

'Incubator' to help new North Slope businesses with start up

Residents and economic entrepreneurs had a chance to informally talk with local development officials last month about their needs and desires for starting small businesses in the Barrow area.

The North Slope Borough has contracted with The Arctic Development Council, a non-profit economic development agency to develop a small business assistance center and a small business incubator. Goals include business development, new job creation, and economic diversification. ADC staff, board members and business and civic volunteers spent a week discussing the incubator, and people's business dreams, frustra-

tions and accomplishments.

The location of the discussions was held at the AC Stuaqpak check out area. "Thanks to AC Stuaqpak Manager Mike DellaBona and his staff, we were able to talk to anywhere between five and twelve people an hour," said Earl Finkler, the business incubator manager.

A variety of local resource people came to offer one-on-one assistance. Don Schindler, ADC Executive Director, explained how to develop a business plan and Bryan Harvey, manager of the Barrow Branch of National Bank of Alaska, discussed small business financing.

Jana Harcharek, chairperson

of the North Slope Cultural Center Commission, previewed the upcoming Cultural Center and its business and economic impact.

Jim Sears, the Grants and Contracts Manager for the Workforce Development Program, met with people to hand out applications for the next round of the Borough's and Piquiniq Management Corporation's Small Business Development Grants. The grants range from \$3,000 to \$20,000 and that the deadline for the next round is March 1, 1995.

Other business people who counseled at the table were Grant Thompson of Cape Smythe Airlines, Berney Richert

of U.S. Economic Development Administration, and George Cowan, formerly of Ukpeagvik Inupiat Corporation.

A small business incubator is a facility where new or growing small businesses which show promise of viability and job creation can find some space, along with the shared use of a receptionist, business equipment and assistance. Then, as those businesses grow, they move out of the incubator and others move in to "incubate," or grow.

In Barrow, Finkler said, the plan is for the Borough to work with UIC to renovate the old Marina

building behind AC Stuaqpak to serve as a small business support center and an incubator. There will also be incubator outreach to the villages, and that staff is looking into some possible space for satellite incubators in the villages.

ADC staff are currently looking for donations from businesses in the area. They are in need of spare tables and chairs, and host businesses. For more information, contact the Arctic Development Council at 5146 Herman Street, or PO Box 1353, Barrow, AK 99723 or by calling (907) 852-4146, toll free (Alaska) 1-800-478-4146.