"How could anyone ever tell you, you were anything less than beautiful… How could anyone ever tell you, you were less than whole… How could anyone fail to notice, that your loving is a miracle, how deeply you're connected to my soul?" With those words by Alaska singer/songwriter Libby Roderick, the Auke Bay Elementary School Orca and Little Orca Singers opened AWARE's 12th Annual Women of Distinction Gala. Their performance was beautiful, engaging, poignant, open hearted. They were the perfect opening act.

Sometimes we have to be reminded of our humanity, our humanness, our connection to ourselves, to others, to all that surrounds us and all that we surround. This simple reminder can keep us involved, and it is this involvement for which I offer thanks today. AWARE has been successful in our work to support and honor survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault, to provide intervention and prevention services for adults, children and youth, to hold batterers accountable, and to work towards multi-level change in creating a community where the impact of prevention services is palpable.

How does this happen?

It happens thanks to women like Alberta Aspen, Helen Abbott-Watkins, Susan Baxter and Betsy Brenneman, AWARE's 2008 Women of Distinction. Read about them in this issue, or see them on KATH-TV, channel 15 on April 14-17, 12:30 to 1:00 pm, as they spoke about what inspires them at the celebration on March 8.

It happens thanks to all who support our fundraisers, who attend, who sponsor, and who make it so. SEARHC Health Promotion (special thanks to Cache Garrett) sponsored "The Healing Power of Humor," a benefit comedy night for AWARE, raising over $1200 for AWARE in partner contributions and ticket sales, securing Collette Costa as emcee and Dan Fink as opening act, and Susan Rice as hilarious Headliner.

It happens thanks to the teens who are on board AWARE's TRAIN (Teens Resisting Abuse and Initiating Non-Violence). It happens thanks to brave women who walk through AWARE's doors or phone AWARE's crisis line, who are willing to risk for healing, for connection, for understanding, or maybe just for a kind listener.
Alberta has been providing that instruction manual to Native women and children, instilling in them a sense of pride in not only their culture but themselves, as far back as 1985, when she first joined the Alaska Native Sisterhood. In 1992 she became the Juneau Community Council's President and Executive Director.

"Being a young woman during the 60’s further strengthened my belief in the idea that women can do anything - all they need is the instruction manual," Alberta says.

"It gives me great pleasure when I see families walking in the Celebration parade wearing their regalia with pride," Alberta says. "It's important for children to be proud of who they are, and for women to learn and know they can do anything - all they need is the instruction manual."
Helen Abbot-Watkins’ life may not have always been easy, but it’s always been blessed.
The ninth of 10 children born to John Abbot, a Raven from the Frog House, and Lily Abbot, an Eagle Thunderbird, Helen’s father died shortly before her fifth birthday. Unable to care for all 10 children, Helen’s mother sent her children throughout Southeast Alaska to be cared for by family. Helen was sent to Hoonah to live with her grandmother. When Helen was seven she began spending summers in Juneau with her mother and step-father Bill Nigh. These times were not only some of the happiest of her childhood, but also taught her traditional Tlingit values.

“We packed up our little gillnet boat and the ride was wonderful,” Helen says. “My step-dad fished and my mom worked in the (Haines) cannery. We smoked salmon and picked berries, sometimes past the Haines border to pick blueberries. Other times we’d go to Big Boulder for a picnic. My step-dad would get a long alder pole, tie a hook on it and catch a king salmon that we’d roast on the fire.”

As Helen got older, she noticed that of all her siblings, Helen’s mother always turned to her for help.

“I asked my mother, ‘Why do you only call me to help?’” Helen says. “She said, ‘Because I want you to learn.’ I was never so proud, and learn I did.”

During winters Helen’s mother taught her to bead, sew moccasins, baby booties and button blankets. She taught her to cook traditional Tlingit foods like fry bread, how to fish and can her catch.

Helen married when she was 18 and had a son and two daughters. The marriage was violent, but Helen, who looked to her mother’s strength for inspiration, had the courage to leave the marriage. Now married for 26 years, Helen enjoys sharing the skills her mother taught her, and the blessings of her life, with others. She volunteers at Gastineau Elementary School in her great-granddaughter’s class and is on the board of directors at SEARHC. She’s a regular speaker on traditional Tlingit food in schools and workshops.

“I try to do something special every day for someone,” Helen says, whether it’s bringing fish or jams to elderly Native women who can’t catch or make their own or crocheting hats for the Navajo reservation. “I enjoy sharing my blessings.”

“By volunteering for what you believe in, you can let your passion motivate your actions,” said Susan Baxter, who currently mentors beginning teachers in Juneau, Yakutat, Haines, Gustavus, Tenakee Springs, Angoon, and Wrangell through the Alaska State-wide Mentor Program, a joint project of the University of Alaska and the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development.

“I have found that the volunteer hours I put in feed my inner need to contribute to the well-being of Juneau’s children.” Susan, who earned a bachelor’s degree in elementary education from Skidmore College and a master’s in education from the University of Alaska Southeast, has been a professional educator for 32 years. Her first teaching job was at Juneau’s Capital School in 1976. She went on to teach in three schools, including all elementary grades, special education, and extended learning. She served as volunteer coordinator of the Sea Week Program for 15 years, was volunteer coordinator for the Science Fair Special Awards, and was a founding board member of Discovery Southeast, where she helped create the Natural History program for Juneau students.

“I strongly believe that opportunities that are available for some children should be available to all,” Susan said. “This has meant seeking funding for children who can’t afford to participate, designing programs with equal access for all children, and convincing others to support these needs, as well.”

Susan’s involvement with women’s and children’s issues extends beyond the classroom. She has served as a board member of AWARE and the Alaska Natural Resource and Outdoor Educators, and was a founding member of the Juneau Coalition for Pro Choice.

“I hope that I can find ways to continue to give back to the community of Juneau and to inspire others to make a lifelong commitment to use their energies and abilities to contribute to the well-being of the people of Juneau and the world,” Susan said.

Susan credits a multitude of people with inspiring her to become involved in the community: her mother and grandmother, her daughters, the many teachers and administrators she has worked with, and the students and their families. She also thanks her husband of 33 years, Dave Sturdevant for his continual support and encouragement. “Dave gave me the peace of mind and freedom to extend beyond the needs of my home and work for the things I believe in.”

KATH-TV will air the 

Women of Distinction highlights on

“Spotlight on Southeast”, Channel 15 on 

April 14, 15, 16 and 17th from 12:30 - 1 pm.

April 14th: Kim Elton, Alberta Aspen, Orca Choir. 
April 15th: Kim Elton, Sue Baxter, Orca Choir 
April 16th: Helen Abbott-Watkins and her power-point (only) 
April 17th: Kim Elton, Betsy Brenneman, Orca Choir

DVD’s for purchase: Each program is available separately on DVD. The cost is $20 per DVD and can be ordered online at www.KATH.TV
THANK YOU! THANK YOU! THANK YOU!
TO Everyone who contributed to Women of Distinction 2008

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Natalee Rothhaus

AWARE STAFFERS’ CRISTINA &
Spring has brought three new staff members to AWARE

**I am the newest legal advocate here at AWARE and bring many years of working with Juneau families to my new job. Raised in Seattle in the midst of a large family, I have lived in Juneau for 38 years. My work history spans just about every job that exists that involves working with young children and families, including teaching for the Juneau School District, Directing a RALLY Program, running my own home child care business, teaching preschool and Head Start and working in the Infant Learning Program at REACH with families of children with disabilities. I like to laugh and walk a lot and now I have a dog, Lola, that encourages me in both of these pursuits. It is an honor to work in such a well known, appreciated agency.**

I have been hired at AWARE to be the new Education Specialist, though it is hard to fill Kathi G.’s shoes. My name is Elizabeth, but most people call me by my nickname Liz, feel free to call me whatever you want, I’ll answer to anything. I was born and raised in Juneau with the exception of the 5 years spent in Canada while attending Luther College Prep and Luther College. I have spent the last 7 years working in youth related programs, schools, and service Agencies. I just moved back to Juneau, from Fairbanks, where I worked with the Fairbanks School District starting up a new grant for working with at-risk youth. And, yes, I am Mary Tonsmeire’s youngest child and only daughter, and very proud to be. I am excited to be working here, and am so impressed with how wonderful everyone has been since I started.

**I began my career here at AWARE as a project person for Women of Distinction and have since transitioned into AWARE’s new Volunteer Coordinator! Normally I am guiding people through Hatha Yoga postures at Rainforest Yoga Studio or kayaking the waterways of Glacier Bay. I have been living in Juneau for the past two years after 5 years living in Gustavus and 10 years in New York. I’ve been volunteering for all of those years since my days as a commodities trader on the Chicago Merchantile Exchange. I love the supportive and kind environment at AWARE. The people here and the mission create a fulfilling place to be.**

**Re-Educating Men Who Batter**

Think of something you’ve done that you’re not proud of. Something that you did even though you may have thought it was wrong, or had some reservation about how you handled the situation. You may have felt justified, or that the way you acted was necessary in some way. The bottom line is: the reason you acted was thought it was wrong, or had some reservation about how you handled the situation. You may have felt.

This situation is similar to every man who walks into the Juneau Batterer’s Accountability Program (JBAP). Each one can say that it is wrong to hurt another person, especially a person you love. That it scares children to hear adults fight. That no one deserves to live in fear, and that no one should dominate or control their partner. They can all articulate this…but in the next breath also justify it.

It is a very human desire to want to feel good about what you’ve done. And when someone (like the state of Alaska) tells you that what you’ve done is wrong, it is understandable to want to defend that action. JBAP is about encountering those defenses, learning where they come from, and re-educating yourself to believe in different ideals. For most people, equality, communication, and non-violence do not get reinforced every day. Rather, messages of violence, toughness, and winning at any cost bombard us from music, TV, friends, families and work.

We spend an hour and a half every week with men in the batterer’s group to look critically at the decisions they’ve made, why they made them, and how they can be better partners, fathers, and friends. The process is engaging; I learn something each week about the world, and about my own life. The hope (and it is a sincere and beautiful one) is that the men in the group are also learning.

And when I hear one of the guys say, “I guess you don’t get to decide what someone else is feeling”, I believe that hope to be justified. Batterer’s re-education is a real way to help make women, children and our community safer.

-Mandy O’Neal Cole
April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM), as well as Child Abuse Prevention Month and there are plenty of events around Juneau to bring awareness to these issues! Keep an eye out for related posters on the buses and displays at Hearthside books and the downtown public library. If you’re looking for a way to get involved, join our “Take Back the Light” event to be held on April 19th. Start your day with a brisk 5k run along the downtown waterfront, or if you prefer, a one mile walk/march is being held in conjunction with the race. Both the Waterfront Race and walk will begin at 10:00am in front of the new Juneau Arts & Culture Center (old armory), ending in the same place. The run/walk will be followed by food and drink, live music, guest speakers, and a variety of family events at the Juneau Arts & Culture Center. If you can’t make it to the ten o’clock events, please join us at 11:00am for the second part of Take Back the Light. These events are sponsored by AWARE, Juneau Public Health, Court Appointed Special Advocates for children, and the Southeast Road Runners Club.

For more information, please call Cristina or Ati @ 586-6623.

Advocacy Training Starts Thursday April 24th!

Training Topics Include:

* Dynamics of Domestic Violence
* Dynamics of Sexual Assault
* Effects of Violence on Children
* Advocacy Skills
* Legal Advocacy

To register or for more information contact Kathryn Toth by phone at: 586-6623
Or by email at: kathrynt@awareak.org

The Alaska PARENT Line
1-800-643-KIDS (5437)

The Alaska Children’s Trust in collaboration with the Resource Center for Parents and Children are pleased to introduce a free, state-wide parent warm line which is staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The Alaska Parent Line staff are trained individuals who listen as parents share their concerns and then assist them by brainstorming ideas and solutions to their parenting questions. They also assist parents in locating resources in their community and mail correspondence on strategies to their parenting concerns.

In addition to calling the toll-free Alaska Parent Line, parenting questions can be e-mailed to: parentwarmline@rcpcfairbanks.org, where a response will be returned within 24 hours.
Take Back the Light 2008

10am Saturday April 19th

Who: Everyone!
Where: Start & end @ The Juneau Arts & Culture Center (the old armory)

What: A march & rally to honor survivors of child abuse & sexual assault & to bring community awareness to these issues. Featuring food, music, guest speakers, a survivor speak-out & other family activities. (Held in conjunction with the Waterfront Run).

This event is sponsored by AWARE, CASAs for children & Juneau Public Health

For more information contact Ati or Cristina @ 586-6623

AWARE has full & part-time job opportunities! Are you looking for meaningful work? We are accepting resumes for:

- Relief Advocates (on-call)
- DELTA Program Specialist (primary prevention program)
- Children’s Services Clinician
- Children’s Advocate

Call us for more information @ 586-6623

Healthy Relationships Group for Women
A Ten Week Course

WHEN: Starting April 8, 2008
~Participants must join by April 29
Tuesday evenings from 6pm - 7:30 pm

For more information, contact Ellen @ 586-6623
AWARE’s mission is to provide safe shelter and supportive services for women and children who have been subjected to domestic or sexual violence; and to effect the social, political and legal changes needed to eliminate oppression and violence against women and children.