

SEARHC healthbeat

SouthEast Alaska Regional Health Consortium
a bi-monthly newsletter from your partner in health

Popular Physician Retires



Dr. Fred Chu retired this summer for health reasons, after serving on the Juneau Medical Center staff for more than 17 years.

"Dr. Chu was very popular with patients, especially with the elders," said Dr. Janice Sheufelt, medical director at the SEARHC Juneau Medical Center. *"He was a great listener and always showed the greatest respect for patients. He was well connected to the Native culture."* Chu is an adopted member of the Kaagwaantaan clan. ❖

Find it at www.searhc.org

Accessing our on-line directory

Next time you need to find the phone or fax number for a SEARHC office, program or service, try going on line to: www.searhc.org.

Our on-line directory includes contact information for SEARHC operations in Sitka and Juneau, as well as in the outlying communities. To find our on-line directory, go to www.searhc.org and click on the **"About SEARHC"** link on our home page.

Klukwan welcomes new, more accessible clinic



"I'll never have to climb up those stairs again," said SEARHC board member Evelyn Hotch at the late July dedication of the new Klukwan Health Center. She was referring to the notorious outside stairwell that she and other Klukwan residents had to navigate to access the previous, second floor clinic that was located above the ANS Hall. *"Anyone who could climb those steps wasn't really sick enough to be seen at the clinic,"* joked SEARHC board chair Jan Hill.

The new facility is located in a remodeled, single-story house. The reconstruction work was performed by local Native workers.

On hand for the clinic dedication was the SEARHC board, SEARHC executive staff and Haines medical staff. They joined members of the Chilkat Indian Village council and village residents for the ribbon-cutting ceremony. The dedication was held in conjunction with the quarterly SEARHC board meeting, which was held in Klukwan.

"This event represents a five-year of collaboration involving SEARHC, the community, the Denali Commission, the Rasmuson Foundation and the Tlingit-Haida Regional Housing Authority," said SEARHC President Ken Brewer. ❖

New program will help Native patients avoid or delay diabetes

A recent national study shows that people can prevent diabetes by making a few lifestyle changes. Sponsored by the National Institutes of Health, the study found that nearly 60 percent of those who were diagnosed with prediabetes were actually able to keep themselves free from the disease by meeting certain food and physical activity goals.

People are diagnosed with prediabetes when their blood sugar levels are higher than normal, but not high enough for full blown diabetes.

SEARHC is one of 36 healthcare facilities in the nation to put these study results to the test by offering a lifestyle change program specially tailored to Native people. Beginning this fall, SEARHC will invite Juneau and Sitka beneficiaries who have been diagnosed with prediabetes and are age 18 and older to join the program. The recruitment kick-off event will occur in early October at the ANB/ANS Grand Camp Convention. In January, program participants will begin weekly group sessions and monthly lifestyle coaching appointments that are designed to help them meet their physical activity, nutrition and weight management goals.

"This is a great opportunity for those who are most at risk for progressing to

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HealthBeat is produced every two months by the SEARHC Corporate Communications department for SEARHC patients. To be added or removed from our mailing list, or to offer comments or questions, please contact the Corporate Communications office at 907-463-4067.

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An important message from the President



The Alaska Dental Society and the American Dental Association recently sponsored TV and newspaper ads that take aim against Alaska's Dental Health Aide program. Many people across the state who saw the ads are expressing concern.

Be assured that SEARHC provides high quality dental care to Native families across Southeast Alaska. In addition to operating state-of-the-art dental clinics in Juneau, Sitka, Klawock and Haines, SEARHC regularly sends dentists and dental hygienists to rural Southeast Alaska communities to perform routine dental care on adults and children. SEARHC has initiated a Dental Health Aide program to improve care to the communities we serve. Modeled after Alaska's very successful Community Health Aide program, SEARHC's Dental Health Aide program trains a community member to help provide quality oral health care.

The Dental Health Aides undergo extensive professional training and are closely supervised by a SEARHC dentist. In villages that cannot support a full-time dentist, Dental Health Aides can make all the difference.

The SEARHC dental program provides up-to-date dental care for Southeast Alaska's Native people by using a comprehensive network of professionals and skilled technicians. Working together, they provide rural residents access to quality dental care.

Ken Brewer

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type 2 diabetes, because participants can learn how to delay and possibly prevent the onset of the disease," said Susan Hoyt, SEARHC diabetes program coordinator.

The nutrition-related goals will focus on low-fat and high-fiber foods. The physical activity goals will focus on achieving 150 minutes a week -- or 30 minutes a day, five days a week -- by activities such as moderate-paced walking. Participants will also be encouraged to participate in SEARHC physical activity programs to help reach their activity goals. Every six months, participants will receive a medical re-evaluation, so they will always have current information about their prediabetes status. Program participants will continue to receive support after they have completed an initial series of group meetings and coaching sessions.

Hoyt said she hopes SEARHC patients who have been diagnosed with prediabetes will take advantage of the new program. "The message that we're trying to deliver to Native people is that you don't have to get diabetes," she said.

To register or to receive more information, please contact:

- Walleen Whitson in Sitka at 966-8916.
- Sarah Paddock in Juneau at 364-4453. ❖

What is prediabetes?

Prediabetes is a condition people have before they get type II diabetes, which is often called adult-onset diabetes because people sometimes don't become diabetic until they are adults. In prediabetes, your blood sugar is above normal, but not quite high enough to be actual diabetes. People who have prediabetes often don't know they have it because they don't yet have any of the usual symptoms of diabetes.

The only way to know for sure whether you have prediabetes is to have a blood test at your local clinic. It is a simple test. It is a good idea to have it done, especially if you are Alaska Native and are either overweight or have relatives who have diabetes.

It is very important to know whether you are prediabetic because with the help of the SEARHC diabetes program, you can learn to lower your risk of developing diabetes.

Protect your smoked fish from spoilage

When smoking some of that fish you caught this summer, remember that smoked fish still has some moisture in it, so it needs to be refrigerated to keep it from spoiling. Smoking fish is different from the traditional Native practice of drying fish to preserve it.

Dry fish, or náayadi, is like jerky; it has all the moisture removed and can be stored in any cool, dry place for long periods of time. If you want to keep your smoked fish for more than a few days, you'll need to freeze or can it.

According to Libby Watanabe, chief dietitian at Mt. Edgecumbe Hospital, three conditions are needed for spoilage to occur in meat or fish: moisture, air, and above-freezing temperatures. The higher the temperature, the faster the spoilage can occur. "One of the best modern ways to keep fish safe and fresh is to vacuum seal it in airtight bags and put it in the freezer," she noted.

Watanabe said that Native people historically have been very respectful in the way they handle fish. "That respect is still important today in the way we keep the fish fresh and clean when it is being prepared for eating or preserving."

Here are Watanabe's tips for handling fish to avoid spoilage:

- Always keep fish chilled when not working on it.
- Clean fish very thoroughly, making sure you remove all blood and internal organs and wash it down completely.
- Thaw out frozen fish in cold water or in the refrigerator. You may also thaw fish using your microwave oven. Do not thaw frozen fish by leaving it out on the counter or putting it under hot water because the outer portion will thaw quickly and make that part subject to spoilage while the inner portion is still thawing. ❖

Smoked Salmon and Noodle Soup

Modified from "Betty Crocker's Diabetes Cookbook"

5 Servings

Ingredients:

- 1 pound smoked salmon, cut into 1 - inch pieces
- 2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 2 teaspoons finely chopped gingerroot
- 2 cans (14 oz. each) chicken broth
- 2 cups water
- 2 tablespoons soy sauce
- 2 cups uncooked fine egg noodles (4 ounces)
- 1 medium carrot, sliced (1/2 cup)
- 1 small red bell pepper, chopped (1/2 cup)
- 2 cups fresh spinach leaves

Directions:

1. Spray a 3-quart saucepan with cooking spray; heat over medium-high heat. Sauté garlic and gingerroot 3-5 minutes.
2. Stir in broth, water and soy sauce. Heat to boiling; reduce heat. Simmer uncovered 5 minutes. Stir in noodles, carrot and bell pepper. Simmer uncovered 10 minutes or until noodles are tender.
3. Stir in smoked salmon and spinach; cook until heated through.

Nutrient Information:

- 1 serving provides:
- 235 calories
 - 9 grams fat
 - 1160 milligrams sodium
 - 15 grams carbohydrate
 - 2 grams fiber
 - 70 milligrams cholesterol
 - 26 grams protein

Food Exchanges:

- 1 starch
- 3 very lean meat
- 1 fat

Patient Tip: To get served quickly, make an appointment

The SEARHC medical clinic staff can better meet your health care needs when you make an appointment ahead of time, rather than just showing up and hoping for the best. In times of a medical emergency, the situation does not always allow time for an advanced appointment.

Here's why we can serve you better when you schedule your routine visits:

- We can arrange for you to see the provider who you normally see and who knows you best. We can also try to book the right appointment length.
- We can pull your chart and have it ready for your provider in advance.
- Lab tests and other support services can be scheduled in advance. Walk-in patients sometimes need to come back the next day for such support services.
- Your waiting time is likely to be much shorter.
- Even if you have an urgent problem and need to come to the clinic that same day, if possible, it's best to call to let us know you are coming because:
 - ◆ Staff will be able to have your chart ready. (If our phone line is busy, please leave us a message that you are coming and include your date of birth, so we can pull your chart.)
 - ◆ Sometimes we have last-minute cancellations and can actually get you a scheduled appointment for that same day.
 - ◆ Sometimes we can help you over the phone so you don't need to make an unnecessary trip to the clinic.

When you are unable to make your scheduled appointment, please call the clinic to cancel so that staff can make the time slot available to another patient.

Golf Tournament benefits Native healthcare



SEARHC Team "Alder Pod": L-R Bob Wastell, Lola Young PA, Dr. Cate Buley, and Sara White RN

Fifty-two golfers helped raise \$3,558 to benefit Native health at the second annual SEARHC Juneau Medical Center Charity Golf Tournament. Community members and out-of-town visitors joined SEARHC employees who responded to the call to "swing for healthcare" and raise funds for The SEARHC Foundation.

The foursome of Bill Andrews, Mike Rose, Mike Belknap and Bob Winters took the first-place trophy.

"The huge turnout and the money raised shattered the goals we had set," said tournament organizer Alan Travasso, a SEARHC Juneau Medical Center physical therapy aide. Participation nearly doubled that of last year's tournament.

In accepting the donation from Travasso at the end of the tournament, SEARHC Foundation executive director Cheryl Eldemar said, "We're honored that Alan and his fellow employees choose to hold this event to benefit The SEARHC Foundation. Every participant can feel good about being a part of the tournament because it encourages healthy activity, fun, philanthropy and raises public awareness of a worthwhile cause." To date, more than 340 patients from 16 Southeast Alaska communities have received assistance from The SEARHC Foundation totaling over \$140,000.

Event sponsors included GMAC Mortgage Corporation, Goldbelt/Mt. Roberts Tramway, Play It Again Sports, Wells Fargo Bank Alaska, AT&T Alascom, the Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes of the City and Borough of Juneau, the Juneau Empire, SEARHC and First National Bank Alaska. ❖

All-ages event brought Juneau families out for a day of fun

Several hundred members of the Juneau community joined SEARHC staff at Twin Lakes in mid-July for the SEARHC-sponsored Family Fun Day. The event was held to encourage family fun and physical activity. Picnic foods, games, canoe races and Native dancing rounded out the day of fun.

"The big turnout shows how the Native community really likes family events like this," said SEARHC health promotions staffer Christa Lott.



SEARHC offered a barbeque lunch and a day of outdoor activities for all ages. Singing and drumming by the Woosh Ja Een dance group began the day's events. In addition to the canoe races, the day was packed with classic picnic activities, including an Eagles versus Ravens tug-a-war, three-legged races and board races. Adults who had never been in a canoe had a chance to learn first-hand to paddle safely and work as a team.

The SEARHC Family Fun Day was supported by Tlingit and Haida Central Council, Costco, Tlingit-Haida Regional Housing Authority, Coca-Cola, Jerry's Meats, KINY-AM, Safeway and Goldbelt, Inc. ❖



Around the Consortium

Sitka

Over the next two years, SEARHC will add two family practice physicians and two mid-level practitioners to the Mt. Edgecumbe Hospital medical staff. Outpatient clinic manager Phyllis Hill hopes to have two of the new providers on board by the end of the year. Over the next year, patients should see an improvement in the availability of clinic appointments and a reduction in waiting time for urgent care clinic visits, she said.

Juneau

Juneau medical director Dr. Janice Shefelt reminds patients that the SEARHC Juneau Medical Center is open on weekends for patients who need urgent primary care. Limited pharmacy and lab services are also available. Except for holidays, the clinic is open for "walk-in" visits Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sundays from noon to 4 p.m. Dr. Shefelt stresses that the purpose of the weekend hours is to serve those whose medical needs are urgent. Patients should come in no later than an hour before the scheduled closing time.

Following renovations, the former SEARHC Juneau medical clinic building has reopened. The first floor of the building is now home to an expanded behavioral health department, the Juneau health promotions staff and the

WIC office. The second-floor dental clinic has doubled in size and now features state-of-the-art dental equipment and more specialty services. An open house event, during which the public will be invited to tour the new facility, is scheduled for September 28.

Haines

Physical therapist Marnie Hartman has joined the Haines Health Center staff to implement its new physical therapy program. Dr. Hartman treats patients with orthopedic injuries, developmental disabilities, post-surgical rehabilitation and chronic or acute pain. This fall, she will begin an aquatic therapy program at the Haines pool. She also plans to offer home visits and field clinics at the Klukwan Health Center.

Klawock

Alicia Roberts Medical Center director Cindy Gamble reports the clinic's two new wings will be completed in time for a late September open house. The additions, which double the size of the clinic, house the new emergency room, the extended stay unit, and behavioral health and dental suites.

In other ARMC news, medical director Dr. Matthew Dinon hopes to improve doctor-patient relationships by having as many patients as possible assigned to an individual primary care provider.

Kake

Nurse Practitioner Pornson Linton recently joined the Kake Health Center's medical staff as the clinic's sec-

ond midlevel provider. Prior to coming to Kake, Linton worked at a non-profit health clinic in Texas for 13 years. She says that her experience in Texas as an emergency room nurse has prepared her for the great variety of emergencies and urgent cases that she must handle in a rural Alaska clinic. "You have to be able to respond to every kind of case without any help nearby," she said. Linton has also worked as an OB and family practice nurse.

Angoon

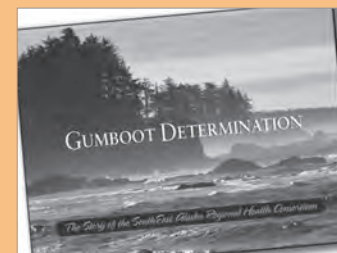
The Angoon clinic has recently launched a new Seven Circles substance abuse prevention project with the hiring of two prevention specialists. Brendan Cullum is the clinic's new prevention coordinator and high school student Samantha Williams is the new youth coordinator. The two are preparing for the reopening of the teen center in its new quarters in the center of town.

Doris Williams also recently joined the clinic staff as the local coordinator for the STEPS Project—a new regional program that is helping SEARHC communities be more efficient and effective in their health promotion efforts.

Hydaburg

The clinic is reactivating its community wellness program and has hired Louise Travis as its Community Wellness Advocate. In related news, clinic staff participated in the raising of the Wellness Totem Pole in July. The pole carved by David "Joe" Frisby, husband of clinic health aide Anna Frisby, promotes wellness and sobriety in Hydaburg.

A great gift idea! Gumboot Determination, the story of the SouthEast Alaska Regional Health Consortium, is now available for purchase.



"Frieda Damus remembers the day SEARHC became a reality: 'Five members of the Native Board of Health signed the incorporation papers: Nelson Frank, Mary Jones, Ethel Lund, Trudy Wolfe and myself. Bob Willard was there. It was Bob who inspired us to incorporate. He wrote the first bylaws and was the one who practically insisted that we incorporate. He had such a vision of the future.'" -- From Gumboot Determination: The story of the Southeast Alaska Regional Health Consortium (p. 71)

All proceeds from the sale of the book go to benefit The SEARHC Foundation.

Soft-cover books are available for a minimum donation of \$20; hard-cover books are available more a minimum donation of \$40.

To order by mail: Please send check and your mailing address to SEARHC Foundation, 3245 Hospital Drive, Juneau, AK 99801
Make checks payable to The SEARHC Foundation

To download an order form: Visit www.searhc.org (Click on the link under "Hot Topics")

To order by phone (or for more information): Please call (907) 463-4673.

Healthcare benefits: What students going out of state should know

If you are a SEARHC beneficiary who is headed out of state to attend school this fall, you may be eligible to have your health-care paid for by Indian Health Service contract health services funding. Here are some tips to help you:

- Medical and dental care for Southeast Alaska Natives who study out of state is paid for by the Alaska Native Medical Center in Anchorage, not SEARHC.
- When you need medical care, you must first contact ANMC Contract Health Services department for authorization. When you need dental care you must first contact the ANMC dental program. Both of these offices can be reached by calling 1-800-478-1636 toll free.
- If you have a medical emergency and must receive immediate care, you should notify ANMC within 72 hours to ensure payment for the services you received.
- To avoid a delay in getting the services you need, before school begins ask the school registrar's office to send ANMC an official letter that verifies that you are a full-time student and that your permanent address is still in Alaska. Please send this information to Alaska Native Medical Center/ATTN: ANC-CHS, 4315 Diplomacy Dr., Anchorage, Alaska 99508.
- You also need to supply proof of when you left Alaska and when you expect to return; a copy of an airline or ferry ticket is acceptable for this purpose. ❖

StrongWomen member makes fitness look great



It took some major life changes to get Adela Florendo off the couch and into the gym. Before that, she described her fitness program as sitting with the remote control. "My thumb got a real work out," she said jokingly.

By her 50th birthday, her priorities changed. "I started thinking about my own health issues. All my kids were

out of the house so I finally had time for me," she said with a smile. Adela started her road back to fitness by lifting weights on her own, but she missed the fellowship of other women.

During a routine SEARHC check up, she learned that her weight, blood pressure and cholesterol levels put her at risk for future health problems. Not one to take this kind of news lying down, Adela joined the SEARHC WISEWOMAN program, which – through a series of fun activities and classes -- teaches women to reduce their risk for heart disease by eating right and being more physically active.

As a WISEWOMAN member, Adela received discounts for memberships and passes to local fitness facilities to make exercise more affordable. Eventually, her regular physical activity included yoga, weight lifting, volley-

ball and water aerobics. She said that exercising in the pool is a great way to get a workout that is gentle on knees and joints.

Last April, she joined the SEARHC StrongWomen program and now enjoys a fun, challenging weight-training program along with other women enrolled in the program. The class is held twice a week at the SEARHC Juneau Medical Center.

Over time, Adela lost 30 pounds and got her blood pressure and cholesterol under control. Her favorite part about being in shape is that she has more energy. "I used to sleep till seven and go to work at eight. Now I'm in the gym by five-thirty." She also noted that her legs don't tire as quickly. "When I play volleyball, now I can hit the ball a lot further."

When asked what advice she has for others, she said "Get up and start moving! It's the only thing you can do." ❖

How do I sign up?

Eligibility: Twelve hour-long Strong-Women classes are offered on a regular basis for women age 30 and older. In Juneau, the program is limited to women age 30-64, who are SEARHC beneficiaries and up to date in their WISEWOMAN enrollment.

Signing up: In all communities, eligible women may sign up for the class by contacting the local StrongWomen coordinator in advance.

StrongMen: The diabetes prevention program this fall is expanding SEARHC strength training classes to include all those with diabetes—both men and women. Sitka has already begun a co-ed StrongWomen/StrongMen class for those who have been told by their SEARHC provider that they have diabetes. Several other communities will follow this lead later in the fall.

Fall classes and contact numbers:

Sitka

Contact: Janice Huls, 966-8739, or Martha Pearson, 966-8783 **Classes:** StrongWomen beginning October 3. Co-ed StrongWomen/StrongMen will begin in October.

Angoon

Contact: Doris Williams, 788-4616, or Doreen McClusky 788-4637 **Classes:** StrongWomen will begin in September. Co-ed or StrongMen will be offered, if there is interest.

Haines

Contact: Pam Sloper, 766-6367 **Classes:** StrongWomen beginning August 29.

Juneau

Contact: Gail Waltzer, 364-4451, or Linda Koski, 364-4450 **Classes:** StrongWomen (Please call for start-up date). Co-ed StrongWomen/StrongMen will be offered, if there is interest (**Contact:** Rocky Plotnick, 364-4452).

Kake

Contact: Georgie Reese, 785-3260 **Classes:** StrongWomen will be offered in the fall (Please call for dates). Co-ed or StrongMen will be offered, if there is interest.

Klawock

Contact: Brenda Isaacs, 755-4983 **Classes:** StrongWomen will begin in the fall (Please call for dates).

Move over Mr. Universe: SEARHC introduces weight training for women



If you are a woman age 30 or older and looking for an easy, fun way to get into better shape, the popular new SEARHC StrongWomen program may be just what you've been waiting for.

StrongWomen is a strength training class that uses a series of easy-to-learn free-weight exercises. "It's been hugely successful!" exclaimed Janice Huls, who has been leading classes in Sitka since early this year. "We expected about 10 or 12 women to sign up, and we already have 37 enrollees, with about 15 coming each session."

Sponsored by the SEARHC WISEWOMAN and Diabetes Prevention programs, StrongWomen is suitable for women regardless of their current level of physical activity. "Participants can start with just as much or as little weight as they want and gradually challenge themselves to become stronger," said Huls. The program is being offered at SEARHC facilities in Juneau, Sitka and Haines. Plans are in the works to expand to Kake, Angoon and Klawock by fall.

"Many of the women in my class have never done any weight training before and they're really getting into it," said Gail Waltzer, who leads the class at the SEARHC Juneau Medical Center. "It's the best attended fitness class we've done yet."

The StrongWomen strength training program was developed by Dr. Miriam Nelson of Tufts University, author of the several books on women and fitness. Several SEARHC staff members, including Huls and Waltzer, attended a StrongWomen teacher training session with Dr. Nelson in Anchorage last year.

Dr. Nelson's research shows that strength is a critical factor in living a healthier, more active life. According to Nelson, a program of strength training improves bone density, reduces falls, lessens arthritis symptoms, increases flexibility and strength, and lowers the risk of diabetes and heart disease. It also increases metabolism, which helps with weight control.

Huls noted that many women attend her class because they want to maintain their strength and independence as they get older. "We had one woman who was 84!" Huls said. "We are already finding that older participants are now able to do things around the house they were previously unable to do." She reported that many of her students are enjoying the class not only because they see results -- ranging from weight loss to reduced blood sugar -- but also because it's a fun group activity. ❖