

UNIVERSITY of ALASKA SOUTHEAST

# WHALE SONG

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The Official Student Newspaper of UAS



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# Knowing the signs

*UAS provides At-Risk Kognito training for students and staff to help recognize signs of distress and know what to say*

**By SHEVONDA BURKHART**  
Staff Writer, UAS Whalesong

The At-Risk Kognito is a free mental health and suicide prevention training provided online for UAS students, faculty, staff and administrators.

The training is free and voluntary.

The purpose for the training is to ensure that students can recognize signs of distress and know what to say if a friend needs help said Juneau Suicide Prevention Coalition Outreach & Training Coordinator, Michelle Beaulieu.

“Given that college students face a variety of stressors, and that people’s community members, those they see on a day to day basis, would be the first to notice signs of distress, we felt it was important to raise awareness and find tools that can be directly utilized by community members,” said Beaulieu.

The training includes a virtual environment in which the student will be engaging in a series of game based exercises including role play conversation with a fully animated and emotionally responsive student.

Taking the training will allow students to recognize signs of emotional stress and provide conversation skills to help a person in distress. Students will also be able to observe and identify different personality changes in a peer and develop better communication skills to help those in distress and to steer their peer in the right direction.

Margie Thomson, LCSW Coordinator for Counseling, Health & Disability Services thinks that the Kognito training is a wonderful way to learn how to help a student, friend or classmate who may be having a difficult time.

“Right now, suicide is the second leading cause of death for college students (as for all those between 10 and 35 years of age), according to the American College Health Association, and that means that at UAS, we have many students at risk for depression and mood disorders that may influence suicidal thoughts,” Thomson said.

“I want to encourage my fellow staff and faculty, as well as students, to be a part of the solution and supportive factors on our campus.”

After completing the training, the student will

be able to participate in a survey in which all of their identifying information and answers are confidential.

The survey will ask questions about the training and and take aways from the experience, allowing for feedback on the experience.

“We hope that students end up with concrete tools and increased knowledge about how to interpret warning signs and how to connect people experiencing distress to help,” said Beaulieu.

“Ultimately, we want people to recognize that suicide prevention begins with each of us. It’s about educating

ourselves and practicing so that we find the courage to brave the discomfort of bringing up topics that historically have been stigmatized in our society.”

To incentivize those who take the training students can save and print their At-Risk certificate and bring it to Student Resource Center located on campus for a \$5 coffee card to Spike’s Cafe and receive a chance to win a \$20 Gonzo gift certificate.

For more information on the training go to [uas.alaska.edu/juneau/counseling/uascares.html](http://uas.alaska.edu/juneau/counseling/uascares.html).

**My note**

It is important to become familiar with mental health issues to better equip yourself if you were

to experience crisis or helping others with a mental health crisis.

I myself have experienced suicidal thoughts with the illness that I have which is Schizoaffective Disorder with Major Depression. I was diagnosed at the age of 31 and have known others with mental illness but did not know much about it.

When I felt suicidal I had no idea what was going on, it was not my thoughts but my illness making feel that way. At times I had no control of my mood or my symptoms and I needed mental health help immediately.

I never feel ashamed of my circumstances.

Others have walked in my shoes and conquered their reality, including myself.

For peers of those who may experience a crisis please be kind and let your peer or family member know the many resources that are available for them.

For those who may endure any mental illness please know that there is light at the end of the tunnel.

Your life is precious and your life matters.

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## WHALESONG PUBLICATION SCHEDULE (FALL 2017)

SUBMISSION DEADLINE	ISSUE #	PUBLICATION DATE
SEPT. 06, 2017	1	SEPT. 13, 2017
SEPT. 20, 2017	2	SEPT. 27, 2017
OCT. 04, 2017	3	OCT. 11, 2017
OCT. 18, 2017	4	OCT. 25, 2017
NOV. 01, 2017	5	NOV. 08, 2017
NOV. 15, 2017	6	NOV. 22, 2017
NOV. 29, 2017	7	DEC. 06, 2017

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