

**Mike Swanson**

Executive Director

Amundsen Educational Center

As both a leader in Christian camp ministry and a local church camp booster, I am so grateful for the Covenant Children's Ministries' funds that allow us to serve at-risk youth at both of our Bible camps. Over many years, youth from some of Milwaukee's most challenged neighborhoods have found a bed, good food, a reliable schedule and loving counselors at Covenant Harbor and Covenant Point. Most significantly, they – and scores of others from Midwestern towns, suburbs and cities – have heard about the God who loves them and wants to walk through their lives with them in the person of Jesus Christ. This is the heartbeat of our ministry. Praise be to God that Covenant Children's Ministries makes it possible.

Amundsen Educational Center in Soldotna, Alaska has been blessed by the generosity of Covenant Children's Ministries to help the at-risk youth and young adults that attend AEC. We have received a grant annually from the Ronald Lee Sterner Trust Fund for the last 8 years. Additionally, we have received two Mission & Ministry grants from CCM for capital improvements / building projects.

The funds from the Sterner Trust provide vital operating capital and are primarily used to feed students in our Building Hope Construction program. We distribute the grant in the fall semester to students in need. We apply the funds to their student accounts in the form of a scholarship and tell them who is supporting their training. As a small operation, these funds really go a long way and help significantly. By itself, the current annual gift from the Sterner Trust of \$6000 can pay almost all of the cost for one student for an entire semester. There is almost always a funding gap for our students in the first semester. We do not allow our students to borrow money or owe money to AEC. At the end of the school year, all outstanding tuition, room / board, and fees are forgiven to our graduates. This may not be a sound business practice from a worldly perspective, but the Lord has honored it and people like you have continued to make it possible.

Building Hope Construction is the learning lab for whole life discipleship at AEC. Each year, our students learn how to build a house by building a house, everything from the dirt work to the finish carpentry. In addition to training in a high demand job area, our students receive professional life coaching, learning stewardship and personal finance, along with a myriad of basic life skills from cooking and cleaning to time management. Through a partnership with Alaska Christian College and their New Hope Counseling, our students are able to begin to work on healing from trauma. We seem to draw some of the most marginalized students from already marginalized populations. Our students are the definition of at-risk. Nearly all of our students are Alaska Native from rural Alaska, having grown up in some of the most impoverished communities in America with among the highest rates of unemployment, domestic violence, substance abuse and suicide. We are doing our best to help produce hope in the form of better community members, better parents and better partners, and more

importantly, people that know where they are going to spend eternity and can share the same Good News with others.

Currently, we have 6 students that have been enrolled this semester. Our max enrollment is 6 students per semester. We already had to send one student home for drinking. Out of our remaining 5 students, I want to highlight a couple:

One of our students is a 19 year-old Alaska Native male. He was in foster care most of his life. Outside of his enrollment with AEC, he is homeless. He is putting 40-50 hours a week in training at AEC. Additionally, he is trying to finish high school this semester and is spending an additional 3-5 hours per day on his remaining high school classes in the evening. He told me that the best lesson we have taught him so far is "You can't change the family you come from, but you can change the one you're going to leave behind." He has made a decision to follow Jesus in the month he has been with us, has gotten baptized, and is attending church and Bible study several times a week. So far, he has not received a penny in other funding beyond the Sterner Fund. Thank you for helping this student!

Another student to highlight is another 19 year-old Alaska Native male. He has a daughter that is almost two years old that he wants to support and be part of her life. He is grieving the recent loss of his cousin to a drug overdose. The student we had to dismiss this semester is his life-long friend and "big brother" in a community sense. We are trying to help him process grief and still manage to get up each day and work all day every day. He was adopted by and raised by two loving and supportive parents. His adoptive father told me, he "has worked harder in the last 4 weeks than he has worked at any point in his life." It is an uphill battle, but I have hope that he will finish his training, become a good worker and become the father his daughter needs him to be. Thank you for helping this student!

By the grace of God, every single one of our Building Hope Construction graduates from 2002 through today are still alive. Most are thriving. We have contractors and carpenters using their training every day in their home communities throughout Alaska. Every one of our graduates is either working or continuing their education. Three of the young men that have not completed our program have taken their lives.

Thank you for the leadership and heart you are bringing to CIC and for continuing to support our ministry through the legacy grant of CCM as a recipient of the Sterner Trust. We hope to continue to be good stewards of these resources and honor the intention they were set aside and the traditions of the Children's Home in Princeton. God bless you!