Childhood obesity prevention subaward received

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Fairbanks, Alaska—Researchers at the University of Alaska Fairbanks are collaborating on a new project aimed at developing childhood obesity-prevention strategies in the Pacific region.

A $2.9 million subaward to the UAF Cooperative Extension Service is part of a $25 million U.S. Department of Agriculture grant to the University of Hawaii. The project team includes scientists from colleges in Alaska, Hawaii, Guam, American Samoa, Northern Mariana Islands and Micronesia. The five-year subaward will involve three units at the University of Alaska Fairbanks: Cooperative Extension, the Center for Alaska Native Health Research and the School of Natural Resources and Agricultural Sciences.

Extension food and nutrition specialist Bret Luick, the lead investigator of the Alaska project, said the long-term goal of the grant is to reduce childhood obesity by encouraging active lifestyles and improving dietary practices of families with young children.

“This is about children achieving and maintaining healthy lifestyles,” said Luick.

Researchers will partner with communities to inventory resources, identify barriers to healthy lifestyles, and design and evaluate culturally appropriate programs. Luick said the project will increase the university’s capacity to provide childhood obesity education, research and outreach to the state. The grant also will help support academic training in natural resource management, and foods and nutrition by building on existing UAF degree programs.

Other UAF researchers include Andrea Bersamin, an assistant professor of nutrition at CANHR and the Institute of Arctic Biology, and Joshua Greenberg, an associate professor of resource economics at the School of Natural Resources and Agricultural Sciences.

- 30 -

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