

Farewell coffee held for Vern Shimanek

A farewell coffee party was held on Wednesday, October 29, 1980 for Vern Shimanek who left the Bethel hospital on November 1 after reaching his personal goal of building a new IHS hospital for the Bethel region.

Shimanek was instrumental in the initial planning of the space allocation change staff housing, etc. for the new hospital which was completed and opened in August of this year.

Mr. Shimanek arrived in Bethel in February of 1975 to work as an Administrative officer for the Bethel Service Unit of the Alaska Area Native Health Service. In the same winter, the light plant in Bethel was destroyed by fire. During this emergency Shimanek was appointed to serve as Executive Director of the Bethel Service Unit. In January 1976, Shimanek became Service Unit Director there. The construction of housing facilities is currently being done for forty 1-, 2-, and 3-bedroom units for hospital staff.

Shimanek has worked with the Health Board, Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation and AVCP in the Bethel area.

Paul Gregory, community relations specialist for the Yukon-Kuskokwim Service Unit said that Mr. Shimanek was well liked by residents of Bethel and surrounding villages. Gregory went on to say that Shimanek's home was always open to village travelers and local residents who needed a place to stay.

Dr. Nelson and Mr. Ivey of the Alaska Native Medical Center in Anchorage sent Shimanek a letter commending him on the work he has done in Bethel, naming it "the toughest job in the IHS."

Before arriving in Bethel, Shimanek had owned and administered a clinic, hospital and nursing facility in his native Oregon.

Shimanek plans to travel throughout Oregon and New Mexico for four months before deciding whether to continue working for the federal government or going into the private sector.

Shimanek leaves Bethel with his wife Betty and two children.