

ASRAA aims effort at rural Alaskans

By Linda Lord-Jenkins

Tundra Times

A battle to prevent victimization of rural Alaskans when they come into Anchorage has been mounted by the Association for Stranded Rural Alaskans.

Using a \$60,000 grant from the Alaska Department of Community and Regional Affairs, ASRA has hired a man to conduct a crime prevention information dissemination drive aimed at residents of the Bethel region.

ASRA has always been concerned about rural residents coping in the city but became doubly concerned with statistics showing that 47 of every 100 ASRA clients are victimized by being assaulted or raped and another 24 of that 100 have been robbed.

ASRA has for the past two years patched up the victims of these crimes and often sent them home to safer and friend-

lier surroundings but now wants to warn the potential victims before they get hurt or ripped off.

To that end, a crime prevention specialist was hired to spread the message "Now is the time to stop crime — Prevention begins with you."

CPS Bill Gaudreau, a former counselor at Akeela House alcohol and drug rehabilitation center, has taken on the job.

Gaudreau says he will begin a multi-pronged attack including television and radio public service announcements, posters placed on public transportation such as taxi cabs and the Anchorage People Mover bus system, informational flyers that will be passed out in the Bush and any other means possible.

Under terms of the grant, Gaudreau will travel to 16 communities in the Bethel area to conduct training seminars on the perils of An-

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Prevention effort targets Fourth Avenue

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chorage.

The prime target will be the glittering magnet that draws many Bush residents to seek friends or acquaintances — Fourth Avenue.

The avenue, once a friendly place where Bush folk could meet and greet old or new friends, has of late become a good place for human animals of prey to find trusting and unsuspecting Bush residents to hurt or steal from.

In a newspaper story about heroin users printed last week in Anchorage, one addict vowed that if he needed money to buy drugs, he would simply walk down to Fourth Avenue,

find a person who looked like a Bush resident and offer to sell them some marijuana. He planned then to take them into an alley and take all their money, leaving none of the promised drug.

S.T.A.R., the Anchorage sexual assault prevention and crisis organization, often warns Bush residents that they should be wary of city folk who can become more aggressive than rural people are accustomed to.

Gaudreau says "I hate to be the person to spread the message that people have to watch out in town but it has to be done."

Public service announcements

will be designed to give information needed by people just visiting Anchorage; to people moving to Anchorage; to people being medivaced to Anchorage, and on how to deal with people in authority in Anchorage.

They will tell people where not to go, and give alternative activities to hanging out on Fourth Avenue.

Gaudreau said ASRA was at first reluctant to tell people to stay off of Fourth Avenue because it was at one time a safe place to meet people. The campaign will be aimed then, more at redirecting people.

Gaudreau also says a central registry will be established for people coming to town with no specific place to stay. They can call the registry and tell it where they will be staying, providing a phone number if possible. Then, anyone else trying to locate them can call the registry for that information instead of walking the streets seeking them.

The grant will pay for the program through June and Gaudreau hopes that it will be continued if statistics show that victimization of rural residents decreases.

The crime prevention bureau can be reached by calling 272-3055.