



Spring clean up is coming;
Look to eliminate hazards, replace and repair

Newsletter of the Interior Regional Housing Authority

Safe Housing for Tribes through the Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act

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Serving the Native People of the Doyon Region, Alaska

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Denali Commission funds health clinic assessment project

Project aims to prioritize tribal clinics' rehab and energy-use optimization needs

The Denali Commission has awarded a grant to IRHA to assess seven health clinics in the TCC region. The project will determine facility deficiencies, analyze alternatives and provide recommendations.

The villages are: Ruby, Tanacross, Koyukuk, Alatna, Allakaket, Huslia and Nenana.

Across the region, the buildings that house village clinics have seen years of service. Many are in need of repair or replacement. While there are exceptions, many use too much energy and need to be modernized.

Since federal funding is shrinking, this effort supports a needs-based priority list in order to deal with the highest need first.

The assessment aims to get a handle on the relative costs of new construction vs. remodel, addition vs. other options. The process evaluation will bear on the most practical and cost effective means to meet facility needs.

The information in these assessments will be used by the Denali Commission to determine next steps in addressing facility needs on a case-by-case basis.

As construction and energy specialists, IRHA will make recommendations aimed at increasing the building's efficiency. Reducing the clinics' operational costs is the goal.

As part of the award, IRHA will be conducting the following activities:

- ◆ Assure tribal approval to assess the clinic; meet with local officials.
- ◆ Get preliminary information (interview staff and others).
- ◆ Review local utilities capacity: energy, water mains, septic etc.
- ◆ Write estimate/analysis.
- ◆ Present recommendations to tribe.
- ◆ Request a letter of support from tribe or city government.
- ◆ Assist tribe in applying for Denali Com-



Whenever possible, IRHA ships building material by river barge. However, some of the villages we serve are not reached by barge and require air freight service.

mission funding.

- ◆ Establish deadlines/timelines for submittal to Denali Commission.
- ◆ Upon approval, design and build project.

Alaska Summit Enterprises will consult with IRHA staff in bringing technical assistance to Denali Commission applications. In villages where a grant exceeds \$100,000, a business plan is required. Assistance in writing a business plan is part of this package.

IRHA is negotiating with the Denali Commission about the need to create a "business plan template", one that is more suited to rehabilitation projects.

On completion of these assessments and recommendations, it is likely that IRHA will be awarded additional funding for a similar project targeting other clinics in the region.

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Employees of the Year receive awards highlighting excellent performance and dedication



Tammy Brooks, left, and Angela Ludwick, IRHA's Employees of the Year receive congratulations from Steve Ginnis.

Each year in the spring, IRHA reviews the performance of its employees. Our workers are the heart of the company and we want to acknowledge the skills and dedication they bring to the job. This year we selected two people who've shown professional service in their respective departments.

Tammy Brooks works in the finance department as an accounting specialist. With four grown children (three boys), Tammy has developed a love for baseball and good food. Her husband is the head chef at Pikes Waterfront Lodge. According to her nomination letter, "...in 2007, [the department] had a changeover in two of five positions...Tammy stepped up and took on additional duties in addition to her already demanding job...her ability helped keep the department running nearly seamlessly...her dependability and strong personality make her a tremendous asset to IRHA." We are pleased to acknowledge Tammy's work ethic and its contribution to carrying out the company's mission.

Angela Ludwick is IRHA's construction manager. She's the person who knows the nuts, bolts and hammers of the operation. She manages schedules and sees to it that our building crews and material are put to work in the most efficient manner. Angela's competence and good humor bring valued assets to IRHA. Called indispensable by some, Angela's organizational skills are legendary. She joined us in 2003 as the assistant to Steve Ginnis; last year she took on more responsibilities as the head of the construction department. Angela's background includes stints as executive director of the Native Village of Fort Yukon and the director of programs at Doyon. A graduate of Doyon's Management Training, Angela is from Circle and has two children, Aimee and Cody.

Legislature honors Interior Regional Housing Authority

On March 10, the Alaska Legislature has issued a proclamation honoring the Interior Regional Housing Authority. The distinction was sponsored by Rep. Woodie Salmon and Sen. Al Kookesh and signed by the Speaker of the House and the President of the Senate. Fifty-two members from both houses joined as co-sponsors.

The citation highlights IRHA's 34-year record of success in securing safe and affordable housing for the people of this region. It points to our cooperative work with village and tribal councils, the development of long-term

planning and local hire policies.

The legislature's proclamation acknowledges the company's extensive role in the TCC region by saying, "The services provided by IRHA tremendously benefit entire communities—from rental assistance for the elderly, homeownership for various segments of the population, and emergency assistance, to construction of community buildings and clinics, and contributing to energy conservation by retrofitting buildings for efficiency. IRHA also carries a proud legacy of community service,

Squeeze energy dollars, Tips for saving energy and money

Close wood stove damper when not in use

Warm room air escapes if not closed.

Make sure refrigerator's air vents are clean and not blocked

Blocked vents makes unnecessary work for the compressor.

Allow food to cool before placing in refrigerator

Air-cooled food reduces the compressor's load

On the stove, use pans that fit the burner

Use small pan for small burner

IRHA

The Interior Regional Housing Authority is the Tribally Designated Housing Entity of the tribes of the Doyon region. It works in partnership with the tribes that have, by certification and resolution, agreed to be part of the Indian Housing Plan. It is legally constituted under the Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act of 1996 to promote safe housing and self-sufficiency.

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Yukon-Koyukuk Assisted-Living Center gets greenlight Galena site prepared last fall for fast start, work underway this month



People in villages near Galena have long advocated for a facility that offered elders supervised care while accommodating the need to be independent. They also wanted it to be near home and not in a distant city. The idea was nourished over the years and finally succeeded in ground breaking last fall. Here's a view of the site overlooking the Yukon River.

IRHA has signed a contract to build the Elder Assisted-Living Facility in Galena. The 8,900 sq. ft. building will be owned by a consortium of tribes of Galena, Nulato, Koyukuk, Ruby and Kaltag. It is designed to accommodate nine elders in individual units. Each apartment is equipped with a kitchen. It also has a manager's unit, a central kitchen and a commons area.

This idea for this facility goes back a decade. Now that the funding is in place it has a start date in mid April. The pad was completed last fall. Its estimated completion date is February 2009.

To meet the project budget, the tribes used multiple funding sources. These include with HUD's ICDBG, the Denali Commission and the Rasmuson Foundation.

In the construction phase, the tribal consortium and IRHA's priority is to hire as many people as possible from local villages. IRHA's contract, however, is for construction only. We will not be operating this facility. The operation plan and resident selection criteria is the

responsibility of the board of directors that was selected by the consortium.

Employment opportunity notices were posted by the tribal consortium in each village from March 17 - March 31. IRHA supplied a public notice and applications to tribal offices.

IRHA expects to employ between 10 - 30 people, depending on the stage of construction. Based on a variable schedule, workers must expect periods of no activity. Some positions will not be constant. The point of hire is Galena.

Tribal council offices will collect applications, flagging candidates who are most qualified. April 4, tribal council sends all applications to IRHA for final selection.

Policy requires pre-employment drug testing and random drug testing during employment.

When the first barge arrives in May with materials the project will be in full swing.

IRHA is looking forward to building this project and pleased to be working with the tribal consortium. We support efforts that help elders remain near their families.

Village assessments create energy-use data base Workshops well attended

Funded with grant money from the US Dept. of Energy, IRHA's Energy and Infrastructure department has fully launched its project, "First Steps towards Energy Efficiency".

Joy Schockley has taken the program to Hughes, Huslia, Allakaket and Birch Creek. The workshops consist of four community visits in which participants analyze individual energy-use patterns while also reviewing the needs and capacity of the entire village.

In reviewing local energy costs and demand the village energy initiative's information gathering is setting a baseline in each community. As the project moves ahead, village energy-use data will form a data base that can be used to chart progress.

In the second phase, participants review energy planning. In broad terms, the workshops present energy planning through these components:

- How to develop a vision statement
- What action items are appropriate
- Who are the proposed partners
- Why develop a timeline for energy initiatives in the community

Upon completion of the series each community will have a community energy plan and the understanding to develop energy projects.

In addition to work in the villages, the department staff are fulfilling opportunities to advocate for projects in the Interior. Staff has met with state, federal and local agencies with a hand in policy, funding and technology. This includes a visit to the Legislature, using the access to get acquainted and to advocate for better building standards and funds for energy efficiency research and residential upgrades.

Mendone subdivision trees warmed homes in Fairbanks/NP Elders welcome firewood

In an effort to off-set home heating costs, IRHA offered a wood giveaway program this winter. The wood came from clearing the lots, power lines and roads in the Mendone subdivision, near North Pole.

Given the price of fuel oil these days, the program was popular. We delivered, free of charge, 100 loads to member households in the Fairbanks and North Pole area.

The giveaway has ended, however, exceptions can be made for elders on an emergency basis. For more information please contact IRHA offices at 452-8315.

CEO's remarks to TCC Convention worth repeating

Issues raised by Mr. Ginnis in prepared remarks to the TCC Convention last month bear a second look as IRHA moves ahead.

On Financial concerns

"Now let me address the funding obstacles coming our way. They are never far from my mind—how do we stabilize IRHA over the long term in the face of federal budget reductions and ever climbing oil prices?"

"When you look at the numbers, you could say that the federal NAHASDA budget grew by \$3 million this year. Yes, that's true, but the increase did not cover inflation, the increasing cost of products and services we buy to meet our mission. Inflation has eaten the increases, so we've really been flat-funded. Rather than moving ahead, we are standing still.

"And when you consider the dropping value of the US dollar, we are moving backwards. Today's dollar is worth less than the same dollar last year, so it cannot buy as much. Add the energy-cost crisis and you can see, we are put in a terrible squeeze. And still, no meaningful resolution from the state."

Response to declines

"In this environment of declining dollars, we've shifted the way we operate in order to better compete for revenue. While the mission remains the same, we're moving away from the mentality of non-profit agency to a business model of enterprise development.

"This means we are sharpening our pencils and going into the marketplace to capture jobs and revenue. Under a business model, we are actively seeking ways to maximize our potential for generating income.

"We've started a company within the company. It's called "the enterprise" and we are going after contract construction work, as planned by various state and federal agencies that conduct business in our region.

"For instance, as part of the state's clean water program in the Interior, we are contracting with the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC) to complete 18 septic and water well projects. Moving beyond house construction, we are diversifying the range of our contracts in order to support our base of operations and keep people employed.

"We're moving in this direction so that we remain flexible in times of economic challenge and hardship. Such flexibility will pay dividends as we work to adopt to the changing realities of higher energy costs.

"As the economic landscape shifts beneath our feet, we're developing strategies and partnerships that will allow IRHA to remain a vital component of our people's vision for a better way of life."

Self-Help project grows near Chena River in Fairbanks



Abby Scannell and her fiancé, Rob Riggs, are building a Self-Help home in the woods not far from Chena Pump Rd. Abby's family comes from Tanana. Rob drew up the plans and detailed his experience in a series of meetings with IRHA managers. The plans were approved in time to pour footings in early Oct. 2006. According to the builders, IRHA staff have been "fantastic" to work with, "always there, or called right back." While the actual labor is the owner's responsibility, IRHA's trades supervisors and purchasing agents are available to lend suggestions. Rob found the advice and consultation saved the couple time and money. The 1800 sq. ft. home is being built to a five-star energy rating. Insulation in the second-story roof is R 60-70. The couple says they plan to finish the project soon and expect to move in by June. To learn more about the Self-Help program, review the web site, www.irha.org, or call the office.

Tanana Chiefs and IRHA agree to coordinate clinic and energy work

IRHA and Tanana Chiefs Conference have signed a memorandum of understanding that links our efforts in planning and construction of village health clinics. The arrangement is intended to facilitate the maximization of resources for the purpose of reducing costs. The agreement also gives IRHA a lead in energy conservation and advocacy. In an era of restricted funding, this partnership makes sense for both parties and to the people of the region.

We intend to coordinate with the leadership of TCC and its managers will improve the delivery of services by both organizations. Under this MOA, we'll be working with TCC in the practical hands-on development of clinic design, new construction and retrofitting. We'll also be tackling high energy costs by advocating for energy solutions that will ease the burden in our villages.

In working closely with TCC managers, we expect to strengthen our relationship with the Denali Commission and other funders for their support of our energy initiative in the region. With staff from Interior Regional Energy Management, Inc already conducting assessments and workshops in the region, our skills and experience will dovetail with TCC's work in the villages. We are excited by this collaborative effort and looking forward to joining with TCC in making the fullest use of all available resources.

Proclamation, Continued From Page 2

especially in helping families that suffer the loss of a loved one. IRHA donates the labor and materials needed to build the casket, and often delivers the casket to its destination. The success stories of IRHA have a ripple effect that spreads to the furthest reaches of the communities and villages they serve."

The document also praises IRHA's staff and the company's excellent standing with the federal government.

The greatest gift will be to know the security of a good home. It will be a bulwark against all dangers from within and without.

— **Dietrich Bonhoeffer**