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# Senior Voice

A publication of Older Persons  
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Serving Alaskans 50+ Since 1978

Volume 46, Number 9 September 2023

**Proposed tax exemption for senior home modifications.**  
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**Anchorage's standout but not-so-different quilter.**  
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*Happy passenger and senior center housing resident Alice Landers rides with Combat Vets Motorcycle Association member J.D. Weeks during the club's annual visit to Chugiak-Eagle River Senior Center on Aug. 19. This was the seventh year the club has visited the center, and 43 bikes were involved.*  
Michael Dinneen Photography/Senior Voice



2023  
**National Mature Media Awards**  
Winner



# Home modification proposal will benefit everyone

By **KARLA ZERVOS**

For Senior Voice

A proposal to help Alaska seniors fix their homes so they can live at home longer is on its way to the legislature. Current state statutes provide a minimum \$150,000 property tax exemption for Senior Citizens/Disabled Veterans. If approved by legislators, modifying a home would add an additional \$20,000 to the property tax exemption at no cost to the State of Alaska.

The home modifications incentive is a way to motivate older Alaskans who think about adding grab bars, raised toilets or roll-in showers with hand-held showerheads. Often homeowners put off adapting their homes until a crisis occurs. Suddenly they need ramps, stair handrails, night-lights or other modifications just to enter and get around inside their own home. Coping with a family healthcare crisis

while working on adapting the home is often difficult. This incentive provides a way to keep elders living in a home adapted for aging-in-place while gradually recovering some of their home modifications costs.

Home modifications are very specific and should not be confused with home maintenance, repairs, remodeling or renovation. For purposes of this property tax incentive, home modifications are defined as adaptations to a home that help prevent falls and make the home more accessible, safer and simplify Activities of Daily Living for individuals and/or their caregivers and service providers. Activities of Daily Living are defined as bathing, dressing, eating, mobility, toileting and transferring. Examples of home modifications include accessible bathrooms, door levers, grab bars, hand-held shower heads, handrails, lighting improvements, raised toi-

### Try this formula to figure out what the Senior Home Modifications Property Tax Exemption Incentive would mean for you.

- A) Current year's documented annual home modifications expenses \$ \_\_\_\_\_
  - B) Mill rate for your home's property tax \_\_\_\_\_
  - C) Mill rate multiplier = .001 per \$1,000 assessed value \_\_\_\_ .001 \_\_\_\_
  - D) Annual property tax exemption (Multiply lines A x B x C) \$ \_\_\_\_\_
  - E) Number of years you plan to live in your current home \_\_\_\_\_
- Total Senior Home Modifications Property Tax Exemption Incentive \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
(Multiply lines D x E)

lets, ramps, roll-in showers, single-lever faucets, stair/step safety improvements and wider doors.

### How it will work

According to the proposed legislation, homeowners would provide local assessors offices with paid receipts for their materials and/or labor expenses each year when they file for their existing exemption(s). The total home modifications amount cannot exceed \$20,000 for as long as the qualified homeowner lives in the same home.

To receive the home

modifications property tax exemption, a homeowner would complete the "Senior Citizen/Disabled Veteran Property Tax Exemption Application" provided by their local assessor or clerk's office. To file for the additional home modifications exemption they would also complete a form documenting the modifications completed during the past tax year and provide proof of payment for materials and labor.

Calculating the financial impact of the Incentive involves many factors. Mill rates range from 0 to 20

mills around Alaska and the base Senior Citizen/Disabled Veteran Real Property Tax Exemption

varies from \$150,000 to \$300,000. The number of homeowners who will use the exemption is unknown.

See the box for a formula to figure out what the Senior Home Modifications Property Tax Exemption Incentive would mean for you.

This incentive is a wise investment for older Alaskan homeowners and their communities. The following are some costs and benefits.

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## Passport delays, what's the deal?

By **LOGAN HICKLE**

Better Business Bureau

Airlines are seeing international travel peak this summer with families feeling comfortable traveling internationally with the COVID pandemic slowing down. Many countries have reopened in 2023, including the tourist hot spot of Japan. With these compounding factors, the U.S. State Department is experiencing a higher demand for passports which is causing delays and heartache for would-be travelers. As with anything in high demand, someone will find a way to take advantage.

### What's led to this influx in passport applications?

During the COVID pandemic, many individuals let their passports expire – travel was limited. Now that more borders are reopening, both new applicants and renewing applicants are acting at once. Earlier this year the U.S. State Department reported receiving the most applications ever in one week after collecting

500,000 submissions.

Another factor is that individuals who are under the age of 16 at the time their passport is issued must renew their passport after only five years. This differs from travelers who are 16 and older – their passports are only required to be renewed every 10 years. Since some individuals need to submit documents more often, the system may experience more congestion.

### How long will it take to get a passport in your hands?

The latest update from the U.S. State Department stated that routine processing times are taking 10 to 13 weeks, while expedited applications can be completed in seven to nine weeks. There is also a two-week window on either side of these processing time-

lines for the documents to arrive at the U.S. State Department and to then receive your passport once mailed to you.

### Bad actors and fake passport websites

So far this year, Better Business Bureau has received 264 reports to our

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**Older Persons Action Group, Inc.**  
**Annual Meeting**  
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### 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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# Anchorage's Jeanne Ashcraft Series: Working past retirement in Alaska

By **LAWRENCE D. WEISS**

For Senior Voice

Jeanne Ashcraft started out as a school librarian, but for the last 10 years she has been operating Ashcraft Historical Transcription in Anchorage. She's 80 years of age now, and periodically thinks about stepping back from the work, but hasn't yet. She seems to be having too much fun.

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

Oh, my. I came in 1998, about 25 years ago. My daughter and I drove up.

I had three sons up here and a new grandchild, so I came up temporarily to see the grandchild, but then all of a sudden I had another grandchild and then I got a job. I'm a school librarian and they needed school librarians, so I got a job in Kennedy Elementary out on Fort Rich. Then my daughter met someone and got married and had a grandchild, and I just fit. I never left.

**How do you describe your business, Ashcraft Historical Transcription?**

In general, I just say I

transcribe historical documents. And if they look confused, I'll say, "Old letters, deeds, journals, marriage licenses, news, all kinds of stuff, whatever people want typed up in digital form so they can print it out." I have to be really good at reading handwriting.

I'm here [in my home office] in my pajamas at two in the morning, or whatever I feel like, and it's fun. It's not a job that I could have for my permanent income. It's second. But I make enough to pay



Jeanne Ashcraft in her home office.

Lawrence D. Weiss photo

[her canine companion's] vet bills and take a vacation — things like that. Plus, it's just fun. And the best part about it, honestly, is that it's so satisfying to be doing something useful.

I think that when you retire, you've worked or,

even if you haven't had a job outside the home, when you reach a certain age you think, "Okay, now I'm kind of retired." I felt this, and sometimes people feel kind of like useless all of a

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## Age-Friendly team talks community livability at block party

AARP Alaska

The AARP Alaska Anchorage Age-Friendly team hosted a booth at the 2023 Annual Fairview Block Party July 22 and enjoyed the opportunity to collect feedback about making Anchorage and Fairview more Age-Friendly. The event was lively, fun-filled and featured live music, good summer weather along with several other community service organizations, AARP partners and many engaging community members.

The AARP booth centered around what it means to be an Age-Friendly community, shown by the "8 Domains of Livability". The Domains are Outdoor Spaces and Buildings, Transportation, Housing, Social Participation, Respect and Social Inclusion, Work and Civic Engagement, Communication and Information, and Community and Health Services. The quality and availability of these features is what makes a community a good place to

live for seniors and all residents. Our booth featured graphic posters explaining each of the domains and flyers with more detailed explanations.

The Anchorage Age-Friendly team is currently gathering input from community members by asking the question, "What can be done to improve these elements in our community?" During the block party, we talked to about 100 adults and children who stopped at our booth. With a little conversation, we were happy to find people had a lot to share.

One way we collected feedback was by asking people to write or draw their thoughts on cutouts representing each of the 8 Domains of Livability. Once we explained the concept there was a clear winner for children 12 and under. Their favorite domain was Outdoor Spaces and Buildings and the major change they want to see is to have "more trash picker-uppers." The idea was probably driven in part by

the number of block party organizer/volunteers who were walking around picking up trash throughout the event, but what is important is that kids noticed how this simple action can make a difference in their neighborhood.

It is more difficult to determine one clear favorite from the adult suggestions

for improvement, but several people talked about the need for more affordable housing and others were passionate about the need for more public transportation options within the Fairview neighborhood. Overall, the block party was incredibly fun and a terrific opportunity to engage with many different

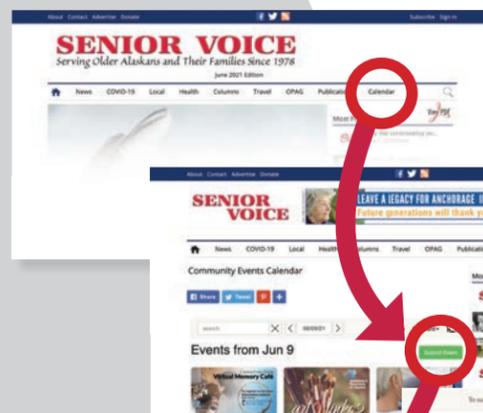
people and share ideas about improvements that can make Anchorage more Age-Friendly.

If you are interested in joining the effort to make Anchorage more age-friendly, please contact Patrick Curtis at [pcurtis@aarp.org](mailto:pcurtis@aarp.org)

### Get word out about your upcoming event!

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

It's easy to post your events to [seniorvoicealaska.com](http://seniorvoicealaska.com) – and it's **FREE**.



**1** Go to the Senior Voice website: [seniorvoicealaska.com](http://seniorvoicealaska.com) Click on the "Calendar" tab in the upper right corner

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

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

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

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

**TRY IT NOW.**

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

### Send us your letters

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

# Senior Voice

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



# I'm divorcing at age 77. What can I do?

By **KAREN CASANOVAS**

For Senior Voice



**Q:** My wife recently moved out, and I am unsure how to begin life over at age 77. She wants a divorce and I cannot imagine my life without her.

**A:** While not knowing the details of your situation, I acknowledge your predicament. Life transitions pose difficulties for many reasons. First, the emotional havoc of that news is tough to digest. It creates pain, anxiety or possibly guilt, then drains

a person's vitality. And people often see change as a problem rather than an opportunity. Further, it will not be just one alteration in your life as you

**What gets us through challenging events is our mindset toward those circumstances and whether or not the internal roadblocks to overcoming them will outweigh the external barriers.**

know it, but many variables co-occurring.

What gets us through challenging events is our mindset toward those circumstances and whether or

not the internal roadblocks to overcoming them will outweigh the external barriers. Our mental attitude toward change or those conditions may (or may not) allow us to transform the negative situation into reinvention of one's self.

Psychologists say that change requires resisting well-established behavioral patterns, which means you will work against unconscious thinking and doing. All the automatic processes your brain made when you were a couple will be altered. Habits you

formed over the years in your everyday life existing with another person will be different now.

So what can you do?

**Take time to assess your situation.** This does not mean you need to accept the new environment you are living in immediately, but pause to understand what you are feeling, knowing that it will be a grueling emotional time in the days, months and years ahead. You may feel failure, guilt, loneliness, grief and

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## Home

continued from page 2

### Homeowner costs

- ▶ Taking money, time and energy to complete or supervise home modifications
- ▶ Spending a maximum of \$20,000 while you live in the same home
- ▶ Documenting and verifying materials and labor expenses

### Homeowner benefits

- ▶ Living longer in your own home
- ▶ Easing tasks for family and paid caregivers
- ▶ Lowering the cost of your care after hospitalization
- ▶ Increasing home safety and reducing life-changing falls
- ▶ Preparing your home for yourself and future generations
- ▶ Welcoming family, friends and neighbors regardless of their age or abilities

### Community costs

- ▶ No cost to the State of Alaska
- ▶ Losing some local property tax revenue
- ▶ Administering the exemption by local Assessors Offices

### Community benefits

- ▶ Reducing EMT calls, emergency room visits, hospitalizations and intensive care costs that average \$80,000 for each Alaska senior who falls
- ▶ Providing more efficient, cost-effective community-based transpor-

tation, home-delivered meals, respite and chore services for elders

- ▶ Decreasing hospital and healthcare costs by \$30,000 per patient for every \$3,000 spent on home modifications, as Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing reports
- ▶ Lowering the number of work-related injuries to caregivers, home health-care workers and senior service providers
- ▶ Keeping older residents in familiar communities with homes modified for independent or assisted living and long-term care, especially where no Pioneer Home exists
- ▶ Increasing the number of homes in a community that are prepared for current and future local residents to age-in-place

### Fixin' to stay

You can support the Senior Home Modifications Property Tax Exemption Incentive by letting your local legislative delegation know that you think keeping seniors in their own homes is a good idea for seniors and for the communities where they live. You can spread the word to your family, friends, neighbors, churches, community groups and senior service providers. This property tax incentive is a sure way to help older Alaskans who are "Fixin' to stay."

*Karla Zervos is a Fairbanks Senior Center Helping Hands Home Modification Program Volunteer Founder.*

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# Robotic glove custom made for stroke survivors

By JOHN C. SCHIESZER

For Senior Voice

A first-of-its-kind robotic glove currently is lending a hand and providing hope to piano players who have suffered a disabling stroke. After suffering a stroke, everyday tasks can be extremely challenging due to decreased coordination and strength in one or both upper arms. These problems have spurred the development of robotic devices and now Florida investigators have come up with a new robotic hand that uses artificial intelligence (AI) to improve hand dexterity.

The developers claim this robotic glove is the first to “feel” the difference between correct and incorrect versions of the same song and to combine these features into a single hand exoskeleton.

“Playing the piano requires complex and highly skilled movements, and re-



The soft robotic glove integrates five actuators into a single wearable device that conforms to the user's hand.

Alex Dolce/Florida Atlantic University

learning tasks involves the restoration and retraining of specific movements or skills,” said Erik Engeberg, who is a professor at Florida Atlantic University College of Engineering and Computer Science. “Our robotic glove is composed of soft, flexible materials and sensors that provide gentle support and as-

sistance to individuals to relearn and regain their motor abilities.”

Researchers integrated special sensor arrays into each fingertip of the robotic glove. This new technology provides precise force and guidance in recovering the fine finger movements required for piano playing. By monitoring and respond-

ing to users’ movements, the robotic glove offers real-time feedback and adjustments, making it easier for them to grasp the correct movement techniques.

“In my opinion, we are indeed in a new era when it comes to helping people after a stroke. Advances in technology, such as the robotic glove, have opened

up new possibilities for rehabilitation and recovery,” said Engeberg.

## Music and strokes

Stroke is the most important cause of disability for adults age 50 and older. After a stroke, patients commonly need rehabilitation to relearn to walk, talk or perform daily tasks. Research has shown that besides physical and occupational therapy, music therapy can help stroke patients to recover language and motor function. But for adults trained in music and who suffered a stroke, playing music may itself be a skill that needs to be relearned.

In a study published in the journal *Frontiers in Robotics and AI*, the Florida researchers have shown how novel soft robotics can help recovering patients relearn playing music and other skills that require

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# New coordinator at Alaska Center for the Blind

Alaska Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired

My name is Pete McCall and I’m excited to introduce myself as the new Older Blind Coordinator at the Alaska Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired. I was born and

raised in southwest Louisiana and worked over 20 years as an administrator and teacher in the New Orleans catholic school system. Six years ago, I came to Alaska to teach in one of Alaska’s villages, Kotlik. I met my wife in Anchorage and have been in Alaska

ever since and now call it my home.

It is my goal to help build a close-knit, vibrant blind and low vision community at the center. To help achieve this goal, we will have support groups every second and third Wednesday of the month at

the center, 3903 Taft Drive. During these meetings, we will have a guest speaker and share tips on dealing with low vision and blindness. We will also share information about assistive technologies and devices to make independent living easier and more enjoyable.

It’s an honor to serve you and I hope you can make it to our support group sessions. If you have ideas of how we can better support you, please let us know.

Contact me by email at [pmccall@alaskabvi.org](mailto:pmccall@alaskabvi.org) or call 907-771-4306.

# Medigap policies help cover out-of-pocket costs

By SEAN McPHILAMY

Alaska Medicare Information Office

As you may know, Original Medicare (Parts A and B) covers approximately 80 percent of the cost of most services. But what about the remaining 20 percent, or even the other out-of-pocket costs like deductibles or inpatient copayments? You may want to obtain a Medicare Supplement Insurance (also known as Medigap) policy as a companion to your Medicare coverage. But how to know which one? My first recommendation is to obtain a copy of the Consumer Guide to Medi-



care Supplement Insurance (Medigap), which is published annually by the State of Alaska. This is available online, and may also be obtained by contacting the Medicare Information Office. We would be happy to provide a printed or electronic copy.

## Medigap coverage

Out of pocket costs of health insurance for individuals enrolled into Medicare may be paid for by policies that offer standardized benefits to work with Original Medicare. This is known as Medigap coverage, which are plans sold by private insurance companies. If you have a Medigap, then this plan will pay part or all of certain remaining costs after Original Medicare pays first. Medigaps are designed to cover outstanding deductibles, coinsurance and copayments. If you have a Medigap, you will generally not have any out-of-pocket costs for an

inpatient hospital stay or outpatient doctors’ visits if your providers accept Medicare assignment.

An individual may choose any one of up to ten different Medigap policies (or plans) named alphabetically: A, B, C, D, F, G, K, L, M and N. Two of these plans (C and F) are only available if the individual first enrolled into Medicare before 2020. Other letters (such as E, H, I or J) represent plans which are no longer able to be newly issued to Medicare enrollees. Each policy offers a different set of standardized benefits, meaning that policies with the same letter offer the same benefits. However,

premiums vary from company to company.

## Protected Enrollment Periods

Here in Alaska, there are two different specified times when someone has guaranteed issue rights, which means that you have the right to buy a plan without being denied coverage or charged higher premiums due to your health status. The first period starts when you are age 65 (or older) and enroll in Medicare Part A and B for the first time, it ends six months later. If you apply for a policy after this

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# Your balance system



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

Part one of two

Often taken for granted, good balance is necessary to perform daily activities. But our balance system is complex and delicate, and many things can contribute to loss of equilibrium or dizziness—including problems in the inner ear. Let me explain.

**Balance 101.** Vestibular organs—the paired set of tiny sensory organs tucked right near the cochlea of the inner ear—are key to maintaining balance. They are filled with fluid (called endolymph) that moves when your head moves, which places pressure against hairs in the ears.

Combined with infor-

mation from the eyes, nerves and muscles, these hairs send signals to the brain when the body's position is changing. The brain takes in all this information and coordinates the body to respond so a fall does not occur.

**Why your balance might be off.** Balance issues arise when something interrupts this coordinated process—and it's not uncommon for vestibular organs to be the culprit. Aging alone results in natural endolymph fluid loss as well as the sensitivity loss in your inner ear hairs. But illness, infections and head trauma can also cause equilibrium disorders and dizziness, including two common ones including two common ones, to be discussed in next month's part two article.

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

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# Medigap

continued from page 5

period ends, companies may refuse to provide you coverage because of health reasons. If you are under 65 and have Medicare Part A and B coverage because of disability (per the Social Security Administration) or end-stage renal disease, you will not be eligible for this period until you become 65 years old.

The second period begins when you lose or end certain kinds of health coverage; however, there are only 63 days under which you may exercise this guaranteed issue right and apply for a Medigap policy to supplement your Medicare coverage. The Consumer Guide mentioned previously details many of these examples in Appendix A. The variations and details are too numerous to list fully in this article. If you have questions, please contact

our office to discuss with any of our certified Medicare counselors.

## Purchasing a Medigap policy

Fifteen different insurance companies offer Medigap policies to supplement your Medicare. In addition, the Alaska Comprehensive Health Insurance Association (ACHIA) exists to offer coverage to Alaskans who otherwise are unable to qualify for a policy.

When picking the plan that may be right for you, assess your health care needs now and in the future. Compare premiums both for your current age and for someone 10 to 15 years older to look at changes over time. The State of Alaska-published Consumer Guide to Medicare Supplement Insurance (Medigap) is a fantastic resource with an overview, comparisons between the different plans, contact information for each of the in-

surance issuers, and monthly premium estimates.

None of us have a crystal ball nor a time machine; we know that you want to make the best decision you can, so give our office a call to help.

For any Medicare related questions, contact the State of Alaska Medicare Information Office at 800-478-6065 or 907-269-3680; our office is also known as the State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP), the Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP), and the Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act (MIPPA) program. If you are part of an agency or organization that assists seniors with medical resources, consider networking with the Medicare Information Office. Call us to inquire about our new Ambassador program.

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

# Medicare counseling by phone

By **LEE CORAY-LUDDEN**

For Senior Voice

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

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

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

## Oct. 15-Dec. 7 is the time to sign up for Medicare prescription drug plans.

Plans change, so compare each year for the best value.

If you have other prescription insurance, you may not need Medicare Part D.

Check with your plan!

## Questions?

Visit [www.medicare.alaska.gov](http://www.medicare.alaska.gov)

Medicare Information Office



Medicare Information Office  
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or  
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# Fall health fairs return around the state

Alaska Health Fair, Inc.

September is a bustling month for Alaska Health Fair, with numerous opportunities to participate in health education and affordable blood and health screenings. We invite you to join us at these events across various communities, whether you attend to receive services, volunteer to help serve the public or share a mission by exhibiting.

## Southcentral

- Sept. 9 Valdez** Valdez Civic Center, 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- Sept. 9 Anchorage** St. John Methodist Church, 1801 O'Malley Road, 8 a.m. to noon.
- Sept. 15-16 Palmer** Palmer Depot, 610 S. Valley Way, 2 to 6 p.m. on Sept. 15, and 8 a.m. to noon on Sept. 16.
- Sept. 15-16 Soldotna** Peninsula Center Mall, 44332 Sterling Hwy., 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- Sept. 23 Seward** Seward Community Health Center,

- 417 First Ave. 8 a.m. to noon.
- Sept. 23 Chugiak** Chugiak-Eagle River Senior Center, 22424 N. Birchwood Loop, 8 a.m. to noon.
- Sept. 27 Palmer** Mat-Su College, 8295 E College Drive, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- Sept. 30 Anchorage** Egan Civic and Convention Center, 555W. 5th Ave., 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

## Southeast

- Sept. 30 Skagway** Skagway Rec. Center, 455 13th Ave., 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

## Tanana Valley and northern regions

- Sept. 12 Fairbanks** Alaska Health Fair office, 725 26th Ave., Suite 201, 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.
  - Sept. 26 Fairbanks** Alaska Health Fair office, 725 26th Ave., Suite 201, 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.
  - Sept. 30 Delta Junction** Delta Junction Elementary School, 2659 Nistler Rd., 8 a.m. to noon.
- Mark your calendar and share this information with

family and friends. Details of the fall events are subject to change. Visit our website [www.alaskahealthfair.org](http://www.alaskahealthfair.org) or use our QR code (on the right) or call an Alaska Health Fair office for updated schedules and to pre-schedule your appointment, which is highly

recommended.

We are also taking walk-ins at most venues this season, as space and time permits.

Have any questions? Call us: Anchorage/statewide, 907-278-0234; Fairbanks, 907-374-6853; Juneau, 907-723-5100.



## Prostate cancer and the Alaska Men's Run

September is Prostate Cancer Awareness Month and Alaska Health Fair, Inc. is dedicated to educating our community and supporting early detection and intervention. Here's what you need to know.

### Understanding prostate cancer

Prostate cancer is the second most common cancer among men in the United States. The cause is not entirely understood, but risk factors may include age, family history, and race. Early symptoms

may include difficulty in urination, blood in the urine or semen, and pelvic discomfort.

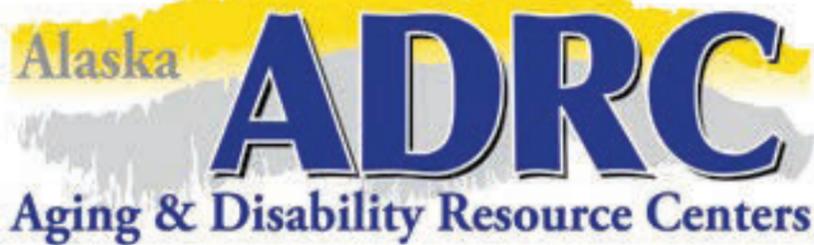
Early detection of prostate cancer greatly increases the chance of successful treatment. Currently, metastatic prostate cancer is incurable, making early detection and intervention critical.

### Partnership with Alaska Men's Run

Alaska Health Fair, Inc. is proud of our long-standing partnership with the Alaska Men's Run, an orga-

nization impacting men's health in our community for over 30 years. This collaboration has enabled us to provide free PSA (Prostate Specific Antigen) tests at all of our health fairs, while supplies last.

Alaska Men's Run is an annual event held in Anchorage, aiming to raise awareness and funds for prostate and testicular cancer. This year's run is on Saturday, Sept. 16. Learn more at <https://alaskamensrun.com>.



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

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

### Anchorage Area

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

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

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

### Southeast Alaska

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

### Mat-Su Borough

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

### Fairbanks North Star Borough

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

### Bristol Bay Native Association

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



**1-877-625-2372**

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



# New guidelines for latest Alzheimer's medications

## Also: Olive oil may help protect from dementia

By JOHN SCHIESZER

For Senior Voice

### Olive oil packs powerful punch against dementia

Switching your cooking oils to olive oil may have important hidden brain benefits. A new study is suggesting that incorporating olive oil into your diet may help reduce the risk of dying from dementia. As many countries face rising rates of Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia, the study offers hope that healthy lifestyle factors such as diet can help to prevent or slow the progression of brain deterioration.

"Our study reinforces dietary guidelines recommending vegetable oils such as olive oil and suggests that these recommendations not only support heart health, but potentially brain health," said Anne-Julie Tessier, a postdoctoral fellow at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, Boston, Mass. "Opting for olive oil, a natural product, instead of fats such as margarine and commercial mayonnaise is a safe choice and may reduce the risk of fatal dementia."

Dementia includes a range of conditions in which impairments in thinking or memory affect a person's daily activities. Alzheimer's disease, a progressive and fatal disease affecting an estimated 5.7 million Americans, is the most common form of dementia. This new study is the first to investigate the relationship between diet and dementia-related death. Scientists analyzed dietary questionnaires and death records collected from more than 90,000 Americans over three decades. During the study period, 4,749 participants died from dementia.

The study showed that people who consumed more than half a tablespoon of olive oil per day had a



28% lower risk of dying from dementia compared with those who never or rarely consumed olive oil. In addition, replacing just one teaspoon of margarine and mayonnaise with the equivalent amount of olive oil per day was associated with an 8 to 14% lower risk of dying from dementia.

Research suggests that people who regularly use olive oil instead of processed or animal fats tend to have healthier diets overall. However, Tessier noted that the relationship between olive oil and dementia mortality risk in this study was independent of overall diet quality, suggesting that olive oil has properties that are uniquely beneficial for brain health.

"Some antioxidant compounds in olive oil can cross the blood-brain barrier, potentially having a direct effect on the brain," said Tessier. "It is also possible that olive oil has an indirect effect on brain health by benefiting cardiovascular health."

Previous studies have linked higher olive oil intake with a lower risk of heart disease. Incorporating olive oil as part of a Mediterranean dietary pattern has also been shown to help protect against

**The study showed that people who consumed more than half a tablespoon of olive oil per day had a 28% lower risk of dying from dementia compared with those who never or rarely consumed olive oil.**

cognitive decline. Tessier cautioned that the research is observational and does not prove that olive oil is the cause of the reduced risk of fatal dementia.

Additional studies such as randomized controlled trials will be needed to confirm the effects and determine the optimal quantity of olive oil to consume in order to reap these benefits. Overall, however, the study aligns with dietary recommendations and bolsters the

evidence for using olive oil in place of other oils.

### New guidance on latest treatments for early Alzheimer's disease

New therapies for early Alzheimer's disease are changing how patients are being managed. Monoclonal antibodies that remove amyloid-β plaques in the brain are bringing new hope to people whose lives have been affected by Alzheimer's disease. Now, the American Academy of Neurology (AAN) has

developed new guidelines for patients. The guidelines are derived from expert consensus about new and emerging therapies.

"Neurologists care for millions of people with Alzheimer's disease and many people with early forms of dementia are eager to learn if these new therapies could help them," said AAN president Dr. Carlyne E. Jackson. "To help neurologists provide the highest quality care, experts with the American Academy of Neurology have summarized the available evidence on anti-amyloid monoclonal antibodies so that neurologists, patients and their caregivers can make informed decisions together about possible treatment with these therapies."

The guidelines provide the latest available information on lecanemab, aducanumab and donanemab. "Recent data on lecanemab and other monoclonal antibody infusions targeting amyloid-β protein make clear that new agents are highly likely to be part of the toolkit for neurologists caring for people with Alzheimer's disease," said Dr. Vijay K. Ramanan with the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota.

Lecanemab received traditional FDA approval on

July 6, 2023. Aducanumab received accelerated approval from the FDA in June 2021, but has not yet received traditional approval. Aducanumab is available only to individuals participating in a clinical trial. Donanemab is not yet approved, but a decision on traditional FDA approval is expected within the next four months. All of these agents are administered through regular infusions and monitoring with multiple brain scans.

Currently, only individuals with early symptomatic forms of the disease, mild cognitive impairment or mild dementia due to Alzheimer's disease, may qualify to receive lecanemab. There is a concern that some patients may take these drugs inappropriately out of desperation. Neurologists says all older adults should be counseled about certain genetic risk factors and must not have a history of strokes.

If a person is taking certain anticoagulant medications that are commonly prescribed to older adults, they may not be eligible. The goal of using these therapies is to remove amyloid-β plaques and slow cognitive decline. These new therapies are not a cure for the disease. There is reason for optimism as there are dozens of very promising new agents in the development stage.

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

**Currently, only individuals with early symptomatic forms of the disease, mild cognitive impairment or mild dementia due to Alzheimer's disease, may qualify to receive lecanemab. There is a concern that some patients may take these drugs inappropriately out of desperation.**

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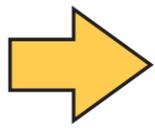
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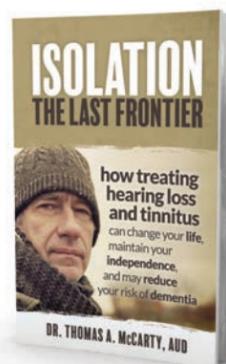
1. If you have experienced Tinnitus, or ringing/buzzing/chirping in the ears
2. If your doctor has ever told you that you were diabetic
3. If you have high blood pressure
4. If you sometimes have difficulty hearing
5. If you are retired without a driving purpose
6. If you forget more than you used to, or are having more memory lapse
7. If any of the above apply to you, a loved one, or neighbor we look forward to seeing you and them at this Dementia Education Event

Learn From Guest Lecturer  
**Harvard Medical & M.I.T. Trained  
Neuroscientist and  
Certified Dementia Practitioner**

#### Dr. Keith Darrow, PhD, CCC-A

M.I.T. and Harvard Medical Trained  
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# Robotic

continued from page 5

dexterity and coordination. While wearing the glove, human users have control over the movement of each finger to a significant extent. Engeberg said the glove is designed to assist and enhance natural hand movements, allowing a stroke survivor to control the flexion and extension

of their fingers.

## Improved dexterity

The glove supplies hand guidance, providing support and amplifying dexterity. Each fingertip contains an array of 16 flexible sensors or ‘taxels,’ which give tactile sensations to the wearer’s hand upon interaction with objects or surfaces.

“The robotic glove is certainly an important advance in stroke rehabilita-

**The robotic glove is a significant development but there are also other interesting technologies on the horizon that could further transform stroke rehab.**

tion. Not only can the glove be used by stroke victims, but it could be used broadly by people with spinal cord injuries, brachial plexus injuries, basically anyone who has impaired motor control or sensation of the hand. Furthermore, this kind of glove could even be used as a tool to prevent certain kinds of injuries caused by repetitive movements,” said Engeberg.

However, he cautioned that this technology is still in early stages. Currently, the robotic glove is a significant development but there are also other interesting technologies on the horizon that could further transform stroke rehab.

“For instance, virtual reality-based therapies are gaining attention and have shown promise in providing immersive and engaging rehabilitation experiences. Additionally, brain-computer interface technologies hold potential for enabling direct communication between the brain and external devices, opening up new avenues for rehabilitation,” said Engeberg.

## How can I get this glove?

As for availability, the timeline for the robotic glove’s widespread use could vary. While the technology is progressing rapidly, it may still take some time before it becomes readily accessible to the general public.

“However, there might be ongoing clinical trials that individuals can participate in to gain access to the technology and contribute to its further development. Consulting with health care professionals or research institutions specializing in stroke rehabilitation would provide more specific information about the current status and availability of such trials,” said Engeberg.

The researchers used machine learning to successfully teach the glove to ‘feel’ the difference between playing a correct versus incorrect version of a beginner’s song on the piano. The glove operated autonomously without human input, with pre-programmed movements. The song was “Mary Had a Little Lamb,” which requires four

fingers to play.

“We found that the glove can learn to distinguish between correct and incorrect piano play. This means it could be a valuable tool for personalized rehabilitation of people who wish to re-learn to play music,” said Engeberg.

The authors foresee that patients might ultimately wear a pair of these gloves to help both hands independently regain dexterity, motor skills and a sense of coordination.

“The technology developed by professor Engeberg and the research team is truly a game-changer for individuals with neuromuscular disorders and reduced limb functionality,” said Stella Batalama, who is the dean of the FAU College of Engineering and Computer Science. “Although other soft robotic actuators have been used to play the piano, our robotic glove is the only one that has demonstrated the capability to ‘feel’ the difference between correct and incorrect versions of the same song.”

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

# Divorce

continued from page 4

confusion. Do not gloss over your circumstances or emotions in your effort to “move on.”

**Talk to others about what you are feeling.** This could be with family, friends or trained professionals. For most people, expressing their emotions and thoughts to others helps them process the situation. Reciting thoughts aloud compels us to slow down, integrating and coordinating information across brain regions. By engaging the amygdala, the neuronal networks regulating thoughts, language and behavior, evaluate sensory information and assign the appropriate emotional response.

**Understand the statistics.** More than one in three people divorcing in the United States are over age 50. For some folks staying in a low-quality marriage means a detriment to their health and well-being. Some ask themselves, “Does this marriage make me happier?” Or “Is this marriage fulfilling?” People are living longer, and “gray divorce” is rising. As of 2022, nearly 16 million people in the U.S. age 65 and older live alone. That is three times as many people in that age group compared to the 1960s. Economic gains by women, couples drifting apart, and attitudes toward marriage are just a few reasons. Thus, the risk of divorce among older adults, who are now primarily Baby Boomers, seems to be trending upward.

**Put social services in place.** How will you provide self-care through this transition? Are there resources available if you

need help physically or mentally? Who can you reach out to when having a tough day? Consider if you will need assistance in the future. Who might care for you as you age? Many of those 65+ will not re-partner. Autonomy can be a two-sided coin—you may fare well living alone, but many older adults report a high incidence of loneliness. What can you do now to thwart loneliness and isolation to ward off health consequences down the road?

**Look toward the future.** While you may not feel a sense of stability for quite some time, know that as the years pass, many find a sense of security and connection they may not have had previously. Authentic friendships with other older fish in the sea may offer new possibilities. Older adults tend not to sweat the small stuff. Dream of your second act. How could you live out this part of your life? Is there a job you always wanted to do or a group of individuals you were often drawn to? Could you pursue an interest you have put on hold?

It’s never too late. The later years often open doors we thought were closed. Options for a new hobby, career, relationship, or focus on personal passions are obtainable. A divorce can bring about different choices once thought to be impossible. While it may take time to process the grief from the end of your marriage, divorce at any age can provide new opportunities for life, laughter and even love.

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

**omada**  This program is supported by the State of Alaska Department of Health and Social Services

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[omadahealth.com/alaska](https://omadahealth.com/alaska)

For more information, email [diabetes@alaska.gov](mailto:diabetes@alaska.gov)



# Make a difference in seniors' lives

## Become a Long Term Care Ombudsman volunteer

### Alaska Long Term Care Ombudsman

Do you care deeply about improving seniors' quality of life? Join us in speaking up for Alaska seniors living

in long term care facilities.

As a Long Term Care Ombudsman volunteer, you'll advocate for residents of assisted living homes and skilled nursing facilities across Alaska.

We need compassionate volunteers statewide who want to defend seniors' rights and dignity.

Free training is provided, and you'll be supported every step of the way. No

previous experience required —just bring your empathy, patience and drive to help vulnerable older adults.

Volunteer opportunities are available in Anchorage, Bethel, Eagle River, Fairbanks and many more

communities.

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

Our next volunteer orientation and training dates are Saturday, Oct. 28 and Saturday Nov. 4.

# Free training, support for family caregivers

### Senior Voice Staff

Family Caregiver Support Programs offer free support meetings to allow you to share your experiences as a caregiver, or support someone who is a caregiver. If you are helping a family member or friend by being a caregiver, learn what kind of help is available. There is no charge for these services and everyone is invited to attend.

Alzheimer's Resource of Alaska (ARA) organizes caregiver support meetings around the state, including Anchorage, Eagle River, Fairbanks, Ho-

mer, Juneau/Southeast, Ketchikan, Kodiak, Mat-Su Valley, Seward, Sitka, Soldotna, Talkeetna, Willow. Call 1-800-478-1080 for details.

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

The Homer caregiver support group meets at the Homer Senior Center on the second and fourth Thursday of each month (Sept. 14 and 28), from 2 to 3:30 p.m. Contact Pam

Hooker for information, 907-299-7198.

In Southeast Alaska, the Southeast Senior Services Caregiver Support Group

meets every Thursday, 1 to 2 p.m. via Zoom. The group is available to all caregivers in the region. For more information and a

Zoom invitation, call Denny Darby at 907-463-6181 or email Denny.Darby@ccs-juneau.org.

# Virtual assistive technology expo

### Senior Voice Staff

Assistive Technology of Alaska (ATLA) will host its second annual virtual expo Sept. 12 and 14, with speakers and presentations on topics related to accessibility such as increasing home safety; Microsoft Office accessibility features; reminders and other memory aid tools and technologies; low-tech

technologies and tools for low vision; even a session on assistive technologies for agricultural work.

Sessions are conducted online, from 9 a.m. to noon each day, and free for everyone.

For schedule information and registration, visit <https://bit.ly/44yKlMp>.

Call ATLA at 907-563-2599.

# Farmer's Market checks for fresh produce

### Senior Voice Staff

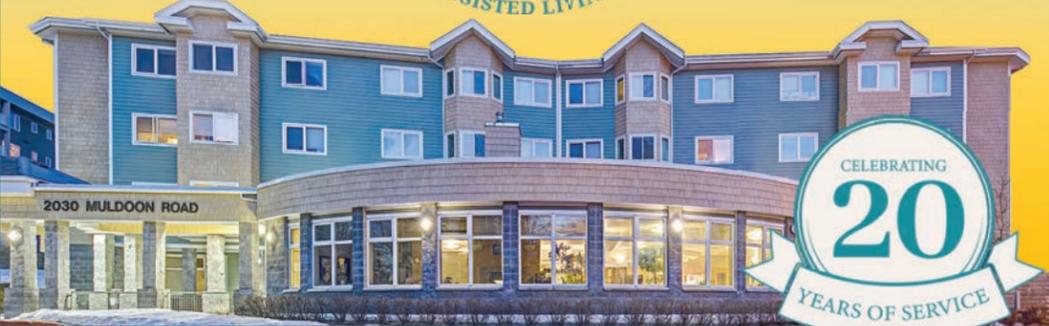
Still haven't used or picked up your Senior Farmer's Market Nutrition Program checks, worth \$35 toward fresh produce? The booklets are available at local senior centers and other agencies and may be used through Oct. 31.

Links to program information and a downloadable application are at <https://bit.ly/3BfGvLV>. Or call your local senior center or meal program for details. There's also a proxy application form that allows someone to apply on behalf of someone else.

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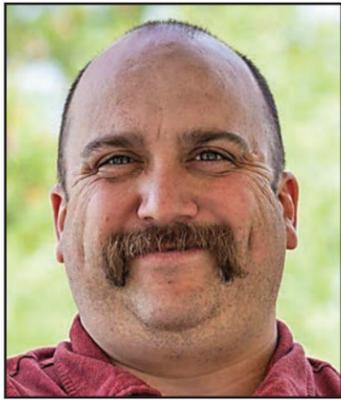
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# Stay on the road with better driving skills

By **CHRISTIAN M. HARTLEY**

For Senior Voice



As people age, it becomes more important for them to match their driving habits to their abilities. Safe driving habits ensure everyone's well-being on the road, not just the driver. While aging does not necessarily mean a decline in driving abilities, certain changes in vision, reaction time and strength may require adjustments. By adopting specific habits, the more experienced drivers can enhance their driving skills and reduce the risk of accidents.

## Start with maintenance

Schedule regular health check-ups to monitor your physical and cognitive abilities, as these can directly impact driving performance. Eye examinations and hearing tests can help identify potential issues early and allow for appropriate interventions or adjustments. You might need glasses or hearing aids, sunlight-reactive lenses for your eyeglasses, or maybe even yellow-tinted sunglasses, and not even have noticed it yet. Put them on for the first time, and you might be impressed by a world of difference.

Did you know you can improve your driving skills

without even being in your car? Participating in regular physical and mental activities can help maintain overall health and mental faculties. Exercises that improve strength, flexibility and coordination can positively impact driving skills. Talk to a physical therapist or your primary caregiver about exercises that can help. Developing those hand-eye skills makes it easier to react to unexpected situations on the road.

## Keep up with traffic laws

Traffic rules change frequently. Over time, traffic laws and regulations change so it is extremely important for all drivers to stay informed about current laws. Did the state make it illegal to occupy the left lane except when passing yet? What about when you are driving slower than the speed limit because of weather? When should you pull over and let traffic pass you? Taking

**Remember that you need to adjust your driving to your current abilities and the road and weather conditions. Drive safe, drive defensively, and arrive alive.**

a driving refresher course or participating in driver's education programs specifically designed for older adults can provide updated information and reinforce safe driving practices. Perhaps providing a record that you took the classes to your insurance company will lower your insurance costs.

## Your attention is required

Becoming distracted can worsen a driver's focus and reaction time, and the distraction can lead to disorientation about where you are. Drivers should minimize distractions by focusing on the road. Avoid using mobile phones and do not eat or groom yourself while behind the wheel. Adjust your music and GPS systems before driving.

Maintain a safe following distance, and remember that changes. Every driver should maintain a safe following distance, allowing plenty of time

to react to sudden stops or changes in traffic. As we age, our time to react to something increases so you might need to increase your following distance to compensate. You should never be closer than three seconds behind the car in front of you, but as you notice your reactions taking longer you need to increase that to four or five seconds or whatever you need to be safe.

## Learn to use the bells and whistles

Modern vehicles come equipped with safety features designed to enhance safety. Drivers should familiarize themselves with these features such as anti-lock brakes, blind-spot detection, and lane departure warning systems. Some of the fanciest cars even have a self-driving mode that can help a driver stay in their lane. You can also have your car connect to your cell phone and it

can dial 9-1-1 immediately for you if you are involved in an accident.

## Weather updates

Take weather conditions into account in your driving decision and driving actions. Rain, wind, snow, ice, and unmaintained roads can significantly impact road safety. Adjust your driving habits according to weather conditions such as slowing down and increasing your following distances during poor conditions. If you notice someone tailgating you and making you feel uncomfortable, maybe give some extra grace to them and pull over so that they can pass and not continue to crowd you into driving unsafely.

## Mindset matters

Accept limitations. None of us want to admit that we are slower than we used to be, but we are. None of us want others to know that sometimes things are blurrier at night than they used to be, but they are. If certain things make driving

page 23 please

## Free Legal Services for Seniors!



Alaska Legal Services Corporation provides legal assistance for seniors\* (60 and older) with housing, government benefits, wills, healthcare, and more!

Call your local ALSC office to learn more:

- Anchorage..... 272-9431 or (888) 478-2572
- Utqiagvik..... 855-8998 or (855) 755-8998
- Bethel..... 543-2237 or (800) 478-2230
- Dillingham..... 842-1425 or (888) 391-1475
- Fairbanks..... 452-5181 or (800) 478-5401
- Juneau..... 586-6425 or (800) 789-6426
- Kenai..... 395-0352 or (855) 395-0352
- Ketchikan..... 225-6420 or (877) 525-6420
- Kotzebue..... 442-3500 or (800) 622-9797
- Nome..... 443-2230 or (888) 495-6663
- Palmer..... 746-4636 or (855) 996-4636

Additional information is available at: [www.alsc-law.org](http://www.alsc-law.org)

\*Funded by State of Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Senior and Disabilities Services. Preference for seniors in social and economic need.



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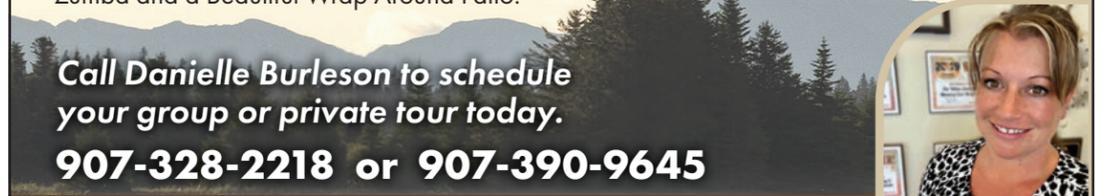
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# Back to school with Grandma Rosemary

RurAL CAP Elder Mentor Program

Hello there! My name is Rosemary Havens and I am a longtime Elder Mentor volunteer in Anchorage. I am 91 years old, and I was born in New York City. I love music, all kinds of music. When I was 14, I worked in the movie theater sorting the candy for sale then moved to cashier. I heard the music and I was so drawn to it. That's where I saw my first opera on film. Beacon Theatre in New York. It's still there. I came to work early one day just so I could see the opera. It was "La Traviata." Magical!

I've lived in Anchorage since 2004. Now there are four generations in the family here. I used to stay every summer in Eagle River visiting family, and then I moved up to be closer. I lived in Puerto Rico for over 30 years. My home was right across the street from the ocean. I love the climate on the island. Some of my family still lives there.

And here, there is so much wildlife outside my window. Recently there's been this rooster wandering around. I also see moose, bear, magpies, robins, you name it. I love getting up in the morning. I get up at seven o'clock. I get dressed, dressed like I'm going out. And if you don't do that, you'll get into a rut. I come in and sit here, watch the news, and have breakfast. I'm ready for the day. That's one reason I love the Elder Mentor Program. It gets me out there meeting people and being part of the community.

Kids like me! Everyone calls me Grandma. What else could they ever call me? I love doing puzzles with the kids because they learn so quickly. Isn't it wonderful to help children? To mentor children? I enjoyed last summer so much because I was volunteering in the summer school program at Wonder Park. That was the first time I've ever taken my scooter out because I didn't know how much I had to walk. And the kids and I had so much fun together.

I spent five years volunteering with Elisabeth at Muldoon Elementary, and



Rosemary Havens has volunteered in several Anchorage schools as an Elder Mentor.

Courtesy RurAL CAP

now we've been friends for about 11 years. I love her husband's soup. We did so many great projects with the students. Then I volunteered at the Native school in Muldoon for three years up until the pandemic. I volunteered with pre-kinder, third grade and fourth grade. Our fourth grade students made hand-made drums. I still have my beautiful drum made by our classroom teacher. The whole school went to the gymnasium every morning and pledged allegiance to the flag in both Yupik and English. Everyone knew each other so well. All the students and staff would go berry picking together, too. It was so wonderful. I am still so close with the teachers and staff from there. We made beautiful bonds.

## Retired teacher shares her praise

Elisabeth A. Kachline, "grateful retired classroom teacher," shares these compliments about Grandma Rosemary:

I don't remember the specific date the Vice Principal and Grandma Rosemary walked into my room while the students were at lunch and recess, but the moment wonderfully rests in my memory. Rosemary was to spend a little time in my room and then go to the other kindergarten classrooms. We clicked. She stayed with me that day and for the next five years.

Grandma Rosemary has an extraordinary personality. She is always positive. She connects with students, especially those with Spanish as a first language. The kindergarten

teachers would often get together at lunch to share classroom happenings. Grandma would often bring foods to share along with her life experiences, humor and wisdom.

Today, five years after retirement, we are friends and as sisters from a different mother. We get together quite often. She



Rosemary says she enjoys seeing the children engaging in games and puzzles because they learn so quickly.

Courtesy Elisabeth Kachline

arranges haircut days for Muldoon Manor and me; and we share a love of many things, including 49th State Brewing Root Beer.

The Elder Mentor Program is a marvelous resource for classroom teachers. I will be forever grateful to these wonderful ladies who encouraged students and me with their

presence and life wisdom.

## Join the Elder Mentor program in your community

The Elder Mentor Program is currently accepting applications for the school year. Benefits for qualifying seniors age 55+ include paid time off, a tax-free stipend, paid holidays, free meals and travel assistance. Please call for more information and to apply, 907-865-7276. Check out the online interest form and learn more at <https://eldermentor.org>. If you are a school interested in having Elder Mentors volunteer in your classrooms, please contact us. You can also reach the team via e-mail at [eldermentors@ruralcap.org](mailto:eldermentors@ruralcap.org). And search "Elder Mentor" on Facebook to find us there.

Make sure you visit this same article on the Senior Voice website for Grandma Rosemary's Pasta Salad recipe.

## Small birds, big preparations for winter

By LISA PAJOT

For Senior Voice

As we near the end of summer, many of us are planning for the winter months ahead: hunting, picking berries, canning vegetables, and freezing summer's food bounty. And the birds who will spend the winter with us are doing the same.

Many birds that live in Alaska year-round have clever strategies for ensuring they have enough food to get them through our long, cold winters. If you watch closely, you can see them gathering and caching food at this time of year. Some are scatter hoarders, hiding their foods in various places around the environment, and some cache food nearby.

Red-breasted nuthatches, the small songbirds who you see going up and down tree trunks seemingly upside down, stuff beetles and seeds under the bark of birch and spruce and often cover the cache with moss, lichen or even small rocks.

Black-capped chickadees are also busy this time of year, hiding seeds



Black-capped chickadees are among Alaska's birds that hide and preserve their food to get through the winter.

Photo courtesy Bird TLC staff

and insects behind tree bark, under dead leaves, between spruce needles or under moss.

The Canada jay also caches foods in multiple places in their territory, coating their finds with sticky saliva that helps to preserve the food for the long winter.

These three birds have learned that the antimicrobial properties in spruce resin help preserve their caches of insects and seeds.

The Boreal owl, a small owl primarily active at

night, caches food too. Their strategy is to cache voles or shrews just before and after snowfall. They do not store their food long-term, like the chickadee, nuthatch or jay, but instead have a quick meal on hand after thawing their frozen prey using the heat from their feathered feet.

How do the birds that scatter their food around the environment remember where they hid everything, you might wonder?

Studies have found that chickadees in Alaska have larger hippocampus volumes with more neurons than their relatives in more southern latitudes. This gives them increased spatial memory to recall where they put that spider back in September.

Many studies of corvids (the family that includes ravens, jays, crows, and magpies) have found that these birds also have hippocampus adaptations that aid in spatial memory.

Birds who store their food must be aware of which individual birds are nearby when they are

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# Class reunion is a town reunion in Glennallen

By **MARALEY McMICHAEL**  
*Senior Voice Correspondent*

After making the 140-mile drive from Palmer to Glennallen, I parked my car, gathered the coleslaw I'd made from cabbage from my garden, and I walked with anticipation to the picnic area of the Pinneo Ballpark. Fifty years ago in May, 22 other classmates and I had graduated from Glennallen High School, and I was curious as to who I might find to visit with at this class reunion.

There had been no communication between me and any of my classmates

about marking this milestone year, so I could only hope that some would show up. The night before, I dug out our yearbook and the four prior years and looked at all the photos and names of the seniors, hoping that would help jog my memory. I had no doubt I would recognize my classmates (even with grey hair), but I wasn't as sure about the others who might attend.

In 1993, I helped organize our 20th reunion and it was a big deal. Eight of us gathered for dinner at Tolsona Lake Lodge and then again for lunch the next day at the Caribou

Café in Glennallen. We only invited the 23 members of our graduating class. I lived in Palmer at the time. Then 10 years later when I lived in Slana, I helped one of our classmates (who lives in the area) organize a picnic at the Pinneo Ballpark for our 30th. That time we decided to open it up to the classes before and after us, as well as teachers. I think we used 1980 as the cut-off year, but it wasn't set in stone. There hadn't been much of a reunion of any kind in several years and we had a great turnout.

**Glennallen High School class of 1973 alumna Terry Spracklen, Jacque St. Amand and Maraley Clayton McMichael, July 2023.**

*Below, their 20-year reunion in 1993. Maraley McMichael is far right.*



*The Glennallen High School building, July 29, 2023.*

*Photos courtesy Maraley McMichael*



So much so, that a local girl (class of 1978) decided to keep it going these 20 years since. It always takes place the last Saturday of July at the ballpark. Hamburgers, hotdogs and drinks are provided and alumni are asked to bring a potluck side dish. The 1978 graduate stores all the reunion supplies and makes sure it happens each summer.

Back in 1973, I married Gary a week after graduating and we immediately moved to Anchorage for his construction job. Since we celebrated our 50th wedding anniversary this past May, I was very aware that it was also 50 years since my graduation. Since that, too, seemed like such a milestone, I decided I wanted to take the time and make the effort to attend the annual reunion in Glennallen, a town I called home beginning in 1963.

On the drive to Glennallen the morning of July

29, I'd had plenty of time to think and consider my expectations. I do correspond with three of my classmates regularly, but only once a year at Christmas, and one of those lives out-of-state. I knew she would not attend. Another of our classmates married a guy from Tonga not long after our graduation and has lived all of her married life in his home country. Others live in Maine, Florida, Texas and California, scattered with the winds. Four are local and many live in other Alaskan towns. Four of our classmates have died. I hoped at least five of us would show up to celebrate this 50th.

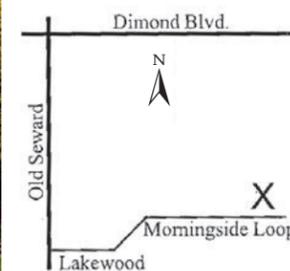
Arriving at the cooking area first, I immediately recognized a guy from the class of 1971 grilling hamburgers. We greeted each other and his wife and I chatted for a few moments, before she offered to take

*page 26 please*

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## Anchorage's not-so-different quilter

By SHEILA TOOMEY

For Senior Voice

There was something different about one of the quilters at the monthly Guild meeting. There among all the women oohing and aahing at a “show and tell” presentation.

It was pretty obvious.

It was a guy.

The Anchorage Log Cabin Quilters Guild has about 150 female members—and George Taylor, who seems puzzled when you ask him why he wants to hang out with a room full of women.

Well, OK. That's probably a stupid question. George, now in his 70s, just smiles.

In the public imagination, “quilters” are old ladies gathered around a huge quilt frame usually pictured outdoors—stitching earnestly to finish the latest bed cover. All very vintage, very 19th century.

But today, in the 21st century, quilters range from casual piecers of fab-



George Taylor in his studio with a design board.

Stan Jones photo

ric scraps to international artists producing improvisational museum quality work. And men are among the best-known artists in the field—men like Kaffe Fassett, possibly the most recognizable fabric de-

signer working today. Or Ricky Tims, who brought his workshop to Alaska a couple years ago and wins international awards for his amazing quilts.

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## Rambles

News from the Grapevine

The Homer Emblem Club is hosting a “Women Warriors Night” dinner to honor all women veterans, Sept. 16 at the Homer Elks Lodge. Cocktails at 5:30 p.m., dinner at 6:30. To RSVP (for oneself and a guest), call 907-299-9951 ... AARP Alaska's Age Friendly Livable Community team (see related story on page 3) will hold a listening session for community input at the Chugiak-Eagle River Senior Center at 1 p.m. on Wednesday, Sept. 27. Share your thoughts on what makes a community inclusive for seniors and community members of all ages and abilities, and ways to make improvements. For more information, call 907-688-2685 ... Kodiak Senior Citizens, Inc. will celebrate their 50th anniversary with refreshments and snacks Sept. 30 at the senior center from 2 to 5 p.m. This will also be a farewell party for Pat Branson, who is retiring after 35 years as the organization's executive director and CEO. If you can't make it, keep your eye out for her around town. She notes in the center's September newsletter that she will remain living in Kodiak, “a paradise of diverse people who take care of each other. I will continue to advocate for senior services and the community of Kodiak” ... After a summer break, the chorus returns to the Anchorage Senior Activity Center, meeting Tuesdays from 1 to 3 p.m. No auditions required, all levels welcome, meet in the ballroom and sing, sing, sing. A Zoom link is available for participating off-site. Email Margaret Simmons for details, queenowrits@arctic.net ...

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**To learn more, visit our booth at the Alaska Federation of Natives conference from October 19 to 21. Find information and resources on Social Security at [aarp.org/socialsecurity](https://aarp.org/socialsecurity).**

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# Rambles

News from the Grapevine

*continued from page 15*

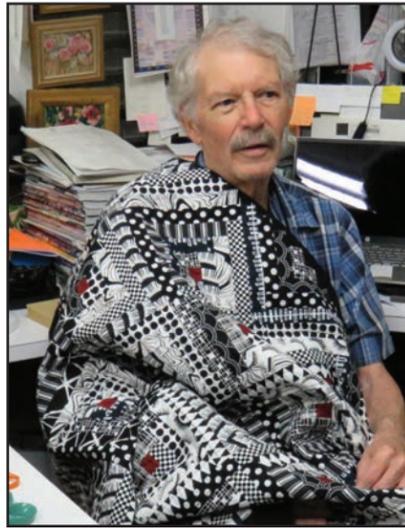
**Nome Swimming Pool** has been closed for two months but reopens in September. It will offer a swim session for seniors, 11 a.m. to noon on Wednesdays, Sept. 6 and Sept. 13. Call for more information, 907-443-5717 ... Another seasonal favorite returns in September, **indoor walking in Fairbanks** at the **Big Dipper**. Beginning Sept. 5, join in on Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:30 to 10:30 a.m. Call **Marya** to register, 907-459-1136 ... Also in **Fairbanks**, the Parks and Rec program is hosting a **community prom** on Friday, Sept. 15 at the **Joy Community Center**, 5 to 7 p.m. This is an all ages dance event. Call for more information, 907-459-1070 ... The **Alzheimer's Association** will host its **"Walk to End Alzheimer's"** fundraiser in two locations in September: **Soldotna** on Sept. 16 and **Anchorage**, Sept. 23. The event raises funds for Alzheimer's Association research and advocacy. No fee is required to participate, however registration is required and donations encouraged. The Soldotna walk takes place Saturday, Sept. 16 at the **Soldotna Regional Sports Complex**. Registration begins at 10 a.m., opening ceremony at 10:30 a.m. and walking begins at 10:50. There are short and longer walking routes to choose from. The Anchorage walk Sept. 23 takes place at the **Alaska Zoo**, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Pick up Promise Garden flowers at the entrance, explore the zoo and head to the lawn at 11 a.m. for Promise Garden and Closing Celebration. There will be multiple walking routes of different lengths. Register online at [www.alz.org](http://www.alz.org) (click "Event" tab at top and search for Alaska). More information: **Cyrese Gorrin**, 907-215-6711 or [cvgorran@alz.org](mailto:cvgorran@alz.org). *Rambles is compiled from senior center newsletters, websites and reader tips from around the state. Email your Rambles items to [editor@seniorvoicealaska.com](mailto:editor@seniorvoicealaska.com).*

# Quilter

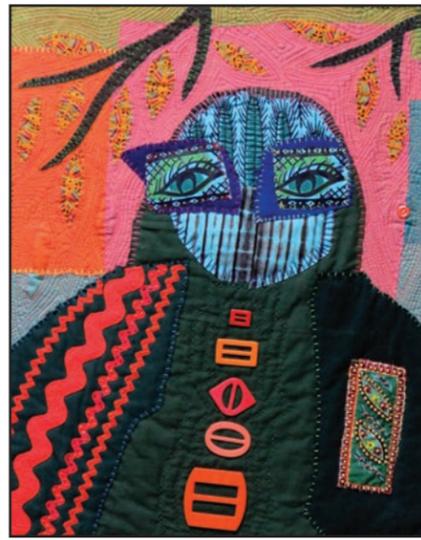
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Lucky for all of us, an infinite variety of local creativity will be on exhibit in Anchorage, for free, at the Great Alaska Quilt Show, Sept. 9 and 10, at the First United Methodist Church on W. 9th Avenue at G Street, right on the Park Strip.

Every quilter has a story about how they first decided it was a good idea to spend hours, days, even years sewing tiny pieces of fabric together, often after first cutting the same fabric into the tiny pieces. But George's story is even more



George Taylor in his west Anchorage studio with a black and white creation.



A George Taylor quilt.

*Stan Jones photos*

legendary than the ladies around the quilt frame: He made his first quilt from flour sacks.

No, he wasn't living in some 1890s backwater, too poor to afford store-bought cotton. It was the 1960s. He was living in Anchorage, working for the in-house bakery at a local supermarket, watching them dump flour out of cotton sacks. All that cotton, in danger of going to waste. It stirred the urge that cannot be denied. He salvaged the sacks and made a quilt.

When he began to get serious about quilting, he asked a friend who had been piecing for a while if she had any spare scraps he could use. (Quilters: you can laugh here.) She filled

his car trunk with bags of them.

"I made three 90" by 108" quilts," he recalled. Then gave them away.

For artists like George, quilting is more than a hobby. It's what he does with his life. Why was he attracted to it?

"I have no idea," he says.

But it's fun to speculate: Perhaps he inherited a yen to piece things together from his father,

a journeyman carpenter. Perhaps the fact that, after working a dozen different jobs as a youth—waiter, grocery store clerk, truck driver, tug boat crew, bus-boy at The Whale's Tale, a printer for five years, a Chinese restaurant—after all that, he went back to school and became a draftsman for the Alaska Dept. of Transportation for 27 years.

And what does a draftsman do? "Generate designs and drawings," "calculate dimensions," "create layouts," get the "scale" right. Sounds familiar to anyone with a sewing machine and a rotary cutter.

Over the years, George's quilts have been featured in more than a dozen books, many by celebrated artists—Mary Mashuta, Judy Hopkins and Roberta Horton, to name a few.



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## Great Alaska Quilt Show Sept. 9-10

First United Methodist Church  
W. 9th Avenue at G Street

Hundreds of local quilters, including George Taylor, have shared their art in the 33-year history of the Great Alaska Quilt Show. And a whole lot of them will be doing so again on Sept. 9 and 10.

As usual, the show will feature the entire range of quilts, from beginners sewing squares into classic patterns to artists with skill and imagination that amazes.

It's not a sale, it's a show. For visitors who just have to buy something, one quilt will be raffled off and there will be a small-quilt silent auction.

Did we mention admission and parking are free?



# Commission on Aging to meet Sept. 19

Senior Voice Staff

The Alaska Commission on Aging will conduct their quarterly meeting Sept. 19, in-person in Seward and online via Zoom.

Held at Seward Senior Center, the meeting is open to the public and will start at 9 a.m. and end at 4:30 p.m.

The commission includes a roster of advocates from around the state with the mission to ensure the dignity and independence of all older Alaskans, and to assist them to lead useful and meaningful lives through planning, advocacy, education and interagency cooperation.

The meeting will be open for public comment at 1:15 p.m. Public comment will be limited to three min-

utes for personal and five minutes for organizations. Organizations may be represented by not more than three speakers whose combined comments may not exceed 10 minutes.

Those wishing to call in via telephone can dial 253-215-8782 and follow the prompts. The meeting ID is 865 8072 6904.

To attend in person, the address is 336 Third Ave. in Seward.

The link to participate online via Zoom is <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86580726904>.

For more information, call 907-465-3250. More information on the meeting will be posted Sept. 1 to the ACoA website at <https://health.alaska.gov/acoa/>.

# Networking for Anchorage, Mat-Su area providers

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

a.m., second Wednesday, at a different host location each month. Breakfast provided. The next date is Sept. 13, hosted by the Palliative Care Alaska Network.

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

# Calendar of Events

**Sept. 10 Nationwide** National Grandparents Day

**Sept. 11 Nationwide** Patriot Day

**Sept. 12-14 Nome** Tribal Justice Summit, hosted by Kawerak, Inc., at Nome Mini Convention Center. Regional Alaskan tribes are invited to learn and discuss how to strengthen tribal courts and traditional law. Open to public, registration required. [www.kawerak.org](http://www.kawerak.org) or call 907-443-4325.

**Sept. 13-15 Kodiak** "Dementia Collaborative," three-day series presented by Senior Citizens of Kodiak, Inc., Hospice and Palliative Care of Kodiak, Alzheimer's Resource of Alaska, KANA Elder Services. Memory screenings (call to schedule); film showing, "Alive Inside," at the public library; Dementia Caregiver Support Group meet and greet, community talk, more. For times and info, call the senior center, 907-486-6181.

**Sept. 15-17 Worldwide** Rosh Hashanah

**Sept. 16 Soldotna** Chili Cookoff at Soldotna Senior Center, 2 p.m. Admission (\$10) buys you a slice of cornbread and bowl of chili from the center's kitchen as well sample cups from contestants and voting privileges. Also, a live auction, games, live music, and a captivating car show from the Kaknu Kruzers. 907-262-2322

**Sept. 16 Nenana** "Dancing in the Streets" at Nenana Civic Center, 5 to 10 p.m. Celebrate recovery with friends, dancing, DJ and glow sticks. Dinner and desserts provided. All are welcome. Presented by Railbelt Mental Health and Addiction, and the Nenana Student Living Center. Call Bethany Jones, 907-378-1443.

**Sept. 20-23 Seward** Pioneers of Alaska Annual Grand Igloo Convention. [www.pioneersofalaska.org](http://www.pioneersofalaska.org)

**Sept. 23 Soldotna** Harvest Moon Local Food Festival at Soldotna Creek Park. Kenai Peninsula's biggest one-day farmers market and local food celebration, spotlighting Alaskans who grow, harvest and produce food and wellness products. Vendors, live music, kids' activities, cooking demonstrations, educational presentations, wild edibles walks, Fermentation Station, more. Free, goes on all day. [www.kenailocalfood.org](http://www.kenailocalfood.org).

**Sept. 23 Anchorage** 27th Annual Sons of Norway Nordic Market, Viking Hall, 8141 Briarwood St., 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Bazaar of Scandinavian gifts returns with woodworking and Norwegian knitting demonstrations, Scandinavian music, traditional food favorites like Polse (reindeer dog wrapped in lefse), traditional soups, waffles, krumkake, Danish puff pastry, Risengrot, meatballs on a stick served with fresh Alaskan lingon berries, and more. 907-349-1613. [www.sofnalaska.com](http://www.sofnalaska.com).

**Sept. 28 Seward** Seward Senior Center 45th Anniversary Party, disco dance party at Gateway Hotel, 6 to 8 p.m. Music, food, games, prizes, quilt raffle, photo booth. 907-224-5604

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



## Alaska Chamber Singers

DAVID HAGEN, Conductor

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Sat., Oct. 21, 2023 7:30 p.m. Cathedral of Our Lady of Guadalupe  
 Sun., Oct. 22, 2023 4:00 p.m. St. Andrew Church, Eagle River

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### Christmas in Venice

With Alaska Chamber Singers  
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Sat., Dec. 9, 2023 7:30 p.m. St. Patrick's Parish  
 Sun., Dec. 10, 2023 4:00 p.m. St. Andrew Church, Eagle River

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 Sat., April 6, 2024 7:30 p.m. Cathedral of Our Lady of Guadalupe

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Alaska Chamber Singers is funded, in part, by the National Endowment for the Arts, Atwood Foundation, Richard L. and Diane M. Block Foundation, Carr Foundation, M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust, Municipality of Anchorage, Rasmuson Foundation, and through the generosity of many individuals and corporate community leaders.

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# From bankruptcy to Skagway elite

By LAUREL DOWNING BILL

Senior Voice Correspondent

Harriet Smith Pullen left her children with friends in Seattle, and a bankrupt farm in Cape Flattery, and arrived broke in Skagway on Sept. 8, 1897. Although husband Daniel came with her, their marriage ended after he continued on to the Klondike and later died in Seattle in 1910.

Earning \$3 a day (about \$108 in 2023 dollars) as a cook for Capt. William Moore, one of Skagway's founders, the enterprising 37-year-old soon opened a tent restaurant to feed Skagway's hungry stampeeders. She also began baking pies in pie tins made from discarded cans.

It didn't take long for Pullen to gain a reputation as a pie baker by using the tons of dried apples included in every stampeeder's outfit to create her pastries. She eventually made enough money to send for her three sons to help with the business, which she'd moved into a log building.

An experienced horsewoman, Pullen also saw an opportunity to provide the stampeeders with transportation as well as food. She sent for her seven horses, and when they arrived in Skagway, she jumped into a rowboat and guided them to shore because no one else would bring them in.

With grit and courage, along with her care and knowledge of horses, she hired out to pack prospectors and their supplies over the White Pass Trail. Pullen became one of the few women packers on the trail, surviving the rough conditions and the corruption imposed by Soapy Smith and his band of thieves.

Her business was so successful that she netted a grubstake that funded several future enterprises when she sold it.

Pullen used some of the profits gleaned from her successful freighting business to rent Capt. Moore's boarding house, which she later purchased and converted into Alaska's largest and most elaborate hotel – the Pullen House. The rooms boasted hot baths and soft beds. The hotel's tables were laden with vegetables grown on land she owned near the old townsite of Dyea, once the major gateway to the Chilkoot Trail, and with milk from her own cows. And food was served on the finest china and silver.

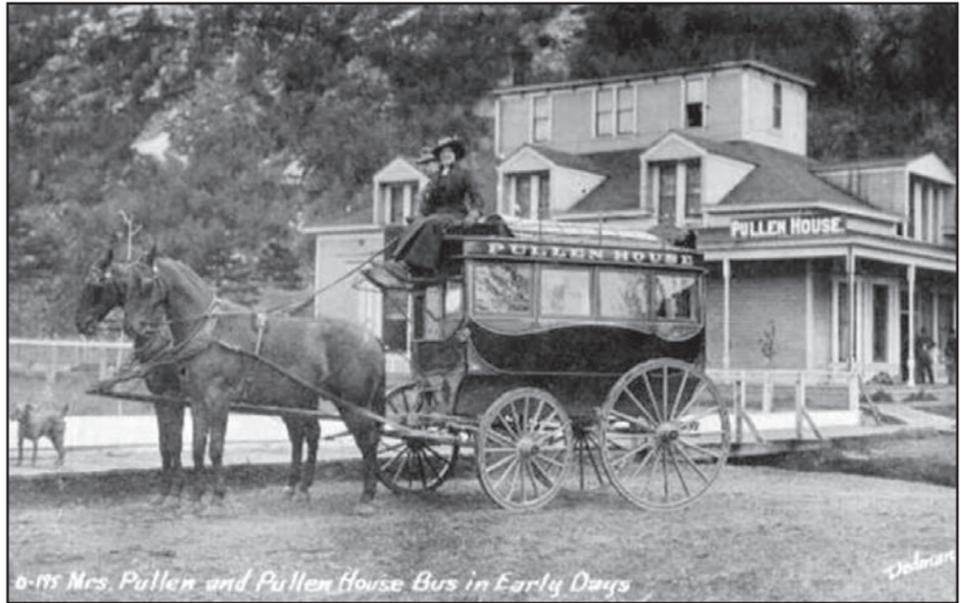
Even during tough times, the Pullen House retained its elegance. President Warren G. Harding made it a point to visit the outstanding hotel during his visit to Alaska in 1923. Pullen made sure her guests were transported to and from the

wharf in her own horse-drawn coach.

Over the years, Pullen became a well-known character throughout Alaska. She promoted tourism in Skagway, which at one time was Alaska's largest city, and amassed a large enough collection of Alaska artifacts to have her own museum. In her later years, she regaled tourists with tales of the Klondike Gold Rush and the shooting of Soapy Smith, an event she claims to have witnessed.

In 1947, after spending 50 years in her adopted town, the grand lady of the North died at the age of 87. She is buried near the site of her once-vibrant hotel.

Her extensive collection, exhibited by granddaughter Mary Pullen Kopanski from the late 1950s, was sold by auction in 1973.



Harriet Smith Pullen sits at the reins of her horse-drawn carriage in front of her elegant hotel in the early 1900s.

University of Washington, AWC 1415

This column features tidbits found in Aunt Phil's Trunk, a five-book Alaska history series written by Laurel Downing Bill and her late aunt,

Phyllis Downing Carlson. The books are available at bookstores and gift shops throughout Alaska, as well as online at [www.auntphilstrunk.com](http://www.auntphilstrunk.com).

### Either Or

#### Across

- 1 Crossjack
- 5 "The Luck of Roaring Camp" writer Harte
- 9 Dangerous fire
- 14 Isle of exile for Napoleon
- 15 Son of Jacob and Leah
- 16 Kindly endorsement and guidance
- 17 Drops from the sky
- 18 Part of the eye
- 19 Glacial lakes
- 20 Tries to fix (with "with") or musical instruments
- 22 The grind or an athletic event for bandicoots
- 24 Clemente leader
- 25 "Dark Knight" actor
- 26 Clock standard (Abbr.)
- 29 Scarf material
- 31 Card game or vessel part
- 36 Velvet plant or Hank's bat
- 39 Precipitous
- 40 Ranch newborn
- 41 Feminine suffixes
- 43 It may follow something
- 44 Common side order
- 46 Impasse or moth-eaten spouse
- 48 Inventor or musician
- 50 Genesis locale
- 51 Sycophant's answer
- 52 Place to hibernate
- 54 Printer's widths
- 56 Chess moves or princes' places
- 60 Southwest Indians or flying machines
- 64 Love, in Roma

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- 65 Play the siren
- 67 Sally in space
- 68 Kind of box
- 69 Mideast title
- 70 Over yonder
- 71 Pains in the neck
- 72 Youngsters
- 73 Marcel Marceau, e.g.
- 9 Baseball players or pates a choux
- 10 Cordelia's father
- 11 Old Mogul capital
- 12 Brass component
- 13 To be, in old Rome
- 21 Bowling green
- 23 Priestly garb
- 25 Rap sheet or absorbent paper
- 26 Fishing tackle
- 27 Polynesian language
- 28 Get in shape or public transport
- 30 Dog bowl bits
- 32 Tabloid twosome
- 33 Time lag
- 34 "Beau \_\_\_"
- 35 Fencing swords
- 37 Couturier Cassini
- 38 End's beginning?
- 42 Planted saboteurs or REM participants
- 45 Hawkiers or a comedic actor
- 47 Castrogiovanni, now (Sicily)
- 49 Victoria Island explorer
- 53 Speck in the ocean
- 55 "Vamoose!"
- 56 Before David or Swampy
- 57 Foreign pen pal
- 58 They're often pickled
- 59 Waste allowance
- 60 Like the Kalahari
- 61 Pre-stereo
- 62 Cheese in a ball
- 63 Sun-cracked
- 66 Fringe-toed lizard

Crossword answers on page 26



# When and how to ‘reset’ play in pickleball

By **JIM LAVRAKAS**

For Senior Voice

So, you’re out there banging away at your opponents and they’re banging it right back at you. Something’s got to give as the speed of the ball and the pace of the return continues to climb. You see that your returns to your opponents also continue to rise in the air and you know that it’s only a matter of seconds before they are able to hit down on the ball and win the point.

What can you do as the frenetic energy builds,

page 27 please



*Juxia Scarpitta of Homer has her paddle turned parallel with her body as she readies to block a shot at the net. On the right, she digs for a low return as she tries to “reset” the point during play at Homer’s HERC facility.*

Jim Lavrakas photos

# Sidney Kibrick remembers ‘Our Gang’

By **NICK THOMAS**

Tinseltown Talks

First screened in movie theaters during the early 1920s, the “Our Gang” film series was produced for another two decades and featured an ever-changing cast of children, showcasing their comedic neighborhood antics.

Throughout the series of some 220 short films created by producer Hal Roach, about 40 child actors appeared regularly beginning in 1922’s silent era and continuing through 1944. Sidney Kibrick is one of the last surviving “Our Gang” cast regulars.

Kibrick, 95, appeared in more than two dozen ‘Gang’ shorts, initially as an unnamed character but

eventually anointed with the nickname ‘Woim,’ the exaggerated Brooklyn pronunciation of ‘worm.’ Other well-known members of the gang included Spanky (George McFarland), Butch (Tommy Bond), Buckwheat (Billie Thomas) and Alfalfa (Carl Switzer).

“We’d have two hours of schooling in the morning and then work anywhere from six to 16 hours until we finished,” recalled Kibrick from his home in Los Angeles. “There was a lot of work, no question about it, but our director Gordon Douglas was a terrific guy and he was really able to get a lot out of each kid.”

Despite the long hours, there was occasionally time to relax and be a kid off-camera.

“There was a big pond at the studio, so Spanky and I would go fishing a lot,” said Kibrick. “We developed a lifelong friendship and although he moved to Dallas while I lived in Beverly Hills, we used to visit and stay at each other’s homes time and time again over the years.”

Despite dozens of kids running around on set, Kibrick remembers things never getting out of control.

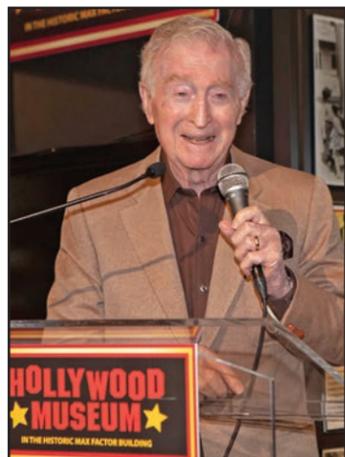
“We had scripts and had to rehearse before shooting so it was very structured,” he recalled. “Parents had to be on the set at all times.”

And while most of the



From the 1939 short, “Auto Antics”. Sidney Kibrick is second from right.

Hollywood Museum publicist photo



Sidney Kibrick addresses the crowd at the opening of the Hollywood Museum’s *Our Gang* exhibit, July 27, 2022.

Bill Dow photo courtesy Hollywood Museum

young actors got along, Kibrick remembers one troublemaker.

“Alfalfa (Switzer) was a very difficult kid and created a lot of problems on the set. He was not nice – not only to the gang, but to the boys and girls who were extras in the movies. It was just his nature. Years later, he was killed in a fight, so he was basically a tough kid.”

So too was Kibrick’s character, Woim.

“I was Butch’s sidekick and we were the bad guys always taking on Spanky, Alfalfa and Darla (Hood),” he explained.

Born in Minneapolis,

young Sid was just an infant when the family moved to Los Angeles so his dad could find better work and was later ‘discovered’ after turning five.

“My mother took us to Grauman’s Chinese theater and after the movie, a man came over to us, pointed at me, and said he could ‘use that little kid in the movies,’” Kibrick recalled. His parents really pushed him and his brother, Leonard, into acting.

“I was earning \$750 a week in ‘Our Gang’, which was a lot in those days, especially during the Depression,” he said. “But by the time I was 15, I’d had

enough. My parents wanted me to continue but finally my mother went along with my wishes. I later attended college and became a real estate developer. So I had a very successful post-Hollywood career.”

Last year, Kibrick attended the opening of an exhibit at the Hollywood Museum honoring the 100th anniversary of the “Our Gang” series. “It’s nice to be remembered!” he said.

Nick Thomas teaches at Auburn University at Montgomery, in Alabama, and writes about classic film, television, and music for numerous magazines and newspapers. See [www.getnickt.org](http://www.getnickt.org).



# Ashcraft

continued from page 3

sudden. I think we have a need to be relevant and to be contributing in some way, whether it's volunteering, whether it's just going to church and having breakfast with people, or we're making a beautiful garden in your neighborhood—whatever.

We want to be relevant. And this honestly gives me a huge amount of satisfaction that way, because I'm helping preserve really important stuff to families and to companies and to businesses. For example, Corpus Christi, Texas. I transcribed all of their city council meeting minutes from the time they started

in 1848 until about 1904, when they got their first typewriter.

I only transcribe from written to written. I don't do auditory. Almost everything is sent to me as a scan, emailed as a scan, or a JPEG, or something. Every once in a while—in fact, any day—I'm going to receive in the mail an actual journal, a great grandmother's travel journal, from this client who wants this done. Because the binding is fragile, he doesn't want to have to crack it open to scan the pages, so he's sending me the journal. I'll just work from that. I do that three, four times a year. Once in a while I get a whole box of war letters. It's just too much for the client to take each one out of the envelope and unfold

them and scan them. I've never had trouble receiving anything, protecting anything—everything gets back to the owner.

**When did you start doing this?**

I started in 2013. I had knee replacement surgery and I was sitting in a chair all day, and I got bored. I had an old journal of a great uncle who walked from Hamburg, Germany to Switzerland just before World War One broke out. He kept an incredible journal, so I typed up his journal, which I inherited, just for the fun of it. I had my mom's letters from college. She only went one year, but they were really fun to read. She was 18 or 19. Then I finished that. I thought, "God, there must be other people who

have stuff like this sitting around their homes." And I had so much fun doing it. I just had this need festering in me to be doing something other than knitting and gardening and going out to dinner with friends.

**Any final words for our readers?**

I guess in a more philosophical sense, as you get older you think more about the value of your time. If you're doing something that's become a drudge or not fulfilling, or if you love what you're doing and you

feel fulfilled and you're okay with it—I don't know why you would stop unless there's something to fill its place. I guess one other thing I'd say—we're never too old. As long as we have our health, we're never too old to try anything.

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

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

# Birds

continued from page 13

caching, as some are adept at stealing others' caches. To prevent possible loss of their cache, they may make sure they are out of the sight of potential thieves when they cache their food, reduce their caching efforts until the coast is clear, or space their food in various locations.

These birds' ability to plan for the winter by stor-

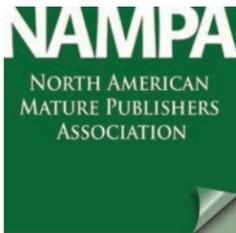
ing food and remembering where most of their caches are is impressive. Unlike us, they can't run to the grocery store weekly to restock their food supplies.

Even after the multitudes of summer birds have migrated out of Alaska, Bird Treatment and Learning Center remains open to care for injured and ill birds who keep us company throughout the winter.

*Lisa Pajot is an ornithologist and Bird Treatment and Learning Center volunteer.*



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# Age 70 or older and not yet receiving benefits?

Social Security Administration

Retirement is not one-size-fits-all. It can mean different things to different people. Perhaps you have not applied for Social Security retirement benefits because you're still working or are delaying applying so you can get the higher benefit. If you're age 70 or older, you should apply

now for the benefits you're owed. Your benefits will not increase if you continue to delay applying for them because you are 70 or older.

Did you know that you can receive benefits even if you still work? Your earnings can increase your monthly benefit amount—even after you start receiving benefits. Each year that you work, we check your earnings record. It's

possible your latest year of earnings is one of your highest 35 years. If so, we will automatically recalculate your benefit amount and pay you any increase due.

You can claim your retirement benefits now. The best and easiest way to apply is with a personal my Social Security account. You can create your free account at [www.ssa.gov/myaccount](http://www.ssa.gov/myaccount).

Once you create your account, you can get an estimate of how much you might receive each month based on when you want to start receiving benefits and then apply.

In your account, you can also:

- ▶ Access our publications—like the fact sheet for workers ages 70 and up.
- ▶ Find your Full Retirement Age.

▶ Learn about benefits for your spouse and family members.

- ▶ Apply for benefits.
- ▶ Manage your benefits once you start receiving them.

Learn more about applying for retirement benefits at [www.ssa.gov/apply](http://www.ssa.gov/apply) on our website. Please share this information with those who need it.

## Video assistance with Social Security questions

Social Security Administration

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

The video service loca-

tions are available at:

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

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

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

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

tions can save people a long trip to a busy office.

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

If they already receive Social Security benefits, they can start or change di-

rect deposit online, request a replacement SSA-1099, and if they need proof of their benefits, they can print or download a current Benefit Verification Letter from their account. People not yet receiving benefits can use their online account to get a personalized Social Security Statement, which provides their earnings information as well as estimates of their future benefits. The portal also includes a retirement calculator and links to information about other online services.

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# The deer in the headlights moment

By **KENNETH KIRK**

For Senior Voice



When people come to see me for the first time, they are usually emotionally prepared to deal with the unpleasant question of what happens to their stuff when they die. I mean, really, nobody schedules an appointment with an estate planner to have a will or trust done, and is shocked to be asked that question. That's why you're there, right?

What they are not always prepared for is a follow-up question: What happens if any of your children has died before you?

Some people are ready for that one, but others get that shocked, deer-in-the-headlights look. Nobody wants to think about one of their children dying before them. It is a horrible thing, and most people, if they have ever thought about it, promptly pushed it to the back of their mind and decided that such a thing would never happen. It just can't. It's too terrible to contemplate.

But in order to do estate planning, you have to answer that question. There is no way to write up a will, or a trust, without making that decision.

For example, let us say

that I write up the document and it says, "I leave my estate to my children, in equal shares". That language has a specific legal consequence. If any of your children dies before you, it would just go to your other children. At least, that is the consequence if the thing I am writing is a living trust. If I put the same words into a will, Alaska has an "anti-lapse statute" which says that unless I very specifically say otherwise, the share of that deceased child goes to their children. But in a trust, it would not go to their children (your grandchildren), it would just go to your remaining children.

But let us say that, instead, I write it as "I leave my estate to my issue, in equal shares". Your issue means your descendants. Now, regardless of what kind of document this is, if

**Nobody wants to think about one of their children dying before them. It is a horrible thing, and most people, if they have ever thought about it, promptly pushed it to the back of their mind and decided that such a thing would never happen.**

one of your children dies, it goes to their children. Incidentally this might be called "right of representation" or a per stirpes distribution. I threw that in to see if the Senior Voice editors are paying attention, because spellcheck programs are always trying to change that to "stripes".

So depending on the wording you use, and what kind of document you put it in, you are always making that decision, one way or the other. But what if you don't want either one? What if you want Buford to get his share if he survives, but you don't want Buford Junior to get a share if Buford doesn't survive you. Instead you want it to go to his other kids. Or maybe you want to include a stepchild who would not normally be included. Or any number of other variations. That's easy—you just have to be specific about what is to happen.

For that matter, I have been assuming throughout that you want the estate to go to your children. Maybe it's not your children, it's your nephews and nieces, or your best friend. Different wording, but the same question. You still have to say what happens if they don't survive you.

There are a lot of perfectly good answers to this question. There are also a few answers that don't work. Sometimes people say, "Can't that just be decided later?" As I said, there is no way not to answer that question. One way or the other, the words I put into that testamentary document are going to have to resolve that issue.

Or my other favorite: "Can't I just leave it up to the kids?" No. They're gone at that point. You have to decide.

It isn't easy to make these decisions. But as that great poet, A. E. Hausman

put it:

While the sun and moon endure  
Luck's a chance but trouble's sure  
I'd face it as a wise man would  
And train for ill and not for good

In the meantime, if your eyes glazed over after the second paragraph, and you don't remember a thing you read after that, take a deep breath, throw back a scotch and soda, and read it again. It isn't pleasant, but you have to face it.

*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. Do not drink scotch while driving or operating heavy machinery. Do not drink scotch if you are allergic to scotch or any of its ingredients.*

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# Scrapbooks, flight trackers and travel chargers

By **BOB DELAURENTIS**

Bob's Tech Talk

**Q.** Is there a computer-friendly way to organize the notes I take when planning a trip?

**A.** There are apps designed to collect separate bits of information from different sources and organize them into meaningful groups. Chances are pretty good you already use at least one. A word processor like Google Docs can be a decent notebook. Websites like Pinterest ([www.pinterest.com](http://www.pinterest.com)) can be used effectively to organize disparate ideas if they are on Pinterest already.

But these tools have limitations. They are good for collecting bits of information, less good at organizing the information you have collected.

This is where tools like Notion ([www.notion.so](http://www.notion.so)) can be useful. Notion is a suite of apps and services that has tools for both note taking and organizing. Notion is available on most devices, and it has a generous free tier that might be all you ever need.

There is an entire subculture on YouTube for explaining how to use Notion. The good news is that you do not have to embrace every feature to make Notion useful. Notion is worth a look if you find a word processing document too inflexible to organize your notes.

**Q.** Do you have a favorite app for tracking flights?

**A.** I find Google search good enough for simple flight status checks. Just enter the flight number

**Google's flight tracking works best when you are actively seeking answers for a specific flight. What it cannot do is notify you when something has changed.**

into the Google search box to show the flight's progress. Google's flight tracking works best when you are actively seeking answers for a specific flight. What it cannot do is notify you when something has changed.

In that case, you need a dedicated flight tracking app. Apps can track multiple flights and notify you about changes in real time. Flight tracking apps tend to be expensive, but they are a good example of "you get what you pay for." Fortunately, they usually offer a number of subscription options that will match your travel requirements.

The best flight tracker app seems to change every few years. In 2023, the top pick for iPhone, iPad and Mac is Flighty ([www.flightyapp.com](http://www.flightyapp.com)). Flighty excels at presenting the most important information you need while traveling in a clean, well-designed handheld interface.

For Android, the best option is Flight Aware Flight Tracker ([www.flightaware.com](http://www.flightaware.com)) on the Google Play store. Flight Aware is an established leader in the flight tracking space, and it is also available on iPhone.

No matter which option you choose, flight tracking software has become an essential travel companion.

**Q.** What is the best way to keep my iPhone charged when traveling?

**A.** There are a wide variety of products that fit on a bedside table and travel well. These products fit into one of two categories: stands and chargers. Stands tend to be less expensive, and usually require additional components such as cables and power adapters. Stands can be a good option if you already have extra cables or adapters available. However, stands can be cumbersome to pack. It is easy to leave home with an incomplete set of components.

Wireless bedside chargers are a convenient upgrade for both travel and everyday use. They provide everything in a single package.

By far my favorite is the Anker 3-in-1 Cube with MagSafe. The small size (when folded) makes it easy to pack. The 3-in-1 Cube is a complete set of chargers in a single device, with magnetic docks for an iPhone, an Apple Watch, and an AirPods case.

## Wander the Web

Here are my picks for worthwhile browsing this month:

### Travel Advice

Chances are good you have seen this site in search results. I have mentioned it before, but its continued usefulness makes it worth another visit.  
[www.tripadvisor.com](http://www.tripadvisor.com)

### The Ultimate Travel App

The Tripsy app is a powerful tool for travel planning. Use it to track flights, create sightseeing activities, or simply dream about your next vacation. Unfortunately, it is for iPhone only.  
<https://tripsy.app>

### Travel Article Collection

A beautiful collection of travel-oriented articles published in Smithsonian Magazine.  
[www.smithsonianmag.com/travel](http://www.smithsonianmag.com/travel)

There are other multi-device chargers available, but none of them are as small yet powerful enough to fast charge three devices at the same time. Later this month iOS 17 will add a nightstand mode to some iPhone models, making the cube an even better travel companion.

My advice, if you have

an iPhone, get one of these chargers. If you want to get a head start on holiday shopping, watch for sales on the 3-in-1 Cube for that special person on your gift list.

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

## Driving

continued from page 12

unsafe, it may be necessary to explore alternative transportation options such as buses, cabs, ride-sharing services or carpooling.

Managing stress while driving is crucial for maintaining focus and making smart decisions on the road. When you are stressed, it is easier to be distracted or angered. Deep breathing exercises, listening to relaxing music, or taking breaks during long drives

can help you stay calm and in control.

Remember that you need to adjust your driving to your current abilities and the road and weather conditions. Drive safe, drive defensively, and arrive alive.

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

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# Europe sleeper trains travel far and wide

## From Brussels to Prague, Paris and beyond

BY DIMITRA LAVRAKAS

Senior Voice Travel Correspondent

Why do I write so many columns about trains? Because I'm old, you're old and we can't walk that far anymore.

Taking a train means you see more of a country and its cities, towns and villages, and in style and comfort.

Comfort means a lot at our age.

### Czech railway company RegioJet picks up speed

If you're traveling by train between major cities in the Czech Republic or Vienna, Regiojet offers economy class, first class, business class, and four-bed cabins, which are like bunk beds and perfect if you're traveling with your extended families on the trip.

The bright yellow trains hum through mountains and valleys like a bumble



A luxurious ride on the new Orient Express La Dolce Vita brings you back in time.

Photo courtesy Orient Express La Dolce Vita/Rendering by DimoreStudio

bee, traveling up to 124 mph. From Brussels to Prague it's just 15 hours.

Routes include Brussels

to Prague by way of Antwerp, Rotterdam, Amsterdam, Hanover, Berlin and Dresden. Plans are to add

The most affordable

a route from Amsterdam to the south of France, which should prove very popular.

The most affordable

class is standard, with prices starting at \$206 a night, and includes reclining seats with headrests, complimentary Wi-Fi, and a selection of drinks (mint tea, coffee, apple juice). After boarding, guests in the Business Class have the option of enjoying orange juice or Bohemia Sekt Brut, including a quiet compartment for four people with electric sockets.

Remember you'll need a European plug adapter to use with your wall charger so that you can plug it into a wall outlet in Europe, except in the UK.

America uses type-A/B plugs, while most European countries use Type-C plugs. American appliances run on 110 volts, while European appliances run on 220-240 volts.

There are all kinds of world plug adapters, ranging from basic ones that are simple but would do the job, to sophisticated but pricier

next page please

# Alaska's winter ferry schedule announced

## AMHS sails ahead with funding on deck

By DIMITRA LAVRAKAS

Senior Voice Travel Correspondent

It didn't take long for new Alaska Marine Highway Director Craig Torga to make waves. Since his appointment in March this year, he's been busy turning the ferry service around.

The winter schedule is now out and he's heeded the concerns of remote ports. For example, Kake, Angoon and Tenakee Springs will have two stops a week Wednesday and Saturday, every month this winter — a far cry from last year's dead zone in January and February. And Gustavus will also get two visits a week. Unfortunately, this year Pelican is the only community without regularly scheduled ferry service during the winter period.



An Alaska Marine Highway ferry makes its way through Tongass Narrows.

Dimitra Lavrakas photo

The Kennicott ferry will be coming online in mid-December when Columbia goes in for its annual overhaul, but not before a nearly two-week

blackout in service between Bellingham and major Alaska ports.

"There will be a service gap for Southeast for just under two weeks between

Dec. 2 and 14," said Sam Dapcevich, spokesperson for the Alaska Dept. of Transportation and Public Facilities. Columbia is scheduled to resume work

starting March 15.

The Alaska Marine Highway System will not be taking reservations for

next page please



# Train

from page 24

ones. Easiest place to get one may be off of Amazon.

## Travel on a legend

Many of us have read the book, or seen the movie “Murder on the Orient Express,” and now you can board it.

Six new trains of the

2023 premier of the Orient Express La Dolce Vita offers six routes traveling through 14 regions. And three international itineraries are offered through eight countries, linking Rome to Paris, Istanbul and Split, Croatia.

Plus, opening in 2024, there is a first-ever Orient Express Hotel, Accor’s Grand Hotel de la Minerva.

Not for the faint of heart pennypincher, the cost be-

gins at a whopping \$2,255 per night, per guest. Go to <https://www.orient-express.com>.

With 12 deluxe cabins, 15 suites and a restaurant, you will be wrapped in luxury, fed gourmet meals and fine Italian wines.

## Skip the plane and airport hell and sleep tight

In 2024, Midnight Trains, a French start-up railway company will launch its all-private sleeper car service that includes private baths and premium bedding.

From Paris to 13 cities — Barcelona, Berlin, Brussels, Copenhagen, Edinburgh, Florence, Hamburg, Lisbon, Madrid, Milan, Porto, Rome and Venice—all trains will arrive at their destination the next morning.

The debut route will likely connect Paris to Milan and Venice in the future, according to the company.

Rooms are configured for solos, duos, and for friends or family traveling together. Each train accommodates up to 350 passengers in high-European style, not AMTRAK



A sleeper train on the fast-running RegioJet train has both bunks and couch.

Photo courtesy RegioJet

style. Meals are served in the dining room, at the bar, or in your room. Go to <https://www.midnight-trains.com>.

Touted as being 23 times less polluting than air travel, the company says you would have to travel 23 times from Paris to Rome to equal the pollution effect of one air flight on the same route.

The founders Adrien Aumont and Romain Payet say, “The experience of flying around Europe is inefficient and marked by stress and discomfort. The

speed the airlines offer is an illusion, and a one-hour flight is actually a grueling four-hour trip from door to door.

“Finally, and most importantly, air travel produces high carbon emissions. Midnight Trains was born of these observations. It’s time to choose a more comfortable, efficient, and sustainable alternative.”

In June, France passed a bill to ban short-haul flights through parliament where a train alternative of 2.5 hours or less exists. Voila!

# Ferry

from page 24

Kennicott after the end of February until it becomes clear whether there will be enough crew to run both mainliners.

This winter, ferries LeConte and Hubbard will share service through the Lynn Canal, meaning either one ship will run or the other. That accommodates the scheduled overhaul of LeConte, which begins at the end of November, and the Hubbard, which goes offline in mid-March.

Pelican, which relies on a ramp, will lose regular ferry service when the LeConte goes offline. Its dock can’t accommodate the Hubbard. However, supplemental contract providers will fill in the gap in service, Dapcevich said.

Go to <https://dot.alaska.gov/amhs/schedules.shtml>.

## Federal funds will bolster ferries and infrastructure

With five of its nine ships over 45 years old, there are

plans for three new vessels. The first, replacing the beloved Tustemena and bolstered by more than \$286 million in federal money for new ferries and terminals from the Infrastructure Investments and Jobs Act, will be diesel-electric; the second, diesel-powered hybrid; and, the third, a low-emissions ferry, which uses an alternative fuel such as methanol, natural gas, propane, hydrogen or electricity.

In mid-August, U.S. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg took the M/V Hubbard from Juneau to Haines with Sen. Lisa Murkowski after his flight was canceled due to weather. He was in the state to tour its transportation infrastructure.

The AMHS master plan includes upgrading some docks to make them more accessible to the newer ships.

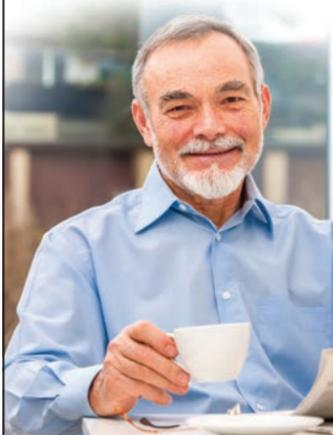
Another new program puts retired State Troopers on the ferries in uniform, which will hopefully calm the sometimes raucous frolicking, especially on the solarium deck.



The M/V Malaspina docks in Skagway.

Dimitra Lavrakas photo

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# Reunion

continued from page 14

my salad to the food table. Just then another lady (I didn't recognize) caught my eye and we began to talk. It turned out she is the wife of one of my brother's good friends. (My brother graduated in 1980.) And so it went. I just kept speaking to first one person and then another, introducing myself and asking who others were, engaging in so much conversation it was hard to stop long enough to get a plate of food, which I took to a picnic table in the shade.

I enjoyed talking to the mother of the lady who makes sure the yearly reunion happens – a dear lady from my mother's generation. I also enjoyed exchanging memories with a friend of Gary's, who knew him even before we married. I don't know what year he graduated, but did learn he is now 79. Then I had a great conversation with a 1971 graduate, whose son I knew from my years working at the Slana School where he did his first year of teaching in 2002. I laughed with a lady from the class of 1966 as she talked about her experiences being our family's babysitter, taking care of me and three younger siblings – two sisters and a brother. Growing up in a small town like Glennallen, you not only know your classmates, but also their siblings and parents – pretty much the whole town.

By this time, I was aware that two guys from my class who still live in the Copper River Valley were present, so I joined their group. We talked a little of health issues, but mostly of memories: specific teachers and particular incidents. I so enjoyed the spirited conversation, the laughter and the joking. I look back on my high school years with fondness, unlike some people. We caught up on what we knew of the whereabouts and activities of other classmates.

Later that night, I made a list of everyone I could think of that attended and came up with 32. And yes, several were from out-of-state. There were only two people I absolutely did not recognize and had to ask their names, but they were quite a bit older than me, graduating before I became a freshman.

I was among the last to leave, staying until almost all the food had been cleared away and the supplies had been packed up in the boxes for another year, wanting to soak up enough nostalgia to last a long time. Then I took a leisurely drive around town, taking photos and reliving childhood memories.

I marvel at how quickly 50 years passed. Then I purposefully change my mindset and look toward the future and wonder about those years, too, as I continue on this journey of life.

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

# Passport

continued from page 2

Scam Tracker that mention the word "passport." What's happening here is bad actors are setting up official-looking websites to sell passports that simply don't exist, and they aren't authorized or even capable of making these documents.

Individuals have reported to BBB that they lost money using websites they found through an online search or on social media. They filled out a form and paid a processing fee. They thought they were on a government website

because it looked official. But it wasn't. And to make matters worse, these fake websites often collected applicants' Social Security Numbers and other personal information. Giving up that personal information is worse than losing a few hundred dollars in a one-time transaction.

### What can you do?

Consider submitting for a passport now whether you need it or not, just in case travel comes up. Even if you don't have any plans to travel internationally, it's best that you play the waiting game now while you don't need a passport, instead of a month out from

a trip.

As with any government document, only use official government websites to gather information on passports and submit documents. Ensure you are visiting websites ending in ".gov" like <https://travel.state.gov>. You can visit [travel.state.gov](https://travel.state.gov) to find up-to-date information on processing times and to learn how to submit for your passport. You can also head over to [www.BBB.org/travel](http://www.BBB.org/travel) to stay on top of all the latest information and helpful tips for your upcoming vacation.

*Logan Hickle is a PR and communications manager at BBB Great West and Pacific.*

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### Crossword answers from page 18

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# Pickleball

continued from page 19

and before you're overwhelmed? It's called "re-setting" the point. Selkirk Sports' simple definition

volleys the ball hard at you. A block involves turning your paddle sideways and literally blocking the shot with a soft paddle hold. Using a light hold allows you to soften your return so that it just falls over the net. Again, you achieve best



Homer player Betsy Vanek has perfect "paddle ready" form as she tracks the ball for a return shot.

Jim Lavrakas photo

of the reset says it simply: "A reset is nothing more than a third shot drop performed at a time when you find yourself not in control of the point." A third shot drop is a return that drops softly in the kitchen where your opponent is challenged to slow their own game down. "Kitchen" is the nickname for the "no-volley zone".

There's two major ways to reset. If you're on the run you simply want to get your paddle out in front of you the best you can and connect with the ball as low as you can so that its return has a higher arch, while still aiming to drop in the kitchen. This helps make the shot unattackable and gives you time to recover.

You're trying to slow the game down, so hitting back hard is unproductive. And you will most likely dump the ball in the net. "Just get it over" softly into the kitchen and you will have achieved the slowdown you're looking for.

You may have to retreat to do this. And in pickleball we want to strive to move forward to the net, yes? But there are times when retreating is the best and only way to recover from an attack and you need to take the ball off the bounce, and not volley the return (a volley is a shot taken out of the air.)

The other way to reset is to block your opponent's shot. This usually comes into play when you are at the net and your opponent

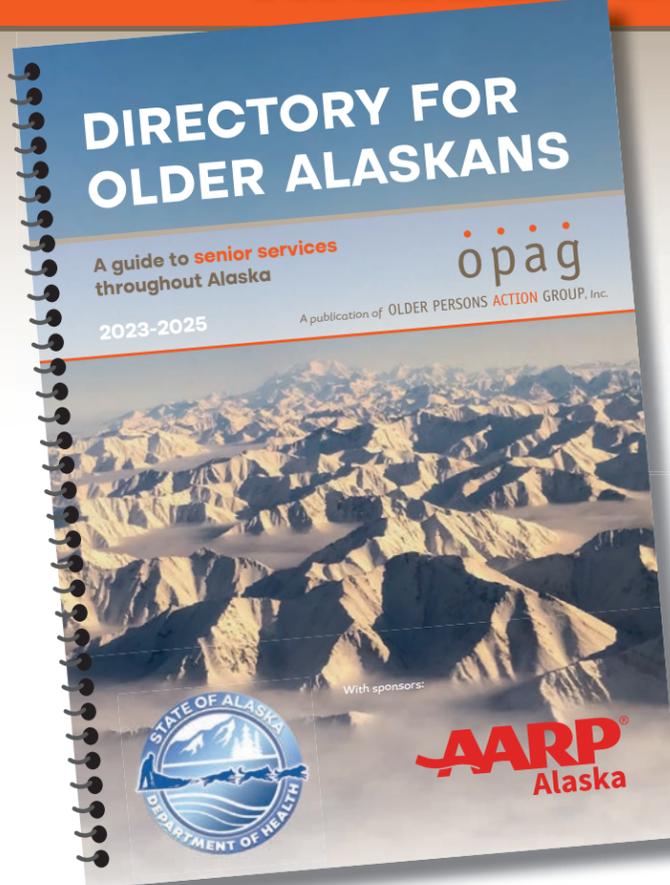
results attempting the block by having your paddle in front of you, in the paddle ready position. I've talked about this before, the "ready position". This is the one thing I see players fail to do that can improve their game immediately. Get, and keep, your paddle in the ready position. That means, get your paddle out in front of you with your non-paddle hand resting near your paddle hand wrist (see photo). To get into the habit of doing this when I first started playing, I repeated to myself "paddle ready, paddle ready" after every shot, and that prompted me to bring my paddle back up after a shot.

There are some very good videos of resetting on the Web. PrimeTime Pickleball has a good one at <https://bit.ly/45f1Ja4> with player/instructor Daniel Moore. And on the same website you can see how to block a shot at <https://bit.ly/3K0jDIC>.

These are skills that you develop over time. I think they are some of the hardest skills to master because you're trying to change the pace of the game. Developing skills, it is said, takes repeating them (correctly) 10,000 times. So, you better get started.

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

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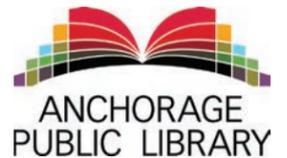
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