

MARC program aids minority students

by Sheryl Prewitt
for the Tundra Times



Kathy Hurlburt of Naknek has always had an affinity for the sciences.

UAA photo

Elsie Brooks of Anchorage, Kathy Hurlburt of Naknek and Fred Laitinen of Oneida, Wis., share an unusual opportunity available at the University of Alaska-Anchorage. Their education is being paid for by a specialized \$400,000 grant from the National Institute of General Medical Sciences.

Brooks and Hurlburt both have Athabascan heritage, and Laitinen is Iroquois. Their Native American heritage made them eligible for the Minority Access to Research Careers Honors Undergraduate Training Program funded by the federal grant.

The MARC Honors Program and the UAA Biological Sciences Student Association recently presented two talks by Dr. Fred Begay of the Los Alamos National Laboratory.

Begay is the first Navajo Indian to earn a doctorate in physics. He was once a minority undergraduate student like the three UAA students.

Before he went to a university his



Elsie Brooks of Anchorage is doing radiation physics research with Daryl Douthat.

UAA photo

only education came from the Navajo reservation. He was in Anchorage to encourage Alaska Native students to strive for the sciences.

Brooks, a senior majoring in chemistry, has always been interested in physics, and she is currently doing research in radiation physics with Daryl Douthat, associate professor of

chemistry. Following graduation, she hopes to continue graduate research in chemistry.

As an undergraduate junior and senior, the MARC Honors Program pays Brooks up to \$7,000 toward living expenses, up to \$1,000 for travel expenses and provides up to \$1,500 for research supplies. The program also pays for 15 percent of a faculty member's time to work with the student individually, according to Richard Kullberg, UAA MARC Honors Program coordinator.

Hurlburt, a junior, has always had an affinity for the sciences. Until she learned of the MARC Honors Program, however, she never really investigated the possibility of pursuing a medical career.

She is looking forward to being accepted to medical school in the fall of 1988.

"You can make things happen yourself by being in the MARC program," she said as advice to other students.

Laitinen is a senior studying neurobiology with Kullberg. He applied to UAA after learning about the Alaska program from a physician on his reservation in Wisconsin.

Kullberg believes more minority students should be encouraged to enter the sciences.

"The problem in rural Alaska goes all the way back to kindergarten," Kullberg said. "When a child shows an interest in the sciences, that interest must be fostered from early on. Alaska Native students must have that kind of encouragement."

To be accepted in the program a student must be a member of a recognized minority group, have an interest in the biomedical sciences and have maintained at least a B average in his or her undergraduate work at the time of acceptance.

Those who want more information may contact the MARC Honors Program, care of Richard Kullberg, UAA, 3211 Providence Drive, Anchorage 99508.

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