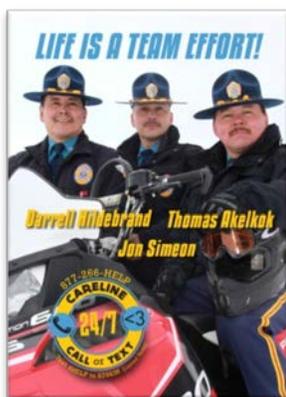


March 4, 2013
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Alaska Wildlife Troopers Hit The Trail For 1,500-mile Suicide Prevention Crusade

After last year's successful 850-mile snowmachine trip in the Interior, Alaska Wildlife Troopers will once again hit the

trail, this time covering more than 1,500 miles in two weeks in an effort to prevent suicides. This year, Alaska Wildlife Troopers Darrell Hildebrand, Thomas Akelkok and Jon Simeon plan an ambitious journey to reach adults and school children in five different school districts and 19 villages in rural Alaska. Other troopers will join the expedition for sections of the trek as they wind their way from Manley Hot Springs to Bethel and back. The trip is expected to start in Manley Hot Springs on March 17 and return March 30. For the first part of the trip, they'll follow the Tanana and Yukon rivers and revisit some villages from [last year's campaign](#). Then they'll turn south and travel the Kuskokwim River, visiting villages between and around McGrath, Aniak and Bethel before heading back to Manley Hot Springs.



Alaska Wildlife Troopers Darrell Hildebrand, Jon Simeon and Thomas Akelkok will hand out Alaska CARELINE cards during the trip.

Hildebrand, Simeon and Akelkok are armed with personal stories of how suicide touched their lives and recent [Applied Intervention Skills Training](#) provided by the Department of Health and Social Services [Suicide Prevention Council](#). 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 the troopers. It's a message that Hildebrand and Simeon have carried with them during outreach trips for the past [four years](#) – many of them in conjunction with the [Iron Dog Suicide Prevention Campaigns](#). Last year was the first time the three troopers braved 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.

All three grew up in rural Alaska – Hildebrand in Nulato, Simeon in Aniak and Akelkok in Ekwok – where the suicide rate is an epidemic. The rate in Alaska is almost twice that of the rest of the nation, but [Alaska Native males between the ages of 15-24 have the highest rate with an average of 141.6 suicides per 100,000 \(2000-2009\)](#). 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.

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Click on embedded links for more information and past stories. Click on the photo to link to an online folder with high-resolution photos of the three Alaska Wildlife Troopers, the Alaska CARELINE card file and a trip itinerary.