



DPS PR# 11-016

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20 Village Public Safety Officers Graduate From Academy

(SITKA, Alaska) – Twenty Village Public Safety Officers graduated from the Public Safety Academy in Sitka today, strengthening the VPSO ranks to 79 strong in villages throughout Alaska. This graduating class of VPSOs is the largest in recent history.

Program recruits received 10 weeks of extensive training at the academy starting on Jan. 3. The curriculum spans 37 separate subjects and includes 488 classroom hours of intensified instruction and testing before a student may graduate.

The VPSO program began in the early 1980s as a way of providing rural Alaskan communities with needed public safety support services, and was designed to train and employ individuals residing in the village as first responders to public safety emergencies such as search and rescue, fire protection, emergency medical assistance and law enforcement support.

The presence of these officers has had a significant impact on improving the quality of life in the participating villages. As a result, Village Public Safety Officers are generally the first to respond to many calls for help from community members.

The effort to increase VPSOs' presence in villages has been an important part of Gov. Sean Parnell's public safety initiative, "Safe Homes, Strong Families." There are 86 funded positions with plans to increase that number to 101 by July. The initiative aims to boost the number of VPSO positions by 15 each year for the next 10 years.

The following is a list of VPSOs who successfully completed the program today, their employing Native nonprofit corporation and assigned village:

Amil Burns – Northwest Arctic Borough – Noatak

Jim Cedeno – Kodiak Area Native Association – Old Harbor

Barret Eningowuk – Kawerak, Inc. – Shishmaref

John Grady – Tanana Chiefs Conference – McGrath

Jerome Kelly – Association of Village Council Presidents – Quinhagak
Fred Lamont Jr. – Association of Village Council Presidents – St. Mary’s
James Lolley Jr. – Chugachmiut – Chenega Bay
Rachel Nelson – Association of Village Council Presidents – Kwigillingok
Reuben Norman – Chugachmiut – Port Graham
Joseph Okitkun – Association of Village Council Presidents – Kotlik
Jen-Raye Pavageau – Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association – Akutan
Robert Pitka – Association of Village Council Presidents – Aniak
Philip Plessinger – Tanana Chiefs Conference – Ruby
Jonathan Russell – Association of Village Council Presidents – Aniak (roving)
John Samuel – Association of Village Council Presidents – Platinum
Jonathan Shivel – Kawarak, Inc. – Savoonga
Speridon Simeonoff Jr. – Kodiak Area Native Association – Akhiok
Donald Tritt – Tanana Chiefs Conference – Chalkyitsik
Jason Turk – Northwest Arctic Borough – Kiana
John Uttereyuk – Association of Village Council Presidents – Scammon Bay

More information about the Village Public Safety Officer Program can be found on the DPS website at <http://www.dps.state.ak.us/ast/vpso/>.