

# Kanjiqsirugut News

kang·ik'·see·roo'·koot (Iñupiaq): we understand

Fall 2018

The Newsletter of Norton Sound Health Corporation

No. 69

## NSHC earns recognition as a leader in quality health care

Norton Sound Health Corporation raked in the second-highest grant amount statewide through the federal Health Resources and Services Administration's (HRSA) annual Health Center Quality Improvement awards.

HRSA awarded NSHC \$87,248 based on five different improvement categories and named NSHC a National Health Center Quality

Leader — one of only three in Alaska.

Two of NSHC's awards, totaling \$11,000, highlight the use of the electronic health record and its ability to generate high quality reports about patients across disciplines, departments and locations.

NSHC improved data collection across its entire patient population, making reports much more complete and

accurate than when it relied on reports about random subsets of patients.

NSHC's frontline staff and providers are to thank for recognition in the "clinical quality improvers" category, which garnered \$21,124. Health centers must have improved 10 percent of clinical quality measures between 2016 and 2017, which required diligence and documentation around those

measures. Some areas of improvement that NSHC noted:

- Weight assessment and counseling for children and adolescents: Rose from 26 percent to 92 percent;

- Adult body-mass index (BMI) screening and follow-up: Increased from 69 percent to 88 percent;

- Percentage of patients with

*Please turn to back page*



Photo: Reba Lean

### QCC elders go fishing

Quyanna Care Center residents, volunteers and staff gathered at the mouth of the Snake River on July 17 to brave the misty weather and reel in pink salmon as they began their journeys upriver. Gloria Walluk (brown jacket) assists Bernice Nupowhotuk in getting her rod set up, while Gaylon Rodin begins reeling in his line.

### MRI services closer to reality for region

If all goes well, patients from around the region will soon be able to have needed MRI scans done in Nome.

Norton Sound Health Corporation is building an addition to house a new magnetic resonance imaging machine next to the emergency department on the first floor of the hospital. UIC Construction, based in Utqiagvik (Barrow), is on schedule to complete the addition by the end of 2018.

Meanwhile, the MRI machine will be making an arduous journey to the hospital in Nome.

**"The MRI equipment and addition are a gift from the NSHC Board to save the patients' lives."**

An MRI machine is essentially a giant magnet that looks like an oversized metal donut — with a magnetic field force ten thousand times stronger than that of the Earth, according to Cathy DeAngelis, manager of NSHC's radiology department. An MRI magnet is much bigger than the similar-looking magnet of a CT scan machine.

The MRI manufacturer, General Electric, is transporting the huge magnet from the East Coast to Anchorage and will fly it to Nome on Oct. 23. UIC Construction will then move the giant

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## Traditional values make local CNAs a perfect fit for life-changing work at QCC

Around a large table in Quyanna Care Center's activity room sat seven of the women residents — elders from communities around the region, now living together in the Nome facility.

They wore fancy red hats and white gloves in celebration of a special tea party. On this Tuesday in August, they were a quiet bunch, tired from a visit to the XYZ Senior Center earlier in the day.

Then Ronda Burnett, QCC activities coordinator, turned on some

music. It was a recording of resident Eloise Ahwinona's husband singing. Pretty soon, Ahwinona was feeling less quiet and began to sing along in her language.

The women perked up even more as some familiar faces joined the party.

Amanda Homekingkeo, a certified nursing assistant, wore a bright smile as she greeted each resident. She bent down to say hello and asked how each woman was doing.

Rachel Nassuk, a former CNA, happened to stop by at the same time, just to pay her friends a visit.

As the residents were served cups of tea and plates of blueberry delight, the younger women kept a close eye on each of them, anticipating their needs, making conversation, and helping where needed. It was a mark of their training as CNAs but also of a deeper, more innate custom: Respect for their elders.

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Kanjiqsirugut News





## Kanjiqsirugut News

The Newsletter of  
Norton Sound Health Corporation

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HEALTH CORPORATION**

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Photo: Monica Watchman

## NSRH ranks high among beautiful hospitals in U.S.

For the third consecutive year, Norton Sound Regional Hospital ranked among the Top 20 Most Beautiful Hospitals in the U.S.

This year, NSRH took seventh place out of 68 hospitals nationwide. In 2017, NSRH came in ninth place and in 2016, it received sixth place honors. NSRH received its first Top 20 recognition in 2013, when the brand new hospital ranked in 11th place.

Beauty was one of the things in mind when members of the NSHC Board of Directors, who represent regional tribes, approved the design of the facility. They hoped to build a hospital in which patients would feel at home. The hospital is covered with windows on all sides that provide amazing views of the surrounding tundra

and sea while filling the interior with natural light. Artwork from all parts of the region is prominently displayed on each of the three main floors.

Soliant, a leading specialty health-care staffing provider, holds an annual contest to recognize the nation's most beautiful hospitals. This year's contest received more than 250,000 total votes; NSRH received over 10,000 of them.

"Being named among Soliant's Most Beautiful Hospitals is a significant achievement," said David Alexander, president of Soliant. "Each winner joins a distinguished list of outstanding hospitals committed to delivering first-class patient care in environments that foster healing."

Check out the other top 20 most beautiful hospitals at Soliant's website.

## NSHC patient advocate helps ensure your voice is heard



Jeannie Yuman



Mark Allred

The NSHC Patient Advocacy Program is here to assist you. If you need help navigating through your health care delivery system, please speak to Jeannie Yuman, the patient advocate, at (907)443-4567, toll free at 800-443-3311, or by email at padvocate@nshcorp.org.

If you have a complaint, concern, suggestion, or compliment, please let the patient advocate know!

Patient concerns will be reviewed and investigated and a response will be made within 30 days or sooner. NSHC strives to immediately resolve concerns and the process is most efficient if you directly call Yuman to assist.

The patient advocate can also help you appeal a medical bill from another medical facility if you followed the NSHC policy for a referral. Please give the patient advocate a copy of the bill. You may also call the patient advocate for medical travel, escort, or lodging concerns.

If you have travel-related questions while in Anchorage, please contact Mark Allred, NSHC travel liaison, at (907) 434-1323. He is available Monday-Friday, 9 a.m. until 9 p.m.

**NORTON SOUND  
HEALTH CORPORATION**

*Travel Liaison*

**Mark Allred**

434-1323 | mallred@nshcorp.org



## Angie's Report

**Angela Gorn**  
CEO & President

On behalf of the NSHC Board of Directors and our entire NSHC family, it is my pleasure to share what our staff have been working on to ensure your health care experience is respectful, high-quality, and attentive to your needs.

The quality care delivered by our health aides continues to be recognized by the NSHC governing board as well as the State of Alaska. The Board of Directors has approved more time off for our health aides, along with housing and airline ticket bonuses in FY2018 — a small token to reward them for their work. Meanwhile, the State of Alaska has approved reimbursement for Health Aide Level I and Level II visits, which will bring more funds into our health care system.

Last fall, NSHC appointed Dr. Mark Peterson as medical director.

Dr. Peterson has recruited experienced, high-quality medical providers and implemented a new model to staff the primary care department with providers who will travel more often (3-4 times annually) to each village clinic.

Dedicated hospital and emergency room providers, as well as physicians specialized in delivering babies (OB/GYNs), were also added. Full-time psychiatry services were added to ensure behavioral health services are fully integrated into patient care. Our providers are seeing more patients in the primary and acute care departments, and fewer in the emergency department.

Medicaid expansion has allowed NSHC to enroll more residents into the Medicaid program. Over 5,300 residents are now insured by Medicaid, allowing NSHC to capture revenue for more health care services. Cash collections now exceed the level of funding from Indian Health Services, at approximately \$68 million collected for FY2018. This allows NSHC to add further support services and resources for Tribal members.

Major steps are being taken to expand substance abuse treatment services. While planning construction of a wellness and training center, we are moving ahead now to improve services in this area. NSHC will start a day shelter in Nome to provide a safe place for our patients to be during hours when the local emergency shelter is not open. Coming changes will also ensure that patients are safely monitored and transitioned from one service to the next.

More plans are underway to better serve our population. We plan to open our operating room in FY2019 and initiate minor day surgeries. The new MRI machine will go live in January 2019. NSHC is also working to support elders and other patients with care needs in their own homes.

At NSHC, there is no such thing as "good enough." Our staff continue to grow and learn to improve quality care.



# Aarigaa! NSHC staff take time to learn Inupiaq

When a group of about 20 Inupiaq language learners gathered in Nome in June for their second-annual intensive course, Norton Sound Health Corporation leadership jumped on the opportunity to get involved.

Ilisaqativut is the name of the program, organized by second-language learners Cordelia Qigñaq Kellie, of Wainwright and Wasilla, and Reid Paafuk Magdanz, of Kotzebue. Aspiring Inupiaq speakers can apply for the program, which meets up annually for a two-week immersive course in speaking and understanding the indigenous language.

In its first year, Ilisaqativut met in Utqiagvik (Barrow). While there, the group met with Utqiagvik hospital staff over an optional language-learning lunch.

The group wanted to do something similar for its Nome gathering and reached out to NSHC administrators, who opted to provide the opportunity to all staff. Not all of NSHC's communities are Inupiaq-speaking, so clinics were given the option of hiring a local speaker to provide similar lessons.

On June 14, NSHC opened late to the public to allow for a corporation-wide learning opportunity for its employees. In Nome, about 200 employees gathered on the second floor at 8 a.m. for an introduction to speaking Inupiaq from the program's participants. Several village clinics called into a videoconference to take part in the lesson as well.

The program's participants became instructors to NSHC staff. With at least two instructors each, NSHC employees were split into small groups and given handouts with the Inupiaq alphabet, Inupiaq words and phrases commonly seen around town, and popular greetings and phrases, among other things.

For two hours, the halls of Norton Sound Regional Hospital were filled with laughter and the murmurs of Inupiaq pronunciations. As



Photos: Reba Lean

**Above:** Instructors, including Maddy Alvanna Stimpfle of Nome (center, blue kuspuk), taught NSHC employees the Inupiaq alphabet, which includes 28 distinct sounds, not including vowel combinations with their own sounds. **Right:** The Inupiaqtun Introduction lesson was available to all NSHC employees, including village staff, who joined via videoconference.

health care employees, the instructors taught pertinent phrases like "Arii!" ("It hurts!") and "Igayan-aqqiin?" ("Do you need help?"). Ilisaqativut instructors taught the NSHC learners to celebrate small victories and even mistakes, because every attempt was a step toward learning the language.

"Aarigaa!" learners would exclaim after forming a successful interaction.

As the small groups wrapped up their lessons, everyone gathered once more on the second floor



to wrap up the course by singing an Inupiaq rendition of "Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes" or "Niaquq, Tuik, Sitquk, Putukkuk," followed by one more resounding "Aarigaa!"

## Nome-based nursing students near end of 2-year program

For three local nursing students, this past summer has been all work and no play.

Over the last few months, Colette Topkok, Richelle Horner, and Mary Ruud have worked taxing shifts in Norton Sound Regional Hospital's acute care and emergency departments, sharpening real-world skills to supplement what they learn in class.

Now they are back in school to finish their fourth and final semester of the University of Alaska Anchorage School of Nursing's two-year registered nursing program.

Ruud said her normal week for the next few months will involve going to the University of Alaska Fairbanks Northwest Campus in Nome to participate in a weekly video conference, regularly scheduled clinical hours which will mostly be completed in Anchorage, and lab days to work on her nursing skills.

On top of that she hopes to continue working in NSHC's emergency department as a tech — a job she qualifies for because she already has her certified nursing assistant license.

"It feels like I'm more of a nurse, being independent, getting to interact



Photo: Reba Lean

Richelle Horner, Mary Ruud, and Colette Topkok demonstrate how a fetal heart monitor works during a presentation at the NSHC Patient Hostel/Pre-Maternal Home in April. The monitor is used to see how the baby's heart rate corresponds with the mother's contractions.

with patients more," Ruud said. "It feels more real now."

Each of the nursing students has her own reasons for becoming a nurse, but all three share a common goal: To help others through their job.

"I wanted to become a nurse because in our cultural Native values it is said to always help people in need," Topkok said. "This is one of the cultural

values that my Auka (grandmother) instilled in her children and grandchildren every day."

Horner, too, wants to make a difference in the region.

"I wanted a career that I felt would benefit and serve the people of our community and region," she said. "Since we don't have many local nurses, I plan to be a familiar face in

our hospital. I also want to encourage others, not only from Nome, but also from our surrounding villages, to take advantage of our local nursing program here in Nome."

The two years of coursework and training will result in all three students becoming registered nurses with an associate of science degree in nursing. Topkok, Horner and Ruud make up the fourth group of nursing students to finish the UAA nursing program in Nome.

Sometime in December, the students will attend a formal pinning ceremony to cap off their schooling, during which they will recite the Florence Nightingale Pledge, which includes the following:

*I will do all in my power to maintain and elevate the standard of my profession, and will hold in confidence all personal matters committed to my keeping, and family affairs coming to my knowledge in the practice of my calling.*

"It's hard to believe that it's just around the corner," Horner said of the pinning ceremony and graduation.

"I think it's important to celebrate our accomplishments and take the time to thank those who have helped us along the way."



# Your Best Life

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

## Hospital improving support for breastfeeding moms

### Hospital working hard to earn “Baby Friendly” designation

By MEGAN TIMM  
CAMP Lactation Counselor

*“Breastfeeding is a vital component of realizing every child’s right to the highest attainable standard of health, while respecting every mother’s right to make an informed decision about how to feed her baby, based on complete, evidence-based information, free from commercial interests, and the necessary support to enable her to carry out her decision.”*

— 2018 BFHI Implementation Guidance from WHO and UNICEF

The Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI) was launched in 1991 by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF).

This global program is designed to encourage hospitals to implement the Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding and the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes.

The BFHI helps hospitals give mothers the information, confidence, and skills necessary to successfully start and continue breastfeeding their babies or safely feed with formula — and gives special recognition to hospitals that do so.

In 2007, less than 3 percent of United States births occurred in approximately 60 Baby-Friendly designated facilities. In 2018, those numbers have risen to more than 24 percent of births in more than 500 Baby-Friendly designated facilities, and continue to rise.

Norton Sound Regional Hospital began the journey of going Baby Friendly in March 2016.

Since then we have been busy preparing for this important designation



Photo: State of Alaska

As a Baby Friendly Hospital, NSRH will provide more support to help moms like Shelby Sinnok (pictured in 2014) provide the most healthy food for their babies.

by training all staff who work with new moms and babies, including medical providers, acute care and primary care nursing staff, and health educators.

We have created and implemented breastfeeding curricula for prenatal and postpartum education to give moms the tools they need to be successful in feeding their babies.

Lastly, we are finalizing a hospital-wide policy to ensure moms are supported with breastfeeding and babies are getting the best nutrition at the beginning of life.

We will be moving into the final stage in the Baby Friendly process this fall and hope to be designated as a Baby Friendly Hospital in fall 2019.

If you or someone you know is looking for help with breastfeeding their infant or just need some additional support, please contact the CAMP Department’s lactation team at (907) 443-3365.

### 10 steps to making our hospital better for babies

1. Have a written breastfeeding policy that is routinely communicated to all health care staff.
2. Train all health care staff in the skills necessary to implement this policy.
3. Inform all pregnant women about the benefits and management of breastfeeding.
4. Help mothers initiate breastfeeding within one hour of birth.
5. Show mothers how to breast-feed and how to maintain lactation, even if they are separated from their infants.
6. Give infants no food or drink other than breast-milk, unless medically indicated.
7. Practice rooming in — allow mothers and infants to remain together 24 hours a day.
8. Encourage breastfeeding on demand.
9. Give no pacifiers or artificial nipples to breastfeeding infants.
10. Foster the establishment of breastfeeding support groups and refer mothers to them on discharge from the hospital or birth center.

## Trying to quit tobacco? Learn how to avoid a relapse!

By WANDA IYA  
CAMP Tobacco Cessation Specialist

When trying to quit tobacco, slips that lead to relapses are common. Understanding the difference between slips and relapses can help you make the right choices that will lead to a better chance of successfully quitting.

While trying to quit tobacco, withdrawal symptoms may occur. These are caused by a decrease in nicotine

levels in the body. You may start to feel cravings for tobacco that can be very intense, usually accompanied by increased stress and a negative attitude, which may cause you to slip and light a cigarette.

Immediately, you can lose all hope and decide to continue using tobacco. This becomes a relapse.

A slip does not have to become a relapse. The process of quitting

tobacco use is not something that comes naturally, it is a learning process.

If you do slip, decide for yourself to learn something from it. Think about what happened that made you light a cigarette.

- ▶ How did I feel?
- ▶ What could I have done differently?
- ▶ Next time this happens, how am I going to deal with it instead of light-

ing a cigarette?

Learning how to deal with a slip, if it does happen, and how to avoid it will strengthen your ability to prevent a relapse. Although quitting isn’t easy, it is possible. Keep trying, you will eventually succeed.

If you’d like support or assistance to quit smoking, please contact Wanda Iya at (907) 443-9671 or the CAMP department at (907) 443-3365.



# Tasteful traditions

## Native foods link us to land, sea, nutrition

By **Stephanie Stang**  
CAMP Manager & Dietitian

Traditional foods are foods that are passed down from generation to generation.

All cultures and regions have different traditional recipes due to the foods that are available to them. Here in Alaska, the gathering, hunting, preserving and eating of traditional foods is such an inspiring way to stay connected with the land and sea and eat the best nutrition possible.

Do you have a favorite family recipe that everyone in your family loves to cook and eat? Was this recipe passed through generations? Keep this up — there are so many benefits to eating traditionally!

Here are just some of the benefits:

- ▶ Native foods are great sources of protein, iron and vitamin A. An added bonus is that most are low in saturated fat and sugar, too!

- ▶ No more processed foods with unknown ingredients or preservatives — traditional foods usually have few to no chemicals and additives.

- ▶ Exercise is one of the best medicines out there and by gathering, hunting and preparing foods you get your fair share.

- ▶ Participating in the preparing and sharing of foods with your family or community can increase your spiritual well-being.

- ▶ Knowledge is power — teach the youth how to prepare, hunt and gather so these traditions can continue for generations to come.

Check out the nutrition facts labels for some of this region's favorite traditional foods!

### Sockeye Salmon

Serving Size 3 oz., canned

#### Amount Per Serving

**Calories 137** Calories from Fat 33%

**Total Fat 5g**

Saturated Fat 1g

**Cholesterol 59mg**

**Sodium 332mg**

**Total Carbohydrate 0g**

Dietary Fiber 0g

**Protein 23g**

Vitamin A 184 IU • Vitamin C 0mg

Iron 2mg

*\*Cited from the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium Traditional Food Guide for the Alaska Native People.*



Photo: Carol Gales

## Oven-Baked Salmon

### Ingredients

- ▶ 1 salmon fillet
- ▶ 3 tablespoons sweet chili sauce (such as Mae Ploy or Thai Kitchen)
- ▶ 1 teaspoon ground or grated ginger
- ▶ 1 clove garlic, minced
- ▶ 2 tablespoons green onion, chopped (optional)

### Directions

- ▶ Spread 2 tablespoons sweet chili sauce on thawed salmon fillet. Marinate for one hour in refrigerator.
- ▶ Preheat oven to 400 degrees Fahrenheit.
- ▶ Place salmon fillet skin-side down on baking sheet lined with aluminum foil.
- ▶ Sprinkle with ginger and garlic.
- ▶ Cover with aluminum foil and bake for 15 minutes.
- ▶ Turn on broiler, remove aluminum foil cover, and top salmon with remaining 1 tablespoon of sweet chili sauce. Return to oven and broil for an additional 3-5 minutes or until easily flaked with a fork.
- ▶ Remove from oven, sprinkle with green onions, and enjoy!

*This recipe can be paired with all different kinds of foods. Try it with brown rice and broccoli!*



## Did you know?

▶ **SALMON:** Salmon swimming upriver use some of their fat during the journey, and thus contain less fat than salmon caught from the ocean. Salmon with less fat dry quicker and harder. On the other hand, king salmon caught in the ocean have the best color, firmest flesh and highest fat of all the salmon species at 11 grams of fat per 3 ounces. Don't fear salmon fat; it contains a lot of omega-3

*Source: ANTHC Traditional Food Guide for the Alaska Native People*

fatty acids, which are good for your heart.

▶ **BERRIES:** A recent study showed that Alaska wild blueberries are even more nutrient-rich than wild blueberries in the Lower 48 states.

▶ **GREENS:** Most plants and roots grow on good, dry soil, on mountain sides, or near the coasts or river banks. However, sourdock can be found in inland swamps.

### Blueberry

Serving Size 1 cup, raw

#### Amount Per Serving

**Calories 88** Calories from Fat 11%

**Total Fat 1g**

Saturated Fat not tested

**Cholesterol** not tested

**Sodium 9mg**

**Total Carbohydrate 18g**

Dietary Fiber 4g

**Protein 2g**

Vitamin A 167 IU • Vitamin C 26.5mg

Iron 1mg

### Salmonberry

Serving Size 1 cup, raw

#### Amount Per Serving

**Calories 76** Calories from Fat 14%

**Total Fat 1g**

Saturated Fat not tested

**Cholesterol** not tested

**Sodium** not tested

**Total Carbohydrate 13g**

Dietary Fiber not tested

**Protein 4g**

Vitamin A 315 IU • Vitamin C 237mg

Iron 1mg

### Willow Leaves

Serving Size 1 cup, young leaves, chopped

#### Amount Per Serving

**Calories 67** Calories from Fat 12%

**Total Fat 1g**

**Cholesterol** not tested

**Sodium** not tested

**Total Carbohydrate 11g**

Dietary Fiber not tested

**Protein 3g**

Vitamin A 10,285 IU • Vitamin C 105mg

Iron 1mg

### Sourdock

Serving Size 1 cup, young leaves

#### Amount Per Serving

**Calories 34** Calories from Fat 14%

**Total Fat 1g**

**Cholesterol** not tested

**Sodium** not tested

**Total Carbohydrate 5g**

Dietary Fiber not tested

**Protein 2g**

Vitamin A 9,520 IU • Vitamin C 54mg

Iron 1mg



Heather Lefebvre (right), director of NSHC's pharmacy, and Kylea Goff, assistant director, accepted the 2017-2018 Laura Scott Outstanding Influenza Season Activities Award in Atlanta, Ga.

## Pharmacy honored for immunization push

Earlier this summer, the Norton Sound Health Corporation Pharmacy Department received a national award for its immunization efforts across the Bering Strait region.

In May, pharmacists Kylea Goff and Heather Lefebvre, representing NSHC's entire pharmacy team, accepted the 2017-2018 Laura Scott Outstanding Influenza Season Activities Award in Atlanta, Ga., during a meeting of the National Adult and Influenza Immunization Summit.

The organization addresses adult and influenza immunization issues and seeks to improve the use of vaccines recommended by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

By sending consent forms home with students in the Nome and Bering Strait school districts, NSHC was able to reach the entire regional community without barriers to access.

Lefebvre, pharmacy director, highlighted her team's efforts within the region's schools to schedule 25 vaccination clinics throughout 15 Bering Strait communities in 2017.

"We have several pharmacists and student pharmacists who go to our region's schools and give presentations on vaccinations, drug abuse, and other topics," Lefebvre said.

Her staff took things one step further to see if they could vaccinate more kids. As a result, NSHC increased vaccination numbers among children threefold — from 288 in 2016 to 894 in 2017. By the end of 2017, the pharmacy team had vaccinated more than 2,500 patients.

Through this in-depth, collaborative model between pharmacists and school districts, NSHC hopes to increase its vaccination rates in the Bering Strait region even more this year.

Goff, assistant director of the pharmacy, said many people don't understand the role of pharmacists.

"We have a lot of people who are thankful that we called in their teens to get those few vaccines they need instead of having to make appointments and spend time in the system," she said.



# NSHC Health Care

## PHYSICIANS HOSPITAL SERVICES



**Mark Peterson, MD – NSHC Medical Director, Family Practice**

Dr. Peterson lived in Nome and worked at NSHC as a staff

physician from 1996 to 2005 before moving to North Dakota where he continued to work as a family physician. He returned to NSHC in late 2017 to take on the charge of medical director and lead medical staff.



**Cody Augdahl, MD – Family Practice**

Dr. Augdahl was born in Nome. He attended the University of Alaska Anchorage and

medical school at the University of Washington School of Medicine. He completed his residency in Anchorage before returning to Nome. His main role at the hospital is working in the emergency department and acute care.



**Andrea Clark, MD – Family Practice**

Dr. Clark is originally from southern California and attended college at Pepperdine University.

She studied medicine at the University of Iowa and then completed the Alaska Family Medicine Residency Program. She began working for NSHC as a locum (temporary) provider in fall 2015 before signing on permanently.



**Adam Colton, DO – Family Practice**

Dr. Colton hails from Detroit, Mich. He attended undergraduate school at the

University of Michigan and pursued his medical degree at Midwestern University. He completed his residency in Salinas, Calif. He has been working for NSHC since October 2016.



**Samuel Covington, MD – Emergency Department**

Dr. Covington graduated from medical school in South Carolina in 1984 and has

more than 30 years of experience, mostly in emergency medicine.



**Toby Currin, DO – Family Practice**

Dr. Currin is Nebraska-born and raised. She studied at Pacific Northwest University in Yakima,

Wash., before attending her last two years of medical school in Anchorage. She did her residency at the Alaska Family Medicine Residency in Anchorage and graduated in 2017.



**Anne Flint, MD – Family Practice**

Dr. Flint received her undergraduate degree from the University of Utah in 1991

and received her medical degree from there in 1999. She first came to Alaska through Kotzebue in 2004 and began working at NSHC as a locum tenens (temporary) physician in 2007. She signed on permanently in 2015.



**Richard Kaut, MD – Family Practice**

Originally from Hamburg, Germany, Dr. Kaut received his medical degree in The Netherlands

in 1985. He then moved to the U.S., where he completed his medical residencies in New York and California, focusing on family medicine. He has worked mainly in emergency medicine ever since, and can be found in NSHC's emergency department.



**Alin Ledford, MD – Family Practice**

Dr. Ledford has worked for NSHC since 2011 and is based in the emergency department. He

graduated from the John A. Burns School of Medicine at the University of Hawaii and completed his residency with the U.S. Navy.



**Marc Levin, MD – Family Practice**

Dr. Levin splits his time between New York City and NSHC. He attended the

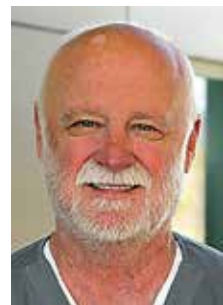
Upstate Medical University in New York for medical school and completed a family medicine residency in St. Paul, Minn.



**Terry O'Malia, DO – Family Practice, Emergency Medicine**

Dr. O'Malia has a family practice background but has worked

in emergency medicine ever since his residency days in Virginia. He graduated from medical school at Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine and has spent the last few years teaching medical school at Campbell University in North Carolina.



**Jonathan Schumaker, MD – Family Practice/ Emergency Medicine**

Dr. Schumaker started at NSHC

in the summer of 2018. He has worked in emergency medicine for 20 years since graduating from the Medical College of Ohio. Before going into medicine, he completed laboratory training in the Army during the Vietnam era and worked in a histology lab for many years.



**Michael Scott, MD – Emergency Medicine**

Dr. Scott graduated from Temple University School of Medicine. He

has worked in emergency medicine for over 30 years and most recently lived in Illinois. He began working for NSHC in the summer of 2018.



**Shelly Theobald, MD – Family Practice**

Dr. Theobald grew up in Papua New Guinea and attended medical school in Israel.

She fulfilled her residency in Vancouver, Wash. She moved to Nome and began working for NSHC in October 2016.



**Thomas Wonderlich, MD – Family Practice**

Dr. Wonderlich attended college at Gonzaga University before joining

the Peace Corps for two years in Paraguay. He then went on to the Tulane School of Medicine and completed his residencies in Utah and Idaho. He provides full-spectrum care, including obstetrics, emergency, inpatient, and endoscopy.

## PHYSICIANS PRIMARY CARE CLINIC



**Soraya Aragundi, MD – Family Practice**

Dr. Aragundi has been practicing family medicine for over 20 years. She spends

half of the year in Nome and is married to Dr. Gonzalez.



**Stephen Daniel, MD – Family Practice, Health Aide Training**

Dr. Daniel is originally from Texas

and New Mexico and moved to the NSHC region in 2004. He has been a board-certified family physician since 1996 and has 28 years of experience and graduate work in cross-cultural medicine. Dr. Daniel runs the diabetes clinic at NSHC.



**Paul Davis, MD – Family Practice**

Dr. Davis works for NSHC on an intermittent basis with the specialty clinics for endoscopy and

colonoscopy. He works for the Alaska Native Medical Center and received his medical degree from Oral Roberts University School of Medicine.



**Jay Flynn, MD – Internal Medicine/ Pediatrics**

Dr. Flynn was born in Kentucky and attended the University of

Kentucky for medical school. He then moved to Ann Arbor, Mich.,



# Provider Directory

where he did his internal medicine/pediatrics training at the University of Michigan. He moved to Alaska after finishing residency in 2016 and splits his time between NSHC and ANMC.



**Julian Gonzalez, MD – Family Practice**

Dr. Gonzalez has been in practice for over 20 years. He spends half of

the year in Nome and is married to Dr. Aragundi.



**Bryce Loder, MD – Family Practice**

Dr. Loder has been practicing family medicine for 39 years. He came to NSHC after practicing

in Kansas and New Zealand.



**Nora Nagaruk, MD – Family Practice**

Dr. Nagaruk is an Inupiaq practitioner originally from Unalakleet. She attended medical school in

Seattle and Anchorage at the University of Washington School of Medicine's WWAMI program. She trained for two years at the Providence Alaska Family Practice Residency program. She enjoys teaching community health aides.



**Kyle Pohl, MD – Internal Medicine/Pediatrics**

Dr. Pohl splits his time between ANMC and NSHC. Originally from

Fowler, Mich., Dr. Pohl attended undergraduate and medical school at Michigan State University. He completed his residency at the University of Michigan. He started working for NSHC in October 2016.



**Donna "Roxanne" Richards, MD – Family Practice**

Dr. Richards grew up in Michigan and attended

the University of Michigan for her undergraduate studies. She completed medical school at Ohio State University and family medicine residency at

the University of Virginia. She began working for NSHC in 2015 as a locum (temporary) provider and signed on permanently in 2018.



**Martina Sczesny, MD – Family Practice**

Dr. Sczesny grew up and attended medical school in Germany before meeting her husband and moving to the U.S. to pursue her career in family practice medicine. She spent 20 years in her private practice and most recently worked in the Navajo Nation.

the University of Virginia. She began working for NSHC in 2015 as a locum (temporary) provider and signed on permanently in 2018.



**Ryan Sherer, MD – Family Practice**

Born and raised in Dodge City, Kan., Dr. Sherer graduated from the Kansas University

School of Medicine. He worked as a general medical officer with the U.S. Navy and spent the last 16 years in private practice with his wife, who is also a family physician. Dr. Sherer has focused his practice on geriatrics with a side interest in sports medicine.



**Angela Torres, MD – Family Practice**

Dr. Torres has been practicing family medicine for 15 years. New to NSHC, she is from Okla-

homa and has lived in Anchorage and Wasilla in the past.

## PSYCHIATRY



**Natasha Krebs, NP – Psychiatry**

Natasha Krebs is a board-certified psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner. She graduated from

Midwestern State University with a bachelor's of science degree in nursing and then completed a nurse residency program in psychiatry at Vanderbilt Psychiatric Hospital. She earned her master's degree in psychiatric mental health nursing from Midwestern State University in 2017.



**Timothy Peterson, MD – Psychiatry**

Dr. Peterson graduated from the University of Manitoba School of Medicine and also completed

his family medicine residency there. His psychiatry residency was completed at the University of North Dakota.



**Tom Peterson, MD – Psychiatry**

Dr. Peterson graduated from the University of North Dakota School of Medicine and also

completed his psychiatry residency there.



**Matthew Pitera, MD – Psychiatry**

Dr. Pitera is board-certified in adult and child/adolescent psychiatry. He earned his medical degree from the University of

Medicine and Dentistry: New Jersey Medical School.

## MID-LEVEL PROVIDERS & VILLAGE CLINIC PHYSICIANS



**Louisa Albright, PA – Sub-Regional Clinic**

Louisa grew up in Washington state. She attended Augsburg University

in Minneapolis, Minn., where she received her master's of physician assistance degree. She worked in Bethel for Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation before joining NSHC and is based in Unalakleet. She is a health aide trainer and a primary care provider.



**Julianne Anderson, PA – Shishmaref**

Julianne began her career with NSHC in 1999 as a registered nurse and in 2003 graduated from

the University of North Dakota as a physician assistant in family practice.

Julianne has worked in a number of villages around the region but her primary responsibility now is with the village of Shishmaref.



**Kristine Beck, PA – Nome Primary Care**

Kristine grew up in Wyoming and most recently lived in Colorado. She attended under-

graduate school at the University of Wyoming and physician assistant school at the University of Colorado Auschutz Medical Campus. She enjoys women's health, working with teens and doing procedures.



**Dave Davalos, PA – St. Michael, Stebbins**

Dave is originally from New Mexico but has been working in Alaska since 1984 and in the

Norton Sound region since 1997. Though he has spent most of his time in the sub-region of Stebbins and St. Michael, he has delivered care in many of the NSHC villages. He has been a physician assistant for over 40 years.



**Richelle Fisher, PA – Nome Primary Care**

Richelle was born in Hawaii and grew up in rural Missouri. She graduated with a master's

degree in physician assistant studies in 2003 from Missouri State University. She has worked with NSHC since 2004.



**Teri LeMay, NP – Health Aide Training**

Teri is an adult nurse practitioner originally from Tennessee. She has a background as an

emergency room nurse. After schooling to become a nurse practitioner, Teri headed to Nome to work with the Health Aide Training Program.

*Please turn to page 8*



## PROVIDER DIRECTORY

Continued from page 7



**Megan Mackiernan, PA – Nome Primary Care**

Megan is from western North Carolina and received her master's of medical sciences at Methodist University in Fayetteville, NC. She has worked at NSHC since 2013.



**Kim Matthews, NP – Health Aide Training**

Kim has worked for NSHC for over 10 years. She spent seven years as a mid-level practitioner in Brevig Mission, Teller, Wales and Diomedé before moving to Nome to join Health Aide Training. She graduated in 1996 from the University of Nebraska Medical Center as a family nurse practitioner.



**Tim McGarry, NP – Nome Primary Care**

Tim was raised in Deerfield, N.H., and went to the University of New Hampshire in Durham, where he received his bachelor's degree in kinesiology. He went on to receive an associate degree of nursing from New Hampshire Technical Institute and returned to UNH for his master's in nursing. He moved to Nome in spring 2018.



**Sandi Nahriri, DNP – Nome Primary Care**

Sandi practiced as a registered nurse for nearly 30 years in different fields before advancing her education as a nurse practitioner in family practice. She earned her doctoral degree in nurse practice from Creighton University in Omaha, Neb. Her professional passion is intercultural nursing.



**Deborah Petteway, PA – Sub-Regional Clinic**

Deborah is originally from California, where she was educated at University of California, Berkeley. She began working for NSHC in March 2016 and is based in the Unalakleet sub-regional clinic.



**Dan Thomas, PA – Health Aide Training**

Dan has lived in Nome most of his life and worked for NSHC as a behavioral health counselor, inpatient registered nurse, Village Health Services supervisor/instructor, and physician assistant, including three years at the Unalakleet clinic. He has been a health aide trainer since 1997.



**Nicole Thomas, PA – Nome Primary Care**

Nicole grew up in Nome and Unalakleet. She attended physician assistant school at George Washington University in Washington, D.C., and has been working as a PA for 10 years, including the last several years at NSHC.



**Kristina Tracy, NP – Nome Primary Care**

Kristina joined NSHC in December 2017. She completed her master's degree in nursing at the University of Toledo in 2016. Prior to coming to Nome, she practiced internal medicine, as well as emergency medicine. She is certified as a family nurse practitioner



**John Wallace, DNP – Nome Primary Care**

John relocated to Nome from North Carolina with his wife Jena in July 2018. He attended Lenoir Rhyne University for his bachelor's degree and Winston-Salem State University for his master's. He also has a doctorate of nursing practice degree from Grand Canyon University.



**Ashley Westbrook, PA – White Mountain, Golovin, Elim**

Ashley was raised in New Hampshire and went to school at Rocky Mountain College in Montana. She made her way to NSHC in 2011, where she started as a physician assistant based in Savoonga. She became the director of Village Health Services in 2015 and returned to practicing medicine in 2017.

## NSHC plans for upcoming construction projects

### Wellness and Training Center

Site work for the future Wellness and Training Center, adjacent to the Patient Hostel and across Greg Kruschek Avenue from Norton Sound Regional Hospital, has been completed. Bettisworth North finalized a design for the center, and the project is expected to be put to bid this fall. A majority of the funding for the project, \$16 million, is still being secured.

### Nome Warehouse/Operations Building

NSHC plans to construct a warehouse next to the new Wellness and Training Center, which will include space for a maintenance shop, a loading dock, storage and some office space. The project will be under construction at the same time as the Wellness and Training Center, and will help bring all Nome-based NSHC personnel and operations to a centralized location near the hospital. The Nome Operations Building will cost \$5 million.

### New Diomedé Clinic

NSHC has partnered with the City of Diomedé to finalize a design for a new clinic in the small island community. The design team and NSHC project manager Mike Kruse visited Diomedé in July to discuss the clinic site, floor plans and construction plan. The new clinic's design will be completed in the fall, and planning and procurement are scheduled for early 2019, with a construction period yet to be determined.

### New Clinics for Shishmaref and St. Michael

NSHC plans to build replacement clinics in Shishmaref and St. Michael. The clinics will be 5,300-square-foot facilities with site work and foundations planned for next summer. NSHC was awarded \$2 million in an Indian Health Services small ambulatory health center grant for the Shishmaref project. Both replacement clinics are expected to cost \$5.9 million.



Photo: Davis Hovey

## More wheeling for healing

NSHC has expanded its patient driving service until 7 p.m. on weekdays to accommodate more patients who are traveling into or out of Nome in the evenings. It also added a pharmacy driver position that assists with transporting medications to be sent to the villages and as a back-up patient driver. Meet the crew (from left): Reggie Ongtowsruk, pharmacy driver; Morgan "Mo" Miller; patient driver, and Craig Teesateskie, 8-10 a.m. patient driver. Patients can contact the driver directly for pick-up at 434-2718.



**Rebecca Wurmstein, NP – Brevig Mission, Teller, Wales, Diomedé**

Rebecca, "Becky," started working for NSHC in April 2016. She is from Manassas, Va., and completed her master's of science in nursing degree to become a certified family nurse practitioner at George Washington University in 2011. She is based in Brevig Mission and serves the communities of Teller, Wales, and Diomedé as well.



**Laurel Desnick, MD – Internal Medicine**

Dr. Desnick earned her medical degree from the University of Washington School of Medicine and has been in practice for more than 20 years. She specializes in internal medicine and works out of the sub-regional clinic in Unalakleet.



# NSHC building more homes for staff in villages

## Strategy combats housing shortage, aids recruitment

As a way to combat a region-wide housing shortage, Norton Sound Health Corporation has planned several housing projects to provide homes for existing employees and possibly improve recruitment of village-based providers.

One such project was completed in 2016. A triplex in St. Michael is home to the local physician assistant and has space for another health professional and public safety official.

The St. Michael building was funded by an Alaska Housing Finance Corporation (AHFC) grant and served as motivation to begin other housing projects around the region in communities where such buildings are desperately needed.

Through a combination of Indian Health Service and grant funding totaling more than \$2 million, NSHC staff in Savoonga will soon have new quarters to live in.

Two duplexes, both with two-bedroom units, are currently being constructed in the St. Lawrence Island community.

According to Preston Rookok, the NSHC Board representative for the Native Village of Savoonga, his community has no existing housing for NSHC employees.

As Rookok says, Savoonga's housing shortage is one of the worst in the region, with approximately 61 percent of residents in need of housing. According to AHFC, the rate of over-

crowding in the Bering Strait region as a whole is *more than eight times the national average.*

"I'm very happy the Board is directing its attention to villages' needs," Rookok said. "Lack of housing prevents new PAs (physician assistants) or employees from coming to our communities. Offering housing means NSHC can provide better health care."

H Construction has completed site work plus foundations, and now flooring has begun for these duplexes. By November, four families or individual NSHC employees could be moving into these brand new housing units.

Both buildings will be open to PAs, village health aides, and potentially the village public safety officer, depending on other available housing options in Savoonga.

Rookok hopes the Board of Directors will be able to address housing needs in every NSHC community, but some are already taking action on their own.

One such place is Golovin, where renovations are underway at the old clinic building. For the cost of \$885,000, that clinic space is being repurposed as housing for an incoming NSHC employee.

Once renovations are finished, a single family or couple will have housing about 150 feet from the community clinic, according to Martin Aukongak, NSHC Board representative for Chinik Eskimo Community in Golovin.

"We only have one health aide here currently, so hopefully we can get another mid-level employee or PA in there," Aukongak said.



Photo: Mike Kruse



Photo: Davis Hovey

**Top:** The frame of one of the two duplexes in Savoonga looms large near the community clinic. **Above:** One of the two duplexes in Savoonga is pictured here next to the community clinic. It is expected to be completed and home for a new family by November. **Right:** Golovin's old clinic is almost completely renovated to house one NSHC employee and family.



Photo: Mike Kruse

# Bigger, better Shaktoolik clinic to open in spring 2019

In the 1980s, Matilda Hardy worked as a community health aide at the original Shaktoolik clinic. During that time she remembers contacting the doctor in Nome by radio and how there were only two staff members based out of the clinic, both of whom were health aides.

"In the old clinic (not built by Norton Sound Health Corporation), we didn't even have running water before 1980," she recalls.

Times have changed, and Hardy is now the Shaktoolik representative on the NSHC Board of Directors.

**"I'm excited about this new clinic, the village health aides are excited for this new clinic, the whole community is excited!"**

By 1999 the old clinic was demolished and NSHC constructed what is still the community's lone health service building today. Due to its old age, the clinic has cracks and leaks in the walls. It is not energy efficient, nor does it provide adequate space for the current staff that works there.



Image: Architects Alaska

A computer-generated image of what an exam room in the new Shaktoolik clinic will look like.

Hannah Sookiayak has been the travel clerk for the Shaktoolik clinic these last five years. Currently her office space is set aside in the lobby area. She says supplies are stacked up in the hallways and maintaining individuals' privacy is very difficult.

"One of the challenges I have is trying to have conversations with patients or make phone calls about confidential information from my desk," Sook-

iyak said.

In addition, almost every winter the Shaktoolik clinic's sewer system freezes up. The staff is encouraged to continue working when that happens, unless conditions are too unbearable. Sookiayak has remained at the clinic in her role as travel clerk because she loves interacting with people. "I know our patients, and I enjoy a good talk or sharing with them."

For the travel clerk and the rest of the staff, privacy should not be an issue going forward. The plan is for every staff member to have their own office space in the new clinic, including a designated dental office. Construction crews of regional employees and contractors under Paug-Vik Development Corporation have building materials on the ground. Support beams are set and the gravel pad is completed.

Sookiayak is overjoyed to have an updated building which will include a more conveniently located emergency room, just inside the main doors of the facility. The new 3,600-square-foot clinic is about twice the size of the current clinic and is being staged on the north end of Shaktoolik, between town and the airport.

With a beaming smile on her face, Hardy remarked, "I'm excited about this new clinic, the village health aides are excited for this new clinic, the whole community is excited!"

Construction is expected to be completed around March 2019, costing about \$5 million. NSHC is providing 100 percent of the funding for this project.



# How to clean and sanitize your household water storage tank

For the health of everyone, it is highly recommended that only drinking water from your community's water treatment plant is used in your homes.

If you haul your drinking water, it is important to know how to keep your household storage tank clean and sanitary!

► Use only containers that are food-grade, with a tight-fitting lid, to transport or store drinking water. Keep them clean and sanitary!

► If you use a dipper to get drinking water out of your home's water tank/barrel, make sure it is cleaned and sanitized daily.

► Home water storage tanks should be cleaned and sanitized at least twice a year, or more often if needed.

## Steps to safely clean and sanitize your home's water storage tank

1. Empty the water tank/barrel.
2. Mix 1 tablespoon of unscented, household bleach (5.25 percent chlorine) into 1 gallon of water. Using this mixture and a stiff brush, scrub the inside of your tank.

How to make 1ppm sanitizing solution	
Tank Capacity	Unscented household bleach (5.25 percent)*
500 gallons	2 tablespoons (or 6 teaspoons)
100 gallons	2 teaspoons
50 gallons	1 teaspoon
10 gallons	10-15 drops

\*NOTE: Some household bleach is "concentrated" and much stronger than 5.25 percent. Read the label before mixing the sanitizing solution. Questions? Contact NSHC-OEH: (907) 443-3294 or rlee@nshcorp.org.

**Safety Note:** This mixture creates a strong solution for cleaning and disinfecting — it should be handled carefully. Also, do not crawl into your tank to scrub it. This is not safe!

3. Rinse the container thoroughly, then fill it with clean water from the water plant.
4. Once the container is full of clean water, add enough unscented, household bleach (5.25 percent chlorine) to

reach about 1 part-per-million (ppm) chlorine. Follow the instructions in the table at left.

**NOTE:** 1ppm bleach is high enough to keep bacteria, viruses, and algae from growing, but will not harm people or animals. After this initial post-cleaning fill-up, water hauled from the water plant does not need additional unscented, household bleach added.

If you can't access the inside of your tank to scrub it, empty out as much water as possible, fill the storage tank with clean water from your water plant, and then follow step #4 listed above. Sanitize your tank at least twice a year.

## Water storage tank help

► **Water Storage Tank Maintenance, ADEC:** <http://dec.alaska.gov/eh/pdf/dw/brochures-water-storage-tank-disinfection-updated-5-20-13.pdf>

► **Public Health Ontario Chlorine Dilution Calculator:** <http://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/ServicesAndTools/Tools/Pages/Dilution-Calculator.aspx>

# New Office of Environmental Health team working for you

The Office of Environmental Health (OEH) looks a little different these days.



Racheal Lee

Kevin Zweifel, former director of NSHC-OEH, retired last year after more than 20 years at the head of the office. I'm Racheal Lee and I'm stepping into Zweifel's big shoes, hoping to fill them as best I can.

Though I am very new to this region, I bring almost 10 years of knowledge and experience gained from providing environmental health services to Tribes and utility systems in other parts of rural Alaska. I look forward to learning from and working with the Tribes in the Bering Strait region!

## OEH team members

- **Racheal Lee**, director.
- **Emma Pate**, training coordinator and environmental coordinator.
- **Arthur Amaktoolik**, remote maintenance worker.
- **Megan Contreras**, summer intern.

## Office of Environmental Health current priorities

- Regional drinking water and wastewater issues.
- Regional utility operator training and certifications.
- Bed bug education outreach and coordinating NSHC's region-wide Bed Bug Pilot Project.
- Regional rabies prevention and control.
- Supporting the Tribes' environmental efforts.



Photo courtesy of Racheal Lee

## Utility workers learn to be safer

On July 10, OEH hosted a safety refresher class designed for rural utility operators by the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium. ANTHC instructor John Gilbert covered excavation and trenching safety, electrical safety, fall protection safety, and confined space entry awareness. **Front, from left:** Carl Rock, Jake Soolook, Alfred Ningeulook, Archie Adams, Jerry Okbaok. **Back:** Racheal Lee, David Nakarak, William Olanna, Lenny Katcheak, Art Amaktoolik, Clarence Dewey, George Turner, Ed Titus, John Gilbert, Emma Pate.

# NSHC helping Tribal members get rid of bed bugs

Norton Sound Health Corporation is now contracting with Houdini's Bed Bug Service LLC, a Nome-based company, to provide whole-house heat treatments for tribal home owners in

the Bering Strait region. NSHC will cover 100 percent of expenses for heat treatment in homes that have verified bed bug infestations.

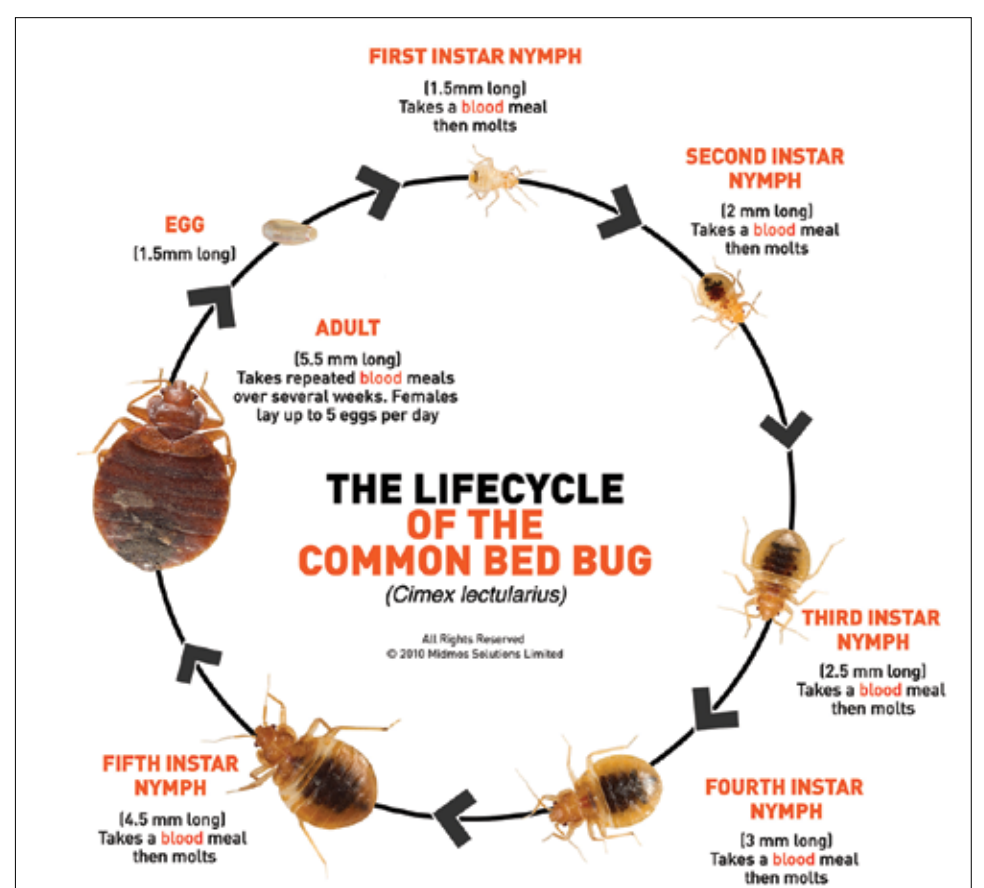
Though whole-house heat treatments are expensive, NSHC plans to continue the Bed Bug Pilot Project as long as funding is available. Funding will not be used for homes that are rentals leased or owned by non-Tribal members. If clarification is needed for home ownership status of Bering Straits Regional Housing Authority (BSRHA) properties, BSRHA can be reached toll-free at 800-478-5225.

Tribal home owners interested in this service must call either Houdini's Bed Bug Service LLC or NSHC's Office of Environmental Health (OEH) to request an inspection. Houdini's Bed Bug Service LLC can be reached at (907) 434-6446 or (907) 434-1161. NSHC-OEH can be reached at (907) 443-3311 or rlee@nshcorp.org.

## What do bed bugs look like?

Adult bed bugs are big enough to easily see, while the eggs and nymphs are smaller. Their bodies vary from paper-thin to big and round when recently fed. Bed bugs do not have wings. They can't jump or fly; they can only crawl slowly.

Use the sticky side of tape to catch critters you think might be a bed bug, put in a zip lock bag, and send to OEH for identification. For information, contact Racheal Lee at 907-443-3294 or rlee@nshcorp.org.





# Spring Employees of the Month honored

## JANUARY

**Name:** Samantha Kleindienst Robler  
**Title:** Audiologist and manager  
**Department:** Audiology



**Nomination:** Samantha Kleindienst Robler demonstrates hard work, compassion and pride in her work. Without her time and

dedication, an important NSHC audiology project would not succeed.

Since last fall, she has traveled to every NSHC community, spending over 40 days away from home, helping to screen over 1,200 students region-wide for hearing problems.

This effort is part of Hearing Norton Sound, a research project addressing childhood hearing loss disparities in the Alaska Native population. While she continues to see patients in the villages, Kleindienst Robler inspires her Nome-based employees to step up in her place.

## FEBRUARY

**Name:** Ruth Peterson  
**Title:** Clinic travel clerk  
**Department:** Irene L. Aukongak "Dagumaaq" Health Clinic



**Nomination:** Ruth Peterson has worked for NSHC for over 13 years. She has been noted as an asset in her home clinic more than once.

Peterson not only helps things run smoothly on busy or hectic days, she also goes out of her way to make sure things are done correctly — even if it means spending over an hour on the phone with Medicaid to accomplish patient travel arrangements. She has also taken on arranging travel for villages other than her own.

In addition to always being a warm and friendly presence at the Golovin Clinic, Peterson goes out of her way to help health aides and ensure they're able to leave on time for the day.

## MARCH

**Name:** Claude LeMay  
**Title:** Maintenance engineer  
**Department:** Maintenance



**Nomination:** This winter, Claude LeMay was often the first person seen at the hospital when coworkers arrived. In a winter with the

second-largest snowfall on record in Nome, LeMay kept the hospital campus and outbuildings accessible, no matter the weather.

Although his schedule calls for him to start work at 5:30 a.m., LeMay would often start his day as early as 4 a.m. to ensure people could get into the hospital.

LeMay's job can feel thankless, but he is happy to do it — which is saying something because he happens to be from the South and hadn't seen much snow before moving to Nome!

## APRIL

**Name:** Kathryn Sawyer  
**Title:** Clinical pharmacist  
**Department:** Pharmacy



**Nomination:** Kathryn Sawyer was nominated for her proactiveness in both educating patients and leading the way for improving

patient outcomes. She takes great pride in her work and has spent many hours volunteering to help others and thinking of new ways to help patients receive the highest quality care possible.

Sawyer works to improve antibiotic stewardship at NSHC, and does it very well. She works with insurance contracts, audits and back billing to bring the corporation thousands of dollars. She has designed algorithms to ensure patients are treated speedily and correctly in both inpatient and outpatient settings.

## Kelly Bogart named VP of Hospital Services

Norton Sound Health Corporation has hired Kelly Bogart of Nome as vice president of Hospital Services to replace departing administrator Phil Hofstetter.



Kelly Bogart

Bogart will lead the large NSHC division, which includes most hospital-based departments, and plans to also take on the role of nursing home administrator.

Her promotion marks the first time there has been a home-grown administrator in the position since the departure of Charles Fagerstrom, Jr., in 2003.

Bogart, 30, was raised in Nome. She is the daughter of the late Jones Wongittin of Savoonga and Phyllis Punguk (Longley) of Nome and step-daughter of Charles Punguk of White Mountain and Golovin. She is married to Blake Bogart, with whom she has two young daughters.

Bogart graduated from Nome-Beltz High School in 2006 and obtained a bachelor's degree in child development and family studies through the University of Alaska Fairbanks in 2014. She is working toward her master's degree in organizational leadership through St.

Mary's University.

Bogart joined NSHC in 2014 and gained experience in the human resources department as well as the Infant Learning Program before becoming the assistant vice president of the Hospital Services Division in 2015.

Since then she has become an integral member of the administration team, has familiarized herself with Hospital Services departments, and has overseen several committees, including the Emergency Operations Plan and the Safety and Environment of Care Committee.

"I am so grateful for this opportunity, and I'm excited to continue learning and growing," Bogart said.

"Over the last few years, I've learned a lot and have established good relationships with managers of Hospital Services departments. I look forward to supporting them and working together to make a difference in the Norton Sound region."

Hofstetter, Bogart's predecessor and mentor, departed NSHC at the end of June with his family to relocate to Petersburg, Alaska. Hofstetter served as vice president of Hospital Services and nursing home administrator for five years.

"Kelly has been a gem to work with as the assistant vice president, and I am extremely excited she will assume the vice president role," said Hofstetter.

"Kelly is a local talent, and she will add considerably to the leadership of this organization."



Photo: Reba Lean

Brian Blandford, Annie Blandford, RN, Joe Hofstetter, Phil Hofstetter, Sarah Hanson Hofstetter, and Hahnah Hofstetter. Annie's cake reads: "40+ years of nursing. Annie, you're finally discharged! Doctor's orders: enjoy retirement." Phil's cake reads: "Le Tour De Phil. Happy trails to you on your next adventure!"

## NSHC bids farewell to Hofstetter, Blandford

Norton Sound Health Corporation staff gathered June 21 to say reluctant goodbyes to long-time employees Phil Hofstetter, former vice president of Hospital Services, and Annie Blandford, former Primary Care Clinic nurse.

Blandford first came to NSHC as a volunteer KNOM nurse in 1978. In the early 1980s she worked seasonally at the hospital and spent winters with her family at remote Aggie Creek. She became a full-time employee in 1997 while continuing to raise five children with her husband, Brian. She worked in various capacities at the hospital,

including in acute care and primary care. She is well known around the region for her compassion, thoughtfulness, and skill in nursing.

Hofstetter joined NSHC in 1998 as an audiologist in Nome and was also based in Unalakleet for a short time. He became an administrator and helped shape NSHC into the organization it is today. Hofstetter headed to Petersburg, Alaska, with his family, where he took on the role of chief executive officer for Petersburg Medical Center.

Hofstetter handed over the reins of vice president of Hospital Services to Kelly Bogart.



## LOCAL CNAS

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Training of local residents as CNAs has been underway in the region since 2004, coordinated by the Bering Strait Health Consortium — a group that includes NSHC, the University of Alaska Fairbanks Northwest Campus, Northwestern Alaska Career and Technical Center, Kawerak, Norton Sound Economic Development Corporation, Nome Eskimo Community, Bering Straits Foundation, Bering Strait School District, and Nome Public Schools.

In 2016, the program shifted when NSHC began to pay training wages throughout the course at Northwest Campus and committed to hiring the students upon certification.

Stephanie Cummings, LPN, QCC staff education coordinator, then began to teach the CNA course. As a QCC employee, she establishes a team bond early on with these future employees.

Needing a large team of caregivers, QCC hires CNA travelers from all over the country. Often, it is the travelers' first time to Alaska, not to mention to this far, northwest corner of rural Alaska. The travelers can stay for just 120 days — not enough time to become familiar with the many things unique to this area and to the residents.

Hiring local CNAs is “about continuity of care for the elders,” Cummings said. “They’re much calmer and able to trust and able to build a rapport” with local CNAs.

### A life-changing career

“I was trying a whole bunch of different careers,” said Rebecca Pikonganna. “I always knew I wanted to care.”

Pikonganna, who grew up in Nome and Teller, considered teaching or nursing. Some of her friends became CNAs and started working at QCC. So after seeing an upcoming training advertised,



Photo: Reba Lean

Eloise Ahwinona and Amanda Homekingkeo, certified nursing assistant, enjoyed the opportunity to dress up at a Red Hat Tea Party event at QCC on Aug. 21.

## Become a CNA!

If you're interested in becoming a certified nursing assistant, contact UAF Northwest Campus to be placed on the list of interested candidates for the next training. Contact Kacey Miller, campus student services manager, at (907) 443-8416 or [klmiller@alaska.edu](mailto:klmiller@alaska.edu).

Pikonganna decided to try it, too.

Samantha Ustaszewski said she felt destined to have a career in health care.

“If I would have stayed in the village, I would have probably become a health aide,” said Ustaszewski, originally from Stebbins.

Growing up visiting the clinic and watching staff at work, she realized that she, too, loved to help people.

These CNAs find it difficult to quantify how their backgrounds make a difference in the lives of QCC elders.

“I think they prefer being taken care of by their own,” said Debbie Okbaok, who completed the CNA program in September 2017 with Pikonganna and Ustaszewski.

“We grew up respecting our elders,” Ustaszewski added.

“They took care of us, so now we’re taking care of them,” said Pikonganna.

The CNAs are familiar with the values that Alaska Natives of the area place on elders and youth and mutual respect. Local CNAs know they have a special role to play in making residents feel at home at the facility, and a big part of that is living out traditional values.

Not everything about being a CNA comes naturally or easily, though. There are many tears, fears, frustrations and family misgivings among those who live in nursing homes. It is the job of CNAs to help residents and their families find comfort and trust in their new living situations.

The hardest part of being a CNA is having to say goodbye.

“You get to know some of these elders so well, and they end up getting sick and passing,” Ustaszewski said. “That’s what’s so tough about it.” The CNAs and nursing staff support one another. Their close bonds help them through hard times.

As a CNA, Okbaok has discovered strengths she didn’t know she had.

“When I first started, I was scared, but now I love it,” she said. “It’s like a second home. It’s like second nature, being a CNA, for me.”

## QUALITY AWARD

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controlled hypertension: increased from 55 percent to 69 percent.

These improvements, combined with continued success in screening for cervical cancer, colon cancer, and treating chronic diseases, placed NSHC among the nation’s Health Center Quality Leaders, accounting for \$25,124 of the grant.

NSHC, the City of Seward, and Interior Community Health Center were the only three Alaska organizations to receive this recognition.

Finally, NSHC received \$30,000 in recognition of the Nome Primary Care Clinic’s National Center for Quality Achievement Patient-Centered Medical Home (PCMH) designation — which certifies that a facility meets the high standards of accessible, affordable, high-quality care for all patients.

PCMH is a model of care that puts patients at the forefront of health care. PCMHs build better relationships between people and their clinical care teams. Research shows that they improve quality, the patient experience and staff satisfaction, while reducing health care costs.

A team from NSHC’s quality, primary care, and wellness departments led the effort to achieve this recognition status.

Megan Mackiernan, director of Quality Improvement and Risk Management at NSHC, said the recognition highlights improvements that can change the lives of people in the region.

“The changes NSHC has made over the past several years with the EHR implementation, PCMH and quality improvement focus are being realized with improved patient outcomes,” she said. “They’re being recognized at a national level for excellence in quality care.”

## MRI COMING

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magnet from the airport to the hospital using a truck and crane.

Once this magnet arrives at the facility, an entire wall must be cut out of the building between the ambulance bay and the magnet room in the addition.

Timing is of the essence, DeAngelis said. The construction crew has ten days to essentially plug in the machine from the moment the machine was filled with cryogen, a cooling agent. If they are unable to install the MRI within that time, the magnet will have to be sent back to the East Coast and refilled with cryogen.

Having MRI capabilities at the hospital will save time for patients who travel to Anchorage for their MRIs as well as bring down expenses for travel, lodging, and meals.

Patients like James Standish and Mikey Wongittilin, who both work for the hospital’s security department, know all about the costs of MRIs.

After Standish was told he needed an MRI, he had to find a radiologist on his own, determine the cost with

his insurance company, arrange and pay for his flight to Anchorage, find a hotel room, and then coordinate with the emergency room in Nome to have a copy of the MRI order sent to the doctor in Anchorage. The Anchorage doctor had no open appointment for Standish until three or so weeks later. Meanwhile, the father of two had to manage his pain and continue working while walking with a cane. For Standish, pain management was the biggest challenge of going through the MRI process outside of Nome.

Primary care at NSHC coordinated Wongittilin’s MRI appointment in Anchorage, but he still had to wait weeks to be seen by a doctor there. He could have chosen another option, but would have had to shoulder more of the financial burden. Once his appointment was set up in Anchorage, Wongittilin had to take time off work to make the trip and find lodging since there is limited patient housing available in the big city. Had Wongittilin not been able to stay with relatives, his personal expenses would have gone up significantly for his overnight MRI trip.

DeAngelis says the plan is to start



Photo: Davis Hovey

Above: Cathy DeAngelis administers a CT scan — a process similar to what a patient undergoes in an MRI machine. Right: A computer rendering of what the new MRI machine will look like when installed.

using the new MRI machine in Nome for patients like Wongittilin and Standish in January.

“The MRI equipment and addition are a gift from the NSHC Board to save the patients’ lives,” DeAngelis said.

“It gives us the space and technology to provide care in the best possible way.”

