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Senior Voice

A publication of Older Persons Action Group, Inc.

Serving Alaskans 50+ Since 1978

Volume 45, Number 12 December 2022



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Above: Year-round Alaskans, tiny American dippers have thick, waterproof feathers and extra down that insulates them even in extreme subzero arctic temperatures. Read more about Alaska's winter birds and how they thrive in the cold on page 14.





Winter wellness at Age Smart forum, Dec. 13

Senior Voice Staff

“Age Smart – Let’s Talk,” the series of forums sponsored by AARP Alaska, Anchorage Senior Activity Center and Older Persons Action Group, Inc., returns Dec. 13, from 6 to 7:30 p.m. This free event will be in-person at the senior

center, with appetizers and refreshments provided.

This month’s program features Anchorage Senior Activity Center fitness instructor Brittney Mitchell and friends, presenting a workshop presentation on winter wellness.

Doors open with a light meal and live music at 6

p.m., followed by the program from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m.

The “Age Smart – Let’s Talk” series is a monthly forum on a topic of interest and importance to Alaskans who want to be thoughtful about how to make good choices as they grow older. The series is developed to provide working age adults

with information necessary to plan and fulfill a secure, healthy and satisfying life after 60 (all ages are welcome). Each month the series highlights a particular topic with a variety of formats, including issue experts, panel discussions, interactive presentations, and plenty of time for

questions.

Admission is free and open to everyone. Doors open and a light dinner is served at 6 p.m. Program is 6:30 to 7:30 p.m.

Register at https://events.aarp.org/Ag-eSmart_2022.

Strong showing for Alaska’s ranked choice voting

Editor’s note: This press statement was received Nov. 23, 2022.

Alaskans for Better Elections

Today, Alaska became the first state in the country to elect its state and federal officials using ranked choice voting, an election system that rewards candidates who build deep and broad voter coalitions.

Alaskan voters have twice now used the open, non-partisan primary and ranked choice voting general election system they adopted by ballot measure in 2020. A near consensus of general election voters (79%) found the new election system simple to use, and most voters took advantage of the opportunity to rank a second and third choice candidate.

“First and foremost, we must thank the Division of Elections for their tireless efforts to educate Alaskans, as well as for running a transparent and secure election. Democracy wouldn’t be possible without the dedication of our election workers and volunteers,” said Bruce

Alaska’s largest voter bloc are neither Republican nor Democrat – but unaffiliated. Voter registration numbers show that Republicans make up 24% of the electorate, Democrats total 13%, while unaffiliated voters far outnumber both at 58%.

Botelho, former Alaska Attorney General and current Chair of Alaskans for Better Elections.

The Alaska Division of Elections completed its tabulation of the Nov. 8 general election ballots live on public television station KTOO.org. The results reflected the full spectrum of Alaska voters’ political ideologies, from conservative to moderate Republican and moderate Democrat.

Alaska’s largest voter bloc are neither Republican nor Democrat – but unaffiliated. Voter registration numbers show that Republicans make up 24% of the electorate, Democrats total 13%, while unaffiliated voters far outnumber both at 58%. Several candidates succeeded by broadening their campaign to appeal to voters

outside of their traditional party base, which helped them earn a majority, often with the support of voters who picked them as their second choice candidates.

Incumbent Republican Gov. Mike Dunleavy won re-election with a majority (50.28%) of the statewide vote in the first round of tabulation. Republican Senator Lisa Murkowski won her race against Republican challenger Kelly Tshibaka with 53.7% of the vote including second and third choice votes.

Democrat Mary Peltola, who eschewed negative campaign tactics and actively asked her opponents’ supporters for their second and third choice votes, won Alaska’s lone seat in the U.S. House of Representatives for the second time this year with 54.9% of the vote, having

previously won the August special election to fill the remainder of the late Rep. Don Young’s term.

Alaska voters also saw greater competition under the new rules among the 59 legislative races on the ballot – 22 legislative contests had three or more candidates. Roughly 200 candidates competed for legislative offices this year, giving voters more opportunities to support candidates that best shared their values and priorities.

“The diversity of these results is noteworthy. Alaskans elected candidates across a broad ideological spectrum,” said Jason Grenn, Executive Director of Alaskans for Better Elections. “Both Democratic and Republican candidates benefited from ranked choice voting tabulation while prevailing in different races. Truly, this new system favors no party – it simply empowers voters and ensures that

winning candidates have a mandate to govern and a better understanding of voter preferences.”

Under the new system, candidates who built broad coalitions were rewarded by voters. The combination of the open, non-partisan primary and ranked choice voting general reorients the incentives of candidates and elected leaders to campaign to and represent the broadest possible electorate. Candidates must earn the support of a true majority of their district’s electorate to win, making it more likely that they are more representative of the people they represent and that they enter office with a stronger mandate to govern.

Alaskans for Better Elections is a nonpartisan, non-profit organization providing public education and research about how Alaska’s elections work. For more information, visit www.alaskansforbetterelections.com.

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

Vision statement:

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

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New findings about assisted living for Alaska seniors

By **LAWRENCE D. WEISS**

For *Senior Voice*

One fine day in early November I grabbed Jim McCall, who manages the Senior Office of the Alaska Housing and Finance Corporation (AHFC), for a friendly Zoom chat. His subject: The just-released Anchorage Assisted Living Survey. The following includes Jim's "big picture" responses to a few of the more important issues, with significance for all of Alaska in addition to Anchorage. Questions and responses have been edited for length and clarity.

Weiss: Jim, you work in the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation (AHFC). What is that?

McCall: AHFC is a quasi-public corporation. We have offices in a variety of locations throughout the

state, primarily for public housing. The focus is on providing safe, secure and affordable housing for Alaskans, which is our mission. In addition to what I do with a senior focus, we have a mortgage division that does a lot of mortgage programs – from first time homebuyer to energy add-ons to interest rate reduction programs – we have a multifamily program, and on and on. There's just a lot of things that go under that umbrella.

Weiss: I understand that these surveys went out to Anchorage assisted living facilities that serve seniors among their clients. How many facilities were included in the survey?

McCall: That totaled 131 different providers around Anchorage. So that's roughly how many people were sent the sur-

vey. Of those, 17% responded to this survey.

Weiss: Why do you periodically conduct this survey?

McCall: in addition to keeping the commission [Alaska Commission on Aging] up to date on this topic, which is one of the huge benefits of this survey, many of those things dovetail into other things, the state plan for example. We know that assisted living care is important here, we know that our population is swelling, and Alaska has for many years led the nation in senior growth. So this is one facet of care for seniors in addition to long term care or skilled nursing, for example.

The other reason, of course, is we have a loan program that helps develop this type of housing, so periodically I like to be able

to go out and check with these folks. New folks may come to us for an assisted living loan. To put that in perspective, we have about 116 assisted-living loans in our portfolio worth somewhere just a little bit north of \$36 million.

Weiss: The waitlist to get into assisted living is a matter of perennial concern. What are the most recent findings?

McCall: About three quarters of the homes that responded indicated that they had a waitlist of six months or less. I think that's important because there were times when we knew the waitlist was probably more than six months. When somebody calls my office or calls wherever they call, and they've got a loved one who needs care, they don't need it in six months, or a year

or two years. They need it today. Hearing that the wait time has gone down to six months or less is a very positive revelation from this survey.

Weiss: What about people with Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia? Are they able to find the care they need in assisted living environments?

McCall: Another thing that I think is very positive about the findings of this survey is about seniors who have some type of impairment through Alzheimer's disease and related dementia. That is a growing number within the senior population. This survey reflected that about 77% of homes have the capacity or are currently caring for individuals with some form of Alzheimer's disease and

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Age Friendly: Sharing ideas at Anchorage listening session

AARP Alaska

On chilly Tuesday evening, Nov. 1, the beautifully renovated Anchorage Senior Activity Center was abuzz with chatter and activity as residents of Anchorage shared input on Anchorage as an Age-Friendly Community. The Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities (NAFSC), an

international initiative, began in 2006 to encourage cities to be ready for rapidly aging populations by helping people thrive in their homes and communities as they age. The recent listening session was the program for the November gathering for Age Smart, a monthly forum on aging well sponsored by AARP Alaska, Older Persons' Ac-

tion Group, and Anchorage Senior Activity Center.

The program began with a light dinner provided by the Anchorage Senior Activity Center's Arctic Rose Restaurant and a presentation by AARP Alaska volunteer state president Madeline Holdorf and state director Teresa Holt, who provided an overview of the age-friendly initiative, including detailed descriptions of each of the eight domains of livability: Health Services and Community Support, Transportation, Social Participation, Communication and Information, Outdoor Spaces and Buildings, Housing, Respect and Social Inclusion, and Civic Participation and Employment.

After dinner, the audience was asked to select

the domain most important to them and sit at the domain's dedicated table for facilitated discussion. After providing input, participants moved to new tables, selecting a second domain. Discussion and sharing were lively, with many participants eager to share specific feedback about Anchorage's successes and shortcomings in each domain.

Among the comments, attendees highlighted the needs for improvements in Anchorage's public transit system, suggesting additional free days for seniors, monitored bus stops, new People Mover routes and expanded night transportation options for elders. Discussion about health services noted a "lack of easy-to-find information

on how seniors can get assistance with medical appointment scheduling and finding community services." From having store-to-vehicle escorts at the grocery to providing winter clothes for seniors to prevent slips and falls, attendees shared not only feedback but also great suggestions for making Anchorage age-friendly for all residents.

This was the first of a series of listening sessions AARP Alaska will be hosting in Anchorage to prepare an age-friendly Community Action Plan. To get more information on the Anchorage Age-Friendly initiative or to volunteer to help, contact Patrick Curtis at pcurtis@aarp.org or call 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.



What to do if your health prevents travel

By **KAREN CASANOVAS**

For Senior Voice



Q: It's the time of year when many people take trips to see their loved ones. What could I do over the holidays if I can't travel to visit family because of my health?

A: Health prevents travel for many people. If unable to visit loved ones because of an illness, injury or other health-related issue, it may be difficult to be away from family. There are a few things you can do, though, to make the situation a little easier. Here are some ways to stay connected even when you can't travel.

something to look forward to if your health improves.

Staying in touch is important

Maintaining connection with people is important for a few reasons. First, it

When we are unable to see loved ones in person, it is easy to feel isolated and alone. Staying in touch with them online or through other means helps prevent those thoughts.

1. Stay in touch with friends and family online. Conversations through social media or video chat can help you feel closer, and they can see your face and hear your voice. Enlist help if you don't know how to use these applications or internet-based services.

2. Send them gifts. If you can't be there in person, sending presents is a great way to acknowledge you are thinking of them. Online ordering is easy or, more traditionally, send gifts via the mail. The United States Postal Service and other delivery companies will pick up items from your location. Reach out to others if you are unfamiliar with how this works.

3. Plan a phone call. If you're not able to have a video chat, call your loved ones. This allows you to hear their voices and catch up on what they have been doing.

4. Write letters or cards. Another way to stay connected with friends and relatives is by sending letters, cards and photos. Sharing thoughts and feelings in more detail can be very meaningful for the recipients.

5. Make a visit when you are able. Schedule a trip to see your family in person. This will give you

helps us feel connected to the world beyond our personal space. When we are unable to see loved ones in person, it is easy to feel isolated and alone. Staying in touch with them online or through other means helps prevent those thoughts.

Second, staying connected also helps us feel supported. Emotional support during difficult times can be especially beneficial when feeling lonely and apart from family activities.

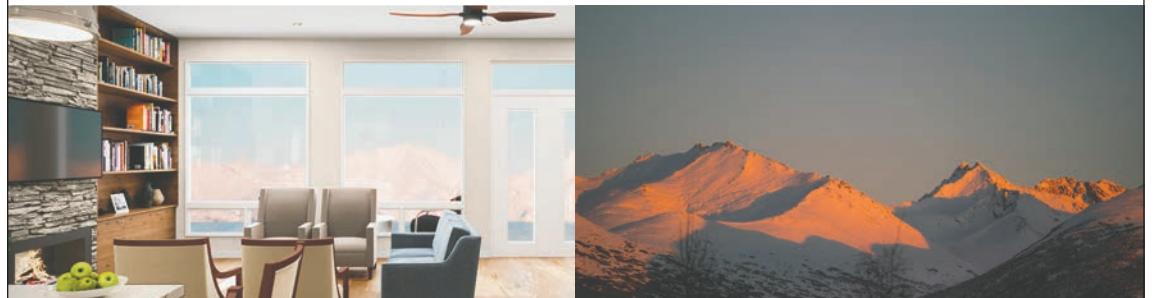
Finally, staying in touch keeps us connected to our culture and community. A sense of belonging is important for people living in a newer location or far away from their hometown or country. Attending community events during the holidays is a great way to find community connection, and you may even discover events similar to your own holiday traditions. These celebrations might include parades, tree lightings, festivals, group gatherings or other festive activities.

If you're unable to attend community socials, there are other activities you can do without going anywhere. Watch the events on TV, listen to

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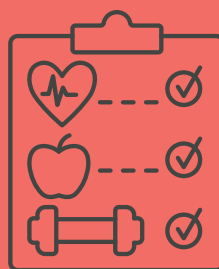
Age Smart - Let's Talk!

Join us Tuesday, December 13th for a Winter Wellness Workshop with Fitness Instructor/Trainer Brittney Mitchell & Friends

at Anchorage Senior Activity Center
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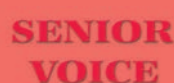
Brittney Mitchell, ASAC Fitness



Doors open, light meal & live music at 6 pm
Program 6:30 - 7:30 pm
Registration:

https://events.aarp.org/AgeSmart_2022

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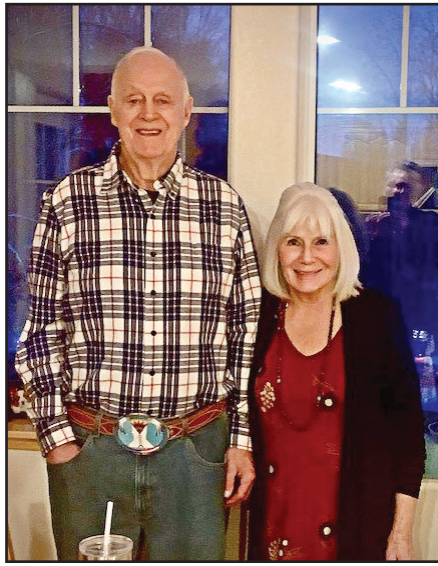
Sharon and Jerry: A caregiver's story

By SHARON STORY

Alzheimer's Resource of Alaska

"When you love someone with dementia, the goal is not perfection... it's okay to be good enough."

Years ago, when I was just starting my career as an intern principal in the Anchorage School District, I met a wonderful teacher, Rebecca "Becky" Ann Clement. Becky, along with sister Beverly, were the founders of the Alzheimer's Resource of Alaska. She would often share her daily experiences caring for her mother with Alzheimer's with me. Little did I know that one day in the future, I would also be a caregiver to my husband,



Jerry and Sharon Story.

Photo courtesy Sharon Story

Jerry, who is living with Alzheimer's.

Jerry and I have been happily married for 33 years. We met in Delta Junction where Jerry was

Assistant Superintendent and I was a single mother with three young children to support. Jerry helped me get a job at the school library and encouraged me to finish up my teaching degree. We became good friends, and after a few years, we fell in love and became official partners in marriage. Over the years our friendship and love have only deepened.

During the early years of our marriage, Jerry was always my biggest supporter. While I worked, he helped take care of the home front so I could pursue my [teaching] career. He was a steady

and loving presence for the family, attending games and activities, packing lunches and keeping things on an even keel. Jerry always loved serving as an educator throughout Alaska – from the North Slope, Barrow, Point Hope, and many other rural places in-between. He always loved the people he met and worked with, and they felt the same about him. These are some of the special memories that spark joy and bring back highlights of his life before dementia.

Later, we moved to Wasilla and I made the daily commute to Anchorage as a school principal – a job I loved. In 2003, Jerry had two transient ischemic attacks (TIAs), a brief stroke-like attack that

happens suddenly. I started noticing some cognitive decline but didn't pay much attention to the symptoms at first. After his last TIA, he received a diagnosis of Alzheimer's and vascular dementia, also referred to as mixed dementia. This is when I started noticing a real decline in his thinking abilities.

About eight years ago, I gave up my career so I could devote more time to Jerry's care. This is a decision I do not regret because it has taught me about myself and my husband. I've learned many lessons about life. The biggest lesson is the importance of patience and humility, and the gift of helping someone with

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Resolutions, opportunities for behavior change

By DR. EMILY KANE

For Senior Voice

Even though January first is just another day, many of us will invest some energy in reviewing our successes in the year flown by, and strategize for further personal gains in the precious time that remains ahead. This is an excellent exercise in self care, because really taking care of oneself requires strategy and commitment. There is no more valuable way to spend time, since taking care of yourself forms the basis of your authentic capacity to care for others, and all living beings including the air, water and soil.

New Year's resolutions are notoriously abandoned by early spring because folks forget about the strategy. But resolutions

can be durable. The keys are to choose a wellness goal which you both deeply desire and also consider feasible.

Behaviors and addictions

Let's take the classic "quit smoking." If you are still smoking (or consuming too much alcohol, or pot or pastries) it is not simply because you lack willpower. You are addicted. Addiction is a disease which changes our brain chemistry and kicking bad habits requires more than willpower.

Different "substances" require similar, but somewhat differing strategies to eschew because there's a "bright line" for, say, tobacco or cocaine, which is not to have any, ever. For alcohol it is a bit more nuanced because it is feasible (although maybe not

Taking care of yourself forms the basis of your authentic capacity to care for others, and all living beings including the air, water and soil.

for a bona fide alcoholic) to have a moderate amount of alcohol and be a perfectly functional and pleasant human.

There is an effective method widely used in Scandinavian countries called the "Sinclair" method in which a small amount of naltrexone (an opioid receptor blocker) is used in the early evening, whereby the drinker really doesn't get any buzz, and the desire to keep drinking is significantly curtailed. This method requires working with a medical professional who has experience with the method.

With food, the "bright line" is less bright. How

do we know when we are crossing the line into too much food consumption? It can be tricky and nobody should have to be vigilant 24/7 about food, unless they have an eating disorder that, for the time being, requires medical attention.

A general guideline is to stop eating when you feel 80% full, because in 20 minutes you will feel 100% full. That lag in satiety can be a stumbling block but being aware of it helps. Try your best to push away from eating when not quite full. You will not go hungry.

Set a date for success

If you become intoxicated with anything from

heroin to sugar and want to get that monkey off your back, start with committing to a quit date. Know you absolutely, positively can quit white flour, white sugar, tobacco, alcohol, pot, etc.

To set yourself up for success, leading up to the quit date, strategically remove "paraphernalia" for your substance. This might mean baking pans. It might mean ashtrays or bongs or lighters. It might mean your martini shaker.

If possible, enlist the support of your immediate family and closest friends. If any of these folks cannot be supportive, you are going to have to decide whether you can prevail without their help. Sometimes you have to let go of friends who, wittingly or

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Medicare offers benefits to military veterans

By SEAN McPHILAMY

Alaska Medicare Information Office

As a military veteran, this month's topic resonates with me. Medicare can work with military-related healthcare, whether you are a military veteran

or a military retiree. As a reminder, Original Medicare (available to the majority of eligible Alaskans) consists of Part A (hospitalization insurance) and/or Part B (medical service providers insurance). Part D is Medicare's prescription drug plan benefit of-

fered through third-party insurers who are approved both by Medicare and the State of Alaska.

Medicare and Veterans Affairs benefits

If you are a military veteran, you may choose to receive health care benefits

from the Dept. of Veterans Affairs (VA). You can have both Medicare and VA benefits, but the two are not fully interchangeable. You usually only get VA benefits at VA facilities, and Medicare does not work in VA facilities. The VA does cover some services that

Medicare may not, such as hearing aids and dental care; eligibility for specific services may relate to a service-connected disability and income.

However, if the VA is your only coverage, you

page 6 please



Put an end to volume wars



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

Imagine no longer having to strain to hear the TV or radio. Imagine not having to upset your friends or spouse by keeping the TV at a high volume just to be able to hear a show due to hearing loss. At Accurate Hearing we are excited about all the new hearing aids and assistive listening devices.

The new hearing aids offer many features focused on wireless capabilities to enhance the experience of wearing hearing aids. They are especially designed to enhance hearing in

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



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Medicare

continued from page 5

will not have insurance for care outside the VA system. Because of that, some people also enroll in Medicare, so they have more choices for doctors and facilities. Your VA benefits include prescription drug coverage, and you can choose to not to sign up for Medicare's Part D prescription drug coverage. However, if you want to use pharmacies outside of the VA network, then you will need a Part D plan to provide that coverage. If you choose to sign up for Part D later, you will not have to pay a penalty for signing up late, since VA pharmacy coverage is creditable as a Part D plan.

Medicare and TriCare benefits

As part of the military health system, TriCare is health insurance coverage for military retirees (and eligible dependents), reservists who elect coverage (and eligible dependents), and eligible dependents of service members still on active duty. There are different TriCare programs, based in part on the enrollment and premium levels; this article will focus on

You can have both Medicare and VA benefits, but the two are not fully interchangeable.

TriCare for Life, which is for Medicare eligible enrollees, which for most is when you turn age 65.

For military retirees and eligible dependents, upon age 65, the Dept. of Defense requires enrollment into Medicare Part B in order to retain TriCare benefits; previous TriCare coverage (such as TriCare Prime or TriCare Select) then becomes TriCare for Life coverage.

TriCare for Life insurance is secondary coverage to Medicare. When you receive care at a Medicare-certified facility, Medicare will pay the majority of the claim, with TriCare for Life usually covering the remaining amount. TriCare for Life also includes creditable prescription drug coverage, meeting or exceeding the requirements of a comparable Part D plan.

TriCare for Life is similar to Medicare Supplement Insurance (or Medigap) coverage plans, but with the addition of prescription drug coverage. Beneficiaries seek out care through Medicare's available provider network with TriCare for Life seamlessly acting

as secondary insurance coverage.

While Original Medicare is for medical services within the United States of America, TriCare for Life can offer healthcare coverage for those who are residing or traveling outside of the United States. In such cases, TriCare for Life becomes primary coverage with an annual deductible and cost-sharing for services received.

Contact us

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 (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.

Year-end greetings from Alaska Health Fair, Inc.

By **SHARON PHILLIPS**

Alaska Health Fair, Inc.

Our fall season has come to a close. Health fairs will resume in January 2023. Please sign up to our newsletter at www.alaskahealthfair.org, and we will notify you when the new schedule is published.

We thank all of you – our clients, volunteers, and partner agencies – for another successful season of health fairs as we celebrate our 42nd year of service. We wouldn't be able to deliver important health education and screenings to thousands of Alaskans statewide without the strength of our amazing volunteer force. Your support keeps our organization strong and thriving. We are always

looking for new volunteers, and if you are interested, please visit our website in January and simply complete an exhibitor or volunteer application.

If you are interested in hosting a spring 2023 event, please don't delay and call us to learn more and to reserve your date. There are still some dates available, but our schedule is filling up quickly.

For more information about our non-profit, please scan the QR code below or visit our website.

You can also call Anchorage/statewide, 907-278-0234; Fairbanks, 907-374-6853; or Juneau, 907-723-5100.

Our staff will be taking a short break from the third week of December until the start of 2023 to

include both Christmas and New Year Holidays and we will reopen the first week of January and publish a new health fair schedule at that time.

The Alaska Health Fair team wishes you joy and health this holiday season. See you in 2023.

Sharon Phillips is the Alaska Health Fair, Inc. Tanana Valley/Northern Region program director.



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At-home clinical trials

Participate in the comfort of your recliner

By **DIMITRA LAVRAKAS**

For Senior Voice

There are many new clinical trials available to Alaskans that are conducted at home. Clinical

trials are medical research studies designed to test the safety and effectiveness of new investigational drugs, devices or treatments in humans. These studies are conducted worldwide for

a range of conditions and illnesses.

Chronic pain study

Boomers, if you are having chronic pain, this may be of interest to you.

The home study with researchers from the University of Michigan gives you the opportunity to participate in a first of its kind study on the efficacy of unique cannabinoid tablets and capsules in treating fibromyalgia, rheumatoid arthritis and osteoarthritis.

This 12-week study focuses on cannabinoid based medicine. There are three

specific products included in the study, all in capsule or tablet form. Each product contains different ratios and formulations of THC, CBD and a wide range of minor cannabinoids.

If you are a first-time cannabis or cannabinoid consumer, none of the products are THC

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Was 'breakthrough' Alzheimer's drug oversold?

By **JOHN SCHIESZER**

For Senior Voice

A lot of hype about an alleged breakthrough drug for Alzheimer's disease may leave some families disappointed yet again. On Sept. 27, 2022, pharmaceutical company Eisai in Tokyo and biotechnology firm Biogen in Cambridge, Massachusetts, issued a press release claiming a drug called lecanemab slowed the rate of cognitive decline for adults with Alzheimer's disease by 27%. The new findings

Because lecanemab works in a different way, it may complement other therapies and be a real-game changer. Unfortunately, it may have been oversold and many people may think it can do much more than it really can.

were hailed as a significant advance. However, it is far too early to know what its true benefits and risks may be.

This agent is a monoclonal antibody designed to clear clumps of amyloid- β protein from the brain, which are thought to be a root cause of Alzheimer's. Because it works in a different way, it may complement other ther-

apies and be a real-game changer. Unfortunately, it may have been oversold and many people may think it can do much more than it really can.

"This is interesting and potentially good news. But the devil is in the details. They met their primary outcome in the trial but both treatment and placebo groups continued to decline. However the

drug-treated group declined 27% less than the placebo group over 18 months," said Dr. Paul Newhouse, who is the Chair in Cognitive Disorders Professor of Psychiatry, Pharmacology, and Medicine Director at Vanderbilt Alzheimer's Disease Research Center, Nashville, Tennessee.

This is in line with the modest effect size

seen previously with other agents, such as aducanumab and donemab.

"It would be helpful to know whether the difference in decline is only seen at the 18 month endpoint or was evident at earlier time points," Dr. Newhouse said. "In other words, does it take 18 months of administration before you see any treatment benefit compared to placebo?"

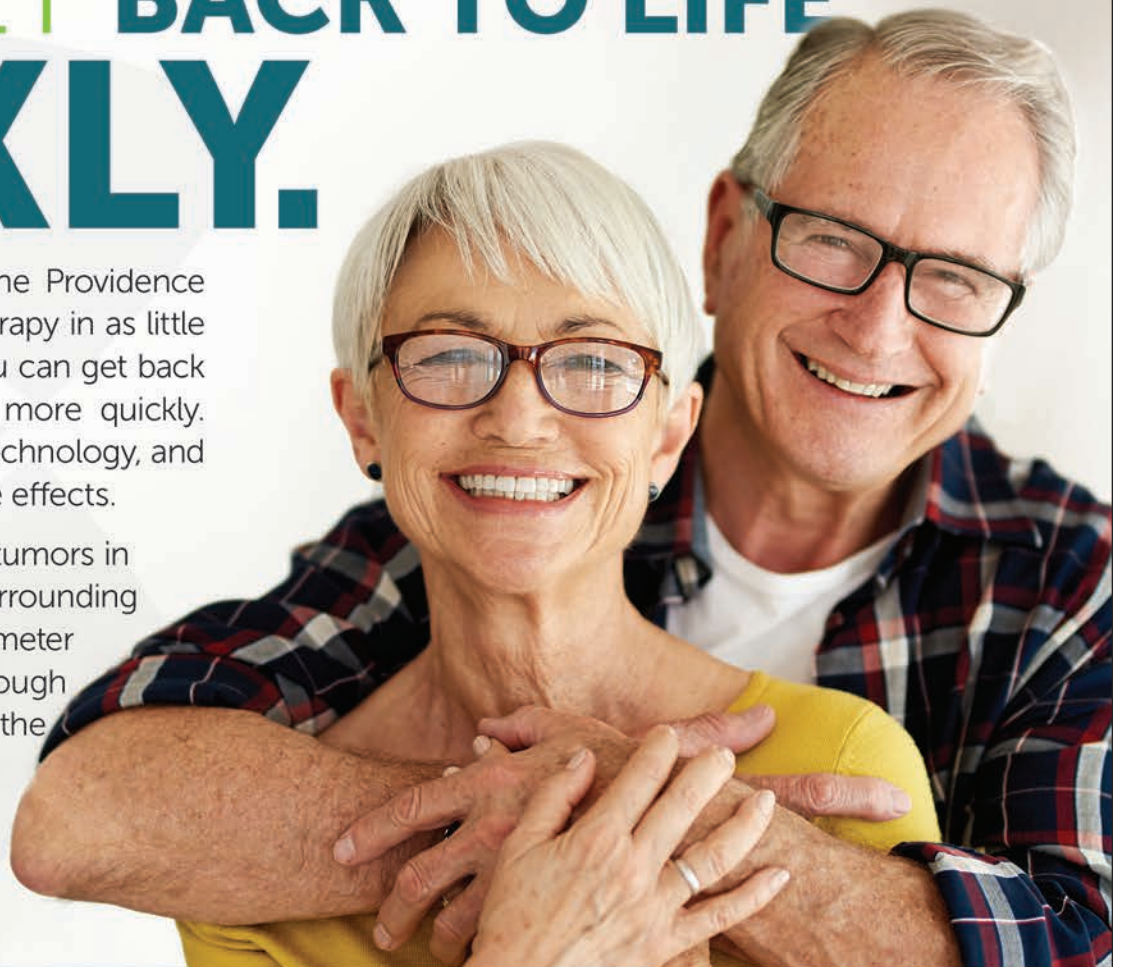
Currently available treatments work by a different mechanism,

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New research on almonds, UTIs and cancer

By JOHN SCHIESZER

Medical Minutes

Almonds may pack important hidden health benefit

Eating a handful of almonds a day can greatly benefit your tummy because almonds significantly increase the production of butyrate, a short-chain fatty acid that promotes gut health, according to a recent study. A team of researchers from King's College London investigated the impact of whole and ground almonds on the composition of gut microbes.

The gut microbiome consists of thousands of microorganisms living in the gut. These play a vital role in digesting nutrients and can have a positive or negative influence on our health, including our digestive and immune systems. The mechanisms of how the gut microbiomes have an impact on human health is still being investigated, but evidence suggests eating specific types of food can positively influence the types of bacteria in our gut.

Researchers recruited 87 healthy adults who were already eating less than the recommended amount of dietary fiber and who snacked on typical unhealthy snacks, such as potato chips. Partici-



pants were split into three groups: One group changed their snacks for 56 grams of whole almonds a day, another for 56 grams of ground almonds a day, and the control group ate energy-matched muffins. The trial lasted four weeks.

Researchers found that butyrate was significantly higher among almond eaters compared to those who consumed the muffin. Butyrate is a short-chain fatty acid that is the main source of fuel for the cells lining the colon. When these cells function effectively, it provides an ideal condition for gut microbes to flourish, for the gut wall to be strong and not leaky or inflamed and for nutrients to be absorbed.

No significant difference was observed in gut transit time, which is the time it takes for food to move all the way through the gut. However whole-almond eaters had an additional 1.5 bowel movements per week compared to the other

The mechanisms of how the gut microbiomes have an impact on human health is still being investigated, but evidence suggests eating specific types of food can positively influence the types of bacteria in our gut.

groups. These findings, published in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, suggest eating almonds could also benefit those with constipation.

Testing showed that eating whole and ground almond improved peoples' diets, having higher intakes of monounsaturated fatty acids, fiber, potassium and other important nutrients compared to the control group.

"We think these findings suggest almond consumption may benefit bacterial metabolism in a way that has the potential to influence human health," said lead author Kevin Whelan, Head of Department of Nutritional Sciences at King's College London, UK.

New drug combination for combating urinary tract infections

Finally, a new weapon

against UTIs. An international study comparing new and older treatments against complicated urinary tract infections has found a new drug combination to be more effective, especially against stubborn, drug-resistant infections.

Research from the ALIUM Phase 3 clinical trial showed that a combination of the drugs cefepime and enmetazobactam was more effective in treating both complicated urinary tract infections and acute pyelonephritis (AP), a bacterial infection causing kidney inflammation. It appeared to have significant benefits over the standard treatment combining piperacillin and tazobactam. UTIs are considered complicated when they are associated with fevers, sepsis, or urinary obstructions.

"It represents an excit-

ing option for treatment," said lead study author Keith Kaye, chief of the Division of Allergy, Immunology and Infectious Diseases and a professor of medicine at Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, New Brunswick, New Jersey.

The trial was conducted at 90 sites in Europe, North and Central America, South America and South Africa from September 2018 to November 2019. More than 1,000 patients participated in the study. The researchers found that 79% of the patients receiving the new combination of cefepime and enmetazobactam were successfully treated for their illness compared to 59% of those receiving the conventional treatment of piperacillin and tazobactam.

The antibiotic cefepime is a fourth-generation cephalosporin that was approved for use in the 1990s and is available generically. Enmetazobactam, an experimental drug made by the French biopharmaceutical company Allecra Therapeutics,

next page please

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Research

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is a beta-lactamase inhibitor. More than 2.8 million antimicrobial-resistant infections occur in the U.S. each year, and more than 35,000 people die from them, according to a report from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Good news in the war on cancer

Overall cancer death rates are continuing to decline among men, women, children and adolescents in every major racial and ethnic group in the United States. The latest numbers are from 2015 to 2019 and are published in the Annual Report to the Nation on the Status of Cancer.

All of the findings in this report are based on data from before the COVID-19 pandemic. The report shows that from 2015 to 2019, overall cancer death rates decreased by 2.1% per year in men and women combined. Among men,

death rates decreased by 2.3% per year. Among women, death rates decreased by 1.9% per year. The annual declines in death rate accelerated from 2001 to 2019 in both men and women.

The declines in death rates were steepest in lung cancer and melanoma (by 4% to 5% per year) among both men and women. Death rates increased for cancers of the pancreas, brain and bones and joints among men, and for cancers of the pancreas and uterus among women.

“The findings in this year’s Annual Report to the Nation show our ongoing progress against cancer, continuing a more than two-decade trend in declining mortality that reflects improvements in preventing, detecting, and treating cancer,” said Dr. Monica M. Bertagnolli, director of the National Cancer Institute (NCI).

In men, the greatest incidence rate increase was seen in pancreatic cancer, which increased by 1.1% per year, and the steepest incidence rate decrease was

Different ways to connect and enjoy the holidays

By MAUREEN HAGGBLOM

Anchorage ADRC

Finding joy in small things, sharing our stories, and giving to others are powerful ways to connect with family and friends during the holiday season. The ADRC (Aging and Disability Resource Center) team would like to share a few suggestions that may be helpful as you navigate the holiday season, while remembering those whose holidays can be difficult and emotional. Here are some of our favorites:

- Most of us are familiar

ADRC ANSWER OF THE MONTH

with the technology that can be used on a phone or a computer such as Skype, Facetime and Zoom. Don’t forget – sometimes the simplest way to connect is by placing a phone call. Perhaps scheduling time to talk over a holiday meal is a good idea for your family or those spending the holiday alone when it’s not possible to be physically together. The “conference” button on the phone may be the easiest technology to use for a group connection.

- We all know Alaska

winters bring snow and ice, and snow and ice are a safety risk during this time of year. Consider the gift of hiring someone to keep walkways/driveways clear of snow and ice and prevent someone you know from having to do it themselves.

• Following a significant snowfall or ice storm, it may be best to avoid going out to the store or traveling immediately. Do you know someone that could benefit from having food essentials and medications handy to decrease the need to travel during less than desirable road conditions?

- Helping someone with

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seen in lung cancer, which fell by 2.6% per year. In women, melanoma had the steepest increase in incidence, rising by 1.8% per year, and thyroid cancer had the sharpest decrease, falling by 2.9% per year.

“Through funding scientific breakthroughs and

raising awareness about prevention and early detection, we are making progress against a subset of the more than 200 diseases we call cancer,” said Karen E. Knudsen, chief executive officer of the American Cancer Society. “However, for certain cancer types,

concerning trends persist, and durable cures remain elusive for many people.”

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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5 ways over-the-counter hearing aids are different

Less expensive hearing aids will be in stores and online

By MICHELLE CROUCH

AARP

Consumers can now buy hearing aids without a prescription, possibly saving thousands of dollars per pair. The new devices — designed for those with mild to moderate hearing loss — are expected to transform the hearing aid market. They are being sold at stores and online without a medical exam, prescription or special fitting by an audiologist. This follows a ruling on Aug. 16, when the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) agreed to allow over-the-counter hearing aids to be sold directly to consumers.

Although the first models are expected to largely resemble the devices you can get through a hearing professional, there are some important differences. Here are five ways over-the-counter devices differ from prescription versions.

1. Over-the-counter (OTC) hearing aids are for mild to moderate hearing loss only, while prescription hearing aids can help with all types of hearing loss.

Over-the-counter hearing aids: They are intended for adults with perceived mild to moderate hearing loss, the FDA says.



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That means your hearing loss range is between 20 and 60 decibels (dB). And you don't need a hearing test to try out an over-the-counter device, the FDA says. Signs that you may have mild to moderate hearing loss include: You often ask people to repeat themselves or speak up, speech sounds muffled, you have trouble hearing in noisy places or you turn up the volume on the TV higher than other people prefer.

Prescription hearing aids: If you have severe hearing loss, you need prescription devices. You may have severe hearing loss if you have difficulty hearing in a quiet place and trouble hearing loud

sounds, such as a truck driving by. Some experts say prescription devices are also a better choice for those with hearing loss in only one ear, those whose hearing loss was caused by excessive noise damage or

those whose hearing loss was caused by chemotherapy or another drug, since those conditions can be difficult to treat.

However, anyone with

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Oversold

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primarily affecting chemical mechanisms involved in attention and memory. It is hoped that lecanemab will work well with existing treatments as it attacks the underlying abnormal proteins associated with Alzheimer's disease. However, Dr. Newhouse said

currently it is unknown if that will happen.

"We need to see the full information on this trial. This relatively modest benefit will have to be balanced against issues of potential side effects. Brain swelling and micro-bleeds were significantly increased in volunteers treated with this agent."

Dr. Newhouse said a big question to be answered is how significant the benefits

are when weighed against the drug's cost and the regular MRI brain scans for side effect monitoring. There are also the costs of biweekly intravenous administration.

These results are potentially a validation of the hypothesis that removing amyloid from the brain will positively influence the disease course. However it also suggests that it may be necessary to intervene even earlier in the disease process to stop it in its tracks or prevent it from occurring at all. These types of studies are ongoing now and will be critically important.

Dr. Judy Heidebrink, a professor of neurology at University of Michigan and co-leader of the Clinical Core of the Michigan Alzheimer's Disease Research Center, Ann Arbor, Michigan, agrees with Dr. Newhouse and said many people already think this new agent will be a game-changer.

"I think it's an important advance in demonstrating that a treatment targeting amyloid can slow the progression of Alzheimer's disease in persons with

mild symptoms. However, lecanemab doesn't reverse or completely stop progression, and the amount of slowing appears small. So, it looks more like a 'base hit' than a 'home run,'" Dr. Heidebrink said.

The recommended treatments for Alzheimer's currently are donepezil, galantamine, rivastigmine, and memantine for treating symptoms. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in 2021 approved aducanumab for treating Alzheimer's disease and it is marketed as Aduhelm by Biogen. To be eligible for this drug, individuals must have progressive weakness of memory or thinking that is mild, as determined by quantitative testing. Secondly, they must undergo a spinal tap or PET scan to show that they have amyloid in the brain.

"Another drug that targets amyloid, aducanumab, was approved by the FDA last year, but is rarely used due to uncertainty that the benefits outweigh the risks. In comparison to aducanumab, lecanemab appears to have more con-

sistent evidence of benefit and less frequent side effects," said Dr. Heidebrink.

If I have mild cognitive impairment should I take lecanemab?

This new agent is not being recommended for the millions of older adults who have mild cognitive impairment (MCI). That's because MCI has many potential causes, and treatment with lecanemab would be considered only if there is evidence, such as with an amyloid PET scan, that someone has MCI due to Alzheimer's disease.

"In addition, other health conditions need to be taken into account when considering use of lecanemab," explained Dr. Heidebrink.

The latest study included 1,795 adults with early Alzheimer's disease and the incidence of adverse events associated with anti-amyloid antibodies in the brain occurred in 12.5% of the lecanemab group compared to 1.7% in the placebo group. MCI can develop for multiple reasons, and

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Travel

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holiday happenings via live online broadcast or on the radio, or read about the events in the newspaper. You can also chat with friends who are attending the events in person.

Other interactive ideas if your health does not allow for travel are playing online card or word games, watching movies or reading books with family through video chat. And, baking cookies, creating decorations, making gingerbread

houses, hanging lights, or sitting outdoors with friends are all terrific ways to celebrate the holidays at home too.

Staying in touch with your loved ones even when you're not able to see them in person, plus keeping busy with other activities can ease the feelings of missing out on family celebrations. Wishing you good health!

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.



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Holidays

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holiday decorating can help decrease loneliness during the holiday season. Setting up timers for holiday lights and using battery operated candles help keep the season bright for many of us.

• Listen to your favorite tunes. There is nothing like music to bring a memory to life. Maybe consider gifting a headset or wireless ear buds with a pre-programmed music list you have created for your special someone.

• Everyone enjoys receiving a letter — get the grandkids involved!

• Read the newspaper together with someone who would like help in keeping up with current and community events. And don't forget how fun those crossword puzzles and word finds can be.

• Check out the on-line exercise classes designed for seniors. Maybe someone you know would like company or help in accessing a class on-line?

There are many ways to connect with family, friends and those who may feel lonely and forgotten. Sometimes the simplest act of kindness is the best way to make that connection.

Submitted by Maureen Haggblom, Anchorage Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) program manager, and the Anchorage ADRC team.

Alaska's Aging and Disability Resource centers connect seniors, people with disabilities, and caregivers with long-term services and supports. For assistance and answers, call your regional ADRC toll-free at 1-855-565-2017. Or visit the Alaska Div. of Senior and Disabilities Services ADRC website at <https://dhss.alaska.gov/dsds/pages/adrc>.

Resolutions

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not, conspire to keep you in your addiction. Remember this must be a deep desire you have for yourself — no one else can do this for you.

Similarly, no one else can exercise for you, or have a positive attitude for you. You can (and often this helps) have a workout or walking buddy, and a close friend or family member willing to remind you to smile — gently, with no shaming or put-downs, which never helps anything.

Sometimes when I'm stewing, my husband will push up the corners of his mouth with two index fingers and slightly bare his teeth, which looks so funny it usually makes me laugh. So that can work.

Plan ahead and try, try again

If you are letting go of a bad habit or trying to start a good one, know that the first three weeks are critical. It truly gets easier after about 21 days. With most addictive substances (not all) there is no residue remaining after about 10 days and the receptors will stop screaming for their fix. Planning some really good self care up front — spa treatments, long baths,

long walks, watching movies with friends or snuggled with your pet sipping on warming teas, exercising, especially outside — can help cement your self-care commitment. Plan ahead. Schedule these self-care events, then show up for yourself. Avoid potlucks or party gatherings where it could be easy to get into your previous drug. Because you don't want to go there anymore, right? False starts can be painful. But don't give up. Kindly analyze what happened even though the "trigger" was out of your control. You can learn something and be more successful next time. Start again right away.

Visualize yourself as a non-smoker, non binge-drinker, non binge-eater, non rager. That's a great way to start every day. Really look yourself in the eyes each morning in the mirror and promise yourself you will always take care of yourself, starting with all day today. See yourself clean and free of bad habits, and freeing up time and money for good habits. Being good to yourself is a sweet balm and helps to make your community and the world a better place.

Emily Kane is a naturopathic doctor based in Juneau. Contact her online at www.dremilykane.com.

Free training, support for family caregivers

Senior Voice Staff

The Kenai Peninsula Family Caregiver Support Program will hold the following peer support meetings in December. Support meetings allow you to share your experiences as a caregiver, or support someone who is a caregiver. If you are helping a family member or friend by being a caregiver, learn what kind of help is available. There is no charge for these services and everyone is invited to attend. Call with suggestions and ideas for upcoming trainings or follow on Facebook, @KPFCSA.

The Kenai Peninsula Family Caregiver Support Program office is located at 35477 Kenai Spur Highway, Suite 205 (located in the 4D Professional Building). You can call them at 907-262-1280 or email kpfcsa@soldotnaseniors.com.

The program will hold support group meetings in December at the following locations:

Dec. 1 Sterling Senior Center, 1 to 2 p.m.

Dec. 2 Seward Senior Center, 1 to 2 p.m. Meet and

greet and play some Bingo.

Dec. 9 Soldotna Senior Center, 1 to 2 p.m. With training with Valerie Flake, "Nutrition and Hydration in Older Adults."

Dec. 13 Tyotkas Elder Center (Kenai), noon to 1:30 p.m.

Dec. 20 Kenai Senior Center, 1 to 2 p.m.

Dec. 28 Nikiski Senior Center, 1 to 2 p.m.

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

Statewide

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@ccs-juneau.org.

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.

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Driver safety reminders for winter conditions

By KATEY REDMOND

For Senior Voice

Alaskan winters provide a great opportunity to contemplate our driving as we take our time navigating darkness and snow. The American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) observes Older Driver Safety Awareness Week on the first week of December. According to the Centers for Disease Control, older drivers are more likely to be injured in a crash. Fortunately, most injuries can be prevented through simple adjustments you can make to the driver's seat.

For Older Driver Safety Awareness Week, the Center for Safe Alaskans is sharing tips to help you stay safe.

- ▶ Wear your seatbelt. Place the shoulder belt across the middle of your chest and away from your neck. Place the lap belt across your hips.
- ▶ Make sure there are at least 10 inches between you and the steering wheel.
- ▶ Center your ears in the middle of the headrest for the best protection in a crash.
- ▶ Adjust the seat to easily press the pedals without stretching.
- ▶ The best view of the road is three inches above the top of your steering wheel.
- ▶ Learn to use your vehicle's safety features; we



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can help.

- ▶ Plan ahead. Leave early to avoid rushing on the road.

Want to learn more? Visit Safe Alaskans' online library with 12 short videos to improve your safety and comfort while driving. The videos were created for the CarFit program supported by AAA, AARP and AOTA. After viewing, you can complete a voluntary survey and enter a monthly drawing for a \$25 gift card. <https://safealaskans.org/de-library/>.

For more information, contact the Center for Safe Alaskans at 907-929-3939 or info@safealaskans.org.

Katey Redmond is the Senior Program Manager for the Center for Safe Alaskans.

Networking for Anchorage, Mat-Su area providers

Interested in learning more about businesses and agencies providing senior services in the Anchorage and Mat-Su area? Want to get the word out about your own service? The monthly Service Providers Breakfast, sponsored by Older

Persons Action Group, Inc., is an opportunity for all the above. Informal, early and free, the event begins at 8 a.m., second Wednesday, at a different host location each month. Breakfast provided. The next date is Jan. 11. (No breakfast in

December.)

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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How Alaska's winter birds adapt to the cold

By LISA PAJOT
For Senior Voice

This time of year, many of us like to sit back with a warm cup of tea and watch the birds that come to our feeders. Chickadees, nut-hatches, woodpeckers and occasionally redpolls and pine grosbeaks partake of the free food. But what about the other birds that stay in Alaska through our long, often cold winters? The ones that don't visit bird feeders, like golden-crowned kinglets, American dippers or northern goshawks?

The diminutive golden-crowned kinglet stays in Alaska and can survive temperatures below -40 degrees Fahrenheit. Kinglets forage in mixed coniferous and deciduous forests throughout the year for the adults and eggs of spiders, mites and insects. To maximize foraging during the winter, they are active until dark. Once the sun falls, kinglets that spend the winter together will huddle near the trunks of spruce trees to keep one another warm until morning. You won't find them



The tiny golden-crowned kinglet lives in Alaska year-round, foraging for spiders, mites and insects.

Rob Tappana photo

sleeping in the same place every night because they are on the move to find food during the day.

The American dipper also survives cold temperatures, including frigid water. These medium-sized songbirds have many physiological adaptations that enable them to forage in freezing water for aquatic insects, larvae, small fish

and invertebrates. Dippers have more feathers than other songbirds and extra down for insulation. In addition to the thickness of their feathers, they have a lot of them — feathers even cover their eyelids. Dippers also have water-resistant feathers and can keep their body temperature a toasty 103 Fahrenheit even when the air temperature is be-

low -30.

The northern goshawk is another bird that can survive Alaska's long and cold winters. The goshawk is substantially larger than the kinglet and dipper. Their greater mass and size help them to stay warm. If they get cold, they seek shelter near the trunk of a tree and cover their legs and feet with their thick

feathers. Goshawks prefer to live in mature mixed forests where they hunt ptarmigans, squirrels, snowshoe hares, corvids and grouse. Goshawks are so elusive that one is more likely to spot a small flock of kinglets or a dipper foraging in a stream than find a goshawk perched in a cottonwood.

When you retreat to the warmth of your home after being outside in the cold, think of these hearty birds who survive the long, dark winter.

Bird Treatment and Learning Center remains open all winter. While we see fewer patients than in the summer, we are still here to care for the birds of winter.

If you're looking for an enjoyable and educational outdoor activity this winter, join the Audubon Christmas Bird Count. This annual will take place from Dec. 14, 2022 through Jan. 5, 2023. Get more information here: www.audubon.org/conservation/join-christmas-bird-count.

Lisa Pajot is an ornithologist and Bird TLC volunteer.

Assisted

continued from page 3

related dementia. There are not enough skilled nursing beds, for example, in the state to be able to say that that's our solution, so the skilled nursing beds are one part of the solution.

Many [assisted-living residents] are largely dependent on state programs for funding their care, whether that's Medicaid, or whether that's adult public assistance, or whether that's general relief. Any of those state programs are critically important to the funding so that [residents] have a place to stay and receive care. The providers largely indicated that they were satisfied with how those programs are functioning.

Weiss: Finally, staffing seems to be an inescapable issue in many businesses in recent years. What did the survey indicate about staffing at assisted living facilities?

McCall: Staffing is a significant concern since COVID began. [Survey respondents] acknowledged that they've had to increase staff pay. The average increase was about 16%, from 2020 to 2022. So even though they've increased their pay by 16%, they know they have a challenge. And I think in this open-ended type of question, 80% of the [survey respondents] listed that as a problem.

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



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Peninsula volunteers give blankets and smiles



Assisted living residents Jolee Ellis and Sharon Hargrove display lap blankets at Homer Senior Center in early October. The blankets, 10 in all, were hand-sewn and donated by Kenai Senior Center members Mary Ann and her daughter Kayla Feltman. Known as “fidget” blankets, the lap blankets provide sensory relief and a calming effect to people with restless hands caused by Alzheimer’s disease and related dementia.

Photo courtesy Homer Senior Center

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Rambles

News from the Grapevine

Are you losing more and more vision? Do you know someone who is blind or visually impaired? Then bring a family member or friend to a **Christmas party** on Tuesday, Dec. 20, at the **Wasilla Senior Center** activity room, 1 p.m. Enjoy fellowship, food, games and music. Presented by the **Alaska Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired Living Well With Vision Loss** support group. Call for information, 907-248-7770 or 907-206-8800 ... A fond farewell to **Lesley Thompson** in **Juneau**, who is stepping away from her position as a Dept. of Health and Social Services planner supporting the **Alaska Commission on Aging**. During her 15 years on the job, Lesley has been a go-to resource for information about commission meetings, legislative teleconferences, and any and all other commission-related matters. She will be missed but is moving into other work for the state, she says. Thank you, and keep in touch, Lesley ... **Kodiak Senior Center** will host its annual **Christmas lights tour** on Dec. 15, with KATS public transportation providing the driving around town to see decorations. Starts at 6 p.m. Call now to sign up, 907-486-6181 ... Do you have any hearing aids you no longer need? **Alaska Hearing Foundation**, the charity operation of **Dr. Thomas McCarty** of **Audiology Associates** in **Anchorage**, is asking for **donated used hearing aids** for his annual mission work in the **Dominican Republic**. To learn more, call 907-278-6400. And watch the powerful video with footage from previous visits at <https://bit.ly/3XL3sAw> ... **Chugiak-Eagle River Senior Center**

page 16 please



THANK YOU!

As we approach the end of another great year, we recognize that tremendous work was done by AARP volunteers.

From our efforts to build livable communities to our advocacy and voter education campaigns (and much, much more), we couldn't have done it without YOU - our volunteers.

We appreciate you and look forward to continuing our work together in the coming year!

To learn about volunteer opportunities with AARP Alaska, email pcurtis@aarp.org.



Rambles

News from the Grapevine

continued from page 15

is looking for players to join its recently-started **Bunco game nights**. No experience necessary, residents and community members learn and play together. Call for details, 907-688-2685 ... From the **Nenana Senior Center** November newsletter: "On Thursdays, at the library from 2 to 6 p.m., several ladies are going to meet to **knit and crochet**. If you want to learn or already know how to knit and/or crochet, please join us!" Bring a project or just show up to visit. Call **Carol Walter** for details, 907-888-8840 ... This is great timing for **North Pole** area readers who may be interested in joining the book club at **Santa's Senior Center**. The center is not having a December meeting, so you have an extra month to read the book for their Jan. 24 meeting: "**Summer Light**," by **Elyse Guttenberg**. Call for details, 907-488-4663 ... **Seward Senior Center** is providing **free ice cleats** to locals, sponsored by **Providence Seward and Seward Community Foundation**. Stop by the center for a fitting, and walk away with more confidence. Call for details, 907-224-5604 ... **Free tech help** is available twice a month at the **Homer Public Library**. Computer, phone, tablet, e-reader – bring your questions on the first and third Saturday, 10 a.m. to noon. Call the **Homer Senior Center** for more details, 907-235-7655 ... **Anchorage Senior Activity Center** wants to add **mahjong** and **cribbage** to its games schedule, but needs people to lead these games. Interested? Call the center at 907-770-2000.

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

Jerry

continued from page 5

kindness and love. I've learned so much from my husband – his ability to meet the challenges of Alzheimer's with such grace and calmness. Dementia tends to strip away some of our learned behaviors or how we want to appear to others. With Jerry I now get to see the whole person, and that is rare. He can still make me laugh and his manners are still intact.

He is still the gentleman he was the day I married him and, to this day, he insists on walking along the right side of me.

About six years ago we sold our family home and relocated to Raven Landing, an independent living community in Fairbanks. For three years it provided Jerry friendship, activities, social events, and ways to be active in the community – all in a safe environment. Not too long ago, I had to make the difficult decision to place my husband in an assisted living home. I did what I thought was the best for him. I wouldn't be telling the truth if I said it hasn't been lonely for me. Perhaps the hardest part

was second-guessing my own decision. Since then, I've learned that I can't judge others' situations in comparison to our own. Each journey is indeed unique.

of Alaska has also supported Jerry and I with engaging classes, informative educational opportunities, and much needed socialization. All of these supports have helped me be the best caregiver I can be.

I believe they will work for you too.

I hope my story will encourage others in their caregiving journey to celebrate your special times together, the memories you hold dear to your heart, and the real gift of meeting someone living with dementia where they are in their journey.



Jerry and Sharon Story with their granddaughter, Teslin.

Photo courtesy Sharon Story

I am so grateful for my family and my amazing women friends. They really help support and hold me up when I need it the most. The Alzheimer's Resource

For help or more information on Alzheimer's Resource of Alaska supports and services, contact us at 907-561-3313 or at <http://www.AlzAlaska.org>.

Winter registration for lifelong learner classes

Senior Voice Staff

offered.

Anchorage's Opportunities for Lifelong Education program, OLÉ!, begins its winter term registration Dec. 15. Class descriptions and schedules will be posted to the OLÉ! website around Dec. 5, and classes for the term begin the third week of January, according to OLÉ! staff. Some 35 new classes are expected to be

OLÉ! is a non-profit, volunteer-led organization that provides courses aimed to people 50+ years of age – classes for the curious, no tests or grades required. Become a member and you may take as many classes as you like for a whole year.

For more information, visit <http://www.oleanchorage.org>.

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By the chimney with care



Senior Voice Staff

A holiday tradition, Anchorage's historic Oscar Anderson House Museum will host its Swedish Christmas Open House two weekends in December — Dec. 3 and 4 and Dec. 10 and 11, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. each day. Experience how a Swedish family decorated and celebrated Christmas in the early 20th century while touring one of the oldest homes in Anchorage. The Oscar Anderson House was constructed in 1915 and remains relative-

ly unaltered. It is located in downtown Anchorage in the Bootleggers Cove neighborhood, listed as a "Distinctive Destination" on the National Register of Historic Places.

Open house hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tours are about an hour long and will be ongoing throughout the afternoon. Coloring pages and crayons will be available for children. Walk-ins are welcome or RSVP online at www.oscaranderson-housemuseum.org. Admission is \$10 adults, \$5 age 12 and younger, \$5 seniors.



The Oscar Anderson House Museum annual Swedish Christmas open house has been hosted for over three decades. It was started in the 1980s by former museum manager Mary Flaherty.

Photos courtesy Alaska Assoc. for Historic Preservation

Calendar of Events

Dec. 2 Anchorage "Holiday Trees From Around the World," at Anchorage Senior Activity Center, 5 to 8 p.m. Decorated trees, baked goods, singing, multicultural entertainment, more. Presented by the I Am Anchorage program. 907-770-2000.

Dec. 2-3 Seward Holiday Art and Craft Fair at Seward Cruise Ship Terminal. Family-friendly events with more than 60 vendors, food court, live music, activities. Make an ornament, enjoy a treat. 907-224-8051 or visitseward@seward.com for more information.

Dec. 7 Nationwide National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day

Dec. 16 Wasilla Wasilla Area Seniors, Inc. Silent Auction. In-person event at Wasilla Senior Center, 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. 907-206-8800

Dec. 17 North Pole Santa's Senior Center Winter Wonderland Gourmet Luncheon Fundraiser and Silent Auction, 11:30 a.m. Buffet style meal with prime rib, tickets \$40 per person. Limited seating. Call 907-488-4663

Dec. 18 Worldwide Hanukkah begins

Dec. 19-25 Petersburg Annual community week of Julebukking, with local businesses opening their doors to serve pastries, seafood, warming spirits and other delights, following the Norwegian tradition. Petersburg Chamber of Commerce for more information, 907-772-3646

Dec. 21 Northern Hemisphere Winter solstice

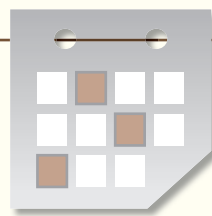
Dec. 21 Kodiak Kodiak Senior Center Christmas lunch celebration, noon. Cranberry-glazed cornish game hen, wild rice, cauliflower au gratin, special dessert. 907-486-6181

Dec. 25 Worldwide Christmas

Dec. 25 Juneau "Sundays with the Juneau Symphony," presented on local radio station KRNN 102.7 FM and streaming at www.ktoo.org. Weekly series features new performances, musician interviews, and an ongoing spotlight on the local music scene with Juneau Symphony music director Christopher Koch. More details, Charlotte Truitt, 907-586-4676.

Dec. 26 Nationwide Kwanzaa begins

Dec. 28 Fairbanks Game time at the Fairbanks Senior Center Annex inside the Shopper's Forum, 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. Bring your favorite game to play. 907-459-1136 each Wednesday at Nome Swimming Pool, 11 a.m. to noon. 907-443-5717



Send us your calendar items

Send to: Senior Voice, 3340 Arctic Blvd., Suite 106, Anchorage AK 99503
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Deadline for January edition is December 15.

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Loneliness and hardship for early trappers

By LAUREL DOWNING BILL

Senior Voice Correspondent

Some adventurous souls who came to Alaska didn't search the creek beds and mountains for golden riches. Instead they chose to make their fortunes through trapping furs. From early in the fall to the close of trapping season in April, many trappers traveled miles and miles of trap lines with no company but that of their dogs. It was no job for a "Chechako."

Trappers like Ed Ueek covered around 80 miles a week, checking to see if any animals had been caught in hidden traps.

"About 14 miles a day is my average travel on the circle, although I cover considerably more than that, of course, on the side trails," Ueek told Tom Jackson in an article for the October 1939 issue of *The Alaska Sportsman*. "During the trapping season there are only six hours of daylight at the most, and it is long after dark before I reach the trail cabin at the end of a day's hike complete."

Once trappers fixed something to eat and fed their dogs, they then had to skin and care for the furs they'd picked up along the line and get ready for the next day.

"Blinding storms are sometimes encountered far out on the trail between shelter cabins, and a biting wind with the thermometer at forty below zero makes it seem twice that cold," Ueek said. "When a trap has been sprung, it has to be reset with bare hands, and it must be done quickly and carefully...frozen hands can easily spell disaster to a trapper who is a hundred miles from civilization."

Ueek started out in the Matanuska Valley helping colonists harvest their crops. But when he saw the prices paid for furs, he switched professions and headed into the wilderness. He chose a spot near Lake Leila, on the divide between the Nelchina and Matanuska rivers.

After unloading six months of supplies from a pontoon aircraft, he picked up an axe and began swamping a trail through a heavy growth of willows to build his headquarters cabin on higher ground.

Once that cabin was finished, he spent a few years building another six cabins on the circumference of a circle, whose center was the main cabin. He stored his winter supplies in a cache, about 18 feet above ground, to prevent wild critters from helping themselves to his grub.

Ueek's story is similar to hundreds of early trappers who turned to the Last Frontier to eek out livings in the wilderness, including



Once trappers skinned and scraped the skins of beavers they trapped, they then stretched the hides on circular frames like the one in this photograph.

Anchorage Museum at Rasmuson Center

this author's grandfather. Robert Louis Mathison and his brother, Charlie, worked on their Hope gold mine during summers and trapped during winters. They sold their furs to David Green after the

master furrier started his business in Anchorage in 1922.

Most trappers didn't talk much about the money they made, nor the hardships they endured climbing creeks and mountain ridges as

they routed out any unlucky fur bearers that happened to cross their paths. But they knew that any man who could make a living from trapping in Alaska could make a success of anything.

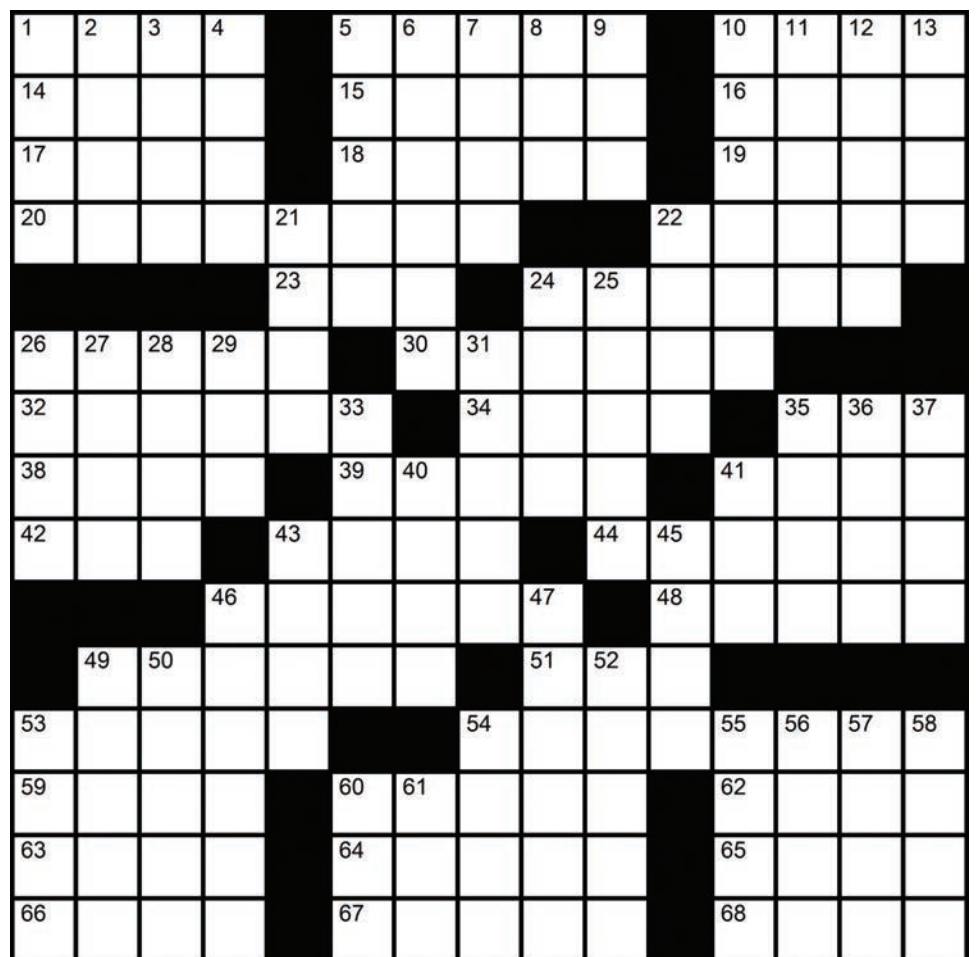
This column features tidbits found among the writings of the late Alaska historian, Phyllis Downing Carlson. Her niece, Laurel Downing Bill, has turned many of Carlson's stories – as well as stories from her own research – into a series of books titled "Aunt Phil's Trunk." Volumes One through Five are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

What "Z" Heck Is That?

Across

- 1 Benchley epic
- 5 Intense
- 10 Zorro's marks
- 14 Playwright Ayckbourn
- 15 Ill-tempered woman
- 16 Sandwich man?
- 17 Mostel of "Monsieur Lecoq"
- 18 Subsequently
- 19 Get-up-and-go
- 20 Chichewa denizens
- 22 Upright
- 23 Insect egg
- 24 Mackenzie River locale
- 26 Oxlike antelope
- 30 Cartoon expression of anger
- 32 Gentle breeze
- 34 Some M & M's
- 35 High school class
- 38 Muddy up
- 39 Humiliate

- 41 Side squared, for a square
- 42 Literary collection
- 43 Decree
- 44 Quick squirt of some liquid
- 46 Goofballs
- 48 Free from restraint
- 49 "In Search of Lost Time" author
- 51 "Platoon" setting
- 53 Lover of Eos
- 54 Large rigid dirigible
- 59 Farm soil
- 60 Boo alternative
- 62 Thou-shalt-not
- 63 Diminutive suffix
- 64 Fad
- 65 Coffee choice
- 66 Provoke



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- 67 Keys
- 68 Take a nap
- 21 Race place
- 22 Means justifiers
- 24 Hints
- 25 Where to find El Libertador
- 26 Book before Nehemiah
- 27 Writer Uris
- 28 Samoan port
- 29 Art Ross Trophy org.
- 31 Provide an address
- 33 1955 Lana Turner, Richard Burton flick, "The ___ of Ranchipur"
- 35 Pluck
- 36 Tibetan denizen, maybe
- 37 Labyrinth
- 40 Switch's partner
- 41 Prince Valiant's son
- 43 Ancient Italian deity
- 45 Low-cut shoe
- 46 Rocketed
- 47 Allergic reaction
- 49 Prefix with type
- 50 Cow catcher
- 52 ___-ski
- 53 First name in fashion
- 54 Ardor
- 55 Writer Bagnold
- 56 Bonkers
- 57 Don Juan's mother
- 58 Lymph bump
- 60 Third-century date
- 61 Mins. and mins.

Crossword answers on page 26



Christmas magic with Ilene Graff

By NICK THOMAS

Tinseltown Talks

Perhaps you remember her as TV mom Marsha Owens in ABC's popular 80s sitcom "Mr. Belvedere," starring alongside baseballer-turned-actor Bob Uecker and British actor Christopher Hewett in the title role. But Ilene Graff is also an established singer whose career began in musical theater. In recent years her live festive Christmas special, "The Ilene Graff Holiday Show," has delighted audiences at 54 Below, a supper club in the basement of New York's famed Studio 54 theater.

"We couldn't do it because of COVID for a couple of years, but I'm thrilled to be back on stage December 28 with a new show," said Graff from Los Angeles. "I loved the holiday specials of the 60s and 70s on programs like 'The Andy Williams Show,' so that's



The cast of "Mr. Belvedere," including Ilene Graff with Bob Uecker at right and Christopher Hewett at left.

the mood I've always tried to bring to my shows. I have special guests, we chat, sing holiday songs, and just try to keep it warm and friendly with a family feeling, including some light-hearted moments of

reflection and love."

A native of Queens, New York, Graff lives in Los Angeles but always enjoys returning "home" to the East Coast where she and her husband, composer Ben Lanzarone, maintain an apartment.

"I love celebrations and hosting parties, and I do love the holidays," she said. "So a few years ago I pitched this idea to my family and we put together

the first holiday show, which was a huge success. It just became something I wanted to continue."

That first show was a real family affair also featuring brother Todd, an actor, writer and director, her Tony Award-winning cousin Randy, actress/dancer daughter Nikka, as well as Ben. But with their busy schedules, only her husband could regularly join her in subsequent

December holiday presentations.

"I love working with him so that's another reason I wanted to continue doing them," she said.

Ilene says she still encounters people unaware of her musical background.

"Most know me from television but don't realize that I started on Broadway, so they are kind of surprised that I'm a real singer!" she said, laughing (see www.ilenegraff.com). "I also sang a little on maybe three episodes of 'Mr. Belvedere,' so that was always a surprise for the audience."

One of those episodes first aired in December 1989. In "A Happy Guy's Christmas" the Owens family is cast in a local production of a Charles Dickens classic.

"We did a silly take-off of 'A Christmas Carol,'" she recalled. "They dressed me up with this beautiful long blonde wig and Christopher was attached with wires so he could fly. It was exactly what you wanted from a Christmas episode - goofy and yet heartfelt and sincere."

Graff remembers her

page 26 please



A festive Ilene Graff.

Provided by Ilene Graff



Fun math and money board games to play with grandkids

By KIMBERLY BLAKER

“Play is our brain’s favorite way of learning.” – Diane Ackerman

Looking for some fun games as gifts or to play when grandkids come to visit that also serve a purpose? Math is one of kids’ least-loved subjects because it’s often an unpleasant experience of boring lessons, memorization, and testing that isn’t always conducive to learning authentic information and understanding important concepts. But it doesn’t have to be that way. The following board games make learning math and money concepts more fun from preschool to high school. They’re also a fun way to spend quality time with grandkids. All games can be found easily and ordered online (Amazon, for instance).

Hi Ho! Cherry-o is an excellent game for young children to naturally practice counting, addition, and subtraction skills. The concept is simple as each player spins to see how many fruit pieces to pick or remove from their basket. Ages 3-6.

Feed the Woozle is a game for practicing preschool skills, including counting up to twelve during silly and cooperative play. It offers three different play levels to challenge growing children as they work together to feed the Woozle. Ages 3+.

Sum Swamp helps players become more fluent in



addition and subtraction as they try to safely cross the swamp. Special spaces like evens, odds and numbers add an extra challenge. Ages 5+.

Cloud Hoppers works on subtraction practice, starting at 50 then counting down, as players embark on a quest to help their alien get down to the ground. Ages 6+.

Buy it Right is a shopping game where players buy, sell and set prices for items using fake money that mimics real coins and cash. Players practice counting out change and learn the value of money during play, with different levels of difficulty possible. Ages 6+.

Mathological Liar is a detective game where players solve mysteries using math. Each player gets a suspect card and must determine if the math in their alibi is correct, meaning innocence, or incorrect, meaning guilty. There are boxes for each grade level from 2-6. Ages 6+.

Three Sticks is a geometry game that operates in a similar way to Scrabble. Players take turns trying to create shapes on a board while using only two sticks of various lengths during each turn. Ages 8+.

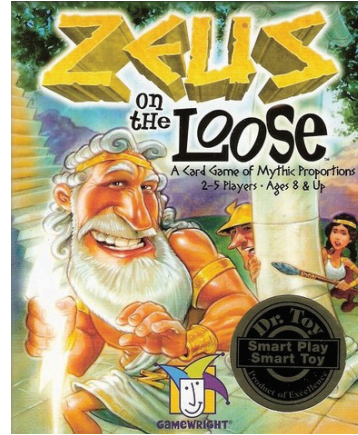
Monster Sock Factory is a game to introduce and practice multiplication and division concepts. Players try to determine how many socks to pack and ship from the factory for monsters with different numbers of legs. Ages 8+ but can be adapted to younger players.

Monopoly is a classic game dealing with money and economic concepts. You buy properties, pay rent, and manage your money as each player tries to take control. There are countless versions of this game to match a range of ages and interests. The original version is recommended for ages 8+.

The Game of Life teaches how the choices we make affect our finances and life, while surprises can affect even the most well-thought-out plans. Players use practical math skills while learning about life-long economic impacts, helping kids think about their financial futures. Ages 8+.

Managing My Allow-

ance teaches players about money management and budgeting. Players make choices about how to spend or save the money they earn. The game uses play cash for players to handle as they count out changes to their total and try to save money for college. Ages 8+.



Zeus on the Loose is a fast-paced math game using number cards to climb Mount Olympus and catch Zeus by getting the number total to a multiple of 10. Players use strategy, addition and subtraction while managing other gods and goddesses’ effects along the way. Ages 8+.

Proof! is a game that works for a wide range of ages and abilities, depending on the players, to support mental math prac-

tics. The dealer lays down nine cards while players look at the cards to create an equation out of at least three available cards. It can be made more or less challenging with variations on the basic game and can even be played solo. Ages 9+.

The Stock Exchange Game teaches players about the stock market and related concepts during strategy-based play with three play levels for varying difficulty. The game uses play money and stock coins along with extras like world event cards that affect results. Ages 10+.

Prime Climb uses prime numbers, factorization, multiplication, and division along with strategy. Players roll the dice, move, and draw cards while navigating around other players to get both of their pawns to exactly 101. Ages 10+.



Oversold


continued from page 11

individuals living with MCI may go on to develop dementia, but others will not.

Currently, there are no specific treatments for MCI. As new treatments for Alzheimer’s disease are developed, these treatments may be tested on patients with MCI. If experimental treatments help slow cognitive decline, the early diagnosis of MCI will become increasingly important. MCI refers to when there is a decline in cognitive abilities (memory, language and/or reasoning)

but not to the extent that it affects routine activities, like banking, driving, managing medications, and taking care of usual responsibilities.

MCI is distinguished from dementia, a condition in which cognitive decline is significant enough to affect the ability to carry out usual daily functions. MCI can be a sign of progression to a state of dementia and is known as a risk factor for dementia. There are a number of lifestyle modifications that have been shown to help individuals with MCI and they include staying active, eating right and maintaining good sleep hygiene.

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Alaska secures its largest judgment on elder fraud

Editor's note: This press statement was received Nov. 28, 2022.

Alaska Dept. of Administration, Office of Public Advocacy

On Nov. 13, 2022, the Alaska Office of Elder Fraud and Assistance won a \$1.47 million judgment against defendants James Vernon and Carla Sigler, formerly of Yakutat, now living in Bosque County, Texas, for the financial exploitation of

Yakutat resident Neva Ogle. The Siglers took \$700,000 in funds from Mrs. Ogle over the course of two years. They used \$380,000 of the funds to fund a cash purchase of a five-bedroom home with a swimming pool for themselves in Texas and spent the rest of the funds to retire early and to purchase a new truck and other items for themselves and their family members.

Superior Court Judge Daniel Schally grant-

ed punitive damages in the amount of \$450,000 against the Siglers, stating that the specific and general deterrence of elder fraud in Alaska is an important goal recognized by our legislature.

"The deceitful financial maltreatment of Alaskan elders is corrosive of the values of our community at large," Judge Schally wrote in the order for the punitive damages. "A message must be sent that the swindling

of elders is offensive to this community. The protection of Alaskan elders is strengthened through deterrence and punishment of those who take advantage of these valuable and vulnerable citizens of our state."

The State of Alaska takes the exploitation of its elderly population seriously. This judgment sends a powerful message: If you defraud one of our elders, the Alaska Office of Elder

Fraud and Assistance will come after you, even if you are outside of Alaska.

If you have information about elder abuse or fraud, you can submit anonymous tips to the Office of Public Advocacy, Office of Elder Fraud and Assistance at: Phone (907)334-5954, Fax (907) 269-1071, E-mail doa.opa.elder.fraud@alaska.gov.

Top financial scams targeting seniors today

By JIM MILLER

Savvy Senior

Dear Savvy Senior: What are the most common scams today that target elderly seniors? My 75-year-old mother has been swindled several times over the past year, so I'm being extra cautious. -Paranoid Patty

Dear Patty: Great question. While many scams today are universal, there are certain types of fraud that specifically target older adults or affects them disproportionately. And unfortunately, these senior targeted scams are on the rise.

According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), in 2021 there were 92,371 older victims of fraud resulting in \$1.7 billion in losses. This was a 74 percent increase in losses compared to 2020.

Here are five of the most common senior scams that were reported last year that both you and your mom should be aware of.

Government impostor scams

These are fraudulent telephone calls from people claiming to be from the Internal Revenue Service, Social Security Administration or Medicare. These scammers may falsely tell you that you have unpaid taxes and threaten arrest or deportation if you don't pay up immediately. Or they may say your Social Security or Medicare benefits are in danger of being cut off if you don't provide personal identifying information. They may even "spoof"

According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, in 2021 there were 92,371 older victims of fraud resulting in \$1.7 billion in losses. This was a 74 percent increase in losses compared to 2020.

your caller ID to make it look like the government is actually calling.

Sweepstakes and lottery scams

These scams may contact you by phone, mail or email. They tell you that you've won or have the potential to win a jackpot. But you need to pay a fee, or cover taxes and processing fees to receive your prize, perhaps by prepaid debit card, wire transfer, money order or cash. Scammers may even impersonate well-known sweepstakes organizations, like Publishers Clearing House, to fool you.

Robocalls and phone scams

Robocalls take advantage of sophisticated, automated phone technology to carry out a variety of scams on trusting older adults who answer the phone. Some robocalls may claim that a warranty is expiring on their car or electronic device, and payment is needed to renew it. These scammers may also "spoof" the number to make the call look authentic.

One common robocall is the "Can you hear me?" call. When the older person says "yes," the scammer records their voice and hangs up. The criminal then has a voice signature to authorize unwanted charges on items like stolen

credit cards.

Computer tech support scams

These scams prey on seniors' lack of knowledge about computers and cybersecurity. A pop-up message or blank screen usually appears on a computer or phone, telling you that your device is compromised

and needs fixing. When you call the support number for help, the scammer may either request remote access to your computer and/or that you pay a fee to have it repaired.

Grandparent scam

The grandparent scam has been around for several years now. A scammer will call and say something along the lines of, "Hi Grandma, do you know who this is?" When the unsuspecting grandparent guesses the name of the

grandchild the scammer most sounds like, the scammer has established a fake identity.

The fake grandchild will then ask for money to solve some unexpected financial problem (legal trouble, overdue rent, car repairs, etc.) to be paid via gift cards or money transfers, which don't always require identification to collect.

Other scams

Some other popular

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Over the river and through the woods

By KENNETH KIRK

For Senior Voice



It might seem that it would not be that hard to prove that lack of grandparent visitation would be detrimental to the child. In reality, it is a very difficult standard to meet.

This issue of the Senior Voice will be coming out at the beginning of the holiday season. For many of us, that means enjoying time with grandchildren.

I don't know who first said that "grandchildren are God's reward for not killing your teenagers," but I can certainly relate to that. And with apologies to those readers who don't have grandkids, they certainly bring life and meaning at this time of year.

One of the nice things about grandchildren is that we don't have to take care of them all of the time. For most of us, if we want to see our grandchildren, we just have to pick up the phone and ask.

Unfortunately, that is not the case for everyone.

Occasionally grandparents are denied contact. It may happen for any number of reasons. There may be religious or philosophical differences between the grandparents and their child. The parent may be bitter or resentful about things that happened when they were young. There may be a son- or daughter-in-law who dislikes the grandparents, or is isolating the family from extended family. And of course on occasion, there may be good reasons for denial, such as when the

grandparents are abusive or undermine the parents.

Sometimes the grandparents seek visitation orders from the courts. It doesn't happen every day, but it happens often enough that back in 1995 the Alaska legislature passed a statute to cover that situation. AS 25.20.065 sets the standards for grandparent visitation. A judge can order the visitation if the grandparent has established, or at least attempted to establish, ongoing personal contact with the child; and if visitation by the grandparent is in the child's best interest. That is a pretty broad standard, and it definitely appears to put a grandparent in a good position if he or she wants to petition for a visitation order.

But not so fast: Just five years after Alaska enacted this statute, the U.S. Supreme Court decided a case involving a similar statute from the state of Washington. The case is called *Troxel v. Granville*,

and it involved a situation in which the grandparents' son had died, and the daughter-in-law (that is, the surviving parent of the grandchildren), while agreeable to some visitation, wasn't giving the grandparents as much as they wanted. The Supreme Court held that because the right of a parent to raise their child is a "fundamental right", the states could not simply order a parent to allow grandparent visitation based on a "best interest of the child" standard. Custody and visitation cases between the parents are decided based on the child's best interest, but the Supreme Court said that a higher standard is necessary when it is a non-parent who is petitioning for visitation.

The U.S. Supreme Court did not say, however, exactly what the standard should be; they just reversed that specific case on the grounds that the Washington statute did not give enough weight to parental preference. That left it to the states to figure out what they could or could not do.

In Alaska, the legislature

did not step in and rewrite the statute, so it fell to the Alaska Supreme Court to interpret the statute so as to meet the constitutional standard.

When the question of grandparent visitation found its way up to the Alaska Supreme Court, the justices looked at their previous cases, and decided that a grandparent should have to meet the same standard as any other third-party. They had decided third-party visitation cases before, such as when a divorcing stepparent seeks visitation with their stepchildren, and decided that the standard they had developed in those cases, was appropriate in the grandparent cases as well.

So here is the law, for a grandparent seeking visitation over the objections of the parents. There are exceptions, of course, but these are the basic rules. The grandparent still has to meet the statutory requirements of having established, or attempted to establish, ongoing personal contact with the child, and still must show that visitation is in the child's best interest. But then the

grandparent must also prove, by the heightened standard of "clear and convincing evidence", that it would be detrimental to the child to not order the visitation.

To people who have not dealt with these kinds of cases, it might seem that it would not be that hard to prove that lack of visitation would be detrimental to the child. In reality, it is a very difficult standard to meet. I used to handle family law cases, and I pursued several grandparent visitation cases. They are almost never successful.

So, if you are considering pursuing this kind of lawsuit, let me give you two pieces of advice. First, do everything you possibly can to work it out and avoid litigation. It may mean having to compromise and do things you don't want to do, or getting a lot less contact than you would like, and it may be unfair, but it may also be the best option.

And if you do decide to go forward, hire a really good family law attorney. But not me. I don't do that anymore.

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. Merry Christmas.

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Carrot Weather, Twitter and last minute gifts

By **BOB DeLAURENTIS**

Bob's Tech Talk

Q. The built-in weather app on my smartphone is pretty basic. When I search for a more advanced app, I'm presented with an overwhelming number of choices. Is there one you would recommend?

A. To paraphrase an old adage: Someone with one weather app knows the temperature, but someone with two weather apps is never sure. My mind reels when I think about the thousands of weather apps for sale in app stores.

There is a standout app that I enjoy for its creativity and its expansive feature set: Carrot Weather, from www.meetcarrot.com. There is a free version, but unlocking its full feature set spans the gamut from "pricy" to "wow you must really love weather."

Putting aside the snark for a moment, the Carrot Weather is worth a trial run. The app's standout features are the ability to customize views exactly the way you prefer, and its attitude slider, which goes from polite to profane.

If you like it, great. If not, you may discover a newfound love for that free app that comes on your device.

Q. Is there an alternative to Twitter?

A. The simple answer is no. The non-simple answer: In the short term, the

Power adapters and cables are not flashy, but good ones make every single day a little easier, which is a gift that keeps on giving throughout the year.

most likely replacement is a service called Mastodon (see the link in the box).

I joined Twitter when it was less than a year old. I have been using it daily for well over a decade. Since the beginning, Twitter has been a service that struggled to define its role. It began as a chat using SMS messages on cellular phones, moved to the Web, and then went through a series of peaks and valleys.

Early outages and instability were common as it grew rapidly, but its user base never grew to match the numbers of other popular social media networks. There is no question that Twitter is now in a period of extremely rapid change.

Twitter itself is a very different service than it was a short time ago. More than half of its workforce is no longer there, advertisers are pulling back, and Twitter's moderation practices seem to change almost daily.

About the only thing anyone can say for sure is that Twitter has changed course many times in its

relatively short life. What happens next remains to be seen.

Q. Please share some good last-minute suggestions for holiday gifts.

A. Every person I know could make great use of another power adapter. Many devices no longer ship with power adapters and cables. Those that do often include minimal adapters that barely do the job.

Anker, my all-time favorite power adapter manufacturer, has a new line of adapters that will make anyone's life easier. Anker has a retail presence in some stores, but their entire catalog is available online at www.anker.com.

The two product lines you should consider first are Nano 3 and GaNPrime. Nano 3 is a selection of compact chargers to support phones and most tablets. GaNPrime adapters, which are also small compared to traditional chargers, support multiple simultaneous devices, fast charging times and many laptops.

Pair the adapter with a high quality fabric-braided cable. Spare cables are

very handy. Most cables are short, about three feet or less. A six-foot cable is an everyday luxury that makes life easier in many situations.

The Android users in your life will probably benefit from USB-C cables, whereas Apple people can probably use a USB to Lightning cable.

If you are not sure which cable connectors are right,

Amazon allows returns and exchanges well into January, making a wrong guess simple to fix.

Power adapters and cables are not flashy, but good ones make every single day a little easier, which is a gift that keeps on giving throughout the year.

Bob has been writing about technology for over three decades. He can be contacted at techtalk@bobdel.com.

Wander the Web

Here are my picks for worthwhile browsing this month:

Mastodon

Mastodon is both a Web service and a collection of apps that features short posts, images, timelines and followers, just to name a few. One important note: Direct messages are not that private, so consider Mastodon a public space.

www.mastodon.social

Glitch

Glitch is reminiscent of the internet circa 2000. It tends to favor people with coding skills, but if you had your own livejournal back in the day, or want to try your hand building toys in its sandbox, check it out.

www.glitch.com

Smarthome Tour

This 30-minute video is a good overview of the current state of home automation devices: The good, the bad and the ugly.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ylf5rhIaS7I

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By **DIMITRA LAVRAKAS**

Senior Voice Travel
Correspondent

When someone in your family is dying whether, it's in-state or the Lower 48, you want to get to them fast.

When I was visiting a friend in Kodiak, her mother lay dying in Alabama, and we managed to get her off the island on the last flight out and to Anchorage on a reduced fare, then on to Alabama thanks to Alaska Airlines.

Alaska Airlines

How does the Alaska Airlines bereavement fare work?

If you need to travel within the next seven days due to the death of one of your immediate family members, you may be eligible for a 10 percent discount off the lowest available fare for your desired flights.

Immediate family members who qualify for this fare include: A spouse or domestic partner, child or stepchild, parent (mother, father, stepmother or stepfather), siblings (brother, sister, half-brother, half-sister, stepbrother or stepsister), grandparents (grandmother, grandfather, step grandparent, or great grandparent), grandchild (granddaughter, grandson, step grandchild or great grandchild), aunt or uncle, niece or nephew, and in-laws (mother-in-law, father-in-law, daughter-in-law, son-in-law, brother-in-law or sister-in-law).

The reduced rate does not apply to cousins or other in-law relatives, and is not intended for medical or emergency travel.

The discount is valid on Alaska Airlines and flights operated on behalf of Alaska by Horizon or SkyWest.

Travel must begin within seven days of purchasing your ticket.

Guests over the age of 18 must be Mileage Plan members and have their Mileage Plan numbers added to their reservation. It is free to sign up, so be prepared and do it now.



istockphoto.com/MesquitaFMS

All rules associated with the fare are applicable, including Saver fare restrictions, and all fees associated with the fare are applicable.

This fare discount cannot be combined with any other promotional discounts such as Money and Miles, companion fares, government fares, or military fares.

The discount is not offered after travel has begun.

This reduced rate is only available if you purchase your ticket by phone.

Phone numbers to call to receive the reduced rate fare:

- ▶ Reservations and customer service, 1-800-252-7522
- ▶ Hearing and speech impaired (TTY), dial 711 for relay services
- ▶ Accessible services, 1-800-503-0101

Air Canada

Air Canada's bereavement policy offers reduced fares and flexibility needed during a difficult time. It is possible that there may be lower prices available

on their website, but they could be subject to additional fees. Its bereavement policy applies to: Immediate family members, any flight marketed and operated by Air Canada, Air Canada Rouge, or Air Canada Express, or any Economy Class fare, except for the airline's Economy Basic fare for travel within North America

Bereavement travel must occur within 10 days of booking and does not exceed 60 days. Air Canada's bereavement policy does not apply to codeshare flights or flights operated by another airline.

Air Canada requires more proof before you travel and when you return.

You must provide the name of the family member, your relationship to the dying or deceased family member, the name of the hospital or residence, as well as the attending physician's name, address and phone number, or the name, address and phone number of the memorial or funeral home, along with the date of the memorial or funeral.

Within seven days of your return travel, please send an email to Bereavement@AirCanada.ca with your booking reference in the subject line and attach one of the following supporting documents: a copy of the death certificate, the funeral director's statement, the coroner's statement, registration issued by a provincial government, a letter from the treating physician on official letterhead and/or a prescription pad which clearly defines the situation as one of imminent death of your immediate family member.

If you fail to send one of these documents you may have to pay the regular fare price difference.

Air Canada recognizes the following as immediate family: Spouse (common law, same sex partners and ex-spouse), child (step/grand/great grand), parent (step/grand/great grand/in-law/ common law in-law), son or daughter (includes step/in-law/common law in-law), brother or sister (step/half/in-law/common law in-law), legal

guardian and spouse of legal guardian (with proof of judgment).

All the above also includes in-laws of a same sex partner.

You must call 1-888-247-2262 to make a reservation.

Hawaiian Airlines

Since so many Alaskans vacation in Hawaii, taking notes of Hawaiian Airlines' bereavement policy might be a good thing to have handy. Hawaiian Air's policy is very generous.

If you had to change your reservation because a family member passed away, you may qualify for either a waiver of your change fees or a ticket refund, if your reservation was canceled.

Change or cancel your flights online or by phone. For changes, the change fee and fare difference will apply.

You will need the following documents: A copy of the death certificate, proof of your relationship to the deceased (birth certificate or marriage

next page please



Flights

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certificate), and a copy of your ticket.

Submit your request and scanned copies of your documents online to HawaiianAirlines.com/CAO.

You are eligible if you booked a reservation, but you were unable to travel because your immediate family member passed

away, or your travel companion (someone booked under the same six-letter confirmation code as you) passed away.

Hawaiian Air defines immediate family members as your spouse, children, parents, siblings, grandparents, grandchildren, your mother-in-law, father-in-law, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, brother-in-law, or sister-in-law, as well as step-parents, step-children, step-sib-

lings, step-grandparents, or step-grandchildren, and adopted children.

Hawaiian Air also offers medical waiver requests for a waiver of your change fees if you changed or canceled your reservation because you or a family member was hospitalized.

For medical waiver requests, if you had to change or cancel your reservation because you or an immediate family member (see above) became hospital-

ized, complete a medical waiver request form and send a scanned copy to HawaiianAirlines.com/CAO

Submit a scanned copy of the form at HawaiianAirlines.com/CAO. Allow 30 days for processing.

If approved, the airline will refund your change fees. Please allow up to 30 days for processing. Waivers do not cover differences in fare or ticket refunds.

You may be asked to provide proof of your re-

lationship.

Call 1-800-367-5320 if you have questions.

Delta Airlines

Delta offers a bereavement policy with additional flexibility on the best-published fare for your itinerary when last minute travel is required.

Call Delta Reservations 800-221-1212 for domestic flights or 800-241-4141 for international flights to book a bereavement fare.

Flying legal: Your cannabis and the law

By **DIMITRA LAVRAKAS**

Senior Voice Travel Correspondent

Twenty-one states have decriminalized possession of cannabis and some allow growing for your own use. Pot shops have popped up all over and the taxes from the sale of marijuana in specialized stores have bolstered many a municipal budget.

In Congress, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer introduced the Cannabis Administration and Opportunity Act, which would federally decriminalize weed. However, the bill's passage is uncertain.

As a THC user, how do you get from Alaska to another state carrying your marijuana or edibles? And should you?

In relaxing punishment on marijuana, President Joe Biden said he would

issue pardons to everyone convicted of the federal crime of simple marijuana possession. This will apply to about 6,500 Americans. However, a senior White House official clarified to reporters that no one is currently behind bars for simple possession of marijuana.

But if you don't want to end up in a Russian penal colony for nine years like American WNBA basketball star Brittany Griner, never bring even CBD into a foreign country. If you really want to go to Europe, go to Amsterdam where they have it in cafes.

Sneak it in or not

While carrying marijuana in a civilian aircraft is illegal under federal regulations, in some airports, like Sea-Tac, people are not prevented from bringing it aboard in their carry-on or

checked luggage.

Hence there are amnesty drop boxes in airports for those who decide that maybe it's too big a risk to carry onto the plane, or they are traveling to a state where it is still illegal.

With a medical marijuana card in hand, the authorities are much more lenient. There have been no reports so far of people being arrested for possession when holding a medical card.

Some airports do have fines, like Colorado Springs,

Colorado, where it is \$2,500 and jail time, and Denver, \$999, but no jail time.

You can bring on a CBD product so long as it contains no more than 0.3 percent THC, which does not cause a high, or is approved by the Food and Drug Administration. If the product is a liquid it must, like any carry-on liquid, be 3.4 ounces or less.

According to the US Transportation Security Administration website, "TSA's screening proce-

dures are focused on security and are designed to detect potential threats to aviation and passengers. Accordingly, TSA security officers do not search for marijuana or other illegal drugs, but if any illegal substance is discovered during security screening, TSA will refer the matter to a law enforcement officer."

In conclusion, be aware of the laws at the airport before you go and either comply or not, but be ready for whatever may happen.



A disposal box at Chicago's O'Hare International Airport, for passengers who don't want to risk flying with marijuana.

Benita Washburn photo

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Trials

continued from page 7

dominant. Meaning, none of these products are meant to make you feel high or “stoned.” Only one product has more than 1 mg of THC and it contains an equal amount of CBD.

These products are specifically formulated to be used as medicine and help patients find relief.

To see if you qualify, go to <https://btstudi.es/q/uofm/>

Paid studies with Sanguine

For all of the following trials with Sanguine, a provider of at-home clinical trials, you will receive \$100 to \$150 for your participation.

You may qualify to participate if you are 18 years of age or older, have been

diagnosed with the study disease and live in the U.S.

Grave’s disease. Contribute to the development of new treatments and help advance Graves’ disease research with a 15-minute blood donation.

Call 818-293-2248 to speak with a research coordinator to see if you qualify.

Colon cancer at-home study. Sanguine is also conducting studies for new treatments to help advance colorectal cancer disease research with a 15-minute blood donation.

Donating is fast, easy, and you will receive \$150 for your time without leaving home.

Call 818-804-2463 to speak with a research coordinator and see if you qualify.

Lung cancer at-home study. Sanguine is also conducting studies to develop new treatments for

lung cancer with a 15-minute blood donation.

You will receive \$100 for your time without leaving home.

Go to <https://bit.ly/3VkJTFja>.

Alzheimer’s disease. You will receive \$100 for your time without leaving home. To sign up call 818-804-2463 to speak with a research coordinator and see if you qualify.

Pemphigus vulgaris. You can contribute to the development of new treatments and help advance Pemphigus vulgaris research with a 15-minute blood donation. Pemphigus vulgaris is a rare long-term condition caused by a problem with the immune system. It causes blisters in the mouth and on the skin. You will receive \$100 for your time without leaving home.

Call 818-804 2468 to

speak with a research coordinator and see if you qualify.

Other clinical trial opportunities

You can sign up with

ClinicalConnection and receive notifications about trials in your area or at home. Visit <https://www.clinicalconnection.com> to join.

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Senior Voice is compiling a list of businesses that offer a senior discount, and will maintain it on our website. Email the business name, discount amount and age to qualify to

editor@seniorvoicelaska.com

Graff

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years on the “Mr. Belvedere” set with fondness. “It was an amazing cast and crew who worked so well together. You know how some people are just funny? Well, that was Bob, completely natural and comfortable on camera and one of the smartest people I’ve ever known – and he still broadcasts baseball (at 88, for the Milwaukee Brewers). Both he and Christopher were such great guys and insisted that everybody in the cast and crew be treated equally on the set. How lucky I am to

have those memories in my career.”

Graff hopes to create new memories for herself and the audience when she returns for this year’s holiday show.

“I’ve always thought of myself as a singer who got into acting and the acting really took over for many years,” she says. “But I never stopped singing because that’s just who I am. Music, singing, and of course family are everything to me.”

Nick Thomas teaches at Auburn University at Montgomery, Ala, and has written features, columns, and interviews for numerous magazines and newspapers. See www.getnickt.org.

Scams

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scams targeting older adults right now are romance scams through social media and online dating sites, COVID-19 scams, investment scams,

Medicare and health insurance scams, and internet and email fraud.

For more information on the different types of senior scams to watch out for, along with tips to help your mom protect herself, visit the National Council on Aging website at www.NCOA.org, and type in “the

top 5 financial scams targeting older adults” in the search bar.

Send your senior questions to: Savvy Senior, P.O. Box 5443, Norman, OK 73070, or visit SavvySenior.org. Jim Miller is a contributor to the NBC Today show and author of “The Savvy Senior” book.



Crossword answers from page 18


J	A	W	S		A	C	U	T	E		Z	E	E	S	
A	L	A	N		S	H	R	E	W		E	A	R	L	
Z	E	R	O		S	I	N	C	E		B	R	I	O	
Z	A	M	B	I	A	N	S				E	R	E	C	T
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Z	E	P	H	Y	R		R	E	D	S		G	Y	M	
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G	O	A	D		I	S	L	E	S		D	O	Z	E	

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Hearing

continued from page 10

any level of hearing loss can benefit from prescription hearing aids. Although they are more expensive, prescription devices offer the most sophisticated technology and will be better able to treat the nuances of different types of hearing loss. They also include built-in help from a hearing professional to fit and adjust them, so they are a good choice for someone who has tried an over-the-counter option without success.

2. Prescription hearing aids are ordered from a hearing specialist or audiologist, but OTC hearing aids will be available in stores, pharmacies and online without a fitting or exam.

Over-the-counter hearing aids: You will now be able to buy them in pharmacies, stores and online without a medical exam or a special fitting from an audiologist. Retailers including Best Buy,

Walgreens and CVS plan to carry the hearing aids in their stores and online. All over-the-counter hearing aids will need to meet FDA quality standards.

Prescription hearing aids: They are ordered by an audiologist or a hearing instrument specialist who has tested your hearing using advanced diagnostic tools. The hearing professional will help you fit and adjust your new hearing aids at a follow-up appointment once the devices come in.

3. OTC hearing aids are expected to cost substantially less than prescription hearing aids.

Over-the-counter hearing aids: The average price of over-the-counter devices remains to be seen, but they are expected to offer substantial savings compared with prescription versions. Government officials estimate Americans will save on average \$2,800 a pair. Most private insurers and Medicare don't cover the devices.

Prescription hearing aids: They cost on average about \$4,600 per pair,

though premium models are priced as high as \$12,000. The total price covers the cost of the devices, the professional fitting and follow-up treatment, as well as maintenance and troubleshooting visits for the life of the device.

4. Prescription hearing aids require the help of a health professional for adjustment, while OTC hearing aids can be adjusted by the user.

Over-the-counter hearing aids: You will configure them yourself, most likely using software or a smartphone app. Unlike getting a new pair of glasses that correct your vision as soon as you put them on, hearing aids can take some time to get used to, so it may take a few weeks and several adjustments before you are satisfied.

If you are still having trouble hearing after using the built-in device settings, you may want to look for an audiologist willing to help with fitting over-the-counter hearing aids. Barbara Kelley, executive director of the Hearing Loss Association of America,

predicts more audiologists will offer that service as over-the-counter options become available.

Prescription hearing aids: A hearing health professional will program your hearing aids to make sure they fit comfortably in your ears and provide the maximum benefit. He or she will also help you practice putting them in and taking them out and show you how to adjust the settings for different environments. You will have regular follow-up appointments for fine-tuning and maintenance, and you can go back at no additional charge anytime you have a problem for the life of the device.

5. OTC hearing aids may eventually have new designs and look different from prescription hearing aids.

Over-the-counter hearing aids: At first, OTC devices may largely resemble the simplest prescription hearing aids. But experts say allowing manufacturers to market directly to consumers will foster competition and

spur innovation in hearing aid design.

Nicholas Reed, an audiologist at Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health and co-author of the AARP's new "Hearing Loss for Dummies," predicts that allowing over-the-counter devices will prompt "some crazy technology changes" related to what a hearing aid looks like in the next 10 or 20 years.

Prescription hearing aids: If you get a prescription pair, you will have a range of options when it comes to design, including behind-the-ear, in-the-ear and discreet custom styles. With the help of an audiologist, you will be able to try out different designs for comfort and fit.

Michelle Crouch is a contributing writer who has covered health and personal finance for some of the nation's top consumer publications. Her work has appeared in Reader's Digest, Real Simple, Prevention, The Washington Post and The New York Times.

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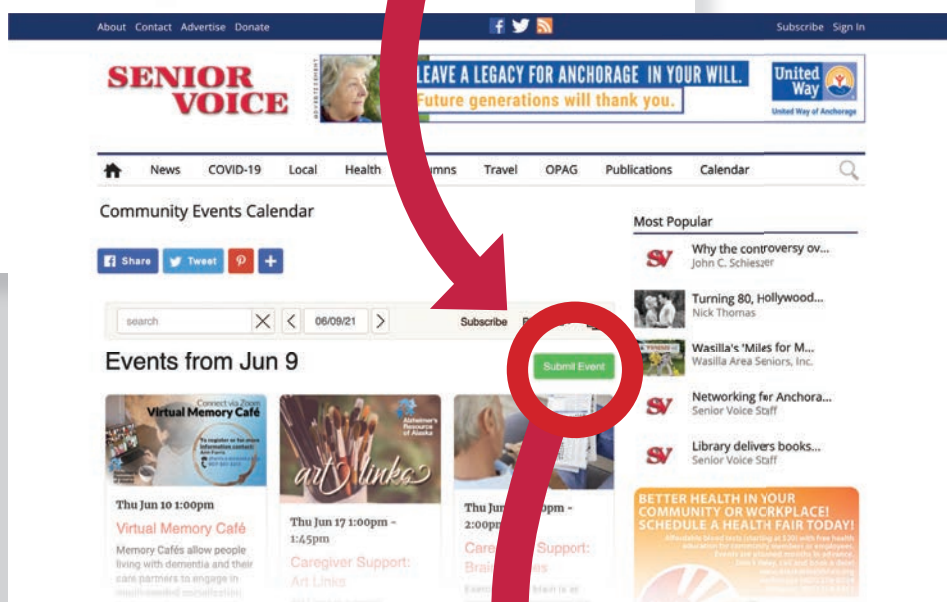
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2 You will see the list of upcoming events. To add your own event, click the “Submit Event” button on the upper right.

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

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- 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

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'. A green 'Check and Submit' button is in the top right corner.

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