a blood pressure monitor, a thermometer, a pulse monitor and a scale.

When the patient walks into the room, Coyle said they press a button by the door. It automatically closes and is locked to assure privacy. As soon as it shuts, a special light illuminates killing any germs which may remain from a previous use. When done, the individual touches the button again, and the door slides open.

Privacy is provided in other ways. The door is frosted on the outside so people in the public area of the library cannot tell who is inside. Coyle said there is a fan with a purpose beyond providing circulation.

"The fan blocks out outside sound," she said. "People here can help you if you need it."



Library Executive Director Tiffany Verzani and Waukegan Mayor Ann Taylor cut a ribbon opening the Telehealth Booth. (Steve Sadin/For the Lake County News-Sun)

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Should the consultation require a visit with a specialist, McKenzie said the primary care physician can arrange it and connect everyone needed.

Lushawn Rainer, who said she is a regular visitor to the library, took a tour of the booth and liked what she saw. It was the first time she saw the ease with which someone can engage in telemedicine.

“It’s pretty amazing,” Rainer said. “The doctor can see you, and you can see the doctor.”

The booth is available during regular library hours. It is open from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Mondays through Thursdays, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Fridays and from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. on weekends.

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