

The Nome Static

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Dear Friend,

One morning in June, people all over northwest Alaska awoke to discover they suddenly had no internet access or cell service. At first, no one knew what was wrong, but information slowly trickled in. The entire region receives its internet connection from a single undersea fiber-optic cable, which had been severed by sea ice off Alaska's northern coast. Once the cable was laid in 2018, many had high-speed internet for the first time. Now, they were suddenly set back to the days before access. Emergency services were still able to function, but important public services like the court system struggled to communicate. Current estimates foresee repairs happening in September or October.

Events like this underscore the importance of radio for Western Alaska. With no internet access, the airwaves are the only source for public announcements, weather information, and connection with loved ones in neighboring communities. This crucial service would not exist without your support. Thank you for providing the information lifeline that Alaskan communities need!



Above: A Mizuktata booth on West Third Avenue. Photo by Ava White/KNOM.

Below left: Map showing the location of the fiber optic cable providing internet access to the region.

Young lemonade vendors show business skills

In late June, children lined Nome's streets with booths to sell homemade juice, baked goods, and homemade goods. The second annual Mizuktata event had more than thirty booths participating, the result of several weeks of planning.

"I love it because I think it started as teaching children a little bit about entrepreneurship," says participant Reba Lean. "But, it turned into a really big celebration of everyone's talents in town. There are lemonade stands that we look forward to every year. And they have the best goodies, so everyone gets really excited about this day."

Popular stands included salmonberry- and blueberry-glazed doughnuts, a blueberry-infused

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lemonade titled "Nomade", and a petting zoo.

One young entrepreneur, Kaylie, spent the day raising money to send herself to volleyball camp. She says her favorite part of the event is getting to run her own business. She added that the hardest part was keeping up with foot traffic when a lot of people came to get food at once and a line would form.

After the state announced last year that it would no longer fund Lemonade Day, two local mothers felt youth should continue to have the opportunity to learn hands-on business skills. With the help of Elder and Iñupiaq teacher Yaayuk Alvanna-Stimpfle, they renamed the event "Mizuktata," which is Iñupiaq for "Let's drink juice."



A girl watches the annual Midnight Sun parade on Front Street in Nome. Other festival events included a mock bank robbery, a plunge in the Bering Sea, and Mizuktata. Local families filled the streets for the celebration. Photo by Ava White.

"We pray that the World Youth Day in Lisbon will help young people to live and witness the Gospel in their own lives."

— Pope Francis' prayer intention for August 2023

Sharing the Word in Western Alaska

"Six days before taking [Peter, James, and John] up the mountain, Jesus had told them for the first time that he was going to suffer greatly in Jerusalem and be crucified, die, and be raised to life.

As he reflected on the hard times to follow, he and his disciples not only experienced the consoling presence of God but they heard the same voice as at his Baptism: 'This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased.' And they were able to accept the hurt and rejection about to happen.

All of us will experience times in our lives when we will be asked to carry the cross with Jesus. Perhaps in the form of illness, perhaps in the loss of a loved one, perhaps in times of personal failure or personal hurt. But if we take time, like Jesus, to find the time and place for quiet prayer, either alone or with loved ones, we too will find peace in consolation and acceptance. We too will sense the presence of God reminding us that we are his beloved son or daughter."

— Patrick Tam, August 6



The Homeplate Nome Apartments construction site. Photo by Ava White.

Home for the winter

Construction is now well underway on a project to provide housing for those who experience chronic homelessness in Nome.

Nome Community Center (NCC) started the project in 2018. The fifteen apartments, named 'Homeplate', will complement a seasonal shelter that the Nome Emergency Shelter Team (NEST) has operated seasonally since 2017. The current timeline for completion is December 2023.

According to NCC's Shoni Evans, the new apartments will add stability for many of Nome's most vulnerable. "We have 33 chronically homeless on our streets in Nome right now," she says. "To be chronic homeless, you have to be homeless three years or more, so these are people who have been on the streets a long time. We're going to be able to get 24 of those 33 housed within the two programs."

The project broke ground last year. It takes time: Like most housing projects in Western Alaska, it began with setting pilings, so the foundation and building could be built above-ground. That type of construction prevents it from shifting or sinking as the frozen soil underneath it melts. Above-ground construction began this May.

Project developer Scott Niblack says although

the entire project depends on materials being shipped in by barge, construction is on schedule. "We're up there monthly," he says. "We inspect the work and make sure that we're keeping up with any kind of issues that may come through during construction."

According to a newsletter statement from NCC, nearly 20 different funding partners are in place to foot the estimated \$9.8 million bill for the project.

Children's Day celebrated with painted rocks

In celebration of National Children's Day, Nome youngsters had the chance to hunt for rainbow-painted rocks and turn them in for a prize.

Nome's Children's Day is part of a global celebration of the lives of children and the challenges they face. The event included activities for kids such as face painting, rock decorating, seed planting, and more.

Event organizer Jennifer Dean-Johnson at Kawerak's Child Advocacy Centers says making the festivities available to all children is a high priority. "Regardless of economics, where they live, any of that, if you're here and you want to participate, no matter what your age group or your background is, and you don't have to have a tribal affiliation, it's just welcome to all," she says.



Community members celebrate Children's Day. Photo by Ava White.

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While other community celebrations are geared for adults, Dean-Johnson believes it's important to hold events for the community that are child-inclusive and bring the community together., "This is about having an activity that's just for children," she says.

"We are here to support them and champion kids," she says.

Dean-Johnson added that children in the community experience prolific trauma. She says by meeting safe adults, they are helping children and their families become more aware of resources and help available to them.



A dog from Savoonga under the care of PAWS. Photo courtesy of PAWS of Nome, used with permission.

Dog days in Nome

Veterinary care can be difficult to find in the remote stretches of Western Alaska. A veterinarian comes to Nome every six weeks, but other than that, the nearest veterinary care is in Anchorage, 500 miles and an hour-and-a-half-long flight away. PAWS of Nome, a non-profit pet rescue and advocacy organization based in Nome, has recently expanded services to several villages in the region.

"There's a lot of anxiety around not having a full-time pet service here," says PAWS of Nome vice president Amanda Snyder.

In partnership with the Bering Sea Humane Society, PAWS has provided services over the past three years through local clinics and send-out services. According to PAWS president Emily Stotts, veterinarians are only available in rural villages when sent out, and many people don't even realize they have resources available to them. "The expectation has been so low for pet care for so long, people might not even try to find help. We're trying to make sure everyone's getting what they need," Stotts says.

Morning Prayer

Dear Jesus,

You said, "Love one another as I have loved you." And that there is... "No greater love than to lay down your life for your friends." You demonstrated that love on the cross. Help us to offer our lives to you, to love others as you have loved us, one day at a time.

In your precious name, amen!

— Scotty Campbell, Morning Show