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Story by

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Arctic Evidence

North Slope teens learn about the work behind the badge

(BARROW, Alaska) – Teens on the North Slope got a rare glimpse into the gritty work that comes with wearing a badge. Over the course of the week starting on July 11, 2011, select students from Barrow and surrounding villages saw first-hand what a career in law enforcement would entail. A U.S. Marshal Service C-208 Caravan delivered a team of instructors and supplies to Barrow to host the first annual Public Safety Youth Academy. Alaska's top U.S. Marshal, Rob Heun; Deputy Marshal Ryan Filson; Deputy Marshal James Caudill; Alaska State Trooper Capt. Steven Arlow; AST Sgt. Leonard Wallner; Trooper Perry Barr; Village Public Safety Officer John Uttereyuk; and Forensic Scientist IV Jessica Hogan were invited by Ilisagvik College in Barrow to instruct at their first Public Safety Youth Academy. The group spent the next five days with the 12 students sleeping and eating at Ilisagvik College. In that time, they provided structured curriculum including an overview of duties and responsibilities associated with being an Alaska State Trooper, U.S. Marshal, VPSO, North Slope Borough Police Department officer and a forensic scientist. Students had the opportunity to ask questions from each representative of these agencies and were then provided opportunities to learn some of the duties associated with these respected professions.

The State Crime Lab provided Forensic Scientist Jessica Hogan, who teamed up with a seasoned 20-year criminal investigator, Sgt. Leonard Wallner of the Alaska State Troopers, to teach the students CSI techniques not seen on TV. The kids, ranging in age from 13 to 18, learned how to approach a crime scene, what to look for, what to isolate as potential evidence and how to collect the evidence. That included dusting for latent fingerprints and casting for footprint impressions in the dirt.

The students were put through additional courses such as search and rescue, survival training, courtroom procedures and demeanor, ethics, and cultural awareness. Students toured the North Slope Bough Search and Rescue station in Barrow and met with local agency leaders and EMS staff after a day of instruction on the principles of search and rescue. Additional classes proved fruitful as students learn the ways of fire starting techniques, building shelters, and other life-saving skills.

Meanwhile, throughout the classes, much of the focus was geared toward how the choices the teens make both today and tomorrow affect their future.

On the last day of classes students were allowed to attend a real court trial before the magistrate of the Barrow court. They experienced the procedures for introduction of evidence; observed arguments made by both public defender and district attorney; and heard testimony from suspect and case officer. Superior Court Judge Michael Jeffery took time out of his day to spend explaining the court system and answered questions from the students. They also took turns simulating testifying as an expert witness on the evidence they collected in part of the crime scene investigation portion of the class.

VPSO John Uttereyuk, of Scammon Bay, watches as students Alex Ufkin, Richard Ahmoagak and Naomi Ahsoak investigate, photograph and measure a mock crime scene.





The class of the first annual Youth Public Safety Academy after graduation in Barrow with some of the instructors.

The students received certificates at a program ending graduation ceremony. According to the instructors, the students all seemed to enjoy the week of training and some interest was expressed by a few to seek a career as a VPSO. Regardless, it was a great opportunity for both instructors and students to learn about careers in or around law enforcement. For the instructors, it was rewarding to see the time and energy they invested was well received and showed that the youth in the region had great promise.

The community of Barrow welcomed all the instruc-

tors and students during the week and willingly helped in providing local expertise on many topics. Local leaders such as Price and Fredrick Brower, Billy Aiken, North Slope Borough Police Chief Leon Boyea, assisted in instruction. Ilisagvik College Chief Financial Officer Andy Stemp, President Dr. Brooke Gondara and administrative and kitchen staff provided additional support to make the week and program a success. The North Slope Borough also provided a lot of behind the scenes support for the youth academy.

Public Safety Academy Class of 2011

- Len Ahgeak of Barrow
- Rhoda Aguvluk of Wainwright
- Richard Ahmaogak of Barrow
- Walton Ahmaogak of Barrow
- Naomi Ahsoak of Barrow
- Uriah Ahsoak of Barrow
- Lavisa Ahvakana of Wainwright
- Leo Ferreira IV of Point Lay
- Carl Hank of of Point Lay
- Kenneth Ivanoff
- Rupert Koonuk, Jr. of Point Lay
- Alex Ufkin of Barrow



North Slope Borough Paramedic Heather Seeman and Scott Prociew provide an overview of duties and a career in the paramedics.