

# MESSENGER

Spring 2019



## THE BEST INVESTMENT

By Jens Laipenieks CEO/General Manager



As the new year kicks into gear and the sun creeps ever higher on the horizon, I reflect on our many accomplishments and eagerly anticipate the work that lies ahead of us. This time of the year we conduct annual performance reviews, and I get detailed reminders of the many goals achieved and personal milestones attained. I am proud of our cooperative's progress on many levels

but seeing us grow our human capital gives me the greatest pride. What is human capital?

ASTAC continues to flourish with exceptional staff honing sharp minds. We invest heavily in our employees by providing training, access to new technology and new tools, allowing us to work smarter and safer. These investments pay dividends for the co-op and set the course for our future. I

am especially happy to see many employees progress into new positions and career opportunities here at ASTAC. By prioritizing skill development, we foster a culture of innovation and in turn become more competitive as a company.

As our staff transitions, we sometimes get to celebrate the final chapter in a career dedicated to our cooperative. For the past 10 years ASTAC has enjoyed the leadership of Jodi Forsland, our Chief Services Officer. Jodi believed in growing human capital; she was a fantastic mentor to many, and took great pride in seeing her staff excel. The ASTAC that you see today is in a large part the result of Jodi's efforts and we wish her the best in her retirement.

### human capital

*noun*

the collective skills, knowledge, or other intangible assets of individuals that can be used to create economic value for the individuals, their employers, or their community.

*Education is an investment in human capital that pays off in terms of higher productivity.*

*Pinraagiaqta* | Top of the World Golf Tournament  
**COMING IN APRIL!**

**BEST PRIZES EVER!**  
**REGISTER TODAY: ASTAC.NET**

1st PRIZE	2nd PRIZE	3rd PRIZE
<b>NEW! Samsung Galaxy S10</b>	<b>\$500 Cash</b>	<b>Apple Watch</b>

## CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE TEAM GROWING

In January ASTAC hired three new staff in our Customer Experience Department. Janelle Kaleak, born and raised in Utqiaġvik, joined our retail store team. She looks forward to traveling with her family to new places to experience new cultures and food and loves to cook for her family. Stop by our retail store and say hello!

Stefani Rhett joined our Anchorage team with many years of sales and customer service experience. She is bubbly, excited, and ready to learn about our industry. Stefani enjoys Christmas as it is the giving time of year, and loves making people smile.

Michele Dykmann also joined our Anchorage team and has extensive experience in telecom and possesses a wealth of knowledge related to the industry. Michelle enjoys running and loves all things Alaska.

In January we changed our department name and position titles from Customer Service (Representatives) to Customer Experience (Specialists) to better reflect how ASTAC assists its members. We stand out from the competition in a number of ways and felt highlighting that we provide a full experience than just a service was an important distinction to make.

## SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

ASTAC has been reaching out to school counselors and school board members letting them know about our college scholarship program. Each year, ASTAC awards two \$1,000 scholarships to resident students from our serving area. The application deadline is April 12, 2019. Additional details including the application can be found on our web site, under Community, Education.

## MOM OF THREE WINS 2018 *Swoosh* GRAND PRIZE

It was Etta Attungana's six-year old son who convinced her she should enter ASTAC's 9th Annual Swoosh Competition in Point Hope. She had participated every year and thought this time she would just watch the event with her three young children.

"He said, 'Mom, you have to go shoot. You could win this time!'"

So Attungana, 28, waited her turn with everyone else in the Tikigaq School gym last October, then stepped up to the free-throw line. She nailed her shot, then another, and before she knew it, Attungana had won the Point Hope Swoosh Competition. But the bigger excitement was yet to come.



*Etta Attungana of Point Hope was selected as our 2018 Swoosh Grand Prize winner! ASTAC will be sending Etta and her Aunt Hilda to the NCAA Men's Final Four Tournament in Minneapolis, Minnesota April 6-8, 2019.*

ASTAC conducts the Swoosh contest in each of the eight villages it serves (excluding Deadhorse). The name of the winner from each village is then put into a random drawing for the Grand Prize – an all-expenses paid trip for two to the NCAA Men's Final Four Basketball Championships. The tournament takes place in April and this year will be held in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

"I was in shock when ASTAC called to tell me I won," said Attungana. "I haven't played in a game since high school, but I love basketball and am really excited to watch some good ball. I'm taking my Auntie Hilda with me."

Attungana says she's glad she listened to her son.

"He's so excited for me. He said, 'See, Mom. I told you that you could win!'"



A new ASTAC company was recently created to distinguish it from our local exchange carrier (LEC) company. ASTAC Broadband, LLC will be used by our Enterprise sales team when soliciting non-LEC services.

To ensure brand continuity the ASTAC font was incorporated into the new logo, as brand consistency makes a brand feel more dependable. The icon in the logo reflects that we're always moving forward and that no matter what the challenge, ASTAC Broadband, LLC will work towards a solution to help businesses grow. The color scheme is modern and conveys technology.



## FIRST LEGO LEAGUE ROBOTICS

The 2018/2019 school year marks the 4th year ASTAC has been sponsoring the NSBSD FIRST Lego League Robotics program. Participation has doubled this year growing to 91 students, up from 45 last school year.



Twenty six students participated in the Regional Qualifier on January 12.

The North Slope assembled an all-star team of eight students from Harold Kaveolook, Tikigag, Nunamiut, Meade River and Eben Hopson Middle schools. The team traveled to Anchorage to compete in the State Competition where they received the Judges' Award for teamwork and perseverance in forming a team and competing in just two days. The students went from strangers to competitors and better yet, friends, and placed 17 out of 52.

"The opportunity to participate in a program like Lego Robotics helps students focus, problem solve, develop leadership qualities and find that these truths help them in their everyday lives," says Rodney Lloyd, Meade River Coach.

Three students from the Harold Kaveolook Robo Rams team placed 24th out of 52 in the Robot Run at the State Competition.

## FIBER TO THE HOME

ASTAC CEO/General Manager Jens Laipenieks spoke before the Barrow City Council in November 2018 to update the council on ASTAC's Fiber to the Home build out in Utqiagvik. He gave an



overview of the project design, steps involved, challenges faced and timeline. ASTAC is overbuilding our existing outside plant with the intent to retire and remove all copper infrastructure once migrations to fiber are complete in 2019.

ASTAC invested over \$5M completing three other fiber to the home projects in Wainwright, Point Hope and Nuiqsut between 2016/2017.

ASTAC's Director of Wireless Networks, Brian DeMarco presented the same information to the North Slope Borough Assembly in December 2018.

## BATTLE of the BOOKS



NSBSD super readers have been hitting the books and studying in preparation for the Battle of the Books District Competition held on February 8. Participation in this slope-wide reading program increased by 35 percent over last school year.

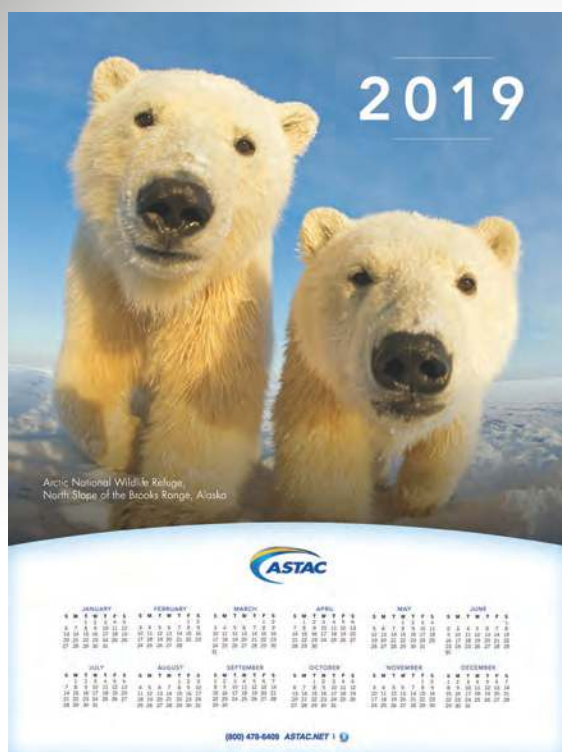


## OUT WITH THE OLD



ASTAC dismantled and removed its 17-year old, 200-foot guyed tower near Tarn Road (east of Kuparuk) in January. Crews did an incredible job working in -15-degree temps to safely lower the tower and haul it off site in 40' segments. In May of 2018, a new 200' self-supporting lattice tower was erected allowing ASTAC to continue providing reliable 4G service to the area.

## ASTAC's 2019 CALENDAR



### HEARING AID COMPATIBLE PHONES

Hearing aids do not always function well with wireless handsets. ASTAC has numerous handsets that have been tested and rated for use with hearing aids and it offers several price categories. ASTAC's sales staff is trained to assist customers looking for Hearing Aid Compatible (HAC) devices/handsets.

When choosing a phone, it's important to try the different features thoroughly and in various locations using your hearing aid or cochlear implant to determine if you hear interfering noise. Refer to our website for more details regarding HAC phones and their price ranges.

## FAREWELL TO JODI FORSLAND

When ASTAC's Chief Services Officer Jodi Forsland looks back on her 30-year career in the telecommunications industry, she's a little surprised.

"I didn't intend for a career in this field. I took a summer job at Anchorage Telephone Utility (now ACS) and loved it," says Forsland. "After 20 years there, I applied for a manager position at ASTAC, but was given the CSO position. It was a 'pinch me' moment."



The first thing Forsland did in her new position was to start marketing ASTAC's products and services, something the company had never done before.

"We needed to get our name out there and look like a professional company. We're still a small company today, but we're competing with the big boys."

After a decade at ASTAC, where she saw the company grow from dial-up Internet to providing fiber-fed services as well as LTE wireless in some markets, Forsland retired in February. She'll miss the ASTAC family but looks forward to this next chapter.

"My three main goals are to do more volunteer work, spend time with my grandchildren and travel. I'm also really looking forward to not getting up at 5:30 a.m."

### 911 EMERGENCY NUMBERS, ALL LOCATIONS

For police and fire, call 911.

Notice: The 911 emergency number has been developed to quickly respond to crisis situations. Call 911 only when human life or property is in jeopardy.

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