

Kaniqsirugut News

kang•ik•see•roo•koot (Iñupiaq): we understand

February 2006

The Newsletter of Norton Sound Health Corporation • Kawerak, Inc. • Bering Straits Regional Housing Authority

No. 59

Missing persons cases receive new attention

Unsolved missing person and suspicious death cases in Nome continue to be an issue of concern in our region.

Thanks to the persistence of a group of organizations in the region, these cases are now getting renewed attention, and the Nome Police Department has received some new information about several old cases.

The following steps have been taken since a plan was developed in June:

■ **Investigation into missing persons and unexplained deaths:** The Alaska State Troopers and Nome police compiled a list of unsolved missing persons cases. They submitted the list and case files to the Federal Bureau of Investigation. FBI representatives agreed to visit the region at the urging of Tim Burgess, U.S. Attorney in Alaska.

■ The Nome Police Department has publicized its ethical and professional

standards, its process for reporting complaints, who to contact, etc. Police Chief Craig Moates sent the material to Kawerak, which has had it published in the *Nome Nugget* and in *Kaniqsirugut News* (see page 19).

■ **Communication of progress:** Kawerak staff have regularly updated their board members at meetings. Moates provides updates at Nome Common Council meetings. Melanie

Edwards, Kawerak executive vice president, Nome Mayor Denise Michels, and the U.S. Attorney Burgess were interviewed by KNOM. Information about the effort has appeared in the *Anchorage Daily News*, resulting in three people contacting Kawerak with information, which was then gathered by Moates.

■ Resource information was shared with next of kin of missing persons.

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Clinic in Unalakleet named after visionary

As one of Norton Sound Health Corporation's first board members back in the 1970s, Ruth Johnson advocated for a "super clinic" in Unalakleet to serve villages in that subregion.

Now the 17,000-square-foot subregional clinic in Unalakleet, which opened in 2004, bears Johnson's name.

The Ruth L. Johnson Anikkan Inuit Iluaqutaat Clinic was named Nov. 21 with a ceremony at the clinic followed by a potluck.

"I'm very honored," Ruth Johnson said after the potluck. "I never expected anything like this to happen to me!"

The clinic name was selected by a committee that included people from St. Michael, Stebbins, Unalakleet, Shaktoolik and Koyuk—the five communities the clinic serves.

During the naming ceremony, Willie Takak of Shaktoolik, NSHC's original board chair, explained why Johnson's name was chosen.

"When NSHC first started ... and we asked the villages for their needs and priorities, they all wanted a clinic," Takak said. "But Ruth Johnson had a dream that she'd want what we began to call a 'super clinic' in Unalakleet" to serve the five southern villages.

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Look inside!

Village Focus: We travel out to Shishmaref **page 14**

Dental therapists back from training, ready to make a difference! **page 6**

Researching family history **page 13**

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Jobs! Training! Your future! **page 24**

Changes at BSRHA **page 17**

The facts about bird flu **page 21**

Keep moving this winter **page 5**

And much more ...



NSHC held a candlelight vigil on World AIDS Day, Dec. 1, in front of Old St. Joe's in Nome. With candles, from left: Andrea Kuzuguk, Sophie Nothstine, Dr. Michael Mraz, Aldrich Mazonna, and Charles Pullock. Children: Franklin and Rene Kuzuguk.

Facing the HIV threat

AIDS is a disease. There is no cure. It's deadly. But it's preventable.

That's the message Aldrich



Sherry Trigg is with ANTHC's HIV/AIDS project

Mazonna, prevention coordinator for Norton Sound Health Corporation, and Sherry Trigg, with the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium, are taking to the Bering Strait region.

Alaska Natives in our region are in grave danger from HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. AIDS is spread through sexual contact. So are chlamydia and gonorrhea—and our

region has some of the highest rates of these diseases in the country.

This means that once a few people in our region are infected with HIV, it could spread very quickly. There

Speaking out to save lives

AIDS patient from Bering Strait region shares story to promote healthy choices

When Leslie Oyoumick was asked to be part of a Kawerak Regional Conference panel discussing HIV and AIDS last February, he hesitated.

It's not that he isn't used to telling people that he has AIDS, that he is gay, and that he probably was infected

is *no cure* for HIV or AIDS. People can live with HIV or AIDS for years, but their quality of life is severely affected.

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with HIV by sharing a needle while using drugs. At 45, the Anchorage resident is very involved in doing HIV education and sharing his story.

But speaking on the Kawerak panel would mean going to Nome and telling his story to people from the region where he grew up.

He asked his parents, Merlin and Mildred Oyoumick, how they would

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