# ANCHORAGE NATIVE NEWS

#### Alaska Native People Shaping Health Care

Spring Edition | 2024

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#### COMMUNITY



## Remodeled Traditional Healing Clinic Brings New Energy to Ancient Ways of Healing

#### By Senior Public Relations Specialist Tara Carey

After months of renovations, the beautifully remodeled Southcentral Foundation Traditional Healing Clinic is ready to welcome customerowners. New exam rooms, multiple classrooms and meeting spaces, and an updated lobby have been added to improve the customerowner experience.

Upon entering the enclosed lobby, visitors enjoy the new environment that is artfully lit and induces a sense of calm and balance. The clinic's walls are decorated with images of Alaska plants and scenery, reflective of what can be found in Southcentral Alaska. For many customer-owners visiting the clinic, the familiar imagery feels like home.

Just past the front desk, a hallway leads to 14 exam rooms and Tribal doctor classrooms. Another classroom, the Gathering Area, is located near the front desk and can be seen from the Alaska Native Primary Care Center lobby. The Gathering Area (different from the Gathering



Room also located on the Alaska Native Health Campus) is where the Traditional Healing Clinic will host cultural classes.

The new clinic layout has teaching areas that emphasize the importance of sharing and passing on information, whether clinical, traditional, or cultural. In addition to the Gathering Area, there are two training and meeting rooms for the Tribal Doctor Training Program.

SCF's Traditional Healing Clinic incorporates ancient healing ways with Western medicine that integrates Alaska Native values, beliefs, and practices. Tribal doctors use practices such as traditional physical, traditional counseling, and talking circles to support customer-owners.

"Traditional Healing looks forward to partnering with customer-owners on their wellness journey in the newly remodeled space that ensures access to traditional ways and practices," Traditional Healing Clinical Director and practicing Tribal Doctor Natalee Wigen shared. "We are able to help heal our ancestors and the next seven generations by healing ourselves now."

When receiving Traditional Healing services, customer-owners work in collaboration with their Tribal doctors to establish goals and create treatment plans specific to their needs. Customer-owners may have different balances of traditional physical, traditional counseling, and w participation in their treatment plans. The final plan might focus on one area or involve a balance of treatments and is fluid depending on the pace of healing.

The Traditional Healing Clinic is a place where healing is supported in a way that honors and focuses on each customer-owner's individual wellness goals and milestones. Customer-owners interested in receiving services at the Traditional Healing Clinic can talk with their primary care providers for referral.

For more information about Traditional Healing services, cultural classes, or the Tribal doctor and apprentice programs, call the Traditional Healing Clinic at (907) 729-4958.

# March is Brain Injury Awareness Month Do You Know How To Prevent Traumatic Brain Injury?





Never drive a car, snow machine, or bike while under the influence of drugs or alcohol.



See Your Provider Immediately after a fall or blow to the head, even if you feel fine afterwards.





Children should always be placed in a properly fitting carseat when riding in a vehicle.



Have your eyes checked once per year, and update your eyeglasses prescription if needed.





Make sure all furniture is anchored to the wall and keep walkways clear of tripping hazards.

Alaska has the highest rate of TBI in the United States.

reduce your chance of TBI when riding bikes, snow machines, or ATVs.

handrails, adding ice grips to shoes, and keeping doorways clear of ice and snow can prevent falls.

#### 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 the Public Relations and Corporate Communications department. SCF reserves the right to edit all submissions for clarity, length, and content.

Every article will be considered for publication depending on space available. SCF Public Relations and Corporate Communications 4501 Diplomacy Drive Anchorage, Alaska 99508 (907) 729-4953 SCFMediaRelations@scf.cc

#### Learn More at:

southcentralfoundation.com



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## **Nurturing Mental Wellness Together**

#### By Public Relations Specialist Erik Judson

Spring is arriving in Southcentral Alaska. As the temperature rises and a sense of renewal awakens in Anchorage, consider what steps you can take on your path to wellness. This May, in recognition of Mental Health Awareness Month, consider if a supportive community setting could enhance your mental health journey.

Southcentral Foundation offers a range of learning circles and other support options to the community, from clinical settings to casual gatherings, addressing a variety of topics. One advantage to attending learning circles is receiving support from peers.

SCF Psychologist Terri Draper, of Koyukon Athabascan and Unangan descent, leads some supportive community settings and encourages members of the community to attend if they are experiencing loneliness or seeking more social rituals in their life.

"You get a sense of belonging with that feeling of 'I'm not alone," Draper said. "Getting a variety of perspectives, too, can be neat from your own peers."

Some learning circles take a clinical approach, providing attendees tools or developing skills to respond to challenging situations in life. These education-based groups might feel like attending a class at school.

"The point is to learn information, learn about mental health, and to go through the handouts and curriculum where you walk away with concrete tools to manage stress," Draper shared.

Other settings are more casual, encouraging participants to share stories and experiences to better relate to each other and collaborate in exploring possible solutions. Depending on the topic, some sessions may include both methods of learning, adjusting to suit the needs of the attendees. Depending on the topic, some groups may include both methods of learning, adjusting to suit the needs of the attendees.



Engaging with others facing similar challenges can provide valuable peer support that may not be found in individual therapies.

SCF offers a variety of support options open to everyone in the community. Topics include mindfulness and parenting among many others. Other closed support options require a referral, such as art therapy or dialectical behavior therapy and award participants with a certificate upon completion. Whatever the topic, SCF surveys the needs of the community and takes suggestions into account when developing programs.

Draper encourages people to join if they feel anxious, lonely, or otherwise need support.

"It is amazing to see the personal growth experienced by people who engage in peer support," Draper said.

For more information about learning circles, connect with your primary care team or behavioral health provider.

# Luq'u ts'il NlihdanlggashEveryone Coming Together



May 1 Anchorage Native Primary Care Center

Join Southcentral Foundation, family, and friends for Luq'u ts'il Nlihdanlggash — a celebration of culture and community at the Anchorage Native Primary Care Center.

Scan the QR code to view upcoming events.



Vaccines Are Safe and Effective

Vaccines protect those we love and prevent serious illness. Connect with your primary care team if you have questions about vaccines or to learn more information about:

#### APRIL IS CHILD ABUSE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT AWARENESS AND ACTION MONTH

## **OBSERVANCE AND WALK**

Join Southcentral Foundation's Family Wellness Warriors in centering healing and action to end cycles of child abuse and sexual assault. Indigenous and community leaders will guide participants through a ceremony and walk around campus.

Wear blue or teal in solidarity. We heal for those to come.

- April 23, noon-1 p.m.
- Anchorage Native Primary Care Center
- 4320 Diplomacy Drive

For more information about FWW, visit bit.ly/47xSkek

- Recommended
  immunization schedules
- RSV and seasonal immunizations

 Available COVID-19 vaccines and boosters

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#### **COMMITMENT TO QUALITY**

## ANMC Cleft Lip and Palate Program Receives Award for Community Service

#### By Southcentral Foundation Public Relations and Corporate Communications

Alaska's Cleft Lip and Palate Program at the Alaska Native Medical Center was recognized as a significant contribution to public health by the Alaska Public Health Association (ALPHA) at an awards ceremony Jan. 30.

The nationally recognized program at ANMC offers the only designated cleft palate team in



From left to right: Vice President of Dental Sonda Tetpon, Behavioral Health Consultant Kim Trevino, Case Management Support Laramee Hartman, and Registered Nurse Case Manager Allison Gallen.

the state. Cleft lip and palate is when part of the lip or roof of the mouth (palate) does not form properly, it leaves a gap, or cleft. This happens early in pregnancy and may be detected before birth. Children can have one or both of these conditions. The multidisciplinary team serves Alaska Native and non-Native families from across Alaska. Since assuming operations of the program from the State of Alaska nearly a decade ago, ANMC has increased the frequency of the clinics each year and expanded the time allotted to evaluation and treatments. ANMC has also provided funding for additional resources to strengthen the services, including behavioral health, registered nurse level care coordination, and support from administrative and quality assurance staff. The program also offers visits to mothers given a prenatal diagnosis of cleft lip and palate.

The 2024 award presented to the Cleft Lip and Palate Program, the Alaska Community Service Award for Health, is presented annually at the Alaska Health Summit.

## Dr. Randy Zernzach Recognized for Public Health Achievements

### By Southcentral Foundation Public Relations and Corporate Communications

Dr. Randy Zernzach received the Alaska Health Achievement Award at the 2024 Alaska Public Health Association (ALPHA) Health Summit.

Dr. Zernzach, a developmental-behavioral pediatrician and the first medical director for the Alaska Native Medical Center's Child and Family Developmental Services, was recognized for removing obstacles and establishing care for Alaska Native and American Indian children with neurodevelopmental health care needs.



Developmental Pediatrician Dr. Randy Zernzach.

He has supported improved health care system access to assessments and referrals and streamline processes for families.

He has also collaborated with other disciplines and practitioners, such as audiologists, speech therapists, physical therapists, occupational therapists, applied behavior analysts, psychologists, and individual and family counselors, to promote overall wellness. His contributions to these projects are changing the way intellectual and developmental disabilities are responded to within the state of Alaska. Dr. Zernzach's leadership, along with the entire CFDS team are improving the ways we support children and families.

To learn more about Child and Family Developmental Services, talk with your primary care provider.

## Southcentral Foundation Pharmacist Recognized by Alaska Pharmacist Association

## By Southcentral Foundation Public Relations and Corporate Communications

Southcentral Foundation congratulates Pharmacist Rod Gordon on receiving the Distinguished Alaskan Pharmacist Award from the Alaska Pharmacist Association. The organization noted Gordon stood out from the many nominees because of his dedication, passion, and contributions.



Southcentral Foundation Pharmacist Rod Gordon.

## Karen McIntire Celebrated as a 2023 Women of Achievement

## By Southcentral Foundation Public Relations and Corporate Communications

Southcentral Foundation Vice President of Workforce Karen McIntire received a 2023 YWCA Alaska Women of Achievement Award at the awards luncheon in Anchorage.

The award honors women who demonstrate qualities of leadership and excellence in their professional and personal endeavors while embodying YWCA Alaska's mission of eliminating racism and empowering women.



Southcentral Foundation Vice President of Workforce Karen McIntire.

Co-workers describe Gordon as an outstanding pharmacist and mentor of pharmacist colleagues, students, residents, and other medical disciplines.

"Rod's dedication, passion, and contributions to the field of pharmacy are remarkable," said Callista Carlton, clinical director of SCF Pharmacy. "His work has made a significant impact on the community, and he has touched the lives of many over his long career."

Gordon has worked for SCF Rural Anchorage Service Unit Pharmacy since 2020, however, his career has spanned over 40 years. Well-respected in the profession, Gordon is sought out by many for his calm logic, clinical diligence, and kind demeanor. He finds helping others to be rewarding and the highlight of his work as a pharmacist.

Among his numerous awards throughout his career, Gordon received an SCF Honoring Our Successes award for his work with hepatitis treatments and expanding service access to remote regions of Alaska.

McIntire joined SCF in 1996 and has played a key role in the organization's strategic planning and development. She has held positions in Organizational Development and Innovation, human resources, and program management.

Ten women are selected each year from a large pool of deserving candidates. The selection committee considers record of accomplishments, investment in the community, and the work done to empower other women.

"SCF's leadership team is pleased to see Karen recognized for all she has done for the Alaska Native Community. She has played a key role in the growth and development of our workforce. This is a well-deserved honor," said SCF President and CEO April Kyle.

Since 1989, YWCA Alaska has been committed to fostering a community where all can live and thrive. The event is an acknowledgment of exceptional leadership in the community, and also an opportunity to encourage and inspire other women to create their own positive impact.

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## **Raise Day of Fun: Shaping Health Care Careers**

By Southcentral Foundation Public Relations and Corporate Communications

Curiosity met opportunity during the Raise Day of Fun in February. The event provided a chance for current and former Raise interns to foster connections and exchange experiences, highlighting the program's positive impact on career development.

The day was filled with traditional games and learning opportunities where participants heard about different career paths that can be taken to become part of the health care field. A question-and-answer session led to insightful conversations with alumni on how participation in the program impacted their careers.

"The Raise Program is more than an internship, it is a transformative journey where each step paves the way for the health care leaders of tomorrow," Executive Vice President of Executive and Tribal Services Ileen Sylvester said. "We nurture leaders who not only embrace the present challenges but also envision the future possibilities in Alaska's health care landscape."

The Raise Program introduces Alaska Native and American Indian interns to potential health care, administrative, and related careers. The program offers support to achieve educational goals and provides meaningful worksite experiences for students to become the next generation of Alaska Native and American Indian leaders.

There are three intern sessions throughout the year: summer, winter, and graduate programs. Applications for the summer internship opened in February. If you are interested or know someone who may be interested, apply here www.southcentralfoundation.com/careers/raise-program.

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



Raise Interns Misty Tuzroyluke and Arianna Leuer enjoy beading during the Raise Day of Fun held Feb. 23.



Raise interns practice beading during the Raise Day of Fun.



Show of hands of former Raise interns who also participated in SCF's Administrative Support Training Program.

## Navigating the Importance and Impact of **Immunizations for Every Generation**

By Southcentral Foundation Public Relations and Corporate Communications



It is normal to worry about those we love. When it comes to health

When making health care decisions, it is natural to have questions. In fact, primary care providers at Southcentral Foundation welcome discussions about decisions that affect your family's health. Your primary care team is available to address any reservations or concerns you may have, identify what immunizations are best for your family, and assist with special immunizations for life events, jobs, or travel.

"I always appreciate it when customer-owners have detailed questions about the need and timing of their children's immunizations. In this day and age of free-flowing information, it is imperative that families know the what and the why of their health care," SCF Medical Director Dr. Shahid A. Zaidi shared.

Some immunizations last a lifetime, others, such as the flu and Tdap vaccines are recommended to be updated after a certain period. Immunizations may be recommended for adults based on completion of childhood immunizations, age, life events, or health conditions. It is not too late to catch up on many vaccines.

and wellness, immunizations are available to help ease concerns of serious illness. Immunizations have revolutionized preventative care and are beneficial to people of all ages. Knowing the importance of immunizations is essential, and understanding how they work can help you make decisions about your family's health care.

So, how do immunizations work? When your body is infected with a virus or bacteria, your immune system sends white blood cells to fight the infection. Once your body learns how to fight a particular illness, it retains antibodies that protect it from future exposures to the same or similar viruses and bacteria. That is why immunizations are so important – they mimic an infection, which lets your body practice its defense.

This is especially valuable for infants and children, who are being newly exposed to viruses and bacteria every day. Parents or guardians of infants, toddlers, and school-age children are strongly encouraged to vaccinate their children. Schools and daycare facilities have vaccination requirements because any group setting inherently increases the risk of infection. Visit the Alaska Department of Health Division of Public Health to review current child care and school immunization requirements.

"As we age, our bodies change, our habits change, and the types of illnesses that are most likely to affect us change, as well. That's why it is important to continue to update our immunizations throughout our lives, and it is especially important as we enter those later decades," said SCF Medical Director Dr. Kenneth Norris.

Staying up to date on immunizations is something everyone can do to help build a healthier future. When one person is immunized, children, parents, and grandparents are all safer from life-threatening diseases. Connect with your primary care team to ensure your vaccines are up to date. The first step could be as simple as reaching out through MyHealth to ask questions, or as easy as scheduling an appointment to discuss immunizations in person. Scheduling an appointment today could save a life.

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### **FAMILY WELLNESS**



# **Get Your Garden Growing This Spring**

#### By Public Relations Specialist Shamika Andrew

Are you ready to get your garden growing? Whether you are a beginner or have a green thumb, there are many benefits to gardening.

A busy day in the garden can be a good form of exercise. While tending a garden, you perform squats and lunges while weeding. Carrying bags of mulch and other supplies works your arm muscles. Digging, raking, and using a push mower can all be physically intense activities. Additionally, soaking up ultraviolet light from the sun produces vitamin D, which can support your physical and mental health by improving nutrient absorption of calcium and phosphorous, and increasing serotonin.



Reap the benefits of gardening this spring.

Nearly all forms of exercise can reduce stress, including gardening. People tend to breathe deeper when outside, which may reduce stress levels. Gardening routines, like watering and weeding, can ease stress.

Growing and eating your own fruits and vegetables can have a positive impact on your diet. Gardeners are more likely to include what they grow in their meals, increasing dietary variety and fiber intake. Fresh fruits and vegetables can inspire new recipes and bring people together in the kitchen.

It is gratifying to plant, tend, harvest, and share your food. The gardening community is rich with people willing to share their expertise and harvest with others.

Here are some helpful gardening tips to get your garden started:

- Choose what you want to grow for your starters; get seeds that will grow in the climate in which you live.
- Early spring is the best time to plant your seeds with the short window for the growing season in Alaska.
- Keep your seed starts moist; you do not want them to dry out.
- Find out where you are going to place your garden to get enough sunlight, and research which plants might grow better together.
- The best time to replant your seedlings is in June, when the weather is getting warmer.

Spring is here, so do not miss out on this perfect opportunity to get your hands dirty!

Learn how regularly tending to a garden benefits your physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual wellness. Contact Health Education for more information at (907) 729-2689.



**4201 TUDOR CENTRE DRIVE** 

Show support for diabetes prevention and awareness by participating in the 17th Annual Fun Run. Choose between a 5k or 1-mile course. The event is free of charge and shirts are available on a first come, first served basis. Register on the event day from 9 to 9:45 a.m.



## **Get Your** Garden Growing



Southcentral Foundation Health Education hosts Get Your Garden Growing April 16 and April 30.

This event is a learning opportunity for all levels of gardeners.

Contact (907) 729-2689 for registration requirements.

Learn how regularly tending to a garden benefits your physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual wellness



# **ATV Safety**

Southcentral Foundation is excited to host ATV safety classes in rural Alaska. Adults and youth can learn how to safely operate ATVs to prevent accidents and injuries.

Scan the QR code below to view upcoming safety rodeos near you.





MyHealth is an online health management tool for customer-owners provided by Cerner<sup>®</sup> 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:



Request

appointments



communication





**View medical** record summary

#### **DOWNLOAD TODAY!**

Google Pla

View most lab

results

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

C App Store



Scan for more information

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By Public Relations Specialist Levi Oyster



Working at Southcentral Foundation means more than merely having a job — it is about developing a career that can lead to opportunities for advancement, supported by on-thejob training, a generous scholarship program, and academic leave.

SCF Learning and Development Specialist Tessie Estes, of Yupik descent with family in Napakiak, has taken a non-linear and rewarding career path to her current position. Her story is one of seeking opportunities and taking them head on.

In 2011, Estes had been working in retail for almost 10 years and was ready for something new. Her sisters, SCF Case Management Support Casandra Rabb and SCF Health Educator Rebecca Rabb, encouraged her to apply for the Administrative Support Training Program. Both Cassandra and Rebecca also started in ASTP and progressed into successful long-term careers at SCF.

Estes began her journey at SCF by graduating from ASTP and was placed in Anchorage Native Primary Care Center. Soon after, she was promoted to the role of case management support, developing versatile skills in customer service. After three and half years as a CMS, she transitioned to program coordinator and was soon promoted to administrative supervisor, the position Estes wanted for years. "Building the relationships with my team and teaching and helping them to grow made me happy," Estes stated. "I loved being there for customerowners and producing solutions to best suit them. The support I received from my leadership team prepared me to be ready for a manager position one day."

Estes supervised employees in primary care for over five years and wanted to expand this skill set further. She enrolled in the first class offering of the Manager and Supervisor in Training Program. MSIT is an immersive and engaging leadership development program designed to advance Alaska Native and American Indian people into supervisory and managerial positions throughout SCF.

"This experience really pushed me to work on my internal growth and allowed me to fully engage in some of the best leadership trainings," she shared.

Estes went on to be a manager of the Behavioral Health Consultants and Community Resources Program supporting departments throughout SCF. While Estes enjoyed being a manager, she realized her true passion was the culture of SCF itself, sharing story and building relationships. Estes, in turn, became a learning and development specialist to teach and train fellow employees on these topics to build a stronger community-based organization. Estes' non-traditional career path allowed her to develop a wide range of valuable skills that led her to the rewarding work she engages in today.

"Taking this position totally fills my bucket," Estes stated. "I love working for SCF because there are so many opportunities for growth, and they really foster growing leaders from within while embracing Alaska Native culture and traditions."

For information about career opportunities at Southcentral Foundation, visit bit.ly/SCFApply.

#### Do you receive Medicaid or Denali KidCare?

## Be prepared for your renewal!





Step 1

Step 2

CONFIRM your mailing address, phone number, and email address are up to date with the Division of Public Assistance.

CHECK your mailboxes, residential and email.

RESPOND to DPA when they reach out. Complete and submit renewal packet when requested.

Southcentral Foundation Family Health Resources can assist in updating your contact information, call (833) 729-4470.

Southcentral Foundation invites CIRI shareholders and descendants interested in serving on the Southcentral Foundation Board of Directors to apply.

Southcentral Foundation is an Alaska Native-owned, nonprofit health care organization serving nearly 70,000 Alaska Native and American Indian people living in Anchorage, Matanuska-Susitna Borough and 55 rural villages in the Anchorage Service Unit. Incorporated in 1982 under the Tribal authority of Cook Inlet Region, Inc., Southcentral Foundation employs more than 2,700 people in more than 80 programs.

### Southcentral Foundation's Nuka Conference June 24-28

For more information, contact SCF Learning Institute at SCFNukaEvent@scf.cc. SCFNuka.com | (907) 729-6852



Interested candidates are invited to submit a letter of interest outlining their experience and/or knowledge by March 29, 2024. The Southcentral Foundation Board of Directors will make recommendations to the CIRI Board of Directors, who appoint SCF directors.

Learn more and apply at southcentralfoundation.com.

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#### ELDER DRUM

## Enhancing Elder Well-Being: A Year of Growth and Mobility

#### By Public Relations Specialist Stephanie Smith

In 2023, Southcentral Foundation Elder Program achieved a milestone — the return to its pre-COVID functionality. The Elder Program plays a key role in supporting Elder customer-owners who live independently. As activities and services increased, so did the need for transportation.

The Elder Program serves 80-90 customer-owners daily with transportation coordination. Routes run to and from the Elder Program, a place where customer-owners gather, have lunch, and participate in a variety of activities offered each week. The current weekly activities include Culture and Traditions — a time designated for Elders to work on sewing, beading, or other art projects — bingo, health education and exercise classes, live music provided by a Yupik drum group or local band, and time with Family Health Resources where application assistance is provided for third-party health insurances or other support programs. While most activities are social in nature, essential routine services offered, such as grocery shopping trips, support self-sufficiency.

Elder Program drivers manage a full transportation schedule Monday through Friday. "If a driver is not available, other Elder Program employees are certified to drive and step-in, including myself," Elder Program Supervisor Sabrina Tocktoo shared. "Making sure all routes are covered is a main priority. The Elder Program is a success in large part due to the shuttle services. I have observed Elders cannot be at [the Elder Program] as often as they like to be if they have to rely on other means of transportation."

In addition, to support health and wellness, transportation is offered for Elders from their homes to medical appointments in Anchorage. Recently, this services was enhanced with a new medical van, the sixth vehicle in the fleet. The van has the capacity to hold two wheelchairs, ensuring Elders can safely navigate to their appointments.



Promoting independent living through fostering an environment of quality, dignity, and pride.

Accessible and adequate mobility is not just a convenience — it is the foundation of maintaining independence so Elders may uphold their ties within the community.

Accessible and adequate mobility is not just a convenience — it is the foundation of maintaining independence so Elders may uphold their ties within the community.

For more information about transportation services offered at the Elder Program or within the community, contact the Elder Program at (907) 729-6500.

FRIDAY
rse Practitioner
Services
0 a.m2 p.m.
Elder Jam
Noon-2 p.m.



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

#### **Important Phone Numbers**

Alaska Native Medical Center	Division of Senior and Disabilities Services
American Association of Retired Persons (AARP)(907) 762-3388	Food Bank of Alaska
Anchorage Police Department (non-emergency)	People Mover
Anchor Rides(907) 343-6543	Salvation Army Meals on Wheels
Cook Inlet Housing Authority	Southcentral Foundation
Division of Public Assistance	SCF Elder Program Event Hotline

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