

## Janet Athanas named to 4-H Hall of Fame

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Retired 4-H educator Janet Athanas will be inducted into the National 4-H Hall of Fame on Oct 7.

Only four other Alaskans have received that honor. The Hall of Fame was created in 2002 to recognize 4-H volunteers, Cooperative Extension Service professionals, staff and others who made a significant impact on 4-H at the local, state or national level.

4-H state program leader Deb Jones nominated Athanas for her work with 4-H in Bethel and in Alaska. In 1996, Athanas was hired as director of the Bethel Youth Center, a position supported by the City of Bethel and the 4-H program at the University of Alaska Fairbanks Cooperative Extension Service. The following year, she also became the director of the city's Parks and Recreation Department. She and her staff initiated the National Guard 4-H youth camp, 4-H softball, soccer and archery, a garden club, a community garden and an after-school program. She also served as president of the Alaska Association of Extension 4-H agents and coordinated the state 4-H shooting sports program for 11 years.

Athanas is proudest of her work with Bethel youth. More than half of Bethel's 1,500 school-aged children interacted with programs through the City of Bethel and the 4-H, she said. When she started, there was only a big screen TV and a pool table at the center. When she left, there was a lunch food program, job training and a computer lab.

"We were so thankful for the leaders and the volunteers," she said.

In her nominating letter, Jones wrote, "Janet's altruistic nature and drive have improved the quality of life for many children, teens and adults within the community, and her legacy continues since her retirement." The cooperative arrangement between the City of Bethel and 4-H continues. Jones said Athanas was good at working with other community organizations and was a tremendous leader. "Her leadership with this program was phenomenal," she said.

Athanas, who retired in 2012 and now lives in Wasilla, will attend the induction ceremony at the National 4-H Youth Conference Center in Chevy Chase, Maryland. Other Alaska inductees have included pioneering 4-H and home ec agent Lydia Fohn-Hansen, former Fairbanks 4-H

agent Charlotte Lehman, retired Juneau and Kodiak agent Jim Douglas and longtime Kenai 4-H volunteer Carrol Martin.

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