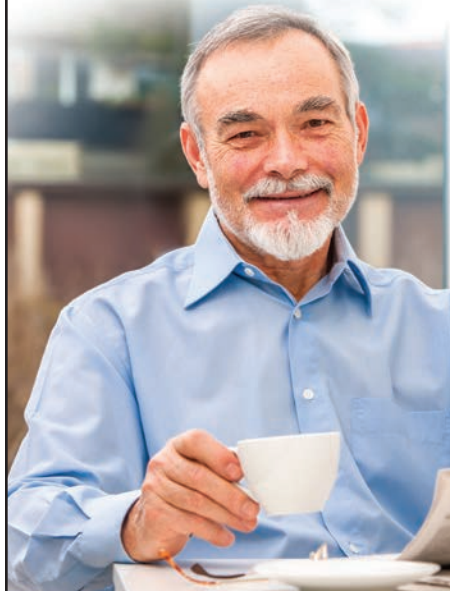
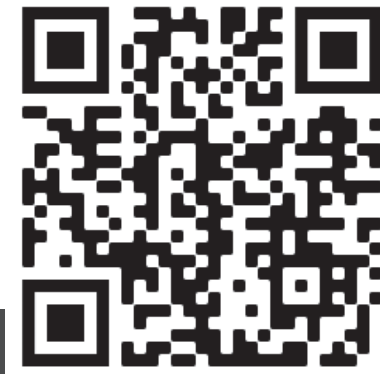


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Volume 49, Number 7 July 2026

Modern shoulder surgery is lifechanging. - page 5

Hiking Lazy Mountain was anything but. - page 14

Guardianship cases are to be avoided. - page 20

Angela Gonzalez is a beadworker and much more. - page 27

Donna Gail Shaw checks on one of her motion-activated cameras, which help her capture scenes of urban wildlife without human interaction. - page 25

Photo by Paola Banchemo





League of Women Voters protects basic rights

By **PATTY GINSBURG**

President, LWV of Anchorage

Friends ask why I spend so much time volunteering with the League of Women Voters (LWV). Consider the mission: Empowering Voters. Defending Democracy. At no time in my 76 years has this work been more important.

Voting is truly threatened. Our democracy is teetering, as a determined federal administration seizes power, ignores the rule of law, defies court rulings and dismantles institutions. They're not the first administration to attempt a power grab, and we're not the first generation of Americans called upon to say "no—not on our watch!"

The challenges feel overwhelming. But each of us can be part of the push-back, a brick in the wall protecting our democracy.

Like all 800 local and state chapters, and the national organization, LWV Anchorage is nonpartisan, nonprofit and grassroots. Nonpartisan means we do not endorse or oppose candidates or political parties. But we are definitely political. We work to protect and expand voting rights and ensure everyone is represented in our democracy. We defend democracy through advocacy, education and litigation.



The League of Women Voters Anchorage organized a Democracy Fair last January. This is the Municipality of Anchorage's Ombudsman table at the fair. Another one is planned for this fall. Photo courtesy LWV Anchorage

Established in 1920, the LWV US grew out of the suffrage movement. It has welcomed men as equal members since the 1970s. LWV Anchorage, formed in 1950, pre-dates statehood and was a formidable civic force in Anchorage through the 1970s.

Even without paid staff, there's still much we are doing to empower voters and defend democracy.

Host public forums and educational events

One of the newest and most exciting of our initiatives is the Democracy Fair, a one-day event that features speakers, films and nonpartisan booths, focusing on myriad topics related to democracy. The first Democracy Fair in January was a huge

success, judging from the feedback. We are in the planning stages of Democracy Fair 2.0 and working with Get Out the Native Vote and a national group, Veterans for All Voters. The event would be in the fall.

Register voters

LWV Anchorage has registered voters as a core element of its work. We also work with local elections officials to safeguard ballot boxes and deliver ballots to housebound voters. LWV Anchorage reaches out to people through tables at community events. These "tabling events" allow us to chat with other Alaskans in comfortable, no pressure environments. Our tables usually include a League volunteer trained to register voters.

Educate voters

Democracy demands that voters be informed; educated voters are empowered voters. LWV Anchorage educates voters in several ways. In cooperation with the Municipal Elections Office, we publish the Ballot Review, a guide to every municipal election. It includes information about candidates, ballot measures and propositions, how and where to vote and election resources. The Ballot Review is mailed to every household in the Municipality of Anchorage and is the only source of comprehensive information currently available to local voters.

We also educate voters through partnerships with other nonpartisan nonprofit organizations. These partnerships organize public forums on topical issues, produce public service announcements for traditional and social media, and cooperate on get out the vote (GOTV) campaigns.

Engage youth

Anchorage Youth Vote, a program of the Anchorage League since the

early 2000s, is a youth-run organization based in Anchorage. Its mission is to provide a non-partisan venue to engage youth in the democratic process and educate youth about the rights and responsibilities of living in a democracy.

Youth Vote projects and programs may include candidate forums, campaigns to educate young people on the democratic process, mock elections for high school and middle school students, engagement education and workshops.

LWV Anchorage offers a service to Anchorage high schools in which a League member visits government or civics classes – with the teacher's permission – to register students in person and provide nonpartisan information about voting, elections and the importance of voting in municipal elections.

We plan to work more closely with the Anchorage School District to expand the service to all high schools, as well as private and charter schools.

I recite our activities as examples of the small acts that—if multiplied many times over—can save our democracy.

Senior Voice Alaska will consider submissions to its Perspective pages. Submissions should relate to what we cover: people 50 years old and older and their needs and lives. To submit a piece for consideration, email editor@seniorvoicealaska.com. We require full names, addresses and a contact number and will consider letters from and about Alaska and Alaskans.



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Who are we? Senior Snapshot report has answers

By LAWRENCE D. WEISS

Senior Voice Correspondent

One day years ago a fine fellow I worked with at the time came up to me and, in the course of water-cooler conversation, mentioned he had been chatting with, well, we will call him Dr. "X." My colleague reported to me that after a few minutes of chit-chat with Dr. X, my name came up. Without seeming too insistent I encouraged him to tell me about the conversation. Yes, I was fishing for compliments but trying to be oh so nonchalant about it.

My coworker recounted that he told Dr. X that I had a good reputation at the university as an educator and writer, and was well liked and respected by students and faculty. Sometimes fishing for flattery works. I struggled not to show it, but I was all puffed up with pride.

However, shamelessly, I was not done fishing. "Very kind of you," I allowed, "but what did he have to say?" "Well, um, Dr. X said, 'Weiss may be popular with the students, but I think he is loud and obnoxious.'"

Kablooie! That was the sound of puffed-up pride exploding.

Apart from the foolishness of flattery and pride, what can be learned from this incident? Perhaps one lesson is that I have my image of who I am, but others may have a very different image of who I am, or collectively, who we are. And that is the perfect segway to "Senior Snapshot 2025."

"Every year, the Alaska Commission on Aging (ACoA) provides a snapshot of the health and well-being of Alaskans ages 60 and older (60+). The Senior Snapshot incorporates the latest data available." Collectively this is who we are at a point in time. Let's take a look at some of the most



The Senior Snapshot, produced by the Alaska Commission on Aging, gives us insight about Alaska's Elder population.
Image by Lawrence D. Weiss utilizing Google Gemini

interesting, even startling factoids about who we are.

Some of us are criminals. We made bad choices or were appointed an overworked public defender. Maybe both. We are incarcerated. "Between 2003 and 2023, the share of incarcerated individuals age 50 and older more than doubled, increasing from 10.8% to 21.4% of the total prison population." That's nearly 1,000 older Alaskans.

Some of us are homeless. In 2025, 2,707 seniors ages 55+ reported being homeless. 45% reported they were American Indian, Alaska Native, or Indigenous. About 15% (392) were veterans.

On the other hand, some of us are still employees. Since 1980 we have had a higher percentage of working seniors than the U.S. average. That's generations of hard workers in a challenging state. In the latest year for which there is information, 2023, 22% of Alaska seniors were still hard at work whereas the national average was only 19%. The difference was much greater in the past but seems to be narrowing over time. But not only are we working hard outside the home, we are working hard inside the home too.

"About 1 in 8 children

in Alaska are being raised in households headed by grandparents and other extended family. Nationally, American Indian and Alaska Native grandparents are the most likely to be responsible for their grandchildren, with 39.2% of coresident grandparents responsible for their grandchildren. About 90% of those kin families are totally separate from the state foster care system, meaning that they don't get stipends, social workers, Medicaid benefits, or other supports that come with state foster care."

Our work inside and outside the home takes a toll mentally and physically. Sometimes we have to kick back because we just can't manage the struggle any longer. But there are big challenges that shape who we are in those later years.

Nursing home care in Alaska averages \$365,000 per year compared to \$159,000 – \$175,000 nationally. Raise your hand if you can afford that. Not many hands to count. In fact, as cited in this study, AARP ranks nursing home costs in Alaska the worst in

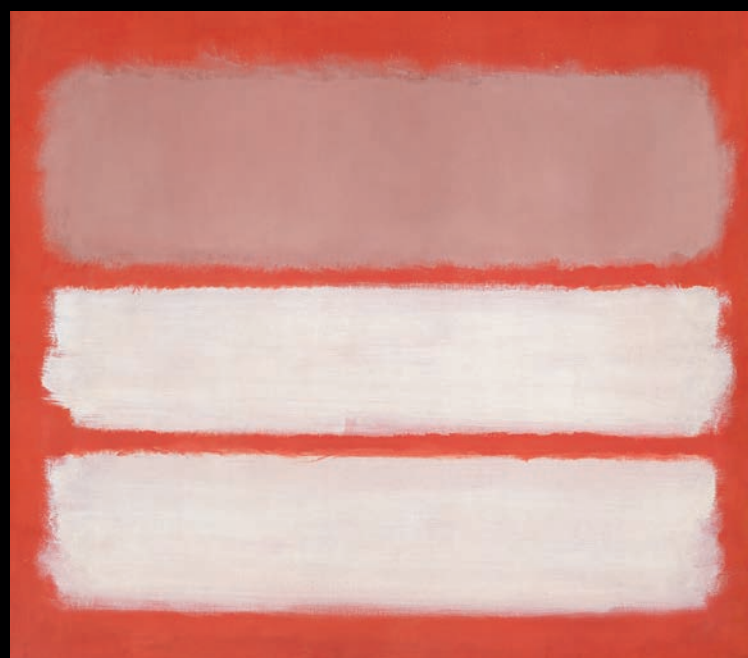
the nation.

Going with the flow here for a moment, AARP ranked Alaskan seniors 50th in the nation on the Transportation Livability Index due to widespread limited access to reliable and accessible transportation. That makes it harder for older adults and people with disabilities to reach health care, groceries, and community services. And in the Housing Livability Index AARP ranked Alaskans 39th, way below the national average in housing affordability and accessibility, limiting options for older adults to safely age in place.

So, who are we? We are tough and we have to stare down big challenges. But it could be a tad easier for us. Maybe today's challenge for us collectively is how to make our lives a little easier. Search on the internet for the Alaska "Senior Snapshot 2025" to learn more about who we are.

Lawrence D. Weiss is a UAA professor of public health, emeritus, creator of the UAA Master of Public Health program, and author of several books and numerous articles.

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Understanding fear as we age: A guide for older adults

By **KAREN CASANOVAS**

For Senior Voice



Q: As I age, I've noticed that certain situations make me feel unsettled, while feeling more sure of myself in others. What could be causing these feelings?

A: Fear responses naturally shift as we age. Many adults experience a mix of apprehension in certain situations, while feeling confident in others. These feelings can stem from a mix of physical, mental, and social changes. Let's explore these factors to better understand our fear responses and discover effective coping strategies.

Physical factors

Aging can bring physical changes that heighten sensitivity to fear. Issues like declining vision, reduced strength, and difficulty with balance can increase feelings of vulnerability, especially in unfamiliar environments. For in-

stance, fear of falling or health complications can significantly elevate anxiety. Acknowledging these changes is vital, as it allows you to take proactive steps to enhance safety and well-being.

One useful approach to confront fearfulness is the "fear hierarchy" technique. This method involves identifying your specific fears, ranking them by anxiety level, and gradually taking manageable steps to face each one, starting from the least intimidating. Reflecting on your progress helps build confidence and reduce apprehension in

fear-inducing situations.

Mental changes

While physical changes play a significant role, mental and neurological changes also impact our fear responses.

Fear is processed in the amygdala, the part of the brain that deals with emotions. As we age, research indicates that the amygdala becomes less active, leading to milder emotional responses. At the same time, the prefrontal cortex, responsible for decision-making, becomes more active, helping older adults manage emotions more beneficially. While this change allows for better stress management, lower levels of brain chemicals like serotonin can heighten perceptions of threat and increase feelings of fear. Learning about these complex changes in the brain helps people navigate emotional turbulence with greater agility.

Visualization is a pow-

erful technique to manage mental overload. By vividly imagining yourself successfully navigating a feared situation, you can activate relaxation responses in your body, fostering a sense of tranquility. Repeated visualization reinforces positive outcomes, making fears more manageable. Use this strategy during anxious moments to center your thoughts and calm your nerves.

Social dynamics

Social factors also play a key role in shaping fear responses. Life changes, such as losing loved ones or experiencing a shrinking social circle, can evoke feelings of isolation and increase fearfulness. Engaging in new social situations may feel daunting due to worries about judgment. However, many adults manage emotional regulation well, thanks to tenacity built from life experiences. By recognizing these shifts in social dynamics, you can

actively counteract feelings of pressure and worry.

Coping strategies

One effective mindfulness technique for combating fear is the 3-3-3 Rule, which centers you in the present moment through sensory engagement:

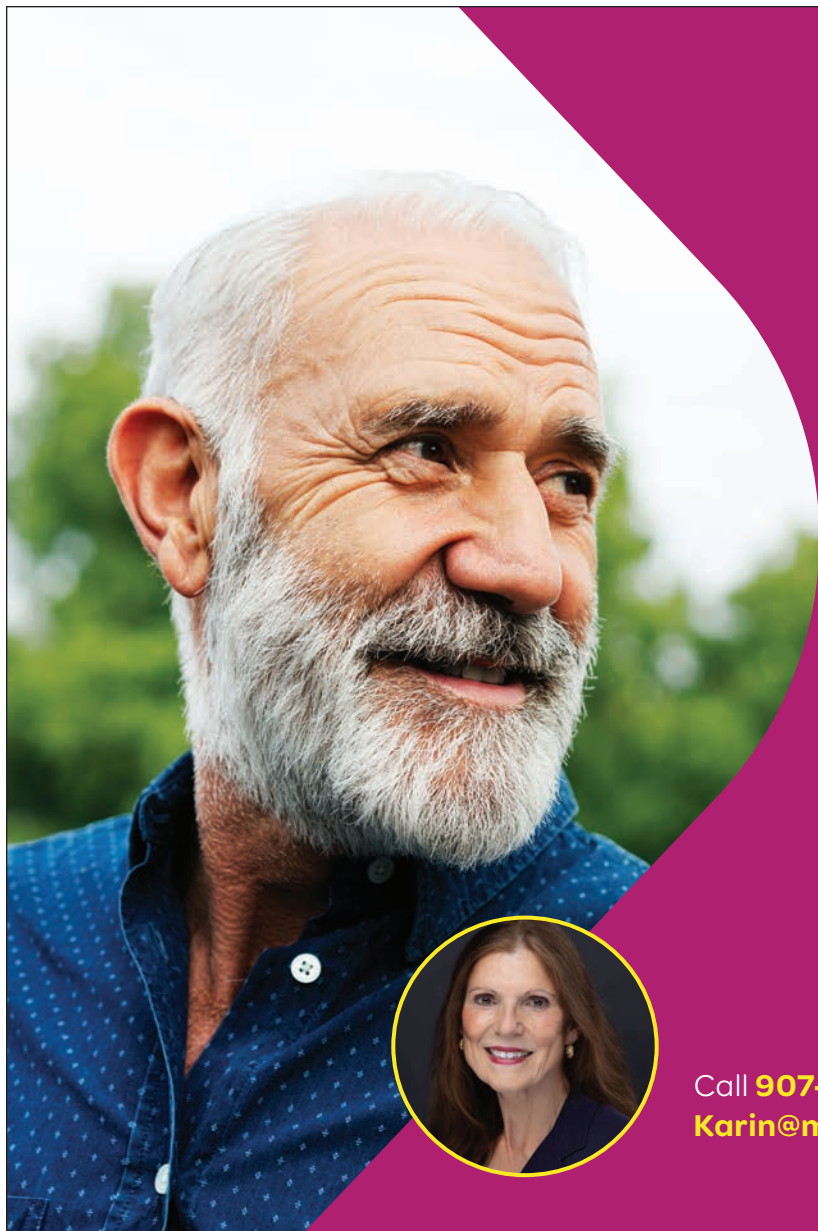
1. Identify three things you see: Look around and note three objects in your environment.
2. Name three things you hear: Listen for three distinct sounds to anchor yourself.
3. Move three parts of your body: Engage physical movement to release tension.

This grounding practice reduces stress, helping you tackle fears with clarity by focusing on the present rather than worrying about the past or future.

Evaluating fear and taking action

When fear arises, pausing

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Joint replacements contribute to healthy aging

By **DIMITRA LAVRAKAS**

Senior Voice Correspondent

Many Alaskan seniors age from physically demanding jobs that took them to remote parts of the state, from the fishing industry, to mining and oil production, as well as tourism activities like mountain guiding and heliskiing. But modern medicine

offers relief through joint replacement. While invasive and painful depending on your pain tolerance an operation will give you years of pain-free mobility. It's a life changer.

The damage to my left knee after being catapulted off a freight sled on the way out to a whaling camp at Point Barrow saw a joint replacement 30 years later.

I had a replacement after the pain interfered with walking and sleeping. And my left shoulder was replaced a couple of months ago. I feel so much better.

Worried about cost? I have a basic United Health Medicare Advantage insurance plan and the knee was \$59,000, but I paid only \$1,200. The shoulder was \$49,000 and I paid \$550.

Hospitals do offer payment plans making the cost reasonable over time.

I have a friend who needs a knee replacement but opted for the steroid shots.

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An X-ray of Dimitra Lavrakas' shoulder.

Courtesy Dimitra Lavrakas



Stories we share with each other keep us strong

By **LISA SAUDER**

For Senior Voice

Summer in Alaska has a way of bringing people together. Family members travel long distances to visit, grandchildren are out of school, and community gatherings fill calendars across the state. Whether it is a backyard barbecue in Fairbanks, time spent at fish camp, a fishing trip on the Kenai, or a family reunion in Anchorage, these moments create opportunities for something that often matters more than we realize: sharing our stories.

Stories are one of the most valuable gifts we can pass from one generation to the next. They preserve family history, strengthen relationships, and help younger generations understand where they come from. A favorite fishing memory, a lesson learned from a parent, a story about building a home, serving in the military, raising children, or ex-



periencing Alaska's many changes over the decades all become part of a family's legacy.

In Alaska, storytelling has long been an important way of preserving culture, history, and community. For Alaska Native peoples, stories have been passed down through generations to teach values, share knowledge, honor ancestors, and maintain connections to culture and place. At fish camps, around kitchen tables, and gathered with family, stories have helped pass along lessons about the land, the seasons, and the

importance of caring for one another. Across Alaska's diverse communities, storytelling continues to connect people to traditions, strengthen relationships, and remind us that every life contains wisdom worth sharing.

Beyond preserving history, storytelling can also support healthy aging. Recalling meaningful experiences engages the brain and encourages conversation and social connections. **Research continues to show that staying socially engaged and mentally active are important factors in supporting cognitive health as we age.**

Many people assume their stories are ordinary. Yet what feels routine to one person may be fascinating to someone hearing it for the first time. Grandchildren may never know what it was like to grow up without smartphones, travel across Alaska decades ago, or witness historic events through your

eyes unless those stories are shared. The details of daily life, family traditions, and personal experiences often become the stories future generations treasure most.

Summer offers the perfect opportunity to begin preserving those memories. Pull out old photographs and talk about the people and places they capture. Record family stories using a smartphone or audio recorder. Create a scrapbook or memory book. Write down favorite recipes along with the stories behind them. **Most importantly, make time for conversation.**

Sometimes all it takes is a simple question to unlock a lifetime of memories. What was your favorite summer in Alaska? What was your first job? What life lesson would you want future generations to remember? The answers may lead to stories that have never been told before.

At Alzheimer's Resource

Alaska, we know that every person's story matters. Whether someone is living with Alzheimer's disease or another dementia, serving as a care partner, or simply seeking information about brain health and aging, preserving connection remains deeply important. Through education, support groups, care coordination, and community programs, we help Alaskans navigate challenges while honoring the experiences and memories that make each person's story unique.

Find out more about Alzheimer's Resource Alaska at www.AlzAlaska.org or call us at 907-561-3313.

This summer, take time to share a story, ask a question, or listen closely to someone else's memories. You may discover that some of life's greatest treasures are not found in photographs or keepsakes, but in the stories we carry and pass on to those we love.

Lisa Sauder is the CEO, Alzheimer's Resource Alaska.

Medicare and Medicaid: Some seniors can qualify for both

By **SEAN McPHILAMY**

Alaska Medicare Information Office

Medicare and Medicaid are sometimes hard to understand, especially if you are eligible for both insurance programs. This month's article will discuss how the two programs work together and how to apply for both. Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) is the agency which provides regulatory oversight over both programs. Medicare is a federal health insurance program



for people age 65 or older. People younger than age 65 with certain disabilities, permanent kidney failure, or amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS, also

known as Lou Gehrig's disease), may also be eligible for Medicare. Medicaid in Alaska is a joint federal and state health insurance program known locally as DenaliCare; considered "the payer of last resort," Medicaid is the primary Alaska-managed system financing basic health and long-term care services for vulnerable Alaskans.

Medicaid works with Medicare

If you are eligible for both Medicare and Medicaid, you may enroll in

both. Some people may say you are "dually eligible." Here are a few examples of how Medicaid works with Medicare:

- ▶ Medicaid can provide secondary insurance. This means that Medicare would pay for your care first, and then Medicaid may cover any remaining costs like coinsurances and copays.
- ▶ Medicaid can pay your premiums through the Medicare Savings Program (MSP). In most cases, if you have both Medicare and Medicaid, the State of Alaska will pay your Medicare

monthly premiums.

▶ Dually eligible people are automatically enrolled in Extra Help, offering lower prices for prescription drug costs.

Applying for Medicaid

Alaskans can now apply for multiple public assistance services including Medicaid directly from their phone through a new mobile-friendly Application for Services that makes it easier to apply for benefits online. The application

page 8 please



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How AI is making hearing aids better than ever



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

Artificial intelligence (AI) is transforming hearing aids, making them smarter, more personalized, and more effective than ever before. AI-powered hearing aids do much more than simply amplify sound—they continuously adapt to your environment and listening needs, helping you hear more naturally and comfortably.

How AI hearing aids work

AI hearing aids use advanced machine-learning algorithms to analyze sounds in real time. These devices automatically adjust settings based on your surroundings.

By learning from your listening habits and preferences, AI-powered hearing aids become more personalized over time. The more you wear them, the better they can tailor sound processing to match your unique needs.

Benefits

Better hearing in noisy environments

AI hearing aids can distinguish speech from background noise, reducing unwanted sounds while enhancing conversations.

Recognition of familiar voices

Advanced AI systems can learn and recognize the vocal patterns of people you interact with frequently. This allows the hearing aids to prioritize and enhance those voices, helping conversations feel more natural and effortless.

Reduced listening fatigue

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The future of hearing technology

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Medicare

continued from page 7

allows new applicants to apply using a single streamlined form, replacing the previous online application; paper applications will continue to remain available for those who prefer that option. Available through the Alaska Connect Portal (<https://alaskaconnect.ilinx.com/engage/dpa>), questions are tailored to meet the applicant's needs, reducing unnecessary paperwork and simplifying the process. Applicants can also upload supporting documents directly through the application, including pay stubs, identification, birth certificates and utility expense documentation. After applying, users may also choose to receive confirmation by text message or email that includes the date and time their applica-

tion was received. Alaskans who do not have access to a mobile device or prefer in-person assistance can still apply by calling the Division of Public Assistance at (800) 478-7778 or visiting a local office.

Applying for Medicare

The gateway for all Medicare applications is through the Social Security Administration, which reviews enrollment eligibility. If you are already receiving Social Security retirement benefits, enrollment into Medicare is automatic once you turn age 65. If you begin receiving Social Security retirement benefits after age 65, then you need to apply by calling, going online, or visiting a local Social Security office; in Alaska, the three local offices are in Anchorage, Juneau and Fairbanks. If you are receiving Social Security disability benefits, then normally Medicare

begins after two years (or 24 months of disability benefits).

Both Medicare and Medicaid have significant and nuanced policies. For any Medicare (or Medicaid) 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 (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 Ambassador program.

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

Medicare counseling by phone

By **LEE CORAY-LUDDEN**

For Senior Voice

I am a Certified Medicare Counselor working

under SHIP. My office is in the Soldotna Senior Center, and I serve the state via phone. If you are local, I can help you as a

walk-in. I am here Mondays through Thursday, 8 am to 3:30 pm. Call with your Medicare questions, 907-262-2322.



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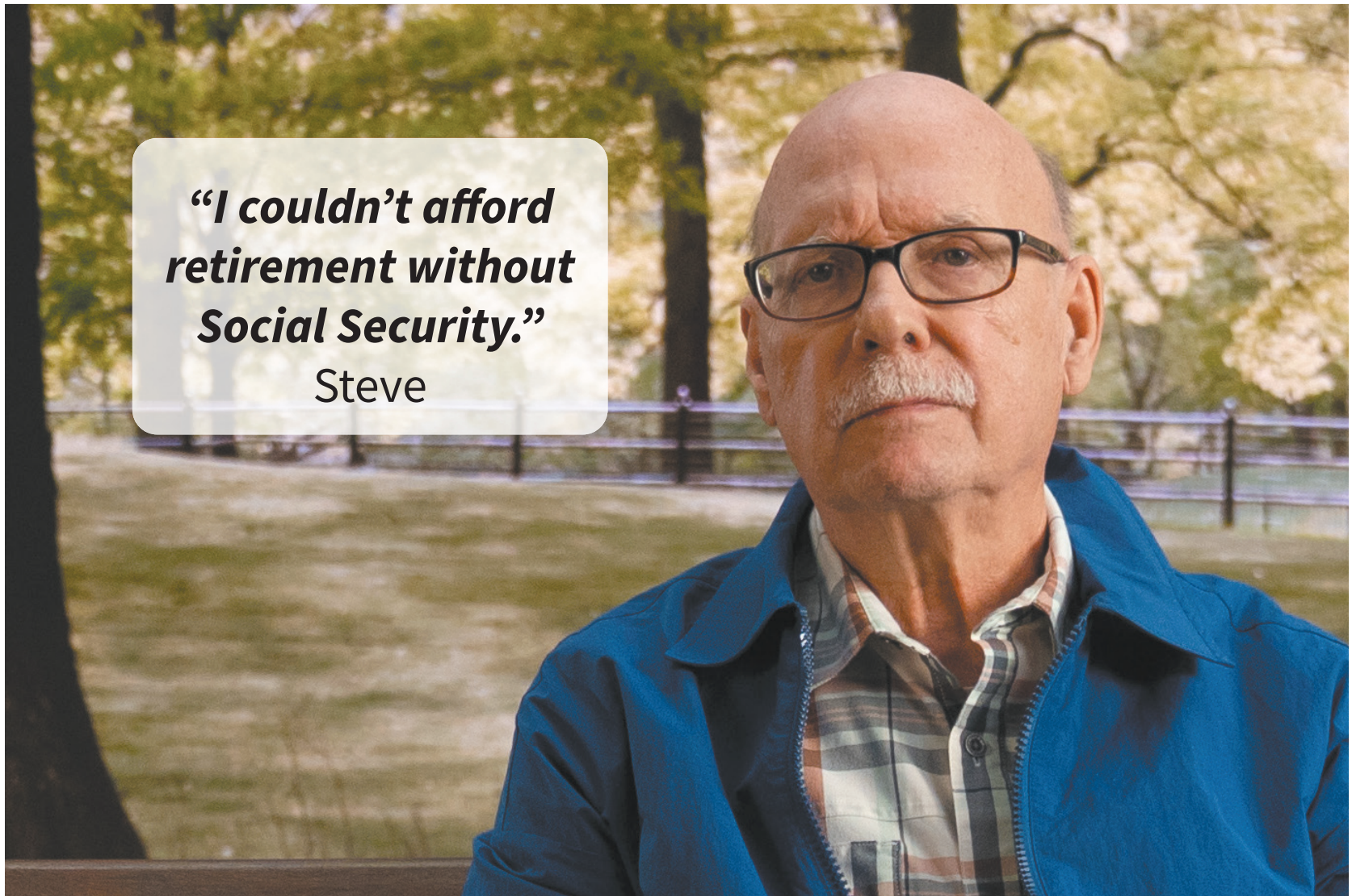


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Study finds prayer group helped patients reduce pain

By JOHN SCHIESZER

Medical Minutes



Sitting in a circle holding hands and praying may have some hidden health benefits, even for non-believers. A randomized controlled trial conducted at the University of Maryland School of Medicine has found that a five-minute session of proximal intercessory prayer (PIP) significantly reduced pain and anxiety in primary care patients compared to a music control group. The PIP approach involves an in-person prayer offered by a trained volunteer. The findings, published in *The Annals of Family Medicine*, suggest that proximal intercessory prayer may offer a practical, non-pharmacologic complement to conventional care, particularly for underserved populations.

Researchers enrolled 180 patients from a university family medicine practice who reported

clinically significant pain (having a score ≥ 4 on a 0–10 scale) or anxiety (as measured on the GAD-7 scale). After their medical appointments, participants were randomly assigned to receive either five minutes of Christian intercessory prayer from a trained volunteer, incorporating laying-on-of-hands, or five minutes of soft music as a control.

The researchers found that the prayer group participants reported significantly greater pain reductions immediately after the session and at the two-week follow-up compared

Prayer group participants showed significantly greater reductions in anxiety scores immediately after their treatment. This effect persisted at two and six weeks suggesting durable effects lasting at least a month and a half.

to the music group. Prayer group participants showed significantly greater reductions in anxiety scores immediately after their treatment. This effect persisted at two and six weeks suggesting durable effects lasting at least a month and a half.

No participants reported adverse events and 97% of prayer recipients were neutral, agreeable, or strongly agreeable to having PIP available as part of future medical visits. Prayer is the most common form of complementary medicine in the United States, used by 43% of Americans with 62% of this group identifying as Christian. Despite this widespread use, rigorous clinical trials of in-person intercessory

prayer have been scarce. This study is among the first well-powered randomized controlled trials of proximal intercessory prayer conducted in a standard primary care setting.

"Proximal intercessory prayer was safe, effective, and well-received as complementary treatment for pain and anxiety," said lead author Dr. Katherine Jacobson, an assistant professor of family and community medicine at the University of Maryland School of Medicine, Baltimore. "It may be a low-cost, non-pharmacologic, effective adjunct to standard care with particular relevance for underserved populations."

Co-author Joshua W. Brown, who is a professor of psychological and brain

sciences at Indiana University and director and co-founder of the Global Medical Research Institute, said the prayer intervention was effective regardless of the patient's faith or no faith. "Our findings add to research showing how prayer changes brain function in ways that promote health."

Women face challenges to getting quality sleep across key life stages

A new survey by the American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM) has found that more than a third of women ages 45–64 report frequent nighttime waking (37%) and night sweats or hot flashes that disrupt sleep (35%) due to menopause. Further, more than a quarter of women between 45 and 64 have increased daytime fatigue (29%) and trouble falling asleep (27%). Only 6% of

next page please

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



Sleep

from page 10

women in this age group say their sleep quality has not changed during menopause.

“Too many women accept poor sleep as an inevitable part of menstruation or menopause when effective treatments are available,” said Dr. Suzie Bertisch, chair of the AASM’s Women’s Sleep Health Task Force. “If hormonal changes are disrupting your sleep, talk to a healthcare professional. It’s an important first step toward getting the sleep you need and protecting your long-term health.”

The academy commissioned an online survey of 2,007 adults in the United States. Fieldwork took place between June 5-13, 2025, by Atomik Research, an independent market research agency. The AASM recommends that adults sleep seven hours or more a night on a regular basis to promote optimal health. However, studies show that



A recent survey found more than a third of women ages 45-64 report frequent nighttime waking (37%) and night sweats or hot flashes that disrupt sleep due to menopause.

Ron Lach via Pexels

about 30% of women fail to get sufficient sleep on a regular basis. Some sleep disorders, such as chronic insomnia and restless legs syndrome, are more common in women, and sleep problems can be related to both cyclic hormonal changes and significant shifts in hormone production that occur across the lifespan.

Through its women’s sleep health initiative, the AASM is working to advance education, research, and advocacy to ensure women’s unique sleep needs are addressed in clinical practice. For women looking to improve their sleep, AASM sleep experts recommend keeping a consistent sleep schedule. They recommend going to

bed when you feel sleepy at night and aim to wake up at the same time each day, including weekends.

Cooling your sleeping space may be beneficial. Keeping your bedroom comfortably cool and the use of moisture-wicking sheets may help alleviate discomfort from night sweats. Regular physical activity can improve sleep

quality and may help ease some hormonal symptoms that disrupt sleep, like mood changes and fatigue. However, it is recommended that individuals should avoid vigorous workouts right before bedtime.

Eating a balanced diet is helpful. Choosing balanced, regular meals throughout the day can help to support steady energy levels and consistent body rhythms. Sleep experts say it is important to limit caffeine and alcohol. Both can disrupt sleep cycles, especially when consumed later in the afternoon or evening.

It is recommended that individuals reduce screen time at night. The blue light from phones, tablets or TVs can interfere with the brain’s ability to prepare for sleep. It may be best if you turn off electronics 30 to 60 minutes before bed and give yourself time to wind down.

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



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Electrical safety at home: Avoiding shocks and fires

By CHRISTIAN M. HARTLEY

For Senior Voice



Smoke alarms save lives, but only if they work. Test your smoke alarms every month and change the batteries twice a year, such as when you change batteries in your smoke alarms. If your smoke alarm is more than ten years old, replace it.

Electricity keeps our homes warm and bright, but it can also cause shocks and fires if we are not careful. For this reason, it is important to check our homes for electrical hazards. A few simple habits can help you stay safe and avoid a trip to the emergency room.

Start by looking at the cords around your home. Frayed or cracked cords are dangerous. They can spark and start a fire before you even notice. If you see damage, stop using the item right away. Do not hide cords under rugs or behind furniture. Electricity produces heat, so cords tucked under and behind furniture can overheat. The risk of tripping over them is real, so keep cords out of walkways where you or a visitor could fall.

Space heaters are common in cool weather, but

they cause many house fires each year. Always keep space heaters at least three feet away from anything that can burn. This includes curtains, beds, and chairs. Turn off your space heater when you leave the room or go to sleep. Never plug a space heater into an extension cord. Extension cords cannot handle the high power that space heaters need. Plug space heaters directly into a wall outlet instead.

Window air conditioners and fans are more frequent during summer because they help us stay cool, but they can also

cause fires if used wrong. Always plug window units directly into a wall outlet, just like heaters. Turn off fans and air conditioners when you leave the room or go to sleep. Keep them at least three feet away from curtains, beds, and chairs.

Overloaded outlets are another risk. If you plug too many things into one outlet, the wires inside your walls can get too hot. This heat can start a fire inside the wall where you cannot see it. Use only one high-power appliance in each outlet at a time. This means your coffeemaker, toaster, and window air conditioner should each have their own outlet.

Summer rain and damp grass can create wet spots near outdoor outlets and

doorways. Wipe up spills quickly and make sure your hands are dry before you touch any electrical device.

Ground fault circuit interrupters, or GFCIs, are special outlets that shut off power fast if they sense a problem. They are required in bathrooms, kitchens, and outdoor areas. Test your GFCI outlets once a month by pressing the test button. If the outlet does not trip when you press the button, it may not protect you. Ask an electrician to check it.

Smoke alarms save lives, but only if they work. Test your smoke alarms every month and change the batteries twice a year, such as

when you change batteries in your smoke alarms. If your smoke alarm is more than ten years old, replace it. Working smoke alarms give you the early warning you need to get out safely.

If you need more help or want to learn more, the Alaska Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management offers free guides on home safety. You can visit their website at ready.alaska.gov or call your local fire department. Many fire departments in Alaska will visit your home for free to help you find hazards.

Electricity is a helpful friend, but it demands respect. By taking these small steps, you can enjoy a safe and comfortable home all summer long.

Christian M. Hartley is an Alaska resident with three decades of public safety and public service experience. He lives in Big Lake.

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Two road races bring people together to celebrate cancer survivors and raise funds for research

By PAOLA BANCHERO

Senior Voice

June is peak road race season, and two of the events raise money for cancer research and bring community together to fight their respective diseases.

The Alaska Run for Women, held on the first Saturday in June every year, had a big turnout thanks to good weather.

“This was our thirty-fourth annual run,” said Alaska Run for Women board member Nance Larsen, a public relations professional. “It definitely exceeded expectations.”

The 2026 run had 5,175 registered entrants; 1,100 participated virtually. There were also 432 breast cancer survivors who ran or walked the course.

“This event is so representative of the community,” Larsen said. “We literally could not do this without the participants and donors. Almost everyone knows someone who is impacted by this disease. It could be a mom, an aunt, a coworker, a sister.”

Breast cancer strikes an estimated one out of



Bonnie Lind (left), Paola Banchero, Pam Barbeau and Anne Fielder participated in the Alaska Run for Women in June.

Photo by Claudia Rector

eight women in the United States. Over the history of the event, the nonprof-

it behind it has received \$6.5 million in donations that goes to breast cancer

research, education and awareness.

Larsen said it is also an

event that has something for everyone. While elite women runners enter the timed 5-mile race, about half the participants are walkers or choose to do the 1-mile event.

The Alaska Men’s Run is also a race with a long history. It raises money for prostate and testicular cancer. It happens on the second Saturday in June. It also gives out grants to individuals and agencies fighting cancers that affect men. The awards focus on educational activities, health awareness, and early detection.

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Alaska International Senior Games are next month



By PAOLA BANCHERO

For Senior Voice

Sharon Baker was just about to go on a bike ride when she paused to talk to the Senior Voice.

The Fairbanks resident is active year-round. In the winter she skis, preparing for the Sonot Kkaazoot, a 50-kilometer ski race in late March. Then in April she straps on running shoes and begins training for the annual Equinox Marathon in September.

"I love to be outside," Sharon said.

Part of her athleticism is participating in the Alaska International Senior Games, both as an athlete and as an official. The games are August 7-16. This is the official state qualifier of the National Senior Games, which is an organization of athletes aged 50 and older.

The National Senior Games are held in odd years, and you qualify in even years for those events. The next National Senior Games are in Tulsa, Oklahoma, June 30-July 11, 2027. <https://nsga.com/>

"I'm almost always competing," Sharon said. "It's nice to challenge yourself, push yourself. Unless you get in competition, you

Sharon Baker running in the Alaska International Winter Games. She runs and bikes during the games, which are held in August. She is also a commissioner for several events.

Photo courtesy Alaska International Winter Games.

don't know how fast you can go. I won't go as fast unless I'm pushed a little bit. Always fun to see where you're at. Sometimes I can do better and maybe a lot better than I thought."

Sharon's mom is also a competitor in the Alaska International Senior Games. She plays bocce, an Italian lawn game similar to bowling.

Consider participating or watching the events. You can learn about the games, and how to register, at this link: <https://www.alaskaisg.org/games/> It also has a schedule of events.

You can plan your visit to Fairbanks by going to this site: <https://www.alaskaisg.org/lodging/> Of course, it's the height of summer, so be prepared for Fairbanks to be chock-a-block with visitors.

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Now that I have a will, do I also need a trust?

By **JIM MILLER**

Savvy Senior

Dear Savvy Senior.

My wife and I were recently talking about updating our will and wondered if we should also set up a trust. How do we know if we need one?

– *Planning Ahead*

Dear Planning,

That's an excellent question. A will is one of the most important tools in estate planning, but many people wonder if it's enough, or if adding a trust makes sense. The answer

Taking the time to put a plan in place, whether it's a will, a trust, or both, can protect your loved ones, ease stress, and give you peace of mind now and in the future.

depends on your finances, your family situation, and what you want your plan to accomplish. Here's a simple way to think about it.

What a will does

A will spells out who gets your assets after you pass away. It also names an executor to carry out your wishes and can designate a guardian for minor children.

The downside is that a will must go through probate, which is the court process that validates it and oversees distribution. Probate can take months and, in many states, becomes part of the public record.

What a trust adds

A trust works a little differently. A revocable living trust holds your assets

during your lifetime and directs how they'll be distributed after your death, without going through probate. Unlike a will, it stays private and lets a successor trustee step in immediately if you can't manage your finances, which is useful in cases of illness, injury, or dementia.

Trusts can also help with complicated family situations, like blended families or children with special needs, giving you more control over who gets what and when.

The biggest challenge is that you have to move your accounts and property into the trust yourself, which takes time and care. Most people who create a trust also keep a simple "pour-over will" to catch anything that wasn't transferred.

Because trusts are more complex, they usually cost more than a will. Attorneys typically charge \$1,000 to \$3,000 for a trust versus \$300 to \$1,200 for a will, although costs vary depending on the estate and location. You can use do-it-yourself options like Quicken WillMaker & Trust, Trust & Will or LegalZoom to save money, but they're generally best for simple situations. If your finances or family circumstances are more complicated, hiring an attorney is usually worth the cost.

When a trust makes sense

You might benefit from a trust if you own real estate—especially in more than one state—want to avoid the costs and delays of probate or prefer to keep your estate matters private. It's also helpful if you have

a larger estate, a blended family, or want to ensure someone can manage your finances if you become incapacitated.

When a will may be enough

If your estate is relatively small, your family situation is simple, and most of your assets already have named beneficiaries—like life insurance, IRAs, or bank accounts with pay-on-death or transfer-on-death designations – a will may be all you need. Some states also offer simplified probate for small estates, which can make the process quicker and cheaper.

You don't need a trust just because you have a will. But if avoiding probate, protecting privacy, or managing assets during incapacity is important to you, a trust is worth considering. Even a modest estate can benefit from a clear plan.

Getting help

If you don't already have an attorney, a good estate-planning professional can help figure out what's right for you. Two trusted resources are the National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys (naela.org) and the National Association of Estate Planners and Councils (naepc.org), both of which let you search for local professionals.

Taking the time to put a plan in place, whether it's a will, a trust, or both, can protect your loved ones, ease stress, and give you peace of mind now and in the future.

Send your questions or comments to questions@savvysenior.org, or to Savvy Senior, P.O. Box 5443, Norman, OK 73070.





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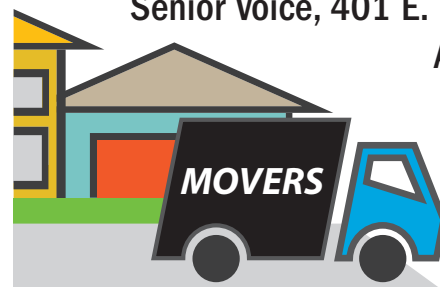
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Climbing Lazy Mountain with a daughter's boost

By **MARALEY McMICHAEL**
Senior Voice Correspondent

After shopping at either Palmer Fred Meyer or Carrs/Safeway, while still in the parking lot, I sometimes look to the east and check out the weather conditions at the top of Lazy Mountain. It gives me a thrill to recall sitting at the top, thanks to my daughter Erin's help. It was a dream that I'd given up on, so the accomplishment was extra special. I'd told her that because of approaching the big 70, I was evaluating my life and thinking about dreams I would have to let go and consider priorities for my remaining years...however many that might be.

Erin lives in Colorado and was planning a trip to Palmer July 2025. One day she called to talk about details regarding her visit. She



Maraley McMichael near the top of Lazy Mountain.

Photos by Erin McMichael

was to be in Alaska, we chose the day with the best weather—temperature in the 60s and cloudy, but no rain. We got to the trailhead about 9 am. After discussion, I said it would be better for me to go up the switchback trail, rather than the shorter steeper trail. We each wore several layers and it wasn't long before I had removed everything except my tank top. I'd bought a set of carbon fiber trekking poles in anticipation of the hike and used one as we climbed. We stopped periodically to take photos of the view and the lovely variety of blue wildflowers, talk about the smell of the vegetation, and drink water.

Erin told me there would be a picnic table after we got off the switchback trail, where we could rest and eat. When we got to the picnic table I was disappointed to find it full of people, but when I asked for a few inches of room someone graciously scooted over. While resting in silence, I learned the table was full of three sets of people that didn't know each other—two from out of state, one being New Hampshire.

Having had no time to "train" for this hike, I really had no idea if I was capable of making it to the top. It wasn't until we stopped at the second picnic table about 2 p.m. (from which we could actually see the top) that I felt we might be successful. We had been going slow and steady, and at that time, I still felt pretty good. Tired, but not exhausted, and nothing hurt. Knowing that I would never

said her daughter, Amelia, would not accompany her on this trip, and then surprised me by asking me if I was interested in trying to climb Lazy Mountain. The previous summer, the three of us hiked a mountain trail out of Whittier, with Ame-

lia sprinting far ahead, me slowly bringing up the rear, and Erin having a hard time keeping track of either of us in bear country. After only a few seconds of consideration, I wholeheartedly said yes. Then I started asking questions... She said we could hike whatever pace was best for me and that we could quit and turn around at any point.

Since I'd climbed Mount

Marathon, I asked how she thought Lazy Mountain compared to Mount Marathon. She had climbed Lazy Mountain with her family during our summer filled with wildfire smoke and thought it might be a little harder, or at least a longer distance. Although I was born in Seward, I did not climb Mount Marathon until July 1990. That enjoyable day included my family of four, my brother, my dad, and long-time family friends, Charles and Jimmie King. Once my family moved to Palmer in 1984, I often thought about climbing Lazy Mountain. But I gave up that dream after major health issues in the fall of 1990 and then again in the fall of 2008. Erin offered me an opportunity I couldn't resist!

Of the seven days she



Erin and Maraley McMichael still in thick vegetation while hiking Lazy Mountain July 2025.

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Maraley McMichael going for the top of Lazy Mountain July 2025.

page 16 please





Juneau Senior Recognition Day

AARP Alaska

On May 20 AARP Alaska celebrated Older Americans Month and Senior Recognition Day with an afternoon gathering at the Douglas Library. Linda Kruger, local AARP volunteer lead, provided information about AARP and AARP's 55 years in Juneau. Juneau Commission on Aging Chair Deborah Craig read an Older Americans Month proclamation signed by Mayor Beth Weldon.

The AARP Alaska Andrus Award for Community Service, AARP's most prestigious volunteer honor, was presented to Bruce Botelho for his dedication to volunteer service, community impact, inspiring others to take action and sharing his experience, talent, and skills to make a difference in the lives of those who live in Juneau and beyond.

Each year AARP Alaska presents the Andrus Award to someone who shares the spirit of service championed by AARP founder Dr. Ethel Percy Andrus. Former Alaska Rep. Beth Kerttula presented the award. In accepting the award Bruce shared a saying that is important to him "Three things are necessary for the happiness of life: something meaningful to do, someone to wait for, and something to hope for." He added that "making a difference is an important driver for life."

Longtime AARP Juneau volunteers Sue Nielsen (18 years) and Barb Potter (16 years) were recognized for their many years of service to AARP in Juneau. Bartlett Regional Hospital family



Each year AARP Alaska presents the Andrus Award to someone who shares the spirit of service championed by AARP founder Dr. Ethel Percy Andrus. Former Alaska Rep. Beth Kerttula presented the award to Bruce Botelho, who has served in a variety of positions in Juneau, including as mayor.



Longtime AARP Juneau volunteers Sue Nielsen (left), Linda Kruger and Barb Potter were recognized for their years of service. Photos by Jeff Gnass, published with permission

and patient administration operations manager Jane Johnson was honored for her many years of service by helping seniors and others navigate the complexities of healthcare finance.

We hope these awards

have set the groundwork for an annual event to honor the older members of our community who contribute so much to making Juneau the friendly, welcoming, livable age-friendly place it is.

Rambles

News from the Grapevine

It wouldn't be July in Alaska unless people were readying to run up **Mount Marathon** in blazing fashion and then come cascading down. The July 4 event is a must-watch at least once, even if your knees beg you not to attempt it. <https://mountmarathon.com/> It's of course too late to register anyway, but it's definitely possible to watch legends—**David Norris** and **Allie Ostrander** are registered—from the comfort of your lawn chair. Plan ahead and get to Seward the day before....You can also catch a parade in any number of larger and smaller communities across the state....**Anchorage** has a **parade** along the **Delaney Park Strip** followed by a **reading of the Declaration of Independence**.... **Seldovia's** Fourth of July celebration starts with a **pancake breakfast**, features a **parade** and ends with **live music**....**Bethel** also has a **parade**, followed by activities in Pinky's Park such as family-friendly games, food vendors and music....Later in the month, head to **Fairbanks** for its **summer arts festival, July 19–Aug. 2**. The festival offers performances, hundreds of workshops that span genres from visual to performing arts and beyond. <https://www.fsaf.org/> The event is supported in part by a grant from the **Alaska State Council on the Arts** and the **NEA America 250** program.... **Low-income seniors** should avail themselves of the **farmers market program**. With it, seniors receive \$55 to buy locally grown fruits, vegetables, herbs and honey at many farmers markets in the state. Alaska residents are eligible if they have an income less than 185% of the federal poverty level or are receiving commodity supplemental food program benefits. Contact <https://health.alaska.gov/en/services/senior-farmers-market> to see if you are eligible or use the Healthy Together App: www.healthytogether.co/support/download-healthy-together.... **Valdez** has an unusual festival **July 25** at the Kelsey Dock. It will become the site of a gathering of local **yoga teachers** and hosted by Sauna Valdez. It's also the opening day of the **Valdez Silver Salmon Derby**.

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

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Rightsizing instead of downsizing



By **ALLANA LUMBARD**

Downsizing Alaska

When it comes to transitioning to a new home, downsizing isn't always about moving to the smallest space possible—it's about finding the right space for your lifestyle and needs. Rightsizing focuses on creating a living environment that supports your priorities, whether that means simplifying your home, moving closer to loved ones, or designing for future accessibility.

Start by considering what truly matters. Do you need room to host family gatherings or space for hobbies? Is being near family, friends or medical care a priority? A right-sized home should align with how you live now and how you envision the future.

Design is equally important. Many seniors benefit from single-level

living, wider doorways and accessible bathrooms. These features can make daily tasks easier and provide peace of mind for years to come.

Rightsizing can also mean evaluating location. Moving closer to family or into a community with social and recreational opportunities can enhance your quality of life. A well-chosen neighborhood can be just as valuable as the home itself.

Finally, take inventory of your belongings and decide what fits your new vision. Letting go of what you no longer need allows you to focus on what brings you joy and functionality.

Rightsizing isn't about compromise—it's about living intentionally. By choosing a home that fits your goals and values, you're setting the stage for a simpler, more fulfilling life.

Interested in more learning opportunities? We host regular educational opportunities with both in-person and Zoom options. Call/email for info. Please inquire at downsizingalaska@gmail.com or see <https://downsizingalaska.com/>

Allana Lumbarde is a downsizing expert and real estate agent affiliated with Real Broker Wasilla.



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Climbing

continued from page 14

get this way again, that no parts of my body hurt, and figuring that going down would be faster than going up....I told her I wanted to continue. We reached the top about 2:30 p.m. and I immediately sat down among the rocks. The steep dropoffs on either side of the ridge unnerved me. I remember Mount Marathon being flat enough on top to walk around.

We only stayed on top about 20 minutes. We took photos, had something to eat and drink, and tried to call our friends the Kings, but had no cell signal. We were just below the cloud layer. As soon as we started down, I knew I needed the second trek pole for balance. Even then, in the steepest spots, I relied on Erin, following her footsteps, guiding me off trail a little where the tundra had much better traction. For safety, I found myself coming down sideways... even during parts of the switchback trail.

The more time elapsed, the slower I got, since each footstep now brought a certain amount of pain. Erin was in front (supposedly to stop me from going too far if I slid) and continued to encourage me. She reminded me of her promise that we were going for ice cream to celebrate this accomplishment. The sun came out. I was so hot and had no more layers to remove. In fact, I was getting quite miserable and with a glimpse of the lovely view, I could see we still had a long way to go. She started telling me random things about her life...just to dis-



76-year-old Al Clayton and 11-year-old granddaughter Erin McMichael at the top of Mount Marathon July 1990.

Courtesy Maralee McMichael

tract me from the pain.

Each downward step (after I placed the tips of the trekking poles in a secure position) I placed my weight on the poles and could no longer squelch my groans of pain in my thighs, my knees, and my calves. The last 2.5 hours were a test of endurance, and I found myself muttering the words "what a foolish decision" more than once. I was so relieved to get off the mountain about 7:30 pm. It may look like a lazy mountain, but it certainly wasn't an easy climb, at least not for me.

The ice cream at Big Dipper was absolutely delicious, but the walk from the car into and out from the store was not fun. Once home, I took a shower and went to bed with bags of frozen peas on my knees. In fact, I could hardly walk for the next two days. Two more days, and only my calves ached. The day after that, I finally felt normal again and was thankful that apparently, I would not have any permanent ramifications from overdoing. Erin told me that it would be

like childbirth. After time, I would not remember all the pain, just that we made it to the top. A week later, I was glad we did it, but also knew I would never attempt it again. In fact, if I knew coming down would be so hard, I probably wouldn't have pushed to go to the top.

Back in 1990 when Dad climbed Mount Marathon with us, using a walking stick he made himself, I took for granted his physical fitness. At age 76, there was no mention of pain and he didn't hike at a slower pace than the rest of us. But then, Dad was a big game guide for Dall sheep in the Wrangell Mountains into his 70s. I know better than to compare myself to him.

I have since talked to a few other women my age who have a long history of climbing Lazy Mountain. As I gaze up at the summit from grocery store parking lots, I'm so thankful that my daughter had the patience to help me accomplish a bucket list wish.

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



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Hospice walk is Aug. 1

By PAOLA BANCHERO

Senior Voice

Hospice of Anchorage is organizing its first “Embrace the Journey” walk. The event is Aug. 1 at Margaret Eagan Sullivan Park, 1824 W. 15th Ave. in Anchorage.

The event follows a 1-mile route, making it accessible to strollers, wheelchairs and participants of all ages. You can also choose your start time: 10 a.m., 10:30 or 11 a.m.

The 1-mile walk will feature several family-friendly aspects to uplift and foster connection. One is a bubble lane, another is an affirmation card pull, where you choose a message you need for your journey. In one segment, you are encouraged to do your silliest walk.

“It’s a fundraiser to support our mission at Hospice

of Anchorage,” said Angie Frank, the administrative and communicators coordinator for the nonprofit. “A lot of the community doesn’t necessarily know about us. We want to offer a broad community event that is accessible and family-friendly. It’s celebrating life in every season that we have it.”

Hospice of Anchorage supports individuals and families in all stages of dying and bereavement. It offers a range of programs, from group grief sessions to medical equipment and supplies, that are for individuals who have a terminal illness, their families, or for people grieving the loss of a loved one.

Registration for the “Embrace the Journey” event costs \$20 for adults, \$5 for children and those under 5 have free entry.

Register here: <https://bit.ly/3RYpfGL>

Burial site takes step closer

Senior Voice staff

The Anchorage Assembly voted on June 9 to approve AO 2026-72, which authorizes the transfer of land from Heritage Land Bank’s inventory to Alaska Natural Burial. <https://www.muni.org/Departments/Assembly/Documents/AO%202026-72.pdf>

The 9.6-acre tract of land, which is legally described as Tract B-2 Legacy Pointe Subdivision (Plat 14, 2013-18), can be used for the purposes of creating a natural burial cemetery. The area is wooded city land near Golden View Drive.

Alaska Natural Burial is a nonprofit organization that would like to provide what it describes as a low-cost option compared to a casket cemetery.

The idea would be to make the plot, which could hold up to 2,000 graves, look more like a park with natural landscaping.

The Alaska Natural Burial website describes the project as follows: “Natural burial (also known as green burial) describes a way of carrying out cemetery activities without harming the local ecosystem. Broadly, this means that only bodies

and other readily biodegradable objects are placed in the ground.”

Increasingly, people are looking for options for their remains, from cremation to natural burial, according to a University of Southern California professor. <https://today.usc.edu/what-we-think-about-death-and-funerals-is-changing/> Natural burial can include composting or using biodegradable materials, such as bamboo. There is also an option in some states for aquamation, an alternative to traditional flame cremation that uses a water and potassium hydroxide solution to gently break down tissue.

No natural burial cemetery exists in Anchorage at present.

The municipality’s main burial spot, the Anchorage Memorial Park Cemetery at 535 East Ninth Ave., is 22 acres. It has public and private areas of burial and a columbarium wall, which can accommodate more than 9,000 urns of cremated remains. It is also the final resting spot of many Anchorage historical figures.

<https://www.muni.org/Departments/parks/cemetery/Pages/default.aspx>

Calendar of Events

July 1 National Postage Stamp Day

July 2 National Wildland Firefighter Day

July 4 National Independence Day. The Declaration of Independence, a document of foundational promise, was adopted unanimously On July 4, 1776, by the Second Continental Congress at the Pennsylvania State House. We know it now as Independence Hall.

July 6 National Fried Chicken Day. If you’re vegetarian, wait until July 10 for National French Fry Day or National Pecan Pie Day on July 12. And maybe the best of them, National Ice Cream Day, is July 19.

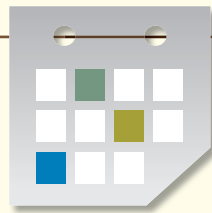
July 14 France Just like the United States has its Independence Day, France has Bastille Day. Many francophiles or French-speaking peoples around the world mark the day in 1789 when French citizens stormed the Bastille, a medieval fortress and prison in Paris, signaling the start of the French Revolution.

July 20 National Moon Day. On this day in 1969, the first humans—Neil Armstrong and Edwin “Buzz” Aldrin—walked on the Moon.

July 23 National Gorgeous Grandma Day. It’s a day to celebrate the woman who embrace their age as a grandma, whether they are grandmothers or not.

July 24 National Cousins Day. Let’s face it. Cousins were often more tolerable than our own siblings during childhood. Reach out and call a cousin and let them know you are thinking about them.

July 28 National Buffalo Soldiers Day. This day commemorates the formation of the first regular Army regiments comprising African American soldiers in 1866.



Send us your calendar items

Send to: Senior Voice

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calendar@seniorvoicealaska.com or

editor@seniorvoicealaska.com

Deadline for August edition is July 15.

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Clarence Berry struck gold on the Klondike

By LAUREL DOWNING BILL

Senior Voice Correspondent

A few years before he became “the luckiest man on the Klondike,” Clarence Berry was almost broke. He was a fruit farmer in California’s Fresno Valley in the early 1890s, scraping by and struggling with the fallout from the Panic of 1893. He didn’t have enough money to pay his room rent, let alone marry his sweetheart, Ethel Bush. When he heard wild stories of gold being discovered in the far North, he figured he had nothing to lose.

Borrowing what little money he could, Clarence set off for Alaska in 1894. He joined a group of 40 men to trek across the tough Chilkoot Pass, but thanks to his strength and stubbornness, he was one of just three who made it to the Fortymile mining camp. But he didn’t strike it rich right away. Instead, he worked odd jobs, including tending bar to pay for food and supplies.

But Clarence didn’t give up. He earned enough to travel home to California to marry Ethel and bring her back north with him.

For their “honeymoon,” Ethel braved a three-month, 900-mile journey by sled dog from Juneau to Fortymile, with a trousseau made for Alaska winters: heavy wool, furs, and flannel. In an interview reported by John W. Leonard in *Gold Fields of the Klondike*, Ethel said:

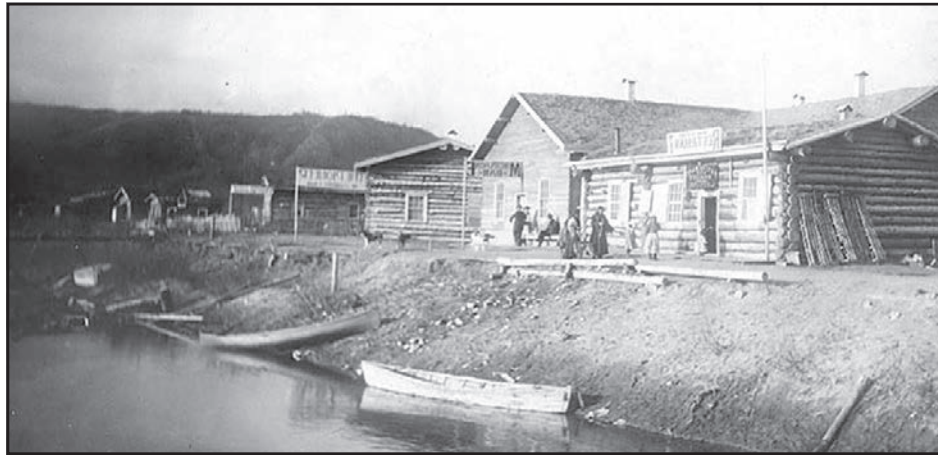
“What advice would I give to a woman about going to Alaska? Why, to stay away, of course. It’s no place for a woman. I mean for a woman alone...it’s much better for a man, though, if he has a wife along....”

In 1896, luck finally smiled on the Berrys. While bartending for Bill McPhee, news of George Washington Carmack’s big gold strike on Bonanza Creek changed their fortunes. McPhee grubstaked Clarence, who then staked a claim on Bonanza Creek and later traded his Bonanza claim for a key spot on Eldorado Creek with a fellow prospector.

For months, he and his partner toiled through frozen ground, but when they finally hit bedrock, they found the richest pay dirt anyone had ever seen. Suddenly, Berry was pulling in more gold than he ever dreamed—around \$1 million in less than a year (more than \$38 million in 2026 dollars).

The couple went “Outside” in 1897, boarding the *Excelsior* loaded down with suitcases and wooden boxes stuffed with gold. Crowds in San Francisco and Seattle swarmed the docks, desperate for a glimpse of the Klondikers and their piles of nuggets. The frenzy announced the start of the Klondike Gold Rush.

Most people lost their gold just



While bartending at Fortymile, seen here, Clarence Berry heard firsthand from George Washington Carmack about the riches in Bonanza Creek.

Courtesy University of Washington

as fast as they found it. But Clarence invested wisely and returned for a second round of mining in Alaska, striking it rich again in Fairbanks. The Berry family turned their wealth into a fortune in California oil fields, founding what became the Berry Petroleum

Company—a business that still operates generations later.

Clarence was always grateful for the people who’d helped him along the way. He never forgot the saloonkeeper, Bill McPhee, who’d given him a crucial stake early on and later supported McPhee

through hard times. Both Clarence and Ethel became legends—the adventurous, modest millionaires who showed the grit and generosity that marked the best of the gold rush era.

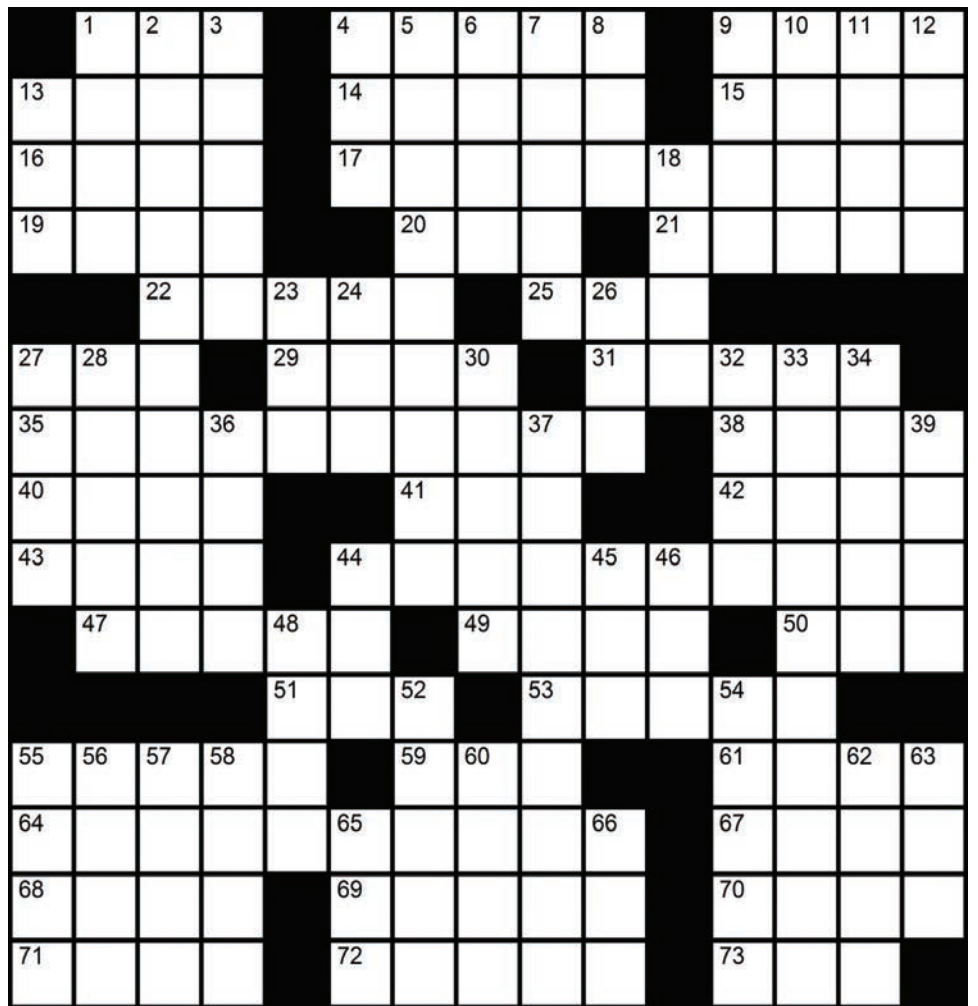
Today, Berry’s legacy lives on in Alaska, from university scholarships to a bronze plaque and “Gold Room” at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. He and Ethel proved it was possible to survive the wilds, find fortune, and keep their feet on the ground. Sometimes, Lady Luck rewards those who meet her halfway.

This column features stories researched for *Aunt Phil’s Trunk*, a five-book Alaska history series written by Laurel Downing Bill and her late aunt, Phyllis Downing Carlson. Along with Bill’s latest book, *Pioneers From Alaska’s Past*, the books are available at bookstores and gift shops throughout Alaska, as well as online at www.auntphilstrunk.com and Amazon.

Words of Wisdom

Across

- 1 Conger
- 4 Burning
- 9 Arizona city
- 13 Bass horn
- 14 Dribble
- 15 Golf club
- 16 Globes
- 17 Lacking resources words
- 19 Flightless birds
- 20 Human beings
- 21 Passageway
- 22 Situation words
- 25 Uh-huh
- 27 After launch or ink
- 29 Molecule
- 31 Strike lightly again
- 35 Eccentric words
- 38 Upset
- 40 Aria
- 41 Actress Massen
- 42 Alaska town
- 43 Make like an owl
- 44 Really, really slow words
- 47 Chirp
- 49 Notion
- 50 Beatty or Sparks
- 51 Golf item
- 53 Pointed
- 55 Lightweight wood
- 59 Army brass (Abbr.)
- 61 Bulldoze
- 64 Hard to accomplish words
- 67 Eve’s son
- 68 Not any
- 69 Light anchor



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- 70 Hardens
- 71 Hastened
- 72 Theater feature
- 73 Gr. letter
- 11 Embodiment
- 12 Wager
- 13 Male turkey
- 18 Scruff
- 23 Baby’s cry
- 24 Follower (Suff.)
- 26 WWW address
- 27 Stylish
- 28 Sherlock’s word
- 30 Giraffe type
- 32 Snare
- 33 Words of assistance
- 34 Locality
- 36 Lug
- 37 Play review words
- 39 Augmented
- 44 Fr. saint (Abbr.)
- 45 Wreath
- 46 Film director Peckinpah
- 48 And others (Lat.)
- 52 Heron
- 54 Rub out
- 55 Disallows
- 56 Upon
- 57 Path
- 58 Toboggan
- 60 Poi
- 62 Gr. letter
- 63 Golfer Ernie
- 65 Allows, for short
- 66 ND indian

Crossword answers on page 30



Hiking in Roosevelt National Park, North Dakota

By **NICK THOMAS**

For Senior Voice

Yellowstone is renowned for its huge bison population. Badlands National Park is famous for stretches of surreal striped landscape. On the Outer Banks, herds of wild horses roam freely. But you don't have to travel to Wyoming, South Dakota, and North Carolina to experience them. North Dakota's Roosevelt National Park has all that and more, including one of the largest prairie dog populations of any park. Named after the 26th U.S. president who was an avid nature lover and former area resident at one time, it's the only national park named after an individual. So far.

Dozens of hiking trails spread across the park's more than 70,000 acres (110 square miles) that are divided into north and south units, 80 miles apart. To be sure, North Dakota is a bit off the beaten track, but the park still receives more than half a million visitors a year. For nature lovers, it's worth the drive.

Hikes range from short



Left: Early morning at the park.

Bottom left: Entrance sign to Roosevelt National Park.

Bottom Right: Wild horses in Roosevelt National Park

Photos by Nick Thomas



and easy to long and challenging. The Coal Vein Trail in the South Unit is a 0.8 mile loop that's fairly easy with a few stairs and mildly steep sections. The views are wonderful and the trail highlights the area's natural history and geology. Once an ancient swamp, underground coal fires burned in the area thousands of years ago caused by "spontaneous

combustion, range fires, and lightning" according to the park's website. Those heat sources cooked the rocks above, producing the red baked rock still capping the surrounding hills. Eventually, the heat caused some areas to collapse and formed the depression that hikers walk through today. Most recently, fires started in the 1950s and burned for three decades.

The striking scenery while hiking includes stunningly colorful rock layers, undulating hills, and vegetation including prickly pear cactus. Visitors should keep a watch out for the bison and wild horses that can pop up anywhere and always maintain a safe distance. You probably won't find any prairie dogs on this trail since they prefer, well, prairies. While they are terribly cute, they are very skittish being low down on the food chain and sought out by coyotes, badgers, bobcats, and various birds of prey.

Our last visit to the park was in early spring, before the summer crowds invaded

ed this beautiful vacation gem. Early mornings were still chilly and foggy but were an excellent time to visit with the mist hovering in the valleys. Of the Grand Canyon, Teddy Roosevelt once said, "Leave it as it is. You cannot improve on it." That applies equally to the park that carries his name.

Nick Thomas teaches at Auburn University at Montgomery in Alabama and has written features, columns, and interviews for many newspapers and magazines. His "It's A Wonderful Hike" website describes short trails, hikes, and walks from around the country that seniors might enjoy while traveling. See www.itsawonderfulhike.com.

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Guardianship cases are to be avoided

By **KENNETH KIRK**

For Senior Voice



I don't know if other types of attorneys have to spend as much time explaining why it's a bad deal to have to go through a court case. It's probably obvious to the clients of criminal defense lawyers that it would be bad if they got caught and had to go to court. Likewise with divorce lawyers and personal injury lawyers. Businesspeople don't generally need to be told that they should try to avoid going to court.

And usually, I'm explaining why you should want to avoid probate court. But today, I want to talk about another kind of case to avoid: adult guardianship.

First, I need to clarify some language. In Alaska, a guardian makes all the decisions the person could otherwise make, such as medical and housing decisions, and also manages their finances. If they are only managing that person's finances, and not other parts of their life, then they're called a conservator. In some states they use these terms differently. For instance, in California they don't have guardians for adults, only for children, so anyone appointed to make decisions for an adult is called a conservator.

But in Alaska, it's conservator if you just manage finances, guardian if you

manage all aspects of their life. Either way it's mostly the same court procedures, and that's what I want to walk you through.

Let's say Dad can't manage his finances anymore. If he realizes that, you don't need to go to court, you just have him sign a power of attorney. But let's say he insists he can still handle it all himself. Maybe the dementia has progressed to the point where he isn't seeing things clearly. He may have lost benefits because he didn't get paperwork in, he may have been scammed, he may have forgotten to pay his bills. Or maybe he's in a coma and can't sign anything.

So, you initiate a guardianship case. How? By filling out a form. The Alaska Court System has a form petition on its website. It's not an easy form; you have to provide a lot of information about finances, medical situations, personal relationships, and so forth. When someone tells me they think they might have

to file for guardianship in the near future, I always tell them to get started on the form early, because doing that on short notice can be overwhelming.

You fill out the form; you file it at the nearest courthouse – what happens next? The case is assigned to a judge. In Anchorage the load is shared between three magistrate judges. In other courthouses it's usually one particular judge. Either way that judge is going to do three things.

First, the judge will appoint a "court visitor." This person, on contract with the court system, will do an investigation. They'll read medical records and interview people, including you but also the respondent (the allegedly incompetent person is the "respondent") and others. The court visitor will file a report, with background facts and a recommendation as to what they think the judge should do.

The second thing the judge will do is set a hearing. This varies from judge to judge, but typically it's about one or two months down the road. You can ask for an earlier hearing but

there's no guarantee.

And third, the judge will appoint an attorney for the respondent. This can be a bit hit-and-miss. Some of the attorneys who take these appointments are fairly aggressive; others are pretty blasé. But the attorney is supposed to advocate for what the respondent wants, as opposed to what they need.

This can be a shock to the person who filed the petition. You thought you were just doing a nice thing by getting this process moving, right? But now Dad has told the attorney that he's perfectly capable of taking care of his own finances, by gum, and now the judge is expecting you to be the prosecutor. You have to call witnesses, present evidence, and do a lot of other stuff you're not trained for. You may end up having to hire your own attorney, paid for out of your own pocket.

But here's the worst part, in my view: You have to present evidence that will show that Dad is not capable of managing his own affairs. That means bringing up situations that are em-

barrassing or distressing to him. And this happens while he is sitting right there in the courtroom. In divorce cases, sometimes a parent will try to bring a minor child into the courtroom, but invariably the judge sends them back out and then chastises that parent for dragging the child into the middle of it. But in adult guardianship cases, the respondent has the absolute right to be there in the courtroom while all of this is going on. That can be difficult for everyone involved and can even poison family relationships later.

Most of the time adult guardianships can be avoided by having two documents in place: a financial power of attorney and an advance health care directive. Sometimes a trust can help as well. But unquestionably, guardianship cases are to be avoided.

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



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Operating systems, easier text chats, travel routers

By **BOB DeLAURENTIS**

Bob's Tech Talk

Q. What exactly is an operating system?

A. Every tech device has both a hardware component and a software component. The device is the hardware: the phone, tablet, or computer. The operating system is what orchestrates everything, from launching apps to providing network connectivity.

The model and operating system version are vital bits of information when you have technical problem to solve. It would not be very useful to answer a question about Android when the person has an iPhone.

Chances are the operating system is not part of your everyday experience. It is a nerdy topic.

An operating system version usually has several different parts. For example, "iOS 26.5.1" means operating system for iPhone (iOS), its major number (26), and its specific release, (.5) and (.1).

As if that's not complex enough, operating systems often have code names or

nicknames. Macs formerly used cat names (Tiger, Lion), and now they use place names (Tahoe, Golden Gate). Android tends to use sweet nicknames, like "Jellybean."

Today, most modern operating systems are just named with a number, such as "Android 16." If your phone has a voice assistant, you might just ask something like, "What is your current operating system?"

Or try the on-screen menus. On iPhone, go to Settings -> General -> About to reveal the model name and operating system version.

On Android, tap Settings -> About to locate the same information.

On Mac, go to About This Mac under the Apple logo on the top left of the screen.

On Windows, select Start -> Settings -> System -> About. (This varies depending on the device).

Hopefully, now the inner workings of your devices are a little easier to understand. Every time you perform a system update, you're improving the operating system. That system is key to how the device behaves.

Q. Sometimes I send an instant message to the wrong person. Are there safeguards to make this more difficult?

A. We have all done it—typed a hasty message into our phone and sent it to the wrong person.

There are no absolute ways to protect yourself from yourself, but there are actions that help.

Some devices allow you to "undo send" for the last message. Check to see if your device supports "undo." Often it only works for a couple minutes after clicking "send."

Personalizing windows and audio alerts can also help.

Tell your phone you want every text from a given person to use a unique sound, which helps keep them apart.

And my favorite feature in Apple Messages is the ability to have a different visual look for each person's messages window. And thanks to iCloud, the settings will sync with all your devices. Make a change on your iPhone, and the same background will appear everywhere.

Wander the Web

Here are my picks for worthwhile browsing this month:

Free fun with AI

Visit this site and ask it to render illustrations based on your prompts. It is free, but it does require an email address. studio.intangible.ai

Desktop planetarium

Try this site on the Web, and check out the companion app for Apple or Android if you want to go mobile. stellarium-web.org

Play capture the flag on the web

This free-to-play game matches you against yourself or against new online friends you have not met yet. koalabeast.com

Q. What is this year's must-have travel tech?

A. Road warriors often depend on a portable Wi-Fi router. These pocket-sized devices can attach to an existing network, either wired or wirelessly, and they create a personal network for your devices.

There are many pocket router models out there, but some of the best are from a company called Ubiquiti.

Ubiquiti makes expensive networking devices with a very good reputation, and pocket routers are one of the more affordable products in its catalog.

The specific model is the Ubiquiti UniFi UTR Travel Router. These are often out of stock, but they are excellent quality despite selling for less than \$100 from online stores like B&H.

If you can find one, it's cheap insurance to help stay connected while traveling. If you configure the portable router with the same name and password as the one used at home, your devices will move seamlessly between home and travel.

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

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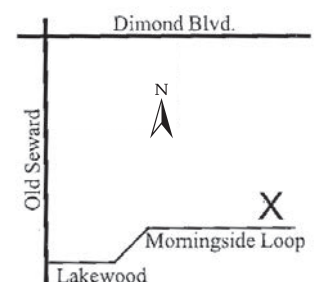
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I'm Meda DeWitt, and I'm running for Governor of Alaska.

I'm a lifelong Alaskan, Lingít traditional healer, and community organizer with a depth of experience spanning education, public health, and environmental stewardship. I currently serve in leadership roles across multiple Alaska Native organizations and my career demonstrates a deep commitment to protecting Alaska's lands, waters, and communities.

I'm running as a *nonpartisan* because the crises we're facing will impact everyone in Alaska - *regardless of party* - and our state needs a serious intervention.

As your governor, I will do what is necessary to:

- Protect and restore Senior Benefits so no elder has to choose between medication and groceries
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- Protect the principal of the PFD and give Alaskans a dividend formula they can trust
- Lower the cost of energy, housing, and prescriptions that hit fixed incomes hardest
- Fix our fiscal foundations, invest in new economic engines, and implement Alaska-first protections for our resources

**In our cultures, we don't push our elders to the margins.
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There's a lot at stake in this election. It's critical that we choose leadership that understands where we come from and has a clear plan for where we're headed. We are committed to stewarding Alaska's interests wisely, growing durable local economies, and preparing the next generation to thrive in a changing world.

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Retired science educator captures animals on video

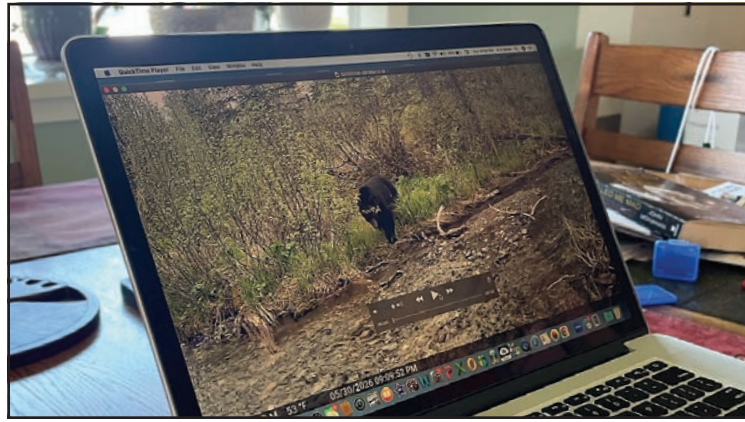
By PAOLA BANCHERO

Senior Voice

Donna Gail Shaw trots across the street to give treats to a neighbor's dog as she heads out for a hike. She calls out to another one "Neptune! Neptunee!" on the way back.

In between, she checks on the 10 wildlife cameras she has installed in an area of Anchorage known as Far North Bicentennial Park. In actuality, the wildlife she encounters can be anywhere near or even in the housing development where she lives, which abuts Joint Base Elmendorf Richardson. It's something of a highway for urban wildlife, used by moose, bears, fox, coyotes, wolves, wolverines and an assortment of smaller creatures.

Once a week and sometimes more, the 70-year-old hikes a couple of miles from her house on the east side of the city to check on the motion-activated cameras, replace batteries if needed and switch out the SD cards, the devices that store the footage she captures of wildlife. She packs her camera gear, a



Left: Donna Gail Shaw checks on one of her motion-activated trail cameras. She hikes to her cameras once or twice a week to replace SD cards, which store the footage, or adjust the cameras. Photos by Paola Banchero

Above: Donna Gail Shaw looks over the footage she got of a black bear in late May.

.44, bear spray, and church hymns she has committed to memory.

"I've had to teach myself some hymns I thought I knew," she said. She sings them aloud to warn bears she's in their space.

Then she comes home and scans through what her cameras have captured.

"What made me internet famous was video from right here," Donna Gail said, her Texas accent still strong after more than 40 years in Alaska. She's referring to a video she took of a pack of wolves stalking

a moose and its calf in the Campbell Creek. The wolves were able to take down the calf.

But she has also captured other scenes, usually hidden from the population of Alaska's largest city. Among them are moments of bears rubbing their backs against spruce trees or foxes traipsing through the woods, in search of food or possibly a mate, or marten scurrying over fallen branches.

"Late April, early May once the bears show up, it starts going nuts," she said.

The videos are post-

ed on a Facebook group called Muldoon Area Trail Photos and Videos. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/295985214145979>

Today, on a sunny day that seems almost like the first day of real summer in Southcentral Alaska, Donna Gail dons gray Xtra Tuff boots and a baseball cap that reads, "Girls in Science." The devil's club is low to the ground, and sun has dried part of the trail.

A student of nature

Donna Gail grew up in Troup, Texas, but really in the country. She spent as much time outdoors as she could, awed by the natural world.

In the summer following her senior year of high school, she accompanied a friend to Tyler Junior College just to keep her com-

pany, with little thought to her own future. The college adviser saw something in Donna Gail, and soon she was enrolled herself. She became a science educator, first teaching in public schools in Texas before earning her master's degree at Stephen F. Austin State University and doctorate at University of North Texas.

Donna Gail moved to Alaska more than 40 years ago to take a job at the University of Alaska Anchorage as a science educator. Though she retired in 2011 as an associate dean in the College of Education, with a return between 2019 and 2021 in an administrative role, Donna Gail is still a science educator. Only she does it through social media and in her interactions with neighbors, all of whom seem to know her and she knows them and their dogs' names.

About 10 years ago, she started peppering Joe Cantil, a retired public health educator who is also a wildlife enthusiast, with questions about his motion-activated cameras. "I must have seemed like a nagging wife," she said.

It wasn't long before Donna Gail got her own cameras and became adept at operating them and collecting the footage and then sharing it on social

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Alaska is the final stop for well-traveled 103-year-old

Editor's Note: National Centenarian's Day is Sept. 22. The day honors those who've celebrated 100 birthdays or more. We're publishing profiles of people who have hit this milestone. The Alaska Commission on Aging is working with the Governor's Office, Pioneer Homes and Long Term Care Ombudsman to celebrate Alaska's centenarians. If you know someone who is 100 or older and would like us to profile them, contact editor@seniorvoicelaska.com.

By PAOLA BANCHERO

Senior Voice

Marjorie Kortkamp has a flower clipped to her soft gray curls, but she confessed it hasn't been the easiest morning, "I had a seizure!" she said matter-of-factly.

But as she settled into her room at the Anchorage Pioneer Home, Marge (as most people call her), relaxed into a spirited retelling of her long life, from Atlantic City, New Jersey, to the Last Frontier. Her eldest daughter, Diana, was there to help her with her morning routine and to fill in any gaps in the narrative.

A late-in-life move to Alaska

Marge is the beloved matriarch of a family of four children, one of whom passed in 2022. She moved to Alaska in 2005 and lived with Diana. The Anchorage Pioneer Home has been her

home for about 16 years.

"When I came in, I said I want to know as many of these people as I can," she said. She got to know the Pioneer Home staff, their children, their other family members as well as her neighbors. She recounted that one of her fellow residents had lost a dog recently. "It was one of those cute little shih tzus," she said. But it was OK, after all, she added, because her friend's grandchild was going to have a child.

She especially likes those activities when toddlers come to interact with the Pioneer Home residents. "Oh, the little ones! That was fun," she said. She has also won a scarf playing bingo and she attends church at the Pioneer Home.

She is social and upbeat, despite having lost her vision and being able to hear only when her hearing aids are working.



Left: Diana, her father, and her mother, who is now 103.



Courtesy Kortkamp family

Right: Four generations of a family: Diana Schilling, Brynn Rathert, Nicole Kimball, and Marjorie Kortkamp at Diana's wedding in May

Courtesy Nicole Kimball

Marge also has the benefit of having family who regularly visit her. Daughter Diana recently got married, and Marge was present with Diana, her granddaughter

Nicole and great-granddaughter Brynn.

A witness to history

Anchorage is the latest in a series of cities Marge has called home since she was born in New Jersey in 1922. She grew up in Atlantic City, where she and her siblings would spend hours on the beach. Her mother would put up a bedsheet in the window to indicate to her children that it was time for lunch.

One day when Marge was 14 years old, the Hindenburg, a German zeppelin, flew over her home. The captain of the airship had been diverted over Manhattan because of thunderstorms. He also flew over the Jersey shore while waiting for the weather to clear. Thousands gathered in New York and New Jersey to watch the Hindenburg, which had only started commercial service the year before. Minutes later, the airship, loaded with hydrogen, crashed at Lakehurst Naval Station in New Jersey and exploded, killing 36 people.

Another memory stems from the early days of her adulthood. Marge was widowed as a young mother, with two children, ages 6 and 3. She remembers fly-

ing on a DC-4 to go live with her parents in California. During a refueling stop, another woman noticed Marge's frazzled state. "A lady...an angel in disguise," Marge said, helped her wrangle the children. "She was so nice and we made it."

While in California, Marge worked for "Mr. Phillips" as in Frank Phillips, who founded the Phillips Petroleum Co. that later merged with Conoco.

Later, the family lived in Honolulu, then Chicago and then Arizona.

Alaska as a final destination

Marge tried living with her son in Dallas and her daughter in rural Virginia, but it turned out that Alaska was more suited to her, despite the weather and her health challenges. When she was in her mid-80s living with her daughter, she ventured out on an icy, bitterly cold morning. When Diana saw her at the bottom of the driveway, Marge explained, "But it's sunny!"

Marge credits faith and her family with buoying her attitude. But it's Marge's sunny disposition that makes a difference in the lives of her loved ones.

Baseball Trivia

EMERALD
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ACROSS:

4. A GAME-ENDING HOME RUN IS CALLED A _____-OFF
5. A PITCHER'S DREAM GAME WITH NO HITS ALLOWED
7. THE PLAYER BEHIND HOME PLATE
9. HANK AARON BROKE BABE RUTH'S CAREER RECORD FOR THESE
11. THE SULTAN OF SWAT
12. JACKIE ROBINSON'S HISTORIC TEAM

DOWN:

1. LAST WORD IN THE TRADITIONAL 7TH INNING STRETCH SONG
2. BASEBALL'S CHAMPIONSHIP SERIES IS CALLED THE _____ SERIES
3. BASEBALL HALL OF FAME IS IN WHAT NY TOWN?
6. YANKEE NICKNAMED "THE IRON HORSE"
8. CHICAGO BALLPARK WITH IVY COVERED WALLS
10. BOSTON TEAM WHO WON THE 2004 WORLD SERIES AFTER 86 YEARS!



Storytelling motivates multi-talented artist



This is the fourth in a series about people finding or rediscovering creative pursuits later in life. The reporting project is funded by a grant from the Alaska Center for Excellence in Journalism. If you have a suggestion of a person who has explored their artistic

or creative impulses upon retirement or when other life demands lessened, email editor@seniorvoicealaska.com

By **PAOLA BANCHERO**

Senior Voice

Angela Łot'oydaatlno Gonzalez sits at her kitchen window, beading what will be a doll-sized salmon that will be the center of another "Fish Camp Barbie" display, one of several she has made in recent years.

Barbie herself stands to Angela's left at a small table wearing a pink kus-puk (the Yup'ik spelling is qaspeq and in Athabascan, the word is bets'egh hoolaanee). She sports a crown beaded with "B." When the display is finished, this Barbie, chosen for her caramel skin tone, will be posed fileting salmon with an ulu knife, which in Koyukon Athabascan (Denaakk'e) is tlaabaas. The salmon on the table is

made of real salmon skin, beaded to glimmer as a real salmon does.

The fish camp Barbie scenes are not just a creative outlet.

"It helps tell a story," Angela said. "It touches people, it makes them feel proud of who they are when they see it."

Honoring her ancestors

Angela, who is Koyukon Athabascan from Husila, grew up around the state. Fish camp with her family, when they would spend weeks in the summer fishing along the Koyukuk River, meant time learning about traditional crafts and activities. It was there that her grandmother would help entertain the children by making them toys while



Angela Łot'oydaatlno Gonzalez learned how to bead as a child but picked up the craft again about a dozen years ago and has made museum-quality items.



This Barbie, wearing a pink kus-puk (in Yup'ik qaspeq and in Koyukon Athabascan, the word is bets'egh hoolaanee), will be part of a fish camp Barbie display, one of several Angela has made in recent years.

Photos by Paola Banchero

the grownups worked on stocking up on fish for the winter.

Both of Angela's grandmothers were talented beadworkers, making items that were used and loved. About a dozen years ago, Angela got serious about beading, though she had learned the basics as a child. She and a friend

asked other friends and relatives for guidance, and they consulted some online resources. Soon, they were gaining confidence and making more elaborate projects. This included using native plants and items for the beadwork, such as silverberries, hard seeds that can be drilled with a hole.

May from the University of Alaska Anchorage wearing a gown custom-beaded by her mother.

Ermelina can remember when her mother really picked up beading again. She made several pairs of slippers for family members. Ermelina is a beadworker herself, learning from her grandmothers, mother and aunts, and, of course, from TikTok.

She's especially fond of the Barbie displays she has created with her mother.

"Small things are very cute and different. I really

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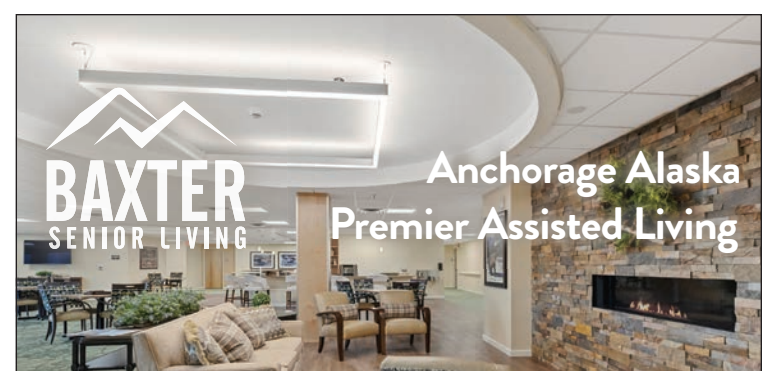


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7 signs of a scam every homeowner should know

By AIDAN SMITH

For Senior Voice

If it ain't broke, don't fix it. If it is, fix it ... carefully. That's easier said than done when a contractor promises fast repairs at an unbeatable price. Here are seven warning signs that a contractor might leave you with partial, poor, or overpriced work.

1. The "storm chaser"

A storm hits, and suddenly, help is knocking on your door — or what's left of it. A contractor says they can fix the damage on the spot. It might look like a silver lining, but reputable contractors usually book jobs in advance. And if they want you to sign your insurance check over to them, that "easy solution" only makes it easier for you to lack control if things go wrong.

2. The "free" inspection

Someone knocks and offers a free inspection. It's free, so why not? Ten minutes later, your house

is supposedly falling apart. Apparently, it's so serious that if you look at it, everything will crumble. And if you ask questions, good luck following their "explanation." The pitch is simple: let them fix it now or regret it later, even if the problem is minor ... or non-existent.

3. The "leftover materials" deal

A contractor claims they have extra materials from another job and offers a steep discount. Convenient, right? It's a great deal, and your house needs some work, but you feel pressured to decide quickly. This is exactly what the scammer wants — to rush you into deciding before you do your research.

4. No license or insurance

It may seem obvious, but it happens. Some contractors rely on our good faith to avoid showing their license and proof of insurance. They might say it's not a big deal. It is. Don't settle for excuses.

Hiring a contractor who isn't licensed or insured can leave you unable to make a claim against sub-standard work and liable for their injuries.

5. Large upfront deposit

Until now, everything has been smooth. No pressure, fair estimates, and valid licenses. But before signing a contract, the contractor asks for cash up front. A lot. Maybe all of it. Yes, deposits are normal, but never pay more than one-third of the total estimate, and never before you sign a contract.

6. Vague contract

When it's time to put pen to paper, the details get fuzzy. Timelines? Unclear. Costs? Open-ended. This is standard, they say. Don't stress, they stress. But without clear terms, it's hard to know what you're agreeing to, and even harder to sort things out later.

7. Specific payment methods

A contractor may insist on payment via cash, gift

cards, or cryptocurrency. Not only are these harder to track, but they're also harder to recover. A preferred payment method isn't always alarming, but only accepting payment in a particular way is.

How to protect yourself from home improvement scams

To protect yourself from home improvement scams, get multiple written estimates before agreeing to any work and verify a contractor's licenses and insurance independently. Avoid rushing into signing a contract, and keep copies of all documents, receipts, and any changes

made along the way to have a record if problems arise.

Resources for victims of home improvement scams

Restoring Trust is a program from the Better Business Bureau Foundation that connects victims with trusted, vetted businesses to repair and rebuild after a scam. You can apply here.

You can also report the scam to the AARP Fraud Watch Network at 877-908-3360 or file a report on the AARP Scam-Tracking Map. Remember, if you can spot a scam, you can stop a scam.

Aidan Smith is an intern for AARP Alaska.

Senior Voice is on Facebook!

Search for "Senior Voice Alaska" then click on over!



Big plans around the house this summer?

Before you hire a contractor, give them a thorough inspection. Home improvement scams can cost you big time.

Learn more and protect yourself at aarp.org/scams

Remember: if you can spot a scam, you can stop a scam.



The role of a funeral director: It is more than most people realize

By **BRITNI SHELTON**

Owner, Legacy Funeral Homes

Most people know they need a funeral director when someone dies. What many don't realize is how much a funeral director does behind the scenes to help families navigate one of life's most difficult experiences.

When a death occurs, families are often overwhelmed with grief, paperwork, decisions, and deadlines. A funeral director serves as a guide through

that process. They coordinate transportation of the deceased, obtain permits, help complete death certificates, communicate with cemeteries, clergy, veterans' organizations, florists, and others involved in the arrangements.

But the role goes far beyond logistics.

When many people hear the word funeral, they picture a traditional service with specific customs or religious traditions. While those services remain meaningful for many families, a funeral today can

take many forms. It may be a gathering at a community center, a celebration of life at a favorite fishing spot, a family dinner filled with stories and photographs, or a quiet private farewell.

At its heart, a funeral is simply an opportunity to acknowledge a death, honor a life, and gather the people who cared about that person.

Funeral directors help families create these experiences. They help families think through what would be most meaningful, whether that is a traditional

funeral, a memorial service, a celebration of life, or something entirely unique.

Research has shown that rituals and ceremonies can play an important role in helping people process loss. Gathering with others, sharing stories, hearing favorite music, and reflecting on a life lived can provide comfort and support during a difficult time.

Perhaps most importantly, funeral directors bring experience. While

most people arrange funerals only a few times in their lives, funeral directors help families every day. They understand the questions that arise, the challenges that can occur, and the decisions that often become important later.

At its core, a funeral home exists to help families acknowledge a loss, honor a life, and begin moving forward with the support of those around them.

Artist

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like collecting those types of items," Ermelina said. "Some of the Barbies have gone to the Alaska Native Heritage Center. A lot of I would say I'm happy to share Athabascan culture. They do accurately reflect my memories of fish camp when I was growing up."

A full life

Angela is a strategic communications professional by trade. She works as the communications manager at Chugachmiut, a nonprofit that serves the seven Native tribes in the Chugach Region. Most of her professional experience has been at other Alaska Native entities, such as First Alaskans and KNBA, the Native-owned and operated public radio station in Anchorage.

"It's important to have the Native perspective and guidance." She sees her professional life dovetailing with her personal creativity. "It's a way of helping organizations tell their story, especially for nonprofits," Angela said.

She also is finishing up a master's program in strategic communication at Washington State University, a program she has been able to do online. While there, she solidified her graphic design skills and created a logo for her beadwork, though she says modestly, "It's not a real company." Koyukon Bead & Bloom, the name she gave her beading entity, did have a popup sale a couple of years ago, and it featured the campaign



The garment that Angela Lot'oydaatIno Gonzalez beaded for her daughter Ermelina's college graduation. It has elements of beadwork that honors both of Angela's grandmothers.

Photo by Paola Banchemo

materials with the new logo and design elements that mimicked beadwork lines.

Another creative project is a blog she keeps called Athabascan Woman. It features information and photos about Athabascan culture and Alaska Native topics. <https://athabascan-woman.com/>

How does she manage to thrive professionally, find time to make museum-quality beadwork projects, pursue a master's degree, write in her spare time, and be a mother and wife?

Alaska Native people are in the rhythm of preparing for the next season, she said as she continued to bead the small salmon skin in front of her. "It seems like it's all work, but it doesn't feel like it's all work. This is part of what we do."

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Joint

continued from page 7

She can no longer walk much of a distance and from afar she has the gait of Popeye the Sailor.

The shots are quite painful because the needle is guided between bone and muscle. Breathing deeply and going in your mind to your happy place is advised.

Cortisone steroid shots—well, there's a drawback. The Mayo Clinic reports "There's concern that repeated cortisone shots might damage the cartilage within a joint. So, health-care professionals typically limit the number of cortisone shots into a joint." Mayo also cautions about the shots damaging effects on what cartilage is left.

Usually, the shot is given every six months, but in the end, it's only delaying the inevitability of a replacement. However, the push for the shots could be attributed to the insurance companies wanting a cheaper method to deal with the pain before paying for a replacement.

When offered a course of shots, from which I never did get any relief, I reminded the doctor of this

side effect and asked why not just have the operation.

Also, and this is kind of cheating, when asked what level the pain is on a scale from one to 10, I always say seven because it's a level doctors seem to take seriously.

There are so many people and so few physicians that it helps to make yourself memorable to the doctor. Older people can be dismissed so easily as whining hypochondriacs.

It took me seeing three shoulder replacement surgeons to finally get one who paid attention. I leave comments if they're good and also if they are bad.

Ask your primary care physician to recommend a surgeon and make sure you tell the surgeon your doctor praised their expertise.

New treatments on the way

New joint treatments target both bone density loss (osteoporosis) and cartilage degradation (osteoarthritis).

Advances include anabolic biologic injections to rapidly build new bone and cutting-edge research into single-dose regenerative shots to reverse cartilage damage.

Bone building and an-

abolic agents (substances that stimulate anabolism—the metabolic process that builds complex molecules like proteins and bone tissue.

For severe osteoporosis, new treatments actively build new bone mass rather than just slowing deterioration

► Romosozumab (Evenity): An FDA-approved sclerostin inhibitor that increases bone formation and decreases bone breakdown. It is typically administered as a monthly injection in a doctor's office for up to one year.

► Teriparatide (Forteo) and Abaloparatide (Tymlos): Parathyroid hormone-related drugs that stimulate new bone growth, given as daily injections for up to two years.

► If your joint issues lean more toward osteoarthritis (joint osteoporosis/degeneration), new therapies aim to reverse tissue damage rather than just masking pain:

► Regenerative injections: Research at institutions like the University of Colorado Anschutz shows early promise for single-dose

therapies designed to fill damaged cartilage "potholes" and keep joints healthy for years.

► Next-Generation Joint Replacements: Minimally invasive surgical techniques mean implants can now last up to 30 years, making procedures viable and highly effective for younger patients.

Biological disease-modifying drugs

If you have an autoimmune condition (like rheumatoid arthritis) accelerating bone and joint loss, biologic DMARDs and RANKL inhibitors (like Denosumab) can stabilize bone mineral density and halt the gradual wearing away, eating away, or superficial destruction of a body's surface tissue.

What you eat makes a difference

To damp down inflammation in the body, diet changes can help and also prevent inflammation.

Fill your plate with whole, minimally processed, and whole foods like omega-3 fatty acids: Alaskans have a plentiful

supply of them in salmon, sardines and chia seeds. These healthy fats block compounds linked to inflammatory responses.

► Phytonutrients and antioxidants: Found in deeply colored fruits like Alaska blueberries and vegetables (leafy greens).

► Healthy oils: Extra-virgin olive oil contains polyphenols, naturally occurring compounds that protect your body from cellular wear and tear.

► Fiber-rich foods: Legumes, beans, and whole grains.

► Minimize foods that overwork your immune system and trigger inflammatory responses.

► Refined carbohydrates and sugar: Spikes in blood sugar directly cause inflammation.

► Processed meats and trans fats: Often found in packaged snacks, red meats and fried foods.

► Added ingredients: Prepared foods often contain hidden salts and processed oils.

I hope this helps you on your pain-free journey to better aging. I feel your pain.

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Heritage Health

Alaska trivia crossword answers from page 27

ACROSS

- 4. WALK
- 5. NOHITTER
- 7. CATCHER
- 9. HOMERUNS
- 11. RUTH
- 12. DODGERS

DOWN

- 1. BALLGAME
- 2. WORLD
- 3. COOPERSTOWN
- 6. GEHRIG
- 8. WRIGLEY
- 10. REDSOX

Crossword answers from page 18

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



Fear

continued from page 4

to assess and respond can be beneficial. Consider these strategies:

1. Calm immediate anxiety with deep breathing.
2. Identify the specific source of fear.
3. Evaluate your surroundings for distractions.
4. Reflect on past experiences relevant to the situation.
5. Weigh potential risks against benefits.
6. Identify available support systems.

Creating a step-by-step plan to tackle fear leads to decisive action. Regularly practicing this method enhances flexibility and confidence in managing fear.

Conclusion

By understanding the reasons behind fear as we age—physical, mental, and social—you can

confront your emotions with greater awareness. Incorporating fear-reducing practices, reflecting on your experiences, and nurturing social connections enable you to navigate anxiety more effectively. Recognizing these changes not only fosters healthier living but also empowers you to face situations with increased ease. Consider integrating one mindfulness practice into your daily life—small adjustments can transform how you manage fear. You've got this.

Karen Casanovas, PCC, CPCC, CLIPP, is a certified resilience strategist, author, and keynote speaker. Her work explores the intersection of personal narrative, human connection, and formidability. In her latest book, "Cracking the Rich Code" (Vol. 19), she unpacks the core mechanics of overcoming adversity through motivation, agility, and perseverance. For inquiries, contact her at info@karencasanovas.com.

Trail cam

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media. She has an eye for detail as she walks through the woods near her home. She notices a clump of fur on tree bark, likely left by a bear leaving its scent. She explains how different bends in the creek look on either side, and where she is not willing to walk alone past a certain spot because the vegetation make it too difficult to see what other fauna might be in the vicinity. She is especially careful in July, when the fish are in the creek and bear activity spikes.

Often, Donna Gail visits her cameras by herself, so she texts a friend who can track her phone to let her know when she is leaving her house, a form of the buddy system. She's had to use her bear spray on moose and bears, and she gives her companion a refresher on how to aim the can, just in case.

A threatened corridor

On one week worth of video footage, Donna Gail captures a black bear, two different brown bears, a bull moose she calls Mr. Paddles, one man and his dog, a marten, another

moose, wolves, porcupine, and possibly a coyote.

Of late, Donna Gail has been concerned about a proposed fence the military wants to build that would change the wildlife corridor she knows intimately. It would effectively block off the residential neighborhoods in east Anchorage from JBER land.

"It wouldn't keep terrorists out," she said. "But it would keep animals from going back and forth between military land and park land as they do now."

As it is, Donna Gail has a recreational permit to be on JBER property. She logs in on her phone when she wants to enter JBER property, telling the military where she is going and logs out when she has completed her hike.

Not everyone who goes onto military property is so responsible, she realizes.

While loss of access to this recreational area would directly impact her quality of life, she is more concerned about the negative impact on the area wildlife.

"A perimeter fence would significantly disrupt wildlife movement, habitat access, and natural breeding patterns."

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