

# MESSENGER

Spring 2020



## DECADES

By Jens Laipenieks CEO/General Manager



2020. The beginning of a new decade is upon us. Tracing our roots, ASTAC was formed in 1977 and service began in 1981 with the most basic form of telephone dial tone. Since then, our services expanded to include wireless offerings, analog service at first, and eventually, we joined the digital wireless world. With the birth of the Internet, ASTAC introduced the first data offerings

to the North Slope, initially dial-up internet which over time we upgraded to DSL service. Over the past decade, with broadband as our core mission, ASTAC has evolved most significantly. Today, our 4G LTE wireless and fiber-to-the-home broadband services rival anything offered in major urban Alaskan markets.

This past summer we completed our fiber build-out in Utqiagvik. This \$3 million, multi-year effort was the largest single project ASTAC has ever undertaken. I am thankful to all the dedicated and talented employees and contractors who made the fiber conversion a reality. Network-wide, ASTAC now has fiber connections to over 85 percent of all the locations we serve. These new broadband networks we have built will bring economic opportunities to our membership and carry us far into the future.

As we look ahead, ASTAC will continue to innovate and strive for ways to improve. We are fully committed to expanding fiber access and improving the services we offer to all of our customers in all of our markets. In 2020, we will announce the beginning of transformational construction projects to connect the villages of Atkasuk and Kaktovik. As with all things in life, there are risks and

The advertisement features a dark blue background with a glowing fiber-optic effect at the top. In the center, there is a stack of US dollar bills, including a \$100 bill, fanned out. A hand is visible at the bottom right, holding a pen and pointing towards the text. The text is in white and yellow, with a yellow swoosh underlining the word "BUNDLE".

**BUNDLE UP  
AND GET \$100 OFF!**

- ✓ Internet
- ✓ Landline
- ✓ Long Distance

Get **FREE** installation and up to **\$100** credit when you sign up for one year!

uncertainties, but we will continue to assess, adapt and improve as we go. The ASTAC Board of Directors, the leadership team, and I continue to remain focused on our objectives and will take ASTAC into the next decade and beyond.

# the big ten

## Swoosh

ASTAC 10<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL COMPETITION



Samuel Henry with ASTAC Point Lay Board member Sophie Tracy

Third time's a charm for Samuel Henry! After his third year coming out to ASTAC's Swoosh contest, he took first place for Point Lay. After being drawn as our grand prize winner, he's headed to Atlanta, Georgia to see the NCAA Men's Final Four Tournament with his dad, Nathan, next month! Samuel began playing basketball when he was 12 for the Kali Wolverines. His favorite team is the L.A. Clippers and his favorite player was Kobe Bryant (RIP). Samuel and his dad look forward to seeing the Final Four and checking out the Botanical and Callaway Gardens during their trip.

### FREE SHIPPING

Did you know ASTAC now offers FREE SHIPPING all year long? Call our Customer Experience Department at 1-800-478-6409 to place an order today!

## WELLNESS PROGRAM UPDATE

Over the holidays, ASTAC shifted the focus from physical wellness to community wellness with a canned food drive challenge. We donated over 80 lbs. of food to the Alaska Food Bank in early January.

At the start of 2020, we kicked off a 10-week Biggest Loser Competition to encourage and celebrate healthy living.



ASTAC Director of Customer Experience Stacy Marshall with a representative of the Alaska Food Bank

## FIRST LEGO LEAGUE

The Harold Kaveolook Robo Rams competed at the FIRST Lego League state meet in Anchorage in January. The students learned a tremendous amount while at the event, such as the varieties of robots and attachments used by other teams. The competition matches brought them through a challenging start, progressively finishing with success in the final match as their robot completed all tasks as programmed.



The innovation and core values portions provided them with more insight into the importance of developing their presentation skills. Listening to the teams that qualified during the ending portion of the meet also opened their eyes to a wider perspective of how to apply their innovations.

The FIRST Robotics officials and administrators were wonderful and so helpful, as well as other coaches present. Everyone's smiling faces and kind words helped make this event a wonderful experience for Robo Rams and ignite their desire to return next year.

ASTAC congratulates all the participants in this competition and is proud of the Robo Rams' dedication to science and innovation!

## WIRELESS SERVICES UPGRADED



ASTAC is now running on a Telesat Anik F3 satellite that rotates with the Earth over 22,000 miles above the equator. Utilizing hydrophobic satellite dishes and the latest technology available, voice quality, data speeds, and home Internet speeds in Point Lay, Atkasuk, Anaktuvuk Pass, and Kaktovik will be greatly improved. The new equipment will allow ASTAC to provide high-quality and more cost-effective backhaul to these remote villages as it continues to invest in the North Slope communities it serves.

"ASTAC is committed to closing the technology gap across the North Slope to enhance our members experiences and improve connectivity in some of the most remote places in Alaska," said Jens Laipenieks, ASTAC CEO/General Manager. "Reliable backhaul is essential to that goal and is a real game-changer in the region."

Adding capacity will improve service immediately, but making these investments in satellite technology is a short-term solution. The eventual and long-term plan is to establish terrestrial connections capable of far greater capacity – 1,000s of Mbps instead of 10s or 100s. The demand placed on our networks continues to increase at an exponential rate and the fixed-satellite constraints of high cost, high latency, and limited bandwidth are all driving factors to evolve to terrestrial backhaul.

## SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

ASTAC is accepting applications for its scholarship program until Friday, April 17. Additional details including the application can be found on our web site, under Community, Education.



## CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR SURVEY WINNERS

ASTAC would like to thank our members that participated in our advertising and customer satisfaction surveys late last year. The feedback is invaluable to us and we appreciate everyone taking the time to respond.



James Griffin with his new Xbox courtesy of ASTAC.

Randy Nashoalook won a Google Home Mini & Amazon gift card and James Griffin won an Xbox gaming console. Congratulations Randy & James!

## ACCEPTABLE USE POLICY ENFORCEMENT

ASTAC will begin enforcing its Acceptable Use Policies for both its Internet and wireless services in 2020. Customers should familiarize themselves with them and can always be found on our website: [www.astac.net/aup](http://www.astac.net/aup)

## CUSTOMER TESTIMONIAL:



"ASTAC's new fiber at the Wainwright Co-Op is great! Our credit card transactions go through really fast now."  
– Ira Ungdruk, Store Clerk



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## EMMA TUKLE RELOCATING



Emma Tukle pictured with Ryan Kelly, Mike Phillips, David Serino, Joe Zimmerman, Brian Hoffman & Martina Tu'ua

Emma Tukle joined ASTAC in February 2016 as an intern in our Utqiagvik retail store. Over the last four years, she has become an invaluable member of our team providing an excellent customer experience for our members. Some may recognize her from our advertising campaigns and voicing our radio commercials. She moved to Anchorage in February and began working out of our headquarters in Anchorage. Although Utqiagvik will miss her, we are thrilled to have her in Anchorage!

## 2020 ASTAC CALENDAR



ASTAC's 2020 calendar is out! Visit your local community center to pick one up or give our friendly Customer Experience team a call at 1-800-478-6409 to have a copy mailed to you.

## BATTLE OF THE BOOKS

North Slope Borough School District super readers have been hitting the books and studying in preparation for the Battle of the Books District Competition that was held on February 6. The 2019/2020 school year marks the sixth year ASTAC has



sponsored this slope-wide reading program. Battle of the Books is a reading incentive program for students in third through 12th grade. The goals of the nationwide program include encouraging and recognizing students who enjoy reading, broadening reading interests, increasing reading comprehension, and promoting academic excellence.

## ALASKA BUSINESS WEEK

ASTAC will be hosting its first annual Alaska Business Week at Barrow High School the week of June 1-5, 2020. High school students (9th-12th grade) are encouraged to follow ASTAC's Facebook page and website to register for this incredible event.



Alaska Business Week is a fun, intensive entrepreneurship experience for Alaska high school students. The week-long program teaches students the basics of business, leadership, and entrepreneurship. Participants compete as teams in a dynamic business simulation with the guidance of adult mentors from the business community. After completing the program, students have a competitive edge on workplace readiness, college preparation, and overall life success.

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