

AVTEC provides food service training for rural cooks

Since 1976, the Alaska Vocational Technical Center of Seward has offered a summer short course for those people who prepare the meals in Alaska's Rural Schools. Participation has increased each year, and now an average of 8 to 10 students enroll for each session. The majority of those who come to AVTEC each summer call the Southwestern part of Alaska home. Strong representation comes from the Lower Yukon region, Bering Straits, and Adak.

Each session is two weeks in length and during this time the students have classroom sessions and actual hands on experiences. Both are held in the AVTEC Food Service Facility where students have access to modern equipment and a qualified staff. In the classroom the time is spent studying the latest federal regulations the people are required to know, menu planning, sanitation, daily record keeping and discussions on the best use of food and proper preparation. The classroom time is two hours daily and the rest of each day is spent on actual practice and observing demonstrations of the techniques discussed.

This continuing education of these people who work in the kitchens of the various school

districts in Alaska is in keeping with the desires of Ms. Ruth Benigno, who is the Director and Coordinator for the Statewide School Lunch Program. Her primary emphasis is to have improvement of the food preparation, insure the proper utilization of raw foods, and another facet is the improvement of the self esteem of these people who prepare the meals the students eat.

Each session incorporated field trips to other facilities operated by the state or organized boroughs. This year the students visited the Kenai Peninsula Borough's Soldotna facilities, and also the MV Tustumena, one of the vessels of the Marine Highway System. Shopping is always in order on these excursions. Another activity is a Crafts Bazaar which some of the students put on with the hand-made items each has brought with them. This is a popular event for the staff of AVTEC and the other students as well.

Instructors for the course this summer were Georgia Kirwin, Earl Cagle, Jeff Austin, Randy Knopik, and Donna Barr. Roger Long is the Department Head for the Food Services Department of AVTEC.

