

An Alaskan Adventure



Special interest rotations have always caught the eyes of eager third-year professional students planning out their fourth and final year of Advanced Pharmacy Practice Experiences (APPEs) in the Purdue College of Pharmacy's PharmD program. The rotations abroad in Kenya, London, and Colombia have generated quite a bit of interest amongst students. This year, a brand new rotation was introduced: Pain Management, an ambulatory care rotation at the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Regional Health Clinic (YKHC) in Bethel, Alaska. A recent Purdue pharmacy graduate, Dr. Daniel Jenkins, is the Pain Management and Substance Abuse Pharmacist for the hospital and the preceptor of the new rotation. Three lucky students - Luke Malik, Austin McCauley, and Molly Nichols - were selected to be the first to try out the Bethel rotation and experience the Alaskan wilderness firsthand.

The Purdue College of Pharmacy offers other ambulatory care rotations in Anchorage and Juneau, but unlike those modern cities, this newest rotation is set in the remote, rural town of Bethel. Bethel is a small town along the Kuskokwim River and is home to around 6,000 residents, the majority of which are native Yup'ik people. It is about 400 miles away from Anchorage and only accessible by plane or boat. As the central hub to over 50 villages along the Western coast of Alaska, Bethel's hospital, YKHC, services an area roughly the size of Oregon. Although each village has a local clinic staffed by health aides, patients with severe injuries or illnesses often require transportation to YKHC. While Luke, Austin, and Molly all knew that this rotation would be unlike anything they had encountered before, they were up for the challenge.

[Click Here to read Molly's story](#)

[Click here to read Austin's story](#)

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Ultimately, the three students found the chance to experience a different culture and the opportunity to treat pain and substance use disorders exciting and eye-opening. While rates of substance use continue to climb and the treatment of pain becomes more sophisticated, the pharmacists in Alaska and today's pharmacy students are tackling these issues head-on. The Bethel rotation offers students a peek into a disease state that has historically been misunderstood and underrepresented, building on a recognition of a need for empathy and increased awareness. Luke, Austin, and Molly are excited to take what they learned into their future practice, allowing their experiences to shape their patient care. With more

students excited to go next year and others asking these three Bethel veterans for more information, this rotation is sure to remain an attractive option for years to come.