

# Alaska's only statewide publication for seniors age 50+

Published by Older Persons Action Group, Inc.



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- Alaska's seniors are the fastest growing population in Alaska
- Seniors annually contribute over \$3 billion to the state economy, compare favorably to other industries such as fishing, construction, retail and tourism.
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# Senior Voice

A publication of Older Persons Action Group, Inc. Free

Serving Alaskans 50+ Since 1978

Volume 46, Number 12 December 2023

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A cow moose browses branches high and low for seasonal sustenance in an Anchorage neighborhood.  
Michael Dinneen photo for Senior Voice.







# Commission on Aging meets Dec. 5 via Zoom

Senior Voice Staff

The Alaska Commission on Aging will conduct its quarterly meeting Dec. 5, from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., online via Zoom. The commission includes advocates from around the state with the mission to ensure the dignity and independence

of all older Alaskans, and to assist them to lead useful and meaningful lives through planning, advocacy, education and interagency cooperation. The link to participate via Zoom is <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86109693669>. You can use your phone camera to scan the QR code at right to easily connect.

Those wishing to call in via telephone should contact the commission office for the Zoom phone numbers and ID information, or find it download it, along with the agenda, at <https://bit.ly/4oTOOJq>. The meeting will be open for public comment from 1:15 to 1:30 p.m. Public comment will be limited to

three minutes for personal and five minutes for organizations. Organizations may be represented by not more than three speakers whose combined comments may not exceed 10 minutes. For more information, please contact the Alaska Commission on Aging by email at [hss.acoa@alaska.gov](mailto:hss.acoa@alaska.gov) or by calling 907-465-3250.



# Tech support scams are surging

By MICHELLE TABLER  
AARP Alaska

Have you clicked on a website and suddenly a loud voice comes on at the same time as a warning fills your screen? The threatening voice advises that you have been infected with a computer virus, warns you not to turn off your computer, and urges you to immediately call the number on your screen. Or have you received an unsolicited phone call from someone who claims to be from Microsoft, Apple or a security software company to tell you they've detected a threat to your computer? These are both tech support scams, a surging

**Have you received an unsolicited phone call from someone who claims to be from Microsoft, Apple or a security software company to tell you they've detected a threat to your computer?**

category of fraud and one of the most reported to the Federal Trade Commission. The scammers will try to obtain credit card and bank account information. They may also attempt to gain remote access to your computer and any personal information. Unfortunately, most of these scams originate outside the U.S. so prosecution is almost impossible. But you don't have to fall victim to a tech scam. Your best defense is knowing about

these scams and being proactive about protecting yourself. **What should you do?** If it's a phone call, hang up immediately. Do not engage the caller in any conversation. Never give any information such as credit card or banking information to any unsolicited callers. And never give control of your computer to anyone who says they can fix the problem remotely. It's best to just hang up

the phone as soon as you get the call. If it's a fake virus alert message, shut down the browser immediately and then shut down your computer. (Use Control-Alt-Delete to bring up the Task Manager and close down the browser.) Never call the number in the virus alert. And do not click on any links on the screen—even if it shows you are closing the window. Be sure to use antivirus software that scans your computer regularly. Run the scan after getting any virus pop-up message. These scammers are relentless and can be awfully convincing. If you do become a victim, contact

your bank and credit card company fraud department immediately to cancel your accounts. Have your computer checked out at a local computer repair business. Change all passwords used for the accounts you gave access to. You can file a report with the Federal Trade Commission at [ftc.gov](http://ftc.gov). The AARP Fraud Watch Network Helpline at 877-908-3360 is also a free resource. Most importantly, be kind to yourself. These scammers have made a full-time profession of targeting and scamming computer users. Michelle Tabler is an AARP Alaska volunteer fraud education expert.

# Networking for Anchorage, Mat-Su area providers

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

sons Action Group, Inc., is an opportunity for all the above. Informal, early and free, the event begins at 8 a.m., second Wednesday, at a different host location each month. Breakfast provided. The next date is Dec. 13, hosted by Turnagain Social Club.

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

## Correction

The Nov. 2023 issue travel story on page 24 quoted Jim McCool. His name is John McCool.

### OLDER PERSONS ACTION GROUP

#### Mission statement:

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

#### Vision statement:

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

# Senior Voice Alaska.com



OLDER PERSONS ACTION GROUP  
3340 Arctic Blvd., #106  
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Phone 907-276-1059  
Toll free 800-478-1059  
[www.opagak.com](http://www.opagak.com)  
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Editor ..... David Washburn  
[editor@seniorvoicealaska.com](mailto:editor@seniorvoicealaska.com)  
Correspondents ..... Laurel Bill, Dimitra Lavrakas  
Maralee McMichael  
Advertising sales ..... Anne Tompkins  
[A.Tompkins@seniorvoicealaska.com](mailto:A.Tompkins@seniorvoicealaska.com)  
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# Series: Working past retirement in Alaska

## The two lives of Anchorage's (and Denali's) Nancy Bale

By **LAWRENCE D. WEISS**  
For Senior Voice

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

I was swept up in that back-to-the-land movement of the late 60s, early 70s. And so was my husband at the time. He had gone to Alaska a couple of years prior. We had known each other from college. He liked what he saw and he wanted to go back, so we were married and drove

up the Alcan in '71. It was in our VW bus after he'd outfitted it with the bed and the Coleman stove—and all that romantic notion of going off into nowhere. In my younger years I wanted to live in a rural area. I was horse crazy from day one. I liked to play cowboys and Indians with my next-door neighbor. I've had many cap guns. This just was a little bit of a modulation of that lifestyle where I wasn't a farm wife

with 12 children and pigs and goats and chickens, but I was more of a rural wilderness person, whatever that was going to end up being. So we drove up between Cantwell and McKinley Park entrance and met with people there. We found a smaller cabin that had just been built by a home site person on the Homestead Act. After all those years in a cabin in McKinley Park, when did you make the big move to Anchorage?

I came to Anchorage in the wintertime in '93 to go to nursing school, and I graduated in 96. That was the last summer I worked full time at Denali, it was by then Denali, and moved to Anchorage to a tiny little four-plex in the fall of '96. Got a job at the Alaska military youth academy. You know that place has a staff nurse there. Learned a lot. I kept that job for a while



*Nancy Bale traded her Denali homestead lifestyle to move into Anchorage to go to nursing school at the age of 50. She went to work as a school nurse for the Anchorage School District when she was 60.*

Lawrence Weiss photo

the time I decided to go in, it was just time. I was 50 when I entered nursing school. I was 60 when I went to work for the school district. Seems like big career changes later in life than is usually the case. I was at an age where most people retire. But I hadn't built up any retirement. So in that sense, I couldn't retire. And I was healthy, happy, interested in the work—there was no reason. I just did everything a little bit later than the next person did, without

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# Still impressed by Alaska's new election system

Dear Fellow Alaskan,

It's been one year since Alaskans used our new election system - nonpartisan open primaries and ranked choice voting - for the first time. What were the results?

- Open primaries opened doors for voters and candidates. All voters could choose from all candidates, regardless of party, and those with the most support from a broad group of voters won. There were more candidates, leading to more competition in both the primary and general elections.
- 99.8% of ballots were filled out correctly. With redistricting challenges, a special election, and a new election system, we had a very complicated election year and Alaskans got it right! When I tell our story to folks Outside and note that only 342 ballots were invalid, they are impressed

and inspired.

- Elections didn't favor one party over another. The three statewide elections saw a conservative Republican, a moderate Republican, and a Democrat win.
- In a break from the past, both houses of the Alaska State Legislature were organized and ready to work on the first day of session. Lawmakers did not spend countless days in expensive, unproductive special sessions.

As political campaigns ramp up, I'm reminded of how important and necessary it is to keep these voter-centric, voter-approved reforms in place. I'm excited to see how open primaries and ranked choice voting continue to shape better elections in Alaska!

*Juli Lucky, Executive Director Alaskans for Better Elections*

### Send us your letters

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

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# Retirement

continued from page 3

thinking too hard about it, and came to Alaska, not thinking I'd ever be part of any system. Kind of having that sort of "hippie-esque"

***I was at an age where most people retire. But I hadn't built up any retirement. So in that sense, I couldn't retire. And I was healthy, happy, interested in the work—there was no reason.***

rejection of systems back at that time.

But then, after a while, you kind of see the lay of the land and how everything works, and how it isn't like there's "us" and "them." We're all really more human than anything else. And you know, a lot of people have decided at some point in history that saving your money up so

that you can use it for retirement is a good idea. And in that sense, I felt happy to get more involved in the system.

**I understand that you are contemplating retiring in a couple of years at age 80. Why is that your target age for retirement?**

We're all getting closer to our death. There should be some time to spend with family that's not constrained by working. My own death is not too far away. Maybe I'll live till 100. That is my goal, to live until the age of 100. So that's what I tell doctors anyway, and so far, so good. But I am noticing the gradual decline of things. That's closing in.

**And what do you think you will do in retirement?**

I'll have more time at Denali. I still have my networks up there, so that's great. I'll have more time to go out and check out the cabin, which will be great, because I'll need to spend some time out there. I heard our cache fell down. As long as I have my health, I have a tick list of five years' worth of things I'd need to do,

probably after retirement.

**Do you have any advice for older persons nearing the age of retirement in terms of should they retire or keep on working?**

If they like the work, there shouldn't be any constraints on retiring. But if they've always thought that they would like to

travel somewhere, spend time somewhere, or teach outside of their workplace, or be involved in volunteer work or do other things with their lives that took time, It's not as if retirement is sitting in the BarcaLounger. It's that retirement is a new way to work with people.

*This interview has been edited for length and clarity.*

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

## Sleuthing to solve your medical mystery

By KAREN CASANOVAS

For Senior Voice

**Q:** I have seen an internist and a gastroenterologist, but still have unexplained chronic ailments. What else can I do?

**A:** With advances in internet searches and artificial intelligence (AI), it is tempting to self-diagnose. Don't do it. Leave the analysis for professional providers.

What you can do while searching for answers is to approach the situation like a mystery—by thoroughly and systematically cataloging your symptoms. Here are a few easy steps



symptoms are you having? How often? What time of day are you experiencing them? Duration of symptoms (days, weeks, months)? Write down specific details.

**Learn how to read a situation.** Are your symptoms after eating certain foods, or taking specific medications? Are you experiencing pain after stressful situations? Focus on what is happening and avoid distracting thoughts.

**Use logic.** Review your notes separating what is relevant and important from what is not. Pore

to take.

**Approach each medical mystery with a blank mind.** Do not jump to conclusions or believe just because a friend or relative has similar symptoms that you have the same diagnosis.

**Define the mystery.** What

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# Self-care for the holidays and beyond

*How to create a nourishing self-care routine that can help you feel calmer, more centered and better able to face the challenges of the world around you.*

By **EMILY KANE, ND**

For Senior Voice

A reader emailed me this question: I want to take better care of myself, but I'm having trouble committing. Any tips for creating a good routine?

Here was my reply. Thanks for sparking a good column topic!

**Intention is key.** That's the best place to start. You said "routine," which may sound less-than-exciting. But, honestly, excitement is overrated. In fact, our bodies respond very well to routine at all stages of life. And we feel so much better, and act more con-



siderately, when applying consistent self-care. The basics include making healthier dietary choices, getting enough sleep, being well-hydrated (with mostly water), moving every day, and practicing forgiveness.

There are so many triggers that can throw you off balance. Some you can control, such as how much sugar you put into your mouth, and some you cannot, such as, let's be honest, other people. Keeping your emotions on an even keel goes a long way toward maintaining composure and equilibrium. You're less likely to get bent out of shape if you maintain your own inner calm, deep breathing and intent for harmony. Take breaks from your screens and devices. It can be incredibly healthy to set aside one day a week for traditional fasting (water only) and one day a week—

maybe the same day—for "screen fasting."

**Managing stress is also critical.** You can't completely turn off stress, of course. It's actually an inherent part of human survival, creativity and productivity. Stress motivates us to get things done, to take on difficult projects, or try to reach physical goals. Stress isn't the enemy, but if you can't take it in stride, it will wear away at your energy and self-confidence. Unmitigated stress has been shown to exacerbate (or even cause) obesity, type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, neurodegenerative

diseases, headaches, digestive problems, anxiety, depression, insomnia and OCD behaviors.

To maintain balance through self-care, you need to find effective ways to manage stress. Lifestyle choices are key to staying even, focused and calm throughout the day. Pick a mindfulness practice that appeals to you—that makes sense, too—and explore. This could be a daily yoga stretch, contemplative (not judgmental) journaling, or a breath practice that helps you slow down and focus for at least 10 minutes.

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## Medicare: Choosing doctors and other providers

By **SEAN McPHILAMY**

Alaska Medicare  
Information Office

Choosing a medical provider can be both challenging and overwhelming for many patients. Here in the Great Land, Alaskans often travel significant distances to obtain healthcare. Medicare can help, when searching for and finding a provider. You can also save money by choosing providers who accept Medicare assignment. This last term, "assignment," is an important one to remember, especially if you are newly enrolled in Medicare. First, a brief introduction to finding health care providers, from physicians to medical equipment suppliers. Searching for providers is not always easy, but help is available.

### Searching for providers

You can obtain assistance over the telephone or by using the internet. Consider calling the national help line at 800-Medicare, which is also 800-633-4227. This line is open around the clock, 24 hours a day, seven days a week (except some federal holidays). Alternatively, you may call us at the State of Alaska's Medicare Information Office by dialing 800-478-6065 or 907-



269-3680. You may leave a message, and our certified counselors will be glad to call you back to help in your search for a medical provider.

When using the internet, either on a computer, a tablet, or a smart phone, begin your search by going to Medicare.gov and click the link to find care providers. This search can be narrowed by location and by the type of care, service or facility desired. An entire list of specialties can be optionally chosen to narrow your search for a provider. Once you have identified a potential provider, remember to call the office to verify if the provider is accepting new patients. A health care provider may accept Medicare, but not be able to accept new patients at this time.

### Medicare assignment

The term "assignment," mentioned earlier in this

article, is an important word to remember. Different procedures, exams, tests and medical devices all are assigned prices which Medicare may reimburse. I will provide three examples on how Medicare

assignment works. In the first, you go to see your doctor. This office visit is billed at \$150, and the doctor accepts Medicare assignment. Medicare sets the price for this office visit at \$100, and will reimburse

the provider at 80 percent (or \$80 in this example). Since the doctor accepts assignment, then the price is reduced to \$100, and you (as the patient) owe the

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## Kenai Peninsula caregiver support program returns

By **DANI KEBSCHULL**

For Senior Voice

Good news from the Kenai Peninsula. The Kenai Peninsula Family Caregiver Support Program (KPFCSPP) is now being administered by the Nikiski Senior Center.

I'm Dani Kebschull, program coordinator of the KPFCSPP. I've lived on the Peninsula almost all of my life and have spent my career working with, and providing services for, family caregivers - including 10 years with the KPFCSPP. I'm excited to help rebuild this program and aid in its growth for the entire Peninsula.

A caregiver can be anyone from a helpful neighbor who provides daily check-ins or helps with small tasks, to a live-in family member who helps with activities of daily living,

such as dressing, bathing, grooming or eating.

The Kenai Peninsula Family Caregiver Support Program promotes the health and well-being of caregivers by providing:

- Information and assistance accessing services
- Respite
- Caregiver support groups
- Caregiver training
- Supplemental services including Personal Care Assistance (PCA), chore, and other needed services to assist family caregivers care for their loved ones at home.

If you would like more information, feel free to call the Nikiski Senior Center at 907-776-7654 and ask for Dani. I look forward to what we can all do together.

### Family caregiver support around the state

Senior Voice Staff

Alzheimer's Resource of Alaska (ARA) organizes caregiver support meetings around the state, including Anchorage, Eagle River, Fairbanks, Homer, Juneau/Southeast, Ketchikan, Kodiak, Mat-Su Valley, Seward, Sitka, Soldotna, Talkeetna, Willow. Call 1-800-478-1080 for details.

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





## Hearing isn't like riding a bike



By **DONNA R. DeMARCO**

*Accurate Hearing Systems*

Studies have shown that, on average, people will wait eight to 10 years between first experiencing symptoms of hearing loss and finally seeking help. Unfortunately, during this timeframe, people fall into coping mechanisms. They ask people to repeat themselves, turn the TV up louder, or avoid places where hearing is more challenging. These behaviors are actually exacerbating the negative effects. That's why early intervention is always recommended.

**Early intervention prevents your brain from forgetting what to do.** The ability to make instant association depends on repeatedly hearing a word.

If you do not hear a word for a long period of time, difficulty connecting the sound to its meaning occurs. Over time, reduced stimulation to the brain can impair its ability to process sound and recognize speech. Once speech recognition deteriorates, it is only partially recoverable with hearing aids.

**Early intervention slows cognitive decline and communication problems.** Not being able to hear what's going on around you contributes to reduced mental sharpness and communication abilities.

**Early intervention improves the use of hearing aids.** The earlier people begin to use hearing aids, the sooner they get comfortable wearing them and the easier it is to maximize their advantage.

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*Donna R DeMarco, AAS, BC-HIS, Tinnitus Care Provider, Holding a Certificate from the International Hearing Society.*



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

## Medicare

*continued from page 5*

remaining \$20 (or 20 percent of the assigned price).

In the second example, the doctor accepts Medicare, but does not accept Medicare assignment. This does not mean that the doctor's staff gets to set the price, but instead Medicare allows the provider to bill excess charges, up to an additional 15 percent of the Medicare approved amount. So, using the same scenario, you once again go to see your doctor. The office visit is again billed at \$150. Medicare still has the price for this office visit set at \$100, and will reimburse the provider at 80 percent (\$80). As the patient, you owe the remaining \$20 (up to the assigned price) plus up to an additional \$15 (or up to 15 percent additional above the assigned price of the office visit), for a total cost of \$35. In both of the first two examples, secondary insurance has not been mentioned.

For the third example, and possibly the most important, another phrase, "opt out," is used. In this scenario, the doctor has opted out of Medicare. This is not done on the second Tuesday of the month, or at the whim of the office staff. Instead, the doctor

has entered into a legal agreement with Medicare (and the contracted billing services overseen by Medicare) whereby the doctor no longer accepts Medicare. Using the same scenario as above, during the doctor's visit, the staff lets you (as the patient) know that the doctor does not accept Medicare (has opted out.) If you choose to obtain the services of this physician, then you enter into a private contract with the physician, and Medicare will not reimburse your medical claim. Additionally, Medicare supplement insurance (Medigap plans) will also not pay for the claim, neither will many other secondary insurance plans. So please be aware of both Medicare assignment and check to see if a provider has opted out of Medicare.

### Pharmacy networks

Private insurance companies have established Prescription Drug Plans (PDPs) under Medicare Part D. These insurance companies have contracts established with pharmaceutical firms (drug manufacturers) and with pharmacy networks (drug distributors). You can save money by being aware of which local retail pharmacy (or your plan's mail order option) charges the lowest price that you will pay when

filling or refilling your next prescription. There are preferred in-network pharmacies, in-network pharmacies, and out-of-network pharmacies. And the price for the same prescription may be different when comparing two different pharmacies even when both are in the network contracted by the insurance company.

You can find additional details in your drug plan's website, by using the Medicare.gov plan finder tool, or by calling our office and requesting to speak with any one of our certified counselors.

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

If you are part of an agency or organization that assists seniors with medical resources, consider networking with the Medicare Information Office. Call us to inquire about our new Ambassador program.

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

## Medicare counseling by phone

By **LEE CORAY-LUDDEN**

*For Senior Voice*

Hi, my name is, Lee Coray-Ludden, I am a Certified Medicare Counselor serving Southeast Alaska and the rest of the state

as needed through referrals by SHIP (State Health Insurance Program). I am available Monday through Thursday, 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. My office is in the Soldotna Senior Center. You can contact me

directly by calling 907-262-2322. The phone will be answered 'Soldotna Senior Center'—it's a small staff, just ask for Lee or 'the Medicare person'. Thanks and have a good day.

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# Embracing the spirit of giving and wellness

## Health fairs will return in January

Alaska Health Fair, Inc.

As the crisp air envelops our great state, it's not just the snowflakes that remind us of the season's charm, but also the spirit of giving and togetherness. This December, as we observe Safe Toys and Gifts Month, we invite you to join us in reflecting on the choices we make when selecting gifts, not just for children but for adults as well.

**Active play and educational value.** In a world increasingly dominated by screens, gifting items that encourage active play is more crucial than ever. For children, consider toys that promote physical activity, stimulating their growth and development. For adults, gifts like fitness trackers, yoga mats, or even dance class subscriptions can be both thoughtful and beneficial for their health.

**Age-appropriate and trusted.** Choosing age-appropriate gifts ensures safety and enhances developmental benefits. Trusted brands known for their quality and safety standards should be your go-to choices.

**Beyond material: Gifts of time and thought.** In our pursuit of the perfect gift, let's not forget that the most meaningful presents often aren't tangible. The gift of time, a thoughtful note, or even a shared experience can be far more significant. This December, let's embrace the idea of smaller, environmentally responsible gifts—a book that can transport someone to another world, or a handmade item that carries a piece of your heart.

**Gifts for those in need.** The holiday season is also a time for philanthropy. We encourage you to donate gifts to those experiencing hardship. Your generosity can bring joy to those who need it most and embody the true spirit of the season.

**It's about love.** The essence of a gift lies not in its complexity or profundity, but in the simple message of love and care it conveys. Each gift, no matter how small, carries with it a piece of our heart and thought. As we embrace the holiday spirit, let's cherish the joy of giving and the bonds it strengthens.

**Health fairs will resume in 2024.** As Alaska Health Fair's health fair season comes to a close, we extend our deepest gratitude to the

hundreds of volunteers, exhibitors, partner organizations, and the thousands of Alaskans who participated. Your support and involvement are the pillars of our existence. While we take our winter break, remember that more health fairs await in the new year. The new event schedule will be published in the first week of January, alongside volunteer and exhibitor opportunities. For those interested in scheduling a community or worksite health fair, spots could

still be available. Contact our team at your earliest convenience: Anchorage, 907-278-0234; Fairbanks, 907-374-6853; Juneau, 907-723-5100.

### About Alaska Health Fair, Inc.

Alaska Health Fair, Inc. is a nonprofit organization delivering health education and affordable comprehensive blood tests statewide since 1980. Check out our mission, vision, core purpose and health newsletters at [www.alaskahealthfair.org](http://www.alaskahealthfair.org).

## Low vision clinics Dec. 4-5 in Fairbanks

Alaska Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired

The Alaska Center for the Blind will hold two low-vision clinics and two support group meetings in Fairbanks, Dec. 4 and 5. At the low-vision clinics, a specialist will match the client with the best possible

device for their condition. The Dec. 4 clinic will be at Ravens Landing. Also on Dec. 4, Center for the Blind staff will hold a support group at Timber Creek at 9 a.m. and another at Access Alaska at group at 1 p.m. Staff will be available for home visits in the afternoon.

On Dec. 5, a low-vision clinic will be held at the Tanana Chiefs Conference at 9 a.m. and specialists will be available for home visits in the morning. Spots are filling up fast. To make an appointment or for more details, call Pete McCall at 907-771-4305.



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# New tech to heal wounds, help people ‘see’ sound

Also: Benefits of tai chi for Parkinson’s

By JOHN SCHIESZER

Medical Minutes

## New help for those with low vision or blindness

Australian researchers have developed a new type of technology known as acoustic touch and it helps people “see” using sound. The technology has the potential to transform the lives of those who are blind or have low level vision.

Researchers from the University of Technology Sydney and the University of Sydney have developed new smart glasses that translate visual information into distinct sound icons.

“Smart glasses typically use computer vision and other sensory information to translate the wearer’s surroundings into computer-synthesized speech,” said Chinteng Lin, who is a global leader in brain-computer interface research from the University of Technology Sydney. “However, acoustic touch technology sonifies objects, creating unique sound representations as they enter the device’s field of view. For example, the sound of rustling leaves



might signify a plant, or a buzzing sound might represent a mobile phone.”

The researchers tested the device with 14 participants (seven individuals with blindness or low level vision and seven blindfolded sighted individuals who served as a control group). They found that the wearable device, equipped with acoustic touch technology, significantly enhanced the ability of blind or low-vision individuals to recognize and reach for objects, without causing too much mental effort.

The researchers found that the auditory feedback can empower users to identify and reach for objects with remarkable accuracy. They believe acoustic touch

next page please



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# Medical

from page 8

has the potential to offer a wearable and effective method of sensory augmentation for the visually impaired community.

The research underscores the importance of developing assistive technology in overcoming the challenges such as locating specific household items and personal belongings. By addressing these day-to-day challenges, the acoustic touch technology opens new doors for individuals who are blind or have low vision, enhancing their independence and quality of life.

## Magnetic healing gel may be beneficial for diabetic wounds

A team of researchers from the National University of Singapore has developed an innovative magnetic wound-healing gel that promises to accelerate the healing of diabetic wounds, reduce the rates of recurrence, and lower the incidence of limb amputations. A bandage pre-loaded with magnetic hydrogel is placed on the wound, and an external device is used to accelerate the wound healing process.

Diabetic patients, whose natural wound-healing capabilities are compromised, often develop chronic wounds that are slow to heal. Such non-healing wounds could cause seri-

ous infections resulting in painful outcomes, such as limb amputation. With this new approach, a bandage is pre-loaded with a hydrogel containing skin cells for healing and magnetic particles. To maximize therapeutic results, a wireless external magnetic device is used to activate skin cells and accelerate the wound healing process. The ideal duration of magnetic stimulation is about one to two hours.

Lab tests showed the treatment coupled with magnetic stimulation healed diabetic wounds about three times faster than current conventional approaches. Furthermore, while the research has focused on healing diabetic foot ulcers, the technology has potential for treating a wide range of complex wounds including burns.

“Conventional dressings do not play an active role in healing wounds,” said study investigator Andy Tay, who is with the National University of Singapore (NUS). “They merely prevent the wound from worsening and patients need to be scheduled for a dressing change every two or three days. It is a huge cost to our healthcare system and an inconvenience to patients.”

In contrast, the NUS invention takes a comprehensive ‘all-in-one’ approach to wound healing, accelerating the process on several fronts. “Our technology addresses multiple critical factors associated

***Lab tests showed the gel treatment coupled with magnetic stimulation healed diabetic wounds about three times faster than current conventional approaches. Furthermore, while the research has focused on healing diabetic foot ulcers, the technology has potential for treating a wide range of complex wounds including burns.***

with diabetic wounds, simultaneously managing elevated glucose levels in the wound area, activating dormant skin cells near the wound, restoring damaged blood vessels, and repairing the disrupted vascular network within the wound," said Tav.

## Tai chi may benefit individuals with Parkinson's disease

The Chinese martial art that involves sequences of very slow controlled movements, may curb the symptoms and complications of Parkinson's disease for several years, according to a new study published online in the *Journal of Neurology Neurosurgery & Psychiatry*. Its practice was associated with slower disease progression and lower doses of required drugs over time.

Parkinson's disease is a debilitating and progressive neurodegenerative disorder, characterized by slowness of movement,

resting tremor, and stiff and inflexible muscles. It is the fastest growing neurological condition in the world and there is no cure for Parkinson's. Current medications can improve clinical symptoms, but they don't treat all the manifestations of the disease. Further, there's no evidence that they slow progression.

The researchers monitored two groups of patients with Parkinson's disease for more than five years from January 2016 to June 2021. One group of 147 patients practiced tai chi twice a week for an hour, aided by the provision of classes to improve their technique. The other group of 187 patients continued with their standard care, but didn't practice tai chi.

Disease severity was formally assessed in all the participants at the start of the monitoring period. Disease progression, including increases in the need for medication, were

subsequently monitored in November 2019, October 2020, and June 2021.

Disease progression was slower at all monitoring points in the tai chi group, as assessed by three validated scales to assess overall symptoms, movement, and balance. In the tai chi group, fewer medications were required and sleep and quality of life continuously improved. Additionally, the prevalence of complications was significantly lower in the tai chi group than in the comparison group: dyskinesia (involuntary movement) 1.4% versus 7.5%; dystonia (abnormal muscle tone) 0% versus 1.6%; hallucinations 0% versus just over 2%; mild cognitive impairment 3% versus 10%; restless legs syndrome 7% versus 15.5%.

This is an observational study and as such can't establish cause and effect. The researchers acknowledge that the number of study participants was relatively small, but it does appear that tai chi may provide a long-term beneficial effect on Parkinson's disease.

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

The logo for Hospice of Anchorage features the organization's name in a serif font. To the right of the text is a heart shape formed by two overlapping, hand-drawn style lines, one in red and one in yellow. Below the name, a list of services is provided, followed by the contact information and a sponsor note at the bottom.

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## Self-care

continued from page 5

**Finding balance in whatever way you take this to mean.** There's no one-size-fits-all healthy eating plan, but in general, we could all benefit from bending our diets more toward the keto and vegetarian ends of the scale.

**You're less likely to get bent out of shape if you maintain your own inner calm, deep breathing and intent for harmony.**

That might seem like a contradiction, but it really can be done. One of the reasons the U.S. was so hard-hit by Covid-19 is sadly due to the prevalence of preventable "co-morbidities" such as obesity, cardiovascular disease and diabetes. Catastrophic environmental disturbances are one of many relatively new, and crushing, stressors that can throw us off balance, along with the constant bickering in the news and on social media.

I strongly recommend a prolonged easy exhale as the basis of a calming breath pattern. Some people like the "3-4-8" pattern in which you breathe in deeply to a count of 3, then hold your breath in gently for 4 counts, then exhale slowly over 8 counts. This exercise can be especially effective if you find a comfortable seat—cross-legged on a small cushion is great—and put your hands on your knees, keeping the arms extended.

Prolonging the exhale is associated with activating

the parasympathetic (opposite of the fight or flight) nervous system. Prolonged exhales can significantly and quickly lower blood pressure, heart rate and pain perception.

Deep breathing has the potential to improve cognition, reduce stress, enhance attention span, and even improve sleep quality by reducing cortisol levels.

And speaking of sleep, life today is often overstimulating, so do your best to avoid additional stimulants such as caffeine, alcohol, and nicotine. Sorry to say, there really are no health reasons to indulge in any of these substances. You'll read articles about caffeine helping you concentrate, but getting good sleep helps with concentration too. There's information out there about how wine is neuro- and cardio-protective—but that's not the alcohol. It's the resveratrol in the grape skins. Better to get that from non-alcoholic supplements.

Regular physical whole-body movement is the cheapest method to reduce stress and control anxiety, according to the Anxiety and Depression Association of America (2020 study). Find what feels good—yoga, dance, swimming, rebounding, spinning, hiking, aerobics, tennis, pickleball, volleyball—and plug one into your schedule every day.

I recommend sketching out your next day as part of a bedtime routine. Make a note in your calendar about your food plan, your movement plan, including exactly what time of the day you will set aside for joyful physical activity, your meditation/yoga time (morning is ideal) and

## Five supplements for managing stress

By EMILY KANE, ND

For Senior Voice

I will mention five anti-stress supplements which may be effective in helping your quest to be a calmer, kinder person. My top five include:

**Vitamin C**, which boosts the immune system during cold, flu and virus season. Vitamin C is the foundational nutrient for tissue repair, including collagen synthesis, which makes it critical for brain, heart, and skin health, as well as immune support. We do not produce our own vitamin C (ascorbic acid) internally—we must get it from foods or supplements. Most cheap vitamin C is made from corn, but I prefer C sourced from tapioca. The ideal supplement is liposomal, from sunflower phosphatidylcholine, because this fat-soluble form will deliver C through the cells to the mitochondria.

**B complex**, particularly if you are vegan or vegetarian. B vitamins in general are nerve and brain nutrients, and many studies have elucidated the benefits of Bs for mood, stress, anxiety, depression and even serious conditions such as schizophrenia. Look for a B complex that contains methylated versions of B12 (methylcobalamin), folate (methylfolate), and the



© Danny Hooks | Dreamstime.com

P-5-P type of B6. Some folks experience a "niacin flush" with vitamin B3, but this is actually great for opening up circulation in the smaller capillaries and improving tissue oxygenation.

**Magnesium**, especially for women who tend to lose magnesium during their menses. Magnesium is a muscle relaxant that also acts directly on the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis by down-regulating stress responses, so it reduces anxiety as well as muscle cramps, including menstrual cramps. Generally, about 300 mg of magnesium at bedtime helps improve deep sleep, but up to 750 mg may be required. Too much magnesium will cause a loose stool, so work up slowly to find your optimal dose.

**Turmeric** is an all-around marvelous anti-inflammatory spice. Try buying it in bulk, from an organic source. When you cook soups or stews, put a lot of turmeric in the pot—about ¼ cup in a 4-quart stock pot. You can improve the absorption with a few

twists of freshly ground blackpepper, then simmer with onions and olive oil on low heat before adding veggies, beans and stock. You can also enjoy turmeric in delicious, blenderized "Golden Milks" with chai, black or green tea, warming spices such as cinnamon or cardamom, and veggie milks with some added fat such as ghee or MCT oil.

**GABA** at bedtime combines well with melatonin and magnesium to help turn off a chattering mind. This naturally occurring, relaxing, neurotransmitter can help counteract the multiple shocks of adrenaline and jangling surges of dopamine we all experience. GABA also has known antiseizure and antianxiety effects. A dose of 100–150 mg per day is generally sufficient. While GABA is considered safe for all ages, there are possible (though unsubstantiated) side effects of lowered blood pressure and appetite suppression. So if you have very low blood pressure or suffer from low appetite, proceed with caution.

In a nutshell, the fundamentals of self care are good food choices, making every bite worthwhile, moving your body with joy, getting enough sleep, finding meaning in your work, and nurturing a daily contemplative practice.

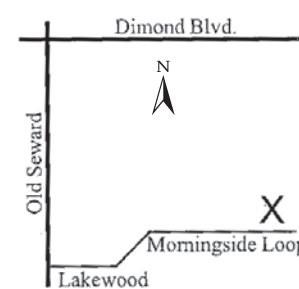
what time you plan to get to bed in order to get eight hours of sleep.

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

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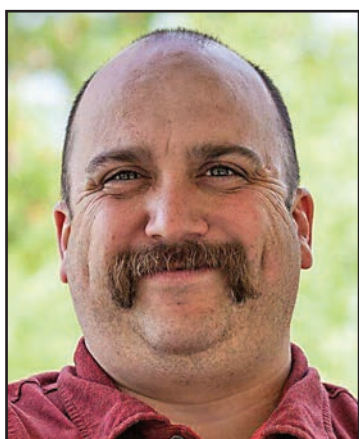




# Adapting to winter weather with your car

By **CHRISTIAN M. HARTLEY**

For Senior Voice



As cold winter months intensify, it's important that drivers take prepare their vehicles in case of snowstorms and the like. It's especially important to have the proper supplies and safety items on hand in case you get stuck or stranded while driving in wintry conditions. Being prepared can help ensure your safety and peace of mind.

One of the most important things to pack is a basic emergency kit. This should include items like blankets, warm clothing layers, gloves, hats, food that won't spoil like energy bars, a flashlight with extra batteries, a shovel, a tow strap, jumper cables, and traction mats or cat litter for ice. Consider keeping this kit in your trunk year-round so it's ready when needed.

You're less likely to get

stuck if you can see where you are going. Check your windshield wipers and replace them if they are worn out. Make sure to top off your windshield washer fluid with one that won't freeze in cold temperatures. You never dilute this fluid with water, unlike coolant.

Give your tires a safety check as well—replace them if the treads are worn down and maintain the proper air pressure. Uneven tire pressures can create decreased friction on the road which means less traction.

Some cars come equipped

with winter tires, but all-weather or snow tires are an affordable investment that can really improve traction, braking and handling in wintry driving situations. Studs are great for keeping traction on slippery hard surfaces, but it's the tread of the tires that keep you moving best in the snow.

A snow-covered vehicle is just as dangerous as a snow-covered road. Have a snow brush and ice scraper on hand to clear off all the snow from your windows, hood, roof and trunk before driving. Leaving snow on top of your car is dangerous as it can blow off onto the road while driving, obstructing visibility for other motorists. Snow can also slide off your roof over your windshield and block your view.

Always match your driving to the current road and weather conditions; taking a little extra time and care behind the wheel ensures a safer journey. When you are

out, drive slowly and leave extra space between you and other vehicles. Your stopping distance is longer in winter than summer, make sure to adjust for that. Step on the gas or brake pedals gradually. It's also wise to let someone know your intended travel route and expected arrival time when traveling in severe storms.

Keep your cell phone plugged in to maximize the battery life in case you need to use it to call for help. Keep it within reach, but not loose. Placing it into a glove box or center console or cubby in the vehicle is important, or a purse that is tucked into the center console. If you are in a serious accident, finding a phone that has been thrown to the back of your car or outside can be near impossible, especially if you are stuck. But having it within reach can make a difference of life or death.

If you do get stuck and can't get your vehicle

moving again, stay with your car for warmth and visibility to rescuers. Run the motor sparingly and open a window slightly for ventilation if needed. Make sure that your exhaust pipe is free of snow, debris or water so that the exhaust does not come back into the vehicle. Remain as calm as possible until help arrives.

Have roadside assistance. Whether through your vehicle insurance or a third-party organization, make sure that all of your vehicles have coverage so that if you get stuck, wrecked or disabled, the vehicle can get home without a huge out-of-pocket payment.

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

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# Christmas and cultural exchange with Elder Mentor Maryann Johnson

RurAL CAP Elder Mentor Team

Hello! My name is Maryann Johnson. I'm from Montana. My grandfather homesteaded there in the late 1800s, and the family is still there. They came from Norway, and my other grandparents came from Poland. My grandpa started with 360 homestead acres and turned it into 4,000 acres. He built a beautiful two-story white ranch house. His was the first home with electricity and plumbing. It was pretty exciting times. They were just starting to put up telephone lines then, at the turn of the century. We had a small mountain range to the east of us and a ski area about 60 miles from us.

It was a quaint town of 700 people: two churches, one café, and one school, kindergarten through high school. My graduating class was 40 students. Our town was a ranching community



Anchorage Elder Mentors Eva Atchak (left) and Maryann Johnson at the 2023 Walk to End Alzheimer's at the Anchorage Zoo.

Photo courtesy RurAL CAP

of cattle and wheat. In the summers I'd go and stay with my aunt and uncle, help her cook three meals a day, and spend the rest of my time riding horses and bringing in the cattle

in the fall. I lived the real Yellowstone. Of course, my mother was Polish, so I also grew up with the beautiful traditions and rituals of the Catholic church. The mass

was still in Latin then. I remember going to Mid-night Mass when I was very little for Christmas. I can still recall the cold on my face and the snow crunching underneath my feet. I had these pink rabbit fur boots. The altar in the church was covered in fresh pine branches, with blue Christmas lights, and the choir was incredible. Our town butcher sang bass and his voice was beautiful. One of my grade school teachers conducted the choir. We lived as an extended family. The coffee pot was always on, my mother was always baking something, and the doors were always unlocked. My uncles were such kind men. I remember being thrown in the air when I was little, and I remember their sparkling blue eyes. My favorite place was Tiger Butte. It got that name because it looked like a tiger laying down. We'd go up this old country dirt

road, up to the top, and there would be antelopes jumping all over before the snowstorms. All the aunts and uncles, all my cousins, everybody would get together for Christmas dinner at our original farmhouse. The women would be in this huge kitchen. Dinner would already be made and spread out on the large dining room table. The women would make the lefse days before, and it would be stored in dry stacks. Then we would take it and layer it in linen or cloth napkins, then steam it in the roasting pan. They had one of those electric oven roasters. Finally, we'd roll them up—they'd be nice and soft—and smear butter, cinnamon and sugar on top. It was like our dessert. The next room was where the men would be playing poker (my dad and uncle), then there was the parlor

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# Memories of Glennallen Community Chapel

By MARALEY MCMICHAEL  
Senior Voice Correspondent

The small space between Mt. Sanford drive and Crossroads Clinic didn't seem big enough to hold the log church building from my childhood memories. How could the main room with the cathedral ceiling, the two-story Sunday school addition, the out-houses, the "extra room" mobile home, and all those parked cars possibly fit on that small piece of land? These were my thoughts back in December 1999, as I stared at the empty space where the Glennallen Community Chapel once stood. We had recently moved to Slana and my husband and I had made a trip to Glennallen for some groceries and to eat lunch at the Caribou Café. My first memory of Glennallen Community Chapel is of sitting in the little room to the right of the pulpit area, which was front center. Mrs. Walya Hobson was my Sunday school teacher and I loved her. She was kind, she told interesting stories, and if



The Glennallen Community Chapel log building during Maraley McMichael's childhood.

Photos courtesy Glennallen Community Chapel



we remembered to bring our Bible, she gave us a shiny gold cross sticker to place on a chart on which our names were printed. The stickers had to be licked and I had never seen anything like them before. I was in second grade during the winter of 1963 and my family was new to the Glennallen area. I also vividly remember the giant icicles that hung down sometimes 4 to 5 feet off the edge of the roof. Once or twice I broke off an

page 14 please

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J. Hunter Photography

# A bird for winter: Snowy owls

By LAURA ATWOOD

For Senior Voice

Bird Treatment and Learning Center (Bird TLC) has ten Ambassador Birds in our education program. We could not release these birds back to the wild due to the severity of their injuries or because they are habituated to or imprinted on humans.

Two of these birds are snowy owls, an iconic bird of the far North. Many of us don't have the opportunity to see these owls because they are found primarily on the Arctic tundra.

Our Ambassador snowy owl, Annik, whose name means "blizzard" in Iñupiaq, came to us from Utgiagvik, one of the coldest places in Alaska. Snowy Owls are honored in Iñupiaq carvings, ceremonial regalia, and their spiritual lives.

Owls like Annik can survive in the Arctic because they are covered, head to toe, in thick feathers. Their feathers even cover their eyes. The weight of these feathers makes snowy owls the heaviest bird in Alaska.

Do snowy owls spend the winter in the Arctic? Yes. And no. Some years, there will be an irruption of snowy owls, with many birds, mostly first-year birds, migrating to southern Canada and the northern Lower 48 of the United States. Other birds, primarily females, spend the winter in Alaska's Arctic.

Snowy owls prey on small mammals, primarily

lemmings. An adult snowy can consume three to five lemmings a day. They can locate their prey by sight or sound, even in tall grass or under the snow. With their short, broad wings, these owls can glide at slow speeds while carrying prey heavier than their own weight. Snowys can even hover!

In addition to lemmings, snowy owls hunt squirrels, ptarmigan and shorebirds. These ingenious hunters will even perch on the ice of polynyas (large areas of open water surrounded by ice) far at sea to hunt for sea ducks.

Living in the 24-hour daylight of the Arctic summers means that the eyesight of snowy owls has had to adapt to allow them to see in daylight as well as in the 24-hour darkness of winter.

Even if you haven't seen a snowy owl in Alaska, you've probably seen Hedwig, the snowy owl in the Harry Potter movies. Hedwig's white plumage marks him as a male, like our Ambassador Ghost, who we sometimes endearingly refer to as a marshmallow. It takes six to eight years before a male attains his nearly fully white adult plumage.

Staff and volunteers at Bird TLC provide Ghost and Annik with opportunities to engage in natural behaviors. For instance, they can "hunt" and forage for food that is hidden in boxes, papers, bags, or toys that are scattered around their

enclosures.

Bird TLC Ambassador Birds are available for educational programs. Some Ambassadors are available for live programs, while others, like Ghost and Annik, are available for virtual programs. Contact us at [information@birdtlc.org](mailto:information@birdtlc.org) for more information.

Laura Atwood is the executive director for the Bird Treatment and Learning Center.

## Rambles

News from the Grapevine

Congratulations **Hospice of Anchorage**, selected to be the winning nonprofit in this year's **Anchorage Chamber of Commerce Gold Pan Awards**. The awards recognize "those who have shown business and entrepreneurial excellence, as well as a loyal commitment to Anchorage through community service," according to a Chamber of Commerce press statement following the awards ceremony on Nov. 17. Check out the well-done video profile of Hospice of Anchorage, its people and services at <https://bit.ly/3N1Z9x2> ... News flash from the **Upper Susitna Senior Center** Facebook page: **Bingo** will return on Dec. 1 and Dec. 15 at 8 p.m. The center's address is 16463 E. Helena Ave., off the Parks Hwy. near Talkeetna. For info, 907-733-6200 or [ussi.inc@outlook.com](mailto:ussi.inc@outlook.com) ... In other gaming news, **Valdez Senior Center's board game group** meets Tuesdays at 1 p.m. Bring a game to share or play what's available ... Also in **Valdez**, **Kellie Hales** leads **American Sign Language practice** on Thursdays, 1 p.m., at the senior center. Free for all ages, come and learn. 907-835-5032 ... **Kodiak Senior Center** notes in its December newsletter that, in maintaining a tradition of **holiday giving**, they are encouraging locals to bring in a small, donated item that will be distributed to the **Kodiak Women's Resource and Crisis Center** by Dec. 20. "We will make sure a young girl or boy gets joy this holiday season by providing these gifts." Call for more details, 907-486-6181 ... **Fairbanks North Star Borough senior activities program's** monthly group **lunch outing** will be at the **Banks Alehouse**, Dec. 5, from 12:15 to 1:45 p.m. These outings are for people to enjoy a meal together, reconnect with old friends and meet new people. Call for details,

page 14 please

### Celebrating 20 years of Assisted Living!

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# Rambles

News from the Grapevine

continued from page 13

907-459-1136 or email [marya.lewanski@fnsb.gov](mailto:marya.lewanski@fnsb.gov) ... Celebrate the holidays with ukuleles and carols at **Chugiak-Eagle River Senior Center**. The center has scheduled free **Ukelele Jamfests** on Mondays, Dec. 4, 11 and 18, from 6 to 8 p.m. in the lobby. Everyone is invited to sing along or just listen and enjoy. Bring your friends, family, ukulele or perhaps another instrument (there is also a banjo player and guitar player). A free beginner's class for ukulele newbies meets from 5 to 6 p.m. in the lobby prior to the jamfest. For more information, call 907-688-2674 ... Instructor **Maria Santa Lucia** leads **Zumba Gold** classes at **Homer Senior Center** on Tuesdays at 2 p.m. This is fun and easy-to-follow Zumba choreography that focuses on balance, range of motion and coordination, notes a post on the center's Facebook page. Cost is \$5 per class for senior center members, \$7 for nonmembers. Physician authorization and participant consent forms are required. Call for more information or to register, 907-235-4555 ... **Seward Senior Center** will hold a **Holly, Jolly Brunch** at Friday, Dec. 22 from 10:30 a.m. to noon. **Santa** will be there at 11:45 a.m. for photos and he will hand out the presents for the **gift exchange**. The center suggests donating a gift (\$5 range) at the office ahead of time, by Dec. 21, to help Santa have enough gifts to go around. The center will also celebrate the holidays with **Christmas carols** from the **Seward Strings and Chorus** on Mondays from 1 to 4 p.m. For more information, call 907-224-5604.

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

## Chapel

continued from page 12

end point to suck on, but after a good scolding from both Dad and Mom about the danger of the whole thing crashing down on me or some other little kid and what would happen if I did it again, I learned to just admire them. It wasn't until years later that I also understood Dad's comments about heat loss.

In the early years, the Sunday evening service was one of my favorite times. For at least half an hour, everyone sang favorite hymns requested by the congregation. That is where I learned the words and became familiar with the melody of many old hymns. Every once in a while, Fred Lambert would make a 3 foot x 2 foot chalk drawing during a Sunday evening service. I especially enjoyed watching a magnificent drawing unfold before my eyes with Mr. Lambert telling a story all the while. The church was dark with only a spotlight focused on the giant paper pad on his easel.

In the fourth, fifth and sixth grades we climbed the steep, narrow stairs



The current Glennallen Community Chapel.

Photo courtesy Glennallen Community Chapel

to a large second floor classroom where all three grades met together for the first 15 minutes. Then we separated into individual classrooms divided by cloth curtains. The competition of those weekly Bible drills helped me learn the names of each book and where they were located. We were also each given a small study booklet to take home and fill in the blanks each week. Special award charts hung on the walls showing the Bible verses we memorized.

Junior Church was held in the back room for ages 5 through 12 during the Sunday morning sermon, and an interesting flannel graph story was presented each week by one of the "mission" ladies. (Central Alaska Mission was the parent organization for the church, the radio station, and the Bible college.) Many times the stories involved missionaries. Out in the hallway was a large bulletin board with a map of the world and pictures of the various missionaries and information about the mission they were involved with. Sometimes we sent our Junior Church offering to the Lazy Mt. Children's Home near Palmer. Years later while living in the Mat-Su valley, I got to tour the children's home facilities which was by then being used by a different organization. I could imagine how it bustled with children 20 years earlier.

Also in the church hallway was the door to the KCAM radio station booth. In my younger years, I thought all churches broadcast their worship service over the radio. Later I realized Glennallen Community Chapel was unique in doing that—KCAM went "live" for the first time immediately following the 1964 earthquake. I some-

times peeked back during the service to see if the sign showed we were still "on air."

Every summer the Vacation Bible School program was looked forward to and well attended. There were songs, crafts, stories, games, various contests and oh so much fun. In later years, I worked as a VBS helper. High School Youth Group was held every Sunday evening in a "mission" home. My senior year, I can still remember sitting in a pew toward the back of the church during the Christmas Eve service, holding hands with the young man who would become my husband.

The old log church was torn down for safety reasons and a modern building built sometime in the 1980s, at a new location about a mile up the Glenn Highway. It is spacious and has plenty of parking. Although the name is the same, it is certainly not the church of my childhood memories.

During the 11 years we lived in Slana, we had several occasions to walk through the doors of the new building, including for a Sunday morning worship service, a wedding, a memorial service, a 50th anniversary celebration, and a retirement/good-bye party. The current building bustles with life, still broadcasts live from KCAM, and serves the needs of the community.

Now in December 2023, as I think about the "reason for the season," I am thankful for the influence of the Glennallen Community Chapel during my childhood.

Maraley McMichael is a lifelong Alaskan currently residing in Palmer. Email her at [maraleymcmichael@gmail.com](mailto:maraleymcmichael@gmail.com).



**Annual**

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Uplift someone's golden years. Contact Alvin Ancheta at 907-334-4480 or 1-800-730-6393 to learn more about this rewarding role. Make a difference today.

Our next volunteer orientation is Jan. 4-5 and Jan. 11-12, from noon to 4:30 p.m.

# Holiday parties with Access Alaska

Senior Voice Staff

Access Alaska is hosting Holiday Bash parties at its offices in Anchorage, Mat-Su and Fairbanks. Bring your family and friends and enjoy some snacks while participating in holiday crafts, games and an ugly sweater contest.

The Anchorage party will be Dec. 19, from 1 to 4 p.m. at the Access Alaska office, 1217 E. 10th Ave. RSVP required by Dec. 11. Call 907-248-4777.

In Wasilla, the party will be on Dec. 21, from 1 to 4 p.m. at the Mat-Su Health Foundation location, 777 N. Crusey St. RSVP required by Dec. 11. Call 907-357-2588.

The Fairbanks bash takes place Dec. 22, from 1 to 4 p.m. at 3399 Peger Rd. RSVP required by Dec. 11, call 907-479-7940.

All dates are subject to change, depending on weather. For more information about Access Alaska, visit [accessalaska.org](http://accessalaska.org).

# Calendar of Events

**Dec. 1-2 Healy** Healy Christmas Bazaar at the Tri-Valley Community Center. 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Dec. 1 and 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., Dec. 2. [www.healybazaar.com](http://www.healybazaar.com)

**Dec. 2 Wasilla** 2023 Mat-Su Veterans Resource Fair at Curtis D. Menard Memorial Sports Center, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Connect with fellow veterans over coffee and organizations offering local information and resources. 907-352-4404

**Dec. 2 Nome** Firemen's Carnival at Nome Recreation Center, 7 p.m. to midnight. Food, games, prizes for the whole family, including big-ticket raffle items like airline tickets, shopping sprees, airline tickets, heating fuel, more. Info: Nome Volunteer Fire Dept., 907-443-8522

**Dec. 6 Ketchikan** Ketchikan Community Chorus "Joy from the World" concert, 7 p.m. at First United Methodist Church, 400 Main Street. There will be a second concert Sunday, Dec. 10 at 3 p.m. Tickets \$20 for adults, \$15 seniors, \$5 students, free for children 5 and under. Purchase online at [www.ketchikanarts.org](http://www.ketchikanarts.org)

**Dec. 7 Nationwide** Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day

**Dec. 7 Worldwide** Hanukkah begins

**Dec. 13 Sterling** Sterling Area Senior Citizens, Inc. general membership meeting, 1 p.m. at Sterling Senior Center. 907-262-6808

**Dec. 14 North Pole** Santa's Senior Center Winter Wonderland Gourmet Luncheon fundraiser, noon at the center. Buffet style with prime rib main dish, \$50 per person. Seating is limited. Call 907-488-4663.

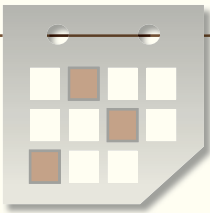
**Dec. 15 Fairbanks** Holiday party at Mary Siah Recreation Center, 2 to 4 p.m. Hosted by Fairbanks North Star Borough senior activities program. Bring a dish to share and a gift worth about \$5 for the gift exchange. 907-459-1136

**Dec. 16 Fairbanks** 2023 Winter Solstice Festival Fireworks Show, 8 p.m. Presented by the Downtown Assoc. of Fairbanks, who advise that the fireworks will launch from Shoreway Park on the north side of the Chena River and right in the heart of downtown. There are plenty of parking and viewing options nearby, but the south side of the river is the best location to watch the show. <https://wintersolsticefestivalfairbanks.com/>

**Dec. 20 Kodiak** Christmas lunch at Kodiak Senior Center, noon. Featuring cranberry-glazed Cornish hens, wild rice, cauliflower au gratin and a special dessert. Games follow at 1 p.m. 907-486-6181

**Dec. 21 Anchorage** Winter Solstice Festival at Midtown Cuddy Park, 5 to 8 p.m. Celebrate the shortest day of the year with activities for everyone. Ice skate around the oval to your favorite holiday music. Take a break by a warm fire while sipping hot chocolate. Ride on a horse-drawn wagon, hop on a dog sled for a ride around the park, or visit Santa's reindeer, and you might see Santa too. Activities are free to the public. Contact Parks and Recreation for information, 907-343-4492 or [cathy.janigo@anchorageak.gov](mailto:cathy.janigo@anchorageak.gov).

**Dec. 25 Worldwide** Christmas



## Send us your calendar items

Send to: Senior Voice, 3340 Arctic Blvd., Suite 106, Anchorage AK 99503  
[editor@seniorvoicealaska.com](mailto:editor@seniorvoicealaska.com)  
Deadline for January edition is December 15.

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# ‘Eskimo Scouts’ volunteer by thousands

By LAUREL DOWNING BILL  
Senior Voice Correspondent

When the U.S. Government needed them, Alaska’s Native population came out in droves. From the beaches of Bristol Bay to the far corners of Bethel, Kotzebue and Barrow, villagers didn’t hesitate to provide Alaska with a line of defense after the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941.

Col. Marvin “Muktuk” Marston, who’d been put in charge of organizing the Alaska Territorial Guard, traveled along 5,200 miles of western Alaska coastline to personally address the Natives, including a stop in the Norton Sound village of King Island:

“Men and women of King Island, I am here representing the President of the United States and the Governor of Alaska [Ernest Gruening]. You know that we are at war with the Japanese.

“I have been to Kuskokwim, Point Barrow and up to Kobuk and the Noatak rivers to visit all of you. I have seen more Eskimos than any Eskimo, and everywhere I find them to be fine people and fine Americans. They are helping in this war 100 percent.

“We need you to be the eyes and ears of the Army. You know how to hunt the seal and the walrus. You’re fine shots. I want every man who is willing to join the Alaska Territorial Guard.”

As Marston and Capt. Carl Scheibner traveled by dogs and sleds with an interpreter along the coast and into the Interior, they recruited and organized the homeland defense. Approximately 6,000 Natives were asked to join the Guard, and although there was no money to pay the force and little equipment available, 100 percent enlisted.

These were the original “Eskimo Scouts.”

The Scouts were accomplished shooters. And even though the government could only issue them outdated Enfield rifles, they made every shot count.

In his book, “Men of the Tundra,” Marston recounts a ceremony that lasted hours because all 3,000 in attendance received medals for “expert marksman.”

The Inupiat and the Yup’ik learned the art of military reconnaissance along the shores of the Bering Sea. Young men and women routinely patrolled the coastline, keeping a sharp eye out for intruders in a war that would eventually reach Alaska by way of the Aleutians. Many scouts earned commendations for shooting down Japanese air balloons carrying bombs, eavesdropping on radio transmissions, and rescuing

downed airmen.

Alaska disbanded the Territorial Guard in 1947, with no fanfare for the volunteers who proudly wore World War I-era uniforms bearing a blue patch with the stars of the Big Dipper.

It wasn’t until 2004 that the Alaska unit was officially recognized as military veterans. In 2008, the U.S. Army finally granted formal military discharge certificates to former members of the Guard, which now only numbers a few. And those who qualify also can receive a headstone, a U.S. flag and burial in a national cemetery.

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



Alaska Natives eagerly volunteered to serve in the Territorial Guard during World War II.

Alaska State Library

## Here Kitty!

### Across

- 1 Kind of lift or card
- 5 Hindu social division
- 10 Green gem
- 14 Spellbound
- 15 Per \_\_\_\_ (yearly)
- 16 Atlas stat
- 17 They take “pride” in each other
- 19 Pesky insect
- 20 Chemical suffix
- 21 Branches
- 22 Some showdowns
- 23 It’s often sloppy
- 24 Wood sorrels
- 25 Spanish aunt
- 26 Milne marsupial
- 27 Civet of Asia
- 31 Striped wildcat
- 34 Farm young
- 36 Flowery verse
- 37 Ruckuses
- 38 Kind of cross
- 39 \_\_\_\_ Bator, Mongolia

- 40 Old Olds
- 41 Bay window
- 42 Consumers
- 43 Large spotted feline of tropical America
- 45 Gives the green light
- 46 Rascal
- 47 “Que \_\_\_\_?” (Sp.)
- 49 Basic unit of electric current
- 52 Grounds
- 55 Pub orders
- 56 Manila bean
- 57 Continental coin
- 58 Leopards and the like
- 60 Goatee’s locale
- 61 Detergent plant
- 62 Western Indians

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|----------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 63 Tolkien creatures       | 11 “Rule Britannia” composer | 39 Battleship letters       |
| 64 No-cal drink            | 12 Bargain                   | 41 Units of resistance      |
| 65 Brazilian soccer legend | 13 Vittles                   | 42 Imperial decree          |
|                            | 18 Kind of plan or show      | 44 Some cross-breed cats    |
|                            | 22 “Buenos ____”             | 45 Stable worker            |
|                            | 25 Be a snitch               | 47 Burgundy grape           |
|                            | 26 Legal matter              | 48 Perspective              |
|                            | 27 Jezebel’s idol            | 49 Playing marble           |
|                            | 28 ____ slaw                 | 50 Traveler’s stop          |
|                            | 29 Jewish month              | 51 Outmoded                 |
|                            | 30 Sawbucks                  | 52 Art ____                 |
|                            | 31 Canvas cover              | 53 Essen’s river            |
|                            | 32 Inkling                   | 54 Mystery writer           |
|                            | 33 Thug                      | 55 Cougar                   |
|                            | 34 Carnival                  | 58 Moose ____, Saskatchewan |
|                            | 35 Unlock, in verse          | 59 Trophy                   |
|                            | 38 Kind of school            |                             |

Crossword answers on page 22





# Eddie Muller’s case of the missing marshmallow monkey

By **NICK THOMAS**  
*Tinseltown Talks*

If reading bedtime stories to the grandkids is a cherished family tradition, Eddie Muller has an unusual tale to share this holiday season: a gritty feline sleuth searches for a stolen artifact while encountering a host of seedy underground characters prowling through a shadowy urban setting.



If that sounds like the plot from 1940s film noir cinema, you’re no dope. In his first published children’s book, “Kitty Feral and the Case of the Marshmallow Monkey,” the Turner Classic Movies host has channeled his film noir expertise onto the pages of a new book for kids age 4 and up. Toning down the traditionally dark stylized themes from early crime fiction thrillers was a no-brainer for Muller ([www.eddiemuller.com](http://www.eddiemuller.com)) and Running Press Kids

Turner Classic Movies host Eddie Muller has channeled his film noir expertise onto the pages of a new children’s book, “Kitty Feral and the Case of the Marshmallow Monkey.”

David M. Allen photo

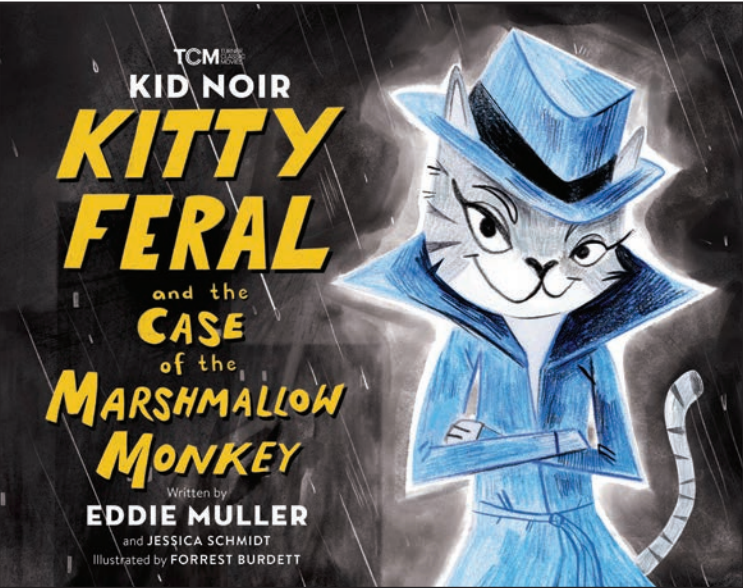


Photo courtesy Running Press

publishers ([www.runningpress.com](http://www.runningpress.com)). The result is a cute mystery tale with animal characters that cleverly reference popular classic noir films, including one of the best from 1941. “‘The Maltese Falcon’ seemed a perfect template,” said Muller from his home in the San Francisco Bay Area. “Film noir themes revolve around the most diabolical and dastardly motivations that are not suitable for a children’s book. But many are detective stories, so the idea of a simple quest, like

a treasure hunt, seemed adaptable for kids.” Just like private detective Sam Spade’s search for the precious ‘Falcon’ statuette, Kitty Feral pursues a stolen artifact (a Marshmallow Monkey) and along the way, interacts with some interesting characters, driving the plot. Kitty is also on a mission to locate kidnapped crime-fighting partner Mitch the Mutt. When originally approached by co-author Jessica Schmidt with the idea, Muller says he jumped at the opportunity, pro-

vided the artwork would emulate the style of classic noir film. Drawn by Forrest Burdett in glorious noir-ish black-and-white and distinctively skewed viewer angles, the Oregon-based artist added a splash of vivid blue highlights to Kitty who roams the dark alleys, deserted city rooftops, and eerie waterfront in search of a missing Marshmallow Monkey—a stolen sweet treat. While obviously aimed at children, adults familiar

page 22 please

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Art of the North Galleries photo by Oscar Avellanada-Cruz





# Getting back to the basics about wills

By KENNETH KIRK

For Senior Voice

I enjoy watching the presidential debates every four years. I think the first one I saw was Carter-Ford in 1976, when I wasn't even old enough to vote.

But there is a common mistake that candidates make in these debates. They assume that everyone watching knows about all of the stuff which the political reporters have been talking about all week. A lot of the most critical swing voters—the ones who are actually watching to decide who to vote for, as opposed to just rooting for their favored candidate—have not been watching the news during the week, so they don't follow what the candidates are talking about.

For instance, in 2016, John McCain kept making references to "Joe the Plumber," without actually explaining who Joe the Plumber was. He had a chance to score political points, but he missed a lot of people.

Nearly all of us do that in some fashion. If we have a lot of information about a particular thing, we tend to forget that other people don't have the same information. In estate planning, that means we often assume that clients understand the basics about, for instance, how a will works.

So, since my last two columns were about fairly technical stuff, I thought I would take a step back today and focus on some basics. Here are the most common questions I hear about wills:

**What does a will cover?** It is actually easier to answer this question by saying what a will does not cover. It does not cover anything that has a designated beneficiary, like a bank account that has a POD designation, or a property that has a transfer-on-death deed. It does not cover items that are owned jointly with right



of survivorship. And it does not cover anything which is not in your name, for instance assets in a trust. The will covers all the rest of the estate.

Example: I leave a will which says that my account at First National Bank goes to Junior, my account at Edward Jones goes to Susie, and my pickup truck goes to Buford. However, I put Susie on the bank account as a joint owner so she can help me pay the bills, and the truck is also jointly held with Susie. Despite what the will says, Susie would get everything.

**Does a will override a trust?** Yes and no. If the assets in question are in the trust, the will doesn't apply. If I quitclaim my cabin to the trust, and the trust says that the cabin goes to Buford, but I say in my will that the cabin goes to Junior, the trust effectively overrides the will. Buford gets the cabin regardless of what the will says.

**Does a will need to be notarized?** It does not have to be, but it does if you want it to be "self-proving." You want the will to be self proving, partly because it avoids an unnecessary hearing at the beginning of the probate. More importantly if anybody challenges the will, if it is not self-proving, the executor has to prove that it was validly signed. That can be difficult when it is years later and the witnesses can't be located or don't remember.

But no, the will does not have to be notarized. It does need to be signed

**What does a will cover? It is actually easier to answer this question by saying what a will does not cover.**

in front of two witnesses. I have seen people type up a will, and then sign it in front of a notary but without witnesses. That is not a valid will.

**Can a will be hand-written?** Yes, and if the material parts of the will are in your own hand, it does not need two witnesses. That is called a "holographic will." It is not self-proving, though, so it still leaves the burden on the executor to prove up the will.

(For my fussier readers, I do understand that hand-written, i.e. cursive, is not the same as written in your own hand. You can print it by hand, and that can still be a valid holographic will.)

Normally I would never recommend relying on a holographic will. During the first part of the pandemic, when it was difficult to arrange witnesses, I sometimes had to recommend that clients write up a holographic will as a

temporary fix. If you did that, you should replace it as soon as possible with a regular will.

**Can you write on your will?** No, good heavens, no. Writing on your original will invalidates it. Don't do that!

**Does the will have to be filed with the court?** Not in this state. In some states, a will is not valid unless it was filed with the court before you died. In Alaska there is an optional system to deposit your will with the court system, but it is not required.

If you don't file your will with the court, you need to make sure it is safely protected. If your heirs cannot find the original will after you are gone, they will have to jump through a lot of extra legal hoops to try to get a copy accepted.

**Is there anything else a will covers?** If you have minor children, the will can dictate who will be the guardian of the children

if neither parent can take care of them. That is really important, because it can stave off disputes between family members over who will care for them. It would be bad enough for your children if they lost their parents, but imagine they go from that trauma right into being stuck in the middle of a custody dispute. So if you know any parents with minor children, encourage them to get their wills done.

Vince Lombardi once started a team meeting by holding up a ball and saying "gentlemen, this is a football." John Wooden would start his first practice every year by teaching his players how to put their socks on the right way. The first thing they taught us in the army was how to line up properly. Sometimes you need to start with the basics.

*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. And that way, you're not basic.*



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# App store refunds, junk calls, password managers

By **BOB DELAURENTIS**

*Bob's Tech Talk*

**Q.** Is there a way to get a refund for apps purchased in an online store?

**A.** There are numerous app stores but the two largest are from Apple and Google, and both offer a refund process.

Keep in mind that there are two types of purchases. One type is the cost of the app itself and the other type is an in-app purchase or subscription.

The rules are different depending on the purchase type. Requesting a refund for the purchase price of an app is straightforward. In-app subscriptions are much more varied, policies are affected by terms and conditions of each individual app. Refunds are rare, usually your only recourse is to cancel the subscription. The Apple App Store allows you to request a refund at [reportaproblem.apple.com](https://reportaproblem.apple.com).

The Google Play Store works best when the request is made within 48 hours of the original purchase. Start by looking up your purchase history, and tap the “More” button next to the appropriate purchase. That will reveal a menu with additional instructions to request a refund for that item.

**Q.** How can I switch password managers?

**A.** The basic procedure is to export all the items in

a password manager into a plain text file. This file will not be encrypted, so it should be treated as temporary: an unlocked home until the data it contains is transferred to a safer place such as your new password manager.

I recently switched from 1Password to Apple’s built-in iCloud Passwords. I have written about 1Password before, and it has served me well for over 15 years. However, the price increase for 1Password, along with improvements to Apple’s free built-in tools in macOS 14 Sonoma, makes it the right time to switch.

Changing password managers is not for the faint of heart. It should only be done when you have no other choice. It requires careful handling of sensitive data.

Apple makes this easier because its built-in Notes app supports encrypted notes. In my case, I was able to cut and paste the contents of the temporary text file into an encrypted Apple Note. Once safely backed up there, I could slowly move the important passwords into iCloud Passwords.

Each platform has specific capabilities but all of them support some kind of export and some kind of encrypted notes. Just be sure to use the one that works on your system.

**Q.** My cellphone rings 10 or more times a day, and maybe one ring is a call I

want to answer. What can I do to reduce the number of junk phone calls?

**A.** If you rarely receive vital calls from people unknown to you, I suggest changing the default settings on your smartphone to block unknown callers. With that setting turned on, callers from numbers the phone does not recognize because they are not in your contacts or recent call list will be sent to voicemail directly.

To do this on an Apple phone, go to Settings -> Phone -> Silence Unknown Callers.

To do this on an Android phone (later models only), open the Phone app, tap the three-dot menu and select “Settings.” Tap “Block Numbers” and toggle the “Block Unknown Callers” button.

This will eliminate most if not all the unwanted calls. In some cases, you may need to turn this setting off temporarily, but when you think about it, how many people really should have unfiltered instant access to your attention nowadays?

There are other options,

## Wander the Web

Here are my picks for worthwhile browsing this month:

### Wayback Machine

I first wrote about the Wayback Machine five years ago. This important site archives portions of the ever-changing internet. The contents do not appear in most search engines. However, it can be searched directly to find useful information.

[archive.org/web/](https://archive.org/web/)

### Shark Attack Tracker

Ocearch is a global research organization that focuses on the ocean, with special attention to the large denizens of the deep.

[ocearch.org](https://ocearch.org)

### Lego Videos

The Lego website has a rich collection of videos aimed toward parents and children alike. Follow this link and click on the Videos button.

[lego.com](https://lego.com)

but I think they are a losing battle. The only way to communicate clearly that you do not wish to be bothered is to ignore the calls entirely. Ignoring calls may reduce their frequency over time. But absent federal reg-

ulations that carry serious penalties, I fear phone abuse will continue to be a serious problem. Bob has been writing about technology for over three decades. He can be contacted at [techtalk@bobdel.com](mailto:techtalk@bobdel.com).

# Smart home devices for aging in place

By **JIM MILLER**

*Savvy Senior*

**Dear Savvy Senior:** I’ve been talking to my mobility-challenged mother, who lives alone, about automating her house with some smart home products to make it more convenient. She’s very interested but we’d like to get your opinion as to which types of smart devices are most helpful for seniors aging in place. –*Searching Daughter*

**Dear Searching:** If your mother is game, smart home products—such as

smart lights, video doorbells and voice-activated speakers—can be very useful for aging in place. These devices can add safety and convenience to a home by providing voice and app-controlled operation, which is extremely helpful for seniors who have mobility issues or reduced vision.

Smart home technology can also provide family members peace-of-mind by giving them the ability to electronically keep tabs

*page 21 please*

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# Kodiak shines as a best place to visit

## Also: More women are traveling solo

By **DIMITRA LAVRAKAS**

Senior Voice Travel  
Correspondent

### Travel agents are coming back

Many of you in your senior years still avoid the use of computers. This is both good and bad. Good because it makes you comfortable not having to wrestle with the never-ending new applications and websites, but bad because you could shop for vacation bargains online.

Travel disruptions in recent years due to the pandemic, lack of trained pilots and extreme weather, look to be a permanent consideration in your vacation plans.

That's where travel agents come in and can save you time and deflect any problems that come your way.

Triple A says there are seven good reasons to use one:

1. They save you time
2. They take the stress out of traveling
3. Travelers themselves, they offer expert recommendations
4. Been there, done that and learned not to do it again
5. They will handle the unexpected
6. Help with getting through changing travel conditions
7. Will show you the world picture of where you are

### Road Scholar sees rise in solo women travelers

Road Scholar, the company for older travelers, released a report in November on trends they've identified from a survey of 600 customers, and a dominant theme was traveling solo. According to the report, 85 percent of Road Scholar's 80-100,000 annual travelers are women and of those, 20 to 30 percent travel alone, with the number rising. Of the 600 surveyed women who have taken Road Scholar trips, 60 percent have gone alone at least once. Why? 26 percent say it makes it easier to meet new people

and make friends when solo; 22 percent like having the autonomy to make their own decisions and spend time as they wish; 21 percent like having their own space (i.e. hotel room); 15 percent want to be able to choose the travel destination or the trip they're most interested in; 9 percent like having alone time at the end of the day to process what they've learned and reboot; 7 percent love how solo travel makes them feel liberated and empowered; 6 percent have no partner to travel with and so go solo; and, 6 percent say they can travel when they want and don't have to coordinate with others' schedules. And while trends like higher female longevity and high senior divorce rates play into the solo travel trend, 60 percent of the solo travelers were married.

Check the report out at <https://www.roadscholar.org>

### Kodiak named to World's Best Places to Travel in 2024

Online travel advisory site Travel Lemming ranks Kodiak as No. 8 on its annual list of the World's 50 Best Travel Destinations.

Travel Lemming is an online travel guide with more than 10 million annual readers.

While Alaska is a popular tourist destination, few people visit Kodiak Island, a truly hidden gem. With so many activities, there's certain to be one outdoor lovers remember for the rest of their lives, like scenic hikes, fishing, and bear-viewing tours, as Kodiak is home to a subspecies of brown bears that dwarf other brownies on an average of 1.5 to 2 times in size.

Travel Lemming writer Matthew Reppond commented, "Leave the crowded tourist traps behind. Venture off the beaten path to this often-overlooked corner of the country and explore black sand beaches, verdant forests, and mist-clad mountains. There's also a rich local history that combines Native Alaskan, Eastern European, Scandi-



A commanding view of Kodiak and beyond.

Dimitra Lavrakas photo

navian, and Pacific Islander cultures."

And Kodiak has, for such a small population, a wealth of museums—Kodiak History Museum, The Alutiiq Museum, the Kodiak Mar-

itime Museum, and Kodiak Military History Museum.

Travel Lemming's full list of top 10 places to travel in 2024 are: 1. Yucatan, Mexico; 2. Gizo, Solomon Islands; 3. Stavanger, Nor-

way; 4. Antigua, Guatemala; 5. Memphis, Tennessee; 6. Phú Quốc, Vietnam; 7. St. John's, Canada; 8. Kodiak, Alaska; 9. Guatapé, Colombia; 10. Eureka Springs, Arkansas.



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## Devices

continued from page 19

on their elder loved one when they can't be there.

If you're interested in adding some smart home products to your mom's house, she'll need home Wi-Fi installed, and she'll need either a smartphone, tablet or smart speaker to operate them. To help you get started, here are some different types of devices to consider that are very helpful to older adults.

**Smart speakers.** A smart speaker—like the Amazon Echo, Google Nest or Apple HomePod—can serve as the brains of a smart home, controlling the devices with voice commands or automating them.

These devices can also play your mom's favorite music, read audiobooks, make calls, set timers and alarms, provide reminders for medications, appointments and other things, check traffic and weather, answer questions, call for help in emergency situations and much more—all done by voice commands.

**Smart light bulbs.** To help prevent home falls, which are often caused by fumbling around a dark room looking for a light switch, smart light bulbs will let your mom turn on and off the lights by voice command, smartphone or tablet. These bulbs can also change brightness and color and be programmed to come on and off whenever she wants.

**Smart plugs.** These small

units plug into a standard outlet and connect to the internet. That means your mom can control whatever she plugs into them, from a space heater to a coffee maker, using her voice or phone.

**Video doorbell.** Safety is also a concern for older adults, especially those who live alone. A video doorbell would let your mom see and speak to visitors at the door without having to walk over and open it.

**Smart locks.** For convenience and safety, smart locks would give your mom keyless entry to her home, provide customized access to family, friends and caregivers, and let you monitor who comes and goes from your mom's house.

**Smart thermostat.** This

lets your mom preprogram or manually control the temperature in her home with voice command or via phone, and let you monitor it too.

**Smart smoke alarms.** These will alert your mom when smoke or carbon monoxide is detected and will also send alerts to your phone if a problem is detected.

**Stovetop shut-off.** To prevent home cooking fires, smart stovetop shut-off devices, like the iGuard-Stove, will turn off electric and gas stovetops when left unattended, and will alert you via text.

**Medical alert system.** These devices provide wearable wrist and/or necklace emergency buttons that would allow your mom to call for help if she were

to fall or need assistance. Many systems today also provide voice activated and fall detection features, and caregiver tracking apps that will let you keep tabs on her.

**Cameras and smart sensors.** If your mom needs more in-depth monitoring, there are indoor cameras you can install so you can see, hear and talk to her from your phone. Or, if that's too intrusive, you can install smart contact sensors on her doors so you can know when she comes and goes, or on her refrigerator door so you can know if she's eating.

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

## Video assistance with Social Security questions

Social Security Administration

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

The video service locations are available at:

► In Nome, Norton Sound Health Corporation, located at 1000 Greg Krushek Ave. Video service is

available for walk-ins on a first come, first served basis, on the second and fourth Wednesdays, 9 a.m. to noon.

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

► Kodiak Job Center, 211 Mission Road, Suite 103. Video service is available here for walk-ins on a first come, first served basis, on the second and fourth Tuesdays, 9 a.m. to noon.

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

Most Social Security services are available to

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

count.

If they already receive Social Security benefits, they can start or change direct deposit online, request a replacement SSA-1099, and if they need proof of their benefits, they can print or download a current Benefit Verification Letter from their account.



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# Muller

continued from page 17

with classic movies will enjoy the subtle references to noir films. For instance, Kitty begins the search at the Acme Book Shop—similar (but naturally less risqué) to a Humphrey Bogart scene right out of 1946’s “The Big Sleep.”

A dockside warehouse image captures a scene from “99 River Street,” a theater marquee acknowledges producer Val Lewton’s “Leopard Man,” and there are plenty of obvious

references to “On the Waterfront,” “Casablanca,” “Shakedown,” and “The Postman Always Rings Twice.”

As for the book’s cast of supporting characters, rotund owl boss Casper Nighthawk and sleazy Wilmer the Weasel represent villainous Kasper Gutman (Sydney Greenstreet) and Wilmer Cook (Elisha Cook Jr.) from “The Maltese Falcon.” Sinister leather-clad Johnny Gila is distinctly reptilian, a nod to William Talman’s title role in 1953’s “The Hitch-hiker.” “People have said he looked like a Gila monster,”

notes Muller. And speaking of “Perry Mason” actors, there’s even a character representing Raymond Burr’s villainous roles (but we’ll leave that one for readers to uncover).

As for Kitty, the character is modeled after actress Ella Raines, especially her sultry role in 1944’s “The Phantom Lady,” even though Muller doesn’t formally acknowledge Kitty’s gender in the pages.

“Kitty was clearly inspired by Raines—a smart, independent woman intent on solving a crime herself in the film, not the typical femme fatale character,”

explained Muller. As a bonus, if reading the story to kids, grandparents can test the youngsters’ powers of observation by asking if they can spot something intentionally omitted from the artist’s images of Kitty.

Of course, most of the book’s film references will be beyond young readers, but Muller thinks adults reading the story to their little ones will enjoy opening up a monochromatic world not usually seen on cellphones, laptops, or while gaming. And, perhaps, some may even come to appreciate the screen imagery in classic films

enjoyed by their parents and grandparents.

“Since the book came out, I’ve attended film festivals that lasted several days and people told me they were buying the book for their grandkids,” recalls Muller. “They’ve returned a second day, reporting they read it to them and that the kids loved it. So that’s really gratifying.”

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

# Mysteries

continued from page 4

over your notes to see if any connections emerge. Take your “jottings” and compile an easy-to-follow narrative. Think of it as your coherent summary of facts. Include ‘when X occurs, I feel Y’, or ‘when I do X, Y happens’. Reviewing, reworking, and rewriting your jottings into detailed notes will strengthen your grasp of the information.

**Recognize vital facts from incidental facts.** Logical thoughts have premises and conclusions. Premises support conclusions. Your statements must not only be valid, but also sound. Valid means the statements have good structure, and sound means they are both valid and based on true premises. Incidental facts are not the main portion of your symptomatic summary, but the vital

facts are.

**Never give up the opportunity to listen.** Verbally sharing your symptoms links what you already know about your body or mind, to what is happening that is new. Stating your symptoms out loud to others aids in maximum recall by transferring brain data from its temporary storage, when you first encounter info, to long-term memory. This minimizes loss of details or information by prompting you to remember facts and capturing more pieces of the medical puzzle.

**Visualize symptoms.** Converting information to images makes it easier to recall. This “method of loci,” a technique that originated in ancient Greece, was used by Sherlock Holmes to imagine he was storing bits of information in a “memory palace”. To remember a piece of information, you “drop it” along the path

and later retrace your steps and “pick it up.” By visually drawing the places that ache or where pain is occurring the impression gets embedded in your mind.

Suggestion: on a piece of paper draw an outline of your whole body. If you are experiencing cardiac issues, write words that capture your symptoms such as “breath” across throat area (gasping for breath), and “flutter” over the chest (for rapid heart beats), and on the left arm “shaky” (how your arms feel). Then retrace and review your body imagery

with your provider showing exactly where you are experiencing pain or symptoms. This visualization helps you remember the data and info.

Once your information is fully compiled, separating what is most necessary from what is not, and you still need answers to determine what ails you, further detective work may be in order. After exhausting primary available sources, consider reaching out to these additional agencies:

The State of Alaska Department of Public Health one resource. Also the Mayo

Clinic, Swedish Health Services or the Center for the Undiagnosed Patient, a specialty Cedars-Sinai clinic founded in 2017 to diagnose and treat patients whose conditions have defied identification is another source of medical advice.

Keep up the persistence with consistency, and hopefully with tenacity you will find answers.

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

Crossword answers from page 16

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

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Elder

continued from page 12

with one of those old-fash-  
ioned pianos that plays by  
itself.

My parents had had  
friends who came down  
from Alaska in the ‘50s and  
they showed slides at our  
house when I was about five  
or six, and I knew right then  
and there I wanted to go to  
Alaska. I came up on Oct. 7,  
1976. It was a lot of snow.

I have served as an Elder  
Mentor at several schools  
in Anchorage and have  
thoroughly enjoyed my  
experience, especially the  
diversity Anchorage has to  
offer. I have been exposed  
to so many different cul-  
tures from my own, and  
that has become so valu-  
able and rewarding to me  
personally. We as all people  
of this planet have more in  
common than we do other-  
wise. Human emotions are  
human emotions.

I immensely respect the  
professionals, the staff and  
teachers at our Anchorage  
schools who do so much  
to support our kids and  
encourage their success,  
safety and growth as young  
people. School culture has  
changed so much since I  
was growing up to be more  
inner-directed than based  
on outer authority, which  
is powerful.

I first started as an Elder  
Mentor at the school my  
grandchild was attending.  
I love working one on one  
with kids, assisting them  
with reading, and helping  
them with their class as-  
signments in all subjects.  
I had this one student  
who was reading this story  
about dirt. It really made  
me laugh that he didn’t  
like dirt at all. I had never  
met a child who didn’t like  
playing in the dirt. Well,  
some days later we were out  
in the garden, and all of a  
sudden he started getting  
his hands in the dirt and  
having a great time. That

was so much fun to see.

Our children need us.  
Our teachers need us. So  
many kids need a con-  
nection with a positive  
role model, a grandparent  
figure, a safe, caring, lov-  
ing mentor. Also, because  
Anchorage is so diverse, if  
you or someone you know  
is bilingual, we really need  
you. The teachers are over-  
loaded and they are doing  
their best, but any help  
from the community is  
appreciated.

It can be intimidating  
entering a school, not  
knowing how it might go  
with the kids, learning new  
material and familiarizing  
yourself with your school  
culture, but it is worth it.  
I have learned and grown  
so much, my network has  
expanded, and I’m building  
community where I live.  
My advice is to jump in  
and start swimming. I have  
a card from school on my  
fridge right now that says,  
“You are wonderful!” I get  
lots of beautiful cards from  
the students saying thank  
you.

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Mentor in your  
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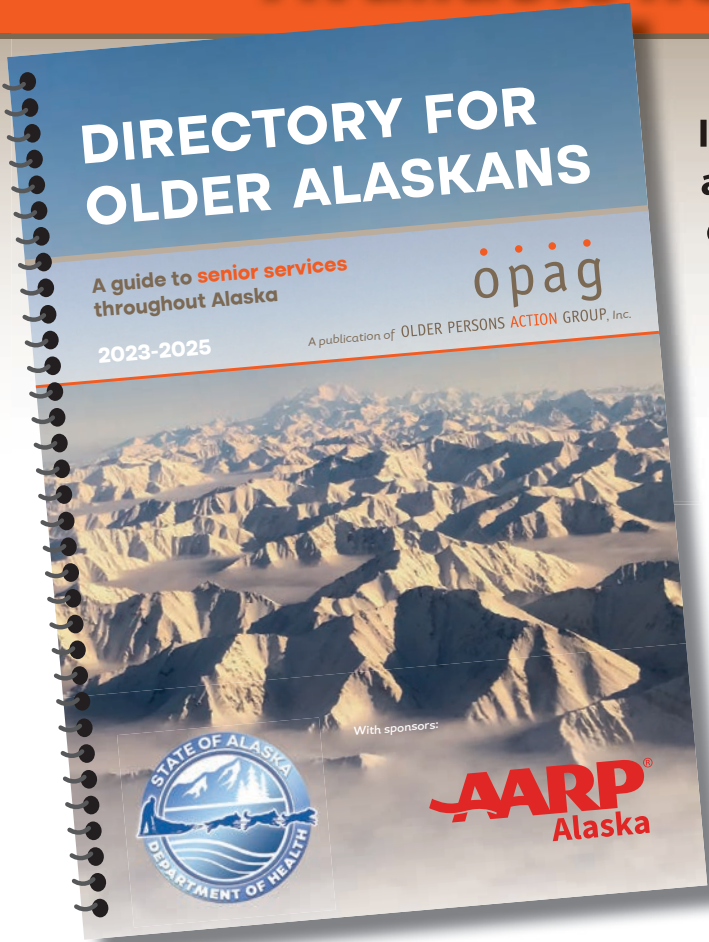
Make sure you visit this  
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Your guide to senior services  
throughout Alaska.

Revised and improved, this booklet is packed with up-to-date information  
for people in need of senior-related services:

- Comprehensive listings of state agencies and programs, including contact  
telephone numbers.
- Local contact numbers for national programs like Medicare and  
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- Regional listings, alphabetized by city of local organizations and services.
- New for this edition: icons to quickly locate most-needed services such as  
housing, transportation, health care.

- |                    |                           |                    |
|--------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|
| • Assisted-living  | • Volunteer organizations | • Legal assistance |
| • Health Care      | • Job programs            | • Housing          |
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# SENIOR SATURDAYS

**SATURDAYS, 11 AM - 1 PM  
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A time and space has been set aside to assist area seniors one-on-one or in small groups.

**Opportunities For**  
Basic Help with Technology and Applications  
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This project was made possible in part by the Institute of Museum and Library Services CAGML-247051-OMLS-21.



[WWW.ANCHORAGELIBRARY.ORG](http://WWW.ANCHORAGELIBRARY.ORG)



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

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



# 1-877-625-2372

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

### **Anchorage Area**

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

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

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

### **Southeast Alaska**

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

### **Mat-Su Borough**

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

### **Fairbanks North Star Borough**

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

### **Bristol Bay Native Association**

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