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# Senior Voice

A publication of Older Persons  
Action Group, Inc. Free

Serving Alaskans 50+ Since 1978

Volume 44, Number 9 September 2021

## Senior Housing

**New units opening soon  
in Anchorage, Kenai  
Peninsula.** - page 20

**Smart technology for  
the house.** - page 21

**Is it time to sell your  
long-term home? Factors  
to consider.** - page 23

## Emergencies will come. Are you ready?

*September is National Preparedness Month and we have advice from emergency readiness experts around Alaska. Read the story on page 12.*



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2021  
National Mature  
Media Awards<sup>SM</sup>  
Winner

## COVID and travel

**A report from the front  
lines.**

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# Learn about Alaska’s Medicare Information Office at Sept. forum

Senior Voice Staff

“Age Smart – Let’s Talk”, the series of forums sponsored by AARP Alaska, Older Persons Action Group and the Anchorage Senior Activity Center, returns Sept. 14, from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m.

Events are currently held virtually on the internet, using Zoom. This month’s topic focuses on Alaska’s Medicare Information Office: What it is and how they can help with all things Medicare-related. The timing is good, with the annual Open

Enrollment for Part D drug plans starting in October. 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 satisfying “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/ASSEP142021>.

# Affordable long term care insurance for everyone?

## Learning from the state of Washington

By LAWRENCE D. WEISS  
For Senior Voice

What are the chances that you will need services like these at some point in your life?

- ▶ nursing home
- ▶ assisted living
- ▶ home health care
- ▶ homemaker and chore services

It turns out that the chances are quite good.

The WA Cares Fund – a new program in the State of Washington, discussed below -- estimates that 7 in 10 Washingtonians over the age of 65 will need long-term services and supports within their lifetimes. That seems to parallel comparable national estimates. More to the point, these services can be extremely expensive. For example, here in Alaska the average monthly cost of homemaker or home health aide services runs around \$5,300. The average monthly cost of a room in a nursing home facility is – I hope

you are sitting down for this – about \$37,000. Yikes! (Source: Genworth.com) Medicare generally won’t pay for these kinds of services. Medicaid will, but only if you “spend down” into near-poverty. Theoretically you could purchase commercial long term care insurance, but that is usually quite expensive, not to mention full of exclusions and loopholes and conditions that can trip you up. National average long term care insurance rates for one year for age 55 are \$1,700 for a single male, and \$2,675 for a

single female. Not hard to see why only about seven million people in the United States have long term care insurance, despite the fact that many tens of millions are likely to need these expensive services at some point. This is all rather gloomy, but I would like to direct your attention to a most interesting and hopeful development in the state of Washington, the WA Cares Fund, with the official tagline, “Ensuring all Washingtonians have access to affordable long-term care when they need it.” Several

other states including California, Maine, Vermont, Michigan, Illinois and Minnesota are considering adopting similar programs in the coming years. Perhaps it could also serve as a model for Alaska. Let’s take a closer look. Washington state is the first in the nation to develop a way to make long-term care affordable for all workers in the state. The WA Cares Fund is a universal long-term care program that works like Social Security, where all


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# Nursing home roundup: Vaccinations, costs, safety

## Reversing Trump’s limits on fines

ANALYSIS  
By ALAN M. SCHLEIN  
Senior Wire

The Biden administration recently quietly reversed a controversial Trump administration policy that had limited the fines levied on facilities that endangered or injured residents at nursing homes. While the numbers of deaths have plummeted since the release of vaccines, inadequate staffing, protec-

 **WASHINGTON WATCH**

tive equipment shortages and poor infection control remain significant concerns at most of the nation’s 14,000 skilled nursing facilities, advocates say. The Trump policy favoring lower penalties was adopted in 2017, directing regulators at CMS, Medicare’s parent agency, to shift from fining a nursing home for each day it was out of compliance with federal standards. That relaxed policy reduced many penalties to a single fine, effectively lowering amounts from hundreds of thousands of

dollars to a maximum of \$22,000. That shift, which had been pushed by the powerful nursing home industry lobby, was part of the much broader Trump administration’s rollback of government regulations across many business sectors. Many of the nursing homes cited for poor infection controls, failing to protect residents from avoidable accidents, neglect, mistreatment and bedsores, are repeat offenders. Larger fines act as a deterrent and are more likely to signal strong enforcement of the rules, Toby

Edelman, a senior policy attorney at the Center for Medicare Advocacy, told the New York Times recently. In July, without much notice, the Biden administration revoked the earlier guidance on the CMS website, saying it had “de-

termined that the agency should retain the discretion at this time to impose a per-day penalty where appropriate to address specific circumstances of prior non-compliance.” Under the new

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Mission statement:

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

Vision statement:

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

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# AARP Alaska members support state revenue measures not cuts

By MARGE STONEKING

AARP Alaska

Our state is facing budget challenges and will need to make important decisions about how we can best address these challenges to continue providing health and financial security as well as economic opportunities to Alaskans of all ages.

For many years, Alaska used its oil revenues to balance the state budget and fund state services and programs. At the same time, the state used Permanent Fund earnings to issue dividend checks to all Alaska residents. As oil revenues declined, the state reduced spending on services and programs and used the state savings account to help balance its budget. Now, our savings account is nearly depleted, and the state is using Permanent Fund earnings to help pay for services and issue dividend checks to residents. Without enough oil revenue or state savings to draw from, Alaska is considering additional cuts and new ways to raise revenue to help balance the state budget, maintain

state programs and services, and continue issuing Permanent Fund Dividend checks.

When AARP surveyed members on state fiscal solutions this year, there was agreement – regardless of geography or party affiliation – in opposition to continued state cuts and in support of revenue solutions.

Our research shows that older Alaskans are keenly aware of the state fiscal challenges and are willing to do their part to ensure a sustainable Alaska for future generations. The message to legislators from the strongest voting group in Alaska – older Alaskans – is simple: support revenue solutions over cuts to state services or cuts to the PFD.

Key findings in this survey of AARP Alaska members are:

- ▶ Cuts to state spending on funding for local governments, public safety, education, transportation, health services for children and low-income families, and home care services for seniors are opposed by more than 70% of AARP members. A majority “strongly oppose” these

cuts.

- ▶ Increasing taxes on oil and gas companies is the preferred way to balance the state budget by a wide margin; the majority of AARP members (51%) “strongly support” this tax increase.

- ▶ A state graduated income tax is supported by a wide margin overall, with nearly three out of five in support.

- ▶ Two-thirds of AARP members initially support a state sales tax but only 43% support a sales tax after learning about the burden on some local communities who already have local sales taxes.

- ▶ Capping PFD checks to help balance the state budget and maintain state services is also supported.

Visit our website at [www.aarp.org/ak](http://www.aarp.org/ak) to read the “AARP Alaska Members Support Statewide Broad-based Revenue Measures” article which explains the survey results, the methodology, and topline findings.

As older Alaskan voters, our voices are important to legislators – and particularly impactful when we join them together under

the banner of AARP.

Alaska’s senior population represents over a third of registered voters in the state, but we have an outsized impact in elections – particularly in lower turnout elections such as primaries.

Older Alaskans consistently participate in voting at higher rates than any other age group, and at 10 percentage points or more than general voter turnout rates.

We know that today’s older Alaskans want to remain in Alaska as they age, and a sustainable state budget is important to AARP members. A sustainable Alaska means resolving our ongoing structural budget challenges.

During the 30-day special session, legislators will consider constitutional amendments regarding the PFD, the Permanent Fund Earnings Account, and new revenues.

During this same time period, AARP Alaska is partnering with Alaska Municipal League in hosting a five-part Legislative Conversation Series on State Revenue Solutions and you’re invited to par-

ticipate.

AARP and Alaska Municipal League are pulling together toward a future, where Alaskans of all generations can stay in Alaska. Together we know that the State’s budget shortfall must be addressed. New revenues are needed to continue to provide the state infrastructure and services that Alaskans need to allow them to remain in their communities as they age.

Join Alaska Municipal League and AARP in this five-part conversation series with legislators to explore revenue options for a sustainable Alaska for all. The series will run on Thursdays at noon starting August 26 and repeating September 2, 9, 16, 23 on Zoom platform. To register to participate or learn more, visit <https://states.aarp.org/alaska/aarp-aml-conversation-series>.

To get involved as a volunteer with AARP legislative advocacy, please contact [mstoneking@aarp.org](mailto:mstoneking@aarp.org).

*Marge Stoneking is the Advocacy Director for AARP Alaska.*

# Is it time to amend the U.S. Constitution again?

By BEVERLY CHURCHILL

For Senior Voice

Sept. 17, 2021 is Constitution Day, the 234th anniversary of the U.S. Constitution. The state of Alaska, and several of its local jurisdictions have called for a Constitutional Amendment to implement needed reforms. To understand the need for changes to our Constitution, we need to understand the Constitution we have.

Our Constitution establishes the fundamental structures of our democracy and helps protect us against governmental abuses. The drafters also provided for changes (amendments) to the Constitution. Jefferson wrote that it ought to be reviewed every generation, so it is adapted to modern times.

The Constitution has been amended only 27

times since it was enacted. The first 10 amendments, the Bill of Rights, passed in 1791, include our basic liberties such as freedom of speech, religion and press, due process and equal protection rights and other rights. Amendments 13 through 15 abolish slavery and involuntary servitude and guarantee civil rights for the freed slaves.

The 17th Amendment provides for the popular election of senators. Women won the right to vote in 1920 with ratification of the 19th Amendment. The 22nd Amendment sets term limits for the presidency. The 26th amendment was ratified in 1971 and granted the right to vote to persons 18 and over. The most recent amendment was enacted in 1992, and limits when Congress may vote to increase their own salaries.

Many people believe it is

time for another amendment. The issue of big money drowning out the voices of ordinary citizens in electoral politics, and dark money hijacking our deliberations on public policy has risen to the top for many. It is court decisions that have allowed this to occur, and as such only a constitutional amendment can fully address them.

U.S. House Joint Resolution 48 is one proposal to enact such an amendment. It can be read at [www.movetoamend.org/amendment](http://www.movetoamend.org/amendment). It provides that Constitutional rights are for natural persons only, that money is not speech, and our elected representatives have the authority and duty to regulate political campaign finances. Twenty-two states (including Alaska) have passed resolutions supporting a constitutional

amendment like HJR 48.

A constitutional amendment, if passed by Congress, is referred to the states for approval. It takes effect if three-fourths of the states vote to ratify. An Article Five Constitutional Convention may also be called, but this has never been used.

Such an amendment is the way that Alaska’s

campaign finance laws can be restored, which will be covered in the next installment of this series of articles.

*Beverly Churchill is a member of Alaska Move to Amend, whose mission includes educating Alaskans on constitutional issues regarding personhood and money as a form of free speech.*

## 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.





# New toolkit to connect diverse family caregivers

By **MICHAEL ADAMS** and **OCEAN LE**

Diverse Elders Coalition

Equitable access to care, services and supports for older adults and their caregivers has always been one of the main pillars of The Diverse Elders Coalition, founded in 2010, which comprises six member organizations representing African American/Black, American Indian and Alaska Native, Asian American and Pacific Islander, Southeast Asian American, Hispanic/Latinx and LGBT+ communities. The coalition's partnership with the American Society on Aging (ASA) reflects a shared commitment across the Coalition, the ASA membership and the broader ASA community to champion all elders as they age.

The COVID-19 pandemic has provided a powerful reminder that some elders are particularly vulnerable, marginalized and in danger of being left behind—BI-POC and LGBT+ elders were at the epicenter of the pandemic, and continue to suffer disproportionately. The fact is that older adults and caregivers from diverse communities have always been particularly vulnerable. But during the pandemic, these vulnerabilities among diverse communities have become more pronounced and much more visible.

For example, the lack of translated COVID-19 information made available to limited English proficient older adults and caregivers led to confusion and misinformation in many diverse communities. Years of discrimination, neglect and disregard deterred many diverse older adults and caregivers from getting medical assistance during a time when they needed it the most. At the end of the day, numerous equity disparities left unaddressed over many years led to severely disproportionate rates of COVID-19 infections, hospitalizations and deaths among diverse communities, with black and brown people dying at rates two to three times those of the population in



American Society on Aging

general.

As we emerge from the pandemic, all of us who focus on improving the quality of life for older adults must heighten our commitment to eliminating these disparities and addressing the acute, particular needs of diverse elders. Fortunately, we now have a resource that was specifically created to help address the challenges of diverse communities as they age.

The Diverse Elder Coalition's new toolkit, "Caring for Those Who Care, Resources for Providers: Meeting the Needs of Diverse Family Caregivers," was put together to help professional and voluntary caregivers, providers and a wide array of professionals better understand the unique realities and challenges diverse caregivers face and best practices they can employ to better care for diverse family caregivers and, ultimately, the older adults they care for.

This toolkit, made even more relevant by what we learned during the pandemic, represents the culmination of Coalition-sponsored original research, the expertise of the Coalition's six member organizations and feedback from physicians, researchers, social service providers and aging-focused organizations across the United States. Concentrating on the multiple communities of identity and culture represented by the Coalition, the toolkit offers community-specific fact sheets, caregiving and COVID-19 specific resources for healthcare providers, social services providers and aging-focused organizations.

The six fact sheets in the toolkit focus on African

American/Black, American Indian and Alaska Native, Asian American and Pacific Islander, Southeast Asian American, Hispanic/

**As we emerge from the pandemic, all of us who focus on improving the quality of life for older adults must heighten our commitment to eliminating disparities and addressing the acute, particular needs of diverse elders.**

Latinx and LGBT+ caregivers. The fact sheets were developed by synthesizing data from the Diverse Elders Coalition's original research, which included in-language focus groups and a national caregiving survey with more than

1,000 respondents from the full swath of Coalition communities.

Additionally, the expertise of the Diverse Elders Coalition's six member

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# COVID update: Symptoms, tests and flu shots

By JOHN C. SCHIESZER

For Senior Voice

Symptoms for early COVID-19 infection differ among age groups and between men and women, according to new research. These differences are most notable between younger age groups (16 to 59 years) compared to older age groups (60 to 80 years and older). Researchers also found that men have different symptoms compared to women in the early stages

**Results strongly suggest that the flu vaccine may protect against several severe effects of COVID-19. However, more research is needed to prove and better understand the possible link between the flu vaccine and COVID-19 complications.**

of COVID-19 infection.

Investigators at King's College London analyzed data from the ZOE COVID Symptom Study app between April 20 and Oct. 15, 2020. App contributors are invited to get tested

as soon as they report any new symptoms. The researchers modeled the early signs of COVID-19 infection and successfully detected 80% of cases when using three days of self-reported symptoms.

The team compared the ability to predict early signs of COVID-19 infection using current National Health Service UK diagnostic criteria and a Hierarchical Gaussian Process model, a type of machine learning. This machine learning model was able to incorporate some characteristics about the person affected, such as age, sex, and health conditions. This investigation revealed that symptoms of early COVID-19 infection are different among

various groups.

The study analyzed 18 symptoms, which had different relevance for early detection in different groups. The most important symptoms for earliest detection of COVID-19 overall included loss of smell, chest pain, persistent cough, abdominal pain, blisters on the feet, eye soreness and unusual muscle pain. However, loss

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## Letting family know when you are dealing with depression

By KAREN CASANOVAS

For Senior Voice

**Q:** How do I tell family and friends I'm struggling with depression?

**A:** While depression is common amongst older adults, it is not a normal part of aging. Life transitions, isolation, death of a loved one, health issues or loss of life purpose are stressful situations, and can cause a person to experience depression. It's good you have recognized the symptoms, and hopefully are receiving the help you need. For most people, they



get better with treatment.

Often older adults do not recognize the signs of depression or take steps needed to manage their mental health. It's a posi-

tive sign you want to reach out to others to discuss what you're experiencing. Start with a general conversation about the emotions you are feeling, and try to pinpoint what may be causing your depressive symptoms. By staying in conversation and connected to those you trust, you can alter your perspective and even boost your mood. Try to find purpose in life, and focus on what you can do, rather than what you can no longer do. Stay healthy by engaging in regular physical activity, eating nutritious foods,

and getting adequate sleep. Lack of sleep makes depression worse. Find compassionate support from friends, family or group gatherings.

Some red flags of depression:

- ▶ Sadness or feelings of despair, loneliness or isolation
- ▶ Unexplained or aggravated aches and pains
- ▶ Loss of interest in socializing or hobbies
- ▶ Weight loss or loss of appetite
- ▶ Feelings of hopelessness or helplessness
- ▶ Lack of motivation, en-

ergy or physical activity

- ▶ Sleep disturbances like difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep, oversleeping, or daytime sleepiness
- ▶ Loss of self-worth such as worries about being a burden, feelings of worthlessness or self-loathing
- ▶ Increased use of alcohol, prescribed or recreational drugs
- ▶ Medical conditions (feeling incapable, incompetent or loss of independence)
- ▶ Neglecting personal care such as skipping meals,

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## Be on the lookout for these important Medicare notices

By SEAN McPHILAMY

For Senior Voice

You can make changes to your Medicare coverage each year during Medicare's Open Enrollment Period, which runs Oct. 15 to Dec. 7. Beginning in September, you may receive notices with information about possible changes to your coverage for the coming year. Please read these notices, as these can help you decide if you should make changes to your coverage during Medicare's Open Enrollment Period.

### Medicare and You

If you are currently enrolled in Medicare, watch for the 2021 Medicare & You handbook in the mail in September and review your health care benefits. If you do not receive one, you can call 1-800-MEDICARE

**After reading about the changes to your Medicare prescription coverage for 2022, decide whether your plan will still be able to meet your needs in the upcoming year.**

(1-800-633-4227) and request that a copy tailored for Alaska be mailed to you. You may also download the general handbook at [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov). You can also contact one of the Certified Medicare Counselors at the State of Alaska's Medicare Information Office by calling either 1-800-478-6065 or 907-269-3680 for answers to any questions about Medicare benefits.

To learn about your employer-provided retiree benefits and/or Medicare

Supplement Insurance (Medigap) plan coverage, please call your plan directly or read your plan's handbook.

### Prescription drug coverage

If you have a Part D prescription drug plan, you should receive a notice called an Annual Notice of Change (or ANOC for short) and an Evidence of Coverage (or EOC). Your plan should send you these notices by September 30. If you do not receive these notices, contact your plan to request copies. These notices list any changes for your plan in 2022.

There are three kinds of changes to look for in an ANOC or EOC. First, look for changes to your plan's costs for the upcoming year. Costs such as deductibles and copayments can

change each year. Second, look for changes to the plan's network; make sure to see if your preferred pharmacies will still be in network in 2022. And third, look for changes to the plan's formulary, which is the list of drugs the plan covers. Formulary changes can happen from year to year, meaning your drug may not be covered in 2022 even if it was covered in 2021. Even if it is still on the plan's formulary, the cost of your drug may have changed.

After reading about the changes to your coverage for 2022, decide whether your plan will still be able to meet your needs in the upcoming year.

In October, plans leaving the Medicare program in the coming year send out a Plan Non-Renewal Notice to plan members.

If you receive this notice, you should take action to make sure you are covered in 2022. You can choose to enroll in a new Part D prescription drug plan during Medicare's Open Enrollment, which again is Oct. 15 through Dec. 7. You can also enroll in a new plan up until the last day in February of the following year. You will be disenrolled from your previous plan starting January 1st, though, so if you do not pick a new plan by then you will likely experience a gap in coverage until you enroll in a new plan.

In late October, Medicare also sends a Consistent Poor Performance Notice to people enrolled in a plan that has received a low rating on quality and performance for three or more

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## Helping a loved one address their hearing loss



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

When a friend or family member has difficulties hearing it can be as frustrating for those around the individual as it is for the person with hearing loss. Oftentimes, the individual with hearing loss is apt to find ways to deal with their hearing difficulties without seeking the appropriate treatment and, if needed, a hearing aid. This common behavior still causes frustration for those who care for the person. To help avoid these challenges here are some tips that might help.

Confront the individual in a constructive manner and make sure not to express personal frustrations. Help them understand what they are missing due

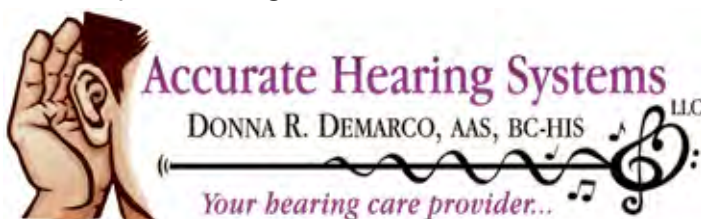
to hearing loss. These areas can include withdrawal from social gatherings, difficulty hearing on the phone and more. If the individual can recognize hearing loss exists, it may help them understand they do need help.

Offer your time to help them and their appointment with them. Anything to help ease the process of taking the first step will help them with the process. Continue your support to keep them motivated.

If you know someone that displays any symptoms of hearing loss, not helping that person get treatment can negatively affect their well-being as well the enjoyment for those around them. Focus your efforts on helping them get the hearing help they need.

At Accurate Hearing we offer complimentary appointments to make sure all of those in need get the care they deserve. To schedule an appointment, call 907-644-6004.

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.

## Fall health fairs are underway

By **SHARON PHILLIPS**  
Alaska Health Fair, Inc.

Alaska Health Fair is in the middle of a very active fall season. We continue providing appointment-based services to communities around state, and many worksites. Our September community events include Anchorage, Fairbanks, Chugiak, Girdwood, Palmer, Soldotna and Wasilla. As we continue to work through COVID, we provide these much needed services to all Alaskans using reliable health and safety protocols.

Check out our full schedule at [www.alaskahealthfair.org](http://www.alaskahealthfair.org) and look for the city of your choice.

Here is a brief list of the coming month's events,

with more detailed information found on our website:

**Anchorage locations:** North Star Elementary, Sept. 11; Hotel Captain Cook, Sept. 14; Anchorage Senior Activity Center, Sept. 24.

**Fairbanks office draws:** Sept. 8, 14, 18, 21 and 28

**Chugiak-Eagle River Senior Center:** Sept. 2

**Girdwood Community Center:** Sept. 25

**Palmer Depot:** Sept. 28  
**Soldotna Community:** Sept. 10-11

**Wasilla-Menard Center:** Sept. 17-18

A few early October fairs:

**Anchorage locations:** Enlaces Latino Health Fair, Oct. 2; An-

chorage Museum, Oct. 6  
**Delta Junction,** Oct. 2  
**Fairbanks office draw:** Oct. 5

For quick access to our website with schedules, newsletters and more, hover your cellphone camera over the QR code below.

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



## Medicare: Look for notices

*continued from page 5*

years in a row. A low rating is three stars or fewer out of five. The notice encourages you to look at other plan options in your area. These star ratings are also online at [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov) when comparing prescription drug plans.

### Marketing information and rules

As Medicare's Open Enrollment Period begins, you will likely start receiving mail from different insurance companies about the plans they offer. You can use this marketing information to compare your options. You should

know, though, that companies must follow certain rules when marketing their plans. These guidelines are in place to protect you from manipulative sales and enrollment tactics.

For example, a plan cannot use language that suggests their plan is preferred by Medicare. They also cannot call or email you if you did not ask them to do so or if you have no prior relationship with them. Plans should additionally not leave information like flyers or door hangers on your car or at your home if they came from a company that did not have an appointment with you. When contacting plans,

remember that you should take your time to review your choices and make an informed decision.

For any Medicare related questions, please feel free to contact the State of Alaska Medicare Information Office at 1-800-478-6065 or 907-269-3680. Our office is also known as the State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP), the Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP), and the Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers (MIPPA) program.

Sean McPhilamy is a volunteer at the Medicare Information Office in Anchorage.

## Free Legal Services for Seniors!



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Fairbanks.....	452-5181 or (800) 478-5401
Juneau.....	586-6425 or (800) 789-6426
Kenai.....	395-0352 or (855) 395-0352
Ketchikan.....	225-6420 or (877) 525-6420
Kotzebue.....	442-3500 or (800) 622-9797
Nome.....	443-2230 or (888) 495-6663
Palmer.....	746-4636 or (855) 996-4636

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

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

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# COVID update: Symptoms, tests and flu shots

continued from page 5

of smell lost significance in people over 60 years of age and was not relevant for individuals over 80. Other early symptoms such as diarrhea were key in older age groups (60 to 79 and 80 and older). Fever, while a known symptom of disease, was not an early feature of the disease in any age group.

Men were more likely to report shortness of breath, fatigue, chills and shivers, whereas women were more likely to report loss of smell, chest pain and a persistent cough. While these models were generated in the COVID Symptom study app, models were replicated across time suggesting they would also apply to non-app contributors.

Although the models were used on the first strain of the virus and Alpha variants, the key findings

suggest the symptoms of the Delta variant and subsequent variants will also differ across population groups.

"It's important people know the earliest symptoms are wide-ranging and may look different for each member of a family or household," said lead study author Claire Steves who is with King's College London, England. "Testing guidance could be updated to enable cases to be picked up earlier, especially in the face of new variants which are highly transmissible,"

## Flu shots may offer some protection against COVID-19

The flu vaccine may provide vital protection against COVID-19. A new study that included 74,754 individuals analyzed patient records from around the world

and found that the annual flu shot reduces the risks of stroke, sepsis, and DVT (deep vein thrombosis) in patients with COVID-19. Patients with COVID-19 who had been vaccinated against the flu were also significantly less likely to visit the emergency department and to be admitted to the intensive care unit.

"Only a small fraction of the world has been fully vaccinated against COVID-19 to date, and with all the devastation that has occurred due to the pandemic, the global community still needs to find solutions to reduce morbidity and mortality," said senior study author Dr. Devinder Singh, who is chief of plastic surgery and a professor of clinical surgery at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine in Florida.

Having access to the

real-time data on millions of patients is an incredibly powerful research tool, added Dr. Singh. The study was conducted using patient records from a number of countries, including the U.S., the U.K., Germany, Italy, Israel and Singapore.

The analysis revealed that those who had not had the flu shot were up to 20% more likely to have been admitted to the ICU. The unvaccinated were up to 58% or more likely to visit the emergency department, and up to 45% or more were likely to develop sepsis. The findings were similar for stroke (up to 58% more likely) and a DVT (up to 40% more likely). The risk of death was not reduced.

Although it isn't exactly known yet how the flu vaccine provides protection against COVID-19, most theories speculate that the flu shot may boost the im-

mune system. The results strongly suggest that the flu vaccine may protect against several severe effects of COVID-19. However, the authors write that more research is needed to prove and better understand the possible link between the flu vaccine and COVID-19 complications. The authors contend that continued promotion of the influenza vaccine also has the potential help the global population avoid a possible 'twindemic' (a simultaneous outbreak of both influenza and coronavirus).

## Giving grandkids a breath test before they visit

Adults infected with the COVID-19 virus exhale different metabolites in

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# New high-tech may aid the visually impaired

*Also: Nutritional changes for the brain and waist size*

By JOHN SCHIESZER

Medical Minutes

## Wearable devices helping visually impaired

Updated computer technology now is revolutionizing care for those who are visually impaired. A new study is showing that wearing a vibrating collision device can reduce collisions in adults who are blind or have low level vision. Researchers found that a wearable computer vision device can reduce collisions for both people who are blind and those who are visually impaired and using a long cane and/or guide dog by 37%, compared to using other mobility aids alone.

People who have visual impairments are at a significantly higher risk for collisions and falls. Commonly used mobility aids like long canes and guide dogs can offer benefits, but come with limitations. While some electronic devices are marketed directly to consumers and claim to warn wearers of surrounding objects, there has been little evidence of their effectiveness in actual daily mobility settings.

This is one of the first randomized-controlled trials to look at the potential benefit of the devices at home and outside of a controlled lab environment.

"Independent travel is an essential part of daily life for many people who are visually impaired, but they face a greater risk of bumping into obstacles when they walk on their own," said Gang Luo, associate professor of ophthalmology at Harvard Medical School, Boston, Mass.

The experimental device used in the trial was created by Luo and his colleagues in their vision rehabilitation lab. The device and data recording unit are enclosed in a backpack with a chest-mounted, wide-angle camera on the strap. The individual wears two Bluetooth-connected



wristbands. The camera is connected to a processing unit that captures images and analyzes collision risk based on the relative movement of incoming and surrounding objects in the camera's field of view.

If an imminent collision is detected on the left or right side, the corresponding wristband will vibrate. A head-on collision will cause both wristbands to vibrate. Unlike other devices that simply warn of nearby objects whether or not a user is moving toward the objects, this device analyzes relative motion, warning only of approaching obstacles that pose a collision risk, and ignoring objects not on a collision course.

The new study included 31 blind and visually impaired adults who were using either a long cane and/or guide dog to aid their daily mobility. Guide dogs are highly effective, but hard to come by and cost-prohibitive for many. Training a guide dog typically costs \$45,000 to \$60,000. A chest-mounted, collision-warning device could provide an option and be commercially available in the not too distant future.

## What you eat can improve waist size

Eating more whole grains may mean a smaller waistline. Middle-aged and older-aged adults who ate at least three servings of whole grains daily had smaller increases in waist size, blood pressure, and blood sugar levels over time compared to those who ate less than one-half serving per day, according to new medical data.

In a study published in the Journal of Nutrition, re-

**Training a guide dog typically costs \$45,000 to \$60,000. A chest-mounted, collision-warning device could provide an option and be commercially available in the not too distant future.**

searchers at Tufts University examined how whole-grain and refined-grain intake over time impacted five risk factors of heart disease. They looked at waist size, blood pressure, blood sugar, triglyceride,

and HDL ("good") cholesterol levels. Using data from the Framingham Heart Study Offspring Cohort, which began in the 1970s to assess long-term risk factors of heart disease, the researchers

examined health outcomes associated with whole-grain and refined-grain consumption over a median of 18 years. The 3,100 participants were on average in their mid-50s at the start of data collection.

The research team compared changes in the five risk factors, over four-year intervals, across four categories of reported whole grain intake, ranging from

*next page please*

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# Diet: Nutrition for better waist size, brain power

from page 8

less than a half serving per day to three or more servings per day. According to the Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2020–2025, the recommended amount of whole grains is three or more servings daily. An example of a serving is one slice of whole-grain bread, a half cup of rolled oats cereal, or a half cup of brown rice.

Researchers found that waist size increased by an average of more than 1 inch in the low intake participants compared to about a half inch in the high intake participants. Even after accounting for changes in waist size, average increases in blood sugar levels and blood pressure levels were greater in low intake participants compared to high intake participants.

“Our findings suggest that eating whole-grain foods as part of a healthy

diet delivers health benefits beyond just helping us lose or maintain weight as we age,” said study investigator Nicola McKeown, who is a scientist on the Nutritional Epidemiology Team at Tufts University, Boston, Mass. “In fact, these data suggest that people who eat more whole grains are better able to maintain their blood sugar and blood pressure over time. Managing these risk factors as we age may help to protect against heart disease.”

The presence of dietary fiber in whole grains can have a satiating effect, and the magnesium, potassium, and antioxidants may contribute to lowering blood pressure. The greatest contributor to whole-grain intake among participants was whole-wheat breads and ready-to-eat whole-grain breakfast cereals. The refined grains came mostly from pasta and white bread.

## Boosting brain power with small dietary changes

Individuals who eat a diet that includes at least half a serving per day of foods high in flavonoids like strawberries, oranges, peppers and apples may have a 20% lower risk of cognitive decline, according to a study published in the journal *Neurology*. The researchers looked at several types of flavonoids, and found that flavones and anthocyanins may have the most protective effect.

Flavonoids are naturally occurring compounds found in plants and are considered powerful antioxidants. It is thought that having too few antioxidants may play a role in cognitive decline as you age.

“There is mounting evidence suggesting flavonoids are powerhouses when it comes to preventing your thinking skills

from declining as you get older,” said study author Dr. Walter Willett, who is with Harvard University, Boston, Massachusetts. “Our results are exciting because they show that making simple changes to your diet could help prevent cognitive decline.”

The study looked at 49,493 women with an average age of 48 and 27,842 men with an average age of 51 at the start of the study. Researchers also looked at individual flavonoids and other factors. Flavones, found in some spices and yellow or orange fruits and vegetables, had the strongest protective qualities, and were associated with a 38% reduction in risk of cognitive decline, which

is the equivalent of being three to four years younger in age.

Peppers have about 5 mg of flavones per 100 gram serving. Anthocyanins, found in blueberries, blackberries and cherries, were associated with a 24% reduced risk of cognitive decline. Blueberries have about 164 mg of anthocyanins per 100 gram serving. The authors say think about color and picking the darkest berries and fruits for the biggest nutritional punch.

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

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# Depression: *Treating*

from page 5

forgetting meds, neglecting personal hygiene

► Fixation on death; thoughts of suicide

How common is depression?

More than 264 million people suffer from depression worldwide and depression is the leading cause of disability in the world, according to the World Health Organization.

Neuropsychiatric disorders are the leading cause of disability in the U.S. with major depressive disorder being the most common, according to the National Institute of Mental Health.

## Types and forms of depression

Older adults may experience one of these types or forms:

► Major Depressive Disorder

► Persistent Depressive Disorder (Dysthymia)

► Substance/Medication-Induced Depressive Disorder

► Depressive Disorder Due to a Medical Condition

► Psychotic Depression

► Postmenopausal Depression

► Seasonal Affective Disorder

Research suggests that depression doesn't spring from simply having too much or too little of certain brain chemicals. Rather, there are many possible causes of depression, including faulty mood regulation by the brain, genetic vulnerability, stressful life events, medications, and medical problems. It's believed that several of these forces interact to bring on depression.

If you have not seen a healthcare professional about your symptoms or what you are experiencing, contact your provider to make an appointment. Consider getting a full

evaluation by recommended professionals to be accurately diagnosed and to receive appropriate treatment.

September is National Self-Care Awareness Month. Many of us tend to put others first and our own physical or mental health gets neglected. This month we should pay more attention to how we're feeling and our physical condition. If you notice challenges with decision-making, taking care of simple daily activities, or communicating your needs clearly, ask for help. You deserve to be living a meaningful, thriving existence where self-care isn't selfish. Put yourself at the center of your life.

"Urgent optimism is the desire to act immediately to tackle an obstacle, combined with the belief that we have a reasonable hope of success." - Jane McGonigal.

For more information about generalized depressive symptoms, recognizing episodes of sadness versus depression, and to read additional reports, view these resources:

► [www.cdc.gov/aging/depression/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/aging/depression/index.html)

► <https://nami.org/NAMI-Media/Images/FactSheets/Depression-FS.pdf>

► <https://www.singlecare.com/blog/news/depression-statistics>

► <https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/depression-and-older-adults>

Karen Casanovas is a Professional Certified Coach who 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).

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# Free training, support for family caregivers

Senior Voice Staff

The Kenai Peninsula Family Caregiver Support Program has moved into a new office located at 35477 Kenai Spur Highway, Suite 205 (located in the 4D Professional Building). You can call them at 907-262-1280 or email [kpfscsp@soldotnaseniors.com](mailto:kpfscsp@soldotnaseniors.com).

Caregiver support group meetings will be held at the following locations and times in September. Please join to share your experiences as a caregiver or to support someone who is a caregiver.

Sept. 9 Sterling Se-

nior Center, 1 to 3 p.m. The Teepa Snow DVD "The Senior Gems: Your Guide to Supporting Family Members with Dementia," will be shown from 1 to 2 p.m. with a caregiver support meeting from 2 to 3 p.m.

Sept. 10 Soldotna Senior Center, 1 to 3 p.m. Valerie Flake from Genacta In-Home Services will speak about "How to Manage Your Respite," from 1 to 2 p.m., followed by a caregiver support meeting from 2 to 3 p.m.

Sept. 21 Kenai Senior Center, 1 to 3 p.m. The Teepa Snow DVD "Seeing it From the Other Side: Caregiver Stress and Dementia

Coping Strategies," will be reviewed from 1 to 2 p.m., followed by a caregiver support meeting from 2 to 3 p.m.

Sept. 29 Nikiski Senior Center, "Getting to Know You" meeting from 1 to 2 p.m. Join and learn more about the Kenai Peninsula Family Caregiver Support Program.

Support meetings allow you to share your experiences as a caregiver, or support someone who is a caregiver. If you are helping

a family member or friend by being a caregiver, learn what kind of help is available. There is no charge for these services and everyone is invited to attend. Call with suggestions and ideas for upcoming trainings or follow on Facebook, @KPFCS.

## Statewide

Alzheimer's Resource of Alaska (ARA) organizes caregiver support meetings all around the state, including the following

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

ARA also hosts a statewide call-in meeting on the first Saturday and third Wednesday of every month, 1 to 2 p.m. For additional information, call Gay Wellman, 907-822-5620 or 1-800-478-1080.

## Toolkit: Connection

continued from page 4

organizations, physicians, researchers, social service providers and aging-focused organizations across the country contributed to developing these fact sheets. It is our hope that the fact sheets provide much greater knowledge and understanding of diverse caregivers so that healthcare providers, social service providers and aging-focused organizations are better equipped to address their unique challenges. Along with fact sheets, the toolkit also offers national caregiving and COVID-19-specific resources for diverse caregivers.

We encourage providers to share and disseminate the caregiving resources outlined in the toolkit among diverse constituents in the communities they serve. Similarly, social services providers and aging-focused organizations should share these resources with constituents as they were tailored to resolve health, financial, cultural and linguistic barriers that may burden diverse caregivers. The

toolkit is interdisciplinary as it was developed with key input from professionals across a multitude of sectors relevant to the aging experiences of diverse older adults.

Most importantly, the toolkit is informed by the voices and perspectives of diverse elders themselves, as well as their caregivers, with their insights and wisdom woven throughout.

Download the toolkit at <https://asaging.org/diverse-family-caregivers-toolkit>.

Also be sure to visit the Caregiving Resource Hub at [www.diverseelders.org/caregiving/](http://www.diverseelders.org/caregiving/).

Michael Adams is the CEO of SAGE in New York City and chairs American Society on Aging's Board of Directors. Ocean Le is senior program coordinator of the Diverse Elders Coalition, also in New York City.

This article originally appeared on the American Society on Aging website Generations Today. It is part of an ongoing Senior Voice series provided by the Diverse Elders Coalition, focusing on different segments of the senior population.

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# The best time to prepare for an emergency is right now

*Tips from Alaskan readiness experts*

By **KEN STEWART**

Senior Voice

September is Emergency Preparedness Month, and Alaska's unique geography can leave us vulnerable to a multitude of emergency situations like wildfires, earthquakes and tsunamis--to name a few. The Alaska Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness encourages all Alaskans to have two weeks worth of emergency supplies on hand, as well as a plan mapped out in advance.

Logan Stolpe, Emergency Management Specialist at Alaska Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management, recommends working with

***Living in rural communities poses additional challenges that those living in more metropolitan areas might not have to prepare for. You don't want to wait until there is a disaster and potential supply chain interruption before gathering the necessary supplies.***

your social networks to determine how you all will communicate and work together to stay safe in the event of a disaster.

"For example, I keep a wood burning stove with wood stock on hand," says Stolpe. "If an earthquake disturbs gas and electric utilities, and it's winter, I talked with my neighbors across the street about coming over and staying warm at my place."

The Alaska Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management recommends having at least two people in your

emergency network you can contact, as well as one out of area contact.

"Sometimes local calls won't go through during an emergency, but a call to the outside will sometimes go through instead," explains Audrey Gray, Emergency Programs Manager at Municipality of Anchorage.

If your household struggles to keep an entire two weeks' worth of supplies on hand, partner with your family, friends or neighbors to divide up and determine who has access to what and how you might all share with each other when disaster

strikes.

Another aspect of emergency situations is whether you will have to evacuate your home. In the event you must shelter in place, your emergency supplies can be stored wherever is most convenient. But if the emergency forces you out of your home, it is imperative to have a "go bag" stashed with all the necessary items to be out of your home for a week or two.

## Medications

The most important item to have in an emergency situation is a sufficient amount of your daily or weekly medications, usually enough to last a week. With that said, it can be difficult to obtain an extended supply of your prescribed medications from your insurance company or doctor's office.

Instead, Gray recom-

mends keeping a comprehensive list of your prescribed medications in your go bag to expedite receiving refills when they can be filled again.

Another tip from Art Nash, Energy Specialist at UAF Cooperative Extension, is to store over-the-counter medications and supplements in your go bag (Metamucil is a good one to have if you're sitting in one place for a while).

"Every so often, you should rotate out medications to make sure they don't expire," says Nash.

## Assistive devices

Make sure you always have access to any assistive devices you usually require. Keeping an extra pair of glasses, hearing aids or dentures in your go bag can save

*next page please*



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# Could I have COPD and not know it?

By **JIM MILLER**  
Savvy Senior

**Dear Savvy Senior:** I have struggled with shortness of breath for several years now. I just thought I was getting old and fat, but a friend recently told me about COPD.

## Emergency: Ready

from page 12  
you time while evacuating your house. If you're being evacuated with the help of first responders, ask for their help with gathering any assistive devices you need.

Another item emergency specialists recommend you have is a foldable walker that can double as a seat. Nash stresses that even if you don't usually use a walker, you might need it anyway because you could be injured. A foldable walker could be stored with your go bag in an easy to reach spot, or kept in your car or boat.

### Important documents

Keep photocopies of critical documentation in your go bag, says Stolpe, including your driver's license, state ID, the title to your car, house deed and insurance documents. Having these on hand can help you file insurance claims or apply for government assistance, depending on the extent of the disaster.

If you'd like, printing extra copies of beloved photos

page 31 please

So, my question is could I have COPD and not know it? — *Huffing and Puffing*

**Dear Huffing:** Yes. COPD, or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, is a progressive lung disease that affects an estimated 30 million Americans, but about half of them don't know they have it.

Many people mistake shortness of breath as a normal part of aging, or a result of being out of shape, but that's not necessarily the case. COPD – a term used to describe a variety of lung diseases including emphysema and chronic bronchitis – develops slowly, so symptoms may not be

obvious until damage has occurred.

Symptoms can include an ongoing cough or a cough that produces a lot of mucus, lack of energy and/or shortness of breath especially during physical activity, wheezing and chest tightness, blue lips or fingernails, or swelling in your feet, ankles or legs.

Those most at risk are smokers or former smokers over age 40, and people who have had long-term exposure to other lung irritants like secondhand smoke, air pollution, chemical fumes and dust. There is also a rare genetic condition known as alpha-1-antitrypsin, or AAT

deficiency that can increase the risks.

If you're experiencing any of the aforementioned symptoms, you need to get tested by your doctor. A simple breathing test called spirometry can tell if you have COPD, and if so, how severe it is. Early screening can also identify COPD before major loss of lung function occurs.

If you do indeed have COPD, you need to know that while there's no cure, there are things you can do to help manage symptoms and protect your lungs from further damage, including:

**Quit smoking.** If you smoke, the best thing you

can do to prevent more damage to your lungs is to quit. To get help, the National Cancer Institute offers a number of smoking cessation resources at [www.SmokeFree.gov](http://www.SmokeFree.gov) or call 1-800-QUIT-NOW. Or ask your doctor about prescription antismoking drugs that can help reduce your nicotine craving. If you smoke marijuana for a medical condition, talk to your doctor about edible versions

**Avoid air pollutants.** Stay away from things that could irritate your lungs like dust, allergens and strong fumes. Also, to help improve your

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Expect More



Even if you don't usually use a walker, you might need it anyway because you could be injured. A foldable walker that doubles as a seat could be stored with your go bag in an easy to reach spot, or kept in your car or boat.

\*Documentation of eligibility is required. Only one Lifeline Service is allowed per household. All Lifeline services not available in all areas. Terms and conditions apply. Subject to Alaska Communications Acceptable Use Policy and applicable agreements. Service not available in all locations. ©2021 Alaska Communications  
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# Classes return for lifelong learners

*OLE, OLLI offerings will be online, with some in-person*

By **KEN STEWART**  
*Senior Voice*

Fall is back to school time, with educational programs for older adults kicking off their fall semesters. Here is an overview of the OLE and OLLI programs' offerings.

**OLÉ! Anchorage**

OLÉ, which stands for Opportunities for Lifelong Education, is raring to go after a summer off with

classes both online and – on Fridays – in person. Whether you want to learn about invasive plants in Alaska, films from storytellers around the globe, seabirds and shorebirds, Antarctica or electric vehicles, OLÉ has classes! Online classes through Zoom take place Tuesdays and Wednesdays.

At press time, UAA plans to be open for OLÉ classes on Fridays. There are classes on theater, botany, strategies for tackling homelessness and the History of the Dena'ina People, plus many more.

The complete course catalogue is available on the OLÉ website at <https://ole-anchorage.org> and course selection (the first step in

registration) begins Sept. 2. The fall term begins Sept. 27. Membership is required to register, but you may join online with the \$200 annual fee.

**OLLI in Fairbanks**

"A health club for your mind," as their website endearingly states, Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) at the University of Fairbanks will be offering a mix of distance-delivered (via Zoom) and in-person classes for Fall 2021.

Classes are offered to adults age 50 and older and topics cover films and photography, healthy living, science and mathematics, computer applications and much more.

Fall registration opened Aug. 11 with the upcoming semester commencing on Sept. 13. and running until Nov. 19. Classes will be offered Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30

p.m. with a few evening classes offered from 5:30 to 6:45 p.m.

Members can pay \$35 per year plus \$15 tuition per course and Unlimited Members can pay \$185 for the year with no per-course tuition. Visit <https://uaf.edu/olli/courses/registration.php> to register for a membership.

Vaccination for COVID-19 will be required for in-person participants.

**University of Alaska for seniors**

The University of Alaska waives regular tuition for Alaska residents who have reached age 65 and older, in addition to meeting other criteria. Eligibility is extended to permanent residents of Alaska, those receiving full (unreduced) Social Security retirement benefits and if space is available for the desired class. Seniors using tuition

waivers must also wait until the first day of semester course instruction to register – registering prior to the first day of instruction will result in having to pay full tuition. Seniors are still responsible for lab and material fees, the Campus Consolidated Fee and Network Charge.

To view the full policy, links to class catalogues and the tuition waiver form for UAA, visit <https://catalog.uaa.alaska.edu/academicpoliciesprocesses/tuitionfees/> and scroll down to the bottom of the page to "Senior Citizen Tuition Waiver."

To view the same information for UAF visit <https://www.uaf.edu/bursar/for-students/tuition-waivers.php> or for UAS visit <https://uas.alaska.edu/student-accounts/waivers.html>.

## A story for every garage sale memento

By **MARALEY MCMICHAEL**  
*Senior Voice Correspondent*

The garage sale signs were posted on each side of the driveway, so I knew we were expected and welcome, but I still had mixed feelings. An older gentleman in our community of Slana back in the summer of 2010, had sold his home and moved to Tok. His lifetime accumulation of personal belongings needed to be removed from the property.

A Norwegian immigrant, he moved to Alaska in 1966, making his living as a commercial fisherman, a trapper, and a carpenter. He embraced the homesteader lifestyle. Beside the house, he had the usual assortment of out buildings: generator shed, workshop, garage, storage building, outhouse and so forth.

I recognized neighbors and friends as my husband and I drove in and soon met the gentleman's daughter, also an Alaskan, but one who lived 350 miles south. She explained the procedure for the sale, "Half the bedroom is blocked off and not for sale, otherwise, wander around the whole house and take a look."

She also said we were free to poke around in the boxes in the nearby storage building, but that she hadn't been able to access everything, let alone sort through it all, so if we brought an item out that she hadn't yet seen, it might not be for sale.

"Also, nothing is priced," the daughter continued, "That's impossible." She suggested that we create a pile of things were interested in and she would then give a price for the whole lot and go from there.

I had known this homesteader's wife, a lovely woman who had passed away several years earlier, and I was drawn to this sale particularly to pick up something to remember her by. Soon I saw a great assortment of books I couldn't pass over and ended up looking at title by title.

As I slowly made my way through the living room so filled with belongings, a pair of touristy Alaskan Forget-Me-Not salt and pepper shakers caught my eye. Nice and small, I decided they would be my memento, but before I left

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# Nominations sought for excellence in Alaskan historic preservation

Application deadline is Oct. 1

Senior Voice Staff

Preservation Alaska, also known as the Alaska Association for Historic Preservation (AAHP), seeks nominations for its 14th Annual Historic Preservation Award. This award honors excellence in historic preservation throughout Alaska by recognizing a project, organization, agency or individual exemplifying the highest standards in Alaska preservation in different categories: Lifetime Achievement, Adaptive Use, Stabilization, Renovation and Restoration Projects; and the Stewardship Award for property owners, organizations, firms, governmental organizations and individuals.

Two new categories have been added this year:

- The Robert Mitchell His-

toric Architect Award was created in honor of the late Robert Mitchell who passed away this past spring. Mitchell was a long-time member of Preservation Alaska and was involved in various historic preservation projects. He worked as an architect for almost six decades. This award is specific to architects working on historic preservations projects.

► Historic Advocacy has been added to the Stewardship Award, which recognizes a person who advocated for funding and put the people together for a successful project but does not have historic preservation background.

The honoree(s) will be announced at the organization's annual meeting in November 2021. Last year's recipients were the Iditarod Historic Trail Alliance and

the Fraternal Order of the Alaska State Troopers.

Instructions, eligibility criteria and the forms to submit a nomination for the 2021 AAHP Historic Preservation Award can be found online at <https://alaskapreservation.org>. For more information or to obtain the program's overview and nomination form, contact Trish Neal, President of Preservation Alaska at 907-929-9870 or via email at [AKPreservation@gmail.com](mailto:AKPreservation@gmail.com). Nominations may be sent via email or mailed to AAHP at AAHP, PO Box 102025, Anchorage, AK 99510.

The deadline for all nominations is October 1, 2021.

*Founded in 1982 as a private, nonprofit corporation, Preservation Alaska is dedicated to the preservation of Alaska's prehistoric and historic cultural resources.*

## Rambles

News from the Grapevine

Attention Anchorage bowlers: **Jewel Lake Bowling Center** is looking for more participants for its **senior bowling league**, which bowls on Mondays and Thursdays. Call the bowling center for details at 248-2634. Ask for **Bob ... Kenai Senior Center** is calling all pinochle players to join in the gaming Mondays, 12:30 p.m. Beginners interested in learning are encouraged to contact Kayla to sign up for an upcoming class. Call 283-4156 for details ... **Wasilla Senior Center** holds **line dancing lessons** on Tuesdays at 2 p.m. This is through their Club 50 activities program, which requires a membership. However, there are different membership options depending on what you need so don't be discouraged from checking it out. Call 907-206-8807 ... In its August newsletter, the **Anchorage Senior Activity Center** published a progress update on its **major renovations**. The 16,800 pound skylight in the main lobby was removed and recycled in July and the replacement should be completed any time now. Major interior renovations will be broken into four phases, starting with the main lobby and bathroom. In

page 16 please



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

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

#### Anchorage Area

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

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

Independent Living Center  
47255 Princeton Ave., Ste 8, Soldotna, AK 99669  
907-262-6333 / 1-800-770-7911 [www.peninsulailc.org](http://www.peninsulailc.org)

#### Southeast Alaska

Southeast Alaska Independent Living (SAIL)  
3225 Hospital Dr., Ste 300, Juneau, AK 99801  
1-800-478-SAIL (7245) [www.sailinc.org](http://www.sailinc.org)

#### Mat-Su Borough

LINKS Aging & Disability Resource Center  
777 N. Crusey St., A101, Wasilla, AK 99654  
907-373-3632 / 1-855-355-3632 [www.linksprc.org](http://www.linksprc.org)

#### Fairbanks North Star Borough

Fairbanks Senior Center - North Star Council on Aging  
1424 Moore St., Fairbanks, AK 99701  
907-452-2551 [www.fairbanksseniorcenter.org](http://www.fairbanksseniorcenter.org)

#### Bristol Bay Native Association

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



1-877-625-2372

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.





# Rambles

News from the Grapevine

continued from page 15

ate September, demolition and remodeling will begin in the fitness, dance, gift shop, cafeteria and additional bathrooms, with completion in mid December. New carpet and interior painting in the lobby and library areas starts in December and kitchen upgrades in January, with completion scheduled for Jan. 28, 2022 ... Also at the **Anchorage Senior Activity Center**, **volunteers** are wanted to help get their games activities going again, now that the center has reopened. If you're interested in leading games – maybe cribbage? A board game? – contact **Diane Pyle** at ak49er@alaska.net or 907-529-5472 ... **Marie Billings** is teaching **tai chi classes** at **Soldotna Senior Center** on Wednesdays and Fridays, 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. Tai chi is low impact and excellent for joints and balance. Attendees who are vaccinated for COVID-19 will get their temperature taken before class and masks are optional. For unvaccinated participants, masks are required. Call for more information, 907-262-2322 ... The **board of directors** of **Santa's Senior Center** in **North Pole** will meet Sept. 8 at 1 p.m. If you would like to attend, contact the center's office so arrangements can be made. Call 907-488-4663

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

# Letting go: Memories

continued from page 14

I wanted to check out the storage building.

Outside in the yard, I consulted with my husband who had found nothing he needed and was ready to leave, but he was also content to visit with neighbors while I walked up to the storage shed. The building he was most interested in, the workshop with all the power tools, was not open to the public.

I found the 15' x 20' foot storage shed full, from floor to ceiling. Shelving three layers high surrounded the perimeter of the room as well as a block of shelving down the center. There was a walkway access, but it was more like a trail with contents from the shelves spilling out everywhere. I didn't even attempt to check out the top shelves. Not long after I began poking around the many layers of boxes and bags, I became overwhelmed and soon walked away with nothing. Although we didn't have a garage sale, these personal belongings could just

as easily be my dad and mother's stuff that my three siblings and I had sorted through the previous summer.

We had gathered at three different locations around Alaska and opened boxes, many times looking at things we'd never before seen. We completely cleaned out one house to get ready to rent, but otherwise did not finish our difficult task. And this summer, no one had the time, energy or motivation to continue the project.

At times last summer, sorting through our parents' lifetime of personal belongings seemed like an impossible, monumental task – especially because they grew up during the Great Depression and never threw anything away. But at other times, I was so thrilled to discover a family history treasure. I learned more about my paternal grandmother, who died years before I was born. We found some remnants of her quilt-making in a box that hadn't seen the light of day since 1947 and discovered and read a few of her letters to my dad from the 1940s, both of which gave me a little more insight into this grandmother.

Eventually I decided to view the process as a treasure hunt and was ultimately thankful that we kids still had the opportunity of discovering treasure. I'd heard sad stories of the opposite extreme. Like one where in the process of the parents getting rid of their stuff just so the kids wouldn't have to deal with it, some family heirlooms were lost forever. Or another story where the family suffered loss of treasures due to fire.

While looking for the daughter to ask for a price on my pile of treasures, I noticed the old homesteader observing friends, neighbors and a few strangers sifting through his personal be-



Dried beans and salt and pepper set bought at a 2010 Slana yard sale.

Maraley McMichael photo

longings. He wore a pained expression most of the time, but his face broke into a smile when one of his young great-granddaughters asked him a question.

Then a man at the sale, a stranger to me, asked him if a certain unique item had a story behind it. I wasn't the least surprised at the reply in the familiar Norwegian accent, "Everything here has a story to it." That would have been my father's response, too.

As I tried to picture my dad in this same situation, I couldn't. The summer before he died, he told me he had never even been to a garage/yard sale, and I know for certain he and mom never held a sale. In fact, once someone told him a lot of items in his living room should be in a museum. "Why would I want to give my things away to a museum? I enjoy looking at them," had been his reply.

I came home with more than one memento and several useful items that were just too great to pass up at garage sale prices, including a case of 2-pound bags of Jacob's Cattle dried beans. I also came away with a sense of admiration for this gentleman and his daughter, knowing how difficult letting go must have been for both of them. I'm sure most of the other buyers felt the same way.

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

## Spotlight: State Budget Conversation Series, presented by AARP and the Alaska Municipal League

AARP and Alaska Municipal League (AML) invite you to join them as Alaska's legislators discuss possible budget solutions to resolve the state's fiscal crisis on Thursdays from 12-1 pm starting August 26<sup>th</sup>.

- August 26:** Issue overview presentations
- September 2:** Oil tax discussion
- September 9:** Alternative tax solution discussion
- September 16:** State sales tax discussion
- September 23:** Income tax discussion

View details and register for individual events by visiting [aarp.org](http://aarp.org) and clicking "State Revenue Solutions Conversation Series" or by calling 1-877-926-8300.







# Genealogy seminar meets via Zoom, Oct. 2

Senior Voice Staff

Anchorage Genealogical Society holds its fall seminar Oct. 2, virtually via Zoom this year. The seminar will be led by Lisa Alzo, a freelance writer, instructor and internationally recognized lecturer specializing in Slovak/Eastern European genealogical research, writing family histories, and using the internet to trace female and immigrant ancestors. She is the author of nine books and numerous magazine articles.

Seminar sessions will include “10 Ways to Jump Start your Eastern European Research”; “Immigrant Cluster Communities: Past, Present and Future”; “Make Those Skeletons Dance”; “Show Don’t Tell: Creative Non-Fiction Writing for Genealogists”. Attendance is free for AGS members and non-members can register for just \$20. Visit [www.anchorage-genealogy.org](http://www.anchorage-genealogy.org) for more information and to download a seminar registration form.

# 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, 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 September meeting is Sept. 8, hosted by Alaska Health Fair, Inc. 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.

# Don’t let your Senior Farmer’s Market coupons go to waste

Senior Voice Staff

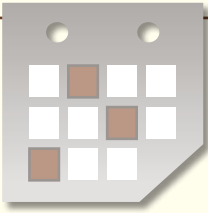
There’s still time to grab and use this year’s Senior Farmer’s Market coupon booklet, distributed through local senior centers and other agencies. Each booklet includes five coupons valued at \$7 each, which can be used to buy fresh produce and other items at local farmer’s markets, authorized roadside stands and other select locations. Applicants must be at least 60 years old and meet low-income

eligibility guidelines. Links to the online application and a list of where to get the booklets are at the state’s Dept. of Health and Social Services website. Go to <https://bit.ly/3w3IPAD> and scroll down to the “Senior Farmer’s Market Nutrition Program” section. Or call your local senior center or meal program for details. There’s also a proxy application form that allows someone to apply on behalf of someone else. Coupons may be used through Sept. 30.

# 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.

- Sept. 3-4: Bethel** 2021 Bethel Community Fair at Yupiit Piciryarait Cultural Center and Lion’s Club Park. A variety of activities for all ages, including carnival games, Bethel’s Got Talent show and field day games. Masks required inside the cultural center. Call the Kuskokwim Consortium Library at 907-543-4516 or visit Facebook: 2021 Bethel Community Fair
- Sept. 6: Fairbanks** Labor Day Celebration at Pioneer Park Gazebo, noon to 8 p.m. Artists will be playing at the gazebo all day, and there will be youth games, food vendors, mini golf, scavenger hunt and shops to check out. Facebook: Fairbanks North Star Borough Labor Day Celebration
- Sept. 8: Statewide** “How Music Shapes the Brain” Online, 2:30 p.m. One Day University Lecture Series with neuroscientist and opera singer/director Dr. Indre Viskontas illustrating the wide ranging power of music to shape our brains. Visit <https://local.aarp.org/aarp-event/> and select “See all AARP events” on the right hand side of the page. Scroll down until you find the event, and click to register.
- Sept. 11: Nationwide** Patriot Day
- Sept. 11: Anchorage** Dimond Center Car Show at Dimond Center East Parking Lot, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Drive cars in at about 9 a.m. The show starts at 10 a.m. and breaks up around 3 p.m. Call Jim Fredenhagen, chair, at 907-351-3115 for more information.
- Sept. 12: Nationwide** Grandparents’ Day
- Sept. 15: Kenai** Writer’s Group at Kenai Senior Center Game Room, 1 p.m. Share your drafts, proofread and tell your story every Wednesday. Call the Center at 907-283-4156 for more information.
- Sept. 15-16: Worldwide** Yom Kippur
- Sept. 17: Wasilla** Bingocize at Wasilla Area Seniors, Inc. Meeting Room, 10 to 11 a.m. Come play bingo and meet new people while learning about new techniques to reduce falls. Every Tuesday and Friday. Space is limited. Call 907-376-3104 to register.
- Sept. 18: Sitka** Sitka Farmer’s Market at Harrigan Centennial Hall, 330 Harbor Dr., 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Fresh local produce, fish, baked goods, prepared foods, cottage foods and arts and crafts, all made in Alaska. Visit [www.sitkalocalfoods-network.org](http://www.sitkalocalfoods-network.org) for more information.
- Sept. 21: Palmer** Rock Painting at Palmer Senior Center, 2 p.m. All painting supplies and rocks are provided, but bring your favorite rock to paint, if you wish. Call the center at 907-745-5454 for more information.
- Sept. 23-25: Fairbanks** Pioneers of Alaska 2021 Grand Igloo Convention at Pike’s Waterfront Lodge. Theme: “Dredging Up the Past”. Hosted by Fairbanks Men’s Igloo No. 4 and Women’s Igloo No. 8. Online participation via Zoom is an option for those who cannot or prefer not to attend in person. This will be a business meeting with most recreational activities curtailed due to COVID concerns. Information and full registration packet are available at [www.pioneersofalaska.org](http://www.pioneersofalaska.org).
- Sept. 27: Chugiak** Knitwits Group at Chugiak-Eagle River Senior Center, 3:30 p.m. Meeting every Monday and Thursday, the Knitwits get together around a table to visit while working on knitting projects, either together or individually. Call the center at 907-688-2674 for more information.
- Sept. 28: Statewide** Family Guardian Network monthly meeting, 4 to 5:15 p.m. via Zoom. Networking opportunity for family guardians and conservators (or non-professional guardians and conservators). Learn, listen, discuss questions, concerns, successes and struggles with our fellow guardians. Visit <https://asaga.info> and register from the calendar of events site. An email will be sent to you with the Zoom invitation on the morning of the event.



**Send us your calendar items**  
Send to: Senior Voice, 3340 Arctic Blvd., Suite 106, Anchorage AK 99503  
[editor@seniorvoicealaska.com](mailto:editor@seniorvoicealaska.com)  
Deadline for October edition is September 15.

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# Crime syndicate and the Keystone Canyon affair

By LAUREL DOWNING BILL  
Senior Voice Correspondent

Prospectors searching for gold in the Wrangell mountains during the early 1900s found a mountain of copper instead. That discovery brought the famous Guggenheim-Morgan Syndicate into the history of Alaska, along with chicanery of the highest order.

The Syndicate, which owned the copper mines, needed a transportation system to haul its lucrative cargo. It planned a railroad line in the Copper River valley that ran 196 miles from Cordova to the site of what became the Kennecott Copper mines. The Guggenheims also hoped to use their railroad to exploit large coal fields near Cordova and to ship the coal to West Coast markets.

But other railroads also were being built, and often the railroad gangs clashed. Such was the case in fall 1907. A rival crew working on a railroad from Valdez were confronted by a rock barricade erected by the Guggenheims when they entered the Keystone Canyon, leading to Thompson Pass.

Armed with tools, the Valdez railroad men marched toward the Syndicate's obstruction on Sept. 25. They were met with gunfire backed by badges.

Local Syndicate officials had convinced the U.S. Marshal in Fairbanks to issue temporary deputy marshal commissions to Syndicate employees, including a man named Edward C. Hasey. Sheltered behind the barricade, Hasey shot three marchers, killing one.

A grand jury was hastily convened. And even though Territorial Gov. Wilford B. Hoggatt, a well-known Syndicate supporter, hurried to Valdez to intervene on Hasey's behalf, the gunman was indicted for murder. His trial then was moved to Juneau, since ill sentiments against the Syndicate abounded in Valdez.

Prior to the trial, however, Gov. Hoggatt was successful in convincing the Justice Department to remove the U.S. Attorney who'd refused to allow Hoggatt to interfere with the Valdez Grand Jury proceedings.

Then the Guggenheims put one of the Valdez railroad workmen on its payroll and prepared him to testify in Hasey's trial to say that the Valdez workers were armed when they marched on the barricade in Keystone Canyon.

After several weeks of testimony in spring 1908, the jurors found that Hasey's fear of bodily harm by the Valdez railroad crew justified his shooting in self defense. They acquitted him of the murder

charge. But in February 1909, Hasey was found guilty on a second charge of assault. He served 18 months at McNeil Island, receiving full pay and benefits for his family during his incarceration.

Perhaps blinded by its success at paying off a witness in the Keystone Canyon murder trial and getting the U.S. Attorney removed from the Territory, Syndicate officials next persuaded their workers to line up

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*This engine chugging across newly erected tracks over the Copper River in 1909 was a part of the railroad system in early Alaska, which the Guggenheim-Morgan Syndicate needed to haul copper and gold to markets.*

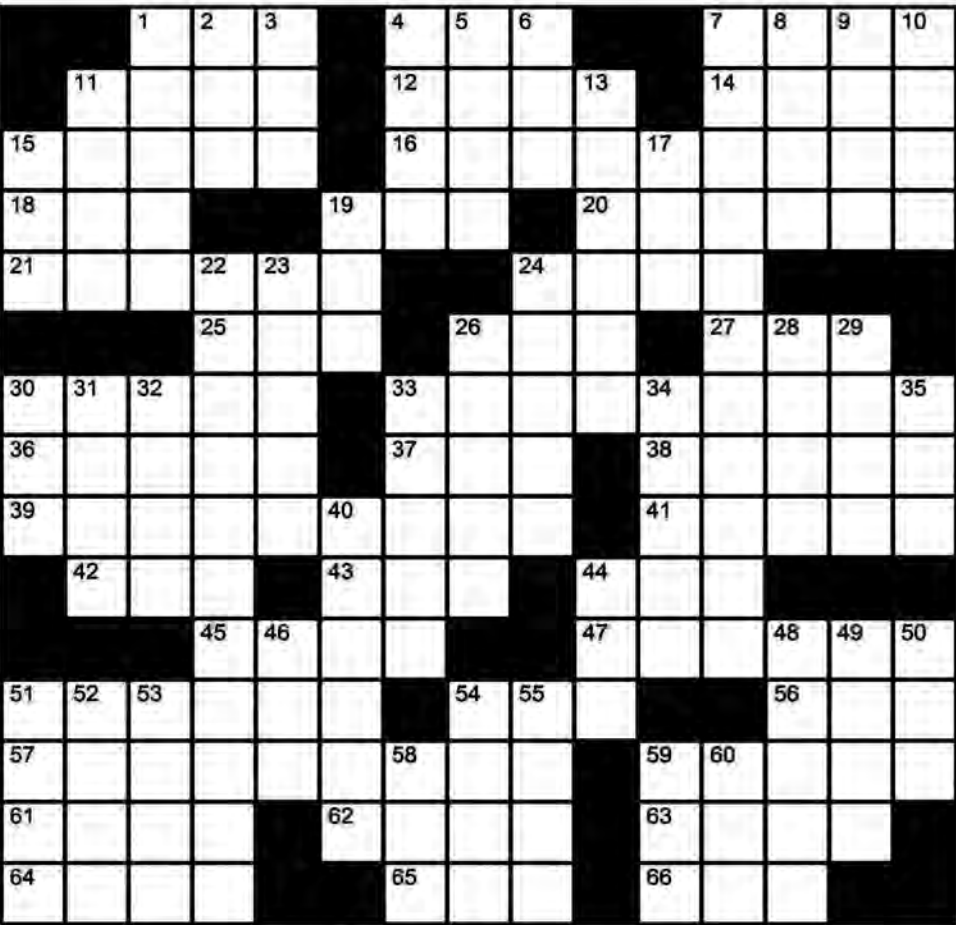
*Photo courtesy University of Washington, THW308*



## First in Line

### Across

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- 4 Spigot
- 7 \_\_\_ Pet (novelty item)
- 11 Metric weight
- 12 *Mila 18* author Leon
- 14 Feed bag contents
- 15 Like a beach
- 16 Item forerunner
- 18 Bullfight cry
- 19 Norse god
- 20 Turkish capital
- 21 Citizen forerunner
- 24 Humane org.
- 25 Peacock network
- 26 Actress Barbara \_\_\_ Geddes
- 27 Baseball stats (Abbr.)
- 30 Wait on
- 33 Comb forerunner
- 36 Ribbon holder
- 37 Stomach muscles, for short
- 38 Golf aims
- 39 Too late forerunner
- 41 Embrace, as a cause
- 42 Comic Gilliam
- 43 Chowd down
- 44 Cobbler's tool
- 45 Not one
- 47 Fly forerunner
- 51 Notes forerunner
- 54 Be musical, kind of
- 56 Ump's call
- 57 Spears forerunner
- 59 Plant life
- 61 Aspersion
- 62 Anger



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| 64 Theater award      | 15 Plea at sea             | 40 Sauce forerunner       |
| 65 Herd of seals      | 17 Business abbr.          | 44 Cash source            |
| 66 Affirmative        | 19 ___ de Triomphe         | 46 Tire filler            |
|                       | 22 Manslaughter forerunner | 48 Honks                  |
|                       | 23 Manuscript daggers      | 49 Positive               |
|                       | 24 Good judgment           | 50 Gr. letter             |
|                       | 26 Hotel room item         | 51 Former                 |
|                       | 28 Marco ___               | 52 Norse capital          |
|                       | 29 Footfall                | 53 Rotated                |
|                       | 30 Retired flier           | 54 French poet Victor     |
|                       | 31 Heroic poem             | 55 Employed               |
|                       | 32 Origin                  | 58 Breach                 |
|                       | 33 Oleaginous              | 59 Sauté                  |
|                       | 34 Melts                   | 60 Fish story             |

Crossword answers on page 30





# Claudia Wells went 'Back to the Future'

By NICK THOMAS

Tinseltown Talks

When the Los Angeles Hollywood Museum reopened in August, having closed its doors to the public during much of the pandemic, Claudia Wells was one of many guests invited to celebrate the event that included a "Back to the Future" exhibit ([www.the-hollywoodmuseum.com](http://www.the-hollywoodmuseum.com)).

Wells appeared in the original 1985 movie as Jennifer Parker, girlfriend to Marty McFly played by Michael J. Fox who starred in the beloved movie trilogy. Diagnosed with Parkinson's disease in 1991 at age 29, Fox later established the Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research ([www.michaeljfox.org](http://www.michaeljfox.org)) which was also presented with a \$5,000.00 donation during the event.

"I'm a big cheerleader for the Back to the Future trilogy," said Wells from Los Angeles (see [www.claudiawells.com](http://www.claudiawells.com)). "So, anything I can do to promote the movies and help support Michael, I'm there with bells on."

"Back to the Future" was Wells' first movie role. Her scenes were brief but memorable, as was her first day

ing Fox for the first time. "They were filming the Enchantment Under the Sea dance scene at a church and I was sent around to meet Michael. He came outside, gave me a hug, and told me he was looking forward to working with me. He was very positive, upbeat, kind, funny, natural and great fun to work with."

But when time came to reprise her role four years later in "Back to the Future Part II," Wells was unavailable due to a family illness and was replaced by Elizabeth Shue in Parts II and III.

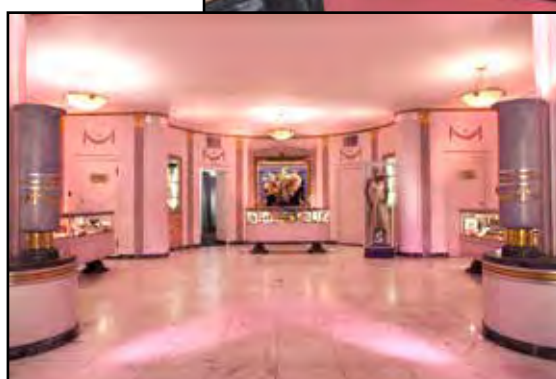
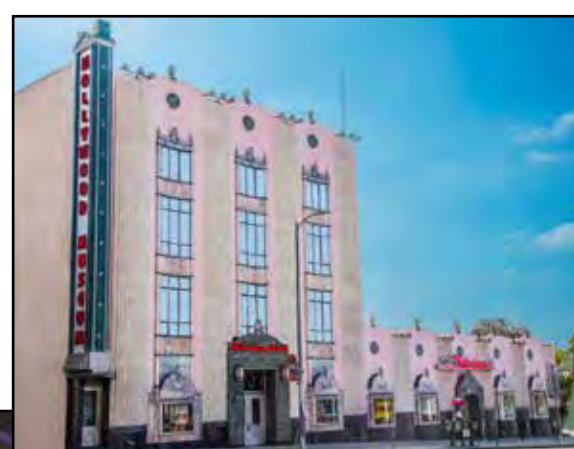
"I've met fans who remember watching Part II when it came out and didn't even notice a different actress was playing Jennifer," Wells said. "But others told me they were screaming at the screen wondering why there was a different Jennifer."

Despite bumping into other cast members of the trilogy while traveling the film convention circuit over the years, 'the two Jenni-

([www.armaniwells.com](http://www.armaniwells.com)), a menswear store in Studio City. "The store will be 30 years old in December. I am so fortunate to have found two different careers that are completely fulfilling."

Wells says she was thrilled to be included in the reopening of the Hollywood

Museum, especially with its "Back to the Future" exhibit and its support of the Michael J. Fox Foundation.



(above, top) The Hollywood Museum in the historic Max Factor Building.

(above) Part of the Back to the Future exhibit.

(left) The Hollywood Museum lobby.

Provided by the Hollywood Museum

"Michael was able to hide the disease for a number of years and I was absolutely flabbergasted when I first heard he was diagnosed," she said. "He was so good at physical comedy and so healthy. But he has not only been an inspiration to others who have Parkinson's but has encouraged research that will hopefully lead to a cure one day."

Nick Thomas has written features, columns, and interviews for numerous magazines and newspapers. See [www.tinseltowntalks.com](http://www.tinseltowntalks.com).



Claudia Wells and Michael J. Fox in 1985's "Back to the Future".

Universal Pictures

on the set.

"It was the last scene of the movie with me, Michael and Christopher Lloyd in the car," she recalled. "I remember when he (Lloyd) got out of the car and raised up those metal glasses on his face, it ripped the old-age make-up on his forehead and we had to wait for hours for him to get the make-up redone to shoot again."

She also recalls meet-

fers' have never met (who knows what that might do to the space-time continuum!). "I'd love to meet Elizabeth because I think she's just a brilliant actress and I was actually quite flattered when they cast her in the role."

After an acting gap of about 20 years, Wells returned to film and television. She also opened and still runs Armani Wells

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# Senior housing springs up around Alaska

## Exploding elderly population spurs development

By DIMITRA LAVRAKAS

For Senior Voice

Since its inception 47 years ago, Cook Inlet Housing Authority (CIHA) has seen the state's elderly population skyrocket. According to CIHA statistics, in 1990, Alaska's overall population stood at 550,000 and the state's median age was 29. Approximately 6 percent of the state's population was over age 60 at the time. Of those, about 1,200 Alaskans were over the age of 85. Some 47 years later, the state population now stands at 731,000; the median age has grown to 36, and the 60 and over population has more than tripled from 1990 to represent 19 percent of the overall population, representing a near 300 percent growth rate over the period.

One of the most helpful of state departments, Alaska Housing Finance Corp., as well as CIHA, offers a helping hand to first-time homeowners, renters and seniors searching for housing.

Over 1,000 senior housing units have been developed by AHFC, and even seniors who want to remain in their

homes can with AHFC's funding of design upgrades and accessibility improvements.

But there are more organizations developing senior residences — Catholic

Social Services, Covenant House, Wasilla Area Seniors, Inc., AVCP (Assoc. of Village Council Presidents) Regional Housing Authority in the Bethel and Kusilvak Census Areas, Valley Residential Services in Wasilla, Palmer Senior Citizens Center, Weidner Apartments, Abused Women's Aid in Crisis, and more.

### Wasilla seniors have choices

Wasilla Area Seniors Housing consists of six housing complexes: Knik Manor, Raven Tree Court, Alder View, Susitna Place, Eagle's Nest, and Blueberry Pointe (in Houston), said Wasilla Area Seniors, Inc. (WASI) Housing Manager Alison Dormer in an email. The five buildings house 128 units for those 62 years or older.

Each building has a common area for congregate games, puzzles, reading or TV. Surrounding the housing complexes are large grassy areas and a picnic pavilion complete with a gas grill and gazebo-covered seating.

WASI received a grant this summer and used it to purchase and install five new greenhouses and many raised garden beds on both the Wasilla Campus and at Blueberry Pointe.

This fall, they will open their newest apartments at Willow House, a 40-unit building for households 55 or older and include all the amenities of the Wasilla campus. Willow House offers a preference for veterans, and for homeless households. Applications are now being accepted and occupancy is expected to begin this year in late October.

To qualify, only one member of the household must be 55 or older. Applications are now being accepted with occupancy planned for Nov. 1. Thirty units are one-bedroom and 10 units are two-bedroom. There will be lockable, heated storage available in the building for each unit. Major appliances include washers and dryers in each unit. Residents pay their own electric, phone, internet and cable.

One-bedroom rents range from \$750 to \$950 and two-bedrooms rent from \$900 to \$1,150, depending on income. Applicants and residents who receive reduced rent based on income must qualify every year. Veterans and the homeless



The interior and the exterior are under construction at Cook Inlet Housing Authority's Qevu Village, located in south Anchorage just off Huffman Road on the Old Seward Highway.

Photo courtesy Cassey Bradley-Leonardis/CIHA

receive preference and documentation is required.

Qualifying annual incomes are: for one person, under \$32,100 to \$39,900; and for two, \$36,650 to \$45,600. Low-income rents range from \$645 to \$955, and market rates are \$935 to \$1,150, with most rents including heat and electricity, but not internet, telephone or cable TV. Residents at Blueberry Pointe and Willow House pay their own electricity.

Visit <https://www.wasillaseniors.com/housing> for more information.

### Cook Inlet Housing Authority offers Anchorage housing

Qevu Village is Cook Inlet Housing's first housing development to be located in South Anchorage.

Qevu (Keh Vu) is the Upper Dena'ina (Tyonek, Susitna Station, Knik and Eklutna) word meaning colorful sunrise or sunset, and "village" is a naming convention used by CIHA to celebrate "community," the use of "village" also recognizes that in an Alaska Native village everyone

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## Temporary halt on evictions extended to Oct. 3

### Alaska Housing Finance Corp. ready to help

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued a new order temporarily halting evictions in areas with heightened levels of community transmission of COVID-19. The order makes it illegal to evict any individual who qualifies, and allows tenants to stay in their housing through Oct. 3, 2021.

Meanwhile, state of Alaska officials are still determining the specifics of this new order. The

most current guidelines are numbered below. Go to <https://www.alaskahousingrelief.org/renters/eviction-guidance> for updated information.

### Eligibility requirements

In order to qualify for the eviction protection, you must declare that you have made your best effort to obtain all available government assistance for rent or housing. You either:

1. Earned no more than \$99,000 (or \$198,000 if filing jointly) in calendar year 2020, or
2. Expect to earn no more than \$99,000 in an-

nual income for calendar year 2021 (or no more than \$198,000 if filing a joint tax return), or

3. Were not required to report any income in 2020 to the IRS, or

4. Received an Economic Impact Payment (stimulus check)

5. Are unable to pay the full rent due to substantial loss of household income, loss of compensable hours of work or wages, a layoff, or extraordinary out-of-pocket medical expenses

6. You are making your best effort to make timely partial payments that are as close to the full payment as your circumstances may permit, taking into

account other non-discretionary expenses

7. Eviction would likely lead to homelessness — or force you to move into and live in close quarters in a new shared living setting — because you have no other available housing options; and

8. You reside in a U.S. area experiencing substantial or high rates of community transmission levels of COVID-19 as defined by the CDC.

To find out if your area is categorized as having substantial or high rates of community transmission, go to: <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#county-view>.

Go on the AHFC website to review all the requirements to avoid evictions.

While the eviction order does not apply to homeowners if you are struggling to pay a mortgage you may be eligible to request hardship forbearance. Learn more at <https://www.alaskahousingrelief.org/homeowners>.

For homeowners who need counseling for mortgage problems, go to <https://bit.ly/3kgVRXv>, which is the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development page for foreclosure avoidance counseling if you are behind in your mortgage payments.





# Home automation do's and don'ts

By **BOB DELAURENTIS**  
*Senior Wire*

In the decades since George Jetson previewed his push-button lifestyle, some of us have dreamed of a smart home of our very own. Yet this branch of technology has resisted the kind of progress that has put supercomputers in our pockets.

Most home automation products are hard to set up, they do not work and play well with others, and even the best devices are occasionally unresponsive. Like a desert mirage, visions of a push-button future always feel just out of reach.

Automation has crept into a few spaces in our house, with limited success. My wife and I increasingly depend on conveniences like voice-controlled lights, an automated

smart light bulbs, they do not require a dedicated network hub and they work with our existing floor lamps.

Connecting Wemo switches to your home Wi-Fi the first time should be easier. But once set up they work very well. I started with a single switch a few years ago, and now our house is full of them.

Wemo equipped lighting can be grouped into different scenes, triggered either by voice, an app tap, or configured with individual timers. The lights are smart enough to adapt to the different times for sunrise and sunset each day. I can also check any light's status when I am not



*Belkin Wemo switches are relatively inexpensive and can be installed by the homeowner. If someone in your household has mobility issues, voice controlled lights can be a life changer.*

reset the thermostat.

### Door video

We also had help installing a new front door light fixture that contained a video camera. The design of our house made this an especially useful upgrade, but this device requires a user account on a third-party website. As soon as I find a product that does not require an outside account

and a monthly service fee, I expect to replace this fixture.

### Choosing an 'ecosystem'

The key to understanding the home automation landscape starts with recognizing that there are three popular network "ecosystems" available, and you should try to stick with a single one. The "big three" network systems are Apple HomeKit, Amazon Alexa and Google Home. The easiest way to minimize compatibility headaches is to pick one and stick with it. All three cover the basics, so the best choice is probably the company you are already

familiar with.

Generally speaking, I think Apple has the best security and privacy technology. Amazon is the least expensive and has the best voice response. Google's biggest strength is its integration with Android.

Once you select a network ecosystem, look for switches and other control devices compatible with that system. Before you purchase an automation product, you should make sure that it is compatible with the other devices you plan to use. Note that some products rely on specialized

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**Most home automation products are hard to set up, they do not work and play well with others, and even the best devices are occasionally unresponsive. Like a desert mirage, visions of a push-button future always feel just out of reach.**

thermostat, and a front door video camera. While these technologies deliver benefits, they still do not work as reliably as a simple light switch.

As a tech writer, I explore these products to share my experiences with readers. Home automation definitely has improved my quality of life. But I must make clear at the outset that all home automation products require considerable patience to install and maintain. Moreover, the network services needed to make home automation work create significant privacy concerns.

### Lighting

My mother still uses a traditional outlet timer to control a lamp in her living room. It is ancient technology, effortless to install, and it works every time. Thanks to Belkin Wemo switches, the lights in my house behave like something out of "Star Trek." These switches are relatively inexpensive, and they can be installed by the homeowner. Unlike

at home. If someone in your household has mobility issues, voice controlled lights can be a life changer. Two big thumbs up for Wemo switches paired with either an Amazon Echo or Apple HomePod.

### Controlling the temperature

The next area we decided to tackle was indoor climate. We were using a simple, battery-operated thermostat that changed the temperature several times a day. It worked, sort of. We never could find a one-size-fits-all schedule that was comfortable.

Because our house is older, we needed professional help installing an Echobee3 Lite thermostat. Many owners can install it themselves, but we needed extra wiring. The Echobee does not have the most features, but it does the important job I wanted most: the ability to turn the heater on from my phone when I need to warm the house. No more frigid early-morning mad dashes downstairs to

### COOK INLET HOUSING AUTHORITY

Since its creation 46 years ago, Cook Inlet Housing Authority (CIHA) has earned a reputation for developing sustainable, innovative senior housing communities that are welcoming and encourage active lifestyles. With multiple properties in Anchorage and on the Kenai Peninsula, CIHA meets the housing needs of hundreds of Alaskan seniors. With the addition of Qevu Village in South Anchorage this fall, that number will grow.

"We believe that our senior residents are an invaluable asset to our community," says CIHA President and CEO Carol Gore. "That's why we are



so committed to improving residents' quality of life through the promotion of independence and self-sufficiency."

This commitment is displayed through CIHA's Resident Engagement Program, which offers activities, events and amenities designed to recognize, entertain, educate and empower residents. Depending on the senior housing location, this program can include bus transportation, clubs, holiday celebra-

tions, and access to computer labs and libraries. CIHA also coordinates guest speakers and educational events, monthly blood pressure checks, annual flu shots, COVID-19 vaccines and income tax filing assistance through a network of local partnerships.

CIHA expects Qevu Village to be ready for occupancy in South Anchorage in September 2021. Applications are being accepted now for potential tenants. To learn more about the development, visit [www.cookinlethousing.org](http://www.cookinlethousing.org), or call 907-793-3020.

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# Does Medicare cover home health care?

By JIM MILLER

Savvy Senior

**Dear Savvy Senior:** How does Medicare cover in-home health care? My husband has a chronic health condition that makes it very difficult for him to leave the house, so I'm wondering if he could qualify for Medicare home health care. — *Seeking Help*

**Dear Seeking:** Medicare covers a wide variety of part-time or intermittent in-home health care services to beneficiaries in

need, if they meet Medicare's criteria. Here's how it works.

In order for your husband to secure coverage for home health care, Medicare first requires that he be homebound. This means that it must be extremely difficult for him to leave home, and he needs help doing so either from another person or medical device like a cane, wheelchair, walker or crutches.

He will then need to have a face-to-face meeting with his doctor to get a

home health certification confirming that he needs skilled-nursing care or skilled-therapy services from a physical or speech therapist on a part-time basis.

His doctor can also request the services of an occupational therapist and a personal care aide to assist with activities of daily living such as bathing, dressing and using the bathroom. His doctor must renew and certify his home health plan every 60 days.

He will also need to use

a home health agency that is certified by Medicare.

If he meets all of the requirements, Medicare should pay for his in-home health care.

But be aware that Medicare will not pay for personal care aide services (for bathing, dressing, using the bathroom, etc.) alone if he does not need skilled-nursing or skilled-therapy services too. Homemaker services, such as shopping, meal preparation and cleaning are not covered either.

If your husband has original Medicare, you can locate a Medicare-certified home health agency by calling 800-633-4227 or by visiting [www.Medicare.gov/care-compare](http://www.Medicare.gov/care-compare).

For more detailed information on how Medicare covers in-home health, see the "Medicare and Home Health Care" online booklet at [www.Medicare.gov/Pubs/pdf/10969-Medicare-and-Home-Health-Care.pdf](http://www.Medicare.gov/Pubs/pdf/10969-Medicare-and-Home-Health-Care.pdf).

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## Senior housing: Anchorage, Kenai Peninsula

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has value and everyone is essential.

This senior independent-living apartment building is for persons 55 and older, and has studios, one-bedrooms and two-bedrooms, and an elevator. Its peaceful location offers views of sunrises, sunsets and alpenglow, and residents will enjoy a variety of colorful and welcoming community spaces to enjoy social time and activities.

Located just off Huffman Road on the Old Seward Highway, Qevu Village also offers convenient access to grocery, retail, restaurants and medical facilities. The Old Seward Highway is close by for travel north or south, and there are also several nearby neighborhood parks for the enjoyment of all.

Applications opened up in August with rents from \$735 to \$1,250. The apartments range from 436 to 795 square feet.

Cook Inlet has constructed a total of 1,708 units — 1,561 in Anchorage, 52 on the Kenai Peninsula, 21 in the Mat-Su Valley, and 74 units are under construction, said CIHA Marketing Coordinator Cassey Bradley-Leonardis in an email. And housing done with community partners number 542.

Every Wednesday, CIHA posts a notice of vacancies at <https://www.cookinlethousing.org/ciha-news-events>.

To apply go to <https://>



While not specifically for seniors, Willow Green in Soldotna is an income-restricted eight-plex being developed by Kenai Peninsula Housing Initiatives, Inc. and is about 75 percent complete.

Photo courtesy Kenai Peninsula Housing Initiatives

[www.cookinlethousing.org/housing/how-to-apply](http://www.cookinlethousing.org/housing/how-to-apply).

### A home on the Kenai

Built in 2020, Kenai Peninsula Housing Initiative's Kenai Meadows II Senior Housing in Kenai is a six-unit building for those at least 55 years of age and identical to its Kenai Meadows Phase I.

Designed with two one-bedroom units and four two-bedroom units, all have attached heated garages.

These units were designed to promote independent living with each unit incorporating universal design and all units are fully equipped for mobility and sensory impairment, allowing residents to safely age in place.

Crane Hill Phase II in Homer is a four-unit 3,190-square-foot building currently under development to provide safe, affordable residences to low-income families, defined as earning below 50 to 60 percent of the Area

Median Income. The development will consist of two one-bedroom units, two two-bedroom units. Two apartments, one one-bedroom and one two-bedroom, will be equipped for tenants with sensory or mobility impairments.

Willow Green Apartments is an eight-unit, 6,000-square-foot building currently under de-

velopment in Soldotna for low-income families. The development will consist of four one-bedroom units, four two-bedroom units. Two of the one-bedroom apartments will be equipped for tenants with sensory or mobility impairments. Occupancy is expected to begin in early 2022.

While not strictly for seniors, said KPHI Executive

Director Steven L. Rouse, it does have suitable apartments.

"Kenai Peninsula Housing Initiative's has developed independent senior housing in Soldotna, Seward and Kenai that we own and manage," Rouse said in an email. "We have also developed senior housing for others including Ninilchik Traditional Council and Sterling Senior Center. I personally also developed senior/elder housing for Bristol Bay Housing Authority."

For the last 20 years, KPHI has been providing low-income, senior and special needs housing to residents of the Kenai Peninsula. KPHI currently manages more than 100 units of affordable housing in Homer, Seward, Soldotna, Ninilchik, and Kenai.

For vacancies for KPHI's units, go to <https://www.kphi.net/vacancies>.

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# Is the time right to say goodbye to the house?

By KAREN TELLEEN-LAWTON

Senior Wire

My book club has been reading and nattering together for over 30 years, since most of us had kids in the same neighborhood grade school. A generation later, almost all of us still live in the same general area, but many of have downsized. Our needs have changed through responding to various life circumstances. A few of us are eying the leap to retirement communities. What considerations enter the decision to move from a long-term house?

Your unique situation may offer compelling financial reasons to stay, to downsize, or to move into senior living. Sometimes the financial “best

*Your unique situation may offer compelling financial reasons to stay, to downsize, or to move into senior living. Sometimes the financial “best choice” aligns with your emotional inclination, while other times they are at cross-purposes. Identifying the underlying issues can help you sort out and discern what might be called a “smart heart” decision.*

choice” aligns with your emotional inclination, while other times they are at cross-purposes. Identifying the underlying issues can help you to sort out and discern what might be called a “smart heart” decision.

Will selling the family home save you money? The differences in cash flow can be evaluated by measuring maintenance, cleaning, and gardening expenses against a monthly condominium or residential fee.

Property tax and insurance are other cash flow costs that generally will be lower or zeroed out if you downsize. Be sure to compare apples to apples, account for amenities the group situation includes such as dining, medical or athletic fees.

Cash flow is only part of the picture, of course. Your home is an investment. When that investment is cashed out and any mortgage paid off, you will be investing the proceeds in something else with a different potential return. Real estate generally performs well over the long term, but it is absolutely possible to lose money even in the short term as long as a decade or more.

If your idea is to sell your home and gradually spend down the equity for living expenses, consider reviewing your financials with an expert. Your banker or a financial advisor can help you determine a sustainable level of withdrawal. A financial advisor can also help evaluate choices with major life implications.

Even if the financial factors seem to point to an obvious decision one way or the other, it’s important to consider the factors that can’t be quantified. Your life and priorities have changed since you moved into your current house. You may relish the empty-nester space to spread out projects. You have more time now to dig in the garden or tinker in the garage.

On the other hand, maybe you feel like you’re rattling around in a too-big space. Perhaps you want a “turn-key” condominium to leave easily when travel is safe again. Maybe the kids have ended up clustered in another area and you want to relocate.

I’ve had friends who have moved to a lower-tax state for tax purposes.

Another factor to consider is repurposing the value in your home. Having a house to exchange or rent out is a great way to make traveling more affordable. We have used Home Exchange for years and really enjoy dropping into neighborhoods as “locals” all over the world.

Whether or not you consider yourself sentimental, leaving a long-time home can be emotionally fraught. You’ve celebrated birthdays, graduations and perhaps engagements here. You planted and nurtured the trees that are now mature friends in your yard. The kids’ heights are marked on the door jam in the closet.

Besides sentimental reasons, there’s the stuff. Are you prepared to face decisions regarding your kids’ childhood art, books and other mementos? You

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## Automation: Homes

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networks of their own. Many work with their own hubs plus at least one of the “big three.”

If you remember the 1990s when tinkering was a necessary skill for PC owners, then the current state of home automation

will seem very familiar. If, however, you dream of an automated house that adapts to your lifestyle effortlessly, that remains a distant mirage.

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

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# Nursing homes: Vaccinations, costs, safety

continued from page 2

rules, regulators can impose per-day or per-instance penalties.

Consumer groups had challenged the policy in a lawsuit last January, arguing the weakening of enforcement put residents at greater risk. The main trade group, the American Health Care Association and National Center for Assisted Living, (AHCA/NCAL) countered that fines levied on a per-day basis “only take precious resources” away from an already underfunded industry, especially during a crisis period.

Last year, a nursing home in Washington state, Prestige Post-Acute and Rehab Center at Kittitas in Ellensburg, Washington, experienced a major outbreak, where 52 residents and 43 employees were infected, according to a survey done by Medicare. Fifteen residents died. Federal regulators fined Prestige a total of \$21,295 in March 2021 using the “per-instance” penalties rules. If it had been fined per day, that nursing home could have been penalized more than \$600,000.

## Let's make it easier for people to find nursing homes

Despite Medicare's long-running efforts to overhaul its website to make it easier for consumers to find and compare nursing home facilities, families still lack easy access to crucial Medicare immunization data that could help them pick the right facility for their loved one.

Medicare has a “Care Compare” website (<https://www.medicare.gov/care-compare/>) for consumers that it has spent years refining and regularly updating. Yet that's not where the agency is posting vaccination numbers for residents and staff at individual nursing homes. Why make things easy? Instead, Medicare relies on a Covid19 data page, geared to researchers (<https://data.cms.gov/covid-19/covid-19-nursing-home-data>).

To make things work on

**Some states require nursing homes to post vaccination rates, but there's no national requirement. It leaves seniors and their families with a vital question to answer: Do you want to live at, or go visit a facility that has a low vaccination rate?**

the website, you need to scour a map for little red dots that represent nursing homes. There's also a huge spreadsheet. But that's not an easy task for most seniors, Harvard University health care policy professor David Grabowski told the Associated Press recently. “Having it buried in a spreadsheet is really frustrating,” he said, because access to the numbers are critical since there are wide differences among nursing homes and within nursing homes when it comes to vaccinations.

Grabowski's analysis of Medicare data indicates that nationwide, about 78% of residents and 56% of staff completed their vaccinations as of late June. Medicare statistics reveal huge disparities between states. In Alaska, 91% of residents are vaccinated, but in Florida it's 69%. Among hospital staffers, in Hawaii, 82% of staffers are vaccinated but in New York it's 62% and in Louisiana, 43%. Obviously, staff vaccination rates are critical because infected workers can unwittingly bring the virus into a nursing home before that person develops symptoms. And within states and even within nursing homes in the same communities, there can be big differences. But one thing is clear – these can all be prevented with increased vaccinations.

The Associated Press asked Medicare's parent agency, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), about the available data and the difficulties for seniors to find what they need, and the agency promised to make it more consumer-friendly and easier to navigate. But they gave no time frame, noting the vaccination data has only been available for about a month. CMS officials stopped short of agreeing to post nursing home vaccination rates on its Care Compare site.

Maybe they'll even get to it while the delta variant is raging?

What worries consumer advocates like Charlene Harrington, a professor at the University of California School of Nursing in San Francisco, is a false sense of security since the number of cases and deaths at nursing homes have plunged since the earlier part of the pandemic.

“Once the vaccines started being given out and the rates went down,” Harrington told the AP, “then I think the administration kind of forgot about nursing homes. So they really need to get on top of the situation.”

Ironically, Medicare already provides information on flu and pneumonia vaccination rates for individual nursing homes on its

Care Compare site. So it's unclear why they don't do that for COVID-19 vaccination rates. Some states require nursing homes to post vaccination rates, but there's no national requirement. It leaves seniors and their families with a vital question to answer: Do you want to live at, or go visit a facility that has a low vaccination rate?

## Nursing homes: Shaky future?

Only 25% of nursing homes and assisted living communities are confident they can remain open for another year or more, according to a survey from AHCA/NCAL, the American Health Care Association and National Center for Assisted Living. The findings from the organization's most recent survey of U.S. skilled nursing centers, assisted living communities and sub-acute centers and homes found:

► More than half of nursing homes and close to half of assisted living communities said their organization

is operating at a loss.

► The top three costs facilities have incurred due to the pandemic are additional pay for staff, hiring additional staff and PPE (personal protective equipment).

► Some 92% of nursing homes and 62% of assisted living facilities said the government-funded Provider Relief Fund has been helpful amid the pandemic.

► Meanwhile overall, 143 closures or mergers occurred in 2020, with 1,670 projected in 2021.

Mark Parkinson, the president and CEO of AHCA/NCAL noted that while coronavirus cases are much lower than during the pandemic, facilities are still struggling to recover from the economic devastation the pandemic caused and he expects the industry facilities will continue to need federal government help to survive and thrive.

Also contributing to this column: Washington Post; AP; New York Times and Becker's Hospital Review.

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# Washington: State’s plan for long term care for all

continued from page 2

workers participate and earn coverage over the course of their working life. WA Cares is self-funded entirely by worker contributions. The premium is 0.58% (your wages x 0.0058). For the typical worker earning \$52,075, it is \$302 per year. To earn benefits, you must contribute at least 10 years (without a break of five or more years) or have contributed

**Washington state is the first in the nation to develop a way to make long-term care affordable for all workers in the state. The WA Cares Fund is a universal long-term care program that works like Social Security, where all workers participate and earn coverage over the course of their working life.**

three of the past six years at the time of application for benefits. Beginning January 2025, each person who is eligible

to receive the benefit can access services and supports costing up to \$36,500. Note that this is a one-time benefit. It does not repeat annually. It may not sound like a lot, considering how much long-term services can cost, but 20 hours of home care per week for one year costs around \$32,000 in Washington state. Moreover, according to AARP, 48% of people who need long-term care need it for only one year or less. For most people, the state program will be more cost effective than a privately purchased policy. Take a look at this hypo-



thetical example, from the Tacoma News Tribune: “Tom is 45, earns \$100,000 per year and expects to retire at 65. Assuming his income grows by 3 percent per year over his final 20 years of employment, Tom would pay \$17,131 in [long term care paycheck deductions]. Since Tom would potentially have access to \$36,500 (inflation-adjusted in the future) for eligible expenses, it would make sense for Tom to utilize the state’s program.” It certainly won’t solve the long-term care problem in Washington, but it is an important first step and national precedent. And I do think it will help ease the burden of long-term care in particular for lower-income families. Learn more at [www.wacaresfund.wa.gov](http://www.wacaresfund.wa.gov) or contact program administrators by email at [wacares-fund@dshs.wa.gov](mailto:wacares-fund@dshs.wa.gov).

## COVID: Update

continued from page 7

their breath than uninfected people, and dogs and diagnostic devices can detect these changes. Now, researchers have shown that children infected with the virus also show breath metabolite changes, but they’re largely different from the ones in adults. These new findings are very promising and suggest that kids as well as adults may be able to avoid exposure to COVID-19 with a simple breath test. Currently, COVID-19 is diagnosed through the detection of specific viral nucleic acids or antigens, but these techniques are slow, relatively expensive, sometimes un-

comfortable, and prone to false-negative results. Scientists have observed that dogs can detect volatile organic compounds (VOCs) in human biological samples and distinguish certain diseases, including COVID-19. Researchers have also developed a sensor array to detect COVID-19-related VOCs in the exhaled breath of adults. It is hoped these advances can help to slow the spread of the disease. 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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# Delayed certificates: Ask not for whom the bell tolls

By KENNETH KIRK

For Senior Voice

A few months back, the State of Alaska got hacked pretty badly. Some evil doers broke into their system, and the State had to shut down all their systems for a while, and then bring them back up slowly. Among the systems which were shut down for quite a long time were those of Vital Statistics.

If you are not familiar with Vital Statistics (nowadays officially called the Health Analytics and Vital Records Section, but that's too long) it does a number of things which impact the public directly. If you want to get married, for instance, you deal with them. I frequently deal with them regarding death certificates, which are issued by Vital Statistics.

And with the recent hack, and the resulting shutdown of computer systems, Vital Statistics developed a backlog. It used to take a week or two, after someone died, to get the death certificate. Lately it is more like two months.

Not being able to get these kinds of certificates promptly is a major issue for a lot of people in a lot



of circumstances. I used to handle adoption cases, and I shudder to think what the consequences of these delays may be. In an ordinary adoption case, the delay in getting the birth certificate would just delay the final adoption, but a lot of things could be taken care of ahead of time. But in adoptions of Native children, there is a federal law which gives the birth mother the right to change her mind, right up until the final adoption decree. If you now add two months to the time before you can even start the process, and then at least another month to get through it, you are significantly increasing the risk that she will change her mind, and with that risk you increase the stress on the people involved. Imagine raising a newborn as your own for three months, only to have

her taken away from you.

In terms of death certificates, the consequences are usually not as extreme, but they can be when people rely on another person's assets or income. Imagine, for instance, that I am a disabled person who is unable to work, but I don't get public benefits because my parent has a lot of money. Now that parent unexpectedly dies in an accident, and for the next few months I cannot get access to the money I need to support myself. How will I eat?

It may even be my spouse who has died, and the needed assets or income are in her accounts.

The reality is when someone dies you need a death certificate for almost anything. If you are the designated pay-on-death beneficiary on an account, they won't give you that money without a death certificate. You can't open a probate case without being able to show a death certificate. Typically, you cannot take over as the substitute trustee on a living trust, as

***It used to take a week or two after someone died to get the death certificate. Lately, it is more like two months.***

a practical matter, without being able to show a death certificate.

There is one exception: If you have a joint account, and the other owner dies, you don't need to show the certificate. You can simply access the account and take out whatever you need. Is that a suitable alternative?

Perhaps. However, there are downsides to joint accounts.

Let's say that I set up a joint account between myself and my daughter, putting my money into it, so that she can access the money quickly when I'm gone. If she gets into financial trouble, her creditors may tap into that account. She could also take the money out just because she wants to (although hopefully she was raised better than that). And if she has a sudden medical crisis and needs long-term care, Medicaid will treat that money as hers; but if I am

the one who needs long-term care, they will still treat the money as mine.

Anything I put into that account is at risk. If it is a modest amount designed to take care of final expenses and provide dependents with a little breathing room, that might be a reasonable way to accomplish that. But not if it is a substantial part of my estate.

Joint accounts might be an alternative we will have to consider in the future. In the meantime, let's hope Vital Statistics is able to catch up their backlog soon. And ask not for whom the bell tolls, since you won't be able to document it anyway.

*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.*

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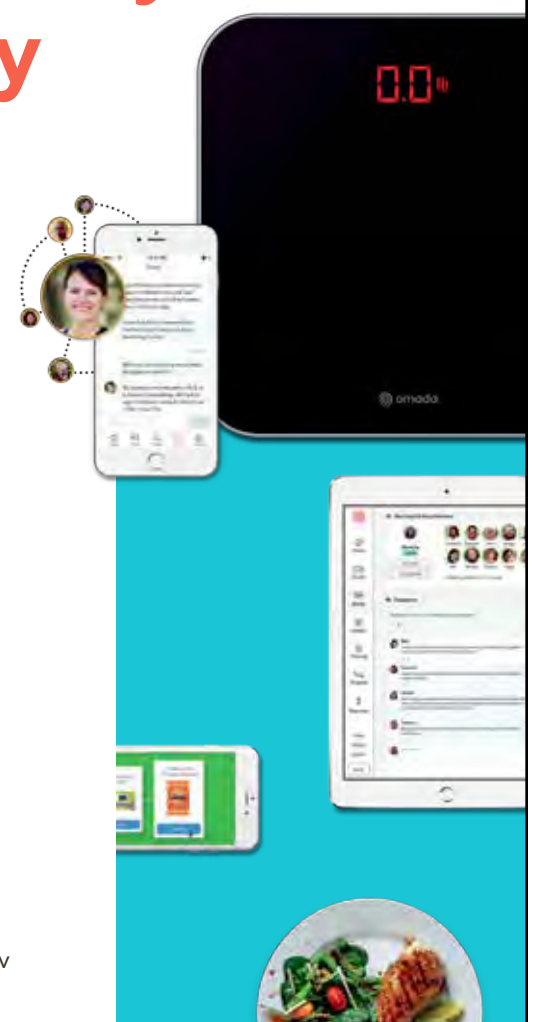
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# Accessibility: See better with your smartphone

By **BOB DeLAURENTIS**  
*Senior Wire*

**Q.** How do I make the text on my phone larger?

**A.** The good news is that both iPhone and Android have system settings to make text larger, and many apps support adjustable-size text based on these settings.

The less good news is that these settings appear in multiple places, and they have different effects. Read on for some general suggestions, but I encourage you to search the web for detailed advice about your specific device.

Not all text on a phone is the same. Labels are text. So is scrolling text in an email. Action items such as notifications and menus contain text as well.

On both iPhone and Android, open “Settings,” and open the “Accessibility” option, then look for a menu choice like “Font Size” or “Larger Text.” These controls will get you started in the right direction.

On Android, text in the Chrome web browser has its own control under the three dot menu in the upper right of the screen. Tap it, then tap “Settings” followed by “Accessibility” and “Font Scaling.” On Apple, the Safari text is a small button next to the URL marked with “AA” that reveals a menu to change text size.

One side effect of larger text is that other items on screen have to adapt. Make the text too big, and other screen elements might be pushed off the screen. There is a balance to strike between readability and usability.

Once you find the correct size for you, the experience of using your phone will be much more comfortable.

**Q.** How can I make my phone screen easier to see? Sometimes I cannot tell where I should tap.

**A.** Modern smartphones are smart enough to accommodate our individual differences in a number of ways. Options range from increases in text size, to contrast and color refinements, to voice-based interfaces useable by people

*Modern smartphones are smart enough to accommodate our individual differences in a number of ways. Options range from increases in text size, to contrast and color refinements, to voice-based interfaces useable by people with severely impaired vision.*

with severely impaired vision.

All of these options are managed in device “Settings,” grouped under a menu titled “Accessibility.” There are a considerable number of choices under that menu. Simply knowing what they are and what they do is useful.

In addition to text size adjustments, there are two other notable features worth exploring.

The first is system-wide screen enlarging. It works similar to a zoom gesture on a photo, except that it magnifies the entire screen. It takes practice to manage zooming along with screen taps and scrolling regions, but it can make a huge difference in usability. To enable it, look under “Accessibility” for an item called “Magnification” on Android and “Zoom” on iPhone.

The second is increasing contrast. This feature is more useful on iPhone, because it changes things like buttons and borders to make them more clearly defined. Android has a similar option, but it only applies to text.

Every year smartphones become smarter at adapting to us. And accessibility features are key to making the most personal computing devices ever made even more personal.

**Q.** Can I use my smartphone like a magnifying glass?

**A.** Absolutely, yes! I first wrote about this capability on iPhone a few years ago, but the feature has improved since then, and it has come to Android as well.

The “Magnifier” app comes preinstalled on iPhones and the “Lookout by Google” app is available from the Google Play Store. Both apps have similar features.

For iPhone users, this feature is as simple as activating Siri and saying

“open Magnifier.” It can also be opened by tapping the Magnifier app in the utilities folder or in the Control Center.

There is a slider at the bottom of the screen to adjust the magnification. If you tap just

above the slider, a tray will slide upward to reveal secondary controls, which include a snapshot button, contrast and color adjustments, and a flashlight.

Snapshots allow you to store a quick image, so you do not have to hold the camera for more than a few seconds. This is especially handy for grabbing images in awkward to reach places. Use the two-finger zoom gesture to enlarge the parts of the snapshot you wish to read.

The Lookout app for Android is a gem. Along-

## Wander the Web

Here are my picks for worthwhile browsing this month:

### Android Accessibility

This site is an overview of the Android operating system’s accessibility features.  
[www.android.com/accessibility/](http://www.android.com/accessibility/)

### Apple Accessibility

An overview of accessibility features on Apple platforms, including iPhone and iPad.  
[www.apple.com/accessibility/](http://www.apple.com/accessibility/)

### iPhone and AirPods: Live Listen

This page explains “Live Listen,” a somewhat hard to discover feature that helps you hear every word of a conversation.  
[www.support.apple.com/en-us/HT209082](http://www.support.apple.com/en-us/HT209082)

side the ability to magnify, it has special modes for things like reading a document aloud and deciphering nutrition labels.

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



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# Ups and downs of flying during the pandemic surge

*You pay your money and take your chances*

By **DIMITRA LAVRAKAS**

Senior Voice Travel Correspondent

I am sitting in the Juneau “International” Airport waiting for the milk run from Juneau to Sitka to Ketchikan to Seattle, when an Alaska Airlines agent announces that, due to fog, our flight’s captain has missed his initial approach and doesn’t know if he has enough fuel to try another.

I have never heard of this — have you?

And when it is broadcast the plane will not land and rebooking will be necessary, we travel-savvy Alaskans make like a thundering herd of caribou for downstairs and the ticket agents as our luggage begin their death circle round the carousel.

I am in line when I realize that perhaps I need my bags in hand and ask the woman behind me to save my space and run over and grab them. On my return, I save hers.

While she is gone, the woman behind us begins to move into her space.

Why do people think that crawling up the backside of people in front of them will make a line move faster? And in this time of COVID, what does six feet mean to you?

I remind her that another person is coming back and she insists she will move. But because she has moved up, others behind her have too, making her promise an impossibility. I tell her she is being rude. She seemed surprised at this.

As I age, I find I deal with situational turmoil better than with people and their lack of manners. Since I flew to Alaska in February, I have been decompressing in Tenakee Springs, recovering from the pandemic time back East where it was a daily battle to deal with people who would not adhere to medical advice on how to prevent contracting or transmitting COVID-19.

In this line, I remained in control of my emotions because seeing my son and

his family for the first time since October 2019, due to the pandemic, would actually happen — although delayed for six hours.

The ticket agent was kind and professional and rebooking was not as onerous as I thought. Instead of arriving at midnight in Chicago it would be 6 a.m.

## Something’s fishy

The time is no more when you could simply take your wild fish or game and freeze it, either shrink-wrapped or in plastic film, wrap it in newspaper, roll it in your clothes, and pack it in your suitcase for a trip Outside to share Alaska’s bounty with friends and relatives.

Now it must be in an airtight container with dry ice (no ice cubes) and each species identified on a provided sticker with the weight of the item noted.

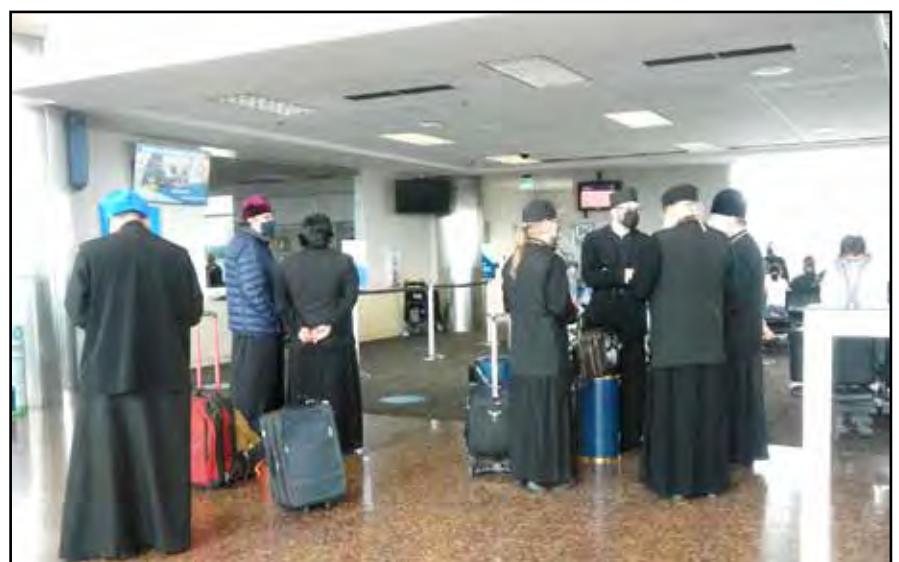
I had my sockeye filets, smoked sockeye tail, Dungeness crab claws, salmonberries, blueber-

ries, nagoonberries, thimbleberries, and red chili berries frozen in Ziplock bags, wrapped in an emergency reflective blanket, inside a plastic garbage bag, in an insulated shopping bag, in a rolling soft-sided cooler I bought on sale at Fred Meyer’s.

It passed inspection, but that was on rebooking. When I first brought my baggage to the Juneau airport, the agent at that time asked if there was frozen food in the cooler but did not ask me to fill out a sticker. So it seems oversight is uneven at times, but follow the rules because you don’t want to arrive empty handed after it’s been confiscated.

## On to Anchorage

Instead of my original route, I was rebooked through Anchorage with a quick one-hour turnaround



A group of Russian Orthodox priests in the Anchorage airport await their flight to Kodiak for the Aug. 9 celebration of Saint Herman of Alaska’s canonization service 51 years ago.

Dimitra Lavrakas photo

and out on another plane to Seattle, where I found myself sitting between two men from Utqiagvik (formerly Barrow, although Alaska Airlines still refers to it as Barrow). I heard one call the other “Price,” and having lived there I turned to him and asked if he was Price Brower and with that quick wit I learned to love and laugh with when living there, he replied “I have

been called that.”

That’s the thing about traveling in the state, you always run into someone you know, or someone who knows someone you know. It’s a big state with a small population.

On approach to Seattle, I heard stewardesses say that two people refused to wear

next page please

# Canada opens to American travelers

*Border crossing closed since March 2020*

By **DIMITRA LAVRAKAS**

Senior Voice Travel Correspondent

To the joy of Alaska border towns, Canada has reopened its customs checkpoints after 16 months due to the spread of COVID-19.

As of Aug. 9, fully vaccinated foreign nationals are allowed into Canada for discretionary travel.

But there are certain requirements you must meet: Travelers must be fully vaccinated, submit travel information electronically on Canada’s official government application ArriveCAN within 72 hours prior to arrival in Canada, and provide proof of a negative COVID-19 molecular test,

taken within 72 hours.

Those molecular tests are free and usually offered by your local clinic or at major airports in Alaska like Juneau, Anchorage and Fairbanks.

Visitors to Canada must have no symptoms of COVID-19, provide proof of COVID-19 vaccination (paper or digital) and have a basic quarantine plan in place in case of an emergency.

Unvaccinated children under the age of 12 are allowed to travel with their vaccinated parent, but must avoid large group settings.

No smartphone? You can register your travel plans by visiting Canada.ca/ArriveCAN, then print the receipt to show officials.

If the test comes back negative, you are free to go about your trip as planned. The Canadian government asks you keep a record of

all close contacts within the first 14 days. If you test positive for the coronavirus, or start showing symptoms, you will need to quarantine for 14 days in the location you detailed in your ArriveCan quarantine plan. On the eighth day, you will then be required to take another coronavirus test, which you must pass to leave quarantine.

Canadian Transport Minister Omar Alghabra announced that vaccinations will be required this fall for all passengers on planes, cruise ships and inter-provincial travel. Some provinces have ruled masks are mandatory, but even where not mandatory it is advised to wear a mask.

## But ban remains on non-essential travel from Canada into U.S.

On Aug. 20, the U.S. government extended

the ban on nonessential travel along the borders with Canada and Mexico to slow the spread of COVID-19. The ban is extended to Sept. 21.

According to the U.S. Embassy and Consulates in Canada, “non-essential travel” includes travel that is considered tourism or recreational in nature. Essential travel that is still permitted includes work and study, critical infrastructure support, economic services and supply chains, health, immediate medical care, and safety and security.

Trade and business travel will continue to operate across borders ensuring workers and goods are not impeded.

However, U.S. citizens, lawful permanent residents, and individuals with valid travel documents will be exempted and allowed to travel into the U.S.





# Pandemic: *Flying can be an ordeal, but necessary*

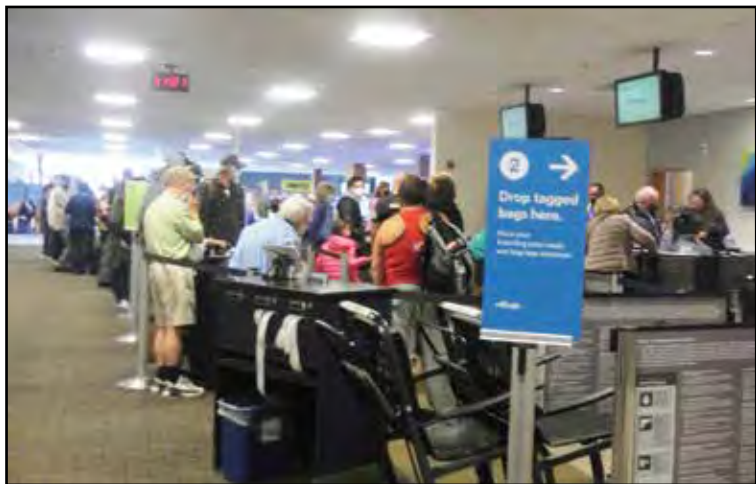
from page 28

their masks. If they had at the beginning of the flight, they would have been denied boarding, and they knew that.

## An itinerary change has its rewards

I was surprised when I looked at my boarding pass to see the leg from Seattle to Chicago was in first class, and in seat 1A to boot. I was the second person to board, but soon fell asleep so if there were any perks, I missed them. Still, it was nice to have a bathroom nearby visited by less people, if you know what I mean.

I usually fall asleep before the plane leaves the ground because I am relieved of any responsibilities, have nowhere I have to go because I can't go anywhere, and I'm not driving.



*The line at the Juneau airport snakes around the terminal after an Alaska Airlines flight is canceled due to fog and the pilot's reluctance to try another approach due to low fuel.*  
Dimitra Lavrakas photo

I don't find flying as relaxing or as entertaining as riding the Alaska Marine Highway System ferries, which have all the comforts — good food, interesting fellow travelers, sometimes a movie or a talk by a National Park Service naturalist, and great scenery and wildlife viewing.

Plus, you can get away

from snoring people, unlike now on this flight where the male steward is snoring like a bear on the other side of the divider.

I have two more hours to go before landing and seeing my son, daughter-in-law and precious four-year-old granddaughter again, and also seeing if everything arrived still

frozen.

(Everything was more frozen than thawed and easily refrozen.)

Arriving right on time

Because I was rebooked, my flights were all on Alaska Airlines so I got all those miles added to my mileage plan, because Delta is no longer a mileage partner.

I sprinted to baggage claim and retrieved one bag, but the carousel did not spit out my big bag. I asked and it was tracked down within 10 minutes.

## Low fuel not unusual

Out of curiosity I emailed Tim Thompson in the Alaska Airlines public affairs office about the pilot coming into Juneau with low fuel.

"Not unusual at all," Thompson emailed. "As you know, South East (sic) is no stranger to bad weather, summer or winter. First, let me add that safety is our

first priority, and our pilots are the best at flying in the Alaska environment.

"We are usually able to make most landings (and takeoffs) into Juneau with our RNP (Required System Navigation) system. We have several different approach patterns we can use that are specific for Alaska Airlines aircraft and allow for safe operations. It appears in this case, the minimums for a safe approach were too low. Looking back at the history of this flight, it looks like they made two attempts for Juneau before moving on. It appears they did a flyover of Sitka (next destination) and proceeded to Ketchikan. Our aircraft always carry enough fuel to make a few approaches but at some point, the captain will make the decision (based on current weather patterns) to move to the next stop or a divert airport."

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# COPD: *Knowing and managing symptoms*

continued from page 13

air quality at home, remove dust-collecting clutter and keep carpets clean; run the exhaust fan when using smelly cleaning products, bug sprays or paint; ban smoking indoors; and keep windows closed when outdoor air pollution is high (see [www.AirNow.gov](http://www.AirNow.gov) for

daily air-quality reports). **Get vaccinated.** The coronavirus and flu can cause serious problems for people who have COPD, so if you haven't already done so, get vaccinated for COVID-19 and get a flu shot every fall to help avoid getting sick. Also ask your doctor about getting the pneumococcal immunizations for protec-

tion against pneumonia. **Take prescribed medications.** Bronchodilators (taken with an inhaler) are commonly used for COPD. They help relax the airway muscles to make breathing easier. Depending on how severe your condition, you may need a short-acting

version only for when symptoms occur, or a long-acting prescription for daily use. Inhaled steroids may also help reduce inflammation and mucus and prevent flare-ups. For more information, visit the COPD Foundation at [www.COPDfoundation.org](http://www.COPDfoundation.org)

or call the COPD information line at 866-316-2673. *Send your senior questions to: Savvy Senior, P.O. Box 5443, Norman, OK 73070, or visit [SavvySenior.org](http://SavvySenior.org). Jim Miller is a contributor to the NBC Today show and author of "The Savvy Senior" book.*

## House: *Goodbye*

continued from page 23

can give your kids the ultimatum to come get their stuff. If they're not ready, will you clean out or haul them with you? Downsizing sounds refreshing until you're faced with the detailed choices. My husband and I have been considering these factors for several years now. We joined the ranks of the over-65 only recently but have visited and expressed interest in retirement places in town. Many of them are more like active college campuses than the low-security prisons that some imagine. The allure for us is that, while we love our home of almost 20 years, the garden becomes more of a burden when we travel. Before the pandemic, we were convinced that the next time the real estate market is hot, we'd be ready to put up our house for sale. If we weren't ready to move into our favorite retirement living facility, we'd rent a place in a different area of town

for a penultimate adventure. Now we were grateful not to have followed up our impulse with a move. We have no doubt we have been better off at home in the pandemic than if we'd chosen to move to an independent living facility. Yet our friends in retirement facilities are grateful to have been cocooned in retirement living. Their lives have been more curtailed than ours, but their meals have been delivered, frequent COVID testing facilitated, and outdoor entertainment provided where possible. There's no right decision. As seniors, however, we have the experience to enter this next phase with our eyes open. Test drive your preferred solutions by visiting and listening to your trusted friends. Do the math with an advisor. And take the long view with a smart heart, so your kids don't take the matter into their own hands.

*Karen Telleen-Lawton is a Certified Financial Planner in Santa Barbara, California.*

## Medicare: *Home health coverage*

continued from page 22

**Other options** If your husband does not qualify for Medicare home health care coverage, there are other coverage options depending on your situation. Here are several that may apply to you: **Insurance.** If you happen to have long-term care insurance, check to see if it covers in-home care. Or if you have a life insurance policy, see if it can be utilized to pay for care. **Medicaid.** If your income is low, your husband may qualify for Medicaid, which

offers different home and community-based services that can pay for in-home care. To investigate this, contact your local Medicaid office. **Veterans benefits.** If your husband is a veteran, the VA also offers some benefits that can help. Two programs to inquire about are "Aid and Attendance or Housebound Allowances" and the "Veteran-Directed Care" program. Both programs provide monthly financial benefits to eligible veterans that can help pay for in-home care. To learn more, contact your

regional VA benefit office. See [www.Benefits.va.gov/benefits/offices.asp](http://www.Benefits.va.gov/benefits/offices.asp) or call 800-827-1000. To look for these and other programs in your area that can help pay your husband's home care, go to [PayingForSeniorCare.com](http://PayingForSeniorCare.com) and click on "Find Financial Assistance for Care" to access their Eldercare Financial Assistance Locator tool. *Send your senior questions to: Savvy Senior, P.O. Box 5443, Norman, OK 73070, or visit [SavvySenior.org](http://SavvySenior.org). Jim Miller is a contributor to the NBC Today show and author of "The Savvy Senior" book.*

## Keystone Canyon: *Crime and intrigue*

continued from page 18

against Judge James Wickersham during his campaign for the office of Territorial Delegate to Congress. Big mistake. That decision caused Wickersham to come down hard on the Syndicate. The judge got evidence from a former Syndicate bookkeeper that showed how a Valdez railroad worker, who was the key witness in the first Hasey trial, had carried Guggenheim money to other witnesses for the prosecution, as well as members of the trial jury. Persuading President Taft to oust U.S. Marshal Dan Sutherland of Juneau, as well as the U.S. Attorney, also backfired against the Guggenheims when a Senate committee convened to consider the fitness of new appointees. Wickersham argued that the real reason behind the dismissals was because the marshal and attorney were investigating the Hasey affair. While the Senate confirmed the new officers, John Rutgard and Herbert Faulkner, the attorney

general decided to reopen an investigation into the Keystone Canyon trials and other questionable activities of the Syndicate in Alaska. As a result, subsequent digging into Syndicate activities found collusive bidding on contracts for coal for the U.S. Army posts in the Territory, as well as 37 fraudulent claims under the title of Clarence Cunningham and associates. Federal officials determined that the claims had been taken out with intent to consolidate and create a monopoly in the interests of the Guggenheim-Morgan Syndicate, which needed the coal for its Copper River Railroad. That discovery brought about the prosecution of several Syndicate officials and a locking up of coal resources in Alaska. Gifford Pinchot, first director of the U.S. Forest Service and close friend of Theodore Roosevelt, ordered the withdrawal of vast coal field holdings in Alaska to protect them from the Guggenheim Syndicate. The early conservationist's action was one reason for his later dismissal by President

Taft, which precipitated the historic split between the Taft and Roosevelt branches in the Republican Party during the 1912 presidential election that saw Woodrow Wilson and the Democrats triumph. And so it was that the shooting of a Valdez railroad worker on a barricaded track in Keystone Canyon, which resulted in payoffs, perjury and manipulation by the Guggenheim-Morgan Syndicate, ended the Syndicate's attempt to control coal resources in Alaska. The company that wanted to dominate the Territory never did secure its coal lands. *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).*

Crossword answers from page 18

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# Emergencies: Preparedness advice from Alaskan experts

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and keeping them in your go bag can provide solace during difficult times.

“Some things you’re never going to be able to replace in an emergency situation,” says Stolpe, “but it’s important to consider the psychological impact of disasters.”

Gray also recommends keeping electronic copies of important documents on the cloud. Bonus tip: Make them available offline so you can access them even if you’re not connected to the internet.

## Food and water

Storing at least two weeks’ worth of nonperishable foods like canned goods, dried fruit and peanut butter at home will help you wait out an emergency situation. Keeping at least one gallon of water per person per day is also the standard for making sure everyone is well hydrated while sheltering in place.

Keep granola bars and other small nonperishable food items and water bottles in your go bag to sustain you until you are able to make it to a safe place to wait out the emergency.

## Heating

Something that doesn’t always make the list, but is life sustaining here in Alaska, is keeping an indoor-safe heat source and cold weather clothing on hand, says Jeremy Zidek, Public Information Officer at Alaska Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management.

“You may have all the emergency supplies that you need for two weeks, but if your home drops below freezing and your water freezes, you can’t stay there,” says Zidek.

Propane heaters that are indoor safe burn more efficiently and have emergency shutoffs for carbon monoxide. An electrical generator with a sufficient supply of fuel is another good option. Oil drip stoves that work off gravity can keep your home warm with minimal effort.

Keep extra hand warmers in your go bag in case you have to evacuate.

## Other equipment ideas

All emergency specialists recommend having a flashlight or headlamp on hand with extra batteries. Extra power is also important for any assistive devices you have, so keep the right power sources in your go bag or an easy to reach place at home.

Something you might not have considered, but would be hugely helpful if you’re evacuating your home, is to purchase a heavy duty cart that can store all your go bag items. That way, you can easily pull everything to your car or boat without injuring yourself or having to make multiple trips.

Because of earthquake country, keeping a pair of shoes by your bed could prevent your feet from getting cut on any glass if you have to jump out of bed in the middle of the night when an earthquake strikes.

To keep yourself comfortable, tuck any hygiene, sanitization or first aid items into your go bag along with any entertainment, like books, magazines, puzzles or the like.

## Urban vs. rural

Living in rural communities poses additional challenges that those living in more metropolitan areas might not have to prepare for. You don’t want to wait until there is a disaster and potential supply chain interruption before gathering the necessary supplies, says Zidek.

“Ready.alaska.gov has a number of different resources available to help individuals and families prepare, including a guide that instructs you to collect supplies each week for twelve weeks,” says Zidek.

Along with supplies, securing the proper medications is even more important. If you receive any medications via mail or travel to a pharmacy outside of your area, making sure you have access to extra refills ahead of time is especially important.

In a situation where you have to evacuate, how you leave your home is crucial in rural communities, says Nash.

“In winter, you should

turn off your utilities, if you can,” adds Nash. “Using an oil drip stove can keep your house warm while you’re gone.”

Overall, folks in rural communities should especially rely on their extensive social networks. If you are looking out for your entire village, gathering supplies for your household could feel extra complicated, says Zidek. “In Alaska Native

communities, when we say ‘have enough food and water for your family for at least seven days,’ they say, ‘the whole village is a family!’”

In that case, considering who will have what as part of your emergency plan will ensure everyone in your family, even across multiple households, is taken care of.

To view instructional guides on emergency preparedness, visit [ready.alaska.gov](https://www.alaska.gov) and select “Quick Docs” under the main menu to view an array of emergency preparedness guides, including “My Emergency Plan” or “Prepare in a Year – 2020.”

Visit <https://www.uaf.edu/ces/family/emergencyprep/> to view UAF Cooperative Extension’s guides on different disasters, including storm surges, wind events, wildfires and more.

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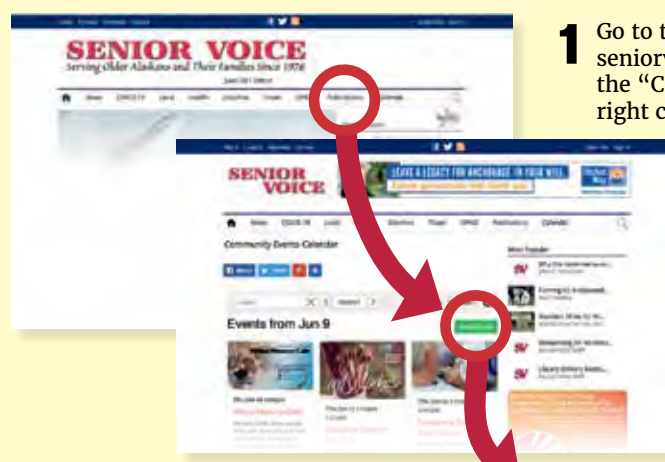
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