

APIA receives \$300,000 health grant

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation has awarded nearly \$300,000 to the Aleutian/Pribilof Islands Association Inc. Health Department for a health care program for older Alaskans, according to Adrian Melovidov, association board chairman.

The program, called "Community-Based Self-Care for the Aged," has three main purposes. They include:

- Demonstrating the ability of older Alaskans to manage their own health problems by means of self-care activities. The health problems of primary interest are high blood pressure, arthritis, cancer and diabetes. The program will also address the problem of accidents.

- Finding out how alcohol influences the health problems of the aged and how it affects the self-care activities directed at the management of those problems.

- Designing and testing appropriate alcohol intervention activities.

Unlike standard funding and most grants, which are provided on a one-year-at-a-time basis, the Kellogg Foundation provides secure funding for the total project period of 42 months.

The design of the program, departing from standard approaches that provide direct care, promotes self-care

activities integrated into the community. The program also is unique in its multi-generational approach. Included will be training middle-aged volunteers to help older residents develop self-care skills, as well as training older residents to work with the youth of the community.

Dimitri Philemonof, association executive director, said the project will help contribute to an overall effort to restore a great measure of local autonomy for the management of health care.

"There is a need to reduce the dependency of the people of this region on direct health care services," he said. "History has been hard on the Aleuts. Outsiders exploited their labor and brought diseases and almost wiped out our people and culture.

"The American government relocated our people during the Second World War in camps in Southeast Alaska. This history has played a major role in reducing the use of traditional self-care health practices."

Rhonna Burrelle, Health Department director, said the agency's focus is to help local communities assume more responsibility for the management of health care programs.

"The number of older people in our region is small but growing," she said.



"We have developed a rare opportunity to find more appropriate community-based responses before the problems become overwhelming.

"Furthermore, this program will tell us more about the role of alcohol in the lives of older people and how drinking affects their health problems and their responses to them."

The Aleutian/Pribilof Islands Association Inc. is the non-profit corporation delegated by the Native communities of the region to provide community and health services. The region includes 11 communities spread out over a chain of islands extending 1,300 miles off the Alaska mainland.