

## **The Next 50**

### **Story and photos by Yuliya Redelina**

Alaska has enjoyed 50 years of statehood and what came with it – grand political endeavors, economic prosperity and a rich social culture. This was possible because of outstanding Alaskans like Howard Rock, Elmer Rasmuson, Robert Atwood and many others.

The next 50 years look just as promising. Please meet some of the future leaders of Alaska.

#### **Barbara Petukh**

Barbara Petukh, 28 – a high school teacher at MidValley High School in Wasilla – has one lesson for her students to remember: to count the blessings this free country offers.

When not teaching world history, Alaska studies and Russian, Petukh connects with her students on a more personal level, through biking and rafting trips, hiking and staging theater plays.

One bachelor's degree in languages, another in theater and an up-coming master's degree in teaching from University of Alaska Anchorage opened many doors for this talented woman. She set her heart, however, on investing in the future of young Alaskans.

"There is a lot of things I could do that would make me happy, but in teaching I really feel that I am actively making a difference," Petukh says.

Although Petukh feels the need for government to invest more in education and for education to be affordable for all Alaskans, she's got no time for small talk. She's got the real work to do – to make a difference, one student at a time.

#### **Karl Wing**

He is 23 and ambitious. To never take things for granted is the number one priority for the University of Alaska Anchorage Student Body President Karl Wing. Born and reared in Alaska, Wing takes pride in serving his community.

"Community service taught me about the real world. It taught me to apply my strengths to human issues," Wing says.

Engaging young people in politics is of great importance to Wing. He sees his peers as future leaders, who will make Alaska a more developed and stronger state, with new traditions and fresh voices.

Before he gets serious about politics, Wing plans to experience the world first-hand, get a higher education and work for a non-profit organization.

"I wanna live my life before I do it," he says, smiling.



### **Ian Shepard**

Although 20 years from now Ian Shepard might be a whole new person, he has already accomplished enough in his 22 years to write a memoir. His personality reaches out to people from tough military guys to orphan children in other countries.

As president of the Rotaract Club, a smaller version of a Rotary Club for younger crowd, Shepard helps his peers see that simple act of kindness can mean the world to somebody.

“I don’t wanna be a person who doesn’t give back to the world,” Shepard says.

While on a Rotary exchange program in New Zealand Shepard learned that things aren’t always done American way. By refusing to call french fries hot chips for longer than half a year he realized how really close-minded he used to be.

“Although I still agree driving on the left side of the road is wrong,” he says, laughing.



### **Amy Slinker**

One of many things Amy Slinker, 31 – Marketing Director at Pfeffer Development, LLC – learned about life is that it doesn’t care about your plans.

She was going into photojournalism after graduating from University of Texas at Arlington with a bachelor’s in visual journalism and a minor in military science, but ended up here, miles away from home.

After moving to Alaska from Texas, Slinker decided the best way to get integrated into the

community is to get involved in it. From mentoring her little sis at Big Brothers and Big Sisters, to supervising the 134<sup>th</sup> Public Affairs Detachment at the Alaska Army National Guard, to serving as a communications chair at the Anchorage East Rotary Club, Slinker gives her best in everything she does.

Her mantra? “Stopping and acknowledging that I can learn from people I am surrounded by,” she says.