Join us for the 2010 ALPHA Health Summit

Start your 2011 off right by attending the 28th annual Alaska Public Health Conference.

The theme this year is Starting Upstream: Creating Healthy Communities, and emphasizes the importance of looking at what determines health focusing on how can we work smarter to build those conditions.

Let us recall the Upstream Parable...

“People are being swept downstream by a river's raging water. The crowd on shore works to pluck them out of the rushing water (tertiary prevention – rehabilitative), but many are missed and swept away. Perhaps some of the rescue group decide to pull out those that could not swim first (this would be a form of secondary prevention or screening). As the rescue group continues it’s never ending battle, a few hike upstream to see what is causing people to fall into the river in the first place (these public health professionals are focused on primary prevention).

They identify the root cause of the problem (people crossing a dangerous river without a bridge), come up with a solution (build a bridge), and put the solution into action. As a result: People stop falling into the river. They are no longer at risk and there is no need to focus all the effort/resources on pulling people out of the river one at a time.”

Primary prevention is public health at work.

At the conference we hope to generate discussion around the following questions:

- What types of solutions are needed to build healthy communities?
- How can we work ‘upstream’ to prevent problems before they begin?
- With only pennies from every health care dollar spent on public health how can we promote the political, economic and community conditions in which people can be healthy?
- What effect with Health Care Reform have on Alaska?

Many thanks to all involved in creating this year's Summit, as well as all of you planning to attend for your dedication to protecting and improving the public's health.

Join in the conversation at the next Alaska Public Health Association Annual Conference January 10-12, 2011 at the Captain Cook Hotel in Anchorage.

http://www.upstreampublichealth.org/whoweare/vision

2010 Summit Tracks

Workforce Development - track will focus on current health care and public health workforce issues and new opportunities in Alaska.

Social and Economic Determinants of Health - track will discuss not only what is known about social and economic determinates of health, but how to improve health status for individuals, communities and regions as a whole.

Using Public Health Science - track will discuss programs and projects that demonstrate contributions to the scientific foundation for improving health through public health science.

Innovative Approaches to Public Health Practice— track will highlight new and exciting efforts in the field of public health in which projects, programs or communities have improved health using an innovative approach.

Policy, Systems and Environmental Change— track will focus on achieving sustainable change across a wide range of populations.

Inside this issue:

The Upstream Parable 2
Teens Acting Against Violence 2
Rural Roads Article 2
ALPHA Website Revisions 3
NW Center for PH Practice Then & Now 5
Teens Acting Against Violence Trip

This summer Teens Acting Against Violence (TAAV) and YK Delta Suicide Awareness Intervention, Prevention and Healing Coalition teamed up to work on a resource guide for Delta residents related to suicide prevention, intervention and healing. TAAV, a violence prevention and education group for youth ages 12-18, assisted by making phone calls to surrounding communities about suicide prevention resources in each village. SAIPH will use the information to publish a resource guide in the upcoming year. In exchange for their efforts, SAIPH help fund some of TAAVs travel on their annual outward bound trip. This year TAAV traveled to the North Cascades in Washington where they spent 10 days backpacking and rock climbing.

The trip challenged the youth to step out of their comfort zones and build confidence and self-esteem by participating in new activities. Skills learned by TAAV will help them as they provide healthy activities for local youth and conduct various community awareness campaigns. TAAV tackles issues such as domestic violence, teen dating violence, sexual assault, types of abuse, suicide, and substance abuse. For more information about SAIPH visit www.saiph.weebly.com and TAAV visit http://www.twcpeace.org/

UAF Professor named Acting Chair of US Arctic Research Commission

Dr. Virgil "Buck" Sharpton, President's Professor at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, was designated by President Obama to serve as Acting Chair of the US Arctic Research Commission, effective August 13, 2010. Sharpton, who was originally appointed to the Commission in 2008 by President Bush, will advance federal arctic research, and will coordinate such efforts with the State of Alaska and international partners.

"I'm honored to have been selected to this important post. I will do my best to ensure a smooth transition in leadership and to expedite the development of an integrated arctic research policy. I'm also looking forward to helping implement the recent Presidential Memorandum that assigns responsibilities for coordinating the activities of the Interagency Arctic Research and Policy Committee to the White House National Science and Technology Council."

Sharpton recently completed his tenure as UAF's vice chancellor for research, and returned to his professorial duties where he plans to direct the university's participation in the proposed NASA Radaron Venus project, which will map the planet's surface. He will continue to be principal investigator on several other projects, including the Geographic Information Network of Alaska and the Pacific Area Climate Monitoring and Analysis Network cyber infrastructure program.

In 2001, he was named a President's Professor for his work in remote sensing, after former University of Alaska President Mark Hamilton sought to recognize Alaska's top research and instructional faculty, Sharpton was awarded one of only six such professorships. According to UAF Chancellor Brian Rogers, "Buck has been an effective advocate for the university's research interests. I appreciated his willingness to temporarily leave his own research projects to build the Center for Research Services and to advocate for science."

Sharpton obtained a Ph.D. and Sc.M. in Geological Sciences from Brown University and a B.S. with high honors in Geology from Grand Valley State University. The Commission, which sets goals (http://www.arctic.gov/publications/2009-10_usarc_goals.html) for the approximately $400 million annual U.S. Arctic Research Program, has urged a new federal emphasis on integrated Arctic Ocean research, renewed programs related to the prevention of and response to oil spills in ice-covered waters, and to strengthen Arctic health and indigenous language research.

The Arctic Research and Policy Act of 1984 established the U.S. Arctic Research Commission (www.arctic.gov). Its principal duties are to develop and recommend an integrated national Arctic research policy and assist in establishing a national Arctic research program plan to implement the policy. Commissioners also facilitate cooperation between the federal government, state and local governments, and other nations with respect to Arctic research, both basic and applied.
Alaskan’s in Rural Road Magazine (reprinted with permission from the National Rural Health Association)

The following article was featured in the Spring 2010 edition of the National Rural Health Association magazine, Rural Roads:

ON A MISSION: Pharmacists serve remote island

Bill and Sarah Altland are always on a mission, and often on the go. From Arkansas to Zaire, the pharmacists have spent their 30-year marriage serving the underserved in remote areas. Their focus was on helping others. There was always food on the table, but income was an afterthought. A volunteer opportunity at a mission clinic brought them to rural Alaska a decade ago. For a year, Sarah served as an unpaid pharmacist in Glenallen, while Bill relieved pharmacists across Alaska. "We're both from small towns in Arkansas, and we knew we liked Alaska so I filled in at about 20 places around the state to make grocery money and to find a job," he says. "I can't describe it; I just had a good feeling about this place." Soon the couple was headed for an even more remote assignment on the country's third largest island. Bill and Sarah shared the sole pharmacist position at an Alaskan Native clinic, one of two clinics on Prince of Wales (POW) Island.

A whale of a tale

Word spread on the island, population 3,600, that two pharmacists had moved in, and the Altlands were encouraged to open POW's

---

THANK YOU 2009 ALPHA SUMMIT SPONSORS

Denali Level >$10,000
- Information Insights

Foraker Level $5,000 – $9,999
- Alaska Department of Education, Early Development & Headstart
- Alaska Department of Health & Social Services, Division of Behavioral Health
- Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority
- Mat-Su Health Foundation

Fairweather Level $2,500 – $4,999
- Alaska Division of Public Health, Division of Public Health, Section of Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion
- Providence Health & Services Alaska

Marathon Level $1,000 - $2,499
- AARP
- Alaska Primary Care Association
- Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium
- Institute for Circumpolar Health Studies, University of Alaska Anchorage
- North Star Behavioral Health

---

Do you have a public health program or project to share with other ALPHA members?

Contact Brian Lefferts at 543-6423 or e-mail brian_lefferts@ykhc.org

To become a ALPHA contributing member, visit www.alaskapublichealth.org
first drug store. "We didn't come here with the intent to run a business, just the vision of helping people," Sarah says. "But everyone was so supportive, enthusiastic and grateful. Even though it provides us with a livelihood, we see it as a mission in a way." In 2001, the Altlands opened Whale Tail Pharmacy in Craig, the island's "hub," population 1,100.

"Even before we opened, both clinics were calling," recalls Bill. "So I feel like we really fill the need. It's a responsibility we've created in the community, but the need was there all along." Tina Bell, a long-time local nurse, realized the need several years earlier and had researched the viability of starting an independent island pharmacy but shelved the idea when recruitment efforts failed. "When the Whale Tail opened, the whole island was ecstatic," Bell remembers. "No more waiting for flown in or mailed prescriptions. Not to mention we have two wonderful people in our midst that have big hearts and try to accommodate very need." At the clinic, Bell says, "I was the pharmacy," typing labels and requesting meds flown in from what was the closest pharmacy in Ketchikan, Alaska. "It was often touch and go because of the weather and caused quite a bit of nail biting when we had a really sick patient," she says. From Craig, Ketchikan is a three-hour ferry ride followed by a 45-minute drive on a good day. In case of emergency and with clear skies, it's a 45-minute flight. So Whale Tail, possibly America's most remote pharmacy, maintains a larger inventory than most pharmacies its size, according to Bill. "We don't always get mail and drug orders regularly," Sarah says. "Sometimes we go four or five days without, and then we can get three or four orders at a time. It can be overwhelming, but people have a great attitude here. They're very understanding and willing to work with us." Some Whale Tail customers drive four hours to the pharmacy, but ordering prescriptions online doesn't seem to be an option, Bill explains. "Folks here rebel against that," he says. "The main problem is that mail comes by float plane and is often delayed because of inclement weather, and they'd miss doses if it's not received in timely manner. There can be 10 days between planes with mail. These folks also really seem to like having a relationship with a pharmacist."

Mom and pop apothecary

The Altlands know most of their patients, and Their patients know them. "I guess the downside is that in a small community, people know more about you than you ever realized," Sarah says. "We get calls at home a lot saying they forgot to pick up their medication or their dog is really sick. We're pretty easy and go get it for them. It's a plus and a drawback. We give, and they give back in a way that doesn't happen in metro areas." Bill says he often gets asked about medications on the ferry or in church. "I like answering my neighbors' questions or just shooting the breeze about our kids, life or whatever," he says. "People know each other and support each other, and we like that. Where we live is more important than income. We've spent a big part of our careers as volunteers and aren't motivated by a higher salary but by quality of life, which is relative, I guess. "Living where we live is not for everybody. It's hard to recruit. There's no Walmart or McDonald's. It's kind of like going back a few decades in time."

Bill refers to Whale Tail as a "mom and pop apothecary." He and Sarah split their time there, each working part time with Bill still providing some relief to independent pharmacists and Sarah handling the books. "We learned over the years that we live together better than we work together," he laughs. Their second daughter, 20, instituted a ban on business talk at the dinner table, so the couple has weekly staff meetings and breakfast dates at the local cafe on Thursday mornings. They've hired two full-time pharmacy technicians. Their oldest daughter, now 25, filled in as a tech during college breaks. Their youngest, 9, serves as "sanitation engineer," Sarah says. She cleans on Saturday mornings for allowance. And their son, 16, and his best friend added to the apothecary's ambiance with a 3-foot Star Wars death star made of Legos. Smaller Lego creations made by smaller people line the counter with artist credits. Children also regularly submit paintings for public display. "Sometimes moms will ask if they can leave the kids in the play corner while they run an errand or something," Bill says. "People stop in for coffee or checkers, and we encourage that."

After hours, the pharmacy hosts jam sessions with Bill on harmonica, Al-Anon meetings, book clubs, Bible studies and Socrates Cafe (a philosophical discussion group). "You've got to make your fun on the island a lot of times," he says. "Folks are creative and most folks know each other, so it's an opportunity to get together and use the space for other things." The island population grows as much as 50 percent in the summer with tourists and commercial fishers, and new customers almost always remark on "our dead animal," Sarah says, referring to a 15-foot python hide hung behind the cash register.

"In Alaska, when you go into somebody's home, there's usually a dead animal on the wall ... moose, deer, sheep," Sarah says. "We don't hunt. But we do have this giant snakeskin tanned by a group of disabled young people while we were living in Zaire, now the Congo. That's a popular attraction. Nothing fancy, but we like to put our personality into the business, even though it's really about the community." Bell named the pharmacy even before the Altlands arrived on Prince of Wales Island.

"One day while fishing a huge humpback whale breached the water right in front of my boat and then slapped its tail down and just missed us," she says. "After we calmed our nerves, we decided Whale Tail Pharmacy had a nice ring to it. We're so lucky to have it and thankful to have the Altlands as part of our island family."

By Lindsey V. Corey
The new ALPHA website is up and running. The site contains several tools to help ALPHA connect with its members, and to help facilitate them connecting with one another. It is a gathering site for people and ideas. Some features include:

**ALPHA Facebook link:** as highlighted in the last newsletter, ALPHA members can join the ALPHA Facebook group and meet colleagues from across the state.

**Board Members:** The “About Us” page allows you to contact individual board members and to share your suggestions and ideas with us.

**Community Calendar:** The ALPHA calendar is the place to find out about upcoming conferences or workshops, and to post your activity on the calendar.

Lots of hard work went into making this new website possible. A special thank you goes to: Gretchen Clarke, Constance Page, Karol Fink, Jana Pierce, Debra Caldera, and the staff of Sundog Media for making this a reality.
Alaska Highlighted in NWCPHP Then & Now Series

The Northwest Center for Public Health Practice then & now series is a monthly e-postcard celebration of 20 years of promoting excellence in public health practice and is the recipient of a 2010 APEX Award for Publication Excellence. The May e-postcard highlighted the lay vaccinator program operated by the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services. The program began in 1978 to address epidemic rabies in wildlife in rural Alaska.

In 2009, a lay vaccinator, Brian Berube, with the Yukon Kuskokwim Health Corporation vaccinated over 800 animals. Brian discussed how his work providing rabies shots has helped open doors for him to be more involved in other aspects of environmental health in the villages he serves.

To read the entire article, visit http://www.nwcphp.org/20th/then-and-now-2010-05