

# Surplus medical supplies shipped to bush villages

by Margaret Bauman  
for the *Tundra Times*

BARROW – Portable centrifuge labs, sterilizing equipment, cardiac resuscitation kits - a virtual windfall of military medical supplies - have arrived, a sort of Christmas in autumn for rural health providers.

"It will enhance our ability to provide services," said Carolyn McClintock, administrator for the Public Health Service Alaska Native Hospital, Barrow service unit.

"I think we provide very good care, but we are understaffed," said McClintock, who said technological help would have been welcome along with the supplies. McClintock was pleased, nonetheless, when a C-130 Air Force Reserve cargo plane out of Chicago arrived August 29 with about five tons of medical supplies.

That was Barrow's share of about 55 tons of supplies distributed in August to more than a dozen Indian Health Service locations in Alaska.

"I just wanted to say 'thank you'," said Mary Jo Aveoganna Santos, an appointments clerk at the hospital, who came looking for the reservists. Santos said she wanted to be sure everyone who helped bring the supplies knew how much they were appreciated.

Thirty-five reservists with the 928th Air Wing, 64th Air Lift Squad

of the Air Force Reserve, volunteered for the mission, said Steve Taylor, flight engineer.

Two weeks earlier, the unit was ferrying supplies to war victims in Sarajevo. The reservists' eight-day Alaska mission included flights to Anchorage, Bethel, Dillingham, Juneau, Nome and Barrow.

The supplies came from American bases in England and Denmark that have been closed. They were warehoused in Texas and had been destined for the Ukraine. But then congressional supporters, including Senators Daniel Inouye, D-Hawaii, and Ted Stevens, R-Alaska, of the Senate Indian Affairs Committee, intervened to redirect \$6 million in surplus medical equipment to Native American medical facilities nationwide.

Nine service areas of the Indian Health Service got to choose from the windfall, in a lottery similar to a professional football league draft, said Barbara Fine, a quality assurance specialist with the Alaska Area Native Health Service, in Anchorage.

"We prioritized our needs here, and when it came our turn on the draft, we requested the items we needed the most," she said.

"Alaska's needs were the greatest. We got the highest dollar amount of any one group."

Fine was particularly pleased with the 15 electrocardiograph bedside monitors, which will be used as a screening device for village health aides. Now, when someone comes in complaining of chest pains, village health aides equipped with the moni-

*Page 7, please*

# ... Surplus medical supplies

*Continued from page 1*

tors will be able to do baseline electrocardiographs and fax in the results to the closest hospital.

"Every village I've ever been in has a fax machine," said Fine, a registered nurse. "IT gives the doctor a little more concrete information on what is going on with the patient.

"Our mission is to get as much equipment as we can to bring up the standard of care for village health

aides," Fine said.

Acquisition of equipment to sterilize medical supplies also was significant, particularly because of the need to treat patients with AIDS, tuberculosis and hepatitis, she said.

"The health aides are probably going to get the biggest benefits," Fine said. "This will give health aides the opportunity to come up closer to the level of hospital care."