

UAF offers journalism education for teachers

FAIRBANKS — A year ago, Lael Morgan, assistant professor of photo-journalism at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, checked into the status of journalism education in Alaska.

Statewide, she found teachers with little or no journalistic background leading school newspapers and putting together yearbooks.

Most teachers were also unaware of recent court cases which had increased principals' powers of censure and the legal liability of teachers and principals who publish papers.

"These people are like lighthouse keepers. . . often insulated and suffering from a lack of backing. Networking is very effective," Morgan said. "The need for a journalism education course was great."

Morgan developed a two-credit course in journalism education for teachers and upper division education majors. The course covered all the basics of style, desktop publishing, legal liabilities, photography and advertising sales.

Working with Morgan were Assistant Professor Mark Linsalata and UAF student Dennis Eames who served as a teaching assistant.

The first course was held Aug. 5-12 with 19 teachers attending. Of the group, only four had ever had any previous journalism experience or even taken a journalism class. In less

than six days, however, they went to print with a newspaper about the new class and their teaching experiences.

Advertising space was sold in the newspaper to generate funds to cover print costs. The paper, "Teachers' Torch," was mailed to teachers and schools statewide. Leftover revenue will be placed in scholarship fund for teachers who wish to attend the class next year.

This year, Dow Jones provided a \$500 grant for a teacher from Kake to attend the course. The Farthest North Press Club provided a \$100 grant to a teacher from Whale Pass.

Morgan explained that there is a real need for Alaskan, especially Alaska Native, journalists. Companies need press-savvy employees for their public relations offices. If students aren't introduced to journalism at the junior and high school level, they are not likely to pursue journalism at the collegiate level, she said.

Additionally, journalism classes introduce students to valuable life skills such as time management, cooperation, stress management and problem solving.

For information regarding future courses in journalism education at UAF, please contact Morgan of the Department of Journalism and Broadcasting at 474-7761 in Fairbanks.