

## AFS Locations

### Main Offices

1825 S. Chugach St.  
Palmer, AK 99645  
746-4080  
Toll Free 866-746-4080

### Behavioral Health Treatment Center

5851 E. Mayflower Ct.  
Wasilla, AK 99654  
376-4000

### Trans-Alaska Building

165 E. Parks Hwy.  
Wasilla, AK 99654  
376-2003

### Westside Center

899 Commercial Dr.  
Wasilla, AK 99654  
376-4080

### Family First Treasures Family First Center

403 S. Alaska St.  
Palmer, AK 99645  
746-6260

### Anchorage

1251 Muldoon Rd.  
Ste. 116  
Anchorage, AK 99504  
644-5000

### Kenai

601 Frontage Rd. Ste. 102  
Kenai, AK 99611  
283-4172  
Toll Free 800-283-4172

### 24-Hour Crisis Line

746-4080 or toll free  
866-746-4080

Visit us online  
[www.akafs.org](http://www.akafs.org)



# Navigator

Guiding you through our social service programs

A L A S K A



**FAMILY**  
SERVICES

May 2017

## Raising Awareness in the Month of April

April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month. Each year Alaska Family Services begins their awareness outreach activities on the last Thursday in March by hosting the annual statewide Choose Respect March. The march was started by Sean Parnell as a way for the state of Alaska to come together to bring awareness to domestic violence and sexual assault and with a goal to end this epidemic. Alaska Family Services has hosted the march in Palmer and Wasilla for the past 8 years. In 2016 the two separate marches were combined into one large march. That year the consolidated march was hosted in Palmer. This year the march was hosted in Wasilla.

After the Choose Respect March AFS continues to raise awareness about sexual assault by partnering with different community agencies around the valley by providing those agencies with tables for displaying information, resources and the color teal. Staff returns periodically

to replenish items these tables are at the different locations. On April 8<sup>th</sup>, Alaska Family Services Inc., in partnership with the city of Wasilla and as part of the Wasilla centennial, hosted the first annual Mat-Su Walk a Mile in Her Shoes.



## Reuniting a Family with Support and Preservation

Mandy (name has been changed to protect confidentiality) is a woman in her early thirties with five children. Mandy came to us seeking to be reunified with her children, who were in the custody of the Office of Children's Services, and was residing in in the domestic violence shelter and attending visitation services within the Family Support and Preservation Program.

Mandy, when asked to encapsulate her experience with Alaska Family Services, wrote, "I am honored to share my experience with Alaska Family Services. I

want to demonstrate how this agency has changed my life and the lives of my children. I originally came to AFS as a WRRAP client. I did not come by my own accord—my attorney had referred me... initially coming into the program I felt unprepared and unsure of what to expect. However, my heart ached deeply at the loss of my children, so I chose to take this step. Here I was immediately offered round the clock support. I attended bi-weekly WRRAP meetings and this allowed for open communication of my progress to all agencies. I began treatment and visitation with my children. In

treatment (at AFS) I was greeted with acceptance. I found value in peer support and substance abuse counseling. I charged on to face past trauma, shame and guilt. I confronted the most fearsome barriers that held me back from a full life. I began to heal. I started to attend weekly visits with my children at the AFS contact center. I was nervous. My visits would be supervised and reported directly to OCS. I wanted to show them I was a perfect mom...but inside I knew I wasn't. I opened the doors to the contact center and it was warm and inviting. My uneasiness began to diminish. Here was a

**“it is nearly impossible to slip off tight jeans even partly without the active collaboration of the person wearing them”.**  
*Italian Supreme Court ruling on a rape case before them.*

#### Thanks to Our Donors

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- AFS Board of Directors



And a big thank you to all our individual members!

## Raising Awareness in April (continued from page 1)



Walk a Mile in Her Shoes was started in 2001 as a small group of men to raise awareness and show support for women who experience domestic violence and sexual assault and has grown to a world-wide international men's march with a goal to stop rape, sexual assault and gender violence. The Wasilla march went from the downtown museum to the new library where it concluded with kid's crafts, resource tables and a raffle.

On April 9<sup>th</sup> Alaska Family Services and the Wasilla Sunrise Rotary came together for the 3<sup>rd</sup> annual No More Mat-Su event. For the second year in a row the half day event took place on the campus of Mat-Su College at the Glenn Massay Theater. The event consisted of 2 survivor stories, an interactive bingo game, a visual art contest, a live skit and resource tables.

On April 26<sup>th</sup> AFS participated in Denim Day for the 3<sup>rd</sup> year, an event in which people are encouraged to wear jeans in order to raise awareness of rape and sexual assault. This event originated in Rome when a driving instructor, accused of rape, was found innocent by the Italian Supreme Court due to their conclusion that “it is nearly impossible to slip off tight jeans even partly without the active collaboration of the person wearing them”. This information based on the clothes the victim was wearing at the time of the assault. In support of the victim AFS distributed 300 denim ribbons to local agencies, encouraging employees to wear jeans and the denim ribbons to work that day.

*Jeaninne Milne, DVSA Clinician & AFS Outreach*

## The Value of Outreach

Families learn of AFS's services through a variety of sources. Some are referred through professional service organizations to integrate activities identified as necessary for completion of services as part of their overall case plan. Others, however, discover the depth and breadth of AFS programs through staff participation in community outreach activities.

This year alone AFS has attended events such as Homeless Connect, Mat-Su Regional Community Baby Shower, The Healthy Women's Expo and as mentioned in a story within this

newsletter, AFS's own outreach to bring awareness in the area of sexual assault and domestic violence.

Whether it is AFS's participation in health fairs or providing opportunities for other community members to participate with us, outreach is an invaluable avenue for the community we serve to know and understand AFS and the services it offers better.

We are engaged with AFS's services and programs on a daily basis. Our understanding of what is offered and available

is, sadly, one of AFS's best kept secrets. One of the downfalls of working in a successful well established non profit is the tendency to think that the community knows and understands how our different programs impact the individuals and the community they serve.

Do not underestimate the value of talking informally with others and exchange of that interaction to impact the community we serve.

*Noel Crowley-Bell, Tobacco Prevention Coordinator*

## Family Sufficiency Through Families First Work Services

Our client came to the Families First Work Services program a year ago from living in the Shelter, fleeing a domestic violence situation in the Lower 48. She is a single mom, and had very little work experience outside of the home. Since she began receiving services from AFS and the Families First program, she has exceeded her goals of safe housing and employment. Due to the resource information provided to her by AFS staff, the client has obtained residence for her and her children in a beautiful home. The client has also gained valuable work experience through our Job Developer's individualized services and work placement opportunities. The client is now gainfully em-

ployed and has requested to close her case as she feels she is quite capable of managing life's complexities on her own.



This client stated that her level of confidence has greatly increased because of her experiences at our Job Center, and also reports that she is very grateful for the encouragement and knowledge she received

there. She will now close her State cash assistance case due to her earned income. To continue our support, the client knows will still be able to receive help from the AFS Families First program as well as our Job Developer's services for the next twelve months. This post case closure program will be a safety net for the client and her children as they transition off of public assistance benefits and to a more self-sufficient life.

*Debbie Robinson, Program Director Families First Work Service*

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**Thank you!**



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## Family Support and Preservation *(continued from page 1)*

*safe and calm environment. I enjoyed the visit with my children. I met my baby. I held her. I did not feel pressure to be perfect. Instead I was supported. Staff helped me keep my kids safe. They offered me suggestions that were helpful. For example, how to mitigate problems between siblings and how to make clean up time fun. They asked about my parenting style and helped me meet my goals. I feel like a mother; I am not a failure.....I've struggled for a very long time. It wasn't until AFS that I learned who I am. That I am worth more than my mistakes. I was loved and supported by people who really care. By people who are invested in my family...Alaska Family Services has changed the lives and direction of this family infinitely."*

Mandy's words beautifully summarize the whole purpose of AFS. We want to provide

services that help families become their most healthy selves. Mandy continues to forge ahead trying to overcome her challenges. She has made tremendous progress through her own effort and with our support. We will continue to support her and cheer her on until she is ready to stand independently. Her voice was heard loudly by my staff as a

voice of encouragement in a business that is oftentimes discouraging. These stories of success and of hope are hard-won, immensely valuable and I'm honored to be part of her journey.

*-Sonya Hull, Program Director,  
Family Support and Preservation.*



**"I wanted to  
show the court  
and my children  
how hard I was  
willing to work  
for this."**

**Help Strengthen & Support Families. Become an AFS Member Today.**

**RETURN TO:**

Alaska Family Services  
1825 S. Chugach Street  
Palmer, AK 99645

Phone: 907-746-4080  
Fax: 907-746-1177  
Website: www.akafs.org

Alaska Family Services is  
a 501(c)(3) nonprofit  
organization.  
Contributions may be  
tax deductible as  
provided by law.

Alaska Family Services could not successfully pursue its core purpose of "Services for Families Through Intervention, Referral, Collaboration and Education" without the kind and generous support of individuals and businesses in the Mat-Su Valley. Your membership will be used for the direct care of families that enter our services.

To join, simply fill out this form and return it to the address posted on the side.

Thank you! Your support makes a difference.

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