Look to traditional knowledge to maintain winter wellness

From her desk inside the Tribal Healing program office at Norton Sound Health Corporation’s Wellness and Training Center, Etta Tall is transported to an earlier time.

From every view while sitting at her computer, she can see historic photographs of family members. Her dad’s side of the family smiles at her from the graphs of family members. Her dad’s computer, she can see historic photos, and picking salmonberries. These activities kept her spirits high throughout the year.

“Always stay busy and active. Shovel snow, haul snow, dress appropriately. Take care of oneself and look after family.”

In the winter, when the days are mostly dark, the activities slow down, but tribal healers agree that it is important to continue to find ways to move your body.

Anne Marie Ozenna, another Nome-based tribal healer from Diomede, says winter is a time to prepare for the hunting season ahead.

“Always stay busy and active,” she said. “Shovel snow, haul snow, dress appropriately. Take care of oneself and look after family.”

Maria Dexter, who has been an NSHC tribal healer since 2004, says

Providers now answer medical advice call line

Norton Sound Health Corporation is changing the way its 24-hour medical advice phone service operates.

Advanced practice providers, including nurse practitioners and physician assistants, will be the ones picking up the phone when a regional resident dials up the formerly named Nurse Call Line.

NSHC has renamed its service the Provider Care Line to reflect the change.

“We heard from our customer-owners around the region, and we listened,” said Kirsten Timbers, vice president of Community Health Services. “Healthcare issues can come up at any time of day, and it’s important that we have a caring provider take our call. As a mom, I look forward to having a provider take my call in the wee hours of the night, when I need medical or mental health help.”

In 2017, NSHC rolled out the call service to residents of the region to help provide care over the phone. The Nurse Call Line successfully increased patient access to care advice and helped alleviate the after-hours, on-call work of community health aides in regional communities.

For the last five years, the call line has been operated by nurses in the

St. Michael clinic triples in size

Fall was setting in on October 18 when a small crowd gathered outside the new clinic in St. Michael. Temperatures hovered around freezing, but the low-level sun shone golden on the building’s fresh siding and glistening metal stairs, where a ribbon stretched across the entrance.

Alice Fitka, Norton Sound Health Corporation board representative for St. Michael, with the heavy task of cutting the ribbon to the community’s new clinic.

Angie Gorn, NSHC CEO, shares some opening remarks during the grand opening celebration at the new St. Michael clinic as Berda Willson, NSHC board secretary, prepares to assist Alice Fitka, NSHC board representative for St. Michael and for Stebbins shortly after the clinic’s lab, he said the new facility builds in 2003.

shelves shared just two computers in the old setting, and now they each have their own desk space and computer.

Mark Roman, PA, was hired to work in Stebbins shortly after the COVID-19 pandemic began. He transitioned to working in St. Michael at the beginning of 2022, in the old clinic. From his new office space, which houses shared just two computers in the old setting, and now they each have their own desk space and computer.

New funding for kids’ glasses and hearing technology p. 3

Still awaiting harmful algal bloom test results p. 3

Stay active this winter! p. 4

NSHC working to tackle TB p. 5

So many BHS group classes p. 5

Training future doctors pp. 8-9

NSHC scholarships awarded p. 10

Top employees honored p. 11

Merkob hits NSHC p. 12

And much more ...
Happy Happy Holidays!

Fiscal year 2022 was a very positive year for Norton Sound Health Corporation. The pandemic situation has improved, and patients are once again able to access in-person care from local health clinics and traveling health departments. NSHC’s greatest strength is our workforce, and while we’ve experienced some challenges with recruitment, this has also improved. The summer college internship program was a success at NSHC.

During its September 2022 meeting, the NSHC Board of Directors approved a $232 million operating budget. Cash collections for FY22 exceeded FY21’s, due to continued high volumes of patient care. Primary Care volumes for Nome are on par with FY21 volumes, while overall village clinic encounters are slightly down due to reduced COVID-19 testing as the pandemic winds down.

Our focus is on access, quality, growth, and equity, and COVID-19 public health emergency response. NSHC is among 27 health centers in Alaska that HRSA recognized for quality achievements in 2022. Of those Alaska health centers, NSHC is among only three to receive an overall quality award and to receive five or more awards.

The Capital Projects department remains busy with several projects in the works. The new St. Michael clinic opened this August, and progress has been made on the Wales Clinic and Housing Project. A renovation of the former Nome-based Community Health Services building into patient lodging is in the planning stage. A 12-bed expansion design for Quyana Care Center is also in progress. NSHC purchased the old Shishmaref clinic building and it is currently under renovation to become a duplex to support provider housing. A daycare facility and more Nome-based patient lodging is currently in construction.

Happy Happy Holidays!

Kaitlyn Painter brings traditional values to work

Kaitlyn Painter grew up spending summers in Nome, and recently moved back to the region after graduating with a bachelor of arts degree in psychology from Fort Lewis College in Durango, Colorado. An NSHC intern for the past four summers, she is now a full-time Behavioral Health Services clinical associate. Kaitlyn is now working toward a master of social work degree in Indigenous Trauma and Resilience at the University of Toronto while continuing to work full-time at NSHC.

Can you tell us a little about your family background?

My given name is Qataq, and my English name is Kaitlyn. My parents are Nolee Schwenna and Charlie Painter. My grandparents are the late Agatha Kokuluk and Raphael Sebwenna from King Island, and the late Herbert and Ruth Painter from Vermont.

Kaitlyn Painter grew up spending summers in Nome, and recently moved back to the region after graduating with a bachelor of arts degree in psychology from Fort Lewis College in Durango, Colorado. An NSHC intern for the past four summers, she is now a full-time Behavioral Health Services clinical associate. Kaitlyn is now working toward a master of social work degree in Indigenous Trauma and Resilience at the University of Toronto while continuing to work full-time at NSHC.

Can you tell us a little about your family background?

My given name is Qataq, and my English name is Kaitlyn. My parents are Nolee Schwenna and Charlie Painter. My grandparents are the late Agatha Kokuluk and Raphael Schwenna from King Island, and the late Herbert and Ruth Painter from Vermont.

How did working at NSHC as an intern help you transition into your current career?

Each summer was spent working in a different department, so I’ve gotten to work with Human Resources, Qual- ity Improvement and Risk Manage- ment, and Behavioral Health Services. I learned so much from the different people I’ve worked with, and the experience has definitely been worthwhile. NSHC has been incredibly supportive since the start, and I’m so glad that they provide our region with oppor- tunities for our people to grow!

What is the best part of your job?

The best part of my job is working with people, community members, clients, and my coworkers! BHS staff are some of the most caring people I know, and I’m proud of all the work that everyone does.

What advice do you have for someone interested in this field?

One of our King Island elders gave me the best piece of advice that I’ll always hold close: “Good things come to those who help.” Working in the behavioral health field requires respect, cooperation, humility, empathy, compas- sion. These are some of our most prominent Inupiaq values. My advice for those interested in working in this field is to keep an open mind in all the spaces you enter, and to build genuine connections with those around you.

Kaitlyn Painter stands next to a display of her research on how expres- sing compassion can alleviate symp- toms related to historic cultural loss. The display was part of an art exhibit at Fort Lewis College called “As Seeds We Grow.”

Our focus is on access, quality, growth
New fund buys glasses, hearing tech for kids

Lack of money should not stop children from receiving the important healthcare fixes they need for their vision and hearing. That’s the idea a team of NSHC providers rallied behind and brought to the NSHC Board of Directors earlier this year. Thanks to them, a gap in the healthcare system is being filled so that parents without private insurance need not worry about being able to afford their child’s vision or hearing needs.

In May 2022, the NSHC board approved the Pediatric Fund, which will help cover out-of-pocket expenses for eyewear and hearing technology, including hearing protection and rehabilitative hearing devices, when no insurance is available. If the child is under the age of 18, an Indian Health Services beneficiary, and a resident of the Bering Strait region, they may be eligible. It’s no secret that hearing and vision play important roles in child development.

“There are many reasons that children have hearing loss, including ear infections and noise exposure,” says Samantha Kleindienst-Robler, NSHC audiologist. “Both types of hearing loss are preventable, and we are doing a lot of work to improve hearing outcomes and quality of life. Hearing is essential for life in our region—from listening to elders to hearing the rustling of animals when hunting.”

Regular hearing screenings are essential to ensure children do not experience the negative effects of hearing loss on quality of life, school success, and vocational opportunities. The State of Alaska requires hearing screenings at birth, in early childhood education (Head Start), and throughout school. This is because long-term effects of hearing loss can be improved when action is taken quickly and appropriately.

Like hearing problems, vision difficulties can develop at any time but are often more obvious in school-aged children. Children should have their eyes examined at birth, between ages 3 and 4, and throughout school.

“Having the funds to keep children in glasses, no matter the circumstance, and provide them with the best vision possible allows them to succeed in school, sports, subsistence and their daily life,” said Abigail Timmerman, NSHC optometrist.

Between June and October 2022, Eye Care has helped a total of 25 children receive glasses through the NSHC Pediatric Fund. This equates to about eight children each month. In Audiology, about five children each month have benefited from the fund.

Travel is not covered by the Pediatric Fund. Ask your provider for more information about eyewear and hearing technologies. For more information, contact:

▶ Audiology: 907-443-3597
▶ Eye Care: 907-443-3323
▶ Patient Benefits: 907-443-5323
▶ Patient Advocate: 907-443-4567

or padvocate@nshcorp.org

Running for fun

Emma Takak looks joyous while being blasted with blue as she runs past an NSHC Color Run checkpoint on August 15 in Nome.

Region anxiously awaits algal bloom test results

There is a heightened urgency in western Alaska to know more, and sooner, about potential harmful algal blooms in the area.

This summer, a research vessel that traveled through the Bering Strait collecting water samples sent alerts to regional agencies about high levels of a particular type of algae it found. The vessel Norseman II reported algal blooms near Gambell, Shishmaref, Wales, Brevig Mission, Teller, and Little Diomede.

The type of algae the crew detected was Alexandrium catenella, a phytoplankton that produces a natural biotoxin called saxitoxin which, if consumed in a large amount, causes paralytic shellfish poisoning ( PSP). According to UAF Alaska Sea Grant, PSP can occur when people consume clams, crabs, and other seafood contaminated with high concentrations of saxitoxin. PSP occurs when there is enough saxitoxin eaten to affect the nervous system and block nerve function. If high enough concentrations of saxitoxin are eaten, breathing difficulties and paralysis occur in humans, marine mammals, and seabirds.

As of early December, it was still unknown whether the detected samples contained the harmful saxitoxins because laboratories have yet to return results.

In November, Emma Pate with Norton Sound Health Corporation's Office of Environmental Health traveled to Savoonga with Gay Sheffield of UAF Alaska Sea Grant’s Marine Advisory Program. Together, they helped train tribal environmental workers to collect seawater samples to better understand levels of harmful algae throughout the year. They also collected several different kinds of tunicates—commonly called sea peaches and a local seafood delicacy—to send off for sampling.

“Most likely, we’ll get lab results back from the NOAA lab that Alaska Sea Grant is working with before results come in from the samples collected by scientists during the Norseman II research cruise,” Pate said, explaining that the research cruise collected such a large number of samples that its research laboratory is likely overwhelmed with the testing.

“Usually, research projects have their own process, and they don’t budge on urgency, etc. They go their own steady pace,” Pate said.

“But now everything is shifting because of this summer, with the Norseman II’s cruise, to work with all of us on the western Alaska coastline to help us develop an early warning system for the region and to improve the harmful algal toxin testing system so we get results sooner.”

Pate said many groups have expressed interest in partnering with regional tribes and environmental workers to ensure harmful algal bloom testing can be done. Western Alaska groups are keeping an eye on sampling and testing support becoming available as the focus on algal blooms shifts northward with warming waters.

Heed early warning signs

It is important that your children are regularly screened and, if results suggest follow-up, that you bring your child in to see a provider, audiologist, or optometrist right away.

HEARING DIFFICULTIES CAN INCLUDE:

▶ Pain or pressure in the ears
▶ Ringing in the ears
▶ Sense of fullness in the ears
▶ Change in hearing
▶ Dizziness
▶ Noises or voices that sound distorted or muffled

SOME WARNING SIGNS OF VISION PROBLEMS

▶ Eyes that are crossed or don’t focus together
▶ Squinting at objects that are either near or far from child
▶ Poor reading comprehension
▶ Constant watery eyes, redness in eyes that doesn’t go away, or discomfort that doesn’t go away
▶ Light sensitivity or rubbing eyes repeatedly

Eyes that are crossed or that don’t focus together.

Noises or voices that sound distorted or muffled.

Dizziness.

Sense of fullness in the ears.

Sense of pressure or pain in the ears.

Change in hearing.

Light sensitivity or rubbing eyes repeatedly.

Eyes that are crossed or don’t focus together.

Squinting at objects that are either near or far from child.

Poor reading comprehension.

Constant watery eyes, redness in eyes that doesn’t go away, or discomfort that doesn’t go away.

Light sensitivity or rubbing eyes repeatedly.

Ears that are crossed or that don’t focus together.

Noises or voices that sound distorted or muffled.

Dizziness.

Sense of fullness in the ears.

Sense of pressure or pain in the ears.

Change in hearing.

Light sensitivity or rubbing eyes repeatedly.

Eyes that are crossed or that don’t focus together.

Noises or voices that sound distorted or muffled.

Dizziness.

Sense of fullness in the ears.

Sense of pressure or pain in the ears.

Change in hearing.

Light sensitivity or rubbing eyes repeatedly.

Eyes that are crossed or that don’t focus together.

Noises or voices that sound distorted or muffled.

Dizziness.

Sense of fullness in the ears.

Sense of pressure or pain in the ears.

Change in hearing.

Light sensitivity or rubbing eyes repeatedly.
Don’t hibernate! Ways to stay active this winter

During spring, summer and fall, it is easy to keep our bodies moving due to all the subsistence activities and abundance of daylight. But during the winter months, with the dropping temperatures, the darkening sky, and the chilly wind, the season seems to be begging us to stay indoors and hibernate on our couch under a mound of blankets.

Moving your body should be part of your daily routine, no matter the weather. The advantages of regular physical activity are too great to be put on hold when finding opportunities to move our bodies become inconvenient.

Regular physical activity will improve your mood, increase your energy level and help you sleep better at night.

To battle the cold weather excuses, explore some of these suggestions:

▶ FIND SOMETHING YOU LIKE. Don’t force yourself to do something you don’t like. You won’t stick with it. Try doing a new activity a couple of times before deciding whether to continue with that activity. If one activity isn’t a good fit, don’t give up. Try something else.

▶ START SMALL. If you’re not already physically active, you should begin slowly and work your way up to the desired level. For example, walk to the post office or grocery store, get up and move during TV commercials, or go for a 15-minute walk at your local school gym or rec center. Start small and gradually add a little more time and intensity each week.

▶ FIND A PARTNER. It’s more fun when someone else is counting on you to show up. Having a partner may help you continue to be active.

▶ PICK A GOAL. An example of a goal could be to walk every day for a month or to be active every weekday for 30 minutes. Be specific and realistic.

▶ SCHEDULE IT IN! The more regularly you do an activity, the quicker it will become a habit. Think of ways to link activity to daily life. For example, you could schedule a walk with a friend after dinner. Try not to go more than two days in a row without being active.

Don’t shy away from moving your body because of the weather. It just takes a little creativity and commitment.

Looking for some new ways to stay active? Contact the CAMP department at 907-443-3365 to try one of our many fitness DVDs for free! From yoga to dance and walking, we have something for everyone. Check out our website for our monthly Wellness Challenges along with a schedule of our group fitness classes: www.nortonsoundhealth.org/camp/

Tips for safe snowmachining

This winter we want everyone to remain safe while participating in what they love to do. When planning to travel long distances on snowmachines, it is important to follow a few safety guidelines:

▶ Know the weather conditions before leaving.

▶ Wear a DOT-approved ATV helmet.

▶ Wear proper winter gear: hat, gloves, warm jacket, boots, etc.

▶ Check your snowmachine before leaving. Make sure you have enough gas.

▶ Know the trail and know how to identify overflow. Overflow can look like light blue slush on top of the ice on rivers or the ocean. In these areas, the ice can be weaker and should be avoided.

▶ Tell someone where you are going and when you plan to return. It’s best to travel with an InReach device or satellite phone. If you do not have an InReach and would like to travel with one, the CAMP Department rents them out for a $10-per-day deposit. When the device is returned, you get your money back. To rent an InReach, call CAMP at 907-443-3365 or stop by on the second floor at the Wellness and Training Center.

Have fun, be seen, and be safe in the Norton Sound region.
A healthy idea for using that leftover turkey

**RECIPE: Creamy Mushroom & Leftover Turkey Stuffed Spaghetti Squash Bake**

With the holidays come the leftovers! Here is a delicious way to use some of your leftover turkey to make a delicious, veggie-rich meal.

**INGREDIENTS**
- 1 large spaghetti squash
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- Salt & pepper
- 2 tablespoons butter (can use olive oil)
- 8 ounces sliced mushrooms
- 1 small onion, diced
- 8 ounces shredded parmesan cheese
- 1 tablespoon dried Italian seasoning
- 2 cups fresh or frozen spinach
- 1 large spaghetti squash
- 1/2 cup heavy cream or whole milk
- 1-2 cups cooked turkey meat
- 1 cup shredded parmesan cheese (separated into two 1/2 cup portions)

**DIRECTIONS**

1. With a fork, poke holes in the spaghetti squash. Line up the squash on a baking sheet and place in the oven at 375 degrees. Preheat oven to 375 degrees.
2. Place squash on a microwave-safe plate and microwave for 5 minutes. Meanwhile, preheat oven to 375 degrees.
3. Once the squash is done, remove from microwave and let cool slightly.
4. When cool to the touch, cut the ends off the squash and then slice down the middle of the squash lengthwise. Scoop out the seeds with a spoon and discard.
5. Rub the inside of the squash with olive oil. Season with salt, pepper, and any other herbs you desire. Our favorites are thyme, rosemary, and Italian seasonings.
6. Place squash face-up on a baking sheet and bake in the preheated oven for 35-60 minutes until tender.
7. Meanwhile, in a large skillet, melt 2 tablespoons of butter over medium heat and add mushrooms, onion, and Italian seasonings.
8. Reduce heat to low. Add heavy cream and the rest of the vegetables and herbs you desire. Our favorites are thyme, rosemary, and Italian seasonings. Stir occasionally until thickened. Once thickened, add mushrooms, onion, and Italian seasonings.
9. Place squash face-up on a baking sheet and bake in the preheated oven for 35-60 minutes until tender.
10. Once the squash is baked, scrape the flesh into a glass baking dish. Top with the creamy mushroom mixture and the rest of the shredded cheese.
11. Return to oven and bake for an additional 5 minutes until cheese is melted.

**TRIBAL HEALING**

Continued from page 1

that to help maintain a healthier lifestyle during the winter, people should “eat good, natural, traditional foods to help our all-around health” and keep active.

Born in White Mountain but raised in Golovin, Dexter worked as a community health aide starting in 1999 before transferring to the Tribal Healing program. Inspiration to switch positions began while, as a health aide, she sometimes used her hands to help patients in pain. Since 2020, Dexter has been based in Golovin, but like the other tribal healers, she often travels to nearby villages to provide her services.

This winter, to help her community members stay active in the slow months, Dexter will be leading yoga classes from the school.

Along with finding ways to stay active, there is another wellness tactic the tribal healers agree on. “For staying healthy during the winter time, you need to stay hydrated,” said Evelyn Karmun, a tribal healer originally from Kotzebue.

Karmun moved to Nome with her family in 2016. She said she loves winter activities because they’re a great way for family to gather and play together. Playing outside comes with the added bonus of soaking up as much sunlight as possible, at a time when subarctic bodies are lacking Vitamin D.

Another healthy habit to add to winter wellness strategies is making stinkweed tea to ward off all types of illness, including bad colds, infections and stomach issues. Ozenna recommends boiling water and adding stinkweed to put moisture into the air. Once the tea cools, it should be sipped in small portions.

**NSHC doubles down on TB prevention**

Tuberculosis, better known as TB, was an extremely prominent disease in western Alaska during the early to mid-1900s, with high infection and death rates among Alaska Natives.

Thankfully, unlike much of the 20th century, reliable treatments are now available for those affected, and patients who seek medical attention can expect to fully recover. Unfortunately, the region has been seeing more cases recently.

“Tuberculosis is a serious disease. We all know that,” said Dr. Timothy Lemaire, NSHC’s director of Public Health. “But sometimes we forget about things that we don’t see every day.”

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, NSHC and the Alaska Division of Public Health worked together to travel to regional villages to identify anyone with TB symptoms, successfully preventing spread of the disease. For the last two years, however, travel restrictions and other concerns made TB more challenging to monitor and control. Now, with COVID-19 numbers down and TB cases rising, NSHC has provided more TB training for providers and expanded its team of doctors able to treat positive patients.

“We work closely with the experts in Anchorage to develop treatment plans unique to each patient,” Lemaire said. “The public health team keeps tabs on everyone who is being treated and we meet monthly with them to discuss the cases and make changes as needed.”

TB is caused by bacteria that attack the lungs and sometimes other parts of the body. It is an airborne disease; when an infected person coughs, laughs, or sneezes, the bacteria can be transferred to anyone nearby. Left untreated, TB can be fatal.

If the bacteria are growing in the lungs, some symptoms include a cough that lasts more than three weeks, pain in the chest, or coughing up blood or phlegm.

Patients can also experience weakness, weight loss, lack of appetite, chills, fever, and night sweats. If the bacteria are not growing in the lungs, the infected person may not have symptoms. These people cannot spread TB to others but should still be treated to prevent progression.

“As the COVID pandemic showed, people in our region know how to support each other. This disease is a slow, secret disease that sneaks up on you. If you have symptoms, talk to your doctor or health aide and ask for a TB test,” Lemaire said.

“If we come together, we can eradicate this disease from our region.”
New BHS director aims to strengthen spirit

In June 2022, Lance Johnson stepped down as administrative director of Behavioral Health Services.

During his 11 years at the helm of BHS he created a legacy of teamwork, camaraderie, and the dogged pursuit of dreams long held by the region. As he stepped down, he agreed to help with the transition as a new administrative director took over.

Kira Eckenweiler, who had served as a prevention planner with the INUA (Intergenerational Native Understanding and Abundance) program for over a year, took on the administrative role, armed with a vision of empowering people and strengthening spirit.

Eckenweiler is from Unalakleet. She received her bachelor’s degree in music performance from the University of Alaska Anchorage and her master of music degree from the Berklee College of Music. She was recognized by UAA with the 2021 Emerging Leader Award. She returned to the region after receiving her master’s degree and will continue to be based in Unalakleet, traveling to Nome and throughout the region as needed.

She is excited for the possibilities in her new role.

“Mental health should be cared for just like physical health,” Eckenweiler said.

“When someone has anxiety, depression, substance abuse issues, or other mental issues, it should be just as normal for them to go to BHS for a visit like they would for any physical health issues. I am excited for the day when someone goes to BHS and everyone who knows is proud and happy for them for working on improving their mental health. I know our ancestors are definitely cheering us on when we want to strengthen our tiita (spirit).”

In addition to Eckenweiler’s hiring, other researchers observed that the past 20 years, including 11 in a residential setting, and the remainder of the time providing outpatient services for adolescents and adults.

Prior to his arrival in Alaska, Hesson was the clinical and program director for Palmer Continuum of Care in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and brings this expertise to his new role.

“I have met some of the most amazing people since I have been in this region,” Hesson said. “I am grateful for the opportunity to continue serving them in my new role.”

Hesson said he hopes to take BHS’s solid foundation of clinical services and be able to expand on those services in all communities.

During Johnson’s time as BHS director, armed with a vision of empowering people and strengthening spirit, he created a legacy of teamwork, camaraderie, and the dogged pursuit of dreams long held by the region. As he stepped down, he agreed to help with the transition as the new administrative director, Kira Eckenweiler, who will bring her talents, insights, and culture to build on the things that are working, better those that are not, and create new opportunities for care and compassion,” Johnson said.

Johnson is continuing to work in the behavioral health services realm. He intends to work to help reduce barriers—both state and federal—to accessing mental health services and to change the over-regulated system for the better.

Eckenweiler says she looks forward to Johnson’s further impacts on behavioral health in his new endeavors and is grateful for his leadership thus far. “Quyanna to Lance Johnson for his time he spent in this position,” Eckenweiler said. “I am inspired by his commitment and determination to create the best program possible at BHS for our region.”

Lack of running water at home linked to hearing loss in children

A research study published in Ear and Hearing, the official journal of the American Auditory Society, examines how environmental risk factors such as lack of running water correlate with ear infections in children in western Alaska communities.

Co-author and NSHC Audiologist Samantha Kleindienst-Robler and other researchers observed that the presence of running water in homes led to a decreased rate of ear infections, while in homes without running water there was a higher number of children with middle ear disease.

The data was used from screenings done between 2017 and 2019 in which children in the Bering Strait region had a 5% higher rate of middle ear infections if they did not have running water in their home. Those most at risk were younger children ages 3-6.

In a bid to understand environmental factors in children’s ear diseases, the study did not find a link between other known risk factors like poor air quality from indoor smoking and wood-burning stoves, or crowded houses. Middle ear disease and infection-related hearing loss are preventable illnesses, and children who live in homes without running water, particularly children ages 3-6, may benefit from earlier and more frequent hearing health evaluations, the study said.

Preventive hearing health services could include hearing screenings at well-child visits, school screenings, and check-ups with an audiologist.

Read the complete research study here: [www.bit.ly/earinfectionswesternakstudy](http://www.bit.ly/earinfectionswesternakstudy)
The BHS team is ready to help

Going to the doctor for a broken bone or strep throat is a no-brainer, right? But where do you go when your mind needs healing? Behavioral Health Services! We offer individual and group therapy for anyone who lives within the region.

Our team is here to support you to work toward bettering your health and wellness. Whether you’re feeling sad, overwhelmed, lonely, or grief-stricken, are struggling with addiction, or just want to talk, we are here.

Call 907-443-3344 anytime between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday-Friday, to schedule an appointment. We can’t wait to hear from you!

BHS group classes teach wellness, coping skills and more

Behavioral Health Services continues to expand group services, having added six new groups in the past year. New smartboards installed in the BHS group room allow clients to participate from anywhere in the region. For information on how to join these groups, please call 907-443-3344.

Aataqun Adolescent Group

Aataqun translates to “give it your all.” Aataqun Adolescent Group is a psychoeducational skills group based on dialectical behavior therapy (DBT) and cultural wellness. Aataqun emphasizes developing safe and healthy coping and communication skills. Members will learn skills to help manage difficult emotions, navigate relationships, and manage stress, and will also participate in mindfulness-based activities. This group is open to anyone ages 13-18.

Anger Management

The Anger Management group is comprised of 12 sessions that expand on participants’ understanding of anger. Group members work on developing plans for controlling anger, learn about the aggression cycle, explore alternatives for expressing anger, and more. Anger Management meets every Wednesday morning and is open to anyone over the age of 18.

Healing from Grief and Loss

The Healing from Grief and Loss group creates a space to heal by connecting participants with others who may be grieving. Group members will learn about the five stages of grief, which can help with coping during difficult times. This group meets Fridays at noon and is open to anyone over the age of 18.

Living in Balance

Living in Balance is an outpatient substance use group that offers two options for participation. New members can choose which group to join based on the time that works best for them. This group is made up of 12 sessions. Topics include conversations on cravings, planning for sobriety, stress, negative emotions, and relapse prevention.

MATRIX

MATRIX is an intensive outpatient group comprised of the following sections: Individual and Conjoint, Early Recovery, Relapse Prevention, and Family Education. Group members attend three days a week for a total of nine hours. This group incorporates a book study on The Red Road to Wellness, Every Friday, group members participate in cultural activities.

Men’s Group

Few men are given an environment where they can express normal and healthy feelings. Our men’s group provides a space for participants to express themselves in a way free of judgment or shaming. This is a community of men committed to uplifting one another and learning from each other’s shared experiences. This group is open to anyone who identifies as male ages 18 and older.

Wellness Wednesdays and Feelings Fridays

Wellness Wednesdays and Feelings Fridays were developed to support parents and children in their practices of bonding, setting boundaries, monitoring kids’ activities, and helping prevent youth drug and alcohol use. Parents and children who experience difficulties in these areas would highly benefit from this group.

Strengthening Families

The Strengthening Families program is for parents who have children ages 7-17 who would benefit from learning skills of bonding, setting boundaries, monitoring kids’ activities, and helping prevent youth drug and alcohol use. Parents and children who experience difficulties in these areas would highly benefit from this group.

Women’s Empowerment

The Women’s Empowerment group is for K-12th grade students to engage in social-emotional psychoeducation and to develop healthy coping skills. Activities are regionally and culturally relevant. During the school year, Wellness Wednesdays meets at Nome Elementary School. During the summer months, Feelings Fridays meets at the Nome BHS office.

Would you like help host a wellness event in your community? In the village, reach out to your local village-based counselor. In Nome, call the main Nome office at 907-443-3344 and you can be connected with the appropriate BHS program.

Ready to learn more about bringing a BHS wellness event to your community? In the village, talk to your local village-based counselor. In Nome, call the main Nome office at 907-443-3344 and you can be connected with the appropriate BHS program.

BHS clients to use.

Activities can include sewing, crafts, youth activities, talking circles, and anything else designed to strengthen communities.

Bring a BHS wellness event to your community!

BHS group classes teach wellness, coping skills and more

Behavioral Health Services continues to expand group services, having added six new groups in the past year. New smartboards installed in the BHS group room allow clients to participate from anywhere in the region. For information on how to join these groups, please call 907-443-3344.

Aataqun Adolescent Group

Aataqun translates to “give it your all.” Aataqun Adolescent Group is a psychoeducational skills group based on dialectical behavior therapy (DBT) and cultural wellness. Aataqun emphasizes developing safe and healthy coping and communication skills. Members will learn skills to help manage difficult emotions, navigate relationships, and manage stress, and will also participate in mindfulness-based activities. This group is open to anyone ages 13-18.

Anger Management

The Anger Management group is comprised of 12 sessions that expand on participants’ understanding of anger. Group members work on developing plans for controlling anger, learn about the aggression cycle, explore alternatives for expressing anger, and more. Anger Management meets every Wednesday morning and is open to anyone over the age of 18.

Healing from Grief and Loss

The Healing from Grief and Loss group creates a space to heal by connecting participants with others who may be grieving. Group members will learn about the five stages of grief, which can help with coping during difficult times. This group meets Fridays at noon and is open to anyone over the age of 18.

Living in Balance

Living in Balance is an outpatient substance use group that offers two options for participation. New members can choose which group to join based on the time that works best for them. This group is made up of 12 sessions. Topics include conversations on cravings, planning for sobriety, stress, negative emotions, and relapse prevention.

MATRIX

MATRIX is an intensive outpatient group comprised of the following sections: Individual and Conjoint, Early Recovery, Relapse Prevention, and Family Education. Group members attend three days a week for a total of nine hours. This group incorporates a book study on The Red Road to Wellness, Every Friday, group members participate in cultural activities.

Men’s Group

Few men are given an environment where they can express normal and healthy feelings. Our men’s group provides a space for participants to express themselves in a way free of judgment or shaming. This is a community of men committed to uplifting one another and learning from each other’s shared experiences. This group is open to anyone who identifies as male ages 18 and older.

Strengthening Families

The Strengthening Families program is for parents who have children ages 7-17 who would benefit from learning skills of bonding, setting boundaries, monitoring kids’ activities, and helping prevent youth drug and alcohol use. Parents and children who experience difficulties in these areas would highly benefit from this group.

Wellness Wednesdays and Feelings Fridays

Wellness Wednesdays and Feelings Fridays were developed to support parents and children in their practices of bonding, setting boundaries, monitoring kids’ activities, and helping prevent youth drug and alcohol use. Parents and children who experience difficulties in these areas would highly benefit from this group.

Strengthening Families

The Strengthening Families program is for parents who have children ages 7-17 who would benefit from learning skills of bonding, setting boundaries, monitoring kids’ activities, and helping prevent youth drug and alcohol use. Parents and children who experience difficulties in these areas would highly benefit from this group.

Women’s Empowerment

The Women’s Empowerment group is for K-12th grade students to engage in social-emotional psychoeducation and to develop healthy coping skills. Activities are regionally and culturally relevant. During the school year, Wellness Wednesdays meets at Nome Elementary School. During the summer months, Feelings Fridays meets at the Nome BHS office.

Would you like help host a wellness event in your community? In the village, reach out to your local village-based counselor. In Nome, call the main Nome office at 907-443-3344 and you can be connected with the appropriate BHS program.

Bring a BHS wellness event to your community!

BHS group classes teach wellness, coping skills and more

Behavioral Health Services continues to expand group services, having added six new groups in the past year. New smartboards installed in the BHS group room allow clients to participate from anywhere in the region. For information on how to join these groups, please call 907-443-3344.

Aataqun Adolescent Group

Aataqun translates to “give it your all.” Aataqun Adolescent Group is a psychoeducational skills group based on dialectical behavior therapy (DBT) and cultural wellness. Aataqun emphasizes developing safe and healthy coping and communication skills. Members will learn skills to help manage difficult emotions, navigate relationships, and manage stress, and will also participate in mindfulness-based activities. This group is open to anyone ages 13-18.

Anger Management

The Anger Management group is comprised of 12 sessions that expand on participants’ understanding of anger. Group members work on developing plans for controlling anger, learn about the aggression cycle, explore alternatives for expressing anger, and more. Anger Management meets every Wednesday morning and is open to anyone over the age of 18.

Healing from Grief and Loss

The Healing from Grief and Loss group creates a space to heal by connecting participants with others who may be grieving. Group members will learn about the five stages of grief, which can help with coping during difficult times. This group meets Fridays at noon and is open to anyone over the age of 18.

Living in Balance

Living in Balance is an outpatient substance use group that offers two options for participation. New members can choose which group to join based on the time that works best for them. This group is made up of 12 sessions. Topics include conversations on cravings, planning for sobriety, stress, negative emotions, and relapse prevention.

MATRIX

MATRIX is an intensive outpatient group comprised of the following sections: Individual and Conjoint, Early Recovery, Relapse Prevention, and Family Education. Group members attend three days a week for a total of nine hours. This group incorporates a book study on The Red Road to Wellness, Every Friday, group members participate in cultural activities.

Men’s Group

Few men are given an environment where they can express normal and healthy feelings. Our men’s group provides a space for participants to express themselves in a way free of judgment or shaming. This is a community of men committed to uplifting one another and learning from each other’s shared experiences. This group is open to anyone who identifies as male ages 18 and older.

Strengthening Families

The Strengthening Families program is for parents who have children ages 7-17 who would benefit from learning skills of bonding, setting boundaries, monitoring kids’ activities, and helping prevent youth drug and alcohol use. Parents and children who experience difficulties in these areas would highly benefit from this group.

Wellness Wednesdays and Feelings Fridays

Wellness Wednesdays and Feelings Fridays were developed to support parents and children in their practices of bonding, setting boundaries, monitoring kids’ activities, and helping prevent youth drug and alcohol use. Parents and children who experience difficulties in these areas would highly benefit from this group.

Strengthening Families

The Strengthening Families program is for parents who have children ages 7-17 who would benefit from learning skills of bonding, setting boundaries, monitoring kids’ activities, and helping prevent youth drug and alcohol use. Parents and children who experience difficulties in these areas would highly benefit from this group.

Women’s Empowerment

The Women’s Empowerment group is for K-12th grade students to engage in social-emotional psychoeducation and to develop healthy coping skills. Activities are regionally and culturally relevant. During the school year, Wellness Wednesdays meets at Nome Elementary School. During the summer months, Feelings Fridays meets at the Nome BHS office.

Would you like help host a wellness event in your community? In the village, reach out to your local village-based counselor. In Nome, call the main Nome office at 907-443-3344 and you can be connected with the appropriate BHS program.

Bring a BHS wellness event to your community!

BHS group classes teach wellness, coping skills and more
NSHC now a sought-after med student destination

The process for selecting medical student candidates for rotation in the region’s healthcare system is a deliberate one.

And it should be, as members of Norton Sound Health Corporation’s selection committee would say, because the medical student program is one of the organization’s biggest recruitment tools.

Medical students who come to NSHC get an in-depth look at what it takes to be a family doctor in rural Alaska, complete with the opportunity to travel to a village with an attending physician. Due to the uniqueness of the program, the selection process tends to be competitive, with around 20 learners accepted each year.

Though priority is given to applicants from local programs like the University of Washington School of Medicine’s WWAMI (Washington, Wyoming, Alaska, Montana, and Idaho) program and Alaska Family Medicine in Anchorage, students and residents apply from across the nation. Despite the high demand, the program boasts quality over quantity, striving to provide one-on-one training. Typically, three learners are accepted at any given time for four-to-eight-week rotations.

A committee—consisting of NSHC Administration staff Charlie Cross, Kirsten Timbers, Cameron Piscoya, and Michelle Krier—reviews all applications and conducts interviews with the students and residents, always taking long-term potential into consideration.

“Our teaching program is an excellent tool for us in recruiting future physicians here,” said Dr. Mark Peterson, NSHC medical director. “We expect some of these students to one day be physicians here.”

NSHC currently employs six physicians who completed a rotation as a resident before being hired, and now they are helping to mentor incoming students and residents.

Realizing that program participants tend to come back to work in the region permanently, Dr. Marc Levin created the selection committee because he knew it was important to have regional tribal input in deciding who would be caring for the region’s people in the future.

The committee uses breakout rooms during the virtual interviews to talk to the applicants about the region’s culture, languages, and land. “Even on Zoom, you can see the excitement rising as they start to talk to them about what life is like here. It adds a whole other layer to the discussion, and the students love it,” Levin said. “We’re really proud that we’re representing the vision and ideals of NSHC as a tribal organization.”

An Nguyen, Tulane medical student

“The commitment to putting the patient first, both at the Norton Sound Regional Hospital and at the 15 village clinics managed by NSHC, is truly admirable and impressive.”—An Nguyen, Tulane medical student

Kirsten Timbers, NSHC vice president of Community Health Services, discusses Alaska Native culture and the subsistence lifestyle.

“It is rewarding to share the amazing cultural revitalization that has occurred in my lifetime,” she said. “I love explaining our way of life including gathering berries, food, fish, and greens. This outing has been very exciting for me and is a highlight for our students and residents.”

Kirsten Timbers, NSHC vice president of Community Health Services, discusses Alaska Native culture and subsistence during a visit to Nuuk with Tulane medical students Udit Dave and Laurel Seltzer.

Kirsten Timbers, NSHC vice president of Community Health Services, discusses Alaska Native culture and the subsistence lifestyle with medical students Udit Dave and Laurel Seltzer.

Kirsten Timbers, NSHC vice president of Community Health Services, discusses Alaska Native culture and the subsistence lifestyle with medical students Udit Dave and Laurel Seltzer.

Udit Dave, a third-year medical student at Tulane University, originally from Long Island, New York, was one of three students selected to spend six weeks in the region this fall.

Inspired to become a doctor by his grandfather who practiced medicine in India, Dave previously spent eight months in Sydney, Australia, and volunteered with indigenous groups while there.

At NSHC, he appreciated the one-on-one training with an attending physician and said that is one of the most valuable parts of the program.

“Getting that instant feedback and being able to put the work in and then improve the next day has been a very valuable experience,” he said.

MyCache scholars convene at AFN

Scholarship recipients pose for a group photo at the MyCache banquet in Anchorage on Oct. 19. The celebratory dinner was complementary to any MyCache scholarship recipients and gave students the opportunity to share about how their post-secondary education has changed their lives and to express their thanks. Partnering MyCache organizations, including NSHC, provided updates on their continuing education programs and opportunities. Front: Amanda Gonzalez, Rebecca Young, Janelle Otton, Row 2: Santerra Burks, Caly Gregg, Maggie West, Molly Kenick, Matthew Schubert, Lisa Elebra, Back: Opal Brunette, Hazel Brunette, Kaelyn Nutuknginoung Schenkkenberger, Veronica Dinskiil, Savannah Gonzalez, Kierrann Bailey, Maggie Miller, Jolene Lyon.

MyCache scholars convene at AFN

Scholarship recipients pose for a group photo at the MyCache banquet in Anchorage on Oct. 19. The celebratory dinner was complementary to any MyCache scholarship recipients and gave students the opportunity to share about how their post-secondary education has changed their lives and to express their thanks. Partnering MyCache organizations, including NSHC, provided updates on their continuing education programs and opportunities. Front: Amanda Gonzalez, Rebecca Young, Janelle Otton, Row 2: Santerra Burks, Caly Gregg, Maggie West, Molly Kenick, Matthew Schubert, Lisa Elebra, Back: Opal Brunette, Hazel Brunette, Kaelyn Nutuknginoung Schenkkenberger, Veronica Dinskiil, Savannah Gonzalez, Kierrann Bailey, Maggie Miller, Jolene Lyon.

MyCache scholars convene at AFN

Scholarship recipients pose for a group photo at the MyCache banquet in Anchorage on Oct. 19. The celebratory dinner was complementary to any MyCache scholarship recipients and gave students the opportunity to share about how their post-secondary education has changed their lives and to express their thanks. Partnering MyCache organizations, including NSHC, provided updates on their continuing education programs and opportunities. Front: Amanda Gonzalez, Rebecca Young, Janelle Otton, Row 2: Santerra Burks, Caly Gregg, Maggie West, Molly Kenick, Matthew Schubert, Lisa Elebra, Back: Opal Brunette, Hazel Brunette, Kaelyn Nutuknginoung Schenkkenberger, Veronica Dinskiil, Savannah Gonzalez, Kierrann Bailey, Maggie Miller, Jolene Lyon.

MyCache scholars convene at AFN

Scholarship recipients pose for a group photo at the MyCache banquet in Anchorage on Oct. 19. The celebratory dinner was complementary to any MyCache scholarship recipients and gave students the opportunity to share about how their post-secondary education has changed their lives and to express their thanks. Partnering MyCache organizations, including NSHC, provided updates on their continuing education programs and opportunities. Front: Amanda Gonzalez, Rebecca Young, Janelle Otton, Row 2: Santerra Burks, Caly Gregg, Maggie West, Molly Kenick, Matthew Schubert, Lisa Elebra, Back: Opal Brunette, Hazel Brunette, Kaelyn Nutuknginoung Schenkkenberger, Veronica Dinskiil, Savannah Gonzalez, Kierrann Bailey, Maggie Miller, Jolene Lyon.
A partnership that began as a chance encounter has earned Norton Sound Health Corporation’s medical student program coordinator a special recognition.

Dr. Marc Levin, who heads NSHC’s visiting student, resident, and fellow rotations program, was named Tulane University’s Best Family Medicine Preceptor for 2022. It all started in 2018, at 40,000 feet in a commercial jet. Levin was seated next to a student who was applying to Tulane University School of Medicine in New Orleans, Louisiana. Levin told the student that he was the new coordinator of the student program in Nome and described life in the region. They exchanged contact information.

A couple of years later, after finishing his first year of med school, the student reached out, asking if he could come to Nome to shadow a doctor that summer. Levin agreed.

“And then he’s like, ‘Can I bring a couple of friends?’” Levin remembered with a laugh.

NSHC has been training new and future doctors for decades through the student program focused on rural, full-scope family medicine. As program coordinator over the past three years, one of Levin’s biggest accomplishments has been a partnership with Tulane—sparked by that chance meeting with a student on a plane. After two years of primarily classroom work, it was time for the three Tulane students who had spent a summer shadowing NSHC doctors to complete hands-on rotations. Tulane students usually stayed in New Orleans or the surrounding area for rotations. But, citing their Nome experience, these students petitioned their department to allow them to do their family medicine rotation in Alaska.

The school hesitated. To ensure that students met core requirements, rotation sites had to be vetted by students. Levin agreed.

“But the students wouldn’t take no for an answer,” Levin said. So one day, the program manager for purchasing local artwork to adorn the new facility. Construction cost $8.1 million. As clinic staff members settle into their new space, a few finishing touches are yet to come. Among them, plans for purchasing local artwork to adorn the clinic are in the works.

Winter 2022 9

NSHC doctor honored for med student rotation partnership

The clinic now has room for the community’s 13 NSHC employees—including the Behavioral Health Services staff and clinic manager—who used to work out of the tribal hall. The new facility has a reception area, three exam rooms, a trauma room with two beds, a specialty exam room, a laboratory, dental space, a village-based counselor office, a conference room, a sleeping room for visiting staff, and several large offices.

Angie Gorn, NSHC CEO, made opening remarks during the clinic’s ribbon cutting ceremony. She recalled the community meeting when tribal members and residents weighed the idea of building a new clinic versus expanding the old one. Eventually, they decided to build new. The chosen site is central to the school, clinic staff housing, tribal hall and city offices. The clinic shares the same design by

NEW CLINIC

Continued from page 2

All smiles at the Pumpkin Walk

Halloween guests made their way around the hospital during NSHC’s Pumpkin Walk on October 31, visiting departments and collecting trinkets and healthy treats along the way. Above: The Smithshieder family came costumed as a farm bunch, with dad Shane in a chicken suit, daughter Ali as the farmer, and moms Dani and twins Andi and Dale as cows. Above: Holly Gray, Charlie Edwardsen, and Olivia Piscoya stop for a light-up toy from Elizabeth Herzner and Chris Waters at the finance department.
Norton Sound Health Corp offers a competitive scholarship worth up to $3,000 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 spring 2023 competitive scholarships is Dec. 31, 2022. Questions? Contact Irvin Barnes, Tribal Training & Development manager, at ibarnes@nshcorp.org.

FALL 2022 NSHC COMPETITIVE SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

Jennie Reynolds – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Justice
Amy Payenna – University of Alaska Southeast, Business Administration
Skyler Ungwiluk – Lewis-Clark State College, Psychology
Ana Karmun – Oregon State University, Business Administration

Victoria Fisher, University of Alaska Anchorage, Health Sciences
Alazae Wagniay – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Social Work

Nicole Patkotak – University of Alaska Anchorage, Natural Sciences
Heather Sinnott – University of Alaska Anchorage, Management
Jacob Iya – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Business Administration

Jena Schuerch – University of Alaska Anchorage, Business Administration

FALL 2022 NSHC NON-COMPETITIVE SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

Debbie Peacock – Alaska Pacific University, Business Administration
Laverne Sacquece – Alaska Pacific University, Business Administration
Trista Topkok – Alaska Pacific University, Business Administration
Teri Rasmussen – Pacifica University
Taylor Anne Ison – Alaska Pacific University, Nursing/Pre-health

Macey Wittwosky – Boise State University, Business
Alukka Ivanoff – Boise State University, Gaming, Interactive Media, and Mobile

Sean Schenkenberger – Cal Maritime University, Marine Transportation

Bode Leeper – California State University Northridge, Computer Science

Will Fagerstrom – Colorado State University, Biomedical Engineering
Sara Bioff – Dartmouth College, Political Science

Dawson Saechefer – Diablo Valley College, General Education

Dawson Conant – Eastern Washington University

Austyn Moore – Elon University, Doctor of Physical Therapy

Kelly McDaniel – Ferris State University, Business

Imari Bright – Fort Lewis College, Anthropology

Mauri Butzke – Fort Lewis College, Biochemistry

Tiffany Ongtowarsuk – Fort Lewis College, Biology

Dawson Evans – Fort Lewis College, Business Administration

Landon Varga – Fort Lewis College, Computer Science

Payton Commock – Fort Lewis College, Economics

David Anungnakuz – Fort Lewis College, Health

Evelyn Rochon – Fort Lewis College, Psychology

Joseph Bureau – Fort Lewis College, Psychology

Ashley Lockwood – Fort Lewis College, Undecided

Jeremy Koozaza – Fort Lewis College, Undecided

Jewels Iyapan – Fort Lewis College, Undecided

Stephanie Nielson – Hutchinson Community College, Nursing

Laurel Ivanoff – Institute of American Indian Arts, Creative Writing

Carol Hobbs – Liberty University, Psychology

Wallace Ungwiluk – Multnomah University, Management & Leadership

Nathan Ivanoff – Oklahoma Baptist University, Elementary Education

Tribal Merchant – Portland State University, Health Science

Christina Gardner – Regent University, Psychology and Counseling

Donna Rupe – Seminole State College, Nursing

Lawrence Lynch – Seton Hall University, Accounting

Margaret O’Connor – Sinte Gleska University, MA-Human Services

Kastyn Lie – Stanford University, English

Cadence Meyers – Texas Lutheran University, Kinesiology

Karish Evans – Texas Lutheran University, Pre-Medicine

Ashlee Meeks – University of Alaska Anchorage, Applied Business

Joshua Cannon – University of Alaska Anchorage, Alaska Native Studies

Kedlin Schenkenberger – University of Alaska Anchorage, Anthropology

Gareth Hansen – University of Alaska Anchorage, Aviation Technology

Katherine Smith – University of Alaska Anchorage, Aviation Technology

Carter Commock – University of Alaska Anchorage, Biological Sciences

Rebecca Young – University of Alaska Anchorage, Clinical-Community Psychology

Nakita Crisci-Ohanna – University of Alaska Anchorage, Diagnostic Medical Sonography

Chelsea (Ryan) Sieh – University of Alaska Anchorage, Finance

Madison Weyiouanna – University of Alaska Anchorage, Health Sciences

Victoria Fisher – University of Alaska Anchorage, Health Sciences

Jazara Ivanoff – University of Alaska Anchorage, Undecided

Nicole Parkotak – University of Alaska Anchorage, Natural Science

Alice Amaktoolik – University of Alaska Anchorage, Nursing

Savannah Ivanoff – University of Alaska Anchorage, Pharmaceutical Sciences

Molly Kenick – University of Alaska Anchorage, Political Science

Kelly Lyon – University of Alaska Anchorage, Pre-nursing

Devon Oyoomick – University of Alaska Anchorage, Professional Piloting

Jolene Lyon – University of Alaska Anchorage, Project Management

Marilyn Moore – University of Alaska Anchorage, Social Work

Isaiah James – University of Alaska Anchorage

Amy Bioff – University of Alaska Anchorage, Journalism and Public Communications

Racemle West – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Occupational Endorsement, Administrative Assistant

Annie Weyiouanna – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Alaska Native Studies

Colleen Adams – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Applied Accounting

Maggie West – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Applied Accounting

Alyssa Jemewook – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Applied Business

Amanda Patrick – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Associate of Arts

Heather Sinnott – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Management

Jacob Iya – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Business Administration

Jena Schuerch – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Business Administration

Jena Matson – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Computer Science

Makayla Marble – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Computer Science

Lizzy Hahn – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Digital Journalism

Frieda Southall – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Early Childhood Education

Kyle Evans – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Education

Sonja Annoygyuk – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Education

Nathaniel Appolloni – University of Alaska Fairbanks, English

Mandy Elliana – University of Alaska Fairbanks, General Studies

Brayden Bahneke – University of Alaska Fairbanks, General Studies

Parker Kenick – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Mechanical Engineering

Emily Adams – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Medical Assistant

Ellie Martinson – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Music Performance

Megan Rock – University of Alaska Fairbanks

Melinda Anowlic – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Nursing

Gwendalyn Trigg-Komakuk – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Nursing

Alexander Morgan – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Nursing

Marie Katchatag – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Pre-nursing

Marina Koosook – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Undecided

Maggie Miller – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Rural Development

Ada Harvey – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Social Work

Lily White – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Social Work

Yuka Ungwiluk – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Social Work

Clara Hansen – University of Alaska Fairbanks, Undecided

McKenzie Sagonick – University of Alaska Southeast, Health Sciences

John Wade – University of Alaska Southeast, Biology

Erich Jonsson – University of Alaska Southeast, Biology

Amy Payenna – University of Alaska Southeast, Business Administration

MacKenzie Goodwin – University of Alaska Southeast, Elementary Education

Yvonne Gregg – University of Alaska Southeast, Elementary Education

Larissa Figley – University of Hawaii at Hilo, Exploratory Health Sciences

Stephan Anderson – University of Hawaii at Hilo, Kinesiology and Exercise Sciences

Kayslyn Smith – University of Hawaii at Manoa, Climate Sciences

Talia Cross – University of Hawaii at Manoa, Nutrition

Katie Kelso – University of Oregon, Accounting

Kanayan Ivanoff – Washington State University, Biology

Sierra Musgrove – Washington State University, Political Science

Alivia Ita – Westminster University in St. Louis, Social Work with concentration in Alaska Native/American Indian

Cassandra Alba – Wayland Baptist University, Finance

Jewel Wilson – Western Washington University, Biology

Lisa Elliana – William Mitchell College of Law, Law

Ava Earthman – Williams College, Psychology

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 online 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: 907-443-4550 or ibarnes@nshcorp.org.

CURRENT VOCATIONAL SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

Elaine Bogyakut – Alaska Career College, Business and Office Specialist Certificate Program

Haley Osborne – Blue River Aviation, Private Pilot’s License

Kellen Katchek – Alaska Technical Center, Heavy Equipment Operator Training

Mary Pete – Alaska Career College, Cert. Medical Assistant Program

Lisa Haugen – Northern Industrial Training, Commercial Driver’s License

Crystal Wassman – The Salon Professional Academy, hairdresser’s program

Robert Dixon – Northern Industrial Training, Commercial Driver’s License

Sherrynne Steve – Alaska Career College, Medical Billing and Coding
Suicide prevention hotlines ready to help

In July 2022, the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline switched over to the three-digit number 988 line.

Anyone can contact the easily remembered number, including when they are in crisis or feeling suicidal. Operators on the line are highly trained and compassionate and will provide confidential support 24 hours a day, seven days a week, for anyone of any age, including non-English speakers and those who are deaf or hard of hearing. People can call or text the 988 number or chat with operators online at www.988lifeline.org.

The 988 line does not replace Alaska’s Careline. The State of Alaska operates its own suicide prevention line, toll-free at 1-877-266-4357 (HELP), which is also available all day, every day.

In-region, people with urgent Behavioral Health Services needs can call BHS directly at 907-443-3344 during business hours. After hours, people should call Behavioral Health Services (BHS) Care Line at 907-443-6411, where providers will connect callers with on-call BHS professionals.

If someone you know needs support, make sure they know there is help at their fingertips if they dial any of the numbers above.

JANUARY – JOYCE NESBY Licensed Practical Nurse, Primary Care Clinic, Nome. Joyce is a pillar in her department. Her peers say she is extremely knowledgeable and always willing to train others. She is an excellent problem solver and sees problems before anyone else can. She never misses details and never leaves a mess or work for others to clean up or finish. Additionally, she is well known in the community and well respected, both professionally and personally.

JUNE – RICHELLE HORNER Registered Nurse, Acute Care, Nome. Richelle is an extremely valued member of her team, where she is a constant advocate for patients, a steward of traditional culture and values, and a quality caregiver at all times. She had the opportunity to make her department shine in a recent survey. She displayed superior knowledge of policies and procedures and performed important work under pressure. She leads by example and takes ownership of her unit and team. She is a fast learner, kind, and always willing to patiently explain processes to other employees.

FEBRUARY – DIGNA ANDREWS Village Maintenance Technician, Stebbins. Digna has demonstrated time and time again her commitment to health care and stepping in when the moment calls for it. She is dependable on a regular basis and in special situations, like when her community experienced an outbreak, and food needed to be delivered and people needed to be tested. She also went out of her way to spend a full day in a neighboring community to help during a trauma incident. When she is gone, she is sorely missed because she is never one to say “that’s not my job.”

JULY – MARTINA LEEDY Material Support Technician, Materials Management, Nome. Martina is a member of a department that is short-staffed, but with her help, you would never know it. Her role is essential in the operation of the hospital, and she keeps things ticking so providers have what they need in order to give patients timely care. She is quick to respond and always makes sure to check in with those departments she works with to ensure their needs are covered. Through significant medical issues of her own, she overcame challenges to continue her role, always with a smile and kind word for others.

MARCH – ALICIA NIKSIK Community Health Aide, St. Michael. Alicia is capable of providing outstanding care even in the midst of difficult times and short staffing, and she keeps an amazing attitude through it all. In one instance, Alicia had been the only health aide in her clinic for a whole week when a traumatic ATV accident occurred. She kept a cool head and helped the responding providers find needed items and keep family members calm. Her strength is noteworthy when helping care for friends and loved ones, and she is a valued member of the team.

AUGUST – FELICIANO ABBAA Environmental Service Worker II, Environmental Services, Nome. Feliciano is not taken for granted by the departments where he works. When he is gone, his absence does not go unnoticed. When he is there, his presence is appreciated. He does the job of four people and does it well. He regularly cleans departments and patient rooms with excellence, is readily available when needed, never complains, and always makes friends by sharing his candy stash with others. He takes pride in his work and is an important member of the team.

APRIL – JOSEPH SEM Dentist, Dental Department, Nome. Joe has worked for NSHC for over three years now, and his exuberance for his job has not worn out. He takes pride in his work and treats his coworkers and patients with respect. He has profound appreciation for the region, its people, and the outdoors. He takes the extra time to make those around him feel special—by compiling music playlists for his patients or making ice cream birthday cakes for his peers. He enjoys village travel and does not seem to tire from the trips away from home; in fact, he will request more if there is still work to be done.

SEPTEMBER – JOEL ROSE Warehouse Operator, Facilities Maintenance, Nome. Joel received numerous nominations for recognition, and they all mentioned his great attitude and willingness to work with others. Joel always steps up when there is a need, and in doing so, makes lives easier for departments in need. During the September storm weekend, he worked to transport patients and staff members and handle other requests. He never shows hesitation or annoyance to help take a stressful situation and make it possible. He is a fantastic example of teamwork in the organization.

The sign made for Shaktoolik’s Suicide Prevention Awareness Walk in September shares a message of support.
**Merhc slams NSHC facilities**

Typhoon Merbok blasted western Alaska with powerful winds and waves in mid-September, flooding communities, destroying coastal campsites, and displacing several homes.

In Golovin, where the storm’s surge flooded half the town with water, mud, sand, and sewage, many families had to leave their uninhabitable homes at least temporarily.

“We’ve lived here all our lives and never seen it this way,” said Maria Dexter, a Norton Sound Health Corporation tribal healer based in Golovin, as she sat next to her sister in the community’s tribal hall in the days following the storm. Dexter was among residents of the community whose homes were undamaged, and she was able to help cook meals for those who were displaced.

Several feet of water inundated the low-lying part of town. Where waters did not seep inside the homes, it likely lapped around the skirting or subflooding of houses.

NSHC’s staff housing building, which was the community’s clinic about 20 years ago, was among homes impacted. NSHC’s Village Facilities Maintenance team replaced the subflooding in the weeks after the storm. Golovin’s local advance practice provider lives in the building, located next to the current clinic—which was largely unscahed.

Outside of Nome, the storm’s surge annihilated generations-old cabins and subsistence camps along the coast. At mile 20 on the Council Road, NSHC’s Camp Nuuk fared comparatively well. The campsite, consisting of four cabins and several smaller outbuildings, is used as a wellness retreat site for different programs throughout the year. Early assessments of damage show that the cabins were thankfully not displaced, but there was some evidence of flooding. Some outbuildings shifted or flipped over. Three outbuildings were lost all together.

In Diomede, water surged about five feet above the normal high tide line to where a shipping container sat full of furniture, fixtures, and equipment, for the community’s newly built clinic. The container was swept away in the storm and its contents are considered a loss. While NSHC is filing an insurance claim for the lost items, it is also actively working to replace the items. The clinic opened in 2021, but delivery of medical equipment. The grant will be used to help fly new equipment to Diomede.

NSHC’s staff housing building, which was the community’s clinic about 20 years ago, was among homes impacted. NSHC’s Village Facilities Maintenance team replaced the subflooding in the weeks after the storm. Golovin’s local advance practice provider lives in the building, located next to the current clinic—which was largely unscahed.

“W e’ve lived here all our lives and never seen it this way,” said Maria Dexter, a Norton Sound Health Corporation tribal healer based in Golovin, as she sat next to her sister in the community’s tribal hall in the days following the storm. Dexter was among residents of the community whose homes were undamaged, and she was able to help cook meals for those who were displaced.

Several feet of water inundated the low-lying part of town. Where waters did not seep inside the homes, it likely lapped around the skirting or subflooding of houses.

NSHC’s staff housing building, which was the community’s clinic about 20 years ago, was among homes impacted. NSHC’s Village Facilities Maintenance team replaced the subflooding in the weeks after the storm. Golovin’s local advance practice provider lives in the building, located next to the current clinic—which was largely unscahed.

Outside of Nome, the storm’s surge annihilated generations-old cabins and subsistence camps along the coast. At mile 20 on the Council Road, NSHC’s Camp Nuuk fared comparatively well. The campsite, consisting of four cabins and several smaller outbuildings, is used as a wellness retreat site for different programs throughout the year. Early assessments of damage show that the cabins were thankfully not displaced, but there was some evidence of flooding. Some outbuildings shifted or flipped over. Three outbuildings were lost all together.

In Diomede, water surged about five feet above the normal high tide line to where a shipping container sat full of furniture, fixtures, and equipment, for the community’s newly built clinic. The container was swept away in the storm and its contents are considered a loss. While NSHC is filing an insurance claim for the lost items, it is also actively working to replace the items. The clinic opened in 2021, but delivery of the equipment was delayed until 2022 due to poor weather. The storm swept away the container before the items could be installed.

### CALL LINE

**NSHC Emergency Department.** When medical issues arose, the nurses were able to triage patients and either provide advice and education over the phone or connect the patients to their local healthcare providers in an emergency.

Since its implementation, the call line has served around 4,250 individual patients in over 20,200 phone calls. In about 40% of the calls, the nurse was able to help provide home care or to advise the patient to follow up in their clinic during regular hours.

With advance practice providers on the other end of the line, a phone call is now more equal to a healthcare visit. Many of the providers who answer the phone have practiced in the regional clinics and know the patients and health aides.

If ever a provider assigned to answer the line is unavailable, an Emergency Department nurse will pick up the phone. The nurse will either take a message and send it to the provider, so the provider can call the patient back as soon as possible, or, in an emergency, the nurse will contact the local on-call health aide.

Callers can be confident in the medical knowledge of the provider taking their call and that they will continue to act fast in emergencies and connect them with their local healthcare responders.

### TIP:

**Keep these numbers visible in your home:** Cut out this box and stick it to the fridge with a magnet.

**Save the NSHC Provider Care Line number as a contact in your cell phone—then save that contact to your “favorites” or emergency contacts.

### Save 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.

### 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.

### ANGIE’S REPORT

Continued from page 2

Sanitation Services at NSHC continues to make progress with the development of the Community Utility Assistance Program (CUAP). A new administrator, Denise Michels, has been hired. Both Stubbins and Wales have been included with infrastructure bill funding for new piped water and sewer projects. Indian Health Services visited the region twice this summer to learn more about water and sewer needs.

The NSHC Board of Directors and staff members participated in strategic planning this spring, and Administration looks forward to making progress with goals that were set. In early December, the Site Planning Committee participated in master planning to document a ten-year capital investment plan.

Thank you to our customer-owners and patients for your trust in NSHC, as your preferred health care organization and much appreciation to the Board of Directors for the continuous support, leadership, and dedication to meeting the healthcare needs of the people in the region.

Looking forward to 2023!