



Indian Health Service Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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IHS Employee Selected As a Recipient Of the 2004 GEICO Public Service Award

Alfred B. Benalli, a Substance Abuse Prevention Specialist at the Crownpoint Service Unit of the Indian Health Service (IHS), an agency of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), was awarded the 2004 GEICO Public Service Award for substance abuse prevention and treatment. The GEICO Public Service Awards Program was established to recognize federal employees for their special achievements and contributions to the public good. The award presentation was made at the National Archives in Washington, D.C., on April 4, 2005.

"Mr. Benalli is a dedicated individual who has consistently provided outstanding substance abuse prevention education to the community he serves," said HHS Secretary Michael Leavitt. "He is an outstanding example of the health care professionals working through our Indian Health Service."

"We know that alcohol and substance abuse plagues American Indian and Native Alaska communities and that it remains a challenge. Mr. Benalli has exceeded his employment responsibilities in fighting this battle," stated Dr. Charles W. Grim, IHS Director. "This award acknowledges his excellent prevention education to teachers, counselors, students, adults, and the community. This award is a well-deserved recognition of his commitment to the battle of alcohol and substance abuse."

Mr. Benalli works in the IHS Navajo Area, Crownpoint Service Unit, in Crownpoint, New Mexico, to prevent and treat substance abuse in the community. He does this by offering prevention education in 16 schools, which involves training teachers and counselors and providing technical assistance. Mr. Benalli also created intervention groups in the schools for children who are living in homes where substance abuse is present. He conducts weekly ALANON meetings and recovery programs, facilitates a 12-step program for adults with substance abuse and mental health issues, and mediates Teen Court Family Education/Counseling group sessions. Mr. Benalli also administers the Substance Abuse Prevention & Community Education Series in which he helps suspended students return to the local schools as soon as possible.

Mr. Benalli became interested in substance abuse prevention after studying social work at the Utah State University. Since then, he has worked in several capacities within the field. He served as an instructor at the University of New Mexico's Continuing Education Program in the Alcohol and Drug Studies Institute. For eight years, he was also on the board of directors for the National Council of Alcoholism representing the State of New Mexico. Currently, he serves as the Vice-chairman of the Albuquerque Area Inter-Tribal Council on Substance Abuse and has been appointed by Governor Bill Richardson to serve on the Cooperative Agreement Advisory Council to further coordinate prevention efforts in the state. Mr. Benalli is also a proud Vietnam Veteran.

He was judged primarily on his contributions and the extent to which he served as an inspiration to others, thereby bringing credit to the federal service and himself.



NOTICE TO EDITORS: For additional information on this subject or to arrange an interview with Mr. Benalli, please contact the IHS Public Affairs Office at 301-443-3593. Additional information about the IHS is available on the IHS Website at <http://www.ihs.gov> and <http://info.ihs.gov>

