



# Alaska Railroad Corporation *News Release*

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Railroad honors Tour Guide Program teaching veteran** *Alaska Railroad hires dozen high school Tour Guide graduates*

ANCHORAGE, Alaska – This week the Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC) honored long-time Anchorage School District (ASD) King Career Center teacher Mike Woods during a presentation at King Career Center for 20 years of mentoring high school students pursuing a career in tourism through the Alaska Railroad Tour Guide program. Fittingly, the honors are shared as the ARRC welcomes a dozen new 2012-2013 program graduates as seasonal employees this week. Starting in 1981-1982, the Alaska Railroad partnered with the ASD to develop and support the curricula that prepares junior and senior high schools students for a career in tourism. Since then, Tour Guide classes have graduated each spring (except a one-year hiatus in 2010), with many finding summer employment at the railroad.

Students from Anchorage area high schools come to the career center to participate in the curricula that runs for 10 weeks, January – April, 3:00 – 5:30 p.m. Monday-Thursday. Woods teaches students about native cultures, interesting facts about Alaska's history, geography, demographics, wildlife, transportation and industry. As a staunch ASD School Business Partner, the Alaska Railroad contributes considerable resources to the ARRC Tour Guide Program. In addition to providing program funding to the school district, ARRC offering staff time and industry experience, and jobs to benefit Alaska's youth. The railroad's Tour Guide supervisor spends time in the classroom, providing presentations on ARRC, railroad employment, tour guide job responsibilities, including onboard commentary. Railroad marketing staff, train crew, onboard supervisors, and former tour guides also share their expertise, as do representatives from tour, lodging and travel businesses. The class also participates in numerous field trips that introduce them to various aspects of the railroad as well as businesses that are part of the visitor industry in Alaska.

Since the program started, ARRC has hired more than 500 students to serve in great summer jobs as Alaskan ambassadors aboard railroad passenger trains. Hundreds of ARRC tour guides have gone on to accept positions of greater responsibility at the railroad and within other tourism businesses.

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The railroad invites the media to share this story of young Alaskans sharing their state with visitors. The following people are available to contact for interviews:

- Robert Russell, ARRC Onboard Services Manager: 265-2619  
(supervises Tour Guide program for the railroad),
- Mike Wood, ASD Tour Guide program instructor: 742-8964  
(available weekdays between 1:30 – 3:00 p.m.)
- Michael Aronwitz, Newly-hired 2013 Tour Guide: 440-6453  
(available after 2:00 p.m.)
- Shannon McLaughlin, 2<sup>nd</sup> Year Tour Guide: 444-7848
- Parent of Tour Guide Janet McLaughlin 382-3269
- Shawnessy Leon, ARRC Director of Grants & Operating Budgets (was a member of the first Tour Guide class in 1981/82) 265-2510
- Barbara Hotchkin, ARRC Project Permits Manager 265-2313  
(Her daughter was a Tour Guide several years ago)

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The ARRC is an Equal Opportunity Corporation. If you need special assistance (including language) in order to participate in any ARRC service, program, or activity, please contact the Alaska Railroad Corporation; P.O. Box 107500; Anchorage, AK 99510; Attention: Legal Department, [zappasj@akrr.com](mailto:zappasj@akrr.com), (907) 265-2461; via Alaska Relay Service for hearing impaired – dial 7 11 anywhere inside Alaska, OR dial toll-free from anywhere outside the state 1-800-770-8255 (voice); 1-800 770-8973 (TTY). Upon request, printed materials can be made available in alternate formats.