

2011 AWARD WINNERS

Aleutian Pribilof
ISLANDS ASSOCIATION



CCS
EARLY LEARNING



FAIRBANKS NATIVE ASSOCIATION

Serving the Community for 40 Years



RurAL CAP

HEALTHY PEOPLE, SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES, VIBRANT CULTURES

CHILD DEVELOPMENT





Father of the Year

Mel Gibby

I want to thank you for the opportunity to nominate Mel Gibby for Father of the Year Award.

This wonderful man is the grandfather of two children in our program. Both of his grandchildren have gone through our program and we have had a chance to get to know a man truly dedicated to his family. Mel meets the challenges of raising his grandchildren head on, looking for guidance to the best possible school options and opportunities he can give them from the staff at his center.

Mel has had his share of ups and downs and yet has never wavered in his support for his family. He makes sure the children are always ready for school and Head Start, bringing them and picking them up on a regular schedule like clockwork. In addition to taking the children to Head Start and an ASD school, he also takes them to their many appointments as the children are diagnosed with different disabilities. He also takes care of his wife who has a disability. He is extremely grateful to the resources in the community that has helped him to keep a roof over his and his family's head and is quick to share a resource if he knows someone is in need.

He volunteers on the Policy Council and most advisory committees. He has helped us develop our budget and goals and objectives for KCI's federal grant. He has also participated on hiring committees, health advisory and education advisory groups. He listens to what people have to say and shares his opinion in a way that is always respectful to others. He attends everything that is happening in his center to give his grandchildren as much social interaction and growth opportunities as possible.

Mel is an eloquent advocate for his grandchildren and family. He has written letters and made phone calls to the Alaska congressional delegation and to his state representatives to advocate for Head Start and other issues that concern him. He encourages other parents to get involved by sharing the responses he has received from Juneau and Washington and by sharing the "talking points" that are important to him.

Mel is always ready to lend a hand at the center, whether the work involved is sweeping the center parking lot, facilitating parent discussion at the monthly parent committee meeting, or helping to plan a special event at his center. He is especially committed to encouraging other dads to come to be involved at Head Start and in the lives of their children.

Mel is truly a blessing to his grandchildren, his community and our agency.

Kids' Corp, Inc



Teacher of the Year

Carrie L. Wallace

For all of the twenty five years that Wrangell has had a Head Start Carrie has taught in the Head Start classroom. In the early years Carrie was the cook/teacher aide and earned first her CDA, then an AA in ECE. She is now close to a BA in ECE. Carrie moved into the lead teacher position taking on staff supervision, training, and building management as well as the leadership position in the classroom. Carrie has deserved to be the Teacher of the Year many times over, with specific reasons for each individual year. We would like to nominate Carrie as “Teacher of the Year” both for a single year of excellence in teaching and also for a collective twenty five years of teaching

For Twenty Five years Carrie’s energy and knowledge have bubbled through her classroom. She has infused her love of singing, her love of the out of doors, and support of children’s creativity into her classroom. Carrie weaves a tapestry of educational opportunities for children by her careful planning and consistent use of community resources – parents, fisherman, construction workers, artists, and more, are invited into the classroom to provide activities. Books are produced telling of field trips and other classroom adventures. Carrie is a careful observer who works closely with the School District and Medical Professionals to provide support services for children who need them. All children in Carrie’s classroom know they are special – because she tells them so, and includes all children in the classroom. This year Carrie combed the beaches of Wrangell to find just the right BIG root wad to bring into the Head Start outdoor play yard so children could safely climb all over it, and lots of smaller drift wood for the children to “build with”. This year, as every year, she took children to the beach to view the petraglyphs and to do fern rubbings on the brass plate replica provided by the forest service so no damage would occur to the originals. This year’s summary of the year, a CD produced by a High School Senior, was full of children painting at easels, building with blocks, climbing, jumping, dancing to the drum, listening to stories, telling stories and more – the kind of early childhood classroom we want for every child.

The twenty five year birthday party that Carrie organized this last year exemplifies Carrie’s quiet leadership. No long talks or an award, instead, everyone in the community was invited- “come look at pictures”. Hundreds of community members of all ages dropped by the center to find pictures posted on every wall: activities, celebrations, field trips, children, children, and children. The room buzzed with stories. Everyone had a story, everyone had someone to listen. Representatives of the original Wrangell committee were present, previous graduates, school children, and current parents. Laughing, pointing, storytelling and eating everyone involved was honoring twenty five years of Head Start in Wrangell.

We wish to honor Carrie with this nomination for Teacher of the Year

Central Council of Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska Head Start



Bus Drivers

John "John" Heyano

I would like to take this opportunity to nominate John Heyano ('John-John') for AHSA's Bus Driver of the year award.

John came to BBNA as a brand new bus driver and completed his training just days before school started. He took to heart all that he had learned in his training to ensure that the children were receiving the safest transportation possible. John re-mapped all the routes so that he was using the most efficient as well as the safest route. This caused some major changes for many parents who were used to having the bus back into their individual driveways. The parents weren't afraid to let John know how they felt, but John took it all in stride and explained to each parent why the changes would be in the best interest of the children. John also re-vamped the communication system in the bus and for the first time in 8 years, the front desk personnel did not have to spend a large chunk of their day monitoring bus runs. John's reports are always timely and correct; he goes out of his way to make sure his bus is running well and that the kids are happy.

The thing that makes John stand out from other bus drivers is not so much what he does while he's driving but what he does when he isn't driving. John always spends his breaks in the classroom or on the playground playing with his 'little friends' or making things safer for them by shoveling snow, fixing tricycles or sweeping gravel.

The kids are always on the lookout for John, and he always takes time to talk to them or make the bus beepers and flashers go off. The kids know which office is John's and when they're on the playground they'll knock on his window which he always opens it to acknowledge them. I got to witness one event where there were about 5 kids outside his window clamoring, 'bus driver, bus driver, open your window!!' When John opened his window, he noticed that due to the cold weather, there were a lot of runny noses. He got the kids to stick their heads through his window one at a time while he wiped all their noses. After that, he always kept a full box of Kleenex on his desk.

John is truly a team member here at Head Start. He's willing to help anyone do whatever needs to be done at the time whether it's part of his job description or not. His heart is always with the kids and he's been a welcome addition and a valuable asset to the BBNA Head Start team.

Bristol Bay Native Association Head Start



Corporate Award

Bristol Bay Area Health Corporation

We would like to nominate the Bristol Bay Area Health Corporation for their outstanding support and collaboration with BBNA Head Start. Many of the services they provide to our program would be unavailable to us any other way as providers in rural areas are few and far between.

All of the following departments and the BBAHC administration are on our thank you list:

The Dental Department comes to our centers or village clinic sites and provides exams and preventative care to our children. The staff also does classroom sessions where the children can try on the gowns and masks as well as talk about good oral care prior to the care so it is not so intimidating. We have a great picture of one of our dentists sitting in the child size chair having an interactive lunch with our children. The department has also started bringing in a pediatric dentist that travels to our sites. This enhances the care as without this many families would have to take their children to Anchorage for the service which is more than 300 miles by air away.

The Health Information Management staff are invaluable to us as they quickly provide us summaries of all of a child's health parameters including the dental care piece. We are well aware of how difficult it can be for parents or programs to obtain this complete information.

The Environmental Health Department does courtesy health and safety inspections for all our sites and ensures that we are in compliance with pre-school standards.

The Immunization and WIC staff is more than willing to share their expertise with us as well as serve and provide outreach to our children in a caring and culturally sensitive manner.

The traveling and onsite clinic medical staff members make a special effort to get all our required screenings and exams done as timely as possible.

BBAHC Behavioral Health staff has been helpful and full of ideas as we have implemented steps in providing behavioral health services to young children.

The Diabetes Program has provided needed and fun equipment to promote physical activity and help in the reduction of obesity in our children and their families. To help promote nutritional information their director has dressed in a clown suit and handed out huge apples to our children.

Members from all these departments attend and actively participate in our Health Services Advisory Committee.

This is just an abbreviated list of all these caring individuals do to make our Head Start a happy and healthy place to be for our children and families. Thank you, BBAHC !

Bristol Bay Native Association Head Start



Administrative Support Person of the Year

Nancy Gearhart

Nancy Gearhart is an extraordinary individual to work with. By simply entering a room she elevates the mood. She always has a smile and a kind word if not a laugh to make you feel better about where you are and what you are doing. But a wonderful personality is not enough to merit an award.

Nancy knows her job very very well. There is not a form, a policy or procedure that she does not know or does not know where to get information and clarification on. Her knowledge and skill regarding office procedure makes the lives of everyone in our office much easier and make us more able to focus on our jobs. But knowing your job well is not enough to merit an award.

Nancy knows much of the content area jobs of the others in the office. She can and has in many cases provided our program with excellent interim coverage in a content area that was either unfilled or needing assistance for whatever reasons. In essence, she frequently acts as an “on-call” content area coordinator. But knowing the jobs of those you work with well enough to be able to fill in and keep the office operating is not enough to merit an award.

Over the past year Nancy has taken on the challenge of obtaining a counseling certificate through the school of Rural Human Services. This course work will end with Nancy obtaining a counseling credential and opening the door for so much more and increasing her value to our program. But wanting to improve oneself through education is not enough to merit an award.

Let’s see, Nancy is an individual with a tremendous gift that allows her to work equally as effective with staff, parents, vendors and a variety of professionals. She provides a great boost to the morale of not only our office but also to our field staff. She makes certain staff are paid, students get their food, bills are paid on time, orders are processed, office inventory is tracked, busses have tires, applications for employment are kept in order, interviews are set up, meeting are set up, rooms are reserved, fill in as a nutrition coordinator, fill in as a transportation coordinator, answer any questions about any of our paperwork, act as the in house computer expert and completed other duties as assigned as well as taking the initiative to improve herself through education.

Nancy is more than the Program Assistant for the APIA Head Start program, She is a resourceful, enthusiastic individual with a strong sense of commitment. She is the heart and soul of the program and is very much deserving of this award and I very much feel that we are only seeing the tip of the ice berg of what Nancy will become and be able to accomplish.

Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association



Humanitarian Award

Lorna Pletnikoff

The Aleutian Pribilof Islands people are called, “Unangax.” The Unangax have many cultural values that guide their way of life. One of these guiding pieces of wisdom is, “Life is gifted to you. What you make of it is your gift in return.” (Quoted from, “The Right Way to Live as an Unangax,” from Father Michael Lestenkof.) In relation to the cultural value system of the Unangax is the very definition of a, “Humanitarian.” A Humanitarian is devoted to and a strong advocate for having the best interest of mankind at heart. It is the guiding spirit of a person who makes the most of their natural gifts.

The Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association, APIA, Head Start Program is privileged to nominate our example of a true Humanitarian, Ms. Lorna Pletnikoff, State of Alaska, Public Health Nurse, PHN. Lorna has served as a PHN for over 20 years, working in the Aleutian Pribilof region for the last 10 years. Her work with the Unangax is a remarkable example of dedication and commitment to the cultural values of the people she serves. She is devoted to her profession and to our Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association, (APIA), Head Start program.

APIA Head Start is privileged to work with Lorna to coordinate the health needs of our children. Some examples of her efforts to coordinate/collaborate services are; keep our program informed of advance travel plans, coordinate services for our children’s health needs and she provides pertinent teacher/parent trainings. An illustration of how Lorna serves and actively engages herself in our program is her devotion to our Health Services Advisory Committee, HSAC. She is a strong advocate for our children and assisted in the creation of the APIA Health Exam form, advised on APIA’s TB/Immunization requirements and is available to train both staff and parents on current health issues.

In addition to her many other Humanitarian qualities, her greatest gift to the world is her ability to work with children. She understands the developmental nature of a child and knows instinctively how to relate to them. This natural gift, builds trust and confidence and Lorna is able to inspire a child to cooperate when they are most vulnerable and frightened. This ability shines through when a child needs immunizations and her soft voice, calms while her words illustrate for the child a form of understanding of process and procedure. Her gentle mannerisms add a degree of belief that promotes her ability to screen or give the immunization.

This kind of work is special and cannot be taught but is gifted by the person who has a humane nature and knows how to give of themselves above and beyond their call of duty. This is the true nature of the, “Unangax,” people and the characteristic of a person who is inherently a Humanitarian. It is our belief that Lorna unselfishly makes the most of her natural gift and is deserving of this reward because her true Humanitarian spirit. This is the gift she shares with the children and families of our APIA Head Start Program!

Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association



Cultural Awareness

Polly Hyslop

For the first time in many years, the children at Tok Head Start are learning the local Native language thanks to Polly. Polly has been coming into Head Start weekly to teach the children in the morning class the Native language. Arrangements have also been made for her to come in 2x per week for now to the end of the year in the afternoon class so that they can also learn the good morning & spider songs. That way all the children can perform these at closing ceremonies.

Polly is also incorporating sign language into her teaching so while the children are learning the Athabaskan work for things like animals as well as the sign. Polly decided to learn sign language not only to help expand on what the children were already learning in the classroom but also because she was worried about the elders that are losing their hearing and wants to provide them other ways to communicate. Polly has also made visual resources like picture books to aid in the learning .

RURAL CAP



Maintenance

Horace Akeya

Horace alone cleans & maintains a 5,000 sq ft building. It is kept spotless at all times. He hauls garbage, freight and fuel oil. During the Christmas holidays the community suffered a power outage which caused pipes to freeze and break. Horace collected heating devices to heat the building and stayed there to monitor the situation 24 hours a day for several days.

Because of his actions the damage was way less than it could have been. He worked jointly with the repairman (plumbers & electricians) to make the needed repairs.

Horace is truly loved by the children, many of who are his nieces and nephews

RURAL CAP



Assistant Teacher Freeda Felix

I would like to nominate Freeda Felix for the ASHA Teacher Assistant award for 2011. Freeda is a great asset to our team. Freeda has strong relationships with children, their families and staff. Freeda's attitude and calm demeanor is greatly appreciated. The past school year our Full Day Cushman site has been short staffed all year. Freeda has stepped in and taken on many of the managing roles and being a lead teacher. She is also spending her own time off the clock working on lesson plans and find fun cool ways to individualize for the children in her classroom. She does this all while being a mom of four and working on her CDA. While all the teachers at the site have stepped up this year, Freeda does it with a smile on her face. When Freeda is out or missing from the classroom families notice and ask if she is okay. In the 3 years I have worked with Freeda I have never heard her complain or grumble about what she is asked to do. Freeda goes Okay and walks away with the attitude of "How can I help." The children in her class know when she means business to quote one of the children Freeda has had for two years "OH OH Ms. Freeda, hands are on her hips, we better listen." Freeda's voice never goes above a calm quiet talk. I would like Freeda to know how much she is a great influence and positive role model and how she affects people around her with it. Thank you Freeda for being the loving, kind, caring teacher and staff member who brings calm and serenity to our otherwise crazy work days.

Freeda began her employment with FNA in January of 2008 as a teachers aide for Head Start at our Center Base site, serving part day children, but has spent the better part of her career at our Cushman site serving full day children and families. Freeda has recently been working on the requirements for her CDA, possibly on to become a primary teacher in the future. Freeda has always demonstrated her commitment to the Head Start program and the belief of our mission. Her son is a past Head Start graduate, and her daughter is currently enrolled in one of our part day classes at Center Base. I myself have not had the opportunity to be stationed at the same site as Freeda during her employment with FNA, but I have worked with her both directly and indirectly over the past few years, in her role as one of our Head Start parents and as a co-worker. While filling in as cook at our Cushman families, she was attentive to the children, giving them the love, comfort and compassion they needed, along with showing kind, consideration when it came to parent concerns and requests. Freeda is well liked and respected by both her families and co-workers, she is a very quiet, low key individual who just goes with the flow, does what is asked of her, without complaint, and always seems to have something positive to say, followed by a slow drawn smile.

I believe Freeda is an asset to FNA, the Head Start Program, and the families throughout the Fairbanks Community.

I would like to say THANK YOU FREEDA from: FNA, the families you serve and the entire Head Start Staff.

Fairbanks Native Association Head Start



Leadership Sarah Newton

I would like to nominate Sarah Newton for the AHSA Leadership Award for 2011.

Sarah is a leader here in our program. Sarah leads by example. Sarah's dedication to our families and our staff is outstanding. Sarah's normal work day begins at 7 and ends at 5:00pm with a two hour break. Sarah is the first to volunteer to help with whatever needs to be done from recruitment, to cooking, to walking in the Golden Days parade, to helping at the end of the year picnic.

Sarah encourages all staff to get their education and to lead healthy lives by going to the gym every day on her break and encourage us to eat healthy foods. Sarah loves her job. She is always coming up with fun and new ways for us to practice the things we learn in trainings and to find new and interesting things for us "old timers" to learn.

If you are struggling with anything Sarah is there to help. She has been a wonderful example of what a supervisor should do and be. She spends time every week to check on each staff member and to make sure that we are okay. She loves coming up with fun activities that involve team work and learning to grow together as a team. Sarah has been a great strength and comfort to many of our staff this year as we are or have been going through home issues. One of the things that make Sarah the great supervisor/leader that she is, is her ability to relate and to understand, to show empathy to those who are hurt or struggling while also showing a strength as a mom, teacher and woman.

I have worked with Sarah for the past 3 years and I have never heard her speak ill of anyone. She is wonderful when venting or talking with her. She often will say "Okay now what are you going to do to change the situation?" She always reminds us that while situation is hard, we as the person in the situation make it what it is.

Sarah thank you so much for all you do. Without you we would not have become the team that we are and would not be growing in the direction that we are as a program.

Fairbanks Native Association Head Start



Mother of the Year

Mary Ann Fey

Mary Ann Fey is a kind, generous, and strong lady of Irish-American and Cherokee roots. She has been an amazing parent to work with during my first three years here at FNA Early Head Start, and has had at least one child in our home-based program, continuously, for the past nine years. Mary Ann has four biological children, whom she raised as a single parent. As her children got older and began leaving “the nest”, Mary Ann heard about the incredible need there is in Alaska for good foster homes for our children, and made the decision to become a foster parent. Later, as a foster parent, she learned that there was a need for adoptive parents. Mary Ann adopted her first child nine years ago. She was a cocaine-addicted infant, and Mary Ann brought her home directly from the hospital. A few years later, Mary Ann adopted a young toddler, then an infant, and finally a six-year old, whom she fostered for two years before finally being able to make her one of their family. Three of these four girls are Native Alaskan, and have been adopted with the blessing of their families and the tribes. All four girls are either cocaine or alcohol affected. Because of their learning disabilities, Mary Ann has chosen to home school the children. It took her oldest child two years to get through Kindergarten, mostly because of her difficulty with reading. This year, she has almost completed two grade levels, and has read five of the Harry Potter books! Two of the other children also have learning disabilities, and schooling them at home has given them an extra measure of care and safety while learning at their own pace. Mary Ann works part time at a ballet studio, which pays for dance education for all the girls, helping with their gross motor and social-emotional development.

All of Mary Ann’s girls have mild to severe allergies, which have landed one of them in the emergency room several times. Mary Ann took all of the girls to a specialist to determine exactly what their allergies are. She works hard to feed them right, and teaches them about their conditions so that they can help take care of themselves instead of just being monitored by their mother.

Recently, Mary Ann was talking to another foster parent about FNA’s Head Start/Early Head Start home-based program. She told this parent, “The first thing I do when I get a new foster child, is call Head Start and Project Teach, and call the pediatrician to have a complete well-child evaluation.”

I have been honored to be this family’s home visitor over the last three years, and I will miss them very much, since the youngest is now five and will be graduating soon. The most special thing about Mary Ann Fey, is that she has been able to take four children, from two racial backgrounds, and from three different Alaskan tribes from across the state, and has brought them together as a strong, blended family. Therefore, I am so happy to be nominating Mary Ann Fey for Mother of the Year.

Fairbanks Native Association Early Head Start



Cook

Tracy Neves

Tracy Neves has been with Head Start for 24 years and a cook for the past 15 years at the Palmer Center. She is a valuable member of the team and provides nutritious home cooked meals while incorporating new food items. She also helps the teachers plan cooking projects that can be used in the menu. She helps the family staff in purchasing food for all family events which saves money through bulk ordering and reduces waste by incorporated unused supplies in the next week's menu.

Tracy works with parents on special dietary or mealtime issues. She incorporates required modifications into the daily planning in a way that does not single out one child and allows them to eat with the group either the same foods or similar looking food. She also serves a variety of foods which consider cultural and ethnic preferences and also broadens each child's food experience.

Tracy does more than ensure federal and local requirements are met and children are fed. She loves what she does and she loves helping others see the value of good nutrition and making food fun and interesting. She is a dedicated team player who is always prepared and willing to assist where needed as with children in the hallway to and from the restroom, being in the classroom while teachers take a break, visiting with children who are having a bad day and walking children to and from the bus with a smile and kind word. Tracy can be counted on to share her knowledge and cooking expertise to assist children and staff with nutritional cooking activities and healthy life style choices. Tracy's dedication to CCS gives her many hats that she takes on willingly.

CCS Early Learning



EHS Teacher of the Year

April Diselrod

April Diselrod is an Infant/Toddler teacher who has been with us since the start of our Early Head Start program as well as a past employee in our child care program. During her break in employment she went back to school and first received her Associate degree in Early Childhood and also an Associate degree in Nursing. As part of our start-up team she worked tirelessly to get the program up and running. We relied on her expertise in early childhood and nursing to help train new staff, model appropriate practices in the classroom and help set-up our classrooms after renovation.

The children and parents respond quickly and naturally to April's warmth, compassion, and positive energy. She is very creative in developing ways to engage children in classroom activities, exploring new skills and making even routine tasks fun. She works closely with parents to find resources, make referrals or discuss goals or concerns. All of April's efforts have been to help improve the lives of the children and their families by encouraging families to have children screened by Infant Learning, to help with developmental delays, help families get resources for housing, or work with Head Start Staff for proper placement for transitioning children.

One example that demonstrates the commitment and enthusiasm she has for this work is even when her family life had major issues with serious illness of her granddaughter and unknown illness of her mother she still showed up early to work to make sure the children have the consistency here that they may not have at home; and had smiles and hugs for the children and families that she works with. This dedication and effort to think of the children's needs and how our actions affect them is what I look for in the teachers we have.

Her efforts go beyond the classroom; she has donated numerous supplies for the center and she gets her family involved as her husband will come and make minor repairs or maintain the grounds during the summer. April is very deserving of this award; she takes our mission to heart and truly makes a difference in the lives and families of young children.

CCS Early Learning



Family Community Partnership Professional

Joyce Wright

We nominate Joyce Wright for Family Community Partnership Professional. Joyce coordinates the family services for our Wasilla Center which serves 100 families. She also coordinates activities with the Early Head Start program at the same location which serves another 16 families. She has built a strong parent involvement program and has served as a mentor for a new family service manager at another center.

The family partnership program Joyce has created at the Wasilla center fully embraces our mission of making a difference, our values of excellence, being strengths based, and family centered as well as the inclusive spirit of Head Start. This is evident in everything she does to ensure quality services and meaningful experiences for the families we serve.

Joyce works closely with each teacher to ensure family partnership plans are completed, family goals are set, resources are made available and that each parent is involved in their child's education. She has also taken on a mentor role to assist two new Family Partnership Coordinators in two other centers to help them learn the job, the requirements and then how to pull it all together and create a successful family service and parent involvement program.

She coordinates with staff and parents to plan and run very successful Family Fun Nights which have been extremely well attended. The Movement and Music, Science Night and Literacy were especially popular with families. She also works closely with staff to promote literacy in many ways from book orders, lending library and grants for funding these programs. Whenever there is an evening event for families, Joyce plans the menu and enjoys cooking something special from scratch. It is just another way shows her appreciation and support to families and makes families feel welcome.

Joyce works closely with the Wasilla parents in planning Family Fun Nights, classes for parents on topics they have chosen like time management, organization, etc. She also completed training on how to conduct Active Parenting classes and completed a series of classes for Wasilla parents. She works with the Parent Center Committee and center. This group has held several fund raising events and then decided how to invest these funds in the center.

Joyce is very open, honest, helpful person who works hard to create an environment that is inviting, informative, friendly and fun. Play, laugh, learn, grow—that is CCS's motto and Joyce does a great job of walking this talk and teaching others to do the same.

CCS Early Learning



Policy Council

The Policy Council for CCS Early Learning for the 2010-2011 school year can only be summed up as “awesome!”

Our Policy Council this year was outstanding. We only had one returning PC member that remained on the council from the previous year so we were a bit apprehensive about moving into this year without some experienced PC members to provide leadership. However, those fears were quickly put to rest when the new PC elected officers and we discovered how committed, how dedicated, and how serious this group of parents was!

Some examples of what they have done to deserve this nomination are:

- Three of our current PC officers attended the AHSA Leadership Conference in Juneau. Together, they made the Head Start case to our elected officials more effectively than any group we have had attend in the past.
- Our Policy Council President called in to testify on behalf of Head Start during the House Finance Committee process.
- The entire Policy Council together with our various Parent Center Committees was phenomenal in their advocacy efforts at the national level.
 - They worked very hard to spread the word about the potential cuts to Head Start and Early Head Start. They took it upon themselves to start a petition to save Head Start and Early Head Start funding. Through their efforts they were able to collect over 3000 signatures. These petitions were then delivered to Senators Murkowski and Begich and to Representative Young.
 - They made presentations to raise awareness about this issue at several community events including the local Lions Club and the Student Government of Mat-Su College.
- Beyond this agency wide work on the Policy Council—these parents demonstrated the same level of leadership and commitment at their individual centers on the Parent Center Committees.
 - They organized multiple fundraisers including spaghetti feeds, carnivals, ice cream parties, party lights and bake sales. The proceeds from all of their hard work were used to purchase items to improve our centers and services. A new stackable washer and dryer was purchased for one center. A flat screen TV/DVD combo was purchased for movie nights and for staff training. They also used their funds to pay activities like field trips and pictures with Santa for families that might not be able to otherwise participate.

To sum up—this Policy Council has been simply amazing. I give them much credit for helping us keep our Early Head Start program and for making our day to day CCS services better and better!

CCS Early Learning



Beating the Odds

Lillie Nylin

Lillie Nylin deserves to be recognized for 'Beating the Odds'. Lillie is not only a parent of one of our Early Head Start students, she is also a new teacher of Elim's Kawerak Early Head Start in Alaska.

Lillie was hired as one of our first Early Head Start Teachers and started her new job which came with a huge learning curve. Early Head Start was new to not only her, but to Kawerak's core staff as well. She worked closely with core staff and her coworkers until the wrinkles of our new program were ironed out. She asked questions and was willing to do what it took to do the job well and cooperatively.

Lillie's mother was very sick during this school year. Lillie became the main caregiver of her mother. During this very difficult time Lillie communicated with her coworkers and core staff if she needed to be away with her mother and always arranged for someone to take her place in her absence. We were very sad for Lillie and her family when her mother passed away during this school year.

Lillie took two ECE intensive courses this past November and December during which time were low health points for her mother. Lillie persevered through her courses and caring for her mother and passed both classes with the highest grades out of all her 27 classmates also teaching in Head Start or Early Head Start.

Lillie willingly completed a weekend long CDA and CPR training to work toward earning her CDA credential.

Lillie knew that she had enough training hours between the two ECE courses she took, our pre-service training, and CDA/CPR training to apply for her CDA. I am very pleased to say that Lillie decided to take another ECE course offered this Spring and she once again passed the course with a glowing report from her instructor saying, "Your work has been articulate, thoughtful, and always above and beyond".

Lillie had a difficult year! I am so very pleased to say that she shines among her peers as a mother, wife, and teacher! She gives praise to God for all she has been able to accomplish while meeting the needs of her family, caring for her mother, working with our Early Head Start staff and students, and working toward her CDA and AAS degree in Early Childhood Education. We are very proud of her and pleased to have her part of the success of Kawerak Early Head Start. She is an example to us all!

Kawerak



Community Advocate

Campbell Kristenson

I would like to nominate Campbell Kristenson for Community Advocate. Cam has been a lifelong community member in Nome. For the past 5 years he has volunteered in our classrooms or at special events that we host and he is not a parent or related to anyone in our program. This past year he took a very active approach with contacting our legislative representatives at both the state and federal levels to ensure that Head Start funds were not cut in our state. He took time to write letters and call our representatives to let them know of the impact that Head Start/Early Head Start makes in our community, region and state. He even took time to meet face to face with Senator Murkowski and Governor Parnell when they were both in Nome during separate visits. Cam made our holiday party at our Nome center extra special for our Head Start kiddos by becoming Santa for the evening. Every summer he ensures that our barge order for food is always delivered to our building or helps to arrange for it to get delivered. If called upon he will help with potlucks, fix our laminator or move a desk. Our program is very fortunate to have him as an advocate for Head Start.

Kawerak



Family Advocate

Mary Long

I would like to nominate Mary Long for Family Advocate. Mary has been working for the Head Start Program for 25 years. She has worked various jobs throughout her time with our program—Teacher Aide, Teacher, Education/Disabilities Specialist and her current position Family Advocate. As our Family Advocate, Mary not only works with the families and children in St. Michael but she travels our other communities to provide services. She does site visits to support our teaching staff and to ensure that the family community partnership piece is in compliance.

In St. Michael Mary works very closely with our teaching staff to ensure that our St. Michael Program runs smoothly. St. Michael is a site that has struggled due to various circumstances. This past school year the building that we rent caught on fire and we were forced to move into another building in the community. Mary ensured that the classrooms transitioned to the new space and kept the main office up to date with any information that was needed. She created a better working environment and atmosphere with staff by running weekly staff meetings and incorporated a rule that staff must say something they are thankful for from one of their co workers each week. She also does joint parent newsletters each week with 2 classrooms and she has created monthly calendars for the families that lets the families know what is coming up in the classroom and in the community. She is working on creating a family cookbook in St. Michael with recipes for the Head Start families and community members.

Mary not only works hard at work but she also just adopted a baby girl, is a current Head Start parent with a child with special needs and has had numerous children go through our program before. Mary hold her AAS degree in Early Childhood Education and continues to take classes towards her BA degree in ECE. Our program is very fortunate to have her!

Kawerak



School District Collaboration

Nome Public Schools

I would like to nominate Nome Public Schools for the School District Collaboration of the Year award. The Kawerak Head Start program works with two public schools. One of the school districts, Nome Public Schools (NPS) has taken a hand's on approach with collaborating with our Head Start program to provide a well rounded education for our children and families.

During the 2009-2010 school year we partnered for the 1st time with NPS in regards to daily classroom routines and became a part of the pilot pre-k program through the State of Alaska. The first year went well and in August 2010 NPS came to us and asked if they could partner even further by placing 2 certified teachers into our classrooms. We have been very fortunate to have 2 staff from NPS in our classrooms in Nome where they were able to focus on small group learning and providing more learning opportunities for children in the community. With the additional staff from NPS we were able to open an afternoon session for children and provide additional services to 16 children and families. The 2 staff members placed in our classrooms also became mentors for our young teacher aides.—guiding them into becoming proud of their work that they do in and out of the classroom.

NPS not only looks at the child but at the family as a whole in the education process. They focused on recognizing parents as the key to “Excellent” and “Perfect Attendance” for children enrolled. They would provide quarterly recognition to the families of these children. They also help to plan family and game nights monthly as well.

NPS continues to provide excellent disability services to our children as well. After the death of one of their staff members services continued without any lapses. Children continued to receive the services that were needed and specialists were flown in to take care of any services that staff at NPS may not have been able to provide. We also co-hosted the Child Find this year with them in the Head Start building and it was a success with over 50 families been seen in one afternoon.

Kawerak



Head Start Director

Malinda Besett

- Malinda is a role model for all our Head Start employees and parents.
- Malinda is a caring mother for her daughter, Graciana. When one stops by her office, others are able to see how Malinda is able to juggle motherhood and her profession. Malinda even brought her daughter with her on site visits to 12 of our remote villages.
- Professionally, Malinda has set goals for herself and her staff. She has high standards for herself, fellow co-workers and employees.
- To improve children's education in the Bering Strait Region Malinda applied for and received funding to start a Early Head Start Program for children birth to 36 months in Brevig Mission, Elim and Nome.
- Malinda was able to send staff to Summer Intensive in Fairbanks, to help them work toward their CDA, AA, or BA degrees.
- Malinda is working towards a full day program for Head Start children and providing jobs as teachers and family advocates in our region.
- Malinda is able to meet deadlines and make improvements for our Head Start children and families.
- Malinda is able to plan and schedule in advance weekly teleconferences, and yearly in services for staff.
- Malinda sees the importance of communicating with staff on a regular basis; to keep them updated on Policies & Procedures and the Head Start Performance Standards.

Kawerak