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## Press Release

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S OFFICE

### **Volunteers Help 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade Students Look To Their Future**

Youngsters begin early career exploration and college awareness

#### **For Immediate Release**

November 1, 2011

This month, University of Alaska and other postsecondary alumni volunteers are visiting 33 schools in 20 communities across the state to share a colorful children's storybook about dreaming for the future. Now in its fifth consecutive year, the UA College Savings Plan's **I Know I Can** outreach program will reach over 1,600 second grade children. A partnership sponsored by the UA College Savings Plan and Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education (ACPE), this program continues to expand; this year's participating communities include: Anchorage, Barrow, Bethel, Dillingham, Fairbanks, Haines, Juneau, Kotzebue, Nome, Savoonga, Unalakleet, Stebbins, Niuqsut, Palmer, Sitka, Valdez, Wainwright, Akiachak, Akiak, and Tuluksak.

**I Know I Can** engages children and their families, encouraging them to start thinking about college during their early school experience. Research shows children can learn to think of themselves as having higher education and related career opportunities as early as age eight and this program helps open their minds to a multitude of college and career options available to them.

Volunteers with a variety of postsecondary education credentials (including apprenticeships, specialized occupational training from military service, as well as vocational or collegiate certificates and degrees) share the **I Know I Can** story with second-graders in participating schools. The colorfully illustrated book tells the tale of some animal friends trying to decide what they want to be when they grow up and how college fits into those plans. Designed to spark youngsters to begin their own career exploration, this story makes the connection of careers to higher education, and sends the message that college is possible.

After hearing the story, students draw a picture on a postcard depicting what they want to be when they grow up. The postcard is mailed back to the students within two years as a reminder of their goals. Each student receives their own copy of the book which includes extra activities

that can be enjoyed at home and may stimulate conversations about college preparedness with the whole family.

Linda English, Director of the UA College Savings Plan, said the initiative is to help youngsters think about exciting opportunities that can be ahead for them in life.

"Young children love to think about what they're going to be when they grow up, but we have to make sure they know it requires effort on their part," English said. "We know not every job requires a four-year college degree but most careers require some level of postsecondary training and workforce education beyond high school. Children need positive encouragement beginning at an early age to think about all of the possibilities for their life, including college."

The UA College Savings Plan funds Alaska's project, with operational and staffing support from ACPE. **I Know I Can** was established as a non-profit, national organization based in Ohio.

*The UA College Savings Plan offers tax-advantaged savings plans to residents in Alaska and throughout the United States. Students who use the plan to pay for college can attend any qualified school, not just UA.*

*ACPE is the state's higher education agency and promotes, supports and provides access to higher education through a package of financial aid and early education awareness services.*

For more information, call Linda English, UA College Savings Plan Program Director, at (907) 450-8115, or Shelly Morgan, ACPE, at (907) 269-7972.

Check out <http://www.alaska.edu/student-services/outreach/i-know-i-can/index.xml> for more information, including samples of postcards drawn by the children.