

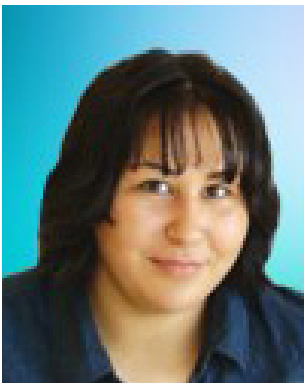


Savannah Bonorden, Sitka, AK Southeast Alaska Regional Health Consortium

I'm from Sitka, which is in the southeast of Alaska. I am a proud mother of two beautiful children. Before coming into the DHAT program I was a dental assistant. I was offered the opportunity to attend the DHAT program with a position at my clinic when I finish school. I was very excited about the offer and saw it as a great way to expand my horizons and travel the state I love the most. Since joining the program I have found the true meaning of independence and have gotten to know who it is I really am. I've gained new skills and have experienced new things I would have never thought I could do nor accomplish.

From the DHAT instructors I've truly learned the importance of oral health and the importance of not only "drilling and filling", but how to put the hand piece down and educate and teach our people about oral health. The instructors have passed down the skills of a provider and for that I'm grateful. I have so much passion and belief in these people, my former classmates and all DHATs, for what we can provide for the future. I am privileged to have met and gone to school with the strong, inspiring and remarkable people in my class!

I see smiles and sense gratitude from the patients and I'm proud to be here helping. It warms my heart and gives me the sense that I'm doing something right. I'm very honored for my position and role as a Dental Health Aide Therapist!



Danielle Boston, Chistochina, AK Mt. Sanford Tribal Health Consortium

Joining the DHAT Program has rewarded me in many ways, I have grown and developed exponentially personally and professionally; I continue to do so on a daily basis. I have the honor of working in the community that I was raised in; I also serve the neighboring village of Mentasta. Being able to provide a much-needed service to both of these villages has been fulfilling in knowing that I make a huge impact on the oral health of the communities that I serve. Seeing the children is my favorite part of my practice, I have been able to change the dental setting to be positive as opposed to being a negative experience.



Samantha B. Brown, Kotzebue, AK Maniilaq Association

I was born and raised in a family that has a history of Inupiaq dancing. I've been dancing since I could walk. This is my way of keeping our traditions alive—singing and dancing the Inupiaq songs while wearing traditional regalia. I would say this is a very important piece of my culture to hold close to my heart, for it has taught me unity in diversity. There is no doubt that Alaska is short of dental providers. This is a place where I see myself giving back to my community. Dental school is my next step in life not only because my fellow Alaskans need more dental providers, but because I know in my heart that this is what I want to do.



Corina Cadzow, Ft. Yukon, AK
Council of Athabascan Tribal Governments

I am from Fort Yukon, Alaska. My goal was to start a career that was always different and challenging. I got an education as a Dental Health Aide Therapist so I could return to my hometown and work with the people of my community. I try to make the people comfortable, and educate them on how to keep from getting cavities. I have a lot of friends here and like to help in anyway I can. I like to go camping, hunting, and fishing. I also like to bead and play basketball.



Reneé Mae Cheemuk, Bethel, AK
Yukon Kuskokwim Health Corporation

I've seen the effects of the lack of dental care in rural villages. Oral care here in the villages can be unreliable due to the shortage of dental staff, as well as financial means to travel to another village or city to obtain dental care. I don't have a problem residing in a village for a work site because I've lived in the village of Kotlik all my life. I love the community environment and want to help children avoid life long dental problems. I love to bring smiles to the villages, just as though I were the Tooth Fairy.



Robert Curtis, Shishmaref, AK
Norton Sound Health Corporation

Initially I worked as a Dental Assistant. The DHAT program interested me, and I trained as a DHAT in New Zealand during 2003-2004. Currently I live in a remote community of 600 to 700 people. The population of kids is around 200 to 300. We have a weekly flouride schedule where we go up to the school at a set time Monday through Thursdays. During the school year we take kids out of class to do cleaning, provide fluoride treatment and talk about brushing. If they have other work that needs to be done we get them in after. With adults we schedule them into the clinic early in the morning or after school is out. If a patient comes in and I see the procedure will be out of my scope of practice I refer them to the dentist in Nome.



Rochelle Ferry, Nome, AK
Norton Sound Health Corporation

Growing up in rural Alaska, good dental hygiene was installed in my family, for the simple reason, "We don't always have a dentist to take care of you if you get a tooth ache." Brushing and flossing were part of our nightly routine. Today I realize that dental hygiene is often lacking largely due to the fact that good dental hygiene is learned and if not understood can be detrimental. I see patients from all over the Bering Straits region and travel to the villages of St. Michael and Stebbins. Along with placing sealants and doing fillings I spend time educating children on proper brushing and flossing and how to avoid decay. Education is a stepping-stone to a better dental future.



Sadie Green, Hooper Bay, AK
Yukon Kuskokwim Health Corporation

My home village is Hooper Bay where I am the oldest sister of three brothers. I am a hard worker, and people look up to me. I trained to become a DHAT so I can help Native people improve their oral health both in my village and in nearby communities. I want to make a positive change while doing something I truly enjoy.



Shannon Hardy, Ft. Yukon
Council of Athabascan Tribal Governments

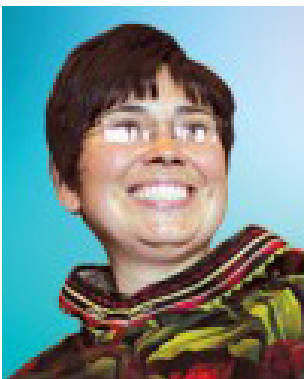
I am honored to be a Certified Dental Health Aide Therapist for my community and surrounding villages. Access to care in Alaska is a great need. To be able to provide dental service to help people whether it's helping with pain or fixing their smiles is a great feeling. For education, I set up at schools to provide prevention and education serving approximately 300 school aged children between three villages.

Going through the DHAT program was a wonderful experience for me and my family, although it was a lot of stress and hard times, but with help and support from my family, friends, classmates, instructors, and community members, I made it through the program successfully and I am working in my region.



Melanie Kerschner, Aniak, AK
Yukon Kuskokwim Health Corporation

I was born and raised in a small country town in Pennsylvania where I grew to love hunting and all the activities the outdoors provide. When I was given a chance to work in Alaska over a year ago I let nothing get in the way. I simply love the way of life here. I moved to Hooper Bay, Alaska to work in their dental clinic looking for a new experience after 11 plus years in the field. I understand almost all aspects of dentistry. It is a privilege to treat our patients with the care they need and deserve. This is my dream come true.



Aurora Johnson, Unalakleet, AK
Maniliq Corporation

Living in a village where dental care only came once a year and dental products were not a priority in many homes, I was very fortunate that at a very young age I had someone in my life to encourage me to take care of my teeth. Now as a dental provider I make it a priority to make dental products available for kids at all school sites. I have been a DHAT over 10 years. Each year as I provide care to the kids in the communities I am building a relationship of trust through what we call continuity of care. As a DHAT I believe our preventive care has provided and improved how we fight the enormous decay rate we have in our region. Working together with other entities in our communities can only better our program toward improved oral health.



Bonnie Johnson, Emmonak, AK
Yukon Kuskokwim Health Corporation

I was raised in a village that did not receive consistent dental care. Dental providers would come and go. Unfortunately, there were villages that did not receive any dental care. Now, I am a Dental Health Aide Therapist who is able to provide much needed dental care to 4 villages on the Yukon Delta. I am able to educate many that had little or no knowledge of the importance of good oral hygiene. The majority of the children were fearful of dental because they usually had experienced the trauma of having teeth extracted in a papoose board. Now that I have been stationed in the Emmonak sub-region, children anticipate a fun dental visit. I am proud to provide preventive and basic restorative dental care to rural Alaska.



Daniel Kennedy, Klawok, AK
SouthEast Alaska Regional Health Corporation

I have been working for Southeast Alaska Regional Health Consortium (SEARHC) as a Dental Health Aid Therapist since Jan. 2009. I have practiced what I have learned from my DHAT training with many community projects that educate, teach oral hygiene instruction and prevention to Headstart programs, public schools, mothers and mothers to be, diabetics, and the elderly. I want to break down the fear barrier between patients and the dental clinic. It is an ongoing mission to convince patients not to be so scared when they come to the dental clinic. The majority of the patients have dental phobias partly due to the dental clinic located within the same building as the medical clinic.



Eric J. Linduska, King Cove, AK
Eastern Aleutian Tribes, Inc.

Growing up in an active rural community has allowed me to recognize qualities that make a strong community grow emotionally and physically—qualities such as teamwork, friendship, patience, hard work and honesty. My goal has been to live in the Aleutians and provide DHAT services to the people there. Knowing firsthand how poor oral healthcare is in the Aleutians, I could not have set a more challenging, inspirational and worthy goal for myself. I became a Dental Health Aide Therapist to implement preventive measures for bad oral health through education and general clinical practice. The sites that I serve are Adak, Akutan, Cold Bay, False Pass, King Cove, Nelson Lagoon, Sand Point and Whittier.



Sabrina Chilton, Juneau, AK
SouthEast Alaska Regional Health Consortium

I am an Alaska Native (Tlingit) from the Eagle Brown-Bear clan, born and raised in Juneau. I have always been interested in health care, even as a child, and as a dental assistant, I often found myself wishing I could practice as the provider. I am proud to serve my community as a DHAT, with the hope that some of my future patients will want to become DHATs too.



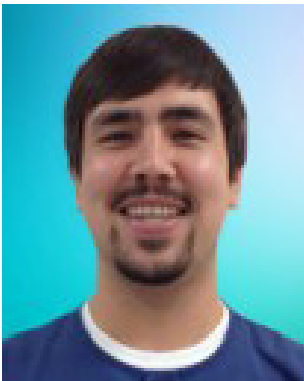
Shawn Martin, Bethel, AK
Yukon Kuskokwim Health Corporation

I am from the community of Bethel, the place where I was born and raised. I want to give my dental knowledge to the community. Some families can't travel to Bethel to see a dentist due to insufficient money or time. That's where I come in and bring oral care to remote patients. Teach patients how to brush and floss. Tell them the importance of applying fluoride to their teeth. Teach children about cavity bugs and why they have to brush them off or have holes in their teeth. I became a Dental Health Aide Therapist to provide preventive and routine dental care to my people.



Amanda Miles, Kodiak, AK
Kodiak Area Native Association

I was born and raised in Kodiak with two sisters and a brother. My grandparents taught me to be a hard worker and that family is the most important thing in life. I have worked as a dental assistant since 2006. Some people are nervous about going to the dentist, but if you can talk to them and make them feel comfortable, the chances of them coming back are better. I am excited for more education and more skills as a dental professional, which will allow me to be able to give more back to my community.



Conan Murat, Aniak, AK
Yukon Kuskokwim Health Corporation

I was born and in Bethel, AK and graduated from Bethel Regional High School in 2000. I left for New Zealand in 2003 to attend the University of Otago and graduated in 2004. Ever since I started working for YKHC I have been dedicated to caring for the people of the YK delta. I have been working and living in Aniak, AK since 2006 and have been providing care to 12 surrounding villages. It has been quite an adventure since I have been practicing as a DHAT, traveling every other week to a different village to keep up with the amount of care needed in my area. I totally love what I do for a living and I can't imagine doing anything else.



Trisha Patton, Bethel, AK
Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium

Coming from a small community gives me a great opportunity to be familiar with the people of these communities. Growing up in a village with a lack of resources and many struggles encouraged me to strive for more: success, happiness and a better life. There was a time in my young life where I had no idea what I wanted to become, until I had become familiar with the DHAT program. I am confident in my career as a Dental Health Aide Therapist; I am making a difference in lives of people of my own and am honored to be improving access to dental care in these rural communities. I only look at my past struggles as something that made me a better and stronger person. In 2015 I was hired by ANTHC to be an instructor at the DHAT training site in Bethel.



Marian Petla, New Stuyahok, AK
Bristol Bay Area Health Corporation

I am from New Stuyahok in the Southwest region, 50 air miles from Dillingham. I grew up and lived in New Stuyahok for 20 years. I moved to Dillingham because there was no work in the village. It was hard to make the decision, as I knew the people very well in the village. I would go home every weekend – but through time I was able to adapt to living in Dillingham.

Before Dillingham, I went to University of Alaska at Fairbanks, and just stayed one semester – but didn't think I was ready for school. I came back and started working part time jobs. That's when I made decision to move to Dillingham. I started taking part-time classes at the campus there, and decided I wanted to continue my education. I went back to the university and was studying for early childhood degree, so I would have a promised job to go back to.

I was always interested in dentistry, but didn't know if there was a job for that in New Stu. One of my friends sent me an email about the DHAT program. I thought great — I will still be working with kids, I'll get to go home – and I'll get to work in dentistry! I decided I wanted to do it right away. I loved working with the people here Bethel. Everyone is so friendly. I found out there is a lady in town whose brother married into my family. Since I've been here, she's been trying to find a way to meet me because she knew a little about our family. After a couple of months, we finally met. She's taking me places – I got to experience dip-netting. On Mother's Day, she took me to dinner even though the people didn't know who I was, people welcomed me into their home. As a DHAT I give back to the people – helping everyone I know – the families. One of the biggest things for me is being able to give back.



Charles Redfox, Emmonak, AK
Yukon Kuskokwim Health Corporation

I am from Emmonak, a community of 1,000 people at the mouth of the Yukon River. I am a person people can look up to in my community where I have worked as a dental assistant for the past 18 months. I have worked closely with a practicing DHAT. Growing up in rural Alaska I know about the lack of dental care. I want to help my community by improving the availability of routine dental services.



Lauren Tooyak, Kotzebue, AK
Maniilaq Association

I am from a small, beautiful community called Noatak. My son Joseph and I lived in Kotzebue for the past few years. One talent I'd love to bring to our community is to show them that dedication and hard work really does pay off in the end. Being a Dental Assistant opened my eyes to learn more about dentistry and I loved that rewarding feeling at the end of the day knowing you helped someone one way or another.



Jana Schuerch, Kiana, AK
Maniilaq Association

I was born in Kotzebue and grew up in Kiana where I spent the majority of my life. It's clear that additional efforts in addressing the prevention of tooth decay in underserved Rural Alaska Communities are needed. As a Dental Health Aide Therapist I have the opportunity to work within a small community, getting patients out of pain, restoring teeth, and working on preventing dental decay. These efforts will ultimately slow the growing tooth decay in our region.



Ferdella J. Sharp, Based in Manokotak, AK
Bristol Bay Area Health Corporation

Is it worth it? That was my first thought when I heard of the opportunity to apply to the DHAT training program. I am someone the people of Manokotak trusted to do any job put before me. But I had never done anything in the health field. So the encouragement I got from the community proved to me it was worth trying. It takes a steady hand and people skills to be an effective Dental Health Aide Therapist. My community's faith in me—my future plans, and the confidence that I could be an effective Dental Health Aide Therapist— became reasons to answer my question, "Is it worth it?" with yes, it is!



Ben Steward, Sand Point, AK
Employer: Eastern Aleutian Tribes

Work as a DHAT remains as fun and exciting as I had felt it would. Every day is different; I never know what kind of work I will be doing till it's done.

The people that work in the clinic with me are amazingly fun to work with. On top of that the people of the community are just as fun and interesting to get to know.



Carrie Tikiun, Atmautluak, AK
Yukon Kuskokwim Health Corporation

I am three quarters Yupik Eskimo, and my current home is in Atmautluak, alongside the Johnson River. I see myself as a role model for kids in this small community, letting them know there is more to life after graduating high school. Working as a DHAT means I can help my community live in a healthier environment without having to travel out of their home village in order to receive dental care. I want to help Alaskans all over keep their healthy teeth in the future to come.



Phylcia Wilde, Mt. Village, AK
Yukon Kuskokwim Health Corporation

I have the experience of traveling to a faraway place in order to get dental treatment. As a child every time I had a toothache or cavity I had to travel to Bethel, just like everyone in my village. In elementary school I went to Bethel many times in order to get my cavities and fillings done. One of the things most needed in the villages are Dental Health Aide Therapists. When I was six I got a toy dentist kit for Christmas. I went to everyone in the house pretending to fix everyone's teeth.



Stephanie Woods, Kotzebue, AK
Maniilaq Association

I am a certified Dental Health Aide Therapist (DHAT) that trained in New Zealand in 2003-2004, working for the Maniilaq Association since January of 2005. After doing a six-month preceptorship in Kotzebue, I moved to the village of Shungnak, where my husband is from, and practiced dentistry in the local clinic as well as frequent travel to other villages.

In January 2009 I became the dental director for the department and moved to the region's headquarters in Kotzebue. I currently work in the clinic 1-2 days a week and travel to one of the outlying villages for one week every other month to provide dental services. I have spoken in numerous states around the country including twice in Washington DC promoting the DHAT program. For the past eight years I've been on the Dental Academic Review Committee (DARC) that reviews the DHAT curriculum.