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Nelson’s tour is aimed at initiating grassroots, communitywide changes in the food and physical environments of eight rural communities that are the locations of active StrongWomen programs. The nutrition and exercise program targets midlife and older adults and is offered through the Cooperative Extension Service in 40 states.

Linda Tannehill, a UAF Cooperative Extension Service agent in Soldnota, was one of two agents who approached Nelson in 2002 about developing a strength-training curriculum for Extension educators. In Nelson’s latest book, “The Social Network Diet: Change Yourself, Change the World,” she said Tannehill’s phone call encouraged her to develop the program. She wrote, “That call triggered a decade of community engagement that has influenced the lives of thousands of women across the country who have led or participated in our programs.”

Tannehill is one of 11 StrongWomen “ambassadors” nationwide who are certified to teach instructors. Since 2005, she has trained 145 instructors in Alaska, who teach hundreds of women in more than 20 community sites. Participants report increased strength, muscle mass and bone density.

Nelson and staff will be in communities for three days to introduce her new program and to work with what she calls “change clubs,” groups of women who are committed to staying fit and motivating others to adopt a healthier lifestyle. Tannehill said the change club in Kenai consists of 14 StrongWomen participants from the central Kenai Peninsula.

Nelson is the director of the John Hancock Research Center on Physical Activity, Nutrition and Obesity Prevention at Tufts University. Her tour will also take her to Montana, Colorado, Kansas, Arkansas, Missouri, Wisconsin and Pennsylvania.

For more information about the StrongWomen program, call Tannehill at 262-5824 or e-mail her at lktannehill@alaska.edu.
Media advisory: There are no public events planned. Media are invited to participate in a “walkabout,” a physical fitness activity with change club members on Sept. 15. Call Tannehill for details.

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