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# Senior Voice

Serving Alaskans 50+ Since 1978

Volume 46, Number 10 October 2023

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*Sage Weaver, 3, fronts the Alaska Native Heritage Center Dancers as they perform during the 2022 Alaska Federation of Natives convention. Sage will be watching his father Andrew Weaver this year as he performs with the Lower Yukon Dancers and Drummers at Qujana Night for this year's convention, taking place Oct. 19-23 in Anchorage at the Dena'ina Center. The annual convention is preceded by the First Alaskans Institute Elders and Youth Conference, also at the center, Oct. 15-18.*  
AFN photo



2023 National Mature Media Awards  
Winner





# A mountain of debt: Can credit and debt assistance companies help?

By **LOGAN HICKLE**

*Better Business Bureau*

Millions of Americans are in debt, but debt relief companies have their own issues. American consumers hold more than \$16 trillion of debt in the form of mortgages, credit cards, personal lines of credit, home equity lines of credit, student loans and personal loans. When emergencies strike or monthly paychecks don't always cover bills, countless credit repair and debt relief com-

panies offer to help. However, our Better Business Bureau team has received over 11,000 complaints and almost 900 negative reports about debt and credit assistance. These reports reveal a pattern of misleading and sometimes fraudulent claims, especially among a group of companies headquartered in the American west. While their contents vary, consumers talked about higher-than-expected fees, a

*page 4 please*

### Know your options, with tips from the BBB

#### Tips for debt relief

- ▶ Know your rights when it comes to debt collection.
- ▶ Never pay an upfront fee. Since 2010, businesses are required to accept payment only upon services rendered. But they can ask you to deposit monthly funds into a "third-party" account and encourage you to make payments on your existing debt.
- ▶ If you are in default, call debt holders yourself and attempt to negotiate a lower debt payment.
- ▶ Be wary of anyone claiming to be associated with a government agency.

#### Tips for credit repair

- ▶ Consumers can reach out to credit score companies themselves if they believe there is inaccurate information on their reports.
- ▶ Use the FTC's website at <https://bit.ly/3Lsybhr> to find out how to run a free credit report.
- ▶ Check monthly bank statements to avoid recurring charges from companies.

# Improving crosswalk safety near Anchorage senior center

*AARP Alaska*

For the last year, the Anchorage Age-Friendly Leadership Team has been gathering input from Anchorage residents on how to make Anchorage a better place to live for people of all ages, including seniors. After considering comments from the Anchorage Senior Citizens Advisory Commission, the Anchorage Senior Activity Center and several residents of Chugach View and Chugach Manor senior housing, the team decided to look at pedestrian safety near the senior center. On Aug. 23, the Team conducted a walk audit of the area around the Anchorage Senior Activity Center to determine the safety and accessibility for those walking to the senior center. The leadership team was joined by members of the senior center board and the Anchorage Senior Citizens Advisory Commission as well as a Dept. of Transportation contractor, staff from senior housing, AARP Alaska volunteers and staff. The group braved the rainy weather to walk the path from the senior center to the senior housing complex

and along both sides of 19th avenue between Karluk and Orca.

The results will not be surprising to those who walk in this area. The walk audit team found that a crosswalk is needed between the senior housing and the activity center. The team proposes a crosswalk that includes a timed pedestrian crossing signal with both visual and auditory signals as well as flashing lights to alert drivers. There are several reasons this type of crosswalk is needed: a painted crosswalk will be covered with snow during the winter; the wide street takes a long time to cross; traffic tends to speed through the area.

As many residents at the housing complex have mobility impairments, a raised crosswalk would be ideal to improve accessibility for those using wheelchairs and walkers as well as to slow vehicle traffic. Crosswalks at the Karluk and Orca intersections would also improve safety and accessibility for people who are walking.

Another major issue seen during the walk audit was people parking partially on

the sidewalk and blocking half of the walking path, making it impossible for those using wheelchairs or walkers to get past. The walk audit team also noticed that people tend to park as close as possible to the front doors of the senior center, limiting drivers' view of people crossing the street. The group has low-cost suggestions for these issues, including painting curbs to designate "no parking" areas near pedestrian crossings and launching an education campaign to make sure people do not park on the sidewalk.

Other suggestions for improving walkability in the area include repairing the cracks in the sidewalk, adding speed limit and pedestrian crossing signs on 19th Avenue, clearing vegetation and gravel from the sidewalk, adding a stop sign at the intersection of Karluk and 19th, ensuring trash from dumpsters doesn't block the sidewalk, adding speed bumps to slow traffic, painting curb cuts to make them more visible, and re-painting the lines on the street to designate lanes and parking area.

The AARP Anchorage Age-Friendly Leadership Team is planning to share the information from this walk audit with the Municipality of Anchorage Traffic Calming/Bicycle/Pedestrian Coordinator, local community councils and legislators to advocate for needed changes. If you are interested in helping to make Anchorage more friendly for people of all ages, you can provide comments by taking our survey at <https://bit.ly/age-friendly-questionnaires> or by scanning the QR

code. If you are interested in volunteering to participate in activities like this walk audit, help develop a plan for Anchorage or advocate for changes, contact Patrick Curtis at 907-268-7919 or [pcurtis@aarp.org](mailto:pcurtis@aarp.org).



**Older Persons Action Group, Inc.**  
**Annual Meeting**  
**Thursday, Nov. 16, 2:30 p.m.**  
*Mark your calendar!*

### OLDER PERSONS ACTION GROUP

#### Mission statement:

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

#### Vision statement:

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



OLDER PERSONS ACTION GROUP

3340 Arctic Blvd., #106  
Anchorage, Alaska 99503  
Phone 907-276-1059  
Toll free 800-478-1059  
[www.opagak.com](http://www.opagak.com)  
[www.seniorvoicealaska.com](http://www.seniorvoicealaska.com)

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#### EDITORIAL

Editor ..... David Washburn  
[editor@seniorvoicealaska.com](mailto:editor@seniorvoicealaska.com)

Correspondents ..... Laurel Bill, Dimitra Lavrakas  
Maralee McMichael

Advertising sales ..... Anne Tompkins  
[A.Tompkins@seniorvoicealaska.com](mailto:A.Tompkins@seniorvoicealaska.com)

Page design ..... Rachel Gebauer, Gebauer Design





# Baby, it’s going to be cold outside

## Find help for your heating woes

By **DIMITRA LAVRAKAS**  
*For Senior Voice*

If you face heating bills that are burdensome, the State of Alaska’s Low-Income Heating and Energy Assistance Program could be your solution. LIHEAP is a federal-ly-funded program that helps low-income households with their home energy bills. It can help you stay warm in the winter and reduce the risk of health and safety problems such

as illness, fire or eviction. The program may be able to offer you one or more of the following types of assistance: bill payment assistance, energy crisis assistance, and weatherization and energy-related home repairs. For information, visit <https://www.benefits.gov/benefit/1411>. In order to qualify, your income must fall within guidelines of annual income limits before taxes (see the box at right). The yearly income shown in

this table is for 2022, and while the new numbers will not be posted to the program’s website until Oct. 2, this should give you an idea of whether or not your income might qualify you. **Make it warmer** Would you like to lower the cost of heating your home? Weatherization programs may be able to help lower your heating cost by installing energy efficient improvements. To find your local weath-

### 2022 ANNUAL HOUSEHOLD LIMITS (before taxes) \*

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2	\$34,335	
3	\$43,185	
4	\$43,185	
5	\$60,885	
6	\$69,735	
7	\$78,585	
8	\$87,435	

erization program go to <https://www.ahfc.us/efficiency/energy-programs/>. Or phone the Municipality of Anchorage for resi- dences in Anchorage at 907-343-4881; the Alaska Community Development *page 14 please*

# Series: Working past retirement in Alaska

## Interview with Bill Weiss

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

This is the third in a series of interviews with Alaskans who have continued to work beyond the

usual age of retirement. In this article, Bill Weiss, Physician Assistant (a mid-level health care provider), talks about living and working in Alaska and in other parts of the world.

It’s complicated. **When and why did you come to Alaska?** I originally came to Alaska in 1986 or 1987 after I had worked in Saudi Arabia. I came to Alaska to visit my brother [the interviewer is the brother] who had been living in Alaska.

At that time, I was a nurse. I asked him where would be the best place for me to look for a job in Alaska. He said Homer, so I went to Homer and almost immediately got hired to work in their hospital. That’s what kept me in Alaska. Since that time, I have come and gone

from Alaska. I left for many years to live on the island of Saipan, but I still very much love coming back to Alaska. **Tell us some of your work history highlights.** In 1975, I graduated *page 21 please*



*Bill Weiss in front of the clinic in Skagway that lured him out of retirement.*  
*Courtesy Bill Weiss*

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## Send us your letters

Send letters to the editor to Senior Voice, 3340 Arctic Blvd., #106, Anchorage AK 99503. Maximum length is 250 words. Senior Voice reserves the right to edit for content and length. Space may be made available for longer opinion piece essays up to 400 words. Contact the managing editor at [editor@seniorvoicealaska.com](mailto:editor@seniorvoicealaska.com) to discuss this. Copy deadline is the 15th of the month prior to publication.





# Home modifications for wheelchair users

By KAREN CASANOVAS

For Senior Voice

**Q:** My mother will soon be using a wheelchair in her home. What should we be considering as she makes this transition?

**A:** This is a really great question because there



*While the focus is generally on older adults, designing and building for persons of all ages who use a wheelchair should not be dismissed. All homes should be safe, comfortable and healthy for everyone.*

are several adjustments to be made, not only by your mother, but for others who

may be visiting her home. I will only address a few potential retrofits

one may take into account when getting her home ready to accommodate a wheelchair. One broad option is to undergo a full assessment of her living environment to understand where additions of

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## Debt

continued from page 2

failure to deliver on debt reduction and credit score improvement, and a lack of response from businesses when questions arose.

While some consumers find success with debt assistance, many are unable to shed their financial burden. That leaves the question: Where do the majority of these companies fall short?

### Limited success plus stacked fees

Debt relief companies might advertise quick fixes, but their ability to help is limited. In some cases, consumers report that stacking fees have lost them thousands of dollars and left them worse off than before.

Crystal from Spokane, Wash., wrote to the BBB about her experience with Lexington Law Firm, which has received an outsized number of complaints since 2020. After spending over \$1,500 with the company

to repair her credit, she became dissatisfied with their service after a number of issues, including accidentally revealing her Social Security Number to an outside business. In her words: “There has been no part of this relationship that has benefited us, that has not caused us stress and more work to be done to fix the wrongs.”

Her story isn’t unique. In the last three years, nearly 700 others have registered complaints at BBB about Lexington Law Firm (parent company is Progrexion). The government is taking action. Progrexion recently settled with the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau on Aug. 28, 2023. The proposed settlement from the CFPB could impose a \$2.7 billion judgment against the subsidiary companies of Progrexion for collecting illegal advance fees for credit repair services through telemarketing. The order will also ban the companies from telemarketing credit repair services for 10 years.

### Untangling your financial options

Many of the services offered by credit and debt assistance companies can be done by consumers themselves. However, difficulty in understanding their options, lack of know-how, or a time crunch and other issues can lead some consumers to seek assistance. Here are some key terms and services to know when researching options.

**Debt relief, also known as debt negotiation or settlement:** Companies offer to negotiate on a consumer’s behalf to reduce their total amount of debt.

**Debt consolidation:** Multiple debts of various types (credit cards, lines of credit, personal loans, student loans, business debts) are combined into

one single loan.

**Credit repair:** Companies sort through a consumer’s credit report, looking for errors. If there are issues, they may contact the credit bureaus and ask for an adjustment.

**Credit counseling, typically done by non-profits:** Complete budget advisory sessions, long-term goal planning, create debt payment plans and attempt to look at financial problems holistically.

### General consumer tips for debt and credit management

- Critically examine any guarantee made. Few, if any, companies can ensure a credit or debt company will agree to negotiate with them or adjust reports.
- Search online for free

information on trusted government and nonprofit sites like FTC, CFPB and BBB. Check to see if a business is BBB Accredited.

► Don’t be rushed. Unscrupulous businesses and scammers both use high-pressure tactics.

► Avoid giving away personal banking information until you are 100% certain a company is legitimate.

► Refuse to work with companies that won’t tell you your rights when it comes to debt relief or credit repair.

You can read our full study about credit repair and debt relief at [BBB.org/CreditDebtStudy](https://www.bbb.org/CreditDebtStudy).

Logan Hickie is a Public Relations and Communications Manager for BBB Great West and Pacific region.



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# Learn more about supplements and how to use them

By **DR. EMILY KANE**  
*For Senior Voice*

Supplements are different than over-the-counter medicines because medicine is given to change the physiologic workings of the body—suppress cough, decrease mucus, dampen inflammation—whereas supplements are typically given to enhance the normal functioning of the body, or to promote the optimal expression of body and mind. Here are the four basic types of supplements, with information on how to take them.

**Food-like supplements, including vitamins, minerals and botanicals**

In general, it's best to take these supplements with meals, which allows the entire digestive system to work on breaking them down, enhancing their effectiveness and reducing chances of a sour stomach. Look for a multivitamin/mineral product that doesn't have a lot of unpronounceable words in the "inactive ingredient" list. And test it out. If your supplement doesn't dissolve completely within two hours of being placed in a small glass of vinegar, it won't break down in your stomach like it should. Unless you're a strict vegan or vegetarian, or have an iron deficiency, you probably don't need iron supplements. But if you do need iron, uptake can be improved by taking it with vitamin C. This vitamin comes in many forms, but I prefer a non-GMO source such as organic corn, tap-



ioca, or acerola cherry. Many vitamin C products are, unfortunately, derived from GMO corn, and although there is no genetic material from the corn in the C supplement, you are still supporting the GMO industry buying the standard corn-based vitamin C pills and powders. Herbal medicines are, on the whole, extremely safe. There are a few herbs that can pose problems if taken at high doses, but they aren't widely available. A few other herbs also come with limited cautions. For instance, St. John's wort (*Hypericum perforatum*) can cause a rash in people who live in northern climates and visit very sunny places. Called "solar urticaria," this condition goes away if you stop taking the herb for two to three days, and it doesn't cause residual problems. Theoretically St. John's wort can cause "serotonin syndrome" if taken along with high dose SSRIs or SSNIs (pharmaceutical anti-depressants) but I've never seen this in 30 years of clinical practice. In fact, when helping folks wean off pharmaceutical anti-depressants (which needs to be done very slowly and with medical supervision) I not infrequently

use St. John's wort in the step-down protocol very effectively. Ginkgo is reputed to be a blood thinner and may enhance blood-thinning effects if you take it with pharmaceutical blood thinners like Plavix, Coumadin, aspirin, but it won't cause you to bleed out in surgery. It will improve your memory and your peripheral circulation, however, which helps with erectile dysfunction and cold hands and feet. Licorice (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*) supposedly puts people at risk for high blood pressure due to its diuretic, and thus potentially potassium-wasting effects. But I have never seen this actually happen. Licorice is a potent adrenal support medicine, an antiviral, and an effective restorative herb for poor tone in the lower esophageal sphincter, which is almost always the problem in cases of heartburn. **Probiotics** Antibiotics wreak havoc on our gut flora, which includes *H. pylori* in the stomach (a balanced amount is normal); *Lactobacillus acidophilus* at the top of the small intestine; and *Bifidobacteria* in the colon. It's generally a good idea to take a broad-spectrum probiotic product for a month after taking antibiotics. And take probiotics right before eating a meal, which helps the friendly bacteria make its way to the intestines before stomach acid can compromise its viability. I also recommend trying a variety of probiotic

**Look for a multivitamin/mineral product that doesn't have a lot of unpronounceable words in the "inactive ingredient" list. And test it out. If your supplement doesn't dissolve completely within two hours of being placed in a small glass of vinegar, it won't break down in your stomach like it should.**



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brands. The science of probiotics is highly complex, and scientists have yet to understand which bugs are best for you as an individual. So, it doesn't hurt to find out which ones make you feel better, improve your digestion, brighten your skin, etc. My preferred probiotic is fermented foods like kimchee, sauerkraut, pickles, kombucha. **Enzymes** Most common enzymes are named after the substance they digest. Amylase digests amyl (starch), and protease digests protein, lipase digests lipids (fats) and lactase digests lactose (the sugar in dairy products). If you have digestive difficulties such as constipation, gas, bloating, or abnormal stools, digestive enzymes, taken with

meals, can help. If they don't help, please consult with a nutrition-savvy doctor. Enzymes also help with immunity. Your immune system's white blood cells contain enzymes called lysosomes, which "lyse" (break open) when they reach an area of infection or injury. These enzymes "digest" viruses, bacteria or irritated tissue so that the debris can be expelled from the body. High-potency proteases (protein-digesting enzymes), taken without food, are my favorite remedy for most any type of "itis," including tendinitis, laryngitis, and adhesive capsulitis (bum shoulder). I often recommend a 10-day course of 1,000 mg of bromelain (a strong

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# Time to review your Medicare Prescription Drug Plan

By **SEAN McPHILAMY**  
*Alaska Medicare Information Office*

From Oct. 15 through Dec. 7, I encourage you to review and, if needed, change your Prescription Drug Plan under Part D coverage. Changes you elect will become effective on Jan. 1. Certified Medicare counselors across Alaska can help you as part of the Medicare Information Of-



fice's network of program Ambassadors, including

through your local Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC). Give us a call, we would be glad to answer your questions, guide you through the process, and even complete the review of your prescription drug plan with you. **Now is the time to review your drug plan** Under Part D of Medicare, private insurance companies have estab-

lished Prescription Drug Plans (PDPs). These plans meet the regulatory requirements of the national Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services along with complying with the State of Alaska's rules overseen by the Dept. of Commerce and the Division of Insurance. These private insurance companies set up agreements with both drug manufacturers (the pharmaceutical companies) and

distribution networks (the retail pharmacies). Under a tiered pricing system, the Prescription Drug Plans provide access to a list of prescription drugs, also known as their formulary. Even if your current plan has been meeting all of your prescription needs, you may be able to obtain a new plan at a lower overall cost to you. For many

page 6 please





## The inner ear and your balance system



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

### Part two of two Benign Paroxysmal Positional Vertigo (BPPV)

The most common disorder of the inner ear's vestibular system, BPPV causes brief but intense episodes of vertigo as a result of changing position of your head (such as sitting up in bed). Causes of BPPV vary, from migraines and viruses to reactions to drugs (ototoxicity), but treatment is available.

#### Ménière's disease

A chronic, incurable vestibular disorder caused by abnormally large amounts of endolymph fluid collecting in the ear.

Typically occurs in adults between 40 and 60 years of age and eventually leads to hearing loss.

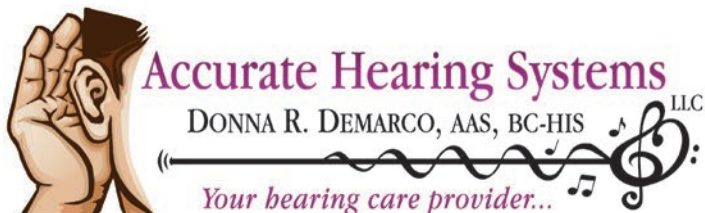
#### Take balance issues seriously

While balance problems can occur at any age, balance-related falls account for more than half of accidental deaths for people 65 and older, and over 300,000 hip fractures a year.

That's why we recommend taking your hearing health seriously. With proper diagnosis and therapeutic exercises, most balance issues can be managed.

Accurate Hearing offers free hearing tests. We ensure every patient gets the right hearing aids to best meet their hearing loss, lifestyle and budget needs. Request an appointment by calling 907-644-6004.

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



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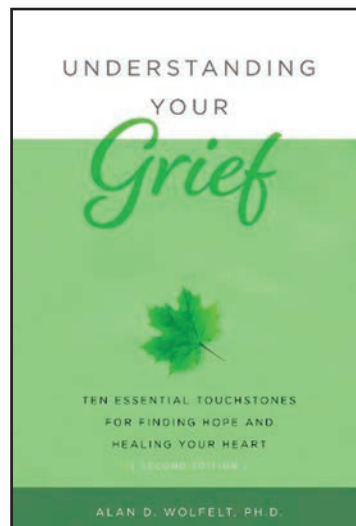
Alaska law permits a hearing aid dealer who is not a licensed physician or a licensed audiologist to test hearing only for the purpose of selling or leasing hearing aids; the tests given by a hearing aid dealer are not to be used to diagnose the cause of the hearing impairment.

## An excellent resource for understanding your grief

By **CAROL DELVALLE**

*For Senior Voice*

Have you ever lost someone you love, or do you anticipate the death of someone you care about? Are you, yourself, facing the end of your life? I believe this is just about everyone reading this newspaper! Having been through the loss of two of my brothers, my husband, my friend, my mother, my step-dad, and my father, I found that the book "Understanding Your Grief: Ten Essential Touchstones for Finding Hope and Healing Your Heart (2nd Edition)," to be a wonderful resource. The author, Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D., writes with clarity and empathy. This is not a "to do" list for coping



with loss and grief; it is an offering of guidelines to honor your unique way of engaging with grief. He presents insights and assistance in finding your own understanding and self-compassion.

The book's "10 Essential Touchstones" provided me with a validation of my

experiences, honoring the influences of loving people and losing them, and providing a sense of encouragement to view my losses as life-changing. This book can be used with its companion journal, "Understanding your Grief Journal: Exploring the Ten Essential Touchstones". This journal could be helpful for processing your own thoughts and feelings by yourself or with other people.

I appreciated the smooth layout of this book. The information was straightforward and written from the author's own authentic voice. Alongside the main text, the author included quotes from various sources to emphasize his

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## Prescription

*continued from page 5*

reasons, these private insurance companies revise their offered plans annually. What has worked for you may not work for you next year. To review your options, you may go online to Medicare.gov, then find the link for Health and Drug Plans. Without needing to create an account, you may use this online tool to review the medication you currently are prescribed, by entering the prescription name, its dosage, and how often you take it. You can also compare costs through local retail pharmacies. And you may be able to save money by using mail order delivery of your medications.

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

Once you have reviewed

your options, you may elect to change to a new plan. The goal when searching for a new plan which meets all of your requirements is to obtain the lowest overall cost to you. Each plan may contain specific rules regarding your prescriptions, so read these notations carefully.

The estimated annual cost is calculated by adding up the plan's monthly premiums along with the cost-share of the prescriptions you anticipate obtaining during the year. While Prescription Drug Plans offer a variety of deductibles, premiums and cost-shares, pay attention to the total estimated cost rather than one individual factor. During the open enrollment period, Oct. 15 through Dec. 7, you may even make multiple changes – the last change you make prior to Dec. 7 is the one which will become effective on Jan. 1, 2024.

Remember, you may call for our help. We are happy to do the review and enrollment with you during the open enrollment period. For any Medicare related questions, please feel free to contact the State of Alaska Medicare Information Office at 800-478-6065 or 907-269-3680; our office is also known as the State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP), the Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP), and the Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act (MIPPA) program.

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

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

## Medicare counseling by phone

By **LEE CORAY-LUDDEN**

*For Senior Voice*

Hi, my name is, Lee Coray-Ludden, I am a Certified Medicare Counselor serving Southeast Alaska and the rest of the state

as needed through referrals by SHIP (State Health Insurance Program). I am available Monday through Thursday, 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. My office is in the Soldotna Senior Center. You can contact me

directly by calling 907-262-2322. The phone will be answered 'Soldotna Senior Center'—it's a small staff, just ask for Lee or 'the Medicare person'. Thanks and have a good day.



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# Schedule your health fair visit for this month

## Also: Early breast cancer detection saves lives

Alaska Health Fair, Inc.

October marks Breast Cancer Awareness Month, a global campaign to increase awareness about this prevalent disease. Breast cancer affects millions of women worldwide. Early detection, often through screening, increases the chances of successful treatment and can save lives.

Breast cancer is a malignant tumor that starts in the cells of the breast. It can affect both men and women, but it's far more common in women. Regular self-examinations and routine screenings can help in the early detection of breast cancer.

Mammography remains one of the most effective screening tools. It can detect breast cancer early, sometimes up to three years before it can be felt. Women are encouraged to discuss with their healthcare providers about the right age to start and the frequency of mammograms.

Sometimes, Alaska Health Fair, Inc. collaborates with local providers to bring mammography screenings to our health fairs. It's an essential part of our mission to pro-

mote health awareness and early detection in our community. We encourage everyone to check our schedule of events at [www.alaskahealthfair.org](http://www.alaskahealthfair.org) and our Facebook page to see whether mammography screenings are available at a health fair near you.

For those seeking additional resources and information on breast cancer, we recommend visiting the websites for the National Breast Cancer Foundation; Breast Cancer Research Foundation; American Cancer Society.

### Health fairs around the state

Embrace October's fall colors with Alaska Health Fair, Inc. health fairs and affordable blood draws:

**Oct. 1 Anchorage** Make It Alaskan Market, Egan Civic and Convention Center, noon to 4 p.m.

**Oct. 3 Anchorage** - Anchorage Museum Community Health Fair, Anchorage Museum, 8 a.m. to noon. Flu and Covid Immunizations will be available/

**Oct. 7 Anchorage** Enlaces Community Health Fair, Dena'ina Center, 8:30 a.m. to noon. Flu & Covid Immu-

nizations will be available

**Oct. 10 Fairbanks** Alaska Health Fair Fairbanks Office Draw, 725 26th Ave., Suite 201, 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.

**Oct. 14 Girdwood** Girdwood Community Health Fair, Girdwood Community Center, 250 Egloff Dr., 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

**Oct. 14 Wasilla** - Wasilla Community Health Fair, Wasilla Area Seniors Inc. (Wasilla Senior Center), 1301 S. Century Cir., 8 a.m. to noon. Flu and Covid

Immunizations will be available

**Oct. 18 Anchorage** Credit Union 1 Community Health Fair, CU1, 1941 Abbott Rd., 7 to 10 a.m.

**Oct. 20-21 Juneau** Juneau Health Fair, Nugget Mall, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. both days.

**Oct. 21 North Pole** North Pole Community Health Fair, 301 N. Santa Claus Lane # 2, 8 a.m. to noon.

**Oct. 24 Fairbanks** Alaska Health Fair Office Draw,

725 26th Ave., Suite 201, 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.

**Oct. 28 Houston** Mid-Valley Senior Center, Houston, 11975 W Mid-Valley Way, 8 a.m. to noon.

For a full schedule and more details about each event, visit [www.alaska-healthfair.org](http://www.alaska-healthfair.org).

If interested in holding a worksite event, reach out to one of our offices and our team will be happy to help you get something started.

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

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

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



This program is supported by the State of Alaska Department of Health and Social Services

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# Drug discount cards; new weight loss med

*Also: Using augmented reality to improve knee replacements*

By JOHN SCHIESZER

Medical Minutes

## Discount cards with Amazon and GoodRx versus out of pocket payments

A nationally representative study is suggesting that at least one out of five prescriptions for commonly prescribed generic medications are cheaper through Amazon Prime or GoodRx Gold discount cards compared to actual out-of-pocket payments made by patients. The authors also highlight the disproportionately higher frequency of out-of-pocket payments exceeding discount card pricing for various vulnerable subgroups like the uninsured and those in the no coverage (deductible) phase.

Researchers from University of Toledo College of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences compared out-of-pocket payments obtained from 2020 Medical Expenditure Panel Survey to 2023 counterfactual discount card pricing (Amazon Prime and GoodRx Gold) for 20 commonly prescribed generic medications. They estimated the proportion and extent of out-of-pocket payments exceeding Amazon and GoodRx discount card pricing benchmarks (referred to as “excess OOP payment”). The authors have published their findings in *Annals of Internal Medicine*.

Results indicate that out-of-pocket payments made by patients exceeded Amazon (20%) and GoodRx (43%) prices for the prescriptions evaluated. The proportion of excess out-of-pocket payment was 40% overall and 79% for prescriptions assumed to be in the no coverage (deductible) phase. Lastly, the estimated cumulative out-of-pocket cost-savings was \$969 million with the Amazon discount card and \$1.83 billion with the GoodRx discount card.

## A new tool in the battle against obesity

A popular weight loss medication may prevent up to 1.5 million heart



attacks and strokes over 10 years, and could result in 43 million fewer obese people. Researchers from the University of California, Irvine have just published a study that projects 93 million U.S. adults who are overweight and obese may be suitable for the 2.4 mg dosage of semaglutide, a weight loss medication sold under the name Wegovy.

The study estimated a reduction in cardiovascular disease risk of 1.8% (from 10.15% to 8.34%), projecting up to 1.5 million cardiovascular events could be potentially prevented in 10 years. The study, “U.S. Population Eligibility and Estimated Impact of Semaglutide Treatment on Obesity Prevalence and Cardiovascular Disease Events,” was published in the journal *Cardiovascular Drugs and Therapy*.

The analysis is based on results from the STEP 1 trial, published in 2021 in the *New England Journal of Medicine*. It showed the 2.4 mg dosage of semaglutide approved by the FDA for the treatment of obesity reduced body weight by an average of 14.9% along with reductions in several cardiovascular risk factors such as blood pressure and lipids. The study projected 93 million U.S. adults (based on National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey data) who are overweight or obese would fit STEP 1 eligibility criteria and that treatment with the drug would result in 43 million fewer persons with obesity.

“We now have a weight control therapy that also significantly reduces cardiovascular events beyond the diabetes population where it was originally studied,” said lead study

***In recent years, augmented reality has become increasingly beneficial in orthopedic surgery, with significant advantages that equip the operating team with the tools to provide a more personalized approach to patient care.***

investigator Nathan D. Wong, PhD, who is a professor and director of the Heart Disease Prevention Program in the Division of Cardiology at the UCI School of Medicine, Irvine, Calif. “It should be considered for patients who are obese or overweight with other risk factors where cardiovascular disease is their leading cause of disability and death.”

Since drugs in this class have side effects, it is important that patients always discuss the risks and benefits of such therapies with their physician. Additionally, an appropriate dietary and physical activity regimen is always the foundation of weight management and cardiovascular risk reduction. Additionally, Wong noted that given the costs of these therapies, better access is needed for

the high-risk underserved populations who may benefit from them.

## Augmented reality total knee replacement procedure

Surgeons are now successfully performing a total knee replacement procedure with the assistance of an augmented reality-based surgical platform that was designed with artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning. Total knee replacement is the most common type of knee replacement.

Arthritis is the most common condition that causes debilitating musculoskeletal pain. Total knee replacement is a successful treatment for advanced knee arthritis. It eliminates much of the pain and restores function. In recent

years, augmented reality has become increasingly beneficial in orthopedic surgery, with significant advantages that equip the operating team with the tools to provide a more personalized approach to patient care.

“Augmented reality gives a visualization of the joint that is more dynamic as it is three-dimensional (3D),” said orthopedic hip and knee surgeon Dr. Panagiotis Gikas. “The advanced technology helps with planning the procedure and allows for the best positioning of the implant for each patient during the procedure. The end-result is tailored to the unique anatomy and specific needs of each patient.”

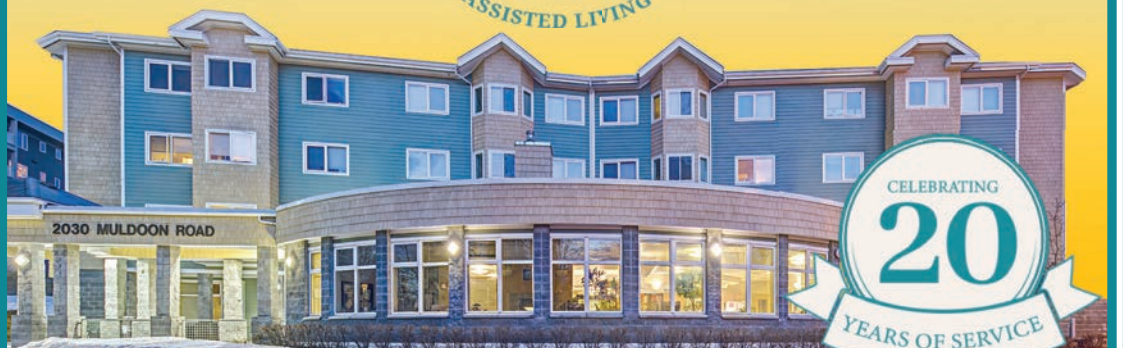
Prior to the procedure, Dr. Gikas used advanced imaging software to visualize the patient’s knee joint in 3D and determine the ideal implant positioning, based on specific anatomy. The virtual 3D model of the patient’s knee helps

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# Remember safety when firing up the woodstove

By **CHRISTIAN M. HARTLEY**

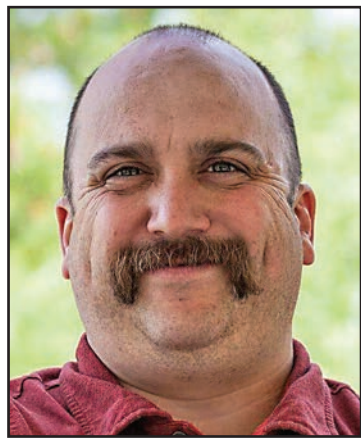
For Senior Voice

There is nothing that sounds like winter more than crackling wood in a woodstove and the thuds and groans of children stacking firewood. But it's important to remember that a maintained stove is a safe stove.

**Get an annual inspection from a chimney sweep.** They'll check for creosote buildup, damage and function in the chimney. To find one, contact local woodstove vendors and ask them for referrals. Ask friends with fireplaces to get referrals or remind them to clean their own. Add a second inspection annually in January if you can.

**Clean the firebox after every use.** To clean, remove unburned wood and ash and place into a metal bucket and cool outside for at least seven days before disposing into a dumpster, or use the ash for projects like your garden, an ashpit for chickens to clean themselves in, or to sprinkle outdoor in a gravel area.

**Chimney caps are very**



**important** on chimneys to keep birds, animals and debris from entering your chimney. They can also catch embers as they exit if you have an ember screen on your cap, which is a very cheap addition. In addition, it will keep rain and snow out of the stack.

**Regularly check for cracks in your stovepipe** and watch for smoke escaping from the fireplace when it's closed. Cracks allow smoke and carbon monoxide to escape and can also allow fresh air to enter that you cannot control and increase the temperature, possibly resulting in a chimney fire. Make repairs immediately.

**Burn seasoned hardwoods** like birch, poplar, willow or alder. Softwoods

like pine, spruce or cedar are okay to start a fire but never to burn for very long. Cottonwood is a medium between the two in that it doesn't produce a lot of heat and sparks but it also doesn't burn so slowly that it is incomplete.

**Overloading your fireplace can lead to overheating and damage.** Follow your manufacturer's guidelines for this, but a good rule of thumb is to never fill a firebox more than the height of the bricks inside of it. If you do not have bricks or are putting your own in, keep it under one-third filled.

**Too much wood, burning soft wood, and too much air will increase the temperature of the fire.** You can tell that a fire is too hot by several things. A whooshing sound inside the firebox or chimney is a sign that it is drawing in oxygen faster than it is designed to. A red glow at the base or along the chimney is another key indicator. If either of these are present, your risk of a chimney fire is significant and you need to mitigate the hazard immediately.

Decrease the amount of air getting in by closing the air intake or closing the flue, or open the door and throw a coffee mug of water onto

flammable materials, including curtains, furniture and rugs for at least. Do not allow anything or anyone to get within 3 feet of the fireplace. Install a carbon monoxide detector near your fireplace to ensure your family's safety. If you notice any issues with your fireplace, call a professional for prompt repairs. Do not put your life at risk for a quick or cheap fix.

*Christian M. Hartley is a 40-year Alaskan resident with over 25 years of public safety and public service experience. He is the City of Houston Fire Chief and also serves on many*



© Scamp | Dreamstime.com

*the fire to decrease it and immediately shut the door. Call 9-1-1 immediately if you have a chimney fire.*

**Keep the area around your fireplace clear of**

*local and state workgroups, boards and commissions related to safety. He lives in Big Lake with his wife of 19 years and their three teenage sons.*

## Grief

continued from page 6

points. One quote that particularly hit home for me was from Vicki Harrison: "Grief is like the ocean; it comes in waves, ebbing and flowing. Sometimes the water is calm, and sometimes it is overwhelming. All we can do is learn to swim."

"Understanding Your Grief" is available for checkout at the Hospice of Anchorage. I have been very grateful for hospice services on my life journey. I hope that you can find the support and care that you need, when you need it - we all lead unique lives and yet the older I get the more I realize how closely related we are. We can help each other.

Hospice of Anchorage is a non-profit and

non-medical hospice that provides help, hope and comfort for clients, caregivers and families navigating serious illness and end of life diagnosis. Our resource center has an excellent collection of books for checkout on the topics of chronic disease, grief, end of life, child loss, dementia, caregiving, nutrition and more. A loan closet has durable medical equipment such as walkers and shower chairs. Advance Directive forms are available. Dementia care items include robotic pets, music players and fidget blankets. Beautiful and comforting lap blankets created by a local craftswoman are also available. There is no cost for services and goods.

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*Carol DelValle is a volunteer Compassionate Companion for Hospice of Anchorage.*



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# Wheelchair

continued from page 4

grab bars and ramps, or which modifications to toilets, showers, doorways, lighting, flooring and countertops are most useful. If you email me your request, I would be happy to conduct a thorough safety and accessibility evaluation of her residence, and provide a report with my findings. Listed below are some suggested initial alterations to consider:

**Entrance/Exit.** Aim for no more than a 1/4" door threshold height (rubber ramps are a safe and cost-effective solution). Doorways should have a minimum 32" opening (up to 48"). Allow for easy access for a wheelchair with a level-landing—mobility ramps are convenient for the individual and others helping a wheelchair user.

**Lighting.** Light switches should be no more than 15-48" maximum from floor, with no obstructions in front of light switches.

**Door handles.** Install

curved lever handles with returns. These are easy for a person to open with their elbow, fist, hand or body and beneficial for those with arthritis or limited hand dexterity. A return will prevent a purse, bag or clothing from getting snagged. Returns with an angled back prevent a person from leaning on the lever handle with their hand and falling.

**Counters and sinks.** Countertop height should be maximum 34", since most wheelchair armrests are 29". The recommended counter length is 36". Leave a 30" minimum in front of person for wheelchair clearance. Sinks may need to be moved closer to the front edge of counter and sink height no more than 34" from floor.

**Clearance.** 30" x 48" will give a wheelchair occupant range required to easily maneuver and make a transfer to a sofa, bed or bench. Allow space for the person to make a 180° turn. A T-shaped space of 60" square, and a base 36" wide provides adequate space for turning. Remove

obstacles such as rugs, furniture, electrical cords or waste bins.

These are a few suggestions to start with. While the focus is generally on older adults, designing and building for persons of all ages who use a wheelchair should not be dismissed. All homes should be safe, comfortable and healthy for everyone.

### Other tips

- ▶ A wheelchair is one of the most commonly-used assisted devices
- ▶ Using a wheelchair allows a person to remain socially active
- ▶ Wheelchair should meet

a person's needs and environmental conditions

▶ Wheelchair type must be the right one for their weight and height (fit and postural support)

▶ Safety and durability are important considerations

Finally, know that your mother or other family members may grieve the loss of mobility. There may be feelings of anger, numbness or depression. Help your mom focus on her abilities, not what she has lost. Challenge negative-based thoughts with reality-based positive ones. Guide your mother in seeing that a wheelchair still gives her some inde-

pendence and freedom to see things in a new way.

It is important for all family and friends to take this change one day at a time. A wheelchair is a new tool to keep active by finding ways to exercise the body and doing things that bring joy. Help her manage expectations and view using a wheelchair as a different mode of transportation. She is still capable and has value.

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

## Low vision support in Anchorage, Mat-Su

Senior Voice Staff

The Alaska Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired organizes monthly "Living Well With Vision Loss" educational and support meetings for people with low vision and their caregivers in Anchorage and the Mat-Su Valley. In

Anchorage, meetings are at the center's office, 3905 Taft Drive, every second and third Wednesday (Oct. 11 and 18) at 1 p.m. Call Pete McCall for information, 907-771-4306. The Mat-Su sessions take place at **Wasilla Senior Center**, Oct. 17, 12:30 p.m., and **Palmer Senior Center**, Oct. 19 at

1 p.m. **Mid-Valley Senior Center in Houston** will host a meeting on Oct. 4 at 1 p.m. Call Jacque Olsen for information on Valley meetings, 907-354-8568.



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# Grandma Thea makes waves in Wasilla classroom

## RurAL CAP Elder Mentor Team

Did you know I'm a mermaid? I'd like everyone to know that, first and foremost.

My name is Thea Whitehead. You can call me Grandma Thea. I was born in upstate New York, but grew up in Florida. I never really liked it there—it's too hot and too humid. One of my kids and grandchild were living in Alaska, and I would come visit them. In December 1999, I made the move up and I have loved it ever since. I adore the mountains. When I'm out of the state, my stomach actually twitches and aches because I miss the mountains that much.

I remember seeing the work RurAL CAP was doing in the community and had a really good feeling about the organization. I'm so happy I joined the program and became an Elder Mentor. I volunteer in Wasilla at Iditarod Elementary. I work with preschool, kindergarten and first grade students. I love to play games with the kids. You see them learning so much and having fun at the same time. I also really enjoy eating lunch with the students. It seems more personal, you know, sharing a meal together, getting to know the students.

When I first became an Elder Mentor at Iditarod, I



requested that I be called Grandma Thea. The kids picked up on that immediately and it just kind of grew. I have a wooden sign that says, "Grandma Thea," and that's what everyone calls me.

What is so special about being an Elder Mentor? It's very selfish, but it just makes you feel so good. When you reach a child and you see that little lightbulb go off, it sends chills down my back. I had one little girl who usually is chipper, but I could tell she was having trouble one day. I asked her what was wrong, and she says to me, "I just don't know what to do. I don't understand class." As I talked to her, I figured out she was having problems with numbers. I worked with her one-on-one, and gave her some tricks to remember counting. The next time I saw her, she was happy as a lark, and we kept working on numbers together. I watched her progress more and more. It is so rewarding to witness.

Now. I must tell you, yes,

Elder Mentor volunteer 'Grandma Thea' Whitehead was recognized as a Champion for Children by Mat-Su Education Association.

Courtesy RurAL CAP

it is true that I am a mermaid. There is an attraction in Florida called Weeki Wachee Springs. I was there in the sixties, before and after getting married and having kids, performing as a live mermaid. It's a very unusual job—and the best job anyone could have. Eating, drinking, feeding

fish, doing ballet, all underwater. And we used air hoses to breathe. I got to see the amphitheater that is there today being built underwater. If you were sitting on the bottom row of the theater, you're 16 feet below the surface of the water. The majority of the show was 30 to 40 feet underwater. I don't, however, enjoy swimming much since then because I miss my crystal-clear water. And I like knowing where every rock and cranny is. I also can scuba dive, but the tank and everything

else is so cumbersome. I was featured in a film in the sixties, "The Care and Feeding of a Mermaid," which you can watch on YouTube.

I was named a Champion for Children by Mat-su Education Association, and Volunteer of the Year 2022-2023 at Iditarod Elementary, and the association hosted a wonderful dinner, celebrating all volunteers. It was lovely. I was presented with an award, and wonderful words from staff

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Grandma Thea performing underwater as a mermaid in the 1960s in Florida.

Courtesy Thea Whitehead





# Recycled, reused and repaired work clothing

By **MARALEY MCMICHAEL**  
*Senior Voice Correspondent*

Over 25 years ago, while at my sister’s house in Glennallen, a gentleman dropped by to discuss some business. I found myself staring at his Carhartt vest and blue jean bib overalls, which featured multi colored patches upon patches. I had mended clothing for my family of four for over 20 years and had never seen anything like it. I couldn’t help making a comment about the patches and learned he’d done all this repair work himself. I found this intriguing because many people viewed mending as “women’s work” and yet this guy was an expert welder, as well as other typically “manly” crafts. I’ve talked with him periodically over the years and again this past July, when I attended the Glennallen High School annual



*Maraley’s work clothing wardrobe before heading to the washing machine, October 2018.*  
Courtesy Maraley McMichael

reunion. At the reunion, I learned he operates a statewide business (Gary’s Sewing Works) which includes a variety of things including embroidery, zipper replacement, and snow machine seats. Near the end of September I put a load of my (end of season) work clothes in

the washing machine and thought of him. My brown jeans have had double patches on the knees for several years and they looked pretty ratty last fall when I washed them, but I decided not to throw them away until the zipper fails.

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## Rambles

News from the Grapevine

**Anchorage Senior Activity Center’s Fall Sale** takes place across three days this year: Friday, Oct. 6, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Sat., Oct. 7, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.; and Monday, Oct. 9, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. The list of sale item categories is long – books, puzzles, crafts, quilts, fabric and art – so there’s something for everyone. Call for more information, 907-770-2000 ... **Juneau Senior Center** will continue offering **Bingocize** through the end of October, and beyond that if there’s enough interest. Led by **Kathy Washburn**, sessions are every Tuesday and Thursday from 10:15 to 11:15 a.m. Bingocize combines the game of bingo with exercise and nutrition education, with small prizes awarded. The senior center address is 895 W. 12th Street. Parking is available in the back lots by the kitchen door, or in front of the building. Call for more information, 907-463-6175 ... **Wasilla Area Seniors Inc. (WASI)** is readying for their annual “**My-O-My It’s Pie**” fundraiser. The annual event combines purchasing pies with an online auction for other donated items. Pie purchasing is underway now. Order apple, pumpkin, pecan, or a surprise flavor, \$30 each, through Nov. 16. Pies can be purchased for oneself, family, friends, and available for pickup at the Wasilla Senior Center on Nov. 18. Or pies can be purchased and donated to WASI for delivery to a local senior to help make their November more cheerful. The auction takes place online at [www.wasillaseniors.com](http://www.wasillaseniors.com), Nov. 4-15. Donations are

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# AARP Alaska Tech Webinars



The coronavirus pandemic showed the importance of technology to stay connected — to work, health care services and friends and family.

For those who have yet to master the latest in tech — or for those just needing a skills refresh — AARP Alaska and its affiliate Senior Planet are offering a series of six free technology webinars for older adults.

The one-hour sessions will be held Fridays at 11 a.m., from Oct. 13 to Nov. 17. Topics include protecting personal information online, making the most of Twitter and YouTube, understanding streaming and “smart” TVs, the pros and cons of using food delivery apps, and using fitness apps for health and wellness.

**AARP Alaska Technology Series**  
Fridays at 11AM from October 13 to November 17  
For more information and to register, visit [aarp.org/ak](http://aarp.org/ak)







# Rambles

News from the Grapevine

*continued from page 13*  
needed and will be accepted at the center through Oct. 27. Call for more information, 907-206-6800 ... **Santa’s Senior Center in North Pole** is partnering with the **17 Mile Homermakers** to bring some comfort to 1,500 single soldiers in the community through a partnership with the **Fort Wainwright USO**. The partnership volunteers will prepare **Christmas cards, bake cookies and provide candy**. Cards are available to take home to sign, or join in group sessions on Thursdays, 9 a.m. to noon at the **Lord of Life Lutheran Church**. Start baking and freezing cookies at any time. Call for more details, 907-488-4663 ... **Nenana Senior Center** gave a special shout out in their September newsletter to **Michael Bruner and Steve Yates**, letting them know how much their **donation of smoked and fresh salmon** was enjoyed and appreciated. After the center lost its previous donors, “we went several years without fresh salmon and depended largely on donations from the **Fairbanks Food Bank**,” the newsletter says and notes that, while center staff get to see how much the donations mean to those “who otherwise would go without what was once considered a staple in their diet, those who actually make the donations miss seeing what in impact their time, hard work and expense means to so many.” Well done.

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

# Heating

*continued from page 3*

Corporation at 800-478-8080 for Mat-Su, Kenai Peninsula, Copper River, Kodiak, Bristol Bay, Aleutians, and Southeast except for Juneau; for Interior Alaska, call Interior Weatherization at 800-478-5323; and for Juneau, Western and Northern Alaska, call RurAL CAP at 800-478-7227.

## Where and how to file for fuel assistance

The application is very detailed, so make sure you follow the directions closely.  
You cannot receive benefits from both a tribal organization and the state. Your benefits can be delayed if you apply with the wrong organization. For a list of communities served by tribal organizations, please visit <https://bit.ly/3rdmapk> or contact your local tribal organization.  
And you cannot share or barter your benefit.  
If you live in a trailer or mobile home, list the

exterior length and width in question 9. If you live on a boat, provide the square footage of your heated living space.  
And if there is an approved vendor of heating fuel in your area, you must use them.  
The application asks a lot of questions—read it carefully and have all the information they request available, like pay stubs, bills and mortgage information.  
Applications for Heating Assistance are accepted Oct. 1 (again, wait until the new income guidelines come out this year on Oct. 2) through April 30.  
If you are legally disabled or age 60 or older, your application will be expedited when received for the benefit year. You can contact the office at 1-800-478-7778, or email [hss.dpa.offices@alaska.gov](mailto:hss.dpa.offices@alaska.gov) for assistance.  
For information on the program and to fill out an

application for heating assistance, go to <https://www.benefits.gov/benefit/1411>  
If you are not computer savvy, call or go to your local Alaska State Dept. of Health, Division of Public Assistance:  
**Ketchikan**, 2030 Sea Level Drive, Suite 301  
**Kodiak**, 211 Mission Road, Suite 101  
**Anchorage**, University Center, 3901 Old Seward Hwy., Suite 131  
**Nome**, 214 E. Front Street  
**Fairbanks**, 675 7th Ave., Station E  
**Sitka**, 304 Lake Street, Suite 101  
**Wasilla**, 855 W. Commercial Drive  
The phone number to reach all offices is the main state office number, 800-478-7778.  
You can mail, fax or drop off the application. The fax number is the same for all state locations, 1-888-269-6520.

## Your support helps

Older Persons Action Group continue its mission.  
Call 1-800-478-1059 to donate.



## 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



# 1-877-625-2372

The State of Alaska, Division of Senior and Disabilities Services, administers the ADRC grant in partnership with the 6 regional sites. For more on the ADRC grant program, contact an ADRC Program Manager at 907-465-4798 or 1-800-478-9996.

### Anchorage Area

Municipality of Anchorage, Anchorage Health Department  
825 L St., Ste 200, Anchorage, AK 99501  
907-343-7770 [www.muni.org/adrc](http://www.muni.org/adrc)

### Kenai Peninsula/Kodiak Island/Valdez/Cordova

Independent Living Center  
47255 Princeton Ave., Ste 8, Soldotna, AK 99669  
907-262-6333 / 1-800-770-7911 [www.peninsulailc.org](http://www.peninsulailc.org)

### Southeast Alaska

Southeast Alaska Independent Living (SAIL)  
3225 Hospital Dr., Ste 300, Juneau, AK 99801  
1-800-478-SAIL (7245) [www.sailinc.org](http://www.sailinc.org)

### Mat-Su Borough

LINKS Aging & Disability Resource Center  
777 N. Crusey St., A101, Wasilla, AK 99654  
907-373-3632 / 1-855-355-3632 [www.linksprc.org](http://www.linksprc.org)

### Fairbanks North Star Borough

Fairbanks Senior Center - North Star Council on Aging  
1424 Moore St., Fairbanks, AK 99701  
907-452-2551 [www.fairbanksseniorcenter.org](http://www.fairbanksseniorcenter.org)

### Bristol Bay Native Association

Aging & Disability Resource Center  
1500 Kanakanak Rd., Dillingham, AK 99576  
907-842-4139 / 1-844-842-1902





# Free training, support for family caregivers

Senior Voice Staff

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

Alzheimer’s Resource of Alaska (ARA) organizes caregiver support meetings around the state, including Anchorage, Eagle River, Fairbanks, Homer, Juneau/Southeast, Ketchikan, Kodiak, Mat-Su Valley, Seward, Sitka, Soldotna, Talkeetna, Willow. Call 1-800-478-1080 for details.

ARA also hosts a state-

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

The Homer caregiver support group meets at the Homer Senior Center on the second and fourth Thursday of each month (Oct. 12 and 26), from 2 to 3:30 p.m. Contact Pam Hooker for information, 907-299-7198.

In Southeast Alaska, the Southeast Senior Services Caregiver Support Group meets every Thursday, 1 to 2 p.m. via Zoom. The group is available to all caregivers in the region. For more information and a Zoom invitation, call Denny Darby at 907-463-6181 or email Denny.Darby@ccsjuneau.org.

# Webinars focus on brain health

Senior Voice Staff

AARP Alaska is sponsoring a webinar series, “Brain Health Across the Lifespan,” which will explore how the brain changes as we age, plus aspects of lifelong brain health including diet, exercise and sleep. Webinars will also discuss how to work through situations where brain changes may be non-modifiable.

The University of Alaska Southeast will livestream and post the talks on the UAS YouTube page. The series runs through Janu-

ary, with one webinar per month except for October, when there will be two: Oct. 13 and Oct. 20. Both will be presented in person in the Egan Library on the UAS main campus and also livestreamed. The Oct. 13 topic is “the Vicissitudes of Aging and Brain Health: What Parents May Never Have Told You”. The Oct. 20 topic is, “Why Improving Your Gut Health Will Reduce the Risk of Alzheimer’s Disease”. For more information, contact Patrick Curtis at pcurtis@aarp.org.

# Networking for Anchorage, Mat-Su area providers

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

at a different host location each month. Breakfast provided. The next date is Oct. 11, hosted by the Alaska Long Term Care Ombudsman office.

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

# Calendar of Events

**Oct. 6 Juneau** “Mga Kuwento: Filipinos of Juneau” Filipino history exhibition opening at Juneau-Douglas City Museum, 4 to 7 p.m. The exhibition will remain on view through Nov. 22, 2023. 907-586-3572.

**Oct. 7 Nikiski** Annual Fall Fundraiser at Nikiski Senior Center. Doors open at 5 p.m. Wall of Guns begins at 6 p.m. Dinner will be served, auctions throughout the evening. Advance tickets, \$75. Call 907-776-7654 for more information.

**Oct. 9 Fairbanks** University of Alaska Fairbanks Indigenous Peoples’ Day Celebration. Events to honor Alaska Native people, culture and knowledge, to be held across different UAF colleges, campuses and departments. Visit website and select “Events” for updates, <https://www.uaf.edu/news/>.

**Oct. 10 Talkeetna** Upper Susitna Senior Center annual membership meeting and banquet, 5 p.m. Hors d’oeuvres, meet and greet, annual meeting and elections (must be paid member to vote). Prime rib and chicken dinner, \$30 per person. 907-733-6200.

**Oct. 11-12 Anchorage** 9th Annual Disability and Aging Summit at Special Olympics Alaska Jim Balamaci Training Center, 3200 Mountain View Drive. Keynote speakers, presentations and panels cover national and state trends regarding aging and people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, caregiving, housing, guardianship, legislative panel and more. Food trucks on site during lunch hours. Hosted by the Alaska Aging and Disability Coalition. Event will be streamed via Zoom. For information, agenda and online registration, visit <https://bit.ly/3PR1U6h>. Contact: Joanna Paris, [joanna@specialolympicsalaska.org](mailto:joanna@specialolympicsalaska.org).

**Oct. 13 Chugiak** Oktoberfest celebration at Chugiak-Eagle River Senior Center, 6 p.m. 907-688-2674

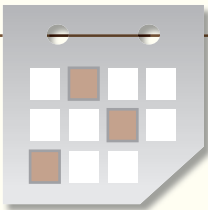
**Oct. 14-15 Fairbanks** Annual Fairbanks Fiber Festival, Pioneer Park Civic Center, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. each day. Shop for gently used looms, spinning wheels, reeds, bobbin winders and more other tools and equipment. Silent auction (Saturday only), bake sale, kids area with activities, more. 907-451-0691 or [www.fairbanksfiberfestival.com](http://www.fairbanksfiberfestival.com).

**Oct. 17 Wasilla** Wasilla Area Seniors, Inc. (WASI) membership meeting at Wasilla Senior Center, 12:45 p.m. 907-206-8800

**Oct. 18 Statewide** Alaska Day

**Oct. 18 Homer** Homer Senior Citizens, Inc. special membership meeting, 1:30 p.m. in the Homer Senior Center activity room. This is a reschedule from an earlier date in September. Call for information, 907-235-7655

**Oct. 20 Fairbanks** Potluck social, sponsored by Fairbanks North Star Borough senior activities program, at Mary Siah Recreation Center, 2 to 4 p.m. Bring a dish to share. 907-459-1136



## Send us your calendar items

Send to: Senior Voice, 3340 Arctic Blvd., Suite 106, Anchorage AK 99503  
[editor@seniorvoicealaska.com](mailto:editor@seniorvoicealaska.com)

Deadline for November edition is October 15.



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# Fire hazards and the day Dawson burned

By LAUREL DOWNING BILL  
Senior Voice Correspondent

Fire was the curse of many towns during the Klondike Gold Rush era, and Dawson was no exception. The extreme cold, coupled with dryness, meant fires burned in all buildings when occupied.

Stovepipes thrust through flimsy walls or roofs of cabins and tents carried smoke from high-creosote spruce. Over time, the creosote built up on the pipes, which increased the draft, and soon that created enough heat to start the creosote burning. Eventually, a red-hot stovepipe could set a building on fire.

The Dawson volunteer fire department had built a fire hall and tower down near the bank of the Yukon River by the 1890s. Whenever a report of a fire came, firemen rang the bell in the tower and raced to the scene, pulling their fire-fighting apparatus behind them. The record was 22 alarms in one night.

The fire department had a hose cart that extended only as far as the city's water system, and chemical carts that were little more than large fire extinguishers to use when water froze inside the hoses. By the time an alarm sounded, and the firemen reached a fire, they usually found the tent or cabin gone and spent most of their time trying to keep the fire away from other structures.

To keep fires from spreading during cold weather, residents had a rather unique system. They soaked blankets in water, thrust them out windows, and fastened them over walls. The blankets promptly froze and formed a barrier of ice.

But despite the danger, the town grew by leaps and bounds. And as it grew, the residents needed better fire protection in order to get fire insurance. Insurance companies wouldn't cover high-risk areas, at least not at rates that most customers could pay.

Some sources say that town merchants collected \$5 apiece (about \$180 in 2023 dollars) from the ladies of the evening to buy a fire engine. Others speculate that the ladies collected the money from the merchants and politicians who used their services.

Whatever the real story, the town purchased a steam pumper from the Seattle Fire Department in 1898 and had it shipped north. However, due to human error, the new horse-drawn fire engine with its smoking stack proved useless when a fire broke out on April 26, 1899. The next day, the Klondike Nugget newspaper reported:

"Dawson is once again in ashes.

The Queen of the Yukon is once more attacked by her old-time enemy. The city's loss will be fully a million dollars. One hundred and eleven buildings gone up in smoke and flame. Incompetency in operating the Fire Steamer charged with being the cause of the heavy loss."

While many people said the fire was "an act of God," several others said it was aided by the stupidity of man.

During breakup, the river had churned under the rotting ice of the river and the shift in pressure had pushed water up through the hole where the steamer sat. Nobody noticed that the water had doused the fire in the firebox, which was necessary to make the steam pump work.

It took almost a half-hour to get the fire lit again, by which time the entire east side of Dawson had



Fire swept through Dawson in 1899 and destroyed more than 100 buildings.  
University of Washington

already gone up in flames.

This column features tidbits found in *Aunt Phil's Trunk*, a five-book Alaska history series written by Laurel Downing Bill and her late aunt, Phyllis Downing Carlson. The books are available at bookstores and gift shops throughout Alaska, as well as online at [www.auntphilstrunk.com](http://www.auntphilstrunk.com).

### Typecast

#### Across

- 1 On the safe side, at sea
- 5 Thunderstruck
- 9 Air bags?
- 14 Watch word?
- 15 Spicy cuisine
- 16 In progress
- 17 Type of lens
- 19 Short-legged Welsh dog
- 20 \_\_\_ Point, Guam
- 21 Magnetism
- 23 Rocky prominence
- 24 Soak flax
- 25 Toot
- 26 Frosh, next year
- 29 Type of burglar
- 30 Type of box
- 32 Kind of admiral
- 35 Macho Picchu builder
- 38 Deuce toppers
- 40 "A Death in the Family" writer
- 41 Thicket
- 43 Bygone leader
- 44 Throng
- 46 Physics calculation
- 47 Blues singer James
- 48 Big party
- 50 \_\_\_ Xing
- 52 Flower stalk
- 53 Father of Romulus and Remus
- 55 Usher's offering
- 58 Kind of gun
- 60 Gains points in a game
- 62 Born
- 63 Pontificate
- 66 Type of carriage
- 68 Take place

#### Down

- 1 \_\_\_ of roses
- 2 Vassal
- 3 Acclaim
- 4 \_\_\_ out a win
- 5 Kind of competition
- 6 Like some milk
- 7 Consume
- 8 Last name in fashion
- 9 Fond du \_\_\_, Wis.
- 10 Tabloid topic
- 11 Kind of passage
- 12 Kind of dancer
- 13 Brouhaha
- 18 Sunscreen ingredient
- 22 Lawyer's abbr.
- 27 Passé
- 28 Broke up
- 29 Kind of bureau
- 30 Insolence
- 31 Myanmar cash
- 32 Cheerleader's cheer
- 33 Inflatable things
- 34 Kind of engineer
- 36 Seward Peninsula city
- 37 Tax prep. expert
- 39 Mexican Mrs.
- 42 Type of machine
- 45 Before, in verse
- 49 German river
- 51 To be, in old Rome
- 53 Dudley of "Foul Play"
- 54 Rich tapestry
- 55 Embrocate, old time
- 56 Varnish ingredient
- 57 Tablelands
- 58 Codger
- 59 Kind of enemy
- 61 China problem
- 64 Egyptian boy king
- 65 Historic period
- 67 Conducted

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Crossword answers on page 22





# Barry Bostwick wants you to do the Time Warp, again

By NICK THOMAS

Tinseltown Talks

With Halloween coming up, there's no better time to satisfy your "Rocky Horror Picture Show" craving than by doing the Time Warp with Barry Bostwick, who will be traveling the country in October for various conventions, appearances, and screenings of the 1975 musical comedy horror classic (see [www.barrybostwick.com](http://www.barrybostwick.com) for dates and locations).

Bostwick, who starred as clean-cut Brad Majors in the original film, has attended dozens of screenings over the years but still looks forward the most to where a 'shadow cast' of local actors act out scenes while the film plays in the background.

"I'm entertained like hell each time because the performances are just so wonderful," said Bostwick from his Florida home north of Orlando. "Many have been doing it for years and know every detail about every scene from the movie."

These days, Bostwick does not perform with the shadow cast.

"A couple of years ago they got me up on stage to play the Ralph Hapschatt part, the character who gets married at the beginning of the film," recalled Bostwick. "There were only a few lines, but I just sucked at it because I couldn't keep

up with the performers on stage. I swore I'd never get talked into that again. So, I just go out and screw around with the audience for a while to get them pumped up. I make fun of them as much as they have made fun of me for the last (48) years."

To embrace the whole "Rocky Horror Picture Show" experience, fans dress as their favorite characters while yelling at the screen and tossing objects around the theater, behavior that would normally lead to ejection by management. But such conduct is not only tolerated but expected during the movie as fans mimic iconic moments from the beloved film.

Originally a critical and commercial flop when first released, midnight screenings in the late 70s soon began attracting young audiences drawn to the film's outrageous characters featured in exotic and erotic scenes.

By contrast, Bostwick's character is initially rather staid, peering through nerdy, black-rimmed glasses alongside girl-next-door fiancée Janet (Susan Sarandon). The pair stumble upon a country mansion occupied by Dr. Frank-N-Furter (Tim Curry), an eccentric transvestite scientist (who's actually an alien) preparing to unveil his latest humanoid



Actor Barry Bostwick still makes appearances at events and film showings, from his role playing Brad in the "The Rocky Horror Picture Show."

[www.barrybostwick.com](http://www.barrybostwick.com)

creation, Rocky.

"I never get bored because the music (e.g., 'The Time Warp') is so superb and watching Tim eat up the screen is a delightfully enriching experience," says Bostwick.

When filming the original, Bostwick says the self-assured heroic character of Brad fit right into his

professional wheelhouse at the time, but were there moments when playing the more shocking Frank-N-Furter character might have been more appealing?

"Sure, but then Tim would walk on the set to begin a scene and I realized I couldn't do it," he said. "He just had that spark that others have tried to imitate

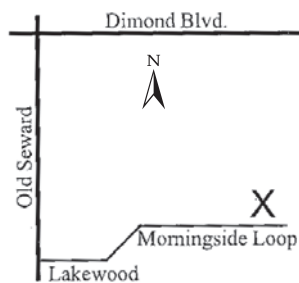
in later stage productions, but no one ever has. He helped make it the greatest cult movie of all time."

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

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# ILITs, A/B trusts and other legal artifacts

By KENNETH KIRK

For Senior Voice

I recently spoke to a family who had an unpleasant surprise after the father died. Everything was going smoothly as far as transfers, until they contacted the life insurance company. That was when they were told that there was something called an ILIT which was the beneficiary of the life insurance policy.

What, they asked me, is an ILIT?

I was a bit taken by surprise, because I hadn't seen an ILIT in quite a few years. It stands for Irrevocable Life Insurance Trust, and it is usually pronounced like "eye-lit". It is something I used to see fairly regularly back in the old days.

An ILIT is primarily an estate tax device. Today, very few people have to worry about estate taxes, because the first \$12.9 million of your estate is free from that tax, and that is obviously all the vast majority of people need. But back in the day, it used to be different. When I graduated from law school, back in the Pleistocene, only the first \$600,000 was excluded from estate tax.

An ILIT was a way to pass money along to your heirs, outside of the taxable estate. It was, as the name suggests, an irrevocable



trust. You would set up this trust, and the trust would actually own a life insurance policy, with you as the insured. You would pay the insurance premium each year, but the premium amount would be less than the amount which was excluded, each year, from gift tax. Back in those days you could give \$10,000 per year to any one person. So if you and your spouse had three kids, you could each give \$10,000 to each of the kids, for a total of \$60,000. You could actually give that money to an ILIT, as a gift to the kids, and the ILIT would use that money to pay the premium on the life insurance policy. And then, when you died, this huge life insurance payout would not count as part of your taxable estate.

But aside from the very wealthy few who still have to worry about that \$12.9 million exclusion amount, people don't need to do that anymore. But there it was, in this particular case, an

***But here's the rub: a lot of those A/B Trusts are still out there. Most people don't even know that they have one. And when the first spouse dies, they may find that a significant portion of their assets are restricted.***

ILIT that was still being funded.

And that sent me on a trip down memory lane.

The most common device we used to use to avoid estate tax was the "A/B Trust". This was a trust that split in two when the first one of a married couple died, and it was a way to make full use of both a husband's, and a wife's, estate tax exclusions.

Let us say that, back in the day (when the exclusion amount was \$600,000) a husband and wife had a total estate of \$1 million. The husband died, leaving everything to his wife. Later on when the wife died, the estate was still worth \$1 million. But she would only get a single exclusion amount, so everything above \$600,000 would be subject to a whopping estate tax (the top rate in those days was 55%). What happened to the estate tax

exclusion for her husband? It died when he did.

But with an A/B Trust, you could effectively double up that exclusion amount. The trust would split into two parts (the A trust and the B trust) automatically when the first spouse died, with part of the assets going into a restricted, irrevocable trust. The restrictions didn't have to be unduly harsh, and typically the surviving spouse would have the right to some financial support from the restricted part. The other part would be unrestricted and the surviving spouse could do whatever she wanted with that.

Nonetheless, in order for this to work, there had to be some restrictions after the first spouse died.

For the most part, A/B Trusts became obsolete in 2013, when the Congress passed a law allowing "spousal portability".

Now all you have to do, to preserve the first spouse's exclusion amount, is file some forms with the IRS after the first spouse dies. But of course, for almost everybody, that is unnecessary because the exclusion amount is so much higher than it was back in the day.

But here's the rub: a lot of those A/B Trusts are still out there. Most people don't even know that they have one. And when the first spouse dies, they may find that a significant portion of their assets are restricted. Even though it did them no good, if those are the terms of the trust, then those are the terms of the trust.

And that isn't the kind of trip down memory lane that you want to take.

*Kenneth Kirk is an Anchorage estate planning lawyer. Nothing in this article should be taken as legal advice for a specific situation; for specific advice you should consult a professional who can take all the facts into account. Now if you don't mind, I'm going to go home and put on some Beatles records. That's my kind of trip down memory lane.*

## Video assistance with Social Security questions

Social Security Administration

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

The video service locations are available at:

► In Nome, Norton Sound Health Corporation, located at 1000 Greg Kruschek Ave. Video service is available for walk-ins on a first come, first served basis,

on the second and fourth Wednesdays, 9 a.m. to noon.

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

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

The agency strongly encourages people who can to use its online services at [www.socialsecurity.gov](http://www.socialsecurity.gov), call on the phone, or use the video service option when possible.

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# Swipe gestures; iPhone software update; holiday gifts

By **BOB DELAURENTIS**  
*Bob's Tech Talk*

**Q.** When someone tells me to “swipe right” on my phone, do they mean swipe to the right or swipe from the right?

**A.** Technology changes so fast that the language is always trying to catch up. Early designs made gestures obvious with on-screen controls like switches. The original iPhone’s “Swipe to Unlock” control became iconic.



© Glowonconcept | Dreamstime.com

As complexity grew, and as people have become more familiar with smartphones, designers have pushed toward less explicit controls.

In 2016 TikTok upended everything. Its interface took a different approach: the swipe interaction model is invisible, and the app requires experimentation and discovery.

That brings us to today, where the definition of “swipe” has multiple meanings, and the user has to determine which meaning applies.

If at all possible, rather than words, use a demonstration. That is the best way to avoid confusion. If that is not an option, be explicit. For example, “Did you mean to drag my finger from left to right across the screen?”

The bottom line is that “swipe” remains confusing, and it will continue to be confusing. So much so that “swipe right” has even become slang for desirability, an outgrowth of how dating apps have adopted the convention of a swipe toward the right gesture to mean yes, and swipe left to mean no.

**Q.** My iPhone keeps offering me an update to iOS 17. Should I accept it?

**A.** Yes! The phone will only offer the update if the phone is compatible. And iOS has some nice improvements. Here are a few favorites:

When an incoming call goes to voicemail, it’s possible to screen the call. The words recorded in voice-

mail are displayed on the screen, allowing you to pick up before the caller finishes speaking.

The phone has a new standby mode that appears if the phone is plugged in and sitting sideways. The screen can display a clock and calendar by default, or it can be customized with other choices, such as local weather.

The notification system has a new feature, Critical Alerts. If you use the phone to track your medication, it can trigger an audible warning that you missed a dose. Take note that enabling a Critical Alert will override the phone’s silent switch. This feature is bound to create some embarrassing moments.

These notifications, along with improvements in widget performance, make using the phone as a medical tracker more reliable than ever.

If you have AirPods Pro 2, iOS 17 enables additional capabilities for noise cancellation and spoken conversation, which give the phone enhanced capabilities as a hearing aid.

These are a few of my favorites that I use every day. There are many more, all available free if you upgrade to iOS 17 in Settings -> General -> Software Update.

One final tip: After updating, speak into the phone “Siri, open tips.” (Note “Hey Siri” has been shortened to “Siri”). This phrase opens the built-in app intended to help you get the most from your

phone.

**Q.** Now that Costco has artificial Christmas trees for sale in August, I guess it is not too early to ask for gift advice. Any suggestions?

**A.** I have two, one simple and budget-friendly, the other more elaborate that works for anything available from Amazon.

My go-to tech gift idea might seem boring: chargers and cables. But extra chargers and cables are super handy. Pretty much anything made by Anker fits this bill. And if you’re not sure which product suits your recipient’s needs, they offer gift cards.

## Wander the Web

Here are my picks for worthwhile browsing this month:

### Swipe Gesture History

A brief history of the swipe gesture from an Android perspective. [www.androidpolice.com/brief-history-android-gesture-navigation/](http://www.androidpolice.com/brief-history-android-gesture-navigation/)

### Quality iOS 17 Apps

Please pardon another long URL. If you are using iOS 17, look at this page for apps to show off its new capabilities. <https://9to5mac.com/2023/09/18/the-best-ios-17-apps-with-interactive-widgets-and-standby/>

### 13 Centuries of Spoken English

This three minute YouTube video captures how language changes over time. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=CtQYF2cJ5og](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CtQYF2cJ5og)

The second suggestion works best when you start early. The website [www.camelcamelcamel.com](http://www.camelcamelcamel.com) enables you to create price alerts for anything on Amazon. It is a free service that creates email alerts to watch for quiet, often short-term price drops. The price history charts can also help gauge recent price changes up or down.

Starting early and letting the deals come to you is the most stress-free shopping experience I know. Good luck!

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

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- Remain home without stress on the family, should the need for long term care arise
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# Travel, activities sparkle in the fall

## Plane fares take a dive

By DIMITRA LAVRAKAS

Senior Voice Travel  
Correspondent

The tourists have departed and the land is changing colors, and it's the time when Alaskans can see the state unhindered by tour buses and being asked pesky questions like, "when do the Northern Lights come out?"

Best of all, the fish are running and the crowds are gone.

### Hook a fish

Best Fishing Specials Of 2023 on The Kenai River:

- Drifters Lodge, 18404 Sterling Hwy., Cooper Landing, AK 99572

20 percent to 30 percent off guided fishing and rafting trips on the Kenai River. Call and book at 907-595-5555 or go to [www.drifterslodge.com](http://www.drifterslodge.com) and search for tours savers. Valid to Oct. 8, 2023

- Military veterans get 10 percent off until Dec. 3 at Drill Team Six Fishing Excursions, LLC, in Wasilla. Call Sonia and Dan to book, 702-465-4747. Gift cards available. Veteran owned and operated.

### Flights drop from seasonal high

Fall is the time to take advantage of falling air fares, with Delta leading the way and Alaska Airlines following.

On Delta, you can go from Fairbanks to Seattle for \$220 nonstop and round trip; Anchorage to Salt Lake City for \$256 from Oct. 1 to April 30, with Alaska matching that price, but not the time period; Fairbanks to Detroit is \$129 one way through April 30, and Alaska also offers this; and, Delta pulls ahead in the fare wars with more flights out of Juneau (always weather and fog permitting) starting with \$180 round trip to Seattle with one flight daily beginning Oct. 1. Hint: if the flight is canceled and there's a plane heading to Seattle still at the gate, even though it may not be the same airline, do not run downstairs to rebook, but try and get on that flight.

### Ongoing love-hate with Alaska Airlines

Alaska Airlines has added yet another category in its seemingly endless quest to wring money from the traveling public and separate us in a class-distinct manner, and on top of that having us line up like cattle heading for the slaughterhouse.

The following restrictions are not for the faint of heart.

The new so-called "Saver" rate will only give you 30 percent of the miles you fly, plus it cuts back on in-flight amenities — no seat selection, no boarding or deplaning early, no extra legroom, no free beer, wine or cocktails, no complimentary food and drinks, no dedicated flight attendant, no access to the Alaska Lounge, and no two free checked bags, except if you're an Alaska Club 49 member.

And do join Club 49 for its specials, like \$157 one-way to Utqiagvik beginning Oct. 10, or Sitka to Juneau for \$97 one-way beginning Oct. 27. Go to <https://www.alaskaair.com/en/club-49-deals>.

Granted some of these things were only offered to Premium and First Class passengers, but still, Alaskans should feel dissed. After all, the airlines is named after where you live. Or maybe I'm still holding the grudge that the company didn't offer any cake to the state when it turned 50 and only served it in Seattle.

Additionally, and more insultingly, these restrictions also apply: Seats will be assigned at check-in; no guarantee that parties of two or more will be seated together; no refunds are allowed beyond the first 24 hours after ticketing; for flights booked on or after July 19, 2023, a credit for 50 percent of the ticket value can be issued for flights canceled at least 14 days to departure of the first flight on the ticket; no changes, including same-day confirmed changes, are allowed for Saver fares; no standby is allowed for Saver fares, even for elite status guests; if a guest is a no-



Above, in 2005 Alaska Airlines painted a 737-400 with a giant fish spanning the entire side of the airplane, then onto a 737-800, which was recently repainted, below, with a design by Tlingit artist Crystal Worl. The design is called Xáat Kwáani, which means "Salmon People" in the Alaskan Tlingit language.

Dimitra Lavrakas photo



Photo courtesy of Alaska Airlines

show for any flight during a trip, all other flights within that trip are automatically canceled, with no refund available; Saver fares cannot be combined with any other fare types on the same itinerary; and, Saver fares are non-transferable.

They allow you to bring one carry-on.

Please join me in traveling on the wing of the plane

from now on.

But then Alaska Airlines does something right: The beloved Salmon-30-Salmon plane has been repainted in an ancient way. Designed by Alaska Native artist Crystal Worl, whose work explores the relationships and bonds connecting her people, the land and the native animals of Alaska, this is the first livery in

a domestic airline fleet to have the name of the plane in an Alaska Native language. The aircraft is called Xáat Kwáani, which means "Salmon People" in the Alaskan Tlingit language and refers to the spiritual link between the people who interact with the beloved salmon and the role they play in our environment.

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## Retirement

continued from page 3

from UCLA School of Nursing and worked in New Mexico. I got a job working in the intensive care unit, and then eventually in an emergency room, [which is the type of setting] where I have often worked since then. In 1994 I graduated from the University of Washington Physician Assistant program, and I've been functioning as a PA ever since.

After I became a PA, I worked on the islands of Saipan and Guam, and the islands of Tinian and Rota. Then I worked in Afghanistan and Iraq for several years, and then went up to Alaska via several recruiters who asked me do various jobs. So I started bouncing around Alaska for several years working as a locum [temporary health care provider] in various villages and smaller towns.

Then I got a job working on the island of Shemya, which is out at the end of the Aleutian Islands, on a military base there. I did that for about four years. In the interim, I ended up working locum in, among other places, Skagway. I found that I really enjoyed Skagway. They called me back several times. I sort of retired from work as I was getting into my 70s, but they continued to call me back when they had staffing problems. I ended up finally going with a



**Bill Weiss on a day off from work, hiking near the Alaska-Yukon border.**

Courtesy Bill Weiss

contract for three months on and three months off. So basically, a very long commute traveling between the island of Saipan in the Western Pacific, and Skagway in Southeast Alaska.

**How long does that trip take?**

It takes anywhere between 30 and 40 hours, depending upon which way we're going, the layovers, the weather, etc.

**We're taping this interview in Anchorage on Aug. 16, 2023, during your brief stopover. Are you coming or going?**

I am on my way to Skagway where, because they have a staffing shortage, they've asked me to come back earlier than my contract would have been. Normally the contract is for three months on, three months off. This time I'm going to be coming back early and spend about four and a half months there.

**How old are you now?**

I am 74—a "young" 74.

**Did you think about retirement in the past, or**

**try retirement?**

I retired after I was working as a PA in Shemya. I decided to retire just because I was getting older. Work gets a little harder, and doing these 35-hour trips between Saipan and Alaska becomes more challenging. I was not working for probably eight or nine months. And then I got called to come back to Skagway to work, and they had asked me to stay for quite a while that time and then they called me back several more times and then offered me a contract.

**You were retired for**

**eight or nine months, and they called you back to work. You could have said, "No, I don't want to. I love being retired." But apparently that isn't what you said.**

Correct. Even though I live on a beautiful tropical island, I found that I was bored. There's not much of a social life there. As you get older, lying on the beach all day isn't as much fun as it is when you're younger. Even though it's a beautiful place, our house is lovely, we have an incredible view of the ocean, we are right next to the jungle—I was

bored. I wasn't using my brain and there was no job on Saipan that was of interest to me. I wasn't feeling that I was being fruitful or doing worthwhile things.

**I am afraid we have run out of time. Pleasant travel on the last leg of your journey to Skagway.**

Thanks.

*This interview has been edited for length and clarity.*

*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.*

## Supplements

continued from page 4

protein-digesting enzyme derived from pineapple), twice per day: first thing in the morning (half hour before breakfast) and last thing at night (at least two hours after dinner). Adding turmeric (1/4 – 1/2 tsp) improves the anti-inflammatory potential.

In short, just remember that if you need digestive help, take enzymes with food. If you need tissue repair or immune support, take enzymes several hours

away from food.

### Homeopathic remedies

The true study of homeopathy is a lifelong pursuit that requires a deep understanding of the "strange, rare and peculiar" aspects of each patient. However, the tiny white pellets that are available at health food stores can be extremely helpful for various common conditions. A few to try: Sarsaparilla for bladder infections; Ignatia for menses-related "blues"; Belladonna for flushing and right-sided headaches; Lycopodium for excessive gas; and Arnica for garden-va-

riety bumps and bruises.

Homeopathic medicines are fragile. Take them with water only. Afterward, wait at least 15 minutes before eating and drinking, or using perfumes, hair products, toothpaste, or herbs. Avoid mentholated substances (e.g., Tiger Balm, Vicks VapoRub) because the strong menthol can be highly disruptive, and will "antidote" a homeopathic remedy, causing symptoms to re-emerge.

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





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# Recycled

continued from page 13

This summer, the zipper did give me a little trouble some days, but it never completely quit working. Should I put them in the washing machine or just throw them away?

Soon my mind is contemplating the whole topic of clothing. Several articles about clothing repair, reuse and recycling have come to my attention lately. France is actually offering a government program that will pay a “repair bonus” to have items mended in a new scheme aimed at cutting waste. Other articles discuss how bad the “new” clothing industry is for the environment and suggest remedies for our throw away, disposable society. I mostly just skim these articles, though, because I’ve already held the mindset that is now being encouraged. My clothing shopping has been done almost exclusively at thrift stores for over 20 years and I’ve been mending anything that needed repair since I was a teenager.

I’ve always kept a set of clothing on hand for working on dirty or clothes-damaging jobs, which includes gardening, painting, berry picking, processing salmon and moose meat, tending burn pile fires, etc. They come out in April and usually by the end of September or early October, they get washed, mended if needed, and put away for the winter.

I rarely wash these items during the summer. If I’m



Maraley after one particularly muddy work session, August 2018.  
Courtesy Maraley McMichael

working on an especially dirty project one day, like kneeling in the mud using a pick mattock digging out wild rose or raspberry roots, and plan to continue the same work the next day, there’s no reason to start out the second (or third or fourth) day with clean clothes. At times, my jeans are quite stiff when I put them on, but the dried dirt often wears off during the next project.

Usually, the jeans have to be soaked in a bucket of water and the caked dirt scrubbed off the knees, before even considering putting them in the washing machine. Stains don’t bother me, but when holes appear in the knees, they get patched. And then

patched again. I’m on my knees a lot and I do have knee pads, but they don’t work in many situations.

This past August, I hired a teenage neighbor boy to help me with two projects. We worked together for more than an hour moving some compost materials. Since he wasn’t really wearing work clothes, I gave him the less dirty job of shoveling the sweet smelling, already composted material, while I wrestled the large plastic garbage bags of stinking, rotten year old lawn clippings, spilling some on my bare arms, my clothes and my footwear. Of course, in those situations, I not only wash my work clothes, but take a shower, too. And, when I go berry picking or process salmon or moose, I always start out with clean work clothes.

I have a whole wardrobe of work clothing. One each of heavyweight and lightweight long sleeved shirts, which are great protection

from scratches and bug bites, and several severely stained tank tops, a couple t-shirts in various stages of disrepair, and a pair of shorts. Lightweight and heavyweight jeans and a lightweight jacket and a heavy duty vest are all part of the mix. I did purchase some of these items new, but after several years of regular use, they end up as work clothing.

When I have to go into the house, I learned years ago that it is easier to change my work footgear and clothes for house footgear and clothes, than to clean up messes. No work clothes in the house is a strict rule.

Some days, this can mean up to four times of changing clothing in the garage (coming and going

makes eight) to accommodate fixing meals, taking my afternoon rest, or even having an impromptu Skype session with my granddaughter.

As I fold and put away the load of work clothes until next spring, I again think of Gary’s Sewing Works in Glennallen. I could mail my brown jeans to him and get the zipper replaced, but I have to draw the line somewhere and it really wouldn’t be worth the postage. Once the zipper fails, I plan to cut out the brass pocket rivets, snap “button” fastener, and zipper, and put the brown jeans in my next burn pile fire. They weren’t purchased new and I think they have been recycled, reused and repaired enough.



Newly patched work jeans, November 2020.

Some people might think too much. I know the French government wouldn’t pay a repair bonus for them.

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

## Crossword answers from page 16

A	L	E	E		A	W	E	D		L	U	N	G	S
T	I	C	K		T	H	A	I		A	F	O	O	T
T	E	L	E	P	H	O	T	O		C	O	R	G	I
A	G	A		A	L	L	U	R	E			T	O	R
R	E	T		B	E	E	P			S	O	P	H	
			C	A	T					S	Q	U	A	W
R	E	A	R		I	N	C	A		T	R	E	Y	S
A	G	E	E		C	O	P	S	E		T	S	A	R
H	O	R	D	E		M	A	S	S		E	T	T	A
		S	O	I	R	E	E			P	E	D		
			S	T	E	M		M	A	R	S		A	R
C	A	P			S	C	O	R	E	S		N	E	E
O	R	A	T	E		H	O	R	S	E	L	E	S	S
O	C	C	U	R		I	R	A	S		E	L	I	A
T	H	E	T	A		P	E	S	O		D	E	N	S

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Thea

continued from page 12

and students.

“When Grandma Thea came to Iditarod as part of RurAL CAP’s Elder Mentor Program, she quickly became an essential part of our team, and even quicker, she occupied space in our hearts. Grandma Thea goes above and beyond to serve the students at Iditarod Elementary each and every day. Whether it’s through helping them learn letters, playing a game, or just sitting with students during lunch, she is so caring, kind and thoughtful in her approach toward kids who truly need love the most. When you get the chance to actually sit down and chat with Grandma Thea, she’ll tell you of her recent skydiving adventures or the time she spent as a mermaid. She is an educator with vast experience and expansive heart that has just blessed our students, staff and community in so many meaningful ways. Grandma Thea is a true champion for children.”

And here is what the kindergarten students had to say:

- “Grandma Thea is nice.”
- “Grandma Thea is kind.”
- “Grandma Thea helped me learn the letters – X, Z, A and C ... and maybe kinda all of them.”
- “We get to eat lunch with her on Fridays.”
- “It’s nice that she talks to us at lunch.”
- “Grandma Thea is happy.”
- “Grandma Thea is respectful.”
- “Grandma Thea is Husky-Strong.”
- “Grandma Thea cares about us.”
- “Grandma Thea plays



A thank you poster made by Mrs. Young’s kindergarten class.  
Courtesy RurAL CAP

games with us like Spot-it and Kaboom.”

“She looks like my real grandma.”

“It’s nice to have Grandma Thea at my school since my grandma isn’t around anymore.”

“We LOVE Grandma Thea.”

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This article on the Senior Voice website at [www.seniorvoicealaska.com](http://www.seniorvoicealaska.com) also includes the recipe for Grandma Thea’s Spanish Bean Soup.

Knee

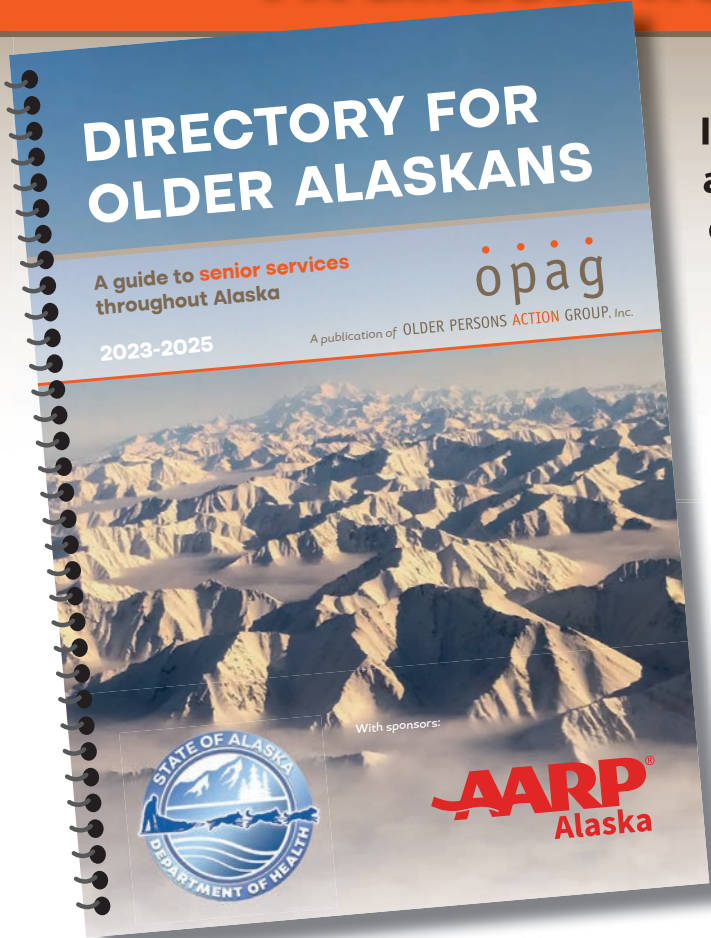
continued from page 8

the surgical team evaluate damaged bone and cartilage so they can plan for the surgery and the optimal placement for the implant. During the procedure, the physician wears a pair of augmented reality glasses to view the patient’s specific knee anatomy in 3D. Two small sensors are attached to the patient’s leg to provide real-time soft

tissue feedback, such as the tension of the ligaments. The AR-based platform enables the surgical team to easily adjust, better visualize and determine the proper placement of the implant given the patient’s specific anatomy, which is key to a successful knee replacement procedure.

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](mailto:medicalminutes@gmail.com).

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