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“Remembering and Honoring Dr. Christopher Krogh, Dr. Arvo Oopik, and Dr. Ruggles Stahn”

by

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The Indian Health Service provides care to American Indian and Alaska Native people across the nation, from crowded urban areas to remote, isolated sites on the Alaska tundra to the bottom of the Grand Canyon. We are able to do this because of dedicated and exceptional employees who provide the care and those who support them.

Ten years ago on February 24, 1994, three of our physicians, Dr. Christopher Krogh, Dr. Arvo Oopik, and Dr. Ruggles Stahn, lost their lives in a tragic plane crash during a winter storm in Minot, North Dakota. The friends, families, and co-workers are organizing a remembrance service to celebrate their lives, share memories, and reflect on how their work continues to benefit American Indian and Alaska Native people.

The service will be held at the Mother Butler Center in Rapid City, South Dakota, where a memorial service was held for them 10 years ago. Among the many expected to attend will be their wives, some of their children, other family members, and many of those who worked with them and admired them. The organizers extend an invitation to all the IHS family to share in this remembrance service that will begin at 2:30 p.m. on February 28, 2004, and the dinner that will follow.

I have said before, the physicians who serve Indian communities are not your average doctors – they demonstrate an exceptional dedication to the communities they serve. And among the best are Dr. Krogh, Dr. Oopik, and Dr. Stahn.

Dr. Krogh was a family physician with many years experience in academic medicine and international health. He had worked as the Maternal Child Health Consultant for the Aberdeen Area since 1991. He was the principal investigator for the Aberdeen Area Infant Mortality Study, medical consultant for the Northern Plains Healthy Start Program, and a coinvestigator on a study of fetal alcohol syndrome.

Dr. Oopik was an IHS cardiologist based at Fitzsimons Army Medical Center who made monthly clinic visits to IHS hospitals and clinics in the Aberdeen Area. He was also the lead cardiologist for the Strong Heart Study, a multicenter longitudinal study of heart disease and its risk factors in Indian communities. The Strong Heart Study began in 1988 and is still continuing.

Dr. Stahn was a family physician who worked as a Diabetes Control Officer for the Aberdeen Area since 1987 and previously worked at four other IHS sites. Dr. Stahn was the principal Investigator for the Winnebago Diabetes Prevention Grant and co-investigator for Pathways, an obesity prevention intervention for Indian children.

To all the doctors of the Indian Health Service who so professionally serve American Indians and Alaska Natives, you will always be remembered in the hearts of the IHS family and by those you have so willingly served—as we remember these three departed doctors.

For more information about the service or the Krogh-Oopik-Stahn Memorial Fund, contact Mary Reiner at (605)431-0362, Laurie Pope at (605) 393-8086 after 6 p.m., or Vina Conroy at vconroy@rapidcity.aberdeen.ihs.gov.