

Kids these days

The publication for people who care about Alaska's Kids!

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Community Mural in Dillingham

By AASB Staff

The community of Dillingham recently came together to create an artful display that not only brightens the city landscape, but also speaks in support of the community's young people.

Apayo Moore, a 23 year-old local artist of Dillingham, painted four large murals and families, youth, and adults from the community added over 200 11"x11" tiles to the project. Governor Palin was in town and she and her children participated by painting tiles as well. "The 'Paint Your Name on Dillingham' project was a complete and total community affair," said Community Engagement Advocate Kathy McLinn.

Two outer murals list the [40 Developmental Assets](#): the internal and external experiences and qualities that are essential to raising successful young people, helping them to become caring, responsible adults. Two large murals depict a fishing scene and a local on a four-wheel ATV, both common activities important to the transportation, recreation, and livelihoods of many Dillingham residents.

The mural project is sponsored by S.A.F.E. (Safe And Fear free Environment) and is situated in a high traffic area downtown for all community members to see and enjoy.

Apayo was inspired to integrate the Assets Framework into the art project while attending AASB's Artist



Young and old can appreciate the hard work and creativity that Apayo and community members contributed

Training Of Promoters and Storytellers (TOPS) workshop that was held in Anchorage this spring. The Artist TOPS is an opportunity for artists and arts educators to share ideas and experiences, and develop strategies focused on

building assets in and supporting our youth.

The local N&N store agreed to display the artwork, which is featured on the Hildebrand building downtown, and the community – young and old – came together to express themselves and contribute the many different colorful pieces that perfectly complement Apayo's work.

The mural is a testament to the collective spirit and pride of the local residents of Dillingham and promotes community involvement in support of its most precious resource, its youth.

"Apayo has chosen to channel her talent in a way that not only decorates but that actually creates change, which truly beautifies Dillingham," said McLinn. "She has planted one more seed toward raising consciousness toward instilling the 40 assets in our youth and celebrating ourselves, and each other."

Dillingham is one of AASB's QS2 partners, working collaboratively to increase student achievement, improve schools, and engage the community in helping kids succeed.

School Connectedness Matters

By AASB Staff



Dr. Robert Blum, a leading researcher on adolescent health and advocate for the importance of youth connectedness, was the guest speaker at the 12th Annual Assets Fair in Anchorage (sponsored by the Anchorage School District and AASB) that took place this past April. He shared his research on the effects and impacts of school climate and school connectedness on student risk behaviors, academic achievement, and offered strategies for creating school climate where students feel connected to school.

Blum states: “What we have found from our research is that kids who felt connected to school . . . smoked less, drank alcohol less, had a later age of sexual debut and attempted suicide less. On top of this, from the educational literature, they do better across every academic measure we have. There is something in that bond, in that connection to school that changes the life trajectory - at least the health and academic behavior. It is very powerful.”

The single strongest association with connectedness was [school climate](#).

Dr. Blum finds that balancing high standards and expectations with providing academic support to all students is an effective strategy that schools can employ to raise achievement levels. Blum also points to creating trusting

relationships between teachers and students, extended outward to administrators, other staff, and families in the community, creates a strong bond of interpersonal connectedness which promotes an improved climate. All point to an engaging environment that is physically and emotionally safe for students.

According to Dr. Blum, school connectedness is influenced by: individuals (students and school staff), the environment (school climate and school bonding), and the culture of the school (social needs and learning priorities). Dr. Blum suggests it is in these interdependent factors that school connection is made and may have important association with student’s overall health and educational outcomes.

When students feel safe, connected and engaged in their schools, they are more successful and effective learners

Blum also agrees that measuring school climate is an effective strategy for evaluation and, if necessary, improvement of the school environment in order to sustain



Students engaged in a fun game, and learning Photo: Alex Mayo

higher levels of student connectedness and student achievement. By gaining a better understanding of the school’s climate; administrators, teachers, and staff can not only enhance student performance, but also better nurture students’ emotional and physical well-being.

Developed for AASB in 2005 by the American Institutes for Research, and in collaboration with the Anchorage School District, the School Climate and Connectedness Survey (SCCS) is an assessment tool to help determine the environment of Alaska’s schools.

The student SCCS reports on school climate factors (school leadership, high expectations, and school safety), factors contributing to student connectedness in school (respectful climate, caring adults, and peer climate), social-emotional learning skills, and occurrence of a variety of risk behaviors. The staff survey reports perceptions of school leadership, student involvement, staff attitudes, climate, safety, parent and community involvement, and risk behaviors.

Twenty-two districts, including QS2 and CDL (laptop) districts, participated in the 2007 survey and the Anchorage School District has adopted it as a critical piece of their school improvement strategy district-wide. Some of

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The Association of Alaska School Boards’
Alaska ICE
1111 West 9th Street, Juneau, AK 99801
(907) 586-1083 Fax: (907) 586-2995
E-mail: aasb@aasb.org
Web: www.kidsthesedays.org

Editors: Ryan Aguilar, John Greely
Designer: Stacey Poulson

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Summer Reading

By AASB Staff



Summer is a time for relaxing from the daily stresses of school, visiting with friends, going on family vacations, and enjoying the outdoors. Summer is also a great opportunity to get lost in the pages of a book!

Research shows that children can lose the equivalent of up to three months of learning every summer. Reading is one approach to combat summer learning loss, and a great way to get a reading routine started in younger children.

Here's a list of some books tailored to different ages and reading levels to get your child's summer reading list started.

Other web-links to check out for more reading selections

American Library Association (ALA) - Association for Library Service to Children
<http://www.ala.org/ala/alsc>

National Endowment for the Humanities - Summertime Favorites
<http://www.neh.gov/projects/summertimefavorites.html>

BookBrowse
<http://www.bookbrowse.com/>

BookSpot
<http://www.bookspot.com/>

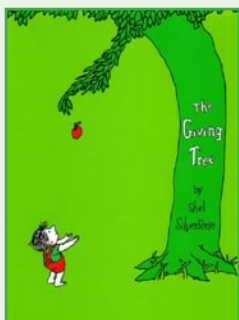
Teenreads.com
<http://www.teenreads.com/features/2006-reading-list.asp>

YOUNG CHILDREN

The Giving Tree

By Shel Silverstein

Shel Silverstein has created a moving parable for readers of all ages that offers an affecting interpretation of the gift of giving and a serene acceptance of another's capacity to love in return.



Flotsam

By David Wiesner

The Brand New Kid

By Katie Couric

Click, Clack, Moo: Cows that Type

By Doreen Cronin

Dream Snow

By Eric Carle

MIDDLE YOUTH

Rules

By Cynthia Lord

Twelve-year-old Catherine has conflicting feelings about her younger brother, David, who is autistic. While she loves him, she is also embarrassed by his behavior and feels neglected by their parents. Set in coastal Maine, this sensitive story is about being different, feeling different, and finding acceptance.



The Giver

By Lois Lowry

The Old Man and the Sea

By Ernest Hemingway

Jonathan Livingston Seagull

By Richard Bach

A Corner of the Universe

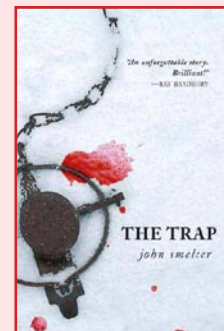
By Ann Martin

TEENS

The Trap

By John Smelcer

Johnny Least-Weasel worries that his grandfather hasn't returned home from checking his trap-line. The elderly Indian packed ample supplies onto his snowmobile, but has been out far too long in the plummeting temperatures of the Alaskan winter. Cultural pride and reluctance to disrespect an elder get in the way of search plans until Johnny's grandmother can wait no longer, and she sends him out to find her husband.



Freedom Riders: John Lewis and Jim Zwerg on the Front Lines of the Civil Rights Movement (2005)

By Ann Bausum

Anthem

By Ayn Rand

Slaughterhouse - Five

By Kurt Vonnegut

Beyond Those Horizons: An Epic Novelette

By Saba Sophiya Hasan

Kasilof students befriend Crooked Creek



Tustumena Elementary School

Kenai Peninsula Borough School District

P.O. Box 877 • 58200 Sterling Highway • Kasilof, Alaska 99810 • (907) 265-8844
FAX: (907) 265-8477

Ken Halverson, Principal

By Will Morrow, for the *Peninsula Clarion*

KASILOF -- Students in Kelly Balise's sixth-grade class at Tustumena Elementary School in Kasilof have been taking good care of Crooked Creek over the past nine months, and earlier this month they erected a sign sharing some of the things they've learned and some things others can do to keep the creek healthy.

"We've been doing tests on the water, and catching fish and seeing what kind and how big they are," said Daniel Baldwin, a student in the class, which participated in the Kenai Watershed Forum's Adopt-A-Stream monitoring program this school year.

"All the tests came back good," said classmate Marcus Cisneros. "We have (the results of) all those tests up on a chart in our school -- pH, dissolved oxygen, conductivity, turbidity."

This year, students involved in the Crooked Creek monitoring project decided to share what they've learned about Crooked Creek with the rest of the community, including those who visit the creek to watch salmon swim by.

Kenai Watershed Forum education specialist Dan Pascucci compiled ideas from students and worked with parents to design a sign that incorporates a conservation message. The sign includes information on Crooked Creek's importance in the local ecosystem, students' water monitoring efforts and things visitors can do to keep the watershed healthy.

"We call them streamkeepers," Pascucci said of the students' role as caretakers of their stream. "The sign that was put up is their words. It is their doing that that sign is up and says what it says." The class installed the sign May 18 at the spot where Johnson Lake Road used to cross

Crooked Creek. The road, and the two culverts through which the creek flowed, were washed out during major flooding in 2004. The sign installation is the first step in a project to restore damaged and unstable banks and improve access in the area.

Students said they learned quite a bit from their monitoring project. Among the species of juvenile fish identified in the creek were rainbow trout, Dolly Varden, king and silver salmon, and sculpins. Students also found and identified quite a few insects.

"If you find insects in stream, you know the stream is healthy," said student Hunter Koch.

WINTER POSED CHALLENGES

During the winter, students said, it was sometimes challenging to drill through the ice to take water samples.

"There was one time the ice went all the way down to the (creek bed), so we had to go to the culvert (by the Sterling Highway) to drill it," Daniel Baldwin said.

Students also noted the changes in water level throughout the year. Water levels were highest during spring breakup -- after the ice finally melted.

Pascucci said stream monitoring involves hands-on, real-world science and illustrates for students the message that science isn't always something done in a classroom.

"Within their community, there are students who are taking an active role in accomplishing



The class installed a sign that includes information on Crooked Creek's importance in the local ecosystem.

Photo: M. Scott Moon

a lot of different tasks concerning the health of their watershed," Pascucci said. "I don't know if people fully comprehend the depth they're getting into with these issues. They're out there every month testing that water."

Pascucci said the program is geared to start off with the basics of water quality at the beginning of the school year. As the year progresses, the students delve deeper into the topic of watershed health and all the things that need to happen to keep a stream healthy.

Students said they feel ownership over their little bend in the stream because of their constant monitoring and caretaking. Many said they plan to continue to visit the site even after they have moved on from Tustumena Elementary.

"It's going to make everybody feel good that they had a part in keeping fish healthy," said student Makinna Halverson.

"If we don't keep the water clean, we'll never be able to go fishing, and fishing is, like, awesome," Marcus Cisneros said.

Recognize Youth

for all that they contribute to their community! Since 2003 the Spirit of Youth positive media campaign has received nominations from local community members across Alaska and been responsible for publishing over 800 positive stories about youth in newspapers, over 25 radio stations airing stories and PSAs locally and statewide, and over 50 positive stories broadcast on television.

Let's keep the positive wave of appreciation for our youth rolling! Nominate a youth from your community today at www.spiritofyouth.org.



At Glacier Valley School, Art is Elementary



By AASB Staff

Along with McNeil Canyon Elementary School in Homer, and Ayaprun Elitnaurvik in Bethel, Glacier Valley Elementary in Juneau was recently awarded a Creative Ticket School of Excellence Award from the Kennedy Center Alliance for Arts Education program.

The Creative Ticket Award is presented to individual schools with arts education programs that:

- teach all the arts as specific disciplines;
- provide imaginative learning environments;
- include parental involvement;
- promote learning about other cultures; and
- encourage community connections.

Unlike the two other schools from Alaska however, Glacier Valley Elementary was selected as one of 25 schools across the country to advance into the national award category. After a thorough review process, five finalists will be announced this August.

Glacier Valley Elementary School staff and parents firmly believe in the power of arts and that all students should have access to quality arts experiences. To meet a variety of student learning needs and styles, the school has adopted an approach that integrates the arts into everyday classroom learning. The arts are seen as a way to engage, motivate and extend learning into other subject areas.

Glacier Valley integrates arts into its curriculum in a variety of ways that challenge and motivate its students. The Glacier Valley **Art is Elementary** program provides arts experiences in dance, drama, music and visual arts to all Glacier Valley students. The goal is to provide knowledge in multiple forms so that students can gain familiarity with and contribute to a diverse, multi-literate society.

Music, Physical Education, Library, Counseling and Extended Learning specialists work with classroom teachers to **integrate the arts throughout their curriculum**, often **collaborating** to create performance-based projects.

“It is when these two elements are combined

that learning is most engaging, meaningful and communal,” says arts educator Lorrie Heagy.

National arts research reinforces Lorrie’s remarks about the positive influence that the arts have had on the local atmosphere at Glacier Valley Elementary. Numerous studies have been conducted and evidence demonstrates that involvement in the arts and arts education (from elementary through high school):

- helps close the achievement gap between students,
- improves academic skills essential for reading and language development,
- lowers drop-out rates,
- increases standardized test scores, and
- advances students’ motivation to learn.

Art is Elementary has opened many doors for the students and has resulted in countless opportunities to explore their academic content in rich, imaginative, and personal ways. The program has been enriching to the teachers as well, who have been allowed to bring new and innovative teaching practices into the classroom.

In addition to the weekly arts-integrated experiences that occur for all Glacier Valley students, other examples of projects include:

Morning Musicians – a before-school program of 40 4th and 5th graders (45% of total 4th/5th grade population) interested in learning how to play the clarinet, flute or trumpet. The group meets twice a week at 7am.

- The Musicians have performed at school board meetings, assemblies, cultural gatherings, and have held two evening concerts for the community.

HeART and Sole Dancers – Ballroom dancing for 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade students. Students dance the Waltz, Tango, and the Merengue and love it. It’s more than dancing though; the students are learning etiquette and manners as well.

- Over 100 3rd – 6th graders have performed at community events such as: the Alaska State



Morning Musicians practice.
Photo: Micheal Penn/Juneau Empire

Library Conference, Women of Distinction banquet, and the National Association for the Education of Young Children conference.

Art Exhibits – Student artwork (K-6th grade) was on display at a HeART and Sole gallery walk, and at local businesses in Juneau.

A 12-month **Art is Elementary event calendar** highlighted K-5th grade student artwork, combined with a Developmental Assets message, for each month of the year.

“All students are engaged and they learn by moving and doing,” says 5th grade teacher Florence Hayward. “Concepts become real to them. I can think of two or three students who are generally disinterested and hard to reach who have truly shined in art/drama.”

A parent of a Glacier Valley student shares: “I truly believe that when art is being integrated into the students’ current studies that they have another source to draw a meaningful understanding of the subject that is being learned. I believe that the combination of what they are being taught makes a big difference in their overall academic performance.”

The Art is Elementary program has had a major influence on how the teachers teach and the students learn, and the positive gains don’t stop at academic benefits, but carry over into multiple aspects of their lives.

Congratulations to Glacier Valley on receiving the Kennedy Creative Ticket School of Excellence award!

Alaska City & Village Kids Trade Places



By Rachel D'Oro, Associated Press

PALMER, Alaska - The four students peered at the rows of butter in the refrigerator case. So many choices, so many prices in this sprawling supermarket, almost 500 miles from their tiny village in western Alaska.

"This one is \$3.75," said 13-year-old Aaron Ballot, jotting down the price.

"This one is \$2.99 a pound," teacher Peter Beachy pointed out.

"But this is the kind we have at home," said Karstin Hadley, 14. At the village store, the only brand of butter available goes for \$4.79.

Another lesson learned about urban life.

The eighth-graders from the Inupiat Eskimo village of Buckland are among dozens of Alaska students participating in a federally funded exchange program that pairs remote schools with their big-city counterparts.

The point is to build understanding between rural and urban Alaskans and teach that cultural differences can be valued as strongly as similarities.

The students and their teachers stay with host families. They visit their sister schools, work on educational projects and go on field trips that apply to classroom topics ranging from health care and transportation to subsistence foods and economy.

"Instead of reading about them in a book, they get to experience these issues first hand," said Panu Lucier, director of the program. "For example, they're learning about subsistence, how it's handled in rural and urban areas and what it means to the local people."

The Buckland students visited Mirror Lake Middle School in the Anchorage suburb of Chugiak this month. The previous week a group from Mirror Lake traveled north to Buckland — population 418 — a treeless



In the RURE program, urban and rural students share different aspects of everyday life, such as school, hunting, and transportation

community built on tundra just below the Arctic Circle. Students from both schools documented the visits with photos and audio recordings to share with classmates back home.

Thirty schools from across the state participated this year in the Rose Urban Rural Exchange, now in its seventh year. The program is administered by the Alaska Humanities Forum.

Competition for five positions was intense among the Mirror Lake participants. About 25 students who wanted the role turned in essays, saying why they should be chosen to go to Buckland.

The Buckland students toured a musk ox farm, the state crime lab, a local landfill, a vocational training center and the University of Alaska Anchorage. They ate Big Macs, splashed around at an indoor water park and compared grocery prices at a supermarket in Palmer, just north of Anchorage.

The teenagers were amazed at the vast choices and lower prices of everyday goods, particularly gasoline, which costs \$6 a gallon in the village.

They noted the hugeness of the malls, the

stores and multiplexes, where Ballot watched "Spider-Man 3" with his host family. It was only his second time in a theater.

Even the students' sister school, with an enrollment of 680, houses more people than their entire village.

They had fun, but urban life was a bit overwhelming for Hadley. "It's too big for me," she said. "It's too busy here."

In their venture north, the Mirror Lake students were also immersed in an unfamiliar setting. The seventh-graders went ice fishing for sheefish, learned native dancing, made swan sculptures out of caribou antlers and sewed traditional cloth parkas called kuspuks. They learned a body slamming game called buckbuck.

Tilly Cantor said she enjoyed a soup made by her host family, and then learned the ingredients included the heart and tongue of caribou.

"It's a different kind of culture, a different way of living," the 13-year-old said of her first visit to a native village.

Just as the rural kids got a jolt from the relative cheapness of supermarket items, Cantor and classmate Heidi O'Hara, 13, were stunned at the cost of food in the village store. A large bag of potato chips goes for \$7.15. A dozen eggs cost \$4.99.

Other surprises: houses built on stilts as protection against a river prone to overrunning its banks, a 10 p.m. curfew for minors and no indoor plumbing except at the school and in teacher housing.

Homes are typically equipped with 5-gallon plastic pails used as toilets, and the village has a washeteria, which is a combination coin-operated laundry and public shower.

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How the Arts Develop the Young Brain - NEUROSCIENCE RESEARCH IS REVEALING THE IMPRESSIVE IMPACT OF ARTS INSTRUCTION ON STUDENTS' COGNITIVE, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

By David A. Sousa, for *The School Administrator* magazine

Every culture on this planet has art forms. Why is that? Neuroscientists continue to find clues as to how the mental and physical activities required for the arts are so fundamental to brain function.

Certain brain areas respond only to music while others are devoted to initiating and coordinating movement from intense running to the delicate sway of the arms. Drama provokes specialized networks that focus on spoken language and stimulate emotions. Visual arts excite the internal visual processing system to recall reality or create fantasy with the same ease.

These cerebral talents are the result of many centuries of interaction between humans and their environment, and the continued existence of these talents must indicate they contribute in some way to our survival. In those cultures without reading and writing, the arts are the media through which that culture's history, mores and values are transmitted to the younger generations and perpetuated. They also transmit more basic information necessary for the culture's survival, such as how and what to hunt for food and how to defend the village from predators. Here, art becomes an important force behind group survival.

Cognitive Growth

During the brain's early years, neural connections are being made at a rapid rate. Much of what young children do as play — singing, drawing, dancing — are natural forms of art. These activities engage all the senses and wire the brain for successful learning.

When children enter school, these art activities need to be continued and enhanced. Brain areas are developed as the

child learns songs and rhymes and creates drawings and finger paintings. The dancing and movements during play develop gross motor skills, and the sum of these activities enhances emotional well-being. And sharing their artwork enhances social skills.

The arts are not just expressive and affective, they are deeply cognitive. They develop essential thinking tools — pattern recognition and development; mental representations of what is observed or imagined; symbolic, allegorical and metaphorical representations; careful observation of the world; and abstraction from complexity.

The arts also contribute to the education of young children by helping them realize the breadth of human experience, see the different ways humans express sentiments and convey meaning, and develop subtle and complex forms of thinking. Although the arts are often thought of as separate subjects, like chemistry or algebra, they really are a collection of skills and thought processes that transcend all areas of human engagement.

Arts Integration

Research studies have examined both stand-alone arts programs as well as those that integrate concepts and skills from the arts into other curriculum areas. One intriguing revelation of these studies is that the most powerful effects are found in programs that integrate the arts with subjects in the core curriculum. Researchers suggest that arts integration causes both students and teachers to rethink how they view the arts and generates conditions that are ideal for learning.

Studies consistently show the following in schools where arts are integrated into the core curriculum: Students have a greater emotional



Rock painting at Juneau camp

investment in their classes; students work more diligently and learn from each other; cooperative learning groups turn classrooms into learning communities; parents become more involved; teachers collaborate more; art and music teachers become the center of multi-class projects; learning in all subjects becomes attainable through the arts; curriculum becomes more authentic, hands-on and project-based; assessment is more thoughtful and varied; and teachers' expectations for their students rise.

[The arts play an important role in human development](#), enhancing the growth of cognitive, emotional, and psychomotor pathways. Schools have an obligation to expose children to the arts at the earliest possible time and to consider the arts as fundamental (not optional) curriculum areas. Finally, learning the arts provides a higher quality of human experience throughout a person's lifetime.

Reprinted with permission from the December 2006 issue of The School Administrator magazine

Community Center Volunteers Total More than 3,500 Hours

By Monica Southworth, for the *Dutch Harbor Fisherman*

Every year, the Community Center holds a banquet as a way of saying thank you to its volunteers.

“We do the banquet to thank them,” said Kristine King, event coordinator at the community center. “Then we have to ask them for help at the banquet.”

At this year’s event on Saturday, June 2, 10 awards were given out to businesses, adults and students. King believes that all volunteering counts, from holding the door open for someone with a load to helping with organization of events.

Over the last year, community members contributed approximately 3,500 hours to the community center. The volunteered hours were valued at about \$60,000.

Other volunteer opportunities include adults coaching youth leagues, serving as mentors for teens, or helping staff during the after-school programs.

This year a new category was added, teen mentor. “We wanted to establish how important it is for older kids to be mentors and leaders for the youth,” King said.

Teens who received the new award were Ryan Burnias and senior Andrew Doerr. King said the two teens had an outstanding year of service playing with children and setting an example of leadership.

Another award, the business donor of the year, was given to Alyeska Seafoods. King said it supplies “the best cookies ever” for the holiday events, and when the Missoula Children’s Theatre directors were in Unalaska, Alyeska housed them for a week in its facilities.

A special recognition award was given to departing school Superintendent Darrel Sanborn and the elders from the Church

of the Latter-day Saints. King said the community center staff wanted to recognize Sanborn for all the work he has done working with the community center and school before he and his wife move away from the community.

“He knows all of the students’ names and he truly cares for the best interests of each student,” King said. “We wanted him to know how important he has been to our community.”

King noted the ease of working with Sanborn and his constant availability. The community center staff and school would share facilities for sports teams and for various event.

King also wanted to recognize the elders and all of the time they spend playing with children at the community center. Because there is a continual rotation, the group didn’t fit into a category and was given a special recognition.

“Since they’ve been coming to Unalaska, they have had a tremendous amount of hours,” King said. “Everyone is doing so much to help out.”

Elizabeth Johnson received the instructor of the year award. Johnson provides fitness-training consultations, addressing nutrition, exercise and wellness. King said the education component had been missing until Johnson joined the staff and noted her passion for instruction and field of study.

Alysha McGuire received the teen volunteer award, and J.J. Fernandez received the youth volunteer award. Fernandez helped Tony Garcia with the Parent’s Night Out, playing with children and ensuring their safety. King said that McGuire would constantly seek out King to provide assistance in any way.



Volunteer instructor Pam Kyle sits with her family at the Community Center volunteer banquet on Saturday, June 2.

“She’s always very enthusiastic, has a good attitude and a lot of energy,” King said.

Jack Pound received the coach of the year award for coaching sports throughout the year. Coaches are required to organize and plan practices and coach the games every week, in addition to their usual schedule. Oftentimes, the job of coaching involves a lot of work outside the allotted practice time.

Finally, Jane Bye received the volunteer of the year award.

Bye mentors the community and staff of the community center. Bye is a former staff member and now works with a wellness and mental health program.

King said Bye enjoys playing with children and will always provide ideas for events. For a while, Bye sponsored a youth council to help develop young leaders and spearheaded **Alaska Kids Are Our Kids**^{*}. She trains and leads workshops for teens. “I just can’t say enough about her. She is a true asset to not only us, but the whole community,” King said. “We couldn’t do anything without the volunteers. We have so much help every year.”

^{*}Alaska Kids Are Our Kids is Unalaska/Dutch Harbor’s local community engagement team, working with the community, the school district, and AASB’s Alaska ICE and QS2 initiatives.

Stronger Communities, the *Talk of Alaska*

RADIO SHOW DISCUSSES HEALTHY COMMUNITIES, SCHOOL VIOLENCE PREVENTION

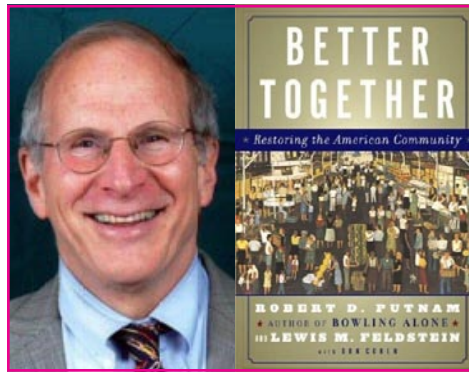
By AASB Staff



In light of the shootings at Virginia Tech University, as well as various other violent acts committed on school grounds across the country this year, and in recent years, on Tuesday, May 1, APRN's *Talk of Alaska* call-in radio program chose to focus on community. Key questions posed by Talk of Alaska host Steve Heimel included: "What does it take to build a healthy community?" and "Can strong communities create safer school environments?"

Lewis Feldstein, president of the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation and co-author of *Better Together: Restoring the American Community*, was the guest expert on the show and offered his views on community and society.

"Social capital," a central topic of the book, is a subject that Feldstein consistently referred to. By social capital, Feldstein is referring to



Lewis Feldstein, president of the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation and co-author of *Better Together: Restoring the American Community*

social networks or gatherings such as civic organizations, church groups, even bowling leagues. In other words, his focus is on the centrality of relationships and interpersonal connections between members of a community as the true catalyst for positive, sustainable change, and a practical factor toward improving various societal ills.

His conclusions on social capital point to benefits received by both those involved in the social network, as well as bystanders. An example from the book talks about the crime rate of a neighborhood dropping considerably as a result of neighbors knowing one another by name, which serves to benefit even residents who are not personally involved in neighborhood activities. A similar idea offered in *Better Together* is the idea that: "Society as a whole benefits enormously from the social ties forged by those who choose connective strategies in pursuit of their particular goals."

Callers from Sitka to Unalakleet to Bethel, all across Alaska, posed questions and shared their insights on a host of related issues. The role that over-consumption of television and other passive media plays in disconnecting people and limiting interaction was one issue. Other topics of conversation

included bullying; assigning responsibility to people for their actions, as opposed to transferring responsibility to a weapon or other inanimate object; and teaching our youth the importance of cooperation and tolerance.

The statewide broadcast helped to bring focus to the issue of youth violence, and shed light on how strong, healthy communities could act as a solution, or at least a forward step, toward a brighter, safer future for our kids.

It is refreshing and encouraging to see that APRN and *Talk of Alaska*, in the months following AASB's collaboration with the *Kids These Days* radio program, continues to highlight issues related to youth, family, and healthy communities.

The community engagement message is about our collective efforts to reach out and support youth in a number of ways that lead to their academic and life success. In order to act, we must be made aware, and last month's radio program helped to keep the idea of strong communities fresh in our minds, as a positive step toward ensuring that success.

The original Kids These Days radio-show, a forerunner of this KTD digital version, was a partnership between AASB and APRN's Talk of Alaska. Six shows hosted by Steve Heimel and Nancy Seamount on a wide variety of teen, family, and community issues can be heard at: www.kidsthesedays.org

School Connectedness Matters

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the 2006 survey findings include:

- 55% of students believe there is at least one adult in the school they can turn to for support.
- 51% of students report their teachers treat them fairly.
- 47% of students believe their peers treat them with respect.

Robert Blum, MD, MPH, PhD., is the William H. Gates Senior Professor, Chair, and leading researcher on school connectivity for the Department of Population, Family and Reproductive Health at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

For more information, click on the School Climate "Quick Link" at www.alaskaice.org



Supportive adults and engaged communities provide a positive future for our youth.

Nurturing Children's Imaginations -

IMAGINATION LIBRARY - HELPING KIDS TO DREAM MORE, LEARN MORE, CARE MORE, AND BE MORE

By AASB Staff



Developing literacy skills early in a child's life creates an important foundational basis for their learning in the future. Studies have shown that immersing a child in a literacy environment can be a stronger predictor of literacy and academic achievement than family income.

In a 1991 (Boyer) study, kindergarten teachers reported that 35% of the children arrive at school unprepared to learn.

Reading aloud to children is a wonderful way to create a loving, learning environment. A growing body of research suggests that **quality family time spent reading will have tremendous impacts on the short- and long-term reading capabilities of a child.**

These and other related findings are at the heart of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library. For renowned singer/songwriter Dolly Parton, the Imagination Library was an attempt to improve educational opportunities for children, allow for positive family and youth-adult interaction, and foster a love of reading to help



Sharing a learning experience through a good book

children arrive at kindergarten ready to learn.

Created in 1996, the Imagination Library was set up to deliver a new, age-appropriate storybook each month to all of the preschool children aged 0-5 in Sevier County, Tennessee. Sixty books to one child (and family) from the time that they are born is quite an achievement, and a great head-start for that child in the world of reading and learning. Based on its success, the program was expanded in 2000 to reach pre-school youth and families in communities across the United States and Canada.

Currently, the program is running in three Alaskan communities: Nome, Juneau, and Hoonah. [The Association for the Education of Young Children – Southeast Alaska \(AEYC-SEA\)](#) is a prime sponsor for the Imagination Library program in Juneau.

Through a two-year partnership with AASB/Alaska ICE, AEYC-SEA worked to embed the assets framework in the early care and education training delivery system in Alaska. Through combined efforts, an overall increase in communication, collaboration, and supportive relationships between early care and education groups has occurred throughout the state.

As part of our ongoing collaboration, AASB/Alaska ICE contributes to the Imagination Library as a family/child literacy effort that builds assets in young children, strengthens family connections, and prepares children for school.

To find out more about *Dolly Parton's Imagination Library*, and how you can bring the program to your community, visit: www.imaginationlibrary.com

Alaska City & Village Kids Trade Places

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But the girls also saw ways their new friends were much like them. Most people have dogs, and all the teenagers, it seems, have laptop computers. Many families subscribe to Netflix.

By the end of their visit Cantor and O'Hara felt right at home. "We're thinking of going back this summer," Cantor said.

The Rose Urban Rural Exchange is a unique cross-cultural exchange program whose mission is to build understanding between urban and rural Alaskans. The program, now entering its seventh year, aims to strengthen relationships between urban and rural Alaskans by building mutual respect, understanding, and a statewide sense of community by bridging the cultural and geographical urban/rural divide through Alaska's youth.

For more information on the Rose Urban Rural Exchange (a program of the Alaska Humanities Forum), visit www.roseurbanruralexchange.org.



Barrow is one of 15 rural communities that offered the exchange program during the 2006-07 school year.



The Alaska Teen Media Institute (ATMI) produced a radio program entitled "Culture Shock" documenting the Rose Urban Rural Exchange experience, told through the voices of youth and community members who have participated.

ATMI, an AASB partner organization under the umbrella of Spirit of Youth, is dedicated to providing teens with the tools and training needed to produce stories - told in their own voices - to be shared through a variety of media.

Listen to the radio program at: www.alaskaice.org/files/CultureShock.mp3
For more information on the award-winning Alaska Teen Media Institute, visit: <http://www.alaskateenmedia.org>