

# KUEUIT AURORA

July 1, 2012



Artist's rendition of completed Jesse Lee Home Rehabilitation.

## PHOENIX RISES FROM ASHES

By Dorene M. Lorenz, Chairman of the Board, Friends of Jesse Lee Home

We are excited to be able to resurrect the Kueuit, pronounced Ku-eu-it, which means Northern Lights. The official newsletter of the Seward Jesse Lee Home started in 1925 and ran sporadically through the 1950s.

The Kueuit began as a Jesse Lee Home junior high school project, with Mrs. Myrtle C. Hatten listed as the faculty advisor in the earliest known edition surviving, May of 1927.

Familiar names got the publication together - Harriet Lange was editor-in-chief in November of 1928, Charles and Mary Ella Larson associate editors, Benny Benson and

Charles Nelson art editors. Subscriptions were a dollar a year.

The monthly editions carried news, hopes, dreams, aspirations, jokes, lessons learned and a common place history of the happenings of the Jesse Lee Home.

It is our intent to carry on the proud legacy of the Kueuit, and invite you to follow the journey of rehabilitating the Jesse Lee Home and developing of her resident Balto School through these pages.

It took the Friends of Jesse Lee Home several years to determine an appropriate end user of the rehabilitated structure.

Over the decades there have been many options suggested, efforts prosecuted, and projects failed. It was important to us to create a meaningful, authentic end user that would be self-sustaining, and be true to the historic intent of the Jesse Lee Home.

The Balto School checked all the boxes.

The name of the school came easily, it was already chosen by the original users - who named the main common building in the campus center after the lead dog that brought lifesaving serum to Nome.

## Shooting for the Stars

By Kirsten Vesel, Project Manager

“I am amazed at what great shape much of this building is in,” recently exclaimed Al Bryant, a historic preservation specialist from the Seattle firm BergerAMAM, as he made his first inspection of the Jesse Lee Home. “Quality craftsmanship, quality materials. The building breathes right.”

The structures have integrity, fortified with strategic stabilization that is gently pulling elements back together.

Last season an expert Historical Preservation structural engineer, who has rehabilitated over 100 stucco/wood beam structures at Fort Apache, conducted a detailed analysis of Jewel Guard Hall, the Arcades, and the Balto Building.

Under his recommendation, a protective impermeable membrane now clads the entire roof, proving its value through one of the deepest snow events on record this past winter. Retaining walls have replaced misappropriated beams, and adjacent grounds are cleared.

The State of Alaska has appropriated \$8 Million for the Jesse Lee Home’s stabilization, design, and rehabilitation; and also for development of the leadership program for the Balto School.

In late June, Kumin Associates began the design phase of A&E, which includes the more exact cost estimating necessary before a final budget can be realized.



### Collaborating with the Rural Alaska Honors Institute at the University of Alaska Fairbanks

From top to bottom:

**Balto School Educational Coordinator Daniel Becker**

**Academic Advisory Committee Chairman Paul Ongtooguk**

**Friends of the Jesse Lee Home Board of Directors Chairman Dorene Lorenz**

**Executive Director- Project Manager Kirsten Vesel**

**Science Curriculum Development Alanna Purdy**

After a site control agreement has been signed with the City of Seward, the real work will begin with aggressive grant writing to secure the additional money needed to fully fund the project.

Summer 2012 construction plans include abating a small amount of identified hazardous material in the crawl spaces by encapsulating it in cement, and removing trip-fall hazards from the site. Much needs to be done to stay on track with the Balto School opening in 2014.

The Educational team is developing a unique academic model serving a cross section of students throughout the State

for an intensive, one semester, junior year residential program.

The Balto School will expose students to opportunities unique to any other educational facility in Alaska.

This residential school will serve a student population of approximately 150 students per semester. Three semester programs, including an enriched summer session, will reach approximately 450 high school juniors per year.

A special emphasis will be placed on models of Alaska Native leadership and Alaskan history.

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#### Standing tall and proud

Balto School Academic Advisory Committee Chairman Paul Ongtooguk and Educational Coordinator Daniel Becker challenge Alaskan stereotypes at Chena, Alaska.

## Balto Crew Diaries

By Daniel Becker, Educational Coordinator

I am grateful for the opportunity to be working with the Balto School as the Educational Coordinator of the Academic Advisory Committee.

This project’s academic vision uniquely addresses questions vital defining a distinctly Alaskan education and creating its future leaders.

I received a B.A. in Native American Studies, completing concentrations in both Native governance and literature.

The coursework also included education, philosophy, history, law, religion, research, and current topics.

This interdisciplinary framework provided me with a broad skill set necessary for varied, self-motivated work with diverse groups.

I joined Teach for America (TFA) - a service organization dedicated to countering educational inequality. I completed their intensive teaching institute which combined coursework, professional development, and classroom teaching teaching.

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## Shooting for the Stars

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Native and non native students will develop cross cultural competencies to better understand the opportunities of our unique State.

Natural resource management, sciences (with an emphasis of marine science), mathematics, politics, technology, energy, mechanics, arts, finance, humanities, literature and hands-on vocational training will be included in this innovative education model.

Students will keep pace with their home schools for graduation while completing a rigorous, enhanced academic experience to include several different options for specialized, core educational tracks.

Students will discover the benefits and responsibilities of being citizens of Alaska and will leave the Balto School with a strong desire to be civically engaged in their home communities.

It is anticipated that this leadership school will partner with Seward's existing educational facilities including Seward High School, Alaska Vocational Technical Center, U.S. Forest Service, National Park Service, the Marine Science Center, Kenai Peninsula College, UAA, UAF, the Seward Library/Museum and the Alaska SeaLife Center.

Balto students will leave the program with a well defined "life plan" that will further prepare them for their senior year and future plans after high school graduation.

Like the Jesse Lee Home of yesteryear, Balto School students will be part of a life-long family.

A strong alumni association will track pupil progress and foster life-long expectations for students to pursue leadership roles and strive for overall excellence.

The relationships and contacts the graduates will gain in their semester long program will continue to strengthen with annual Balto School reunions and continued involvement with Statewide professional organizations.

We are looking ahead to an exciting and challenging year to further develop our education model, further build our academic team, and solidify our Seward and State partners.

## Balto School Diaries

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Afterwards, I taught English Language Arts (ELA) for the Laguna Department of Education, a tribal school in New Mexico. Due to the results of rigorous tracking of my student's progress, I was made instructional lead teacher for the ELA area at my school after the first year.

Additionally, I was selected to serve as a member of the team that created a standards-based curriculum and reporting system for the district and the advisory committee that structured a long-term transformation plan to increase student achievement and academic rigor at the school.

Following completion of my commitment to Laguna and TFA, I returned home to work with the Alaska Humanities Forum for their Take Wing project.

There, we led a group of rural Native students through an intensive postsecondary education preparation experience. We focused on building academic, career, and life skills to prepare students for higher education and to encourage them to bring those skills and knowledge back to their home communities - a vision which aligns well with that of the Balto School.

This past year, I've been working for the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education (ACPE) as their Community Liaison.

I provided statewide higher education outreach, especially for rural and remote communities. This largely consisted of giving trainings and presentations on topics such as financial aid, college and career options, financial literacy, and the value of higher education to students, parents and educators.

I believe in and am dedicated to the goals and values of the Balto School, and am personally and professionally invested in its success.

## New Leadership School

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It was at the dedication of the Balto building, on July 9, 1927 that the eight stars of gold on a blue field designed by JLH resident Benny Benson was raised to the sky for the first time, courtesy of the sewing of JLH staffer Fannie Kearns. We still celebrate this event as Alaska Flag Day.

When the Alaska State Legislature designated the Alaska malemute as the official state dog at the request of her school children, they perhaps weren't aware that Balto was originally passed up as a lead dog because he was a sturdy malemute and not a fleet footed Siberian.

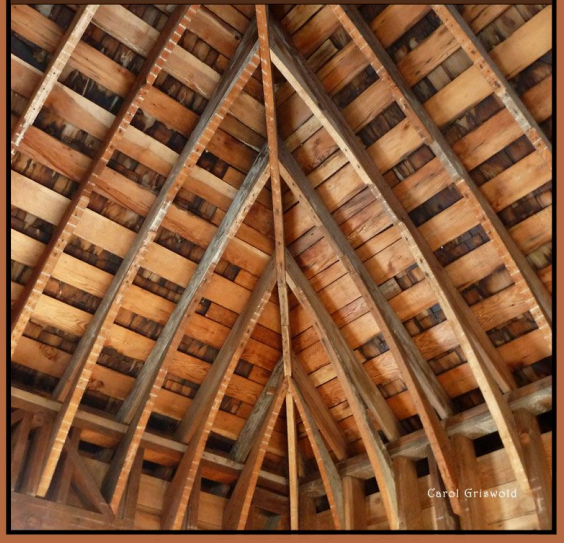
Fate chose Balto to lead the last two legs of the serum run, though a snow storm, with strength, perseverance, and fortitude when it mattered most.

It was an intuitive choice to name Alaska's Leadership school the Balto School, with Alaska State Flag blue and gold her colors, and the Alaska malemute her mascot.

We look forward to cutting blue and gold ribbons, the smell of freshly painted walls, and the sound of young Alaskan voices echoing laughter down the Jesse Lee's hallways once again.

Thanks for joining with us on this journey through our history to our future.

Jesse Lee Home: A Tribute to Craftsmanship  
By Carol Griswold  
First Friday Art Show Opening July 6, 2012  
Balto School 302 Washington Street  
Seward, Alaska



Carol Griswold

## Stepping forward in the Arts

“We are focused on re-establishing ourselves as an entity that adds value to the community,” advises Balto School Outreach Coordinator Laura Hensley, “and we’re not waiting for the building. We’ve rolled up our sleeves, and we’re working.”

This winter the Friends of Jesse Lee Home partnered with the Rasmuson Foundation and Res Art to host a reception for Seward artists to meet Terry Adkins. A USA Fellows visual artist, Adkins pursues an ongoing quest to uphold immortal figures to their rightful place in the landscape of history.

Three works inspired from Adkin’s discovery of the Benny Benson story, which ended in a tour of the Jesse Lee Home, are on display at the [True North](#) Exhibit at the Anchorage Museum through September 9.

Adkins has exhibited at the 2012 Paris Triennale, MOMA, ICA London, American Academy in Rome, and the Sculpture Center New York, among others.

Our 302 Washington Street Seward office participates in the First Friday Art Walk. In June, our gallery featured Dorene Lorenz’s whimsical “Happy Halibut” paintings.

Carol Grizwald’s brilliant photo essay “Jesse Lee Home: A Tribute to Craftsmanship” is featured during the month of July. Our office is open weekdays from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

The last weekend of July we are partnering with the Alaska Film Forum with film making workshops, the Balto 48 Hour Film Challenge, and an Open Projector Night film screenings.



### Collaborating beyond Alaska's Borders

East Coast Artist Terry Adkins, Friends of Jesse Lee Home Project Manager Kirsten Vessel and Balto School Academic Advisory Committee Chair Paul Ongtooguk braved record snows to give the internationally acclaimed artist an opportunity to experience a stronger understanding of the Jesse Lee Home.

Adkins expressed a strong desire to return to Seward and create more works inspired by the Jesse Lee Home and it’s former residents.

## FRIENDS OF JESSE LEE HOMEBALTO SCHOOL

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