

BETHEL PRENATAL HOME SHAKY



BETHEL PREMATERNAL HOME—The prematernal home residents in Bethel are blowing out a candle commemorating a second year's operation of the home. During the two years, some 400 pregnant native women from the outlying areas have been provided with a place to stay. The home is now under shaky ground as funding for further operation is unstable. Helping the

home celebrate its second year of service are, from left to right, Mrs. Alice Anvil, nurses aide, Mrs. Agnes Tikiun, Nunapitchuk; Mrs. Nancy Reisinger, RN; Mrs. Hilda Matchian, Chevak; Mrs. Molly Hendrickson, Mekoryuk; Mrs. Mary Jane Johnson, Pilot Station; Mrs. Katherine Dock, Kipnuk; Mrs. Jeane Toomer, RN, director, and Mrs. Carrie Paul, Kipnuk.

Unsure Future Plagues Bethel Facility for Bush Pregnant Women

The Bethel Prematernal Home is again going through financial difficulties that would keep the home operating beyond the two years it has operated.

The home celebrated its two years of service recently with the native women residents from outlying areas participating.

The prematernal home operates on donations from the women residents themselves, the Association of Village Council Presidents, Public Health Service, RurALCAP, and the City of Bethel.

"Our funding, like many organizations that depend on politics, is not adequate nor stable

year after year," said Mrs. Jeanne Toomer, RN, director of the home.

"Once again," she added, "it has become necessary to fight for recognition of this project and the need for it to be continued."

Mrs. Toomer said that at the present time the portion of the budget handled by RurALCAP is again on shaky ground.

The home has a capacity to handle 14 residents. Two years of operating experience has shown that the home is not always adequate and it has had to service on the first-come-first-

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serve. basis.

"The need for the home in Bethel is very great, not only because of the lack of public housing but also because of the need for teaching," said Mrs. Toomer.

At the present time, the home provides an excellent opportunity for teaching the native women who are interested.

"For obvious reasons a pregnant woman is extremely interested in every facet of health involving her and her baby," Mrs. Toomer stated.

"This ranges," she continued, "from the development of the unborn baby, good prenatal care, infant care, sanitation at home, nutrition, etc. We try to approach in some manner all of these things here at the home. Besides this type of class we also have sewing, cooking demonstrations, handicrafts and knitting yarns available."

The home services an area of 100,000 square miles and approximately 60 villages. It does not discriminate between races nor economic levels.

According to their ability the women and their families donate native foods and \$1.50 per day for their stay at the home. It has been estimated that it costs \$18 to \$20 per day to support each woman.

The Bethel Prematernal Home has found favor among the native people in the southwest area of Alaska.

Mrs. Toomer thinks the future will definitely prove the need for enlargement of the facility if it can keep going.

The home strongly depends on the donations of native foods, money, and the funds from various organizations.

"This often makes us an insecure organization but in no way changes the dire need of the prematernal home in Bethel," Director Toomer said.

"The Bethel Prematernal Home is an organization formed to satisfy a direct need here in Bethel," Mrs. Toomer added. "Basically, it provides housing and food for pregnant women from the outlying villages who otherwise would be living in abandoned shacks, cars, etc., or sharing already overcrowded homes with families in Bethel."