



**Alaska Native
Tribal Health Consortium**

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December 11, 2008

First US-trained Dental Health Aide Therapists graduate

When: 2:00 p.m., Friday December 12

Where: Conference Rooms 1 & 2, Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC)
400 Ambassador Drive (west of Alaska Native Medical Center, accessible via Elmore Drive)

What: Keynote Address: Anthony Brusca, DDS, DENTEX Faculty

Presentations by:

Ron Nagel, DDS, MPH, ANTHC Dental Consultant
Ruth Ballweg, MPA, PA-C, Program Dir., Univ. of Washington, School of Medicine
Mary Williard, DDS, Clinical Site Director, DENTEX Training Center
Don Kashevaroff, ANTHC CEO

This event is to recognize the nation's first ten US trained Dental Health Aide Therapist students. It celebrates the graduation of four students who have completed the full two-year training (one year each in Anchorage and Bethel). Upon certification, these four Alaska graduates will join ten Dental Health Aide Therapists who trained in New Zealand and are now already practicing in rural Alaska.

These four students, who will be receiving certificates of completion, are Danielle Boston of Chistochina, Christopher Evan of Russian Mission, Daniel Kennedy of Klawock, and Sheena Nelson of Yakutat.

The event also celebrates the transition of six students who have completed the one-year Anchorage-based training and are headed to the *Yuut Elitnaurviat* (people's learning center) Dental Training Clinic in Bethel for their second year of training. These students are Tatiana Barraclough of Atka; Bernadette Charles of Mountain Village; Tambre Guido, sponsored by YKHC; Ooyuan Nagaruk of Elim; Marian Petla of New Stuyahok; and Ben Steward of Seward.

The first year of training includes pre-clinical courses and patient care. During the second year, students begin to manage their own patients under the guidance of a dentist. After graduating from the program, students must also successfully complete a 400-hour preceptorship before they can be recommended for certification by the Community Health Aide Program Certification Board.

A note on the significance of this event

Although more than 50 countries worldwide recognize Dental Therapists as integral members of their dental workforce, the Alaska Tribal Health System is the first entity in the United States to successfully introduce this type of dental provider.

Monday, January 16, 2007, was not only Martin Luther King Day, but the start of the Dental Health Aide Therapist training center. Based in Anchorage, the training center was created by the

Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium and University of Washington DENTEX program. Controversy surrounded the program, including a lawsuit to bring it to a halt. Thus, it seemed fitting that the program launched on a day commemorating a man who surmounted serious controversy and numerous challenges to achieve great success.

Before the Alaska center opened, Dental Health Aide Therapist students traveled to New Zealand for their training. Costs and attrition were high, and traveling so far from home was hard on the students. Training in Alaska made more sense.

Special thanks and deep appreciation go to the ANTHC staff who worked with staff from the University Of Washington School Of Medicine's MEDEX Northwest Physician Assistant Training Program to begin the Alaska DHAT training program.

This graduation will mark another historic day in the US and a clear victory for the people of rural Alaska who will benefit from the services provided by these four new DHATs. This victory is possible because tribal leadership came together to create a local solution to a local problem. It is also possible because of positive partnerships with academic leaders such as the University of Washington, the University of Kentucky and the University of Alaska Anchorage, and partnerships with forward thinking funders like Kellogg Foundation, Rasmuson Foundation, Murdock Charitable Foundation, Bethel Community Services Foundation, Paul G. Allen Foundation, and the Denali Commission.

Thank you and congratulations to all who have stayed the course and seen this meaningful and valuable program to a successful beginning.