



# ALASKA AHEC PROGRAM 2023 ANNUAL REPORT



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





## MISSION AND ORGANIZATION

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 (3) 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



The Alaska AHEC Program was as busy as ever in 2023. The Alaska AHEC relaunched the [CACHE](#): Clearinghouse for Alaska's Continuing Health Education, a one-stop shop for training and professional development for our current healthcare providers. This launch has been accompanied by a large-scale marketing campaign which has generated interest from individual providers, healthcare facilities and licensing boards. We are excited to continue this great work with support from the State of Alaska Department of Health Division of Public Health in the future.

The Alaska Primary Care Association, our partners and host of the South Central AHEC, were recipients of the Economic Development Association's "Good Jobs Challenge," a \$9.7 million grant focused on expanding and enhancing the healthcare workforce pipeline in Alaska. The Good Jobs Challenge involves a multi-sector approach relying on the infrastructure of the AHEC network and relationships with school districts and industry partners across the state. This work has been challenging to get off the ground, but we are excited to impact meaningful progress in stabilizing our state's healthcare workforce with this investment from our federal partners.

The AHEC has also been an integral partner in the revival of the WWAMI Della Keats program which will be offered in summer 2024. We have supported the establishment of a HOSA Board of Directors and in-person state conference which will be held in April 2024 on the UAA campus. We look forward to sharing these opportunities with you all in the coming year.

*Gloria Burnett*

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



## ISAAC BETTIS

Isaac Bettis is the new Center Director for the Interior AHEC, housed within Tanana Chiefs Conference in Fairbanks. He has lived in Alaska the majority of his adult life. He moved to Fairbanks to attend UAF where he graduated with a BA in Philosophy. Since then he lived and worked throughout the interior, west coast, and North Slope.

## REGIONAL DIRECTORS

### NORTHWEST AHEC

Vince Villella, Center Director  
Norton Sound Health Coporation  
vpvillella@nshcorp.org

### INTERIOR AHEC

Isaac Bettis, Center Director  
Tanana Chiefs Conference  
isaac.bettis@tananachiefs.org

### YUKON KUSKOKWIM AHEC

Naomi Digitaki, Center Director  
Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation  
naomi\_digitaki@ykhc.org

### SOUTH CENTRAL AHEC

Teresa Novokovich, Center Director  
Alaska Primary Care Association  
teresan@alaskapca.org

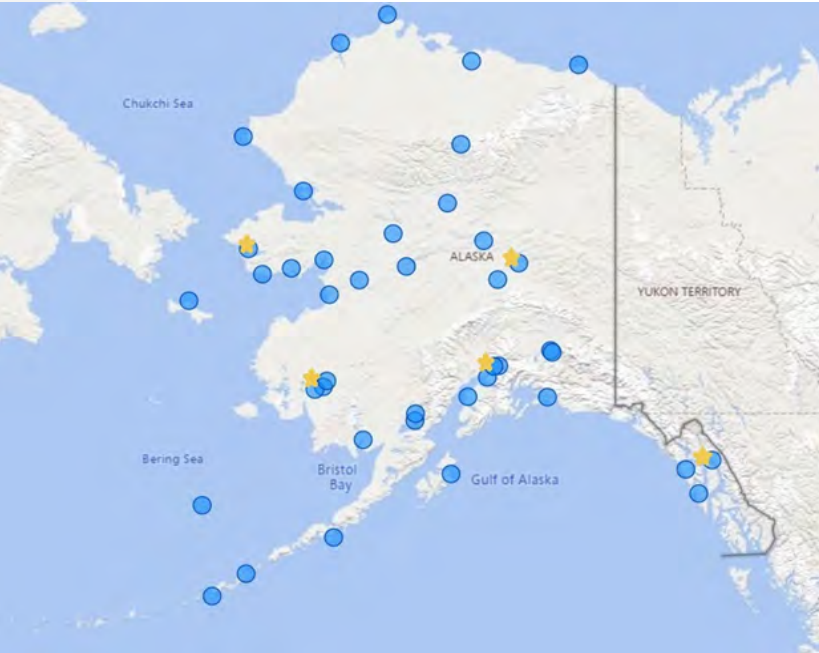
### SOUTHWEST AHEC

Olivia Bridges, Center Director  
Aleutian Pribilof Island Association  
oliviab@apiai.org

### SOUTHEAST AHEC

Mary McEwen, Center Director  
Southeast Regional Resource Center  
marym@serrc.org

## STATEWIDE REACH



### Regional Centers

Anchorage, Bethel, Fairbanks, Juneau, Nome

### 2023 Programing Locations

Akiak, Allakaket, Anaktuvuk Pass, Anchorage, Anderson, Barrow, Bethel, Cordova, Dillingham, Fairbanks, Glennallen, Huslia, Juneau, Kaktovik, Kaltag, Kenai, Kodiak, Kotzebue, Koyuk, Newhalen, Nikolski, Nome, Nondalton, Nuiqsut, Palmer, Pelican, Point Hope, Rampart, Ruby, Sand Point, Savoonga, Sitka, St. George, Tazlina, Teller, Tuluksak, Unalakleet, Unalaska, White Mountain, Wainwright, Wasilla



Unalaska, Alaska



## LAUNCHING A NEW COHORT OF AHEC SCHOLARS



The Alaska AHEC has made significant strides in achieving its mission of improving the distribution, diversity, and quality of healthcare personnel in Alaska over the past year. A cornerstone of our approach is the AHEC Scholars Program which is designed to supplement the core training of health students by providing additional didactic and hands-on training, with a particular focus on rural and underserved healthcare.

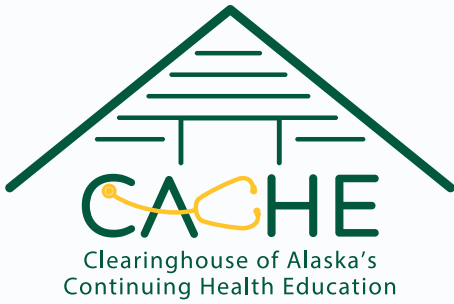
One notable aspect of the program is its flexibility, allowing students to select learning modules that complement their core educational curriculum. Moreover, the program offers a unique opportunity for students to travel throughout Alaska, gaining firsthand experience and insight into the realities of rural healthcare. This experiential learning is invaluable in preparing future healthcare professionals for the unique challenges faced in remote and underserved areas of our state. A highlight of the past year was the Kickoff Event on October 29th, which marked the commencement of a new cohort of AHEC Scholars. This event served as a valuable orientation, ensuring scholars were well-acquainted with the program's fundamental requirements. It also provided an opportunity for Scholars to meet our Regional AHEC Directors and a few Community Partners allowing them to foster connections and learn about potential Community-Based Experiential Learning (CBEL) placements for the upcoming year.



An enlightening address by a Tribal Healer added a culturally enriching dimension to the event, offering a unique perspective on traditional healing in Alaska and emphasizing the importance of bridging the gap between these cultural practices and western medicine.

Overall, the progress of the Alaska AHEC Scholars Program over the past year is marked by its commitment to comprehensive and experiential learning, fostering diversity, and addressing the unique healthcare needs of Alaska's underserved populations. The program's success is evident in its ability to prepare a new generation of healthcare professionals equipped to make a meaningful impact in challenging and diverse healthcare settings.

## AHEC'S CONTINUING EDUCATION OFFERINGS



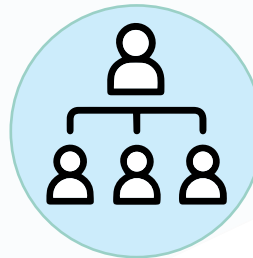
At the start of 2022, the AHEC implemented a robust new system that not only handles event registration, but also connects directly to the Blackboard Learning Management System used by UAA. This new system, dubbed the CACHE, houses the CE listings that partners submit to be featured or those with which the AHEC is directly involved. Please check out the listings available on the CACHE: Clearinghouse for Alaska's Continuing Health Education [here!](#) And if you have events you would like listed please contact our team by completing the event submission form [here!](#)

### 2023 EVENTS LISTED IN CACHE



126

### ORGANIZATIONS FEATURED



72

## MORE TO COME IN 2024!



### ACCREDITED CONTINUING EDUCATION

The AHEC CE team continues to offer high-quality accredited training opportunities to healthcare professionals throughout the state through our partnerships with the State of Alaska Division of Public Health, the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium, and the Alaska Nurses Association. To better serve our partners and reach a wider range of healthcare professionals with CE Training, the AHEC Program Office has contracted out a team of healthcare professionals to review training content and approve it for joint Interprofessional Continuing Education (IPCE). This means that a training which may have only been offered for nursing credit can now be offered as accredited for physicians, psychology, social work, pharmacy, and more all at the same time within the same application. If interested in learning more about how the CE Team can support your next training or how you can offer something with IPCE joint accreditation please contact [uaa\\_ahecce@alaska.edu](mailto:uaa_ahecce@alaska.edu).



## SPARKING ALASKAN YOUTH'S INTEREST IN HEALTH CARE

After last year's success, the Yukon-Kuskokwim School District contracted the Alaska AHEC program office to continue offering three-day camps for high school and middle school students. So far this academic year, camps have been held in Tanana, Ruby, Allakaket, and Nulato. We are excited to have the rest of the schools in the district scheduled for the spring of 2024!

During the most recent YKSD camp in Tanana students dissected pig hearts and practiced wound packing. During the pig heart dissection, the local physician assistant and community health aide were able to join in on the fun, providing guidance and context to students as they examined the hearts' anatomy. Wound packing was one of the skills students learned as a part of the Stop the Bleed certificate training (a training created by the American College of Surgeons). Learning about health and the world through such hands-on activities and life-saving trainings is what makes the Alaska AHEC's programming unique. Similarly in Ruby, students sketched the human heart as a way to combine science and art for learning. Through this practice, they not only improved their creative abilities but also gained a deeper understanding of the heart's special role in the human body.

Another favorite activity of the students at all the schools was the handwashing activity. It was particularly fun because it caught the students by surprise – little did they know that before they were instructed to wash their hands they had been given a lotion that fluoresces under UV light. With their hands under the UV light upon their return from the sink, students were aghast to see how poorly they and their classmates had washed their hands. The second time they tested their hand washing ability with the same lotion, their washing technique was much improved.

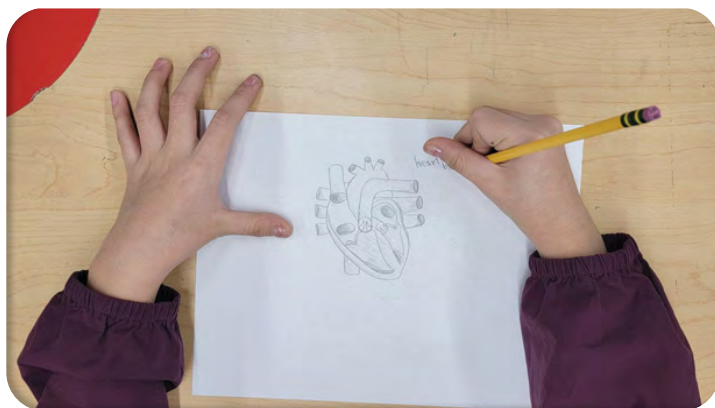


*Students assessing the efficacy of their hand washing technique (fluorescent spots indicate where lotion was not washed off their hands and wrists)*

At the end of the intensives, the students were able to take a few things home with them. As they mastered the use of various medical instrumentation and materials, they were provided the materials to build their own first aid kits. More importantly, the students were also provided with experience and knowledge that will prepare them to respond in medical emergency scenarios and pursue a career in healthcare if they desire. "This [week] was extremely useful for students who want to enter a medical or life sciences profession," reflected one student. "The activities were really fun."



*LeAnne Cota, PA from Tanana Health Center, helping students identify and contextualize different parts of a pig heart*



*A student illustrates the human heart's structure, combining science and art*

# FROM HOSA TO THE WORKFORCE

The AHEC has partnered with HOSA Future Health Professionals for several years as part of our shared mission to foster Alaskan students’ interest in health careers from a young age. The program’s mission is to empower future health professionals to become leaders in the global health community through education, collaboration, and experience. Many of these high school students go on to further education and ultimately work in healthcare in Alaska. One of these students, Masa Abaza, is currently a University of Washington School of Medicine student.

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## LOOKING BACK, HOW DID YOUR HOSA EXPERIENCE POSITIVELY IMPACT YOU?

HOSA positively impacted my learning by inspiring me to pursue medicine at a young age. The exposure I got to healthcare and biomedical science during high school is what motivated me to finish my premedical coursework early on, get an MPH, and start medical school at an earlier point in my life.



## WHY DO YOU THINK HOSA IS IMPORTANT TO HAVE IN ALASKA?

HOSA is so important to have in Alaska. There are often few opportunities for Alaskan students to be involved with an academically challenging program and work hard to succeed at it. HOSA is one of the few programs available for high school students who are interested in science and healthcare to explore career options in a way that allows them to study and work hard for a competitive and professional event.

## WHAT SPECIFIC SKILLS OR KNOWLEDGE DID YOU GAIN FROM THE PROGRAM THAT YOU FIND MOST VALUABLE IN YOUR CURRENT ROLE OR EDUCATIONAL JOURNEY?

I was able to practice my presentation skills at a young age, as well as learn what it was like to be at a professional event.

## WERE THERE ANY UNEXPECTED BENEFITS OR OUTCOMES FROM THE PROGRAM THAT SURPRISED YOU?

I was able to compete at the national HOSA event, which allowed me to connect with like-minded students from all over the country.

## DO YOU THINK HOSA IMPACTED YOUR DECISION TO LIVE AND WORK OR RECEIVE HIGHER EDUCATION IN ALASKA?

Yes. HOSA impacted my decision to pursue a medical field in my home state. With my experience in the program, I received my bachelor’s in natural science and MPH from UAA and am now a medical student at the University of Washington School of Medicine’s WWAMI program that allots 30 seats for Alaskan students every year with the goal of returning to practice medicine in Alaska.

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The AHEC is currently advocating with the State for funds to employ a staff member to help coordinate and support HOSA across Alaska. If you are interested in assisting with advocacy efforts, please email the current HOSA advisors Shawn.Glenn@matsuk12.us or AGelvin@gci.net. Thank you for your support of further funding for HOSA in Alaska!

# SOUTHWEST AHEC: FUTURE HEALTH PROFESSIONALS, ALASKA GROWN

In partnership with Bristol Bay Region Career & Technical Education Program, Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association's Southwest AHEC facilitated a week-long Allied Health program for high school students from the Bristol Bay Region of Alaska. Eight high school students came together in Dillingham, AK at University of Alaska Fairbank's Bristol Bay Campus to earn their American Heart Association Heartsaver CPR AED and First Aid certifications. Students also toured Bristol Bay Area Health Corporation's Kanakanak Hospital and practiced their skills at triage in a mass casualty incident drill. The Southwest AHEC interviewed one of these outstanding students.

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Intro: My name is Angel Yagie. I currently live in Nondalton, AK. It is on the Six Mile Lake right below Lake Clark. I am 17 years-old, a junior. I graduate next year. And, I have to say I'm not really psyched about that, I'm going to miss school. My mom used to work at the hospital, my dad works on the slope. I have two brothers, one sister. I have a nephew, a sister-in-law and I am very close to graduating here from Nondalton School.

## WHAT DID YOU EXPECT GOING INTO THE WEEK AND HOW DID IT TURN OUT?

I expected the week to be, you know, pretty long and slow, but it was actually really, really fun and it turned out to be a really good time. I really enjoyed it and will encourage everyone else to go to it.

## DID THE PROGRAM SPARK ANY NEW CAREER IDEAS IN THE HEALTH FIELD OR OTHER FIELDS FOR YOU?

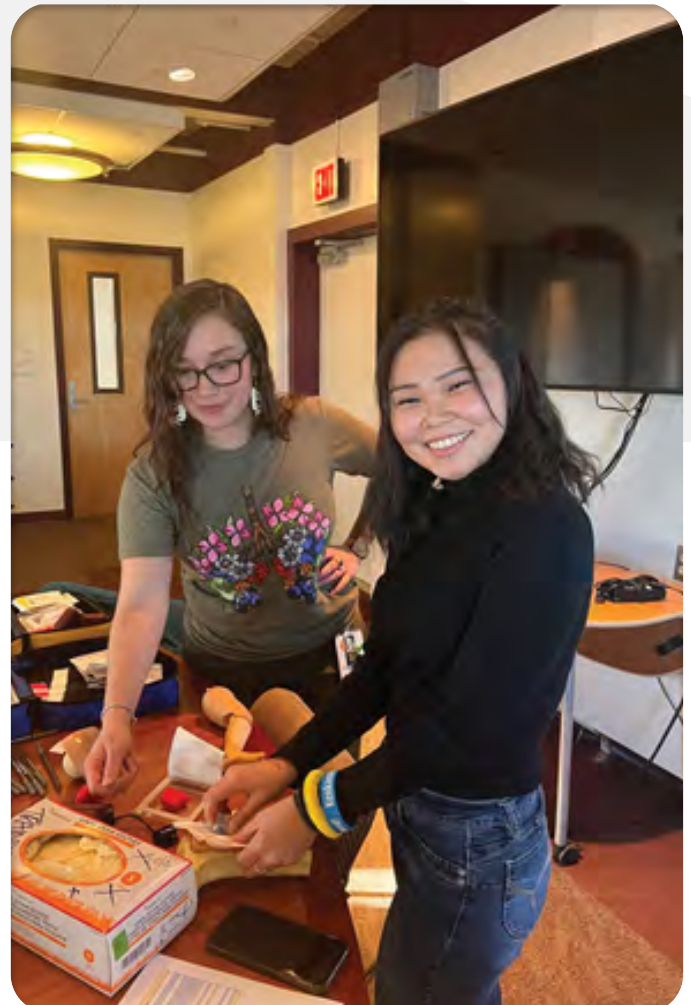
I went into this week thinking I wanted to be a nurse or a community health aide. And it just made those ideas even stronger and made me more excited to work toward my goal.

## WHICH ACTIVITY OR TRAINING FROM THE WEEK LEFT YOU FEELING THE MOST EXCITED AND WHY?

First Aid, because it gave me a real world situation and it taught me how to take care of other people and how to also remain calm in these serious situations.

## IS THERE ANYTHING YOU WANT TO ADD OR ANY MORE INFORMATION YOU WANT TO SHARE WITH THE PROGRAM?

I would say that this program is extremely fun and knowledgeable. You really do learn a lot from something that you thought you knew a lot about but there is so much more knowledge out there. And [it's important to]... know First Aid and CPR to save a person's life. Have fun with the program, take it seriously and really pay attention, just in case you ever need to use these techniques or you ever need to save someone's life.





## SOUTHWEST AHEC: SCHOLARS IN UNALASKA

As a part of their AHEC Scholars experience, students are required to complete 40 hours of Community Based Experiential Learning (CBEL) in either rural or underserved Alaskan health environments. Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association's Southwest AHEC supported Callie Simmons (MPH candidate) of Sitka to meet her CBEL requirement in Unalaska, AK. Unalaska overlooks Iliuliuk Bay and Dutch Harbor on Unalaska Island in the Aleutian Chain. Eight hundred air miles from Anchorage, it is a rapidly-growing and culturally-diverse community, with a strategic position as the center of a rich fishing area and for transshipment of cargo between Pacific Rim trading partners. Fishing and fish processing activities are the primary focus, with the harbor serving as a natural protection for fishing vessels. The community also has a budding tourist industry and a new Convention and Visitors Bureau, receiving visitors from cruise ships and serving daily scheduled flights at the State-owned 3,900 foot paved runway.



AHEC Scholars Beau Larson and Dani Schroeder also traveled to Unalaska to shadow APIA's Richard Eaton, PA-C.



Callie Simmons

Intro: My name is Callie Simmons. I'm from Oregon, but have lived in Sitka, AK the last 8 years! I'm currently in my last year of a Master's of Public Health at UAA. I work part-time at a local bookstore and at Sitkans Against Family Violence. I enjoy embroidery, hiking, and snuggling my cats!

### WHAT WAS THE MOST EYE-OPENING ASPECT OF YOUR COMMUNITY-BASED EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING (CBEL) IN UNALASKA, AK?

During a gathering next to the ocean on a beautiful sunny day, one of the event facilitators and cultural bearers said something to the effect "all this industry is temporary and will be gone, the people who are of the land and for the land will remain as we always have" as we were watching huge ships pass in and out of the channel. It was a really profound moment, one I've thought a lot about since.

### HOW DID THE EXPERIENCE COMPARE TO YOUR INITIAL EXPECTATIONS, AND DID IT INFLUENCE YOUR CAREER ASPIRATIONS IN PUBLIC HEALTH?

I'm not sure what my initial expectations were, but I was surprised with how much industry and commercial activity existed alongside community and local people. This experience solidified my career aspirations in public health (working for emergency planning/doing climate adaptation work) and increased my desire to work in remote/rural Alaska.



## WHAT WAS THE MOST REWARDING PART OF YOUR TIME IN UNALASKA, AND HOW DID IT IMPACT YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF PUBLIC HEALTH CHALLENGES IN RURAL COMMUNITIES?

I was glad that I was able to help with the Alaska Native Cultural Healing and Resiliency Gathering (setting up, cleaning up, taking videos). I was worried it was going to be a very one-sided experience. It was really rewarding meeting people doing work in the region, sharing food with community members, and hiking as a guest on Unangax land. I live in a rural community, but we have a lot more amenities compared to Unalaska; the internet and transportation in and out of Unalaska humbled my experience of rural communities in Alaska and certainly expanded my understanding of the public health limitations in these areas.

## CAN YOU SHARE A MEMORABLE MOMENT OR ENCOUNTER FROM YOUR CBEL THAT LEFT A LASTING IMPRESSION?

I would say my answer to the first question and meeting and hiking with some of the employees from Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association. They were very welcoming and introduced me to lots of people and experiences.

## HOW DO YOU ENVISION INCORPORATING THE LESSONS LEARNED FROM THIS EXPERIENCE INTO YOUR CAREER IN PUBLIC HEALTH?

I think I will try to take the leaders and facilitators' compassion and genuineness moving forward, particularly Dr. Gary Ferguson's and Jenna Larson's presence in a space. As a student and someone engaged in this type of work I always worry about saying the right and correct thing (which is important to strive towards) but this experience showed me that showing up as a human first is the most important thing we can do to create trusting and healing relationships.



## YKHC EMPLOYEES AND STUDENTS ON THE MOVE!

Yukon Kuskokwim Health Corporation (YKHC) employees and classmates who are currently enrolled in UAA's Registered Nurse (RN) Bethel cohort that started on Tuesday, September 6 are already on the move and assisting the community. In late October, supported by friends and family, the students participated in a White Coat Ceremony to celebrate their decision to pursue a nursing career. Each student was given a lapel pin with the inscription "Keeping Healthcare Human," courtesy of the Arnold P. Golden Foundation and a reminder that compassion and empathy are fundamental qualities in the delivery of quality care to patients.

In addition to the RN cohort, six students from communities in the YK-Region enrolled in the 3rd CNA program in the fall of 2023 at YUUT Elinauriviat. These students worked hard to complete the program and become CNAs in their communities.



L-R : RN students Christina Laroux, Venassa Yazzie, Madeline Parsons, Allan White, Danika Bailey, and Brooke Arnett at the Flu Vaccine Clinic on 10/7/2023

### CHRISTINA LARAUX RN STUDENT UAA BETHEL COHORT

*"I've always wanted to go into nursing... and it was always on the back burner - so I am beyond ecstatic to finally embark on this journey with the Bethel cohort! I come from a family of nurses so naturally I wanted to go into healthcare and help underserved populations, especially my community in Bethel. My background and prior work experience as the Office Manager for the State of Alaska's Public Health Nursing has also inspired me to go into nursing - and my interest heightened even more so during the Covid-19 pandemic."*



L-R, CNA students - Justine Ayagalria, Ashley Evan, and Natalia Anaver learning the ropes of administering infant CPR



### NATALIA ANAVER (KIPNUK)

*"Attending this CNA program has been very informative. Our instructor Joan is very helpful and makes sure that we learn and practice our skills lab. I would certainly recommend this program to anyone interested in getting a good foundation to a career in healthcare."*

### JUSTINE AYAGALRIA (TUNTUTULIAK)

*"This CNA program has inspired me to learn and keep going towards my career goal. After completing my CNA program, I hope to work as a CNA and someday become a nurse at YKHC."*

## SOUTHEAST AHEC: ASK AND WE WILL COME!



Southeast AHEC added a new staff member this year and is now an office of two! Welcome to Cameron Young, Student Program Specialist, who has been busy becoming certified in MHFA, BLS, and Mandt De-escalation and joins Director, Mary McEwen in starting PATH Academies.

Variety and geography were the themes for the office in 2023. The center serves a large geographic region, from Yakutat to Metlakatla and have covered most of the territory by cars, planes, and boats, providing health care education. “Ask us and we will come,” is the center's informal motto and the requests are rolling in from Pelican School District to Bartlett Regional Hospital, from Sealaska Heritage to the University of Alaska Southeast. Southeast Alaskans are resilient and resourceful and Mary and Cameron are adept at “making things work” for all of the many unique needs of our geographic region.

### OTHER 2023 HIGHLIGHTS:

- 2 camps serving 38 middle and high school students
- Our first PATH Academy with 9 students
- 76 people trained in Mental Health First Aid (MHFA)
- 90 people trained in CPR or Basic Life Support
- 1 online MHFA in collaboration with an Interpersonal Communication class at UAS

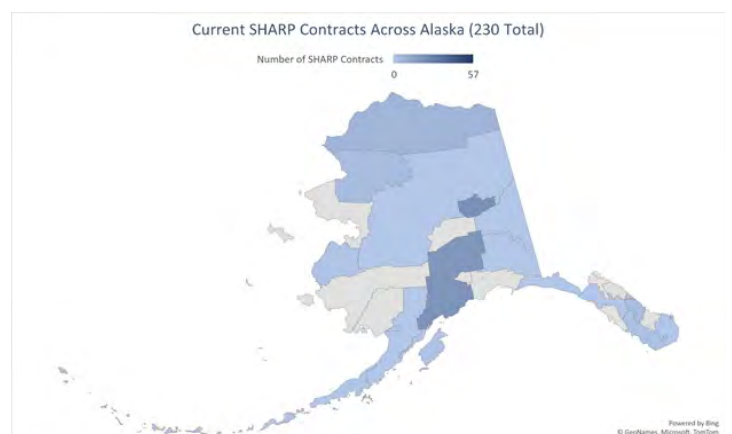


## FEATURED AHEC PARTNERSHIP -- SHARP

# SHARP

*Strengthening Healthcare Access  
Recruitment Program*

Alaska's Strengthening Healthcare Access Recruitment Program, SHARP, supports the health care workforce through student loan repayment and direct financial incentives. Alaska's AHEC and SHARP share similar goals: to increase the quality and access to healthcare, especially in rural and underserved areas. Alaska's AHEC is proud to partner and collaborate with SHARP. Gloria Burnett, Director of Alaska's AHEC Program Office, serves as Co-Chair for the SHARP Advisory Council and provides staff that directly supports SHARP through data management, communications, and marketing. Looking forward, the SHARP team, in partnership with Alaska's AHEC, will focus on recruitment efforts of healthcare professionals from other states to apply for the program, and ultimately live and work in Alaska.



## SOUTH CENTRAL AHEC: PATH ACADEMY FOR ENGLISH-LANGUAGE LEARNERS

The South Central Alaska AHEC (SC AHEC) serves some of the most populated and diverse communities in Alaska. “We focus on providing training and job placement services for members of underserved communities who are interested in working in healthcare,” said Teresa Novakovich, SC AHEC Director. “One way that we do this is through a partnership with the Anchorage Literacy Program, or ALP,” Novakovich shared. Working together, ALP and the SC AHEC held a Pre-apprenticeship Training in Healthcare (PATH) Academy for English-language learners October 30th – December 14th, 2023. Students met Monday through Thursday evenings for six weeks.

During the PATH Academy, participants earned certifications such as Basic Life Support CPR, Mental Health First Aid, Bloodborne Pathogens, and Mandt de-escalation training. In addition to these certifications, students gained knowledge of the healthcare industry in Alaska, job readiness skills, and expanded their English vocabulary and comprehension. Many of the participants had healthcare credentials from their home countries including degrees in pharmacology, Physician Assistant (PA), and Psychology.

SC AHEC Instructor Kayla Franklin shared, “We had an incredible group of 18 students who each had a unique interest and passion for supporting others. Many came to Alaska with invaluable experience in healthcare or counseling from their home countries, and we are currently working with many of them to find employment in related fields. Supporting English language learners is empowering and essential, as they have unique knowledge and experience that will benefit our community in many ways. I learned something new from them each and every day we had class!”



## NORTHWEST AHEC: COW EYE DISSECTIONS!

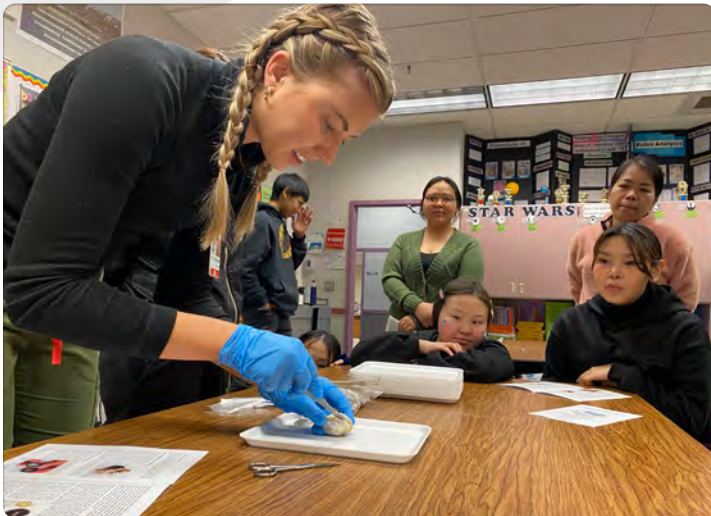


The Northwest AHEC this season has aimed to bring their village-based travel to the next level by not only providing youth with American Red Cross certifications, but additionally partnering with Norton Sound Health Corporation's (NSHC) Optometry department to perform Cow Eye dissections in village classrooms.

These experiences provide students with hands-on experience interacting with the medical sciences with an in-region expert. This gives students the opportunity to see firsthand what the inside of a body looks like and perhaps consider this as a future career. Additionally, it gives the students and optometrists an opportunity to connect on a relational level which builds a stronger connection and therefore creates the potential for better health outcomes.

This is not without challenges. Coordination between the Northwest AHEC, NSHC's optometry department, shipping materials, and making this all happen during a blizzard was an outstanding display of logistical maneuvering. However, the result of engaged students who are excited about health sciences is worth the investment.

The pilot of this program occurred in Gambell, Alaska, on St. Lawrence island in the Bering sea. The Northwest AHEC plans to continue this style of project with other departments and regional villages in 2024.





## INTERIOR AHEC: EQUIPPING INTERIOR ALASKA'S WORKFORCE

Interior AHEC has moved from Chief Andrew Isaac Health Center (CAIC) to the Education and Indigenous Learning department within Client Development at Tanana Chiefs Conference. TCC and the Interior AHEC have identified 3 main goals for delivering programming to TCC stakeholders: Preparing a diverse, culturally competent primary care workforce that can address the needs of the communities TCC serves; Improving workforce distribution through the nation, particularly among rural and underserved areas and populations; Developing and maintaining a health care workforce that is prepared to deliver high quality care in a transforming health care delivery system with an emphasis on rural and underserved areas and communities.



TCC staff, as well as other community members throughout Fairbanks, participated in Adult Mental Health First Aid trainings offered by Interior AHEC staff. These trainings occurred in July and December. These trainings will continue to be held for staff and community members throughout the year.

In 2023, CAIHC significantly increased the number of student rotations from previous years and secured rotations within rural communities. Students on rotation have been able to participate in the Blanket Exercise, led by TCC staff, to have a better understanding of patient population and history of the region.

Interior AHEC and TCC Education and Indigenous Learning will continue to collaborate and provide needed educational opportunities for people throughout the TCC region to bolster healthcare workforce demands.

## STAFF RECOGNIZED AT NATIONAL AHEC CONFERENCE

In June, Alaska AHEC staff and directors traveled to Salt Lake City for the 2023 NAO Biennial Conference. The Alaska AHEC Program Office would like to shine a much deserved spotlight on two hard working AHEC Center Directors. Olivia Bridges and Vincent P. Villella each received awards for their dedication to their unique and remote AHEC centers and programs.

Olivia, director of the Southwest AHEC, was awarded the Christina Holmes Emerging AHEC Leader Award, NAO's most recent legacy award, created in honor of Christina Holmes who dedicated over 25 years of her life toward AHEC's mission. Olivia's dedication, leadership, and resourcefulness have made a significant impact on the Alaska AHEC program and the communities she serves, exemplifying the qualities embodied by Christina Holmes.

Vincent, director of the Northwest AHEC based in Nome, was awarded the Andy Nichols Award for Social Justice. This award honors Dr. Andrew W. Nichols, who pursued justice and health for all, especially the disadvantaged. Vincent's work aims to inspire future healthcare professionals, particularly in the most vulnerable villages, while respecting traditional ways of knowing. He collaborates with local entities and travels extensively to ensure access to resources and training opportunities.

A big congratulations to both Olivia and Vincent!





## 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>TERRI DOUGHFMAN-BILLING</b>	<i>Assistant Director of Nursing, Maniilaq Health Center</i>
<b>AMY CARLOUGH</b>	<i>Wellness Services Administrator, Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association, Inc.</i>
<b>JENNIFER NIXON</b>	<i>Director, Workforce Development and Health Equity, Alaska Primary Care Association</i>
<b>JEANNIE MONK</b>	<i>Senior Program Officer, Alaska State Hospitals and Nursing Homes Association</i>
<b>MELISSA REED</b>	<i>Assistant Professor/Grant Manager, University of Alaska Anchorage School of Nursing</i>
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