

SEARHC healthbeat

SouthEast Alaska Regional Health Consortium
a bi-monthly newsletter from your partner in health

Donal Wick quits tobacco for his health and his two daughters



get help. Donal has tried six times to quit tobacco and this time he feels it's working. He said he has more motivation to quit, because "I want to protect my health so I can spend time with my kids and be there for my family."

Donal said he started smoking when he was 8 years old. He smoked a full pack of cigarettes that first day, and he kept smoking even though he got really sick and threw up. He almost quit smoking a few years ago, but Donal went with friends to a bar and started again.

Sometimes Donal walked around with a chew in his lip and a cigarette in his mouth. Since chewing tobacco is more concentrated than cigarettes — a can of chew has the same nicotine content as four packs of cigarettes — he got an extra buzz from chewing. But Donal said it still wasn't enough nicotine.

Donal uses patches to wean himself off tobacco. He said the first five days were tough, with migraine headaches, sleepless nights and the sweats. But the pain was worth it to quit.

"I just decided I'm not going to die of cancer, and I'm not going to have my jaw fall off," Donal said. ✦

Donal Wick Jr. knew it was time to do something about his tobacco habit when he saw what it was doing to his mouth.

"My gums were eroding and there were white patches in my mouth. I also was coughing up brown phlegm," Donal said. *"I got worried."*

Donal chewed a can or more of tobacco a day. He also smoked about a pack of cigarettes a day. At \$9 a can for chew and about \$6-\$7 per pack of cigarettes, Donal said he spent too much money on tobacco, "a little over \$100 a week, it was pretty spendy."

Donal, 26, is part Tlingit and grew up in a Sitka family where several people smoked. Donal now has two young daughters — the oldest turns 4 years old in September and the youngest is 8 months — and he didn't want to smoke or chew around them. He said he'd go outside and his oldest girl would ask him if he was going to smoke. "I don't want it to seem normal for them," he said.

A security guard at SEARHC Mt. Edgecumbe Hospital, Donal contacted the SEARHC Tobacco Cessation program (1-888-966-8875) several months ago to



Find it @ www.searhc.org

Website has info on specialty clinics

Did you know SEARHC Mt. Edgecumbe Hospital hosts specialty clinics, so patients don't have to spend the time or money to travel all the way to Anchorage or Seattle to receive medical services not available in Southeast Alaska?

Each month a schedule of upcoming specialty clinics is posted on the SEARHC website. This helps patients and providers know when specialists are coming to Sitka and appointments can be scheduled. Recent specialty clinics were held for cardiology, neurology, hepatology, dermatology, urology, rheumatology, hand issues, pediatric cardiology, pediatric neurology and orthopedics. Other specialists visit Sitka as needed.

For more information, look for the "Specialty Clinics" link in the Hot Topics column on the SEARHC home page.

HealthBeat is produced every two months by the SEARHC Corporate Communications department. To be added or removed from our mailing list, or to offer comments or questions, please contact the Corporate Communications office at 907-463-6666.

SEARHC Administration Building
3245 Hospital Dr., Juneau, AK 99801



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A Message from Mark Gorman



SEARHC is in a period of significant transition and transformation. The next 12 months will bring important changes and developments to the consortium.

This year, the Board of Directors will hire a new President/CEO; we will implement new business and patient-care software systems; and our programs will economize to ensure we have adequate resources to support our operations. Each task offers enormous challenge and opportunity. Taken as a trio, they require extreme dedication, diligence and determination to assure we achieve our mission.

Transforming our business and patient data systems will make us more efficient. In the near future, patients can expect to see their provider assisted by laptop computer medical charting, scheduling, and access to pertinent medical records. Electronic health record technology is becoming a standard in U.S. health care, leading to improved patient care and satisfaction.

We will take measures to keep expenses within budgets. Health care inflation has outpaced new resources coming to SEARHC. We will strive to minimize the impact to patient services. But the reality is we have fewer dollars to provide services than we have had in the past.

Although this is a challenging time, I am confident that we are embarking on a critical transformation of SEARHC — one that will maintain our recognition as a leader in tribal and rural health.

Mark E. Gorman

Educational kiosk installed at hospital

A new health education kiosk has been installed in the Outpatient Department waiting area at SEARHC Mt. Edgecumbe Hospital.

The educational kiosk is a computer station that gives patients free access to the Web so they can visit selected links dealing with that month's chosen health topic. For example, the September topic is Fruits and Veggies More Matters. Patients will be able to use the kiosk to visit selected websites about how they can add more fruits and vegetables to their daily diets and why eating more fruits and veggies is better for a person's health. Patients can access links by clicking on the link's logo and they can use the arrows to see more links. Patients also will be able to run searches on Google for more information about the topic of the month, but many of the sites will have restricted access.

The special topic and selected websites will change each month, and upcoming topics include:

- ◆ October — Healthy Lung Month
- ◆ November — American Diabetes Month
- ◆ December — Healthy Holidays
- ◆ January — Cervical Cancer Screening Month
- ◆ February — American Heart Month
- ◆ March — National Nutrition Month
- ◆ April — Traditional Values ("Have a sense of humor")
- ◆ May — Asthma Awareness, Clean Air, National Breathe Easy Month
- ◆ June — National Men's Health Week
- ◆ July — Physical Activity
- ◆ August — Traditional Foods

"The educational kiosk gives patients the opportunity to explore websites about the current month's health topic that will increase their knowledge about their health and well-being," said Renae Mathson, a Community Project Assistant for the SEARHC Steps to a Healthier SE Alaska Program and the kiosk's coordinator. "Not all of our patients have access to the Internet or the time to weed through the various health and wellness websites. We know that knowledge empowers people to make more informed choices or begin discussions with their primary care provider. We hope to encourage people to use the educational kiosk and explore selected websites while they wait for hospital services."

SEARHC's Steps to a Healthier SE Alaska Program provided the kiosk. For more information, contact Renae Mathson at 966-8797 or by e-mail at renae.mathson@searhc.org. ❖

Program provides low-cost dentures for elders



Dr. Thomas Jordan (L); Hoonah Elder Mamie Williams (C); Dr. Thomas Taylor (R)

Hoonah elder Mamie Williams had a big smile on her face after her visit to the SEARHC Mt. Edgecumbe Hospital Dental Clinic. She'd just been fitted for a set of dentures during the annual visit to Sitka in June by the Academy of Prosthodontics Foundation's Outreach Program.

"Atlein Gunalchéesh (a big thank you) for all the work the dental team did to make this possible. I am very happy," said Mamie, who is in her 90s. Mamie said getting the dentures was her treat to herself.

The Academy of Prosthodontics Foundation's Outreach Program started in 1993, and Dr. Thomas Taylor, of the University of Connecticut Health Center, said the program visits about three or four sites each year. He said the program has six or seven sites on its regular schedule, but it makes Alaska an annual trip. This year's Sitka team had eight members — two oral and maxillofacial surgeons who spent part of the week placing implants, and six prosthodontists (three clinicians and three laboratory people) who spent the week fitting dentures.

Dr. Thomas Jordan, Chief of SEARHC's Sitka Dental Unit, said when the program comes to Sitka, they try to serve elders from rural Southeast villages first. They charge \$100 for each denture plate, which is about 5 percent of their usual cost. Dr. Taylor said this year's team made 26 arches, which is \$52,000 worth of dentistry. He figured the program has provided about \$720,000 in services during the years its visited Sitka and Juneau. ❖

Dental Health Aide Therapist lawsuit ends

A two-year-old lawsuit over the use of Dental Health Aide Therapists in rural Alaska has come to an end, allowing the program to continue.

On June 27, Judge Mark Rindner rejected a request by the Alaska Dental Society, the American Dental Association and four individual dentists to stop the program. On July 12, the two large dental groups decided not to appeal, ending the lawsuit. They also agreed to pay \$537,000 into a fund run by the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC) to improve oral health care in rural Alaska.

"It's a big relief," said Dr. Tom Bornstein, DDS, SEARHC's Dental Unit Director. "We're excited to get on to the next phase, which is to do the real work instead of skirmishing about it."

The program began in 2002 with the creation of four new classes of community health aides who would work under the supervision of a licensed dentist. The top level — the Dental Health Aide Therapist or DHAT — has completed two years of special training and is able to fill and extract teeth.

Dr. Bornstein said Alaska's DHAT program is modeled after similar programs operating in 40 countries where there are shortages of dentists. Tooth decay in Alaska Natives is 2 1/2 times the national average. DHATs provide preventive care to keep small problems from growing bigger. ❖

Alicia Roberts Medical Center launches telepharmacy project

In August, SEARHC launched its first telepharmacy site at the Alicia Roberts Medical Center (ARMC) in Klawock. It will be a pilot site for SEARHC's new telepharmacy program.

Telepharmacy service already is in use by the Alaska Native Medical Center in Anchorage, which provides services to more than two dozen villages in Western Alaska. SEARHC is Alaska's first regional tribal health organization to adopt the technology for its own program. Pharmacists are difficult to attract to rural Alaska, said ARMC Clinic Administrator Cindy Gamble, and telepharmacy is a way to deal with the problem.

"Quite frankly, we have to have the ability to dispense medicine for our patients at ARMC," Cindy said. *"We are excited to demonstrate a solution to the pharmacist shortage problem at ARMC."*

Telepharmacy is a new way to provide safe and reliable pharmacy services, better tracking of medication and reduce costs for Prince of Wales Island. The telepharmacy program in Anchorage has proven an invaluable and secure tool for remote dispensing of medications.

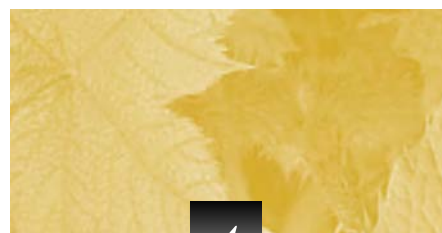
Klawock medical providers now are linked by computer with pharmacists at Mt. Edgecumbe Hospital in Sitka, and those pharmacists are connected to a pharmacy technician and two remote dispensing machines back in Klawock.

The Klawock provider writes a prescription, which is transmitted to the Sitka pharmacy so it can be reviewed with the patient's medication history and listed allergies. Once the pharmacist reviews the prescription, the pharmacist dispenses the medication by computer, releasing it from dispensing machines in Klawock.

A pharmacy technician in Klawock — who is monitored by a pharmacist in Sitka using videoconferencing technology — scans the medication's bar code information to verify the correct medication was dispensed, then prints the label before giving the medication to the patient.

The new technology makes it easier for pharmacists to track medications, because now they all will be entered into the same database, making it easier to spot possible drug interactions. The patient can request a consultation with the Sitka pharmacist at any time during normal clinic hours.

"Although patients will have a longer wait time for some medications, waiting is much preferable to having all medications mailed from Sitka," Cindy said. *"We are hopeful the process will be fairly seamless to patients."* ❀



HPV vaccine is now available in Southeast Alaska

The new human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine Gardasil will be available for girls and young women this fall at SEARHC clinics. Almost all cervical cancers are caused by HPV, which are the most common sexually transmitted infections.

The vaccine involves three injections over a period of six months, and the vaccine is recommended for all females ages 9-26. Gardasil prevents four types of HPV that are responsible for 70 percent of cervical cancers and 90 percent of genital warts. Most SEARHC clinics should have the vaccine by this fall. Check with your provider about availability.

The Alaska Immunization Program provides Gardasil free to girls ages 9-18. Women ages 19-26 have to use other funding to cover the cost, such as private insurance, Medicaid (ages 19-20), or those who meet certain income guidelines can apply to the Adult Vaccine Patient Assistance Program through Merck & Co. Inc. (Gardasil's manufacturer).

For information on the HPV vaccine and/or cervical cancer screening, please call your local clinic or contact the SEARHC Breast and Cervical Health Program at 966-8782 in Sitka, 1-888-388-8782 toll-free in Alaska, or by e-mail at askwh@searhc.org. ❀

Around the Consortium

Consortium-wide

The late-summer and fall 2007 schedule for the mobile mammogram van includes stops in Haines (Sept. 4-13), Skagway (Sept. 17-19), Klawock (Sept. 26-28), Craig (Oct. 1-3), Klawock again (Oct. 4-12) and Metlakatla (Oct. 18-24). The travel dates are tentative, due to ferry schedules, so check with the local clinic for updates. The mobile mammogram program is sponsored by the SEARHC Breast and Cervical Health Program and by Bartlett Memorial Hospital. For information, contact Roz DeRensis at 966-8743 or Susan Suarez at 966-8459.

Juneau

Juneau's 2007 Eagles vs. Ravens Wellness Challenge comes to an end with an awards ceremony and potluck banquet from noon to 2 p.m. on Sunday, Sept. 30, at the Tlingit-Haida Community Center, 3235 Hospital Drive, in Juneau. The contest began on Aug. 1, and this year the contest was online at <http://www.searhc.org/evr/> for the first time. For information, contact Alan Travasso at 364-4458 or Cachet Garrett at 463-4092.

Take

A ground-breaking ceremony took place in August, kicking off construction of the new Kake Health Center. The 7,300 square foot project has two phases — construction of a new primary care wing and renovation of the existing facility. McGraw Custom Construction of Sitka had the winning bid for the project, which is fully funded by the Indian Health Service and the Denali Commission. The target for completion is January 2009.

Hydaburg

The Hydaburg Health Center hosted a Women's Health Gathering in July that was attended by 19 women. The event featured presentations by two Alicia Roberts Medical Center employees from Klawock (WISEWOMAN Community Wellness Advocate Brenda Isaacs and ARMC Women's Health Coordinator Gwen Hamilton), who discussed the upcoming mobile mammography clinics and the shuttle service that will take women from Hydaburg to Klawock for screenings. Susan Suarez of SEARHC Breast and Cervical Health Program spoke about early detection and symptoms of breast cancer.

Haines

The Haines Medical Center welcomed Dr. Russ Bowman to its medical staff in June. Dr. Bowman is board certified in family and emergency medicine.

Sitka

WISEGUYS men's health group in Sitka will host the second annual "It's All In The Cards" family oriented prostate cancer awareness poker run/walk at 5 p.m. on Labor Day Monday, Sept. 3, at the Crescent Harbor covered shelter. Contact Charles Bingham at 966-8504 or Doug Osborne at 966-8734.

"Working Well in Alaska," an interactive training workshop about how to create and sustain employee wellness programs that get results, takes place from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on Thursday, Sept. 27, at Harrigan Centennial Hall. This event, which is sponsored by SEARHC Health Promotion and the SEARHC Steps to a Healthier SE Alaska program, is open to the general community. For information, contact Doug Osborne at 966-8734 or Bradelle Padon at 364-4404.

The annual Breast Cancer Awareness Walk takes place at 9 a.m. on Saturday, Oct. 6. The three-mile walk starts behind Brenner's and goes across the bridge to Japanski Island and back. Also, a showing of the documentary film, "The Heart of the Sea," about champion Hawaiian surfer Rell "Kapolioka'ehukai" Sunn and her battle with breast cancer, takes place at 6:30 p.m. on Friday, Oct. 5, at the Sheet'ká Kwáan Naa Kahídi. For information, contact Susan Suarez at 966-8459.

Patient Tip: Studies show importance of sleep

Over the years, several medical studies have shown how getting enough sleep can help students do better in school, makes drivers safer and helps reduce stress. This past year, two new studies revealed the importance of sleep for fighting obesity and preventing or treating diabetes.

A New England Research Institute study said men who don't get enough sleep (or too much sleep) are at increased risk for getting Type 2 diabetes and metabolic syndrome. A University of Chicago study said people with Type 2 diabetes who don't get enough sleep or have poor sleep have worse blood sugar control than their well-rested peers.

Seven hours of sleep was the ideal, according to the New England study. The diabetes risk was twice as high for men with less than five or six hours a night, and the risk was three times as high for men who reported getting more than eight hours of sleep.

Here are some tips for getting better sleep:

- ◆ Keep a regular sleep schedule, going to bed and getting up about the same time each day.
- ◆ Don't consume caffeine after your noon meal, because it disturbs sleep.
- ◆ Regular exercise can improve sleep, just don't work out too close to bedtime.
- ◆ Alcohol makes for fragmented sleep and you'll have a more restful night if you abstain.
- ◆ Tobacco use and tobacco withdrawals can disturb sleep, so avoid tobacco.