

2015 Tour

LIVE TO RIDE.
CALL TO LIVE.

March 20, 2015

Troopers Hit The Trail Once Again For Suicide Prevention Crusade Across Alaska

Alaska Wildlife Troopers will once again hit the trail, this time snowmachining more than 1,000 miles across Alaska in two weeks in an effort to prevent suicides. This year, Alaska Wildlife Troopers Darrell Hildebrand, Thomas Akelkok and Jon Simeon, accompanied by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Officer Brad Honerlaw, plan an ambitious journey to reach adults and school children in at least 10 villages in rural Alaska. Other troopers and law enforcement will join the expedition for sections of the trek as they wind their way across the Interior to the Northwest Arctic region and back. The trip is expected to launch from Bettles on March 24 and reach Kotzebue on April 1. Allakaket will be the first school on the visit followed by schools in Hughes, Kobuk, Shungnak, Ambler, Kiana, Noorvik, Selawik and Buckland before turning around after talking to school kids in Kotzebue. If trail conditions and weather allow, the group will head home via the Kobuk River to Huslia and take the trail back through Galena and up the Yukon and Tanana rivers, stopping in schools along the way on their journey to Fairbanks. The Fish and Wildlife Service also provided a sponsorship to help cover fuel costs. You can track their progress online via a [SPOT locator](#).

Hildebrand, Simeon, and Akelkok are armed with personal stories of how suicide touched their lives. Hildebrand's father committed suicide when he was 4-years old while Simeon's friend took his life while he was a young man living in Aniak. The goal is to make sure people know to reach out to someone and talk about their problems – whether it's a friend, a parent, grandparent, teacher or even troopers. It's a message that the wildlife troopers have carried with them during outreach trips for the past [five years](#) – many of them in conjunction with the [Iron Dog Suicide Prevention Campaigns](#). [Three years ago](#), the three troopers started braving subzero temperatures and blowing winds to snowmachine to the different communities in rural Alaska to tell school children and community members there is always hope in the midst of despair and that suicide is preventable. Along the way they'll hand out personalized [Alaska Suicide Prevention CARELINE cards and posters](#).

All three grew up in rural Alaska – Hildebrand in Nulato, Simeon in Aniak and Akelkok in Ekwok – where suicide is an epidemic. [The rate in Alaska has one of the highest suicide rates in nation at 23.4 suicides per 1000,000 people in 2013](#), according to the [Statewide Suicide Prevention Council](#). That year, 75.5 percent of suicides in Alaska were by men. As representatives of not only law enforcement, but also Alaska Native men, they use their personal stories as proof that despite all that may go wrong in life, there's still a way to succeed.

Click on embedded links for more information and past stories. Otherwise contact Beth Ipsen at (907)347-0635.

Planned schedule for the 2015 Ride For Life

Depart Bettles – March 24

Selawik – March 30

Allakaket – March 24

Buckland – March 31

Hughes and Kobuk – March 25

Kotzebue – April 1

Shungnak, Ambler – March 26

**Kobuk, Yukon and Tanana river villages
as time and conditions allow – April 1-3**

Kiana, Noorvik – March 27

Life is a Team Effort

877-266-HELP
WWW.CARELINEALASKA.COM
SUICIDE PREVENTION