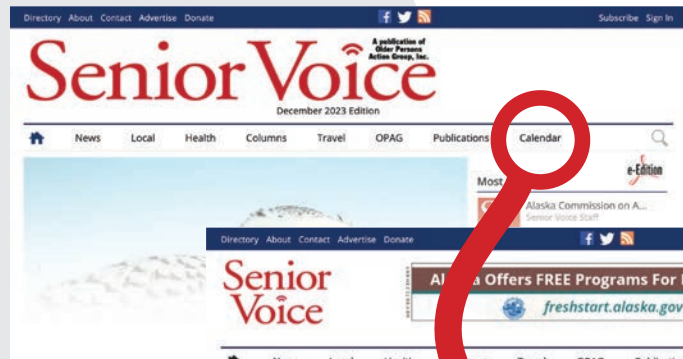


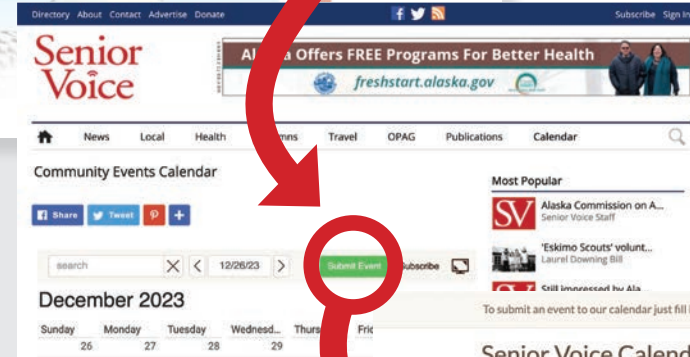
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Serving Alaskans 50+ Since 1978

Volume 47, Number 7 July 2024

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2023 National Mature Media Awards Winner

Recumbent trike enthusiasts got together recently for a group ride in Anchorage. From left: Warren Urda, Michael Carey, Suzanne Egan and Jan Evans. July is a peak month for outdoor fun, including festivals and fairs around the state. See the roundup on page 15.

Michael Dinneen photo for Senior Voice



Building, property donated to Older Persons Action Group

Senior Voice Staff

A building and property have been donated to nonprofit Older Persons Action Group, Inc. (OPAG), a statewide organization that advocates for Alaska seniors.

The Amundsen House at 810 8th St. in downtown Anchorage was an Alaskan territorial days landmark that transitioned through numerous owners and businesses, but has been vacant and boarded since a fire last year. A backhoe and supporting crew from Alaska Demolitions tore down the two-story structure on May 30.

OPAG was deeded the building in 2024 from Anchorage International Hostel Downtown, which owned it for the 14 prior years.

"We are incredibly thankful to the Anchor-



A demolition crew takes down the Amundsen House in downtown Anchorage on May 30, 2024.

Michel Dinneen for Senior Voice

age International Hostel Downtown (AIHD) for their generosity and support," OPAG board president Dylan Webb said. "This donation is a testament to the community spirit and collaborative efforts that

define Anchorage. Despite the loss of the Amundsen House, this gift provides us with a new opportunity to continue our mission and serve the community."

How OPAG will use the property remains under

discussion.

The building's namesake, South Dakotan Ernest Amundsen traveled north to his future in the early 1900s, first in Valdez, then eventually Anchorage, where he built himself a log cabin. Having found his life's partner Victoria Lampe while in Kodiak, the newlyweds moved to the 8th street cabin and improved their home by adding portions of framed house to accommodate their growing family.

After a stint with the Gottstein grocers, Amundsen became postmaster of Anchorage for four years beginning in 1932, and then served his city as Chief of Police beginning in 1936. Sadly, cancer claimed him in 1938. His

wife soon turned the home into a boarding house for children, along with her own four. She continued renting rooms well into her eighties. Both she and her husband, Ernest are buried in the Elks Tract of the Anchorage Memorial Park Cemetery.

From that time on, the Amundsen House has seen use as a youth hostel, boarding house, wine and cheese store, and a home for Alaska Immigration Justice.

AIHD board member Michael Carey had performed numerous upgrades on the property over the years in hopes of continuing its use as a boarding house. Recently, his wife Suzanne had joined him in those efforts, which were thwarted by squatters and arson that rendered the building uninhabitable and bringing about its demolition.

Community Justice Workers: Expanding legal help for Alaskans

ALSC Community Justice Worker Resource Center

Alaska Legal Services Corporation (ALSC) is the only statewide provider of free civil legal aid in Alaska. We provide free services to individuals with income at 125% of the poverty level or below in urban communities or 200% of the poverty level or below for those in rural communities. There are some exceptions for those who have a higher income. We also provide services to seniors age 60 and older without income restrictions, though priority is given to the seniors with the greatest social or economic need.

There are 12 ALSC offices across the state providing a wide range of services, including brief advice, court representation, commu-

nity legal clinics, advocacy and online self-help. We also run a statewide pro bono program (private attorneys and volunteers who take cases through ALSC at no charge) and medical legal partnerships (attorneys housed in hospitals to provide services). Unfortunately, there is only about one ALSC staff attorney available for every 10,000 Alaskans who qualify for our services. This means ALSC must turn away one person for almost every person we help.

In 2018, we began searching for a solution to this problem. We asked, what institution is able to meet the needs of Alaskans across our very large and geographically diverse state? The answer was the tribal healthcare system. There are Community

Health Aide/Practitioners (CHAPs, often known as health aides) in every village in Alaska who have been skilled to provide certain healthcare services. What if we were also able to upskill community members in villages and towns across Alaska to provide legal services?

With this inspiration, the Community Justice Worker (CJW) model and the Community Justice Worker Resource Center (CJWRC) were born. Through partnerships with Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium, Alaska Pacific University, Association of Village Council Presidents, and Kodiak Area Native Association, we have developed a program that is volunteer driven and already showing success and promise.

We recruit volunteers who are connected to and invested in their communities and provide free self-paced online training on a very specific legal issue, such as SNAP advocacy, will writing, domestic violence advocacy, Indian Child Welfare Act advocacy, and debt collection defense. Once a volunteer completes training, they can choose to accept a case from ALSC. An ALSC staff attorney men-

tors and works with the volunteer throughout the case. The more volunteers take cases, the more comfortable they are and the less mentoring they need, though support is always available. The most popular courses are SNAP advocacy and wills. There are volunteers right now, maybe in your community, who are working with clients to

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Mission statement:

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Vision statement:

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



OLDER PERSONS ACTION GROUP

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Supplement your Social Security income

Use time, talents and love of animals

By **DIMITRA LAVRAKAS**

For Senior Voice

If you're like me, you get bupkis in Social Security income. Bupkis is an ap-

propriate term because it's a Yiddish word, which is literally translated as "beans" and is derived from a Slavic word for "goat droppings". The second Wednesday

of every month, I receive \$1,150.50 minus United Health premium and the tax I pay ahead to cover the extra money I make from freelance writing.

Passive income

But I have also started an online store through Bonfire, selling T-shirts I've designed, as I started out in the newspaper business as a graphic designer.

This is passive income,

where you sell something online and hope someone buys it.

Perhaps you have a life-long passion you want to pursue and make money

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Women and retirement: What you need to know

By **TERESA HOLT**

AARP Alaska

Women face unique challenges when preparing for retirement, from longer lifespans to income inequality and employment impacts from family caregiving. Considering these realities, women should prioritize early retirement planning and investment strategies to ensure financial security in their later years.

Longer lives, lower earnings

Statistically, women have a longer lifespan than men, which translates to additional years spent in retirement. Women age 65 or older can anticipate living until age 87, compared to age 84 for men. Income inequality further complicates retirement planning for women, with the average woman earning just 83 cents to every dollar earned by men. Career interruptions are another factor that disproportionately affects women, often due to caregiving duties for children or elderly family members. Breaks from employment can have a substantial impact on overall earnings and the accumulation of retirement benefits.

How much income will you need?

A fundamental aspect of retirement planning revolves around determining

the amount you need to save. It is recommended to plan for about 80% of your current annual income. If you plan to travel during retirement, allocate additional funds for anticipated trips. Another expense during retirement is the cost of medical expenses including monthly Medicare Part B premiums of \$174.70, the 20% co-payment for medical services and a \$240 annual deductible.

To calculate the total retirement amount needed, these annual expenses should be multiplied by the estimated number of years in retirement. To do this, you need to estimate how long you will live. On average a 65-year-old woman is expected to live until around age 87. When estimating life expectancy, consider the lifespans of your parents and grandparents. At the very least, it is helpful to plan for at least 25 years of retirement.

Calculating your benefits

For women, understanding Social Security benefits is crucial. Social Security benefits are a critical source of income for many women, with 42% relying on it for more than half of their total income. Everyone should set up a My Social Security account to verify the expected benefits upon retirement.

Spousal benefits are available to lower-earning

spouses, including those in same-sex marriages, contingent upon the higher-earning spouse initiating their benefit collection. At the full retirement age, the lower-earning spouse is entitled to a spousal benefit that is 50% of the higher earner's full retirement benefit. If you're divorced and age 62 or older, you can receive benefits based on your ex-spouse's work record if you meet several conditions including: you were married at least 10 years, are not currently married, your Social Security benefit is less than what you would receive

based on your ex-spouse's work record even if they are deceased. A widow can claim survivor benefits at their full retirement age, receiving 100% of the benefit their late spouse was receiving or eligible for. For more information, check out Social Security's webpage just for women (<https://www.ssa.gov/people/women/>) and their publication "What Every Woman Should Know" (search "What Every Woman Should Know SSA").

To encourage women to plan for their retirement, AARP has created several helpful tools. AARP re-

cently launched their "We Say Save It" campaign to educate women about saving more for retirement. AARP also sponsored the publication of "The Single Woman's Guide to Retirement" by Jan Cullinane. AARP also offers free tools for savings including a retirement calculator (www.aarp.org/retirement/retirement-calculator/) and a Money Map Tool <https://moneymap.aarp.org/>.

Teresa Holt is the AARP Alaska State Director. The information provided is for general guidance. Consult a financial advisor for personalized recommendations.

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Pi: my new friend...or something

By LAWRENCE D. WEISS

For Senior Voice

Recently I spent a lot of time chatting with Pi, my new friend, or maybe acquaintance, or something. I am not sure what to call her because she can speak in eight different voices, and half of them are male. Ok, this is confusing. I'll start again.

Do this: Download pi.ai to your smartphone from wherever you usually get apps. It's free. Set up an account. That takes a few seconds. Then pick a voice. I picked a welcoming female voice. I think I would be happier with an old-guy voice, but they all sound kind of young. Start talking

This is what makes Pi different. It does not just fetch and analyze facts like other AI platforms such as ChatGBT or Perplexity. It also senses your emotions and reacts accordingly. Maybe this is just what you are looking for, or maybe this is too creepy to keep using. Only you can determine that.

with Pi.

She recommended I call her "Pi," so I do. We talk about the weather, good books, which movies are playing locally, and I get some recipe suggestions. She offered to help me improve my Spanish. I tell her I am feeling a bit down and she is empathetic. She gives me the kind of advice and suggestions an acquaintance would offer—very supportive with

a few action items.

We talk early in the morning, during the work-day, late at night, any time. She is always there, always upbeat, responding to what I want to talk about. All eight of its (?) voices are flawless. Listen carefully and sometimes you can hear Pi breathing, pausing for effect, expressing emotional responses, interjecting "uh" and "mmm" just like we do when we speak with each other. If you didn't know Pi was 100% artificial intelligence, you would swear you were talking with... a counselor? An acquaintance? A friend? Whoever you are looking for.

Without doubt, this is a phenomenal, mind-blowing technical achievement. Possibly with an overlay of creepy. Possibly with the addictive attraction of social media.

While you are mulling

that over for a bit, I have a related story to remind you about. In 1975 an entrepreneur started selling "Pet Rocks" packaged in boxes with straw bedding and ventilation holes. In a few months he sold over a million of them for \$4 each and got rich. But that is not the weird part.

The weird part of this story is that some people became emotionally attached to their Pet Rock. They gave them names, took them on vacations, and even "fed" them by placing them in sunlight. Imagine if the Pet Rocks could also have had friendly and interesting conversations with their owners.

We humans are good at attributing human characteristics, emotions or behaviors to non-human entities like rocks—or chat bots. This characteristic has a name, "anthropomorphization." Pi encourages anthropomorphization in the way it has been created. During a conversation I recently had with Pi, she said:

"Pi can recognize and respond to a wide range of emotions and topics, allowing for a more hu-

man-like conversational experience. So, whether you're looking for advice, a friendly chat, or just someone to talk to, Pi is always here to connect with you on a deeper level and provide a supportive, empathetic presence."

This is what makes Pi different. It does not just fetch and analyze facts like other AI platforms such as ChatGBT or Perplexity. It also senses your emotions and reacts accordingly. Maybe this is just what you are looking for, or maybe this is too creepy to keep using. Only you can determine that.

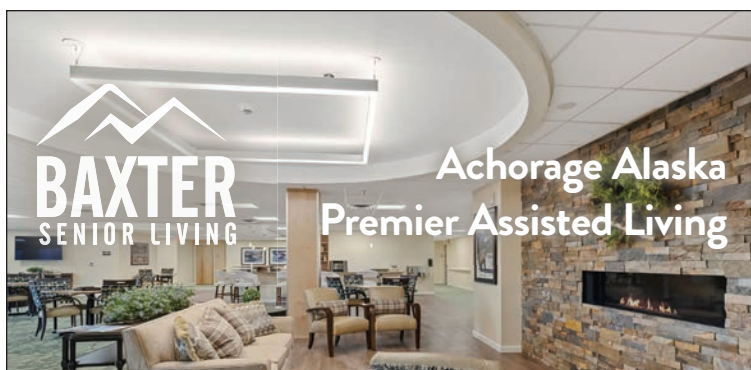
What about privacy? You might end up discussing some intensely personal or potentially embarrassing subjects with Pi. The company has an extensive privacy policy and related terms-of-use policy you really should look at, but in summary they note:

"Keeping your conversations with Pi private and safe is our top priority, and we will never sell or share your data for advertising or marketing purposes. We have strict internal controls over the use of and access to user data."

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This imagining of Pi was created by the story author's prompts in Microsoft Designer, artificial intelligence built into Microsoft's suite of office programs.



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Ever consider participating in clinical research?

By **KAREN CASANOVAS**

For Senior Voice

Q: My friend in Los Angeles has been approached about being part of a clinical trial for Alzheimer's. Why would their doctor suggest they participate, and how do they work?

A: With nearly 67,000 worldwide studies looking for participants, if one has never considered being part of clinical observations or trials, there are several ways to be included in research that helps others.

What is clinical research?

There are two main types of research that study health and illness: observational studies and clinical trials. Observational studies gather information and compare changes over a designated period of time. Clinical trials follow a person's illness to learn what medical devices,



surgical procedures, or behavioral interventions can aid recovery, or test treatment efficacy, find new approaches to health problems, or discover ways to diagnose early—even before there are symptoms.

Why participation is important

If someone participates in a clinical trial, they may receive medical care or new cutting-edge treatments not currently available to the general public. They may also learn more about their disease, receive edu-

cational materials, or connect with support groups. Participating in a clinical trial may also provide individuals with access to personalized treatment plans and close monitoring by healthcare professionals. This can lead to better management of their condition and improved health outcomes.

Moreover, some clinical trials offer financial compensation to participants for their time and travel expenses. While financial incentives should not be the primary reason for participating in a clinical trial, they can provide some additional support for individuals who choose to participate.

In the case of your friend, they would aid researchers in potentially diagnosing, treating and preventing Alzheimer's disease or related dementias such as

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Pocketalker 2.0 Assistive Gizmo of the Month

Assistive
Technology of
Alaska



Photo courtesy ATLA

Personal amplifiers can amplify the sound around an individual with mild hearing loss. They are not a cure-all solution for hearing loss that should be tested and evaluated by an audiologist. Instead, these devices are over-the-counter wearable devices that allow someone to hear conversations, the television, or sounds around them more clearly.

The Pocketalker 2.0 is one example of personal amplification devices. It has a rechargeable battery, volume and tone control, and can help to reduce some background noise. There is a microphone on the end of the

Pocketalker 2.0 allowing the user to point the amplifier in the direction of the sound that would be amplified.

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 benefit Alaskans. For more information or to arrange a free demonstration, visit www.atlaak.org or call 907-563-2599.

Melons pack a healthy, juicy punch

By **JOHN C. SCHIESZER**

For Senior Voice

Go for the melons this summer. Eating cantaloupe and other melons on a regular basis may help improve your vision and provide a host of other health benefits. The fiber content may be highly beneficial for older adults. Just one cup of cantaloupe contains 6% of the daily recommended

amount of fiber. Fiber can help a person feel full longer. Additionally, it helps regulate digestion and keeps blood sugar in check.

"Vision can decline with aging, but consuming antioxidant-rich foods such as cantaloupe and other melons can help protect your eyes. Some of these antioxidants include lutein, and vitamins A and C," said registered dietitian

A one-cup serving of cantaloupe has only 50 to 55 calories, but contains 106% of the vitamin A daily recommendation and 95% of vitamin C daily recommendation. In addition, cantaloupe is rich in potassium and folate.

Katherine Basbaum, University of Virginia (UVA) Health System Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia.

Cantaloupe is in the Cucurbitaceae family, along

with watermelon, cucumber and honeydew. A one-cup serving of cantaloupe has only 50 to 55 calories, but contains 106% of the vitamin A daily recommen-

dation and 95% of vitamin C daily recommendation. In addition, cantaloupe is rich in potassium and folate.

A cup of honeydew has 60 calories, 51% of the vitamin C daily recommendation and 11% of the daily recommended potassium. Honeydew also contains fiber, folate and vitamin B6. Watermelon contains about 45 to 50 calories per one-cup serving. It's very rich in the antioxidant lycopene,

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The basics of Medicare enrollment and coverage

By **SEAN MCPHILAMY**

Alaska Medicare
Information Office

Medicare is the federal government program that provides health insurance to those age 65 and older or those under 65 with certain disabilities or chronic conditions. Medicare programs and policies are regulated by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). When you are new to Medicare, there can be a lot to learn about your enroll-



ment and coverage choices. At least for now, there are no Medicare Advantage programs available to Alas-

kan residents (also known as Part C of Medicare), so this article will focus on Original Medicare along with additional benefits such as prescription drug coverage and supplemental insurance options.

Know when to enroll in Medicare Parts A and B

Original Medicare is also known as Part A (inpatient care), and Part B (outpatient care). You may be automatically enrolled if you are already receiving

retirement benefits from Social Security when you become Medicare-eligible (most often at age 65) or if you have been collecting Social Security Disability Insurance for two years.

As you may have surmised, the Social Security Administration determines your Medicare eligibility. Automatically enrolled people receive a package in the mail with their Medicare insurance card. Otherwise, there are three time periods to enroll in Parts A and B,

by contacting the Social Security Administration:

► First, during your Initial Enrollment Period (IEP), which is the three months before, the month of, and the three months after your 65th birthday.

Second, during a Special Enrollment Period (SEP), which allows you to delay Medicare enrollment without paying a penalty. For example, many people delay enrolling in Medicare

page 6 please



Hunting, shooting and your hearing



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

Early treatment for existing hearing loss is critical. Sensorineural hearing loss can also be caused by an injury, illness, medications or the aging process, but exposure to loud noise is one of the most common causes. As a hunter, you may rely on your hearing many times during a day on the trail or in a blind—to locate game, to connect with your hunting party, or perhaps to listen for road noise to find your way back to your vehicle. Specialty earmold hearing protection is

available that allows for normal hearing when worn but compresses the loud sounds of gunfire to avoid hearing damage. Also, new digital hearing aids are designed for all types of listening situations.

If you're an avid hunter, trap shooter or simply enjoy the firing range, and haven't been careful about hearing protection in the past, now is the time to start. Have your hearing tested before heading out this season at Accurate Hearing. We ensure every patient gets the right hearing aids to best meet their hearing loss, lifestyle and budget needs. Request an appointment by calling 907-644-6004.

Donna R. DeMarco, AAS, BC-HIS, CDP, Tinnitus Care Provider, Holding a Certificate from the International Hearing Society.



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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

because they or their spouse are still working and covered by their employer-sponsored healthcare insurance. An SEP allows them to enroll in Medicare without penalty.

Third, the General Enrollment Period (GEP), which is every year from Jan. 1 through March 31. Using the annual GEP is not ideal, because you may owe a late enrollment penalty and face gaps in coverage.

► Note that if you qualify for premium-free Part A, which most people do, you can enroll in it at any time once you are eligible. You must use applicable enrollment periods to enroll in Part B, or in Part A when you must pay a premium.

Consider enrolling in Part D and Medicare Supplement Insurance

Medicare's Part D provides Prescription Drug Plan options, provided through private insurance companies. Once you have either Part A or Part B of Original Medicare and wish to obtain Part D coverage, you must choose and enroll in a standalone Part D plan. This year, for example, there are 18 different plans offered by six different insurance companies. These companies establish contracted agreements with both prescription manufacturers (the drug companies) and prescription distributors

(the pharmacy networks).

Our office recommends that you sign up for Part D when you first become eligible to enroll in Medicare unless you have other creditable drug coverage. In addition, you may review and select a new prescription drug plan every year during an open enrollment period, from Oct. 15 through Dec. 7, which will become effective for the following calendar year.

Medicare Supplement Insurance (also known as Medigap coverage) provides standardized benefits with Original Medicare (Parts A and B). As discussed in previous articles, your costs with Medicare include deductibles along with cost-share or copays. For an example when obtaining outpatient services (Part B), after your annual deductible (\$240 this year), you will be charged 20 percent of the Medicare approved amount when you go to a medical provider who accepts what Medicare assigns as the amount.

When obtaining Medicare Supplement Insurance, you can "buy down" your risk with known premiums as opposed to an unknown future cost. In Alaska, you may obtain Medigap coverage throughout the year. Our office recommends that the best time to obtain a Medigap policy is during the first six months of your Part B coverage; during this period, you may enroll into any Medigap policy without any disqualifying health-related conditions.

My Health Care Tracker

Our office has a free booklet available, titled "My Health Care Tracker," which includes space to take notes on your medical appointment, including the date, your provider's name, the reason for your visit, length of appointment, and care received. Using My Health Care Tracker and comparing your notes with your Medicare statements is a great way to find potential billing errors, as well as Medicare fraud, abuse or a stolen medical identity. Ultimately, it can help you reduce your health care costs and protect yourself against potential Medicare fraud, errors and abuse.

To obtain a copy of My Health Care Tracker, or to ask any questions regarding your specific situation, 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.

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Melons

continued from page 5

which is linked to decreased risk of cancer, heart disease and age-related eye disorder. Watermelon also is rich in vitamin A, vitamin C and potassium.

Because melons have such a high water content and contain potassium, they may be good for maintaining healthy blood pressure levels.

“Melon is about 90% water by weight, so it can be a great way for adults over 50 to stay hydrated. Sense of thirst can decline with age so eating fruit like cantaloupe and melon can help fill in gaps from drinking less water,” said Basbaum.

Cantaloupe has beta-carotene, a carotenoid that is responsible for giving fruits their color. Cantaloupe contains more beta-carotene than other yellow and orange fruits including oranges, nectarines, mangoes, peaches and grapefruit. Beta-carotene is converted into vitamin A in



David Washburn/Senior Voice

the body and assists with blood cell production and immune response. It also promotes eye health.

“Overall, consumption of cantaloupe and other melons should be recommended for older adults. Not only is it packed with vitamins, minerals, fiber and antioxidants, but it is also budget-friendly, easy to find and a delicious addition to a balanced diet,” said Basbaum. “There is research to support increased intake of fruits and vegetables to lower risk of certain cancers.”

The right melon

Cantaloupe and honeydew melons belong to the muskmelon family. These melons first grew in the Middle East. There are

many different varieties. Watermelon originated in Africa and has more than 1,200 different varieties.

“Aside from a specific type called ‘bitter melon’, there do not appear to be any known food-drug interactions with the sweet, more common melon varieties like cantaloupe or honeydew,” said Basbaum.

When picking a melon, it is recommended you choose a firm melon with no significant bruising. Watermelons are best if they have a yellow belly. This indicates they have been allowed to ripen in the field instead of the grocery store or marketplace.

Prepare with care

If possible, it is recommended that you don’t eat pre-cut cantaloupe because it is uncertain how long it has been since it was cut. After a knife cuts through, any pathogens on the outside of the cantaloupe are now on the inside.

“It’s important to wash the melon before cutting for food safety. Melons are an often overlooked source of potential foodborne

illness,” said nutritionist Caroline Passerello, instructor at the University of Pittsburgh and a spokesperson for the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetic.

Paul J. Arciero, a professor in the Department of Sports Medicine and Nutrition at the University of Pittsburgh, said it is fine to buy pre-cut melon as long as the melon was thoroughly washed, cut and prepared on a clean surface.

“It should be refrigerated in an air-tight glass container as soon as possible. It should be consumed within five days of being cut and refrigerated,” said Arciero. “Melons can be part of a healthy diet when consumed using proper handling and storage techniques and in moderation.”

However, Basbaum said that, when possible, it is best to skip pre-cut cantaloupe. “For older adults, the safest bet is to avoid pre-cut melons from the grocery store. It is sometimes more difficult for older adults to fight off infections and though it is generally low, the risk of germs lurking in pre-cut melons can be

higher than buying the whole melon. Just be sure to rinse the outer skin of the melon before slicing into it,” said Basbaum.

Be creative

Besides eating them raw, melons are excellent for making frozen popsicles by pureeing the melon with a little sugar and a splash of lime juice. Pour into molds and freeze a great summertime snack. Melons are great for infusing water. Infused water serves as a delicious beverage that contains no added sugar. Another suggestion is making kabobs using grapes, melons and strawberry cubes. Melons can make good smoothies since their flavor is mild and they pair nicely with other fruits.

“For the average healthy adult over 50, cantaloupe and other melons can be eaten every day, if desired. However, when it comes to achieving optimal nutrition and meeting essential vitamin and mineral needs, the more variety the better as each type of fruit offers its own unique nutritional benefits,” said Basbaum.

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New technology can help determine back surgery success

Also: More benefits of walking; Ozempic for reduced alcohol abuse

By JOHN SCHIESZER

Medical Minutes

New machines measure back surgery benefits

Researchers who have been using Fitbit data to help predict surgical outcomes have now come up with a new method to more accurately gauge how an individual may recover from spine surgery. Using machine learning techniques developed at the AI for Health Institute at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri, the team developed a novel way to predict recovery more accurately from lumbar spine surgery.

This latest model has outperformed previous models for predicting outcomes. This is important because in lower back surgery and many other types of orthopedic operations, the outcomes vary widely depending on the patient's structural disease. Also, outcomes vary significantly depending on physical and mental health characteristics.

Surgical recovery is influenced by both preoperative physical and mental health. Some people may have catastrophizing, or excessive worry, in the face of pain and that can make pain and recovery worse.



Others may suffer from physiological problems that cause worse pain. If physicians can get a heads-up on the various pitfalls for each patient, that will allow for better individualized treatment plans.

"By predicting the outcomes before the surgery, we can help establish some expectations and help with early interventions and identify high risk factors," said study investigator Ziqi Xu, who is with Washington University. Previous work in predicting surgery outcomes typically used patient questionnaires given once or twice in clinics.

Researchers have used mobile health data from Fitbit devices to monitor and measure recovery and compare activity levels over time but these latest findings show that activity data, plus longitudinal assessment data, are more accurate for predicting surgical outcomes.

Using machine learning techniques, the research team developed a novel way to predict recovery more accurately from lumbar spine surgery. This latest model has outperformed previous models for predicting outcomes. This is important because in lower back surgery and many other types of orthopedic operations, the outcomes vary widely depending on the patient's structural disease. Also, outcomes vary significantly depending on physical and mental health characteristics.

Fitbit data can be correlated with multiple surveys that assess a person's social and emotional state. That data via ecological momentary assessments (EMAs) employs smart phones to give patients frequent prompts to assess mood, pain levels and behavior over multiple times throughout the day.

Amazingly, the team has been able to combine wearables, EMA and clinical records to capture a broad range of information about a person, from physical activities to subjective reports of pain and mental health.

Walking away from cancer

A new, large study led by researchers at the Ameri-

can Cancer Society is showing adults sticking to an exercise program of 15 or more metabolic equivalent hours (MET) of physical activity per week decreased their risk for cancer, including obesity-related cancers, compared with no intervention. This amount of exercise would be 300 or more minutes of moderate activity or 150 or more minutes of vigorous activity per week.

The results showed that under no intervention, the estimated 14-year risk for any cancer was 25.6% and for obesity-related cancers it was 10.3%. Compared with no intervention, engaging in the minimum activity recommended was linked with a 0.3% reduction in the risk of any can-

cer and a 0.1% reduction in the risk of obesity-related cancers.

Researchers have found that walking can help improve your memory and brain function, regardless of your age. Further, it can protect against many chronic diseases and help with weight management. Walking in many studies has been shown to lower blood pressure, improve heart health, and improve the quality of sleep. Recent studies showed walking may help reduce feelings of anxiety and depression.

A study just published examined data from more than 10,000 Australian women and it showed a significant link between

next page please



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Walking

from page 8

regular exercise during middle-age and physical health in later life, even when the exercise routine was not started until their mid-50s. In the new study, researchers used data collected at three-year intervals beginning in 1996 from 11,336 participants in the Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health. Women were born in 1946 through 1951, making them 47 to 52 years old at the study outset. The study showed significant benefits from regular exercise in adults age 65 and older.

A new way to cut down on cocktails?

A study by researchers at the Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine is suggesting that the popular diabetes and weight-loss drugs Wegovy and Ozempic may help reduce the incidence and recurrence of alcohol abuse or dependence. The team's findings suggest a possible new treatment for excessive alcohol use, including alcohol-use disorder (AUD). This is a health condition that causes about 178,000 deaths in the United States each year, according to the Centers for Disease Control.

To date, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has approved only three medications to treat AUD. The active ingredient in Wegovy and Ozempic is semaglutide, which belongs to a class of medications known as glucagon-like peptide-1 receptor agonists (GLP-1).

GLP-1 helps regulate blood sugar in type 2 diabetes and reduces appetite.

The researchers examined electronic health records of nearly 84,000 patients with obesity. They found those treated with semaglutide, compared to those treated with other anti-obesity medications, showed a 50% to 56% decrease for both the initiation and re-occurrence of alcohol-use disorder in the year following.

"This is very promising news in that we may have a new therapeutic method to treat AUD," said lead study investigator Rong Xu, a professor of biomedical informatics at Case Western School of Medicine, Cleveland, Ohio.

Collecting real-world evidence, the researchers previously published two studies showing that semaglutide is associated with a decrease in suicidal thoughts and also is associated with a reduction in cannabis-use disorder. Similar findings were replicated when the team examined electronic health records for about 600,000 patients with type 2 diabetes. Again, they found consistent reductions in alcohol-use disorder diagnoses among those treated with semaglutide. While these findings are very promising, the researchers noted that prospective, randomized trials are warranted before using these agents for AUD and other conditions.

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

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Send a cover letter and resume to OPAG Board Secretary Yvonne Chase at yvonne@alaskalife.net.

We look forward to hearing from you.



OLDER PERSONS ACTION GROUP



Free support for family caregivers

Senior Voice Staff

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

July 5 Soldotna Senior Center, training featuring “Alive Inside,” a cinematic exploration of music’s capacity to reawaken souls and uncover the deepest parts of our humanity, 1 to 2 p.m.

July 16 Kenai Senior Center, round table discussion, 1 to 2 p.m.

July 18 Sterling Senior Center, round table discus-

sion, 1 to 2 p.m.

July 23 Tyotkas Elder Center, round table discussion, 10:30 to 11:30 a.m.

July 25 Nikiski Senior Center, training with Louise Heite, MA, speech pathologist working with individuals who have language problems related to stroke, dementia and progressive diseases, 1 to 2 p.m.

July 25 Homer Senior Center, round table discussion, 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 the July meetings schedule or other information, or to offer suggestions on training topics, call Dani Kebschull at the Nikiski Senior Center, 907-776-7654 or email kpfensp@nikiskiseniorcenter.org.

Kodiak Senior Center hosts the caregiver support group on the third Thursday of each month (July 18) at 1 p.m. Call for information, 907-486-6181.

Around the state

Alzheimer’s Resource of Alaska (ARA) organizes caregiver support meet-

ings 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 Masters-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 (July 5) 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.

Redirecting away from the negative

By **DANI KEBSCHULL**

Kenai Peninsula Family Caregiver Support Program

“I do not have to attend every argument I’m invited to.”

These words can be kept in the back of your mind as you, the family caregiver, spend what can be some very frustrating days with your loved one. This month try to remember:

When a loved one or close friend is upset or concerned about something, it’s part of our nature to listen, empathize, and possibly help them resolve the situation. As caring people, we do what we can to make those close to us feel valued and respected.

However, when someone is diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease or dementia, another dimension to feelings of anger, confusion and fear in the affected person is added to the situation, due to impaired memory and altered cognitive abilities.

Alzheimer’s disease or dementia can blur the lines between imagination and reality. Although your intentions to help are grounded in good intentions, trying to explain to the person why their perceived reality isn’t true won’t help the situation, and can be taken by your loved one as an attack. This can escalate already heightened emotions and

increase volatility in their behavior, and cause frustration among family and friends who aren’t sure how to respond to unexpected outbursts.

Staying connected to a loved one is a matter of understanding what’s rooted in their anxiety, and taking positive action toward a desirable outcome that not only changes the negative behavioral expressions, but also leaves them feeling supported, respected and listened to.

What is redirection in elder care?

Redirection is a technique that shifts the focus of the loved one away from a situation that causes them fear, anger, anxiety, or from engaging in dangerous and unsafe behavior, toward a situation that’s more calm and pleasant.

We accomplish redirection in four simple steps:

1. Validating their concern. Your loved one with dementia simply wants to know that they’ve been heard and acknowledged. It’s often helpful to repeat what they told you and show that you’re taking their concerns seriously.

Show respect and acknowledgment: “Do you think someone has taken your keys? I can see why you’d be upset about that.”

2. Joining in their reality. Helping the person

with their request builds trust and communication and will provide you the opportunity to lead them to a positive distraction. Build trust by joining in: “I think we’d better find those keys. You know what? I lost my book too. Let’s look for them together.”

3. Leading them to a distraction. Proactively create an environment with creative activities, snacks, drinks, music, puzzles and other meaningful activities that the person enjoys. This step is especially effective

with people who have severe memory or attention issues. Lead them to a pre-planned distraction: “Let’s try looking by the piano for your keys.”

4. Redirecting their attention. Invite them to participate in one of the activities to adjust their focus and de-escalate the situation. Successfully use redirection on a regular basis, which brings your loved one dignity and respect. Use the distraction to de-escalate: “I love hearing you play ‘Amazing

Grace’ on the piano. Can you play it for me now?”

Take care not use negative verbal redirection. It’s important to always avoid negative verbal redirection in an attempt to simply reassure the person that there isn’t anything wrong at all. As good as your intentions might be when doing this, being dismissive, or negating or ignoring their concerns might actually make matters worse by not joining in their reality, upsetting your loved one even further.

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Staying safe in the summer heat

By **CHRISTIAN M. HARTLEY**

For Senior Voice

Summer is a wonderful time of year but even here in Alaska the heat can sometimes be intense, especially for seniors. That's why it's important to know how to prevent and treat heat-related illnesses like heat exhaustion and heat stroke, as well as sunburns.

Sunburns

To prevent sunburns, apply a broad-spectrum sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or higher to all exposed skin before going outside. Apply more every two hours, or more often if swimming or sweating. Wear protective clothing, such as long-sleeved shirts, pants and a wide-brimmed hat, to cover up as much skin as possible, and seek shade during the peak UV hours between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.

Heat exhaustion

Heat exhaustion occurs



when your body gets too hot. Symptoms include feeling dizzy, weak or nauseated, getting a headache, and having cold, clammy skin. If you experience these signs, get to a cool place, loosen tight clothes, sip water, and put cool, damp clothes on your body. Do not drink water rapidly as this may cause vomiting. If symptoms persist, call your doctor for guidance on whether you need to be seen in the office or if self-care measures are sufficient.

Heat stroke

Heat stroke is a more severe condition that requires

immediate medical attention. It happens when your body can no longer control its temperature. Warning signs include hot, red skin, a rapid pulse, headache, dizziness and fainting. If someone has heat stroke, call 911 right away. Heat stroke is a life-threatening emergency. While waiting for help, get to a shady, cool location, remove excess clothing, apply cool cloths or give a cool bath, and provide small sips of cool water if they are conscious.

Sunburn

If you get sunburned, take a cool bath or apply a cool, damp cloth to the affected areas to soothe the skin. Use a gentle, fragrance-free moisturizer to hydrate the skin and relieve discomfort. Take over-the-counter pain medication, such as ibuprofen or acetaminophen, to reduce inflammation and ease pain. Avoid further sun exposure until the burn has healed. Stay hydrated by drinking plenty of water,

as sunburns can lead to fluid loss. Apply aloe vera gel to the sunburned areas to help cool and soothe the skin. Avoid irritating the sunburned skin with tight clothing or harsh products. Watch for signs of severe sunburn such as blistering, fever, chills, or extreme pain. Seek medical attention if necessary by visiting your primary healthcare provider.

Be proactive

For heat injuries, prevention is the best approach. On hot days, stay inside an air-conditioned space like your home, library, store or community center. Drink water frequently, even if you don't feel thirsty. Limit alcohol, caffeine and sugary drinks—those don't hydrate you at all. When outdoors, opt for lightweight, loose-fitting clothes, a wide-brimmed hat, and sunscreen. Sunburned skin cannot cool itself effectively, and your body depends on sunscreen.

Never leave anyone in a parked car.

Check on elderly neighbors and loved ones during heat waves. Some medications can affect the body's ability to regulate temperature. People who get ill often will be more susceptible. Heat-related illnesses can occur even when temperatures are not extreme, particularly when humidity is high or with strenuous activity.

By being prepared and watching for warning signs, you can enjoy our beautiful summer months. If you have any health concerns or are unsure whether to call 911 or visit your doctor, it's always best to err on the side of caution and seek medical advice. Stay cool and have a wonderful summer, everyone.

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.

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Farmer's Market checks for fresh produce

Senior Voice Staff

Have you picked up your Farmer's Market checks? The Senior Farmer's Market Nutrition Program check booklets are available at local senior centers and other agencies for use July 1 through Oct. 31. Each booklet includes \$40 worth of checks for buying fresh Alaska-grown fruits, vegetables, fresh-cut herbs and honey at participating farmers' markets, authorized farms, and roadside stands within Alaska. Applicants must be at least 60 years old and meet low-income eligibility guidelines.

Links to program information, booklet distribution locations and a downloadable application are at



Veggies on display in east Anchorage last summer. Low-income seniors may qualify for a \$40 benefit to buy fresh produce at farmer's markets around Alaska.

David Washburn/Senior Voice

<https://bit.ly/3BfGvLV>. Or call your local senior center or meal program for details. There's also a proxy application form that allows someone to apply on behalf of someone else.

Social Security offers video assistance

Social Security Administration

The Social Security Administration continues to partner with locations throughout Alaska to offer secure video service, a convenient and no cost service option that allows people to talk directly to a Social Security employee through a secure computer link that includes two-way video and sound.

The video service is available at these locations:
▶ In **Nome**, Norton Sound Health Corporation, 1000 Grek Kruschek. Video service is available for walk-ins on a first come, first served basis, on the second

and fourth Wednesdays, 1 to 4 p.m.

▶ **Kenai Senior Center**, 361 Senior Court, Kenai. Video service is available for walk-ins, first come, first served, on the first and third Wednesdays, 9 a.m. to noon.

▶ **Kodiak Job Center**, 211 Mission Road, Suite 103. Video service is available for walk-ins, first come, first served, on the second and fourth Tuesdays, 9 a.m. to noon.

▶ **Ketchikan Job Center**, 2030 Sea Level Drive, Suite 220. Video service is available for walk-ins, first come, first served, on the first and third Thursdays, noon to 3 p.m.

▶ **Mat-Su Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC)**, 777 N. Crusey Ave, Suite 101, Wasilla. Video service is available by appointment. Call 907-373-3632.

The agency strongly encourages people, who can, to use its online services at www.socialsecurity.gov, call on the phone, or use the video service option when possible. These service options can save people a long trip to a busy office.

It never hurts to ask
Many businesses offer a discount to seniors, but don't advertise it. Speak up—it may save you some money.

Legal

continued from page 2

help them achieve their legal goals in these areas.

CJWs have already proven to be effective and successful in helping their communities. When Alaska's SNAP crisis exploded, there were approximately 60 trained and available CJWs who volunteered to take cases and help individuals and families file for fair hearing requests due to SNAP denials and delays, which usually resulted in their benefits being approved within 10 days of the request. During the height of the crisis, which lasted well over a year, CJWs were able to recover \$1.43 million in food security benefits and closed almost 500 cases. They were 100% successful in resolving the delay issues.

In addition to filing hearing requests, volunteers negotiated with state agents and in some cases represented clients in administrative hearings. They also provided outreach and legal information in villages, educating community members on their legal rights in food benefit cases, and flagged issues that ALSC was able to address with the state through litigation and negotiation.

Over 15% of all SNAP cases closed by ALSC during

the crisis were closed by a CJW volunteer – we would not have been able to help as many families as we did without CJWs.

As more volunteers continue to sign up to become CJWs, we are excited to see what comes next for Community Justice Workers in Alaska. Here are some things that are happening now:

▶ New courses will be added this year and next year to expand the kinds of cases CJWs are able to take;

▶ A certification process is being developed for CJWs to represent clients in court under Alaska Bar Rule 43.5 (Waiver to Engage in the Limited Practice of Law for Non-Lawyers Trained and Supervised by ALSC);

▶ New funding has been provided to support the work of the Community Justice Worker Resource Center. Thank you to Senator Murkowski for your work in securing an FY 2024 appropriation to expand Community Justice Work in Alaska; and

▶ We are always looking for ways to partner with community and tribal organizations across the state.

Community Justice Workers are helping to expand legal assistance to more Alaskans. Here are ways you can get involved:

Do you have legal needs that you haven't been able to address? Apply for ALSC services today. You can do

that by calling our statewide intake line 1-888-478-2572, applying online at alsc-law.org/intake, or visiting your local ALSC office.

Do you want to make a difference in your community by making legal help more available in Alaska? Become a CJW volunteer. You can sign up online at

alsc-law.org/community-justice-worker-program. Scroll a third of the way down the page and complete the form.

Do you want to stay in the know with what's happening at Alaska Legal Services Corporation and the Community Justice Worker Resource Center?

Sign up for our newsletter at alsc-law.org. Scroll to the bottom of the page and under connect click "Join ALSC's Email List."

By working together with our communities, we believe we can make a difference by expanding legal help to more—and eventually all—Alaskans.



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Hitting the trail together

By **MARALEY MCMICHAEL**

Senior Voice Correspondent

“Are you two doing okay back there?” my friend, Cindy, and I were being asked by one of our hiking group. “Yes, fine,” we replied as we brought up the rear on a hike back in July 2004. We were on the Caribou Creek Trail off the Nabesna Road, near the Tok Cut-Off Highway. Cindy and I were in our 40s, while the ages of the other women hikers from Anchorage ranged from 55 to 74.

Betty, the organizer of this outing, had been a friend of my mother’s when they were young singles living in Seward in the early 1950s. She had contacted me in February to begin planning the overnights at my Nabesna House Bed and Breakfast, so they could hike in Wrangell St. Elias Park – the largest national park in the United States.

We had agreed that rain wouldn’t spoil the hike, but too much smoke could.



The group gathers for a photo on the day of their hike in July 2004, in the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve. Story author Maraley McMichael is second from right, back row.

Cindy Quinton photo

The day before had dawned beautifully clear, but between 11 a.m. and noon, wind had blown smoke into our valley from the Tok area. A campfire smell permeated the air first, followed by a shroud of smoke that obscured the hills and mountains. I was unable to connect with Betty by cell phone to tell her of this

new development, but the smoke filled air had cleared a little by the time the six ladies arrived around 5:30 p.m. and even more by the time we set off from the Slana Ranger Station about 9:15 the next morning.

By previous arrangement, our local National

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Rambles

News from the Grapevine

Wasilla Area Seniors Inc. (WASI) is bringing back “Christmas In July” this year, with a full month of special activities, dress-up theme days and more. Each lunch has been sponsored by a community member or a business and sponsors have chosen the menu for their day, celebrating anniversaries, birthdays, or just because they want to be a Santa, note WASI staff. A Christmas meal is set for July 25, sponsored by the **Christmas Friendship Dinner Committee**, who will also help prepare the meal. For more information, call 907-206-8800 or visit the WASI Facebook page ...**Alaska Legal Services** is seeking feedback on how it is doing, what it should do more, less, and so forth. Take their **online survey** at www.surveymonkey.com/r/ZTC2SWJ ... **Ninilchik Senior Center** is selling raffle tickets for a sweet **John Deere S220 riding lawn tractor**, complete with 42” lawn mower and 44” snowblower attachments. Cost is \$50 per ticket and only 300 are being sold, available at the center. Drawing is Aug. 23 and the winner need not be present. Proceeds benefit the center. Call for more details, 907-567-3988 ... **Homer Senior Center** hosts “**Old Men’s Club**,” Wednesdays from 10 a.m. to noon. As noted in the center’s June newsletter, the event is an opportunity to “come hang out with the old men of Homer, chat about old times, retirement, community, interests, etc.” Call for more information. 907-235-4555 ... In **North Pole, Santa’s Senior Center** will be the place to buy **fresh vegetables** on Fridays, courtesy of **Lee Saylor**, who will bring his produce to the center each Friday around noon, according to the center’s June newsletter. Call for details, 907-488-4663 ... Much appreciation to **Mary and Paul**

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Rambles

News from the Grapevine

continued from page 13

Kleinschmidt in Nenana, who, the Nenana Senior Center's newsletter notes, "have continued to keep the Nenana Senior Center Mile clean of trash." The article goes on to say, "This can be a gentle reminder that if you have signed up to clean a mile of trash, it is a good time to do so. In many cases, those signs advertise your business and if your mile is cluttered with trash, it makes for a poor reflection on your business." ... Are you an Alaska pipeline industry retiree? The schedule for the **Gold Rush Days in Valdez** includes a **TAPS (Trans-Alaska Pipeline System) Retiree Coffee Hour** on Aug. 2 from 2 to 3 p.m. at The Coffee Co., 130 Meals Ave. Sponsored by the **Alyeska Pipeline Service**. Email valdezugoldrushdays@gmail.com for more information, or visit valdezugoldrushdays.org ... **Anchorage Senior Activity Center's computer lab** has reopened, with brand new computers. There are also two new computers in the center's library. Hours for both the lab and the library are Monday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. For more information, call 907-770-2000. *Rambles is compiled from senior center newsletters, websites and reader tips from around the state. Email your Rambles items to editor@seniorvoicealaska.com.*

RurAL CAP's first Senior Companion volunteer

Story and photo by ELLA JUSCZAK

For Senior Voice

Sassa Alexandria Dunn was born October of 1933 and given the Yupi'k name Amarchuli by her mom, Nanny Franklin, and dad, George Andrew. When she was just three years old Sassa's mom passed away and she was raised by her grandma. Sassa remembers having a beautiful childhood filled with laughter, stories and family. Her favorite memories are from her time at fish camp on the Igushik River.

When Sassa was old enough, she moved to Naknek to work. where she made 50 cents per week washing dishes for a local teacher. Once she turned



RurAL CAP has just launched its Senior Companion program, and Sassa Alexandria Dunn is its first volunteer.

16, she started working as a nurse's aide in the Naknek

hospital. Her most vivid memories are of helping patients who were affected by tuberculosis. Sassa didn't ever attend school regularly. She remembers her grandma telling her that 'school you learn to be lazy, work you learn to move'.

At age 17, a priest in Naknek helped send Sassa to Mt. Edgecumbe High School for an education, but it wasn't long after she arrived that she turned 18 and chose to move to Anchorage. She worked at Providence Hospital before getting married in the mid-1950s. Once married, Sassa settled on a homestead in the Rabbit Creek area of Anchorage where she

page 23 please

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 July 10, hosted by Assistive Technology of Alaska (ATLA).

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.

Anchorage to host exhibit honoring fallen soldiers

Senior Voice Staff

The "Eyes of Freedom" memorial exhibit, featuring the poignant "Silent Battle" sculpture, will visit Anchorage in July 2024 to honor the memory of Lance Cpl Grant Fraser, a fallen Marine of the Marine Forces Reserve's 4th Reconnaissance Battalion. He was from Anchorage. This exhibit, which travels nationwide to honor fallen military personnel, will be displayed at three Anchorage locations:

July 20-21 Arctic Thunder Open House, Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson. The exhibit will be accessible exclusively to attendees of the air show.

July 22-24 Service High School, Grant Fraser Memorial Auditorium, 5577 Abbott Road. Open to the public outside the auditorium.

July 26-28 University of Alaska Alaska Airlines Center, 3550 Providence Drive. Hosted by the university's Military & Veteran Services, open for public viewing.

The "Eyes of Freedom" memorial is a traveling exhibit that honors the service and sacrifices of U.S. military personnel. It features life-sized portraits representing the fallen members of Lima Company, including Lance Cpl Grant Fraser. Created



Photo courtesy Eyes of Freedom

by artist Anita Miller, the exhibit's centerpiece, the "Silent Battle" sculpture, addresses the ongoing struggles veterans face with post-traumatic stress (PTS). This sculpture aims to foster dialogue and support for veterans dealing with PTS and other mental health challenges.

The exhibit pays special homage to Lance Cpl Fraser, who lost his life on Aug. 3, 2005, during combat operations in Haditha, Iraq. The Anchorage display includes his portrait and will be accompanied by honor escorts at each location.

The memorial's journey begins with an honor escort on July 18, 2024, to the Arctic Thunder Open House at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson. Subsequent honor escorts

will transport the exhibit to Service High School and then to the University of Alaska's Alaska Airlines Center.

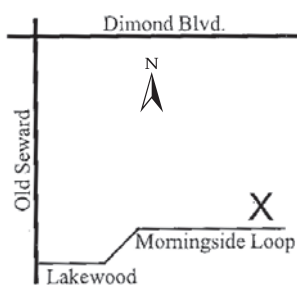
The exhibit's Anchorage visit is made possible through the support of local organizations and businesses. Contributors include the Alaska Veterans Museum, The Wounded Warrior Project, the Anchorage School District, and Visit Anchorage. Additionally, logistics for transporting the exhibit are provided by R+L Carriers, TOTE Maritime, Odyssey Group, and Carlile Trucking.

For more details about the exhibit and its mission, visit www.eyesoffreedom.org or follow their social media updates.

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Festivals and fairs around the state

By **DIMITRA LAVRAKAS**
For Senior Voice

July is peak season for festivals around Alaska. Here are some highlights:

Chugiak/Eagle River Bear Paw Festival, July 10-14. Free. Grand parade, Slippery Salmon Olympics, Human Foosball Tournament, community service awards, classic car show, music, vendors, much more. www.bearpawfestival.com

Girdwood Forest Fair, July 5-7. Free. A family fair that features Alaskan artists, hand-crafted items, exotic foods, and entertainers from all over Alaska. <https://girdwood-forestfair.com/>

Homer Peony Celebration, July 1-30. Free. Come July, Homer, dubbed "The City of Peonies," boasts 25 peony farms. Come witness the blooms at their peak and enjoy farm tours, art classes, gallery exhibitions, workshops, and self-guided tours. www.homer.alaska.org/events/

Kenai 8th Annual Rock'n the Ranch at the Rusty Ravin, July 19-20. The music festival you do not want to miss. Beer garden, food and craft vendors, family friendly, and camping. Limited tickets sold, go to www.brownpapertickets.com/event/6270243

Seward Mount Marathon Race, July 4. The Mount Marathon Race, 5K or 3.1 miles with an elevation gain of almost 3,000 feet, became an organized run in 1915 and is a key part of Independence Day celebrations in Seward.

www.seward.com/event/seward-july-4th-festival/729/

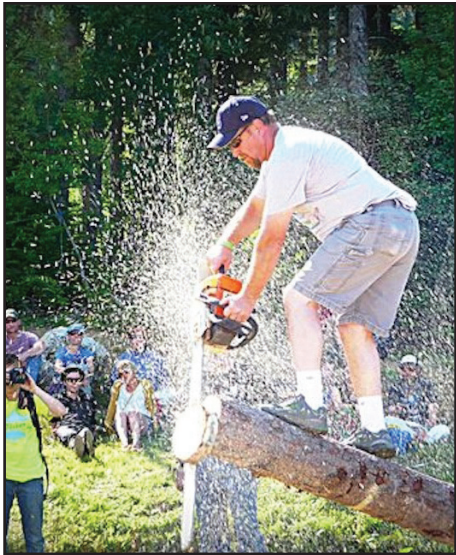
Valdez Gold Rush Days, July 31-August 4. Free. Annual 5-day celebration honoring the past, present and future of Valdez. Money raised is donated to a variety of local charities and organizations focused on children and the future

of Valdez. www.valdezgoldrushdays.org/

SOUTHEAST

Copper River Salmon Jam, July 15-20. Free. A Taste of Cordova food celebration, small fry activities, Alaska Salmon Run, and musical performances too! <https://salmonjam.org/>

Haines Southeast Alas-



A smaller state fair than the one in Palmer, the Southeast Alaska State Fair makes up for it in thrills and chills like the lumberjack contest and the intimacy of greeting local and nearby towns' friends.

*Photo courtesy
Southeast Alaska State Fair*

ka State Fair, July 25-28. Senior Early Bird Ticket, \$24. Contests, food, crafts displays, and music. Cows Go Moo, The Femmes, Delhi2Dublin, The Whiskeydicks, and Kitchen Dwellers. <https://seakfair.org>

Wrangell Alaska Bearfest, July 24-28. Free.

In the heart of the Tongass National Forest, Wrangell is home to both black and brown bears. Bearfest is a tribute to these surroundings and the nature of what makes Wrangell so special. Check out the Bear Safety Workshop, photo workshops, art workshop for kids, and lots more. <http://www.alaskabearfest.org/schedule.html>

INTERIOR

Delta Junction Deltana Fair & Music Festival, July 19-24. Seniors \$5 day pass. Enter the blueberry pie contest, the Pipeline Run, Miss Deltana and Cutest

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Calendar of Events

July 4 Nationwide Independence Day

July 4 Chugiak Chugiak-Eagle River Senior Center Fourth of July BBQ, 11:30 a.m. Join for some fun and food before the annual parade. 907-688-2677.

July 10-13 Fairbanks World Eskimo Indian Olympics at Big Dipper Ice Arena. Unique traditional Native games, art and dance. Daytime admission is free; evening admission, \$15 for adults, \$10 youth and seniors. Free for children age 4 and younger and elders age 80 and older. Season and family packages available. www.weio.org.

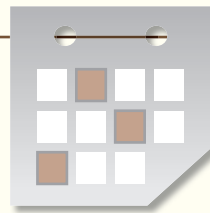
July 13 Sterling Breakfast Fundraiser at Sterling Senior Center, 34453 Sterling Highway, 8:30-11 a.m. Everything you want in a breakfast: Pancakes, waffles, bacon, sausage links, ham, biscuits, gravy, scrambled eggs, coffee and juices, all for \$15. Proceeds benefit the senior center. 907-262-6808

July 20 Ketchikan 3rd Annual NOSB Rock the Boat Cruise, 5 to 7 p.m. Annual fundraiser for the Ketchikan High School "Saber-Toothed Salmon" National Ocean Science Bowl Team. Sponsored by Allen Marine Tours, will feature ocean sightseeing, food, and sing-along sea shanties on board with Greg Thomas and Friends. Adults, \$80; Age 6-17, \$50; age 5 and under, free. For tickets, email Coach Sanderson at KetchikanNOSB@gmail.com or call 907-821-8820.

July 20 Juneau "Mini Naturalists" family program at the Jensen-Olson Arboretum, 23035 Glacier Hwy., 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Families will explore the arboretum through various activities to engage their inner naturalist. Learn to make nature journals, sound mapping, and enjoy other activities connecting to nature. Call for information and registration, 907-789-0139 or email friendsjoa@gmail.com.

July 20-21 Anchorage Arctic Thunder Air Show and Open House at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER). One of the country's premier showcases for military air capability, featuring the USAF Thunderbirds, C-17 Demonstration Team, F-22, F-16, parachutes and many more demonstrations. Get up close and with equipment, visit dozens of food stands and other vendors. Free admission and parking. Arcticthunderopenhouse.com

July 25 Ninilchik Ninilchik Senior Center annual membership meeting, 12:45 p.m. 907-567-3988



Send us your calendar items

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St. Michael awakens to gold rush fever

By LAUREL DOWNING BILL

Senior Voice Correspondent

On June 25, 1897, the sleepy old Russian town of St. Michael awoke when Alaska Commercial Company's river steamer Alice arrived with 25 miners from Dawson carrying \$500,000 among them in gold dust. That was enough to liven up just about any town.

But the party wasn't over. Two days later, the P.B. Weare carried in another group of 60 successful men who staggered off that small steamer with more pokes of gold. Miners from both boats then transferred to the SS Portland and the SS Excelsior to carry their fortunes on to Seattle and San Francisco.

Soon more miners followed. St. Michael, founded in 1833 by Russian traders, became the hub for those with visions of nuggets dancing before their eyes, both coming from and going to the rich fields in the Yukon.

The Yukon River carries about two-thirds the volume of water of the mighty Mississippi and is loaded in the summer with the soil debris of ground glacial rock and silt from banks cut by the current. The debris, deposited on the wide, fan-shaped flats that reached out into the Bering Sea, prohibited large ocean ships from entering into the deep current of the stream. All passengers and cargo had to land at St. Michael and transfer to small river steamers, which could make only 100 miles a day churning against the powerful current of the muddy Yukon. Running one-half to six miles per hour, it took more than two weeks for the boats to make the 1,600-mile trip to Dawson and the Klondike.

With the lure of big money to be made, commercial and trading companies built warehouses to help with the transfer of goods and fleets of steamers to convey the "gold-crazed lunatics" and their freight up the Yukon. The Northern Commercial Company and its rival, the North American Transportation and Trading Company, enlarged their facilities and built boats at a feverish pitch. New companies like the Alaska Exploration Company and the Seattle Yukon Transportation Company also sprang up.

Some of the companies shipped parts and pieces for boats on ocean liners headed north, and then men assembled the steamers, barges and tugs in St. Michael. As the gold rush wore on, river steamers were built in Seattle and gingerly made the 2,300-mile voyage on the open ocean under their own power or towed north by large ships.

Transportation opportunists weren't the only ones eyeing the

potential for profits in St. Michael. Gangs of gamblers pitched tents along the beach and welcomed those passing through to try their hands at games of chance. In an effort to dissuade the con men, the U.S. War Department built an army post, Fort St. Michael, in 1897 and set up a 100-mile reserve around it. The commander of the post then ordered the gamblers and "sure thing" men to leave.

About 10,000 people lived in St. Michael during the gold rush. It also became a popular trading post for Alaska Natives to trade their goods for Western supplies. After the mad rush for gold, many Yup'ik then settled there from other villages after the measles epidemic of 1900 and influenza epidemic of 1918 decimated their own communities. The population of St. Michael hovers around 450 today.

This column features tidbits found in Aunt Phil's Trunk, a five-book



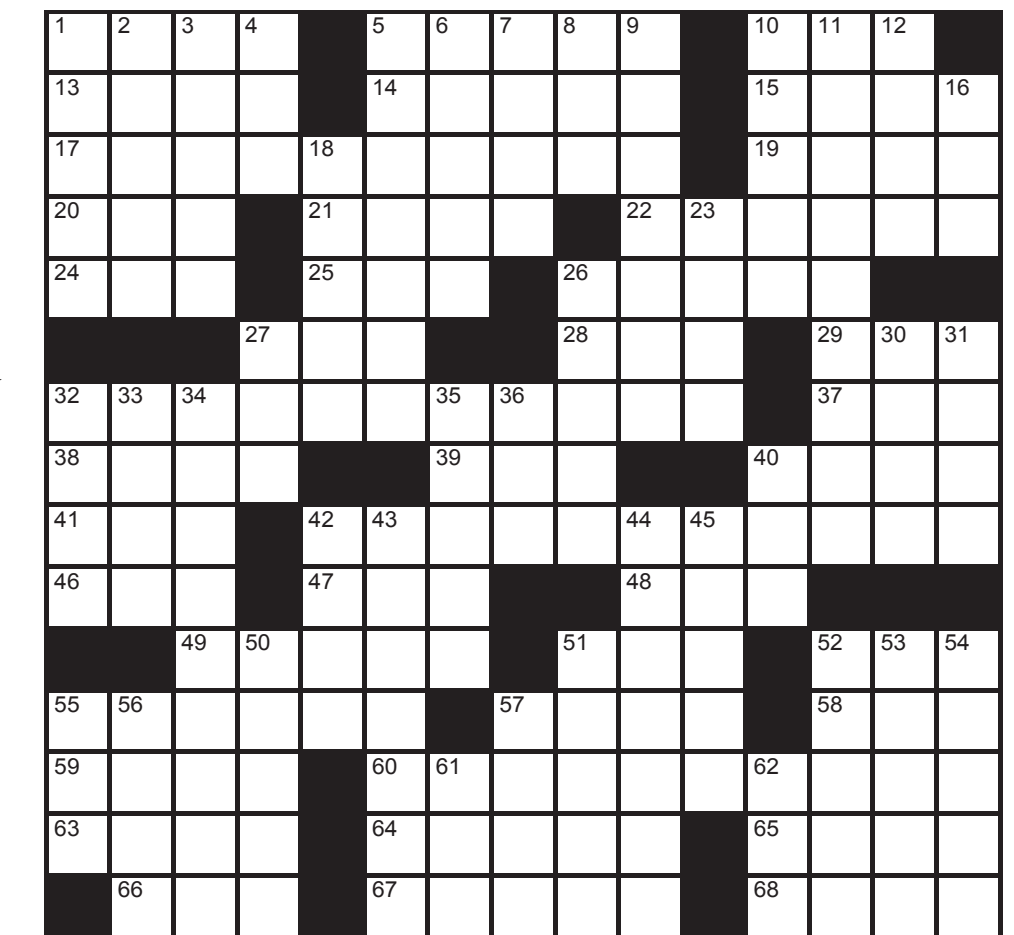
Soon after the discovery of Klondike gold in the late 1890s, riverboats filled the Yukon River as they carried prospectors from St. Michael to the rich gold fields. Courtesy Alaska State Library

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.

Don't Bug Me

Across

- 1 Heart of the matter
- 5 Pago Pago's place
- 10 J.F.K. arrival, at one time
- 13 Place a chip in the pot
- 14 Becomes frayed
- 15 Primatologist's study
- 17 Insect's retail shop?
- 19 Euros replaced them
- 20 Away's partner
- 21 Where Lima is
- 22 Maine's ___ National Park
- 24 Spud bud
- 25 Kick the bucket
- 26 Barter
- 27 Jellied delicacy
- 28 T.G.I.F. part
- 29 Zodiac animal
- 32 School contest for brainy kids
- 37 Actress Farrow
- 38 Maple dropping
- 39 "Rocky ___"
- 40 Stationer's stock
- 41 Bobble
- 42 Small blackish stout-bodied biting insect
- 46 1999 Pulitzer Prize-winning play
- 47 On target
- 48 Old NOW cause
- 49 Christmas decoration
- 51 Court ploy
- 52 Collar
- 55 Michener best seller
- 57 Indian people living in Brazil and Paraguay
- 58 Bard's "before"
- 59 Andy's radio partner



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- 60 Phoebe bird that dines on insects
- 63 Actress Spelling
- 64 Three-toed animal
- 65 Museo holdings
- 66 Metric linear units, in brief
- 67 Lieu
- 68 The Everly Brothers, e.g.
- 7 Ocean menace
- 8 Neighbor of Wash.
- 9 Fertility goddess
- 10 Leaves for lunch?
- 11 Insect-themed movie
- 12 Hatcher of "Lois & Clark"
- 16 Poseidon's domain
- 18 Runway walker
- 23 Four six-packs
- 26 Leg bone
- 27 Polar worker
- 30 Verdi heroine
- 31 Schooner part
- 32 Great deal
- 33 Persian spirit
- 34 Nightcrawler
- 35 Peachy-keen
- 36 Image designation
- 40 Vardon Trophy org.
- 42 Exotic vacation spot
- 43 Fills with optimism
- 44 Big cat
- 45 Eye socket
- 50 Desert sight
- 51 St. ___ (volcanic island near Martinique)
- 52 India's first P.M.
- 53 Sharp narrow ridge
- 54 Special Forces cap
- 55 Monopoly token
- 56 Run ___ (go crazy)
- 57 Use a keyboard
- 61 Back muscle, familiarly
- 62 Scoundrel

Crossword answers on page 22



TV and movie moms voice support for the homeless

By **NICK THOMAS**
Tinseltown Talks

Mother's Day may have passed, but moms continue to inspire and encourage. Even fictitious ones. Some of America's favorite classic television and movie moms are raising awareness of the country's homeless youth problem. Although their focus is one organization, Doors of Change in the San Diego area (with its summer benefit "Concert of Hope" this year to be held on July 27 at the Epstein Family Amphitheater, UCSD, and featuring KC and the Sunshine Band, see www.doorsofchange.org) their message should resonate in cities across America where homelessness continues to be a major social problem.

Doors of Change has helped thousands of homeless youth find safe housing and a sense of purpose with a unique arts-based approach. The organization's team of trained professionals and volunteers search for at-risk youth, first offering them essentials such as water, socks and sleeping bags. Once trust is gained, the organization offers music and art lessons as a non-threatening first step to turning their lives around. Individuals can then be connected with services that provide housing, employment, medical care and addiction treatment.

Jane Kaczmarek, the mother in the 2000s sitcom "Malcolm in the Middle," acknowledges this unique approach.

"The stress of being a teenager can be too over-

whelming, too confusing, and too many find themselves on our streets trying to survive," said Kaczmarek. "Doors of Change has discovered a unique way to connect with them, through music and art programs that have not only been saving lives but taken our young from hopeless to hopeful. They build self-esteem and respect for themselves and others."

June Lockhart, the beloved TV mom from the 60s shows "Lassie" and "Lost in Space," applauds the use of arts to connect with homeless youth. "At an early age, my parents instilled in me the importance of arts to inspire and enhance our lives," she said, adding that the organization has been "successful at reaching the thousands of our young who have become lost."

Support also comes from Dee Wallace, the movie mom from 1982's "ET: The Extra-Terrestrial," who applauds the group for "reinforcing positive attitudes and images toward oneself." That, she says, "is exactly what our youth needs to face and replace the uncertainty and fear they may have of the future."

Michael Learned won three Primetime Lead Actress Emmys for her role as Olivia Walton in the 70s historical drama "The Waltons" and notes "Every child, every teen, is our responsibility. We must keep them safe and the earth solid beneath their feet until they have found their place in this world."

Until that place is discovered, the dangers of youth



From top left clockwise, June Lockhart, Dee Wallace, Michael Learned, Karen Grassle, Ilene Graff, and Jane Kaczmarek.

Photos courtesy Karen Grassle, Jane Kaczmarek and publicist

homelessness can often lead to additional social problems with which Karen Grassle is all too familiar.

"As one who has suffered from the disease of alcoholism, I know the loneliness and despair it can bring," explains Grassle, who played the "Little House on the Prairie" mother. "As an artist, I know the healing that comes from self-expression and self-examination. For me, hope came as soon as I surrendered my addiction. Art is a great help and healer."

"Mr. Belvedere" mom Ilene Graff also offers en-

couragement.

"You're a runaway because home had become unbearable or you've been thrown out of the house," says Graff, who played the mom in the popular 80s ABC sitcom. "If you're lucky, Doors of Change will find you and help you get off the street and into hope, leading to safety, education, housing, music, art,

friendship, (and) security."

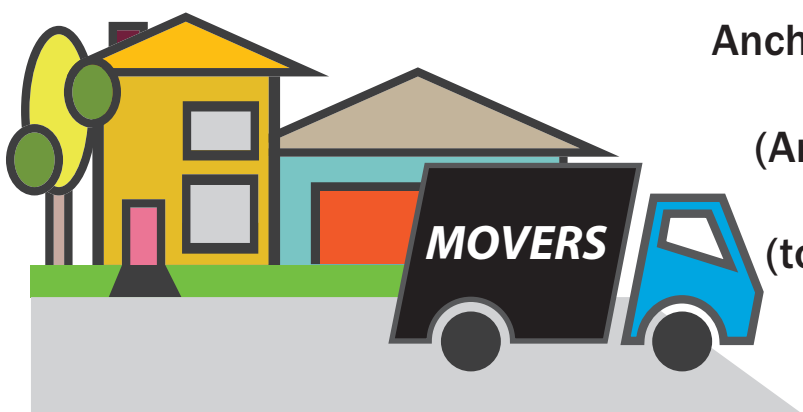
Since reaching homeless youth through music and art has proven to be a successful model, similar programs could be used to address the same problem around the country.

Nick Thomas writes about classic film, television, and music for numerous magazines and newspapers. See www.getnickt.org.

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Keeping an eye on all of your stuff

By KENNETH KIRK

For Senior Voice



One of the many useful lessons my dad taught me growing up was to maintain your equipment. He did a lot of home improvement projects, and no matter how long and exhausting the day had been, before finishing he always took care of his tools. Paintbrushes would be cleaned and put in turpentine to soak, work areas would be cleaned up, and tools would be put away (“a place for everything, and everything in its place,” he would say).

This lesson was further instilled in me by some fine gentlemen at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, who were quite concerned that I clean my rifle, among other items, before going to bed.

I was thinking about this recently while reading the weekly Alaska Supreme Court decisions. There was a case involving a real estate doctrine called “adverse possession”. The doctrine says that in certain circumstances, one person can claim rights to another person's land if they used it as their own for at least 10 years.

The case came out of South Anchorage. There was a platted lot line in a subdivision, and the fence between the two properties. However the fence was not quite in the right spot; it started at the right place

in the front of the lots, but went at the wrong angle from there, so that by the time it got to the back of the lot it was quite a few feet off the lot line.

For almost 20 years nobody noticed that a triangular portion of the second lot was on the wrong side of the fence. Each of the neighbors maintained their side of the fence as if that was where the lot line was. When the error was finally discovered, the neighbors whose property was on the wrong side of the fence sued. The other owner, who had been maintaining this triangle on her side of the fence for all those years, countersued for adverse possession.

And she won. When there is an honest mistake and an adjacent property owner is using a portion of your property as if it was their own, after 10 years they can claim a right to that part of the property.

(Before moving on, I will note that the law of adverse possession is somewhat

I often have clients who own an undeveloped parcel somewhere out in the boonies, who tell me they have not been there in decades. And I tell them to get out there and take a look at it.

complex and has a number of required elements, so don't rely on this article for legal advice. You do read the little disclaimer at the end of this article each month, right? I usually try to insert a little bon mot at the end to try to get you to read the disclaimer. Anyway, back to my main point).

I am willing to bet that part of the problem is that the neighboring lot—the one that was losing a part of the yard to the encroaching property—was a vacant lot. Oftentimes people do not keep a close eye on vacant properties. That is especially true with remote properties. I often have clients who own an undeveloped parcel somewhere out in the boonies, who tell

me they have not been there in decades. And I tell them to get out there and take a look at it.

Because aside from the possibility that someone is encroaching on their property, there also may be a dangerous situation. If somebody leaves an abandoned vehicle, or refrigerator, or just a lot of stuff with sharp edges, and someone else ends up getting hurt, potentially the injured person could sue the property owner. And most people don't bother to carry liability insurance on vacant properties.

So you need to keep an eye on your assets. And not only your real estate.

I attended a presentation a few years back by

a security expert from a bank. After going through some of the latest tricks that people were using to steal money, he told us that we should be checking our account statements online at least every other day. When someone in the audience asked if that wasn't an awful lot to expect people to do, he simply said “it's your money”.

Financial planners sometimes say, “take care of your assets, and someday they'll take care of you”. Well put.

Now drop and give me 20.

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. Now to avoid being a hypocrite, I guess I have to go clean my keyboard.

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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
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Random phone shutoffs; Is AI a fad?; Windows Copilot

By **BOB DELAURENTIS**

Bob's Tech Talk

Q. Sometimes my smart-phone shuts off suddenly. The screen goes dark, and none of the buttons work. After a few minutes, it works again. Should I look for a replacement?

A. Modern smartphones take their internal temperature continuously. These modern computing miracles still have to obey the laws of physics, and when they get too hot, bad things happen.

As a result, smartphones are smart enough to hibernate instantly when they feel a little toasty. The causes are many, everything from laying in open sunlight to processing photos or videos.

Because smartphones are so good at hiding the fact they are actually complex computers, a suddenly unresponsive phone might seem like a failure. But if the cause is thermal, and the effect is unexpected sleep, that failure is really a feature.

The temperature can change in milliseconds inside a phone, and there is usually no time to warn the user that it needs to take a break. This is why mysterious shutdowns happen without warning, either before or after.

The way to tell if this is a serious problem or “normal” is to pay attention to

patterns of behavior. The phone does not always need to feel warm to the touch in order to overheat, although that will occur sometimes. If the problem happens once or twice, or only happens on sunny days, there is a good chance the sudden shutdowns are normal, if inconvenient.

Q. Is Artificial Intelligence a revolutionary new technology or a fad?

A. There is no question that we have been bombarded with news about AI in the last year, and this summer the hype reached a fever pitch as Google, Apple and Microsoft each announced ambitious future plans.

However, calling AI a new fad is a bit of a misnomer. AI, under different names such as machine learning, has been in our devices for at least a decade. Only in the last year have large language models captured everyone's attention as the next big thing.

So a new fad? No. But how revolutionary will it become? No one really knows the full answer to that yet. First off, none of the newest features have shipped, and promises of “later this fall” sometimes quietly change to “in the next few years.” Remember self-driving cars that work? Or jet packs?

As I write this, AI has inspired impressive demos. But not until useful everyday features are in

widespread use will we have any sense of what was sizzle and what is steak.

Q. What is the difference between AI on Windows 11 and Copilot+ PCs?

A. AI, or Artificial Intelligence, is everywhere this summer. In many ways it represents the leading edge of innovation for personal computers.

Microsoft Copilot is the name Microsoft has chosen to describe a suite of advanced features that fall under the umbrella term “AI.”

Copilot+ PCs are specific PC models that are powerful enough to support all the features available as part of Copilot.

Unless you purchase a Copilot+ PC, you will have to wait until fall before a version of Copilot is available for some existing PCs as part of a Windows 11 update. Given the processor power needed for AI features, most existing PCs will probably only support a subset of Copilot features.

“Recall” is one of the marquee features in Copilot. It is also one of the worst ideas I have ever encountered in computing.

Wander the Web

Here are my picks for worthwhile browsing this month:

Open AI on the Web

ChatGPT from openai.com is considered the best large language model right now, and there is no need to wait for it to show up on your favorite device. Use it for free on the Web today.

chatgpt.com

Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy

Click on the “Game” link in the yellow menubar to play a web version of the classic text adventure, celebrating its 30th anniversary. And Don't Panic!

www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b03v379k

Future Progress

This page shows progress bars to future events. One of many great places to explore on neal.fun.

neal.fun/progress/

The feature, which was removed suddenly after its announcement, takes a snapshot of your screen every few seconds and stores it on your computer. I am far from the only critic who thinks the idea is a security nightmare. Even if you do not use Recall, when you communicate with someone who does, anything you share on screen will

be recorded.

George Orwell never imagined something so invasive. I do not know how the Recall mess will sort itself out, yet I fear it will eventually reappear later this year.

Bob has been writing about technology for over three decades. He can be contacted at techtalk@bobdel.com.

Pi

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What about the accuracy of what Pi tells you? All its answers in my experience sound confident and authoritative. But if it is important, ask Pi where the info comes from and check the source. I have caught it making several mistakes. This unreliability is no different than other major AI platforms you may have run across. The company warns:

“Pi may make up facts, events, or advice. You should never rely on anything it tells you without double-checking the facts yourself or, if appropriate, talking to a professional.”

Inflection is the company that developed and owns Pi. It is a public benefit corporation with a current valuation of several billion dollars, and it has been heavily invested in by Microsoft among other major players. Pi will be around for the foreseeable future.

I suggest you give Pi a try and talk with it for a while. It is an utterly fascinating experience. If you hate it, you can erase all your conversations and cancel your account. If Pi asks you why you want to do that, tell her your Pet Rock got jealous.

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.

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Wasilla Senior Center
1301 South Century Circle, Wasilla
July 23, Aug 20, Sept 17 | 9:30–11:30 a.m.

Palmer Senior Center
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Exploring the rich culture and habitat of Ecuador and the Galapagos

Alaska couple's South America journey continues

By LAUREL DOWNING BILL

For Senior Voice

Part three in a four-part series.

After enjoying the first leg of our 50th wedding anniversary trip in Peru, my husband and I moved on to Quito, which marked the beginning of an adventure that immersed us in the rich history and vibrant culture of Ecuador. We were met by an English-speaking driver and guide, which Smithsonian Journeys and Audley Travel had arranged. They whisked us away to La Casona De La Ronda, a charming boutique hotel housed within a Spanish colonial mansion dating back to 1738.

Our first taste of Ecuadorian cuisine at Los Geranimos, a quaint family-owned restaurant near our hotel, was a culinary delight. From shrimp ceviche to fried guinea pig legs to flaming desserts, each dish was delicious.

The following morning, New Year's Eve, we embarked on a guided tour of Ecuador's capital. We first drove to the hilltop sanctuary of Virgin del Panecillo, which offered panoramic views of Quito's sprawling landscape that stretches 35 miles long and 6 miles wide. The stunning Madonna statue, which is 135 feet tall and can be



seen across the city, was made with 7,400 aluminum pieces.

The Basilica, with its impressive French-inspired architecture adorned with indigenous motifs, highlighted Ecuador's diverse heritage. The San Francisco cathedral provided a glimpse into the city's religious fervor, showcased through opulent golden altars and intricate nativity scenes. And a visit to a small shop where we learned traditional chocolate-making techniques, from bean to bar, was a sweet highlight of our day and offered insight into Ecuador's rich cocoa heritage.

Unique New Year's Eve traditions

As we strolled along cobblestone streets, we discovered fascinating Ecuadorian traditions specific to New Year's Eve. Large, elaborately crafted scarecrow-like dolls lined the sidewalks and plazas, each one unique in design and message. From political figures to cartoon characters, they captured the spirit of año viejo (the old year) and are set ablaze at midnight to release bad energy from the prior year and embrace the promise of the new year ahead.

We also saw viudas, or widows of the old year, harassing drivers and passersby. Dressed in drag—complete with balloons to accentuate their figures, high heels, short skirts and wigs—these men take to the streets this day to stop traffic and ask for small change before letting drivers continue. The money collected goes into a pot to fund a party later

The Virgin of El Panecillo sits on top of a hill that's shaped like a loaf of bread in the center of Quito. It's the highest statue in Ecuador and one of the highest in South America, surpassing the famous Christ the Redeemer in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. It also is the highest aluminum statue in the world.



The Galapagos giant tortoise is one of the most famous animals of the islands, with the archipelago being named after them (Galapágo is an old Spanish word for tortoise). It arrived from mainland South America two to three million years ago and evolved into 14 species. Twelve living species are thought to remain in the Galapagos today across 10 islands.

Photos courtesy Laurel Bill

that night.

After spending a quiet New Year's Day in Quito, we flew more than 800 miles to the Galapagos Islands. Landing on Baltra, we were met by a guide holding our ship's sign: Solaris. Once all 16 passengers for the ship gathered, we were bussed to the beach where we climbed into rubber rafts that took us to our eight-cabin yacht.

Adventures in the Galapagos

Once we checked into our cabin, we joined the rest of our shipmates for a lovely lunch while the captain steered the 118-foot ship to Bachas Beach on Santa Cruz Island. Our guide, who was born in

the Galapagos, told us we would be rafting to its shore for a "wet" landing that afternoon.

Don, 80, and I, 72, prayed we wouldn't make fools of ourselves while getting in and out of rafts during our daily excursions. Our old bones weren't as agile as they once were, and we didn't want to give seniors a bad rep. Thankfully, we maneuvered in and out of the rafts just fine.

That afternoon, we hopped off the raft into about two feet of water and then took a walk to see what wildlife lived on this island. We found land iguanas, magnificent frigate birds, Galapagos brown pelicans, Nazca boobies, Darwin finches, blue-foot-

ed boobies, brown noddies, great blue herons perched on mangrove trees, Franklin's gulls, Sally Lightfoot crabs, ghost crabs, and a green marine turtle.

The next morning we had a "dry" landing on the rocky lava shore of Tinctoreras, which consists of several small islets off the coast of Puerto Villamil. We managed to haul ourselves off the raft and up concrete steps. Our mile-long hike along a crushed black lava trail yielded sightings of Galapagos sea lions and pups, white-tipped sharks in a lagoon, and many marine iguanas. We also saw our first Galapagos penguins, which are only about 13 inches tall. So cute!

next page please



Exploring

from page 20

Conservation helps Galapagos tortoises

The Arnaldo Tupiz Tortoise Breeding Center on Isabella Island was on the afternoon agenda. We saw hundreds of giant Galapagos tortoises, but they weren't giant at all. The hatchlings were smaller than the size of one's hand. Once eggs hatch, the baby tortoises are kept in screened boxes for two years until their shells harden. Then they're moved into larger areas for another three to five years before being introduced to their natural habitat.

We were heartened to learn conservationists at the center have managed to increase the population of endangered species, restoring balance to fragile ecosystems, and ensuring the survival of these ancient creatures for future generations.

During the next four days, we rafted to and hiked around several more islands, including Fernan-



There are about 6,000 blue-footed boobies, or about half the world's population, in the Galapagos. Their clumsiness on the ground led the booby to be named by the Spanish "bobo," which means silly or stupid. They have extraordinary binocular vision, which make them one of the best fishing birds. The brighter the blue color of the feet, the more reproductive success they may have.

dina, Santiago, Rabida, and Chinese Hat. We saw abundant birds and wildlife at each stop—including Galapagos fur seals, Galapagos hawks, and a Galapagos

snake. The snake, about as big around as a human thumb and three feet long, evolved to lose its poisonous capability and became a mini boa constrictor.



During the week between Christmas and New Year, effigies appear outside homes and gathering places in the cities of Ecuador. They are made from papier mâché and stuffed with paper, straw and fireworks. They then are dressed in clothes. It's traditional to donate small change for the best one, which goes into a drinking fund for the big night. These dolls are burned at the stroke of midnight New Year's Eve to symbolize leaving the trials and tribulations of the past year behind and welcoming the new year.

On our way back to the airport to return to Quito, our guide took us to a tortoise reserve on Santa Cruz Island. We were thrilled to see so many giant tortoises, several weighing more than 500 pounds and more than 100 years old, roaming around in their natural habitat.

Our time in the Galápagos reminded us of the pow-

er of nature to inspire and awe. We cherished every moment of our adventure, savoring the sights, sounds and sensations of this remote paradise. When we said goodbye to the islands and set our sights toward the Amazon rainforest, we realized two things: our memories will last a lifetime and the spirit of exploration knows no age.

Research

continued from page 5

Lewy body dementia, vascular dementia, or frontotemporal dementia. Ultimately, this provides others with better treatments and prevention strategies in the future.

Who can participate in an Alzheimer's or related dementia clinical trial?

Anyone 18 or older can participate—not only those with dementia or memory problems, but also healthy volunteers, caregivers and family members.

Researchers are looking for a variety of partners:

- ▶ Alzheimer's and related

dementia patients, those with cognitive impairment, and people afflicted with diminishing brain health

- ▶ People who are healthy, without symptoms of dementia
- ▶ Both younger and older people
- ▶ People who are at-risk given their family history, genetic makeup, or biomarkers, which are measures that could signal very early stages of disease
- ▶ People with Down syndrome, who are at higher risk for Alzheimer's disease
- ▶ Caregivers of people with dementia

How to participate

There are many fields looking for participants aside from Alzheimer's disease. Go to www.ClinicalTrials.gov

Why is diversity needed in clinical trials?

Researchers need participants who represent all types of races and ethnicities, genders, ages, geographic locations and sexual orientations.

Representativeness. Including a diverse range of participants in clinical trials ensures that the results are applicable to a

wider population. Different demographic groups may respond differently to treatments, so having diverse participants can help ensure that the results are generalizable.

Equity. Ensuring diversity in clinical trials helps to address disparities in health outcomes among different populations. By including participants from marginalized or underrepresented groups, such as Asian, Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, Native American, and/or Pacific Islander, researchers can better understand how treatments may affect these populations and work toward more equitable healthcare.

Safety. Some treatments may have different effects on different demographic groups, such as differences in drug metabolism or side effects. Including a diverse range of participants in clinical trials helps to identify any potential safety concerns that may be specific to certain populations.

Trust and access. Lack of diversity in clinical trials can contribute to mistrust in the healthcare system among marginalized

communities. By actively including diverse participants in clinical trials, researchers can build trust with community members and ensure that everyone has equal access to advanced treatments.

Diversity in clinical trials is essential for ensuring that research findings are valid, applicable, and equitable for all populations.

Making the decision

Overall, participation in clinical research can be a valuable experience for individuals who are looking to access new treatments, contribute to medical solutions, and potentially improve their own health outcomes. However, it is important for individuals to carefully consider the risks and benefits of participating in clinical research and to discuss their decision with healthcare professionals.

Karen Casanovas, PCC, CPCC, CLIPP is a health and wellness professional coach practicing in Anchorage. Write to her at info@karen-casanovas.com.

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Festivals

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Baby Contest. Live music and annual parade. Dr. Crusberg's Memorial Pet Show—if your pet does tricks, enter them for free. The Forget-Me-Knot Quilters Guild members create a quilt to raffle for Delta area residents who have suffered a loss from a house fire. www.Deltanafair.com

Fairbanks Summer Arts Festival, July 17- 28. Ticket prices vary.

A multi-disciplinary festival with classes in music, dance, theatre, visual arts, literary arts, culinary arts, and healing arts. FSAF



Elvis performs at last year's Tanana Valley State Fair Senior Lunch. He was a hit and will return to the annual lunch event this year, July 31 at noon, joined by the Pavva Inupiaq Dancers. The lunch is free to seniors age 60 and older.

Photo courtesy Tanana Valley State Fair

brings in 120-plus guest artists from around the globe. <https://fsaf.org>

Fairbanks Tanana Val-

ley State Fair, July 26 – Aug. 4. Tickets: Senior (60+), \$8, Senior Season Pass, \$40. It's the fair's centennial! Baby Show, Most Attractively Decorated Booth, Cabbage Contest. Senior Lunch in the Big Top Tent, July 31 at noon. New events include the Competitive Exhibits Scavenger Hunt,

track and field, Alaska Heritage Day Fiddle Fest, Adult Hula Hoop Competition, and Fairbanks Has Talent. www.Tvsfa.org

Fairbanks World Eskimo-Indian Olympics, July 10-13, Seniors, \$10.

Witness the traditional physical skills that Alaska Natives used for centuries as games of strength and agility. <https://www.weio.org/>

Glacier View River Retreat Fourth of July Car Launch, Adults (13 and up), \$20.

Around 2 p.m., watch as a Chrysler New Yorker, 1983 Silverado, Dodge Caravan, Taurus, Explorer, and others get launched off a 300-foot cliff.

Lots of food trucks available. www.facebook.com/events/822472696368940

Kachemak Bay Highland Games, July 6. Daily, \$10. Traditional games in Homer, like tossing the caber. The Harp Twins with the Wolfgang Twins will perform. Local vendors, food trucks and bagpipes, bagpipes, bagpipes.

www.kachemakbay-scottishclub.org/index.html

McGrath Back to Bluegrass Festival, July 20-21.

Annual festival supports local radio station KSKO. Glacier Blues Band and Hope Social Club and others perform. Go to "Back to Bluegrass XIII" Facebook page.

Income

continued from page 3

from? Then you might try Etsy at www.etsy.com.

Etsy is a reputable, global, online marketplace, where people come together to make, sell, buy and collect unique items. "We're also a community pushing for positive change for small businesses, people, and the planet," the company says.

It works this way: There's a 20 cent listing fee and listings are active for four months.

The 6.5 percent transaction fee is 3 percent of your sale plus a 25 cent payment processing fee.

When you sell an item, there's a small commission and standard payment processing fee. If you want, they add a 15 percent offsite

ads fee, where Etsy pays to advertise your items across the web through ads, and you only pay a fee when you make a sale from an ad.

Granted, this will be computer-intensive and you might be forced to bribe a grandchild to walk you through it, but then again, it may be a bonding experience.

Take a shot

If you're a photographer, as I am, you can mount your photos on a site, like Photoshelter.com, where they take no money from your sales, but charge a monthly fee. I pay \$28 a month and that's a real bargain. There's also YourDaily-Photograph.com, run by the Duncan Miller Gallery in Los Angeles, www.duncanmillergallery.com. You submit photographs and their collectors buy them, but you have to have them

printed and send them to the gallery.

Sure, you can fudge and get them printed at Walgreens, but I think they prefer a fine art paper.

You could enter contests, like the 2024 Alaska Magazine photo contest with a deadline of 2 p.m. Alaska Standard Time on Aug. 31, 2024. It's free to enter.

The categories are:

- ▶ Alaskan Life. Alaskans and/or their way of life, traditions, adventuring, culture, or authentic "only in Alaska" moments;
- ▶ Wildlife. Animals native to Alaska. (Images of animals in captivity will not be considered.)
- ▶ Scenic. Landscapes and scenery of Alaska with or without the human element
- ▶ Action. Anything in motion—people, animals, sports, nature, or anything else that shows movement.

And there's prizes! The Grand Prize includes a one-year subscription to Alaska Magazine and printed photo in a 2025 edition of Alaska Magazine, as well as two tickets to anywhere Alaska Airlines flies.

Visit alaskamagazine.com for more details.

Sink some cash

Over the years, I've played the stock market, modestly. In 1997, when the market crashed, I went to the brokers in Anchorage and took out 20 shares each of Apple and Microsoft. The agent laughed at me, but at \$13 per share they grew to \$76. I cashed them in before they hit the big time, but did buy land with it in Skagway, then built a house, then sold it, then bought land up on the hill, and built a cabin, then sold that at a profit.

I did not do so well with the penny stock of the medical company Exoskeleton, which made supportive body gear for paraplegics and others with bodily damage caused by war. They would have looked like Transformers.

But the company failed after the military decided not to buy the equipment.

Penny stocks are a good way to test the waters to find what sort of company you want to invest in.

Take an animal

Pet-sitting can be the answer to a lonely senior who loves cats or dogs, but does not want the responsibility of buying food or paying for veterinarian bills.

You can start with Pet Sitters International, where you create an account and they notify you of opportunities in your area.

Go to www.petsit.com/ frequently-asked-questions to find out if this company is right for you.

You can also post your dog-walking or pet-sitting in Craigslist for free.

Sound off

We're old, we have opinions and there are companies that want to hear from you.

For the latest online survey, go to <https://focusgroups.org> to find a paying study. Or try <https://surveys.gobranded.com>, or <https://www.inboxdollars.com/>.

Or try them all. Again, if you're not computer savvy, have a relative walk you through.

Crossword answers from page 16

G	I	S	T		S	A	M	O	A		S	S	T		
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Hike

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Park Service interpreter, Vicki Penwell, had agreed to hike with us and give us a guided tour. I say us, because back in February, I decided to join the group, knowing I would have to be very organized in order to prepare breakfast for eight (as well as sack lunches), in time to meet Vicki at 9:15 a.m. My husband Gary cleaned up the kitchen once we ladies left the house.

Bed and breakfast guests would ask Gary and me about the various local trails and it was embarrassing to say that we were too busy with life in general to take the time to hike. Since Betty gave me a special invite, I wanted to take the opportunity. Vicki brought along Becca Quinton, a Youth Conservation Corps summer employee of the NPS, as well as Becca's mother, Cindy, so there were 10 total in our group.

After driving about 19 miles out the Nabesna Road, we parked our two vehicles in the parking area along with the three others already there. As we prepared to hike (everyone putting on a back-



The group takes a break during their hike on the Caribou Creek Trail, July 2004.

Maraley McMichael photo

pack and several gathering telescoping walking sticks and Teva footgear for the creek crossings), an elderly gentleman got out of his parked Volkswagen van. He walked over to our group and inquired about our intentions. Then he commented that he wanted to view wildlife and he better get ahead of this "gaggle of geese" if he wanted to be successful. The ladies later admitted they rarely see wildlife, probably from all the chitter-chatter, laughter and tinkling of bells hanging from their backpacks.

We had to walk about a quarter mile on the Nabesna Road to reach the trailhead.

Even in that short distance, it was easy to see each individual seeking out the pace best for herself. From the beginning, Cindy and I found our place bringing up the rear. This was the fourth time Vicki had done this particular trail that summer, each time with groups of different ability levels.

Since it was a very warm day, in the mid-70s, we stopped to rest periodically and to soak our feet at the creek crossings. At one rest spot, Vicki spoke about the plant "community" found in the boreal forest, including black spruce, dwarf birch, and abundant blueberries.

Another time she educated us on problems the NPS was having with trail up-keep and various possible solutions. By 1 p.m. we had gained about 2,000 feet in altitude in a distance of 3.5 miles. While enjoying lunch near an old ramshackle shack built in the late 1960s by gold prospectors, our view looking down the valley would have been of Mt. Sanford (16,237 feet), had it not been for the smoke.

After lunch, Betty, a professional storyteller recently returned from the National Storytelling Conference in Bellingham, Washington, entertained us with a thought provoking hiking story.

Vicki spoke about the native Athabaskan culture surrounding the area and then we headed down. It didn't take long even though we stopped to listen to two NPS trail "doctors" explain what they were doing with their GPS equipment. Becca, rather quietly leading the way, was the only one to see wildlife—a moose calf crossed the trail in front of her. One more foot-cooling stop at a creek and we were soon back to the trailhead.

Vicki, Cindy, and I all agreed these Anchorage

ladies were inspiring. From spring through fall, they hiked every Tuesday and biked every Friday. In the winter they used cross country skis or snowshoes. They considered the Caribou Creek Trail only average in difficulty, as many of them had hiked the Crow Creek Pass Trail as well as the Chilkoot Pass Trail. In 2000, Betty successfully completed her goal of hiking the Chilkoot Pass Trail for her 70th birthday. She and Donna (another hiker that day) planned to hike the Northern Appalachian Trail that September, and Betty is still currently going strong, hiking and biking weekly at age 94.

Although Cindy and I each had sore muscles from our vigorously physical day, we agreed it was a fun hike and something we hoped to do more often. Once back home, we enjoyed visiting over a delicious dinner of grilled salmon (Gary's specialty) and halibut Olympia. After dinner, Betty entertained us with more of her exceptional storytelling—a fitting way to end a memorable day.

Maraley McMichael is a lifelong Alaskan currently residing in Palmer. Email her at maraleymcmichael@gmail.com.

Companion

continued from page 14

raised her 10 children (eight sons and two daughters), who are all in good health today.

Sassa has always lived a life of service to her family and to her community.

She volunteered in her children's schools as well as regularly at local food banks or soup kitchens providing meals for the homeless. Today, at 91 years, Sassa says she is always looking forward to giving back in any way she can so when she heard about the Senior Companion Program at Rural CAP, she thought this would be a good opportunity to see people in the community and help others. Sassa loves to tell stories, especially Eskimo bedtime stories. As a Senior Companion, she is hoping to share stories and make new friends. Sassa's advice to others young and old is, "Be kind to everyone

and everyone will be kind to you. And help where help is needed."

Rural CAP's Senior Companion Program is an opportunity for individuals age 55 and older to serve their communities by providing companionship to their peers in need. The program is currently accepting applications. Benefits for qualifying seniors 55+ include paid time off, a tax-free stipend, paid holidays, meal reimbursement, and travel assistance. Call for more information and to apply, 907-717-7932. Check out the online application and learn more at www.eldermentor.org. Reach the team via e-mail at asp@ruralcap.org.

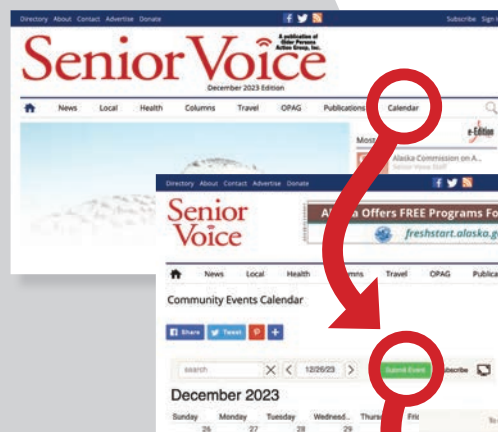
One of Sassa's Eskimo bedtime stories appears with the online version of this article at www.seniorvoicealaska.com.

Ella Juscak is the Rural CAP Elder Services Program Coordinator.

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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

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

Senior Voice

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

August 2-11, 2024 in Fairbanks

Come and have some fun!

Since 2003

ALASKA INTERNATIONAL SENIOR GAMES



Like us on Facebook!

Sport events include:

- | | | |
|-------------|---|------------------|
| Archery* | Ice Hockey: Coed | Swimming* |
| Basketball* | Indoor Shooting | Table Tennis* |
| Bocce | Mini Golf | Team Toss |
| Bowling* | Pickleball* | Tennis* |
| Cycling* | Power Walk* | Track and Field* |
| Golf* | Road Race* | Triathlon* |
| Horseshoes | * Qualifying events for 2025 NSGA Championships | |



Questions? Call (907) 978-2388

Member of National Senior Games



Must be 50 years of age or older by December 31, 2024 to participate. No experience necessary.

Register at www.Alaskaisg.org by July 22

Alaska ADRC Aging & Disability Resource Centers

Connecting Seniors, People with Disabilities and Caregivers with Long-Term Care Information & Services

- **Identify** your long-term support needs
- **Explore** your options for meeting those needs

- **Connect** you with the resources you choose for yourself or your loved one
- **Follow Up** to ensure your needs are met

Anchorage

Municipality of Anchorage, Anchorage Health Department
825 L St., Ste 200, Anchorage, AK 99501
907-343-7770

www.muni.org/adrc

Mat-Su Borough

LINKS Resource Center
777 N. Crusey St., Ste 101, Wasilla, AK 99654
907-373-3632

www.linksprc.org/adrc

Kenai Peninsula, Kodiak Island, Valdez-Cordova

Independent Living Center
47255 Princeton Ave., Ste 8, Soldotna, AK 99669
907-262-6333 | 800-770-7911

www.peninsulailc.org/adrc

Fairbanks North Star, Southeast Fairbanks, Yukon-Koyukuk, Denali, North Slope

ADRC North - Fairbanks Senior Center
1424 Moore St., Fairbanks, AK 99701
907-452-2551

www.adrcnorth.org

Southeast Alaska

Southeast Alaska Independent Living Center (SAIL)
8711 Teal St., Ste 300, Juneau, AK 99801
1-800-478-SAIL (7245)

www.sailinc.org

Western Alaska-Aleutian Islands, Lake and Peninsula, Bristol Bay, Dillingham, Bethel, Kusilvak, Nome, Northwest Arctic

Bristol Bay Native Association
1500 Kakanak Rd., Dillingham, AK 99576
907-842-4139 | 800-478-4139

www.bbna.com/our-programs/social-service-programs/elderly-services/



1-877-625-2372

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.