



ALASKA AHEC PROGRAM 2020 ANNUAL REPORT



UAA Alaska Center for
Rural Health and Health Workforce
UNIVERSITY of ALASKA ANCHORAGE



MISSION AND ORGANIZATION

Area Health Education Centers (AHECs) are academic and community-based partnerships engaged in primary care workforce engagement, training, recruiting and retention activities to improve the distribution, diversity, supply and quality of the healthcare workforce.

The national AHEC Program is funded by the Health Resources and Services Administration, Bureau of Health Workforce (HRSA). The Alaska AHEC began at the University of Alaska Anchorage in 2005 and was the first in the country to be awarded to a School of Nursing, rather than a School of Medicine. There are now six regional centers in the state that conduct educational activities to engage and expose students to primary care delivery in rural or underserved settings, and to provide Continuing Education/ Professional Development (CE/PD) to current health professionals.



LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

I want to start this message by seizing the moment to remind you all to take a step back, inhale a breath of fresh air, and give yourselves a big pat on the back. What a whirlwind 2020 has been! 2020 marked my sixth year serving as Alaska's AHEC program Director and also the start to my service as the National AHEC Organization President. I have grown alongside the AHEC Program and I am so proud of all we have

accomplished together over the years.

The challenges of this pandemic have been trying on all of us, both personally and professionally. Public health professionals wear many hats... we know this, but COVID-19 has created an environment where we now have to pile on even more! For many of us who are working parents, like myself, we may be tasked with taking on the role of teacher (or "Miss. Mommy" as I like to token it). Many of our family members have fallen ill and we are filling in as caretakers. We are supporting our neighbors who are more vulnerable to the virus. We are finding ways to overcome the negative impacts of isolation, stress and fear of the unknown on our mental health. We are navigating all of this while maintaining our existing programming and contributing to pandemic response and relief efforts. I see you. I hear you. I feel you. You are NOT alone!

In lieu of our normal AHEC Annual Report, we wanted to provide our stakeholders with a glimpse into how COVID-19 has impacted our program. This special COVID-19 edition will focus on adaptations, response and relief efforts of the Alaska AHEC in 2020. We are proud to serve Alaska and support the health and wellbeing of Alaskans through this pandemic and beyond!

Gloria Burnett

Gloria Burnett, MS
Director, Alaska's AHEC
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MEET OUR NEWEST RURAL HEALTH CARE ADVOCATES



VINCENT VILLELLA

Vincent Villella is the North West Area Health Education Center (AHEC) Director. NW AHEC is situated within NACTEC and works lockstep with them to achieve mutual health care career pipeline goals. AHEC's mission is centered around assisting folk of all ages with their transition into the

health care workforce. Vincent is from Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania, the home of Groundhog Day!

His undergraduate is in education and biology. He worked in Quinhagak, AK for two years teaching science and coaching wrestling. His M.Ed is in Social and Comparative Analysis of Education and Indigenous Studies where he was a Fulbright Scholar in 2016. Vincent started as the NW AHEC director in 2020.



AMY CARLOUGH

Amy Carlough is Unangax (Aleut) and a Agdaagux tribal member born and raised in Anchorage, AK. Currently, she is employed at Aleutian Pribilof Island Association, Inc. (APIA). She is responsible for planning, organizing, directing and evaluating the program, policy, financial and personnel

activities of the Southwest Area Health Education Center (SW AHEC). She also serves as APIA's Youth Program Services Administrator, which includes responsibility for planning, developing, coordinating, implementing, and direct oversight of the Health Department's Community Health Services programs, that promote positive youth development aimed at reducing negative health outcomes for adolescents and young adults. Her career experiences have provided her the ability to integrate holistic care through the provision of spiritual, physical, mental, economic social work services in medical, social, employment, training and educational positions.

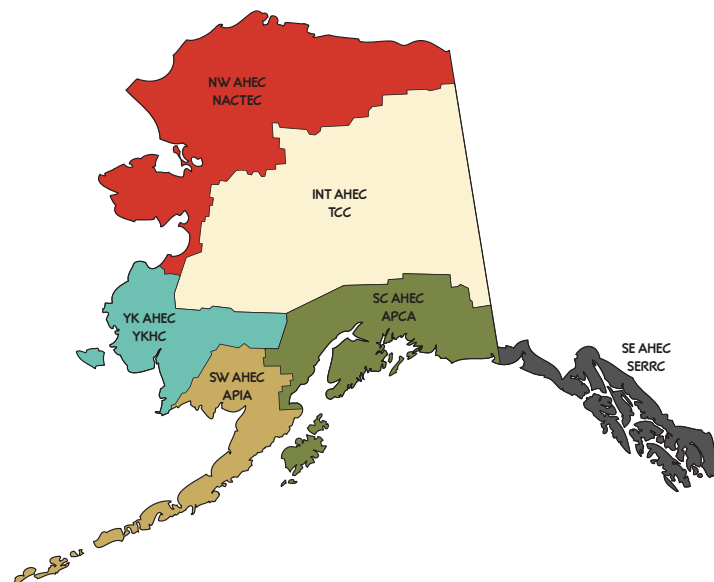


KATE GAPPERT

Kate Gappert is the new Interior AHEC Director, within the host organization of Tanana Chiefs Conference.

Kate was born in Kodiak and raised in Fairbanks, AK. Since 2015 she has been working for TCC's Chief Andrew Isaac Health Center, coordinating pediatric and adult specialty care across local,

Anchorage and Lower-48 clinics, including Alaska Native Medical Center. Prior to CAIHC, she spent four years as administrative support for the UAF Community & Technical College (CTC) Allied Health Department, collaborating with faculty and staff to support the students and many wonderful programs.



NORTHWEST AHEC

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STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

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WWAMI AHEC Director, Regional Affairs and Rural Health (WWAMI Rep), University of Washington, School of Medicine

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State CTE Administrator, AK Career and Technical Education, State of Alaska, Department of Education & Early Development

RAHNNIA BOYER

Vice President, Village Health Yukon Kuskokwim Health Corporation

TRICIA FRANKLIN

Health Program Manager III, Office of Healthcare Access, State of Alaska Division of Public Health

NATHAN DAHL

Administrator, Maple Springs of Alaska

TERRI DOUGHFMAN-BILLING

Assistant Director of Nursing, Maniilaq Health Center

BARBARA DOTY, MD

Assistant Dean, Alaska WWAMI Regional Affairs, UW School of Medicine

VERNÉ BOERNER

President/CEO, Alaska Native Health Board

TARA FORD, PHD

Interim Community Health Services Regional Director, Aleutian Pribilof Island Association

PATTY LINDUSKA

Sr. Director of Training & Technical Assistance, Alaska Primary Care Association

JEANNIE MONK

Senior Program Officer, Alaska State Hospitals and Nursing Homes Association

CARLA HAGEN, PHD, MPH, RN

Director, School of Nursing

RITA KITTOE

Director, RRANN

DOUG WALRATH

Director, NACTEC

CHRISTA GACKSTETTER

Clinical Staff Office Director, Tanana Chiefs Conference

SHERYL WEINBERG

Executive Director, SERRC

DALLAS HARGRAVE

Director, Human Resources, Bartlett Regional Hospital

COMMUNITY BASED LEARNING IN THE TIME OF COVID-19

BY KERIANN SHINE, SYDNEY BURNS & KAYLA FRANKLIN

COVID-19 threw a major wrench in “business as usual” for AHEC Scholars and other students dependent on community placement, but all challenges present opportunities. In light of the pandemic, students were faced with many challenges including loss of in-person clinical opportunities, transition to online learning, and for some, their own children forced to take part in at-home learning, and reduced household incomes. The AHEC team throughout the State pivoted to secure new opportunities for community engagement and learning despite the limitations posed by the pandemic.

AHEC SCHOLARS

In March, we channeled our focus into supporting Scholars by connecting them with resources, and exploring ways to be flexible while assisting them to meet their requirements for the year with limited additional stress. We held a virtual roundtable and one major concern we heard was Scholars felt a lack of exposure to potential future employers. Throughout the summer of 2020, we held biweekly virtual employer panels with one recruiter from an underserved or rural employer for current and graduated AHEC Scholars to ask questions about open positions, the hiring process, and suggestions to bolster their applications.

With in-person clinicals limited at best, we have tried to get creative with Community Based Experiential Learning (CBEL). We converted our Premera Baby Box training into recorded video modules of our Scholars to send to rural communities without reliable internet in multiple formats to increase accessibility. This will allow the expecting families access to maternal health education while keeping the community safe. Scholars are serving as mentors to other students, particularly those interested in health programs from rural and underserved communities. They are supporting our healthcare workforce and contact tracers by delivering care packages. They are also serving as contact tracers to aid with COVID-19 relief efforts.



The cancellation of in-person events has expanded and strengthened our virtual didactic offerings. We have been fortunate to have our Alaska AHEC Scholars attend events offered by other AHECs across the nation from Washington to Maryland. We have also been able to invite Scholars from other states to attend our virtual events. We had a remarkable turnout totaling more than 150 participants from all across the country to our Fall 2020 virtual Grand Rounds: Telehealth for Infectious Disease Part 1. Part 2 of the series is scheduled for Friday, March 26, 2021. [REGISTER HERE!](#)

AHEC Scholars has also faced similar challenges with reduced enrollment. In an effort to boost enrollment, we opened applications to students in online out of state programs that reside in Alaska. The goal is to increase experiential learning for future health professionals that want to work in Alaska even if their academic program is not Alaska based. We have also bolstered engagement with graduated AHEC Scholars, specifically the ones that graduated over the summer, during the pandemic, to find ways to support them while the healthcare system is facing unprecedented challenges. We are hoping to establish a formal network in the future geared towards AHEC Scholar alumni involvement in interprofessional events and mentorship of current AHEC Scholars.



PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION



In light of the hardships brought on by COVID-19, many health professions students turned to the SC AHEC and asked “How can we help?” Many Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA) participants were unable to attend their work experience opportunities as planned. Hospitals and providers in the Anchorage area closed their facilities to nonessential students and visitors. In April, our AHEC Scholars and WIOA participants were mobilized to help sew Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for Community Health Centers (CHCs) all over Alaska. At the time, CHCs were having a very difficult time getting the PPE they needed to serve their patients.

They were severely impacted by the national shortage and had few resources to purchase and obtain the supplies they needed. 30 participants were provided with resources to sew reusable face masks to meet the increase in demand for PPE among clinics in our Alaskan communities. By the end of June, students had completed approximately 500 masks. These were distributed to Bethel Family Clinic, Norton Sound Health Corporation, Port Graham Village Council, Annette Island Health Center among other local organizations such as Alaska Literacy Program and Chugiak Volunteer Fire Department.

Other students participated in a group research project regarding the Coronavirus and the challenges faced by various populations within Anchorage. Research topics included health disparities, social determinants of health, and available resources provided to minorities including immigrant and refugee populations impacted by the virus. Throughout the beginning months of the pandemic, WIOA was able to continue to provide financial support for students and participants who have lost jobs or other sources of income due to COVID-19. Rent, transportation, and grocery assistance increased to aid our participants as they shifted to a virtual learning environment.



CONTINUING EDUCATION,

CONTACT TRACING IN ALASKA

BY GLORIA BURNETT & PAT SAMMARTINO

Anyone who is familiar with the work of Area Health Education Centers (AHEC) would easily be able to explain the value of the AHECs in the field of healthcare. Strengthening workforce development efforts, inspiring youth from diverse and underserved backgrounds to pursue pathways in healthcare and addressing the maldistribution of health professionals in rural communities are a few of the key elements of the AHEC mission. It is with this in mind that Alaska AHEC Program Director Gloria Burnett responded to the call for action to address the contact tracing needs of the state during a worldwide pandemic.

AHECs are federally funded programs via the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). In mid-March, when schools began to close down and students stayed home instead of returning from Spring Break, HRSA began outreach to grantees about prospective opportunities for supplemental funding directly to AHECs to assist with COVID-19 response efforts. Shortly thereafter, the State of Alaska approached the University of Alaska Anchorage inquiring about capacity to assist with development of a contact tracer training specific to the State of Alaska's unique geographic and diverse cultural representation. A strong partnership with faculty from the UAA College of Health's Division of Population Health Sciences (DPHS) and extensive experience in large-scale health continuing education training initiatives, AHEC was in a position to rise to the occasion. The journey from that point forward had been ever evolving, tumultuous and rewarding, all at the same time.



Gloria Burnett



Pat Sammartino



Nancy Nix



Kristin Bogue

The small but mighty core team of UAA staff included Alaska AHEC Program Director, Gloria Burnett, AHEC Continuing Education Coordinator, Pat Sammartino, and DPHS Faculty Dr. Nancy Nix and Kristin Bogue.

Together, this team simultaneously created, recruited for and launched a 16-hour comprehensive training in a matter of three short weeks. The

training, which is available for continuing education credits provided through partnership with the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium and the UAA College of Social Work, was reviewed and sanctioned by the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services as a mandated requirement for all contact tracers in the State. Since then, over 1,800 have registered for the training and over 1,100 individuals have successfully completed the course... and the work didn't stop there.

In order to prepare for possible surge of COVID-19 cases, and with limited workforce readily available. The State of Alaska quickly realized they would have to rely on partnerships to meet the contact training workforce needs. In addition to tribal health facilities and municipal government health departments, the State contracted with the University and AHEC to hire and manage a workforce of up to 250 contact tracers. Given the University was on strict remote work-from-home orders for most employees, the entire UAA Surge Workforce was created remotely and all employees work remotely.

The challenges of building a large-scale operation under the pressure of rising case counts and constantly changing processes seemed insurmountable, but with the support and encouragement of university leadership and the cooperation of other UAA programs such as IT and HR, the team has grown and persevered.

Currently, the UAA surge workforce is covering approximately 45% of all case investigations for the State. Our teams are solution-oriented, oftentimes proposing changes to improve productivity or piloting new efforts to better prepare and train new hires. For example, the UAA teams have created a Shadow Lab to improve onboarding of new hires without impeding on active workloads. The Shadow Lab concept is now modeled for other State partners and UAA trains instructors for partners across the State as needed. In addition, to address the backlog of data entry and length of time to contact once an individual tests positive, UAA teams are planning to launch a call center where positive cases can circumvent the wait period by calling to schedule a case interview at a time that works for their schedules.

The team has often referred to the entire project by using the analogy of “building a plane while flying it”. Although navigation has been difficult, the weather hasn’t always cooperated, we lost some of our crew and have been constantly training new crew members to meet the need... we haven’t crashed yet! The Alaska AHEC has taken advantage of an opportunity to shine light on the value an AHEC adds to the healthcare field, especially during times of crisis.

Registered for training:
1885 (UAA – 1039, State – 846)

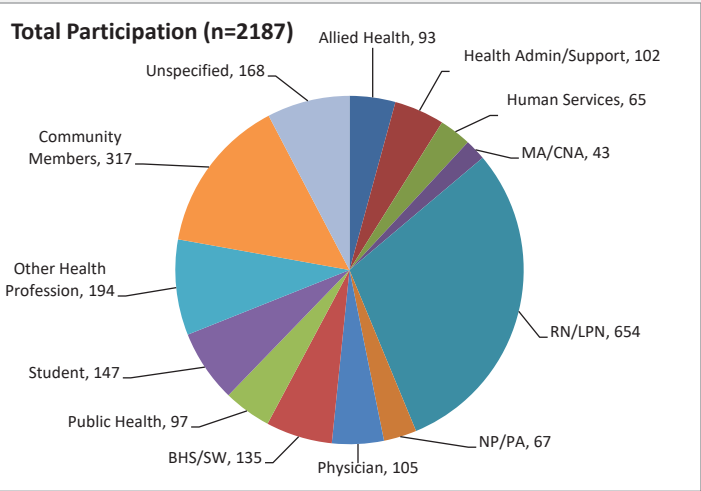
Completed training:
1111 (UAA – 533, State – 578)

Hires by UAA for Surge Workforce Team:
284 (Active – 239, Resigned – 45)

Total Case Capacity per day for UAA
Surge Workforce: (200 cases)

CONTINUING EDUCATION, OTHER 2020 CONTINUING EDUCATION ACTIVITIES

Total Participant (n=2187) (1660 Unduplicated)



All CE Activity for FY20 (Jan 1, 2020 - Dec 31, 2020)

CE/PD Events	Webinar	In person	Self Paced	Hybrid	Total
Number of Events	28	11	2	2	43
Education Hours Offered	37	57	13	56	163
Attendance	821	163	1109	94	2187
Total Contact Hours	1830	800	12505	1540	16675

COMPASSION FATIGUE: COVID-19 RESILIENCE RECOVERY FOR ALASKA NURSES

BY ANNA THOMAS, MSN AND PAT SAMMARTINO

Anna Thomas was one of the first COVID Tracers hired and has become an instrumental part of the COVID Tracer leadership. Prior to joining the AHEC team she was already working to help nurses understand and cope with the challenges they face every day. The COVID-19 crisis has demanded more of the nursing workforce than ever before. This course was developed by the UAA Alaska Training Cooperative in partnership with AHEC to provide support for nurses struggling with burnout and compassion fatigue. The distance delivered series focuses on building the participant’s understanding of themselves, expanding their toolbox of coping skills, and learning to draw healthy boundaries that allow them to stay connected in healthy ways. These skills can help to decrease burnout and compassion fatigue while increasing workplace satisfaction and career engagement. There were 5 sessions delivered in 2020 and they will continue into 2021.

LEADERSHIP AND SUICIDE PREVENTION TRAINING

BY AMY CARLOUGH

Amy Carlough officially moved into the SW AHEC Director position in May 2020. Currently, she is operating as the Youth Services Program Administrator and SW AHEC Director for Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association, Inc (APIA). Upon onboarding, she was accepted into the National Council for Behavioral Health's 2020 Addressing Health Disparities Leadership Program. The National Council's Addressing Health Disparities Leadership Program supports managers to develop their voice, agency, and power to advance health equity within their organization and across their broader communities. This opportunity was an enriching experience and the content over the seven-month program allowed for opportunities to strategize visions and ideas for the future of SW AHEC.

In addition to the leadership program, AHEC staff were trained to facilitate ACES and teenMHFA. The ability to facilitate the additional curriculum, will strengthen active suicide prevention activities and increase mental health awareness across the Aleutian and Bristol Bay region. Currently, Question, Persuade and Refer (QPR) is regularly facilitated among APIA communities and staff. Upon becoming the SW AHEC site, APIA was able to assist in extending this suicide prevention training out to other AHEC sites and professionals across Alaska virtually during the COVID-19 pandemic.

SW AHEC services are planned to continue virtually at this time. A continued extension of programming and partnership plans with the Bristol Bay region is an expected highlight heading into 2021. We have many goals in the new year, one of which is ensuring quality programming is delivered by trained and qualified staff in a variety of health and behavioral health educational domains.



PROJECT GROOVE & EMT/ETT TRAINING

BY VINCENT VILLELLA

Project GROOVE, funded by the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development (DEED), will empower CTE instructors in northwestern Alaska by providing high quality, standards aligned, professional development of online and remote CTE delivery. Groove CTE teachers will receive three graduate level credits learning about best practices in the focus areas of (1) CTE, (2) remote/online delivery, and (3) supporting diverse students. This program is open to teachers from Nome Public Schools, Bering Strait

School District, North Slope Borough School District, Lower Kuskokwim School District, and Northwest Arctic Borough School District. For more information, please contact Vincent Villella, vincent.villella@bssd.org.

In partnership with Nome Emergency Medical Services (EMS), the NW AHEC has provided materials for the EMS / ETT training offered in Nome. These trainings were offered remotely due to COVID-19 and had competency skills checks in small groups. Increased training to local individuals is essential to continue to fill medical services positions throughout the region.

PROFESSIONALISM SERIES

BY MARI SELLE

As many organizations halted operations and with uncertainty in the air, the South Central AHEC decided one way to “give back” was to hold a free professional development series to help the current and future health workforce continue to use any down time to build skills to come back to work stronger and smarter. Inspired by the Alaska Training Cooperative at UAA, who started a similar free training initiative, we presented a 10-session gift of Professional Development In COVID-19 Times series, with several sessions focused specifically on Professionalism in Health Care. It was delivered “live” April – May of 2020 but is still available via recordings on our website: <https://www.scahecak.org/professional-development-series/>

Session 1: Work Ethic and Performance by Teresa Novakovich

Session 2: Relationships and Teamwork by Sydney Burns

Session 3: Professionalism and Personal Life by Teresa Novakovich

Session 4: Your Personal COVID Coaching Session by Sevilla Love

Session 5: Cultural Competency Kayla Franklin

Session 6: Adverse Childhood Experiences Part I by Nyabony Gat

Session 7: Adverse Childhood Experiences Part II by Kayla Franklin

Session 8: Compassion Fatigue by Sydney Burns

Session 9: Implicit Bias by Mariko Selle with guest Cathy Colwell

Session 10: Communication by Teresa Novakovich

TEEN MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID (TMHFA) INSTRUCTOR TRAINING

BY GLORIA BURNETT

Originally, the Alaska AHEC was scheduled to be the first cohort (outside of initial pilots) to be certified as tMHFA Instructors. The in-person training was slated for twenty participants including AHEC staff and community partners for May, 2020. Unfortunately, COVID-19 impacted our ability to hold this training in person. However, with a quick pivot to a virtual format and restructuring of the original roster and schedule, we were able to train sixteen tMHFA instructors from across the State of Alaska.

The Teen MHFA training is a newer curriculum intended for instruction to high-school aged students to aid peers in connecting with mental health resources in times of crises. Despite not being formatted for virtual instruction yet, this course is vital to training the teenage demographic, which originally was instructed using a combination of Question, Persuade, and Refer (QPR) Training and Youth MHFA (with signing of minor consent waivers). In response to the current pandemic, the National Council on Behavioral Health is hard at work trying to develop a virtual version of the Teen MHFA training. In the meantime our partners around the state are scheduling and conducting Youth MHFA training to help bolster the number of responsible adults for teens in crisis, necessary for areas where teen mental health first aiders will be trained. To date we have offered two live tMHFA sessions, one in Fairbanks and one in Nome and both have been highly praised by participants and key stakeholders in those communities.

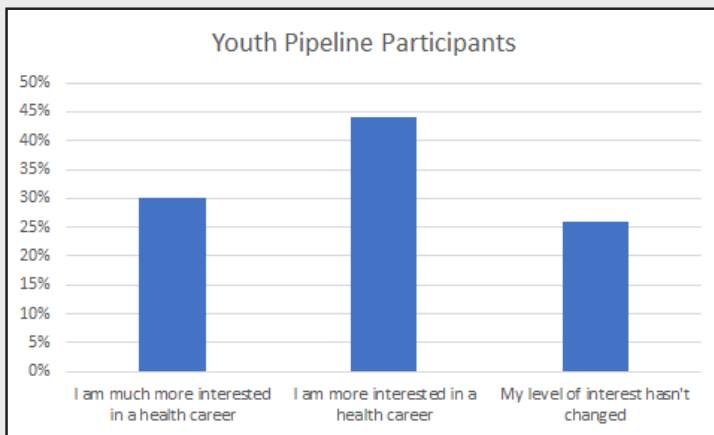
If you are interested in bringing teenMHFA to your community, please contact Gloria Burnett at gburnett3@alaska.edu.



PIPELINE PROGRAMMING

BY ALEXIS HARVEY

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent closures around the state, the Alaska AHEC's programming efforts have shifted significantly in order to accommodate the overwhelming need for student engagement during these uncertain times. While not being able to meet in-person, especially in rural areas where the spread of COVID-19 may result in complete community closures, the AHEC has moved to an entirely virtual format for the 2020-21 academic year. With this shift, programming has not slowed down, but has become more innovative and at times, more widely available. While some obstacles have been encountered, such as rural internet access, the Alaska AHEC has worked to provide resources to overcome and adapt to the current circumstances.



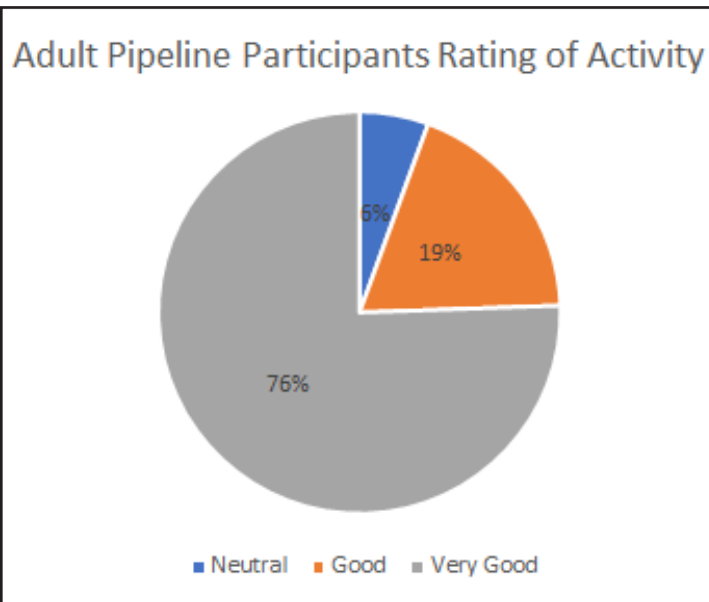
17 PATH Academies

12 Apprenticeship Cohorts

11 Youth Camps

Seawolf Cyber Connection Summer Program

This program was a collaboration with the UAA Community and Technical College to support incoming College Freshman from rural areas around Alaska. Originally intended as a Summer Bridge program wherein students travel to the UAA campus, this program was one of many that subsequently changed due to COVID-19 precautions--shifting to a virtual format. AHEC funding was used to provide adequate technological tools to students such as Chromebooks and internet jetpacks to ensure equal access to classes and Zoom meetings. Additionally, to keep students engaged AHEC Scholars were voluntarily recruited to serve as mentors, answering questions regarding health career degree programs and university life. In addition to their roles as mentors, AHEC Scholars were provided handbooks to guide them through various professionalism activities with their mentees.



CURRICULUM REVISIONS

By Teresa Novakovich

In March, due to the potential spread of COVID-19, SC AHEC adapted their curriculum delivery from in-person to virtual. New strategies were implemented to allow for engaging, high-quality virtual training in apprenticeships, PATH Academy pre-apprenticeships, high school camps, and other classes and seminars. Students were able to safely participate from home through synchronous classes over Zoom, self-paced online training, and independent study. Conducting training online gave us the unique opportunity to have guest speakers and subject-matter experts from all over Alaska present in our classes.

ANSEP/AHEC Collaborations

The AHEC collaborated with their long-time partner ANSEP to bring in guest speakers for a ANSEP Insights Session on Behavioral Health careers for their Middle School Academy. This panel was hosted virtually via Zoom where guest speakers Johon Atkinson, BHA and Jen Kiser-Brower, MSW talked about their respective lines of work and how they intersect with the field of behavioral health. Additionally, students had the opportunity to ask questions about the field of behavioral health and how to get involved.

In addition to the ANSEP Insights session, the ANSEP Middle School Academy reached out for collaboration on a Discovery Lesson. The AHEC taught a lesson on the brain, focusing on the biology of the brain and careers in Neurology and Psychology. Students were shown a short presentation before moving into an activity using gelatin brains that they made prior to the lesson as models. The activity allowed students to actively visualize parts of the brain while talking about different regional functions.

Along with conducting lessons for the ANSEP Middle School Academy, the AHEC Program Office worked with the ANSEP Acceleration High School to provide various 2 hour lessons touching on various career fields revolving around health. The following are details of the lessons instructed:

Health Education Lesson

(Nov 6th)

This lesson touched on the field of health education and allowed students to explore the career path and education that goes into becoming a health educator. Students also were able to construct a lesson plan for various public health mock scenarios to determine best practices for health education dissemination before presenting to their peers.

Becoming a Medical Doctor Lesson

(Nov 13th)

This lesson explored the path to becoming a physician and the intricacies therein. In addition to a presentation, students participated in an activity where they were introduced to medical charting-- a major part of physician's daily work. In this activity, students watched a brief patient presentation and interview while taking notes to later use in writing a History of Present Illness (HPI) for the patient seen in the video.

Neurology & Psychology Lesson

(Nov 20th)

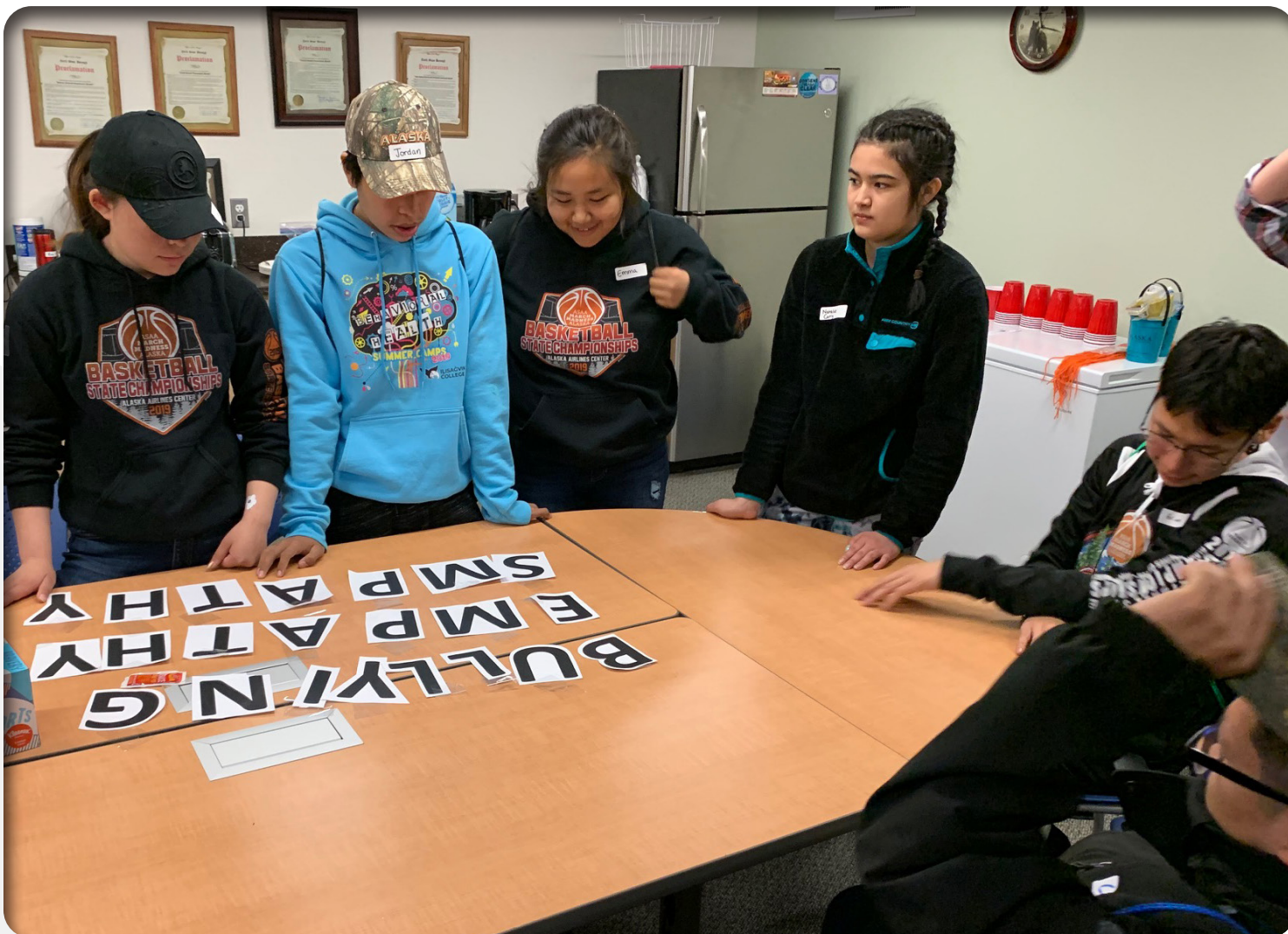
The third lesson focused on the brain, talking about the structure, function, and careers involving the brain. An in-depth look at the beginnings and evolution of both the fields of Neurology and Psychology was given before diving into the anatomy of the brain. Students finished off the lesson with an exercise wherein they diagnosed potential damage to different brain regions based on clinical presentations.

Physician's Assistant Lesson w/ MEDEX Students (Dec 11th)

The AHEC partnered with AHEC Scholars Alumni currently in the MEDEX Physician's Assistant program to give a presentation on becoming a PA and what is involved in this career path. Lesson consisted of a presentation given by the guest PA students and a Kahoot activity compiled by the PA students.

Epidemiology & Public Health Career Exploration (Dec 16th)

The ANSEP Acceleration Academy's tradition of Career Explorations week to end the academic semester was not to be derailed due to the pandemic, and instead moved to a virtual format. The Alaska AHEC Program Office also collaborated in order to teach a 4.5 hour lesson on Epidemiology and Public Health. In light of the current pandemic, one of the COVID-19 Contact Tracers was gracious enough to serve as a guest speaker. Their expertise in the area of Public Health and Contact Tracing was expanded upon and was used to put on an activity running through mock Contact Tracing scenarios.



BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CAREER PATHWAYS PROGRAMMING

BY MARI SELLE, JENNI EBERSBERGER AND ALEXIS HARVEY

As the Alaska Primary Care Association and the SC AHEC “hunkered down” last spring, we contemplated how we could continue to deliver Health Career Camps for high school students, funded by Carl Perkins and the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority. We knew we needed to get creative and innovative. Staff decided to move the camp to an online Zoom format and moved forward with a June Behavioral Health Camp that was originally intended for teens in the South Central region to all of Alaska. We were initially overwhelmed by the number of registrants we had that signed up for the camp, as we didn’t know what to expect. We had a big group of 25+ teens from Southcentral, Interior, and Southeast Alaska join the camp. Each “camper” joined the camp from their home computer. Each participant was assigned an adult mentor to help them keep on top of their assignments and their final project. The camp was a success with students earning 2 college credits through UAF Bristol Bay campus.

"I loved this class and all the guest speakers, I learned a lot about different health careers."

- Yaakoosge Daakahidi High School Student

These efforts were enhanced and expanded to another camp coordinated by the AHEC Program Office. Hosted virtually in collaboration with Ilisagvik College in Utqiagvik, Alaska, this camp spanned two weeks and was open to students across the state. All students who attended were from the Southeast region and all successfully completed the course, earning 1 college credit for the course titled “Becoming a Behavioral Healthcare Professional.” Students were also encouraged and given the opportunity to collaborate with their current high school to earn dual-credit. Throughout this camp, students were introduced to different career opportunities within the behavioral health field through professional-led panels.

Additionally, students learned the importance of not just clinical diagnostic practices, but holistic approaches to mental health and wellness such as art therapy and journaling. Various sections within the course also introduced Indigenous approaches to mental wellness such as the guest panel on dance and music therapy with UAS Multicultural Services Manager and Woonch.een Club Advisor Kolene James, and the section on Cultural Competence and Humility with UAA Psychology Professor E.J.R. David, Ph.D..

Continuing to revise and improve the virtual model, SE AHEC offered a virtual Behavioral Health camp for Yaakoosge Daakahidi High School students. Throughout the camp, the students worked together on a community project. As we all know, COVID-19 has taken a toll on our morales, thus the students put an inspirational letter together to be handed out to each of the residents at St. Vincent De Paul. The letter consisted of a conglomeration of inspirational quotes / thoughts from several students at Yaakoosge Daakahidi. Students were also provided with many wellness items such as a yoga mat, water bottle, devils club salve, a journal, and backpack. They were encouraged to use these items throughout the camp. To conclude camp, Justin McDonald and the 'Red Road Journey to R Shuka' drumming group sang songs and played music for the students. The group shared some words of encouragement with the students as well to send them on their way.

SIIP PROJECT/IET PATH ACADEMY PLANNING

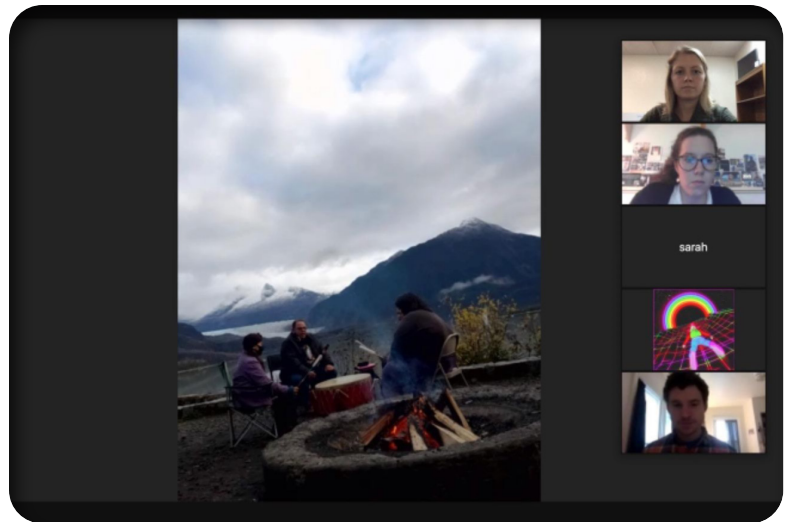
BY NYABONY GAT

SC AHEC had the opportunity to collaborate on the Skilled Immigrant Integration Project which is an international initiative to support and create career pathways for immigrants and refugees. The project particularly addresses brain waste and barriers to employment entry. Anchorage focused on three outcomes as it relates to health career pathways

"I honestly loved every bit about this class, from each presenter to their presentations and ALL the knowledge they had to share! I definitely learned a lot more about the health field and definitely a ton more on mental illness and drug/alcohol abuse!!!"

-Yaakoosge Daakahidi High School Student

SE AHEC is planning to coordinate two more Health Career Camps/Behavioral Health Career Camps in the spring.



1

Enhance and develop a network of partners supporting career pathways and bridges for Anchorage New Americans into health care careers

2

Develop and conduct integration and inclusion survey of Anchorage new Americans

3

Develop a health care pre-apprenticeship training curriculum for English language learners

Continuing Education Opportunities

Alaska AHEC works with the UAA College of Health and our partners to offer continuing education credits for healthcare professionals across Alaska. You can find a list of course offerings as well as registration instructions at <https://uaa-coh.asapconnected.com>.



UAA College of Health
UNIVERSITY of ALASKA ANCHORAGE

Health Careers in Alaska: bit.ly/healthcareersak

This website provides information on scholarships, camps, internships and academic programs related to healthcare in Alaska. There are also detailed descriptions of over 50 healthcare careers and links to major employers and job-search services.



UAA Alaska Center for
Rural Health and Health Workforce
UNIVERSITY of ALASKA ANCHORAGE



Find us on YouTube!

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