

Transition House helps Native women adjust to city

Alaska's Children's Services, Inc. (ACS) has announced the launching of a new project to serve the needs of young adult Alaska Native women who are often 'at risk' in making a successful adjustment to urban living.

The project known as 'Transition House' will be a two-year national demonstration effort designed to provide economical housing and support services in a cultural context for Alaska Native young adult women, ages 17-21.

Ms. Marlene Johnson, who directs the ACS Cultural Awareness Program, will serve as the half-time Coordinator for the project. Ms. Johnson states, "We are excited about the possibilities for this new area of work. Transition House will provide six months of economical housing for young women as they learn to adjust to urban life and work at upgrading their job skills from entry level positions. The focus of the project will be very practical and will emphasize the cultural context. There will be an elder who will serve as house mother. This person will provide a great deal on inter-generational strength and needed cultural identity. Additionally, the project will rely heavily on volunteers. This is really a 'women's share' project. We are recruiting a corps of approximately 25 Alaska Native women who will serve as instructors for a 13-week Urban Survival Course that will be required of all residents. This course will deal with fundamental issues like poise and grooming, cultural pride, the dangers of sexual assault, consumer education, assertiveness training, and a variety of other topics that will be helpful to these young women as they adjust to urban life. We will also have an 8-woman Advisory Board that will work with me to determine policies and priorities for the project."

Ms. Johnson has served as the Director of the ACS Cultural Awareness Project for the past three years; she will continue to direct that

project on a half-time basis while serving as director for the Transition House.

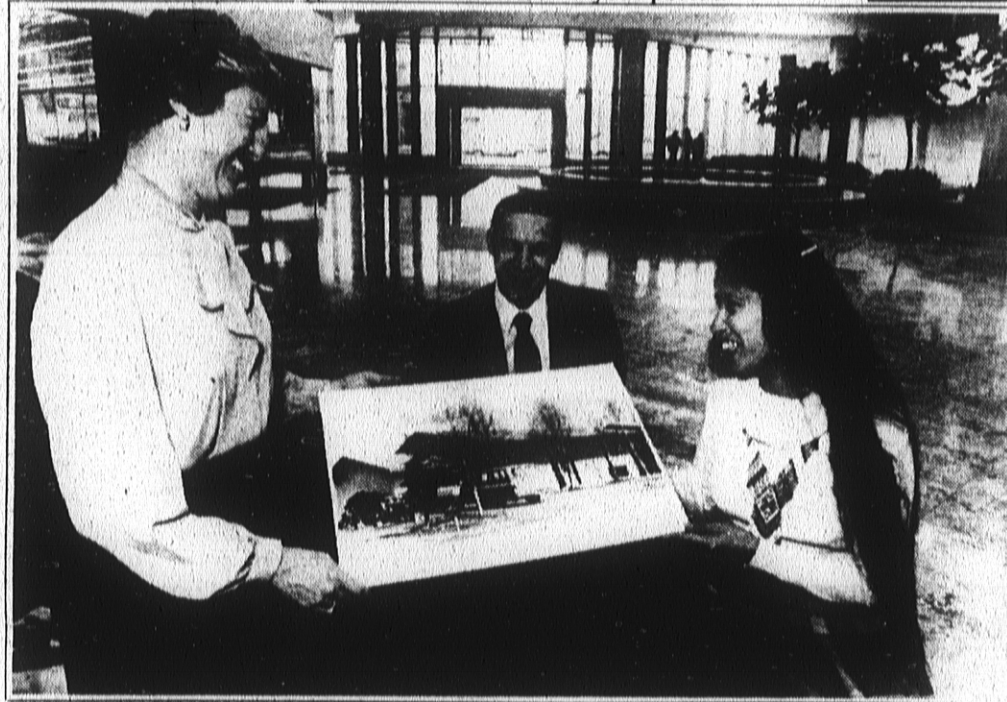
Funding for the Transition House Project has come entirely from the private sector-corporation and foundation gifts. Robert L. Griswold, Executive Director of Alaska Children's Services, states, "We are deeply indebted to the Atlantic Richfield Foundation for their challenge grant of \$50,000 that has been instrumental in helping us underwrite the necessary funding for this project. Their grant was primarily responsible in helping us leverage the other \$120,000 needed. Other donors to the project include the M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust of Vancouver, Washington; the Public Welfare Foundation of Washington, D.C.; Cook Inlet Region, Inc.; the Arctic Slope Regional Corporation; and United Bank Alaska."

pleased with the strong support that we have gathered for this new project during the design and fundraising effort over the past 12 months. The Alaska Women's Commission, the Alaska Women's Resource Center, the Municipality of Anchorage, the Association for Stranded Rural Alaskans, and numerous Native organizations and church groups have been consulted and have added strong letters of support. These organizations and agencies will be invaluable in making the private referrals of the young women who will be served by Transition House. Further, we think the project will be greatly strengthened by the presence of social anthropologists Rosita Worl and Charles Smythe, who will serve as consultants and evaluators for this work. Our commitment is to 'spin-off' the project to a Native organization within a two-year period

after the initial national demonstration phase. To the best of our knowledge this will be the only project of its kind in the nation. Our start date will be January 1, 1986."

ACS operates a network of programs that provide residential care and specialized counseling services for troubled children and their families. Each year ACS provides care for some 800 children who cannot live in families because of crises, emotional and behavior problems or delinquency. ACS is a joint project of American Baptists, American Lutherans, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and United Methodist Churches. ACS represents a tradition of 125 years of church-related child care in Alaska.

ACS is a member agency of the United Way of Anchorage and the Child Welfare League of America.



Ann Kampher, ACS Board member; Harold Heinze, President of ARCO Alaska, Inc. and Marlene Johnson, Director of the ACS Cultural Awareness Project

Walter L. Hays, Director of Public Affairs and Development for ACS states, "We have been extremely