

Ruth D. Wood
P. O. Box 766
Talkeetna, AK 99676

January 9, 2013

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to voice my support for the Northern Susitna Institute, with particularly emphasis on its efforts to purchase the Church on the Rock property and its efforts to expand educational opportunities in our community.

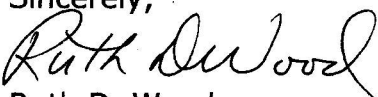
I have been actively involved in the Talkeetna community since I moved here 14 years ago. I served on our community council for 7 years, including 5 as chair. Two of our community successes during that time were completing the Talkeetna Community Tourism Plan and securing Mat-Su Borough adoption of the Talkeetna Special Land Use District (SPUD), our only zoning. The plan was an effort to address community needs arising from the ever expanding growth of tourism, and the overwhelming direction from the community was to maintain our community's character. The SPUD puts some of the recommendations from the plan into code, but the SPUD does not (and should not) mandate land use. Therefore, most land is developed to take advantage of the growth in tourism (e.g., more restaurants, gift shops, etc.) The Northern Susitna Institute's use of this property will be unique in that it will be available for a multitude of community uses and for programs aimed at attracting a different kind of tourist. NSI will both support our community economically and help us maintain our town character.

Talkeetna has some excellent educational opportunities, and NSI will build on and increase those opportunities. We probably have the best Community Schools program in the State, but school isn't in session all year, and classes cannot be held during the school day. We have some of the best public school teachers that I have known anywhere, but the hours in a school day are limited and some curriculums cannot be accommodated. When I heard the concept for the Build A Plan program, for example, I immediately understood the value of bringing together our high school students and aviation experts so that these youngsters learn marketable skills that will prepare them to find careers in Alaska. Fostering internships and mentors is a proven method of helping young people learn work ethics and skills needed in the real world. The Folk School will not only offer classes designed for locals, but for people who travel to take advantage of artisans who teach where they live.

Talkeetna is very short on good meeting space, and NSI makes their space available to the community at very reasonable rates. I am on the board of the Jessica Stevens Community Foundation (JSCF). Last year, JSCF held a fund-raising workshop for community nonprofits, an all day planning session, and a donor event at NSI. The benefits from the availability of this great space cannot be overstated.

I am happy to expand on these thoughts if you would like to call me at (907) 733-6874, and I close by stating that my family will continue to support NSI with our own charitable giving, for all the reasons stated above.

Sincerely,


Ruth D. Wood