

Everyday Women of Sitka: Alice Nunes, DDS



- **Can you please tell me a little about yourself? How long have you lived in Sitka? What types of things are you involved in here?**

I am originally from Long Island, New York. I am a first generation American. My mom is Armenian and grew up in Egypt and my dad is Portuguese from Portugal. I went to Barnard College in NYC prior to moving to Bethel, AK, as an AmeriCorps volunteer in 2003. During my time in Bethel I traveled to many villages along the Kuskokwim and Yukon Rivers working on projects ranging from recycling and solid waste management to wildfire prevention. While traveling around the YK delta I noticed the need for dental healthcare providers in rural Alaska. I first moved to Sitka in 2006, took classes at Sheldon Jackson and UAS while working as a dental assistant at SEARHC and applying to dental school.

I entered dental school at the University of Washington in 2008 and I am currently a dentist at SEARHC and have been living here in Sitka full-time since 2012. While working for SEARHC, I have been fortunate to travel to the villages of Kake and Angoon to provide dental care.

In my free time, I enjoy running and hiking with my husband, our friends and my dog. I enjoy harvesting local foods and learning more about the local environment.

- **What is your biggest struggle right now?**

We live in a small, tight-knit community and when there is a tragic loss of a member of that community, I struggle with how to come to terms with those losses.

- **What makes you proud to be a woman?**

Women are very resilient. Traditionally across many cultures, women are the backbone of the family and the community. Women are nurturing, give life and often suffer tremendous burdens with strength and grace.

- **Who was/is a female role model for you? Why?**

My grandmothers were very strong, resilient and resourceful women. My maternal grandmother survived the Armenian genocide. She was raised in an orphanage only to become a widow supporting her five young children while facing religious persecution in Egypt. My paternal grandmother moved to France for employment after she raised her children. She worked as a servant until she was able to save enough to eventually return to Portugal.

In addition to my grandmothers, I have had the fortune of working with many extremely intelligent women involved with research. These women are at the forefront of scientific research in fields ranging from facial development to geological sciences. Having the opportunity to see strong, intelligent female scientists as a pillar of the scientific process never made me feel that women were not welcome in this domain.

- **Why do you think you were nominated to be featured on our Facebook?**

I am not really sure. I have wanted to get more involved with SAFV for a long time. Often women in dire situations, especially those involved in abusive relationships neglect their oral health. Abuse and neglect can manifest early on in poor dentition.

- **What does a normal “day in the life” look like for you?**

During the work week I will be at work at 7:30 and begin seeing patients at 8am. I will see patients for exams, fillings, extractions, root canals and many other procedures. Typically, our last patient is out of the door at 5:30pm. Once I’m done seeing patients, I finish up my notes, complete whatever administrative tasks I have, and am usually home around 6 pm. Once I get home, I may take my dog for a run or short hike, cook dinner, and visit with family and friends.

- **Do you have something you’d like to say to other women in Sitka?**

Living in Sitka or the surrounding small communities, you realize that we all are in some way interconnected and in some way neighbors. We should support each other. We are all human and capable of deep suffering and pain. We may never know when it will be our turn to depend on the kindness of our community.

- **What does being a strong woman mean to you?**

In my mind, being a strong woman means demonstrating the values you wish to see in the world through adversity and through challenge. It means showing up and handling your responsibilities.