

# Tyonek to host conference

by Bob Koweluk

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The Native village of Tyonek will host a Rural Providers Conference on May 2, 3, and 4.

Tyonek is involved in the preparation and organization of the meetings and is providing free of charge, for the meetings. Tyonek residents are coordinating lodging for participants who are urged to bring sleeping bags.

The Sisterhood of the Native Village of Tyonek will be cooking meals for the people attending the conference.

"On the second, third and fourth, we're going to set up breakfast, lunch and dinner for them," Freida McCord, President of the Tyonek Sisterhood said. "We'll do our best to help out with the food." The sisterhood McCord said was formed to help fund Tyonek's Russian Orthodox Church which opened in September last year. "We never had a priest for so long," McCord said. "and now we finally got a priest and I formed this group to help raise money to help by bake sales, selling easter baskets and candy, selling jackets, and now by helping feed up to 70 people expected to attend this conference."

Father Paul Mercurief

Aleut from the Pribilof Islands, now the priest at the Native village of Tyonek.

A Native foods potluck will take place on the last day of the conference, and people are encouraged to bring Native foods to share with others.

The Rural Providers conference is sponsored by the Alaska Village/Alcohol Information League along with RurAL CAP, SOADA and Tyonek.

More villages today are realizing they have the power and resources to deal with alcohol abuse. This conference is designed to encourage and support this process by sharing information and programs that are working throughout the state. It is hoped that the conference theme, community development will assist those villages who want to promote community action to deal with alcohol abuse by using local resources. Community-based organizational skills on how to lead a community into action to implement change will be stressed.

Robert Sam is no longer president of AVAIL. A new president will be elected for the group at the Tyonek conference.

Sam took the job as coordinator of RurAL CAP's alcohol pro-

gram April 1, and is now doing the logistics, paperwork necessary to get the conference underway.

"I had to resign to take this job," Sam said, "because RurAL CAP sponsors AVAIL. I couldn't be on the AVAIL board and work at RurAL CAP at the same time because that would cause a conflict of interest."

Sam said he had a difficult time resigning after being with AVAIL for one and a half years. He said it was good training for the job as coordinator he now holds.

"I've seen things turn around and improve in a community with the people in the villages," Sam said. "We can do a lot, especially by those people not into this field for the money, but by people who have an interest to see people's lives turned around away from alcohol."

"It gets overwhelming at first, but after a while you get used to it. Things get better for the program and for the lives of people we serve."

People interested in attending the conference are urged to register with RurAL CAP in Anchorage, the first 70 people will be the ones to attend the meeting. Tyonek cannot accomodate more than an influx of 70 people.