

Alaska Head Start Association Awards of Excellence 2022





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Beating the Odds
Award
Joe Steel



**"JOE HAS DONE A REMARKABLE JOB COMING UP
FROM THE BOTTOM AND WE ARE LOOKING
FORWARD TO SEEING HIM STAY ON TOP"**

Joe has gone from being without his daughter, to living in a shelter with his daughter, to obtaining housing, getting a vehicle and being able to provide for his daughter. He even gets her to school when the bus is not in service. Joe has done a remarkable job coming up from the bottom and we are looking forward to seeing him stay on top.

-Angela Nickich



Assistant Teacher of the Year Shaira Dungca



Shaira is respectful, culturally sensitive and nonjudgmental of the Head Start families, children and staff. Being bilingual, she has assisted me with families with accessing community resources if needed. She's demonstrated the ability to work effectively in a team environment.

Shaira maintains confidentiality, has professional boundaries and has no problem gaining trust in the families we serve.

"SHE'S MINDFUL OF WHAT FAMILIES MAY NEED AND WILL CHECK UP ON FAMILIES IN QUARANTINE AND OFFER ASSISTANCE OR ACCESSING RESOURCES IF NEEDED"

In the classroom, she ensures it is a safe, healthy & nurturing environment and ensures staff is using the principles of Active Supervision at all times. Also while in the classroom, she is very observant of children's behaviors & interests. She is aware of the changing resources in the community and brings things to my attention if she has a concern or ideas.

With the changes that COVID-19 has brought to our community, she's mindful of what families may need and will check up on families in quarantine and offer assistance or accessing resources if needed.

She has helped guide the new TA in learning their position, responsibilities & the program as Shaira also switched roles from FA to TA this school year.

She doesn't skip a beat! It's noticed & appreciated that she is a self starter & self directed. Without hesitation, she jumps in to help where needed from the kitchen to the classroom or in the office. -Kathy Johnson



Cook of the Year **Debra Harbison**



Over the past 18 years, Ms. Deb has held various positions in Early Childhood Education. Those positions include: classroom Teacher, Head Start Health Coordinator, and Parents As Teachers (PAT) Parent Educator. Deb has always been there to support Tok Head Start. When the Bus Monitor had to fly out to help with her sick father, Deb subbed for months. When our last Cook had to stop working for medical reasons, Deb stepped up and finished out that school year.

"DEB IS ALWAYS ONE OF THOSE PEOPLE WHO GOES ABOVE AND BEYOND"

She then also subbed for the start of that following year, until she was hired as our Cook in 2019. This wasn't the first time Deb has taken on this responsibility, she was also our Cook from 2002-2004. It was during this time that our classroom adopted the handwashing song she created that is STILL in use. We sing this song before each meal while using sign language as a transition activity. One of our classroom jobs is a song leader. This child starts by choosing how many pumps of soap. Often, he/she selects three.

ONE...TWO...THREE!

Before we eat our lunch/snack we wash our hands,
WITH SOAP!

Before we eat our lunch/snack we wash our hands,
WITH SOAP!

Before we eat our lunch/snack we wash our hands,
WITH SOAP!

nomination continued on back...



It's a good idea I think,
To wash those DIRTY germs down the sink,
So before we eat our lunch/snack we wash our hands,
WITH SOAP!

Ms. Deb has created and conducted nutrition education programs in the classroom using books and other age appropriate materials as well. One of these learning tools, a puppet named Jeffrey, teaches the children about a new food each week. The children learn to identify if a food is glow, grow or go food. Through the years, we often have parents joining us for lunch and they always feel welcome with plenty of food for all. Some have asked her for cooking tips saying that "Their child won't eat a certain food like a certain vegetable at home, but they love Ms. Deb's!" She's used techniques such as everyone at her table taking a bite after some saying, "One, two, three," has helped the students acquire tastes for new foods. Last year, Deb had taken on the new challenge of creating meals to be delivered to students while still providing a lunch and afternoon snack in the classroom.

Whenever I was able to eat lunch with the children in the classroom, she made me feel welcome and had a spot ready for me. I want to give you a glimpse of a typical day and how it is made extra special because of Ms. Deb. Ms. Deb started to describe to everyone what they were eating while emphasizing the words the children might not know or remember, like "quinoa" and "frittata." She put things in simple terms like "quinoa is a grain" and "frittatas have eggs." She then went on to remind everyone about "eating the alphabet." She asked if they remembered what they ate yesterday that starts with the letter "A" and one of the students excitedly said, "asparagus!" She then let them know that for the letter "B," she has beets. Ms. Deb actually had two types of beets for the children to try. It was fun to hear which beet each child preferred. Beets hadn't been a part of my own diet, but having tried them myself, I will be purchasing pickled beets for my family to try. I found out that the next day, she served an "ABC salad" consisting of apples, broccoli, and carrots. After I was finished eating, Ms. Deb and several others did a special "clean plate club" clap.



At the Tok Head Start Graduation this year, the teacher read to families in attendance the answers to various questions, including: "What is your favorite food that Ms. Deb has served?" Several of the children responded, "salmon patties!" and I had overheard a parent say to her spouse, "I guess I'm going to need that recipe again." That parent will very happy to discover that Ms. Deb had already included that recipe in their child's graduation packet! She also added some other items that she had gotten each student to enjoy this summer, including a pair of sunglasses and fidget spinners.

Ms. Deb maintains her Alaska Food Worker's card as well as her ServSafe certification. She always gets 100% on the production records she submits. Deb is always one of those people who goes above and beyond. I know Ms. Deb puts in extra hours to make things extra special. When I had monthly Family Fun Nights, she made yummy dinners like homemade soup and rolls, or chili with cornbread for the children and families. If she sees something that needs to be done, she will take it upon herself to do it without being asked, including taking out the trash or shoveling the walkway. When I changed positions within RurAL CAP, she took on the added responsibility of creating the weekly newsletter and sending it home to families. Ms. Deb participates in our weekly staff meeting and helps bring laughter to the office. She has given each staff "You're Awesome" cards to open up on several occasions. The last one I received said: "There is not a duplicate of you in the whole wide world," though I do wish we can clone Ms. Deb! I appreciate Ms. Deb's hard work and I feel very honored to have worked with her. Ms. Deb is very deserving of the AHA Cook of the Year award! -Carrie Beeman



Family Advocate of the Year **Rebecca Yunker**



Rebecca came back to Ketchikan Head Start after spending many years as an advocate and supervisor at the local domestic violence shelter, WISH. The knowledge that she gained at WISH has had a huge impact on the families and staff that she partners with at Ketchikan HS. Rebecca has also jumped right in to the role of being a Family Advocate and makes meaningful connections with the families. She has supported one family this school year by going to several medical appointments with a mother who was overwhelmed.

"SHE TRULY DOES HER BEST TO MAKE SURE THE PARENTS AND STUDENTS ARE INFORMED AND COMFORTABLE AT HEAD START AT ALL TIMES"

Rebecca has also worn many hats this year in the center because we were so short staffed. She was the bus aide until we could hire one and the Teacher Aide when our Teacher Aide was out sick. She is a pleasure to work with, is always positive, gives great advice and brings a level of professionalism that is good for building high quality connections with families, community partners and staff. -Angela Nickich

Becca is one of the first people you meet when you enroll your child in our RurAL CAP Ketchikan Head Start. She goes above and beyond to answer any of the parents' questions not just at the beginning of the year, but all throughout the year and throughout kindergarten transitioning. She truly does her best to make sure the parents and students are informed and comfortable at Head Start at all times. She encourages parents to ask questions no matter how small and insignificant they might think they are. She is absolutely fantastic with the children and other staff members. I am lucky to have her not only as a coworker but as a friend as well.

-Elizabeth Jones



Maintenance Staff of the Year

Simon Lawrence



Simon Lawrence has been overseeing one of our most complex, rural EHS/HS buildings as the Maintenance Specialist in Kwethluk, AK for over 12 years. This consists of maintaining commercial boilers, a separate diesel power generator, a fire suppression system, and a full air ventilation system. His communication skills include timely information concerning building needs; including trouble-shooting mechanical, plumbing, and integrated systems of the facility.

"HE HAS A SENSE OF HUMOR THAT KEEPS EVERYONE SMILING, ESPECIALLY AS WE NAVIGATE THROUGH THE CHALLENGING TIMES OF THE PANDEMIC"

He advocates for future building needs and spends time to improve his understanding of how the different systems work together to keep the building in a safe, working condition.

Simon has a lot of pride in his job and it shows by the level of care he provides to the large facility. He is constantly checking the building to ensure everything is functioning as intended. When a situation arises, Simon is level-headed, acts quickly, and utilizes his resources to resolve the problem (ie. referring to YouTube videos to teach himself). He makes sure there is enough fuel to last during school closures, and continues to check on the building during closures. With fuel shortages this year, Simon has been especially proactive to ensure adequate heating fuel is delivered to the site from a nearby community.

nomination continued on back...



He ensures the facility is safe & sanitary at all times, taking extra precautions during COVID exposures.

He is very flexible to meet the needs of the center, this includes traveling to Bethel by snowmachine or ATV to get parts. During the past year, the facility's fire panel system needed troubleshooting, and he was able to do it over the phone with guidance from a professional. Simon is able and willing to step in wherever needed, sometimes including the classroom. He has a great rapport with the children and their families.

Simon is very knowledgeable with technology, always willing to install new equipment and train his co-workers on how to use new systems/software platforms.

He has a sense of humor that keeps everyone smiling, especially as we navigate through the challenging times of the Pandemic.

Simon has great communication with the Head Start Regional Manager, notifying her immediately of any problems and getting permission for purchases.

During PY 2021-22, he met all of the goals that were established in his March 2021 Performance Review. He is working hard towards his next goal of getting his Level II Portable Fire Extinguisher Certification.

Simon is an asset to RurAL CAP Early/Head Start. *-Lynette Cooper*



Head Start Father of the Year **Joseph Lash**



Joseph is an amazing father to see in action. He is very hands-on with his children and communicates well to the CCS staff about his family's needs, concerns, and satisfaction of care. Joseph raises his family with love, kindness, and generosity and he shares that passion with the staff in the classrooms. Joseph is willing to volunteer with CCS as needed. Joseph engages in a team approach to give his child the best level of care at CCS.

-Victoria Grey

" HE IS A POSITIVE ADVOCATE FOR NOT ONLY HIS CHILDREN, BUT ALL CHILDREN THAT CCS SERVES"

Joseph is a strong participant in the Policy Council as the Vice President. He is a positive advocate for not only his children, but all children that CCS serves. He very professionally communicates concerns and provides insight from a parent perspective. He is dedicated to providing the best opportunities for his children and family. Even when participating in the program became a challenge, Joseph continued to participate as much as possible in the Policy Council and at the Center. It is inspiring to see his level of commitment. *-Tabatha Peterson*

Joseph was the only father within our center to volunteer for Policy Council and has been an amazing support to his daughter. *- Cassie Padgett*



Assistant or Deputy Director of the Year **Victoria Grey**



This year CCS Early Head Start has had many staff changes due to many unfortunate events. Victoria took on the rolls of multiple job titles and kept our center together while also continuing to serve our children and families. During times of happiness and distress, Victoria has been there every step of the way. Aside from daily duties Victoria has gone above and beyond doing everything she can to support her staff.

**"DURING TIMES OF HAPPINESS AND DISTRESS,
VICTORIA HAS BEEN THERE EVERY STEP OF THE WAY"**

Victoria has been an incredible advocate for her staff, students and families and words do not do her justice to the important role she holds at our center.

-Cassie Padgett

Victoria is the best center coordinator I have ever had! She works hard to keep our team on track. She holds the center together. *-Ariel Webster*

Victoria is deserving of this nomination because she is a walking billboard of resiliency. Victoria has been with CCS for less than two years. In that time, she has gone from a leadership position working primarily within family services to a Center Coordinator position leading an entire facility.

nomination continued on back...



During her time with CCS, there have been some extremely difficult challenges specific to the center that she has navigated with the highest level of professionalism and empathy. Victoria has been a role model for her staff in many ways. She leads by example. I have had the pleasure of observing Victoria cultivate the staff members at her center into a family that encourages staff wellness, positive communication, healthy and professional conflict resolution, and growth through professional development. In the absolute most challenging moments, Victoria finds the opportunity to strengthen the teams she works within. Learning how to lead a facility during a pandemic is not for the faint of heart. Victoria's dedication to the work she does is apparent every day. She is one of the most positive and supportive leaders I know. -*Tabatha Peterson*



Bus Driver of the Year **Ronald Kilian**



We would like to nominate Ron Kilian, as bus driver of the year. Ron has been a bus driver for CCS Early Learning since 2016. Ron really deserves this award. He is always calm and uses a quiet voice with the children. He is always willing to help children get to their classrooms even when they are struggling. We had one child in particular who had a difficult time with transitions, and rode Ron's bus. Ron would often hold his hand and help the child get to class, or wherever the class was supposed to go, anytime Ron was in the center.

" RON IS NOT ONLY A GREAT DRIVER HE IS ALSO A GREAT PERSON, AND IT SHOWS IN EVERYTHING HE DOES"

The children really like Mr. Ron and are glad to see him. He builds personal relationships with the bus aides that makes it easier to ride the bus with him and can be considered a lifelong friend for many people who meet him. He is also willing to help with making sure important information gets sent home to families and would carry children's artwork out to the bus to help the aide. Ron also makes sure that the snow is removed from the sidewalks if needed and that they are safe for staff and families, showing up before his bus route to take care of them. We really enjoyed his conversations, he was a great member of the Chugiak team. Ron would come in and chat with staff before his bus route every afternoon, and to make sure he knew which children were riding that day. Ron has been a mentor to others and is a very reliable bus driver and also was willing to help out with another head start center when needed. Ron is not only a great driver he is also a great person, and it shows in everything he does. We hope you will consider Ron for bus driver of the year.

-Michelle Schilling



Early Childhood Coach of the Year

MariaJose St. John



MJ is an incredibly talented coach who really loves what she does. Her passion for Early Childhood Education is a strength when it comes to coaching the Early Head Start Teachers. When MJ enters the classroom she makes a point to greet every child and teacher with respect, which is something appreciated by both staff and students. MJ's work with the Early Head Start Teachers has been an exceptional experience to be a part of. MJ works really hard to be intentional with what she brings to the table.

"SHE TURNS CHALLENGES INTO OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH"

Recently MJ has been doing individual feedback sessions with the teachers which allows time for her to highlight their glows and really support them with their area of growth. She is flexible on meeting the needs of each teacher and I believe that has strengthened her ability to be an Early Childhood Coach. MJ has also started a book club with the teachers which has been a new, fun, and beneficial way to learn about early childhood and how we can apply these concepts in the classroom. MJ is very deserving of this award. -Victoria Grey

MJ St John. MJ is a positive force in every situation. She is always smiling and always willing to help you find a solution for any problem you may have. She goes above and beyond if she doesn't know the answer, she'll find it! -Lana Arsenault

nomination continued on back...



I am nominating MJ St. John for Early Childhood Coach of the year. MJ has been in her position as a coach for two years and has brought a whole new perspective of coaching to our Early Head Start Programs. MJ has immersed herself in multiple opportunities for her own professional development and gives that knowledge directly back to the work she does. She turns challenges into opportunities for growth. In two years, MJ has moved our Early Head Start programs from a minimally structured coaching system to fully implementing Practiced Based Coaching, One on One coaching and TLC' groups. She supports every teacher, meeting them individually where they are and prioritizing the importance of the relationships she builds with them. MJ has also taken a very intentional approach to formally introducing the CLASS tool to the Early Head Start programs in such a way that teachers value the tool and its ability to enhance their teacher child interactions. She continues to support the agency's growth and development through coordination with the program management and leadership teams. Her head start work beams with equity, diversity and inclusion and we couldn't be more proud to have MJ on our team. I want us to all celebrate MJ and all that she has done for CCS Early Learning! -*Tabatha Peterson*



Home Visitor of the Year **Lana Arsenault**



Lana is an amazing Home Visitor. She takes the time to know and understand her family's needs and walks with them during the short time as their CCS Home Visitor. She has managed to meet the families where they are during the last few years and rolls with the changes that have been placed in her path. She enjoys connecting families together and providing activities and resources.

"SHE HAS MANAGED TO MEET THE FAMILIES WHERE THEY ARE DURING THE LAST FEW YEARS AND ROLLS WITH THE CHANGES THAT HAVE BEEN PLACED IN HER PATH"

Several of her families have talked to me about how Lana is wonderful in supporting their ideas and concerns and always available to listen. She is a wonderful asset for our Home Visitor team and enjoys coming up with ideas to keep us connected and working together. She loves to share her knowledge with others and is a joy to work with. -*Tammy Berdeaux*

Lana is very compassionate, goes the extra mile to help the families, always makes sure that families are welcomed and feel safe with sharing their information. -*Kacie Arsenault*

Lana is great and really cares about her families. She is always looking for new ideas to bring to her families and they all love her. She really helps them with resources and needs. -*Wendy King*



Community Advocate of the Year **Mat-Su Health Foundation**



The Mission of the Mat-Su Health Foundation is to improve the health and wellness of Alaskans living in the Mat-Su. CCS would like to nominate the Mat-Su Health Foundation (MSHF) for all the work that they have done to have a positive impact in our community - especially in supporting the work of CCS Early Learning. Since 2008 - the Mat-Su Health Foundation has provided over \$2.2 million dollars in grants to our agency.

"WE ARE SO THANKFUL THAT WE HAVE A COMMUNITY ADVOCATE THAT RECOGNIZES THE IMPORTANCE OF INVESTING UPSTREAM - IN THE YOUNG CHILDREN (AND THE YOUNG FAMILIES) THAT WE SERVE"

Some of the purposes these funds have accomplished:

1. Purchasing property, construction, and renovating facilities
2. Refurbishing playgrounds
3. Providing funds for professional development and training for our staff
4. Providing funds to support increased mental health supports for children, family members and CCS staff.
5. Helping us to institutionalize best practices in Trauma Informed Care (which we have shared with other Alaskan grantees)

In addition, the Mat-Su Health Foundation consistently reaches out to CCS Early Learning to make sure that their advocacy work and legislative correspondence includes items that are important to early childhood.

nomination continued on back...



They have worked very hard to make sure that Mat-Su data is accurate and readily available to our agency and to the community as a whole to support grant writing and community improvements.

We are so thankful that we have a community advocate that recognizes the importance of investing upstream - in the young children (and the young families) that we serve. In our work to make a difference in the lives and families of young children - there has not been a better partner and we would like to honor their ongoing support by recognizing them as the Alaska Head Start Association - Community Advocate of the Year! -*Mark Lackey*



People. Partnership. Potential.

Head Start Mother of the Year **Aana Sales**



Aana Sales is truly a great example of an involved and caring parent. She regularly attends family functions with Clare Swan, including our family nights and our Tsil'que parent training. She is dedicated to her children and making sure that they are attending school and learning. She is involved in her children's education and helps to ensure that her children succeed. Aana has experienced significant trauma in her life including the tragic loss of her partner in a shooting that left her a single mother of two with another one on the way.

"OVERALL, AANA IS AN INCREDIBLE MOTHER WHO HAS CONTINUED TO FACE SO MANY CHALLENGES AND DIVERSITY WITH STRENGTH AND RESILIENCE"

Despite this trauma Aana has continued to stay involved and dedicated to her children. After the loss of her partner COVID hit the Anchorage community which led to the closing of Clare Swan. In June of 2020, we re-opened our center which allowed Aana to return to her job as an essential worker.

Around every corner, Aana has persevered. She became homeless in July of 2020. With some ingenuity, she was able to create a safe living space for her family while they waited for their housing situation to improve. With the support of Clare Swan Aana is now in stable housing. Due to another unseen circumstance, Aana took placement of her nephew and has now adopted him. With the addition of her nephew Aana has continued to be involved in his education and being an advocate for him.

nomination continued on back...



Throughout all of these challenges Aana has continued to work on herself to better meet the needs of her children. Aana is in the process of furthering her education and attaining her High School Diploma. She has also participated in our Tsil'que parenting class and has used these skills to become an even more present and attentive parent. She has also used these additional skills to provide support and encouragement to other parents who are also struggling. Aana has learned to not only speak up for the needs of herself and her children, but also the needs of others.

Overall, Aana is an incredible mother who has continued to face so many challenges and diversity with strength and resilience. Due to all these aspects I think Aana Sales truly represents the values of Head Start and would make a great Head Start Mother of the Year. -*Thelma Clay & Victoria Gonzalez*



Program Policy Council Award

Thrivalaska Head Start Birth to Five Policy Council



Steve Bouta



Rick Burroughs



Justice Soule

I would like to nominate the Thrivalaska Head Start Birth to Five Policy Council for the Award of Excellence!

It has been extremely challenging getting a group of parents committed to being on the Policy Council with the ongoing difficulties COVID continues to throw at us. Our Policy Council, consisting of parents Rick Burroughs and Justice Soule, along with Board Liaison Steve Bouta, have continuously supported our program by being active members on our Policy Council.

**"THEY TRULY UNDERSTAND THE IMPORTANT ROLE
THEY PLAY AS AN ADVOCATE FOR THEIR CHILDREN
AND BELIEVE IN WHAT HEAD START CAN DO FOR
FAMILIES".**

They have been able to make meetings happen monthly and sometimes in a matter of hours depending on our program needs. They truly understand the important role they play as an advocate for their children and believe in what Head Start can do for families. They have often joined Board meetings for different program approvals which allows for crucial business to happen in a timely manner. All of our worlds turned completely around and we have had to change many ways that our tasks are accomplished and this group has definitely stepped up to the challenge! Without them and their ongoing support, our program would not be possible! They deserve to be recognized for the Policy Council of the Year for the Alaska Head Start Association! -Sarah Newton



Administrative Support Staff of the Year **Jennifer McClure**



I would like to nominate Jennifer McClure for the Administrative Support Staff of the Year Award for the exemplary dedication she has shown to Kids' Corps, Inc. especially in this 2021-2022 school year. Our agency expanded this school year which led to many changes. We added new positions, and we re-opened a site we closed at the start of the pandemic back in 2020. Like many programs we have been short-staffed for much of the year.

**"YOU STILL SEE JENNIFER'S BRIGHT SMILE AND
CHEERFUL DISPOSITION NO MATTER WHAT
CHALLENGE IS PRESENTED TO HER"**

Jennifer played a big part behind-the-scenes helping us get to where we are today. She oversees and brings professionalism to our social media, staff page, office orders and makes sure our IT network runs smoothly. You still see Jennifer's bright smile and cheerful disposition no matter what challenge is presented to her. She maintains a can-do attitude and makes sure everyone's IT and office supply needs are met.

Jennifer has many talents that make her such a skilled worker. In order to help when we were short staffed during the pandemic, she learned to do child care program billing and assist with other bookkeeping duties. She is a wonderful event planner and host who makes sure everyone feels welcome and has what they need for the occasion, whether it is a pre-service training or end of the year celebrations.

Whatever the project, Jennifer always brings a positive attitude and a willingness to share her thoughts and ideas. You will find her promoting our mission and striving to bring unity to our School Family by making it an amazing place to work and be a part of. We are thankful for her care and tenacity. -Selina Ellis KCI MV EHS Center Director

FAIRBANKS NATIVE
ASSOCIATIONHEAD START
0-5

Early Head Start Teacher of the Year **Julia Lovett**



I would like to nominate Julia Lovett for the associate teacher of Early Head Start for 2022. Julia is a team player, she is quick to assist her team leads in prepping, cleaning, and lesson planning. Julia comes to the table ready to learn and willing to share ideas with her team and program. Julia works in our 0-3 option is often seen sitting on the floor with the little ones on her lap, singing, clapping, or just having fun.

"SHE HAS UNPARALLELED WORK ETHIC, RELIABLE, RESOURCEFUL, AND DEPENDABLE IN MANY RESPECTS."

Julia is committed to her families and her effort and commitment is clearly seen through her work and the smiling faces of the little ones when entering the classroom. Her nickname "Ms. Hulia" (Julia) is often heard as the children enter the classroom. She lights up the room with her smile when she enters the doors. Knowing that I have not long worked with Julia, I therefore sought help from her peers, assistant in writing the nominations from members of her team who knows her best. The following are her teams' response and comments:

Ms. Zelona states this is my profound words for Julia, she is very dedicated to her work, pleasant, hardworking, and understanding individual. I would publicly announce her contributions and positive attitude every day, she's always smiling and she's such a joy to work with every day. She has unparalleled work ethic, reliable, resourceful, and dependable in many respects.

nomination continued on back...



Ms. Alexia states Julia is one of my favorite co-teachers and my personal I.T. gal. First, we started out as co-workers then, we became great friends and we have created an amazing bond together. She is a whole lot of fun, a great team player, and has a ton of spunk in her. Julia has this infectious low-key quiet laugh and body shaking giggles that make you laugh even harder. She has hilarious come backs when we jokingly tease each other. Julia is passionate in her work and gives 100% to her students. She is definitely a mother bear to them.

Julia thank you for the passion, smiles and love you to give to the little ones in Head Start program; and your hard work, dedication, and willingness to learn and share to our entire team. Your skills and talent are why we are Head Start Strong, and our families and children are succeeding. Thank you!! -Angi Thomas

FAIRBANKS NATIVE
ASSOCIATION



HEAD START
0-5

Teacher of the Year **Anastasia Agee**



I would like to nominate Ms. Anastasia (Ana) Agee for Head Start teacher of the year for 2022. I have had the honor and privilege working with Ana since she started here at FNA Head Start 0-5 program. I have watch her grown from an Associate Teacher to a Primary Lead Teacher. She works in our D'ennake Language program as a Primary Teacher.

"ANA'S PASSION AND DESIRE TO BEST SERVE THE FAMILY IS EVIDENT IN ALL THAT SHE DOES"

Ana recently graduated with her Associates degree in Early Childhood Education. Ana is an instrumental part of our Head Start team. Ana's vast experience with preschoolers and as a past and current Head Start parent help her to enhance her services as a teacher. She is excellent at meeting the parent where they are. Ana comes ready and willing to work and builds secure and lasting relationships not just with parents and children but the staff and community we serve.

Ana builds long lasting relationships with families and children; she works endlessly to ensure families need are met. As her supervisor she communicates effectively with me and the family advocate. Ana advocated for and spear headed our team in gathering more education resources for traumatic brain injuries and working with individuals who have experience them as one of our parents does. Ana's passion and desire to best serve the family is evident in all that she does.

nomination continued on back...



Ana's ceaseless commitment to thinking outside the box, helped families navigate remote learning. She ensured a smooth transition to and from in person to remote multiple times and kept families engaged over the last 2 and half years of working during Covid-19. Her passion to see the children thrive in uncertain times and to support and hold them when they are learning a new skill is what we all strive in our work as early educators.

Ana has a propensity for learning; and language has become one of her passions. Ana's first language is Russian. English is a second language which makes learning. Hence Ana's 3rd language. She shares her story with families as part of their relationship and families can build and trust her as she works to serve their family. Ana, thank you for the countless hours you devote to our families, your wisdom, your love, and your skills. Ana your work and commitment makes Head Start triumphant.

Thank you for your time and consideration,
Aliya Maiden



Cultural Awareness Award

Chugachmiut Heritage Preservation Department



I would like to nominate the Chugachmiut Heritage Preservation Department for the Cultural Awareness Award. The vision of Chugachmiut's Heritage Preservation Department is to revitalize the traditional Chugach Native culture and language.

"ONE OF THE MOST EXCITING DEVELOPMENTS IS THE COLLABORATION BETWEEN OUR HEAD START AND HERITAGE PRESERVATION DEPARTMENTS TO DEVELOP A SUGT'STUN LANGUAGE APP"

The goal is to make Sugpiaq/Eyak history and heritage a part of the regular school curriculum (Head Start through High School) with support and direction from Elders' traditional ecological knowledge. The Heritage Preservation Department and the Head Start have been collaborating to bring Sugt'stun language lessons into our classrooms. When health conditions have allowed, the local Sugt'stun Language Teacher is scheduled in our classrooms to teach language lessons.

They have also developed Heritage Kit Curriculum/Lesson for Pre-K – Grade 12 that are available for teachers. These age-appropriate Lesson Plans, aligned with state standards, have suggested activities, resources and are centered around cultural activities and provide Sugt'stun vocabulary words for students that align with the activities.

nomination continued on back...



One of the most exciting developments is the collaboration between our Head Start and Heritage Preservation Departments to develop a Sugt'stun language app (for IOS and Android). This app, set to be released the end of September, is game based. The children have an avatar that explores a Sugpiaq village, playing developmentally appropriate "games" and hearing and speaking Sugt'stun (and English). The app will reinforce the language learned in our Head Start classrooms.

We, at Chugachmiut Head Start, are so grateful for the support from the Heritage Preservation Department has given our Head Start Program and sharing the Sugpiaq culture, heritage and Sugt'stun language with our children.

-Kristin Ramstad



Leadership Award **Lola Hannon**



I would like to recommend Lola Hannon for your Leadership Award. I have known Lola for about 26 years, and she is one of the most dedicated staff members that I have worked with during those years.

She represents what a leader is for our program. She has the initiative to take charge, and work with her staff so that they excel in what they do in the program, and integrity to set high standards for herself, and for her staff.

"SHE ALWAYS WANTED TO MAKE SURE THAT SHE WAS A SUPERVISOR THAT WAS APPROACHABLE, UNDERSTANDABLE, AND TRUSTWORTHY"

I had first known Lola as the lead teacher in her classroom. She always took the initiative to make sure subs or new staff hired were trained. When we had new teachers coming in from our partnering Bering Strait School District, she always made sure they knew our Policies and Procedures. She took the lead in making sure all her paperwork was submitted to the appropriate core-staff members.

In her current position as a Program Specialist this past year, I have seen a growth in her leadership abilities as a supervisor. She supervised four sites, and in one of the sites there is an EHS & HS, so she was in charge of tracking five classrooms. She always made sure that the staff in these classrooms met with her on a weekly basis.

nomination continued on back...



She wanted to know what they were doing well, and also wanted to see if she could help with any struggles that staff brought up that they could find solutions to.

I have seen so much from her when it comes to setting high standards for herself. She always wanted to make sure that she was a supervisor that was approachable, understandable, and trustworthy. She also wanted her staff to follow her lead. She was a role model, and if she did have any staff not understanding, she made sure she met with them individually, so they were on the same page, the same road to achieving goals, and the same track to better themselves.

I hope you will consider Lola Hannon for this award. *-Mary Long*



Content Area Specialist of the Year **Jill Ridenour**



The person selected for Content Specialist of the Year from Tanana Chiefs Conference is a person that has dedicated 12 years to ensuring children and families are thriving. She has held the title of: Deputy Director, Head Start Manager, and now Health, Safety, & Nutrition Coordinator (HSN).

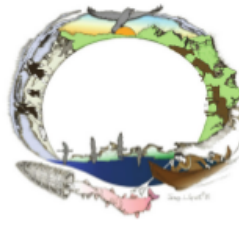
Jill has held many positions that supported the program in very specific ways, but in 2019 when she was hired as the HSN Coordinator, she took on a very intricate role and learned it inside and out.

"SHE WINS THE CARING HEART AWARD FROM HER TEAM"

Jill took on this role right before the pandemic started and implemented a lot of creative ways to support children and families in each of these areas. Like most programs, Jill assisted in 17 remote Head Start sites with food boxes, snacks, diapers, PPE, and of course all the compliance pieces such as dental and immunizations. She is always trying to figure out how our classrooms can remain open and we can assure children are receiving services. When the pandemic said no teeth brushing in class, Jill not only implemented the "Brush, Book, Bed", but went further to provide parent education to show the importance of a good bedtime routine.

As we emerge from the pandemic, Jill is working closely with parents and educators to return to safe environments "post COVID". The program wants to thank Jill and show our appreciation with this award nomination. She wins the caring heart award from her team. -Jennifer Russell

Corporate Award Tanana Chiefs Conference



Tanana
Chiefs
Conference

Tanana Chiefs Conference has been instrumental in the operations of our Head Start program. From Employee Health working with all Head Start staff on all things COVID related, disaster pay, to Administration supporting all programs to operate as they could safely.

The company vision of "Healthy, Strong, Unified Tribes" shows in all services provided to beneficiaries as well as to TCC staff. TCC has made it very apparent they believe in the way they work with their staff, and the services provided to beneficiaries.

"THE COMPANY VISION OF "HEALTHY, STRONG, UNIFIED TRIBES" SHOWS IN ALL SERVICES PROVIDED TO BENEFICIARIES AS WELL AS TO TCC STAFF"

To the Head Start program, this meant level increased pay, 5% COLA for 2022, this meant COVID relief payments to each employee, as well as the care that the entire organization had for all. It is because of TCC that Head Start was as supported as it was.

The partnerships from communities, the overall coordination it takes to make our Head Start program operate more efficiently. Without their support, our program would struggle to do it all.

As a large organization, there are many behind the scenes operations that support the program, supports that have incredible impact to daily operations. This includes mail pick-up and drop-off, HR with hiring, Accounting helping manage grants, and facilities with all tasks they do. There are many cogs to operate a Head Start program, and Tanana Chiefs Conference has been the most supportive they can be to support their vision in rural Alaska.

The program would like to Thank Tanana Chiefs Conference for everything they do as an organization supporting many programs and staff. They show Ch'egwhtsen' (True Love) every single day. -Jennifer Russell



Head Start Director of the Year **Jennifer Russell**



I chose to nominate Jennifer Russell as the Head Start Director of the year because she is passionate and loves her job.

I see the struggles and how hard it is to keep a Head Start program up & going successfully.

**"SHE IS POSITIVE, SUPPORTIVE, UNDERSTANDING,
ENGAGED, ENCOURAGING AND HONEST"**

As the Tanana Chiefs Conference Prenatal to Five Head Start Manager and serving 17 villages with Early Head Start and Head Start center base & home based options is not an easy job. I believe she is doing an outstanding job providing quality services to each village and the staff.

She is positive, supportive, understanding, engaged, encouraging and honest. She pushes and strives to make sure services are provided. She never gives up and always looks for the good in every situation, she is very supportive to her staff and the families we serve. She is understanding in every situation and believes that we can make this work no matter the situation. I can tell that she loves her job and most of all loves the program and what it provides to families and children.

Jennifer rocks as the manager at Tanana Chiefs Conference Head Start!
-Sheree Titus



All 2022 AHSA Award Nominees



Angela Nickich
 Almarie Cook
 Ariadna Jimenez
 Alice Edmund
 Alicia Notti
 Amber Vaska
 Aqueda Lozano
 Angie Malafronti
 Angela Jones
 Angeliz Rodriguez
 Brandi Heppe
 Bruce Greer
 Bering Strait School District
 Cassie Padgett
 Charity Lawrence
 Charlene Lauth
 Cindy Deschamps
 Casie Marang
 Charles Owusu
 Caroline Wolkoff
 Carrie Wallace
 Dorothy Harris
 Donna Reisinger
 Davina Sunkel
 Emily Cunningham
 Holly Houtchens
 John Strongheart
 Jessica Loaiza
 Kimberly Ross
 Katrina Nunemann
 Kayla Tripp

Ka Her
 Lauren Patton
 Lynsey Dellinger
 Linda Duke
 Marvella Webster
 Mark Lackey
 Miranda Doramus
 Marry Grace Garchitorena
 "Grace"
 Marcella Atcherian
 Marie Schliebe
 Neva Lancaster
 Pauline Lane
 Patricia Kramer
 Riley McLellan
 Rebecca Peterson-Spurgeon
 RYC (Residential Youth Care Inc.)
 Rizielle Acierto
 Roberta Katongan
 Roger Ridenour
 Sadie Maher
 Summer Frank
 Sheena Lizama
 Sarah Burton
 Tracy Neves
 Tamara De Los Santos
 Valeria Foster
 Walter L. Chastain
 Wesleyan Foraker
 Yaejin Park