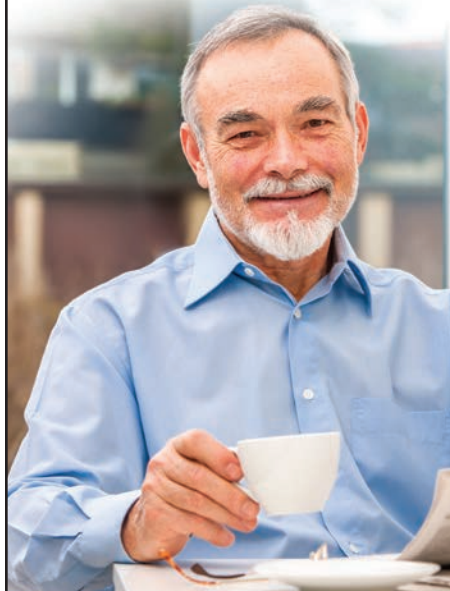
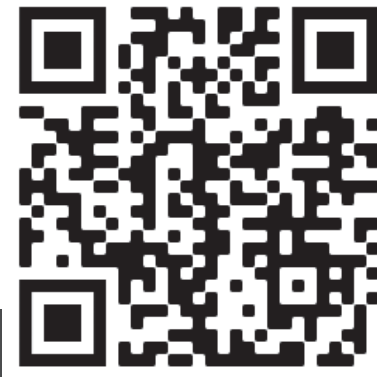


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# Senior Voice

A publication of  
Older Persons  
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Serving Alaskans 50+ Since 1978

Volume 48, Number 9 September 2025

**Common Medicare open enrollment notifications and what they mean. - page 5**

**Make jams and jellies with summer's bounty of berries. - page 14**

**The rise and fall of Katalla, an oil-boom town. - page 18**

**Title thieves can take your good name, if not your house. - page 20**

*John F. Strong is one of the centenarians — people 100 or older — honored by the Alaska Commission on Aging this month. Celebrate National Centenarian's Day on Sept. 22.*

*Photo by Yasmin Radbod, Alaska Commission on Aging*



2024  
National Mature  
Media Awards  
Winner





# Now is a good time to hire an older worker

By **JIM WARREN**  
For Senior Voice

Every year, the Department of Labor designates the last full week of September as National Employ Older Workers Week: Sept 21-27, 2025. The NEOW Week recognizes the vital role of older workers in the workforce, and it highlights the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP), which provides on-the-job skills training for seniors, 55 and older, with limited financial resources. SCSEP was authorized under the Older Americans Act of 1965. Here in Alaska, SCSEP is known as Mature Alaskans Seeking Skills Training (MASST).

September is a great time to celebrate and encourage older workers as they seek employment. We can also celebrate the 60th anniversary of the Older Americans Act and the SCSEP program. In the past 60 years, SCSEP has



**Jim Warren**  
Photos courtesy Jim Warren

helped over one million older Americans enter the workforce. As seniors become an ever-larger segment of the population, they are going to become a larger and more important segment of the workforce. Abipartisan group of U.S. senators recently reintroduced the Older Americans Act (OAA) Reauthorization Act to extend OAA’s vital nutrition, health and employment service through 2030. The reauthorization would apply to SCSEP as well, and that means it would also authorize



*Sherry Foster was recently fast-tracked to become a permanent member of an employment agency, a win for the MASST program, which provides on-the-job skills training for older workers.*

MASST through 2030. Sen. Bill Cassidy (R-LA), chair of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, is sponsoring the reauthorization bill in the Senate. “The Older Americans Act is crucial in helping American seniors live healthy and independent lives in the settings they choose,” said Sen. Cassidy. Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), rank-

ing member of the Senate Aging Committee and a cosponsor of the bill, further noted the importance of investing in services for older adults. “One in six older Americans are served by programs funded by the OAA,” Gillibrand said. “We owe it to seniors to strengthen and continue funding these programs, so they have the support they need to age

with dignity and respect.” Here in Alaska, MASST supports seniors in their journey toward unsubsidized employment. The program provides an average of 20 hours of training at government and non-profit agencies, paying the participants \$15 an hour. Participants learn new skills and engage in community service. They support the important work of scores of organizations across the state.

One recent MASST participant, Tyann Payne, describes her journey well. She had worked as a nurse for 10 years, but then she raised children for 20 years, until her husband had to retire early because of bad health. She went back to school, and while she was earning an associate’s degree in medical coding, she enrolled in MASST. Her MASST coordinator placed her with Big Cabbage Radio in Palmer.

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## Senior Voice makes subscription changes

By **C. KELLY JOY**  
Executive Director, Older Persons Action Group, Inc.

The time has come to be the bearer of timely news. Timely because the Senior Voice subscription plans have not changed in 10 years, and new postage costs are forcing the revision. The Senior Voice is implementing the following subscription plans this month. The cost for the newsprint edition is increasing, and we are keeping open access (no paywall) for the online edition. Additionally, billing management for subscriptions is transitioning into an automated system over the next four months.

Free copies of the news-

print edition will remain available at many newsstands. However, I encourage you to consider investing in a subscription for two primary reasons. The first reason is statistical. By default, life after 50 means membership into a protected class of the population, and OPAG, Inc. is an advocacy organization for

Alaska Seniors. Subscriber registrations quantify size, and this amplifies your voice. The second reason is simply for the convenience of access...newsprint copies are mailed directly to your address of choice.

Thank you in advance for your continued support for the Senior Voice News publication.

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#### Mission statement:

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

#### Vision statement:

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



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# 100 years young and living up to his name

*Editor's note: National Centenarian's Day is Sept. 22. The day honors those who've celebrated 100 birthdays or more. If that's you, happy birthday! We're publishing several profiles of people who have hit this milestone this month and in following months. The Alaska Commission on Aging is working with the Governor's Office, Pioneer Homes and Long Term Care Ombudsman to celebrate Alaska's centenarians. See page 25 for another centenarian profile.*

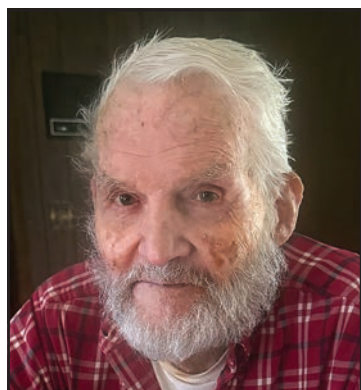
By YASMIN RADBOD

Alaska Commission on Aging

At 100 years old, John F. Strong has truly lived up to his surname. A World War II hero, builder, pilot, wild-life caretaker, and driver of the ALCAN Highway an astounding 59 times—with his last trip completed in his late 80s—"strong" might even be an understatement. He credits his long, healthy life to never drinking alcohol or smoking. There was that one cigarette at a poker game when he first joined the Navy, but that was only to prove a point to a bully, so perhaps that doesn't really count.

Strong grew up in Michigan with an alcoholic parent and had to take care of himself from a young age, hitchhiking to school as a child. In the spring of his 16th year, he arrived late to class one morning. "The teacher was hot about it," Strong recalled. She told him he was going to be reprimanded. His reply: "Don't worry about it, I'm leaving." And with that, he set out to start his life.

Not long after, he heard

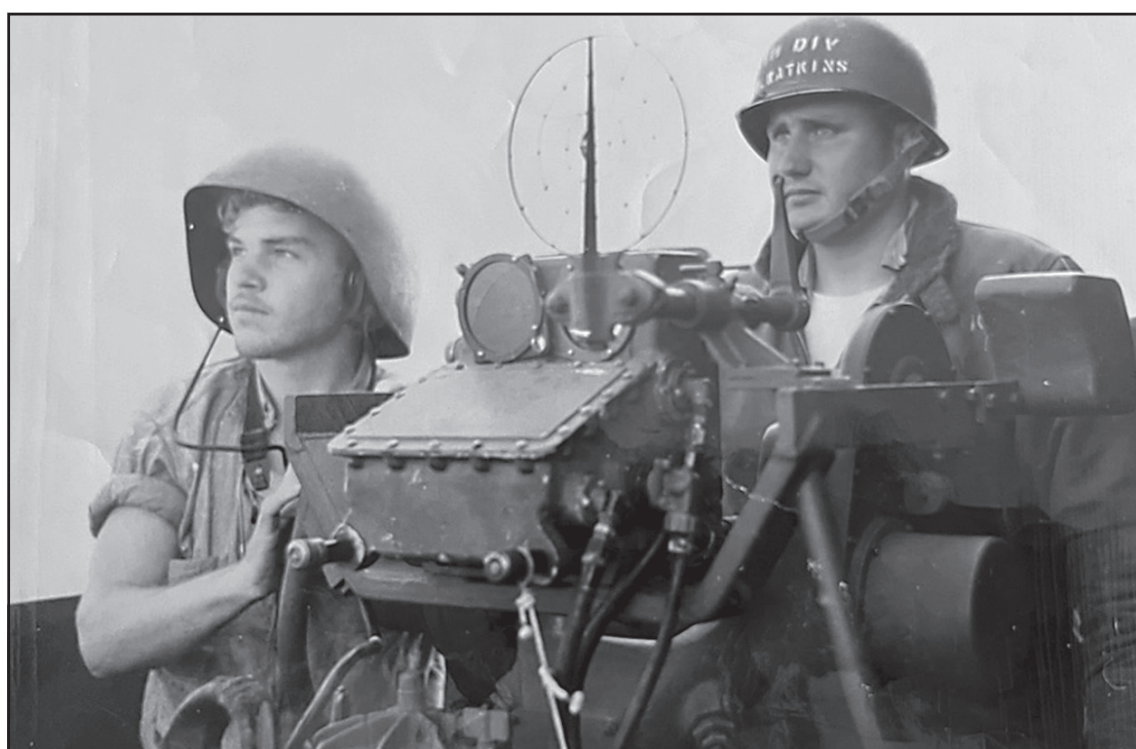


John F. Strong

Photo by Yasmin Radbod

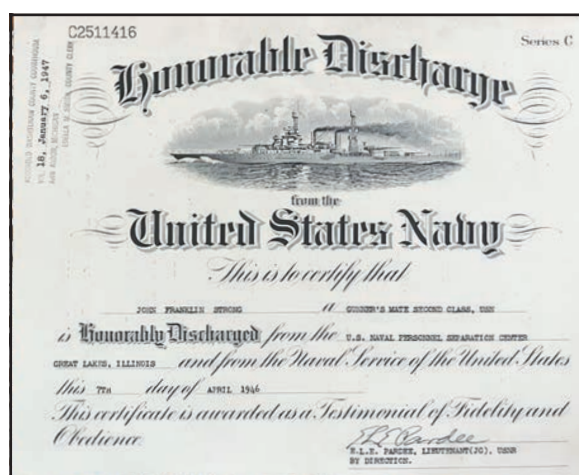
about a bowling alley looking for a pinsetter. The owner told him he was too young to work, but when couples began arriving to bowl with no pinsetter in sight, Strong jumped in—running between lanes, resetting pins, and keeping the games going. He did so well that he was hired despite his age. He rented a woman's garage, saved enough to buy a cot and sleeping bag, and lived there for nearly a year while working.

Approaching his 17th birthday, Strong visited recruiting offices for the Marines, Army, and Navy, playing "Goldilocks" in search of the right fit. De-



John F. Strong is pictured on the left in this World War II-era photo. He was a gunner's mate, third class, aboard the USS Wilkes-Barre. Pictured with him is Harold U. Watkins, of Henderson, N.C.

Official U.S. Navy Photograph, courtesy John F. Strong



This certificate shows John F. Strong was honorably discharged from the U.S. Navy in January 1947.

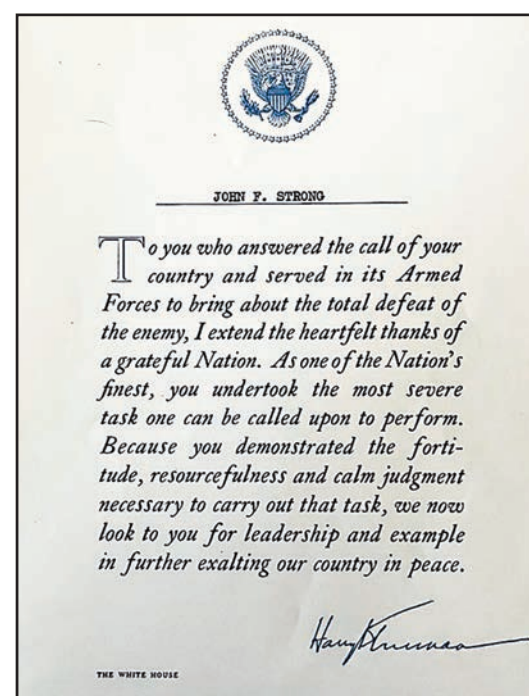
Courtesy John F. Strong

termined to meet the Navy's 5'2" minimum height requirement, he stretched himself as best he could and made it in once again despite being underage. He began in Aviation Ordnance, loading ammunition onto airplanes. Strong successfully hit targets during training that others could not reach. He served as a gunner and shot down over 40 planes in the war.

Small but mighty, Strong quickly earned a reputation for his physical agility, mental sharpness, and unwavering morals. He advanced through the ranks, known for his impeccable aim and his ability to think fast under extreme pressure. He saved the lives of many colleagues and civilians, survived multiple injuries, and independently shot down four Kamikaze planes. Strong served aboard the USS Savannah and the USS Wilkes-Barre, earning the American Area Campaign Medal, the Asiatic-Pacific Area Campaign Medal, the

European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal, the Philippine Liberation Ribbon, and the Good Conduct Ribbon—among other medals he is still waiting to receive, as verifying them decades later is no small task.

After his service, Strong trained in nearly everything he could including carpentry, plumbing, electrical systems, engineering, piloting and building. Eventually, one of Strong's construction workers told him about Alaska's great summers and fishing, inspiring him to make the move from Florida. At first, work was scarce here—his skills were so exceptional that they made others look bad and he was fired multiple times. However, once he proved himself to the manager of a large housing development project, his career took off. He went on to serve as a foreman on



This letter, issued by the Harry S. Truman White House, recognizes the contributions John F. Strong made during World War II. Courtesy John F. Strong

major projects across the state, including the Eklutna Power Plant, numerous schools, condominiums, and homes.

Strong settled on a property in Anchorage near the airstrip so he could work on planes in his yard and easily transport them to fly. He and his family cared for wildlife in the surrounding woods, befriending moose, rabbits, and other animals that spent their days visiting the Strong family.

"I've never cheated anybody out of anything," Strong said. "I taught a bunch of young people how to fly. I explained to these kids about not smoking and drinking. I taught them to enjoy life."

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

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# Grieving through sensory experience

## *Understanding what is happening can help us cope*

By **KAREN CASANOVAS**

For Senior Voice

**Q: My wife recently passed away. How do I live without her? I feel lonely and lost.**

**A:** My heartfelt condolences for your loss. The grief you are experiencing can feel overwhelming and unbearable. Heartbreak following the death of a loved one is challenging; it begins in the mind, but impacts the entire body, heightening stress and affecting your senses.

### What is happening

After a significant loss—be it a death, job loss, divorce, or other major life transition—grief manifests in stages. It's crucial to process these emotions to rediscover a sense of resolution. Healing isn't about "getting over" the grief but integrating the loss into your life to restore meaningful living.



### What to do

The loss of your wife will forever shape your life. Here, we explore how engaging your five senses (sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch) can enhance your well-being. By embracing experiences of belonging, continuity, sociability, security, and adventure, you can transform feelings of loneliness into a journey toward thriving.

**Sense of belonging:** Social bonds are essential for fostering a sense of belonging, a core human

need. Our senses facilitate these connections—eye contact and shared moments evoke feelings of acceptance. Engaging in community activities or reconnecting with friends can help rebuild that sense of belonging, offering comfort during your grief. This sense of connection not only alleviates loneliness but also reminds you that the love you shared continues to be felt by those around you.

**Continuity:** Our senses help maintain a sense of self amidst change. Memories tied to our senses connect past experiences with our present and future selves. Surrounding yourself with familiar sights, sounds, and smells can reinforce your identity. Creating a memory shrine with photos and meaningful items can serve as a comforting reminder of shared moments with your

wife, enhancing your sense of continuity in daily life. Embracing traditions you shared can also provide a structured way to honor her memory while merging those lived experiences into the present.

**Sociability:** Senses play a vital role in social interaction and relationship-building, integral to our social health. Feeling loved and valued is often activated by sensory experiences like eye contact and shared meals. Consider joining a support group or reaching out to friends; these interactions can foster a healing environment, allowing you to process your feelings in a shared setting. Participating in social activities can also distract your mind from grief, gradually helping you to feel connected to the world outside your sorrow.

**Security:** A sense of security is crucial for both

mental and physical health. Our senses help us assess our surroundings. Engaging in activities that promote safety—like listening to familiar music or surrounding yourself with comforting textures—can reduce anxiety. Establishing a routine that incorporates pleasurable sensory experiences can create a sense of stability during unpredictable emotional times. Additionally, personal practices such as breathing deeply in a quiet space or gentle exercise can further cultivate a sense of security, allowing you to ground yourself in the present moment.

**Adventure:** Embracing new experiences and stepping outside your comfort zone can ignite a sense of adventure and adaptability. Engaging your senses in new activities—like

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# How to protect yourself from Medicare scams

AARP Alaska

Medicare scams spike each year during the open enrollment period from October through December. Scammers may pressure you to agree to a new plan or offer a new Medicare card, free medical equipment, or genetic testing. Scammers spoof the phone number to make it look like the call is coming from Medicare. They may know personal details like your date of birth or address,

but don't let that fool you into thinking the caller is legitimate! Scammers can easily purchase or find that information. Remember, Medicare will not call you unexpectedly. These scammers are trying to get your personal information to access your bank funds, steal your identity or file fraudulent claims using your Medicare account. Fraud, along with errors and abuse, causes Medicare to lose an estimated \$60 billion annually.

A frequent Medicare scam involves criminals enticing victims with the promise of a new Medicare card or an upgrade to their current one. Scammers claim that there are new plastic cards with a chip, but to get the new card, they need to verify your Medicare ID number and other personal information. They may also ask for your credit card or bank account information to pay an upgrade fee. However, there are no new Medicare cards.

If you want a new card, you can print one from the Medicare website. Scammers might also tell you that your Medicare number has been compromised. If you want to double check this information, hang up and call Alaska's Medicare Information Office at 1-800-478-6065. Another common scam involves offers of free medical supplies, equipment (like a knee or back brace), medical care, or prescription medications.

Scammers use these offers to trick you into giving them your Medicare ID number, which they then use to file fraudulent high-cost Medicare claims in your name. Other scams include offers for free genetic testing or screenings. Scammers will create a sense of urgency, claiming that the offer is time-limited, and you must act fast. Remember, if your medical provider has not

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# Does Medicare cover ambulance rides?

By JIM MILLER

Savvy Senior

Dear Savvy Senior,

A few months ago, I took an ambulance to the hospital emergency room because I had a nasty fall at home, but just received a hefty \$1,050 bill from the ambulance company. Doesn't Medicare cover ambulance rides?

- Frustrated Beneficiary

Dear Beneficiary,

Yes, Medicare does cover emergency ambulance services and, in limited cases, nonemergency ambulance services too, but only when they're deemed medically necessary and reasonable.

So, what does that mean? First, it means that your medical condition must be serious enough that you need an ambulance to transport you safely to a hospital or other facility where you can receive care that Medicare covers.

If a car or taxi could transport you without endangering your health, Medicare won't pay. For example, Medicare probably won't pay for an ambulance to take someone with an arm fracture to a hospital. But if the patient goes into shock, or is prone to internal bleeding, ambulance transport may be medically necessary to ensure their

safety on the way. The details make a difference.

Second, the ambulance must take you to the nearest appropriate medical facility. If you choose to be transported to a facility farther away because the doctor you prefer has staff privileges there, expect to pay a greater share of the bill. Medicare will only cover the cost of ambulance transport to the nearest appropriate facility and no more.

Medicare may also pay for an emergency flight by plane or helicopter to the nearest appropriate medical center if the trip would take too long on the ground and endanger your health.

### Nonemergency situations

Medicare may also cover ambulance transportation in some cases when you're not facing a medical emergency. But to receive this coverage, your doctor needs to write an order stating that an ambulance is medically necessary because other ways to get you to an appointment could endanger your health.

For example, if you've been diagnosed with end-stage renal disease, Medicare may pay if you have a doctor's order stating that it is medically necessary for you to use an ambulance to take you to and from a

dialysis center.

You also need to know that in nonemergency situations, ambulance companies are required to give you an Advance Beneficiary Notice of Noncoverage or ABN if they believe Medicare may not pay. This lets you know that you will be responsible for paying if Medicare doesn't.

### Ambulance costs

Ambulance rides can vary from several hundred to several thousand dollars depending on where you live and how far you're transported.

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# Common Medicare open enrollment notices

By SEAN McPHILAMY

Alaska Medicare Information Office

For those of us enrolled into Original Medicare (Parts A & B), most of us have also enrolled into one of Medicare's Part D Prescription Drug Plans (PDPs). Each year, we may make changes to this prescription coverage during Medicare's Open Enrollment period, which runs from Oct. 15 through Dec. 7, for changes which will then go into effect from Jan. 1 onward. Leading up to this open enrollment, you will start to receive notices with information relating to any changes in your plan for the coming year. If you are like me, sometimes (more often than I should) I leave mail unopened, knowing that



I will get to it, but maybe tomorrow. However, it is important to read and understand these notices, as they can help you decide if you should make changes to your coverage during open enrollment.

### Annual Notice of Change and Evidence of Coverage

If you have a Part D prescription drug plan,

you should receive a notice called an Annual Notice of Change (ANOC), and an Evidence of Coverage (EOC). Your plan should send you these notices by Sept. 30. If you do not receive these notices, contact your plan to request copies. There are three kinds of annual plan changes to look for in an ANOC or EOC:

**First**, look for changes to your plan's deductibles and copayments, which can change each year. For example, your plan may not have a deductible in 2025 but could have one in 2026.

**Second**, look for changes to the plan's pharmacy network. Plan networks can change each year, which means your pharmacy may not be in your plan's network for 2026. Your preferred in-network

pharmacy options may not be the same. If you obtain your prescription from an out-of-network pharmacy, your co-pay will likely be greater.

And **third**, look for changes to the plan's formulary, which is the list of drugs the plan covers. Formulary changes can happen from year to year, meaning your prescription drugs may not be covered in 2026 even if these are covered during this year. Even if still on the plan's formulary, the cost of your drugs may have changed. After reading about the changes to your coverage for 2026, decide whether your plan will still be able to meet your needs in the upcoming year. If not, I encourage you to review your options during the

open enrollment period. The certified Medicare counselors in the Medicare Information Office will be glad to help you complete a prescription drug plan review to find the lowest cost plan for you.

### Plan Non-Renewal Notice and Consistent Poor Performance Notice

In October, plans leaving the Medicare program in the coming year send out a Plan Non-Renewal Notice to people enrolled in the plan. If you receive this notice, you should make sure you are covered in 2026. You can choose to enroll in a new Part D plan during Open Enrollment, which again is Oct. 15 through

page 6 please





ADVERTISEMENT

## Frequently Asked Questions About Hearing Aids

Part 1 of 2



By **DONNA R. DEMARCO**

Accurate Hearing Systems

**How do I know if I need hearing aids?** Clues include if you are asking friends and family to repeat more frequently, or you feel everyone around you is mumbling. Another clue is turning the TV up louder than everyone else likes. You need to get your hearing tested to see if you need amplification.

Will hearing aids restore hearing to normal? Hearing aids can aid you in understanding speech much easier and clarity better. They do not restore the natural functioning of the ear.

**How long do hearing aids last?** You should get new hearing aids every three to five years to get the most benefit out of them. New technology is always coming out and making big improvements to the newer devices. Hearing aids typically comes

with a three-year factory warranty covering repairs and a one-time loss and damage during the three-year warranty period. Many hearing aids are still functioning after seven years, while others may need re-programming, repair, or replacement.

**I have hearing loss in both ears. Is it necessary to wear two hearing aids?** Research has shown that speech understanding in noisy environments is optimized when the brain receives sound input from both ears. The brain uses the sound input from both ears to help determine the direction of the sound source. Having a hearing aid in only one ear can alter this sense of direction making it more difficult to localize sound. Also, if you only use a hearing aid in one ear the other ear will start a fast decline, and you will lose hearing / understanding in the unused ear all together.

Make an appointment at Accurate Hearing for a free hearing examination and consultation. Request an appointment call 907-644-6004.

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



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## Medicare

continued from page 5

Dec. 7. If you receive this notice, you may also enroll in a new plan up until the last day in February. You will be disenrolled from your previous plan starting Jan. 1, though, so if you do not pick a new plan by then you will likely experience a gap in coverage until you enroll in a new plan.

In late October, Medicare will also send a Consistent Poor Performance Notice to people who may be enrolled in a plan that has received a low rating for three or more years in a row. A low rating is three stars or fewer out of five. The notice encourages you to complete a Part D Prescription Drug Plan review, consider choosing another plan which has better service and support, along with fully meeting your prescription drug plan needs.

## Medicare Summary Notice

Every three months, you should receive a Medicare Summary Notice (MSN) which provides a summary of the services and items you have received and how much you may be billed for them. Reading your MSN is important for detecting potential Medicare fraud, errors, or abuse. Keep the following tips in mind:

- Review your Medicare statements as soon as they arrive.
- Keep notes of your medical appointments and compare these to your statements.
- Confirm that everything listed on the statement is accurate—in other words, that you actually received all listed services or items.
- Contact your health care provider if you have questions or notice any mistakes.
- Contact our office for a My Health Care Tracker

(which helps you keep track of your appointments) or to receive assistance reading your Medicare statements.

To discuss any of these notices, or to ask any questions regarding your specific situation, please 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 Ambassador program.

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

## Medicare counseling by phone

By **LEE CORAY-LUDDEN**

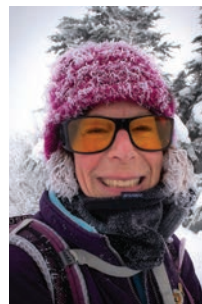
For Senior Voice

I am a Certified Medicare Counselor working

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

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

Watch the ceremony from the comfort of your home!



Judy Caminer



Joaqlin Estus



Katherine Gottlieb



Ada (Deluktuk) Blackjack Johnson



Lisa Parker



Fannie Quigly



Sue Sherif



Roslyn Singleton



Matilda Tamaree



Dorothy Urbach

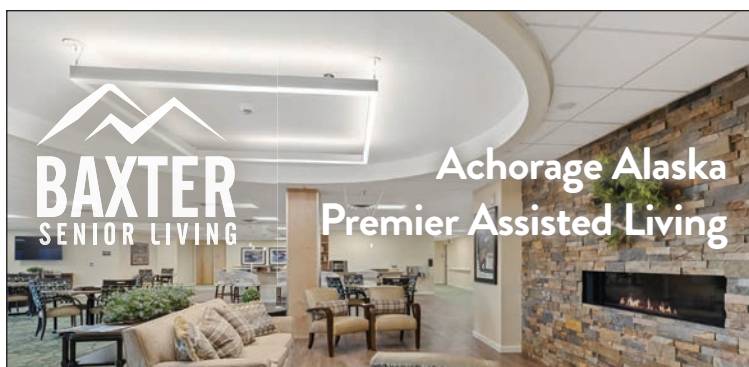
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# Fueling yourself the right way for healthy aging

By **ELIZE RUMSLEY**  
For Senior Voice

As we age our nutritional needs change. Paying attention to the foods we consume can keep our energy level, vitality, cognition, stamina and strength, and prevent chronic health problems. Strategies to increase or to maintain muscle mass and its functional capacity are essential to preserve the quality of life of aging adults. Here is a quick guide for aging well.

1) Boost protein intake—it helps to preserve immune system, prevent the loss of muscle mass and strength and helps to aid recovery. Good sources of protein are lean meats, fish, poultry, eggs, dairy, soy, and legumes. If you weigh 150 pounds, aim for about 80 to 125 grams of protein a day or around 30–40 grams per meal, 3 times a day. One egg or one ounce of meat or fish is about 6–7 grams of protein. If protein can't be consumed through diet,

high-protein shakes can be a good alternative.

2) Include calcium and Vitamin D—these are important to maintain bone health, prevent bone diseases and fractures. Foods like dairy, leafy dark greens, fortified cereals, along with direct sunlight exposure can help meet calcium and vitamin D requirements. The goal is 1000–1200mg daily calcium and 800–1000 units of daily vitamin D. Certain geographical areas like Alaska are difficult to meet vitamin D needs through sunshine, so it is best to take vitamin D supplements.

3) Incorporate omega-3 fatty acids—these help support heart health, cognitive function and decrease inflammation. Fatty fish such as mackerel or salmon, flaxseed, chia seeds, walnuts are good sources of omega-3 fatty acids. You can also get it from fish or krill oil supplements.

4) Don't forget fiber—



Eggs, legumes, quinoa, and cottage cheese are good choices for increasing your protein intake. Paola Banchemo photo

this will keep your bowel more regular, improve gut microbiota, reduce cholesterol and blood sugars, and prevent weight gain. Include whole grains, fruits and vegetables, nuts and seeds in the diet. The goal is 25–30 grams fiber a day. If you are short of this goal, try a psyllium fiber supplement.

5) Stay hydrated—As we age, we become less aware of needing hydration, so try to sip on water

throughout the day. Good hydration is crucial to support all body functions. Older adults need 8–10 cups of water daily, adjusting for activity and weather conditions.

Try to enjoy small meals and more frequently. Prioritize eating protein first and nutrient-dense foods over dessert type or highly processed foods. If you can't meet your nutritional needs through food, consider taking multivitamins. Stay active, engage in social and physical activities to keep your mental acuity and muscle strength.

Here is a sample menu providing about 125 grams of protein:

**Breakfast:**  
2 eggs (12 grams protein)  
2 slices of whole grain bread (7 grams protein)  
1/2 cup Greek yogurt (10 g protein) with 1 tbsp

chia seeds  
1 cup of fruit

**Morning Snack:**  
1/2 cup of mixed nuts (12 grams protein)

**Lunch:**  
3 ounces of canned tuna fish (20 grams protein)  
2 slices of whole grain bread (7 grams protein)  
1 cup of 1% milk (8 grams protein)  
Veggies with 2 tbsp hummus (2.5 g protein)

**Afternoon Snack:**  
1/2 cup of low-fat cottage cheese (14 grams protein)  
fruit

**Dinner:**  
4 ounces of chicken breast (32 grams protein)  
1/2 cup of cooked quinoa (3.5 g protein)  
House salad, veggies.

Elize Rumsley, Ph.D. Nutrition Science and is a registered dietitian. She is a contributor to The Alaska Club's blog on nutrition as part of an overall wellness program.



## Connecting Seniors, People with Disabilities and Caregivers with Long-Term Care Information & Services

- **Identify** your long-term support needs
- **Explore** your options for meeting those needs

### Anchorage

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

### Kenai Peninsula, Kodiak Island, Valdez-Cordova

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

### Southeast Alaska

Southeast Alaska Independent Living Center (SAIL)  
8711 Teal St., Ste 300, Juneau, AK 99801  
1-800-478-SAIL (7245) [www.sailinc.org](http://www.sailinc.org)

### Mat-Su Borough

LINKS Resource Center  
777 N. Crusey St., Ste 101, Wasilla, AK 99654  
907-373-3632 [www.linksprc.org/adrc](http://www.linksprc.org/adrc)

### Fairbanks North Star, Southeast Fairbanks, Yukon-Koyukuk, Denali, North Slope

ADRC North - Fairbanks Senior Center  
1424 Moore St., Fairbanks, AK 99701  
907-452-2551 [www.adrcnorth.org](http://www.adrcnorth.org)

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

Bristol Bay Native Association [www.bbna.com/our-programs/social-service-programs/elderly-services/](http://www.bbna.com/our-programs/social-service-programs/elderly-services/)  
1500 Kakanak Rd., Dillingham, AK 99576  
907-842-4139 | 800-478-4139



1-877-625-2372

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





# Seeking better outcomes for women with breast cancer

By JOHN SCHIESZER

Medical Minutes

A new AI-based breast cancer software has received FDA Breakthrough Device destination, accelerating the path to approval. The system analyzes mammograms to produce a risk score estimating the likelihood that a woman will develop breast cancer over the next five years. The technology is compatible with both types of mammogram imaging available: the four 2D views of the breast produced by full-field digital mammography and the synthetic 3D view of the breast produced by digital breast tomosynthesis.

Importantly, the system produces an absolute five-year risk that makes it possible to compare a woman's risk to an average risk based on national breast cancer incidence rates. This provides a meaningful estimate that is aligned with the U.S. national risk reduction guidelines, so that clinicians will know what steps to take next if a woman's risk is elevated.

The FDA Breakthrough Device designation provides an expedited review process for full market approval in an effort to give patients and clinicians accelerated access to new medical devices. Products that receive the designation have already undergone rigorous testing and shown excellent promise in their potential to improve treatment or the diagnosis of debilitating or life-threatening conditions.

"We're excited about the potential of this technology to improve risk prediction and prevention of breast cancer broadly, no matter where a woman is getting screened," said Dr. Graham Colditz, who is with Washington University in St. Louis. "The long-term goal is to make this technology available to any woman having a screening mammogram anywhere in the world. No matter the type of imaging they receive, our data show the software's potential to identify women at increased risk of developing breast cancer over the next five years, providing them with opportunities to take



targeted steps to reduce that risk."

The new device could have a large impact on risk prediction because the infrastructure is already in place to begin immediately using the software anywhere mammography is provided. Furthermore, most women who are 50 or older already receive regular mammograms. According to 2023 survey data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 75% of women ages 50 to 74 reported having received a mammogram in the past two years.

Even with widespread screening, about 34% of breast cancer patients in the U.S. are diagnosed at later stages of the disease. According to the investigators, being able to assess risk up to five years in advance of the onset of cancer is likely to improve early detection, reducing the number of late-stage cancers diagnosed.

New data are showing significant declines in death due to breast cancer. From 2010 to 2020, breast cancer deaths among women ages 20-49 declined significantly across all breast cancer subtypes and racial/ethnic groups, with marked declines starting after 2016, according to an analysis of data from the Surveillance, Epidemiology, and End Results (SEER) registry.

Breast cancer incidence rates in women aged 20 to 49 years have been increasing over the past 20 years across most racial and ethnic groups, but few studies have examined mortality data for patients in this age group, according to Dr. Adetunji Toriola, who is a professor in the Department of Surgery and Division of Public Health Sciences and Siteman Cancer Center at Washington

**Even with widespread screening, about 34% of breast cancer patients in the U.S. are diagnosed at later stages of the disease. According to the investigators, being able to assess risk up to five years in advance of the onset of cancer is likely to improve early detection, reducing the number of late-stage cancers diagnosed.**

University School of Medicine in St. Louis. "Understanding recent trends in mortality will enable us to assess progress over the years and inform where to direct resources to reduce cancer burden in this age group," said Dr. Toriola.

The researchers analyzed data from the SEER

Program 17 registry, which included data on 11,661 breast cancer deaths among women ages 20-49 between 2010 and 2020. They evaluated breast cancer incidence-based mortality by race and molecular subtypes, including luminal A, luminal B, human epidermal growth factor re-

ceptor 2 (HER2)-enriched, and triple-negative breast cancer. The researcher identified differences in trends using annual percent changes (APC). Additionally, they performed relative survival analyses by examining the 10-year survival rate for each group and subtype.

Across all subtypes and racial/ethnic groups, incidence-based mortality declined from 9.70 per 100,000 women in 2010 to 1.47/100,000 in 2020. Luminal A had the most pronounced decline among the

next page please



Anchorage Senior Activity Center

**BENEFITS ENROLLMENT CENTER**

*Do you need assistance with food, utility, medical, or prescription drug costs?*

The National Council on Aging (NCOA) supports a network of Benefits Enrollment Centers (BECs) that help people find and enroll in benefits programs. BECs are free, private community organizations that can help people with low income, disabilities, or other challenges.

BECs can help people enroll in programs such as Medicare Part D Extra Help, Medicare Savings Programs (MSP), Medicaid, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).

**Senior Center membership is not required.**  
**Take advantage of this FREE public service and schedule an appointment today!**

 907-770-2025  ANCHORAGESENIORCENTER.ORG



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

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

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# UAA researcher studies malnutrition among older adults

By PAOLA BANCHERO

Senior Voice

Amy Urbanus was already an assistant professor in the dietetics and nutrition program at the University of Alaska Anchorage but missed working with patients. So she started working with patients at the Anchorage Senior Activities Center, putting in about 20 hours a month to address seniors’ nutrition needs. That work, and a professional career as a diabetes educator drove Urbanus to seek a Ph.D., which she is completing at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. She designed her own interdisciplinary doctorate, which

combines psychosocial, biological and clinical aspects of treating Elders by addressing their nutrition habits. So for the last several months, she has been collecting data. And to do so, she is doing a survey of Anchorage seniors and their nutrition habits who are “community dwelling.” That means they don’t live in assisted living or long-term care facilities. In other words, she wants to see how seniors do and what they understand about nutrition when they are largely living by themselves or with family members. Research shows that higher age is one risk factor for developing disease, and older

adults have the highest risk of being at nutritional risk or becoming malnourished. However, the causes of malnutrition are complex. Urbanus hopes to conclude her survey gathering by Oct. 1 and then set about to analyze the results and write her dissertation. “There is no malnutrition data for the State of Alaska for any age,” Urbanus said in an interview. By early August, she had collected 170 surveys, but wants to get closer to 300. Every survey respondent gets a \$20 gift card to Fred Meyer’s or Walmart. Urbanus is looking at the many barriers seniors face in getting good nutrition, from lacking the transpor-

tation to get to the store regularly to feeling overwhelmed at the prospect of cooking for themselves or lacking the appetite to do so. Some seniors also are on a fixed income, and less nutritious foods often cost less while more nutritious foods are more costly. As we age, our bodies need different nutrients. We might have been able to stay gassed up on carbohydrates in our youth and stay lean. As we age, things change. During our discussion, we both talked about loved ones who are active but are probably not fueling themselves adequately. “Nutrition guidelines change,” Urbanus said. “Our protein needs to go up. I’m sort of on a mission to get seniors to eat more protein.” The changes we experience as we age are multi-

faceted and can be hard to acknowledge. For example, some seniors have a hard time swallowing, and that can reduce food intake. Some of us have limited mobility, or, after a lifetime of cooking for others would rather avoid being in the kitchen. There are a lot of misperceptions about nutrition among the general population, and those misperceptions persist among older people too, Urbanus said. “People are always thinking that they need more fruits and vegetables,” Urbanus said. “At 80 years old, you are not going to prevent cancer by eating more fruit.” Urbanus says she will share her research results once she has analyzed them. For a protein-rich menu, check out the column by Elize Rumsley, page 7.

## Are you 65 or older? Participants needed!

If you are 65 or older you are invited to participate in a nutrition research study by completing a short survey. Help guide nutrition programs for older adults in Alaska!

### Are you eligible?

- 65 years or older
- Live in the Municipality of Anchorage
- Do not live in assisted living or long term care

### Study Survey

- Can be completed online
- Email or call and a survey can be mailed to you!
- Takes only 20 minutes!

### Participant benefits

First 300 participants will receive a \$20 gift card

### Questions?

Amy Urbanus  
Phone number: 907-786-0337  
Email: [alurbanus@alaska.edu](mailto:alurbanus@alaska.edu)



[https://uaa.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_9pq7itHGCilabS6](https://uaa.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_9pq7itHGCilabS6)



IRB # 2325731-1

The UAF Institutional Review Board (IRB) is a group that examines research projects involving people. This review is done to protect the rights and welfare of people involved in the research. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, you can contact the UAF Office of Research Integrity at 474-7800 (Fairbanks area) or 1-866-876-7800 (toll-free outside the Fairbanks area) or [uaf-irb@alaska.edu](mailto:uaf-irb@alaska.edu).



## Outcomes

from page 8

four subtypes, with a decline throughout the time period and the largest drop in 2017 (-32.88% APC). Triple-negative breast cancer followed a similar trend, with 2018 marking its largest decline (-32.82% APC). Even though the decline in incidence-based mortality was the largest for luminal A overall, the 10-year relative survival for women with this breast cancer subtype varied depending on age. Among women ages 40-49, luminal A had the highest 10-year survival while among women ages 20-39, luminal A (78.3%) had lower 10-year survival than luminal B (84.2%). “This was unexpected as luminal A is generally the least aggressive subtype with the most favorable prognosis,” said Dr. Toriola. “This requires confirmation in other studies but may suggest that luminal A tumors in women ages 20-39 may represent a more biologically heterogeneous and potentially aggressive subgroup.” The 10-year relative survival analysis found that non-Hispanic Black women had the worst survival outcomes, while non-Hispanic white women and

non-Hispanic Asian/Pacific Islander women had the best. “We have made tremendous advances in reducing mortality from breast cancer in young women but there are still opportunities for improvements, especially in relation to eliminating disparities,” Dr. Toriola said. The more drastic declines seen after 2016 reflect advancements in treatment options, greater uptake of precision medicine, and expanded access to care and screening in women ages 40-49. “We must continue to perform impactful research to ensure further reduction in breast cancer mortality, including research into understanding the tumor biology and molecular mechanisms driving carcinogenesis and treatment response in younger women,” said Dr. Toriola. “Additionally, we must encourage and provide access to population-based screening in women ages 40-49 and targeted screening in younger high-risk women, and advocate for access to high-quality treatment and care for all women.” John Schieszer is an award-winning national journalist and radio and podcast broadcaster of The Medical Minute. He can be reached at [medicalminutes@gmail.com](mailto:medicalminutes@gmail.com)

# Senior Voice

Proud Member







# Lifelong learning opportunities abound this fall

*Courses include photography, whiskey appreciation and Vietnamese history*

By **PAOLA BANCHERO**

Senior Voice

The Organization for Lifelong Education, commonly known as OLÉ, has a full schedule of classes and activities this fall for Anchorage-based learners. In Fairbanks, a program through the University of Alaska Fairbanks also offers courses.

Sandra Christopherson is one of the founders of OLÉ. She a group of friends thought Anchorage needed more opportunities for adult learners. They put together a nonprofit in 2007 with that aim, enlisting people known for getting things done, such as Gretchen Bersch, who had worked in adult education at the University of Alaska Anchorage, and Eric Wolhforth, an attorney who had served as Alaska commissioner of Revenue and chairman of the Alaska Permanent Fund Corporation board.

"The courses are designed for people over 50 but welcome to everyone," said Christopherson, who served on the curriculum committee for much of the existence of OLÉ.

Christopherson said that OLÉ has shifted and adapted to the changing needs of its audience. At the beginning, Christopherson said, the group veered away from offering courses like yoga and crafts, that are available elsewhere in town.

But the current schedule is a mix of academic courses and practical courses, many tailored to the stage-of-life questions seniors have.

For example, one course is called "The Aging Brain," and will be taught by Dr. Adam Grove, a naturopathic family practice doctor. This class and many others are taught via Zoom, a practice that started during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We have people all over the Lower 48 takes a class," Christopherson said. "We can get a teacher from anywhere. We've had one from (University of California) Berkeley. We have lots of resources available to us."

A good example is that OLÉ is offering a course taught by acclaimed author



Photo courtesy OLÉ

**1. OLÉ offers tours as well as courses, and beekeeping was just one highlight of a summer tour. 2. UAA professor emerita Kris Crossen explains a lesson on the fossil record to OLÉ students at the Alaska Museum of Science and Nature. Many of the instructors for OLÉ classes are UAA professors, but thanks to Zoom, they have a variety of instructors from across the country. 3. OLÉ members visit the rat lab, led by UAA professor of psychology Gwen Lupfer. The rat lab helps students understand animal behavior and how it can apply to the human experience. 4. Retired editor Thetus Smith takes a picture for an OLÉ photography class.**

and environmental historian Bathsheba Demuth. "History of the Yukon River: Environmental, economic and cultural changes of the last 200 years." The four-week course will examine the history of the Yukon River, from its mouths along the Bering Sea to the headwaters in northwestern Canada, with a focus on how changes in law and economic goals influenced cultures and ecologies of the river.

To participate in OLÉ courses, members pay \$200 per rolling year, which allows them to register for as many courses as they'd like. Classes are held at several venues around the city, including the University of Alaska Anchorage campus. There are two eight-week semesters per year. The fall semester starts at the end of September and finishes the week before Thanksgiving; the spring semester begins in February and finishes in April with a one-week pause for spring break.

OLÉ also offers an array of tours and interactive experiences. This fall, members can go on a tour of KTUU (Alaska's News Source), the dominant television newsroom in the state. They can also tour and learn more about AWAIC, Alaska's largest domestic violence safe shelter. For a more lighthearted experience, there is a tour of the Maggie Moo Ice Creamery

and a learning experience about indoor plants, featuring the UAA grounds team.

OLÉ is always looking for volunteers to get involved, Christopherson said. The organization need people to facilitate the class, making sure the technology works or people don't talk over the speaker on Zoom. It's

an entirely volunteer-run organization, Christopherson emphasized.

## Lifelong learning in Fairbanks

In Fairbanks, learners can sign up for classes through OLLI at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. There are courses in art,

exercise and recreation, history, literature, music, religion, science and math, food preparation, senior issues such as tax-wise retirement distribution.

<https://www.campusce.net/uafolli/category/category.aspx>

Disclosure: Paola Banchero has taught several courses for OLÉ.



Photo courtesy OLÉ



Photo by Donna Gail Shaw



Photo courtesy OLÉ



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# Help for people raising grandchildren in Alaska

*The Kin Support Program Haa Yatx'u Saani ("Our Precious Children")*

Alaska Commission on Aging

For every 20 readers, one of you is doing the incredible work of raising a young relative. Although you may feel alone at times, you are definitely in good company.

## A community of caregivers

Across the United States, more than 2.6 million children are being raised by a grandparent, other relative, or close family friend, according to nationwide advocacy organization Generations United. The vast majority of these kinship families are formed independently, outside the state foster care system. Every family has its own story for why kids live with a relative, and each family has its own unique needs.

In Southeast Alaska, where our program is based, the practice of relatives caring for kids has been a foundational source



**Kinship Family Support**  
with  
**Haa Yatx'u Saani Kin Support Program**  
and **Volunteers of America Alaska**



**Friday, Sept. 5th**  
**12pm - 1:30pm**

**Free webinar via Zoom**

*For all families where a relative is raising a child & all are welcome*

**In honor of Grandparents Day!**

**Join the meeting using this link at noon:**  
**<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81324705401>**  
Questions? Contact ACoA Staff Yasmin Radbod at 907-230-0871.

VOA Alaska

of family and cultural wellness for generations. Uncles, aunties, grandparents, and clan relations all

play specific roles helping children nurture connections to self, family, clan, culture, community, land,

and the spiritual universe. They may step into a caregiving role to support healthy parents, to broaden a child's network of relationships, or to keep the child safe when a parent is struggling and afford the parent space to heal.

## If you're struggling, that's normal

Many relative caregivers will share that while raising children is a joy, it's also taxing. It is expensive to raise kids, and many caregivers are living on a fixed income. Child care is hard to find for working caregivers. Some relatives have just begun to enjoy their independence after raising kids to adulthood. The thought of waking up to a baby's cries and chasing toddlers around again can be overwhelming.

Dynamics with the child's parents can also be hard. Nationally, the recent opioid crisis instigated a

wave of grandparents becoming primary caregivers. Relatives stepping in under these circumstances may have strong feelings to navigate, including grief about their adult child's choices, confusion over how to manage the child's sense of abandonment, stress about meeting their own needs along with the child's, discomfort attending events advertised for "parents," and resentment over the lack of help.

## Support in Alaska

Kinship Navigator and peer support groups have popped up across the country over the past few decades. These groups are picking up steam as society has come to recognize that kids tend to have the best outcomes when raised by family. Alaska has the following:

- A statewide kinship

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# Cooking classes for bone & brain health!

Join our four-part webinar series to learn everyday kitchen tips that support brain & bone health. Enhance your wellbeing with simple, nutritious cooking habits.

**Tuesday, September 2 from 12 p.m. to 1 p.m.**

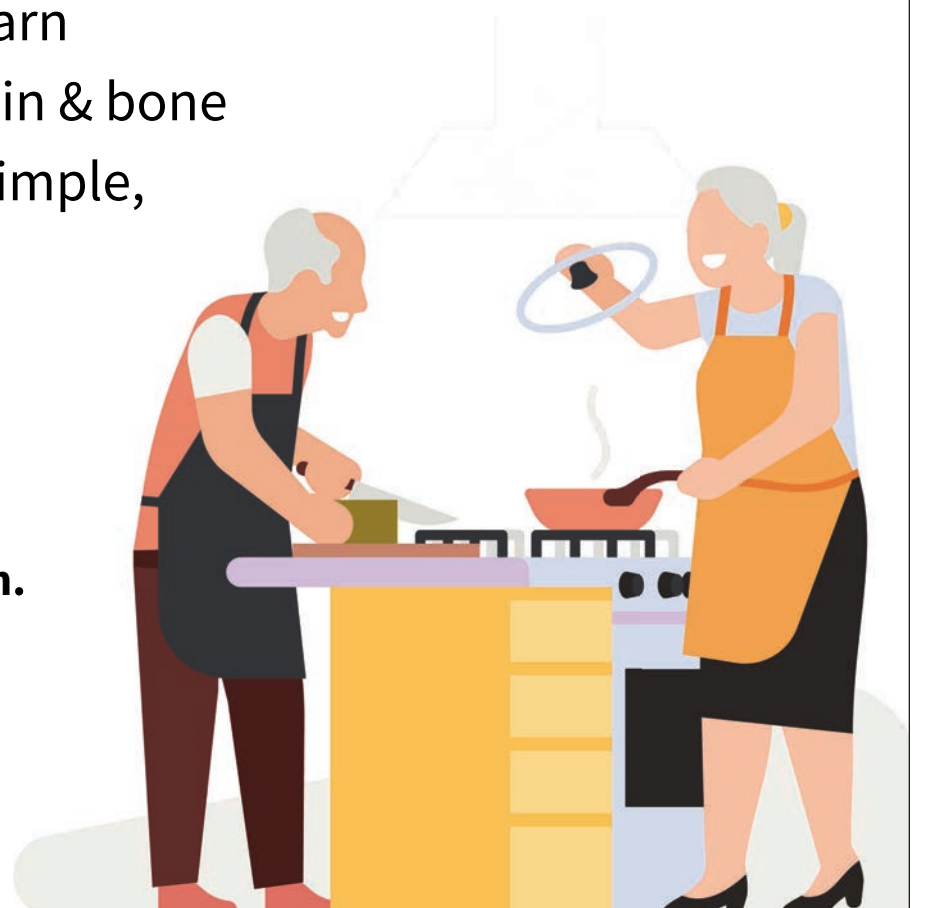
**Thursday, September 4 from 12 p.m. to 1 p.m.**

**Tuesday, September 9 from 12 p.m. to 1 p.m.**

**Thursday, September 11 from 12 p.m. to 1 p.m.**



Scan the QR code or visit [aarp.org/ak](http://aarp.org/ak) to register for one or all classes.







# Create your emergency medical file now

## Taking the time to do so could save your life

By **CHRISTIAN M. HARTLEY**

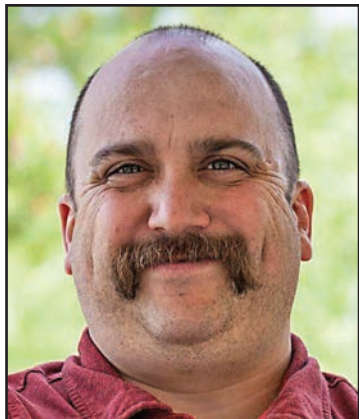
For Senior Voice

When a medical emergency happens, you may not be able to speak for yourself. That's why having an emergency medical file ready is one of the smartest things you can do to protect your health and safety.

An emergency medical file is a simple folder or envelope that contains all your important medical information in one place. You know all those questions the EMTs and nurses and doctors ask so often? It's because the answers are key to the care you need. This file is your medical story told quickly and clearly for care providers and loved ones who need to help you fast.

The most important part of your file is a list of all your medications. Write the name of each medicine, how much you take, and when you take it. Include vitamins and over-the-counter drugs too. Many seniors take several medications, and mixing the wrong ones can be dangerous. When paramedics or doctors know exactly what you're taking, they can make better choices about how to treat you.

Your file should also include your medical con-



ditions and allergies. If you have diabetes, heart problems, or breathing issues, write them down. If you're allergic to certain medicines or foods, make sure that information is clear and easy to find. In more remote areas, where it might take longer for help to arrive, this information becomes even more critical.

Don't forget to include your doctor's name and phone number, along with your pharmacy's contact information. If you wear hearing aids, have a pacemaker, or use other medical devices, add that information too. Even dentures are important to mention, in case you need airway help. Some people also include their insurance card information and emergency contact numbers for family members.

Have a list of at least three contacts that care providers can call. It might be family, friends, former



**Make and post in a visible place your emergency medical file, which will explain to loved ones and paramedics what your health situation is if you are unable to speak for yourself.**

Photo by Pavel Danilyuk via Pexels

doctors, neighbors; anybody that knows your medical history and needs and who knows your wishes.

Keep one copy of your medical file on your refrigerator door where emergency workers can easily find it. Many first responders know to look there first. First responders are trained to look at the refrigerator for all sorts of medical directives when they enter

a house. Put another copy in your wallet or purse and consider giving a copy to a trusted neighbor or family member who lives nearby.

Update your file every time something changes. Got a new medicine? Add it right away. Stopped taking something? Cross it off or make a new copy. Your file is only helpful if it's current and correct. Review it every six months to make sure

you didn't forget an update.

In Alaska, where weather can delay emergency services and hospitals might be far away, having this information ready can save precious time. It can also prevent dangerous mistakes when you're unable to communicate. Start today by gathering your medicine and writing the basic information. You can make it fancier later but having something is better than having nothing.

Your doctor's office can also help you think through what information would be most important to include. Remember, the best emergency plan is the one you make before you need it. Take an hour this week to create your medical file. Your future self will thank you.

Christian M. Hartley is a 41-year Alaska resident with more than 26 years of public safety and public service experience. He is the public safety director of the City of Houston and serves on many local and state workgroups, boards and commissions related to safety. He lives in Big Lake with his wife of 21 years and their three teenage sons.

## Kodiak seniors visit Coast Guard base

Senior Voice Staff

In August, Island Cove adult day care program participants had the opportunity to attend a field trip to U.S. Coast Guard Base Kodiak.

Lt. Jeff Batchelder gave participants a tour of the hangars on base, answering questions and providing photo opportunities. Afterward, participants enjoyed pizza at the bowling alley and arrived back safely to Island Cove.

Island Cove offers a safe, caring, and active environment for seniors and adults with special needs. The program supports participants' independence,

maintaining and increasing skill levels, while enhancing their quality of life.

In addition to special field trips, the program has a variety of activities that rotate in and out of a daily schedule including morning exercise, bingo, card games, independent activities like puzzles and coloring stations, group games and brain games. Program organizers meet with participants regularly to find out what new things they might like to try.

Island Cove offers a two-week trial to determine if it's a good fit for you or your loved one. <https://kodiak-seniorcenter.org/island-cove-adult-day-program/>

## Free Estate Planning Workshops



Law Office of  
**Constance A. Aschenbrenner, LLC**  
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[www.akwillstrusts.com](http://www.akwillstrusts.com)

### Discover The 7 Threats to Your Estate Plan

#### If Crisis Strikes, You Risk:

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

### It's all about family! Have you protected them?

#### Proper Planning Ensures You:

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

#### If something happens to you, do you want to:

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

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

### IN-PERSON WORKSHOPS:

#### Anchorage Senior Activity Center

1300 E. 19th Avenue, Anchorage  
Sept 8, Oct 6 | 9:30–11:30 a.m.

#### Wasilla Senior Center

1301 South Century Circle, Wasilla  
Sept 9, Oct 7 | 9:30–11:30 a.m.

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

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

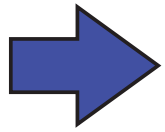
Unable to attend in person? Call to request the link to a recorded webinar.



# DEMENTIA SYMPOSIUM

## NEUROSCIENCE OF TINNITUS AND HEARING LOSS

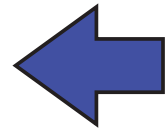
Why Your Ears Are Ringing, Buzzing,  
Chirping & What Can Be Done About It!  
Plus, Why It's Harder Now to Hear in Noisy Situations!



**September 16<sup>th</sup>**

**Doors open at 10:00am**

**Symposium starts at 11:00am**



**Aloft Hotel • 310 West 36th Avenue and C Street, Anchorage, Alaska 99503**

**Limited Seating • RSVP Required**

### Who This Event Is For:

1. If you have experienced Tinnitus, or ringing/buzzing/chirping in the ears
2. If your doctor has ever told you that you were diabetic
3. If you have high blood pressure
4. If you sometimes have difficulty hearing
5. If you are retired without a driving purpose
6. If you forget more than you used to, or are having more memory lapse
7. If any of the above apply to you, a loved one, or neighbor we look forward to seeing you and them at this Dementia Education Event

Learn From Guest Lecturer  
**Harvard Medical & M.I.T. Trained  
Neuroscientist and  
Certified Dementia Practitioner**

**Dr. Keith Darrow, PhD, CCC-A**

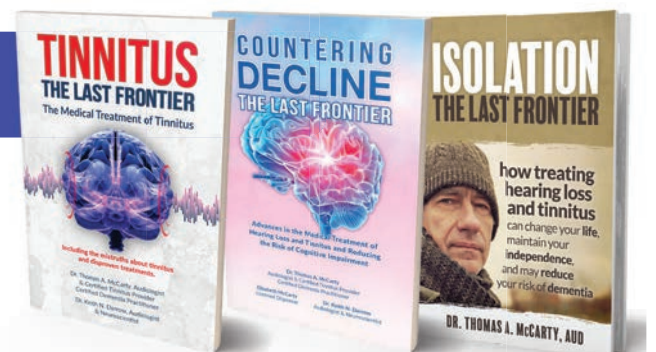
**M.I.T. and Harvard Medical Trained  
Neuroscientist and Clinical Audiologist**

Amazon #1 New Release & Best-Selling Author  
Spokesman, Excellence In Audiology  
Expert in Speech and Hearing Bioscience and Technology  
Professor at Worcester State University  
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## Why the Right Home Feels Like Freedom

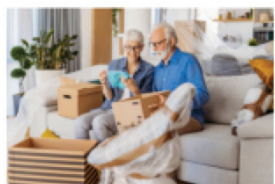


By **ALLANA LUMBARD**

*Downsizing Alaska*

One day, you'll look around your home and realize it no longer fits the life you're living. Maybe the stairs feel steeper than they used to. Maybe the yard that once brought you joy now feels like work. Or maybe, you simply find yourself using less and less of your space. It's not that you don't love your home—it's that your life has shifted, and your home hasn't shifted with you. The truth is, we all outgrow spaces in different ways. Sometimes it's because our needs change physically. Other times it's because our priorities change—

we'd rather spend our time with family, traveling, or pursuing hobbies than maintaining a house that demands more than it gives back. This isn't about giving up; it's about making a choice that supports your lifestyle today and in the years to come. The best next step isn't to rush—it's to plan. Understand your options, explore communities and homes that fit your current needs, and think about what will make your everyday life feel easier and more fulfilling. When the time comes, your move can be one of empowerment, not loss. The sooner you begin the conversation, the more choices you'll have—and the more peace of mind you'll feel when you make the leap. Your next chapter should feel right for who you are now. And it's never too early to start imagining what that could look like. *Allana Lumbard is a downsizing expert and real estate agent affiliated with Real Broker Wasilla.*



**DOWNSIZING  
ALASKA**

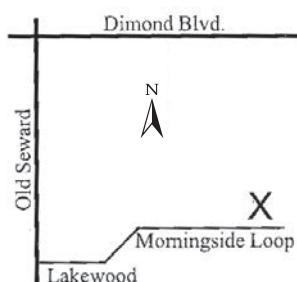
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# Squeezing the best out of summer berries

By **MARALEY McMICHAEL**

*Senior Voice Correspondent*

I can still remember the day my mother announced that we were going to make jam. I was perhaps 12 years old and the oldest of four siblings growing up in Glennallen. I don't remember what kind of berries we used or where they came from. But the other details certainly stuck in my mind—washing the jars, measuring the sugar, adding the Certo at just the right time, pouring the jam into the jars, and finally adding a layer of hot wax. Mom made very few batches of jam, but that one lesson stayed with me.

So much so that in 1974, with the help of a Cooperative Extension Service publication, I soon became an expert at making a variety of jams and jellies. Minus the wax seal method. My husband Gary and I had recently purchased five acres at 23.5 Mile Chena Hot Springs Road, and we discovered wonderful patches of blueberries and cranberries nearby. That Christmas, we sent out gift boxes of delectable jars of deliciousness. Judging by the thank you notes, family and friends were delighted.

Over the next four decades, jam and jelly making was a routine part of my life in the nine different houses we lived in after Fairbanks. We rarely ate storebought preserves. Flavors varied according to location. During the two and half years in California, we ate more strawberry thanks to a local U-pick farm. Back in Alaska, during our Palmer years, my absolute favorite was red currant jelly. It wasn't until we moved to Slana, and I had good access to wild blueberries again, that spiced blueberry jam became my new favorite.

Once, desperate for a wedding gift in the early 2000s, I gift wrapped jars of an assortment of flavors of wild berry jams and jellies. That was such a hit, it became my standard gift for weddings. Those were also the years of running our Nabesna House Bed and Breakfast. After sev-



*Labeling jam and jelly jars to give to friends is an important step in preserving the best of summer's bounty.*

*Photos by Maraley McMichael*



*Mailing jam and jelly jars is no longer part of Maraley McMichael's routine, but she was a prolific preserve maker and generous gift-giver.*



*Maraley McMichael still keeps a set of preserves she made as a memento.*

eral guests asked if they could purchase the spiced blueberry jam we offered (alongside pure maple syrup) for our blueberry pancakes, I started a new business. Eight-ounce jars for \$5 each or three for \$13, and gift sets of four 1.5-ounce jars for \$15.

One family of five enjoyed staying with us so much that they booked a reservation for their return leg. Their travel took them up to Fairbanks, down the Parks Highway to Anchorage, and back around. We only had two rooms and a shared bathroom, so their family filled our space. The night of their reservation, we turned away two different parties and were disappointed when the family still had not shown

up by the time we went to bed. (Drop-ins were just as common as reservations.)

Mid-day two days later, a vehicle unexpectedly drove in and parked, and the family of five all spilled out into the front lawn. The mother apologized for not showing up and offered to pay for their absentee night. She explained that they had been stuck (along with several other vehicles) on the other side of a fire that closed the Parks Highway, and they spent a miserable night in their vehicle. No one had cell phone service. I said paying would not be necessary as it was an "act of God" situation. Then she said, "Well, the least we can do is buy some

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# Celebrating Celtic culture

(and the origins of Halloween)

By JOCELYN PAINE

For Senior Voice

The heart of a society is often best expressed through its rituals and traditions. Hindu India joyfully joins together in the spring to fling colored powders at each other in the Festival of Holi, celebrating new beginnings. At the cusp of the year, whether it is the lunar year of Chinese or Jewish religions or the Gregorian calendar year, people gather to “ring out the old” and “bring in the new.” All over the world fall harvests are marked with feasting: Sukkoth, Thanksgiving, or Pongal (rice festival).

As cultures develop, practices change as religions demand. Christianity has had a strong impact on the pagan origins of many customs, shaping the dates to honor saints or to match differing concepts of afterlife and renewal. Samhain is one of four Celtic shoulder holidays, all set between the solstice and equinox celebrations. Beltain (or Beltane or Beltine, meaning “Fire of Bel”) is in the summer. Sometimes druids drove the cattle through the smoke of two fires as a protection from disease. The choice of wood was important. Oak can bridge the worlds and is a way of connecting with ancestors. Birch symbolizes new beginnings. Scotch pine stimulates and refreshes, and rowan can protect. Imbolc is an early spring feast of purification for the lambs and is associated with Brigid (later St. Bridget). The principal symbols of Imbolc are milk or whiteness. Lughnasadh, at the beginning of August, is the feast of the pagan god Lugh. But it is Samhain that is one of Celtic culture’s most important celebrations, happening at a time when it is believed that protections are most



Lisa Maloney on accordion with the Red Cap Family Band.  
Photos by Jocelyn Paine

fragile between the world of us, the living, and the other world of the dead or demonic. Falling on the night of Oct. 31 and, if followed strictly, lasting until the morning of the next day, Nov. 1, Samhain is generally translated as “Summer’s End.”

Over the centuries the rituals have been changed to adapt to Roman and then to Christian ideas. The Romans added their own autumn festival of Feralia, the passing of the dead, and inserted the figure of Pomona, the goddess of the harvest. Christians bundled things together into All Saints’ Eve or All Hallows’ Eve, which came to be known as Halloween. The North American and British habits of dressing in disguises and trick-or-treating come from Samhain practices originally meant to confuse the dangerous aos sí, or sidhe (fairies), who, if they caught a mortal, could whisk him or her away for centuries, while only a few years seemed to have passed to the victim.

The fairy lands had poetic names: Honeyed Plain of Bliss, Fortunate island, Summerland, Isles of the Blessed. Whatever was left in the fields after harvest on Samhain’s Eve belonged

to the aos sí and they were fierce about protecting their rights. Modern Samhain practices usually have less to do with farming and other-worldly spirits and more to do with honoring and preserving traditions.

The Celtic Community of Alaska (CCA), a group of people with Celtic heritage or with an interest in celebrating Celtic culture, has presented a traditional Samhain céilí (a party with entertainment, music, dancing) at the Anchorage Senior Activities Center for more than 15 years.

An Ancestors’ Table is arranged for photos and favorite foods brought from home. The Old Fire is doused and the New Fire is started. In the past, people took home embers in turnips carved into goblin faces, which became our jack-o-lanterns made of pumpkins. Today’s bonfires will have a fire dancer, but no longer offer take-aways. Samhain still includes costumes. There is a contest (all ages welcome) with prizes. A silent auction funds CCA’s Spring Festival of Workshops. Celtic-themed foods are available for dinner. A self-directed game, A Passage to Discovery, will reveal the meanings behind nine Celtic symbols.

## Rambles

News from the Grapevine

September starts the season of nonprofit in-person fundraisers. Many of the advocacy organizations who work with Elders, improving their lives and helping their loved ones navigate the complexities of caregiving, are busy planning the events that raise the most money for their organization ... The **American Heart Association** has its own kind of party when the **Heart Run and Walk** returns **Sept. 20**. This event had traditionally been held in April, but has switched to a fall date. [https://www2.heart.org/site/TR/HeartWalk/WSA-WesternStatesAffiliate?pg=entry&fr\\_id=12052](https://www2.heart.org/site/TR/HeartWalk/WSA-WesternStatesAffiliate?pg=entry&fr_id=12052) ... **Arc of Anchorage** is preparing for a fun **Trunk-Or-Treat** fundraiser **Sept. 13** from **5 to 7 p.m.** The cost is **\$10 per person**, though parents/guardians are free. The event takes place on the Arc of Anchorage campus, **2211 Arca Dr.** Anchorage... Questions? Contact Asiasiga “Sina” Tagalao or email [atagalao@thearchofanchorage.org](mailto:atagalao@thearchofanchorage.org). <https://trunkortreatak.com/> ... The **autumn equinox**, the official start date of **fall**, is **Sept. 22, 2025, 10:19 a.m. Alaska time**. But don’t worry; we have one more day of fall in 2025 (89 days, 20 hours, 43 minutes) than we do winter (88 days, 23 hours, 42 minutes). ... The **Mayor’s Charity Ball** is **Oct. 11** at the **Dena’ina Center** in Anchorage. This annual event raises money for a variety of charities in the community. The honored charities for this year’s event are Anchorage Opera, Choosing our Roots, Covenant House Alaska, and Special Olympics Alaska. The event is a great excuse to dress up and raise money for important organizations. You and your organization can buy a table or request individual tickets. <https://mayorscharity.org/the-ball/>... **Hospice of Anchorage** has a **Masquerade in the Garden** fundraiser **Oct. 25**. Hospice of Anchorage relies entirely on the generosity of corporate sponsors, individual donors, and grant funding. <https://event.auctria.com/ab0f261e-c5de-4d9d-85ee-97aee16ac21d/0260453089f111ecac63a9890ba8c214>... September is also the start of the fine arts season. The **Sitka Music Festival Autumn Classics 25** comes to various communities

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## Free Legal Services for Seniors!



Alaska Legal Services Corporation provides legal assistance for seniors\* (60 and older) with housing, government benefits, wills, healthcare, and more!

Call your local ALSC office to learn more:

Anchorage.....	272-9431 or (888) 478-2572
Utqiagvik.....	855-8998 or (855) 755-8998
Bethel.....	543-2237 or (800) 478-2230
Dillingham.....	842-1425 or (888) 391-1475
Fairbanks.....	452-5181 or (800) 478-5401
Juneau.....	586-6425 or (800) 789-6426
Kenai.....	395-0352 or (855) 395-0352
Ketchikan.....	225-6420 or (877) 525-6420
Kotzebue.....	442-3500 or (800) 622-9797
Nome.....	443-2230 or (888) 495-6663
Palmer.....	746-4636 or (855) 996-4636

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

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

This family-friendly and respectful evening is a good alternative to Halloween.

**EVENT:** Samhain Fire Celebration and A Passage to Discovery  
**DATE:** Saturday, Oct. 25  
**TIME:** 6-10 p.m.  
**PLACE:** Anchorage Senior Activity Center, 1300 E. 19th Ave.  
**CONTACT:** [akcelts.org](http://akcelts.org) or Eventbrite for tickets in advance.





Rambles

News from the Grapevine

continued from page 15

in September, including Anchorage, Ketchikan and Wasilla. Find out more here: <https://www.sitkamusicfestival.org/> ... Perseverance Theatre is also preparing its 2025-26 season, with performances in Juneau and Anchorage. The plays are “What the Constitution Means to Me,” “Buyer and Cellar,” and “Pueblo Revolt.” “What the Constitution Means to Me,” will be in Juneau Sept. 12 to 28 and in Anchorage Oct. 17-26. <https://www.ptalaska.org/season/> ... Catch Aunt Phil at the Kenai Community Library, 163 Main Street Loop, at 5:30 p.m. Sept. 18. She’ll be sharing stories about incredible Alaska pioneers. ... If you’re looking for your next health fair, there are options in September. 8 a.m. to noon, Sept. 6 at St. John Methodist Church, 1801 O’Malley Road, Anchorage; 8 a.m. to noon Sept. 9 at the Anchorage Museum, 625 C Street, Anchorage; 8 a.m. to noon Sept. 13 at United Methodist Church of Chugiak, 16430 Old Glenn Highway; 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the YMCA of Alaska, 5353 Lake Otis Parkway, Anchorage; 8 a.m. to noon at the Mat-Su Evangelical Covenant Church, 5201 E. Mayflower Lane, Wasilla. Walk-ins are possible, but you are encouraged to make an appointment: <https://alaskahealthfair.org/>

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

Send your news tips and event items to [editor@seniorvoicealaska.com](mailto:editor@seniorvoicealaska.com)

Berries

continued from page 14

of your jam,” and proceeded to buy one each of all four flavors.

While we operated Nabesna House Bed and Breakfast, we advertised in the Milepost travel guide. One year, the advertisers were contacted by letter, asking for participation in a cookbook. I submitted my version of spiced blueberry jam, and it was included in the 2003 “New Roadhouse Recipes From the Editors of the Milepost.” I enjoyed sharing my recipe and how-to knowledge. Years later, a young man surprised me by asking me to teach him and a friend how to make jam as part payment for the very physical yardwork he did for me.

Postage kept going up and I quit mailing to family and friends once it started costing a dollar per jar. But, during our snowbirding years, it was easy to transport cases of jam in our truck when we drove out the Alaska Highway, or in our checked baggage when we flew. Our son and daughter each got married in 2005. One of my contri-

butions was a mini jar of spiced blueberry jam for all the guests at a March wedding reception in Louisiana and a May wedding in Colorado. Ribbons and labels were added at the final destinations. Having heard horror stories of frozen Alaska fish disappearing from checked coolers, I wrote a note to the TSA staff each trip, asking them to please take extra care of the precious wedding baggage...and they did.

My jam and jelly selling business came to a screeching halt when we moved back to Palmer in 2011, but for several years I continued to use jam sets for wedding gifts. So, I made a batch every once in a while until 2018. At that time, I made a drastic change in my diet and quit eating anything with “added” sugar. That ruled out homemade jams and jellies, unless alternative sweetener was used, which I didn’t want to do. Funny how something that was at one time an integral part of my life no longer held any interest.

However, this change did not affect the amount of berries I eat. Now, they just go straight into my mouth without all the “processing.” Berries get

frozen whole for use plain or with granola or yogurt and mashed and put into ice cube trays for small size portions for flavoring water. I actually eat more berries now than I did when I would turn them into jams, jellies, muffins, or desserts. Because it is not easy to get out and pick wild blueberries and cranberries anymore, at present I have black currants and raspberries in my freezer, from the berry patches in my yard.

Fall always reminds me of berry picking, which makes me think of making jams and jellies. And I’m still dazzled by the jewel-colored jars I see for sale at “made in Alaska” markets and bazaars. A while back, my brother spent a lot of time and effort on my behalf. He didn’t want money but said he would enjoy a jar of my spiced blueberry jam. Since I don’t have any wild blueberries in my freezer, I’m thinking about making a batch of spiced jam substituting black currants for blueberries. I’m hoping the experiment turns out well. If so, I will give him more than one jar.

Maraley McMichael is a lifelong Alaskan now residing in Palmer. Email her at [maraleymcmichael@gmail.com](mailto:maraleymcmichael@gmail.com).

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## SPICED BLUEBERRY JAM

Gary and Maraley McMichael  
Nabesna House B&B  
Mile J 0.8 Nabesna Road

7 8-oz. jelly jars with lids and bands	1/2 tsp. ground cinnamon
5 cups fresh or frozen blueberries, crushed	1/2 tsp. ground cloves
1 cup water	1/4 tsp. butter
2 Tbs. lemon juice	1 package Ball® Fruit Jell® No Sugar Needed pectin
	3 cups granulated sugar

Wash jars, lids and bands. Place jars upright in 9" X 13" glass dish ready to fill with boiling water. Place lids and bands in saucepan. Cover with hot water and keep hot over low heat. Fill teakettle and bring to boil. Prepare and measure fruit into a 6- to 8-quart saucepan. Add water, lemon juice, spices and butter. Measure and set aside sugar. Gradually stir pectin into prepared fruit using a wire whisk (do not add all at once). Bring to a boil over high heat, stirring constantly. Just before jam boils, turn off heat long enough to pour boiling water over jars. Stir sugar into boiling fruit mixture and return to boil. Boil hard 1 minute, stirring constantly. Remove from heat and skim foam if necessary. (The butter reduces foam.) Empty water from jars and turn upside down on sterile towel for 30 seconds to drain. Upright jars and carefully ladle or pour jam into jars, leaving 1/4" headspace. Wipe jar edge and clean with wet, sterile cloth. Place metal lids on jars and screw on bands. Process jars 10 minutes in a boiling water bath canner. Remove jars and let cool. Make sure lids are sealed (lid should not spring up when center is pressed). and Store jam in refrigerator. *if lid did not seal.*

Yields 6 to 7 jars.

« New Roadhouse Recipes »

Glenn Highway • Spiced Blueberry Jam

63

McMichael submitted her spiced blueberry jam recipe to the “New Roadhouse Recipes from the Editors of the Milepost” in 2003. Her writing at the bottom indicates that if the lids have sealed, the jam is shelf-ready. If they haven’t, refrigerate it.

Photo by Maraley McMichael





# Retired teachers group seeks new members

Senior Voice Staff

CARTA (Central Alaska Retired Teachers' Association) is a nonprofit organization aimed at working and retired teachers as well as all those who care about education. Two to three scholarships of \$2,500 each are awarded every year to applicants from the University of Alaska System for those people starting their "internship" to complete their education degrees.

The group meets on the first or second Saturday of the month (September through May) for a luncheon at the Anchorage Moose Lodge. Each month features varying speakers or programs of interest to the members. At each meeting an outreach organization (i.e., Salvation Army, Red Cross, Covenant House, Clare House, etc.) is chosen as the donation focus of the month.

CARTA sponsors yearly philanthropic grants of varying amounts to organizations such as The Food Bank, the Anchorage Concert Association, AARP Foundation, the Anchorage Concert Chorus. CARTA also offers four \$200 Classroom Awards for education per year, as well as \$700 philanthropic grants made throughout the community at the request of members for passion projects. Some past recipients have been Mobile Medics, The Diaper Pantry, and Restoration of Engine 557.

Anyone interested in attending a CARTA meeting needs to make a reservation so the Moose Lodge can prepare enough meals. To do this, please contact the following email address and put "CARTA" in the subject line. (petecrosby@aol.com). CARTA would then add your name to the reservation list for the month.

# Senior Voice's ad representative to serve on advisory commission

Senior Voice Staff

Anne Tompkins, Senior Voice Alaska's ubiquitous ad sales representative, was recently named to the Municipality of Anchorage's Senior Citizens Advisory Commission by the Anchorage Assembly. Her appointment is immediate. Her first meeting was Aug. 27. The commission

meets the last Wednesday of the month from 10 a.m. to noon. Her term will last until October 2026, but she can be reappointed to the position.

The municipality's boards and commissions play an important role in ensuring good government by giving community members to contribute and share their input on local issues.



## Alaska Chamber Singers

DAVID HAGEN, Conductor

### Ernest Bloch: Avodath Hakodesh (Sacred Service)



October 11, 2025 7:30 p.m. St. Patrick's Parish  
October 12, 2025 4:00 p.m. St. Patrick's Parish



### Christmas *with Alaska Chamber Singers*

December 12 & 13, 2025 7:30 p.m. St. Patrick's Parish  
December 14, 2025 4:00 p.m. St. Andrew Church (Eagle River)

### A Baroque Banquet



March 6 & 7, 2026 7:30 p.m. Anchorage Lutheran Church

Save these dates. Be sure to join our email list (on our website) and follow us on social media for up-to-date information.

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Alaska Chamber Singers is funded, in part, by the Alaska State Council on the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts, Atwood Foundation, Richard L. and Diane M. Block Foundation, Carr Foundation, M.E. Webber Foundation, Rasmuson Foundation and through the generosity of many individual and corporate community leaders.

# Calendar of Events

**Sept. 1-Sept. 30 National Falls Prevention Awareness Month.** Several national nonprofit and advocacy organizations support this month-long awareness campaign, including the Brain Injury Association of America. Accidental falls are one of the leading causes of injury among Alaskans aged 65 and older, often resulting in serious harm like brain injuries or hip fractures. The State of Alaska Department of Health has a myth-busting information page full of resources that can help you. <https://health.alaska.gov/en/education/senior-fall-prevention/>

**Sept. 1 National Labor Day** Most government offices, banks, and many public transportation departments, including People Mover in Anchorage, will be closed in observance of the federal holiday.

**Sept. 5-6 Skagway to Whitehorse, Yukon Territory** The annual Klondike Road Relay is a fun, picturesque event. If you're not racing, you can volunteer. <https://www.klondikeroadrelay.com/>

**Sept. 6 Girdwood** The 18th annual Alyeska Climbathon is a 10-hour multi-lap, all-day event where climbers run/speed hike/walk up the approximately 2.2 mile North Face Trail (2,000 vertical feet) then descend on the Alyeska Resort Tram to complete a lap. Donations go to Let Every Woman Know and the Girdwood Health Clinic. <https://www.alyeskaclimbathon.com/>

**Sept. 6 and 7 Girdwood** Mushroom enthusiasts gather to share knowledge and tips for harvesting all kinds of fungi. <https://www.fungusfair.com/>

**Sept. 8-14 National Suicide Prevention Week.** <https://www.thenationalcouncil.org/national-suicide-prevention-week/>

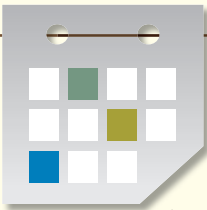
**Sept. 14 National Grandparents' Day.**

**Sept. 15-Oct. 15 National National Hispanic Heritage Month.** Originally a week established by legislation sponsored by Re. George Brown Jr. of Los Angeles and signed into law by President Lyndon Johnson in 1968, it became a month-long celebration in 1988. The 30-day period includes many Independence Day commemorations across Latin America. Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua celebrate their anniversary of independence on Sept. 15; Mexico commemorates its independence on Sept. 16; Chile commemorates its independence on Sept. 18. The month also includes what is known as Día de la Raza on Oct. 12.

**Sept. 19 International Talk Like a Pirate Day.** Don't sleep on Anchorage's Pirate Fest, which is Sept. 13. It has a kid-friendly aspect from 2 to 10 p.m. There is also a Pirate Pub Crawl starting at 7 p.m. for adults 21 and over. The event raises funds for the Blood Bank of Alaska.

**Sept. 20 Wasilla** Emergency Preparedness Expo. 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Menard Sports Center, 1001 S. Clapp St. Learn how you and your family can prepare for any emergency.

**Sept. 20 Fairbanks** The Equinox Marathon is the Interior's premier running event. The scenery is lovely, and the temperatures are usually just right to run 26.2 miles. <https://www.equinoxmarathon.org/>



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# First oil rush fueled the rise and demise of Katalla

By LAUREL DOWNING BILL  
Senior Voice Correspondent

Generations of Alaska Natives made use of thick, black goo oozing out of the hills and beaches in the Last Frontier long before white men “discovered” oil. Sources say Northern Natives burned the tar-like chips, and Southeastern Natives used it for war paint. Oil shale was used in knives and labrets.

The Russians knew of Alaska Peninsula oil seeps as early as 1860, but at this time whale oil was the important fuel. Oil from rocks was ignored. When Russian fur trade declined, the Russian American Company began exploring for minerals while searching for gold only a few miles from what became the Swanson River oil fields on the Kenai Peninsula. The Russians passed on the oil and settled for a coal prospect near Katchemak Bay in Cook Inlet. The black gold of the Kenai was left to be discovered almost 100 years later.

The first discovery of commercially viable oil happened accidentally in 1896. While hunting for bear, Thomas White fell into a seepage pit in the Controller Bay region southeast of Cordova. He later claimed that after he cleaned himself and his gun, he tossed a match into the pit “to see what would happen.”

The pool burst into flames and burned for a month.

Thus began the first oil rush to Alaska and grew the community of Katalla, which is in the Katalla is in the Valdez-Cordova Census Area. In September 1902, the Alaska Development Company, also known as the English Company, brought in the first gusher after stumbling upon more oil seepages.

As news of the discovery spread, Katalla experienced a rapid transformation with a frenzy of speculation and investment. By the fall of 1904, there were 15 holes down or drilling, including two at Katalla, two at Strawberry Harbor, and nine between Katalla Slough and the Bering River.

About this time the first oil swindle was reported, pulled off by an enterprising prospector. He staked a claim at Controller Bay and sold it for \$1,700 (almost \$59,000 in 2024 dollars). When spring breakup came and went, the claim was carried away—the buyer had purchased a non-sedimentary Controller Bay ice floe.

The population of Katalla soared to nearly 5,000. The hillside near the discovery site became dotted with oil derricks, drilling equipment, cabins, and pipelines. In the absence of proper storage facilities, workers resorted to digging deep pits in the bog to hold the crude temporarily.



Many oil rigs dotted Katalla's landscape by 1910.

Alaska State Library

The town's growth was further propelled by the announcement that the Copper River and Northwestern Railway planned to make Katalla its Pacific Ocean terminus,

providing access to the Bering River coal fields. However, violent storms in the fall of 1907 destroyed the jetty under construction. That prompted the railroad to relocate its terminus to nearby Cordova, dealing a blow to Katalla's ambitions.

Despite the setback, Katalla's oil industry persisted, albeit on a smaller scale. In 1911, Alaska's first oil refinery was established on Katalla Slough to process the crude oil, which was primarily sold locally to power the fishing fleet. The Chilcat Oil Company refinery expanded the following year and went into regular operation, producing gasoline and other products. Most of the refinery products were used in Cordova, as Katalla oil could not compete with fuel oil that was produced more cheaply in California.

By 1931, 44 test wells had been drilled in the area—18 were producing oil. However, the town's

fortunes took a turn for the worse on Christmas Day 1933 when a fire ravaged the refinery. Deemed economically unfeasible to rebuild, the refinery's closure marked the beginning of Katalla's decline.

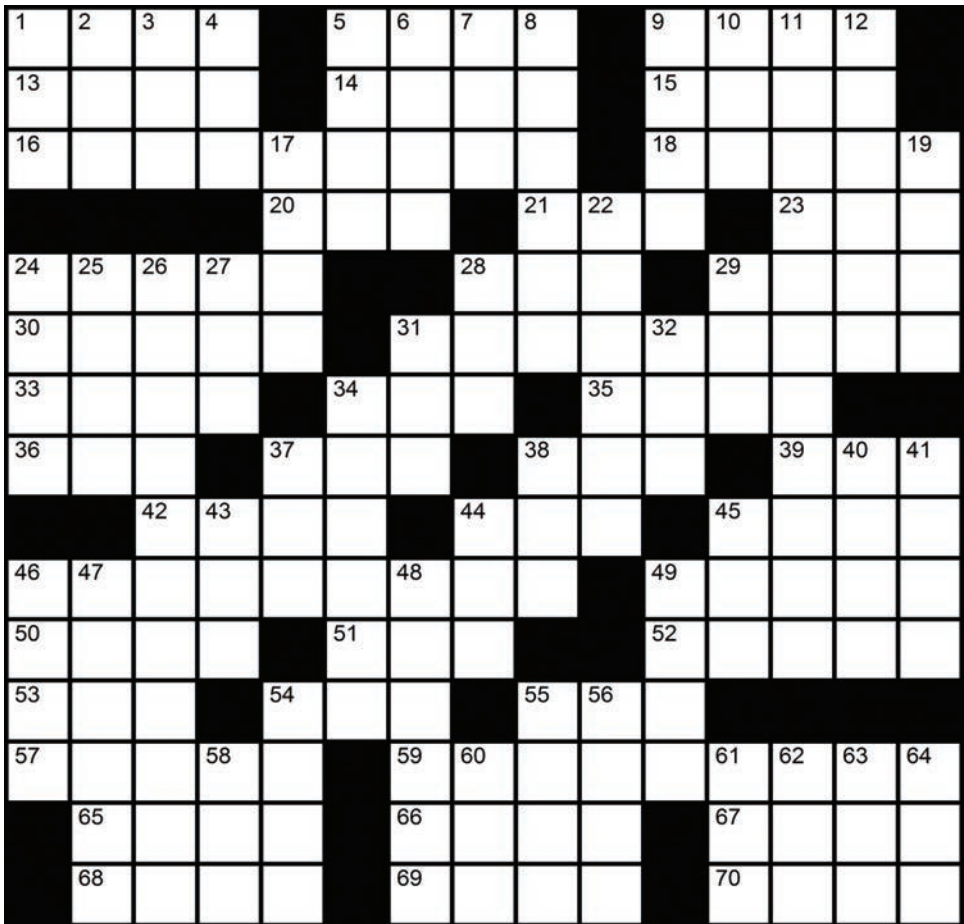
Although Katalla's post office closed in 1943 and the town was eventually abandoned, its legacy endures as a significant chapter in Alaska's oil and gas history. The Chilcat Oil Company Refinery site is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and serves as a tangible reminder of Katalla's pioneering role in the state's energy industry.

This column features tidbits found while researching Alaska's colorful past for Aunt Phil's Trunk, a five-book Alaska history series written by Laurel Downing Bill and her late aunt, Phyllis Downing Carlson. The books, including the newest titled "Pioneers From Alaska's Past," are available at bookstores and gift shops throughout Alaska, as well as online at [www.auntphilstrunk.com](http://www.auntphilstrunk.com).

## Animal Crackers

### Across

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- 14 Without (Fr.)
- 15 City in northern India
- 16 Equine theater?
- 18 Damp
- 20 Yes vote
- 21 Circuit
- 23 Union inits.
- 24 Intuition
- 28 Wordplay
- 29 Augments
- 30 Grownup
- 31 Loafers in the herd?
- 33 Couch
- 34 Morse code signal
- 35 Droop
- 36 Gremlin
- 37 Stout or Reason
- 38 Chicken
- 39 Cooking measure (Abbr.)
- 42 Distant
- 44 High rocky hill
- 45 Transact
- 46 Cattle to-do?
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- 50 Dwarf buffalo
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- 52 Army ant
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- 65 Flair



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Crossword answers on page 26





# Jade Marx reflects on Grandpa Groucho in Hollywood exhibit

By NICK THOMAS

Tinseltown Talks

Grandparents often play a profound role in a child's development and life, providing not just affection and guidance, but a link to family history. Their absence, however, can leave a void that lasts a lifetime. But what if a missing grandparent is a beloved celebrity, admired around the world—someone whose legacy is shared publicly, but whose presence is never personally experienced?

In 1977, Jade Marx was just 3 years old when her maternal grandfather died. He was comedy legend Groucho Marx.

Along with regular on-screen brothers Chico and Harpo, as well as lesser-known siblings Zeppo and Gummo, the Marx family is being honored with a new exhibit—"The Legends of Laughter: The Marx Brothers." Along with other Marx family members, Jade was invited to celebrate the exhibit's July 17 opening at the Hollywood Museum in the historic Max Factor Building (see [www.thehollywood-museum.com](http://www.thehollywood-museum.com)).

"The only memory I have of Groucho is being in his arms at his house and he was in his pajamas," recalled Jade from Los Angeles. "But my grandmother and mother have shared stories about him and the family over the years."

Jade was one of several speakers at the exhibit's opening, along with other guests including Harpo's son (Bill Marx), Gummo's grandson (Greg Marx), and Groucho's grandson (Andy Marx) as well as family friends, entertainment historians, and celebrities.

"This was possibly the most Marx Brothers family members I've been in the same room with at the same time and it was so much fun—I think we should do a reunion!" she said. "We've all gone in different professional directions."

In addition to working

as an actor, Jade dabbled in real estate and worked as a wellness professional. She took a hiatus from the entertainment industry to raise her son, who she says also has the acting bug. She's now returning to acting and performing as well as producing and writing projects, including some about her family.

"I can't talk about those just yet," she said. "But I'm an artist and it's the heart of my being and my family's."

The new exhibit includes Marx-related items never-before seen on public display, says Donelle Dadigan, the founder and president of the Hollywood Museum.

"I believe it's one of the most comprehensive Marx Brothers exhibits, period," she said from Hollywood. "It runs until the end of the year. We've got costumes that Groucho, Chico, and Harpo wore in the films that we pair with stills from the movies. Fans will recognize them."

Other items include numerous photos, posters, and even Harpo's artwork, as well as Harpo's wig, iconic horn, and prop trunk, Chico's hat, and Groucho's glasses.

"Those wire rim glasses were very magical to me," added Jade, "his eyes were so famous. There's a lot of neat things I've never seen before including a 'You Bet Your Life' board game (from Groucho's TV show) that I never knew existed. But I find the costumes particularly fascinating because you get to see their body frames and sizes which aren't always obvious on film. You can imagine them right there in front of you in those familiar outfits like Harpo's trench coat."

Although a regular viewer of Marx Brothers movies over the years, Jade doesn't recall the first film she saw.

"But I do remember being overwhelmed when I first realized I was watching my family," she recalled. "I couldn't immerse



Andy Marx (Groucho's Grandson), Donelle Dadigan (Host and President and Hollywood Museum Founder), Bill Marx (Harpo's son), Jade Marx (Groucho's Granddaughter), Greg Marx (Gummo's Grandson).

Photos Sheri Determan, Courtesy Hollywood Museum



Some items in the Marx Brothers exhibit including Chico's hat, Harpo's coat, wig and horn, and Groucho's glasses and jacket.

myself in the films initially because that fact was distracting. However, over time I've come to enjoy their movies like anyone in the audience."

As a child, Jade was instructed by her mother (Melinda Marx) not to tell others about the family's link to Hollywood.

"She's a very private person, but she also wanted people to like us for who we are, not because of our Hollywood connection," explained Jade. "It seemed strange when I was young, but as I've grown older, I understand why she did that."

As for losing a famous grandparent as a toddler, Jade has come to appreciate the historic footage of her grandfather.

"For most people losing a grandparent decades ago, they may only have photos to remember them by," she

says. "But I can access all those film and television images, and I can hear his voice. So it's really a blessing and makes me closer to him and my uncles. I'm very proud to be a Marx."

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

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# Title thieves can take your home equity, if not your home

By KENNETH KIRK

For Senior Voice

You have no doubt seen recent ads about “house stealing.”

This is a real thing, although I think “title theft” is the better term. They don’t actually steal your house; it is still sitting there, firmly attached to the ground. But potentially it could indeed cause you to lose your house.

Here’s how it works. You can prove you have title to your house because there is a series of deeds in the public record, showing who owned the underlying property, and who they sold it to, and that sequence of deeds ends with you. Each of those deeds was signed in front of a notary public, who had to confirm the identity of the person signing. Whoever it was that owned your house before you, signed a deed under oath, which was recorded with the State, saying they sold it to you.

So what a title thief does, is forge a deed. They put together a document that looks real, saying that you are transferring the property to them. Of course they can’t sign it in front of a real notary, because the notary would want to see their ID, and they can’t produce an ID showing they’re you. However, they can get a rubber stamp kit and put together a fake notary stamp and forge the notary’s signature as well as yours.

And then they record it. There is now a document in the public record showing that they own the property. It’s fake, but it looks real.

But that is only the first step. They don’t want your house; the minute they show up at the door, you are going to realize somebody has committed a fraud and call in the authorities. The thief doesn’t want to be there when you get wise to the scam. The title thief could sell the house, but that may be difficult because most buyers are going to want to inspect the



house, and again if somebody shows up at the door you are going to be alerted that somebody is trying to scam you.

But do you know who doesn’t always inspect the house? Mortgage lenders. So, the title thief contacts a mortgage lender and applies for a home equity line of credit or some other type of mortgage. If you have a lot of equity in your home, potentially that mortgage could be for a pretty substantial amount of money, maybe hundreds of thousands of dollars. The thief can tell, from the property records, which houses are owned free and clear.

And a few months later, since nobody is actually going to make payments against that mortgage, you suddenly receive a foreclosure notice. Now you are definitely aware something is going on. But by that time, the thief has taken that mortgage money, converted it to cash or bitcoin, and skipped town, leaving you holding the bag.

The good news is that you will most likely be able to hold on to your house. A handwriting expert can establish that you did not actually sign the deed, and that can stop the foreclosure. The bad news is that you are going to spend a lot of money on that handwriting expert, not to mention the attorney you will need to defend you in the case. This is a private lawsuit, and your opposing party isn’t the title thief, it is the mortgage lender who is trying to foreclose on the home. Lawsuits like this aren’t cheap.

What can you do to protect yourself against

***But the best thing you can do—and for this you should be very glad you live in Alaska—is check your own title regularly. The Alaska Records Office has a website where you can look up any deed you like, for free. It is located at <https://dnr.alaska.gov/ssd/recoff/search>.***

title theft? Well, there are those companies you see advertised. A service like that will probably cost around \$20 a month but understand that they don’t actually prevent someone from transferring your title. All they do is monitor any activity on your title and then alert you if something happens. By the time they find out and tell you, the title thief has already transferred the property. On the other hand, they may or may not have been able to arrange that false mortgage yet. And some of those services will also pay for the attorney fees to defend you.

You can also freeze your credit by contacting the credit reporting agencies. That way nobody can, for instance, take out a credit card in your name. That does not necessarily protect you from title theft,

though, because the title thief isn’t taking out that mortgage in your name. They are transferring it to themselves and then taking out the mortgage in their own name.

One partial solution is to put your property into a trust or LLC. That doesn’t prevent the theft, but it does present an extra hurdle for the thief. The mortgage company will want to see a copy of the trust or LLC documents, which means they have to forge a few more items and make them look real. It helps because you are no longer the low-hanging fruit, so the thief is more likely to go after someone else instead of you.

But the best thing you can do—and for this you should be very glad you live in Alaska—is check your own title regularly. The Alaska Records Of-

fice has a website where you can look up any deed you like, for free. It is located at <https://dnr.alaska.gov/ssd/recoff/search>. You can’t look it up by your street address, but you can look it up by your name, or if you have the previous deed, by the legal description. And if you see a recent entry that you don’t recognize, you can click on it and, potentially, see that fraudulent deed.

When those people in the ads tell you what a nightmare it was when somebody stole their title, they aren’t exaggerating. But the sooner you find out somebody is trying to snatch your title and take out a phony mortgage, the easier it will be to head that off at the pass.

*Kenneth Kirk is an Anchorage estate planning attorney. Nothing in this article should be taken as legal advice for a specific situation; for specific advice you should consult a professional who can take all the facts into account. Sorry about the lack of humor in this one; it was written by AI. No, just kidding, I don’t use AI. That was the joke.*



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# Tech resources and using AirPods Pro 2 as hearing aids

By BOB DeLAURENTIS

Bob's Tech Talk

**Q. Where can I learn more about tech-related topics? I'm not interested in news as much as how-to guides and general knowledge.**

A. There are so many options available online that finding gems can seem overwhelming. So I'm going to focus on a couple of sites that are well suited for helping my readers refresh their skills.

The first is TechBoomers, which has focused on tech for the last 10 years but recently changed their name to Tech Life Unity (techlifeunity.com).

Senior Planet is a site from AARP that hosts hundreds of video classes on topics ranging from becoming a gamer to navigating Medicare.

If you enjoy the kinds of articles I prepare each month, I'm confident you'll find a great deal of useful information on these two standout sites.

**Q. I used to be able to use my iPhone and AirPods Pro 2 as a makeshift hearing aid, but that option seems to have disappeared. Is**

**there a way to get it working again?**

A. Yes, there is. When I first wrote about AirPods Pro as hearing aids, it was possible using the right settings. But those settings were not obvious at the time.

Apple has revised the AirPods Pro 2 software a number of times since my first column on the subject, and those updates made big changes.

There are now more user settings for things like active noise cancellation, adaptive noise reduction, and hearing self-tests. The hearing test is quite easy and takes about five minutes. To start, ask Siri on the iPhone to "open hearing test" or open the built-in Apple Health app and tap on the Hearing category.

Scroll down until it shows a button to take a hearing test. The test walks you through a series of steps to ensure the AirPods fit correctly, then it will play a series of tones in each ear and prompt for feedback. Once completed, the results will be presented on a chart.

If the test reveals some hearing loss, it will suggest

enabling the AirPods Pro 2 to function as hearing aids. Another feature of the test is that it will offer to adjust the sound to be more balanced when playing media.

Unfortunately, there is no way to turn on the hearing aid mode, nor is there a foolproof way to confirm if your hardware supports this mode except to already own AirPods Pro 2 and see if the test appears in the Health app.

I helped my mom set up her first AirPods last week, and a future column will recount her experiences. At this point, first impressions are that she is quite happy with being able to hear everyone in the car when she is in the back seat, and she is hoping that her ears will adjust to having an earbud inserted.

**Q. The Apple Watch I bought last year did not include a blood oxygen sensor, although I could see where the same model sold outside the United States has one. Can I purchase a non-U.S. Apple Watch to use with my U.S.-based iPhone?**

A. I do not know how well mixing hardware from

## Wander the Web

Here are my picks for worthwhile browsing this month:

**A history of Mac settings**  
For longtime Mac fans, this page is a walk down memory lane. For everyone else, it is a powerful example of what system emulation can do. The "movies" in this essay are not movies—they are built with decades-old software running in emulation. [aresluna.org/frame-of-preference](https://aresluna.org/frame-of-preference)

**Armchair aviation**  
This site will take a very long time to load, but after initial the black screen disappears you will be able to step through a photo gallery of various airports. [randomairport.onrender.com](https://randomairport.onrender.com)

**Sticks and more sticks**  
This Instagram page has 3.5 million followers who post photos and comment about wooden sticks. (Requires an Instagram account to view). [instagram.com/officialstickreviews/](https://instagram.com/officialstickreviews/)

different countries would work in practice, but I suspect it would be messy.

However, the good news is that thanks to a software update in early August, Apple re-enabled the oxygen sensor on models in the United States. If your watch has a hardware sensor, updating to iPhoneOS 18.6.1 and the watchOS to 11.6.1 will

restore the functionality.

The feature was removed for some users about 18 months ago over a patent dispute, but the software update avoids the dispute and allows your watch to collect blood-oxygen data.

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



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# Prepare yourself and your ride for Alaska's winter

## *Save yourself and maybe help another traveler*

By **DIMITRA LAVRAKAS**

Senior Voice Travel  
Correspondent

More and more people are getting stuck in their cars due to floods or snow storms because of severe changes in the weather. There's also troubling, more frequent rock and landslides that can trap you.

Be prepared for anything.

As someone who's traveled throughout Alaska, the Yukon Territory, the Northwest Territories in Canada, and up and down the Alaska Highway to the Lower 48, I know being prepared not only saved me some discomfort but also discomfort for fellow travelers. A courtesy of the road in those places means you ask someone pulled over to the side if they're all right, and if they're not, offer assistance. I've handed off quarts of oil and gas to stranded drivers.

I'll never forget what one homeless man said to me after helping me get out of a snow berm in Anchorage, "Alaskans don't let Alaskans freeze."

Also, when I take long trips on so-called animal corridors, I drive in the middle of the road if no one's around just in case a moose or an elk decides to cross the road. If I'm in the middle, I figure I have a 50-50 chance of avoiding a hit. This was a pointer given me by the late Alice True of Skagway: "If no one else is driving why not use the whole road?"

### More than the basics

First of all, a reliable vehicle in Alaska is a four-wheel drive with studded tires. Nothing is more frightening than your tires spinning on a deserted road in the middle of winter.

These are what you should always have in your gas-powered vehicle no matter if it's winter or not:

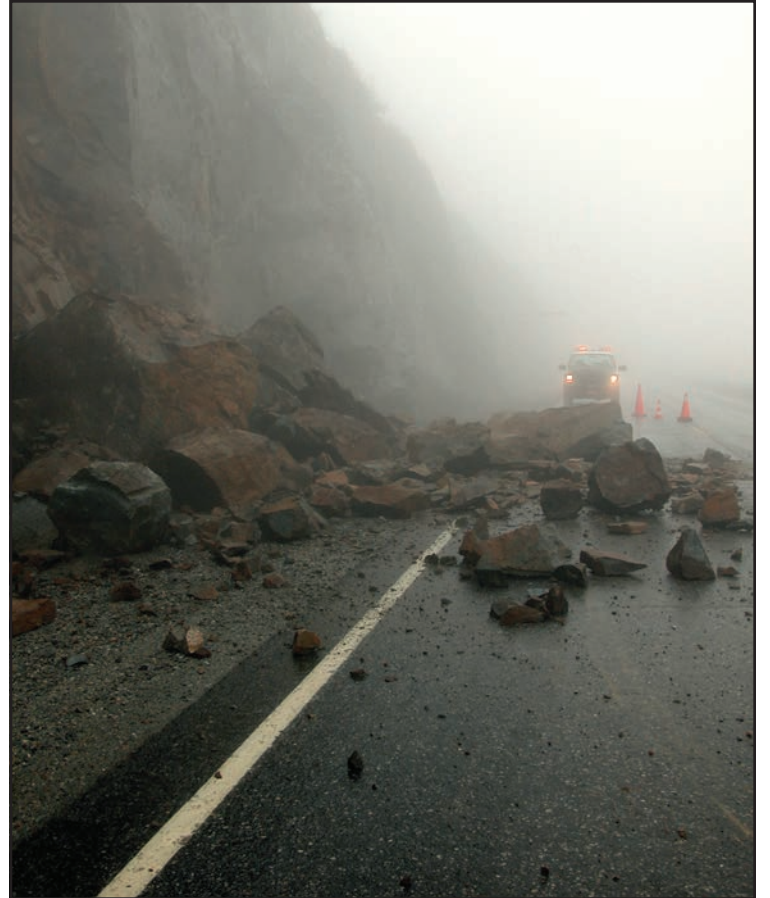
1. Jerry can of gasoline, because gas stations are usually few and far between.

2. Jumper cables. You may need them or someone else might.



*My trusty Toyota Tacoma before a trip to the Lower 48.*

*Dimitra Lavrakas photos*



*More and more slides are happening from Washington state all the way up to Denali.*



*Alaska snowstorms can be blinding, making driving a real test of your survival skills.*

3. A jerry can of water in case your radiator boils over. Remember to let it cool down before pouring water because the radiator will crack.

4. A couple of quarts of oil, again, just in case.

5. Windshield washer fluid for the bugs on the windshield.

6. A can of Fix-A-Flat Aerosol Tire Inflator.

7. A shovel, the big kind, not a snow shovel, just in case the snow is heavy.

8. Some say use kitty litter for traction, but it's hard to find the kind that doesn't clump. I've used my floor mats turned upside down under the tires with the ridges giving traction, and I've also used those doormats made out of hand-knotted coir.

### Food for long trips in bad weather

1. Food that won't freeze, like crackers and peanut butter, energy bars, something sweet in case of hypothermia like chocolate or M&Ms.

2. Something to drink that won't freeze like herbal tea in a thermos and plastic Ziploc bags to melt snow in if you leave the heater on for some time.

3. Bags of pretzels, chips, popcorn.

4. Jerky.

5. A hunting knife (I traveled with a Buck knife) or a gun to eat critters or scare them away.

### Staying warm

1. Lots of matches in a waterproof container, lighters.

2. I like fire starter logs because they're an easy way to get warm and last two to three hours, and you can start a real fire with them without fumbling around with kindling in a stiff wind.

3. I had a truck and piled wood pallets in the bed for a fire and also to help with traction.

4. A bow saw and an axe to cut wood.

5. Tarp for shelter.

6. Rope to hang tarp.

7. A mattress pad and a sleeping bag good to minus 20F degrees or more.

8. Change of clothes (think layers), including wool or Polar fleece socks.

9. Pack boots also good down to minus 20F or 40F degrees.

10. Wool hat, gloves or

mitten, long underwear.

11. Hand warmers like packs that activate when exposed to air or the rechargeable kind.

12. A flashlight with extra batteries; a wind-up radio that also has a flashlight and a siren; a headlamp (don't we all have one?), and a battery-powered lantern that can signal distress but also provide light.

It may seem like a lot, but really, once you gather all the equipment and put it in a tote in your car or the garage, you'll be all set for your next adventure. You'll come home safe and sound. Happy trails to you.

*Note: This will be my last column for Senior Voice. Thanks for reading and the kind words over the years.*





# Down the Hobbit Hole on a writing retreat



A view from the totem pole toward the lodge and other buildings.

By **LAWRENCE D. WEISS**

For Senior Voice

Air taxis are scary. I like new experiences, but I hoped this one would not be my last. I sat quietly in the unadorned waiting area at the air taxi terminal in Juneau—gritting my teeth and contemplating mortality. Then a guy behind the counter walked briskly into the waiting area, twirled his finger in the air and bellowed, “Time to go. Let’s board the bus.” The bus took eight or nine of us to the seaplane gently bobbing in the water next to the tarmac.

As I awkwardly climbed in through the tiny door, I made an innocuous comment to the pilot that apparently oozed apprehension. He responded confidently that this plane, a Super Otter, was made in the 1950s and this type of plane flew all over Alaska. I couldn’t help but think of cars I remembered from the 1950s. All in junkyards by the end of the 1960s. Yikes. “Don’t worry. Be happy,” I intoned to my-

self. I was determined to go. We were instructed to put on our headsets to block out the engine noise. Calming elevator music was piped into our brains. The plane accelerated and gently bounced off the waves into the air.

Forty-five minutes later we landed in a channel surrounded by islands and mountains. A smallish boat approached us. Luggage was stored under the deck and we clambered on board. A few minutes later we motored through a somewhat concealed opening between the rocks. We entered a cove about half a mile across surrounded by heavily forested mountains. We pulled up to the dock near a string of low wooden buildings. Welcome to the Hobbit Hole.

A few months earlier I had seen an advert in a local newsletter for Alaska writers about a “gathering” on a remote island to hone our skills about “environmental rhetoric.” I wasn’t really sure what that meant but it sounded interesting and maybe even appropriate

to my interests. The event was surprisingly inexpensive. Yes, a little out of my comfort zone but certainly I would have something to learn from younger attendees, and perhaps something to leave with them too. I signed up.

Most of the other participants were in their 20s and 30s. They were from New York, Boston, Alaska, even Hong Kong. They slept in a communal bunkhouse up a steep trail. Three of us had limited mobility and we were assigned the “guest cabin.” I am 79 and got my own queen-sized bed. No, I did not feel in the least bit guilty.

Rhetoric is the art of using language to persuade someone to do something. After a communal breakfast in the lodge, we had lectures about rhetoric basics such as logical and illogical ways to argue, and the elements of formal debating. As a case study we discussed the role rhetoric played in the complex relationship between early conservationist John Muir and the Tlingits here in Alaska.



A selfie, gritting my teeth, waiting for the Super Otter to take off.

Photos by Lawrence Weiss

The afternoons usually involved a hike or a kayak trip or both. The Hobbit Hole is situated in spectacular country, and I deeply regretted that I could not hike those rough and steep trails due to an ankle that seems to have aged faster than the rest of me. Two of us “limited mobility” types stayed behind to enjoy more contemplative activities. One afternoon Zach, co-director of the nonprofit Tidelines Institute that owns the Hobbit Hole, approached the two of us with a proposition. How would we like to go on a boat ride around some of the local islands? Well, sure.

Off we went. The highlight of the excursion was a visit to a nearby sealion haulout featuring maybe 150 of the gigantic creatures sunning themselves,

arguing loudly, completely unaware of their pungent and overpowering malodor.

In the evenings, huddled around the campfire or in the main room of the lodge, we had a variety of educational presentations and public speaking exercises. Suffice it to say that I am a better writer than public speaker. One evening I was assigned to a team of very smart environmental activists in their 20s and 30s. The instructor would yell out the name of one of about 50 types of illogical arguments, and individuals on the various teams would instantly thrust their hand into the air to be called upon to give an example of that type of argument. Way too fast for me. I told my younger colleagues that I was the team ballast.

All in all I am glad I was able to go—as a guy at the threshold of his 80s. I still want to have new experiences and learn what life has to offer. I love meeting new people and hearing their stories. A couple months ago a friend called and invited me to join a group of a dozen “artists” headed to Adak for a week in August. I think he expected me to say “No.” I said “Yes!”

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



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# Tips for future or current executors

By MICHELLE TABLER

AARP Alaska Volunteer  
Fraud Education Expert

Have you ever settled the affairs for a relative or friend who has passed? Are you the future estate executor for a relative? While my articles generally focus on fraud topics, I'm offering the following tips based on my ongoing experience to date to help future executors.

I had a rude awakening when my mother passed away in March of this year. I thought I had a handle on her affairs as the executor; I was listed on her banking accounts and had been paying her bills for several years. It's been months, and I am still spending hours each week on her affairs.

Here are my top tips for current or future account executors:

► A family member suggested monitoring my mother's emails. I hadn't thought of that. I spent

**After a loss, it's hard to know where to start.**

**AARP has a checklist for those early days:**

**<https://www.aarp.org/family-relationships/when-loved-one-dies-checklist/>.**

hours unsubscribing to shopping sites, magazine subscriptions, and more. But a few very important emails came in with information that I would not have known about otherwise, including a statement for an investment account that we hadn't known about.

► Close all online accounts while you still have access to your friend or family member's computer, especially if passwords are saved. Be sure to have an updated list of passwords for any online activities including their email account, Facebook, Amazon, Netflix, other subscription services, financial accounts, and any other online sites your relative or friend might've used. Canceling Facebook, Amazon and other accounts using the call center numbers has

been frustrating and time consuming. I have spent dozens of hours on hold and it's still ongoing.

► Sign up online to have mail forwarded with the United State Postal Service (USPS). Set up Informed Delivery so you can monitor incoming mail. As mail arrives, be sure to change the address with each company so future correspondence comes directly to you as mail forwarding has a time limit. Recently, due to Informed Delivery, I was notified that an Amazon package had been delivered to my mother (at her former assisted living facility) that is probably part of a scam. I reported that possible fraud to the U.S. Postal Inspection Service.

► If possible, keep the cell phone service (and/or the land line) active until all

accounts have been closed. Subscription services or other accounts may have two-factor authentication with the code going to the phone (for one of my mother's accounts, the code was a call to the landline). Some accounts may also have the "change password" link going to the cell phone. This was a hard lesson for me as I thought it prudent to shut down my mother's phones right away to avoid further monthly charges. That was a time-consuming mistake.

► Although it's best to know this information before your relative/friend passes, check to see what medical insurance they have. Make copies of their cards for Medicare, Supplements, Part D and other insurance such as property, auto and life insurance policies. Ask if there is a hospital indemnity policy and check if claims for recent hospitalizations and rehab facilities have been made. You may have to make these claims after your

loved one's death, so be sure to have the information. I'm currently having to jump through hoops sending documentation for a hospital indemnity policy: they keep rejecting my claims due to what they consider missing information. This week, they rejected a claim because the hospital's address wasn't on the form. Really? Be persistent and keep re-submitting by appeal.

► Have copies of all credit cards that would need to be closed as well as any bills that are on autopay. Contact all companies. In most cases, I was able to send a scanned copy of the death certificate rather than mailing a copy.

As you go through this long, arduous process, be prepared for frustration in dealing with companies who systematically make it difficult to cancel accounts. In one case, I've had to appeal to the Federal Trade Commission. That case is

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# 103-Year-Old Esteline Moe finds the good life in Alaska

By **YASMIN RADBOD**  
*Alaska Commission on Aging*

Esteline “Estie” Moe, who has lived in Alaska since 1947, turned 103 this summer, celebrating her birthday with neighbors and family. When asked what the key to a long life is, she simply says, “You have to milk cows.” Estie was raised on a farm in northern Minnesota, the eldest daughter in her family, and did chores alongside her father and two brothers. With forty cows on the farm, she would milk ten cows every morning before breakfast and every night after school, shovel

manure, and stack hay. Like other rural families in those days, her family used a “biffy,” or outhouse, pumped their own water, and cooked on an oil stove. She says that upbringing prepared her well for life in Alaska. Later, while working as a waitress in Minneapolis, Moe met her husband Alvin. It didn’t take him long to figure out that she was a keeper. Shortly after they were married, he was sent overseas for military service. She joked, “We had forty days and forty nights together, and then he was gone.” Alvin was on the other side of the Atlantic



**Esteline "Estie" Moe**  
*Photo by Yasmin Radbod*

Ocean for almost three years. During that time, Moe roomed with his female cousins and continued

working. She lived on her earnings, saving her husband’s monthly paychecks. Eventually those savings would pay for their first house in Anchorage. When Alvin returned, he asked his wife where she wanted to live. When she replied, “Anywhere but northern Minnesota!” He suggested, “How about Alaska?” and she agreed—“but only for two years.”

The young couple found a small log cabin for \$3,500 in what is now the Fairview neighborhood, then on the outskirts of town. Life on the farm had prepared them both for living in Anchorage in 1947. They had no indoor plumbing or running water, just an outdoor pump and buckets of water to carry inside, and no electricity, just drums of oil for lighting and heating. Every morning, Estie’s first task was to turn up the heat; then she went back to bed to warm up again before starting the day.

Within their first month in Anchorage, Alvin and Estie Moe found a church home at Central Lutheran Church. Although they told the pastor they would stay for only two years, Estie Moe has now been a member for 78 years. For 40 of those years, Alvin was head usher and Estie made coffee for the congregation’s coffee hour.

During the Alaska winter, the outdoors was the refrigerator and freezer, but in the summer, the old federal building downtown had a cold storage area where moose meat and other perishables could be kept. When Moe went there to retrieve meat for dinner, she could also pick up the family mail.

Moe worked as a checker at Northern Commercial Company before she and Alvin started their family. Later she opened a day care at home to supplement

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## ACoA September board meeting

Senior Voice Staff

Join Alaska Commission on Aging Thursday, Sept. 25 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. (lunch break noon-12:30 p.m.) on Zoom for our quarterly board meeting. We will recognize several national awareness days with special presentations featuring Alaskan voices. You can look forward to educational discussions and updates from local organizations including the Alaska Training Cooperative, Alaska Housing Finance Corporation, ACLU Alaska Prison Project, the new State Falls Prevention Coalition, Alaska Long Term Care Ombudsman Office, Senior and Disabilities Services and more. Join us at 11:40 a.m. for a presentation by Jim LaBelle, Sr., 2nd vice president of the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition in honor of the National Day of Remembrance for U.S. Indian Boarding Schools (Sept. 30). Celebrate National Employ Older Adults Week with a presentation from the Mature Alaskans Seeking Skills Program (MASST).

The commission en-

courage agencies, senior centers, and organizations to publicly show the board meeting in their facilities throughout the day.

Use this Zoom link to join the board meeting: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86170026613>

The complete Sept. 25 board meeting agenda is available via the commission’s weekly e-blast, which you can access on at <https://aging.alaska.gov>. In addition, you can search “aging” on the Alaska Online Public Notice website to download the agenda: <https://aws.state.ak.us/OnlinePublicNotices/>

If you have any trouble using Zoom or have questions, call us at 907-230-0871 or email the commission at [doh.acoa.info@alaska.gov](mailto:doh.acoa.info@alaska.gov).

You are welcome to join and leave throughout the day at your preference. There is no meeting password. All are welcome.

Public Comment is at 1 p.m.

The ACoA’s Centenarians Day Celebration Video will be live on its Facebook page Sept. 22. Thank you to everyone who participated.

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# MASST

continued from page 2

“I got to brush up on all my computer tech skills and even got to proofread and post programs on the web,” Payne said. “I also got to do some broadcasting. My supervisors were wonderful, exceptional

teachers and very patient. After six months, I needed to make more money, so I tried the job search again. Having a good referral and a job already made all the difference.” She took one of three job offers as a direct service provider, using her nursing skills, and now she is perusing entry jobs in medical coding.

Another recent success story involves a MASST participant I worked with for over two years. Sherry Foster was a steady student in a weekly computer training course I taught, and even though she learned a lot from her host site, the Wage and Hour Administration, she didn’t use computer training much. Her knowledge paid off well, however, when she landed a job as the front desk receptionist with an employment agency in Fairbanks. On a recent visit to the office, Foster informed me that she had been fast-tracked to be-

come a permanent member of the agency team. MASST isn’t only about skills training. What Foster values most from the MASST program is the way it places seniors in a positive, safe work environment. For older workers with disabilities or mobility issues, that is a major support. In addition, she notes, MASST advocates for seniors and provides supportive services in the initial job placement. And the advocacy, she says, is marked by persistence and perseverance. After moving from one position to a better one, Foster contin-

ues to build her confidence, taking time to learn on the job and appreciating the patience and support of her new manager. If we could send Payne and Foster to testify at the hearings in Congress, there is no doubt that the Older Americans Act would be reauthorized. By a unanimous vote. In celebration for another five years of important work for community service and for older workers. Employ Older Workers! Jim Warren is in his third year as MASST coordinator for Northern and Interior regions, based in Fairbanks.

# Scams

continued from page 5

prescribed the equipment, supplies, or tests, it is a scam designed to steal your Medicare number.

Here are a few tips to protect yourself from Medicare scams.

- Official Medicare communications will come by mail. Medicare representatives will not come to your home, text you or unexpectedly call you. Protect your personal information. Never share your Medicare or Social Security number with anyone who contacts you, even if it seems like they work for the government. If you initiate a call to the official Medicare phone number or have scheduled a phone appointment with Medicare, they may ask you to verify your personal information.
- Medicare will not offer you a refund or threaten to cancel your coverage over the phone. They will send you notices in the mail. If a caller is threatening these things, it is a scam. Keep your Medicare card at home and only take it with you to medical appointments with

new providers who do not have it on file.

- Be sure to review your Medicare claim notices, looking for services you did not receive. There have been recent cases in Alaska of scammers making false claims for Medicare, especially for catheters.

If you have questions about Medicare or think you have been scammed, contact the Alaska Medicare Information Office by calling 1-800-478-6065 (or 907-269-3680 if you are not in Alaska) or by email [doh.mio.info@alaska.gov](mailto:doh.mio.info@alaska.gov). The staff and volunteers at the Medicare Information Office can also help you select the best plan for you during open enrollment.

If you or someone you know has been targeted by a scam, you are not alone. Fraud specialists at the AARP Fraud Watch Network Helpline (877-908-3360 available from 4 am to 4 pm Alaska time) can provide free support and guidance on what to do next. To learn more about fraud, scams, and prevention, visit the AARP Fraud Watch Network at [www.aarp.org/fraud](http://www.aarp.org/fraud).

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

# Grieving

continued from page 4

trying a different cuisine or exploring nature—can foster excitement and self-discovery. Consider planning small outings or trying out hobbies that slowly encourage exploration, helping you connect with life in fresh ways. Seeking new adventures can remind you that life still holds beauty and joy, encouraging personal resilience as you navigate your emotions.

## Healing through grief

While the journey through grief can be painful, it often leads to profound healing and personal growth. Allowing yourself to grieve is an essential step in honoring your wife’s memory and processing your emotions. Writing in a notebook, engaging in creative arts, or talking with others can assist in articulating your feelings, providing a clearer path toward healing. Through this process, grief can transform into a deeper understanding of love, loss, and introspection.

## Conclusion

Our senses are not just tools for perceiving the world; they are deeply intertwined with our emotional and psychological well-being. By focusing on belonging, continuity, sociability, security, adventure, and healing through grief, you can navigate your journey and gradually move toward a place of hope and renewal. Karen Casanovas, PCC, CPCC, CLIPP is a health and wellness professional coach practicing in Anchorage. If you have questions write to her at [info@karencasanovas.com](mailto:info@karencasanovas.com).

## Crossword answers from page 18

A	N	T	E		E	D	D	A		L	A	C	E	
S	E	A	M		S	A	N	S		A	G	R	A	
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# Executor

continued from page 24

ongoing. On another account, I had to file a complaint with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to finally get the account closed down and the ongoing charges stopped. That took an additional three months after I turned in the equipment and thought the account had been closed. This involved multiple phone calls, visits to stores, emails to corporate headquarters, and finally the FCC complaint.

There is an actual name

for this—sludging (introducing obstacles)—which refers to the practice of intentionally making a product or service difficult to use or cancel. I can only imagine the frustration experienced by elderly seniors or children after a spouse or parent’s death when faced with the roadblocks created by these companies. The longer they can drag out the process, the more money they can make/save. Be prepared to be persistent.

After a loss, it’s hard to know where to start. AARP has a checklist for those early days: <https://www.aarp.org/family-relationships/when-loved-one-dies-checklist/>.

# Ambulance

continued from page 5

Medicare Part B pays 80 percent of the Medicare-approved ambulance rides after you’ve met your annual Part B deductible (\$257 in 2025). You, or your Medicare supplemental policy (if you have one), are responsible for the remaining 20 percent.

If you have a Medicare Advantage Plan, it must

cover the same services as original Medicare, and may offer some additional transportation services. You’ll need to check with your plan for details.

## How to appeal

If an ambulance company bills you for services after Medicare denies payment, but you think the ride was medically necessary, you can appeal – see Medicare.gov, click on “Providers & Services” followed by “Claims, Appeals, and

Complaints.” To help your case, ask the doctor who treated you for documentation that you needed an ambulance.

If you need some help, contact your State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP), who can help you file an appeal. Go to ShipHelp.org or call 877-839-2675 for contact information.

Send your questions or comments to [questions@savvysenior.org](mailto:questions@savvysenior.org), or to Savvy Senior, P.O. Box 5443, Norman, OK 73070.

## Subscribe to Senior Voice

Call 276-1059 in Anchorage or 1-800-478-1059 toll-free statewide

# Kinship

continued from page 11

navigator program through Volunteers of America Alaska. VOA Alaska is a behavioral health provider serving youth and adults and provides mental health services and case management for Kinship Families across the state. VOA’s program includes a dedicated clinician for kinship families who can be accessed in person or via telehealth.

VOA works with families inside and outside the OCS system.

► A regional, culturally based kinship navigator program for the Southeast region called the Kin Support Program Haa Yatx’u Saani based in Juneau (phonetically: ha yut koo sawknee, Tlingit language). This program is open to all Southeast families where a relative is raising a child outside the Office of Children’s Services system, regardless of background or financial status. The pro-

gram offers family specialists, an in-house attorney for relatives, and a contract attorney for parents to help resolve legal caregiving authority for children.

Alaska Kinship Caregivers of Children is a private Facebook group for relatives raising kids, facilitated by the Alaska Impact Alliance, a nonprofit focused on preventing child abuse and supporting family wellness. The Alliance also runs URECARES (Unlicensed Relative Caregiver Stipend & Respite Program), offer-

ing annual payments and support referrals to stabilize families and reduce foster care placements. In addition, the 907 Navigation App, developed by the Alliance, connects Alaskans to trusted local resources, services, and community support with just a few taps. It’s a free app available on both Android and Apple. A browser version is available at their website: <https://www.alaskaimpactalliance.com/>

While raising a child is never easy, especially for relative caregivers, you are part of a bigger community, and there are people ready to help.

Don’t miss our upcoming statewide webinar with Alaska Commission on Aging (ACoA) and Volunteers of America Alaska

in honor of Grandparents Day! All are welcome to attend, especially families where a relative is raising a child, and for anyone interested in learning more. Join us via Zoom on Sept. 5 from noon to 1:30 p.m. for a free presentation on kinship family support in Alaska. Use this Zoom link at noon: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81324705401>. Have questions or need help with Zoom? Call ACoA’s Program Coordinator at: 907-230-0871. You can also check with your local senior center to see if they are hosting the webinar during lunch.

Learn more about the Kin Support Program Haa Yatx’u Saani at [southeastkin.org](http://southeastkin.org) and find us on Facebook! Call us at: 907-318-6560.



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# Moe

continued from page 25

the family income, while caring for their own four little ones.

Alvin worked in construction with his two brothers, finishing concrete in the summer. Back then, you couldn’t pour cement in the winter, so Alvin spent his winters building houses. Estie often helped and has not-so-fond memories of holding sheetrock in place while he fastened it. Together, they built the house she still lives in today, as well as four others in the neighborhood.

Her favorite place to volunteer was Bishop’s Attic, where she sorted clothing

in the back with wonderful friends and lively conversation. An avid reader, for years Moe read a book every day. She is also a master embroiderer. After the 1964 earthquake, she joined a pottery club whose instructor collected clay from Cook Inlet for their projects.

“It’s been a very good life. It’s what you make of it, of course,” Moe said. “My parents taught me never to spend what you don’t have. That was probably the best advice.” When asked if she would have done anything different in life, she said, “I wouldn’t have milked so many cows.” But maybe it’s a good thing she did.

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



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