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# Senior Voice

A publication of Older Persons  
Action Group, Inc. Free

Serving Alaskans 50+ Since 1978

Volume 44, Number 5 May 2021

**Alaska senior centers open back up, but carefully.**

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**Sleeping difficulties? Try a wearable tracker.**

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**TRAVEL Exploring and enjoying other cultures without leaving the country.**

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2020  
National Mature  
Media Awards  
Winner

*Eagle River's Chris Fearon, 72, runs or walks the Eagle River Road near his house every day. Part of his routine includes picking up roadside garbage along the way, something he's been doing for over 10 years. "I have a following of people that honk at me, which is good. Usually."*

Colin Tyler Photography





# Older Americans Month: Communities of Strength

Alaska Commission on Aging

In tough times, communities find strength in people—and people find strength in their communities. In the past year, we’ve seen this time and again in communities throughout Alaska as friends, neighbors, and businesses have found new ways to support each other.

In our state, older adults are a key source of this strength. Through their experiences, successes, and difficulties, they have built resilience that helps them to face new challenges. When communities tap into this, they become stronger too.

Each May, the Administration for Community Living leads the celebration of Older Americans Month.

This year’s theme is “Communities of Strength,” recognizing the important role older adults play in fostering the connection and engagement that build strong, resilient communities.

Strength is built and shown not only by bold acts, but also small ones of day-to-day life – a conversation shared with a friend, working in the garden, trying a new recipe, or taking time for a cup of tea on a busy day. And when we share these activities with others, even virtually or by telling about the experience later, we help them build resilience too.

This year, the Alaska Commission on Aging will celebrate Older Americans Month by encouraging community members to share their experiences. Together,

we can find strength, and create a stronger future.

Here are some ways to share and connect:

- ▶ Look for joy in the everyday. Celebrate small moments and ordinary pleasures by taking time to recognize them. Start a gratitude journal and share it with others via social media, or call a friend or family member to share a happy moment or to say thank you.
- ▶ Reach out to neighbors. Even if you can’t get together in person right now, you can still connect with your neighbors. Leave a small gift on their doorstep, offer to help with outdoor chores, or deliver a homecooked meal.
- ▶ Build new skills. Learning

something new allows us to practice overcoming challenges. Take an art course online or try a socially distanced outdoor movement class to enjoy learning with others in your community. Have a skill to share? Find an opportunity to teach someone, even casually.

▶ Share your story. There’s a reason storytelling is a time-honored activity. Hearing how others experience the world helps us grow. Interviewing family, friends and neighbors can open up new conversations and strengthen our connections.

When people of different ages, backgrounds, abilities and talents share experiences – through action,

story, or service – we help build strong communities. And that’s something to celebrate. Please join the Alaska Commission on Aging and our state and local partners in strengthening our community. We want to hear from you. Please send a photo of your local celebration of Communities of Strength to [lisa.morley@alaska.gov](mailto:lisa.morley@alaska.gov), so we can share the joy with others throughout the state. Subscribe to the Alaska Commission on Aging listserv to receive updates and photos throughout the month, celebrating the strength of Alaskan seniors. Sign up for the link to the listserv at <http://dhss.alaska.gov/acoa/Pages/default.aspx>.

## Commission on Aging to meet in Soldotna, May 4-6

Alaska Commission on Aging

The Alaska Commission on Aging will hold its spring meeting at the Soldotna Senior Center, May 4 through May 6. The agenda and site

visit schedule will be distributed through the Alaska Commission on Aging Listserv once it is confirmed.

Day one of the meeting will be held at the Soldotna Senior Center from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., with an

opportunity for public testimony from 4 to 4:30 p.m.

On day two, commissioners will divide into groups and partner with local senior centers, tribal health centers and other groups to hold senior lis-

tening sessions.

On day three of the meeting, each group will summarize the feedback they received at the listening sessions and determine next steps. There will be another opportunity for public testimony from 11 to 11:30 a.m.

The Alaska Commission on Aging is highly sensitive about following safety protocols recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and is committed to maintaining the health and safety of their hosts

on the Kenai Peninsula. All participants are to wear masks and practice safe distancing if they wish to attend in person. If not, they may take home the talking points and submit questions in writing via email or regular mail.

For more information, email Lisa Morley at the Alaska Commission on Aging, [lisa.morley@alaska.gov](mailto:lisa.morley@alaska.gov) or subscribe to the ACoA Listserv at <http://dhss.alaska.gov/acoa/Pages/default.aspx>.

## Keep up with senior bills in the Alaska legislature

Senior Voice Staff

Keep track of senior-related bills, budget decisions and other issues by attending the Alaska Commission on Aging Legislative Teleconferences. Hosted by local agencies statewide, and available by toll-free call-in, the teleconferences provide a convenient forum for seniors and advocates across Alaska to share information about issues and specific bills of concern,

including Medicaid, state budget and funding, senior assistance, retirement, Pioneer Homes and more.

Zoom conferences are scheduled 9:30 to 11 a.m. every other Thursday and weekly during the last month of session. The remaining 2021 meeting date is May 15.

Draft agendas and a legislative watch list will be available to print the day before each meeting, and a list of bills to be discussed will be available to

print from the state Notices website at <https://aws.state.ak.us/OnlinePublicNotices/Notices/Search.aspx>.

The website will also have the Zoom address and phone numbers (for non-computer attendees).

Individuals who require special accommodations to participate should contact Lesley Thompson at 907-465-4793 at least two days prior to the teleconferences.

### 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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# Payee Representatives scramble to continue service

By **KEN STEWART**  
*Senior Voice*

In the fall of 2019, representative payees in Alaska were involved in a controversy with the Social Security Administration over the legality of charging a certain fee for representative payee services.

A representative payee is a person or organization appointed by the Social Security Administration to receive the Social Security or Social Security Income (SSI) benefits for beneficiaries who can't manage

or direct the management of their benefits. Millions of Americans who receive monthly Social Security or SSI benefits need help managing their money and may need a representative payee.

According to the Social Security Administration, representative payee organizations can only operate as nonprofit entities charging \$45 per month from SSI income per client. Alaska had been operating outside the law with representative payee

organizations operating as for-profit organizations charging more than the \$45 per month allotment from SSI income, despite consistent audits from the Social Security Administration over the years.

The issue of running as a for-profit organization wasn't brought to light until federal officials from Washington D.C. and regional officials from Seattle conducted an official audit of all representative payee organizations in Alaska in 2019.

At the time, Alaska had around 15 representative payee services, each serving 15 to 20 clients, according to Vicki Jorgensen, owner of the now-closed Community Payee Services in Anchorage.

Jorgensen ran Community Payee Services as a for-profit business for over 20 years, and charged each of her 220 clients a flat rate of \$85 per client per month to process all monthly income from SSI, Alaska Native Dividends, Senior Benefits, Public Assistance,

wages and more. Jorgensen was confused by the abrupt shift in operations, as her business had been audited several times over her career and no issues were raised.

While it seems counter-intuitive to charge clients for performing necessary, life sustaining activities, such as making sure rent is paid on time, the fees charged by the for-profit organizations were the only way to stay in business.

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Letters

# Protect Alaska's nursing standards and our health care

As a retired Alaskan, I depend on quality health care from knowledgeable professionals. The health care workers I see regularly are people I know and have come to trust with my care. Alaska has a stringent set of standards when it comes to nurse licensing and robust continuing education requirements. It makes sense; we have a diverse population, both ethnically and geographically, and our aging population is growing as more and more people decide to make Alaska their retirement destination. Alaska depends on these highly trained professionals to care for our diverse and aging population.

Governor Dunleavy recently filed Senate Bill 67, which would make Alaska a "nursing license compact state." This would open the floodgates for what are called traveling nurses, allowing them to work in our facilities with whatever license they already have -- despite Alaska's high standards for nurse licen-

sure. This would also cause a revenue loss for our state since these nurses won't have to pay fees for their Alaska license as our highly trained Alaskan nurses do.

Why do I care about fees? Nurse licensing fees in Alaska pay for investigations into care abuse. As that funding diminishes, so does the ability to investigate complaints of potential elder care abuse, for example. Additionally, the State of Alaska won't be tracking these traveling nurses as they do with licensed Alaska nurses. The State won't know who is working in Alaska since they only track nurses who have an Alaska license; traveling nurses would not be required to get one.

While the Governor is touting this bill as a way to fix our nursing shortage, the entire nation faces a huge shortage of all health-care workers. What we need to do is work hard to recruit and retain our own nurses. Let's encourage the growth of UAA's Nursing program to train more Alaska

nurses and DHSS's SHARP program, which provides financial assistance to those looking to become healthcare providers. This is where we should focus our efforts and energy instead of lowering Alaska's

standards for nursing and relying on the mythical surplus of outside nurses to take care of us.

This is a scary scenario that I hope we can avoid by urging our legislators to say no to allowing Alaska

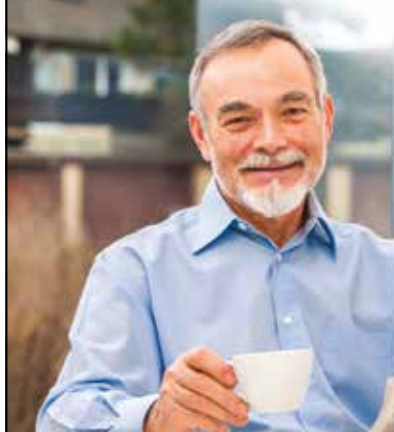
to become a nursing license compact state. Take a moment today to submit a letter in opposition to SB 67 to maintain Alaska's high standard of care.

**Laura Bonner**  
Anchorage, Alaska

## Send us your letters

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

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# Health research across generations

National Hispanic Council on Aging

While Latinos represent approximately 18% of the population in the United States, fewer than 5% participate in clinical trials or other forms of health research. Being left out of health research could have a significant negative impact on Latino communities, especially when it comes to understanding how new drugs, devices and therapies affect different people.

Although Latinos are underrepresented in health research, that doesn't mean that they don't participate. NHCOA (National Hispanic Council on Aging) spoke with two Latinos from different generations – Baby Boomer and Millennial – about their experiences as both researchers and health research participants.

## A career in research

Freddy Pacheco, age 72, immigrated to the United States with his family when he was 18 from Cochabamba, Bolivia. His parents wanted to provide a better life for him in a country that was not dealing with political unrest and where he could obtain a good education. Mr. Pacheco attended college, got his Master's in microbiology and began working toward a PhD. His career goal was to be a researcher.

Fast forward 54 years, Mr. Pacheco is now retired from a long fruitful career in allergy and immunology research at the region's premier children's hospital. He still teaches part-time at a community college – teaching future nurses about chemistry, biology and microbiology.

Mr. Pacheco spent some time discussing not only his career as a researcher, but also his experience participating in various health research initiatives.

What motivated you to want to work in research? I liked the challenge and the ability to discover new ways to address the challenges various diseases presented. I first realized that I wanted to be a researcher when I was pursuing my masters. As a researcher, I had the

**Being left out of health research could have a significant negative impact on Latino communities.**

space to pursue my interests. I was always learning something new, and I was able to challenge myself in new ways while exploring ways to enhance the health of my communities and the greater population.

What were some of your biggest career accomplishments? The accomplishments that my research team and I were obtain include:

- ▶ Identifying the causative environmental agents of allergies in children;
- ▶ Developing rapid allergenic tests for mold and fungal spores – allowing allergists and physicians to communicate results to patients, eliminating wait times;
- ▶ We were the first group to identify the major allergen in one of the most prevalent molds (*Alternaria*) for respiratory illness; and
- ▶ Developing the extraction procedures for different environmental allergens – in which we were able to isolate allergens and purify them so that they could be used for allergy skin testing, which is still done today.

Have you personally participated in health research? Yes, I have participated in several health research studies. One study was a colorectal cancer screening study that looked at the efficacy of a culturally tailored touch screen computer intervention. The purpose was to improve screening rates among at-risk populations. I also participated in a brain health study that focused on the ability of exercise to improve cognitive abilities.

What are some of the benefits of participating in health research? I am helping researchers learn about different ways to improve health, and even if it is too late to help me, my kids and grandkids could

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# Sleep trackers increase in popularity, usefulness

By JOHN C. SCHIESZER

For Senior Voice

It is now possible to find out lots of details about what you are doing while you are sleeping at night. There are wrist sensors, rings and a host of other gadgets that measure how much sleep you are getting on a nightly basis. They are known as Consumer Sleep Technologies (CSTs) and there are dozens of options. These sleep trackers can give a person a better idea of whether they are getting

***They are known as Consumer Sleep Technologies (CSTs) and there are dozens of options. These sleep trackers can give a person a better idea of whether they are getting enough quality sleep.***

enough quality sleep.

Sleep trackers use sensors to detect things such as body movement and heart rate. Some wearable sleep trackers remain on the individual to measure data and then they send the information to an app on a smartphone. Some sleep trackers rest on a mattress and some rest under the

mattress or next to the bed. All these devices upload data that is analyzed through an algorithm.

Dan Jennings, who is 76 years old and lives in Seattle, Washington, has been using the Motiv ring for more than two years. It looks just like a regular ring on his finger and it is paired to a smart phone app.



***Go2Sleep Tracker from SleepOn is a silicone ring you wear to bed that syncs with your phone to provide sleep data.***

“You should not expect perfection but the devices

give you a good idea of your sleep patterns and the amount of sleep you are getting at night,” said Jennings. “I like that it is easy and it is just a ring and I wear it to bed. It is not a watch or bulky device. It has been fairly accurate.”

He said it has helped improve his sleep because it had made him work harder on going to bed early and setting goals. The Motiv ring is no longer sold, but another ring called Oura is

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# Can you transmit COVID if you are vaccinated?

By JOHN C. SCHIESZER

For Senior Voice

The latest studies show that a person who is fully vaccinated against COVID-19 can still become infected with the virus. However, there have been many questions about whether a fully vaccinated adult can transmit the virus.

“It would be very rare. The best data we have are from long-term care facilities in a study from Denmark,” said Dr. Morgan Katz, who is an Assistant Professor of Infectious Dis-

ease at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine in Baltimore, Maryland.

Denmark launched an immunization program against COVID-19 at the end of 2020. The Danish health authorities prioritized older adults living in long-term care facilities and frontline healthcare workers as the first receivers of vaccination. Preliminary data just published showed that 39,040 long-term care residents (average age 84 years) and 331,039 healthcare workers (average age 47 years), who were vaccinated, developed

protection in very high numbers (90%) after two shots.

“This gives us a better idea because people were tested on a regular basis and so that speaks to significantly reduced risk of transmission. They looked at older adults, who are immunocompromised, so vaccines are usually less effective in these groups,” said Dr. Katz. It appears that older adults now can feel comfortable that if they are fully vaccinated they have a lower risk of contracting the virus and an even lower risk of trans-

mitting it to others. However, Dr. Katz said that does mean these immunized adults should be in high-risk situations where there are large numbers of people who are unvaccinated and unmasked.

“In general, the vaccines are incredibly efficacious and you can feel comfortable about a very low risk of transmission, but that said, we need more long-term data,” said Dr. Katz.

Hospital epidemiologist Dr. Laraine Washer, who is an Associate Professor of Infectious Diseases at the University of Michigan

Medical School in Ann Arbor, said in clinical trials the vaccines were 94% to 95% effective at preventing symptomatic COVID infection. This means that the chance of becoming symptomatic with COVID infection was 95% less, relative to people who were not vaccinated.

“The absolute risk of infection depends upon risk of exposure to COVID and that is driven by the amount of COVID circulating in the community as well as individual behaviors and

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# What moving means for your Medicare benefits

By COLTON T. PERCY

For Senior Voice

It's that time of year again; the sun is warm, breakup is messy, and the snowbirds are migrating back to Alaska. It's the time of year where the year-round residents and snowbirds alike are asking themselves, “Is this the year I finally move?”

What does moving mean for your Medicare benefits? What is the process? Will your coverage change?

## Moving out of Alaska

**Medicare Parts A & B:** The most important thing to do when moving is to update your address with the Social Security Administration. This will ensure you don't miss important updates about Medicare or

that a replacement Medicare card will arrive at the correct location. Your Medicare A & B benefits will follow you to any provider who accepts Medicare through all 50 states, Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Northern Mariana Islands.

**Medigap:** Medigap, or Medicare supplement plans, offer standardized benefits to work with your Medicare A & B and you won't need to change plans. However, you may want to contact your plan's provider and see if the costs will be changing. You may also want to contact your destination state's State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) to discuss what changing Medigap plans looks like

as enrollment rules can change between states.

**Part D:** Medicare Part D prescription drug plans do have coverage areas so you may need to switch plans. You can call your plan directly or the state SHIP office to discuss your current plan's coverage area. You will be granted a Special Enrollment Period (SEP) to change your Medicare Part D plan if you are moving to a new coverage area. If you notify your Part D plan of a permanent move in advance, you have an SEP to switch to another Part D plan beginning as early as the month before your move and lasting up to two months after the move. If you notify your Part D plan of a permanent move after you move, you have an SEP to switch to another

drug plan, beginning the month you tell your plan, plus two more full months thereafter.

**Medicare Advantage:** You may also be eligible to enroll in a Medicare Advantage plan (Part C) if you are moving to an area that offers these plans. This is another call to the state's SHIP office to determine what coverage you may be eligible for. Your SEP to explore Medicare Advantage plans will be the same as the Part D SEP.

## Moving to Alaska

**A & B:** The most important thing remains updating your address with the Social Security Administration. If you already have Medicare Parts A & B, your coverage will not change.

**Medigap:** The same details as moving out of Alaska apply. The plan coverage is standardized but plan change eligibility or costs may change.

**Part D:** You may need to change plans to one that has Alaska in its coverage area. You can contact your plan or the Alaska Medicare Information Office to discuss coverage details. The same enrollment periods detailed above will apply.

**Medicare Advantage:** There are no Medicare Advantage plans in Alaska. If you have a Medicare Advantage plan and are moving to the state of Alaska, you will need to make sure to notify your Medicare Advantage plan when you move, update

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## Audiologist or hearing aid specialist? What is the difference?



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

Part one of two.

Audiologists used to specialize more in disorders of the ear and cochlear implants. An audiologist is a certified and licensed professional who has earned a Master's or Doctoral Degree in the field of audiology. Audiologists now fit hearing aids more than before.

A Hearing Instrument Specialist (HIS) or dispenser can receive their training from other dispensers. Each state is different on the requirements that the HIS needs. Some require written and practical exams to be licensed and others require a two-year Associate in Applied Sci-

ence degree (AAS). An HIS may also pass a national exam and become a board certified HIS (BC-HIS).

An audiologist has more schooling, learns more about disorders of the ear, has training with cochlear implants and hearing aids. If an audiologist sees a disorder, they can diagnose. Chances are they will refer the patient to an ENT (Ear Nose Throat Doctor) for treatment.

ENTs primarily deal with the medical issues, mainly focusing on health problems that can be treated. Audiologists and Hearing Instrument Specialists focus on the hearing health of the ear.

At Accurate Hearing, we offer a free hearing test and want to ensure that every patient gets the right hearing aids to best meets their hearing loss, lifestyle and budget needs. Call 907-644-6004 for an appointment.

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



### ADVERTISEMENT

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.

## Spring health fair services continue

By **SHARON PHILLIPS**

For Senior Voice

Spring blood test date offerings continue through May for Southcentral and Southeast programs and mid-June for the Tanana Valley Northern Region Program.

We continue to follow our appointment-based model, which works well and our clients are pleased with the service. Our traditional "morning draws" offer the ability to scoot in early and go enjoy a good lunch. Our late afternoon draws provide the chance to eat breakfast and skip lunch. Visit [www.alaska-healthfair.org](http://www.alaska-healthfair.org) and check for various May "office draw dates" offered "by appointment only". Follow these instructions:

Find the program that serves your region; pick the city and date, then "Make Appointment" button on that line.

The system will walk you through some ques-

tions and schedule your appointment.

Our scheduling system notifications@calendly.com sends confirmations and reminder emails and texts. Check your junk mail if these communications are not seen quickly (call if you don't find them).

The ability to change or cancel (if needed) can be found at the bottom line of your original confirmation email.

If you experience difficulties registering for an appointment on our web-

site, give our local office a call and we'll assist you in the process: Anchorage (907) 278-0234, Fairbanks (907) 374-6853 and Juneau (907) 723-5100.

### May health fairs

In addition to our in-office, by-appointment draws, we have the following in-person community events scheduled for May:

**May 5-6, Ninilchik Community Center**, 15763 Kingsley Rd., 4 to 7 p.m. on May 5 and 8 a.m. to noon May 6.

**May 7-8, Wasilla Menard Sports Center**, 1001 S Clapp St., 4 to 7 p.m. on May 7 and 8 a.m. to noon May 8.

**May 15, Anchorage University Center Mall**, 3801 Old Seward Hwy., 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

**May 15, Central Central Community**, Circle District Historical Society Museum, 128 Steese Hwy., 8 to 11 a.m.

Sharon Phillips is the Tanana Valley/Northern Region Program Director for Alaska Health Fair, Inc.



Scan Alaska Health Fair's new QR Code to make an appointment on your smartphone.

## Moving: How it affects Medicare

continued from page 5

you address with Social Security, and enroll into a Part D plan which has service areas in Alaska. This will ensure your Medicare changes from the Medicare Advantage plan to Original Medicare, providing you the coverage you need here.

### Special note

This summary is not comprehensive. If you are receiving cost assistance such as Extra Help or Medicare savings program, are moving abroad, or have other questions about moving with Medicare, call the Medicare Information Office to discuss further how moving will affect your benefits.

Colton Percy is a Certified Medicare Counselor and the Volunteer Coordinator for the Medicare Information Office, the Alaska State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) and Senior Medicare Partol (SMP). If you have questions about Medicare or are interested in volunteering and helping your fellow Alaskans navigate Medicare, please call 1-800-478-6065.

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# An Alzheimer's disease resource for Alaskans

A conversation with Kay Papakristo, Alzheimer's Resource of Alaska Education Director

By KATIE DOUGHERTY

AARP Alaska



Kay Papakristo, Alzheimer's Resource of Alaska Education Specialist.

**Kay, tell us first about the mission of Alzheimer's Resource of Alaska?**

ARA's mission is to support Alaskans affected by Alzheimer's disease, related dementias and other disabilities to ensure quality of life. Aging is something that impacts everyone and brings its own challenges; however, Alzheimer's disease and related dementias (ADRD) are not a part of 'normal' aging and the impact to all affected by ADRD is significant. Our goal at ARA is to provide support to all those affected by ADRD, including family and professional caregivers, through services such as: consultation, referrals

to community resources, coaching, education and training, support groups, care coordination, etc.

**My understanding is that ARA provides services not only for those experiencing memory loss and dementia, but also for the family caregivers who assist them. Can you tell me more about your caregiver support programs?**

Yes! We offer a variety of classes specifically for family or friends of loved

ones living with ADRD, including single classes, trainings, and educational series. ARA has a variety of regular support groups for care partners of loved ones living with dementia. In addition, ARA provides consultations to families of loved ones living with dementia to help identify needs and resources, as well as professional support and guidance. ARA also facilitates the Mini-Grant program for individuals with a diagnosis of some form of dementia, which can assist caregivers in obtaining necessary resources for their loved one living with ADRD.

**What are the biggest challenges your clients face when they come to ARA? How do you address those as they go through the intake process?**

While each caregiver's journey is unique, there are definitely some challenges

that seem to affect most. One challenge is just knowing where to turn or what resources are out there. Another significant challenge is finding the time to work on all of these things when you are a fulltime caregiver for your loved one. Through our intake process, we talk with the client to pinpoint their initial purpose for calling and to identify areas where ARA can provide support, guidance, resources and referrals. Intake calls are often followed up by longer consultations where situations and needs can be reviewed more thoroughly, and the Education Specialist can offer detailed information on classes and supports.

In addition to working with families impacted by Alzheimer's and related memory loss issues, ARA also educates service providers statewide to build

a strong corps of professional caregivers. Tell us more about that work and its impact across Alaska.

Professional education and training for providers is essential to increase their skills in dementia-specific care, and the critical need for a well-trained workforce will continue to grow as Alaska's senior population grows. ARA's professional education offerings ensure these workers are well-trained and have strong tools to care for individuals with ADRD. ARA also provides consultation and coaching for professionals to ensure they have well rounded support. The overall impact to Alaska is that we have more skilled dementia care workers and ultimately people living with dementia and their families will receive better care and have an improved

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Photo: Josh Corbett, 2019

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# Health benefits of exercise, wine and coffee

By JOHN SCHIESZER

Medical Minutes

## Wine drinking may help protect against cataracts

People who consume alcohol moderately appear less likely to develop cataracts that require surgery. Wine consumption showed the strongest protective effect, suggesting that antioxidants which are abundant in red wine may play a role in cataract prevention. However, people who drank daily or nearly daily had about a 6% higher risk of cataract surgery compared with people who consumed alcohol moderately. The new research was published in *Ophthalmology*, the journal of the American Academy of Ophthalmology.

A research team from NIHR Moorfields Biomedical Research Centre at Moorfields Eye Hospital NHS Foundation Trust in London, England conducted the study because previous studies on cataracts and alcohol consumption were limited in their design and offered mixed results. Some studies showed an increased risk from heavy drinking, some suggested a reduced risk from low to moderate drinking and some data showed no link at all between alcohol and cataracts.

A cataract is a clouding of the eye's normally clear lens. Most cataracts develop slowly and don't affect vision early on. However, cataracts eventually make it more difficult to read, drive a car or see people's faces. An ophthalmologist surgically removes the cloudy lens and replaces it with an artificial lens. Cataract surgery is highly effective and one of the most common procedures performed in all of medicine. Three million Americans undergo cataract surgery each year.

This study, the largest of its kind, tracked 490,000 volunteers in the U.K. who agreed to give detailed information about their health and lifestyle. After taking into account factors already known to affect cataracts (age, sex,



ethnicity, social deprivation, weight, smoking and diabetes) the researchers found that people who consumed about 6.5 standard glasses of wine per week (which is within the current guidelines for safe alcohol intake in both the U.S. and U.K.) were less likely to undergo cataract surgery.

Wine drinkers benefited the most compared with those who abstained and those who drank other types of alcohol, showing a 23% reduction in cataract surgery in one study group and a 14% reduction in the other study group. However, the researchers note that their study does not establish causation, only a strong association between alcohol consumption and cataracts.

The study's findings are consistent with what is already suggested about the health benefits of red wine and with previous studies that found diets rich in antioxidants may prevent the onset of cataracts. Grape skin is loaded with healthful antioxidants, resveratrol and flavonoids. These powerful plant compounds and antioxidants are found in higher concentrations in red wine than in white. Both red and white wine have higher concentrations of these compounds than beer.

"Cataract development may be due to gradual damage from oxidative stress during aging," explained Dr. Sharon Chua, who is the lead study author. "The fact that our findings were particularly evident in wine drinkers may suggest a protective role of polyphenol antioxidants, which are especially abundant in red wine."

***After taking into account factors already known to affect cataracts, researchers found that people who consumed about 6.5 standard glasses of wine per week were less likely to undergo cataract surgery.***

## Boosting brain power with exercise

It's not just your legs and heart getting a workout when you walk briskly. Exercise affects your brain as well. A new study by researchers at UT Southwestern in Dallas, Texas, shows that when older adults with mild memory loss followed an exercise program for a year, the blood flow to their brains increased. The results were published in the *Journal of Alzheimer's Disease*. "This is part of a growing body of evidence linking exercise with brain health," said study leader Rong Zhang, PhD, who is a professor of neurology at UTSW. "We've shown for the first time in a randomized trial in these older adults that exercise gets more blood flowing to your brain."

As many as one-fifth

of people age 65 and older have some level of mild cognitive impairment (MCI). This is slight changes to the brain that affect memory, decision-making, or reasoning skills. In many cases, MCI progresses to dementia, including Alzheimer's disease.

Scientists have previously shown that lower than usual levels of blood flow to the brain, and stiffer blood vessels leading to the brain, are associated with MCI and dementia. Studies have also suggested that regular aerobic exercise may help improve cognition and memory in healthy older adults. However, scientists have not established whether there is a direct link between exercise, stiffer blood vessels, and brain blood flow.

In the study, 70 men and women aged 55 to 80

who had been diagnosed with MCI were followed. Participants underwent cognitive exams, fitness tests, and brain magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scans. Then they were randomly assigned to either follow a moderate aerobic exercise program or a stretching program for one year. The exercise program involved three to five exercise sessions a week, each with 30 to 40 minutes of moderate exercise such as a brisk walk.

In both programs, exercise physiologists supervised participants for the first four to six weeks, then had the patients record their exercises and wear a heart rate monitor during exercise. Forty-eight study participants (29 in the stretching group and 19 in the aerobic exercise group) completed the full year of training and returned for follow-up tests. Among them, those who performed aerobic exercise showed decreased stiffness of blood vessels in their neck and

next page please

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# Benefits: *Exercise, coffee pay dividends*

from page 8

increased overall blood flow to the brain. The more their oxygen consumption (one marker of aerobic fitness) increased, the greater the changes to the blood vessel stiffness and brain blood flow. Changes in these measurements were not found among people who followed the stretching program.

While the study didn't find any significant changes in memory or other cognitive function, the researchers say that may be because of the small size or short length of the trial. Changes to blood flow could precede changes to cognition, according to the investigators. They're already carrying out a larger two-year study that further investigates the link between exercise and cognitive decline.

## A hidden health benefit from coffee

Drinking a strong coffee half an hour before exercising increases fat-burning, according to a new Spanish study. Scientists from the Department of Physiology of the University of Granada in Spain have shown that caffeine (about 3 mg/kg, the equivalent of a strong coffee) ingested half an hour before aerobic exercise significantly increases the rate of fat-burning. They also found that if the exercise is performed in the afternoon, the effects of the caffeine are more marked than in the morning.

In their study, published in the Journal of the International Society of Sports Nutrition, the researchers aimed to determine whether caffeine actually does increase oxidation or "burning" of fat during exercise. Despite the fact that its consumption in

the form of supplements is very common, the scientific evidence for its beneficial claims is scarce.

"The recommendation to exercise on an empty stomach in the morning to increase fat oxidation is commonplace. However, this recommendation may be lacking a scientific basis, as it is unknown whether this increase is due to exercising in the morning or due to going without food for a longer period of time," explained the lead author of this research, Francisco José Amaro-Gahete of the UGR's Department of Physiology.

A total of 15 men (average age 32 years) participated in the research, completing an exercise test four times at seven-day intervals. Subjects ingested 3 mg/kg of caffeine or a placebo at 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. (each subject completed the tests in all four conditions in a ran-

dom order). The conditions prior to each exercise test (hours elapsed since last meal, physical exercise, or consumption of stimulant substances) were strictly standardized, and fat oxidation during exercise was calculated accordingly.

The results of the study showed that acute caffeine ingestion 30 minutes before performing an aerobic exercise test increased maximum fat oxidation during exercise regardless of the time of day, according to the authors. These results also showed that caffeine increases fat oxidation during morning exercise

in a similar way to that observed without caffeine intake in the afternoon. The findings of this study suggest that the combination of acute caffeine intake and aerobic exercise performed at moderate intensity in the afternoon provides the optimal scenario for people seeking to increase fat-burning during physical exercise.

*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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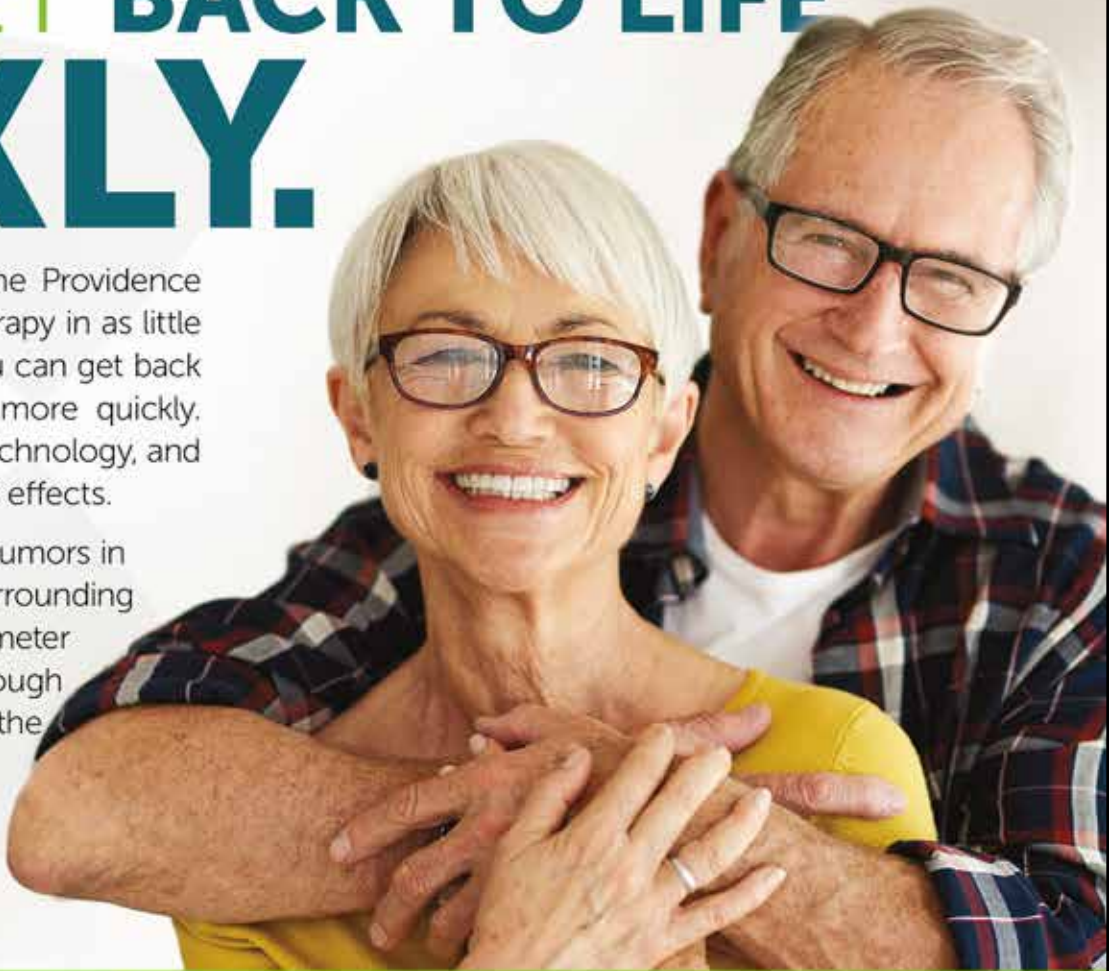


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# What does successful senior living look like?

By KAREN CASANOVAS,  
PCC, CPCC

For Senior Voice

Question: How do I find the right senior housing?

Answer: In the search for aligning housing to individuality, maintaining dignity, and what's best for your needs, it's important to find a place that provides life enrichment. Safe and secure housing is coupled with focusing on all aspects of living: Social opportunities, mental enhancement and physical requirements.

Greater than just an emotional location, your housing choice is unique to you when creating meaningful living. Community-based independent residences can



lean into your interests and spark curiosities to discover new passions. If you enjoy social events that bring people together, those options are available in retirement, independent or assisted living environments.

If adaptive equipment

or devices are needed to enhance and increase independence, assisted living facilities are designed to aid in mobility and self-care. This is a good option for those needing human guidance, supervision, cueing or standby assistance, technology help, health maintenance, care and service coordination. Rates can exceed \$60,000 per year, which is why more than three-quarters of family members contribute financially.

For the medically-necessary services of licensed nurses, physical and occupational therapists, or other trained medical professionals, another choice is skilled nursing centers. Residents may require intermediate housing and care for physical challenges or a mental health facility designed for long-term support and services. In 2016, according to the AARP, the average annual cost for a private room in a nursing home was about \$92,000. Private sources, insurance,

**Safe and secure housing is coupled with focusing on all aspects of living: Social opportunities, mental enhancement and physical requirements.**

government programs and out of pocket retirement funds are some ways these expenditures are met.

## Economic realities

The senior living industry is our country's largest economic engine—greater than auto manufacturing (\$205.8 billion), air transportation (\$202.8 billion), hotel/motel industry (\$167.9 billion)—playing a critical role in every state and region. The rapidly expanding spending and operations of the senior living industry have nearly a quarter of a trillion dollars in total economic impact. Economic development to support the multiplier effect of senior living and its employment is worth greater attention. One in every \$137 in the nation is either directly or indirectly generated by operations of the senior living industry, and that

trickle down effect creates an additional \$149.7 billion in nationwide spending.

With median net worth of \$264,800 in 2016, households headed by adults age 75 and older are more likely than younger adults to spend more than half their income on housing. Cost burdens also increase with age. One in four households 85+ use at least half of their income on housing, as compared with about one in five households aged 65 to 74 and about one in six households younger than 65, according to AARP.

Americans are living longer. About 70% of Americans will need some kind of long-term care after they turn 65. With the last of the baby boomers reaching age 65 in 2030, they will represent more than 20% of the total US population.

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## Family caregiver tip of the month

By DANI KEBSCHULL

For Senior Voice

Caring for someone else can and will involve all the management skills you can muster. Depending on your loved one's needs, you might be managing a variety of things from medications to bathing, to transportation. The more organized you are, the easier it will be to perform these tasks. Organization will give you a sense of control and help you to provide the best care possible. Here are some tips for managing the day-to-day tasks of caregiving:

Write things down. Keep a small notebook where you can jot important information or ideas as they occur. These can be to-do lists, phone numbers, medication names – anything important that you need to remember.

Use a calendar. Keep a calendar on your desk or by your phone for recording dates, appointments, or tasks to do on different days.

Organize paperwork. No one likes paperwork, right? You'd be surprised to find how much paperwork is involved with caregiving. Take control. Devise a system (a file cabinet, a shoe box, anything!) where you can label and file the paperwork for future reference.

Look for help. Getting others to help – delegating tasks to friends and family, for instance – is a great way to get things done. There are tasks that others can easily accomplish and there are some tasks that other people may enjoy or fulfill better.

Don't be afraid to say "no." As your tasks and chores begin to escalate, you may find yourself agreeing to things that are beyond your capabilities or desires. Try to remember that you don't have to do everything. Determine the necessity of any given task and if it isn't necessary, you may want to let it go for a while. If it's necessary but beyond your means, ask others to help fill in the gaps.

And remember, there are people who do want to help but are waiting to hear from you what you need.

Dani Kebschull is the program coordinator for the Kenai Peninsula Family Caregiver Support Program.



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# COVID: Do vaccines prevent transmission?

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interactions with others who may have COVID infection, particularly with others who have not been vaccinated," said Dr. Washer.

The clinical trials of all COVID vaccines available in the US were nearly 100% effective in preventing need for hospitalization and death. However, fully immunized adults, who are two weeks past having received two vaccinations a month apart, in rare cases still could transmit the virus to others.

"We can't fully answer this question yet, but the evolving data suggest that this risk is likely low," said Dr. Washer.

Other studies suggest that the amount of virus in the nose is lower among persons who develop infection after vaccination and this might be expected to translate into a lower risk of transmission to others.

"We don't yet have data from studies looking at household transmission where some household members are vaccinated," said Dr. Washer.

All adults, who are fully vaccinated, should continue to wear a mask and socially distance in most circumstances, while the level of circulating virus remains high.

"Adults who are fully vaccinated may choose not to wear a mask when interacting with a small number of other asymptomatic fully vaccinated people, as long as no one else in the household is at risk for severe COVID infection and is not vaccinated," said Dr. Washer.

Stephaun Wallace, PhD, who is a staff scientist and epidemiologist at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center and the director of external relations for both the COVID-19 Prevention Network and the HIV Vaccine Trials Network in Seattle, Washington, said if an adult has been fully vaccinated (two shots and a full two weeks after

**The clinical trials of all COVID vaccines available in the US were nearly 100% effective in preventing need for hospitalization and death. However, fully immunized adults, who are two weeks past having received two vaccinations a month apart, in rare cases still could transmit the virus to others.**

that) there is not enough data to know how common it may be to transmit the virus. However, he said that question will be answered shortly.

"Ongoing studies are assessing that now, including one that was just launched in March and involves college students on more than 20 U.S. campuses," Wallace said.

## Still testing for answers

The COVID-19 Prevention Network is conducting a study at select university campuses across the country to learn whether the Moderna vaccine stops the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus that causes COVID-19 disease. Over about five months, 12,000 university students will get injections of the Moderna vaccine to determine if vaccinated people can still be infected with SARS-CoV-2, and if they are able to spread the virus to other people.

The answer to this question will have a huge impact on how soon everyone can get back to school, work, and a regular social life. It is already known that this vaccine can prevent serious COVID-19 disease, but it is unknown if the vaccine will prevent the virus from shedding from the nose and mouth and infecting others. Throughout the study period, all participants will complete questionnaires via a smartphone app and provide blood samples. In addition, study participants will be asked to collect daily nasal swabs that will be batched and sent to a central laboratory for further analysis.

This will allow researchers to determine when the infection occurred, how

much virus was present in the nose, and to perform genomic sequencing of the viral samples. Genomic sequencing will have the added benefit of demon-

strating whether coronavirus variants of concern play a role in the vaccine's ability to prevent infection and transmission.

The Washington State Department of Health (DOH) is investigating reports of people in the state who tested positive for COVID-19 more than two weeks after being fully vaccinated. Scientists call these "vaccine breakthrough" cases, which are

expected with any vaccine. Out of one million fully vaccinated individuals in Washington State, epidemiologists report evidence of 102 breakthrough cases since February 1, 2021, which represented .01% of vaccinated people in Washington. In many ways, that is very good news and suggests that it is very unlikely for an individual who is fully immunized to transmit the virus.



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# Housing: Success requires a bigger picture

continued from page 10

Senior living services and products will see unprecedented demand in the coming decades.

The estimated U.S. future potential senior living impact in 2028 will be \$327.6 billion. More trained professional staff, an adaptive model of senior

living meeting the needs of the aging population, and addressing the demands of more than 34 million Americans providing unpaid care for an adult age 50 or older will be necessary when se-

nior living communities are expected to double in size by 2050.

## Support services

If staying in your home is an option, The National Family Caregiver Support Program (NFCSP) provides grants to states to fund support for family and informal caregivers caring for older adults in their homes. On March 27, 2021, under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act, \$955 million is directed toward Older Americans Act

programs for community-based services, nutrition programs, additional caregiver jobs, raising wages and benefits for essential workers and supports centers for independent living.

No matter which living situation one ends up in, successful senior living should be a person-centered, strength-based, relationship-driven support system that keeps older adults thriving.

## Takeaways

1. Reflect on your cur-

rent housing situation and ask yourself: How would you describe the ideal place to live?

2. Consider how to get more information and decide what additional questions you have in order to take on new perspectives, broaden perception and examine all possible housing options.

3. Make a list of pros and cons in each senior living alternative. The process of finding what's important to you, discovering options you hadn't thought of before, educating yourself

about options you didn't even know existed and gaining confidence in challenging decision-making can help you navigate new waters to find the best solution for you.

*Karen Casanovas is a Professional Certified Coach that oversees a private practice specializing in aging and health. She's a Fellow with the Institute of Coaching and former member of the Anchorage Senior Citizens Advisory Commission. If you have a question for Karen, email her at [info@karencasanovas.com](mailto:info@karencasanovas.com).*

# Alzheimer's: Alaska agency offers many resources

continued from page 7

quality of life.

**I hear that ARA is running some innovative new programs to support brain health and address social isolation for clients. What can you tell us about those?**

Yes! We are in the works to launch Mind Aerobics™: a fun, evidence-based, award-winning suite of programs designed to provide older adults with comprehensive mental workouts that can help support brain health, maintain cognitive functioning or slow cognitive decline. A secondary benefit of these programs is that participants report feeling less isolation and depression. This summer, ARA will launch the Mind Sharpener™ program, which targets individuals who have no impairment or very mild cognitive decline. Later, ARA will launch the second program in the series, Mind Works, for those in the early to moderate stage of dementia. Keep an eye out for ARA's exciting new Mind Aerobics™ programs.

**I know ARA wants services to be accessible, regardless of income. How do you do that?**

ARA is the recipient of several grants from the State of Alaska, the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority, the MatSu Healthy Foundation and other local organizations. We also depend on the generosity of our donors, which often includes families we serve. It is our belief that people affected by ADRD should be able to access all services without regard to financial status; these grants and donations allow us to offer no fixed charges for individuals or families.

**How can folks at home learn more and request services for themselves and their loved ones?**

There are several different ways. Check out our webpage to learn more about our agency's history, mission, and our current offerings and events. Call to talk with one of our highly trained staff, all of whom are more than happy to answer any questions or concerns. ([AlzAlaska.org](http://AlzAlaska.org); 561-3313)

**Is there anything we didn't cover that you'd like Alaskans to know about ARA? Thanks for your time.**

Yes, ARA's Comfort Pet project. Alzheimer's

Resource of Alaska is distributing robotic comfort pets to improve quality of life for people living with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias by reducing social isolation. Robotic comfort pets offer the benefits of a live pet without the additional responsibility and risks associated with a live animal.

Also, in Anchorage only, we are partnered with the

state of Alaska to administer the Caregiver Connection Program, a pilot program designed to provide support and relief through a limited services plan to primary family caregivers who experience significant burden due to their caregiving responsibilities.

For more information about our Comfort Pets, Caregiver Connection, Mind Aerobics™ program,

Care Coordination or Education supports, please call 907-561-3313. Go to our website at [alzAlaska.org](http://alzAlaska.org) for our calendar of ARA classes & events happening around the state.

*Katie Dougherty is the AARP Alaska Associate Director for Communications. For the full interview, please see <http://www.aarp.org/ak>.*



**You're Invited! Connect with us in May.**

**AARP Alaska has more great programming and resources for you this month!**

Tuesday, May 11, at 6:30 pm, **Age Smart: Introducing Alaska's Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRC's)** - Alaska's ADRCs connect seniors, people with disabilities, and caregivers with services and supports. Join Age Smart to learn more about these valuable organizations. *This discussion brought to you in partnership with Senior Voice and the Anchorage Senior Activities Center.*

Thursday, May 20, at 1 pm, **Fraud Watchdogs HOWL** - Join Senior Medicare Patrol expert, Nila Morgan, to discuss how Senior Medicare Patrols (SMPs) empower and assist Medicare beneficiaries, their families, and caregivers to prevent, detect, and report health care fraud, errors, and abuse.

Tuesday, May 25 at 10:15 am, **"Landscapes of Alaska"** - This is the second event in our series on "Landscapes of Alaska" with the Anchorage Museum. Museum educators virtually guide participants in observation, discussion, sketching and other creative practices. Please bring a writing utensil and paper.

Registration information for all AARP Alaska events at [www.facebook.com/AARPAK](https://www.facebook.com/AARPAK) or by calling 1-877-926-8300.

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# Alaska senior centers are cautiously re-opening

By KEN STEWART

Senior Voice

Like flowers in spring, senior centers across the state of Alaska are beginning to open up again. Most have been closed since March 2020, a time we collectively remember as the end of "normal" life.

"Today, a woman came to the center that I had not seen in a year," Marlene Munsell, Assistant Executive Director of Wasilla Area Seniors, Inc. (WASI), said in April. "As more people are vaccinated and feeling comfortable, we expect to see more people return to the center."

Senior centers statewide are either opting to cautiously re-open or resume services full force. Some are still offering virtual activities and others are beginning beloved in-person activities like bingo. All are offering an array of options for dining, in-

cluding congregate meals, takeout or Meals on Wheels deliveries.

## Reopening plans

To combat COVID cases fluctuating in different areas of the state, a good number of senior centers in densely populated areas like Anchorage and Eagle River are opting to work with their municipality on a phased approach to reopening.

Anchorage Senior Activity Center (ASAC), for example, will offer a phased approach effective April 15. Phase 1 will allow seniors into the building on a by-appointment-only basis for limited activities, including to arrange for on-site fitness orientation or fitness assessment. Most other services, including exercise classes and benefit screenings, will continue to be offered over the phone or online.

"Our Phase 1 opening

looks similar to our operations throughout the pandemic," said Patrick Curtis, Wellness and Programs Director for ASAC. A Phase 2 date and additional services offered in-person have not been decided upon yet, as ASAC staff continue monitoring COVID cases in the area.

In other areas like

Ninilchik and the Mat-Su Valley, senior centers have been open since the fall. While these centers did not take a more conservative approach to opening their doors to patrons, such as in this spring's phased approaches, they gradually increased from limited hours to being open at full pre-COVID hours.

No matter how centers have reopened, all of them have been following CDC guidelines, including recommending social distancing at 6 feet and mask wearing for seniors and staff.

Other centers might not

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# An unforgettable Dougie MacLean concert

By MARALEY MCMICHAEL  
Senior Voice Correspondent

One of the best music concerts I ever attended took place right here in downtown Palmer at Vagabond Blues, back in May of 2017. From Scotland, Dougie MacLean sang and played his guitar. He said he'd been a traveling minstrel for 44 years.

About 25 years ago, my husband Gary and I attended one of Dougie's concerts at the Performing Arts Center, but this second one in 2017 was even better because I didn't have to drive to Anchorage. And I was so physically close to Dougie, I could see his strands of grey hair and the wrinkles on his face. Somehow he had gotten older, but so had I. I made a mental note to "Google" him when I got home to learn his age. Turned out he is one year older than me. A friend and her husband



**Dougie MacLean in a 2011 photo.** Courtesy Diane Snider, My Own Work, Wikimedia Commons.

had saved me a seat next to them in the third row from the front, so I didn't have to show up an hour early, which my health wouldn't allow. I'd wanted to attend some kind of music concert at Vagabond Blues ever since we moved back to Palmer five years earlier and I wasn't disappointed. Dougie said he had never played in the daylight before and that kind of bothered him. As I watched

*He probably tells all of his audiences that they are great, but he certainly looked like he meant it when he stepped back from the mic and listened to us sing the chorus on a couple songs.*

and listened, if I looked beyond his face, I could see the Cummins Dry Cleaning sign on the building on the opposite side of the street. It was an overcast, mist-spitting kind of evening, so no mountains were visible, but the green leafed-out alder trees swayed in the background.

He had such a strong Scottish accent, it was very hard to understand much of what he said and some words were impossible. But, that wasn't just me. At one point, my friend leaned toward me when the audience was laughing and said she didn't understand. I told her that he'd asked

the audience to make ocean sounds for background during the chorus to his next song.

Most songs, he encouraged the audience to sing the chorus along with him. He took time to teach us the words and for one song, taught us to be the percussion background. When he travels, he doesn't bring his band, so it's always just him and his guitar on the stage.

One song was about his father and the chorus featured the words

"weathered face". As I looked around at my fellow concert goers, I figured 95% of us had weathered faces. He told us a story his father told him, involving a school all three generations had attended in their small village of Perthshire. Dougie's grandfather and

next page please



**Maraley McMichael's three CDs of Dougie MacLean's music.** Maraley McMichael photo



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907-343-7770 [www.muni.org/adrc](http://www.muni.org/adrc)

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

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### Southeast Alaska

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907-586-4920 / 1-800-478-SAIL (7245) [www.sailinc.org](http://www.sailinc.org)

### Mat-Su Borough

LINKS Aging & Disability Resource Center  
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### Fairbanks North Star Borough

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### Bristol Bay Native Association

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





# Dougie MacLean: Concert



*Dougie MacLean sang and played his guitar at Vagabond Blues coffee house in Palmer in May, 2017.*

*Maralee McMichael photo*

from page 15

his brothers had a hard time getting to school in the winter because of the weather and a hard time attending in the fall and spring, because there were more important (as well as fun) things to do. One day in the 1930s, the teacher really ragged about the MacLean brothers because they came to school so seldom. She used them as an example of who not to be like. Dougie said he wished his grandfather could have told the teacher that sometime in the future, one of his grandsons would be successful enough to buy that old, abandoned school (it closed in the 1960s) and turn it into a recording studio. Dougie also spoke of his 5-year-old grandson, and the relationships among the MacLean men through the generations.

Another story involved the eruption of Mt. Redoubt in March 2009. A fellow named Mike has been Dougie's concert promoter all the years he has come to Alaska. One time Mike met Dougie at the Anchorage airport and didn't look his usual upbeat self. When Dougie asked what was wrong, Mike said he was worried about the concert that night. He said that Mt. Redoubt could blow at any moment and then he handed Dougie a mask. Mike drove him downtown to his hotel and told Dougie he would be able to see the smoke, steam and ash

from his hotel window. That really got Dougie's attention. It wasn't the best concert that evening and the audience seemed ready to vacate with a moment's notice. When it was over, as people walked out of the Performing Arts Center, ash was falling

from the sky.

Mike and Dougie then went to a bar downtown and there he noticed a large group of men really partying. Turned out it was the cast and filming crew from the "Deadliest Catch" and they were celebrating the completion of their filming for that season. Dougie was impressed that these guys were so into their celebrating that they had no idea about the volcano and didn't care. Dougie was stuck in Anchorage for a few days. He went home and wrote a song about the whole experience. He told us this background story so we would understand the verse about the Deadliest Catch crew and reference to the Bering Sea. When he finished singing, he said it was so great to sing to folks who understood the song. That when he sang it in Glasgow, the audience had a glazed over look at the mention of the Bering Sea.

Dougie writes most of the songs he sings. I listened for 25 minutes before I heard a familiar song at Vagabond Blues. He had few CDs available for sale that evening. My friend who had saved me a seat was the one who introduced us to Dougie's music 25 years earlier. At a later concert that Gary and I weren't able to attend, she purchased two CDs for us and I picked up another one from a thrift shop years later. All three continue to get much use.

Since it was such a small intimate audience at Vagabond Blues, Dougie said he would take requests. People weren't bashful and shouted out their favorites. He laughed and said he could tell how many years he had been coming to Alaska, as many of the requests went way back.

He saved "Caledonia" for the last, but then we managed to persuade him for an encore. When he returned to the stage, he made a comment to the effect that he knew it was still daylight, but that we all needed to go home, because he was tired. Of course, he said that with a smile on his face. He probably tells all of his audiences that they are great, but he certainly looked like he meant it when he stepped back from the mic and listened to us sing the chorus on a couple songs. I'm sure I'm not the only one ready for a return visit from this traveling minstrel from Scotland.

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

## Rambles

News from the Grapevine

**Chugiak-Eagle River Senior Center** will be collecting donated items this month for an upcoming **garage sale fundraiser**. Pick up dates are Saturday, May 8 and Saturday, May 15, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on both days. Call to have them pick up your items. The garage sale will be June 12, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. A second fundraising event is "**Stepping in the Sunshine**," with participants walking any way or time that suits them from June 14 to 30. Register May 1 through June 14 by emailing [cerscevents@gmail.com](mailto:cerscevents@gmail.com). Walkers will receive a packet with instructions on recording sponsors and donations. Funds raised from both events will go to the center's Meals on Wheels delivery van. Call 688-2677 ... "**Tai Chi for Arthritis and Fall Prevention**" classes at **Seward Senior Center** will resume May 3, and continue Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, 9:30 to 10:30 a.m. Classroom size is limited to six, with pre-registration required. And for everyone else, participation via Zoom is available, too. Call for information, 224-5604 ... At the **Kodiak Senior Center**, **Deb McCusker** will resume on May 12 leading **Qi Gong and Somatics Zoom classes** on Wednesdays, 9:30 a.m. Also, the center is seeking art submissions for its annual **Crab Festival Art Show**, displayed in its outside front foyer. Artists are requested to bring their artwork to the center by May 25. Call for more information, 486-6181.

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

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### ***It never hurts to ask***

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# Fairbanks agency learns, improves from isolation

*Aging at Home Fairbanks*

Aging at Home Fairbanks, along with almost all other organizations, has learned a lot in the last year. Becoming familiar with Zoom and creating social and educational events in this flat format instead of in person has been challenging, but we've discovered the benefits also.

Aging at Home Fairbanks is a membership organization associated with the North Star Council on Aging Senior Center in Fairbanks and the nationwide Village to Village Network. The goal of the organization is to assist older adults in remaining in their homes as they age. It has a cadre of volunteers who can provide assistance to members in need as well as a list of reputable paid providers when needed. In addition, prior to the onset of Covid 19 shutdowns, AAH conducted person to person

***We've learned that there are always pros and cons to any situation, and change is good – at least it can be.***

events such as lectures, workshops, field trips, and purely social events such as meals in local restaurants, gatherings at members' homes, annual meetings, and many more such events.

## **When "At Home" really means at home**

Last year's shutdowns, though, meant Aging at Home became not just a title but reality. The loss of socialization opportunities was a huge hardship to most people and organizations, yet with flexibility we have been able to circumvent many of these hardships by participating in online Zoom meetings.

Some of the AAH virtual events created in the last year are expected to contin-

ue. We've learned that there are always pros and cons to any situation, and change is good – at least it can be. Specifically, AAH has used Zoom Steering Committee and other committee meetings, social, and education events for members. We have found that Zoom made events possible that would not have been possible prior to 2020, before we discovered that we could meet online. It opened possibilities that will hopefully be continued well past the loosening of social distancing and masking.

Many different applications have been found using Zoom. Having Happy Hour online on Friday afternoons is not the best social event we could wish for, but it does mean we can check in with friends. AAH has used

Zoom for educational presentations by persons who would have been unavailable to be present in person. Good Reads, a discussion with Alaskan authors, has been able to include authors who are not in Fairbanks but can talk with us via Zoom – even those currently living out of state. It's been great to be able to talk with Heather Lende from Haines, Dana Stabenow from Homer, and Peggy Shumaker who is in Arizona this winter.

In our Aging Well series, a lawyer from the Alaska Attorney General's office spoke on avoiding frauds and scams in Alaska to all members. His schedule would not have allowed an in-person presentation, depriving the audience of this valuable information. Another speaker was a nutritionist who talked about nutritional guidelines for older adults, and a future event is planned to discuss

research on influences of pets on seniors' quality of life.

Another event has featured an AAH member presenting photos he has taken over his many years in Fairbanks that he calls Life in Fairbanks, Remembering the Past. Here, local history is presented with photos and lively discussion from all participants, most of whom have also lived in Fairbanks a long time.

## **Adaptation and creativity**

Once we got started, it was easy to be creative about how we used Zoom to keep our members connected. Besides educational events, AAH has used Zoom for social events. In the Cooks' Challenge interest group, participants choose a challenge which each member

*next page please*



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# Fairbanks: Adapting



AAH Fairbanks members participate in a Zoom conversation with Alaska poet Peggy Shumaker in March. Courtesy AAH Fairbanks

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tries to create before the next meeting. Challenges have ranged from being required to use a specific list of ingredients for a dish, to creating a not-too-unhealthy appetizer or layered main dish. The group shares photos and recipes of each, with, unfortunately, no tastings.

Another participatory group is the Tai Chi class, which we hope will continue when in-person events are possible.

Very probably other participating organizations in the Village network have many creative events on Zoom which could be shared. (Recently AAH had a Zoom meeting with a Village in Seattle sharing ideas and experiences.)

And continuing to incorporate Zoom in the

future means seniors who have limited transportation options, are mobility-challenged, or are out of Fairbanks can continue to participate fully in activities which would be denied them otherwise in an in-person setting. And presenters who would otherwise be totally unavailable to AAH may be available through Zoom.

Although the last year has been very challenging for our organization and others, there have been some surprising opportunities. AAH has found that online meetings of all kinds, despite the technical challenges, have given us new insights into possibilities for conducting business and connecting with all our members. That's a big plus.

For more information, visit <https://aahfairbanks.clubexpress.com/>.

# Calendar of Events

Editor's note: Due to COVID-19 safety concerns and restrictions, all events are subject to change or cancellation. Always confirm before attending.

**April 30-May 2: Statewide** "Mañi - Towards the Ocean, Towards the Shore" film screening via Facebook. Want to learn more about indigenous representation in film and media? Enjoy a free screening of "Mañi - Towards the Ocean, Towards the Shore" by filmmaker Sky Hopinka with Sundance Film Festival. Visit Alaska Native Heritage Center's Facebook page at any point over the weekend to stream the film. For more details, visit [www.alaskanative.net](http://www.alaskanative.net) and click "Upcoming Events".

**May 1-31: Statewide** Amblin' for Alzheimer's throughout the month of May. Amble where you are, when you want and how you want, by yourself or with a team. Raise funds to serve Alaska's elders and Alaskans living with a disability who need care coordination. Visit [alzalaska.org/amblin-for-alzheimers-2021/](http://alzalaska.org/amblin-for-alzheimers-2021/) to register.

**May 1: Palmer** 2021 May Day Celebration at Palmer Senior Center. Play Day activities, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.: Music, games, vendors, food trucks and more. May Day Dance, 4 to 6 p.m. 18 and older. \$10 General Admission. \$5 for Key Card Holders. Pay at the door. Call 907-761-5006.

**May 6-9: Cordova** 2021 Hybrid Copper River Delta Shorebird Festival. Enjoy this year's festival from the comfort of your home across the state or in-person in Cordova. Virtual events include keynote speakers, classes and more. A limited number of individuals and groups will be allowed to travel into Cordova this year. Visit [coppershorebird.com/hybrid-festival](http://coppershorebird.com/hybrid-festival) for more information.

**May 7: Anchorage** Anchorage Market outside the Dimond Center mall at 88th Ave, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Alaska's largest open-air market has a new location along with familiar comforts like salmon quesadillas and beautiful Native crafts. Visit [anchoragemarkets.com](http://anchoragemarkets.com) for a full list of weekend hours and more.

**May 8: Fairbanks** Tanana Valley Farmers Market at the corner of College Road & Caribou Way (2600 College Rd.), 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Find a selection of fresh vegetables in season, displayed by growers who travel from throughout the Tanana Valley--an area larger than the state of Indiana--to participate! Visit [www.tvfmarket.com](http://www.tvfmarket.com) for more information.

**May 8-16: Petersburg** Little Norway Festival throughout Petersburg. Featuring walking tours, shopping from local artists, the Little Norway Festival Pageant and more. Visit [petersburg.org](http://petersburg.org) for a full schedule of events. Masks and social distancing required at some events.

**May 9: Nationwide** Mother's Day

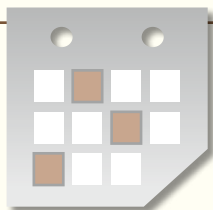
**May 13: Statewide** AARP: Downsizing and Decluttering via Zoom, 2:30 to 3:30 p.m. Join AARP for this workshop to explore why stuff is so important for some people and practical, easy-to-follow tips on downsizing and decluttering. Learn how to get started by registering at [local.aarp.org/aarp-event/aarp-decluttering-and-downsizing](http://local.aarp.org/aarp-event/aarp-decluttering-and-downsizing)

**May 14-16: Seward** Seward Mermaid Festival. Celebrate the opening of the Seward Harbor with citywide activities for the whole family. Dress up as a mermaid and explore local businesses during a pub crawl and merchant crawl. Visit [sewardmermaidfestival.com](http://sewardmermaidfestival.com) for more information.

**May 18: Statewide** AARP presents "Cooking Filipino Savory Dishes," with Chef Roline via Zoom, 1:30 to 2:30 p.m. In celebration of Asian Heritage Month, Chef Roline cooks pancit and lumpia, delicious Filipino savory dishes. Visit [local.aarp.org/aarp-event/cooking-filipino-savory-dishes-with-chef-roline](http://local.aarp.org/aarp-event/cooking-filipino-savory-dishes-with-chef-roline) to register or email Kris Ritualo with questions at [kritualo@aarp.org](mailto:kritualo@aarp.org)

**May 27-31: Kodiak** Kodiak Crab Festival. Five days jam-packed with fun, music, food and events. Visit [kodiakcrabfest.com](http://kodiakcrabfest.com) for a full schedule of events or follow Kodiak Crab Festival on Facebook for up to the minute information and reminders.

**May 31: Nationwide** Memorial Day



## Send us your calendar items

Send to: Senior Voice, 3340 Arctic Blvd., Suite 106, Anchorage AK 99503  
[editor@seniorvoicealaska.com](mailto:editor@seniorvoicealaska.com) Fax: 907-278-6724.  
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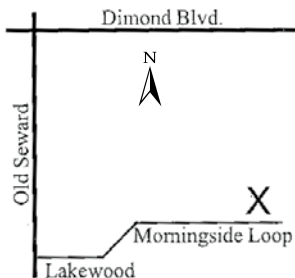
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# Seaworthy captain full of adventures

By LAUREL DOWNING BILL  
Senior Voice Correspondent

When news reached Seattle of gold discoveries in Cook Inlet in 1896, every available vessel was pressed into service. With ships scarce, those heading north were filled to capacity with prospectors and their supplies.

And Capt. Johnny O'Brien's steamship Utopia, which set out with 100 passengers that spring, was no different. In early May, it arrived close to Kachemak Bay, but couldn't continue on up Turnagain Arm because of ice in Cook Inlet.

Although this turn of events didn't really bother the captain, he had no way of knowing that he soon would be close to death.

O'Brien was used to adventure, according to Mary J. Barry in her book, "A History of Mining on the Kenai Peninsula, Alaska". Born in Ireland in 1851, he'd been shanghaied at 16 while traveling home from engineering school in England and sailed around the world for six years. When he finally worked his way back to Ireland, he found his parents had died.

Sometime later, authorities arrested childhood friend Peter Mathews as a member of the Fenians and sentenced him to death. O'Brien and members of the Sinn Fein blew up the jail and rescued him.

The two young men then escaped to the United States where O'Brien studied navigation. While in New York City, the two friends found themselves shanghaied onto the ship Hampton, which was to carry them to England to face trial as revolutionaries.

The men managed to escape, but knowing they could never return to Ireland, they decided to search for gold instead. The longtime friends unsuccessfully prospected in British Columbia in 1894, where a hungry Mathews died during a long, cold winter.

O'Brien returned to the sea. Over time, he made captain. And even though he had a couple of wrecks, he always stayed with his damaged ships. That helped him establish a reputation for tenacity and toughness.

He soon would have to rely on that toughness as he waited near Homer for the ice in Kachemak Bay to clear.

As several of his passengers jumped ship and made other arrangements to get to the gold fields in Cook Inlet, O'Brien suffered an attack of acute appendicitis and fell desperately ill.

One of the ship's passengers who hadn't jumped ship near Homer in search of alternate transportation



When Capt. Johnny O'Brien needed to have his appendix removed, Della Murray Banks, a Denver newspaperwoman who lived on the Homer Spit pictured here in 1899, offered her house for the operation.  
Photo courtesy University of Washington, HAR221

Banks' galley home on the Homer Spit for the operation. The doctor-turned-pro prospector, who hadn't performed an operation in years, accepted a fee of \$1,000 and liberally dosed the captain with whiskey, the only anesthetic available.

And while the captain watched, the former doctor used a kitchen knife and scissors to remove the appendix and a forecandle needle and thread to suture the wound.

Even the doctor didn't expect the captain to make a full recovery. But under the watchful eye of a pleasant, well-mannered, dark-haired man named Mr. Smith, O'Brien emerged from his semiconscious condition seven days later and walked shakily onto the Utopia

to Cook Inlet offered to operate. The prospector told the captain that he'd once had a medical practice, but he did not divulge the reason

that he'd abandoned it in favor of back-breaking work in Alaska's gold fields.

Volunteers cleared out Mrs.

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## It's Music to my Ears

### Across

- 1 Doctrines
- 5 Swamp critter
- 9 "He's a Rebel" singer Vikki
- 13 Early course
- 14 Cugat's flamenco guitarist wife
- 15 Others, to Ovid
- 16 Repeated, singer who sang with Cult Jam
- 17 Graceful bird
- 18 Musical symbol
- 19 "Boola Boola" singer
- 20 Kind of coat
- 21 Musicians Mangione and Berry
- 23 Crawled
- 25 Biz bigwigs
- 26 Double-reed instruments
- 27 Lively dances that resemble the samba
- 31 A watering can has one
- 32 Pessimist's word
- 33 Varnish ingredient
- 34 Barbershop call
- 35 Uniform fabric
- 36 Legal prefix
- 37 Miner's load
- 38 Early name for Shiva
- 39 Relish
- 40 Tuba, for one
- 43 Big name in Russia
- 44 Do damage to
- 45 Renaissance fiddle
- 46 Beethoven's "Moonlight \_\_\_\_"

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8		9	10	11	12
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57					58					59			
60					61					62			

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- 49 Diner sign
- 50 Lady lobster
- 53 Arab chieftain
- 54 Cocoon contents
- 56 Roman wrap
- 57 Coarse file
- 58 1950's Ford flop
- 59 "That's a \_\_\_\_!"
- 60 French cordial flavoring
- 61 Tipplers
- 62 Bookie's quote
- 6 Pink, as a steak
- 7 Pizarro's quest
- 8 Mozart piece
- 9 Tenor of note
- 10 Pianist Templeton
- 11 Insurer's calculation
- 12 Vermin
- 14 Fellows
- 20 Borscht vegetable
- 22 \_\_\_\_ polloi
- 24 Defeat decisively
- 25 Arrowroot
- 26 "The Barber of Seville," e.g.
- 27 \_\_\_\_ terrier
- 28 Early stringed instrument
- 29 Composer Copland
- 30 Melee memento
- 31 High-hatter
- 32 Amulet
- 35 Lutheran hymns
- 36 Toast topping
- 39 Grinders
- 41 Musical notations
- 42 Bowler, for one
- 43 Corolla part
- 45 Great reviews
- 46 Word repeated after "Que," in song
- 47 Arabian sultanate
- 48 Not yet final, at law
- 49 Once, long ago
- 51 "Holy smokes!"
- 52 Snoozes
- 55 Commotion
- 56 Low card

### Down

- 1 Capri, e.g.
- 2 Potting need
- 3 They play ditties
- 4 Jacuzzi
- 5 Where the heart is

Crossword answers on page 27





# Ruta Lee put the ‘pro’ in professional

By NICK THOMAS

*Tinseltown Talks*

While some entertainers are renowned for their personal and professional demands while working, Ruta Lee never aspired to be a diva. Acting nonstop in film, TV and theater since the early 1950s, she tackled projects with professionalism.

“There was no time to throw fits because you had to work quickly as you rapidly went from job to job,” recalled Lee from Los Angeles.

Off-screen tasks were also approached with her trademark zeal. In 1964,

she called the office of the Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev to secure the release of her 90-year-old Lithuanian grandmother, held since World War II in a Siberian internment camp.

A decade earlier, Lee approached her first film role as one of the brides in “Seven Brides for Seven Brothers” with similar resolve. “During the dance audition, the producers and director asked me to show them something folksy. Because of my Lithuanian descent, I danced up a storm with a polka and got the role.”

She was paired with gifted dance partner Matt Mattox in the beloved MGM musical and remembers one rehearsal.

“He lifted me high off a bench and I sprained my ankle when I landed. So I learned most of the choreography from

a sitting position, but still managed to do most of the dancing in the big barn-raising number.”

Many stories from the actress’s career and life can be found in her April 5 autobiography, “Consider Your Ass Kissed,” the edgy-sounding title merely reflecting the genuine gratitude she feels for the people she worked with.

She also celebrates a birthday this month, turning 86 on May 30.

A quick study, Lee learned an early valuable lesson in on-set protocol when she boogied her way into one of her first TV roles – a 1953 episode of “The Adventures of Superman.”

“It was a short dance scene in a café and I decided to rehearse during lunch hour,” she explained. “But when I plugged in the record player, someone grabbed me and said, ‘you can’t do that, you don’t belong to the electrician’s union!’”



Ruta Lee and Alex Trebek, hosts of “High Rollers.” *NBC photo*

Lee went on to make hundreds of appearances in TV series as well as game shows such as “Hollywood Squares” and “High Rollers” (as Alex Trebek’s dice roller), but westerns were a favorite (see [www.rutalee.com](http://www.rutalee.com)). And while many cowboys chased her, only one came close to catching her off-screen.

“Most of the dating I did was for publicity purposes and never had any real romances with actors except Eric Fleming from ‘Rawhide.’ What a darling man, but the most he got was a goodnight kiss.”

Her serious relationships were always with businessmen, she says, not show business men. In the midst of her rising career, Lee met Texas restaurant

executive Webster B. Lowe, Jr., and the couple soon married. They were together 46 years until his death last year.

Lee has also been a tireless voice for charitable organizations such as the Thaliens, raising millions of dollars through her leadership role to support people with mental health problems, including returning veterans (see [www.thaliens.org](http://www.thaliens.org)).

And then there was that phone call to Khrushchev’s office to rescue her Siberia-bound grandmother.

“Within 48 hours we were flying over to bring her back to America. So I’ve had an interesting life and I’m always involved with something. It’s been a long, wonderful and fruitful career.”

Nick Thomas teaches at Auburn University at Montgomery, Ala., and has written features, columns and interviews for over 850 newspapers and magazines and is the author of “Raised by the Stars: Interviews with 29 Children of Hollywood Actors.”



Ruta Lee receives her star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame in 2006.

*Provided by Lee’s publicist*

## If I’d known then

What words of wisdom you would offer your 21-year self?

I would advise myself to not rush headlong into a marriage and a family. Take time to discover who I am, what work I’d like to pursue and visit places I had only dreamt about. Completing my education and going on a mission trip

would definitely be on my to-do list.

Martha Gelineau, age 77, Wasilla

What advice would you give to your 21-year-old self? Email it to [editor@seniorvoicealaska.com](mailto:editor@seniorvoicealaska.com). Or mail to Senior Voice, 3340 Arctic Blvd., #106, Anchorage AK 99503.

## Networking for Anchorage, Mat-Su area providers

Interested in learning more about businesses and agencies providing senior services in the Anchorage and Mat-Su area? Want to get the word out about your own service? The monthly Service Providers Breakfast (formerly known as the Interagency Breakfast), sponsored by Older Persons Action Group, Inc., is an opportunity for all the above. Informal, early and

free, the monthly event currently meets virtually online via Zoom. The May meeting is May 12, hosted by the Anchorage Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC). Begins at 8 a.m.

RSVP by calling Older Persons Action Group, Inc. for more information on these events or to be added to our e-mail reminder and Zoom invitation list, 276-1059.

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# Regulations: Alaska's payee representatives struggling

continued from page 3

"They treated us like criminals," said Jorgensen. "It was unbearable. We tried to be a good service, and I was a stable person in a lot of my clients' lives. They knew their rent would be paid, that their groceries were taken care of, that they would have help with their PFD and taxes. We were very responsible with the PFD and tried tactics to space out an allowance over the year for clients."

## Switching to nonprofit status

The Social Security Administration offered to assist each for-profit business with the transition to nonprofit status. However, the "simple" switch is harder with the fine print.

It took almost a year for Michael Kelly, executive director of the nonprofit Kenai Peninsula Human Services Center (KPHSC), to get up and running per the Social Security Administration's standards for a representative payee organization.

Kelly had never operated as a representative payee organization before, so he had to work independently as a representative payee for free for five to 10 folks for about four months before applying to the Social Security Administration for recognized representative payee organizational status. On top of this, he also had to fulfill the nonprofit requirement by applying to the IRS for 501(c)3 status and recruiting a board of trustees.

"There are about 2,000 people in the state of Alaska that need a representative payee," said Kelly, citing market research he conducted within the last few months. "When I heard that Alaska no longer had representative payee organizations, I dropped everything I was working on because I knew that this would be a critical need for the state."

HOPE Community Resources, a nonprofit based in Anchorage, resumed offering representative payee services after the Social Security Adminis-

tration closed down all the for-profit businesses in the state.

HOPE used to provide representative payee services as an organization several years ago, but stopped offering the service to allow clients more of a separation between their service provider, such as HOPE, and the organization that manages their money.

"We started offering representative payee services again with the idea of keeping people solvent and safe," said Michele Girault, executive director of HOPE Community Resources. "The representative payee services we offer are an elective program. If a person wants to hire another financial services partner outside of HOPE, that's alright. It doesn't need to be for people that are already affiliated with HOPE either. This is for the community at large."

## How is nonprofit status sustainable?

The question at hand for past for-profit business owners like Jorgensen is, how is offering representative payee services as a nonprofit financially sustainable? In short, it isn't.

"I work three jobs, including this one, to make ends meet," confided Jorgensen. "I have 10 clients at this time, but I have at least three on my roll that, as it stands right now, I'm not sure if I'm going to collect the fee that the Social Security Administration lets me collect."

Kelly's projection comes from the knowledge that most SSI checks are around \$700 per month, and most folks' rent is about that much. Most clients are receiving state funds as well, but those aren't usually over \$400 monthly. After the need to support the client through groceries and other bills, there isn't much left over for representative payees like Kelly to collect fees.

On the other hand, in order to become more profitable - which in nonprofit terms, means simply making ends meet - nonprofits need to amass a certain amount of clients to stay

in business offering representative payee services.

When Jorgensen was doing research to decide whether or not switching her for-profit business to a nonprofit was practical, she reached out to nonprofits in the Lower 48 and discovered a sole nonprofit supporting 1,200 clients to help them make ends meet financially.

Cache Integrity Services based in Wasilla currently serves around 200 clients,

whereas HOPE received around 70 clients from Jorgensen's business after she was closed down.

Nonprofits such as HOPE maneuver the financial strain by charging additional fees for each type of financial service provided on top of SSI assistance in order to stay afloat. HOPE's establishment as a nonprofit with other programs - and supportive income - also helps manage the potential strain of op-

erating as a representative payee service charging only \$45 per client per month for services.

## What happened to the clients?

Aside from the financial strain and logistics with the Social Security Administration, those most-impacted by the change in operations were clients who were forced to switch

next page please

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# Learn all about ADRCs at May 'Age Smart' forum

Senior Voice Staff

AARP Alaska, Older Persons Action Group and the Anchorage Senior Activity Center continues its series of "Age Smart – Let's Talk" forums on May 11, from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. Events are currently held virtually on the internet, using Zoom.

Have you ever wondered about Aging and Disability

Resource Centers (ADRCs)? What do they do? How do you access one if a need arises? Join us May 11 to learn more about these valuable organizations.

Alaska's ADRCs connect seniors, people with disabilities, and caregivers with long-term services and supports of their choice. The ADRC network serves Alaskans statewide, re-

gardless of age or income level, through regional sites. ADRCs are part of a federal effort to help people more easily access the long-term services and supports available in their communities. That might include transportation, assistive technology, or in-home care.

The ADRC goal is to be a trusted resource. ADRC specialists counsel callers and visitors on long-term supports that fit their circumstances. People choose

which services they would like, then the ADRC specialists help people access those services.

The "Age Smart – Let's Talk" series is a monthly forum that focuses on a topic of interest and importance to Alaskans who want to be thoughtful about how to make good choices as they grow older. The series is developed to provide working age adults with information necessary to plan and fulfill a secure, healthy and satis-

fying "life After 60" (all ages are welcome). Each month the series highlights a particular topic with a variety of formats, including issue experts, panel discussions, interactive presentations, and plenty of time for questions.

Admission is free and open to everyone. Presentation begins at 6:30. To sign up, go to AARP's event page at <https://aarp.cvent.com/ASMAY2021>.

## Payee: Regulations

from page 20

from the representative payee they knew.

Of Jorgensen's 220 clients at the time of the shutdown, 50 clients had a guardian step in as their new representative payee, 70 went to HOPE Community Resources, 18 went to Cache Integrity Services and two went to KPHSC. Thirty moved to direct pay status, where they currently receive their benefits monthly but do not have any assistance managing them.

Forty-five of Jorgensen's clients were given court appointed conservatorships. A court appointed conservator is the next step up from a representative payee and is in charge of a client's health and finances in addition to ensuring the client does not become homeless. Clients cannot file for a court appointed conservator themselves and instead must rely on their representative payee to do so for them, according to Jorgensen.

At the time of the shutdowns, the Social Security Administration estimated there were 1,000 people eligible for a representative payee in Alaska, meaning hundreds of eligible SSI beneficiaries are either receiving assistance from a trusted family member or guardian or have fallen through the cracks and are either still receiving their benefits and potentially

mismanaging them or are no longer receiving their benefits at all because they were never given a court appointed conservator.

"I feel like the whole policy contributed to homelessness," said Jorgensen. "I tried to explain to the Social Security Administration the logistics of Alaska, that rural villages are spread out and you can't deposit checks right away in some places. They didn't listen. It was cut and dry, baked into their statute. They didn't care what happened to people."

### Resources

If you, a loved one or a community member you know is needing representative payee services, reach out to the following organizations:

- HOPE Community Resources in Anchorage, Lisa Huntley 907-433-4948
- Kenai Peninsula Human Services Center in Sterling, Michael Kelly at 901-444-0819
- Cache Integrity Services in Wasilla, Tom McDuffie 907-631-2000

*Note: Alaska is under a moratorium with the Social Security Administration that allows clients to work with a representative payee organization that is more than 70 miles away – help is still available even if you live in an isolated or underserved community that is outside of Anchorage, Sterling or Wasilla.*

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# Just what is an LLC and what does it do?

By KENNETH KIRK

For Senior Voice

I'm an estate planning attorney, not a business attorney. Sure, some of my clients own businesses, but my focus is on how they transfer that business smoothly to their heirs on death, not about what kind of business entity they should use for other purposes.

But once in a while I go a little bit beyond that, and talk to clients about LLCs.

What is an LLC? It stands for "limited liability company". Please note that it is not "limited liability corporation," although people often refer to them that way. A corporation is a different kind of animal.

An LLC is a type of business entity, much like a corporation, or a sole proprietorship, or a partnership. If you form an LLC, you then put your business into the LLC. A lot of my clients own rental properties. If they form an LLC, they will then need to deed the property into the LLC. Now the LLC owns the property, not my client. But my client still controls the property, and gets the profits from it, because my client owns the LLC.

So why would somebody go to the trouble of setting up this LLC, if they already own the property? The usual reason is for liability



protection.

Let us say that I own a four-plex. I fail to notice that there is a nail coming loose on one of the upper stairs. One day a young lady trips on the nail, tumbles down the stairs, and suffers a catastrophic injury. A sympathetic jury awards her a verdict of \$8 million.

But I don't have \$8 million in assets. I do have \$2 million in liability insurance coverage on the four-plex, so the insurance company pays that to the plaintiff. Are the plaintiff's attorneys going to accept that? Of course not. They want the whole thing; after all they're getting paid a percentage of what they actually collect.

So they go after the rest of my assets. Let us say that in addition to the four-plex, which is worth \$500,000, I have \$4 million in other assets. If I own the four-plex in my own name, the plaintiff's attorneys can start selling my assets

to pay the judgment. I could easily be left penniless.

But with the LLC in place, all they can get is the property that is in the LLC. They cannot get the rest of my assets. Because of that little bit of extra planning for liability protection, I am only out \$500,000, and I still have the rest of my assets for my retirement.

Notice that the LLC does not protect the assets that are in the LLC. In this example, my four-plex is going to be forfeited. The LLC protects everything outside the LLC. It is like those canisters the bomb squad has; everything inside the canister is going to be obliterated, but it protects everything outside the canister.

I am using the example of a rental property because that is what a lot of my clients need an LLC for. However, I also have clients who have a variety of other types of businesses. Many of them sell those businesses when they retire, but many retirees hold on to their rental properties as a continuing source of

**Many retirees hold on to their rental properties as a continuing source of income. For many of them, the difference between having an LLC and not having one could be the difference between living a comfortable retirement or having to scrape by on Social Security alone.**

income. For many of them, the difference between having an LLC and not having one could be the difference between living a comfortable retirement or having to scrape by on Social Security alone. I don't know about you, but when I retire, I want to be able to visit my grandkids, sit on a beach, and go out to dinner once in a while.

A few caveats: You should still have liability insurance. In that example I gave, the plaintiff's attorneys are going to try to find some way to have the judge invalidate the LLC. Not having any liability insurance, which means the plaintiff only gets \$500,000 and nothing more, is like waving a red flag in front of a bull when that case gets to court; a judge can almost always find a way to get past the LLC if she really, really

wants to. Also, you have to do all of this right. I see a lot of people form their own LLCs, but get sloppy about how they handle them, with the result that if the LLC has to earn its money, it will have become useless.

Wills are useful if you have to go to probate. Trusts are useful for avoiding probate and smoothing the transition on death. Neither of those does anything for liability protection. Corporations do, but they are complicated. For a lot of folks, an LLC is the right answer.

*Kenneth Kirk is an Anchorage estate planning lawyer. Nothing in this article should be taken as legal advice for a specific situation; for specific advice you should consult a professional who can take all the facts into account. If you're going to do it, do it right.*

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# Cords, video stills and internet data removal

By **BOB DELAURENTIS**  
*Senior Wire*

**Q.** My grandson accidentally sent my laptop crashing to the floor when his leg hooked around its power cord. Other than unplugging my new laptop when he visits, how do I tame the mess of cables that is lurking around my computer table?

**A.** I am sorry that this turned into such an expensive lesson. The cords and wires that populate our lives seem pretty much invisible until something goes wrong. Product photography rarely shows wires of any kind. But in real life cables, cords and wires are everywhere.

There is a wide variety of techniques for detangling cord clutter. Any web search for “cable management” will return thousands of responses. It turns out there are plenty of clever products for keeping wires under control.

I keep a bag of Velcro straps handy that I use to wrap up excess length cable into loops (never bend any cable sharply), or to tie a number of cables together in a single bundle. Besides Velcro straps, there are zippered pouches, plastic tubing and good old fashioned wire ties.

Another common fix is

*There is a wide variety of techniques for detangling cord clutter. Any web search for “cable management” will return thousands of responses. It turns out there are plenty of clever products for keeping wires under control.*

to mount a power strip to the desk (the underside works well) to keep power cables off the floor and out of the way.

Cables that never change can be left alone once they are placed, but cables that are frequently plugged and unplugged from a device require a different approach.

One of my favorite cable management tools is a weighted (or adhesive) clip that keeps a cable from slipping behind a desk when it is disconnected from its device.

It might not be the most exciting thing on your to-do list, but spending a little time moving your cables out of harm’s way is worth the effort.

**Q.** I have a lot of home videos on DVD. I want to grab still images from the video. Is it possible and where can I find such a device?

**A.** Yes it is possible, and you can use just about any personal computer. There are many paths to make this work. Probably the easiest method is to download a free app called VLC me-

dia player (videolan.org). As long as the computer meets VLC’s modest system requirements, and it can play a DVD, you will be good to go. (Note: because of copy protection, these instructions do not cover commercially published DVDs.)

VLC can play just about any video format in existence. And taking a still is as easy as playing the content and choosing “Snapshot” from the video menu.

I suggest starting with a quick trip to the VLC application settings. There you can set a hotkey to give you precise control over triggering each snapshot. You can customize the folder where the stills are saved, and which file format is used. (PNG files are best.)

The quality of the images that result may disappoint you. Images that look fine

as part of a video are not the same as frames from a still camera. Video and still cameras are fundamentally different, and so are the images they capture. That said, in my experience the results can be good. With recent advancements in post-processing apps, it is even possible to make a decent 8x10 print from a video still.

**Q.** How can I remove my personal information from the internet?

**A.** Because information is so widely redistributed online, complete removal is probably impossible. However, there are a number of steps you can take that will reduce your online footprint.

Step one is to delete any accounts on social media. Most companies do not erase deleted data, but de-

leting the accounts makes them inaccessible to search engines and keeps people from finding or accessing them. This works best when you simply want to withdraw from participation and remove the bulk of what you have posted.

In situations where you want to remove a specific piece of data, but you also wish to continue participating in social media, the choices are more difficult. You can try deleting the item in your account, but if it has been reposted by someone else it will remain accessible.

A last resort, mostly because of its cost, is a service like deleteme.com.

*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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Wander the Web

Here are my picks for worthwhile browsing this month:

Boring Podcasts

My new favorite podcast series is a collection of boring topics, a blend of fact and wit mixed to perfection.  
[www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p05t3gr2](http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p05t3gr2)

Browse Down Memory Lane

This 20-year-old site describes itself as the “internet’s most diverse, idiosyncratic pop-culture museum.”  
[www.lileks.com](http://www.lileks.com)

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Senior Voice, May 2021 | 23





# Fascinating ethnic enclaves without leaving the U.S.

By VICTOR BLOCK

Senior Wire

Women chatting in Greek stroll by signs that identify the Spartan Gas Station and Alexander the Great Apartments. They pass restaurants where diners are feasting on



*Guided tours of the Hermann, Missouri Deutschheim Historic Site provide an introduction to the daily life and traditions of the German settlers in the mid-18th century.*

Katy.Holmer@dnr.mo.gov

pickled octopus, squid salad and gyro sandwiches. Nearby, a man wearing a diving suit emerges from a river and clambers into a boat, clutching a sponge he dredged up from the bottom.

At this time of limited travel, it may be impossible to visit other countries that are on your bucket list. However, that doesn't mean you can't enjoy their customs, culture and cuisine.

A visit to Tarpon Springs, Florida can replicate a trip to Greece, where sponges have been used since the times of Homer and Plato. When those multicellular organisms were found beneath Florida's waters in the late 19th century, an influx of Greek immigrants came to dive for them.

While the demand for natural squeegees shrank, a pocket of the industry hung on in the town. The main draw today is the lore of a community which resembles a small corner of Greece.

Other towns and neighborhoods throughout the United States capture the essence of a variety of nations. Here's an introduction to a small sampling, and an internet search can help you discover

***At this time of limited travel, it may be impossible to visit other countries that are on your bucket list. However, that doesn't mean you can't enjoy their customs, culture and cuisine.***

er more, including those that may be within an easy commute of where you live.

Some visitors to Miami stroll into tabacaleras to watch vendors meticulously hand-rolling cigars. Others check out markets where unusual body parts of pigs and other animals are sold. Not far away, gray-haired men and women loudly slap dominoes onto tables, seemingly interested more in who can produce the loudest sound than how the game turns out.

Welcome to Calle Ocho (Eight Street) in the neighborhood known as Little Havana. Settled by an influx of Cubans fleeing after Fidel Castro came to power, the area greets visitors with sights, sounds and scents identical to those encountered in the island-country.

Cuba isn't the only Caribbean island with a

gather at markets to buy plantain, salt pork and other favorite foods. Shops sell kremas mapou, a blend of milk, egg yolk, cane sugar and light alcohol, and flaky dough pockets brimming with meat, fish and flavor.

Tiny botanicas offer medicinal herbs, incense and other supplies for voodoo ceremonies. It's possible to find dolls and pins for casting spells intended to bring happiness to friends, and grief to others.

Reminders of European countries also are scattered about ours. Immigrants from Germany are said to have ended up in Hermann, Missouri, because its steep, rugged terrain reminded them of the Rhine Valley. The vineyards they planted have won gold medals in world competitions. Today, it's the old-world charm of the town that is its major appeal. Homes from the 1880s hug downtown sidewalks in traditional German style, and more than 150 buildings are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Guided tours of the Deutschheim Historic Site provide an introduction to the daily life



*Locals play dominoes in Miami's Little Havana. Murals are a popular attraction in the district.*

Victor Block photos



foothold in Miami. In the Little Haiti enclave women in colorful print dresses

and traditions of the German settlers in the mid-18th century. Typical food, music and dancing are recalled



*Above, New Glarus, Wisconsin, celebrates its Swiss roots at its Folk Festival. Attractions include alphorn performances (below).*

Courtesy Green County Tourism



at Oktoberfest and other festivals throughout the year.

Memories of the founders of New Glarus, and of their namesake canton in Switzerland, abound in that Wisconsin town. In 1845, families fleeing poverty survived a four-month journey and settled in an untamed wilderness area where Native Americans had lived for centuries.

Architecture, art and other vestiges of their homeland abound. Swiss-style chalets adorned by flower boxes set the scene. Folk art, museums and celebrations add to the feeling.

Dire economic conditions also prompted Dutch Calvinists to flee the Netherlands and settle in Holland, Michigan. Dutch architecture, delicacies and festivals are among features that create a charming environment. The 12-story-tall De Zwaan Windmill, one of over 9,000 such structures that once graced the Netherlands landscape, was dismantled and reassembled on its present site, where it grinds grain into flour which may be purchased. It's surrounded by manicured gardens, canals and dikes. Tulips are

everywhere, and serve as the main attraction of the annual Tulip Time Festival.

More than a half-million Iranian-Americans and their descendants live in Los Angeles, the largest concentration outside their country of origin. That accounts for the city being referred to as Tehrangeles, a blending of its name with Tehran. Hints of the pervading culture are centered around the intersection of Westwood Boulevard and Wilkins Avenue at eateries like the Shamshiri Grill and Farsi Cafe.

An all-in-one experience awaits visitors to Queens, New York. That borough is the most ethnically diverse urban area in the world. Over half of its residents were born outside of the United States. They came from more than 120 countries and speak over 135 languages. The Tower of Babel had nothing on this enclave.

This is but a brief sample of destinations around the United States where people may enjoy attractions and appeals of other countries and cultures. There are many more, including picturesque Danneborg,

next page please



# Sleep: Lots of trackers, apps to help

continued from page 5

growing in popularity. It is made of titanium and is lightweight and water resistant. The company that makes it calls it “the most comfortable smart ring in the world”. It captures body signals like resting heart rate, body temperature and active calorie burn. It has a long battery life of up to 1 week, with fast, wireless charging, and costs \$300.

### Raising awareness

Dr. John Krehlik runs a sleep center in Anchorage that specializes in the treatment of snoring and sleep apnea, and provides home sleep testing. His sleep

disorder clinic specializes in the nonsurgical treatment of snoring and sleep apnea. He told Senior Voice that CSTs have become more prevalent over the past few years.

“Most CSTs are self-described as ‘lifestyle/entertainment’ devices. As such, they are not subject to the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) oversight. These devices generally lack standardization and validation of data,” said Dr. Krehlik.

He said sleep trackers are not a substitute for appropriate medical evaluation. “None at this time have been validated to render a diagnosis or treatment plan.”

However, they have

helped raise awareness of sleep issues, which can be addressed and successfully treated. He said a study in the Journal of Clinical Sleep Medicine in 2020 suggested that wearing a CST may have a positive impact on the perception of sleep quality. This study was done at the University of Arizona Health Sciences Center for Sleep and Circadian Sciences. “CSTs have the potential to positively impact sleep in the future. They are able to generate large patient generated databases of sleep data that are otherwise unobtainable by conventional methods,” said Dr. Krehlik.

### Which work best?

Dr. William J. Healy, is the director of Sleep Quality Improvement at the Medical College of Georgia and AU Health System in Augusta, and he said sleep trackers can be helpful adjuncts but should not be considered to be medical data.

“I recommend using a pen and paper to track sleep like a sleep log from the American Academy of Sleep

Medicine,” said Dr. Healy. He said while CSTs can be helpful for getting patients to think more about their sleep patterns and what factors improve and worsen sleep, there has not been a rigorous validation of the technology and they do not always accurately reflect sleep time.

“I think it is fine for patients to use the information as a part of the puzzle. However, they can likely achieve as good of results with pen and paper. They are constantly improving and here to stay,” Dr. Healy told Senior Voice.

The Sleep Foundation has studied many of these gadgets and it has rated them. It claims some of the best sleep trackers are Fitbit Versa, which is a wearable watch that costs \$160, and the Go2Sleep Tracker from SleepOn, which is a silicone ring that syncs with your phone to provide sleep data you can access on its accompanying phone app. The Sleep Foundation rates the Tempur-Pedic Sleeptracker as the best non-wearable sleep detector. It slides

under your mattress and monitors sleep quality, and duration. It also monitors your bedroom environment, such as air purity, humidity, CO2 levels, and temperature near your bed. It costs \$300.

### Not the total answer

Currently, The American Academy of Sleep Medicine has issued a position statement saying CSTs cannot be utilized for the diagnosis and/or treatment of sleep disorders at this time. However, CSTs may be utilized to enhance the patient-clinician interaction when presented in the context of an appropriate clinical evaluation.

Jennings said he has benefited significantly over the past two years with his ring and now has added a pad under his sheet that prevents the mattress from getting too hot or holding heat.

“In the past, I struggled staying asleep because I was too hot. Between the ring and this pad, I’m sleeping longer than I have in the past,” Jennings said.

# Travel: Domestic

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Nebraska, with its romantic-style homes and Danish festivals; Mineral Point, Wisconsin, where restored homes built in the 1830s by miners from Cornwall, England are among reminders of those early settlers; and the Asiatown neighborhood of Houston, Texas, with a melting pot of architecture, shops, restaurants and experiences reminiscent of Vietnam, Korea, Pakistan, Bangladesh and other Asian countries.



*The De Zwaan windmill was dismantled in the Netherlands for shipping and reassembly in its new home in Holland, Mich.*

Victor Block photo

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# Senior centers: Safety concerns while re-opening

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be opting to open to the public at all at this time in places like the Kenai Peninsula, Interior and North Slope, so make sure to call your local senior center before attempting any in-person visits, as most are requiring seniors to make appointments before arriving to speak with staff one-on-one, if they are offering in-person services at all.

In Fairbanks and North Pole, Fairbanks Senior Center and Santa's Senior Center have confirmed they are not ready to open in the spring and will keep patrons updated as the summer months approach. In the case of Fairbanks Senior Center, necessary building renovations are preventing a full return to the center and will cause indefinite delays.

## Dining

Regardless of reopening

plans, all centers had continued to feed seniors throughout the pandemic through take-out options and home deliveries.

For centers that have reopened to in-person dining, social distancing requirements of three people per table is recommended, but not required, with center staff allowing seniors to make their own decisions on what makes them most comfortable while visiting the center for in-person meals. For some, social distancing tickles their fancy, but for others, the opportunity to dine with friends they haven't seen in a year is more rewarding. Regardless, seniors are usually asked to wear a mask while moving



Plastic dividers and cordon ropes like these at the Anchorage Senior Activity Center's front desk became commonplace at businesses during the pandemic. With Alaska's COVID-19 vaccination rates increasing, centers are evaluating when and how to best re-open for services and activities.

Photo courtesy Anchorage Senior Activity Center

about the center, similar to what restaurants are asking of patrons when they are not seated at their table.

Most centers require a reservation before eating indoors due to capacity limits, and all takeout options ask that seniors call at least a day in advance before picking up a meal to go.

For anyone - seniors or caregivers - needing assistance through meal

home deliveries, contact your local Meals on Wheels representative or call your local senior center or Aging and Disability Resource Center to get connected. Most places around the state are offering breakfast, lunch and dinner for anyone interested.

## Activities

As far as activities go, centers that have opened their doors full

time have resumed in-person exercise classes and other activities. For example, WASI has church services, Quilts of Valor and exercise classes like Bingo-cize (a clever mix of bingo and fall prevention exercises) back up and running.

Ninilchik Senior Center has gotten creative with their in-person activities, catering to all types of comfort levels by sched-

uling masked activities, such as Sewing with Masks on Mondays, and no-mask activities, like Games with No Masks on Thursdays, as part of their weekly repertoire.

Despite day-to-day activities resuming in-person, a majority of senior centers are not yet comfortable celebrating with large fundraising events that include community members at this time. Perhaps, the summer will see a return of gun shows, door raffles, dances and more, but time will tell.

Curious about your center's re-opening plans? Give them a call during usual business hours or search for your local senior center by name on Facebook, as many centers are posting re-opening updates on social media feeds. Most senior centers also keep their newsletters on their websites, which include information on re-opening, virtual and in-person activity calendars and meal menus.

# Captain: Adventures

continued from page 18

with the help of Smith and a sailor.

Since most of his passengers had left the ship, O'Brien ordered the crew to turn the ship around and head back to Seattle. And after O'Brien watched his ship round Cape Elizabeth, he fell into a deep sleep in his bunk. He woke up four hours later to discover her sitting still.

When he looked out his window and saw land all around, he picked up a medicine bottle and heaved it at the window to attract attention. The shattering glass brought a sailor to his cabin.

The sailor told the captain that his crew refused to continue the trip because the cook was bad.

O'Brien summoned Smith. He asked him for his two revolvers and help getting into a chair on deck. He then called for his crew.

As he pointed one revolver at the chief engineer's head, and the other at anyone who might interfere, O'Brien asked,

"Are you going to turn the engines over and get the ship underway?"

The crew quickly changed their tune and headed the Utopia toward Seattle. It wasn't until much later that O'Brien learned the identity of the man known as Smith who'd helped him quash the mutiny and had nursed him back to health.

It was none other than the notorious confidence man, Jefferson Randolph Smith. Better known to Alaskans as "Soapy," he returned to Alaska after the Utopia made it to Seattle and robbed many during the Klondike Gold Rush.

This column features tidbits found among the writings of the late Alaska historian, Phyllis Downing Carlson. Her niece, Laurel Downing Bill, has turned many of Carlson's stories - as well as stories from her own research - into a series of books titled "Aunt Phil's Trunk." Volumes One through Five are available at bookstores and gift shops throughout Alaska, as well as online at [www.auntphilstrunk.com](http://www.auntphilstrunk.com) and [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com).



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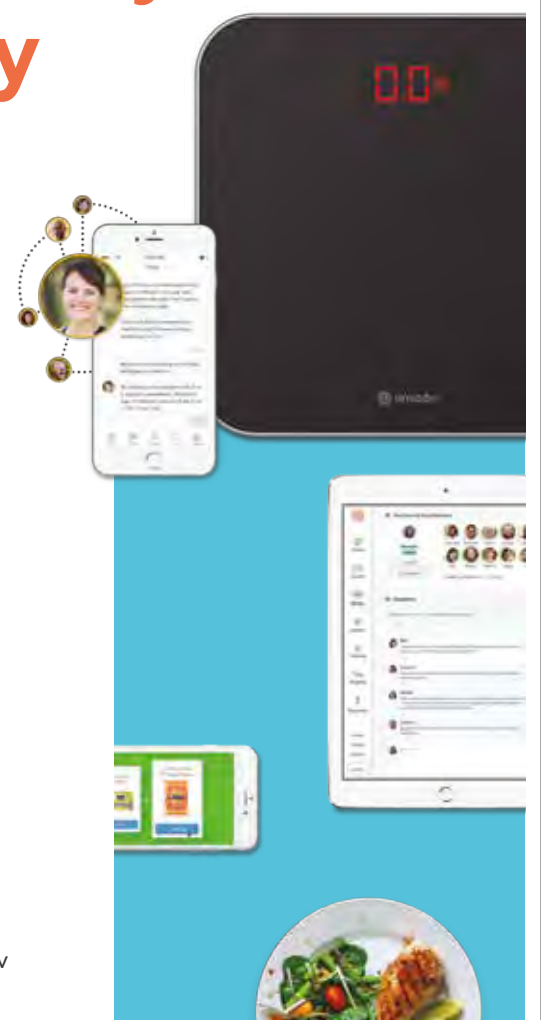
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# Research: Encouraging older generations’ participation

continued from page 4

benefit from my participation. It also lets me learn about my own health, and some of the studies are interesting. I also got gift cards for participating in some of the studies.

Did you have any concerns about participating in research? I did not have any concerns about the studies I participated in. But whenever I think about participating in research, safety is my biggest concern. Is this study safe. My studies were all safe. If I was participating in a drug trial, I would be more concerned about side effects.

Why do you think other Latino older adults are less willing to participate in research? I think it’s culture and a lack of exposure. In Bolivia, I do not remember it being a thing that people did. Here, in the U.S., you hear about research on the news and on the radio – it was not the same in Bolivia. I also think it is a generational thing. The benefits are not realized for many years to come, sometimes decades. It also depends on the type of research – people are more willing to take a survey than to be poked and prodded. Today, my children are more likely to participate in research because they grew up around research. They played in research labs and were taught from a young age about its value. In fact, two of my three children have

become health researchers themselves.

Any closing thoughts? Latinos should participate in research to benefit our communities. When we are not represented in research, we lose out. New drugs, therapies, and interventions are advanced and it is unclear how they affect our people. Do it for La Raza!

**A personal motivation for helping others**

Christine Perez, age 29, is Puerto Rican and has worked in health research and running scientifically backed health interventions for the last five years. She received her master’s in environmental science. In addition to coordinating the All of Us Research Program education and awareness campaign for the National Hispanic Council on Aging, she is also a participant. She shared with us her personal story about why she decided to participate in All of Us.

“As a patient with psoriasis, I decided to participate in the All of Us Research program so that scientists and researchers can learn more about this skin condition and, in the near future, find new individualized treatments for people like me, who suffer from psoriasis. Unfortunately, psoriasis is a rare skin condition that has no cure. While there are a number of different treatments (medications,

topical creams, steroids), they are costly and have side effects.

“As a participant in the All of Us Research Program, I can share my health and lifestyle information through online surveys and by allowing them to access my electronic health records. My personal information goes into a secure database that the program established. My contribution to this program allows scientists and researchers to advance individualized

prevention, treatment, and care for people of all backgrounds, including Hispanic women, such as myself.

In the near future, I will provide my DNA to the All of Us Research program to help advance their research. By providing my DNA, I can learn about my genetics and learn about my risks for other health conditions.”

Joining the All of Us Research program can help increase scientific knowledge about psoriasis,

and other diseases, and help find an individualized treatment that can help me and the other 7.5 million people suffering from this rare skin condition in the United States. Learn more about the program by visiting [www.joinallofus.org/Together](http://www.joinallofus.org/Together).

*This article originally appeared on the National Hispanic Council on Aging website, [nhcoa.org](http://nhcoa.org), and is part of an ongoing Senior Voice series by the Diverse Elders Coalition.*

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Crossword answers from page 18

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