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Senior Voice

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Volume 44, Number 7 July 2021

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Fishing glory!

Senior Voice correspondent Maralee McMichael shows off her rainbow trout, caught in the Naknek River, in this 1974 photo. Like so many Alaskans, she's landed a stringer full of memories from fishin adventures over the years. Read her story on page 14.

Photo courtesy Maralee McMichael

2020
National Mature
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Awareness and training to confront elder abuse

Dear Editor,

June 15, 2021 was World Elder Abuse Awareness Day. On that day, communities in the United States and all over the world sponsored events to highlight solutions to this systemic social challenge. The State of Alaska, Long-Term Care Ombudsman, the State of Alaska, Division of Senior and Disabilities Services, AARP-Alaska and the Alaska Commission on Aging are proud to participate in this national conversation and will also host a series of trainings on Elder Abuse Awareness and Prevention. Our united goal is to protect

the health, safety, welfare and rights of seniors living in Alaska. Currently, 91,281 elders age 65 and older live in Alaska. According to the data from the Administration on Aging, Alaska is the most rapidly aging state in the United States. The number of seniors in Alaska will continue to increase over the next decade. It is important that elders in Alaska have the supports in place to age well wherever they choose to live. As Americans, we believe in justice for all, yet older members of our society are abused or neglected each day across this

country. Older people are vital, contributing members of American society and their maltreatment diminishes all of us. Just as we have confronted and addressed the social issues of child abuse and domestic violence, so too can we find solutions to address issues like elder abuse, which also threatens the well-being of our community. Societal norms and practices make it hard for elders to stay involved with and connected to our communities as they age. As a result, elders are more likely to experience social isolation, which increases the likelihood of abuse and

neglect. We can design stronger societal supports to keep elders connected and protect them from abuse, whether financial, emotional, physical, or sexual. When we address a root cause, like social isolation, we also make it less likely that people will become neglected. Elders who are socially connected and protected from harm are less likely to be hospitalized, less likely to go into nursing homes and less likely to die. We can and must create healthier and safer living environments for older adults, including in their homes, nursing homes and

assisted living facilities. Get more information about how to make a difference by visiting the National Center on Elder Abuse <https://ncea.acl.gov> or by calling the Eldercare Locator at 1-800-677-1116 to explore local community services and supports. **Stephanie Wheeler**, State of Alaska, Long Term Care Ombudsman Program **John Lee**, State of Alaska, Division of Senior and Disabilities Services-Adult Protective Services **Lisa Morley**, Alaska Commission on Aging **Teresa Holt**, AARP - Alaska

Telemedicine on ascendency – or the chopping block?

By **ALAN M. SCHLEIN**
Senior Wire



WASHINGTON
WATCH

ANALYSIS

As the nation emerges from the coronavirus pandemic, telemedicine has transformed how millions of Americans, particularly seniors, see their doctors. Now the Biden administration and Congress must decide whether video and audio appointments with doctors should continue as a routine part of health care and should get federal reimbursement.

Telemedicine, also called telehealth, has been the most significant health care shift caused by the pandemic. Before coronavirus, lawmakers had tightly restricted the kind of video and audio visits that could be billed to Medicare, drastically limiting how many people could use it, by geographically allowing only people in rural areas and to visits in which a doctor was in an office or hospital, rather

than working remotely. The fear was it would enable fraud and doctors might abuse this capability by over-billing patients and insurance companies. But the pandemic changed that completely. In the year plus that it has become a mainstream way of visiting doctors, a clear consensus has emerged – many services that once required an office visit can be provided easily, safely – and more effectively – through a video chat, a phone call, or even an email. Almost everyone, from consumers to health insurers, state Medicaid officials, doctors’ organizations and of course telehealth vendors, like it – when it works well.

What this change means and how it happened

In 2020, as pandemic lockdowns shuttered phy-

sician offices, doctors were suddenly forced to pivot to virtual care to maintain contact with patients and keep money flowing. As things went from bad to worse, the Trump administration moved quickly to facilitate the shift to virtual visits. Medicare dramatically expanded the kinds of services that could be provided online, adding 150 telehealth services to the list of what Medicare would pay for during the pandemic, including emergency visits, eye exams, speech and hearing therapy, and nursing home care. Congress then passed the Cares Act, which, among other regulatory flexibilities, provided the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) the authority to waive the geographic origination requirement, leading to a surge in telemedicine usage among Medicare beneficiaries as patients could, for the first time, access virtual services

from wherever they were located. Once Medicare raised fees for virtual visits to equal those for in-office exams, state Medicaid programs and commercial insurers matched Medicare’s rules and telemedicine exploded in usage. While fewer than 1% of primary care visits in Medicare occurred virtually in January 2020, by April nearly half did, according to Medicare’s own numbers and those numbers kept skyrocketing. At UnitedHealth Group, the nation’s largest health insurer, the number of covered telehealth visits increased nearly 30-fold,

rising from 1.2 million visits in 2019 to 34 million last year. Other insurers reported as much as 80-fold increases. The huge usage prompted groups like UnitedHealth and Kaiser Permanente to not only help its doctors pivot to telehealth, but also to build virtual urgent care systems that allows patients to connect by video with on-call doctors 24 hours a day. Medicare and Medicaid went several steps further as well, including making critical care services, physical and occupational therapy

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Mission statement:

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Vision statement:

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



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PRO Act will strengthen union retiree benefits

By **SUSAN REILLY**
Alaska Alliance for Retired Americans

A strong and growing labor movement is good for workers and for all Americans. The labor movement has been and continues to be the leading force in the fight to strengthen Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid, ensuring a measure of retirement security for all Americans. Our country, our democracy, and our people benefit when workers have a strong voice at work and are able to join together to build a more secure future for their families and their

communities. Union jobs often come with negotiated defined benefit pensions which ensure lifelong retirement income and provide an influx of reliable revenue into local economies. Retirees who choose to remain in their communities invest their retirement income in local businesses, supporting jobs and local governments. Additionally, retirees whose retirement is funded by accrued union retirement benefits and Social Security are not a perceived burden on the economy. They continue to be self-sufficient

contributing members of our communities and, if healthy enough to engage in volunteer activities, to benefit the communities in which they reside. The PRO Act streamlines the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) election process so workers can petition to form a union and get a timely vote. It prohibits employer interference of any sort, including delaying the vote or forcing workers to attend mandatory anti-union meetings as a condition of continued employment. Should an employer break the law or

interfere with a fair election, the PRO Act mandates that the NLRB require the employer to bargain with the union if the union had the support of a majority of workers prior to the election. The PRO Act also requires employers to disclose the names and payments they make to outside third-party union-busters hired to campaign against the union. Some courts have sided with employers to prohibit workers from boycotting secondary companies doing business with their employer. Under current conditions, employers can permanently

replace workers who strike. The PRO Act repeals the prohibition on secondary boycotts and prohibits employers from permanently replacing strikers with new workers. The Alaska Alliance for Retired Americans endorses the PRO Act and urges Senators Murkowski and Sullivan to co-sponsor the PRO Act (S420) and work toward its enactment. It's the right thing to do for Alaska's working families. Susan Reilly is the president of the Alaska Alliance for Retired Americans.

Better pay, benefits will boost caregiving

By **DEBBIE MULHOLLAND**
I've had a front-row seat to the growing senior care crisis in Alaska, and I am worried. I'm worried about our seniors not getting the care they need, and I'm worried about professional caregivers leaving this field or Alaska to find better jobs elsewhere.

I've proudly served as a professional home care provider to help Alaskans age at home safely for almost a decade. Caregiving is a valuable and rewarding job. Over the years, severe cuts to Medicaid services and care hours undermined the ability of professional caregivers to provide the care that our seniors need. It is scary how many Alaskans need care but do not have access due to the cuts. Many of our elders and people with disabilities struggle on waitlists, are denied in services, or are forced into nursing homes at an even greater cost to the state. At worst, seniors are forced to leave their homes and move to a state where care is available.

At the same time, the pool of professionally trained caregivers is decreasing because cuts to long-term care in Alaska have made it impossible to access the number of hours necessary to financially support our own families. There are many people who have a passion for this work but can't continue because we are not valued. Alaska has the fastest-growing elderly population in the nation — yet we continue to face cuts to care and fewer Alaskans choosing home care as a career. If Alaska is going to do right by our seniors and those who support them, now is the time to invest in care, in seniors, and in family-sustaining jobs. Right now, a bill is before Congress that would provide millions of dollars as an investment in home- and community-based care that Alaska needs: the American Jobs Plan. The American Jobs Plan will also protect those most vulnerable by funding expanded access to home care for our elders

and people with disabilities and chronic health issues and keep more caregivers in the profession by raising wages and benefits. Aging with dignity at home is possible for all Alaskans if we invest in care

now. The American Jobs Plan gives me hope that in Alaska, we will finally do right by our seniors. Please join me in urging Congress to support desperately needed funding for in-home and commu-

nity-based care. Debbie Mulholland is 63, resides in Anchorage, and has lived in Alaska since 1971. She has worked as a caregiver since 2012 providing in-home support to Alaskan seniors.

Send us your letters

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

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Gender identity and your grandchild

By KAREN CASANOVAS,
PCC, CPCC

Question: My granddaughter's good friend is a young woman she used to work with. They spend a lot of time together and have come to visit me. It is apparent they are a couple. I'm not sure how to interact with them.

Answer: This is a great question; while a grandparent may not be one of the first people a grandchild shares personal information with, how delightful she feels comfortable visiting you. It sounds like you two have a special relationship.

Responding appropriately and uniquely to the situation preserves your grandparent and granddaughter connection. 'Coming out' to a close family member can stir up emotions when revealing lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer identities. It can make everyone uncomfortable, however, having open conversations is easier than withholding the truth. Being aware of your reactions whether surprise, shock, disappointment, or anger, as those are emotions often experienced, is crucial. Mixed feelings are common and rejecting your grandchild is not a preferred option. Reassure your granddaughter that she is accepted and loved. Responding with comforting language and "I love you" can ease tensions.

Shunning or disowning LGBTQ individuals risks increasing their anxiety, which in turn can lead to depression, substance abuse, or even suicide.

Religious beliefs that condemn alternative lifestyles often make the situations more difficult to resolve, and if that applies in this situation, seek guidance from a religious or spiritual advisor. If you don't approve of receiving the message about their sexual orientation, understand that your grandchild hasn't changed who they are internally, nor should it alter the love you have



for them. While you may not give full approval of the partner relationship, you can be empathetic.

Try using language similar to "I may not always know what to say, how to say it, or ask the right questions, but know that I'm open to learning new terms. Please know I love you, am here to support you and will try to grow in my understanding of your partnership."

Bombarding your grandchild with questions can be overwhelming. If you had already guessed about their orientation, you don't need to tell them that you suspected it all along. This can often lead to guilt on their end for not saying anything sooner. Recognize that young people sometimes tread slowly with whom they are sharing the information, and often it is only with close family or friends. Be respectful of telling others – including other family members – about their orientation outside of the individual's chosen circle. You want to maintain their trust. And, after all, it is their story to tell, however and whenever they wish and feel comfortable doing so.

Additionally, if you feel at ease, discuss which gender pronoun your granddaughter prefers. What is a gender pronoun? It simply means knowing which gender an individual wants to go by. Pronouns are how we identify ourselves apart from using our name. It could be how someone refers to your grandchild in conversation. This is important as you learn more

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COVID: Vaccinations, vitamin D and nanobodies

By JOHN C. SCHIESZER

For Senior Voice

Getting vaccinated helps protect others who don't

Older adults who get vaccinated against COVID-19 may also be protecting their unvaccinated family members. Researchers at the Helsinki Graduate School of Economics have found that the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines protect both vaccinated individuals and their unvaccinated adult household members against SARS-CoV-2 infections. The study used Finnish administrative datasets to examine the link between mRNA-based COVID-19 vaccines and infection risk among vaccinated individuals as well as their unvaccinated family members.

The study showed that the indirect protection for unvaccinated family

The results support the idea that vaccines reduce the risk of both getting infected and infecting others.

members builds gradually over time. Two weeks after the recipient's first dose, the spouses of vaccinated individuals showed 8.7% fewer cases of coronavirus than the spouses of unvaccinated individuals. Ten weeks after the first dose, the indirect effectiveness of vaccines for family members was up to 42.9%.

"Our study clearly shows that the vaccines reduce coronavirus infections in unvaccinated adults living in the same household. The results support the idea that vaccines reduce the risk of both getting infected and infecting others," said study investigator Mika Kortelainen, a Professor of Health Economics at the University of Turku in Finland.

This analysis was only possible because Finland has comprehensive, high-quality administrative data on its population. The study focused on healthcare workers as they were typically the only ones in their households to get a vaccination against coronavirus in Finland during the study period between January and March of this year.

Governments all over the United States and around the world are hoping to lift COVID-19 restrictions as vaccination coverage increases. These results provide new information on how vaccines affect infections among the unvaccinated, offering additional insight for decision-makers to de-

sign effective vaccination strategies, societal control measures, and travel recommendations for vaccinated individuals.

Vitamin D may not protect against COVID-19 susceptibility or severity

A new study by researchers at McGill University in Quebec, Canada, has found genetic evidence does not support vitamin D as a protective measure against COVID-19.

The ability of vitamin D to protect against severe COVID-19 illness is of great interest to public health experts, but has limited supporting evidence. To assess the relationship between vitamin D levels and COVID-19 susceptibility and severity, researchers conducted a study using genetic variants strongly associated with increased

vitamin D levels. The authors analyzed genetic variants of 4,134 individuals with COVID-19, and 1.28 million without COVID-19, from 11 countries to determine whether genetic predisposition for higher vitamin D levels were associated with less-severe disease outcomes in people with COVID-19.

The results showed no evidence for an association between genetically predicted vitamin D levels and COVID-19 susceptibility, hospitalization, or severe disease, suggesting that raising circulating vitamin D levels through supplementation may not improve COVID-19 outcomes in the general population. However, the study had several important limitations, including that the research did not include individuals with

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Coming soon: An online workout for your brain

Alzheimer's Resource of Alaska

For older people, going to a gym on a regular basis helps to build strength and stamina by exercising the body in systematic, increasingly exerting ways. This effort pays off with a reduced chance of falls, better coordination and balance, improved sleep, stronger muscles and a more positive self-image.

As we age, our brains need consistent exercise, too. Aging brings with it a host of "senior moments,"

when we begin to second guess ourselves, becoming more easily distracted, forgetful, and less able to concentrate for long periods of time. Taken together, these senior moments can add up to unsettling feelings of fear and anxiety. Is it Alzheimer's or perhaps some other kind of dementia?

For healthy, community-dwelling older adults, Alzheimer's Resource of Alaska has some good news. Beginning in July, we will offer a new program for those who find themselves worrying more about mem-

ory loss, and who want to take charge of building resistance to it. The new program, Mind Aerobics™, was developed by the non-profit New England Cognitive Center as a non-medical intervention to help stabilize and in many cases even improve function across six domains of cognitive functioning. Alzheimer's Resource of Alaska (ARA) will offer the Mind Aerobics™ as a virtual program made up of two distinct courses, Mind Sharpener and Mind Works, that are designed for persons with none to mild

diagnosable cognitive loss.

Independent research studies have shown that there can be improvement/stabilization in the six cognitive domains the Mind Aerobics™ targets – reaction time, visual/spatial, attention and concentration, memory, language, and problem solving. Each of these have real-life implications in how we move through our daily activities, and just like with physical exercise, regular brain workouts help strengthen our minds and keep them t.

Participants in ARA's

Mind Aerobics™ program will work out on Zoom two times a week for one hour for a total of 12 weeks (24 sessions). Prior to beginning the course of workouts, each participant will have a complete assessment of their baseline cognitive functioning conducted by an independent researcher from Minnesota State University. Following the 24 sessions, the assessments will be conducted again to evaluate progress in the six domains. Participants

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Alaska Health Fair is taking a summer break

By SHARON PHILLIPS

Alaska Health Fair, Inc.

Alaska Health Fair, Inc. takes an extended break twice a year – after each active and heavy duty health fair season. We do this to provide our few paid staff plus our dedicated and cherished volunteers a longer period to take their own vacations. These breaks have become even more important as we've worked almost non-stop

through COVID. Though we are not offering blood draw dates in July, we are busy closing out the spring season and looking forward to the upcoming fall season.

Our summer break is now in full swing, so you may have difficulty reaching a staff person at the Anchorage or Fairbanks office. A staff person is usually in the office for limited hours and we try to check email, snail mail and voice mail at those

times. We ask you to be patient if you reach out to us during these breaks, as it may be a few days before we respond during our slowed down period.

The best way to stay informed of dates that might be available for your choosing is to sign up for our newsletter at www.alaskahealthfair.org. You'll be the first to get the information that includes the new dates for late summer and fall offerings. You'll also re-

ceive our health newsletters, seasonal schedules, announcements, agency updates and more.

The best ways to stay informed include: Sign up for our newsletter; catch us on Facebook; visit www.alaskahealthfair.org; read August's Senior Voice, hard copy edition or online at www.seniorvoicealaska.com; or hover your smartphone camera over our QR code and quickly access our website.

We thank everyone that has supported us through giving donations of materials, money or time; getting your blood taken through our agency; providing local sponsorships; volunteering at our office or local events. Our agency would not be here without you.

Sharon Phillips is the Tanana Valley/Northern Region Program Director for Alaska Health Fair, Inc.



Misunderstanding words



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

Part one of two.

Hearing loss is a major factor on your quality of life. One of the qualities is the understanding of your language or languages. Hearing loss can have a cognitive decline on your word understanding and the ability to understand speech. Hearing and understanding are two very different things

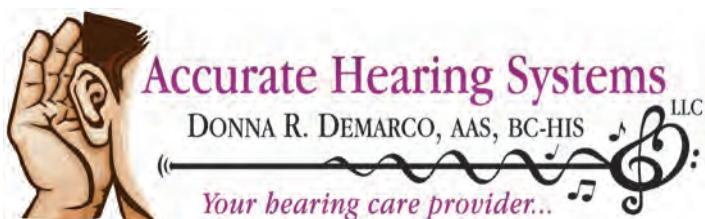
We have all misunderstood part of a conversation and it can be quite funny. When you hear someone order nice water, maybe they want-

ed ice water. I am sure your dad does not want grape ants for Christmas, but maybe grey pants would be more like what he might want. However, when you have a hearing loss and this is your daily conversation, always filling in or trying to interpret what is being said, there is nothing funny about it.

When you have a hearing loss, and you are filling in the blanks and interpreting what words are, you run a huge risk of losing your language.

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



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Appealing a Medicare denial

By **COLTON T. PERCY**

For Senior Voice

Every Medicare beneficiary has the right to appeal a denial of coverage for services or items made by Medicare. However, there are some things you should know. First, you need to understand why Medicare denied coverage in the first place. Then you need to build your case for the appeal and begin the process. You need to understand that there are multiple levels of appeals you can go through if your first decision is denied and each of these has their own timeline associated.

Why was your item or service denied coverage by Medicare? Make sure you read and understand all letters and notices that have been provided to you by Medicare and any other insurance coverage you may have. If you are not provided with the reason why you were denied coverage or you don't understand the reasoning, call 1-800-Medicare (1-800-633-4227). They will be able to provide the reasoning for the denial, which is

vital for building a strong case for your appeal.

You should be reading and reviewing your Medicare Summary Notice (MSN) as it arrives about every three months. This is the explanation of what benefits you received over the previous three months, what Medicare paid for these services, what you owe, and if a service was denied. If a service you received was denied coverage and you think it should have been covered, call your doctor and ensure that it was not a billing error.

You begin the appeals process by following the instructions on the last page of your Medicare Summary Notice. You will fill out the information requested on the Medicare Summary Notice and mail it to your Medicare Administrative Contractor (MAC) whose address is listed on your Medicare Summary Notice. You need to do this within 120 days of the date on the Medicare Summary Notice. You can strengthen your appeal by adding a letter of support from your provider if they also think Medicare should

have covered the item or service provided. The Medicare Administrative Coordinator should have a decision on the appeal back to you within 60 days. If your appeal is denied, you can move on to the next level by following the instructions on the Medicare Administrative Contractor denial notice.

There are three additional levels of appeal if the Medicare Administrator Contractor denies the initial appeal. Each of these three levels have their own timeframes for completion and can increase in complexity. If you need help navigating the appeals process or want help initiating an appeal, call the Medicare Information Office and we can provide you with direction for your specific situation.

Colton T. Percy is a Certified Medicare Counselor and the Volunteer Coordinator for the Alaska Medicare Information Office. If you have questions about Medicare or are interested in volunteering and helping your fellow Alaskans navigate Medicare, please call 1-800-478-6065.

Workout: Healthy brains

continued from page 5

will thus be able to see for themselves the benefits of their participation, as well as to identify areas needing additional workouts.

There is no limit to the number of courses in which an individual may participate. In the event that an

individual learns through their medical care of the presence of a dementia, including those that are progressive, eventually ARA will be offering specially developed Mind Aerobics™ programs that can help at each stage of the illness.

For more information about this exciting new

program and to see if you qualify, you may contact Ken Helander at the Alzheimer's Resource of Alaska at 907-561-3313. As of now, the Mind Sharpener program is virtual and is therefore available to Alaskans with computer access anywhere in the state.

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The differences between volunteer and Medicare hospice

By **AMY TRIBBETT**

Hospice of Anchorage

Hospice is not a place. And hospice care is not just about those who are dying. Hospice is a comprehensive, compassionate kind of care that focuses on living – hospice is about living as fully as possible, surrounded by family and friends, up until the end of life. Palliative care brings this special philosophy of care to people earlier in the course of a serious illness. Did you know that Hospice of Anchorage is a Volunteer Hospice? Did you know there are three Medicare hospice providers serving Anchorage and the surrounding areas as well?

What is a Volunteer Hospice and what does that mean for you?

Because Hospice of Anchorage is not a Medicare Certified hospice provider,

access to our services differ from Providence Hospice, Ancora Hospice and Frontier Hospice (the three Medicare hospice providers in the Anchorage area).

Making a referral to hospice care

If you are earlier in the course of a serious life-limiting illness and/or are still undergoing treatment but need some guidance and support, please call Hospice of Anchorage. We can help you and your loved ones navigate your diagnosis, connect you with community resources, and provide social services as well as nurse education.

If you or a loved one are no longer pursuing curative treatment, do not want to return to the hospital, and have been given a diagnosis with a life expectancy of six months or less, you should call a Medicare Certified

Hospice.

Most importantly, do not wait. What we hear most often from those on our service is, “I wish I would have called sooner.”

What services are offered?

Hospice of Anchorage offers care provided by a team of professionals and trained volunteers, and includes emotional spiritual support, information, education, in-home practical assistance and companionship, assessment, and coordination of community resources. The staff provide consultation, education, and support visits generally during regular working hours, Monday through Friday. We make referrals to Medicare Hospice or other home care providers and provide volunteers when care needs increase. Hospice of Anchorage coordinates with other providers

for needed medications and equipment and provides limited in-home respite and chore services for those who qualify for our State of Alaska funded Senior In-Home grant program.

Supervision of medical care remains with the individual’s provider.

Grief support is available to anyone in the community through phone calls and mailings. Individualized support is available for families of Hospice of Anchorage patients.

Providence Hospice, Ancora Hospice and Frontier Hospice provide care in the person’s place of residence by a team of professionals (RN Case Managers, Chaplain, LCSW or LMSW, Medical Director, and Certified Nursing Assistants) and trained volunteers. They also provide:

- After-hours coverage with as needed access to RN and physician

- Medications related to pain and symptom management (per formulary) and Durable Medical Equipment, per basic equipment list (all other requests considered on a case-by-case basis)
- Four levels of care: Routine In-home care; Continuous Care; General In-Patient Care; In-Patient Respite Care
- Supervision of medical care can remain with the individual’s provider or can transfer to the Hospice’s Medical Director.
- One year of bereavement support after the death.

Who is eligible?

Hospice of Anchorage serves individuals of all ages (from before birth to 101+) with a limited life expectancy and their support networks; provides support to families and caregivers

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New ‘smart toilet’ will be able to analyze stool

By JOHN SCHIESZER

Medical Minutes

Smart toilet may be able to analyze stool

For the first time, researchers are suggesting that an artificial intelligence tool can be used for long-term tracking and management of chronic gastrointestinal ailments. Scientists at Duke University have added an artificial intelligence tool to the standard toilet to help analyze patients’ stool and give gastroenterologists the information they need to provide appropriate treatment, according to a new study. This novel technology could assist in managing chronic gastrointestinal issues such as inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) and irritable bowel syndrome (IBS).

“Typically, gastroenterologists have to rely on patient self-reported information about their stool to help determine the cause of their gastrointestinal health issues, which can be very unreliable,” said lead study investigator Dr. Deborah Fisher, an associate professor of medicine at Duke University in Durham, North Carolina. “Patients often can’t remember what their stool looks like or how often they have a bowel movement, which is part of the standard monitoring



process. The Smart Toilet technology will allow us to gather the long-term information needed to make a more accurate and timely diagnosis of chronic gastrointestinal problems.”

The technology can be retrofitted within the pipes of an existing toilet. Once a person has a bowel movement and flushes, the toilet will take an image of the stool within the pipes. The data collected over time can provide a better understanding of a patient’s stool form (loose, normal or constipated) and if there is the presence of blood. The Smart Toilet could help diagnose problems and point to the right treatment.

To develop the artificial intelligence image analysis tool for the Smart Toilet, researchers analyzed 3,328 unique stool images found online or provided by research participants. All images were reviewed and annotated by gastroenter-

ologists according to the Bristol Stool Scale, a common clinical tool for classifying stool. The researchers found that the algorithm accurately classified the stool form 85.1% of the time and blood detection had an accuracy of 76.3%.

“We are optimistic about patient willingness to use this technology because it’s something that can be installed in their toilet’s pipes and doesn’t require the patient to do anything other than flush,” said lead study investigator Sonia Grego, who is the founding director of the Duke Smart Toilet Lab. “An IBD flare-up could be diagnosed using the Smart Toilet and the patient’s response to treatment could be monitored with the technology. This could be especially useful for patients who live in long-term care facilities who may not be able to report their conditions and could help improve initial diagnosis of acute conditions.”

The prototype has promising feasibility, but it is not yet available to the public.

Researchers are developing additional features of the technology to include stool specimen sampling for biochemical marker analysis.

Electronic nose sniffs out cancer

There may be a whole new way to identify pancreatic and ovarian cancer. An odor-based test that sniffs out vapors emanating from blood samples was able to distinguish between benign and pancreatic and ovarian cancer cells with up to 95% accuracy, according to a new study from researchers at the University of Pennsylvania and Penn’s Perelman School of Medicine, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

The researchers developed a tool that uses artificial intelligence and machine learning to decipher the mixture of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) emitting off cells in blood samples. They found that this could serve as a non-invasive approach to screen for harder-to-detect cancers, such as pancreatic and ovarian.

“It’s an early study but

the results are very promising,” said A. T. Charlie Johnson, who is a Professor of Physics and Astronomy in Penn’s School of Arts & Sciences. “The data show we can identify these tumors at both advanced and the earliest stages, which is exciting. If developed appropriately for the clinical setting, this could potentially be a test that’s done on a standard blood draw that may be part of your annual physical.”

The E-nose system is equipped with nanosensors calibrated to detect the composition of VOCs, which all cells emanate. Previous studies from the researchers demonstrated that VOCs released from tissue and plasma from ovarian cancer patients are distinct from those released from samples of patients with benign tumors.

Among 93 patients, including 20 patients with ovarian cancer and 20 with benign ovarian tumors, the vapor sensors discriminated the VOCs from ovarian

next page please



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Medical: Sniffing out cancer; optimal exercise

from page 8

cancer with 95% accuracy and pancreatic cancer with 90% accuracy. The tool also correctly identified all patients with early-stage cancers.

The technology’s pattern recognition approach is similar to the way people’s own sense of smell works, where a distinct mixture of compounds tells the brain what it’s smelling. The tool was trained and tested to identify the VOC patterns more associated with cancer cells and those associated with cells from healthy blood samples in 20 minutes or less.

An exercise cocktail may be optimal approach

A new study from the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) is suggesting there are multiple ways to achieve the same

health benefits from exercise, as long as your exercise “cocktail” includes plenty of light physical activity. The study employed data from the REGARDS (Reasons for Geographic and Racial Differences in Stroke) Study, a long-running national study of differences in stroke.

“For decades, we’ve been telling people that the way to stay healthy is to get at least 30 minutes of exercise five days a week,” said study investigator Keith Diaz, an assistant professor of behavioral medicine and director of the Exercise Testing Laboratory at the Center for Behavioral Cardiovascular Health at Columbia University Vagelos College of Physicians and Surgeons. “But even if you’re one of the few adults who can stick to this advice, 30 minutes represents just 2% of your entire day.”

The recommendation about how much exercise

to do is not wrong per se, according to Diaz. However, it may be insufficient depending on how individuals spend the rest of their waking day. Previous studies tended to look at the impact of one type of activity or another in isolation. But each activity has either harmful or beneficial effects on health.

Only with the recent advent of inexpensive and easy-to-use activity monitors, which can be worn by study participants throughout the day, have researchers been able to address the question. With data from six such studies including more than 130,000 adults in the United Kingdom, United States and Sweden, the authors used a technique called compositional analysis to determine how different combinations of activities affect mortality.

They found the benefits of 30 minutes of moderate to vigorous exercise depend

on how you spend the rest of the day. The current recommendation of 30 minutes per day of moderate to vigorous physical activity reduced the odds of an earlier death by up to 80% but only for some individuals.

“It is not as simple as checking off that ‘exercise’ box on your to-do list,” said Diaz. “A healthy movement profile requires more than 30 minutes of daily exercise. Moving around and not remaining sedentary all day also matters.”

The researchers found that people who spent just a few minutes engaging in moderate to vigorous physical activity lowered their risk of early death by 30% as long as they also spent six hours engaging in light physical activity.

“Getting 30 minutes of physical activity per day or 150 minutes per week is what’s currently recommended, but you still have

the potential to undo all that good work if you sit too long,” said study investigator Virginia Howard, a professor of epidemiology in the UAB School of Public Health.

The researchers say a cocktail formula of 3 to 1 is best. They found that getting three minutes of moderate to vigorous activity or 12 minutes of light activity per hour of sitting was optimal for improving health and reducing the risk of early death.

“This new formula gets at the right balance between moderate to vigorous exercise and sitting to help people lead longer, healthier lives,” said Howard.

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



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

Anchorage Area

Municipality of Anchorage, Anchorage Health Department
825 L St., Ste 200, Anchorage, AK 99501
907-343-7770 www.muni.org/adrc

Kenai Peninsula/Kodiak Island/Valdez/Cordova

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

Southeast Alaska

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

Mat-Su Borough

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

Fairbanks North Star Borough

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

Bristol Bay Native Association

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



Free training, support for family caregivers

Senior Voice Sta

The Kenai Peninsula Family Caregiver Support Program has moved into a new office located at 35477 Kenai Spur Highway, Suite 205 (located in the 4D Professional Building). You can call them at 907-262-1280 or email dkebschull@soldotnaseniors.com.

Caregiver support group meetings will be held at the following locations and times in July. Please join to share your experiences as a caregiver or to support someone who is a caregiver.

July 8, Sterling Senior Center, 1 to 3 p.m. A training titled, “Can Alzheimer’s be Stopped?” will be available from 1 to 2 p.m., and a peer support meeting will follow from 2 to 3 p.m.

July 9, Soldotna Senior Center, 1 to 3 p.m. Gail Kennedy will speak on “Grieving for the Living” from 1 to 2 p.m. and a peer support meeting will follow from 2 to 3 p.m.

July 20, Kenai Senior Center, 1 to 3 p.m. There will be a “town hall” meeting from 1 to 2 p.m. to introduce new staff and take suggestions for topics for upcoming

trainings. Peer support group meeting follows, 2 to 3 p.m.

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

Statewide

Alzheimer’s Resource of Alaska (ARA) organizes caregiver support meetings all around the state, including the following locations: 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 additional information, call Gay Wellman, 907-822-5620 or 1-800-478-1080.

Grandchild: Identity

continued from page 4

about your granddaughter because you cannot always know an individual’s pronoun simply by looking at them. Asking and correctly using someone’s pronoun is one of the most basic ways to show your respect for their gender identity. When someone is referred to by the wrong pronoun, it can make them feel disrespected, invalidated, or dismissed.

Here are some examples:

- ▶ she/her/hers
- ▶ he/him/his
- ▶ they/themself/them

A gender-neutral or gender-inclusive pronoun is a pronoun that does not associate a gender with the individual being discussed. An individual who is transgender or gender queer might have frustration because the dichotomy of “he and she”

in the English language does not leave room for other gender identities.

If you want your grandchild to be honest and live with integrity, realize that having these discussions and coming out to you is all of that. Good for you for recognizing that living openly is an important part in your relationship with her. By you being honest, supportive and open, you can become an advocate and love your granddaughter for who she is.

Karen Casanovas is a Professional Certified Coach that oversees a private practice specializing in aging and health. She’s a Fellow with the Institute of Coaching and former member of the Anchorage Senior Citizens Advisory Commission. If you have a question for Karen, email her at info@karencasanovas.com.

Self-care for the caregiver

Caring for a person with memory loss and confusion can be stressful and exhausting. The following tips can help you find the support you need:

Ask for help. Ask a friend to make a dinner or a relative to help out for an hour each week. Make a list of ways others can help so when a friend or family member asks, “What can I do?” have them choose from the list. Ask for and accept help on a regular basis – don’t wait for a crisis.

Express your feelings. Recognize that feelings of frustration, sadness, anger and depression are normal under the circumstances.

Take care of your health. Try to eat as healthy as you can, get regular physical exercise as often as you can, and plenty of rest as you are able.

Learn about the disease. Find out as much as you can about the various forms and stages of dementia so that you are not taken by surprise when new behaviors occur.

Avoid isolation. Grab a cup of coffee or lunch with a friend. Visit that shop that you’ve been eyeing.

Get back to the favorite hobby that you’ve let go by the wayside.

Watch for signs of burnout. Not taking care of your own health, feeling lonely, crying, or losing your temper more than usual are all signs that you may need help. Find someone to talk to if you feel discouraged, frustrated, trapped or over-burdened by attending caregiver peer support meetings that are held by the Kenai Peninsula Family Caregiver Support Program.

Give yourself a treat. Buy yourself a present even if it’s a favorite magazine or new clothes. Put your feet up and listen to your favorite music. Order dinner from your favorite restaurant and have it delivered.

Take time for yourself. Schedule regular time for yourself even if it’s just an hour each day. Take a walk around the neighborhood and enjoy the sights, sounds and smells.

Remember, you will be better able to take care of your loved one if you take time for yourself.

– Dani Kebschull, Kenai Peninsula Family Caregiver Support Program



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Differences: Medicare and Volunteer hospice

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even when an individual declines care; will serve those who are continuing to receive palliative or curative treatments or go to their provider or hospital for care.

Providence Hospice, Ancora Hospice and Frontier Hospice generally, do not admit individuals receiving ongoing medical treatments/hospitalization for their illness. Medicare does have specific medical indicators/criteria that must be present to qualify for the

Medicare Hospice Benefit. A physician must sign a "Certification of Terminal Illness" (CTI).

Who can make a referral?

For Hospice of Anchorage, anyone. A referral/admission order from a health care provider is not needed.

For Providence Hospice, Ancora Hospice, Frontier Hospice, a referral/admission order is needed from a health care provider.

How do I pay for hospice care?

At Hospice of Anchorage, there is no fee for care. Services are funded primarily by community donations and gifts of volunteer time.

At Providence Hospice, Ancora Hospice, Frontier Hospice, hospice care is 100% covered by Medicare, as well as by most Medicaid and commercial insurances.

If this information about hospice surprises you, or raises more questions, take the time to find out more. The best time to learn about

hospice care is before someone in your family is facing a health care crisis.

Hospice of Anchorage,
907-561-5322

Providence Hospice,
907-212-4400

Ancora Hospice, 907-561-0700

Frontier Hospice, 907-272-1275

Amy Tribbett is the Hospice of Anchorage executive director.

Networking for Anchorage, Mat-Su area providers

Interested in learning more about businesses and agencies providing senior services in the Anchorage and Mat-Su area? Want to get the word out about your own service? The monthly Service Providers Breakfast (formerly known as the Interagency Breakfast), sponsored by Older Persons Action Group, Inc., is an opportunity for all the above. Informal, early and free, the monthly event currently meets virtually online via Zoom. The July meeting is July 14, hosted

by the Anchorage Senior Activity Center. Begins at 8 a.m.

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

This month's event allows for on-site attendance, with breakfast served. Seating is limited. To RSVP for seating, call Nila Morgan at the Anchorage Senior Activity Center, 770-2070.

Let someone fish for you

If you are 65 or older, 70 percent physically disabled or blind, you are eligible for a fishing proxy. This means you may have someone else fish for you for most fish and shellfish, though proxy fishing for halibut is not allowed. For more information or to pick up a form, visit your local senior center or

Dept. of Fish and Game office. Or visit the website <https://bit.ly/2ISozyl>. The Proxy Fishing Information Form can be downloaded, printed, then filled out, but it has to be brought in, faxed, or scanned in then e-mailed to an Alaska Fish and Game office for validation.

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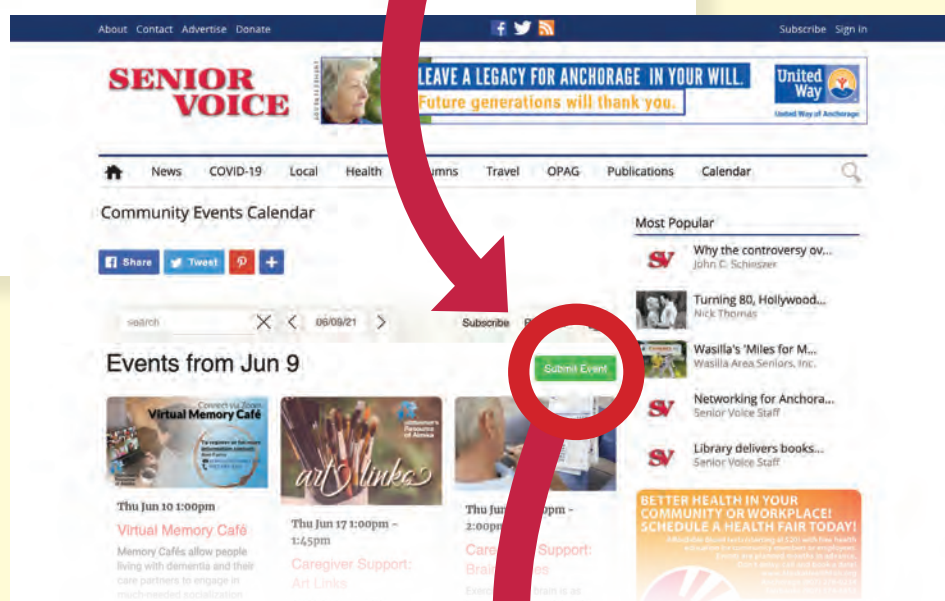
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Senior Voice is published by Older Persons Action Group, Inc.



Pickleball brings seniors together for fun and fitness

Some say they never imagined being so competitive

By **DIMITRA LAVRAKAS**

For Senior Voice

Aging surely has its challenges and one is keeping up your physical health as your body slowly deteriorates. Add an injury or major operation and the road to recovery may be too hard to meet – especially for those who spent a lifetime in competitive sports because they can no longer function at the high level they once could.

Some seniors have found a low impact activity that

allows them to bounce around a court and smash the heck out of a perforated ball with a ping pong paddle. That's pickleball.

Post-operation pickleball

Take my brother, Jim, who the family refers to as "The Human Squirrel," long an adrenaline junkie and extreme sports enthusiast, he now sports metal plates in his back and five stents in his heart, but he's raring to go and does so at Homer HERC (Homer Education and Recreation Complex) and the South Peninsula Area Recreation Center (SPARC), a non-profit that started

with youth soccer and has expanded to pickleball and roller skating.

"You can play outside at the high school too," Jim said.

He has become very philosophical about his health.

"As my body starts to fall apart, I can modify how aggressive I am on the pickleball court. I used to fly through the air to smash the ball, but I don't do that anymore."

The varying age groups in the game offer lessons, too.

"I watched people five or 10 years older than me and they enjoy it as much as I do and benefit from it as much as I do," Jim said. "Playing a slower, more passive game, that's it, it's not like tennis anymore, but more like a tender game of ping pong. I've seen people in their 90s play and they're competitive. And it's inspirational to see people in their 80s and 90s get out and do what they can. I'll see what happens in the next 10 years and if I stop falling down, I'll stop getting hurt."



Pickleball players enjoy a game at the Eagle River Alaska Club.

Photo courtesy of Michael Gauthier /Alaska Club

Alaska Club goes all in

Janet Warner, executive director of fitness for the Alaska Club, said they have offered pickleball for four years now. Not only seniors play, she said.

"Our staff plays on Wednesdays at our Anchorage East End club and it includes people in their 20s and older," she said.

During the pandemic the clubs were closed by the Municipality of Anchorage from mid-March to mid-May of 2020.

"We returned with outside pickleball last summer and back into the clubs in September of 2020,"

she said. "Precautions include disinfection of all equipment, everyone being scanned at the front desk and wearing of masks."

Alaska Club has outdoor courts at the South Anchorage location and indoors at East, South and Eagle River.

Players do not sign up; instead the games are "pick up," with eight to 30 people participating.

Membership is required, but a member can sponsor a guest if they want a friend to play the game with them. And there are pickleball workshops that are open to non-members.

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Jim and Ruth Lavrakas practice on the court in Homer.

Jim Lavrakas photo

Geocaching keeps Fairbanks couple active year-round

By **DIANN DARNALL**

For Senior Voice

Alaska International Senior Games bowlers Phil and Lois Heine continue to encourage each other to expand their activities. This past year the Fairbanks couple have stepped up their personal geocaching challenge, which sends them out of the house exploring and creating new adventures.

Some of you may be wondering, what is geocaching? Geocaching is a worldwide treasure hunt. Founded in 2000, there are now over 3 million geocaches in 191 countries on all seven continents. GPS coordinates are utilized for establishing and finding caches, which span a variety of sizes and difficulties to locate. For more specific information on participating, check out

www.geocaching.com.

Phil and Lois' personal challenge to go out and find a new cache daily started on September 28, 2020. When October rolled around, they decided to log a cache a day, everyday, before it snowed. Their thinking expanded when the snow arrived: "Well, we've got this far, let's keep going." As of May 26, 2021, they had logged cache finds on 241 consecutive days.

Utilizing a shared account, the adventurous couple have located and logged over 1,755 caches. One of their long-term goals is to find 10 caches in every U.S. state and Canadian province. Thus far they have 10 or more caches in 11 Canadian provinces and 39 states, with over 550 caches in Alaska. Pre-COVID they even found caches in the United

Kingdom, Mexico and Norway.

In addition to geocaching getting them out and active, they cherish the way it slows them down enough to stop and smell the roses along the way.

While there are many types of caches, Earth-Caches are one of their favorites. At these destinations, they continue to learn new things about nature as well as benefiting from science lessons, which could be geological or an ecosystem.

History lessons also continue to delight the Heines. A recent local cache search stepped them into a piece of local history in Goldstream Valley dating back to 1905. Here they found a historic railroad bridge originally built by the Tanana Mines Railway from Fairbanks to



Geocaching in November off the trail at Creamer's Field in Fairbanks.

Photos compliments of Phil Heine

Fox to accommodate gold mining activity.

A memorable experience this past winter included one outing with a two-day find. By heading out to a nearby dome late at night, they were able to find a cache, enjoy a spectacular display of dancing northern lights, and find another cache after midnight on the way home.

Occasionally they stum-

bled upon an outing that included both a scientific and history lesson, like the one they encountered on Kodiak Island. After Lois participated in the Alaska State Women's Bowling Tournament held in Kodiak, they extended a few extra days to explore geocaches

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A lifetime of Alaska fishing memories

By **MARALEY MCMICHAEL**
Senior Voice Correspondent

I don't recall one of my first fishing experiences, but according to a family photo, grayling were caught in a little creek near Twin Lakes, about mile 28 of the Nabesna Road in the summer of 1958. At three years old, I'm sitting with my mother, wearing a huge grin and holding three grayling on a stick. Mom holds a pole with a grayling still attached.

I do remember standing on the bank of the Twentymile River just south of Anchorage on the Seward Highway. Dad stood a few feet out and scooped up eulachon in his dip net. Many whole fish were packed into half-gallon paper milk cartons surrounded with water and frozen. Strangely, I don't remember eating them.

Another time, our family went to Chitina so Dad could dip net salmon out of the Copper River. With the steep, muddy trail down to the mighty river, I

thought it was a great adventure. Mom was adamant that it was no place for girls ages seven, five and two and a half. We girls never got a return trip, but we grew up loving fresh salmon.

In May 1973, Gary, my fiancé at that time, took his dad and my brother on a memorable grayling fishing excursion just up the creek from the Moose Creek bridge south of Glennallen. After we married, Gary worked construction in various parts of Alaska and in May 1974 he was finishing a job in the King Salmon area. To celebrate our first anniversary, we trolled for rainbow trout in



Maraley and mother, Martine Clayton, with grayling caught near the Nabesna Road in 1958.

Photos courtesy Maraley McMichael

the Naknek River. We immediately ate his 31-inch beauty and put my 28-inch trout in the freezer for later.

Several years later we returned to Glennallen to live for a short while. During this time, Gary went king salmon fishing almost daily when they were running in the Gulkana River. Although our three-year-old son was too young to go with his papa, he treasures the photo of himself standing in between two frozen kings, both taller than him.

In 1981, with our three children (the youngest being a year old), we spent a wonderful afternoon fishing for grayling at Snowshoe Lake, which is about 45 miles south of Glennallen on the Glenn Highway. This time our son, who had just turned five years old, was delighted every time Papa (Gary) caught one and let him help reel it in.

During the 1980s, one year when the wind had blown



Maraley with her father, Al Clayton, on the Gulkana River, June 2000.

After enjoying an eye-opening halibut charter out of Valdez, thanks to my dad, Gary bought a 22-foot C-Dory so we could have saltwater fishing adventures. We mostly fished out of Homer, Ninilchik and Seward. Our daughter treasures the experience of catching a 68-pound halibut which weighed more than she did. Several years and much fresh halibut later, we sold the boat. I had tried to be a good sport on these trips, but if I took medication to prevent seasickness, I fell asleep. If I didn't, I ended up leaning over the rail.

Ice fishing for lake trout in Finger Lake in the Mat-Su Valley was also a fun winter family activity.

the snow off the lake and polished the ice until it was glass smooth, we took Grandpa McMichael with us. Being from California, the whole concept was new to him and we didn't think to forewarn him before driving the car out onto the crystal clear ice, which resulted in his frightened panic.

Celebrating the Fourth of July near Cooper Landing several years later, Gary, our son, and I fished the mouth of Quartz Creek where it flows into Kenai

page 16 please



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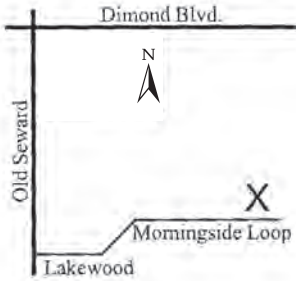

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Couple: Geocaching



The Heines found this cache on Dec. 10, 2020 and Phil noticed he'd lost his glove. They searched, but no luck. A return trip on May 13, 2021, and luck abounds, with the glove found in great shape.

continued from page 13

on the Island. On a southern beach they found a cliff full of ancient fossils and on a nearby ridge a camouflage bunker known as a pillbox. Pillboxes were built in the 1940s by the military as part of the Alaska Coastal Defense Project during World War II.

What adventures are

Lois and Phil working on now? They are planning to expand their cache finds to one every day for a year. In addition to continuing to encourage others and share hints, they will be setting out new caches for others to find. Whether traveling Alaska or the world, this adventurous couple is choosing to keep active and smell the roses along the

way. What's on your list to keep active?

Diann Darnall is the President of the Alaska International Senior Games. AISG is hosting the 2021 Games August 7-15 in Fairbanks and North Pole. Online registration and other information can be found at www.alaskaisg.org.



Phil and Lois Heine represented Alaska at the National Senior Games Assoc. Championships in Birmingham, Alabama in 2017.

Photos courtesy Phil Heine

Rambles

News from the Grapevine

Our apologies for overlooking **Mary Shields** in last month's announcement about the **Ron Hammett Award** for public service in **Anchorage**. She won the award for the year 2020, but there was not a public recognition, due to closure at that time at the **Anchorage Senior Activity Center**. Instead, she was acknowledged and presented during this year's ceremony at the center in May. Mary, a 47-year resident of Anchorage, served on the **Alaska Commission on Aging** from 2014 to 2019, currently serves as vice president on the Anchorage Senior Activity Center Board of Directors, and spent several years as its director. Senior Voice did publish an article with testimonials and a photo last spring on its website, www.seniorvoicealaska.com. Type "Mary Shields" into the search window to read it... Love **line dancing**? Enjoy sharing with and helping people? **Wasilla Area Seniors Inc.** is looking for a volunteer line dance **teacher**. If you're interested, call **Anna**, 907-206-8808 ... **Kenai Senior Center** continues to offer its **Walkabout Wednesdays**, a leisurely group walk around the grounds and perimeter of

page 16 please



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Rambles

News from the Grapevine

continued from page 15

the center and **Vintage Pointe Manor**. Meet in the lobby at 10 a.m. Call for more details, 283-4156 ... Don't forget to grab this year's **Senior Farmer's Market coupon booklet**, distributed through local senior centers and other agencies. Each booklet includes five coupons valued at \$7 each, which can be used to buy fresh produce and other items at local farmer's markets and other select locations. Applicants must be at least 60 years old and meet low-income eligibility guidelines. Links to the online application and a list of where to get the booklets are at the state's Dept. of Health and Social Services website. Go to <https://bit.ly/3w3IPAD> and scroll down to the "Senior Farmer's Market Nutrition Program" section. There's also a proxy application form that allows someone to apply on behalf of someone else ... In its June newsletter, **Nenana Senior Center** says it is on schedule to **reopen** in July, adding, "With this comes the reminder that **home delivered meals** will stop at the same time, unless you met the criteria and received a home delivered meal prior to the pandemic." The center has purchased patio tables and chairs for additional outdoor seating and is looking forward to returning to buffet-style meals soon. Light at the end of the tunnel!

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

Memories: *Fishing*



Sisters Maraley and Jeanette Clayton, with grayling caught near the Nabesna Road, summer 1959.

Photos courtesy Maraley McMichael

continued from page 14

Lake. Sitting there in our rubber raft with my two favorite men, the day became even more memorable when I caught the largest fish, a 16-inch Dolly Varden.

The summer of 2000 I went on a three-day raft trip on the Gulkana River with my brother, his family and my dad. The afternoon of the third day, I fished for king salmon for the first time in my life. I was so excited when I felt the

nibble that I forgot to set the hook. Mine got away, but my seven-year-old nephew was successful.

That same summer, our first living in Slana, Gary took the four-wheeler out shing for grayling in the local creeks. Not just once a day, but many times twice a day. I thought he would tire of it after a while, but I was wrong and we had fresh grayling for dinner on a regular basis, something we have greatly missed since our move back to Palmer.

Gary enjoyed taking our kids, relatives, friends, and even a few bed and breakfast guests fishing for grayling during our 12 years in Slana. He did frequently joke with them, though, that he had to either blindfold them before they

set out or shoot them when they returned, if he took them to the secret fishing hole down the Nabesna Road. I enjoyed going along on some of those little excursions now and then, to fish in the same area from my childhood – enjoying the moment and making memories for the future.

Many Alaskans have a wonderful variety of great fishing experiences. Mine happen to begin and end with grayling on the Nabesna Road. No matter what yours are, may you have a wonderful summer of



Gary McMichael at the secret fishing hole off the Nabesna Road, August 2000.

fishing or at least revisiting priceless memories.

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

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Tuesday, July 13 at 10 am, Preserving Fish in Jars: Learn to use a pressure canner to preserve fish in jars. Types of pressure canners, jars, lids and steps in canning fish will be discussed.

<https://aarp.cvent.com/JUL132021>

July 22 at 1 pm Alaska time, Fraud Watchdogs – Introducing VOA | ReST: The AARP Fraud Watch Network and Volunteers of America (VOA) have created a new and free program called VOA | ReST. (Resilience, Strength, and Time). The VOA | ReST program features small groups in which members are led in discussion by one or more trained peer facilitators to recover from a fraud incident. Join confidential, hour-long virtual sessions by computer, tablet, or smartphone. <https://aarp.cvent.com/FWDJUL2021>

For a full listing of events, visit www.aarp.org/ak

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Alaska's summer festivals are returning

Senior Voice Sta

Shake off the pandemic isolation and check out the sights and sounds of a local festival, most of which were canceled last year. Be sure to observe safety precautions, and check online for updates.

Peony Celebration, July 9-24 in Homer. Come see Homer's famous peony blooms at their most glorious state along with art exhibitions, great food, farm tours, concerts and more. HomerAlaska.org/homer-peony-celebration/

Salmon Jam! Salmon Festival, July 12-17 in Cordova. Featuring a socially distanced version of your favorite events like the local arts and crafts festival, Dumpster Painting, Small Fry Activities, live performances and more. \$30 per weekend music performance. SalmonJam.org

Chugiak-Eagle River Bear Paw Festival, July 14-18. Celebrate with this year's theme "Roaring Twenties 2.1", and see the Slippery Salmon Olympics, Classic Car Show, Bear Paw Motorcycle Show, Festival Royalty Pageant, the Spectacular Grand Parade and much more. BearPawFestival.org

Golden Days, July 17-25 in Fairbanks. Watch Alaska's largest parade, peruse the street fair, cheer on the Rubber Duckie Race and more. FairbanksChamber.org

Fairbanks Summer Arts Festival, July 18-Aug. 1. Awaken your inner artist with workshops and performances for every budget on various art forms like opera, jazz and aerial silk flying, to name a few. Tickets for concerts and performances range from free to \$10. Fsaf.org

Bearfest, July 28-Aug. 1 in Wrangell. Enjoy street games, Native storytellers,

bear symposium, workshops, live music, film screenings, a marathon, photo contest, daily bear tours and much more. AlaskaBearfest.org

50th Southeast Alaska State Fair, July 29-Aug. 1 in Haines. Four days of music and entertainment, contests, attractions, exhibits, food and shopping vendors. Seniors 65 and older with ID: \$10 per day, Thurs.-Sat., and \$5 on Sunday. Regular four day pass, \$30. SeakFair.org

Deltana Fair & Music Festival, July 23-25 in Delta Junction. This year's festivities theme, "Blue Jeans & Alaskan Dreams," includes a blueberry pie contest, talent show, live music, annual parade and more. Seniors 60 and older, \$7. DeltanaFair.com

Progress Days, July 21-24 in Soldotna. Events include a parade, family activities, free community picnic and much more. Visitsoldotna.com/events/progress-days/

Tanana Valley State Fair, July 30-Aug. 8 in Fairbanks. Celebrate the 97th annual fair with new vendors, entertainment and live events, midway rides, exciting exhibits and more. Tvsfa.org/

Gold Rush Days, Aug. 4-8 in Valdez. Honor the past, present and future of Valdez with the Can Can Girls, local market, food vendors and parade. ValdezAlaska.org/events/gold-rush-days/

Alaska State Fair, Aug. 20-Sept. 6 in Palmer. The three-weekend event is back with amusement park rides, Alaska Native crafts, foods of all kinds, exhibits, including the livestock pavilion, and much more. The fair will be closed on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. Seniors 65 and older with ID: \$7 per day Mondays and Thursdays; \$8 per day Fri.-Sun. \$40 Season Pass. AlaskaStateFair.org

It never hurts to ask

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

Calendar of Events

Editor's note: Due to COVID-19 safety concerns and restrictions, all events are subject to change or cancellation. Always confirm before attending

July 3: Palmer Moonstone Farm Opening Day at Moonstone Farm, 2141 S. Church St. Join Moonstone Farm, Jams Juice & Jelly, Farm 779 and others at the Church Family's Colony era farm. Produce picked to order with stellar vista mountain views. <https://fb.me/e/17nCR5EJi>

July 4: Nationwide Independence Day holiday

July 4: Anchorage Veterans Fourth of July Parade at Delaney Park Strip, 11 a.m. The Veterans Fourth of July Parade Council presents a return to in-person parade and events. This year's theme is "Remembering Our Prisoners of War". <https://fb.me/e/HBYfHtDr>

July 7: Seward Mount Marathon Race at downtown Seward. Join the community of Seward for the 93rd annual running of the Mount Marathon Race, a grueling 1.5 mile climb up, and back down, Alaska's majestic and treacherous Mount Marathon. <https://mountmarathon.com>

July 10: Palmer Palmer Museum Garden and Art Faire, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. in downtown Palmer. A celebration of local art, gardening, food and music, including vendors, live music, historic tour, family activities, Invasive Weed Smackdown and more. <https://palmergardenandart.org>

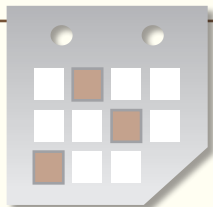
July 13: Statewide Preserving Fish in Jars via virtual webinar, 10 to 11 a.m. Learn how to use a pressure canner to preserve fish in jars. Presenter Julie Cascio will teach you about the types of pressure canners, jars, lids and all the steps to know when canning fish. Register at local.aarp.org/anchorage-ak/aarp-events/

July 15-18: Juneau Historic Downtown Juneau Walking Tours at the City Museum, 10 a.m. Join an enthusiastic local guide for a walk around Juneau's original town site and learn about the people and events that shaped the city. Ticket price includes admission to the City Museum. \$30. juneau.org/library/museum

July 21-24: Fairbanks World Eskimo-Indian Olympics at the Big Dipper Ice Arena. Celebrate the 60th anniversary of the WEIO, watch athletic events like the high kick, four man carry and muktuk eating contest and browse the arts and crafts tables. Free admission for daytime events. After 4:45, \$15 adults and \$10 for students, elders and military. For a full schedule of events visit www.weio.org.

July 24-25: Sterling 8th Annual Gun Show at Sterling Senior Center, Saturday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Sunday, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Vendors, gun raffle food and more. Tickets: \$5. Contact Bill at 907-260-3725 to reserve your table and answer any questions.

July 26-30: Statewide 2021 Virtual Disability Pride Celebration, noon to 1 p.m. everyday via Facebook Live. 31 years ago, the Americans with Disabilities Act was passed by Congress. Each day features a different nationally recognized guest speaker and an interview between the guest speaker and an advocate interviewer. <https://fb.me/e/16PCWO4Qq>



Send us your calendar items

Send to: Senior Voice, 3340 Arctic Blvd., Suite 106, Anchorage AK 99503
editor@seniorvoicealaska.com Fax: 907-278-6724.
 Deadline for August edition is July 15.

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Horses cross raging waters in riverboat

By LAUREL DOWNING BILL
Senior Voice Correspondent

Hair-raising experiences, hardships and back-breaking toil were common to the lives of those who struggled to take from Nature her wealth of precious minerals. Few emerged victorious, thousands failed. But the lure of gold continued to draw prospectors on to new fields in the 1930s

Prospectors did not work alone. Many relied on horses to help them mine claims along the rivers, beaches and mountains of the North, according to an article written by F.W. Gabler titled “Horse Power for Unuk Gold,” which appeared in the January 1937 issue of The Alaska Sportsman. And when Thomas McQuillan found his much-sought pay dirt in the Unuk River Valley in 1936, he knew he would need to get horses to transport equipment and supplies to mine it.

He and the Unuk River Placer Gold Co. Inc. faced a major obstacle, however. The mining property was 48 miles up the Unuk River, which flows from British Columbia into Southeastern Alaska – 24 miles was accessible only by riverboat. Who ever heard of transporting horses up a swift and treacherous river in a small boat?

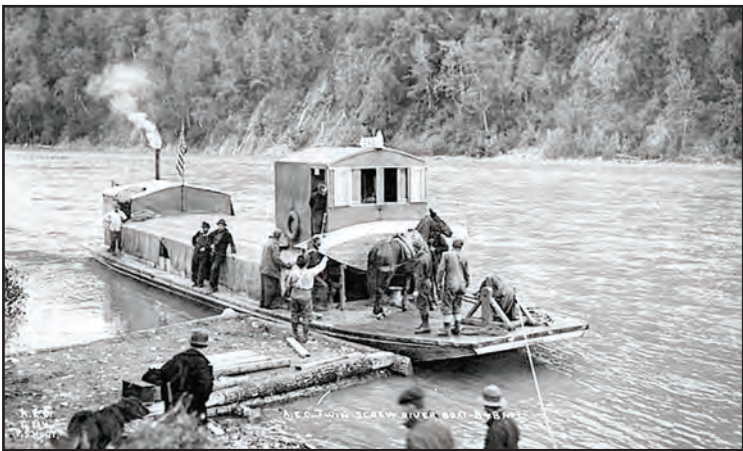
One of McQuillan’s associates, Walter C. Blanton, was charged with purchasing two horses from a packer named Jack Rainey. Blanton knew just which horses to buy because he had experience with them crossing glaciers and hazardous trails while working for another mining concern.

Shortly after buying the horses, McQuillan changed his mind and hired new-fangled airplanes to take supplies and equipment to the mining camp. He sold the horses to Premier Gold Mining Co., which wanted them delivered to the boundary of its property, a few miles farther up the trail from McQuillan’s site.

In late July, McQuillan stood at the mouth of the Unuk and carefully checked his plan. He had to get the horses used to standing in a small boat before he started out on the voyage up river. If they got spooked, they could easily flip the boat and send all men overboard.

McQuillan knew if a man entered the grasp of the silt-laden river, it was only a matter of moments until his clothes, weighted with entering silt, pulled him down to his death.

The prospector spent hours teaching the heavy horses how to get into the lightweight river boat. He carefully led each horse to the side of the boat, slowly lifted one front hoof, then gently placed it



During the stampede for gold, some horses were familiar with trotting onto a large riverboat, like the one in this photo. But they were not used to stepping into small boats with outboard motors as described in this story from 1936.

Photo courtesy Anchorage Museum at Rasmuson Center, AMRC-aec-g114

over the gunwale and lowered it to the floor of the boat. Then when McQuillan pulled on the

And along with a man named Berg, a rugged Norwegian from Premier,

halter rope, the horse followed with his other feet and finally grasped the idea.

McQuillan then started the outboard motor to get the horses accustomed to the noise. After many rehearsals, McQuillan felt the steeds were ready for their big adventure.

he started the unusual journey with the horses from the mouth of the Unuk in late July 1936.

The men waded the horses across a slough and then followed a primitive road built around 1900. Soon McQuillan had to teach the horses a new maneuver, because they had to swim across portions of the slough to get to parts of the path.

McQuillan tied a stout line to the halter and took the line across the slough in the riverboat. He then directed the horses by pulling on the rope. He repeated the process several times during the first four-mile day that only got them to Clearwater Creek.

The next day, McQuillan set up the rope and directed the mare,

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Cops & Robbers

Across

- 1 Agreement
- 5 Scam artists
- 10 Criticize severely
- 14 Soothing agent
- 15 Japanese cartoon art
- 16 “While You _____ Sleeping”
- 17 Supreme Court count
- 18 Police force investigators
- 20 Interstate sign
- 21 Poly- follower
- 22 Dickens character Heep
- 23 Half a fly?
- 25 Beach bum?
- 27 Extortionists
- 31 Tavern
- 34 King of the road
- 35 Make public
- 36 Repair shop
- 38 Norse capital
- 39 Rich dessert
- 41 Sicilian city
- 42 Religious gift shop statues
- 44 Spanish bear
- 45 Domed beehive made of twisted straw
- 46 _____ and outs
- 47 Arms smugglers
- 50 Stare
- 51 W.W. II command
- 52 Vamoose
- 55 Stadium walkways
- 59 “Ciao!”
- 62 Shamus
- 64 Wild goat
- 65 Helper
- 66 Femme fatale
- 67 _____ good example

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| | 34 Pueblo Indian | |
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Crossword answers on page 27



Family film favorite 'Matilda' turns 25

By NICK THOMAS

Tinseltown Talks

When British author Roald Dahl's beloved 1988 novel "Matilda" was transformed into a fantasy comedy movie a decade later, the film became hugely popular. It remains an enjoyable family movie to watch with children and grandchildren today, 25 years after its release in July of 1996.

Filled with memorable characters, including a callous and dishonest family as well as a tyrannical school principal, Matilda was portrayed by adorable child actor Mara Wilson who battles and eventually overcomes adversity. It was one of four films in the 90s that made Wilson famous. Matilda, she says, was a role she was thrilled to play.

"It was my first favorite



Danny DeVito, Mara Wilson, and Rhea Perlman, in "Matilda".

TriStar Pictures

Wilson had slipped from the public spotlight by the decade's end – an exile that was largely self-imposed.

"I grew out of that cute stage and didn't develop into the classic Hollywood beauty as I got older," she explained. "I didn't like being reduced to adjectives – you're thin or short or

career was Robin Williams during the filming of "Mrs. Doubtfire," who she says was "kind and gentle, but rather shy, which is not uncommon for actors." Not surprisingly, he was usually hilarious on the set and responded in typical Williams style when she told him of her fondness for musicals such as "The Sound of Music" and "South Pacific.

"So he started singing 'Nothing Like a Dame,' which was funny because there he was, a man dressed like a woman singing there

was nothing like being a woman."

While her films from the 90s were largely comedic or sentimental, Wilson remains proud that her Matilda character has helped kids overcome abuse.

"They were living in abusive families or with parents who didn't care about them, and the movie showed them there was a way out and that they could find people who cared. So

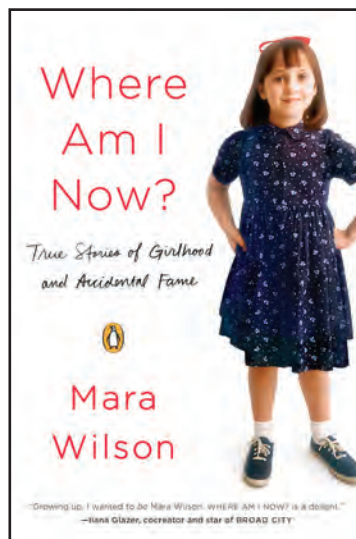


Mara Wilson all grown up. Ari Scott photo

it's a comforting movie about feeling powerless, then finding power. People write to me all the time about the impact it had on their lives and I love that."

Wilson's autobiography, "Where Am I Now? – True Stories Of Girlhood And Accidental Fame," was published in 2016.

Nick Thomas teaches at Auburn University at Montgomery, Ala., and has written features, columns, and interviews for over 850 magazines and newspapers.



Cover of Mara Wilson autobiography, "Where Am I Now? True Stories Of Girlhood And Accidental Fame".



Mara Wilson with Robin Williams in "Mrs. Doubtfire".

Twentieth Century Fox

book," she told me in a 2017 interview. "The film became a touchstone for girls who grew up feeling a little awkward and out of place and could relate to the Matilda character. When I was little and people would recognize me at the airport, park, or mall, I used to think 'Why do they care?' But I've come to realize how important some film can be to people."

Despite the popularity of the spirited little actress in the additional 90s hits "Mrs. Doubtfire," the remake of "Miracle on 34th Street," and "A Simple Wish,"

tall or blonde – and was no longer comfortable going to auditions. I still do some fun TV or web projects for friends and I love voice-over work because no one is judging how I look or how many times a week I workout."

One actor she fondly remembers during her early



Richard Attenborough and Mara Wilson in "Miracle on 34th Street".

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Telemedicine: *Future*

continued from page 2

and psychological services available as well as home visits for established patients, virtual group therapies online; care planning services and many private insurance companies and state governments followed that pattern.

Additional uses of telemedicine have also taken off including large increases in the use of remote monitoring tools in people's homes that track vital signs of patients with chronic illnesses such as diabetes. But while companies have jumped in with both barrels to offer remote urgent care, virtual primary care and new wearable technologies to monitor patient health, their reason wasn't only the pandemic, but profit

Wearable sensors, lon-

to their medications. It has also helped medical personnel overcome clinician shortages, especially for many specialties in rural and other underserved populations.

The federal issues

Unless Congress moves to act, most Medicare beneficiaries will no longer be able to take advantage of these services as soon as the public health emergency is declared over with. That change, back to the old rules, will mean that the only time video and audio chats can be used will be in specific rural areas, and doctors will be required to be receiving the calls from medical facilities like offices or hospitals

One of the many questions to be determined by lawmakers, even if the geographic restrictions

Unless Congress moves to act, most Medicare beneficiaries will no longer be able to take advantage of these services as soon as the public health emergency is declared over.

ger-life batteries, faster data speeds, cloud-based analytics – often powered by machine learning – are allowing results and notifications instantaneously. There are smart watches and smart patches, digital stethoscopes that share respiratory and heart rhythm readings now, as well as finger pad readers that come with smart phone case attachments.

What's coming next? Smart clothing is forecasted to reach more than \$2 billion next year, special shirts that continuously monitor ECG and heart rate tracking are already on the market. According to PitchBook, a research company, the annual global telehealth market is expected to top \$300 billion by 2026, up nearly fivefold from 2019.

Use of telehealth has also been transformational in mental health services and treatments for patients addicted to drugs, particularly in rural areas from Alaska to Maine. Clinics report being able to better help monitored patients adhere

are lifted, is how much a telehealth visit is worth in a system that is already breaking the bank. Politicians, insurers and hospitals will have to decide whether Medicare should continue reimbursing providers at the same payment rate as for in-person coverage. Consumer groups and many government folks are pushing for lower prices when the federally designated public health crisis officially ends. At the same time, however, physicians and hospitals are looking to maintain income.

These days, with Capitol Hill in total gridlock until lawmakers figure out how to agree on some kind of infrastructure bill, something simple – like getting Congress and the federal government to agree that the sun is shining outside – is next to impossible. So even an issue like telemedicine, where nearly everyone agrees the benefits are significant and helpful, faces a difficult battle toward permanency. Doctors warn poorer care, inequities and even higher

But telehealth can't do these

Sometimes, telemedicine cannot replace hands-on care for some conditions. It can't perform a colonoscopy, draw blood or replace a hip. During the pandemic, patients canceled tests, screenings and physicals, and many postponed elective surgeries. Recently, Kaiser Health News asked a variety of medical personnel for tips on the types of concerns that are best handled in person and when video visits are most useful. Here are three of their recommendations:



1. Chest pains, new shortness of breath, abdominal pain, new or increased swelling in the legs — all those things point to the need for an in-person visit. And, of course, blood tests, vaccinations and imaging scans must be done in person. The best rule is if patients are concerned enough about the situation that you are thinking about going to an urgent care clinic or an emergency room, go see the doctor in person. If a condition, even something seemingly simple, has not resolved in a reasonable time, that's also a smart time to go see the doctor in person. In-person visits can also prove more productive because a physician gains visual clues to what might be wrong by watching how a patient walks, sits or speaks.
2. It's not always necessary to trek into a medical office or clinic. Check-ins for chronic conditions such as diabetes or hypertension that are basically under control, can easily be handled remotely. This is especially true if you have to inconvenience someone else to take time off work to get you and bring you to your doctor. But if you are short of breath just walking or suffering chest pain, those are times to see the doctor. For those patients who monitor blood sugar or blood pressure at home, reporting those results to the doctor can often be done during a tele-visit or in a simple phone call. Some dermatologic conditions, like rashes, can also be handled by video, as long as the patient is comfortable with the technology. But that's one to talk about with the doctor to see if you need to get an in-person evaluation or perhaps even a biopsy.
3. Both patients and providers can get the most out of a video visit if they first take a few simple steps. Find a quiet place without distractions. Turn off the TV. Have a family member present if you want a second set of ears, but choose a private setting if you don't. Video visits from your car are not exactly ideal. Have a list of medications you're taking and write down the problem or symptoms you wish to discuss, as well as specific questions you have, to make the most out of the time available.

– Alan M. Schlein

medical bills are at risk without carefully written rules.

So far, Biden administration officials have not yet indicated whether it will push to make permanent

the looser telehealth rules rolled out last year. Democrats and Republicans in Congress have introduced bills to cement the changes. A bipartisan effort from Republican Sen. Tim Scott,

R-S.C., and Democrat Brian Schatz, D-Hawaii, would remove restrictions limiting Medicare patients from accessing telehealth services outside of rural areas

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Discounts, upgrades for Alaska's broadband service

By KEN STEWART

Senior Voice

The COVID-19 pandemic solidified our dependence on the internet. Throughout the Lower 48, high speed internet access is a given. In Alaska's rural – and at times, urban – communities, high speed internet access can be hard to come by. According to the Federal Communication Commission's (FCC) Broadband Deployment Report, 85% of Alaskans have internet access at 25 megabits per second (mbs) or higher, the minimum speed standard outlined by the FCC. This breaks down further when considering rural communities, where 63.7% have access to internet with speeds of 25mbs or higher.

To level internet access inequities across the country during the COVID-19 pandemic, the FCC introduced the Emergency Broadband Benefit (EBB) in May. EBB will provide a discount of up to \$50 per month toward broadband service for eligible households and up to \$75 per month for households on qualifying tribal lands. Because the state of Alaska is considered tribal lands in its entirety, all eligible

households in Alaska will receive up to \$75 per month toward their internet bill.

Since EBB was announced on May 12, over 2.5 million Americans have applied, according to numbers recently released by the Universal Service Administration Cooperative.

To qualify for EBB, households must be eligible for at least one of the following criteria:

- Has an income that is at 135% or below the Federal Poverty Guidelines or participates in certain assistance programs, such as SNAP, Medicaid or Lifeline
- Approved to receive benefits under the free and reduced-price school lunch program or the school breakfast program, including the USDA Community Eligibility Provision in the 2019-2020 or 2020-2021 school year
- Received a Federal Pell Grant during the current award year
- Experienced a substantial loss of income due to job loss or furlough since Feb. 29, 2020, and the household had a total income in 2020 at or below \$99,000 for single filers and \$198,000 for joining filer

► Meets the eligibility criteria for a participating provider's existing low-income or COVID-19 program

Most of Alaska's broadband service providers are participating in the EBB program, including GCI, the North Slope's Arctic Slope Telephone Association Cooperative (ASTAC) and Alaska Communications, which serves businesses and residential communities from Deadhorse to Whittier, the Aleutian Islands to the southeast.

"We are very excited to be providing this program to our eligible customers," said Heather Marron, Corporate Communications Manager at Alaska Communications.

Alaska Communications will be participating in another aspect of the EBB program: Eligible customers can also use a one-time discount of up to \$100 to purchase an internet device, such as a laptop or tablet.

Adding the device credit aspect of the EBB program is one of the many ways Alaska Communications, ASTAC and other providers have looked after customers during the pandemic.

"We wanted to make sure we weren't adding addition-

al stress to families," said Stacy Marshall, Chief Services Office at ASTAC. "We provided a \$50 credit to all households with broadband at the start of the pandemic, suspended all late fees and did not shut off anyone's internet if they couldn't pay. I've learned that we should treat the customer the way we want to be treated."

Customers eligible for EBB must simply visit their broadband service provider's website and follow instructions for applying, outlined by the FCC. After approval, the eligible customer's service provider adds the \$75 monthly credit to their account (as Alaska is considered tribal land).

Considering EBB is a federal program, its \$3.2 billion allocation will be used to help eligible households across the country, and funding could be exhausted sooner rather than later. If funding doesn't run out first, the program will continue until six months after the federal Dept. of Health and Social Services declares the pandemic over.

Funding to extend the program past the current operating has not been promised yet, although Congress

has their eye on providing additional broadband assistance to American households in the future, says Christine O'Connor, Executive Director of Alaska Telecom Association (ATA).

The cost of providing Alaska's broadband

At an Alaska House Finance Committee meeting on May 6, O'Connor gave a "State of Broadband in Alaska" presentation on behalf of ATA to discuss ways to close access gaps to broadband across the state, both in rural and urban communities.

"Access to broadband is a big topic of concern and conversation," O'Connor said. "We use a variety of technologies to provide broadband across the state, but once you're off the road system, the cost of providing high speed broadband becomes expensive."

O'Connor's presentation outlined the means for providing broadband across the largest, and one of the most remote, states in the country.

As a rule, broadband is

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Telehealth: The pandemic changed everything, maybe

from page 20

or from their home. Another House bill, from Ways and Means Committee Health Subcommittee Chairman Lloyd Doggett, D-Texas, would temporarily extend the current waivers to allow experts more time to further study the issue.

Other bills by Reps. Mike Thompson, D-Calif., Reps. Jason Smith, R-Mo., and Josh Gottheimer, D-N.J., would also waive the rural and home restrictions while giving CMS the authority to designate new eligible sites, like a clinic, library or other community establishment. It would also address telephone-only access, which is particularly important to many seniors and those in underserved areas. Meanwhile, in state legislatures, advocates for expanding telehealth have

introduced more than 650 bills, according to the Alliance for Connected Care, a telehealth lobbying coalition.

This issue also gets caught up in the politics of the much larger infrastructure fight. Allowing phone and video access requires adequate broadband internet services. The Biden administration has already taken some steps to address the connectivity needs. The Federal Communications Commission has expanded connectivity to people in need of discounted internet services – particularly older Americans who currently receive or qualify for Lifeline benefits through federal programs such as SNAP and households with incomes at or below 135 percent of the federal poverty guidelines. Congress included money for this

expansion last year when it passed its coronavirus relief bill.

Depending on what emerges from any infrastructure compromise – if one happens at all – funding for broadband

expansion is expected to be included, even if the final legislation is mostly dollars for bridges, roads and airports and not the Biden administration's expanded definition of infrastructure including home care for se-

niors and child care support for parents.

Also contributing to this column: NPR; KHN; Reuters; Roll Call; Popular Science; Politico and JAMA Internal Medicine.

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Giving away the estate requires strategy, planning

By KENNETH KIRK

For Senior Voice

One strategy you can use in estate planning is “lifetime gifts”. In other words, you sign things over to your heirs while you’re still alive, instead of making them wait until you’re gone. Due to some recent proposed legislation in Congress, this strategy is becoming more tempting.

But be very careful here.

There are three main reasons people are taking a hard look at gifting strategies. Let’s examine each one separately.

Should I give away assets for estate tax purposes?

For the vast majority of Americans, the answer has been ‘no’. At the moment,



estate.

But even at \$3.5 million, there aren’t too many people who are in serious danger of a large estate tax bill. For those who are just a little bit over that, making small annual gifts of \$15,000 to the heirs is one possible strategy. The IRS doesn’t count that small amount against the lifetime exclusion. And that is from any one person to

2) making the heirs carry that future liability forward, the same way they would if you had given it to them while you were alive, so that they have to pay the capital gains tax later when they sell it. It is possible that neither of these options will pass, but it is also possible one of them will.

It is also very possible, you might even say likely, that the tax rate will increase. Right now, most people only pay 15% on long-term gains. I would not be shocked to see that percentage double.

But an increase in the capital gains rate, without an increase in the capital gains structure, is not necessarily a reason to give away assets to your heirs. It may be a reason to consider selling an appreciated asset, and paying the tax while it is still a relatively low percent, but giving it away wouldn’t accomplish anything.

Should I give away assets for Medicaid purposes?

This one isn’t really about a change in the law,

it is just because of the increasing cost of long-term care. Even the Pioneer Homes charge a lot more than they used to, and the cost of a skilled nursing facility in Alaska is outrageous (several times more, in fact, than anywhere Outside). This causes a lot of people to consider giving away assets in order to qualify for Medicaid, since Medicaid can pay for long-term care.

But if you give away assets, and you apply for Medicaid within five years after that, Medicaid will penalize you. So in order to make this work, you have to give assets away well in advance.

And that is very dangerous, because if you give away assets and then you need assisted care within that five years, Medicaid will disqualify you for a certain time, depending on how much you gave away. That can still be a useful strategy, depending on the numbers, but if your heirs get into financial trouble and can’t pay for your care during that ‘penalty period’, you are up Ship Creek

without a paddle.

So what is the upshot?

Chances are, giving assets away won’t be a good strategy for you. However, there are a number of exceptions.

Most of this depends on what Congress does, and of course nobody will know what that is until they actually pass something (and most likely, not for some time after that). Right now it’s just a guessing game.

If you are considering making these sorts of gifts, you should definitely not try to do this without getting guidance from somebody who understands the details of how these things work. If you don’t, you could definitely ‘step in a pile of it’. That might be too graphic a metaphor, but it’s apt.

Kenneth Kirk is an Anchorage estate planning lawyer. Nothing in this article should be taken as legal advice for a specific situation; for specific advice you should consult a professional who can take all the facts into account. If you’re not sure why, re-read that last paragraph.

Chances are, giving assets away won’t be a good strategy for you. However, there are a number of exceptions.

the lifetime exclusion from estate tax – the amount of assets you can pass, tax-free, on your death – is almost \$12 million. That is easily doubled for a married couple, so there aren’t too many people who have to worry about it.

However, that will probably change. Most of the Democrats in Congress want to lower that exclusion amount. The lowest I have heard bandied about as a serious number is \$3.5 million. If it gets that low, individuals who are over \$3.5 million (or married couples who are over \$7 million) will need to consider making large gifts this year, before the new law takes effect.

If you do that this year, you are covered under the present, almost \$12 million lifetime exclusion. So, for instance, if I had \$10 million, and they lowered the exclusion amount to \$3.5 million beginning in January, I could give away all of my money without any estate tax. The exclusion limit that counts for gifts, is the exclusion limit for the year in which you gave it away. If the exclusion dropped between the year of the gift and the year you died, they don’t get to retroactively charge your

any one other person. So a married couple can give \$30,000 (that is, \$15,000 each) to each of their children, children-in-law, grandchildren, and anybody else they particularly like, and still have the full lifetime exclusion available.

But unless you’re in danger of being over \$3.5 million in assets, there is no need to do that.

Should I give away assets for capital gains purposes?

This is a new one. Up until now, one of the reasons to not give assets away, if they have gone up in value, is that when your heirs eventually sell the assets they will have to pay the same capital gains tax you would have had to pay, if you sold it. But if you hold onto the assets until you die, there is a “step-up in basis” (to use the technical term), which effectively means that any capital gains tax is cleared, and never has to be paid. So it makes sense to hold on to an “appreciated” asset until you die, all else being equal.

There are people in DC who are seriously looking at eliminating the step-up, and either 1) making the heirs pay the capital gains tax when you die, or

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App removal, Tracker tags, Google Photos fees

By **BOB DELAURENTIS**
Senior Wire

Q. There is an app on my phone that I do not use. Can I save space by removing it?

A. Not only will you save space, removing unneeded apps will make the phone much less cumbersome to use.

When I set up my mom’s new iPhone, I removed all but the half-dozen apps she used. That worked out great for her.

A word of caution: While you cannot damage a phone

That means that in order to locate a tracker, another device with a stronger radio and GPS has to be in close range. The more devices in use that are compatible with the tracker, the better the odds the tracker will be located.

Apple has the biggest tracker network, with a billion devices circulating throughout the world.

But Apple has its drawbacks also, most noticeable at close range. If the tracker is somewhere in

(100GB) is \$1.99 a month. 100GB should be enough to cover the storage needs of all but the very largest of libraries.

The 15GB free tier still exists, but it is like a free sample: Enough to give you a taste, and perhaps hook you, but you have to pay to get the full value available. As I have written many times, I think that both Google Photos and iCloud Photo Library for Apple are inexpensive bargains. They provide another backup to protect your photos, safe from fires, floods, and hurricanes.

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

Wander the Web

Here are my picks for worthwhile browsing this month:

Free eBooks
Project Gutenberg volunteers have donated their time and proofreading skills to create freely available electronic books since 1971. The catalog is available online.
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Inside an Automobile Engine
A gorgeous 3D animated look at the inner workings of one of the most important inventions in history.
ciechanow.ski/internal-combustion-engine/

The Whimsical Web
This site is a collection of inspired perspective-shifting diversions, everything from how websites appeared 10 years ago to printing money.
<https://Neal.fun>

A word of caution: While you cannot damage a phone by deleting an unwanted app, you can lose data. Be sure the app is really never used before you remove it. If you delete an app by mistake, you should be able to re-install it, but data associated with the app will be lost.

by deleting an unwanted app, you can lose data. Be sure the app is really never used before you remove it. If you delete an app by mistake, you should be able to re-install it, but data associated with the app will be lost.

To remove an app from Android, go to Settings, then select Apps. The exact steps vary depending on the phone, but eventually you should be able to tap a disable button.

To remove an app from an iPhone, press the icon of the app until a menu appears. Select Remove App from the menu. I suggest choosing the option “Remove App From Launch Screen.” That way, it is less likely to lead to data loss.

While saving space is always useful, having a simple menu of apps makes the phone much friendlier to use.

Q. Are Apple’s new AirTags and Samsung SmartTags ready for everyday use?

A. It is still early days for the technology. In demos they look great. They make it look easy to find your keys in a flash, or see if you left your purse in a friend’s car.

But there are also drawbacks that demos do not show. These kinds of devices use short distance Bluetooth radios, not GPS.

your house, the tracker will report that it is home, but not necessarily in the laundry basket downstairs. You can ask the tracker to emit a beep. And there is also a homing function that will help you point the phone toward the tracker (think of the kid’s game Hot and Cold!), but that only works on the very newest iPhone models.

In general, Bluetooth trackers are young. There was a recent announcement from Amazon and Tile about teaming up to expand the Tile tracker network. And I doubt Samsung will be standing still. Today, Apple performs the best so far. I expect the technology will improve in the next few years, but right now, they are useful as long as you are aware of their limitations.

Q. I store my entire photo library on Google Photos. What do the recent policy changes mean to me?

A. Google Photos is no longer free starting sometime in June. If your current photo library is large enough, you should have received an email about the upcoming changes. However, it is good practice to check for yourself. If your library requires more than 15 GB, you will need to create a Google One account and begin paying a monthly fee. The good news is that the fee for the first tier

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August 18, 9:30 am to 11:30 am
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Celebrate America, celebrate democracy

Alaskans go all out for the Fourth of July

By DIMITRA LAVRAKAS

Senior Voice Travel Correspondent

It was no time to celebrate in large crowds the past two years, so Independence Day celebrations across the state were canceled. But they're back now.

In Utqiagvik (formerly Barrow), the midnight sun makes fireworks impossible, so they're saved for New Year's Eve at a time when the sun does not rise until February. While it may sometimes snow on July 4, that doesn't prevent residents from turning out for an array of games from foot races to a contest tossing a line and hook used in seal hunting to a fly over of the North Slope Borough's impressive array of aircraft — a Lear Jet model 31A, Beechcraft King Air 350 and two Bell model 412 helicopters.

Heading south

Seward gets to have fireworks at its annual July Fourth celebration and features a packed holiday schedule of special events, presentations, contests, and community gatherings.

There's a boat parade on July 3 from 10 to 11 p.m., followed by fireworks at midnight launched from the Harbor Uplands, near the Mariners Memorial.



Jean Worley created this beautiful Fourth of July banner in Tlingit for Skagway's Fourth.

Courtesy Skagway Fourth of July Committee

You can spot them from all over town, but some favorite viewing spots include the Seward Waterfront Park, Seward Boat Harbor, or on a boat in the bay.

Of course, Seward is known for the grueling Mount Marathon race that draws runners and hikers from all over Alaska, and that's on July 7, but there's another on the Fourth of July. A mini-Mount Marathon race for children from two to six years of age. That'll be something to see.

There's festival booths selling Alaska-made crafts, so be sure to support them after the two-year hiatus in their ability to make a living.

At the beginning of the Inside Passage

Skagway starts the Fourth early with a contest of decorations on homes and storefronts on July 3. Winners receive local gift cards. This year's theme is "Skagway: We Are One

— Shgagwéi Ku.oó: Ch'a Tléix'í Yáx Uháan."

This year's Grand Marshals are Si and Sheryl Dennis.

There will be a drop box to help choose parade themes

and recognize deserving community members for future Independence Day celebrations.

For ages 12 and up there's hitting accuracy contest with softballs, followed by

Book of World Records' Skagway Egg Toss, deemed the biggest by Guinness.

And for a town with a historic Klondike Gold Rush train, the White Pass & Yukon Route Railway, what could be more appropriate than a spike-driving contest?

It's all-day fun and there's only one cruise ship in town that day, the American Constellation, with 250 on board. This time of year in Skagway, the port is usually full of ships.

Island celebrations

Next to Juneau, the small-knit island of Douglas has a homespun Fourth.

For kids there's a bike-decorating contest and sidewalk chalk decorat-



Makeah Twitchell parades in Skagway in traditional Tlingit dress.

Dimitra Lavrakas photo



Skagway boasts the Guinness Book of World Records biggest egg toss.

Dimitra Lavrakas photo

a Home Run Derby contest, with entrants providing their own softballs and a pitcher.

It's a packed day on Independence Day proper from 7:30 a.m. to 8 p.m. The Skagway News holds its annual 5K Run-Around (and walk, too) for fun and boasting rights. A classic car display, pie-eating and hot dog-eating contests, mini-golf at the Skagway Mini-Open, a slow bike race, a magic show, barbecues, a tug-of-war, horseshoe tournament, corn hole tournament, chalk festival for kids, and choose a numbered duck for a prize in the Ducky Derby.

Be part of the Guinness

ing at the Douglas Library parking lot.

And what could be more American than a Soapbox Car Race? Held on July 3 from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m., the divisions are for ages 5 to 6, 7 to 8, and 9 to 10.

The next day is the main and children's parade, church bells ring out, and the annual Deep Pit Beef Barbecue, and of course a hot dog sale.

Congratulations to the Douglas Parade Grand Marshals Susanne and Sandy Williams.

Tiny Tenakee Springs

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Broadband: Upgrades

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provided by two large systems: the Middle Mile and the Last Mile. The Middle Mile connects broadband from the core network to the local network, i.e. schools, businesses and health care providers in the community, whereas the Last Mile connects the local network to residential communities.

In Alaska, Last Mile and Middle Mile infrastructure is currently being updated or added, with millions of dollars supporting efforts across the state for providers like Alaska Communications, Matanuska Telephone Association and ASTAC, according to O'Connor.

Aside from the structures themselves, Alaska uses three types of connections to get internet to communities: fiber optic cable, microwave and satellite. Satellites and microwaves run as waves above the ground, allowing less than optimal connections. Microwave still requires towers that can be dangerous to operate on in arctic Alaska's below freezing weather, according to ASTAC's Marshall, and satellite connection causes latency, both O'Connor and Marshall agreed, respectively.

The best type of connection for high speed internet is hands-down fiber optic cable.

Marshall mentioned the North Slope community of Atkasuk as an example, where work is underway to connect all residents to fiber optic cables. "Rather than simply have what's called a node, or fiber optic cable hub nearby connected to each house via copper cables, we are running fiber optic cables straight to each residence. I don't even have internet like that in Anchorage."

While providers like ASTAC strive to create and maintain strong, ideally fiber-based, Middle and Last Mile connections to their customers, the services they provide in rural communities are still expensive.

"What people don't understand is that the companies that provide our backhaul (for the core,

Middle Mile connection) are not a nonprofit based in Alaska like ASTAC is," stated Marshall. "They're a private company based in Tokyo – because yes, our fiber optic we use, Quintillion, runs all the way to Tokyo. This is why we can't offer unlimited internet for a flat rate. It's too expensive for us to provide."

To combat this, O'Connor and Marshall believe action from state and federal governments is crucial to take the pressure off consumers paying for broadband.

"We need advocacy," said O'Connor when interviewed by phone in June. "Making sure there is enough infrastructure to support high speed broadband in the state is crucial. The Dunleavy administration has done a great job by forming a broadband task force to make policy recommendations."

On the federal side, Marshall notes that there are important discrepancies between what backhaul providers can charge broadband providers depending on location – almost as if federal regulation for providing internet is needed to keep costs down for consumers.

"What we pay as a company versus what a company in the Lower 48 pays for their backhaul is astronomically different," said Marshall. "Internet is a requirement now like gas and electricity. A lot of these communities in the villages don't have the same technologies as the rest of the country, so children aren't staying and the way of life is leaving. We want to provide fast, reliable broadband so people have a reason to stay."

Other cost saving options

Aside from EBB, low income households can apply for Lifeline, another FCC program that provides unlimited local calling or internet service to eligible customers.

Anchorage residents are also eligible for assistance through the Municipality in the form of a past-due bill forgiveness for those that experienced a financial hardship due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Fourth of July: Alaska style



Courtesy Seward Chamber of Commerce

Above, the sky lights up over Seward with fireworks on the Fourth of July.

Right, a contingent of Royal Canadian Mounted Police is always a feature of Skagway's Fourth of July. The crowd even sings the Canadian National Anthem "O Canada."

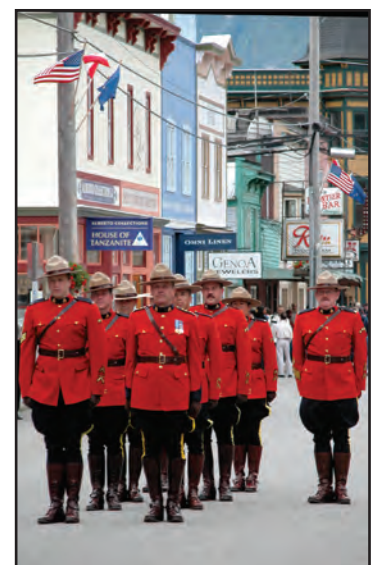
from page 24

on Chichagof Island's 2021 theme is "Freedom Flings!" At noon there's a parade of local floats, followed by a potluck with ribs and hot dogs provided. Bring your own beer.

On yet another island farther south is Unalaska. The city will have the Graduating Class of 2021 as parade grand marshals.

This is a great gesture for the seniors who missed so much during the pandemic. Its theme is "Party in the USA." So no political parties involved, just a good time for all.

So far they just have a parade with prizes in categories — Best Use of Theme, Judge's Favorite, Best With Animals, Best of Show, and Best of Cars/Trucks/Machinery. Enjoy



Dimitra Lavrakas photo

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Pickleball: Fitness Horses: Riverboat

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As for the benefits, Warner said, “All movement and social interaction is great for overall health – so we see huge benefits from the overall population.”

Eagle River member Janet Hunter agrees.

“I play pickleball with my husband, Doug, and we’re both 65,” she said. “I got started last year when a friend convinced me to try it. It was addictive. I have never played sports before now. I am active and love watching sports, but never have been a participant.”

An added perk to pickleball is togetherness.

“I then got my husband, who played tennis and other sports in high school and college, to come play.” She said. “Now we both play almost everyday. It’s the only sport we have been able to play together.”

Hunter and her husband noted marked physical improvement since playing.

“We are both finding that physically, our reaction time, hand-eye coordination, agility and flexibility have improved,” she said. “It is also mentally engaging. Trying to figure where the ball is going to land, what kind of spin it has, and trying to place shots and keep score all keep us on our toes.”

Loneliness and social isolation can also be a degenerative feature of aging, but pickleball addresses that.

“We have also met many great people and developed some close friendships over the last year,” she said. “We are planning other activities to enjoy together.”

New-found confidence and a hint of competition are also gained.

“Over the weekend I participated in a tourna-

ment. Something I never thought I would do. Winning was the objective, but in the end it didn’t matter,” she said. We had fun and as always, laughed a lot. Pickleball is also good for your soul.”

Pickleball pick up games in Anchorage

The Anchorage Pickleball Club was formed at the end of the summer of 2020 with a goal of promoting and developing pickleball in the Municipality of Anchorage. With 122 members the first year, the club began recruiting for more members this spring.

Open Play is every Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday from 11a.m. to 2 p.m., and Tuesday and Thursday from 5 to 8 p.m., weather permitting at the Bonnie Cusack Memorial Outdoor Rinks (previously Ben Boeke) outdoor rinks.

Play is free for a \$25 membership fee, non-member fee is \$5 per day or \$25 for the week. Visit www.anchoragepickleballclub.com for more information and to sign up for the newsletter.

Other locations, resources

“Places to Play Pickleball in Alaska”: the Places2Play.org website lists locations, facilities and times for pickleball around the state, from Palmer and Kodiak to Sterling and Ketchikan. Listings may not be completely up-to-date, but provide a good start and contacts: <https://bit.ly/3j-sUtTd>

And if you want to play in a big tournament, try the 2022 National Senior Games, May 10 to 23, 2022. Go to <https://nsga.com/pickleball>.

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named Old Baldy, across the slough. She hauled herself up on the opposite bank, shook off excess water and then whinnied to her companion. The other horse entered the water and swam across without the aid of the rope.

Several days later the road ran out and it was time for the horses to get into the riverboat. Old Baldy went first, carefully stepping inside the small boat and steadying herself.

All went well at first, although McQuillan couldn’t believe he was balancing a boat that drew hardly four inches of water with a horse towering six feet above him in a swirling river.

Suddenly a sweeper sprang up in front of him. In a flash, McQuillan thrust the tiller over in a wild effort to miss the battering ram. The boat rolled as the horse’s weight shifted. Water poured over the gunwale.

Then Berg used his massive strength to drive the pike pole into the end of the

log and forced the boat over to the other side. The log scraped alongside the boat, and with surprising agility, Old Baldy maneuvered her feet

to keep balanced. Then another snag floated into sight. But McQuillan turned to avoid it, and the log swept past.

McQuillan and Berg pulled ashore a bit later and unloaded their supplies and Old Baldy. They returned downriver and repeated the process with the second horse. Once both horses were safe on shore, the group headed out toward their goal.

Days later, as Old Baldy headed onto Premier’s property, McQuillan said she stopped, half turned



Work horses were worth their weight in gold as evidenced by this fellow pulling a long line of loaded sleds along tracks in Dawson circa 1900. Photo courtesy Alaska State Library, ASL-P41-099

in the trail and issued a loud whinny, as if to say, “It was a grand trip boys! Goodbye,” wrote Gabler.

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

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COVID: ‘Nanobody’ inhalation therapy shows promise

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vitamin D deficiency, and it remains possible that truly deficient patients may benefit from supplementation for COVID-19 related protection and outcomes. Additionally, the genetic variants were obtained only from individuals of European ancestry, so future studies will be needed to determine the relationship with COVID-19 outcomes in other populations.

Attacking COVID-19 in the nose

For those who can’t get vaccinated due to allergies or other health conditions, there may now be a new avenue of treat-

similar to monoclonal antibodies but smaller in size, more stable and cheaper to produce.

The scientists showed that low doses of an aerosolized nanobody named Pittsburgh inhalable Nanobody-21 protected hamsters from the dramatic weight loss typically associated with severe SARS-CoV-2 infection and reduced the number of infectious virus particles in the animals’ nasal cavities, throats and lungs by a million-fold.

“By using an inhalation therapy that can be directly administered to the infection site, the respiratory tract and lungs, we can make treatments more

SARS-CoV-2 nanobodies. From this repertoire, the scientists selected an ultra potent nanobody (Nb21) and bioengineered it to further maximize its antiviral activity. The resulting PiN-21 is by far the most potent antiviral nanobody that has been identified, according to the researchers’ review of published studies.

“COVID-19 is now a pre-eminent disease of the 21st century,” said co-author Doug Reed, an associate professor of immunology at

Pitt. “Delivering the treatment directly to the lungs can make a big difference for our ability to treat it.”

Nanobodies and vaccines are complementary and do not compete with one another. Vaccines remain the best tool to stop the virus from spreading from person to person, but nanobodies will be useful to treat people who already are sick and those who can’t get vaccinated for other medical reasons. Promising early preclin-

ical data, combined with the researchers’ extensive knowledge about rapidly identifying drug-quality nanobodies, suggest that this approach can provide a convenient and cost-effective therapeutic option to control the coronavirus pandemic.

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.

Vaccines remain the best tool to stop the virus from spreading from person to person, but nanobodies will be useful to treat people who already are sick and those who can’t get vaccinated for other medical reasons.

ment. Researchers from the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine have demonstrated that inhalable nanobodies targeting the spike protein of the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus can prevent and treat severe COVID-19 in hamsters. This is the first time the nanobodies were tested for inhalation treatment against coronavirus infections in a pre-clinical model. Nanobodies are

efficient, said co-senior author Yi Shi, an assistant professor of cell biology at the University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. “We are very excited and encouraged by our data suggesting that PiN-21 can be highly protective against severe disease and can potentially prevent human-to-human viral transmission.”

Previously, Shi’s team discovered a large repertoire of over 8,000 high-affini-

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Crossword answers from page 18

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N	I	N	E		D	E	T	E	C	T	I	V	E	S
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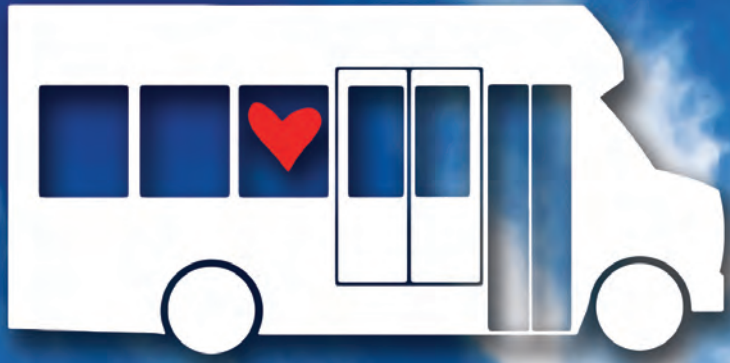


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