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Press Release

COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE

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Teens use 11 grants across state to reduce and prevent violence

(Anchorage, AK) — The State of Alaska Section of Women's, Children's and Family Health (WCFH) has funded 11 mini-grants to youth groups throughout the state in conjunction with *Stand Up Speak Up!*, a statewide effort to engage young adults in efforts to prevent violence and choose respect.

"Engaging youth in primary prevention efforts is a great way to build strong future leaders that will help change social norms around respect in their communities" said Lori Grassgreen, director of prevention programs for the Alaska Network on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, which distributed the grants.

The 11 grants were awarded in the following communities:

1. **Shishmaref** — teens participated in a 3-day trip to promote the subsistence lifestyle of their people and share their local traditional hunting, harvesting, and safety practices.
2. **Juneau** — youth spent a week kayaking through Glacier Bay and discussing leadership skills.
3. **Ketchikan** — teens taught their younger peers a community unity dance and performed it.
4. **Sitka** — youth worked collaboratively to create the Sitka Youth Leadership Committee with the goal of promoting respect and building bridges amongst youth.
5. **Venetie** — young adults came together with parents and elders to bring back the traditional dances used to bring the caribou to their people.
6. **Wrangell** — a group of young people came together to form the Teen Action Group which set up a teen night to give youth a safe environment to turn to on Saturday nights.
7. **Cordova** — teens worked on promoting healthy relationships and lifestyles and violence prevention by creating and painting inspirational benches around the community. "The benches around town offer inspirational quotes that not only inspired me as I helped organize the event, but will also inspire our community to appreciate not only the beauty of the benches, but the beauty inside one another," said Christina Morrisett, one of the

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youth leaders from Cordova. “I'm hoping that the Choose Respect bench will do just that, it has an important message to express.”

8. **Seldovia, Port Graham and Nanwalek** — young adults participated in a peace flag project that brought youth together to discuss peace, oppression, and injustice and share their thoughts and ideas by creating individual flags that were displayed at a community wide event.
9. **Dillingham** — teens created a youth wellness center with the central focus being their youth court, providing prevention classes, support groups, activities, opportunities and resources to help youth build their assets.
10. **Kodiak** — youth learned about domestic violence prevention and healthy relationships while quilting for charity.
11. **Anchorage** — teens created an art contest around sexual assault and helped revise a middle school sexual assault awareness presentation.

“We are very excited to have had Alaska youth involved in the design of the campaign materials and engaging in their communities to promote healthy relationships,” said Sophie Wenzel, Adolescent Health Program Manager for WCFH.

Teens are invited to visit www.StandUpSpeakUpAlaska.org to learn ways that they can take an active role in preventing violence in their communities.

For more information on Governor Sean Parnell’s Choose Respect campaign go to: <http://gov.alaska.gov/parnell/priorities/choose-respect.html>

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