

Southeast Alaska Regional Health Corp.

State funding has been awarded SEARHC to continue and expand two programs currently offered communities in Southeast: the "Wilderness Survival" program and a "Swim for Health" project.

The Wilderness Survival program will expand current curriculum designed to teach students to identify and meet needs essential to survival in a wilderness environment. Unforeseen circumstances such as boat sinkings, aircraft accidents and hunting accidents are part of life in Alaska. This program is designed to be presented in those contexts and will be incorporated into the regular

school schedule. This expanded curriculum will be offered in five rural Southeastern communities, at least three of which received the introductory program this year.

The Swim for Health project will target children in grades 3-6. It will provide instruction in water safety, develop deep water confidence, facilitate acclimation to aquatic recreation.

State funding for an elderly health program which provided eye exams, glasses, dental care, dentures and hearing aids to those 60 and over was discontinued June 30. This much-needed program began Sep-

tember 1981.

Since January, with the submission of a letter of intent to the State and a subsequent proposal in March, SEARHC has been actively pursuing administration of the Juneau Mental Health Center. The SEARHC Board of Directors had identified psycho-social illnesses as a leading health problem of Southeast and directed staff to seek a means to bring mental health support services to the rural communities currently without services.

The proposal developed by SEARHC provided a full-time psychiatrist and staff for Juneau, a day treatment center

for the chronically mentally ill, as well as offering outreach to the communities in the Juneau catchment area. Juneau Mental Health Center staff has not traveled to those communities in over two years.

Administration of the Juneau Mental Health Clinic became a major political issue. Eventually the City Assembly voted not to undertake its administration. This left SEARHC as the sole applicant. The proposal received favorable reviews from the Southeast HSA and Southeast Governor's Mental Health Advisory Board. The funding, however, was moved from the contract

and grants line item in the DHSS budget by Senator Bill Ray and moved into continued state administration funding in the Senate budget.

This eventually prevailed. In mid-July the State issued an RFP for provision of mental health services to the communities in the Juneau Mental Health Center catchment area. On July 22 the SEARHC Executive Committee met, reviewed the need and directed staff to continue seeking these outreach services. For the third year and third attempt, a letter of intent was submitted prior to the July 29 deadline and a proposal is currently under development.