

# THE Mukluk Telegraph

THE OFFICIAL QUARTERLY NEWSPAPER FOR THE CUSTOMER-OWNERS OF THE ALASKA NATIVE TRIBAL HEALTH CONSORTIUM

APRIL-JUNE 2012

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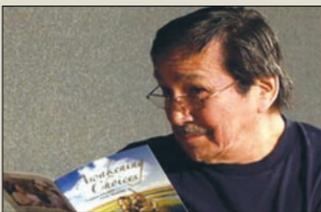


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PHOTO BY MICHAEL DINNEEN

Some of the members of The Path of the Raven group gathers recently at the Alaska Native Medical Center.

## On the right Path

*Path of the Raven guides providers, customer-owners to improved care*

**W**hat started as a small support group has quickly become a guiding force in impactful and culturally competent health care for Alaska Natives around the state. Comprised of proud and passionate elders who represent Alaska's regions, the Path of the Raven provides guidance, insight and

compassion to help increase positive health outcomes and encourage patient advocacy for American Indian and Alaska Native Peoples.

The Path of the Raven meets twice monthly and works with health care providers, organizational and Tribal leaders, as well as people of all ages, with a mission "to learn, share and

spread the word about health and wellness." The group works in close partnership with the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium and Southcentral Foundation.

The Path of the Raven began as an elders talking circle and support

SEE PATH, PAGE 3 ►

## ANTHC crews help keep the clean water flowing

BY JOSH NIVA

The Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium's Division of Environmental Health and Engineering (DEHE) crews are well-known for spending their summers bringing clean water and sanitation to communities around Alaska.

Not as celebrated is DEHE's work that keeps that water flowing during the coldest stretches of Alaska's winter.

During this unusually cold winter, DEHE

SEE CLEAN WATER, PAGE 6 ►



PHOTO BY JUDD STERLING

Crews work to thaw a junction box in Selawik during a cold stretch this winter. ANTHC staff provided support for thawing water and sewer systems around Alaska during this unusually cold winter.

# Make protective eyewear part of your fishing season

BY THE ALASKA NATIVE MEDICAL CENTER  
DEPARTMENT OF OPHTHALMOLOGY

Being on call for eye emergencies in Alaska has its seasonal twists, but the peak of serious eye injuries occurs in midsummer. This is when frantic sports and subsistence activities result in a variety of injuries, and the worst is when an emergency room doctor announces another fishing-related eye disaster: a fishhook in the eye.

Virtually all of the freshwater and saltwater fishing-related eye injuries we see in clinical practice are preventable with ballistic protective lenses. In fact, protective glasses should be used at all times when fishing or even when being near people who are fishing.

TV scripts often portray surgical miracles, implying that all things are easily fixable. This may be true for cars and computers, but not so with eyes. Once damaged, this jewel of visual perfection no longer provides those wonderful images we take for granted. Many fishing-related eye injuries result in profound vision loss or even loss of the eye. Prevention of injuries, not repair, is key. A recent case illustrates this point.

A family camped near the Kenai River was enjoying a sun-filled fishing trip. It had all the makings of Alaska utopia until a fishhook went flying and suddenly a life was changed forever: a child's eye was impaled with a fishhook. The family's recurrent nightmare was the knowledge that a pair of simple protective lenses would have completely prevented this tragedy. This child had an acceptable surgical outcome, but the eye will never see normally again – he would



## Eye safety tips

Keeping your eyes safe during fishing season around Alaska:

- Always wear protective lenses when fishing or even when you are in a fishing area – polycarbonate lenses are preferred
- Safety glasses may be worn over regular spectacles
- Wear a stiff-billed baseball hat or other large brim caps to further protect eyes

never be a jet pilot or a surgeon.

The world is filled with warnings for everything and ophthalmologists hate to raise one more voice in this symphony. However, the necessity of wearing eye protection when people nearby are violently flinging sharpened bits of metal through the air is obvious.

Most fishing-related eye injuries are caused by fishhooks, sinkers and rod tips. Severe freshwater hook and weight injuries nearly always result from the same mechanism. When a hook or sinker from a trout or salmon line (8-40 pound test) is snagged on a rock or a fish and suddenly pulled free, a violent whiplash action is created that can

launch projectiles directly back into the eye of a nearby fisherman. Even a bead or small hook on a light fly rod may cause ocular injury. This problem is exacerbated along popular fishing spots like the Kenai and Russian Rivers, where sport fishermen can stand shoulder-to-shoulder during peak fish runs.

Saltwater injuries frequently occur when a fish is being hoisted out of the water and into the boat using the fishing pole with the hook attached to the fish. The fishhook may dislodge from the fish's mouth during this process and catapult back into the face or eye. Gaffs used to impale and land halibut or other large fish thrashing at the boat side may also pop loose from the fish and be propelled into the eye of a bystander.

Those are just a few examples of why it's important to wear protective lenses when fishing or when you are in fishing areas. The lenses are easy to find – nonprescription wrap-around protective polycarbonate lenses are available at supermarkets, hardware and sporting goods dealers around

Alaska. For sportsmen who normally wear prescription lenses, polycarbonate prescription glasses are also available from optometrists. As an alternative, safety glasses may be worn over regular spectacles. Added protection can also be provided by wearing a stiff-billed ball cap or other large brim hats.

Although Alaska sport fishing officials recommend the use of polycarbonate protective lenses while fishing, use is voluntary, and unfortunately most anglers don't perceive fishing as a sight-threatening pastime. It's our hope that fisherman always use protective lenses while fishing and that parents are vigilant when fishing with children who may have to be constantly reminded to use the proper eye protection. That way, your memories of summer fishing will be about fishing, not about an accident.

*This article was authored by Tom Mader M.D., Robert Werner M.D., and Dave Chamberlain M.D., who work in the Department of Ophthalmology at the Alaska Native Medical Center.*

## MISSION

Providing the highest quality health services in partnership with our people and the Alaska Tribal Health System

## VISION

Alaska Natives are the healthiest people in the world

## VALUES

Achieving excellence  
Native self-determination  
Treat with respect and integrity  
Health and wellness  
Compassion

### THE MUKLUK TELEGRAPH

The Mukluk Telegraph is the official newspaper of the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium.

The paper is published quarterly and distributed at no charge to customer-owners, employees and partners of ANTHC statewide.

### HOW ARE WE DOING?

Have a suggestion or a compliment for the Mukluk Telegraph?

We would love to hear from you. E-mail the ANTHC Marketing Department at [marketing@anthc.org](mailto:marketing@anthc.org).

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PHOTO BY JOSH NIVA

Longtime ANMC nurse Jill Adamson discovered new ways to make an impact in health care after she started working with the Path of the Raven elders group.

# ANMC nurse works with elders to make an impact

BY JOSH NIVA

Jill Adamson has worked as a nurse at the Alaska Native Medical Center for 16 years, beginning her tenure at the old hospital downtown. She had always recognized that Alaska Native elders were a special population that demanded a different level of respect, communication and care. But four years ago, she also realized the impact that group could have on health care of all Alaska Native people.

Adamson was working in Cardiology and noticed that there were reoccurring issues involving patients who were not taking their medicine as prescribed. She considered making a flyer to remind customer-owners to be diligent about taking their prescriptions, but she was encouraged to talk with a group of elders first. When the group shared its feedback, she realized that they could have an influence well beyond that issue.

Adamson began spending more of her work and volunteer time with the group, which consists of elders from around Alaska. Combining Adamson's health care background with the cultural knowledge and experiences of the elders led to one breakthrough after another: they were able to provide cultural and communication tips for providers; act as consultants and encourage the sharing of information between providers and customer-owners; and even identify and fix system-wide problems.

The group has gained momentum and influence in the past year. They named themselves the Path of the Raven and created a logo. They localized a national Ask Me 3 campaign about people taking

ownership of their health care and made it culturally appropriate for Alaska Native people. They renamed the campaign Ask Today and its posters now hang in health care organizations around Alaska.

Adamson now works as a case manager nurse in ANMC's Internal Medicine Clinic and says her role with Path of the Raven is as involved and inspiring as ever. She's part facilitator, part organizer and part medical information source for the group. She is proud of the impact the group has made and excited about its future. She also notes the impact it has had on her.

"As you get more into your career, you look at other things that make your practice what it is," said Adamson with a smile. "My work with the elders has been amazing. And I'm certain the care that I give and discuss is much more therapeutic because of it."

PATH, FROM PAGE 1 ▶

group, but growing elder involvement and questions about other issues regarding health and medication, particularly stroke and heart disease, led to an expanded focus on customer-owner advocacy.

In just three years, the Path of the Raven has offered leadership that has led to wide-ranging health care improvements in many areas, including the Alaska Native Medical Center (ANMC). The group played a key role in localizing and publicizing the national Ask Me 3 campaign and in the process empowered Alaska Natives around the state to take ownership in their medical care.

The group also helped the ANMC Cardiology Clinic implement pharmacy system changes that led to a 50 percent improvement in medication compliance in just 30 days. And the group encouraged 178 ANMC nurses to respond to a survey, which opened discussion about cultural considerations and the impact on their nursing practice.

The elders are now viewed as community liaisons who help spread information about health and wellness – they are visible and vocal in encouraging discussions about health care delivery and customer-owner perceptions about the care they receive.

And the group has potential to make even more impact in the future. They have expressed concerns that elders visiting ANMC don't know how to navigate the hospital and are encouraging the return of a patient navigator system. The group has also expressed an interest in working with youth groups to create digital stories to share information over the hospital televisions.

## THANK YOU

to these sponsors for their generous support!

These community leaders helped make the 2012 Raven's Ball a success.





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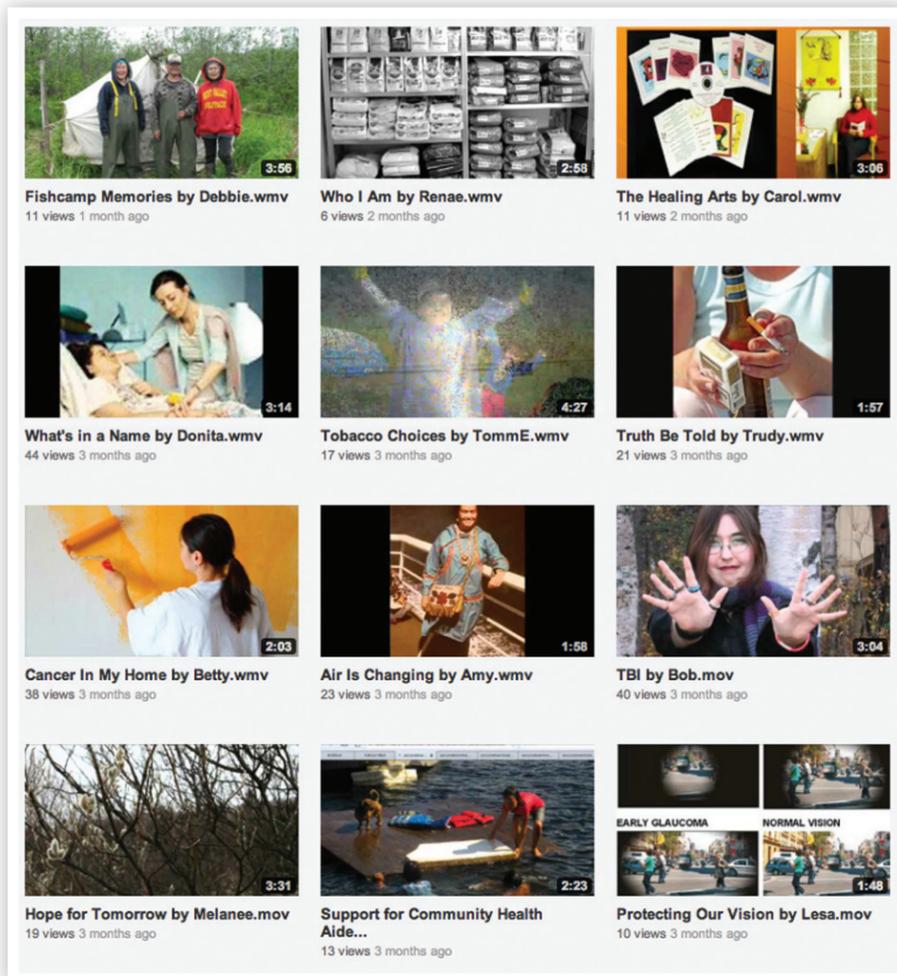
All proceeds benefit key initiatives to improve medical care, strengthen wellness and prevention efforts, and promote healthy village environments.

# Lights ... Camera ... Health!

*ANTHC uses video to engage, inspire and provide better health for Alaska Natives*

BY JOSH NIVA

ANTHC often works on the cutting edge of technology and new media. Video is one medium that the Consortium and its partners uses to inform and inspire, educate and engage, connect and even provide better health to Alaska Natives around the state. Here are just a few of the ways ANTHC uses video as a tool to help reach the vision that Alaska Natives are the healthiest people in the world.



## Alaska Native Center for Digital Storytelling ▲

Sometimes the most effective way for ANTHC to share the stories of Alaska Natives around the state is to empower community members, partners and customer-owners to share their own.

Margaret David, ANTHC's Program Manager Health Promotion and Disease Prevention, leads digital storytelling workshops that teach Alaskans how to effectively tell their stories using modern tools. She also monitors the Alaska Native Center for Digital Storytelling website which houses more than 100 videos made by community members on topics as broad and personal as suicide, subsistence, spirituality and culture.

"Storytelling is a tradition in indigenous and Native cultures and we help blend that with modern technology," explained David. "What's really exciting about digital storytelling is that it's real people telling their stories firsthand, using their voice and experiences. Viewers really relate to those personal experiences."

Visit the Alaska Native Center for Digital Storytelling page at:

[youtube.com/ANTHCDigitalStories](https://www.youtube.com/ANTHCDigitalStories)



## Giving communities voices, solutions ▲

ANTHC's Division of Environmental Health and Engineering (DEHE) uses video to educate communities and partners, propose funding, and share its work with the media and public. One recent example of DEHE's diverse video use is the six-minute "Copper Valley School Brownfield."

Produced by Environmental Health Assistant Kimberly Smith and a videographer, the video tours a site in the Tazlina area of Alaska's Interior and discusses the potential public health implications of the fuels and chemicals used and stored in the area for many decades. Through interviews, it offers a window to the future of the land and its people. Smith said the project opened dialogue between the Native Village of Tazlina and the Catholic Archdiocese that ran a school on the site.

"This video helps convey the emotions that people feel," said Smith. "When I first saw it, I thought 'Wow.' This clearly states the message we were trying to get across and it also brought two groups together. They're ready to talk to one another now because of this video."

View the video at: [youtube.com/watch?v=RFIz64eRfEo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RFIz64eRfEo)



## Our shuttle. Your convenience.

Alaska Native Medical Center's shuttles now offer two convenient routes to and from the hospital.

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### Route 2: ANMC, Alaska Regional Hospital, Quality Suites

Operates Monday-Friday

For a complete route schedule, please visit [www.anmc.org/HospitalServices/travel.asp](http://www.anmc.org/HospitalServices/travel.asp)



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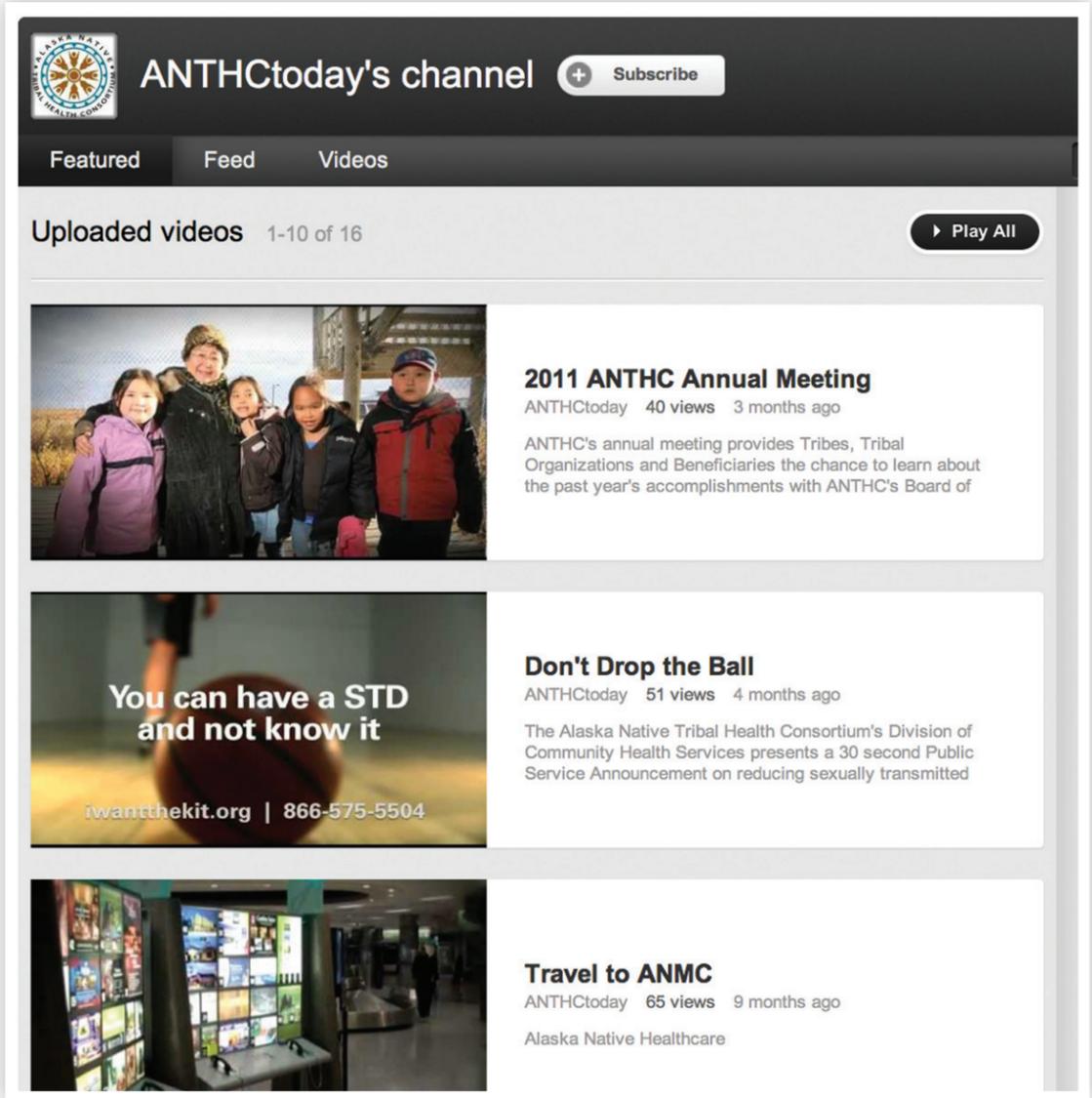
**ANMC travel video**

Facing a health issue is stressful enough, but for customer-owners around Alaska who must travel to the Alaska Native Medical Center (ANMC) for care, the steps in getting there can also be filled with anxiety.

ANTHC created "Traveling to ANMC," a three-minute video that guides viewers through the experience. The video is posted online and distributed in DVDs to clinics and partners around Alaska.

Leatha Mercurieff, Vice President of Customer Service, said her team is producing an updated video, which will be released soon.

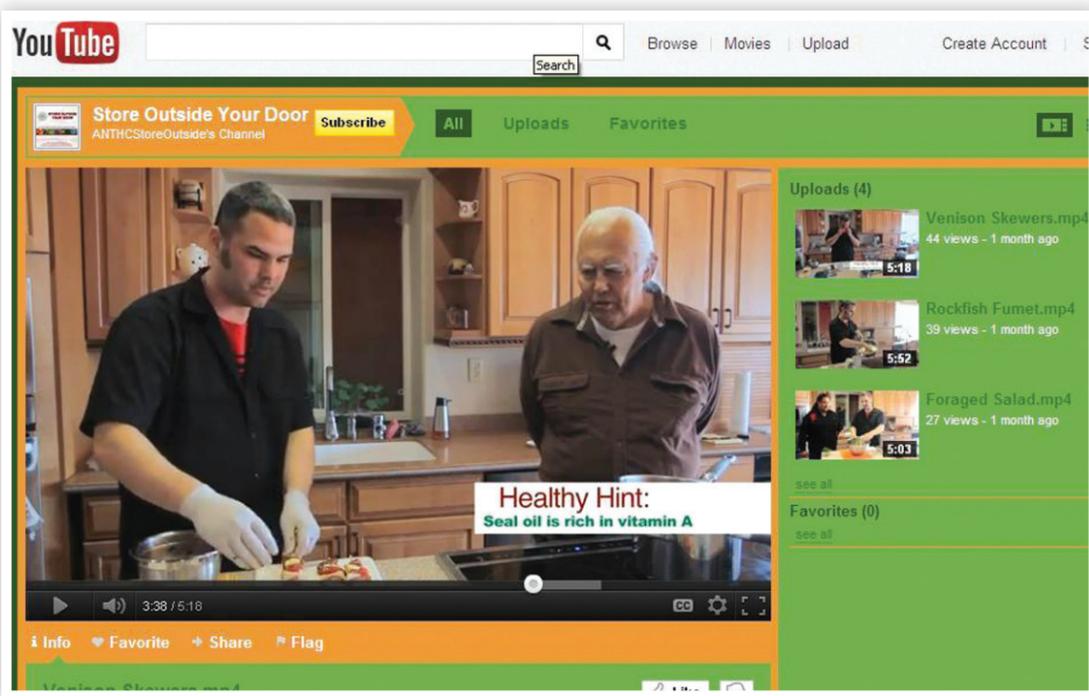
Watch or share the current "Traveling to ANMC" video at: [anmc.org/HospitalServices/travel.asp](http://anmc.org/HospitalServices/travel.asp)



**ANTHC Today**

ANTHC's YouTube channel shares information-driven videos, ad campaigns and important messages with the world and is a perfect example of the ANTHC's industry leadership in social media.

Visit the channel at: [youtube.com/user/ANTHCtoday](http://youtube.com/user/ANTHCtoday)



**Traditional Foods, Contemporary Chef**

A vibrant piece of ANTHC's Store Outside Your Door initiative, this web video series sends Tlingit chef Rob Kinneen around the state with Alaska Native elders to create contemporary recipes out of traditional foods.

"It's a way for us to demystify traditional foods and help young Alaska Natives and families live healthier," said Dr. Gary Ferguson, ANTHC's Director of Wellness and Prevention and an integral part of the production of the series.

The videos will make an impact beyond just a tasty meal: they are woven with healthy lifestyles messaging that build healthier communities. The first webisodes debuted in late 2011; Dr. Ferguson plans on filming and posting more episodes in the coming months.

Watch it here: [youtube.com/ANTHCStoreOutside](http://youtube.com/ANTHCStoreOutside)

Learn more here: [facebook.com/storeoutside](http://facebook.com/storeoutside)

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**Dr. Paul Willard**  
Hospitalist  
Internal Medicine



The Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium and Southcentral Foundation jointly own and manage the Alaska Native Medical Center under the terms of Public Law 105-83. These parent organizations have established a Joint Operating Board to ensure unified operation of health services provided by the Medical Center.

# Pardon our dust: We're making Quyana House more comfortable

BY JOSH NIVA

It's never easy to travel across the state or to be far from home while facing health concerns. That's why the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC) and its Alaska Native Medical Center (ANMC) teams work constantly to make Quyana House a warm and welcoming place for customer-owners to rest, recover and visit with loved ones.

Earlier this year, ANTHC launched an extensive Quyana House lobby renovation. The project will create a better atmosphere in the gathering area for those staying at Quyana House, as well as for their visiting family and friends; it will also improve the look and functionality of the reception area for customer-owners and staff; and it will create a new space for ANTHC's travel staff. The project will be completed by June 1.

"This is a high-visibility space," explained Ted Dickerson, ANTHC's Senior Project Manager in Campus Facilities Group, "and it's important for us to make the experience there as pleasant as possible."

Currently, the gathering area is a high-traffic

space near the elevators, which is not very quiet or private. By moving the gathering area, it will eliminate much of the foot traffic and create a more comfortable environment. Upgrades to the gathering area will include new finishes, flooring, ceiling and walls, as well as new furniture and a television.

Meanwhile, other Quyana House upgrades are taking place behind the scenes to make for more efficient and effective travel bookings for customer-owners and for partners working in the Alaska Tribal Health System.

In March, Quyana House became a standalone travel management service. An agreement with U.S. Travel allows staff to book, issue and change travel tickets, see last seats available, and even check car and hotel availability. And in February, Quyana House launched a streamlined online booking function for ANMC case managers to be able to check room availability, book rooms, receive confirmation codes, and change or cancel reservations. The new system had a successful launch and is being considered for expansion to regional partners.

CLEAN WATER, FROM PAGE 1 ▶

staff assisted during many cold-weather calamities. DEHE employees resolved an emergency involving an ice-laden water storage tank in Ouzinkie. DEHE's Alaska Rural Utility Collaborative (ARUC) also sent parts and equipment from Anchorage to Savoonga to help thaw the community's main water line, preventing a catastrophe that would have eliminated water distribution through winter.

In Selawik, DEHE ARUC and Construction employees led around-the-clock efforts to help restore a clogged water pump in an icy river while also thawing water mains. And as pipes froze and burst in Saxman, the innovative new water treatment facility designed and constructed by DEHE staff helped the community avoid a complete water outage while the system was restored.

"In the winter, we're constantly working to keep water running in homes and protecting public health," explained John Spriggs, an ARUC Utility Coordinator who helped launch the program more than 10 years ago. "And even though we build a community's system and move on to the next one, we never really go away. Our program and other ANTHC programs are always there to take care of the systems and the customers."



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# Colorectal cancer prevention hits the streets

“Get screened at 50! Love your colon!” That was the message sent from a most unusual float heard in the streets during the 2012 Fur Rendezvous Parade as it traveled through downtown Anchorage. In honor of Colorectal Cancer (CRC) Awareness Month in March, staff from the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium and Southcentral Foundation Colorectal Cancer Control Programs along with the Alaska Colorectal Cancer Partnership participated in the 2012 Fur Rondy Grand Parade. The CRC Prevention Float featured six costumed Polyp Men and a giant colon made out of pink balloons, along with cancer prevention helpers from the Alaska National Teenager Scholarship Organization.

Colorectal cancer is one of the leading causes of death in Alaska, but if everyone were screened for this disease most of these deaths could be prevented. Additionally, colorectal cancer is the second leading cause of new cases of cancer among Alaska Native people, who experience two times the rate of new cases of cancer and death due to this disease as U.S. whites. All people over age 50 should be screened for colorectal cancer, or earlier if there is a family history of the disease. Across Alaska, the CRC screening rate is 62 percent; the Centers for Disease Control have set a national screening rate goal of 80 percent.

The Colorectal Cancer Prevention Float was created to encourage parade-goers to get themselves and their loved ones screened. Laughter was the most common reaction as the Polyp people waved and mugged for camera shots.



PHOTO BY DIANA REDWOOD

Polyp people spread the word about colorectal cancer screenings at the 2012 Fur Rendezvous Grand Parade in Anchorage. The Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium and Southcentral Foundation Colorectal Cancer Control Programs participated along with the Alaska Colorectal Cancer Partnership.

“Already got my colonoscopy!” shouted out one man.

“I made him do it!” shouted out his wife.

The Alaska Colorectal Cancer Partnership wants to remind you to help prevent colorectal cancer by not smoking, being physically active, eating a healthy diet and getting screened if you

are over 50. Encourage your loved ones to get screened, and remember that colorectal cancer is beatable, treatable and preventable!

For more information contact Diana Redwood, ANTHC Colorectal Cancer Control Program Manager at 907-729-3959, dredwood@anthc.org, www.anthctoday.org/epicenter/colon.html.

## CHAPs offer engaging cancer education for Alaskans

The ANTHC Community Health Aide Program (CHAP) consists of a network of approximately 550 Community Health Aides/Practitioners in over 170 rural Alaska villages. CHAPs are often the primary provider of health care in Alaska’s rural communities and serve as the frontline resource for cancer information.

A variety of cancer education resources were developed with and for CHAPs to support their learning and community conversations. In the words of a CHAP, “Wellness lives in the heart of the community.”

Here are some of those educational and entertaining resources to prevent cancer or decrease cancer risk:

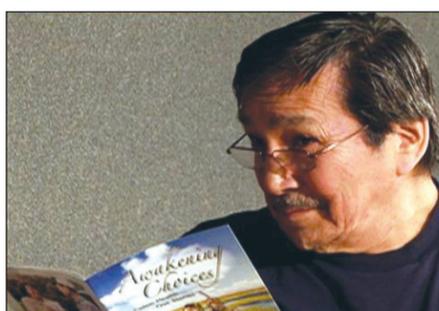
### The Story Basket: Weaving Breast Health Into Our Lives

Informational movie and booklet on breast health.



### What’s the Big Deal?

A telenovella style movie features an Alaska Native cast. View seven 3-5 minute story vignettes to learn if Isaac will have a lifesaving screening exam.

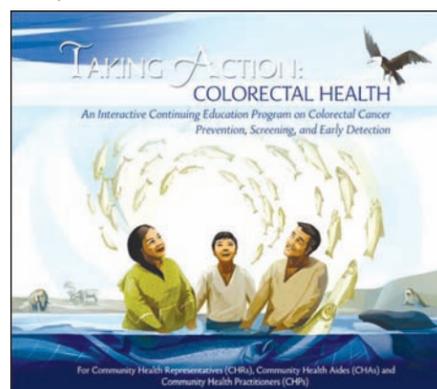


### Staying Strong, Staying Healthy: Alaska Native Men Speak Out About Cancer

Resilient stories featured on a DVD and educational quiz.

### Awakening Choices: Colon Health, Our Stories

Informational movie, booklet and activity guide to encourage Alaska Native people to talk about colorectal cancer and healthy lifestyle choices.

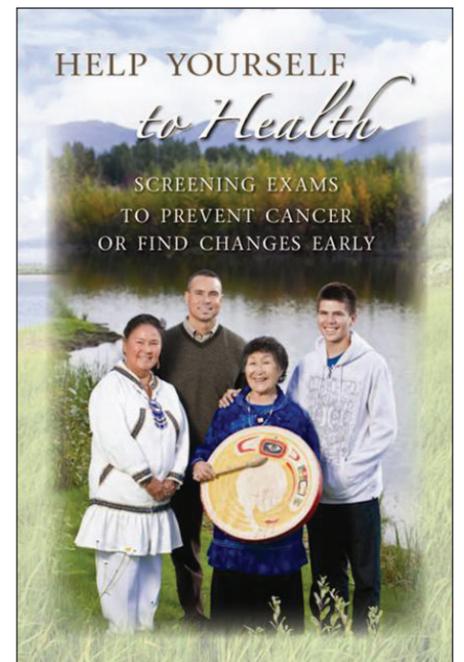


### Winds of Hope and Taking Action: Colorectal Health

Two interactive CD-ROMs with stories, games, short movies, pictures and other activities to share cancer information and wellness ways.

### Sharing Stories Through Theater

A 45-minute cancer education script that



explores many challenging and sensitive themes including emotions associated with a cancer diagnosis, treatment, pain, end-of-life, and loss and grief.

To learn more or order copies, visit [www.akchap.org/html/resources/cancer-education.html](http://www.akchap.org/html/resources/cancer-education.html) or contact Melany Cueva at [mcueva@anthc.org](mailto:mcueva@anthc.org).

# The best health for the youngest customer-owners

From award-winning care to innovative specialties at Alaska Native Medical Center (ANMC), to literacy programs and safety education, to connecting families far from home via teleconferencing, Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC) staff is constantly strengthening and expanding the way it cares for our youngest Alaska Native people. Here are a few of the ways we're taking care of them and their families:

- New pediatric endocrinology team hired at ANMC to care for children with growth, puberty, diabetes or other disorders related to hormones and the glands that produce them.
- ANMC volunteers offer services that range from holding NICU babies for exhausted parents to enrolling families in Imagination Library, which provides free books to children from birth to age 5.
- ANTHC's Division of Community Health Services staff offers an array of wellness and prevention services and healthy lifestyles education that keep children and families safe and strong.
- The Healthy Alaska Natives Foundation funds initiatives that positively impact children, including Camp Coho, where children grieving the loss of family and friends can find support.
- ANTHC's Division of



BY TODD HENRY

*ANMC's new pediatric endocrinology team.*

Environmental Health & Engineering staff provides clean water for families, which is crucial for children. Children who live with only limited access to water service are five times more likely to be hospitalized for lower respiratory infections and 11 times more likely for pneumonia.

- ANMC nurses provide new mother education, and in times of despair, compassionate bereavement assistance.

Thank you to everyone at ANTHC and across Alaska who works to help make Alaska Natives the healthiest people in the world, especially the youngest ones!



BY JOSH NIVA

*Above: Members of the Seattle Seahawks football team visit families at ANMC.*

*Iditarod musher Hugh Neff celebrates Dr. Seuss's birthday and encourages literacy with young patients at ANMC.*



BY TODD HENRY



ANTHC FILE PHOTO

*Left: ANTHC's Division of Environmental Health & Engineering provides clean water for families across Alaska.*