

# Get word out about your upcoming event!

Publicize a program or class. Post an invitation to a new Zoom offering. The Senior Voice online calendar is here for you.

It's easy to post your events to seniorvoicealaska.com – and it's **FREE**.



**1** Go to the Senior Voice website: seniorvoicealaska.com Click on the "Calendar" tab in the upper right corner

**2** You will see the list of upcoming events. To add your own event, click the "Submit Event" button on the upper right.

**3** You will be taken to a forms page where you can quickly enter your details.

In addition to the date, time, location and description, you can include other items:

- Photos, fliers and other images
- Links to your website
- A button linking to the event and your site
- Zoom, Skype and other conferencing links
- Your email and other contact information

**Senior Voice Calendar of Events**

Your Name:

Your Contact Email:

Private notes for the calendar owner (not shown with your event):

Event Title:

Add a button linking to the event website

### TRY IT NOW.

Our website readers are all around the state, and beyond. If you run into problems, call 1-800-478-1059 or email [editor@seniorvoicealaska.com](mailto:editor@seniorvoicealaska.com)

# Senior Voice

Senior Voice is published by Older Persons Action Group, Inc.



# Senior Voice

A publication of Older Persons Action Group, Inc. Free

Serving Alaskans 50+ Since 1978

Volume 47, Number 10 October 2024

**Medicare Open Enrollment is here. Be sure to review your prescription drug coverage. – page 5**

**Square dancing over the years: Friends, fun and exercise. – page 14**

**Are there Extraterrestrials in the neighborhood? – page 3**

**Vacation packages for solo women travelers. – page 24**

*Participants practice scraping moose hides at the Denakkanaaga Elders Mentoring Elders Cultural Camp, held in August at the Howard Luke Gaalee'ya Spirit Camp on the Tanana River near Fairbanks. The event brings together Elders and emerging Elders to learn and celebrate Native traditions, values, stories and skills. Read the story on page 13.*

*Photo courtesy Denakkanaaga*







# Join our team as a part-time program manager

Older Persons Action Group, Inc.

Are you passionate about supporting Alaska's senior community? Older Persons Action Group Inc. (OPAG) is seeking a dedicated and enthusiastic Program Manager. This part-time position offers the opportunity to forge valuable partnerships and play a key role in improving the lives of seniors throughout Alaska.

As a Program Manager,

you will represent OPAG at various community functions, leading outreach for our monthly Senior Voice newspaper and cultivating relationships with community and funding agencies. You will also coordinate meetings and events, manage our archiving systems, and supervise student interns.

### Key responsibilities

**Develop partnerships.** Collaborate with commu-

nity agencies and funding organizations to support OPAG's mission.

**Community representation.** Act as a representative at community events and deliver presentations as needed.

**Outreach for Senior Voice.** Engage with potential sponsors and donors to secure financial support for OPAG's newspaper.

**Event coordination.** Prepare materials for meetings and community events.

**Archiving systems management.** Maintain both hard copy and electronic filing systems.

**Intern supervision.** Guide and mentor student interns.

### Qualifications:

► Associate or bachelor's degree with relevant experience.

► Proficiency in WORD, EXCEL and other common office software.

► Strong organizational

skills and the ability to manage multiple projects.

► Excellent communication skills and a friendly, approachable personality.

If you are a motivated individual with a passion for community service and a desire to make a positive impact on the lives of Alaska's seniors, we would love to hear from you. Send your cover letter and resume to the Board Secretary, Yvonne Chase, at [y Chase@alaskalife.net](mailto:y Chase@alaskalife.net).

# If you think you've been ripped off by a business

By CAMERON NAKASHIMA

Better Business Bureau

What do you do when a business doesn't live up to its promises? Maybe you paid for something you never received, or a product or service didn't exactly meet your expectations. If this sounds familiar, you're not alone—and you don't have to just accept it.

There are simple steps you can take to get back what you're owed, without adding more stress to your life. Let's walk through some simple actions you can take to resolve the issue and set things right.

Talk to the business first

Start by reaching out to the business directly. And when you connect with them, remember to stay calm and communicate clearly. Most legitimate businesses don't want you feeling frustrated because of your experience with them, and many times simply describing your bad experience to a manager via a level-headed conversation can move you toward a reasonable resolution.

Remember to have everything ready, including receipts, contracts, emails and anything else that backs up your side of the

story. A detailed timeline of what happened can be super helpful, too. When you're organized and have the facts straight, businesses are more willing to get on board with you to solve the problem. If the business ignores you or refuses to make things right, here are the next steps you can take toward resolution:

### Get BBB involved

Filing a complaint with the Better Business Bureau is easy and free and boosts your chances of getting things resolved. Businesses pay attention when the BBB gets involved, especially if keeping a good rating matters to them. Most of the time, this step is enough to settle things, but if not, BBB can help you take it further to get a fair outcome.

### Consider mediation or arbitration

If the issue isn't getting resolved, you might want to try mediation or arbitration. These options are quicker, less formal, and often far less expensive than going to court—some mediation cases are wrapped up in just a few weeks. But keep in mind that both sides have to agree to take part. If the business refuses, you

may need to consider legal action.

### Take legal action (if you have to)

If the business refuses to participate in arbitration or mediation, small claims court can be a helpful option for resolving smaller disputes without costly legal representation. Just be sure to check your state's monetary limits to ensure your case qualifies. Filing fees are often low, but you might want to consult a lawyer if you're dealing with a bigger claim. While hiring legal help can raise the cost, getting advice early can help you better understand what you're getting into and prepare for the process.

### Bring in other authorities

Depending on your situation, you might need to get other authorities involved. There are industry-specific groups, like the Department of Transportation or the Building Industry Association, that could help apply some pressure. If things get more serious—like potential criminal behavior—you might need to involve local law enforcement. And if fraud is on the table, reporting it to the Federal Trade

Commission (FTC) and your local Attorney General's (AG) office is another good move. These steps can push the business to act and give you more ways to resolve the issue.

### Final thoughts

When it comes to dealing with disputes, knowledge and patience are your best tools. Knowing what steps to take, keeping good records, and staying proac-

tive can turn a frustrating experience into something more manageable.

For more information, visit BBB's online Dispute Resolution Services to explore how mediation, arbitration, and complaint resolution services can help you reach a fair outcome with a business.

Cameron Nakashima is a Media Engagement Manager for Better Business Bureau Great West + Pacific.

## Older Persons Action Group, Inc. Annual Meeting

Nov. 25, 2024

Online via Zoom.

OPAG board meets at 11:30 a.m., followed immediately by annual meeting.

Please RSVP with email address to [admin@opagak.com](mailto:admin@opagak.com) or voicemail at 907-276-1059. Zoom code will be provided by email prior to meeting.

### OLDER PERSONS ACTION GROUP

#### Mission statement:

"To work statewide to improve the quality of life for all Alaskans through education, advocacy and collaboration."

#### Vision statement:

"Promote choice and well being for seniors through legacy and leadership."



OLDER PERSONS ACTION GROUP

401 E. Fireweed Lane, #102 Anchorage, AK 99503

Phone 907-276-1059 Toll free 800-478-1059

[www.opagak.com](http://www.opagak.com) [www.seniorvoicealaska.com](http://www.seniorvoicealaska.com)

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# Reconsidering the likelihood of extraterrestrials

By **LAWRENCE D. WEISS**  
For Senior Voice

In 2017, The New York Times published "Glowing Auras and 'Black Money': The Pentagon's Mysterious U.F.O. Program". That article helped change the common perception about UFOs and intelligent life on other planets from "goofy people who wear tinfoil hats" to "Hmm, maybe there is something to this." Since then, military

sources have publicly released and verified images of UFOs, often referred to as "UAPs," Unidentified Anomalous Phenomena. Highly placed military officers and civilians have become whistleblowers, Congress has held public and private hearings, stacks of official reports have been released, and bipartisan legislation has been enacted to force government and military transparency on the issue.

Wow, that's a mouthful, but as I said, a lot has happened. Let's step back for a moment and conduct a simple thought experiment. Assume no one has ever seen an unidentified anything flying around in our skies. What could we say about the likelihood of intelligent life elsewhere in our galaxy, or elsewhere in the universe?

In our case, during the  
*page 4 please*



The story author confronts aliens at the UFO Museum in Roswell, New Mexico, 2012.

Photo courtesy Lawrence D. Weiss

# A place where we can all choose how we live as we age

By **MARGE STONEKING**  
AARP Alaska Advocacy Director

AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that empowers people to choose how they live as they age. We work to make that happen through legislative advocacy, supporting policies that benefit the age 50+ community, opposing those that don't, and working alongside our partners to ensure issues related to aging in Alaska are top of mind when drafting new legislation. AARP is offering three opportunities for you to help make Alaska a place where we can all choose how we live as we age.

- ▶ Become an e-activist
- ▶ Volunteer as an AARP legislative advocate
- ▶ Ask candidates questions about how they'll support aging issues

To easily support making Alaska a place where we can all choose how we live as we age, please sign up to become an e-activist at [aarp.org/getinvolved](http://aarp.org/getinvolved)

If you're interested in policy over politics and want to be actively engaged in AARP Alaska's advocacy to influence policy leaders

on issues most important to age 50+ Alaskans, contact [AKAARP@aarp.org](mailto:AKAARP@aarp.org) for more information. The AARP Volunteer Legislative Advocacy Team is actively recruiting volunteers for the 2025 Alaska Legislative Session now through Nov. 1.

AARP Advocacy volunteers help educate policy makers on issues of importance to older Alaskans and AARP's position on them, follow key legislation through the legislature, support AARP priority issues with meetings, emails, phone calls and outreach, testify on bills supported or opposed by AARP before legislative committees as requested. Together we ensure that the voices of older Alaskans are heard by the people making state laws on issues that include senior services to help older Alaskans continue to live independently, retirement readiness, financial security, supporting family caregivers, healthcare and more.

50+ voters consistently vote at higher rates than any other age group, which means they decide elections. We made up the ma-

ajority of the electorate in 2022 at 57% with the highest age bracket for voter turnout in Alaska coming from the age 65-74 cohort. Candidates can't afford to overlook the power of 50+ voters whose votes can sway elections and shape the political landscape of the 2024. Find the names and contacts for candidates at: <https://www.elections.alaska.gov/candidates/>.

### Questions to ask your state legislative candidates

If elected, how will you protect and expand senior services to help older Alaskans continue to live independently?

Alaska has 94,000 family caregivers needing support. Candidates, how would you help family caregivers?

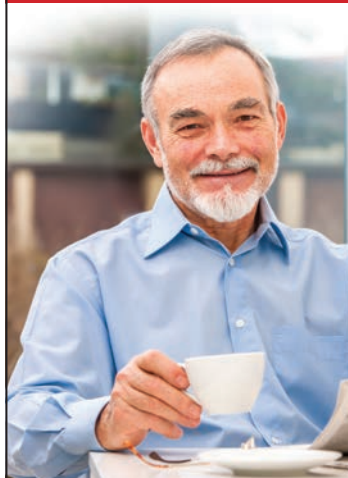
As a legislator, how would you improve retire-

ment savings options for workers so more Alaskans can financially prepare for retirement?

What would you do to address the public employee workforce shortage impacting services at the state and local levels?

How would you address the shortage of nurses and other providers impacting access to health and long-term care?

## Senior Voice SUBSCRIPTION



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*Your subscription includes your OPAG membership.*

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## Send us your letters

Send letters to the editor to Senior Voice, 401 E. Fireweed Lane, #102, Anchorage AK 99503. Maximum length is 250 words. Senior Voice reserves the right to edit for content and length. Space may be made available for longer opinion piece essays up to 400 words. Contact the managing editor at [editor@seniorvoicealaska.com](mailto:editor@seniorvoicealaska.com) to discuss this. Copy deadline is the 15th of the month prior to publication.





# Extraterrestrials

continued from page 3

course of a few billion years, dust and gases formed stars and planets. About 4.5 billion years ago life emerged on Earth, and then...whammo! A mere 300,000 years ago, Adam and Eve, or their historical evolutionary equivalents, walked Earth for the first time.

The basic underlying premise is that presumably the laws of physics are the same everywhere in our Milky Way galaxy, and everywhere in the universe. We know life emerged on the planet Earth, and we can imagine that life could arise on other planets "similar" to Earth. What does "similar" mean? Here are a few commonly outlined criteria:

► Earth-like planets are generally comparable in size and mass to Earth.

► These planets must orbit within the habitable zone of their star which is the region where conditions are just right for liquid water to exist on the surface.

► Earth-like planets typically have a solid rocky surface—in contrast to gas giants.

► An Earth-like atmosphere would contain essential gases like oxygen and nitrogen, as well as the right pressure to support liquid water.

Ok then, how many of these "Earth-like" planets are believed to be in our galaxy, the Milky Way? Hold on to your hat! Estimates range from 10 to 40 billion Earth-like planets based on current astronomical research. Wow. And that is just in our medium-sized Milky Way galaxy. How many other galaxies are there?

I am not a math whiz and these numbers are just mindboggling, so here is my favorite answer to that question. Pick up a single grain of sand and hold it at arm's length between your thumb and forefinger. Look at the grain of sand. It is blocking out about 10,000 galaxies in the universe.

Even if only one out of every million, or heck, every billion Earth-like planets in our galaxy—not to mention the entire universe—has developed intelligent life, that's a lot of

little green aliens running around, or lizard people, or tall whites, or whatever.

Given the odds, I think it would be quite extraordinary if intelligent life did not exist elsewhere in the universe. Of course, the next logical question is, are some of these extraterrestrials popping into Earth's skies for a visit?

Thousands of UFO sightings have been investigated in the last few decades and have been attributed to Venus, satellites, airplanes and rockets, swamp gas, and the like. But some have been tracked on civilian and military radar, witnessed by civilian and military pilots, and experienced by police and other credible observers on the ground—sometimes all at the same time.

These remain "UFOs," and to a great extent the details remain locked up in government and military files. However, there has been a steady leak of information since the NYT article, but just a leak. Congress, however, in a bipartisan effort, tried to pry the top off the secrecy.

The UAP Disclosure Act was introduced in 2023 by Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) and Senator Mike Rounds (R-SD) in a rare effort of bipartisan cooperation. It passed and is now law of the land, but it was so heavily watered down in the political process it may do very little to facilitate disclosure of records held by the government and military.

So, the foot is in the door and the cup is half full, to mix metaphors. But you get the idea. Meanwhile, when you are outside, don't forget to look up. You will frequently be rewarded by spectacular cloud formations or beautiful blue skies, and maybe you'll see the occasional orange globe or black triangle with blinking lights zip by. Could be some of our joyriding extraterrestrial neighbors.

Lawrence D. Weiss is a UAA Professor of Public Health, Emeritus, creator of the UAA Master of Public Health program, and author of several books and numerous articles. He also teaches a class on UFOs for Opportunities for Lifelong Education (OLE) in Anchorage.

# Love and healing for someone who is troubled

By KAREN CASANOVAS

For Senior Voice

**Q.** Someone I know appears to be mentally stressed or troubled. It raises the questions: When should I become concerned? How should I respond to any unusual mannerisms they may exhibit?

**A.** If someone shows signs of mental stress or angst, pay close attention to any significant changes in their behavior. Should their actions become extreme, reach out to a healthcare



provider or seek professional guidance promptly. In cases where you believe the individual may pose a risk to themselves or oth-

ers, it is critical to contact appropriate authorities immediately. Your attentiveness and proactive approach in addressing the situation are commendable and can make a significant difference in providing care for those in need.

### What to look for

Recognizing signs of distress can be crucial to providing support and assistance. Some common indicators include:

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**BENEFITS ENROLLMENT CENTER**

*Do you need assistance with food, utility, medical, or prescription drug costs?*

The National Council on Aging (NCOA) supports a network of Benefits Enrollment Centers (BECs) that help people find and enroll in benefits programs. BECs are free, private community organizations that can help people with low income, disabilities, or other challenges.

BECs can help people enroll in programs such as Medicare Part D Extra Help, Medicare Savings Programs (MSP), Medicaid, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).

**Senior Center membership is not required. Take advantage of this FREE public service and schedule an appointment today!**

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You may be eligible for one or more of the following programs:

- **Medicare Part D Extra Help/Low Income Subsidy (LIS)** - pays for Part D plan premiums, reduces drug co-pays and eliminates the Donut-Hole
- **Medicare Savings Program (MSP)** - pays Medicare premiums
- **Medicaid** - serves as a supplement to Medicare, pays deductibles and co-pays.
- **SNAP** - Alaska's Food Stamp Program
- **LIHEAP** - Heating assistance
- **Senior Benefit** - receive cash from the State of Alaska
- Additional programs may be available.

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## Providing vision services around the state

By **PETE McCALL**

For Senior Voice

Tom Class, the dedicated rural outreach coordinator for the Alaska Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired, has had a very busy year. Traveling extensively across the state, Tom has been conducting low-vision clinics in various remote locations, including Nome, Juneau, Kotzebue and several other communities.

Tom's tireless efforts are making a significant impact, bringing much-needed vision care to those in Alaska's far-flung regions. His work ensures that even the most isolated residents have access to essential vision support, improving their quality of life and independence.

At these clinics, Tom examines patients' vision and recommends a range of magnifiers and lenses tailored to enhance their visual capabilities. His goal is to help clients make the most of their remaining vision. Once the most suitable device is identified, the Alaska Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired provides



**Tom Class conducts low vision clinics in Alaska's rural communities.**

*Courtesy Alaska Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired*

each client with \$100 to go toward its purchase.

Tom's next trip is scheduled for later this month in Ketchikan. Additionally, the center is planning visits to Seward and Sitka before the end of the year. To find out when Tom will be coming to your area and to book an appointment, call Casey Duer, 907-771-4300.

*Pete McCall is the older blind coordinator for the Alaska Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired.*

## Bump Dots

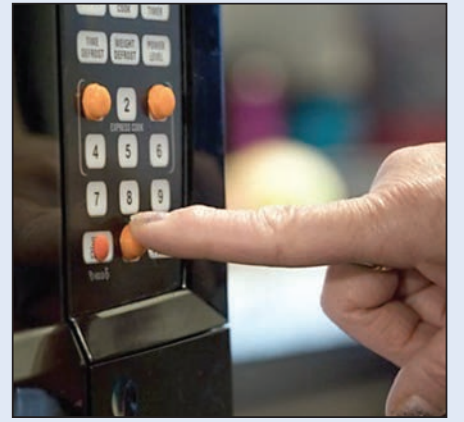
### Assistive Gizmo of the Month

Assistive Technology of Alaska

Bump Dots are adhesive dots that provide tactile marking of everyday items such as a microwave, oven, keyboard, calculators, light switches and more. The dots allow an individual who has vision loss to easily navigate and utilize the appliance or device. Bump Dots come in many different siz-

es, shapes, heights and colors to help with distinguishing between each dot.

*This column is brought to you by ATLA (Assistive Technology of Alaska), a nonprofit, statewide resource. ATLA does not endorse this product but shares information on the types of assistive technology that may*



*Photo courtesy ATLA*

*benefit Alaskans. For more information or to arrange a free demonstration, visit <http://www.atlaak.org> or call 907-563-2599.*

## Disability and Aging Summit returns, Oct. 8-9

Senior Voice Staff

The 10th Annual Alaska Disability and Aging Summit, themed "Inclusive Aging in Alaska: Thriving and Growing Together," will be held on October 8 and 9 in Anchorage. Organized by the Alaska Disability and Aging Coalition, the event will be hybrid, allowing participants to attend both in person at the Special Olympics Alaska Jim Balamaci Training Center and online via Zoom.

The summit's goal is to unite Alaskans to discuss national and state trends related to aging, specifically focusing on individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and how these issues impact

Alaska. The increasing life expectancy of individuals with intellectual disabilities represents a significant achievement, reflecting advances in healthcare and shifts in societal attitudes. However, this progress has also created a gap in care for the aging IDD population, underscoring the need for more education, training, and research on how to provide appropriate care for these individuals as they grow older.

Summit Sessions will address a variety of topics, including disabilities and relationships, dementia, innovative senior housing, advocacy in healthcare settings, and navigating end-of-life care.

Keynote speaker Jennifer Keelan-Chaffins, known for her participation in the Capitol Crawl as a child, will share her insights on advocacy. Additionally, the event will feature an action panel with local representatives and senators, as well as an elder panel discussing their experiences with aging and strategies for aging well. A vendor fair with over 20 organizations will provide networking opportunities and resources for attendees.

The summit aims to foster collaboration and knowledge-sharing to ensure that individuals with intellectual disabilities can continue to thrive as they age. For more information, contact 907-222-7625 ext. 612.

## Your annual opportunity to review your Medicare drug plan

### What's new for 2025

By **SEAN McPHILAMY**

Alaska Medicare Information Office

From Oct. 15 through Dec. 7, I encourage you to review and, if needed, change your Prescription Drug Plan under Part D coverage. Changes you elect will become effective on Jan. 1. Certified Medicare counselors across Alaska can help you as part of the Medicare Information Office's network of program Ambassadors, including through your local Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC). Give us a call, we would be glad to answer your questions,



guide you through the process, and even complete the review of your prescription drug plan with you.

### Take the time to review your drug plan

Under Part D of Medicare, private insurance companies have established Prescription Drug Plans (PDPs). These plans meet the regulatory requirements of the national Centers for Medicare and

**To review your options, you may go online to [Medicare.gov](https://www.medicare.gov), then find the link for Health and Drug Plans. Without needing to create an account, you may use this online tool to review the medication you currently are prescribed, by entering the prescription name, its dosage, and how often you take it. You can also compare costs through local retail pharmacies. And you may be able to save money by using mail order delivery of your medications.**

Medicaid Services (CMS) along with complying with the State of Alaska's rules overseen by the Dept. of Commerce and the Division of Insurance. These private insurance companies set up agreements with both drug manufacturers (the pharmaceutical companies) and distribution networks (the retail pharmacies); under a tiered pricing system, PDPs provide access to a list of prescription drugs, also

known as their formulary.

Even if your current plan has been meeting all of your prescription needs, you may be able to obtain a new plan at a lower overall cost to you. For many reasons, these private insurance companies revise their offered plans annually. What has worked for you, may not work for you next year. To review your options, you may go online to Medicare.gov, then find

the link for Health and Drug Plans. Without needing to create an account, you may use this online tool to review the medication you currently are prescribed, by entering the prescription name, its dosage, and how often you take it. You can also compare costs through local retail pharmacies. And you may be able to save money by using mail order delivery of your medications.

### You may change to the plan of your choice

Once you have reviewed your options, you may elect to change to a new plan. The goal when searching for a new plan which meets all of your requirements is to obtain the lowest overall cost to you. Each plan may

*page 6 please*





ADVERTISEMENT

### Protecting aids from damage



By **DONNA R. DEMARCO**  
*Accurate Hearing Systems*

Any exposure to water, humidity, condensation or perspiration can cause serious damage to a hearing aid. While many of today's hearing aids are designed to be highly water and oil resistant, it is difficult to protect hearing aids from all oil and moisture hazards.

The first step to preventing moisture damage is to avoid accidental exposure to water. Hearing aid users should adhere to a routine when it comes to their daily use of their devices. For example, if you typically shower first thing in the morning, leave the hearing aids in their storage case, preferably not in the bathroom, in order to avoid forgetting to take them out before bathing or accidentally knocking them into the sink or toilet.

At night, hearing aid battery doors should be left open to allow air to flow through the device; this has the added benefit of preserving battery life.

**Physical damage** To prevent damage, hearing aids should be stored in a consistent, safe manner nightly. They should be placed out of the reach of small children and pets, as animals tend to be drawn to the devices due to the human scent. When damage occurs, gather all components of the hearing device and schedule an appointment with your hearing healthcare professional as soon as possible. The devices should not be worn if there is damage to the casing as sharp edges may cause irritation or abrasion to the ear and surrounding areas. Damage to the tubing, either tears or pinches, should be addressed as soon as possible as that can have severe effects on the sound quality of the hearing device.

For more information and to schedule a free hearing test, call 907-644-6004.

*Donna R. Demarco, AAS, BC-HIS, CDP, Tinnitus Care Provider, holding a Certification from the International Hearing Society.*



*Alaska law permits a hearing aid dealer who is not a licensed physician or a licensed audiologist to test hearing only for the purpose of selling or leasing hearing aids; the tests given by a hearing aid dealer are not to be used to diagnose the cause of the hearing impairment.*

## Medicare

*continued from page 5*

contain specific rules regarding your prescriptions, so read these notations carefully. The estimated annual cost is calculated by adding up the plan's monthly premiums along with the cost-share of the prescriptions you anticipate obtaining during the year. While prescription drug plans offer a variety of deductibles, premiums and cost-shares, pay attention to the total estimated cost rather than one individual factor. During the open enrollment period (Oct. 15 through Dec. 7), you may even make multiple changes – the last change you make prior to Dec. 7 is the one which will become effective on Jan. 1, 2025.

### Changes coming in 2025

Thanks to recent federal legislation, your annual out-of-pocket Part D costs will be capped at \$2,000. This includes what you pay for your prescriptions' co-pays or coinsurance during the year (including the plan deductible). This does not include the monthly drug plan premiums. After meeting the out-of-pocket limit, you pay \$0 for covered Part D drugs for the rest of the year. This Also beginning in 2025, you will have the option to sign up

for a payment plan for your Part D out-of-pocket costs. This program is called the Medicare Prescription Payment Plan, and you may also hear it referred to as "smoothing" costs. It lets you spread your drug costs out throughout the year. If you sign up, your Part D plan will send you a monthly bill, and you will pay \$0 at the pharmacy. The payment plan does not reduce your out-of-pocket costs, but it can help people with high drug costs concentrated in the early months of the year manage their monthly expenses. To sign up for the payment plan, contact your Part D plan in 2025.

### Summary of things to consider

Ask yourself the following questions before choosing a Part D drug plan:

- ▶ Does the plan cover all the medications I take?
- ▶ Does the plan have restrictions on my drugs, such as prior authorization, step therapy or quantity limits? Prior authorization means that you must get approval from your Part D plan before the plan will pay for the drug. Step therapy means that your plan requires you to try a cheaper version of your drug before it will cover the more expensive one. Quantity limits restrict the quantity of a drug you can get per prescription fill,

such as 30 pills of Drug X per month.

- ▶ How much will I pay for monthly premiums and the annual deductible?
- ▶ How much will I pay at the pharmacy (copay/coinsurance) for each drug I take?
- ▶ Is my pharmacy in the plan's preferred network? (You pay the least if you used preferred network pharmacies.)
- ▶ Can I fill my prescriptions by mail order?
- ▶ What is the plan's star rating?

To discuss your options when choosing a Part D Prescription Drug Plan, or to ask any questions regarding your specific situation, please contact the State of Alaska Medicare Information Office at 800-478-6065 or 907-269-3680; our office is also known as the State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP), the Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP), and the Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act (MIPPA) program.

If you are part of an agency or organization that assists Seniors with medical resources, consider networking with the Medicare Information Office. Call us to inquire about our new Ambassador program.

*Sean McPhilamy is a volunteer and Certified Medicare Counselor for the Alaska Medicare Information Office.*

## Medicare counseling by phone

By **LEE CORAY-LUDDEN**

*For Senior Voice*

I am a Certified Medicare Counselor working under SHIP. My office is

in the Soldotna Senior Center, but I serve the state via phone. If you are local, I can help you as a walk-in.

I am here Mondays

through Thursdays, 8 a.m. to 3 p.m., and Fridays, 8 a.m. to noon.

Call with your Medicare questions, 907-262-2322.

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# Breast cancer: Early detection saves lives

Also: Health fairs around the state this month

Alaska Health Fair, Inc.

October marks Breast Cancer Awareness Month, a global campaign to increase awareness about this prevalent disease. Breast cancer affects millions worldwide, with an estimated 2.3 million new cases diagnosed each year. Early detection, often through screening, significantly increases the chances of successful treatment and can save lives.

Breast cancer is a malignant tumor that starts in the cells of the breast. While it can affect both men and women, it's far more common in women. Regular self-examinations and routine screenings play a crucial role in the early detection of breast cancer. Mammography remains one of the most effective screening tools available. It can detect breast cancer up to three years before it can be felt during a physical

exam. Women are encouraged to consult with their healthcare providers about the appropriate age to start and the recommended frequency of mammograms based on their individual risk factors.

Alaska Health Fair, Inc. is a nonprofit organization established in 1980 to promote health awareness and early detection in Alaska at health fairs statewide. We occasionally collaborate with local providers to offer mammography screenings at our events. We encourage everyone to check our schedule of health fairs (see below) and affordable blood tests at [www.alaskahealthfair.org](http://www.alaskahealthfair.org) and our Facebook page to see if mammography screenings are available at a health fair near you.

### National and local resources

For those seeking additional resources and infor-

mation on breast cancer, we recommend:

- ▶ The National Breast Cancer Foundation ([www.nationalbreastcancer.org/](http://www.nationalbreastcancer.org/))
- ▶ Breast Cancer Research Foundation ([www.bcrf.org/](http://www.bcrf.org/))
- ▶ American Cancer Society ([www.cancer.org/](http://www.cancer.org/))
- ▶ Alaska Breast and Cervical Screening Assistance Program (AK B+C) (<https://health.alaska.gov/dph/wcfh/Pages/AKB+C/default.aspx>, Phone: 1-800-410-6266)
- ▶ Breast Cancer Detection Center of Alaska (Fairbanks) (<https://www.bcdcof.alaska.org>, phone: 907-479-3909)

### October health fairs and affordable blood testing

Alaska Health Fair delivers around 100 health fairs throughout Alaska annually. Our mission is to empower people to take charge of their health through education and access to affordable blood testing.

Embrace October's golden glow with health fairs and affordable blood draws:

**Oct. 5 Anchorage** Make It Alaskan Day at Egan Center, 555 W 5th Ave., 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on day one, noon to 5 p.m. day two.

**Oct. 9 Palmer** Mat-Su College Community Health Fair, 8295 E. College Rd., 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

**Oct. 10 Anchorage** Community Fair at Hope Community Resources, 570 W 53rd Ave., 8 a.m. to noon

**Oct. 12 Girdwood** Community event, 250 Egloff Dr., 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

**Oct. 12 Anchorage** Enlaces Hispanic/Latino Health Fair at Our Lady of Guadalupe, 3900 Wisconsin St., 8 a.m. to noon.

**Oct. 12 Delta Junction** Community event at Elementary School Gym, 2659 Nistler Rd., 8 a.m. to noon.

**Oct. 19 Wasilla** Wasilla Area Seniors, 1301 S Century Circle, 8 a.m. to noon.

**Oct. 19 North Pole** Community event at Plaza Mall,

301 N Santa Claus Lane, 8 to 11 a.m.

**Oct. 22 Fairbanks** Alaska Health Fair, Inc. Office Draw, 725 26th Ave., Suite 201, 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.

### New blood tests available

This season, Alaska Health Fair is excited to offer new blood tests to support your health:

- ▶ Magnesium (\$25): Essential for energy production, muscle function and bone health.
- ▶ Uric Acid (\$25): Helps diagnose gout and monitor levels during treatments.
- ▶ Celiac t-Transglutaminase (tTG) (\$40): Screens for celiac disease, an immune reaction to gluten.

These tests complement our existing range of affordable blood screenings, providing valuable insights into your health, allowing for early detection and prevention of various conditions. For our complete schedule, details about each event, and information on all available tests, visit [www.alaskahealthfair.org](http://www.alaskahealthfair.org).

**STAY HEALTHY THIS SEASON!**

**Boost your defenses against seasonal illness.**

**Talk with your health care provider about vaccines that can help prevent:**

<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Flu</b></p> <p>A flu shot is recommended every fall. If you are 65 years or older, a high dose flu shot is recommended.</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>COVID-19</b></p> <p>Everyone is recommended to get a 2024-2025 COVID shot this season.</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>RSV</b></p> <p>An RSV vaccine is recommended for the following people who haven't gotten the RSV vaccine before:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Everyone 75+ years</li> <li>• People 60-74 years with higher risk of severe RSV</li> </ul>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Whooping cough</b></p> <p>Protection against whooping cough is a part of the tetanus vaccine, Tdap. A tetanus booster is recommended every 10 years for adults.</p>
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**FIND A VACCINE LOCATION: Contact your health care provider, local clinic or hospital. Learn more at [vaccinate.alaska.gov](http://vaccinate.alaska.gov)**





# New tech for heart tests, bandages, ER monitoring

By JOHN SCHIESZER

Medical Minutes

## At-home detection of heart failure

Heart failure is a leading cause of death worldwide and now researchers hope to combat it in a whole new way. They have developed a point-of-care electrochemical biosensor that can measure levels of two biomarkers for heart failure in as little as 15 minutes from just a drop of saliva.

“Our device would be ideal for people, who are at high risk for heart failure but have limited access to a hospital or a centralized lab,” said developer Trey Pittman, who is with Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado. “Working on this project to address health disparities in rural and low-resource areas really hits home for me because I’m from Mississippi, which has one of the highest mortality rates from heart failure in the United States.”

Heart failure refers to weakened heart muscle that cannot pump enough oxygenated blood through the body. The current gold standard for heart failure screening is a blood test administered twice per year by a healthcare professional. It measures levels of B-type natriuretic peptide (BNP), a protein that indicates the heart is working too hard.

Now, a simple, at-home saliva test may soon change things. It could be used to check an older adult every few weeks instead of every six months, suggests Pittman. So far, widespread use of portable saliva tests for heart health has been limited by complicated manufacturing techniques and lack of relevant data beyond the presence or absence of a single biomarker. No word yet on when this saliva test will be commercially available.

## Bombastic bandages battling infections

New research on wound care at Binghamton University in New York is



combining a biodegradable paper dressing that uses bacteria-fueled biobatteries. This technique begins with therapeutic dressings that inhibit dangerous biofilms. These dressings are applied with paper and contain spore-forming bacteria that produce antibacterial agents along with electrical stimulation powered by biobatteries.

The team has successfully added copper oxide and tin oxide nanoparticles to the spore-carrying bacteria to generate a tiny amount of power. When channeled into the wound area, the electric current seems to break down the cell integrity of the infecting microbes and stimulate healing. The researchers tested their paper-based dressing on simulated human skin and pig skin with promising results, but more investigation is required before the process is ready for human use.

Principal investigator Sean Choe with Binghamton University said biodegradable papertotics and bacteria-fuel biobatteries may usher in a new way to treat a host of diseases.

“The beauty of using paper is that it is disposable, so you don’t need to worry about a second infection after you use it, but the future work is necessary,” said Choe.

While this research is very promising, it is still in early development stages. Choe said there are still many unanswered questions. “We don’t clearly understand how this electrical stimulation heals the wound infections. One guess is that the membranes

next page please



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# Medical

from page 8

of bacterial cells were damaged, but the type of electrical stimulation or how long in duration or how frequently to make it effective is something we need to study further.”

## Wireless monitoring in the ER

Physicians in the emergency department (ED) at Vanderbilt University Hospital (VUH) are now using wireless physiologic monitoring. The new rechargeable device is from a company called Masimo. The device's central unit, the size of a bath-sized bar of soap, attaches to the person's lower arm. Sensors run to the hand, upper arm, chest and neck.

Besides displaying vital signs on a small screen on the device's central unit, it also connects to the hospital network using the local wireless Wi-Fi network protocol. Data flows to the patient record and is displayed on centrally

located electronic boards where doctors can keep an eye on the patient's status. When vital signs change, automatic alarms are triggered. Patients can get up to use the bathroom without having to unhook from a monitor.

"Wireless monitoring promises both to enhance support for our care teams and to elevate care for patients placed in our non-traditional spaces and in our waiting room," said Dr. Ian Jones an associate professor of Emergency Medicine and a clinical director with HealthIT at Vanderbilt University Medical Center, Nashville, Tennessee. "This is an innovative measure aimed at improving vigilance, efficiency and satisfaction for patients and staff."

The pilot extends to continuous wireless monitoring of blood pressure, blood oxygen level (pulse oximetry), heart rate and, in selected patients, continuous cardiac rhythm. Patients in standard ED beds at the hospital are tethered to plug-in monitors that are wired to the

VUMC network, allowing continuous central monitoring and automatic alarms when vital signs change. Those beds and their patients are outside the scope of the ED's wireless initiative.

Hallway beds are used for arriving patients who may be less in need of a standard ED bed. While these patients may generally be more stable than

those in standard beds, care standards still call for periodic checking of their vital signs.

"In bringing wireless physiologic monitoring to the ED, we're providing more surveillance, more vigilance to each patient's physiologic status," said Dr Neal Patel, a professor of Clinical Informatics and chief informatics officer for HealthIT at Vanderbilt

University. "Technology such as this forms part of the solution as health care systems such as ours seek to make care better and more efficient."

*John Schieszer is an award-winning national journalist and radio and podcast broadcaster of The Medical Minute. He can be reached at medicalminutes@gmail.com.*

# Monday is for Medicare answers

Senior Voice Staff

Alaska's Medicare Information Office holds a webinar on the second Monday of each month, "Medicare Monday," to discuss and answer questions related to Medicare. The October session is on

Oct. 14, from noon to 1 p.m., and the topic will be Part D prescription drug plan open enrollment. After a brief presentation, the meeting is open for Q&A.

Anyone can attend via Zoom or phone call (must dial in using Zoom number). Registration is re-

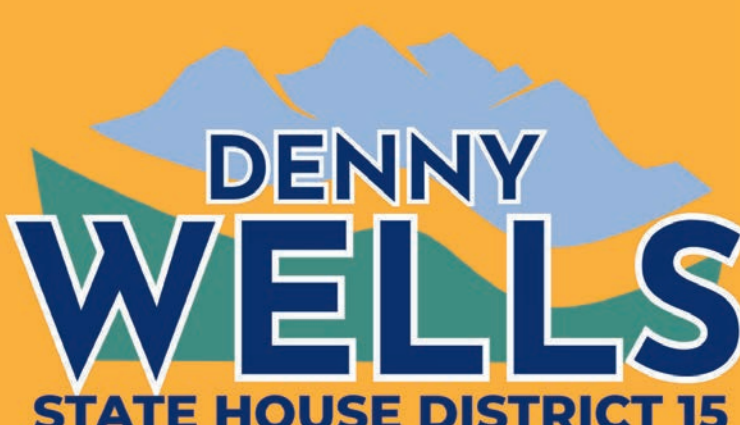
quired, upon which the Zoom address is sent. To register, visit <http://alaska.gov/go/7V6X>.

For more information, call the Medicare Information Office at 1-800-478-6065.

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# Free support, resources for family caregivers

Senior Voice Staff

The Kenai Peninsula Family Caregiver Support Program will hold the following caregiver support group meetings in October. Meeting format is open discussion unless otherwise noted.

**Oct. 2. Kenai Senior Center, "Stronger Together" support group with Rachael Craig, 2 to 3:30 p.m.**

**Oct. 3 Tyotkas Elder Center (in Kenai) support meeting, 10:30 to 11:30 a.m.**

**Oct. 4 Soldotna Senior Center support meeting, 1 to 2 p.m.**

**Oct. 17 Sterling Senior Center support meeting, 1**

to 2 p.m.

**Oct. 29 Nikiski Senior Center, Cindy Harris from Alzheimer's Association presents "The Empowered Caregiver," 1 to 2 p.m.**

**Oct. 31 Homer Senior Center support meeting, 1 to 3 p.m.**

Support meetings allow you to share your experiences as a caregiver, or support someone who is a caregiver. If you are helping a family member or friend by being a caregiver, learn what kind of help is available. There is no charge for these services and everyone is invited to attend. For information or to offer suggestions on

training topics, call Dani Kebschull at the Nikiski Senior Center, 907-776-7654 or email [kpfensp@nikiskiseniorcenter.org](mailto:kpfensp@nikiskiseniorcenter.org).

**Kodiak Senior Center** hosts the caregiver support group on the third Thursday of each month (Oct. 17) at 1 p.m. Call for information, 907-486-6181.

## Around the state

Alzheimer's Resource of Alaska (ARA) organizes caregiver support meetings around the state, including Anchorage, Eagle River, Fairbanks, Homer, Juneau/Southeast, Ketchikan, Kodiak, Mat-Su Valley, Seward, Sitka,

Soldotna, Talkeetna, Willow. Call 1-800-478-1080 for details.

ARA also hosts a statewide call-in meeting on the first Saturday and third Wednesday of every month, 1 to 2 p.m. For information, call Gay Wellman, 907-822-5620 or 1-800-478-1080.

In **Southeast Alaska**, the Southeast Senior Services Senior and Caregiver Resource Center is available. Call Jennifer Garrison at 866-746-6177.

The national Alzheimer's Association operates a 24-hour help line for caregivers, staffed by specialists and Mas-

ters-level clinicians, at 800-272-3900.

## Online caregiver support for Alaska veterans

The Alaska VA Caregiver Wellness Cafe is held monthly on the first Thursday (Oct. 3) from 1 to 2 p.m. via the Teams software and is an informal virtual place to engage with other caregivers while learning about topics beneficial to your role as a caregiver. Enrollment in Alaska VA Caregiver Support Program (CSP) is not required to participate in the call. For information, call 907-375-2606.

# More men in caregiving

By **DANI KEBSCHULL**

Kenai Peninsula Family Caregiver Support Program Coordinator

Over the course of my career working with family caregivers, I have noticed a subtle change in the makeup of who is providing the care.

In 2009, men comprised 34 percent of family caregivers of adults. In 2020, according to a report by the National Alliance for Caregiving and AARP ("Caregiving in the U.S. 2020"), roughly 40 percent of informal caregivers in the U.S. were men. And

that number is likely to increase, according to a 2019 NIH study, due to a shrinking family caregiver pool and shifting policies that provide better support for all caregivers, regardless of gender.

Our society has normalized caregiving as a female role, but men are stepping up and taking on the responsibility. As a man providing care for a loved one, there are things you can do to make caregiving easier. Men can be very successful in this role and community resources can help you be the best caregiver possible. In Alaska,

the best place to start is by calling your local Aging and Disability Resource Center (<https://health.alaska.gov/dsds/Pages/adrc/default.aspx>). Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRCs) help connect caregivers with local resources.

As you begin your caregiving journey be sure to ask questions. Get as much

information about your loved one's condition as you can. Be open to new skills – you may have to learn how to cook, clean, or do other tasks that you haven't done before. You may need to bathe or dress your loved one or provide personal care. Ask for help from a friend or relative if you need it.

Learn to delegate by deciding which tasks you want to do yourself and

then ask for help from others. You can sign up for meal deliveries or online grocery shopping. Most importantly, for all caregivers regardless of gender, you can't take care of someone else if you don't take care of yourself, too. Don't put off your own medical appointments, try to get enough rest, and take pride in the job you are doing. It requires a special person with a lot of love.



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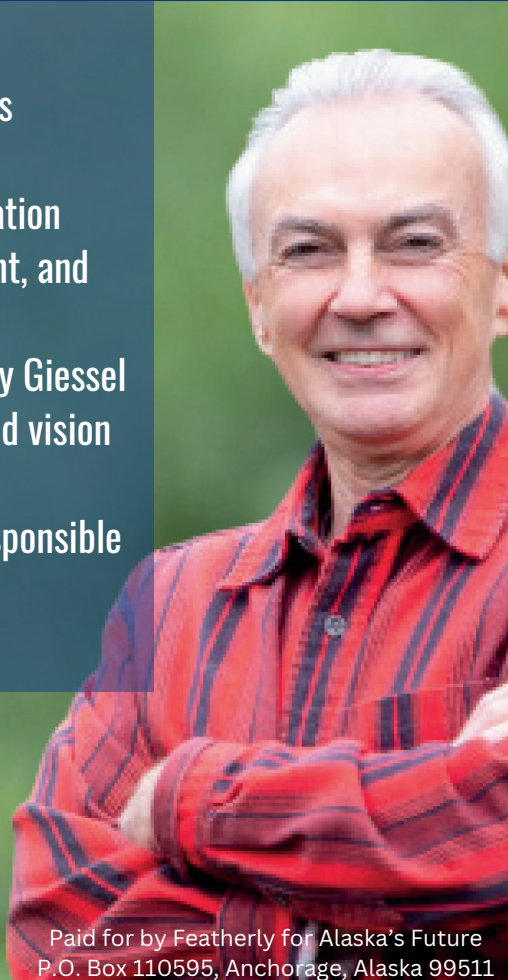


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# Aging is a gift: Invest in making the most of it

By JANET WARNER

For Senior Voice

Aging is not for the weak. Tasks we once took for granted become more difficult to complete. New challenges pop up frequently such as sore knees, stiff back or not sleeping well. That list just keeps on growing, right? However, aging is a gift and one we can value and maximize every day.

To be our best selves at our current age and forward, we need to invest in our health and well-being. The benefits of strength training for aging are well documented. The good news is this doesn't have to be a body builder program. We simply need to challenge our muscles two or three times per week.

The Alaska Club's Expressway is a circuit of weight machines targeting the major muscle groups that can be done in 30 minutes, and can progress with you over time simply by moving the pin to the next weight stack. Another means of staying muscle and movement strong is by taking our Group Power classes. You'll be coached through exercises using the major muscle groups and stay motivated with fun music and an amazing community of people. One of our Group Power regulars recently celebrated his 82nd birthday—so yes,

**ALS is becoming more prevalent in those ages 40 to 70. It could be there are more people getting ALS or that medical professionals are getting better at diagnosing it. Most likely it's a combination of both.**

Group Power works for everyone.

I also recommend having an activity that you really enjoy. This can be pickleball, golf, hiking, and many other activities. To keep you at your best in that activity, be sure to cross train with strength and mobility exercises. Community, enjoyment and movement will positively impact our sense of happiness.

This is all positive but yes, I also have days when I'm not so appreciative of the aging process. More wrinkles and extra belly fluff can certainly get to me. However, I know that not everyone is given this gift. My mother died at 48 after battling breast and bone cancer for six years. My dad was in the prime of his retirement, the day before his 65th birthday when he died from a heart attack. My brother Leo died at 55 from ALS.

### Diagnosing ALS

Unfortunately, ALS is becoming more prevalent in those ages 40 to 70. It could be there are more people getting ALS or that medical professionals are getting better at diagnosing it. Most likely it's a combination of both, meaning it's happening more often and what used to be misdiagnosed or undiagnosed is now being discovered.

ALS—Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis – is a progressive condition where the brain and the muscles stop communicating. Eventually this impacts muscles needed for walking, talking and breathing. The average life span from diagnosis to death is about 2.5 years. However, if we can get that diagnosis sooner, the person will have more quality time by receiving the needed medications and tools to make the most of the time remaining.

ALS is in the same "family" as multiple sclerosis and Parkinson's disease. When my brother Leo was at the Mayo clinic receiving his diagnosis, it was narrowed down to these three.

No one should ever have to hope they have MS or Parkinson's but that's the reality for those in the ALS diagnosis process.

Initially the symptoms are subtle and easier to ignore or attribute to getting older, such as tripping, dropping things, fatigue and slurred speech. There was a point Leo knew it wasn't nerve damage due to breaking his arm as a kid or just getting older. Knowing it was more, he didn't want to face it right away completely understandable and normal.

Recently a woman in her sixties that I knew died from ALS although it wasn't identified as ALS until the end. She had lost weight quickly, needed to use a cane to walk and didn't talk as much as usual. All of these can be a normal part of aging or related to dementia but the rate at which these symptoms progressed should have raised the ALS flag much sooner than it did.

Be honest with yourself, your family and your doctor about anything you're feeling that is not part of your normal, seems to



A group power class at The Alaska Club.

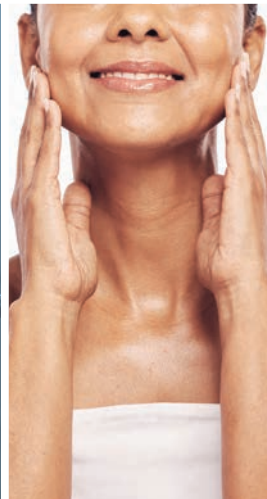
Courtesy The Alaska Club

be progressing quickly or simply scares you. It might be something simple like needing physical therapy to overcome a muscle imbalance or a change in medications. If it happens to be more, you'll make the most of your gift of aging by addressing it sooner.

To read more about ALS and seniors, Check this out: [www.targetals.org/2022/04/28/als-in-the-elderly-recognizing-als-in-seniors/](http://www.targetals.org/2022/04/28/als-in-the-elderly-recognizing-als-in-seniors/)

To learn more about how The Alaska Club is supporting Augie's Quest to Cure ALS: [www.thealaskaclub.com/als](http://www.thealaskaclub.com/als).

Janet Warner is the Fitness Services Executive Director at The Alaska Club.



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# Planning your escape from a household fire

By **CHRISTIAN M. HARTLEY**

For Senior Voice



**This is important to remember: If your house is on fire, never open a window unless you are using it to escape the home. Fire runs to fresh air and will come directly at you if you open any window or door.**

Let's use Fire Prevention Month to talk about something very important: Fire safety for those of us who might have trouble moving around quickly. Whether you use a wheelchair, a walker, or just find it harder to get around these days, it's crucial to have a good plan for getting out of your home if there's a fire or carbon monoxide leak.

First, let's discuss making your home safer. Inspect around your home or apartment. Are there things in the way that could trip you up if you needed to leave in a hurry? Remove any clutter from your hallways and doorways. Make sure your paths to the exits are clear and wide enough for you to get through easily, even with a walker or wheelchair.

Next, think about your doors and windows. Can you open them easily? If not, it might be time to replace old, sticky locks or handles with ones that are easier to use. For windows, consider installing special handles or latches that are simpler to operate. But this is important to remember: If your house is on fire, never open a window unless you are using it to escape the home. Fire runs to fresh air and will come directly at you if you open

any window or door.

Now, let's plan your escape routes. You should have at least two ways to get out of every room, if possible. This could be a door and a window, or two different doors. If you live in an apartment building, know where the nearest stairwell is. Remember, never use elevators during a fire, and never go back once you have left.

If you live in a multi-story home and can't use the stairs easily, consider moving your bedroom to the ground floor. This will make it much easier to get out quickly if there's an emergency.

It's also a good idea to keep any items you might need for getting around, like your cane or walker, close to your bed. That way, you can grab them quickly if you need to leave in a hurry.

Now, let's talk about smoke and carbon monoxide alarms. These are your first line of defense against fire and dangerous

gases. You should have both types of alarms on every level of your home, including inside and outside of sleeping areas. Place carbon monoxide alarms near sleeping areas, any fuel-burning appliances, and inside the home by the door to any garage.

Testing these alarms is very important. Set a reminder to test them once a month. It's easy—just press the test button and

make sure you can hear the alarm clearly. If you have trouble hearing, there are special alarms that use flashing lights or vibrations to alert you. Call your local fire department or the Red Cross of Alaska for more information on this.

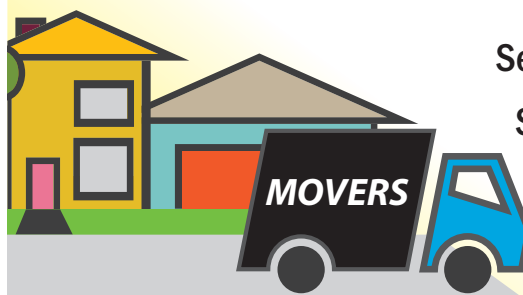
If you're worried about being able to call for help in an emergency, consider getting a medical alert system. These devices allow you to call for help with

just the push of a button. Practice your escape plan. Time yourself to see how long it takes to get out. If it takes too long, think about ways to make it quicker and easier.

Being prepared is the best way to stay safe. It could save your life, or the life of a loved one.

*Christian M. Hartley is a 40-year Alaska resident with over 25 years of public safety and public service experience. He is the City of Houston Fire Chief and serves on many local and state workgroups, boards and commissions related to safety. He lives in Big Lake with his wife of 20 years and their three teenage sons.*

## MOVING? Let us know!



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- Dillingham..... 842-1425 or (888) 391-1475
- Fairbanks..... 452-5181 or (800) 478-5401
- Juneau..... 586-6425 or (800) 789-6426
- Kenai..... 395-0352 or (855) 395-0352
- Ketchikan..... 225-6420 or (877) 525-6420
- Kotzebue..... 442-3500 or (800) 622-9797
- Nome..... 443-2230 or (888) 495-6663
- Palmer..... 746-4636 or (855) 996-4636

Additional information is available at:  
[www.alsc-law.org](http://www.alsc-law.org)

\*Funded by State of Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Senior and Disabilities Services. Preference for seniors in social and economic need.





# A place for learning, sharing and healing

## 2024 Denakkanaaga Elders Mentoring Elders Cultural Camp

By **SHARON McCONNELL**

For Senior Voice

It is late August and despite the nip in the air as fall descends on Interior Alaska, 56 elders and emerging elders eagerly gathered to learn and share their traditional Native activities at the third Denakkanaaga Elders Mentoring Elders Cultural Camp. Held at the scenic Howard Luke Gaalee'ya Spirit Camp on the Tanana River, the elders joined together to celebrate Native traditions, values, stories and skills.

"The camp is an opportunity to support elders who were disconnected from their culture, traditional foods and languages due to various reasons, such as being taken away to boarding schools," said one of the camp planners, Dr. LaVerne Xilegg Demientieff. "The camp creates a safe space for elders to



Elders take off from the boat landing in Fairbanks to attend the camp located on the Tanana River.

Photos courtesy Denakkanaaga

work together to heal, connect and learn without criticism or judgement."

For the past three years Denakkanaaga, an Interior regional Native nonprofit



Mildred Allen of Arctic Village shows the wild labrador tea and high bush cranberry plant she picked while at the camp.

elder advocacy organization, has collaborated with University of Alaska Fairbanks professors Dr. Demientieff and Dr. Jessica Black to hold this unique camp which has seen participants from many of the 42 Interior villages and Fairbanks.

"For some elders, their experiences with traditional knowledge and practices have been limited. So, to be able to attend a camp such as the Elders Mentoring Elders, it is an opportunity that not only benefits them, but also the younger generations of their families," said Sharon McConnell, Executive Director of Denakkanaaga. "One of the camp goals is that the elders will learn these skills and then return home and teach others."

Decided on by the elders themselves, this year's camp centered on the harvest of moose and related fall activities, such as cutting up the moose, tanning the hide, jarring moose meat and blueberry jam, making moose dry meat and begee (similar to fry bread), learning about the moose through Denaakk'e

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# Square dancing over the years: Friends, fun and exercise

By **MARALEY McMICHAEL**  
Senior Voice Correspondent

It could be said that I owe my existence to square dancing. My parents met at a square dance in the basement of the Seward Methodist Church in the early 1950s. Dad grew up on a ranch in Montana and came to Alaska for adventure and work. Mom grew up in a Pennsylvania town and came to Alaska as a missionary nurse.

They married in 1954 and lived in Seward, Anchorage and Cooper Landing before moving their growing family of four children (I'm the oldest) to Glennallen in January 1963. Glennallen did not have a square dance club, so I grew up ignorant about this activity. I later learned some of my contemporaries were introduced to it through school, but it wasn't taught in my school.

As a young adult raising



Alaska State Square and Round Dance Festival, July 1997 in the Colony High gym.  
Photos courtesy of Maraley McMichael

my children in Palmer in the mid-1980s, I was intrigued by a demonstration given by the local square dance club, the Paws and Taws, at the Alaska State Fair. The music was upbeat, the dancers wore colorful costumes, they had smiles on their faces, and all looked as if they were having

fun. I expressed interest to my husband Gary and he said there was no way he would be involved. This didn't surprise me because I learned before we married that he didn't dance.

Years later in the summer of 1995, the Paws and Taws float in the Colony Day's Parade caught my attention. There they were dancing to music in the street... having fun without me. Walking into the Carr's grocery store that fall, I glanced up at the bulletin board, which had just been

cleared. A single flyer jumped out at me and I caught the words "square dance". The Paws and Taws were beginning a new class. Here was my chance. I wrote down all the information. The first three weeks were introductory and free and the classes were held Friday nights at Pioneer Peak Elementary School, only a mile from my home. Missing the first two classes because of work, I eagerly awaited that third class. Upon arrival, I was welcomed with friendly conversation as someone made a name tag for me and explained what to expect during the evening. At the time I didn't realize how easily the club members could spot a newcomer. The music started as I walked to a row of chairs off to the side to find a place to set my coat and purse. When I turned around, I was surprised to find a man waiting to ask if I would be his partner for

the next dance. I replied that I'd never square danced and would rather just watch for a while. He insisted I would learn more by participating. He was right.

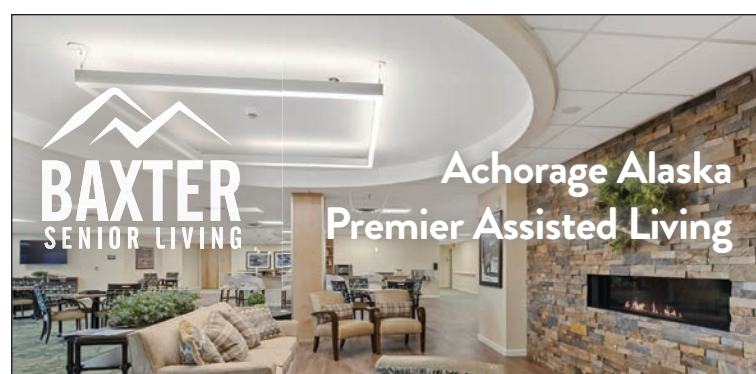
That night, I learned several basic movements and square dance terms, got my heart rate up with all the exercise, and met lots of friendly people. The evening flew by and too soon it was time to go home. When asked if I would attend the next Friday, I was torn. I really wanted to go again, but wasn't sure I should get involved in something so much fun without my husband.

I set about to persuade Gary that he would enjoy square dancing. After all, three quarters of the shirts in his closet were western. He had cowboy boots, hat and a black leather vest. I had no country style clothing. I told him that I was having a mid-life crisis (I would turn 40 in two weeks) and the only crazy thing I wanted to do was to take up square dancing. I said I needed a supportive spouse and partner. That was my

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Paws and Taws at the Buffalo Wallow in Delta Junction, May 1996.



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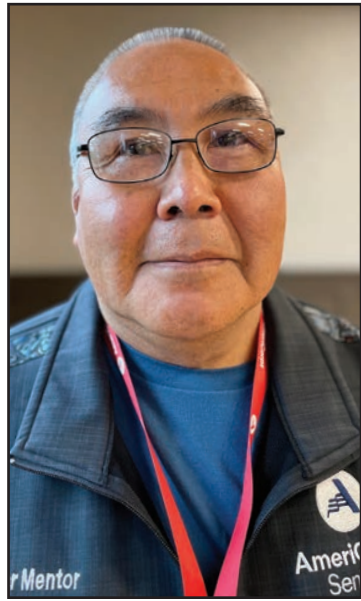
## Sharing skills and culture in Pilot Station

RurAL CAP

The Elder Mentor Program, part of RurAL CAP's AmeriCorps Seniors Program, serves children across Alaska in pre-K and school settings. Elder Mentors, age 55 and older, volunteer to support school readiness and academic engagement as mentors and culture bearers. They receive training, support and a small stipend for their service.

John Borromeo has been part of the Elder Mentor program since 2022 and volunteers at the Pilot Station school with students from kindergarten through eighth grade. Last school year John served 1,017 hours teaching drumming, singing and dancing to 143 students. We talked to John last spring about his volunteer experience, and this is what he shared:

"I'm John Borromeo from Pilot Station. I've been a school volunteer for four or five years and



Elder Mentor John Borromeo.

Photo courtesy RurAL CAP

joined the Elder Mentor program 14 months ago, thanks to our Yupik teacher. I teach Yupik singing and drumming, despite the kids primarily speaking English. Since 2005, I've been involved in Eskimo dance, teaching students from grade school to high school by repeating songs and explaining their meanings.

"As Elders pass on, Eskimo dance is becoming rarer, but young adults continue practicing with us. I help students overcome the challenges of drumming by focusing on the drumbeat and maintaining eye contact.

"We begin dance practice with warm-up songs, which I use to prepare students' voices. My senior nephew, who learned many songs from listening, now teaches younger students with my guidance in Yupik words and dance moves.

"Initially, I was hesitant to hold the drum due to its sacredness, but I now use it with great respect. I also assist with sewing mittens, gloves and caps alongside Patricia, another Elder Mentor, and seek guidance from Barbara (Heckman) when needed. I'm actively involved in helping with patterns, cutting fabric, and assisting with various tasks, volunteering almost daily.

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## Rambles

News from the Grapevine

If you still haven't acquired or used your **Senior Farmer's Market Nutrition Program checks**, they are valid through the end of October. Each booklet contains \$40 worth of checks for buying fresh Alaska-grown fruits, vegetables, herbs and honey at participating farmer's markets, authorized farms and roadside stands. Call your local senior center or meal program for details ... In **Fairbanks**, the **Parks and Recreation** department has started offering **limited transportation** to and from senior and adaptive recreation programs. This service will be different from the local Van Tran service in that drivers will be one of the Parks & Rec staff, and all participants will be picked up and dropped off on one route. To learn more about the policies for this new service, call 907-459-1136 ... **Anchorage Senior Activity Center** continues its twice-monthly **Nutrition Education Sessions** in October, with registered dietitian and nutritionist **Kiana Holland**. Bring your questions and learn about healthy living. Oct. 14 and 28 at 9:30 a.m. Kiana is also available for one-on-one private consultations with center members. Call 907-770-2002 or email [kholland@anchoragecenter.org](mailto:kholland@anchoragecenter.org) ... The **Anchorage Senior Activity Center** will again present the monthly **Age Smart: Let's Talk** forum, Oct. 15 in the ballroom, 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. This month's program: "**Ghost Stories of Anchorage**". Complimentary light meal provided ... Farkle returns to **Santa's Senior Center** in **North Pole**, with a **Farkle tournament** on Oct. 14.

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# Voters 50+ decide elections.

## Alaska's general election is Tuesday, November 5.

Our AARP Alaska voter guide has the when, where, and how so you can vote with confidence.

Get the AARP Alaska voter guide at [www.aarp.org/akvotes](http://www.aarp.org/akvotes) or by texting 'AKVOTES' to 22777







# Rambles

News from the Grapevine

continued from page 15

at 12:30 p.m. Call for details, 907-488-4663 or email [santaseniors@alaska.net](mailto:santaseniors@alaska.net)... The **Kenai Community Library** is offering a “**Bath Soak**” crafting session on Oct. 15, from 4 to 5 p.m. Join others in making a scented bath salt potion to take home for indulgent self-care soaks. Materials provided. Call 907-283-8207 ... If you live in the Valdez area and have a hard time getting to the post office for your mail, the **Valdez Senior Center** will pick it up for you, delivering on Wednesdays and Fridays. If interested, visit the center’s front desk to drop off your mailbox key and fill out their form. For more details, 907-835-5032 ... **Wasilla Area Seniors, Inc.** will hold their **holiday craft fair** on Nov. 2, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Table fees are \$20 to \$25. To reserve yours, call Kim Wolf at 907-717-6633 or email [kimtuckerwofl@outlook.com](mailto:kimtuckerwofl@outlook.com) ... The **Alaska Veterans Museum in Anchorage** will hold its **annual meeting and auction** on Saturday, Oct. 5, from 5 to 8 p.m. The dinner is provided by **Sal's New York Grill & Catering**. Cost is \$50 single and \$90 a couple with your annual 2025 museum membership dues included. The auction will include several guns, large baskets of enticing items, and more. Location is AMVETS Post 2, 855 East 38th Avenue. To book your reservation, call the museum at 907-677-8802, or **Jann Sherrill** direct at 813-545-6957 ... **Fairbanks North Star Borough Senior Program** hosts an **adult game night at Joy Community Center**, Oct. 8, from 5 to 8 p.m. \$5 for seniors, \$7 all other adults. Call for information, 907-459-1136.

Rambles is compiled from senior center newsletters, websites and reader tips from around the state. Email your Rambles items to [editor@seniorvoicealaska.com](mailto:editor@seniorvoicealaska.com).

## Culture

continued from page 15

“One eighth grader, who initially spoke only English, began singing in Yupik and has made great progress. I’m proud of him and have taught about 30 students over the years. Their smiles and continued participation are rewarding.”

“During Culture Week, students sing, drum and fish, culminating in a performance and potluck. They perform three times a year—at Christmas, Culture Week, and the school year’s end.”

### Learning our language

“Yuuyaraq, meaning ‘The Way of Life,’ is a continuous tradition where knowledge is passed down from parents. It encompasses subsistence living and preparation for winter, with students learning by observing us. They often seek guidance from those who help.”

Our Elder Mentors are crucial in preserving these traditions and ensuring they are passed on correctly.”

Anna Heckman, site supervisor at Pilot Station School, says, “I feel blessed to have John as one



John works with his drumming students. Photo courtesy RurAL CAP

of our Elder Mentors. He has greatly contributed by teaching Eskimo dance and sharing Yupik values and traditions with students. [Elder Mentors] John, Patricia (Polty) and Barbara have all been invaluable to our program.”

### How to get involved

RurAL CAP offers two types of volunteer opportunities for people 55 and

better: Elder Mentors and Senior Companions. Elder Mentors serve in schools and Head Starts as tutors, mentors or Culture Bearers. Senior Companions volunteer with other seniors in the community through peer-to-peer support providing transportation, respite service, or companionship. We are

currently accepting applications for both programs, which offer benefits including a tax-free stipend, paid holidays, free meals, and travel assistance for seniors age 55 and older.

For more information or to apply, call 907-717-7932 or visit [eldermentor.org](http://eldermentor.org). Find us on Facebook by searching “Elder Mentor” or “RurAL CAP Senior Companion Program”

## Photo ID booth returns to AFN



Anchorage Museum photo

### Senior Voice Staff

The Anchorage Museum Atwood Resource Center has been working to identify individuals, places, natural features, and elements of the built environment in historic photographs of rural Alaska villages. In support of this project, the museum hosts a booth at the Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) annual convention and attendees are invited to stop by and help identify any unknown people, places, or features in the historic photographs from the Anchorage Museum collection.

The booth will be located at booth 182 inside the Dena’ina Civic and Convention Center, during AFN exhibition hall hours.

Since the project’s inception, thousands of photographs have been partially or completely identified by Alaska Native Elders and community members. Information shared through the project broadens the context and information of the records held at the museum, to present a more authentic narrative of place and people.

The museum’s library and archives, with collections in history, ethnography, science and art of Alaska and the North, includes more than 750,000 photographs, 15,000 books, 800 rare books, 800 maps, auction catalogues, periodicals plus artist files for thousands of Northern artists.

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## Alaska Women's Hall of Fame to honor 10 trailblazing women

Senior Voice Staff

The Alaska Women's Hall of Fame (AWHF) has announced its 2024 inductees, recognizing ten remarkable women who have made significant contributions to their communities, professions, and the state. The honorees will be celebrated at a virtual induction ceremony on Wednesday, Oct. 16, at 6 p.m. The event will be broadcast live on the AWHF website, providing a platform for the inductees to share their inspiring stories.

This year's inductees include a diverse group of women whose achievements span various fields, from science and education to healthcare and journalism. Vera Alexander (1932–2023), a pioneering marine scientist at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, broke barriers for women in science and academia, while Carol Beery Davis (1890–1990) contributed to Alaska's cultural heritage by writing the second verse of the Alaska State Song and preserving historic artifacts.

Tina DeLapp, a nurse educator at the University of Alaska Anchorage, has made a lasting impact on Alaska's healthcare by expanding nursing programs and supporting the recruitment and

retention of Alaska Native nurses. Dr. Barbara Doty, a Mat-Su Valley physician, has been a key figure in healthcare and community development, co-founding the Alaska Family Medicine Residency Program.

Other honorees include Jo Heckman, the first female CEO and bank president in Alaska, and Janis Johnson, a champion for social services and disability advocacy. The list also features two influential journalists: Rhonda McBride, known for her compassionate reporting, and Nellie Moore (1954–2024), a cultural icon who highlighted the importance of preserving Alaska Native culture and languages.

Attorney Mary Nordale and indigenous health expert Vi Waghiyi round out the list of this year's inductees. The AWHF website provides biographies and photos of all inductees since the Hall's inception in 2009.

The AWHF is a non-profit organization that seeks to honor and preserve the legacy of Alaska's outstanding women. Nominations for future inductees will be open soon, and donations to support the organization's mission are welcome. For more information, visit [www.alaskawomenshall-offame.org](http://www.alaskawomenshall-offame.org).



The Retired and Senior Volunteer Program at APIA has partnered with several non-profits to meet community needs by encouraging and supporting volunteerism for people ages 55 years and older in the Anchorage and Mat-Su region. We are currently looking for elders to volunteer at the following sites (but not limited to): Alaska Regional Hospital, Alaska Veterans and Pioneer Home, Alaska Veterans Museum, Anchorage Loussac Library, Anchorage Senior Activity Center, Catholic Social Services, Downtown Hope Center, Mat-Su Regional Medical Center, Prestige Care and Rehabilitation Center, Primrose Retirement Communities, Wasilla Area Seniors Inc.

*If you are interested please contact:*

**Brianne Hunt**  
RSVP Coordinator  
(907) 276-2700 ext. 276  
Or directly (907) 222-4276  
[brianneh@apiai.org](mailto:brianneh@apiai.org)  
[www.apiai.org](http://www.apiai.org)



## Calendar of Events

**Oct. 1-2 Juneau** Southeast Regional Eldercare Coalition Summit, Centennial Hall. Information about eldercare supports, benefits and services, employment opportunities for job seekers, workforce development for local employers, and regional strategic planning for the eldercare system. Catered meals and vendor tables during the conference. Senior discounts available. Call 907-523-2300 or find event on Facebook.

**Oct. 2 Worldwide** Rosh Hashanah begins at sundown and concludes at nightfall on Oct. 4.

**Oct. 2 Anchorage** AARP Legislative Forum, 49th State Brewing Heritage Theater, 717 W. Third Ave., 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Meet candidates and learn where they stand on issues important to Alaska seniors. Free pizza and drink tickets provided. Space limited, RSVP at [aarp.org/ak](http://aarp.org/ak) or 877-926-8300.

**Oct. 5-6 Anchorage** Whole Life Festival at Coast Inn on Lake Hood, 3450 Aviation Ave., 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. both days. Learn about the holistic, metaphysical and healing arts community with vendors, lectures more. Admission: \$10 per day, or \$5 for seniors age 65+. Visit the Alaska Whole Life Festival Facebook page or their website, [alaskawholelifefestival.com](http://alaskawholelifefestival.com).

**Oct. 12 Nikiski** Nikiski Senior Center Fall Fundraiser, 4 to 8 p.m. Fine dining combo dinner plate with herb roasted chicken, bacon wrapped beef medallion, grilled garlic and lemon shrimp, rice and vegetable sides, more. No host bar from Kassik's Brewery (one beverage included with ticket purchase). \$75 per person, seating limited. Call to purchase, 907-776-7654.

**Oct. 15 Soldotna** Information session on applying for U.S. citizenship, Soldotna Public Library, 6 p.m. Featuring virtual presentation from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. Free. 907-262-4227

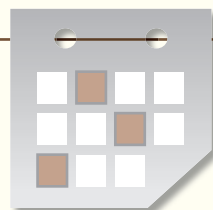
**Oct. 17-19 Anchorage** Alaska Federation of Natives convention, Dena'ina Center. The principal forum and voice for the Alaska Native community in addressing critical issues of public policy and government. The convention convenes thousands of official delegates and participants from across the state and is packed with cultural performances and activities. [nativefederation.org/convention/](http://nativefederation.org/convention/)

**Oct. 18 Homer** "Oc-Elder-Fest" at Grace Ridge Brewery, 5 p.m. Fundraiser for Homer Senior Citizens, Inc. features brats, pretzels, music, silent auction, more. 907-235-7655

**Oct. 18 Statewide** Alaska Day

**Oct. 26 Nationwide** Drug Enforcement Administration National Prescription Drug Take Back Day, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Drop off expired, unused, unidentified medications, prescription or not—pills, syrups, inhalants, lotions, more. Search website for locations near you, <https://bit.ly/3zvHASA>

**Oct. 26 Anchorage** Hospice of Anchorage "Heroes of Health Care Enchanted Forest" fundraiser at Hilton Anchorage. Multi-course dinner, live and silent auction, Cocktail hour at 5 p.m., ballroom doors open at 6. Wear your finest. Various ticket packages available. [www.hospiceofanchorage.org](http://www.hospiceofanchorage.org) or 907-561-5322



### Send us your calendar items

Send to: Senior Voice, 401 E. Fireweed Lane,  
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# 1918: The Big Sickness spreads across Alaska

By LAUREL DOWNING BILL

Senior Voice Correspondent

Called the Spanish flu, only because the Spanish press wrote about it, a virus took more than 500,000 American lives between 1918 and 1919 (estimates worldwide range from 20 to 100 million). And it came north, even though Territorial Gov. Thomas Riggs did everything in his power to keep it away from Alaska's shores.

When 75 citizens of Seattle died from the flu during the week of Oct. 12, Riggs asked steamship companies to examine all passengers heading north on the final ships of the season and not allow anyone with symptoms to travel. He warned that anyone showing signs of influenza would be isolated at the port of debarkation and assigned physicians to meet the ships and enforce his directive.

By the end of October, Seattle's death toll had reached 350. And the panhandle of Alaska was too close to Seattle to keep the flu at bay.

Juneau's first reported case came on Oct. 14, 2018. Soon it had spread along the coast. Juneau officials advised people not to congregate in groups, which meant staying away from churches, schools, social functions and pool halls.

The panhandle came through the epidemic better than areas farther north and west, because it had services and physicians who set up quarantine areas, emergency hospitals and buried the dead immediately. It also had help from professionals in Seattle and San Francisco.

But when passengers from the S.S. Victoria, the last ship of the season from Seattle, docked in Nome, all hell broke loose on the Seward Peninsula.

Before leaving Seattle, the ship's passengers and crew had been checked by three physicians, separately and independently, to assure that no one who exhibited symptoms would be traveling. And when the Victoria arrived in Nome on October 20, all those who came ashore were quarantined in the hospital for five days and all freight and mail were fumigated.

No one showed any signs of influenza.

But within days, Alaska Natives were sick and dying. Few escaped infection. In a single eight-day period, 162 had died.

The people of Mountain Village initiated a quarantine.

"This was a hard thing for the Natives to do," wrote a school-teacher at the time, "but the safety of their own families impelled them to break their habits and the customs of their ancestors [to gather together]."

The flu never made it to Mountain Village.

However some mail carriers that hit the trails with the governor's order for quarantines delivered more than Rigg's message. The Spanish flu followed the mail carriers' routes to York and Wales.

The epidemic killed everyone in York and 170 of Wales' 310 residents.

Flu also spread to Solomon, Golovin, Mary's Igloo and Teller. The population of Teller Mission, located about five miles from Teller, was decimated. The deadly virus may have reached that village, later renamed Brevig Mission, on the breath of men bringing supplies. Natives who loaded their dogsleds with supplies in Teller might have picked up the virus by working beside the men. Between November 15-20, 72 of Brevig Mission's 80 residents died.

The flu made its way to other

parts of Alaska, as well, including Kodiak Island—where 47 of the island's 550 residents died—Copper Center, Cordova, Skagway and Cook Inlet.

In the spring of 1919, it hit Fairbanks, the Aleutian chain and Bristol Bay.

By summer 1919, the killer had disappeared. And while many white Alaskans contracted the flu, only 150 deaths were reported. But between 1,500 and 2,000 Natives had died.

This column features tidbits found while researching Alaska's colorful past for Aunt Phil's Trunk, a five-



Many victims of the 1918 influenza froze to death because they were too weak to chop wood and keep fires burning.

Alaska State Library, Dr. Daniel S. Neuman Collection, ASL-P307-1052

book Alaska history series written by Laurel Downing Bill and her late aunt, Phyllis Downing Carlson. The books are available at bookstores and gift shops throughout Alaska, as well as online at [www.auntphilstrunk.com](http://www.auntphilstrunk.com).

### Who's Side Are You On?

#### Across

- 1 Head honcho
- 5 Like the Kalahari
- 9 Waste maker
- 14 "\_\_\_ Baby" (song from "Hair")
- 15 Boxing prize
- 16 Part of "the works"
- 17 Tires that used to have white on them
- 19 Largest of the Texas barrier islands
- 20 Daughter of Mnemosyne
- 21 Mah-jongg piece
- 22 Unruly crowd
- 24 Less of a mess
- 27 Boat propellers
- 30 Spirited horse
- 32 Lavish affection (on)
- 33 Stick-to-itiveness
- 34 Layers
- 37 Fourth-down option
- 39 Word of possibility
- 40 Some are steep
- 43 Broadsheets
- 46 Jai follower
- 47 Kind of ticket
- 51 Expressed
- 53 Bookie's quote
- 55 They're spotted in casinos
- 56 London's \_\_\_ Park
- 57 Show instability
- 60 Little League coach, often
- 61 Times in classifieds
- 63 Join forces
- 65 Implied
- 67 Some entrances
- 71 Clear the chalkboard
- 72 Gloomy
- 73 Word with high or hole
- 74 Farm units

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- 75 Ilium's alternative name
- 76 Renaissance name of fame
- 11 Pistol
- 12 Rocky prominence
- 13 Helm heading
- 18 Showing fatigue
- 21 Fashions
- 22 More, in Madrid
- 23 Crumb
- 25 Not below, on board
- 26 Small ornamental purse
- 28 Coastline feature
- 29 Farm area
- 31 "\_\_\_, humbug!"
- 35 Spanish aunt
- 36 Apportions
- 38 Informal wear
- 41 Stow, as cargo
- 42 Bummed
- 43 Havana residue
- 44 Calendar square
- 45 Cocktail or conveyance
- 48 Soccer terms
- 49 Mozart's "L' \_\_\_ del Cairo"
- 50 Nancy Drew's beau
- 52 Concoct
- 54 Kind of apartment
- 58 Hostile force
- 59 "Get \_\_\_ of that!"
- 62 Summers on the Seine
- 64 Casino tip
- 65 Mad Hatter's drink
- 66 Missile's path
- 67 \_\_\_ Hulka ("Stripes" role)
- 68 Sale item abbr.
- 69 Soak flax
- 70 Bishop's jurisdiction

Crossword answers on page 26





# What happened to Mrs. Tony Curtis?

By NICK THOMAS

Tinseltown Talks

It's been 14 years since 85-year-old screen legend Tony Curtis died at his Nevada home on Sept. 29, 2010. The much-loved actor left behind a body of work that included over 150 television and movie roles in such classics as "The Defiant Ones," "Some Like it Hot," and "The Sweet Smell of Success." Curtis remarried for the last time in 1998 and his new bride, Jill Vandenberg, was some 40 years his junior. The pair became inseparable, traveling the world together. But back in Nevada, the couple founded Shiloh, a horse rescue ranch.

"I was horrified to learn that tens of thousands of unwanted American horses are slaughtered each year for human consumption in Asia and Europe," Jill told me in 2006 when I met her and Tony on their ranch. "I realized I could do more to help horses."

"We were driving in the car one evening and Jill told me she wanted to save some of those horses," Tony recalled to me. "I told her let's go do it!"

They did, and the couple soon acquired 40 acres of desert outside Las Vegas, eventually transforming the barren area into a nurturing ranch where hundreds of horses were saved. I still recall Curtis's



The Lucky Horse Co., in Deadwood.



Jill Curtis, center, with husband Todd and mother Sally in their Deadwood shop.

Nick Thomas photos

joy when I asked him to comment on the success of the Shiloh sanctuary: "It picks up my spirits to see the good work done there," was his reply.

Today, Jill Curtis is now Jill Curtis-Weber after marrying Todd Weber three years after Tony died. The couple met at a country and western club in Vegas and were married six months later. After selling the Nevada ranch and her Las Vegas home, they moved to Deadwood, South Dakota, often romanticized as the heart of the American West with history steeped in gold rushes, outlaws, and frontier legends such as Wild Bill Hickok and Calamity Jane.

"We both loved the history of the Old West and began traveling around selling our horseshoe art," said Jill, when I met up with her recently at her shop in the heart of downtown Deadwood. "When we came here we loved it and decided to stay."

Along with her husband and mother, Sally, the trio run "The Lucky Horse Co.," a thriving Western-themed business specializing in decorative horseshoes and other gifts (see [www.shilohhorserescue.com](http://www.shilohhorserescue.com)). Their charming little shop, an open-air wooden structure built around a living tree, is located on the main street of Deadwood. It's filled with hundreds of Western art pieces, showcased by unique horseshoe art—beautifully painted or decorated horseshoes for wall hangings and intricate pieces welded into artistic shapes.

"We make everything here in Deadwood by hand," said Jill. "Todd does all the welding for the

horseshoes and also teaches gold panning to tourists. He built the shop around the tree and based it on an old livery stable from the late 1800s. The profits go toward supporting Shiloh."

With her deep passion for horses, it was a natural progression for Jill to expand into Western art. She relocated Shiloh Ranch from Nevada to Newell, about 30 minutes from Deadwood, where the ranch has rescued and rehabilitated over 700 horses since its founding. She remains grateful to her previous husband for supporting her horse rescue efforts and recognizes some similarities between Tony and Todd.

"Todd has the same

sense of humor and wit, and is very intelligent and kind," she said. "I think Tony would have liked him. Todd is very supportive of my past life and has never felt he had to live up to Tony, who had a larger-than-life personality. We were ready to start a new life, a simpler life, in this beautiful historic Old West town. Tony and I watched and really enjoyed HBO's 'Deadwood' series, so I believe he would absolutely love that I now live in the town."

Nick Thomas teaches at Auburn University at Montgomery, Ala., and has written features, columns, and interviews for many newspapers and magazines. See [www.getnickt.org](http://www.getnickt.org).

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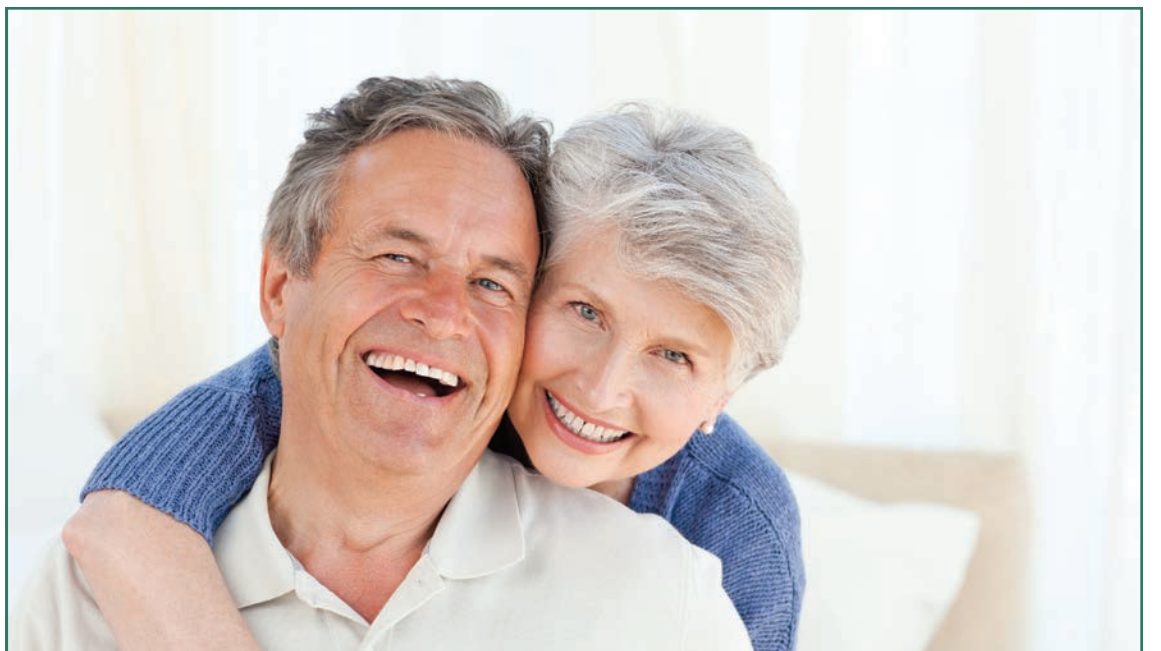
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# Troubled

continued from page 4

- ▶ Excessive panic or anxiety
- ▶ Noticeable decrease in social interactions
- ▶ Frequent absences from social gatherings or activities
- ▶ Feelings of fatigue or apathy, changes in sleeping patterns, significant fluctuations in weight
- ▶ Alterations in personal hygiene habits
- ▶ Isolation or withdrawal from social situations
- ▶ Expressions of hopelessness or helplessness in conversations, texts, emails or online posts.

It is important to note that this list is not exhaustive, and individuals may be experiencing distress without displaying overt behaviors. Seeking professional advice is recommended if you have concerns about the welfare of those around you, whether they are family members, friends, caregivers, co-workers or acquaintances.

### What can you do?

When offering assistance to someone showing signs of distress, communication and empathy are key. Initiating a conversation with an open-ended question such as "How is it going?" and actively listening in a nonjudgmental manner can help you understand the individual's perspective and needs.

If you feel unable to effectively engage with the

person, involving others who may be better equipped to provide support is advised. Encouraging the individual to seek help from a clinician or mental health professional can also be beneficial, with resources such as helplines, urgent care centers, general practitioners, and enlisting additional healthcare provider support for guidance.

### What does the science say?

Performing meaningful gestures for others can have a significant positive impact on our body, as evidenced by scientific research. Acts of kindness have been shown to boost the production of three key brain chemicals—dopamine, serotonin and oxytocin, often referred to as the "happiness trifecta." These chemicals play a role in improving mood and overall well-being. Studies have also demonstrated that helping others lowers the risk of depression by promoting social interaction, which is beneficial for heart health. Researchers at Carnegie Mellon University have even found a link between volunteerism and a reduced risk of high blood pressure, a major factor in various cardiovascular conditions.

Engaging in acts of service and altruism have a range of mental and emotional advantages by decreasing stress levels and enhancing overall wellness. Physical activity through caregiving helps older adults maintain mus-

cular and bone strength as they age. Providing support to individuals boosts self-esteem and confidence, fostering a sense of achievement. Moreover, helping others can combat feelings of isolation and loneliness, leading to a greater sense of belonging, opportunities to forge new friendships, and increased connections within one's community.

### Moral aspects

Immanuel Kant, a philosopher and Enlightenment thinker, believed in the moral value of acting for the good of others over acting for one's own bene-

fit. The concept of altruism is debated among philosophers, with some viewing it as an innate human trait to be nurtured and valued, while others see it as a cultural construct influenced by a cost-benefit analysis. According to the social-exchange theory, certain acts of service may be driven by self-interest. Each individual weighs the rewards of their actions against potential negative outcomes, leading to adjustments based on personal considerations.

On the other hand, the empathy-altruism hypothesis posits that true altruistic behavior arises

from a genuine desire to help those in need. In situations where helping others may come at a personal cost, the decision to proceed is driven by the belief that the benefits to the recipient outweigh any sacrifice on the part of the helper. By engaging in acts of kindness, individuals can experience the positive effects of increased happiness and well-being, both for themselves and those they assist.

Karen Casanovas, PCC, CPCC, CLIPP is a health and wellness professional coach practicing in Anchorage. If you have questions write to her at [info@karencasanovas.com](mailto:info@karencasanovas.com).

## Networking for Anchorage, Mat-Su area providers

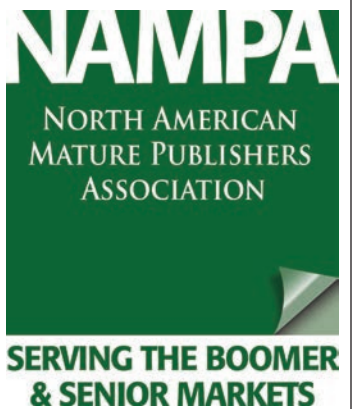
Interested in learning more about fellow businesses and agencies providing senior services in the Anchorage and Mat-Su area? Want to get the word out about your own service? The monthly Service Providers Breakfast, sponsored by Older Persons Action Group, Inc., is an opportunity for all the above. Informal, early and free, the event begins at 8

a.m., second Wednesday, at a different host location each month. Breakfast provided. The next date is Oct. 9, hosted by RurAL CAP.

Call Older Persons Action Group, Inc. at 907-276-1059 for location information and to RSVP for this event, or for more information on future events, and to be added to our e-mail reminder list.

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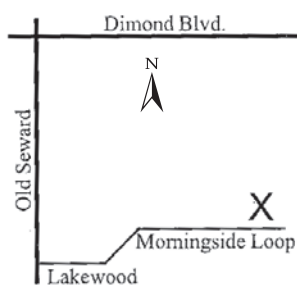


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# Dance

continued from page 14

best argument and it didn't work.

However, he was fine with me going by myself, while he sat at home enjoying his TV programs. Completing the lessons the next spring, I was awarded an official blue membership badge. The mother of the caller offered to lend me two handmade square dance dresses from her closet, so I looked like I belonged, too.

I was happy to learn the Friday evening dancing would continue at a different venue during the summer—a pavilion at the Homestead RV Park on the Glenn Highway, where tourist visitors frequently gathered to watch us dance. Just before the last dance of the evening, we would pick someone from the audience and ask if they would like to be our partner. Our caller kept the calls simple and we closed out each evening by putting smiles on the faces of many visitors to Alaska.

For the next four years,

I greatly enjoyed this new activity—the exercise, the upbeat alcohol-free environment, new friendships, holiday get-togethers, and more. Each summer over the July Fourth weekend, a state festival was held somewhere in Alaska.

In 1997, it was the Paws and Taws turn to host. We held a very successful festival in the Colony High gym with about 250 dancers. I also enjoyed participating in the parade floats and other demonstrations.

In the fall of 1999, Gary and I moved to Slana and to my disappointment, my days of weekly dancing came to an abrupt end. The nearest clubs were in Valdez or Delta – too far to travel, especially during the winter.

Years later in the fall of 2011, Gary and I decided it was time to return to “civilization” and we moved back to Palmer. We also both needed to be closer



Paws and Taws demonstration at the Alaska State Fair, 2005.

Photos courtesy of Maraley McMichael

to medical facilities. When I read about the Paws and Taws Club starting up their introductory classes in the fall of 2012, I hesitantly decided to try to pick up where I'd left off. After only two weeks, I had to drop out. Still dealing with some brain fog and unable to do quick movements, I was disappointed that square dancing was beyond my capabilities at that time.

Then a year ago, fall of 2023, I again read about Paws and Taws starting their fall classes. This time things were different. My health was definitely better and I wondered if I might be able to successfully follow instructions and learn the

calls all over again. Although Gary had been living in the Palmer Pioneer Home for over a year, I didn't feel lonely, but decided I needed to do something for fun. That's how I found myself going to Sophia's Café on the Palmer Wasilla Highway every Friday evening last winter, trying to earn my blue club badge all over again.

Although the club was hit hard by the pandemic and our membership has not fully recovered, we successfully hosted the Alaska State Square and Round Dance Festival July 4-7, 2024 in the Mat-Su Borough gym. Four guest callers from the Princess

Cruise Lines “Alaska Square Dance Cruise” lead the event. They, along with other out-of-state dancers, went directly from our festival to their cruise. Many from Anchorage and other Alaskan towns also attended, making a total of over 100 dancers on the floor at times.

Paws and Taws are still in the middle of introductory classes this fall and would welcome more participants. For more info call 907-355-2382 or email garyfeaster@yahoo.com.

### Anchorage Stardusters Square Dance Club

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### Fairbanks Santa Swingers Square Dancers

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Square dancers in the Mat-Su Borough gym at the July 2024 Alaska State Square and Round Dance Festival.

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[www.adrcnorth.org](http://www.adrcnorth.org)

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[www.bbna.com/our-programs/social-service-programs/elderly-services/](http://www.bbna.com/our-programs/social-service-programs/elderly-services/)



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The State of Alaska, Division of Senior and Disabilities Services, administers the ADRC grant in partnership with the regional sites. Contact SDS at 1-800-478-9996 to learn about the grant program.





# What's mine is yours and...

By **KENNETH KIRK**

For Senior Voice



Do you remember the Little Rascals?

I'm not talking about the old black-and-white films from the 1920s and 30s, although some of you might remember those. I mean the wonderful 1994 movie based on those old "Spanky and Our Gang" films. If you haven't seen it, it is a marvelous movie, quite funny and very much family-friendly.

There is a scene in the movie, in which one of the characters says "what's yours is mine, and what's mine is ours". That gives me a chuckle, or at least a wry grin, everytime I hear it. It is a line which a lot of divorce lawyers use, when talking to each other, to express how certain of their clients seem to feel. Everything which I brought into the marriage, or inherited, belongs to me. Everything my spouse brought into the marriage is joint property, to be divided in the property division.

Of course, it doesn't work that way, but sometimes it is hard for a divorce lawyer to get that across to their client. People who are going through a divorce are not always logical. That is at least one of the reasons I stopped handling divorce cases years ago.

But there are two points I want to make in regard to estate planning.

First, many of my clients have the concern that if they die and leave assets to their child, and then that child's spouse divorces them, all the money the client worked for would end up going to that ex-son or daughter-in-law.

That usually doesn't happen though. As long as the inheriting child keeps those assets separate, they are not treated as "marital property" in a divorce. Let us say that I leave a few hundred thousand dollars to one of my daughters. She takes that money and puts it into a brokerage account which is just in her name. If her husband runs off with some cocktail waitress, he can't claim that account as a marital asset. It is her separate money, and does not count in the property division.

Which is fine as long as she has the good sense, and strength of will, to do that. But if she is foolish enough to put it into a joint account, it would become marital property. Or if the

**Real estate usually goes to the surviving spouse automatically, but not always. If the property is titled to the couple as husband and wife, then it automatically belongs to the survivor. But occasionally a property is titled to just one spouse.**

relationship is so abusive (emotionally or otherwise) that she really can't say no, she might be forced to put it into a joint account.

And if she does keep it in a separate account, and then dies and leaves her estate to her husband, it might not end up with her kids. Her husband might leave it to his next wife, or her kids.

For that reason, some people put the assets into a living trust, and then direct that the assets will continue to be held in trust throughout the lifetime of their child. The trustee (that is the manager of the trust) can pay money out for the child's benefit, but the principal remains in the trust, to go to the

grandchildren, typically, when the child dies.

There are downsides to doing that. Every year that the money is in trust, there are costs, such as tax preparation and accounting. It also makes selection of trustees more complex, since you need to have trustees who are not too much older than your child. Alternatively, you can name a bank or trust company, but that costs money. So most people don't go that far, they just leave it to their kids and trust their judgment. But it is an option.

The other point I want to make is that under the inheritance laws, not everything automatically belongs to a surviving spouse.

Some things do. What the Alaska Supreme Court calls "household goods"—furniture, appliances, artwork, and so forth—is presumed to be joint property, so it automatically belongs to the surviving spouse. And anything which is jointly titled, for example a joint bank account, automatically belongs to the other owner.

Real estate usually goes to the surviving spouse automatically, but not always. If the property is titled to the couple as husband and

wife, then it automatically belongs to the survivor. But occasionally a property is titled to just one spouse.

I recently ran into a case, not for the first time, where a couple who were not yet married bought a property together, and then later got married. They assumed that the property would automatically pass to the surviving spouse, but because they were not married when they bought it, things would not have worked out that way.

In most cases it is pretty easy to fix that kind of situation, at least while both spouses are alive. Properties can be retitled to the couple as husband and wife. Accounts can either be made joint, or the spouse could be designated as the POD (or "death beneficiary") on the account.

But don't automatically assume that the spouse necessarily inherits everything, otherwise it will be "what's mine is mine, and what's yours is in probate".

*Kenneth Kirk is an Anchorage estate planning lawyer. Nothing in this article should be taken as legal advice for a specific situation; for specific advice you should consult a professional who can take all the facts into account. Otay?*

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# iPhone options, passwords, AirPods hearing health

By **BOB DELAURENTIS**

Tech Talk

**Q.** I need help deciding which cellphone to buy. What do you recommend?

**A.** If you have a tech-oriented friend, get the model they suggest. Just make sure they are willing to help you when you need it.

If I assume you don't have a friend like that, here is my take:

I purchased my first cell phone in 1989. I have owned or tested countless different cellular phones. As a daily user of cellphones for 35 years, I have strong opinions.

The very best phones available at any price are made by Apple. Any Apple phone is a good choice, so making your choice based on what you can afford is a reasonable place to begin. The entry-level iPhone SE 2 is a top-quality option.

If you look beyond just affordability, here are the basics.

This year, the iPhone 16 is the newest release. There are four models, two sizes, and two feature sets.

Choose the size first. That is a personal choice. Which phone feels comfortable in your hand?

Once you choose a size, the next choice is the Pro model or the non-Pro model. The differences are minor. For example, the Pro model has three camera lenses instead of two.

Size: Check. Pro vs non-

Pro: Check. The last decision is the memory size. This decision can get expensive, adding hundreds of dollars to the price. Unlike the first two choices, this one is a bit hard to pin down.

Let me make it easy. The base model is all any new iPhone owner would ever need unless you take hours of video, and if you run out of space then a \$3 monthly iCloud plan will solve the problem.

Apple phones are easy to return or exchange, so a less than perfect choice is easy to fix.

My last bit of advice is to buy directly from Apple. If there is a store nearby, go there. If not, use their online store. They sell carrier plans for every network. They treat their customers better than any other electronics store I have ever used.

**Q.** What is your favorite new feature in Apple's latest software?

**A.** The feature that most people are going to find useful when they upgrade to the latest operating system is the Passwords app. I have been recommending Apple iCloud Keychain for several years, because it was free and it worked. The one shortcoming it had was that the keychain was confusing, however its ability to auto-fill fields in many places made it work well enough.

The new Apple Passwords app is a fresh way to interact with your passwords. If you

use an existing password manager, it should be able to import your existing passwords. And if you've never used an app to manage passwords before, this is the perfect time to start.

Many of the other new features will not be available for several months, but I will cover them.

A few of the other big-ticket features that are here now that I'm impressed with are the sleep apnea detection (in conjunction with Apple Watch) and the hearing aid capability of the new AirPods.

The additive effects of many small features make this year a solid upgrade, with more promised in the coming months.

**Q.** I saw in the news that Apple AirPods are approved as an over-the-counter hearing aid. Where do I sign up?

**A.** For me, the hearing aid functionality news is welcome and a bit anti-climactic, because I've been testing the existing AirPods Pro as a simple hearing aid for the last few years.

Although I haven't personally tested the new software, I'm so impressed with how well these unofficial

## Wander the Web

Here are my picks for worthwhile browsing this month:

**New Apple Software Releases**  
A closer look at the latest updates, many of which are available to existing iPhone users.  
[apple.com/ios/ios-18/](https://apple.com/ios/ios-18/)

**Apple-focused Tutorials**  
This service provides tutorials to help you get started with Apple products or learn a new skill.  
[screencastsonline.com](https://screencastsonline.com)

**Pre-Internet Network**  
A barbed wire fence was once a communication network commonplace in farm areas.  
[loriemerson.net/2024/08/31/a-brief-history-of-barbed-wire-fence-telephone-networks/](https://loriemerson.net/2024/08/31/a-brief-history-of-barbed-wire-fence-telephone-networks/)

hearing aids have worked that I'm eager for the new release.

That is because unlike the unofficial preview version, the new software is FDA sanctioned, and I expect it will be a bit easier to use. Moreover, it will include hearing tests and long-term hearing health tracking.

The AirPods hardware terminology is a bit confusing. As of this month there are three models, AirPods 4, Air-

Pods Pro 2, and AirPods Max.

The hearing aid functionality will be available on AirPods Pro 2, which is \$249, and on the AirPods 4 with Active Noise Cancellation, which is \$179. The entry-level \$129 AirPods 4 and the \$499 AirPods Max do not support the hearing aid feature.

Bob has been writing about technology for over three decades. He can be contacted at [techtalk@bobdel.com](mailto:techtalk@bobdel.com).



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- Additional stress on your family
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**Proper Planning Ensures You:**

- Maintain control of assets for the sake of the family
- Give control to those you trust when you're not able
- Remain home without stress on the family, should the need for long term care arise
- Keep family business private

**IN-PERSON WORKSHOPS:**

**Anchorage Senior Activity Center**  
1300 E. 19th Avenue, Anchorage  
Oct 8, Dec 10 | 9:30–11:30 a.m.

**Wasilla Senior Center**  
1301 South Century Circle, Wasilla  
Oct 15 | 9:30–11:30 a.m.

**Palmer Senior Center**  
1132 South Chugach Street, Palmer  
Oct 7 | 9:30–11:30 a.m.

No workshops in November

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# Road Scholar has treats for solo women travelers

By **DIMITRA LAVRAKAS**

Senior Voice Travel Correspondent

Road Scholar, the senior travel organization that takes you on all-included trips worldwide and in the U.S., is offering solo women travelers' trips in 2025.

And, because the 2025 Monarch butterfly tours to Mexico have sold out, another is planned for 2026.

But for both, you'll have to be alert as to when they open up and be skippy in signing up.

If you're a woman traveling alone and are tired of couples who do not interact with you, clutching each other as if you will ruin their marriage, Road Scholar has trips with you in mind.

Women-only walking tours in Switzerland, Greece, Africa, or the Arctic give the female wanderer a wide choice of locations from cold to hot.

## Swiss beauty and history

Twelve days, 11 nights, and 21 meals covers your rambling through the mountains of Switzerland and France, as well as strolls through cities and charming villages, like Bern and Annecy, and along hiking trails with breathtaking views of the Alps.

Local experts talk about the roles of women in religion and politics, including the Huguenots who fled religious persecution and the path to women's right to vote in Switzerland.

Depending on the time of year, tuition starts at \$5,549 and flights, \$1,050.

## Charming Greece

Northern Greece is a world away from Athens, but also has a rich history that shaped the country's modern culture. Visit Thessaloniki — the second largest city in Greece — and explore its open markets and ancient ruins. Look into the past in historic stone villages nestled in the Zagori Mountains and stop in Metzovo, a charming small town with red-roofed houses perched on mountainous hillsides, where the Metzovo Folk Art Museum highlights the city's centuries-old trade in wool and

the clothing and textiles craftspeople made.

Twelve days, 11 nights, 23 meals with prices starting at \$3,399 and flight at \$1,050. Activity is intensive so bring your best walking shoes.

## Arctic exploration

Road Scholar says cities like Barcelona are turning on tourists because of overcrowding, so it's looking to find more "off-the-beaten-path" destinations.

Pricier trips include two — "Heart of the Arctic: An Expedition to Northern Canada and Greenland," or "Arctic Ecosystems: Fjords and Tundra Under the Midnight Sun."

Sail into the Canadian and Greenlandic Arctic on Adventure Canada's Ocean Endeavour that sports twenty Zodiacs, advanced navigation equipment, and excellent maneuverability so you can explore remote Arctic environments up close and personal. It even has a hot tub.

## On to Africa

The "Kenya in Depth: How Wildlife, People and Landscapes Intersect," lasts for fifteen days and 34 meals, with only 12 people. Explore Lake Nakuru National Park on the floor of the Great Rift Valley, and you'll search for flamingos along its shores, a field trip to learn about its wildlife conservation efforts, but be on the lookout for rhinos and chimpanzees.

Then on to the Maasai Mara National Reserve, home to lions, elephants and part of the Great Migration where over 1.2 million wildebeest and 300,000 zebras along with topi and other gazelle move in a constant cycle through the Serengeti-Mara from July to November.

## Monarch migration 2026

Each year, millions of Monarch butterflies migrate to Mexico, creating a unique concentration of butterflies.

In this tour, sold out for 2025, you'll walk among the fluttering butterflies at the Monarch Butterfly Biosphere Reserve, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Experts will speak about



A pair of solo travelers toast to the trip.

Photo courtesy of Road Scholar

the complex migration pattern of these insects and the importance of habitat conservation.

While spending three days viewing butterflies in different sanctuaries to maximize your viewing op-

portunities, delve into the natural and human history of the areas you explore.

Sanctuaries are at altitudes above 9,000 feet and require one to three hours of walking/hiking on graded paths, and up hills

that are often steep.

It runs for eight days, with 19 meals and starts at \$2,899.

For more information and to sign up for tours, go to <https://www.road-scholar.org/>.



With elephants in the background, a solo traveler enjoys her surroundings.

Photo courtesy of Alyssa Bichunsky/Road Scholar



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# Tips for traveling on a budget

By **TERESA HOLT**

AARP Alaska State Director

Thinking about a trip this fall or planning a spring vacation? Here are a few tips to help you save money while traveling.

► The most obvious way to save is to use your airline miles and companion coupons. To maximize the use of your airline miles, aim to book your travel about a year ahead, since airlines often have a limited number of mileage tickets for each flight. Additionally, flying on Tuesday or Wednesday can be cheaper, as tickets are often less expensive on these days.

► Pack light with only a carry-on and a backpack to avoid baggage fees and lost luggage. Be sure to check your airline's carry-on rules to make sure your bags meet their size and weight restrictions. Plan clothing that you can mix and match as well as layer to stay warm and dry. Packing cubes can help you fit it all

in. Ditch unnecessary items like multiple pairs of shoes, purses and accessories.

► Traveling during the off-season or shoulder seasons can help you save money and avoid crowds. These seasons will vary depending on your destination. You can often save up to \$100 per night on accommodations during these less busy periods. However, it is important to check that the attractions and activities you want to experience are available, as some tours and businesses may be closed during the off-season.

► Be sure to use every discount that you are eligible for, including senior and AARP membership discounts. Ask for discounts at hotels, car rental companies, cruises, trains, restaurants, museums, and tours. Anyone 62 or older can purchase a lifetime pass to national parks. If you volunteer at your local museum or botanical garden, you can often get

free admission at similar institutions.

► Booking a place to stay with a kitchen can save you \$20 to \$50 a day, depending on how many meals you prepare instead of eating out. Eat breakfast before you leave for the day and pack some snacks to eat on the go. Make lunch your main meal at a restaurant, as it is often cheaper than dinner. Carry an insulated water bottle to avoid the cost of buying beverages.

► Public transportation is easy to use in many cities. While planning your trip, explore public transportation options. Many systems now offer apps with trip planners that provide directions, track your journey, and show you the cost of the trip. Using public transportation is both environmentally friendly and allows you to experience more of the local culture.

► To find free activities in your travel destination, start by searching online for "free things to do"



David Washburn photo

in that area. You might discover free concerts in parks, museums with free admission on certain days, and downloadable walking tours from visitors bureaus. For unique and unusual attractions, visit "Atlas Obscura" and click on "Places" to see a map of interesting spots to explore. You can save money and find the area's hidden gems.

► Taking steps to protect your savings and identity while traveling can also make your money go further. Before traveling,

make copies of your driver's license, passport, credit and debit cards, and other important documents. Keep these copies in your carry-on bag in case the originals are lost or stolen and leave copies with a trusted family member for emergency access. Save the toll-free numbers for credit cards and your bank in your phone, so that if there is an issue, you have instant access to report the loss.

► Avoid using public Wi-Fi in airports, hotels, restaurants, and cafés. While it is convenient, it comes with security risks. Instead, purchase a mobile hotspot for your phone. Avoid using public USB charging ports at airports or other public places. Only use a portable charger or a power outlet with your own cord.

To wrap up, remember that careful planning and savvy decisions can make your travels both enjoyable and affordable. Using these strategies, you can stretch your travel budget further and create lasting memories. Safe travels and happy adventures!

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# Elders

continued from page 13

(Koyukon) language games and making healing salves from plants gathered earlier in the spring. Camp planners received a special hunting permit and were able to get a moose for hands-on teaching at the gathering.

Funded by the Center for Indigenous Innovation and Health Equity, through the Center for Alaska Native Health Research, the camp brought back many memories for elders, such as the smell of moose hide being smoked and tanned, and the making of fry bread and goose and moose soups over a campfire. One elder commented that “I learned so much. I’m still willing to learn! When I smelled the moose skin, I had tears in my eyes as I smelled my mom. It’s been a long time.”

Marie Simmons of Fairbanks, age 87 and originally of Galena, happily declared after practicing how to cut a salmon caught earlier this summer, “I DID IT! I’m so happy!” To her, the camp



Denakkanaaga Executive Director Sharon McConnell walks with elder and camp language teacher Marie Yaska.

Photos courtesy Denakkanaaga

was “like going back to my childhood when I went to fish camp with my mom, being in a tent and watching her cut fish. This was when I was nine years old.

That was the last cultural event I remember with my family before being sent away to boarding school shortly thereafter.”

Another participant, 89-year-old Elizabeth Fleagle of Fairbanks, and originally Alatna, said that the food was key to the success of the camp, as well

as being on the land and river, and sitting around the campfire and interacting with others. It took her back to all the positive things she experienced as a child. It brought back memories of when she was young and strong and as a result during the camp she felt younger and stronger.

This year the four-day camp allowed elders to stay overnight in cabins, each heated by a wood stove. Despite it raining most of the days, the elders told concerned camp planners not to worry, that they were resilient and had



Instructors Kathleen Hildebrand Meckel and Nina Heyano talk to the participants about what wild plants to gather to make various healing salves.

dressed appropriately for the weather.

Some 10 traditional cultural teachers were on hand to teach and share their skills, and each day healing circles were held to allow elders a chance to talk about their feelings that were coming up as they participated in the activities.

“It was so inspiring to see the elders adding their personal stories and knowledge as the various activities were being held,” said camp planner Dr. Jessica Black. “It was so empowering, and really

enhanced the camp as a whole.”

For camp manager Taniasha Moses, the gathering was a special event in which she, as a young adult, could assist and help the elders attending. “Seeing the elders together, learning and laughing, made me think of my own grandmother, which was so special.”

A key component of the camp is how traditional activities impact the physical, mental and spiritual well-being of individuals

next page please




Elders Miranda Wright of Fairbanks and Becky Gallen of Northway visit at the camp kitchen.

### Crossword answers from page 18

B	O	S	S		A	R	I	D		H	A	S	T	E
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# Elders

from page 26

and how these activities specifically relate to food sovereignty. Food is connected to the well-being of the people. Focusing on moose during the camp provided holistic opportunities to engage in a respectful relationship with the moose, in a way that Native people have done since time immemorial.

It starts with ceremonies of gratitude for the moose giving itself to us and ends with a giveaway celebration to include dancing and singing, ensuring all the elders and participants get to go home with moose meat to enjoy with their families. In between these ceremonies are lots of hard work, stories, laughter and healing.

The camp planners will soon begin work on the



Camp participants learn how to make blueberry jam with blueberries picked in Interior Alaska.

2025 camp that will take place in the summer or fall.

In October they will fly to Reykjavik, Iceland, to present on the camp at the Arctic Circle Assembly that brings together leaders from 60 northern countries.

Sharon McConnell is the Denakkanaaga executive director.



Language teacher Susan Paskvan (center) of Fairbanks and originally of Koyukuk, conducts a language game with camp participants.



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# We Must Preserve and Expand **SOCIAL SECURITY**

**Mary Peltola**  
for CONGRESS

## ONLY YOU, CAN VOTE FOR YOU.

**\*8PM**  
2 Weeks before ELECTION DAY

My dad is really concerned about his future because his benefits just don't cut it...

Yeah... my aunt is struggling to keep her bills paid off right now.

Let's actually do it this year... We have to vote in this upcoming election!

**\*2 WEEKS LATER\***

**\*8AM**  
ELECTION DAY

It feels like we are forgetting something...

I'm going to go drop off the kids! I'll be back to pick you up in a couple of hours.

**\*12PM**  
ELECTION DAY

Don't get into any trouble! I'm going to pick up you dad.

**\*6PM**  
ELECTION DAY

OH NO! IT WAS ELECTION DAY TODAY!

Wow... we really let our folks down...

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