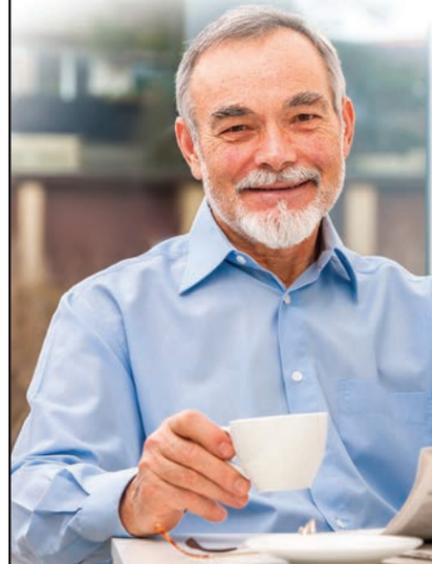


# Senior Voice SUBSCRIPTION



Just pick up the phone and call 276-1059 or toll free, 1-800-478-1059 to start your Senior Voice subscription today or subscribe at [www.seniorvoicelaska.com](http://www.seniorvoicelaska.com). The QR code below will take you to the subscription page.

Or complete and mail this form to:  
Older Persons Action Group, Inc.  
Publisher of the Senior Voice  
401 E. Fireweed Lane, #102  
Anchorage, AK 99503



Your subscription includes your OPAG membership.

## SUBSCRIPTIONS

- New: One year - \$36
- Renewal: One year - \$36
- Out of State: One year - \$40
- My donation
- Gift subscription: One year - \$36
- Gift subscription: Out of State - \$40
- Other \_\_\_\_\_
- Address change

*(donations help fund the Older Persons Action Group's programs and services, including the publication and distribution of Senior Voice to low income seniors.)*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

## PAYMENTS

Credit Card  Visa  MasterCard  other \_\_\_\_\_

Name on card \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Card# \_\_\_\_\_ Exp \_\_\_\_\_ Sec code \_\_\_\_\_

Check # \_\_\_\_\_ Amount \$ \_\_\_\_\_

*Make checks payable to Senior Voice*

# Senior Voice

A publication of  
Older Persons  
Action Group, Inc. Free

Serving Alaskans 50+ Since 1978

Volume 49, Number 3 March 2026

Remembering the  
Good Friday Earthquake  
of 1964. - page 3

Anchorage Genealogical  
Society welcomes  
internationally  
known expert. - page 13

Iditarod Trail  
Dog Sled Race  
is a journey  
through time. - page 16

Community property  
loophole could  
help you. - page 18



*The Tour of Anchorage is an all-ages point-to-point ski and fat-tire bike race and a harbinger of spring.*

*Photo by Joselynn Finch for Nordic Skiing Association of Anchorage*



2025  
National Mature  
Media Awards  
Winner



# AARP Alaska's 2026 legislative priorities: strengthening financial security and protecting older Alaskans

AARP Alaska

As Alaska's 2026 legislative session gets underway, AARP Alaska is advancing a focused set of priorities designed to help Alaskans age with dignity, security, and independence. Representing more than 76,000 members statewide, AARP's agenda underscores two fundamental needs for older adults: financial resilience and strong consumer protections.

AARP's flagship initiative for 2026 is Retirement Readiness. That includes expanding access to retirement savings through Alaska Work and Save (SB21) for the private sector and Pensions for Public Service (HB78) for the public sector.

Alaska Work and Save is a portable retirement savings program designed for private sector workers who lack access to employer-sponsored plans. Today, nearly half of Alaska's private sector workforce has no workplace retirement plan, and the smaller the business, the less likely they are to be able to offer a plan. Without a payroll deduction option, savings rates plummet—just 5% of workers open a retirement account on their own. By implementing Alaska Work and Save, the state can help thousands build longterm financial stability while reducing reliance on public assistance later in life.

Alaska faces an escalating public sector workforce crisis, and one major cause is our lack of a defined-



AARP Alaska key advocacy focus in the Alaska Legislature is retirement readiness. That includes expanding access to retirement savings through Alaska Work and Save (SB21) for the private sector and Pensions for Public Service (HB78) for the public sector.

Photo by Andrea Piacquadio via Pexels

benefit pension. Alaska is now one of only two states without a pension option for public employees—and the only state that offers neither Social Security nor a pension to all public workers. This makes recruitment and retention extraordinarily difficult.

AARP Alaska also supports restoring a modest, stable, defined benefit pension, because older households without a pension are nine times more likely to live in poverty, increasing pressure on state safety net programs. Public work-

ers earn 14% less than private sector workers on average; a pension helps close this wage gap and keeps essential workers in Alaska. Workforce shortages are harming seniors and communities—from monthslong SNAP and Adult Public Assistance backlogs, to unplowed roads, to the Office of Public Advocacy being unable to meet demand for public guardians.

AARP is also urging lawmakers to take action on

page 27 please

## Send us your letters

Send letters to the editor to Senior Voice, 401 E. Fireweed Lane, #102, 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.

## OLDER PERSONS ACTION GROUP

### Mission statement:

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

### Vision statement:

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

Senior Voice Alaska will consider submissions to its Perspective pages. Submissions should relate to what we cover: people 50 years old and older and their needs and lives. To submit a piece for consideration, email editor@seniorvoicealaska.com. We require full names, addresses and a contact number and will consider letters from and about Alaska and Alaskans.



OLDER PERSONS ACTION GROUP

401 E. Fireweed Lane, #102  
Anchorage, AK 99503  
Phone 907-276-1059  
Toll free 800-478-1059  
www.opagak.com  
www.seniorvoicealaska.com

SeniorVoice, established in 1978, is published monthly by Older Persons Action Group, Inc., a statewide non-profit corporation serving the interests of all older Alaskans.

Partially funded by a grant from the Alaska Division of Senior and Disabilities Services.

Subscription price is \$30 a year to Alaskan residents. All subscriptions outside Alaska are \$35 a year.

Copyright © 2026  
by Older Persons Action Group, Inc.  
ISSN 0741-2894

For advertising information please call (907) 276-1059. The printing of ads in Senior Voice does not constitute endorsement by Older Persons Action Group, Inc.

### OPAG BOARD MEMBERS

Sharon White-Wheeler (Emeritus), Eileen Hosey, Leonard T. Kelley (Emeritus), Joan Haig, Yvette Tousignant  
Board President ..... Dylan Webb  
Vice President ..... Yvonne M. Chase  
Treasurer ..... Carol Allen  
Secretary ..... Amanda Biggs

Executive Director ..... C. Kelly Joy

### EDITORIAL

Editor ..... Paola Banchemo  
editor@seniorvoicealaska.com

Correspondents ..... Laurel Bill, Dimitra Lavrakas, Maralee McMichael, Lawrence D. Weiss

Advertising sales ..... Anne Tompkins  
A.Tompkins@seniorvoicealaska.com

Page design ..... Rachel Gebauer, Gebauer Design



# Remembering the Good Friday Earthquake of 1964

By C. KELLY JOY

Senior Voice

On the evening of March 27, 1964, soldiers assigned to Battery A of the 4th Battalion/43rd Air Defense Artillery (ADA) Regiment had just finished dinner. Members of the 6–Midnight crew were preparing for shift while off-duty soldiers were starting the nightly games of spades or finding other activities to avoid the 28-degree weather.

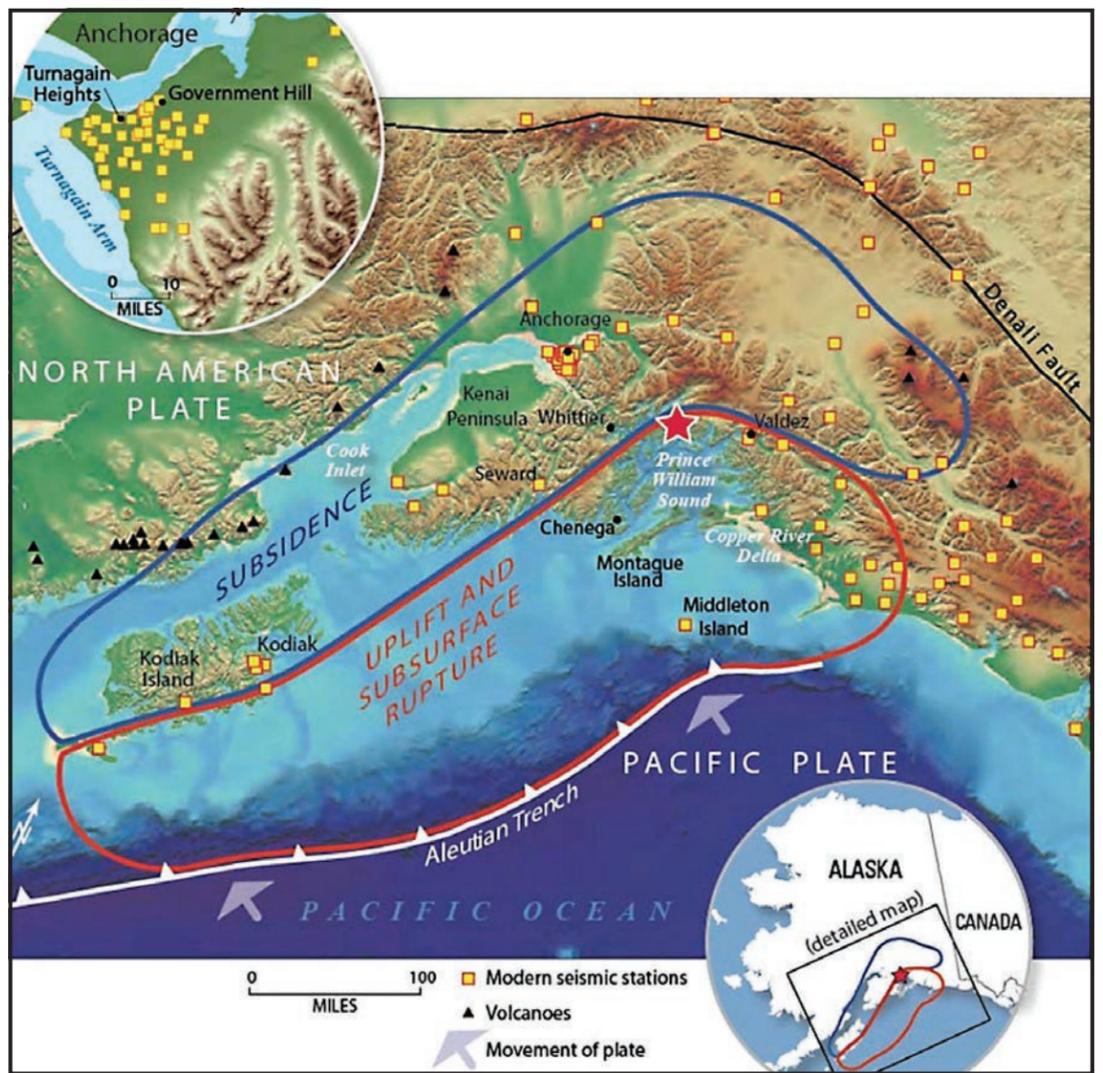
Duty logs indicate that planned activities were interrupted at 5:36 p.m., by seismic activity of magnitude 9.3 and that aftershocks lasted for at least five minutes. The event is now known as the Good Friday Earthquake of 1964, and 139 people died in the aftermath.

The biggest earthquake in North America coincided with the Cold War, when Anchorage and surrounding sites housed nuclear warheads. So rapid responses from military personnel were key in the moments after the shaking stopped.

The Cold War that started in March 1947 ushered in military construction to counter the high-speed, high-altitude threat of jet-age aircraft. Between 1951 and 1959, the joint venture between the U.S. and Canada constructed the North American Air Defense Command (NORAD) system. In Alaska, the NORAD system of the era consisted of the Distant Early Warning (DEW) line of radars, the White Alice Communications System (WACS), four air interceptor launch locations, the USAF 626th Airborne Control and Warning Squadron, and the new state-of-the-art, U.S. Army Nike-Hercules surface-to-air missile

(SAM) system. The Army Air Defense Command Post (AADCP) at the Fire Island Air Force Station replaced the observation point that had been in use by the 75th Coastal Artillery (AA) Regiment since 1940. Battery A (Site Point) was located at Point Campbell (aka Kincaid Park) and was one of the eight missile batteries built to repulse Soviet bombers. The layered defensive strategy dictated that interceptor aircraft were preferable for incursions by individual aircraft. The Nike Hercules batteries were reserved for incursion by a large sortie. One Nike-Hercules missile could be armed with a nuclear warhead that theoretically, could damage three hundred aircraft in a single blast.

As the aftershocks subsided, soldiers donned their cold-weather gear and dispersed to perform damage-control inspections at their duty areas. As several launcher crewmen pried open the blast door for one of the magazines, they could hear the whine of a spinning gyroscope, an indication that a warhead was in the “armed” status; and the smell of highly flammable ammonium perchlorate filled the air, an indication that a rocket engine had been perforated. The magazine was home for 16 missiles. A spark from a light or a heater could set off a chain reaction of explosions. Three crewmen made the decision to enter the dark magazine to assess the situation: How many missiles were safe? How many missiles had been damaged? How many engines were compromised? And the most important question was how many, and what type of warheads were armed? Meanwhile, three soldiers evacuated



The Good Friday earthquake zone.

Courtesy of U.S. Geological Survey



During the Good Friday earthquake on March 27, 1964, the U.S. was in the middle of the Cold War, and what is now Kincaid Park was one of eight Nike-Hercules missile sites that defended the country against Soviet bombers. A magazine which held nuclear warheads is now a ski bunker.

Photos by C. Kelly Joy



A painting by Anchorage artist Duke Russell shows the soldiers of A Battery, 43rd Air Defense Artillery, opening the doors of the launch bay to find chaos. The art was commissioned by nonprofit organization Friends of Nike Site Summit. It hangs in the ski bunker.

the site after learning that at least one of the missiles had a “hot” warhead and were later charged with going AWOL (absent without leave).

The soldiers at Battery A mitigated the danger within three days and the Battery returned to operational status within two weeks. If one of the conventional munitions had detonated,

Kincaid Park would have a lake. If one of the nuclear munitions had detonated, Anchorage would not exist. Good Friday of 1964 could have been a double disaster day for Alaska; but it was not, thanks to the courage of a few Cold War-era veterans.

The Remember Everyone Deployed tradition of wearing red on Friday is a visible appreciation for the sacrifices made by servicemembers. I challenge readers to wear red on Friday, March 27, to commemorate the contributions that servicemembers and veterans have shared with Alaska.

A plaque identifies the magazine that now serves the Nordic Skiing Association of Anchorage (what skiers call the wax bunker) and a mural inside depicts

the events from that day. For more information on this historic event, education on the Cold War in Alaska, and tours of preservation sites, contact the Friends of Nike Site Summit at [www.nikesitesummit.net](http://www.nikesitesummit.net). Additionally, the Anchorage Museum at [www.anchagemuseum.org](http://www.anchagemuseum.org) and the Alaska Veterans Museum [www.alaskaveterans.org](http://www.alaskaveterans.org) offer visual histories on NORAD in Alaska.

C Kelly Joy, the executive director of Older Persons Action Group, is a former U.S. Army Air Defense Artillery officer who trained under the supervision of seasoned Nike-Herc Veterans prior to deploying to West Germany and guarding the Fulda Gap under similar Cold War circumstances as Battery A.



# Are you prepared for an emergency?

By **KAREN CASANOVAS**

For Senior Voice



**Q: I have seen advertisements urging people to be ready for an emergency crisis, but do not know what supplies are needed. What should I gather up?**

**A:** It is crucial to be ready for emergencies such as natural disasters or power outages, especially if you live alone. Make a plan today that can be adapted to any situation so others can help you, or periodically check on your safety following an unusual event. Having a well-thought-out plan can ease anxiety during unplanned situations. Many interconnected challenges result in older adults being disproportionately affected by disasters requiring tailored preparedness and response strategies to assure safety and well-being. Here's a concise guide to help you prepare:

**1. Emergency notifications:** If you reside in assisted living, determine how you will be notified about emergencies—whether through facility alerts or communication from loved ones. Understand the building's crisis plans and knowing who will inform you is essential. If you live alone and have a smartphone consider signing up for personal response systems, weather service announcements, download emergency management alerts or the FEMA app.

**2. Support contacts:** Create a list of individuals to contact in emergencies. This support network should include at least three family members or friends, along with necessary emergency providers such as your doctor, transportation services, and reminders for 9-1-1. Consider giving a spare key to trusted individuals and inform them of your emergency plan.

**3. Communication methods:** Plan how to communicate if phone lines are not functioning. Options

like walkie-talkies can be effective. These will work if phone lines are not operating, cellular networks are out, or if power grids are down because they use radio waves, not towers. Determine if you could safely walk to a neighbor's house for help. If needed, consider installing a landline since traditional phones operate without electricity, unlike cordless models.

**4. Emergency kit:** Assemble a "go bag" with supplies for 3-7 days. Include 1 gallon of water per day, non-perishable food, a week's worth of medication, a first-aid kit, personal hygiene items, extra batteries for hearing aids, spare eyeglasses, flashlights, a battery-powered radio, essential documents, and emergency contacts. Detailed supply lists and other resources are available at this website <https://www.ready.gov>.

**5. Backup power for medical equipment:** If you use medical equipment like oxygen tanks or electric wheelchairs, establish a backup power plan and inform the utility company of your needs.

**6. Emotional preparedness:** Emergencies can be distressing. Stay calm and secure. Assist emergency responders by turning on outside lights if you have power. Be ready to provide your exact address, cross streets or notable landmarks. If you have a smartphone, utilize GPS or apps like What3Words to communicate your location easily via a three word address. Open Google Maps or Apple Maps to read your exact latitude/longitude or

**It's important to ask for assistance when needed. You might worry that you are burdening others, but even small disruptions to your routine impact your health. Calling for an emergency response team can reduce physical or mental decline.**

address to the dispatcher. If you are in a car, make yourself more visible with hazard lights if you anticipate rescue in a few hours.

**7. Don't hesitate to seek help:** It's important to ask for assistance when needed. You might worry that you are burdening others, but even small disruptions to your routine impact your health. Calling for an emergency response team can reduce physical or

mental decline. Conditions like dementia or memory loss complicate an individual's ability to understand, remember, or follow evacuation procedures or emergency plans. If you or others around you feel disoriented, or are injured, don't wait—reach out for help right away.

**8. Practice your plan:** Regularly rehearse your emergency procedures and communication strategies

with your support network. Familiarity will build your confidence and readiness for any situation.

Taking these steps ensures you will be better prepared when emergencies arise, and help you navigate unfamiliar, chaotic environments safely.

Karen Casanovas, PCC, CPCC, CLIPP is a certified resilience strategist, author, and speaker dedicated to empowering individuals and organizations with practical tools and strategies grounded in neuroscience, positive psychology, and cognitive-behavioral frameworks. If you have questions write to her at [info@karencasanovas.com](mailto:info@karencasanovas.com).



**ANCHORAGE SENIOR ACTIVITY CENTER**

**BENEFITS ENROLLMENT CENTER**

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

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

BECs can help people enroll in programs such as:

- Medicaid
- Medicare Part D Extra Help and Savings Programs
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).



**Senior Center membership is not required. Take advantage of this FREE public service and schedule an appointment today!**

907-770-2025 | [ANCHORAGESENIORCENTER.ORG](http://ANCHORAGESENIORCENTER.ORG)



**Premier Assisted Living in Anchorage, Alaska!**

*Where You Are Family*

- 48-apartment community all with private fully accessible bathrooms
- 14 apartments on a secured floor for memory care and special needs
- RN on staff during business hours and on-call 24/7 to triage concerns
- Activities Coordinator provides recreational opportunities
- Restaurant-style Dining • Utilities and DISH TV • Secured Entry System
- Resident Call Buttons • Wi-Fi in Common Areas • Microwave & Refrigerator

[www.MarlowManor.com](http://www.MarlowManor.com) | 907-338-8708

**Providing your loved ones with privacy, dignity and individualized care.**



2030 MULDOON ROAD

Advertise in

# Senior Voice

Call 1-800-478-1059.



# Alaska's health care system dinged in recent study

By JOHN SCHIESZER

For Senior Voice

According to the latest report on health care quality across America, Alaska ranks as the second worst in terms of several factors. A study by the stem cell treatment center called Auragens examined health care systems in all 50 states, comparing safety, response time, and medical bills.

New York ranked the worst state to get sick in America. In New York, medical expenses reach \$14,000 per person and emergency rooms taking three hours to see patients. Alaska ranks second-worst, charging \$13,600 for health care. Alaska was found to have the highest infection rates in the country. Delaware has the longest emergen-

**Alaska hospitals record a 0.84 infection score, the worst in the United States, which means when patients go in for treatment, they face a risk of catching something in a medical facility. This problem reflects broader health safety issues in Alaska, with only 14% of hospitals meeting proper safety benchmarks.**

cy room waiting times in the country, making sick people sit for more than three hours before getting treatment.

The research measured each state using multiple health care indicators. This included doctor availability per 100,000 residents, medical costs, emergency room wait times, and hospital safety ratings. The study also tracked hospital-acquired infection rates, showing how often patients catch illnesses during treatment. The study also analyzed

patient satisfaction scores for communication and cleanliness.

Alaska hospitals record a 0.84 infection score, the worst in the United States, which means when patients go in for treatment, they face a risk of catching something in a medical facility. This problem reflects broader health safety issues in Alaska, with only 14% of hospitals meeting proper safety benchmarks.

"Health care costs in America have nearly doubled over the past decade, going from \$3.1 trillion to \$5.3 trillion. But paying more hasn't improved

service. Emergency room wait times have tripled since the pandemic, and as our research shows, in some states, patients have to wait for around 3 hours to see a doctor. Higher costs should mean better access, but the opposite is happening," said Dr. Dan Briggs, president and CEO of Auragens.

This past November, the University of Alaska reported it is anticipating an increase of up to 10% for health care costs this fiscal year, on par with what employers are anticipating nationally. Nikole Conley, who is the chief of human resources for the university system, outlined the university system's health care costs and projections for the rest of the fiscal year, which ends in July 2026.

The university is projecting 8% to 10% overall cost increases across the system for this fiscal year.

That means health coverage for 3,442 employees is estimated to cost \$85.5 million. Conley said employers nationwide are expecting around 8.5% higher medical costs and 11% higher pharmacy costs this year. The experience by the University of Alaska mirrors national trends, with cost increases remaining elevated, especially for prescription drugs.

An email to the Alaska Hospital and Healthcare Association asking for comment was not returned before deadline. The organization hosts a quality summit every year and has several initiatives to improve health care, including infection prevention trainings and resources. To register for the quality summit April 15-16, which will be in Anchorage, go to <https://bit.ly/4kPoMxW>

The Worst States to Get Sick | Research

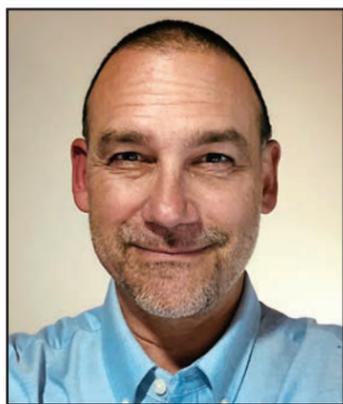
State	Number of Primary Care Physicians per 100K	Number of Special Physicians per 100K	Health Care Cost in USD	ER Wait Time (in minutes)	Hospital Safety "A" Grade Ranking	HAI Infections Score	Average HCAHPS score	Final Score
New York	193	221	14,007	184	23.1%	0.6	2.64	99
Alaska	171	149	13,642	138	14.3%	0.8	3.67	92
Delaware	183	158	12,899	195	28.6%	0.5	3.00	87
Arizona	132	147	8,756	176	17.6%	0.7	2.88	86
New Jersey	192	212	11,868	173	52.2%	0.8	2.61	73
Alabama	126	120	9,280	139	9.3%	0.6	3.40	72
Florida	148	147	9,856	155	37.9%	0.6	2.61	71
California	160	164	10,299	164	44.4%	0.6	2.62	68

## Enrollment decisions when you have other coverage

By SEAN McPHILAMY

Alaska Medicare Information Office

The Medicare-related decisions can be quite challenging, especially when you or your spouse are about to turn age 65, during your Initial Enrollment Period. The decisions can be even more complicated when you have other health insurance coverage. Deciding if and when to enroll in the various parts of Medicare, when you are first eligible, is an important choice including how to avoid potential penalties or gaps in coverage. Most people enroll into Medicare Part A (in-patient, hospitalization insurance) as this coverage is premium-free, if you have at least 10 years (40 credits)



of work history recorded by the Social Security Administration. But what about other parts of Medicare?

### Job-based health insurance may influence Part B enrollment

You may delay enrollment into Medicare Part B (out-patient, medical provider services coverage) if you have health insurance

from your or your spouse's current employer. You will have a Special Enrollment Period, or SEP, to enroll in Part B up to eight months after either the coverage or the current work ends, whichever is first. This SEP lets you enroll in Medicare without a late enrollment penalty and without having to wait for the General Enrollment Period. In most cases, though, you should only delay enrolling in Medicare if your job-based insurance would be the primary payer, meaning it would pay first for your medical bills and Medicare would pay second. Your job-based insurance pays primary if the employer has 20 or more employees. Even if employer-sponsored coverage would be your primary insurance, you

might consider enrolling in Medicare if you want a secondary insurance to help cover the cost of your medical care.

### Learn how other types of health insurance affect Medicare enrollment

If you have another kind of health insurance when you become Medicare-eligible, it is important to know how it works with Medicare and when you should enroll in Medicare. ► Retiree insurance almost always pays secondary to Medicare, meaning you need to enroll in Medicare when first eligible or when you retire so you are fully covered. One exception is Federal Employee Health Benefits (or FEHB) retiree coverage. FEHB re-

tiree plans continue paying primary for retirees who do not enroll in Part B. FEHB retiree plans only become secondary if you choose to enroll in Part B.

► If you have a Qualified Health Plan from the Marketplace (HealthCare.gov) offered under the Affordable Care Act (ACA), you should almost always disenroll from it and enroll in Medicare when you become eligible.

► If you have continued your employer's health care following job loss as provided under the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA), it is very important to enroll in both Part A and Part B. Your COBRA continuation rights usually

page 6 please



ADVERTISEMENT

# Healthy hearing habits



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

There is strong evidence that forming good habits early in life makes a difference as we age. Early exposure to healthy habits matter and can have a life-long impact. The same applies to hearing. We need to begin teaching safe listening practices early in life.

### Top sources of unsafe listening for young people

Music venues, personal listening devices, video gaming and esports, firearms, toys, motor sports, firecrackers, power tools/heavy machinery, home or care stereo, lawnmowers, white noise machines, team sports, virtual reality headset, loud outdoor parties  
Source: *The World Health Organizations (WHO)*

A good rule of thumb is

if you must raise your voice over the sound, it's too loud.

Once you lose your hearing, it's gone. There's nothing you can do to reverse the symptoms of hearing loss. You can prevent it.

- Wear earplugs in loud noise

- Turn down the volume—When listening with earbuds protect your ears with the 60/60 principle. Only listen up to 60% of the device's maximum volume for no more than 60 minutes at a time.

- Invest in new headphones—Earbuds are dangerous, as they sit directly next to the eardrum. Headphones can cause damage as well, since they tend to be low-fidelity, requiring you to crank up the volume to hear well. Consider purchasing noise-canceling headphones, which will allow you to listen at a lower volume with greater clarity.

Call *Accurate Hearing today for a FREE hearing test 907-644-6004. We are here to help.*

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



**Accurate Hearing Systems**  
DONNA R. DEMARCO, AAS, BC-HIS LLC  
*Your hearing care provider...*

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

# Medicare

*continued from page 5*

terminate if you have COBRA before Medicare, and if you have Medicare Part A before you elect COBRA, the continuation coverage is secondary to Medicare and may not pay at all for outpatient care if you do not enroll in Part B of Medicare.

► If you have Veterans Administration (VA) health-care coverage and choose not to enroll in Medicare, you will not have health insurance for facilities outside the VA health system. You may wish to sign up for Medicare when you become eligible if you want to get covered health care outside the VA system.

Note that having any of these types of insurance does not grant you a Special Enrollment Period if you delay Medicare enrollment. If you don't enroll

in Medicare when you are first eligible because you have one of these types of insurance, you will likely incur additional premium penalties and a gap in coverage if you later enroll in Medicare.

### Part D prescription drug coverage enrollment considerations

If you are considering delaying Part D enrollment because you already have prescription drug coverage, first find out if your coverage is considered creditable. Creditable drug coverage is as good as or better than the standard Medicare Part D drug benefit. If you have creditable drug coverage, you will not have a late enrollment penalty for delaying Part D enrollment. If you lose creditable coverage, you will have a Special Enrollment Period to enroll in a Part D plan. If you have no drug coverage, or have

drug coverage that is not creditable, you must enroll in Part D when you are initially eligible to avoid a late enrollment penalty or gaps in coverage.

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

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

## Medicare counseling by phone

By **LEE CORAY-LUDDEN**

*For Senior Voice*

I am a Certified Medicare Counselor working

under SHIP. My office is in the Soldotna Senior Center, and I serve the state via phone. If you are local, I can help you as a

walk-in. I am here Mondays through Thursday, 8 am to 3:30 pm. Call with your Medicare questions, 907-262-2322.



*Bringing Specialty eye care to the last frontier since 1972*

### Trusted, Board-Certified Eye Specialist



### Comprehensive Specialty Eye Care

- Cataract & Glaucoma Care
- Cornea Conditions
- Ocularplastic & Orbital Surgery
- Diabetic Eye Disease
- Urgent & Acute Eye Issues

Downtown Anchorage Location

**542 W. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave**  
Anchorage AK, 99501

☎ (907) 276-1617

🌐 [www.akeyedoc.com](http://www.akeyedoc.com)

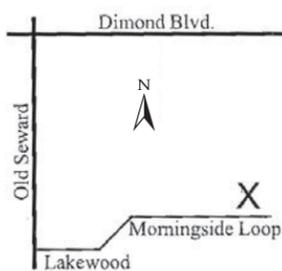


Learn more about our providers and services

## DELUXE SENIORS COMPLEX

Tour our property and view our Quiet & Spotless Apartment Homes

- For Seniors 62+ years old.
- Income eligibility required.
- Keyed access bldg. w/ elevator.
- Washer/dryer in each unit.
- Security Deposit \$200.
- Pets upon pre-approval.
- Pet deposit \$50.
- Convenient to shopping.



## Southside Apartments



9480 Morningside Loop 907-344-0281  
[www.manormanagementak.com](http://www.manormanagementak.com)





# Falling for you: Losing balance is no joke

By **DIMITRA LAVRAKAS**

Senior Voice Correspondent

I have an older cousin who was just diagnosed with early-stage Parkinson's after several years of dizziness and falls.

Luckily, his doctor said it's not the type of Parkinson's that leads to death.

I often give "Come to Jesus" talks to family and friends when they begin to experience these symptoms. It can be annoying for them.

I advise sturdy equipment like walkers, especially ones with built-in seats.

But men usually disdain the advice because of pride and vanity. They just don't want to look old or accept their mortality.

In my experience, women are more willing to use assistive aids.

I become alarmed when I see an elderly couple with the man "cruising" along walls, just like a toddler learning to walk, while his



As we age, we have a greater chance of falling. Resources from the Alaska Department of Health and others can help us beef up our fall-prevention skills.

Photo by Dimitra Lavrakas

wife holds his arm. They'll both go down if he loses control.

Or those three-prong canes, which I believe are pretty useless. I have a father-in-law with a floppy foot who uses one and I predict disaster.

## It's your brain

As we age our brains

shrink, so when we fall the brain bounces around inside our skull causing trauma and even death. Read the obituaries for the too-common causes of death reading "died several weeks after a fall."

My cousin told me last year after a series of falls, that he "knows how to fall." Nope.

There comes a time in our lives when we should revere our cranium and our brain cells.

We need to pay attention to warning signs like falls that predict Parkinson's and dementia.

A December 2024 study in Archives of Gerontology and Geriatrics Plus, concluded, "...this study

illuminates the multifactorial nature of fall risk in patients with PD (Parkinson's disease) and other parkinsonism. Parkinsonism is a clinical syndrome characterized by tremor, bradykinesia (slowed movements), rigidity, and postural instability. Age, cognitive impairment, vitamin B12 deficiency, polypharmacy (regular use of five or more medications at the same time), walking assistance, memory loss, postural disorders (postural disorders or postural injuries refer to conditions that cause a misalignment or imbalance in the body), and specific parkinsonian diagnoses all play roles in fall occurrences..."

And a Parkinson's Foundation report found that vitamin D levels are significantly correlated with falls and some non-motor symptoms in people with Parkinson's disease.

If you're prone to falls

page 26 please

## April is Fraud Prevention Month.

Join AARP Alaska with local and national experts for fraud events at the Anchorage Senior Activities Center. Let's keep your hard-earned money in your pocket and out of the hands of scammers.

**April 1 at 12 p.m. - Fraud Bingo**

**April 14 at 5:30 p.m. - Fraud Prevention Panel with the FBI and Alaska Senior Medicare Patrol**

*Plus: stay tuned for free shred services coming in May!*



**AARP**  
Alaska



# Electric toothbrushes repair damage to teeth

By JOHN SCHIESZER

Medical Minutes

Even with regular brushing, teeth can become stained from genetic factors or consuming foods and drinks like tomatoes and coffee. Chemical whiteners can help, but they can also damage teeth in the process. So, researchers have designed a prototype teeth-whitening powder that is activated by the vibrations from an electric toothbrush.

The system both brightened and protected teeth in lab demonstrations. "This work offers a safe, at-home teeth whitening strategy integrating whitening, enamel repair and microbiome balance for long-term oral health," said study investigator Min Xing, who is with the Chinese Academy of Sciences, the Science and Technology Commission of Shanghai Municipality.

Peroxide-based bleaching with strips, gels and mouth rinses is a popu-



lar option for whitening stained teeth. This type of chemical whitening generates reactive oxygen species (ROS), compounds that break apart stain-causing molecules. However, many whitening techniques can damage the tooth enamel, which might result in easier re-staining or other oral problems.

Now, researchers are developing a tooth-whitening compound that generates ROS when activated by electric toothbrush vibrations while strengthening and repairing teeth at the same time. The researchers combined strontium and



Electric toothbrushes were shown to both brighten and protect teeth in lab demonstrations, according to a recent study. Screenshot from Amazon.com

calcium ions with barium titanate in a solution and then heated and formed it into a ceramic powder, dubbed BSCT. When vibrated, the powder generates

a small electric field that causes ROS-generating chemical reactions.

In initial lab tests using human teeth artificially stained with tea and cof-

fee, brushing with BSCT and an electric toothbrush caused visible whitening. The treated teeth were almost 50% whiter than the control group stained in the same way but brushed with saline. For teeth with damaged enamel and dentin, BSCT brushing regenerated these structural components because the strontium, calcium and barium ions included in the powder formed deposits on the tooth surface. Researchers are now developing a toothpaste formula with the BSCT powder, which could provide a new effective, at-home treatment for safely whitening teeth and promoting oral health.

## A new approach to treatment-resistant depression

About 20% of U.S. adults experience major depression in their lifetime. For some individuals symptoms improve within a

next page please

**Call Now!**

*Opus Memoria*  
The Work of Memories  
Compassionate Care for Those with Dementia

## Preferred Care at Home

- Meal Preparation
- Dress/ Hygiene Assistance
- Housekeeping/ Laundry
- Holiday & Vacation Coverage
- Live-In Services & More

We are committed to making your choice possible with quality services at affordable prices.

Preferred Care at Home®



Call For Your Free In-Home Assessment

Lynetta Hagel-Grant, Owner

907.868.1919

LynettaH@PreferHome.com | PreferHome.com/alaska



Suzanne Hickel, Owner

907.677.1919

Hickel@OpusMemoria.com | www.OpusMemoria.com



Daily activities are in place to keep the residents safe, active and living out their memories through all senses. Caregivers are on staff 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year

- Private rooms
- Fenced one acre property
- One caregiver for every three residents.
- Specialized training on caring for seniors with dementia. Staff is required to complete continued education for Dementia and Alzheimer's.
- ADA compliant

To schedule a personal tour or to receive additional information please contact us today.



# Portal opens for Rural Health Transformation Program

Senior Voice Staff

Organizations can submit a letter of interest now through March 11 for Alaska’s Rural Health Transformation Program. The letter of interest gives organizations a chance to briefly describe their ideas for improving rural health care in Alaska.

Alaska’s RHTP is part of a \$50 billion national initiative authorized by Congress in 2025 to strengthen rural health systems

over the next five years. The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services has awarded Alaska one of the largest allocations in the nation.

The year one award was \$272,174,856, pending approval of a revised budget, to support investments that improve access to care, strengthen the health care workforce, modernize care delivery systems, and promote long-term sustainability across Alaska’s health system.

The Alaska Department of Health has contracted with the Alaska Community Foundation to administer the application and award process for organizations and entities seeking RHTP funding. The Alaska Community Foundation will manage the application portal, support organizations throughout the submission process, distribute approved funds, and provide administrative support over the life of the program.

To indicate your organization’s interest in applying for funding begin by registering and submitting a letter of interest through ACF’s online portal: <https://www.grantinterface.com/Opportunity/Catalog?urlkey=alaska>

The Department of Health and Alaska Community Foundation will host RHTP office hours webinars to provide technical assistance related to registration and submission in the LOI portal.

Upcoming Office Hours webinars will be held:

- ▶ Feb. 24, 2026 | noon–1p.m.
- ▶ Mar. 3, 2026 | noon–1p.m.

Organizations may register for the Applicant Office Hours series at this link: <https://bit.ly/46miMcW>

Applicants are encouraged to sign up for RHTP updates to receive information about

webinars, timelines, and program guidance:

<https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/AK-DHSS/signup/48430>

## Depression

from page 8

few treatment attempts. However, up to one-third of patients have treatment-resistant depression, for which standard antidepressant medication or psychotherapy isn’t enough. Now, a study shows that a small, implanted device may provide substantial, long-lasting relief to adults with the most severe treatment-resistant depression.

Researchers at Wash-

***"We were shocked that one in five patients was effectively without depressive symptoms at the end of two years," Conway said. "Seeing results like that for this complicated illness makes me optimistic about the future of this treatment..."***

ington University School of Medicine in St. Louis, Missouri helped develop this device, which stimulates the vagus nerve. They found it produced improvements in depressive symptoms, quality of life and other measures. On average, each patient in the clinical trial had already tried 13 treatments that

failed to help them, including interventions such as electroconvulsive therapy and transcranial magnetic stimulation.

"We believe the sample in this trial represents the sickest treatment-resistant depressed patient sample ever studied in a clinical trial," said lead author Dr. Charles Conway, a professor

of psychiatry and director of the WashU Medicine Treatment Resistant Mood Disorders Center. "There is a dire need to find effective treatments for these patients, who often have no other options. With this kind of chronic, disabling illness, even a partial response to treatment is life-altering, and with vagus nerve stimulation we're seeing that benefit is lasting."

The study was designed to evaluate whether adding vagus nerve stimulation (VNS) to existing treatment improves outcomes for treatment-resistant depression. The therapy involves implanting a device under the skin in the chest that emits carefully calibrated electrical pulses to the left vagus nerve (a major conduit between the brain and internal organs).

The trial enrolled nearly 500 patients at 84 sites across the U.S. Three-quarters of the participants were so ill they were unable to work. VNS devices were implanted in each patient, but for study control purposes, only half of the devices were turned on during the first year of the trial. Treatment outcomes were measured in terms of depression symptom severity, quality of life and daily function.

Among the 214 patients receiving active treatment from the beginning of the trial, about 69%, (147 individuals) had a meaningful response at 12 months. Among those patients who experienced a meaningful benefit at 12 months, more than 80% maintained or increased benefits at 24 months across all measures of depression, quality of

life and function. Among patients who had a substantial response at one year (defined as 50% or greater symptom reduction) 92% were typically still experiencing a benefit at the two-year mark, across all measures.

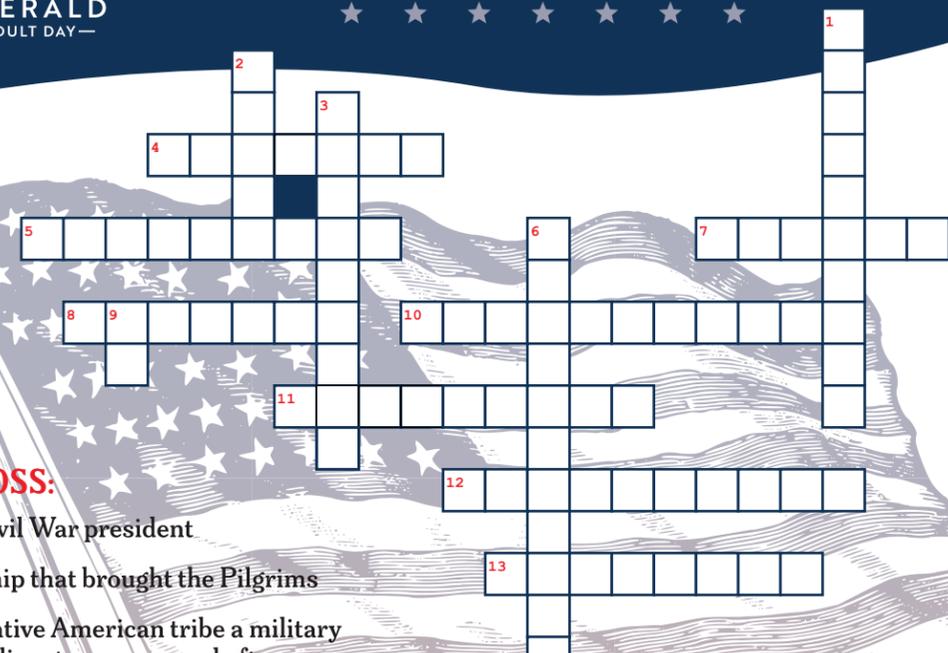
Interestingly, nearly one-third of participants who had not responded after one year of treatment reported benefits at the end of the second year, suggesting the treatment might take more time to work in some people. Among those who experienced benefits at one year, relapse rates were consistently low, especially for the strongest responders. The researchers found that more than 20% of treated participants (39 adults) were in remission after 24 months, meaning their symptoms had improved to the point where they could function normally in daily life. This was a finding Conway said was particularly striking.

"We were shocked that one in five patients was effectively without depressive symptoms at the end of two years," Conway said. "Seeing results like that for this complicated illness makes me optimistic about the future of this treatment. These results are highly atypical, as most studies of markedly treatment-resistant depression have very poor sustainability of benefit, certainly not at two years. We're seeing people getting better and staying better."

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



## AMERICAN HISTORY



**ACROSS:**

4. Civil War president
5. Ship that brought the Pilgrims
7. Native American tribe a military helicopter was named after
8. 'Father of the Constitution' James...
10. Iconic cracked symbol of US independence
11. First English settlement
12. Site of Lincoln's famous Civil War address
13. Nicknamed the Sultan of Swat

**DOWN:**

1. Thomas Jefferson's home in Virginia
2. Infamously bad American-made car
3. Known as the 'Forgotten War'
6. Trail travelled by pioneers heading westward
9. The steak sauce created during the Civil War and still available today



[WWW.HERITAGEHEALTHAK.COM](http://WWW.HERITAGEHEALTHAK.COM)

Answers on page 26



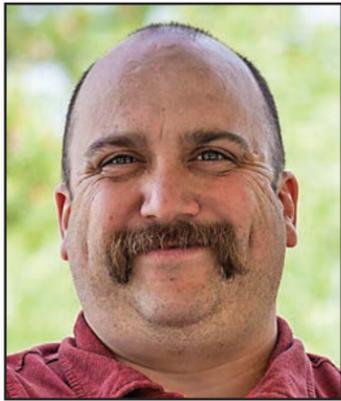
# Know how to care for minor injuries at home

By CHRISTIAN M. HARTLEY

For Senior Voice

Minor accidents happen frequently, but sometimes what didn't bother us before is a real nuisance now. A slip on an icy walkway, a cut while preparing dinner, or a bruise from bumping into furniture are common experiences for many people. Knowing how to handle these minor injuries properly can help you heal faster and prevent bigger problems down the road.

Let's start with sprains, which happen when we twist or stretch a ligament too far. If you roll your ankle or hurt your wrist, remember the word RICE. This stands for Rest, Ice, Compression, and Elevation. First, stop what you're doing and rest the injured area. Next, apply ice wrapped in a towel for about 15 to 20 minutes at a time. You can use a bag of frozen vegetables if you don't have an ice pack. Then, wrap the



area gently with an elastic bandage to reduce swelling, but make sure it's not too tight. If it hurts, it's too tight or there's another injury. Finally, prop up the injured body part above the level of your heart when sitting or lying down. If the pain is severe or doesn't improve after a couple of days, call your doctor.

Cuts are another common injury in the home. For minor cuts, wash your hands first, then rinse the wound under clean running water. Apply gentle pressure with a clean cloth or bandage until the bleeding stops. If it doesn't stop



Keeping your first aid kit up to date and having on hand other necessities, such as ice packs, can help you treat minor injuries at home.

Photo by Roger Brown via Pexels

with pressure, lift it above the level of your heart if you can. Once the bleeding stops, apply an antibiotic ointment and cover with a bandage. Change the bandage daily and watch for signs of infection like increased redness, warmth, or pus. Deep cuts that won't stop bleeding need medical attention right away.

Bruises often appear after bumping into something or falling. While bruises usually heal on their own, you can speed up recovery by applying a cold pack for the first day or two. After that, a warm compress can help your

body absorb the bruise faster. If you notice you're bruising easily or bruises appear without any injury, talk to your doctor as this could be because of other health concerns.

Our unique climate means we face extra challenges with icy conditions and long periods indoors during winter. Keep your pathways clear of ice and snow, and wear shoes with traction. If you use a walking aid, make sure it has a traction add-on. Inside your home, remove loose rugs and keep floors clear of clutter to prevent falls.

For more detailed in-

formation about first aid, you can also call your local senior center or area Agency on Aging for printed materials. Many Alaska communities offer first aid classes designed specifically for seniors. The Alaska Commission on Aging can connect you with resources in your area by calling 1-800-478-9996, as can Connect Mat-Su at 907-373-2628.

Trust your instincts. If something feels seriously wrong or you're unsure about an injury, it's better to call your doctor or visit urgent care. Your health and safety come first, and medical professionals are always happy to help.

Christian M. Hartley is an Alaska resident with three decades of public safety and public service experience. He is the public safety director of the City of Houston and serves on many local and state workgroups, boards and commissions related to safety. He lives in Big Lake with his wife and their three sons.

## Alaska ADRC Aging & Disability Resource Centers

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

- **Identify** your long-term support needs
- **Explore** your options for meeting those needs

- **Connect** you with the resources you choose for yourself or your loved one
- **Follow Up** to ensure your needs are met

### Anchorage

Municipality of Anchorage, Anchorage Health Department  
825 L St., Ste 200, Anchorage, AK 99501  
907-343-7770

[www.muni.org/adrc](http://www.muni.org/adrc)

### Kenai Peninsula, Kodiak Island, Valdez-Cordova

Independent Living Center  
47255 Princeton Ave., Ste 8, Soldotna, AK 99669  
907-262-6333 | 800-770-7911

[www.peninsulailc.org/adrc](http://www.peninsulailc.org/adrc)

### Southeast Alaska

Southeast Alaska Independent Living Center (SAIL)  
8711 Teal St., Ste 300, Juneau, AK 99801  
1-800-478-SAIL (7245)

[www.sailinc.org](http://www.sailinc.org)

### Mat-Su Borough

LINKS Resource Center  
777 N. Crusey St., Ste 101, Wasilla, AK 99654  
907-373-3632

[www.linksprc.org/adrc](http://www.linksprc.org/adrc)

### Fairbanks North Star, Southeast Fairbanks, Yukon-Koyukuk, Denali, North Slope

ADRC North - Fairbanks Senior Center  
1424 Moore St., Fairbanks, AK 99701  
907-452-2551

[www.adrcnorth.org](http://www.adrcnorth.org)

### Western Alaska-Aleutian Islands, Lake and Peninsula, Bristol Bay, Dillingham, Bethel, Kusilvak, Nome, Northwest Arctic

Bristol Bay Native Association  
1500 Kakanak Rd., Dillingham, AK 99576  
907-842-4139 | 800-478-4139

[www.bbna.com/our-programs/social-service-programs/elderly-services/](http://www.bbna.com/our-programs/social-service-programs/elderly-services/)



# 1-877-625-2372

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



# Mini grants impact dementia patients, families

By LISA SAUDER

For Senior Voice



**In fiscal year 25, Alzheimer's Resource Alaska awarded 289 mini grants, serving individuals and families across the state.**

Alzheimer's Resource Alaska offers mini grants to help ease the daily challenges faced by Alaskans living with Alzheimer's disease or related dementia and those who care for them. These grants, made possible by the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority, are designed to improve quality of life and support independence by helping cover the cost of services, equipment, and supports that are often out of reach. The impact of these grants is best understood through the voices of caregivers who use them during some of the most difficult moments of their lives.

ARA asked one caregiver to share their experience.

**ARA Asks: How did you hear about the mini grants program?**

I learned about the mini grants program through a caregiver support group connected to the Homer Senior Center and Hospice of Homer. Listening to other caregivers share their experiences at different

stages of their loved one's journey helped me feel less alone and more prepared. The information shared in that space encouraged me to think proactively about what may lie ahead and what supports could help us navigate this disease

**ARA Asks: What did you use the grant funds for?**

The grant allowed us to make important updates to our bathroom, including a wheelchair accessible shower and a bidet. Coordinating materials and professionals took time, but I am incredibly grateful we were able to complete these changes. I also used some of my own saved funds to add a large pocket door between my husband's bedroom and the bathroom. Receiving

the grant helped me stretch my resources further so we could make additional improvements that support safety and comfort.

**ARA Asks: How did this help you and your loved one living with ADRD?**

Within just a few months, I have already seen noticeable changes in my husband. The updated bathroom gives him time to adjust to a new routine that will make daily life easier and healthier for both of us. The Alzheimer's Resource Alaska information packet and household tips also helped simplify how I organize our living spaces. Most importantly, this grant gave us hope. After 46 years of marriage, we are facing this journey together, and having support like this has made a meaningful difference. It has helped us prepare for the future, accept what we can and cannot control, and feel deeply grateful for the impact this gift has had on our lives.

## Helping more Alaskans thrive

Mini grants help improve the quality of life and independence for Alaskans living with Alzheimer's disease or related dementia. This program reduces burden and stress for those living with ADRD and for their caregivers by helping cover the cost of services, equipment, and supports that make daily life safer and more manageable. Funding is available for items and services that improve quality of life.

Eligible applicants include Alaskans with a confirmed Alzheimer's disease or related dementia diagnosis. There are no income eligibility requirements, and anyone who meets the criteria

may apply.

In fiscal year 25, Alzheimer's Resource Alaska awarded 289 mini grants, serving individuals and families across the state. Twenty three percent of grant funds went to beneficiaries living in rural Alaska. Grant categories include accessibility improvements such as ramps or lifts, dental hearing and vision supports including hearing aids and eyeglasses, supplies and adaptive items, and respite. Examples include medical or therapeutic equipment, alert safety systems, and instruments or hobby supplies that bring comfort, safety, and purpose.

It is more than a helping hand. It is quality of life.

To learn more or apply, visit [www.AlzAlaska.org/mini-grant](http://www.AlzAlaska.org/mini-grant).

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

## Alaska Commission on Aging seeks two public members

Senior Voice Staff

Two public member seats are open on the Alaska Commission on Aging. Applicants must be age 60 or older. These are volunteer positions appointed

by the governor. Quarterly attendance of board meetings is required. Monthly meeting attendance is strongly encouraged. Apply here: <https://gov.alaska.gov/.../apply-for-a-board-appointment/>



**Midnight Sun Home Care**



**Helping Alaska's Seniors Stay Happily In Their Homes**

For over 20 years, Midnight Sun Home Care has been a proud, Alaska-owned provider of heartfelt care - supporting seniors and their families with trust, compassion, and the power of staying home. We're not a chain; we're your neighbors, deeply rooted in Anchorage.

Bringing a caregiver into your home is a loving choice. That's why we offer more than care - we offer real, honest respectful relationships, built around kindness and understanding. Every visit matters, every voice is heard.

Whether you need a few hours of help or 24-hour live-in support, our local team is available 7 days a week. We personalize every care plan to fit your unique needs.

At Midnight Sun, we believe home is healing. It is a place of comfort, dignity, safety, and independence. Our care helps families navigate sensitive decisions with clarity and heart.

Each of our caregivers is carefully screened and trained to ensure safety, skill, and compassion. We are guided by our core values of:

- Compassion
- Professionalism
- Integrity
- Consistency

Our clients often tell us it's not just what we do, it's how we do it - with empathy, reliability, and a local voice on the other end of the phone when you call. Thinking about in-home care? Let's start the conversation.

We'd love to meet you, hear your story, and explore how local care with heart can support your journey.

- ✓ Caring companionship
- ✓ Meal planning & preparation
- ✓ Light housekeeping & laundry
- ✓ Transportation & errands
- ✓ Personal hygiene & bathing
- ✓ Medication reminders
- ✓ Post-surgical & respite care
- ...and more

Mention This Ad to Receive 6 hrs of Complementary Care



[f](#) [@](#) [in](#)

Call (907) 677-7890 or visit [midnightsuncare.com](http://midnightsuncare.com) for your FREE consultation today!

ADVERTISE IN

Senior Voice

Alaska seniors have buying power!



Senior Voice advertising representative

Anne Tompkins

can help you reach our readers.

Email her at [A.Tompkins@seniorvoicealaska.com](mailto:A.Tompkins@seniorvoicealaska.com)

or call 907-276-1059

toll-free 1-800-478-1059



# McMichael turns MacGyver for her seed starts

By **MARALEY McMICHAEL**  
Senior Voice Correspondent

I hung up the phone totally devastated.

That morning back in April 2023, I was ready to spend \$800 for an item I'd wanted for years, and I'd just learned shipping to Alaska was impossible. I don't spend much money on myself and now that I was ready to, ironically, I couldn't.

I wanted to replace my 1950s era Gardener's Supply brand grow light shelf system. My old system was so big and heavy, it was a two-person job to drag it (the tiny wheels were not much help) from storage across the sometimes snowy, other times icy driveway into the garage and then up three steps into the house. My husband, Gary, graciously let it take up room in his office every spring for two months... and then it was back out to storage. With him living at the Palmer Pioneer Home, I no longer had a second person to help me drag it into and out of the house each spring. On the other hand, I now had room for a



Cosmo starts ready for transport to the Valley Garden Club plant sale in May 2024.



A repurposed sturdy metal shelf became the basis for Maraley McMichael's grow light system in March 2024 when the grow light system she had her heart set on couldn't be shipped to Alaska.

Photos by Maraley McMichael

grow system to stay in the house year-round.

A friend in Slana used it for years to keep dozens of different colored African violets healthy in those frigid interior winters. After her husband died, she decided to sell everything

at a garage sale and return to her hometown in Texas. Finding no buyer for that hulk of metal, she told me she wanted me to have it for free. I couldn't refuse. It was 4 feet wide by 4.5 feet tall, had two spillproof galvanized tray shelves,

adjustable lighting (that was too cumbersome to adjust) and was built to last. It was in rough condition, but Gary rejuvenated it.

I used it each spring 2017 through 2019 and then sold it at my May 2022 garage sale, fully intending to replace it with the same brand, only the modern, lighter weight version, with adjustable lighting that worked. Shortly after my garage sale, I went to the Gardener's Supply website, picked out what I wanted, and placed the website in my bookmarks, so I could easily order it when I felt the time was right.

That time came April 2023, and I sat down at the computer to place the order. Once on the website, a pop-up offered free shipping for orders over \$127. There was a special

notation that the grow light system could only be shipped by ground with an additional fee of \$10. All fine. I didn't care how long it took, because it was already too late for the 2023 growing season.

I had completed all the required information including shipping address and credit card info, when it seemed the ordering process froze. My computer kept telling me to fill out the shipping but would not give me any additional options when I clicked on the shipping icon.

So, I called the company and got a guy named Bill. I told him about the shipping problem and that I lived in Alaska, thinking that had something to do with it. He didn't seem concerned, said they would ship it

page 14 please



**BRIAN FLYNN**  
ANCHORAGE ASSEMBLY

www.FlynnforAnchorage.com  
brian@flynnforanchorage.com  
907.727.7738

FlynnforAnchorage

PAID FOR BY FLYNN FOR ANCHORAGE | 645 G STREET SUITE 100 PMB 626 ANCHORAGE, ALASKA 99501

**Opportunities Ahead**  
Let's be a community of builders again, not a city of stalled ideas. Cut the red tape, create jobs, spark investment, and revive Anchorage.

**Ready to Move**  
Let's stop pretending that motion is the same as progress. Enforcing laws and requiring real treatment will help us move away from normalizing dysfunction.

**Now's a Good Time**  
The same ideology has been running our city for nearly a decade, and the results speak for themselves. It's time for a change.

**It's Our Anchorage**  
Our community isn't a project to be managed; it's a home to be rebuilt. Let's put residents before special interest groups, because hardworking people are tired of being ignored.



Unpacking the new LED grow lights in March 2024. Improvising worked just as well as the grow light system Maraley McMichael first wanted.



# Genealogy conference



Judy Nimer Muhn, president of the Michigan Genealogical Council, is the guest speaker at the Anchorage Genealogical Society annual seminar April 18. Here she is in the South Dakota State Historical Archives in Pierre. An ancestor, Jean-Baptiste Amiot/Amyot, had been part of a French expedition to the west, looking for a route to the western sea (the Pacific Ocean). The expedition was in 1743, and the French "claimed" the territory for the French crown and placed three lead plates in the area. Children found one of the lead plates in 1913. Muhn learned that this is one of the original lead plates that was buried on a hilltop and is held by this facility in its museum. As the museum was closed for renovations, she asked to see any records of this discovery. Her request evolved into an opportunity to see the actual plate and hold it. Photo by South Dakota State Historical Archives curator of collections, Katy Schmidt

**By PAOLA BANCHERO**  
Senior Voice

The Anchorage Genealogical Society's annual seminar will feature nationally known genealogy expert Judy Nimer Muhn on April 18.

The seminar is from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at St. Mary's Episcopal Church, Waldron Hall, 2222 E. Tudor Road.

Muhn began her professional genealogical work in 1993. She has lectured at National Genealogical Society conferences, RootsTech, Federation of Genealogical Societies as well as conferences in Europe and around the United States. Traveling extensively around the world, Nimer Muhn has visited and researched in the vil-

lages and archives of Germany, Scotland, France, Quebec, and Ontario where her or her husband's family lived. Owner of Lineage Journeys, she conducts research for clients and offers presentations for a variety of organizations.

Muhn is the president of the Michigan Genealogical Council, a board member of the National Genealogical Society, president of the Oakland County Genealogical Society and a member of many societies related to genealogy.

A school assignment sparked Muhn's lifelong interest in genealogy. She had to fill out a family tree, and in asking her mother about her ancestors realized branches were missing.

"Where are our peo-

ple from?" she wanted to know. She was 12 years old.

Then, in 1993, she and her husband were living in Europe. She turned her

page 27 please

## Rambles

News from the Grapevine

Curious about where a career in aging could take you? **Dr. Britteny M. Howell**, UAA associate professor of Health Sciences, will discuss careers in aging. This talk highlights the growing opportunities in this rewarding field, spanning healthcare, policy, research, and community engagement. Learn how your skills and interests can make a meaningful difference in the lives of older adults and their communities. The event is from noon to 1 p.m. March 4 in the Professional Studies Building, Room 204B. This is a brown bag event, and attendees are encouraged to bring their lunch. Keep in mind that you must pay to park at UAA Monday through Thursday ... The **Alaska Chamber Singers** present "A Baroque Banquet" during two performances, both at 7:30 p.m. March 6 and March 7 at Anchorage Lutheran Church, 1420 N Street in Anchorage. Hear favorite choruses and arias by Purcell and Handel, including Bach's beloved Easter cantata "Christ lag in Todesbanden" and many others. Tickets available at [CenterTix.com](http://CenterTix.com) or at the door ... The **Iditarod Trail Dog Sled Race** begins March 7 with the ceremonial start in Anchorage at 10 a.m. downtown. Head to Willow to see the official start at 2 p.m. March 8. Or receive the finishers in Nome. A tour that puts you in Nome for eight days, pretty much ensuring you'll see the top finishers. <https://www.iditarodtours.com/nome/index.htm> ... The **Tour of Anchorage** is March 8. Sign up for the cross-country ski race (25-, 40- or 50-kilometer distances) or a fat bike race. Some hard-core athletes do both the ski and bike race. The event takes you right through Anchorage on its miles of trails. <https://bit.ly/3OgPW07> ... Every Monday from 1:30 to 3 p.m. from March 16-April 27 the **Soldotna Public Library** invites you to participate in "Simply Soups: A Creative Aging Series." The **32nd Annual Homer Winter King Salmon Tournament** will take place March 21. The tournament has averaged more than \$200,000 in annual cash prizes and the champion fish has averaged \$77,910. After the fishing lines are pulled from the water join the festivities at the weigh-in stations by the Deep Water Dock, located at 4667 Freight Dock Road. There will be live music, beer and wine, food trucks, vendors and some surprises. <https://www.homerwinterking.com/2026-homer-winter-king-salmon-tournament/about-the-tournament/> ... A rite of spring is the **Cama'i Dance Festival** in Bethel March 27-29, featuring **Yup'ik** drumming, dancing, and local crafts. <https://www.swagak.org/camai>

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

## Dinner Solutions for Seniors!

### Alaska Fresh

- Single Serving
- Fully Cooked
- Includes entree, starch and veggie
- 7 dinners weekly
- Weekly delivery \$125/week



### Delivery Club

- 3-serving or 6-serving sizes
- Cooking required
- Includes entree
- 12 dinners monthly (36 servings)
- Monthly Delivery \$245/month

5905 Lake Otis Pkwy, Ste. E  
Anchorage, AK 99507  
Call (907) 677-6633 for information  
[www.AlaskaDinnerFactory.com](http://www.AlaskaDinnerFactory.com)



Alaska Dinner Factory



ADVERTISEMENT

## Understanding today's buyers and why it matters to you



By **ALLANA LUMBARD**

*Downsizing Alaska*

If you've owned your home for many years, you may be surprised by what today's buyers are looking for.

Most buyers want homes that feel simple, well-maintained, and move-in ready. Many are juggling busy work schedules, family responsibilities, and rising costs. Because of this, they often prefer properties that don't require immediate repairs or major updates.

This doesn't mean your home needs a full remodel. In fact, the biggest impact often comes from small improvements: fresh paint, good lighting, decluttering, and addressing deferred maintenance. A clean,

well-cared-for home signals value and helps buyers feel confident making strong offers.

Another important shift is the desire for functional spaces. Buyers appreciate clear walkways, easy-to-use layouts, and homes that feel safe and comfortable from the moment they walk in.

Understanding these preferences allows you to make informed decisions, whether you plan to sell soon or simply want to protect your home's value for the future.

If you're curious what buyers might notice in your home, I invite you to join my free, virtual Home Prep, Staging & Selling Workshop March 18 at 11:30 a.m. We'll cover practical steps that help homes stand out and protect your equity.

Planning ahead creates confidence and peace of mind. Please email [downsizingalaska@gmail.com](mailto:downsizingalaska@gmail.com) to register.

Allana Lumbarde is a downsizing expert and real estate agent affiliated with Real Broker Wasilla.



**DOWNSIZING ALASKA**

907-671-2663

[downsizingalaska@gmail.com](mailto:downsizingalaska@gmail.com)

## MacGyver

*continued from page 12*

FedEx, and he would be happy to place the order for me by phone. I waited while he processed things at his end...only to have him hem and haw and finally say that he was sorry to give me bad news... "It can't be shipped to Alaska! Only to the continental USA. No way around it—company policy."

In the ensuing discussion, he asked if I knew anyone in Washington state, that I could ship it to and then they ship it the rest of the way to me. I don't, but I had shipped some things to my daughter in Colorado, which she then brought to me in her baggage on her next trip to Alaska.

But the grow light system weighed 66 pounds. And I didn't want to bother asking her help with this, even if I could figure out the additional shipping costs. I knew USPS had a weight limit of 70 pounds but didn't know their dimension limits. I had recently tried to ship a lamp to Florida by FedEx and learned it would cost a fortune, and it was light weight compared to this.

After pondering this dilemma for a few days, I went to a specialty garden supply store in Wasilla. When I explained what I was looking for, the owner said I should consider buying the components and building a system myself. I thanked him and left. I didn't want a homemade version. My heart was set on what I'd seen on the Gardener's Supply website. (An item no longer offered in 2026.)

A month later while working in the little room attached to my greenhouse (which contains all my gardening supplies) I realized that I already had a sturdy 3-foot-wide, 6-foot-tall metal shelf. I bought it when All I Saw Cookware in Wasilla was going out of business. It was overloaded with gardening paraphernalia, but that was easy to remedy. The next time



Tomato starts on top shelf, cosmos and zinnia starts on the middle shelf, and vegetable seeds germinating on the bottom shelf in May 2024.

*Photo by Maraley McMichael*

my nephew dropped in, I asked him to help me carry it into the house. Perhaps it might work.

By the spring of 2024, I'd had a change of heart and decided a homemade grow light system would be acceptable. After researching the huge assortment of LED grow lights available and choosing and ordering some compatible with my shelf size, I was excited to finally be able to start seeds to sell at the annual Valley Garden Club plant sale—a Memorial Day weekend sale I've participated in for over ten years.

It took a while to figure out how to make the lighting adjustable. I used boxes of various heights to place the plants close to the lights until I came up with an acceptable design... using locally available, appropriate size metal chain, "s" hooks, and cotter pins.

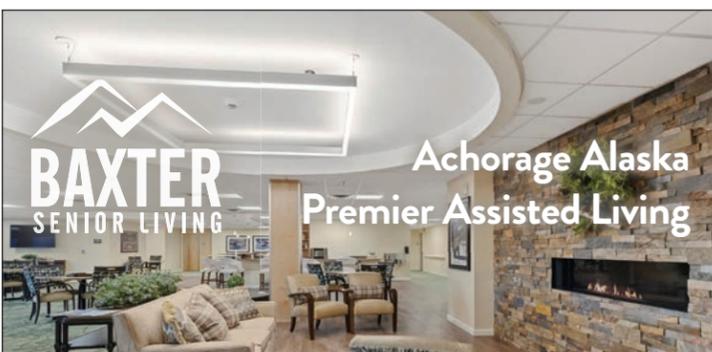
Spring 2025 was even better. I started tomato seeds in mid-March...and then gradually filled all three shelves with various vegetable and flower starts. By Memorial Day,

everything was either sold or moved out to my greenhouse.

Jeff Lowenfels, the weekly garden columnist in the Anchorage Daily News, insists Alaska gardeners need to have additional lighting for plants in the winter. Now I have that capability. Not just for a few houseplants that would enjoy a little extra winter light, but also for propagation experiments. This past winter, I've kept the middle shelf lit on a timer for seven hours daily. Spring is almost here and I'm excited to start tomato seeds soon.

I was so disappointed not to be able to order my dream grow light shelving system back in April 2023, but that turned out to be a blessing in disguise. It forced me to use something I already had on hand. I ended up spending a fraction of what my dream system would have cost and am satisfied with the results.

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



**BAXTER**  
SENIOR LIVING

Achorage Alaska  
Premier Assisted Living

ASSISTED LIVING | MEMORY CARE | ASSISTED LIVING + | RESPITE STAYS

Home is not the house you live in. Home is the memories we make with those around us.



(907) 865-3500

[baxterseniorliving.com](http://baxterseniorliving.com)

[info@baxterseniorliving.com](mailto:info@baxterseniorliving.com)



## Subscribe to Senior Voice

Call 276-1059 in Anchorage or 1-800-478-1059 toll-free statewide



# Alaska Senate votes to require public schools to teach CPR



Sen. Elvi Gray-Jackson, D-Anchorage, talks to a colleague on the floor of the Alaska Senate, Wednesday, May 1, 2024. Photo by James Brooks/Alaska Beacon

By JAMES BROOKS

Alaska Beacon

Alaska public school students would be required to learn hands-only CPR under a proposal advancing through the state legislature.

In a 19-0 vote in mid-February, the Alaska Senate approved Senate Bill 20, which requires the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development to “adopt curricula to instruct public school students on hands-only cardiopulmonary resuscitation.”

Conventional CPR involves chest compressions and mouth-to-mouth breathing, whereas hands-only CPR uses compressions alone.

Sen. Robert Yundt, R-Wasilla, was absent from the vote.

Existing state law says that each state school district is “encouraged” to teach CPR; the new bill, if approved by the House and Gov. Mike Dunleavy, would change CPR to a requirement.

The department said in a fiscal note that it will be

able to implement the new requirement at no additional cost to the state.

“It’s time for Alaska to align with the growing national standard that ensures students learn these life-saving CPR techniques,” said Sen. Elvi Gray-Jackson, D-Anchorage and the sponsor of the bill.

Heart diseases are the No. 2 cause of death in Alaska, according to the latest available state statistics. CPR can be used to keep someone’s blood flowing if they experience sudden cardiac arrest. That can triple a victim’s chances of survival, Gray-Jackson said, noting that CPR has even been used in the Capitol on occasion.

SB 20 advances to the House for further consideration. A companion measure, House Bill 92, is in the House Education Committee and has not yet been heard.

*This story was first published by the Alaska Beacon. Its stories may be republished online or in print under Creative Commons license CC-BY-NC-ND 4.0.*

## Are you 100 plus? Know someone who is?

Senior Voice staff

The Senior Voice has been publishing articles about people 100 or older, the centenarians in our midst. They have provided fascinating stories of early memories of the Great Depression, wartime heroism and homefront support, and homesteader adventures.

The Alaska Commission on Aging works with the Governor’s Office, Pioneer

Homes and Long Term Care Ombudsman to celebrate Alaska’s centenarians. Each centenarian receives a letter from the governor and other acknowledgements to coincide with National Centenarian’s Day on Sept. 22.

If you or someone you know has reached this milestone, please contact editor@seniorvoicealaska.com and we’ll try to interview you and publish a profile about your life.

# Calendar of Events

**March 7 Alaska** The Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race kicks off with a ceremonial start in Anchorage at 10 a.m. downtown and an official start at 2 p.m. on March 8 in Willow. <https://iditarod.com/>

**March 2 National** Read Across America Day. The day coincides with the birthday of Theodor Seuss Geisel, who wrote such classics as “The Cat in the Hat,” and “How the Grinch Stole Christmas!” The day promote literacy and the joy of reading.

**March 8 National** Daylight Savings begins. Roll your clocks forward in the wee hours of Sunday morning.

**March 12 National** Girl Scout Day. The day commemorates the anniversary of the first Girl Scout troop meeting in 1912, organized by Juliette Gordon Low in Savannah, Georgia. It’s also a good reminder to buy a box or two of your favorite Girl Scout cookies.

**March 14 National** Pi Day. Named for 3.14159...Well, you know. It’s the ratio between a circle’s circumference and its diameter. It’s also become a good excuse to eat pie. Local bakeries and pizza parlors often offer discounts or specials on this day.

**March 16 National** Freedom of Information Day. It is part of Sunshine Week, which shines a spotlight on the rights citizens have to government documents and attendance at government meetings. March 16 was the birthday of the fourth president of the United States, James Madison, who is recognized as the father of the Constitution and a key proponent of open government.

**March 17 International** St. Patrick’s Day. St. Patrick is the patron saint of Ireland, who brought Christianity to the island. His feast day has become an occasion for people of Irish descent and people who love Irish culture to celebrate, often by wearing green and making merry.

**March 19 National** Certified Nurses Day.

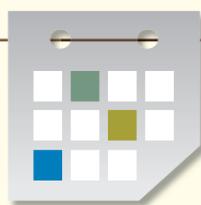
**March 20 International** Spring equinox in the Northern Hemisphere. It’s the official start to spring, but it won’t feel like that for a few more weeks up north.

**March 23 National** Puppy Day. Enough said. Go find a puppy to pet.

**March 21 International** Quilting Day. It’s the third Saturday in March. The day recognizes the skill, artistry, and tradition of quilt-making, with events like quilt shows, classes, and community gatherings held to honor quilters and their craft.

**March 26 National** Epilepsy Awareness Day. Epilepsy is not just a childhood phenomenon. In adults older than age 35, stroke is a leading cause of epilepsy.

**March 29 National** Vietnam War Veterans Day.



### Send us your calendar items

Send to: Senior Voice

401 E. Fireweed Lane, #102, Anchorage AK 99503

[calendar@seniorvoicealaska.com](mailto:calendar@seniorvoicealaska.com) or

[editor@seniorvoicealaska.com](mailto:editor@seniorvoicealaska.com)

Deadline for April edition is March 15.



Call today to schedule or confirm benefits.

[www.metrochiroak.com](http://www.metrochiroak.com)

907-276-6325



- Convenient midtown Anchorage location and hours.
- Providing customized treatment plans, including gentle care options, since 2009.
- Preferred providers and accepting VA Community Care, Auto Injury, Worker’s Comp, Premera, Aetna, and Medicare.
- Providing Chiropractic, Myofascial Release, Massage Therapy, Rehabilitation Exercises, Shockwave Therapy, and Health Coaching.





# Iditarod Trail Race: A journey through time

By LAUREL DOWNING BILL

Senior Voice Correspondent

As Iditarod mushers and their teams head out of Willow on Sunday, March 8, and race toward Nome, they will follow a path steeped in history—a story written by Native traders, gold rushers and the evolution of the Alaska frontier. The northern route, used during even-numbered years like 2026, passes through remote villages and towns that each tell a unique tale of adaptation, ambition, and survival.

After leaving Willow, teams thunder past checkpoints at Yentna Station, Skwentna, Finger Lake, Rainy Pass, and Rohn. Then not far after the Alaska Range, mushers arrive in Nikolai, an Upper Kuskokwim Athabascan village that's seen centuries of movement and trade. Originally hosting a trading post and roadhouse during the region's gold rush, Nikolai sat astride the historic Rainy Pass Trail. This connection linked miners, prospectors, and trappers from goldfields at Ophir to the ports of Cook Inlet.

Next, the mushers race toward McGrath, located deep in Alaska's interior. It emerged as a vital meeting point and regional supply center for surrounding villages. Founded as an Athabascan camp, it grew with the arrival of large riverboats and steamers, becoming indispensable for miners exploiting the region's gold resources. The changing river course forced McGrath's relocation in 1933. By World War II, it boasted an airstrip that played a crucial role in the Lend-Lease program transferring equipment from America to Russia when both nations fought against the Nazis.

The teams then pass through Takotna, Ophir, and Cripple on their way to the Gem of the Yukon, Ruby. Perched on high cliffs above the Yukon River, gold was discovered there in 1906 and drew a wild stampede of fortune-seekers. By 1913, Ruby had electric lights, hotels, newspapers, and riverboat service—a metropolis that briefly rivaled Fairbanks. The largest gold nugget found in Alaska's history, nearly 300 troy ounces, was discovered nearby in 1998.

Galena, which began as a Koyukon Athabascan fish camp, is next on the trail. A supply depot for the surrounding lead ore mines gave the town its name. World War II transformed the area with the construction of a major military airfield; it then became a Cold War outpost, bringing growth, infrastructure, and new jobs.

Mushers then move on to Nulato, a hub for trade between the Koyukon and the Inupiat long before Europeans arrived. With the



Ruby's First Avenue was a hub of activity during 1912.

Courtesy University of Alaska Fairbanks

gold rushes and Russian traders came both prosperity and hardship with epidemics, uprisings, and famine costing many lives. Nulato adapted and evolved with gold-seekers, missionaries, and modern settlers coming and going.

Kaltag, which marks the end of the famed Kaltag Portage—a

centuries-old trading route connecting the Yukon River to the Bering Sea at Unalakleet—follows next. Scarred by epidemics and food shortages, the village was formed by survivors of three neighboring communities.

Mushers move on to Unalakleet, which became a vital trading center at the end of the Kaltag Portage. It saw Athabascan traders meet coastal Inupiat in exchange networks that spanned Alaska. Russian posts, missionary settlements, reindeer herders from Lapland, and, later, the U.S. Army all left their mark. Its active local economy and blend of cultures make it one of the region's most dynamic villages.

The route then sweeps through checkpoints at Shaktoolik, Koyuk, Elim, Golovin, and White Mountain

—each with rich Native traditions and histories rooted in subsistence, trade, and adaptation to the harsh Arctic world. Safety, which grew out of a roadhouse to service travelers during the early 20th century, is the final checkpoint before the last 22 miles to Nome.

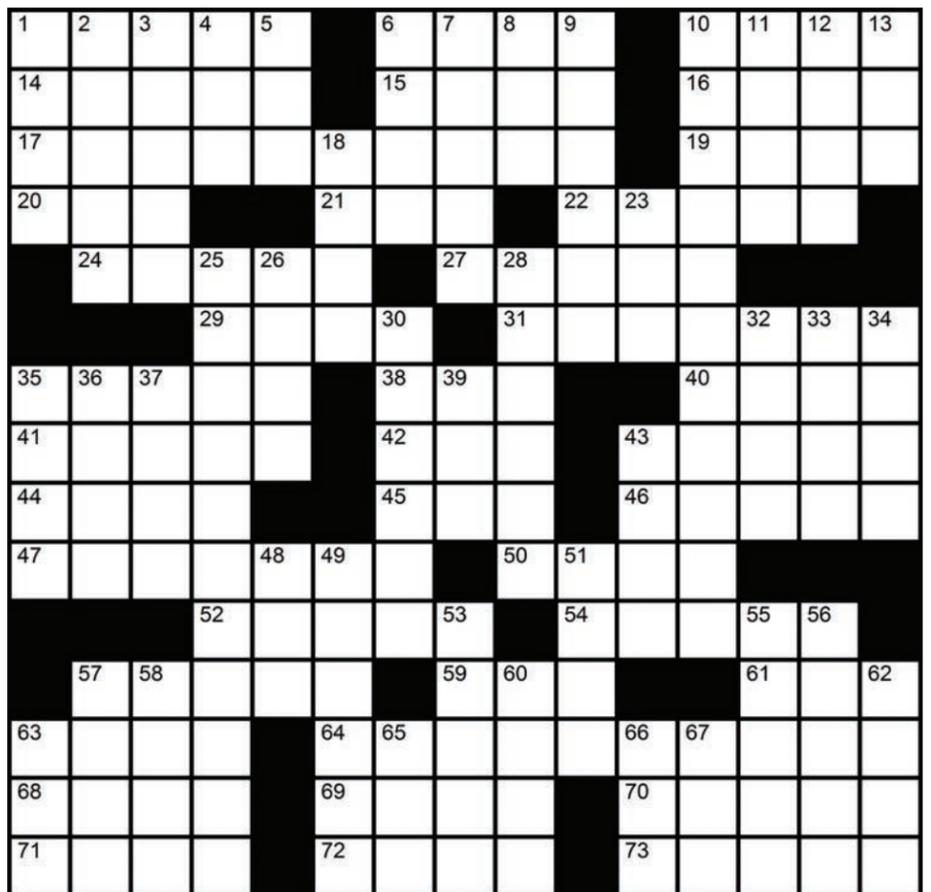
These secluded communities, trail markers, checkpoints, and cabins all whisper stories of ancient migration, gold fever, hardship, and hope that make the Greatest Race on Earth more than a competition. It is a journey through living history.

This column features stories researched for *Aunt Phil's Trunk*, a five-book Alaska history series written by Laurel Downing Bill and her late aunt, Phyllis Downing Carlson. Along with Bill's latest book, *Pioneers From Alaska's Past*, the books are available at bookstores and gift shops throughout Alaska, as well as online at [www.auntphilstrunk.com](http://www.auntphilstrunk.com) and Amazon.

## National Pastime

### Across

- 1 Passé
- 6 Kind of fall
- 10 Pallid
- 14 Dwelling
- 15 Big name in video games
- 16 Chipping choice
- 17 Baseball's place at the plate
- 19 Riviera city
- 20 Compass pt.
- 21 Had a bite
- 22 Reverted to China in 1999
- 24 Fire remnant
- 27 Baseball director, at first or third
- 29 District
- 31 Still wearing a coat, like a sheep
- 35 Chip dip
- 38 Congeal
- 40 Thought
- 41 Maladies
- 42 \_\_\_ Lanka
- 43 Antique guns
- 44 1987 Peter Weller flick, \_\_\_ Cop
- 45 Hostel
- 46 Cruising
- 47 Schedules
- 50 Was philanthropic
- 52 Baseball players can drag these
- 54 Moorage
- 57 Saudi neighbor
- 59 \_\_\_ Aviv
- 61 Blockhead
- 63 Exam
- 64 Baseball running play



Copyright ©2026 PuzzleJunction.com

- 68 Healthy
- 69 A long, long time
- 70 Butter up a turkey?
- 71 Gobs
- 72 Old dagger
- 73 Wagers
- 10 Substitute, in baseball
- 11 Opera solo
- 12 Bonkers
- 13 Compass pt.
- 18 Pink, as a steak
- 23 Coolers, briefly
- 25 Pitcher's pass
- 26 Baseball stats
- 28 Pitcher's day on the mound
- 30 Help make the out
- 32 Keats creations
- 33 Russo of *Tin Cup*
- 34 Org. with a mission
- 35 1980's Geena Davis sitcom
- 36 All excited
- 37 Oil
- 39 Sea bird
- 43 Relief pitcher's stat
- 48 Pester for payment
- 49 Liqueur flavorers
- 51 Competent
- 53 Rock
- 55 Salute
- 56 Dispatch
- 57 Creme cookie
- 58 Brewer's need
- 60 Choice word
- 62 Charges
- 63 Wise one
- 65 Heavy weight
- 66 Hoops grp.
- 67 Exclude

Crossword answers on page 26



# Take a hike: Yellowstone National Park

By **NICK THOMAS**

For Senior Voice

Over the years I've returned to America's oldest national park many times and can summarize every visit in three words: Yellowstone never disappoints. Whether you're content to just drive the roads in search of wildlife or take a few steps from the car to admire the raging rivers and waterfalls, mountains, sprawling canyons, geysers or other geothermal features, Yellowstone will deliver. One year, we watched the aurora borealis spread across the Wyoming sky at 2 am, and on another occasion, saw the most magnificent spring rainbow at the West Entrance.

We always stay at a hotel near the South Entrance, since it's only minutes to reach the park, although roads within the park (Hwy 98 and others) are usually closed during winter due to snow. It hardly needs to be said, but like most national parks in the summer, Yellowstone is enormously popular with the most visited sites like Old Faithful becoming oppressively crowded. But you can always beat the crowds by arriving early. Two summers ago, I drove in at 5 am on a weekday and had the place almost to myself, sharing one area only with several wolves stalking some critter across the road.

For those wishing to discover Yellowstone on foot, there's more than 1,100 miles of trails to explore. Needless to say, we've only attempted a fraction of those, but if you're looking for a short easy trail that's not on everybody's radar, then Storm Point Trail is a great choice for several reasons.

To quote the park website, "This trail begins in the open meadows overlooking Indian Pond and Yellowstone Lake. It passes alongside the pond before turning right (west) into the forest." The trailhead is about 3 miles east of Fishing Bridge Visitor Center and the trail itself is a loop, a little over 2 miles long, with just a few easy inclines and uneven spots to navigate. When we arrived early one July morning, a ranger was on hand and walked up, asking, "Do you have your bear spray?" We did, because we had heard it was an area popular with bears (spoiler alert: we did not see any on the path).

The trail leads to Yellowstone Lake, abundant with waterfowl, and you can walk down to the beach. You can also step out onto the rocky lookout, Storm Point, with a beautiful scenic view over the lake. Just behind that area lives a large colony of cute marmots that you will almost certainly see as they scamper in and out of their tunnels. The trail follows the shoreline for a while, then loops back through the forest and fields before returning to the parking area.

So, flaunting a lake, overlook, pond, fields, forest, birds, marmots, and with the possibility of a grizzly sighting, this trail won't disappoint, either.

Nevertheless, we worried that our visit to Yellowstone last summer might be our first disappointing trip, given last year's reports of reduced federal funding and staffing in the national parks. Fortunately, any impact was barely noticeable. The park rangers and staff clearly went out of their way to keep the park clean, safe, and well-supported, and they were readily available



Stormy Point Trail leading from the trailhead to Yellowstone Lake. Photos by Nick Thomas

should they be needed. Our national parks are a national treasure and should be treated accordingly.

Nick Thomas teaches at Auburn University at Montgomery in Alabama and has

written features, columns, and interviews for many newspapers and magazines. His "It's A Wonderful Hike" column describes short trails, hikes, and walks from around the country that seniors might

enjoy while traveling. See [www.itsawonderfulhike.com](http://www.itsawonderfulhike.com).

**A marmot observes strangers hiking into its territory.**



Yellowstone Lake view from Stormy Point.

## Free Estate Planning Workshops with Attorney

**Constance A. Aschenbrenner**

**AK Wills and Trusts**  
P.O. Box 140842  
Anchorage, Alaska 99514  
Phone: (907) 334-9200  
[www.akwillstrusts.com](http://www.akwillstrusts.com)

**Discover The 7 Threats to Your Estate Plan**

**If Crisis Strikes, You Risk:**

- Losing control
- Additional stress on your family
- Loss of what you spent a lifetime building

**If something happens to you, do you want to:**

- Protect your spouse and children?
- Be clear so your loved ones will know what to do?
- Ensure your hard earned money doesn't go to the government?

**Yes? ▶ Then your first step in creating your asset protection plan is attending this workshop.**

**LIVE WEBINAR:**  
March 17 | 9:30–11:30 a.m.

**IN-PERSON WORKSHOPS:**  
**Wasilla Senior Center**  
1301 South Century Circle, Wasilla  
Apr 27 | 9:30–11:30 a.m.

**Free initial consultation for those who attend the workshop. Book now to protect your loved ones.**

**To reserve your space call or text (907) 334-9200 or go to [www.akwillstrusts.com](http://www.akwillstrusts.com)**

Unable to attend in person? Call to request the link to a recorded webinar.



# Community property loophole could save you

By **KENNETH KIRK**

For Senior Voice



*I'm sure I don't need to tell you that the federal tax laws are really complicated. When you make something really complicated, sometimes unintended consequences result. With the capital gains tax, the way the law is written, states that have community property laws actually get more favorable treatment than states that don't.*

Whenever you see something like “this one weird trick could save you tens of thousands of dollars in taxes” or “the secret tax loophole the IRS doesn't want you to know about” you should usually run for the hills. That kind of come-on almost certainly indicates a scam.

But this column is about one legitimate trick which can, in many cases, save you tens of thousands of dollars (or even hundreds of thousands) on future taxes. And this one's legit.

I'm sure I don't need to tell you that the federal tax laws are really complicated. When you make something really complicated, sometimes unintended consequences result. With the capital gains tax, the way the law is written, states that have community property laws actually get more favorable treatment than states that don't.

Let's detour into a brief tutorial for those of you who are not familiar with the capital gains tax: This is the tax that applies when you sell something for more than you paid for it. To calculate the capital gains tax, you take the proceeds—what you got paid for it when it sold—and subtract the “basis,” which is what you paid, adjusted for things like

improvements or depreciation. The tax is a percentage of that profit, the exact percentage depending on some other factors including how much you make, and how long you held that asset.

Back in the 1990s some sharp Alaska tax lawyers noticed that the nine states that have community property laws, were getting better treatment than the states that don't. Specifically, if a married couple held an asset in a community property state and one of them died, it completely eliminated the capital gains tax on that asset. But in the rest of the states, it only eliminated half.

For example, Husband and Wife purchase a property for \$100,000. They live in Alaska, which is not a community property state. Years later, when Husband dies, the property is worth \$200,000. Wife sells the property. She will have to pay capital gains tax on half of the profit, and if she is in a 20% tax bracket

for capital gains, that will result in a \$10,000 tax bill. But if the property had been in Arizona, which is a community property state, she wouldn't have had to pay any capital gains tax at all.

So these clever lawyers came up with an idea. Alaska did not want to change its entire property system over to a different type, but the Legislature was willing to pass a bill which allowed people to opt-in to community property. Now, a married couple can have their property declared community property, either by putting it into a community property trust, or by simply signing a community property agreement. And the result is, voila, no capital gains tax if one spouse dies.

Does that mean all married couples in Alaska should convert to commu-

nity property? Not necessarily. If you don't have assets that are going to be subject to capital gains, this doesn't benefit you at all. Your primary home is typically going to be exempt for the first \$500,000 in gain. Tax deferred accounts like IRAs and 401(k)s are not subject to capital gains. And if you're regularly selling your stocks or bonds or mutual funds, you have to pay the capital gains along the way, so you may not have assets in those accounts on which you haven't already paid the tax.

But people with rental properties or recreational properties that are not their primary home, often have significant gains built up over time. People who own small businesses will often have massive capital gains exposure. And people who

buy stocks or other investments and hold them for a long time will also often be subject to a potentially whopping capital gains tax bill if the survivor wants to liquidate. For those people, a community property trust or agreement could be worth a great deal.

I will note that the capital gains tax laws are very complex; I have given only a simplified explanation of some of those laws in this column. I also note that community property trusts and agreements must have certain very specific provisions. This isn't something you want to try to do yourself.

So if you think you may benefit from this, talk to your accountant, financial advisor, or estate planner. They can tell you whether this “one weird trick” could really be one great benefit.

*Kenneth Kirk is an Anchorage estate planning attorney. Nothing in this article should be taken as legal advice for a specific situation; for specific advice you should consult a professional who can take all the facts into account. Don't believe me? As Annie Savoy would say, “You can look it up.”*



**RBC HOME MAINTENANCE, LLC**  
RESIDENTIAL CONTRACTING

Over 13 years of professional and personable service in the MatSu and Anchorage. Licensed, bonded and insured.

**Age in place with an Accessibility Remodel!**

- Nearly any home can have
  - ▶ Roll In Shower
  - ▶ Exterior ADA Compliant Entry Ramps
  - ▶ Door Widening
  - ▶ Roll Under Bathroom Sinks
  - ▶ Complete Interior Remodeling

**Free Consultations**

D. Christopher McMullins

**907-315-0886**  
rbc\_hm@rocketmail.com  
rbchomemaintenance.com

license# CONH40091



**Alaska Stairlift & Elevator, LLC**

Elevating quality of life in Alaska since 1998.

- Stairlifts
- Elevators
- Wheelchair Lifts

Lift and accessibility solutions for your home and business.

EXPERIENCE YOU CAN TRUST.

**(907) 245-5438**  
www.alaskastairlift.com

1200 E. 76th Ave | Suite 1201  
Anchorage



# Online recipe apps, Wi-Fi access when traveling, extending phone battery life

By **BOB DeLAURENTIS**

Bob's Tech Talk

**Q. I like to find recipes online. I usually print them out on paper, but I wish there was a better way to save my favorites.**

A. A good recipe app has to do several jobs. The first is the hardest, importing the ingredients and instructions in a meaningful way. Next, the recipes need to be organized. Lastly, they need to help plan a shopping list.

I have used a number of these apps over the years. Right now my favorite is ReciMe (recime.app), available on both iOS App Store and Google Play.

ReciMe is not the least expensive option, but if your primary goal is to save online recipes, I believe it does a better job than the others I've used.

It takes a little practice to learn how to import an online recipe, but once you get going it only takes a few seconds to import one from Instagram, Facebook, Pinterest, and more. If you



*We've become accustomed to Wi-Fi access everywhere for our mobile devices. Without it, our phones are not as useful. As a general rule, places that offer free Wi-Fi should work your devices seamlessly, but those that offer Wi-Fi for a fee can be problematic to use.*

Wikipedia

have printouts already, or handwritten recipes, use your phone's camera to take a photo of each one to import it.

I have tried to save over a hundred recipes, and only a couple didn't import correctly. Those can be reported to the developer as bugs.

The imported recipe will include the source URL, so you can always return to the original page online.

If your goal is to collect recipes, ReciMe is a useful app.

**Q. Why is it so difficult to access reliable Wi-Fi on a cruise ship or in a hotel?**

A. We have become accustomed to having speedy Internet service everywhere.

When the Internet is not available, these powerful computers in our pockets stop working.

As a general rule, places that offer free Wi-Fi should work with your device seamlessly, perhaps requiring a password or email address.

## Wander the Web

Here are my picks for worthwhile browsing this month:

### Modern Foodie Blog

Tastingtable is a food site that caters to enthusiasts. If you want a good place to start, check out "47 Types Of Pasta..." (tastingtable.com/1863917/types-of-pasta-when-to-use/)

tastingtable.com

### Bacon Method

This page explains how to cook bacon "with the minimum amount of preparation and cleanup."

makemydrivefun.com

### The Curious Dreamer

Use this search engine to decode the meaning of your dreams or learn about dreaming in general

thecuriousdreamer.com

Locations that offer Internet for a fee is a travel minefield. As a result, some hotels, airliners, and most cruise ships require patience (and sometimes luck) to connect.

Most of the time there is a checklist of the steps needed, but what happens when you perform every step perfectly and it still does not work?

Modern devices have a number of do-not-track features that promotes user privacy, but those features often interfere with fee-based Internet hot-spots.

The only option is to start disabling features such as "Limit IP Address Tracking" and "Private IP Address." Apple's iCloud Private Relay may also cause issues, but it's pretty good at shutting itself off in situations where it's not supported.

The next time you encounter trouble using a fee-based Internet Wi-Fi hotspot, try turning off any tracking-related settings.

**Q. My phone's battery no longer lasts an entire day. How can I squeeze a bit more life from this device?**

A. Most of the battery power in our portable devices is consumed by the screen. As a result, you

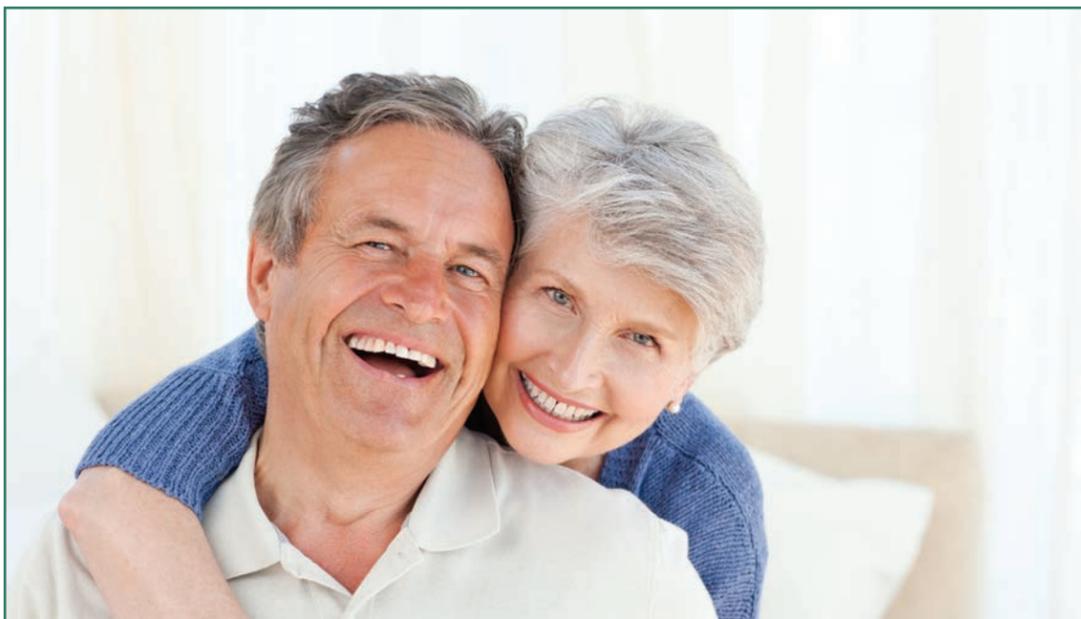
can stretch battery life by turning down the screen brightness.

Another straightforward option is to consistently place the phone face down on a table when not in use. The phone's sensors will keep the screen off until it is picked up.

Still another option is an accessory battery pack such as those made by Mophie or Anker. Add on batteries are usually built into phone cases, but they also have models that attach to the back of the phone with magnets. An external battery will add some charging steps, but a good one will extend a phone's life by a year or more.

The last option is to consider replacing the internal battery. New batteries installed by a technician are usually a bit less expensive than an external battery pack.

A good replacement can add years to a device, at the risk of the phone becoming damaged when it's disassembled. Some devices are easier to update than others. If your phone has a reputation for easy repair, internal battery replacement may be the best option.



## Enjoy your Retirement!

Chester Park is a safe, secure 55+ Adult Community. Our Member-Owners enjoy all the benefits of home ownership with none of the hassles. **DON'T WAIT! UNITS SELL QUICKLY!**

### Safe, Secure Senior Living

For more information or a tour please call:

907-333-8844

www.chesterparkcoop.com



**Chester Park**  
COOPERATIVE



## Senior Voice is on Facebook!

Search for "Senior Voice Alaska" then click on over!





# Alaska Veterans Museum celebrates 15th anniversary

Senior Voice Staff

The Alaska Veterans Museum is throwing itself a birthday bash on April 18 from 1 to 4 p.m. The party will feature live music, food and beverages, and free entry.

The museum, at 411 W. Fourth Ave., Suite 201 in the yellow Sunshine Plaza, honors, educates and inspires with stories of military veterans. It also

has a focus on Alaska's unique military history. Come hear, see, and touch military history, as well as learn little known facts. Winter hours are Wednesday through Saturday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Memorial Day starts summer hours, Monday through Saturday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Group tours by appointment. The museum is also seeking volunteers for a number of tasks.



Left: Bob Sherrill, executive director and president of the Alaska Veterans Museum, in front of the World War II diorama of the Landing Ship Transport (LST), Landing Ship Vessel (LSV) and Higgins boats used for landings on the many islands in the Pacific War as part of the island-hopping campaign.

Right: Thomas Fenoseff, a docent at the Alaska Veterans Museum wearing a Japanese WWII Attu unit uniform. Photos courtesy Bob Sherrill, Alaska Veterans Museum

## Alaska Native Media Group and Alaska Teen Media Institute release podcast

Senior Voice staff

The Alaska Native Media Group (ANMG) and partner Alaska Teen Media Institute are releasing four one-hour radio/podcast episodes. Listeners can find the podcasts at [alaskanativemedia.org/radio-show/](http://alaskanativemedia.org/radio-show/). They are also available on PodBean, Apple Podcasts and Spotify.

NATIVE Voices features Alaska Native community leaders in conversation about lived experiences and issues that are often misrepresented or left unanswered in public discourse.

The first four episodes are hosted by Hannah Bissett (Dena'ina Athabascan) and produced by longtime Alaska reporters Joaquin Estus (Tlingit) and Rhonda McBride. The Alaska Teen Media Institute recorded and edited all the episodes.

- Episode titles:**
- ▶ **Episode 1** – ABCs of Native organizations
  - ▶ **Episode 2** – Tribal Sovereignty in Alaska
  - ▶ **Episode 3** – The Soul of Subsistence, part one, from the Uncle's perspective
  - ▶ **Episode 4** – The Soul of Subsistence, part two, from the Auntie's perspective
- Bissett is a four-time

Alaska Broadcasters Association Goldie Award winner and a graduate student in public policy at the University of Alaska Anchorage. Estus and McBride produced two episodes apiece and were inducted into the Alaska Women's Hall of Fame for their work in journalism. McBride is a news producer at KNBA, and Estus is a retired ICT (Indian Country Today) and public radio reporter. Bissett and Estus also serve on the Alaska Native Media Group board.

The effort has been led by Irene Rowan (Tlingit), a longtime advocate for ANCSA and a founding member of ANMG, who said, "I'm so happy that we did this. It's been a dream of mine for years." Produced on Dena'ina land in Anchorage, the project was funded in 2025.

For its first four episodes, NATIVE Voices was funded by a grant from The CIRI Foundation. ANMG is seeking additional funding and partnerships to continue production on new topics and episodes.

Nonprofit Alaska Native Media Group's purpose is to promote and advance Alaska Natives in the media.

# THANK YOU to our advertisers

Senior Voice would not exist without them. We thank our advertisers and encourage everyone to support them.

## THEY DON'T NEED TO LEAVE HOME TO LIVE BETTER

Going on vacation?  
Need a break  
to run errands?  
We can help!

- Respite Care
- Companion Care
- Chronic Disease Care
- Parkinson's Certified
- Demetia and Alzheimer's Certified
- Personal Hygiene Assistance
- Appointment Transportation
- Light Housekeeping & Meal Prep
- Daily Activities & Hobbies

Experienced  
Caregivers  
Available  
24/7



**907-337-5972** SENIORHELPERS.COM  
1142 North Muldoon Rd. Ste 116, Anchorage



# Do I need to file a tax return this year?

By **JIM MILLER**

Savvy Senior

Dear Savvy Senior,

What are the IRS income tax filing requirements for retirees this tax season? I didn't file a tax return last year because my income was below the filing threshold, but I got a part-time job in 2025, so I'm wondering if I need to file this year.

- Semi-retired Joe

Dear Joe,

Whether you need to file a federal income tax return this year depends on several factors: how much you earned in 2025, the source of your income, your age, and your filing status.

Here's a quick guide to this year's IRS filing thresholds. For most people, it's straightforward: if your gross income (all taxable income, excluding Social Security benefits unless you're married and filing separately) is below the threshold for your filing status and age, you generally do not need to file. But if it's over, you will.

## 2025 IRS federal filing thresholds:

- ▶ **Single:** \$15,750 (\$17,750

**If you need some help with your tax returns, the IRS sponsored Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE) program provides free tax preparation and counseling to middle and low-income taxpayers, age 60 and older. Call 800-906-9887 or visit IRS.treasury.gov/freetaxprep to locate services near you.**

if you're 65 or older by Jan. 1, 2026).

- ▶ **Married filing jointly:** \$31,500 (\$33,100 if one spouse is 65 or older; or \$34,700 if you're both over 65).
- ▶ **Married filing separately:** \$5 at any age.
- ▶ **Head of household:** \$23,625 (\$25,625 if 65 or older).
- ▶ **Qualifying surviving spouse:** \$31,500 (\$33,100 if 65 or older).

For a detailed breakdown, including taxable vs. nontaxable income, you can request a free copy of the IRS "1040 and 1040-SR Instructions for Tax Year 2025" by calling 800-829-3676, or view it online at [IRS.gov/pub/irs-pdf/i1040gi.pdf](https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/i1040gi.pdf).

## Check here too

Be aware that there are other financial situations

that can require you to file a tax return, even if your gross income falls below the IRS filing requirements. For example, if you earned more than \$400 from self-employment in 2025, owe any taxes on an IRA, Health Savings Account or an alternative minimum tax, or get premium tax credits because you, your spouse or a dependent is enrolled in a Health Insurance Marketplace plan, you'll need to file.

You may also need to file if you're receiving Social Security benefits, and one-half of your benefits plus your other gross income and any tax-exempt interest exceeds \$25,000, or \$32,000 if you're married and filing jointly.

To figure all this out, the IRS offers an online tax tool that asks a series of questions that will help

you determine if you're required to file, or if you should file because you're due a refund. It takes less than 15 minutes to complete.

You can access this tool at [IRS.gov/help/ita](https://www.irs.gov/help/ita) - click on "Filing Requirements - Do I need to file a tax return?" Or you can get assistance over the phone by calling the IRS helpline at 800-829-1040.

## Check your state

Even if you're not required to file a federal tax return this year, don't assume that you're also excused from filing state income taxes. The rules for your state might be very different. Check with your state tax agency before assuming you're off the hook. A complete list of state tax agencies is available at [Taxadmin.org/fta-members](https://www.taxadmin.org/fta-members).

## Tax prep help

If you find that you do

need to file a tax return this year, you can Free File at [IRS.gov/freefile](https://www.irs.gov/freefile), which is a partnership program between the IRS and tax software companies. Your 2025 adjusted gross income must be below \$89,000 to qualify.

If you need some help with your tax returns, the IRS sponsored Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE) program provides free tax preparation and counseling to middle and low-income taxpayers, age 60 and older. Call 800-906-9887 or visit [IRS.treasury.gov/freetaxprep](https://www.irs.gov/freetaxprep) to locate services near you.

You can also get help through the AARP Foundation Tax-Aide service at [AARP.org/findtaxhelp](https://www.aarp.org/findtaxhelp) or call 888-227-7669. You don't have to be an AARP member to use this service.

Send your questions or comments to [questions@savvysenior.org](mailto:questions@savvysenior.org), or to Savvy Senior, P.O. Box 5443, Norman, OK 73070.

# NAELA Foundation offers scholarships to law students interested in elder and special needs law

Senior Voice staff

The National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys (NAELA) Foundation is offering up to four \$3,500 scholarships for law students who plan to enroll in a qualifying course in elder or special needs law.

The students must be enrolled at law schools accredited by the American Bar Association.

The need for skilled elder and special needs law attorneys is growing rapidly amid significant demographic shifts. The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that 73 million Americans will be 65 or

older by 2030, increasing demand for legal services related to long-term care planning, public benefits, guardianship, and disability rights. Practitioners nationwide who work with older adults and individuals with disabilities are already experiencing a crisis of capacity as the need for their services grows.

Each scholarship includes:

- \$3,500 in tuition support for one qualifying 2-3 credit course
- A one-year NAELA student membership

Applications are open through April 1. For more information and to apply, go to [NAELA.org/Law-SchoolScholarship](https://www.naela.org/Law-SchoolScholarship).

**RE-ELECT**

**ANNA BRAWLEY**

FOR ASSEMBLY

[WWW.BRAWLEYFORANCHORAGE.COM](http://WWW.BRAWLEYFORANCHORAGE.COM)

PRACTICAL. PROVEN. FOCUSED ON OUR FUTURE.

PRIORITIES

- Expanding our Housing Market
- Addressing Homelessness
- Passing a Balanced Budget
- Increasing Public Safety
- Getting Results for West Anchorage

SCAN FOR MORE INFO ABOUT MY CAMPAIGN

VOTING INFORMATION

MUNICIPAL ELECTION TUESDAY, APRIL 7TH

- SUNDAY, MARCH 8**  
Last Day to Register to Vote.
- TUESDAY, MARCH 17**  
Ballots will be sent to registered voters by mail.
- TUESDAY, APRIL 7 - 8PM**  
Deadline to return ballot or vote in person.

PAID FOR BY ANNA BRAWLEY FOR ANCHORAGE, P.O. BOX 91771, ANCHORAGE, ALASKA 99509

Advertise in

**Senior Voice**

Call 1-800-478-1059.

Senior Voice, March 2026 | 21



# Tax season scams: Red flags you should know

By TERESA HOLT

For Senior Voice

Tax season already brings enough stress...so the last thing you need is a scammer pretending to be the IRS sliding into your texts, emails or phone calls. Every year, scammers try to scare people into acting fast and thinking later. Consumers reported losing \$789 million to government impostor scams in 2024, including IRS impostor scams, according to the Federal Trade Commission.

If the IRS really needs you, they won't text you at midnight or email you with flashing warnings and emoji-filled subject lines. IRS scammers count on confusion and urgency to trick people into clicking links, sharing personal info, or sending money they'll never see again. Knowing the red flags makes it easy to hang up, hit delete, and keep your hard-earned money safe.

## How it works

IRS scams usually come out of nowhere...an unexpected phone call, text, or email demanding immediate action. Scammers may insist you owe back taxes and threaten to arrest you. Scammers often intimidate victims by threatening to stop Social Security benefits or revoke Medicare coverage until victims pay a fine. They may call with promises of a "refund" that requires clicking a link, calling a special number, or sharing personal information, or offer to help you claim tax credits you don't qualify for. Whether it's gift cards, crypto, or wire transfers, these payment demands are a sure sign it's a scam.

The IRS continues to see a surge in email and text scams targeting taxpayers. These fake messages appear to be from the IRS or a tax preparer, showing up unexpectedly and urging quick action. These scams—known as phishing (emails) and smishing (texts)—use fear and urgency to lure people into clicking links or handing over sensitive information. They are even seeing deepfake video calls, using realistic computer-gener-



**Don't fall for scams that prey on you during tax season. If the IRS needs to contact you, it will be via mail, not with a text or an emoji-filled email.**

Nataliya Vaitkevich via Pexels

ated images of government officials to demand immediate payment for fake tax debt.

Another growing concern in 2025 is the spread of bad tax advice on social media. Inaccurate or misleading posts—especially on platforms like TikTok—can confuse well-meaning taxpayers and lead to identity theft or serious tax problems. Some of this advice even encourages people to misuse common tax documents, like Form W-2, putting them at real risk.

## Key indicators of an IRS scam

IRS scams have clear warning signs if you know what to look for. The real IRS usually starts with a paper letter, so surprise calls, texts, or emails about refunds or tax credits should raise alarms. Scammers often threaten that you will be arrested if you do not pay immediately, or they demand payment via gift cards, cryptocurrency, or wire transfers... methods the IRS never uses. Also, be cautious of tax preparers who won't sign your return, ask for cash payment, route refunds into their own accounts or promise to settle your tax debt for pennies on the dollar.

## How to protect yourself

The IRS does not initiate contact with taxpayers by email to request personal or financial information. Generally, the IRS first mails

a paper bill to the person who owes taxes. Always verify your tax information directly by logging in to your account at www.IRS.gov or by calling the IRS at 800-829-1040. For extra protection, the IRS offers an Identity Protection personal identification number (PIN), a simple tool that helps stop scammers from filing fake tax returns in your name, even if they

**The real IRS initiates communication by mail, including in delinquent tax cases. The agency may contact you by phone only after you have received and failed to respond to multiple written notices. Federal agencies never request payment via wire transfer, cryptocurrency, or gift card. In 100 percent of these scenarios, it is a scam.**

have your personal information. The IRS encourages everyone to create an Identity Protection PIN as a proactive safety step. Never click links or open attachments from unexpected emails or texts, and forward suspected scam emails to phishing@irs.gov.

## What you should know

IRS impostor scams often begin with a robocall instructing you to press a number on your keypad to speak with a live agent or to call back using the number provided. Scammers can manipulate caller IDs to make it appear the call is from the IRS. The real IRS initiates communication by mail, including in delinquent tax cases. The agency may contact you by phone only after you have received and failed to respond to multiple written

notices. Federal agencies never request payment via wire transfer, cryptocurrency, or gift card. In 100 percent of these scenarios, it is a scam.

If you need help with tax preparation, the AARP Foundation Tax-Aide program is a trusted resource. AARP Foundation Tax-Aide provides free tax assistance to anyone, with a focus on taxpayers over 50 and those with low to moderate income. You don't need to be an AARP member to use the service. For more information on the Tax-Aide program or to locate the nearest Tax-Aide site, search for AARP Foundation Tax-Aide Locator or call 211 (at 1-800-478-2221), from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Teresa Holt is the AARP Alaska State Director.

## \$5 THIRD THURSDAYS ANCHORAGE MUSEUM

Visit the museum for \$5 on the third Thursday of every month from October through April

- Bring the grandkids and enjoy the Discovery Center together
- Bring a friend and enjoy a cup of tea or coffee in the atrium
- Shop the Anchorage Museum Store where museum members get 10% off purchases – become a member today and get free museum admission all year
- Handicap parking in the museum's heated underground garage
- Free wheelchairs available during your visit

ANCHORAGE MUSEUM  
625 C ST  
DOWNTOWN ANCHORAGE  
CORNER OF 7TH & C ST  
(907) 929-9200





# Municipality faces transportation strain; elders can now ride for free two days a week

By YASMIN RADBOD

Alaska Commission on Aging

Recent Anchorage Assembly discussions have highlighted senior transportation pressures, particularly around the municipally supported AnchorRIDES paratransit program, which provides door-to-door transportation for seniors and people with disabilities who are unable to use fixed-route bus service.

## A lifeline for older adults

Riders rely on AnchorRIDES for medical appointments, grocery shopping, senior center meals and other daily needs that support aging in place. Each trip represents a scheduled ride that enables access to essential services that many riders could not otherwise reach.

## Transit usage and rising demand

Municipal transportation data show that AnchorRIDES provided 163,292 completed trips in 2024, including 39,454 trips in the first quarter and 38,748 trips in the second quarter, reflecting sustained demand throughout the year.

Advocates say Anchorage's growing senior population, longer life expectancy, rising housing costs that push older residents farther from services, and limited alternatives for those who no longer drive are driving demand. Maintaining reliable service can become more challenging-



Anchorage residents 60 and older can now ride the People Mover for free Wednesdays and Fridays, thanks to a change the Assembly made last month. However, the city faces several structural challenges to providing seniors with affordable public transportation.

Photo by Paola Banchero

during periods of workforce shortages and rising operational costs.

## The cost of paratransit service

Providing curb-to-curb paratransit service is significantly more expensive than operating fixed-route buses. The average cost per AnchorRIDES passenger trip was approximately \$31.74 in 2024, reflecting driver labor, fuel, vehicle maintenance, scheduling systems and dispatch operations, according to

municipal transportation reports.

While riders pay modest fares, most costs are covered through municipal funding and grants. Officials have noted that Anchorage's relatively low population density and service model, requiring longer distances and individualized routing, contribute to higher per-trip costs than traditional bus service.

Despite the higher cost, supporters emphasize that paratransit plays a preventive role, helping

older adults attend medical appointments and remain independent longer, which may reduce downstream public costs.

## Recent assembly actions

During the most recent budget cycle, the Anchorage Assembly adopted a municipal budget that continued funding for AnchorRIDES at previously approved levels, allowing service to continue into the upcoming fiscal year.

In a separate 2026 budget change narrative, the Public Transportation Department reported that higher contract rates proposed by MV Transportation would increase per-trip and fixed costs for AnchorRIDES, identifying an estimated \$4.4 million annual increase as the amount needed to maintain current paratransit service levels. That additional funding was not included in the adopted budget. Assembly members have described

the current approach as a short-term measure rather than a long-term solution.

The Assembly also approved an expansion of fixed-route transit access for seniors in February. Members voted to add a second weekly free People Mover bus day for riders age 60 and older, allowing seniors to ride free on Wednesdays and Fridays. The change was recommended by the Public Transportation Advisory Board and supported with additional transit funding. <https://bit.ly/4tA7pYO>

## Medicaid waiver transportation gaps

While municipal transit programs like AnchorRIDES serve an essential role, transportation gaps remain for seniors and adults with disabilities who rely on Medicaid home- and community-based services (HCBS) waivers.

HCBS waiver providers were designed to deliver

page 27 please

**Anchorage Senior Activity Center**  
"A Place to Stay Young!"

- ✓ MEDICARE INFORMATION & BENEFITS ENROLLMENT
- ✓ FITNESS CENTER, TAI CHI, CHAIR YOGA and more!
- ✓ HEALTH & WELLNESS PROGRAMS
- ✓ BILLIARDS ROOM & LIBRARY
- ✓ ARTS & CRAFTS CLASSES, CARD GAMES
- ✓ SOCIAL EVENTS & DISCUSSION GROUPS
- ✓ ARCTIC ROSE CAFE (breakfast and lunch)

907-770-2000
AnchorageSeniorCenter.org



# Tour of Anchorage is highlight of skiing season

By PAOLA BANCHERO

Senior Voice

My husband and daughter are avid cross-country skiers, but somehow my love of running never turned into a similar enthusiasm for snow sports.

But one spring I decided I would sign up for the 25-kilometer Tour of Anchorage ski race.

My sister-in-law, an adventurous young woman who pledged to do one thing outside her comfort zone every year—skydiving, stand-up comedy, trapeze artistry—had died a few months before. And maybe I was honoring her legacy by registering for an athletic event I had always looked upon with trepidation.

Sure enough, it took me several hours to do a race that would have taken talented skiers half the time. But I got it done and learned more about skiing and myself in the process.

I realized the race is a lot of fun. I was in the back of the pack with people who looked like they had never

*next page please*

***Cross-country skiing is an ideal sport as we age because it's low impact on our joints and has a lot of cardio benefits.***

*Photo by Joselynn Finch for Nordic Skiing Association of Anchorage*



*Photo by Travis Rector*





The 2026 race will be on the urban trails of Anchorage.

Photo by Paola Banchemo

## Tour

from page 24

been on skis before. And, hey, I probably looked like that too. We went slowly, we fell a few times, we got back up, we bellyached about one particularly long hill near the end. And then we finished.

Matt Hebard, events manager for the Nordic Skiing Association of Anchorage, extolled the race, which starts at Service High School for the longer distances and goes west through the city. The 25-kilometer race starts at Alaska Pacific University and joins up with the other races.

“The Tour of Anchorage is one of the few point-to-point cross-country ski marathons in North America and may be the only one that crosses through an urban environment,” Hebard said in an email. “The Tour is a celebration of the nordic skiing community of Alaska and beyond that provides a unique point-to-point experience across an urban environment. It celebrates

the amazing trails we have in Anchorage, encourages healthy and active lives.”

In fact, you don’t often hear of cross-country skiers having to give it up. In the 2024 race, which was the most recent to use the point-to-point format, 11 men 70 or older completed the 25-kilometer classic ski race, including an 88-year-old. One of the men finished in an impressive two hours and nine minutes. Seven women 70 and older finished that race. The fastest completed it in three hours and five minutes.

It’s a low-impact sport with high cardio benefits, perfect for any age.

The Tour of Anchorage is coming up March 8. You can ski or ride a fat-tire bike for 25-, 40- or 50-kilometer lengths. I recommend you feel confident on skis if you are taking on the longer races.

Register here: <https://bit.ly/4kJVOSU>

**THANK YOU**  
to our advertisers.  
We encourage everyone to support them.



## ELDER ENDEVORS

4TH WEDNESDAY OF THE MONTH  
LOUSSAC LIBRARY

An opportunity to enjoy community connection, get library service support, and learn about a library resource.

Join us select Wednesdays from 1:30 - 3:30 PM.

**March 11** Story Circle

**April 1** End of Life Planning Workshop & Therapy Dogs

**May 13** Poetry Walk With Candace Blas

More information online at <https://bit.ly/APLForSeniorsSV>

## DROP-IN TECH TIME

WEDNESDAYS, 10 AM - 12 PM

CHUGIAK-EAGLE RIVER LIBRARY

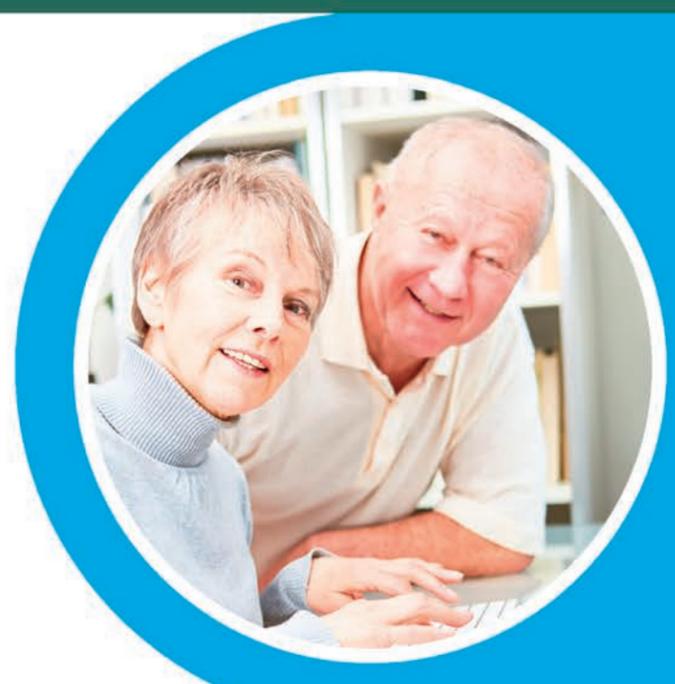
A time and space has been set aside to assist area seniors one-on-one or in small groups.

### Opportunities For

Basic Help with Technology and Applications

Access to Community Resources

Traditional Library Services



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



# Falling

continued from page 7

purchase a safety monitor that comes as a necklace or a bracelet and summons help as soon as you hit the floor. Smart watches can also alert loved ones if you fall.

## Taking precautions

You can find out about fall prevention resources from the Alaska Department of Health: <https://health.alaska.gov/en/education/senior-fall-prevention/>

The Alzheimer's Foundation of America, <https://alzfdn.org>, also offers these recommendations for healthy aging.

### 1. Eat well

Adopt a low-fat diet high on fruits and veggies. Take daily vitamins. Limit intake of red meats, fried and processed foods, salt and sugar. In general, foods that are "heart healthy" are also "brain healthy."

### 2. Stay active

Physical activity increases blood flow to the brain and can also help improve mood and overall wellbe-

ing. Brisk walking benefits brain health, while aerobics can boost your heart rate, and weight training builds strength and flexibility. Look for classes that offer balance and strength components, such as tai chi and yoga. Many senior centers offer them.

### 3. Learn new things

Challenge your brain by starting a new hobby like playing tennis, learning to speak a foreign language, or something you haven't done before. Even something as simple as brushing your teeth with your non-dominant hand stimulates the brain by forcing it to think outside of its normal routine.

### 4. Get enough sleep

Getting a consistent sleep every night is key; at least seven to nine hours is ideal. Having a good sleep environment is also helpful. Insomnia or sleep apnea can have serious physical effects and negatively affect memory and thinking.

### 5. Mind your meds

Medication can affect everyone differently, especially as you age. When getting a new medication or something you haven't

taken in a while (whether over the counter or prescription), talk to your doctor or local pharmacist.

### 6. Stop smoking and limit alcohol

Smoking can increase the risk of other serious illnesses, while too much alcohol can impair judgment and cause accidents, including falls, broken bones, and car crashes.

### 7. Stay connected

Social interaction and maintaining an active social life are very important for brain health, cognitive stimulation and mood. Engaging in your community and partici-

pating in group activities is also beneficial.

### 8. Know your blood pressure

Blood pressure can impact your cognitive functioning. Visit your physician regularly to check your blood pressure and make sure it is in normal range 120/80.

### 9. See your doctor

Maintain checkups. Health screenings are key to managing chronic illnesses, such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and obesity, all of which can impact brain health. Make a list of concerns and bring it with you.

### 10. Get a memory screening

Our brains need regular checkups, just as other parts of our bodies do. Alzheimer's Resource Alaska offers free memory screenings. <https://www.alzalaska.org/for-individuals/#worried-about>. The Alzheimer's Foundation also offers free, on-line memory screenings at <https://alzfdn.org/memory-screening-2/virtual-memory-screenings/> Monday through Friday.

I would add, get outside and soak up some vitamin D from the sun.

**Senior Voice**

Proud Member

**SERVING THE BOOMER & SENIOR MARKETS**

## Heritage Health Alaska Trivia Crossword Answers

### DOWN

- 1. Monticello
- 2. Pinto
- 3. Koreanwar
- 6. Oregontrail
- 9. A1

### ACROSS:

- 4. Lincoln
- 5. Mayflower
- 7. Apache
- 8. Madison
- 10. Libertybell
- 12. Gettysburg
- 13. Baberuth

### Crossword answers from page 16

D	A	T	E	D		P	R	A	T		P	A	L	E	
A	B	O	D	E		S	E	G	A		I	R	O	N	
B	A	T	T	E	R	S	B	O	X		N	I	C	E	
S	S	E			A	T	E		M	A	C	A	O		
	E	M	B	E	R		C	O	A	C	H				
			A	R	E	A		U	N	S	H	O	R	N	
S	A	L	S	A		S	E	T			I	D	E	A	
A	G	U	E	S		S	R	I		S	T	E	N	S	
R	O	B	O			I	N	N		A	T	S	E	A	
A	G	E	N	D	A	S		G	A	V	E				
			B	U	N	T	S		B	E	R	T	H		
	O	M	A	N	I		T	E	L			O	A	F	
O	R	A	L			S	T	O	L	E	N	B	A	S	E
W	E	L	L			E	O	N	S		B	A	S	T	E
L	O	T	S			S	N	E	E		A	N	T	E	S

**Personalize Your Home Care with HomeWell™ of Anchorage**

Home care is never a one-size-fits-all solution. Our holistic approach to home care provides a personalized experience based on individual needs—ensuring a better quality of life. Get the professional assistance you need and the peace of mind your family deserves, no matter where you call home.

**Call HomeWell of Anchorage today at 907-868-3100**

Trusted Care. True Compassion.™ | [homewellcares.com](http://homewellcares.com)

©2020 HomeWell Senior Care, Inc. All rights reserved. Rev0320



## AARP

continued from page 2

cryptocurrency ATM fraud, an increasingly prevalent scam payment scheme targeting older residents. Crypto ATMs—now found in convenience stores, gas stations, and supermarkets statewide—enable legitimate digital currency transactions but operate with far fewer consumer protections than banks or traditional money service businesses. Their rapid growth (“dozens” now operate in Alaska) has been matched by a surge in fraud, with criminals exploiting the machines to steal hundreds of millions nationally. Older adults are disproportionately impacted.

AARP supports legislation that would require state licensing of crypto ATM operators; strengthen fraud prevention standards; and improve transparency and consumer safeguards. These reforms would help curb a fast-evolving threat while educating consumers on how to avoid scams.

Alaska’s guardianship laws are based on a framework dating back to the 1980s—long before modern best practices for autonomy, human dignity, and rights protections were established. Outdated statutes lead to inconsistent protections, inefficient processes, and unnecessary reliance on full guardianship.

AARP Alaska is advocating to update these laws by adopting provisions based on the Uniform Guardianship, Conservatorship, and Other Protective Arrangements Act (UGCOPAA), which provides a more modern, evidence-based, person-centered approach.

In the new proposal, SB190, courts must first consider alternatives such as supported decision-making, powers of attorney, or limited guardianship before imposing full guardianship. This ensures individuals retain as much independence as possible.

Guardianship orders must reflect the individual’s preferences, values, and goals rather than defaulting to broad, one-size-fits-all authority.

The statute change would also clarify the guardian’s duty to support participation in decision-making, honor the individual’s likely preferences, and respect their autonomy unless doing so would cause harm. And outdated terms like “ward” would be replaced with “individual under guardianship,” aligning Alaska’s statutes with national best practices and promoting dignity.

Alaska’s aging population continues to grow, and with it, the urgency to ensure systems and protections are in place that allow seniors to remain independent, financially secure, and safe from exploitation. The 2026 priorities reflect the concerns AARP hears directly from older Alaskans—especially around rising costs, unstable retirement pathways, and new forms of fraud.

By pushing for sensible retirement programs for public and private sectors and modernized consumer protections, AARP Alaska aims to build a stronger, more secure future for all who call the state home.

## Genealogy

continued from page 13

interest into a side gig and started her business, Lineage Journeys, which helps people who want to know more about their family history. <https://lineage-journeys.com/>

Three years ago, she was able to retire from her organizational development career and has been dedicating herself full time to genealogy. She’s both researcher and student in that she’s always learning something new.

“I feel like I’m getting a doctorate but I’m not getting the credit for it. Gee!”

Muhn has presented at RootsTech, a national genealogy conference in Salt Lake City, Utah, and that’s why the Anchorage Genealogical Society invited her to come to Alaska.

She had three pieces of advice for those researching their family roots:

**Remember that because they lived, you are.** We can

learn uncomfortable truths about who our ancestors were or the actions they took, but on some level, we have to have gratefulness because they gave you life, ultimately.

**Keep digging.** “There are no dead ends,” Muhn said. “Genealogy doesn’t happen as fast as ‘Finding your Roots’ on PBS.” Finding your way through family roadblocks requires research skills, time and tenacity.

**Reach out.** Broaden your search to finding your cousins or second cousins. Do they have a family bible? Facebook is your best friend. Broaden your circle to include tools like interlibrary loan and attending seminars. There are resources in a lot of communities to help you.

To register for the seminar on April 18, go to the Anchorage Genealogical Society website: <https://www.anchoragegenealogy.org/store.php?sid=3>. It costs \$45 for the full-day workshop and \$25 for the half-day workshop.

## Transportation

continued from page 23

care in lower-cost, community settings as an alternative to institutional placement. When adequately funded, these providers help individuals remain in their homes, reduce reliance on higher-cost services, and relieve pressure on more expensive systems like AnchorRIDES.

However, providers report that Medicaid waiver transportation rates often do not cover the true cost of providing rides, making it difficult for independent transportation companies and community-based providers to operate sustainably.

They cite rising labor costs, vehicle expenses, insurance and administrative requirements as major barriers, and also point to administrative hurdles, including prior authorization requirements for medical transportation.

This can delay or prevent access to time-sensitive appointments. According to providers, recent Medicaid transportation rate increases have been minimal and have not kept pace with rising wages, fuel costs and vehicle maintenance.

The Guidehouse Long-Term Support Services study acknowledged that Alaska’s Medicaid transportation system faces structural challenges, including non-billable costs unique to Alaska’s geography. While the study published a benchmark rate reflecting approximately an 8 percent increase, it did not conduct a formal adequacy analysis or recommend implementation. Meanwhile, providers report ongoing instability, and individuals must often choose between medical appointments and community participation due to waiver transportation limitations. A separate medical transportation study (ground and air ambulance, taxi, para-

transit services, and accommodation services) is expected in the coming months, but policy action remains pending.

### What’s next

Residents interested in senior services and community accessibility may wish to follow Anchorage Assembly meetings and Transportation Committee discussions, where funding and service levels are reviewed. The Public Transportation Advisory Board also provides updates and recommendations related to transit services. For the release of the additional Guidehouse study on medical transportation, individuals can subscribe to Senior and Disabilities Services e-alerts here: <https://list.state.ak.us/mailman/listinfo/sds-e-news>.

How Anchorage responds to the transportation needs of its seniors will shape not only today’s services, but how future generations are able to age in place.

## MOVING? Let us know!

Send your change of address information to  
Senior Voice, 401 E. Fireweed Lane, #102,

Anchorage, AK 99503

Or call 276-1059

(Anchorage area) or

1-800-478-1059

(toll-free statewide)



Meeting Tuesday’s  
5:30-6:30PM  
2612 E. Northern  
Lights Blvd.  
Anchorage, AK 99508



Open group. No cost.  
Simply come as  
you are.

### Themes:

- 4/7: Caregiving Foundations
- 4/14: Caregiver Burnout & Self-Care
- 4/21: Healthy Boundaries & Asking for Help
- 4/28: Communication Skills
- 5/5: Emotions in Caregiving
- 5/12: Stress Management & Relaxation
- 6/2: Holidays & Special Dates
- 6/9: Preparing for What Comes
- 5/19: Finding Hope & Meaning
- 5/26: Navigating Transitions
- 6/16: Life After Caregiving
- 6/23: Closing & Celebration

907.561.5322  
[info@hospiceofanchorage.org](mailto:info@hospiceofanchorage.org)



# Enjoy the Ride!



## Stay active and stay connected.

Ride with friends, family, or caregivers comfortably and affordably. Getting around Anchorage doesn't have to be stressful or expensive.

**SENIORS RIDE FREE ON WEDNESDAYS & FRIDAYS.  
HALF-PRICE FARES ALL OTHER DAYS.**

\*Seniors 60+ just show your ID and ride.



SCAN ME



PLAN TRIPS, BUY TICKETS,  
& TRACK REAL-TIME BUS ARRIVALS.  
**DOWNLOAD THE TRANSIT & mTICKET APPS TODAY!**



**PEOPLEMOVER.ORG | (907) 343-6543**



**PEOPLE  
MOVER**