



# ANCHORAGE NATIVE NEWS

## Elder Program Activities

Summer sunshine and warmer weather are not the only motivators to get moving at SCF's Elder Program.

**Read more, page 12.**

## Gifting Wellness to Future Generations

Protect your family and community by following a suggested schedule for vaccinations.

**Read more, page 2.**

## Medicaid Renewal

Ensure your contact information is up to date to avoid a gap in coverage.

**Read more, page 3.**

## Start Your Mindfulness Journey

Did you know being out in nature and participating in traditional subsistence activities rely on mindful practices?

**Read more, page 11.**

## Invigorate Health Among Alaska's Majestic Beauty

Improve physical and mental health, decrease burnout, and boost happiness by taking an Alaska staycation.

**Read more, page 10.**

# Family, Fun, and Sun

Recharge Your Health

## Added Support for Families

To support growing families, SCF is integrating pediatric support teams into primary care clinics.

**Read more, page 4.**

## Fun in the Sun for All Ages

Staying active does not have to be arduous or mundane, especially in the land of the midnight sun.

**Read more, page 6.**

## Men's Health and Wellness: Preventative Care

June 12-18 is Men's Health Week. Reflect on health care goals, and prioritize your journey to whole-person wellness.

**Read more, page 9.**

## Preparing Youth for Industry Careers

Learn how *Benteh* STEAM Academy is sparking interest in science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics for students grades K-12.

**Read more, page 8.**

## Reach Your Health Goals

Explore physical, mental, and emotional aspects of living a healthy lifestyle with SCF's Lose to Win Program

**Read more, page 7.**



Non-Profit Org.  
US Postage  
PAID  
Anchorage, AK  
Permit No. 1022

4501 Diplomacy Drive  
Anchorage, Alaska 99508





The Anchorage Native News is published by Southcentral Foundation Public Relations and Corporate Communications.

If you have questions, comments, wish to submit articles, or be added to our mailing list, please contact:

SCF Public Relations and Corporate Communications

4501 Diplomacy Drive  
Anchorage, Alaska 99508  
(907) 729-4953  
SCFMediaRelations@scf.cc

SCF reserves the right to edit all submissions for clarity, length, and content.

Every article will be considered for publication depending on space available.

PRCC Team

- Christine Adams
- Shamika Andrew
- Addison Arave
- Denise Bingham
- Krystin Bogan
- Melanie Brenner
- Tara Carey
- Lyla DeTavernier
- Tara Durand
- Basilio Gonzalez
- Domonique Hansen
- Jesse Holt
- Emma Irish
- Erik Judson
- Kaylee LaTocha
- Sharon Leighow
- Unita Mauigoo
- Michelle Mincks
- Nicole Nordstrom
- Levi Oyster
- Esther Robertson
- Stephanie Smith
- Karla Starbard
- Gabby Stone
- Kristen Trevorow
- Matthew Wichorek
- Shawn Wilson
- Leilani Zywicki

Vision

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

Mission

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

Board of Directors

- Karen Caindec (Chairman)
- Roy Huhndorf (Vice Chairman)
- Thomas Huhndorf (Secretary)
- Charles Akers (Treasurer)
- R. Greg Encelewski (Director)
- Sandra Haldane, BSN, RN, MS (Director)
- Jessie Marrs, MD (Director)
- Terry Simpson, MD, FACS (Director)
- Lisa Wade (Director)

President and CEO

April Kyle



© 2023 Southcentral Foundation

# Gifting Wellness to the Future Through Vaccinations

By Public Relations Specialist Addison Arave

In the early 1940s, an influx of settlers introduced new diseases to Alaska Native populations. Illnesses such as meningitis, chicken pox, whooping cough, and influenza were detrimental to communities with no preventative strategies. Over the past several decades, however, medical researchers have developed vaccines to help prevent these diseases. These vaccinations have had an incredible effect on the rate of vaccine-preventable infections and deaths, which help protect vulnerable individuals.



You can discuss your questions or concerns about childhood immunizations with your or your child's primary care provider.

To understand the importance of vaccinations, it is important to know how the human body fights illness and the role of vaccines in that process. When the body is infected with a virus or bacteria, the immune system sends white blood cells to fight the infection. Once a body learns how to fight a particular illness, it retains antibodies that protect from future exposures to the same or similar viruses and bacteria. That is why immunizations are so important – they mimic an infection, which lets the body practice its defense.

This is especially valuable for children, who are being newly exposed to viruses and bacteria each day. Parents or guardians of infants, toddlers, and school-age children are strongly encouraged to vaccinate their children. Decades of research have given experts the history and evidence needed to create a recommended vaccine schedule. This schedule considers vaccinations that require multiple, spaced-out doses to offer complete protection; age-based risk factors, and which vaccines can be taken simultaneously. Staying on track will provide the best protection, not only for the immunized children, but their communities.

The United States has vaccination requirements for childcare facilities and schools. Schools have vaccination requirements because any group setting inherently increases the risk of infection. According to the Alaska Department of Health Division of Public Health, children enrolled in Alaska schools must be immunized against:

- Diphtheria
- Tetanus
- Pertussis
- Polio
- Measles
- Mumps
- Rubella
- Hepatitis A
- Hepatitis B
- Varicella (chicken pox)
- Hib

Because immunizations are available and requirements are in place for these conditions, rates of infection now vastly contrast history. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, measles infected three to four million people and killed 400 to 500 people annually in the decade prior to 1963. This serious infection affects young children and causes cough, runny nose, inflamed eyes, sore throat, fever, and rash. Last year, there were zero reported cases of measles in Alaska, 121 reported cases in the United States, and zero resulting deaths. This example demonstrates that immunizations provide safety and security on a large scale.

Even with evidence of the effectiveness of vaccines, it is reasonable and expected for parents to have questions about childhood injections. Southcentral Foundation health educators, primary care providers, and pediatricians are available to answer those questions and provide materials sharing how the vaccines work, potential risks, and benefits.

For more information, talk with your child's provider during your child's next well-child check up or back-to-school physical, or call (907) 729-3300 to schedule a telehealth or in-person appointment.

### Stay on Track

Suggested Schedule for Vaccinations

Birth	Hep B
6 weeks-2 months	Hep B, DTaP, IPV, Rotavirus, PCV13, Hib
4 months	Hep B, DTaP, IPV, Rotavirus, PCV13, Hib
6 months	Hep B, DTaP, IPV, Rotavirus, PCV13
12 months	MMR, Varicella, Hib, PCV13
15 months	DTaP, Hep A
2 years	Hep A
4-6 years	DTaP, IPV, MMR, Varicella
11 years	Tdap, HPV, MCV4
12 years	HPV
16 years	MCV4

# The Voice of the Customer-owner

By Technical Writer Uinita Mauigoo

At the heart of Southcentral Foundation's customer-owned, relationship-based Nuka System of Care is the voice of the customer-owner.

As an organization that is owned and operated by Alaska Native people, listening and responding to customer-owner feedback is a priority. SCF assesses customer experience data and implements improvement strategies that align with SCF's Vision and Mission to meet and exceed customer expectations.

In 2022, 17,552 responses were collected from customer-owners through the Customer Satisfaction Survey. Questions are about important aspects of SCF's services such as relationships with care teams, accessibility, and quality of care.

SCF uses this important customer-owner feedback to plan, create, and implement its programs and services across the entire organization to improve care for the 65,000 customer-owners served. Below are some recent improvements and expansions made by SCF in response to feedback provided by customer-owners:

Anchorage Native Primary Care Center Pharmacy opened a new location on the first floor that now has 10 dispensing windows, three check-in windows, and increased privacy for customer-owners. The new pharmacy is almost twice the size of the former pharmacy, which will reduce wait times significantly.

In March, the new Family Dental Clinic opened on the second floor of the Dr. Katherine and Dr. Kevin Gottlieb Building with 28 closed treatment rooms. The new clinic has eight integrated dental care teams providing comprehensive dental care and allowing for families to be seen conveniently in one location.

SCF's Nui'ju Healing Place therapeutic community launched a trauma-informed, culturally-rooted program at Hiland Mountain Correctional Center in Eagle River. The program is at full capacity with 20 women waiting to enter. Seventy percent of participants are customer-owners.



The voice of the customer-owner drives Southcentral Foundation's Nuka System of Care.

The Takotna Clinic added 1,860 square feet of new space to better serve customer-owners and community members.

Traditional Healing is in the process of expanding and remodeling.

Behavioral Services introduced a team-based model of care at Behavioral Health Fireweed with a team that includes RN case managers, community case managers, and an expanded

certified medical assistant support clinic to increase access and opportunities for customer-owners to participate in their own health care decisions.

In partnership with Cook Inlet Housing Authority, SCF opened the Centennial Center Clinic to provide easier access to medical services for its nearly 600 residents, half of whom are customer-owners.

As SCF continues to improve and expand services specific to the health care needs of Alaska Native and American Indian people, the voice of the customer-owner remains central.

Customer-owner feedback can now be provided through multiple channels such as text, email, and QR codes. The Customer Satisfaction Survey also continues to be available via iPads or paper format at the front desks of SCF clinics and programs.

SCF's Vision is a Native Community that enjoys physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual wellness. The Nuka System of Care is truly driven by the voice of the customer-owner.

## Keep your coverage!



The first step in keeping your Medicaid coverage is to ensure your address and contact information are up to date.

If you currently receive Medicaid, learn how to update your contact information to save time during your renewal by calling (833) 441-1870 Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-5 p.m., or make your update online using the Medicaid information update form.

To update your info online, go to [medicaidrenewals.alaska.gov](https://medicaidrenewals.alaska.gov) and click the Save Time option.

Family Health Resources is available to answer questions or assist with the process. Call (907) 729-4470.



## Your voice matters!

SHARE YOUR FEEDBACK AND BE ENTERED INTO A RANDOM PRIZE DRAWING!

Provide your feedback about topics, format, and distribution of the Anchorage Native News.

Complete this survey to be entered into a random prize drawing for SCF apparel and more!

DRAWING WILL BE HELD ON JULY 14.

Access the survey by scanning the QR code below or visit [bit.ly/ANN2023Survey](https://bit.ly/ANN2023Survey).



Quyana!

\*One entry per person. Prize drawing for SCF apparel and more!





Adding Pediatric Support Teams to Primary Care

By Southcentral Foundation Public Relations and Corporate Communications

Southcentral Foundation's Nuka System of Care is customer driven by and centered on family. Having the same primary care team for all members of your family fosters meaningful relationships. Knowing your family's health history supports physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual goals across multiple generations. To support growing families, SCF is integrating pediatric support teams into primary care clinics.

Integrated pediatric support teams will be available in all primary care clinics and include a pediatrician, registered nurse case manager, certified medical assistant, and case management support. These child experts partner with your primary care team to support your child's health from birth to adolescence to address questions or concerns regarding your child's health or development. This means your child will see your family's primary care provider for regularly-scheduled appointments and pediatric support team members at certain ages. However, families may request a pediatrician's opinion at any time.

Your family currently benefits from integrated specialists such as dietitians, midwives, behavioral health consultants, and pharmacists. These specialists add support, improving the care your family receives. This similar approach allows children to stay empaneled to their primary care providers and have access to their integrated pediatric support teams, during recommended well-child check-ups and as needed throughout their development.

SCF started this journey in 2015 when the *Benteh Nuutah* Valley Native Primary Care Center hired its first integrated pediatrician. The integrated model received positive responses from families and employees who benefited from the added care. VNPPC now has integrated pediatric



support teams for each primary care clinic. The continued success prompted the addition at Anchorage Native Primary Care Center, as well. Customer-owners at both locations can expect to have these established teams, ensuring all children at SCF receive consistent high-quality care. As integrated pediatric support teams are added to clinics, children previously empaneled to SCF Outpatient Pediatrics will remain with their established pediatricians with the opportunity to join their family provider if desired. However, the check-in location may move to another clinic in the ANPCC.

By shifting pediatric support teams into primary care clinics, an additional 5,000 customer-owners from birth to adolescence gain access to specialized care. Below is a parent's story of how pediatric support teams in primary care was helpful:

"Our family is so thankful for the care and support we have received from our primary care team and integrated pediatric support team. We have been able to see our primary care provider and the pediatrician during different occasions for all three. Having a certified medical assistant who specializes in pediatrics and makes them feel comfortable as they do their vitals and immunizations puts my mind at ease as a parent. We as parents have been learning more about ways to keep our children safe and healthy. Our visits are no longer than usual, and I love having more expertise in caring for my children."

To learn more about your family's access to pediatric support teams, contact your primary care team directly.

Pharmacy Refill Hotline

(907) 729-2117 or  
(877) 320-4321

Please call seven days in advance

Rural Clinic Refills

(877) 365-1104

Please call two weeks in advance



It is important to ensure your address is up to date. If you live in an area where pharmacy mailout services are not available, you may be able to pick up a 30-day supply of your prescribed medication in person.

For more information,  
please scan the QR code.



Families Supporting Change

DOES SOMEONE YOU LOVE STRUGGLE WITH  
DRUG OR ALCOHOL USE?

This free group is for family and friends in Matanuska-Susitna Borough with a desire to help make a change in their loved one's life. Each Monday there is an opportunity to learn evidence-based tools to encourage change, develop positive communication techniques, take care of yourself on this journey, and understand your loved one's behavior.



Mondays from  
noon to 1 p.m.  
in Wasilla.

This program is based on the Community Reinforcement and Family Training and Invitation to Change model, which are highly effective, evidence-based, motivational programs. It is rooted in love and compassion.

(907) 631-6300  
Benteh Nuutah Four Directions  
3223 E. Palmer-Wasilla  
Highway, Ste. 4  
Wasilla, AK 99654



# New Generations Project Focuses on Generations to Come

By Administrator Lindsey Earnest

Setting the foundation for physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual wellness as early as infancy can set your child up for future success. Studies have shown early learning development is at one of its most influential stages from birth to age 8. Southcentral Foundation's New Generations Project focuses on the importance of infant and early childhood mental health and connecting new generations from pre-pregnancy through age 5.

SCF's New Generations Project seeks to improve coordination across child-serving systems, build infrastructure, and increase access to high-quality prevention and wellness promotion services for children and their families. Services seek to address the nutritional, physical, behavioral, and intellectual needs of families focusing on a connection to culture.

To increase understanding of the goal, SCF renamed the program from Project LAUNCH to the New Generations Project after the first year to support the aim: Alaska Native families will increase their physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual wellness by optimizing the effectiveness of services that support families in the preparation for and care of new generations.

The New Generations Project launched the second phase of a new service delivery model offered to all customer-owners as a new standard of care called the parent partner.



The New Generations Project focuses on the importance of early childhood mental health.

The pilot began in July 2022 and utilizes a behavioral health consultant as a parent partner to provide community and home-based services for customer-owners in any stage of parenting from preconception to age 3. The goal is to improve access to home visiting services for families through early intervention and



improve health outcomes, safety, and emotional well-being. The pilot continued into spring 2023 with a long-term goal of expanding parent partner services system-wide within the next few years throughout primary care clinics.

To learn more, please contact SCF New Generations Project at [NewGenerations@SouthcentralFoundation.com](mailto:NewGenerations@SouthcentralFoundation.com).

# The Peak of the Week Hiking Challenge Starts in June

By Public Relations Assistant Stephanie Smith



The Peak of the Week hiking challenge highlights trails of varying degrees of difficulty from easy to moderate.

The Peak of the Week hiking challenge is an excellent way to discover new paths and meet new hikers while enjoying the physical, emotional, and social benefits of climbing. This challenge will feature a new weekly trail from July to August, inviting you to experience some of the best areas in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough.

Whether you are new to hiking or an experienced hiker seeking new inspiration, the *Benteh Nuutah* Valley Native Primary Care Center Wellness Center Facebook page is the place for weekly trail announcements. The team has compiled a list of trails of varying degrees of difficulty, from low to moderate, to suit hikers of all levels.

In addition to the physical and mental benefits of hiking, Peak of the Week offers an opportunity to connect with other hikers in the community. Sharing a common interest and exploring new trails can be a great way to build new friendships and foster community. Plus, hiking with a group can provide an added level of safety and security, particularly for those who may be new to hiking or unfamiliar with the area.

Each trail presents its unique challenge, whether a gradual climb or a steep ascent. However, one thing is for sure: hiking is an excellent way to build strong muscles and bones by adapting to different terrains and slopes. With Peak of the Week, hikers will have the opportunity to challenge themselves physically and mentally while enjoying the great outdoors.

Here are some of the featured trails, their difficulty levels, and distances (round trip):

- Butte, 3 miles, low difficulty
- April Bowl, 2.2 miles, moderate difficulty
- Wasilla Creek Trail, 1.6 miles, low difficulty
- Gold Cord Lake, 3 miles, moderate difficulty
- Reflections Lake, 1.1 miles, low difficulty
- Marmot Mountain, 3.2 miles, moderate difficulty
- Thunderbird Falls, 1.8 miles, low difficulty

No matter your age or ability, there's a trail for you. The challenge is open to everyone, and the more trails you complete, the more entries you get into random prize drawings for outdoor gear such as hydration packs, trekking poles, and hammocks. To enter, send a photo of yourself on each challenge trail to [peakoftheweek@southcentralfoundation.com](mailto:peakoftheweek@southcentralfoundation.com).

Lace up your boots, hit the trails, and challenge yourself with Peak of the Week. Whether you are a seasoned hiker or just starting, there is something for everyone in this exciting hiking challenge. So, get outside, breathe in the fresh air, and experience the beauty of nature while enjoying the physical, mental, and social benefits of hiking.

For more information about Peak of the Week, please call the Benteh Nuutah Valley Native Primary Care Center Wellness Center at (907) 631-7630.



# Fun in the Sun for All Ages

By Technical Writer Uinita Mauigoa

Staying active does not have to be arduous or mundane, especially in the land of the midnight sun. Here are some ideas to get the whole family active outdoors this summer while having fun:



### GARDEN CONVENIENTLY

Consider a vertical garden. Growing plants on poles and trellises is easier and assists with mobility. Tomatoes, squash, and cucumbers make great vertical plants. Raised beds are also better for the back with benefits of improved soil drainage, less space, and better soil.



### CREATE A CAMPFIRE FOR STORYTELLING

Keep traditions and culture alive by sharing stories with family and friends. Plus, preparing an outdoor campfire requires physical activity.



### TRY PHOTOGRAPHY

Alaska is brimming with beauty. Snap photos of nature during the next venture. A Polaroid camera is a fun and efficient option now available in stores.



### START A NATURE COLLECTION

Collect items you find outdoors such as sticks, pinecones, feathers, stones, fallen leaves, and driftwood. These can be used for crafts or a rock garden.



### EXPLORE A NEW TRAIL

Alaska has endless options of public trails to experience. Everyone has their favorite trail or mountain to usually visit. Expand horizons and you may end up loving the newly discovered trail.



### ATTEND AN OUTDOOR FITNESS CLASS

There are fitness clubs and organizations in town that host exercise classes outdoors. One example is yoga in the park. Breathe in fresh air and be among nature to elevate workouts to a whole new level.



### VENTURE THE WATERS

Exercise doesn't have to be confined to land. There are many creative and fun ways to venture waters such as kayaking, canoeing, stand up paddling, inner tubing, rafting, boat rowing, and more!



### BE A KID AGAIN

Sometimes it's just fun and it reminds us not to take life too seriously. Fly a kite, have a water balloon fight, play dodgeball or hopscotch, build a fort, play tag or tug-of-war. You will be surprised with how many calories you burn.



### BIKE THE NEIGHBORHOOD

When was the last time you saw teenagers riding bikes around the neighborhood? This gets teens off of the screens and moving. It can create a sense of belonging and connection to the neighborhoods in which they live.



### PICK PRODUCE WITH THE FAMILY

Stay active while engaging youth with nature to instill appreciation. It is also a time for parents and grandparents to interact with youth in solitude away from technology.



### PLAY A FUN SPORT

Remind youth that connecting with people in person can be meaningful by involving them in fun summer sports with family and friends. Try volleyball, pickleball, cornhole, or ultimate frisbee, among much more.



### CAMP OUT

Not only is camping fun, the preparation itself provides many opportunities to get active. Have youth set up tents, build a fire, and cook. It will be one slumber party they will never forget.



### GO ON A BUG HUNT

At the end of the day, many children love bugs and dirt. Acquire a simple guide to easily identify insects they find. The prospect of finding a cool looking caterpillar or butterfly will have them walking, running, bending, reaching, and, most of all, smiling.



### DISCOVER WITH A COLOR-CODED SCAVENGER HUNT

Kids are naturally curious. Nature has a plethora of items children can collect for learning and observation. Make exploring fun with a color-coded theme.



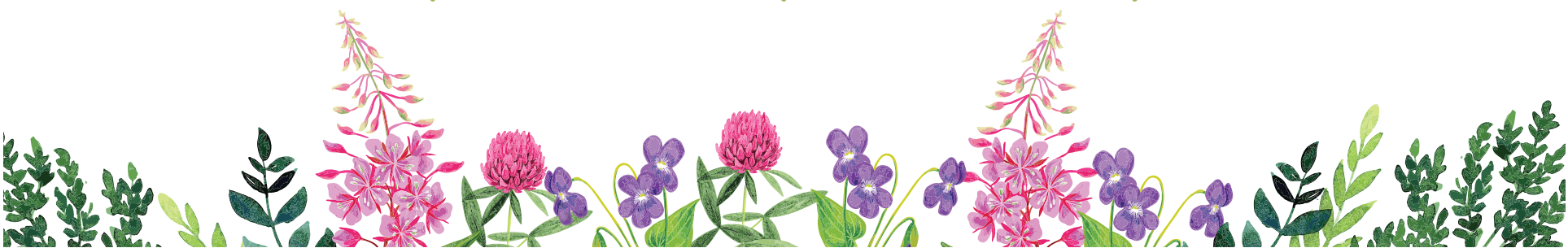
### CREATE THROUGH WATER TOY PAINTING

A fun spin on painting ditch the brushes in lieu of water toys. For this outdoor activity, be sure to use washable paint and old clothing. This way everyone can paint their canvases and each other!



### HAVE A SPRINKLER PARTY

Sprinkler parties were a huge hit in the 80s and 90s. Bring back this nostalgic activity and make it fun with games. Add in some other outdoor water toys to get folks running.



# Reach Your Health Goals with Lose to Win

By Southcentral Foundation Health Education



Picking berries is a great outdoor activity.

Everyone’s healthy journey is unique. For some, setting health goals is easy, others may find it daunting. Once you set goals for yourself, where do you start and where can you find support? Southcentral Foundation’s Lose to Win Program and the team of health professionals is here to help guide you through the process.

The Lose to Win learning circle, an evidence-based diabetes prevention program, has supported many customer-owners on their health journeys. Health educators, dietitians, exercise physiologists, and behavioral health consultants work together to facilitate the curriculum.

“SCF’s Lose to Win program has motivated me to think daily about my level of activity and what kinds of foods I’m putting into my body; but more than that, it has made me consider the ‘why’ in regard to how I became a Type 2 diabetic — I’ve learned that it takes the ‘whole person’ approach to be healthy: physical activity, mental attitude, emotional recognition (is this an emotional choice vs. a healthy choice), patience, and grace with oneself,” Cyndi Navarrette, a Lose to Win participant said.

Lose to Win addresses the physical, mental, and emotional aspects of living a healthy lifestyle. The program provides prediabetes education, with the goal of reducing the risk for developing Type 2 diabetes and associated complications. Participants attend live virtual exercise classes, health coaching, cooking demos, and more. Customer-owners learn helpful tools to reach their goals such as:

- Eating to support your health
- Staying motivated
- Addressing barriers
- Meeting movement goals
- Managing stress
- Staying active

A new session of the Lose to Win Program will begin in August. During this yearlong program, participants attend 16 classes in the fall and six classes in the spring.

If you are interested in joining the program or for more information, contact the Lose to Win team at [scflosetowin@southcentralfoundation.com](mailto:scflosetowin@southcentralfoundation.com).

### Anchorage Service Unit

Southcentral Foundation  
Lose to Win Program  
(907) 729-2689

### Matanuska-Susitna Borough

Benteh Nuutah Valley Native Primary Care Center  
Wellness Center  
Lose to Win Program  
(907) 631-7630

## UPCOMING HOLIDAY CLOSURES

Southcentral Foundation will be closed

**Monday, June 19**

in observance of Juneteenth.  
Services will resume June 20.



**Tuesday, July 4**

in observance of Independence Day.  
Services will resume July 5.

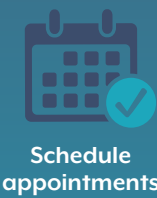


**MyHealth —  
Your Portal to Wellness**

MyHealth is an online health management tool for customer-owners provided by Cerner® and the Alaska Native Medical Center.

If you would like to sign up for a MyHealth account, contact your primary care team or visit the front desk for assistance with the registration process.

On MyHealth, you will be able to:



Schedule appointments



Send secure communication



View limited lab results



View limited medical record summary

For more information on **MyHealth**, contact your primary care team.

DOWNLOAD TODAY!



Scan for more information

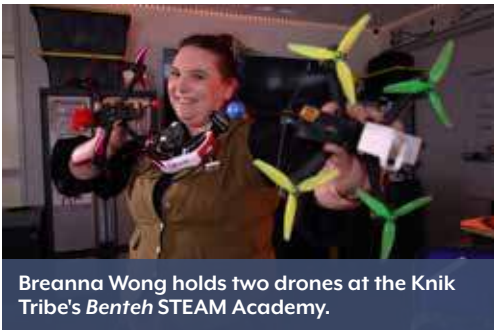


# STEAM: A Woman’s Journey of Inclusion and Education

By Public Relations Assistant Leilani Zywicki

What is STEAM? STEAM or STEM, is Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math — the terms are used interchangeably, depending on the specific program.

Breanna Wong, an Indigenous instructor at the *Benteh* STEAM Academy shared, “STEAM programs stimulate students by allowing them to practice hands-on activities that promote skill development and easy retention of knowledge they can use in the future.”



Breanna Wong holds two drones at the Knik Tribe's *Benteh* STEAM Academy.

project focusing on aviation and preparing students for obtaining certification for professional drone flights. She says although not all students are old enough to take the test for certification, it’s important for them to have the knowledge to fly drones safely and legally, even if they want to fly them recreationally. In one class, students are given a small, pre-built drone that they learn how to race. They also learn how to repair, adjust, program, and calibrate the drones.

Wong’s Indigenous heritage is from the Caddo Nation of Oklahoma, but she grew up on Dena’ina land in Anchorage. She received her Bachelor of Arts in theater and communications at Carroll College in Helena, Montana. She shared that her passion for designing, building, engineering, and carpentry came from learning stagecraft in college. Wong later worked at Cook Inlet Tribal Council helping to build its mobile STEM lab program that visited schools within the Anchorage School District.

Wong works with students grades K through 12 at Knik Tribe's *Benteh* STEAM Academy. Registration for the STEAM program is offered to Knik Tribal members first and is also open to any middle or high school student in the community. The goal of the *Benteh* STEAM Academy is to increase students’ math and science scores for their measures of academic progress, or MAP testing. The program acts as supplementary education to students’ normal school day to reinforce lessons taught in school while exploring fun projects they might not be exposed to otherwise.

At *Benteh* STEAM Academy, the curriculum is developed entirely in-house, so a lot of Wong’s time and energy goes into building lessons with cultural ties and ensuring she and other instructors are serving the students in the best ways possible.

Keeping up with the times, the *Benteh* STEAM Academy utilizes a YouTube channel where students can access lessons and how-to videos for corresponding STEM kits. Wong is currently working on a grant-funded

“We are opening so many doors for these students and allowing them to explore what they’re passionate about,” Wong shared.

Wong emphasizes that students in the program are studying topics that get them real certifications. The students are now working on building a drone from scratch. She shared that watching her students explore, learn, and grow is the best inspiration she could possibly ask for, especially seeing their grades improve and getting excited about what they’re learning.

According to the United States Census Bureau, women make up only 27% of the workforce in STEM fields despite being nearly 50% of the workforce. While there have been more women entering STEM careers since the 1970s, there is still room for greater representation in this field.

Wong’s advice to young women and girls interested in STEM fields is, “It’s really hard to be in a male-dominated industry without the drive to get there, so if you have the drive and you have the interest never give up on it, and keep trying until you get there. We need more women in STEM. Never stop trying.”

For more information about science, technology, engineering, art, and math programs, call Knik Tribe's *Benteh* STEAM Academy at (907) 521-8697 or CITC Youth Services at (907) 793-3265.

## Graduate Intern Spotlight: Jasmine Ross

By Public Relations Specialist Esther Robertson

Southcentral Foundation Raise Program graduate intern, Jasmine Ross, shares her experience as a college student and intern. Ross, whose Tribal affiliation is with Cook Inlet Region, Inc. and the Native Village of Eklutna, is a freshman in the pre-nursing program at the University of Alaska Anchorage.



Southcentral Foundation Raise Program graduate intern Jasmine Ross.

"I decided to go into nursing is because I never really saw people from my background or who look like me in the medical field," Ross shared. "I want to help other people of similar backgrounds feel comfortable knowing someone like them is there to take care of them."

As a full-time student, Ross balances working in SCF’s OB-GYN clinic and meeting her school requirements. Her responsibilities at the clinic include checking in customer-owners, handing out supplies, managing schedules, and more. Ross uses the built-in study sessions provided through the internship to help meet her study needs.

After the internship, her goal is to work as a certified nurse assistant while completing the nursing program at UAA. Ross aspires to join the U.S. Public Health Corps as a nurse practitioner either in pediatrics or women’s health. She encourages Indigenous youth and shares the wisdom she gained juggling work and school.

“There will always be bumps in the road on your journey of your education and life. It is up to you where you want that road to lead,” Ross shared. “You have the power and strength to overcome anything you put your mind to.”

For more information about the Raise Program, call (907) 729-5015.

**Medicaid and Denali KidCare may cover the cost of needed services to keep children and teens healthy.**

**Enrolling in additional health insurance programs may cover out-of-pocket expenses such as:**

- Certain dental appliances (including braces)
- Glasses
- Health care coverage while traveling
- Ambulance coverage
- And more!

For more information about the programs or how to apply, contact Southcentral Foundation Family Health Resources at (907) 729-4470.

A photograph of a woman with glasses and a green patterned shirt hugging a young girl in a pink patterned shirt. They are both smiling and looking at each other.



# Mens Health Week — Prioritizing Your Personal Health Care Goals

By Public Relations Specialist Christine Adams

June 12-18 is Men’s Health Week and a great time to reflect on your health care goals and prioritize your journey to whole-person wellness. There’s no better time than now to book the appointment you’ve been putting off, explore new ways to wind down and minimize stress, or talk to your provider about your personal health goals. Southcentral Foundation programs and services are available to partner with you along the way.

Physical health is an important component of overall wellness. It is recommended that men older than age 50 have a physical exam every year, and men younger than age 50 have a physical exam every three to five years. Even if you feel healthy, a regular check-up with your provider is a good way to validate your health, identify concerns, and discuss upcoming health care screenings. Regular cancer screenings can begin as early as age 40 or even sooner, depending on personal and family health history.

“Some cancers, heart disease, and the rate of suicide are higher for men than they are for women and social indicators such as college admission and employment rates are lower,” SCF Medical Director Dr. Kenneth Norris said. “Fortunately, solutions for many of these problems fall within our own sphere of control such as regular exercise, healthy eating, forming solid friendships, sharing frequent laughter, and avoiding all forms of smoke inhalation. Preventing cancers or catching cancers early helps improve survival rates. Screenings are readily available. We have very good resources and highly qualified employees who stand ready to help.”

Whole-person wellness includes mental, emotional, and spiritual wellness. Throughout life, you may experience hardships in relationships, grief and loss, stress, or other concerns. Behavioral health consultants are available in primary care to walk through these experiences with you. Communication with BHCs is confidential and there is no referral necessary. Appointments can be scheduled through your primary care team or requested during an appointment.



Setting personal health goals can be intimidating, but changes do not have to occur all at once. In fact, small gradual shifts in lifestyle may help prevent burnout. If your goal is to eat healthier, consider eating a wide variety of vitamin and mineral-rich foods such as fresh fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. If you want to increase your amount of exercise each week, try starting with 30-minute walks. If you would like support from peers and community members, check out virtual and in-person learning circles on the SCF website calendar.

SCF has many programs and services to partner with you during Men’s Health Week and throughout the year. Connect with your primary care team or visit [southcentralfoundation.com](https://southcentralfoundation.com) to learn more about resources such as physical fitness classes, behavioral health support, family-focused learning circles, healthy cooking classes, the Quit Tobacco program, and more.

## Akers Honored for Outstanding Service

By Southcentral Foundation Public Relations and Corporate Communications

Southcentral Foundation Board of Directors member Charles Akers was honored with the National Indian Health Board Outstanding Service Award at the Heroes in Health Awards Gala in Anchorage. The award recognizes individuals whose work has made an impact on American Indian and Alaska Native health care.

Akers, who is of Yup’ik descent, has dedicated his career to the betterment of Alaska Native health care. A veteran of the Vietnam War, he served until 1969 as a hospital corpsman. Akers’ post-military career included more than a decade serving as executive director of the Alaska Rural Development Council where he championed what is now telemedicine. He is an exemplary leader, from his governance roles on the Southcentral Foundation Board of Directors and *Benteh Nuutah* Valley Native Primary Care Center Joint Operating Board, to his unwavering support of wellness initiatives for Indigenous veterans and first responders.

Through his personal stories, Akers reinforces the power of empathy, compassion, and relationship building in the health care setting. His work and commitment has helped generations in the Alaska Native Community achieve health and wellness.



# 13th Annual

## Tribal Celebration and Health Fair

Hosted in partnership with Knik Tribal Council, Native Village of Eklutna, and Chickaloon Village Traditional Council.

Saturday, July 8

11 a.m.-3 p.m.

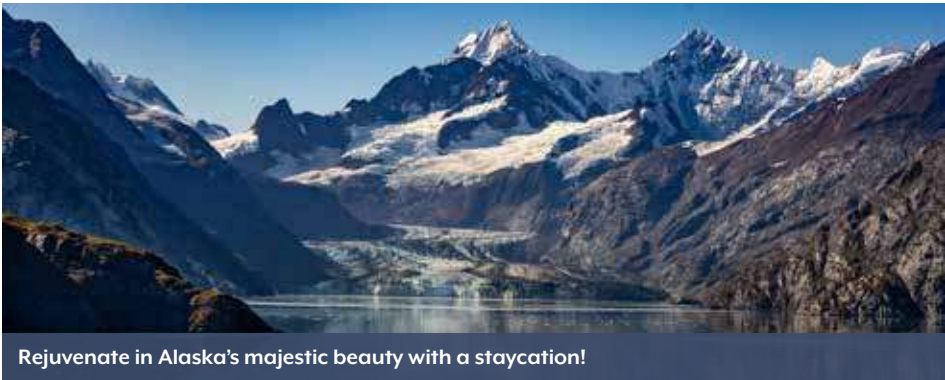
Alaska State Fairgrounds Raven Hall

Join family and friends for drumming and dancing, craft vendors, health care vendors, fun family activities, traditional foods, BBQ, and more. Admission is free and everyone is welcome to attend.



# Invigorate Health With an Alaska Staycation Bucket List

By Technical Writer Uinita Mauigoo



Rejuvenate in Alaska's majestic beauty with a staycation!

If tempted to skip vacation in lieu of being too busy, don't! Several studies by health care institutions such as Harvard Medical School reveal health benefits of vacation. Among the many benefits are improved physical and mental health, decreased burnout, and boosted happiness. We live in one of the most sought-after destinations in the world, so why travel out of state? Here are some ideas to get your Alaska staycation bucket list going:

- Climb a summit. Sometimes admiring Denali from afar is not enough. Alaska.org lists the best state mountains people can climb without having to be a mountaineer.
- Explore waters dynamically. Try a hand at a new activity to venture the waters of Alaska such as windsurfing, white-water rafting, canoeing, or sailboarding.
- Marvel icy wonderment. One does not have to board a cruise ship to behold Alaska's many glaciers. The Matanuska Glacier is a true roadside beauty, for example.
- Be among wildlife. The beauty about Alaska is that you can see animals in their natural habitats. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game website is a great resource where you can find national parks and state viewing areas to safely admire mother nature.

- See Alaska in aerial view. People often think of discovering Alaska on land or sea. Why not scope out Alaska from the window of an airplane or helicopter? Alaska has several flightseeing tour options to choose from to elevate your viewing pleasures.
- Trek a national forest. Alaska has the most national forest land in the nation with 21.9 million acres, which is larger than many U.S. states. Instead of opting for your usual favorite local trail, heighten your adventure by discovering the endless possibilities at Chugach National Forest or the largest in the U.S., Tongass National Forest.
- Learn about Alaska Native cultures. There are museums and cultural centers open to the public throughout the state that provide education opportunities to respectfully learn about the many different cultures Indigenous to Alaska.
- Bathe in serenity. Alaska has 79 hot springs, 20 of which are open to the public. Rejuvenate the body and relax muscles by seeking out the best spot to soak in nature's warmth.
- Seek the unusual. As one of few surviving gold rush towns in Alaska, Chicken has a nostalgic vibe. A popular attraction is the town's massive metal chicken sculptures spread about, the largest being "Eggee," created out of scrap metal from school lockers, which towers surrounding cabins.
- Travel Alaska internationally. Hyder, Alaska, is accessible by road only from Stewart, British Columbia. Although part of the U.S., it feels international as the town celebrates Canadian holidays and accepts Canadian currency.

The best way to have an immersive Alaska staycation experience is to maintain respect for the people, cultures, plants, and animals of the land.

Additional information can be found through Alaska.org, the National Park Service website, or the Alaska Department of Natural Resources website.

## Mt. Marathon

# Open Gym and In-person Classes



Mon.-Fri. | 6:30 a.m.-6 p.m.  
4201 Tudor Centre Drive

Southcentral Foundation Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy, and Exercise is offering open gym and in-person classes for customer-owners 18 years and up.

Pre-registration is required before your first workout, please call (907) 729-6683 for more information.

Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy, and Exercise  
(907) 729-6683 | southcentralfoundation.com



## In support of LGBTQ2+ Pride Month, Southcentral Foundation celebrates acceptance and belonging.

- » We all belong.
- » We are connected.
- » We are all part of the unbroken circle of Ni'tet dnayi, 'among relatives.'





# Benefits of Practicing Mindfulness

By Public Relations Specialist Levi Oyster

Mindfulness is the practice of focusing on the present, tapping into our five senses to ground ourselves in the moment. To clear up misconceptions of mindfulness; being mindful does not require you to have a quiet mind free of emotion or a pristine location to practice. In fact, most people already practice it without even knowing it.

“A common misconception about mindfulness is that it leads to feeling good or feeling calm. More accurately, it teaches us to be present with whatever is happening in the moment, which doesn’t always feel good and that’s okay,” Southcentral Foundation Psychologist Terri Draper said.

By focusing on what we see, hear, feel, taste, and smell we find ourselves in the now and, in doing so, we can release ourselves from the anxiety of the past and future. It is a powerful skill that allowed our ancestors and those who subsist off the land to patiently observe the cold tundra and frigid waters to survive in the Alaskan wilderness. This skill helps hunters glass hillsides and ridgelines for hours for the smallest changes in the environment to successfully harvest their bountiful game.

“Traditional practices are great tools to bring back not only to help us manage symptoms of grief, anxiety, trauma, and depression but more so to reconnect us to our culture and our ancestors. That reconnection is our medicine,” SCF Traditional Healing Clinic Tribal Doctor Lois Law said.

Using our senses to tap into the present can be practiced at any time of the day and in any situation. We can practice while having our morning coffee, taking a walk in nature, engaging in a focused creative task, and even while stuck in traffic or waiting in line. When we actively focus on our five senses: the smell of the salmon as the catch of the day is filleted, the rustle of leaves while picking berries, the tactile nature of bead work,



or the sight of the far-off tree while waiting at a traffic light; we bring ourselves into the present.

“I consider many cultural activities as naturally being mindful activities. Being out in nature and practicing subsistence such as hunting, berry picking, gathering traditional plants/ medicine, and fishing are all activities that are mindful and can be very calming, spiritual, and centering,” SCF Traditional Healing Clinic Tribal Doctor Colleen Anagick shared.

Research suggests these simple practices reduce depression and anxiety, and help regulate the physiological effects of trauma on our bodies and minds. When we are present focused, we can observe ourselves with less judgment and live healthier lives both physically and mentally. By being mindful of our senses, we can ground ourselves in the sensations of the present moment with greater control over our thoughts, consciously choosing where to put our attention.

“Some customer-owners struggle with anxiety, grief, depression, and trauma. Engaging in mindful activities such as prayer, meditation, and breathing activities, as well as doing cultural activities helps to decrease symptoms and promote healing,” Law said.

Start your mindfulness journey today by trying the sensory counting exercise below.

For more information on practicing mindfulness, contact your primary care team to schedule an appointment with a behavioral health consultant or attend the Creating A Life Worth Living learning circle. Visit <http://bit.ly/3G7iB8n> to see a meeting schedule.

# Clinician Honored for Community Leadership

By Southcentral Foundation Public Relations and Corporate Communications

In recognition of her service to youth experiencing homelessness and efforts to combat human trafficking in Alaska, Southcentral Foundation Clinician Josie Heyano received the Federal Bureau of Investigation Director’s Community Leadership Award. The honor is awarded to individuals who are working to make a difference in their communities through the promotion of education and the prevention of crime and violence.

“It is an honor to receive this award, to serve my community and to work alongside so many fiercely compassionate people,” Heyano said. “Thank you to the FBI for this humbling recognition and to my colleagues, clients, and family for their wisdom and support.”



In Heyano’s role at SCF, she provides therapeutic services to youth at Covenant House who have experienced human trafficking. During this process, she offers clinical services and law enforcement resources.

During her own time, she assists with trainings the FBI offers on human trafficking in Alaska, specifically on the intersectionality of violence, missing or murdered Indigenous persons, and providing services. Heyano has joined the FBI in providing training to SCF employees.

“I appreciate Josie’s commitment to Alaska’s youth – Josie is making a difference in preventing human trafficking in Alaska,” SCF President and CEO April Kyle said. “This is a well deserved honor.”

FBI Director Christopher Wray hosted the DCLA winners in a special ceremony at FBI Headquarters.

## Here is a exercise you can do right now to begin your mindfulness journey:

### Sensory Counting

#### Instruction

This practice can be done alone or in a group setting with everyone taking turns. Take a moment to observe the space you are in. Identify five things you can see, five things you can hear, and five things you can touch. If you would like to take this practice a step further, name one to two details about each of those things. For instance, “I feel the wooden arm rest... it is cold and has grooves.”

#### What is the Point?

When we engage our senses and focus on the current moment, our anxiety level decreases. Anxiety is often paired with what feels like a free floating, out-of-body experience. When we consciously shift our attention to our surroundings, we become settled into our bodies and the here-and-now. Additionally, this exercise settles the mind because it gives it something on which to focus. Engage in this activity anywhere, anytime when you are feeling scattered or anxious.



SIGHT



SOUND



TASTE



SMELL



TOUCH





# Staying Active at the Elder Program is Easy

By SCF Public Relations and Corporate Communications

Summer sunshine and warmer weather are not the only motivators to get moving at Southcentral Foundation's Elder Program. Elder customer-owners once again have great activities to choose from this summer!

Many activities have returned to the Elder Program schedule, including daily hot lunch service, exercise classes, learning circles, games, gardening, and the opportunity to visit with friends and family.

Live music fills the room every Friday during the Elder jam lunch hour. The dance floor fills up, and Elders show their best dance moves.

Culture and traditions day is popular among Elders who work on projects while socializing with friends. Some come for the visit, while others enjoy having access to sewing machines. There are dedicated machines where Elders can work on sewing projects at the same time. The sewing corner is supplied with arts and crafts tools and equipment available for Elder use. The beautiful artwork produced on any arts and crafts day is a marvel.

With increased activities at the Elder Program, bus service to and from the Elder Program resumed. Elder customer-owners interested in



Elders shake a leg to live music during a Friday Elder jam.

transportation options can check with the Elder Program front desk for current bus schedules.

It is a short walk from the front door of the Elder Program to the garden, located at the end of the walkway. Benches placed along the walkway provide a nice rest area and the opportunity to take in the scenery and fresh air. In previous years, employees harvested the vegetables from the garden and included the veggies on the weekly food distribution.

Elders are invited to stay active and enjoy time with friends at the Elder Program, which is open Monday through Friday.

For more information about the services provided or volunteer opportunities at the Elder Program, call (907) 729-6500.



Elder Program bus services resumed, coinciding with the return of hot lunch services earlier this year.

MONDAY

Shopping  
12:30-2 p.m.

Please call (907) 729-6500 for transportation. Space is limited.

TUESDAY

Culture and Traditions and RN Clinic  
10 a.m.-2 p.m.



WEDNESDAY

Bingo  
Noon-2 p.m.  
Learning Circle  
10 a.m.-noon



THURSDAY

Health Education and Exercise  
Noon-2 p.m.

Please call SCF Health Education at (907) 729-2689 for more information.

FRIDAY

Elder Jam  
10 a.m.-2 p.m.



SCF Elder Program | 4501 Diplomacy Drive, Anchorage, Alaska 99508 | (907) 729-6500

Important Phone Numbers

Alaska Native Medical Center .....	(907) 563-2662	Division of Senior and Disabilities Services .....	(800) 478-9996
American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) .....	(907) 762-3388	Food Bank of Alaska .....	(907) 272-3663
Anchorage Police Department (non-emergency) .....	(907) 786-8500	People Mover .....	(907) 343-4536
Anchor Rides .....	(907) 343-6543	Salvation Army Meals on Wheels .....	(907) 349-0613
Cook Inlet Housing Authority .....	(907) 793-3000	Southcentral Foundation .....	(907) 729-4955
Division of Public Assistance .....	(800) 478-7778	SCF Elder Program Event Hotline .....	(907) 729-6588