

JUNE 2010

THE

NEWSLETTER

Fairbanks Native Association

State and local partners pulled together to fix problem

Gateway to Recovery regains program approval from State of Alaska

As everyone knows, Gateway to Recovery, the detox clinic, faced its own crisis last August and closed the service to reorganize.

The clinic reopened in early December and has been functioning smoothly since then.

During the closure, managers gave much thought to cause and solution. Coming out of discussions among the community partners and the staff was the term 'redundancy', or the capacity for backup reserves.

Perry Ahsogeak, FNA's Behavioral Health Services director sums up the experience by saying, "There is no substitute for staffing levels that take into account unforeseen circumstances in supervisory staff. We have that redundancy now and everyone is pleased to be moving forward."

According to Stacy Toner, Deputy Director of the Div. of Behavioral Health, the agency recommended Fairbanks Native Association for a one-year program approval on May 27. "By focusing on the task of improving its health services and in working with DBH staff, FNA accomplished its Plan for Improvement. As a result, DBH renewed program approval for FNA to operate Detoxification Services in Fairbanks. We thank FNA for its commitment to serve this critically impaired population," Toner said.

The facility is a recently constructed structure designed for its purpose and licensed by the state. Located on South Cushman St., its modern interior is laid out to accommodate client privacy and staff safety. It has a staff of 23 and is budgeted with state funds in the amount of \$1.5 million. A 25 percent match from In-



During a routine shift change, clinic employees share notes about client status and other concerns. Currently staffed by 23 employees, the clinic is in operation 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Left to right: Nancy Randall, CNA, Mary Downs-Last, RN, Kayla Rutter, CNA, and Stephanie Christianson, P.A. CNA (Certified Nurses Aid) PA (Physicians Aide)

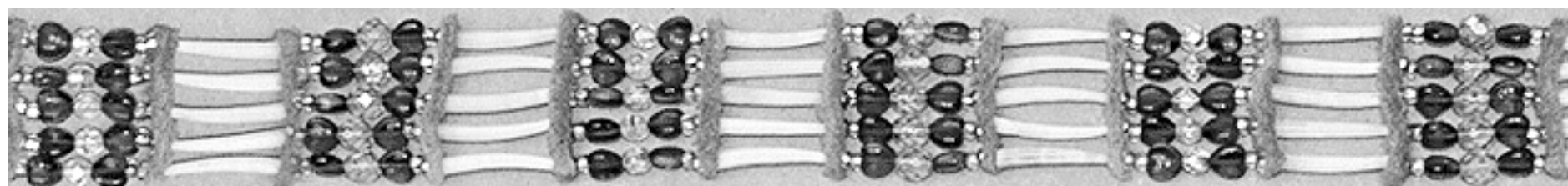
dian Health Service, third-party Medicaid and foundation funding is used to pay annual operating costs.

FNA is responsible for its day-to-day operations while policy is guided by an umbrella of community groups. These include the Fairbanks Community Behavioral Health Center, Fairbanks Memorial Hospital, Tanana Chiefs Conference

and the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority.

The clinic's medical side (client intake, assessment and monitoring) is being overseen by Kate Wood, a registered nurse, with a dozen years in the field of acute alcohol treatment.

In conversation, Kate is candid about the nature of her responsibilities, the toll on pro-



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viders and what it says about a community that supports a detox clinic.

She praises Fairbanks leaders for supporting the clinic. "Detox units are almost nonexistent Outside, so Fairbanks and Alaska demonstrate a greater awareness of the problem. Most policy makers think that if they can't see it, it doesn't exist."

In earlier times, people who were incapacitated by alcohol were placed in 'drunk tanks', scarcely better than an alley behind a bar, although presumably safer and warmer.

We're now more compassionate in response to acute and chronic alcohol addiction, though lasting solutions elude us. It makes no sense to allow people to collapse on sidewalks or storefronts. The reality requires an emergency room for alcohol poisoning. But once the detox staff has helped a client begin thinking clearly, it makes no promises.



Kate Wood supervises the detox clinic's medical staff.

"It's a hard life; we can't fix everyone. We offer tools and encouragement. Ultimately, only people can help themselves", Kate said.

Even under the best conditions, a person's

health is strained coming out of an acute exposure to alcohol. Many detox clients are stressed from years of poor nutrition, lack of emotional support, and inadequate health care.

With these clients, Kate and her staff are prepared for withdrawal risks that include cardiac or pulmonary arrest, delirium tremens and aspiration of stomach contents.

If you ever helped a high school or college friend cope with the effects of extreme alcohol consumption, an initially compassionate response that lasted more than 12 hours, you've seen a slice of the reality. Now, imagine doing that daily as a health professional, obligated to perform according to watchful monitoring and established protocols that are recorded in log books.

Gateway's residency is restricted to 3-5 days; all clients receive safety checks on 15-30 minute intervals to assure detox is progressing without crisis. Clients who are assessed as suicidal are under 24-hour video supervision.

The facility has a capacity for 16 clients, however, the current limit is 12, with the intent to go to full capacity by mid-July. Vacant nurse and CNA positions have been filled. When they complete orientation capacity will be increased in increments, up to a total of 16 clients.

While detox currently provides services for alcohol, we intend to provide detox for drugs/opiates by July 1, once the necessary training is completed.

The clinic accepts everyone in need. Caucasians, Native Americans, Asians and African-Americans. All races have received care at the clinic. No one is turned away; payment is on a sliding scale. In order to bill Medicaid, clients must remain in the facility for 24 hours.

The average client is a male, 35-45 years-old. Thirty-five percent are women. The gender disparity is assumed to be related to greater risk taking by males whereas a woman or mother's connections to children and family prevent or limit alcohol abuse.

Men are more 'in the world' and subject to the temptations that come with it. They are also

more likely to repeat, to visit the clinic multiple times.

Fairbanks Native Association

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FNA's Mission

We provide our membership and the greater Fairbanks community quality services in a professional manner. These services are provided through special and innovative programs, which preserve the membership's unique lifestyle and culture, while improving the quality of life for the community.

- Steve Ginnis, Executive Director
- Doreen Deaton, Deputy Director
- Duane Hoskins, Director of Finance
- Rhonda Howard, Director of Human Resources
- Perry Ahsogeak, BHS Director
- Carrie Lucas, WCCIH Program Director
- Suzanne Christenson, Graf Program Director
- Mary Willey, Head Start Program Director
- Angela Foster-Snow, Early Head Start Program Dir.
- Shirley Williams, PAT Program Director
- Freda Williams, Community Services Program Dir.
- Louise Glynn, FASAP Program Director
- Linda Woods, Johnson O'Malley Program Director

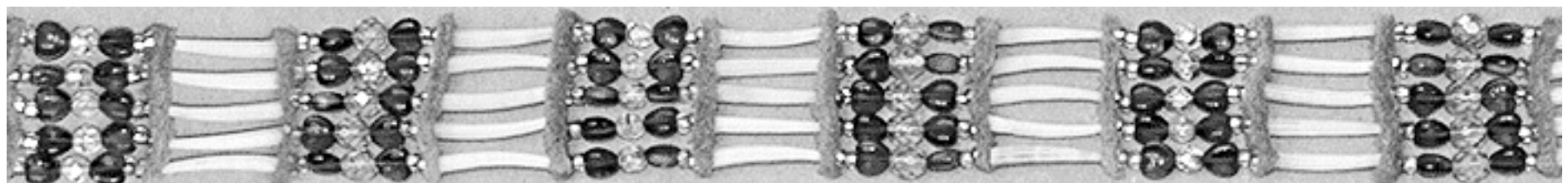
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"There is always hope, says Kate, no matter how often people return. What's needed are small successes, building day by day, and hopefully, people do recover. But no one should deny this is hard work. Recovery is not an easy process; detox is the first step."

Kate brings to the detox unit a deep investment in Alaska and this region. Since arriving in the late 70s from Maine, with a nursing degree from a school in Rhode Island, Alaska has been home. Like many in her generation, she came for a summer and never left.

Kate says her first job was at Ann's Greenhouse in Goldstream Valley; she's always had a green thumb, first vegetables, now flowers. Farming skills were first adopted, along with raising ducks and turkeys, when she lived on a 20-acre farm near the coast of Maine.

However, Alaska quickly got under her skin. She was soon pursuing a life of village nursing, dog mushing, gold mining, roadhouse cooking and subsistence living on a remote parcel in the Alaska Range.





Lynda Crow is the detox clinic's case manager and care coordinator.

Kate is a hunter, and knows the obligations that go with it. She's shot moose, caribou and black bear, meat for the table. One winter she took 15 wolves on a trap line out of Gold King Creek. Later, she worked with biologists at Fish and Game to live trap lynx for a Colorado relocation program.

As a nurse with Tanana Chiefs Conference, she organized the Elders program to advocate for better access for health care. Kate's experience with cross-cultural communications and exposure to village life, along with a compassionate nature and medical skills make her a natural to oversee the clinic's medical requirements.

According to Kate, the work is challenging. "People either like it or they can't work with it at all."

To move the clinic ahead Kate has assembled a team of professionals to staff the facility on a 24-hour basis. They are a diverse group of people, grounded individuals with hobbies, families and children. Respect for each other and the mission is paramount.

Lynda Crow is a member of the team, one who leads the counseling side of the clinic. As the care coordinator, Lynda's responsibilities include working with her colleagues to assure clients receive followup services.

A Doyon shareholder from Circle, Lynda is responsible for overseeing mandatory group therapy sessions and that clients observe clinic

rules; she helps determine assessments in mental health status; and if needed, she arranges for referrals and additional evaluations.

Lynda has nearly 20 years of experience in the substance abuse field. She's seen the personal devastation that alcohol brings to people, families and communities. Amid the wreckage, she admits to good days and bad days.

"I like helping people in great need and I've had some successes. Using my knowledge about healthier ways of living to get people thinking about the future keeps me going," she said.

Previously, Lynda worked at the Tanana Chiefs/Old Minto Recovery Camp. She also did a stint with the Council of Athabascan Tribal Governments, giving her the

opportunity to visit all villages in the region.

Educated at Sitka's Mt. Edgecumbe High School, Lynda has a Rural Human Service certificate, and is a state certified Chemical Dependency Clinical Supervisor.

Speaking of her good days, she's pleased when a client moves toward health and recovery. "Everyone benefits when that happens," she said.

Lynda's treatment philosophy is connected to spiritual beliefs about the natural world and its ability to heal. "Nature is my church," she said. "I like to spend time near rivers, and I hope they're running with fish," smiling broadly at the thought.

She's a student of medicinal plants and of her people's ability to heal themselves from what the land provides. When at home she enjoys reading, berry picking, preserving foods and photographing children and nature.

The lack of adequate followup care, particularly for male clients, troubles her. "The first priority is housing for women and kids, men are essentially left to fend for themselves. Lots of rules, higher fees and sobriety requirements tend to leave men out in the cold," she said.

While it's not a perfect world, both Kate and Lynda, along with their colleagues, are working to improve it. FNA's Gateway to Recovery detox clinic is visible evidence of those efforts.

Head Start class photos ask you to consider the future, See Page 4

Graduation photos, class photos, are records of accomplishment, validation for student, teacher and family. Our Head Start class photos capture a step on the lower rungs of socialization and education, when a parent's hopes and fears are perhaps keenest.

FNA Head Start is plays a vital role in preparing children for school, collaborating with parents and working with community partners to secure a good future for Fairbanks children.

According to program director, Mary Willey, Head Start is funded to serve 152 children (3 years-5 years) at three facilities. The majority, 120, are center based (80 part day and 40 extended day) while 32 are home based children. By stretching the limits of a lean budget, upwards of 180 children benefited from the Head Start program this year.

The program employs 34 regular staff and a roster of on-call staff. This includes six primary teachers, 10 teacher aides, two managers, three kitchen staff, three home visitors and a bus driver. Behind them are six who support and administer the front lines. An additional three people are employed as family advocates.

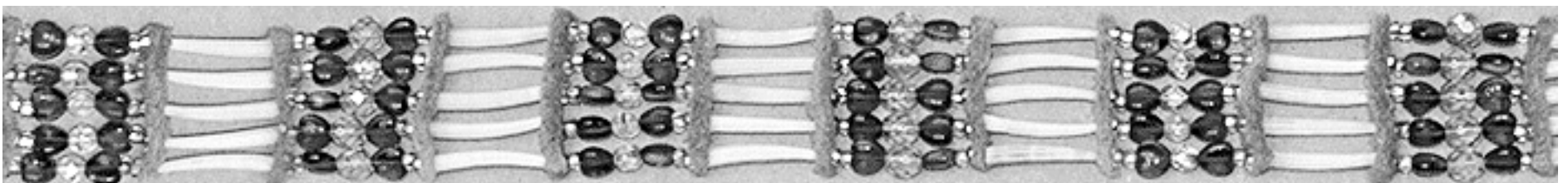
The Head Start staff has a large variety of skill sets. Federal regulations require the primary teacher to have a Child Development Associate (CDA) and working for or a higher degree such as an AA and BA in Early Child Education. Teacher aides must commit to obtaining their CDA. The bus driver is required to hold a CDL, with school bus endorsement.

FNA Head Start delivers services in downtown Fairbanks. The Poldine Carlo building on Second Avenue houses four Part Day classes. The majority of the staff have offices here. We work with 80 children a day, four days a week, from September to the end of May. The Carlo building is owned by FNA.

At 1024 Barnette we present an Extended Day Class. From this leased building we serve 20 children a day, four days a week, from September to the end of July.

From another leased property at 909 Cushman Street, we offer a second Extended Day Class. At this location, Head Start serves 20 children a day, four days a week, from September to the end of July. This is a leased property.

Take a look at the Head Start's class photos on Page 4. If you know someone who works or volunteers at Head Start, thank them.



See story on Page 3

Fairbanks Native Association 2010 Head Start Class Photographs



AM1, Part Day Class, Poldine Carlo Building, 320 2nd Ave.



AM2, Part Day Class, Poldine Carlo Building, 320 2nd Ave. *



PM2, Part Day Class, Poldine Carlo Building, 320 2nd Ave. *



Barnette Extended Day Class, 1024 Barnette St.

* The date stamp on some photos is inaccurate



PM 1, Part Day Class, Poldine Carlo Building, 320 2nd Ave.



Cushman Extended Day Class, 909 Cushman St. *

