

THE VOICE OF INTERIOR ALASKA

**Inside Today** Recycling Commission looks to broaden its scope into sustainability. » A5

DREAMT IT. PLANNED IT. DID IT.



Graduates celebrate during the University of Alaska Fairbanks College of Rural and Community Development Rural Alaska Honors Institute 2017 graduation ceremony Thursday afternoon in Schaible Auditorium.





Forty-two students completed the 6-week program, which accepts high school juniors and seniors from towns across the state. 2017 marked RAHI's 35th year. This year's theme: "Dream it. Plan it. Do it."

**Above: Valedictorian Brian Conwell** of Unalaska smiles while listening to Elena Jacobs of Bethel give her salutatory address. Left: Jasmine Woods of Anchorage is

congratulated by Caitlyn Moses.

ERIC ENGMAN/NEWS-MINER PHOTOS

### GOOD MORNING



#### The weather.

Mostly sunny. Areas of smoke. Light winds. Mostly clear tonight. Isolated showers after midnight. High today ......78 Low tonight ......60

**WEATHER** » A7

Sunrise: 3:54 a.m. Sunset: 11:59 p.m.



SOURDOUGH JACK:

"Con-grad-ulations, **RAHI students! You** did the hard work and it paid off. Well done!"

### McConnell woos Murkowski with \$2 billion for health care

By Ricardo Alson-Zaldivar ASSOCIATED PRESS

**WASHINGTON** — A provision in Senate Majority Leader Mitch

McConnell's rewritten health care bill appears to benefit only one state. That's Alaska, home of one Republican holdout McConnell badly needs to Murkowski keep the legislation



alive, and her state might gain nearly \$2 billion in federal money.

The language would give states with extremely high premiums an added piece of two funds the measure would create

New Senate health care bill could be in trouble. » A5

that together total \$182 billion through 2026. The money is supposed to help insurers curb consumers' coverage costs.

Analysts at the consulting firm Avalere Health and Cynthia Cox, who studies health insurance at the nonpartisan Kaiser Family Foundation, said Alaska seems to be the only state qualifying for the added money.

Avalere Health estimated the provision would mean \$150 million for Alaska in 2018, \$230 million in 2019 and

**HEALTH** » A5

## Winter smoke control

Borough plans conference, mailings on new regulations

By Amanda Bohman ABOHMAN@NEWSMINER.COM

As a smoky haze from faraway wildfires hung over Fairbanks on Thursday, air quality staff briefed the Air Pollution Control Commission on efforts rolling out this winter to reduce smoke from wood burning.

An air pollution conference is being planned for September, new air quality commercials are being created and a mass mailer about new air quality rules is going out to residents, said Todd Thompson, air quality program supervisor for the Fairbanks North Star Borough.

The borough also is developing a program that will focus on monitoring area schools and provide school administrators real-time data on what schoolchildren

are breathing.
"The big thing is we are going to send out a postcard to everybody in the Air Quality Control Zone, talking about the new regulations, stage restrictions and the woodstove changeout program," Thompson said

**POLLUTION » A8** 

RASMUSON FOUNDATION

# Alaska groups awarded

By Erin Granger  ${\tt EGRANGER@NEWSMINERCOM}$ 

As part of a larger collection of donations, the Rasmuson Foundation has awarded \$500,000 to assist in construction of a new health clinic in the Steese Highway community of Cir-

The donation is one of 18 awarded to organizations across Alaska as part of an \$8.6 million package, one of the largest awards in the foundation's history.

**RASMUSON** » A8

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### Daily News-Mine

# OPINION

"INDEPENDENT IN ALL THINGS ... NEUTRAL IN NONE."

Fuller A. Cowell, publisher • Kathryn Strle, general manager • Rod Boyce, managing editor • Tom Hewitt, opinion editor • Charles L. Gray, publisher emeritus

# Alaska needs RAHI's graduates

### Young rural scholars can help chart course for communities, state

News-Miner opinion: Summer school is a prospect dreaded by most students. So an outside observer at Thursday's Rural Alaska Honors Institute graduation could be forgiven for being confused at the joyousness of the several dozen young people wearing caps and gowns, having just completed six weeks of classes during the heart of the Interior summer. Now in its 35th year, the RAHI program has been helping the best of Alaska's rural communities further their educations and make the most of the future. The program's graduates this year are finishing RAHI at as precipitous a time as any in its history — Alaska and its communities are always in need of good young leaders.

Founded in 1983, RAHI is a "bridge" program that helps prepare motivated high school juniors and seniors from rural communities across Alaska for higher education and life beyond high school. Participants have gone on to achieve great things as educators, lawmakers and entrepreneurs. Some have attended Ivy League schools, many have gone on to college within the University of Alaska system and others have participated in vocational education or applied RAHI's lessons

within their own communities.

Judged by the numbers, this year's class was impressive. The 42 members of the class earned an average of 9.24 college credits apiece, the fourth-highest average in program history. Their average GPA was 3.68, a new record for RAHI. The 12 students who took a reading class saw their reading test scores rise an average of more than a full grade grade level apiece in six weeks.

The students' accomplishments

weren't limited to the classroom. RAHI students this year performed a total of 620 hours of community service, which works out to an average of about 2.5 hours per week per student for all six weeks of the program. The twin standards of academics and service speak well to the dedication of the RAHI class of 2017.

But the heart of what RAHI is about can't be conveyed by statistics, a point made by several of the speakers at Thursday's graduation.

"This is not the finish line," said Greg Owens, RAHI's academic coordinator. He emphasized the program's worth in helping prepare its students for life ahead, both in academic life and the world at large.

Evon Peter, UAF's vice chancellor for rural, community and Native education, riffed on this year's RAHI slogan, "Dream it, plan it, do it." Musing on what the "it" is, Mr. Peter asked graduates to consider the broader picture of their futures. "What is our role in contributing to our communities,

our families and our state?" he asked.
Keynote speaker Nathan McCowan,
a member of RAHI's class of 1994
who now serves as CEO of a Native
corporation, spoke directly to the
issues facing rural communities and
the state. He referenced the state's
ongoing budget shortfall and a host of
societal problems such as outmigration, unemployment, substance abuse
and domestic violence that affect all
of the state's communities — sometimes disproportionately in rural
areas. Rural residents, both Native

Native, face great challenges and "a shortage of resources to address those challenges," he said. "And the greatest shortage is a shortage of leaders."

The RAHI graduates of 2017 have shown they have the skills to become the leaders their communities need. Whatever paths they take in the years ahead, may they keep that in mind and help Alaska and its people to great accomplishments as they work to fulfill their potential.

#### LETTER TO THE EDITOR

### State parks need help

July 9, 2017

**To the editor:** I am writing this letter to advise residents of Fairbanks and surrounding areas that our state parks are in need of support and attention.

The state Department of Natural Resources has chosen in its budget cuts to put all of the state parks in the Delta area in what is called passive management. No park ranger has been assigned to the Delta area as of July 1. On June 29, notices were posted on all of the bathrooms and they were locked. This closure affects the Clearwater campground, Quartz Lake campground, historical park at Rika's Roadhouse, the campground at the Delta Recreation Area site in Delta Junction, the Donnelly Creek campground and the Fielding Lake campground.

Camping areas were still open, but with no bathrooms available during a busy holiday weekend, you can only imagine the problems that it caused and the unsanitary mess. If nothing is done, it will soon destroy our beautiful parks in Delta Junction that others love to recreate at also.

On July 6, there was a community meeting in Delta that included Deputy Commissioner of DNR Ed Fogel, Parks Superintendant for the Northern Region Brooks Ludwig and Rep. George Rauscher. The meeting was held on short notice but was well attended by Delta residents.

The outcome of the meeting was that parks would reopen the outhouses, volunteers from the Delta community would volunteer to clean the outhouses and there should be a concessionaire taking over the parks by mid-August.

With that being said, we are volunteers. We work, we have busy lives and we want to enjoy our summer, too, but are willing to help to try and make all of our visits to the very busy and beautiful parks more pleasurable. What I am requesting of the general public is to be patient with all of us. We will do the best we can but we need your help. There is no refuse pickup, so what you pack in, you must pack out. Please don't litter. When using the outhouses, if you see garbage in there, please help us by removing it.

The Delta Historical Society is taking care of Rika's, and the restaurant and gift shop are open. Volunteers will clean Quartz Lake and Lost Lake outhouses, the Delta Rec campground, Clearwater campground and Donnelly Creek campground. We will not be able to take care of the Fielding Lake campground.

Thank you for your help in this matter.

Carol Dunlap-Austin DELTA JUNCTION



COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVE

### State had a good run on oil revenue

By Rep. Adam Wool

e had a good run. This phrase was recently recited in conversation and sort of sums things up for many Alaskans. Oil started flowing in the trans-Alaska oil pipeline on June 20, 1977, and ever since, Alaska has been on a good run. We got rid of our state income tax and our education head tax and started doing something no other state does: giving out identical checks to every man, woman, and child residing in Alaska, regardless of length of residency and income level. The first dividend check, in 1980, was \$1,000 (which was supposed to account for the first 3 years of pay-

Things have changed significantly since those days. In 1980, the price of oil, adjusted for inflation, was \$116 a barrel; the current price is less than \$50 per barrel. Peak throughput of the pipeline was about 2 million barrels a day in 1988, when it was responsible for 25 percent of total U.S. production. Currently, throughput is about 500,000 barrels per day, which accounts for about 5 percent of total U.S. production. Price and production levels are down since the big years, and the impact of Alaskan oil is also down.

We have to address this new reality. We may see some slight increases in oil production and the price may go up, but as a resident of Fairbanks, I don't really want \$100 oil. It makes everything more expensive, especially utilities. Many people left Fairbanks when heating oil was \$4 per gallon and no one wants a heating bill higher than their mortgage.

There are two competing views to

solving Alaska's fiscal crisis. Both involve restructuring the way the dividend is paid out and will add about \$1.9 billion to the general fund. Both sides wanted cuts and many cuts have already been made. Many on both sides of the aisle say we've cut enough. Sure, there are some targeted cuts that could still be made, but none that will have a huge impact. Also, the cuts that are suggested now face huge political hurdles, as was witnessed by the recent proposal to cut Pioneer Homes by \$6 million. Try that 100 times over.

There is a major chasm about whether we need to implement some sort of new revenue to balance the budget. Some argue the permanent fund earnings restructure will get us 80 percent of the way there. Even if that figure is accurate, the last 20 percent is significant — a 20 percent shortfall would mean dramatic cuts, which no one seems willing to identify, as well as no capital budget for the foreseeable future.

Other revenue sources have been discussed such as an income tax, a sales tax and a head tax. They all have certain pros and cons. A sales tax will draw from the tourists who visit Alaska but is regressive and will also tax many services, such as auto repair, that can add up quickly. An income tax draws from many nonresident workers and can be progressive or a flat percentage, but many people don't want an income tax — even though they might pay less compared to a sales tax. A head tax is a set amount paid by working people regardless of income and is deducted from their paycheck. We had one until 1980, and it was \$100 at that

time. However, it doesn't raise much

Those that say to the Legislature, "just go down there and work on it," seem to be missing the point. When we try to work on a compromise, there is a contingent that says, "no taxes, no way, no compromise." That leaves little to talk about. When the House Majority Coalition tries to combine other things on the table with revenue, to form a bigger menu from which to reach a compromise, such as the operating budget or oil taxes, they're met with, "no, we're only here to discuss one issue."

We need compromise and we need revenue. I was just camping along the Richardson Highway during the Fourth of July week. The federal Bureau of Land Management campground was maintained and clean; the Fairbanks borough campground was maintained and clean; the state campgrounds were not maintained, not clean and looked wild — some even had junk cars on them. Is this the direction we want to be going? I hope not.

Many people accept that new revenues will be needed, but some want to wait. I think now is the time. To continue to cut more services and education, including K-12 education and the university, and fill the remaining budget gap with draws from savings every year, is unacceptable and unwise. We must move our state forward into the 21st century with an educated and well-trained workforce, and of course a stable economy to attract much-needed

It's been a good run, but now it's time we all chip in a bit.

Rep. Adam Wool, D-Fairbanks, is a local business owner who serves in the Alaska House of Representatives.

investments.