

The Nome Static

KNOM Radio Mission
PO Box 190649
Anchorage, AK 99519
(907) 868-1200

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Dear Friend,

As soon as the snow melts and winter parkas come off, bustling activity begins in Alaska. Construction crews and seasonal workers return to work sites. The first barge brings in long-awaited supplies ordered months ago. Soon, salmon will start running. Not long after that the first berries will be ripe.

The bountiful food put away, resources shipped in, and homes and public infrastructure repaired during the summer months will shelter and feed the families through eight long months of winter.

Through it all, at work sites and fish camps, the radio is a constant companion. It keeps us informed, entertained, appraised of stormy weather, and engaged with the rest of the community. Every day, your support helps make our way of life possible. Thank you!

Innovative students awarded

What do a renewable snow cone machine and an app for tracking dangerous wildlife have in common? Both are award-winning ideas dreamt up by Nome youngsters. Fifth-grader Denali Walrath and second-grader Bradley Rowe recently took home awards from a statewide competition for innovation in the Arctic.

Walrath, who took first place in the aptly-named Cub Division, says she came up with the idea of tracking animals like bears or musk oxen while picking berries with her family in Nome. The app would alert users if a dangerous animal



Fifth-grader Denali Walrath and second-grader Bradley Rowe took awards home to Nome. Their innovative new ideas were honored at a statewide convention held at the University of Alaska Fairbanks.

like a bear or musk ox had been spotted recently at a specific location. Denali's dad, Doug, says thanks to the researchers who heard her presentation, the app may become a reality.

"It's an ideas competition, so, when she finished, she was speaking with some of the faculty at UAF in the engineering department," Doug said proudly. "They noted how they would have undergraduate students or graduate students that could work with her in the future doing the programming and coding, skills an 11-year-old just doesn't have."

Rowe, a second grader at Nome Elementary School, was motivated by making snow days home from school more fun. His idea is a machine that uses snowblower blades to churn and pull snow into the machine, roll it into balls, put them into snow cone cups, and add flavoring on top.

You can read the full story and hear from the students themselves at knom.org.



Top: Alaska's top military officer, Maj. Gen. Torrence Saxe pins the a heroism medal on Cpl. Bruce Boolowon in Gambell. Photo courtesy Robert DeBerry, Alaska National Guard.

Middle: Sam Schimmel, who was awarded for his cultural leadership. shows off his catch. Photo courtesy Jeremy Schimmel.

Bottom: Nome leader Marjorie Kunaq Tahbone received the Governor's Arts and Humanities Award. Photo courtesy Sigvanna Tapqaq.

You can learn more about all three at knom.org.

Hometown leaders honored for helping others

Recently, a number of stories have emerged about leaders whose examples, sacrifice, and focus on others honor their communities.

First, Corporal Bruce Boolowon was awarded for his heroic effort rescuing 11 U.S. Navy airmen in 1955. Boolowon saw a U.S. Navy airplane, a Lockheed P2V-5 Neptune, shot down by Soviet fighter planes. He and a group of 16 other Indigenous Alaska National Guardsmen were first on the scene and got the airmen to safety. Boolowon, the only member of the group still alive, was given the state's highest award for valor during peacetime, the Alaska Heroism Medal.

Days later, the Alaska Native Heritage Center recognized Sam Schimmel, a 23-year-old Siberian Yupik and Kenaitze Indian man, for his effort to share Alaska Native values and feed his people. Currently a law student, Schimmel coordinated an effort to distribute more than twelve thousand pounds of salmon: a gift of food, and also of cultural continuity. "Some of the greatest stories that you'll ever hear are told around a table set with Indigenous foods," Schimmel said.

Finally, Marjorie Kunaq Tahbone, an Inupiaq and Kiowa woman from Nome, was awarded the prestigious Governor's Arts and Humanities Award. She is an artist, teacher, traditional tattooist, hide tanner, and business owner awarded for her efforts to revitalize culture, such as starting Nome's Inupiaq immersion program for kindergarten and first grade. She has recently been named the director of Nome's Katirvik Cultural Center.

"Our languages and our cultures will make us happier, healthier people," Kunaq said. "It's not my knowledge to keep. It's something that must be passed down and shared with everybody and anybody who wants to learn."



Reba Lean with Norton Sound Health Corporation (NSHC) and Danielle Slingsby with Kawerak (at the back) speak with Jason Chandler, Judith Bruno, and Travis Hogans of Engineering Ministries International.

Hope for sustainability in sight for water and sanitation

As communities struggle with seemingly annual water line freeze-ups and other sanitation issues, a new partnership in the region gives cause for optimism.

For two years, Engineering Ministries International (EMI), a Christian nonprofit that works primarily in developing nations, has been involved in a partnership to improve water and sanitation in the Bering Strait region.

During a recent episode of the show “Suwat”, representatives from the tribal nonprofit Kawerak and Norton Sound Health Corporation chatted with a team from EMI.

They fill a two-fold project management role: filling urgent gaps in maintenance and creating a sustainable water and sanitation system in the region. The first step has been creating a tribal community utility assistance program, with a goal of creating a sustainable and strategic plan for water and sanitation in all communities in the region.

“Unalakleet is a great example of one of the oldest systems in the region. They have leaks every winter, and they currently have a big project to replace all their pipes. It’s taken them a long time to get there. But through our partners

and people we’ve hired — let’s make [the system] more robust and more reliable until they can get their new pipes in the ground,” said civil engineer Travis Hogans.

And, sure enough, the help is critically needed. The village of Unalakleet has been on a boil water notice since the typhoon damage last fall and has survived on flown-in donations of bottled water.

A few weeks after the interview with EMI aired, the mayor of Unalakleet, Abel Razzo, told listeners the community will break ground on the project this summer.

“The expected completion date of that project of connecting the new wells, which have already been dug, and upgrading our current water system to process the water coming in, should be the end of next summer,” Razzo said.

“We pray that the international community may commit in a concrete way to ensuring the abolition of torture and guarantee support to victims and their families.”

— Pope Francis’ prayer intention for June 2023



Top left: Community members march in remembrance of lost, missing, and murdered community members and loved ones. Organizer Deilah Johnson told listeners Alaska Native people go missing more often than other groups, and that the issue affects everyone in the community.

"If it's not our best friend, if it's not our sister or cousin, it can be our neighbor. It's somebody that's at our grocery store when we're checking out, getting our eggs or getting our milk. We see those faces that shape our community and those are still our family," Johnson said.

Top right: Public Safety Commissioner James Cockrell and Lieutenant Governor Nancy Dahlstrom told listeners about the government response to the issue of missing and murdered Indigenous people.



Above left: Former volunteer Peter Neagle, who served at KNOM in the early 80s, reviews one of the thousands of vinyl records he meticulously color coded during his volunteer service. He currently works for the U.S. Postal Service, and during a visit to Nome he returned to the Morning Show to inform listeners about work opportunities at their local post offices.

Above right: May began with snow showers in Nome. From the second floor of the radio station, you can see the western side of Nome's downtown.

Left: A lone flower on the windowsill is a sign of spring. After the coldest April in Nome's hundred-year recorded history, most yards were still full of snow when this newsletter went to print in the middle of May. Still, the warm, long, and sunny days of spring mean summer is not far behind.



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