

## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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### Sitka Employee Wellness Coalition honors Sitka Tribe

**SITKA, March 7, 2008** — The Sitka Employee Wellness Coalition has honored Sitka Tribe of Alaska with its Well Workplace of the Month award for March. The monthly award recognizes the efforts of Sitka organizations that promote employee wellness within their worksites.

A group of Sitka Tribe of Alaska (STA) employees made a New Year's resolution to make 2008 a great year in wellness, and so far STA's motivated employee wellness team is doing just that. The team, called SWEAT (STA Wellness Encourages an Active Tribe) recruited staff from all of STA's different departments, set standard monthly meeting times, elected Crystal Duncan as chairperson and Paulette Moreno as vice chairperson, and created a new page highlighting the team's many offerings for the employee Web site.

"Our SWEAT team had a meeting where we planned out events for 2008 with two barriers in mind," Duncan said. "The first barrier is time. Employees, as well as our SWEAT team members, do not have a lot of time to devote to activities outside of their job. The second barrier was money. With limited funding, we tried to plan programs that would not require a large investment of time and money. As such, we are partnering with a number of community organizations, including SEARHC. We have managed to set up monthly programs for staff that hopefully will make a difference in their overall wellness."

The employee wellness team planned a very complete wellness calendar for the year, which was the result of a needs and interest survey completed by 89 percent of STA staff. The team selected monthly themes, such as the importance of staying hydrated for March and physical activity during the workday for April. Other themes include traditional healing, tobacco cessation, healthy eating, relaxation and diabetes prevention. To remind employees to stay hydrated, this month all employees received a bottle of Sheet'ká Heen water in their mailbox along with a package of Crystal Light and a crossword puzzle about hydration. In April employees will receive an extra 15 minutes at lunch on Fridays so they can take walks through the totem trails at Sitka National Historical Park.

"As one of the outstanding advocates for community and tribal wellness, Sitka Tribe of Alaska has been dedicated to the health of our community since its beginnings," Moreno said. "Our employees enjoy the support of our tribal council and upper management; as such we are continuing to focus on and succeed in tobacco cessation, eating healthy, physical activity and traditional healing, to name a few areas."

The Sitka Employee Wellness Coalition is a community-wide organization promoting workplace wellness and the group is open to all Sitka workplaces interested in designing and implementing effective employee wellness plans. The coalition was created as a follow-up to the Working Well in Alaska employee wellness training seminar held in September in Sitka, and is co-sponsored by the SouthEast Alaska Regional Health Consortium (SEARHC), Sitka Community Hospital and the SEARHC Steps to a Healthier SE Alaska program. The coalition's next meeting takes place from 3-4:30 p.m. on Thursday, March 13, at Harrigan Centennial Hall.

For more information on the Sitka Employee Wellness Coalition, contact Doug Osborne of SEARHC Health Promotion at 966-8734 or Elisabeth Crane of Sitka Community Hospital at 747-1721.

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