APHA thanks senators who stood up for public health, urges bipartisan cooperation

Statement from Georges C. Benjamin, MD, executive director, American Public Health Association

Washington, D.C., July 28, 2017—"I and the American Public Health Association would like to thank all senators who voted early this morning to protect public health and access to health care. The Senate’s "skinny repeal" plan would have stripped health insurance from millions of Americans and devastated critical programs that receive funding through the Prevention and Public Health Fund, which provides key resources for preventing infectious and chronic disease and basic public health efforts like immunization. Thank you to all APHA members, Affiliates and partners who have gone the distance and volunteered their time working to improve the Affordable Care Act and opposing the many efforts to repeal and weaken it.

"This morning's vote, and votes to reject similar Senate proposals to weaken and repeal the ACA, represent a victory for public health. However, threats to our nation’s health infrastructure remain. The current administration and key members of Congress have made clear their intent to defund critical public health programs and turn back policies that work to make our nation healthier.

"We urge Congress, the administration and the public health community to advance bipartisan solutions to improve the ACA, prioritize prevention and to implement evidence-based policies to protect the public’s health."

APHA champions the health of all people and all communities. We strengthen the public health profession. We speak out for public health issues and policies backed by science. We are the only organization that combines a 145-year perspective, a broad-based member community and the ability to influence federal policy to improve the public’s health.

Visit us at www.apha.org.
Recruitment for the 2017-18 LEND Program

Contributed by Nancy A. Nix, MD, MPH&TM, MEd, CHES, Associate Professor of Public Health, University of Alaska Anchorage

Do you have colleagues who are interested in becoming leaders in the field of developmental disabilities and/or Autism Spectrum Disorder? Do you know individuals who want to gain skills and make connections in Alaska in her/his field? Please share this information with them.

Alaska LEND Without Walls provides graduate-level interdisciplinary leadership training for individuals who have a commitment to providing family-centered coordinated systems of health care and related services. The program aims to improve the health of infants, children, and adolescents who have (or at risk for) autism and other developmental disabilities. Completion of the training program results in a workforce credential and includes a stipend.

Graduate students and practicing professionals in the fields of nursing, public health, social work, psychology, special education, education, speech language pathology, occupational therapy, or medicine are invited to apply. We are also recruiting parents and family members of children with a developmental disability.

We accept applications each February and March for the Alaska LEND Without Walls Program that begins in the following Fall semester. Go to alaskalend.org and click on “Apply to LEND” to find out more.
2017 American Public Health Association (APHA) Annual Meeting and Expo

Attend the Conference in Atlanta!

Register by Aug. 10 and save up to $115! Registration has been open for over a month, and more than 1,500 peers are registered to attend APHA 2017 Annual Meeting & Expo! Multidisciplinary public health professionals will gather in Atlanta from Nov. 4-8 to learn and share the latest research and best practices. Join the excitement and register today.

Find out more about all of the sessions, events and activities taking place at the Annual Meeting.

Register now for Learning Institute courses and continuing education credits

The APHA 2017 Annual Meeting offers participants the opportunity to earn 19.5 continuing education (CE) contact hour credits in four disciplines: CME (physicians and non-physicians), CNE, CPH, CHES® Entry Level and MCHES® Advanced Level NCHEC credit. Up to 12 additional credits can be earned for attending the two day pre-convention learning institutes.

View the full course listing here, additional fees apply. Registration for the full meeting and the Learning Institutes is now open.

Stand with APHA to take action against the harmful health impacts of climate change.

The science is clear. Climate change is real, it is happening today and it profoundly affects our health. What we don’t always understand is how climate change is impacting our health – right now! We are seeing rising rates of climate-related health issues like asthma and allergies, respiratory disease, cholera, Zika, malaria and dengue – just to name a few. The good news is that when people understand the health impacts of climate change, they are more motivated to take action.

APHA declares 2017 the Year of Climate Change and Health. With the changes brought by the 2016 elections, now more than ever we need to raise awareness of the health impact of climate change and build a sense of urgency for action.

Join the Year of Climate Change and Health movement
Visit our website to learn more about how you can get involved, join our coalition activities and access resources.

Activities will culminate in November with APHA’s 2017 Annual Meeting and Expo — “Creating the Healthiest Nation: Climate Changes Health”.

The year of climate change and health
Join the movement!
National Presentations of Alaska Data

Contributed by David K. O’Brien, PhD, GISP, Alaska Cancer Registry, Alaska Division of Public Health

The following Alaska posters were presented at the annual conference of the North American Association of Central Cancer Registries last month in Albuquerque and are available online:

Time between breast cancer diagnosis and treatment among Alaska Native people
By Stacy Kelley, Gretchen Day, Christine DeCourtney, and Sarah Nash. Community Health Services, Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium

Mapping Alaska Stomach Cancer Incidence Relative to the Geographic Distribution of Races in the Statewide Population
By David O’Brien, Alaska Cancer Registry, Alaska Department of Health and Social Services

Finding "Zombies" in Your Database by Confirming Vital Status
By David O’Brien. Alaska Cancer Registry, Alaska Department of Health and Social Services

In addition to the conference posters, Alaska data was published in the following CDC report:

CDC Data Mapping Highlights Report Volume 8
Highlights from State Health Departments: Alaska, Arizona, New Jersey, North Dakota, and West Virginia; and Local Health Departments: California Counties- Merced and Stanislaus; Kansas Counties- Douglas, Johnson, and Wyandotte.
The Department of Health Sciences at the University of Alaska Anchorage celebrated National Public Health Week from April 3-9. The celebration included a week-long book and information display in the UAA/APU Consortium Library.

Starting off the week on Monday April 3, exhibitors were present at the library and included representatives from UAA Department of Health Sciences, Student Health and Counseling Center, and the Tobacco-Free Campaign Team as well as the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services – Section of Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Municipality of Anchorage Department of Health and Human Services, Alaska Public Health Association, Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium, and RurAL CAP.

UAA Chancellor Tom Case attended and talked with exhibitors.

The UAA College of Health Diversity Committee presented a film, *The Visitor*, followed by a discussion on immigration issues in the US. It was a successful week that brought health and wellness to the forefront!

The Instagram hashtag #AKpublichealth was promoted for anyone and everyone to post photos of "What is Public Health in Alaska?" and for folks to think about what public health is to them and within their communities.

Last but not least, ALPHA promoted and requested proclamations to bring awareness and support for public health. A total of seven proclamations were signed to support National Public Health Week 2017: From Governor Bill Walker and Mayors from Anchorage, Fairbanks, Homer, Kenai, Bethel, and Delta Junction!

**We thank everyone for all of their support! Until next year!**
Let’s Put #AKpublichealth on the Map!

Contributed by Tara Stiller, Community Development Manager—RuralCAP, University of Alaska Anchorage

Camai, my name is Tara Stiller and I am a UAA MPH student working on my Practicum Project for the completion of my degree. This spring semester I was gifted with an opportunity to participate in the Community Engaged Student Assistant program. I was partnered with the Alaska Public Health Association (ALPHA) and my task was to develop and promote an “Instagram” social media account.

The ALPHA Instagram account was developed to begin an ongoing campaign to support efforts of ALPHA and engage all Alaskans utilizing the #akpublichealth.

It may seem like an oxymoron for a millennial who was raised in the peak of social media communication, to create a hit Instagram account for ALPHA hand over the account at the end period of the project with a wave of followers and shares of the #akpublichealth.

While we had an initial boost of attention…it was difficult to continue to reach folks who did not use Instagram or did not know how to. Therefore, we created a flyer that provided folks on how to access Instagram and how to utilize the #akpublichealth applied to their images and was circulated through various listservs.

Next, we attempted to engage Instagram users with a specific call to action to all Alaskans asking the question- “What does public health in Alaska look like to you?” Using calls to action on social media inspires people to do just that. Such a great idea! Think about it, a photo journey from your target audience about what public health means to them in Alaska. You could almost use these as unfocused focus groups and see what your audience does with the resources you have provided.

The initial roll-out was during the National Public Health Week 2017 Celebration event, April 3rd, on the UAA campus. Currently, the #akpublichealth Instagram campaign has 31 followers and 10 posts. In order to continue the forward progress some next steps to continue the campaign are to:

Promote, promote, promote! There will be a continuation to distribute the outreach flyer to promote #akpublichealth and encourage photos to be posted. One recommendation is for the use of incentives. As much as we want to believe everyone cares about public health, sometimes you have to lead with a carrot. Keep posting! #akpublichealth

Quyanaa!

Tara
Brought to you by: Alaska Public Health Association

JOIN US!!!
Show us what Public Health in Alaska means to you!

1. Create and go to your Instagram account.

2. Post a pic to depict what public health in AK means to you.

3. Use the Hashtag! #AKpublichealth
   (i.e. type in #AKpublichealth in your photo caption)

4. Repeat steps 1. - 3.

5. BOOM!

Save the date!
NATIONAL PUBLIC HEALTH WEEK!
APRIL 3rd-9th, 2017

Thank you! Keep posting! Let's put #AKpublichealth on the map!
National Health Observances

Contributed by Janice Gray, RN, BSN, Alaska Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention Program Nurse Consultant II, Alaska Division of Public Health

Every month health care issues are recognized to increase awareness and hopefully improve health. Please visit the linked sites to learn more about these important topics and spread the word to your colleagues and the public.

Here are some of the many Health Observances coming up in the next few months:

May
- National Stroke Awareness Month
- National High Blood Pressure Education Month
- Melanoma/Skin Cancer Detection and Prevention Month
- Arthritis Awareness Month
- Mental Health Month
- National Physical Fitness and Sports Month
- National Bike to School Day (May 4)
- National Women’s Health Week (May 8-14)
- HIV Vaccine Awareness Day (May 18)
- World No Tobacco Day (May 31)

June
- National Scleroderma Awareness Month
- Men’s Health Month
- National Safety Month
- Fireworks Safety Month (June 1-July 4)
- Cataract Awareness Month
- Men’s Health Week (June 13-19)

July
- International Group B Strep Awareness Month
- World Hepatitis Day (July 28)

August
- National Breastfeeding Month
- National Health Center Week (August 7-13)
- National Immunization Awareness Month

September
- Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month
- National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month
- Fruits & Veggies—More Matters Month
- National Atrial Fibrillation Awareness Month
- Prostate Cancer Awareness Month
- World Alzheimer’s Month
- National Sickle Cell Month
- National Recovery Month
- National Preparedness Month
- National Traumatic Brain Injury Awareness Month
- National Suicide Prevention Week (Sept 5-11)

October
- National Breast Cancer Awareness Month
- National Domestic Violence Awareness Month
- Health Literacy Month
- National Bullying Prevention Month
- Mental Illness Awareness Week (Oct 2-8)
- World Food Day (Oct 16)

November
- American Diabetes Month
- COPD Awareness Month
- Lung Cancer Awareness Month
- National Alzheimer’s Disease Awareness Month
- Great American Smokeout (Nov 19)
- National Family Health History Day (Nov 24)

December
- World AIDS Day (Dec 1)
- National Influenza Vaccination Week (Dec 4-12)
Group A Streptococcus Outbreak and Response in Anchorage

Contributed by Emily Mosites, PhD, MPH, Epidemic Intelligence Service Officer, CDC Arctic Investigations Program, CDC/OPHSS/CSELS/DSEPD

In 2017, the public health community in Anchorage came together to respond to an outbreak of severe bacterial infections caused by Group A Streptococcus (GAS). People commonly carry GAS on their throat and skin without having any symptoms, but it can sometimes cause life-threatening invasive infections.

The Alaska Section of Epidemiology (SOE) and the CDC Arctic Investigation Program (AIP) routinely monitor the number of people who develop serious GAS infections, as well as the types of strains that are causing these infections. Beginning in July 2016, SOE and AIP identified an increase in the number of serious GAS infections caused by a rare strain in Anchorage. Most of these infections occurred in people who were homeless. This unusually high number of cases was declared an outbreak in August 2016.

In February 2017, SOE and AIP conducted a campaign to provide antibiotics to homeless people in Anchorage to help clear the bacteria from their skin and throats. A total of 65 volunteers from SOE, AIP, Providence Hospital, Southcentral Foundation, the Anchorage Quarantine Station, the Anchorage Department of Health and Human Services, and the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium helped with the campaign. Over the course of five days, volunteers visited 6 facilities and provided antibiotics to 391 people.

After the antibiotic campaign, the number of new invasive infections among homeless people decreased (see Figure 1). SOE and AIP will continue monitoring for new infections and respond as necessary.

Please see the State of Alaska Epidemiology Bulletin May 9, 2017 for more information.
2017 ALPHA Award Winners

The Alaska Public Health Association ALPHA awards were presented at the Health Summit on January 19, 2017.

★ Alaska Meritorious Health Service Award: Patricia Carr, MPH
★ Barbara Berger Excellence in Public Health Award: Thad Woodard, MD
★ ALPHA Award for Long Term Service: Bradley Whistler, DMD
★ Alaska Health Equity Award: Andrea Fenaughty, PhD
★ ALPHA Award for Short Term Service: Janice Gray, RN, BSN
★ Alaska Community Service Award for Health: Sunshine Community Center
★ Alaska Health Achievement Award: Captain Hans Brinke
★ President’s Award for Excellence in Public Health: Municipality of Anchorage Department of Health & Human Services

Congratulations to all the deserving winners!

Alaska Meritorious Health Service Award

Patricia Carr: Pat Carr is recognized in Alaska and nationally as a leader in rural health planning. Pat’s 21-year career with the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services has improved access to health care for all Alaskans by working on tobacco prevention and control, telemedicine, expanding rural health care access, and health care workforce development. Pat and her staff have aggressively pursued federal grants for primary care and rural health, tobacco control, health promotion, workforce development, and quality improvement. Pat has been a force to be reckoned with in the development of Alaska’s health care system. She has been a highly effective supervisor, mentor, and partner. Her strengths and abilities include collaboration, facilitation, program development, and strategic planning.

Barbara Berger “Excellence in Public Health” Award

Thad Woodward: Dr. Thad Woodard is a pediatrician at the Alaska Center for Pediatrics who specializes in asthma/allergies, parenting advice, development of the infant brain, long term effects of early experiences on physical and mental health, and patient education. Dr. Woodard also hosts “Line One: Your Health Connection”, a weekly live call-in radio program produced by Alaska Public Media for the past 16 years. Dr. Woodard has provided a venue for discussing important, relevant-to-Alaska, health topics with the general public. The show, combining a local knowledgeable host with topic experts and Alaskans across the state delivers high quality health information, in the broadest inclusive sense, free of charge to people in need throughout Alaska.

Awards were presented by:
Mary McEwen, ALPHA President
2017 ALPHA Award Winners

Alaska Health Equity Award

Andrea Fenaughty: Andrea Fenaughty has produced and contributed work that has served as the model for public health epidemiology and health promotion statewide. She has successfully communicated the important messages of prevention and healthy behavior to all audiences, from everyday consumers, to lawmakers, to healthcare professionals and business leaders. She has set a gold standard for professional reporting that reverberates through the Department of Health and Social Services at the State of Alaska. She helped to build the foundation for chronic disease epidemiology in our state, and she set a high bar for using data to inform our decisions, plan our programs, and improve the health of our fellow Alaskans.

ALPHA Award for Short Term Service

Janice Gray: Janice Gray serves on the ALPHA Development Committee as the primary producer, editor, and writer for the twice-yearly ALPHA Newsletter, which consistently provides timely and relevant news and information about the most current events related to public health in the state and in the nation. This award is given for her contributions to ALPHA in honor of her quality work and dedication.

ALPHA Award for Long Term Service

Bradley Whistler, DMD: Brad Whistler has been a member of ALPHA since 1992, is a former ALPHA president (1994-1996) and has served two terms, a total of seven years, on the ALPHA board of directors (1992-1997; 2004-2007). He also organized and coordinated 2 Alaska Health Summits and 1992 Alaska Data Conference. He received the ALPHA short-term service award 21 years ago. In 1984 he started his career in public health and for the past 32 years he has improved the health of thousands of Alaskans. He staffed Governor Hickel’s Executive Work Group on Health Care Reform. In the early 90s, he led a community process that included input from 500 Alaskans at the 1992 Health Summit and as the project coordinator Brad compiled all the recommendations into a 200 page document called Healthy Alaskans 2000. The list of accomplishments during his career is extensive. In addition to his outstanding work, he treats everyone with respect, is able to easily work with all the personalities involved in any group process, and is an excellent resource for information. His colleagues are impressed by his organization and the amount of information he brings to each project.
2017 ALPHA Award Winners

Alaska Community Service Award for Health

Sunshine Community Center: Sunshine is making a significant contribution to improving the health of Alaskans in the Upper Susitna region and beyond. Sunshine provides high-quality, comprehensive, culturally competent, healthcare services. The Clinic promotes prevention and early intervention and is a best practice model for the integration of primary and behavioral health for the entire State of Alaska. They have created unique programs, including behavioral health and opioid treatment. Sunshine is a resource for health education, community outreach, advocacy and support programs. Sunshine is truly the "little clinic that could." It is a model rural clinic, one that offers an approach to health care that recognizes and integrates physical, emotional and spiritual health, with the ultimate goal of a healthier community.

Alaska Health Achievement Award

Captain Hans Brinke: Alaska State Trooper Captain Hans Brinke has contributed to improving the health of Mat-Su residents through his outstanding leadership and dedication to the Mat-Su Crisis Intervention Team Coalition. This coalition is a network of first responders, emergency department doctors, court system staff, and mental health professionals. This coalition is developing tools for first responders to better handle crises that people are experiencing and provide the most appropriate disposition for those individuals. The coalition is also working to devise a system to better meet the needs of emergency department high utilizers to prevent further high utilization. Captain Brinke saw the need and had the foresight to recognize that first responders trained in mental health skills will improve both emergency and long-term services for those in need. Now all first responders in the Mat-Su are being trained in Mental Health First Aid.

President’s Award for 80 Years of Excellence in Public Health Services to the Citizens of Anchorage

Municipality of Anchorage Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS): The mission of DHHS is to be a leader and a partner promoting health and well-being in the Anchorage community. Often referred to as the “best kept secret in town” since much of their work is done behind the scenes to keep individuals, families, pets and the community safe and healthy. DHHS safeguards Anchorage public health by preventing, detecting, and treating communicable diseases, by assuring a safety net for seniors and vulnerable citizens and for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault, and by monitoring and by enforcing air quality, food sanitation, noise control, child care, and animal control regulations. DHHS prepares and plans for potential community emergencies, connects citizens in need with temporary or permanent supportive housing, and provides a sacred place for burial and bereavement at the Anchorage Memorial Park Cemetery. DHHS also helps strengthen the community’s ability to improve its own health and well-being by informing, educating, and empowering people about health issues, mobilizing community partners to identify and solve public health problems, and by developing plans and policies that support individual community health efforts. 2017 will mark the 80th year that DHHS will have been providing this vital public health service.
2017 ALPHA Awards

The Alaska Public Health Association has a long history of recognizing individuals for their contributions to the public’s health and health education. Each year, the Awards Committee of the Alaska Public Health Association requests nominations for awards to be given at the Alaska Health Summit each year.

★ Alaska Meritorious Health Service Award: Recognizes the achievements of an individual in the area of health in Alaska over an extended period of time, not less than 10 years. Patricia Carr

★ Barbara Berger Excellence in Public Health Award: Recognizes an individual who has made special, unique, or substantial contributions to Alaska in the field of public health. Thad Woodard

★ ALPHA Award for Long Term Service: Recognizes an individual who has made outstanding contributions to ALPHA over the course of several years by promoting ALPHA’s purpose, “to advance the public’s health.” Bradley Whistler

★ Alaska Health Equity Award: Recognizes an individual or organization who has demonstrated commitment to addressing health inequities in Alaska. Andrea Fenaughty

★ ALPHA Award for Short Term Service: Recognizes an individual who has made outstanding contributions to ALPHA during the past 1 to 2 years by promoting ALPHA’s purpose, “to advance the public’s health.” Janice Gray

★ Alaska Community Service Award for Health: Recognizes an organization, business or group making a significant contribution to improving the health of Alaskans. Sunshine Community Center

★ Alaska Health Achievement Award: Recognizes an individual with recent or current contributions to the health of Alaska. Captain Hans Brinke

★ President’s Award for Excellence in Public Health: The ALPHA President presents this special award recognizing an individual or organization demonstrating excellence in public health. Municipality of Anchorage Department of Health & Human Services

 ALPHA awards provide an opportunity to recognize our colleagues and acknowledge their contribution to the Alaska Public Health Association and to public health in Alaska.
The Alaska Public Health Association has a new Facebook page!

Contributed by Sheli Delany, MA, ALPHA Development Committee Chair

The former ALPHA group page is in the process of being deleted. If you received a notification that you were removed from the group, it is because the page is being dismantled. If you were ever an administrator of that page, please remove yourself so that the page can be removed from Facebook.

Please go “Like” the new page. We hope it will be a convenient and efficient way of sharing information about public health and ALPHA activities with both ALPHA members and the community across the state.

Some of the most popular recent posts include:
- Alaska’s First Lactation Pod Infographic
- The Time to Advocate for Public Health Nursing is NOW
- Alaska Tobacco Control Alliance Summit

If you have suggestions for the Facebook page, or if you would like us to post or share content, please contact Sheli DeLaney (shelicdelaney@gmail.com)