

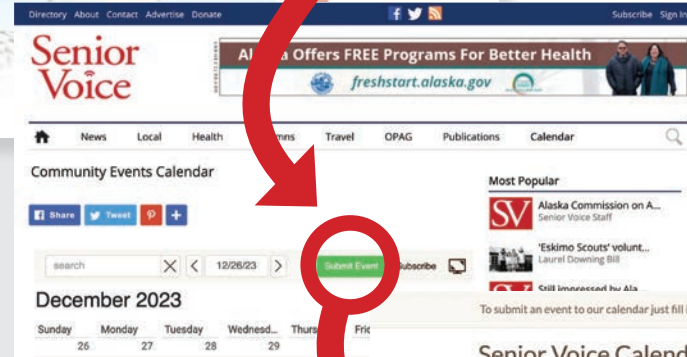
# Get word out about your upcoming event!

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



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

**3**

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

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Your Name

Your Contact Email

Private notes for the calendar owner (not shown with your event)

notes

Event Title

event title

Add a button linking to the event website

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# Senior Voice

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



# Senior Voice

Serving Alaskans 50+ Since 1978

Volume 47, Number 12 December 2024

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Travel: Head south to Santa Fe for food and fun.

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Lydia Abrigo samples the delectable treats at last year's Kodiak Senior Center cookie exchange. The event returns this year on Dec. 13 at 1 p.m., also the day for the center's annual holiday lights tour which takes place that evening from 6 to 8 p.m. Sign up ahead of time, space is limited, and meet at 5:30 to catch the bus. Call for more details, 907-488-6181. For a look at other activities around the state, see the calendar on page 17.

Photo courtesy Kodiak Senior Citizens, Inc.





# Your Senior Voice subscription is important

By DAVID WASHBURN

Senior Voice Editor

Many readers pick up their Senior Voice each month at a senior center, apartment complex, office lobby or other public place. We gladly provide bundles to these locations at no charge to get our paper and its information into the hands of as many people as possible. However, I want to en-



courage readers who get their paper from these places to subscribe. You can do this using the subscription form on page 3 of

this issue, or just call one of the numbers at the end of this article. Or hold your smartphone camera up to the QR code here, and it will take you to our online subscription form. Not only does a subscription result in Senior Voice being delivered directly to your mailbox each month, it helps us keep our expenses down. It costs us much less in postage to mail directly to your address than it does to send large bundles to “a

location near you.” For many readers, a subscription won’t cost a thing. Older Persons Action Group, Inc., the nonprofit agency that publishes Senior Voice, provides the paper at no charge to low-income seniors. By “low income” we mean someone who qualifies for public assistance. We generally give people the benefit of the doubt as to whether they can afford a subscription, and we don’t

require income verification. We’ve found that many readers who get the paper free will frequently send in a donation because they want to help out, which is greatly appreciated. Sure, you can keep getting the paper when you’re out and about, but wouldn’t it be nice to get it right at home, without missing an issue? Our sincere thanks for your continued support.

# ‘Smishing’ text messages can be dangerous

By MICHELLE TABLER

AARP Alaska

Have you received unsolicited spam texts with a message that appears to be from your bank, credit card company or a shipping company such as FedEx? How about a message just saying “Hi. How are you?” These are called “smishing” scams—scams which involve a text message on your cell phone. Statistics show that people read nearly all their texts, but may not answer calls from unknown numbers nor respond to emails. Scammers know this, and use smishing to get personal information like your Social Security

number, date of birth and usernames and passwords. According to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), the most common text message scam reported in 2022 was a fake warning about bank fraud. You receive a text purportedly from your bank alerting you to a transaction and asking if you approved it. Just by replying, the scammer knows they have found an active phone number. The scammer may then call you with a spoofed caller ID that often mimics that of your actual bank. To stop the “fraudulent” charge, they will instruct you to send money to yourself through a digital wallet app (such as Zelle). They

will also tell you to give them the verification code the bank sent you. There is also a sense of urgency that you need to act quickly. Don’t do it! Another common type of smishing scam uses fraudulent messages from well-known shipping companies. Many of us are ordering online and expecting packages, so a text about package delivery will catch our attention. Scammers will send a fake text message notifying that you have a missed delivery or they need a verified address. Be aware that USPS will not send text messages or emails without the customer requesting the service with a tracking num-

ber. Furthermore, official USPS messages will never contain a link. Whenever viewing messages claiming to be from known shippers, never click on a link. Look for these red flags to avoid smishing scams: the text is unexpected; the text message may contain misspellings and bad grammar; and the phone number may be unusually long. Of course, the most obvious red flag is that you do not have an account with that bank or credit card or you’re not expecting a package. To avoid becoming a victim of this type of scam: ► Don’t respond! Don’t type “stop” or call the phone number. ► Never click on any link within the text. The link could send you to a fraudulent site or even infect your phone with malware.

► Delete all suspicious texts and report as junk. Block the number as well. ► Contact the company directly through a number that you have or use the contact information listed on their official website. ► Make sure your phone has updated to the latest version. Remember, it’s best to resist the urge to text, email or speak to scammers when you know it’s a scam. This could put you at risk for future scams because they now know they have a working phone number and that you’ll respond and/or engage them in conversation. That information can then be sold on the dark web. It’s best to just hang up the phone or delete the text or email. Michelle Tabler is an AARP Alaska Volunteer Fraud Education Expert.

## Networking for Anchorage, Mat-Su area providers

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

fast, 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 Dec. 11, hosted by AARP Alaska. Call Older Persons Action Group, Inc. at 907-276-1059 for location information and to be added to our e-mail reminder list.

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#### 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.”



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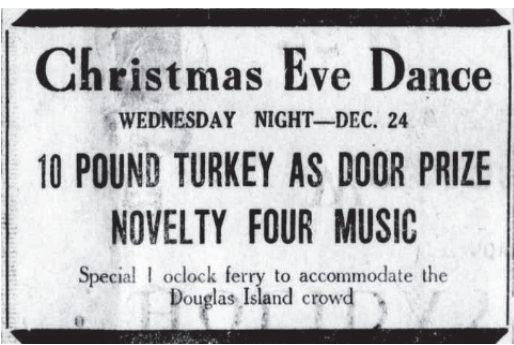


# Christmas in Alaska 100 years ago

By LAWRENCE D. WEISS  
For Senior Voice

This year the spirit of Christmas in Alaska may be overwhelmed by the politics of the times and a tsunami of electronic gifts and doodads. But looking through Alaska newspaper clippings from 100 years ago, Christmas had more to do with turkey shoots and a kindly police chief ...

**Turkey Shoot at Kennecott**  
A very successful turkey shoot was held at Kennecott on Christmas day starting at 10 a.m. and lasting until 3:30 p.m. It was a decided financial success as well as being thoroughly enjoyed by both spectators and participants. Ideal weather prevailed...



Victor Johnson picked off no less than seven, while Fred Schranz got three and Walter Egert two. The opening rules

compelled shooting offhand from a standing position at 100 yards. This was modified later to permit kneeling to aim while the last few were disposed of with pistols at thirty yards. Twenty birds were put up. — *The McCarthy Weekly News*, Dec. 27, 1924.

Apropos of Christmas we are reminded that

many a fine girl is going to make the mistake of judging a man by the kind of Christmas gift he sends. Too frequently it happens that a 10-cent man sends a 6-dollar gift. — *Hyder Weekly Herald*, Dec. 24, 1924.  
**Flooded with gifts**  
Program for Those Persons Who Think Santa Clause Deception Should Come to End  
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# When winter whispers: A season of thoughtful giving

Alaska Health Fair, Inc.

The first snow has fallen across Alaska, transforming our landscape into a quiet wonderland. But December brings more than just crystalline beauty – it carries the profound warmth of human connection, wrapped in the age-old tradition of giving. Think back to the most meaningful gift you've ever received. Chances are, its value wasn't measured in dollars, but in the thought behind it. This season, we're reimagining gift-giving through a lens of wellness and intention. In a world increasingly dominated by screens, gifting items that encourage active play is more crucial than ever. For children, consider toys that promote physical activity, stimulating their growth and development. For adults, gifts like fitness trackers, yoga mats, or even dance class subscriptions can be both thoughtful and beneficial

for their health. But let's venture beyond the material. Sometimes the most profound gifts cost nothing at all:  
► An afternoon spent teaching your grandmother to use video calls to connect with far-off family  
► A handwritten book of your favorite recipes for a friend who's just starting to cook  
► A promise of monthly hiking dates with your sibling  
► Your time and skills offered to a local shelter or food bank  
These gifts ripple outward, creating connections that last long after the holiday decorations are packed away. For those wanting to help others, consider reaching out to local organizations serving Alaskans in need. A warm coat, a grocery gift card, or simply your time can transform someone's winter from survival to celebration. As Alaska Health Fair

wraps up another year of service, we're filled with gratitude for our incredible community – the volunteers who brave dark mornings to set up health fairs, the medical professionals who share their expertise, and every Alaskan who takes charge of their wellbeing by attending our events. While our health fairs pause for winter's depth, we're already planning

for a vibrant 2025. New schedules will be published in early January, bringing fresh opportunities for health education and affordable screenings across our vast state. Stay connected with us by signing up to AHF newsletter at [www.alaskahealthfair.org](http://www.alaskahealthfair.org). This December, as the sun plays brief and beautiful across our snow-covered state, remember that every act of giving, no

matter how small, weaves another thread into our community's tapestry of care. Here's to a season of mindful giving, deeper connections, and the quiet joy of making someone else's world a little brighter. Alaska Health Fair, Inc. is a nonprofit organization delivering health education and affordable comprehensive blood tests at health fairs statewide since 1980.

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# In an anxious population, seniors can help

By DR. EMILY KANE

For Senior Voice

Last year for the first time ever, the nation's top panel of preventive health experts, the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force, or USPSTF, recommended that doctors routinely screen all adult patients under 65 for anxiety disorder. Evidence shows that anxiety screening can help those patients find peace of mind, as the USPSTF said in recommendations that were published in the Journal of the American Medical Association in June of 2023.

The Task Force found for patients age 19 to 64 evidence is robust that screening leads to a reduction of symptoms of anxiety, which of course also benefits overall quality of life. The Task Force also reiterated its longstanding recommendation that all adults receive regular depression screening.

USPSTF vice-chair Silverstein wrote, "We were able to identify effective practices to screen the adult population for common and serious mental health disorders. The good news is that screening for depression and anxiety can identify these conditions early. When this screening is linked to quality mental health care, patients benefit."

However, the task force did not recommend anxiety screening for seniors because in the population 65 and older, the USPSTF didn't see the same quality of evidence that spoke to those outcomes.

The American Psychiatric Association president Dr. Petros Levounis also contributed to the JAMA report, noting that "the pandemic highlighted the importance of mental health care for Americans. The global prevalence of anxiety and depression increased by 25% in the first year of the pandemic, according to a 2022 scientific brief from the World Health Organization. Depression and anxiety disorders are prevalent in the United



States—it's estimated that one in five people could have an anxiety disorder at any given point—and it's gotten worse since COVID. Often depression and anxiety disorders go undetected, and if a mental health disorder goes untreated it can get worse."

Evidence shows that two simple screening tools were accurate in screening for generalized anxiety disorder, the USPSTF said. One of the tools, the GAD-2, contains just two questions: "Over the last two weeks have you been feeling nervous, anxious or on edge?" and "Have you been unable to stop or control worrying?" The longer tool, GAD-7, contains a list of seven similar questions. Clinicians conducting screenings have training so they can follow-up on positive screens with a few questions, such as the duration of symptoms, degree of distress and impairment, and current or previous treatment history, to better determine clinical significance and the need for treatment. This initial assessment and treatment planning has been shown to improve outcomes.

Likely all of us seniors have younger people in our lives who seem more anxious, more time-constrained and more pessimistic about the future than we are. We are all living together in this hard and scary time, however older folks have the benefit of appreciating the long arc of the lifespan. At age 20 or 30 or even 40, I truly had absolutely no understanding of what life inside

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# Winter, the heart attack season

By JIM MILLER  
Savvy Senior

**Dear Savvy Senior:** I've heard that people with heart problems need to be extra careful during the winter months because heart attacks are much more common. What can you tell me about this? – AFib Alan

**Dear Alan:** Everyone knows winter is cold and flu season, but many don't know that it's also the prime season for heart attacks too, especially if you already have a heart condition or have suffered a previous heart attack. Here's what you should know, along with some tips to help you protect yourself.

In the U.S., the risk of having a heart attack during the winter months

is twice as high as it is during the summertime. Why? There are a number of factors, and they're not all linked to cold weather. Even people who live in warm climates have an increased risk. Here are the areas you need to pay extra attention to this winter.

**Cold temperatures.** When a person gets cold, the body responds by constricting the blood vessels to help the body maintain heat. This causes blood pressure to go up and makes the heart work harder. Cold temperatures can also increase levels of certain proteins that can thicken the blood and increase the risk for blood clots. So, stay warm this winter and when you do have to go outside, make sure you bundle up in layers with gloves and a hat, and place a scarf over

your mouth and nose to warm up the air before you breathe it in.

Snow shoveling. Studies have shown that heart attack rates jump dramatically in the first few days after a major snowstorm, usually a result of snow shoveling. Shoveling snow is a very strenuous activity that raises blood pressure and stresses the heart. Combine those factors with cold temperatures and the risks for heart attack surges. If your sidewalk or driveway needs shoveling this winter, hire a kid from the neighborhood to do it for you, or use a snow blower. Or, if you must shovel, push rather than lift the snow as much as possible, stay warm and take frequent breaks.

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## Automatic card shuffler and card holder

Assistive Gizmo of the Month



Assistive Technology of Alaska



to keep track of the cards without causing pain or discomfort that can be found from grasping.

Card games are a great pastime and opportunity for socialization. If it is difficult to shuffle or hold cards, there are options to allow an individual to continue with this pastime. Place your card deck in an automatic card shuffler, press the switch, and watch as your deck is shuffled and collected in a tray for easy access. Once shuffled and dealt, use a card holder

This column is brought to you by ATLA (Assistive Technology of Alaska), a nonprofit, statewide resource. ATLA does not endorse this product but shares information on the types of assistive technology that may benefit Alaskans. For more information or to arrange a free demonstration, visit <http://www.atlaak.org> or call 907-563-2599.

# Options around the state for indoor walking

By DIMITRA LAVRAKAS  
For Senior Voice

In December after an active spring, summer and autumn of physical activity, you wonder how to keep it together as another Alaska winter sets in. You could winter over in Hawaii (see deals in the travel column), but you don't have to go that far; exercise is as close as your nearest shopping mall or recreation center.



© Atcharapun Samorn | Dreamstime.com

**Anchorage**  
**Dimond Center Mall** is open for free mall walking

on the first and second levels of the building, Hours are Monday through Sat-

urday, a.m. to 7 p.m., and Sunday, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Early in the morning there is a lot of parking up close to the mall, making access easier than later in the day. If people are interested in walking, just enter the mall and walk. No need to report to anyone or sign in. Phone: 907-344-2581.

And if you're comfortable on ice, the mall's Ice Chalet rents skates for \$3.50 and seniors pay \$5 to skate.

**Anchorage's 5th Ave-**

**nue Mall** has no organized walking groups and its website states "you are welcome to walk the mall for exercise during regular mall hours." Normal hours are 10 a.m. to 7 p.m., Monday through Saturday, and 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Sundays. However, there will be variations for holiday shopping during December. Phone: 907-258-5535.

**The Dome** is an expansive indoor facility at 6501

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# Medicare coverage for preventive care

By SEAN McPHILAMY  
Alaska Medicare Information Office

Preventive care helps avoid illness, detect medical conditions, and keep you healthy. A preventive medical service is conducted when you have no prior symptoms of disease. In contrast, diagnostic services address symptoms or conditions that you already have. In this month's article I will describe how Medicare covers preventive care.

## Medicare covers preventive services

Medicare's Part B out-



patient care covers many preventive services, such as screenings, vaccines, and counseling. To find out if Medicare covers any test, service or treatment visit [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov), call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-

800-633-4227), or read your "Medicare & You" handbook. If you meet the eligibility requirements and guidelines for a preventive service, the service is covered. You should pay nothing for most preventive services when you visit a provider who accepts Medicare assignment.

During your preventive visit, your provider may discover and need to investigate or treat a new or existing problem. This additional service may be diagnostic or treatment. Medicare covers diagnostic and treatment services differently than preventive

services, and you may be charged coinsurances or copays. You also may be responsible for paying a facility fee, depending on where you receive the service.

## Welcome to Medicare visit and Annual Wellness visits

Medicare covers an initial "Welcome to Medicare" preventive visit during your first year enrolled into Medicare Part B, then one Annual Wellness Visit per year after that, when you visit a physician who accepts Medicare assignment. Keep in mind that

these visits are not all-encompassing physicals. During the "Welcome to Medicare" visit, your provider will review your medical and social history as well as your health status and risk factors. Your provider will then give you resources related to your risk factors and health needs and will give you a checklist or written plan with information about other preventive services you may need.

Annual Wellness visits, which Medicare will cover once you have had

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## Headphone and earbud usage



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

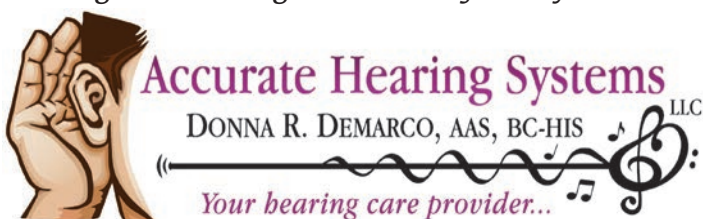
A good rule of thumb is if you must raise your voice over noise, it's too loud. A person at arm's reach should not hear what you're listening to and you should hear them clearly without removing your headphones or earbuds. Studies have shown that most people can listen to sound at 85 decibels for up to eight hours without any negative impact. One study shows that if listening to music for more than three hours at a time, you're more likely to have ringing in your ears.

Earbuds can hold moisture in your ear canal causing bacteria to grow

and ear infections over prolonged periods of time. If your headphones or earbuds don't fit well, they can cause damage to the skin in your ear canal over time. Bad fitting earbuds can also lead to little blood flow, resulting in trauma so your skin cells die, leaving lesions or black and brown tissue. If you feel any pressure, pain or fullness in your ear, you may want to investigate a different earbud or a custom sleeve for your earbuds.

Best practice is the 60/60 rule: Keep volume at 60% for headphones or earbuds and limit wear time to no more than 60 minutes per day. If you must wear longer than 60 minutes per day, take a break for five minutes every 30 minutes and 10 minutes every 60 minutes.

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



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

## Medicare

*continued from page 5*

Part B for 12 months, are yearly appointments with your primary care provider to create or update a personalized prevention healthcare plan. This plan can help prevent illness based on your current health and risk factors. For both kinds of preventive visit, be prepared with information about your medical history, family history, doctors, medications and durable medical equipment you use.

Twice now, I've mentioned that you can save money when you see providers who accept assignment. These providers accept Medicare's approved amount for a service as payment in full. For preventive services that Medicare covers at 100%, you owe no deductible or coinsurance when you see a provider who accepts assignment. And if you receive additional services that do have a cost, these providers cannot charge you more than the Medicare-approved deductible and coinsurance.

### Learn to prevent, detect and report fraud, errors or abuse

Medicare fraud and abuse costs all of us money that could better be spent on caring for you. Billing errors can be reduced by

### Examples of preventive services Medicare covers

- Pap smears, pelvic exams and breast exams
- Colorectal cancer screenings (such as colonoscopies)
- Mammograms
- Prostate cancer screenings
- Bone mass measurements
- Medical nutrition therapy
- HIV screenings
- Depression screenings
- Diabetes screenings

reviewing your Medicare Summary Notice, which are provided every three months. One example of tests which are not medically necessary are genetic testing which has not been ordered by your treating physician. Scammers offer cheek swab tests to obtain your Medicare information, which the scammers can then use for fraudulent billing or medical identity theft. You may hear these cheek swabs or genetic tests also called DNA testing, hereditary cancer screening, dementia test, or Parkinson's screening.

To prevent genetic testing fraud and abuse, make

sure to work with your trusted health care provider on your preventive health. Do not give out your personal information or accept genetic screenings or tests from a person or company you meet at a public event or over the phone. Always read your Medicare Summary Notices and watch for words like "gene analysis" or "molecular pathology" that may indicate questionable genetic testing. And finally, if you received a cheek swab or genetic screening/test that was not medically necessary, report your concerns to our office.

To discuss any Medicare preventive care concerns, or to ask any questions regarding your specific situation, 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*

I am a Certified Medicare Counselor working under SHIP. My office is

in the Soldotna Senior Center, but I serve the state via phone. If you are local, I can help you as a walk-in.

I am here Mondays

through Thursdays, 8 a.m. to 3 p.m., and Fridays, 8 a.m. to noon.

Call with your Medicare questions, 907-262-2322.

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*Do you need assistance with food, utility, medical, or prescription drug costs?*

The National Council on Aging (NCOA) supports a network of Benefits Enrollment Centers (BECs) that help people find and enroll in benefits programs. BECs are free, private community organizations that can help people with low income, disabilities, or other challenges.

BECs can help people enroll in programs such as Medicare Part D Extra Help, Medicare Savings Programs (MSP), Medicaid, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).

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You may be eligible for one or more of the following programs:

- **Medicare Part D Extra Help/Low Income Subsidy (LIS)** - pays for Part D plan premiums, reduces drug co-pays and eliminates the Donut-Hole
- **Medicare Savings Program (MSP)** - pays Medicare premiums
- **Medicaid** - serves as a supplement to Medicare, pays deductibles and co-pays.
- **SNAP** - Alaska's Food Stamp Program
- **LIHEAP** - Heating assistance
- **Senior Benefit** - receive cash from the State of Alaska
- Additional programs may be available.





# Easier holidays for families dealing with dementia

By **LISA SAUDER**

*Alzheimer's Resource of Alaska*

The holiday season is a time for joy, connection and creating memories. However, for families with loved ones experiencing Alzheimer's disease or related dementias, the holidays can also bring unique challenges. Balancing traditions with the changing needs of those we care for is essential, and small adjustments can make all the difference. Here are some ways to help make the holiday season more enjoyable and less stressful for both caregivers and their loved ones.

**Plan celebrations** with simplicity in mind. Simplifying holiday plans can help reduce stress for everyone.

Consider shorter gatherings or smaller gatherings with familiar faces. Too much activity or noise can be overwhelming for those with Alzheimer's or dementia, so keep gatherings relaxed, with fewer people and low background noise.

**Stick to a routine.** People with dementia often feel more comfortable when their routines are consistent. Try to hold holiday activities at times when your loved one feels their best—often earlier in the day. Avoid significant disruptions to regular meal and sleep schedules, as this can help minimize confusion and reduce agitation.

**Prepare guests** and family members. It's helpful to set realistic expectations for

friends and family members about what to expect when they visit. Some guests may not know how to interact with your loved one due to memory or communication changes. Let them know it's okay to be themselves and that simple, positive interactions—like smiling, holding hands or sharing a story—can be meaningful.

**Involve your loved one in familiar holiday activities.** Adapting holiday traditions can allow your loved one to feel included. Simple activities like decorating cookies, listening to holiday music, or helping to wrap gifts can provide joy without overstimulation. Be mindful of their energy level and offer gentle guidance if needed.

**Create a calm, familiar environment.** Holiday decorations can bring warmth and cheer, but too many changes to the home can be confusing. Instead, consider familiar decorations and keep pathways clear to avoid falls or disorientation. Avoid blinking lights or excessive decorations, which can sometimes cause anxiety or confusion.

**Embrace the power of music and memories.** Music

is a powerful tool that can spark memories and create moments of connection. Play holiday songs that your loved one enjoys, or consider sharing photo albums or talking about past family traditions. These conversations and moments can be a source of comfort and joy for both of you.

**Adapt gift-giving for practicality and comfort.** Thoughtful gifts can provide comfort and enrichment for those with dementia. Consider gifts like a cozy blanket, a favorite music playlist, or a soft stuffed animal. Practical items like easy-to-put-on clothing or a favorite snack are also wonderful options that are easy to enjoy.

**Take care of yourself, too.** Caring for a loved one with dementia can be demanding, especially during the holidays. Be sure to ask for help if you need it and take breaks to rest. Remember that self-care is essential to being the best caregiver you can be, so give yourself permission to step away for some time to recharge.

**Use patience and flexibility as your guide.** The holiday season can be un-

predictable, especially with dementia. Be prepared to adjust plans if your loved one seems tired, anxious, or uncomfortable. Remember that it's okay to step back from certain traditions or to celebrate in a simpler way if it means that everyone can enjoy the season peacefully.

The holidays are about togetherness, and even small, quiet moments can bring joy. By simplifying plans, honoring your loved one's comfort, and showing patience, you can help create a meaningful holiday season that centers on love and understanding. Embrace these moments and know that adapting your traditions is a gift of care and kindness to your loved one—and to yourself.

For additional resources including educational classes, consultations, and support please contact Alzheimer's Resource of Alaska at 907-561-3313 or online at [ALZalaska.org](http://ALZalaska.org). For 40 years Alzheimer's Resource of Alaska has been providing support to Alaskans and their loved ones with Alzheimer's or dementia.

*Lisa Sauder is the CEO for Alzheimer's Resource of Alaska.*

## Free support, resources for family caregivers

*Senior Voice Staff*

The Kenai Peninsula Family Caregiver Support Program will hold the following caregiver support group meetings in December. Meeting format is open discussion unless otherwise noted.

**Dec. 4 Kenai Senior Center,** "Stronger Together" support group, 2 to 3:30 p.m.

**Dec. 5 Tyotkas Elder Center** (in Kenai) support meeting, 10:30 to 11:30 a.m.

**Dec. 6 Soldotna Senior Center,** 1 to 2 p.m.

**Dec. 19 Sterling Senior Center** support meeting, 1 to 2 p.m.

There is no charge for these services and everyone is invited to attend. For information or to offer suggestions on training topics, call Dani Kebschull at the Nikiski Senior Center, 907-776-7654 or email [kpfscsp@nikiskiseniorcenter.org](mailto:kpfscsp@nikiskiseniorcenter.org).

**Kodiak Senior Center** hosts the caregiver support group on the third Thursday of each month (Dec. 19) at 1 p.m. Call for information, 907-486-6181.

### Around the state

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

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

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

In Southeast Alaska, the Southeast Senior Services Senior and Caregiver Resource Center is available. Call Jennifer Garrison at 866-746-6177.

The national Alzheimer's Association operates a 24-hour help line for caregivers, staffed by specialists and Masters-level clinicians, at 800-272-3900.

### Online caregiver support for Alaska veterans

The Alaska VA Caregiver Wellness Cafe is held monthly on the first Thursday (Dec. 5) from 1 to 2 p.m. via the Teams software and is an informal virtual place to engage with other caregivers while learning about topics beneficial to your role as a caregiver. Enrollment in Alaska VA Caregiver Support Program (CSP) is not required to participate in the call. For information, call 907-375-2606.



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# Ozempic and Alzheimer's; Socializing for super aging

*Also: Virtual yoga reduces back pain*

By JOHN SCHIESZER

Medical Minutes

## Medication may reduce the risk of Alzheimer's disease

Researchers at the Case Western Reserve School of Medicine have found that when compared to seven other anti-diabetic drugs, semaglutide, a popular diabetes and weight-loss drug, may lower the risk of Alzheimer's disease in people with type 2 diabetes. Semaglutide, a glucagon-like peptide receptor (GLP-1R) molecule that decreases hunger and helps regulate blood sugar, is also the active component in the diabetes and weight loss drugs Wegovy and Ozempic.

In a study published in the journal *Alzheimer's & Dementia: The Journal of the Alzheimer's Association*, researchers found that individuals taking semaglutide had a significantly lower risk of developing Alzheimer's disease, and these results were consistent across different subgroups, including obesity status, gender and age.

The research team analyzed three years of electronic records of nearly 1 million adults with diabetes. The researchers used a statistical approach that mimics a randomized clinical trial.

"This new study provides real-world evidence for its impact on Alzheimer's disease, even though preclinical research has suggested that semaglutide may protect against neurodegeneration and neuroinflammation," said lead study investigator Rong Xu, who directs the medical school's Center for AI in Drug Discovery and is a member of the Cancer Genomics Epigenomics Program at the Case Cancer Comprehensive Center, Cleveland, Ohio.

Further studies now are



planned to see if these types of medications can halt or reverse Alzheimer's disease. There is an assumption that, as we age, our memory inevitably slips. Misplacing the TV remote on a regular basis, or walking into a room and realizing you can't remember why you did, are common among older adults. Don't panic. These minor blips on the memory continuum are vastly different from neurodegenerative conditions such as Alzheimer's disease.

## Super-agers have better memories

In the field of geriatrics, scientists divide older adults into different subgroups and there is one group known affectionately as "super-agers." These individuals have the same memory and cognitive function as someone 20 or 30 years their junior. Studies show super-agers perform better on word recall tests compared to their peers, and their brains atrophy at a slower rate. Scientists used MRI scans and discovered the regions of the brain considered important to memory, attention, cognitive control and motivation, appeared thicker in super-agers than in others in the same age group.

It is well established that healthy aging involves having strong social connections. Super-agers tend to maintain strong

*next page please*

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Aging

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relationships and active social lives. On the other side, social isolation has been linked to a greater risk of dementia, high blood pressure, heart disease, anxiety and depression. A national poll found that feelings of loneliness spiked among adults age 50 to 80 in 2020 during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. A 2023 follow-up survey showed that a sense of seclusion had receded, but it has not returned to pre-pandemic levels.

Mental health experts say there are ways of establishing or rebuilding bonds by reaching out to old acquaintances and joining new social spaces. It might mean accepting your age and physical limitations by finally agreeing to get hearing aids or use a cane to walk. Too many people see these accessories as a sign of weakness or giving up, but actually the opposite is true. They help remove barriers. If you can hear better, you can engage in more conversations. If you can walk farther, your body will get the benefits of added exercise.

Combating low back pain with virtual yoga

Researchers at the Cleveland Clinic researchers are reporting that a 12-week therapeutic virtual yoga program for chronic low back pain can be a feasible, safe and effective treatment option. Chronic low back pain is very common and in severe cases it can make it difficult to walk, sleep, work or do daily activities. Clinical guidelines recommend the use of nonpharmacologic treatments first, such as physical therapy or in-person yoga classes. In this study, researchers examined whether virtual yoga classes—where participants follow along to streamed sessions while

**Researchers examined whether virtual yoga classes—where participants follow along to streamed sessions while at home—would be effective for the treatment of chronic low back pain. The findings showed that participants who practiced virtual yoga classes reported reduced back pain intensity and improved back-related function.**

at home—would also be effective for the treatment of chronic low back pain. The findings showed that participants who practiced virtual yoga classes reported reduced back pain intensity and improved back-related function.

Researchers performed a 24-week randomized clinical trial that involved 140 eligible participants with chronic low back pain. The average age of the participants was 48 and more than 80% were female. The study participants were members of Cleveland Clinic’s Employee Health Plan from Northeast Ohio and Florida. The study was conducted from May 2022 through May 2023.

The research team conducted assessments to determine baseline measures, such as pain intensity score and back-related function. Yoga instructors delivered a 12-week program designed to maximize effectiveness and safety, adapted for virtual delivery, and intended for participants with chronic low back pain. To facilitate at-home practice, participants were provided with a yoga mat, a participant manual and access to prerecorded yoga classes corresponding to the session content each week. Following the base-

line assessment, participants were reassessed at six weeks, 12 weeks, and 24 weeks for low back pain intensity, back-related function, pain-medication use, and sleep quality. At the end of the 12-week virtual yoga program, participants reported six times greater reductions in pain intensity scores and 2.7 times greater improvements in back-related function compared with participants who had not taken the yoga classes.

Further, 34% fewer patients in the yoga group reported using pain medication, and they reported 10 times greater improvement in sleep quality. At 24 weeks, the improvements in pain and back-related function were sustained.

“Yoga offers a comprehensive approach to managing low back pain, a condition for which traditional treatments often fall short,” said study investigator Hallie Tankha, a researcher at the Cleveland Clinic. “Now we must work to increase access to this safe and effective treatment.”

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).

Anesthesia and older adults

By KAREN CASANOVAS

For Senior Voice

**Q:** I have heard that as you get older there are more risks when undergoing anesthesia. What are they?

**A:** As the new year approaches, many individuals are considering elective surgeries. This is an opportune time to reflect on your own health status.

With aging, individuals often encounter medical issues related to cardiovascular, pulmonary or neurological conditions. It is important to discuss these issues with your healthcare provider before undergoing anesthesia for surgical procedures. A skilled team of anesthesia and medical professionals can implement various precautions and safety measures to ensure a safe outcome, regardless of age.

Geriatric anesthesia focuses on providing specialized anesthesia care for adults over the age of 65, ensuring their comfort during surgery. While the risks associated with an-



esthesia can depend on a patient’s medical condition and the type of surgery being performed, age can complicate predictions about how the body will respond to surgical stress. According to Andreas Loepke, associate professor of clinical anesthesia at the University of Cincinnati College of Medicine, anesthetic medications can have significant side effects, including respiratory depression, loss of protective airway reflexes, blood pressure instability, nausea and vomiting. Common age-related conditions such as hypertension and

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# Staying on your feet during the winter

By YVONNE JESCHKE  
For Senior Voice

Winter has arrived in Alaska. For many kids, this brings joy and excitement about making snow angels, going sledding, skiing, snowboarding, and ice skating. For some of us, however, the winter season brings fear – fear of slipping on the ice, falling and causing serious injury.

Otherwise easy tasks such as taking out the trash or getting the mail become treacherous in snowy and icy conditions. Walking to the car or bringing grocery bags from the store to the house become high risk activities. The fear of slipping and falling makes those individuals less and less likely to go outside, enjoy the winter, and maintain their regular activities.

Research shows that older adults are at an increased risk of falling any time of the year, but especially in the winter, due to a lack of balance, strength and mobility. In addition, the severity of those injuries is higher in older adults, ranging from fractures in the hips and wrists to spinal cord and brain injuries.

Now to the good news: There are ways to reduce your risk of slipping and falling this winter by establishing a simple workout routine that focuses on



Balancing on one foot and heel-to-toe walking are good exercises for improving balance.



Photos courtesy The Alaska Club

balance, strength and mobility. Balance training can help improve coordination and proprioception, which is the body's ability to sense where it is in space. Strength training—especially the legs, hips, core and back—can help with stability and increase bone density so if a fall occurs, the risk of a fracture is reduced. Mobility training can help increase the range of motion of joints and re-

duce stiffness. This makes it easier to move safely and catch a fall before hitting the ground.

With its many locations in Anchorage and across

the state, The Alaska Club is a great environment for your workouts. Personal Trainers can assist in developing a personalized workout plan that focuses on your needs. Classes such as “Group Power” help to stay accountable and make strength training fun.

Many senior centers have well-equipped fitness rooms, trainers and group classes, as do local recreational centers.

An easy way to work on balance is to try standing on one foot for 30-60 seconds, using a chair to hold on for assistance if needed. Switch feet and repeat each side three times. Another exercise is heel to toe walking. Simply pick a straight line and place the heel of one foot directly in front of the toes of the other foot. To make it more difficult, this exercise can also be done walking backward.

To work on upper body mobility, stand with your back against the wall and have your arms extended next to your hips, and the back of the hands against the wall. Now, keep your arms extended and hands

against the wall, raising them above your head. This looks like a standing snow angel. For your lower body mobility, perform a kneeling lunge. Start with one foot forward, knee stacked over the ankle. Have a pillow under your knee of the leg in the back to prevent discomfort. Keep the torso upright and hips squared. Hold the position for 30-60 seconds on each side and repeat three times.

If you can relate to this topic, then it's time to get to work! Balance on one foot while you brew your next coffee, search for the closest fitness center, and reach out to personal trainers for workouts and advice.


Yvonne Jeschke grew up in Germany and moved to Alaska in 2015 to study Kinesiology at UAA and compete in track and field for the Seawolves. She is now a Master Level Personal Trainer and the Personal Training Manager at The Alaska Club East in Anchorage. Yvonne spends most of her free time trail running, mountain biking and cross country and back-country skiing.

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# Walking

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Changepoint Drive. Membership during any open hours offers unlimited access to its 400-meter track for walking alone or with a friend. Annual membership is \$70. An electronic punch card offers drop-ins at a discounted rate of \$48 for five days or \$9.60 a day, and \$85 for 10 or \$8.50 a day, compared with \$12 for one day. Winter hours are Monday through Friday, 6 a.m. to 10 p.m., Saturday, 7 a.m. to 11 p.m., and Sunday, 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. Phone: 907-770-3663.

## Bethel

**YK Fitness Center** does not have an indoor track, but does offer treadmills and other fitness activities. Day passes for seniors age 60 and older are \$3, monthly passes \$28 and annual \$275. If price is a barrier, discounted fees are available on a sliding scale. Learn more at [ykfitness.org](http://ykfitness.org) or call 907-543-0390.

## Chugiak-Eagle River

**Chugiak-Eagle River Senior Center** features hallways that total a one-mile round trip from end to end of its building.

Exercise for Independence promotes regular exercise as key to maintaining independence and warding off age-related health issues. The center's fully equipped gym features top-of-the-line equipment including ellipticals, treadmills, weights and more, empowering you to stay strong and active.

CERSC membership: Individual yearly: \$35; couples yearly: \$45

Phone: 907-688-2609.

The **Harry J. McDonald Memorial Center**, located at 13701 Harry MacDonald Road, features two separate track options for indoor walking and jogging. The

track, located around the ice rink, is one-eighth of a mile and offers users views of the ice surface and a slightly cooler walking environment. The track located around the turf facility features two lanes and is one-tenth of a mile with a slightly warmer walking environment.

This is a multi-use facility, so please be watchful at times when there are other events going on the turf and ice rink. Strollers, walkers and walking canes are all welcome

Hours: Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., and closed Saturdays and Sundays. \$2 per visit or 20-punch card for \$30.

Phone: 907-696-0051.

## Fairbanks

The Fairbanks North Star Borough Parks and Recreation Department offers a free walking program at the **Big Dipper Ice Rink**, located at 1920 Lathrop Street. Note that reservations are no longer required and is free.

The schedule varies, so best to call for times or go to <https://fairbanksak.myrec.com/info/activities/program>. Phone: 907-459-1076.

## Gustavus

**Gustavus Community Center** offers chair yoga Tuesdays and Fridays at 1 p.m. Chair yoga has the benefits of regular yoga, such as helping with stress, pain and fatigue, but it can also help with joint lubrication, balance and even age-specific issues like menopause, and arthritis. Phone: 907-209-2224.

## Juneau

Free indoor walking is available at the **Nugget Mall** located at 8745 Glacier Highway. Open Monday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 7 p.m., and Sunday, noon to 5 p.m. There is no organized walking group, just show up. Phone: 907-789-2289.

## Ketchikan

The **Gateway Recreation Center** has an indoor walking track on its upper level – 12.5 laps equals one mile – available during regular business hours, Monday through Friday, 5 a.m. to 9 p.m., Saturday, 7 a.m. to 9 p.m., and Sunday, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. One month senior memberships are \$42, daily price for indoor walking is \$4, or \$2 for seniors 55 and older. 907-228-6650

## Nome

**Nome Community Center** includes the XYZ Senior Center that offers much-needed services to elders. Activities are available during the day, with staff supervision, including falls prevention and strength exercising, outings, cultural activities, nutritional and health monitoring in partnership with Norton Sound Health Corporation, fishing and berry picking. Phone: 907-443-5238

## Sitka

Elders and students go on a light walk for conversation and exercise at Intergenerational Walking in Sitka. For more information, contact the **SAIL ORCA** (Outdoor Recreation and Community Access) program coordina-

tor Kari Rogers at 1-888-487-1033 or email her at [krogers@sailinc.org](mailto:krogers@sailinc.org).

## Skagway

**Skagway Recreation Center Senior Socials** feature games, gossip and gourmet treats. Must be over 64, or invited by a senior. Chair-based stretching and resistance training for the whole body. Shared gym:

Monday through Friday: 5 a.m. to 9 p.m.; weekends, 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.

907-983-2679, or go to <https://skagwayrecreation.org/>

## Soldotna

Soldotna's Olympic-sized ice rink at the **Soldotna Regional Sports Center** also has an indoor walking track, open daily, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. The track may close during special events such as conferences or hockey games. A season walking pass is available with a season being from the day after Labor Day through April 1. Walking track patrons are asked to sign in at the office prior to starting their walking.

A one-time walk is \$3.50, season pass is \$42, and a half season pass (January through April), \$21. Phone: 907-262-3151.

Walk With a Doc is the first Wednesday of every month at 7:30 a.m. in partnership with Central Peninsula Hospital. Learn about health issues and meet new friends, with the doctor and topic shared monthly at <https://www.facebook.com/Soldotna-ParksRecreation>.

## Unalaska

The **Unalaska Community Center** has everything from a cardio and weight room to music and art areas. Hours: Monday to Friday, 6 a.m. to 10 p.m.; Saturday, 8 a.m. to 10 p.m.; and, Sunday, noon to 7 p.m. Phone: 907-581-1297

## Wasilla/Palmer

The **Curtis D. Menard Memorial Sports Center**, 1001 S. Clapp Street, has an indoor walking/running track and offers a free senior walking program for ages 65 and older. These sessions are Monday through Friday, 7:30 to 9 a.m. General walking hours are 7:30 a.m. to 8 p.m. daily. Call 907-357-9100.

The **MTA Events Center** in Palmer, 645 Cope Industrial Way, is open for free indoor walking Monday through Friday, noon to 9 p.m., and weekends, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. 907-745-3709.



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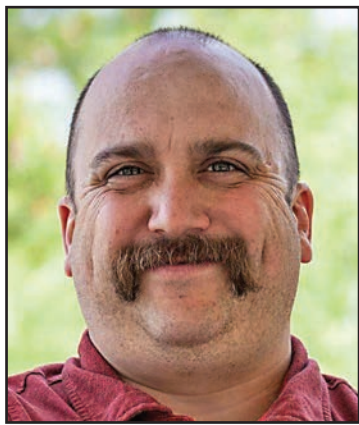
# Carbon monoxide, the silent killer

By CHRISTIAN M. HARTLEY

For Senior Voice

As winter approaches and we spend more time indoors with our heaters running, I want to talk about a danger that claims hundreds of lives every year. Carbon monoxide gives no warning, even as it poisons you. This invisible, odorless gas is often called "the silent killer," and seniors are disproportionately vulnerable to its effects. Carbon monoxide is also called CO. It is not called CO<sub>2</sub>, which is a normal and necessary part of breathing.

Every year in the United States, at least 430 people die from accidental CO poisoning, and about 50,000 people go to the hospital from exposure. What makes this even more tragic is that most of these incidents are preventable with proper awareness and



safety measures.

Whenever fuel burns, it produces carbon monoxide. Whether a vehicle, fireplace or woodstove, furnace, water heater, gas stove, or other household appliances, anything that uses combustion creates CO. Yes, this includes those propane heaters that claim to be safe indoors. If there's a flame, there's CO. When these devices work properly and are well-ventilated, there's usually no problem. However, malfunctioning equipment or poor air

***If there's a flame, there's CO. Yes, this includes those propane heaters that claim to be safe indoors. When these devices work properly and are well-ventilated, there's usually no problem. However, malfunctioning equipment or poor air movement can cause CO to build up indoors.***

movement can cause CO to build up indoors. A buildup of CO may lead to serious illness at an unpredictable pace.

The tricky part about CO is that you can't see, smell or taste it. The early symptoms often feel like a cold or the flu headaches, dizziness, weakness, upset stomach, vomiting, chest pain and confusion. Many people mistake these warning signs for other illnesses, which makes CO particularly dangerous for people with vulnerable immune systems.

Prevention is easy but requires diligence. The most important step is installing CO alarms on every level of your home, especially near sleeping areas. You can find these devices, which cost about \$20 to \$50, at most local hardware stores. Test them monthly and replace their batteries twice a year. You

can also buy ones that have 10-year batteries so you never have to change them for their life. Another great tool is a combination smoke/CO alarm, also sold locally and online.

Regularly maintaining fuel-burning appliances is also important. Have a qualified technician inspect your gas, oil or coal-burning appliances every year. Heating systems, water heaters and dryers are often operated by fuel. Never try to heat your home with your gas stove, and don't run generators or grills inside your house, garage or carport even if the door is open. In fact, don't run them within 25 feet of your house to be safe.

If your CO alarm sounds or you suspect poisoning, don't try to find the source. Get everyone outside immediately into fresh air and call 911. Don't go back inside until emergency re-

sponders say it's safe. If you experience symptoms, seek medical attention right away. Medical providers typically treat carbon monoxide poisoning by having the patient breathe pure oxygen. In severe cases, they may use special pressure chambers.

Remember, CO poisoning is preventable. Don't put off having your heating systems checked and make sure your carbon monoxide alarms are working properly. There are many EMS calls all over Alaska for sick people that turn out to be CO poisoning and they didn't realize it. Having working alarms is the most important part. That way, if an appliance fails, you can get out right away. If you live alone, consider asking a family member or neighbor to help you with regular maintenance checks. Your life could depend on these simple precautions.

*Christian M. Hartley is a 40-year Alaska resident with over 25 years of public safety and public service experience. He is the City of Houston Fire Chief and serves on many local and state workgroups, boards and commissions related to safety. He lives in Big Lake with his wife of 20 years and their three teenage sons.*

## Winter

*continued from page 5*

**New Year's resolutions.** Every Jan. 1, millions of people join gyms or start exercise programs as part of their New Year's resolution to get in shape, and many overexert themselves too soon. If you're starting a new exercise program this winter, take the time to talk to your doctor about what types and how much exercise may be appropriate for you.

**Winter weight gain.** People tend to eat and drink more and gain more weight during the holiday season and winter months, all of which are hard on the heart and risky for someone with heart disease. So, keep a watchful eye on your diet this winter and avoid bingeing on fatty foods and alcohol.

**Shorter days.** Less daylight in the winter months can cause many people to develop "seasonal affective disorder" or SAD, a winter-time depression that can stress the heart. Studies

have also looked at heart attack patients and found they usually have lower levels of vitamin D (which comes from sunlight) than people with healthy hearts. To boost your vitamin D this winter, consider taking a supplement that contains between 1,000 and 2,000 international units (IU) per day.

**Flu season.** Studies show that people who get flu shots have a lower heart attack risk. It's known that the inflammatory reaction set off by a flu infection can increase

blood clotting which can lead to heart attacks in vulnerable people. So, if you haven't already done so this year, get a flu shot and Covid-19 booster for protection. And, if you've never been vaccinated for RSV or pneumococcal pneumonia, you should consider getting these vaccines too.

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

***In the U.S., the risk of having a heart attack during the winter months is twice as high as it is during the summertime.***

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# Looking ahead: LifeWorks celebrates 25 years of service in Alaska

By MISTEE BAILEY-MYRICK  
*Lifeworks*

LifeWorks offers diverse programs and services to foster cognitive stimulation, inclusivity and social interaction for aging individuals, those seeking respite, or those experiencing intellectual or developmental disabilities (IDD). From arts and crafts, exercise classes, music classes and our most famous service, which is taking them into the community. Some of our community outings include Anchorage libraries, thrift stores, Aviation Heritage Museum, Alaska State Parks, Crow Creek Mines, various restaurants for our monthly Men's Brunch and Women's Brunch, and many more. Each activity is thoughtfully developed to cater to our members' unique interests and abilities. With a dedicated team and three current locations to serve



Mistee Bailey-Myrick is the Chief Operating Officer for LifeWorks.

you (two in Anchorage and one in Wasilla), we offer door-to-door transportation services with courtesy pre-pickup calls. Our trained chef also prepares a fresh lunch and snacks tailored to all dietary needs (the diabetic-friendly no-bake cookies are a big hit with everyone). In addition to the LifeWorks Adult Day Program, the ArtWorks IDD program demonstrates how creative

engagement can improve the lives of adults experiencing developmental disabilities. ArtWorks nurtures creativity and fosters emotional well-being and social connection by providing a platform for artistic expression. We continue to uplift the lives of our participants, reaffirming the concept that everyone deserves the chance to express themselves and thrive in a supportive community. LifeWorks offers a safe and inclusive environment where members can connect, participate in activities, and enjoy a sense of belonging. When asked what they liked about LifeWorks, here are some of our members' comments: "Thank you for keeping me extra safe and giving me happiness starting the day." "All the staff are most caring and supportive." "Artwork, learning to make necklaces." "Just getting out of my

house, seeing friends." "I like going shopping at Fred Meyers, Carrs, etc.." "I like putting jigsaw puzzles together and playing bingo." "Meeting friends, going to the library, socializing with peers." "Making hand warmers and all activities; Christmas art activities." "Cause it's so fun, likes music, games, outings." "Getting to know all the amazing people that come here." At LifeWorks, we are more than just an adult day care; we are a vibrant community that encourages growth, creativity and connection. Our unique blend of extensive programs and a strong focus on community engagement distinguishes us as a vital resource for individuals with disabilities and the aging population. As LifeWorks moves forward, we remain committed to enhancing the lives of our members and

ensuring that everyone in our community can thrive in a supportive and inclusive environment. The organization cherishes the milestones of the past and embraces the possibilities for the future. LifeWorks 25th anniversary is not just a reflection on the past; it's a promise of what lies ahead. As we enter our next chapter, the focus remains on expanding services and enhancing the quality of life for our members. We will be opening two additional facilities in Palmer in early 2025. These two new locations will provide adult day care/respite services and teen/adult IDD programs. Here's to 25 years of extraordinary service and a bright future filled with possibilities. To learn more about us or to schedule a visit or a trial run, call us at 907-312-3564. LifeWorks! Broadening horizons and engaging minds since 1999.



**Our Services:** At LifeWorks, we are more than just an adult daycare or IDD program; we are a vibrant community that encourages growth, creativity, and connection. From arts and crafts, exercise classes, music classes, and our most famous service, which is helping our Members be active by keeping them engaged in the community!

**Serving You In More Areas:** We will be opening two additional facilities in Palmer in early 2025. These two new locations will provide Adult Day Care services and teen/adult IDD programs. With these additional locations and strengthened partnerships, LifeWorks will continue to shape the future, ensuring we remain a leading force in adult day care and IDD in Alaska.

**Additional Offerings:** There are three current locations to serve you (two in Anchorage and one in Wasilla); we offer door-to-door transportation services with courtesy pre-pickup calls. Our trained chef also prepares a fresh lunch (and snacks) tailored to all dietary needs (the diabetic-friendly no-bake cookies are a big hit with everyone!).



# CELEBRATING 25 YEARS

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# Light the World Giving Machine brings joy for Christmas

## First time in Alaska for unique fundraising project

By **DIMITRA LAVRAKAS**  
For Senior Voice

For the first time ever, the Light the World Giving Machine is coming to Alaska. Disguised as a vending machine, it dispenses cheer by simply choosing one of the local non-profit organizations in the machine and depositing money. Actually, there will be two machines.

“In case one goes down, you know electronics, and it can allow two people to donate at the same time. The lines can get long,” said Fairbanks Senior Center Co-Director Angela Jones.

This year for the 2024 holiday season, there will be machines at 108 locations worldwide, she said. In Alaska, the machines will be at the Santa Claus House in North Pole, Nov. 22 to Dec. 11, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., then at Dimond Center Mall in Anchorage, Dec.



*The Light the World Giving Machine looks like your regular vending machine, but it promises much more than snacks. It raises funds for nonprofit and charity programs and will be at the Santa Claus House in North Pole, Nov. 22 to Dec. 11, and at the Dimond Center in Anchorage, Dec. 13-31.*



*Light the World Giving Machine Salt Lake City*

13-31, during mall hours. “Each machine has one row of five cards the size of a bag of potato chips,” Jones said. “Each location will have five local nonprofit organizations represented with specific items they need this year. There will also be two global nonprofit

organizations represented in each location. The non-profits in Fairbanks are the Fairbanks Senior Center, Fairbanks Food Bank, Breast Cancer detection Center of Alaska, Rescue Center for Parents and Children, and Armed Services YMCA of Alaska.

In Anchorage, the organizations are Challenge Alaska, Downtown Hope Center, Love INC. of Kenai Peninsula, Lutheran Social Services, and Catholic Social Services. The bottom row is for the international non-profit organizations iDE Global

International Development Enterprises and UNICEF USA. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints covers all operational costs for the Light the World Giving Machine initiative. Individual credit card transaction fees are covered by the donor or the Church, so participating nonprofit organizations receive 100 percent of every donation. “For instance, if you donate \$7 to the Fairbanks Senior Center, that’s one Meals on Wheels lunch for a senior,” Jones said. Last year it was decided to test mobile routes splitting the time between locations, and the project found that the same amount of donations occurred whether the machine was stationary for six weeks, or split time with another community on the route. Jones has high hopes that Alaskans will be generous. “We know that Alaskans like to donate to Alaskans,” she said.

# ‘Naked ladies’ and an amaryllis Christmas

By **MARALEY McMICHAEL**  
Senior Voice Correspondent

Last December, I read a humorous story about amaryllis bulbs in the weekly email I receive from my favorite gardening magazine, “Green Prints”. In the story, confusion about beautiful naked ladies dancing in a back yard resulted in much trouble. However, the naked ladies turned out to be amaryllis plants and the magazine went on to say that the story never happened – it was fiction, but that laughter is good for all of us. I’d never before heard of amaryllis as “naked ladies” and I’ve been a gardener for over 50 years. But having grown up in Glennallen, it is not surprising if there are several gardening phrases I might have missed. I wondered if I googled “naked ladies,” would amaryllis come up? Immediately realizing that would not be a smart thing to do, I instead googled “amaryllis”.



*Amaryllis bulb in Gary McMichael's room at the Palmer Pioneer home on Christmas Day 2023.*  
Photo courtesy Maraley McMichael

Christmas 2023 turned out to be my Christmas of amaryllis bulbs! It started

out with a Home Depot November sale flyer advertising two bulbs for \$12.

What a deal! The sale was not just for Black Friday, but included days before

and after. I was definitely interested and put the flyer in the pile by the door, for my next trip to Wasilla. My husband and I had not watched one of these bulbs grow for several years, and I wanted to purchase two, one for my house and one for his room at the Pioneer Home. However, I don’t drive to Wasilla very often and didn’t make it to Home Depot until Dec. 4 and I was very happy to find that they still had some amaryllis bulbs for sale and still had two colors to choose from. They were individually packaged in boxes, along with “condensed” soil and a pot. I carefully peeked into each box to check the condition of the bulbs. (One previous year, I’d come home with a box containing a bulb which sported eight inch long yellow leaves.) I also shopped for and chose a six-hook coat bar rack for Gary’s room. With only three items in my cart, I decided to go through self-checkout. When the total came up much higher than expected, I found that

each bulb was ringing up at \$16.98. How could that be? They were on sale for two for \$12. I had the sale flyer with me and searched the fine print. Sure enough the sale had ended just a few days before, on the last day of November. I looked around for someone to help me delete the bulbs from my purchase. The store was so busy, five minutes passed before two ladies came to help—a clerk with a trainee. The next 15 minutes were a “comedy” of errors as I was eventually helped by a total of five clerks. Finally, I was able to walk out to my car with my coat hook bar, but was quite disappointed about no bulbs and the waste of time. Next stop was Lowe’s to see what they had in the way of coat hook bars. But first I wanted to check out the amaryllis bulbs. Their bulbs in boxes were even more expensive than Home Depot. But then I found a rather small, nearly empty box of individually netted





# Winter migration is not all fun in the sun



Alaska’s emperor geese migrate north for their winters. Fluffy new down keeps the geese warm in their winter territory, which spans from Kodiak Island west across the Aleutian chain.

Robyn Thomas photo

By J.K. ULLRICH

For Senior Voice

When termination dust sprinkles Alaska’s mountain peaks, the summer tourists depart in campers, cruise ships, and V formations soaring over the yellow birches. An estimated

5 billion birds from 250 species visit Alaska to breed each year, following established migration routes called flyways. But even bountiful Arctic ecosystems can’t feed this many birds all year round. At the end of nesting season, these nomads embark on

incredible—and increasingly difficult—journeys to their winter homes.

The northern wheatear flies 8,500 miles from Alaska to Africa, claiming the longest east-west flight path of any bird. Arctic

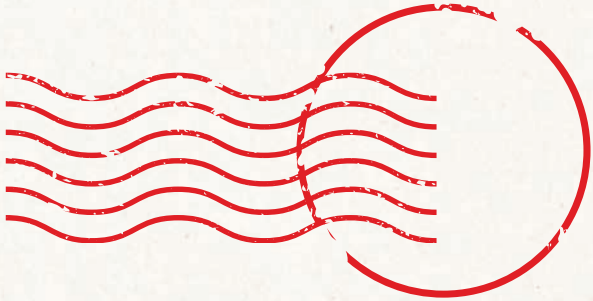
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## Rambles

News from the Grapevine

The Anchorage Museum will present “Multigenerational Housing Initiative Design Presentations,” on Dec. 6 in their atrium and auditorium, 6 to 8 p.m. The event features work of local architects and designers seeking to help address Anchorage’s housing challenges. Proposed solutions will be on display in the museum’s atrium starting at 6 p.m. with project and design presentations by three local firms starting at 6:30 p.m. The initiative is a collaborative project lead by Cook Inlet Housing, with partners NeighborWorks Alaska, Sightline Institute, the UAA Institute for Social Economic Research, Anchorage Museum, AARP Alaska, FRAME Architects, BDS Architects, Arete Alaska, Municipality of Anchorage Planning Dept. and Spinelli Homes. Attendance is free. Call for information, 907-929-9200 ... Chugiak-Eagle River Senior Center is presenting “Clicking with Confidence: A Cyber Safety Briefing” on Dec. 4 at 2 p.m. in the dining room. The session explores ways to increase security while online, including decoding email addresses and URLs, how to safely visit websites, evaluating and reading email messages and addresses, and what to do if something seems suspicious. For information, call 907-266-2677 or email seniors@chugiakseniors.com ... Homer Senior Center offers walk-in tech help on the first and third Thursday of every month, from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. Bring questions and any electronic devices (including phones) to the tech specialist in the library meeting room. Free, no appointment necessary ... Valdez Senior Center offers rides for errands and other business around town, Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. The driver can pick you up and take you to your destination. There’s a

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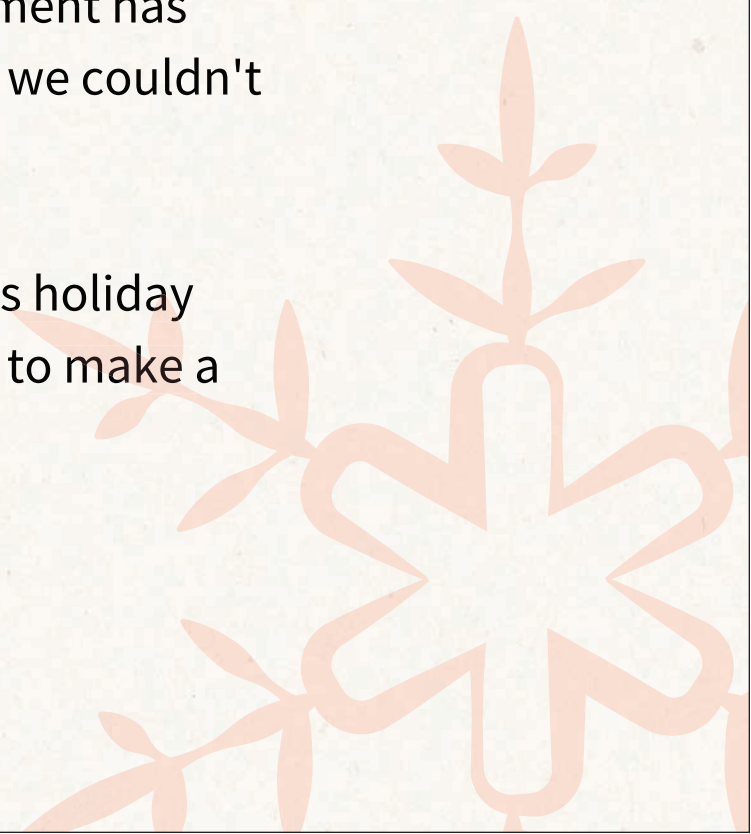


### Happy Holidays from AARP Alaska!

As we reflect on the past year, we are filled with gratitude for the incredible support and dedication of our members, volunteers, and all Alaskans aged 50 and above. Your commitment has made a significant impact on our community, and we couldn't have achieved our goals without you.

From all of us at AARP Alaska, we wish you a joyous holiday season and a prosperous new year. Let's continue to make a difference together in 2025!

Warmest Wishes,  
AARP Alaska Team







# Rambles

News from the Grapevine

continued from page 15

limit of two rides a day per person, and the ride must be reserved 24 hours in advance. Call 907-835-5032 ... Fairbanks Senior Center will be conducting “**Check on Your Elderly Neighbor Week**,” beginning Dec. 16. Give your neighbor a call, or walk over with a little gift to brighten their day and bring a smile. It’s also an opportunity to consider becoming one of the center’s **Silver Squad Wellness Caller Volunteers** for homebound seniors in the community. If you are interested, reach out to the center’s **volunteer coordinator Ashley** at 907-452-2563 ... In **Sitka**, baker **Andrew Jylkka** has added a second session of his “**Biscuits and Breakfast**” class where he teaches how to make sourdough buttermilk biscuits. The first session sold out and this one is scheduled for Dec. 14, from 9 to 11 a.m. at the Sitka Lutheran Church kitchen. Cost is \$35. Register at [bit.ly/SitkaBiscuits14](https://bit.ly/SitkaBiscuits14). The event is in partnership with the **UAF Cooperative Extension**. If special assistance or accommodations are needed, call at least five days in advance, 907-747-9440 or email **Jasmine Shaw** at [jdshow2@alaska.edu](mailto:jdshow2@alaska.edu).

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).

# Amaryllis

continued from page 14

“Red Lion” bulbs for \$6.98 each—something I’d never seen at one of these big box stores. I happily bought only one for Gary’s room.

A few weeks later, while pushing fresh snow off my deck, I was surprised to see a package on the ground by the side of the garage door. I wasn’t expecting anything and no package had ever been left in that location before. When I saw the return label of a bulb company, I was immediately concerned, since it was only 6 degrees. How long had the package sat there? Whatever was in there would be frozen.

I opened it to indeed find a large bulb covered in some kind of waxy gold material. Relieved, I thought it was



White amaryllis in bloom at the Palmer Pioneer Home December 25, 2023. Photo courtesy Maralee McMichael

a candle. Then I noticed at the top of the wax ball (with metal wire stand) what looked to be the beginnings of live growth and a tag stating it was a “Red Victory” amaryllis bulb! That brought to mind all kinds of questions, like how were the roots going to penetrate the wax to get to the soil, etc. In the meantime, it needed to warm up. The bulb was too cold for me to hold in my hands. I placed it on the kitchen counter. After half an hour I checked on it, only to find it still very cold to the touch. The little bit of growth was limp, translucent and yellow.

That evening, I called my friend in Slana (who had sent this gift) and explained the circumstances. She advised me to keep all the paperwork in case it didn’t grow. After about four days, I could tell that it would indeed survive. The little bit of growth had turned pale green and the top of the bulb felt firm. Hooray!

By Dec. 22, my waxed dipped bulb had three inches of green growth, Gary’s bulb had 12 inches and the swelling of a bud, and the amaryllis plant at the end of one of the wings at the Pioneer Home was full of beautiful white blossoms. When my daughter called

the night of the 23rd, I told her about my fascinating waxed dipped amaryllis bulb. But, that was no surprise to her, because years ago when she worked in the floral department of a Whole Foods store, she sold waxed dipped amaryllis bulbs every Christmas.

About that Google search for amaryllis, I found lots of companies that advertised bulbs 50% off, so close to Christmas. I got on a few websites about how to grow amaryllis, but none mentioned naked ladies. I tried a different search—“other names for amaryllis”. Wikipedia came up and in it I read: The common name “naked lady” comes from the plant’s pattern of flowering when the foliage has died down. This name is also used for other bulbs with a similar growth pattern. Finally, the answer I’d been searching for.

The “Red Victory” bulb from my Slana neighbor was beautiful, but turned out to be white. For about two months, Gary and I both enjoyed watching the “naked ladies” grow and bloom in all their red and white beauty.

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

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# Commission on Aging meets Dec. 4

Senior Voice Staff

The Alaska Commission on Aging will hold a quarterly meeting on Dec. 4, via Zoom and by teleconference, starting at 9 a.m., breaking for an hour at noon, and resuming from 1 to 4 p.m.

At the meetings, commission members review policy and activities regarding senior housing, transportation, health care and other topics, with reports and input from representatives from agencies and organizations serving seniors and their families

and caregivers.

There will be a public comment period at 1:10 p.m., allowing for feedback from individuals and organizations.

To participate via Zoom, use the address: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/9484709363?omn=83258529704>.

To join by telephone, dial 253-215-8782 and follow the prompts. You will be asked to enter the meeting ID, which is 948 470 9363.

For more information or to request special accommodation, call 907-465-3250.

# Mat-Su Veterans Resource Fair returns to Wasilla

Senior Voice Staff

Veterans and their families in the Mat-Su Valley will have the opportunity to connect with valuable resources and support services at the third annual Mat-Su Veterans Resource Fair. Scheduled for Saturday, Dec. 7, 2024, the event will be held at the Curtis D. Menard Memorial Sports Center in Wasilla.

The fair, which has grown to become an essential event for local veterans, will feature upward of 50 organizations offering information, resources and guidance across a wide range of topics. Attendees are invited to explore the fair, speak with representatives, and engage with the local veteran community.

Key resources and support categories available at the fair will include:

**Community resources:** Local organizations and

support networks will discuss their services and ways they assist veterans and their families.

**Information and counseling:** Veterans and their families can receive expert advice on benefits, mental health support, career guidance, education, housing and caregiver assistance.

**Health and wellness:** Information on physical and mental health services will be available from organizations focused on veteran well-being.

The event is free and open to all veterans, active-duty service members, their families and friends. It is made possible through the dedication of the Mat-Su Health Foundation, Alaska Warrior Partnership, Alaska Office of Veterans Affairs, and the Alaska VA Women Veterans Program.

For additional information, call 907-352-4420.

Advertise in

Senior Voice

Call 1-800-478-1059.

# Calendar of Events

**Dec. 7 Anchorage** Makers Market, featuring locally made gifts from over 50 artisans and makers on two floors, plus food trucks and vendors, at Alaska Pacific University Atwood Center, 4455 University Dr., 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Presented by Little Fish Workshop. More info on their Facebook page or email [littlefish-workshopak@gmail.com](mailto:littlefish-workshopak@gmail.com)

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

**Dec. 10 North Pole** "Winter Wonderland" gourmet luncheon at Santa's Senior Center, noon. Seven entrees to include prime rib, lobster mac and cheese, clam chowder, lobster ravioli and more. RSVP required, \$50 per plate. Limited seating. 907-488-4663

**Dec. 11 Sterling** Sterling Senior Center membership meeting, 1 p.m. 907-262-6808.

**Dec. 13-14 Palmer** Holiday Bazaar at Palmer Senior Center, 1132 Chugach St. Food, fun, festivities with over 35 vendors, quilt raffle, silent auction, more. Noon to 6 p.m. on Friday, Dec. 13, and 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday. 907-745-5454

**Dec. 14 Fairbanks** Fairbanks Senior Center Annual Meeting and Christmas Party, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. All members and families welcome. 907-452-1735.

**Dec. 14 Haines** Holiday Bazaar at Mosquito Lake School, Mile 27 Haines Hwy., 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Presented by Four Winds Resource Center. Homemade clothing, food, toys, knickknacks, ornaments, crafts, more. Call Julie, 907-767-5456

**Dec. 14 Palmer** Cantora Arctica, a Mat-Su Valley women's choir, presents "The Christmas Rose: Songs of the Season," at First Baptist Church of Palmer, 1150 E. Helen Drive, 7 p.m. Free admission. 907-354-4331.

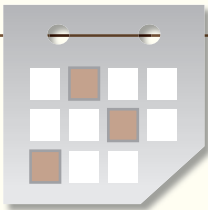
**Dec. 14 Soldotna** Nutcracker painting class at Soldotna Library, 3 to 4 p.m. Supplies provided, but limited, please register. 907-262-4227.

**Dec. 14-15 Juneau** Juneau Symphony presents "Holiday Cheer," at Thunder Mountain High School Auditorium, featuring a lineup of local and nationally acclaimed musicians including the Sitka Holiday Brass with Symphony Strings, Vox Borealis, and Symphony Brass. Time: 3 p.m. on Dec. 14, 7 p.m. on Dec. 15. Tickets start at \$20. [www.juneausymphony.org](http://www.juneausymphony.org).

**Dec. 20 Fairbanks** Holiday party at Mary Siah Recreation Center, 2 to 4 p.m. Bring a dish to share and a gift worth about \$10 for gift exchange. Sponsored by North Star Fairbanks Borough Dept. of Parks and Rec senior programs. 907-459-1136

**Dec. 21 Northern Hemisphere** Winter solstice

**Dec. 25 Worldwide** Christmas



## Send us your calendar items

Send to: Senior Voice, 401 E. Fireweed Lane,  
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Deadline for January edition is December 15.



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# The wonder girl of White Pass

By LAUREL DOWNING BILL  
Senior Voice Correspondent

Mollie Walsh made a name for herself among the prospectors who flooded north during the Klondike Gold Rush. Her “grub tent” was a welcome sight to many miners who climbed the White Pass Trail in the late 1890s. One man carried such affection for her that he created a memorial that still stands today in the little town of Skagway.

Born Mary Walsh in 1869 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, the Irish lass and her laundry worker friend Maggie Allen packed their bags and headed north on board the Bristol in August 1897. Although their destination was Dawson, the pair ended up broke in Skagway, instead.

Mollie, who had worked as a laundress from age 15, found lodging at the Bay View Hotel on 4th Avenue. Evidence suggests the redheaded girl then built a small cabin in the woods and became a waitress at a restaurant in Skagway, as well as perhaps at the hotel.

Walsh stayed in Skagway only a few months, however. As she watched the number of gold seekers arriving by ship, and then heading toward the Klondike, she saw an opportunity to help them and herself by opening a grub tent.

Also, with people like the notorious criminal Jefferson “Soapy” Smith and his gang swarming the streets looking for easy prey, Skagway was becoming dangerous. One first-hand observer noted:

“I have stumbled upon a few tough corners of the globe during my wanderings beyond the outposts of civilization, but I think the most outrageously lawless quarter I ever struck was Skagway,” wrote Superintendent Samuel Benfield Steele, who was tasked with establishing a North West Mounted Police border post on top of the Chilkoot Pass.

Walsh and two Klondikers left town on Sunday, February 20, 1898, and headed up the White Pass Trail toward Lake Bennett. She set up a tent restaurant about 10 miles from the summit and two miles from the N.W. Mounted Police post at Log Cabin.

“She operated a very primitive eating place with only a small sheet-iron stove and a narrow lunch counter in front of it,” a stampeder later said. “The eats weren't anything special, but the girl's hearty enthusiasm, quick wit, and a dusting of freckles made her a favorite with all who stopped there.”

One of the many men who beat a path to her tent was a respectable packer named Jack Newman, who had met Mollie earlier in Skagway.

He fell hard for her.

But her heart went to another—she married Mike Bartlett later that year. Sources say the couple ended up in Nome. Mollie gave birth to a son in August 1900 on the Yukon River, returning from Nome without her husband. The couple's troubled marriage ended in violence in Seattle in 1902, however, when a drunken Bartlett followed his wife into an alley and shot her dead.

Walsh's story might have been lost for the ages were it not for the love that never died inside packer Jack Newman's heart. Newman commissioned a statue to be placed in Skagway that would memorialize her. The bust, created by artist James A. Wehn in 1930, stands in a park named for Walsh and reads:

“Alone, without help, this

courageous girl ran a grub tent near Log Cabin during the Gold Rush of 1897-1898. She fed and lodged the wildest gold-crazed men. Generations shall surely know this inspiring spirit. Murdered Oct. 27, 1902.”

*This column features tidbits found while researching Alaska's colorful past for 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 on-line at [www.auntphilstrunk.com](http://www.auntphilstrunk.com).*

**In the late 1890s, Mollie Walsh ran a tent “grub house” on the White Pass Trail, and was affectionately known as ‘wonder girl’. A memorial for her still stands in Skagway.**

Alaska State Library, Portrait File, ASL-P01-4140



### "Moldy" Words

#### Across

- 1 Transverse flute
- 5 Twinge
- 9 Tattered Tom's creator
- 14 Burden of proof
- 15 Wing-shaped
- 16 Chutzpah
- 17 Teeth holders
- 18 Approximately
- 19 "Merry Company" artist
- 20 Cost to play golf
- 22 Expel, like a kidney stone
- 23 "That's right!"
- 24 Not at home
- 25 Parachute material
- 27 Pioneering Dadaist
- 28 Abound
- 29 Louisville Slugger
- 32 Fraternity letter
- 35 Celtic underworld god

- 36 Cause of wrinkles
- 37 Business firm abbr.
- 38 Attempts
- 39 Soviet ballistic missile
- 40 Chowd down
- 41 Rancher's concern
- 42 "Omigosh!"
- 43 West of Hollywood
- 44 Old Chinese money
- 45 Slot machine symbol
- 46 Kind of situation
- 48 Kitten's cry
- 49 Kind of order
- 52 Computer acronym
- 54 Newbie
- 57 Rings
- 58 "\_\_\_ it the truth!"

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- 59 Retro hairdo
  - 60 Everglades bird
  - 61 Kelt
  - 62 Paper purchase
  - 63 McDowall of "Planet of the Apes"
  - 64 "What \_\_\_ is new?"
  - 65 Highlands tongue
- 9 Archbishop of Canter-bury from 1093 to 1109
  - 10 Release
  - 11 Folding money
  - 12 Nights before
  - 13 Cost of living?
  - 21 One of Asta's masters
  - 26 Hankerings
  - 27 Roadie's responsibility
  - 28 Spin
  - 30 Malaria symptom
  - 31 Spreads grass for drying
  - 32 Con game
  - 33 Minute amount
- 34 Alien identification
  - 35 Plum variety
  - 38 Spicy cuisine
  - 39 Madam's mate
  - 42 Sign of boredom
  - 44 Like some road turns
  - 45 Weevil, e.g.
  - 47 Snockered
  - 48 Tables d'hote
  - 49 Errand runner
  - 50 Capital of Pas-de-Calais
  - 51 Garden figure
  - 52 Mimicker
  - 53 Utah's \_\_\_ Canyon
  - 55 Omani money
  - 56 Tortoise racer

Crossword answers on page 26





# Novelty Christmas song still going strong

By NICK THOMAS

Tinseltown Talks

'Tis the season when television channels bombard us with round-the-clock Christmas movies while radio stations across the country add festive tunes to their daily playlists. In the latter case, one divisive ditty has been traditionally considered naughty or nice.

Elmo Shropshire didn't write "Grandma Got Run Over by a Reindeer," but he's been singing the jolly jingle with the not-so-jolly lyrics since first hearing it in Lake Tahoe in the late 70s. The song was released in 1979 and credited to duo Elmo and Patsy, with Elmo's then-wife Patsy Trigg.

Turning 88 this year, Shropshire (known also as "Dr. Elmo") is a competitive distance runner, too, gathering several national and world titles in his 80s. He still performs music and for several years has traveled to the East Coast in November and December with a group of musicians called The Holiday Express presenting shows at soup kitchens, hospitals, and schools for kids with special needs, where they also distribute food and gifts.

While he readily acknowledges that not everyone is a fan of his now-classic Christmas song, audiences would probably riot if he didn't include the novelty ballad—a catchy tune wrapped around witty and admittedly macabre lyrics, featuring Shropshire's distinctive raspy voice.

"I had no musical background or sang before moving out to California in the 60s," said Shropshire, a Kentucky native and graduate of Auburn University's veterinary college, and now lives in Novato, north of San Francisco.

After graduating from Auburn, he worked with horses at racetracks around New York, then moved to the West Coast after a trip to San Francisco and later opened an animal clinic in the Bay Area. He soon became interested in bluegrass music, learning to play the banjo and began performing with Patsy, although the couple later divorced in the 80s. Shrop-

*Elmo Shropshire has been singing "Grandma Got Run Over By A Reindeer" since the 1970s. He turns 88 this year. "I never thought I could still be making a living from it," he says.*

*Prismic Photography*

shire even hosted a bluegrass radio show recorded from his boarding house.

When songwriter Randy Brooks played his reindeer song for the couple when they were all stranded in a Lake Tahoe hotel due to bad weather in 1978, Shropshire knew he wanted to record his own version.

"I just made this funny Christmas recording as a gag and a friend took it to a radio station and they started playing it," he recalled. "People began calling in to say they loved it, but so did others who hated it. After that first Christmas, I thought that would be the end of it. But every Christmas the stations would play it again. Unbeknownst to me, they were copying the song on cassettes, and radio stations began playing it all over the country in the early 80s."

Shropshire knew he had a hit. In 1983, he sold his vet clinic and used \$30,000 to produce a video of the song with one modification: "Grandma survives in the video!" he said. "And I played grandma and grandpa." Patsy played Cousin Mel.

The original video currently has over 15 million YouTube views (see [www.youtube.com/watch?v=MgIwLeASnkw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MgIwLeASnkw)), while the song has sold millions of units over the years in various formats – vinyl, cassette, CD, digital and ringtones.

"It's impossible to tell the exact number because it's been used so much and on so many different albums and online recordings," said Pam Wendell, Shropshire's wife since 2000. But the royalties keep coming anytime his version is used – in movies, TV shows, and even a plush toy reindeer that plays the song.

While Shropshire has recorded many other songs including various versions of his 'grandma' theme – "The Ballot of



Grandma" and "Grandma's Killer Fruitcake"—he takes the controversy of the original in his stride.

"It's just wonderful to have a hit song, even if you only have one," he says. "I never thought I could still

be making a living from it. It's just one of those things you could never predict."

And for those of you grinchers who still can't warm up to a Christmas novelty song about a granny taken out by a hit-and-run reindeer, just be grateful her encounter wasn't with a John Deere.

That really could have been gruesome.

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

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# Keep your family safe in the car

A special service for grandparents

Center for Safe Alaskans

Are you a grandparent who drives with your grandkids? We want to help keep everyone safe. The Center for Safe Alaskans has a new service called Drive Safe and Fit that checks two important things:

- Your grandchild's car seat
- How well your car fits you as the driver

December 2-6 is Older Driver Safety Awareness Week. This makes it the perfect time to check that both you and your grand-

kids are safe in the car.

## Why you should get a Drive Safe and Fit check

For your grandkids: Did you know that the right car seat can lower the risk of serious injuries by 82%? Many grandparents have questions about car seats because they don't use them every day. That's okay! Our team will:

- Make sure the car seat is the right size
- Check that it's installed correctly
- Show you the easiest



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way to buckle your grandchild in

For you: Being comfortable while driving helps keep everyone safe. We will:

- Show you how to adjust

steering wheel  
► Help with any special needs you might have

## Feel better about every car trip

When you know your car is set up safely for both you and your grandkids, you can relax and enjoy your time together.

Want to schedule a check? Just call us at 907-929-3939 or visit [safealaskans.org](http://safealaskans.org). No grandchild needed at the car seat check!

Let us help make every car trip with your grandkids a safe one.

Don't need a car seat check? We're happy to offer just the CarFit portion of the appointment.

## Anxious

continued from page 4

a nearly 70-year old body would be like. The body part can be challenging! But mentally and emotionally I feel so much more mellow, accepting and interested in de-escalating tense conversations – a trait I share with most of my fellow elder folk. Because our time on earth is short now, each day and each moment becomes more precious. Our attitudes come more under our control so we have a choice as to how to respond to our fellow humans at the grocery store or in a board meeting or online. I used to think that thoughtful, kind people were just born that way. Likely they put in the

**A well known psychological fact is that helping others is one of the very best ways to feel better, through satisfying the deep need for connection. Seniors get that.**

extra effort to become part of the solution to a hectic and unpeaceful world.

I propose that we seniors take extra care to recognize that coming up in the world now often feels overwhelming or even terrifying for younger adults, who may well see fewer possibilities to get established and create a secure basis for personal development. We all deserve to live our best lives—and younger people are not always appreciating the path forward. Let's be forgiving and generous and kind—because that feels really good.

This is not to say that seniors can't get depressed or feel anxious. Please reach out for help if you are troubled. But if you see an opportunity to smile, to share soup or a hug—do it. A well known psychological fact is that helping others is one of the very best ways to feel better, through satisfying the deep need for connection. Seniors get that—that's why we tend to be super-volunteers and super-voters. Take a risk – connect more!

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

## It never hurts to ask

Many businesses offer a discount to seniors, but don't advertise it. Speak up - it may save you some money.



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# Free online Social Security workshop, Dec. 11

Senior Voice Staff

The Social Security Administration is hosting a webinar through Microsoft Teams on Dec. 11, from 4 to 5:30 p.m. Social Security Public Affairs Specialist Nathan Cole will lead the workshop, "Social Security 101," to explain Social Security benefits and eligibility. The webinar is free but registration is required. Register online at <https://bit.ly/3CCUboo> or scan the QR code to be directed to the site.

## Local offices emphasize appointment-based services

The Social Security Administration (SSA) is expanding appoint-

ment-based services at its local offices. The aim is to reduce wait times, streamline service delivery, and improve the overall customer experience, according to a Nov. 15, 2024 SSA press statement. Nearly 400 field offices have already moved to appointment-based service this year. These offices have seen significant improvements in wait times due to more efficient and helpful visitor experiences and increases in the number of customers able to complete their business online, the press statement noted.

The transition period for Alaska offices is now through January 5, 2025. Effective January 6, 2025, customers will be required to schedule an appoint-

ment for service in Social Security offices, including requests for Social Security cards. Customers are encouraged to become accustomed to using SSA's:   
▶ online services, where many transactions can be completed conveniently and securely, and   
▶ automated services available on our National 800# at 1-800-772-1213.

Customers who are not able to handle their business online or with the automated options, may call their local Social Security office or our national number, 1-800-772-1213 to schedule an appointment. Local offices: Anchorage, 1-866-772-3081; Juneau, 1-800-478-7124; Fairbanks, 1-800-478-0391.

"We want to make clear

that we will not turn people away for service who are unable to make an appointment or do not want to make an appointment," noted the press statement. "For example, members of vulnerable populations, military personnel, people with terminal illnesses, and individuals with other situations requiring immediate or specialized attention may still walk in for service at our field offices. Some of our offices also have minimal to no wait times, and they will still serve customers who walk in."

## Social Security to increase attorney fees cap

Effective Nov. 30, 2024, there will be an increase

to the fee cap representatives can charge for help when you do business with Social Security. The maximum dollar amount for fee agreements approved by Social Security will increase from \$7,200 to \$9,200.

If a fee agreement is not filed, a representative can submit a fee petition after completing work on your claim(s). Social Security will review the value of your representative's services and also let you know the fee your representative is authorized to charge and collect.

For more information, read the Social Security publication, "Your Right to Representation," at [www.ssa.gov/pubs/EN-05-10075.pdf](http://www.ssa.gov/pubs/EN-05-10075.pdf).

# Free legal clinics for seniors in December

Senior Voice Staff

The Anchorage and Chugiak senior centers are hosting free legal clinics this December to help seniors navigate legal questions and access resources,

brought to you by Alaska Legal Services Corp.

## Chugiak Senior Center:

- ▶ Date: December 3
- ▶ Clinic: Begins at 10 a.m.
- ▶ 907-688-2677

## Anchorage Senior Center:

- ▶ Date: December 17
  - ▶ One-hour presentation prior to clinic: 10 a.m.
  - ▶ Clinic: Begins at 11 a.m.
  - ▶ 907-770-2000
- Participants will have

30-minute one-on-one sessions with an attorney during the clinics. While these sessions do not offer legal advice, the attorney can guide attendees toward helpful resources and explain legal topics of interest.

To sign up, contact the respective senior centers directly with your name, phone number, and the area of law you'd like to discuss. There's no need to go through the regular Alaska Legal Services Corp.

intake process.

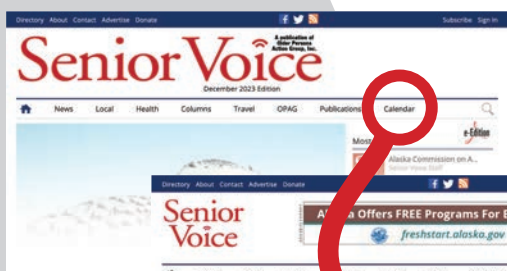
## Kodiak free Q&A

Kodiak Senior Center will hold its monthly free legal Q&A session on Dec. 16, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. in its library. Appointments and questions are on a first-come, first-served basis. For information or to schedule an appointment, call the Alaska Legal Services Kodiak office at 907-512-0499 or email [kodiak@alsc-law.org](mailto:kodiak@alsc-law.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:

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- A button linking to the event and your site
- Zoom, Skype and other conferencing links
- Your email and other contact information

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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)

# Senior Voice

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



The Retired and Senior Volunteer Program at APIA has partnered with several non-profits to meet community needs by encouraging and supporting volunteerism for people ages 55 years and older in the Anchorage and Mat-Su region. We are currently looking for elders to volunteer at the following sites (but not limited to): Alaska Regional Hospital, Alaska Veterans and Pioneer Home, Alaska Veterans Museum, Anchorage Loussac Library, Anchorage Senior Activity Center, Catholic Social Services, Downtown Hope Center, Mat-Su Regional Medical Center, Prestige Care and Rehabilitation Center, Primrose Retirement Communities, Wasilla Area Seniors Inc.

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Or directly (907) 222-4276  
[brianneh@api.ai](mailto:brianneh@api.ai)  
[www.api.ai.org](http://www.api.ai.org)







# Risky unknowns of the new ‘Transparency Act’

By **KENNETH KIRK**

For Senior Voice

*You take a chance getting up in the morning, crossing the street, or sticking your face in a fan. – Frank Drebin in “The Naked Gun”*

Three years ago our beloved Congress slipped a new law through, hidden inside another law which wasn’t even related to the same topic, called the Corporate Transparency Act. When people see the name, they generally assume it has some relationship to big corporations with billions of dollars and offices on Wall Street, so they don’t have to worry about it. Actually it is the opposite; big companies are exempt from the law. This new law actually applies instead to a lot of really small businesses.

This new law says that by the end of 2024, most small businesses are required to file an ownership report with a federal agency called the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (or FinCEN). At first, they were calling this report by an acronym that came out to BOSS, but somewhere along the way the public relations people convinced the higher-ups that was a bad acronym, and they changed it to BOI for Beneficial Ownership Information report.



And yet here we are, almost at the end of 2024, and I still don’t know whether to tell clients to file a BOI. Because here’s what happened.

Earlier this year an organization called National Small Business United filed a lawsuit, arguing that the new requirement was unconstitutional. And they actually got a federal judge in Alabama to agree with them.

But what usually happens in these situations is that the judge issues a “nationwide injunction” which prevents the federal government from enforcing the law. In this case, and I don’t know why, the judge didn’t do that. He only made the ruling effective as to the members of NSBU. The feds can enforce it as to everyone else.

Of course the federal government doesn’t really like it when a judge rules that a law it likes is unconstitutional, so the government is appealing

the case to the 11th Circuit. They had an oral argument but I don’t know whether a decision will be issued before the end of the year. And even if they do declare that the law is unconstitutional, that only applies to a handful of states that are covered by that circuit. The rest of us would still be legally required to file a BOI if we have a small business.

There are a lot of details as to who is required to file. Bigger companies don’t have to file. Sole proprietorships don’t have to file. Nonprofits don’t either. Trusts don’t have to file, but if the trust owns an LLC then the LLC has to file. If you have anything in an LLC or corporation, even just a few bucks in an account that you use for your occasional side hustle, you are covered by this law.

Part of the problem is that most people who have these small businesses haven’t even heard about the law. You, of course, have because you are reading this column. So having heard about the requirement, should you go ahead and file? Or should you just wait until next year to see

whether the law gets overturned?

This kind of question doesn’t have an easy answer. Chances are, because of the anticipated massive noncompliance, the federal government will not actually charge or fine a lot of small businesses. But they could.

The penalties for non-compliance, by the way, are \$591 per day, with a cap of \$10,000, and up to two years in prison.

In order to make this decision, I suggest you consider three factors: 1) what are the odds of getting hit with a penalty, 2) how bad will the penalty be if you are hit, and 3) what will you lose by complying? I am suggesting this method of making the decision on the assumption that you don’t have some moral or philosophical objection to filing the report, and are making the decision on purely practical grounds.

Chances are you won’t get penalized, because there will be so many small businesses that don’t file. But there is some chance. It may not be the maximum penalty, but it is entirely

possible that, in order to scare other people into filing the report, the feds may just decide to whack a few people on the nose to get everyone else’s attention.

You can see what the penalties are if you do get hit, and they are pretty significant. But what does it cost to do this? Some people are going to want to get the help of an accountant to file the report, but most folks can do this on their own. The government does not charge a fee for filing. It does mean that your ownership information will be available to certain federal agencies, although in Alaska, most of that is available anyway through the state corporations division.

So unless you really have something to hide, at this point I am going to come down on the side of filing your report. But I will leave that decision up to you.

*Kenneth Kirk is an Anchorage estate planning attorney. 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. Let’s hear it for the BOI! Or not.*

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# Apple Photos, better holiday pictures, Qi chargers

By BOB DELAURENTIS

Tech Talk

**Q.** The Apple Photos app is really different after this last update. Is there a way to change it back?

**A.** Apple revamped the Photos app this year. All the same functions are there, but the initial screen presents them differently. Although it might seem like change for change's sake at first, let's take a deeper look.

In many ways, the old app wasn't that great. The new design makes it easier to find the major part of the app more quickly. Rather than simply showing the photos, it presents the major parts of the app in a single scrolling window. The photos remain at the top, and the tabs from the previous app are now sections in a list. Things like Albums, Shared Albums, Memories and more are there.

The biggest improvement is that now you can customize the main screen with the sections you want. To do this, scroll all the way down to the bottom of the main screen and tap on the Customize and Reorder button. From the resulting screen, you can sort the sections in the order you prefer, and hide items you do not use often.

The other big feature this year is a new editing tool called "Clean Up." To use it, zoom into view a

single photo. At the bottom of the screen, tap the Edit button (immediately to the right of the Info button). The rightmost button that appears in the edit mode is labeled "Clean Up." Tap that button, then touch any object you want removed from the photo.

**Q.** I want to make the most of my holiday pictures this year. What simple things can I do to take better photos?

**A.** Get closer. Fill the frame with your subject. Almost every photo will look better if the camera is closer to the subject. This can be done while shooting, or afterward by cropping the photo.

Take more photos. The more photos you attempt, the more images will be successful. Instead of taking a single shot of a subject, take several. Move the camera to capture a different angle or look for a different pose. Often unique images result from placing the camera somewhere other than eye level.

Group photos are some of the most difficult, but you can make it easier by interacting with everyone. Direct your subjects so their faces are close to one another. Take a dozen or more shots, hopefully catching one with everyone looking their best. Edit ruthlessly. Do not share every image you take. The numbers vary, but a

good rule of thumb is 10 percent. Aim for taking a few hundred images, and only share the best 10 or 20 images.

If you move a little closer, take more photos, move the camera high and low, and be patient with groups, your photos will look better than typical snapshots.

**Q.** Is there any benefit from charging my smartphone battery with a cord? My phone can use either a cable or a magnetic charging stand. Is one method better than the other?

**A.** Phones that charge wirelessly use a round shaped coil known as a Qi (pronounced "Chi") charger. These chargers use magnets to cinch the device to the charger, and magnets are generally better than stands that rely on you placing the device on the charger. When it comes to Qi chargers, position matters. And if the coils inside the devices are not aligned, the charge may never finish.

As for which method is better, there are advantages and disadvantages to each.

Cords are significantly

## Wander the Web

Here are my picks for worthwhile browsing this month:

### Click to Build

This playful website allows you to build a village one click at a time.

[oskarstalberg.com/Townscaper](https://oskarstalberg.com/Townscaper)

### Machine Learning

This Instagram page celebrates amazing feats of mechanical engineering. (Requires an Instagram account to browse more than a handful of images.)

[instagram.com/machinepixl](https://instagram.com/machinepixl)

### Santa Claus is Coming to Town

Start the holiday season off with a website stuffed with holiday treats.

[santatracker.google.com](https://santatracker.google.com)

faster and use less energy. In general, they are more reliable. Cords can break with heavy use, and cord connectors are one of the few parts of your smartphone likely to wear out or break.

Qi chargers are slower, which can be an advantage since battery life is extended with slow charge times. They avoid the frayed cable or bent connector problems entirely, which is also a plus. They do waste energy

compared to a cord.

Placement and alignment are the other downsides, although that can be eliminated by magnets or cradles with precise guides.

In my household, Qi wins overall for convenience and less clutter. But for Qi without alignment support, I recommend cables.

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

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# Santa Fe: Head south for a taste of food and fun

By DIMITRA LAVRAKAS

Senior Voice Travel  
Correspondent

Imagine breakup and the feeling you usually have about escaping it to somewhere the sun shines and its warmth actually touches your body.

Consider a trip to Santa Fe, New Mexico with Road Scholar.

The best part of Road Scholar aside from its all-inclusive scheduling with meals and accommodations, is the price — seven days for \$2,749. Flights are not included.

The seven day, six-night trip includes 13 meals, six expert-led lectures plus a group leader, 11 expert-led field trips, six nights of accommodations, taxes and gratuities. It also covers the Road Scholar Assurance Plan that provides 24-hour assistance in the event of an emergency during your program and insurance for emergency medical evacuation, but it does not provide cancellation, interruption or travel delay insurance benefits.

## Different way of seeing the world

This program is part of Road Scholar's "Our Changing Planet" series, exploring the solutions to the challenges of global climate change in communities around the United States. (Learn more at [www.roadscholar.org/planet](http://www.roadscholar.org/planet).)

The leader will talk about the unique history and cuisine of New Mexico, from its earliest Ancestral Puebloan inhabitants to the European settlers who followed, as well as the history of agriculture in



*Santa Fe's Plaza has been the vibrant heart of the city for almost four centuries and now hosts the large farmers market.*

*Photographs Courtesy of Road Scholar*



*A step up from taco food trucks, this Southwest plate is considered nuevo (new) cuisine.*

the region.

Curated visits to locations include deep dives into the region's cultural heritage and history.

Note that the talks will take place in the private meeting room at the hotel.

For almost four centuries, Santa Fe's Plaza district has been the vibrant heart of the city. The group will also visit the imposing Cathedral Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi, the Palace of the Governors, Sena Plaza, and other sites.

An extra treat is dining at local restaurants to taste the local food, which has undergone some transfor-

mation in the 21st Century to a Nuevo (new) Santa Fe cuisine.

## A new approach

Explore Reunity Farm, founded in 2011 as Reunity Resources as a small bio-diesel program where it upcycled used cooking oil to be used for fuel or other products. It expanded in 2014 to add the Commercial Food Waste Collection program to collect food scraps from local restaurants.

A year later, it leased a non-arable acre of land from the Santa Fe Community Farm, using an aerated static pile system to compost in what became their Soil Yard. Reunity Farm used the regenerative farming method (see the movie "Kiss the Ground"). The food is made available to those in need through donations with partner organizations, farm-to-family meal donations and a 24/7 access Community Fridge.

This segment might bring home to Alaska some innovative ideas.

A 75-mile motorcoach ride takes you north to the village of Don Fernando de Taos to visit the Huerta Sol Feliz Farm.

Huerta Sol Feliz is "a manifestation of agricultural reconnection and home-scale sustainable living," said its host, Miguel Santistevan, who spent most of his summers and holidays on this land, where his grandparents lived. He will introduce you to local permaculture techniques, sustainable

agriculture, how to nurture biological diversity, and the history of the Acequia Sur del Rio Don Fernando de Taos which has been in existence since the 1700s.

The bus will ride on to Taos Pueblo. (But note this is subject to change as the Pueblo sometimes closes with little to no advance notice for private events.)

The picturesque Pueblo at the base of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains is one of the oldest continuously inhabited communities in North America. The multiple-story adobe dwellings reflect an ancient culture; approximately 100 Pueblo residents still live much as their ancestors did 1,000 years ago, without electricity or running water.

Taos Pueblo is the only living Native American community designated both a World Heritage Site by UNESCO and a National Historic Landmark. While there, you'll enjoy an expert-led walk through the community.

Then back on the motorcoach to a local winery for a wine tasting and learn about some of the oldest grape production in North America, with vines brought into the area by Spanish monks in 1540.

That's it for this day, but what a day.

Other days' events include some free time, and a short ride to the end of Upper Canyon Road for a hike around the upper part of Santa Fe Watershed, which covers over 285 square miles and contains the main course of the Santa Fe River. This river has been Santa Fe's original water supply for thousands of years.

The importance of water in the desert Southwest will be explained by a local expert during a hike around the reservoirs that store and supply the water.

Afterward, there's time to explore Museum Hill for a self-directed field trip to the Museum of Indian Arts and Culture and the Museum of International Folk Art.

There's more adventures on this trip, go to <https://www.roadscholar.org>.



*A revitalized Santa Fe Railyard offers studios, galleries, museums, new retail and restaurant spaces, as well as live-in artist studios.*

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Additional information is available at:  
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\*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.





# Migration

continued from page 15

terns chase the sun all the way to Antarctica; during their 30-year lifespans, they travel the distance between earth and the moon three times. Tiny blackpoll warblers, which weigh only as much as three nickels, trek from Denali to South America. The current migration record belongs to a bar-tailed godwit that flew 8,425 miles non-stop between Alaska and Australia in 2022.

To prepare for these epic trips, migratory birds find a safe place to molt and don fresh feathers. Some species undergo more dramatic changes. “They’ll start to essentially change their whole physiology, and in some cases their anatomy,” says Robyn Thomas, a Master’s of Science student studying waterfowl. Body parts unnecessary for migration, such as reproductive organs, “will shrivel up, and energy will be shifted toward things like their flight muscles for the long haul.” Bar-tailed godwits even shrink their digestive tracts since they won’t eat until they reach their destination.

Other species do make pit stops, but human development threatens many critical “stopover” sites. Urbanization, agriculture and industry diminish habitats migratory birds rely on to rest and refuel. Since conditions in multiple countries affect these birds’ survival, conservation becomes an international challenge. A 2015 study of 1,500 migratory bird species found that only 9 percent had protection throughout their range, and just 22 percent of their key stopover sites were protected. More than half the species traveling



**The current migration record belongs to a bar-tailed godwit that flew 8,425 miles non-stop between Alaska and Australia in 2022.**

© Dr Ajay Kumar Singh | Dreamstime.com

by flyways have recently suffered serious population declines.

Conservation isn’t straightforward even for species that stay closer to home. One iconic example migrates almost exclusively within Alaska: the emperor goose. Western explorers gave this stocky blue-grey bird a magisterial moniker because its white head resembled fur trim on royal robes. Its Yupik name, nacaullek, loosely means “the one having a parka hood”. About 90% of the population breeds on the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta. When most migratory birds head south in autumn, “Alaska’s goose” goes north to molt along the Chukchi Sea, venturing as far as Russia. Fluffy new down keeps the geese warm in their winter territory, which spans from Kodiak Island west across the Aleutian chain.

On those chilly beaches, Thomas studies the birds’ wintering ecology and population dynamics. Her research supports a joint project between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. Despite frigid field conditions,

the subjects can be heart-warming.

“The emperor goose is pretty unique in that it hangs out with its kids all winter long,” says Thomas. Families travel together to their winter habitats, where parents show their young how to forage. Offspring may even return to associate with their parents the following season.

Even with devoted care, only one in 10 goslings survive their first year. Still fewer reach the breeding age of three. A slow reproductive rate makes emperor geese less resilient against

population-level threats. Their numbers plummeted between the 1960s and the 1980s, for unknown reasons. Hunting and oil pollution may have played a role. Coastal waterfowl are also highly vulnerable to climate change. A hunting ban and 30 years of conservation efforts helped the emperor goose population recover to a healthier level by 2001. Subsistence harvest resumed in 2017, but may be suspended again if the population drops below a certain threshold.

Careful management preserves both the birds and the human heritage surrounding them. Emperor geese are an important cultural resource for Alaska Native peoples. “They’re the only goose that stays in the winter...there are communities that would rely on that for some part of their diet during the winter months,” says Thomas. She points out that indigenous knowledge has been crucial to the project’s success: researchers struggled to catch emperor geese for satellite tagging until local Native people offered tips on the birds’ behavior. “They know this bird better than we could.”

Studying these migratory marvels can also help

us understand how human activity affects wildlife. For example, light pollution can confuse birds that navigate by the night sky. Dimming outdoor lights during migration season gives them a clearer path. Domestic cats may prey on vulnerable molting birds, unless pet owners keep them under control. Window reflections can lure birds into deadly collisions, but special stickers on the glass can prevent these strikes. The Bird Treatment and Learning Center in Anchorage recommends Feather Friendly and Acopian Bird Savers, both available online.

Everyday actions like these will help welcome Alaska’s winged visitors for many summers to come. Whatever the season, connect with BirdTLC to support birds from across the state. The clinic cared for more than 500 injured and orphaned birds in 2024. Bird TLC also offers conservation education programs for grades K-12 and the general public, inspiring others to care about the wild birds with whom we share the world.

*J.K. Ullrich is a freelance science writer and author. She volunteers at the Bird Treatment and Learning Center in Anchorage.*

## Free Q&A with state senior services

Senior Voice Staff

Training specialists and other representatives from Alaska’s Senior and Disabilities Services are available via Zoom on the first and third Monday of each month (Dec. 2 and 16) for “Individual and Family Of-

fice Hour,” noon to 1 p.m. Ask questions about benefits eligibility, the Medicaid waiver, and other services available through SDS.

For information and the Zoom meeting address, email [sdstraining@alaska.gov](mailto:sdstraining@alaska.gov) or call 1-800-478-9996 or 907-269-3666.



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# Christmas

continued from page 3

We have tried to work out a little Christmas program for those who object to Santa Claus. We respect the opinions of all who think the deception should be stopped and feel that we ought to help them to arrange a disillusionized and thoroughly harmless Christmas—what you might call a germless and renovated and disinfected and veracious Joy season—which the children will take hold of with enthusiasm without, in after days, wishing to upbraid their parents and hiss at them, “You lied to us!”

We suggest, therefore, that the children be called together on Christmas morning by the governor and addressed as follows:

“Kids: We shall now enjoy our gift giving. I tore off a few scads from my roll the other day and handed them to your mother, and she dived headlong into the bargain counter flood and for two whole days



appeared not again, and when she did crawl out, battered, jammed, ragged, torn, bruised and old, she clutched to her bosom these few gimcracks, fold-ers, and highly un-ser-vic-able articles. We have placed them upon these chairs so as to divest the business of any stage ef-fects that might heighten the pleasure in any way or give a false impression. You are to understand that

I had to give up for these things, and I wish to forget about It before I feel real good inside again, and with these few remarks we will now fall to, and you want to be quick about It, for I want to read my paper in peace.”— Judge.

— Wrangell Sentinel, Dec. 25, 1924.

## Christmas tree for Indians on Tomorrow Eve

Various Societies and School Will Celebrate at the A. N. B. Hall.

The Indian people and their friends will hold their Christmas tree exercises at the A. N. B. Hall on Wil-loughby Avenue on Christ-mas Eve. The program beginning at 7:30 o'clock sharp. As usual, the affair is in the hands of the Alaska Native Brotherhood, which is being assisted this year by two other Indian soci-eties, namely, the Alaska Daughters and the Chris-tian Endeavor. No expenses have been spared to make the occasion an enjoyable and memorable one. — The Alaska Daily Empire, Juneau, Dec. 23, 1924.

## Chief of Police Mack gives present to all Juneau kiddies

Chief of Police A. D. Mack

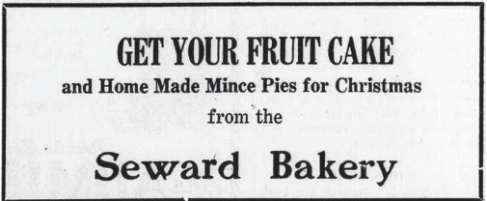
announced this afternoon that he is giving a Christ-mas present to all Juneau kiddies but will be unable to make distribution per-sonally so has asked The Empire to assist. The gift is an extra hour each night, beginning tonight and in-cluding Sunday night, Jan-uary 4, that they may loiter on the streets. In other words, the curfew will not ring until 10 o'clock instead of 9 o'clock. — The Alaska Daily Empire, Dec. 24, 1924.

## Christmas in Seward

Christmas in Alaska is not the dull, uneventful day one would imagine it to be from reading about the country in the first sell-ers. Seward citizens spend about the same Christmas spent by millions of outsid-ers, and probably a better Christmas than other mil-lions. They have good warm churches, with able minis-ters, whose ser-mons are along the same lines as those of the churches in the larger cities in the States. They have snowshoeing, skiing, tramping, the theatre, the dance, and numerous good books to read. Our homes are as snug and warm as those of other places,

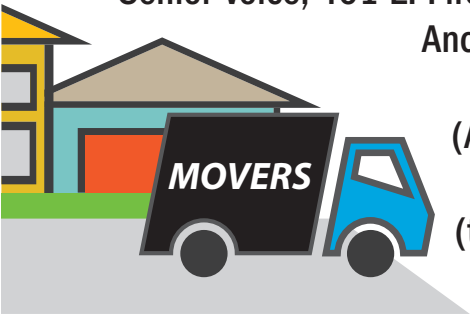


and there is no doubt but that the average Alaskan has as good a dinner. We can see no gainful way of spending the day any other place, over spending it in Seward, with the possible exception we will not have the Christmas issues of the daily papers filled with promiscuous advertising. — Seward Daily Gateway, Dec. 24, 1924.



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

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## Crossword answers from page 18

F	I	F	E		P	A	N	G		A	L	G	E	R
O	N	U	S		A	L	A	R		N	E	R	V	E
G	U	M	S		S	O	M	E		S	T	E	E	N
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			A	R	P		T	E	E	M		B	A	T
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E	G	R	E	T		G	A	U	L		R	E	A	M
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# Anesthesia

continued from page 9

heart disease can further increase the likelihood of complications during and after surgery.

Although anesthesia is generally safe when administered by qualified professionals, older adults are at an elevated risk for various complications affecting multiple bodily systems. It is essential for patients and their families to engage in discussions about these risks and the measures in place to mitigate them, paving the way for informed decisions regarding surgical care.

## Physiological risks

**Hypothermia:** Older patients may have a reduced ability to regulate body temperature during surgery.

**Dehydration and electrolyte Imbalance:** Preoperative fasting and fluid management can lead to dehydration or electrolyte disturbances.

**Delayed drug metabolism:** Age-related changes in liver and kidney function affect the movement of a drug into, through and out of the human body, which can inhibit drug clearance and metabolism, leading to prolonged effects of anesthetics.

## Cardiovascular risks

**Arrhythmias:** Anesthesia can provoke irregular rhythms, particularly in those with pre-existing heart conditions.

**Hypotension:** Anes-

thetic agents can lead to widening of blood vessels and decreased blood pressure, potentially more pronounced in older patients.

**Myocardial infarction:** Increased risk of cardiac events (heart attack), especially in patients with existing cardiovascular disease.

**Heart failure:** Anesthesia may increase risk of heart failure due to fluid shifts and mood changes following surgery.

## Pulmonary risks

**Respiratory depression:** Anesthetic agents can depress respiratory function, leading to a reduced heart rate with more carbon dioxide and too little oxygen available to the body.

**Pneumonia:** Increased

risk of postoperative pneumonia due to impaired respiratory function.

## Neurological risks

**Delirium:** Postoperative delirium is common in older patients..

**Cognitive dysfunction:** Anesthesia may lead to postoperative cognitive decline or worsen existing dementia.

## Renal risks

**Acute Kidney Injury (AKI):** Risk of AKI may increase due to reduced passage of fluids through circulatory or lymphatic systems, or underlying kidney insufficiencies.

**Fluid overload:** Difficulty in managing fluid balance can lead to a collection of excess fluids and

increased kidney workload.

## Additional complications

**Skin damage:** Increased susceptibility to surgical site infections.

**Thromboembolism:** Risk for a blood clot that starts in a vein from changes to blood flow.

## Comprehensive planning is crucial

While further research is needed to fully understand the effects of anesthesia on brain and physical functions, it is crucial for healthcare providers to perform comprehensive preoperative assessments. These evaluations help identify potential risks, particularly in advanced-age patients. Im-

plementing tailored anesthetic techniques, vigilant monitoring, and effective postoperative care can significantly reduce the likelihood of complications.

If you or a loved one is scheduled for surgery, it is important to address any concerns you may have. Rather than worrying unnecessarily, focus on making informed decisions based on the patient's overall health status. Engaging in open discussions with healthcare providers can lead to better understanding and management of anesthesia-related risks.

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

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- Provide outreach to prospective sponsors & donors for financial support of OPAG's monthly newsletter, the "Senior Voice".
- Participates in community relations activities and special projects.
- Coordinates preparation of material for meetings and community events.
- Maintains archiving and filing systems, including hard copy and computer files.
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- Communicative and friendly personality.
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### Mat-Su Borough

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The State of Alaska, Division of Senior and Disabilities Services, administers the ADRC grant in partnership with the regional sites. Contact SDS at 1-800-478-9996 to learn about the grant program.