

# Ka iqsirugut News

Winter 2023-24

The Newsletter of Norton Sound Health Corporation

No. 76

## Coming to life: Unalakleet revives dance group

Just over a year ago, Amber “Kapuu kaq” Cunningham could not get the sights and sounds of Alaska Native dancing out of her head.

Home in Unalakleet from her recent trip to Anchorage for the annual Alaska Federation of Natives convention, Cunningham’s mind was still filled with all she had seen and heard during AFN’s Quyana Nights.

For two nights during the convention, Alaska Native dance groups from

of large audiences at the Denaina Center. As Cunningham watched the

groups, she took in their vibrant outfits, the resonating singing and drumming and the beautiful, unapologetic movements. She was especially struck

by the happiness she saw reflected in the dancers’ and drummers’ faces.

“That’s what we’re missing. We really need that,” she thought, picturing her home community.

Cunningham was not alone in her feelings. Others wished to bring back

traditional dancing in Unalakleet, too. That became apparent when she gathered the courage to make a post on her Facebook page. She told her friends

sanaaq Kairaiuak “Ossie,” member of the well-known Yup’ik singing group Panyua, was willing to come to Unalakleet and teach community members

Already an idea simmering among  
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## Grant supports improved NSHC dementia care

was recently awarded a \$200,000 grant

its mission of improving dementia care

in the Norton Sound/Bering Strait region. This grant is part of \$18 million in funding from the IHS for tribal organizations

that gradually impairs memory, thinking and everyday tasks. Alzheimer’s disease

is a leading cause of dementia. According to the IHS, one-third of Alaska Native people ages 65 and older are at risk of developing demen-

tia. Many are diagnosed or are not aware of their

condition. The grant, which will be managed by the In-Home Support program of

NSHC, is helping to open increased services by addressing any service gaps for patients with

“Our goal is to strengthen families

and keep them from leaving the region to receive care,” said Tierra Austin, personal care ser-

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## Wales celebrates opening of new clinic

A few weeks before Christmas, the community of Wales got to cut the ribbon to their new clinic building. It was an early unveiling to celebrate the highly anticipated facility.

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## **EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT**

# Supporting quality care in Koyuk

*John Prentice has worked as a clinic travel specialist (CTS) since 2016. In 2023, he was promoted to CTS supervisor. He grew up in White Mountain and moved to Koyuk in 2005 where he became a stay-at-home dad for 10 years while keeping the church up and running throughout the year. Now, when not at work, he is enjoying the subsistence lifestyle and spending time with his family, gathering food with his wife and seven children year round.*

*As a CTS at the Koyuk clinic, Prentice answers and directs incoming telephone calls, schedules patient appointments with providers or health aides, and ensures that patient travel needs are met. He sometimes performs basic and helpful clinical duties. He finds that being able to multi-task and be polite are skills vital to the job.*

**Please describe what you like most about your job.**

My favorite part of the job is knowing that I make a big difference in our community as far as helping them get appointments and helping them get

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# NSHC health and career fairs come to village communities

one can find health resources and

# YOUR BEST LIFE

NEWS & VIEWS FROM THE CAMP DEPARTMENT AT NORTON SOUND HEALTH CORPORATION

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## CAMP re-introduces intuitive eating to promote health

NSHC's Chronic Care Active Management and Prevention (CAMP) program team is working to shed the many layers of outside influence on eating habits that have built up over

With the introduction of Western dieting the traditionally intuitive ways of eating were called into question. Through mass media, people learn

they should take to achieve those. The eating habits that came naturally were

from the decades-old idea that Western dieting and exercise are the most effective ways to be healthy. Experts now say reclaiming more intuitive ways to

and focuses on building a healthy body image, making peace with food, and listening to yourself. It uses instinct,

irrational thoughts that govern eating

"Incorporating the components of

"Individuals, not only in our region

through influence of diet culture,"

vention program supervisor.

"We are constantly seeking the quick fix to lose weight, but in reality,

understand that all bodies are different and will look different."

According to Evelyn Tribole and Elyse Resch, dietitians and authors of the book *Intuitive Eating*

intuitive eating positively affects the

removes 'food rules' that people have that may stop them from consuming their traditional foods," says Kylie Pot

CAMP recently offered an intuitive eating course that gave participants insight into the self-care framework and ten key intuitive eating principles

## Berries of summer that enrich winter

### **RECIPE: Tundra Blueberry Crumble Muffins**

A winter powerhouse for wellness, the immune-boosting properties of tundra blueberries go a long way during the cold, dark months. Even frozen, they offer a great variety of vitamins and minerals to help keep your immune system strong during cold and flu seasons. To bring variety to this recipe, you can swap tundra blues for other tundra berries or skip the streusel crumble topping.

### **ST RUESEL CRUMB TOPPING**

the catalyst for a meeting of several people who set to work combining their knowledge and resources to form a dance group.

The first dance practice was held November 20, 2022.

“We had one song at that point,” Cunningham said.

The song had originated in Unalakleet in the 1800s and tells a story of caribou hunting. It had been translated in 2020 through the efforts of a group of people with Unalakleet roots who wished to bring back songs that had been tucked away during the many years of Westernization. The group, including Ayyu Qassataq, Adrienne Blatchford, Theresa John, and others, practiced the song and, with help, put

Linda Cooper, a founding member of the dance group with Cunningham and at the time a bilingual and bicultural teacher at the Unalakleet school, said the 2020 translation projec

BHS staff teach drum

# Work progressing on NSHC facility projects in region

## QCC expansion project update

The current Quyanna Care Center was constructed in 2014 as a long-term care facility with 18 resident

that there was greater demand in the region for Elder care, and so planning to expand the building began. The expansion project will add 12 beds for a total of 30 beds

Anchorage-based firm Architects Alaska designed the concept layout in partnership with NSHC's engineering team. The expansion will be 14,452 square feet, doubling

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# Area students supported by NSHC scholarships





# Shedding some light on seasonal depression

In western Alaska, the onset of winter causes a drastic change in all living things each year. Daylight is minimized to as few as four hours on the darkest days of the year, with the sun barely leaving the horizon line as it simultaneously rises and sets.

The extended periods of darkness can disrupt a person's natural circadian rhythm, also known as their internal clock.

As the days grow shorter, critters like snowshoe hares, ermine, and ptarmigan begin to release hormones that causes them to change color. Birds have

their brains know when to grow flight feathers and when to begin the long journey to their winter vacation homes. Domestic laying hens slow egg production, compelling farmers to provide artificial light on an automatic timer to mimic 12 hours of daylight.

Like these animals, humans have not escaped the effects of limited daylight, making Alaskanstentimes

more likely to be diagnosed with a type of depression known as seasonal affective disorder (SAD) than people living outside of Alaska, according to

Some key physical changes are vitamin D deficiency, reduced serotonin (also known as the happiness hormone) and increased melatonin (also known as the sleep hormone).

Difficulty concentrating and social withdrawal. Tragi

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