COVER PHOTO. Traditional dancers performed at the opening of the ribbon cutting ceremony at the new Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Regional Hospital in July. For more on the event, see page 18. Photo by Brian Hilde.
REPORT TO THE PEOPLE
2022

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YKHC administers a comprehensive health care delivery system for 50 rural communities in southwest Alaska.

The system includes community clinics, sub-regional clinics, a regional hospital, dental services, behavioral health services including substance abuse counseling and treatment, health promotion and disease prevention programs, and environmental health services.

YKHC is a Tribal Organization authorized by each of the 58 federally recognized Tribal councils in its service area to negotiate with the Federal Indian Health Service to provide health care services under Title V of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975.

YKHC, along with 22 other Tribal Organizations, is a co-signer to the Alaska Tribal Health Compact, a consortium which secures annual funding agreements with the federal government to provide health care services to Alaska Natives and Native Americans throughout the state.
Elected by the Tribal Councils of each of the 58 federally recognized Tribes in the YKHC service area, the Board of Directors is the chief policy-making body of the corporation, exercising overall control, management and supervision.

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Geraldine Beans, 2nd Vice Chair
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Bonnie Persson, Treasurer
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Moses Owen, 1st Additional Member
Alton Alexie, 2nd Additional Member
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Cultural Crafts & Photo
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Peter Atchak

Traditional Quotes & Signage
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Board Appointments
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Moses Owen—Alternate
ANTHC: Walter Jim
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2nd Alton Alexie—Alternate
LifeMed: Patrick Tall
Stanley Hoffman Jr.
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LEADERSHIP MESSAGE

We have had another busy year of celebrating achievements and overcoming challenges!

Much construction happened across the Yukon-Kuskokwim region. We were excited to join the community of Akiachak for the groundbreaking of their new health clinic last June. A month later we celebrated the opening of the new Kongiganak health clinic with a very large turnout of what seemed to be most of the village. We are looking forward to this June when we will be celebrating the opening of the new Quinhagak health clinic.

Here in Bethel, we are currently building a new 109-room, Qavartarvik Customer Lodge. It will be dedicated to providing customers safe and comfortable lodging when needing to spend the night in Bethel for their medical travel. As village customers know, our current hostel is only 24 rooms and cannot accommodate the volume. Our new facility is being built large enough so that for the first time, all village customers will have a nice place to stay. It is scheduled to open in the spring of 2024.

On June 3, we also held a ribbon cutting event for the region’s new hospital. Members from YKHC’s 58 tribes, the US Indian Health Service, financiers, construction partners and dignitaries attended the half-day event. Many speeches and tours were given celebrating this five-year, $335 million project that finished safe, on time and under budget.

As we all know, this past winter, we also had significant challenges with not having enough aircraft seats or lodging available for both village travel to Bethel and travel to Anchorage. When seats or lodging were not available, it unnecessarily delayed appointments. In many instances, appointments were available either in Bethel or Anchorage, but there was no way to get customers from villages to their appointments due to the lack of available aircraft seats or lodging.

The lack of lodging in Bethel will be alleviated when our new Qavartarvik Customer Lodge opens next year. With spring arriving and having more daylight, we were also notified by local carriers that village aircraft seat availability recently increased. Additionally, since most out-of-region flights have been close to full, we requested Alaska Airlines add additional flights to Bethel to accommodate our customers who travel to Anchorage for their specialty appointments. Alaska Airlines is considering that request.

With the severity of the COVID-19 pandemic winding down, we strongly encourage parents to make appointments for your annual well child exams. It is in these exams that we can help ensure your baby or child has the best opportunity for a healthy life. We also encourage adults to schedule your annual physical exams. This is where we can determine what type of age-appropriate health screening you need. The pandemic took a heavy toll on our child immunization rates, as well as breast, cervical and colon cancer screening rates. Let’s improve it! You can make an appointment by calling your village clinic or, if in Bethel, call 907-543-6442.

Lastly, we announced in January of 2023 that YKHC will be constructing five new village health clinics, including the expansion of an existing clinic; constructing approximately 120 units of new staff housing; doubling the size of our new supply warehouse; and constructing a new child care center for employees. The new clinics will be in:

- Anvik
- Lime Village
- Mertarvik
- Oscarville
- Stony River

A sixth village clinic will receive a much-needed clinic expansion in Kwigillingok.

These new, region-wide construction projects represent an investment of more than $100 million in critical health care infrastructure. YKHC is able to construct these new facilities due to our strong financial position. We are proud of our 58 member tribes, 1,500 employees and pleased our 30,000 customers will greatly benefit from these new facilities that will help improve health care delivery across the great Yukon-Kuskokwim region!

Sincerely,

Walter Jim
Chair of the Board

Dan Winkelman
President & CEO
As described by our late Honorary Board Member Dr. Paul John, “napartet” is the mast of a boat that led him and his father out to traditional fishing waters. At YKHC, we have used Dr. John’s story to inspire our strategic plan to move our region’s health priorities forward. These are the tactics that guided our healthcare priorities in 2022. The following pages describe our priority work in 2022.

COVID-19 testing in February.  
At the ribbon cutting for new Kongiganak clinic.  
Qavartarvik Customer Lodge in December.
Extend and sustain water and sewer projects and advocate for public funding and new projects

The Infrastructure Investments and Jobs Act (IIJA), signed into law in November 2021, is a comprehensive piece of legislation that aims to modernize the nation’s infrastructure and provide crucial funding to various sectors.

One of the key areas of focus for this bill is to address the long-standing issue of inadequate access to clean drinking water in many parts of the country, including in Alaska Native communities. The act allocates $3.5 billion towards providing safe drinking water and wastewater infrastructure to Alaska Native and American Indian communities.

Access to clean water is essential for basic daily needs, such as cooking, cleaning, and personal hygiene. Many Alaska Native homes have challenges in accessing clean and safe drinking water which can result in a wide range of health issues. Providing this service will help address these health problems, as well as create economic opportunities for these communities, enable them to build sustainable and thriving economies, reducing healthcare costs, and creating new jobs in water treatment, infrastructure development, and related fields.

YKHC has been working with communities in the region, and our partners at the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium, to develop plans to use the IIJA funding to provide service to over 1,100 unserved homes in the region.

We are hoping to receive funding in FY2023 to begin designs on water and wastewater projects in Mertarvik, Kipnuk, Tuluksak, and Tununak. Planning is underway to complete preliminary engineering reports (PER) for Atmautluak, Chefornak, Kongiganak, Mekoryuk, Napakiak, and Napaskiak that make them eligible for FY2024 funding. Once complete, PERs for Nightmute, Nunapitchuk, Tuntutuliak, Kasigluk, Mertarvik (phase 2), and Kalskag will begin, making them eligible for IIJA funding in FY2025/FY2026.

Once funded, these projects will take many years for construction to be completed, but we are still extremely excited about this rare opportunity to provide service to so many unserved and underserved homes.

New Village Health Clinics

Groundbreaking in Akiachak

The Native Community of Akiachak celebrated the groundbreaking for their new health clinic in June. YKHC Board of Directors, Tribal leaders, YKHC guests and members of the community gathered for a ceremony and reception near the site of the new clinic. The Akiachak clinic project includes the construction of a new, larger, code-compliant health clinic that will meet the current and future village health care needs.

Kongiganak Clinic Grand Opening

In July, the residents of Kongiganak, along with YKHC leadership, Board Members and other guests celebrated the opening of their new health clinic with a ribbon-cutting ceremony, tours of the facility and, of course, cake!
Improve the oral health of our children

YKHC Dental welcomed a big and exciting change in 2022. After more than 20 years the electronic dental record was upgraded.

This software change was a huge undertaking. The team worked hard on the implementation of this powerful, new tool which allowed the dental team to have a closer connection to the medical team to streamline processes to create more patient care time. As a result, the Dental department can become a more comprehensive connection for our customers’ medical needs.

We continue to grow our dental team. During 2022, we welcomed four new dentists who are energetic and passionate about bringing our customers the care they need. We also supported the development of several new dental health aides, who will be able to travel to communities in the YK Delta to provide care.

These changes allowed YKHC Dental to grow and usher in a new wave of dental care for the YK Delta.

Reduce drownings, unintentional injuries

Drowning was the number one leading cause of unintentional injury death in the Yukon-Kuskokwim region according to data collected from 2007 through 2016. We are working to change that.

The Office of Environmental Health staff promotes safe boating practices and works to reduce drownings by requesting free life jackets through the State of Alaska Office of Boating Safety Kids Don’t Float Program on an annual basis every fall.

Each community in the YK Delta has at least one local entity that has volunteered to be the community’s Kids Don’t Float life jacket provider and often sets up a loaner program to allow the life jackets to be shared among residents.

In the fall of 2022, OEHE Staff contacted the 52 Kids Don’t Float life jacket station providers in the YK Delta to collect order requests that will be delivered before spring breakup in 2023. A total of 2,755 free life jackets of various sizes for children and adults were requested.

Pedestrians are among the most vulnerable users of the road, which can be even more dangerous during dark, winter months in Alaska.

Wearing clothing with reflective materials can significantly increase drivers’ ability to see and react to pedestrians on the roadway.

OEHE staff provided free reflective tape for coats and outerwear at two public events in Bethel during 2022—the LKSD Little Folks Halloween Carnival in October and the Project Homeless Connect Event held in November.

A variety of reflective tapes were available to choose from—adhesive strips (stickers) or iron-on pieces in a variety of shapes and colors. When patrons are hesitant to commit to the somewhat permanent iron-on reflectors, they can usually be persuaded to take a handful of adhesive strips instead, and possibly share with their family.

Reduce suicides

Reducing suicides was an important priority for 2022. While there is no one solution to the complicated issue of suicide, we have worked on several projects we believe will help reduce suicides.

A new suicide risk/prevention screening tool was adopted and implemented in Behavioral Health. All patients presenting for behavioral health treatment, regardless of location, are being screened for suicide risk.

YKHC’s new designated evaluation and stabilization (DES) behavioral health unit is now open and operational. This unit provides a safe place for patients to stabilize until they are returned home or sent to a higher level of care. Approximately 555 people were placed in the DES unit in 2022. The Emergency Services department is fully staffed and the Prevention department well-staffed and making regular village visits as well as responding to traumatic events. Our Calricaraq team was expanded and offers classes to help people understand the role traditional Yup’ik practices have in supporting mental health. They are also available as a resource to communities who request support after an event in the community.

Increase cancer screenings

As part of our efforts to increase cancer screenings, we concentrate on four preventive screening rates:
- mammograms
- cervical cancer screening
- colorectal cancer screening
- tobacco use screening

During the pandemic, some cancer screening rates decreased. This was due to significantly reduced travel and exams. Additionally, we lost one full-time mammographer.

With the ending of the pandemic, we have hired a new mammographer and have a second mammographer expected to be hired soon. The YKHC region has two-and-a-half times the national incidence of colon cancer, which makes colon cancer a major area of focus. During the last two years we have participated in a research project to identify if Cologuard, a less intrusive test for colon cancer, can be successfully obtained by patients in the villages, processed in Anchorage, and sent out of state for final testing and results. We have currently screened 161 YK Delta residents with Cologuard.
Strengthen village health programs

Coming out of the COVID era into a new year, 2022 was marked by strong emotions and sighs of relief in our communities. New challenges produced fresh ideas to provide quality patient care from clinic staff, float CHA/Ps, Itinerant PA/NP providers, and every CHAP department. We are grateful to all CHAP staff for a spirit of collaboration, concern for others, positive interactions, and hard work, accomplishing much despite the challenges.

Appreciation goes first to the Community Health Aides and Practitioners (CHA/Ps) that provided patient care in their home villages. Focusing on acute and emergent care, as well as increasing well-child visits and immunizations, CHA/Ps are the heart of healthcare in the villages. Float CHA/Ps and Advanced Practice Providers (APPs) covered village clinics with low or no staffing, and on-call as well.

Continued focus on recruitment of new and re-hire Health Aides paid off in Field Supervision. The rate of filled CHA/P positions increased from 59% filled in January to 73% filled by December 2022. A total of 19 CHAs (12 new and seven rehired) were onboarded, as well as three Health Aide Assistants. In partnership with the Alaska Area Health Education Center (AHEC), CHA assistants are mentored to pass the Test of Basic adult Education (TABE) required for entry to the CHA training program. The CHA sign-on bonus of $5,000 has also proven to be attracting more village candidates for the position.

The CHAP Training Center provides all CHA/P training, re-entries, certification process, and continuing education opportunities. CHAP Field Supervision, in collaboration with Behavioral Health Services, offered a two-day community health aide wellness retreat to CHA/Ps November 12–13. This retreat covered positive practices for coping with stress and trauma.

The CHAP Itinerant Program PA/NPs Advanced Practice Providers (APP) provided regular visits to villages, with the primary focus on acute and chronic patient care as well as immunizations. They also responded to emergencies and provided on-call relief for Health Aides. Collectively, the providers made 182 village rotations and completed 5,553 patient visits.

The program continues to grow, with five additional providers added in 2022. This is a great accomplishment as staffing challenges continue throughout the country. The additional providers increase YKHC’s capacity to care for patients at their home villages, while giving needed support and relief to villages with staffing issues.

Immunization rates for children 3–27 months saw a slow but steady increase from 39% in January to 45% by December. A strong PR campaign was launched in 2022 for parents and families to make them aware of how to prevent many childhood diseases with readily available vaccines. Pediatric physicians, Public Health, CHAP Providers and PR partner in monthly meetings with the Immunization department to strategize initiatives to sustain the increasing trend.

Focus on quality

In 2022, the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Region Hospital successfully obtained Joint Commission Certification. This review is done at least every three years to assure that we are maintaining national standards of care.

To ensure we maintain these standards and are prepared for our next visit, YKHC arranged to conduct a mock Joint Commission survey in 2023. We also focus on patient and employee safety, with teams assigned to track and decrease falls, and to prevent medication errors.

Top four injuries in 2022

Here are tips to help avoid them!

- **Needle Sticks and Punctures**
  - Avoid recappping or bending needles
  - Promptly dispose of used needles in sharp containers

- **Slips, Trips, and Falls**
  - Wear shoes or boots that fit well and have good grip
  - Use shoe grips or ice cleats on

- **Strain**
  - Don’t lift with your back or twist while lifting
  - Bend your knees and keep your back straight
  - Keep the object close to your body

- **Cuts and Abrasions**
  - Wear proper PPE
  - Use the proper tool in the correct way
  - Be extra attentive when cleaning instruments

Safety is important at YKHC. This poster was created to help employees avoid some of the most common workplace injuries.
Improve patient experience

The YKHC patient experience involves a cross-section of elements—including registration, care, referrals, travel, accommodations and much more.

In order for us to improve the patient experience, we began to work with a company to help us gather feedback from customers about their experience at the hospital in Bethel. This company, Press Ganey, calls patients after a visit to inpatient or the emergency room to ask about the environment of care and their experience with nurses and healthcare providers. Starting in 2023, Press Ganey will also be gathering feedback for visits to outpatient and Behavioral Health Services.

Press Ganey consolidates patient responses and provides them to YKHC’s senior leadership team and staff to identify areas for improvement. We ask all patients who receive a call from Press Ganey after a visit to please take the time to answer the questions. This gives us important, timely information to help us improve our service.

Qavartarvik Customer Lodge

Another significant part of improving the customer experience is providing safe and comfortable lodging for patients who have to spend the night in Bethel as part of medical travel. In 2022, YKHC broke ground on the Qavartarvik Customer Lodge (QCL), a new patient lodging facility with 109 rooms.

In January 2022, YKHC met in Anchorage with Design Alaska and the contractor, ASKW-Davis, to follow up on earlier design comments and revisions.

The team was tasked to come up with value engineering cost saving suggestions. Project management software and document controls were set up, and a contract was awarded to RSA Engineering for coordination and oversight of the building and equipment commissioning process.

The contractor and design team worked together on finalizing the structural steel package so piling for the building foundation would meet the first barge delivery to Bethel in late May. Other long-lead equipment items such as the main power transformer, standby generator, fire pump and air handling units were approved for early procurement.

Early site work, relocation of the existing man camp, surveying, and preparation for pile driving took place in March and April as applications were submitted to the City of Bethel for the site plan permit, and to the State Fire Marshal for plan review approval. Approval to construct was granted by the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation.

Pile driving began in late May. By the end of June, structural framing for the first floor had begun, followed by setting the first-floor structural walls which had been prefabricated on the job site.

Second and third floor framing continued throughout the summer with roof framing and metal decking beginning in October along with the insulated metal panel siding. A cultural identity concept meeting and presentation by Jones and Jones Architects occurred in October.

The building membrane roofing system started in November as exterior windows were installed. Enclosing the building allowed for the start-up of temporary heat so work could continue through the winter. Roofing was completed just in time for the end of the holiday season.

Work will continue in 2023 and we anticipate having the lodge open in the first half of 2024.
# Qavartarvik Construction Timeline 2022

**January**
- Construction contract review with legal
- Work through early structural design for pile foundation
- Commissioning contract awarded to RSA

**February**
- Final construction contract signed with ASKW-Davis
- 100% design drawings received from Design Alaska

**March**
- Submittal reviews expedited for long lead equipment procurement
- Site work and pile foundation preparation begins

**April**
- Conformed drawings received
- Site plan permit submitted to City of Bethel
- Plan review approved by State Fire Marshal

**May**
- Special Inspection contract awarded
- ADEC approval to construct granted
- Start driving foundation piles

**June**
- First deliveries of structural framing steel arrive
- HDB contracted for interior design and procurement of furnishings
- Pile driving completed, first floor framing begins
- Temporary site power for construction installed

**July**
- Completed first floor steel, metal decking and floor sheathing
- Cast mechanical room and elevator pit concrete slabs
- Completed first floor wall framing

**August**
- Started second floor framing, sheathing and setting of prefabricated walls

**September**
- Started third floor structural steel and framing below building for panels
- Continued wall framing; started third floor sheathing and setting walls

**October**
- Completed second and third floor framing, sub-floor and exterior wall framing
- Began roof framing and metal decking
- Started installation of exterior insulated metal siding panels

**November**
- Began installation of roofing and windows
- Set up temporary heat to start interior rough-in work at the north half of building
- Continued plumbing and electrical rough in below building

**December**
- Continued roofing and window installation
- Started drywall at top of wall on 3rd floor
- Continued structural framing for insulated panels below building
Improve recruitment and staffing processes

Recruiting and training qualified employees is a top priority for the organization. Our employees are our greatest asset and essential to our mission of providing excellent healthcare.

In November 2022, the entire HR recruiting team and various hiring managers met for a five-day workshop dedicated to improving YKHC’s hiring practices. Facilitated by the Virginia Mason Institute, the event involved learning various Lean tools, mapping out current processes, identifying waste, brainstorming ideas for improvement, and developing a rapid improvement plan. The event was capped with a final presentation in front of the Senior Leadership Team and other invested employees. Although the event is over, the improvement work continues. The team continues to implement the plan and build upon these efforts to continue improving efficiency and reliability in recruiting.

YKHC is currently hiring for hundreds of positions and has jobs for every skill set. We offer competitive pay, generous benefits and a chance to make a difference in the community. A current list of open positions can be found at www.ykhc.org/work.

Develop a strong Alaska Native workforce

YKHC’s Human Resources and Workforce Development department engaged in a number of initiatives in 2022 and into 2023 to further the tactics of developing a strong Alaska Native workforce.

Alaska Area Health Education Center (YK-AHEC) supported employees, students, and residents of the Yukon-Kuskokwim region in finding and participating in a variety of educational and training opportunities.

In December, a number of employees and residents graduated from the LPN program at Yuut Elitnaurviat in Bethel. YKHC worked in collaboration with Yuut to provide clinical rotations and other support services to the students. We congratulate these graduates and look forward to welcoming them as they explore opportunities in their new fields.

Other initiatives:

Summer Hire Program: Approximately 50 students were hired in June 2022, with five continuing as year-round hires. Preparations are underway for the 2023 student summer hire program.

DHAT Program: YKHC sponsored three students in the Alaska Dental Therapy Educational Program. The students completed the first year of the two-year program in Anchorage in June 2022, and are currently in the second year of the program in Bethel.

Scholarship Program: Thirty-one applicants were awarded scholarships in 2022 to pursue careers in healthcare. All together the scholarships totaled more than $75,000.

YKHC established connections with school districts throughout the region in an effort to educate and encourage students to explore opportunities in healthcare. We hosted guest speakers from YKHC, UW School of Medicine, and other entities throughout the school year.

Two middle school camps were held in June and July with the goal to encourage and increase awareness of healthcare careers for middle schoolers in Bethel and in the YK region.

In collaboration with Alaska Primary Care Association, four pharmacy technicians completed apprenticeship programs in 2022. Various healthcare courses are available to all YKHC employees in communities throughout the region.

We would like to thank our academic and community partners, our preceptors and other employees for their generous support throughout the year.
Shape culture to support high reliability

Shaping a culture to support high reliability includes training, standardization, and continuing the structure of the Angyaq Quality System, YKHC’s quality system based on principles of Lean management, a quality system adopted by many healthcare organizations.

Being a high reliability organization means effective standardization to increase the safety and quality of our services.

Since 2021, YKHC has partnered with Virginia Mason Institute to assess and deploy an improvement plan for the organization’s Lean transformation. A few initiatives in this contract included establishing a communication plan for the Angyaq Quality System, deploying the Respect for People, Behavior and Culture, and Advanced Process Improvement training.

In 2022, six employees received certification in Advanced Process Improvement. We also engaged staff in two Rapid Process Improvement Workshops, one focusing on recruiting processes and the other on increasing patient access to care.

Looking to 2023, YKHC aims to accelerate strategic alignment through departmental goal development. Leader competencies for sustaining a high reliability culture will be advanced through standardized managers’ training and the Lean for Leaders class. Furthermore, training for the Angyaq Quality System will be defined through a curriculum.

There are two more Rapid Process Improvement workshops planned in key areas. Finally, sharing and celebrating improvement efforts through the new Aspiaq program will encourage staff engagement.

Continue to improve cash flow

2022 was another year of strong financial performance for YKHC, which provided funds for many significant projects. The organization received Board approval for the construction of four village clinics in Anvik, Stony River, Metarvik, Oscarville and the renovation of the washteria in Lime Village to include an exam room.

An expansion of the Kwigillingok clinic will also be part of the capital request that the Board approved. This completes the village clinic new construction with the Akiachak and Quinhagak clinics that are currently under construction. In addition to clinic construction and renovation, YKHC is currently completing the new 109-room patient lodge on our hospital campus, which will significantly improve patients’ travel experience while traveling to Bethel.

YKHC was also able to significantly increase the amount of rent paid to the villages for the lease of the clinic facilities. This increase in rent allows the tribes to respond to inflation in the costs of owning the village clinics.

YKHC spent more than $10 million in other capital improvements during FY2022. This included all new furniture for the village clinics, ATVs for clinic use and new exam tables for both the village and sub-regional clinics.

Other improvements included the complete renovation of the former treatment center in Bethel to the new residential home for developmentally disabled adults and the launch of the new six-room Diagnosis, Evaluation and Stabilization Unit for behavioral health treatment in the region. This is a significant investment in mental health treatment for the YKHC region, as we are able to treat patients who would have previously been sent out of the region for care.

In addition to the improvements in patient care, while other healthcare organizations were cutting back positions, YKHC was able to invest in and reward employees by doubling the scholarship fund and providing a raise to all eligible employees. YKHC also provided a Hero’s Bonus for all eligible employees for their work in helping serve the region during the COVID-19 pandemic. This was another way to show our employees how important their work is to the people of the region and the difference that they make every day.

2022 YKHC Revenue

About half of YKHC income comes from the Indian Health Service (IHS) and the other half comes from other sources, including 41% from patient care revenue.
COVID-19 response remained a part of our healthcare strategy throughout 2022.

We continued to encourage all eligible people over six months to stay up-to-date on their COVID-19 vaccines and boosters, including the bivalent booster, which first became available in September 2022 and provides additional protection against newer variants of COVID-19. Vaccinations and boosters were available in our walk-in clinic in Bethel and at clinics throughout the region.

We ran advertising campaigns reminding people of the value of vaccinations and boosters in protecting against serious illness and death due to COVID-19.

We kept communities and individuals informed on the status of COVID-19 in our region. We provided weekly situational reports, which were emailed to community leaders and posted on our website. Our COVID-19 dashboard was updated weekly and we published regular social media posts on topics such as vaccinations and boosters, testing, prevention and safe holiday gathering practices.

As we ended our testing in clinics in the second half of the year, we distributed thousands of at-home COVID tests to villages and made them available to pick up at no cost at the hospital in Bethel. People who tested positive were encouraged to report their positive result so that our contact tracing team could continue to track the disease in our community and provide support.

At the start of 2023, it seems COVID-19 is transitioning from pandemic to endemic, meaning that it is going to be with us for the foreseeable future. By the end of spring 2023, YKHC expects to integrate COVID care into normal outpatient processes. We will continue to promote vaccinations and boosters, and expect these shots to become an annual shot (similar to flu) in the next one to two years. We will be standing down the COVID response team and moving to focus on post-COVID care needs.

COVID-19 cases in 2022 peaked in January and February, when the omicron variant arrived in the YK Delta. By the end of the year, new weekly cases had stabilized and remain stable so far in 2023.
HEALTH AIDE PROGRAM

Health Aide of the Year

Candace Nelson, Health Aide of the Month for September 2022, is YKHC’s 2022 Health Aide of the Year.

Candace started with YKHC’s Community Health Aide Program in 2010. She completed the Community Health Aide Program in August 2014. Candace is currently a Community Health Practitioner based in Napakiak.

Candace has been described as an open, friendly, and caring health care professional. Throughout her session trainings she demonstrated competence, maturity and professionalism with the training staff, patients, and coworkers. She is an intelligent and thoughtful individual with a strong understanding of her function as a Community Health Practitioner in remote Alaska.

Diligent, dedicated, and focused are a few words used to describe Candace. She has been working as a Community Health Aide for roughly 12 years. She has been the sole and primary CHP in Napakiak for the past two years. She serves a community of about 350 individuals and provides acute, preventative, and urgent care.

She is continuously on-call with little relief, and does so without complaint. Candace also volunteers to provide remote, over-the-phone coverage for villages without Health Aides, ensuring that unmanned communities receive urgent care coverage.

Candace’s incredible attention to detail is reflected in her work environment. The Napakiak Clinic is exceptionally well organized and orderly. Candace’s strong work ethic aligns well with YKHC’s values of the pursuit of excellence and personal growth.

YKHC-CHAP is greatly appreciative of all the hard work Candace does for her community and the other communities she covers. May you be proud of the work you do, the person you are, and the difference you make. Keep up the awesome work!

Community Health Aide Wellness Retreat presents positive practices

On November 12 and 13, 2022, YKHC’s CHAP Field Supervision and Behavioral Health Services partnered to offer a two-day Health Aide Wellness Retreat.

The retreat was held in Anchorage with nine Health Aides participating and three presenters/facilitators. Facilitators included Joseph Okitkun, CHP/FS coordinator, Tamara Ayapan, CHP, BHA, and Asela Calhoun, PhD.

Topics included resilience and cultural connection to the YK Delta, emotional intelligence, somatic (body) movement for relaxation and dealing with stress, mindfulness and mental health, dealing with stress with a positive attitude, self care and self worth exercises, ciuerkami caningqaug, visualization, life balance, and more. All presenters used interactive exercises to enhance and support learning and positive behavioral practices.

The evaluations were excellent. Participants were refreshed and enthusiastic, a resounding success!
HOSPITAL DEDICATION

YKHC had a ribbon cutting event for the new Bethel hospital. Members from YKHC’s 58 tribes, our Joint Venture partner the U.S. Indian Health Service, financiers, and construction partners celebrated the completion of a new hospital for the people of the Yukon-Kuskokwim region.
YKHC provided small group tours of the new and remodeled facility to invited guests and Tribal leaders.

The hospital’s Gathering Space was designed to serve as a warm, welcoming place where family and friends can gather when receiving services at the hospital. It was wonderful to see the area finally put to use.

Toksook Bay Dancers.

Lloyd Miller, Partner at Sonosky, Chambers, Sachse, Miller & Monkman, who provided funding for the project, snaps a photo of a new trauma bay in the Emergency Room at the hospital during a small group tour.
Mekoryuk Health Aides recognized at Alaska Federation of Natives Conference

During the 9th Annual Tribal Conference in Anchorage October 19, the Alaska Federation of Natives, joined by YKHC’s Board of Directors and leadership, honored Mekoryuk Health Aides Linda and Shara Davis for their heroic frontline response during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Upon initial roll-out of lifesaving COVID-19 vaccine, this mother-daughter healthcare team was able to help their community achieve a 98% vaccination rate.

On behalf of the organization, YKHC Board Chair Walter Jim and President & CEO Dan Winkelman commended the incredible heart and commitment of these exceptional community health practitioners. Quyana to AFN’s co-chair Ana Hoffman for presenting this recognition, along with a beautiful piece of art by Yup’ik artist Ossie Kairaiuak.

YK Dental Health Aide Therapist is Rising Star

Dental Health Aide Therapist Kathrine Levi was presented with the Rising Star Award at a ceremony in Anchorage in November.

The Dental Health Aide Rising Star Award recognizes a DHAT who has been employed fewer than five years and who demonstrates excellence in their role by continuously delivering exceptional patient care, has somehow improved the healthcare delivery system and enhanced the level of care in their community, and has demonstrated balance between work and personal life.

Applications for these awards are accepted from programs around the state and Kathrine Levi was chosen as this year’s award recipient.

Kathrine Levi is a Dental Health Aide Therapist stationed in Aniak who has spent many weeks travelling to the surrounding villages.

Many patients have complimented the excellent care she provides and rave about how knowledgeable she is. They say they love the way she talks them through treatment. By providing patient knowledge, she is able to gain their trust.

Kathrine is very detailed, patient and amazing with kids. She takes her time to be gentle with children so they won’t be afraid. She consistently displays compassion. She truly cares about her patients and goes above and beyond expectations to do everything she can to provide the best care possible. We are very lucky to have her on our team. Congratulations Kathrine! Thank you for all that you do.