

Cooperative Extension receives grant, builds development program

A partnership between the University of Alaska Fairbanks, Alaska Cooperative Extension (ACE), Native Alaskan groups, and several state and federal agencies have been working together to develop a program to help solve some of these problems. The program, "Strengthening Alaska's Children, Youth and Families," recently received a \$ 150,000 fi-

nancial boost from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The funds will help expand the ACE outreach program over the next two years throughout Alaska.

According to ACE State 4-H Program Leader Dennis Crawford, the funding will be used to target building a "holistic family-oriented program" with young people, young couples and single

parents. The extension agents will work with Native groups, schools and other agencies to provide a comprehensive pilot program for family health and nutrition programs, parenting education and youth development education.

Program goals include developing health awareness and skills, increasing the educational skills of young people, organizing young

families in each community to support each other to form a healthy village, and building strong cultural ties. The program will spend the first year working with ten different Native villages and will expand to a statewide level for the second year.

"By working with youth and young people, we will create and build the capacity of a generation

with the skills and cultural strength to survive and live in greater health and prosperity in the world of tomorrow," said Crawford.

Local Native elders and village leaders will be enlisted to serve as mentors for youth and young families. Existing tribal culture and organizational structures will also be strengthened and used to help provide program continuity.