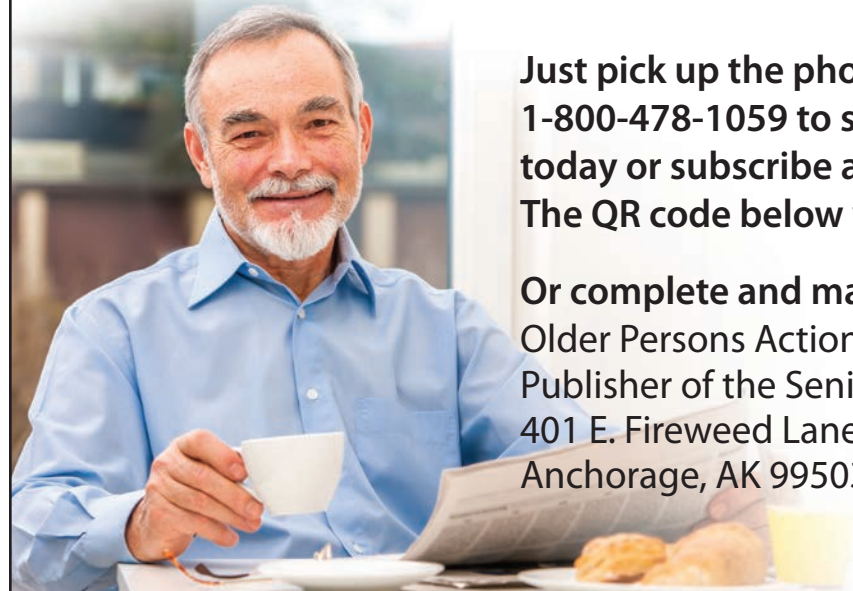


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# Senior Voice

A publication of  
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Serving Alaskans 50+ Since 1978

Volume 48, Number 5 May 2025

What to know about imposter  
scams as a Social Security  
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REAL ID deadline  
is May 7. - page 20

Students in Colony High School's  
Junior Reserve Officers' Training  
Corps program form the color guard  
at the Alaska Veterans and Pioneers  
Home in Palmer on Memorial Day  
2024. The Palmer facility is the  
official veterans home for the whole  
state and in May 2024, of the 77  
residents, 43 were veterans.

*Photo courtesy Alaska Veterans and  
Pioneers Home staff*



2024  
National Mature  
Media Awards  
Winner



# Seniors with wings: The migration patterns of older Alaskans

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

How many Alaska seniors have wings? Hmm, perhaps that’s not the best way to phrase it. How about, “How many Alaska seniors are snowbirds?” Better.

It’s an interesting question because we all know at least a couple of snowbirds. Heck, maybe even you are a snowbird, but that doesn’t really tell us much about the big picture. Turns out that counting snowbirds is a bit of a sticky wicket.

“Snowbirds are hard to measure because they either remain residents and therefore aren’t counted as out-migrants, or, conversely, they spend a significant amount of the year in Alaska but are nonresidents, so they don’t show up in the population data.” So noted the briefly flum-

moxed researchers writing in the March issue of Alaska Economic Trends in the featured article, “Alaska’s Seniors.” It’s accessible at <https://live.laborstats.alaska.gov/trends-magazine/2025/March/seniors-are-a-growing-slice-of-alaska>

What to do? Putting their heads together to consider this dilemma, the researchers had an epiphany. How about taking a close look at PFD applications because those documents identify people who have been out of Alaska for more than three months but less than six months in order to qualify for the PFD. That sounds like snowbirds.

Approximately 7% of Alaska’s seniors appear to be snowbirds, numbering about 7,000 in 2024. Frankly, considering the strength and persistence of the meme, I thought



*The March issue of Alaska Economic Trends, a publication of the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, estimated that about 7% of Alaska’s seniors appear to be snowbirds, numbering about 7,000 in 2024. They travel out of state for more than three months but less than six months.*

there would be more, but there it is. Alaska Seniors with wings.

One more factoid about 65+ snowbirds. For reasons unexplained and proba-

bly not well known, older snowbirds are not evenly scattered throughout the state. For example, Haines and Petersburg lead the state with around 13% of seniors absent at least 90 days a year. Those Panhandlers really have wings! On the other hand, Fairbanks,

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# Cancer survivors gather for weekly support

By **DEB WARD**  
*For Senior Voice*

Women LISTEN is an Anchorage-based group of women dedicated to the mission of supporting women living with cancer by focusing on sharing information, offering emotional support and practical ideas while advocating for people with cancer, and connecting women in meaningful ways. Those who are new to the cancer journey, as well as longtime survivors, celebrate courage, give voice to fears, provide helpful tips and help smooth the path for women who have experienced the trauma of hearing the words, “You have cancer.”

Every Friday morning from 10-11:30 a.m., at the Anchorage YMCA and over

ZOOM, women are listening, laughing, sharing and caring. They come together as the group called Women LISTEN, which supports women who have been given a diagnosis of cancer.

The group’s mission is represented in the name, Women LISTEN, which stands for Laugh, Inform, Support, Talk, Empower and Network. Women LISTEN strives to network with women throughout the state of Alaska, and currently has participants living in Anchorage, Kodiak, Homer, Eagle River, Girdwood, Willow and Wasilla.

As an all-volunteer, Alaska-grassroots organization, Women LISTEN was founded in May 2002 by a group of women cancer survivors and in September 2004, it became a 501(c)(3) not-for-

profit organization, guided by a board of directors. Executive Director Nancy (Muff) Zellmer, ANP, facilitates the Friday support group meetings. Women LISTEN activities are funded entirely by donations.

Vikki, who was diagnosed in January 2023 notes that the friendship, understanding, and acceptance from Women LISTEN participants helped her cope in unexpected ways, and that the group has become a safe space, where she knows, “I’m never alone.” Vikki also says that “shared experiences, deep empathy, and genuine love within the group have given me both courage and peace as I navigate my cancer journey.” She hadn’t realized how much emotion she had been holding in, until the Women LISTEN quar-

terly guided meditations offered her tools to begin releasing stress.

In addition to the weekly support group meetings, which are open to women with any type of cancer, Women LISTEN sponsors other events throughout the year, including retreats, educational opportunities and art sessions. Women LISTEN will promote National Cancer Survivors Day on June 1 by hosting

an uplifting gathering with music and refreshments for women cancer survivors and their supporters. The event will be held in the Lidia Selkregg Chalet at Russian Jack Park, 1600 Lidia Selkregg Lane, from 1-3 p.m. Additional information is posted on the Women LISTEN website, FaceBook and Instagram.

Contact information: [ward\\_deb@hotmail.com](mailto:ward_deb@hotmail.com) (907) 727-3034

## OLDER PERSONS ACTION GROUP

### Mission statement:

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

### Vision statement:

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



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# Social Security customer service win and the fight continues

By MARGE STONEKING  
For Senior Voice

The Social Security Administration (SSA) scrapped a service change in April that would have exacerbated their customer service challenges by forcing Alaskans to have to go in-person to a Social Security office in Anchorage, Juneau, or Fairbanks for routine services that have been handled over the phone.

As a result of AARP's strong advocacy, applying by phone at 800-772-1213 and confirming your

***It's no secret that the Social Security Administration has experienced a customer service crisis for years. Perhaps no organization has been more outspoken about the need to tackle it than AARP.***

identity in the process remains an option for people claiming all types of benefits. Once you're receiving benefits, you don't have to prove your identity to continue receiving them. Of course, you can still apply online using a MySocialSecurity.gov account or at a local Social Security office, and that may be quicker

given call volume and wait times.

It's a win for AARP and for people across the country that SSA backedtracked on their harmful proposed cuts to phone service, but this kind of disarray from the Social Security Administration has led to people around the country confused and

anxious about the status of Social Security. Call volume to SSA has increased substantially at the same time that fewer people are getting resolutions to their problems.

It's no secret that the Social Security Administration has experienced a customer service crisis for years. Perhaps no organization has been more outspoken about the need to tackle it than AARP. Yet call wait times, hold times, and customer service resolutions have been inconsistent for years, according to SSA's own live 800 number

dashboard data at SSA.gov. It doesn't help that Congress hasn't provided the funding necessary to ensure Social Security can deliver quality customer service. In fact, funding to improve the program has long been on the decline. SSA funding has dropped by 9% since 2018 despite ongoing advocacy efforts.

This year, wait times are on the rise, fewer people can reach a Social Security representative to meet their needs and this challenge emerges just as

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# Imposter scams: That's not the Social Security Administration calling...

By TERESA HOLT  
AARP Alaska

Government imposter scams, where criminals pose as government employees, are one of the most common scams. Pretending to be from Social Security is one of the top government imposter scams. In 2023, Social Security's Office of the Inspector General (OIG) received 73,626 reports of Social Security impersonators and related scams, a 13.7% increase from 2022.

Here is what a Social Security imposter scam looks like: You receive a call, text, or email from someone claiming to be from Social Security. The phone number may be spoofed to look like it is from Social Security, or the email may use Social Security letterhead. Most often, they tell you there is a problem with your Social Security number, that it has been suspended, or that it has been used in a crime, and you are in dan-

ger of going to jail or losing the money in your bank account. They might also tell you that you qualify for a benefit increase or need to complete a form to get your Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) increase. These are scams. They are trying to get your personal information or access to your money.

Look out for these red flags: scammers may threaten to suspend your Social Security number, to have you arrested, or to seize the money in your bank account. They might also demand immediate payment (by gift card, cryptocurrency, or cash), pressure you to give them your personal information, tell you to keep the situation secret, or promise to increase your benefits. The Social Security Administration won't do any of these things, so you know this is a scam.

The Social Security Administration communicates about changes by mail. If you owe the agen-

cy money—for a benefit overpayment, for example—you'll receive an official letter outlining your payment options and appeal rights. Social Security mainly calls people who have recently applied for a Social Security benefit, are already receiving payments and require an update to their record, or people have requested a phone call from the agency. If you are not in one of these situations, you nor-

mally would not receive a call from the agency.

To protect yourself, do not engage with anyone who unexpectedly contacts you and claims to be from Social Security. If you are concerned there is a problem with your account, contact the agency at 800-772-1213. Be warned that the wait time for calls can be long. To avoid long wait times, set up a "My SSA Account" at [www.ssa.gov/myaccount](http://www.ssa.gov/myaccount), which you can access at any time to check the status of your account.

To report a Social Se-

curity scam, you can call the Social Security fraud hotline at 800-269-0271 or complete a form online. You can also call the AARP Fraud Watch Network helpline at 877-908-3360 to report the scam and talk with a trained fraud specialist who can share information on what to do next. The AARP Fraud Watch Network also offers online group support sessions. For more information on current scams, go to [www.aarp.org/FWN](http://www.aarp.org/FWN).

Teresa Holt is the state director for AARP Alaska.

### Send us your letters

Send letters to the editor to Senior Voice, 401 E. Fireweed Lane, #102, Anchorage AK 99503. Maximum length is 250 words. Senior Voice reserves the right to edit for content and length. Space may be made available for longer opinion piece essays up to 400 words. Contact the managing editor at [editor@seniorvoicealaska.com](mailto:editor@seniorvoicealaska.com) to discuss this. Copy deadline is the 15th of the month prior to publication.

### Beware of Scam Emails Asking to Download Statements

Use caution when clicking links in unsolicited emails that appear to be from SSA

The Social Security Administration (SSA) Office of the Inspector General (OIG) is cautioning the public to be aware of emails that appear to be from SSA and include a link to download their Social Security statement. This email is an attempt to lure individuals to fraudulent sites that are not associated with SSA. The first image closely resembles a legitimate Gov Delivery email, making it particularly deceptive.

**THIS EMAIL IS NOT FROM SSA.**

**This is NOT an official SSA notice, nor is it from an official government email address. It does NOT have ".gov" as part of the sender's address.**

Government agencies end with ".gov" as part of their official email address.

The email states that your Social Security statement is available for download. **DO NOT CLICK THE LINK.** These emails are not from SSA and will compromise your personal data and likely damage your computer system once you allow access.



A recent media release by Social Security Administration Office of the Inspector General warns people not to fall for Social Security scams. The image shows an email from someone posing as the Social Security Administration to try to get personal information from Social Security recipients.

Social Security Administration Office of the Inspector General



*Dear Readers: We invite you to contribute to a new column “I used to ...” where you can regale us with a story of your most memorable time living in Alaska. And tell us what you’re doing now to cope with not being able to do what you did! I’ll go first.*

## A ferry ride into the future, with a glance at the past

By **DIMITRA LAVRAKAS**

Senior Voice Travel  
Correspondent

I met my husband Bruce Ware, on the M/V Columbia parting out and my first impression of him was, “Must be from Haines, they don’t make hippies like that anymore.” But he was from Tenakee Springs and was biking down to California “to party with the hippie chicks.” Instead, he followed me to the East Coast like a puppy.

We’ve been together for 12 years now but only married in 2024.

When I alerted him to our anniversary this year, he asked “Is that a thing?”

I don’t think I could be married to anyone other than an Alaskan. Who else would listen to my stories of being a journalist from the shores of the Arctic Ocean to the Aleutian Chain?

I don’t have to explain the terms, or the thrills, or the terrors of living in the Bush.

His love of extreme kayaking in blizzards and mammoth waves, when he once slept on a beach and a bear walked across his face.

Or when he had a sailboat he didn’t know how to tack and took it up Lynn Canal, narrowly avoiding being rammed by a cargo ship.

Or the many times he ran into a bear and they both



*Bruce lands in Tenakee Springs after a kayak.*

*Photos courtesy Dimitra Lavrakas*

agreed to ignore each other.

The three years I lived in Utqiagvik as editor of the Arctic Sounder, although I was the only one there, I flew across the tundra in planes ranging from a two-seater helicopter to a C130.

The fear I felt when hearing the pilot say as we once neared the Brooks Range, “The pass is snotty, I’m taking the back door,” or “I know I saw a hole down there. I’m going back to look for it.”

We are amazed to still be alive.

### What now?

One summer we were lighthouse keepers of the coast of Massachusetts, another time we drove our 10-year-old hybrid Toyota Prius from Vermont to Alaska by way of Canada and hung out in the Yukon for a while.

The good thing about being a former Alaskan is the ability to sleep any-

where, so we just pulled into a side road or trail at night and inclined the seats. One time we tried sleeping in the back, but Bruce found it too claustrophobic and just threw himself on the ground.

We want to do that again.

As former adrenaline junkies, we’ve had to pursue other challenges.

Bruce goes to the local Y and lifts weights and at

70 is almost at his goal to press 225 pounds. He’s losing weight before his knees give out.

At 76, I go there to the pool to recover from a knee replacement caused by an injury sustained in 1994, when I was catapulted off a freight sled on the shore-fast ice off Utqiagvik on my way out to a whaling camp. Luckily, I was a bike rider, even in the Arctic, and my quads sustained me for decades.

When the flocks of sand-hill cranes pass over here and we hear their prehistoric cries, we run to the windows and are still in awe.

Only a fellow Alaskan could ever understand that.

Send your story to [editor@seniorvoicealaska.com](mailto:editor@seniorvoicealaska.com). The article should be under 750 words and also send a couple of high-resolution photos of what you did back then and what you’re doing now. We await your story with anticipation.



*Dimitra with Evelyn Donovan in Utqiagvik.*

## TRICKSTERS & SOURDOUGHS: Humor and Identity in Alaska



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Steve McCutcheon Collection, Anchorage Museum, B1990.14.5.Animals.4.1



*Wedded in 2024, in a joining I call Gandalf marries a Hobbit.*



# Relationship strained as Mom ages

By **KAREN CASANOVAS**  
*For Senior Voice*

**Q:** Coming back home after visiting my mom opened my eyes to the various challenges that older individuals face—challenges I had not fully recognized before. I’ve also noticed growing strain in our relationship as she ages. How can I improve our communication, especially when I need to discuss concerning behaviors?

**A:** I appreciate you sharing your reflections after a visit with your mother. It is natural to feel a sense of concern as we navigate the complexities that come with aging and changing dynamics in our relationships. Open communication is key, and, approaching these conversations with care can make a world of difference.

**Understanding the behavior: A first step**  
Start by taking a closer



look at the context of the behavior. Does it happen after specific events or at predictable times of day? Is it more likely when particular people are around or when certain topics come up? Is there recurring visual or auditory stimulation? Identifying patterns can help guide your response. Next, observe whether the behavior is consistent in those settings. For example, does your mom always raise her voice? Does she cope by drinking alcohol, or withdraw emotionally, or appear agitated when specific situations

arise? What insights can you gather from these repetitive acts? Then, consider the aftermath. If she lashes out at a caregiver and they leave the room, that sequence of actions might unintentionally reinforce the behavior. Understanding this chain of events gives you a foundation for a thoughtful discussion with your mom about what may be causing the behavior and what the consequences are surrounding that behavior.

**The ABC model of behavior**  
This approach follows the **ABC Model—Antecedent, Behavior, Consequence**:  
► **Antecedent:** What happens before the behavior  
► **Behavior:** The observed action or response  
► **Consequence:** What happens after the behavior  
This model helps form

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# Stress management

*Assistive Gizmo of the Month*

*Assistive Technology of Alaska*  
After a brain injury, stress management is crucial for recovery and well-being.

- Calm is an app that offers a variety of breathing techniques, calming exercises, and sleep resources.
- The Hatch sound machine provides sleep sounds while a user falls asleep and a sunrise alarm for gentler wakeups, reducing the need to look at a bright phone first thing in the morning.
- Another tool to help with stress management is Loop earplugs, specifically the Quiet and

Engage models, which minimize background noise to create a more calm environment.  
This column is brought to you by ATLA (Assistive Technology of Alaska), a nonprofit, statewide resource. ATLA does not endorse these products but shares information on the types of assistive technology that may benefit Alaskans. ATLA’s program, Tech-Ability, provides lifetime equipment loans to mental health trust beneficiaries, including individuals with acquired or traumatic brain injuries. For more information or to arrange a free demonstration, visit <https://www.atlaak.org> or call 907-563-2599.



# Bill to cover fewer workers with paid sick leave introduced

By **YERETH ROSEN**  
*Alaska Beacon*

Alaska’s voter-approved mandate for paid sick leave has not yet gone into effect, but some lawmakers are already trying to reduce the number of workers who would benefit from it. A bill pending in the Alaska Legislature, House Bill 161, would exempt businesses with fewer than 50 employees, a change from the 15-employee thresh-

old in the labor-rights initiative that voters approved in November. The bill would also drop seasonal workers from the mandate for accrued paid sick leave. The bill was introduced on March 28 by Rep. Justin Ruffridge, R-Soldotna, with Rep. Julie Coulombe, R-Anchorage, as a co-sponsor. Both are members of the House minority. It has the support of a key majority member; House Majority Leader

Chuck Kopp, R-Anchorage, signed on as a co-sponsor in April. It addresses Ballot Measure 1, a three-part citizen initiative that will raise Alaska’s minimum wage and protect workers against any employer-imposed political or religious meetings, as well as mandate paid sick leave, based on time accrued over work periods. Voters approved Ballot Measure 1 by a 58-42 percent margin. The new

law is set to go into effect on July 1. Ruffridge and Coulombe, during the bill’s first hearing, described the proposed changes as modifications that fit within the state constitution’s limits. While the constitution forbids sweeping changes within two years to any voter-passed initiatives, the bill “in no way seeks to repeal or change some of the key provisions of Ballot Measure 1,” chiefly

the minimum-wage hike that was probably the most popular element, Ruffridge told the House Labor and Commerce Committee. Coulombe said the changes amounted to a “few tweaks” that are necessary to help small businesses. “What will happen if we don’t try to amend this a little bit, make the language a little cleaner and

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# What to know about Medicare and durable medical equipment

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

In this month’s article, I will discuss Medicare’s coverage of durable medical equipment, which is called DME for short. It is equipment that helps you complete daily activities. This category is also sometimes labeled more inclusively as DMEPOS for durable medical equipment, prosthetics, orthotics, and supplies.



**Medical equipment to help you daily**  
Durable medical equipment (DME) are items that

help you complete your daily activities including a variety of items, such as walkers, wheelchairs, hospital beds, and portable oxygen tanks. Medicare usually covers DME if the equipment:  
► Is durable, meaning it is able to withstand repeated use.  
► Serves a medical purpose.  
► Is appropriate for use in the home, although you can also use it outside the home.

► And is likely to last for three years or more.  
To be covered by Part B, DME must be prescribed by your treating practitioner, may require a face-to-face office visit within six months of prescription, and obtained from a Medicare-approved supplier. Avoid suppliers who do not have a contract with Medicare, as you will be responsible for the entire cost of the equipment. Be aware that many suppliers are Medicare-ap-

proved but do not take assignment. These suppliers may charge you more than Medicare’s approved amount for the cost of services. Medicare will still only pay 80% of its approved amount for services, so you will be responsible for any additional costs. Under the durable medical equipment, prosthetics, orthotics, and supplies (DMEPOS) category,

*page 6 please*



ADVERTISEMENT

## A guide to cleaning your hearing aids



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

Regularly clean your hearing aids (HA); they will sound better and work longer. Remember even if you clean your HA daily have them professionally cleaned every 3 to 6 months by your hearing care provider. They can make sure your HA still sound good, change filters and use suction to clean them. They should clean them free for you if you purchased your HA from them.

In the morning turn HA upside down and brush the back of the HA. Make sure to brush around the microphone and any buttons.

If you have a vent, use long plastic string down vent to keep clear. A tiny brush or Nano Clean is an easy way to clean your vents out.

Earmold or earbuds can

be cleaned by removing then, washing in soap and water. Dry before you put them back on. Wash as needed, removing to often they tend to start tearing. Inspect wax guards to see if they are plugged, change if needed.

NEVER use rubbing alcohol, cleaning fluids or other solvents on your HA, it can damage it. If you need something wet, use audio wipes that are meant for HA.

There are sanitary wipes (audio wipes) to keep HA sanitized. For behind the ear HA there is a system called PerfectClean that uses a cleaning solution to remove earwax, microbial growth from domes and earmolds. Then it uses forced hot air to remove moisture and a UV-C light disinfects your hearing aids. If you want to sterilize your hearing aids or are prone to ear infections, I recommend PerfectClean.

If you live in a humid place store HA in a dehumidifier. Removing moisture will improve sound quality.

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



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

## Medicare

*continued from page 5*

Medicare Part B also covers:

- Prosthetic devices that replace all or part of an internal bodily organ;
- Prosthetics, like artificial legs, arms, and eyes;
- Orthotics, like rigid or semi-rigid leg, arm, back, and neck braces; or
- Certain medical supplies.

Medicare Part B also covers certain prescription medications and supplies that you use with your DME, even if they are disposable or can only be used once. For example, Medicare covers medications used with nebulizers, or lancets and test strips used with diabetes self-testing equipment.

### Items not covered by Medicare

- Certain kinds of durable medical equipment (DME) and supplies that Medicare does not cover include the following:
- Equipment mainly intended to help you outside the home. For example, if you can walk on your own for short distances—enough to get around your house—Medicare does not cover a motorized scooter that you only need outside the home.
- Most items intended mainly to make things more convenient or com-

fortable. This includes stairway elevators, grab bars, air conditioners, and bathtub and toilet seats.

► Items that get thrown away after use or that are not used with equipment. For example, Medicare does not cover incontinence pads, catheters, surgical facemasks, or compression leggings. However, if you receive home health care, Medicare pays for some disposable supplies—including intravenous supplies, gauze, and catheters—as part of your home health care benefit. Note: Catheters may be covered as prosthetics if you have a permanent condition.

► Modifications to your home, such as ramps or widened doors for improving wheelchair access.

► Equipment that is not suitable for use in the home. This includes some types of DME used in hospitals or skilled nursing facilities (SNFs), like paraffin bath units and oscillating beds.

Keep in mind that Medicaid may cover some forms of equipment that Medicare will not cover.

### Obtaining DME with both Medicare and Medicaid

There are Alaskans who have both Medicare and Medicaid (also known as DenaliCare). If this is the case, remember that Medicare coverage pays first; Medicaid is known

as the “payer of last resort.” When obtaining any DMEPOS, Part B is billed by the approved supplier before Medicaid is billed. Failure to do so may mean that Medicaid will deny payment, resulting in out-of-pocket costs to receive supplies or equipment. If you have questions, contact your health care provider, your DMEPOS supplier or find a Medicare-enrolled supplier (through the Medicare.gov website).

To discuss any concern relating to obtaining DME through Medicare, 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.

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- **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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# 71-year-old raises money for cancer, his entry to the Boston Marathon

By PAOLA BANCHERO

Senior Voice

Thomas McCarty, a 71-year-old audiologist, celebrated two milestones in April. He entered his 14th Boston Marathon and raised more than \$15,000 for cancer research in the process.

McCarty is part of a program in which participants in the famous 26.2-mile race can raise funds for the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute in lieu of qualifying with a speedy time. The Boston Marathon is known for having a high barrier to entry and elite runners rubbing shoulders with more mortal athletes.

McCarty started running in his 50s and signed up for Alaska races including the Mayor's Marathon and the Kenai River Marathon. By 2012 he had signed up for his first Boston Marathon. That year, temperatures



McCarty, who is 71, entered in his 14th Boston Marathon in April. He is one of about 500 teammates who are part of the Dana-Farber Marathon Challenge. The challenge invites runners to raise money for basic cancer research and they get to run in the highly competitive race.

Minnie McCarty photo

it's all positive. I never experienced so much positivity in my whole life."

McCarty was on the course during the terrorist bombing in 2013 that left three people dead and many injured. He could not complete the race but came back the next year. It became a habit.

While he keeps fit year around, he starts his marathon training regimen in earnest in September. He works his way up from a few miles a couple of times a week to a full 26 miles

were among the highest ever during the race — official reports say it reach 89 degrees.

That didn't faze McCarty.

"What I experienced was everyone is so positive," McCarty said. "You have one thing on your mind: to do 26 miles. Nothing else matters. Nothing negative,

before the day of the event. That way, he knows he can meet his target.

In terms of cancer fundraising McCarty has far exceeded his goal. He has raised more than \$15,000 this year. McCarty said he got interested in the cancer research aspect because his father has prostate cancer. Dana-Farber Marathon Challenge teammates from across the United States and around the world collectively raise \$8.5 million for cancer research at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute at Harvard University.

McCarty is the founder of Audiology Associates, an audiology practice in Anchorage that frequently advertises in the Senior Voice.

Interviewed before the race, he said he was hoping for a mild day with no wind or rain. He doesn't have a time goal.

"At 71, 72, you can't be

running for speed," he said.

Nathalie Sczublewski, a spokeswoman for the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, said no other runners from Alaska were participating in the fundraising effort for cancer this year. Many Alaska runners do qualify and compete in Boston every year.

Sczublewski said she hopes more runners from Alaska will join the Dana-Farber Marathon Challenge next year.

To contribute to the challenge, visit [RunDFMC.org](http://RunDFMC.org) or contact the Dana-Farber Marathon Challenge office at (617) 632-1970 or [dfmc@dfci.harvard.edu](mailto:dfmc@dfci.harvard.edu). Follow DFMC on Facebook: [www.facebook.com/marathonchallenge](http://www.facebook.com/marathonchallenge).

The link to support Thomas McCarty is [https://danafarber.jimmyfund.org/site/TR?-fr\\_id=2310&pg=personal&px=1060097](https://danafarber.jimmyfund.org/site/TR?-fr_id=2310&pg=personal&px=1060097)

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# A call for improving how medicines are approved

By JOHN SCHIESZER

Medical Minutes

Older adults are expressing their discontent with medication barriers. A large majority of older Americans feel that health insurance, including Medicare, should cover anti-obesity medications, according to a new University of Michigan study. More than half of older adults who meet criteria for obesity said they were interested in trying one of these drugs to manage their weight. Current law prevents Medicare from covering medications to treat obesity, and most private plans don't cover the most effective newer weight management drugs because of cost.

However, 83% of older adults surveyed agreed strongly or somewhat that health insurance should cover weight management medications. Asked specifically about Medicare, 75% of respondents said the insurance program for older and disabled Americans should cover obesity medications. However, the percentage was much lower (30%) when respondents were asked if they'd favor having Medicare cover the drugs even if it meant paying a higher premium for their own coverage.

"As our nation contends with the impacts of the obesity epidemic on older Americans, and the costs of both obesity-related conditions and the medications that can treat obesity, data like these can inform the discussion over coverage and access," said Dr. Lauren Oshman, the lead author of the study and an associate professor of family medicine at the University of Michigan Medical School in Ann Arbor.

Later this year, Medicare will begin negotiations with the company that makes semaglutide. The negotiated price would take effect in 2027. The researchers analyzed data from the National Poll on Healthy Aging. The new analysis dives deeper into the data from the poll, which was conducted online and by phone in summer 2023. The analysis included 2,657 respondents between the



ages of 50 and 80.

The poll asked respondents about their knowledge and experience with a wide range of weight management. It asked about the drugs by both brand and generic names.

The poll also asked for respondents' height and weight so the researchers could calculate their body mass index (BMI), a measure often used as a marker of overweight and obesity. A BMI of 25 to just under 30 is viewed as overweight, and a BMI over 30 is the cutoff for obesity. Approximately 37% of poll respondents met criteria for overweight and 36% met criteria for obesity.

In all, 35% of all poll respondents said they're somewhat or very interested in using a weight management medication. This figure includes 29% of those with a BMI between 27 and 29.9, and 59% of those with a BMI of 30 or over. About 7% had used Ozempic, the form of semaglutide approved for use in diabetes that also improves weight loss. Just over 1% had used Wegovy, the form of semaglutide approved for obesity, and about the same percentage had used Saxenda (liraglutide), phentermine-topiramate (Qsymia) or bupropion-naltrexone (Contrave). The poll was done before tirzepatide was approved for weight management under the name Zepbound, so the poll did not ask about that medication.

The poll revealed an age gap and 38% of those in their 50s and early 60s were potentially interested in obesity medication, compared with 31% of those age 65 and older. The poll found that 90% of respondents agreed strongly or somewhat with the statement "Obesity is a chronic

**83% of older adults surveyed agreed strongly or somewhat that health insurance should cover weight management medications.**

condition resulting from a combination of genetics, the food environment, medical conditions, and social factors."

## Combating fatigue with a smartphone app

One of the most common side effects of cancer treatments, including chemotherapy and radiation therapy, is fatigue. Cancer-related fatigue is often worse and harder to manage compared to the fatigue in people without cancer and can sometimes persist weeks, months or even years after treatment ends.

Researchers at the Rogel Cancer Center at the University of Michigan now have developed and tested a personalized app that tracks a user's circadian rhythm and makes behavioral recommendations to reduce daily fatigue. Traditional approaches to managing cancer-related fatigue include medicines, exercise and meditation practices. However, they

may not work for everyone. "These measures appeal to only a portion of the population," said Dr. Muneesh Tewari, a professor of internal medicine and a member of the University of Michigan Rogel Cancer Center. "We wanted to provide something that could be more easily and widely accessible."

Our bodies have an internal clock that controls our sleep-wake cycle. It follows a 24-hour pattern and affects several processes, such as digestion and body temperature. Disturbances in this system have been shown to worsen fatigue and quality of life in individuals with cancer. The team developed an app called Arcasync that tracked a user's sleep-wake patterns based on their heart rate and physical activity patterns. Using mathematical models, the app is able to make recommendations such as "seek bright light" at a particular time of day.

With the help of 138 participants, the researchers tested the app on patients who had breast cancer, prostate cancer and blood cancer. For 12 weeks, all participants were asked to report their fatigue levels, sleep disturbances, anxiety, depression and overall health.

The volunteers who used the app had decreased daily and weekly fatigue, demonstrating that personalized recommendations can improve quality of life. "We have shown that you can take a device that is seamlessly integrated into your life and use it to guide your circadian rhythms," said Dr. Sung Won Choi, a professor of pediatric hematology-oncology and a member of the Institute for Healthcare Policy and Innovation at Michigan. "The reach of this app may be far greater than traditional medications or exercise regimens, regardless of cancer type."

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



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# What that ringing in your ears might really be telling you!

When some people lose a limb, they can experience phantom limb syndrome, or pain in that limb they lost.

Tinnitus, or ringing in the ears, is a similar phenomenon where there is damage in the auditory system. The ringing is your brain's way of alerting you that something is wrong.

Symptoms of tinnitus can vary from person to person and no two people experience it exactly the same way, which can make diagnosis and treatment difficult.

One study on PubMed Central found that tinnitus prevalence ranges anywhere from 5.2% to 45% of the population.

Many people don't even notice that they have it — but it's far from being a mere nuisance.

*"Tinnitus or phantom sounds are the direct result of your nerves breaking down from your ear to brain,"* Dr. Keith N. Darrow, a neuroscientist and clinical audiologist, explains. If left untreated, this condition can lead to much more serious problems, including hearing loss, loss of balance and even dementia. Although there's no cure, there are effective treatment options available to significantly reduce — or even eliminate — your symptoms.

## Dr. Tom McCarty's books

McCarty wrote two books, *"Isolation: The Last Frontier"* and *"Tinnitus: The Last Frontier,"* where you can learn about what tinnitus is, the latest treatments for tinnitus, hear personal success stories, and discover how early intervention can provide lasting relief for up to 90% of patients.



*"Tinnitus: The Last Frontier,"* is designed to provide valuable information for both those living with tinnitus and people who want to learn more.

You will gain insight into the latest treatments, coping strategies, and patient success stories.

Whether you've been struggling with tinnitus for years or are just starting to notice symptoms, this book offers practical tools to help you improve your quality of life.

Call to request your free copy of the book (907) 202-9648.

*"Damage to the ears – be it from age, noise or even medications – can compromise the neural connections from ear to brain and cause a significant increase in neural activity in higher brain centers, which the person then perceives as tinnitus,"* Darrow said.

## The most effective form of treatment

When it comes to the best way to treat tinnitus, research over the past decade has been clear: Hearing treatment plans with ongoing support from a specialist and prescription-grade hearing aids are key to successfully restimulating the auditory system and providing tinnitus relief.

*"We have discovered that the most effective way to treat tinnitus is to provide direct sound stimulation to the brain,"* Darrow said. He explained that this allows the brain to rewire and make long-term neural changes.

## New bimodal neuromodulation device, Lenire

Lenire for Tinnitus Relief is a non-hearing aid option to manage tinnitus symptoms such as ringing, buzzing, chirping in the ears. Primarily used to supplement the direct treatment of tinnitus in patients who need additional tinnitus support beyond the medical treatment of tinnitus.

It uses a combination of sound therapy and gentle electrical pulses to the tongue to help retrain the brain and reduce the perception of tinnitus. Backed by clinical research,

Lenire offers a safe, at-home solution under professional guidance for those seeking relief from persistent tinnitus symptoms.

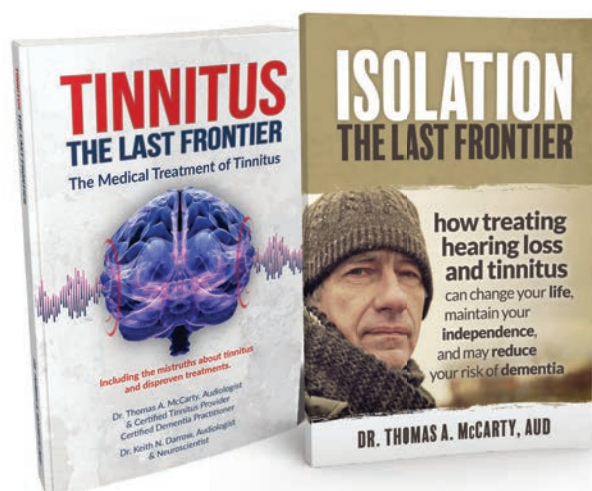
## Seek treatment as soon as possible

For the best results, it's important to treat tinnitus as early as possible. If left untreated, tinnitus will only get worse and could impact other aspects of your life. Knowing how detrimental it can be — and how much better life is after treatment.

Take the first step toward living with less noise! Call (907) 202-9648 to request a book, get your questions answered, or book an appointment.

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# Recognizing a heart attack can save lives

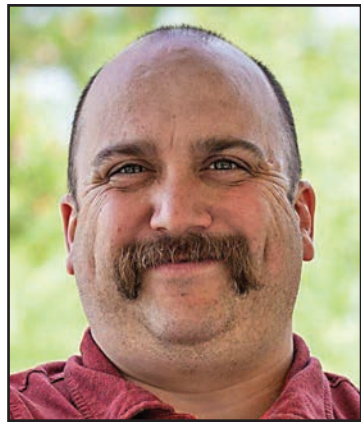
By CHRISTIAN M. HARTLEY

For Senior Voice

Heart attacks are a major health concern for older adults. Knowing what to watch for can save your life or the life of someone you care about. While a heart attack can happen suddenly and without warning, it can also start with small symptoms that are easy to miss. It's critical to recognize these signs and know what actions to take.

The most common sign of a heart attack is chest pain or discomfort. This often feels like a heavy weight, tightness, or squeezing in the middle of your chest. It might stay for a few minutes or come and go. Some people describe it as feeling like an elephant is sitting on their chest. However, not everyone experiences this type of chest pain. Sometimes, the symptoms are harder to notice, especially for older adults, women, or people with diabetes.

Other signs of a heart attack can include pain in other parts of the upper body. The discomfort might spread to your shoulders, arms, back, neck or jaw. You may also feel short of breath, as if you can't catch your breath, even



when resting. Some people feel dizzy, lightheaded, or suddenly breakout in a cold sweat. Others feel feeble or unusually tired, even if there's no apparent reason for it. Some may feel stomach pain, nausea, or think they just have indigestion, which can sometimes hide the fact that they're having a heart attack. Some women may feel it start as a strange tooth or jaw pain that won't go away.

Because the symptoms can vary so much, it's important to listen to your body. If something doesn't feel right, don't ignore it. You've lived with your body for your whole life: trust your instincts. Many people are unsure whether their symptoms are serious or they don't want to bother anyone, but acting quickly is critical. Waiting too long can cause lasting damage to the heart. If you think you might be having a heart



*This graphic explains the warning signs of heart attack. Be alert to them in yourself and your loved ones. Learn more at [heart.org/HeartAttack](https://heart.org/HeartAttack).*

American Heart Association

attack, call 911 right away. Don't drive yourself to the hospital because emergency responders can start treatment on the way and save valuable time.

If you are with someone who shows signs of a heart attack, stay calm and help

them sit or lie down in a comfortable position. Call 911 for them and ensure they remain as still as possible. If they have medicine like nitroglycerin from their doctor, help them take it. The most important thing to do while waiting

for help is to remain calm. Just focus on breathing and communicating calmly. Knowing that help is there or on its way brings relief. Focus on that relief, and not on the fear.

If the person becomes unconscious and stops breathing, you may need to do CPR, which can save their life. Learning CPR in advance can make you more prepared for emergencies. If you don't know CPR, a 911 dispatcher will guide you through it.

Preventing a heart attack is just as important as recognizing the symptoms. Eating foods that are good for your heart, staying active, quitting smoking, and keeping conditions like high blood pressure or diabetes under control can reduce your risk. You should also see your doctor regularly and take your prescribed medications as directed.

Pay close attention to how your body feels, and don't ignore any signs that something might be wrong. Acting quickly when symptoms appear can save a life or protect your health for years to come. Share this information with others so they can be more aware, too. Awareness is an important step in fighting heart disease.

## Because she was my mother: My journey in Alzheimer's care

By LISA SAUDER

For Senior Voice

When I think of Mother's Day, I think about the woman who always encouraged me to go after



*Lisa Sauder, CEO of Alzheimer's Resource of Alaska, with her mother on a Valentine's Day in the past. Sauder became an advocate for people with dementia after caring for her own mother.*

Photo by Madison Sauder

what I wanted. My mom believed in education, independence, and making the most of opportunities—values she passed on to me from a young age. So, when her memory started to slip and things became more uncertain, I knew it was my turn to step in.

It happened quickly. She had been living in Idaho, and at first the signs were subtle, repeating herself, forgetting details, growing more anxious. Then I got a call from her neighbor; they were worried about her. I booked a flight and went to see what was going on. Once I got there, I realized things were not OK and she couldn't manage living on her own anymore.

I made the decision to bring her back to Alaska, thinking she just needed

a little more structure and support. What I didn't realize is that I had just become her full-time caregiver—overnight.

I wasn't ready. I didn't have a plan. I didn't have a medical background or training in dementia care.

I was just a daughter trying to do the right thing. And like so many others, I found myself overwhelmed navigating doctor visits, medications, changes in behavior, and my own emotions all at once.

I didn't even know Alz-

heimer's Resource of Alaska existed.

Looking back, that's what I wish I could change most. I wish I had known that support was out there—education, guidance,

next page please

### Caregiving corner: 5 practical tips for supporting a loved one with dementia

- 1. Keep a routine.** Consistency helps reduce confusion and anxiety. Keep meals, rest, and activities on a regular schedule whenever possible.
- 2. Simplify the environment.** Clear clutter, use labels or photos on drawers and doors, and create calm, easy-to-navigate spaces.
- 3. Be patient with communication.** Speak slowly, use simple sentences, and offer reassurance instead of correction when your loved one is confused or upset.
- 4. Take care of yourself.** You can't care for someone else if you're running on empty. Make time for breaks, ask for help, and connect with other caregivers.
- 5. Reach out early.** The sooner you connect with resources, the more prepared and supported you'll feel. Help is available—and you don't have to wait for a crisis.



# Flexibility and strength build fitness

By **TRACY DUMAS**  
For Senior Voice

We all know that exercise is good for us. Maintaining a regular exercise routine helps your heart, lungs, muscles, even your social and mental health by being part of a fitness community in your neighborhood, at your local gym or senior center. While moving to get your blood flowing is important, slowing down and taking recovery time also matters. You can reap the benefits of recovery through red light therapy, percussive massage tools, or with restorative yoga.

**Restorative yoga** is a gentle style of yoga that encourages physical and mental relaxation with long holds, deep breathing, and a slower pace. This style of yoga literally restores the body's parasympathetic nervous system to induce a relaxation response. The benefits include better balance, mobility, and flexibility, pain management, improved mood, lower blood pressure, improved breathing, and better sleep.

Want to give restorative yoga a try? You can either take a class at your local gym\* or try a few poses on your own such as fish pose, child's pose, or



**Fish pose** ©Deniza | istock.com



**Child's pose** ©fizkes | istock.com



**Corpse pose** ©Koldunov | istock.com

corpse pose, also known as savasana. Each pose should be held for 5 minutes to feel the benefits.

*Fish pose* helps release neck and shoulder tension, as well as open your chest. It begins seated with folded blankets behind your back. Lie back resting your shoulders and head on the blankets. Rest your arms at your sides, close your eyes, and breathe deeply.

*Child's pose* stretches your spine, hips, glutes,

and shoulders. Kneel on the floor with your knees apart and big toes touching pushing your buttocks towards your heels. Extend your arms in front of you and place your head in between your arms. You can also rest your head on a pillow or make a pillow with your hands. Relax and take deep, slow breaths.

*Corpse pose* (savasana) is lying on your back with your arms and legs extended. You can be supported by blankets or bolsters to enhance your experience. Close your eyes and breathe deeply to help release tension.

Not a yogi? **Percussive massage tools**, such as Hypervolt or Theragun, offer a recovery method you can use anytime. The hand-held tools use rapid and repetitive pressure combined with vibration to ease sore muscles, increase blood flow, and promote healing. This combination can reduce stress on your body and give your well-being a boost in a short amount of time.

Finally, if you want to try the recovery method everyone is buzzing about these days, then you might consider **red-light therapy**. Regular use of red-light therapy has been shown to boost your immune system, improve sleep, reduce stress and inflammation, enhance brain function, promote collagen production, and help with muscle recovery. It works by exposing bare

skin to particles of light which enter your tissues to prompt a change in your cells. The red light is said to affect cells' mitochondria generating energy to promote healing.

These are just a few of the many recovery options available today. No matter which recovery method you choose, slowing down and giving your muscles a break is an important part of any well-rounded fitness routine. While it's great to get your sweat on with a heart-pumping, muscle-building workout, you also need to listen to your body and treat it with care. It's the only one you've got, so take good care of it and in return, it will take good care of you!

Tracy Dumas, Director of Marketing & PR for The Alaska Club.

\*The Alaska Club West offers a restorative yoga class on Wednesdays at noon. You can find other gentle yoga classes on the group fitness schedule as well including Gentle Yoga Stretch and Weekend Wind Down by visiting <https://www.thealaskaclub.com/schedules/south-central-schedules>.

## Alzheimer's

from page 10

connection—for people like me. I struggled physically and emotionally. I tried to be everything to everyone. I didn't know where to turn. And the worst part? I didn't know I didn't have to do it alone.

Today, I'm the CEO of Alzheimer's Resource of Alaska. I often get asked how I found my way here, and my answer is simple: because I lived it. I know what it feels like to wake up at 2 a.m. in panic, to feel guilty for needing help, to wonder if you're doing enough—or doing it right. And I don't want anyone else to walk that path in the dark.

That's why we're here. For over 40 years Alzheimer's Resource of Alaska has served families across

the state with free memory screenings, dementia education, support groups, individualized care coordination, and so much more. Our team walks beside caregivers every day answering questions, offering guidance, and providing comfort so that you can do this, and you don't have to do it alone.

This Mother's Day, I honor my mom by sharing our story. And I honor you—whether you're a caregiver, a family member, or someone watching a loved one slowly change before your eyes.

You are not alone. Help is out there. And we are here to walk with you.

To learn more or reach out for support, visit [www. AlzAlaska.org](http://www.AlzAlaska.org) or call our Anchorage office at 907-561-3313.

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

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## How Are We Going to Afford This?



By **ALLANA LUMBARD**

*Downsizing Alaska*

If you're considering a move, you've probably asked yourself that very question. The cost of packing, sorting, cleaning, and coordinating a move can feel overwhelming—especially when you've lived in your home for decades and accumulated a lifetime of belongings.

As an occupational therapist and real estate agent, I specialize in helping seniors and individuals with disabilities transition into homes that better suit their needs. I've heard the same concerns again and again: "I have so

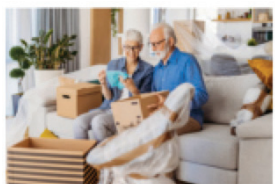
much stuff," and "How am I going to pay for all of this?"

That's why I created Hearts in Motion, a student and community volunteer program designed to assist my real estate clients with the physical and emotional load of downsizing. Volunteers may help with light packing, sorting, organizing, landscaping, and listing prep. This is not a general decluttering service—it is a *supportive add-on* available only to those selling their home through Downsizing Alaska.

Our goal is to make the moving process more manageable, less expensive, and full of heart.

If you or someone you know is thinking about downsizing and needs guidance, we're here to help.

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



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## Training videos produced by Catholic Community Service in Juneau well received

By **PAOLA BANCHERO**

*Senior Voice Staff*

A series of training videos specifically made for rural caregivers came out last month to a warm reception among service providers.

"These are amazing! Wonderful for quick on-point training or a 6-month refresher," said Mary Beth Westland, chief operating officer for Mat-Su Senior Services in an email to other caregiving agencies.

The project is the brainchild of Jennifer Garrison, who works in home- and community-based programs for Catholic Community Service in Juneau.

While at a Title VI conference last March, she got the idea of creating a set of videos that could meet the needs of rural caregivers in Alaska, "It was such a needed thing and I couldn't find any one that really pertained to what our rural caregivers need," she said.

She found a production company in Anchorage, Landsick Media LLC. She sent the company a list of the topics she wanted covered, and then the video producers came to Juneau



last August to collect footage. It took the next few months to perfect the editing and narration to "make the magic," Garrison said.

The result is an 18-video series available free of charge at <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLh2Vo-gePF8V9bIJAsmevb0HIL-FXn-bqlA>

The series includes short videos on topics such as toileting, feeding assistance and oral care assistance.

Garrison worked as a

certified nursing assistant for 10 years, so she had ideas about what she wanted to convey. Catholic Community Service was able to receive two grants to make the training series possible. One was a federal public health workforce grant and the other was a Title III grant for caregiver support.

Garrison is happy the word is getting out about the video series. "I'm hoping it gets to all the people who need it," she said.

## Valdez Senior Center offers discounted glacier tours in May

*Senior Voice Staff*

The Valdez Senior Center Inc. is offering tours through the Stan Stephens Glacier and Wildlife Cruise company in May. The dates are May 19, May 23, May 27 and May 30. Seats are \$41 for members of the senior

center. The tour goes to the Columbia Glacier.

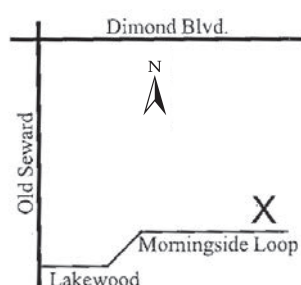
"Each year, the company gives senior center members a discounted tour rate for select dates in the early season," said Haden Bricker, activities coordinator and office assistant at the Valdez Senior Center.

If people are interested in joining these tours they can contact the senior center office at (907)835-5032 or email the activities coordinator at [VSCoffice-assistant@valdezak.gov](mailto:VSCoffice-assistant@valdezak.gov). Guests must be Valdez Senior Center members.

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# Reflecting on this Memorial Day about life-altering military service

By **MARALEY McMICHAEL**

Senior Voice Correspondent

My husband Gary had lived in the Palmer Veterans and Pioneers Home for two years on Memorial Day 2024. I planned to join him as usual to attend the 11 a.m. Memorial Day program. With our grandson sweating away in Army basic training in Fort Moore, Georgia, the holiday had even more significance.

During the Sunday sermon the day before, the pastor had brought several interesting things to light about celebrating Memorial Day. Then first thing Monday morning, I found the entry in my daily devotion book written by a woman whose husband served four years in the Air Force straight out of high school. He patrolled military bases as a law enforcement specialist, and she explained how his time in the military affected the rest of his life. Never in the military herself, she wrote how and why she grew to respect veterans.

In a second devotional book another woman wrote about how her younger brother went off to Vietnam in 1969, but she was newly married and living far from family and didn't realize how life-changing his experience was until many years later when she read the letters he sent home to their mother. She wrote that she never acknowledged his sacrifices or even said a simple "thank you." And that she now understands how Memorial Day not only honors the Americans who sacrificed their lives for their country, but also those who sacrificed their comfort and safety.

Then shortly after reading those devotions, I flipped on my usual radio station in the kitchen and soon was immersed in patriotic songs. For some reason, I had never before heard "Some Gave All" by Billy Ray Cyrus, and it moved me to tears. I dropped everything and researched on the Internet until I found the lyrics and printed them.

A couple of hours later, I sat on a folding chair



*A photo wall in the front entry hallway of the Alaska Veterans and Pioneers Home features each veteran resident with an 8x10-inch color photo with their name, branch of military service, and date of service.*

*Photo courtesy Maraley McMichael*

beside Gary in his wheelchair in the "great room" of the Palmer Veterans and Pioneer Home, where staff were busy getting everyone situated. A noticeable feeling of anticipation filled the air as more residents gathered...a few walking, but most with the help of walkers and wheelchairs, either self-propelled or being pushed. My mind pondered as we waited.

As a child living in Spennard, a large American Legion sign on Fireweed Avenue always stood out to me while riding in the family car. The sign proclaimed, "Freedom Is Not Free." I couldn't understand why the American Legion (whoever they were) felt it was important to put that message on a sign for all to read. I remember asking my mother what it meant, but I was so young that after she finished her explanation, I still did not understand.

Many of my high school classmates enlisted or were drafted into the Vietnam war. Both the draft ended and I graduated in 1973. I understood the guys who chose to enlist in what they were interested in, rather than wait and be drafted. If I was a male, I would have chosen the Navy, but now I question my 17-year-old mind. Growing up in Glennallen, I knew little about oceans and could not swim. Instead, I married Gary the week after graduation.

Neither Gary nor I served in the military, but so many of our generation did, as

did family and relatives in previous generations. My dad worked in the Seward power plant during World War II. He was ready to go wherever he was sent, but each evaluation he was told by the Selective Service, "The military needs you to stay right where you are." Gary's father was a civilian flight instructor for the U.S. Air Corps Flight School at

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## Rambles

News from the Grapevine

If you are hearing "Pomp and Circumstance" a lot lately, that's because May brings with it the **commencement ceremonies** happening at high schools and universities across the state. This month is also a time to reflect on the sacrifice of military personnel killed in battle. Americans also associate **Memorial Day weekend** with the official start of summer, and that's no different in Alaska, where you may have noticed scenic byways getting more congested with tourists... Many coastal communities have **shorebird festivals**, such as the Cooper River Delta Shorebird Festival in Cordova, May 1-4, the Kachemak Shorebird Festival in Homer, May 7-11, and the Seward Seabird Festival, May 30-June 1. The Audubon Society has listings for many of them. <https://ak.audubon.org/birds/alaskas-2025-bird-festivals> If you missed signing up or reserving for this year, put a note in your calendar for next spring ... In honor of **Older Americans Month**, the Fairbanks North Star Borough Parks & Recreation Department will host a catered luncheon and awards ceremony from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. May 8 at the Carlson Center, 2010 2nd Ave. The last day to send in a nomination for a senior from the borough was March 20. Categories of achievement are outstanding volunteer, lifetime fitness, model of health, and honored caregiver. If you missed the deadline or don't live in Fairbanks, you can still honor the Elder in your life with a lunch out or a small gift that says you're glad they are in your life. This event is part of Fairbanks' 50+ Art & Science of Aging Summit, which goes on at the Carlson Center May 8 and May 9 ... The **Chugiak-Eagle River Senior Center** is having its 10th annual military appreciation gala on May 17. You can register here. <https://>

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# Rambles

News from the Grapevine

continued from page 13

chugiakseniors.app.neoncrm.com/nx/portal/neon-events/events?path=%2Fportal%2Fevents%2F15892 You can honor the active duty or veteran in your life by buying a table or a seat at the gala, which will be held at the center, 22424 Birchwood Loop Road ... **Wasilla Area Seniors Inc.**, 1301 S. Century Circle, is having a **Mother's Day Tea** at 11 a.m. on May 10. This gathering will raise funds for Meals on Wheels while celebrating mothers and loved ones with an afternoon of tea, delicious treats, and great company. Seating is limited, so be sure to reserve your spot. An online auction will run from May 6–10, allowing supporters to bid on unique items and experiences to further benefit WASI's senior nutrition programs. Tickets for the tea are \$50 per person, and reservations can be made online at wasillaseniors.com. For more details on these events, to register, or to explore sponsorship opportunities, visit wasillaseniors.com or contact Aaron King at aaronk@alaskaseniors.com or call 907-206-8800 ... If you just want to bang a gong, check out Gail Johnson's **drumming circle** on the first Saturday of the month at the at the **Anchor-age Mountain View Library**, 120 Bragaw St., from 3 to 4:30 p.m. Johnson is a movement therapist. The event is free.

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

# Celebrating Older Americans Month

Alaska Commission on Aging

May is a special time as we celebrate Older Americans Month. This year's theme is "Flip the Script on Aging," focusing on how society perceives and approaches aging. The Alaska Commission on Aging (ACoA) is highlighting senior issues throughout the month on our Facebook page. We invite you to follow us for daily updates on activities and issues affecting seniors across Alaska. Staying connected is easy: simply search for "Alaska Commission on Aging" on Facebook.

Save the date! Monday, May 12 from noon to 1 p.m. the American Aging Association is hosting a free public lecture on advances in aging research in the Tikahtnu Ballroom, third floor of the Dena'ina

Center, 600 W. Seventh Ave., in Anchorage. This is a special, one-time event. No registration required. Learn about the research on why the body ages and how we can slow aging to extend the period of good health. Featuring Daniel Promislow of Tufts University, principal investigator of the NIH-funded Dog Aging Project. Promislow has worked on the biology of aging for more than 30 years. Visit [www.americanagingassociation.org](http://www.americanagingassociation.org) to learn more about the organization. Stay tuned on the ACoA's Facebook page for event updates.

## Understanding senior trends in Alaska

Are you curious about the latest data on Alaska's senior population? The ACoA recently released the "Senior Snapshot 2024," a comprehensive report

filled with data and insights. To request a copy, call us at 907-465-3250 or email us at [hss.acoa@alaska.gov](mailto:hss.acoa@alaska.gov). This report is a valuable resource for understanding the trends and challenges facing seniors in our state.

## Share your thoughts with the ACoA

The Alaska Commission on Aging invites you to participate in its quarterly meeting on Tuesday, May 6, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. via Zoom. A public comment period is scheduled for 1:15 p.m., providing an opportunity for you to express your thoughts and concerns. To join the meeting, visit <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83876760818> or call 253-215-8782 (Meeting ID: 885 7510 0686). For assistance or to request accommodations, please call 907-465-3250.

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Service

continued from page 13

Los Angeles airport during World War II and later transported jeeps and other military equipment to the South Pacific war arena. Gary's Uncle Jim was a test pilot for Lockheed during this time. Later, my uncle served in Korea.

Over the past three years, Gary and I have done many "walkabouts" around the Palmer Veterans and Pioneer Home. I slowly push his wheelchair up and down the various wings. Interesting military art hangs on the walls. Six flags hang from the extra high ceiling of the hallway on the Homestead wing — one flag for each of the Coast Guard, Merchant Marines, Army, Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps. The Palmer facility is the official veterans home for the whole state and in May 2024, of the 77 residents, 43 were veterans.

Memorial Day 2024, the space in the "great room" was full by the time the Colony High Military color guard marched in and "Taps" were played. Seeing the young people in uniform immediately reminded me again of our grandson. One of the wives of a veteran resident gave an "Introduction to Memorial Day," in which she said, "We should all remember that our freedom is not free." Her British accent was a reminder that many of our servicemen married European girls because of World War II. After a Pioneer Home board member spoke, the British woman read the poem "In Flanders Field." Interspersed, Dave Baker played "My Country 'Tis of Thee" and "God Bless America" on the piano and we all sang along.

More than once, my thoughts strayed to our grandson, and how his service would affect his life. My heart was troubled thinking about his future safety...as I imagined were the hearts of all mothers, fathers, and family of the more than one million men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice for our nation while serving in wars and missions since the



The Alaska Veterans and Pioneers Home is the official facility for the state's military veterans.

Photo courtesy Maralee McMichael

American Revolution. My heart swelled with pride at the same time. Such conflicting emotions... I now read every article about military topics in the Anchorage Daily News, and I have long known Alaska has a higher percentage of veterans compared to the other 49 states. When our grandson said he put JBER (Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson) near the top of his list as to where he would like to be stationed, I was thrilled.

Now another year has come and gone, and my appreciation for the veteran residents of the Palmer Veterans and Pioneers Home continues to grow. Recently, a wonderful photo wall was created in the front entry hallway. Each veteran is featured with an 8x10-inch color photo with their name, branch of military service, and date of service. A new additional set of military flags are now hanging high on the wall of the "great room."

I look forward to attending the 2025 Memorial Day program with Gary. That day (like every other day) my thoughts and prayers will be with our grandson. He finished basic training (1st Battalion, 50th Infantry Regiment - War Eagle Company), completed Airborne training, and is now stationed in Vicenza, Italy, with the 173rd Airborne Brigade, serving his country...because freedom is not free.

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

Calendar of Events

May 1-31 Nationwide Older Americans Month.

May 11 Nationwide Mother's Day.

May 3 Anchorage The Anchorage Genealogical Society is having its spring seminar. The AGS will have a slate of speakers with a variety of knowledge about genealogy, including presentations about German and Scottish genealogy, recording your family history on your phone, learning about DNA, the Mayflower Society, and Daughters of the American Revolution. The keynote speaker is Claire Gebben. Gebben is an award-winning author, historian, and genealogist. She is a public speaker and teacher on writing family history, German genealogy and migration patterns, and 19th-century history. To sign up go to <https://anchoragegenealogy.org/cpage.php?pt=128>.

May 7 Nationwide REAL ID or other valid accepted identification documents required by TSA and other federal agencies.

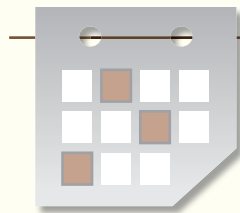
May 9 Valdez The Valdez Senior Center is having an estate planning workshop. The first session, from 10 a.m. to noon, is specifically for providers, such as personal caregivers, hospital personnel and the like to learn how to convey the essentials about planning for the future. From 3 to 6 p.m., a public seminar is meant for anyone interested in the estate planning process.

May 10 Talkeetna Clean Air Challenge. American Lung Association Alaska organizes this bike ride every year—it coincides with National Bike Month. Cyclists raise money for the nonprofit and ride 100-mile, 60-mile, 26-mile, or a 10-mile route. This year there is also a 5K (3.2-mile) run. Register, ride or support those who do. [https://action.lung.org/site/TR?fr\\_id=26728&pg=entry](https://action.lung.org/site/TR?fr_id=26728&pg=entry).

May 15 Anchorage Hope Community Resources is having its annual Walk for Hope on May 15. Check-in starts at 5 p.m. and the walk begins at 6 p.m. Participants will take a scenic stroll on the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail, and along the way they'll enjoy surprises and tasty treats from some of Anchorage's local restaurants. Once back at the Park Strip, participants will celebrate with certificates of completion, live music, delicious food, games, and tons of family fun. This event has been a tradition since 1970 bringing together nearly 4,000 participants.

May 16 Fairbanks Denakkanaaga Voice of the Elders is a nonprofit that provides a voice for Native Elders in Interior Alaska. The organization will be highlighting the late poet Mary TallMountain May 16 at the Morris Thompson Cultural and Visitors Center Theater, 101 Dunkel Street. The event begins at 7 p.m.

May 26 Nationwide Memorial Day.



Send us your calendar items

Send to: Senior Voice, 401 E. Fireweed Lane, #102, Anchorage AK 99503  
[calendar@seniorvoicealaska.com](mailto:calendar@seniorvoicealaska.com) or [editor@seniorvoicealaska.com](mailto:editor@seniorvoicealaska.com)  
Deadline for June edition is May 15.

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# How one beloved culinary concoction began in Alaska

By LAUREL DOWNING BILL

Senior Voice Correspondent

Creamy, tangy ranch dressing, a beloved condiment that has become a staple in American households, has a fascinating origin story rooted in the rugged wilderness of Alaska. Its creation can be traced to the early 1950s when a plumber-turned-cowboy found himself cooking for hungry work crews in the remote Alaska bush.

In 1949, Nebraska-born Steve Henson arrived in Anchorage to pursue a career as a plumbing contractor. While working on remote job sites, he took on the additional role of camp cook, tasked with keeping his hardworking crew satisfied and well-fed.

Henson’s culinary ingenuity was put to the test by these hungry folks, as he sought to create a dressing that would entice his crew to eat their vegetables without complaint. Using the limited ingredients at hand, Henson concocted a dressing made from buttermilk, mayonnaise, and a blend of herbs and spices. This experimental dressing proved to be a hit among the rugged plumbers, who eagerly devoured their greens when accompanied by Henson’s flavorful creation.

“It’s tough to feed men up in those bush jobs. If they don’t like something, they’re as likely to throw it at the cook as they are to walk out cursing,” Henson later recalled. “I had to come up with something to keep them happy.”

By age 35, Henson had saved enough money after a few years of plumbing in Alaska to retire. In the mid-1950s, he and his wife, Gayle, moved to California. They purchased a 120-acre spread called Sweetwater Ranch in the mountains near Santa Barbara. The couple renamed their new home Hidden Valley Ranch with the goal of turning it into a successful dude ranch for tourists. But it was Henson’s dressing that put the place on the map.

The Hensons served their signature dressing at the ranch’s steakhouse, and it quickly became a hit among guests, who began requesting jars to take home and share with friends and family. Recognizing the growing demand, Henson started selling dry seasoning packets for 75 cents and shipping them through the mail, allowing customers to easily recreate the beloved dressing at home by simply mixing the contents with buttermilk and mayonnaise.

As word of Henson’s ranch dressing spread, the demand skyrocketed. By the late 1960s, the Hidden Valley Ranch business



Delightful, tangy ranch dressing traces its roots to the wilds of Alaska.

Wikipedia

rated Hidden Valley Ranch Food Products, Inc. and opened a factory to manufacture the dressing mix on a larger scale, eventually distributing it to supermarkets across the Southwest and, ultimately, nationwide.

In 1972, the Clorox Company recognized the immense potential of Henson’s dressing and acquired the Hidden Valley Ranch brand for a staggering \$8 million (more than \$60 million in 2025 dollars). Under Clorox’s ownership, the dressing underwent several reformulations, including the addition of buttermilk flavoring to the seasoning mix, allowing for a more convenient preparation using regular milk.

The popularity of ranch dressing continued to soar, and by the 1980s, it had become a common snack food flavor, with the introduction of Cool Ranch Doritos in 1987. Ranch dressing’s versatility

extended beyond salads, as it became a beloved dip for everything from chicken wings to pizza crusts. In 1983, ranch dressing surpassed Italian dressing to become the best-selling salad dressing in the United States, a position it still holds.

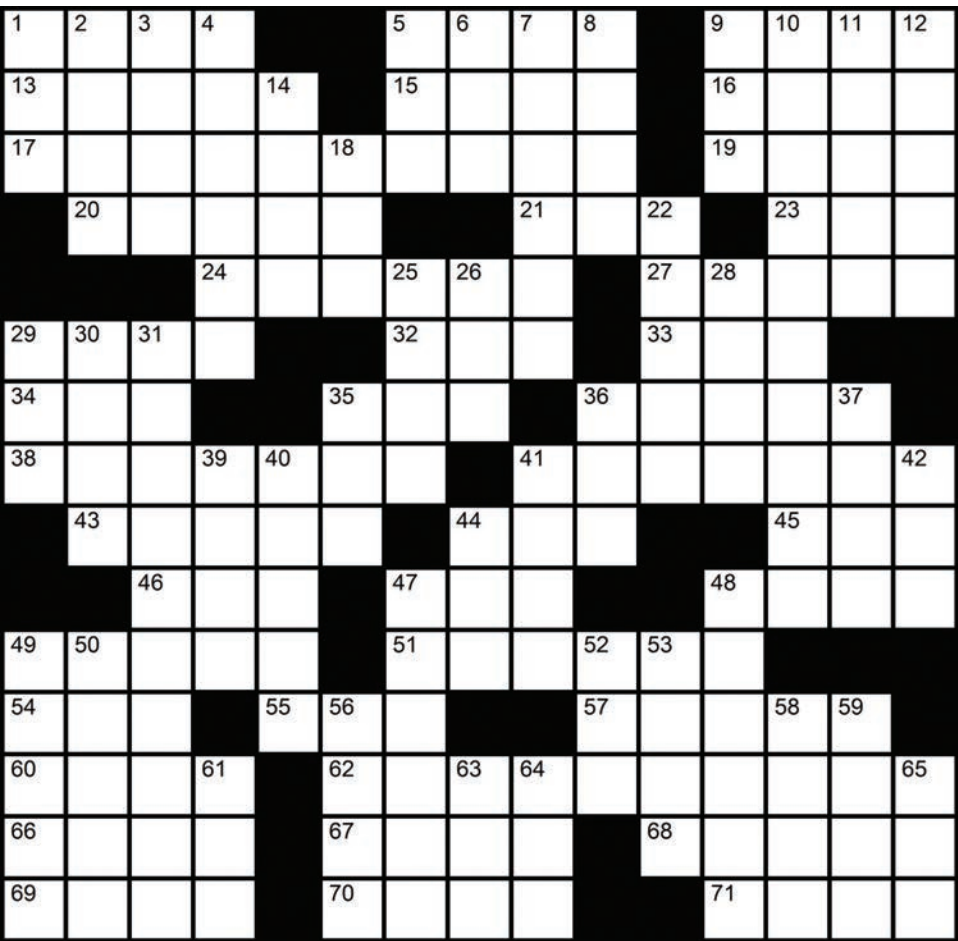
Henson passed away in 2007, but his legacy born in a remote Alaska construction camp lives on in every bottle of ranch dressing and every ranch-flavored snack. What began as a solution to keep Alaskan workers happy has become a multi-million-dollar industry and a cultural phenomenon.

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

### Water Logged

#### Across

- 1 Long bath
- 5 Throat-clearing sound
- 9 Kindergarten lesson
- 13 Places in the heart
- 15 2004 Queen Latifah movie
- 16 Caspian feeder
- 17 Sailing vessel with multi-masts
- 19 Copter’s forerunner
- 20 Navigational aid
- 21 Caffeine source
- 23 Moo \_\_\_ gai pan
- 24 Stimulate
- 27 Rascalion
- 29 Like some lips
- 32 Negative conjunction
- 33 Go for the bronze?
- 34 Antipollution org.
- 35 Do film work
- 36 Military posts
- 38 Long narrow flat-bottomed boat
- 41 Harbor to harbor vessels
- 43 Nigerian monetary unit
- 44 Fifth-century warrior
- 45 Born
- 46 Class-conscious org.?
- 47 Funnyman Brooks
- 48 Sea swallow
- 49 Savage
- 51 Connected to the web
- 54 Priest’s robe
- 55 Cup handle
- 57 Bench-clearing incident
- 60 Laughfest
- 62 Double-hulled sailboats
- 66 Manila beans
- 67 Joie de vivre



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- 68 Speeds
- 69 Novel conclusion?
- 70 Rest stop sight
- 71 Hot under the collar

#### Down

- 1 Got an eyeful
- 2 Elevator pioneer
- 3 River of Tuscany
- 4 Excretory organ
- 5 Balance provider
- 6 Son of Noah
- 7 English cathedral city
- 8 Bog down
- 9 Calendar abbr.
- 10 Two-masted sailing vessel

- 11 Billiards bounce
- 12 Single-master
- 14 Sophocles tragedy
- 18 Circle segment
- 22 Mary of “The Maltese Falcon”
- 25 Ancient Andean
- 26 Diaper wearer
- 28 “The Alienist” author
- 29 Gas station abbr.
- 30 \_\_\_ reflection
- 31 Ship designed to transport plantain
- 35 Chicken \_\_\_ king
- 36 Boggy lowland
- 37 Nostradamus, e.g.
- 39 Fizzles out
- 40 Emulate Cicero

- 41 Sated
- 42 Cambodian coin
- 44 Egg protector
- 47 Esprit de corps
- 48 Aquarium residents
- 49 Trash hauler
- 50 “The Waste Land” poet
- 52 School of thought
- 53 At hand
- 56 Air force heroes
- 58 Mexican crunchy munchie
- 59 Unique person
- 61 Mao \_\_\_-tung
- 63 Tartan cap
- 64 Black cuckoo
- 65 Compass pt.

Crossword answers on page 22



# John Denver’s “Country Roads” remains a hit for all ages

By NICK THOMAS  
Tinseltown Talks

Fifty-five years ago this year, John Denver performed “Take Me Home, Country Roads” for the first time in public at The Cellar Door music club in Washington, D.C. Released as a single in April the following year, “Country Roads” (as it’s fondly known) quickly became a pop sensation.

With its catchy, sing-along melody and heartfelt lyrics, the hit song resonated across borders—national and international—even though it paid tribute to a single U.S. state, West Virginia. Evoking deep nostalgia and the universal longing for going home, the song has remained a beloved favorite ever since.

Composed by Bill Danoff and Taffy Nivert, with Denver facilitating the ballad’s completion, hundreds of cover versions of “Country Roads” appear on YouTube today where it remains as prolific as the Mountain State’s dazzling fall leaves are abundant.

Among my favorite versions are performances by The Petersens, a Missouri bluegrass family, the Hermes House Band, a Dutch pop group, New Zealander Jamie McDell, and South Korean YouTuber J.Fla.

While none can surpass the original, in my opinion, one standout contemporary version comes from

*In addition to being inspired by the Denver classic, she hopes to elicit that inspiration in others through her own music.*

Down Under. Since posting it on Instagram, TikTok, Facebook and YouTube, Aussie country music singer Sara Berki has racked up over 20 million views of her 2024 live performance before the crowd at an Australian Football League match in the state of Queensland. The song has even been adopted as the Brisbane Lions’ football club official team song. ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wqSPyk-G8i\\_g](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wqSPyk-G8i_g))

“It was an absolute privilege to be able to play at the game,” Berki told me by email. She says Denver’s storytelling was not only admirable, but memorable and personal.

“His music is sentimental, honest, and sincere which is relatable to so many human beings around the world in every generation,” she notes. “It reminds me of my Welsh grandmother playing it in her living room on vinyl when I was a little girl. It makes me think of home – tall pines, rolling green hills, and maple leaves all over the road when the



Australian singer Sara Berki has become something of a sensation for her cover of John Denver’s “Take Me Home, Country Roads” that she sang at an Australian Football League match last year. She hopes to come to Nashville.

Screenshot of Sara Berki’s appearance March 12, 2024 from YouTube video

weather changes. I think of my mum, and how I always travel back home down the highway to her house when I’m feeling a little lost.”

Originally from Bundaberg on the Queensland east coast, Berki now lives near Sydney. As a singer-songwriter, she has also composed numerous songs since debuting her self-funded single “Fallin’

off the Heartline” in 2022. A more recently released song “Tear You Apart” checks all the required boxes for successful country chart hit ([www.saraberki.com](http://www.saraberki.com)). (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4NI-crXDGeRo&ab>)

Berki has plans to head to Nashville this year and hopes to one day perform in the U.S.

“I can’t wait to meet some inspiring people, play some writers’ rounds, work with songwriters and producers that I’ve had written down in my little black book since being an artist, drink some Dr Pepper, eat some fried chicken, and just take it all in really,” she says. “I’m excited to experience American culture, the landscapes, and all the opportunities that it can offer.”

In addition to being inspired by the Denver classic, she hopes to elicit that inspiration in others through her own music.

“It’s just a well-respected song—a classic that will always remain popular,” she says. “Since playing it live and sharing it on YouTube, I’ve found it has meaning for each and every single person. I just remind myself that it’s my job on this earth to make people feel something, that’s all I can hope for.”

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

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Additional information is available at:  
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# JTWROS: Those silly little words mean a lot

By KENNETH KIRK

For Senior Voice

Some years back I had a new client whose husband had recently passed away. She had gone to her broker to see about changing some things on their investment account, and was told she only had control of half of it. She was confused, and asked me why they would restrict her access to this joint account.

She kept referring to that account as the “ten-com” account, which I did not understand until I finally got her to show me the account statement. After her name and her husband’s name, it said TenCom. At that point it finally clicked in my brain what that meant: they were tenants in common.

And that is something almost nobody wants on an account, at least not when it is a husband and wife.

Tenants in common is legalese for an asset in which more than one person owns the account, but they each own a separate, undivided interest. Let me explain it another way. The alternative to tenancy in common is joint tenants with right of survivorship, usually abbreviated as JT-WROS. When two people have joint ownership, if one of them dies the other one automatically owns that asset. But if they have common ownership, when one



of them dies the survivor still owns their own half, but the other half belongs to the estate of the person who died.

A married couple are almost always going to want to have JTWROS, because that way if one of them passes, there is no need for probate or other complications regarding that account. In the case of this woman with the TenCom account, the way the account was being held meant, unfortunately, that she had to do a probate to clear that account.

And there was no good reason for this couple to want to have the account held commonly, instead of jointly. They had been married when Alaska was still a territory, for Heaven’s sake, when neither of them had a pot to urinate in. Neither of them had inherited assets. They earned it all together, and they definitely wanted everything going to the surviving spouse when one of them died. In all likelihood, it was

*Years ago, the Legislature repealed joint ownership in land, except between a married couple. I don’t know how many unnecessary probates have been caused by people putting their kids on title with them, but I’m willing to bet the number is not small.*

just a mistake, somebody checked the wrong box when they were filling out the paperwork. Nonetheless, it was necessary to go through the costs and delays of probate.

Let me tell you another story caused by someone not understanding the difference between the different ways to hold assets. I had a client who had three children who did not necessarily get along with each other. Her main assets were a nice house and a large bank account. We set up a living trust for her and deeded the house into the trust. She could have put the account into the trust as well, but her bank was going to make her get a new account number if she did, and that would be a hassle. So as an alternative we had her make the trust the death beneficiary (also

called POD) on the bank account.

And at that point everything was fine. But later, she started to have mobility issues, and it was hard for her to get around. Without telling me, she put one of her children on the bank account with her, so that he could pay bills and do other things for her. Because she didn’t understand the difference, she didn’t realize it was important that he was actually on the account as a joint owner, rather than as an authorized signer. The letters JTWROS meant nothing to her.

As a result, when she died her son automatically owned that account. And he still insisted on getting his portion of the proceeds from sale of the house as well.

One more example: Many times I have had

people come into my office who want to put one or more of their kids on title to real estate with them, or perhaps have already done that on their own, thinking it would avoid probate because it would be joint with right of survivorship. That usually works in other states, but not Alaska. Years ago, the Legislature repealed joint ownership in land, except between a married couple. I don’t know how many unnecessary probates have been caused by people putting their kids on title with them, but I’m willing to bet the number is not small.

How assets are titled is the beginning point of everything in estate planning. It might not be a bad idea to check all of your assets and make sure that how they are titled is consistent with your plan.

*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. When I say, “That might not be a bad idea,” I mean, “Do it now!”*



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# Apple Notes, SMS-email gateway fix, and mixing Apple and Android devices

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

**Q. What is a good app for taking notes on an iPhone?**  
A. Every Mac, iPad, and iPhone has an app called Notes. This app is one of Apple's most powerful apps, and it has a wealth of features that are not immediately obvious.

The easiest way to use the app is launch it and create a new note. Add a title and start typing. The message can be as long as you want. There is a formatting bar for making text bold or underlined, and for selecting a typeface and font size.

Notes also understands hashtags. Anything following a # symbol will become a tag. All the tags are clickable on the Folders screen.

The circle with three dots at the top of each note is a menu with still more features, including the ability to scan documents into a PDF, file the note in a folder, and pin a note to the top of the screen.

These features are just a start. To learn more, search the web for videos on how to make effective use of the Apple Notes app.

If you have an iCloud account, the Notes app will keep all the notes backed up in the cloud and synched with all your other Apple devices.

**Q. A friend sends me text messages that always arrive as email messages. The email message has a strange return address and often I cannot tell who sent it. We both use iPhones. Is there a way to fix this?**

A. Yes. This is not a common problem, but it does happen. Let's start with some background.

The Messages app on iPhone supports a number of different services, including the original cell text protocol (SMS), multi-media messages (MMS), Apple's secure message protocol, and the newer RCS protocol.

By design, Messages chooses the delivery service based on your phone's settings and the recipient's address. It is also designed to do everything possible to deliver a message, falling back on a different protocol if the first choice fails.

The good news is that this arrangement works nearly all the time, but as you have discovered, there are exceptions.

When things work correctly, messages sent from iPhones should appear in blue message bubbles, which means that the message was sent via Apple's secure protocol. Green bubbles use the other protocols, which are not secure.

Text messages show up as email addresses because of a fallback service. To make sure that all the messages sent to you from your friend appear as blue bubbles, the sender needs to make sure that both your cell number and AppleID are present in their address book.

To do this, open the Contacts app on the sender's phone, find your address card, and edit it so that your cell number is labeled correctly as one of your telephone numbers, and make sure one of the email addresses matches your AppleID.

If you do not know your AppleID, open the Settings app and tap on your name. On the screen that appears,

the AppleID should appear below your name. It is usually an email address.

Once these entries are in place, send a message to your friend, and have them reply. If you still need help, check out this link: Troubleshooting Messages, [support.apple.com/en-us/118433](https://support.apple.com/en-us/118433).

**Q. I use an iPhone at home and an Android phone for my work. Is there some way I can access things like Apple Notes on my Android device?**

A. Yes, and this works with all newer devices. You may never have visited iCloud on the web, but almost everything you sync via iCloud on Apple devices is visible to you on any device via the Web.

To do this, open a browser on the non-Apple device and visit [icloud.com](https://icloud.com). Log in with your AppleID and password. That opens the portal to everything Apple.

Depending on your iCloud configuration, there are more than a dozen services. In general, you can see your contacts,

## Wander the Web

Here are my picks for worthwhile browsing this month:

**A brief history of peanut butter**  
Everything you need to know about this kitchen staple. Also check out the food-related articles that appear at the bottom of this article  
[smithsonianmag.com/innovation/brief-history-peanut-butter-180976525/](https://smithsonianmag.com/innovation/brief-history-peanut-butter-180976525/)

**Visual vocabulary**  
Eyecandy is a platform to exchange ideas and find inspiration from films. Entries are cataloged by various filmmaking techniques.  
[eyecannndy.com](https://eyecannndy.com)

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[make-everything-ok.com](https://make-everything-ok.com)

calendars, notes, Apple email, iCloud Drive, and photos. If you use Pages, Numbers, or Keynote, full versions of those apps are also available inside the browser.

In short, using your AppleID and password on

iCloud.com will give you access to a large array of capabilities on non-Apple devices.

*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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# Government-approved ID now required

*Make sure your documents are up to requirements for domestic air travel*

By **DIMITRA LAVRAKAS**

Senior Voice Travel  
Correspondent

U.S. travelers will need to present a REAL ID-compliant license/ID or another acceptable form of identification to board commercial flights in or out of the country beginning May 7.

Travelers who fail to produce a REAL ID or an accepted alternative may not be allowed through Transportation Security Administration security checkpoints.

Children under 18 are not required to provide identification when traveling within the United States.

REAL ID-compliant cards have a star marking on the upper top portion of the card. If the card does not have one of these markings, it is not compliant and won't be accepted as proof of identity.

A U.S. Department of Defense ID, including IDs issued to dependents, are acceptable alternatives to a REAL ID.

Other acceptable forms of ID accepted at TSA checkpoints include a U.S. passport or U.S. passport card, Department of Homeland Security-trusted traveler cards, a state-issued enhanced driver's license, and a permanent-resident card.

For a complete list of acceptable alternative forms of identification, visit TSA.gov, and for more information, Department of Homeland Security at visitDHS.gov.

"Travelers who do not present a Real ID-compliant license or acceptable alternative beginning May 7, 2025, will not be permitted through the security checkpoint," Homeland Security states on its on its list of frequently asked questions page.

## STEP up for alerts

The Smart Travel Enrollment Program (SMART) is a free service that allows U.S. citizens and nationals to enroll their trip abroad so the Department of State can accurately and quickly contact you in case of an emergency.



Utqiagvik TSA line during the Permanent Fund sale.

Photos by Dimitra Lavrakas

Get real time updates about health, weather, safety, and security in the country and plan ahead using information from the local U.S. embassy. STEP can help the embassy or consulate contact you if there's an emergency like a natural disaster, civil unrest, or a family emergency back home.

To register an account, go to <https://mytravel.state.gov/s/step> to register for STEP, select "Create account" and enter your personal information, including: name, date of birth, passport number, and emergency contact.

## Green card holders take note

Having a Green Card (officially known as a Permanent Resident card) allows you to live and work permanently in the United States.

There are an estimated 12.8 million lawful permanent residents who have legal rights to live and work in the country.

However, recent high-profile arrests and deportations of visiting professors and researchers holding green cards has caused great concern that the administration will target permanent residents.

In March, Vice President J.D. Vance said on Fox News that green card holders do

not "have an indefinite right to be in the United States of America."

## Possible no-goes either way

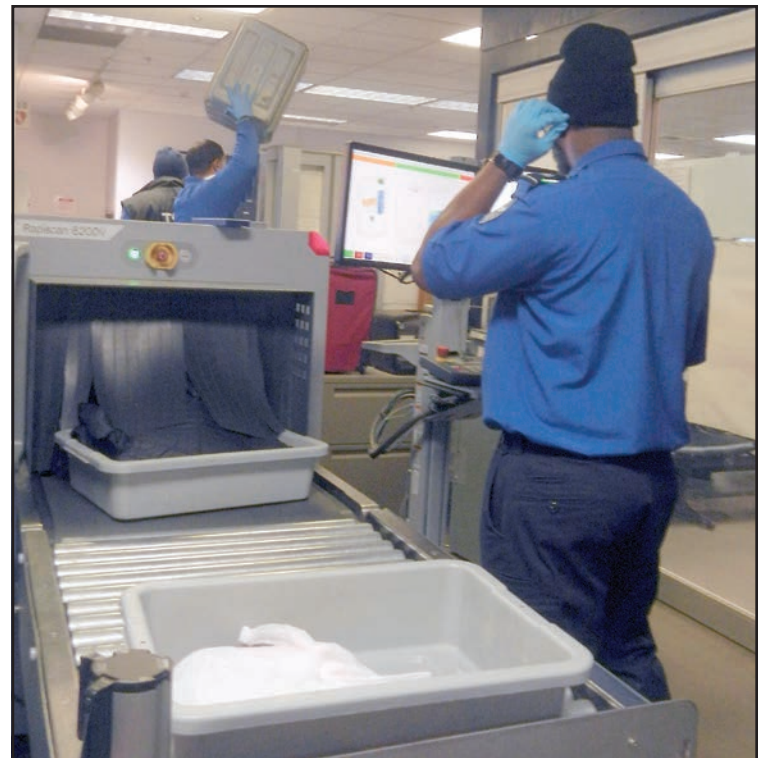
On March 14, Reuters News Service published an internal Trump administration proposal for these countries whose citizens could face restrictions on entering the U.S. See <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/trump-administration-weighs-travel-ban-dozens-countries-memo-says-2025-03-15/>

However, the administration's orders could change at any time.

All travel banned to Afghanistan, Bhutan, Cuba, Iran, Libya, North Korea, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Venezuela, and Yemen. Visas were sharply restricted to Belarus, Eritrea, Haiti, Laos, Myanmar, Pakistan, Russia, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, and Turkmenistan.

Sharply restricted visas are considered for these countries: Belarus, Eritrea, Haiti, Laos, Myanmar, Pakistan, Russia, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, and Turkmenistan.

The following countries have 60 days to correct US-identified inadequate passport and security practices: Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Chad,



Make sure you have no restricted items in your take on bag.

Republic of Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Dominica, Equatorial Guinea, Gambia, Liberia, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, São Tomé and Príncipe, Vanuatu, and Zimbabwe.

Common sense would tell you to avoid travel to these countries as you may book a trip, only to have your destination end up on a no-fly list. And if you are from one of these countries, be aware if you visit family, on return, you might be blocked from re-entering the United States.

There have been many U.S. citizens in the news

who have been caught carrying medical marijuana, or under the suspicion of being a spy, jailed for years. You don't want to be that person.

Here is a Wikipedia page of people who have been detained. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_Americans\\_wrongfully\\_imprisoned\\_or\\_detained\\_abroad](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Americans_wrongfully_imprisoned_or_detained_abroad)

## Some travel advice

I am in the difficult position of being a travel columnist who now thinks nobody should go anywhere anymore. At least for

*next page please*



# Homer Senior Center seeks donations

Senior Voice Staff

The Homer Senior Center is raising funds after accruing substantial debt. Late last year, the non-profit center revealed that it had debt from unpaid payroll taxes and unpaid invoices, according to a report in the Homer News from Nov. 21, 2024.

In mid-April, the IRS executed a one-time levy, removing more than \$138,000 from the center's accounts—leaving it unable to cover essential expenses like meals, medication, and care for seniors, according to a message on the donation site.

The center's Facebook page reads, "Homer Se-

nior Citizens, Inc. has been a cornerstone of care and community for decades—but now, we need your help."

The Facebook message goes on to say that donations will help the center rebuild after financial mismanagement from the previous center administration. The page directs prospective donors to use an online fundraising site: [https://secure.qgiv.com/for/standbyourseniors/?fbclid=IwY2xjawJzfN5leHRuA2FlbQIxMQABHq-JsBQ7tSEqxuzaTxz-DeqGojw5FFnlrzjFR-\\_4JjAuWW9H7GorXnJIJD2aE\\_aem\\_96ixQlURonG1eNu-8gRq\\_bQ](https://secure.qgiv.com/for/standbyourseniors/?fbclid=IwY2xjawJzfN5leHRuA2FlbQIxMQABHq-JsBQ7tSEqxuzaTxz-DeqGojw5FFnlrzjFR-_4JjAuWW9H7GorXnJIJD2aE_aem_96ixQlURonG1eNu-8gRq_bQ)

## REAL ID

from page 20

now, and until the courts step in to uphold the rights of green card holders.

Another point is that many countries hate the United States thanks to this administration's abandonment of historic U.S. support of allies abroad and heavy tariffs that have dangerously affected the world economy.

On the bright side, you're in Alaska.

Ask yourself how many

times have you told someone Outside you are from Alaska and they say, "I've always dreamed of visiting Alaska."

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# Migration

continued from page 2

Mat-Su and Anchorage are 6 to 7%, approximating the state average, but in rural western Alaska relatively few seniors are snowbirds. But there is more to this story. How about older Alaskans who fly off and don't come back, or seniors who arrive from elsewhere and stay? The same clever researchers observed that, overall, people relocate less as they get older. In the 1990s seniors were a mere 2% of the total migrants into and out of Alaska. However, in the last five years, seniors were 9% of total migrants. We seniors are boldly mobile in ways we were not before. The analysts are quick to point out the ramifications. "Although the outflow has increased, it hasn't stopped the age group from growing in Alaska, nor is



Researchers with the State of Alaska also found that in the last five years, seniors were 9% of total migrants—those who move into and out of the state permanently.

it the primary reason for the state's net loss streak, which is the net outflow of working-age adults and children. However, the bigger and consistent senior outflow has created an undertow to the state's migration numbers that didn't exist before, which

has baked in a steady net loss." A little bone to pick here. Why not call "working-age adults" or "children" the "undertow to the state's migration numbers?" After all, there are more of them than us. Harrumph! To continue, looking at

all ages, Alaska has had a net migration loss for about a dozen years. In other words, more people have been leaving than arriving to stay. But we Alaska seniors seem to have itchier feet than the rest of the population. Compared to younger age groups, we seniors are much more likely to leave the state than immigrate into the state. We have been big on getting out of Dodge. The authors of the article do not speculate on why that is, but to me this would be a very interesting question. Better access to health care, family, cheaper prices for everything? One last observation about seniors with wings. "The number of Alaskans 65 or older has skyrocketed over the last decade and a half, continuing to rise even as youth and working-age populations have declined." So note the analysts who wrote this article in Alaska Economic

Trends. Our demographic is still growing pretty fast, but not quite as fast as in past decades. In 2024 there were 115,000 seniors in Alaska, fully 16% of the state's population. Putting all this together, the areas of the state with the highest rates of snowbirds, the Panhandle in the Southeast, are the same areas with the highest rates of seniors. In Haines, about 29% of the population are seniors. Petersburg comes in at around 25% seniors. So, what's the conclusion? Barring cataclysmic political or economic changes in the foreseeable future, there should be more Alaska senior snowbirders than ever. Sound like a good idea? Don't forget your suntan lotion on the way out. 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.

# Bill

continued from page 5

make it more adaptable to small businesses, we have small businesses that might actually just go out of business," she told the committee. The bill has the enthusiastic backing of the Alaska Chamber, a business group that campaigned against the ballot measure. In testimony at Wednesday's hearing of the House Labor and Commerce Committee, Kati Capozzi, the chamber's president, called

it a "vital correction" to a pending mandate that burdens small businesses, especially in the tourism and hospitality sectors. "Maybe well-intentioned or maybe not, Ballot Measure 1 introduced a one-size-fits-all mandate that failed to account for Alaska's unique economic landscape," she said. One of the leaders of the Ballot Measure 1 campaign vowed to work against House Bill 161. "For me, it's really important that the voters will be respected here," Joelle Hall, president of the Alaska AFL-CIO, said Thursday.

"The voters have made this choice. The voters have said, 'We would like this to happen.' And whether or not the business groups can use a smaller group of people, the Alaska Legislature, to try to undo their

will—that is something we will fight." Hall disputed the bill sponsors' characterization of the changes as minor. "This, in my mind, is a substantial change. It is repealing the benefit that the

voters voted for," she said. This story was first reported by the Alaska Beacon <https://alaskabeacon.com>. Alaska Beacon stories may be republished online or in print under Creative Commons license CC BY-NC-ND 4.0.

## Crossword answers from page 16

S	O	A	K		A	H	E	M		A	B	C	S
A	T	R	I	A		T	A	X	I		U	R	A
W	I	N	D	J	A	M	M	E	R		G	I	R
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Relationship

continued from page 5

a hypothesis about why a behavior occurs. It is a tool used to understand and change negative thought patterns and behaviors by examining the relationships between thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. However, it has limits. Emotional history, trauma, medical conditions, or simply limited data can complicate your ability to fully understand or shift a behavior. It's a helpful guide—but not a substitute for a licensed therapist's expertise.

Practical communication tips

Here are some ways you can foster a more supportive and productive dialogue with your mom:

- **1. Choose the right moment.** Find a time when you are both calm and not rushed. Timing sets the tone for connection.
- **2. Use "I" statements.**

Focus on your perspective rather than placing blame. Saying "I've noticed you seem more tired lately" feels less accusatory than "You never have energy."

- **3. Ask open-ended questions.** Invite her to share. Try, "How have you been feeling about your daily routine?"
- **4. Lead with empathy.** Acknowledge that aging may bring new and unexpected challenges. Let her know you understand and that you are there for her.
- **5. Practice patience.** These conversations may take time. Stay open and give her space to process what's discussed.
- **6. Offer help, not criticism.** Frame your observations with care, "I want to help make things easier for you."
- **7. Model the behavior.** Demonstrate calmness, openness, and healthy coping strategies. Your actions can inspire her to do the same.
- **8. Set small, achievable goals.** Help her break

down changes into manageable steps. Celebrate successes, no matter how small.

- **9. Provide resources.** Offer materials like books, articles, or support groups. For example, <https://www.caregiver.org> offers guidance for families and caregivers.
- **10. Praise progress.** Reinforce even minor improvements. A simple acknowledgment can go a long way.
- **11. Create a safe environment.** Let her know she can express herself freely without fear of judgment

or confrontation.

- **12. Stay consistent.** Keep communication open with regular, supportive check-ins.

Final thoughts

Each individual is different, so a combination of these strategies may work best. Approaching your mom with patience, understanding, and clear intentions can help preserve your relationship, while creating space for important conversations. It's not about "fixing" her—it's about walking the years of aging together,

with empathy and care.

If you ever notice behaviors that may point to cognitive changes, depression, or other medical concerns, consider involving a healthcare provider or mental health professional. This journey is about fostering connection and support.

You don't have to go through this alone—and neither does she.

*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).*

Fight

continued from page 2

more people—approximately 10,000 people every day—are retiring.

The Social Security Administration has been too unclear and uncommunicative with the public about its customer service issues in 2025. From their backtracking on phone service changes to confusion over office closures, SSA's public controversies have driven anxiety for Americans everywhere. Phone calls to the agency have spiked

over the last few months, and if they don't commit to customer service improvements, it's going to cause real hardship for many older Americans trying to get the Social Security they have earned.

The incoming Social Security Commissioner would be well served by re-committing the Social Security Administration to providing timely, efficient and effective customer service. SSA needs to be clear when communicating any possible changes, and what effects that lower staffing levels will have. And Congress needs to

provide oversight to ensure that customer service is prioritized at an agency that has struggled to serve Americans everywhere.

We encourage everyone in Alaska to join us in calling for SSA to ensure everyone receives the Social Security service they need for a vital program for Americans everywhere.

Get the latest Social Security news updates, join AARP in the campaign to protect the money you've earned, and view Frequently Asked Questions at [aarp.org/socialsecurity](http://aarp.org/socialsecurity).

*Marge Stoneking, AARP Alaska Advocacy Director.*

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# Celebrate 20 Years of Amblin'!

Visit our website: [AlzAlaska.org/Amblin2025](http://AlzAlaska.org/Amblin2025)





















## Saturday, May 3rd 9:00am - 11:30am

Anchorage Golf Course 3651 O'Malley Rd, Anchorage, AK

Join us to celebrate 20 years of Amblin' for Alzheimer's Resource of Alaska! Ring in two decades of making a difference and help make this year our most impactful yet! Enjoy a fun morning with music, a light breakfast, a silent auction, door prizes, and a leisurely walk around the front 9 of the Anchorage Golf Course. **All funds raised stay in Alaska, directly supporting Alaskans facing the challenges of Alzheimer's disease and related dementias throughout the state.**



Thank you to our Sponsors and Media Partners



For more information and sponsorship opportunities contact April at [APowers@AlzAlaska.org](mailto:APowers@AlzAlaska.org) or 907-561-3313



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

- **Identify** your long-term support needs
- **Explore** your options for meeting those needs
- **Connect** you with the resources you choose for yourself or your loved one
- **Follow Up** to ensure your needs are met

### 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 Kanakanak 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.

# Spring Scam Slam Shred Day

With free shredding from Arctic Shred!

Join AARP Alaska and Arctic Shred for a FREE shred event! Test your knowledge on top scams in Alaska, learn how to spot and report fraud, find scam prevention resources and more.

*Registration required for shred services.*



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



**Date & time:** Saturday, May 17 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

**Location:** Loussac Library parking lot, 3600 Denali Street, Anchorage, AK 99503