

Alaska Head Start Association Awards of Excellence 2021





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Beating the Odds Award Citshiab Moua



It is my honor and privilege to nominate Citshiab Moua for the Beating the Odds award for many reasons, but most importantly for her adaptability, her hard work and dedication to herself and her beautiful daughter. Citshiab is a teen parent we have been working with the past two school years in our EHS program. She attended KCI as a child and got re-acquainted with Head Start when her Head Start teacher recognized her during a presentation about our services at a local high school.

"HOW GREAT THAT SHE WAS A HEAD START CHILD HERSELF AND BECAUSE OF THAT SHE KNEW WHAT SHE NEEDED FOR HER OWN CHILD! "

Citshiab co-parents and after the presentation at the school she and her partner toured our EHS facility. They applied for their infant daughter and got into our EHS Home-Based program with the hopes to transition into our EHS Center-Based once their child was of age and there was an opening since both parents were schooling and working.

Citshiab was doing great at school and on target to graduate. Then COVID-19 hit and disrupted her plans. So instead of going in person seeing and connecting with her peers and friends everything was virtual. There were no sports, no gatherings, a complicated virtual school schedule to follow and temporary closure of in person services for her daughter.

When our EHS center based services reopened in July of 2020, her daughter was at an age where things like teething, immunizations and allergies were creating Covid-like symptoms that required her to stay home from EHS. This made completing her senior year even more challenging at times. She was also working full time and dealing with the complicated schedules and dynamics of co-parenting. Still, she persisted through it all, and with support and encouragement from her friends and Head Start, she graduated this spring.

Citshiab has been Beating the Odds and continues to grow as a parent and an individual. How great that she was a Head Start Child herself and because of that she knew what she needed for her own child! -Selina Ellis



Early Childhood Coach of the Year Amber Calles



I was so excited to see the new category this year for Coach nominee! Our Coach Amber Calles has been with us the past couple school years. This school year Amber had to revamp her whole coaching process since we had virtual services and not all staff worked onsite all day. She came up with solid Coaching cohorts that met in person at different locations. She had to meet individually with many staff for coaching due to work hours, FML, staff being out sick and many other reasons. Amber was always understanding of even started zooming staff into the group coaching to keep with continuity.

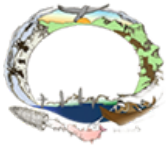
"AMBER IS SUCH A GREAT ROLE MODEL FOR SELF-CARE AND PROGRAM ENGAGEMENT"

She supported them with their goals and videotaping whenever requested. She checked in regularly with us supervisors and gave us updated handouts after coaching sessions and goals.

Amber is such a great role model for self-care and program engagement. She does things like proof read letters of interest from staff who are applying for a higher level position, create a staff bulletin board where she would pose a question of the week and a beautiful "Wish you well" board, organize a "meal train" for an employee who had been in a serious accident, etc. She has great relationships with so many staff because she shows interest and follow through, and most importantly because she shows she cares.

Amber is team player who is always offering a hand with the unglamorous projects too, like organizing curriculum kits or cleaning—something we had to do a lot of in the past year. Amber helped fill in when and where she could, even covering one of our offsites as a Center Director for a week during an emergency. As a PD Specialist she has provided vital support to several staff in completing and achieving their CDA.

Amber is an amazing Coach who has earned consideration for this honor. -Selina Ellis



Tanana
Chiefs
Conference

Head Start Father of the Year Keith Charlie



Keith Charlie is the proud father of 5 children. He is also the Tribal Administrator for Minto, Alaska, a small community of 210 community members located 3 hours north of Fairbanks. As a Tribal Administrator, Keith has to manage a full staff, as well as ensuring all village maintenance gets done; writing grants; attending Tribal Council meetings; monitoring budgets; and all the "other duties assigned".

He is an active Head Start parent, and attends as many of the home visits with his two youngest boys and his wife as he can. Prior to Covid-19 Keith attended socials and volunteered his time and resources.

**"OF ALL THE HONORS KEITH HAS OBTAINED, THE
ROLE OF HUSBAND AND FATHER IS THE ONE HE
CHERISHES THE MOST"**

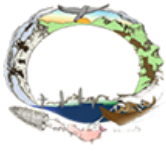
He is also a Head Start partner, and transports many packages and mail to our second floor Head Start office so our staff can sort and disperse to families.

Covid-19 restrictions were especially burdensome for the small interior villages in the Tanana Chiefs Conference Region, and Minto was no exception. In addition to his regular Tribal Administrator duties, Keith added being on the Minto village Task Force for Covid-19 protocols.

Keith stands out as Father of the Year to TCC Head Start because in spite of having a lot of different responsibilities, Keith takes an active role as a parent, is one of his children's first and most important teachers, and all the while continues to be a positive role model, promoting a sober and wellness oriented lifestyle, to include coaching youth basketball teams.

In 2016, Keith was honored with the Patti Hyslop leadership in sobriety award for setting a positive example in the native community of Minto and in the interior of Alaska. In 2017, Keith was an Arctic Remote Energy Networks Academy (ARENA) participant, as well as being honored to receive a Native American 40 under 40 Award. Of all the honors Keith has obtained, the role of husband and father is the one he cherishes the most, and we are proud to nominate him for this Award in hopes that he can add the title of Head Start Father of the Year to his growing list of accolades!

-Jennifer Russell



Tanana
Chiefs
Conference

Early Head Start Teacher of the Year

Brianna Ketzler



Over this last school year, Brianna has really been a bright star. She has been innovative, creative, and has worked with every parent in their own unique way. She took time to learn new technology as she built a website for the Nenana Early Head Start, created a Facebook group specific to her families, as well as just picking up the phone to have a genuine talk with a parent.

"BRIANNA MAINTAINED EXCELLENT COMMUNICATION TO ENSURE QUALITY SERVICES WERE BEING PROVIDED TO FAMILIES"

She has been the "What if" or "Why" staff person who helped Administration think through a mitigation plan, and thought of the reality of operating a center based program during a pandemic.

Brianna took a leadership role when her center needed a spokesperson, or a liaison, to help make decisions, or pull the team together for a meeting. Brianna maintained excellent communication to ensure quality services were being provided to families.

Brianna and her team in the Nenana EHS classroom was the first classroom to successfully re-open to children in April 2021, and as a result she and the team helped pave the way, she and the team paved the way to help calm fears for parents, as well as staff in other communities, giving them the confidence boost they needed.

-Jennifer Russell



Program Policy Council APIA Head Start Policy Council Tabitha Johansen, Chair



Our APIA Policy Council this year was outstanding! We only had one returning PC member that remained on the council from the previous year and this brought about a sense of apprehension as we worried about someone who would provide us leadership.

"THESE POLICY COUNCIL MEMBERS HIT THE GROUND RUNNING AND OUR FEARS WERE QUICKLY SUBSIDED AS WE WATCHED HOW DEDICATED AND ACCOUNTABLE THESE PARENTS WERE! "

However, these policy council members hit the ground running and our fears were quickly subsided as we watched how dedicated and accountable these parents were!

Being a Policy Council member, takes a large amount of time and is a great commitment. There are monthly PC meetings as well and monthly Parent Committee meetings. All PC meetings are done through teleconferences.

APIA nominates APIA Head Start Policy Council, Tabitha Johansen, Chair, for the AHSA Policy Council of the Year!

Thank you for your consideration.

-Beverly "Bonnie" Mierzejek



School District Collaboration Aleutians East Borough School District



APIA School District Superintendent
Patrick Mayer

The Aleutian Pribilof Islands Head Start Program would like to nominate the Aleutians East Borough School District for the School District Collaboration award. For the last 15+ years, AEBSD has been a true advocate and partner in Child Find, Administrators and Kindergarten and Pre-K Staff.

AEBSD works with our Head Start program to ensure all developmental screenings are completed and reviewed prior to the 45-day deadline as required by Head Start.

**"WE TRULY VALUE THEIR SUPPORT THROUGHOUT THE
LAST 15+ YEARS AND THEIR DEDICATION TO
EXCELLENCE FOR THE CHILDREN AND FAMILIES! "**

Without these collaborative efforts, our students with possible developmental delays would not have scheduled observations and the necessary referrals. Concerns regarding special needs children are resolved in a timely manner with a single phone call, email or face to face meetings between the AEBSD Special Education Staff and the APIA parents and staff.

In addition, APIA has been invited to the AEBSD Kindergarten classrooms for a "Transition Lunch" activity for all of our graduating preschool children, their families as well as our Staff. This way a smooth transition of children and families is ensured from Head Start to Kindergarten.

The Aleutians East Borough School District has worked collaboratively with our program to ensure we are providing quality preschool services within our communities of Sand Point and King Cove. We truly value their support throughout the last 15+ years and their dedication to excellence for the children and families!

APIA respectfully submits this nomination to recognize their commitment and efforts! -Beverly "Bonnie" Mierzejek



Assistant or Deputy Director of the Year Summer Keelan



CCS Early Learning program has a lot of newly hired Family Partnership Coordinators in various locations under the CCS umbrella. Summer Keelan, Family Partnership Coordinator, has been very supportive to all the newly hired FPS's. She is always there to help and train the new FPC's, she is a natural leader, and also an advocate for the CCS program.

Summer is friendly, always giving her knowledge, and never hesitates to give a helping hand no matter how much she has on her plate.

"SUMMER IS DEDICATED TO SUPPORTING EACH AND EVERY FAMILY THAT WALKS THROUGH OUR DOORS EVEN WHEN THEY DON'T QUALIFY FOR THE PROGRAM"

To me, without her support as a new CCS Family Partnership Coordinator, I wouldn't have known more than I do now if it wasn't for her. Thank you Summer for your help and support to make CCS Early Learning Program the best it can be!!

Summer started her CCS journey as a parent and then soon after became an employee, working her way up into a leadership position as the Family Partnership Coordinator for the Wasilla Head Start Center. Summer is dedicated to supporting each and every family that walks through our doors even when they don't qualify for the program. She is instrumental in building systems that have children and families at heart. Summer is the first to ask the hard questions that prompt reflection as well as ensure accountability and accuracy. Her passion for the work she does energizes those she works with. Summer is a true walking example of how Head Start makes a difference in the lives of children and families.

-Marita Kameroff



Assistant Teacher of the Year Alia Heck



Alia has worked for the agency for many years, she started as a substitute and then as an Assistant Teacher. She is very dependable, flexible, and helps with many solutions for the center to prevent problems; she is always thinking ahead and is very proactive. She was very helpful to me on learning how this center worked when I became the Center Coordinator at Wasilla. Since I have worked with Alia I have seen her evolve into one of the best teachers in our agency.

"SHE WORKS HARD ON HELPING CHILDREN CALM THEMSELVES, DEEP BREATHING, AND HOW TO SOLVE PROBLEMS WITHOUT TOTALLY FALLING APART"

She has stepped up twice to cover as the lead teacher for several months in a classroom while we searched for a new teacher. She has always taken it on as a learning opportunity. When the new teacher was on board, Alia helped her learn our procedures and routines in the classroom and on home visits. New teachers have always been very excited to work with a teacher assistant of this caliber and one commented that he had been in Early Childhood for 23 years but has learned many things from Alia. Alia teaches by example in many areas such as how to stay calm, how to have the children problem solve, plus many ways to work with difficult children.

Through the years, Alia has worked with some very difficult behaviors very successfully. She works hard on helping children calm themselves, deep breathing, and how to solve problems without totally falling apart. If they reach the fall apart stage, she is patient and calming, getting them out of their trauma to become solution orientated.

nomination continued on back...



I heard many times Alia asking a child what their back-up plan was going to be if they could not get what they wanted right now. She allowed them to problem-solve and come up with their plan with a little guidance from her. She has learned many skills. Furthermore, when Alia chooses a goal from CLASS and works on developing that skill, she works on it. I remember doing an observation and saying you are great at self-talk and parallel talk, she told me, well of course she is better at that because she had worked on that goal all this past period. It works, setting goals and working on them.

This year with COVID-19, Alia helped make sure we were sterilizing and sanitizing the right way. She and her co-workers came up with ways to individualize sensory materials and how to keep up the sanitizing for all projects. She was very helpful during staff meetings on sharing what was working and not working for their room. During training, I love having Alia in those groups because she is great at sharing how it works in her classroom giving other teaching staff different ways to think about the subject or new ideas on how to help build skills with children. She enjoys learning and sharing new skills or experiences she has learned.

When a new sub or Assistant Teacher needs training on the bus or classroom, Alia is the one I always go to and ask if she would mind training them. She is always willing to help people learn the right ways to do their jobs. She remembers to tell them all the little hints on what they may come up against in releasing children off the bus or other possibilities on the job. She helps them in learning to follow the lead of the teacher or assistant in the classroom. If they are in the center more than once she is a good follow-up person for them on how to do their jobs.

She was called on again this year to step up and be the teacher for the last few months of the year. She did this with grace and flexibility, to allow the other teacher to attain her goal. She rode the bus, set up the classroom and was in the teachers role. I think she will be moving up in our organization very soon. She obtained her Child Development Associate (CDA credential several years ago and will be graduating soon with her Associate's degree in Early Childhood. She is a truly inspirational leader. -Neva Lancaster

Alia is a very positive influencer. She's recently stepped up to cover as a teacher for the remainder of the year. -Corrine Lekanof



Home Visitor of the Year Tammy Berdeaux



I want to recognize Tammy for the nomination of the Home Visitor because I feel she goes above and beyond in her work with our families at CCS.

Tammy is amazing in her work! When a child ages 0-3 or a pregnant mama is enrolled with her, she embraces not only them but their family, too. Tammy takes the time to know who they are, respects where they come from, and walks beside them in their current needs and personal journey.

"HER ABILITY TO BE AVAILABLE, TO LISTEN, AND TO SHARE HER WORDS WITH KINDNESS AND GENTLENESS ALLOWS THE FAMILIES TO TRUST IN HER GUIDANCE"

Tammy provides her time, resources, materials, and activities, while giving space and grace to the family as they embark on the direction and goals that they set with her.

Her ability to be available, to listen, and to share her words with kindness and gentleness allows the families to trust in her guidance. With the year of COVID and personal difficult circumstances for Tammy, this year came with many challenges; however, Tammy was able to remain steadfast.

She stayed committed, was creative in providing and delivering materials, activities, and resources, as well as continuing the engagement with and for the families. Tammy is a blessing for CCS! -Sharon Bulawa



Leadership Award Cindy Bergstrom



I am nominating Cindy because she is AMAZING! As a Center Coordinator for Meadow Lakes CCS she has been our Rock in her leadership! Cindy's ability to overcome obstacles and remain steadfast has been a key in the success of navigating through the 2020/21 school year. We not only had COVID as an issue all year, but we also had a flood within our building in March. Cindy has been committed, strong, and compassionate through all of this.

"NO MATTER WHAT TERRIBLE ISSUE WAS AT HAND, SHE ALWAYS HANDLED IT WITH GRACE AND AS ONE OF THE MOST PROFESSIONAL HUMAN BEINGS I HAVE EVER MET. "

Her heart for caring not only for us as her staff but also for the children and families within our program is wonderful! Regardless of the challenges put before her she was able to guide us all through a successful year!

Through the many and constant changes as well as the tons of questions we all had for her she was able to respectfully and kindly address the needs of all. There were times in which her heart was heavy (and a few tears) with the choices and decisions that needed to be made to ensure all were safe and protected but through the ups and downs we could find her encouraging and supporting us all.

Cindy created an atmosphere of connecting, fun, laughter, and hope in spite of all we had to do and change in accordance with the COVID mandates. She allowed us grace as we shared the many emotions throughout the year and provided space for us to be in the moment of what we were experiencing. Cindy is a blessing and I am thankful to work under her leadership at Meadow Lakes Center! -Sharon Bulawa

nomination continued on back...



I first met Cindy when I was a Head Start parent. I spent most of my day while my child was in class doing various tasks and projects around the Meadow Lakes Center. Cindy was always welcoming and each morning I was greeted with a smile and warm welcome.

As more time passed I had the chance to watch Cindy interact with the students, families, and staff on a daily level. She always gave each and everyone of us the same respect and support regardless of being a parent, head teacher, or Executive Director. No matter what terrible issue was at hand, she always handled it with grace and as one of the most professional human beings I have ever met.

As more time went on she encouraged me to take steps towards becoming a substitute, I was reluctant to do so. I did not have the same confidence in myself as she did in me. Over time she showed me I was capable of more than I let myself believe. I did become a sub! She gave me all the support I needed to be successful in my new role as a substitute, and in doing so I gained more knowledge and training to better myself not just as a new employee to Head Start, but a better mother to my own children and has profoundly changed the core of who I am.

I am now lucky enough to be an associate educator at the Meadow Lakes head start under Cindy, and even years later Cindy is still the heart of Center and in my opinion the reason our team can be so strong to support our families and are able to support them in such a high quality. -Kristen Mayo

Head Start Mother of the Year Lenora Gilila



"SHE HAS DELIVERED ALL OF OUR HOME VISIT, HEAD START CLASS, AND GROUP SOCIAL PACKETS FREE OF CHARGE ALL YEAR. "

Lenora is the post master at our local post office.

She has delivered all of our Home Visit, Head Start Class, and Group Social Packets free of charge ALL year.

We've had to send weekly packets through our local post office due to the ongoing pandemic and she wouldn't take payment for any of the 37 packets that we brought over every week for 20+ weeks.

She is also a mother of a current head start student. -*Shawna Williams*



Bus Driver of the Year **Kristie Bass**



"THE CHILDREN LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING HER EVERY DAY!"

Kristie is fun, energetic and works with the monitor to build positive relationships with all of the children they transport.

Kristie is safety-minded and helped install all new 5 point harness systems on the bus. She also loves to decorate the bus.

Mrs. Kristie loves bling and glitter and often wears a fun hat, scarf or pair of printed pants that match the season we are celebrating.

Mrs. Kristie changes her bus schedule to adapt to the needs of the program and never complains. The children look forward to seeing her every day!

-Janice Smith



Content Area Specialist of the Year Tundra Paulsen



Tundra started her journey with Head Start as a parent in the program and has since moved through the program as a teacher, interim center director, Family Service Coordinator, and now as a Regional Manager supporting 6 rural Alaskan Head Start programs and staff.

She is dedicated to serving her team and being their biggest advocate.

"SHE TREATS HER TEAM AS FAMILY AND WOULD DO ANYTHING TO ENSURE THEY HAVE THE TOOLS AND RESOURCES TO DO THE BEST JOB THAT THEY CAN"

I hired her as the Family Service Coordinator knowing she had more to give to the program and our families and I hoped she would move into the Regional Manager role after completing her degree. She did everything that I knew she would and she continues to amaze me with her desire to do the best she can for her team.

Most of all, Tundra reminds me constantly that we do this work for the children and families in our programs and they, above all, should be receiving the best effort we can provide.

She treats her team as family and would do anything to ensure they have the tools and resources to do the best job that they can. Her path from being a Head Start parent to being in Management is commendable and her love of the work she does makes you want to step up and do more, too. -Beth Klein



Maintenance Staff of the Year Chloe Falkner



"SHE IS QUICK TO ADDRESS ISSUES (THINGS THAT NEED FIXED) THAT ARE BROUGHT TO HER"

Chloe is our "rookie of the year" and plays an important part in our team as the Food Service Assistant and the Custodian/Maintenance Specialist. Chloe assisted the cook in how to effectively manage the new distance meal preparations.

Chloe also doesn't let her fear of spiders keep her from needing to crawl into the attic every week or two to check buckets from our leaky roof.

She is quick to address issues (things that need fixed) that are brought to her and if she doesn't know how to fix it, then she will ask and watch You Tube Videos so she can learn how to do it.

She also incorporates her artistic expression into her job by painting seasonal greetings and pictures in the entry way. -Angela Nickich



Corporate Award Three Bears Alaska



Three Bears Alaska is a family-owned chain of Alaskan Grocery Stores and so much more; it was started in Tok in 1980.

This Cooperate Partner has been vital a part of our community and has provided us with above and beyond outstanding service.

Last year, when the COVID Pandemic began, and there were no sanitizing wipes to be found, the Store Manager Larry Weiz, Jr. donated a whole case from the store's personal janitorial supplies.

"FOR THOSE OF US IN RURAL ALASKA, WE CANNOT EXPRESS ENOUGH GRATITUDE OF HAVING SUCH A GREAT LOCAL GROCERY STORE IN OUR COMMUNITY"

Our Head Start is in the same building of the Tok Senior Center and he knew the importance of keeping both populations healthy. When our program's fridge went out, they prioritized us on their backorder list and even delivered it to us. When our freezer went out, they let us store our food in their freezer. If we want or need something, they special order it for us, including different food for our graduation/closing ceremonies.

A few months ago, they happened to have some really cool manipulatives. When staff told them how much the kids loved them, they ordered more so that we could purchase one for each student. We are even doing a classroom planting activity with the soil they donated.

They have provided us with white handled bags used to decorate for Easter Egg Hunts and Valentine's Day. In years past, they have donated the main dish of turkey roasts to the Parent Committee sponsored potluck Thanksgiving and Christmas Dinners. They also donate pumpkins each year for dads to help carve in the classroom. For the past several years, Three Bears has provided us with a generous 10% discount; this in-kind gift has really added up. For those of us in RurAL Alaska, we cannot express enough gratitude of having such a great local grocery store in our community. Thank you, Three Bears Alaska! -Carrie Beeman



Humanitarian Award Ketchikan Public Library



"THEY PROVIDED LIVE STORY TIMES VIA FACEBOOK TO THE COMMUNITY AND ACTIVITY BAGS FOR ADULTS, CHILDREN AND FAMILIES"

The Ketchikan Public Library, a place where field trips and story times used to occur but has been closed to the public and school groups for the majority of the pandemic. However, that didn't keep the staff in the Children's Library down. They provided live story times via Facebook to the community and activity bags for adults, children and families.

In doing so, they also made activity bags and dropped them off at Head Start for all our families several times this school year. They also sent us a flyer each month that has special events for adults and children so that we can share it with our families.

Sometimes their guest speakers include people that talk about topics from financial literacy to self-care. -Angela Nickich

FAIRBANKS NATIVE
ASSOCIATION



HEAD START
0-5

Administrative Support Staff of the Year Poly Chico-Acevedo



When looking at the nominations for this particular award I could not think of a better candidate than Poly Chico. I cannot think of a moment when Poly is not smiling and willing to help. It never matters what Poly is tasked with she is going to smile while doing it and give 100% at all times. Poly makes it exceptionally easy to ask for assistance or for help. She will drop everything she is doing to accommodate everyone else.

**"MORNING AFTER MORNING I WATCH AS FAMILY
AFTER FAMILY ARE GREETED WITH A SMILE AND A
LAUGH"**

English is Poly's second language, but that is not a barrier for her at all. Poly is taking classes and perusing her undergrad degree as her youngest child finishes high school.

Because Poly holds such a high value on education and is so accommodating Poly will always jump right in to become an interpreter for many of our parents who do not understand the English language.

Although her title is Receptionist/Data Tech, weekly Poly meets with a home visitor and a family for their hour and half visit to translate and interpret the entire learning experience for the children and parent to meet their goals. This would not happen without her humble happiness and willing demeanor.

nomination continued on back...



Due to the pandemic, we now have to meet our families at the front door and walk the children to their classes. Morning after morning I watch as family after family are greeted with a smile and a laugh. Children are separating from their parents and are met with funny, upbeat and encouraging words each day. I am certain the parents would be shocked to learn that the person who greets them so warmly every morning is facing a tremendous medical hurdle at this time in her life.

Although she has faced some setbacks in her medical care, which she has to travel out of town for, sometimes for a few weeks, and it all truly does become expensive for a single parent such as herself no one would ever she is facing such hardship right now. While undergoing extensive surgeries, hospital and hotel stays, Poly never missed one of our college classes.

Immediately after surgery, while in recovery she showed up on the zoom and refused to fall behind, also she helped others such as myself to finish the final project. Although Poly has been going through so much in her personal life facing her medical hardships I believe there are many coworkers who have no idea that she is going through anything at all because her gracious pleasant attitude has never wavered.

In addition, she takes time to check on other families in our program who have suffered tragedies because she is concerned about how they are feeling, what they are going through and the outcome. Again, Poly Chico is an exemplary example of how all of us should react to living with a tremendous hardship and Poly is without a doubt a tremendous asset to FNA Head Start. She is truly an example to us all.

Thank you for your time and consideration,
Aliya Maiden

FAIRBANKS NATIVE
ASSOCIATION



HEAD START
0-5

Cook of the Year Jeremy Agee



I would like to nominate Jeremy Agee as Cook of the Year for Head Start. Jeremy has held many different positions within Head Start throughout his career. He has been both an Assistant Teacher and a Primary Teacher. He has been our cook for almost 10 years now.

While responding to the pandemic Jeremy has been busy ensuring our Head Start children had food at home. . He managed shopping for our bi-weekly food boxes that accompanied our learning kits and family services items.

"JEREMY'S POSITIVE ATTITUDE AND EFFORT TO TAKE CARE OF PEOPLE CARRIES THROUGH HIS WORK."

He selected and planned the purchase of items and assembled the boxes, putting the boxes together. At a time where shopping in bulk was difficult, he located enough of the same items to send out to each family. He also made sure the families health needs were met, teaming with the Education Managers to obtain items required for the lesson plans that involved cooking activities.

Jeremy has sought feedback from families and adjusted menus while continuing to meet CACFP guidelines as best as possible, helping families stretch their budget during this time. Jeremy has ensured that items for food accommodations were still purchased and available to the families as they needed them. Many families have expressed over the past year how beneficial these boxes were for their families with children and families home 24 hours a day due to lock down and the pandemic.

nomination continued on back...



Jeremy also assisted in a classroom maintaining contact and supporting teachers during the pandemic ensuring that teachers had support as best he could. Jeremy continued to help support classrooms as we moved recently to in person services while preparing the kitchen and getting ready to serve children back in person.

Jeremy's positive attitude and effort to take care of people carries through his work. Jeremy is always upbeat; he looks for the good in every situation and is always striving to improve the relationships around him whether it serving the families or supporting a coworker or being a friend. Jeremy gives a quick smile and hello to everyone. His support of his coworkers does not go unnoticed. Jeremy takes the time to check in with staff and to support them.

Jeremy thank you for continuing to serve our families and staff, you are an example of optimism even when everything is changing. You remind us all to look for the good in all things. -Angi Thomas

FAIRBANKS NATIVE
ASSOCIATION



HEAD START
0-5



Family Advocate of the Year Aliya Maiden

Please consider my nomination for Aliya Maiden as Family Advocate of the Year as I work alongside Mrs. Aliya as a fellow advocate in our program but I am writing this letter as a parent.

This past year with the pandemic it has been hard for everyone. My own family a month prior to the start of the pandemic experienced a house fire where we lost everything. All four of our children have gone through the foster care system and are adopted.

"AS A HEAD START FAMILY THERE ARE NOT ENOUGH WORDS, GIFTS OR ACTS OF APPRECIATION MY FAMILY CAN SAY OR DO TO THANK HER ENOUGH FOR EVERYTHING SHE HAS DONE FOR MY FAMILY OR OTHER FAMILIES"

They are also all past Head Start students from our program with our last graduating from FNA Head Start 0-5 in August of this year.

I was out of town when the call came from my children and husband that our house was on fire. As I rush to make plans to return home, I notified my team and Aliya as my coworker. I cannot tell you how quickly Aliya started to compile things for my family. To this day the simple act of Aliya staying on the phone with me as I cried and her telling me to breath, that everyone was safe meant and means the world to me. I remember on the phone Aliya directing her sons to gather blankets and material and scissors and her paper and pens. Aliya let me know she would deliver dinner the next night at our hotel and that I needed to stay in contact and update her as I made my way home.

nomination continued on back...



Aliya did not just deliver dinner that next night, she brought everything we would need for our stay at the hotels. She made each of the boys a blanket as she knows they love blankets and pillows. The boys a year later still sleep with those and they have become their comfort blankets. My 2nd oldest calls his “my made with love by Maiden blanket.” This gesture alone brought so much comfort to my children.

Aliya didn’t just bring the “best fried chicken” as my 5 year old said or the best comfy blankets. She came prepared with a list that I would later need to do (she knows I am list person) and applications for me to fill out for assistance. The list included things that I needed to do right away, a list that had what I would later need to furnish a home, and a shopping list of basics. The fact that I didn’t have to think in those moments was such a blessing. Aliya even included color pens that she knew I used to help myself stay organized along with notebooks for my husband and myself.

While we had some savings build to cover, Aliya knew the process for insurance was long. She understood even when I thought we were functioning just fine; we (especially myself) were in a survival state of mind. Looking back now the support she provided helping me to fill out forms I knew how to fill out since I helped and assisted others was so valuable. She took the time to make sure that i’s were dotted and t’s were crossed so that the paperwork wasn’t returned. This helped us so much as we navigated so many challenges with getting duplicates of important paper work such as adoption records, social security cards, children’s medical records, our children’s medication and my husband’s medication. Aliya helped to contact the school district and the homeless liaison and the children’s teachers to notify them of what had happened. She in many ways became their go to person so that we would not be overwhelmed with so many people asking questions or offering help.

Aliya coordinated not only with the community but our church to help us obtain the basics. She coordinated getting the boys backpacks and lists from the teachers making sure the boys would have everything they needed so their education and services were not interrupted. The boys were at school the very next day and within two days because of Aliya coordinating and working with the district the boys had everything. Their outside private therapies were also looped in by Aliya’s coordination and working as our Family Advocate, the boys did not miss their appointments as transportation was arranged to and from with family and friends as well as down time so that my husband and I could get as much done as possible.

Once I returned to work a few weeks after, Aliya was first to check on me the day we had a fire drill. I will admit that I didn’t think the sound of the alarm would affect me when notified that we were going to have drill as I was in a classroom teaching at the time. It hit afterwards as I took a break and Aliya held me in those moments and remind me that we were all safe and that my children were safe at school and my husband was at work safe.

As the pandemic hit 2 weeks after we found housing, Aliya was instrumental in supporting my family and my children as we went from one traumatic experience to dealing with the pandemic in an almost empty house. Aliya supporting me through the rough days of virtual learning, while working from home with 4 special needs high energetic boys, to developing a safe plan for my husband whose employment was considered essential. I can say without a doubt that Aliya's support and guidance during these times both with the house fire and the pandemic is a huge part of why the boys and myself and my family made it through the pandemic while rebuilding our life and home.

I knew from working with Aliya as an advocate how much she cares for the families she serves but experiencing it first hand as I faced a traumatic experience followed by the pandemic. As a Head Start family there are not enough words, gifts or acts of appreciation my family can say or do to thank her enough for everything she has done for my family or other families. FNA Head Start is blessed with an exceptional and amazing advocate serving families in Mrs. Aliya Maiden. -*Angi Thomas*

FAIRBANKS NATIVE
ASSOCIATION



HEAD START
0-5

Community Advocate of the Year Mac Transit



We would like to nominate Mac Transit as Head Start Community Advocates of the year. Mac Transit is the local bus system here in Fairbanks.

During COVID and with remote learning in place they have continued to provide services to our families. With our recent return to in-person services their continued support of our families and staff is priceless.

"MANY OF OUR FAMILIES WHO USE THIS SERVICE TELL US HOW THE DRIVERS CHECK IN WITH THEM WHEN THEY MISS THE BUS OR IF THEY ARE NOT ON SCHEDULE ENSURING OUR FAMILIES SAFETY AND WELLBEING"

Prior to COVID and when returning to in-person services Mac transit drivers have gone beyond helping to empower our parents to continue to progress even during this difficult time.

We watch daily as one driver and a family have worked out a plan where the parent calls the teacher while the bus is coming down the road, the teacher is at the door of the building. The parent exits and does the sign in process at the front door. While she is doing this, the driver very slowly does a circle in our parking lot. This small measure of time allows the parent to drop off and get back on the bus and not have to wait 20-30 minutes for the next bus. This has a great impact as it allows for the parent to get their child to the program and then proceed to their workplace on time, every day.

nomination continued on back...



Another way MAC Transit dispatchers and drivers help to support and empower our families is by taking the time to talk and get to know the families. Many of our families who use this service tell us how the drivers check in with them when they miss the bus or if they are not on schedule ensuring our families safety and wellbeing.

We have had families who shared that driver noticing their child or themselves may be missing gloves or hats in the winter having provided those to the parent the next day or have offered to connect the parent to community resources themselves. Drivers also know that we have staff and families who during winter months stay in the foyer of our building and wait for the bus. The drivers allow time for the families and staff to exit the building and make it to the bus stop limiting their exposure to the extreme cold that we experience in Fairbanks, Alaska.

Drivers taking the time when on tight schedules to help a parent (and staff) by learning to read the bus schedules or providing alternate bus routes, helps to empower our parents as they navigate a town under a lot of construction right now. Many of our parents worked through the pandemic and used the bus system as their only mode of transportation.

Mac transit also provided a training for parents and staff on the how the bus system is working during COVID while we were working remotely and providing remote services. They provided individual copies of all the bus schedules and mask for our families. The trainer Ms. Chris took the time to explain and answer all the questions they had. The staff and parents even months later are talking about how great Ms Chris was on the training. We can't wait to return to fully opening our program to visitors and have her visit our classrooms as part of transportation studies.

Thank you to all of the MAC transit drivers and staff who go above and beyond helping to get our families to and from school, work, training and life in general. They are not only transporting them but caring about our families and staff is a strength that many of our families include in their plans and goals. Thank you for supporting Head Start!

-Aliya Maiden

FAIRBANKS NATIVE
ASSOCIATION



HEAD START
0-5

Cultural Awareness Award Wanda Cover



I would like to nominate Wanda Cover for the Cultural Awareness Award. Wanda is one of our Primary Teachers in our part day preschool classroom. Wanda is an outstanding teacher who brings cultural awareness to the forefront of her teaching.

Wanda takes the time to teach new staff and to help everyone understand the importance that each culture in our classroom and building has, being sure to honor and respect them all. She recognizes the importance in making a connection to individual families and children by learning about their culture.

"HER ABILITY TO BE AVAILABLE, TO LISTEN, AND TO SHARE HER WORDS WITH KINDNESS AND GENTLENESS ALLOWS THE FAMILIES TO TRUST IN HER GUIDANCE"

As a teacher Wanda works to learn her family's cultural traditions, when appropriate she incorporates them into her classroom activities or environments. With COVID this was much harder, however Wanda found a way to include children's first languages as well as traditions and important dates in the virtual teachings or learning kits that were sent home.

When Wanda has a child enroll in her class who is preparing to celebrate a special day or event she will invite the family to share a special circle time with the class. In person pre-COVID, she would prepare cooking lessons and using input from parents. When teaching during COVID she would offer for the families to share their recipes and they were sent out to the other families.

nomination continued on back...



Wanda also helps to incorporate Alaska Native cultural into our program daily. She takes the time to teach the history and meaning behind why things are done the way they are. Wanda educates the staff on the hardships and trauma her ancestors have faced and the importance they play in educating the next generation. Wanda takes pride her in heritage and Alaskan Native culture passing the gift of her knowledge and stories to our Head Start community.

Wanda will seek advice and guidance from elders to help explain and teach the families and children. Wanda enlists her own family to help as well in preparing for events. She actively helps during Festival of Native Arts in teaching the songs and dances. Wanda comes prepared to help enhance the activities prepared. She has taken time to sew Kuspuks, an Indian dress and even helped bead for the regalia that the children wear.

-Angi Thomas



Teacher of the Year Courtland Pannebaker



Mr. Pannebaker goes above and beyond what we call expectations.

He is there for our kids as well as our community. He is not a man that can easily say no when it comes to helping others no matter the task or what is asked of him.

I've witnessed him working on a 40 foot whale for 12 hours straight without wanting a share or acknowledgment of his hard work.

"COURTLAND IS KNOWN FOR HIS WORK ETHICS AND FLEXIBILITY BOTH ON AND OFF THE CLOCK"

He comes and works during the weekends and after hours and he successfully teaches our students and has reached out to families throughout his time in Gambell (at least 5 years).

He is in constant training to better himself as a teacher, and as a person. Courtland is known for his work ethics and flexibility both on and off the clock.

Living in a small village is rough. I will say that elders are the toughest on newcomers but Courtland has earned the respect of many and they now refer to him as Naayvaghvik, the month of October (his birth month), and because he is a successful provider. -Lucas Aningayou



Head Start Director of the Year **Anne Shade**



Anne Shade from Bristol Bay Native Association deserves to be recognized as the AHSA Director of the Year!

Anne has been an amazing leader for many years, not only for her program but for our statewide Association as well.

Anne consistently works for continuous improvement and is not afraid to tackle the big challenges that come her way.

"SHE CONTINUES TO BE THE DIRECTOR WHO REACHES OUT TO ENGAGE, MENTOR, AND SUPPORT NEW DIRECTORS WHO CAN OFTEN FEEL OVERWHELMED AND ALONE"

A couple examples of this are seen in her taking on the role of Child Development Director for BBNA which oversees child care and Head Start - and her work to guide BBNA from RX over into AIAN which is a better fit.

As the former President of AHSA for many years Anne worked very hard to pull grantees together so our voice would be more effective. She continues to be the Director who reaches out to engage, mentor, and support new Directors who can often feel overwhelmed and alone.

For these reasons and many more I nominate Anne Shade for AHSA Director of the Year! -Mark Lackey



All 2021 AHSA Award Nominees



Alicia Fields
 Angeliz Rodriguez
 Ann James
 Ariel Webster
 Beverly Mierzejak
 Brandi Heppe
 Carrie Beeman
 Casie Marang
 Cassandra Harris
 Cindy Deschamps
 Dana Story
 Darilyn Bryam
 Debra Harbison
 Dina Contreras
 Dorothy Harris
 Erin Monarch
 Fancy Conner
 Hannah Jackson
 Jeanny Manilay
 Jennifer Ellison
 Jessica Toth
 Karen VanDoesalaar
 Kelly Pertano

Kristen Mayo
 Lana Arsenault
 Lillian Willis
 Luz Villamarin
 Mai Yia Yang
 Mark Lackey
 Martha "Marty" Newton
 Martha Spencer
 Maya Blackweasel
 Melissa Charlie
 Mystic Webster
 Patricia Gardner
 Pilita Fernandez
 Raelynn Verney
 Rena Akerelrea
 Sheree Titus
 Tana Heussner
 Terre Lee
 Tess Gustin
 Tracy Neves
 Valeria Fostet
 Victoria Grey
 Wendy King