



TIDE POOL TIMES

Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association's Monthly Regional Newsletter

February Wellness

Program Update Staff Sergeant Parker Gordon Fox Project

January, in typical January fashion, lasted much longer than other months. Across the country there was unprecedented weather, political upheaval, and here in Alaska it was full of holidays, northern lights, and touching base with our enrollees. With the exception of some icy roads which were so bad on one particular day that the Vet Center called all Listening Circle attendees requesting they stay home for their safety, it was business as usual.

We are gearing up for the Wellness Gatherings for 2025. This is the perfect healing space for our enrollees to experience nature and connection for overall wellbeing. Amy will be offering Healing Touch (energy therapy that helps balance the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well-being). Destiny will be there with Peer Support and Veteran resource assistance, and Jenna will be facilitating the daily activities as well as booking Rapid Transformational Therapy sessions for those who want to ameliorate their anxiety and depression.

Your SSG Fox team here at APIA want you to feel the love this February. We offer weekly listening circles and yoga at the Anchorage Vet Center to all enrollees, as well as Gatherings in the Region. We offer case management, as well as Wellness boxes when you join the program. It's easy to join us. If you know a Veteran in our service area or are one yourself, or if you are an active service member and you are interested in joining our program, please contact destinyk@apiai.org.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Program Update
Page 1

Tip Of the Month
Page 4

Monthly Spotlight
Page 4

Community Board
Pages 6-7

Upcoming Events
Page 7

Tide Pool Times Editor: Jenna Larson



VA Suicide Prevention Grant Recipient

Staff Sergeant Parker Gordon Fox Suicide Prevention Grant Program Award Recipient



Photo Courtesy: David Fox



Photo Courtesy: Marisa McKasson

Food Security in the Aleutians

By Marisa McKasson

In Nikolski, a small village on the western end of Umnak Island in the Aleutian Chain, greenhouses are both successful places to grow food and a fun aspect of community life. In my role as a new Cooperative Extension agent for the Alaska Tribes Extension Program, I have heard quite a bit of skepticism about gardening in the Aleutian and Pribilof Islands. This article (a follow-up to Heidi Rader's 2022 article Gardening in the Aleutian Pribilof Island Region of Alaska) aims to provide useful information and encouragement that growing food in the Aleutian and Pribilof islands is not only possible but also worthwhile and fun.

Growing food in the Aleutians does present some real challenges. Strong and persistent winds can batter the sturdiest of structures. The summers are short and often foggy without much sun. High shipping costs and delays can make acquiring gardening supplies difficult. But none of these stop production in Nikolski.

In an October 2024 visit, I spent some time with the greenhouse manager, Lily Stamm, her family, and the Nikolski community. I learned that Nikolski originally had three geodesic dome greenhouses. One blew away in a windstorm. Another is just under a mile away from the village outside the Ugludax Lodge. Despite some missing panels, some tasty broccoli (a very cold-hearty crop) was growing inside when I visited. But most of Nikolski's fresh food is grown in the greenhouse that remains in town. Speaking with Lily about the greenhouse illuminated the following takeaways, which may help other existing or potential growers in the region.

1. One can grow many things in the Aleutian and Pribilof Island region. Kale, potatoes, carrots, and other root vegetables grow well in Nikolski, even outside, and are a great starting point for anyone interested in growing food in the region. Lily has even planted directly in the ground around March instead of starting seeds indoors.

The geodesic dome greenhouse that Lily manages provides fresh, nutritious food for the Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association Elder Meal Program. The greenhouse also allows Lily to grow a whole plethora of things that you would not expect to see on the edge of the Bering Sea, including a lime tree, a crab apple tree, and thriving herbs and strawberries. Just as you would expect, not

HEART HEALTH

February is American Heart Month! Here are some nutrition and wellness tips to promote heart health:

1. Go for Whole Grains: Whole grains like oats, quinoa, and brown rice are rich in fiber, which helps lower cholesterol levels and reduce the risk of heart disease. Swap refined grains (such as white bread or white rice) for whole-grain options wherever possible.
2. Vary Your Produce: Fruits and vegetables are packed with vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants. Aim for at least five servings daily to boost your heart health. Don't forget – frozen or canned fruits and vegetables can be just as nutritious as fresh produce. Choose items like low-sodium canned vegetables or fruits canned in water or fruit juice.
3. Choose Healthy Fats: Salmon and seal oil are excellent sources of omega-3 fatty acids, which can help reduce inflammation and support heart health. Plant-based options include flaxseeds, chia seeds, and walnuts. Incorporate heart-healthy fats from other sources like nuts, seeds, and olive oil. Limit saturated fats and avoid trans fats often found in processed snacks.

(Continued on page 3)



Photo Courtesy: Jeanette Dushkin

Food Security Continued

everything is easy. Lily said tomatoes, cucumbers, and cilantro present challenges whenever she tries to grow them. But they are worth a try.

Foods from the garden or greenhouse complement traditional foods. Herbs such as dill and parsley go great with baked salmon. Potatoes and carrots are great for stews and soups. Fermented foods such as pickles and sauerkraut made from fresh vegetables make great sides for halibut or seal ribs.

2. You do not have to do everything “perfectly” to grow food

I sometimes hear that folks have an interest in gardening but fear they do not have enough of a “green thumb” to grow food successfully. Alaska’s climate, changing weather patterns, and lack of transportation infrastructure present both challenges and opportunities to everyone who tries to grow fruits and vegetables. But that does not mean it is not worth trying.

3. A place for growing food can be a fun community space.

This year the Tribe purchased a new geodesic dome greenhouse for the community, and the Growing Spaces team from whom they purchased it built the new structure in August.

With this new dome, Lily and the Tribe decided to do something new and creative — they used half the space to build a pool! The greenhouse is split in half between space for growing additional vegetables and the pool area, which will also include a hot tub and sauna.

The pool has a small deck to make it accessible for all members of the community, from small children learning to swim to Elders looking for low-impact exercise. New structures in Alaska villages can be expensive, difficult to ship, and take time to manage, but if you think out of the box, they can provide sustenance with a side of community recreation.

I was hired as part of the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) Alaska Tribes Extension Program, in partnership with the APIA, to help Unangax people grow, cook, safely preserve, and eat more food at home while supporting Alaska Native food sovereignty. Please reach out to me at mnmckasson@alaska.edu or (907) 222 – 4203 if you have any questions or ideas for working together. Sign up for a free course on growing your own food in Alaska on EdX, [here](#). You can also request a Tribes Extension workshop in your community or via Zoom, [here](#). ~Marisa McKasson

HEART HEALTH (CONT.)

4. Cut Back on Sodium: Too much sodium can raise blood pressure, a major risk factor for heart disease. Limit processed and packaged foods, and flavor meals with herbs and spices instead of salt.

5. Move More: The American Heart Association recommends getting at least 150 minutes per week of moderate-intensity aerobic activity or 75 minutes per week of vigorous aerobic activity, or a combination of both, preferably spread throughout the week. Add moderate- to high-intensity muscle-strengthening activity (such as resistance or weights) on at least 2 days per week. You can incorporate more movement throughout the day with activities like yoga, walking, or cross-country skiing. Increase the amount and intensity of exercise gradually over time. ~ Kiana Holland

HEART HEALTH
AWARENESS
MONTH





Photo Courtesy: Jeanette Dushkin

Monthly Spotlight

My name is Tyson Urich and my family is German on both sides. My great-grandparents on my father's side immigrated to northern Illinois in the early 1900s, where my parents later met, and I subsequently grew up in Germany during the Cold War due to my father's duty assignment in the U.S. Army. We are in touch with our relatives there, and I'm proud to speak our ancestral language with them when I can. Because of German record-keeping, we can trace our family history back to 1390 in Hessen. My mother's side settled in Oklahoma and Texas, where my parents currently reside.

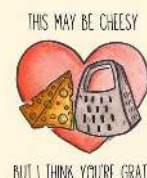


I'm close to my sister and her family, and we are always working on various projects, from foraging for wild foods to making art. We formed a noise band, Dead Girl, where we create soundscapes using found object percussion and vocals, and my sister plays alto saxophone. One day, we hope to open an orchid nursery together, and we are currently launching a natural skin care line.

I have a BA in socio-cultural anthropology with a minor in fine art. After college, I worked as a goldsmith for a few years before transitioning into agriculture, where I've worked with a variety of plants, including endangered species, orchids, carnivorous plants, and industrial crops. I joined APIA as an AmeriCorps volunteer in hopes of pursuing a master's in natural resource management or sustainable agriculture. I hope to use my anthropology training and creative background to contribute to innovation in environmental justice and impact mitigation, and food sovereignty. Agriculture lies at the intersection of human life, culture, and the environment, - it is an area where there is a lot of good yet to be done.

I'm very grateful to APIA for entrusting me to work on these extremely important issues, and my experience with Alaska Native communities has been wonderful, often leaving me surprised and inspired. I'm honored and deeply appreciative of everyone. Qaġaasakuq!

TIP OF THE MONTH



February makes me feel a bit cheesy. If this month were a movie, it would kick off the soundtrack with John Paul Young's "Love is in the Air", and slide onto the screen of our lives wearing sunglasses, a white button down and tube socks while singing into the broom handle. It's every single person's least favorite month, and every partnered person's month trying to decide what to get for their partner and "where can I still get a reservation that she'll like?". Never mind how much the holiday will set the bank account back.

Regardless of where you land on the spectrum of Valentine bliss (or lack thereof), I propose looking at it through the lens of appreciation. The cheesy cheerleader in me just kicked in, "Two-Four-Six-Eight, who do you appreciate?!"

Seriously though, who and what do you appreciate? Start with yourself. What do you appreciate about yourself? What can you gift yourself to show that appreciation? What about the people you care about, live with or work with? How long has it been since you let them know what about them makes them so darn special to you? It doesn't have to be a big gesture; it can be something as simple as a text. In Good Health - Jenna



Photo Courtesy: Aleutian Images

ASIST Training at APIA

On January 13th and 14th, APIA held its first Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) session, hosted by APIA staff. The training group included four APIA Community Health Services staff members and participants from various Anchorage-area organizations dedicated to community service. This milestone was led by Becks Jacobs, Behavioral Health Clinician, and Candace Nielsen, Training and Outreach Specialist, who recently became APIA's first certified ASIST trainers. Their certification enables APIA to offer this highly regarded program to communities across the region.



ASIST is a two-day, interactive, skills-based workshop designed to teach participants how to provide suicide first aid. Using a unique six-task model, the training equips participants to:

- Recognize when someone may be thinking about suicide.
- Conduct a skilled intervention.
- Develop a safety plan and connect individuals to ongoing support.

In addition to ASIST, Nielsen is also a certified trainer for Safe TALK, a shorter, four-hour program that prepares participants to recognize and respond to signs of suicide risk, helping connect individuals to the support they need. Throughout the year, APIA will travel across the region to offer these trainings with the goal of fostering suicide safer communities. If you'd like to host a training in your community, please inform your tribal leaders. They can contact APIA Headquarters at (907)276-2700 or email Candace Nielsen directly at candacen@apiai.org.

Together, we can work toward creating a network of support and save lives.



IT'S TIME TO LET GO OF PERFECTIONISM

I grew up as a perfectionist. I was the oldest of three and truly believed that if everything were organized, life would be smooth sailing. After years of musing about the real reason I was plagued with the blight of perfectionist tendencies, I finally got the answer during Rapid Transformational Therapy Training. Was it due to my wanting parental approval? Being the oldest? Why wasn't whatever I did good enough for me to offer the world? Am I afraid of other's judgment, so I'm extra hard on myself? Turns out I didn't feel like I was enough.

Maybe you're in the same boat. If so, I have a secret to share. You are absolutely enough. You are enough. Your worth isn't dependent on your output. Our accomplishments and "failures" mean little to the ones who love us.

I propose you have outgrown the need for perfection. Let's focus now on your strengths, your unique gifts and how you can share them with the planet. Live this beautiful life you came here to live. Part of living a life that is on purpose is letting go of perfectionism. Here is your invitation to let it go. Watch the transformation that happens when you simply show up. ~Jenna



Photo Courtesy: Jenna Larson

Community Board



Want more
from your
relationship?



Learn new ways to understand & enjoy each other more.

Alaska VA is offering a one-day workshop for Veterans & their partners.

For more information contact the
Relationship Health & Safety Program:
(907) 257-4827

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration
Office of Rural Health



Building Relationships with
Vitality and Engagement



★ Veterans Food Assistance Program ★

What?

Starting October 1st DVNF will be offering a one-time grant per veteran household to support their nutritional needs.

How to Apply

We have an online application that will need to be completed by the Veteran. The application can be found at <https://www.grantinterface.com/sl/dl4NjA>. The link will be open starting October 1st, 2024.

Veteran Qualifications

- Must have a DD214 or Veteran ID
- Was discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable
- A letter of reference from a case worker or advocate may make the application more favorable.

Other Details

- This is not a monthly grant.
- The groceries will be delivered directly to the Veteran using Walmart or grocery store delivery service.
- Veterans can receive up to \$450 worth of groceries

For more information, please contact us: (202) 737-0522 - info@dvnf.org
www.dvnf.org



WWW.APIA.ORG



Community Board (cont.)



Photo Courtesy: Canva

**In February We Celebrate
Black History, Love, &
Presidents Washington &
Lincoln**

UPCOMING EVENTS

February is the month of...

Black History Month

Valentine's Day

Presidents Day

February 2nd

Groundhog Day

February 7th

Wear Red Day

February 14th

Valentine's Day

March is the month of...

Daylight Savings

St. Patrick's Day

Sewards Day

Vietnam Veterans Day

Employee Appreciation

April is the month of...

Passover

Easter

Earth Day

**THINKING ABOUT
QUITTING TOBACCO
THIS NEW YEAR OF 2025?**

I'm not Puffin anymore, I use the patch!

Start the New Year with a Tobacco-Free living! We have available resources like the patches & gum to help you quit. We can help & support you along your quit journey too. Remember, clean air is good air! Call your local health clinic or the Alaska's Tobacco Quit Line Today!

- APIA Local Health Clinic: (907) 276-2700
- Behavioral Health Clinic: (907) 222-9764
- Alaska's Tobacco Quit Line: 1-800-QUIT-NOW

For more information, contact Caroline Nevak at (907) 222-4237 or email: carolinen@apiai.org

Nicorette Gum

Nicotine Patch

ALASKA'S TOBACCO QUIT LINE 1-800-QUIT-NOW

APIA

Show your colon some *LOVE*

Schedule your screening today!

APIA's Clinics:

Unalaska: (907) 581-2742

St. George: (907) 859-2254

Nikolski: (907) 576-2204

Atka: (907) 839-2232

For more information, contact Vivian Nguyen at viviann@apiai.org

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