



**U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE**  
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**NEWS**

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## **Young Leaders in Kaktovik, Alaska, Receive Award for Service to Community and for Polar Bear Conservation**



Youth ambassadors from left to right: Kimberly Burns (represented by her mother), Tori Inglangasak, Chelsea Brower, Melanie Tikluk and Jonas MacKenzie.

Five high school students received an award from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services on Wednesday, April 8, in recognition of their inspiring leadership and service to their community as youth ambassadors. All students at Harold Kaveolook High School watched as Jennifer Reed from Arctic National Wildlife Refuge presented the awards. These teens welcome visitors who are coming into their community to view polar bears, an icon of the Arctic. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service provides funds and staff support for the Kaktovik Youth Ambassador Program and other initiatives to build the community's capacity for polar-bear related management.

The students live in Kaktovik, Alaska, a remote northern coastal village of about 250 people located within the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. The village has become a hub for polar bears in recent years due to factors, including retreating sea ice, availability of seals closer to shore, and a local whaling bone pile which the bears forage for leftover whale meat. During the past three seasons, youth ambassadors

have greeted more than 500 international tourists, ensuring visitors are respectful of their community and educating visitors on safety in polar-bear country.

For one youth ambassador, 11th grader Chelsea Brower, this polar-bear viewing season will be her fourth and final as a youth ambassador. She has been involved in the Kaktovik Youth Ambassador program since it began in 2011. During her first year as an ambassador, Brower was shy and nervous, but wanted to be an ambassador to try something new. The experience has helped her come out of her shell. “I enjoy meeting the visitors and getting to know where they come from,” Brower said. “My favorite part of the experience is informing the visitors of what my village considers acceptable behavior and what is safe for them and the bears.”

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