

2014 Tour

LIVE TO RIDE.
CALL TO LIVE.

March 13, 2014

Troopers Hit The Trail Once Again For 1,000 Mile Suicide Prevention Crusade Across Alaska

Alaska Wildlife Troopers will once again hit the trail, this time snowmachining more than 1,000 miles across Alaska in less than two weeks in an effort to prevent suicides. This year, Alaska Wildlife Troopers Darrell Hildebrand, Thomas Akelkok, and Jon Simeon plan an ambitious journey to reach adults and school children in eight villages in rural Alaska. Other troopers will join the expedition for sections of the trek as they wind their way from Manley Hot Springs to Nome and back. The trip is expected to launch from Manley Hot Springs on Monday, March 16 and reach Nome on March 21. Ruby will be the first school on the visit followed by schools in Unalakleet, Shaktoolik, Koyuk, Elim, Golovin, White Mountain, and Nome. This year, you can track their journey by a [SPOT locator](#).

Hildebrand, Simeon, and Akelkok are armed with personal stories of how suicide touched their lives. Hildebrand's father committed suicide when he was 4-years old while Simeon's friend took his life while he was a young man living in Aniak. The goal is to make sure people know to reach out to someone and talk about their problems – whether it's a friend, a parent, grandparent, teacher or even troopers. It's a message that the wildlife troopers have carried with them during outreach trips for the past [four years](#) – many of them in conjunction with the [Iron Dog Suicide Prevention Campaigns](#). [Two years ago](#), the three troopers started braving subzero temperatures and blowing winds to snowmachine to the different communities in rural Alaska to tell school children and community members there is always hope in the midst of despair and that suicide is preventable. Along the way they'll hand out personalized [Alaska Suicide Prevention CARELINE cards and posters](#).

All three grew up in rural Alaska – Hildebrand in Nulato, Simeon in Aniak, and Akelkok in Ekwok – where suicide is an epidemic. The rate in Alaska is almost twice that of the rest of the nation, but according to the [Statewide Suicide Prevention Council](#), [Alaska Native males between the ages of 15-24 have the highest rate with an average of 141.6 suicides per 100,000 \(2000-2009\)](#). As representatives of not only law enforcement, but also Alaska Native men, they use their personal stories as proof that despite all that may go wrong in life, there's still a way to succeed.

(Click on embedded links for more information and past stories. Otherwise contact Beth Ipsen at (907)347-0635.)

Planned schedule for the 2014 Ride For Life program:

Ruby – March 17

Unalakleet – morning of March 18

Shaktoolik – afternoon of March 18

Koyuk – morning of March 19

Elim – afternoon of March 19

Golovin – morning of March 20

White Mountain – afternoon of March 20

Nome – morning of March 21 (both junior high and high schools)

Life is a Team Effort

877-266-HELP
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SUICIDE PREVENTION