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# Senior Voice

A publication of Older Persons  
Action Group, Inc. Free

Serving Alaskans 50+ Since 1978

Volume 46, Number 8 August 2023

**100 years of the  
Alaska Railroad**  
- page 24

**New series:  
Alaskans  
working  
beyond  
retirement.**  
- page 3

**A month for  
matrimonies,  
memories and  
celebrations.**  
- page 15

**Yes, you can  
maintain and  
build muscle  
as you age.**  
- page 5

**Legal issues:  
To LLC or  
not to LLC?**  
- page 22

Photo courtesy of Alaska Railroad Corp.



2023  
**National Mature  
Media Awards**  
Winner





# Today’s directory has an impressive background

By **DAVID WASHBURN**  
*Older Persons Action Group, Inc.*



By now, you’ve probably seen the ad and mail-in form for the 2023-2025 edition of the Older Persons Action Group, Inc. (OPAG) Directory for Older Alaskans (it’s on page 23 of this issue). The directory has been on the streets for a few months and response has been very positive. Thanks so much to our sponsors for their support and patience – the pandemic disrupted our every-other-year schedule for an updated directory release, a schedule that’s been ongoing for many years.

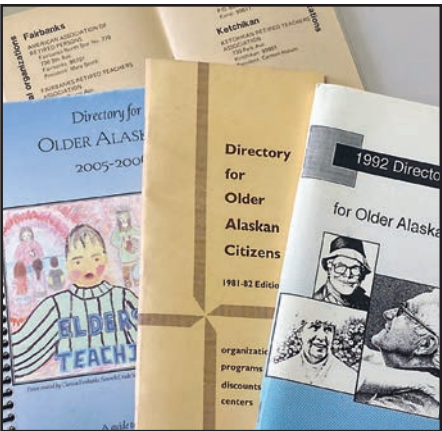
This legacy was brought

home when I recently browsed some archival records and found a collection of the directories spanning decades. The earliest edition is dated 1981-2, a compact booklet with 65 pages, funded by OPAG and the state “Division of Adult and Aging Services,” presumably an ancestor of

today’s Division of Senior and Disabilities Services. Subsequent editions were funded in part by the Older Alaskans Commission, the predecessor to today’s Alaska Commission on Aging. Other editions illustrate the evolution of the directory, growing in size, changing shapes, into the spiral-bound book we have today. For a few years, OPAG conducted an inter-generational art contest and the winning painting was used as the directory’s cover artwork. For this most recent edition, we did something new – in addition to producing and distributing more hard copies than ever before, the entire

document is available in PDF format to browse and download from the web at [www.seniorvoicealaska.com/opagdirectory](http://www.seniorvoicealaska.com/opagdirectory). No other publication includes such a comprehensive collection of agencies, businesses and organizations that provide

services specifically for older Alaskans and their families. Whether and how the directory continues into the future depends on funding, and preference. There’s no denying the trend to go digital, but not everyone wants to use a search engine or computer. And there’s no denying the impressive longevity to this directory and the support to maintain and expand it over the years. *David Washburn is the OPAG executive director and editor of Senior Voice. Email him at [editor@seniorvoicealaska.com](mailto:editor@seniorvoicealaska.com).*



Senior Voice photo

# Playing “password” must be taken seriously

By **ROSEANN FREITAS**  
*Better Business Bureau*

In the 1960s, many Americans tuned into the game show “Password,” where contestants were paired with celebrities to guess words from verbal clues. While that word, “password,” might have once brought to mind giddy TV contestants playing for cash, we’re much more likely to think about passwords nowadays in the context of online security. And why wouldn’t we? Passwords are required across the internet to pay

bills, log in to social media, subscribe to streaming services and more. We’ve become quite familiar with the need to create usernames and passwords to access these accounts, and, unlike the old game show, our modern-day passwords aren’t ones we want people easily guessing. To protect yourself, the challenge is to create complex passwords that keep your personal information protected. Better Business Bureau (BBB) recommends the following password-creation tips to stay safe online.

**Think of your passwords as walls.** A password or a passphrase should be considered a wall between free access to your personal information and the world. The stronger the wall, the more difficult it is for others to break down. The more walls, the more difficult it is to access the information. **Avoid easy passwords.** An example of a weak password is easy-to-guess information anyone can find on social media sites or through a phishing email or text. A strong password has at least 12 to

14 characters mixed with uppercase and lowercase letters, numbers and symbols. Commonly used passwords are your pet’s name, your mother’s maiden name, the town you grew up in, your birthday, your anniversary, etc. Surprisingly, the answers to these common passwords can typically be found online. Even if you don’t consider yourself an active social media user or the internet, your information is on one forum or another. Even for passwords that require numbers and let-

ters, some people stick to simple patterns like 0000, 1111, 1234, etc., and you should not be so predictable. Never use the same password for multiple accounts, especially for the most sensitive ones, such as bank accounts, credit cards, legal or tax records or medically-related files. **Make them creative.** Need more creative ideas for different passwords? Can you use song lyrics? Not only is it impossible for hackers to guess what song you are

page 13 please

## OPAG board vacancy

*Older Persons Action Group, Inc.*

Do you want to be more involved with helping Alaska’s seniors? Older Persons Action Group, Inc. has openings for board members and welcomes inquiries. OPAG publishes the monthly Senior Voice and the Directory for Older Alaskans, coordinates monthly Provider’s Breakfast networking events, and other projects to meet the needs of the fastest-growing senior demographic in the country. We are based in Anchorage but value perspective and ideas from all around the state and will accommodate for distance using digital means. To learn more, email your contact information with a CV or resume to [executivedirector@opagak.com](mailto:executivedirector@opagak.com).

### OLDER PERSONS ACTION GROUP

#### Mission statement:

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

#### Vision statement:

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



OLDER PERSONS ACTION GROUP

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# Series: Working past retirement in Alaska

## Interview with Ken Helander

By **LAWRENCE D. WEISS**

For Senior Voice

*This is the first in a series of interviews with Alaskans who have continued to work years beyond the usual age of retirement. In this article, Anchorage resident Ken Helander discusses why he worked into his 70s and why he was finally forced to retire. We chatted in a local Anchorage restaurant July 11, 2023.*



**Ken Helander**

Courtesy Ken Helander

### When and why did you come to Alaska?

I came in 1981 from Colorado. I was married, had two boys, and I worked for a community mental health center in Fort Collins. The programs began to be cut after Ronald Reagan was elected. My wife was in education and her programs were also being cut. We thought maybe we ought to just move to Alaska and see what it's like.

[Upon arriving in Anchorage] I thought, "I'll go

to the mental health center here and see, maybe I can volunteer." I walked out with a job that I had for eight years.

### Please talk a bit more about your job history in Alaska.

I've worked with issues of aging my entire career in all kinds of settings. Community oral health was one where, as a clinician program developer, we ended up creating an adult day program. I worked in senior centers,

I've worked in clinics, I've worked in nursing homes, I've worked for the Alzheimer's Association, and I was involved in developing two different programs for older LGBT individuals—one in Denver and one here. I also worked at a very innovative program [for seniors] in San Francisco.

Then I worked for AARP as the advocacy director. In that job, I was responsible for public policy and legislation as it would affect older people. I actually was a lobbyist and worked with a lot of people in state government here in the Alaska legislature and also with the federal delegation. And then I finished my career working at the Alzheimer's Resource.

### When did you retire and at what age?

I retired in October 2022 at the age of 74 because I became ill and was diagnosed with metastatic cancer.

**I am happy to say you**

**are looking pretty spunky all these months later. I would like to ask you why you kept on working after age 65.**

Mostly because I enjoyed it. And felt that there was more that I could do within my field, make contributions. I was almost 65 when I took the job at AARP. I had been working in direct service with people and then as a specific program manager. Now, I was kind of taking it to a different level of working in policy that would affect people everywhere. I would say that was the climax of my career.

### If you had it to do all over again, would you continue to work after age 65?

The biggest factor would have been financial. If I had the means and knew that I could retire without financial impact, and I could do things like travel or maybe continue to do my job in a different sort of way through volunteer work, or writing or teaching, or things like that—I might have done that. But I think

I would still be looking for meaning and purpose and activity. I would not feel right to just withdraw and say, "Well, I'm done."

### Now in retirement, what hobbies or other pursuits do you spend time on?

One of my lifelong pursuits has been playing the piano. I love music and I seek out opportunities to share that with others. One of the primary ways I do that is I serve as the accompanist for our church. Every Sunday morning I'm playing the piano for church. That's very meaningful to me. I also enjoy other hobbies such as stained glass.

There are a few groups that I stay in touch with, that I have had involvement with for years. One of them is our LGBT elders group—Alaska Rainbow Elders. One of the other things that I have time for now that I really value is being able to spend time with my family, people that are my friends, people that are important to me. And under the

page 4 please

## Age-friendly work in Anchorage and Juneau moves to year two

Age-Friendly Leadership Team

Alaska's work creating "Age-Friendly Communities" is thriving, making the places we live better able to support people of all ages. The age-friendly program process began with Anchorage's enrollment in the AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities as the 678th community nationwide, with Juneau following shortly thereafter as the 734th member.

As AARP Alaska enters the second year of membership in the Network of

Age-Friendly States and Communities, efforts are focused on community needs assessments in both Anchorage and Juneau. The assessments are an avenue to involve older residents in all the stages of an age-friendly process through walk audits, questionnaires and in-person or virtual listening sessions. The assessment process looks at each community's "built" and "social" environments, including housing, outdoor spaces and buildings, transportation, health services and community supports, social participation, re-

spect and social inclusion, communication and information, civic participation, and employment. The availability and quality of these community features impact the well-being of older adults and people of all ages.

As part of their community assessment, Anchorage's age-friendly team recently shared the results of a 2022 walk audit in the downtown area (5th and 6th Avenues between Gambell and Ingra) with livability partners nationwide as well as the Fairview Community Council. In Juneau, the age-friendly team joined with their local Commission on Aging in sponsoring three listening

sessions to solicit information for future planning. They plan to solicit feedback throughout the summer to make sure all segments of the community have opportunities to share real life experiences, comments and concerns for an action and evaluation plan.

Age-friendly planning includes a five-year process of continuous improvement. The first two years of engaging the community, establishing teams, and completing the assessment result in the formation of a community action plan. Once adopted, plan implementation and evaluation are carried out during years three to five.

By the conclusion of the initial five-year period, the community should have made meaningful progress toward the goals laid out in the action plan and be able to revise the plan as needed. Then the next five-year planning process begins.

The Anchorage and Juneau leadership teams have the mission to foster livable, age-friendly communities that promote neighborhood cohesion and maximizes ways for residents to be active and engaged with neighbors, family and friends. If you are interested in joining the effort to make Anchorage or Juneau more age-friendly, contact Patrick Curtis at 907-268-7919.

### 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 to discuss this. Copy deadline is the 15th of the month prior to publication.

### Corrections

In the July 2023 edition, a story about the Juneau Age Friendly Project included an incorrect web address and email address. The correct link to access the Juneau Age Friendly survey online is <https://bit.ly/jnu-age-friendly-questionnaires>. The email address to contact Linda Kruger, the AARP Alaska Community Action Team Coordinator, is [lindalaska2003@gmail.com](mailto:lindalaska2003@gmail.com).

Also in the July edition, the story on page 10 about lung cancer screening contained an error regarding age eligibility. The correct age range is 50 to 80 years old.





# Disparities in mental health for diverse groups

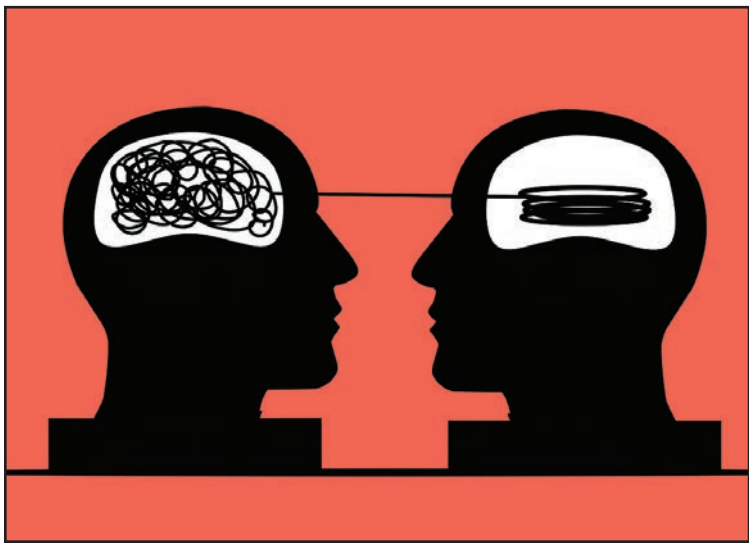


Photo courtesy Diverse Elders Coalition

By **OCEAN LE**

*Diverse Elders Coalition*

July marked National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month, a time dedicated to raising awareness about mental health conditions currently prevailing among diverse groups, however we should take care of our mental health every month. The aim is not just to shed light on these issues' gravity, but also to break down the stigma walls surrounding mental health in these communities.

In recognition of this, I want to share and discuss findings from a report released at the 2022 Alzheimer's Association International Conference that intricately connect race, lived experiences, mental health and cognitive well-being. The research suggested a correlation between experiences of racism, discrimination and increased cognitive decline – a mental health issue that is particularly relevant to diverse communities.

The intersection of rac-

ism, discrimination and mental health is not a new area of research, yet it remains an inadequately explored territory even though it affects millions of diverse individuals. The recent study suggests that individuals who have experienced racial discrimination are more likely to show signs of cognitive decline earlier than those who have not. Cognitive impairment can lead to conditions like Alzheimer's and dementia, which also disproportionately affect diverse populations.

This risk of cognitive decline amongst diverse communities is compounded by pre-existing risk factors such as social isolation and loneliness, high prevalence of diabetes, and genetic defects in the APOE4 gene seen in African American/Black individuals.

For a deeper look into the findings, visit <https://bit.ly/451rc6u>.

These findings underscore the need for our healthcare systems and

page 26 please

## Helander

*continued from page 3*

circumstances of my own life right now, a lot of it has been taken up with medical appointments.

**Do you have parting thoughts to leave with the readers?**

You're not going to be able to figure out retirement until you do it. It's kind of like many things in life, like the experience of loss and grieving. There are components of that in

retirement, but you really don't know what it's all about until you personally feel it and experience it. And then it begins to dawn on you—you have to make some more decisions about a new way of life. You don't have to answer to somebody else, but you have to answer to your own self.

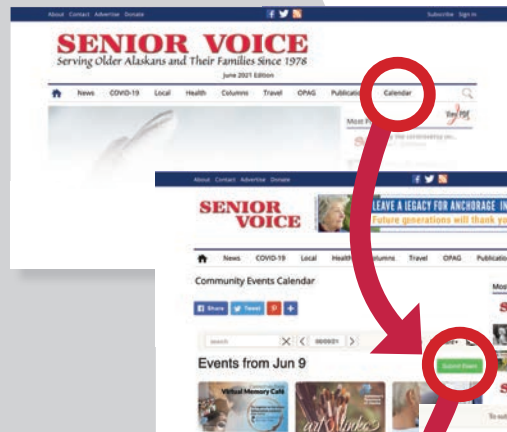
This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

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

## Get word out about your upcoming event!

Publicize a program or class. Post an invitation to a new Zoom offering. The Senior Voice online calendar is here for you.

It's easy to post your events to seniorvoicealaska.com – and it's **FREE**.



**1** Go to the Senior Voice website: seniorvoicealaska.com Click on the "Calendar" tab in the upper right corner

**2** You will see the list of upcoming events. To add your own event, click the "Submit Event" button on the upper right.

**3** You will be taken to a forms page where you can quickly enter your details.

In addition to the date, time, location and description, you can include other items:

- Photos, fliers and other images
- Links to your website
- A button linking to the event and your site
- Zoom, Skype and other conferencing links
- Your email and other contact information



**TRY IT NOW.**

Our website readers are all around the state, and beyond. If you run into problems, call 1-800-478-1059 or email [editor@seniorvoicealaska.com](mailto:editor@seniorvoicealaska.com)

# Senior Voice

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# For health and flavor, bring on the berries

By JOHN C. SCHIESZER

For Senior Voice

The Mediterranean diet is ranked as one of the most healthful diets on the planet. The name derives from the geographical region surrounding the Mediterranean Sea, which includes Spain, Italy, Greece, Turkey and Tunisia, where this diet has been adopted for centuries. It incorporates different types of food that are mostly unprocessed plant food typically found in this area fruit, vegetables, nuts, grains, legumes, extra virgin olive oil, lean proteins and fish.

Large studies have consistently indicated that those who follow this diet

live longer and have a lower incidence of major chronic illnesses such as cardiovascular diseases and Alzheimer’s disease. And, good news for Alaskans, berries play a role. Whether you opt for strawberries, cranberries, blueberries, raspberries, blackberries or salmonberries, they are wonderful functional foods.

“It’s important to add berries to any diet,” said Sandra J. Arévalo Valencia, who is the director of Community Health & Wellness at Montefiore Nyack Hospital, Nyack New York. “Berries are one of those ‘superfoods’ because of the great amount of nutrients they have in them that

make the immune system stronger to add protection against infections. They also protect against other diseases due to the vitamin C, dietary fiber and antioxidants.”

Further, she said the latest research also indicates that some components of berries known as flavan-3-ols may be beneficial for heart health and protect against diabetes. Valencia said the best advice is to eat a large variety of berries because they are very similar in nutritional content, but some berries have different nutritional content.

“If we compare blackberries and strawberries for example, strawberries



Photo courtesy Taylor Wallace

have more potassium, but less fiber. Eating a variety of berries, you get the benefits of all. Even salmonberries are different and necessary because they have more vitamin B6 than their counterparts,” said Valencia.

**Versatile superfood**

Berries are a great choice and very versatile in terms of how they can be consumed. There are many easy ways to enjoy berries by simply adding them to cereal, oatmeal or yogurt in the morning, or to a salad at lunch or dinner. Another simple way is to eat them fresh or frozen as a snack by blending them into a juice or a smoothie.

“The recommended amount of fruit intake is 2 cups per day. Aim to eat at least a half cup of berries per day,” said Valencia. “When berries are frozen the taste and texture might change, but berries

page 26 please

# Maintaining muscle mass as we age

By DR. EMILY KANE

For Senior Voice

Like keeping your bones strong, maintaining or even building muscle as we age requires daily movement and good nutrition. Staying strong as we age will not only be useful for hauling groceries, keeping our home clean, enjoying recreational activities, but also serve to elevate our mood. When it comes to muscle mass, the old adage “use it or lose it” definitely applies.

**Establish a routine**

Lifting weights is a proven method for building and maintaining both muscle mass and bone density as we age. Start slow and low. You don’t need to



have dumbbells or kettlebells or any fancy equipment. If you like going to the gym and can afford a membership, great! But you can easily maintain or even improve your strength at home. There are many resources online.

Start by hard-wiring into your schedule two 20-minute sessions per week. Resistance training

– challenging yourself to push or pull heavier-than-usual weights, quickly – is the most efficient way to build muscle. Each session can involve 10 minutes of lower body strength exercises and 10 minutes of upper body. For upper body, use soup cans or 1 to 3 pound weights in each hand to push your arms overhead as quickly as is comfortable for your shoulders/elbows/wrists, to fatigue. If you don’t get a little burn after 10 to 12 repetitions, increase your weight. Repeat this “set” two more times.

Follow the same idea for three sets of biceps curls, and then finish with holding cans out from sides of body and doing small rotations, first one

direction then the other direction. This last arm movement will require a lower weight, or keeping your elbows bent. Once this routine is established, add triceps dips.

The basic lower body move is squats. You don’t even need to add weight. Make sure to stick your bottom way back as the knees bend so that your knees stay more or less over your feet. Pressing your arms forward is a nice counter-balance for the bottom going back.

Hold onto the edge of a table or window ledge if needed when first doing squats. A chair modification would be seated, then alternately lift each thigh as high as possible in a “marching” movement,

to fatigue. Repeat twice more. You can also engage in “power chair stands” which is basically getting up and down from a seated position without using your arms. Extend your resistance training with heavier weight, longer sessions, quicker movements, as feasible.

The main thing is to stay consistent. Commit to this self-care in your schedule. It’s fun! Bonus points for breaking a light sweat.

**Track these numbers**

Almost everyone will shrink in old age. Gravity happens. I encourage folks to keep track of their height quarterly, or every six months, from age 60

page 27 please

# Medicare coverage for health-related transportation

By SEAN MCPHILAMY

Alaska Medicare Information Office

Ambulances are a critical resource in transporting patients to and from medical facilities, like hospitals. Ambulances are medically equipped and staffed by professionals like paramedics and Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs).



**Emergency transportation**

Medicare Part B covers

emergency ambulance services. Medicare considers an emergency to be any situation when your health is in serious danger, and you cannot be transported safely in another way. There are certain requirements you must meet for Medicare to cover an emergency ambulance ride:

First, the ambulance must be medically necessary. This means it is the only safe way to transport you.

Second, the reason for

your trip must be to receive or to return from receiving Medicare-covered care.

Third, you must be transported to and from certain locations. For example, from your home to the nearest hospital, or from a skilled nursing facility to your home. Medicare will only cover your ride to a medical facility when it’s the nearest appropriate facility that’s able to give you the care you need.

Finally, the transportation supplier must meet Medicare’s ambulance requirements. For example, the ambulance must be staffed by at least two people.

**Non-emergency transportation**

Medicare Part B sometimes covers non-emergency ambulance transportation. You must meet one of two requirements to

page 20 please





## Hearing loss and employment success



hearing aids are nearly twice as likely to be unemployed as peers who use them.

- For people with milder hearing loss, the use of hearing aids reduces the risk of income loss by 90 to 100 percent.

By **DONNA R. DeMARCO**

*Accurate Hearing Systems*

Recently, the non-profit Better Hearing Institute took a close look at the impact untreated hearing loss has on the workplace — and its workforce. What they discovered was intriguing. Untreated hearing loss affected worker's earnings, and even employment rates.

They found\*:

- People with untreated hearing loss lose up to \$30,000 income annually, depending on their degree of loss.

- People with hearing loss who do not use

**Make sure you're working at the level you want to be.**

At Accurate Hearing we can help individuals with hearing loss difficulties. If you feel that you or a loved one are struggling with hearing loss, we encourage you to take the first step to better hearing and call for an appointment for a FREE hearing test and consultation today, 907-644-6004.

*\*The Dollars and Sense of Addressing Hearing Loss in the Workplace, McClatchy Newspapers, June 2012.*

Donna R. DeMarco, AAS, BC-HIS your hearing care provider.



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

# Review and, if needed, renew your vaccinations

## August is Immunization Awareness Month

*Alaska Health Fair, Inc.*

As we observe Immunization Awareness Month this August, we want to underscore the importance of vaccines and acquaint you with the wealth of resources that our state offers to keep your immunizations current.

Vaccines are an essential part of aging healthily and confidently. Especially those age 50 and older need regular immunizations to protect against severe and potentially lethal diseases. Our immune systems tend to weaken with age, making us more susceptible. Don't let disease slow you down; stay on track with routine immunizations.

### Stay up to date on routine vaccines

Now is as good a time as any to check with your health care provider on routine vaccines for adults 50 and older.

- **Tdap vaccine.** While most adults have received a Tdap vaccine earlier in life, a booster shot every 10 years helps keep you protected against tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis.

- **Shingles vaccine.** Adults 50 and older are recommended to receive two doses of shingles vaccine (Shingrix). Even if you have already had chickenpox or shingles, getting

vaccinated can boost your immunity.

- **Pneumococcal vaccine.** The CDC recommends all adults age 65 and older get pneumococcal vaccination. This vaccine helps protect you from serious infection, including pneumonia.

- **Hepatitis B vaccine.** Protects against certain types of cancer and is recommended for adults who are 19 to 59 years old and for those 60 or older with risk factors for hepatitis B infection.

- **Flu vaccine.** An annual seasonal flu vaccine helps prevent potentially serious illness from the flu. It is recommended adults age 65 and older receive a higher-dose version flu vaccine.

- **COVID-19 vaccine.** COVID-19 vaccines reduce the risk of getting seriously sick from COVID. Maximize protection by staying up to date on COVID-19 vaccines.

Visit [vaccinate.alaska.gov](https://vaccinate.alaska.gov) to find an adult immunization schedule or talk to your health care provider.

### Check your records

Not sure if you are up to date on your vaccines? There are several ways to access your immunization records.

- **Download the docket app and view your record.** This mobile application allows you to review vac-

cines received in Alaska and check what vaccines you may be due for. Download the free app to your mobile device from the App Store or Google Play Store. For help, email [doh.dph.epi.docket@alaska.gov](mailto:doh.dph.epi.docket@alaska.gov) or call 907-646-3322 or 833-482-9546 (toll-free).

- **Request records by fax or mail.** The Alaska Department of Health can fax or mail vaccination records. Visit [vaccinationrecords.alaska.gov](https://vaccinationrecords.alaska.gov) to learn more.

- **Request records through your health care provider.** Patients can request copies of their immunization records through their health care provider.

### A community effort

Vaccines aren't just about keeping you healthy. They're about safeguarding our entire community. So, let's roll up our sleeves and do our part to keep Alaska safe and healthy.

Please note that vaccinations are usually available at multiple health fairs. Visit [www.alaskahealthfair.org](https://www.alaskahealthfair.org) for our health fair schedule. Let's make Immunization Awareness Month a resounding success. Stay safe and healthy.

*This article is provided by the Alaska Department of Health Immunization Program and Alaska Health Fair, Inc. a 501(c)3 nonprofit.*

# Fall brings the return of free diabetes screenings

*Alaska Health Fair, Inc.*

The Alaska Dept. of Health and Alaska Health Fair, Inc. are thrilled to announce the continuation of a vital screening program this fall through Alaska Health Fair, Inc. health fairs - free Hemoglobin A1C and Estimated Average Glucose tests. Our aim is to empower Alaskans with the information they need to lead healthier lives, by identifying early risks for diabetes and prediabetes.

**Are you at risk?** Take our short self-assessment survey at <https://bit.ly/3rk9D-jt> to find out. If your survey result indicates a risk, and you're not presently diagnosed with diabetes or prediabetes, you are eligible for a free A1C test this health fair season. The free tests are available to individuals 18 years and older. Our mission is to identify and assist individuals with undiagnosed diabetes or prediabetes. For those diagnosed with

these conditions, scroll down for information on health insurance coverage for regular testing.

**Claim your one free A1C screening this health fair season at selected venues.** Exclusively for at-risk undiagnosed individuals. Take our on-site survey to qualify. There will be a limited quantity at most events as we strive to make this available to Alaskans statewide. If you have any

*page 10 please*

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# Finding steady answers to trembling uncertainties

By **KAREN CASANOVAS**

For Senior Voice

**Q:** Lately, I’ve been experiencing hand tremors and it’s been quite puzzling for me. Would you have any insights?

**A:** Hand tremors can be a concerning and disruptive condition, causing uncontrollable shaking or trembling in one or both hands. While a slight tremor is normal, an excessive and persistent tremor can significantly impact activities of daily living. Let’s explore a few causes, treatment, and management of hand tremors, for you and other individuals seeking relief from this condition.

### Understanding normal tremors

In many cases, a slight tremor in the hands is considered normal. For instance, when you hold your hands or arms out in front of you, they may not remain completely still. However, certain factors can exacerbate these tremors, making them more noticeable. These factors include aging, stress, fatigue, anxiety, anger, excessive caffeine consumption, smoking, and extreme temperatures. Additionally, certain medications and medical conditions can also contribute to hand tremors. It is crucial, however, to confer with your provider before discontinuing any prescribed medication.

### When to seek medical attention

While slight tremors are common and generally do not require treatment, there are instances when medical attention is necessary. It is advisable to consult with a health professional if:

- ▶ you have balance impairment
- ▶ your tremor is worsening over time
- ▶ your tremor is significantly impacting daily activities.

By seeking medical ad-



vice, you can ensure that your tremor is not a symptom of an underlying condition and explore potential treatment options.

### Determining the cause

When seeing a provider regarding hand tremors, a thorough examination will be conducted in addition to an inquiry about various aspects of your health. The practitioner may ask about your symptoms, medication intake, and your family’s medical history, as some types of tremors have a hereditary component. This assessment aims to identify the potential causes of your tremors and rules out any underlying conditions.

### Non-treatment for mild tremors

In cases where the tremor is mild and not caused by a serious medical condition, treatment may not be necessary. Some people find relief through alternative therapies like acupuncture or yoga, while others have discovered nutritional deficiencies causing their symptoms.

Your healthcare professional may choose to monitor the tremor to ensure it does not worsen over time. However, if the tremor persists or becomes more severe, further investigations may be required, including referrals to specialists for additional tests.

### Treatment for severe tremors

For individuals with severe hand tremors that significantly impact one’s daily life, treatment op-

tions are available to help manage the condition. An occupational therapist may be enlisted, or different meds prescribed. While medication may not eliminate the tremor entirely, it can often reduce the intensity of the shaking or trembling. Your practitioner may prescribe medication that needs to be taken regularly, or only when necessary—such as before encountering stressful situations that exacerbate the tremor.

If tremors extend to the head or vocal cords causing

difficulties in speaking, a provider may offer injections to block the nerves and relax the affected muscles.

### Regain control

Hand tremors can be a distressing condition that affects daily life and overall well-being. While slight tremors are normal, persistent and severe tremors may require medical attention. Consulting with a healthcare professional is essential in determining the cause of the tremors and to explore appropriate treatment options. Med-

ication, injections, and, in extreme cases, surgical intervention can help manage and reduce the severity of hand tremors. By seeking medical advice and following recommended treatment plans, people can regain control over hand movements and improve their quality of life.

*Karen Casanovas, PCC, CPCC, CLIPP is a health, wellness and simplified living coach practicing in Anchorage. If you have questions, write to her at [info@karen-casanovas.com](mailto:info@karen-casanovas.com).*



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# Prostate cancer screening is lacking for Alaska Native men

## Also: Using humor for improved personal and social wellbeing

By JOHN SCHIESZER

Medical Minutes

### Alaskan Native men warned about lack of screening for prostate cancer

Men in Alaska age 50 or older may want to discuss prostate cancer screening with their healthcare provider. A new study from Wake Forest University School of Medicine is suggesting that American Indian and Alaska Native men are less likely to be screened for prostate cancer compared to other racial/ethnic groups and it is coming with a high price tag.

The study appears in the online journal called Cancer Causes & Control, and it points out the importance of barriers to good care and how best to overcome those barriers.

“Our findings highlight a significant healthcare disparity in accessing care,” said Chris Gillette, who is an associate professor at Wake Forest University School of Medicine and the principal investigator of the study.

According to the American Cancer Society, there are more than 34,000 prostate cancer deaths in the U.S. each year, and prostate cancer is the second-leading cause of cancer death in



men. American Indian and Alaska Native men are less likely to be diagnosed with prostate cancer. However, their prostate cancer outcomes are much worse than other racial/ethnic groups, especially for men age 50 to 59 years old.

There are two tests that can help diagnose prostate cancer. One is a digital rectal exam (DRE), and the other is a blood test that measures the amount of prostate-specific antigen (PSA). Elevated levels of PSA in the bloodstream can be indicative of prostate cancer.

For the study, researchers conducted a secondary analysis of the National Ambulatory Medicare Care Survey (NAMCS) datasets from 2013 to 2016 and 2018 and the NAMCS Community Health Center (CHC) datasets from 2012 to 2015. NAMCS is a nationally representative sample of visits to non-federal

**American Indian and Alaska Native men experience disproportionately greater prostate cancer mortality compared to other racial and ethnic identities. Men from Alaska often present for care when their prostate cancer is more advanced compared to other racial and ethnic groups, which may be a direct result of not getting PSAs and DREs at the same rate as other groups.**

office-based physician clinics. The CHC samples include outpatient visits to physicians, physician assistants and nurse practitioners at community health centers including federally qualified health centers and Indian Health Service clinics.

In the NAMCS dataset, researchers analyzed 509.7 million visits over a five-year period, of which 232,998 were for American Indian and Alaska Native men.

“We found that American Indian and Alaska Native men were significantly less likely to receive a PSA than non-American Indian and Alaska Native men,”

Gillette said. “The most alarming finding is that there were zero instances of DREs in the NAMCS dataset over the entire five-year period, and there were no PSAs conducted in American Indian/Alaska Native men after 2014.”

In the NAMCS dataset, the rate of PSAs being ordered for American Indian and Alaska Native men was 1.67 per 100 visits but included no DREs. In analyzing the CHC dataset, the researchers found that American Indian and Alaska Native men had slightly lower rates of PSAs than non-Hispanic White men, but the difference was not statistically significant.

“We found that the disparity may not exist when men visit community health centers,” Gillette said. “More research is needed to better understand why.”

Currently, American Indian and Alaska Native men experience disproportionately greater prostate cancer mortality compared to other racial and ethnic identities. Men from Alaska often present for care when their prostate cancer is more advanced compared to other racial and ethnic groups, which may be a direct result of not getting PSAs and DREs at the same rate as other groups.

### Laughter and humor for improving wellbeing

Telling a few jokes may be better for your health and others, and even much more so than ever realized. It turns out that laughter and humor are potent tools that can significantly impact our wellbeing, according to new research conducted by the University of Warwick in England.

next page please



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# Humor

from page 8

The researchers studied laughter and humor in both the workplace and in health-related circumstances and found that these two elements possess remarkable properties that can alleviate worry, diminish feelings of isolation, and instill a sense of control over one’s mental and emotional state. Humor and laughter can act as a natural pressure valve.

“Laughter is an important channel to express feelings, show appreciation and create a positive atmosphere. Similarly, by embracing humor, individuals can find solace and resilience in the face of adversity,” said Stephanie Schnurr, a professor of Applied Linguistics at the University of Warwick.

Laughter and humor play a crucial role in enabling individuals to cope with novel and potentially overwhelming situations, and to create healthy and happy relationships. Hu-

mor provides an avenue to express the unsayable, allowing individuals to discuss topics around social, economic and environmental issues that are typically considered taboo, such as financial issues, mental wellbeing and death.

Schnurr said laughter and humor can be incredibly effective tools for providing a mental break from life’s challenges. They allow individuals to adopt a more light-hearted viewpoint toward their circumstances. By finding humor, and even laughing in difficult situations, we can remind ourselves and those around us that the situation may not be as bad as we think.

She said laughing at disagreements and troubles among colleagues at work helps them to overcome these issues and lays the foundation for a more productive and collaborative working environment. Schnurr said laughter has the remarkable ability to empower us and give us a sense of control, transforming us from feeling

**Laughing and having a sense of humor can help bring people together and build positive relationships. It can create a type of endearment.**

like helpless victims to individuals in charge of our situations.

Laughing at and making fun of one’s outsider status in a work team is another example of this powerful function of humor. By embracing the power of humor and laughter, a person is able to navigate challenges with confidence. Moreover, laughter serves as a valuable outlet for emotional expression, promoting overall mental and emotional wellbeing, according to the researchers.

They contend that humor, especially when used with irony and sarcasm, plays a crucial role as a release valve, enabling individuals to effectively relieve stress and tension. By embracing the power of laughter, it is possible to lighten the weight of everyday challenges. Engaging in humorous exchanges allows a person to temporarily detach from

the seriousness of life and work, offering a momentary respite and a fresh perspective.

It is also a chance to change your outlook on issues that impact overall well-being. In the medical context, humor is often used to put patients at ease, and used to tackle difficult or sensitive conversations, for example an unhealthy lifestyle or lack of engagement with the prevention and treatment plan.

“Humor creates a new version of reality that is easier to live in, less scary, and less likely to cause fear. Used by women in male-dominated professions to make fun of their outsider status, humor enables them to criticize and challenge the status quo without putting others off or offending them. Humor can also help people criticize their boss and communicate alternative views without running the

risk of being shot down for disagreeing with the boss,” said Schnurr.

Laughing and having a sense of humor can help bring people together and build positive relationships. It can create a type of endearment. In the workplace, this is particularly useful in job interviews where creating a good relationship with the interviewers and signaling belonging are important for success. Although making fun of and laughing at someone could be hurtful, laughing with (rather than at) can show that you understand and like your colleague, and it can make both of you feel better and happier.

*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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# Free training, support for family caregivers

Senior Voice Staff

Family Caregiver Support Programs offer free support meetings to 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. Alzheimer's Resource of Alaska (ARA) organizes caregiver support meetings around the state, including Anchorage, Eagle River, Fairbanks, Homer, Juneau/Southeast,

Ketchikan, Kodiak, Mat-Su Valley, Seward, Sitka, Soldotna, Talkeetna, Willow. Call 1-800-478-1080 for details. ARA also hosts a statewide call-in meeting on the first Saturday and third Wednesday of every month, 1 to 2 p.m. For information, call Gay Wellman,

907-822-5620 or 1-800-478-1080. The Homer caregiver support group meets at the Homer Senior Center on the second and fourth Thursday of each month (Aug. 8 and 22), from 2 to 3:30 p.m. Contact Pam Hooker for information, 907-299-7198.

In Southeast Alaska, the Southeast Senior Services Caregiver Support Group meets every Thursday, 1 to 2 p.m. via Zoom. The group is available to all caregivers in the region. For more information and a Zoom invitation, call Denny Darby at 907-463-6181 or email [Denny.Darby@ccsjuneau.org](mailto:Denny.Darby@ccsjuneau.org).

# Car-shopping considerations for caregivers

Also: Check out these useful car gadgets

By KIMBERLY BLAKER

When you care for someone with physical or mental challenges because of age or disability, you might find regular transportation is more complicated. A traditional car setup may be difficult or even dangerous for those with limited mobility or safety concerns. Yet, the ability to get out

and go places is necessary, not just for appointments or to run errands, but also to retain some freedom and engagement with the world.

### Choosing a vehicle

If you're choosing a new car, it may require additional consideration to find a vehicle that's more accommodating. So it can be a bit trickier than the

average car shopping experience. You'll want to think about the basics like your budget, mileage, reliability, and desired features or technology. But it's also important to consider the more specific needs of your passenger. Think about the person or people you'll be driving and what accommodations are needed to ensure their comfort and safety and provide them appropriate accessibility and convenience.

Common features caregivers may find helpful in a car include:

- ▶ Large cargo space for hauling equipment and



The Able Lift Auto Cane Vehicle Support Handle is a small, 1 pound, 6.5 inch long support handle. It stores easily in the car and works in any door latch, providing support for leaning to maneuver.

Stander Inc. photo

## Screenings

continued from page 6

questions or need further information, reach out to us at the contact phone numbers listed below.

While blood testing is an invaluable tool, it is not a complete diagnosis. We strongly urge you to share your blood test results with your healthcare provider for a comprehensive understanding of your health. For additional help, we offer a free guide at [bit.ly/3XI76eQ](http://bit.ly/3XI76eQ) featuring local and national resources for diabetes, pre-diabetes, and high blood pressure. Also, our health educator can answer general questions.

If you need assistance understanding your blood test results, please call our toll-free voicemail at 1-833-800-1292. An Alaska Health Fair Health Educator and RN will return your call and address your questions.

Your health is indeed a treasure, and this treasure extends to your loved ones too. Play a part in their wellness journey by sharing this announcement with them, because health, just like happiness, multiplies when shared.

**Regular screenings are key to prevention and early intervention.** The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force now recommends adults age 35 to 70 who are overweight or obese get screened for prediabetes and type 2 diabetes once every three years. This testing is typically covered by insurance.

In addition, we're happy to refer adults with prediabetes to free or low-cost diabetes prevention programs available both in-person and online. These include:

1. Omada Health, an online diabetes prevention program. Visit [omada-health.com/alaska](http://omada-health.com/alaska) to find out more.
2. InquisitHealth, a telephone-based diabetes prevention program. Fill out the form at <https://bit.ly/3OadLdD> to see if Inquisit is right for you.
3. Contact Leslie Shallcross at 907-474-2426 or [lashallcross@Alaska.edu](mailto:lashallcross@Alaska.edu)

For more information, contact 907-278-0234 in Anchorage/statewide; 907-374-6853 in Fairbanks; 907-723-5100 in Juneau.

This project is made possible by the Alaska State Dept. of Health, Fresh Start, and Alaska Health Fair, Inc.

- other items
- ▶ Low floor but higher seats for an easier time getting in and out
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- ▶ Power doors that can

page 13 please



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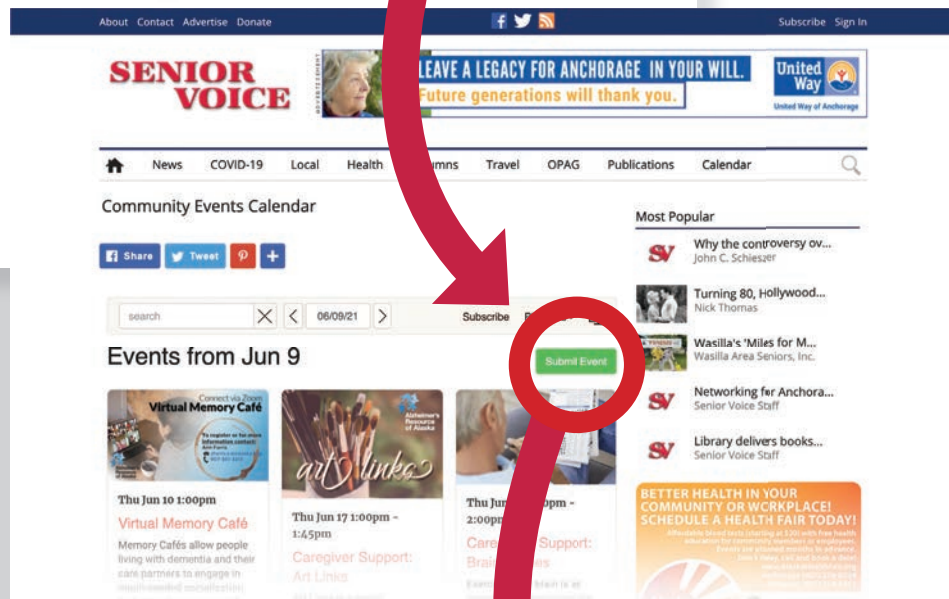
# Get word out about your upcoming event!

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**1** Go to the Senior Voice web-site: seniorvoicealaska.com  
Click on the “Calendar” tab in the upper right corner



**2** You will see the list of upcoming events. To add your own event, click the “Submit Event” button on the upper right.

**3** You will be taken to a forms page where you can quickly enter your details.

In addition to the date, time, location and description, you can include other items:

- Photos
- Fliers and other images
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- Zoom, Skype and other conferencing links
- Your email and other contact information

A screenshot of the 'Senior Voice Calendar of Events' submission form. The form includes fields for 'Your Name', 'Your Contact Email', 'Private notes for the calendar owner (not shown with your event)', 'Event Title', and a checkbox for 'Add a button linking to the event website'. There is also a field for 'A link to your event website'. The form is titled 'To submit an event to our calendar just fill in this form' and has a 'Check and Submit' button at the top right.

## TRY IT NOW.

Our website readers are all around the state, and beyond. If you run into problems, call 1-800-478-1059 or email [editor@seniorvoicealaska.com](mailto:editor@seniorvoicealaska.com)

# Senior Voice

Senior Voice is published by Older Persons Action Group, Inc.

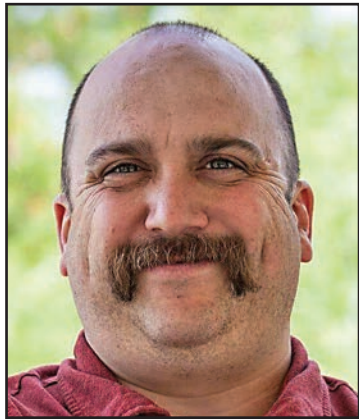




# Use these tips for safety from online scammers

By CHRISTIAN M. HARTLEY

For Senior Voice



Today, it seems like we get more emails and phone calls from scammers than we do from our actual family and friends. These contacts pose a very real threat to people of all ages but particularly the seniors who can least afford to lose what they have been able to save. I hope to provide some sage guidance to help you safeguard yourself from online scams. All it takes is one mistake for half of a second and you can lose all of your personal data, your finances, or your social media account.

**Stay informed about the latest tactics used by scammers.** It used to be emails from Nigerian princes, but now people are creating fake accounts that are exact copies of real people and asking you for financial help. It is hard to keep up with all of the new scams. Contact your local senior center or a regional service organization and ask if they have classes or workshops specifically about online scams and frauds. It might also allow you to meet some new people to call friends, too. You can also read through reliable online resources, such as government websites and organizations you know and trust.

**Use a unique password for your online accounts.** Create complex passwords

by combining letters, numbers and symbols, and avoid using easily guessable information such as birth dates or names. If you have memory problems, you can use a passphrase instead. For instance, you can use “fAgh56EWlas#\$” as a password, or you can use a quote you love and always remember; like, “4ScoreAnd7YearsAgo!” or “My1stDogWasBornIn1962!” (See related story on page 2.)

**Be cautious when sharing personal information online.** Never provide sensitive details such as Social Security Number, bank information, or passwords over the internet or email for any reason. Never share the information over the phone unless you can verify the legitimacy of the recipient. Did they call you? Then hang up and call them back at their customer service number to make sure you really do owe that bill. If they say you cannot hang up or they will call the police, it's a scam. If it's someone calling about a family member, hang

**Staying aware, practicing secure online habits, and seeking help when needed can significantly reduce your vulnerability to fraudulent activities.**

up and call that family member.

**Never enter personal information on any website unless the website begins with HTTPS://, not just HTTP://** That “S” after HTTP means it is secure. Avoid sharing personal information on social media platforms as scammers can exploit such information for identity theft and they can make a copy of your social media page and add your online friends. Always leave your friends list set to Private and not viewable by anybody. The website you are using will tell you how to, or ask someone to help you with that.

**Be skeptical.** Do not trust suspicious emails, messages or phone calls. Never click any links in an email that says it will take you to a login screen or a payment page. Instead, go to your internet browser

and type in the address of the company. Many people hide really dangerous websites with links on words you trust, and you can't see the bad link until after you click on it – which results in the scammer getting a copy of your login information when you log in from their link. Verify the identity of the sender or caller by contacting the organization directly. Never click on any email links or download attachments from unknown sources. That's why you always verify it's really the person talking to you on messenger by calling them to verify if they ask for personal information or for money.

**Reach out to a trusted family member, friend, or caregiver for assistance and guidance regarding online activities.** Allow them to share any concerns or questionable on-

line experiences they may encounter. Loved ones can help monitor your online transactions, assist in installing security software, or guide you through unfamiliar websites or applications.

As the digital world continues to evolve, people must equip themselves with the knowledge and tools to protect against online scams. Staying aware, practicing secure online habits, and seeking help when needed can significantly reduce your vulnerability to fraudulent activities. Remember the bottom line: If it doesn't sound right, it probably isn't right.

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

## Farmer's Market checks buy fresh produce

Senior Voice Staff

Senior Farmer's Market Nutrition Program check booklets are available at local senior centers and other agencies. Each booklet includes \$35 worth of checks that can be used to buy fresh Alaska-grown fruits, vegetables, fresh-cut herbs and honey at participating farmers' markets, authorized farms, and roadside stands within Alaska. Applicants must be at least 60 years old and meet low-in-


come eligibility guidelines. Links to program information and a downloadable application are at <https://bit.ly/3BfGvLV>. 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. Checks may be used from June 1 through Oct. 31.

Some locations have reportedly been slow to receive the booklets. Keep checking.

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Car-shopping

continued from page 10

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Also, don't hesitate to ask for advice from salespeople at car lots for cars that fit your specific needs. A salesperson might offer suggestions you hadn't

considered and have a better idea of what type of cars will work best for your situation.

Car accessories to improve accessibility

Many helpful gadgets and accessories can increase your current car's accessibility. Consider what specific parts of your vehicle or aspects of traveling that your passenger struggles with. This will ensure you best meet their needs, allowing them more independence while also making travel easier and more comfortable.

Swivel seat cushion.

Getting in and out of a car seat can be very difficult for those with limited mobility. A swivel seat cushion makes it easy to sit and turn without straining or having to twist the body. Many swivel seat cushions are also much softer, making car rides more comfortable.

The Sojoy iGelComfort Deluxe Gel Swivel Seat Cushion has a 16-inch diameter and memory foam inside for increased comfort.

**Vehicle support handle.** A portable support handle can be kept in the car or a bag. It hooks into the door's latch to support users while

pulling themselves up to rise from their seat and out of the vehicle independently with less risk of injury or strain.

The Able Lift Auto Cane Vehicle Support Handle is a small 1 pound, 6.5 inch long support handle. It stores easily in the car and works in any door latch.

**Buckle release aid.** Pushing the small release button on the seatbelt can be difficult for those with arthritis or limited hand or finger strength. Release aids are designed to reduce the force and fine motor skills needed to unbuckle.

Bucklebee is a small

release aid that can stay on the seatbelt for convenience.

**Buckle cover.** Alternatively, if you have concerns about someone with dementia, Alzheimer's, or another disability who may try to escape from the car, you don't want it to be easy to unbuckle the seatbelt. There are buckle covers that require a small device to slide through a slot to press the release.

Buckle Robot is a universal and simple seatbelt cover with a release key that can attach to a keychain.

Kimberly Blaker is a freelance writer living in Michigan.

Password

continued from page 2

using, it's even harder for them to guess which lyrics you're using.

**Use a "passphrase."** Instead of using a single word, use a passphrase. Your phrase should be around 20 characters long and include random words, numbers and symbols. Think of something that you will be able to remember, but others need help to come close to guessing, such as PurpleMilk#367JeepDog\$.

**Use multiple passwords.** Using different passwords for different accounts is also important. While it may be easier to remember one password for every account, it's much easier for hackers to break down one wall rather than multiple walls. If hackers can figure out one password, even if it's to something harmless like your Instagram account, they know the password to every account you own. This includes websites you shop online at, banking accounts, health insurance accounts, email accounts—you name it.

**Use multi-factor authentication.** When it's available and supported by accounts, use two-factor authentication. This requires both your password and additional information upon logging in. The second piece is generally a code sent to your phone or a random number generated by an app or token. This will protect your account even if your password is compromised. Many devices include fingerprint or facial recognition to unlock them, which helps protect any apps on

the device if it becomes lost or stolen.

**Consider a password manager.** A written list works, but if you're worried about losing it, type up an electronic list and label it as something other than "PASSWORDS." Keep the list updated and organized as well as secretive. Avoid keeping the list on the device, as it will make it easier for the thief to access the apps and personal data.

You can use a reputable password manager app to store your information. These easy-to-access apps store all your password information and security question answers in case you ever need to remember. However, don't forget to use a strong password to secure the information within your password manager.

**Select security questions only you know the answer to.** Many security questions ask for answers to information available in public records or online, like your ZIP code, mother's maiden name, and birthplace. That is information a motivated attacker can easily obtain. Don't use questions with a limited number of responses that attackers can easily guess, like the color of your first car.

While the game show is in the rearview mirror, passwords are still giving us reason to tune in when it comes to safety. Having an effective password or passphrase keeps your personal information secure on the internet and keeps you winning at the password game.

Roseann Freitas is public relations and communications manager for the Better Business Bureau Great West and Pacific Region.

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# Camping with Elder Mentor Anna Mae Andrew

RurAL CAP Elder Mentor Team

Hi, my name is Anna Mae Andrew and I am 76 years old. My maiden name is Anna Mae Walcott. I have lived in New Stuyahok for more than 50 years—I moved here in 1968. I grew up in Ekook, where it is beautiful all year long. I got married in New Stuyahok to a local named Moxie S. Andrew. My hobbies include sewing, knitting and crocheting cultural things, and also artwork. I love to travel on a boat to my fish camp and camp outdoors up the river, and I love subsistence fishing. Splitting fish during the summer for winter, too. I also like to go outdoors to pick cultural medicines. Berry picking is the best. There is nice wilderness here and beautiful places to camp. What I love about New Stuyahok is that it is a great place to raise a family, the lovely scenery and friendly people. And I cherish my work with the students.



Anna Mae estimates she has been volunteering in the classroom for around 23 years.

Courtesy Chief Ivan Blunka School

This summer has been cold. Every morning at 5 a.m., I wake up and light the wood stove to get it going for the day. My son gets up and goes to check the net when the tide comes in. I watch the stove and get it warm in there. My daughter-in-law cooks breakfast.



Elder Mentor Anna Mae Andrew has lived in New Stuyahok for more than 50 years.

Courtesy RurAL CAP

During the day after they split fish, I go to the smokehouse and check on the fish smoking all day. My family doesn't want me to work too hard, so I do some cooking and washed dishes. We get our drinking water from one hill; it's nice, cold spring water. It takes about an hour to get there then we fill up our jugs. We don't drink the river water.

We bring our own food out to camp. We have eggs, hashbrowns and pancakes in the morning. I love to drink coffee with milk and sugar, sweet, not black. As I get older, I like to have sweet coffee. I used to drink it black, but no more. I do the afternoon cooking for lunch. I love to cook fresh fish from the bay. Sometimes on a nice, hot day, we cook on the beach roasting the fish over the fire. I love my king salmon fish heads and tail. I boil them with water and salt, and we eat them with cut-up raw onions. I haven't seen many birds this summer because of the weather, but we see lots of swallows, eagles, seagulls and cranes.

I love reading and doing word puzzles while I sit

by the bank and watch the smokehouse. I tell my boys, "take me up river, I wanna go riding on Nushagak River," for a picnic and the kids swim. So we go and camp. This year no blueberries, which I love to pick. Maybe next year.

I started off as a special education aide and retired in 2000, then decided to

start volunteering and get back in the schools as an Elder Mentor. I love working with people. I've been an Elder Mentor for most likely 23 years. Our schools in New Stuyahok have plenty of resources with helpful staff, and there are a variety of cultures in which we can learn from each other.

I have so much fun volunteering with the children at our elementary school. Our village respects Elders, and when the children see us, they show that respect to us and carry on with their schoolwork. I enjoy helping students practice a traditional subsistence lifestyle, teaching them cultural ways and helping them do different activities. I knit and sew, and teach the kids how to do it during our cultural week. I also tell stories and read stories.

Volunteering as an Elder Mentor with RurAL CAP has been great. It gives me something to look forward to every day. It would be so helpful to have more Elder Mentors.

"Anna Mae Andrew has been working with students during our E-Week

and daily lessons," says Tatiana Andrew, Chief Ivan Blunka School Site Supervisor. It's really nice to have Elders in our class. I enjoyed working with her."

Make sure you visit this same article on the Senior Voice website for Anna Mae Andrew's Tundra Tea and Blueberry Jam recipes.

## Join the Elder Mentor program

The Elder Mentor Program is currently accepting applications for the coming school year. Benefits for qualifying seniors 55+ include paid time off, a tax free stipend, paid holidays, free meals and travel assistance. Please call for more information and to apply: 907-865-7276, and check out the online application and learn more at <https://eldermentor.org>. Reach the team via e-mail at [eldermentors@ruralcap.org](mailto:eldermentors@ruralcap.org). Search "Elder Mentor" on Facebook.

The Elder Mentor program volunteers and staff wish Tatianna Andrew a happy retirement. She has been a site supervisor for the program for several years. Thanks for all you do.

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# Matrimonies, memories and celebrations

By MARALEY MCMICHAEL  
Senior Voice Correspondent

My son, Patrick, proposed to his girlfriend of three years, Brandi, on March 30, and of course she said yes. It was a shocking surprise to all involved because of his insistence that he would never marry again after the devastating end of his first marriage in 2011. But, Brandi made him happy and he realized that he would be foolish not to “put a ring on it.”

Brandi is a very loveable, family oriented woman. During the phone call telling of their engagement, she asked me if I had anything from my wedding that she could use in their wedding. She explained how she planned to incorporate the lace from her mother’s wedding dress into her dress. That got me to thinking. After my marriage, my mother had put my wedding dress in a box to save for me. Years later, I finally rescued it from fam-



Gary and Maralee McMichael’s 50th anniversary cake with 50-year-old plates and napkins.

Maralee McMichael photo

ily storage and combined it with my husband Gary’s wedding attire (which was hanging in our closet, but no longer fit), along with the collection of 128 cards we’d received, and put it all in a box labeled “wedding memories,” which was part of our “lock, stock, and barrel” during our last three moves.

More recently (2015), when my two sisters and I spent several days sorting Mom and Dad’s belongings at the old home place in Glennallen, we came across a box of all the leftover paper supplies and

decorations from our 1973 wedding. They never threw anything away, so it really wasn’t too surprising.

Since all that stuff had been saved those many years, I decided I wasn’t yet ready to throw it away. I brought the box home and put it on the top shelf in our shop, along with the other box labeled “wedding memories.” With Brandi’s question, I knew right where to look for any possible mementos to share with her.

In the meantime, Gary’s and my 50th anniversary was rapidly approaching. My life was overwhelmingly busy dealing with medical and financial issues, but every once in a while I would let my thoughts wander to the momentous occasion coming up on May 26. In 2008, Gary and I attended a fabulous 50th anniversary party of long-time family friends in Anchorage. It was as big of deal as a wedding, with

page 16 please

## Rambles

News from the Grapevine

Congratulations to Elverda Lincoln, who celebrated her 100th birthday on July 16. An item in the Aug. issue of the Wasilla Area Seniors Inc. newsletter notes Elverda moved to WASI’s senior housing in 2001. She has written four books about her life, mainly for her family, and has done 97 Quilts of Valor, and it still volunteering. “She attributes her longevity to living healthy, being positive and staying out of other people’s business,” the article says. “Most Tuesdays and Thursdays you will find Elverda doing Bingocize at WASI.” ... Tuesdays are for trail walking in Fairbanks, organized by Fairbanks North Star Borough Parks and Recreation. Each Tuesday has two group walks to choose from: the midday “social stroll” at 12:15 p.m., and afternoon “trail tootle” at 5:30 p.m. Some trails on the list: River Loop at Chena Lakes; Beaver Springs Trail at 5th Ave. Park; Flicker Trail at Tanana Lakes Recreation Area, among others. The senior program operates in the Joy Community Center, 24 Margaret Ave. Visit for the full schedule or call 907-459-1136 or go to parks.fnsb.gov online. The program will continue through October ... Chugiak-Eagle River Senior Center is organizing a day trip to Talkeetna for a two-hour riverboat cruise on Mahay’s Riverboat Service. Ticket price for the excursion is \$104, which includes transportation and riverboat cruise. The date is Sept. 6. Leave the senior center’s main lobby at 10 a.m. Seating is

page 16 please



# AARP COMMUNITY CHALLENGE

**AARP is investing \$3.6 million into communities nationwide through 310 community improvement grants.** In Alaska, AARP awarded four grants worth over \$70,000.

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**Learn more: [aarp.org/communitychallenge](http://aarp.org/communitychallenge)**





# Rambles

News from the Grapevine

continued from page 15

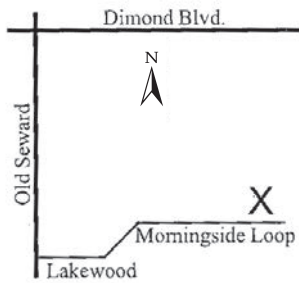
limited, so sign-up asap. Call 907-688-2677 ... Also in **Chugiak**, the **senior center** is hosting a “**Music is Medicine Event**,” Aug. 31 at 6 p.m. in the main dining hall. This **drumming circle** will be guided by **Gail Jackson**, a professional Global Drum Circle Facilitator Trainer and owner of Creative Rhythms sound therapy. No prior musical experience is necessary, drums provided. Or bring your own. Also welcome: rattles, flutes, hand pans, singing bowls. \$25 per person. Call **Heather** at the senior center to pre-register, 907-688-2685 ... **Seward Senior Center’s** August newsletter includes a list with some specific requests for **donations**: “Fiction paperback books and Alaska authors, puzzles, word games, table games, greeting cards, Folger’s coffee, herbal tea, cookies for the cookie jar, hard candy, classic jewelry and hand-made items for the gift shop and your zest for life.” Drop them off during the center’s business hours, or call for more information, 907-224-5604 ... Congratulations to **Amy Durand**, who in July was announced to be the next executive director for the **Senior Citizens of Kodiak, Inc.** Amy has been the deputy director and will take over Oct. 1, when long-time director **Pat Branson** retires ... **Homer Senior Center’s** annual **Alzheimer’s Fundraiser** takes place Aug. 19 and **volunteers** are needed for serving, setup, cleanup, parking attendants, sign-in desk, silent auction and more. Call 907-235-4553 to help ... **Steak dinner** returns this month at **Santa’s Senior Center** in **North Pole**, Friday, Aug. 25, 5 p.m. Enjoy a gourmet meal for suggested donation of \$25. Deadline to sign up is Wednesday, Aug. 23 at noon. Call for more information, 907-488-4663 ... Also at **Santa’s Senior Center**, the annual **jewelry sale** fundraiser is coming up in October so bring in your used, new, broken or mismatched jewelry donations. But before that is the **annual book sale** and **bake sale**, tentatively planned for Sept. 15 and 16, so start gathering your books and baked goods recipes.

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

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# Memories

continued from page 15

people attending from out-of-state, a catered buffet meal, slide show, etc. I’d also recently read in the Anchorage Daily News of a couple who had taken their whole extended family on a cruise to celebrate their 50th. Back in 1973, when Gary and I had stars in our eyes, we never gave a thought to a possible 50th anniversary, let alone how we might celebrate.

Now as the day approached, I realized I was not looking forward to it. I had put a lot of thought and effort into a little celebration for just the two of us last year (Gary’s first year to reside in the Palmer Pioneers Home) and it kind of fizzled. I had no desire for a repeat of that, but yet also couldn’t imagine having a bigger party, sharing our special occasion with a group of strangers at the Pioneers Home. It was easier just to ignore the topic.

However, while I was in Anchorage in early March for a doctor appointment, I went to look for a bed skirt at what I thought was Bed, Bath and Beyond off the Glenn Highway. I didn’t know that a newer store, Party City, had taken its place. I was going to leave and continue with the next errand on my list, but decided to at least to check out the party merchandise. At the time, Patrick and Brandi were considering an Alaskan wedding, and it would be good to know what was available. When I came to the anniversary aisle, a package of gold and white 50th anniversary balloons caught my eye. I could picture them filled with helium next to a pretty cake. I looked at all the 50th anniversary merchandise, but it was the balloons that kept calling to me.

My sister in Glennallen had asked how I planned to celebrate our 50th, but also said that if I had a party, she couldn’t attend because she’d be too busy trying to get her tourist-related job set up for the summer. A friend in Cooper Landing had said we absolutely needed to celebrate and she offered to order a cake for me. At some point, while standing there in the party store



Maraley and Gary McMichael at their 50th anniversary party at the Alaska Veterans and Pioneers Home, May 26, 2023.

Courtesy Jeanette Pedginski

in the anniversary aisle, staring at that package of balloons for 10 minutes, I had a change of attitude. Perhaps I could be agreeable to having a party at the Pioneers Home. I already had all the paper plates and napkins I needed, leftover from our wedding.

When I paid for the package of balloons, the clerk said the helium was free with purchase. I replied that I didn’t want them filled, because the event was over two months away. On the drive home, I wondered if the Pioneers Home had a helium machine, since they have at least one party a month, along with appropriate themed decorations.

The next day, even before I went to Gary’s room, I popped into the activities

socials. I could supply the cake to go along with the ice cream. After 15 minutes of discussion, a party plan seemed to fall into place. For the first time, I looked forward to our 50th anniversary celebration.

For the next couple of months, there were more phone conversations with Patrick and Brandi about the usual planning details involving anniversaries and weddings: Clothes, food, decorations and so forth. How unusual to be involved in planning both a 50th anniversary and a son’s wedding at the same time.

The May 26 anniversary party went well. Many people (who were actually not strangers) both residents and staff came up to Gary and me to share a few words of congratulations and look at our wedding photo. The Palmer Carrs-Safeway baker did a wonderful job decorating the cake and it tasted delicious, too. Although unplanned, the Pioneers Home administrator, Joshua Shaver, a talented musician, played his guitar and sang love songs in our honor.

Then on June 25, Patrick and Brandi’s Denver wedding went fantastically well, with some of their (over 200) friends commenting that it was the “wedding of the year.” Patrick and Brandi sipped champagne from two small 50-year-old ceramic flower vases during the “toasting,” but that is a story for another time. Still to



Patrick and Brandi McMichael using 50-year-old flower vases to toast during their wedding, June 25, 2023.

Courtesy Tony Gallagher Photography

director’s office to ask if they owned a helium machine and tell her my ideas for a possible 50th anniversary party. No machine, but when we checked the calendar for the day of the week and learned it was Friday, we both got excited. Fridays from 1:30 to 2:30 p.m. are always ice cream

come, I hope to attend my 50th high school reunion in Glennallen on July 29 and renew some long time friendships. What a summer of celebration.

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





# Teleconference will focus on senior services grants

By JON HAGHAYEGHI  
*Alaska Commission on Aging*

The Alaska Commission on Aging (ACoA) is hosting a teleconference focusing on Nutrition, Transportation and Support Services (NTS) grants. Subject experts Ellen Hackenmuller and Kristin Cox of Senior and Disabilities Services will explain the mechanics of NTS grants in Alaska. Grant recipients have been invited to participate in regional focus groups alongside our experts to assist the commission in understanding the growing needs of the state. The efforts made during

this teleconference will assist ACoA commissioners in gathering information to guide recommendations issued to the governor and legislature. The public is invited to attend. Participation will be limited to a public comment period at the end of the teleconference. For more information on this teleconference, please check the Alaska Online Public Notices at <https://bit.ly/456Hrz9>. This teleconference is the first of several teleconferences offered quarterly. For more information, contact ACoA's Executive Director, Jon Haghayeghi at 907-465-4793.

# Senior Voice recognized in national awards contest

*Senior Voice Staff*

Older Persons Action Group, Inc., earned honors for its monthly, statewide publication Senior Voice in the 32nd annual National Mature Media Awards Program. The program, presented by the Mature Market Resource Center, recognizes the nation's finest marketing, communications, educational materials and programs designed and produced for older adults. OPAG and Senior Voice

won three awards: Merit Award in the Best Newspaper/Newsletter category for the April 2022 edition; Merit Award in the Best Newspaper/Newsletter category for the January 2022 edition; Merit award to correspondent Maraley McMichael for her essays on life in Alaska. Older Persons Action Group has been publishing Senior Voice for 46 years. Some funding is provided through a federal and state grant managed by the State of Alaska.

# Calendar of Events

**Aug. 5 Salcha** Salcha Senior Center 50th anniversary celebration, noon to 5 p.m. at the senior center, 6073 Salcha Pioneer Court. Potluck picnic – bring side dish or dessert. 907-488-1606

**Aug. 5-13 Fairbanks** Alaska International Senior Games. Annual event brings together people from all around the United States and several countries to compete – you must be age 50 or older – in everything ranging from ice hockey, pickleball and track and field events, to archery, table tennis, bowling and golf. Activities you can enjoy, whether a casual athlete, serious competitor, or spectator. Schedule and other details at [www.alaskaisg.org](http://www.alaskaisg.org).

**Aug. 11-13 Ninilchik** Kenai Peninsula Fair at the fairgrounds. Fair food, rides, pig races, rodeo, live music, “stilt circus”, petting zoo, exhibits, more. Senior day is Aug. 11, \$3 admission. [Kenaipeninsulafair.com](http://Kenaipeninsulafair.com)

**Aug. 17 Wasilla** Wasilla Area Seniors, Inc. board meeting, 9:30 a.m. in the senior center meeting room. 907-206-8800

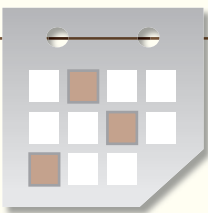
**Aug. 18 Seward** “Virtual Dementia Tour” at Seward Senior Center, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Alzheimer’s Resource of Alaska presents simulation experiences that provide insight into what day-to-day life is like for a person living with Alzheimer’s disease or related dementia. Each virtual tour is 30 minutes and free, but space is limited. Register at 907-224-5604.

**Aug. 18-Sept. 4 Palmer** Alaska State Fair in Palmer. Rides, giant cabbage, live performers, concert headliners, famous fair food, animals, exhibits, much more. Closed on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. Seniors 65 and older with ID: \$8 per day Mondays and Thursdays; \$9 Friday-Sunday and \$55 season pass. [www.alaskastatefair.org](http://www.alaskastatefair.org)

**Aug. 19 Chugiak** Combat Vets motorcycle event at Chugiak-Eagle River Senior Center, 10 a.m. in the front lobby. The Combat Vets Motorcycle Association will visit and offer rides to seniors, weather permitting. Free. 907-688-2677

**Aug. 19 Homer** Homer Senior Citizens, Inc. Alzheimer’s Fundraiser, 3 to 6 p.m. at Homer Senior Center. Food, wine, beer, and live music from Tim Fitzgerald Chicago Jazz Band Quarter. Proceeds to go the center’s new Alzheimer’s wing. Tickets, \$100, available at the center or online, [www.homerseniors.org](http://www.homerseniors.org)

**Aug. 25 Ninilchik** Annual fundraiser Dinner and Auction at Ninilchik Senior Center. Aloha theme: Dress with a tropical flair. Live auction, dessert auction, silent auction and bag sale. Doors open at 4 p.m. for wine and cheese tasting. Prime rib dinner starts at 5 p.m. Tickets (limited availability) are \$25 per person. Must be purchased prior to the dinner. 907-567-3988



## 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 September edition is August 15.

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# Inmate No. 594's Alaska connection

By LAUREL DOWNING BILL  
Senior Voice Correspondent

Before he became well-known around the country, one of America's most famous prison inmates dug gold nuggets out of a mine in Juneau during 1908.

But justice proved swift and sure after he killed a man on Jan. 18, 1909. A coroner's jury convened the evening of the murder, and after hearing testimony from the various parties, returned its verdict that Charles F. Damer met his death at the hands of the rival suitor for the affections of a woman named Kitty O'Brien. The jury included O'Brien as an accomplice.

The man who killed Damer was now working as a part-time bartender instead of digging for gold, and he and O'Brien were charged with murder and arraigned on Jan. 21. Authorities later dropped the charges against O'Brien, and the bartender pled guilty to a charge of second-degree murder. He was sentenced to serve seven years at the federal penitentiary on McNeil Island near Tacoma, Wash.

While the convicted killer served his sentence in Washington, his mother and sister continued to work in Alaska, spending most of their earnings on attempts to have him pardoned or paroled.

Authorities transferred him to the federal penitentiary at Leavenworth, Kan., in 1912, where he kept to himself at the maximum-security facility for hard-case prisoners. Convict Morris Rudensky described him:

"Physically he was a disgrace – tall, thin, and as attractive as a barracuda or a herring bone without the herring. He seldom spoke to anyone, including the cons, and vice versa. He was a ferocious misanthrope."

Just before the bartender's scheduled release on March 26, 1916, he walked into the Leavenworth mess hall and stabbed to death prison guard Andrew F. Turner in front of 1,200 convicts and prison officials. No one knows why. Later he said to Rudensky:

"The guard (Turner) took sick of heart trouble. I guess you could call it heart puncture. I never have given them any reason for my doing it, so they won't have much to work on; only that I killed him, and that won't do much good. I admit that much."

Convicted of Turner's murder, the bartender was sentenced to die in April 1920. However, his mother successfully gained an audience with President Woodrow Wilson's wife. She begged Mrs. Wilson to convince her ailing husband to spare her son's life, since he was just beginning to gain a reputation

as a lover of canaries and an expert on their diseases.

Elizabeth Bolling Wilson, impressed with the woman's son's pioneer work with birds, convinced her husband to commute his death sentence. The same week as the bartender was scheduled for execution, the President's order arrived that commuted the death sentence to solitary confinement for the rest of his life.

The gold-miner-turned-bartender-turned murderer named Robert Stroud carried on experimenting with canary diseases and ornithology while living in two adjoining cells. He also wrote a manuscript called "Looking Outward" about prison reform that was never published.

Stroud later transferred to Alcatraz where he became Inmate No. 594 at the new maximum-security federal institution and gained access to facilities, books and laboratory equipment. His nickname, "The Birdman of Alcatraz," came from his life on the rock. He died there in 1963, after 55 years as a prisoner. His monumental work, "Stroud's Book of Bird Diseases," published in 1942, still is regarded as an authoritative source.



Federal maximum-security prison Alcatraz, where the Birdman spent a great portion of his life, sits on an island near San Francisco.  
Courtesy National Park Service

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

### Both Ends of the Stick

#### Across

- 1 Deadly snake
- 6 Gala gathering
- 10 Heroic deed
- 14 Became an issue
- 15 Multivitamin supplement
- 16 Cuba's \_\_\_\_ of Youth
- 17 Final provocations
- 19 Commuter line
- 20 Part of T.G.I.F.
- 21 Presidential monogram
- 22 Bar order, with "the"
- 23 Piano note (Var.)
- 26 Certain apartment
- 28 Bibliographical abbr.
- 29 Long-legged web-footed black-and-white shorebirds
- 33 Nobility
- 36 "Born Free" lioness
- 38 Viva-voce
- 39 Night fliers
- 40 Perceive
- 41 Gay Talese's "\_\_\_\_ the Sons"
- 42 Change states, in a way
- 43 Lexicographer Partridge
- 44 Source of strength
- 45 Get ready
- 47 Last name in spydom
- 49 Halftime lead, e.g.
- 50 Emma Peel, e.g.
- 54 Pottery fragment
- 57 Expose, in verse
- 58 Mens \_\_\_\_ (criminal intent)
- 59 London favorites
- 60 Doing something you didn't really want to do
- 64 Alice's chronicler

1	2	3	4	5		6	7	8	9		10	11	12	13
14						15					16			
17						18					19			
20						21				22				
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33	34	35				36	37				38			
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42						43					44			
45					46				47	48				
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54	55	56					57					58		
59						60	61				62	63		
64						65					66			
67						68					69			

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- 65 Get the pot going
- 66 That is to say
- 67 W.W. II gun
- 68 Casket
- 69 Back street
- 10 Close family member
- 11 Old Testament twin
- 12 Others, to Ovid
- 13 Rossini subject
- 18 Neighbor of a Laotian
- 22 Amateur video subject, maybe
- 24 How an author might write
- 25 Weight abbr.
- 26 Novel ending, usually
- 27 Egg cells
- 30 Sea eagles
- 31 British poet laureate Nahum
- 32 Place on the schedule
- 33 Ceremonial splendor
- 34 Decorative pitcher
- 35 Model Macpherson
- 37 Pacific ring
- 43 Work unit
- 44 It often follows you
- 46 Elaborate
- 48 Allege as fact
- 51 Dogs do it
- 52 Bone-chilling
- 53 Threadbare
- 54 Watering holes
- 55 Offended
- 56 Proficient
- 57 Bone (Prefix)
- 60 Big pooch
- 61 Black cuckoo
- 62 Capt.'s guess
- 63 Peruvian coin

Crossword answers on page 26





# Gary Puckett's powerful voice still delighting fans

By NICK THOMAS

Tinseltown Talks

Currently traveling the U.S. on the 2023 “Happy Together Tour” with classic pop acts such as The Turtles, The Cowsills, and Little Anthony (see [www.happytogethertour.com](http://www.happytogethertour.com)), Gary Puckett never tires of performing the songs made famous with his Union Gap bandmates.

The hugely popular five-man pop-rock group, remembered for their string of late 60s hits including “Woman, Woman,” “Lady Willpower,” and “This Girl is a Woman Now,” now features all new members but retains one of the most distinctive musical sounds of the era with Puckett delivering his characteristic soaring vocals infused with emotion and perfect pitch.

Famous for often performing in Civil War Union Army costumes and named after a town near where Puckett once lived in Washington state, the original Union Gap disbanded in 1971 but Puckett says the current group creates a sound as close as possible to the classic songs.

“The original recordings featured string and horn sections, but there’s just four of us in the group now so our keyboard player is tasked with recreating those sounds,” said Puckett while traveling to New York from his home in Florida. “I think we’ll give fans what they want to hear.”

Turning 80 last year, Puckett says he was around age eight or nine when his family realized he could carry a tune.

“My folks would get a tape recorder and we would sing songs and record Christmas messages to my grandparents,” he recalled. “Then they would make a little record of it. My voice was way, way ‘up in the sky’ back then, and I remember my mother telling me at one point she just thought all little boys could sing like that.”

Young Gary’s mother wasn’t alone in appreciation of her son’s vocal talents. While later attending college in San Diego, Puckett and the group toured the West Coast playing small clubs and were visited by



The lineup for today’s Gary Puckett and the Union Gap, left to right: Woody Lingle, Gary Puckett, Jamie Hilboldt and Mike Candito.

Provided by Gary Puckett

Columbia Records producer Jerry Fuller.

“He came down to see us in San Diego,” Puckett remembered. “He liked my voice and the idea of wearing the outfits and walked up to the stage at midnight and said let’s go make a record.”

That record became their first hit, “Woman, Woman,” one of several Fuller would produce for the band.

“When he first played it to me it was written as a country song,” recalled Puckett. “So he added a 30-piece string, horn and rhythm section and turned it into the pop record that established me as a singer in the music world.”

The band amassed six gold records in the space of about three years during the late 1960s. But musical tastes were changing as the 70s began closing in and for a decade there was little interest in the group’s music.

“Then in the early 1980s, radio stations began proliferating throughout the United States and featuring 60s music once again,” said Puckett. “I started getting calls from disc jockeys who were playing our songs and promoters who wanted us back on the road giving concerts.”

Puckett has continued to tour either solo or with the band ever since, releasing

another nine solo albums over the years (see [www.garypuckettmusic.com](http://www.garypuckettmusic.com)). Interacting with audiences remains a joy for the singer who is usually available at concerts to meet with fans to sign items they may bring along.

“I love to get out with the fans, it’s always great to see them smiling and enjoying the music we created way back when,” he says. “They are still appreciative of it all and the fact that they are there just honors me and the music.”

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

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# Social Security and people on the autism spectrum

Social Security  
Administration

Social Security is committed to reducing barriers and ensuring people who are eligible for our benefits receive them. We provide income security for the diverse populations we serve. This includes people with autism spectrum disorder

(ASD) and their families.

Many parents and caretakers of children with disabilities lose work hours and income because of their children's care needs. Supplemental Security Income (SSI) provides monthly financial support to low-income families with children who have developmental and behavioral disabilities.

These include ASD – and physical impairments. For more information on SSI, please visit [www.ssa.gov/ssi](http://www.ssa.gov/ssi).

People with ASD may have questions about how ASD affects their employment options. They may also see their ASD as a barrier to employment. Employers have started to recognize that many people with ASD

can bring a variety of skills and strengths to the workplace. Our Ticket to Work (Ticket) Program supports career development for people ages 18 through 64 who receive Social Security and want to work. The Ticket Program helps get vocational rehabilitation, training, job referrals and other employment support

services. For more information about this program please read [www.ssa.gov/pubs/EN-05-10061.pdf](http://www.ssa.gov/pubs/EN-05-10061.pdf).

We recognize the need to support, understand, accept, include, and empower those on the autism spectrum. Please share this information with friends and family and help us spread the word on social media.

# Retirement planning tips for single women

By JIM MILLER

Savvy Senior

**Dear Savvy Senior:** What retirement planning tips can you recommend to single women? I'm a divorced 58-year-old woman with a teenaged son and have very little saved for retirement.

—Financially Vulnerable

**Dear Vulnerable:** It's an unfortunate reality, but many single women – whether they're divorced, widowed or never married – face much greater financial challenges in

retirement than men.

The reasons behind this are women tend to earn less money, about 82 cents for every dollar that men make, on average, and they have shorter working careers than men due to raising children and/or caring for aging parents. And less money earned usually translates into less money saved and a lower Social Security benefit when you retire.

In addition, women live an average of five years longer than men, which requires their retirement

income to stretch further for living expenses and healthcare costs. And, according to some studies, women tend to have less confidence about financial issues than men, which means they don't always manage their money as well as they should.

Because of these issues, it's very important that women educate themselves on financial matters and learn how to save more effectively. Here are some tips and resources that may help.

## Start saving aggressively

If your employer offers a retirement plan, such as a 401K, you should contribute enough to at least capitalize on a company match, if available. And if you can swing it, contribute even more. In 2023, you can save as much as \$22,500 in a 401(k), or \$30,000 to those 50 and older, due to the catch-up rule.

If you don't have a workplace plan, consider opening a Traditional or Roth IRA. Both are powerful tax-advantaged retirement

savings accounts that let you contribute up to \$6,500 annually, or \$7,500 when you're older than age 50. And if you're self-employed, consider a SEP-IRA, SIMPLE-IRA and/or a solo 401(k), all of which can help reduce your taxable income while putting money away for retirement.

Also, if you have a high-deductible health insurance policy (at least \$1,500 for self-only coverage or \$3,000 for family coverage), you should

next page please

## Medicare

continued from page 5

have your non-emergency ambulance ride covered:

One, you are confined to your bed. This means you are unable to get up from bed without help, unable to walk, and unable to sit in a chair or wheelchair.

Or two, you need vital medical services during your trip that are only available in an ambulance. For example, you may need medications administered during the trip or need your vital functions monitored.

Medicare may also cover scheduled and regular non-emergency ambulance transportation. To get this kind of transportation covered, your doctor must send the ambulance supplier a written order. The written order needs to state that the transport is medically necessary. It must also be dated no earlier than 60 days before the trip. In some situations, ambulance suppliers must also receive prior authorization from Original Medicare

before providing multiple scheduled, non-emergency ambulance rides within a brief period of time (such as within one month).

## Transportation by air

Medicare Part B covers medically-necessary transportation in an air ambulance. An air ambulance is a fixed-wing or rotary-wing aircraft that has medical equipment and is staffed by medical professionals. Medical necessity means that you require immediate and rapid ambulance transportation that could not be provided by a ground ambulance. More specifically, air transportation must be needed either because ground ambulance cannot get to you where you are, there is a great distance to travel, or another obstacle involved in getting you to the nearest appropriate facility which occurs across Alaska.

## Red flags

Ambulance fraud, errors, and abuse can take various forms. Here are just a few potential examples:

► An ambulance was ordered for you, even though one was not medically necessary, and a wheelchair van or other automobile could have transported you safely.

► You were transported in an unapproved ambulance like a taxi or rideshare.

► Your ambulance was not properly staffed. This normally means that it was not staffed by two emergency medical technicians (EMTs) or paramedics.

► You were transported from your house to a

non-covered destination like your doctor's office, a community mental health center, a psychiatric facility (outside of a hospital), or an independent lab not connected with a hospital or skilled nursing facility.

For any Medicare related questions, please feel free to contact the State of Alaska Medicare Information Office at 800-478-6065 or 907-269-3680; our office is also known as the State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP), the Senior Medicare Patrol

(SMP), and the Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act (MIPPA) program. If you are part of an agency or organization that assists Seniors with medical resources, consider networking with the Medicare Information Office. Call us to inquire about our new Ambassador program.

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

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Retirement

from page 20

consider opening a health savings account (HSA). This is a triple tax advantage tool that can be used to sock away funds pre-tax, which will lower your taxable income; the money in the account grows tax-free; and if you use the money for eligible medical expenses, the withdrawals are tax-free too.

Pay off debts

If you have debt, you need to get it under control. If you need help with this, consider a nonprofit credit-counseling agency that provides free or low-cost advice and solutions, and can help you set up a debt management plan. To locate a credible agency in your area, use the National Foundation for Credit Counseling website at [www.NFCC.org](http://www.NFCC.org) (800-388-2227), or the Financial

Counseling Association of America, <https://FCAA.org> (800-450-1794).

Find help

To help you educate yourself on financial matters like retirement planning, saving and investing, health care, annuities and more, a top resource is the Women’s Institute for a Secure Retirement at <https://WiserWomen.org>.

And to help you get up to speed on Social Security, visit [www.SSA.gov/people/](http://www.SSA.gov/people/)

women. This web page, dedicated to women, provides helpful publications like “What Every Woman Should Know,” along with links to benefit calculators and your personal Social Security account to help you figure out your future earnings at different retirement ages.

You should also consider getting a financial assessment with a fee-only financial advisor. Costs for these services will vary from around \$150 to \$300

per hour, but this can be very beneficial to help you set-up a retirement plan you can follow. See [www.NAPFA.org](http://www.NAPFA.org) or [www.GarrettPlanningNetwork.com](http://www.GarrettPlanningNetwork.com) to locate an advisor in your area.

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.

Video assistance with Social Security questions

Social Security Administration

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

The video service locations are available at:  
► In Nome, Norton Sound

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

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

► Kodiak Job Center, 211 Mission Road, Suite

103. Video service is available here for walk-ins on a first come, first served basis, on the second and fourth Tuesdays, 9 a.m. to noon.

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

Most Social Security services are available to

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

If they already receive Social Security benefits, they can start or change direct deposit online, request a replacement SSA-1099,

and if they need proof of their benefits, they can print or download a current Benefit Verification Letter from their account. People not yet receiving benefits can use their online account to get a personalized Social Security Statement, which provides their earnings information as well as estimates of their future benefits. The portal also includes a retirement calculator and links to information about other online services.

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- 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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# New reporting guidelines and your LLC

By KENNETH KIRK

For Senior Voice

Two months ago in this column, I wrote about the new Corporate Transparency Act. Don't worry, you don't need to dig that issue out from the bottom of the birdcage, I'll summarize it here.

Starting next year, nearly every Limited Liability Company (LLC for short) and corporation, other than the really big ones, will have to periodically file reports with the federal government, showing among other things the ownership of the entity. They exempted the big companies, but not the small ones. If you have, say, a small LLC to hold your rental property, or a one-owner corporation you use for your 'side hustle', you have to file electronic reports with FinCEN. And there are very serious criminal penalties and fines for failing to do so.

With that in mind, you might be wondering whether it makes sense to create an LLC in the first place or, for that matter, to continue one that you already have. Should you close it down? Should you keep the business in your own name as a sole proprietorship?

Let's think this through.

First of all, you should be aware that most of the information the Feds will be collecting, is already required for corporations and LLC's in Alaska. If you have either of these types of entity, the state of Alaska requires you to file a report, every two years, which includes the identity



of the shareholders (with an LLC those are called "members"). Anybody who has a computer can look that up online. Granted the federal requirements will go a little beyond that, but the biggest thing that a lot of people are concerned about keeping private, the ownership of the business, is already public information in Alaska.

Also the federal government promises that they will keep all of this information confidential and only use it for legitimate law enforcement purposes. Of course if you have been around for a while, you can probably remember any number of cases where someone's confidential information—tax returns for example—was released by some government employee for political purposes.

But you have to balance that against the purpose for which you might need that entity.

Here's an example of how an LLC works: let us imagine that you have a rental property. It is a duplex in Anchorage, worth about \$500,000. On the advice of someone you trust (your attorney, accountant, brother-in-law, or whoever) you

***You might be wondering whether it makes sense to create a Limited Liability Company (LLC) in the first place or, for that matter, to continue one that you already have. Should you close it down? Should you keep the business in your own name as a sole proprietorship?***

create an LLC, and deed the property into the LLC.

Years pass, and then one day a tragedy happens. Your tenant's teenage daughter trips on a nail that was sticking out at the top of the stairs, and tumbles down. She was a pretty cheerleader with a scholarship to Bryn Mawr in her pocket, and now she is paraplegic. She sues for negligence, and a sympathetic jury gives her a judgment for \$10 million.

The problem is, you only have \$2 million insurance coverage on the property. The insurance company hands over a check for the "policy limits" and walks away. You hand over the title to the property, which was worth \$500,000. And you try to walk away too—but not so fast.

The plaintiff has now collected \$2.5 million on a \$10 million judgment,

and her lawyers would really like to get the other \$7.5 million. After all, they are on a contingency fee and they get paid 1/3 of what they collect. So the plaintiff's lawyers now file motions with the court to allow them to "pierce the corporate veil" as they call it. If they are successful, they can get at the rest of your assets, which would mean you lose your home, investments, cars, other rental properties, and pretty much everything else you own (except IRA's, which are protected).

But as long as you properly managed the LLC, they won't be successful. Yes, you will lose the duplex that is in the LLC, but you won't lose the rest of your life savings. Of course if you have been sloppy with the LLC, that is another story. I have seen a lot of these situations where someone

has set up the entity, but then pretty much ignored it after that. They mixed business expenses with personal expenses, didn't keep proper records, didn't file biennial reports, and so forth. In those cases the judge will often let the plaintiff's lawyers get at the personal assets. But not if you've been careful.

So what it comes down to, is a balance. If you create an LLC or corporation, you'll have to file paperwork with the state and federal governments, and there will be a bit more bookkeeping than you would have had otherwise. But if you don't, and something goes wrong within that business, you could lose everything.

To LLC or not to LLC, that is the question.

*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. I usually include a clever bon mot here to get you to read this last paragraph, but there's a writer's strike on.*

## Networking for Anchorage, Mat-Su area providers

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

at a different host location each month. Breakfast provided. The next date is Aug. 9, at the Anchorage Senior Activity Center, hosted by the Law Office of Constance Aschenbrenner.

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



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# Online photo frames, social media meltdown, iPhone Magnifier

By **BOB DELAURENTIS**

*Bob's Tech Talk*

**Q.** I want to gift someone an online photo frame and update it myself remotely. Is that possible?

**A.** Yes, it is possible, but you will need luck and perhaps some patience. The frames that I have experience with are from a company called Nixplay (nixplay.com), and I recommend them without reservation.

Online photo frames require wireless internet, obviously. Make sure the recipient already has a Wi-Fi network.

Whenever connecting a new device to Wi-Fi, there is always a chance that it will not work at first. Ideally, you can deliver your gift in person. That way, you can troubleshoot any difficulties directly. However, connection and setup problems are less likely nowadays, so don't shy away from trying a remote setup with a less tech-savvy friend.

Nixplay has a feature called Preload that will allow you to set up a new frame with your photos. With luck, all the recipient needs to do is turn on the device, then enter your gift code and their email address.

If the recipient shares their Nixplay account information with you, it's possible for you to log into their account in a web browser and make changes.

I have had a Nixplay frame on my desk for nearly three years. Since then, a number of other family members have added Nixplay frames to their households. They are great way to share memories.

**Q.** What is happening in the world of social media?

**A.** Twitter, the social network that depended on short text messages, was sold in late 2022 and became a privately held company. Since then, it has undergone significant changes. Management has changed, the business model has changed, and many of the apps that used to work with Twitter are no longer supported.

In late July, they replaced the blue bird logo with the letter X, as part of

the company's new identity, X.com.

Twitter (X) is not alone. This year the entire social network space is going through a period of rapid change.

Facebook renamed itself Meta a few years back, but everyone still calls it Facebook. Nevertheless, Facebook, which also owns

iPhone, before it's unlocked, there should be two small icons in the bottom corners. The icon on the right opens the camera, the icon on the left illuminates the LED camera flash like a flashlight.

But wait—there is more. Tell Siri to “open magnifier” and it will present you with a lighted magnifying

glass. The light may be off by default, but all you need to do is tap the flashlight icon on the right to bathe the subject in light.

This setup is perfect for reading a restaurant menu or deciphering the small type on a medicine bottle. If your hands are not steady, tap the large double circle icon to “hold” the view-

finder still.

These suggestions will get you started. I have added a link in the box with tips on how to do more with iPhone's built-in magnifier.

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

***Not only does the iPhone make a great flashlight in a pinch, it can also transform into a powerful lighted magnifying glass.***



© Juleta Martirosyan | Dreamstime.com

Instagram, used Instagram as the launchpad for a new service similar to Twitter called Threads.

Meanwhile, Mastodon and other less well-known social networks vie for attention and new users.

I do not know how social media is going to look in a few years, or even a few months. Clearly the upheaval will result in more disruption in the coming days.

My advice for now: Try to ignore it and wait to see how the dust settles. If this summer's social media meltdown has taught me anything, it's that the connections we build on these platforms can disappear or become something entirely different in the blink of an eye.

**Q.** My eyesight is not what it was, especially in darker places. Can I use my iPhone as a flashlight?

**A.** Not only does the iPhone make a great flashlight in a pinch, it can also transform into a powerful lighted magnifying glass. When you pick up an iP-

## Wander the Web

Here are my picks for worthwhile browsing this month:

### iPhone Magnifier Tips

A list of tips and tricks you can do to customize and quickly access the iPhone Magnifier app.  
[support.apple.com/en-us/HT209517](https://support.apple.com/en-us/HT209517)

### Old School Web Directory

Remember the early days of Yahoo? It's like that, except for quality blogs.

[ooh.directory](https://ooh.directory)

### Rotating Sandwiches

The whimsy makers online still have fun occasionally. Caution: might whet your appetite!  
[rotatingsandwiches.com](https://rotatingsandwiches.com)

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

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

## IN-PERSON WORKSHOPS:

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### Wasilla Senior Center

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

### Palmer Senior Center

1132 South Chugach Street, Palmer  
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# Alaska Railroad notes a century of operation

## *Multi-mode railway a boon to Alaska economy*

By **DIMITRA LAVRAKAS**

Senior Voice Travel  
Correspondent

“That the Alaska Railroad was ever built is astonishing,” writes Alaskan author Steven Levi in his rollicking history of the Alaska Railroad in “A Rat’s Nest of Rails: Tundra, Ice, Mosquitoes and Permafrost Saga of the Alaska Railroad” (signed copies available at <https://authormasterminds.com/steve-levi>).

It was a feat of engineering and pluck, resulting in 100 years of carrying freight and tourists, much to the benefit of Alaska.

“It was constructed over the most treacherous terrain in the world during the most violent political era in U.S. history,” Levi continues. “The workforce included anarchists, Bolsheviks, socialists, syndicalists, and labor union organizers against the backdrops of the First World War, Spanish Influenza, the Russian Revolution, American troops in Siberia to keep Russian socialism from our shore,

Japan’s relentless gobbling of colonies from Southeast Asia to Siberia, and the Great Red Scare.

“It was built by the United States military to supply the United States Navy with coal and, in the process, closed coal mining in the Territory of Alaska—to the great anger of the private sector.

“Then there were the scammers, land speculators, Natives and their land claims, blacks and discrimination, sedition, wages in scrip, permafrost, freeze up/breakup, ration stamps, and environmental damage.”

### Miles and miles of milestones

With the swing of a hammer President Warren G. Harding drove the last spike in Nenana on July 15, 1923, decades before Alaska even became a state. The line ran 470 miles from Seward to Fairbanks.

But so much planning and sweat went into that day, driven—as so many projects in the state—by the desire to access potential mineral extraction.



*Pass magnificent glaciers and view in comfort from an Alaska Railroad rail car to Seward on the Coastal Classic train.*

*Courtesy Alaska Railroad/Mike Gilroy*

With that in mind, in 1914, the federal government gave \$35 million to begin its build and operation.

In the 1940s, World War II gave the Alaska Railroad a huge financial boost as it moved military supplies to strengthen Alaska’s defenses against threats from the Pacific sector of the war.

► 1943: Two tunnels are

built through the Chugach Mountains to allow rail access to Whittier, a military port and fuel depot necessary to support the war effort. A new Anchorage passenger depot is completed in December.

► 1947: The inaugural run of the Aurora, a blue and gold steamliner, marks a new level of passenger

service between Anchorage and Fairbanks.

In 1962, the first car-barge service is established in Whittier, followed by train-ship service in June 1964. This revolutionizes Alaska, enabling rail cars from the Lower 48 to be shipped to any point along

*next page please*

## Railroad CEO takes a look back and forward



**Alaska Railroad  
President and  
Chief Executive Officer  
William G. O'Leary.**

*Photo courtesy Alaska  
Railroad Corporation*

By **DIMITRA LAVRAKAS**

William G. O’Leary has served as president and chief executive officer for 10 years and is responsible for the daily management and operations of the Alaska Railroad Corporation. Here he gives his

thoughts on the railroad’s past and its future.

*Looking back on the history of the railroad, what do you think were the most important decisions made that made the railroad so successful?*

One of the pivotal moments in Alaska Railroad history was its purchase by the state from the federal government in 1985. The late former Governor Bill Sheffield had great foresight into the opportunity that the \$22 million purchase would mean for Alaska. That combination of grit, forethought and belief in the potential of the railroad helped make it what it is today. That decision set the railroad on a new track for infrastructure improvements and economic growth.

Another decision that

has proven critical to the railroad’s success is the model put in place after the purchase by the state. Establishing the Alaska Railroad Corporation as a self-sustaining enterprise wholly owned by the state, but with a separate existence from the state with a charge to act similar to a private business, has permitted the ARRC to respond to a competitive marketplace in a timely fashion.

*As for the future, are there any plans for expansion of rail lines within the state or connecting to other rail lines to access the Lower 48?*

There are three expansion projects at various stages of development.

In the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, the Port MacKenzie Rail Extension adds 32 miles of

new rail line to connect to the borough’s Port MacKenzie. Mat-Su Borough is a project sponsor and while much of the foundational infrastructure is complete, substantial capital is needed to complete the project – approximately \$200 million.

Further north, the Northern Rail Extension would extend the rail line just over 80 miles from North Pole to Delta Junction. Phase 1 of the project was complete in 2014, building the Tanana River Bridge. Current estimates to complete the additional phases to Delta Junction is in the \$1.5 billion range. While the Department of Defense and the State of Alaska were the main funding sources for initial planning and Phase 1, a public-private partnership may be explored as a future funding option.

Finally, the Alaska Canada Rail Corridor is a

proposed rail network between Alaska and Canada. A private sector company recently invested significant funding in feasibility and detailed engineering phases for the project; however, the estimated rail corridor cost is around \$30 billion. There are no current investors for this project.

*What is your favorite part of your job?*

It is knowing that the Alaska Railroad and its employees serve as a driver of economic growth for the state and its residents. We get the opportunity to provide visitors a window into the vastness, beauty and hospitality that is Alaska, while also ensuring residents receive the transportation, resources and commodities they need to continue developing their projects and businesses. Getting to be a part of that growth is my favorite part of this job.





## Centennial celebrations

### All Aboard: The Alaska Railroad Centennial

On view May 5, 2023 – Feb. 18, 2024, Anchorage Museum Atrium, first floor. Opening in the centennial year of the completion of the Alaska Railroad, this exhibition created in collaboration with Alaska Railroad historians and experts looks at the history, impact and legacy of the railroad through archival images, objects and ephemera. Examining three key eras of railroad history spanning the 20th and 21st centuries, the exhibition highlights crucial moments, technological innovations, and human stories connected to the railroad and its operations in Alas-

ka. “All Aboard” includes public programs presented in collaboration with the Alaska Railroad, com-

munity clubs, and railroad enthusiasts, also referred to as “foamers,” so called because they are thought to foam at the mouth at the site of a steam train.



*President Harding drives in the golden spike that completed the Alaska Railroad, Nenana, July 15, 1923. Weeks later after he left Alaska, Harding died—some say from bad seafood eaten in either Haines or Skagway, but most opine a stroke.*

*Alaska State Library - Historical Collections/Wickersham State Historic Site collection of Alaska photographs, 1882-1930s.*

### Limited Edition: Centennial Special

12 days/12 nights, available late May – early September 2023

Ride the Coastal Classic, Glacier Discovery and Denali Star Trains the full length of the Alaska Railroad’s historic main line; entry to the Anchorage Museum’s special exhibit; a wildlife cruise in Kenai Fjords National Park; Spencer Glacier float trip; and a Denali wildlife tour. \$6,175 GoldStar Service or \$5,155 Adventure Class. Value Season pricing available for September departures.

### Alaska Railroad open house in Fairbanks

Saturday, Sept. 23, 2023  
The Alaska Railroad’s community open houses

have returned, just in time to celebrate the railroad’s 100-year anniversary in 2023. The event provides Alaskans with a unique opportunity to interact with railroaders and to learn about the state’s railroad, with train rides, static displays of railroad locomotives, and many more family-friendly activities. Free to all.

### Train art

Commemorative prints and posters from Alaska artists William “Art” Chase and Noah Nolywaika and other souvenirs are available at the Alaska Railroad gift shops, [www.alaskarailroadgiftshop.com](http://www.alaskarailroadgiftshop.com).

## Railroad

from page 24

the Alaska Railroad.

This integrated system of hauling goods off ships for distribution across the state currently earns approximately 44 percent of its revenue, according to ARRC.

In 1964, the Good Friday Earthquake hits Alaska on March 27. At a 9.2 magnitude, it is the most powerful quake recorded in North America’s history. Railroad damage from the quake estimated at \$30 million. In an amazing turnaround, freight service from Anchorage to Fairbanks is restored on April 6, passenger service on April 11, and freight service to Whittier resumes April 20.

In the early to mid-1970s, the Alaska Railroad supports construction of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline by receiving shipped pipe and storing it on railroad land in Valdez, Seward and Fairbanks. The railroad also hauled pipe from Valdez and Seward to Fairbanks, where it was then trucked to the North Slope. The railroad workforce increased to more than 1,000 between 1970 and 1975.

In the mid- to late 1970s, the Federal Railroad Administration sought to transfer its ownership of the Alaska Railroad. With this in mind, railroad personnel prepared for some

kind of transition to be sold, transferred or dissolved. The railroad endured an infrastructure-poor and equipment-strapped era as investments declined while options were mulled.

In 1984, the Alaska Railroad develops new passenger services with the cruise industry, accepting contracts to pull

new web-based passenger reservation system is implemented; and the railroad initiates a program to install auxiliary power units and software technology on locomotives to reduce diesel emissions and noise.

In 2007, the Alaska Railroad Corporation and U.S. Forest Service introduce a new Whistle Stop Service to

the Chugach National Forest.

To book a trip go to [reservations@akrr.com](mailto:reservations@akrr.com), call Reservations and Information at 800-544-0552, or go to the train station at 411 W 1st Ave, in Anchorage.

### How you can contribute to the Centennial

Help the railroad capture

your unique stories about the Alaska Railroad with its new storytelling project, “Tales from the Rails”, that will gather anecdotes, memories and milestones. Email stories to [AKtalesfromtherails@gmail.com](mailto:AKtalesfromtherails@gmail.com) and further instructions will be sent.



*Into the Chugach Mountains on a trip from Whittier to Seward.*

*Dimitra Lavrakas photo*

superdome double-decker luxury coaches.

In 1985, the railroad becomes the property of the State of Alaska.

In 1995, ridership hits a new high with 492,528 passengers riding the train during that year.

In 2002, real estate revenues exceed \$11 million for the first time; a



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# Health

continued from page 5

maintain their nutritional value up to a year after being frozen, some can last up to 18 months.”

Berries are outstanding sources of a variety of nutrients, including vitamin C, potassium and magnesium. They also can benefit the stomach as microbiome-promoting natural fiber and other bioactive plant compounds like anthocyanins. A review of 23 randomized controlled trials found that berry intake is linked with beneficial effects on markers of heart disease risk, such as blood pressure, cholesterol, artery function and blood sugar.

Beyond those at the supermarket, there are many berries unique to certain locations and climates and not as widely known, like elderberries or goji berries. Nutrition experts at Tufts University in Boston, Massachusetts report that there are more than 25 different types of berries around the world, and more than 400 different species of varying colors, sizes, flavors and nutrient profiles.

## Berries and brain health

Eating more fruit and vegetables, including berries, seems to protect the brain. Compounds found in berries not only protect the brain from oxidative stress, but also counteract other factors linked to Alzheimer’s disease. In addition, studies suggest berries may help protect



Nutrition expert Taylor Wallace grows blueberries, blackberries and strawberries in his backyard but says he prefers frozen berries for their taste and nutrition.

Photo courtesy Taylor Wallace

against the negative effects of a high fat diet and help boost a person’s mood and decrease the risk for developing depression. Most of the controlled human trials that have been published used blueberries. It is hypothesized that other berries, including raspberries, blackberries, and strawberries, also have many of the bioactive compounds that improve brain health.

## Care and storage

Summer is the perfect time to enjoy a variety of fresh berries and explore varieties unique to where you live, such as lingonberry. Berries can spoil relatively quickly, wasting money, nutrients, and environmental resources. Storing them correctly can significantly lengthen their life.

Nutritionists recommend you refrigerate unwashed berries in their

packages or in a single layer in a spacious container with a loose-fitting, breathable cover. If they begin to over ripen, then transfer them to the freezer. They are then ready for smoothies, oatmeal topping, baking, or sauces whenever you want them.

## Servings ‘sweet spot’

Buying your berries frozen is a good option all year long, according to Taylor C. Wallace, who is an adjunct professor in the Dept. of Nutrition and Food Studies at George Mason University in Washington, D.C. “Frozen berries are generally picked at peak ripeness, when they are most nutritious. Once harvested, they are washed, packaged, and

frozen within a few hours,” said Wallace. “Many ‘fresh berries’ in the grocery store are picked before they are fully ripe, which can affect their nutritional content and they have less time to develop the full range of vitamins, minerals, and bioactives. I actually personally prefer frozen berries for the taste and nutrition.”

Wallace said the Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend that the average adult consume two servings per day of fruit. The majority of clinical studies show that two servings per day of fresh berries is really the “sweet spot” when it comes to prevention of disease and long-term health maintenance.

“We see this with both cognition and heart disease. Many of the foods we consider to be heart-healthy are also healthful in helping to prevent cognitive decline later in life. I personally love berries and consume them raw almost every day,” said Wallace, who grows blueberries, blackberries and strawberries in his backyard.

Fresh berries are at their seasonal best right now, and a good time to add them to fruit salads and green salads. Pureeing them and freezing them into popsicles can be fun as well. Wallace recommends using them as a sauce for chicken, fish or any dish in need of a punch of flavor.

## Smart shopping

Nutritionists say you can increase your berry intake and stretch your berry buck by shopping seasonally. Prices are lowest when fresh berries are in season and local. In general, berries don’t ripen much after picking. Dietitians recommend fresh berries that are richly colored, firm, plump, and dry, without mold, bruises, dents or blemishes.

Frozen berries, which are available year-round, are often less expensive. They tend to be just as tasty and nutritious, and have a long storage life.

## Berries and sugar

One of the relatively unique things about berries is that we eat both the fruit and the seeds, which is a potential reason for greater health benefits, according to nutritionists. If you’re concerned about the high sugar content in most berries, there is no need. Scientists have found that the sugar in berries is contained within the intact structure of the food, greatly slowing the speed of digestion. Other compounds in berries, such as the fiber, slow digestion and offset potential harmful effects of the natural sugar. Studies suggest that adults who eat more fruit, including more berries, have a lower risk of developing diabetes.

# Diverse

continued from page 4

social structures to adequately address and support the mental health of our diverse communities. Racial discrimination is not only a social and moral issue, but a public health issue that directly impacts the mental and cognitive well-being of diverse communities.

So, what can we do to combat this?

Education is our first line of defense. It is imperative to understand that racism is a systemic issue that permeates every layer of our society, and our mental health is no exception. Recognizing this intersectionality is the first step toward fostering an

environment that supports the mental well-being of everyone, regardless of racial or ethnic background.

Raising awareness about the unique mental health challenges that minority communities face is another crucial step. National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month serves as an opportunity to elevate the conversation about the unique struggles faced by these communities, but it is important to elevate the conversation every month. It’s time to educate ourselves and others about the disparities in mental health care, how systemic racism contributes to these disparities, and what we can do to help.

Lastly, we need to advocate for inclusive mental health support. This can take the form of pushing

for policies that ensure access to culturally and linguistically competent mental health services; supporting organizations that are working toward the same; and consciously including minority mental health in our conversations about overall health and wellbeing. Here are some proposed federal legislations you can support:

Comprehensive Care for Alzheimer’s Act

Supporting Our Direct Care Workforce and Family Caregivers Act

HCBS (Home and Community-Based Services) Access Act

This article is part of an ongoing series by the Diverse Elders Coalition, examining different senior demographic groups.

## Crossword answers from page 18

V	I	P	E	R		F	E	T	E		F	E	A	T
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You don't need to have dumbbells or kettlebells or any fancy equipment. If you like going to the gym and can afford a membership, great! But you can easily maintain or even improve your strength at home.

© Wavebreakmedia Ltd | Dreamstime.com

Muscles

continued from page 5

on. This is a reliable indicator of bone density, and considerably less expensive than DEXA scans. The way to keep bones strong is movement – every day – and also supplementing vitamin D3 to keep serum levels in the 50 to 90 ng/mL range. If you don't know your vitamin D3 level, get that checked. You can go to a health fair or order a home kit for \$45 online.

Multiple factors contribute to age-related muscle loss and this typically starts as early as in our 30s, accelerating after age 60 to as much as 10% per decade. Losing strength can be frustrating but don't give up. Muscle is very dynamic tissue and "turn-over" (creation of new muscle cells) happens continuously until death.

The loss of skeletal muscle (the source of our strength) was classified as a disease fairly recently. Sarcopenia involves the long slender muscle cells becoming less contractile, like a rubber band losing elasticity, as well as mutations occurring at the neuro-muscular junctions, where the muscle cells connect to the nervous system and where brain signals to initiate movement take effect. Mutations can build up over time but there is a remedy for reducing them – eat a diet high in vegetables, lean protein and unprocessed carbs.

Diet and hormones

Poor diet will absolutely exacerbate diminishing re-

pair of mutated (less functional) muscle cells. Make every bite count. There are zero health benefits for refined/processed/packaged foods, especially the array of refined carbohydrates, such as store bought pizza crust, crackers, cookies, chips, candy, etc., including the ultimate refined carb, alcohol.

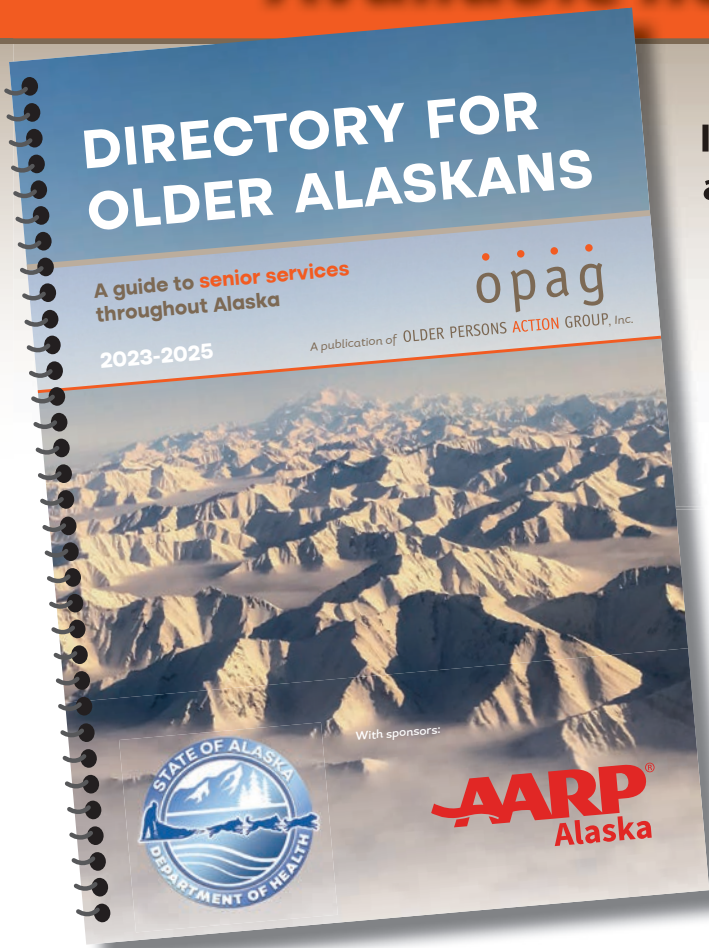
Hormone changes are another contribution to age-related muscle loss and hormone supplementation may be a worthwhile consideration for you. This is a highly personal decision to be made with your health care provider.

Nevertheless, the main driver for loss of muscle mass is a decrease in physical activity. Whether you use a walker or are in a wheelchair, or can still climb stairs, plan to get moving every day. Your muscles need it, and so does your spirit. Good diet helps everything, but maintaining muscle comes down to continued movement. Maintain your gardening, or take it up; use your bicycle or install a stationary bike at home; find a senior dance class or yoga class; walk the dog daily, even if you don't have one.

Muscle loss is a contributor to severe falls and accidents, which precede physical disability in older adults. You don't need bulky muscles; regular movement will improve strength even if muscles don't get bigger. So get moving to improve the quality of your life.

Emily Kane is a naturopathic doctor based in Juneau. Contact her online at <http://www.dremilykane.com>.

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