

Alcohol Treatment Program in Jeopardy

A family treatment program addressing the alcohol problem in Western Alaska failed to receive TY90 state funding.

Pneuma Corp., based in St. Mary's, is unable to operate a residential program until funding is secured.

In April, Pneuma suspended a family program for the prevention and treatment of alcohol abuse, alcoholism, and co-dependency.

"The state had over \$12,000,000 for TY90 alcohol programs, and we thought surely they would fund at least one of our proposals for the period beginning July 1," Robert K. Betz, vice president of Pneuma Corp. said.

Pneuma was pursuing a visionary family-oriented program and submitted four different grant proposals: Alcoholism and Family Treatment — \$916,855; Prevention — \$181,425;

Training — \$136,600; and Village Treatment — \$797,855.

"SOADA didn't even fund us with \$34,000 for a Children of Alcoholics program they supported last year," Betz said.

Pneuma has appealed SOADA's decision to Myra M. Munson, the Commissioner of the Department of Health and Social Services.

"Our family program will operate if funding is available," James Sebesa, president of Pneuma said. "In mid August we will have a board meeting at St. Mary's and expect to have firm plans despite the lack of funds."

Matt Andrews, one of five directors from St. Mary's, testified at the Senate Select Committee on Indian Affairs hearing in Anchorage on May 27.

"We are very concerned about the problem and would like to urge you

to help us bring into existence a family alcohol treatment program at St. Mary's," Andrews said to Sens. Daniel Inouye, D-Hawaii and Frank Murkowski, R-Alaska.

Inouye had visited St. Mary's last fall and promised federal financial help.

Murkowski recently co-sponsored a bill which would provide funding for community-based mental health demonstration projects, including alcohol and drug abuse programs.

Murkowski stated "If enacted, it may provide the best avenue for funding of your family-based program in St. Mary's."

Both senators promised to help obtain federal funds.

"Treatment or tragedy are the alternatives," Pneuma President Sebesta said.

Pneuma's residential treatment programs will remain suspended until funding is available.

"Treatment seeks to avoid the tragedy, but we need financial support to make an impact. Family treatment seeks a healthy continued growth and family development. The family is the ideal vehicle to direct a child away from alcohol abuse.

Pneuma's residential treatment programs will remain suspended until funding is available," Sebesta added.