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Senior Voice

A publication of Older Persons
Action Group, Inc. Fred

Serving Alaskans 50+ Since 1978

Volume 45, Number 9 September 2022

**Make your
voice heard!**

Fill out the Alaska
Commission on Aging
senior survey inside

**Resources for Alaska
grandparents raising
their grandchildren.**

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abound around the state.

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Below: Members of the Anchorage OLE! (Opportunities for Lifelong Education) walking and hiking group stop for a photo during an annual walking tour of the Government Hill neighborhood in Anchorage. OLE offers a wealth of educational and recreational opportunities for learners age 50 and older, and starts its fall semester this month. Read the story on page 16 for more details.

Susan Barrickman photo,
courtesy OLE!



2022
National Mature
Media Awards
Winner



Senior Survey: Alaska needs to hear from you

Alaska Commission on Aging

What do you think are the most important issues affecting Alaska seniors today? What services are lacking that would make your community a better

place to live and age? Do you think Alaska is a great place to live, raise a family, and grow old? How can we make Alaska a better place to live our golden years? The Alaska Commission on Aging wants to hear your input on these topics and

others related to aging in Alaska. If you are an Alaskan resident age 55 years and older, we invite you to complete the enclosed 2022 Alaska Senior Survey in this edition of the Senior Voice and to return the survey

using the self-addressed, stamped envelope by October 1. Or take the same survey online at www.surveymonkey.com/r/ACOA. Your opinions matter and we want to hear them! Moreover, your responses will be totally anonymous.

For further information, please contact the Alaska Commission on Aging at 907-465-3250 or send us an email addressed to hss.acoa@alaska.gov. Thank you for taking part in this important state plan process for Alaska seniors.

Inside info from travel experts at Age Smart forum

Senior Voice Staff

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

center, with appetizers and refreshments provided, and also streamed via Zoom. This month’s presentation topic is “Travel: Here, Near and Beyond,” with guest speakers Gretchen Hackney, luxury travel specialist with Cruise Planners of Alaska; Jin

Chen, chief operations officer with Skylar Travel; and Scott McMurren, from Alaska Travelgram. The “Age Smart – Let’s Talk” series is a monthly forum on a topic of interest and importance to Alaskans who want to be thoughtful about how to make good choices as they grow older.

The series is developed to provide working age adults with information necessary to plan and fulfill a secure, healthy and satisfying life after 60 (all ages are welcome). Each month the series highlights a particular topic with a variety of formats, including issue experts, panel discussions,

interactive presentations, and plenty of time for questions. Admission is free and open to everyone. Presentation begins at 6:30. Doors open at 6 p.m. Register at https://events.aarp.org/AgeSmart_2022. Zoom details will be provided with registration.

“Hold Them Accountable” campaign targets Congressional candidates

By BEVERLY CHURCHILL
Alaska Move to Amend

Big, Outside money is flooding our Alaska elections this season. Alaska’s strong, citizen-initiated campaign finance law was struck down by the courts last fall, and the Legislature failed to act to correct the problem, leaving our elections wide-open to this form of legalized corruption. Recent polls show that 72% of Alaskans want limits on such spending. The citizens are pushing back. The “Hold Them

Accountable” campaign is asking each candidate to sign a pledge to honor the wishes of most Alaskans by supporting an amendment to the U.S. Constitution that would overrule the court and restore our authority to set and enforce our own campaign finance laws. Since the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in the Citizens United v. FEC case that corporations are persons with constitutional rights, and that campaign finance laws may be unconstitutional as they impede the freedom of speech for such

persons, the spending on political campaigns has been ever increasing. The only way to correct this is with a U.S. Constitutional Amendment, initiated by Congress and ratified by 38 states. Right now there are three bills pending in the U.S. House of Representatives proposing such an amendment. While Alaska Move to Amend, Inc. – affiliated with the national Move to Amend – is supporting HJR 48, spokeswoman Sharman Haley says the group is asking

Congressional candidates to support whichever version they prefer. Concerned citizens are encouraged to support the campaign by checking out the www.akmovetoamend.org website or AKMoveToAmend Facebook page. Importantly, voters need to be educated on the topic and ask candidates about their position on the issue of unlimited contributions in political campaigns. Candidates need to hear from voters that this is an issue that concerns them deeply. Here

is a list of the candidates, contact them now and voice your concern. Information on all candidates may be found on the state website at: <https://www.elections.alaska.gov/Core/candidate-list-prim.php>. Beverly Churchill is a member of Alaska Move to Amend, whose mission includes educating Alaskans on constitutional issues regarding personhood and money as a form of free speech.

Networking for Anchorage, Mat-Su area providers

Senior Voice Staff

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

fast, sponsored by Older Persons Action Group, Inc., is an opportunity for all the above. Informal, early and free, the monthly event has been meeting virtually online via Zoom, but is resuming in-person meetings on site for some months. The September

meeting is Sept. 14, hosted by Baxter Senior Living. Begins at 8 a.m. Call Older Persons Action Group, Inc. at 907-276-1059 to RSVP for this event, or for more information on future events and to be added to our e-mail reminder and Zoom invitation list.

OLDER PERSONS ACTION GROUP

Mission statement:

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

Vision statement:

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



OLDER PERSONS ACTION GROUP

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Significant barriers for older Alaskan renters

By JOHN C. SCHIESZER

For Senior Voice

Gayle Slentz has lived in Alaska for more than 30 years. Now, she is moving from Craig, Alaska to Tucson, Arizona, to live with her sister Kris and brother-in-law Ken Howell. Slentz, age 67, cannot manage her home on her own and the rental market in Craig is virtually nonexistent and has been steadily declining over the past 30 years, she said.

“Craig is smaller than it used to be. It now lists 1,036 people, a drop from 1,200 just two years ago,” Slentz said. “When I was looking for a rental, there was nothing. The availability isn’t here. I am not able to run my house myself. The utilities are too much. But housing here is very, very tight. There isn’t any availability, and if something

Many rentals involve a substantial application process that includes a credit check. This can work against someone who hasn’t been in the workplace or is moving out due to divorce or death of a spouse.

does become available, it is expensive.”

Slentz said she will miss Alaska a great deal. However, even if a rental unit became available, the cost of a two bedroom apartment plus utilities is simply too much money, she said.

She is far from alone. There are growing numbers of older adults in Alaska who are in similar situations. It is difficult to find a rental unit all over Alaska, but it is even worse in rural and remote areas of the state.

Real Property Management currently oversees residential and commercial rental properties for private landlords in the Mat-Su Valley, Anchorage, Kenai and Homer areas.

“The market is very tight and fast moving right now, making it difficult to find a place to rent,” said Kassandra Taggart, who is with Real Property Management Inc. “We are currently experiencing a 0% to 2% vacancy rate in 2022. In 2021, we were experiencing a 2% to 3% vacancy rate.”

Depending on the property type and location, it is estimated there have 10% to 30% increases on rent prices year over the past 12 months in Alaska. If a person bought a home, the median home cost in Anchorage is \$341,100. The median home cost for the state overall is \$293,400. Known for being one of the most expensive states, the cost of living in Alaska was

found to be 24.09% higher than the national average as of January 2021.

Formidable application process

Every company and landlord has a different application process due to the type of services they provide and type of client they might be able to service. Many rentals involve a substantial application process that includes a credit check. This can work against someone who hasn’t been in the workplace or is moving out due to divorce or death of a spouse. However, the issue tends to be more about availability than employment status. Most potential renters are assessed

on much more than credit checks and employment history.

“This is (done) on a case by case basis,” said Alaska Housing Finance Corporation (AHFC) Director of Planning and Program Development Daniel Delfino. Landlords in Alaska in growing numbers are opting for lease terms to be month-to-month instead of one-year. This is being done to minimize risk for landlords and their ability to remove deadbeat tenants.

“This is due to the CARES Act still being in place making it easier to provide a 30-days’ notice to end a lease rather than a Notice of Non-payment and following the eviction process with the current moratoriums that are in effect,” said Real Property

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How the Inflation Reduction Act will lower your drug costs

By JIM MILLER

Savvy Senior

Dear Savvy Senior: What kind of changes can Medicare beneficiaries expect to see in the Inflation Reduction Act that was recently signed into law? I’m enrolled in original Medicare and have a Part D prescription drug plan but spent more than \$6,000 out-of-pocket last year on medications alone. – Overpaying Paul

Dear Paul: The climate, tax and health care bill known as the Inflation Reduction Act that was passed by Congress and signed into law by President Biden last month includes significant improvements to the Medicare program that will kick-in over the next few years.

The climate, tax and health care bill known as the Inflation Reduction Act that was passed by Congress and signed into law by President Biden last month includes significant improvements to the Medicare program that will kick-in over the next few years.

These changes will lower prescription drug prices for millions of seniors by allowing the government to negotiate drug prices for the first time and capping seniors’ out-of-pocket drug costs at \$2,000 annually. Some other popular changes will include free vaccinations, lower insulin costs and expanded subsidies for lower income seniors.

Here is a breakdown of the changes to expect in Medicare and when they will roll out.

2023: Starting this January, all vaccines covered under Medicare Part D, including the shingles vaccine, will be free to beneficiaries. And the skyrocketing cost of insulin will be capped at \$35 per month. This will be a significant saving for the more than 3 million Medicare enrollees who currently use insulin to control their diabetes.

Also starting next year, drug makers will be penalized in the form of “rebates” that they would be forced to pay to the government if they impose price increases that exceed general inflation.

2024: Cost sharing for catastrophic coverage in Part D will be eliminated. Under the current Part D benefit, once your out-of-pocket costs reach \$7,050 in 2022, you enter “catastrophic” coverage but are still responsible for 5 percent of your prescription

drug costs, with no limit.

But in 2024, people with Part D coverage will no longer be responsible for any out-of-pocket drug costs once they enter catastrophic coverage. This is significant for seniors who use expensive medications for conditions like cancer or multiple sclerosis.

Also starting in 2024 through 2029, Part D premiums will not be allowed to grow faster than 6 percent per year.

And for lower income Medicare beneficiaries, eligibility for the Part D Low Income Subsidy (also known as Extra Help) will be expanded to 150 percent of the federal poverty level, from today’s limit of 135 percent. This change will mean about 500,000 more seniors will qualify for financial assistance to help pay some or all of their prescription drug premiums and deductibles.

2025: One of the biggest cost reduction measures for Medicare beneficiaries will begin in 2025 when out-of-pocket spending on Part D prescription drugs will be capped at \$2,000 per year. This will be a major savings for the more than

1.5 million beneficiaries who currently spend more than \$2,000 out-of-pocket each year.

2026: When Medicare’s Part D program was enacted in 2003, negotiating lower drug prices was forbidden. But because of the Inflation Reduction Act, starting in 2026 Medicare will be empowered to begin negotiating prices with drug companies for 10 of the most expensive drugs covered under Part D. In 2027 and 2028, 15 drugs would be eligible for negotiations and in 2029 and subsequent years, 20 drugs would be chosen.

And, in addition to all the Medicare improvements, the Inflation Reduction Act also extends the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare) premium subsidies for three years that have helped millions of Americans gain coverage before they’re eligible for Medicare.

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

Send us your letters

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



My adventures at the Mayo Clinic in Phoenix

By LAWRENCE D. WEISS
For Senior Voice

The surgery I needed this summer was not available in Alaska. I could have had it done in several places in the lower 48, but I picked Mayo Clinic because of its excellent national reputation. It is the number one ranked hospital by U.S. News and World Report and Newsweek. I picked the Phoenix facility (as opposed to Mayo Clinics in Florida or Minnesota) for the food.

No need to be snarky. It was a dumb idea, but at the time I was trying to make the experience seem somehow festive, less tense, so I focused on southwestern food, which I love. I envisioned the huge medical facility in the middle of a bustling downtown Phoenix, with dozens of fabulous restaurants within a 15-minute walk. Spoiler alert: Consider the Yiddish proverb, “We plan, God laughs.”

It is the number one ranked hospital by U.S. News and World Report and Newsweek. I picked the Phoenix facility (as opposed to Mayo Clinics in Florida or Minnesota) for the food.

Well into the lengthy admissions procedure, while I was still in Alaska, I decided to get onto Google Street View and start identifying promising restaurants around the clinic. I was stunned. I quickly discovered there were no fabulous restaurants near the clinic. In fact, there were no restaurants at all. In fact, there were no city streets at all. The Phoenix Mayo Clinic is way out at the very edge of Phoenix in the middle of the desert. There are a few huge Mayo facility buildings, a highway, and lots and lots of sand and brush.

My idea — and I don’t think I am alone in this — is that good food is important to keep up the spirits and to make a full recovery. My last hope was

the two Mayo Clinic cafeterias. Surely, they served southwest cuisine. After I had been staying at the Residence Inn for about 10 days, I was joined by my wife, Christy, who helped me with post-operative care. Neither of us wanted to cook much in the little hotel room kitchenette, so we ate one or two meals every day at the cafeterias. Alas, with few exceptions, bland steam-tray-and-grill hospital cafeteria food. Bottom line: Don’t go there for the food.

How about the medical care?

I have never experienced a medical organization like Mayo Clinic. Mayo Clinic itself is a nonprofit organization. All the physicians are salaried and they are to-

tally focused on the patient experience. They are not in business to make a profit but rather they are there to serve patients. And that focus comes through over and over again, sometimes in rather startling ways.

Initially it felt like I was applying to medical school or to an elite institution of some kind because I went through a screening process. In my case, the specific procedure that I required was not offered in Alaska. That’s a pretty good rationale for being accepted to Mayo, as far as I can tell. If you just have some ordinary condition that you can get adequately treated anywhere, it is my impression that you are less likely to be accepted for treatment at Mayo.

The screening process involves multiple discussions with various people including the physicians that are going to do the surgery or perform the procedure. A couple of times the physicians actually called

me up to answer questions that they thought I might have, based on something that I casually mentioned to someone else.

No one seemed rushed, and everyone wanted to answer all my questions or refer me to someone who would. It was an unexpected but positive experience that helped allay anxieties I had about surgery. Once I arrived in Arizona and started going to appointments, I discovered that people were extraordinarily friendly. People would go out of their way to take me to some obscure corner of the facility, or would be comforting if I were stressed or in pain.

The whole functioning of the medical facility was professional and fine-tuned. Any department I spoke with had instant total digital information about all my appointments and everything relevant to my case. In addition, any notes

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Fall harvest

S E R I E S

AARP Alaska and the UAF Cooperative Extension Service are bringing you this webinar series on how to make how to make jams and jellies, pickles, jerky, smoked salmon and much more!



Tuesdays from 11am-12pm, starting August 2

Register: <https://aarp.cvent.com/FALLHARVEST2022>



Helping grandparents raise their grandchildren

Organization supports grandparents with wide range of services

By DIMITRA LAVRAKAS

For Senior Voice

I’m 73 years old, and after taking care of my five-year-old granddaughter Eliza for four hours, well, I’m ready for a nap.

So I have nothing but deep respect and awe for grandparents raising their grandchildren full-time.

And so does Volunteers of America, which provides Kinship Care Services for those grandparents statewide.



Morgan Yaskus helps give out backpacks recently at the VOA Alaska Kinship Care program’s annual backpack giveaway. To ensure students in its Kinship Care program had the supplies they needed to kick-off a successful school year, the team handed out 70 backpacks stocked with supplies to families.

Photo courtesy VOA Alaska

Headquartered in Alexandria, Virginia, the organization includes 32 affiliates and serves approximately 1.5 million people each year in 46 states, the District of Columbia, and

Puerto Rico. In addition to those in need of affordable housing, VOA assists veterans, low-income seniors, children and families, the homeless, those with intellectual disabilities or recovering from addiction, and the formerly incarcerated. And recently, when parents became increasingly unable to raise their children safely, whether due to chronic illness, drug addiction, poverty, or mental illness, grandparents and other family members stepped in.

A long history

Volunteers of America, a nonprofit organization, was founded in 1896

and provides affordable housing and other assistance services primarily to low-income people throughout the United States.

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Healthy nutrition requires planning and effort

Use portions and timelines to your benefit

By DR. EMILY KANE

For Senior Voice

There are many health benefits to getting leaner, going well beyond fitting more comfortably in your clothes. It is important to savor food, take time to cook nice meals and especially take time to chew and enjoy every mouthful. Food is so yummy, and relatively abundant compared to early days in Alaska where most pioneers, including the ones from 10,000 years ago, lived by subsistence hunting, fishing and gathering. The so-called “Green Revolution”

in the 1970s (which began the widespread use of GMO seeds and chemical fertilizers) massively increased production of mostly cereal grains, and this led to a big uptick in processed carbs such as cookies, chips, crackers and baked goods, as well as the “all you can eat” phenomenon, which thankfully is no longer widely promoted. Sure, our stomachs are stretchy. This design feature allows for actual periods of feast or famine, which were more common before we got our food at the grocery store. If the stomach is chronically stretched out, however,

our sense of fullness after a satisfying meal requires more food. So we inevitably gain weight. Ideally food will bring you great pleasure, but it shouldn’t be a form of entertainment. Food is necessary, thus it is much trickier to figure out when we are overdoing it. With other intoxicants, there is a clear bright line — hopefully we are choosing to live with zero cigarettes or heroin, as examples. Food can also be deployed as a drug, with bad outcomes. But in the case of food, correct choices are absolutely vital to a healthy, vibrant life.

Do your best to not eat on the run. Real food takes time. Plan ahead. Make sure you buy vegetables twice a week and eat them up first. Vegetables are the single most nutrient-dense category of food. I love to roast a big tray of cut up, robust, marinated veggies every weekend and put them up in glass Tupperware for lunch (often with a tin of sardines or a little smoked salmon) during the week. Choose four or five of the following: mushrooms, celery, zucchini, onions, garlic, carrots, asparagus, beets, cauliflower. Easy, nutritious and delicious!

Digestion is an enormously expensive process and takes a good deal of enzymes, energy and life force. As mature adults we really only need two meals daily, plus one or two fruits and/or a half cup of nuts for a snack. After an adjustment period, most folks will feel they have eaten “enough” every day with this plan, and thus can avoid packing on extra calories.

The fasting effect

In order to shrink our stomachs to a more normal physiologic size, periodic fasting is one of the most useful tools available. No

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Medicare Open Enrollment season is approaching

By SEAN MCPHILAMY

Alaska Medicare Information Office

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

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

make changes to your coverage during Medicare’s Open Enrollment Period. If you are currently enrolled in Medicare, watch for the “Medicare & You” handbook in the mail in September and review your health care benefits. If you do not receive one, you can call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227) and re-

quest that a copy tailored for Alaska be mailed to you. You may also download the general handbook at www.medicare.gov. You could contact one of the certified Medicare counselors at the State of Alaska’s Medicare Information Office by calling either 800-478-6065 or 907-269-3680 for answers to any questions

about Medicare benefits. To learn about your employer-provided retiree benefits and/or Medicare Supplement Insurance (Medigap) plan coverage, please call your plan directly or read your plan’s handbook. The State of Alaska’s Division of Insurance has also recently updated the Medigap Consumer Guide.

Copies are available online, or you may call the Medicare Information Office and we will be happy to mail a printed version.

Notices coming your way

If you have a Part D prescription drug plan, you should receive a notice called an Annual Notice of Change (or ANOC for short) and an Evidence of Coverage (or EOC). Your plan should send you

page 6 please



3 common myths about hearing loss



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

Today there are over 32 million Americans who suffer from some degree of hearing loss. Only a small percentage have their hearing checked and receive hearing aids, if needed.

Myth #1: If I had hearing loss, my family doctor would have told me.

Fact: Your physician is aware and concerned for your hearing health, but identifying degrees of hearing loss is difficult. Most people with hearing loss hear decently in quieter environments, such as a doctor's office, and recognizing the need for treatment may be hard to do.

Myth #2: Hearing loss affects only seniors and those who work in noisy conditions.

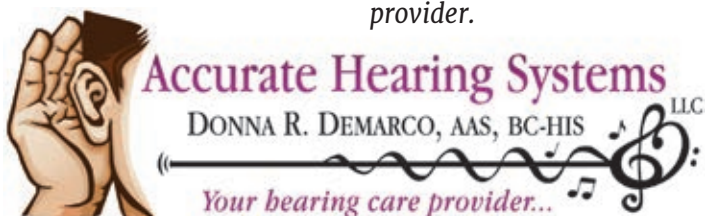
Fact: There are causes of hearing loss beyond extended noise exposure and aging. There are an estimated 6 million people in the U.S. with a hearing loss between ages 18 to 44. The earlier you treat hearing loss the less it will affect your quality of life.

Myth #3: Some hearing losses are too severe to be treated.

Fact: With the rapid advancement in hearing testing and hearing aid technology very few individuals will go without an option for treatment. The best way to treat your hearing loss or help someone suffering from hearing loss is to take the first step and make an appointment for a hearing examination.

For more information and a free hearing test, call 907-644-6004.

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



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

Medicare

continued from page 5

these notices by Sept. 30. If you do not receive these notices, contact your plan to request copies. These notices list any changes for your plan in the upcoming year 2023.

There are three kinds of changes to look for in an ANOC or EOC. First, look for changes to your plan's costs for the upcoming year. Costs such as deductibles and copayments can change each year. Second, look for changes to the plan's network; make sure to see if your preferred pharmacies will still be in network in 2023. And third, look for changes to the plan's formulary, which is the list of drugs the plan covers. Formulary changes can happen from year to year, meaning your drug may not be covered next year even if it is currently included in the plan. Even if it is still on the plan's formulary, the cost (or tiered pricing) of your drug may have changed. After reading about the changes to your coverage for 2023, decide whether your plan will still be able to meet your needs in the upcoming year.

If your plan is no longer available

In October, plans leaving the Medicare program in

the coming year send out a Plan Non-Renewal Notice to plan members. If you receive this notice, you should take action to make sure you are covered in 2023. You can choose to enroll in a new Part D prescription drug plan during Medicare's Open Enrollment, which, again, is Oct. 15 through Dec. 7. You can also enroll in a new plan up until the last day in February of the following year. You will be disenrolled from your previous plan starting Jan. 1, though, so if you do not pick a new plan by then you will likely experience a gap in coverage until you enroll in a new plan.

Poor quality plan? Replace it

In late October, Medicare also sends a Consistent Poor Performance Notice to people enrolled in a plan that has received a low rating on quality and performance for three or more years in a row. A low rating is three stars or fewer out of five. The notice encourages you to look at other plan options in your area. These star ratings are also online at www.medicare.gov when comparing prescription drug plans, using the website's Plan Finder tool.

As Medicare's Open Enrollment Period begins, you will likely start receiving mail from different insurance companies about

the plans they offer. You can use this marketing information to compare your options. You should know, though, that companies must follow certain rules when marketing their plans. These guidelines are in place to protect you from manipulative sales and enrollment tactics.

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

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

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

Harriet Drummond CARES About Our Seniors



Above, Harriet consults with Gordon Glaser at the Anchorage Senior Activity Center. Below, Harriet with her Rogers Park neighbors Karen Ruud and Peter Mjos.



♥ Harriet works to protect **SENIOR BENEFITS** as well as public employee **PENSIONS**.

♥ Harriet makes sure our neighborhoods are **SAFE**.

♥ Harriet supports **GOOD TRANSIT** so you can get to where you need to be.

♥ Harriet's lived in Anchorage since 1976, raised a family here, and is a grandmother. She's been listening to you and understands what seniors need!

♥ Please **Vote for Harriet on Tuesday, August 16**. You may vote early, in person, or by mail.

CALL HARRIET at 907-952-7722
She's here for you!

Paid for by Harriet Drummond for State House
2139 Solstice Circle Anchorage AK 99503
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www.HarrietDrummond.com

Include Medicare in your emergency planning

By **LEE CORAY-LUDDEN**

For Senior Voice

September is National Preparedness Month. It is a reminder to take a few moments and organize those items that will reduce your stress when an emergency happens. For Alaskans, the first thought is often an earthquake and possible tsunami in coastal areas. Other emergencies can be fires or power outages that last for days due to storms. The best place to go is 'National Preparedness Month' at www.Ready.gov. Under that heading is a list of topics including "Build A

Kit". It is a detailed listed of things to have ready in case of an emergency that affects you directly. Be prepared, be safe.

Another form of preparedness is making sure you have all your Medicare current and working for you. A serious illness or a car accident is not the time to wonder 'am I covered?' Plan ahead, review your coverage and have the confidence that you are as prepared as you can be.

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

as needed by phone and in-person. I have enjoyed talking to other Alaskans all over this beautiful and diverse state. I am in my office at Soldotna Senior Center from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Thursday. Call and ask for Lee or the 'Medicare person'. It's a small staff, they will find me. The number is 907-262-2322.

Remember, the only stupid question is the one we don't ask. We can discuss possible options and hopefully find solutions that work for you.



Which stronger flu vaccines are recommended?

By JIM MILLER

Savvy Senior

Dear Savvy Senior: I just turned 65 and would like to learn more about the stronger flu shots I see advertised for older adults. What can you tell me about them and how are they cov-

There are actually three different types of senior-specific flu shots (you only need one) that the CDC is now recommending to people age 65 and older.

ered by Medicare? – Senior Novice

Dear Novice: There are actually three different types of senior-specific flu shots (you only need one)

that the CDC is now recommending to people age 65 and older. These FDA-approved annual vaccines are designed to offer extra protection beyond what

a standard flu shot provides, which is important for older adults who have weaker immune defenses and have a greater risk of developing dangerous flu

complications. Here's more information on these three vaccines.

Fluzone High-Dose Quadrivalent

Approved for U.S. use in 2009, the Fluzone High-

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Alaska Health Fair needs volunteers

By SHARON PHILLIPS

Alaska Health Fair, Inc.

We are in serious need of volunteers to help us produce much-needed events in communities across our amazing state. Our volunteers come from all walks of life, education and professional fields, medical and non-medical backgrounds.

We assign important tasks for people of all ages. Help us to better serve your community by participating this season.

If you are interested in knowing more, go to

our website www.alaska-healthfair.org and click on "volunteer" below our logo at the top. Or call, in Anchorage 907-278-0234; Fairbanks 907-374-6853; Juneau 907-723-5100.

We continue providing appointment-based services to communities and worksites around state. Here are upcoming events in September and early October. Note that appointments are required to participate in the blood draw tests.

Sept. 10 Wasilla
Wasilla Area Seniors, Inc.

Community Health Fair, 1301 S. Century Circle, 8 a.m. to noon

Sept. 15 Palmer
Mat-Su College Community Health Fair, 8295 E. College Drive, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Sept. 17 Anchorage
Charter College Community Health Fair, 2221 E. Northern Lights Blvd., 8 a.m. to noon

Sept. 23-24 Soldotna
Soldotna Public Library, 235 N. Binkley Street, 3 to 5:30 p.m. on Sept. 23 and 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Sept. 24.

Sept. 24 Chugiak

Chugiak-Eagle River Senior Center Community Health Fair, 8 a.m. to noon

Oct. 1 Anchorage
Latino Community Health Fair (open to everyone), Abbott Loop Elementary School, 8427 Lake Otis Pkwy., 8 a.m. to noon

Oct. 1 Houston
Mid-Valley Senior Center Community Health Fair, 11975 W. Midvalley Way, 8 a.m. to noon

Find more information about the fall schedule at www.alaskahealthfair.org.

Early October Fairs to

take note of include Delta Junction and Houston on Oct. 1.

Our largest number of events are held every October.

The best ways to stay informed include our website; the Alaska Health Fair newsletter; Facebook.

The Alaska Health Fair, Inc. staff – Andrei, Betty, Jodie and Sharon – hope you have a wonderful fall season.

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



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New sensor can monitor health through sweat

Also: Avocados and beneficial dietary changes

By JOHN SCHIESZER

Medical Minutes

Monitoring health through sweat

Researchers now have come up with a smart biosensor necklace that can track health status through sweat. In a new study published in the journal Science Advances, researchers at Ohio State University demonstrated a battery-free, wireless biochemical sensor that detected the blood sugar levels through substances excreted from their skin when they exercise.

The Ohio State team fabricated a “smart necklace,” which has a functional clasp and pendant. Once placed around the neck, it becomes a new type of health monitoring device. Instead of a battery, it works using a resonance circuit, which reflects radiofrequency signals sent out by an external reader system.

Researchers had volunteers engage in indoor cycling for 30 minutes. Next, the participants took a 15-minute break, during which they drank sugar-sweetened beverages before resuming cycling. The researchers knew that glucose levels in the sweat should rise after drinking the sugary beverages, but the question was whether this new sensor would pick it up, said Jinghua Li, co-author of the study and assistant professor of materials science and engineering at Ohio State.

“Sweat actually contains hundreds of biomarkers that can reveal very important information about our health status,” said Li. “The next generation of biosensors will be so highly bio-intuitive and non-invasive that we’ll be able to detect key information contained in a person’s body fluids.”

Biomarkers are substances that can divulge



a body’s deepest secrets: Everything from disease, infection and even evidence of emotional trauma can be found in a person’s bodily fluids, which include sweat, tears, saliva and urine. In addition to analyzing the composition of sweat, the researchers believe this sensor could one day be customized into a bioimplant that detects hormone levels.

Avocados may pack a hidden health benefit

Adding avocados to a healthy diet may help reduce your risk of cardiovascular disease, including lowering your cholesterol, according to research published by the American Heart Association. The consumption of avocados in the U.S. has nearly tripled in the past two decades, up to nearly 2.6 billion pounds a year, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Avocados contain high amounts of fiber, potassium, magnesium, folate, vitamin C and vitamin K. The fruit is a known source of healthy, unsaturated fats and a great replacement for certain fat-containing foods like butter, cheese or processed meats.

Researchers found that adults who ate at least one avocado each week had a 16% lower risk of cardiovascular disease and a 21% lower risk of coronary heart disease, compared to those who never or rarely ate

next page please

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Health

from page 8

avocados. Replacing half a serving daily of margarine, butter, egg, yogurt, cheese or processed meats such as bacon with the same amount of avocado was associated with a 16% to 22% lower risk of cardiovascular disease events.

“Although avocados are not a total solution to improving heart health, research shows substantial benefits to adding them to your diet,” said Mayra L. Estrella, a member of the American Heart Association’s Council on Lifestyle and Cardiometabolic Health and an assistant professor in the Department of Epidemiology, Human Genetics, and Environmental Sciences at the University of Texas Health Science Center School of Public Health in Houston.

“However, everything in moderation, because avocados are not calorie-free. A medium avocado averages about 240 calories and 24 grams of fat, according

Adults who ate at least one avocado each week had a 16% lower risk of cardiovascular disease and a 21% lower risk of coronary heart disease, compared to those who never or rarely ate avocados.

to the California Avocado Commission,” said Estrella.

Avocados are a source of healthy fat that can be eaten in place of saturated fat in a typical diet. However, if you’re eating them in guacamole or another type of dip, you’ll want to be careful not to indulge in too many chips.

The research on avocados aligns with the American Heart Association’s guidance to follow the Mediterranean diet, which is a dietary pattern focused on fruits, vegetables, grains, beans, fish and other healthy foods and plant-based fats such as olive, canola, sesame and other non-tropical oils.

Small dietary changes may lead to big improvements in women’s lives

Women tend to live longer than men, but typically have higher rates of illness. Now, new research from University of Georgia

suggests these higher rates of illness can be ameliorated by a better diet, one that is high in pigmented carotenoids such as yams, kale, spinach, watermelon, bell peppers, tomatoes, oranges and carrots. These bright-colored fruits and vegetables are particularly important in preventing visual and cognitive loss.

“The idea is that men get a lot of the diseases that tend to kill you, but women get those diseases less often or later so they persevere, but with illnesses that are debilitating,” said Billy R. Hammond, a professor in UGA’s Franklin College of Arts and Sciences department of Psychology Behavioral and Brains Sciences program in Athens, Georgia. “For example, of all of the existing cases of macular degeneration and dementia in the world, two-thirds are in women. These diseases that women suffer for years are the very ones most amenable to preven-

tion through lifestyle.”

The study, which reviewed and analyzed data from previous studies, detailed several degenerative conditions, from autoimmune diseases to dementia.

“If you take all the autoimmune diseases collectively, women account for nearly 80%. So, because of this vulnerability, linked directly to biology, women need extra preventive care,” said Hammond.

One of the reasons for this vulnerability has to do with the way women store vitamins and minerals in their bodies. Hammond points out that women have, on average, more body fat than men. Body fat serves as a significant sink for many dietary vitamins and minerals, which creates a useful reservoir for women during pregnancy. This availability, however, means less is available for the retina and the brain, putting women at more risk for degenerative problems.

Dietary intake of pigmented carotenoids act as antioxidants for humans. Two specific carotenoids, lutein and zeaxanthin, are found in specific tissues of the eye and brain and have been shown to directly improve central nervous system degeneration.

“Men and women eat about the same amount of these carotenoids, but the requirements for women are much higher,” said Hammond.

The recommendations should be different, but there are not any recommendations for men or women for dietary components that are not directly linked to deficiency disease (like vitamin C and scurvy).

“Recommendations need to be changed so that women are aware that they have these vulnerabilities that they have to proactively address, so they don’t have these problems later in life,” said Hammond.

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

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September is Suicide Prevention Awareness Month

By MAUREEN HAGGBLOM
For Senior Voice

ADRC ANSWER
OF THE MONTH

It's a good time to talk about the newest resource available to Alaskans: 988, the three-digit, nationwide phone number which connects directly to the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline. Not only is this an easy-to-remember number – it's a direct connection to care. Care that is compassionate, and supportive for anyone experiencing mental-health related distress, whether thoughts of suicide, mental health, substance use crisis or any other kind of

emotional distress, or for someone worried about a loved one needing crisis support. The launching of 988 is significant in that it normalizes an emotional distress crisis and shows support for those of us in difficult times and times of intense distress – including and not limited to suicide prevention. Too many of us experience mental health related distress without the support and care we need. The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline is confidential

and includes a national network of more than 200 crisis centers, operating 24 hours/7 days a week through call, text or chat. Is 988 replacing the Careline? No. The Careline provides suicide prevention response, but it is also a number that Alaskans can call if they are feeling sad, depressed or just need someone to talk to. Lifeline 988 will be available to Alaskans along with Careline, at 877-266-HELP (4357), which will continue to take calls like before. Information about the Careline can be found on the Careline Alaska website at

<https://carelinealaska.com/>. What happens to Lifeline, 1-800-273-8255? Calls and texts to Lifeline will reach the 988 Lifeline. When do I call 911? If someone you know is actively suicidal or have attempted suicide, call 911. To learn more, visit 988.alaska.gov. Suicide was the second leading cause of death overall for Alaska youth and young adults, ages 15 to 34, and is most often preventable. Let's all spread the word about 988 – a simple and direct way for Alaskans to connect to the resources they need.

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

Free training, support for family caregivers

Senior Voice Staff

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

riences as a caregiver, or support someone who is a caregiver. If you are helping a family member or friend by being a caregiver, learn what kind of help is available. There is no charge for these services and everyone is invited to attend. Call with suggestions and ideas for upcoming trainings or follow on Facebook, @KPFCSP.

The program will hold support group meetings in September at the following locations:
Sept. 1 Sterling Senior Center, 1 to 2 p.m.
Sept. 2 Seward Senior Center, 1 to 2 p.m.
Sept. 9 Soldotna Senior Center, 1 to 2 p.m.
Sept. 13 Tyotkas Elder Center (Kenai), noon to 1:30 p.m.

Sept. 20 Kenai Senior Center, 1 to 2 p.m.
Sept. 28 Nikiski Senior Center, 1 to 2 p.m.
Statewide
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.

Donations always appreciated

To benefit OPAG and Senior Voice projects. Older Persons Action Group, Inc. is a non-profit organization. All donations are tax-deductible. Call OPAG at 276-1059 in Anchorage or toll-free statewide at 1-800-478-1059.

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You are not hearing what I am saying

By **KAREN CASANOVAS**

For Senior Voice

Q: When I am with others, I occasionally feel dismissed and that my point of view doesn't matter. How do I get others to listen to what I have to say?

A: When we are with others that are of different life experiences, disparate thought, clashing opinions, or diverse age groups, our voice can feel marginalized. We can feel powerless or relegated to an unimportant position.



and self-reflecting. "They are producers of their life circumstances and not just the products of them."

'Holding agency' is the sense of control you have over your own life. The power to face conflict, affect change, and having the ability to influence your future embraces personal agency.

If an individual or group identifies that they are not accepted, due to unequal status, privilege, opportunity, gender, sexual orientation, disability, geographic location, ethnicity, religion, displacement or power, that is marginalization.

Every person should have a fair opportunity to be heard and to share their opinion no matter who or where they are. To give others who are vulnerable or disadvantaged, and may feel excluded, the power to believe their opinions and rights are valued at the same priority as others provides opportunities for communities, organizations or families to ensure no one is excluded.

What actions are needed?

'Holding agency' is the sense of control you have over your own life. The power to face conflict, affect change, and having the ability to influence your future embraces personal agency. Noted Stanford University professor of psychology Albert Bandura, a leader on agency and self-efficacy research, stated in his talk "The Psychology of Human Agency" that people act as agents who intentionally regulate their behavior and life circumstances. They are self-organizing, proactive, self-regulating,

Bandura goes on to say that we are also capable of influencing others to affect change. Therefore, if you are experiencing marginalization, new world realities provide opportunities for us to exercise greater control over interactions with others and how you live your life.

We can start by listening and being present for those that face marginalization, especially due to gender, age, location, religious, sexual identify or disability. Challenge social barriers that deny people opportunity or limit their potential. Build inclusive and open communities, systems, workplaces, where everyone is held accountable.

Stray away from negative thinking or unsupportive interactions as much as possible. Surround yourself with those who support your values and beliefs, resulting in improving your state of mind, and developing your sense of agency.

Agency is the power we have to steer our lives in the direction we want to go. To use our agency, we have to become familiar with its four helpers, or aspects.

According to professor Bandura, there are four helpers which can assist you in achieving your goals of being heard:

Intentionality. You must make a proactive

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Transitioning houseplants indoors for winter

By MELINDA MYERS

Help your houseplants make a smooth transition from their outdoor summer home back inside for winter. The lower light and humidity indoors along with any insects that hitched a

ally decrease the amount of light the plants receive until they reach their final location. This gradual acclimation helps the plants develop more shade tolerant leaves. Foregoing this process results in yellow leaves and massive leaf



Using a combination of artificial and natural light helps plants better tolerate the less-than-ideal indoor growing environment.

Courtesy Gardener's Supply Company

ride indoors make it difficult to keep these plants looking their best.

Give them a shower before they move indoors. A gentle blast of water washes dust and dirt off the leaves and dislodges insects that might be feeding on the plants.

Gradually prepare the plants for the lower light conditions indoors. Start by placing plants in the sunniest south- or west-facing window available or grow them under artificial lights. Leave them there for several weeks if the final destination receives less light.

Next, move them to an east-facing or well-lit north facing window. Again, leave them there for several weeks. Gradu-

ally decrease the amount of light the plants receive until they reach their final location. This gradual acclimation helps the plants develop more shade tolerant leaves. Foregoing this process results in yellow leaves and massive leaf

drop. This is stressful on the plant and its caretaker. Skip this step, reduce the stress on your plants and keep them looking their best throughout the winter by growing them under artificial lights. Using a combination of natural and artificial light helps plants better tolerate the less-than-ideal indoor growing environment.

Isolate these plants from your indoor houseplant collection until you are sure no insects tagged along. Check under the leaves and along the stems. Use an eco-friendly product like Summit Year-Round Spray Oil (SummitResponsibleSolutions.com) to prevent

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Grandparents

continued from page 5

Kinship Care Services

VOA Alaska's Kinship Care program provides additional family services for full-time caregivers of grandchildren, siblings, nieces and nephews, or other extended family

members. You do not have to be licensed or have legal custody to receive support.

To enroll, submit an intake form and family needs assessment, and you will be connected with a care coordinator to create a collaborative support plan to meet your family's needs.

The following services are offered to Kinship families:

- ▶ case management
- ▶ care coordinators work with caregivers to identify and provide services and/or treatment based on the family needs assessment to support the child(ren) and family.
- ▶ financial assistance
- ▶ limited funds to help pay for food and necessities such as gas, household supplies, and clothing.
- ▶ respite care
- ▶ assistance to families in finding short-term childcare services that offer temporary relief for kinship caregivers.

Mayo Clinic

continued from page 4

the doctors had taken or any lab results or anything dealing with my treatment was and is readily available by computer for me to read, download or comment on. It also offers the capability to send and receive secure messages to and from anyone who treated me — and they respond within days. Once I arrived in Arizona, appointments were efficiently scheduled, often

back-to-back, sometimes in the same room with just a change of providers and technicians.

In sum, the medical care was excellent, but my expectations of abundant southwestern cuisine were sadly dashed. Of course, I do love Cuban food. If I need surgery again, perhaps I should try the Mayo facility in Florida?

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.

Why grandparents step in

According to a 2021 Initial Report to Congress by the Advisory Council to Support Grandparents Raising Grandchildren, the reasons why parents give up their children range from drug or alcohol issues, mental health and emotional challenges, parental imprisonment, child neglect, abuse or abandonment, homelessness, military deployment.

There is no number one top cause for grandparents

taking over care of their grandchildren, said Claire Sharp, who coordinates the Volunteers of America Kinship Program.

"However we do see a lot of circumstances where the children's primary caretaker is just no longer able to provide care and grandparents are able to step in," she said.

More and more grandparents are asking for help.

"We currently have 65 families in our active caseload," Sharp said. "This has grown over the years and is still growing."

The Annie E. Casey Foundation's Kids Count Data Center estimated in 2019 that the percentage of children in the U.S. whose care is provided primarily by grandparents is 4 percent of the overall child population, or 2.79 million children.

However, the percentage of Native Americans and Alaska Natives is the second-lowest percentage of grandchildren being taken care of by grandparents, with the least being Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders, according

to 2019 census data.

Sharp said the grandparents come in all different relationship situations.

"We do have a mix of grandparents who are coupled up and single, more often than not even for couples, just one grandparent participates within our program."

While services span the state, they are also offered in rural and Bush communities.

"Currently our services are most used in the Anchorage and Mat-Su Valley areas but we do provide services all over Alaska including rural villages," Sharp said. "Oftentimes, we find our financial assistance is sought after, as well as navigating community resources. We do have more and more participation in our caregiver trainings and support groups."

Email questions to info@voaak.org, or call 907-279-9640.

Go to <https://voaak.org/services/family/kinship/> for more information.

And don't forget, Grandparents Day falls on Sept. 11 this year.

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New film explores loneliness, isolation in Alaska

By **KEN HELANDER**

For Senior Voice

A new documentary film, “All the Lonely People,” with a significant portion filmed in Alaska, addresses the growing public health concerns of social isolation and loneliness, and it offers solutions to help reduce the harmful effects. The groundbreaking film will have its Alaska premier showings on Oct. 5, at the Anchorage Museum Theater, and on Oct. 6, at Palmer’s Glenn Massay Theater.

We all know what social isolation is like. COVID-19

lockdowns showed us that. But for millions of Americans, social isolation and loneliness are all too familiar in their daily lives. The problem is an increasingly common focus of research on the impacts to older and other vulnerable adults. While social isolation and loneliness are not the same, they are closely related. Social isolation refers to the lack of social contact and having few people to interact with on a regular basis. Loneliness is the distressing feeling of being alone or separated. Of course, it is possible to be socially distant and not feel lonely, just as it is

possible to be surrounded by others and still feel very alone.

Social isolation and loneliness often have very real public health consequences. They have been linked to an increase in mortality comparable to the impact of well-known risk factors such as obesity and cigarette smoking. Loneliness has been associated with increased risk of developing heart disease and stroke, high blood pressure, and progression of frailty. There are mental health consequences as well, including higher risk for depression, suicide and even dementia.

Social isolation and loneliness warrant an extended public discussion about these risks, as well as what each of us, as members of community, can do to help. “All the Lonely People” will be an invaluable tool to spur such discussions, both nationally and around our great state. The groundbreaking film features a poignant Alaska story of how caregiving and social stigma often increase the risks.

Tickets to “All the Lonely People” are free thanks to many community sponsors. The film’s premier showings in Anchorage

and in Palmer will include a Q & A with the filmmakers and the film’s featured Alaskans, with a reception and refreshments immediately following. Doors open at 6:30 p.m., and the film starts at 7 p.m.

Tickets for the events are available at Anchorage Premier and at Mat-Su Premier.

Anchorage: <https://bit.ly/3KvUi4H>

Mat-Su: <https://bit.ly/3AAZtfr>

View the film’s trailer at <https://bit.ly/3e6fulU>.

Ken Helander has worked with older Alaskans and their families for 40 years.

Houseplants

continued from page 12

these pests from moving onto the rest of your indoor garden. This highly refined mineral oil suffocates the insects, doesn’t poison them, and is approved for organic gardening.

Continue monitoring for pests over the next few weeks. Reapply the organic

insecticide every two weeks as needed. Always read and follow label directions when using any organic, natural or synthetic chemical.

Increase the humidity by grouping plants together. As one plant loses moisture from its leaves, or transpires, it increases the humidity around its neighboring plants.

Further increase the humidity and decrease

your workload by placing the plants on a gravel tray. Place pebbles in the bottom of the saucer or other shallow container. Set the pot on top of the pebbles. Allow excess water to collect in the pebbles below the pot. As this water evaporates, it increases the humidity around the plants.

You’ll also eliminate the amount of time spent and mess made when pouring off the excess water that

collects in the saucer. Plus, you’ll avoid root rot and other diseases caused by plants sitting in a water-filled saucer.

Give your plants a bit of TLC as you tuck them into their winter lodgings. Your efforts will be rewarded with healthier, pest-free, and better-looking plants to enjoy all winter long.

Melinda Myers has written more than 20 gardening books, including *The Mid-*

west Gardener’s Handbook, 2nd Edition and *Small Space Gardening*. She hosts *The Great Courses* “How to Grow Anything” DVD and instant video series and the nationally-syndicated *Melinda’s Garden Moment* TV and radio program. Myers is a columnist and contributing editor for *Birds & Blooms* magazine and was commissioned by Summit for her expertise to write this article. Her website is www.MelindaMyers.com.

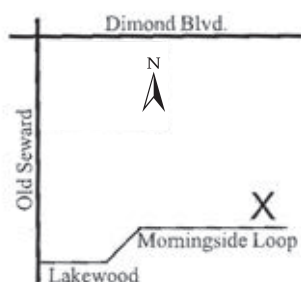
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Cutting wood and tending brush as a family

By **MARALEY McMICHAEL**
Senior Voice Correspondent

Author's note: Life is a journey and circumstances change, as they always do. It was with bittersweet thoughts that I recently recalled this story from 10 years ago while tending a brush pile fire with my two grandchildren, rather than my husband, Gary. He moved into the Palmer Pioneer Home in February. Our daughter and grandchildren traveled from Colorado to visit us in July.

Perhaps some of the glue that holds our almost 40-year marriage together is cutting and stacking firewood and burning brush. Today after waiting out four days of rain and another four days of wind, we are burning a brush pile. Between clearing some land last spring to build a shop and a recent cutting down of brush in the road right-of-way by a borough road maintenance contractor, we have quite an accumulation.

My husband Gary and I take turns feeding the fire from the piles of spruce and birch branches and alder and willow bushes. As I sit here resting, I can't help but think of how many times we have done this before — when we were first married and childless, when we had children living at home to help, and now years after the kids have moved away.

We have moved several times over the years and in each new place we either heated with wood or had raw land to clear, sometimes both. I have mental pictures of the various locations and can hear the chainsaw cutting the firewood logs and smell the smoke from the brush fires.

For almost 15 of our nearly-40 years together, we heated totally with wood. That's a lot of cords of wood, especially during the winters we lived in Fairbanks and Slana. Cooper Landing and Palmer had milder temperatures, of course, but even in Palmer in the mid 1980s, we would usually go through eight cords of spruce and birch combined each winter.

Now, here we are back



Gary McMichael cutting firewood, August 2017.
Courtesy Maraley McMichael

in Palmer in a new location (our fourth in the Mat-Su Valley) and we don't even have a wood burning stove installed in this house yet. But with the help of his tractor, Gary has gathered several four-foot cut lengths of round logs into a pile for future stove length cutting and splitting.

Gary has always done most of the firewood work — hauling the wood to the house, chainsawing to stove length, and splitting. Usually while he split, I stacked. Beside the good old splitting maul and wedge, he's used machinery to make the work easier. In Cooper Landing, he would drive his 1960 Willys Jeep

across frozen Kenai Lake and then drag home many standing dead trees from around the shoreline. Once home, he would take one of the back wheels off and attach a threaded tapered metal cone. With the jeep in low gear and the cone spinning, he would hold a stove length chunk of log up to the point and it would screw itself into the side and split the log apart. More recently, in Slana we used a gas powered hydraulic splitter.

When the kids got old enough, they helped too. Our son reminds us that one year back in the early

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Something for every lifelong learner

By SHEILA TOOMEY

For Senior Voice

Let's get right to the point. If you have never been tempted by the OLÉ catalog, one can only ask: Where were you raised? In a fun-free cave somewhere?

OLÉ, ("Opportunities for Lifelong Education") is the popular learning program for grown-ups, is back — and it's time to pick your Fall courses.

The schedule this semester offers a dizzying array of options. There is the usual writing, yoga, estate planning, painting, genealogy, etc. But how about DNA technology? Bob Dylan and Bonnie Raitt today? The Book of Genesis? Tsunamis or Taxonomy?



Dr. Rachel Mason, Senior Cultural Anthropologist for the National Park Service in Anchorage, leads a presentation on the WWII internment of Japanese Americans and Aleut people, part of an eight-week course offered during the winter 2019 semester.

Photo by Donna Gail Shaw, OLÉ member

You can delve into Charles Dickens or Jack Lemmon, with a side dish of Marilyn Monroe. You can study Chinese poetry or the Russian language. Or learn how to strengthen your connective tissue. Really!

What about PechaKucha (look it up) or Astrobiology — yes, it's about extra-terrestrial life (or not).

You get the picture.

One of OLÉ's most potent lures is you can dive into something you know

absolutely nothing about. There are no tests and no grades. Meredith Parham, a retired administrator and musician, takes music courses. But one year she signed up for an engineering class on bridge building. Why? Well, why not? Learning about something outside your usual comfort zone "expands your mind

in all sorts of ways you never thought you might," Parham said.

Sue Riehle, who teaches one of the courses Parham takes, agrees. She uses the recorder to teach retirees how to read music. She was "blown away" when 19 people showed up for her first class six years ago. "Students" who have already lived 50 years or more "have a zest for life, a real sense of fun," she said. Teaching them is delightful, she added.

Riehle's pupils not only learned how to read music, they got good enough on their recorders to give concerts at the Pioneer Home and the senior center.

next page please

Pickleball insights: 'It's all about your head'

By JIM LAVRAKAS

For Senior Voice

A friend of mine recently sent me an excerpt from "Open: An Autobiography," by Andre Agassi, the retired tennis professional. In it he talks about the mental battle he learned to fight after finding a new coach who helped propel him to do remarkable things in tennis.

My friend saw parallels in my own thought process: "The tyranny of perfection".

Growing up playing tennis with a father who (most of the time) gently taught my brother and me the needed skills, I was still subconsciously motivated to compete against my younger (by 18 months) brother, who was a superior athlete in our teenage years.

Fifty years later and I still wanted to beat him. When I first started to play pickleball, I took that on the court every time and that meant hitting perfect shots down the middle, along the line, or beautiful cross-court backhands. Or trying to blast the ball through my opponent as he stood at the net.

This striving for perfection, and the simmering anger that accompanied it, was getting in the way of just enjoying what I could

still do as I approach my 70th year on this planet — being able to move with balance, learn new skills, and enjoy time with health-minded folks.

If this sounds like you,



Rex Murphy is a Homer advanced recreational player who always plays with a smile.

Jim Lavrakas photo

hear me, there's help for you. If you don't consider yourself a competitive person, there might still be something to learn here.

For me, sports play can achieve a situational awareness because to play well, "play my game," I have to bring myself into the moment and focus. If I'm distracted, thinking about the day's chores, a disagreement at home, or the person across from me who just hit me with the ball (not on purpose,

of course), that can really throw off my game.

Sometimes my focus can look like, and probably is, an intensity that makes others uncomfortable. So, I'll remember to smile

when I'm receiving a serve, like I'm enjoying myself. Or compliment my opponent, or my partner, when they hit a good shot. I'll smother a negative reaction, by yelling "Got me!" when someone gets a ball past my paddle. This has taken time to happen in my game.

Professional athletes talk about, while stepping to the plate to hit a baseball, or playing on Center Court at Wimbledon, or fighting in a world championship, not hearing the

crowd. Not hear a crowd of 60,000 people screaming at you? How can that be? They have learned to focus so intently that all that is present in their minds is that moment, and after that moment the next moment.

And the other battle that us lesser mortals fight is our inner voice, self-talk. The one that tells us we "goofed," or are stupid, inferior, uncoordinated, incapable, dumb, etc. We are then not only playing against our opponent, but ourselves. And that is certainly an unlevel playing field.

At the start, this was really a bad situation for me, and the people I played with. I "played angry," was erratic and no fun to be around. It was only because I apologized for my behavior, promptly, that people continued to play with me.

It's taken about three years, but I don't have the outbursts I used to have. I rarely got angry with other players, it was usually about my own play, but that shouldn't have mattered. My friend, the same one who sent me the Agassi excerpt, told me, "I'm your friend, but sometimes you make it really hard".

Agassi quotes his coach again: "When you chase perfection, when you make perfection the ultimate goal, do you know what

you're doing? You're chasing something that doesn't exist. You're making everyone around you miserable. You're making yourself miserable. Perfection? There's about five times a year you wake up perfect, when you can't lose to anybody, but it's not those five times a year that make a tennis player. Or a human being, for that matter. It's the other times. It's all about your head, man."

So, three years into my new sport I think I've found my way to a place where I am aware of the thought processes that can propel me in an upward spiral. Have I found my "happy place"? Maybe.

I've found meditation helps. As I drive up to the court to play, I'll try to remind myself what I'm doing there, and why I'm doing it. And taking even a few moments during a game to focus on the here and now, a deep breath, saying "this is it" in my head, then letting other thoughts fall away, is helpful. That helps get me in the right place.

And I try to constantly remind myself that it's just a game.

Next time:

How to improve your recreational play



Learner

from page 16

OLÉ, which started in 2007 and now serves hundreds of students with dozens of ever-changing offerings, is “truly a work of volunteers,” said Kee



Instructor Justin Neff, right, leads a session during the course, “The 24 Movements of Yang Tai Chi,” offered during the OLE 2020 winter term.

Photo by Susan Soule, OLÉ! member

Miner, a founding board member and current secretary. Volunteer work — a lot of it by the board — is pulled together by a single paid contractor, and that’s it, Miner said. Although any member

can take any course, the program was created primarily for retired people, people over 50 who no longer report to an office but still want to keep their brains in gear. The name stands for Opportunities for Lifelong Education. Membership costs \$200 a year but opens the door to three semesters and as many courses as you want to take. All classes are held during the day. Mike Doogan, the writer and columnist, now retired, says he’s taken about a dozen courses over five years and intends to continue. “They’re just really interesting,” he said, citing classes in 14th century literature, photojournalism, Darwin, Ray Bradbury and great old movies. Who teaches all this? Apparently people who know a lot about a given subject and love it so much

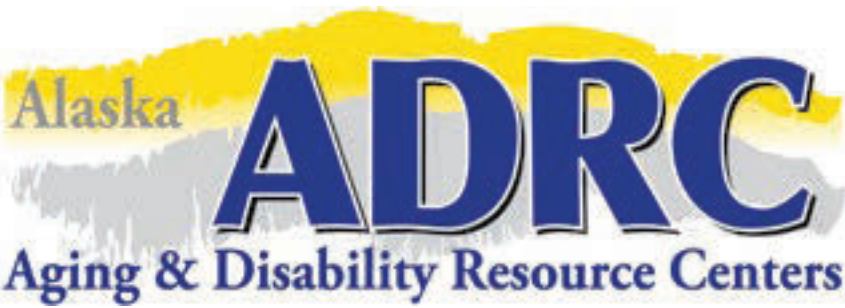
they’re willing to teach for free, said Doogan. That’s correct: No one gets paid to teach in OLÉ. The result is a nice match — people who want to teach and people who want to learn. “Nobody has to be there,” Doogan said. Riehle, the music teacher, first taught during a sojourn in New Zealand. She did it there as a way to meet people and make friends of strangers in a fairly isolated rural area. When she returned to Alaska, she wanted to replicate that rewarding experience. With OLÉ, she said, she has done so. Course selection is already underway. Classes begin September 26. Most Tuesday-to-Thursday classes are still on Zoom, but there are some exceptions and Friday courses are in person. Courses generally meet once a week for either four or eight weeks, but there are exceptions to all these rules so check it out. Everything you need is at the website, www.ole-anchorage.org.

Rambles

News from the Grapevine

Santa’s Senior Center in **North Pole** is looking for someone to fill a **vacancy** on its **board of directors**. The next board meeting is Sept. 14 at 1 p.m., and would be a good time and place to learn more. Or call the center now at 907-488-4663. Email santase-niors@alaska.net ... Also in **North Pole**, the senior center is holding its **annual used book and bake sale** on Friday, Sept. 9, and Saturday, Sept. 10, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. both days. They are still accepting used books, and request you drop them off during business hours or, if closed, leave them on the table to the right of the front door. Donated baked goods are requested, too ... In conjunction with **Fall Prevention Awareness Week**, **Seward Senior Center** will offer a **balance screening** in its fitness room on Sept. 22, from 11 a.m. to noon. The screening will also include tips and exercises to prevent falls. Presented by Advance Physical Therapy. Call the center for more information, 907-224-5604 ... Also in **Seward**, the deadline has been extended to Sept. 30 for submissions to “**Seward Unleashed: Volume 3**,” which will compile local fiction, non-fiction, poetry and illustration artwork. Word limit for writing is 2,000 words; two poems or illustrations per person. For more information, email **Sean Ulman** at seanulman@gmail.com ... Congratulations to **Marlene Munsell**, the new CEO for **Wasilla Area Seniors, Inc.** Marlene joined WASI as assistant executive director in 2019 and prior to that “completed a 28-year career with WalMart stores, Inc., where she earned a reputation

page 18 please



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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

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

Southeast Alaska

Southeast Alaska Independent Living (SAIL)
3225 Hospital Dr., Ste 300, Juneau, AK 99801
1-800-478-SAIL (7245) 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

Fairbanks North Star Borough

Fairbanks Senior Center - North Star Council on Aging
1424 Moore St., Fairbanks, AK 99701
907-452-2551 www.fairbanksseniorcenter.org

Bristol Bay Native Association

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



Rambles

News from the Grapevine

from page 17

for outstanding work ethic, effective leadership and firm commitment to overall team and business success,” notes the September WASI newsletter. “It was her approach to team-building as the foundation of success that marked her tenure as assistant executive director at WASI.” Marlene cited the WASI motto, Rooted in Dignity. Serving with Respect: “Each day gives me a reason to do my best,” she said ... Also in WASI news, the September newsletter notes that **Mid-Valley Senior Center in Houston re-opened** in early August and is getting “overwhelmingly positive feedback” for its meals and recent renovations. Activities are picking up, with art on Mondays, knitting group Tuesdays, game day Wednesdays, bible study Thursdays, and book club Fridays. And coming soon: Tai chi, Bingocize and Strong Seniors classes. For more information, call WASI, 907-206-8800 ... **Homer Senior Center** is looking for **volunteers** to help with its **adult day services program**. Spend time with seniors by playing games, watching movies, reading, doing arts and crafts, and more. Call 907-235-7655 to start volunteering ... In **Anchorage, ATLA (Assistive Technology of Alaska)** accepts **donated** “gently used” assistive **technology devices** and will provide them to other Alaskans in need at no cost. The donation is 100% tax-deductible and a great way to give back to the community. Donated items can range from phones to magnifiers to adaptive keyboards. Call ATLA for more information, 907-563-2599 or visit www.atlaak.org ... **Anchorage Senior Activity Center’s table tennis (aka ping pong) group** meets Thursday, from 9 to 10 a.m. in room 101C. To join, RSVP to 907-770-2000.

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

Wood

continued from page 15

1980s we paid him a penny for each piece of wood he stacked in the woodshed. He was only six years old, but he did his part. Was he proud of that fact, or was he complaining about the wages?

Sometimes we filled the various woodsheds on bright sunny summer days and others times in autumn



Kenai Lake woodshed and cabin, December 1980.
Courtesy Maralee McMichael



Maralee McMichael tending a burn pile fire, April 2019.

when it was overcast and rainy. Frequently there

were either mosquitoes or whitesocks buzzing and biting around us. The most enjoyable times were in mid-winter, when we bundled up and the air was cold and crisp.

Over the years, we have also gathered brush and burned it for a variety of reasons: When we needed space cleared for drilling a well or putting in a septic system or power poles or a garden plot. Other times, it was just to clean up the downed dead trees or branches from trees blown over by wind. My favorite way to gather brush was using a four-wheeler towing a small trailer, but other methods were used as well. This summer we took advantage of the borough’s Firewise program. When the crew came to remove our fire hazards, I saw a chipping machine up close in action for the first time.

I can’t help but think that if we hadn’t moved so often, we wouldn’t have needed so many brush pile fires. Our son has a theory about that. He once said, “I’ve figured you guys out. You buy a place, work hard for as many years as it takes

to make all the improvements you feel necessary. Then, when there are no more projects, it’s time to move on.”

Well, he was too young when we moved to realize that we left several residences in various stages of completion, but there might be some truth to his observation.

As we sit here tending the fire, I think about other changes, too. In the early years, we seldom needed to rest and when we did, we just sat on a stump or a fallen log or anything else handy. These days we rest more than work, sitting in carefully placed lawn chairs. With the pop, hiss, and crackle of the fire in the background, we talk about important things or about nothing.

Through the years, living in all the various places, we may not spend time together sharing sports or hobbies or watching TV, but together we fill the woodshed and burn brush.

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

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Commission on Aging to meet in Anchorage

Senior Voice Staff

The Alaska Commission on Aging will hold a quarterly meeting Oct. 3-6 in the Anchorage area. Items of discussion will include updates on dementia programs, Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority, veterans issues, senior housing, Alaska Pioneer Homes and other topics pertaining to Alaska seniors. Public attendance is encouraged.

Meeting hours are Monday, Oct. 3, from 9 a.m. to

5 p.m. at the Anchorage Senior Activity Center. On Tuesday and Wednesday, Oct. 4 and 5, commissioners will hold listening sessions around Anchorage and the Mat-Su Valley. Oct. 6, the meeting resumes at the Anchorage Senior Activity Center, 8:30 a.m. to noon.

For an agenda and other information, visit the commission website at <https://dhss.alaska.gov/acoa/Pages/default.aspx> or call 907-465-3250.

Make a difference as a Tax-Aide volunteer

By ALLEGRA HAMER

AARP Foundation Tax-Aide Program

AARP Foundation Tax-Aide is now recruiting for volunteers for the 2023 season. As a Tax-Aide volunteer, you can help out in the local community, at a site near you. We do need your help, and you can really make a significant difference in the lives of our friends and neighbors here in Alaska.

Free tax preparation is an important boost for individuals and families. Sometimes the tax refund means keeping the heat on or helping with rent for our Alaska's most vulnerable residents.

Becoming a volunteer tax preparer is easier than you think. No prior tax return preparation experience is necessary, and all the training materials are provided. Volunteers should enjoy talking to people and feel comfortable asking questions, have basic computer literacy, and be willing to refer to resource materials for tax law. Training is free and starts in December. You will use your own computer for training and once a volunteer is certified, an AARP laptop is issued for

tax preparation.

Want to volunteer but don't feel comfortable with tax preparation or are unable to undergo the training? Volunteers are also needed to greet people, help with the intake questionnaire, make reminder calls, and offer technical assistance. Tax-Aide is also looking for client facilitators, local coordinators, and administrative coordinators to expand the program. None of those positions needs to take the 40 hours of tax training. Volunteers are also needed to greet people, help with the intake questionnaire, make reminder calls, and technical assistance. Volunteers who are proficient in other languages are also needed.

Volunteer roles and hours are flexible. If you have questions about becoming a volunteer, please send an email to alaskatax-aide@gmail.com. Visit <http://aarpfoundation.org/taxaidevolunteer> to fill out a volunteer application or learn more about the program. We look forward to working together.

Thank you for making a difference.

Allegra Hamer is the AARP Foundation Tax-Aide Program State Coordinator.

SeniorVoice.com

Calendar of Events

Sept. 5 Nationwide Labor Day

Sept. 6 Fairbanks Better Breathers Club, support group for people with COPD, asthma, lung cancer and other breathing difficulties, meets at noon in the Fairbanks Memorial Hospital J. Michael Carroll Cancer Center conference room. Contact Nancy Tarnai, 907-891-7452 or nancy.tarnai@lung.org.

Sept. 7 Seward Suicide Prevention Walk at the Branson Pavilion, 4 to 6 p.m. Family-friendly event for sharing and remembrance. Walk to the Obihiro Gazebo and participate in the candle lighting ceremony. Stay for the cookout and support. Information: 907-224-2237 or outreach@sewardhealthcenter.org.

Sept. 9 Kodiak Grandparents Day celebration at Kodiak Senior Center, with milkshakes and trivia games during lunch hour. 907-486-6181

Sept. 11 Nationwide Patriot Day

Sept. 11 Nationwide National Grandparents Day

Sept. 17 Palmer Mat-Su Senior Services 1st Annual Aging Healthy Walk and Mini-Vendor Fair, at Palmer Senior Center, 1132 S. Chugach St. Doors open at 9 a.m., walk (under two miles) begins at 10. Vendor fair is from noon to 4:30 p.m., featuring informational tables, food trucks, chalk art contest, obstacle course for children, more. To purchase a ticket (free for seniors older than 50 and children 17 and younger), sponsor a senior or learn more, visit www.matsuseniors.com/activities or call 907-745-5454.

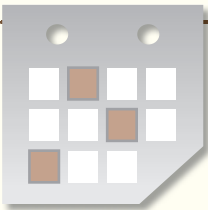
Sept. 20 Wasilla Living Well With Vision Loss support group, sponsored by Alaska Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired, meets 1 to 2 p.m. in the Wasilla Senior Center dining room. Call Jacque Olsen for information, 907-354-8568

Sept. 21 Anchorage Anchorage Genealogy Society general meeting, via Zoom, 6 to 8 p.m. Contact for information and Zoom link, anchoragegenealogy.org

Sept. 22-24 Juneau 105th Pioneers of Alaska Annual Convention. Business meetings, Grand Ball, Grand Banquet, social mixers, optional whale watching cruise and salmon bake dinner. www.pioneersofalaska.org

Sept. 23 North Pole Steak Dinner at Santa's Senior Center, 5 p.m. \$25 per meal (suggested donation). Sign up by Sept. 21. Call for more information, 907-488-4663

Sept. 25 Worldwide Rosh Hashanah begins in the evening



Send us your calendar items

Send to: Senior Voice, 3340 Arctic Blvd., Suite 106, Anchorage AK 99503
editor@seniorvoicealaska.com
Deadline for October edition is September 15.

Anchorage Senior Activity Center

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Pioneering tourism with Alaska’s first streetcar

By LAUREL DOWNING BILL
Senior Voice Correspondent

A three-hour stopover in Skagway in July 1923 by President Warren G. Harding turned into a booming business for one Alaskan sourdough. Martin Itjen, an immigrant who came north from Florida in 1898 to join the stampede in search of riches in the Klondike, took the President on an excursion in a painted coal truck.

After seeing how much Harding enjoyed the tour, the mustached Itjen figured he could make a living off tourism in the famous gold rush city and started the Skagway Streetcar Co.

The local coal delivery man, rooming house operator and undertaker built his first marvel of transportation on a Ford chassis. It resembled a bus and contained fanciful gadgetry.

Itjen, who also became Skagway’s first Ford dealer, eventually had four streetcars decked out with oddities to delight and amaze his clientele. One picturesque car carried a bear cub on the front that growled and pointed to the left or right as the car turned. He also had a life-size mannequin of Soapy Smith that performed when Itjen worked a series of foot pedals. It nodded its head, waved a flag, rang a bell and puffed exhaust smoke through a cigarette.

Itjen gave his customers quite a show as he recited poetry, told stories and related humorous anecdotes of Skagway during the gold rush era. He published a booklet to accompany his tour, too. Following is one of his original pieces of poetry:

If you’re going to the Klondike
I’ll tell you what to do.
Be sure you take a ton of grub,
Or better yet, take two.
For you’ll find that you’ll be hungry,
Morning, noon and night,
And you’ll soon have what the people
Call a Klondike appetite.

After purchasing Soapy Smith’s parlor in 1935 and converting it into a museum, Itjen decided to travel to Hollywood and extend an invitation to movie star Mae West to come north. A Seattle newspaper covered his arrival in its fair city:

In Alaska’s ‘only street car,’ the 65-year-old sourdough, who was Skagway’s undertaker in the roaring days of the gold rush, has come to the United States to see Mae West, the movie actress.

“I’m just itchin’ to see Mae,” said Martin Itjen on his arrival here by steamer. “She’s got something the others haven’t.”

His vehicle, unloaded from the steamer, is a bus constructed to resemble a street car. In it he plans to drive to Hollywood to see Mae.

Itjen indeed drove his street car to California and spent two weeks with West, but he couldn’t convince her to come north with him to be a hostess on his streetcar.

He returned to Skagway and continued operating the Skagway Streetcar tours. The Soapy Smith Parlor Museum became a highlight of Itjen’s tour, with its preserved gold rush era memorabilia. He became, and still is remembered as, the premier leader of Skagway

Following the Klondike Gold Rush, Martin Itjen drove tourists around town in his Skagway Streetcar. The odd-looking vehicle, which he built on a Ford chassis, resembled a bus.

Aunt Phil’s files



tourism.

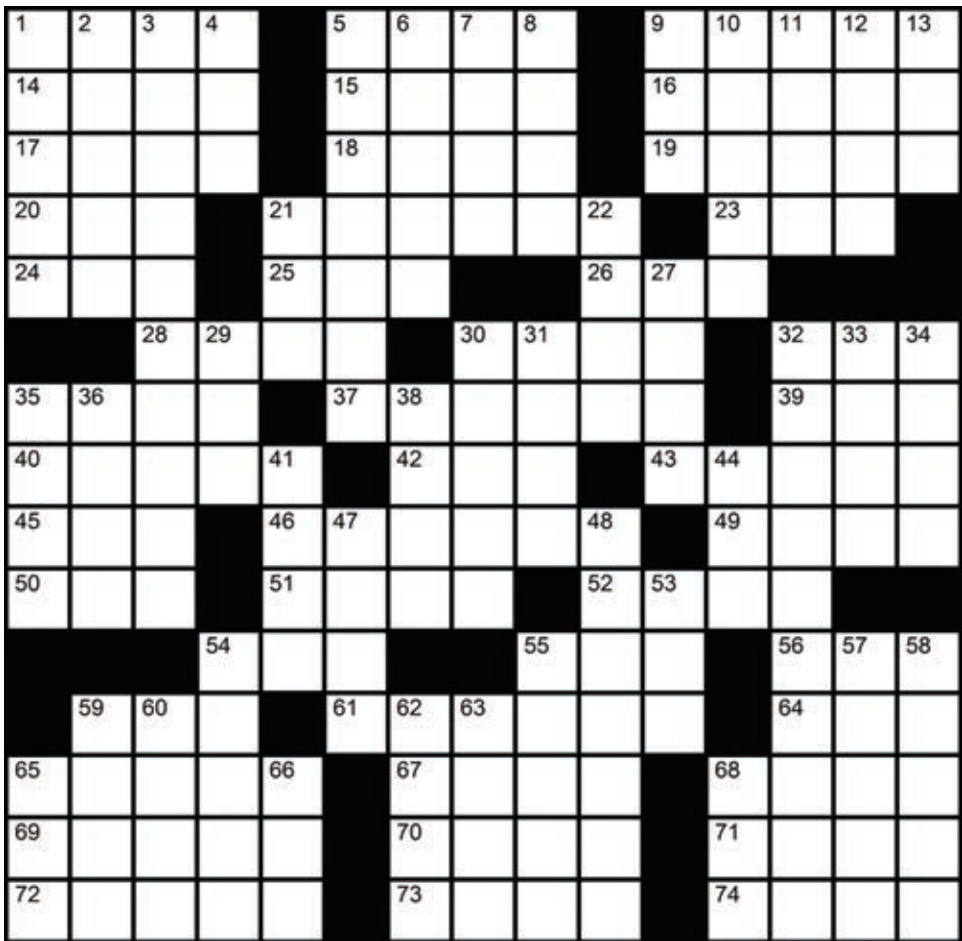
The sourdough tour operator died in 1942. In keeping with Itjen’s sense of humor, a large rock painted gold sits next to his grave in Skagway. On it is written: “The largest nugget in the world” and “Property of Skagway Streetcar.”

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

Know Your Trees

Across

- 1 Rainbows
- 5 Caresses
- 9 Tough, durable conifer
- 14 Aerial maneuver
- 15 Plains tribe
- 16 Deciduous timber trees whose wood is used for baseball bats
- 17 Obligation
- 18 Sweat source
- 19 All tuckered out
- 20 Compass pt.
- 21 Small bushy tree native to Asia and North Africa
- 23 Have a bite
- 24 Early touring car
- 25 More, in Madrid
- 26 Vacation spot
- 28 Within earshot
- 30 Church niche
- 32 Hindu title
- 35 Fiddle sticks
- 37 Christmas evergreen
- 39 Scoundrel
- 40 Take as one’s own
- 42 Make known
- 43 Pilotless plane
- 45 Life story
- 46 Hair curler
- 49 Elevator man
- 50 Cricket wicket
- 51 Schools of thought
- 52 “Paradise Lost,” e.g.
- 54 Our sun
- 55 Summertime in Colo.
- 56 Store posting (Abbr.)
- 59 Beaver’s work
- 61 Canadian capital



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Adam-12’s Kent McCord still on duty for fans

By **NICK THOMAS**
Tinseltown Talks

Not even a pandemic could slow down Kent McCord’s desire to interact with admirers, even if only through virtual fan conventions.

“I’ve done several of these online over the last two years and always enjoy talking with fans,” said McCord, who turns 80 in September, from his Los Angeles home.

Best known as one half of the crime-fighting police duo on “Adam-12,” McCord’s Hollywood career can be traced to college days in early 1961 when a fellow student invited him to participate in a friendly game of touch football. The two teams were captained by Ricky Nelson and Elvis Presley.

The informal match led to a friendship with Nelson that sparked McCord’s five-decade-long film and television career including a recurring role in “The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet,” and most notably co-starring alongside Martin Milner (1931–2015) in “Adam-12” (see www.kentmccord.com).

“I got a five-year role playing Rick’s fraternity brother in Ozzie and Harriet,” noted McCord, who still recalls his only line – “Rick who?” – during a 1962 episode (‘Rick, the Host’). It was his first on-



Kent McCord and Martin Milner in “Adam-12”. To this day, police officers still tell him they became cops because of his TV show, McCord says.

NBC publicity photo

screen speaking part.

The popular series was produced by patriarch Ozzie Nelson, who also wrote and directed many episodes. “Ozzie could have picked anyone for the role and I’m sure he chose me because I was Rick’s friend,” he said. “But those two little words I first spoke changed my life.”

Initially, that included uncredited roles in five Elvis Presley movies, followed by more substantial parts in film and television, and eventually meeting “Dragnet” creator Jack

Webb who brought McCord in to play Officer Jim Reed in several episodes of the revival series “Dragnet 1967” and subsequently “Adam-12.”

“The charm of ‘Adam-12’ was its simplicity,” said McCord. “Just two cops in a black-and-white pa-

trolling the streets of Los Angeles. The moral of the stories was simply – crime doesn’t pay.”

McCord recalls meeting Milner, some 10 years his senior and already a seasoned actor, in the Universal parking lot as the pair waited for a ride to shoot

the pilot on location. “Marty was yawning and told me how he couldn’t sleep the night before beginning a new show,” recalled McCord. “I’d had a restless evening too, so hearing that from a veteran actor was very reassuring. From that moment on our relationship was cemented.”

While his “Adam-12” role brought recognition from audiences around the world, he and Milner also inspired young viewers as well as police organizations that used episodes as training videos.

“To this day I get police officers telling me they became cops because of ‘Adam-12,’” said McCord. “Others remember how kids approached them differently before and after the show aired. Its positive impact meant a lot to Marty and me.”

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.

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Renters

continued from page 3

Management's Cassandra Taggart.

Only in recent years have many of the do-it-yourself (DIY) landlords embraced online tools, according to Taggart.

"As a result, the application with a DIY landlord will be much simpler than that with a company. Applicants facing life transitions where it might impact their credit qualifications will want to be prepared to provide additional documents with their application to help increase their chances of approval," said Taggart.

These requirements can include three months of recent bank statements or documents that show stability in income sources, such as three months of pay stubs.

"We host a club called 'The Landlord's Almanac Club' and it has around 3,000 landlords. Based on many of their conversations it seems pretty standard to charge 30 days of rent plus a deposit before starting the lease. However, applications that are higher risk in being able to consistently pay rent might be charged a higher deposit," said Taggart.

Subsidies and home sharing

Jim McCall, housing relations officer with the AHFC Senior Housing Office, said older adults should see if they qualify for federal or state rental subsidies, including AHFC and many others. "Many of these units are income-based and offer rental payments below the private market," said McCall.

Many older adults need to think differently about

whether they want to do home sharing. McCall said home sharing can have many hidden benefits.

"In the end, Dorothy, Rose, Blanch and Sophia may have provided us with an answer to many of these underlying questions when the 'Golden Girls' debuted over 35 years ago," said McCall. Home sharing is much more common in the Lower 48 than Alaska, but there are websites, such as www.silvernest.com, where owners avail their homes to individuals, as do renters seeking others to help pay for the cost of housing. (Though current Alaska listings are thin or non-existent.)

"These relationships, born of necessity, grow into something far less transactional," said McCall. "While housing is certainly made more affordable in these living arrangements, social isolation decreases, thus lowering the risk of depression, possibly delaying the onset of dementia. By having someone nearby to keep an eye out in case of falls or other emergency medical needs, premature deaths are reduced."

Moving is not cheap and can be extremely difficult for seniors. Utility transfers can add up, among other costs.

"While relocating outside of Alaska may seem to be the immediate answer, it's important to note that nearby Washington and Oregon have fewer rental units per 100 of extremely low income renter households than Alaska," said McCall.

Other considerations and tips

McCall said older adults hoping to find a place to

rent will need to think outside the box and be open and receptive to all resources and ideas.

"No single agency has the answer and it will take collaboration to assist," said McCall. Here are some of his suggestions:

Try negotiating a lesser increase, lock it in, and buy time during the contract period to educate oneself about the local market and shop for something more affordable.

Contact the HOPE Hotline at 888-995-HOPE or

888-995-4673 for a wide array of counseling services, including rental and education services. Reverse mortgage and homeownership counseling services are also available.

Negotiate a longer lease period, if possible, to help lock-in something you can afford now.

Consider offering to give-up an amenity offered, such as a parking space, in consideration of a reduced rent

Within reason, scrub your monthly budget to find ways to save money elsewhere and then hold-on as the housing market eventually settles back to a more normal level.

Consult with local non-profits and faith-based organizations.

Be honest and forthright with family and friends and ask for their assistance;

Consider modifying your living arrangement: Is subletting allowed? Is moving in with a family member an option, at least temporarily?

For more assistance, contact AHFC:

Senior Housing Office, Jim McCall, 907-330-8436 or toll free outside of Anchorage, 800-478-2432

Statewide Homeless Housing Office, Jennifer Smerud, 907-330-8255 or toll free outside of Anchorage, 833-330-8255

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Age-friendly cities and safer roads ahead

Anchorage Age-Friendly Leadership Team

The Anchorage Age-Friendly leadership team will be conducting a pilot 'Walk Audit' later this month. What is a Walk Audit and why are we conducting one in Anchorage?

A Walk Audit is a structured method to assess an area's walkability by observing how pedestrians and drivers use a particular street or intersection, recording information about that use and determining if improvements should be made. If changes are needed to make the area more walkable, the next step is sharing the information and making a case to the community and local leaders for change. Some meaningful changes will be small, but others may be large and require significant funding.

A walkable community promotes health, fosters a sense of connection and community among

A walkable community promotes health, fosters a sense of connection and community among residents, and provides an overall sense of place and belonging that helps make a neighborhood livable for people of all ages and life stages.

residents, and provides an overall sense of place and belonging that helps make a neighborhood livable for people of all ages and life stages. The terms "walkable" and "pedestrians" must be inclusive of both ambulatory and non-ambulatory modes (all forms of mobility devices including walker, cane, wheelchair — any device that allows the user to travel at human speed.) Up until recently the primary purpose of designing urban streets was to provide benefits for those driving or riding in motor vehicles, but that approach has created problems. Neighborhoods have been divided, easy access to basic needs such as shopping for food, receiving medical

care, attending school and taking advantage of social opportunities are often out of reach or dangerous for those who cannot or choose not to drive. Frequently the pedestrians isolated in the difficult to reach neighborhoods are the impoverished

and the elderly.

Is it possible to make Anchorage a more livable and walkable community? With the help of the AARP Livable Community network and tools, communities across the country are proving that positive change is possible. This pilot Walk Audit is the first step toward making this happen right here. If you have ideas about a location that would benefit from being part of this process please share your thoughts

with us at AARPAK@aarp.org. Or even better, submit your ideas on a place that would benefit from a Walk Audit and recruit your friends and neighbors to volunteer to take part in the process. Let's get out there and start to make this happen before the snow flies so we can have follow-up Walk Audits this winter.

For more information, visit <https://states.aarp.org/alaska/section/livable-communities>

Let someone fish for you

If you are 65 or older, 70 percent physically disabled or blind, you are eligible for a fishing proxy. This means you may have someone else fish for you for most fish and shellfish, though proxy fishing for

halibut is not allowed. For more information or to pick up a form, visit your local senior center or Dept. of Fish and Game office. Or visit the website <https://bit.ly/2ISozyl>. The Proxy Fishing Information Form

can be downloaded, printed, then filled out, but it has to be brought in, faxed, or scanned in then e-mailed to an Alaska Fish and Game office for validation. Proof of resident fishing license for both parties is required.

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Elder abuse; income changes and SSI

Social Security
Administration

Are you concerned about protecting your older relatives and friends from elder abuse? The pandemic highlighted the disproportionate impact of tragedy on underserved communities, including older adults, who face high rates of elder abuse, fraud and nursing homes deaths.

It's important to remember that elder abuse can happen to anyone, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, or financial status. We are committed to helping and preventing further victimization – especially in underserved communities.

Fraud

A recent Federal Bureau of Investigation report showed that elder fraud has increased. Older adults in the United States reported over \$1.6 billion in losses in 2021. This includes victims of COVID-related scams. Older adults in the U.S. also lose nearly 25 times more money to scammers than other groups, an estimated \$113.7 billion a year.

Reporting fraud can be difficult and older adults tend to underreport – especially when money is lost. Many older Americans are unsure about the reporting process or feel too embarrassed to report. Understaffed Adult Protective

Older adults in the U.S. lose nearly 25 times more money to scammers than other groups, an estimated \$113.7 billion a year. Reporting fraud can be difficult and older adults tend to underreport – especially when money is lost. Many older Americans are unsure about the reporting process or feel too embarrassed to report.

Services offices can also cause long processing times and underreporting.

We work hard to protect beneficiaries from Social Security and government impostor scams. You can learn more about protecting your loved ones at blog.ssa.gov/slam-the-scam-how-to-spot-government-imposters and our “Protect Yourself from Social Security Scams” webpage at www.ssa.gov/scam.

Please share these important resources with your family and friends.

Reporting changes that affect SSI

Did you know that certain life changes can affect your Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payments? Sometimes your circumstances may change after you apply for or begin to receive SSI. When that happens, it's important for you to tell us about these changes. This will ensure that you receive the benefits to which you're eligible.

Here are some common changes you must report if you have applied for or receive SSI:

- ▶ Changes in income, wages or self-employment income;
- ▶ Starting, stopping or changing jobs;
- ▶ Changing your address or persons moving in or out of the household;
- ▶ Changes in marital status (including any same-sex relationships);
- ▶ Having more than \$2,000 if you are single or \$3,000 if you are married in resources that you can cash in, sell, or use to pay for food and shelter; and

▶ Changes in resources, including money in financial accounts and buying or selling extra vehicles, stocks, investments, or property.

For a complete list of reporting responsibilities for all our programs, please read our publication, “What You Need to Know When You Get Supplemental Security Income” at www.ssa.gov/pubs/EN-05-11011.pdf.

VA caregiver and resource fair, Sept. 7

Senior Voice Staff

The VA Caregiver Support Program is hosting a free virtual resource fair on Wednesday, Sept. 7, from 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. This event is open to all caregivers – they do not have to be enrolled in the VA Caregiver Support Program to participate.

Presentations will be on various topics from multiple service agencies: Intimate Partner Violence

Assistance Program (IP-VAP); VA Mental Health Panel/Services; VA Neuropsychology Services (Dr. Swan); Alaska Legal Services, with attorney Eva Khadjinova; Advanced Care Planning (VA and State of Alaska forms); Aging & Disability Resource Center (ADRC); VA Health Kitchen, featuring “Cooking with Camille”. There will also be a Q&A session at 2 p.m., prior to wrapping up.

Caregivers must register

by calling the Caregiver Support Program office at 907-375-2606.

A confirmation email with the Teams link will be sent after registration completed. What is needed for registration? Caregiver name, phone number and email address.

Don't have a computer or internet access? Not a problem. Caregiver can call-in and be provided a number in place of the link.

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Helping an adult with dementia with their finances

National Hispanic Council on Aging Media

It is advisable for people who have recently been diagnosed with a serious illness that will result in declining mental or physical health to discuss and update their financial and health care affairs as soon as possible.

People with Alzheimer's or other types of dementia often have trouble managing their money, but the person may not realize that they are losing the ability to manage their money. Here are some signs that may indicate that a person with

- Alzheimer's is not managing his or her money well or is the victim of a scam:
- ▶ The person seems to be afraid or worried when talking about money.
 - ▶ Money is missing from the bank account.
 - ▶ Signatures on checks or other papers do not look like the person's signature.
 - ▶ Bills are not being paid and the person does not know why.
 - ▶ The person's will has been changed without his or her permission.
 - ▶ The person's house has been sold without his or her consent.
 - ▶ Things that belong to

you or the person with Alzheimer's, such as jewelry or clothing, are missing.

- ▶ The person has signed legal papers such as a will, power of attorney, or joint title to a house without knowing what the papers mean.

To prevent any of the previously mentioned examples, it is necessary to conduct timely planning. Families beginning the legal planning process should discuss how they will approach the process, what they want to happen,

and what legal documents they will need. Depending on the family situation and relevant state laws, an attorney can file a variety of documents to assist in this process, including some that inform the:

- ▶ Health care desires of someone who can no longer make health care decisions.
- ▶ Financial management and estate planning desires of someone who can no longer make financial decisions.
- ▶ Anticipatory directives for financial and estate

management to effectively manage the individual's wealth. This planning helps the individual and the family to be aware of the older adult's wishes during and after his or her lifetime.

This article originally appeared on the National Hispanic Council on Aging (NHCOA) website at <https://bit.ly/3COHlvw>. It is being reprinted in Senior Voice as part of an ongoing series by the Diverse Elders Coalition, focusing on different demographic groups in the senior population.

Hearing

continued from page 11

commitment to take action to change your life or your environment. You are not letting others around you force your actions – you are choosing to act and take control.

Forethought. Forethought helps you to visualize the future and set goals for yourself. It allows you to motivate yourself and to guide your actions in anticipation of future events.

Self-reactiveness. You have the ability to act on your plans and monitor your progress, plus make a course correction if you stray. Self-reactiveness means that once you have intention and a plan, you

cannot sit back and wait for the results to appear, but must be deliberate in acting toward reaching your goals.

Self-reflection. Allows you to think about and evaluate your motives, values and life goals. Self-reflection lets you address any conflicts in your motivations and choose to act in favor of one over the other.

Together with its four helpers, agency provides choice in the direction your life will take, helps you influence others to hear your voice or affect changes in your life, and gives you opportunities to work with others to change lives locally and globally.

Karen Casanovas is a professional healthy aging coach in Alaska. Contact her through her website, www.karencasanovas.com.

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DIY, outdated estate plans and what you don't know

By KENNETH KIRK

For Senior Voice

I meet a lot of people who try to “do it themselves,” putting together their own wills, trusts or other estate planning documents from some website or kit, or just by copying something a friend had. Nine times out of 10 (okay, maybe 5 out of 7) there is something in that paperwork which is completely contrary to what the client actually wanted. They didn't realize there was an issue.

The problem is, they didn't understand the boilerplate. There was some legalese in there, which they thought was just some routine, throwaway stuff, but which actually would have had serious consequences if it hadn't been caught.

Occasionally, people who use another attorney bring their paperwork to me for revisions or just to get a second opinion. Sometimes I find things in what that attorney did, which are contrary to what the client wanted. And it isn't that the attorney was incompetent or malevolent. They just misunderstood that particular client's wishes.

Which tells me something else: that attorney did not go through the paperwork with the client, to explain it to them. I always do that, especially



with something as complex as a living trust, but not everyone does.

So my first point today is: Use an attorney for your estate planning, and insist that he or she go through the documents with you. Granted, you probably don't want to have him or her walk you through it line-by-line. That would take a long time and end up being pretty expensive. After all, there is a lot of boilerplate stuff in these documents, and you don't need to know all of it. But at least get a general explanation.

Now to my second point. Let's say it has been a while since you had the estate planning done. It may have done exactly what you wanted at the time. However, if you don't understand it well enough, you may not recognize when you need to make a change.

And as Exhibit One, I present to you the “A/B trust”.

Until about 2013, it was very common, when draft-

Let's say it has been a while since you had the estate planning done. It may have done exactly what you wanted at the time. However, if you don't understand it well enough, you may not recognize when you need to make a change.

ing a trust for a married couple, to have the trust automatically split in two when the first spouse died. It was necessary to do that, in order to preserve the deceased spouse's estate tax exclusion. And it was often a very good thing to do, because back in the day, anything over \$600,000 was subject to a federal estate tax which could go as high as 55%. It was a huge issue, and these A/B trusts were, for many people, a good way to save their families a lot of money in taxes.

But there was a tradeoff. In order for this to work, some of the assets had to be restricted after the first spouse died. In other words, the surviving spouse could not just have carte blanche to do whatever he or she wanted with those assets. The money could be used to support them, but part of it would have to be limited.

Which is sometimes what a couple wants anyway, especially in situations involving blended families, or in which one spouse received a significant inheritance, or when the parties each had a fair amount of assets before they got married. But most of the time, that is not what they want.

The good news is that very few people need to have that kind of limitation anymore, at least not for tax reasons. Very few estates are subject to federal estate tax, now that the tax only applies to estates over about \$12 million.

But the bad news is, if your attorney put those restrictions into your trust because, at the time, they were needed for tax purposes, those restrictions are still there. And they can cause big problems for the surviving spouse, even though they might not have

accomplished anything in terms of estate taxes.

Those trusts are complicated, though, and you might not be able to decipher the terms well enough to realize whether it is an A/B trust.

So here is a quick cheat to help you figure out whether your old trust might have a problem: If it has words like “Trust A and Trust B,” or “Marital Trust and Survivor's Trust,” or “Spouse's Trust and Family Trust,” or “Credit Shelter Trust and Marital Bypass Trust,” or anything like that, you may very well have a problem.

So if you have an older trust, take a look at it, and if you are not sure about it, hie yourself down to someone who can understand the boilerplate.

Because what you don't know may hurt you.

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 if the word ‘hie’ is too old-fashioned for you, just go.



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Zoom audio, online photo galleries, and QR codes

By BOB DELAURENTIS

Bob's Tech Talk

Q. What is the least expensive way to improve Zoom calls?

A. Adding more light and positioning the camera so you look straight ahead are the easiest things to upgrade. But the improvement that delivers the biggest impact is better sound.

Most people will watch low-quality video for a much longer period of time than they will tolerate noisy or hard to hear audio. As a result my best suggestion for better Zoom calls is to get a better microphone.

Searching the web for a microphone might trigger sticker shock, but hold off clicking that buy button. The multi-hundred dollar microphone does have its place if you are a podcaster who post-processes audio. For video calls, a cheap lavalier mic will still make you sound like a radio an-

The safety of QR codes is exactly the same as any link you choose to click on your device. If you do not pay attention, you may be tricked into sharing personal information. When I use QR codes, I don't just try any code I see. I know where the code is expected to lead, and I treat it with the same care and respect as any other link.

nouncer.

I bought a "PoP Voice Professional Lavalier Lapel Microphone" from Amazon for less than \$20. It came with an adapter, so I can also use it with a phone or tablet.

I doubt the build quality of this mic would allow for real world professional use, but it does make me sound like Dan Rather for a few hours each week.

Q. I used to love sharing photos on Flickr years ago, but the service seems all but forgotten. Is there a suitable replacement?

A. The original Flickr service was a sensation during its early years. It pi-

oneered many of the ideas that later came to define social networking.

I doubt any online service will recreate that level of novelty again. However, there is a new photo service worth getting excited about — Glass (<https://glass.photo>).

Glass is a young startup, but the founders are nurturing a product that feels like it captures some of the magic of Flickr's early days. I have had an account for about six months. The service costs \$30 a year. There is a free trial and a monthly option as well. The site celebrates photography above all else, with a minimal interface that puts the images in their best light.

It was only for iPhone at first (just like Instagram) but the service is now available on the web.



If you love beautiful photos as much as I do, and if you miss the friendly, small-village feel of the mid-2000s era internet, give glass.photo a look.

Q. Are QR codes safe to use?

A. For readers who may not be familiar, QR codes are printed squares, vaguely similar to UPC barcodes. They are popping up in public spaces in many places, on everything from restaurant menus to parking meters.

QR codes link the real world with the internet. The most common way to use a QR code is with a smartphone camera. If the phone can see the code, it will convert it into a screen button you can immediately tap to be taken to a web page or an app.

Different phones have

different interfaces for exactly how the process works, but the basics are the same. Some phones do a better job than others informing you about where the link leads before it's tapped.

That brings me to your question about safety. Scanning a QR code is safe, the phone is just recognizing the code and converting it to text. Once converted, it is a simple link.

The downside of QR codes is that anyone can print a QR code for a link to anything — including malware — and display it in public.

The safety of QR codes is exactly the same as any link you choose to click on your device. If you do not pay attention, you may be tricked into sharing personal information.

When I use QR codes, I don't just try any code I see. I know where the code is expected to lead, and I treat it with the same care and respect as any other link.

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

Wander the Web

Here are my picks for worthwhile browsing this month:

Discord

Discord is a massive network of online conversations, not unlike old-style bulletin board systems. Initially very popular with video game enthusiasts, it has recently branched out into a broad range of topics.

<https://discord.com>

Atlas Obscura

The site is mainly a hub that offers unique travel experiences, but browsing this "definitive guide to the world's hidden wonders" for a few hours feels like a trip around the world.

www.atlasobscura.com

Laughing Squid

This site with a distinct attitude about art and technology was started in the previous century, and it is still going strong today.

<https://laughingsquid.com>



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It's the season for Alaskan travel discounts

Fall brings time to see the state in its colors

By **DIMITRA LAVRAKAS**

Senior Voice Travel
Correspondent

It's time to take a trip and enjoy the beauty of Alaska.

included — bedding, kitchen equipment and place settings — all of that, plus unlimited mileage, which

days of adventure and getting out of town. The train offers a leisurely pace of seeing the sights without



The Denali Star Train runs roundtrip from Anchorage to Fairbanks until Sept. 18, when it is only southbound from Fairbanks. North of Talkeetna, the tracks veer away from the road system and into the backcountry Hurricane area with views of the snaking Indian River, the occasional remote cabin and the expansive sight of Hurricane Gulch from the top of a 296-foot bridge. Just south of Denali National Park, Broad Pass offers majestic views of the Alaska Range in all directions; north of the park, the train winds along Healy Canyon, following the curves of the Nenana River below.

Fall in Alaska is to be treasured by Alaskans—no tourists, no tour buses clogging the roads, no sightseeing planes or helicopters flying overhead.

Just the sound of the tree leaves floating through the air after they turn gold and fall to the ground.

September with Get Lost Travel Vans in Anchorage.

Travel van and SUV rental rates are just \$199 per night plus tax, with just three-night minimum for a savings of up to \$100 per night over peak season rate. All of the basics are still

is amazing considering gas prices. Travel valid from Sept. 6 – Oct. 2, 2022.

Call 907-222-3233 to book.

Leave the car, take the train

Often overlooked is the Alaska Railroad for a few

Courtesy of Alaska Railroad.

the task of driving a car and the fear of possibly hitting a moose while they are under the spell of rutting season.

The Anchorage – Denali – Anchorage includes round-trip rail and two nights in Denali Park. It's \$1,079 for the GoldStar Service and \$699 Adven-

ture Class.

To properly view the huge landscape of Alaska, seeing them requires a big window. The Alaska Railroad offers the GoldStar Dome service, an upgraded train experience that includes reserved seating beneath full-length dome windows that offer expansive 360-degree views. The cars have two levels, both of which are wheelchair accessible.

GoldStar train car seats are wide and comfortable, set in rows of four with an aisle running down the middle, and equipped with fold-down tray tables. All seats face forward with all seats having a great view.

The upper level also houses an outdoor viewing platform and bar area. GoldStar cars are private, and only passengers with ticketed seats can access the upper dome area.

While underway, each GoldStar dome car has a dedicated host who provides narration throughout the route.

On the lower level of GoldStar dome cars is the dining room with four-person booths with tablecloths and silverware — a dining experience of comfort with a touch of luxury.

next page please

Winter nights bring dancing lights

By **DIMITRA LAVRAKAS**

For Senior Voice

Fall in Alaska comes with many perks — sightings of migratory birds and Alaskans heading to warmer climes, but best is the darkness that brings the awesome Aurora Borealis.

Now Explore Fairbanks has a website that shows you the potential for aurora viewing and how many hours of daylight there is at any given time. While it may be sad to watch the light fade, after Dec. 21 there is the joy of seeing the minutes of light adding up. Go to <https://www.explorefairbanks.com/#tracker>.

Fairbanks is the place

Fairbanks sets the stage for outstanding aurora viewing during aurora

season, Aug. 21 through April 21, spanning all four seasons and nine months of the year. Due to Fairbanks' location directly under the "Auroral Oval," while see-

out during evening hours your chance of seeing the aurora surges to more than 90 percent.

Fairbanks is in an extraordinarily lucky location

both contribute to clear skies.

Lastly, a low population, low light pollution and long nights for most of the year contribute to darker skies



A rare red aurora dance in the skies above Alaska.

Dimitra Lavrakas photo

ing the northern lights is commonplace, it is never boring.

In fact, if you are actively

on the 65th parallel in the sub-arctic, with low precipitation and distance from coastal areas, which

optimal for northern lights viewing. All of these reasons make Fairbanks one of the best locations in the

state to view the aurora.

The Aurora Viewing Map and Guide also offers the core science behind the aurora, basics on photographing the northern lights, as well as pro tips for aurora chasing and FAQs. Aurora travelers to the Fairbanks area can pick up the one-of-a-kind Explore Fairbanks Aurora Viewing Map and Guide for free at the Morris Thompson Cultural and Visitors Center in downtown Fairbanks. An interactive online version can be seen at explorefairbanks.com/aurora.

Other resources

The University of Alaska Fairbanks Geophysical Institute also has a site that tells you if the aurora will be "quiet" or "active," and a graphic that shows where the lights are over Alaska.

next page please



Discounts

from page 28

Adventure Class cars offer comfortable seating and large picture windows. Guests are encouraged to travel between railcars, whether to take advantage of the open seating in the Vista Dome cars, or to visit the Wilderness Café.

Features include confirmed seats with large picture windows, onboard dining and bar service in the Wilderness Café, and the freedom to explore between Adventure Class cars.

Other excursions include the Anchorage-Denali-Fairbanks that includes

one-way rail and one night in Denali Park for

\$725 GoldStar service and \$425 for Adventure Class.

If you live in Fairbanks then take the Fairbanks-Denali-Fairbanks train that includes round-trip rail and one night in Denali Park for \$559 in GoldStar Service or \$325 for Adventure Class.

Call 800-208-0200 to talk to a reservation agent.

Talkeetna getaway

Hop on the Aurora Winter Train in Anchorage and enjoy a smooth ride to Talkeetna, arriving in Talkeetna mid-morning on Saturday to check in to the Talkeetna Cabins. Sunday also offers plenty of time to take a quiet stroll through the snow, cross-country ski, snowshoe hike, or curl up with a good book by the fire. Board the Aurora Winter Train in Talkeetna

at 4:50 p.m. for the return journey to Anchorage on the evening Aurora Winter Train.

This package, two days and one night, is \$289 per person with double occupancy.

The railroad has other packages including the Aurora Winter Train so you can get out of the city lights and view the northern lights in comfort.

While you can book online, there's a reservation agent by calling 800-208-0200. That's a much easier way to book for those who do not do computers, and as Alaskans, the folks at the Alaska Railroad know that.

There's still fish to catch

Valdez's 55th year of fish derbies will give you the opportunity to get in the car and see the countryside, passing through spectacular Thompson Pass.

The Halibut Derby, Silver Salmon Derby and Tagged Fish Derby run until Sept. 4. So you've got a few days to get out there and cast a line.

For more information go to <https://www.valdezfishderbies.com/>.

Way in the future, there's the 2023 Homer Winter King Salmon Tournament



Nothing compares to the view of a big halibut on the hook and rising to the surface.

Dimitra Lavrakas photo

on Saturday, March 18, 2023. There's plenty of time to get ready.

This tournament is the largest fishing tournament on the West Coast with over \$200,000 in prize money for the largest kings caught.

There are additional opportunities to win prize money through side tournaments and random merchandise prize drawings every hour of the tournament.

In 2022, 15-year-old Weston Marley was the grand champion with a fish weighing 27.38 lbs. Weston's total payout including side tournaments was \$84,619.

In 2022, the total tournament cash awards were \$218,189.

For questions call the Homer Chamber of Commerce at 907-235-7740, or go to info@homer-alaska.org or <https://www.homerwinterking.com/>.



The Aurora Winter Train travels north to Fairbanks, crossing the Susitna River along the way.

Courtesy of Alaska Railroad/ Ken Edmier

Winter

from page 28

Visit www.gi.alaska.edu/monitors/aurora-forecast.

There's also a favorite of mine, Space Weather at www.spaceweather.com that predicts when the aurora might be out based on solar flares.

Space Weather also alerts you to upcoming

meteor showers and comets that Alaskans can see.

Don't miss the Leonids meteor shower, active from Nov. 3 to Dec. 2. Peak nights are Nov. 17 to 18. The Leonids are famous for occasionally producing meteor storms. Maybe this year will be that year.

As the late Jack Horkheimer said at the end of his show "Star Gazer," on the Public Broadcasting System: "Keep looking up!"



The comet Hale Bopp does a fly by above the Captain Cook statue in Anchorage, Alaska, in March 1997.

Dimitra Lavrakas photo



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Vaccines

continued from page 7

Dose is a high-potency vaccine that contains four times the amount of antigen as a regular flu shot does, which creates a stronger immune response for better protection. According to a study published in the New England Journal of Medicine, this vaccine was proven 24 percent more effective than the regular dose shot at preventing flu in seniors.

Fluad Quadrivalent

First available in the U.S. in 2016, this adjuvanted vaccine contains an added ingredient called adjuvant MF59 that also helps create a stronger immune response. In a 2013 observational study, Fluad was found 51 percent more effective in preventing flu-related hospitalizations for older patients than a standard flu shot.

You also need to be aware that both the Fluzone High-Dose and Fluad vaccines can cause more of the mild side effects that can occur with a standard-dose flu shot, like pain or tenderness where you got the shot, muscle aches, headache or fatigue. And neither vaccine is recommended for seniors who are allergic to chicken eggs, or those who have had a severe reaction to a flu vaccine in the past.

Also note that the CDC does not recommend one vaccination over the other.

FluBlok Quadrivalent

For older adults that

are allergic to eggs, FluBlok, which is a recombinant vaccine that does not use chicken eggs in their manufacturing process, is your best option. This vaccine is proven to be 30 percent more effective than a standard-dose influenza vaccine in preventing flu in people age 50 and older.

All of these vaccines are covered 100 percent by Medicare Part B as long as your doctor, health clinic or pharmacy agrees not to charge you more than Medicare pays.

Pneumonia vaccines

Another important vaccination the CDC recommends to seniors, especially this time of year, are the pneumococcal vaccines for pneumonia. Around 1.5 million Americans visit medical emergency departments each year because of pneumonia, and about 50,000 people die from it.

The CDC recently updated their recommendations for the pneumococcal vaccine and now recommend that everyone 65 and older who has not previously received any pneumococcal vaccine should get either PCV20 (Pneumovax 20) or PCV15 (Vaxneuvance). If PCV15 is used, this should be followed by a dose of PPSV23 (Pneumovax23) at least one year later.

Or, if you've previously received a PPSV23 shot, you should get one dose of PCV15 or PCV20 at least one year later.

Medicare Part B also covers two different pneumococcal shots – the first shot at any time and a different, second shot if

it's given at least one year after the first shot.

COVID booster

If you haven't already done so, you should also get a COVID-19 booster shot

this fall. Both Moderna and Pfizer have developed new bivalent booster vaccines that adds an Omicron BA 4/5 component to the old formula, which provides better protection.

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

Nutrition

continued from page 5

gizmos or bizarre diets, just eating less. Caveat: When you are eating less, which is the single most-researched concept for improving healthy longevity, you need to choose food wisely. It seems like a big lift, but ideally you would contemplate every mouthful that goes "down the pike". Fasting isn't just a scientifically proven way to manage your weight. Fasting can also help remove cellular waste and even improve mood.

I enjoy engaging semi-regularly – up to once a month, certainly once a quarter – with a five-day modified fast, eating about 500 calories daily of high quality food. The developer, Dr. Valter Longo, has been a nutrition researcher for 35 years and his "Fasting Mimicking

Diet" is now being studied at numerous cancer centers around the country, including MD Anderson and Mayo Clinic. Other good programs include "ReSet" by Jenny Craig, who has won many awards for her food kits. You can also check out www.golo.com, which is mostly directed at averting diabetes.

A well-known semi-fasting concept is called "OMAD", which stands for "one meal a day." Everyone should employ some degree of intermittent fasting, meaning no food for 12 hours a day, overnight. It's great if you can prolong the fasting period to 14 or even 16 hours a day. Some folks prefer the "5 plus 2" program, in which two days a week you choose to fast or eat low calorie (500) and the other five days don't "diet" per se, but choose vegetable-dense, health-promoting menus.

Set yourself up for suc-

cess: Don't plan your first fast over the Thanksgiving or July Fourth weekend.

Fasting is known to benefit cancer patients in many ways because healthy cells actually do well with periodic fasting, whereas cancer cells are always greedy for fuel and will die readily in low fuel settings. Cancer cells are also known to feed at night, so rearranging your food to eat earlier in the day and firmly avoiding "bedtime snacks" is an important strategy for protecting your healthy longevity.

Since we all have circulating cancer cells at all times, which hopefully our immune system picks off daily, I encourage periodic supported fasting as a cancer-preventive strategy as well as for over-all health.

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

Crossword answers from page 20

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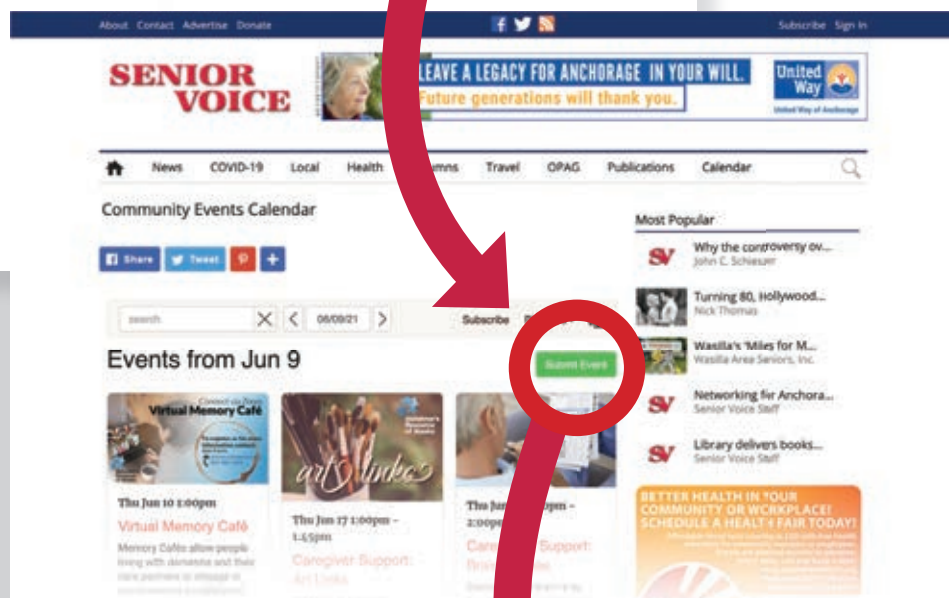
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Senior Voice

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MIKE DUNLEAVY HELPS ALL ALASKANS



HEALTH

Dunleavy's COVID-19 response focused on and protected seniors at a far better rate than the rest of the country. He provided staff, testing supplies and support to Assisted Living Homes and Skilled Nursing Facilities to mitigate COVID-19 and protect our seniors.



RETIREE BENEFITS

After listening to and coordinating with the retiree community, Dunleavy added the full suite of preventative care services to the State Retiree Plan, covering nearly 75,000 members. This is a big step in preventing chronic health issues and keeping healthcare costs low.



PROGRAM INCREASES

Dunleavy increased the General Relief rate for the first time in 21 years. The program provides temporary housing assistance for elderly Alaskans and those with disabilities who are in financial distress.



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