



RurAL-CAP

ACTION REPORTS



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Head Start Field trainers hired

Head Start is closed for the summer and the children are enjoying the vacation. But the staff in Anchorage, each day is filled with long hours of study and preparation for the coming year.

New 'Head Start Field Trainers have been hired and are presently attending a comprehensive training course that will prepare them to assist village Head Start teachers and parents establish effective programs. The course covers all aspects of Head Start: early childhood development, how children learn, teaching materials, special education, nutrition, health, first aid, social services, federal forms and regulations, state and local building, fire, sanitation, and other regulations, parent and community involvement, and career development opportunities for teachers and teachers' aides.

Following these three weeks of intensive training, the staff will begin preparations for holding "workshops" for teachers and aides throughout the state during the month of September. Following these two-week-long workshops the teacher-directors will set up their programs and classrooms. Each trainer will be assigned five Head Start communities. Beginning at the end of September and continuing throughout the school year, the trainers will be making week-long visits to each village to offer technical assistance, training, and advice to teachers, aides, parents, and community to assure that the regulations are being met and the best possible program is being provided for the children.

Roger Mooney, director of Child Development, is enthusiastic about the coming year: "This is the most outstanding field staff RurAL CAP has ever assembled. We are going to see a major improvement in monitoring and support services to Head Start programs throughout the state." Mooney's enthusiasm is shared by his new staff. Following is an introduction to the Field Trainers and some comments from them about the training program and their new jobs.

Elizabeth Ritsch was born and reared in Pilot Point, where her parents had migrated from Teller. Following her marriage, Liz's husband was transferred to the Sacramento, California area. After their two daughters started to school Liz went to college and received her teacher's degree. She spent the next seven years teaching Special Education and Language courses. Of the RurAL CAP training, Liz said she was a little overwhelmed, but now she realized a greater responsibility: "I couldn't have handled the job without it." Elizabeth is now looking forward to visiting and working with the villages of Noorvik, Selawik, Huslia, Galena, and Unalakleet.

Senka Angellan, originally from Kwethluk, has a long time interest in the Head Start program and a personal knowledge of the Career Development part of it. About eight years

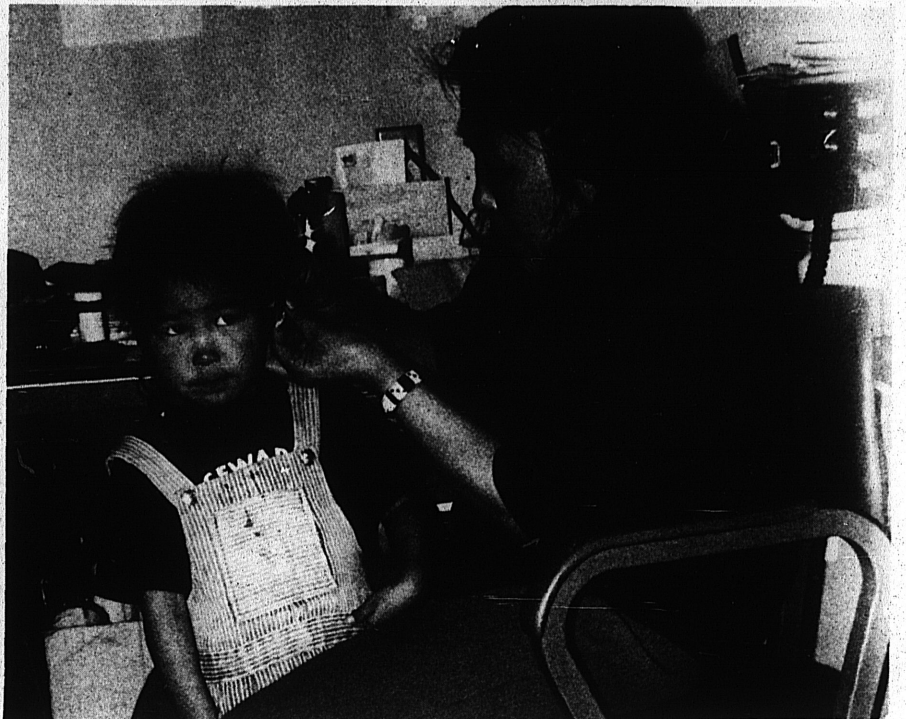
ago he worked briefly as a janitor, then as a teacher's aide, and then teacher-director for the Head Start program in Kwethluk. Since then he has attended AMU and worked for the Yupik-tak Bista School Board training program as a School Board Trainer, and did some research work. Senka said he thinks it will be exciting to work with the villages. The villages Senka will be working with are Nunapitchuk, Kasigluk, Quinhagak, Togiak, and Manokotak. He feels the training is "giving us a basic understanding of what we as field trainers should be looking at."

The Field Specialist for the villages of Hooper Bay, Chevak, Newtok, Tooksook Bay and Akiachak is Mary Toyukak. Mary grew up in the southwest part of Alaska in the village of Manokotak. She attended U of A in Fairbanks, receiving a degree in Alaska Native Languages and education. Mary has worked as a Bilingual Education instructor in the Eskimo Language Workshop, and part-time instructor for AMU and U of A Fairbanks, as an interpreter for the court system, and as an instructional aide for A.N.S. Mary said, "the training is hard, but you can learn a lot from it." She said they are also receiving some good reference materials for future use. Mary is excited about her new position and the opportunity to travel to villages she has never visited before.

Carolyn Madsen is coordinating the Kotzebue, Upper Tanana, and Hoonah Parent-Child Centers, as well as the Hoonah Head Start. Carolyn said she is ecstatic about the opportunity to help develop the PCC program. "This is the first time coordinated training has been available to PCC directors. In fact, this is an exciting time for the entire Head Start program," said Carolyn, "due to the emphasis on expert training." Carolyn is originally from California, but moved frequently and has lived in several parts of the Lower 48. For the past two years she has taught school in Savoonga on St. Lawrence Island. As a new employee, Carolyn says she is impressed with the team-work and hard-working staff at RurAL CAP.

Valerie Jennings, materials development specialist, will be the field trainer for one village. Valerie has been attending the training sessions and will introduce the sessions on teaching materials. This has been a very busy time for her, but she too is looking forward to her field work. "It's always nice to have the chance to work with the persons involved with Head Start in the villages," she said. "This way I can have my regular office job but still be able to keep in touch with what is happening in the classes."

Pam Preston has also been working at the Anchorage headquarters. She has been the administrative coordinator for the past six months. Pam comes to us from California where she has a background in Inservice



Hearing disabilities in village children

Many children in Rural Alaska cannot hear well, and the results can be tragic. Hearing loss is a common cause of learning difficulties for Village children, and it can affect a child's learning even if the loss is only temporary. One of the most common causes of temporary or permanent hearing loss is ear infection. When a child has a cold (even though it seems to be getting better), he or she may begin to complain of ear pain and may be up all night crying. The child may run a fever and start to vomit. These are all signs of an ear infection which requires medical attention. If the child is not treated promptly, the eardrum may break and pus can be seen draining from the ear canal. A child whose ear drum is broken or has a hole in it cannot hear as well as normal children do and will miss hearing important things in school and at home. Younger children who suffer from ear infections may be slow to talk, and their use of the language may be permanently delayed. With prompt medical attention, medications, frequent follow-up examinations to watch the condition of the ears, good hygiene and good nutrition the

ear will heal. Future hearing loss from repeated ear infections can be avoided and the child may continue to learn like all normal children. But this can happen only if the responsible adults in the village (parents, teachers, health aides, and others) know what to do about ear infections and help to prevent them in the children.

At least half the children currently in Head Start have at some time had a serious ear infection. In an audiological test of 526 children in 27 Head Start villages, it was found that 47 per cent of the children had an ear problem or hearing impairment which required close monitoring by medical people, parents, and teachers. In order to provide health care to many of these children, RurAL CAP has begun working on a system of ear care to eleven Head Start villages in southwest Alaska. This program includes the audiological testing of the children, medications, and surgical treatment of children whose hearing is unimproved by medications. But obviously, the most important part of this program is the educational component. George Irvin and Sharry Erzinger, at RurAL CAP's Central Office, are designing materials to educate parents, Head Start teachers, and Village Health Aides about the crucial importance of ear infections, what causes them, how to prevent them and what to do when they occur. Only if the people in the village see how critical this problem is and take action will we begin to reduce the amount of ear disease in our children. Starting with a team visit to each of the eleven villages at the end of September, this educational effort will present information on ear infection, treatment, and

detection of the hearing-impaired child. By the end of 1976, a number of children who have had hearing impairments for months or years will have received medical or surgical treatment, and important information about ear infection will have been discussed with those people in the village who are important to the child's good health.

There are a number of things which can help a child avoid ear infections. Good nutrition is absolutely crucial in helping anyone to prevent colds, and other illnesses. The daily intake of nutritious foods like meat, fish, eggs, oil, berries, and enriched flour and bread can help the body avoid illness. There is some evidence that feeding a baby breast milk can help the baby remain healthier than a baby who is fed cow's milk or formula. Many sources say that if the baby is breastfed, the longer he remains on breastmilk, the healthier he will be. If a child or adult already has a cold, keeping him or her away from young children might prevent the spread of the infection. Eating well and getting plenty of rest helps the person who has a cold get better quicker. If symptoms of ear pain become obvious, immediate medical attention from the Health Aide or other competent person may prevent further complications and hearing loss from a broken ear drum. Parents, teachers, and others should seek the attention of the village Health Aide in case of suspected ear infection.