

RURALCAP's ACTION REPORTS

RurALCAP



Partners for Progress
with Alaska's Communities

The weekly newsletter of the NON-PROFIT, PRIVATE CORPORATION
which serves rural Alaska in the battle against poverty in our state.

An information and education function of Rural Alaska Community Action Program, Inc.



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Bethel Housing Project Grows

The Alaska State Housing Authority (ASHA) has made final inspection on 21 additional homes in the Bethel Housing Project. Families moved into the units June 16. This makes 63 houses completed and paid for and some eight or nine more on the site or in transit from the factory.

A representative of the Housing Committee now participates in the final inspection. The houses are occupied with much more speed as ASHA has provided the Bethel Housing Co-op maintenance men with two 20-ton jacks to facilitate the leveling work made necessary by settlement of the houses, said Ben Marsh, Interagency Housing Coordinator.

The Alaska Air Guard has been able to airlift a load of surplus mattresses and tables to Bethel. The Federal Field Committee thanks the Bureau of Indian Affairs and Braund, Inc. for their help in transporting the materials from the warehouse to the plane, and unloading at the Bethel end. They also expressed their appreciation of the Air Guard's help.

Marsh said, the Alaska District, Corps of Engineers forwarded their Detailed Project Report for the proposed small-boat harbor to Division Headquarters in Portland, Oregon June 10. They expect the Division Headquarters to endorse and send the project to Washington, D.C. shortly. Approval by Corps Headquarters will be built. It will then await its turn to be funded with the limited appropriation authority for small projects. It is possible work may begin spring of 1970 or even fall, 1969, said Marsh.

The State of Alaska requested the City of Bethel to convey a 70-acre tract immediately east of the housing project for construction of the new Regional High School. The new sewer and water systems will be operable just before construction begins on the new school.

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Shown above are the officers of the Kikiktugruk Area Community Development Corp. From left to right are Charles Sheldon, treasurer; Robert Newlin, president; Elmer Armstrong, corresponding secretary; Tommy Sheldon, vice-president; and Dan Iyutungak, reporting secretary.

Kotzebue Corp. Sets Priorities

Employment is the top priority set at the Kikiktugruk Development Corporation's meeting in Kotzebue June 13-14.

The Kikiktugruk Development Corp. is RurALCAP's regional area board for the Kotzebue area. Listed in order of priority were the following; employment, communications, airstrip improvements, erosion control and improvements, community halls, roads, and housing.

The Kikiktugruk Board said there were many needs in their area, but selected a few of the most pressing as other agencies are working on other problems.

They also selected the two villages not federally funded for Head Start during the 1969-70 school term for top priority funding. They are Ambler and Noatak which were selected with consideration of villages with on-going self-help Head Start classes.

One main topic discussed during the meeting was the housing that is to be initiated in Kotzebue area by the Alaska State Housing Authority with the Remote

Housing Program. Kivalina, Noorvik and Kiana will be the villages to get this program.

Low bid housing will be built in Kotzebue with the building contract going to the Alaska Native Brotherhood, Camp 69.

The Alaska Native Brotherhood plans an on-the-job training program with its housing project utilizing the foremen of the ASHA projects in Kivalina, Kiana, Noorvik and Shishmaref.

Other topics discussed were: the progress of the Kotzebue Fisheries Co-op with the help of the regional center, (the center plans to aid other types of cooperatives in their area); dental care of adults; mosquito control by spraying; transportation; educational TV; water and sanitation; soil erosion; fire fighting; fourth-class cities; and state aid to local governments.

RurALCAP's Emergency Food and Medical Services program director, Junior

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Teachers, Aides Attend Training

Alaska Head Start teachers and aides are presently attending the first of two summer sessions being held simultaneously in Nome, Sitka and Fairbanks.

The first session began June 9 and will continue through July 4. The second session is scheduled to begin July 7 and continue through August 1. Some 90 teachers and aides will attend the two sessions.

Miss Sally Miner, RurALCAP Head Start Director, arranged the training sessions. Child Development workers from the University of Alaska, living in Alaska, are instructing the classes along with Head Start field staff. Some experienced village teachers are teaching non-experienced teachers.

There are also dormitory counselors, one secretary for each site and adult education teachers. Teachers and aides will spend some time on nutrition and parental involvement.

Instructors are: Vivian Halverson from Hawaii in Nome with Lyn Harrison from Weber College in Utah; Jody Tanner in Sitka; and Mary Murphy of Fairbanks in Fairbanks. Head Start field staff completes the instructor staff.

Dr. Marianna Bunger of Alaska Methodist University in Anchorage is directing a seven-week course for teachers of Indian and Eskimo children. Workshop activities are scheduled in art, music, science, language and other things that pertain to pre-school children.

The two training sessions are scheduled to be followed up with workshops during the winter school term.

Joint Project Moves Village

The people of Lower Kalskag are presently living in the new homes they built for themselves. They moved the entire village back from the flooding Kuskokwim River where they were faced almost every year with spring flooding of their homes and destruction within the village.

The entire village community participated in erecting and rebuilding the homes in this tremendous project sponsored by RurALCAP. Operation Mainstream paid the wages of the construction enrollees and the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) assisted by providing the equipment for the project.

The BIA set up a complete sawmill, about 16 by 20 feet, a planing area and a saw shack; all with commercial-type equipment. The heavy equipment consisted of a planer, electric saws, and a generator to operate the equipment.

Walter Sellens, a BIA contract super-

visor with 35 years carpentry experience, was on hand at the project along with Operation Mainstream supervisor, Sinka Williams to instruct the men in the use of the various types of equipment, layout, survey and in basic structural engineering to accomplish their village re-location.

Operation Mainstream provided \$17,000 for training the enrollees in constructing homes on the new site which is one-half mile farther back from the river. Some \$14,500 was used for wages and \$2,500 was held in reserve for employee benefits and taxes.

The enrollees received instruction and training in carpentry, all phases of construction, surveying, wiring, sawing, cutting, planing and finishing materials in measurements; also in specifications, blue print reading and data collection and working as a team in group participation projects.



This complete sawmill was built by the Bureau of Indian Affairs for Lower Kalskag to move their village back from the annual flooding of the Kuskokwim River. The village relocated one and a half miles farther from the river.

Bethel Housing

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Two members of the Kuskokwim Forest Resource Committee visited Bethel and Aniak to consult sawmillers and others on market prospects and on the necessary steps to start a planning and drying facility on the Kuskokwim River.

Marsh believes if this bears fruit, future housing built in the region can utilize local lumber and further benefit the local economy.

The Small Business Administration may become an agency partner in the Bethel Housing Project, since the most feasible way to develop lumber processing facilities appears to be through expansion loan support to small business operators already working in the area, Marsh said.

Working Program Shows Progress

More than 400 residents of rural Alaska have been trained for semi-skilled and skilled jobs during the past two years by Operation Mainstream.

In addition to learning job skills, the rural residents also earned about \$200,000 in wages for their work, and built housing and public works facilities in their villages.

These statistics were compiled by Mrs. Mary Gange, Operation Mainstream director for RurALCAP. "Projects ranging from a telephone system in one Interior village to 32-foot bridges in a Bering Seacoast town show the ability of villagers to improve their communities and hold jobs," Mrs. Gange explained.

Mrs. Gange read off an impressive list of accomplishments by people in their own villages as proof that Operation Mainstream is a factor for progress in rural Alaska.

"Since 1967, when Operation Mainstream started, six community halls have been built. Several villages built water and electrical facilities and even a phone system with Operation Mainstream funds," she said.

Mrs. Gange explained that Operation Mainstream provides money for wages. Materials must come from other sources, including village resources or other government agencies. "The \$200,000 in wages is 73% of our total operating budget."

"Many of the agencies don't have money available for wages, or have limited funds which can dovetail well with Operation Mainstream funds," she continued. "And some of the projects are not possible under guidelines for other agencies," Mrs. Gange added.

An example of dovetailing projects is now underway in Kotzebue. The U.S. Public Health Service has a project to bring a water system to the town of 2,000. PHS project supervisors are training seven Kotzebue residents in pipe fitting and laying, so that they will eventually join the Plumbers and Pipefitters Union apprenticeship program.

Once through the union program, the men are expected to find jobs working on the Trans-Alaska pipeline from the North Slope to Valdez. While in preliminary training, the seven men must still make a living. That is where Operation Mainstream is vital; it pays their wages.

Perhaps the most ambitious Operation Mainstream project now underway is the reconstruction of tramways on a portage



Left, Mrs. Mary Gange (shown with her secretary Mrs. Carlin Parisenia) is the director of Operation Mainstream. Operation Mainstream, sponsored by RurALCAP, is presently the only work training program within Alaska under the U.S. Dept. of Labor.

between Kalskag on the Kuskokwim River and Russian Mission on the Yukon River.

When completed, the tramways and related dams will permit small boats access between the two main rivers for the first time in several decades.

The old tramways were constructed by the Alaska Road Commission in 1931. Over the years, lack of maintenance left the route unusable. Work on the portage and tramway is being done by villagers from Russian Mission and Kalskag.

The project includes rough roadway from Kalskag to Mud Creek and a tramway leading to a lake which flows into the Johnson River.

Old tramway rails are being fixed up, new ties made from area timber and other materials being provided by the villagers. A D-7 tractor will be used, part of the surplus military equipment acquired by RurALCAP from the federal government.

Old winches are being made useable for pulling boats out of the water by hand. The entire project is expected to be complete later this year.

Kalskag is also the site of a Bureau of Indian Affairs-Operation Mainstream housing project, where 17 houses were built and four renovated.

A number of other Operation Mainstream projects have already helped aid transportation in the rural areas. One is one-and-a-half mile gravel roadway at Akhiok on southern Kodiak Island. It eliminated what was formerly a 5-mile boat trip to a floating dock and cannery.

Another project aiding transportation was the construction of two 32-foot bridges at Goodnews Bay over a ravine. A third project was a tramway across a creek and slough on Nelson Island near the village of Tununak.

Villagers are also eager to build projects that will help earn more money for themselves. In Tetlin and Mentasta, residents are building authentic Indian villages to attract tourists.

The Tetlin project will also include a laundromat, with machinery purchased by the villagers. Water will be provided by a Bureau of Indian Affairs-built well.

In the field of education, Operation Mainstream funds are also being used. The town of Willow finally has a library, built by people with wages paid by OM, and books and furniture secured by OM and RurALCAP.

In Hoonah, a parent-child center has been constructed, where children of working parents can get day care. Head Start classes will also be held there, along with adult education and child care courses.

"The whole aim of Operation Mainstream, as stated by Congress in 1965, was to provide employment for those people who did not fit into any other project," Mrs. Gange explained.

"We are charged with helping train and employ people who can then go on to permanent jobs because of what they have learned through Operation Mainstream. At the same time, the projects are making life in the villages markedly better," she added. "This is an encouraging, worthwhile program."

Kotzebue . . .

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Ramos, gave a lengthy discussion on these services and on the RurALCAP Nutritional Aide Training. He commended Evelyn Conwell for her work with the Food Stamp Program in the Kotzebue area. Ramos said the State of Alaska Welfare Dept. was badly understaffed to carry out the Food Stamp Program.

Other speakers were Dr. Darnell Whitt, U.S. Dept. of Agriculture Soil Conservation Service specialist from Washington, D.C.; Blaine Halliday, State Conservationist of the Soil Conservation Service, U.S. Dept. of Agriculture; Ted Smith, from Division of Lands; John C. Crupper, Chugach National Forest, Forest Service supervisor; Vern Clapp, U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Regional Forester's Staff; Theodore Smith, Alaska Parks and Recreation Chief; Daniel Lisbourne, Alaska Federation of Natives, Economic Development Planner; and Fred Selkregg, Alaska Federation of Natives, Economic Development Coordinator.

Each village in the area was represented by a speaker giving their villages' reports. There was also discussion and selection of representatives to the Economic Development Administration and Alaska Federation of Natives. Robert Newlin and Charlie Sheldon were elected to represent the Kikiktugruk group.

Native Center Needs Financial Help

The Anchorage Native Welcome Center reports they will need some \$12,000 to finish the current year with their doors open.

The Finance Committee of the Board of Directors for the Center have met three different times trying to figure a way to 'keep the Center's doors open' financially.

The committee recently met with Dorik Micheau of Alaska Methodist University who has offered to help by contacting Eastern institutions that may give funding for the remainder of the year.

Micheau is attempting to understand the Center's financial situation, its philosophy and services for the past year in order to pass on this information to the funding institutions.

The committee members are: Leonard Monaghan, Willy Allen, Bob Arnold, John Tetpon and Roy Ewan. They ask any person with fund-raising ideas to call the Center.

The Center has assisted some 104,000 people since its opening last fall. The statistics of the Center's records show: employment assistance, 264; housing assistance, 108; transportation, 528; counseling and referral, 876; recreational programs, 600; inquiries and incidental services, 390; and arts and crafts, 246.

This is by no means the complete services offered by the Center. They also have driver training, leadership training,

youth group (social and leadership training), Native action group, and a participants council.

The Center's Board encourages action of Gov. Keith H. Miller's Office on a request from the Anchorage Alaska Native Brotherhood asking a grant of \$40,000 to the Alaska Legal Services Corp. Alaska Legal Services is lacking this amount to pay its lawyers above the Federally-set ceiling of \$15,000, states the Center's spokesman.

The Alaska Federation of Natives also endorsed this request at their last session, based on the fact that Alaska Legal Services has assisted many people since its existence, according to a Welcome Center spokesman. He said Alaska Legal Services has helped many of the Center's visitors and the Center endorses the action to keep competent and dedicated lawyers on the staff.

The Center will soon be visited by Jess Sixkiller, executive director of American Indians-United; a national group. Sixkiller will visit Alaska the first week of July. He has been deeply involved in the formation of urban Indian centers throughout the United States.

Sixkiller will divide his time between the Anchorage Native Welcome Center and the Fairbanks Native Center. While he is in Alaska, he will give consulting services in the areas of community involvement, fund raising and programs.

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