



# ALASKA AHEC PROGRAM 2022 ANNUAL REPORT



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





## MISSION AND ORGANIZATION

The AHEC (Area Health Education Centers) program was developed by Congress in 1971 to recruit, train and retain a health professions workforce committed to underserved populations. The AHEC mission is to enhance access to quality health care, particularly primary and preventive care, by improving the supply and distribution of healthcare professionals via strategic partnerships with academic programs, communities and professional organizations.

The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) provides funding under the direction of Bureau of Health Workforce (BHW). The Alaska AHEC Program supports the Bureau of Health Workforce with three overarching goals:

1. Diversity: Preparing a diverse, culturally competent workforce.
2. Distribution: Improving workforce distribution among rural and underserved populations.
3. Practice Transformation: Developing primary care models that can deliver care in rural and underserved communities.

## LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR



It seems the buzz about the dire need for healthcare workforce is more prevalent now than ever before. As I reflect on the past year, I feel the need to acknowledge my appreciation and gratitude for our state's healthcare workforce. Battling burnout, compassion fatigue, cyclical staff turnover and workforce shortages, our healthcare providers are working around the clock to provide the best care possible. I see you all and I thank you for your dedication to the health and wellbeing of Alaskans.

As our healthcare workforce is struggling to make ends meet, the Alaska AHEC continues to do our part in developing a workforce for the future while providing lifeline resiliency support to retain those we have. The good news-- we have more pipeline programming than ever before. Our youth are exploring health careers and our PATH Academies are expanding to support recruitment into entry level positions. We are boasting the largest cohort of AHEC Scholars to date with 137 enrolled and 45 Rising Scholars. We have also fully launched our Resiliency Lab with over 1,600 enrolled to date!

The Alaska AHEC continues to struggle annually to piece together funding to meet federal match requirements and provide regional AHEC Centers with ample funding to support a staffing model in alignment with the demand for programming in their region. We continue to pursue sustainable funding mechanisms and will prioritize advocacy for AHEC funding this legislative session. As AHEC stakeholders we look forward to your support in this endeavor!

Gloria Burnett, MS  
Director, Alaska's AHEC  
907-786-6705  
gburnett3@alaska.edu

## HISTORY

In 2005, the University of Alaska Anchorage received its first five-year award and was also the first AHEC Program in the country to be awarded to a School of Nursing, rather than a School of Medicine. The Alaska AHEC Program Office and six regional centers conduct educational activities to recruit students into health professions, to engage and expose healthcare students to primary care in rural or underserved settings, and to provide Continuing Education for health professionals and community members.

# MEET OUR NEW CENTER DIRECTOR



## OLIVIA BRIDGES

Olivia Bridges is the new Center Director of Southwest Alaska AHEC hosted within Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association, Inc. She received her BA in Health & Societies from the University of Pennsylvania and is a candidate for a Master of Public Health at University of Alaska Anchorage. Before joining AHEC, she interned at the Philadelphia Department of Public Health with the Opioid Use and Overdose Prevention Department. She loves to knit, sew, and go on walks with dogs.

## REGIONAL DIRECTORS

### NORTHWEST AHEC

Vince Vilella, Center Director  
NW AHEC  
vpvillella@nshcorp.org

### INTERIOR AHEC

Whitney Paolino, Center Director  
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### YUKON KUSKOKWIM AHEC

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### SOUTH CENTRAL AHEC

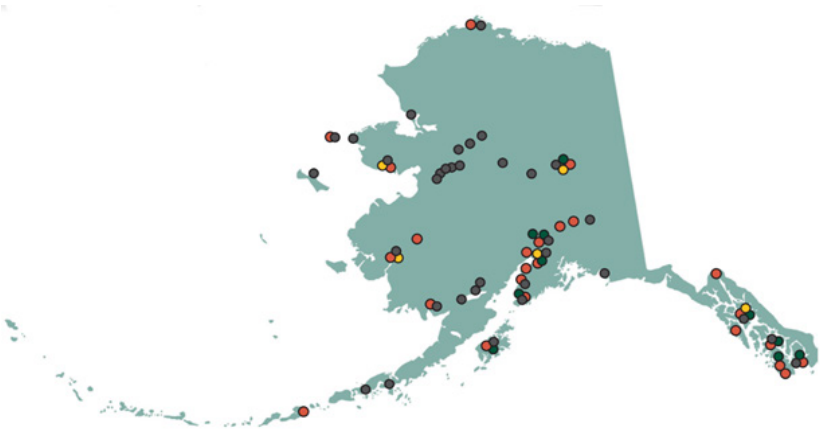
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### SOUTHWEST AHEC

Olivia Bridges, Center Director  
SW AHEC  
oliviab@apiai.org

### SOUTHEAST AHEC

Mary McEwen, Center Director  
SE AHEC  
marym@serrc.org



## REGIONAL CENTERS

Anchorage (Program Office, Southwest headquarters, South Central headquarters), Bethel, Fairbanks, Juneau, Nome

## LOCATIONS AHEC SCHOLARS HAVE BEEN PLACED

Anchorage, Bethel, Chickaloon, Craig, Dillingham, Homer, Juneau, Kalskag, Ketchikan, Klawock, Kodiak, Nome, Little Diomed, Nikiski, Palmer, Petersburg, Port McKenzie, Sitka, Skagway, Soldotna, Sutton, Unalaska, Utqiagvik

## LOCATIONS AHEC SCHOLAR GRADUATES ARE WORKING

Anchorage, Fairbanks, Homer, Juneau, Ketchikan, Klawock, Kodiak, Palmer, Petersburg, Wasilla

## LOCATIONS PIPELINE PROGRAMMING HAS BEEN RUN

Allakaket, Anchorage, Bethel, Cordova, Dillingham, Fairbanks, Galena, Glennallen, Homer, Hughes, Huslia, Igiugig, Juneau, Kaltag, Kenai/Soldotna, Ketchikan, King Cove, Kodiak, Kotzebue, Koyukuk, Little Diomed, Nenana, Nondalton, Newhalen, Nome, Nulato, Palmer, Petersburg, Ruby, Sand Point, Savoonga, Tanana, Utqiagvik, Wales



## AHEC SCHOLARS GRADUATES SERVING ALASKANS

One of the key ways the AHEC achieves its mission of improving the distribution, diversity, supply and quality of health care personnel in Alaska is through the AHEC Scholars program. This two-year program designed to supplement health students' training provides extra didactic and hands-on training in topics specific to rural and underserved healthcare. Not only can students pick and choose learning modules that they believe would be helpful to supplement their core educational curriculum, but they also have the opportunity to travel throughout Alaska to directly experience the realities of rural healthcare. Any eligible student may apply, but the AHEC specifically seeks to support diverse and underserved Alaskans in their educational journey.



23% non-white



43% from rural/frontier background

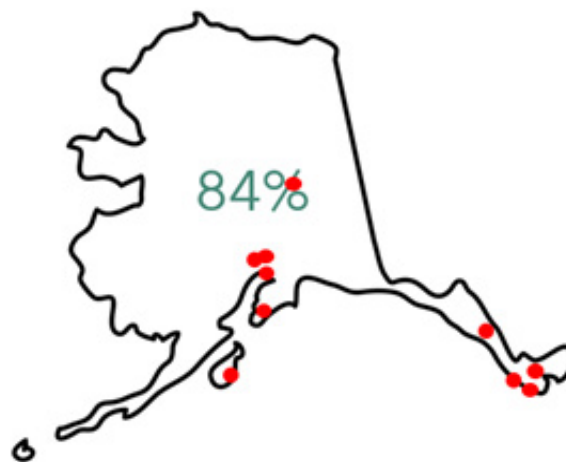


45% educationally or financially disadvantaged\*

*\*Statistics for graduated AHEC Scholars*

Since the program's inception in 2019, 401 Alaskan students from all over the state have participated. To date there have been 129 graduates of the program. Following up with students one year after graduation, the AHEC has found that 84% were working in Alaskan healthcare facilities. Of those, 40% are working in rural or underserved locations. The Scholars graduates are currently working at

- Alaska Native Medical Center
- Alaska Regional Hospital
- Alicia Roberts Medical Center
- Fairbanks Memorial Hospital
- Juneau Alliance for Mental Health
- Mat-Su Regional Medical Center
- Northstar Behavioral Health Hospital
- Petersburg Medical Center
- Providence Alaska Medical Center
- South Peninsula Hospital
- Southcentral Foundation
- ...and more



These encouraging statistics are a testament to the value of supporting local students and giving them experiences to deepen their understanding of Alaska's health needs. As more students complete the Scholars program and graduate with their degrees, the AHEC hopes to see more and more qualified and culturally-attuned providers serving rural and underserved Alaskans.

*"AHEC Scholars provided me with diverse connections and learning opportunities that were unique to Alaska and prepared me for entering the workforce in a rural community"*

— AHEC Scholar Graduate —

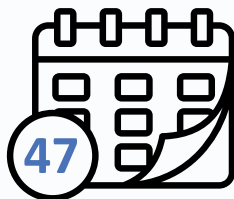




# CONTINUING EDUCATION OFFERINGS

## RESILIENCE RECOVERY PROGRAM

The AHEC Continuing Education program played a significant role in the Contact Tracing efforts of the State through the end of March 2022. As that project wrapped up, partnerships formed supporting new efforts of AHEC’s CE work including the launching of the Resilience Lab in partnership with Managing Me Enterprises which offers short 1-2 hour seminars, full day retreats and long term Employee Retainment Programs. This program is currently free of charge through the end of this fiscal year. If interested in learning more, visit the AHEC CE [website](#) or contact the Resilience Lab team at [uaa\\_resilience@alaska.edu](mailto:uaa_resilience@alaska.edu).



2022  
Resilience Events



Trainees

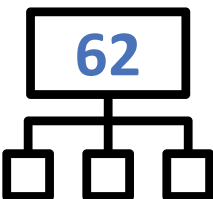


## THE CACHE (CLEARINGHOUSE FOR ALASKA'S CONTINUING HEALTH EDUCATION)

At the start of 2022 the AHEC reinvigorated a robust system that not only handles event registration but also connects directly to the Blackboard Learning Management System used by UAA. This new system, the CACHE, houses the CE listings that partners submit to be featured or that the AHEC is directly involved with. Please check out the listings available, and submit your own program’s events to the CACHE: Clearinghouse for Alaska’s Continuing Health Education [here!](#) Email [uaa\\_akcache@alaska.edu](mailto:uaa_akcache@alaska.edu) for more information.



2022  
Events Listed in Cache



Organizations  
Featured



## EVENT ASSISTANCE

The CE support services that have historically been offered by the AHEC are being updated into a new service menu to allow potential partners to better understand the full scope of services offered as well as the benefits to partnering with the AHEC for their own CE events. Current rates are listed on the CE [website](#) for the variety of support offered including Technical Assistance, Instruction, and Instructional Design. This service menu will provide packed options to partners. If interested in learning more about how the CE Team can support your next training please contact [uaa\\_ahacce@alaska.edu](mailto:uaa_ahacce@alaska.edu).

1,406

ATTENDANCE

55

CONTINUING  
EDUCATION EVENTS

134.5

CONTINUING EDUCATION  
CONTACT HOURS





## SOUTHWEST AHEC: KING COVE STUDENTS GAINING LIFE-SAVING SKILLS

Southwest Alaska AHEC, in partnership with Douglas Finney, RN of Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association's Primary Services offered an Emergency Trauma Technician (ETT) course in the community of King Cove in 2022. The ETT course, open to high school students and adults, is an intense 40 hour certification conducted by instructors certified by the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services that is designed to teach the layperson living in a rural context the fundamentals of emergency medicine in the pre-hospital context.



Students learned firsthand how to manage emergency incidents involving sick or injured persons, to care for and treat wounds and to provide limited medical assistance. They completed the American Heart Association's CPR for Basic Life Support and focused on the multitude of medical emergencies that can occur, including cardiac arrest, stroke, seizures, poison, overdose, childbirth, etc. The course also covered trauma emergencies which included mastering a variety of medical equipment such as longboard, Kendrick extrication device, vacuum mattress and hare traction splint.

The students in King Cove cited a variety of reasons for taking this ETT training. Some were planning on joining the local first aid squad, others knew that they would be going into health careers and the ETT certification was proof of that for their resumes and college applications. One student took the ETT training so that he could use the skills with his crewmates in case they were injured or became ill while fishing out in the deep ocean. In communities like King Cove in the Aleutian Pribilof Islands Region of Southwest Alaska, AHEC programs like this ETT training provide invaluable knowledge and hands-on skills to youth and adults alike who will be those health leaders in emergencies that will doubtlessly arise and will save lives.





## YUKON KUSKOKWIM SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

The Yukon Kuskokwim Health Center scholarship program is administered by the regional AHEC. In 2022 there were over 60 scholarship recipients. Below are some of the students that YKHC, in partnership with the AHEC, has been able to help.



**KYRA S. JOHN**  
**KWIGILLINGOK, AK**  
**PRE-NURSING, UAF – KUSKOKWIM CAMPUS**

"I have been interested in nursing since the day I was seen by a nurse at one of my visits to the clinic when I was young. I liked having my vital signs checked and monitored as the nurse asked me questions about my health... This scholarship will help me towards my career goal as a nurse where I will be able to contribute to the health and safety of my community and alleviate the nursing shortage in our region!"



**MARIAANA GUERRERO**  
**SCAMMON BAY, AK**  
**ASSOCIATE DEGREE IN NURSING, ALASKA PACIFIC UNIVERSITY**

"My goal of becoming a nurse was strongly influenced by my first-hand experience with trauma and recognizing the value of healing, and also realizing that we needed more Alaska Native Nurses in the healthcare field. Once I've obtained my degree, my plan is to return to the YK-Delta and serve our region... I am so excited that I am pursuing a nursing career as it has been a lifelong dream!"



**LUCY ATTI**  
**KWIGILLINGOK, AK**  
**PRE-NURSING, UAF – KUSKOKWIM CAMPUS**

"This scholarship is helping me to further my education and achieve my goals and my dream of becoming a nurse. I am fluent in both Yupik and English and believe that being bilingual is important when gathering information about patients and communicating health programs that benefit them... Helping people makes me happy and I look forward to contributing more to my community and delivering quality health care services when I become a nurse."

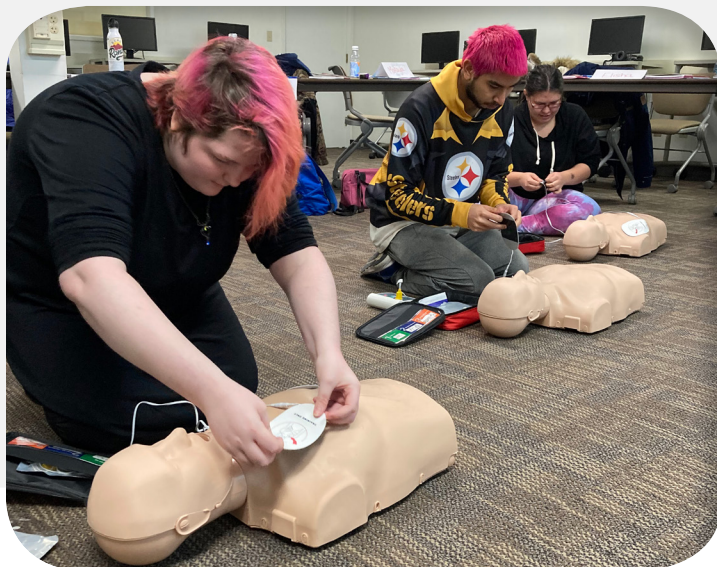




## SOUTHEAST AHEC: DIVERSE STUDENTS EXPLORING HEALTH CAREERS

In November, the Southeast Alaska AHEC, working in tandem with the Alaska Transitions Outcome Project, welcomed 12 high school students to Juneau for a week of activities and learning about careers in healthcare.

The students' field trip to Bartlett Regional Hospital included behind-the-scenes looks at some of the important but often overlooked areas of running a hospital-- meal preparation and planning, supplies ordering and management, and environmental services. Students heard about career paths after high school in many forms, and worked on their own Person-Centered Plans and researching careers of interest.



This camp included CPR/First Aid and Mental Health First Aid certifications, field trips, guest speakers, and hands-on activities. What differentiated this camp from previous ones was that this gathering was designed and marketed to recruit a wider range of students than had previously participated. The camp was open to all high school students with an interest in health careers, including students with disabilities or other potential barriers to employment. Co-taught by special and general education staff, the camp was built with a universal design approach to accommodate the diverse strengths, needs, and interests of the students in attendance.





## SOUTH CENTRAL AHEC: PRE-APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING IN HEALTHCARE

Having the largest population concentration in the state, South Central Alaska AHEC has the opportunity to provide training to dozens of Alaskans each year. In 2022, SC Alaska AHEC provided pre-apprenticeship training in healthcare (PATH Academy) to 145 adults. The PATH Academy is open to all Alaskans 16 years old and older who have an interest in learning more about healthcare careers. No prior education or experience is required. Many individuals who attend training never thought that they would be able to qualify for a career in healthcare. Such was the case with Deborah, who attended a PATH Academy held in Kodiak in August. Within weeks of her graduation, Deborah received a job offer from Hope Community Resources as a Direct Support Professional.

"I had acquired five certificates with the PATH Academy. I believe and trust that this has helped me get this job. I am most grateful to all who have taught me and will carry with me the incredible teaching that I know will help me in all my endeavors," Deborah shared.



Madison's first day  
at ANTHC

Madison attended the September PATH Academy in Anchorage. As Madison learned about the variety of careers in healthcare, she developed an interest in working in a pharmacy. Upon completion of the PATH Academy, and with support from AHEC staff, she applied at Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC). She was offered a position as a pharmacy tech apprentice and couldn't be more excited about her new career path!

Another PATH student, Jany, was already working in environmental services at Providence hospital when he attended the August PATH Academy in Wasilla. Jany wanted to work as a Patient Care Tech (PCT) but was not chosen for the position when he applied. With the certifications in Basic Life Support, Mental Health First Aid, First Aid, and Bloodborne Pathogens he earned in the PATH Academy, Jany had renewed confidence. With support from AHEC staff, he updated his resume, polished his interview skills, and applied again for a PCT position—and got it! He started in his new position in October and loves what he is doing. "I am so thankful for the PATH Academy and the support I've received," he said.



PATH Graduate Kismairy

South Central AHEC also offers integrated English (IET) PATH Academies for English-language learners. Originally from the Dominican Republic, Kismairy had the dream of working in the field of dentistry. She attended the October IET PATH Academy in Anchorage and was offered a job as a caregiver at Maple Springs Living. She loves her job and is pursuing additional training as a dental hygienist.

Teresa Novakovich, Director of South Central Alaska AHEC, is excited to expand PATH Academy training opportunities in 2023. "In the summer of 2022, the Alaska Primary Care Association (host of SC Alaska AHEC) was thrilled to receive generous funding from the Federal Department of Economic Development. This grant, the Good Jobs Challenge, will allow us to partner with other regional AHEC Centers to provide pre-apprenticeship training across the state. Our goal is that every adult in Alaska has access to training and support to start and/or advance their career in healthcare, behavioral health, or human services."



Spring 2022 IET PATH Academy

# NORTHWEST AHEC: TRAININGS ACROSS ALASKA

## TEACHING IN WALES

Early in December of this year NW AHEC Director Vincent Villella traveled to Wales to deliver American Red Cross (ARC) First Aid/ CPR/ AED Training to the students at the high school and middle school. In addition to earning a certification in ARC the students and Mr. Villella worked on career and life skills needed to be successful in healthcare. “The students of Wales are outstanding for their kindness and determination for their success” said Vincent when describing his visit. The community of Wales is notorious for being difficult to fly in and out of, having an average wind speed of 15 mph with gusts above 50 mph not being strange. Providing healthcare training to the most difficult-to-access locations is one quality that the NW AHEC prides itself on.



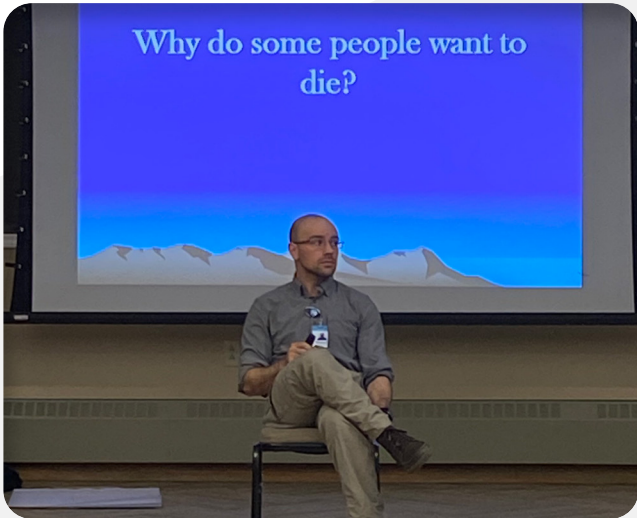
## NACTEC LUNCH AND LEARN

NW AHEC in partnership with Norton Sound Health Corporation (NSHC) and the Northwest Alaskan Career and Technical Center (NACTEC), runs the ‘Lunch and Learn’ series. Students from the surrounding community are brought into Nome for a 2 week stay at NACTEC. On their last day NSHC brings in staff members from a variety of departments at the hospital to speak with students and eat lunch together. This is an opportunity for the students to interact and receive mentorship from leadership at NSHC, as well as a chance for NSHC leadership to stay connected to the future healthcare leaders of NW Alaska.



## KOTZEBUE QPR TRAINING

In October this year NW AHEC Director Vincent Villella Traveled to Kotzebue to provide QPR: Suicide Prevention Training to the Behavioral Health Services (BHS) staff at Maniilaq Health Center and Hospital in Kotzebue. Mr. Villella’s modified version of QPR training with respect to the region and its Iñupiaq and Yupik values and experience. The training was well received and generated many ideas for the future of community mental health trainings.





## Interior AHEC: Settling in at Tanana Chief Conference and Forging New Partnerships

Within Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC), clinical rotations and job shadows have been in full force and still prove to be a strong focal point for the INT AHEC. With support from the INT AHEC, TCC has been able to continue offering students the opportunity to travel with their preceptors to villages to provide care and understand the challenges for patients with limited services. Because of this, TCC has been a desirable location for student clinical rotations!

INT AHEC continues to collaborate with partners to support the region's health workforce needs, specifically through health programs. INT AHEC Director, Whitney Paolino, worked with TCC and UAF Career and Technical College to develop a CNA cohort offered to 7 Alaska Natives from the Interior region. These students attended a paid 6-week course to earn their CNA certification and work for TCC upon successfully passing the course.

During 2022, Interior AHEC forged a stronger partnership with TCC Go, a program designed to encourage high school students to pursue a career in a health-related field. The INT AHEC is exploring shifting locations within



TCC from Clinical Services to the Family Services & Support Division which houses a variety of educational services including TCC Go. The shift would streamline INT AHEC Pathway programs while maintaining staffing and support within the Clinical Services department for student rotations.

Interior AHEC also welcomed a new partnership with Yukon-Koyukuk School District. This new partnership resulted in an introductory health career exploration curriculum designed for combined groups of middle school and high school students. AHEC staff will be traveling throughout the region to Huslia, Kaltag, Koyukuk, Allakaket, Nulato, Ruby, Tanana and Hughes to inspire youth to pursue career pathways in healthcare. High school participants will then have the opportunity to participate in a dual credit introductory course in Fairbanks.

The past couple of years of collaboration between AHEC and TCC has highlighted so many new opportunities for growth and learning, and the AHEC looks forward to continuing to explore these in the future.



## STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

<b>JOHN MCCARTHY</b>	<i>WWAMI AHEC Director, Regional Affairs and Rural Health (WWAMI Rep), University of Washington, School of Medicine</i>
<b>SHEILA BOX</b>	<i>State CTE Administrator, AK Career and Technical Education, State of Alaska, Department of Education &amp; Early Development</i>
<b>CHRISTOPHER BELTZER</b>	<i>Vice President, Legal and Workforce Development Yukon Kuskokwim Health Corporation</i>
<b>TRICIA FRANKLIN</b>	<i>Health Program Manager III, Office of Healthcare Access, State of Alaska Division of Public Health</i>
<b>NATHAN DAHL</b>	<i>Administrator, Maple Springs of Alaska</i>
<b>TERRI DOUGHFMAN-BILLING</b>	<i>Assistant Director of Nursing, Maniilaq Health Center</i>
<b>BARBARA DOTY, MD</b>	<i>Assistant Dean, Alaska WWAMI Regional Affairs, UW School of Medicine</i>
<b>VERNÉ BOERNER</b>	<i>President/CEO, Alaska Native Health Board</i>
<b>AMY CARLOUGH, MSW</b>	<i>Youth Services Administrator, Aleutian Pribilof Island Association</i>
<b>PATTY LINDUSKA</b>	<i>Sr. Director of Training &amp; Technical Assistance, Alaska Primary Care Association</i>
<b>JEANNIE MONK</b>	<i>Senior Program Officer, Alaska State Hospitals and Nursing Homes Association</i>
<b>CARLA HAGEN, PHD, MPH, RN</b>	<i>Director, University of Alaska Anchorage School of Nursing</i>
<b>RITA KAISER</b>	<i>Faculty, RRANN</i>
<b>IRVIN BARNES</b>	<i>Tribal Training &amp; Development Manager, Norton Sound Health Corporation</i>
<b>CHRISTA GACKSTETTER</b>	<i>Clinical Staff Office Director, Tanana Chiefs Conference</i>
<b>JULIE STALEY</b>	<i>Executive Director, SERRC</i>
<b>DALLAS HARGRAVE</b>	<i>Director, Human Resources, Bartlett Regional Hospital</i>



## Continuing Education Opportunities

Visit the Alaska Cache for current continuing education opportunities from the AHEC and its partners!



Health Careers in Alaska: [bit.ly/healthcareersak](http://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.



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The AHEC program is made possible through support provided by the University of Alaska, Anchorage / Anchorage Center for Rural Health and Health Workforce -Alaska's AHEC, and HRSA # U77HP23073.

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