

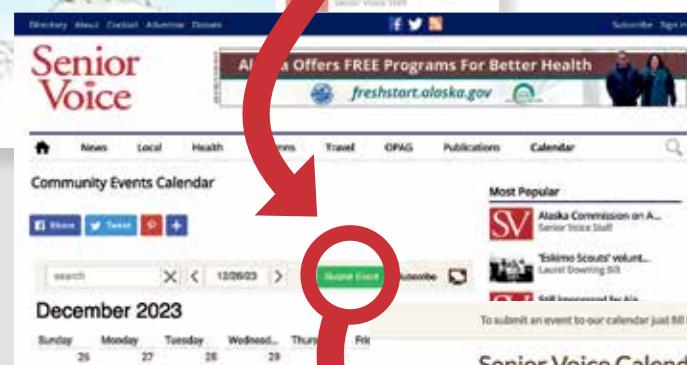
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Serving Alaskans 50+ Since 1978

Volume 47, Number 3 March 2024

Your feedback wanted! See our reader survey on page 22.

2023 National Mature Media Awards Winner

Caregiving: There's an app for that. – page 4

More research links improved hearing with longevity. – page 8

Bird TLC Meet the songbirds of winter. – page 16

Migratory bird festivals return around the state. – page 28

Hoops glory

David Edwards works the ball during 3-on-3 basketball at the Alaska International Senior Games in Fairbanks last summer. Other players, left to right, are Carl Roland, John Gebhart (#3), David Moore and Jumiah Johnston. Basketball has a special place in Alaskans' hearts, as noted in columnist Maralee McMichael's story on page 15. Entire towns may show up to cheer at high school games, and the players carry the memories, and ball skills, forward through the years.

Diann Darnall photo



Senior Voice readers:
Your feedback is valuable
See our survey in this issue

Senior Voice Staff

The Senior Voice Reader Survey is on page 22 and readers are encouraged to complete and send it in.

Learning more about our readers and what they find most useful about our publication helps us improve. If you subscribe, do you receive your monthly paper consistently? If you don't subscribe for a directly-mailed copy, would you want a digital version emailed? Do you find the advertisements helpful? Do you wish

there were more ads for a particular service or type of business? Do you have an idea for a story or topic? Answers to these kinds of questions are what we seek.

But what's in it for you? Content that better serves Alaska seniors and their families and caregivers. Let us know what we're doing right and where we can do better. By doing this, we demonstrate that we take our mission seriously to agencies that provide us grants and other support. We are here for you, and love to hear from you.

Meet your Older Persons Action
Group board of directors

Amanda Biggs, Anchorage

I am one of the Older Persons Action Group's newer board members, and would like to provide a brief introduction.

I am a lifelong Alaskan, who completed both my Bachelor's and Master's degree at UAA in social work. I worked at the Alzheimer's Resource of Alaska, where I was able to pursue my passion to support individuals and families affected by Alzheimer's disease and related disorders, and older Alaskans in need of community services. I worked as a care coordinator, out-



Courtesy Amanda Biggs

reach specialist, education specialist, and eventually the supervisor of our Care Coordination department. I later transitioned to the

role of Court Visitor for the Alaska Court System, where I have worked for the past 16 years investigating adult guardianship and conservatorship cases.

I also teach at UAA in the Dept. of Human Services, where I am able to help students learn about and understand the important role of serving older Alaskans, advocating for proper services and supports, and working together with the community.

I am passionate about serving our communities in Alaska and advocating for older Alaskans, and am honored to be a board member for OPAG.

Be mindful when gifting services, enrollments

By ROSEANN FREITAS
Better Business Bureau

If you're considering purchasing a subscription service as a gift, there are a few things you need to know before you start. Whether you're looking to elevate someone's entertainment, simplify their mealtime, or pamper them with the latest trends, subscription services have got you covered. But be sure you're making a wise investment.

Do your research

Research the company you're interested in by checking their social media accounts, consumer reviews and business ratings on BBB.org. Be sure to look for any red flags, such as complaints or scams, before signing up.

Investigate free trials

If you're considering a

free trial, understand how it works.

- Find out how long the trial period lasts.
- Read the terms of the agreement.
- Learn how and when to cancel.

Always be cautious of companies that offer something for free but require payment for access. It's important to read the fine print and be suspicious of any deals that seem too good to be true.

Understand auto-renewals

Auto-renewals can be a convenient way to keep your subscription current but be sure you understand how they work. Companies must send you a renewal notice ahead of time, and you should always check your bank and credit card statements to ensure the cost is what you expect. If you notice a price jump, it

could mean that you were signed up for a promotional period that ended.

Stopping a subscription

Knowing how to stop a subscription is crucial. There are three ways to stop automatic payments from your bank account:

- Contact the company to revoke payment authorization.
- Call and write your bank or credit union, informing them you've revoked payment authorization.
- Give your bank a "stop payment order".

Monitor your bank statements closely and take further action if you still see unwanted charges.

Cancel unwanted subscriptions

By canceling early, you'll avoid paying for an extra subscription term. Also, periodically review

your active subscriptions to ensure you're still using them. If you're signed up for multiple subscriptions, a subscription management app can help you track and manage them.

Watch out for scams

Scammers may offer you free trials or deals on subscriptions that seem too good to be true, hoping you'll sign up with your credit card number. Don't believe deals that seem outrageously good. Always

contact the company directly to verify suspicious messages.

In conclusion, gifting a subscription service can be a thoughtful and practical gift. By following these tips, you can ensure that your loved ones receive a gift that keeps giving without any unwanted surprises.

Roseann Freitas is a former PR & Communications Manager for the Better Business Bureau Great West + Pacific region.

OLDER PERSONS ACTION GROUP

Mission statement:
“To work statewide to improve the quality of life for all Alaskans through education, advocacy and collaboration.”

Vision statement:
“Promote choice and well being for seniors through legacy and leadership.”

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OLDER PERSONS ACTION GROUP

3340 Arctic Blvd., #106
Anchorage, Alaska 99503

Phone 907-276-1059
Toll free 800-478-1059

www.opagak.com
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EDITORIAL

Editor David Washburn
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Correspondents Laurel Bill, Dimitra Lavrakas
Maralee McMichael

Advertising sales Anne Tompkins
A.Tompkins@seniorvoicealaska.com

Page design Rachel Gebauer, Gebauer Design



Senior services network urges legislative support

Editor's note: AGENet President Marianne Mills testified to the Alaska State Senate Finance Committee in Juneau on Feb. 20. Here is the text of her testimony.

My name is Marianne Mills and I am the president of AGENet, Alaska's association of senior service providers. AGENet stands for Alaska Geriatric Exchange Network, primarily made up of private non-profit organizations founded in Alaska.

AGEnet's goal is to help older Alaskans age in place, supporting them to live safely in their own homes and communities for as long as possible and avoid costly institutional care, such as hospitals and nursing homes. AGENet strives to involve senior service providers in every area of the state so that, statewide, older Alaskans receive the local, community-based services they need.

Today, on behalf of AGENet, I urge you maintain the current FY24 funding level for Senior Community Grants. Offered through the Alaska Division of Senior and Disabilities Services, community-based services made possible by these grants include nutritious meals with daily safety checks, transportation, exercise classes, and light-housekeeping. There are also services to help older Alaskans with disabilities, such as adult day services, assistance with activities of daily living such as bathing or dressing, and counseling or respite services for their unpaid family caregivers to help them continue to care for their loved ones at home.

Maintaining the current level of funding requires adding \$2.7 million in general funds, without which services to older

With Alaska having the fastest growing senior population in the United States, helping them age in their own homes makes economic sense.

Alaskans throughout the state will decline significantly, risking their ability to live independently. With Alaska having the fastest growing senior population in the United States, helping them age in their own homes makes economic sense. Last year, nearly 20,000 older Alaskans benefited from senior community grants at a cost of only \$691 per year per client. In contrast, only 1,152 patients were served in Alaska nursing homes at a cost of \$148,101 per year per person.

Also, since the population of Alaska seniors age 75 and older increased 5% last year, with more vulnerable seniors to serve, AGENet members urge you to support an additional \$998,231 for a 5% increase in SDS Community Based Grants for Fiscal Year 2025.

Community grants awarded by the Alaska Division of Senior and Disabilities Services help Alaska's seniors to age in place. These grants offer a winning solution to our aging population. Older Alaskans prefer to stay in their own homes while these grants offer the least costly type of care.

Most of our member agencies depend on grants to pay for staff and other expenses associated with senior services. The Alaska Senior and Disabilities Senior Community Grants that are critical to helping local seniors remain safe in their own homes and communities include the following:

- Nutrition, Transportation and Support
- Adult Day
- Senior In-Home

- Family Caregiver Support
- Health Promotion and

- Disease Prevention
- ADRD (Alzheimer's disease and related dementias)
- Medicare Counseling and Outreach
- Center for Independent Living grants
- Aging and Disability Re-

source Center (ADRC)
Thank you for the opportunity to communicate our requests and explain the importance of SDS Community Grants. For more information, please contact me at 907-723-0226.

We can help Alaskans save for retirement

By TERESA HOLT

AARP Alaska

AARP's mission is to empower people to choose how they live as they age. The more money you have for retirement, the more choices you have as you age. This year AARP Alaska is focusing on helping people young and old prepare to be financially fit in retirement. We want people to think about retirement, learn about Social Security, and keep the money they have saved away from scammers. In April,

We know that without access to a workplace retirement savings plan, nearly everyone fails to save; only 5% of people independently set up a plan to save. People are 15 times more likely to save for retirement if they have access to a way to do so at work, and 20 times more likely if they are automatically enrolled into that workplace savings option.

AARP Alaska is hosting a four-part webinar series: saving for retirement, protecting yourself from scams, retiring as a state employee and information for caregivers on power of attorneys, wills and trusts.

For more information go to www.aarp.org/ak. This month, we are highlighting how we can help employees of small businesses save for

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Caregiving: Is there an app for that?

By KAREN CASANOVAS

For Senior Voice

Q: I care for three other people and am having difficulty tracking medical appointments and medication management for each of them. Are there any useful apps for my phone that could help me?

A: In this fast-paced world, caregivers often find themselves overwhelmed with various responsibilities and tasks. Fortunately, the advancement of technology has brought forth a plethora of apps that can assist caregivers in managing their duties efficiently. These apps not only provide practical solutions, but also offer a sense of relief and support. Let's explore some of the top apps that caregivers can use to enhance their caregiving experience.

Caregiving can be an arduous task, requiring time, organization and patience. Thankfully, the advent of apps has revolutionized the way caregivers approach these responsibilities. These apps help in areas such as medication management, appointment scheduling, communication, and emotional support. By utilizing these apps, caregivers enhance their efficiency, reduce stress and ensure better care for loved ones or those under their care.

Medication management

One of the most critical aspects of caregiving is medication management. With numerous medications to administer, it can be challenging to keep track of dosages and timings. Medication management apps such as Medisafe and CareZone offer a solution to this problem. These apps provide reminders for medication intake, track refill dates and even generate reports for healthcare professionals. For example, Medisafe allows caregivers to set up multiple profiles, ensuring that each person under your care has their medication needs met.

- Always:
- First, understand what the medications are used for.
 - Next, fully understand



- how the drug needs to be administered. (dose/time/orally/injection)
- Double-check the person's name before administering the medication.
 - Check the drug name on the container's label every time you administer a drug.
 - If meds are kept in a pill box, be sure when sorting them into the container, you choose a time when you are not distracted and can focus on the task at hand.
 - Make sure the patient's list of medications is consistently updated.
 - Make sure all providers have an updated list of medications that are being administered.

Appointment scheduling

Coordinating medical appointments can be a time-consuming task for caregivers. However, apps like CareZone and MyChart simplify this process by allowing caregivers to schedule, track and receive reminders for appointments. CareZone also enables users to share important medical information with healthcare providers, ensuring seamless communication. For instance, MyChart integrates with various healthcare systems, allowing caregivers to access medical records and test results easily.

Communication

Staying connected with healthcare professionals and family members is vital for caregivers. Communication apps like CaringBridge and CareZone facilitate regular updates, providing a platform to share information and seek support. Carebetter, eCare21 and Symple are other apps that allow you to import data, remotely monitor, or catalog client symptoms. CaringBridge, for instance, allows care-

In an increasingly digital world, these apps provide everyone with the tools they need to navigate their caregiving journey with confidence and support. Having a plan and staying organized prevents missed doses, confusion about appointments, or miscommunication between those providing the care, and other responsible parties.

givers to create personalized websites for their loved ones, where they can provide updates on health conditions, progress, and specific needs.

Be sure to speak up if you notice adverse medication

or food reactions. You don't want to put the person(s) you are caring for at risk by not reporting irregularities to an appropriate family member or staff who are in charge of the patient. The sooner everyone is

alerted to reactions, the more readily the one you're caring for can get medical attention. These apps foster a sense of community and emotional support for caregivers, reducing feelings of isolation.

Emotional Support

Caregiving can take a toll on the emotional well-being of caregivers. To address this, apps like Headspace and Calm offer guided meditation and relaxation techniques to

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Battling Alzheimer’s using vaccinations, ultrasound

By JOHN C. SCHIESZER
Medical Minutes

Vaccinations may help protect against Alzheimer’s disease

There now may be new steps a person can take to lower their risk of developing Alzheimer’s disease. Getting your recommended routine vaccinations may provide hidden health benefits, according to new research. In a study published in the Journal of Alzheimer’s Disease, researchers found that after receiving the tetanus/diphtheria vaccine and whooping cough (pertussis) vaccine there was a 30% reduction in the risk of developing Alzheimer’s disease. Similar results were observed in individuals who received the pneumococcal vaccine.

“The question not answered by the study is what is the mechanism whereby the vaccine would protect against dementia?” said Dr. Domenico Praticò, who is the Director of the Alzheimer’s Center at Temple University in Indiana. “For years, there was empirical observation suggesting that activation of our immune system could keep Alzheimer’s disease at

bay. Interestingly, some previous small studies on the effect of general vaccinations on dementia risk provided somewhat promising results,” said Dr. Praticò.

In the current study, the authors looked at more than 200,000 adults who received some or all of the common vaccines recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) for older adults. This group was compared with a group of individuals who did not receive any vaccines.

“A possible answer to this important biological question is that the vaccines, by instructing the immune system to respond to a particular target could indirectly prepare the immune cells to respond more efficiently to any hypothetical insult to the brain,” said Dr. Praticò. “In other words, they may be better prepared for modulation of the inflammatory response within the central nervous system.”

The current study supports some recent epidemiological observations that exposure to infectious

Monitoring and notifications with the SMPL Wander Alert

ATLA Gizmo of the Month

Assistive Technology of Alaska

For individuals who would like notifications when motion is detected in their home, when a door is open, or if someone is in need of assistance, an alerting device can be helpful. The SMPL Wander Alert system has a pager that will vibrate, flash and sound an alarm when sensors are triggered. There are door sensors, motion sensors, help pendants, call bells and more that can be connected to one pager each with a different alerting sound. This alerting device is



wireless, does not require internet or bluetooth, and there are no monthly fees associated.

This column is brought to you by ATLA (Assistive Technology of Alaska), a nonprofit, statewide resource. ATLA does not

endorse this product, but shares information on the types of assistive technology that may benefit Alaskans. For more information or to arrange a free demonstration, visit www.atlaak.org or call 907-563-2599.

agents may be a possible risk factor for Alzheimer’s disease. Established risk factors for Alzheimer’s disease include genetics, diet and age. Dr. John Morley is a professor of medicine at Saint Louis University in Missouri and is an expert in this area. He said these findings are not surprising. “We have published a number of similar studies. We believe vaccines prevent inflammation in the brain, reducing the development

of Alzheimer’s disease,” said Dr. Morley.

Treating Alzheimer’s with focused ultrasound

Researchers at the West Virginia University Rockefeller Neuroscience Institute (RNI) are optimistic about a new approach to Alzheimer’s disease. A first in-human study, which was published in the New England Journal of Medicine, demonstrated

that focused ultrasound in combination with anti-amyloid-beta monoclonal antibody treatment can accelerate the clearance of amyloid-beta plaques in the brains of patients with Alzheimer’s disease.

Anti-amyloid-beta (Aβ) monoclonal antibody therapies, such as aducanumab, lecanemab, and donanemab, can reduce amyloid-beta plaques and slow the

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Medicare and your right to appeal a discharge

By SEAN MCPHILAMY
Alaska Medicare Information Office

If you or a loved one are receiving in-patient medical care, there comes a time when that care will end. Hopefully, this is because the patient is ready for discharge, but sometimes, the patient is notified that care will be discontinued, possibly due to a notice from Medicare. You have a right to appeal this decision.

What if my medical care ends too soon?

If you are receiving care in a hospital or non-hospital setting and you learn that your care is going to



end, you have the right to a fast, or expedited, appeal to request continued care. The distinction between hospital and non-hospital settings is made in these materials because there are different steps in the appeal process depending on whether hospital or non-hospital care is

ending.

Note that hospital and non-hospital settings can overlap. For example, a hospital building may also include a skilled nursing facility. Although they are in the same building, the type of care they provide is different.

In both hospital and non-hospital settings you can file an appeal to challenge your provider’s decision to end your care if you think that they are wrong about whether Medicare will cover your services. If you are unable to appeal, a family member or other representative can appeal for you. If your appeal is unsuccessful at the first level, you can continue to

appeal by following instructions on the denial notices you receive.

Expedited appeals have tight deadlines, so it is important to pay attention to the timeframes for appealing at each level. Keep copies of any appeal paperwork you send out, and if you speak to someone on the phone, get their name and write down the date and time that you spoke to them. It is helpful to have all of your appeal documents together in case you run into any problems and need to access documents you already mailed.

What notice(s) will I receive?

If you are an inpatient

at a hospital, you should receive a notice titled “Important Message from Medicare” within two days of being admitted. This notice explains your patient rights, and you will be asked to sign it. If your inpatient hospital stay lasts three days or longer, you should receive another copy of the same notice before you leave the hospital. This notice should arrive up to two days, and no later than four hours, before you are discharged.

If your care is ending in a non-hospital setting, such as at a skilled nursing facility (SNF), comprehensive rehabilitation

page 6 please



Rechargeable hearing aids



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

If you are having charging issues, bring your charger to your appointment. We might need to check the functionality of your charger and rechargeable hearing aids, wear and tear, including noticeable debris and moisture, or charging ports/post for irregularities.

Store your charger in a clean and dry location such as a dresser or nightstand. Avoid humid or damp conditions such as the bathroom or kitchen.

Do not expose chargers to excess heat such as on a windowsill or in a hot car. If you choose to use an electronic drying system, please check with your hearing professional that

the temperature does not exceed 104(40C).

Regularly inspect your charger and rechargeable hearing aids for debris; gently wipe away using the provided cleaning tool or a dry, soft cloth. Do not use water, solvents or cleaning fluids to clean either your charger or rechargeable hearing aids.

Use the provided charging cable that came with your charger. Most of the newer ones now have a USB-C.

It is safe to keep our rechargeable hearing aids in your charger after they are fully charged and any time you are not wearing them.

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

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



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

Medicare

continued from page 5

facility (CORF), hospice, or home health agency, because your provider believes Medicare will not pay for it, you should receive a “Notice of Medicare Non-Coverage.” You should get this notice no later than two days before your care is set to end. If you receive home health care, you should receive the notice on your second to last care visit. If you have reached the limit in your care or do not qualify for care, you do not receive this notice and you cannot appeal.

How do I start an appeal while in-patient at a hospital?

If the hospital says you must leave and you disagree, follow the instructions on the “Important Message from Medicare” to file an expedited appeal to the Beneficiary and Family Centered Care—Quality Improvement Organization (BFCC-QIO); currently for Alaska, this is Kepro—with contact details on the received notice. You must appeal by midnight (local time) on the day of your discharge. If you are appealing to the BFCC-QIO, the hospital must send you a “Detailed Notice of Discharge.” This notice explains in writing why your hospital care is ending and lists any Medicare coverage rules related to your case.

The BFCC-QIO will request copies of your medical records from the hospital. It can be helpful to ask the hospital for your own copy (a copying charge may apply). The BFCC-QIO will usually call you to get your opinion on the discharge, but you can also send a written statement.

The BFCC-QIO should call you with its decision within 24 hours of receiving all the information it needs. If the appeal to the BFCC-QIO is successful, your care will continue to be covered. If the BFCC-QIO decides that your care should end, you will be responsible for paying for any care you receive after noon of the day after the BFCC-QIO makes its decision. If you stay in the hospital after that period,

If you are receiving care in a hospital or non-hospital setting and you learn that your care is going to end, you have the right to a fast, or expedited, appeal to request continued care.

you may be responsible for the cost of your care, unless you successfully appeal to a higher level of appeal.

If you leave the hospital or miss the deadline to file an expedited appeal to the BFCC-QIO, you have 30 days from your original discharge date to request a post-service BFCC-QIO review. The BFCC-QIO will send a written decision letter once it receives all the information it needs from you and the hospital.

How do I start an appeal for non-hospital care that is ending?

If you learn that your non-hospital care is ending and you feel that your care should continue, follow the instructions on the “Notice of Medicare Non-Coverage” to file an expedited appeal with the Quality Improvement Organization by noon of the day before your care is set to end. Once you file the appeal, your provider should give you a “Detailed Explanation of Non-Coverage.” This notice explains in writing why your care is ending and lists any Medicare coverage rules related to your case. The BFCC-QIO will usually call you to get your opinion.

You can also send a written statement. If you receive home health or CORF care, you must get a written statement from a physician who confirms that your care should continue. The BFCC-QIO should make a decision no later than two days after your care was set to end. Your provider cannot bill you before the BFCC-QIO makes its decision.

If you miss the deadline for an expedited BFCC-QIO review, you have up to 60 days to file a standard appeal with the BFCC-QIO. If you are still receiving care, the BFCC-QIO should make its decision as soon as possible after receiving your request. If you are no longer receiving care, the BFCC-QIO must make a decision within 30 days. If the BFCC-QIO appeal is successful, you should continue to receive Medicare-covered care, as long as your doctor continues to certify it.

In either situation, the focus is upon the medical necessity for the provided care. The patient’s medical provider should clearly explain this information to the individual receiving care.

We can help

If you find yourself overwhelmed by any Medicare issue, including continuing the care appeal process, feel free to contact the State of Alaska Medicare Information Office at 800-478-6065 or 907-269-3680. Our office is also known as the State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP), the Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP), and the Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act (MIPPA) program.

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

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

Medicare counseling by phone

By **LEE CORAY-LUDDEN**

For Senior Voice

I am a Certified Medicare Counselor working under SHIP. My office is in the Soldotna Senior Center, but I serve the state

via phone. If you are local, I can help you as a walk-in.

I am here Mondays through Thursdays, 8 a.m. to 3 p.m., and Fridays, 8 a.m. to noon.

Call with your Medicare questions, 907-262-2322.



The Retired and Senior Volunteer Program at APIA has partnered with several non-profits to meet community needs by encouraging and supporting volunteerism for people ages 55 years and older in the Anchorage and Mat-Su region. We are currently looking for elders to volunteer at the following sites (but not limited to): Alaska Regional Hospital, Alaska Veterans and Pioneer Home, Alaska Veterans Museum, Anchorage Loussac Library, Anchorage Senior Activity Center, Catholic Social Services, Downtown Hope Center, Mat-Su Regional Medical Center, Prestige Care and Rehabilitation Center, Primrose Retirement Communities, Wasilla Area Seniors Inc.

If you are interested please contact:

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March is Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month

Alaska Health Fair, Inc.

It's March again, the month when we ditch our winter blues, welcome springtime, and ... talk about colon cancer? It's not the most thrilling topic for a conversation starter, but knowledge is power and in this case, it could be life-saving for you or someone you love.

What is colon cancer?

Colon (or colorectal) cancer starts in the large intestine, which is an essential part of your digestive system. It usually develops slowly over time, beginning as noncancerous growths called polyps. Regular screenings are crucial because early detection can lead to successful treatment and improved outcomes.

Who's at risk?

While anyone can get colon cancer, certain fac-

tors increase your chances:

Age. Most cases occur in people over 50 years old

Family history. If a close relative had it, you might be more susceptible

Lifestyle. Obesity, smoking, heavy alcohol use, and low fiber/high red meat diets can raise your risk

What are the symptoms?

Early colon cancer often has no warning signs, making screenings even more critical. However, watch out for: Changes in bathroom habits; blood in stool; abdominal pain and cramps; unexplained weight loss; fatigue and anemia

Minimizing your risks

Here are some simple lifestyle changes you can make today that could make all the difference.

Eat your greens (and other colors too). A bal-

anced diet packed with fruits, veggies, whole grains, and lean proteins can help keep those colon cells in line. Limit red meat and processed foods,

which have been linked to an increased risk of colon cancer.

Get moving! Regular exercise reduces your risk of developing various types of cancer, including colon cancer. So, lace up those

sneakers and go for a walk, hit the gym, or dance like nobody's watching.

Quit smoking. Smoking increases your risk of developing not only lung

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Health fairs happening this month

Alaska Health Fair, Inc.

March health fairs feature health education and affordable comprehensive blood tests. See the entire schedule and pricing at www.alaskahealthfair.org, with more events being added as arrangements are made. Schedule an appointment online or simply walk-in at any of our public events.

March 2 Meadow Lakes Community Health Fair, Meadow Lakes Elementary School, 1741 Pitman Rd., 8 a.m. to noon.

March 9 Anchorage Community Health Fair

on O'Malley, 1801 O'Malley Rd., 8 a.m. to noon.

March 16 Anchorage Willow Crest Elementary, 1004 West Tudor Rd., 8 a.m. to noon

March 16 Trapper Creek Community Health Fair, Trapper Creek Community Center, Mile 115, 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

March 12 Fairbanks Alaska Health Fair, Inc. Office Draw, 725 26th Ave., Suite 201, 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.

March 22-23 Juneau Community Health Fair, Thunder Mountain School, 3101 Dimond Park Loop, 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. both

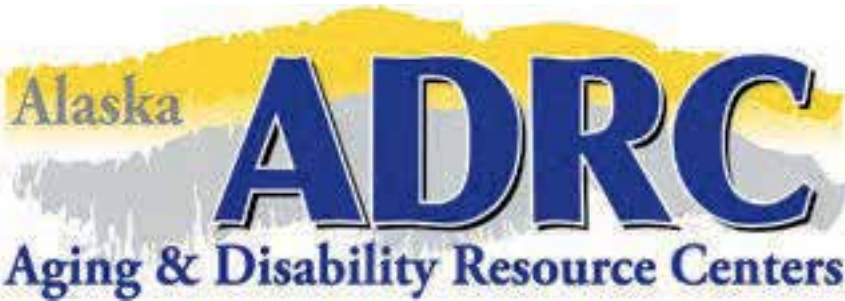
days

March 23 Glacier View/Sutton Glacier View Community Health Fair, Glacier View School, Mile 104 Glenn Hwy., Sutton, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

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

March 27 Dillingham Community Health Fair, Dillingham High School Gym, 7 a.m. to noon.

March 29 Nenana Community Health Fair, Nenana City Schools, 610 E. 6th St., 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.



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

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www.muni.org/adrc

Kenai Peninsula/Kodiak Island/Valdez/Cordova

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www.peninsulailc.org

Southeast Alaska

Southeast Alaska Independent Living (SAIL)
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Mat-Su Borough

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www.linksprc.org

Fairbanks North Star Borough

Fairbanks Senior Center - North Star Council on Aging
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907-452-2551

www.fairbanksseniorcenter.org

Bristol Bay Native Association

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



Robotics technologies for Parkinson's disease

Also: Research linking hearing with longevity

By JOHN SCHIESZER

Medical Minutes

New wearable robotics for Parkinson's disease

"Freezing," a temporary, involuntary inability to move, is one of the most common and debilitating symptoms of Parkinson's disease, a neurodegenerative disorder that affects more than 9 million people worldwide. When individuals with Parkinson's disease freeze, they suddenly lose the ability to move their feet, often mid-stride, resulting in a series of staccato stutter steps that get shorter until the person stops altogether. These episodes are one of the biggest contributors to falls among people living with Parkinson's disease.

Today, freezing is treated with a range of pharmacological, surgical or behavioral therapies. However, none are highly effective. Now, researchers are using a soft, wearable robot to help a person living with Parkinson's walk without freezing. The robotic garment, worn around the hips and thighs, gives a gentle push to the hips as the leg swings, helping the individual achieve a longer stride.

The device completely eliminated the participant's freezing while



walking indoors, allowing a person to walk faster and further than they could without the garment.

"We found that just a small amount of mechanical assistance from our soft robotic apparel delivered instantaneous effects and consistently improved walking across a range of conditions for the individual in our study," said study investigator Conor Walsh with Harvard Medical School in Boston, Massachusetts.

The research demonstrates the potential of soft robotics to treat this frustrating and potentially dangerous symptom of Parkinson's disease and could allow people living with the disease to regain not only their mobility but their independence. The new findings have been published in the journal Nature Medicine.

The team spent six months working with a

73-year-old man with Parkinson's disease who endured substantial and incapacitating freezing episodes more than 10 times a day, causing him to fall frequently. These episodes prevented him from walking around his community and forced him to rely on a scooter to get around outside.

The wearable instantly helped him improve. Without any special training, he was able to walk without any freezing indoors and with only occasional episodes outdoors. He was also able to walk and talk without freezing, a rarity without the device.

"Leveraging soft wearable robots to prevent freezing of gait in patients with Parkinson's required a collaboration between engineers, rehabilitation scientists, physical therapists, biomechanists and apparel designers," said Walsh.

For more than a decade, researchers have been developing assistive and rehabilitative robotic

technologies to improve mobility for individuals' post-stroke and those living with ALS or other diseases that impact mobility. Currently, an exosuit for post-stroke gait retraining is showing promise.

I'm sorry, I can't hear you

Hearing loss affects approximately 40 million American adults, yet only

lead researcher Dr. Janet Choi with Keck Medicine in Los Angeles, Calif. "These results are exciting because they suggest that hearing aids may play a protective role in people's health and prevent early death."

Previous research has shown that untreated hearing loss can result in a reduced lifespan. It is well established that untreated hearing loss can lead to social isolation, depression and dementia. However,

Dr. Choi points to recent research linking hearing aid use with lowered levels of depression and dementia. She speculates that the improvements in mental health and cognition that come with improved hearing can promote better overall health, which may improve life span.

one in 10 people who need hearing aids use them, according to the latest research. Now researchers are warning those who don't use hearing aids but may want to rethink that.

"We found that adults with hearing loss who regularly used hearing aids had a 24% lower risk of mortality than those who never wore them," said

until now, there has been very little research examining if the use of hearing aids can reduce the risk of death. The study represents the most comprehensive analysis to date on the relationship between hearing loss, hearing aid use and mortality in the United States, according to Dr. Choi.

next page please

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Research

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The researchers used data compiled by the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey between 1999–2012 to identify almost 10,000 adults age 20 years and older who had completed audiometry evaluations. Researchers followed their mortality status over an average follow-up period of 10 years after their evaluations and published their findings in The Lancet Healthy Longevity.

A total of 1,863 adults were identified as having hearing loss. Of these, 237 were regular hearing aid users, which were characterized as those who reported wearing the aids at least once a week, five hours a week or half the time. The researchers identified 1,483 individuals as never-users of the devices. Subjects who reported wearing the devices less than once a month or less frequently were categorized as non-regular users.

Researchers found that the almost 25% difference in mortality risk between

regular hearing aid users and never-users remained steady, regardless of variables such as the degree of hearing loss (from mild to severe). There was no difference in mortality risk between non-regular users and never users, indicating that occasional hearing aid use may not provide any life-extending benefit.

While the study did not examine why hearing aids may help those who need them live longer, Dr. Choi points to recent research linking hearing aid use with lowered levels of depression and dementia. She speculates that the improvements in mental health and cognition that come with improved hearing can promote better overall health, which may improve life span. Dr. Choi hopes this study will encourage more people to

wear hearing aids, even though she acknowledges that factors, including cost, stigma and difficulty finding devices that fit and function well, are barriers to use.

Dr. Choi can personally relate to these challenges. She was born with hearing loss in her left ear, but did not wear a hearing device until her 30s. It then took her several years to find ones that worked effectively for her. She is currently working on an AI-driven database that categorizes hearing aid choices and tailors them to individual patient needs.

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.

Center for the Blind clinics, home visits in Fairbanks



Photo courtesy Alaska Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired

Senior Voice Staff

Alaska Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired’s Elijah Haines, pictured above, will conduct two low-vision clinics in Fairbanks, March 11 and 12, at the Golden Towers Building. A certified orientation and mobility specialist, he

will assess and match people with the best possible device for their condition.

Center for the Blind staff will also be in Fairbanks on March 21 and 22 to make presentations and home visits. Reserve your spot (home visit appointments fill fast) by calling Pete McCall, 907-771-4303.

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Free support for family caregivers

Senior Voice Staff

The Kenai Peninsula Family Caregiver Support Program will hold the following support group meetings in March:

March 1, Soldotna Senior Center, discussing direct services models, 1 to 2 p.m.

March 5, Tyotkas Elder Center, open discussion, 1 to 2 p.m.

March 19, Kenai Senior Center, open discussion, 1 to 2 p.m.

March 21, Sterling Senior Center, open discussion, 1 to 2 p.m.

March 29, Nikiski Se-

nior Center, with overview presentation on home health nursing, 1 to 2 p.m.

Support meetings allow you to share your experiences as a caregiver, or support someone who is a caregiver. If you are helping a family member or friend by being a caregiver, learn what kind of help is available. There is no charge for these services and everyone is invited to attend. For more information or to offer suggestions on training topics, call Dani Kebschull at the Nikiski Senior Center, 907-776-7654 or email kpfensp@nikiskiseniorcenter.org.

The **Homer** caregiver support group meets at the Homer Senior Center on the second and fourth Thursday of each month (March 14 and 28), from 2 to 3:30 p.m. Contact Pam Hooker for information, 907-299-7198.

Kodiak Senior Center in partnership with Hospice and Palliative Care of Kodiak hosts the caregiver support group, March 21, at 1 p.m. Call for information, 907-486-6181.

Around the state

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

ings around the state, including Anchorage, Eagle River, Fairbanks, Homer, Juneau/Southeast, Ketchikan, Kodiak, Mat-Su Valley, Seward, Sitka, Soldotna, Talkeetna, Willow. Call 1-800-478-1080 for details.

ARA also hosts a statewide call-in meeting on the first Saturday and third Wednesday of every month, 1 to 2 p.m. For information, call Gay Wellman,

907-822-5620 or 1-800-478-1080.

In **Southeast Alaska**, the Southeast Senior Services Senior and Caregiver Resource Center is available. Call Jennifer Garrison at 866-746-6177.

The national Alzheimer's Association operates a 24-hour helpline for caregivers, staffed by specialists and Masters-level clinicians, at 800-272-3900.

Look for opportunities to laugh

Caregiving can bring out the good and the challenges in our lives. With this, we have opportunities to make beneficial choices. Reducing stress, anxiety, and giving our health a boost can be as simple as finding something to laugh about.

The Mayo Clinic notes stress relief from laughter has short-term and long-term benefits – soothing tension, stimulating many organs, and activating and relieving your stress response is a short-term benefit. Long term effects include strengthening your immune system, relieving pain, improving your mood, and increasing personal satisfaction with life's challenges.

Look for humor in your world, find a comic strip or

a television show that gives you break time for giggles. Share time with friends who make you laugh, and practice. Laughter can feel great. Know what isn't funny – and discover what is. You may find your belly laugh in an unexpected place.

Other ways of reducing stress and anxiety include establishing routines, creating a calm environment by reducing clutter, managing stimulating activities, and planning for five-minute breaks when possible. Make humor a part of your choices and give yourself permission to laugh where you can.

—Dani Kebschull, Kenai Peninsula Family Caregiver Support program

Social Security and government impostors

Social Security Administration

Do you know how to spot a government impostor scam? We continue to raise public awareness about Social Security-related and other government imposter scams during the fifth annual "Slam the Scam" Day on March 7, 2024. Knowing how to identify potential scammers will help safeguard your personal information.

There are common elements to many scams. Scammers often take advantage of fears and threaten you with arrest or legal action. Scammers also pretend to be Social Security or other govern-

ment employees and claim there's a problem with your Social Security number (SSN) or your benefits. They may even claim your SSN is linked to a crime.

When you suspect you've been contacted by a scammer:

- Hang up right away or ignore the message.
- Never provide personal information, money or gift cards.

► Report the scam immediately to our Office of the Inspector General (OIG) at oig.ssa.gov/scam-awareness/report-the-scam.

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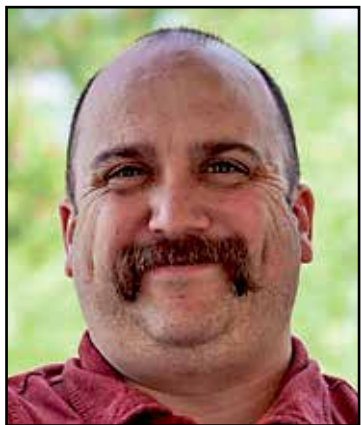
Staying steady as spring approaches

By **CHRISTIAN M. HARTLEY**
For Senior Voice

Falling down is no joke it's a serious threat for many people. But with some simple precautions, you can keep your balance and stay upright. I've slipped up a few times myself, so I've learned some tricks to avoid taking a tumble. Let me share what's helped me stay steady on my feet.

First things first, stay active. I know it's easier said than done, but exercise truly is key. Something as simple as a daily walk keeps your muscles and joints limber. Yoga and tai chi are great, too. Just be sure to talk with your doctor before launching a new workout routine. If you need some extra stability, use a cane or walker when you're moving about.

Now, take a look around your home. Do you see any obstacles? Tripping over loose carpets, cords or clutter is not helpful under any



circumstance. Keep clear walkways and make sure rooms are well-lit so you can see where you're stepping. Grab bars and railings provide great support, too.

In the kitchen, use a sturdy step stool when reaching up high, and never climb on chairs or counters. That's an accident waiting to happen. Wipe spills quickly since the mess can quickly be masked by wet floors and you might forget about it or be unable to see it later.

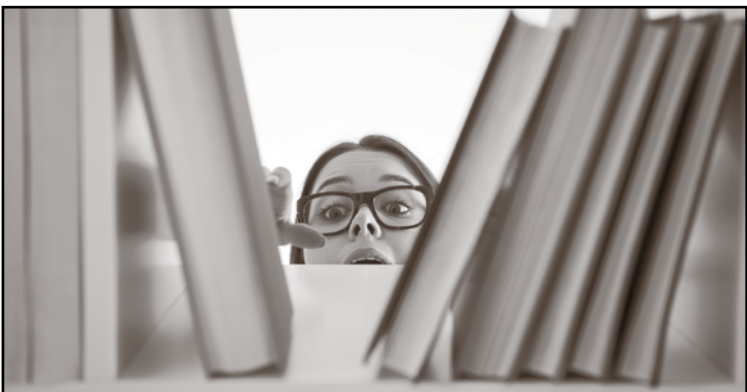
Don't forget your vision. Get your eyes checked yearly. New glasses can make a huge difference in avoiding stumbles. Take

extra caution on stairs, especially with bifocals. Removing reading glasses when you're walking around is a very smart preventative tip.

Medications can throw us off balance. Talk to your pharmacist or another medical care provider about side effects and possible adjustments. Even some of the over-the-counter medications can make you dizzy or drowsy.

Outside the home, watch for cracks in the sidewalk, wet leaves, snow and ice. Take your time and use handrails whenever possible. Even if you think you are doing fine, that extra safety feature just might save you from a slippery mistake. Proper lighting outdoors is a must.

When you're feeling worn out or lightheaded, take a breather. Pushing through fatigue often leads to mishaps. Listen to your body and sit down to rest when needed. Nobody knows you and your body



Keep a stepstool handy so you aren't tempted to climb or use an unstable chair to reach high places.
© Denisismagilov | Dreamstime.com

as well as you do, so trust your instincts when you feel too tired to continue.

After long periods of sitting or lying down, get up slowly. Quick movements can make you woozy. Take it easy and get your bearings before standing.

Lastly, don't isolate yourself. Lack of activity and socializing can weaken your strength and mood, upping your fall risk. Schedule visits with family and friends, join a senior center, or take up a social hobby.


The key is being proactive and using every safety feature and tool you can. Address balance issues with your doctor. They can suggest exercises, physical therapy, medication changes, or other ways to help you stay on your feet.

Christian M. Hartley is a 40-year Alaska resident with over 25 years of public safety and public service experience. He is the City of Houston Fire Chief and also serves on many local and state workgroups, boards and commissions related to safety. He lives in Big Lake with his wife of 19 years and their three teenage sons.



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Cancer

continued from page 7

cancer but also colon cancer. Kick that habit to the curb.

Limit alcohol. Overindulging in alcoholic beverages can raise your risk, so stick to one drink per day if you're a woman, two for men.

Get screened. Early detection is key. Colonoscopies might not be the most enjoyable way to spend an afternoon, but they can detect polyps before they turn into full-blown cancer. Talk to your doctor about when and how often you should get screened based on your personal risk factors.

Early detection

The earlier colon cancer is caught, the better your chances of successful treatment. Don't let fear or embarrassment keep you from getting screened. By understanding your risk fac-

tors, adopting healthy habits, and prioritizing regular screenings, you're taking important steps toward a healthier colon and overall well-being. You've got this.

Join the fight against colon cancer by sharing this article with loved ones and encouraging them to get screened too. If you have any concerns or questions about your colon health, don't hesitate to reach out to a medical professional.

Screening kits available at health fairs

Helena ColoCARE kits are available at all health fair events for \$5. The kit provides an affordable and convenient colorectal cancer screening option. ColoCARE is a fecal occult blood test that detects pre-symptomatic bleeding caused by gastrointestinal diseases. It is easy to use, clean, disposable, and environmentally friendly. Please read and follow the kit's instructions carefully.

Networking for Anchorage, Mat-Su area providers

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

second Wednesday, at a different host location each month. Breakfast provided. The next date is March 13, hosted by Lifeworks Adult Day Services.

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



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Juneau.....	586-6425 or (800) 789-6426
Kenai.....	395-0352 or (855) 395-0352
Ketchikan.....	225-6420 or (877) 525-6420
Kotzebue.....	442-3500 or (800) 622-9797
Nome.....	443-2230 or (888) 495-6663
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Additional information is available at:
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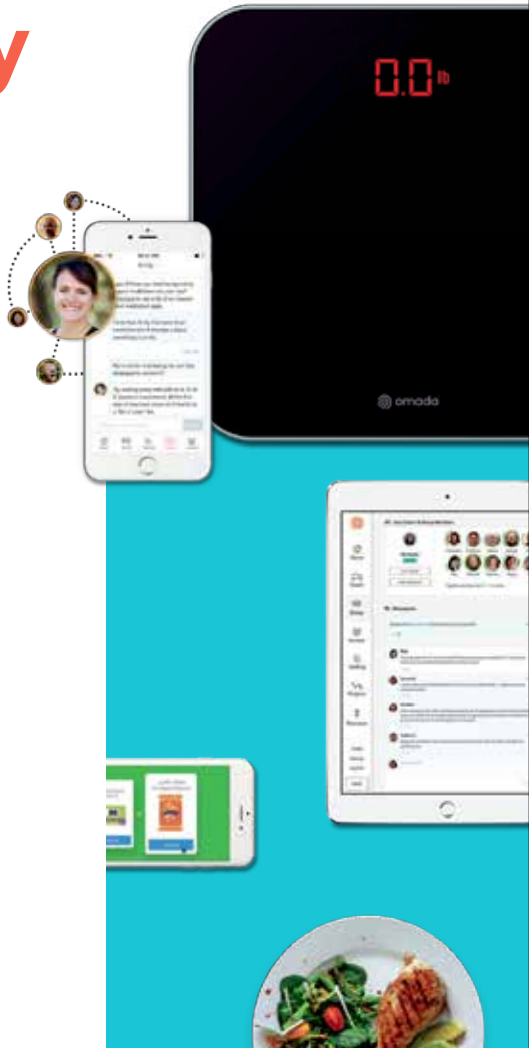
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Sexual abuse and Alaska's elders: What to know

By ERIN KIRKLAND
For Senior Voice

According to the National Council on Aging, five million individuals over age 65 experience sexual abuse each year, but such trauma remains the least-reported of all sexual violence. In Alaska, where sexual assault remains high (three or four times the national average) and continues to trend upward statewide, it's still a struggle to make abuse against older Alaskans a visible epidemic requiring attention.

Alaska's Standing Together Against Rape (STAR), headquartered in Anchorage, is a statewide organization that since 1978 has responded to the physical and emotional needs of those who survive sexual assault. In addition, STAR works to integrate prevention and awareness programs with a goal of reducing harm to all Alaskans.

Defining abuse and consent

The definition of abuse consists of touching, fondling, intercourse, or any other sexual activity with an older adult, when the older adult is unable to understand, unwilling to consent, threatened, or physically forced. In May of 2022, the Alaska legislature went one step further to amplify the term 'consent' and passed HB 325, stating: "(W)ithout consent" means that, under the totality of the circumstances surrounding the offense, there was not a freely given, reversible agreement specific to the conduct at issue; in this paragraph, "freely given" means agreement to cooperate in the act was positively expressed by word or action."

While the bill's passing is particularly important for vulnerable adults who may experience dementia or aphasia (difficulty communicating verbally, usually due to stroke),

victims of sexual abuse and their families still face challenges.

Samantha Mintz-Gentz, director of programs at STAR, says anyone with a caregiver should be aware of the signs of sexual abuse, either against a loved one, or themselves.

"Unfortunately, abusers build trust with people prior to perpetrating harm, and work to maintain it to secure access to victims (known as 'grooming')," she said. "Constant communication for people in care is as critical as noticing any physical or emotional changes before something may happen."

Mintz-Gentz goes on to say that there are a host of emotional signals that may point to sexual trauma, including:

- ▶ Increased fear/anxiety, with uncharacteristic shyness, outbursts, or an unwillingness to be left alone
- ▶ isolation
- ▶ unusual changes in sleep (either more or less sleep)

How to report suspected abuse

Adult Protective Services (APS): 1-800-478-9996, or <https://health.alaska.gov/dsds/pages/aps/default.aspx>

Long Term Care Ombudsman: akoltco.org

STAR 24-hour crisis line: 907-276-7279

Anonymous Victim Report: People have this option within seven days to collect evidence, but not meet with law enforcement. A forensic nurse will do exam and interview, and a STAR advocate will be available for support. This evidence, once collected, will be stored until such time as the victim decides to release it to the police.

▶ withdrawal from normal activities

Physical clues may be more obvious, Mintz-Gentz says, with dehydration or unusual weight loss, missing daily living aids or personal items, loss of appetite, unexplained injuries or bleeding, and frequent urinary tract infections or sexually-transmitted diseases.

It's also a point of note that "Those who abuse vulnerable adults or the

elderly are those who care for them," said Mintz-Gentz. "The relationship creates a power imbalance and reliance that leaves the abused person isolated and vulnerable."

Finding help

Adults do have the power to be their own best advocate with supportive friends or family who take seriously the risk of sexual

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Enjoy more pickleball with proper shoes, warmups

By JANET WARNER

For Senior Voice

We need each other. When your “peeps” are part of a fun activity, it’s like a double shot of happiness. Movement and meaningful interactions. It’s more than just the people or just the activity, it’s how the two blend together and create so many happy vibes.

Here are a few steps to keep yourself strong and able to participate in one of, if not your all-time favorite activity.

Good shoes

True confession – I love shoes. They bring me joy. I have shoes for every occasion and some just waiting for the right occasion. In terms of athletic shoes, I know happy feet mean I can keep on moving. I invest in good quality shoes specific to the activity (running, hiking, cross training) and I also have more than one pair per activity so the shoes get a chance to breathe and return to their original form in between workouts.

My feet and legs tell me when it’s time for new shoes. Oh, but it’s not time to completely retire the shoes. My shoes have a circle of life. The first purpose is for the specific activity – running shoes for running or court or cross training shoes for pickle-

ball, weight lifting, general gym use. However, when they have given me all they can for that purpose, they get bumped to the next purpose – which can be general walking, such as walking the dog – or if they still look nice, for work (I work in a health club so am often wearing athletic shoes). I also keep one pair of shoes in my car for those times I forget my shoes. I am always packing a good pair of shoes that will work for today’s workout.

The next notch in the circle of shoe life is camping or yard work. There’s enough support to wear them occasionally and I’m not sad when they get muddy or grass stains as they are only being worn for those purposes. This is where my shoe life span ends. It’s a circle, however, because I buy and repeat.

I’m not suggesting you go crazy on shoes, but if you’re playing pickleball in a pair of shoes that you’ve had for longer than a year and use for a variety of activities like walking the dog and shopping, it’s most likely time you invest in a good pair of court shoes. Your feet and lower body are a worthy investment.

Since you’re investing in good shoes, also be sure to wear them only on the

court – not to and from the facility. Keep them clean, dry and only used for your pickleball fun. They will last longer and, as a club manager, I can tell you the managers and cleaning staff of the facility in which you play will also be very appreciative that you’re not wearing outside shoes on the court.

Warm up

I know you’re excited to get playing but, just like any activity, a few minutes to warm up will make the activity better. Start your warmup from

your head and work down to your toes. Think of the song, ‘head, shoulders knees and toes’ although we’ll add a few in the middle.

Head. Gentle movements of the neck. Look over your

right shoulder and slowly move to your left shoulder. Allow one ear to get closer to the shoulder. Really, you’re allowing the other side to open up. Not forcing, but allowing with a fluid breath.

Shoulder. Shoulder rolls forward and backward, three or so in each direction. Slow and controlled. Shoulder shrugs, taking both shoulders up and as they return slowly insure your shoulders are open . (proud chest).

Arm circles can be with long arms or the elbows can be bent, any movement that feels best. Circle a few times forward and a few times backward.

Spine. Try the standing cat back stretch: hands just above the knees, fold forward and round your spine like a cat does when they stretch. Gently return to a flat back while keeping your hands just above your knees.

Do side stretches: While right fingertips inch down the outside of your leg, reach your left hand up and gently move your



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Basketball memories run deep in Alaska

By **MARALEY MCMICHAEL**
Senior Voice Correspondent

In the fall of 2002, my husband and I attended a Pioneers of Alaska Convention dinner for 400 people in the gym of Monroe High School in Fairbanks. A Glennallen Panther banner hung on the wall along with banners from the other schools Monroe competed against. Looking at that banner instantly brought to mind several basketball memories.

When our family first moved to Glennallen in the early 1960s, the Panthers (under Coach Noonkesser) played basketball with the Monroe Rams. In those days, the traveling teams ate meals in local homes. One time, two boys came to our house. They had to have their dinner early and then be taken up to the school at a certain time. At nine years old, I didn't even know what a basketball was, but it seemed important. It wasn't until a few years later that I watched my first game.

By the time I was in 7th and 8th grades, I joined in the community feeling that the weekly winter basketball games were important activities. I played clarinet in the school band. Under Pete Lease's instruction, the Pep Band enthusiastically played marching music at all the home games during the half times. The entire student body (junior and senior high) attended half-hour pep rallies before home or away games. By this time, the Panthers no longer played Monroe. We played Tok, Delta, Nenana, Wasilla, Ninilchik and Valdez, with Valdez being one of our strongest opponents.

As a freshman, I tried out for cheerleading. Marie Barber was the advisor. I didn't make the varsity squad, or the junior varsity, but became one of two substitutes. At first I didn't realize that this position would be such a challenge, learning all the girls' positions and filling in when and where needed.

Being a substitute cheerleader got me included in two fun away weekends, one to Palmer and one to Valdez. The gyms in both these towns were gigantic



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EASTERN REGIONAL ALL-TOURNEY TEAM

Glennallen Panthers were Eastern Regional Champions for the 1969-1970 season.
Glennallen High School 1970 yearbook, provided by Maraley McMichael.

compared to ours. Coming home from Valdez, the bus developed two flat tires while following the snowplow too closely through Thompson Pass in a zero visibility snowstorm. What an adventure.

That season, 1969-70, ended with our boy's varsity becoming the Class "C" Eastern Regional Champions, with Ken Sailors as coach. Excitement, school spirit, and community support were at an all time high when this title was earned in our own gym, in a close scoring, hard fought game. The gym was packed and the overflow of people watched the game on closed circuit TV in another room.

We were so proud of our Pantherettes, too. They were state champions for the 1969-70 season, having won all their games, losing none. Two years later in 1971-72, the Pantherettes beat the Dimond High girls to claim the state championship again. What an accomplishment.

My sophomore year, I was no longer a cheerleader or in the pep band, but helped the student council sell popcorn and candy. Many basketball games during my junior and senior years were considered "dates". This was one place my boyfriend (future

husband, Gary) and I were allowed to go without a chaperone, or maybe we just had the whole town as chaperone.

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STATE CHAMPIONS !!



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Glennallen Pantherettes were the State Champions and went undefeated for the 1969-1970 season.



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The songbirds of winter



An acrobatic white winged crossbill looks for seeds.
Alaska Bird Treatment and Learning Center staff photo

By **LISA PAJOT**
For Senior Voice

Imagine being a tiny songbird who flies across thousands of miles of boreal forest, facing frigid temperatures and snowstorms, searching for the next crop of birch or spruce seeds. All the while calling joyously to your flockmates as if you didn't have a care in the world.

Look at your birdfeeder or spruce trees, and you'll likely see a flock of songbirds - common redpolls, pine siskins, or white-winged crossbills. In some winters, you may see an unexpectedly large number of them.

Redpolls, siskins and crossbills are all seed specialists who follow spruce and birch crops throughout the year. They are also known for sporadic, erratic and irruptive movements that deviate from the normal and occur in sudden, unpredictable or irregular intervals.

Seed crops are highly variable in distribution and abundance from year to year and may fail in some

years. As these songbirds search for seeds, they may travel hundreds or thousands of miles. The time, direction and distance of travel differ each year. Fortunately, these resilient birds are flexible and easily adjust their movements.

Each of these species travels in large flocks and sometimes will occasionally form mixed flocks with each other. Flocks of several dozen to hundreds of birds are common. When they follow a seed crop to urban areas, it can seem like a sudden invasion of innumerable birds calling, flitting back and forth, and clearing out your seed feeders in minutes.

As scientists study these birds to learn more about their movements, they have found that some birds have changed their pattern of following the birch and spruce seed crops and will delay or shorten their journeys to feast on the seeds we provide.

And feast they do. To make it through a freezing night, a redpoll can eat the


next page please



Common redpolls like this can eat around 40% of their body mass daily.
Victoria Pennick photo

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16 | Senior Voice, March 2024



March for Meals in Fairbanks

Senior Voice Staff

Fairbanks Senior Center’s annual March fundraising campaign returns this year, with a goal to raise \$100,000 to fight hunger and isolation. The month-long March for Meals campaign supports Meals on Wheels, which last year delivered 60,000 meals to some 400 seniors

in the Fairbanks area, the senior center says, noting that over half live on an income of \$19,000 or less per year. Activities scheduled throughout March include a “Lend a Hand” fundraiser at the Co-Op Market on Gaffney road; Volunteer Appreciation Week, March 11-15; “Champions” awareness week, March 18-22; “In Memory of Week,”

March 25-29, for donations on behalf of someone who passed away, or who receives Meals-On-Wheels, or another important person in your life. For more information, visit the <https://fairbanks-seniorcenter.org> or access the donation page directly at <https://bit.ly/49uL3O6>. Or call 907-452-1735.

Songbirds

from page 16

equivalent of a 150-pound human eating 62 pounds of food a day. Redpolls can eat around 40% of their body mass daily, and crossbills can eat over 3,000 spruce seeds daily. In addition to being intrepid travelers, redpolls, siskins and crossbills are well adapted for the cold subarctic climates. These tiny birds can survive temperatures of -58 degrees Fahrenheit by

being well-insulated, putting on extra fat during the winter, and roosting with others during the night for warmth. Redpolls will even burrow into a snow tunnel for a cozy night's sleep. Redpolls and siskins store seeds in their expandable esophagus so they have food to eat during the cold nights. When you see a flock of these undaunted songbirds, think about how their fluid, dynamic and flexible way of life makes it possible for them to survive Alaska's winters and for us to enjoy their gregarious and exuberant

natures as they flit through the trees, talking to each other and braving winter's elements. Since the beginning of the year, Bird Treatment and Learning Center has taken in 19 redpolls and crossbills, most of whom have been injured when they collided with windows. Find out how you can prevent birds from striking your window at <https://abcbirds.org/solutions/prevent-home-collisions/>. Lisa Pajot is an ornithologist and Bird Treatment and Learning Center volunteer.

Rambles

News from the Grapevine

The Alaska Zoo in Anchorage announced in February the retirement of executive director **Patrick “Pat” Lampi**. His last day will be April 5, at which time the position will go to **Tristan Thon**, the zoo’s Chief Business Officer who was selected unanimously by the board for the executive director position. Pat Lampi worked 38 years at the zoo, starting in 1986 and making his way up through the ranks, notes a Feb. 15 press statement from the zoo. “The zoo would not be where it is today without Pat’s innovation, integrity, and compassion; both for animals and for the people who work here,” Thon said in the press statement. “I know without a doubt that I have big shoes to fill—or perhaps a hat,” she joked, in reference to Lampi’s iconic brimmed hat, which many visitors grew accustomed to seeing on the trails ... In preparation for **National Tea Day** in April, **Seward Senior Center** requests donations of tea. Bring in your bags (or loose leaf) and get ready for the party. Call for information, 907-224-5604 ... Also in **Seward**, **Aunt May’s Taxi and Tours** provides free roundtrip transportation to the senior center, Monday through Friday. Call to schedule your ride, 907-491-1535 ... **Kenai Senior Center** is holding a **James Bond-themed party** (“it will leave you shaken, not stirred”) as part of its **March for Meals** fundraising. Save the date – April 5 – and get your double-0-7 costume ready. Call 907-283-4156 ... **Anchorage Senior Activity Center’s** Second Annual **Senior Prom** takes place March 20, from 3 to 5 p.m. Put on your dancing shoes and attire and enjoy music, dancing and refreshments. *page 18 please*



SENIOR POETRY PROJECT

4TH TUESDAY OF THE MONTH, 2-3:30 PM
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Join local poet and facilitator Brian Hutton for free, monthly, poetry workshops, including exercises and discussions on creativity and mental well being.



WEDNESDAY WORKSHOP

MARCH 20 , 4-5:30 PM
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REMEMBER:
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Rambles

News from the Grapevine

continued from page 17

RSVP to 907-770-2000 or programs@anchorage-seniorcenter.org ... A reminder that March 29 is the deadline to submit nominations for the **Fairbanks North Star Borough senior achievement awards**. Categories include Outstanding Senior Volunteer; Lifetime Fitness, female; Lifetime Fitness, male; and Honored Caregiver. Nomination forms are available at local senior centers and the borough's Parks and Recreation senior program. Awards will be presented during the annual Fairbanks North Star Borough **Senior Recognition Day** event, May 9 at the Carlson Center. Questions? Contact **Marya Lewanski**, 907-459-1136 or email Marya.lewanski@fnsb.gov ... **Kodiak Senior Center** hosts "**Beading with Friends**," on March 12 at 1 p.m. Join **Gail Otto** and learn to bead your own bracelets and necklaces. No experience or sign-up required. Call 907-486-6181 for details ... **Homer Senior Center's Zumba Gold** class meets Tuesdays at 2 p.m., however instructor **Maria Santa Lucia** has been on vacation. She returns March 12. To register for the class, call 907-235-4555 ... The **Mat-Su Council on Aging** is presenting a **workshop series** for area seniors age 60 and older, focused on "creative tools and collaborative efforts to strengthen our community and connections in this place we are so proud to call home." The series includes four half-day sessions, once a week over four weeks, located at a retreat space in Wasilla, with snacks and lunch provided. Transportation and parking are available. There will be two series, one meeting on Tuesdays, April 9-30 and the other on Thursdays, April 11-May 2. Individuals should be able to attend all four sessions in their series. For more information, contact Brenda Sheldon at info@mcoaging.com or call 907-917-4600.

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

Mr. Whitekeys' new act

Sailing into history



The entire expedition party, photographed on the dock in Seattle before sailing.

Photos courtesy Mr. Whitekeys

By DIMITRA LAVRAKAS

For Senior Voice

Perhaps you remember those nights in the Fly By Night Club watching Mr. Whitekeys' "Whale Fat Follies" or "Christmas in Spenard," and laughing so hard you snorted your drink through your nose.

He skewered politicians so deftly it was as if he stuck needles in a voodoo doll and they felt them. That cast parading around with a salmon around their waist or an Alaska Marine Highway ferry were portends of their problems still unsolved.

How the Anchorage comedy scene must miss him.

The show closed after a run in 2019, but Whitekeys

has found another schtick: Alaska history, with the publication of "The Voyage of the Alaska Union: Adventure, Danger, Scurvy, Romance."

It's the story of 80 greenhorns from Chicago, the largest gold rush expedition, who set out to strike it rich in Alaska in 1898.

"They had no idea what they were in for," Whitekeys wrote.

One of their members toted a 40-pound camera with him during the entire odyssey, and after 120 years, Mr. Whitekeys rediscovered the photos in a friend's basement.

A discovery in Hawaii

Alaskans who met by chance and called themselves the 'Saltwater Gang of Six' were hanging out one night in Hawaii not too long ago when Alaska history came up and Randy Jacobs made the comment, "Oh yeah. That was like when my Grandpa came to Alaska in the gold rush of 1898."

Whitekeys said he became very animated, fired off some unacceptable exclamations and asked where the photographs and papers were.

"In my cellar," Jacobs replied. Photographer Charles D. Harris was not Jacobs' biological grandfather but he was accepted as such.

Harris photographed the expedition with a

next page please



Of the expedition, Whitekeys said, "It may be 70 below, you may have forgotten to pack your tent on a 100-mile trek, but if you had doughnuts, everything was just fine."

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Art of the North Galleries photo by Oscar Avellanada-Cruz



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Whitekeys

from page 18

40-pound camera he toted everywhere and upon return to civilization went on the lecture circuit up until the 1950s.

But there in the cellar, Whitekeys found Harris' manuscript and 140 photographs in poor condition, cracked and faded. Being a resourceful man, he taught himself an application far simpler than Photoshop and restored them.

"There were pictures of everything he did," Whitekeys said. "I thought, 'This has gotta be preserved'. It's an important piece of Alaska history."

It was not an easy task. "I went painstakingly through everything, one by one, to figure out which slide Harris was talking about in the manuscript," Whitekeys said.

Alaska history always an interest

Whitekeys pointed out that his interest in Alaska history could be seen in Whale Fat Follies skits and the DVD "Alaska-The First 10,000 Years," available

for a mere \$15 and free shipping.

"I've always liked history—a lot of it is in the Whale Fat Follies and lots of research was needed," he said. "Like moose nugget jewelry: How many moose are in Alaska, or how many times a day does a moose poop. So I'm no stranger to research."

A downloadable ebook can be had for \$9.95 at www.mrwhitekeys.com or a printed book for \$39.95. Books are available in Anchorage at Title Wave Books and Cabin Fever.

Mr. Whitekeys often gives talks about the expedition and dates can be found on his website.

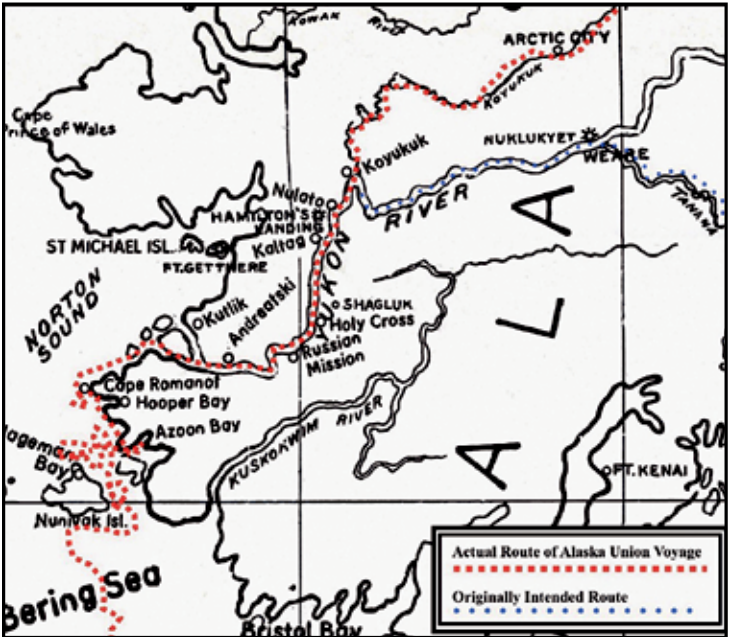


Photographer Charles Harris toted around a 40-pound camera.

Photos courtesy Mr. Whitekeys



Amazingly, these men built a 120-foot paddlewheel in six weeks with no skills in boatbuilding.



Wayward but determined, the men faced the odds, but success eluded them.

Calendar of Events

March 9-10 Anchorage Alaska Whole Life Festival at the Coast Inn, 3450 Aviation Ave., 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily. Metaphysical and healing arts event with lectures, demonstrations, vendors. \$10 per day; \$5 for seniors age 65+, military and students. Visit alaskawholelifefestival.com or their Facebook page.

March 10 Statewide Daylight Savings Time begins. Move clocks ahead one hour.

March 11 Anchorage "Safe Talk: Self Care for Grievors," at Anchorage Senior Activity Center, noon. Free brown bag lunch presentation and discussion with grief coach and chaplain volunteer Kris Green. 907-770-2000

March 14 Fairbanks Spring Fest celebration at Tanana Lakes Recreation Area, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Presented by Fairbanks North Star Borough Parks and Recreation. Enjoy the spring sun and family friendly activities like snow painting, skating on the lake, scavenger hunt, bonfires, refreshments and more. Free. 907-459-1070

March 15-17 Bethel Cama'i Dance Festival. Three-day cultural celebration at the Bethel Regional High School gymnasium, showcasing dancers from around the region, state and beyond. Other activities include workshops, fashion show, pageant, Native foods dinner, more. Sponsored by SouthWest Alaska Arts Group. Information and schedule at www.swagak.org

March 17 Nationwide St. Patrick's Day

March 19 Anchorage Age Smart forum and dinner at Anchorage Senior Activity Center, 6:30 p.m. Join and learn at this free event. This month's speaker is popular Anchorage Daily News history columnist David Reamer, who will speak on Alaska's representation in old movies. 907-770-2000

March 21 Soldotna "Online Safety" presentation at Soldotna Public Library, 5:30 p.m. Learn tips from Soldotna's police chief Gene Meek. 907-262-4227

March 22-23 Juneau 2024 ROAR Women's Conference, Centennial Hall Convention Center. Two-day gathering, ROAR (Reclaim, Own and Renew) celebrates "Alaskan women navigating wellness, wisdom and wholeness across generations." Keynote speakers, panels, more. Presented by Southeast Alaska Regional Health Consortium. 907-463-0400 or searhc.org.

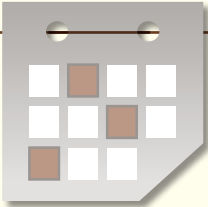
March 25 Statewide Seward's Day

March 27 Wasilla Mat-Su Employer Expo, Menard Center, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Explore career and job opportunities with more than 100 employers, schools and other partners on site. Workshops, resume assistance, typing certification testing, more. Call the Mat-Su Job Center, 907-352-2500

March 29 Wasilla Easter Celebration at Wasilla Area Seniors Inc. (WASI), aka Wasilla Senior Center, 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Ham, scalloped potatoes, pea salad, deviled eggs. 907-206-8800

March 31 Worldwide Easter Sunday

March 31 Statewide Filing deadline for Alaska Permanent Fund Dividend



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52 years of Iditarod and counting

By LAUREL DOWNING BILL

Senior Voice Correspondent

The two legendary visionaries who conceived the 1,049-mile race from Anchorage to Nome hardly could have imagined the success and changes that would happen over the next half century of the “Last Great Race.”

In 1964, a history buff who lived in Wasilla had an idea. Dorothy Page, secretary of the Aurora Dog Mushers Club, saw that snow-machines were fast taking the place of dog teams and mushing. She thought a sled dog race on the historic Iditarod Trail, which originally began in Seward during the gold rush days and stretched to Knik, then on to the gold camp of Iditarod and eventually to Nome, might revitalize a longtime Alaska tradition. But Page knew that she would have to find a musher to share her dream before it could become reality.

She endured comments such as “are you crazy?” for two years, until she talked to Joe Reddington Sr. during a break at the Willow Winter Carnival sled dog races in 1966. Page explained her idea to the veteran musher, who had traveled over sections of the historic Iditarod Trail while homesteading near Flat Horn Lake.

His response, “I think that’s a great idea!” has been echoed by hundreds of mushers from all parts of Alaska, the Lower 48, and even foreign countries ever since.

Fifty-eight mushers signed up to compete for \$25,000 in prize money for the 1967 inaugural race. Since only nine miles of the trail had been cleared, the race ran from Knik to Big Lake on Saturday, and from Big Lake to Knik on Sunday, for a total of 56 miles. Isaac Okleasik, an Alaska Native from Teller on the Seward Peninsula north of Nome, won the “Iditarod Centennial Race.”

Due to a lack of snow in 1968, a lack of money in 1969, and a lack of interest from 1970-1972, the race was put on hold. But the behind-the-scenes work continued as volunteers cleared the brush from both the Nome and Knik ends of the trail.

Finally, on March 3, 1973, amid the cheers of hundreds of well-wishers, 34 mushers left Anchorage headed for Nome in pursuit of not only a dream, but also \$50,000 in prize money pledged by Reddington Sr.

Dick Wilmarth, a hard-working gold miner from the Interior village of Red Devil, crossed the finish line first. It took him 20 days, 49 minutes, and 41 seconds to travel the old winter trail that mushers hadn’t used for 45 years.

Alternating every year between the southern route and the northern route, the current trails cross the Alaska Range, Kuskokwim Mountains, Nulato Hills and over 200 miles along the mighty Yukon River. Once the mushers take off from Knik, they leave civilization behind and only have small towns and villages such as Skwentna, Nikolai, Ophir, and Unalakleet to break the monotony of traveling in bone-chilling cold until they reach the historic Gold Rush town of Nome, perched on the shores of the Bering Sea.

It seems fitting that Ryan Redington, grandson of “the father of the Iditarod,” was the first musher to cross under the burlled arches in Nome on March 14, 2023, to win the 51st running of the great race with a time of 8 days, 21 hours,

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Knik, a small trading center for miners and settlers, was an important stop on the Iditarod Trail.

Photo courtesy Univ. of Alaska Fairbanks

It's the Altitude

Across

- 1 Enraptured
- 5 “___ I care!”
- 9 Short run
- 13 Curved molding
- 14 Mostly dry gully
- 15 Bread spreads
- 17 Where to find Cape York Peninsula
- 19 Wrist accessory
- 20 It’s a plus
- 21 City north of Cologne
- 23 Bout stopper, for short
- 24 Pit contents
- 26 Amount past due?
- 27 W.W. II craft (Abbr.)
- 28 Take a remedial course
- 32 Dreary sound
- 34 Pub fixture
- 35 Lean against
- 37 Dean’s e-mail address ender

- 39 Kind of suit
- 41 Cornfield sound
- 42 Bond role player
- 44 Polit. label
- 45 Underweight
- 47 Editor’s abbr.
- 48 Dusky brownish gray color
- 50 Made to look silly playing a game
- 52 Maximum
- 54 ___ capita
- 55 Acid reflux letters
- 56 Salem’s place, briefly
- 57 1987 Nick Nolte prison drama
- 60 Garners

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- 64 Spiral-horned South African antelope
- 66 Rain gutter attachment
- 68 Basket material
- 69 ___ Bator, Mongolia
- 70 Radius neighbor
- 71 Trampled
- 72 Actor Sarsgaard, to his buddies
- 73 Fly, e.g.
- 7 Dangerous time
- 8 They begin the rush to the goalposts
- 9 Depressing experience
- 10 Chef’s phrase
- 11 Put down roots
- 12 Soup bones
- 16 Exhausted
- 18 Jazz fan, most likely
- 22 Hibernia
- 25 Irritation
- 28 Energy unit, in brief
- 29 Doctor Who villainess, with “the”
- 30 Uncertain
- 31 Ready for a kiss
- 33 General Motors division, once

Down

- 1 Club ending?
- 2 Stars have big ones
- 3 Kind of wire
- 4 Principles
- 5 Barley bristle
- 6 Marquis de ___
- 36 Skater Babilonia
- 38 Sanskritic language
- 40 Harem room
- 42 Nearsighted folks
- 43 Special gift
- 45 Graf ___
- 46 Flyers’ org.
- 49 Ascending
- 51 Finish off
- 52 Jaywalking, e.g.
- 53 Secret meeting
- 58 Big name in pineapples
- 59 Whack
- 61 Lady Macbeth, e.g.
- 62 Conical buoys
- 63 Boxer’s reach, e.g.
- 65 Sign before Virgo
- 67 Storm dir.

Crossword answers on page 30



Billy Dee Williams—more than a charming space pirate

By NICK THOMAS
Tinseltown Talks

As any devoted Star Wars fan can deduce, the title of Billy Dee Williams' new autobiography, "What Have We Here?" released in February, is a nod to the actor's most famous character—Lando Calrissian. The smooth-talking caped space smuggler first greets Princess Leia with that line in 1980's "The Empire Strikes Back."

While the feisty cinnamon-bunned princess may not have swooned on-screen when the charming Lando gently kissed her hand before eventually joining forces to save their galaxy (although Leia's fleeting smirk suggests her royal knees might have buckled slightly), other screen characters were not so demure when confronted with the suave actor.

For instance, Diana Ross (playing singer Billie Holiday) first glimpses Williams (portraying her



Billy Dee Williams, 86, grew up in Harlem in the 1940s. His new book details his life and career in acting.

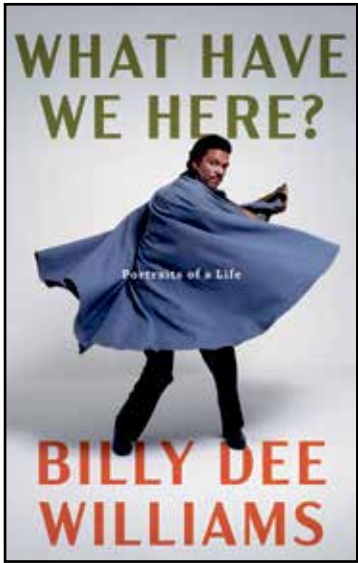
future lover, Louis McKay) in 1972's hit movie "Lady Sings the Blues." Her character promptly sinks to the floor, emotionally melting—mouth agape—captivated by the dreamy, white-suited Williams gracefully descending a staircase.

"When I saw film of myself walking down those stairs, I fell in love with me!" said Williams, laugh-

ing, from his home in Los Angeles. In real life, too, fans were similarly drawn to Williams' charisma.

"I even had a woman faint right in front of me and it's all very flattering," he recalled. "But I don't take myself too seriously."

Beyond his Hollywood status as a heartthrob or swashbuckling space pirate, Williams was a solid, compelling actor through-



Albert L. Ortega photo, provided by publisher

out his long career that began when he stepped onto a Broadway stage, barely eight years old.

Raised in Harlem during the 40s in a moderately well-off household, young Billy's family supported his interest in the arts which also included painting, a career he originally planned to pursue. But in 1956, on a chilly winter's day in New York City, he

literally bumped into a TV casting director emerging from a clothing store, striking up a conversation.

The chance encounter led to an offer of work as an extra in East Coast television series, reinvigorating his interest in acting. After moving to Hollywood, Williams would amass hundreds of film, television and theater credits over the next six decades.

"For a young, brown-skinned boy like me growing up in Harlem, getting to Hollywood was a far-fetched dream in those early days," Williams said. "I'm not a very competitive person when it comes to something like sports, but I am when it comes to acting. I was determined to make it."

And he did, with lead roles in feature films such as "Mahogany" (1975), "Scott Joplin" (1977), "Nighthawks" (1981), as well as ABC's "Dynasty"

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Underutilized burial benefits for veterans

By **JIM MILLER**
Savvy Senior

Dear Savvy Senior: What types of funeral benefits are available to old veterans? My 83-year-old father, who has Alzheimer’s disease, served during the Vietnam War in the 1960s.

Planning Ahead
Dear Planning: Department of Veterans Affairs’ (VA) National Cemetery Administration actually offers a variety of underutilized burial benefits to veterans as well as their spouses and dependents. Most U.S. veterans (both combat and non-combat) who didn’t receive a dishonorable discharge are eligible for burial benefits. To verify your dad’s discharge, you’ll need a copy of his DD Form 214 “Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty.” If you don’t have it, you can request online at [Archives.gov/veterans](https://www.archives.gov/veterans). Here’s a rundown of some of the different ben-

efits that are available to veterans that die a nonser-vice related death.

Military cemetery benefits
If your dad’s eligible and would like to be buried in one of the 155 national or 119 state, territory or tribal-operated cemeteries (see [VA.gov/find-locations](https://www.va.gov/find-locations)), the VA provides a number of benefits at no cost to the family, including: a gravesite; opening and closing of the grave and perpetual gravesite care; a government headstone or marker; a United States burial flag that can be used to drape the casket or accompany the urn; and a Presidential Memorial Certificate.
If your dad is cremated, his remains will be buried or inurned in the same manner as casketed remains.
But be aware that funeral or cremation arrangements and costs are not taken care of by the VA. They

are the responsibility of the veteran’s family, but some veteran’s survivors may be eligible for burial allowances.
The VA also offers a memorial web page called the Veterans Legacy Memorial for any veteran buried in a national, state, territorial or tribal cemetery. This allows families to post pictures and stories of their loved one online as a way to remember and honor their service.
If you’re interested in this option, the VA has a pre-need burial eligibility determination program to help you plan ahead before your dad passes. See [VA.gov/burials-memorials/pre-need-eligibility](https://www.va.gov/burials-memorials/pre-need-eligibility) or call the National Cemetery Scheduling Office at 800-535-1117.
Private cemetery benefits
The VA also provides benefits to veterans buried in private cemeteries. If your dad chooses this

option, the VA benefits include a free government headstone or grave marker, or a medallion that can be affixed to an existing privately purchased headstone or marker; a burial flag; and a Presidential Memorial Certificate.
Funeral or cremation arrangements and costs are again the responsibility of the family, and there are no benefits offered to spouses and dependents that are buried in private cemeteries.
Military funeral honors
Another popular benefit available to all eligible veterans buried in either a national or private cemetery is a military funeral honors ceremony. This includes an honor guard detail of at least two uniformed military persons, folding and presenting the U.S. burial flag to the veteran’s survivors, and the playing of Taps.
The funeral provider you choose will be able to assist

you with all VA burial requests. Depending on what you want, certain forms may need to be completed which are always better to be done in advance.
For a complete rundown of burial and memorial benefits, eligibility details and required forms visit [Cem.va.gov](https://www.cem.va.gov).
Burial Allowances
In addition to the burial benefits, some veteran’s survivors may also qualify for a \$948 burial allowance and \$948 for a plot to those who choose to be buried in a private cemetery. And \$231 for a headstone or grave marker allowance. To find out if your dad is eligible or to apply, see [VA.gov/burials-memorials/veterans-burial-allowance](https://www.va.gov/burials-memorials/veterans-burial-allowance).
Send your senior questions to: *Savvy Senior*, P.O. Box 5443, Norman, OK 73070, or visit [SavvySenior.org](https://www.savvysenior.org). Jim Miller is a contributor to the NBC Today show and author of “The Savvy Senior” book.

Thank you, volunteers!



In February, AARP volunteers from across the state joined staff in the state capitol to advocate for programs and services that make it possible for Alaskans to choose how they live as they age.

Our legislative priorities range from improving access to care at the right level to making it easier for Alaskans of all ages to save for retirement. AARP volunteers are critical messengers, speaking from experience to drive home the impact of pending and needed legislation.

For more on our 2024 legislative priorities, visit aarp.org/ak.





An Alaskan tale of lawyers and strip clubs

By KENNETH KIRK

For Senior Voice

This month's column features a probate fight over a strip joint.

Now that I have your attention, I have to confess that the case, which was reported recently from the Alaska Supreme Court, has little to do with the strip joint itself. In fact, in the written decision it is merely referred to as a "Fairbanks cabaret". A more cynical individual might suspect that the reason they called it that, and made no reference to the fact that the establishment was fairly well known to be a place where women remove their clothing for the entertainment of the patrons, was because some of the members of the court might have told their wives, in response to questioning about a credit card statement, that it was "just a cabaret". Of course, I would make no such insinuation.

But the case is interesting for a completely unrelated reason.

Here are the simple facts of the case: this fellow owned the club, and the property it was located on, as well as a 5-plex apartment building. He died, leaving a will which gave everything to his wife. She applied to be the executor, but so did a man who claimed to be a creditor of the estate. When



the widow failed to show up for hearings, the judge appointed the creditor as the executor. At the same time, the judge entered an order which required that no distributions were to be made from the estate accounts.

(Actually I should clarify that the case was decided on summary judgment, so there hasn't been an actual trial. These were the assumed facts of the case, for purposes of the appeal.)

Several years passed, and things went downhill. The club building burned to the ground, and it turned out the executor had not paid the fire insurance. The heat was turned off to the apartment building because the utility bills were not paid, and as a result the pipes froze. Eventually the properties were foreclosed since the property taxes were also not paid. And it turned out the executor had disobeyed the court order and removed funds from the account.

When the widow was fi-

nally able to have someone else take over as executor, it was too late to recover the assets. The estate was insolvent. So the estate sued the executor.

But the estate also sued the attorney for the executor. And that is where it gets interesting.

There was no evidence that the attorney actually knew that withdrawals had been made from the estate account. He never asked. The new executor argued that since the attorney represented the estate, he had a duty to the estate and should have made some inquiries, especially since his client was clearly doing a terrible job as executor.

But there is a problem with that, and it is a problem I have run into with probate cases before. Contrary to what most people assume, the attorney does not represent the estate, nor the heirs. The attorney represents the executor. He represents him in his specific function as the executor, but he still represents that specific person.

As a general rule, attorneys are responsible to their clients, not to

everyone else. There are exceptions. If I discover that my client is committing fraud, or some other criminal act, in the matters on which I am representing him, I do have a responsibility to address that, and I could potentially be liable if I didn't. But as long as I don't actually know that he is committing a crime or fraud, I don't have a duty to investigate.

Oftentimes when the beneficiaries of an estate are unhappy with the performance of the executor, they want me, as the attorney, to intervene on their behalf. But I can't do that; the executor is my client. And if my client is just delaying, or not doing a very good job of getting things done, but I have seen no evidence of crime or fraud, then there isn't a whole lot I can do about it. I can advise my client to get on the stick, but that's about it.

This is a lot different than what happens in corporate law. If I was the attorney for a corporation, and an officer of the corporation appeared to be doing things which were not in the corporation's

best interest, I could go over his head to the company president or to the Board of Directors. But as the attorney for an executor in probate, I have no ability to go over his head (again, with those limited exceptions).

So the lesson to be learned is, if you are the heir of an estate and you are unhappy with the job the executor is doing, don't rely on the lawyer who is handling the probate; get your own lawyer. And also, if your husband owns a strip club and then he dies, you should probably make it a point to show up for hearings.

Kenneth Kirk is an Anchorage estate planning lawyer. Nothing in this article should be taken as legal advice for a specific situation; for specific advice you should consult a professional who can take all the facts into account. And in case any members of the Alaska Supreme Court read the Senior Voice, the insinuation at the beginning of this article was obviously intended as humor. None of you would ever be caught dead in such a place. Somebody must have stolen your credit card number.

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Free tax assistance from AARP Tax-Aide

Senior Voice Staff

AARP Foundation's Tax Aide Program in Alaska is available to prepare taxes this season through April 15, 2024. Assistance may be in-person at various

locations around the state; online via web, or a combination of the two. Do-it-yourself is also an option using the online assistance.

Find a Tax-Aide location and schedule near you with the site locator at <https://www.irs.gov/charity-epi/epi-locator>

taxaide.aarpfoundation.org/ or by calling Alaska 2-1-1 information and referral line by dialing 2-1-1 or 1-800-478-2221. You will be instructed on what to bring to your preparation visit.

Free Q&A with state senior services

Senior Voice Staff

Training specialists and other representatives from Alaska's Senior and Disabilities Services are available via Zoom on the first

and third Monday of each month (March 4 and 18) for "Individual and Family Office Hour," noon to 1 p.m. Ask questions about benefits eligibility, the Medicaid waiver, and other services

available through SDS.

For information and the Zoom meeting address, email sdstraining@alaska.gov or call 1-800-478-9996 or 907-269-3666.

Impostors

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information. We only accept payments electronically through Pay.gov, Online Bill Pay, or by check or money order.

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immediately.

- Promise a benefit increase in exchange for money.

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Scammers continue to evolve and find new ways to steal your money and personal information. Please stay vigilant and help raise awareness about Social

Security-related and other government impostor scams. For more information, please visit www.ssa.gov/scam.

Tell your friends and family about government impostor scams. Let them know they don't have to be embarrassed to report if they shared personal financial information or suffered a financial loss. The important thing is to report the scam right away.

Video assistance with your Social Security questions

Social Security Administration

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

The video service locations are available at:

► In **Nome**, Norton Sound Health Corporation, located at 1000 Greg Krushek Ave. Video service is available for walk-ins on a first come, first served basis, on the second and fourth Wednesdays, 9 a.m. to noon.

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

► **Kodiak Job Center**, 211 Mission Road, Suite 103. Video service is available here for walk-ins on a first

come, first served basis, on the second and fourth Tuesdays, 9 a.m. to noon.

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

Most Social Security services are available to the public online and with a my Social Security account, or by telephone. And most Social Security services do not require the public to take time to visit an office. People may create their my Social Security account, a personalized online service, at www.socialsecurity.gov/myaccount.

If they already receive Social Security benefits, they can start or change direct deposit online, request a replacement SSA-1099, and if they need proof of their benefits, they can

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That geezer computer in your closet can be young again

By LAWRENCE D. WEISS

For Senior Voice

You know that old computer in the closet, or on a bookshelf, or wherever you stashed it after Microsoft or Apple told you they wouldn't update it anymore? You paid the big bucks for it, and it still turns on and seems to work okay. Apart from some dust, it looks pretty good. Its only problem is planned obsolescence. How maddening!

Now that they have pulled the update plug, the manufacturers of your machine would love for you to rush right out and buy yet another brand-new flashy computer for a king's ransom—until they pull the update plug again in a few short years. There is an alternative. Recall

the old homily, "Don't get mad, get even."

Enter Linux! Wild applause, fireworks, orchestral climax, annoyed computer manufacturers, smile on your face. Why? Because Linux completely replaces the Windows or Apple operating system on your machine. It will most likely make your mature machine run faster than ever. It includes all the software you are likely to ever need, and it automatically updates your operating system and all your programs for many years. It is inherently so safe that most people don't even run an anti-virus program with it.

And, are you ready for this? It is completely free. The operating system, all the software, all the updates, all of it—completely free. Sounds like I am

selling snake oil and there must be a catch, but no, it's for real. Here's why.

Microsoft and Apple are for-profit corporations. They have to charge for their services, and they have to profit from them. And you have to pay for it all. That's the king's ransom part. But the Linux operating system has very different roots.

Linux is not developed in a for-profit corporation, but rather by the "open source" community, which is a decades-old global network of volunteer developers, organizations and enthusiasts who work together to create high-quality software of all kinds. Their guiding principles include the distribution of free software, openness, increased security, customization options, and

innovation. In other words, they are a worldwide network of thousands of dedicated do-gooder brainiacs. Who knew?

If you would like to have a better sense of the look and feel of Linux, see these two short videos on YouTube: "Simple Tasks in WINDOWS 11 vs LINUX MINT," and "Is Linux Mint the Windows replacement?"

I have been working with Linux for about a dozen years. It comes in a great many versions but I use Linux Mint Cinnamon because it has the familiar look and feel of Windows. Mac users shouldn't have too much trouble with the transition. In addition, Linux Mint is known for stability and ease of use for new Linux users. If you like, poke around the Linux Mint website at: <https://www.linuxmint.com/>

www.linuxmint.com/

Here is a very cool feature of Linux Mint: You can download a copy from the website, for free of course, and install it on a thumb drive (a little storage device the size of your thumb that plugs into a port in your computer). Plug that drive into your computer when the computer is turned off, then turn the computer on, and it will usually boot up using the thumb drive. If it doesn't, it's a simple technical fix involving "boot order."

That way you can test Linux Mint on your computer, but nothing on your computer is changed because all the action takes place in the thumb drive. If you want to avoid the geeky hassles of installing Mint

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Caregiving

continued from page 4

reduce stress and anxiety. These apps provide caregivers with a much-needed respite from their demanding roles, promoting self-care and overall well-being. Caregiving can be overwhelming; prepare yourself for the challenges. Make sure you get answers to all your questions. Headspace offers specific meditations designed for

caregivers, focusing on stress reduction and compassion for oneself.

Transforming caregiving

The rise of caregiving apps has undoubtedly transformed the way caregivers manage their responsibilities. From medication management to appointment scheduling, communication, and emotional support, these apps offer practical solutions to ease the unpredictability placed on caregivers. By

utilizing these applications, caregivers, parents, or family members can enhance their efficiency, reduce stress, and ensure better care for their loved ones.

In an increasingly digital world, these apps provide

everyone with the tools they need to navigate their caregiving journey with confidence and support. Having a plan and staying organized prevents missed doses, confusion about appointments, or miscommunication between those

providing the care, and other responsible parties.

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

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Sports scores, lost AppleID passwords, and Google preservation

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

Q. I am looking for a way to follow sports scores from different games on my phone. Does that exist?

A. There are a few options. If all the games are in one league, such as MLB or the NBA, leagues usually have apps that can keep you up to date. Specific features vary within each app, but league-focused apps are a good place to start.

Following a group of teams from different sports altogether requires a little creativity. The ESPN app permits you to create custom alerts for individual teams, and those alerts are delivered to your smartphone. You can craft sophisticated notifications using the ESPN app, which makes it a more complete solution. The tradeoff is that it requires more work to set up.

For Apple iPhone users, the Apple Sports app (free download on the App Store) is a fresh take on a universal scoreboard.

When you first launch the app, you will be prompted to identify your favorite leagues and teams. The challenge here is that the app is new and not every sport is represented. Apple promises there are more stats to come.

The marriage of sports scores and smartphones seems ideal. Unfortunately,

If you prepare ahead of time, a lost AppleID password is a minor nuisance. If not, there is an excellent chance you will lose everything.

following a mix of scores from different sources requires extra effort up front.

Q. What happens if I lose the password for my AppleID?

A. If you prepare ahead of time, a lost AppleID password is a minor nuisance. If not, there is an excellent chance you will lose everything.

Lost passwords can have serious consequences for your family as well. If you die suddenly, and your password is known only to you, all your data and photos are lost forever.

The preservation of digital data is a big topic. However, there are simple steps you can take right now to avoid future problems.

Go to the Settings app on your iPhone and tap your name at the very top of the screen. This will open your iCloud settings. Next, tap Sign-in and Security.

There are two vital settings to configure here, Recovery Contacts and Legacy Contacts.

A Recovery Contact is a trusted friend or family member who is authorized to send you a "recover password" message, which will allow you to set a new password for your AppleID without the old password.

A Legacy Contact is

someone you designate to receive an archive of all your digital data stored on iCloud in the event of your passing.

Configuring these settings require that everyone involved have up to date software. If that is not an option for you, a somewhat less reliable alternative is to print out a recovery code.

These features are fairly new, so there is a good chance this is probably the first time you have heard these suggestions.

Protect yourself and your family by setting up Recovery and Legacy Contacts today.

Q. I am an Android user. Is there something similar to Apple's Legacy Contact for my Google Photos or other data?

A. Google does not have a Legacy Contact feature, although they do have a process that enables a somewhat similar result: the ability to designate an Inactive Account Manager.

Once established, the

Wander the Web

Here are my picks for worthwhile browsing this month:

One Small Step
This site has everything from countdowns to live video during launches. It also features extensive news coverage of space related activities.
spaceflightnow.com

Online Book Club
Glose is a service that helps you find interesting books to read and enables social interaction among readers.
glose.com

America's Finest News Source
Do not let the title fool you. The Onion is pure satire. Sometimes witty, sometimes controversial, but always entertaining.
theonion.com

designee can access your Google account without a password after a set amount of time when the account is inactive.

This is not exactly like a Legacy Contact. The minimum time for an account to be marked as inactive is three months. After the timeout is passed, your data can be retrieved.

Until Google streamlines this process, this is the only

option right now. To get started, visit myaccount.google.com/inactive and follow the prompts.

As I pointed out previously, preserving your data is much easier when it is done before something tragic occurs. Do this today.

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

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Birds on the wing return in the spring

Birding events around the state



A no-nonsense Rufous hummingbird patrols its territory in Tenakee Springs.

Photos by Dimitra Lavrakas

By DIMITRA LAVRAKAS

Senior Voice Travel
Correspondent

Our eyes turn to the skies in early spring with the return of the birds that signal warm weather and another generation of their species. In Utqiagvik, it's the welcome sight of the snowbird and, in Fairbanks, the sandhill cranes, with their cries that penetrate and bring us outside to wonder at them.

And with the birds, there are the annual festivals, with opportunities to celebrate and learn. Here's a preview.

Ketchikan Hummingbird Festival, April, dates to be announced.

Celebrate the return of migratory birds from Central and South America to Southeast Alaska in this month-long annual festival. The male rufous hummingbirds begin arriving in Ketchikan around mid-March and are seen at feeders and flowers throughout the region by mid-April. Events include guided bird hikes, art shows and activities for kids. For more information, call the Southeast Alaska Discovery Center at 907-228-6220.

Fairbanks Spring Migration Celebration, April 27, noon to 4 p.m.

At the 2,200-acre Creamer's Field Migratory Waterfowl Refuge there will be great viewing opportunities for trumpeter swans, Canada geese,

white-fronted geese, and various species of ducks. Activities include birdwatching and wildlife viewing, guided nature walks, falconry demonstrations, and kids' crafts for school-aged children. Friends of Creamer's Field works collaboratively with the Alaska Dept. of Fish & Game and other community partners to offer education programs. Attendees are also encouraged to visit the Farmhouse Visitor Center, the circa-1908 Creamer family farmhouse, which features interpretive exhibits on migratory birds and the historic dairy complex. For more information, call 907-978-8457 or email programs@friendsofcreamersfield.org.

Kachemak Bay Shorebird Festival, Homer, May 8-12, 2024

This large Alaska wildlife-viewing festival honors the spring migration of shorebirds through Kachemak Bay. The festival is sponsored by the Friends of Alaska National Wildlife Refuges and Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge.

This year's featured shorebird is my favorite, the red-necked phalarope that moves in water like the duck at a carnival shooting gallery, kind of in a jerky yet gliding manner. Well, you have to see it.

Information at <https://kachemakshorebird.org/>.

Arctic Refuge Virtual Bird Fest, Dates to be announced
Don't you leave that easy

chair! Here's your chance to see snowy owls, gyrfalcons, red-necked phalaropes from the comfort of your home.

More than 200 bird species have been recorded at Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Birds that breed there have ranges that reach five other continents and all 50 states. www.arcticbirdfest.com

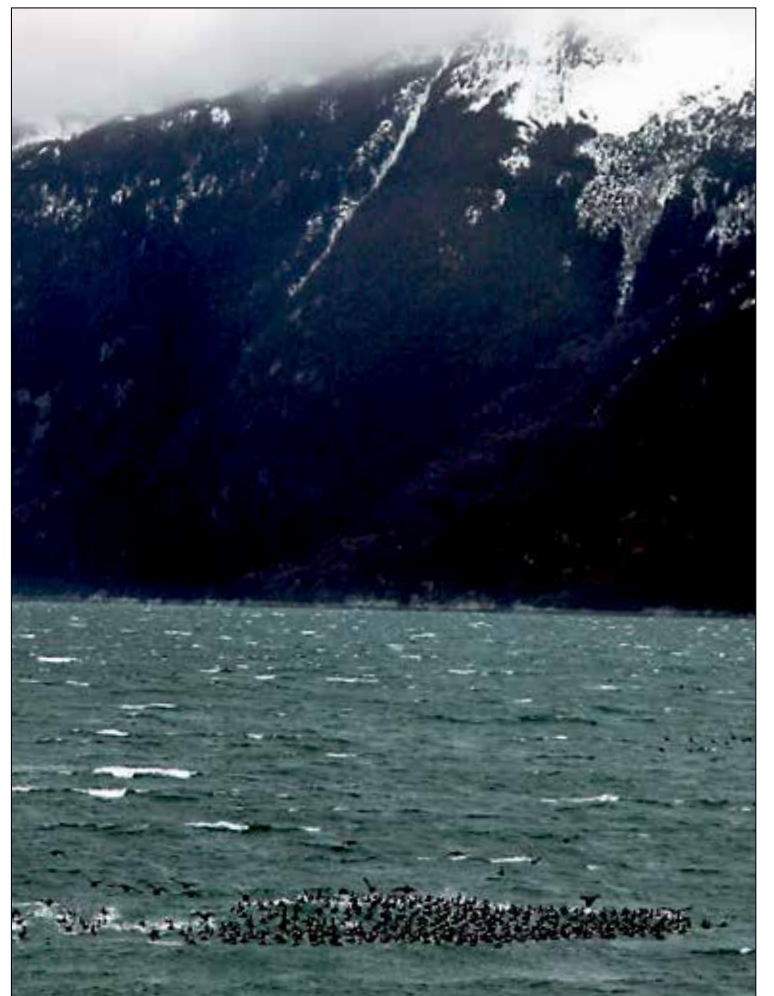
Copper River Delta Shorebird Festival, Cordova, May 2-5

Organizers are recommending festival travelers fly in on May 2 and leave on May 6. If festival goers would like to stay an extra couple of days to view peak migration time they suggest booking an itinerary of May 2-8 to enjoy the full scope of the migration.

It is a very ambitious and exciting schedule, including the Shorebird Scavenger Hunt, Copper River Gallery Art Opening, guided Alaganik field trip bird viewing as well as high tide bird viewing sessions at the Hartney Bay mudflats. A reported 5 million shorebirds rest and feed here before they continue on their journey. The Around Town Birding Tour is May 3, from 4 to 5 p.m.

There are many other activities, from the Pioneer Pie Sale and Social to kids' activities to "Shorebird ID 101" class.

This year's keynote speaker at the Cordova Center, May 3, is Subhankar Banerjee, professor of Art and Ecology and director



A raft of surf scoters herald the beginning of Spring in Skagway, Alaska.

of the Center for Environmental Arts and Humanities at the University of New Mexico. Since 2002, he has been working closely with indigenous Gwich'in and Iñupiat Elders, scientists and conservationists in Alaska. He is the author of "Seasons of Life and Land: Arctic National Wildlife Refuge," and the editor of "Arctic Voices: Resistance at the Tipping Point."

www.coppershorebird.com/schedule

World Migratory Bird Day, May 11, 2024
The United States and

Canada traditionally recognize the second Saturday in May as World Migratory Bird Day. The annual event celebrates the migration of nearly 350 species of migratory birds between nesting habitats in North America and non-breeding grounds in Latin America, Mexico and the Caribbean.

The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is the breeding place for birds that range across five continents and all 50 states. A virtual festival in the fall celebrates that connection.

next page please



Birds

from page 28

<https://ak.audubon.org/get-involved/arctic-refuge-virtual-birdfest>

Utqiagvik Shorebird Festival, Utqiagvik, in June with dates to be announced

The festival, part of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service’s Directorate Fellows Program initiative, is a collaboration between Audubon Alaska, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and other organizations to bring attendees a free, fun and educational shorebird-centered experience. The festival takes place in late June at the Utqiagvik Inupiat Heritage Center and offers activities like educational games and activities for kids of all ages, bird tours for birders of all levels, an artist workshop, and speakers from all over the world sharing their knowledge on shorebird and avian science and cultural importance.

www.facebook.com/utqshorebirdfest/



Sandhill cranes in a “V” formation coming over the Chugach Mountains south of Anchorage.
Photo by Dimitra Lavrakas

Basketball

continued from page 15

During these years it seemed the entire community turned out for the basketball games whether they had children in school or not. Homecoming games were always packed as everyone wanted to see the crowning of the Homecoming King and Queen. And, if for some reason, a fan could not attend, all home and away games were broadcast play by play over the local KCAM radio station.

That was all back in the early 1970s. After Gary and I moved to Slana in the fall of 1999, local basketball returned to my life. Although it was too far to travel to Glen-

nallen to attend games in person (1.5 hours each way), I found myself listening to a few games over KCAM. As I heard names familiar from 30 years earlier, I could easily picture the faces of their parents, who I’d grown up with. And, Monroe was again a school the Glennallen Panthers and Lady Panthers played against.

During the Pioneers of Alaska dinner that night over 20 years ago, sitting for the first time in the gym of the Monroe Rams, I was not surprised that my basketball memories overpowered my concentration on what the convention’s keynote speaker had to say.


MaraleyMcMichael is a life-long Alaskan currently residing in Palmer. Email her at maraleymcmichael@gmail.com.

Video

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print or download a current Benefit Verification Letter from their account. People not yet receiving benefits can use their online account

to get a personalized Social Security Statement, which provides their earnings information as well as estimates of their future benefits. The portal also includes a retirement calculator and links to information about other online services.



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All funds raised for Amblin' for Alzheimer's stay in Alaska to support the needs of those living with ADRD and their families and caregivers

Abuse

continued from page 13

trauma. The State of Alaska Long Term Care Ombudsman program is a pathway through which all elders and vulnerable adults have a representative under federal law who will identify and investigate complaints against seniors in residential care facilities, or, if in-home care is being provided, at the senior's own residence.

Additionally, STAR staff and volunteers provide 24/7 support for both primary (the abused) and secondary (family or friends) victims of sexual assault, including services tailored to each person's needs.

Mintz-Gentz says this "may be a phone call once a week, and information on what to do, like filling out a report of harm, or trauma counseling, relocation, protective orders, and financial assistance if necessary."

STAR operates a 24-hour crisis line, and Mintz-

Gentz emphasizes that calling can be a good first step.

"The crisis line is a good resource, even just to ask a question," she said. "A STAR advocate may also be a good connection to make as well, to determine what services may help."

Warning signs and prevention

But what about prevention? STAR provides educational programs for both the general public and professionals to cast as wide a net as possible across the state. Through online and in-person training sessions and awareness campaigns, STAR is able to share simple, practical strategies for older adults to know about possible red flags and stop abuse before it happens.

For families, this means paying attention to the physical, emotional and social conditions of individuals who live in long-term care or have a caregiver in their own home.

"Keep all interactions observable and interrupt-

ible, meaning that caregivers should never be alone with people in their care," she says, and "all spaces should be visible with windows, open doors, whenever possible."

She adds that while fingerprinting and background checks are also good tools, the process is not foolproof and is only helpful if an individual has a criminal record. The greatest tool, said Mintz-Gentz, is vigilance.

For seniors who have the capability to hire their own caregivers, there are also several ways to be self-aware:

- Designate a living will and power of attorney before health care decisions become urgent
- Stay active in the community and connected with friends and family to decrease social isolation, which has been connected to elder abuse
- Post and open your own

- mail
- Never give personal information over the phone
- Use direct deposit for all checks and never allow someone else to conduct bank business
- Have your own phone and know how to use it
- Know your rights. If you engage the services of a paid or family caregiver, you have the right to voice your preferences and concerns

Alzheimer's

continued from page 5

progression of Alzheimer's. Until now, these promising antibody therapies had limitations in reaching the brain due to the blood-brain barrier (BBB). The BBB is a protective barrier between blood vessels and the brain that blocks harmful substances from getting into the brain. However, the BBB also limits the access of therapeutics. More than 98% of drugs do not readily cross the BBB.

RNI scientists used a focused ultrasound (FUS) system to safely and temporarily open the BBB to allow the anti-amyloid-beta antibodies increased access to targeted areas of the brain. The FUS MRI-guided treatment helmet with more than 1,000 ultrasound transducers were directed to specific brain regions with high amyloid-beta plaques.

In this first-in-human proof-of-concept study, three patients (two male and one female, aged 59 to 77) with mild Alzheimer's disease received six standard monthly infusions of aducanumab antibody, immediately followed by FUS-mediated BBB open-

ing in regions with high amyloid-beta plaques. The results demonstrated the safety of this approach and increased reduction of amyloid-beta plaques measured by PET scans.

"After six months of antibody treatment, we observed an average of 32% more reduction in amyloid-beta plaques in brain areas with blood-brain barrier opening compared to areas with no such opening," said Dr. Ali Redai, who is the lead author of the study and executive chair of the RNI in Morgantown, West Virginia. "Focused ultrasound is a non-invasive outpatient procedure for BBB opening with great promise for improving drug delivery to the brain."

The next phase of the clinical trial will begin this year to explore how to further accelerate amyloid-beta removal in a shorter time with focused ultrasound in combination with lecanemab antibody.

"This is an exciting time in the treatment of Alzheimer's disease," said Marc Haut, who is the director of the RNI Memory Health Clinic. "We are hopeful that the work we are doing may lead to improvements in outcome for many other patients and their families

coping with Alzheimer's."

Dr. Maurice R. Ferre, who is the CEO and chairman of the board at Insightec, a global healthcare company dedicated to using acoustic energy to transform care, said only 1 to 2% of drugs can cross the blood-brain barrier, making progress difficult and patient safety challenging when using large systemic drug concentrations.

"The ability to disrupt the blood-brain barrier to effectively deliver treatment demonstrates the power and potential of using focused ultrasound technology when addressing complex neurological conditions," said Dr. Ferre.

Alzheimer's disease is a condition that affects 6.7 million Americans today, and promising new therapies are emerging to address this unmet medical need. This latest discovery opens up new avenues for research and provides renewed hope for patients and families.

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.

Iditarod

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12 minutes, and 58 seconds—less than half the time it took Wilmarth in that first race.

"It means everything to bring that trophy home. It's been a goal of mine since a very small child to win the Iditarod, and I can't believe it. It finally happened," Redington said in a story printed by the Anchorage

Daily News.

He is the first Redington to win the race since his grandfather and Page conceived the idea more than half a century ago.

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

Crossword answers from page 20

S	E	N	T		A	S	I	F		D	A	S	H	
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Computer

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on the thumb drive, you can buy a pre-loaded thumb drive at various places such as <https://www.shoplinux-online.com/> for about \$12.

You can use Linux in the thumb drive to explore the new operating system and the included programs, then decide whether you want to install it on your

computer. Note that if you do decide to install it, you want to take a copy of all the files that are important to you off your computer drive because installing Linux will reformat your computer's storage drive, deleting everything on it.

Finally, a bit of unsolicited advice. If much of what you have read above sounds like gobbledygook, seek out the computer nerd in your family or among your friends. It might even

be a grandkid. Tell them you would like to explore the idea of loading Linux on your old computer, and could they give you a hand. Heck, give them a copy of this article. You'll probably get a warm response. People like to be recognized for their expertise.

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.



Pickleball

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spine to the side. Repeat three or so times and then do the same on the other side.

For the twist, rotate side to side—but no Chubby Checker music is required. This is not so much about the hips, but rather focus on the spine rotating.

Hips. Make circles with your hips in one direction and repeat in the opposite direction. Stayslowandcontrolled, maybe finding more movement as you progress with the repetitions.

Knees. Placehandsabove the knees and make small circles with the knees. After three or so, repeat in the opposite direction.

Lower legs. Lift up on your tippy toes and slowly return your heels to the floor. Hold onto a chair or the wall if balance is challenging here.

Ankles. Perform ankle circles with each leg and in both directions.

Cross training

I know, you love pickleball and only want to play pickleball. However, we all need to keep our muscles strong and our joints

mobile so we can continue with all the activities. Invite some of your pickleball peeps to hit the weight circuit with you two times per week or go to a gentle flow yoga class together.

If you’re pain free now, keep it that way. If you do experience some pain when playing, please don’t be the person that just puts on an elbow or knee brace and pushes through the pain. Find out what’s causing the pain, which is most likely related to an imbalance of strength or flexibility and find movements that help you control the pain.

So you might be thinking, “this is all good information but I’m doing just fine playing five to seven days per week, in shoes I’ve had since 1999, and don’t want to do anything else.” I get it. However, think about how much you’d miss your activity and your community if you were unable to play. Would you in hindsight wish you had invested in a few steps to stay at your best? You are worth it. Evaluate your current program or routine and take some steps to ensure you’re a pickler for life.

Janet Warner is The Alaska Club Executive Director of Fitness Services and a proud grandmother of three.

remains grateful for the recognition the character afforded.

“In the long run, I think the whole idea of creating a huge fan base gives you much more longevity,” he said. “I’ll be 87 in April, and I’ve had a lot of interesting experiences throughout my life that are described in the book. Some were not pleasant, but working on ‘Empire’ (and two other Star Wars movies) was. I’m always observing, learning, and trying to be a sponge, so to speak, to make myself a better actor.”

Nick Thomas teaches at Auburn University at Montgomery in Alabama and writes features, columns, and interviews for newspapers and magazines around the country. See www.getnickt.org.

Williams

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series and the acclaimed TV sports bio-pic “Brian’s Song.”

“I didn’t want people to just see a young black kid from Harlem on the screen, but to appreciate the full spectrum of the characters I was playing,” said Williams.

It’s been almost 45 years since Williams first entered the Star Wars universe as Lando Calrissian. With his broad appeal and extensive acting experience, he was a popular addition to the franchise.

While he acknowledges that sci-fi actors rarely win Oscars or Emmys, Williams

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