

Standing Out Among His People



Alvin Jimmie, VPSO Coordinator for the Association of Village Council Presidents in Bethel, and Pilot Station VPSO Dorothy Alexie

VPSO Coordinator wins first ever Glenn Godfrey Law Enforcement Award at AFN Convention Story by Beth Ipsen, PIO



When Alvin Jimmie Sr. stepped up to receive his award at the Alaska Federation of Natives Convention banquet on Saturday, Oct. 24, before him sat many of his peers and a large number of movers and shakers in Alaska. To Jimmie, he was not only winning the first ever Glenn Godfrey Law Enforcement Award, but he was given a golden opportunity to tout the Village Public Safety Officer Program and ask for more support.

He hopes that not only his message was heard, but it will produce opportunities for more funding.

“I’m anticipating receiving an e-mail from someone saying ‘You have this money, go forth and spend,’” Jimmie said, laughing good-naturedly.

Jimmie is the VPSO Coordinator for the Association of Village Council Presidents, a position he has held for the past 2-1/2 years. He was selected for the first-time award by AFN’s board of directors because of Jimmie’s positive impact on the Native community in the area of public safety, said Nelson Angabak, vice president of AFN. Angabak said the honor, named after former Commissioner Glen Godfrey, the first Alaska Native to hold the top cop position, will become a permanent award in the AFN system.

Of the 10 non-profit Native corporations that manage VPSOs in their respective regions, AVCP operates in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta region. Jimmie supervises 20 of the 57 VPSOs in uniform in Alaska. In addition, all but one of the 20 officers is an Alaska Native and more than a majority of them grew up in villages in the region.

“That’s the key,” Jimmie said. “I hire people that have an idea of what they’re getting into.”

DPS Commissioner Joseph Masters considers these accomplishments the very intent of what the VPSO program was designed to do – provide rural Alaskan communities with public safety services by employing and training individuals from within the community to be first responders. While speaking at the AVCP annual convention in Bethel on Oct. 13, Gov. Sean Parnell called for a greater partnership between the state and communities to boost law enforcement presence in villages. To show support for Jimmie and AVCP’s efforts to tackle public safety, the number of VPSO positions in the Y-K Delta was increased from 19 to 24 in this year. That number accounts for over a quarter of the 71 positions statewide.

“This is a great example of how VPSOs truly represent the local culture and community,” Masters said.

Jimmie represents this as well. He grew up in Kwigillingok and served as the VPSO there for about 13 years after working as a VPSO in Kipnik and Tuntutuliak. He also worked as a community service officer for the Bethel Police Department before he was hired as the VPSO coordinator in 2007. In all, he’s worked in the VPSO program for 16 years. That experience comes in handy when dealing with the VPSOs that work for him.

He knows first hand some of the challenges VPSOs face in the villages.

“I have an understanding of what they’re going through,” Jimmie said. “I try and put myself in their shoes.”

To help people cope, he has personally counseled several VPSOs when they are struggling. Sometimes, it’s just a matter of giving the person a break by sending them to Bethel or another village for some needed time off, he said.

Most of all, he tries to help the individual succeed as a VPSO. Not only does he arrange for regular training sessions, but he works with tribal and village governments to drum up support for VPSOs, something that is very crucial for the success of the program in a village. The job definitely keeps him busy. He was in Anchorage watching one of his VPSOs, Dorothy Alexie from Pilot Station, graduate from the Drug Abuse Resistance Education training program on Oct. 9. He had to coordinate the VPSO regional training in Bethel Oct. 12-16. Following the training, he returned to Anchorage for the statewide VPSO coordinator meeting coinciding with the AFN convention last week. Then he needed to get back to Bethel and tackle the work that had piled up while he spent the week at the convention.

“He is probably the hardest working VPSO coordinator I’ve ever met,” said Alaska State Trooper Perry Barr, who nominated Jimmie for the AFN President’s Award. “He shows a lot of dedication to his job and to support the VPSOs.”

Barr, a trooper in Bethel, said Jimmie’s hard work had made a difference. The VPSOs are well equipped and their uniform standards have improved since Jimmie took the position. Jimmie has also been instrumental in getting upgrades to several public safety buildings in the Y-K Delta when funding became available.

And he’s not stopping there. Jimmie, talking like a true optimist, feels confident he’ll have one vacancy filled by January. He’s trying to obtain housing for VPSOs in a handful of villages and getting more four wheelers for officers. Then he’ll set his sights on his ultimate goal – getting VPSOs placed in all 56 villages within AVCP’s service area and to provide public safety to as many villages that want it.