

# The Counting Cord

## Nitnuqeyishi



February–March 2016

KENAITZE INDIAN TRIBE NEWSLETTER

# Now we're cooking

## New Elder center opens for service

With pancakes and bacon cooking in the kitchen nearby, Rose Guilbeau leaned forward and gazed out the window.

“You can see the mountains, ocean and river,” she said. “This place looks really nice.”

On a recent Friday afternoon, Guilbeau enjoyed one of the first lunches served at the new Tyotkas Elder Center in Old Town Kenai. The 6,500-square-foot facility officially opened in March after about a year of construction.

The one-story structure includes many amenities. Visitors walk under a covered entrance through sliding glass doors. Expansive windows facing south toward Cook Inlet and the mouth of the Kenai River offer sweeping views

See **TYOTKAS**, p. 5



Carey Edwards butters buns hot out of the oven in the kitchen at the tribe's new Tyotkas Elder Center. She said she's happy to have an oven that will allow her to bake the way she likes to bake.

## Health fair promotes Colorectal Cancer Awareness

As Wilma Omnik stood beside a row of health displays, she thought of her family.

“I don't think there's been a death in my family, on my mom's side, from anything but cancer,” Omnik said.

Omnik was among those who attended a health fair at the Dena'ina Wellness Center in March, which was Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month in Alaska. Southcentral Foundation and Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium representatives joined tribal staff during the event, providing information about colorectal cancer and emphasizing the importance of screening and early detection. The fair also included an appearance by “Nolan the Colon,” a large, inflatable replica of a colon, along with informational booths about nicotine use, sugar consumption, heart health and more.

Colorectal cancer is the leading cause of new cancer cases among Alaska Native people, according



Wellness Assistant Bessie Phillip, dressed as a colon polyp, beads at the Dena'ina Wellness Center's health fair.

to the Alaska Colorectal Cancer Partnership, meaning it's important to get screened. Representatives at the health fair said Alaska Native people, or those with a family history of colorectal cancer, should begin screening at age 40. For others, screening typically begins at age 50.

For Omnik, who is from Point Hope but currently lives in Soldotna, the event reminded her of her family's struggles with cancer. It also reminded her of the things she can do to boost her own health.

Although she admits to smoking cigarettes, Omnik said she ex-

See **NOLAN**, p. 11

## Fish talk

### Tribal fishery tops April quarterly meeting agenda

With their eyes on the past, and their minds on the future, tribal members gathered Saturday, April 2, at the Dena'ina Wellness Center to discuss the tribal fishery.

Tribal Elder Clare Swan went to the heart of the matter in her opening blessing. “(The fishery) is a deep part of who we are,” Swan said.

The meeting came two days before the tribe's Hunting, Fishing and Gathering Commission was to meet to discuss final issues to negotiate with the state as details of this year's educational fishery permit came together.

Members were told at the meeting that the state has responded to a request for additional fish this year, although not the 30,000 salmon the tribe sought.

Robert Begich, writing in an email to the tribe on behalf of the Alaska Department of Fish and

See **MEETING**, p. 3



## NOTE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

*Yaghalí du?* How is it with you?  
It is great with us.

Over the past couple years, we have been working diligently to create a central campus in Old Town Kenai where tribal members and customers can conveniently access our programs and services. Today, I am happy to announce two more significant additions as part of this effort.

First, our beautiful new Tyotkas Elder Center construction was completed in March and the building is now serving the needs of our Elders. As Elders get comfortable in the spacious structure, and staff get settled into the kitchen they helped design, we work together on plans for the Grand Opening celebration.



Please save the date of June 18 and look for details soon. I hope we will see you there!

Please join me in a special *chiginiik* – thank you – to Kahtnuht'ana Development Corp. President and CEO Stan Mishin and his Board of Directors. Managing the Tyotkas project was the first of what we expect will be many successes for KDC. The entity is a federally chartered tribal business corporation wholly owned by the Kenaitze Indian Tribe.

Also in March, the tribe purchased a 1,200-square-foot building and lot on the corner of Overland and Mission Avenues near the Tribal Courthouse and Dena'ina Wellness Center. Formerly a tattoo parlor, the two-story building will house our Environmental Protection Program as well as safety and security offices. The adjoining lot will be paved this summer and used as parking for our neighboring facilities. We will complete a few minor renovations and have employees moved to the new space this spring.

As this newsletter goes to press, we are also in the final days of another construction project, this one, entirely digital. In April, we will launch our new website. It will be at the same address as our current website ([www.kenaitze.org](http://www.kenaitze.org)).

The improvements are too many to list, but a few highlights:

- The site is mobile friendly. More than half of all web traffic is by phone or tablet. Our website will be as easy to use on your phone as on your desk.
- It has detailed information for all of the services we provide, as well as information about the tribe's values, culture and history.
- Addresses, detailed Google maps and telephone numbers will make it easy you to find services.
- There's a blog where we will be able to share stories and our news.
- The calendar has been vastly improved, can be set to display events the way you want to see them, and can even be exported to your own calendar!
- Did I mention photos? Photos anchor nearly every one of more than 50 pages on the site.
- There's plenty of room to grow, too. The site is going to be easy for our staff to update, so you'll want to visit often.

In just a few short days, we will be fishing at the tribal net again. I hope to see you there!

— Jaylene Peterson-Nyren  
Executive Director, Kenaitze Indian Tribe

## Do you know these people? Help us update their address

Please help find correct addresses for the following people so that we can deliver important news and information to them. Call 907-335-7204 or email Karissa Oder at [kodor@kenaitze.org](mailto:kodor@kenaitze.org) with info.

Valerie Agamoo  
Dawn Albright – Pohlen  
Elizabeth Atchison  
Anthony Azzara  
Shawn Baktuit  
Georgia Bass  
Timothy Bateman  
Jacob Bliss  
Kelsie Bliss  
Jacan Boatright  
Miranda Boehmler  
Autumn Boling  
Sharon Boling  
Stephen Boling  
Brittany Boulette  
Camryn Boulette  
Christopher Brandt  
Jonathan Brandt  
Erica Branson  
Rebecca Brunni  
Richard Brunni  
Heather Burnham  
Hillary Burnham  
Frank Campos JR  
William Carlough  
Kenneth Chaffin  
Tina Chaffin  
Helen Chavez  
Myra Cook-Wik-Lewis  
Hazel Costanios  
Anthony Coveyou  
Kathryn Coveyou  
Katie Coveyou  
Rachael Coveyou  
Sarah Coveyou  
James Cross  
James Cross JR  
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Lisa Darien-Hileman  
Angelo Davis  
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Rebecca Davis  
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Lisa Dean  
Clifford Dolchok  
Mack Dolchok  
Drasanna Edelman  
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Jay Edelman  
Norman Edelman  
Jamie Edwards

David Engelstad  
James England  
Patricia England  
Ashley Forstner  
Louis Forstner V  
Brian Frostad  
Vivian Gaines  
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William Green  
Cameron Grothe  
Steven Hallstead  
Nelson Harker  
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Gregory Haskell  
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Jessica Huf  
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Taylor Huf  
Raymond Ivanoff  
Naomi Jackinsky  
Jay Jennings  
Austin Johnson  
Casey Jones  
Casie Jones-Ortega  
Michael Juliussen  
Zane Juliussen  
Marshall Kidder  
Travis Kidder  
Seth Kilgore  
Suzanne Kirschner  
Jonathan Knight  
Corbin Kooly  
Darrell Kooly  
Jakob Kooly  
Zachary Kooly  
Doris Lageson  
Martha Le Maire  
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Henry Lecceardone  
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Anthony Lorenzo  
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Anthony Mesa  
Bernadette Mesa  
Violet Mesa  
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Nicole Murray  
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Jared Page  
Delores Petterson  
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Denali Poage  
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Ralph Wik  
Brandon Wilson  
Frances Wilson  
Norman Wood JR  
Jesse Wright

### Moving soon? Please keep in touch

Please keep your contact information current so you don't miss important mailings from the tribe.  
Send updates to:

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Kenai, AK 99611

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907-335-7204

### From the editor's desk

The Counting Cord is a publication for members of the Kenaitze Indian Tribe and the tribe's customers.

Find more information on the tribe's website at [kenaitze.org](http://kenaitze.org) and like us on Facebook at [facebook.com/kenaitze](https://facebook.com/kenaitze).

For story suggestions or questions about content, contact editor M. Scott Moon at 907-335-7237 or by email at [smoon@kenaitze.org](mailto:smoon@kenaitze.org).



## NOTE FROM THE COUNCIL CHAIRPERSON

Hello,

*Chiginiik* – thank you – to the tribal members who attended this month's quarterly meeting to discuss the tribal fishery. Every year, your Council wants to know how we are doing and how we can improve. In less than a month, we will be fishing again, so hearing from you was important. Your comments help us make better decisions about the issues that are important to you.

Last year, fishing restrictions made it more difficult for our people to get fish. We heard your concerns are working this year to have a better fishery. We are negotiating with the state for more fish. We also scheduling the nets to maximize their opportunity in the water.

If you fish the net, please help us be good stewards of the resource by knowing and following the rules that have been mailed and that are on the beach. The fishery staff are there to help members get their fish. You can help them



by understanding how the tribal fishery works.

It was also good so many people attended the Easter party again this year. Everybody had fun, even people who couldn't be there. There's a video of kids chasing after eggs on the tribe's Facebook page that reached more than 66,000 people in a week!

We are thankful for our partnership with Salamatof Native Association and for their help with the Easter party. They donated bikes and other door prizes.

*Chiginiik* – thank you – to all the other sponsors and the many volunteers who make this event fun for everybody.

*Chiginiik*, again, to *you* for being an active member of the tribe.

— Rosalie A. Tepp  
Tribal Chairperson, Kenaitze Indian Tribe



Members of the audience and Council member Jennifer Showalter Yeoman, at right, listen as Joel Isaak talks about the history of the tribal net during a presentation at the Tribal Membership Quarterly Meeting on April 2, at the Dena'ina Wellness Center. Below, about 50 people were in attendance at the meeting.

### MEETING, from p. 1

Game, said that last year's quota of 8,000 salmon would be increased this year to 10,000 salmon, "with a stipulation for a review of (an) additional quota increase inseason to meet your program needs."

Last year, the tribe reached its quota before everyone who had signed up for the net could fish.

After the state declined to issue a quota increase, the tribe purchased fish for families, Executive Director Jaylene Peterson-Nyren told the audience.

Joel Isaak presented a history of the tribal net and the litigation surrounding it, and discussed a frequently-asked-questions handout.

Then the Executive Council and members of the Hunting, Fishing and Gathering Commission took questions and comments from the

membership.

Mary Ann Mills spoke of "our right to eat," adding that additional legal challenges might need to go to the United Nations, rather than the state or federal court systems.

Council Secretary Liisia Blizzard said the fishery was about food and much more. "I have seen a huge change," she said. "We have come back together as a people. Not only do we get our fish, but our children are learning our culture."

## TRIBAL COUNCIL

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# Coming full circle

## Tribal program helps put former Nikiski High School student on a good path

It's about 5:30 p.m. on a Tuesday in March, and Nico Castro finally has a chance to relax.

Life is busy for this 18-year-old living in Anchorage. When he isn't working at the mechanic shop – like he did this day, from 7 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. – you can find him on campus at the University of Alaska Anchorage, where he is enrolled in automotive technology courses and pursuing a degree.

These days, life is good for Castro.

These days, life is different for Castro.

"I've totally changed my life and my view on life and my attitude in general," said Castro, who attended Nikiski High School. "I find myself focused on my job and my future and my goals."

Castro attributes the turnaround to his experience participating in the tribe's Ts'ilq'u Circle, which means, "coming together as one." The Circle is administered at the Tribal Courthouse in Old Town Kenai and serves different purposes, but most simply is a place where people come to have important or difficult discussions in a good way. The tribe has operated the program since the mid-2000s.

Many Circle participants are teenagers, like Castro, who are referred from the Alaska Division of Juvenile Justice or the state court system. In these cases, it's a diversion program for youth who have pleaded guilty or no contest to a first offense and received a suspended sentence pending completion of the Circle. But the Circle is more than that.

Curt Shuey, who has coordinated the program for about a decade, said it's open to families, coworkers or anyone facing tough circumstances. The Circle is a place for those who need to talk and make important choices.

"People can come to the Circle for any reason," Shuey said.

The Circle is predicated on unity and has guidelines designed to foster trust, honesty and respect. A talking piece is passed around to ensure each participant can speak freely and without interruption. Participants sit in chairs, without a table or other obstructions between them.

When someone facing legal consequences comes to the Circle, they bring with them people who



In the Ts'ilq'u Circle, participants may speak when they are holding the designated talking piece. Some choose the eagle feather.

are important in their lives – parents, siblings, friends, coaches. The group works together to create a plan for the person to make amends for the offense.

Each member of the Circle – including the person facing trouble – has an equal say in the plan. The plan is not finalized until every participant agrees. The plan is then put into action and the Circle periodically reconvenes to gauge progress, make adjustments and assure the plan is ultimately completed.

"It's an approach toward justice where people take responsibility for themselves and they have some input into what they think should happen to make things right and get on a good path," Shuey said. "It's not punishment-focused. It's a different mindset and approach to the court system."

Castro came to the Circle in high school after he was caught con-

suming alcohol, the idea being for the youngster to learn from Castro's story and have a chance, simply, to talk. The plan also called for Castro to regularly attend church.

What resonated most, Castro said, was that everyone in the Circle genuinely seemed to care about the outcome. They spoke meaningfully, fairly and from the heart.

"I learned there are lot more people out there who care about me than I thought there was," he said.

Castro also said it meant a lot to have a say in the outcome, which was a surprise.

Martina Georges, Circle co-coordinator, said the collaborative approach is one of the most powerful aspects of the Circle, especially for young people accustomed to being told what to do.

"They are thinking they are going to get in trouble and they are going to be sentenced," Georges said. "But the more the Circle goes on, you can just see their body start to relax. They are starting to think, 'Oh, wait a second, they are not telling me what I should do. I'm being included to find a solution.'"

For Castro, the experience changed his attitude not just about discipline but life in general. Before the Circle, he said he used alcohol to cope and had little enthusiasm for life.

But these days, life is different for Castro.

These days, life is good for Castro. "My big emphasis on it is I had a lot more motivation to do something with my life after that Circle," he said. "It just helped me out a lot."

He participated with his mother, a neighbor and Shuey. The group devised a plan that required Castro to speak to a younger person about

### Circle Guidelines

#### Honor the talking piece

When the talking piece is passed around, only the one holding it should speak.

#### Speak from the heart

Speak the important things that need to be heard, with honesty, courage and humility.

#### Speak in a good way

Choose your words with care for others. Do not attack or manipulate. Be brief and leave time for others.

#### Listen in a good way

Listen to learn, to understand. Give respectful, interested

attention. See things through the speaker's eyes, even if you disagree.

#### Remain in the Circle

Commit to the Circle until everyone agrees to stop, even if it becomes tense or difficult. Play your part.

#### What is said in the Circle, stays in the Circle

Be trustworthy. The stories and words of others are not to be shared in gossip or backbiting.

To learn more, please contact Curt Shuey at 907-335-7232.



The new Tyotkas Elder Center is open for services on the site of the original building. Below, Paul Lorenzo, Maggie Jones, Ernie Jordan, Zoanne Anderson and Joe Bayes lead a sing-along following a recent lunch in new facility.

**TYOTKAS**, from p. 1

of water and mountains. A large, two-way fireplace separating a gathering area and library creates a cozy atmosphere. Wide hallways and doorways make the facility wheelchair-friendly.

Guilbeau first came to Tyotkas last summer – her inaugural visit was June 26, her birthday – when Elders services were housed at the Fort Kenay building in Old Town.

An arts and crafts enthusiast, Guilbeau now visits Tyotkas every Monday, Wednesday and Friday. She enjoys meeting new people and was impressed when she saw the new building.

"It's very nice," Guilbeau said. "I really like it."

The kitchen features walk-in coolers, commercial-grade appliances and a large dishwashing area separate from the storage and cooking areas.

For cooks James Coveyou and Carey Edwards, who prepare meals for dozens of Elders each day, the new facility offers ample space and quality equipment.

Edwards said a convection oven and commercial-grade mixer will allow her to make fresh bread, in-house, whereas she previously served store-bought bread. The kitchen also is good for baking homemade pies, she said, and the dishwashing area is spacious and easy to maintain.

"All the equipment is really beautiful," Edwards said.

Coveyou, who on this afternoon prepared pancakes, scrambled eggs and other breakfast items, said it's easier to cook in the new building than it was at Fort Kenay.

"At Fort Kenay it was a bit of a



### Save the date

A celebration of the new building will be held on Saturday, June 18. Additional details about this event will soon be announced.

challenge," Coveyou said. "It was almost like cooking on a campfire for 70 people all day."

The building sits in the same location as the previous Elders center, which was demolished in 2014 thanks to a natural gas leak and subsequent structural report that revealed additional issues.

For Duke Minium, 62, the location is one of the best aspects of Tyotkas. Minium, eating with his wife, Henna, said he enjoys exercising at the Dena'ina Wellness Center and walking to Tyotkas afterward for lunch.

"I'm real happy to be able to get in some exercise and then come over here," he said.



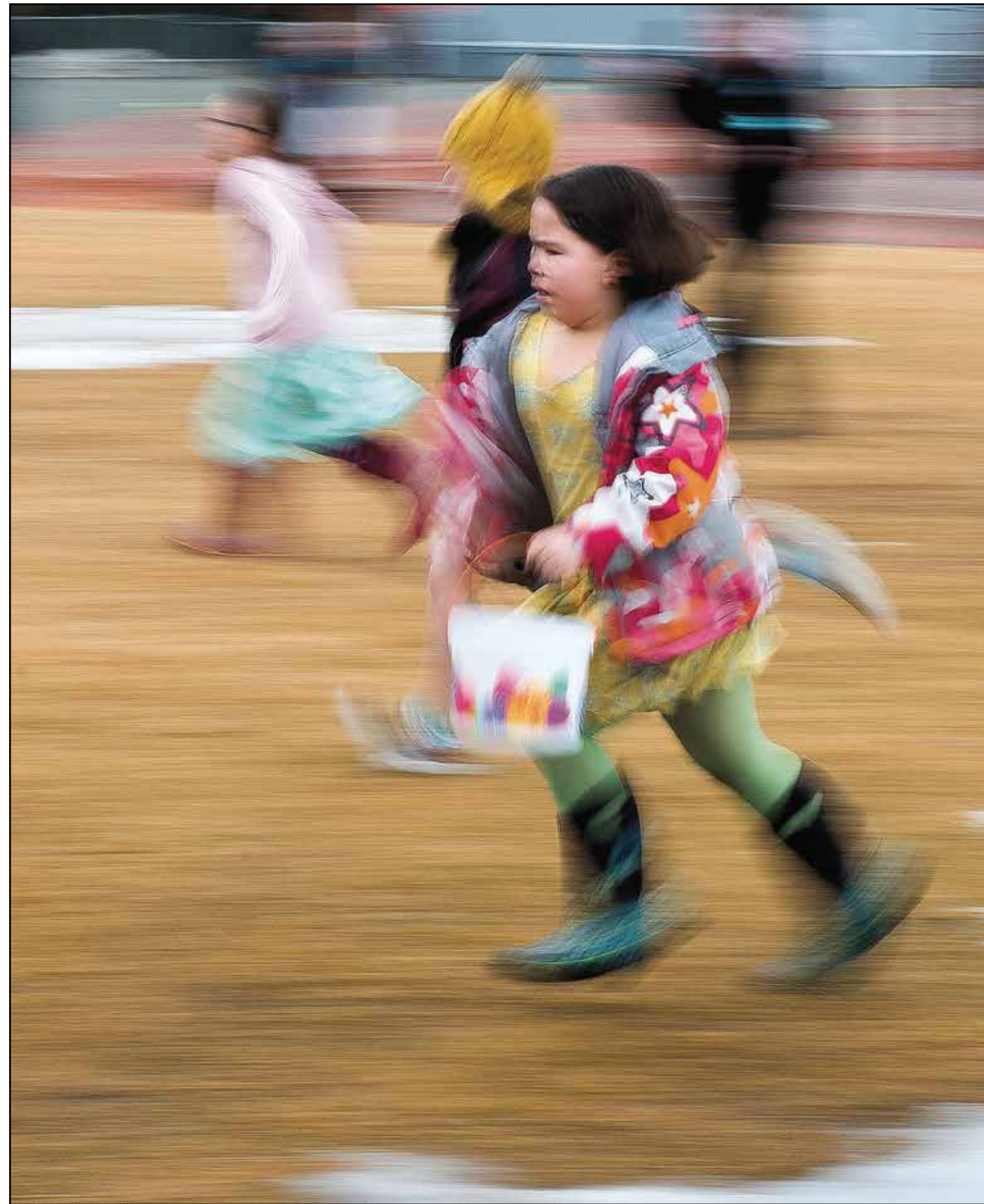
Tauna Reese serves Laura and Davis Hobson lunch in the new building. There is a fireplace on the far wall, which separates the gathering area from a library and reading room.



# Thrill of the hunt



At top, Cooper Bernard reacts as he sees the bike he won at the annual Easter party at Mountain View Elementary School. Above, Alicia, Tony and Reymond Perez watch with hope as names are drawn for door prizes.



## Easter party a hopping good time

Rosy-cheeked and catching her breath, 9-year-old Alyssa Anderson dropped to a knee and set down the bucket of plastic eggs. She reached inside and began popping off the lids, one-by-one, revealing a pile of treats.

Hershey Kisses. Snickers. Reece's Pieces. Even a mini yo-yo.

Similar scenes played out across the playground and ballfields at Mountain View Elementary School in March as more than 200 people attended the tribe's annual Easter celebration, enjoying lunch, giveaways and, of course, a hunt for candy-filled eggs.

Alyssa, who attended with her grandmother Valerie Anderson and 5-year-old sister Layla, had a simple yet crafty egg-finding strategy amid the swarm of children.

"Going to the side a bunch," the third-grader said. "They left a lot on

the sides."

After the hunt for eggs, the Anderson family stood with Leslie Hemphill and Hemphill's two children – 7-year-old JadeRenee and 9-year-old James – as the youngsters dug through their findings.

When asked what he liked most about the event, James had a simple response.

"Getting the eggs," he said. "It's really fun."

Both the Anderson and Hemphill families have attended the celebration every year in recent memory, making it part of their Easter routine.

The Andersons planned on having another egg hunt later in the day as part of a family celebration.

The Hemphill children look forward to the tribe's party every year.

"The kids are always excited to come," Leslie Hemphill said.

Another regular participant, tribal

Elder Phyllis Bookey, brought her 6-year-old great granddaughter Savannah.

Bookey was babysitting for the afternoon and thought Savannah would enjoy the festivities.

"I think this is wonderful for all our little youth," Bookey said. "It's so much fun for them, and they are always so excited."

For other families, meanwhile, it was a new experience.

Amber Herrmann attended for the first time, bringing her fiancé and two young sons.

Herrmann said the family wanted to try something different and had been searching for kid-friendly activities to pass the day.

"We just wanted to get out and do something fun for the kids," Herrmann said.

Before the hunt for eggs, tribal staff served a hot dog lunch and

held a drawing for prizes.

The prizes included Easter baskets, chocolate bunnies and new bicycles and scooters donated by Kenaitze Indian Tribe and Salamatof Native Association.

Kaarlo Wik, Chairman of the Board at Salamatof, said it is fun to see the children's reactions during the prize drawings.

"It's really exciting to see the kids anticipating winning and actually winning. You can see in their faces how excited they are," Wik said. "It's just been a real good partnership between Salamatof and the Kenaitze Indian Tribe."

Other sponsors included Peterkin Distributors, IGA/Country Foods, Coca-Cola of the Kenai Peninsula and L&J Enterprises and Excavating. Staff members from the tribe's Human Services Division helped host the event.



At center top, Riley Mosquito scrambles with other kids to find eggs on the playground at Mountain View Elementary School. Top right, Scarlet Charbonneau, 5, holds the basket of eggs she found during the egg hunt. At middle, Emilee Wilson, 10, stoops down to grab an egg while participating with other kids in the older children's egg hunt. The event was well-attended, nearly filling the gym at Mountain View Elementary School.



### Tribal Fishery set to open May 1

The celebration of the opening of the 2016 Tribal Fishery will be on Sunday, May 1. Details will soon be announced. Festivities will include food, music, dancing and time around the fire. The celebration will be held at the fishery site, which is located at the public beach-access point on Cannery Road off Kalifornsky Beach Road in Kenai. Food and beverages will be provided. Please bring your favorite treat for a potluck-style dessert. Information about reserving a tide and other fishery policies will be sent in the mail to tribal members.



### Tribe purchases Old Town building, lot

The tribe recently purchased a 1,200-square-foot building and adjacent lot on the corner of Overland and Mission Avenues near the Tribal Courthouse and Dena'ina Wellness Center in Old Town Kenai. The two-story structure will house the Environmental Protection Program as well as tribal security personnel. Staff will move into the new space after minor renovations are completed. The adjacent lot, which is about a quarter-acre, will be paved this summer and used as parking for neighboring tribal facilities.

### Register now for summer camps

In partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and U.S. Forest Service, the Yaghanen Youth Program will host two Susten Archeology Camps this summer. The camps are open to male and female students in ninth through 12th grades. The first is from June 20-24. The second session is from June 27-July 1. Students learn cultural awareness and gain exposure to a range of career paths through hands-on lessons. For information, please contact the Yaghanen office at 335-7290.

# To Greenland and back

Not many teenagers living on the Kenai Peninsula can say they've visited the country of Greenland.

Julianne Wilson can.

Wilson, a tribal member and junior at Kenai Central High School, recently returned from Nuuk, Greenland, where she competed in the 2016 Arctic Winter Games as a member of Team Alaska.

"It was pretty awesome," Wilson said. "I got to go to Greenland."

The Arctic Winter Games is a multisport and cultural event that occurs every other year at alternating host sites – the Kenai Peninsula Borough hosted in 2006 – drawing thousands of youth athletes from across the Arctic region. Athletes are selected based on playing experience, recommendations, references and skills. The competition dates back to 1970.

The 2016 event showcased dozens of sports, including skiing, hockey, wrestling, Dene games, volleyball, table tennis and more. Wilson participated in the female open division of the "Arctic sports" category, competing in six events – the one-foot high kick, two-foot high kick, Alaskan high kick, kneel jump, triple jump and arm pull.

She earned a bronze medal in the kneel jump, recording a distance of

3 feet, 8 and 3/8 inches, and placed fourth in both the one-foot high kick and triple jump. Overall, she placed sixth in her division.

Wilson called it a challenging experience for two reasons: she was nervous and faced strong competition.

"I performed the best I could," Wilson said. "It was a really big competition for me, but I got stressed out and psyched out."

The weeklong event featured athletes from Canada, Greenland, Norway and beyond. Team Alaska won the overall competition, finishing with 216 medals – 83 gold, 67 silver, 66 bronze – followed by runner-up Team Yukon and third-place finisher Team Alberta North. Team Alaska also earned the Hodgson Trophy for best sportsmanship as voted on by coaches, officials and committee members.

The tribe's Yaghanen Youth Program, in which Wilson participates, places a strong emphasis on sportsmanship. Its Native Youth Olympics team earned the sportsmanship award at the Qutekack Native Youth Olympics Invitational in February.

Yaghanen Manager Michael Bernard said Wilson epitomizes those values.

"Julianne, being one of our older athletes, is an inspiration to her teammates and coaches," Bernard said. "She does this by demonstrating the idea of strengthening her team by focusing on making herself better at what she does while encouraging others to improve as well."

Wilson also enjoyed the sights and sounds of Nuuk, Greenland's capital city, spending one afternoon exploring with a friend and visiting the mall. She sampled local cuisine – muktuk, dried halibut and smoked salmon sandwiches, among others – and enjoyed a fireworks show during closing ceremonies.

The trip had its share of surprises as well. On its approximately 3,000-mile trip to the competition, the team was delayed for 36 hours in Kangerlussuaq, Greenland, because of a blizzard in Nuuk. Wilson said there wasn't much to do while the team waited, so athletes found WiFi and called home.

Reflecting on the trip, Wilson said the competitive aspect was stressful but fun. She wasn't sure what to expect beforehand, but returned appreciative of the experience and for her life in Alaska.

"When I was there I learned that I shouldn't take anything for granted," Wilson said.

# Building bridges, computers

Like many 11-year-olds, Blaine Hayes enjoys playing on the computer.

Unlike many 11-year-olds, Hayes knows how to build a computer.

"It's cool to learn about technology," he said.

Hayes, the grandson of tribal Elder Phyllis Bookey, recently attended the Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program's Middle School Academy at the University of Alaska-Anchorage.

The two-week program gave 53 students from the Kenai Peninsula Borough and Lower Kuskokwim school districts hands-on experience in science, technology, engineering and math activities.

Commonly known as ANSEP, the program prepares students for education and careers in science, engineering and related fields. It hosts academies for students in sixth through 12th grades, accept-



Blaine Hayes

ing participants through an application process based on grades, an essay and other criteria.

Hayes, a sixth-grader at Sterling Elementary School, attended for the first time in February. Participants stayed in campus dormitories and completed a range of projects

requiring problem-solving, critical thinking and other skills.

In one project, Hayes built a computer out of loose computer parts and got to take home the

puter.

Hayes also built a bridge out of balsa wood, testing the bridge's strength by placing weight in the middle.

"I love technology and finding out how it works and learning about machines," Hayes said. "I like seeing how things go together and how they work when you're done."

Hayes said he would like to participate in another academy – ANSEP hosts multiple sessions each year – because it was a good experience on many levels.

He met new friends from across Alaska. He learned about things that interest him. And he balanced hard work with exciting activities.

"It was a way to have fun for two weeks, but also be in school," Hayes said.

"They like to have fun, but they also take things very seriously."

### Your turn

Does the ANSEP sound like a good fit for your child? If you'd like to get involved, there are academies scheduled for spring and summer 2016 at the middle and high school levels. Applications are required. To learn more, visit the program's website at [www.ansep.net](http://www.ansep.net).

# Yaghali Nusdlan

## He or she got well



Traditional Healer Estelle Thomson talks with Kenai Central High School juniors Breanna McConnell, right, and Keyshawn McEnerney during the Kenai Chamber of Commerce Job Shadow Day. The event was an opportunity for the tribe to demonstrate one of its core values: to pass down cultural knowledge and traditions, while supporting formal education.

# Shadowing the pros

## Students walk a day in the shoes of Dena'ina Wellness Center employees

"Do what you love."

"Be open."

"Keep your grades up."

Those were a just a few of the nuggets of advice employees at the Dena'ina Wellness Center recently offered to a group of young, aspiring medical professionals.

In March, the tribe participated in a job-shadow event organized by Kenai Central High School and the Kenai Chamber of Commerce. More than 120 students visited area businesses and organizations to receive useful tips and on-the-job training. Ten of those students, all 11th-graders, visited the Dena'ina Wellness Center.

Participants toured the facility, met employees and had an opportunity to ask questions. The students' career interests ranged from physician assistant to clinical

psychologist to surgical technician to nurse practitioner, and more.

"Not only do we want to educate our un'ina (those who come to us), but also anyone who is interested in our programs, so it's good to participate in this," said Dr. John Molina, Director of Health Systems.

The students participated in a range of activities during their visit. Some spent time in the Traditional Healing area. Others toured the Primary Care area. One visited the Behavioral Health Department.

Cassidy Holmes, who has pondered different career paths but ultimately sees herself in the medical field, said the visit helped her realize the vast number of paths available in the health industry.

Before the job-shadow event,



Nurse practitioner Geoff Lanfear and Jen Jarvis speak to Kenai Central High School juniors during the students' half-day visit.

Holmes was most interested in becoming a physician assistant. Afterward, realizing the different available options, she wasn't as certain.

"The biggest thing that jumped out was all the different career fields that are in medical," Holmes said. "I wasn't aware of all those different fields."

Abby Beck, who is interested in the behavioral sciences, spent part of the day shadowing a clinical psychologist.

Beck said she received valuable advice and useful information about the industry, including local contacts and suggested reading material.

See **SHADOW**, p. 10



# Learn about Purchased/ Referred Care Service

## An overview of eligibility requirements and other useful information

Paperwork, procedures and protocols can make going to the doctor a stressful and frustrating experience – especially when it comes to paying for the services you receive. At the Dena’ina Wellness Center, one topic that can lead to confusion is Purchased/Referred Care Services. Whether or not you have utilized these service before, here’s what to know about Purchased/Referred Care:

### What is it?

Under certain circumstances, Purchased/Referred Care covers expenses incurred when an eligible person receives services outside the Dena’ina Wellness Center that the center does not offer. However, it is not a guaranteed service.

### Who is eligible?

Purchased/Referred Care is available to Alaska Native and American Indian people who use the Dena’ina Wellness Center as their primary care provider and can show proof of their descent as well as Alaska residency for at least 180 days. It also is available to non-Alaska Native or American Indian women who are pregnant with an eligible person’s child. Children of eligible Alaska Native and American Indian people, including foster children, adopted children, stepchildren, legal wards and orphans are eligible until age 19.

### What are the other requirements?

- To use Purchased/Referred Care, customers must also:
- First use alternate resources (Medicaid, Medicare, private health insurance, and state and local health programs) or be screened annually for eligibility for these resources. By law, an Indian Health Service facility – which is what the Dena’ina Wellness Center is – is the payer of last resort. That means customers must apply for and use all alternate resources available to them before the center can authorize a Purchased/Referred Care payment.
- Obtain prior approval from the Dena’ina Wellness Center for non-emergency care.
- Notify a representative within 72 hours of admission to a non-Indian Health Service facility for emergency services.

### What is not covered?

Purchased/Referred Care does not cover medical services provided by non-Indian Health Service facilities if the services aren’t referred and authorized by the Dena’ina Wellness Center. The following services also are not covered:

- Inpatient or outpatient mental health services.
- Inpatient or outpatient substance abuse programs.
- Medical care considered investigational or experimental.
- Nursing home or long-term care facilities.
- Routine dental services.
- Bills submitted to the Purchased/Referred Care Department more than a year after the date of service.

Purchased/Referred Care is handled on a case-by-case basis and customers have the right to appeal any denials. If you have questions about a bill relating to Purchased/Referred Care, please contact Tracey Hedlund-Smith at 907-335-7537. Questions relating to services received at the Dena’ina Wellness Center should be directed to the Billing Department at 907-335-7500.



Hannah Phillips and Jessica Segura learn about health careers at the Dena’ina Wellness Center during Job Shadow Day.

### SHADOW, from p. 9

What stood out to Beck most, however, was the reception she received from tribal employees.

“It was really nice that they were so welcoming and friendly,” Beck said. “I was really nervous that it was going to be a stiff, awkward environment and it really wasn’t. They made me feel like I was supposed to be here.”

Meanwhile, Emily Halstead said the event helped her better understand the education and training required in the medical field.

Halstead envisioned being a surgeon before participating in the job-shadow event, but by the time it ended, she also was interested in becoming an oncologist or surgery technician.

“There’s all these different occupations I can pick in the medical field that I wouldn’t have thought of,” she said.

## Dena’ina Wellness Center now coordinating obstetrics services for moms and babies

In addition to its many other services, the Dena’ina Wellness Center coordinates care for customers during and after pregnancy.

Partnerships between the tribe and two local obstetricians – Dr. Marcus Deede and Dr. Kristen Lee – give Dena’ina Wellness Center customers access to pre-natal, delivery and post-natal care.

“They are offering a lot of things for the mom to help them through the pregnancy,” said Dr. John Molina, Director of Health Systems.

The way the arrangement works,

The chamber and high school began putting on the event in 1994, and it continues to grow.

Chamber President Johna Beech said 52 business participated this year and that everyone involved took away something useful.

“It showcases our employment opportunities here in the Kenai and Soldotna area,” Beech said. “It also helps the students decide if this truly is the career for them.”

Molina, who shared his career path and offered tips and advice, said he hoped the event gave students a sense of the human element of health care.

For Halstead, the sentiment rang clear.

“It was amazing to see how health care providers see people, and seeing the love they have for the tribe and the Dena’ina,” Halstead said. “It was just really neat to see.”



Wilma Omnik looks at educational materials during a stop at the Dena’ina Wellness Center’s health fair featuring Nolan the Colon.

### NOLAN, from p. 1

cises at the wellness center a few times a week and is working on maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

“I think this is an excellent opportunity to help people,” Omnik said. “I think this is awesome. It’s nice to see everything here.”

Part of what makes colorectal cancer dangerous, staff said during the event, is often-times there are no symptoms. However, the disease is highly treatable if discovered early. That’s why it’s crucial to be screened – which means receiving a colonoscopy – at an appropriate age.

Wellness Director Deb Nyquist said the thought of receiving a colonoscopy makes many people uncomfortable despite the fact that the pre-procedure process is more taxing than the procedure itself.

“The preparation is the hardest part,” Nyquist said.

Charlene Bortz, a Southcentral Foundation employee who attended the fair and works with patients, also said screening is critical – and can be life-changing.

“We get feedback from people saying that if they hadn’t gotten screened they wouldn’t be here,” Bortz said. “We get some amazing stories.”

## Did you know?

- Colorectal cancer is the leading cause of new cancer cases among Alaska Native people
- Colorectal cancer is the second-leading cause of cancer deaths among Alaska Native people
- Colorectal cancer is twice as common among those with a first-degree relative (sibling, parent or child) who has had colorectal cancer.
- Colorectal cancer often has no symptoms

\*Source: Alaska Colorectal Cancer Partnership

## Do your part

- Participate in 30 minutes of physical activity each day
- Avoid using tobacco
- Eat a balanced, nutritious diet
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Limit your alcohol intake
- Have recommended screening exams

\*Source: Alaska Colorectal Cancer Partnership

Tanya Kashevarof, also of the Southcentral Foundation, attended to educate people about the harmful effects of nicotine. She said nicotine effects not just one but many parts of the body, including the colon.

A former smoker, Kashevarof understands it’s difficult to quit and that it can take multiple attempts. But it’s worth the effort.

“Once you put that cigarette out, the healing begins,” Kashevarof said.

To help support Colon Cancer Awareness Month, the wellness center also hosted two nutrition workshops in March. Additionally, it offers tobacco cessation services and a range of fitness activities – all of which can help

people avoid colorectal and other forms of cancer.

Said Omnik of the selection of services: “It’s great. This is like our own little mini Taj Mahal.”

# A clear vision

## Dena’ina Wellness Center partners with Kenai Vision to offer optometry services

How are your eyes?

If you’re a Dena’ina Wellness Center customer, the question might come up during your next visit.

That’s because the tribe recently signed an agreement with Kenai Vision giving Dena’ina Wellness Center customers access to an array of optometry services.

A referral is required from the Dena’ina Wellness Center to access the services, which include:

- Detecting and diagnosing eye diseases, retinal disorders, cataracts, lid disorders and infections.
- Prescribing medication to treat eye disease.
- Evaluating and treating vision conditions such as nearsightedness, farsightedness, astigmatism and presbyopia.
- Removing foreign objects from the eye.
- Provide pre- and post-operative care.

Dr. John Molina, Director of Health Systems, said the tribe is actively recruiting an optometrist and has space designated at the Dena’ina Wellness Center to house those services. But the agreement with Kenai Vision will serve customers well until the position is filled.

“Kenai Vision will provide services that will eventually be available here, and those services will include routine eye exams for eye conditions or injuries that the provider would see,” Molina said. “It’s a great service to have.”

In the past, referrals were made to Kenai Vision for customers with health conditions such as diabetes and hypertension that can increase the risk of impacts to eyesight.

The new agreement expands those referrals to a more general customer base.

“Before, it was basically for people who needed the care,” Molina said. “It wasn’t for eye glasses or basic eye screening.”

The Dena’ina Wellness Center does not provide glasses or contact lenses in-house, Molina said, meaning customers will need a referral and go to Kenai Vision for those services.

As an integrated health care facility, the wellness center takes a holistic approach to care. Molina said partnering with Kenai Vision supports that effort as it gives customers access to yet another service.

“We are establishing outside partnerships and this is another example,” Molina said. “They are really helpful.”



A display at the Dena’ina Wellness Center shows how much tar passes through the lungs of a half-pack-a-day cigarette smoker.

## Tobacco Quit Kits available

The Dena’ina Wellness Center’s Wellness program offers free “Quit Kits” to people who wish to give up tobacco.

They are also working to educate people on the dangers of “e-cigs” or “vaping.”

Drop by the center to pick up a kit or call for help from a Wellness professional. The phone number is 907-335-7200.

Additional resources are available at 1-800-QUIT-NOW, or on the Internet at [alaskaquitline.com](http://alaskaquitline.com).



# The Big Picture



Sharon Isaak (bottom right, gray jacket) leads members of the Kenaitze Indian Tribe’s Elders Committee in a closing prayer after the group toured for the first time the tribe’s new Elders building on Feb. 11. The building is now open. See story, Page 1.

## Our Mission

To assure Kahtnuht’ana Dena’ina thrive forever.

## Our Values

These are the beliefs and principles that define our people and will assure our future as a tribe:

**Family:** Honoring and sustaining health and happiness of family as a first responsibility

**Stewardship:** Respectful use of land, resources and all creations

**Spiritual Beliefs:** Acknowledging the existence of a higher power and respecting spiritual beliefs

**Education:** Passing down cultural knowledge and traditions and supporting formal education

## Our Vision

By 2025, the Kahtnuht’ana Dena’ina have enhanced and strengthened the prosperity, health and culture of their people and tribe by:

- working toward united effort with Native organizations and other governments that impact our people.
- developing and implementing a tribal education system.
- living our traditional values and practices.
- empowering our sovereignty.
- continuing to demonstrate resiliency.
- striving for excellence in all of our programs.
- elevating the wellness of our people.
- using our talents and resources to ensure we are able to take care of ourselves and share with others.

## Addresses and phone numbers

**Administration Building**  
150 N. Willow St., Kenai, AK 99611  
907-335-7200  
907-335-7239 fax

**Early Childhood Center**  
130 N. Willow St., Kenai, AK 99611  
907-335-7260

**Tyotkas Elders Center**  
1000 Mission Ave., Kenai, AK 99611  
907-335-7280

**Yaghanen Youth Programs**  
35105 K-B Dr., Soldotna, AK 99669  
907-335-7290

**Environmental Program**  
150 N. Willow St., Kenai, AK 99611  
907-335-7287

**Dena’ina Wellness Center**  
508 Upland St., Kenai, AK 99611  
907-335-7500

**Na’ini Social Services**  
510 Upland St., Kenai, AK 99611  
907-335-7600

**Tribal Court**  
508 Upland St., Kenai, AK 99611  
907-335-7217

**On the Web:** [kenaitze.org](http://kenaitze.org)  
**On Facebook:** [facebook.com/kenaitze](https://facebook.com/kenaitze)



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