Aurora Exciting-alis!

At around 2:30 a.m. on Sunday, Oct. 14, UAS student Yosuke Sano was out shooting pictures on campus, and captured the stunning photograph of the Northern Lights on the cover of this issue. He’s been at the school for about four years, so this isn't his first run-in with the Aurora, though he said it was one of the biggest displays he has seen. To learn more about Yosuke's photographic work, visit his website at www.yosukephotography.com.

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JSD program seeks substitutes

The Juneau School District Rally Program is looking for substitutes for afternoon hours and some mornings as needed at Valley and downtown elementary schools. This is a great opportunity to earn money and build essential skills in the field of early childhood education. To apply, go online at www.juneauschools.org. For more information, call Cheryl Glen at 780-1410.

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Facing Alaska’s high school dropout rates

BY DANNY PETERSON
UAS Whalesong Staff Writer

UAS students may struggle just picking a field of study. For some young people, even getting to college in the first place is a challenge.

We all know high school is not always easy, but some have problems outside of academia that prevents completing school. Preliminary figures indicate that 2,830 students dropped out of Alaska schools in the previous academic year. Forty-one percent were Alaska Native.

A VARIETY OF CAUSES

About one third of the 379 high-school freshman who enrolled this year will not graduate, according to the Juneau School District (JSD). Ninety-three youths dropped out of Juneau schools in the 2011-2012 school year, some as early as the 7th grade.

“My sense is there is a history of failure on some level,” said Bernie Sorenson, coordinator for the JSD’s Credit Achievement Recovery and Employability Skills program, or CARES, which helps students who are on the verge of dropping out.

“For some the basic is: make sure we have enough money to put food on the table, or find a place to sleep the next night,” said Sorenson.

In Juneau alone there were as many as 93 children under 18 who were homeless in January 2012, according to a survey by Project Homeless Connect; but that number may represent only a portion of the total number of homeless youth in Juneau. Schools generally don’t account for many of these external factors.

Nancy Seamount is the School Liaison for the CARES program.

“I had a kid today that I said, OK, so, he’s a non-attender, but he came today. So I said what incentive would it take for you to get to school? And he looked at me and said, ‘One dollar.’ I said, ‘What?’ He said, ‘One dollar a day.’ I said, ‘So what would you use that one dollar for?’ ‘To ride the bus.”’

“So the first thing people think of, ‘Well can’t he take the school bus?’” Seamount said. “They don’t understand what’s going on in some of our families. There’s a lot of chaos going on. He might need to come late. He needs a bus pass.”

Seamount said her years as an elementary counselor offered insight to the problems students face. By the time students were in 5th grade, she observed students dealing with violence at home, sexual abuse, drug and alcohol issues, or divorce.

“What that tells me is that adults are struggling,” Seamount said.

She said students who drop out often do so as a result of lost confidence, even from failing just one class early on.

“The whole self-esteem thing kicks in, as a freshman,” she said. “One course and they’re already self-doubting whether they can even graduate on time.”

In the 2010-2011 school year, 1,144 Alaska Natives dropped out statewide.

University of Alaska Southeast Assistant Education Professor Alberta Jones has studied what motivates Native students to succeed.

She interviewed more than 200 mostly Native students from middle school to doctoral candidates and examined factors outside the education system as well as teaching methods.

“Children who were resilient and succeeded had some protective factors, according to the research,” Jones said. “And that was extended family or schools and community. And the students having school connections with teachers or other adults made a difference too; they had the power of five.”

That’s five adult role-models.

“Some other common threads in the research were having positive values, having good social skills, having a positive identity,” Jones said.

Jones also interviewed non-Native students. The problems are universal. State Education Department statistics indicate 1,635 non-Native students dropped out in the 2010-2011 school year.

PERSONALIZING EDUCATION

Jones interviewed effective teachers, as reported by students. She said effective teachers push, encourage and tell their students “don’t give up.”

“So just that whole rigor piece of relationships,” Jones said. “That effort and energy. Then I saw another aspect of relationships, the personalization piece, which we know about, we hear that a lot. That’s the attitude and personality with their students.”

The students described the teachers as fun and friendly. Particularly striking to Jones are teachers who do just about anything to get their students to attend class.

“One teacher said he plays a guitar outside his door at the middle school,” she said. “Another teacher said he stands outside of his classroom door and talks about anything except the subject he teaches. It’s like, ‘Hey Johnny, did you and your cousin get your car fixed this weekend?’”

Dirk Ahrens remembers personal involvement like that from his junior year in high school. He and his high school sweetheart, Ginny, were part of the “Project 2000” program.

“It was a lot more one on one with the students,” Ahrens said. “Did all sorts of stuff just getting us out into the community. And by the end of the year I’d go to every class.”

But by the time senior year rolled around, neither Ginny nor Dirk felt motivated to stay in school.

“I was stubborn and didn’t want to listen to the teacher,” Ginny said.

Dirk said he was “living at home, 18 years old, didn’t want to be at home with my mother anymore. And so I went and got a full-time job and just started from there.”

After high school Ginny and Dirk broke up. Eventually Ginny got her GED and Dirk earned his high school diploma from a university in Washington State, where he moved after high school. Ginny became an army recruiter and Dirk a general manager at Costco, and both wound up returning to Juneau. They married and have two children.

Ginny said she hopes her children’s educators are more mentor than disciplinarian. She expects her kids to graduate from high school.

Alaska’s graduation rate hovers around 70 percent. Increasing the number of graduates is a statewide problem and is not solved by academic solutions alone.

This story originally aired on KTOO.
Alaskan walruses forced to land

BY KINSEY HESS
UAS Whalesong Staff Writer

Typically during the summer months, Alaskan walruses gather on the sea ice in the Chukchi Sea to mate and raise their young. While there, they forage for shellfish along the relatively shallow continental shelf and socialize while maintaining a comfortable distance from one another. However, in recent years the sea ice in the Chukchi Sea has greatly diminished due to global climate change. The walruses, confused at their sudden lack of habitat, have moved southward looking for a suitable place to haul out. Large populations of these walruses have made their way to Point Lay, AK, where they have hauled up on dry land. Here they crowd together in vast numbers, forming much denser groups than what would normally be seen on the sea ice.

The walruses, huge animals weighing around 3,700 pounds, are grouped across a small stretch of beach. The sheer size of the dense groups poses a threat to young walruses. Calves may be easily crushed by an adult on the beach. Several dead walrus calves were spotted by scientists performing an aerial survey this past summer. With so many animals in such a small space, the competition for food is very real.

The walruses must venture 50 miles or more out to sea at this location to find suitable prey, an exhausting journey for a mother with a calf. The difficulty of obtaining food and the scarcity of space has had devastating effects on the walrus population. According to U.S. scientists, in the four recent years since walruses began hauling out on Point Lay their numbers have plummeted from 20,000 to a startling 5,000 animals. The walruses are being considered for listing under the Endangered Species Act.

Like so many arctic animals suffering as a result of the effects of climate change, the fate of these walruses is yet to be seen. Scientists have fastened radio collars to several animals in hopes of documenting their movements and therefore gaining a better understanding of how the walruses are adjusting to their lack of suitable habitat.

Undergraduate research at the University of Alaska

BY KINSEY HESS
UAS Whalesong Staff Writer

The University of Alaska Southeast is a unique university that offers a broad array of exciting opportunities for undergraduates. Imagine being a part of real research and working alongside scientists in the field. As a result of a small student body and personable professors, UAS is able to present undergraduates with the rare chance to participate in active research. At most universities research is reserved for graduate students and students pursuing their PhD. However UAS has made undergraduate research a part of the college’s mission statement. This allows enthusiastic arts and sciences students to gain valuable hands-on experiences working with their professors both in the field and in the lab. These research programs can be work study, internships or volunteer, and may be used for class credit. It can also be a valuable addition to a resume.

Over the years many students have participated in undergraduate research at UAS and have gone on to lead successful careers using the skills they gained from real world applications of their studies. One student pursuing undergraduate research this year is Eric Keller, a senior double-majoring in mathematics and marine biology. Eric first began his undergraduate research as a sophomore after he heard about the program from flyers and from his professors. He was able to work with DNA amplification and genetics in a biology lab with UAS. The experience was very useful and helped to broaden his understanding of what a career in biology entailed, Eric said.

“You realize what being a biologist is really about and hopefully it makes you want to do it more,” he said. “Anyone who’s interested in biological sciences should pursue undergraduate research.” Eric has taken his undergraduate research further and is currently working with Dr. Tamone on crustacean hormone research at the Anderson building on campus.

Students may feel intimidated by becoming involved in undergraduate research because they often do not know what it entails, or how demanding the program will be.

“Be prepared for a big time commitment,” Eric said. He estimates the time commitment for his project was 14-20 hours a week, the equivalent of a part time job. However, many projects have flexible hours and professors understand that classes are a priority. There’s also the daunting task of carrying out procedures for experiments you’ve never done before. Many of the techniques may be new to you. But, according to Eric, you should not let this deter you.

“They [the professors] know you’re doing things for the first time,” he said.

Eric was taught all the techniques and procedures needed to gather the data for the experiment. Undergraduate research opportunities provide students an environment in which they can practice skills they’ve learned in lecture and in lab and apply them to real world situations. Students at UAS are encouraged to explore this chance to experience different fields of research in order to better decide what they’d like to pursue academically and as a future career. Undergraduate research can be an exciting and enlightening. “For me,” says Eric, “it was eye-opening.”

If you would like to pursue undergraduate research or have more questions about the program you can ask your professors or visit: www.uas.alaska.edu/arts_sciences/naturalsciences/biology/undergraduate-research
Hungry for literature?

BY THE EGAN LIBRARY
For the UAS Whalesong

The Egan Library held its second annual Edible Books (EB) Contest on Oct. 1. Though we hold it in conjunction with Banned Books Week — which celebrates the freedom to read — EB is primarily a fun, creative contest which encourages reading and which is open to the whole campus. Many UAS students, staff and faculty stopped by to admire, comment on and of course eat the entries. The submissions were inspired by such titles as “The Hunger Games,” “Oliver Twist,” “In Cold Blood,” “Cannery Row” and “The Book of Laughter and Forgetting.”

Faculty members Kevin Maier, Anne Wedler and Carrie Enge presented the Jurors’ Award, which went to Elise Tomlinson’s “The Very Hungry Caterpillar.” The People’s Choice Award went to Christian Hernandez for his interpretation of “The Hunger Games.” The UAS Bookstore donated gift certificates.

The library is hoping to sponsor the event again next year.

Above: Edible Books Contest People’s Choice Award Winner Christian Hernandez’s interpretation of “The Hunger Games.” Bottom right: Elise Tomlinson’s “The Very Hungry Caterpillar,” which was selected to receive the Jurors’ Award. Bottom left: A whiteboard in the Egan Library was used to collect student and community opinions in honor of Banned Books Week.
More than any other films of their era, George A. Romero’s “Night of the Living Dead,” Terence Fisher’s “Frankenstein Must Be Destroyed” and Tobe Hooper’s “The Texas Chain Saw Massacre” emerge definitively as the blinding, infuriating cries of despair from young filmmakers of the counterculture revolution who saw the decade that they believed would issue in a new era of peace, love, and reason instead reach its climax with a bloody, unpopular war, the assassination of Martin Luther King, and the Manson family’s brutal murders and trial.

The world had changed, and the American Dream was no longer one that told traditional tales of old-fashioned good will and prosperity. The narrative was completely rewriting itself, and so were the conventions of artistic expression.

It is no coincidence that the renaissance of American cinema arguably took place in the 1970s, which saw the rise of now-legendary giants Martin Scorsese, Francis Ford Coppola, George Lucas, and Paul Schrader. These men were all born of the hippy era, and their earliest films reflected disenchantment with the way their revolution failed. Among these then-mavericks were a very specific group of low-budget visionaries who accurately recognized that the horror canvas was an appropriate platform to communicate the rage and the war-fatigue that informed the entire country — young, devastation voices unique to a failed social uprising to reflect upon the stakes that they had raised and eventually lost.

George A. Romero’s “Night of the Living Dead” blindsided its audience with this new kind of horror film. A stark, documentary-style time capsule of a failed American Dream literally featuring on itself, it was the beginning of a new era of American horror that blurred the traditional ideas of good vs. evil once and for all. In Romero’s film, the rules were instantly changed: anyone could become a zombie; there are no heroes and no happy endings, and the violence burst forth with unremitting and unforgiving power. Terence Fisher, a British director who understood that his core audience members were the American drive-in crowds, took this idea a step farther by recreating the archetypes of the traditional Gothic canvas with his nihilistic “Frankenstein Must Be Destroyed” (1969), a bold, brilliant, and devastating translation of its namesake’s mythology, reinterpreting the familiar story and themes as a tragic and, yes, horrific portrait of a brutal and unapologetic sociopath. In a time of social upheaval, Fisher proves that not even the most traditional monster story is safe from revision. Lastly, Tobe Hooper’s “The Texas Chain Saw Massacre” (1974) positions itself as a series of brutal images that manifests the trauma poisoning the country’s perceived ethical foundations. Hooper removes any metaphorical implications of his violence and instead tells a straight-up, almost superficial, tale of raw terror and violence. The film does not ask us to understand or interpret the carnage that we witness; it is merely a snapshot of repressed acerbity, a bloodthirsty assault that aims to provide catharsis for an era in which the films of Romero and Fisher were necessary at all.

Danél Griffin’s English 111 class invites you to the Grindhouse Liberation Film Festival, in which we will view and discuss all of these films and their important place in the revisionist horror movement. The films will be screened from 3 p.m.-9 p.m. on Saturday, Oct. 20 in the Egan Lecture Hall (EG 113).

Hosted by Danél Griffin’s English 111 class.

Student-led discussions to follow each film. The event is open and free to public.

Schedule:
3:15 p.m.: George A. Romero’s “Night of the Living Dead”
5:15 p.m.: Terence Fisher’s “Frankenstein Must Be Destroyed”
7:15 p.m.: Tobe Hooper’s “The Texas Chain Saw Massacre”

Danél Griffin is a UAS Adjunct Professor of English.
Campus Calendar

ON CAMPUS

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 17

Deadline for UAS Juneau Campus Student Government Photo Contest. Email digital copies to jypres@uas.alaska.edu. Details: 796-6517.

THURSDAY, OCT. 18
Film: “Maquilopolis: City of Factories,” 5:30 p.m., Egan Lecture Hall. Free and open to the public. Part of the Environmental Film Series.

Root Beer Pong Tournament, 7 p.m., Rec Center. Win prizes, learn about healthy drinking habits, play pong.

FRIDAY, OCT. 19
Bear Pong, 6:30 p.m., Squire’s. 21+. Don’t forget designated driver! A UAS Homebrew Association event. Details: 239-218-8915.

Level 1 Movie Premier, 7:30 p.m., Rec Center. Snowboard/ski film, prizes, giveaways, live music.

THURSDAY, OCT. 25
Blood Drive, 9 a.m.-3 p.m., Glacier View Room. Eat well. Drink plenty of fluids. Bring a photo I.D. Free juice and cookies.

FRIDAY, OCT. 26

SATURDAY, OCT. 27
Halloween Dance, 9 p.m.-1 a.m., Rec Center. Costume contest, dancing & awesome food!

SUNDAY, OCT. 28
Pumpkin Carving Contest, 1 p.m., Rec Center. Pumpkins and carving tools supplied.

TUESDAY, OCT. 30
Film: “Real Injun,” 7:30 p.m., Egan 112. Focuses on the world’s view of Natives. Part of the Alaska Film Series.

OFF CAMPUS

FRIDAY, OCT. 19
Woosh Kinaadeiyi Poetry Slam, 6:30 p.m., JACC. After a year of monthly poetry slams, six winning poets will compete for the Grand Slam title. Afterparty potluck (bring treats!) and a special present for everyone. Pay as you can, $5-10.

SATURDAY, OCT. 20
Festival of Seafood, 4 p.m. – 7:30 p.m., Juneau Yacht Club. Join KTOO News, KRNN and KXLL for the annual “all you can eat” festival. Tickets available at ktoo.org, the station, and at the door. $10 for the beer tasting, $30 for the feast. $10 for kids under 12. Under 5 for free.

THURSDAY, OCT. 25

FRIDAY, OCT. 26

SATURDAY, OCT. 27

Want us to list your event in our calendar? Send us the information via email to whalesong@uas.alaska.edu. Please include “calendar submission” in the subject line.
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The Mall at Sears, 907-279-5288
Eagle River
11432 Business Park Boulevard, 907-622-1725

Fairbanks
356 Old Steese Highway, 907-459-2355
Aurora Center, 407 Merhar Avenue, 907-455-4381
Teddy Bear Plaza, 907-451-1942

Juneau
9400 Glacier Highway, 907-790-3637
Ketchikan
2417 Tongass Avenue, 907-247-2880

Sitka
201 Katlian Street, 907-747-3617

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