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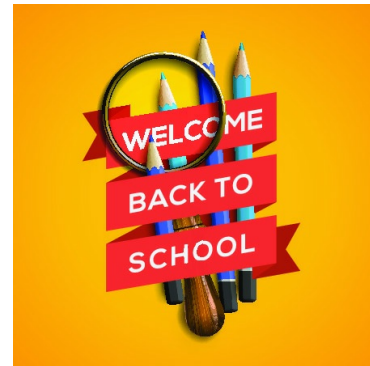
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## Special Education Service Agency Newsletter

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## Welcome Letter: Patrick Pillai, Executive Director

### You Have a Friend in Us

Most special education teachers have a degree in special education yet lack instructional expertise in one or more specific low incidence disabilities. There is too much to learn and no one teacher can be proficient in all fourteen-disability categories listed in the Alaska Special Education Handbook. Wouldn't it be helpful for a teacher to call a friend? Someone who can field a telephone call, visit your classroom, and support you throughout the year with distance delivery. I know! It brings tears to my eyes too! We are of course talking about a SESA Specialist! SESA Specialists are friends who provide technical assistance for low incidence (severe) disabilities through in-services, classroom observations, written reports, and much more. Like any dear friend, they do not charge for services! They are free!

Yes! You can exhale now... it really is true!

So how do you make a friend at SESA? You can call SESA (907) 334-1300 and leave a

voicemail for a specific specialist; or visit our website, [www.sesa.org](http://www.sesa.org), navigate to a specific disability tab, and e-mail a specialist directly. You can also [access a referral packet online](#) and request services for your staff and specific students.

Like all dear friends, we are highly sought after, but will do our very best to help. After all, a friend in need is a friend indeed!

## SESA Staff

### Admin and Support Staff



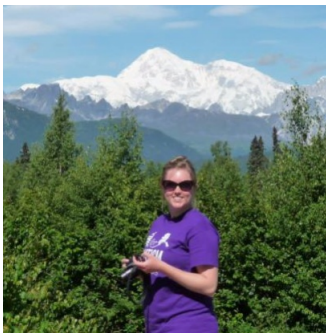
#### **Patrick Pillai, Executive Director**

A native of South Africa, Patrick came to the United States on a United Nations Scholarship. He completed a Masters in Deaf Education in Massachusetts, and a doctoral program in Curriculum Development at Gallaudet University in Washington DC. Patrick has been with SESA for 19 years as a Deaf Education Specialist, and 4 years as Executive Director. When not working, Patrick, his wife, and twin daughters enjoy Alaska's great outdoors.



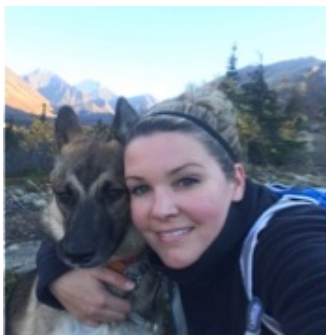
#### **Emily Berliner, Executive Assistant**

Emily joined SESA in April 2013 as the Executive Assistant. Emily attended a university in London, where she earned a BA in Geography and a MSc in Corporate Finance. She also holds a nonprofit management certification from the Foraker Group and UAF.



#### **Phylicia Christian, Program Assistant**

Phylicia joined SESA as a program assistant in September 2014. She was born and raised in a small town in Minnesota, and holds a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology from the University of Minnesota, Duluth. Phyliscia moved to Alaska in August 2014 and loves all of the outdoor activities and wildlife Alaska has to offer. In addition to exploring nature, Phyliscia enjoys spoiling her cat, Skyping with her niece and nephews, and cooking.



#### **Christine Collier, Program Assistant/Travel Coordinator**

Christine joined the SESA team in 2013. Originally from Southern California, Christine lived in Tucson, Arizona, for two years prior to relocating. Upon moving to Alaska, Christine decided she wanted to be a part of an organization that served a greater purpose. Her years of administrative experience, combined with the desire to help others, allowed Christine to find the right fit at SESA. In her free time, Christine enjoys camping and hiking with her husband

and two dogs. They are both thrilled to have the opportunity to plant roots and enjoy their new home in the Last Frontier!

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### **Kathy Dersham, Program Assistant**

Kathy was born in Oregon, but has lived in Alaska most of her life. She has worked at SESA for 8 years. During her nonworking time, Kathy enjoys playing with her grandchildren.

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### **Anne Freitag, Librarian**

Anne has lived in Alaska since 1971. She has worked at the SESA Library from 1991-2001, and again from 2003 to the present. Other library experience has included cataloging and young adult librarianship. Anne received her Master's in Librarianship and Information Management from the University of Denver, and also has degrees in computer information systems, English, History, and Technology. When not working, she enjoys reading and making things.

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### **Yuya Hisada, Educational Technologist**

Yuya has been working as an Educational Technologist since 2012. He was born and raised in Sapporo, Japan. He has a BS in Physics and Computer Science. He also completed a teacher certification program. Before SESA, he worked for Hokkaido International School where he taught basic computer skills and applications for 7th to 9th graders, engaged in training staff, and assisted with technology in the classroom. He enjoys spending time with his family and friends doing outdoor activities such as fishing, hiking, biking, and foraging.

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## **Alaska Autism Resource Center**



### **Tara Maltby, AARC Program Coordinator**

Tara has a M.Ed., and is certified in general education and special education. She currently serves as the Program Coordinator for the [Alaska Autism Resource Center](#). Over the years she has worked in a variety of settings, including a camp for children with behavioral/emotional impairments in upstate NY, a center-based school for students with severe autism and children with multiple disabilities in MI, and a resource and self-contained room in a general education school setting in NC. Tara loves working with students with special needs because every day is a new adventure, and everyday she learns something new.

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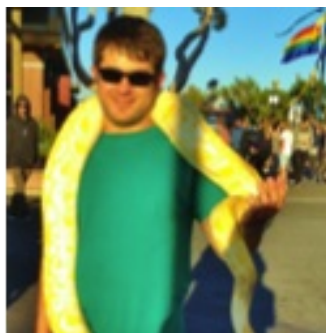
### **Rebecca Parenteau, Autism Resource Specialist**

Rebecca is an Autism Resource Specialist with the AARC, and is a Board Certified Behavior Analyst. She has been working in the field for just over nine years, and has worked with children and adults on the autism spectrum for eight years. Rebecca has also been part of



various research teams while working with students on the autism spectrum, and has been published in various medical and psychology journals a total of four times. Rebecca has experience working with students in the classroom, home, community, and residential settings.

## Autism Specialists



### John Barrowman, Autism Specialist

John is beginning his second year at SESA and is excited to be back. He will be working with SESA's autism team and working on creating online training materials for school staff and families



### Samantha Weiland, Autism Specialist

Samantha grew up in Florida, and moved to Alaska in 2015 where she spent her first year teaching in a rural village. In 2004, she earned her Bachelors degree at St. Andrews Presbyterian College in North Carolina (St. Andrews University) in Therapeutic Horseback Riding, teaching individuals with cognitive, physical, and/or emotional disabilities to ride horses. In 2010, Samantha completed her Master of Arts in Teaching in Special Education from Mary Baldwin College in Virginia. Samantha has taught in the traditional classroom setting for six years, working with individuals with Autism, Learning Disabilities, ADD/HD, and Anxiety

Disorders.



### Kendra Wolf, Autism Specialist

Kendra recently relocated from Minnesota. Kendra attended the University of Minnesota - Twin Cities where she completed her Bachelors degree in Child Psychology in 2014. Upon graduating, Kendra worked as a Behavior Therapist providing communication and behavioral strategies to children with Autism and their families. During this time, she also worked as a camp counselor at True Friends. Kendra returned to the University of Minnesota where she earned her Master of Education in Early Childhood Special Education. Before leaving Minnesota, she student taught in both home and classroom settings focusing in early

intervention education for families of children ages' birth-6 with developmental delays, Autism, and other disabilities.

## Deaf/Hard of Hearing and Dual Sensory Specialists

### Michelle Carroll, Dual Sensory Specialist

Michelle is one of SESA's Deaf and Deaf-Blind Education Specialists. She has a Master's Degree in Deaf Education from Hunter College and a post-graduate certificate in Deaf-Blindness from the Helen Keller National Center. She has presented nationally and internationally, including the World Congress of the





Deaf in Madrid, Spain. Her specialty is working with deaf individuals who experience severe/profound disabilities including Deaf-Blindness. Her favorite part of the job is learning and working in traditional Alaska Native villages throughout the state.



### **Olivia Yancey, Deaf/Hard of Hearing Specialist**

Olivia is beginning her third year at SESA. She loves reading books, drinking coffee, hiking with her Australian Shepherd (Butler), and journaling about the places she visits.

## Emotional Disabilities Specialists



### **Samantha Cowper, Emotional Disabilities Specialist**

Samantha recently moved to Alaska from Wyoming where she worked in education for 23 years. She received her Bachelor of Arts with a dual degree in special and elementary education, as well as an endorsement in autism from the University of Wyoming. She also holds a Master of Science degree in mental health counseling from Capella University. Samantha's teaching experiences include working with a multitude of disabilities, including learning disabilities, developmental disabilities, and social/emotional disabilities in a continuum of educational environments from inclusion to residential settings. In addition,

she has fulfilled the roles of a district autism specialist, behavior interventionist, special education case manager, and PBIS coordinator. Samantha's passion is working with educators, families, and communities helping them understand the unique dynamics that encompass children with disabilities.



### **Lyon Johnson, Emotional Disabilities Specialist**

Lyon has worked for SESA since 2006 primarily as an Education Specialist. His interest areas include applied behavior analysis, connecting school mental health and school-wide positive behavior supports, and the use of tele-practice technologies. Outside of work, Lyon and his wife, Pat, enjoy traveling abroad, but have a special fondness for hiking, biking and kayaking in Alaska. At home in Eagle River, they enjoy the company of "Murphy" a West Highland Terrier, and "Sigmund," a 26-year-old Double Yellow Head Amazon Parrot.

## Multiple Disabilities Specialists

### **Angel Black, Multiple Disabilities Specialist**

Angel graduated from Central Methodist University and is pursuing her Master's Degree from Missouri State University. She is married to my high school sweetheart, and has two amazing children and our first grandchild on the way! They had a



wonderful summer driving up the ALCAN and exploring their beautiful new home, Alaska! Angel is thrilled to be working with SESA and looks forward to serving the people all across this great state!

***Angel is working with students with multiple disabilities, but she is also serving as our new Vision Impairment Specialist!***



### **Julie Burger, Multiple Disabilities Specialist**

Julie is one of SESA's Multiple Disabilities Education specialists who transplanted from Pennsylvania to Alaska. She enjoys playing tennis, cooking, sewing and seeking any sun possible! She formerly taught and tutored with the Lake and Peninsula school district in Port Heiden, gaining experience and a love of rural Alaska. Before coming north, she studied at Kutztown University of Pennsylvania.



### **Meriah Cory, Multiple Disabilities Specialist**

Meriah is one of the multiple disabilities specialists at SESA. She has lived in Alaska for five years. Prior to moving to Alaska, she spent four years in Kazakhstan. Meriah loves all the travel she does with her job, and in her spare time enjoys spending time with her husband and dogs.



### **Jennifer Schroeder, Multiple Disabilities Specialist**

Jennifer has been on the Multiple Disabilities team at SESA for 5, going on 6, years. Prior to working at SESA, she was a special education teacher in Bethel, Alaska. When she isn't at work, Jennifer enjoys riding her bike "Zippy," baking, and reading.

## **Letter from the Editor**

Hello!

Welcome to school year 2016-17! For those of you who are new to working with SESA, welcome! To those who have worked with us in the past, welcome back. The specialists at SESA are eager to start delivering services via distance and on-site support to staff and students in rural Alaska.

This year, our newsletter is going to take on a new format. Our goal is to make the

SESA newsletter a quick reference for teachers, families, support staff, and others when they have questions. Each month, we will cover different topics, including hints and tips from the various disciplines within SESA. Our hope is that the tips will help you not only when issues arise, but also to be proactive throughout the year.

As a specialist, it is important to me that the hints and tips are relevant to what is happening in the classrooms that we serve. If you have a specific question that you would like to see addressed in an upcoming newsletter, I encourage you to send an email to me directly: [jschroeder@sesa.org](mailto:jschroeder@sesa.org). If it is something that would be best answered privately, I will do my best to route it to the appropriate specialist.

Our newsletter will be sent in email form this year, and archived emails will be available on our website for you to view/print as needed. <http://www.sesa.org>

I hope that everyone has a great start to the school year!

Jennifer S  
MD Specialist

