

Kanjiqsirugut News

kang·ik'·see·roo'·koot (Iñupiaq): we understand

Spring 2022

The Newsletter of Norton Sound Health Corporation

No. 73

Programs team up to carry a message of hope

On a Thursday afternoon in mid-April, the wood shop at Aniguiin School in Elim overflowed with 20 lively middle school students, working side-by-side as they filed down foot-long pieces of lumber.

The room filled with the sound of busy hands, the grinding wood creating a swooshing beat and an atmosphere not unlike that of an industrious beehive.

The youth were making ice fishing

jigs to allow them to catch food for their families this spring.

"We're a strong people, we're a happy people, we can do this. We are so capable of living happy, healthy, thriving lifestyles."

It was just one of several activities that Norton Sound Health Corporation's IñUA Program and the Kawerak Well-

ness Program worked together to bring to Elim April 13-15, carrying a message of suicide prevention among young people.

The sister programs worked with over 100 students, holding talking circles and sharing stories during the school day. The community celebrated with an evening of frybread tacos and Native dancing.

It wasn't the first time sixth-grader Mariah Daniels had made a fishing jig. Last year, she used her own homemade

jig to catch tomcod upriver.

"It's fun, and it's part of our culture, too," Mariah said.

Her older cousin, eighth-grader Katya Daniels, said being able to blend their subsistence lifestyle with school makes them feel more engaged.

"It means a lot. It's fun and exciting, and we're always happy to do it," the older Daniels said.

One of the event's organizers,

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Photo: Alexis Erikson

Gordon Iya (right), drum making course instructor, prepares for drilling in a new class offered through Behavioral Health Services at NSHC, while Kenneth Hughes begins to add an ivory wedge to his drum handle.

Traditional crafting heals, inspires, unites

BHS art-based courses teach skills, promote wellness

When summer construction jobs dwindle and the sun begins to hibernate, you can find Benjamin Jack indoors, creating one-of-a-kind carvings from ivory, bone, or antlers. An indigenous artist raised in Stebbins, Ben Jack grew up surrounded by a rich culture of singing, dancing, and art. At a young age he understood the importance of preserving his culture and chose to carry on the

tradition of sharing knowledge about his roots and of carving.

At 14, Jack began designing art when two bilingual teachers sparked his creativity in their classroom.

"Roseanna Dan Waghiyi and Rita Johnson were my inspiration to carve, after teaching me how to make a manaq (fishing rod)," he said. Over time, he learned more about carving and how to integrate his traditional values into his artwork.

This instilled in him a passion to continue to preserve and teach his culture. When he heard about the art-based courses offered through

Behavioral Health Services, he began teaching as the carving instructor.

"This program is beneficial to our community members and greatly appreciated for those who want to participate and learn how to carve," he said. "This is important to me, to keep our traditional values strong."

For Jack, carving became a safe-guard from negativity and old habits.

"It keeps me relaxed, motivated, keeps my imagination imagining, positive thinking and busy," he explained.

It has also helped him keep his sobriety strong.

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Rabid dog endangers residents

It was a cold day in the middle of March when Christopher Noongwook, a dental assistant at the time, noticed a small brown husky curled up outside the Gambell clinic. Noongwook, who loves animals, could not resist spending time with the dog. He brought it some treats and shared cuddles before heading back to work.

When the dog was still there after lunch, Noongwook began to worry. What would later prove a serious cause for worry, however, never entered his mind: that the dog carried rabies.

"At this point, I was asking other people whose pup it was, and they all didn't know. I went back to work, hoping it was one of the health aides' patients' dog," Noongwook said.

An instant connection sparked between the two, and those tiny dog ears would perk up when Noongwook visited on breaks from work. He knew he had to help the dog. He tried to find the owners after work, but it soon became clear that the dog was a stray.

Jill Campbell, Gambell clinic manager and volunteer for non-profit organization PAWS of Nome, helped organize a temporary foster home for the dog. She also got the dog up-to-date on

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Look inside!

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Though uncomfortable, women's health screenings critical **page 7**

Long-term employees reflect on rewarding work **pages 8-9**

So many scholarships! **pages 10-11**

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COVID now new normal **page 16**

COVID now new normal **page 16**

COVID now new normal **page 16**

And much more ...

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HEALTH CORPORATION**

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As COVID recedes, NSHC looks ahead

The Norton Sound Health Corporation Board of Directors and administration are grateful for our dedicated staff, and humbled by their resiliency during the pandemic. NSHC commends all community leaders and partners for keeping the region safe.



Angie's Report

Angela Gorn
CEO & President

We have all faced loss in some way. NSHC extends prayers and condolences to the families who have lost loved ones. The past two and a half years have challenged us as a community, but have also inspired us to never give up. We have adapted to changes in how we live and work, and we've accepted COVID-19 as a reality.

As we climb out of this pandemic phase, NSHC looks forward to achieving some strategic goals to continue our legacy as a leader in tribal health.

For fiscal year 2022, the NSHC board approved a \$227 million oper-

ating budget. This is a significant increase from the \$75 million annual budget of ten years ago.

Although some of this year's operating revenue comes from one-time supplemental COVID-19 funding awards, the majority of NSHC's revenue growth can be attributed to the expansion of health care services. Over the past decade, NSHC has expanded health care visits in the region from 83,000 to 152,000 overall encounters. Cash collections from third-party payors has increased as a result. It is this strong business model that allows NSHC to provide high quality health care services and keep growing.

Powered by our people

Although NSHC is fiscally strong, its greatest asset remains its human capital. NSHC is tribally owned and managed and continues to support youth and its workforce through scholarship and career opportunities. NSHC awards over \$350,000 in scholarships on an annual basis, including vocational scholarships. You can read about the many hard-working students we support on pages 10-11 of this newsletter.

Competitive pay and benefits

remain important to NSHC. In FY22, NSHC raised all employee wages by \$5 per hour and introduced a hiring bonus of \$5,000 for hard-to-fill positions.

NSHC offers medical, dental, and vision insurance at no cost to its employees and an employer-paid pension program providing up to 7% of the employee's income.

Employees who have achieved 10 years of continuous service are eligible for 12 weeks of paid longevity leave. New parents are encouraged to bring children to work up to six months of age. NSHC's Baby Friendly Workplace Policy supports breastfeeding on the clock. Consider joining the NSHC team. This is a great place to work!

Meanwhile, NSHC continues to expand health care to meet the needs of the region.

Mid-level providers have been added to each village clinic to complement the medical team and to provide relief coverage for NSHC's amazing health aides. In addition, full-time psychiatry services are available 24-7 at Norton Sound Regional Hospital and through outpatient clinics. Tribal healing and acupuncture continue to

Please turn to back page

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

Willis Pate IV discovers creativity in the kitchen

Willis Pate IV grew up in Nome before moving to Kenai in 2010. He moved back to Nome in 2017 and shortly thereafter took on his first-ever kitchen job at Norton Sound Health Corporation. This is an interview with him on his experience as a food service worker.



Can you describe the role of a food service worker?

On a daily basis, I prep for patient meals in the morning; switch over to salad bar; put away freezer, dry or chill freight; be a backup cashier; fill out requisitions; and do dishes if need be. All this depends on the number of employees present for work. Some days it's a lot, others it's a few tasks. The environment in my workplace is busy, but because it is so busy, time flies by and your workday is done before you know it.

Do you have memorable moments to share?

The notable days to remember are doing all the catering parties for the holidays with QCC. I had to make blueberry delight from scratch for the huge party, along with other desserts to go with it. Another time, I had to prep desserts for all the village clinics with a few days' notice. That shows the skills you can develop working in a kitchen: being able to create or prep foods and complete them in a timely format. Although we have our given duties of our job titles, we also have to be flexible in covering multiple areas.

What skills have you found vital to your job?

The skills I developed from this job are amazing. I can now cook or bake something from scratch and know that people will enjoy it. These skills can also make you the popular person at the party, as I found out.

What is the best part about your job?

The best part of my job is being creative with the foods and watching people enjoy what I create. An example of creativity at work is designing the salad bar. Utilizing the different color contrasts of the veggies and special salads can

create the right appeal to any paying customer or patient staying at our hospital.

What advice do you have for someone new to the industry?

My advice for anyone who is considering kitchen work is to try it out. When I started, I actually applied just looking for a job and not realizing it was something I can enjoy and grow with. I worked my way up to kitchen supervisor, but chose to stay as a food service worker because it's a job I enjoy most.

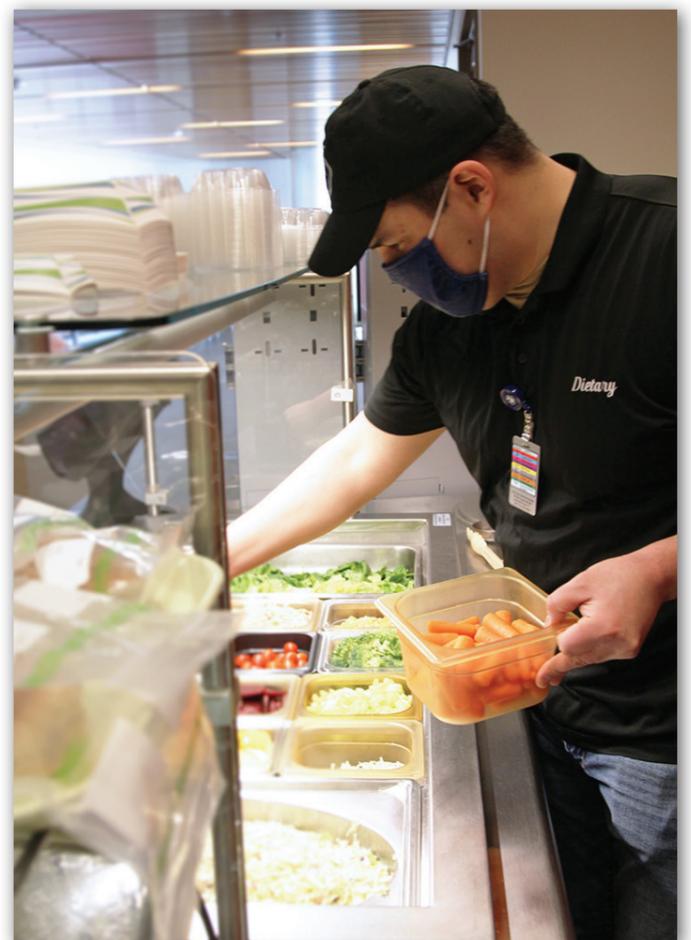


Photo: Alexis Erikson

Part of Willis Pate's duties as a food service worker in the Fireweed Cafe is setting up the salad bar for lunch time.

Filling a crucial need in area villages

Dental team going strong, marks over 40 years of care

NSHC's Dental Department leadership may have changed hands earlier this year for the first time in 30 years, but the goal of providing quality dental care in the region remains the same. In January, Dr. Mark Kelso, who has been working at NSHC since 1986, handed over the reins of department directorship to Dr. Sarah Luce.

Luce has worked for NSHC dental since 2012, the same year she graduated from the University of Maryland School of Dentistry. She has since put down roots in Nome with a family and has made dozens of trips to the region's communities to provide dental care.

Kelso continues to work at NSHC as a staff dentist. He has been a strong supporter of the Dental Health Aide Therapy Program and its positive impacts on small communities where the DHATs are located. He has made countless visits to the region's villages, where he has made many friends and an overwhelming difference in oral health.

Department began with preventive program run by health aides

NSHC has been grateful for such a smooth transition between two great directors in the dental department, which consists of 18 permanent staff members: five dentists, nine dental assistants, two DHATs, one office manager, and one administrative assistant. Luce attributes the department's successes to her team's expertise in the field of dentistry, with over 175 years of combined experience. Each staff member contributes their skills to provide the best patient care possible.

"The first point of contact is most often our receptionist, Pauline Marble. She is professional—a great communicator with a refreshing, joyful attitude," Luce said. "She welcomes all patients, new and old, leaving a positive lasting impression."

NSHC's five full-time dentists each spend about 10 weeks per year travel-



Photo: Reba Lean

Nome-based NSHC Dental Department staff recently gathered for a group photo. Front row, from left: Pauline Marble, Sharon Lock, Dr. Sarah Luce, Precious Nichols, and Kaylee Kakoona. Back, from left: Abigail Crockett, Dr. Erin Medina, Jana Scheurch, Dr. Joseph Sem, Dr. Mark Kelso, Zenas Pratt, Michelle Tall.

ing to villages to offer dental clinics, in addition to three itinerant dentists who travel to the region to provide care in the villages. There are also two teams of pediatric dentists who travel to the region several times a year to provide specialized care for children.

The regional dental program originally began as a preventive education program taught by health aides and became its own department in 1980. There were three NSHC dentists at that time, all members of the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps. In 1986, Dr. Brian Thomas Simkulet and dental assistant Velma Jean Schluckebier died in an airplane crash en route to a village clinic. Later that year, Kelso joined the team.

"The department has expanded since then. More dentists were added to better address the regional need and increase in services provided," Kelso said. "The tribal dental care has morphed from just basic extractions in its initial iteration to a full spectrum of dental services today."

Challenges of mobile care

One of the newest additions to the dental department is Dr. Joe Sem, who has been working at NSHC for three years. When Sem first visited Alaska as a teenager he quickly fell in love with the expansive wilderness the state has to offer. Living in Minnesota at the time, a young Sem was inspired to return to Alaska one day, and years later made it his goal to provide health services in remote Alaska communities. And that is exactly what he has been doing for the past three years in the Norton Sound/Bering Strait region. So far, Sem has offered dental clinics in Teller, Shishmaref, Elim, Little Diomed, Stebbins, and Savoonga in addition to

his regular work in Nome.

"The idea of being able to live here and help people out in a tangible way, like providing dentistry, lit a fire in me—and now, here I am!" he said, reminiscing on those first visits to Alaska. "I enjoy the challenges of mobile dentistry and the 'adventure' of flying to remote villages to serve. I get to do dentistry in a way that few dentists in the U.S. can experience, which I am grateful for."

Along with dentists, dental assistants also travel to the villages to help with procedures.

"There is a lot to learn to become a proficient dental assistant, and then adapting that to mobile dentistry in a village is a whole new learning curve," Sem said. "We are fortunate to have

Education Program, aspiring DHATs work under a supervising dentist for three months. Upon completion of this preceptorship, trainees receive a certification that allows them to practice much needed dental care in rural communities, working under the direction of a licensed dentist. Their scope of practice includes preventative care and education, cleanings, emergencies, and basic restorations such as sealants, fillings, and uncomplicated extractions.

"I care deeply for my patients"

Growing up in the village of Noorvik, where dental professionals only traveled occasionally, Johnson remembers waiting in line for an exam or to have cavities filled. Now a resident of

"After going back to villages a few times and getting to know more people there, I have begun to feel like a small part of the community when I'm there, which I really enjoy."—Dr. Joseph Sem, NSHC dentist

dental assistants able and willing to help us do dentistry in these remote villages."

In addition to the dentists and assistants, NSHC also employs two dental health aide therapists (DHATs): Aurora Johnson of Unalakleet and Elsie "Pepsi" Pelowook of Savoonga.

"We work with Pepsi and Aurora on an almost daily basis as they treat patients in Savoonga and Unalakleet, and sometimes work side-by-side with them in villages together," Sem said. "They are valuable assets to our program out here and provide a high level of care to their communities. They also travel to villages to treat patients in that capacity."

After successfully completing the two-year long Alaska Dental Therapy

Unalakleet, she had always wanted to work in a health care field. When the opportunity came up to become a DHAT, she knew it would be a worthwhile career. She has been working in her current position since 2006. Now, she travels to Koyuk, Shaktoolik, St. Michael, and Stebbins to provide care.

"I look forward to going to the villages I serve," she said. "I get to see my patients year after year and build our relationships throughout time. I care deeply for my patients, and it makes me feel good to consistently provide them the best dental care I can."

Like Johnson, one of Sem's favorite parts of the job is the people he meets along the way.

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Photo: Sarah Luce

Dr. Erin Medina and dental assistant Abigail Crockett take a quick break while preparing for a dental clinic in Brevig Mission in January 2022.

YOUR BEST LIFE

NEWS & VIEWS FROM THE CAMP DEPARTMENT AT NORTON SOUND HEALTH CORPORATION

New program lifts the bar for better fitness

Community members spring into action

With a quickly growing group fitness program, health goals no longer have to be achieved all on your own.

Last fall, Norton Sound Health Corporation's Wellness Program chose six individuals to enroll in a grant-funded community fitness certification program. The aspiring fitness instructors include Nicole Mertz, Tracy Gregg, Leah Anderson, Brodie Kimmel, Katie Fry, and Stephanie Stang. Through the program, they learned practical skills and gained hands-on experience to inspire and motivate people to live happier and healthier lives.

Soon, they will begin offering classes such as spin, circuit training,



New fitness instructors, from left: Brodie Kimmel, Katie Fry, Leah Anderson, Nikki Mertz, Stephanie Stang, Tracy Gregg.

since August 2020. She believes that the secret to a healthy community is camaraderie in fitness, which can be difficult to find outside of team sports. She hopes that the convenience and diversity of the classes will give people the opportunity to stumble upon an activity that they may not have been exposed to in the past but will soon grow to love.

"I am excited to start this program

in Nome and saw this as an opportunity to bring a new fitness option to the community," she said. "Cycling is a great low impact class that can challenge both experienced and inexperienced participants at the same time. It is easy to adapt the bikes and exercises to meet each participant's needs."

Even though Kimmel has taught spin classes in the past, she found the comprehensive certification program to be very helpful, covering everything from basic human physiology to class engagement.

"It really sets instructors up to lead safe group classes," she said.

Another instructor, Nicole Mertz, has always loved taking group fitness classes and wanted to share that joy with others. Mertz is most excited about teaching circuit training. Like Kimmel, she has gotten a lot out of the certification program.

"I learned about proper warmup techniques that safely prep participants for the movements of the workout. I also learned about motivation techniques and how to incorporate music to make the lessons more fun."

She is excited to be working with other talented, creative instructors to bring a variety of fun, new fitness

options for the community.

"There should be something for everyone," she said.

Fitness classes will also be available in the villages when CAMP staff travel. There is also a Fitness DVD Library

New fitness opportunities coming to Nome

- ▶ Spin
- ▶ Circuit training
- ▶ Yoga
- ▶ HIIT (High-Intensity Interval Training)
- ▶ Strong Nation
- ▶ Recovery and stress relief stretching
- ▶ Strength building with resistance bands
- ▶ Express cardio
- ▶ Trampoline fitness

available as a resource for village community members to check out new workout videos.

If you or someone you know would like to teach group fitness, contact CAMP by email at wellness@nshcorp.org or call 443-3365.

"I am excited to start this program in order to bring more fitness opportunities to Nome.

These classes will help build community and accountability in fitness and health.

We promise a lot of fun, sweat, and a safe and accepting environment."

yoga, HIIT, Strong Nation, recovery and stress relief stretching, strength building with resistance bands, express cardio classes, and trampoline fitness. All will be offered free of charge for at least one year at accessible locations in Nome. The classes are expected to begin in June and will welcome people of all fitness levels.

Nicole Santonastaso, NSHC Prevention Program supervisor, has been working toward making this program happen

in order to bring more fitness opportunities to Nome," Santonastaso said. "We realize that we all thrive off of community. These classes will help build community and accountability in fitness and health. We promise a lot of fun, sweat, and a safe and accepting environment."

One instructor, Brodie Kimmel, was a spin/cycling group fitness instructor before moving to the region 10 years ago.

"I have missed having that outlet

their appointment. Otherwise, it was business as usual for NSHC Dental Department.

"Surprisingly we did not change much with COVID. The dental profession is used to working with aerosolized diseases. We have always practiced under universal precautions and PPE (personal protective equipment)," Luce said.

Looking forward, this new era of leadership for the Dental Department will look much the same as the past, with the focus on providing quality dental care in the region.

"Oral health affects total body health including mental health," Luce said. "My mission is to provide healing for the people in this region. One way to accomplish healing is through treating oral health needs."

To find out when a dental team will be visiting your community, please contact your local health clinic.

DENTAL TEAM

Continued from page 3

"After going back to villages a few times and getting to know more people there, I have begun to feel like a small part of the community when I'm there, which I really enjoy," he said.

The most common services offered at village clinics are cleanings, regular exams, fillings, extractions (including wisdom teeth), and other urgent needs in the community. Some procedures, like crowns, root canals, dentures, and orthodontics, require more supplies and materials that are not as easy to travel with, so usually patients who need these services travel to Nome. In all, there are usually about 9,000 patient encounters each year.

During the pandemic, patients were required to secure a negative COVID-19 test 24 to 48 hours before



Photo: Kathryn McTigue

Newly arrived on his first trip to Little Diomedede, Dr. Joseph Sem poses on a snowy helicopter pad to prepare for the October dental clinic.



Photo: Jeremy Nassuk



Photo: Charlie Peterson

Successful hunters

Above left: Landyn "Alagnaq" Nassuk, 11, proudly poses with his catch of brant goose at Safety Sound in spring 2022. Above right: Ty Peterson, 5, collects his pintail duck catch from a fall hunting trip with his dad. Ty dresses warmly for fall hunts, ready to spend time outside in a duck blind in chilly weather. Avian influenza has been detected in Alaska this spring, and wild birds can be carriers of the virus. Turn to page 7 for more information on how to handle harvested birds safely and where to report your observations of sick birds.

Duck Curry

This recipe is meant to be served over a carbohydrate of your choice. Our favorite is rice!

INGREDIENTS

- ▶ 2 pounds duck meat
- ▶ 2 tablespoons oil
- ▶ ½ cup fresh basil
- ▶ 2 tablespoons minced garlic
- ▶ 2 green onions
- ▶ 1 tablespoon salt
- ▶ 2 tablespoons soy sauce
- ▶ 1 teaspoon red curry paste
- ▶ 2 tablespoons sugar

INGREDIENTS FOR THE CURRY

- ▶ 1 onion
- ▶ 2 tablespoons minced garlic
- ▶ 2 teaspoons red curry paste
- ▶ 2 cans coconut milk
- ▶ 3 tablespoons lime juice
- ▶ 1 tablespoon sugar
- ▶ 1 tablespoon soy sauce
- ▶ ½ teaspoon salt
- ▶ Choice of vegetables
- ▶ Optional basil, cilantro and chili flakes

DIRECTIONS

1. Before you begin, wash your hands.
2. In a skillet, heat the oil over medium until glistening. Brown the meat until cooked. Remove the meat from the pan and set aside.
3. Place the basil, garlic, onions, and salt in skillet. Heat for 2-3 minutes. Add in the soy sauce, curry paste and sugar. Stir to combine.
4. Add the meat back into the pan and mix with the other ingredients.
5. Remove the duck mixture from the pan and set aside in a bowl.
6. Place chopped onion and other vegetables of choice into skillet and heat for about 5 minutes or until softened. Add the garlic and stir for about a minute before adding curry paste and coconut milk. Stir until fully incorporated and smooth.
7. Add lime juice, soy sauce, sugar and salt and stir to combine. Bring to a boil, then add the duck mixture back in.
8. Turn the heat to low and simmer, covered, until the sauce starts to thicken. This should take about 20 minutes. Serve over rice or your favorite carb. Sprinkle with cilantro and/or crushed red pepper flakes for extra flavor.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

- ▶ Feel free to replace the fresh basil or minced garlic with whatever version is available to you. Dried basil works just as well.
- ▶ If you do not have curry paste, you can use curry powder. Generally substitute 1 teaspoon curry powder for 1 tablespoon paste.
- ▶ If you do not have coconut milk, you can use whatever milk is available to you. If you like coconut milk but it is not carried at your store, you might ask your store manager to order it.
- ▶ Made this recipe? Be sure to send pictures to wellness@nshcorp.org





CAMP

SUMMERCISE

2022

Session 1: June 6-23 2022

Session 2: July 11-28 2022

MONDAY - THURSDAY | 1-4:30PM

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Health aide trainer fights for Ukraine

Mark Hayward back in Nome after training Ukrainian soldiers

Normally one might find Mark Hayward, a physician assistant and trainer in Norton Sound Health Corporation's Village Health Services department, in either a classroom or clinic setting, helping regional community health aides brush up on their medical skills.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, he traveled in response to village outbreaks to help test community members and administer vaccinations. At home in Nome, he spends time with his cats and hunts for beach glass.

But this spring, Hayward found himself in Ukraine.

He traveled to the besieged country to help in its fight against Russia. Horrified by the Russian invasion and inspired by the will of the Ukrainian people, Hayward applied for service with the Ukrainian Foreign Legion.

What might seem to some like a long leap—from training regional healthcare professionals to rushing to serve in a foreign war—is not out of character for Hayward, according to his wife Cammie Hayward, a nurse in Nome's Primary Care Clinic.

"Oh, you know Mark. It's what he does," Cammie offered in explanation.

From army medic to health aide trainer to the war in Ukraine

Hayward started working for NSHC in June 2018. In his past, he served as a U.S. Army Special Forces medic and trainer. He is a life member of the Special Operations Medical Association and a founding member of Team Rubicon, a non-profit organization that connects military veterans and first responders to areas in need.

Hayward feels at home at NSHC and has a great passion for his current



Photo courtesy of Mark Hayward

Mark Hayward snapped this picture of his progress in using a pocket screwdriver to deconstruct a Javelin missile launcher's \$100,000 command launch unit.

role. He likens community health aides to Special Forces medics, as both are frontline medical professionals. He has a great respect for their ability to serve their communities like no one else can.

However, in February, shortly after Russia invaded its neighbor Ukraine, Hayward felt that old calling to help once again. He felt the calling strongest from the front lines.

"My response, at this unique and very particular moment in history, is not to rush to the aid of the wounded who are under artillery bombardment," Hayward wrote in a social media post, explaining his whereabouts to friends. "My response, in this case, is to move with all due haste as directly as I can, to stop those artillery units from firing any more shells."

In early March, Hayward submitted his paperwork to the Ukrainian embassy in Washington, D.C., proclaiming his intent to formally enlist with the Ukrainian Foreign Legion.

Polish citizens cheer him on

When he arrived in Poland, Hayward procured an ambulance that would allow him to travel into Ukraine. Eager to help their neighbors, Polish citizens filled the ambulance with supplies for medical aid. Hayward crossed the border, buoyed by their support.

Once in Ukraine, however, he was slowed down on his quest to join the front lines by Russian missile strikes

Hayward likens community health aides to Special Forces medics, as both are frontline medical professionals. He has a great respect for their ability to serve their communities like no one else can.

against the Ukrainian base where volunteers were assembling.

While providing medical training to volunteer troops in the western city of Lviv, Hayward befriended a Texan who had traveled to Ukraine with the same intent to help stop the invading army at the source. Together, they traveled to a southern city in Ukraine, Mykolaiv, which was closer to larger numbers of Russian forces. They informally linked up with a group of Ukrainian Marines who, they came to find, needed weapons training on the abundant missile launchers gifted by the U.S. Department of Defense, called Javelins.

Applying ingenuity to make Javelins more effective

The Javelins effectively take out Russian tanks and other armored vehicles using heat-sensor imaging, but the Marines had a couple of issues using them. First, there were no training materials or personnel available to the Ukrainian troops. Second, each missile launcher came with one non-recharge-



able battery that lasted only a few hours.

Hayward and his friend studied up on Javelins and began teaching troops how to use them. To combat the battery issue, Hayward fashioned a rechargeable solution using motorcycle batteries, alligator clips, and a wiring harness from a broken computer. Engineers took his model and refined it for further use.

The tinkering allowed for more training on the weapon, which resulted in more successful use of



Photos courtesy of Mark Hayward

Top photo: Mark Hayward meets with U.S. Sen. Lisa Murkowski and demonstrates the rechargeable battery design he helped assemble for anti-tank missile weapons in Ukraine. Above: Hayward coaches a Ukrainian soldier on the use of an NLAW anti-tank rocket.

his Texas friend gave an interview to the *Wall Street Journal* on the need for more U.S. training resources for Ukrainian troops. The article became the impetus for the duo to return to the U.S. when it became apparent it may have made them special targets of the Russian Army.

On his return, Hayward stopped in Washington, D.C., to sound the alarm on the need for support in Ukraine. He met with U.S. Sen. Lisa Murkowski and her staff, who he said shared his concern for needed training resources. He continues to try to relay his findings and knowledge to Department of Defense personnel who could move the needle on providing support for Ukraine.

Back home in Nome, Hayward tries to adjust to his normal life again. While away, friends and supporters raised money for the Haywards so that they would not suffer from lost income and so Hayward could return home. He has expressed his gratitude for all the support and prayers.

In a letter he wrote to President Biden, the U.S. Secretary of State, and other powerful dignitaries, Hayward appealed for an open ear so that the group of volunteers Hayward served with could share their knowledge.

"Most of us are veterans, and we are heartily sick of war," he wrote. "But some wars must be fought, and some risks are worth taking. This war, and Russian genocide against Ukraine, must be answered."

Returning home to Nome

Even as Hayward made notable differences in the fight against Russia, he felt volunteer service was not an adequate answer for the Ukrainian military's needs.

At the end of April, Hayward and

Women's health screenings: Uncomfortably necessary

Mammograms and Pap smears help catch cancers early

Women's health screenings are a mixed bag.

For many, the intimate encounters with health care providers in sterile settings can be unsettling. Yet the screenings are critical because they can catch cancers in the earliest stages, when they can often be successfully treated.

To prevent common forms of cancer, women should receive cervical cancer screenings and breast cancer screenings regularly. NSHC offers Pap smears starting when women turn 21 years old, and mammograms around the time women turn 40, depending on their health histories.

NSHC has made women's health screenings a priority in order to combat high rates of cervical and breast cancer in the region. After a woman's first Pap smear, she is reminded to return every three years throughout her 20s and every five years once she hits 30. Similarly, after a woman's first screening mammogram, she is reminded annually to return for another.

The first time can be the hardest

"It's easy enough to get women to come back for their regular screenings," said Megan Mackiernan, physician assistant and director of Quality Improvement and Risk Management at NSHC.

"But the hard part is getting them to come in the first place."

There are many reasons women may hesitate to come in for screenings.

Valerie Dull, a contract mammographer at NSHC, says some of her

patients worry about breast compression during the exam and are uncomfortable about showing their bodies.

"I always hope that my patients know that I am a mother and care about women's health, and my job is to be sure we're all healthy," Dull said.

"Most mammographers have their reasons for becoming a women's imaging technologist. Often times, this is because of their own life experiences, like having a loved one that has been lost to breast cancer."

Preparing for a mammogram

Dull says women can prepare for an exam by knowing their medical history, including their family history of breast and cervical cancer, history of breast and reproductive surgeries, and what hormonal medications they've taken or are taking.

Women should expect to remove their clothing from the waist up and change into a mammography cape. A technologist will usually take four X-ray pictures from different angles but can take more if needed.

Mackiernan has firsthand experience of the awkwardness of getting a mammogram. She recommends letting the technologist know how one is feeling and when and if they need to take a break.

"Mammograms are so valuable in their ability to identify even very small areas of concern early, when they are most easily treated," Mackiernan said.

According to Dr. Angela Torres, NSHC's lead obstetrics doctor, cervical cancer screenings, or Pap smears, can make women feel uncomfortable and even anxious.

Usually, women are asked to change into a patient gown, be seated on the

reclined exam chair, and place their heels into elevated stirrups. This gives the medical provider a better angle to complete the examination—but can be awkward for patients.

"It really takes a lot of control away from you," Torres explained. "You're in a very vulnerable place."

Physicians usually have strategies to make the experience less scary.

"If they haven't had one in a while or if they've never had one, I'll talk them through the whole process," Torres said.

She gives her patients an overview of what she will do and offers to position them in a way that allows them to see what's going on if they're curious. She gives women options to help make them as comfortable as possible.

Sexual trauma survivor shares tips for getting through a Pap smear

Sexual trauma survivors may find it extremely difficult to undergo a Pap smear.

"For me, it's a vicious cycle," said one woman who had experienced sexual trauma. "I'm nervous that it's going to be painful, then it's painful because I'm so tense and nervous."

Torres knows well the role sexual trauma plays in exams. She has found that talking a patient through each step of the exam can be calming. She values patient feedback and wants the patient to be the driver in the exam room.

Though it may be difficult, Torres suggests sexual trauma survivors find a way to tell their doctor if they are having a hard time.

Some suggestions Torres has for patients to voice to their physicians are:

- ▶ "I'm not really good at having Pap smears done. I get really anxious."
- ▶ "Give me a minute to breathe before you go further."
- ▶ "I really don't like being touched without warning, so please walk me through the exam as you do it."

After experiencing several Pap smears, one sexual trauma survivor has found it best to request an anti-anxiety medication in advance of her exams. She also repeats a mantra to calm herself while waiting alone in an exam room: "They're here to help me. This is for my health. They don't want to hurt me."

She said there are some things that

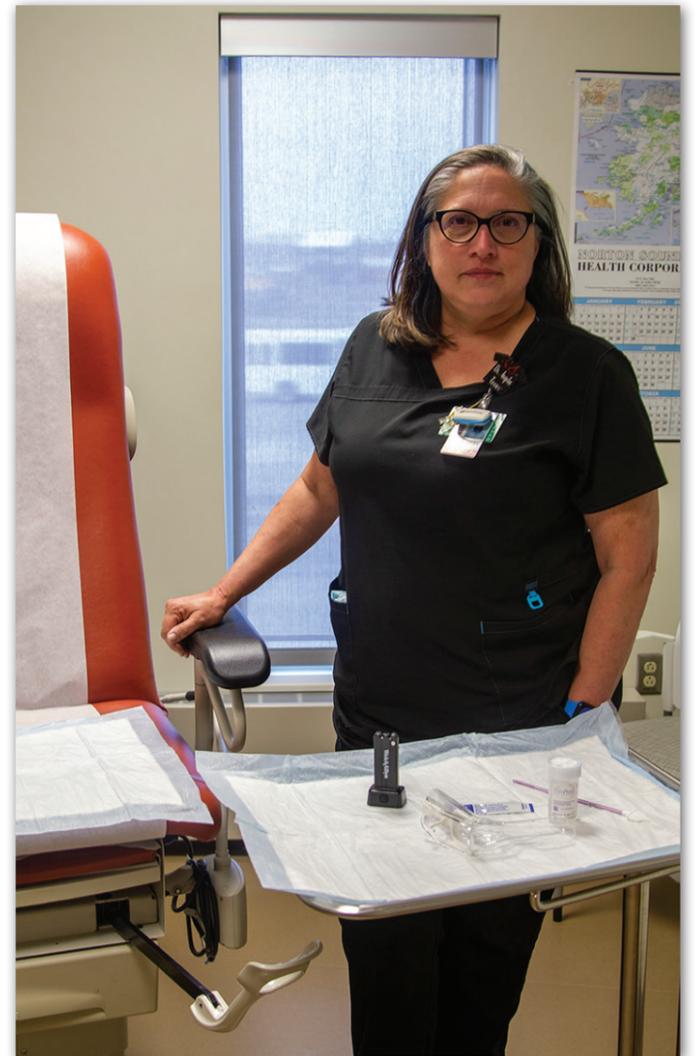


Photo: Reba Leon

Dr. Angela Torres strives to make patients comfortable during cervical cancer screenings. She encourages patients to be open about any concerns or difficulties.

first-time patients should know if they're nervous.

"If they're scared to be alone with a provider, I would let them know they can request that the nurse be there for the exam," she said.

"I would also tell them that the exam doesn't last long, even though it can feel like time slows down.

"Lastly, it's important to know you can request a female (or male) provider for your Pap smear. Since my assaults were perpetrated by men, I'm more comfortable with female providers."

Cancers a real risk for many

In spite of the awkwardness, the benefits of a Pap smear are clear.

"We know what causes cervical cancer, and that's HPV," said Torres.

Human papillomavirus (HPV) is the most common sexually transmitted infection, and more than 80% of sexually active men and women have or will have it. Most HPV infections clear up on their own, but certain genotypes put women at risk of developing cervical cancer.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "HPV is so common that almost every sexually active person will get HPV at some point if they don't get vaccinated."

HPV vaccines are recommended for all preteens at age 11 or 12, or for everyone through age 26 if they have not yet been vaccinated.

"There's a good chance you can get cervical cancer if you've ever had sex," Torres said. But the good news is, if a Pap smear detects no cervical cancer, patients don't have to come back for three or five years.

Avian Influenza: Update (1-June-2022) - Bering Strait region -

Though unconfirmed, avian influenza has arrived to the Bering Strait region. Brant near Golovin and Safety Sound have been reported as "spinning" in the water and/or "almost dead". Avian influenza is highly contagious among birds and has also killed foxes in Alaska (Unalaska), Canada, and several other US states. Report any dead / sick birds (ex. Staggering, approachable, spinning, head-shaking, clear liquid discharge from mouth, etc.) or foxes with rabies-like symptoms.



PLEASE REPORT DEAD BIRDS OR FOXES REPORT 'EM - DON'T TOUCH 'EM!

If you find sick / dead birds or foxes, take photos/video and call:

- **USFWS Sick & Dead Bird Hotline: 1-866-527-3358**
- **UAF Alaska Sea Grant (Nome): (907) 434-1149**

SAFE HANDLING

Currently, the risk of human infection is unknown. Please be cautious and...

- Utilize your traditional knowledge
- Keep your hunting and processing equipment clean (10% bleach solution works)
- Clean and pluck your catch outside or in a well ventilated area
- Do not harvest/handle sick birds or birds found dead
- Do not eat, drink, or smoke when processing birds
- Wear rubber gloves. Wash hands w/ warm soapy water or use hand sanitizer (>60% ethanol)
- Thoroughly cook meat (165F / until juices run clear). Cook eggs.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

- Take photos or video using your cell phone and call in what you saw!
- Report date, location or GPS coordinates, species, number of birds.

Dedicated to making a difference

Long-term NSHC staff reflect on changes, memories

Norton Sound Health Corporation turned 50 years old in November 2020. The anniversary passed without much fanfare due to the pandemic, but the milestone was noteworthy. What made the five decades of service and growth possible? NSHC's dedicated workforce played a large role. Many employees have been with the organization for decades—in some cases, for most of NSHC's existence—and have witnessed the juxtaposition of dramatic change alongside enduring priorities.

Their memories tell the story of NSHC's impact on healthcare and wellness in the region.

MIKE OWENS

Started: September 1983 as EMS trainer

Now: EMS director

Other roles: EMS training coordinator

On improvements:

"Communication is just mind blowing. When you figure you went from single sideband radio all the way to Vido telehealth, where they can actually assess the patient before we get there. From when everybody in the world who can pick that radio wave up can hear that radio traffic going back and forth between doctor and health aide, to where the doctor can see the patient as if they're in the next room. It's just been phenomenal."

On teaching: "When I first came here, it was like you were walking among the giants. The first class I ever taught, I was told by the EMS director that the health aides would not be able to certify for Basic Life Support, so I should just teach them the basics and make sure they understand to do CPR on their own. When we went over to Northwest Campus, and I'm left with all the mannequins, and I'm in a room with all the health aides, I thought, 'Are you nuts? What do you mean they can't certify?' They all walked out with their certification cards."



MARTINA LEEDY

Started: June 1984 in Housekeeping

Now: Senior medical supply specialist

Other roles: Sterile processing, purchasing

On changes:

"When I first started in Materials Management, I was happy I knew how to type! We had no fax machines, so we had to use a phone to take orders of course. We took orders from the village clinics on Tuesdays and Thursdays. It started to speed things up when we got a fax machine. And now today, it's every day: village orders. And they have to be hand carried on the airlines, whereas we had to mail them before. It's faster, that way they can get their stuff now."

On staff growth: "It's like yesterday I started. Things felt very tight-knit then. We got to know everybody. I used to meet even the traveling nurses, and they were really friendly. And we used to have big gatherings for the holidays where we could bring our family members or smaller department parties. It was good to be with different people."



MARK KELSO

Started: August 1986 as a staff dentist

Now: Staff dentist

Other roles: Dental director

On improvements: "As far as dental care goes, there are now programs in place to treat children before their dental disease becomes acute. The dental program has moved from being a predominately emergency dental care facility to proactively addressing the disease overall. Our orthodontic program did not used to exist and now is highly valued by many patients. It is refreshing to see an emerging subset of young adult patients who desire healthy teeth for life and take an active role in their oral health care."

On the best part: "The ability to treat patients and get to know them—now several generations worth."

On what he's known for: "I always enjoy snow-machining to Golovin and White Mountain to work. For the few times that I have flown, I am asked multiple times every day why I didn't ride my machine over. It has become an expectation of sorts."



DAVE COLER

Started: September 1989 as a temporary food service worker

Now: Nutrition Services inventory control

On the best part: "Of course the best thing about working at NSHC has been meeting my wife LizBeth (Elizabeth Coler). I served her the first meal she had in Nome. The food wasn't bad, but the sticker shock was. I guess she got over it, though. We got married a couple of years later. The other best thing has been the folks that work here. I went through some tough, really tough, medical time, and I was touched by the caring staff, the helpful people. Admin was great and understanding, people cooked meals, shoveled snow, donated flex time, and offered up their prayers and thoughts at a time when I really needed it. It's hard to imagine having lived anywhere else for the last 34 years. I'll tell you the truth; I get a little teary thinking about how wonderful NSHC was. The Make a Patient Smile Fund made me cry with appreciation."



ELIZABETH COLER

Started: 1990 as registered nurse in Inpatient/ OB/Emergency Department

Now: QCC audit and staff development RN

Other roles: Manager of Inpatient/OB/ED, Outpatient Clinic staff nurse, interim manager Outpatient Clinic, Clinical Informatics RN

On the best part: "The flexibility to do different kinds of nursing. The patients and staff I have been honored to work with and know. The camaraderie with coworkers as we take care of patients and each other."



SOLOMON BOOSHU

Started: 1993 as a Domestic Services housekeeper

Now: Finance accounts payable technician

Other roles: Radiology reception (in 1986 before a break), maintenance technician/patient observer

On getting started: "In 1993 I worked under Eric Baxter and he pushed me to further my education at Northwest Campus. I started taking accounting courses and applied for an accounting position in 1994. I did not get an interview originally. A few months passed, and I received a call from Ani Wee, a staff accountant in the Finance Department. She had pulled my application from previous applicants and said that the position was open, but I told her I was not interested. She insisted that I apply again, so I did. During my interview with Finance Director Robert Gregg, he required me to do a two-page math test. I finished it in front of the director and told him 'Don't worry, all my answers are correct.' I was offered the position."

On improvements: "Starting Quyanna Care in 1988 was probably the biggest change. Around 2001, I had to make a tough decision on having my mom go there. In our culture in Gambell, we take care of our parents at home. It got really difficult for me to take care of her as she aged. I got her on board with going to Quyanna Care, and it made a big difference."

On staying the same: "Of all the departments in the corporation, my job has probably changed the least. I'm still using the same software. The only thing that changed is it's a newer version. The volume of what I do has gone up, but we still follow the same guidelines, and Accounting still has the same mission. Every year, we have to answer to the auditors. We have never had a bad audit."



DAN THOMAS

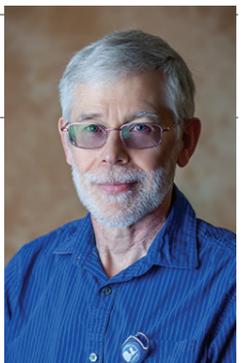
Started: July 1993

Now: Health Aide Training Center coordinator

Other roles: Family Services counselor (1977 before a break), inpatient RN, VHS trainer-supervisor/instructor, outpatient RN, Health Aide Training curriculum coordinator (before a second break), Primary Care PA, Sub-Regional Clinic PA

On his mentor: "The most influential mentor in my life has been my mother Nancy Mendenhall, who first suggested to me the position of health aide trainer. Somehow, she knew that would be a good job for me. I have had several NSHC physician mentors who supported and helped me as a PA over the past two to three decades."

On the best part: "Although I really enjoy teaching health aides and working to improve our program at Health Aide Training, my most special years were those in Unalakleet (1994-1997), working side-by-side with the health aides, doing my best to help with the community's medical needs, and enjoying village life."



“I have had a happy career with NSHC. I have gotten to know all our health aides. They are all special people. I have worked with health aides in every NSHC village clinic. Helping health aides do their difficult jobs with a great team of fellow trainers has been very rewarding. I think this may be the most rewarding teaching job ever.”

ANNE IVANOFF

Started: August 1993 as KNOM volunteer registered nurse in Inpatient/OB/Emergency Department

Now: RN care coordinator and diabetes educator

Other roles: Public Health nurse, diabetes case manager

On improvements: “The growth of the corporation and staff with increased services to the region. Listening and responding to community and board guidance to increase access to care with continued progress toward healthier communities.”



DARLENE WHITNEY

Started: December 1993

Now: Coder III

Other roles: Purchasing (1980s before a break), Eye Care, BHS Billing

On coding: “The biggest change I’ve seen is going from the ICD-9 coding system to international ICD-10-CM codes. There are nearly five times as many diagnosis codes in the ICD-10 system. The other change was going from paper charting to an electronic medical record. Yea! Gone are the days of trying to decipher the provider’s handwriting. Like me, some had little penmanship skill, which made coding more challenging. Having the electronic health record allows NSHC providers to access the Alaska Native Medical Center patient documentation. This I believe allows for better patient care, since the charting is more readily available. The Medical Records Department no longer has to ask ANMC to release or fax us our patients’ records when the patient is coming here for a follow-up or after-care visit.”

“I also worked briefly for the BHS Billing Department before having the opportunity to take coding and reimbursement courses offered at Northwest Campus. Once I received my medical coding certificate, I was offered a job as village coder. Currently, I primarily code inpatient and QCC services. Grace Minix and I are the two remaining certified medical



HIM coders here at NSHC. Originally there were 13 of us employees, and seven of us who completed the coding and reimbursement courses. We then tested to receive our AAPC medical coding certificates in 2004. I am ever grateful NSHC gave us this opportunity.”

KRISCILLA BUCK

Started: October 1994 as a community health aide

Now: Community health practitioner

On her mentors: “My first day was with Georgianne Anasogak and Norma Kavairlook in Koyuk. Georgianne said, ‘Don’t borrow stress. Don’t think about what might happen when you are on call. Just do your best when the time comes.’ My mom, Rita Buck, and her mom, Martha Agloinga, both worked as health aides. They, along with Willa Ashenfelter and Lucy Lincoln, helped our community for decades. When my mom became a supervisor-instructor, I loved it when she came home from her village trips. She really wanted to help our region’s health aides. Watching her adore them is something special.”

On improvements: “For NSHC as a whole: growth and preventative care. Increase in staff in all departments. A focus on healthy lifestyles and preventing illnesses and injury.”

On help she’s received: “I could not have done this job, trainings and on-call without the help and support of friends and family. My kids had wonderful babysitters while I was in training, at work and on call-backs. My oldest took care of her younger sisters a lot!”



IDA LINCOLN

Started: May 1995 as a clinic travel clerk

Now: Community health practitioner

On changes: “I loved working with CHAs as the CTC back then, Willa Ashenfelter and Rita Buck especially. Thankfully I paid attention to technology training back then (so that I can help Rita and Willa after the techs left). I’ve seen a lot of changes with technology since then. From Snappy (a program that sent pictures to a physician on call) to telemed carts and the many other programs NSHC has used. I am now the Cerner super user for the northern villages. When health aides have questions about the online medical record, they can call me or Cody Martin, who has the southern villages. We also take turns teaching the new CHAs.”



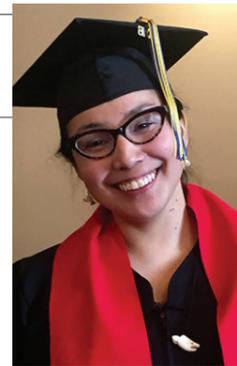
JOSIE GARNIE

Started: February 1997 as a village-based counselor trainee

Now: Village-based counselor supervisor

On improvements: “At BHS, there has been an increase in supportive services available. Urgent care is available during the day and on-call evenings, weekends, and holidays. Also, through technology, there are more services available for more people via televideo.”

On her mentor: “Teresa Sockpealuk-Perry from Shaktoolik. She always reminded us of the value of our traditional knowledge and the importance of using it when working with people, and to always work from our hearts.”



CHRISTINE SCHULTZ

Started: May 1999 as Social Services manager

Now: Patient Support Services director

On the best part: “One of the reasons I love working at NSHC is that the organization has been so creative in trying to address the needs of the people who live here in the region. I have been involved in developing a number of new programs because when we see a need for a service in the region, NSHC has tried to help our communities come up with a solution. Our response to the COVID pandemic has shown how much NSHC is committed to partnering with other programs in order to really meet the needs of our patients.”

On meaningful work: “One thought I would like to share is my profound honor in helping so many families over these years. Thank you for allowing me to share your lives for those moments that we spoke and worked together, especially those families that were struggling with a loss. One of the duties that I have had is managing NSHC’s bereavement programs, including the morgue, and have supported families who have experienced a death in the family. This has, over the years, been an area of my work that has allowed me to be of support to so many families. I have been sincerely honored and humbled to stand with so many families through tears and memories, and I thank you all for letting me be a part of your family at those times and throughout the years that I have been here.”



After 40 years at NSHC, Elvina Turner retires

NSHC’s longest serving employee retired at the end of April. For 40 years, Elvina Turner was based out of Unalakleet as part of the Behavioral Health Services team.

Turner came on board as a village-based counselor and worked her way into the role of VBC field supervisor. She earned her certificate in Rural Human Services from the University of Alaska Fairbanks College of Rural and Community Development in 2006. In 2016, the Alaska Native Tribal Health

Consortium’s Community Health Aide Program Certification Board certified her as a behavioral health practitioner.

Known as a supportive and compassionate resource to her peers and supervisors, she has been recognized for her service several times. She received employee recognition from NSHC in 1990 and 2016. In 2018, at ANTHC’s Annual Behavioral Health Aide Forum, Turner received the Super Star award for her longevity and

assistance to coworkers.

“Elvina is selfless and when families in need called on her or there was a death in the community, she was quick to respond, comforting the family, making food for them, and checking in over time,” said Lance Johnson, former director of BHS. “She will be missed, but she has earned every second of retirement!”

In retirement, Turner looks forward to traveling and spending time with family.

NSHC SCHOLARARS



Photo: Sarah Richards

NSHC employees honored at UAF Northwest Campus commencement

Nine NSHC employees were recognized at the University of Alaska Fairbanks Northwest Campus commencement ceremony on May 12. They celebrated recent accomplishments in achieving educational degrees, certificates, and credentials through UAF. From left: Beverly Nakarak and Helena Otton, Certificates in Community Health; Alfred Ningeulook, James Musich and Chase

Gray, Certificate in Construction Trades Technology; Beverly Tran, Associate of Applied Science in Applied Business; Brendon Tran, Certificate in Construction Trades Technology; Ada Harvey, Bachelor of Arts in Social Work; Raenelle West (not pictured), NWC Credential in Applied Business and People Skills for the Workplace.



Competitive scholarship applications due June 30

Norton Sound Health Corporation offers a competitive scholarship worth up to \$5,000 per term to qualified Alaska Natives/Native Americans.

Applicants must be enrolled in a formal education or training program that would benefit the healthcare field, and they must meet all the general scholarship requirements.

The deadline to apply for the fall 2022 competitive scholarship is June 30, 2022. If you have any questions, please reach out to Irvin Barnes, Tribal Training & Development manager, at ijbarnes@nshcorp.org.



SPRING 2022 NSHC COMPETITIVE SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

- Amy Payenna**, University of Alaska Southeast, Accounting
- Kaitlyn Sebwenpa-Painter**, Fort Lewis College, Psychology
- Jennie Reynolds**, University of Alaska Fairbanks, Justice
- Krystal Hensley**, University of Alaska Fairbanks, Child Development and Family Studies
- Ana Karmun**, Oregon State University, Business Administration
- Elizabeth Alowa**, University of Alaska Anchorage, Legal Studies

Top row, from left: Jennie Reynolds, Elizabeth Alowa, Krystal Hensley. Bottom from left: Ana Karmun, Amy Payenna, Kaitlyn Sebwenpa-Painter.

Regional students supported by NSHC scholarships

Norton Sound Health Corporation offers a general scholarship to higher education students aiming for health-related fields but may be awarded for non-medical-related studies if the degree can help further NSHC's mission and vision. Priority is given to Indian Health Service beneficiaries from our region who commit to returning to the region and possible employment at NSHC. NSHC's Scholarship Committee approves the award amount each year. It is currently \$1,500 per semester for full-time students. Apply online at www.my-cache.org. NSHC's scholarship application deadline is June 30 for all but graduating high school seniors; their deadline was April 30.

SPRING 2022 NSHC NON-COMPETITIVE SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

Leah Kavairlook – Alaska Career College, Business and Administration
Nikita Cartier – Leeward Community College, Culinary Arts
Makiyan Ivaonff – Amundsen Educational Center, Construction
Arctic Ivanoff – Amundsen Educational Center, Construction
Amber Ongtawasruk – AVTEC, Administration
Barbara Pete – AVTEC, Culinary Arts
Ariana Horner – University of California-Santa Barbara, Doctorate of Musical Arts
Michael Isom – John Jay College of Criminal Justice, Forensic Psychology
Erik Handeland – Oregon State University, Computer Science
Katie Kelso – Oregon State University, Accounting
Clair Fry – Brigham Young University in Idaho, Exercise Science
Ava Earthman – William College, Psychology
Stephanie Nielson – Hutchinson Community College, Nursing
Daniel Head – University of Washington, Doctor of Medicine
Naomi Minix – University of Alaska Anchorage, Human Services
Sierra Anderson – University of Alaska Anchorage, Civil Engineering
Kelly Lyon – University of Alaska Anchorage, Pharmacy Technology
Jolene Lyon – University of Alaska Anchorage, Project Manager
Marilyn Moore – University of Alaska Anchorage, Social Work
Kylie Evans – University of Alaska Anchorage, Journalism and Public Communications
Kaelyn Schenkenberger – University of Alaska Anchorage, Anthropology
Amy Bioff – University of Alaska Anchorage, Journalism and Public Communication
Annalise Contreras – University of Alaska Anchorage, Psychology
Rebecca Young – University of Alaska Anchorage, PhD Student
Alice Amaktoolik – University of Alaska Anchorage, Nursing
Marie Balamou – University of Alaska Anchorage, sophomore
Gareth Hansen – University of Alaska Anchorage, Aviation Technology
Taylor Anne Isom – Alaska Pacific University, Nursing/Pre-Health
JoAnne Anderson – Alaska Pacific University, Nursing
Trista Topkok – Alaska Pacific University, Business Administration
Teri Ruud – Alaska Pacific University, Nursing
Debra Hersrud – Ilisagvik College, Inupiaq Studies
Kathleen Aukon – Alaskan Christian College, General Education
Raenelle West – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Administration Assistant
Marina Koonooka – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Pre-Nursing Qualifications
Lily White – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Social Work
Yuka Ungwiluk – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Social Work
Maggie West – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Accounting
Colleen Adams – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Applied Accounting
Gwendalyn Trigg-Komakhuk – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Nursing
Lori Hughes – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Tribal Management
Teresa Trigg – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Applied Business
Alicyn Bahnke – University of Alaska Fairbanks, undeclared
Kailyn Haugen – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Alaskan Native Studies
Julie Amaktoolik – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Business
Harrison Moore – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Business Administration
Timary Stenek – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Elementary Education
Jolene Nanouk – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Rural Development
Brayden Bahnke – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Mechanical Engineering
Jacob Iya – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Business Administration
Kristian Tocktoo – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Alaska Native Studies
Jayden Wilson – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Process Technology
Ida Seetot – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Elementary Education
Ellie Martinson – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Musical Performance, Musical Education
Sharla Aningayou – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Early Childhood Education
Makayla Marble – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Computer Science
Talon Erickson – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Accounting
Melissa Ingersoll – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Alaskan Native Studies
Elizabeth Kakoona – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Elementary Education
Ila James – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Elementary Education
Alazae Waghiyi – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Social Work
Heather Kangas – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Physician Assistant
Brooke Anungazuk – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Psychology
Keon Evans – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Accounting
David Bahnke – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Mechanical Engineering
Maggie Miller – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Rural Development
Amanda Patrick – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Associates of Art

Megan Rock – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Nursing
Alexander Morgan – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Nursing Sciences
Sonja Ningeulook – Fort Lewis College, Biochemistry
Joseph Kinneen – Fort Lewis College, Journalism and Multimedia Studies
Mauri Butzke – Fort Lewis College, Biochemistry
Jewels Iyapana – Fort Lewis College, undeclared
Dawson Evans – Fort Lewis College, Business Administration
Maggie Lyon – Fort Lewis College, History
Tiffany Ongtawasruk – Fort Lewis College, Biology
Lydia Kuzuguk – Fort Lewis College, General Studies
Evelyn Rochon – Fort Lewis College, Psychology
Nicole Bruckner – University of Alaska Southeast, Education
Laurel Katchatag – University of Alaska Southeast, Scientific Diving
McKenzie Sagoonick – University of Alaska Southeast, Associate of Applied Sciences – Health Sciences
Erin Johanson – University of Alaska Southeast, Biology
Kalie Knowlton – University of Alaska Southeast, English Literature
John Wade – University of Alaska Southeast, Biology
Donovan Cooper – Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, Aeronautical Science
Laureli Ivanoff – Institute of American Indian Arts, Creative Writing
Tristan Merchant – Portland State University, Health Science
Talia Cross – University of Hawaii at Monoa, Nutrition
Ariana Adams – University of Hawaii at Hilo, Business Administration
Skeye Ungwiluk – Lewis-Clark State College, Psychology
Kastyn Lie – Stanford University, English
Kollin Kotongan – University of Hawaii at Hilo, Pharmaceutical Sciences
Alaina Pete – Umpqua Community College, Dental Assisting
Faith Itta – Washington State University in St. Louis, Social Work with a concentration in Alaska Native/American Indian studies
Jewel Wilson – Whatcom Community College, General studies
Mary David – University of Denver Washington, Social Work
Wallace Ungwiluk – Multnomah University, Business Administration
Hannah Shreve – Arizona State University, Special Education
Austin Moore – Elon University, Doctor of Physical Therapy
Josiah Brisson – George Fox University, Therapy/Kinesiology
Alexandria Ivanoff – University of Oregon, Journalism
Nathan Ivanoff – Oklahoma Baptist University, Elementary Education
Lawrence Lynch – Seton Hall University, Accounting
Stephan Anderson – University of Hawaii at Hilo, Kinesiology and Exercise Sciences
Donna Rupe – Seminole State College, Health Sciences
Nicole Ryan – University of Denver, Social Work
Cassandra Mike – Wayland Baptist University, Accounting
Jeremiah Hersrud – Bellevue College, undeclared
Katlyn Smith – University of Hawaii at Manoa, Environmental Science
Lisa Ellanna – William Mitchell College of Law, Law
Zoe Okleasik – California Lutheran University, English
Natalie Longley – Kansas City University of Medicine and Biosciences, Sciences
Shayna Warnke-Green – Salem International University, Biology
Charis Ivanoff – North Park University, Psychology
Will Fagerstrom – Colorado State University, Engineering Biomedical
Christina Gard – Regent University, Psychology and Counseling
Jaylene Wheeler – Lewis and Clark Law School, Environmental, Natural Resources and Energy Law Business
Macey Witrosky – Boise State University, Business
Diana Handeland – Creighton University, Occupational Therapy

NSHC's Board of Directors recently approved a scholarship for students pursuing education in a field employable by NSHC through vocational, trade, or technical school, or other short-term training programs in fields critical to support health care. The scholarship range is \$750-\$3,000 for students enrolled in trade programs, including carpentry, plumbing, mechanical, electrical, and boiler, etc., from an accredited institution. Students must apply at www.my-cache.org by at least four weeks prior to the start of training. Questions? Contact Irvin Barnes, Tribal Training and Development manager, at 907-443-4559 or ijbarnes@nshcorp.org.

2022 VOCATIONAL SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS SO FAR

Elaine Bogeyaktuk, Alaska Career College – Business and Office Specialist
Nikita Cartier, Leeward Community College – Culinary Arts
Donovan Cooper, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University – Aeronautical Science
Robert Dickson, Alaska Career College – CDL
Gerald Hughes, Odyssey Pilot Hours – Piloting
Arctic Ivanoff, Amundsen Education Center – Construction
Makiyan Ivanoff, Amundsen Education Center – Construction
Leah Kavairlook, Alaska Career College – Business and Administration
Amber Ongtawasruk, AVTEC – Administrative assistant
Kathleen Panzer, Alaska Career College – Medical Assistant
Barbara Pete, AVTEC – Culinary Arts
Shernyence Steve, Alaska Career College – Medical Billing and Coding
Colton Thrun, University of Alaska Fairbanks – Aviation Maintenance

MESSAGE OF HOPE

Continued from page 1

Carol Seppilu, IñUA outreach coordinator, is an ultra-marathon runner and advocate for mental health. As a teenager, Seppilu survived a suicide attempt. Now her goal is to encourage others to live healthy lifestyles, focusing on the importance of traditional activities.

"I'd like to see us strengthen the cultural connection with our people, especially with the younger generation," she said. "Our culture is a very important part of our lives and a very strong protective factor against suicide. We're doing a lot more cultural

activities and keeping it alive."

While some students were working in the wood shop, others filtered into the school library to watch the documentary film *I Am Yup'ik*, about a teenager determined to lead his small village's basketball team to a district tournament, creating a source of pride and healing for his community.

After the film, the floor was opened to sharing stories that included some personal accounts and some words handed down from elders. There were stories of the ever-mischievous little people, stories of wolves and mysterious whistling in the dark, and stories of crab fishing and preserving beluga.

When an adult asked whether the students enjoyed getting out on the land, all 20 hands shot up enthusiastically. The Daniels girls said they try to take advantage of all outdoor activities Elim life has to offer. The cousins recalled stories of relatives hunting oogruk (bearded seal) and animatedly spoke of cutting beluga that the hunters had brought home.

"It's so yummy," the girls said. "It's the best!"

Elim was the third community to host a Wellness Week this year. IñUA and the Kawerak Wellness Program will next visit Savoonga. During the visits, program staff organize cultural activities, share resources with com-

munity members, and encourage anyone who needs support to contact NSHC Behavioral Health Services.

"We let people know, we've been to therapy," said Kira Eckenweiler, IñUA's prevention planner. "It's okay to seek out help, and it's okay to need help. There's no shame."

Eckenweiler appreciates visiting communities that are open to having deep conversations about mental health and suicide. She strives to share a message of hope with people around the region.

"We're a strong people, we're a happy people, we can do this," she said. "We are so capable of living happy, healthy, thriving lifestyles."

BHS CRAFT CLASSES

Continued from page 1

Since the building's grand opening in 2021, NSHC's Wellness and Training Center has dedicated several multi-purpose rooms to sewing, carving, and other craft activities through BHS. These art-based programs offer a new way to cope with anxiety or negative feelings while also offering social support and influencing creativity. The activities allow BHS to provide a sense of connection to cultural roots.

Fifteen years ago, Gordon Iya took a traditional drum making course with some friends. Guided by the late Ben Snowball, a Native Youth Olympics icon and course instructor at Cook Inlet Tribal Council, Iya made his first of many drums.

Now a Native Connections prevention specialist in Nome, Iya teaches and shares his knowledge of traditional drum making with any who want to learn.

"Learning to make drums may also act as a doorway to learning drumming and dancing. It certainly has in my case," Iya said. Most recently, Iya has paired up with Carol Seppilu to host indigenous dancing and drumming events at the hospital.

After nearly a month of classes, one of Iya's students has almost finished his first drum. Creating a drum has helped Kenneth "Phraustie" Hughes rediscover his Inupiaq roots.

As a child, Hughes was unable to participate in many of the cultural activities that his peers actively explored. As he grew older, he yearned for a place where he felt he belonged. Getting into a rehab program, being in active recovery, and taking a drum making class gave him just that.

"This is important to me. Part of the reason I made poor life choices is because of the lack of cul-



Photos: Alexis Erikson

Above: Stephanie Oittillian and Wanda Iya stitch a pair of mittens. Right: Benjamin Jack uses a belt sander to smooth the edges of ivory earrings.

tural presence within my life," Hughes explained. "So, this is my reclamation of the culture, in a matter that makes sense to me."

He'd like to learn as much about Inupiaq culture as he can and bring aspects of it to share with others. This includes learning a few songs from our region and other regions.

"It's when we walk away from the culture, from who we are, that we lose ourselves to calamity," he said.

Growing up in Savoonga, Wanda Iya remembers watching her mother sew Native clothing, Native kickballs, and dolls made of seal skin. By the time she was 8 years old, her mother and aunt taught her the simplest of stitches. Through them, she discovered the value of carrying the knowledge of her ancestors.

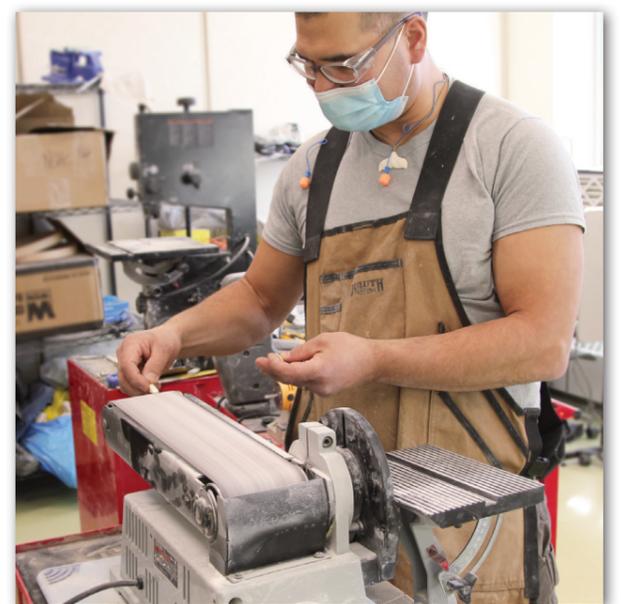
Wanda Iya, a recovery coach, teaches a sewing course at BHS. Most of her students already have some experience with sewing and have made items like mittens, hats, yo-yos, necklaces, earrings, kuspuks, and quilts in her classes.

"I believe it is important to continue to gain knowledge and carry on what we learn from our parents, our grandparents, and other family members," she said.

Whether it comes from a desire to reclaim one's culture or from knowledge passed down through generations, Gordon Iya says embracing creativity can make a positive change in somebody's life.

As Ben Jack says, "Once you're taught this skill, you'll have this skill for life."

If you are feeling down or are looking for help for yourself or others, please talk to someone. Call NSHC Behavioral Health Services at 907-443-3344 during business hours; after hours, call 907-443-6411 or 1-844-586-8773. The Alaska Careline is also available: 1-877-266-HELP.



Alaska Native dancing and singing online

From generation to generation, the knowledge of traditional songs and dances slowly becomes more fragmented. To help preserve the rich history of Alaska Native culture and arts, Benjamin Jack and his wife, Jolene Lyon, began a YouTube channel named "The Tapraq Way." This 15-year-old collection of videos from the Bering Strait region has been published for anyone who would like to view the traditional songs and dances from Stebbins, Nome, and around the region. Check out their channel here: www.tinyurl.com/TheTapraqWay



Get involved!

Consider joining one of these free classes available at the Wellness and Training Center.

TRADITIONAL DRUM MAKING Free. 4-7 p.m. every Wednesday. All basic supplies provided: Ceconite fabric, round wooden frames, wooden dowels, and all materials needed to cut and bind the pieces together. It takes about 2-3 classes to complete one drum. For more information, contact Gordon Iya: 907-443-3215 or email gsiya@nshcorp.org.

SEWING CLASS Typically for Day Shelter guests, but clients and patients may also use the room. All basic materials are provided: fur, leather, fabric, sewing tools, beads, sewing machines, sewing books and patterns. For information about taking or leading a class, call BHS at 907-443-3344.

CARVING CLASS Free and open to patients, clients, and the general public. Supplies are provided: walrus tusks, antlers, bones, and all tools needed to carve and shape your pieces. For more information, call BHS: 907-443-3344.

Keeping a watchful eye on harmful algal blooms

Protecting human health is goal of new regional monitoring program

As climate change continues to warm nearby waters in our region, the risk increases for harmful algal blooms to release biotoxins—poisons that are taken up in clams, crab, and other shellfish.

These poisons can be fatal to people when ingested at high enough concentrations.

In response to this emerging public health issue, Norton Sound Health Corporation's Office of Environmental Health is adapting its focus.

In January 2021, OEH offered a virtual training on harmful algal blooms, or HABs, for tribal environmental programs in the Bering Strait region.



Photo: Katherine Olson

Emma Pate, environmental health specialist, demonstrates for Andrew Kakoona, Shishmaref environmental coordinator, how to complete a vertical net tow three meters below surface water. The data collected included water temperature, salinity, and weather conditions. The sample was then taken to the lab for microscopy.

Challenges of the pandemic, however, hampered participation.

Last October, OEH offered small environmental workshops for tribal environmental staff that included a session on HABs.

The training included virtual presentations from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and Ocean and Earth Environmental Services. As a result of these sessions, it became clear that the region needed a HABs monitoring program.

OEH developing the program for the region because of the role seafood has in traditional lifestyles. A large part of our population hunts, fishes, and gathers clams and other marine or freshwater foods through traditional methods.

While commercial seafood is regularly tested prior to sale, traditional foods brought from ocean or river to dinner table are not screened for toxins that can cause illnesses such as paralytic shellfish poisoning.

That is not to say that traditional foods hunted and gathered from regional waters are unsafe.

However, to gauge the health of our waters and the potential for HABs, an important first step is to establish an early warning system for potentially unsafe HABs levels.

That first step involves gathering baseline phytoplankton data through a multi-year monitoring program. Over a period of three to five years, data will be collected to measure presence and absence of phytoplankton in the water.

Phytoplankton, or algae, are normal components of all aquatic environments. When certain species bloom in significant numbers and produce biotoxins, these events are termed harmful algal blooms. These blooms can negatively affect aquatic life and those who depend on that water for subsistence. How and why these blooms occur is complex and depends on ocean currents, winds, temperatures, and other factors.

Norton Sound Tribal Harmful Algal Bloom (NSTHAB) partners include any federally recognized tribes in the region that choose to participate in collecting water samples for OEH to analyze for the presence and absence of the target species.

The program is designed to support consistent monitoring of harmful algal bloom species using sound collection and microscopy practices.

During 2022, tribal environmental programs within the region can participate in developing sampling locations, as well as logistics of transporting samples to Nome within a key 24-hour period of collection or using microscopy onsite to analyze water samples.

A vital local level partnership is in place with Alaska Sea Grant, which coordinates with NOAA

Some of the dangers posed by toxic algal blooms

There are many different species of algae, but only a few are potential toxin producers—with even fewer that are considered relevant for this region's waters.

The most relevant species in the Bering Strait region to measure and monitor are:

- ▶ **Alexandrium** – can cause loss of motor control;
- ▶ **Dinophysis** – can cause diarrhea, nausea, and vomiting;
- ▶ **Pseudo-Nitzschia** – can cause short-term memory loss.

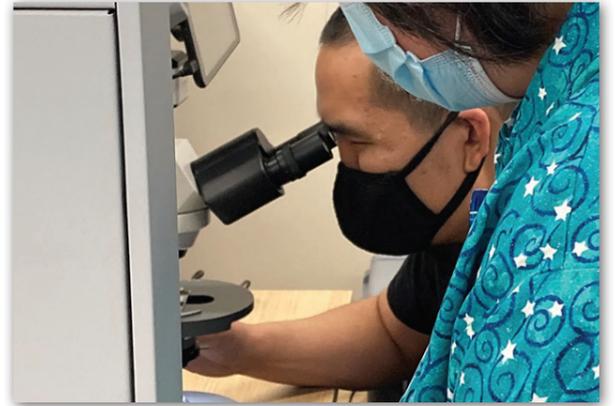


Photo: Katherine Olson

Gerald Oxereok, Wales environmental coordinator, looks through a microscope at a water sample to see if he can detect algae or phytoplankton.

in collecting marine mammal samples (such as small samples from organs and intestines) and water samples to measure and monitor harmful algal bloom species in our region.

The ultimate long-term goal for this program is to protect human health.

It aims to do this by monitoring phytoplankton and using higher level methods to test in a Nome-based lab for rapid results of potential HABs.

This long-term regional project aims to establish a safety monitoring system to protect future generations.

Technical collaborators include Ocean and Earth Environmental Services and NOAA's National Centers for Coastal Science Marine Biotoxin Program.

Key contributions from partners that benefit our region came from the Alaska Conservation Foundation, Alaska Harmful Algal Bloom Network, and Alaska Ocean Observing Systems. Through collaboration and coordination, Alaska Conservation Foundation made a significant contribution to provide NSTHAB with high-grade microscopes, sampling nets and bottles, refractometers, and other sampling supplies to ensure we are ready to start.

RABIES

Continued from page 1

distemper and parvo vaccinations.

"The dog was fine when I picked it up," Campbell said. "Ate dog food, drank water, and warmed up. It was brought to foster that same evening."

But on March 11, only two days after the husky was picked up, it began to act strangely.

Along with foaming at the mouth and breathing heavily, the dog displayed signs of impaired mobility. Recognizing possible signs of rabies, Campbell notified the village police officer (VPO) and they put the dog down. Its carcass was shipped to Nome, where NSHC's Office of Environmental Health packaged the head

for rabies testing by the State of Alaska Virology Lab.

"[That] day Jill asked me if I knew anything about rabies," Noongwook said.

Rabies is mainly transmitted through saliva once symptoms appear, so an exposure of concern would include being bitten or licked by the animal on the eyes, mouth, or any open wounds. While waiting to hear back from the virology lab, Noongwook and one other Gambell resident came forward to say the dog had licked them. By March 15, the dog's test results from the state lab came back positive for rabies.

Noongwook began a treatment plan immediately after learning of his potential rabies exposure.

Safe and effective treatment following potential rabies exposure is one dose of human rabies immunoglobulin (HRIG) and a series of shots called post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP). The shots are administered over the course of 14 days. The treatment regimen is highly successful if given soon after exposure. However, the rabies virus is 100% fatal if left untreated.

Depending on the village and staff, the series of shots can be administered in the village though in many cases patients travel to Nome for their initial PEP shot. Noongwook was able to stay in his home village and wrapped up his final series of shots by the end of March.

According to the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services,

Please turn to page 15



Photo: Jill Campbell

Foaming at the mouth is a sign that a dog is carrying rabies.

2021 NSHC STAFF AWARDS

NSHC Values Awards



PRIDE – RONDA BURNETT Reentry Program Manager, Nome. Ronda has worn different hats at NSHC but most recently is actively increasing wellness throughout the region through her work. She believes in the dignity of the people she serves and works diligently to connect them to needed resources. She partners with community organizations but also acts alone and will drop everything to personally help someone in need. She is committed to seeing families in the region heal, grow, and thrive.



PRIDE – DANIEL STANG Director of Facilities, Nome. Though he oversees a department, whenever a critical issue arises Daniel can be found in the thick of things with his crew. He gives great attention to detail, resulting in cost savings for NSHC and ensuring the smooth operation of the facility. He has great communication skills and is forward thinking, which benefits departments across the board. He has high standards and holds his team accountable. In turn, those high standards are upheld by his team.



COMPASSION – KEITH MORRISON BHS Prevention Specialist, Nome. Keith has the support of his team behind him, who all say he goes above and beyond to care for those who need it. He will cover shifts and work longer hours if it makes the difference of having a safe, warm place for clients to go. He treats everyone with respect and makes sure everyone's needs are met. By caring so much for others – clients and coworkers alike – this employee is a genuine example of compassion.



TEAMWORK – ROBERTA CASTEL Patient Housing Lead, Nome. Roberta's can-do attitude has made a world of difference in NSHC's ability to meet patient needs during the COVID pandemic. For some time, Roberta was the only full-time employee in her department, answering all calls for help with COVID quarantines and isolations. She has since trained coworkers but continues to work overtime and take call. Her cheerful attitude and wealth of knowledge have been instrumental in caring for patients.



ALWAYS LEARNING AND IMPROVING – BRITTANY OXEREOK CHA II, Brevig Mission. Though having worked for NSHC for just over two years, Brittany has quickly moved up in the ranks and is finding her way to her dream of giving back to her community. She is open to constructive criticism and she is understanding with patients. She never refuses to lend a helping hand, carries a great attitude with her everywhere she goes, and always looks to improve her skills as a community health aide.



CULTURAL SENSITIVITY & RESPECT FOR TRADITIONAL VALUES – SHANNON KLESEWSKI BHS Clinical Associate, Nome. Shannon has held different positions within NSHC, always with serving others in mind. She is willing to meet anyone wherever they may be in life. She treats others with respect and uses her traditional values to make others feel good. She provides a listening ear and uses humor to support those in need of a smile. Through her dedication and commitment to

improving lives, she has helped many people walk away from BHS knowing they had a friend inside its doors.



INTEGRITY – RICHARD KUZUGUK Remote Maintenance Worker, Nome. Richard's passion for his work shines through all he does. He has an honest drive to see communities have better sanitary conditions, including water and sewer. He helps communities and NSHC and other organizations better understand one another and the hearts of the issues. Richard is always willing to respond to emergency situations at the drop of a hat because he knows the importance of providing on-site assistance.

Employees of the Year



NOME STAFF – ALEX BAHNKE Lab General Supervisor, Nome. Alex has shown extraordinary commitment to the region in the laboratory. There have been times Alex was the only one taking call or when he did the work of three or four employees by himself. He continues to look out for his team by performing quality and proficiency measures, instrument maintenance, and patient testing. He trains others and maintains a cheerful mood through it all. His hard work does not go unnoticed.



VILLAGE STAFF – TRAVIS KULOWIYA Clinic Travel Specialist, Savoonga. Some of Travis' coworkers say "nothing would be possible" without him at the Savoonga clinic. Everyone feels they can rely on him to not only be present but to make sure a job is done. He is incredibly helpful and willing to go the extra mile to connect providers and patients. He is organized and knows to contact patients before ever being asked. During the pandemic, Travis helped his community achieve one of the highest vaccination percentages in the region through his communications.

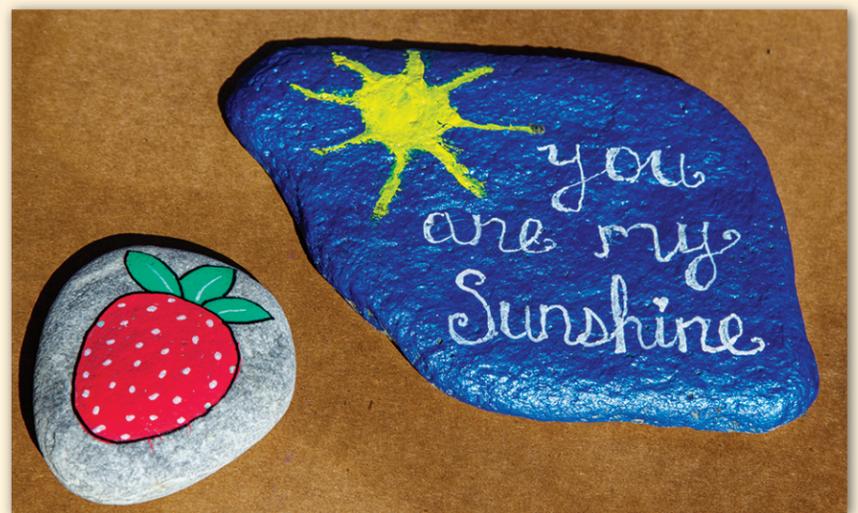
Manager of the Year



STEPHANIE STANG Wellness Director, Nome. Stephanie is highly motivated, driven, and results-oriented. She oversees several departments and ensures their smooth operation, all while being innovative and keeping work fun for all. She takes on additional tasks and takes them in stride. She oversaw the transition of some of her departments to a new location and made sure the move was as seamless as possible. She motivates her employees with her great attitude and exceptional support.



REBA LEAN Public Relations Manager, Nome. Reba is an adept leader, a quality that not only has a huge effect on her department but also on NSHC and the region. She leads by example and operates with inclusiveness and integrity. She communicates clearly, gives constructive feedback, and makes difficult decisions. Her leadership has been invaluable, especially during the pandemic, as her team has demonstrated its commitment and dedication to transparent, up-to-date communications.

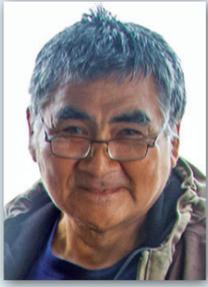


Rocks for wellness

Around 50 people turned out on Wednesday, May 25, for a rock painting event as part of Mental Health Awareness Month. The Behavioral Health Outreach Committee—comprised of staff from Behavioral Health Services, Native Connections, INUA, and Kawerak—planned the event, which attracted school kids, adults, and families. Many rocks were decorated with positive messages and then hidden around town for someone to discover. At right, BHS's Kim Knudsen sprays the brightly painted rocks with a protective finish.



EMPLOYEES OF THE MONTH



MAY – ALFRED NINGEULOOK Maintenance Technician, Shishmaref. Alfred works to keep the Shishmaref clinic maintained in a timely manner with little supervision, always with no complaint. He goes beyond his duties to help the community and fellow coworkers. Before the new clinic opened, Alfred spent countless hours fixing water and septic freeze issues, all on his own. While it is easy to take a well maintained clinic for granted, Alfred deserves recognition for all he does.



JUNE – CHELSEA HUBERT Acute Care RN, Nome. Chelsea's high level of skills, in combination with her calm demeanor in tense medical situations, makes her an asset to the corporation. She provides superior patient care and advocacy, and she goes beyond the call of duty as an exceptional leader. Chelsea always brings a smile to work and provides joy to the Acute Care department's patients and staff members.



JULY – CECELIA NASSUK CHA II, Koyuk. Toward the tail end of an outbreak in Koyuk, Cecelia remained enthusiastic about her job. She does not hesitate with providing needed home visits, takes on housekeeping duties to fill the gap, and keep up with supplies ordering and medication distribution, all while being asked to keep up with her studies. Cecelia's impressive dedication is a model for others.



JULY – CHRISTOPHER HARMON Radiology Technologist, Nome. Christopher has demonstrated the importance of providing quality care, no matter what. In one instance he was not scheduled to work or take call, but when there was a sudden need he stepped up to the plate. He not only came in for emergencies but also offered his services throughout the day. Christopher's willingness to help out is much needed and appreciated.



AUGUST – HILARY FELLO WIC Manager, Nome. Hilary has shown outstanding dedication and commitment to her clients in the last year. With changing funding and program updates, she stayed on top of notifying the region. She is consistent, present every day, and always willing to help out, however needed. When she is the only person in her department, she remains positive and continues to share needed resources and education.



SEPTEMBER – HAE "ANGELA" KIM Kitchen Supervisor, Nome. Angela showed great resilience and dedication in the Nutrition Services department, working through the pandemic with minimal staff. Whenever she is around, she is trusted to get the job done. She picked up countless shifts and gives 100%. Angela works hard to provide food to the nursing departments and patient hostel to ensure patients are fed.



OCTOBER – JODIE SCARLETT Primary Care LPN, Nome. Jodie goes out of her way to be helpful. Not only does she take the time to listen to patients, make sure she understands them correctly, and responds to their needs, but she also looks out for her peers, always asking if there is anything she can help them with. She is constantly assisting others with completing their tasks, sharing her knowledge, and providing excellent customer service.



NOVEMBER – JERRY KOWCHEE Food Service Worker II, Nome. Jerry is willing to try it all in order to help out Nutrition Services. When short-staffed in the department, Jerry would take on the role of two staffers without being asked. He picks up new skills with enthusiasm and continues to be willing to learn more to help where needed. Additionally, he picks up extra work days and hours when asked. He is so appreciated in his department.

DECEMBER – ROCHELLE DAVISON CHA-Trainee, Elim. Rochelle is a relatively new member of her team, but she has already made a difference. She is compassionate and shows pride in her work and is always learning. Patients compliment her for the care she provides, and she takes on duties outside her job description. Rochelle volunteered to work extra hours to ensure the Elim clinic was clean. She pitches in when she sees a need to make sure jobs are completed.



RABIES

Continued from page 13

ments of Environmental Conservation and Health and Social Services, the Bering Strait region generally sees about four or five animals with lab-confirmed rabies each year. Some years the region has no cases.

Between October 2020 and June 2021, however, the State of Alaska Virology Lab and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention confirmed over 35 rabies cases from the region.

"If someone is exposed or think they may have been exposed, they should go to the clinic immediately," said Alicia Reitz, NSHC OEH specialist. "Their medical provider will determine whether they need to receive the post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) shot series to minimize the risk that an infection will advance."

One month after Gambell's first rabies incident, a second dog was put down due to suspected rabies infection. The rabies case was confirmed, and the community was put on alert to tie up loose dogs and make sure all pets were

vaccinated. Posted flyers encouraged residents to report animal bites to the clinic and warned that any unvaccinated pets exposed to rabies would need to be put down.

OEH organized a rabies vaccination clinic for the community April 18-20.

Although the chances of people getting rabies from animals are relatively low, potential exposures should be taken seriously.

There are a few easy ways to reduce the risk.

The best way to protect the community from rabies is to make sure pets have current rabies vaccinations, which creates a layer of immunity between the community and wildlife. Secondly, it is best to avoid close contact with all wild or stray animals. If you must be in contact with them, wear gloves.

If you want to know when your pet is due for its next rabies shot and who in your community can give rabies shots, contact Alicia Reitz at OEH at 907-434-1659 (text or call) or at areitz@nshcorp.org. If you get bitten or scratched by any animal, immediately report it to the clinic and local VPO.

How will you know if you need rabies treatment?

If considering whether a PEP shot for rabies exposure is needed, a medical provider will ask:

- ▶ Did an exposure to rabies potentially occur?
- ▶ Did an animal with fur bite the person?
- ▶ Did the person's open wound, broken skin, or mucous membrane contact saliva or central nervous system tissue from the animal?

If the answer is "yes" to one or more of the questions, the medical provider will next consider additional factors such as low-risk animals vs. high-risk animals, or whether the animal was displaying signs and symptoms of rabies after a 10-day quarantine.

PEP treatment might be initiated immediately for a person with severe bites to the head or neck after an unprovoked attack from a high-risk animal.

PEP may be discontinued if testing proves the animal was not rabid.

A medical provider might determine that treatment is unnecessary if any of these are true:

- ▶ The animal is a vaccinated and healthy pet;
- ▶ The suspected animal tests negative for rabies;
- ▶ The animal shows no signs of rabies after a 10-day quarantine.

Community endemic COVID-19 means new normal

Vaccines and boosters remain important tools

By Dr. Mark Peterson
NSHC Medical Director

COVID-19 is in the region to stay.

The virus that caused a pandemic over two years ago has shaped itself into something that will resemble the common flu, likely with seasons of outbreaks and fewer deadly outcomes. The current dominant variant causes illness that is less severe than its original form and some subsequent variants.

While it may be difficult to accept that the virus will always be around, doing so will allow people to move forward with their normal lives. Practices like masking and keeping distance from others can now be adopted at will or in special case scenarios, like localized outbreaks.

Still, there are some recommended precautions that will help keep everyone safe.

Norton Sound Health Corporation still recommends people keep up-to-date with COVID-19 vaccinations.

Three-fourths of the region's population has been fully vaccinated with the initial series of COVID-19 vaccinations. This provides reasonable protection against developing severe illness from an infection, but booster shots are recommended. Only about 46% of



Photo: Alexis Erikson

The Quarantine Team is still kicking! Though cases have slowed dramatically since early 2022, when this photo of Tobias Wright, David O'Neill, and Roberta Castel was taken, the team of individuals who answer calls from COVID-19 patients is still working hard to meet the needs of the region. The team provides boxes of groceries for households with positive COVID-19 cases. They also transport patients to isolation housing, attend to patient needs, and are in constant communication with the COVID-19 medical response team.

are encouraged to use Pfizer or Moderna as their booster, as long as they do not have an allergy or other contraindication to an mRNA booster.

Testing for COVID-19 is recommended for those who are experiencing symptoms and for close contacts of positive cases. Testing is no longer required in order to travel into the

toms are improving. For the next five days, individuals should wear face masks around others.

NSHC has treatments available for high-risk patients who contract COVID-19. People who are high risk for progression to severe COVID illness can ask their provider about these treatment options, which include the tablet (Paxlovid) and the IV infusion (Bebtelovimab). Common risk factors for severe disease includes obesity, diabetes, COPD, heart disease, and others. Age 65 and older is also a risk factor for more severe disease.

The shift from pandemic to endemic is underway. In the region, rabies is an endemic virus in foxes. It is always present in the geographic area, and it can still have localized outbreaks. The influenza virus is endemic in humans and is mostly predictable in its infectious seasons.

Just as vaccines are available to combat those viruses—vaccines for dogs in the case of rabies, and annual flu vaccines for people—the COVID-19

At-home tests

Did you get a positive result on your at-home COVID-19 test? Please report it to NSHC for medical guidance. Call the Nurse Call Line at 907-443-6411 or 844-586-8773 for more information.

Get your free at-home testing kit from the Public Health Center in Nome or by ordering online from www.covid.gov/tests.

vaccine will remain available and recommended.

With the COVID-19 pandemic on its last legs, the region should be proud of its response. Community leadership and individuals helped ensure one of the state's lowest regional death rates and highest vaccination rates.

An endemic COVID-19 is not a bad thing. In fact, it is a new normal, where people can find comfort in doing things the same way they always have with acquired knowledge about infection prevention.

The region should be proud of its response.

Community leadership and individuals helped ensure one of the state's lowest regional death rates and highest vaccination rates.

the eligible population has received a first booster shot.

Everyone 12 years and older is eligible to receive a booster shot. It is recommended to have a first booster dose of Pfizer or Moderna vaccine five months after the second dose of mRNA vaccine. People aged 50 and older can receive a second booster shot four months after their first booster. Those who had Johnson and Johnson vaccine as their first vaccine

region or on Bering Air, nor recommended regularly for non-symptomatic people.

When individuals test positive, providers will instruct them to isolate for five days from the onset of symptoms or, if not experiencing symptoms, the date of their positive test. Their isolation period is considered completed after the five days as long as they have not fevered for 24 hours and any symp-

ANGIE'S REPORT

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augment medical services available. The day shelter and INUA program continue to provide outreach education and support to help patients cope with trauma and grief. NSHC is working to implement a region-wide home-care program to better meet the needs of patients in their homes. Personal care attendant training is underway.

NSHC has succeeded with building new health clinics in the following communities since 2014: Gambell, Savoonga, Shaktoolik, Diomed, and Shishmaref.

A new clinic will be completed in St. Michael this summer, and new

construction of a health clinic and housing quarters in Wales will begin this summer. Employee housing is also a critical need region-wide. In May NSHC purchased the former Shishmaref clinic and will renovate it into staff housing. In Gambell, two new duplexes will be constructed. Plans are underway to renovate the former Community Health Services building in Nome to convert it to housing. To meet the growing nursing home waitlist, NSHC will expand Quyanna Care Center from 18 beds to 30 beds; the 12-bed expansion design is underway. A new day care facility is also under design.

The recently-passed Infrastructure Bill includes \$3.5 billion to support

water-and-sewer projects for the next five years, with the majority of this documented unmet need being in Alaska. The dream for piped water and sewer for our unserved communities will become a reality, but it will take many years from concept to completion. A regional Community Utility Assistance Program (CUAP) has been established to provide the operation and maintenance support needed to keep existing water-and-sewer systems updated.

For this effort, our region is blessed to have charitable support from the Helmsley Foundation and technical support from Engineering Ministries International. The CUAP team is working closely with all unserved com-

munities to prepare for this funding by ensuring preliminary engineering reports get completed and approved. Congratulations to the community of Stebbins as it has been included in the first round "Tier 1" of approved funding. The Stebbins project is estimated to cost \$78 million and will be broken down and funded in phases.

During the last week of April, the NSHC board and management team met to develop a five-year strategic plan. The key goals include: Housing, water and sewer, child care, mental health, workforce development, in-region services, and communication.

There is no lack of work to be done. NSHC continues to strive to be the leader of Tribal health in Alaska.