Southcentral Foundation Attends 30th Annual Quest for Excellence Conference

By SCF Learning Institute

Employees from Southcentral Foundation attended the 30th Annual Quest for Excellence Conference in Baltimore, Maryland. The conference, hosted by the Baldrige Performance Excellence Program, offers an opportunity to learn improvement practices from current and previous Baldrige award winners. In addition to accepting SCF’s second Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award, SCF employees attended and taught several sessions on Baldrige categories. The learning will support continued improvement for the Nuka System of Care and the customer-owner experience.

The Baldrige Program was designed to support performance excellence and drive the U.S. and global economies to be robust and dynamic by recognizing leaders in six areas: manufacturing, service, small business, education, health care, and government and nonprofit. In addition to recognizing a leader in each sector annually, Baldrige provides ongoing assessments, training, tools, and education to share best practices of national role models.

"This program is much more than recognizing successful organizations or winning a single award," said U.S. Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross at this year’s ceremony. "The organizations which are given the Baldrige Award embody the competitive spirit which drive the American economy forward."

LaZell Hammons, nursing director of SCF’s Learning Institute, attended a session hosted by Ritz-Carlton. "I was impressed by the way Ritz-Carlton acknowledges the ways that their employees give extraordinary service," Hammons said. "They routinely recognize employees who go above and beyond for their guests and exceed their expectations. At SCF, we’re always striving to provide good customer service, and so it was interesting to see the approaches other organizations take to reach this same goal."

Sharon Fenn, director of organizational development and innovation, attended a session hosted by the city of Fort Collins. "Fort Collins is careful to not only incorporate feedback from their residents into their strategic plans, but also to let their residents know how their feedback is used and what specific improvements are made based on it," Fenn said. "We’re always making improvements based on customer feedback, but this session improved my understanding of how important it is to communicate exactly how customer feedback translates into improvements at SCF."

The Quest conference provided the opportunity to share SCF’s story of customer-driven improvement, and to learn improvement techniques from other high-performing organizations. These techniques will help SCF improve the customer experience as we walk together on this journey toward wellness.
Summer 2018

COMMUNITY

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A Native Community that enjoys physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual wellness.

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Working together with the Native Community to achieve wellness through health and related services.

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New Pediatric and other Services on the Alaska Native Health Campus

By Esther Robertson

Southcentral Foundation is committed to providing the very best health care to the Alaska Native Community. From state-of-the-art facilities, to the finest integrated care teams, SCF has invested heavily in the Alaska Native Medical Health Campus. In the past 20 years, SCF has invested more than $200 million — adding 367,000 square feet of clinical space on the campus as well as two parking garages. Recognizing the benefit to customer-owners, SCF has taken on $75 million in debt to provide these much needed campus facilities.

Southcentral Foundation provides primary health care and related services for more than 65,000 Alaska Native and American Indian people within the vast rural Anchorage Service Unit. With the younger population increasing, the need for pediatric services have sky rocketed over the years. Despite multiple clinic expansions, the pediatric clinic has outgrown its space in the Anchorage Native Primary Care Center.

SCF’s senior leadership’s ongoing fiscal responsibility continues to support whole person wellness. To better serve the family health needs of customer-owners, SCF has most recently invested in service expansion by building the Dr. Katherine and Dr. Kevin Gottlieb building, which has the tentative open date of October 2018. This is just one example of how SCF utilizes a diversified funding stream, including Medicaid, Medicare, and private insurance billing for services provided at ANMC, to support continuous quality improvement and a Native Community that enjoys physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual wellness.

The five-story building represents the desire of SCF leadership to maximize the size of every facility built on the limited land available on the Anchorage campus. The Dr. Katherine and Dr. Kevin Gottlieb building was also constructed to allow for a planned easterly expansion of the hospital.

Included in the new building is The Child and Family Developmental Services clinic. The clinic will have an interdisciplinary team to provide pediatric services related to fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, autism, developmental delay, and other concerns, with supportive services such as occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech and language pathology, and behavioral health services for families of children with disabilities. This state-of-the-art clinic will feature two large sensory gyms and several smaller, individualized treatment spaces with specialized equipment to serve a variety of customer-owner needs.

With a customer-owner first approach, SCF will have ample full-time support staff, allowing therapists to focus on direct customer-owner care once the clinic is fully staffed. The pediatric services that will be provided at the child and family developmental services clinic will help provide a foundation of success for the Alaska Native and American Indian generations to come.

The 8th Annual Nuka System of Care Conference

By SCF Learning Institute

From June 18 – 22, Southcentral Foundation will host the 8th Annual Nuka System of Care Conference. The conference provides SCF the opportunity to share the successes of our customer-owner driven health care system. Last year’s conference was attended by health care professionals from all over Alaska, the country, and the world. Some attendees came from as far away as New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and Singapore to learn about the Nuka System of Care.

At the conference, attendees have the opportunity to learn about many different aspects of Nuka, including our integrated care teams, behavioral health, Family Wellness Warriors Initiative, human resource practices, improvement systems, data collection and usage, and more. The conference is preceded by a session of SCF’s Care Concepts training, which teaches the communication and relationship-building skills that have made Nuka one of the world’s leading health care systems. The conference also features a cultural night at the Alaska Native Heritage Center, where attendees can experience the rich culture of the Alaska Native community, and share elements from their own cultures as well.

This year, the conference will feature keynote speeches from Dr. Eric Green, the director of the National Human Genome Research Institute, Cheryl Hankard, lead training specialist for Mamawesikun, The North Shore Tribal Council, and SCF President/CEO Dr. Katherine Gottlieb. SCF is looking forward to hosting health care professionals once again for the Nuka System of Care Conference, and hopes that attendees will take home valuable lessons from Nuka to improve their own health care systems.
Governor Walker Commends FWWI’s Effort to End Child Abuse and Sexual Assault in March

By Sharon Leighow

For far too long, Alaska has ranked the highest in the nation in rates of child abuse and sexual assault. This April, thanks to Southcentral Foundation’s Family Wellness Warriors Initiative, hundreds of Alaskans took part in awareness, education, and action in an effort to end the violence.

FWWI kicked off Child Abuse and Sexual Assault Awareness Month with a special commencement ceremony that packed the Anchorage Native Primary Care Center lobby.

Anchorage Police Department Deputy Chief Ken McCoy and SCF Senior Director for Organizational Development and Innovation Administration Leandra Ross reminded the crowd that violence is preventable, and it is up to all Alaskans to make a safe place for our children and future generations.

Governor Bill Walker sent a letter in support of FWWI’s effort to eradicate abuse and sexual assault in Alaska.

“I am deeply grateful for the work SCF has done to this end. The Family Wellness Warriors Initiative has equipped community organizations and individuals around our state to address the effects of domestic violence, abuse, and neglect, and to encourage individual, family, and community wellness. This initiative provides an effective framework and the tools necessary to bring about a safer Alaska for all.”

Following the commencement, dozens took part in an awareness march around the Alaska Native Health Campus to bring attention to the devastating impact of child abuse and sexual assault in Alaska. FWWI hosted a series of Friday Fairs during the month with many community organizations presenting on topics associated with healing and prevention.

Dental Teams Carry on Food Drive in Memory of Co-Worker

By Krystin Bogan and Addison Arave

Commissioned Corps officer Kim Pitts was a SCF dental hygienist from 2005 until she passed away from a pulmonary embolism in January 2006. During her short time at SCF Dental, Kim became interested in the SCF Elder Program food drive, which collects food donations from employees across the organization and distributes to Elders during the Thanksgiving holiday.

Kim decided to get SCF Dental involved in donating to the food drive by developing a friendly competition between the Fireweed and ANMC clinics. The challenge sparked huge participation and led to record donations from the department. That was the beginning of the dental food drive, which typically contributes hundreds of food items every year to the Elder Program.

Pitts passed away on Jan. 24, 2006. For a short time, the dental teams took a step back from the food drive; the passion had left with Kim’s passing. After realizing the impact dental participation had on the Elder Program and the community, they vowed to take part in the food drive every year following in memoriam.

In 2012, the Benteh Nuutah Valley Primary Care Center opened and several of Kim’s previous co-workers transferred to the new clinic. Today, VNPPC Dental works year-round to raise money for the Elder Program food drive, in honor of Kim and her vision nearly 13 years ago.

The VNPPC Dental team typically organizes fundraising events, only open to SCF employees, leading up to a mass purchase of food later in the year. These events include flapjack Fridays or games. Every November the team goes on a large shopping spree to buy food for donation. In the past, they have purchased Thanksgiving dinner items such as turkeys, cranberry sauce, and pies, with their largest donation totaling up to 744 food items. This year, the focus is on everyday food items to help support those in need beyond the holiday season.

This spring, the VNPPC Dental team tried something new by organizing a paint night fundraiser benefiting the food drive. For the first time, their fundraising event was open to the public. The April event was a success and drew a packed room of painters. The VNPPC Dental team plans on hosting another paint night fundraiser in the fall.

“Win or lose, dental has put forth 100 percent effort to support the Elder food drive,” said Tanya Shanks, VNPPC supervisor of dental assistants.

[“In the past] when VNPPC dental has won the food drive, we made floats for anyone who wanted one in the building. We wanted to make sure that we recognized all of the efforts that everyone put into winning because without them playing our games, eating our foods, or now joining us for the painting class, we would not be as successful as we are.”

Those who worked with Kim Pitts say she had a bright spirit that was contagious. Thanks to her example, the SCF Elder Program has a team of people willing to dedicate time and effort to the well-being of Elders.
The importance of advanced directives is highlighted, suggesting that by using storytelling and culturally relevant imagery to explain the topic, the process becomes more engaging and accessible to customer-owners of any age, as it was determined that everyone should have an advanced care plan on file. Customer-owners and various focus groups helped to tailor the materials specifically to their needs.

Online learning modules were created for providers, allowing for convenient and comprehensive training that was developed to simultaneously achieve SCF's Corporate Goals while adding to cutting-edge science. Mau then collaborated with SCF Research on several diabetes-related studies, including the use of telemedicine for diabetes management and the association between depression and diabetes.

In addition to the conversation guide, brochures, digital lobby displays, a website, and other communication tools were used to get the word out about this important topic. These tools were adapted to communicate appropriate approaches and conversation tools to remain culturally sensitive.

Mau is currently co-director of the Center for Native and Pacific Health Disparities Research located in the Department of Native Hawaiian Health, which aims to confront and eliminate health disparities in Native Hawaiians, Alaska Native people, and other Pacific Island people.

The advanced care planning button to open the conversation between customer-owner and provider.

IHS Recognizes Advanced Care Planning Initiative

By Amanda Cantrell

Your Care, Your Choices, the advanced care planning initiative created by Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium and Southcentral Foundation, was awarded an Indian Health Services Director’s Award for 2017. A team of 39 professionals, with representatives from the medical as well as business side of both ANTHC and SCF, developed this unique program.

“This initiative was a joint effort between ANTHC’s Palliative Care Team, led by Dr. Christopher Pirro-Mallia, and Southcentral Foundation’s Primary Care department, said Jerry Markus, an improvement advisor for SCF and a project lead. “The advanced care planning materials and training that were developed were the first of their kind to approach the topic of health care wishes in the event of serious illness and/or injury from an Alaska Native/ American Indian perspective.”

A Palliative Care Program, created in October 2015, formed partnerships with clinics and programs that supported the medical relief of pain and stress of a serious illness. As the program developed, it became apparent there was a need for communication tools to open the conversation between provider and customer-owner related to advanced directives. The tools needed to be culturally sensitive while also helping providers breach these difficult topics. The Your Care, Your Choices conversation guide did just that by using storytelling and culturally relevant imagery to explain the importance of advanced directives.

Congratulations to the Advanced Care Planning team on their award and thank you to the customer-owners for their help in making a successful program.

Study confirms lifesaving value of colonoscopy

By Alan Messi

A study analyzing outcomes among 25,000 patients in the Veterans Affairs health system confirms that having a colonoscopy is associated with a significant reduction in colorectal cancer death. Andrew Chan (HMS/Mass General) is quoted.

Full article: https://bit.ly/2HCeDeE

How to help manage your anxiety naturally with food

By A. Pawlowski

Anxiety disorders are the most common mental illness in the United States, estimated to affect nearly 40 million adults. Some experts suggest that diet may help assuage anxiety symptoms. Umadevi Naidoo (HMS/Mass General) is quoted.

Full article: https://on.today.com/2GfuO1q

Dr. Marjorie Mau Receives Elite Honor

By Sharon Leighow

Recognizing her extraordinary life’s work in health care and research, Dr. Marjorie Mau has been named a fellow in the Royal College of Physicians. Founded in 1518 by a Royal Charter from King Henry VIII, the Royal College of Physicians of London is the oldest medical college in England. Dr. Mau joins only 25 other U.S. physicians in this elite group, designated masters of their profession.

Mau is a strong advocate for conducting health research relevant to Native people and other populations experiencing health disparities, as well as training the next generation of health-disparities researchers.

Southcentral Foundation is proud of its long relationship with Mau. As SCF’s Research was being formed, Mau provided expert guidance about how to develop the department to simultaneously achieve SCF’s Corporate Goals while adding to cutting-edge science. Mau then collaborated with SCF Research on several diabetes-related studies, including the use of telemedicine for diabetes management and the association between depression and diabetes.
Ileen Sylvester Awarded 2017 IHS Director’s Award

By Connie Irrigoo

Indian Health Service recognized Ileen Sylvester during the 2018 National Director’s Award Ceremony in Rockville, Maryland on June 1.

“We are proud of Ileen’s leadership and honored that she was recognized for her innovation and exceptional performance and exemplary actions resulting in quality service for customer-owners and their families,” said SCF President/CEO Dr. Katherine Gottlieb. “She is dedicated to the Native Community and has fostered partnerships that have helped make SCF a global leader in health care.”

Since 1998, Ileen has served as Southcentral Foundation Vice President of Executive and Tribal Services. She manages and directs the day-to-day operations of tribal relations and village initiatives for health care delivery to 55 rural communities, traditional healing, youth and Elder programming, public relations, planning and grants, and more.

Ileen contributes to regional and statewide health initiatives by building relationships on boards and committees including: Alaska Tribal Health Directors as vice-chair, Public Health Accreditation Advisory Committee, National Indian Health Board Tribal Public Health Workgroup Committee, and Alaska Native Women’s Sexual Assault Committee. She was also selected as a regional delegate to serve on the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Health Research Advisory Council.

Consistent with the traditional values of respect for Elders and honoring children, Ileen has helped strengthen the systems for caring for and supporting Elders and teaching youth. She has, both personally and professionally, dedicated herself to helping Elders be in a position to share their knowledge and experiences. Ileen has worked with the youth to ensure they may know their traditional values and strengths and how to align the understanding with the delivery of health care services. In her pursuit of these endeavors, she has built relationships between many different programs to ensure support for physical, mental, emotional and spiritual wellness.

For example, Ileen has partnered with the SCF Elder Program manager to forge partnerships between the Elder Program and health education to expand services and provide weekly health screenings for Elders. Additionally, they worked together to facilitate a partnership with medical services to create the opportunity for a primary care provider to have a physical presence at the Elder Program.

Ileen’s involvement with the Elder Program, and the way she has brought many disciplines together to foster an environment of quality, dignity and pride, has improved Elders’ lives in Anchorage. During its busiest events, the Elder Program is said to have the largest number of Alaska Native Elders gathered in one place in the world. During these events, Ileen personally takes the time to make the rounds to everyone in attendance to greet them and check in.

An advocate for the youth in the Native Community, Ileen was instrumental in bolstering organization-wide support and partnership with Southcentral Foundation’s RAISE youth internship program. She encourages and teaches the interns, encouraging them to learn and become future leaders.

The SCF RAISE program was founded on the belief that every youth wants to succeed and will respond to expectations when given the opportunity. With her executive oversight, Ileen sets the tone for the program and provides the cohorts of youth participants with a vision of what is possible. She leads by example and shows the youth the path to become future leaders.

Ileen Sylvester visits with Elders during a potluck celebration at SCF’s Elder Program.

Vice President of Executive and Tribal Services Ileen Sylvester with the award-winning SCF teams.

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Ileen is quick to credit the team approach to the positive changes that have been made – and are continuing to be made – in Alaska Native health care. She helps disseminates this approach not only within Southcentral Foundation’s Executive and Tribal Services Division, but also throughout the entire organization and the network of Tribal Health Directors throughout the state.

Ileen offers her wisdom, expertise, help, and encouragement to anyone, anywhere, who wants to improve health care. She shares that we can’t work alone and that we must find partners, including customer-owners, providers, and leadership who can link up with each other in areas of need. Ileen goes the extra distance to ensure that the relationship-building being done includes the necessary communication and feedback to be effective.

Ileen Sylvester visits with Elders during a potluck celebration at SCF’s Elder Program.
Native Men’s Wellness Program Sustainability – Fleet Maintenance for SCF Vehicles

By Connie Irrigoo

In 2014, Southcentral Foundation Native Men’s Wellness Program was established to help Native men in their journey to physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual wellness. The program supports men who are changing their circumstances by embracing a new level of accountability, which is determined and set by individual participants.

NMWP is working to become self-sustaining and will continue its work to change the lives of men in the Native Community.

“Since the program started, a total of 172 Alaska Native men have participated in the program; this exceeds ANA grant goals of reaching a total of 160 participants in year four of the grant,” said NMWP manager David Farve.

NMWP has explored ways to become self-sustaining while continuing to support SCF’s Corporate Goals. One way is to maintain the SCF fleet of vehicles. Doing so would allow participants to learn how to do the work and support them in achieving full-time employment once their internship is concluded. Maintenance will include oil changes and tire changes and will help reduce costs associated to fleet maintenance for many of SCF programs.

This winter, The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation awarded NMWP a $25,000 grant to purchase automotive maintenance equipment. NMWP participants could become certified with nationally recognized associations to change the oil and tires of SCF’s fleet of vehicles. Participants could take either the Automotive Oil Change Association or Tire Industry Association online courses and prove their learning in the NMWP shop for certification. SCF is a member of both associations.

In total, seven participants have been certified to change oil and tires in the last year. Two have gone on to gain their Automotive Service Excellence certification and are fully employed elsewhere.

“I didn’t think I would make it through the training to become certified to change oil and tires,” said one NMWP participant. “The Native Men’s Wellness Program employees had faith in me finishing and passing, with their help I am certified and now have a full-time job.”

If the fleet maintenance program is successful, the program will be expanded and opened to the public for oil changes and tire changeovers. Watch for more information as the program continues to help men reach employment goals, embrace healthy living, and become contributing community members and leaders.

For more information about the Native Men’s Wellness Program, call (907) 729-5208.

Southcentral Foundation Provider Spotlight

By Alyssa Sasser

You may have seen Brandi Hennard during an appointment, while attending a class, or around the Alaska Native Health Campus. As the only senior dietitian at Southcentral Foundation, she has many roles. Hennard has been with SCF since 2004, when she fell in love with Alaska and moved from Texas. She has a passion for nutrition, stemming from childhood.

“I remember being in school and hearing my teacher talk about fats, proteins, and carbs and thinking, Oh no, my dad’s going to have a heart attack since he eats the fat on his steak! I still remember that moment so vividly, it stuck with me,” Brandi said.

As a wife and mother of two, Hennard encourages healthy eating within her family. She shares that moderation and a healthy relationship with food are very important to a healthy diet. Her weekends are family-oriented and start with a late breakfast, followed by outdoor activities. In the summer, Hennard and her family spend the weekends fishing and camping around Alaska.

Hennard is invested in children’s health and recently joined an Anchorage School District task force focused on increasing the amount of time kids have to eat lunch. This issue caught her attention when she realized that as the only senior dietitian at Southcentral Foundation, she has many roles. Hennard has been with SCF since 2004, when she fell in love with Alaska and moved from Texas. She has a passion for nutrition, stemming from childhood.

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We work together with the Native Community to achieve wellness through health and related services.

Partnerships in Mat-Su Grow
By Amanda Cantrell
Connect Mat-Su officially opened on Friday, May 18. The ceremony kicked off with speeches from Mat-Su Health Foundation leaders, community partners, and partners. Southcentral Foundation Vice President April Kyle attended and spoke briefly about the importance of community organizations working together to meet the needs of the area they serve. Representatives from the Chickaloon Traditional Village Council and the Knik Tribal Council joined her as they presented a hand painted drum to the new organization, symbolizing the heartbeat of the community the partnership creates as we walk this new path together.

To learn more about Connect Mat-Su, visit their new location at 777 N. Crusey Street in Wasilla, or call (907) 373-2628.

Ya Ne Dah Ah School Graduates 14 in 2018
By Amanda Cantrell
The Ahtna Athabascan language school Ya Ne Dah Ah graduated 14 students on May 24, 2018. The celebration marked its graduation since its inception in 1992. The Chickaloon school focuses on Native traditions, language, and culture as the foundation of a complete education. With a unique curriculum of Native heritage and skills, coupled with standard Western studies, the school offers an education that supports the traditions of the people who live there, while helping the culture to thrive for future generations. Congratulations Ya Ne Dah Ah 2018 graduates!

To learn more about the Ya Ne Dah Ah school, visit www.chickaloong.org/departments/education/yaschool.

Centennial Celebration for SCF Elder Program Participant
By Connie Irrigoo
As Anna Demientieff entered Southcentral Foundation’s Elder Program on April 27, she did so with a smile. For Anna, April 27, 2018 was a very special day, her birthday, and not just any birthday, it was a birthday celebrating being 100 years old.

It’s a milestone that makes her daughter Deena Penney’s eyes twinkle with delight. At the event she grinned and exclaimed, “We are so happy and honored to celebrate my mother’s centennial birthday with friends and family at the SCF Elder Program!”

Anna has seen many changes in her 100 years of life. “I am very, very happy to celebrate my 100th birthday,” she said. “I am getting ready for the next 100 years!”

Born in Unga on the Aleutian Island Chain, Anna Rose Demientieff’s (Wilson) grandparents are Mattie Gould and Aleck Wilson. Anna married William Demientieff, of Holy Cross, in McGrath on Nov. 20, 1937. She was raised downriver from McGrath at her grandparent’s homestead at a lake locally known as Wilson’s lake. Anna had eight children and one stepson, 12 grandchildren, numerous great-grandchildren and now one great-great-grandchild. She has seen many changes in life: growing up on her grandparent’s homestead before moving to Anchorage in 2012.

In addition to the SCF Elder Program celebration, her family held a big family birthday party at Kincaid Park with family from McGrath joining in on the celebration. Anna was delighted that 100 people celebrated 100 years of life with her. The new centenarian had a wonderful time at both parties!

Turning 100 is a rare occasion that should definitely be celebrated with family and friends. To honor and help her celebrate the milestone, the SCF Elder Program held their monthly potluck on her centennial birthday. Food, music and dancing was enjoyed by all and made Anna’s milestone birthday festive!
By Shamika Andrew

Southcentral Foundation’s RAISE Program began in 1997. The program blends work experience while introducing participants to health-related careers. Located on the Alaska Native Health Campus in Anchorage, new components have been added yearly to accommodate changing needs and innovations. The overall goal is to build future Native leadership, blending cultural components into planning processes. The RAISE Program provides opportunities for on-the-job work experience in the context of Alaska Native cultural values.

The RAISE Program’s is founded on the belief that everyone wants to succeed and will respond to expectations when given the opportunity. Its goal is to strengthen the Native Community by enhancing education, life and employment skills, and professional/personal development while increasing health awareness of Native youth. Two former RAISE Program participants have become influential within SCF.

Ricco Ramos started as an intern at SCF in the summer of 2005. Ricco was placed in the youth mentorship and health careers group for several summers. Ricco returned in 2007 to complete the Administrative Support Training Program and transitioned into the Development Center as an administrative support.

In the five years that followed, Ricco progressed from an Administrative Support I to a level III, and later into a program coordinator. In these roles Ricco provided support to various SCF programs and processes such as the Academic Program, Administrative Support Training Program, and daily course/room management.

Ricco has been in his current role as a learning and development associate with the development center for the past three years. Ricco facilitates a variety of trainings and educational opportunities at SCF:RELATE Customer Experience, Cultural Awareness, Core Concepts Group Leader, New Hire Orientation, Electronic Health Records, and Computer Immersion.

Ricco presents A Comprehensive Approach to Employee Learning and Development annually at SCF’s Nuka System of Care conference each year. Ricco not only shares SCF’s approach to employee learning and development but shares his own growth and development story to conference visitors and all who ask.

Ricco has been with SCF for almost 10 years beginning with his RAISE internship. “Starting with the RAISE program allowed me to build a network of peers and gain meaningful work experience very early on. The RAISE program comes full circle, where I get to work with other employees who were in the same summer cohorts as I was,” Ramos said.

Ricco is Aleut and a customer-owner from Anchorage, Alaska. Ricco continues to provide training and education for all employees of SCF. He believes that everyone should continually learn and grow and that providing education and training will support employees to continue to do amazing work at SCF.

Another SCF leader who participated in the RAISE Program is Fari Sylvester. She became an intern in the summer of 1998. Fari also interned the winter session in 2000-01 and as a graduate intern session 2002-03. Fari’s work sites included human resources, public relations, transitional living program, and RAISE Program.

“The RAISE Program provided me with multiple opportunities,” Fari said. “I was able to become a water safety instructor, emergency trauma technician, and attend college at Haskell Indian Nations University,” she added.

Fari has progressed in the organization starting as administrative support, moving to case management support, and then to program coordinator supporting the SCF Board of Directors before becoming a supervisor.

Fari is now a supervisor in outpatient pediatrics. She received an associate’s of arts degree from the University of Anchorage Alaska in 2007 and is currently working toward her bachelor of arts degree in Alaska Native governance at Alaska Pacific University. Fari wants future interns to be open to any opportunity or job placement.

Her advice for interns: this is your chance to find out what you want to become when you grow up; the relationships that you create now when working in different areas will follow you throughout your life.

Designed to develop leadership skills in Alaska Native and American Indian youth 14–19 years old, SCF’s RAISE Program offers three separate sessions per year: summer, winter, and graduate programs. Each one exposes participants to health-related careers and the expectations of the workplace, while supporting them in both personal and professional development.

Ricco and Fari both learned that when opportunities are offered to you while in the RAISE Program — take them and explore the options provided to you and embrace them.
A Relationship-Based Approach to Handling Opioids

By SCF Learning Institute

Southcentral Foundation has implemented a comprehensive approach to handling opioids and opioid addiction based on its system of relationship-based care and integrated behavioral health. This approach to substance use disorders allows providers to more effectively work with customer-owners who may be experiencing challenges while ensuring needed medications are still provided and customer-owners receive the support they need.

SCF’s Nuka System of Care integrates behavioral health providers in SCF’s primary care clinics to support holistic chronic pain management and effective opioid prescriptions. Behavioral health consultants have multiple roles associated with opioid prescription and treatment, including working with primary care providers and customer-owners in establishing wellness care plans. The plans assist providers and customer-owners in working together to achieve the customer-owner’s health goals. Although wellness care plans can be used for many different purposes, one important function is to ensure that customer-owners are supported by the health care system while they are being treated for chronic pain. Positive relationships and access to care support customer-owners and help to reduce opioid dependency.

For those customer-owners who find themselves struggling with opioid dependency, SCF has several options to help them recover. Primary care providers, behavioral health consultants, and the Four Directions Outpatient Treatment Center are all involved in providing integrated health care. Customer-owners may fluidly move between services depending on their needs. Once treatment has begun, depending on need and circumstance, customer-owners may be treated in an intensive outpatient program or integrated primary care setting. Through provider training and support, SCF has managed to increase the number of primary care providers approved for medication-assisted treatment—a type of treatment that has proven effective for some customer-owners. The percent of providers approved to provide this type of treatment has risen from approximately 10 percent to over 70 percent, making this treatment available to more customer-owners who might need it.

SCF is committed to helping customer-owners on their journey toward wellness, and using the strong relationships we build with customer-owners to achieve this goal.
COMMITMENT TO QUALITY

2018

Living Our Values

Award Recipients

Kristin Allmaras
Pharmacist
SCF Pharmacy

Christine Anaruk
Supervisor
VNCCC Wellness Center Radiology

Heather Anderson
Lactation and Infant Feeding Consultant

Kelly Anderson
Behavioral Health Technician II
Quyana Clubhouse

Julie Beams
Researcher

Julie Castle
Physician
Obstetrics and Gynecology

Christopher Chong
Pharmacist Integrated MOA
VNCCC East

Claudia Phillips
Child Psychiatric Consultant
Behavioral Health Fireweed

Sasha Davis
Certified Medical Assistant
Outpatient Pediatrics

Justin Doggett
Behavioral Health Consultant
Behavioral Health Fireweed

Victoria Greer
Patient Accounts Manager
Optometry

Britta Hanson
OB-GYN Case Manager,
Obstetrics and Gynecology

Kaila Hawley
Exercise Physiologist
Physical Therapy and Exercise

Dawson Hoover
Learning and Development Associate
Development Center

Rachel Jimmy
Senior Accountant
Finance

Susan Kay
Dental Hygienist
Dental

Christopher Klabunde
Manager
Elder Program

Rhonda Koski
Administrative Coordinator
Executive and Tribal Services Administration

Kristen Lanz
Behavioral Health Case Manager - Residential
The Pathway Home

Heaven Lopez
Administrative Support III
Outpatient Pediatrics
The following employees have exemplified themselves by honoring and embodying Southcentral Foundation’s Vision, Mission, and Corporate Goals. SCF’s Living Our Values award is corporate-wide and based on at least one of the following: role model for other employees on how to perform job duties, notable achievements and/or high productivity in service delivery, quality improvement, customer service, risk management, administrative management, improvements in safety, health and well-being of others, family wellness, outstanding teamwork, or any other mission-related activity of SCF. Employees may also be nominated for exemplary performance above and beyond the scope of their respective positions.

Please join SCF in celebrating our employees and their contributions toward achieving SCF’s Vision and Mission!

**Dental Program Coordination Group**

From left to right: Sandy Stearns, Program Coordinator; Amanda Mitchell, Program Coordinator; Mary Awalin, Program Coordinator; Erica Johnson, Program Coordinator.

**Colorectal Cancer Team**

From left to right: Akila Osakwe, Clinician I; Michon Johnson, Clinician-Rural I; Nicole Tracy, Supervisor/Clinical Supervisor; Anthony Washington, Clinician Rural I; Rae Jackson, Behavioral Health Case Manager II.

**Behavioral Services Division Rural Team**

From left to right: Jennielyn Bugarin, Certified Medical Assistant I; Ida Putnam, Certified Medical Assistant I; Paul Fertand, Registered Nurse Case Manager; Tammy Oaks, Licensed Practical Nurse II. Not pictured: Linda Shephard Donovan, Certified Medical Assistant II.
encourages and bases much of its work on story, The Winter Bear
of saving lives and building resiliency. Just as Southcentral Foundation
“It’s about the strength of our Native culture and our traditional ways
“The play encourages people to talk about suicide,” Huntington said.

Southcentral Foundation is committed to providing high-quality services, supporting family wellness, and embracing shared responsibility. To support these corporate goals, SCF has diversified its funding sources to include private insurance, private and public grants, Medicaid and Medicare, and other third-party payers. If SCF relied purely on funding from Indian Health Services and had not diversified the funding stream, roughly half of all services provided by SCF would not exist.

IHS is the primary institution through which the federal government provides health services to Alaska Native and American Indian people; it is not an insurance program, but a federal agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. IHS was created as a result of government-to-government treaties between the sovereign nations of the Alaska Native and American Indian people and the U.S. Government, and it is responsible for providing federal health services for Alaska Native and American Indian people.

Through increased third-party revenue funding customer-owners have same day access to primary care, and, primary care is not just a

By Riley Stewman

Mental health is defined by mentalhealth.gov as our emotional, psychological, and social well-being, affecting how we think, feel, and act. Mental health conditions currently affect one in five people in America, with more than half of the conditions beginning by age 14 and 75 percent developing by age 24. Detecting signs and symptoms of mental health issues as early as possible is important to developing appropriate coping skills. Throughout May, SCF celebrated Mental Health Awareness Month to help further awareness around this important topic.

The National Alliance on Mental Health reports that warnings signs of a mental health concern can include excessive worrying or fear, thoughts of suicide, feeling sad, change in eating habits, mood changes, and much more. For children, signs can include a change in grades at school, anxiety, worry, temper tantrums, frequent disobedience or aggression, nightmares. It is important to get connected with someone if you or someone you know is experiencing any signs, contact SCF Behavioral Health at (907) 729-2500.

On May 9, 16, 23, and 30, Southcentral Foundation Behavioral Services Division held a community meet and greet in the Anchorage Native Primary Care Center lobby. During the event, employees and customer-owners had the opportunity to find out the different behavioral services involved in and use culture to find reasons to live.”

If you would like to find out more information on mental health conditions or are experiencing any signs, contact SCF Behavioral Health at (907) 729-2500.
Southcentral Foundation Creates Powerful Software to Aid in Strategic Planning

By SCF Learning Institute

At Southcentral Foundation, all changes and improvements are driven by customer-owners. Customer-owner feedback is used at every level of the organization, from providing general direction for the organization, to specific suggestions about how processes and systems can improve the customer experience. Strategic planning is the process SCF utilizes to ensure feedback we receive is used effectively and the improvements are in alignment with customer-owner needs.

To assist with this process, SCF has developed the Nuka Strategic Planning Software. The software is used at many different levels of the organization to assist with the planning process. The software aligns organizational goals with department work, standardizes the planning process across SCF, and supports transparency and communication. All employees are able to see work efforts across the organization. In addition, strategic planning helps take the focus beyond the annual cycle, with support for managing things that span across many years like SCF’s corporate goals, objectives, and initiatives. SCF’s strategic planning tools have helped make many key improvements to the Nuka System of Care, including reducing wait times for appointments, implementing training programs to help providers build relationships with customer-owners, and ensuring that high standards for quality of care are maintained.

“At SCF, we have a tiered planning process that we have been managing with SCF-created software for the last 11 years,” said D. Michael Lewis, a senior application developer who worked with SCF leadership and improvement employees to build the software. He continued, “The Nuka Strategic Planning Software will provide even more functionality and flexibility.”

SCF’s Learning Institute is also making the software available to other organizations. The software’s flexibility and ability to be customized will make it a valuable resource for organizations seeking to improve their strategic planning processes.

SCF is committed to continually improving the health care system by making improvements based on customer-owner feedback, and the Nuka Strategic Planning Software is at the heart of achieving this goal.

Rural Anchorage Service Unit Pharmacy Recognized

By Sharon Leighow

One of the most important services in any health care organization is that of the pharmacy. In rural Alaska communities, pharmacy services are especially important as approximately 10,000 customer-owners reside in the Rural Anchorage Service Unit.

At SCF, the Rural Anchorage Service Pharmacy Team (RASU) received national recognition for its work fostering relationships and providing the highest standard of safe, effective, evidenced-based pharmaceutical care. The RASU pharmacy team is the recipient of the 2017 Indian Health Service Director’s Award for Fostering Relationships.

Three dedicated clinical pharmacists and three certified pharmacy technicians make up the SCF RASU Pharmacy. This small team has 60 years of experience providing pharmaceutical care for 55 rural communities. The magnitude of services and the breadth of relationships this team has developed is evident by the numbers. Last year, the team mailed 55,437 prescriptions to rural customer-owners, dispensed 17,142 orders through telepharmacy, sent 512 clinic stock orders, filled 4,000 telepharmacy replenishment orders, prepared 28 dental boxes for traveling dentists and provides formal orientation to 15 traveling rural providers.

The RASU Pharmacy sends all medication supplies to rural customer-owners through the U.S. Postal Service. The team addressed significant challenges to mail delivery in 2017 by collaborating with village clinics employees, tribal health organization’s health administrations, and the U.S. Postal Service administration to develop village-specific solutions to address the challenge.

The RASU Pharmacy continues to play a key role in addressing the opioid crisis in rural Alaska. In 2017, the team participated in a multi-Tribal summit which also included representatives from the State of Alaska and Drug Enforcement Agency to strategize on potential actions and solutions to help combat the crisis. As a result, some of the actions taken include the addition of oral and injectable Naltrexone in selected rural clinics to improve access to medication assisted treatment, and collaborating with provider staff and health directors for an ongoing conversation and review of the appropriate indications and length of therapy for controlled substances.

The provision of pharmaceutical care in rural Alaska is complex. By working in collaboration with the Alaska Community Health Aide Program, tribal health directors, and individual providers, SCF RASU Pharmacy has a crucial role ensuring customer-owners living in remote locations have access to available, effective and appropriate pharmacotherapy.

Rural Anchorage Service Unit Pharmacy Recognized
FAMILY WELLNESS

Southcentral Foundation Learning Circles

Valley
Recovery Support
Tuesdays | 6 – 7:30 p.m.
1001 Knik-Goose Bay Road | Fireweed Room, second floor
Join us to meet with others recovering from substance use and behavioral issues. Receive support and encouragement on your road to an drug free lifestyle. You don’t have to walk your journey alone. Walk-in participants welcome; ages 18 and up.

Anchorage
Breaking the Silence: Healing the Loss of Suicide
Thursdays | 3:30 – 5 p.m.
4085 Tudor Centre Drive
Content: When someone dies by suicide, the loss and devastation, along with so many unanswered questions, leaves family and friends hurt and angry. By sharing our hurt and anger from the heart, healing can come. This learning circle is open to people ages 18 and older; walk-in participation is welcomed.

www.southcentralfoundation.com/learning-circles

Pickled Blackberries

Ingredients
- 3 cups white balsamic vinegar
- 2 whole cloves
- 2 cinnamon sticks
- 1 gallon fresh blackberries
- 2 cups honey

Directions:
1. Combine first 3 ingredients in a Dutch oven and bring to a boil. Cover, reduce heat, and simmer for 10 minutes. Remove from heat and let stand 5 minutes. Add berries and chill for 8 hours.
2. Drain berries in a colander over a bowl, reserving the liquid. Discard spices and divide berries among 12 half-pint jars.
3. Bring vinegar mixture and honey to a boil. Divide hot vinegar mixture among jars, filling 1/4 inch from top. Cover with metal lids and cool to room temperature. Refrigerate up to 2 weeks.

National Cancer Survivors Day Shows the Power of Hope

By Denile Ault

June 3 is National Cancer Survivors Day. On this day, we celebrate the survivors in our community and bring awareness to their individual struggles. The National Cancer Survivors Day Foundation defines a survivor as anyone living with a history of cancer—from the moment of diagnosis through the remainder of life. This definition also recognizes the active survivors in our community.

Active, productive, and full of moxie is exactly how to describe nine-year breast cancer survivor Jesse Merculief. At the time of her diagnosis, Jesse already had the struggles of a young working mom trying to support her family. Breast cancer brought only more struggles. Her daughter’s father left when he found out about the cancer, so Jesse raised their toddler alone while spending the next three years undergoing cancer treatment. Jesse lost a lot through treatment: her long beautiful hair, the chance to have more children, and both breasts.

In the darkest of times, Jesse started speaking with a behavioral therapist. Therapy helped Jesse process her emotions, so that she could carry on and finish her fight. When things started to get better, Jesse had a newfound perspective on appreciating life’s joys. Her hair grew back, with a new wavy texture, and she was accepted into SCF’s Administrative Support Training Program.

Now an SCF patient accounts specialist, Jesse uses her wellness hour to attend SCF’s Health Education’s Power of Hope cancer and education social group luncheons. She enjoys the nutritious and creative lunches, the health educator’s expertise, but above all Jesse enjoys the opportunity to meet with fellow survivors from different walks of life. The next Power of Hope luncheon will be held in Mt. Marathon on June 25 from noon to 1 p.m.

To read more of Jesse’s story, visit southcentralfoundation.com. For more information about Power of Hope, contact Health Education at: (907) 729-2689.
Honoring Women’s Health Week

By Riley Stewman

Women's Health Week, held this year on May 14 – 18, is an annual observance to encourage women to make their health a priority. Getting screened, staying active, eating healthy, managing stress, avoiding unhealthy behaviors, and taking time for oneself are all key factors in maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

During Women’s Health Week, Southcentral Foundation Health Education held a number of events in the Anchorage Native Primary Care Center lobby. These included a Know Your Numbers station, spring traditional plant harvesting, and mom's quick and easy dinners with Instant Pots. Other events included Dinner Makes a Difference and a card making station for Mother’s Day.

Part of staying healthy includes knowing some important health numbers such as risk factors for chronic diseases like high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes, cancer, and obesity. This also includes knowing your blood pressure, blood glucose, cholesterol, and body weight or body mass index. At the Know Your Numbers station, participants had their blood pressure and blood glucose taken. They were encouraged to make an action plan and talk with their primary care provider about their results and how eating healthier and regular exercise can help prevent chronic illnesses. In addition, participants learned about the many learning circles that can help them on their journey to a healthier lifestyle. Those services include Dinner Makes a Difference, the Diabetes Education program, the Lose to Win program, and the group exercise classes offered at the Mt. Marathon Building. To find out more information on any of these activities, visit the health education or physical therapy and exercise page on southcentralfoundation.com.

To help customer-owners get ready to harvest traditional plants, health education hosted an activity booth with information on how to appropriately harvest and use some of the most popular plants. Devil’s club is used in making salves; spruce tips are edible and high in vitamin C; fiddlehead ferns are edible and high in vitamin A; and nettles are edible and high in vitamin A, B, and C. Attendees also had an opportunity to talk with health educators about harvesting tips and special recipes.

If you have any questions regarding your health, contact your primary care provider at (907) 729-3300 or contact health education at (907) 729-2689 for questions regarding healthy activities.

New Medicare Card

By Riley Stewman

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services revamped Medicare cards. From April to June, new cards were mailed to recipients. Those who live in the following states received the new Medicare cards: Alaska, American Samoa, California, Delaware, District of Columbia, Guam, Hawaii, Maryland, Northern Mariana Islands, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and West Virginia. Those who live in all other states, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands will receive their card after June. Retired railroad workers should receive a card mailed from the Railroad Retirement Board.

The new Medicare cards are now credit card sized to fit better in a wallet. The card no longer has Social Security Numbers (these will be removed from all cards by April 2019), signatures, or gender. It consists of cardholder’s name, new Medicare number, and start dates for both Medicare Parts A and B. In addition, cards are written in English and Spanish.

Medicare card representing traditional/original Medicare coverage (Parts A and B) is the only thing changing; do not throw away or destroy Medicare Advantage, Part D prescription plans, and Medigap do not change.

Do not take the Medicare card anywhere unless it is needed for an appointment or is necessary, to avoid someone taking it and stealing information. Do not share your information with anyone.

For any questions regarding your new Medicare card, contact SCF's Family Health Resources at (907) 729-4470.
Elder Garden

By SCF Public Relations

This is the second year the Southcentral Foundation Elder Program garden is available for Elders to tend. Similar to last year, the Cook Inlet Native Head Start planted seeds in the raised garden beds this spring, which inspired and energized participating Elders and SCF employees alike. Time spent outside provides an opportunity to do fun and healthy activities!

Aaron Osterback, Elder Program Supervisor, is committed to bringing healthy outdoor activities to the Elders. He hopes the garden will produce a resource of fresh fruits and vegetables during each growing season. Osterback enjoys sharing his knowledge about growing plants in the short and intense growing season in Alaska. The Elder Program will grow carrots, tomatoes, and potatoes this season, along with a variety of other plants.

Trips to the Elder garden offer many benefits to Elders. Scheduled daily walks to the garden provide gentle cardiovascular options, with benches conveniently placed along the way for rest, if needed. The fresh air is a nice boost of oxygen for Elders, which is a great relief after a long winter indoors. After a few months of watering, preening, and removing weeds, Elders are rewarded knowing that their efforts contributed to a successful growing season. The raised beds were designed so Elders would not have to kneel or stoop when working on projects in the garden. This activity is available for any Elder who is interested in gardening, visiting with others and light exercise.

“We are here for Elders to learn and participate in the garden activities and as we grow plants, fruits, and vegetables,” said Osterback. “It is our hope to have usable vegetation at the end of the season.”

For more information about the Elder Program or the garden, or if you would like to make a donation or volunteer, contact the Elder Program at (907) 729-6500.

Elder Day of Caring

Fueled by SCF workers

By SCF Public Relations

Southcentral Foundation employees are passionate about caring for Elders! Each year employees from across SCF commit a part or all of their workday to assist Elders in taking care of household tasks. SCF employees sweep, dust, wash dishes, rake and clean yards — just a few of the many ways the SCF employees honor and care for Elders.

The Elder Day of Caring was held on May 18. Fifteen Elders who live in Anchorage received help with household cleaning and organizing tasks. Sixty-four employees participated in the annual event and if next year is anything like this year, many of those employees will return to help again.

Worker Riley Stewman shared, “I really enjoy day of caring. Getting the opportunity to give the elders a helping hand for a day makes my day because by the time we are done, you get to see how happy and grateful they are for the help you gave them!”

“Doing outdoor work like raking, bagging leaves and branches for an Elder who has trouble moving is something I feel great about doing,” said SCF employee Jake Johnson. “This is one of the many ways we as SCF employees do to give back to the Native Community; we are here for each other.”

For more information about how you can make a donation to or volunteer at the Elder Program, call (907) 729-6355.

SCF Elder Program | 6901 East Tudor Road, Anchorage, Alaska 99507 | (907) 729-6500

Important Phone Numbers

Alaska Native Medical Center (907) 563-2662
American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) (907) 272-1444
Anchorage Police Department (907) 786-8500
Anchor Rides (907) 343-4536
Cook Inlet Housing Authority (907) 793-5000
Division of Public Assistance (907) 729-6599
Food Bank of Alaska (907) 272-3663
People Mover (907) 343-4536
Salvation Army Meals on Wheels (907) 549-0613
Senior Benefits (907) 352-4150
Southcentral Foundation (907) 729-4955
SCF Elder Program Event Hotline (907) 729-6588