

Anchorage seeks Elders comment about center

A new \$4.5 million senior center is slated to open in Anchorage by the end of February, and center officials are seeking input from Alaska Native senior citizens and others about what types of programs should be offered.

Mike Walti, program director for the Anchorage Multipurpose Senior Center, said that physical fitness, arts and crafts and recreational programs which are "culturally relevant" will be offered at the center.

This could include song and dance, beadwork, carving, basketweaving or just about anything else, according to Walti.

"What we are hoping is that the Native groups will tell us what is culturally relevant," Walti said.

The center was designed and will be run by a board composed of senior citizens, Walti said. Tessie Kardanoff, an Aleut, is the only Native representative now on that board.

The 22,000 square foot center, which does not include a residential facility, has a very large health and fitness section, and Walti is hoping that seniors of all ethnic groups living in Anchorage will take advantage of it, and will partake in exercises which are "culturally appropriate."

Included in the exercise room will be what Walti calls a "large hydro tub" which will seat about ten people. "It is a hot water tub used for physical fitness," he explained.

"We will be offering classes on how to stay healthy. We will not be offering health treatment, but rather we will show elders how to keep their health," Walti said.

The center will be equipped with a large multi-purpose room which will seat about 600 people, according to Walti, or 400 for sit down meals. Full kitchen facilities will also be provided.

In addition, there will be two arts and crafts areas

one a "wet" room for projects such as ceramics, the other a "dry" room for activities such as beadwork.

Educational classes of all kinds will be offered at the center, probably in cooperation with the city's colleges, Walti said. There are rooms which can be utilized by different senior groups for their own meetings and get togethers and games, dances, and competitive activities will also be featured.

Additionally, "outstationing" of services for seniors will be held at the center. In other words, Walti explained, food stamp officials, medicare personnel, or financial advisers and others would come to the

center on certain days to dispense their services. Help will be provided elders who wish to keep working or to find new jobs.

Although the center will be located on 19th Avenue between Orca and Karluk streets, its current offices are at 825 L Street, phone number 264-6732. Anyone seeking information or to give input is encouraged to call.