

Village of Ambler Prepares for Meet

There is an air of excitement building up at the little village of Ambler in Northwestern Alaska. The people there are happily anticipating visitors from some 12 villages to attend the quarterly meeting of the Friends Church to be held for four days starting on March 15.

"We are expecting a lot of dogteams, a lot of Sno-Gos and planes," said Raymond Gonzales, a VISTA volunteer at Ambler.

Gonzales said that Tommy Douglas, a private store owner, is stocking merchandise mostly food items. Douglas said that he has stocked enough gasoline to handle the expected Sno-Go traffic. The villagers are storing up caribou meat and shee fish for the guests.

Gonzales said that Ambler might get as many as 300 to 400 visitors. Ambler's population is around 160.

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CAA Child Care Center To Open in Fairbanks

A Fairbanks Community Child Care Center, to care for young children while their mothers are working, is scheduled to open next week.

The primary goal of the center is to provide low-cost competent babysitting for low-income families, so that the mothers can work and help support the family.

At least two-thirds of the children admitted will be from such families; they will pay a reduced rate for the service.

Because the exchange of experiences among children from different walks of life is mutually beneficial, children from higher-income families will be admitted. Rates for these children will be based on the family's income.

The center will offer care for all the children needing care in a family. It will take care of pre-school children all day, and children up to 12 years old after school.

It will be open 7:30 to 5:30 Monday through Friday, all year around. One meal and two snacks will be provided during the day.

It will also care for children for special short-time reasons such as when their mother has to see a doctor.

The center is scheduled to open March 6 at the First Methodist Church of Fairbanks. Program directors expect an initial enrollment of 15 students, and will expand the center as needs and funds allow.

Families who want to use the service can contact the North Star Borough Community Action Agency, 456-4184.

The program is being sponsored by the CAA, with assistance from the First Methodist Church. Apart from volunteers from VISTA and other programs, the center

will receive no Federal Aid.

At present, the labor and much of the supplies for the program are being supplied without charge. The center is starting on a shoestring of \$200 loaned by a director; most of this will be spent for food.

The director of the center is Mrs. Ruth Van Veldhuizen, wife of a mathematics professor at the University of Alaska. She has college degree in home economics and elementary education, and has three children, Robert, 12, Jay, 6 and Varina, 5.

Teachers for the program are two VISTA volunteers, Ann Lautenbach and Karen Fleming, who have been working in Kwigillingok. The cook for the center will be John Gabriel of Chalkyitsik.

Other help will be given aides from the Neighborhood Youth Corps and the Work Experience and Training Program. The Center will also serve the community by providing training for persons in these programs.

The First Methodist Church is providing the facilities

for the center. The Fairbanks Lumber Company is assisting in making cabinets and other help is expected.

The center is still looking for help, both by donations of materials and money and by actual work at the center. Transportation for children is expected to be a major problem.

Directors of the center are at present checking out sources for grants to help finance the program. Among these sources is the Alaska Native Children Fund of the Methodist Mission Board, which would help support Native children enrolled at the center.

AMBLER . . .

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When asked how the village was going to house the travelers, Gonzales said, "Most of the people will stay in homes and many of them will be quartered in the church buildings."

What are the people going to do?

"They will be singing and praying. Ambler people are already practicing songs and these will be sung in both English and Eskimo. Village delegations will also put on singing performances," said Gonzales.

He said the meeting will be the first one of its kind ever held in the village of Ambler. Such meetings were usually held in coastal villages.

Ambler is located at the headwaters of the Kobuk River near Baird Mountains to the west and north, and Schwatka Mountains to the east.

Visitors are expected from Kiana, Shungnak, Selawik, Noorvik, Kotzebue, Kivalina, Point Hope, Candle, Kobuk, Buckland, Deering, and Noatak.

Raymond Gonzales hails from Corpus Christi, Texas. How does he like Alaska and the village of Ambler?

"I like it. It's not as bad as people said it would be and it's not as cold as people imagine it is."

And the people?

"I like the people" he said, smiling. "They're real friendly."