

# St. Mary's hosts annual Health Aide Conference

The Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation's Community Health Aide Program (CHAP) held its 8th Annual Community Health Aide Conference in St. Mary's, last month. This year's theme was "Prevention: A Pathway to Wellness." It was dedicated to our elders, who are our first teachers.

During this year's conference, Community Health Aides and Community Health Practitioners from the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta, North Slope Borough and St. George Island gathered for program and health care updates, attended continuing medical education classes and discussed their concerns, opinions, needs, and suggestions to improve quality health care in their communities.

The topics that were covered at this year's conference focused on this year's theme. The classes included: Causes of Death in YK Region Natives by Dr. Ellen Provost, CHAP Medical Director; Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Intervention Techniques by the Celebration of Life staff; Gestational Diabetes class taught by Donna Brown, R.N., MCH Clinical Nurse; an Accucheck Skills practice taught by the CHAP Supervisor Instructor staff; a Bereavement Support Group headed by Martha Lyman, MSW, Mental Health Clinician; an all day Community Health Aide

meeting; Drowning/near drowning scenario taught by Nick Kameroff, Safety Specialist for the YKHC Injury Prevention Department; Evaluating and Stabilizing Trauma Patient scenario taught by the Emergency Medical Services staff of YKHC; a Talking Circle and a class on Adolescent Health Issues headed by Cathy Sampson-Kruse, MSW; 1994 RSV Epidemic Update, H. Pylori Study Update and an Antibiotic Resistance Information-sharing meeting headed by Dr. Donn Kruse, YKHC Medical Director; Rural Sanitation Issues meeting with Orie Williams, Executive Vice President of YKHC, and Dr. Donn Kruse.

Other activities were held for everyone's enjoyment. The St. Mary's Sobriety Movement hosted its 6th annual Fiddling Festival August 17th-19th at the St.

Mary's Mission Gym. This year's Fiddling Festival included bands from St. Mary's, Emmonak, Stebbins and Kotlik. Several fishing trips were made up the Andreafski River as well as daily berry picking trips around St. Mary's.

These activities were a wonderful way for the Community Health Aides and Community Health Practitioners to gather together to offer support to one another in their highly stressful careers, and to meet other Health Aides from different villages, to renew old friendships and to meet special guests.

There were two very special groups that came in to talk with the Health Aides who attended the St. Mary's Conference. Senator Ted Stevens came in to welcome the Health Aides to the St. Mary's Conference during his tour of the

Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta villages. He spoke briefly on health care reform and answered questions that the group had during that time.

A group which included the Area Director for the Indian Health Service (IHS), Dr. Michael Trujillo; Gerry Ivey, Alaska Area Director for IHS; Mary Anaruk, YKHC's Vice President of Community Services; Dr. Donn Kruse; and Lee Olson, YKHC's Vice President of Administrative Services, flew into St. Mary's to greet the Health Aides at the St. Mary's Conference during the IHS staff's tour of Alaska Area regions.

Providing the CHAPs with a system of support and letting them know how much we appreciate all that they do as health care providers is the tone we like to set at the conference. Each year we like to show this support and appreciation

by giving personal gifts to the CHAPs. These gifts, which are both monetary and item gifts, are donated by local and regional businesses, and by individuals. This is a great way of showing community support to the CHAPs who make quality health care available in regional villages.

Over all, the guests, staff and Health Aides rated this year's Community Health Aide Conference a success. The Community Health Aide Program staff and the Community Health Aide Advisory Council, who coordinate the annual Community Health Aide Conference, hope to continue to provide meaningful and enjoyable activities in future Community Health Aide Conferences that will bring everyone together for support and fellowship.

*Reprinted courtesy of YKHC Messenger.*