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Senior Voice

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Volume 45, Number 5 May 2022

Fairbanks Senior Center opens new location.

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More telehealth is in your future and that's (mostly) a good thing.

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Travel: These group tours emphasize learning.

~ page 24

2021
National Nature
Media Awards
Winner



Buckets of work, for a good cause

From left: Gary Prokosch, Chloe Clark-Berry, Ooshka, Steve Callahan, Elise Huggins, Lootka, Kelly Westphal were among the dedicated volunteers who spent a long weekend last summer planting over 100 plants for the new Folker Health Park Reflexology Path in midtown Anchorage. A long-time goal of the Alaska Reflexology Association, the path will provide a therapeutic practice for pain relief and improved well-being. Supported in part with Anchorage Park Foundation and AARP Foundation grants, the park also will offer fitness equipment, musical instruments and a labyrinth to encourage healthy outdoor activities. A ribbon-cutting celebration with food and music is scheduled for June 28. Call 907-249-6652 for more information.

Photo courtesy Elise Huggins



Elections have changed: How to make your vote count

This month's Age Smart forum is May 10.

Senior Voice Staff

“Age Smart – Let’s Talk,” the series of forums sponsored by AARP Alaska, Older Persons Action Group and the Anchorage Senior Activity Center, returns May 10, from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. Events are currently

held virtually on the internet, using Zoom. This month’s presentation topic is “Everything Has Changed: How do I Make Sure My Vote Counts?” Gail Fenumi-ai from the Division of Elections will explain the changes to Alaska’s voting

system including an overview of the new open primary system, how ranked choice voting works and changes to campaign funding tracking. We know that Alaskans over 50 are super voters, so it is important to understand how this new voting system will work so you can maximize your voting power. 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. Presentation begins at 6:30. To sign up, go to AARP’s event page at <https://aarp.cventevents.com/ASMAY102022>

A call to awareness and action on elder abuse

By **STEPHANIE WHEELER**
Alaska Long-Term Care Ombudsman

June 15 is World Elder Abuse Awareness Day. Research suggests that as few as 1 in 14 cases of elder abuse come to the attention of authorities.

The mission of the Alaska Long-Term Care Ombudsman program is to provide resident-centered advocacy designed to protect the rights, health, safety and welfare of Alaskans living in long-term care facilities. In 2021, the Long-Term Care Ombudsman program investigated nearly 300 complaints in long term care settings. One of the top five complaints identified in long-term care settings was abuse, neglect and exploitation of residents. The COVID-19 pandemic has been exceptionally challenging to seniors, many who were socially isolated from their loved ones and friends, possibly making abuse and neglect more likely to occur. Elder abuse is a largely hidden and growing problem in the United States. It is defined by law as “an act or omission, which results in a serious physical or emotional injury to an elderly person or financial exploitation of an elderly person; or the failure, inability or resistance of an elderly person to provide for himself or herself one or more of the necessities essential for physical and emotional well-being,

without which the elderly person would be unable to safely remain in the community.” Elder abuse can include physical, sexual, emotional, neglect and financial exploitation. Every year an estimated 1 in 10 older Americans are victims of elder abuse, neglect or exploitation. And that’s only part of the picture: Experts believe that elder abuse is significantly under-reported, in part because so many of our communities lack the social supports that would make it easier for those who experience abuse to report it. Research suggests that as few as 1 in 14 cases of elder abuse come to the attention of authorities. In addition to being a clear violation of the American commitment to justice for all, elder abuse is an issue with many consequences for our society. Its effects on our communities range from public health to economic issues.

A call to action
June is World Elder Abuse Awareness Month. World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD) is June 15 and was launched in 2006 by the International

Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse and the World Health Organization at the United Nations in an effort to unite communities around the world in raising awareness about elder abuse. WEAAD serves as a call-to-action for our communities to raise awareness about abuse, neglect and exploitation of elders, and reaffirm our country’s commitment to the principle of justice for all. When we come together, we can prevent elder abuse from happening. We can put support services in place, and direct community resources toward addressing elder abuse. Our country must reaffirm our commitment to justice and create a sturdy structure of support that will benefit us all as we get older. While Elder Abuse is widespread, the good news is that we can prevent and address the issue of elder abuse. There are many ways to strengthen our social supports through policies, services and programs that keep us integrated in our communities as we age. ► We can design and equip community centers to work as intergenerational spaces

that allow older people to build relationships and participate in the work, play, and life of our neighborhoods. ► We can think about the role of transportation in reducing social isolation and adjust systems so that we can all continue to move throughout our communities as we age. ► We can figure out new and better ways to arrange and coordinate the teams, agencies and programs that work specifically with older people. ► We can develop programs to educate families and professionals who work with older adults to understand the importance of preventing isolation, how to spot the warning signs of abuse and what to do to address abuse or neglect. By doing all that we

can to strengthen the social support structure, we can reduce social isolation, protect communities and families against elder abuse and build a nation that lives up to our promise of justice for all. In our culture, elders should be revered—and rightfully so. Their experiences, memories and perspective on life are valued for the lessons that younger folks can learn. And if older people aren’t encouraged to pass along the skills and wisdom they have accumulated during their lives, then the culture as a whole suffers. We owe it to older generations to ensure that their so-called golden years are not tarnished by abuse or neglect. It’s so easy to see bad things and not say anything—whether that’s senior abuse or a mugging on the street. But Elder Abuse Awareness month can

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Vision statement:

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



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The origins of corporate “Constitutional Rights”

By **BEVERLY CHURCHILL**
For Senior Voice

May 10 is the 136th anniversary of the decision of the U.S. Supreme Court in the case of Santa Clara County vs. Southern Pacific

Railroad Corp., 118 U.S. 394 (1886). This decision of the U.S. Supreme Court was purported to state that corporations (as opposed to natural persons) have constitutional rights under the 14th Amendment.

The court did not actually decide this; the court reporter—a former railroad attorney—misrepresented the substance of the decision when he wrote the published headnotes.

The case nevertheless led to a long line of cases that further expanded the Constitutional rights of corporations, leading up to the 2010 case of Citizens United vs. the Federal Elections Commission, in which the court held that corporations have a constitutional right to spend unlimited amounts of money to influence elections.

The rights enshrined in the Constitution derive from the framers’ concept of the natural and inalienable rights of man. Such rights are foundational, prior to and superior to the authorities of government.

Corporations as we understand them today didn’t exist at the time the Constitution was framed. The framers, who had recently fought against the royal-ly-chartered British East

India Company (remember the Boston Tea Party?) surely had no intent to include corporations in their definitions of the rights of “people”. Unlike human people, corporations are creatures of statutory law, or artificial “persons”. The scope of corporate powers, authorities, privileges and obligations derive from statute and must remain subordinate to the authorities of the governing bodies that created them.

While it is entirely appropriate for courts to extend common law to address the scope of corporate privileges and obligations under the law between corporations, people and governments, it is not appropriate for them to invoke constitutional rights as the basis for their reasoning. Constitutional rights upset the proper hierarchical balance of power between corporations, governments and the people who reign supreme.

We the people can over-

turn the ruling of the five-justice majority by enacting a U.S. Constitutional Amendment clarifying that only human beings are entitled to constitutional rights. Further, the amendment should clarify that money is not speech, and therefore regulating political contributions and spending is not equivalent to limiting political speech.

If we succeed in passing such an amendment, the next step would be to convene a process to write a model statute that would translate the body of common law regarding corporate standing, rights, obligations and privileges into duly deliberated statutory law. The nuts and bolts of the process can be worked on, but it is up to the people to demand that it happen.

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

Respite and caregiving without guilt

By **DANI KEBSCHULL**
Kenai Peninsula Family Caregiver Support Program

Why is it that the words “respite” and “guilt” seem to go hand in hand? Why do caregivers feel we are somehow failing our loved one by admitting that we need help, need time to recharge our batteries, or just time to play a little? Perhaps because so many of us still hold on to the myth that says the caregiver must be all things to all people. We are human and will all the same needs and feelings as every other person in our lives. We will never be able to achieve caregiver perfection.

Ask any caregiver who has been at it for any length of time, and you will learn that their own health has suffered when they failed to take proper care of themselves. Respite care is one way in which the caregiver can get this needed break and hopefully do it without that old feeling of guilt creeping in. The earlier that respite is introduced to our loved ones, the easier it will be for

them to accept it. By taking care of you, and recharging your own batteries, you are ultimately taking care of your loved one.

Remember this when considering respite:

- ▶ You are entitled to take care of yourself
- ▶ You are worthy of a break
- ▶ It is okay to relax and enjoy other aspects of your life
- ▶ It is okay to maintain as much normality in my life as possible
- ▶ It is okay to continue to dream
- ▶ If roles were reversed, there is no question you would want your loved one to have respite
- ▶ It is right and responsible of you to take advantage of respite.

If you are a family caregiver who needs a break, give the Kenai Peninsula Family Caregiver Support Program a call. Alaska Mental Health Trust graciously provided us with more respite funding until February 2023. Call us at 907-262-1280 or email kpfcsp@soldotnaseniors.com.

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.

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The strong role of older adults in our lives

By **DR. YANIRA CRUZ**

Diverse Elders Coalition

U.S. culture is often described as youth focused — a description that

and share the important stories of their lives and those of previous generations. They pass down family traditions, from recipes to holiday celebra-

May is Older Americans Month.

ties are more likely to live in extended families with older adults incorporated into their households and to hold their elders in great respect. These cultural attributes allow their families and communities to benefit from the wisdom, perspectives and history provided by older adults. Although diverse seniors often face the most difficult life circumstances, their cultural strengths of family, community and

work ethic can help them to overcome these circumstances with just a hand up.

May is Older Americans Month. This month reminds all of us to reach out to the beloved seniors of our families and communities, ensuring that they are secure, safe and loved. Reaching out to them will ensure that their golden years are happy and fulfilled, but it may also greatly enhance the lives of ourselves and our children.

Yanira Cruz, MPH, DrPH, is the National Hispanic Council on Aging President and CEO. This article is part of an on-going series by the Diverse Elders Coalition, looking at different senior demographic groups. It originally appeared on the Diverse Elders Coalition blog at <https://bit.ly/3k7QQB8>.

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Photo courtesy Diverse Elders Coalition

is certainly true of U.S. popular culture. Driven by Hollywood standards of beauty and fashion, our media outlets inundate us with images and analyses of trends, as well as star gossip. Invariably, these images and analyses focus on the young and beautiful stars of stage, screen and popular music.

Today, however, the U.S. faces a demographic shift that will likely also force a cultural shift. As the nation's baby boomers age, we are for the first time in our history becoming an aging society, where older adults outnumber the young. Ever the harbinger of cultural change, the U.S. entertainment industry is already featuring older stars on stage and screen.

This cultural shift is one that will likely have numerous benefits for families and communities, as our seniors have much to contribute. Decades of experience and accumulated wisdom can have a positive effect on adults and youth as they face the challenges of growing up and living life. Studies show that often teenagers and children who might defy parents are more likely to listen with an open ear and heart to a grandparent or other senior member of the family.

Older adults not only provide wisdom to families and communities, they provide roots. They know

tions. They are often the most important teachers of history.

Today, many of our seniors face difficult circumstances, especially diverse seniors. They face economic insecurity, poor and inappropriate housing, hunger and malnutrition, poor health and even abuse and fraud. They feel forgotten and isolated and many are unable to stretch their monthly budgets to afford rent, food and medicine. For example, Hispanic older adults, the fastest growing older adult population in the nation, have the highest rates of poverty of any U.S. senior population, and one in four Hispanic families are food insecure. Many Hispanic older adults facing these dire circumstances are requesting job training so that they can return to the workforce to make ends meet, even though they have retired from a lifetime of hard work.

As Americans, we can do better. Our seniors have contributed a lifetime to their families, communities and country. They should be able to enjoy their golden years in security, the best possible health and dignity, surrounded by their loved ones.

Diverse U.S. communities can be a great example to larger U.S. society in their reverence for older adults. These communi-

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A common heart problem that’s often ignored

By JIM MILLER

Savvy Senior

Dear Savvy Senior: What can you tell me about atrial fibrillation? Every so often, I’ve noticed my heart starts beating rapidly for no particular reason. Is this something I should be worried about? – Anxious Annie

Dear Annie: Heart palpitations can be harmless if they are brief and infrequent. But if you’re experiencing an erratic heart rhythm, you need to get

Age is a common risk factor for AFib, which affects roughly 10 percent of people older than 75.

checked out by a doctor for atrial fibrillation, or AFib.

AFib – which is marked by rapid, fluttering beats – can lead to serious complications such as stroke and heart failure, when the weakened heart can’t pump enough blood to the rest of the body.

Normally, your heartbeat follows a steady rhythm as your heart contracts and relaxes. But when you have AFib, the upper chambers of your heart (atria) beat rapidly and irregularly, sending blood to the lower chambers (ventricles) less efficiently. These episodes can last for minutes to hours or longer, and can cause palpitations, light-headedness, fatigue, and/or shortness of breath. Over time, AFib tends to become chronic.

Age is a common risk

factor for AFib, which affects roughly 10 percent of people older than 75. Other factors include genetics, obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure and alcohol and tobacco use. The condition has also been linked to viral infections, including COVID-19.

Diagnosing AFib

If you’re experiencing AFib-like symptoms, you need to see your doctor who will listen to your heart and likely recommend an electrocardiogram (EKG)

or a treadmill heart test, or you may wear a portable monitor for several weeks to look for abnormal heart rhythms to confirm a diagnosis of AFib. Such tests can help distinguish AFib from less serious conditions that may cause the heart to flutter, like anxiety and stress.

AFib affects some three million adults in the United States, a number that is expected to quadruple in the coming decade as the population ages and risk

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Filing Medicare grievances and complaints

By SEAN MCPHILAMY

For Senior Voice

Things don’t always go according to plan. When unforeseen challenges or mistakes occur, you may wish to know to whom you may voice your concerns and who can help resolve your concerns. For an appeal regarding a denied claim, be sure to review your Medicare Summary Notice (MSN) to submit the appeal in writing. You are also encouraged to call the Medicare Information Office to speak with any of

our certified counselors if you need assistance with the appeals process.

Quality concerns

If you have a concern about the quality of care you receive from a Medicare provider, your concern can be handled by the Beneficiary and Family Centered Care-Quality Improvement Organization, which is called BFCC-QIO, or just QIO for short. The QIOs are made up of practicing doctors and other health care experts. Their role is to monitor and improve the

care given to Medicare enrollees. Some examples of situations about which you might file a quality-of-care complaint include medication mistakes, receiving the wrong care or treatment, and experiencing barriers to accessing care. Here in Alaska, Kepro is our Medicare contracted QIO; you may contact them over the internet (<https://www.keproqio.com>) or by calling 888-305-6759.

Formal grievances

A grievance is a formal complaint that you file with

your Part D prescription drug plan. A grievance is not the same as an appeal, which is a request for your plan to cover a service or item that has been denied. You may wish to file a grievance if your plan has poor customer service, if your plan takes too long to decide on an appeal, or if your plan fails to deliver a promised refund. To file a grievance, send a letter to your plan’s Grievance and Appeals department within 60 days of the event that led to the grievance. Visit your plan’s website or call

the plan for the address. You can also file a grievance with your plan over the phone, but we recommend keeping a written record of the name of the person you spoke to, the date and time of the call, and the outcome of the call. Your plan must investigate your grievance and get back to you within 30 days, or within 24 hours for urgent requests.

Complaints and other issues

You can also file a

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Many rewards to be found in volunteerism

By KAREN CASANOVAS

For Senior Voice

Q: I am the leader of a youth group who is looking for volunteer activities. Are there young-person friendly organizations where we can lend a hand to seniors?

A: Yes, there are. May is Older Americans Month, which annually celebrates contributions seniors make to their communities and to the nation. This year’s theme, “Age My Way,” focuses on aging in place – how older adults can plan to stay in their homes and live independently in their communities for as long as possible.

Help with chores, fixes

With the 2022 theme in mind, one suggestion would be to find an older



adult within your own nonprofit community who may be open to getting help with housekeeping chores, yard work or painting. Minor repairs to latches, hinges or cabinet drawers are an annoyance if left unaddressed, but spending money to get fixes made isn’t always easy. Trustworthy, dependable, and reasonably priced individuals can be difficult for a senior to find and vet. No doubt a few youthful

volunteers to sweep driveways, clear gutters or rake the yard would be greatly appreciated.

Professional specialists

Another idea would be to partner with local contractors who are certified as Aging-in-Place specialists. The National Association of Home Builders has the Certified Aging-in-Place Specialist (CAPS) designation program which trains people in the technical, business management, and customer service skills necessary for the fastest growing segment of the residential remodeling industry: home modifications for those aging-in-place. These specialists are in the construction, plumbing, heating, cooling, remodeling industries, and are other allied professionals

that serve the aging in place market. Additionally, a CAPS designation includes occupational therapists, physical therapists, real estate professionals, and trade contractors, as well as academics who work with seniors. Find professional resources in your area here: <https://www.nahb.org/other/consumer-resources>.

Put in some social time

Intergenerational socialization between seniors and young people through shared time and experiences benefits all generations. Older adults look forward to talking, baking, doing crafts, reading stories, singing songs, playing music, having meals, or even sharing pet visits with children and young adults. Engagement keeps

seniors mentally fit while also helping youth better understand the nuances of aging.

“Intergenerational programming,” as defined by the National Council on Aging, involves those “activities or programs that increase cooperation, interaction or exchange between any two generations. It involves the sharing of skills, knowledge or experience between old and young.” Your youth group sharing their talents and time would be welcomed by retirement communities, assisted living, skilled-nursing settings, or home and community-based living environments. Reach out to activity coordinators in those facilities to find the best matches for your group.

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Hearing is better with two ears



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

If you have hearing loss in both ears (bilateral hearing loss), then you are most likely a candidate for two hearing aids. Research has shown that when only one hearing aid is worn, the unaided ear tends to lose its ability to hear and understand.

Participating in conversation is more enjoyable with both ears because you have better speech understanding, better ability to tell the directions of sound, better sound quality, smoother tone quality, wider hearing range, better understanding in groups and noisy places — I could go on with the

list of reasons why.

If you need two hearing aids it is important to wear two hearing aids. Two eared hearing gives you a feeling of balanced reception of sound. One eared hearing creates an unusual feeling of sound being heard in one ear. Wearing two hearing aids generally requires less volume than one. The need for less volume results in less distortion and better reproduction of amplified sounds. Also, lower volume settings enable better tolerance of loud sounds.

Just as you use both eyes to see clearly, you need two healthy ears to hear clearly. After all, you would not only correct one eye and leave the other one unaided.

For more information and a free hearing test call 907-644-6004 or go to www.accuratehearingsystems.com or find us on Facebook.

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



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Filing

continued from page 5

complaint with national Medicare if you have an issue with your plan that has not been resolved through the grievance process, or if you want to alert Medicare about other issues with your plan. Medicare has a formal system to handle beneficiary concerns with Medicare health and drug plans. For example, if a plan is not responding to your grievance or appeals by Medicare's specified deadlines, you should call 800-MEDICARE or 800-633-4227 to file a complaint. And you may also call the Alaska Medicare Information Office, as we will be glad to assist in reporting your concern.

Medicare fraud and abuse

Medicare fraud occurs when someone knowingly

deceives Medicare to receive payment when they should not, or to receive higher payment than they should. Medicare abuse involves billing Medicare for services that are not covered or are not correctly coded when the provider has unknowingly or unintentionally misrepresented the facts to obtain payment. Medicare errors are honest mistakes related to the billing of a health care service or product.

You can watch out for fraud and abuse by keeping a calendar of all your medical appointments and comparing it with your Medicare statements and the bills you receive from your providers. If something does not seem right — for example, if you see on a claims summary notice from Medicare that your provider billed Medicare for an office visit on a day when you did not see them — you should first contact your provider. Call your doctor

or their billing office and let them know about the problem in case it was a mistake.

If your doctor does not fix the error or if you suspect potential fraud or abuse, you can call the Medicare Information Office as one of our certified counselors will be glad to hear your concern and discuss the issue with you.

For answers to any Medicare related questions, please feel free to contact the State of Alaska's 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.

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

Your Medicare questions answered in person

By **LEE CORAY-LUDDEN**

For Senior Voice

Medicare is part of the Social Security Administration. Medicare can be a complex and sometimes confusing program. It helps to have someone to talk to and ask questions to. That is my job. My name is Lee Coray-Ludden, I am based out of the Soldotna Senior Center, and my job is to serve Southeast Alaska, and any other state residents that would like to

talk to someone in person.

I am trained and supervised by SHIP (the State Health Insurance Program) and coordinate with them.

How do I sign up for Medicare? When do I have to sign up? How does Medicare work with my employment health insurance? Can I do auto-pay for my Part B premium? What if I have Medicaid, can I have Medicare too? When do I need to sign up for Part D?

And those are only a few of the questions I am

asked. Remember, the only "dumb" question is the one you don't ask. If a question is concerning you then give me a call, we can discuss it. Hopefully we can find workable solutions for you.

I am at the Soldotna Senior Center at 197 W. Park Ave in Soldotna. The number is 907-262-2322. I am here Monday through Thursday, from 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Give me a call to ask a question or if needed, set up an appointment. There are no fees for services.

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BEFORE AFTER



Telehealth is increasingly likely in our future

By **LAWRENCE D. WEISS**

For Senior Voice

A few weeks ago I was asked to participate in a telehealth session with a physician assistant to discuss an upcoming visit to a local Anchorage clinic. I couldn't help but notice that it looked like she was sitting in her home, maybe at the kitchen table. Being a curious kind of guy, I was compelled to ask her about where she was. Yes indeed, she was sitting at her kitchen table...in Oklahoma.

Turned out that she used to live in Alaska and worked at that clinic, then moved out of state a few years ago. They recently hired her back to do exclusively telehealth patient encounters. On the one hand I am still in awe of this Star Trek holo-deck-type technology. On the other hand, telehealth has become commonplace in Alaska and across the nation.

According to a recent

U.S. Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey taken earlier this year, telehealth services from doctors, nurses and other health professionals were utilized by 22% of Americans in a four-week period. But it's important to point out that not all of it was delivered by whiz-bang Star Trek technology.

Fully 9% of Americans had a phone appointment in this period, while 11% used more advanced video technology.

The Pulse survey produced a number of interesting factoids, knowledge of which is certain to make you popular at your next social gathering. Here's one: Of all age groups surveyed earlier this year, seniors 70 years of age and above were the most fre-

quent users of telehealth services at 24% to 25% in a recent four-week period. I'll bet you thought younger folks would be the heavy users, but we seniors are on the bleeding edge (oops, perhaps not the best of analogies) of this technology. And this is even more astounding in light of the fact that a mere 4% of medical encounters by seniors were telehealth in 2019.

Among seniors, phone

users had a bit of an edge over video users, so don't be shy if video technology is not your thing. In fact, about a year ago I was scheduled to have a video conference with my primary care provider. While I think of myself as a fairly knowledgeable computer user, I could not make the video connection work. I started to go down the troubleshooting worm-hole, but the wise physician suggested we just go POTS

(Plain Old Telephone Service), so we did. It worked just fine.

Perhaps it is not terribly surprising to find that low-income Americans were more likely to use telehealth services. After all, online services are sometimes less expensive and usually easier to access than office visits.

Among every demographic explored in the Pulse survey, transgender Americans reported the highest rate of telehealth use. Fully 42% of transgender Americans had a phone or video appointment with a doctor, nurse or other health professional in the past four weeks – nearly twice the percentage of the general public.

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Good news for coffee drinkers and golfers

Also: Pruning away inflammation

By JOHN SCHIESZER

Medical Minutes

Prunes pack powerful nutrient punch

A prune or six a day may help keep inflammation at bay, according to a new study looking at daily prune consumption. It found eating nutrient-rich prunes every day may be beneficial to bone health and reduce inflammatory factors that contribute to osteoporosis.

Osteoporosis is a loss of bone strength caused by reduced mineral density in the bones. Osteoporosis increases the risk of fracture, especially in older adults. Previous research has shown that the polyphenol extracts in prunes promote lower levels of oxidative stress and inflammation in a type of bone cell called osteoclasts. In a new study, researchers at The Pennsylvania State University explored the effects of prunes on bone health after menopause.

Postmenopausal women with a bone mineral density score that was defined as low were divided into three groups. One group ate 50 grams of prunes (about six prunes) daily for 12 months. A second group ate 100 grams of prunes (about 12 prunes) daily for 12 months. A control group ate no prunes. The research team looked at blood samples taken from all volunteers before and after the trial and found significant reductions in inflammatory markers in both of the prune-eating groups compared to the control group.

"Our findings suggest that consumption of six to 12 prunes per day may reduce pro-inflammatory mediators that may contribute to bone loss in postmenopausal women. Thus, prunes might be a promising nutritional intervention to prevent the rise in inflammatory mediators often observed as part of the aging process," said study first author Janhavi Damani with Pennsylvania State University, University Park, Pennsylvania.



Hidden health benefits of golfing

While golfing was once known as the game of kings, the American Heart Association says you don't have to be royalty or a professional player to reap health benefits from hitting the links at your local golf course. Studies suggest that regularly golfing (at least once per month) lowers the risk of death, especially among older adults.

Golfing can provide benefits such as stress reduction and regular exercise. Due to its social nature and typically slower, controlled pace, people of all ages and physical fitness levels can play the sport.

"The regular exercise, time spent outside enjoying nature, social interaction and even the friendly competition of a round of golf are all elements that can foster mental and physical well being," said Dr. Donald M. Lloyd-Jones, who is the president of the American Heart Association and a professor at Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine in Chicago. He said the past couple of years have been hard and many adults picked up some unhealthy lifestyle behaviors, such as more eating and less physical activity.

"I think golfing can offer a great opportunity to start venturing back out into an enjoyable activity that can feed our hearts and our souls," Dr. Lloyd-Jones said.

For the study on golfing, researchers from the University of Missouri in Columbia, analyzed data from the Cardiovascular Health Study, a population-based observational

study of risk factors for heart disease and stroke in adults 65 and older. Out of nearly 5,900 participants (average age 72), researchers identified nearly 400 regular golfers. During the 10-year follow-up period, death rates for golfers were significantly lower than for non-golfers.

A comprehensive review of research published in the British Journal of Sports Medicine analyzed more than 300 scientific studies, leading a panel of 25 public health experts to issue an international consensus statement, noting the health and social benefits of golf.

"The American Heart Association recommends most people get at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise a week. Golfing qualifies as a moderate-intensity exercise, specifically if you are walking an 18-hole course, carrying your golf clubs," said Dr. Lloyd-Jones.

Dr. Lloyd-Jones said golfing can increase your heart rate and blood flow,

Researchers said new analyses provide reassurance that coffee isn't tied to new or worsening heart disease and may actually be heart protective.

enhancing brain stimulation. "Even if you are riding in a cart and playing a short course of only nine holes, you're still being physically active, and we know any movement is better than none," he said.

Good news for coffee drinkers

Drinking two to three cups of coffee a day is not only associated with a lower risk of heart disease, but also with living longer, according to the latest data. These trends are true for both older adults with and without cardiovascular disease. Researchers said new analyses provide reassurance that coffee isn't tied to new or worsening heart disease and may actually be heart protective.

"Because coffee can quicken heart rate, some

people worry that drinking it could trigger or worsen certain heart issues. This is where general medical advice to stop drinking coffee may come from," said Dr. Peter M. Kistler, with the Alfred Hospital and Baker Heart Institute in Melbourne, Australia. "But our data suggest that daily coffee intake shouldn't be discouraged, but rather included as a part of a healthy diet for people with and without heart disease. We found coffee drinking had either a neutral effect, meaning that it did no harm, or was associated with benefits to heart health."

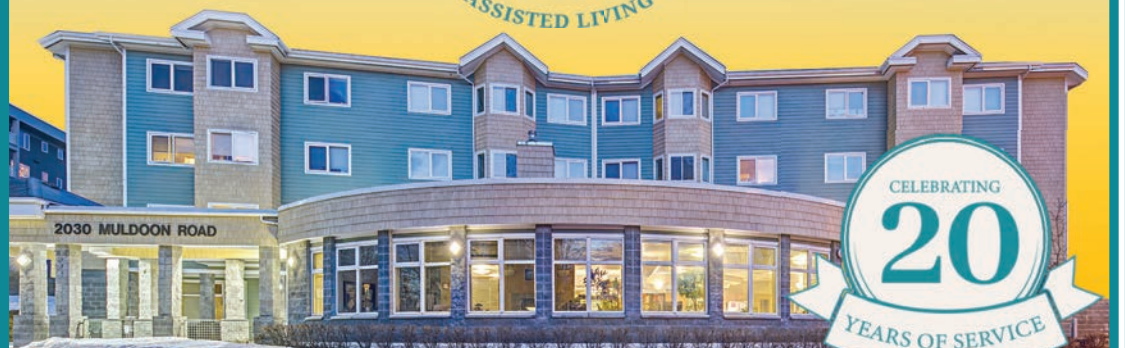
Dr. Kistler and his team used data from the UK BioBank, a large-scale prospective database with health information from over half a million people who were followed for at least 10 years. Researchers looked at varying levels of coffee consumption ranging from just one cup to more than six cups a day and the relationship with heart rhythm problems (arrhythmias) and cardio

next page please

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Spring break-up and the stages of loss and grief

By **LISA NOLAND**

Hospice of Anchorage

Most Alaska residents really look forward to the time of year we call “break-up.” This is always in April and May. We can count on overnight temperatures being above freezing. We see colors moving through shades of gray and brown to lovely emersion of greens as the daylight extends and it’s warmer. We navigate through patches of ice and compact snow as we drive and walk places. We step

through puddles that are seemingly everywhere. Alaskans in our area understand that break-up is a stage in time that will usher in the lushness of our summer growing season. We look forward to that time when the buds on the trees burst into full leaves, and the roads are clear and dry. Hiking, biking and walking the community trails becomes easier. There seems to be more time to tuck in all the outdoor activities we love so much, due to the increase in hours of light.

Stages of loss and grief after losing someone we love to death is unique to each person. Similarly, to us here in Alaska, we often go through a dark time of overwhelming sadness that is like winter. The shock of losing someone so precious to us and fear of the unknown is chilling and a cold shock. As we digest the realization that life is moving forward whether we choose to participate or not, we may go through feelings of frustration and anger. Maybe we begin

to feel more comfortable about telling some people what has happened and trying to make sense of the loss.

This period is like spring break-up. Moving through the loss and grief to find comfort and hope is like Alaskans living through the cold and dark of winter and emerging into spring break-up.

Break-up is a time that requires patience, as does the journey of healing. Each person navigating this complex experience of loss has their own individual healing process. There is no given timeline. For many, there is a time that arrives that shows glimmers of hope and a brighter future. This is a time like spring break-up.

The mission of Hospice of Anchorage is to help individuals and families prepare for and live well with serious, life-limiting illness, dying and grief. We seek to build a caring community of help, hope and comfort. We rely on generous grant funding from places such as the State of Alaska, United Way, First National Bank of Alaska, and the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority as well as people just like you. If you would like to know more about what Hospice of Anchorage has to offer, please visit our website at hospiceofanchorage.org, and like and follow us on Facebook and Instagram.

Lisa Noland is the Hospice of Anchorage Executive Director.

Good News

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vascular disease.

The current investigation showed that having two to three cups of coffee a day was associated with the greatest benefit, translating to a 10% to 15% lower risk of developing coronary heart disease, heart failure,

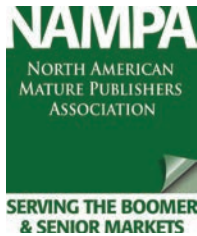
a heart rhythm problem, or dying for any reason. The risk of stroke or heart-related death was lowest among people who drank one cup of coffee a day.

People often equate coffee with caffeine, but coffee beans actually have over 100 biologically active compounds. These substances can help reduce oxidative stress and inflammation, improve

insulin sensitivity, boost metabolism, inhibit the gut’s absorption of fat and block receptors known to be involved with abnormal heart rhythms, said Dr. Kistler.

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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Save your brain with these approaches

By DR. EMILY KANE

For Senior Voice

An estimated 6.5 million Americans age 65 and older are living with Alzheimer's disease today. This is nearly 11% of seniors in the U.S. The cost of caring for patients with Alzheimer's is approaching \$300 billion annually, which is greater than the economy of Finland. All cancer care costs in the U.S. last year approached \$25 billion, by comparison.

Your Medicare part B premium increased recently to cover the cost of a controversial and expensive new drug (Aduhelm). The drug doesn't work

very well, in part because it attacks amyloid plaques in the brain, which are formed in response to brain irritation, and are not the cause of dementia. There is no cure for Alzheimer's so the very best bet is prevention.

Drink water, not alcohol

No amount of alcohol is good for your brain (or other vital organs). If you are a woman and drink more than 4 ounces of wine or 2 ounces of harder alcohol a day, cut back. If you are a man you can supposedly get away with double this amount, though there is

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Telehealth

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Matthew Wetschler, who co-founded Plume — a virtual gender-affirming health care provider group — told Fierce Healthcare in September 2020 that the platform was designed to help transgender patients who prefer a continuous connection with a specific care team. He noted that traditional care can be a negative experience for this vulnerable population facing potential discrimination and harassment.

Special kudos to the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium in the Alaska world of telehealth. They have been actively serving more than 180,000 Alaska Native and American Indian people with innovative telehealth services since 2001. The latest innovation is the ANTHC Behavioral Health Wellness Clinic. The telehealth service is a primary behavioral health clinic designed to meet the patient's everyday behavioral health needs. The BHWC serves Alaska Native and American Indian individuals and families throughout the state of Alaska. Clients are able to begin care quickly with

minimal paperwork.

Finally, a word about younger females in our families and the special value of telehealth. According to the nonprofit Power to Decide, more than 30,000 Alaska women live in areas where they don't have full access to birth control. The Pill Club is a digital healthcare provider focused on contraceptives that expanded to Alaska earlier this year. As reported by KSTK in Wrangell, Stephanie Swartz is Pill Club senior director of policy and public affairs. She was quoted as saying, "Telehealth really has the potential and the promise to reach people who have historically struggled to receive the care that they deserve — whether that's because providers and centers are far away or because they felt like providers just have not paid attention to their needs and their personal conditions."

Perhaps by way of summary we could alter the Star Trek tagline: "Telehealth — boldly going where no healthcare has gone before."

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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Brain

from page 10

no good medical reason to recommend alcohol, especially not on a regular basis. Binge drinking is the worst for your health. As soon as ethanol gets into your mouth, the brain goes into overdrive preparing the rest of your body (especially the liver) to detoxify the stuff. Avoid alcohol if you want your brain to keep working well.

When it comes to promoting good health, preserving your brain health isn't much different from any other part of your body. Drink plenty of water. Get enough sleep. Eat a sensible diet. Two meals a day is plenty for seniors. Eating less has many benefits including mitigating against some of the most problematic "lifestyle" factors which constitute the deadly comorbidities obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular disease. If COVID has taught us anything, it's that the main risk factor for more severe illness

No amount of alcohol is good for your brain (or other vital organs).

of any ilk is having these mitigatable comorbidities.

Herbal and vitamin supplements

Your body is brilliant at self-healing. This is why we can recover from illness and injury and are generally living longer. But the point is to live longer with good health. One of my favorite nutrients to help maintain a healthy brain is fish oil; fresh Alaskan salmon is the very best. On days not enjoying this delicious and nutritious food, take a 2 to 3 caps of wild Alaska salmon fish oil, sold at Costco and many health food stores. Also consider supplementing with Co-Q10 which allows our cells to maintain optimal levels of oxygen. The more oxygen you can produce in your cells, the less hard your heart has to work to pump oxygenated blood around the body, including to the brain. Co-Q10 is rather expensive; 200 mg daily is sufficient.

Ginkgo biloba, a widely

studied herbal medicine, works well for improving short-term memory. It is a peripheral oxygenator (opens small blood vessels) and absolutely helps most people sharpen their cognitive abilities. Start with 120-180 mg daily of a product that contains 24% GBE (ginkgo heterosides, the active ingredient). If there is no cognitive improvement after a 10 day trial, increase to 240-300 mg range daily. Once you find a dose that makes you realize you are not losing your keys and have renewed access to vocabulary, you can taper down to a minimal effective maintenance level.

Other useful herbal medicines to support cognitive function include Ashwagandha, Bacopa moniera, and Gotu kola.

B vitamins are well-known nerve nutrients. Ideally they are taken in the methylated form, which allows for optimal absorption through cell membranes where they can be used as co-factors

in tissue repair and energy production. Take a high quality multi-B, especially if you don't eat red meat (a natural source of these vitamins).

Teeth play a part

Oral health is key for protecting your brain. A low level tooth abscess or even gingivitis keeps pockets of unhealthy bacteria close to your brain. Many of these bad bugs are stymied by the natural sugar Xylitol. Several studies have shown that seniors chewing Xylitol sweetened gum or consuming beverages with this zero-calorie sweetener can help promote oral health, reducing dental and ear infections, and preserving cognitive function. Make sure to visit your dentist twice a year.

Irritants and toxins

Finally, brains are mostly made of fat, specifically cholesterol, which is why statin drugs accelerate early cognitive decline. But so does the toxic burden

in our food, air and water. Our bodies are designed to protect vital organs against toxins — soft plastics, pesticides, fertilizers, heavy metals, pharmaceuticals — by walling them off inside fat cells. Unfortunately, many of these noxious substances can cross the blood-brain barrier and lodge in the fatty brain tissue.

Avoid brain irritants. Don't eat food or drink liquids that have been stored or cooked in plastic. Choose organic or locally-grown food whenever possible. As we age, natural substances which promote brain health (such as bio-identical testosterone, estrogen, and DHEA — all of which derive from cholesterol) decline. Talk to your doctor about partnering with you to implement strategies to preserve your brain.

Emily Kane is a naturopathic doctor based in Juneau. Contact her at dremilykane@gmail.com.

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Spring health fair season wraps-up in May

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

Spring blood test dates end statewide in late May. Health fair services will

be offered again in early August. We continue using our appointment-based model, which works extremely well.

Remaining event details can be found at www.alaskahealthfair.org; or use our QR Code (below):

- May health fair event dates:**
- May 5** Ninilchik 3 to 6 p.m.
 - May 6** Ninilchik 8 a.m. to noon
 - May 14** Central 8 to 11 a.m.
 - May 21** Anchorage 8 a.m. to noon

diabetes and prediabetes, including a free membership in the Omada Health online program. A dedicated health coach and care team will discuss diet and exercise, along with providing interactive weekly lessons and smart devices, all delivered to your door.

Heart

continued from page 5

factors like obesity, diabetes and high blood pressure become even more common. The lifetime risk of developing AFib is greater than 20 percent, yet many people don't even know they have it.

Treatment options

A growing body of research underscores the importance of lifestyle steps such as exercise, a healthy diet, and limiting alcohol for treating AFib. Depending on your age and symptoms, your doctor may prescribe drugs to help control your heart rate, like beta blockers such as me-

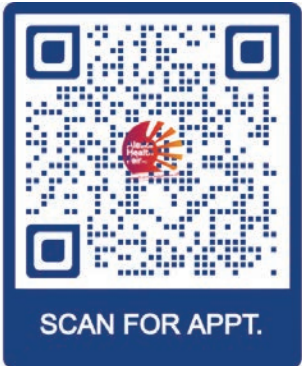
toprolol (Toprol XL); and/or rhythm, such as antiarrhythmics like flecainide (Tambocor). You may also need an electrical cardioversion, an outpatient procedure that delivers an electrical shock to the heart to restore a normal rhythm. You will be sedated for this brief procedure and not feel the shocks. Catheter ablation is another outpatient treatment for AFib that scars a small area of heart tissue that causes irregular heartbeats. This procedure is becoming more common based on evidence of its safety and ability to normalize the heart rhythm and ease symptoms. Ablations can be effective in people 75 and older, but

medication may still be required afterward. If you're at higher risk for stroke, you may be prescribed a blood thinner, too. In the past, Coumadin (warfarin) was the only such drug widely available, but it requires monitoring with regular blood tests. Newer anticoagulants, like apixaban (Eliquis) and rivaroxaban (Xarelto), don't have that requirement and have been shown to be just as effective at preventing strokes. 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.

In-office draw dates – Anchorage May 3 and Fairbanks May 3, 10, 17 Use our website at www.alaskahealthfair.org to schedule a blood test appointment at one of our offices or a community location. Give our local office a call if you have problems and we'll assist you: Anchorage, 907-278-0234; Fairbanks 907-374-6853 and Juneau 907-723-5100.

Resources for diabetes Alaska Health Fair and the Alaska Dept. of Health and Social Services are teaming up to offer free A1C screenings for those who qualify (while supplies last) and free resources on

To receive the free Omada Health membership, visit <https://go.omada-health.com/alaska>, click on "Check eligibility" and enter your Alaska ZIP code when in the form. Sharon Phillips is the Alaska Health Fair, Inc. Tanana Valley/Northern Region program director.



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Move smart to avoid pickleball injuries

By **JIM LAVRAKAS**

For Senior Voice

I've hurt myself a couple of times playing pickleball, and each time it could have been avoided. Moving too quickly – lunging, twisting and throwing myself on the ground — caused lower back pain, knee pain and a broken hand.

But I've seen worse. We had a player here in Homer who back-peddled to get a ball lobbed over their head, tumbled backwards and broke some vertebrae. And I've heard of a brain aneurysm occurring from doing the same thing.

Smooth and deliberate movement — as in preparing for hitting a shot, or preparing to receive a shot — is all-important. That comes from drilling these movements over and over in practice. You need to practice these things before you try to increase your level of play.

When I lunged for a forehand and missed, I was off balance and tumbled, slapping my right hand on the asphalt playing surface. It broke the knuckle above my right pinkie (a “boxer’s

break,” according to Homer orthopedic specialist Dr. Brent Adcox) and I'll have a weirdly deformed hand for the rest of my life (see the x-ray photo).



Jim Lavrakas' right hand “boxer’s break” from when he lunged and fell on asphalt.

Jim Lavrakas photo

It's a great conversation piece, and doesn't really hinder usage (I'm a “lefty” anyway), but it'll probably be arthritically painful in future years and something I could do without.

Repetitive stress injuries

like tennis elbow and wrist strain can occur over time. You'll need to monitor those joints and use icing and heat to keep those at bay.

then turn away from the ball, and run in the direction where it will land. You try to get to the side where you can hit a backhand — or even better, a forehand

ment with twisting will do your knees in. Those ligaments in the knee (ACL, MCL and LCL) will get irritated and sore and can go from a pull to a sprain to a tear, or worst case, a disconnect. Talk about painful. The solution to avoiding problems in the knees is, once again, smooth and deliberate movement. And making small movements with your feet (Google “footwork + pickleball”) to get in a balanced position to hit the ball. Lunging is a no-no, too.

In your excitement to get on the court and get playing, you can forget the most immediate and effective way to avoid muscle pulls, back kinks and joint pain — stretching. Take 10 minutes at home, before you leave for the court, to go through a routine you design to warm up and get limber. That will be an ounce of prevention that may save you some pain over the long run.

The other thing to be sure to do: Get good footwear. I've got arthritis in my feet and I have

— after it bounces. When a pickleball bounces, its rate of movement slows significantly, and allowing it to bounce will give you more time to return a shot. So, no back peddling!

Quick forward move—

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Alaska's migrating birds inspire awe

By **LISA PIJOT**

For Senior Voice

Alaska is a place of endless sky, steep mountains, rolling tundra and miles of coastline. It is a place of climatic and geographic extremes, dynamic and diverse habitats, and abundant resources. Each year millions of birds make the journey from their wintering grounds to this state that we call home. They include over 300 different species from petrels and loons, sandpipers and plovers, hawks and eagles, to hummingbirds and swallows. They depart from six different continents and travel north using one of six different flyways.

Alaska's immense size and small human popula-

tion offer prime habitat to the millions of birds that migrate here each breeding season. Long summer hours and the short summer make for intense breeding efforts, but the rich and varied ecosystems support the millions of birds that fly thousands of miles to nest here. And for those species that forage on invertebrates, Alaska is the place to be.

Tens of millions of seabirds and waterfowl make use of the 46,000 miles of cliffs and protected islands of Alaska's coast, which has some of the world's most biologically productive marine ecosystems. Millions of shorebirds nest along the coastal habitats

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Roadside litter-gathering, a longtime tradition

By **MARALEY MCMICHAEL**
Senior Voice Correspondent

My first bike ride of the season was on April 1 this year, two weeks earlier than spring 2021. That first ride is always thrilling after months of winter snow-shoe lap exercise. The sides of the subdivision roads still had plenty of snow, but the road surface was finally ice free.

During my ride, I noticed more trees that had blown over during our horrendous January wind storm, but I also saw litter peeking out from snow banks. Instantly I was reminded of my huge litter-gathering project last spring.

Early in May 2021, I bought and assembled a new garden cart and picking up litter on the three miles of our subdivision roads was my first use of the new cart. I'd heard an announcement over one of our local radio stations about where to pick up free litter bags, as well as the location for dropping off full bags. With observation during my bike rides, I estimated about three bags' worth, so I planned to ask for four. They came



The author's garden cart load of subdivison litter, early May 2021.

Maraley McMichael photos

— about eight hours. Not counting visiting time. One morning, two neighbor friends stopped to talk, about five minutes each. During an afternoon trip, the guy who plows our driveway stopped to chat for 10 minutes and would have continued, except I told him I needed to get back to work. Also, our local Master Gardener (who I had never met) called out a greeting as I pulled my cart by his house and the next thing I know, I was invited to tour his unique greenhouse and was given two tomato plants and a

get out a piece of iron (also litter) to block a tire and prevent further rolling, the cart was partially blocking someone's driveway. What were the chances of the owners needing to use their driveway while I picked up litter? Evidently quite good. I was down over the side of the bank, when a car slowed down and sure enough, the lady driver wanted to (but couldn't) enter her driveway. I was definitely on her property and dressed in my shabbiest of work clothes, so who knows what she imagined.

She got out of her car and called out, quite perturbed, "May I help you?" "Sorry. I'm just picking up trash. I'll be right up." She was not any happier to see me face to face. After I apologized for blocking her driveway and telling her that I've picked up litter in our subdivision every year for the last 10 years, her body language relaxed slightly and she was a little less snippy. I removed the chunk of iron and let the cart roll just enough to let

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Maraley McMichael's car loaded for the drive to the free litter drop off location.

in packages of five. All five were needed, even though I separated out the burnable items for later disposal on my brush pile fire. So, for three days during the first week of May 2021, I spent all my spare time walking my subdivision roads with my garden cart

kale plant. Three complete strangers stopped and thanked me. The exchanges were not all friendly, though. On the far side of the subdivision, I got into a little trouble. My cart was full and heavy while going down a hill and by the time I was able to

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Back together in Fairbanks



Left to right, Marie and Rusty Scholle, Violet Robinson, Darlene Supplee, Ashley Edgington, Dani Ramos and Pat Ivey cut the ribbon April 13 at Fairbanks Senior Center's new "annex" location.

Photo courtesy Fairbanks Senior Center

BY DIMITRA LAVRAKAS
Senior Voice Correspondent

Knowing all too well the effects of social isolation on the health of seniors, both mental and physical,

the Fairbanks Senior Center has temporarily pivoted to a new rented space at Shoppers Forum Mall next to Planet Fitness. The ribbon cutting was on April 13, when visitors

got to see the new location. "It's the first of many good days for our seniors to meet, have lunch, use the internet and who knows

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Rambles

News from the Grapevine

Fairbanks-North Star Borough's annual **Senior Recognition Day** will be a drive-through event this year taking place May 5 at the Carlson Center parking lot. Registrants age 60 and older will be divided by last name into different time periods between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. to pick up a goodie bag and lunch. There will be a recording that can be listened to via car radio with a mayoral message, proclamations, award winners, and an outdoor area for eating and socializing for those comfortable with doing that. For other information, including the time slots, call 907-459-1070 ... **Anchorage High School** will hold its **annual picnic** on June 18, from 1 to 5 p.m. at the American Legion Post #1 Picnic Grounds. Potluck dishes will be by alphabet: A-H, side dishes; I-P, salads; Q-Z, desserts. Main dishes provided. Registration must be received by June 5. Contact **Faye Robb** for a form, or other information, 907-301-5248 or robbfaye@hotmail.com ... **Wasilla Area Seniors, Inc.** (WASI) brings back its biggest annual fundraiser this year, **Miles for Meals**, June 25 at the WASI campus. Run, walk or roll at your own pace with your family and friends. Or, you can race whenever you want between June 1 and June 25. Just register now and let WASI know when you complete the race. Make a video, take a selfie, or stop by the **Wasilla Senior Center** and they'll take your picture under their "Finish Line" banner. Register in person or online at www.wasillaseniors.com. Registration is \$25, all

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- Jeff was the managing partner of Birch Horton Bittner & Cherot, representing Alaska Native corporations, villages, and mining companies.
- Jeff founded Lewis and Lowenfels - representing Alaskan inventors and bringing Alaskan products to market.
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Rambles

News from the Grapevine

continued from page 15

proceeds go to WASI's Meals on Wheels program. In addition to the racing, an **online auction** will take place from June 4-17. View and participate from the comfort of your own home. To donate an auction item, sponsor a racer, be a business sponsor or otherwise contribute, call Marlene at 907-206-8795 or email marlenem@alaskaseniors.com ... **Kodiak Area Native Association** will offer **free health services** when **Arctic Care 2022** takes place in May. No-cost health services available to the public include medical, dental, optometry, podiatry and veterinary. The dates for the city of Kodiak are May 4-13, with services provided at the National Guard Armory (veterinary services at Kodiak College). For more information, updates and registration, visit kodiakhealthcare.org/arctic-care-2022/. Arctic Care free services will also be available in **Karluk** (May 3-6), **Akhiok** (May 4-8), **Larsen Bay** (May 4-8), **Port Lions** (May 6-12), **Old Harbor** (May 8-12) and **Ouzinkie** (May 8-12). Contact the local clinic in each of these villages to make an appointment and learn more ... **Soldotna Senior Center's** April newsletter has a photo of staff standing next to two brand-new **Ford Edge** SUVs, with the note that they were purchased with funding from the **American Rescue Plan Act**, \$20 million of which was award to the State of Alaska for distribution to nonprofits. The cars will be used for the center's home-delivered meals programs, providing nutrition to seniors for years to come, the newsletter notes.

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

Litter

continued from page 14

her drive by. Then I sat and rested before turning around to avoid continuing downhill with such a heavy load. For the rest of that "leg" of the subdivision, it would be better to bring the litter to the cart, rather than vice versa.

My husband, Gary, also does not thank me. After I got home from my first evening trip, he asked the same question he asks every year. "Why is it your responsibility to pick up the subdivision litter?"

I gave him the same answer I do every year, which is that I love going on my daily bike rides, but looking at all the litter is unsettling and not pleasant. I don't do it out of the goodness of my heart, but so I can have more enjoyable bike rides. I do it for myself.

But, I don't get upset with him. I've had some health issues in the past, and he just doesn't want me to overdo. Picking up litter is not a new thing.



One of the free drop off locations in Wasilla for spring cleanup in 2021.

Maraley McMichael photos

Years ago, we used to do it together. In fact, in the early 2000s, it was Gary who signed us up for litter patrol on a one-mile section of the Tok Cut-Off, just south of the junction

had been picked up prior to that, if ever. There was a full truck load. The year after, there was much less. It got to the point that I would go by myself with the car and I could walk quite

a way in between picking up items. What took the longest was walking back to retrieve the car every so often.

I've spent much more time gathering litter in our present subdivision. For whatever reason, the volume

was really high, spring of 2021. From what I can see so far, 2022 looks to be a much easier year. I'll be walking the roads with my garden cart in early May. If you see me and care to wave, I'll return the wave.

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



State of Alaska roadside sign for litter pick up along the Tok Cut-Off, a memento from years gone by.

with the Nabesna Road. In exchange, the Dept. of Highways posted official blue and white (advertising) signs with the words "Nabesna House Bed and Breakfast" at each end of the mile.

The first year, using Gary's truck, we each took one side of the road and finished in about two hours. Who knows when the litter

was really high, spring of 2021. From what I can see so far, 2022 looks to be a much easier year. I'll be walking the roads with my garden cart in early May. If you see me and care to wave, I'll return the wave.

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

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Commission on Aging to meet in Fairbanks

Alaska Commission on Aging

The Alaska Commission on Aging will hold a quarterly meeting May 9 through 12 in Fairbanks at the Wedgewood Resort. Items of discussion will include updates on dementia programs, Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority, veterans issues, senior housing, Alaska Pioneer Homes and other topics pertaining to Alaska seniors.

Meeting hours are Mon-

day, May 9, from 2:30 to 5 p.m. and Tuesday, May 10, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

On Wednesday, May 11, the commission members will lead listening sessions throughout the area.

Thursday, the commission meets from 8:30 to 11:30 a.m.

The meeting is open to the public and also will be streamed online via Zoom. Contact the commission for the link and other information at <https://dhss.alaska.gov/acoa/Pages/default.aspx> or call 907-465-3250.

Networking for Anchorage, Mat-Su area providers

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

currently meets virtually online via Zoom. The May meeting is May 11, hosted by the Anchorage Aging & Disability Resource Center (ADRC). Begins at 8 a.m.

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

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Calendar of Events

May 4 Anchorage Older Americans Month Kick-Off Event at Anchorage Senior Activity Center, 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Program includes presentation of the Ron Hammett Award and keynote speaker Madeline Holdorf, AARP Alaska State President. Brunch provided. For information, contact Judy Atkins at judy.atkins@anchorageak.gov.

May 8 Nationwide Mother's Day

May 11 Statewide Alaska Legal Services presents free legal consultations for caregivers, in partnership with Alzheimer's Resource of Alaska, from 1 to 4 p.m. As dementia progresses, a person often needs more care and oversight than can safely be provided at home. Meet by phone with an attorney to ask questions and better understand your legal needs and options. Schedule your 30-minute telephone consultations (availability limited) with Gay Wellman, 907-822-5620 or gwellman@alzalaska.org.

May 17-22 Petersburg Little Norway Festival. Celebrate with food and craft booths throughout downtown, the festival parade, Scandinavian pageant, Sil (herring) Toss, much more. Full schedule at www.petersburg.org "Festivals and Events" page.

May 18 Anchorage "Alaskan Pollinators: A Citizen Science Workshop," at Alaska Botanical Garden, 6 to 7 p.m. BLM and U.S. Fish & Wildlife experts will talk about the value of pollinators in Alaska, their endangered status and what you can do to help promote conservation. Online registration. Tickets: \$10 for members, \$12 non-members. www.alaskabg.org

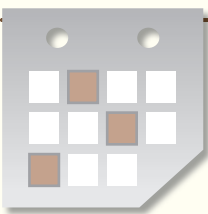
May 20 Chugiak 7th Annual Military Appreciation Gala at Chugiak-Eagle River Senior Center, 6 p.m. Active duty military, veterans and surviving spouses invited. Tickets include dinner and entertainment. Cost: \$35 each, \$60 for two or \$250 for table of eight. Call 907-688-2674 to purchase. To sponsor tickets or tables, call 907-688-2685.

May 21 Nationwide Armed Forces Day

May 23-27 Kodiak Kodiak Senior Center Art Show. Bring in artwork the week of May 16 to be included in the show. Call the center for more information, 907-486-6181.

May 27 Wasilla Wasilla Area Seniors, Inc. Memorial Tree Dedication Ceremony. Annual remembrance event for those who have passed away this year, including planting of a tree and presentation of plaque with the names. Held at Knik Manor Great Hall, 12:45 p.m. Call 907-376-3104

May 30 Nationwide Memorial Day



Send us your calendar items

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James Girdwood settles on Crow Creek

By LAUREL DOWNING BILL
Senior Voice Correspondent

As news of gold spread through America in the mid-1890s, hundreds of people flooded onto Seattle docks seeking transportation northward. Among the 100 passengers who packed onto the Cook Inlet-bound steamship Utopia was a man whose name would become synonymous with an Alaska ski resort.

James E. Girdwood traveled to Kachemak Bay in early May 1896, where he hopped aboard the small steamer L.J. Perry, run by “Cap” Austin E. Lathrop. Girdwood made his way through the ice-filled Cook Inlet to settle for a short time in the areas known as Sunrise City and Hope.

Girdwood, the son of a Dublin linen merchant, studied the region and eventually staked placer ground on Crow Creek, across Turnagain Arm from Sunrise. He built his cabin at Glacier City, a small distribution settlement on a trading and transportation route over the Chugach Range. He then rolled up his sleeves and dove into prospecting for gold.

The linen salesman was used to hard work. After arriving in New York City in 1882 with only \$400 in his pocket, the then 20-year-old managed to control over half of the Irish linen market in the United States within 14 years. Girdwood came north with the money from the sale of his business and put it into his mining venture on Crow Creek.

By 1900, Girdwood had staked four claims called the Annex, Omega, Alpha and Little Gussie. His Crow Creek Alaska Hydraulic Gold Mining Co. was operating some of the largest hydraulic plants in the Turnagain Arm region by June 1904.

The mining claims paid off in subsequent years, yielding bullion income exceeding \$106,000 a year (more than \$3.2 million in today’s dollars). And Girdwood proved so popular with his fellow miners, they gave him the honorary title of “colonel” and renamed Glacier City after him.

With his gold-mining operation doing well, the linen-man-turned-pro prospector shifted his attention to another metallic element found in abundance in Alaska.

Girdwood staked copper claims on Latouche Island, a 12-mile- by 3-mile-long island at the western entrance to Prince William Sound. On Jan. 4, 1907, he formed the Latouche Copper Mining Co. in New York and became a close friend of Daniel and Isaac Guggenheim. He sold his copper claims to the La-

dysmith Corp. in 1921, which later sold them to Kennecott Copper Co. Girdwood’s gold mining company operated high in the Crow

Creek Valley for many years. It built several cabins, had a five-ton derrick and brought in a large giant to undertake the mammoth

task of removing boulders from the streambeds. About 50,000 yards of gravel were removed in 1905 in order to get those flakes and nuggets known as placer gold.

Eventually the operation became too demanding, and the practice of dumping tailings into the creek started raising legal problems. A court injunction finally closed the operation.

A short-lived effort to raise money to revive the mine in the early 1920s failed, and Girdwood returned to the East Coast. He died in 1928 at his home in New Jersey.

The Crow Creek Mining Co., then under the ownership of Paul Denkert of Seattle, hired Arne Erickson to supervise the hydraulic placer gold mine in 1922. Then John E. Homgren, who bought the operation in 1925, hired Erickson to work the mine with him until



Glacier City, later renamed Girdwood, was a small distribution settlement on a trading and transportation route over the Chugach Range in 1906.

U.S. National Park Service

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Animal Antics

Across

- 1 Bellyache or food fish
- 5 Sour fruit
- 9 Cookbook direction
- 13 Symphony member
- 14 Perfume ingredients
- 15 English county
- 16 Swimming stroke
- 18 Heathen
- 19 Joanne Woodward Oscar-winning role
- 20 Astronaut’s insignia
- 21 Kind of show
- 22 Proof word
- 24 More likely
- 25 Strong embraces
- 29 Drink from a dish
- 32 “Chiquitita” quartet
- 35 “The Chinese Parrot” hero
- 36 True heath
- 38 Defeat soundly
- 39 Looks after
- 41 Classic street liners
- 42 They might be British
- 44 32-card game
- 45 Some votes
- 46 Shannon of song
- 47 Computer accessory
- 50 Exploits
- 52 Greek sandwich
- 55 Facial expressions
- 57 Nautical direction
- 60 Previously, in poetry
- 62 Eye color
- 63 Last hurrahs
- 65 Certifies
- 66 The Ponte Vecchio crosses it
- 67 “Buenos ____”
- 68 Father of Romulus and Remus

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15 Meager

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21 Harbor craft

23 Diminish

24 Ice cream order

26 Make a scene?

27 Macaque

28 “Splash” star

30 Summit

31 Bridge call

32 Like the Sahara

33 Big name in speakers

34 Large powerful tractor

37 Primed

40 Big auto race sponsor
- 43 Reeks

48 Some E.R. cases

49 Quite a while

51 Decorative pitchers

53 Enzyme secreted by the kidneys

54 François Couperin’s instrument

55 Bogus

56 Spanish sparkling white wine

57 Not straight

58 Highway division

59 Hazzard County lawman

61 They, in Trieste

63 Needing a lift

64 Harem room

Crossword answers on page 26



Bill and Susan Hayes are still having the time of their lives on 'Days of Our Lives'

Nick Thomas

Tinseltown Talks

Actors Bill Hayes and Susan Seaforth were married in 1974. Or was it 1976? Actually, it was both! The pair tied the knot when their "Days of Our Lives" characters (Doug and Julie) married two years after the couple wed in real life.

Some 50 years and a collective 5,000 episodes later, the Emmy Award-winning stars of the perennial NBC daytime soap opera are still together both on-screen and off. They recently produced a website, *Secrets of Soap Opera Lovers*, explaining how the two have lived, loved, and worked together for five decades (see www.soapoperasecrets.com).

"Our grandson, David Samuel, came up with the idea," explained Bill from the couple's home in Los Angeles. "He had been divorced and wanted to know the secrets for our long and happy marriage."

"So we wrote them down for him and he suggested we share them with others on the Internet," added Susan.

Their secrets, a collection of personal tips for building a successful long-term relationship, include singing and dancing together, saying I love you every day, keeping promises, and supporting your partner's dreams. Another involves kissing, an activity their TV characters frequently embrace. The couple's first kiss – on-screen and in real life – was in a premarital episode airing on July 23, 1970.

"That's our number one secret," noted Bill. "Give your lover a kiss first thing in the morning and the last thing at night."

"We have love scenes on the screen, so naturally we have to rehearse them at home," added Susan as Bill laughed in the background. "We need to practice a lot –



Bill Hayes and Susan Seaforth Hayes in their living room, filming "Secrets of Soap Opera Lovers".

Publicist photo

we have to perfect them!"

On the website, Bill and Susan explain their secrets in a series of short videos filmed in the couple's living room, each reinforced by an illustrative clip of their characters from the show.

"We chose scenes from 'Days of Our Lives' that demonstrate the point we make in each video," said Susan.

Bill, who is 96, and Susan, 78, expect their characters to continue displaying on-screen affection through 2022 and beyond.

"The show is produced five days a week and they used to shoot day-for-day, but now they shoot eight episodes in five days," explained Susan. "Bill and I have been working about four to seven times a month which is plenty right now."

In addition to their daytime soap duties, both Bill and Susan have each appeared (separately) in a dozen feature films, as well as numerous TV movies, series, and theatrical productions throughout their careers. Bill even enjoyed a smash hit in the 50s singing "The Ballard of Davy Crockett," outselling versions by Fess Parker and Tennessee Ernie Ford.

"We recorded it on the first take in one day," recalled Bill. "I still get a royalty check each year for about \$3,000. So someone must still be buying it!"

Long-time fans of "Days of Our Lives" are still buying the love that Bill and Susan's characters share on-screen.

"It's not Shakespeare, but the writers continue to make Doug and Julie fresh as the times change and as we age," said Susan. "We haven't even thought about stopping. Old actors don't retire, they just lose their agents!" This iconic daytime TV couple, however, can expect to retain

their management for quite some time.

"It's been hard work for many years, but we still love it," she adds. "We're proud to be producing a quality product as the matriarch and patriarch of the show."

Nick Thomas teaches at Auburn University at Montgomery, in Alabama, and has written features, columns, and interviews for numerous magazines and newspapers. See www.tinseltowntalks.com.



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Volunteerism

continued from page 5

Closing the generational gap where elder citizens don't feel appreciated or wanted, and a misunderstanding of older adults by youth can be positively fostered by more frequent interactions. Younger people are sometimes intimidated to open themselves up to older adults for fear of being judged. They also may be afraid to approach an elderly person with an illness like Alzheimer's or Parkinson's disease because they don't understand how to act around someone with those conditions. By bringing older adults and youth together, age-related stereotypes can be reduced, stronger community ties are built, leading to improved services for older adults and children.

At home in the community

According to AARP, nearly 90% of adults over 65 want to remain in their current homes as they grow older. While some older adults may feel comfort-

able obtaining assistance as they age, many others prefer to maintain their sense of independence to improve quality of life. Aging in place allows older adults to retain a level of control over their lives, remain in familiar spaces, while still satisfying their basic needs in their own neighborhoods. Adults who can remain in their communities are better able to maintain social interactions as part of their daily lives. Living an active social life helps prevent dementia. Keeping community connections and important friendships also contributes to better overall health and well-being. Any assistance your youth group could provide to aid older adults address safety issues, healthy eating, transportation, chores, or exchange conversation will improve the quality of a senior's life.

Karen Casanovas is a professional healthy aging coach in Alaska helping individuals or families collaborate, find resources and design a plan for thriving and living well whether age 35, 50 or 90. Contact her at info@karencasanovas.com or through her website karencasanovas.com.

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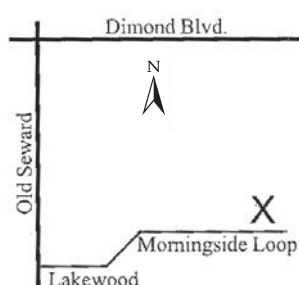


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Together

continued from page 15

— probably some exercise classes in the future,” Fairbanks Senior Center Executive Director Darlene Supplee said.

“Sure was nice to see some of our friends who visited the Senior Center before we closed due to the pandemic.”

Need for services

National Institutes of Health research has linked social isolation and loneliness to higher risks for a variety of physical

productive activities with others tend to have better cognitive function, live longer, boost their mood, and have a sense of purpose.

The Fairbanks Senior Center recognized this and took action.

“The off-site is a satellite station to establish a safe space for seniors to gather,” said Darlene Supplee.

Right now, the main Fairbanks Senior Center is closed to the public, due to the lack of physical space to gather.

“Currently our kitchen is in the Fairbanks Senior Center dining room, but

to congregate meals,” she said. “We have had a kitchen expansion on the books for over a year and that construction project will begin late spring and will hopefully be finished at the end of December 2022.”

The approximately 2,000 square-foot annex is being rented for \$3,000 a month, everything included, for a year.

The space will offer

morning coffee, two computer stations, and the opportunity to catch up with old friends and make new ones.

And a free lunch will be offered Monday through Friday, 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., for anyone age 60 years or older. Meal donations are appreciated no matter what size.

“The plan is to be open Monday through Friday at

this new location, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., until we can officially open our doors back up at our normal location after our kitchen renovation,” she said.

That date is still to be determined.

“We are excited to establish a place for our amazing seniors to gather again,” Supplee said. “We have missed being part of their family.”



The Fairbanks Senior Center's new annex space will be used while the main center undergoes renovations, and will be open Monday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., with a daily lunch.

Photo courtesy Fairbanks Senior Center

and mental conditions, from high blood pressure, heart disease, obesity and a weakened immune system to anxiety, depression, cognitive decline, Alzheimer's disease, and even death.

Conversely, people who engage in meaningful,

due to COVID safety requirements, and the dramatic increase of Meals on Wheels those services exceeded our space limitations. We just sheer ran out of space in our tiny kitchen,” Supplee said. “We knew we needed to secure a place to return

in long term care facilities. 1-800-730-6393

The Office of Elder Fraud and Assistance is charged with addressing all forms of financial exploitation and coordinating related services for the elder population of the state of Alaska. Age and financial criteria apply. 907-334-5954

State of Alaska, Division of Senior and Disability Services – Adult Protective Services is charged with helping to prevent harm from occurring to vulnerable adults. To report suspected abuse of a vulnerable adult, call 1-800-478-9996 (in state only) or 907-269-3666.

Stephanie Wheeler is the Alaska Long-Term Care Ombudsman.

Abuse

continued from page 2

remind us just how important it is to look after, and look out for, our fellow human beings. It reminds us to exercise compassion daily, and care about supporting others who may need our assistance.

If you suspect abuse of any kind for elders or others, please contact your local authorities. You may also contact the following agencies:

The Office of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman identifies, investigates and resolves complaints relating to older Alaskans (age 60 and older) who reside

Free summer tax assistance in Anchorage

Senior Voice Staff

From May through October, AARP Tax Aide volunteers will assist people of all ages in filing their 2021 taxes. Appointments will be at available for noon, 1 and 2 p.m. on the third Saturday of each month at the Alaska Literacy Program, 1345 Rudakof Circle, Suite 104. The appointment will include a short interview and the tax preparer will complete the return. You will pick up the return from 3 to 3:30 p.m. If you are filing with a spouse, both of you must be present. Once the

return is complete, it will be reviewed with you, signed and electronically filed.

Bring the necessary tax documents for your visit: An original or photocopy of Social Security card for you, spouse and all dependents is a must, as well as photo ID for you and your spouse. Other documents include amounts of the Economic Impact Payments and Advanced Child Tax Credits received for the family in 2021; all income information (such as Forms W-2, 1099-Misc, 1099-INT, 1099-DIV, SSA-1099 or RRB-1099 and 1099R); list

of your medical, interest, contributions and miscellaneous expenses (if you itemize your deductions); copies of your 2019 and 2020 tax return (helps volunteer prepare this year's return); bank routing and account number for direct deposit; and an IRS identity theft PIN, if you have one.

Masks are required and must be worn over your mouth and nose at all times.

To schedule an appointment, dial 2-1-1 or toll-free 1-800-478-2221.

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Taxes tend to complicate everything

By KENNETH KIRK

For Senior Voice

Benjamin Franklin famously said that “nothing is certain but death and taxes”. Actually, he wrote it in French, but that’s not my point.

As an estate planner, I deal with death all the time. I also have to be aware of tax issues, although that is less important than it used to be. In fact, for most of my clients, taxes don’t factor into their estate plans in any significant way.

That’s not the way it was when I started out. When I came back from law school, the estate tax was a huge issue. Anyone with an estate of over \$600,000 was subject to it, and the tax rate got up to 55% pretty quickly. That’s one for you, one for Uncle Sam, and then a little more for Uncle Sam.

That started to change in 2001, and today the only people who have to worry about estate taxes are the very wealthy. Everything under \$12 million is excluded from the estate tax, and that exclusion is easily doubled for a married couple. At 40% it’s still an issue for a few people, but I don’t see many people with those kinds of numbers.

Capital gains taxes do affect some of my clients. You pay capital gains tax when you sell an asset for less than what you got it for. There are ways to eliminate the capital gains tax on death, and a lot of my clients have rental properties which have gone up in value, so I can help them structure things to avoid that tax. But for most people, capital gains tax is only 15%, so it’s not that critical. A nice trick to have up my sleeve, yes, but the payoff isn’t that high.

But then there’s the income tax.

Most inheritances are not subject to income tax. If my rich uncle dies and leaves me his house, which is worth \$500,000, I don’t have taxable income in the amount of \$500,000. I can move in, or rent it out, or sell it (probably with no capital gains tax either), and not have income for tax purposes.

It is very different, though, if my uncle leaves



me his \$500,000 IRA.

Incidentally, for the rest of this article I’m going to use “IRA” as shorthand. Most tax-deferred accounts are treated the same for tax purposes when it comes to inheritance. So if you have a 401k, 403b, 401a, SEP, federal TSP, Alaska SBS, tax-qualified annuity, SEP, Simple IRA, or 457 deferred comp, think of it as an IRA as you read along. For what we’re talking about here, it’s the same thing.

An inherited IRA is taxable income. How much tax I have to pay depends on what I do with it after I inherit. If I just cash out my uncle’s IRA, or put it into a regular, non-tax-deferred account, the whole thing counts as ordinary income in one year. Assuming I already have even a very modest income, a \$500,000 IRA will put me into a tax bracket that is almost 40%. To paraphrase Forrest Gump, life is like a box of chocolates, if you eat it all at once you will pay the price.

I can avoid that high tax rate by rolling the inherited IRA into a beneficiary IRA, and taking it out over time. Until just a few years ago, I could have taken it out over my entire lifetime, which means I would not have to pay very much more than the tax rate I was paying normally. They have changed the law now, so that in most cases I would have 10 years to take the money out, paying income tax only on what I take out each year.

But if I take the money out evenly over that 10 years, I only have \$50,000 in additional income each year. I will still pay income tax, and I might be in a slightly higher tax bracket, but it isn’t going to jump me from, say, 12% all the way up to 40%.

In order to make this work, and not end up having a big chunk of my estate paid to Uncle Sam, I may need a different kind of trust called an “accumulation trust”. I can still accomplish what I want, but it will be more complicated.

All of which works fine for me, because I am a reasonably responsible individual. It doesn’t work so well if I want to leave my IRA to an heir who is not responsible.

Let’s imagine I have a son named Freddie. I love the kid, but he is irresponsible as all get out. If I leave him a lot of money, he will probably blow it on booze, or sports cars, or his greedy girlfriend. With regular, non-IRA money, the answer is pretty simple. I put it into a living trust, and give the trustee some instructions about how to pay it out. But with an IRA, it becomes more complicated. In order to make this work, and not end up having a big chunk of my estate paid to Uncle

Sam, I may need a different kind of trust called an “accumulation trust”. I can still accomplish what I want, but it will be more complicated.

But then, taxes always make things more complicated.

And as Forrest Gump also said, “that’s all I have the say about that”.

Before I let you go, I want to explain something about last month. When I was looking for some examples of amusing myths people believe are true, I thought I would use a misconception about a former politician who, after all, hadn’t run for office in about 14 years. So I turned my politically innocuous column in to the Senior Voice, and between then and when the next

issue came out, our congressman died, that same former politician declared for the vacancy, and suddenly it started to look like I was using this column to assist an active candidate.

I have always tried to keep this column politically neutral. I have my political opinions, but the point of this column has always been to educate people, regardless of their political leanings, about topics that may be useful to them. Senior Voice has always tried to stay neutral as well, and I respect that. So from now on, I will only make references to politicians if they are safely deceased. Like Benjamin Franklin or Forrest Gump.

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. Was Forrest Gump a politician? Well, he should have been.

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Safeguard family stories; Exiting group chats

Also: My favorite watch band

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

Q. I love making printed photo books on my computer. Is there a way to make something like a photo book, only with text instead?

A. There are dozens of different tools for creating printed books on computers, but most of them are complex and hard to use. One exception I am very intrigued by is a Web-based service called Storyworth (www.storyworth.com). For a one-year subscription of about \$100, Storyworth will email you (or a gift recipient) a weekly

question. After a year, the questions and answers are collected in a printed hard cover book.

As I have written about many times before, storing very important data only on a computer is a challenge, especially when you want the data to be handed down from one generation to the next.

Storyworth has found a way to build family stories into something like a photo album without requiring any computer expertise beyond email messages. They provide the starting points (although you can also add your own), a working structure and

a final printed product. You or someone you know provides the stories.

You can collaborate with others as the stories are written during the year, while at the same time creating a family keepsake that will last.

Q. How do I quietly leave a group chat inside the Messages app on my iPhone?

A. Because of the nature of how instant messages work on cell networks, there is no single answer. The chats where messages appear inside green bubbles are especially difficult to manage.

The Apple Messages app uses the color green to denote "original" SMS-style text messages.

When the Messages app first appeared years ago, blue bubbles usually meant that the message did not incur a per-message fee, compared to green bubbles, which did. Those cellphone plans are mostly gone, but the blue and green bubbles have adopted a fresh meaning: messages sent from an

Apple device are blue and those that do not are green.

The sender's device matters because it affects how you manage incoming notifications.

At the very top of each chat in the center of the screen is an icon and a name. If the chat is with one person, that person's name appears below their image. If the chat is a group, the text will show the number of people inside the group or the group's name. Tapping the name and icon will reveal an Info panel.

The Info panel's content varies depending on the chat. The easiest situation is when all the message bubbles are blue. In that case, one of the choices inside the Info panel is a button titled "Leave this Conversation." Tap the button and confirm to leave the group. The other members of the group will "see" that you left.

If the Leave button is not present, it means the group chat contains at least one member who used a traditional text message and leaving is not possible.

However, there is one remaining option. And

while it does not stop group messages, it will stop the unwanted alerts and allow you to quietly ignore the group. Reopen the Info panel, and turn on the switch labeled "Hide Alerts."

Q. Do you have a favorite Apple Watch band?

A. I adore the Braided Solo Loop. I think it is a wonderful product. Over the years I have tried a number of different bands, both from Apple and third parties, but I was happiest with the Sport Band that came with the watch.

Last summer, I switched to a Solo Loop. I liked the Sport Band, and the Solo Loop was a nice upgrade. It was very lightweight and it did not have a clasp to scratch against the keyboard tray on my desk.

The Solo Loop was my favorite until my wife bought me a Braided Solo Loop as a gift. It is as comfortable as the Solo Loop, but its blend of materials feels like a natural fabric.

Watch band selection, like any jewelry or clothing choice, is deeply personal

page 26 please

Wander the Web

Here are my picks for worthwhile browsing this month:

Smartphone History Uncovered
A 30-minute documentary about Handspring Inc., an early pioneer in handheld computers.
www.youtube.com/watch?v=b9_Vh9h3OHW

Where is Webb?
This portal explores the journey of the James Webb Space Telescope.
webb.nasa.gov

Cosmic Latte
According to scientists, Cosmic Latte is the average color of the universe. Seriously. They can call it whatever, it looks like beige to me.
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cosmic_latte

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Educational trips for retirees who love to learn

By JIM MILLER

Savvy Senior

Dear Savvy Senior: My wife and I planning to travel much more frequently in retirement and are very interested in educational trips and adventures. Can you recommend any groups or firms that specialize in this type of travel geared towards retirees? – Love to Learn

Dear Love: Educational travel, which combines travel with in-depth learning opportunities has become a very popular way of travel among retirees. Here are a few good places to turn to find these types of trips in the U.S. and abroad.

Tour organizations

One of the best places to start is with Road Scholar (www.RoadScholar.org), which invented the idea of educational travel for older adults in the mid 1970s. The Boston-based organization offers 5,500 learning adventures in all 50 states and 150 countries.

You can search for learning adventures by location, interest, activity level and price. Road Scholar also offers “Choose Your Pace” senior travel tours that allow participants to adjust their level of challenge on a daily basis. And for skip-gen vacations, they offer tours designed specifically for grandparents traveling with their grandkids.

Another excellent option is Smithsonian Journeys (www.SmithsonianJourneys.org), a nonprofit travel group affiliated with the Smithsonian Museum. They offer 350 educational trips a year on every conti-

Most college/university trips are led by faculty who share their expertise, along with regional experts and local guides, and you don't need to be an alumnus to participate.

nent that are led by experts from a variety of fields — academia, the diplomatic corps, scientists and curators, among others.

If you're seeking more adventure, you may want to consider ElderTreks (www.ElderTreks.com), which

Academic travel

Another good source for educational trips is colleges and universities. Some of my favorites include Cornell University's Adult University (<https://sce.cornell.edu/travel>), which offers

Most college/university trips are led by faculty who share their expertise, along with regional experts and local guides, and you don't need to be an alumnus to participate.

Also check out the Trav-



Smithsonian Journeys, the non-profit, educational travel program of the Smithsonian Institution, offers 350 educational trips a year on every continent that are led by experts from a variety of fields — academia, the diplomatic corps, scientists and curators, among others.

Courtesy Smithsonian Journeys

ElderTreks.com), which offers 50-plus travelers small-group adventures by both land and sea in more than 100 countries. Their trips center on adventure, culture and nature, letting you get up close and personal with the locals.

a half-dozen educational trips and courses in the U.S. and abroad, each lasting a few days to a week or more. And Stanford Travel/Study (<https://alumni.stanford.edu/>) that offers educational travel journeys to more than 80 countries each year.

eling Professor (www.TravelingProfessor.com), a small-group touring company led by Steve Solosky, formerly a professor at the State University of New York. They offer a dozen or so tours abroad each year and take between 8 and 16 people.

Cruising options

If you enjoy cruising, consider Grand Circle Travel (www.GCT.com), which offers educational travel aboard small ships, and Naturalist Journeys (www.NaturalistJourneys.com), which specializes in nature and birding tours.

American Cruise Lines (www.AmericanCruiseLines.com) also offers more than 35 river and coastal itineraries in the Northeast, Southeast, Pacific Northwest and along the Mississippi River. And it has themed cruises (Lewis and Clark, Mark Twain, Civil War, etc.) for people with specific historical, literary or other interests.

And Viking River Cruises (www.VikingRiverCruises.com), which is geared to older travelers, focuses on European art, history and culture. Each cruise makes one to two port stops a day as the ship winds its way up or down Europe's most famous rivers like the Rhine, Seine, Danube and Douro. A free sightseeing tour is included at all stops, and special-interest excursions are available for additional fees. Viking offers tours in the United States too.

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.

Airline mask mandate: It's all up to you now

By DIMITRA LAVRAKAS

Senior Voice Travel Correspondent

On April 13, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention announced that the Transportation Security Administration had issued an extension of the mask mandate until May 3 after the CDC's “close monitoring of the COVID-19 landscape in the United States and interna-

tionally.”

But federal officials stopped that enforcement on travel on April 18 after U.S. District Judge Kathryn Kimball Mizelle of the Middle District of Florida ruled the mandate exceeded the statutory authority of the CDC.

With that, some airlines announced that masks are now optional, including Alaska Airlines.

Ironically, the CDC up-

dated its Travel Health Notice system for international travel on April 18, the same day the judge struck down the mandate.

The CDC said the new health notice was “to help the public understand when the highest level of concern is most urgent, this new system will reserve Level 4 travel health notices for special circumstances, such as rapidly escalating case trajectory

or extremely high case counts, emergence of a new variant of concern, or healthcare infrastructure collapse. Levels 3, 2, and 1 will continue to be primarily determined by 28-day incidence or case counts.”

The CDC will use this system to alert travelers to health threats around the world and advise on how to protect themselves before, during and after travel. It will alert them when it

is not advisable to travel to a certain destination, regardless of their vaccination status.

People are more than ready to travel again with or without masks, but there still is that pesky problem of flights canceled because of severe weather and a lack of pilots.

Bon voyage indeed.



Migration

continued from page 13

and inland in the tundra, marshes and bogs that provide a plethora of invertebrates.

This is the time of year when we start seeing spring migrants arriving. Some species have flown non-stop, others in short hops, and many have stopped for layovers along the way to rest, refuel and seek shelter from inclement weather. More than half of the birds that migrate to Alaska come from South America, Oceania, Africa and Asia. Some species make long-distance flights like the Arctic Tern, which travels over 24,000 miles from Antarctica, and the peregrine falcon, which can cover over 15,500 miles from their wintering grounds in Argentina. Other species come from Oceania, like the pectoral sandpiper and black-backed sandpiper, which can cover over

18,000 miles along their migration route. Birds such as the northern wheatear and pomarine jaeger will travel from Africa while tundra swans travel from eastern North America, migrating over 7,000 miles to arctic Alaska.

Witnessing the arrival of these birds who have made extraordinary journeys is humbling. If you time your birding right, you can feel the wind whisper across your cheeks as a flock of western sandpipers fly by or hear the calls of flocks of snow geese whilst in formation far overhead, or even do a double-take when you see a bird in the periphery and realize it's an eastern yellow wagtail slightly off course but singing loudly atop a tree.

Bird migration is an integral part of avian life, and we are connected to these incredible species when we welcome them to Alaska each spring.

The Bird Treatment and Learning Center cares for injured, ill and sick wild



Arctic terns perform an impressive handoff.

Laura Atwood photo

birds from across Alaska. Through March 31 we've taken in 49 birds, some of whom have come to us from Dutch Harbor, Kodiak and Fairbanks. Visit us at <http://birdtlc.org> and follow us on Facebook and Instagram (@birdtlc).

Lisa Pajot is an ornithologist and volunteer at the Bird Treatment and Learning Center in Anchorage.

2022 BIRDING ACTIVITIES AROUND ALASKA

Stikine River Birding Festival

April 22 to May 8, Wrangell

Kachemak Bay Shorebird Festival, May 4-8, Homer

Copper River Delta Shorebird Festival

May 5-8, Cordova

Yakutat Tern Festival, June 2-5, Yakutat

Tanana Valley Sandhill Crane Festival

August 19-21, Fairbanks

Sitka Whale Festival, Nov. 3-6, Sitka

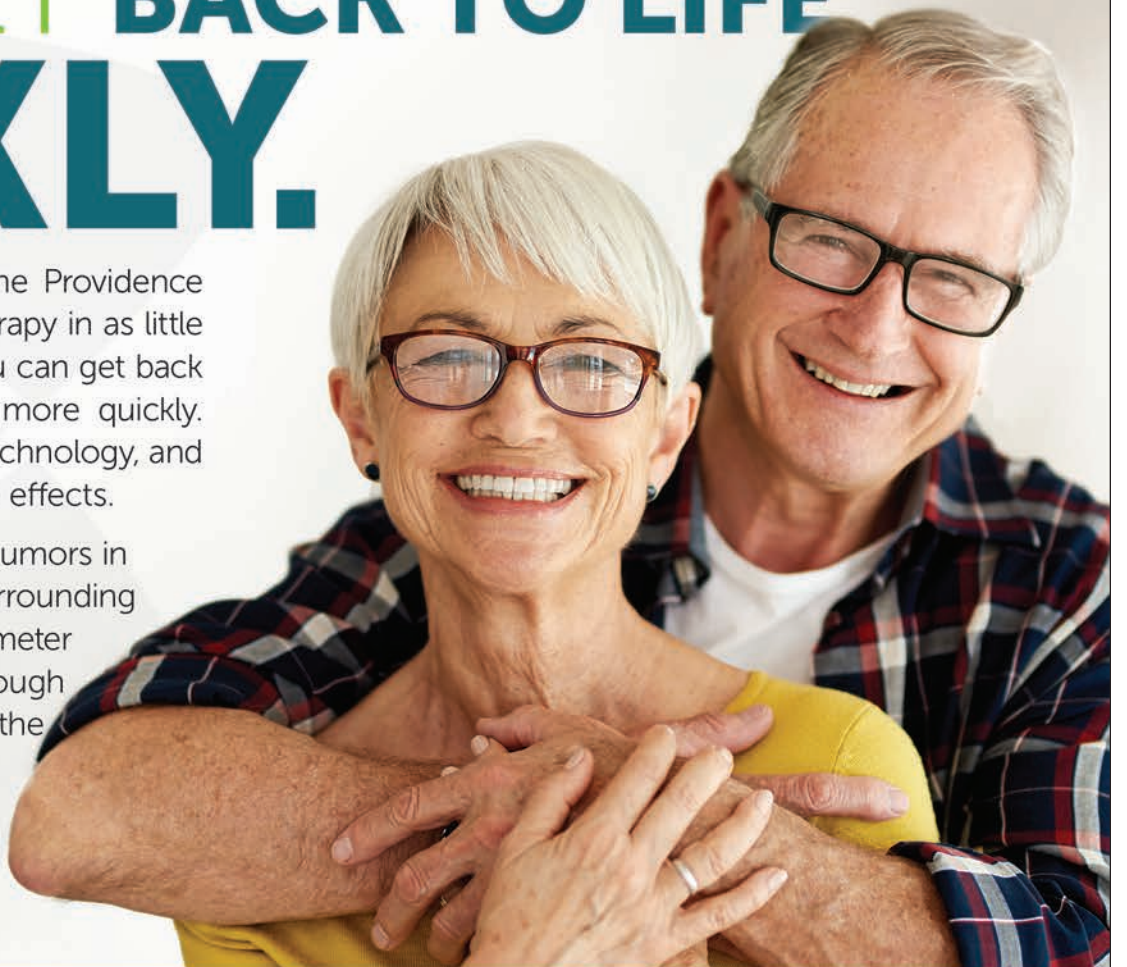
Alaska Bald Eagle Festival, Nov. 10-13, Haines

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Pickleball

continued from page 13

custom orthotics in all my footwear, plus I wear an articulated ankle brace. After too many years of basketball ankle sprains, I finally discovered the Active Ankle, a brace used by NBA players that has cut down on those ugly sprains that almost caused me to get surgery. You can find this particular brace, and others like it, on Amazon.

Don't just use your old sneakers to play. You're looking for a good court shoe that has good lateral support for those side-to-side movements employed in a court game. You don't have to spend a lot, but you do need to replace your shoes regularly, as they break down and stop being good support. I probably

switch out my shoes twice a year, and I buy a New Balance court shoe (in X-Wide for my big ole duck feet) for \$60 to \$80 from Amazon.

The one other thing I'm going to start wearing is eye protection. At a certain level of play it's just too easy for a ball to ricochet and hit an eyeball. That can be both painful and catastrophic.

All of this is not intended to be medical device (necessary disclaimer), but are things I've learned and come to employ in my never-ending battle to fight my future decrepitation. And it can for you too.

Next column: New court options are coming.

Jim Lavrakas has lived in Alaska for almost a half century. The self-proclaimed "squirrel man" has found a lively outlet in the pursuit of pickleball. You can reach him at www.FarNorthPress.com.



Homer pickleball player Rex Murphy turns to chase down a lob from his wife Holly Van Pelt during a practice at the local city gym.

Jim Lavrakas photo

Girdwood

continued from page 18

1933 when Ericson became sole owner. The Erickson family later reported about \$40,000 worth of gold was the average production until World War II closed

down mining operations. Today the mine, owned by the Toohey family since 1969, produces some gold and is a destination spot for Alaskans and tourists alike to see its unique blend of historical buildings, antiques, old mining equipment and exploration opportunities. Folks can

pan for gold on the property, as well.

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, which won the 2016 gold medal for best nonfiction series from Literary Classics International and voted Best of Anchorage 2020,

are available at bookstores and gift shops throughout Alaska, as well as online at www.auntphilstrunk.com and Amazon.com.

Your support helps
Older Persons Action Group continue its mission.
Call 1-800-478-1059 to donate.

Tech

continued from page 23

and one size never fits all. For me, the Braided Solo Loop is the perfect blend

of form and feel. It stands out as the best band I have ever used.

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

SeniorVoice.com

Crossword answers from page 18

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

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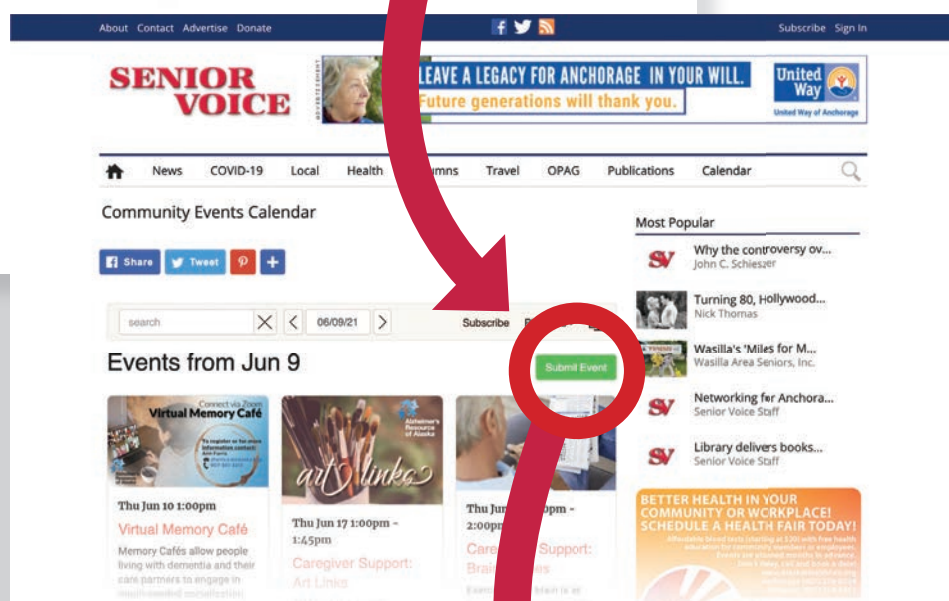
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1 Go to the Senior Voice website: seniorvoicealaska.com
Click on the “Calendar” tab in the upper right corner



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

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

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

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