

# Groups join forces to help Birch Creek

by Jennifer Gordon

Tundra Times reporter

Though temperatures still dipped below zero Wednesday, the residents of the village of Birch Creek, near Fort Yukon, were a bit warmer after supplies were sent from Anchorage.

The shipment was part of an effort of several organizations which are prepared to help in emergency situations.

Maj. Katrina Grundahl, director of family and shelter services for the Salvation Army, said she received a call around 11 a.m. Wednesday from the Emergency Operations Center asking for warm clothes, candles and flashlights for the village of Birch Creek.

A plane would leave from Troy Air at 2 p.m. that day to fly the supplies to the village. The plane would take five hours to deliver the supplies and return to Anchorage.

Birch Creek called the Emergency Operations Center because fuel was low. They told the center that the adults in the village were trying to cut wood outside, but ice fog and temperatures of 50 below zero kept them from staying long in the frigid temperatures. Their clothing was freezing from the ice fog, and there was no way to warm up once they went inside.

Grundahl said she quickly put together a box of three dozen socks, a case of flashlights with batteries, 18 hats and scarves, a box of matches and a box of candles.

Sue LaMunyon, director of Emergency Services for the Southcentral Alaska Chapter of the Red Cross, said that with the help of workers from Pricersavers, she managed to buy \$1,100 worth of supplies for the village, including diapers, baby food, canned meats, dried eggs and coffee.

The National Guard met LaMunyon at Pricersavers and took the supplies to the airport.

Fuel for the village was purchased from Inlet Petroleum. A second load of fuel was flown in the following day.

The supplies were loaded into Troy Air's Casa 212, a twin-engine turbine plane which holds more than 5,000 pounds, said Jerry Wells, receptionist for Troy Air. The plane took off as scheduled, and Birch Creek was warmer by nightfall.

Wells said the airline, petroleum company and Pricersavers will all be reimbursed by the state.