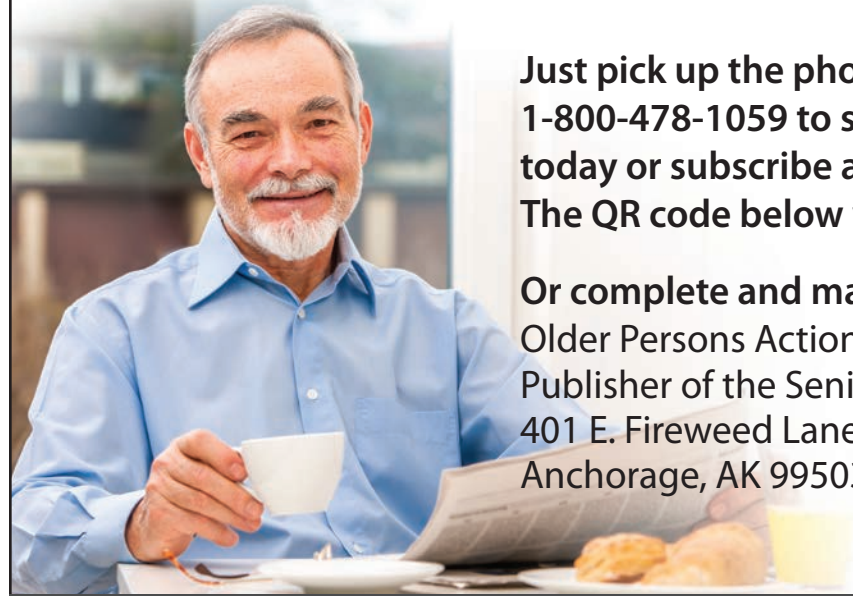
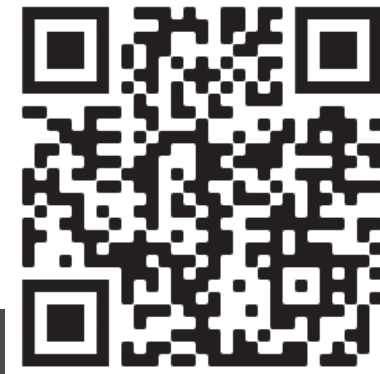


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Serving Alaskans 50+ Since 1978 Volume 48, Number 4 April 2025

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The City of Houston received a federal grant to clear beetle-killed wood and provide the firewood to seniors, veterans and disabled residents. Though the program exhausted the funds, Houston city workers are looking for additional funding to continue and possibly expand a program that reduces wildfire risks and helps people in need. The grant allowed the city to acquire a Timberwolf Pro-HD XL, which streamlined the process of turning hazardous trees into usable firewood.
Photo courtesy City of Houston








Houston, Alaska's firewood program: A community-driven solution to fire safety and support

Yasmin Radbod

Alaska Commission on Aging

In the city of Houston, an innovative program is addressing two critical issues: reducing fire hazards and supporting vulnerable community members. Spearheaded by a creative use of the United States Department of Forestry's Wood Innovations grant, the program has not only mitigated the risk of wildfires but also provided essential firewood to seniors, veterans, and disabled residents.

The program's origins stem from a pressing need to address the threat of beetle-killed trees, which pose a significant fire hazard. Melissa Sonnek, public works clerk at the City of Houston, came up with the idea.

"I found the U.S. Forestry grant, and the objective was to create something that was creative and also reduced fire danger," Sonnek explained. "So, I thought, 'Hey, wouldn't it be great to get rid of the beetle-kill trees, cut them up, and provide them to the citizens in the community that need them most?'" She shared the idea with Mayor Carter Cole, who has extensive experience in public works, and he suggested using a firewood processor to make the idea possible.

The grant was applied for on December 15, 2023. The city received their award letter on May 7, 2024. There was a city council meeting to accept the grant award on May 29. After the approval to move forward, Houston purchased necessary equipment at the end of June 2024 and facilitated the logistics of having it transported to Alaska. The team made a



The City of Houston received a federal grant to clear beetle-killed wood and provide the firewood to seniors, veterans and disabled residents. Though the program exhausted the funds, the Houston city workers are looking for additional funding to continue and possibly expand a program that reduces wildfire risks and helps people in need. The grant allowed the city to acquire a Timberwolf Pro-HD XL, which streamlined the process of turning hazardous trees into usable firewood.

City of Houston, Alaska

quick turnaround of cutting down and processing beetle-killed trees. By July 15, the city made its first delivery to seniors. Public Works Director Jared Eison and his crew worked to get the land cleared and wood processed for this project.

A creative solution

The program's success hinged on the acquisition of a specialized machine, the Timberwolf Pro-HDXL, which streamlined the process of turning hazardous trees into usable firewood. "It takes the full tree. You just stick it in the machine, and with the right feeder, you can feed five trees at once," Sonnek explained. First, the trees are limbed by the public works crew and then picked up with a backhoe that feeds it into the machine. The wood is cut and comes through as chopped firewood at the end.

The program delivered approximately 84 cords of wood to residents in need before funding ran out. "Our seniors were so excited to take photos with their firewood. They were very appreciative and told their friends about the

program," according to a City of Houston statement.

Community impact

The program's impact extended beyond its primary beneficiaries. Younger, able-bodied residents were also encouraged to participate by obtaining free wood permits, allowing them to collect fallen trees for their own use. This opened an additional 200 cords of wood for the community, further reducing fire hazards while fostering a sense of collective effort.

The program's popularity grew rapidly, fueled by word of mouth. "We didn't do too much advertising, just a little on Facebook, then it exploded," Sonnek recalled. Applications poured in, and the team worked determinedly to process them and deliver firewood to those in need.

Lessons learned and future efforts

The success of the firewood program highlighted the importance of community involvement and logistical planning. Houston recommends having a lot of volunteers who can assist with both the transport

and stacking of wood for seniors.

"You can show up with the wood that's been chopped and split and deposit it in the yard, but you need to make sure it's easy and convenient for seniors to get the firewood into their homes," Sonnek said.

The program also serves as a reminder of the ongoing threat posed by beetle-killed trees. The Miller's Reach Fire of 1996, the worst in Houston's history, was fueled by dead trees and brush. "The problem has just exacerbated, and we have so much dead spruce," Sonnek said. "In your community, watch for signs and get rid of affected trees once you see evidence of infestation."

Looking ahead, the team is determined to secure

additional funding to continue the program. Sonnek, the public works clerk, said the city will do the best it can to get the program up and running again by the summer. City workers have already applied for new grants and are exploring private sector funding to expand their efforts. The goal is to reach even more residents, including those in outlying areas like Willow and Wasilla, who expressed interest in the program but could not be served during the initial phase.

A model for other communities

By combining fire safety with community support, Houston has created a program that not only protects its residents but also strengthens the bonds between them. When asked for comment, Mayor Cole said, "Government by the people and for the people is what this program exemplifies."

Learn more at: https://www.houstonak.us/community/senior_firewood_program.php

Seniors are eligible at age 65 and over. The city also takes referrals from nonprofits, senior centers and agencies. Apply here: <https://houstonak.rja.re-vize.com/forms/9207>. If seniors or disabled citizens have any incumbrancers with technology, call 907-892-6869 to apply.

Yasmin Radbod is the Rural Outreach Coordinator at Alaska Commission on Aging.

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Mission statement:

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

Vision statement:

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



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Greetings from the incoming Executive Director

First and foremost, I want to thank our readers for your responses to our recent survey. Your wonderful suggestions are being considered for future editions.

One of my first assignments as a young lieutenant was with a Cold War era PATRIOT missile battery that utilized state-of-the-art technology for the day. However, the publicly available industry standard was dial-up modem technology. Having experienced 50 years of computer evolution, I understand the obsolescence

argument for newspapers.

The sheer volume of information managed by the PATRIOT engagement control center (ECC) team was mentally taxing and we controlled exposure to the stress by limiting the duration of our time on watches. With the inception of data mining, digital media feeds are duplicating the volume of information that I have found to be unhealthy. Consequently, I filter and limit what I choose to consume.

Newsprint information is periodic, predictable, and finite in nature. These

factors create a natural and healthy boundary for the stress we expose ourselves to. I just want to relax on Sunday mornings with a cup of coffee while reading a paper without distractions. If the articles are factually applicable to current events, interesting, engaging and mentally digestible, the author will command my attention. The time I invest becomes enjoyable rather than labor intensive.

Balance is the building block for wellness, and I acknowledge that digital media is useful in many

ways. The Senior Voice will continue to maintain an online presence. The challenge I have been charged with is to use my experience to bridge print media with digital media in ways that complement the strengths of both formats.

Statewide, the Senior Voice newspaper has a monthly distribution of 14,500 copies and thousands of visitors to the online version. The target demographic is for individuals 50+ yoa, their families and other individuals involved in the quality-of-life issues for

the Elders in their lives. Ms. Anne Tomkins remains available to collaborate on your advertising goals. Ms. Paola Banchemo is our incoming Editor and wants to hear about your interests.

Thank you in advance for your continued support of the Senior Voice newspaper.

Sincerely,
C Kelly Joy
Incoming Executive Director
Alaska Older Persons Action Group, Inc.
ExecutiveDirector@OPAGAK.com

Municipal wood lots will be free to residents preparing for Anchorage wildfire season

To help Anchorage residents protect their properties against wildfires, the Mayor's Office, Anchorage Fire Department Wildfire Division and Solid Waste Services (SWS) are partnering together to open the local wood lots for free to Anchorage residents clearing their properties this spring and summer. From March 29 to Sept. 30, no Anchorage residential loads of woody debris will incur fees.

"I live in South Anchorage, so I know firsthand our need to prepare for wildfire risk. People want to take action, and they want to contribute to the effort," Mayor Suzanne LaFrance said in a media release from the Municipality of Anchorage. "I'm excited we can offer an effective, concrete way to help people protect themselves and their neighbors from fire."

"The potential for a

devastating wildfire in our backyard is a real threat. We encourage residents to begin cleaning/clearing their properties as soon as possible," said Anchorage Fire Department Wildfire Division Chief Jon Glover in the media release. "Clearing yards of woody debris and creating defensible space around homes is the best way to prevent a home from catching fire in the event of a wildfire."

An unusually low snow year means fire danger is high this season, and SWS is stepping up to help. SWS is offering free access to both of its wood lots for Anchorage residents throughout 2025.

"As a core value, SWS is deeply committed to being a strong community partner," said SWS Director Kelli Toth. "We recognize the heightened fire danger and want to offer an easy and impactful solution. By providing free access

to our wood lots, we aim to support the safety and well-being of our community during this critical time."

In addition to free wood lot access, SWS continues

to enhance its operations. Last year, SWS invested in a new, larger shredder, which will significantly increase operational efficiency and allow for more effective waste man-

agement. The wood chips produced will be used as alternative daily cover at the landfill and will be a key component of piloting composting programs.

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Nutrition to keep an aging body strong

By **KAREN CASANOVAS**

For Senior Voice



Q: What are general recommended daily supplements, nutrition guidelines and dietary needs for a person aged 65 to 75 years old?

A: It's great to see your interest in health and wellness as you navigate this vibrant stage of life. Proper nutrition and the right supplements can make a significant difference in maintaining overall health, energy, and vitality. Here are some tailored recommendations for individuals aged 65 to 75 years old:

Daily supplements

1. **Multivitamin:** A once-daily multivitamin formulated for seniors can help fill any nutritional gaps. Look for one that includes vitamins D, B12, and minerals like calcium and magnesium.

2. **Vitamin D:** Vital for bone health and immune function, it's especially important for older adults. Aim for 800-1000 IU daily, but check with your health care provider for personalized recommendations based on your blood levels. <https://wicworks.fns.usda.gov/search?key-words=vitamin+d>

3. **Calcium:** Essential for maintaining bone density. 1,200 mg daily, ideally from food sources like dairy, leafy greens, and fortified foods. If you struggle to get enough from diet alone, consider a calcium supplement.

4. **Omega-3 fatty acids:** Found in fish oil supplements, omega-3s can support cardiovascular health and cognitive function. Aim for 1,000 mg daily amount of combined eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) found in cold-water fish, including tuna, salmon and sardines.

5. **Probiotics:** These can support digestive health and may enhance immune function. Look for a probiotic with multiple strains and at least 10 billion CFUs.

6. **Coenzyme Q10 (CoQ10):** This antioxidant may support heart health and energy levels. A daily dose of 100-200 mg can be beneficial, especially for those taking statins.

Nutrition guidelines

1. **Balanced diet:** Focus on a variety of whole foods, including:

Fruits and vegetables: Aim for a rainbow of colors to ensure a wide range of nutrients. Try to fill half your plate with these at every meal.

Whole grains: Choose whole grains like brown rice, quinoa, and whole-wheat bread to provide fiber and essential nutrients.

Lean proteins: Incorporate a mix of plant-based proteins (like beans and lentils) and lean animal proteins (like chicken, turkey, and fish). Aim for 1-1.2 grams of protein per kilogram of body weight to support muscle health.

Healthy fats: Include sources of unsaturated fats, such as avocados, nuts, seeds, and olive oil. These fats are important for heart health.

2. **Hydration:** Stay hydrated by drinking water throughout the day. Aim for 8 cups of liquid (64 ounces), more if you're active or in warm weather. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/nutrition-and-healthy-eating/in-depth/water/art-20044256>

3. **Limit processed foods:** Reduce intake of added sugars, sodium, and unhealthy fats. Opt for fresh, whole foods whenever possible.

Dietary needs

1. **Fiber:** At least 25 grams of fiber daily to support digestive health. Foods rich in fiber include fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts, and seeds.

2. **Sodium intake:** Keep sodium below 2,300 mg per day, or lower (1,500 mg) if you have high blood pressure or other health concerns.

3. **Sugar intake:** Limit

added sugars to less than 10% of total daily calories. This helps maintain energy levels and supports overall health.

Resources

1. **MyPlate:** The USDA's MyPlate website offers valuable resources for meal planning and balanced eating tailored to individual dietary needs. <https://www.choosemyplate.gov>

2. **National Institute on Aging (NIA):** The NIA provides information on nutrition for older adults, including tips for healthy eating. <https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/healthy-eating>

3. **Local Community Resources:** Many communities offer programs for seniors, including meal delivery services, nutrition classes, and health workshops.

<https://www.anchoragepublichealth.com/learn/community-resources/#food>

4. **Consult a registered dietitian:** For personalized guidance, consider meeting with a registered dietitian who specializes in geriatric nutrition. They can create a tailored plan that meets

your specific health needs.

Available resources:

Anchorage Neighborhood Health Center

For all ANHC patients there is nutrition counseling including for those with specific conditions, with registered dietitian Tamara Deschaine. Call 907-743-7200 to request an appointment.

Southcentral Foundation Nutrition counseling and the "Lose to Win" program designed to promote positive lifestyle changes. Contact the SCF Health Education and Wellness Center at 907-729-2689 or the Benteh Nuutah Valley Native Primary Care Center Wellness Center at 907-631-7630.

Providence Diabetes and Nutrition Center

Offers services for individuals with diabetes and other nutrition needs, including weight management and chronic medical concerns. Call 907-212-7980.

Municipality of Anchorage WIC Program Supports healthy eating and lifestyles, nutrition counseling, and referrals to health and community resources.

Call 907-269-3457.

Dietitians of Alaska A private practice offering personalized nutrition plans and support. Call 907-644-8445.

UAA Dietetics and Nutrition Program To reach experts in dietetics and nutrition.

Alaska Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Post questions or seek info from professional dietitians and nutritionists.

Community Nutrition - Alaska Department of Health Provides information and resources on various nutrition programs.

Remember, it's always best to consult with your health care provider before starting any new supplements or making significant changes to your dietary needs. They can provide personalized recommendations based on your health status and medications. Cheers to your health and wellness journey.

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

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Finding relief for spring allergies in nature

By Emily Kane

For Senior Voice

Spring is such a lovely time of year with sunny days, blooming flowers, budding trees and birds chirping. But millions of Americans suffer from seasonal allergies and suffer from wheezing, sneezing, runny noses, itchy eyes and other indignities. Even staying inside won't necessarily cure the problem because indoor irritants such as pet dander, mold, dust mites and scented cleaning products can all trigger allergic reactions.

Your nasal passages and the entire mechanism of the lungs (from the large bronchial tubes to the alveolae, which are tiny sacs that transfer oxygen into the blood stream with every breath) are lined with mucous membranes, whose function is to produce mucus to coat the offending particulates (pollen, diesel fumes, wood



smoke, dander, etc.) thus reducing irritation. However, when the exposure is large (spring is exuberant) the resulting amount of mucus production can be overwhelming and trigger an immune response which manifests as all the not-fun symptoms listed above.

Many who suffer with allergies use over-the-counter (or prescription strength) anti-histamines such as Benadryl, Zyrtec, Flonase and the like but these medicines are very drying. They not only dry up the mucous membranes making them less runny,

but they also dry your skin, your lungs and your brain. Chronic long-term antihistamine use has been linked to more rapid dementia progression.

Luckily, there are many natural supplements that can reduce the suffering wrought by seasonal allergens without drying medication. First, know there are foods that are known to potentially exacerbate allergy misery. The way to assess if this is true for you is to avoid the food for at least 8 days (2 weeks is more ideal, to clear the backlog in your system) and see if your allergy response is lessened. If yes, try reintroducing the food and see what happens, to confirm that it irritates your mucous membranes. The main potentially problematic foods are dairy (huge – this is the No.1 food allergen irritating mucous membranes), sometimes eggs, or shellfish, peanuts, wheat, chocolate, citrus

High-contrast keyboard

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keyboards a couple of examples of keyboards that make computer use more accessible.

There are a variety of keyboards that can make accessing a computer or tablet easier. The Logickeyboard large-print keyboard provides an oversized, high-contrast print on each key, ensuring a clear, easy-to-read interface. These large-print keyboards are ideal options for those with visual impairments and low vision. Large print and high-contrast

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 <http://www.atlaak.org> or call 907-563-2599.



fruits and artificial food colorants.

Supplements that will can greatly reduce the seasonal allergy response include glutathione and N-acetyl-cysteine (NAC)

which are molecularly related and both potent anti-oxidants for the lung; often helpful even with pronounced asthma. NAC

page 11 please

Alaska seniors: Status of Medicare, Medicaid and SNAP

By Lawrence D. Weiss

For Senior Voice

Personally, I'm one for three in the mix. I am 78 so I have been on Medicare for years, but so far (knock on plywood—I'm in my home office) I have not had to sign up for SNAP or Medicaid. I have been very lucky in that my personal resources have been enough. But who knows what the future holds for us as individuals or for the programs as a whole? Suffice it to say that at this point on the program side it is not looking too rosy.

Here's the big picture, and I'll just editorialize that we seniors are, indeed, big in Alaska's picture. Think economic and political power in the state. Anyway, according to the Alaska Commission on Aging (ACoA) report, Senior Snapshot: Older Alaskans in 2024, in 2024 there were 160,906 seniors ages 60+ in Alaska representing nearly 22% of the state's population (741,147). This



Three programs that thousands of Alaskan seniors rely on — Medicare, Medicaid, and SNAP — could be significantly reduced in the second Trump administration and Republican-controlled Congress. SNAP is a program that provides food-purchasing assistance to Americans in need. A total of 8,670 Alaskan seniors receive SNAP benefits, according to the Alaska Commission on Aging (ACoA) report, Senior Snapshot: Older Alaskans in 2024.

U.S. Department of Agriculture

is up from 14.5% in 2010. Did I say our numbers are growing rapidly both in absolute terms and relative to other age groups? Well, they are.

According to the ACoA report, the reality is that all three of these programs play a huge, life-sustaining role for Alaska seniors. By the way, the ACoA report

covers a lot more than just these three programs, but I want to focus on them for now because they are so important, and their future is so uncertain.

Medicare is a federal health insurance program in the United States for people age 65 or older and younger people with disabilities. The number

of Alaskans eligible for Medicare has steadily increased for each of the past five years. In 2020, 102,361 Alaskans were enrolled in Medicare. By 2024, the number had increased to 119,328.

Medicaid is a government program in the United States that provides health insurance for adults and children with limited income and resources. It is a critical safety net program. Medicaid is partially funded and primarily managed by state government. Fully 72,359 Alaskans are covered by Medicaid in Alaska, according to the Medicaid in Alaska Dashboard. In addition, the ACoA report provides details about several thousand Alaskans who receive Medicaid long-term care services.

SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), formerly known as the Food Stamp Program, is a federal government program that provides food-purchasing assistance for low- and no-in-

come persons to help them maintain adequate nutrition and health. The ACoA report documents that the gross monthly income test for SNAP benefits is based on 130% of the current Alaska poverty standard, and the average monthly benefit is a meager \$343. A total of 8,670 Alaskan seniors receive SNAP benefits, up from 7,125 in 2021. Every year there are more hungry low-income seniors.

What will happen to these programs in the coming years in the new political environment? Politico reported on Jan. 31, 2025, that President Trump said he will "love and cherish" Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid, and "We're not going to do anything with that, unless we can find some abuse or waste. The people won't be affected. It will only be more effective and better." The President has repeatedly made statements like this

page 11 please



ADVERTISEMENT

Early Hearing Detection Can Prevent Serious Impact in Learning



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

Hearing is a critical component of language development, communication, learning and social skills. In the US more children are born with hearing loss than any other congenital health issue. According to the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, various studies estimate that between one to six per 1,000 newborns are born with hearing loss. 90 percent of the children are born to hearing parents who have no experience raising a child with hearing loss.

There are several ways in which hearing loss affects children's ability to learn. Vocabulary develops more slowly in children who have hearing loss. Children with hearing loss have difficulty understanding

words with multiple meanings and have difficult learning the meaning to more complex words.

Hearing loss also affects children's ability to speak. Children with hearing loss may not hear their own voices when they speak and may speak too loudly or not loud enough.

Children with hearing loss have difficulty with all areas of academic achievement, especially reading and mathematical concepts. In fact, a recent study indicated that children with mild to moderate hearing losses, on average, rank one to four grade levels lower than their peers with normal hearing.

The earlier hearing loss occurs in a child's life, the more serious the effects on the child's development. Similarly, the earlier the problem is identified and intervention is begun, the less serious the ultimate impact. If you have any concern about your child's ability to hear, don't hesitate to contact Accurate Hearing for free consultation.

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

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Navigating Social Security as it downsizes

By **JIM MILLER**
Savvy Senior

Dear Savvy Senior: My local Social Security office was recently shut down because of staff layoffs and large-scale downsizing by the Department of Government Efficiency. All this disruption makes me very nervous, as I'll be applying for my Social Security retirement benefits later this year. My question is, how are we supposed to get help with our Social Security questions or problems now that our office is permanently closed? What can you tell me?

-Anxious Aaron
Dear Aaron: I've been getting a lot of questions on this very topic. The Social Security Administration (SSA) is facing massive budget cuts and layoffs under President Donald Trump's administration, which is leading to dozens of office closures and a lot of angst across the country.

The downsizing is led by Elon Musk and the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE). Many Social Security experts believe these deep staff cuts could cause interruptions in monthly benefit payments, an increase in improper payments, delays in the processing of new benefit applications and disability claims, and longer wait times for Social Security help.

There are 73 million Americans who currently receive Social Security benefits, including seniors, children and people with disabilities. Many rely on these benefits for the bulk

of their income, so any disruption or errors in payments or other service delays could cause a lot of problems for beneficiaries.

Advocacy groups are urging concerned Americans to contact their members of Congress and demand protections for the program. To find your elected members contact Congress.gov/members/find-your-member.

With that said, here's how you can best navigate the SSA as they downsize.

Use SSA.gov

Most Social Security business today can be conducted online. To get started, just go to SSA.gov/online-services where you can create a personal online "my Social Security" account so you can view your latest statement and earnings history, apply for retirement, disability, and Medicare benefits, check the status of an application or appeal, request a replacement Social Security card (in most areas), print a benefit verification letter, and much more.

The Social Security website also has a wealth of information and answers to frequently asked questions that you can access at SSA.gov/faqs.

Phone assistance

If you can't conduct your Social Security business online or you need extra help, you can also get phone assistance by calling your nearby field office (see SSA.gov/locator for contact information) or by calling the SSA national number at

800-772-1213 (TTY 800-325-0778) between 8:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m. local time, Monday through Friday.

This number has many automated service options you can use without waiting, but if you do need to speak to a representative, wait times are typically shorter early in the morning (between 8 and 10 a.m.) or later in the afternoon (between 4 and 7 p.m.). You may also experience shorter wait times later in the week (Wednesday to Friday) and later in the month.

If you need to visit your nearby SSA office, it's best to call and make an appointment first as walk-ins have much longer wait times. To make an appointment call 800-772-1213 or contact your local SSA office.

Be patient

Also remember to practice patience and plan ahead. With all the SSA staff cuts, delays and longer wait time will be inevitable. And if you're planning to start drawing your Social Security benefits in the near future, it's best to apply as early as possible as the SSA recently announced that new applicants who cannot properly verify their identity over the agency's "my Social Security" online service, will be required to visit an SSA field office in person to complete the verification process. And that could take some additional time and money, particularly if you live in an area far from a Social Security office.

This change will also apply to unverified existing

next page please

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

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

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Shaquil Aribuk: Purpose from the darkness

By PETE McCALL

Alaska Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired

Shaquil Aribuk was born and raised on the island of Palau, where his childhood was filled with the simple joys of fishing, hunting, and playing basketball. However, the limited opportunities on the island prompted Aribuk to pursue a new life in the United States, where he joined his family in Alaska.

Tragedy struck when Aribuk contracted a rare bacterial infection known as necrotizing fasciitis. He lost his two legs and his sight. He has learned to adapt to his new life through the Alaska Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired.

to feel a spark of hope. He believed that his life still had purpose. Determined to rise above his challenges, Aribuk reached out to the Alaska Center for the Blind and Low Vision. It was there that program director Nate Kile introduced him to possibilities to help him adapt to his new life. Inspired by Kile's resilience in the face of his own blindness,



Shaquil Aribuk contracted a rare bacterial infection known as necrotizing fasciitis. He lost his two legs and his sight. He has learned to adapt to his new life through the Alaska Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired.

Photos by Carole Anderson

them. Applying as early as possible can help ensure they're available when needed.

Aribuk made the courageous decision not to let his circumstances define him.

Today, Aribuk is thriving in assistive technology classes, mastering the skills needed to navigate smartphones and computers without sight. His ultimate goal is to become an assistive technology instructor, empowering others to overcome similar obstacles. Aribuk now shares his story through motivational speeches, inspiring local organi-

zations and individuals alike. From the depths of despair, Shaquil Aribuk has discovered his true purpose and continues to shine as a beacon of hope for others.



Downsizes

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Treatments, technology emerge to help you live longer, healthier

By JOHN SCHIESZER

Medical Minutes

Taking the drug Ozempic and other drugs in this class may help you live longer. With GLP-1 drugs dominating headlines for their impact on weight loss and metabolic health, new discussions around their potential role in extending healthy lifespan are emerging. Dr. Christoph Westphal, co-founder and general partner of Longwood Fund, said the biotech industry is partnering with physicians and the result is rather remarkable.

"Within three or four or five years, if we can prove that with GLP-1s you can extend a healthy lifespan, it will actually be the first healthy lifespan-increasing drug available. So it's going to totally change the world," Westphal said.

An entire field is called longevity biotech. Dr. Jarrod Rutledge, who is with the Amaranth Foundation, said there is a great deal of enthusiasm in longevity biotech. "I think at the early stage, we're definitely seeing more. I went to a few lifespan extension and healthspan extension-specific events, and they were always really packed with a lot more builders and also more investment than we've seen in the past," Rutledge said.



Artificial intelligence changing the management of diabetes

Despite advancements in medical technology, diabetes management faces persistent challenges, including a shortage of specialists, uneven distribution of health care resources, and low patient adherence. These factors contribute to suboptimal glycemic control. Now, artificial intelligence (AI) platforms are changing the playing field. AI programs are being deployed to improve accuracy, reduce health care costs, and address critical gaps in diagnosis, treatment and daily management.

"AI isn't just a tool. It's a partner in care," said Dr. Ling Gao at the Central Laboratory at Shandong Provincial Hospital in China. "For example, AI can detect early signs of eye damage from diabetes in retinal images as accurately as specialists, which is critical for preventing

blindness."

He and his colleagues have just published research highlighting several important advances that will greatly improve the management of diabetes. AI can predict risks like kidney disease and heart issues by spotting patterns humans might miss. AI also allows for personalized treatment. Smart systems adjust insulin doses in real-time, cutting dangerous blood sugar swings.

AI can help with diet and exercise guidance. Phone apps can analyze meals via photos and suggest recipes, while AI coaches recommend workouts based on location and health data. AI even outperformed traditional methods in some areas. "For instance, CT scans analyzed by AI could screen for osteoporosis in diabetes patients as effectively as specialized bone density tests," said Dr. Gao. "Wearable devices like smart glucose monitors and socks that detect foot infections further showcase AI's potential to keep patients healthy at home."

The incredible advances occurring through collabo-

ration between tech developers and doctors are making improved care for older adults more accessible. "AI is a powerful ally in diabetes care, but human oversight remains essential," said Dr. Gao. "While AI won't replace human clinicians, it empowers them to make faster, smarter decisions, transforming diabetes from a one-size-fits-all disease into a condition managed with precision and foresight."

Fall prevention efforts

Adults age 50 and older now have new technology available to them to prevent falls and breaking a hip. Researchers at University of California San Diego have revealed promising results from a study evaluating the university's "Strong Foundations" program. The program is a digitally delivered fall prevention initiative for older adults. The program is simple and highly effective in improving posture, balance and strength. These are key factors in reducing fall risk.

"This study showcases the potential of accessible, online exercise programs

to significantly enhance physical function for older adults," said Dr. Ryan Moran, an associate clinical professor at UC San Diego School of Medicine, in a media release. "Online delivery of exercise interventions offers some exciting and enticing prospects, as not only can this platform eliminate barriers related to difficulty with transportation and concerns about participating in conventional gym environments, it can also bring highly qualified experts to individuals who are most in need, and do so safely."

Falls are the leading cause of accidental death and mobility-related disability among older adults, with 1 in 4 individuals over age 65 experiencing a fall annually. The Strong Foundations program addresses these challenges by providing a safe, structured exercise regimen accessible from participants' homes. The once weekly (60 minute), 12-week online program combines postural alignment, balance exercises and strength training.

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Hawaii's population of the "super-aged" is a wake-up call

By SENIOR VOICE
Honolulu Civil Beats

Hawaii faces challenges as its population of Elders, or kūpuna, age 75 and older surges, consuming more resources than they bring in.

This group of "super-aged" is the subject of a recent report that describes the situation and outlines what awaits the state.

One in four Hawaii residents will be over 65 in 2035, and by then the state's super-aged population will number 219,000.

The report, "Aging and Hawai'i's Generational Economy," examined how much every age group consumes in private and public resources and how much it produces through its labor. The gap shows where there are needs that must be met.

Advocates for seniors said the report's findings need to be taken seriously.

"Every policymaker and lawmaker out there should read this," said Keali'i Lo-

pez, state director of AARP Hawaii.

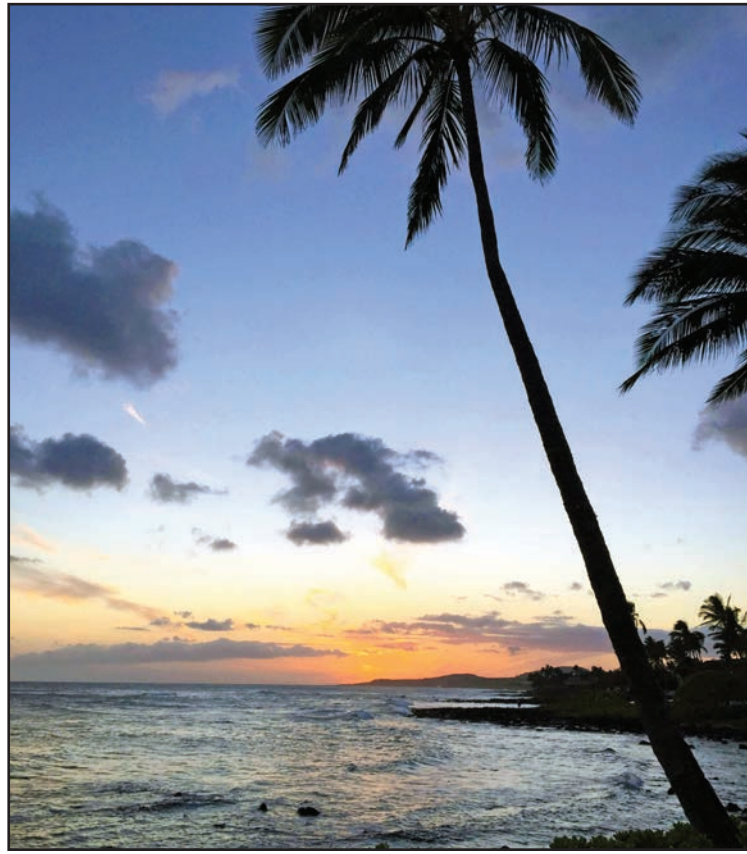
A deficit of resources

When someone consumes more than they produce, it's called a lifecycle deficit.

The report's findings are stark: By the time they reach 80, people consume \$52,000 a year more than they bring in. That's compared to people at 48, who the report said earn \$35,000 more than they consume, which is a lifecycle surplus.

Consumption by the elderly means the use of things like health care and federal benefits such as Medicare and Social Security, as well as of private assets such as housing and pensions.

The report says the challenge of meeting the needs of the super-aged is complex. The state will have to grapple with balancing the needs of this group with another population that consumes more than



Hawaii faces challenges from its growing population of the super-aged, people 75 and older. They tend to use more resources than they bring in, and the state must balance those demands with the needs of other populations in the state, like children and caregivers searching for affordable housing.

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it produces: children. Their consumption of services is centered on education and family resources.

Impact of the pandemic

The report is based on 2022 data, updating an earlier version that used 2012 data.

By comparison, the 2012 report was more optimistic about how the state could meet the needs of the super-aged. But the COVID-19 pandemic set Hawaii back in terms of unemployment, a recession and cuts in public resources. The standard of living for this population did not improve much, and in some cases declined. For example, the elderly were able to save less. Inflation worsened, and children suffered educational setbacks that might affect their future earning potential.

Caregivers need housing

The other issue is that caregivers, who are not well paid or are unpaid family members, need housing.

page 22 please

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Strokes: Quick action can save lives and abilities

By **CHRISTIAN HARTLEY**

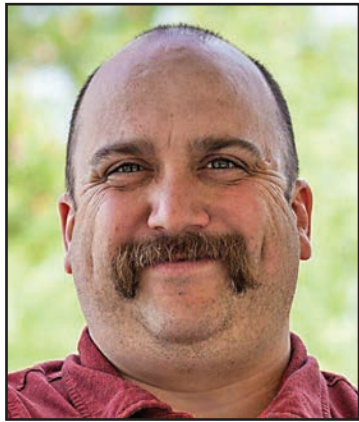
For Senior Voice

Every minute counts when someone is having a stroke. Knowing what to look for makes all the difference in recovery.

Think of a stroke as a "brain attack." Just like a heart attack blocks blood flow to the heart, a stroke blocks blood flow to part of the brain. When this happens, brain cells can die. Every passing minute puts more of the brain at risk.

You can spot a stroke by remembering the word "FAST." The letter F stands for Face. Ask the person to smile. If one side of their face droops or looks uneven, this could be a stroke sign. The letter A is for Arms. Ask them to raise both arms. If one arm drifts downward or the person cannot raise it, this is another warning sign. S stands for Speech. Ask them to repeat a simple phrase. Slurred or strange speech is a big indicator of a stroke. For the last letter, T means Time, and this is crucial: It's time to call 911 right away.

Besides these major



signs, there are other things to watch for. Some people get a terrible headache out of nowhere, almost like a bolt of lightning. Some people suddenly have trouble focusing or feel very dizzy. There are also times that a person loses their balance and has trouble walking, almost like they're drunk when they have had no alcohol.

What makes strokes tricky is that they don't always hurt. So some folks make the dangerous mistake of lying down to "wait it out." Please don't do this. Even if you're unsure, it's better to see a doctor and be mistaken than to wait and risk permanent damage.

Here's something many people don't know: There's a special medicine that can



You can also lower your chances of having a stroke by taking care of yourself. Keep your blood pressure in check, take your medicines as prescribed, eat plenty of fruits and vegetables, and know the signs of stroke.

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help reduce the damage from some types of strokes, but it only works if given within a few hours. This is why getting to the hos-

pital as soon as possible is so important. The sooner someone gets help, the better chance they have of recovering more fully.

You can also lower your chances of having a stroke by taking care of yourself. Keep your blood pressure in check, take your medicines as prescribed, eat plenty of fruits and vegetables, and stay active. If you smoke, your doctor can help you quit. These simple steps can make a big difference.

Remember, you don't need to memorize everything about strokes, but knowing and practicing the FAST signs and being ready to call 911 immediately could save a life or their quality of life. Don't worry about feeling embarrassed if it turns out not to be a stroke — health care workers would rather check you out and find nothing wrong than miss a chance to help someone having a real stroke.

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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Allergies

continued from page 5

is much less expensive and almost as effective. If you have sticky mucus or congested airways and nasal passages, 1200 mg at bedtime will thin mucus, making it easier to expel (instead of clogging up your sinuses). You can use a Neti pot preventively at the end of the day to wash the particulate matter out of your nasal passages, but once you are congested the Neti pot is not very use-

ful. Neti pots come in all shapes and sizes – there is a rubber one made by Neil Med that you can keep in the shower and just squirt a saline solution up your nose every day during allergy season. Butterbur, a root more traditionally used for migraines, is also very effective at treating allergies. It helps improve airflow through the nose by inhibiting the activity of leukotriene, which causes airway constriction. Stinging nettle roots and leaves, which will be starting to come up soon, have been used for thousands of

years to treat symptoms of allergies and other inflammatory ailments. Modern studies show that extracts of stinging nettle can reduce sneezing, itching and watery eyes in folks with hay fever and can be more effective than over-the-counter medications. Nettles work similarly to antihistamines by blocking the body's histamine production.

Histamine (the naturally occurring chemical behind all this suffering) is mostly made and stored in specialized cells called mast cells. An effective approach

to damping down allergic responses is to stabilize and strengthen the mast cell walls so they are much less likely to rupture and flood your body with histamine. Bio-flavonoids in general are brilliant at this job (any food that naturally has a yellow or orange color – so eat a carrot, or yam, or tangerine, or squash every day) but the specific bio-flavonoid for mast cell wall support is quercetin. Quercetin is found in the skins of apples, onions, grapefruit, black tea and red wine, but can also be bought in capsules. A recent study

concluded that people who took a quercetin supplement had a 70% reduction in sneezing, stuffy nose, itchy eyes and other allergy symptoms. Turmeric, another deep yellow medicinal root remedy, is also an effective anti-inflammatory that can be incorporated into cooking daily (“golden latte” anyone?) or taken in capsule form.

Wishing you a sneezeless spring!

Emily Kane is a naturopathic doctor based in Juneau. Contact her online at <http://www.dremilykane.com>.

SNAP

continued from page 5

in the recent past. That's hopeful.

On the other hand, the Georgetown University Center for Children and Families reports that, “On Feb. 25, the House of Representatives narrowly adopted a budget resolution calling for at least \$880 billion in cuts in federal spending

over the next 10 years... The large bulk, if not all, of these cuts would come from Medicaid in the form of a massive and damaging cost shift to states.” That's not hopeful. In fact, in my view that is frightening.

Regarding Medicare, according to a Feb. 7 article in Newsweek, “In a post on X, formerly Twitter, Musk, who owns the social media platform, wrote on Wednesday that Medicare is ‘where the big money fraud

is happening.’”

According to a Nov. 7, 2024, article on the NPR website, “Trump and many congressional Republicans have already taken steps to aggressively promote Medicare Advantage. And Project 2025, a political wish list produced by the conservative Heritage Foundation for the next presidency, calls for making insurer-run plans the default enrollment option for Medicare.” But so far, these steps to privatize

Medicare have not worked well. See, for example, the Jan. 10, 2025, Kiplinger article, “Problems with Medicare Advantage Plans Keep Mounting.”

Finally, Newsweek reports in a Feb. 26 article: “For SNAP specifically, the budget [recently adopted by the House of Representatives] would slash more than \$230 billion from the program through 2034, some estimates show. This likely means 9 million

low-income Americans would lose access to the food aid...”

Bottom line: the future of these programs depends on political decisions that are being made by your elected officials. I am sure they would like to hear from you. The sooner the better.

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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Ciuliaput: Learning and teaching as an Elder Mentor

RurAL CAP's AmeriCorps Seniors Program includes the Elder Mentor and Senior Companion Programs, which provide volunteer opportunities for people 55 and better. RurAL CAP partners with schools, Head Starts, local governments, and health agencies to set up volunteers host sites. Volunteers get training, support, and a small stipend as a thank you for their time and dedication. This is from an interview with Nicholai Slim from Kipnuk, in the Bethel Census area.

By Nicholai Slim

I never expected to become an Elder Mentor. One of the teachers at our school called me and asked if I would volunteer. At the time, I wasn't working, so I thought it would be something good I could do.

Being an Elder Mentor is new to me—I have never volunteered in this way before—but I enjoy it. I love explaining many things to the students about our Yup'ik way of life.

The older people and the teachers ensure that children have Elders in their lives as they grow up. We stress that one of the best things for young people is to learn from Elders—people who have already gone through life's challenges and have wisdom to share. When I was young, my Elders taught me to always do my best when working and to stay committed once hired. I carried this lesson with me when I served as a tribal administrator at our tribal office, ensuring our departments ran smoothly and that employees were doing well.



Nicholai Slim is an Elder Mentor, which connects him to youth in his community so he can teach them about Yup'ik culture and share wisdom.

photo credit

One day, the teachers asked if I had anything to say to the students. I told them that our Native lan-

guage is disappearing. Over the past 10 or 20 years, people have been speaking it less and less. Parents use it less at home, and I wanted the students to understand why it is so important to keep our language alive.

The Yup'ik word for Elder is Ciuliaput (pronounced JIU-lia-but). This is a word I want young people to hear and understand. An Elder is someone with deep life experience, often shaped by a subsistence way of living. I never thought I would be called an Elder myself. You think you are still learning about life, and suddenly, you find yourself becoming an Elder while you're still learning. It happens quickly, even as you continue looking up to those older than you for guidance.

I want to share one of my favorite snacks, something I enjoy just about any time of the day. I like to have a cup of plain tea, usually Red Rose or Lipton, with a slice of homemade bread and butter. Alongside, I eat a bowl of raw, salted, cut-up salmon. In our village, we make the bread locally rather than buying it from the store. I haven't made it myself yet, but I'd like to learn. For now, I buy it from someone in the village who bakes it at home.

The salmon preparation is a tradition. We use rock salt, layering it in a bucket with slabs or filets of

fish, adding another layer of salt, and repeating the process. The fish can stay in the salt for quite a while. When we're ready to eat, we take out a few pieces, soak them in water, and change the water two or three times to remove some of the salt—leaving just enough for a good taste.

Being an Elder Mentor has been an unexpected journey, but one that fills me with purpose. Sharing our traditions, language, and way of life with the younger generation is one of the most important things we can do. Our Elders taught us, and now it is our turn to pass that knowledge on. Volunteering has given me a new sense of purpose. It has reminded me of the lessons my Elders taught me, and it allows me to continue learning while teaching others. I feel more connected to my community, and I've realized that even as an Elder, I still have much to learn from those around me.

Get Involved:

Interested in volunteering in your community? RurAL CAP's AmeriCorps Seniors program is available to anyone 55+ in Alaska. To learn more about volunteer opportunities in your community you can call contact us at 907-717-7932 or visit www.eldermentor.org.

Mother's Day tea at Wasilla Area Seniors, Inc.

Community members are invited to join the Mother's Day Tea on Saturday, May 10, at 11 a.m. at Wasilla Area Seniors, Inc., 1301 S. Century Circle. This elegant gathering will raise funds for Meals on Wheels while celebrating mothers and loved ones with an afternoon of tea, delicious treats, and great company. Seating is limited, so be sure to reserve your spot soon!

An online auction will run from May 6-10, allowing supporters to bid on unique items and experiences to further benefit WASI's senior nutrition programs. Tickets for the tea are \$50 per person, and reservations can be made online at wasillaseniors.com.

For more details on these events, to register, or to explore sponsorship opportunities, visit wasillaseniors.com or contact Aaron King at aaronk@alaskaseniors.com or call 907-206-8800.

WASI is dedicated to helping seniors live independently for as long as possible by providing meals, transportation, affordable housing, exercise programs, and social engagement. Through efforts like Meals on Wheels, WASI serves thousands of seniors annually in the Mat-Su Valley.

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A cedar trunk at the Colony House Museum has special meaning

By Maraley McMichael

Senior Voice Correspondent

We were a group of eight ladies sitting in a circle in the living room of the Colony House Museum, gathered for our annual docent meeting in May 2024. The Colony House Museum features all things relating to the 1935 United States government New Deal project that brought 203 families from Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin to the Matanuska Valley to create an agriculture community.

The phone rang during the middle of our brainstorming discussion about how to recruit desperately needed volunteers. For various reasons, we were extra short for the 2024 season. The Palmer Historical Society board president, Sheri, said to just let it ring. Most of the time, there is no one around and if important, the caller could leave a message. But Barb, the head docent, decided to answer the phone. We continued without her.

When she returned, she said that someone wanted to come see an item their family had donated and she had told them they could come in half an hour, as our meeting would be over by then. Sheri was a bit panicked, knowing sometimes finding a specific artifact (which might only



A cedar chest that came with the Hess family in 1935 and then went back with them to Wisconsin in 1936 now sits in the Colony House Museum in Palmer. The family heirloom spoke through generations about the Hess family's time in Alaska. The Hess family donated it to the museum. Colony House Museum maintains a "mug book" of the 203 families that settled in the area as part of a New Deal initiative.

Photo courtesy Maraley McMichael

be a piece of paper) could take some time. Sheri asked what the donation was and Barb said she didn't know. She said it had been hard to hear during the conversation with the male caller because he was at the Palmer Ale House (with a lot of background noise) and we were quite loud at her end, too.

We continued with our business meeting. In about

half an hour (while Sheri was explaining how to accept credit cards to pay

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Rambles

News from the Grapevine

It's springtime. In the Municipality of Anchorage, that means it's election season. The last day to turn in your mail-in ballot or vote in person is Tuesday, April 1. The municipal election includes the Anchorage Assembly, the school board, and a slew of bond propositions. The Anchorage People Mover is free all day on Election Day ... **Alaska Pacific University** is hosting an outdoor gear swap. The event is Saturday, April 5 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at APU's Mosely Sports Center, 4400 University Drive. The sale is a fundraiser for the APU outdoor gear room which supplies skiing, hiking, climbing, biking, and boating gear for student use and classes. APU takes a 15% commission and does the selling for you. If you want to sell your gear, you have to register at <https://myconsignmentmanager.com/apugearswap> and create an account. You have to check in your gear Friday, April 4 by 7 p.m. or between 8-9 a.m. on April 5. Any items not sold can either be picked up by 2 p.m. on Saturday April 5th, or donated to APU. Good items go quickly, so get there early. Credit cards and cash are accepted ... A community health and wellness fair is happening in **Wasilla** on Saturday, April 5, from 8 a.m. to noon at Wasilla Area Seniors, Inc, 1301 S. Century Circle ... This annual **Full Lives Conference** for **direct services professionals and care coordinators** will be held on April 10-11, and is presented by the UAA Center for Human Development's Alaska Training Cooperative in collaboration with the State of Alaska Senior and Disability Services, the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority, and the Stone Soup Group. This conference draws a range of attendees that provide services in developmental disabilities, behavioral health, traumatic brain injuries, substance-related disorders, and senior services. ... April 15 is Tax Day. Get organized

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Rambles

News from the Grapevine

continued from page 13

by attending a tax preparation session at the **Chugiak Senior Center**. This free tax help is available every Wednesday and Saturday through April 12 ... Jewish **Passover** begins the evening of Saturday, April 12 and continues to Sunday, April 20. April 20 is **Easter** for both the Western church (Catholics, Protestants) and the Eastern church (Orthodox). It's rare for Easter to fall on the same date for both groups of Christians as the Orthodox church uses the Julian calendar and the Western church uses the Gregorian calendar ... The **Anchorage Museum** opens its doors after hours Thursday, April 24, for a midweek 21-and-older event with live music, fun activities, cocktails, and special experiences curated for young creatives. Alcoholic and non-alcoholic cocktails and activities are in store. Doors open at 6:30 p.m., and festivities continue until 9:30 p.m. Tickets are \$50 and are available at the museum front desk or www.anchagemuseum.org; 21+ with valid ID. Museum members receive a 10% discount ... The **Fairbanks Outdoor Show** is the April 24-26. The event is sponsored by Camper Valley RV. Outside activities, ATVs, camping gear, travel ideas, health and fitness, nonprofits, car care, home improvements and local food vendors are all on tap. Admission is \$5 (children 12 and under are free) and includes admission into the Outdoor Show as well as the Interior Alaska Gun Show. Sunday is free for military personnel with ID or anyone who brings two cans of food for the Food Bank ... Author Lily Tuzroyluke visits the **Homer Library** Thursday, April 24. Tuzroyluke's debut novel, "Sivulliq: Ancestor," has received positive reviews.

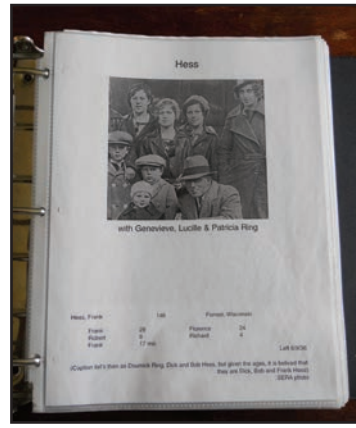
Rambles is compiled from senior center newsletters, websites and reader tips from around the state. Email your Rambles items to editor@seniorvoicealaska.com.

Museum

continued from page 13

for items in our gift shop) we all heard the front entry door of the museum open. Whoever came in waited patiently until we adjourned. Then we all turned to see a man in his 50s walk in. (We later learned his name was Keith.) He was barely into the living room, when he said, "I can tell you a story about that trunk"...pointing to a cedar truck we use as a "coffee table" in front of the couch. He immediately launched into what turned out to be a fascinating story. Some of us were in a hurry to get on with our day, but all of us ended up lingering longer, the more he spoke.

Keith said he was familiar with the cedar trunk, because he had sat on it while putting on and taking off his shoes every day for six years. It belonged to his wife's family. When she offered it to the Colony House Museum (and we happily said yes), he was the one who packaged it, took it to a UPS store, and paid \$900 to have it shipped to the Colony House Museum (actually to Sheri's house). Of course, Sheri well re-



The Hess family appears in the "mug book."

Photo courtesy Maraley McMichael

membered the arrival of the cedar trunk at her home and at this point, told us that it belonged to the Hess family. The museum has a much-used three-ring binder, which contains a page of information (and photo if available) for every one of the 203 colonist families, including the Hess family of five. We call it the "mug" book.

It turned out that Keith's father-in-law (Richard) was a boy of four when his family came to Alaska in 1935. The family of five stayed only one year before returning to Wisconsin and the cedar trunk went back with them. (If a family decided to leave before the first year was up, the government paid their way back to Seattle. If they decided after the first year was up, the family had to pay their own travel expenses.) There was a long wait list of families willing to take the place of those who chose not to stay.

Their year in Alaska had a huge effect on the entire Hess family, especially Richard. He loved to talk about Alaska his whole life and had an entire bookcase of Alaska books in his home in California. The cedar trunk meant so much to him. Each colonist family could bring an amount of belongings not to exceed the weight set by their state. Some colonists were allowed to bring up to 2,000 pounds of belongings and others as little as 375 pounds. Keith's voice broke as he told us that the Hess family was so poor, all they brought with them was what fit inside the cedar trunk.

Richard moved to California as an adult. The trunk eventually went to California after his parents died. Richard told his children that the cedar trunk was NEVER to be

given to Goodwill. He had three children and after he died, the trunk went to his daughter, Keith's wife. She was the one who came up with the idea of contacting the Colony House Museum to see if we were interested in acquiring it. Keith talked about how poor the family was only two generations ago...and how things turned around and that Richard's three children all have very successful careers.

We all had been standing there hanging on Keith's every word...touched by how much the trunk meant to him...not even a blood relative. Sheri asked him (half seriously) if he would like to be a docent at the museum. He replied that he would be working 70 hours a week for Holland America as a bus driver/tour guide until September. He planned to tell the story of the cedar trunk as he gave information about Alaska to the tourists on his bus. That is part of the reason he wanted to see the well-traveled trunk in its final home. He would tell how it traveled from Wisconsin to Alaska, back to Wisconsin, then on to California, and now sits in its final place of honor at the Colony House Museum. He said he planned to end his story by saying that if anyone desired to see the cedar trunk, they could do so by visiting the Colony House Museum in Palmer.

At that point, some of us did leave, but Barb and Sheri stayed to show Keith the page about the Hess family in the "mug" book, as well as a tract map and the location of the Hess house. His unexpectedly moving account of personal Colony House Museum history was the highlight of our day.

A week later, Sheri told this story to those who attended Palmer Historical Society's May History Night. Afterwards, three of us docents talked further about the rewarding result of Barb answering the phone call that disturbed our docent meeting, and agreed that Keith telling the story about the cedar trunk would help make good memories for many visitors to Alaska.

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

ANCHORAGE OPERA

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Major works by Georgia O’Keeffe and others are headed to the Anchorage Museum

Senior Voice

The Anchorage Museum will host artworks by famous American artists through a partnership with the National Gallery of Art for the National Gallery’s “Across the Nation” program, which brings key works of art to regional museums across the United States this year and next.

Through this loan, the Anchorage Museum will receive three works of art: They are Georgia O’Keeffe’s “Winter Road,” 1963, oil on canvas; Nancy Graves’ “Consequence,” 1982, oil on canvas; and Mark Rothko’s “Untitled,” 1958, oil on canvas. The works are on view April 4, 2025–through Sept. 6, 2026. Then they will be reinstalled in the Art of the North galleries.

The Anchorage Museum was chosen as one of only 10 partner institutions nationwide. “Across the Nation” brings landmark paintings into direct dialogue with the Museum’s collections and Alaska’s unique cultural landscape.

“These loans bridge geographies, inviting us to see Alaska in context with major American art movements and narratives,” said Anchorage Museum Director Julie Decker in a media statement. “It’s an

unprecedented opportunity for our community—and for visitors from across the globe—to see artwork by these renowned artists in Alaska. We believe this collaboration will prompt fresh conversations about the connections between landscapes and expression.”

““Across the Nation” manifests the National Gallery’s vision as the nation’s art museum. We are so thrilled to bring some of the most excellent and beloved works from the nation’s collection directly into communities across the country as we commemorate the 250th anniversary of America,” said Kaywin Feldman, director of the National Gallery of Art.

The National Gallery of Art worked closely with each “Across the Nation” partner to ensure a mutually enriching experience. By selecting works that complement local collections and resonate with the Museum’s programming, this partnership broadens access to the national collection while highlighting the breadth of American art and ideas. Additional institutions participating in the initiative are located in Colorado, Connecticut, Idaho, Iowa, Michigan, Nevada, North Carolina, Utah, and Washington.



May 3, 2025. Saturday 9 am – 4:30 pm
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- About DNA
- Recording Your Family History
- DAR & Mayflower

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Register: www.anchoragegenealogy.org

Calendar of Events

April 1-30: Nationwide National Poetry Month

April 1-30: Nationwide National Alcohol Awareness Month

April 1: Nationwide April Fools’ Day

April 5: Wasilla A community health and wellness fair at Wasilla Area Seniors, Inc. from 8 a.m. to noon at Wasilla Area Seniors, Inc, 1301 S. Century Circle.

April 5: Anchorage Alaska Pacific University is hosting an outdoor gear swap from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at APU’s Mosely Sports Center, 4400 University Drive.

April 5: Anchorage Spring Fling Health Fair from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Alaska Airlines Center, 3550 Providence Drive.

April 12: Juneau Community Health Fair from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m., 3254 Hospital Drive.

April 15: Nationwide Tax Day.

April 15: Fairbanks Alaska Health Fair, Inc. has a blood draw with affordable blood tests. It’s from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Food Bank Building, second floor, 725 26th Avenue suite 201.

April 12-20: Nationwide Passover.

April 19: Fairbanks "Becoming Wolf: The Eastern Coyote in New England" with Chris Schadler, M.S. from New Hampshire Wildlife Coalition. This event is sponsored by Protect Our Wildlife. 1962 Yukon Drive.

April 20: Nationwide Easter.

April 22: Nationwide Earth Day.

April 23: Anchorage Elder Endeavors from 1:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m., Loussac Library, third floor, Ann Stevens Room, 3600 Denali Street. This monthly social event is an opportunity to enjoy community connection, get library service support, and learn about a library resource. The discussion will be about Alaska World War II history in the Ann Stevens Room.

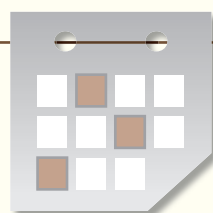
April 24: Anchorage Mother Earth Justice Film Series from 5:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at the Seed Lab, 111 West Sixth Avenue. Part of a free community and family-friendly film series to uplift and bring people together around film and food.

April 24, 25 and 27: Anchorage The Anchorage Opera is staging its last production of the 2024-25 season with “The Italian Girl in Algiers.” The first two productions of the season sold out. Anchorage Performing Arts Center, 621 W. Sixth Avenue.

April 25: Galena Community Health Fair from 8 a.m. to noon, 299 Antoski Road.

April 26: Chugiak Chugiak–Eagle River Senior Center Health Fair from 8 a.m. to noon, Chugiak–Eagle River Senior Center, 22424 Birchwood Loop Road.

April 28: Anchorage Anchorage Senior Activity Center Books, Puzzles, Crafts, Quilts, Fabric & Art Sale from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., 1300 East 19th Avenue.



Send us your calendar items

Send to: Senior Voice, 401 E. Fireweed Lane,
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Prospectors pulled pranks as they rushed to find gold

By LAUREL DOWNING BILL

Senior Voice Correspondent

The Klondike gold rush, a pivotal moment in Alaska's history, is often associated with tales of hardship, adventure, and the pursuit of fortune. But recent research has uncovered a lesser-known aspect of this era: the prevalence of practical jokes among the prospectors and settlers—and not only on April Fools' Day.

Practical jokes and pranks were a common way for miners and settlers to find amusement and pass the long hours of toil and hardship. The monotonous routine of mining life and the extreme living conditions made mischievous antics a welcome diversion. Most prospectors were completely unprepared and inexperienced for the brutal realities of life in the harsh wilderness. Lack of proper supplies, shelter, and skills made mere survival an immense challenge, not to mention rancid food, mosquito plagues, and miserable traveling conditions that miners had to endure while prospecting.

Christopher Petrakos, a historian and assistant professor at the University of Toronto Mississauga, has delved into the humorous anecdotes and practical jokes that were commonplace during the gold rush era. Travelers into the Klondike region were "constant pranksters," he wrote in a paper for the journal *Studies in American Humor*. "Published and unpublished travel narratives were, surprisingly, meant to be funny."

For instance, surveyor and government official William Ogilvie wrote about the frequency of jokes played on one another, both individually and collectively. A classic example involved seasoned miners pulling the leg of newcomers with outlandish tall tales. Ogilvie recounts stories of miners describing mosquitos so strong they could kill a bear or dog, or even carry off a man.

Popular pranks of the time included tampering with someone's bed by filling the mattress with snow or rocks, putting salt in a sugar bowl, or replacing coffee grounds with dirt. And old-timers sometimes convinced naïve newcomers to search for a "gold-weighting machine" or send them to find a "left-handed snow shovel."

Religious figures were not exempt from pranks, either. Reverend R.J. Bowen, one of the first Anglican missionaries in the area, fell victim to a practical joke shortly after his arrival. The miners, unsure of what to make of the young minister, decided to haze him by clogging up his stovepipe.

Bowen's good-natured reaction to the prank as he stumbled out of



With so many struggling to get to the Klondike gold fields, like those seen here in Dyea in 1898, stampeders often pulled pranks on their fellow travelers to lighten the mental load they carried with them on their arduous trek.

Alaska State Library

his quarters in a cloud of smoke helped cement his place in the community and create important connections with his "fellow jokers." In his memoir, Bowen reflected on this experience, writing that "men are developed — they either go under or develop sufficiently to bear the strain of ridicule."

Wealthy miners, like "Swiftwater" Bill Gates, pulled pranks,

too. Gates, who was deeply in love with Gussie Lamore in Dawson City, offered her weight in gold in exchange for her hand in marriage. But when he saw her on the arm of another man, he chose to prank her in a bizarre manner. He knew she loved eggs, which at the time were difficult to find, so he purchased all the eggs available in town. That prank earned him the nickname "The Knight of the Golden Omelet."

Gambling and drinking were popular pastimes in the mining camps, too, which often led to practical jokes like slipping a few rocks into someone's pockets or bags to make him think he had struck gold. Or spiking a drink with vinegar or

hot sauce, causing an unsuspecting victim to spit out their "tainted" beverage.

Most miners used practical jokes to build camaraderie and relieve the monotony of their harsh living conditions in the Klondike. As one miner, Jack London, wrote in his book, "The Call of the Wild": "The men were a rude, rough crowd, with the harsh and uncompromising ways of the frontier. But they were also generous, hospitable, and full of good humor, and the practical jokes and pranks they played on one another were a way to break the monotony of their hard lives."

This column features tidbits found while researching Alaska's colorful past for *Aunt Phil's Trunk*, a six-book Alaska history series written by Laurel Downing Bill and her late aunt, Phyllis Downing Carlson. The books are available at bookstores and gift shops throughout Alaska, as well as online at www.auntphilstrunk.com.

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- 5 Neighbor of Niger
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- 14 Last name in spydom
- 15 Singer Abdul
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- 18 Defeated mentally
- 20 Like a dollar bill in the ten slot?
- 22 Pindar work
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- 4 Failures to face some difficulty
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- 26 Austrian peak
- 27 Coffee break snack
- 28 Clueless, inattentive or careless
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- 32 ___ Paulo, Brazil
- 34 Beehive State native
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- 43 One way to think
- 46 Words after a comment that changes the comment
- 47 Born
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- 52 Pipe problem
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- 58 Shag rugs made in Sweden
- 60 Tom Clancy subj.
- 61 "Billboard" listing

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Crossword answers on page 22



Bank impersonation scams skyrocket: A 20-fold increase since 2019

By **TERESA HOLT, AARP Alaska State Director**

Over the past year, I have received numerous text messages from my bank indicating issues with my account. Surprisingly, some of these messages were from banks where I do not even hold an account. When I checked my accounts, I realized these texts were bank impersonation scams.

In 2024, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) reported that business and government impersonation scams accounted for nearly half the reported scams. The losses from these scams topped \$1.1 billion last year, more than three times what consumers reported in 2020. In that period, reports of scams by text increased more than 100 percent.

These attacks involve criminals pretending to be from the bank's security departments. They send out text messages, emails or phone calls warning you of unusual activity on your account that requires immediate action. The criminals are trying to steal your money or access account information like your PIN, debit card, password, or one-time access codes.

They may also try to get you to move your money to "keep it safe." Scammers often use spoofing technology to make it seem like the text or call is coming from your bank. They also use sophisticated replicas of real bank websites or the names of bank employees to fool you.

If you have signed up for text notifications from your bank, it's easy to mistake the scam texts for legitimate bank alerts. The scam typically unfolds like this: you receive a text message from "your bank" asking for confirmation of recent account activity. When you reply "no," you receive a call, supposedly from your financial institution's "fraud investigations unit" informing you that your account has been hacked. They assure you they can help protect your assets and ask for account access information such as your PIN, debit card details, passwords, or one-time access codes. This is a scam! Your bank will not call you to ask you to verify security information or move your money to a "safe location." If you are unsure, visit your bank's official website—not a link provided by text—to check your account or call the bank using the

phone number provided on their website or your bank statement.

In the email version of this scam, criminals send an email that appears to be from your bank, stating that your account has been locked and requesting you to click on a link or call a phone number to verify the transaction. If you receive such an email, DO NOT click on any links or call the number in the email. Go directly to your bank's website to log in or call them using the phone number from the website.

In the final scenario, criminals call you directly, asking you to verify your account or personal information, send a payment, or reverse a payment. They often create a sense of urgency, telling you to protect your accounts immediately from being emptied. Criminals can "spoof" phone numbers to make it

appear as though the call is coming from your bank. Hang up and call your bank using the phone number on your statement or from the bank's official website. Remember, banks will never ask you to provide your login credentials, PIN, or access codes.

Other red flags indicating a text, email, or call is an imposter scam include: a sense of urgency requiring immediate action, requests for secrecy, threats of arrest, or instructions not to hang up. If you encounter any of these tactics, it is a scam.

If you receive a text, email, or call from your bank that you suspect is a scam, report it to your bank immediately. Banks want to know about scams targeting their customers. If you lose money in a bank impersonation scam, contact your bank right away, as they may be able to refund your losses. Addition-

ally, report any loss to the police, as documentation of the crime can be valuable when attempting to recover your funds. It is also beneficial to file reports with the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) or Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). These agencies use fraud reports to guide their investigations. The more information they have, the better they can identify patterns, link cases, and ultimately apprehend the criminals. Contact the FTC at reportfraud.ftc.gov and the FBI at [IC3.gov](https://ic3.gov).

The AARP Fraud Watch Network offers a helpline (877-908-3360) where you can report a scam and talk with a trained specialist for guidance on what to do next. Additionally, the AARP Fraud Watch Network provides online group support sessions for individuals who have been victims of scams. Visit aarp.org/fraud for more information and resources related to fraud.

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New Aunt Phil's Trunk book soon to be released

This newest volume, titled "Pioneers From Alaska's Past," is filled with a cast of characters so colorful they may outshine the Northern Lights.

This captivating collection of short stories and historical photographs follows in the footsteps of the five previous volumes as it brings to life many colorful personalities who helped shaped Alaska's history shortly before, during, and just after the gold-rush era.

Stories include those of: ▶ Swiftwater Bill Gates: A master of outrageous spending and spectacular cons. This Klondike magnate could teach modern billionaires a thing or two

about bling.

▶ Diamond Tooth Lil: With a smile that could blind a bear, she was one of the original Alaska influencers.

▶ Fannie Quigly: Think Bear Grylls, but tougher and with better cooking skills.

▶ Jujiro Wada: Alaska's Samurai musher — part ninja, part dog whisperer.

▶ Alaska Nellie Lawing: The north country's famous female Davy Crocket.

Don't be left out in the cold — You can preorder a copy faster than a miner racing to stake a claim by going to: <https://aunt-philstrunk.com/product/aunt-philstrunk-pioneers-from-alaskas-past/>

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Art of the North Galleries photo by Oscar Avellanada-Cruz



A visit from Aunt IRMAA can ruin your mood – and finances

By Kenneth Kirk

For Senior Voice



There is a funny scene in a British sitcom called “The IT Crowd,” in which woman is trying to explain to her nerdy, clueless co-workers — both men — that she is having her monthly menstrual cycle, by using the euphemism “Aunt Irma has come to visit.” They, of course, don’t get it, so she tries others, my favorite being “I’ve fallen to the Communists” (to which one co-worker grudgingly admits that “they do have some strong arguments”).

As a biological male I have never had to experience that particular unpleasantness. But if you add another “a” on the end, and capitalize it, you may find that a year-long visit from Aunt IRMAA is very unpleasant indeed.

If you are receiving Medicare, which most of us do at age 65, IRMAA is an added, punitive tax. It stands for Income Related Monthly Adjustment Amount. If you are receiving Social Security, they take it right out of the payment before it hits your bank account. If you are not yet receiving Social Security it is added to the bill that you have to pay.

All of this is assuming that you receive something more than just the free Medicare Part A. Part A is

limited, covering mostly just hospitalization. If you want to have doctors visits, lab tests, or other services covered, you will typically need Part B, and if you want prescription coverage you need Part D as well. And that requires a monthly premium payment.

Which is normally a pretty modest amount. The Part B premium is \$185, which isn’t too bad when you consider medical costs in Alaska. But if you get a visit from Aunt IRMAA, you’ll see that number rise dramatically. If your income is more than \$106,000 (or double that for a married couple filing a joint tax return), the numbers start to rise. It caps out at \$750,000 for a couple. Near the top level, the premium can be several times higher than it is without the IRMAA.

But when I say “income”, what exactly do I mean by that? If you look at your tax return, you will see that there is a line titled

Modified Adjusted Gross Income. That line includes not only what you might have earned from a job or business, but all of your investment income as well.

And this is the kicker for a lot of you who may be looking at that \$106,000 figure and thinking you can ignore this column: it includes capital gains.

Imagine an Alaska couple. They own their home and have the mortgage paid off, and they have a modest pension and perhaps some IRA money as well. But they also have a rental property. They bought the place back in the late 1980’s, and it has gone up in value quite a bit over the years. Now that they’re in their late 60’s, they decide that they don’t want to deal with tenants anymore, so they sell the rental. They set aside part of that money to pay the capital gains tax. But then two years later (the year after the year in which they sold the property), they get a notice from Medicare that instead of paying the normal premiums, they will have to pay more than \$1,000 per month, each, for that year. Ouch!

Depending on the situation, there may be ways to game this whole thing. If they’re selling because they want to move to another state, they may want to consider what is called a like-kind or 1031 exchange, where they sell the property and immediately buy another rental property in the place they plan to move to. Or they can hire a property management company and hold onto it, because if they hold that property until they die, Aunt IRMAA never does come to visit (and on top of that, the capital gains tax never has to be paid by their heirs). If they have several rental properties, they may want to sell them all in one year, rather than over several years, if it means they’ll cap out. Please realize this whole thing can get quite complicated, so if you think you might be subject to IRMAA, you should talk to your accountant to figure out the best way to handle it.

And this extra tax is not the end of the world. As my old tax law professor used to periodically remind us, taxable income is better

than no income at all.

Let me end this article by questioning the practical wisdom of the IRMAA premium. We are living in times when workers are needed. Baby Boomers are retiring, and the following generations are smaller in population. Other areas of U.S. law encourage people to continue working while they’re still able; both the age at which full Social Security benefits can be taken, and the age at which one must take required minimum distributions from IRA’s, have been pushed back. But if you are working past age 65, you pay an extra penalty for doing so, in the form of an added Medicare premium. Does that make sense?

But I avoid getting political in this column, so I will leave it at that.

Kenneth Kirk is an Anchorage estate planning attorney. 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. Perhaps we have fallen to the Communists? But again, I don’t want to get political.

THEY DON'T NEED TO LEAVE HOME TO LIVE BETTER

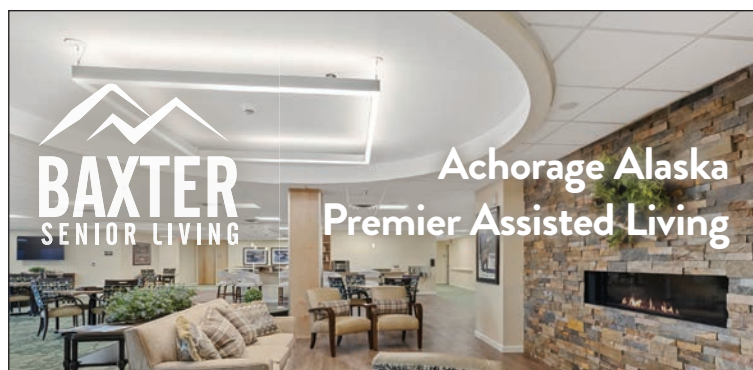
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Outliner apps, my first real computer, motion sickness

Q. I am going to retire soon and I plan to write a book. Is there an app that will help me create an outline?

A. There are so many apps that fit the criteria of your question that it is difficult to recommend a “best” one.

Most word processors can generate outlines. There are also dedicated outliners. If you use a Mac, there are a number of excellent dedicated outliners, the best of which is OmniOutliner from Omni Software (omnigroup.com).

For some reason, a great outliner app has never appeared on Windows. Search online for a Windows outliner and you’ll eventually see OmniOutliner mentioned.

However, there are two excellent apps that work on both Windows and Mac: Scrivener and Aeon Timeline.

Scrivener (literatureandlatte.com) is my word processor of choice for organizing ideas and managing research. This app will do nearly everything. It is over 18 years old, and in its early days every time a writer asked for a new feature the developer found a way to add it. This makes the current ver-

sion somewhat complex to master, but there is no need to understand every feature. Start with the tutorial and be confident that if you think of something you need to do, there is an excellent chance the app will help.

The second app worth considering is Aeon Timeline (aeontimeline.com). Timeline is an excellent tool for creating time-based outlines, along with other features such as tracking people, locations and major events.

Both Scrivener and Timeline can share data, making them a suite of tools that can handle any sized project from a short story to a Ph.D. dissertation.

Q. I have used an iPhone for years. For the first time in my life, I would like to learn how to use a real computer. What do you suggest?

A. First off, get a laptop rather than a desktop machine. Go to walmart.com and buy an M1 MacBook Air, which is currently priced at \$649. This laptop is extremely capable, with a sharp, bright screen, a full-size keyboard, and it works seamlessly with the data from your iPhone.

This Walmart-only edi-

tion of the MacBook Air is not a stripped-down compromise, it was Apple’s top-of-the-line model just a few years ago. Its performance exceeds nearly every Mac-based on an Intel CPU. It does have less memory than other versions, but that limitation is not a hindrance except when editing giant photos or long videos.

The limitations are a matter of size and scale. The M1 can edit photos just fine and edit short videos easily. If the files get too large, the computer will be a bit slower, but that will likely not be noticeable to first time users.

For email, surfing the web, word processing and spreadsheets, the M1 MacBook Air is more than capable.

Q. When I look at my iPhone as a passenger in a moving car, sometimes I feel a bit ill. Is there anything I can do to avoid that sick feeling?

A. This is a problem I have never faced, and you have my sympathy. Car-sickness is miserable.

If you have an iPhone or iPad using the latest

Wander the Web

Here are my picks for worthwhile browsing this month:

Goodreads Alternative
BookWyrn is a non-commercial site that hosts book recommendations and social interaction. If you love books but prefer to avoid Amazon, this is a great choice. bookwyrn.social

Think Differently
The Pudding website is full of unusual ways to visualize information on a broad range of topics, including everything from map names to animal sounds. pudding.cool

Hot Metal in the Material World
Watch as a red-hot metal ball comes in contact with various surfaces and temperatures. A complete waste of time, yet entertaining. instagram.com/redhotballexperiments/

software (iOS 18) there is a feature called “motion cues” that adds small dots to the screen edges that gently sway as the device detects motion. To turn it on, go to Settings -> Accessibility -> Motion -> Show Vehicle Motion Cues and choose “On” or “Automatic.”

Once enabled, the dots shape the visual signals

your brain receives that correspond to the vehicle’s motion, easing the ill feeling that arises when what you see does not match what you feel.

I expect that this will work better for some people, and less so with others, since each of us is unique. Nevertheless, motion cues is worth exploring on your next road trip.

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- Losing control
- Additional stress on your family
- Loss of what you spent a lifetime building

It’s all about family! Have you protected them?

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

If something happens to you, do you want to:

- Protect your spouse and children?
- Be clear so your loved ones will know what to do?
- Ensure your hard earned money doesn’t go to the government?

Yes? ▶ Then your first step in creating your asset protection plan is attending this workshop.

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Apr 10 | 9:30–11:30 a.m.

IN-PERSON WORKSHOPS:

Anchorage Senior Activity Center
1300 E. 19th Avenue, Anchorage
May 12, June 16 | 9:30–11:30 a.m.

Wasilla Senior Center
1301 South Century Circle, Wasilla
May 19, June 17 | 9:30–11:30 a.m.

Free initial consultation for those who attend the workshop. Book now to protect your loved ones.

To reserve your space call or text **(907) 334-9200** or go to www.akwillstrusts.com

Unable to attend in person? Call to request the link to a recorded webinar.



Road Scholar offers multiple paths to travel and learning

Nonprofit has more solo tours and free lectures online

By **DIMITRA LAVRAKAS**

Senior Voice Travel
Correspondent

The nonprofit Road Scholar celebrates 50 years with new tours, as well as free armchair travel.

Offering a wide selection of destinations for avid travelers, it also keeps in mind those who can no longer travel or cannot afford to.

“For 50 years, Road Scholar has empowered older adults to explore, learn and connect with the world around them,” said James Moses, CEO of Road Scholar. “Beginning with our first program at the University of New Hampshire in 1975, we have partnered with thousands of colleges, universities, museums, and cultural centers around the world, and with exceptional teachers, professors and expert instructors to provide educational experiences to more than six million older adults across generations.

“We are proud of the work we’ve done changing perceptions of aging, and of the educational community we’ve built united by curiosity, adventure and a passion for discovery.”

From the comfort of home

Upcoming online free lectures take you to the world, wellness and history.

► April 3 at 10 a.m., Alaska Time

2025 Keynote Event: “Leadership in Turbulent Times” – a free virtual by presidential historian and Pulitzer Prize-winning author Doris Kearns Goodwin. The Q&A session will explore leadership during challenging periods in U.S. history.

Goodwin has written biographies of numerous U.S. presidents including “No Ordinary Time: Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt: The Home Front in World War II,” which won the Pulitzer Prize for History in 1995.

► April 22 at 9 a.m. Alaska Time

“Into the Icy Deep — Marine Life, Sea Ice & Conservation,” a one-hour lecture and Q&A to learn



A pelagic ivory gull scans the horizon off Utqiagvik. The Road Scholar program offers free online lectures, including one called “Into the Icy Deep — Marine Life, Sea Ice & Conservation,” on April 22 at 9 a.m. Alaska time.

Photo by Dimitra Lavrakas

about the vibrant marine ecosystems of the Arctic and Antarctic.

Join Amanda Hunter, marine biologist and polar expedition guide, on a journey across the polar oceans in celebration of Earth Day.

Dive into the vibrant marine ecosystems of the Arctic and Antarctic, from tiny phytoplankton to majestic seals and whales, while uncovering the vital role of sea ice in Earth's climate. Hunter will also discuss the fascinating physical and chemical properties of polar waters and how they shape marine life. Examine the effects of human activities — from early exploration to the pressing challenges of climate change, pollution and overfishing — to better understand why conserving these remote regions is vital to the health of our planet.

► May 1 at 10 a.m. Alaska Time

“Age Well: Aging in Place — Key Considerations for a Fulfilling Future.” Gerontologist and caregiver advocate Lakelyn Hogan Eichenberger will help you explore considerations for aging in place. Learn how to make informed choices, discover useful tools and resources, and gain insights to help aging adults

and family caregivers start the conversation and plan for a safe, comfortable future at home.

► May 5 at 9 a.m. Alaska Time

“Exploring Easter Island — Moai Mysteries & More,” a one-hour lecture and Q&A to learn about the history and mysteries of Rapa Nui (Easter Island).

Experienced guide Nicole Flores will unravel the island's ancient riddles, reveal the moai legacy and explore Tangata Mana, the captivating birdman ceremony. With firsthand experience, she answers the most popular questions from travelers to the region, illustrated by photos from her journeys. Experience the mysteries and traditions of the Rapa Nui people and the wonders of Easter Island — for free!

► May 8 at 10 a.m. Alaska Time

“Age Well: Move for Life — Strength, Balance & Curiosity at Any Age.” Find out about movement for well-being and flexibility.

David Wilson is a movement coach and educator specializing in lifelong physical confidence. The founder of oldscoolmoves and anti-ageism advocate, he has a unique approach integrating rhythm, spatial awareness and adaptability

to help individuals move with greater ease, power and control.

► May 9 at 7 a.m. Alaska Time

“Age Well: Coping with Challenging Situations in Dementia Care.”

Important information about brain changes that typically occur during dementia, and how those changes may contribute to these challenges, along with practical strategies and methods of providing support to individuals living with dementia.

► May 21 at 9 a.m. Alaska Time

“Age Well: The AgeTech Revolution — Shaping the Future of Aging.”

Gerontologist Keren Etkin, Age Tech expert will explore why Age Tech matters, how it's shaping the future of aging and why older adults' voices are essential in tech development.

► May 22 at 10 a.m. Alaska Time

Age Well: Psychology of Kindness — Strategies for Prosocial Behavior”

How can small acts of kindness and positive thinking shape a happier, more fulfilling life? Author Catherine Sanderson, a leading expert in positive psychology, will explore research-backed strategies

for fostering positivity and gain practical tools to strengthen happiness in everyday life.

► June 10 at 9 a.m. Alaska Time

“Honoring D-Day — Echoes of Valor & Victory”

On June 6, 1944, the Allies undertook one of the most bold and significant operations of World War II — a massive amphibious and airborne assault in Normandy, marking the beginning of the end for Nazi oppression in Europe.

The first 24 hours of Operation Overlord, code-named “D-Day,” saw a united effort of American, British and Canadian forces overcome Hitler's formidable “Atlantic Wall” and secure critical beachheads.

Honor this monumental day with a lecture by Spencer Jones, a senior lecturer in Armed Forces and War Studies at the University of Wolverhampton in England, who also serves as the regimental historian for the Royal Regiment of Artillery. Jones will unveil the strategic brilliance and steadfast bravery that clinched the Allied victory.

It's easy to sign up for these lectures, just go to <https://www.road-scholar.org/collections/online-lectures/free/>



Social Security updates, delays identity verification measures

Senior Voice Staff

The Social Security Administration has updated recently announced measures to verify the identities of recipients and applicants. In-person identity proofing for people unable to use their personal my Social Security account for certain services will be effective April 14.

“We have listened to our customers, Congress, advocates, and others, and we are updating our policy to provide better customer service to the country’s most vulnerable populations,” said Lee Dudek, the agency’s acting commissioner in a media statement. “In addition to extending the policy’s effective date by two weeks to ensure our employees have the training they need to help customers, Medicare, Disability, and SSI applications will be exempt from in-person identity proofing because multiple opportunities exist during

the decision process to verify a person’s identity.”

Under the updated policy beginning April 14, individuals applying for Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), Medicare, or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) who cannot use a personal my Social Security account can complete their claim entirely over the telephone without the need to come into an office.

Initially, the agency included recipients and applicants for a broader range of benefits in its plans to tighten identity-proofing, which would have required rural Americans to travel to in-person appointments as Social Security offices beginning April 1. Advocates for seniors, the disabled and other groups, as well as some members of Congress, pushed back.

The revised policy means that individuals who cannot use their personal my Social Security account to apply for benefits

“We have listened to our customers, Congress, advocates, and others, and we are updating our policy to provide better customer service to the country’s most vulnerable populations,” said Lee Dudek, the agency’s acting commissioner.

will only need to prove their identity at a Social Security office if applying for Retirement, Survivors, or Auxiliary (Spouse or Child) benefits. SSA will enforce online digital identity proofing or in-person identity proofing for these cases. The agency will not enforce these requirements in extreme dire-need situations, such as terminal cases or prisoner pre-release scenarios. SSA is developing a process that will require documentation and management approval to bypass the policy in such dire need cases.

Individuals who do not or cannot use the agency’s online my Social Security services to change their direct deposit information for any benefit will need to visit a Social Security office

to process the change or can call 1-800-772-1213 to schedule an in-person appointment. The agency also recommends that individuals unable to apply online call to schedule an in-person appointment to begin and complete a claim for Retirement, Survivors, or Auxiliary (Spouse or Child) benefits in one interaction.

SSA recently required nearly all agency employees, including frontline employees in all offices throughout the country, to work in the office five days a week. This change ensures maximum staffing is available to support the stronger in-person identity proofing requirement.

The agency will continue to monitor and, if necessary, make adjustments

to ensure it pays the right person the right amount at the right time while safeguarding the benefits and programs it administers. SSA plans to implement the Department of Treasury’s Bureau of Fiscal Service’s payment integrity service called Account Verification Service (AVS). AVS provides instant bank verification services to proactively and timely prevent fraud associated with direct deposit change requests. SSA will continue to fight fraud while balancing its program integrity responsibilities with delivering on its customer service mission to the American people.

People who do not already have a my Social Security account can create one at www.ssa.gov/myaccount/.

Stay up to date about SSA’s identity proofing requirements and exceptions at [What to Know about Proving Your Identity](https://www.ssa.gov/what-to-know-about-proving-your-identity) | SSA.

AARP Alaska's virtual fitness classes are a fun and easy way to work on that New Year's resolution.



Classes are designed to reduce stress and promote flexibility to improve overall wellness. Best of all, they're completely free and open to the public. *(We think they're pretty fun, too.)*

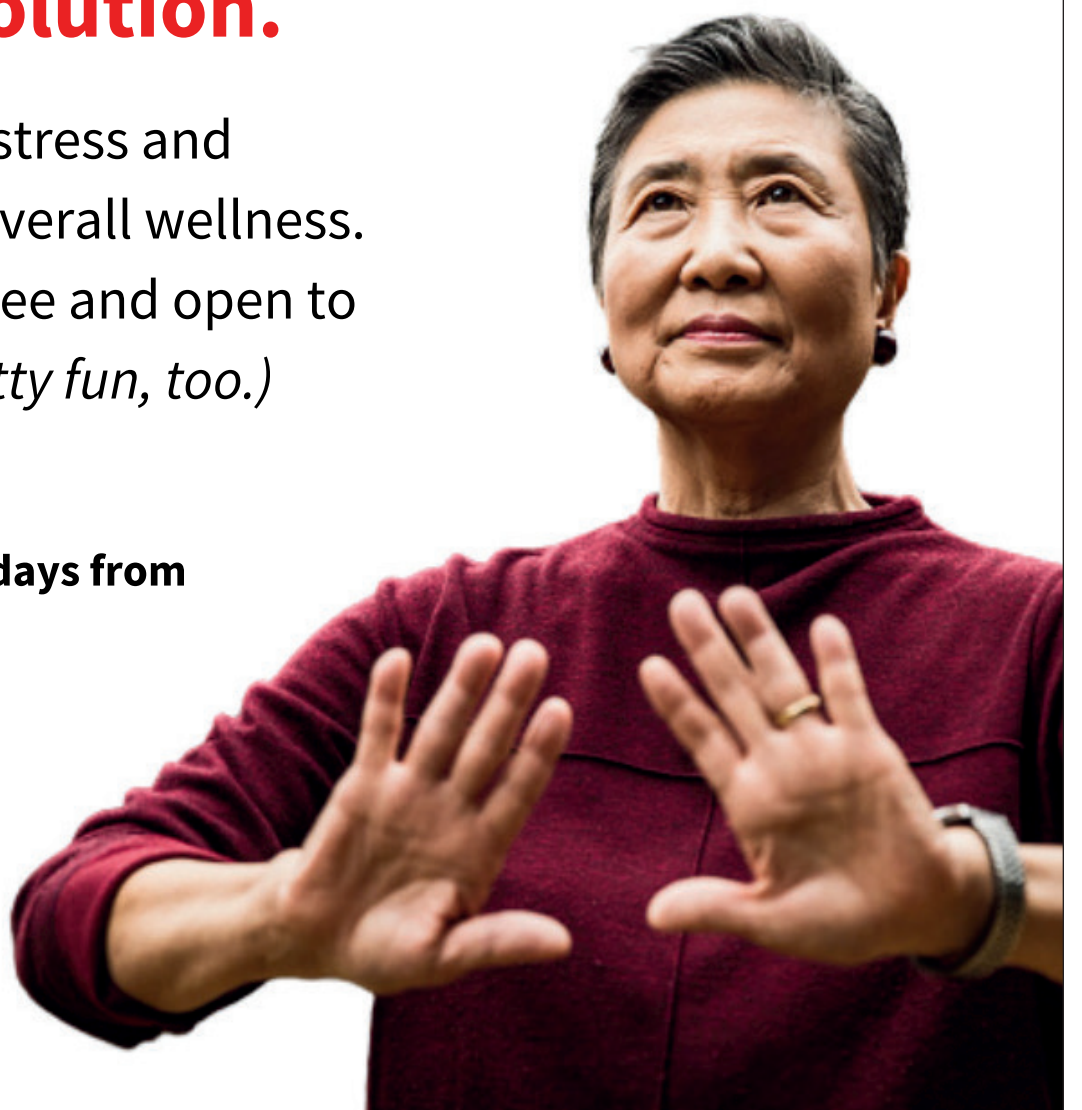
Seated Stretch and Strength, Wednesdays from 11 a.m. – 12 p.m.

Tai Chi, Fridays from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m.

Both series run through June 2025.



Scan the QR code or visit aarp.org/ak to register.





Super-aged

continued from page 9

If Hawaii fails to address the cost of housing, Elders will feel it, said Lopez of the AARP.

“With Hawaii’s growing senior population and the fact that so many of our younger, working residents are leaving the state, it’s very clear that there will be fewer resources, meaning taxpayers, people who are working and paying taxes,” she said, “while at the same time there’s going to be an increase of older adults here who are going to need to be cared for.”

Creating more affordable housing is the most critical piece of the puzzle, Lopez said.

“That is the biggest issue: the ability for families

to be able to remain here in Hawai‘i,” she said. “So affordable housing, whether it’s for low-income, workforce housing, housing for kūpuna, supportive housing—just affordable housing in general.”

Policy changes such as paid family leave legislation, giving people the space and time to care for older family members, are also imperative, she said.

An AARP study found there are about 150,000 family caregivers in Hawaii who put in a combined 144 million hours a year in caring for loved ones.

Hawaii has considered legislation that would have required the state to set up a family and medical leave insurance program and to give unpaid caregivers a tax credit.

“It’s all around, from our perspective, how to

help family caregivers so they can continue their labor of love, so to speak, in caring for their loved ones,” Lopez said.

The challenge, she said, has special significance in Hawaii.

“One of the things that’s wonderful about Hawaii is many of us who live here come from cultures where caring for your elders is very much the fabric of our culture,” she said. “So being able to have family here who recognize that’s a privilege is an important part of the social network to make sure that kūpuna can age in their homes where they want to.”

This story was summarized from Honolulu Civil Beat, a nonprofit newsroom. <https://www.civilbeat.org/2025/03/super-aged-pose-major-challenges-hawaii/>

U.S. women lag behind U.S. men in investment wealth

American women accumulate at least \$1 million less than men over a typical 40-year work career, according to research conducted by the Investors Observer research team.

Key findings of the study show that the average male worker in the United States accumulates \$2.73 million in portfolio wealth, assuming average retirement contributions are invested in an S&P 400 index fund. By comparison, an average female worker investing her savings under the same conditions accumulates \$1.75 million in portfolio wealth, resulting in a \$1 million gap. This compounding effect means that even small annual differences in contributions lead to substantially different wealth outcomes by retire-

ment age for working men and women. While the wage gap has narrowed, by 2023 women earned 83% of what men earned on average. The wage gap and resulting investment disparity persists despite women’s increasing presence in higher-paying industries.

The full report can be found here: <https://investorsobserver.com/research/research-women-lose-1-million-in-retirement-wealth-due-to-gender-wage-gap/>

Investors Observer is a financial technology company, also known as O2 Media, that provides investing tools and data for self-directed investors, enabling them to make data-driven investment decisions. It is owned by Joseph Meyer, and was previously owned by Jared Kushner.

Treatments

continued from page 8

One of the features of the program is the delivery of semi-individualized instruction in real time within a small group. Semi-individualized instruction is attention given to an individual within the group course designed to correct exercise form.

The study included 92 participants (aged 60 and older), who were stratified by fall risk level using the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Stopping Elderly Accidents, Deaths and Injuries (STEADI) questionnaire. A

total of 55 low-risk and 37 moderate-risk adults were recruited. Both low-risk and moderate-risk groups showed improvements in posture (up to 36%), physical strength as indicated by the chair stand (the movement of sitting down on a chair and then standing back up), and other metrics. Older adults at moderate fall risk experienced the greatest gains, particularly in posture and physical strength.

“The improvements in posture alone are particularly noteworthy, given their strong correlation with fall risk and overall mobility,” Moran said. This program demon-

strated the potential to deliver an effective fall prevention program for older adults through a “technological interface.”

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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Crossword answers from page 16

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Mount Spurr activity should prompt home preparation

Senior Voice Staff

By the time you read this, Mount Spurr, an active volcano 80 miles from Anchorage, might have erupted. Then again, its rumblings might just be a preview of what's to come.

In any case, now is the time to prepare for this possible emergency and take stock of your readiness to confront other emergencies, such as earthquakes and wildfires.

Scientists say the volcano is showing signs that an eruption is likely. In mid-March, they announced that the chances for Mount Spurr to go off "within the next few weeks or months" had increased. On March 26, the Alaska Volcano Observatory reported, "Seismicity remains elevated with numerous small, shallow volcanic earthquakes detected beneath the volcano over the past day. Satellite data detected weak sulfur dioxide (SO₂) emissions from the volcano, consistent with recent measurements made from aircraft."

What should residents in southcentral Alaska do to prepare? The Municipality of Anchorage lists several steps you should take. The first is to sign up for text

alerts from the Municipality of Anchorage by texting ANCHORAGE to 67283 or sign up online. You should also create a family plan of action to act swiftly and calmly in the event of ashfall. Don't forget pets. Add N95 masks and goggles (wrap-around ski, swim, or safety) to emergency kits to protect lungs and eyes. Visit the State of Alaska's ready.alaska.gov for preparation and safety updates and read the fact sheet on Mount Spurr.

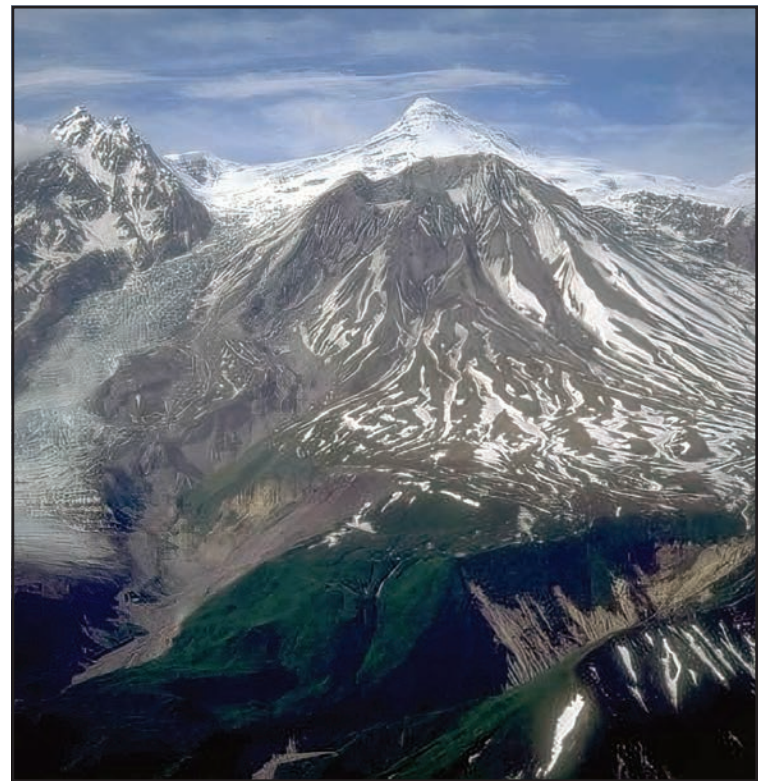
You can also go to the Municipality of Anchorage's Office of Emergency Management's guidelines on preparing for volcanic ash. It's a good idea to have a stock of drinking water at home. The State also has information about protecting pets. It recommends providing clean drinking water, keeping pets inside as much as possible, keeping doors and windows closed. If animals come in contact with volcanic ash, brush off excess ash outside under shelter. Wipe off fur with a damp cloth, rinse or bathe, as needed, when inside. Check eyes for irritation; gently rinse with clean water or saline, if needed. Contact your veterinarian for further advice, if there are concerns.

Place contaminated waste and ash in sealed plastic bags.

Finally, you can follow the activity of the volcano at <https://avo.alaska.edu/volcano/spurr>. It has the most recent science, including new ash dispersion modeling.

Mount Spurr is the closest active volcano to Anchorage. It has been rumbling lately, prompting local and state officials to urge residents in southcentral Alaska to prepare by stocking up on N95 masks, protective goggles and other items.

Photo by U.S. Geological Survey





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Short documentary celebrates a 95-year-old deadlifter

By PAOLA BANCHERO

Senior Voice

I'm struck by the number of men and women who show up at the YMCA Anchorage to lift, swim, bike, and sweat who are well beyond me in age. Many of my fellow morning gym-goers are well into their 60s, 70s, 80s, even 90s. There is even a well-known woman who swims regularly there. She is 102 and has a special parking place as close to the front door as possible. Another regular is there five days a week, walking on the treadmill at a steep incline and hanging out with her friends. She recently told me she felt her gym friends had helped bring her into the 21st century.

The New Yorker re-

cently produced a short documentary about a person like that. It's called "Strong Grandma," and it's available for free on YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G-3pYLCR70JA> Catherine (Kay) Kuehn is a 95-year-old world record deadlifter. She explains that she is the world record holder because "no one my age was doing it." The film, made with a deft touch by Cecilia Brown and Winslow Crane-Murdoch, is worth a watch.

As with the older gym rats I see and chat with at the Y, Kuehn finds connection in coming to athleticism later in life or staying physically active while people a third her age are there too, trying to lift each other up.



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Call Now!

Opus Memoria

The Work of Memories
Compassionate Care for Those with Dementia

Preferred Care at Home

- Meal Preparation
- Dress/ Hygiene Assistance
- Housekeeping/ Laundry
- Holiday & Vacation Coverage
- Live-In Services & More

We are committed to making your choice possible with quality services at affordable prices.

Preferred Care at Home



Call For Your Free In-Home Assessment

Lynetta Hagel-Grant, Owner

907.868.1919

LynettaH@PreferHome.com | PreferHome.com/alaska



Daily activities are in place to keep the residents safe, active and living out their memories through all senses. Caregivers are on staff 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year

- Private rooms
- Fenced one acre property
- One caregiver for every three residents.
- Specialized training on caring for seniors with dementia. Staff is required to complete continued education for Dementia and Alzheimer's.
- ADA compliant

To schedule a personal tour or to receive additional information please contact us today.



Suzanne Hickel, Owner

907.677.1919

Hickel@OpusMemoria.com | www.OpusMemoria.com



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

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

Southeast Alaska

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

www.sailinc.org

Mat-Su Borough

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

www.linksprc.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

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

Bristol Bay Native Association
 1500 Kanakanak 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.