Day Care promise fulfilled

During her recent campaign, Mayor Charlotte Brower made a promise to put the need for quality day care across the North Slope at the top of her agenda. As a mother and grandmother, she knew that day care can be critical to a young family trying to make a good life for themselves and their children.

This month, that promise has taken its first step towards fulfillment with the opening of the Barrow Early Learning Center. “I am committed to the healthy growth of all our children’s minds and bodies and am very aware of just how important these early years can be in that development. I could not be happier that we are finally moving again in a direction that will support all our North Slope families.”

The Barrow Early Learning Center is committed to creating a sustainable and vibrant early care and learning program that contributes to the overall economy, quality of life, and health of the community, where all parents and children are flourishing and growing in a culturally relevant and healthy environment.

The Barrow Early Learning Center is designed to support 20 children 6 weeks through 36 months in out of home care. Through licensed, safe and healthy care, developmentally appropriate learning experiences, and nurturing relationships the Barrow Early Learning Center aims to help each child to grow and develop within the program, their family and the community.

Mayor Charlotte Brower and husband Eugene taking a baby break.

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EMPLOYEE of the Month

Robert Villalon
April 2015 EOM

Robert Villalon is the Employee of the Month for April. He is a Computer Support Specialist II at the MIS Division of Department of Administration and Finance. Robbie started working for the Management Information Systems Group (MIS) as a Computer Support Specialist I in 2010. In his position he provides basic to advanced computer software support, application problem identification and resolution. He provides end-user training as necessary. Robbie has also mentored MIS interns, temporary and new first level support staff.

Robbie has shown willingness and the capability to learn and perform different tasks depending on the needs and requirements of the situation. He continues to improve himself by pursuing a degree in Information Systems.

He performs his duties with diligence, and a cheerful and amicable attitude, which enables him to have good working relationship with the users that MIS support. He is a great asset to the MIS Division and the North Slope Borough. Quyanaqpak Robbie!

Borough Mayor supports Camps across the slope

You don’t have to live in Bush Alaska very long to find out that basketball is king. From their earliest years, both boys and girls in villages across the North Slope can be found shooting hoops in their school gym or at an improvised outdoor spot during the sun filled summer days and nights. Given that one of the major health threats to Alaska Native people is diabetes, which can result from inactivity and overweight, the Mayor’s Office felt that by providing funds to the Booster Club of Barrow to sponsor these camps, the Office was encouraging healthy activities that were also fun for the kids.

In Barrow, an older generation of basketball players, like Tyler Adams, returned to offer their assistance for these camps and to earn a little summer cash. The Booster Club and Mayor Brower agreed that having these young people earn some money for working with the sports camps was a great use of the funds provided to the Booster Club.

In Barrow, the camps were divided into Speed and Agility, Basketball, Cheer Camp, Football, Volleyball and a Fun Run. A volleyball camp was held in Atqasuk, a basketball camp in Point Hope and a cross-country camp in Anaktuvuk Pass. The village camps were developed with the School District and assisted by Challenge Life provided both fun activities and meals for all participants.

The Barrow Basketball camp was led by Adam Ellis, head coach of men’s basketball for Blue Mountain Community College in Oregon. In a letter to Mayor Brower thanking her for the opportunity to come to the North Slope to run these camps, Ellis noted, “Coming into the camp I had a very detailed plan of how I wanted to run the camp. I quickly had to redo my plans. I was impressed with the skill level of all the ages of kids. These kids have been brought up with the game of basketball and taught the right way. They were steps ahead of other age groups of kids I have had in camp. Therefore I had to make the camp more challenging then expected. They have put in a lot of hard work to get better and that is exciting for the future of North Slope basketball. The camp in Barrow was a great success; we had around 70 kids in the younger group and 20-25 kids each day in the high school level. The older kids helped instruct the younger kids and they did an unbelievable job. Some alumni helped instruct the older group and they did a great job as well. Once again I am just so impressed with the kids in the community. You can just tell the amount of love there is for these kids.”
Iñupiat Language Summit

The Iñupiat History, Language and Culture Department, in partnership with the North Slope Borough School District and Iñíasγvik College, held an “Uqausiqput Iñupiatun Maŋŋugilugu Iñuusa, a two day Iñupiaq Language Summit on July 20 & 21, 2015 in Barrow. The 125 participants included residents from communities across the North Slope as well as Kotzebue and the University of Alaska Fairbanks. Additionally, organizations had representatives in attendance and provided support for the summit.

One of the most interesting proposals put forth at the summit called for a master apprenticeship program in which fluent speaker would accept an apprentice to learn the language under the master’s tutelage. Discussions on this issue were spirited, interesting and fruitful. It is this type of idea and discussion that goes a long way in achieving the goal of revitalizing the Iñupiat language. The next step will be to further define the action items needed to activate a master/apprentice program as well as other ideas brought forth at the summit.

In the next year, IHLC will travel to every village on the North Slope to host a mini summit on the future of the Iñupiat language. All village residents are encouraged to attend these summits and bring their best ideas with them so that the Iñupiat language can flourish for generations to come.

Student Highlight

North Slope students who attended the Indigenous Conference in Washington D.C. and met personally with First Lady Michelle Obama. They also had an opportunity to visit the State Department to discuss the challenges and opportunities young Alaska Native youth face growing up in Bush Alaska.

Nancy Larson
May 2015 EOM

I am pleased and saddened to introduce Nancy Larson, this month’s employee of the month. I’m pleased because she so richly deserves this honor and saddened because she will retire after 22 years as a dedicated employee of the North Slope Borough.

Nancy’s work in Human Services and Personnel has been invaluable to the borough’s efforts to provide all employees with a safe, healthy workplace where they can advance their careers while enjoying all the protections and benefits of borough employment. Nancy has been critical to our efforts to ensure that borough hiring practices are consistent and legal in each department while ensuring that the borough is able to hire the best and most qualified employees available. She took special care to see that interns were placed in positions that would encourage their interest in a particular career. She worked hard to see that all MJP employees were given a change to advance, and that high school students in OJT training learned what an employer’s expectations are.

We wish you a long, happy and fulfilling retirement. Quyanaqpak Nancy!
EMPLOYEE of the Month

Thomas Nukapigak is the Employee of the Month for June. He began with the North Slope Borough in June 1986 as a laborer. Thomas is the village supervisor at Public Works in Nuiqsut. Thomas has been instrumental in aligning the Nuiqsut operations of Public Works with the Public Works mission statement. His supervisor states that he has been very dependable when it comes to requests, job duties or responsibilities. Thomas has also been open in his communication with the Department allowing for better response to situations as they arise. His communication also extends to working with the community on any Public Service announcements and making face to face contacts with the residents as needed.

Thomas is a valuable asset to the entire North Slope Borough and particularly the community of Nuiqsut. Quyanaqpak Thomas!

Service Area 10 meeting customer needs

New construction at Service Area 10 is on schedule and maintaining an admirable safety record. This project includes a new treatment plant for the production of water and treatment of wastewater. The new facility is state of the art and will offer customers a new option: the ability to purchase hot water for industrial applications, as well as providing them with faster service. Substantial completion is expected by Oct. 1, 2015. The plant should be in full production before the end of the year.

The Oxbow Landfill is expanding to meet customer needs. Construction of the first cell of the landfill has been completed and the facilities are being retrofitted to improve the efficiency and safety of operations. The hard work of contractors and staff, as well as community support, has kept this project on time for completion.

Trans-Alaska Pipeline System Tax Litigation

The North Slope Borough has been engaged in a complex and lengthy legal challenge over the property tax calculations for the TAPS project. With the borough mayor and assembly standing firm on their position, the Alaska Supreme Court has ruled in favor of the borough on its 2007 – 2009 tax years arguments. Although litigation continues over other tax years, this is at least a partial resolution of the issue in the borough’s favor. While the borough always prefers to work with industry on the Slope, the administration and assembly remain committed to this process so that the interests of residents of the borough are upheld.
Benefits Fair huge success

At the request of the Mayor’s Office, the Borough’s Departments of Human Resources and Administration and Finance hosted the first Employees’ Benefits Fair in Barrow on August 25. The event ran for two days and employees from all North Slope villages were flown into Barrow to attend.

This event was originally intended to offer financial and planning advice to employees within five years of retirement. However, while planning the event it evolved into a much more comprehensive seminar on employee benefits with the majority of vendors that offer employee benefits making a presentation specific to borough employees. Some vendors that made presentations were Valic, PERS and Meritain Health. Taking advantage of the gathering of employees, Interactive Health came to Barrow during the three-day seminar and offered free employee health screenings.

As with anything new, the seminar had some minor problems and one major storm to overcome. But overcome it did. And directly after the seminar, department employees debriefed on both the positives and negatives of the seminar as they work to make next year’s seminar even better. Plans now call for this to become an annual borough event.

Any suggestions, complaints, comments or even compliments can be sent to the Department of Human Resources, PO Box 69, Barrow, AK 99723, or sent as an inter-department letter.

Kristopher Kolodziej
July 2015 EOM

This month I am proud to present this tribute as Employee of the Month to Kristopher D. Kolodziej. Kris originally began with Public Works Power and Light Division in in 2011 through 2013. In October of 2014 Kris was re-hired with the division.

Kris is no stranger to working outside in the elements and rural areas. Originally from Wisconsin, and a Lineman of 20 years, he is a Certified Lineman Journeyman with the Alaska Department of Labor. His willingness to respond to emergency even on his time off is evident of his dedication to his work.

On February 28, 2015, Kris put his own life and safety at risk when he attempted to restore power to the village of Kaktovik during the blizzard. Due to high wind, fourteen (14) transformers in the village gave out and Kris’s determination and commitment to the residents of Kaktovik drove him to restore the power to the community.

Quyanaqpak Kris!

Who is it?

Last issue “Who Is It”? Alfred Koonaloak

Can you guess who this Elder is?
Mari Moore
August 2015 EOM

Mari Moore is the August Employee of the Month. Mari began with the North Slope Borough in the Planning Department in 2012. In 2014 she transitioned to the Department of Administration and Finance to work as a Deputy Assessor.

Since her move to Administration and Finance, Mari has been instrumental in updating accessed property values. Ms. Moore brings competence, professionalism and insight to her job. Her presence has assisted in creating efficiency in Assessing and has assisted in ensuring that our taxation is consistent and equitable.

Mari is willing to go out of her way to assist in Assessing functions in both Barrow and the villages and can routinely be found talking to residents about the process. Mari is a respected member of the Administration and Finance team and an asset to the entire North Slope Borough.

Quyanaqpak Mari!

Mayor’s Message (cont. from page 1)

came to Alaska for the Global Leadership in the Arctic; Cooperation, Innovation, Engagement & Resilience (GLACIER) Conference and to tour several communities. His trip and the additional national and international focus that it brought have given the North Slope Borough the opportunity to highlight the needs of our communities and residents.

Over Labor Day weekend Senator Murkowski, Admiral Zukunft, and Admiral Abel of the Coast Guard met with me for a short period of time. This brief meeting gave me a chance to give a detailed update on the recent fall storm and damages, which naturally led to discussion on erosion and the need for mitigating measures such as a sea wall. Governor Walker also came to the North Slope for a tour of erosion damage and again my administration was given the opportunity to discuss with him the need for longer term solutions and better protection of our infrastructure, water source, and historical sites.

In terms of projects within the North Slope Borough moving forward – you will find that in this newsletter you will find some exciting areas in which priorities voiced by the community are actively being addressed. There has been positive momentum on Childcare, a Benefits Fair, Housing, Permafrost Research, Service Area 10 and the Trans-Alaska Pipeline Litigation.

Our staff has been hard at work for the residents on many fronts, and I want to thank them for those efforts. I also want to thank the residents who work with our administration letting us know what their concerns are so we have an opportunity to address them. The challenges we face are in creating sustainable solutions and my administration is working hard to ensure our efforts are not simply a temporary fix, instead we aim to resolve on-going issues and concerns for future generations.

Public Housing

The Public Housing is under the Mayor’s office with a Letter of Understanding (LOU) with the Department of Capital Improvement Program Management (CIP/M) and is an agreement between both Departments. Lloyd Leavitt from the Mayor’s office over-see’s the Program.

They have completed (3) design’s scenario’s to build in the seven outlying villages. They hope to have 5 units built per village. Land is being solicited in each of the villages. They are working with the Village Corporations to identify these Lands. This will be on-going until they have identified the Lands to build on. They are also trying to work with the City Offices to see if they have land available for sale.

They would like to build units at appraised value, so they are currently working with appraiser’s.

It’s been a slow process but they hope to have units done in 2016.
Point Lay Permafrost Research

The North Slope Borough entered into a research agreement with the University of Alaska Fairbanks to conduct studies of permafrost conditions in Point Lay. The fieldwork and analysis took approximately nine months to conduct and involved the use of new technologies to measure and map underground ice formations. The Assembly received a preliminary briefing on the results of the study on September 1 and a final report is expected by the end of the year. This report will be made available to Point Lay to assist residents in their community planning.

Additional research work is being proposed for Wainwright with the long term goal of creating a partnership among North Slope Borough communities, Planning, CIPM, Public Works, and Risk Management to better address the impacts of changing soil conditions on roads, utilities, and other infrastructure.

Search and Rescue Director a presenter at the Glacier Conference

Search and Rescue Department Director April Brower was honored to make a presentation at the Global Leadership in the Arctic: Cooperation, Innovation, Engagement and Resilience (GLACIER) Conference. Her topic was “Enhancing Search & Rescue at the Local Level.” Leaders from across the Arctic attended her presentation.

Brower focused on the challenges faced by local residents in mounting search and rescue efforts under some very challenging conditions. She detailed the mission of the Borough’s Search and Rescue Department, including information about the kind of aircraft used and the skills needed by department personnel. Following her presentation, there was discussion of local volunteer search and rescue efforts and how critical these volunteer units are to successful mission outcomes. Finally, Brower was able to use this forum to detail the needs that continue to exist in many Arctic communities for more advanced equipment and communications so that both the rescuers and those needing rescue can come home safely.

Response to Brower’s presentation and the ensuing discussion was both positive and complimentary of the borough’s efforts to make life safer for its residents. Director Brower’s participation in this conference allowed her to represent SAR employees as the dedicated and committed individuals they are.
Mayor’s Youth Advisory Council (MYAC) in full swing

The North Slope Borough’s population is approximately 9,700 and a quarter of that population is made up of people younger than 18. This population is unable to vote but play a vital and essential roll to a healthy community and should be engaged in public affairs and community service.

Mayor’s Youth Advisory Council (MYAC) allows for young leaders to have an outlet to discuss and take action on issues that are deemed important to the North Slope Borough’s youth. MYAC members will have an opportunity to develop their personal leadership skills through community service and act as a liaison for youth engagement and community concerns through advocacy and public education. We as a community need to embrace the idea that we need to foster and develop our future leaders. If you have any questions contact Brian Houston, MYAC Coordinator at 852-0200.

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MYAC students in Point Hope hosted an Eskimo Baseball game followed by a Movie/Pizza Night.

MYAC hosted a Bonfire for all ages in Barrow.