

Ten years in, remembering path to new hospital

Like a tanker ship that has been propped on the tundra, the hospital for the Bering Strait region is a formidable sight in Nome. The building towers over the town with uninterrupted views for miles of its surroundings.

Now such a landmark, it can be easy to forget a time before it was built and operational.

It has been 10 years since Norton Sound Regional Hospital officially changed its address to 1000 Greg Kru-

schek Avenue from its former location at Bering Street and 5th Avenue.

The doors to the new, state-of-the-art facility were officially opened to the public as patients and Quyanna Care Center residents moved in on March 5, 2013, but the scene had been set since the building was completed in fall 2012. At a grand opening event held Nov. 14, 2012, members of the public, dignitaries, employees, and past and present Norton Sound Health Cor-

poration Board members toured the new hospital.

“It just fills my heart with pride to see it,” said John Jemewouk, a former representative for Elim on the NSHC Board, during the 2012 celebration. Jemewouk served as a board member from 1984-1992, and as board president for most of those years.

Jemewouk said that even during his time with the board, a new hospital was part of the vision.

“We saw the need for a new facility rather than what we were working with, which limited our ability to provide the care we needed,” he said.

The old NSRH, which began its days as Maynard-McDougall Memorial Hospital in 1948, was a dream come true for many of the tribal leaders who helped Norton Sound Health Corporation come together in 1970 and in the early years afterwards. NSHC

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Photo: Alexis Erikson

A great reason to run

Jade Messer is doused with a final blast of orange during Norton Sound Health Corporation's color run on April 18. The 1-mile color run was organized by NSHC Wellness in recognition of Child Abuse Prevention Month.

Entities partner to prevent rabies exposure

Several reports of red foxes being aggressive to people and pets earlier this winter led to a declaration of a rabies outbreak in the Nome area.

After three foxes tested positive in a one-week period, the response became a collaborative effort at the local, state, and national levels. Several agencies worked together to prevent further exposure to people and pets.

Between January and April, a total of 64 foxes were sent to the Alaska Department of Fish and Game to be tested for rabies. Fourteen had been found dead or were killed because they were showing signs of rabies. All of those animals tested positive. The other 50 foxes were either brought in by hunters and trappers or tested as part of surveillance efforts by a USDA Wildlife Services team. Two of them, or 4%, tested positive. In a typical winter, only two or three positive cases are identified in the Nome area.

“This helped us get a better picture of diseases present in the fox population as well as the prevalence of those diseases,” said Alicia Reitz, Office of Environmental Health (OEH) specialist.

“Just like with any study, the more data you can use for stats, the better picture we have of what’s happening within the population. We typically see an increase in cases around this

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High algal toxin levels in 2022 regional seawater

Researchers and local scientists are updating regional residents on recent laboratory results of seawater samples collected last summer.

Algae found in the Bering Strait have tested positive for highly potent toxic cells, which can lead to accumulation of toxins in seafoods that can cause paralytic shellfish poisoning (PSP) in humans and other animals.

In the summer of 2022, researchers aboard the research vessel *Norseman II* collected samples of regional seawater

to identify types of harmful algae in the Arctic.

From July to September, the researchers’ traverse from west of St. Lawrence Island to the Chukchi Sea

Samples from the 2022 bloom were made up of highly toxic cells producing the most potent forms of paralytic shellfish toxin.

found high levels of a harmful type of algae called *Alexandrium catenella* not far from communities in the Bering Strait region.

Alexandrium is a species of algae

that produces a harmful nerve toxin called saxitoxin, which can cause PSP if a high concentration of the algae is eaten. To better understand the rapid and abundant growth of *Alexandrium*, also called an algal “bloom,” the researchers brought seawater samples back to a laboratory to be analyzed for their algal toxin content.

In March, researchers found that their samples from the 2022 bloom were made up of highly toxic cells that

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Photo courtesy of KNOM

NSHC staff share updates on KNOM's Suwat program

Danielle Slingsby (left), Kawerak outreach director, and Reba Lean (back), NSHC public relations manager, co-host a weekly radio show on KNOM called Suwat, a phrase meaning "What's up?" or "What's happening?" in Iñupiaq. Slingsby has hosted the show for a year and pulled NSHC in to co-host to help share more happenings, information, and updates from the region. In February, their guests featured the CAMP department's Nicole Mertz (front) and Tracy Gregg to talk about the fitness classes their program offers.

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

Third-generation health aide finds joy in job

Kriscilla "Pretty" Buck has worked as a community health aide since 1994. She was born in Nome and has lived most of her life in White Mountain. She is the daughter of Peter and Rita Buck (a retired health aide), and granddaughter of Steve and Martha Agloinga (also a health aide) and Ruth and Aaron Simon. In her spare time, she can be found knitting, sewing, crocheting, and spending time with her granddaughters. When she is not on call, and the weather is nice, she enjoys hunting, fishing, and gathering food.

Can you describe what your day-to-day role looks like as a CHA?

In the past, it seemed like we used to do more patient care for sick patients. Over the years, there has been a lot of wellness and chronic care. Other roles usually include daily quality control checks in the lab, pharmacy inven-

tory, and other stocking duties. A new health aide can expect to learn what it takes to keep a clinic stocked and running. They can help current providers with their job shadowing. As they go through the different levels of training, they take on more patient care.

What is the favorite part of your job?

I like helping providers with well-child, OB, and geriatric patients. At a well-child check, we ask parents how they are developing/learning and do a complete exam and try to answer any questions that the parents may have. We give them patient education about what to look for and give encouragement as they grow. Another favorite part of my job is seeing our community members that I wouldn't see otherwise.

If someone wants to apply to be a CHA, what words of advice would you have for them?

Stick out the training and don't borrow stress from tomorrow. I hope that family and friends support your decision. It helps to have good support systems in place, especially if you have kids.



Photo courtesy of Pretty Buck

Community Health Aide skills, by level

CHA I

- ▶ Emergency Trauma Technician
- ▶ Basic Life Support
- ▶ IV fluids
- ▶ Suturing
- ▶ Blood draw
- ▶ Injections
- ▶ Telemedicine
- ▶ Hemoglobin, blood glucose, and rapid strep labs

CHA II

- ▶ Prenatal exam
- ▶ Mental illness exams
- ▶ Plaster splinting
- ▶ Crutch fitting
- ▶ Postural drainage/clapping
- ▶ Tuberculosis skin tests
- ▶ Urine labs
- ▶ Stool tests
- ▶ HIV pretest counseling

CHA III

- ▶ Routine prenatal care
- ▶ Immediate postpartum, newborn care
- ▶ Breast exams
- ▶ Well child exams
- ▶ Pap smears
- ▶ Immunizations
- ▶ Sexually transmitted infection care

CHA IV

- ▶ Chronic care, including diabetes and tuberculosis
- ▶ After completing session IV and accompanying field work, health aides may be credentialed as community health practitioners

Construction projects to help with housing

NSHC aims to ease shortages in Nome and area villages

Housing continues to be a priority need in the Bering Strait region. With many projects on the horizon, the Norton Sound Health Corporation Board of Directors has chosen to focus on making impacts on patient and staff housing with the goal of relieving some of the housing needs regionwide. Housing has a major impact on patient access and staff retention, and the NSHC Capital Projects department's work in coordinating the different projects will lead to positive outcomes on many different levels.

Quyanna Care Center

The current QCC facility, NSHC's long-term care center, opened in 2013 with 18 beds, which was an expansion from its previous 15 beds. For the last five years, the facility has had a waitlist ranging from eight to 38 people. At least 10 of those on the waitlist would take a bed if offered it today. The NSHC Board approved moving forward with a 12-bed expansion to the facility, and in early 2022 selected Architects Alaska Inc. to design the project. The expansion will extend to the southeast of the existing building. It will include a large outdoor balcony area, enlarged resident bedrooms and redesigned restrooms, as well as a new mechanical room. Foundation construction is expected to begin this summer, with the project's planned completion in spring 2025.



Photo: Ken Graham

Old Community Health Services Building

The building at 607 Division Street was emptied in November 2021 after Public Health Nursing moved next door to the former Health Aide Training building. The old Community Health Services building also used to house Behavioral Health Services, which moved to the Wellness and Training Center in May 2021. The NSHC Board of Directors has approved planning, design, and construction to renovate the old building into patient and employee housing. There will be seven units on the first floor and nine units on the second floor that will be set up as extended stay rooms, most with a kitchenette space. Contractors have completed demol-



Image: Architects Alaska

Quyanna Care Center soon will be greatly expanded, with the addition stretching out in front of the current building as shown in the rendering above.

ishing the interior as of this May. Construction will take place throughout the summer. With furniture, fixtures, and equipment, the building is expected to be completed by the end of 2023.

Nome Employee Housing

In December 2023, NSHC purchased the 21,000-square-foot Norton Sound Suites 20-plex apartment and 17.8 acres of land immediately west of the main hospital. NSHC has begun the planning and design to construct units on the newly acquired property.

Wales Clinic and Staff Quarters

Construction of a new replacement clinic and new staff quarters in Wales is in progress. In summer 2022, a pad was built for the new clinic, which will be based off the same design as the Shaktoolik clinic that opened in 2019. Workers began construction in early May and will work throughout the season. The building is expected to be completed by November 2023. The same building contractor working on the clinic, ASRC SKW Eskimos Inc., is also constructing a staff housing triplex in Wales. The triplex will be based on the same design as one built in St. Michael in 2016. Its schedule for completion lines up with the clinic's, set for November 2023.

Shishmaref Staff Housing Renovation

When the new Shishmaref Clinic opened in 2021, the fate of the old clinic was unclear. Knowing there was a need for staff housing in the community, NSHC came to a ground lease agreement with Shishmaref Native Corporation for the old clinic's land,

and NSHC bought the building from the City of Shishmaref in spring 2022. The building is currently being converted into two apartments: one for a local full-time advance practice provider, and the other for visiting NSHC staff members.

Additional Village Housing Projects

- In Gambell, two duplex units will be constructed near the existing clinic. Site work is expected to begin this year, with construction getting underway next year.
- In Koyuk, NSHC purchased an existing home for the purpose of staff housing. While it is renovated this summer, NSHC continues to pursue a land purchase near the clinic, where it will build a triplex unit.
- NSHC is also planning staff housing projects in Stebbins, White Mountain, Teller, Shaktoolik, Brevig Mission, Unalakleet, and Elim.

Founded 1970

NSHC

COVID-19 Response Winds Down

The global and national public health emergencies for COVID-19 have expired. What does that mean for Norton Sound Health Corporation?

WHAT HAS CHANGED

- Mandatory masking is no longer required in all NSHC facilities. Face masks are still available upon entry for the public. Anyone with respiratory symptoms is asked to wear a mask upon entry to the hospital or clinics
- A schedule will be posted for monthly Tribal Leader Calls, the previously weekly teleconferences, which will be geared toward gaining feedback on programs and services
- COVID food support will no longer be provided after July 1
- Daily COVID Updates will no longer be sent to community leaders
- The NSHC Weekly Update e-newsletter will not feature the COVID-19 Situation Report
- NSHC's COVID-19 Response webpage will no longer feature prominently at the top of www.nortonsoundhealth.org. The page will be moved to the "Patient Resources" tab

WHAT REMAINS THE SAME

- NSHC will continue to provide COVID-19 vaccinations at no out-of-pocket cost
- NSHC will continue to provide COVID-19 testing at no out-of-pocket cost for the short-term future. NSHC will share additional information if any changes are made
- At-home COVID-19 test kits will remain available to the public while supplies last, with pick-up during regular house at the Nome Public Health Center at 207 West 6th Ave

We are always listening. Contact Public Relations at pr@nshcorp.org if you have any concerns about what is changing, related to COVID-19 prevention and management in the region.

24 hours a day, use the
NSHC PROVIDER CARE LINE

907-443-6411
OR DIAL TOLL-FREE
1-844-586-8773

- + **TIP:** Keep these numbers visible in your home. Cut out this box and stick it to the fridge with a magnet!
- + **TIP:** Save the NSHC Provider Care Line number as a contact in your cell phone—then save that contact to your "favorites" or emergency contacts.

YOUR BEST LIFE

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

Summercise is back and better than ever!

Summercise is an award-winning program that has been offered in Nome for more than 20 years, and it's back for another year! Focusing on nutrition education and physical fitness, the day camp is open to kids over age 5 in the Norton Sound/Bering Strait region.

This year, there will be some changes made to better suit summer subsistence and travel schedules.

Instead of signing up for a three-week session as in previous years, families can now register for one week at a time. The programs will run weekly from June 5-22 and July 10-27, Monday through Thursday from 1-4:30 p.m. The per-child registration fee of \$25 per week helps cover location rental costs.

"I think the new structure of Summercise will benefit our families and youth by still providing valuable nutrition education and physical education opportunities on a more flexible basis," said Nicole Santonastaso, Prevention Program supervisor and Summercise director. "We can capture more participants as it fits into busy summer schedules."

Each week kids can choose from topics such as swimming, gardening, hiking, cooking, survival skills, roller skating, biking, cheerleading, scavenger hunts, traditional dance, soccer, basketball, and more. Instead of rotating locations as in previous years, youth will be in the same location for the whole week. Locations include the Nome Recreation Center, the



Photo: Alexis Erikson



Photo: Megan Timm

swimming pool, and the community garden.

"The topics will allow our youth to really explore particular interests and build valuable skills," Santonastaso said.

A certified diabetes care and education specialist, international board-certified lactation consultant, and licensed dietitian, Santonastaso started with NSHC as a Summercise

ABOVE: An excited group of 2022 Summercise kids gears up for a day with warm weather at Nome's East End Park, followed by games and activities on the beach. **LEFT:** Nicole Santonastaso, CAMP prevention program supervisor, started her career at NSHC as a Summercise intern in 2013. Here, she visits with Matti Miller at a 2013 CAMP event in Teller.

intern 10 years ago—and returned to coordinate the program in 2015.

"I love this program because we see how much our interns impact the youth of Nome, but simultaneously we see how much the interns learn from our youth and the community they serve," she said.

New this year is a Junior Summercise program for kids ages 3-4. It will take place Wednesday mornings and Friday afternoons. All participants will need to be accompanied by an adult. There will be a physical activity, snack, and nutrition lesson provided.

"It's such a great opportunity for

the youth in our region, and we want as many kids to participate as possible. We hope restructuring after the pandemic will allow for greater participation," Santonastaso said.

This year staff will visit Gambell June 27-29, and St. Michael and Golovin July 5-6. Youth activities will take place for two days from 1-4 p.m. Biometric screenings for adults will also be offered during this time, and there will be a wellness event in each community during those dates.

For updates on Summercise registration, please visit www.norton-soundhealth.org/camp/summercise

CAMP wants to be your year-round wellness partner

There are many ways the CAMP department can help keep you on track with your wellness goals. Here's how to access our programs!

Ways to Stay Active

► **GROUP FITNESS** Our group fitness programs are designed for all levels. Instructors are educated in how to modify movements and create a safe, welcoming environment for all. Check out the calendar for class descriptions at www.nortonsoundhealth.org/calendar/fitness/

► **WELLNESS CHALLENGES** Each month we choose a theme and put together activities fitting that theme. These challenges are more interactive than in the past as we strive to increase engagement, effectiveness, and FUN!

Along with standard incentives, some months feature special edition incentives important to completing the following month's challenge. Those who participate all 12 months will be entered to win a grand prize!

Paper copies of each month's challenges are available at the CAMP office in the Wellness and Training Center or at www.nortonsoundhealth.org/services/community-health-services/camp/. Turn in each

completed challenge by the 10th of the following month to earn an incentive. These can be submitted in person, via email, or by mail. For details, email us at wellness@nshcorp.org or call 907-443-3365.

Ways to Improve Your Nutrition

Join us in a cooking demo or stop by a produce market! Our programs offer more than just low-cost or free food, they offer education to help you learn how to better store and use foods that are good for your health. Our produce markets and food demos are an opportunity to chat with one of our health educators or get information about foods through our recipe program.

► **PRODUCE MARKET** Want to know when the next produce market is? Join our text alerts by texting CAMP to 833-413-0568.

► **COOKING DEMOS** To sign up for our food demo, keep an eye on our website and follow us on Instagram @nshcwellness for our next program.

► **STEP-BY-STEP** A Step-By-Step visit can give you valuable insight into significant health markers. Appointments are 30 minutes long and measure your cholesterol, blood sugars, body composition, and blood pressure. You can work with a health edu-

cator to set goals to help you feel your best.

Schedule an appointment at 907-443-3365. All participants receive a CAMP incentive.

► **RECIPE LIBRARY** Visit our digital recipe library, with recipes crafted by health educators from our region. The recipes include helpful hints for substitutions (for when the store is a little bare), and most recipes incorporate our wonderful subsistence foods. Scan the QR code to browse our recipes.



Upcoming CAMP events

- Gold Dust Dash: June 17
- Wyatt Earp Dexter Challenge: July 22
- Lactation Educator Training & Retreat: Aug 1-3
- Community Produce Markets: TBA

Stay healthy all year long!

Looking for tips and tricks to stay healthy year-round? Our Instagram is always highlighting ways to promote wellness. Follow us: @nshcwellness

Make way for this summer's fresh catch!

RECIPE: One-Sheet Roasted Garlic Salmon Broccoli

Got frozen salmon fillets in your freezer? Here is a great, easy spring and summer recipe to change up your salmon dishes and help you clear the freezer in anticipation of fishing season. This recipe uses minimal dishes and takes just 15 minutes to bake, which means your oven won't heat up the house too much in the warmer weather!

- Prep time: 5 minutes
- Cook time: 15 minutes
- Servings: 4

INGREDIENTS

- 1½ pounds salmon fillets cut into 4 portions and patted dry
- 1 large head fresh broccoli cut into florets (3-4 cups) — you can also use frozen florets!
- 2½ tablespoons of your favorite olive oil
- 1-2 cloves fresh garlic minced (or jarred minced garlic)
- ¾ teaspoon salt, divided and to taste
- black pepper to taste
- 1 lemon, sliced
- 1 cup shredded parmesan cheese (separated into two ½-cup portions)

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 450°F and line a large baking sheet with parchment paper or a silicon baking mat.
2. Arrange the salmon pieces on the lined baking sheet, leaving a space between the portions.
3. Drizzle or brush 1 tablespoon of oil over the fish. Spread the minced garlic cloves evenly over the salmon. Next, sprinkle the fish with ¼ teaspoon salt (or to taste) and ground black pepper. Finally, top the salmon with the sliced lemon. Set aside for a moment
4. Combine the clean broccoli florets, 1½ tablespoons of oil, ½ teaspoon sea salt, and ground black pepper in a medium bowl. Toss to evenly coat the florets. If using frozen florets, put on the baking sheet and then drizzle with olive oil.
5. Arrange the broccoli on the baking sheet around the salmon pieces.
6. Bake in the oven for 13-15 minutes or until fish is done and the broccoli florets are slightly golden/crisp on the ends.
7. Sprinkle with parsley for a garnish and arrange lemon slices over, if desired. Enjoy warm!



E-cigarettes a growing epidemic

“Is this worth it? Worth your life? And does the tobacco industry care about you, or your money?” Jessica Ivanoff asked as she looked around a classroom of restless Shaktoolik students in November.

Now she had their attention. She took a breath and continued.

For many students in the Bering Strait region, Ivanoff may be the first person to explain how e-cigarettes negatively affect their developing brains and bodies.

A tobacco treatment specialist with NSHC's CAMP department, Ivanoff frequents schools in the region to give presentations on tobacco cessation and education. Ivanoff and her tobacco prevention colleagues work hard to get the attention of youths who may not know about the price of their decisions.

In the past five years, the use of nicotine through electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes) has sky-rocketed



Photo: Celeste Washington
Celeste Washington,
BHS clinical associate

Celeste Washington heard about e-cigarettes when they became popular and tried them for about two months. Tired of ongoing headaches from the e-cigarettes, she decided to quit.

“I love to have more time and money to spend with my family, especially my daughter. My sister used to tell me, ‘That’s 7 minutes I won’t have with you in the long run.’ It gives me peace of mind that I’m able to live a healthier lifestyle.”

among students and young adults. With their high nicotine content, appealing flavors, wide availability, and discreet designs, they threaten decades of progress in the fight against tobacco use.

Many youths in the region have been exposed to e-cigarettes. Based on her own observations, Ivanoff says that in most area villages, at least two students in each grade, from grades 3-12, have tried it. For the younger crowd, peer pressure and seeing family members with e-cigarettes had greatly increased the odds of them trying it.

The Alaska Department of Health has a Tobacco Enforcement & Youth Education Program that aims to decrease youth access to tobacco. Still, purchases are made online and through social media platforms.

“Online purchases can be made since there is no form of identifying their age, and students just need

For the younger crowd, peer pressure and seeing family members with e-cigarettes greatly increased the odds of them trying it.

a card to purchase vape pens (also known as e-cigarettes),” said Ivanoff. After chatting with high school students, she learned that Snapchat, due to its ability to makes messages disappear, is one of the biggest platforms for buying and selling nicotine products to youth in rural communities.

An increasing trend among Alaska high schoolers, 26% of students regularly use e-cigarettes, according to Alaska’s Department of Health. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that these devices are now three times more common among youths than among adults 25 years or older, and many users don’t even realize they contain nicotine.

Because they contain nicotine and sometimes other drugs, e-cigarettes are no safer than traditional cigarettes or chewing tobacco. The American Heart Association found that both vaping e-cigarettes and smoking cigarettes cause a similar amount of damage



Photo: Jessica Ivanoff
Lisa Haugen, BSSD athletic director, rallies student athletes for a tobacco trivia night at the Stebbins school, where a competition took place for a chance to win a Fitbit watch.

to arteries, blood vessels, and adolescent brains.

“My key message to the students is not to shame or make them feel like they are a bad person, but know that the tobacco industries want them to get addicted,” said Ivanoff.

Tobacco use remains a leading cause of preventable addiction, illness, and death in Alaska. If you or



Photo: Alexis Erikson
Kyle Scott, Laboratory informatics specialist

Kyle Scott tried cigarettes as a teen. Later, e-cigarette flavors drew him into vaping for about two years.

“What got me to finally quit was when my oldest daughter asked for it as her birthday gift, so I made a promise and felt that I had someone to report to and keep me in line with quitting. I got a lot of help with the nicotine patches through NSHC, and also got a nicotine-free e-cigarette to use for the feel of smoking to go down slowly.”

someone you know is looking to quit tobacco, text QUIT to 47848, or call the Alaska Tobacco Quitline at 1-800-784-8669. To speak with a tobacco quit coach or request a community presentation, call the CAMP department at 907-443-3365.

E-cigarette quick facts

- E-cigarettes are battery-powered devices that use a heating element to heat e-liquid, typically containing nicotine. The device produces vapor instead of smoke.
- E-cigarette use is often called “vaping.”
- Many e-liquids come in fruit flavors, making them appealing to youth.
- They can be used for delivery of marijuana and other illicit drugs.
- They can look like everyday products such as pens, USB flash drives, or phones.
- The most popular e-cigarette among youth today is the JUUL, which looks like a USB flash drive and produces little visible aerosol while in use. Many JUUL pods contain high levels of nicotine.
- One JUUL pod can contain roughly the same amount of nicotine as 20 cigarettes.
- Approximately two-thirds of e-cigarette users ages 15 to 24 don’t know the devices contain nicotine, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.



An update on the Community Utility Assistance Program

By Denise Michels
CUAP and Sanitation Administrator

The Bering Strait Tribal Community Utility Assistance Program was formed in 2021 to help empower each city government to carry out high-quality, DEC-compliant water and sewer programs.

Efforts toward this mission began with the creation of Norton Sound Health Corporation’s Water and Sewer Ad-Hoc Committee in fall 2017. Board members from regional communities expressed the challenges of served, underserved, and unserved communities. Villages with installed piped water and sewer struggle with maintenance and repair, while unserved communities continue to haul water and waste.

In 2021, the Helmsley Charitable Trust awarded the CUAP a \$20 million grant, which is managed by Engineering Ministries International. NSHC and Norton Sound Economic Development Corporation have each pledged an additional \$500,000 annually for the CUAP’s first five years to aid in the development and establishment of the CUAP.

The CUAP is based on a technical assistance and support model working toward improving the best practice scores established by the State of Alaska. In the last year, this model has taken shape in many ways.

To date, an engineering assessment has been completed for each water and sewer system in the CUAP by MK Consulting. MK Consulting updated the preventative maintenance plans and were able to identify critical deficiencies and recommend improvements to prevent disruption toward



Photo: Reba Lean

CUAP WATER OPERATOR TRAINING Water operators from around the region gathered in Nome in November 2022 for a three-day course covering electrical controls for water plants. The training allowed students to troubleshoot and identify parts on the same types of electrical panels they work with in their home communities. In addition to the 20 continuing education units students received for completing the course, it could lead to more inexpensive fixes when problems occur with panels at their water plants.

water and sewer service. NSHC, in partnership with EMI, will work to finance the critical deficiencies’ parts and equipment. Both MK Consulting and EMI have provided engineering support since fall 2022.

The CUAP development team continues to meet with the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium and Village Safe Water for project management regarding upcoming projects in the Sanitation Deficiency System. The CUAP works with ANTHC and VSW project managers to provide comments on preliminary engineering

reports and draft design plans.

In 2020, a contract was awarded to JW Industries to conduct financial assessments for each community in the CUAP. Copies of the report were provided to the city governments. The reports provided recommendations for financial improvement and training for the city and utility staff.

Kawerak, Inc., in partnership with EMI, hired two municipality accounting specialists. They are visiting every community to assist and strengthen city governments with financial assistance. NSHC Sanitation continues to

assist with financial support for training and certification opportunities for water treatment operators.

In September 2022, the NSHC Board approved the CUAP charter and business plan. It is available to the public at www.nortonsoundhealth.org/CUAP.

This year, the CUAP will work with the communities to provide recommendations to improve best practice scores and will be contacting the communities for options. The spring best practice scores were emailed to the city and operators in March.

GET TO KNOW OUR PROGRAMS

Q&A with Denise Michels, NSHC CUAP & Sanitation administrator

Q: What is the CUAP and Sanitation department’s role at NSHC?

A: The CUAP and Sanitation department manages capital improvement projects, IHS sanitation deficiency system projects, and the remote maintenance worker program across the region’s 15 village communities. The department also supports the CUAP development. The CUAP was created as a utility collaborative to help each city government in the Bering Strait region provide access to clean water and waste management for residents.

Q: What is the importance of sanitation?

A: Sanitation encompasses water, sewer, and solid waste. It’s incredibly important to provide clean water, adequate wastewater facilities, and land-

fills for public health and the safety of everyone NSHC serves. Water is a basic human right, used for drinking, cooking, cleaning, and preventing disease. Unfortunately, sanitation is a big need in the region and across Indian Health Service areas. There is a backlog of over 1,500 sanitation facilities construction projects and a \$3.1 billion need for Alaska Natives and American Indians nationwide.

Q&A with NSHC Remote Maintenance Worker staff

Q: What is the RMW’s role at NSHC?

A: Richard Kuzuguk, RMW program manager: “An RMW provides technical assistance and training to water plant operators on proper operations, maintenance, and repair of the water and wastewater systems, including washeterias, proper

sampling techniques, testing techniques, testing procedures and reporting, as well as lending equipment. RMWs are responsible for verifying the preventative maintenance portion of the best practice scores that are submitted to the State of Alaska. Remote maintenance workers can be an important resource for operators and assist in emergency water plant issues.”

Q: What are some examples of RMW projects?

A: Shyler Johnson, RMW: “In a past position at Maniilaq, I performed main line repairs, changed out pumps, assisted in rehabbing water treatment plants and was a part of the Northwest Arctic Borough rollout of their CUAP program. At NSHC, I troubleshoot Golovin’s water plant after Typhoon Merbok to get their tanks filled and have done minor projects in the villages I have visited so far.”

CUAP trainings FAQ

Q: Where can I find the training calendar?
A: <https://bit.ly/wateroperatorcalendar> or scan the QR code!

Q: Who can take these trainings?
A: Water plant operators can take classes to obtain their certifications and earn continuing education units. There are also trainings available for utility clerks and elected city council members.

Q: I'm interested in a training on the calendar. Who do I contact?
A: Laurel Katchatag and Marilyn Thomas at NSHC CUAP/Sanitation can help answer questions and assist with class registration.

Q: Can NSHC fund the course registration costs and test fees?
A: Yes! NSHC receives grant funding to support course costs, so please reach out to see how CUAP/Sanitation can help.

Q: I'm interested in a course located in Anchorage. Can NSHC Sanitation help cover the flights and lodging?
A: Depending on budget availability, NSHC may be able to fund travel costs.

Q: I'm interested in a virtual class. Can NSHC help with a computer and connectivity?
A: Yes! NSHC can help explore local options and utilizing our partners for computers and locations with wifi.

Q: I'm certified, but I need further CEUs. Can NSHC CUAP/Sanitation help?
A: Yes! The training calendar lists how many CEUs a course includes.

DISCLAIMER: *Though NSHC can assist with lodging, registration, and other course expenses, it is the responsibility of the operator/clerk/elected official to attend class and complete the course. If a student does not attend the course, they may be required to reimburse the Sanitation department. Any damages to lodgings fall upon the operator/clerk/elected official.*



WATER PLANT TOUR Richard Kuzuguk, NSHC RMW program manager, and George Otten, Stebbins water operator, tour Stebbins' relatively new water plant, which hosts a recycled heat system that supplies heat to several public buildings in the community.

BOIL WATER BLUES

What to do when drinking water isn't safe

What is a boil water notice?

Sometimes after an extreme weather event or with aged and exposure-damaged equipment, public water supplies can be compromised. When water sampling results show the water system may be vulnerable to contamination, an assessment must be performed to find and fix any "sanitary defects" (pathway of entry for contamination). Until repeat sampling proves defects have been resolved, the public must boil water for potable use.

During a boil water notice, it is important to follow recommendations from the State of Alaska, the local government, or NSHC for boiling or treating water in your area.

If your water is unsafe, use bottled, boiled, or treated water for drinking, cooking, and personal hygiene.

- Steps for boiling water properly**
1. If water is cloudy, first filter it through a clean cloth, paper towel, or coffee filter, or allow it to settle and draw off the clear water.
 2. Bring the clear water to a rolling boil for one minute.
 3. Let the boiled water cool and store it in clean, sanitized containers with tight covers.

- Steps for disinfecting water when bottled water is unavailable and boiling water is not possible**
1. Check to make sure you have unscented bleach on hand. Most bottles of unscented bleach have instructions for disinfecting water, and if yours does, follow those instructions. If there are none, and the bleach has a 5-9% concentration of sodium-hypochlorite, use the following directions.
 2. If water is cloudy, first filter it through a clean cloth, paper towel, or coffee filter, or allow it to settle and draw off the clear water.
 3. For one gallon of water, add a little less than 1/8 teaspoon of bleach.
 4. If the water is cloudy, murky, colored, or very old, add double the amount of bleach.
 5. Stir the mixture well.
 6. Let it stand for at least 30 minutes before you drink it.
 7. Store the disinfected water in clean, sanitized containers with tight covers.

Meet the Community Utility Assistance Program team



DENISE MICHELS

- CUAP and Sanitation Administrator
- dlmichels@nshcorp.org
- t: 907-443-9570
- Born and raised in Nome
- Worked over 17 years with Kawerak's Tribal Transportation Program.
- Has worked closely with NSHC on several village-based projects.



LAUREL KATCHATAG

- CUAP and Sanitation Administrative Advisor
- lkatchatag2@nshcorp.org
- t: 907-443-9676
- Raised in Elim and Unalakleet.
- Working with NSHC since 2017 in Administration and with the CUAP team.



MARILYN THOMAS

- Sanitation Administrative Specialist II
- thomasm@nshcorp.org
- t: 907-443-8917
- Born in Nome and raised in Koyuk.
- Has been working with NSHC for over 30 years.



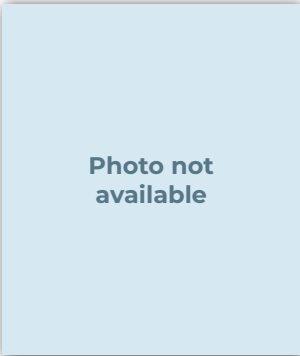
RICHARD KUZUGUK

- NSHC Remote Maintenance Worker Program Manager
- rkuzuguk@nshcorp.org
- t: 907-443-4584
- Born and raised in Shishmaref
- Has worked for NSHC for seven years—as an RMW for two years and recently promoted to RMW program manager.



SHYLER JOHNSON

- Remote Maintenance Worker II
- skjohnson@nshcorp.org
- c: 907-434-1097
- Raised in Unalakleet.
- Hired by NSHC in summer 2022
- Serves southern village communities of Unalakleet, Stebbins, St. Michael, Shaktoolik, Koyuk, Golovin, White Mountain, and Elim.



JALEN KATCHATAG

- Remote Maintenance Worker I
- jrkatchatag@nshcorp.org
- c: 907-434-6904
- Raised in Unalakleet.
- Hired by NSHC in December 2022
- Serves northern village communities of Teller, Brevig Mission, Diomedea, Wales, Savoonga, Gambell, and Shishmaref.

OUT OF THE OLD

RECALLING THE JOURNEY INTO A NEW

NEW HOSPITAL

Continued from page 1

took over the MMM Hospital which, with the completion of an addition in 1978, became known as Norton Sound Regional Hospital.

Planning for a replacement hospital began to ramp up in the early 1990s. It became clear that the healthcare needs of the region were outgrowing the small hospital. Some of the challenges at the old hospital included cramped quarters, a lack of parking space and storage, and an outdated environment, among other things.

In 2005, NSHC's Capital Projects office worked to have a replacement hospital designed. Kumin Associates and Mahlum designed the building, using input from residents of the region they met with. By 2007 a project development team was working with Indian Health Service to advance the project.

A complicated undertaking in many ways, the project's challenging funding aspect presented an opportunity when, in 2009, the project's progress was at the right spot at the right time. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act provided the funding for IHS to award a \$90.5 million building contract for the shovel-ready new hospital. The stimulus funding also provided a sizable amount to an expanded staffing package for the new facility, and the Denali Commission contributed \$15 million. The new hospital's price tag amounted to \$168 million.

The next year, construction was underway on the 144,000-square-foot facility. Inuit Services and Neeser Con-

struction formed a joint venture to build the steel-beam-framed structure. With three main levels and a maintenance penthouse, the region's hospital tripled in size.

The new hospital's features included large waiting rooms and a central main stairway with ample space for visiting with friends and regional residents, art displays with artwork from around the region, an ambulatory surgery clinic with an endoscopy suite, and expanded space in nearly every department.

NSHC hosted a three-day celebration to honor the completion of the new building. Special guests flew in to be part of the event, including former NSHC physician Sen. Donny Olson.

"I really commend the board for their foresight, as well as the other entities that are out there securing funding for a facility like this," he said. "You all know as well as I do, it's expensive to put up something of this quality and magnitude this far away from Anchorage, but I would say they've done an excellent job. The previous boards have done an excellent job of seeing the future, seeing where they want to be."

Charles Degnan, NSHC Board chair from 1971-1974 and representative from Unalakleet, attended the festivities as well. He noted that small communities are usually brushed aside, and the health of their people is not always prioritized. But he said the new hospital was a bright spot in all that.

"It's really an exciting thing to see," he said. "To see a facility in a small community that's built large enough for the opportunity to look into the future."



Small, dated, remembered with nostalgia:



CHELSEA HUBERT, Acute Care

► Remembers: Inpatient nurses worked in the ER as backup for the lone ER nurse. Laboring patients used to go through three different rooms: a laboring room with two beds and a curtain between; a delivery room; and a postpartum room, where they would go once the baby was stable. The nursery was a closet at the nurse's station that had a warmer and supplies to resuscitate babies.

► "The new hospital has so much more staff and resources. There is also so much more room to store supplies. The hospital now has LDRP (labory, delivery, recovery, postpartum) rooms. The new hospital has single rooms compared to double rooms at the old hospital."



JAMES BAREFOOT, Security

► Remembers: Space was tight. He worked as a certified nursing assistant at the old facility.

► "The old hospital was small and outdated. We had patients in the halls at times because we didn't have enough rooms. The ER only had two beds."



ANNA MOORE, Primary Care

► Remembers: When everything was so small, people were more familiar with one another.

► "We went from having no breakroom counter space by our coffee maker at the nurse station to a room with a bathroom and lockers for all of us. It was great and needed, but the community feeling when I reminisce about the old hospital is what I miss most."



ROBERT MOORE

► Remembers: The old hospital was so small, people were more familiar with one another. It was a great feeling when I reminisce about the old hospital.

WELCOME INTO THE NEW

NORTON SOUND REGIONAL HOSPITAL



More new facilities

Since 2013, NSHC has built and expanded more facilities throughout the region.

VILLAGE-BASED

- **2016** St. Michael Staff Housing
- **2017** Savoonga & Gambell Clinics
- **2018** Golovin Staff Housing
- **2019** Shaktoolik Clinic
- **2020** Diomed Clinic
- **2021** Shishmaref Clinic
- **2022** St. Michael Clinic

NOME-BASED

- **2019** MRI Suite Addition
- **2021** Wellness and Training Center; Nome Operations Building



1. Gary Hartz, former Indian Health Service director of the Office of Environmental Health and Engineering, and Emily Hughes, former NSHC Board chair, cut the ribbon to open the new Norton Sound Regional Hospital in November 2012. **2.** Maynard-McDougall Memorial hospital was built in 1948 after a fire destroyed Nome's existing hospital. NSHC bought the building in 1977 and expanded it in 1978 to become the first Norton Sound Regional Hospital. **3.** The late Irene Aukongak, a longtime Golovin health aide, gave a blessing before the 2012 ribbon cutting for the new hospital. **4.** Tight quarters in the old hospital's outpatient clinic area. **5.** As they were added, radiology machines were spread around the old hospital—wherever they could fit. Here, staff pose at the department reception window. **6.** Bill Dann, NSHC's first CEO, stands in the center for this photo taken at the grand opening of the first NSRH in 1978.

Employees compare the old with the new

ANNIE MEADOWS, Materials Management

- **Remembers:** Supplies were kept in a separate warehouse. Materials personnel had to cart items to the hospital from across the parking lot or via forklift.
- “The cafeteria food orders had to be broken down and put on carts that were pushed down the hallway and then down a ramp with a 180-degree turn halfway down. It was challenging with the large, heavy orders.”



MARSHA TOBUK, Respiratory Therapy

- **Remembers:** Respiratory Therapy worked out of a single office, which was an old patient room with a small storage closet next door.
- “Coming into the new hospital felt like we were leaving Nome and stepping into a whole different city. It took almost a whole year for that feeling to fade away. Getting all new equipment felt like Christmas, opening all these fun new things.”

crowded together at the old hospital. In, with parties on the 2-3 foot courses' station, to a large break-out belongings. The extra space is often missed. There is a nostalgia for the old hospital.”



JAMES WADE, Radiology

- **Remembers:** Radiology had a front admissions window, but its different machines were spread across the facility, tucked into spaces where there was room for them.
- “In Radiology, time can be crucial. What changed things for us is how much quicker a patient can be done here than there—20-25% faster!”

Climbing ladders to careers in nursing

MEGAN ROCK: CNA to CMA to preparation for nursing school

After working as a certified nursing assistant (CNA) in Nome for a decade, Megan Rock was looking to continue her education in the medical field when she came across the perfect opportunity: a distance learning program through the Primary Care Association to become a certified medical assistant (CMA). Rock was immediately interested.



Unlike CNAs, who work under registered nurses, CMAs work directly under medical physicians or advanced practitioners. They have more varied responsibilities that include conducting patient assessments, administering immunizations and medications, assisting with procedures, and coordinating patient care.

Rock started the program, a year-long apprenticeship, in October 2022. By February 2023, she had successfully completed the CMA exam and was rewarded with her new certification. Having received support from NSHC throughout the program, Rock is excited to continue to give back to the region with her new skills and knowledge.

“NSHC assisted with scholarships towards my education, provided mentorship in Primary Care to complete my assigned learning and clinical assignments, and allowed me to maintain a flexible schedule,” she said.

Rock is not stopping there. She recently completed required pre-nursing courses with the University of Alaska Fairbanks and plans to become a registered nurse. She received her pre-nursing

certificate during the UAF Northwest Campus commencement in May.

“I always had an ambition to help people,” Rock said. “It’s a chance to develop relationships with patients and engage in problem solving. I truly believe that it is a rewarding career.”

MARIE BALAMOU: From TSA to CNA to registered nurse

About five years ago, Marie Balamou moved to Nome to work as a TSA agent. In November 2019, she was hired as a certified nursing assistant at NSHC’s Quynna Care Center, where she worked for about six months. In January 2020, she enrolled in the UAA distance nursing program at Northwest Campus and graduated with an associate degree in nursing in December 2022.



“I’ve wanted to be a nurse for a long time,” Balamou said. “My grandma was a midwife and delivered almost half of our town’s babies, so she’s been my inspiration.”

Originally from western Africa, Balamou moved to Dallas, Texas, in 2001 to live with family. Since French is the official language in Guinea, she did not know English when she first arrived in the U.S. Yet two years later, she had completed a CNA program. Later, she went on to earn an associate degree in case studies, a bachelor’s in public affairs, and eventually a master’s in business administration at Texas Woman’s University.

In the coming weeks, Balamou plans to take the national nursing board exam, which is the last step before she is granted her registered nurse

license. She plans to work at NSHC in Acute Care and hopes to travel back to Africa to volunteer as time allows.

“Thanks to everyone who helped me get this degree, including NSHC, NSEDC, and the rest of the community,” Balamou said. “Not a lot of people have the opportunity to come into a community and have the resources to become a nurse.”

ALICE AMAKTOOLIK: From health aide to CNA to registered nurse

Alice Amaktoolik was born in Nome and raised in Golovin. Her grandmother is MaryLou Amaktoolik, and she is the daughter of Wayne Henry Sr. and Eleanor Amaktoolik.



“Growing up, I knew that I wanted to either be a teacher or a nurse,” Amaktoolik said.

She first worked for NSHC in 2016, as a village health aide in Golovin. After moving to Nome she decided to give teaching a try, but realized that she had a passion for health care. She switched career goals and became a certified nursing assistant in 2018.

Discovering that she excelled in the medical field, Amaktoolik enrolled in the UAA distance nursing program at Northwest Campus in January 2020. After two years of hard work in the intense program, she graduated in December 2022.

She says NSHC supported her goals by providing the financial support and flexibility that was needed to finish her Associate of Applied Science in Nursing.

Personal care attendants help elders live at home

When she was younger, Martha Butler knew she wanted to help people.

Her main inspiration was her grandmother, Sally Seppilu, who had worked with Norton Sound Health Corporation as a personal care attendant (PCA) and certified nursing assistant (CNA) for many years.

Now the tides have turned and longtime caretaker Seppilu needs some extra support herself. Butler, now a PCA, spends one to two hours each week with her grandmother, helping with housework. They often reminisce about shared memories, like picking blueberries together on warm summer days.

“I feel very grateful for this opportunity,” Butler said.

Butler is part of NSHC’s In-Home Programs department, which provides support to allow elders and individuals experiencing developmental or intellectual disabilities to maintain independence in their home, allowing them to remain in the region rather than moving to an assisted living home.

NSHC has been offering in-home support services for over a decade through Medicaid’s Home and Community Based Waiver Services, often called a Medicaid Waiver. The program has provided individuals with support staff who can go into the patient’s home to teach independent living skills such as cooking, cleaning, and doing laundry.

Once called Rainbow Services, the department changed its name in 2018 to reflect NSHC’s vision to expand home-based services for elders and individuals with disabilities. In March 2020, NSHC became certified to offer personal care services for elders like Seppilu.



Former NSHC caregiver Sally Seppilu now gets help at home from granddaughter and NSHC In-Home Programs PCA Martha Butler.

When not helping her grandmother, Butler is making the rounds helping five other patients who also need extra assistance.

“Sally is so proud of Martha,” said Tierra Austin, PCA office manager.

NSHC currently employs 15 PCAs like Butler

who reside in eight different communities and are responsible for helping patients with daily tasks. Thirty-eight individuals have been approved for services, but not all have been matched with a home caregiver. With some exceptions, an individual’s PCA can be a family member or friend that has been trained, certified, and hired by NSHC.

“This year, we are focusing on community outreach with the goal to increase services to more communities. We’re also focusing on recruitment to be able to provide a staff member to every approved patient,” Austin said. “We’re the start of the career ladder for anyone interested in healthcare, and we support all our staff in reaching their educational and career goals.”

In 2021, UAF Northwest Campus, in coordination with NSHC, received a grant to offer a 4-credit course to train students as certified PCAs. The fourth cohort will finish their certification in June 2023. The additional educational opportunity in the region has supported family caregivers in increasing their clinical skills. It has also helped recruit individuals who want to start a healthcare career path and serve patients who might not otherwise have a family caregiver available.

“The most rewarding aspect of being a PCA is the smile on patients’ faces after receiving services,” Butler said.

If you are interested in starting a career in healthcare, and would like to apply to become a personal care attendant, visit www.nortonsoundhealth.org/careers

RABIES OUTBREAK

Continued from page 1

time of year, but this is more than usual.”

Rabies in the region is considered to be enzootic in foxes, meaning the virus is always present. According to Dr. Kimberlee Beckmen, ADF&G wildlife veterinarian, rabies cases tend to spike every three to five years. Every 10 years, the virus becomes even more prevalent, and this is known as an epizootic outbreak. The last time this happened was in 2021.

“The fact that we are having one now, just two years later, is unusual, and is why we went out to do enhanced disease surveillance to try to figure out why,” she said.

Three other regional cases were identified this winter: one each in Unalakleet, Shishmaref, and Brevig Mission.

Though Alaska has had no human deaths due to rabies since 1943, there are an estimated 60,000 or more rabies deaths in the world every year. The World Health Organization has made it a goal to eliminate human rabies deaths by 2030 through a campaign known as “Rabies: One Health, Zero Death.”

To help prevent the spread of rabies, OEH runs a free vaccination program with 40 volunteer pet vaccinators across the region.

“Dogs represent the greatest risk of transmitting rabies to people. It’s very important all dogs be vaccinated appropriately,” Beckmen said. Beckmen also recommends controlling loose dog populations. OEH also partners with Alaska Native Rural Veterinary Inc. to provide vaccine and spay/neuter clinics in the villages.

For more information on getting your pet vaccinated or spayed/neutered, or with questions about rabies, contact OEH at 907-434-1659 or 907-434-0543.

School rabies talks empower youth

To increase public education and decrease the risk of human exposure, Norton Sound Health Corporation’s Office of Environmental Health worked with the Alaska Department of Fish & Game to launch an outreach campaign that included a dozen school presentations.

Alicia Reitz, OEH specialist, spent a day at Nome Elementary School with Keane Richards, ADF&G education specialist, and Sara Germain, area wildlife biologist. Together, they presented information to every class in grades 1-5. The students learned how to recognize rabies symptoms, how to avoid contact with wild animals, what to do if exposed, and how they can help keep their community safe.

“We used videos to show normal versus abnormal fox behavior and had a short presentation to go along with it,” Reitz said. “I heard from some parents afterwards that their kids came home and wanted to vaccinate their pups! We taught the kids about how the disease works, why it’s so important to prevent it, and the best way to do that.”

Parents and teachers said that the presentations left an impression with the students.

Kids in Krista Marvin’s fourth-grade class played “rabies tag” at recess, while others, like 7-year-old Elizabeth “Iza” Phan, went home and pretended to vaccinate their stuffed animals. Iza’s mom, Nome resident Veronica Alviso Phan,



Photo: Veronica Alviso Phan

Elizabeth “Iza” Phan, 7, draws a colorful fox after learning about rabies safety at school.

was appreciative that the kids were educated on rabies at school.

“I’m a firm believer that knowledge is power, and I think it’s great that there was a school presentation, especially since an incident occurred right outside of the school,” Alviso Phan said.

“Iza is more aware of her surroundings when playing outside now. I think the fact that she is not scared but aware is what brings me the most joy.”

Elders, youth discuss bullying, substance use, getting help

A recent elders and youth conference in St. Michael was a chance for community members to learn about counseling resources available, hear hard topics addressed by elders, and come together in support of one another.

Morgon Lockwood, St. Michael village based counselor, helped organize the event with Kristie Carlson, St. Michael school counselor. The two wanted to bring people together, and Lockwood landed on an elders and youth event with a traditional and cultural emphasis.

Previously a community health aide for six years, Lockwood is no stranger to the community and to being a shoulder to lean on. Over the years, many have shared their burdens with her.

Lockwood wanted the community to know more about the various aspects of her job, which includes organizing wellness activities, doing outreach, and doing a bit of social work, helping with paperwork and connecting people to resources—all in addition to offering support to residents as a counselor.

Along with an introduction to counseling resources, Lockwood focused the event on substance use and bullying.

The April 18 event opened with a feast at the Anthony A. Andrews School. Ward Walker, Behavioral Health Services clinician for St. Michael and Stebbins, made turkey and reindeer stews. Wendy Osinkosky, a BHS clinician for children and family services, brought Subway sandwiches from Nome with help from Lakendra Barringer, St. Michael clinic manager.



Photos: Wendy Osinkosky

ABOVE: Pauline Richardson, center, St. Michael cultural teacher, and Morgon Lockwood, right, St. Michael village based counselor, lead an icebreaker activity for attendees at an April 18 elders and youth conference. **RIGHT:** Morgon Lockwood, Charlie Fitka, and Alice Fitka sit facing the elders and youth conference crowd, as elders took turns answering questions from youths.

Attendees sampled five different agutak (also known as Alaska ice cream, made from whipped fat and berries) recipes. Lockwood had asked four locals to provide a bowl of agutak to enter a contest, and she brought her own rendition. When she collected the most votes from taste testers for her mixture of reindeer fat, sugar, berry juice, sheefish, and berries, she opted to split the first-place prize of \$100 between the other chefs.

Activities next moved into the gymnasium. As an icebreaker, Pauline Richardson, the school’s cultural teacher, asked some cultural traditions trivia questions.

“What is the purpose of first dancing?” she asked the crowd.



First dancing, a Central Yup’ik tradition, happens when people gather to celebrate someone’s first time dancing. The person, typically a youth, dresses in full regalia as family and community members gather to witness their growth, much like other coming-of-age ceremonies. The attendee who answered correctly received one of four kuspuks made by Lockwood.

The food and icebreakers made way for the tougher discussions.

Lockwood first introduced herself and her role as VBC, which she started about a year ago. Walker and Osinkosky also introduced themselves and talked about their roles as clinicians.

Carlson spoke about her position as a school counselor.

“All in all, we are here for our community, here for our people,” Lockwood relayed as their message.

Prior to the conference, Lockwood had met with students to brainstorm questions about substance use and bullying. The questions were narrowed down, printed, and put into a bucket.

At the event, youths took turns pulling a question from the bucket and choosing an elder to respond.

“It’s a small village, everybody knows everybody,” Lockwood said. “They knew an elder had dealt with substance use or bullying and directed the question to someone who would relate to it.”

The crowd respectfully allowed each speaker to finish their thoughts. The elders spoke highly of the counselors, which Lockwood felt was a step toward reducing stigma about seeking help for mental health.

“It was very healing,” Lockwood said. “And it was a little bit emotional.”

The event ended with dancing and a final prayer. Lockwood’s colleagues praised her work to pull together the pieces to create a meaningful event with great participation.

Would you like help hosting a wellness event in your community? Behavioral Health Services has several programs, including INUA, Substance Abuse Prevention (SAPTA), and Native Connections, that are available to help. Reach out to your village based counselor or, in Nome, call 907-443-344 to be connected with the appropriate BHS program.

Regional students supported by NSHC scholarships

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 must meet all general scholarship requirements. The deadline to apply for the fall 2023 competitive scholarship is June 30, 2023. Questions? Contact Irvin Barnes, Tribal Training & Development manager, at ijbarnes@nshcorp.org.

SPRING 2023 NSHC COMPETITIVE SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

Victoria Fisher – University of Alaska Anchorage, Health Services
Ana Karmun – Oregon State University, Business Administration
Amy Payenna – University of Alaska Southeast, Business Administration
Beverly Tran – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Interdisciplinary Studies
Skyley Ungwiluk – Lewis-Clark State College
Alazae Waghiyi – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Social Work

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 the 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 2023 NSHC NON-COMPETITIVE SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS**

Annette Adams – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Dental Assistant
Colleen Adams – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Applied Accounting
Emily Adams – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Medical Assistant
Agnes Anasogak – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Elementary Education
Sonya Annogiyuk – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Education
Hugo Apatiki – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Business Management
Nathaniel Appolloni – University of Alaska Fairbanks, English
Tierra Austin – University of Alaska Anchorage, Pre-Nursing
Brayden Bahnke – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Mechanical Engineering
Amy Bioff – University of Alaska Anchorage, Journalism and Public Communications
Imari Bright – Fort Lewis College, Anthropology
Hazel Brunette – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Applied Business
Joseph Butzke – Fort Lewis College, Psychology
Mauri Butzke – Fort Lewis College, Biochemistry
Dawson Conant – Eastern Washington University, Biology
Benjamin Cross – Alaska Pacific University, Outdoor Studies
Talia Cross – University of Hawaii At Monoa, Nutrition
Amber Cunningham – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Counselor Education
Mary David – The University of Denver, Social Work
Brittany Dillon – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Biology/Nursing
Ava Earthman – Williams College, Psychology
Lisa Ellanna – Mitchell Hamline School of Law, Law
Mandy Ellanna – University of Alaska Fairbanks, General Studies
Talon Erickson – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Accounting
Karis Evans – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Criminal Justice
Keon Evans – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Accounting
Kylie Evans – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Criminal Justice
Mason Evans – Bologna Business School, Business Management
Larissa Figley – University of Hawaii At Hilo, Exploratory Health Sciences
Victoria Fisher – University of Alaska Anchorage, Heath Sciences
Christina Gard – Regent University, Psychology and Counseling
MacKenzie Goodwin – University of Alaska Southeast, Elementary Education
Lizzy Hahn – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Digital Journalism
Caden Hanebuth – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Criminal Justice
Ada Harvey – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Applied Business Management
Kathleen Herzner – University of Alaska Fairbanks, General Program
Richard Hughes – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Entry Level Welding
James Isabell – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Applied Management
Faith Itta – Washington University in St. Louis, Master of Social Policy
Jazara Ivanoff – University of Alaska Anchorage, General Program
Laureli Ivanoff – Institute of American Indian Arts, Creative Writing
Nathan Ivanoff – Oklahoma Baptist University, Elementary Education
Savannah Ivanoff – Washington State University, Pharmaceutical Sciences
Jacob Iya – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Business Administration
Isaiah James – University of Alaska Anchorage, Nursing
Kayla James – University of Alaska Southeast, Elementary Education
Alyssa Jemewouk – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Applied Business
Erin Johanson – University of Alaska Southeast, Biology
Ana Karmun – Oregon State University, Business Administration
Katie Kelso – University of Oregon, Accounting

- Molly Kenick** – University of Alaska Anchorage, Political Science
Parker Kenick – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Computer Science
Marina Koonooka – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Community Health
Caitlin LeClair – University of Alaska Anchorage, Pyschology
Florine Loeits Bannow – University of Alaska Anchorage, Social Work
Lawrence Lynch – Seton Hall University, Accounting
Jolene Lyon – University of Alaska Anchorage, Project Management
Maggie Lyon – Fort Lewis College, History
Makayla Marble – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Computer Science
Ellie Martinson – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Music Performance
Kelly McDaniel – Ferris State University, Business
Ashlee Meeks – University of Alaska Anchorage, Applied Business
Courtney Merchant – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Pre-Nursing
Tristan Merchant – Portland State University, Health Science
Maggie Miller – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Rural Development
Harrison Moore – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Business Administration
Alexander Morgan – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Nursing Sciences
Lauryn Nanouk Jones – Western Washington University, Environmental Studies/Economics
Nicholas Bruckner – University of Alaska Southeast, Education
Asaaluk Nichols – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Applied Business
Margaret O’Connor – Sinte Gleska University, Human Services
Heidi Okleasik – Fort Lewis College, Undeclared
Tiffany Ongtowasruk – Fort Lewis College, General Biology
Amanda Patrick – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Associate of Arts
Amy Payenna – University of Alaska Southeast, Business Administration
Debbie Peacock – Alaska Pacific University, Business Administration
Janelle Pootoogooluk – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Applied Business
Jennie Reynolds – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Justice
Sharon Rida – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Applied Business
Teri Ruud – Alaska Pacific University, Nursing
McKenzie Sagoonick – University of Alaska Southeast, Health Sciences
Dawson Schaeffer – Diablo Valley College, Business
Kaelyn Schenkenberger – University of Alaska Anchorage, Anthropology
Sean Schenkenberger – Cal Maritime University, Marine Transportation
Elizabeth Sherman-Luce – Alaska Pacific University, Business Administration
Katherine Smith – University of Alaska Anchorage, Aviation Technology
Sheralyn Sockpealuk – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Applied Business
Frieda Southall – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Early Childhood Education
Marjorie Tahbone – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Indigenious Studies
Shayla Titus – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Education
Kristian Tocktoo – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Alaska Native Studies
Sabrina Toolie – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Education
Trista Topkok – Alaska Pacific University, Business Administration
Beverly Tran – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Interdisciplinary Studies
Skyley Ungwiluk – Lewis-Clark State College, Psychology
Wallace Ungwiluk – Multnomah University, Management & Leadership
Yuka Ungwiluk – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Social Work
Alazae Waghiyi – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Social Work
Isaiah Waghiyi – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Elementary Education
Tatum Weckwerth – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Business Administration
Raenelle West – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Administrative Management
Annie Weyiouanna – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Alaska Native Studies
Nicholas Willie – Alaska Pacific University, Business Administration
Jewel Wilson – Western Washington University, Biology
- Competitive Scholarship Recipients
- Victoria Fisher** – University of Alaska Anchorage, Health Services
Ana Karmun – Oregon State University, Business Administration
Amy Payenna – University of Alaska Southeast, Business Administration
Beverly Tran – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Interdisciplinary Studies
Skyley Ungwiluk – Lewis-Clark State College
Alazae Waghiyi – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Social Work

NSHC offers a scholarship for students pursuing education in a field employable by NSHC through a 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: 907-443-4559 or ijbarnes@nsh-corp.org.

- SPRING 2023 VOCATIONAL SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS**

David Bahnke – University of Alaska Fairbanks, A&P Mechanic
Nikita Cartier – Leeward Community College, Culinary Arts
Dawson Evans – Kenai Aviation, Private Pilot
Cass Mattheis – College of San Mateo, EMT I
Haley Osborne – Land and Sea Aviation Alaska, Private Pilot
Yvonne Pete – Admin Alaska Career College, Business

AHEC growing regional healthcare professionals

Just over 50 years ago, the U.S. Congress, recognizing a critical need to address large-scale health professional shortages, created the Area Health Education Centers (AHEC) program.



Vince Vilella, NW AHEC director

Today, 300 AHEC locations throughout the U.S. help youth and adults gain the experience and training necessary to build a career in health care.

The northwestern-most branch is now located within Norton Sound Health Corporation and is proving to be a noteworthy addition.

The program falls under NSHC's Tribal Training and Development program, which provides scholarships, internships, and other educational opportunities for regional students to encourage career exploration.

Though Northwest Alaska AHEC is new to NSHC, it has been based in Nome since 2020. Previously hosted by the Bering Strait School District's Northwest Alaska Career and Technical Center (NACTEC), AHEC partners with several other organizations in the region and with other departments at NSHC.

"Transitioning NW AHEC to NSHC provides a greater opportunity to build a pipeline from healthcare career dream to healthcare career reality," said Vince Vilella, NW AHEC director.

"Having a regional AHEC center in-house will pay dividends in terms of healthcare workforce development for NSHC."

Since the branch came to Nome from Utqiagvik two years ago, NW AHEC has facilitated healthcare-related courses—with college credit—for 70 secondary students. It has also awarded 338 healthcare industry certificates for youth and adults who have completed various trainings.

In June 2022, a dozen students from around the region convened at NSHC's Camp Nuuk, located just east of Nome on Safety Sound, to attend a regional health career camp organized by AHEC. The camp was named Camp Mamittuq, which means "heals" in Inupiaq.

"Beyond the numbers lie the stories of passionate students who possess a sincere desire to help their communities," Vilella said.

This past winter, AHEC offered several trainings in villages and in Nome, including an introduction to health careers and first aid courses. Vilella frequently travels to regional communities in addition to working with NACTEC and Nome-Beltz Middle/High School to offer classes in Nome. He is also taking the lead on quarterly suicide prevention trainings for adults.

"Broadly speaking, it is our goal to develop the capacity of students in the region to become the healthcare providers of tomorrow, to provide trainings necessary for adults to enter into the healthcare workforce, to sharpen the skills of providers already in-region to better serve the population—and to do all this in a culturally responsive manner which honors the people and culture of this region," Vilella said.

Interested in signing up for a training or collaborating with AHEC? Call 907-443-3281 or email vpvillella@nshcorp.org



Photo: Vince Vilella

AHEC IN ACTION Students and instructors pose by NSHC's Camp Nuuk sign, located just east of Nome on Safety Sound, during a weeklong regional health career camp in June 2022. Organized by AHEC in collaboration with IñUA, Native Connections, and the CAMP program, students completed several trainings and even earned a Wilderness First Aid certification.



Photo: Reba Leon

FOOD FOR THOUGHT Jeremy LaPierre, Nutrition Services manager, explains the importance of quality food preparation in a hospital setting, especially when it comes to the long-term care residents at Quyanna Care Center. Part of connecting students to careers in healthcare is showing them the variety of roles that exist to provide quality patient care—which is what AHEC strives to do.



Photo: Sarah Richards

NSHC staff recognized at UAF Northwest Campus commencement

Norton Sound Health Corporation celebrated staff education milestones at the University of Alaska Fairbanks Northwest Campus commencement on Thursday, May 11. Standing, from left: Kelly Bogart, vice president of Hospital Services; Dan Thomas, Health Aide Training Center coordinator; Sherri Anderson (Rural Human Services certificate, UAF); Alice Amaktoolik, RN (associate degree, nursing, University of Alaska Anchorage); Megan Rock, certified medical assistant (pre-nursing certificate, UAF); Amy Payenna, assistant vice president of finance (associate degree, business administration, University of Alaska Southeast); Marina Koonooka, Gambell community health aide (associate degree, community health, UAF); Angie Gorn, NSHC CEO; and Alice Fitka, NSHC Board representative from Native Village of St. Michael. Front: Preston Rookok, NSHC Board chair and representative of Native Village of Savoonga; and BHS clinical associates Penny Schaeffer, Shannon Klescewski, and Celeste Washington (all three earned Rural Human Services certificates from UAF).

2022 NSHC STAFF AWARDS

NSHC Values Awards



PRIDE – SOLOMON BOOSHU Accounts Payable Technician III, Nome. Sol has dedicated many years to NSHC and has helped build a solid foundation for keeping the corporation financially accountable. He is known for never accepting “less than,” because he has NSHC’s best interests at heart. If anything appears amiss in documentation, Sol is the first to notice and the first to follow up. Sol is a true team player and works with all departments to process payments, all while sharing explanations for the different components of documentation.



TEAMWORK – CHRISTOPHER MORRIS Materials Management Assistant Director, Nome. Chris is a true team player for the whole corporation. Always the first to volunteer for any additional needs—including COVID testing, shopping, driving, Safety Patrol, patient driving during storms and holidays—his eagerness to help never fails. Working in a short-staffed department, one could get burned out on all the work there is to be done. But Chris does it all, while staying positive and never complaining.



TEAMWORK – DENNIS FAST Property Manager, Nome. Dennis is known to be extremely accommodating, professional, caring, and kind. He quickly addresses concerns and is prompt to follow up with information. He has great communication skills and a positive attitude. Dennis is also dependable, working through challenges, working outside of normal hours, and completing tasks without being asked. His support has made it easy for traveling employees to return to Nome, and his work ethic keeps their department running.



COMPASSION – CHANDRA PREATOR Rehabilitation and Therapy Services Director, Nome. Chandra has patient needs at the top of her mind. In the last couple of years, Chandra has expanded the Rehabilitation and Therapy Services department to better meet the needs of the region. From ensuring village-based patients can receive care in their home communities to hiring new positions to serve patients in new and needed ways, she is looking out for comfort and ease of accessibility for people in the region.

Always a kind and sought-after provider, Chandra constantly seeks to improve her staff’s skills to better serve patients.



ALWAYS LEARNING AND IMPROVING – KAREN TOCKTOO Clinic Manager, Shishmaref. Karen has not been in her position for very long, but she brings an energy that is appreciated and motivating. She has held other manager roles in her past and other roles with NSHC, but she only recently began overseeing clinic operations in Shishmaref. The wide array of duties can be challenging, but Karen’s colleagues have noticed that she is learning and making improvements. When Karen’s main concern is helping run services as smoothly as possible, she is sure to succeed.



CULTURAL SENSITIVITY & RESPECT FOR TRADITIONAL VALUES – DR. MARC LEVIN Primary Care Physician, Nome. Dr. Levin has carefully crafted a program that helps shape the future of providers in the region. Medical staff students are people who could return to NSHC in the future as full-time providers, and selecting the right students for these roles is extremely important. That is why Dr. Levin created a committee to ensure that students who value culture and respect for traditional values are chosen for these roles. The student program has grown into one of the strongest across the state of Alaska, and it is thanks to putting Alaska Native culture at the forefront.



INTEGRITY – CHARLIE CROSS Human Resources Director, Nome. Charlie upholds honesty, trust, fairness, accountability, and responsibility, even when it is very difficult to do so. He dedicates many hours to ensure there is a thorough investigation of the matter at hand and performance improvement goals moving forward. He is skilled at helping managers address conflict and to prevent future occurrences. He also has real passion for improving health care and the quality of life for people living in the Bering Strait region. Charlie is a team player and has made significant contributions as a senior leader in addition to leading his own department.

Employees of the Year



NOME – KYLE SCOTT Laboratory Informatics Specialist, Nome. Kyle is integral to the laboratory team. He is a leader there, always patient and ready to show the newer hires the ropes. His knowledge, experience, and willingness to participate and support makes him invaluable. At the same time, he is always listening and learning new things—flexible to change and improvements. Kyle’s level of expertise and his willingness to prioritize patient care always takes him beyond duty, regardless of time or day.



VILLAGE – MARINA KOONOOKA Community Health Aide, Gambell. Marina takes great pride in the Gambell clinic and is a main component in its daily function. She is the one who patients ask to speak with, because patients know she will take care of them and help them in any way she can. Marina is compassionate not only toward patients but also coworkers, and she helps keep the clinic running smoothly with supplies orders, medication deliveries, and scheduling when needed.

Managers of the Year



NOME – BEVERLY TRAN Medical Staff Program Manager, Nome. Beverly is critical to the medical staff department’s success. Beverly has been part of the department’s growth, which has more than tripled the number of its employees—all of whom require multiple levels of administrative support—and Beverly handles it without complaint. Beverly watches the corporation from the aspect of a customer/owner and uses her role to address the issues she can. Beverly’s excellent organizational skills were noticed by a recent Joint Commission Survey. In addition to her hard work, she chooses to continue her education and earned her associate degree last year.



VILLAGE – JILL CAMPBELL Clinic Manager, Gambell. Jill is a natural leader who is willing to take on additional duties and responsibilities when needed. While managing one clinic, she was asked to supervise additional clinics, and did so wholeheartedly. Her colleagues appreciate her problem-solving skills and her approach of talking with staff members rather than at them. Jill’s prior experience as a health aide makes her relatable and knowledgeable. She makes sure to make their staff members feel heard and represents their concerns to higher levels.



Photo by Reba Lean

Easter cuddles

The Easter Bunny found a real good egg at NSHC’s Hoppy Healthy Easter event on April 7. Tatum Tahbone, 10 months old, smiled big in the fuzzy bunny’s arms.

EMPLOYEES OF THE MONTH



OCTOBER – TAMARA VAN DIEST R.N., Care Coordinator, Nome. Tamara is kind, cheerful, and a go-to in their department for training and support. She helps to boost the mood in her department and is always ready to answer a question about Cerner and how to navigate the system. Recently, she took the initiative to reach out to previous psychiatry and neurology patients to make sure their needs were being met. These patients can often fall through the cracks, and Tamara’s outreach is both appreciated and commendable.



NOVEMBER – JAMES WADE Radiology Technologist, Nome. James has demonstrated noteworthy commitment to his department over the last couple of years. He has taken on manager duties, which include approving timecards, keeping the department in stock of supplies, and providing technical support, not to mention all of his regular duties, and filling in when needed. James keeps the workflow smooth and the morale high, while providing excellent patient care.



DECEMBER – ARIEL ODINZOFF Clinic Travel Specialist, Stebbins. Ariel’s hard work is apparent to all those around her. She has taken on the duties of scheduling patients at an additional clinic when needed, and she always keep a patient’s wellness at heart. Ariel expertly manages the travel system to keep patients most comfortable and to make the most of every healthcare visit. Case managers know they can trust Ariel to share details about a patient’s needs. Ariel’s thoughtfulness and communication skills are second to none.



JANUARY – GARRICK FULLER BHS Clinician, Nome, and **DONNA BARR**, Village Based Counselor, Shishmaref. Both Garrick and Donna were willing and able to respond to an urgent need for support in another community after a tragedy occurred. They did not hesitate, and they boarded the next available flight. They worked together with the community and different local entities to ensure they were reaching all who were impacted and needed their level of support. Garrick’s and Donna’s knowledge and skill in their positions, combined with their compassion and adaptability, really shone through during this situation.



NSHC'S PATIENT ADVOCATES ARE HERE TO ASSIST YOU

Call Wendy Deering or Jason Harrell if you need assistance navigating through your health care delivery system, or experience issues with your designated patient lodging.

In Nome: (907) 443-4567
In Anchorage or Seattle: (907) 434-2844
By email: padvocate@nshcorp.org



Amy Payenna named NSHC assistant vice president of finance

Norton Sound Health Corporation is proud to announce the promotion of a valued employee to the Administration team. Amy Payenna recently traded in her position as grant accountant to become the assistant vice president of finance.

In her new mentorship role, under the guidance of Chief Financial Officer Dan Pardee, Payenna will be helping with the banking process, budgetary process, cost report preparation, indirect cost proposal preparation, and much more. She will continue to oversee grants.

“I am most excited about everything I’m going to learn. I know it will be gratifying to see the administrative side of the hospital as a whole and how my work fits in,” she said. “I hope to learn as much as



possible about the financial system here at NSHC as well what it takes to be a great leader.”

Payenna is originally from Nome, where her parents Josie Reader and Sam Peterson both grew up. After graduating high school, she traveled around the state and to Maryland, doing everything from banking to telecommunications. In 2016 she returned to Nome, where she lives with her husband Scott, daughter Sadie and son Rayme.

Back at home again, she started her accounting career at the City of Nome as an accounts payable technician and then a payroll technician. A few years later, she transitioned to NSHC as a grant accountant.

“I come from a family of accountants and am proud to be a part of the ‘family business,’” Payenna said.

Payenna graduated in December with an associate degree in business administration with a focus on accounting, and is currently enrolled in a bachelor’s

degree program with the same major and focus. With a priority on expanding her learning, Pardee believes that she is the right person for the job.



“She’s a natural leader, and she wants to learn more, which is important,” he said.

Since he started at NSHC in 2020, Pardee has valued Payenna’s expertise in grants. She sets up meetings with various managers of departments that have grants, such as BHS, Sanitation Services and CAMP. She provides guidance to make sure they’re spending on allowable items in accordance with the grant, and she’s played an important role in auditing and reporting requirements. Various calculations are involved in using grant funds, and Payenna ensures that everything is recorded appropriately.

“As the AVP, she’s going to be exposed to a lot of the higher-level finance, and she’ll play a significant role in overseeing the grants because she does have that expertise,” Pardee said.

DRUM MAKING CLASS

with cultural arts instructor, Ben Jack



Tuesday & Wednesday, June 13-14
10:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
FREE!

Are you interested in learning how to make a drum? Join BHS for this two-day, no experience needed workshop!

SIGN UP TODAY! (907) 443-3475

VESTPUK SEWING CLASS

with cultural arts instructor, Evelyn Reitan



Tues-Thurs, May 30-June 1
1:30-4:00 p.m.
FREE!

Are you interested in learning how to make a vestpuk? Join BHS for this three-day, no experience needed workshop!*

SIGN UP TODAY! (907) 443-3475

*limited to 4 participants



Photo: Ellen Roosen, WHOI



Photo: Kali Horn, WHOI



Photo: Emma Pate

ABOVE: Researchers and ship crew aboard the first leg of the Norseman II cruise. **UPPER RIGHT:** Researchers aboard the Norseman II deploy a CTD, an instrument to collect water samples. “CTD” stands for conductivity, temperature, and depth. **RIGHT:** Gay Sheffield (center), with UAF Alaska Sea Grant Marine Life Advisory Program, and Emma Pate, of NSHC’s Office of Environmental Health, teach students at UAF Northwest Campus about different algae samplings, and how to look at potential exposure to algal toxins. On the tray is a bearded seal fetus used as part of the project.

HARMFUL BLOOMS

Continued from page 1

were producing the most potent forms of paralytic shellfish toxin, known as neosaxitoxin and gonyautoxin 1 & 4.

“When we saw the bloom in the water this summer, we knew that those were toxic cells, but we did not know at the time exactly how potent they would be,” said Evie Fachon, a researcher from Don Anderson’s lab at Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution (WHOI), who led the harmful algal bloom (HAB) sampling component on the 2022 cruise.

Alexandrium, generally a temperate algae species, is commonly found at mid-latitudes, said Fachon. Over the last decade, however, several research groups have discovered large accumulations of the resting stages of *Alexandrium* on or near the seafloor in Arctic waters, lying dormant. As Arctic waters warm, the toxic blooms begin to form.

The toxins from harmful algal blooms of *Alexandrium* can cause severe illness and death in humans, marine mammals, and birds that eat shellfish that have been contaminated with the toxin.

According to the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation’s Division of Environmental Health, if a person consumes enough of the toxin, it could paralyze the muscles of the chest and abdomen. Death can occur if the muscles used for breathing become paralyzed.

Shellfish that can accumulate the dangerous toxins in their guts are crabs, clams, mussels, and



Photo: Miguel Goni, OSU

Researchers collect water samples to be analyzed for harmful algae.

Warming seas spark harmful blooms of a common algae

- ▶ *Alexandrium catenella*, a type of algae, is typically found in low numbers in Bering Strait regional waters.
- ▶ This type of algae produces a biotoxin called saxitoxin.
 - ▶ If saxitoxin is ingested it can cause paralytic shellfish poisoning (PSP) in humans and other animals.
- ▶ Though this type of algae is not new to the region, the dangerously high amount of it found by researchers is.
- ▶ This is a direct result of ocean warming.

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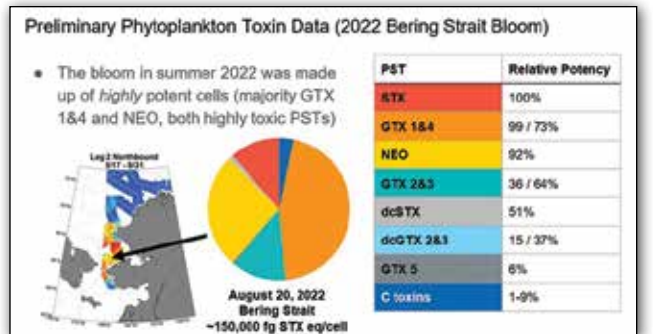
Emma Pate, environmental health coordinator with Norton Sound Health Corporation, explained that though seabirds, marine mammals, and humans can also ingest toxins, they slowly pass those toxins through their digestive systems—meaning that, over time, they do not retain toxins.

“The only way to ensure the safety of subsistence foods that may be impacted is to have them tested for toxin levels,” explained Pate. “Subsistence gatherers and hunters are welcome to harvest and hold their samples if they would like their seafoods tested by a certified lab. Once the lab results are received, individuals can make an informed decision on the risk factors of their seafood.”

Gay Sheffield, of the University of Alaska Fairbanks Sea Grant’s Marine Advisory Program, and NSHC’s Pate will continue coordinating to provide on-site training and education on proper techniques to collect seawater and seafood samples.

Villages that have chosen to participate include Savoonga, Elim, Unalakleet, and Brevig Mission. Other tribal environmental programs have expressed interest and are working with their tribal administrations to determine the level of priority for their programs.

Sikuliaq, a 261-foot oceanographic research ship operated by the UAF College of Fisheries and Ocean



Sciences, will pass through the Norton Sound/Bering Strait region several times over the coming summer field season with an Imaging FlowCytobot aboard. This instrument will photograph plankton and allow WHOI researchers to identify a harmful algal bloom event in near-real time.

If a HAB event is detected, WHOI will inform NSHC, the state public health officials, UAF Alaska Sea Grant, and other regional hub entities.

“As Arctic waters become warmer, we can expect to see more harmful algal bloom events occurring in the Bering Strait and Chukchi Shelf regions,” said Fachon.

For questions about harmful algal blooms or how to get toxin testing done in your community, please call Emma Pate at 907-443-3308.

NOME BIKE RODEO

SAURDAY, JUNE 3
12-2 P.M.
HOSPITAL PARKING LOT

Helmet fittings

Bike tune ups & registration

Hearing screenings

Car seat checks

Healthy snacks

Door prizes

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
907-443-4583

NORTON SOUND HEALTH CORPORATION

CAMP