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Senior Voice Senior Housing

A publication of Older Persons Action Group, Inc.

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August 2018

**Keeping up with
Alaska's aging
boomers. page H2**

**What the Long
Term Care
Ombudsman is
and does for you.
page H7**

2017
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Winner





Senior numbers set to rise in coming years

Alaska housing for elders struggling to meet need

BY DIMITRA LAVRAKAS

For Senior Voice

Thanks to the boomers, and I am one, the forecast for Alaska's senior population is predicted to spike within the next 12 years.

The Alaska Department of Labor predicts in its 2018 Alaska Housing Assessment that the number of seniors will nearly double by 2030 to more than 140,000, but at a rate faster than the general population, and with the percentage of seniors expected to rise from approximately 10 percent to 17 percent of the state's total population.

According to data from Alaska Housing Finance Corporation's Senior Housing Office, there are beds for 3,013 senior citizens in licensed independent senior housing facilities and 2,086 beds in licensed assisted living senior housing facilities. But the number of seniors per senior facility bed in each region varies widely.

Calista has the most seniors per licensed facility bed at approximately 43 per unit, nearly three times higher than the statewide

average of 15. The Arctic Slope region has the fewest seniors per licensed facility bed, at six seniors per unit.

Even in areas with more independent and assisted-living facility beds per senior, such as Sealaska and CIRI, seniors reported a shortage of senior housing.

Public elder listening sessions were held in Anchorage, Fairbanks, Juneau, Kenai Peninsula and Copper Center as a part of data collection for the Alaska Senior Needs Assessment. All regions reported a shortage of either affordable independent senior housing or assisted living facilities.

Alaska's working-age population – ages 18 to 64 – declined for a fifth consecutive year in 2017 due to loss from out-migration and the large number of baby boomers reaching retirement age, according to a report written by Eddie Hunsinger in the March 2018 issue of Alaska Economic Trends, published by the state Department of Labor and Workforce Development Research and Analysis.

Many baby boomers,



The senior van pulls up to the senior center in Utqiagvik (formerly known as Barrow).

Photo by Dimitra Lavrakas

Alaska had the fastest-growing senior population in the United States from 2010 to 2016, and its 44 percent growth was twice the national average. Seniors still make up a smaller share of Alaska than any other state, though, at 10.4 percent in 2016 compared to 15 percent nationwide. Where will they all live as they age?

those born between 1946 and 1964, moved to Alaska in the 1970s and 1980s with construction of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline and the state's resulting economic growth, the article reported.

The state's senior cit-

izen population has increased rapidly as boomers reach 65. Alaska's 65-plus population increased by more than 3,500 from 2016 to 2017, to 82,686 people.

Alaska had the fastest-growing senior population in the United States

from 2010 to 2016, and its 44 percent growth was twice the national average. Seniors still make up a smaller share of Alaska than any other state, though, at 10.4 percent in 2016 compared to 15 percent nationwide.

Where will they all live as they age?

Stepping up in Southcentral

"Since Jan. 1, 2018, we have financed three small assisted living homes in the Anchorage area. These are traditionally two to five bed homes, or what I commonly refer to as 'mom and pop' type assisted living residences," said Jim McCall, an officer with Alaska Housing Finance Corporation in Anchorage.

"Additionally, we financed a 48-bed facility in Kenai over this period called Charis," McCall said.

Charis (pronounced Khar'ee), is from the Greek

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Allen Kunes lives in Willawa Manor Senior Housing in Wasilla. He keeps active by doing a whole lot of gardening something he learned from his mother.

Photo courtesy AHFC





Home and care: A tale of two journeys

Preferred Care at Home and Opus Memoria

‘Alaskans look out for one and other’ never was a saying, a slogan or even a cliché in the early days of our fledgling frontier. It was just the way it was. With extreme climate, limited growing season, and far distances from industrial convenience, Alaskans had to plan ahead, look out, and even *did without* when necessary. This kind of spirit is still prevalent, even as oil has changed our state. Isn’t it true that Alaska’s rich history is in her people? This is a girl who has lived the story, One Suzanne Hickel.

It starts with Oscar Gill, Suzanne (Gill) Hickel’s pioneering great grandfather who delivered mail by dog team for the U.S. Postal Service in the early 1900s. Back then, bonds with neighboring friends were strong, and family bonds

Fifth generation Alaskan Suzanne Hickel.

were stronger. Your credit rating was your word and a handshake.

Self-sufficiency was a stock-in-trade. When someone was in need – the job got done. There were no second thoughts because a grateful friend was gained. For these kinds of values, more families have stayed in Alaska to retire and be with their kids and grandkids to complete the fulfillment of life, which by the way doesn’t have to end with physical limitations. This is where her journey began...

Journey # 1

Not every family is available to care for a loved in the way they truly de-



serve, because we live a different life now that constantly demands our attention. Our routines have become busy and complicated. Thus we have traded some hardships of old, for more of our precious time. Suzanne realized this within her large family network and so opened **Preferred Care at Home**.

By building a large “Care-Force” of professionals to assist with basic needs in the home, families have more flexibility. By maintaining independence, our seniors may stay in their homes and can remain dignified and more accepting of love and affection from family and

friends. Creating something special is never easy. There were other companies, but not other Suzanne Hickels. Her heart, work ethic, and attention to even the small matters made the challenge a mission. The constant goal of **Preferred Care at Home** is to help our elders enjoy the company of others – absent the doubt of whether that attention is out of charity or true spontaneity. They get the caring professionals, you get the good times and good cheer. That’s what makes Preferred Care a success!

Journey #2

What happens if Mom or Dad can no longer be safe and comfortable at home due to memory issues and decline? Suzanne often deals with this. Goodbyes are always sad for her and she wants the best for her clients. The alternatives were not always optimal, especially for those

with memory issues... hence the second part of the story: Going from wanting the best solution, to being the best solution.

Team Suzanne wanted a place that was a home, not an institution. A place where those with declining memory could still live for the day! A place that was clean and inviting. A place where friends *are* family, and visits encouraged. A place where memory might fail, but moments of life enjoyed. She wanted a trained and professional staff, selecting only the right people, with the right disposition, fitting the highest standards.

That place became a reality. That place became **Opus Memoria**, *the work of memories*.

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Maple Springs: A new level of housing and care

Maple Springs Senior Living

No one wants to think about leaving their home because they cannot care for themselves. It is a frightening thought that your independence is gone. Assisted living and skilled nursing facilities are full to some extent throughout Alaska, and navigating the health care system is overwhelming.

In 2019 in Wasilla and Palmer there will be a new type of facility open. It is called Maple Springs Senior Living. It is similar to the assisted living and nursing facilities that you see currently, with one big difference. This facility will incorporate all levels of care for its residents.

In the health care system the different levels of care can seem confusing. Understanding the difference between each of them will help you to navigate the long term care waters in your future.

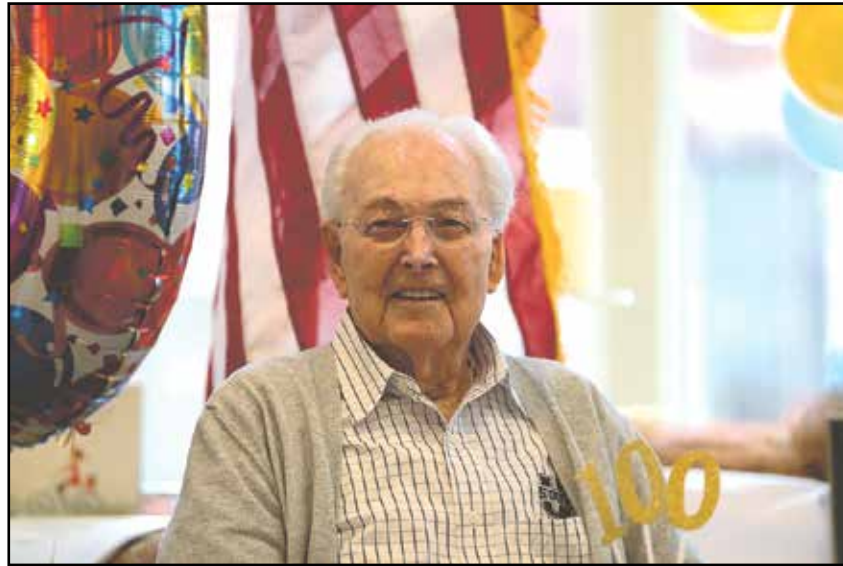
Assisted Living care is designed to help an individual with basic care needs. This includes medication assistance, meals, assistance with mobility, and a number of other things. The level of care that is expected in these facilities is equal to the level of licensed medical professionals in the facility. Assisted living is

required to have a licensed medical professional manage the facility but the day to day staff are only at a basic skill level.

These facilities are a wonderful option for those that need additional help with basic needs. The facilities are home like, sometimes have shared rooms or bathrooms. Others have apartment style settings for the residents. Assisted living is a good option for many people.

Memory Care Units are one of the most needed levels of care in our community today. There are very few options for this type of care. In a 2015 report from the Alaska Commission on Aging it is estimated that 6,400 Alaskans have Alzheimer's disease, which include memory loss. Many assisted living facilities in Alaska serve this population, but dedicated memory care units that are designed for the safety and specialized care of this vulnerable population are scarce.

Skilled Nursing Facilities is a new way of saying nursing home. There are only a handful of these facilities in the state currently. A skilled nursing facility offer long term nursing oversight, some have the same at-home feel of an assisted living



facility but others are more clinical or hospital like. Skilled nursing care would include technical care such as medication administration, wound care, and other types of care that require a registered nurse to have 24 hour oversight.

A skilled nursing facility can also serve as a short term solution for individuals that have surgeries that only need a few weeks of care, so that they can go home with less risk of re-injuring themselves. With a medical director or doctor on call 24 hours a day and in the building multiple times a week, these facilities give a higher level of care for the residents that they house.

The new **Maple Springs** communities that are currently under construction in Wasilla and Palmer, offer a state of the art facility that

incorporates each of these levels of care – **Skilled Nursing – Memory Care – Assisted Living**. A home style setting, with apartment style rooms – studio, one room, and two room options in both the skilled nursing and assisted living areas of the community.

A dedicated memory care unit, that has staff trained to care for the most vulnerable residents in a way that is comfortable for them and gives them the dignity that they deserve. Within the memory care unit are “memory pods” which serve those residents as comfort areas. In the “pods” they are free to use familiar pictures, textures, and items in any way that will make them feel more comfortable and secure. Staff are trained specifically to help these individuals,

and research driven design of the areas make things less confusing and usable for the residents in the unit.

The skilled nursing facilities, which are a first for the Mat-Su Valley, will offer 67 skilled nursing rooms for Wasilla and the same number for Palmer. On-site 24 hour nursing services will give a new level of care for the community and Alaska. Those that go to the hospital for a short term stay will now have a new option to go to once they are discharged, to receive additional respite care.

Maple Springs Senior Living offers other amenities such as restaurant style dining, a 24 hour bistro with free ice cream, art rooms, activity spaces, and a theater for the use of all of the residents and their guests. Culturally appropriate settings for all Alaska residents are a priority in these buildings.

These facilities are scheduled to open beginning with the Skilled Nursing Wasilla early 2019 and the Palmer Skilled Nursing spring of 2019. The Assisted Living and Memory Care to follow.

Housing: Alaska's booming demand

continued from page H2

word meaning grace. Its community features read like a cruise on a luxury liner: common living areas with fireplace, large dining room with meal services and snacks, beauty salon/barber shop, foot care spa with a pedicure chair, media center and cinema, library, weekly gatherings, an enclosed courtyard for outdoor dining or gardening, and a respite room for overnight guests.

The rooms are 320 square feet – as big as my cabin, and that was quite

livable. They can accommodate a couple.

Homer is projected as the second city in the state that will see the most significant senior growth. Homer Senior Citizens operates a 40-bed assisted-living facility. In the last four years, the community had to send four seniors out due to Alzheimer's disease.

The city is planning to build an Alzheimer's unit. It will include 15 beds and 24/7 nursing care, a memory care unit to help maintain residents' existing

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AHFC 'Classic Program' offers senior housing assistance

Alaska Housing Finance Corporation

AHFC's public housing team developed the Classic Program to meet the needs of seniors and the disabled.

In this program the family's shelter burden will be 28.5 percent of gross income, allowing for a streamlined rent calculation with no deductions and stable housing costs for a three-year period.

Household members must be 62 or older or adults must be identified

as disabled. Live-in attendants and full-time student dependents younger than age 24 will not disqualify a family.

Q: How do I calculate my shelter burden?

A: Add rent plus utilities, then divide it by your gross monthly income.

Q: Will I receive a utility allowance?

A: Yes. Under the Classic program, participants will continue to receive utility allowances. Utility reimbursement payments will no longer be provided.

Q: Will I receive a medical allowance?

A: Medical allowances will no longer be part of the program.

Q: I'm interested in relocating to a different community in Alaska. Can I apply for a waiting list in a new area of the state?

A: Yes. Vouchers will still be transferable within communities where voucher programs exist. For Public Housing, transfers between communities are not allowed.

Q: Can I move with my voucher outside of Alaska?

page H6 please

Wasilla and Palmer Communities Opening 2019

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Alaska: Housing

Yes, you have an estate

continued from page H4

cognitive capacity, therapy pool, and an activities room will be open to all seniors 55 years of age and older. The activities room will be Phase 2 of the project and will incorporate low-impact exercise equipment to maintain seniors' physical capacity.

In the City of Homer Capital Improvement Plan 2018-2023, the project is still in fundraising mode.

Three foundations that fund this type of project have been

identified, and one of the priorities for scoring in these grant programs is City of Homer support through Capital Improvement Plan designation. Homer Senior Citizens Inc. will be holding fundraising events to secure the match for foundation grants. HSC held a matching campaign that secured \$40,000 in seed money for the Alzheimer's Unit. The cost of the project is \$3 million and to date \$40,735 has been raised.

Southeast senior plans

The Skagway Elder Care Ad Hoc Committee has been putting together a business plan outline for the new se-

The Alaska Department of Labor predicts in its 2018 Alaska Housing Assessment that the number of seniors will nearly double by 2030 to more than 140,000, but at a rate faster than the general population

nior complex, and in April it met with Juneau's MRV Architects.

At the July 5 meeting of the Skagway City Council, Mayor Monica Carlson gave an update on the project, noting that the initial site was the old clinic parcel at 11th and Broadway, but it is more contaminated than first thought. Alternatives include putting the housing section of the project on six of the Garden City RV Park lots on 15th or perhaps the senior center project could be part of the Recreation Center Expansion plan.

The project remains up in the air.

"It is on hold due to problems with the planned site location and no feasible plan to cover administrative costs," said Skagway Borough Manager Scott A. Hahn.

Connie Aschenbrenner

I help individuals and families create estate life plans to protect themselves and the people and things they cherish in good health, poor health, and at death. The most common comment I receive about estate planning is "I do not have an estate so I don't need an estate plan." To this I say, "I am looking at your estate". If you don't have the right legal directives in place and you become so sick that you can't tell a doctor what to do, an attorney has to file an emergency guardianship petition with the court to appoint someone to make placement and medical decisions for you. When you do the planning, you choose who you would like to make these decisions for you, not the court. I help you do this with Power of Attorney and Advanced Healthcare directives. So when I say I am looking at your estate, I am looking at you. You need an estate plan in case something happens to you regardless of what assets you have.



Connie Aschenbrenner and mom on a trip to Hawaii.

I cover this and other common risks you can face in my educational workshops. I explain estate planning basics and what happens legally and financially when common life events occur – from a new baby to you or a family member needing long term care. The workshops are designed to help you be better informed about the risks we all can face, the options available to protect against these risks, and what various legal directives can and can't do for you.

You then are entitled to a complimentary private

hour of my time to discuss your specific circumstances and questions after you attend the workshop. I cover what your current plan does or fails to do regarding your risks and wishes. I outline your options to close any planning gaps with the pros and cons and costs of each option. You can choose the option you want to implement with me or you can leave with just the knowledge you gained from the workshop and consultation.

Call today and register for my next estate planning workshop, (907)334-9200.

AHFC: Assistance program Q&A

continued from page H4

A: Yes. You can move your Housing Choice Voucher out of state.

Q: What happens if I experience a change in my household composition?

A: Report changes in household composition, in writing, within ten business days.

Q: Will Public Housing residents still need to complete community service requirements?

A: Yes. Public Housing residents must still complete the community service requirement.

Q: Does AHFC provide additional resources for

Household members must be 62 or older or adults must be identified as disabled.

Classic participants?

A: AHFC is launching an expanded Family Self-Sufficiency program that will offer goal setting, training and job search assistance.

For more information check AHFC's website frequently, www.ahfc.us, or email rentreform@ahfc.us or call toll free 1-855-686-3751.

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Estate Planning: Wills, Trusts, and Powers of Attorney
Medicaid Planning: Miller's Trusts and Special Needs Trusts



Long Term Care Ombudsmen: What do they do?

By TERESA HOLT

Alaska Long Term Care Ombudsman

As Long Term Care Ombudsmen for Alaska, our mission is to meet with residents of assisted living homes and nursing facilities to see if they have any issues they need assistance in resolving. An important part of this process is to make sure residents and their families know there is a Long Term Care Ombudsman to help them if they need it.

Established by the Older Americans Act, the Long Term Care Ombudsman program is in every state. We make visits to facilities to talk with residents as often as we can. These visits are unannounced so that we can see the usual conditions in the facility. We also receive complaints and work with residents to resolve their issues. This can range from being able

to get a snack in the middle of the night to investigating abuse situations. Alaska has six staff who serve the 692 individuals in 18 nursing facilities and 2,500 residents of Alaska’s 270 assisted living homes for seniors. At least once a year, we are able travel to each of the 26 different communities that have a nursing facility or assisted living home.

To increase visits to facilities, we train volunteer Long Term Care Ombudsmen who are able to visit more often, especially in communities that are not on the road system. Last year with the assistance of our volunteers, we were able to make 841 visits to facilities. Our ultimate goal is to have a volunteer visit every facility on a monthly basis. Can you give three hours a month to volunteer as a Long Term Care Ombudsman to visit with

Basically, seniors who live in these facilities have the same rights as when they lived in their own homes. They have the right to have visitors and meet in private. They have the right to have access to food when they are hungry. They have the right to sleep in when they are tired. They have the right to be treated with dignity and respect.

residents in long term care facilities? Please call our office at 907-334-4480 if you are interested in volunteering.

Educating on rights

The Office of the Long Term Care Ombudsman also works to educate residents, their families and facility staff on resident rights in a long term care facility. Basically, seniors who live in these facilities

have the same rights as when they lived in their own homes. They have the right to have visitors and meet in private. They have the right to have access to food when they are hungry. They have the right to sleep in when they are tired. They have the right to be treated with dignity and respect. Often, these rights are not honored because it does not fit with the staff’s duties and schedule. We can help

with all of these issues.

Although anyone can contact our office to ask for assistance, we take our direction from the senior living in the facility. If they are not able to communicate their wishes, then we rely on their representative to assist us in knowing what the resident would like us to do.

If you know of someone who lives in a nursing facility or assisted living home who needs our assistance, has some questions or would like us to visit, they can call our office at 334-4480 (or toll free 1-800-730-6393), file a complaint on our website <http://www.akoltco.org/> or come into our Anchorage office at 3745 Community Park Loop, Suite 200.

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Retirement community relationships are critical

Primrose Retirement Community

There are many factors that go into choosing a retirement community. Everything from financial planning to health-care, apartment preferences, staff personalities, dining options, amenities – the list goes on and on. While these are all important factors in making a final decision, one vital piece of the overall puzzle can often go overlooked:

Will my loved one have opportunities to get to know other residents?

It is not until after your loved one moves into a retirement community that they can truly take advantage of the fellowship opportunities available to them. At Primrose, we are fortunate to have residents and staff who have been here for many years. When new residents arrive, these Primrose “veterans” are always quick to help make them and their families feel welcome and at ease in their new home. Our Life Enrichment Coordinator will also spend time getting to know new residents and working to provide them



with opportunities to get involved. As residents participate in these activities, they get to know one another better and great friendships develop. There are many things to do and places to go at Primrose and there are lots of people to share the experience with. It is these collective shared experiences that will help ensure that residents have a wonderful time living and learning at Primrose.

Being physically and socially healthy

Being in good health is about more than just eating right and exercising. It is about the entire spectrum of our wellbeing and the

overall enrichment of our lives. Investing in our social wellness is just as important as being physically fit – especially since we are naturally wired to connect with people socially.

As you research senior living options, look for a community that encourages residents to do things together and to main-

tain friendships and contacts outside the retirement community as well. Take advantage of opportunities

to attend events and to enjoy a meal or two with residents before making a final decision. These kinds of experiences will give you a better glimpse into what everyday life will be like in a community. You may also want to ask what programs the Life Enrichment Coordinator has in place to encourage residents to continue pursuing lifelong skills and interests after they have moved in.

If you have any questions about what Primrose has to offer, feel free to contact us at www.primroseretirement.com. We would be honored to assist you.

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@seniorvoiceak



We also have a page on Facebook with fun and informative posts. Search for “Senior Voice Alaska” then click on over!



At Primrose of Wasilla
this is living!
for residents AND staff

Back Row (Left to Right)

Timer - Resident since 2012, Kathryn - Resident since 2012, Amanda - Housekeeping since 2012, Vicky - Housekeeping since 2013, Gretchen - Nursing since 2009, Brenda - Nursing since 2012

Front Row (Left to Right)

Frances - Resident since 2012, Ray - Maintenance since 2013, Yvonne - Resident since 2009, Tauna - ED/DON since 2010, Eleanor - Resident since 2009, Laine - Administrative Assistant/CNA since 2010, Ruby - Resident since 2010

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