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“ANTI helps teacher candidates realize that going to school can be challenging but it can be done. ANTI helps teacher candidates develop realistic short-term and long-term plans that are achievable. The plans help you to see what actions you need to take and ANTI is there in each step helping you,” said Parker, who expects to graduate from the University of Alaska Fairbanks’ Bristol Bay Campus in 2012 and plans to work as a teacher in Togiak or another rural Alaska village.

Shell has been a long-time supporter of the initiative; the company previously contributed \$352,000 toward ANTI in late 2008. In addition to ANTI, Shell also supports other Avant-Garde efforts, including the organization’s science initiative, which seeks to improve the quality of science education in Alaska.

“A stable teaching environment is one that benefits teachers as much as it does students. As we have learned through the Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program, Alaska Native students can be every-bit the engineers as their urban peers if given the opportunity and the tools to succeed. Making sure teachers are trained and consistently available to those students is a critical part of that tool box,” said Simon King, communications manager with Shell Alaska.

Avant-Garde was founded in early 2005 as a nonprofit corporation by Dr. Shirley Holloway, the former Alaska State Commissioner of Education and Early Development. Avant-Garde is committed to partnering with universities and colleges, school districts, business, tribal organizations, and communities to transform education and ensure Alaska’s young people have the opportunity for bright, successful futures.

For more information about Avant-Garde, the Alaska Native Teacher Initiative and teacher candidates like Kinka Parker, visit www.avantgardealaska.org.

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