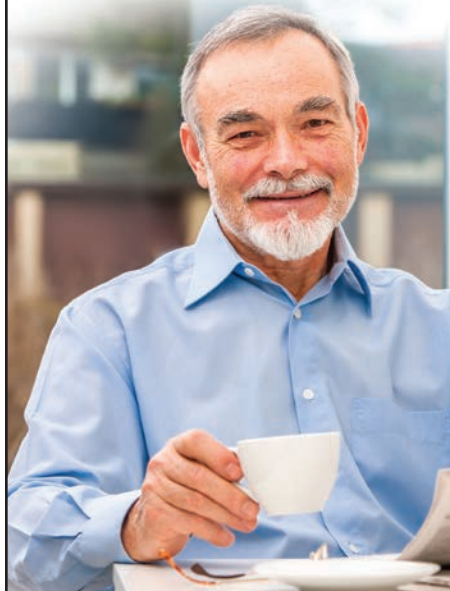
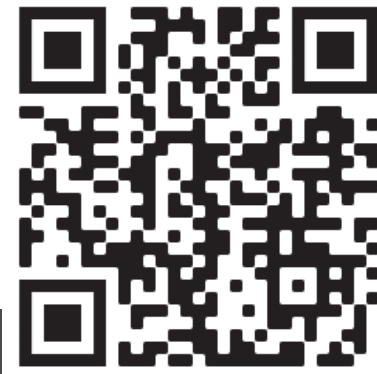


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Volume 49, Number 10 October 2026

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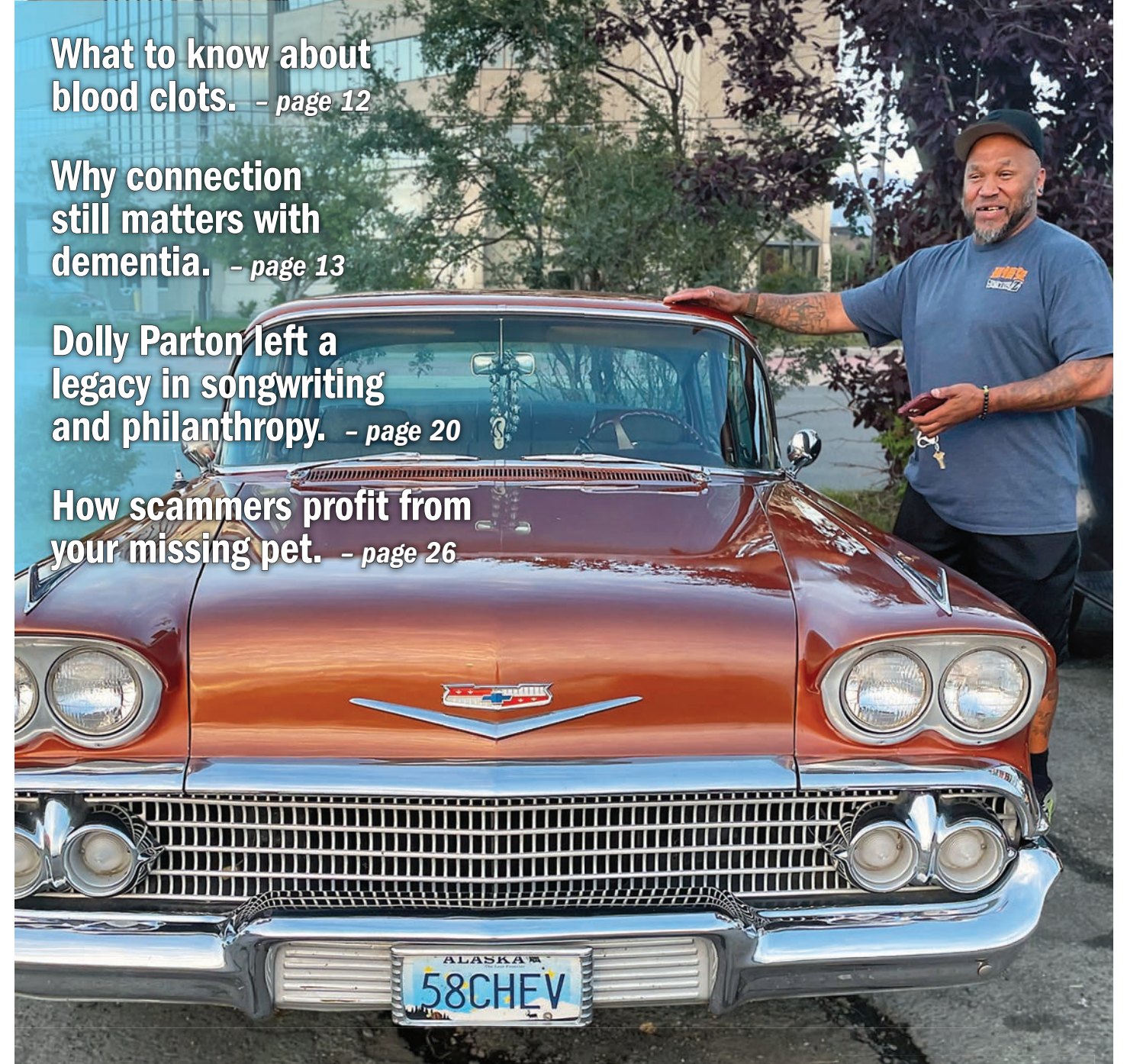
How scammers profit from
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Sonny Byrd, Jr. and his 1958 Chevrolet Bel Air, named Daisy Bel. At 50, he is one of the youngest members of the Antique Auto Musers Club, which is based in Anchorage. - page 24

Photo by Paola Banchemo

2025
National Mature
Media Awards
Winner





Filipino American history beyond the Alaskeros

By SHAYNE NUESCA

For Senior Voice

Filipinos and Filipino Americans have more than 200 years of history in Alaska, but there is only one book that tells our story. It’s called “Filipinos in Alaska, 1788–1958,” written by the late former Alaska state Rep. Thelma Buchholdt, who herself made history. Buchholdt was the first Asian American and Filipino elected to the Alaska Legislature, and the first Filipina elected to any state legislative body.

October is Filipino American History Month, which has been officially recognized in Alaska state law since 2023, through legislation by Rep. Genevieve Mina, who is the second Filipina elected to the Alaska Legislature. It’s a time to uplift achievements like those of Mina’s and Buchholdt’s, recognize our history as Filipino Americans, and it’s a personal call for me to reclaim our shared history as Filipinos of Alaska. For most of my life, whenever I’d tell someone I am from Alaska, especially another Filipino American, they were surprised to learn that Filipinos quote, unquote, “made it all the way up there.”

I immigrated from the Philippines as a child nearly 30 years ago, and in my quest for a sense of belonging, I remember looking for any mention of Filipinos and Alaska in every library book or ency-



Shayne Nuesca is a founder of MANA, which aims to reclaim Filipino American history in Alaska. Photo by Joshua Albeza Branstetter/Mana

clopedia I could find. When I worked in journalism, I took up every opportunity to tell Asian American or Filipino American stories. In that work, I became even more interested in Filipino American history and understanding how Alaska became a place where we settled, but in those long hours of research, I found Alaska more often depicted as an anecdote in the broader narrative of Filipino American history. Alaska was mentioned in passing as part of someone else’s story instead of a story of its own.

The narrative goes something like this: Someone’s grandfather or great-grandfather found their way north to Alaska, by way of Seattle, or somewhere in California. They were called the Alaskeros,

and they spent their summers working the canneries. When their contracts were up, they moved back to wherever they came from on the West Coast. And it will almost always end there—Alaska seasonal work as a footnote in California or Washington’s Filipino American history.

Buchholdt’s book was published in 1996, and it is an illustrative look at the Filipino American community beyond seasonal work contracts. A beautiful snapshot in time, many multigenerational Filipino American families in Alaska can use the book to learn about their own ancestors. The book even has a list of some of the first Filipinos who settled in Alaska. The stories in the book, as its title notes, end in 1958. This was nearly a decade before the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, that fundamentally changed the demographics of our country, and allowed more Filipinos to immigrate to the United States, Alaska included. There are decades, generations, of history that have not been documented—yet.

There’s an effort to fill these gaps in history. At the same time Rep. Mina’s bill made its way through the Legislature, a group of Filipino Americans were

gearing up to tell our community’s stories in a museum exhibit. This group became Mana, named after the Filipino word for “inheritance,” or “heritage.” Mana is a media collective reclaiming the history of Filipino Americans across the state, building a community archive and fostering intergenerational storytelling. We see our stories as what we inherit and what we pass down.

We didn’t know then how serendipitous the timing of our exhibit was, but we knew it was important to tell our stories. While Filipino workers remain an integral part of nearly every industry in Alaska, there is much more to tell about our communities, from the historical Diaz Cafe in Ketchikan, to the Tlingit–Filipino families of Juneau and Filipino Amer-

ican trailblazers whose stories went overlooked for decades. As I listen and document our stories, I’ve come to learn that history is more than a static collection of facts and dates. History is in motion. It’s a living process, challenging our perspectives, sometimes even asking us to reshape what we think we know. What I know is this: Filipino American history in Alaska didn’t end with the Alaskeros. We are still here.

Shayne Nuesca is a founder of Mana, whose mission is to reclaim Filipino American history in Alaska, centering relationships with our communities across the state. You can learn more about Filipino Americans in Alaska by visiting Mana’s website at manaalaska.com, and see our exhibits at manaalaska.com/exhibits.

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.

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.

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Mission statement:

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Vision statement:

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

Corrections

The article “Savoring garden tours and summer’s detours” mistakenly stated the thoroughfare in the Mat-Su Borough. It is the Trunk Road.

The article “Rediscovering ‘us’ in Thailand: Chiang Mai” had confusing captions. The caption “Top left: Walking beside gentle giants into the Chiang Mai jungle—quiet, humbling, and unforgettable.” should have appeared next to the image of the Sherrys with an elephant. The caption labeled “At The Good View,

the Ping River glowed, the city lit up, and even the wrong turns felt exactly right.” should have indicated the photo on the top left of the layout, which began on Page 22. The top right image on the first page of the layout should have read, “A khantoke dinner at the Old Chiang Mai Cultural Center—floor cushions, northern Thai flavors, and a date night from another era.”

The story about the Mat-Su Senior Services’ new CEO misstated her name in the last reference. She is Elda McCraw.



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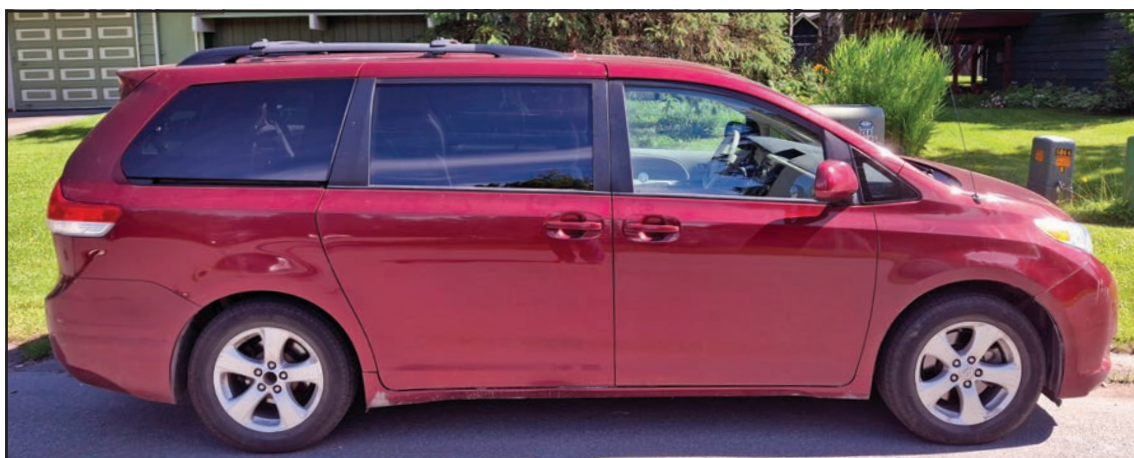
I paid \$40,000 for a brand new Nagmobile

BY LAWRENCE D. WEISS

Senior Voice Correspondent

To us she'll always be the Red Rocket. To the rest of the world, she is a red 2011 Toyota Sienna minivan. We bought her 13 years ago, already a couple of years old, at the Avis used car lot out by the airport in Anchorage. The Red Rocket served us well all these years. It never had a major mechanical problem and it didn't use or leak oil. This is what happened: Christy and I are in pretty good health but we got older. Reaction times are a bit slower. Vision is a little less sharp. The mind wanders a tad more than it used to.

Here's what really pushed me over the edge in terms of considering a newer, safer car. In the last year or so we had some dark, rainy weather. I attached these special bubble mirrors to the regular side-view mirrors on the Red Rocket to eliminate blind spots when I wanted to switch lanes. Between the darkness and the thick coating of rain drops, the bubble mirrors were useless, and I nearly pushed



The old Red Rocket (top), a 2011 Toyota Sienna minivan, was designed to help you survive a collision. The 2026 Hyundai Santa Fe hybrid (bottom) is designed to help you avoid getting into one in the first place.

Photos by Lawrence D. Weiss

cars in my blind spot off the road a couple times. Scary.

A few months ago I got serious and decided to look into buying a new car that would be safer for us than

the Red Rocket and get better gas mileage. I spent hours and hours poring over car reviews in Consumer Reports and on YouTube. Then we visited the car lots.

We sat in cars (too low and confining), took test drives (the seats were uncomfortable and the engines were too loud) and made inquiries ("Sure, I can put you in one of those in about a year. Maybe six months.")

And then, finally, one day we walked into a dealership and bought one. We purchased a 2026 Hyundai Santa Fe hybrid. This is a boxy mid-sized SUV, highly rated for safety, mileage and reliability by Consumer Reports. We like it because it is fairly easy to get in and out of and has large windows with a high roofline and a nice open, airy feeling. They had several on the lot. Naturally we bought the red one.

I want to focus on my experience with a couple of the safety features because after all, that's the main reason we bought a new car. The 15-year-old Red Rocket had seatbelts, a tiny little backup camera screen, air bags, and crumple zones. That was pretty much it.

The Santa Fe has all that and a plethora of additional whiz-bang safety features that we are still trying to figure out. The conceptual distinction is this: The Red Rocket was designed to help you survive a collision.

The Santa Fe is designed to help you avoid getting into one in the first place.

To wit: A few days ago we took the Hyundai for a spin from Anchorage to Palmer. On the highway on the way back it urgently chimed. It was trying to tell me something, but I couldn't figure out what. After a few moments of looking around for a hint, I realized that the digital dashboard had been replaced by the image of a steaming cup of coffee and the words, "Consider taking a break."

The Driver Attention Warning system uses a front view camera on our windshield to analyze driving patterns, lane positioning, and steering behavior. If it thinks we are tired or impaired, it unabashedly "advises" (or "nags," depending upon your perspective). And by the way, I was neither tired nor impaired. Maybe a bit inattentive? In any case it perked me right up.

More good news, Anchorage. It is safe to drive next to me now. The Hyundai has the awkwardly named but very helpful Blind-Spot Collision-Avoidance Assist. When I flip on my turn signal to change lanes and there is a car next to me in the blind spot, the steering wheel vibrates and a small red light pops on in the side-view mirror. You cannot miss the message: "don't change lanes now!"

There is so much more. For example, the Smart Cruise Control keeps you at a steady speed on the highway but automatically slows down when it senses a slower car in front of you. Lane Keeping Assist vibrates your steering wheel and gives your wheel a little tug if you start wandering into the next lane. Safe Exit Assist uses radar to warn you when a car or bicycle is coming from behind after you have parked and you want to get out of the car.

Yeah, it's a Nagmobile compared to our previous car, but I can live with that (yes, an embarrassingly bad pun!).

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

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Finding spiritual meaning in the later years

By KAREN CASANOVAS

For Senior Voice

Q: Recently, I've read about people identifying as "Spiritual But Not Religious" (SBNR). What does that mean?

A: As we age, maintaining physical strength, balance and mobility is essential, but cultivating a positive outlook is equally vital. A recent Pew Research Center study (July 2023–March 2024) highlights how Americans view spiritual and religious self-descriptions:

- ▶ 21% Spiritual but not religious
- ▶ 53% Spiritual and religious
- ▶ 5% Religious but not spiritual
- ▶ 21% Neither spiritual nor religious

Spirituality is a universal human experience that connects us to a sense of meaning and a reality larger than ourselves. But how do we find a personal path within that vast landscape? Because spirituality is deeply individual, it manifests through various traditions and mindsets. To navigate this search, consider which of these three primary approaches resonates with you:

The Thinker: If you connect best through books, philosophy, and deep analysis, lean into Intellectual Spirituality. This includes stoicism, secular humanism, existentialism, and analytical Buddhism, as well as the mystical sub-paths of major world religions.

The Feeler/Doer: If you feel most aligned when volunteering or fighting for a cause, your path may be Service-based Spirituality. This includes traditions like Tikkun Olam, Bhakti yoga, the Catholic Worker Movement, and the Sikh practice of Seva.

The Experienter: If you crave quiet moments, deep meditation, or a sense of oneness with the universe, explore mystical or earth-based spirituality. This includes Indigenous



traditions, paganism, deep ecology, Sufism, Christian mysticism, and Zen Buddhism.

The rise of the SBNR movement—now representing roughly a quarter of U.S. adults—is a significant sociological shift driven by several factors:

1. Institutional disillusionment: Frustration with political polarization and ethical friction within traditional religious organizations.

2. The rise of autonomy: A cultural shift toward individualism and the rejection of rigid dogma.

3. The fading stigma: Being "unaffiliated" is now socially acceptable, removing the fear of judgment.

4. Digital accessibility: The ability to access diverse perspectives online without needing a physical building to participate.

5. Persistent "mystic hunger": An enduring human search for meaning beyond the material world.

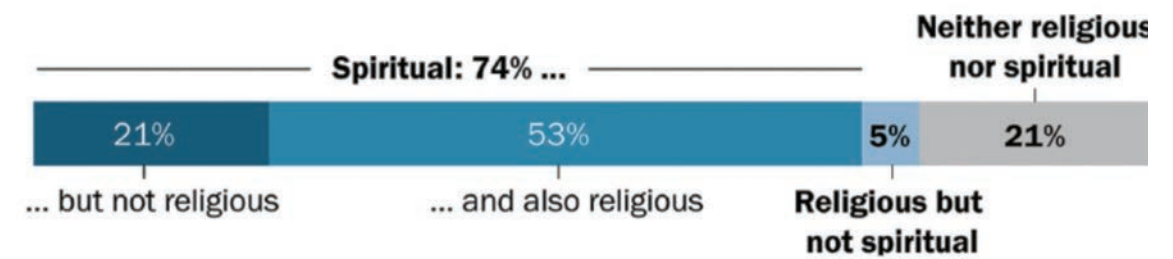
Aging often acts as a natural catalyst for this search. As the years pass, the illusion of control fades, forcing a transition from outward achievement to inward exploration. The evolution of how our priorities change as we age is called gerotranscendence—a natural shift from a materialistic, rationalistic worldview to a more cosmic and spiritual one. This transition involves five fundamental changes:

1. Shedding the ego: Moving from status-seeking to inward reflection.

2. Reframing time: Recognizing time as a finite, precious resource rather than an infinite horizon.

74% of U.S. adults identify as spiritual

% of U.S. adults who identify as the following



Note: Figures may not add to 100% or to subtotals indicated due to rounding. "Spiritual" adults are those who describe themselves as very or somewhat spiritual. "Religious" adults are those who describe themselves as very or somewhat religious. Those who are not spiritual include those who say they are not too or not at all spiritual, and those who did not answer the question. Those who are not religious include those who say they are not too or not at all religious, and those who did not answer the question.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023–March 4, 2024.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

3. Integrating experience: Balancing the grief of life's losses with the resilience gained through them.

4. Neurological maturation: Embracing the strengthening of empathy and emotional regulation.

5. Transcending competition: Shifting from personal ambition to leaving a legacy of wisdom.

To find your path, start by inventorying your core values and the activities that naturally evoke awe

or curiosity. Treat your search like an experiment: try different traditions and mindsets to see what resonates. Feel free to be eclectic—you might combine Buddhist mindfulness for calm, Stoic philosophy for perspective, and community service for ethical grounding. Just as you prioritize physical strength, mobility, and balance to sustain your body, a consistent spiritual practice is essential for sustaining your inner well-being.

Ultimately, your spiritual path is uniquely yours to build; keep what connects, and discard what doesn't.

Karen Casanovas, PCC, CPCC, CLIPP is a translational resilience researcher, speaker, and co-author of "Cracking the Rich Code (Volume 19)". Her work focuses on the art of human connection and the power of intentional practices to navigate the spiritual and emotional transitions of aging with grace. For inquiries, contact her at info@karencasanovas.com.

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Medicaid work and community engagement requirements changing in Alaska next year

By JOHN SCHIESZER

For Senior Voice

Important changes to federal rules will affect some adults ages 19–64 who get Alaska Medicaid starting in January 2027. This means that some people with Medicaid must work, go to school, go to a training program, or volunteer to keep their coverage. For adults ages 50 to 64, one of the biggest changes is that most people covered through Medicaid will have their eligibility reviewed every six months instead of every 12 months beginning Jan. 1, 2027.

If you get a form or letter, read it and reply by the date shown to avoid losing your Medicaid coverage and access to healthcare. Exemptions for Alaska include living in an area with high unemployment (unemployment rate 6.45% or above), living in a federally declared disaster area, including if you had to leave your home. Other exemptions include receiving inpatient or residential care and traveling for medically necessary care not available locally.

“Exclusions may apply to Alaska Native or American Indian individuals, people enrolled in Medicare, certain parents and caregivers, people experiencing a substance use condition, and people with certain health conditions or disabilities,” said Shiva Marupudi, Anchorage Neighborhood Health Center’s director of revenue cycle.

You are likely not affected if you are pregnant or within the postpartum coverage period. You are also not affected if you are medically frail, like having a significant physical, intellectual, or developmental disability, are blind, or have a serious complex medical condition. You are not affected if you are a veteran with a total disability rating or a parent/caregiver for a child under age 14 or someone with a disability.

“There are also new work and community engagement requirements for some adults in the Medicaid expansion group. Under

current guidance, those requirements can be met in several ways, including earning at least \$580 in a month, working or volunteering at least 80 hours a month, participating in an approved work program, attending school at least half-time, or through qualifying seasonal work,” Marupudi said in an interview.

It is important to recognize that implementation planning is still underway, and there are details that have not yet been finalized or fully clarified. We can share what we know

based on the information currently available, but Medicaid recipients should expect additional guidance as the State continues its implementation work.

“It is also important to distinguish between the different changes. The six-month renewal requirement is scheduled to begin Jan. 1, 2027. The State has also discussed seeking additional time to implement the work and community engagement requirements. Until additional guidance is issued, individuals should continue to follow the current requirements and

check the State’s Medicaid information regularly for updates,” Marupudi said.

The most important thing people can do now is to be proactive, according to Marupudi. Make sure the Division of Public Assistance has your current mailing address, email address and phone number, and check your mail and other communications regularly for Medicaid notices. It is also helpful to understand whether one of the exclusions may apply to you. “The State plans to first use information it already has to determine whether

someone meets the requirements or qualifies for an exclusion. If that information cannot be verified, you may receive a request for additional documentation,” Marupudi said.

For people who are subject to the work and community engagement requirements, it is important to understand that there are different ways to meet the requirement. Current guidance also indicates that people already receiving Medicaid generally must demonstrate that they met

page 30 please

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Frank G, US Navy (Ret.), Anchorage

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Vaccines to take or not to take, that is the question

By DIMITRA LAVRAKAS

Senior Voice Correspondent

Maybe you're like me and doomscroll reels on Facebook or memes playing to Alphaville song "I want to be Forever Young," and the young faces of famous people and movie stars morph into their present-day image.

If they're dead, they have beautiful white wings, which is somewhat reassuring.

Sometimes, the cause of death is listed and No. 1 seems to be pneumonia, but also heart problems and Lewy Body dementia.

Pro-vaxxers and anti-vaxxers

Personally, I have never seen a vaccine I didn't like.

In Utqiagvik (formerly Barrow) the town was a site testing the Havrix vaccine used to prevent infection caused by the hepatitis A virus.

Hepatitis A is endemic to areas where there is a lack of sanitation (hot running water).

Once, in Anaktuvuk Pass, I was offered a piece of *quaq*, raw frozen fish, after the woman had changed her child's diaper without



Vaccines, such as the measles, flu and shingles shots, can help older people stay healthy, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Photo by Tara Winstead via Pexels

washing her hands.

That is not the case on the North Slope now as most villages have running water and flush toilets. Honey buckets are, thankfully, less and less common in rural communities.

Anti-vaxxers claim that some vaccines cause conditions like autism, but

extensive scientific studies have disproved this. <https://www.mayoclinichealthsystem.org/hometown-health/speaking-of-health/autism-vaccine-link-debunked>

The World Health Organization recently declared that "vaccine hesitancy is one of the top 10 threats to

global health."

Studies have recently found the flu, herpes zoster (shingles), and pneumonia vaccinations have a protective effect against some cardiovascular events on people over 65 years.

Dosage is once a year.

Pneumonia can be deadly

Watch for these warning signals:

1. Confusion, delirium
2. Weakness and unsteadiness
3. Shortness of breath and racing heart
4. Chest pain
5. Coughing and up and down temperature fluctuation
6. Drop in blood pressure

Dosage is once a year.

Measles outbreak could affect you

Symptoms:

1. High fever
2. Cough
3. Runny nose
4. Red, watery eyes
5. White spots inside your mouth
6. A red rash that spreads from the top of your body on down

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported last month that there are 3,278 confirmed measles cases as of Sept. 10, 2026 reported in 47 jurisdictions, including Alaska.

<https://www.cdc.gov/measles/data-research/index.html>

Complications from a measles infection can include pneumonia, ear infections, blindness, encephalitis (swelling of the brain) and a rare but fatal disease of the central nervous system known as subacute sclerosing pan-encephalitis.

Older adults are also more likely to develop hepatitis or liver problems with a measles infection.

Measles is one of the most contagious of all infections.

Annual flu shot

I was interviewing an astronaut at Utqiagvik's Naval Arctic Research Laboratory when I fell very ill. For the next three days, I had a temperature of 103 and was almost hallucinating. You sure don't want that to happen to you.

Every year, the strain of flu is investigated, so the vaccine will address the new symptoms.

Symptoms:

1. Fever or chills
2. Cough
3. Sore throat,
4. Runny or stuffy nose
5. Muscle or body aches
6. Headaches
7. Fatigue
8. Occasionally vomiting or diarrhea

Complications from the flu for those over 65 can escalate to bacterial pneumonia, sinus infections and

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Consider adding herbal medicine to your routine

By Dr. EMILY KANE
For Senior Voice

The change of season is a time when our immune systems must adapt to a new environment and weather pattern. We are more vulnerable to contagious illness during these colder days and longer nights. Warm hats, scarves and gloves can help. Cold wind can literally drive pathogens into your system, so bundle up.

In many parts of northern Asia, the preferred winter drink is hot water. Take your water warmer if you are feeling chilly. Warming herbs which can be added to hot water include ginger, cumin, cinnamon and the whole range of peppers (cayenne, paprika, kava). I love just-squeezed hot lemonade with fresh sliced ginger and a tiny pinch of cayenne as a winter tonic.

Kitchen and herbal medicine is a fantastic way to stay healthy. Of course, healing your gut and your immune system will cure most ailments. “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure” remains sage advice. If you take care of your intestinal tract (which connects the outside world to your trillions of cells) and your immune system (white blood cells, which along with the oxygen-carrying red blood cells, emanate from the bone marrow) you will most likely stay healthy.



Emily Kane, a naturopathic doctor, recommends using herbs and mushroom supplements to augment your immune system.

A bottle of Paul Stamets Host Defense mushrooms, as shown on the manufacturers' website

My favorite plant medicines for a healthy digestive tract are “bitters.” These bitter (but delicious) tasting herbs stimulate digestive secretions to flow, thus enhancing the breakdown of food into fundamental units (amino acids, simple sugars and essential fatty acids) to allow for optimal absorption. A classic bitter formula would certainly contain Gentian (*Gentiana lutea*) and probably also anise (*Pimpinella anisum*) and ginger (*Zingiber officinalis*). If you wanted a sweeter bitter, Fennel is a good addition (*Foeniculum vulgare*). If your GI tract is touchy, add slippery elm (*Ulmus rubra*). Gentian works by directly stimulating the taste buds to initiate the promotion of saliva and gastric juices. Even



small doses gently stimulate peristalsis (rhythmic contraction of the colon to trigger evacuation of previous meals' waste) without speeding up the passage of food through the tract. Ideal “transit time” is 18–24 hours. Faster means you won't absorb nutrients adequately and slower means constipation and potential return of toxic wastes to the bloodstream. A simple and effective bitter formula might contain 50% gentian, 20% anise, 20% ginger and 10% slippery elm. Take 1/2–1 teaspoons before main meals.

Some of my favorite immune support herbs are anti-virals. Viral illness is very prevalent and also difficult to treat. Viruses get inside our cells and can mess with

the DNA and mitochondrial functions. The mitochondria are tiny organs within each cell that produce the energy to drive all our systems. An antiviral/immune tonic might contain echinacea, goldenseal, lomatium (sometimes called osha) and cedar leaf (*Thuja occidentalis*). Equal parts of these in a tincture (alcohol) or glycerite (honey) can help prevent colds and flus (1 teaspoon 1–2 times daily) or treat an acute viral illness (2 tablespoons twice daily for 3–10 days). Many drugs, including over-the-counter medication, produce unwanted side effects, typically drying not only your mucous membranes but also your brain. Almost all drug classes mess with the microbiome and cause blood sugar fluctuations. Stable blood sugar is a foundational concept for good health, optimal brain functioning and stable mood.

Therapeutic herbs can be made into beverages or incorporated into cooking and will go a long way to keeping you free of colds, flu and aches this winter. For blood type O, sea veggies are particularly beneficial – both due to their mineral content and because they bind lectins (especially grain lectins which tend to drag down the O immune system). Dulse is a super-food for Os. You can often find it pulverized in a shaker jar all ready to sprinkle on all your savory

meals or even at the top of a smoothie. Carob and curry are also beneficial condiments for Os.

People with blood type A can trend a bit nervous and have low stomach acid so eating slowly and chewing your food well is essential. Herbal medicine to help As manage day-to-day stress include *Eleutherococcus senticosus* (Siberian ginseng), *ashwagandha* (*Withania somnifera*), holy basil (*Ocimum sanctum*) and *gingko biloba*. Explore these herbal medicines in tea or tinctures and find one, or a combination, that works for you. As also benefit greatly from green tea/matcha and aloe juice. Both will soothe the intestinal tract and help prevent potential infections getting deeper into the body. Generally, herbal medicines take a bit longer than pharmaceuticals to manifest results (maybe 10–14 days of taking 1 teaspoon tincture or 1 cup strong tea daily) but there are no unwanted side effects, unlike drugs, which usually produce side effects because they are foreign chemicals not recognized by the immune system.

People with blood type B tend to have mild personalities and are in general intelligent and agreeable people. However, they internalize stress and can benefit from long-term strategies to reduce a

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Medicare enrollment period opens Oct. 15

By SEAN McPHILAMY
Alaska Medicare Information Office

From Oct. 15 through Dec. 7, I encourage you to review and, if needed, change your *Prescription Drug Plan* (PDP) under Medicare's Part D coverage. Changes you elect will become effective on Jan. 1, 2027. Certified Medicare counselors across Alaska can help you as part of the Medicare Information Office's network of program Ambassadors. Give us a call, we would be glad to answer your questions, guide you through the process, and even complete the



review of your prescription drug plan with you.

Take time to review your drug plan

Under Part D of Medicare, private insurance companies have established Prescription Drug Plans

(PDPs). These plans meet the regulatory requirements of the national Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) along with complying with the State of Alaska's rules overseen by the Department of Commerce and the Division of Insurance. These private insurance companies set up agreements with both drug manufacturers (the pharmaceutical companies) and distribution networks (the retail pharmacies); under a tiered pricing system, PDPs provide access to a list of prescription drugs, also known as their formulary.

Even if your current plan has been meeting all your

prescription needs, you may be able to obtain a new plan at a lower overall cost to you. For many reasons, these private insurance companies revise their offered PDPs annually. What has worked for you this year, may not work for you next calendar year. To review your options, you may go online to Medicare.gov, then find the link for *Health & Drug Plans*. Without needing to create an account, you may use this online tool to review the medication you currently are prescribed, by entering the prescription's name, its dosage, and how often you take it. You can also com-

pare costs through local retail pharmacies. And you may be able to save money by using mail order delivery of your medications.

You may change to the plan of your choice

Once you have reviewed your options, you may elect to change to a new plan. The goal when searching for a new plan which meets all your requirements is to obtain the lowest overall cost to you. Each plan may contain specific rules regarding your prescriptions, so read these notations carefully. The estimated

page 8 please



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Why does my hearing seem worse after I start wearing hearing aids?

Part 3 of 3



By **DONNA R. DEMARCO**

Accurate Hearing Systems

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- Increased independence
- Better overall quality of life

The bottom line

If your hearing seems worse when you take out your hearing aids, it does not mean the devices have damaged your hearing. More often, it means your brain has adjusted to hearing better and is now more aware of the hearing loss that was already present.

When properly fitted and programmed, hearing aids are a safe and effective way to improve communication, support auditory function, and enhance overall well-being. If you have concerns about your hearing aids or notice changes in your hearing, consult your hearing care professional for an evaluation.

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

Medicare

continued from page 7

annual cost is calculated by adding up the plan's monthly premiums along with the cost-share of the prescriptions you anticipate obtaining during the year. While PDPs offer a variety of deductibles, premiums, and cost-shares, pay attention to the total estimated cost rather than one individual factor. During the open enrollment period (beginning Oct. 15 through Dec. 7), you may even make multiple changes—the last change you make by Dec. 7 is the one which will become effective on Jan. 1, 2027.

Out-of-pocket costs

Your annual out-of-pocket Part D costs are capped at \$2,400. This includes what you pay for your prescriptions' copays or coinsurance during the year (including the plan deductible). This does not include the monthly drug plan premiums, nor does it include any medications which you purchase "outside" of your prescription drug plan, such as that through drug discount cards. After meeting the out-of-pocket limit, you pay nothing (\$0 copay) for covered Part D drugs for the rest of the year.

You also have the option to sign up for a payment plan for your Part D out-of-pocket costs.

This program is called the *Medicare Prescription Payment Plan*, and you may also hear it referred to as "smoothing" costs. It lets you spread your drug costs out throughout the year. If you sign up, your Part D plan will send you a monthly bill, and you will pay \$0 at the pharmacy. The payment plan does not reduce your out-of-pocket costs, but it can help people with high drug costs concentrated in the early months of the year manage their monthly expenses for the rest of the year. To sign up for the payment plan, contact your Part D plan.

Summary of considerations

Ask yourself the following questions before choosing a Part D drug plan:

- Does the plan cover all the medications I take?
- Does the plan have restrictions on my drugs (i.e. prior authorization, step therapy, or quantity limits)?
 - **Prior authorization** means that you must get approval from your Part D plan before the plan will pay for the drug.
 - **Step therapy** means that your plan requires you to try a cheaper version of your drug before it will cover the more expensive one.
 - **Quantity limits** restrict the quantity of a drug you can get per prescription fill, such as 30 pills of Drug X per month.

- How much will I pay for monthly premiums and the annual deductible?
- How much will I pay at the pharmacy (copay/coinsurance) for each drug I take?
- Is my pharmacy in the plan's preferred network? (You pay the least if you used preferred network pharmacies.)
- Can I fill my prescriptions by mail order?
- What is the plan's star rating?

To discuss your options when choosing a Part D Prescription Drug Plan, or to ask any questions regarding your specific situation, please contact the State of Alaska Medicare Information Office at (800) 478-6065 or (907) 269-3680; our office is also known as the State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP), the Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP), and the Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act (MIPPA) program. If you are part of an agency or organization that assists Seniors with medical resources, consider networking with the Medicare Information Office. Call us to inquire about our Ambassador program.

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

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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.

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Weight training is an essential activity as we age

By **TRACY DUMAS**
For Senior Voice

Getting up out of a chair, carrying groceries, or picking up your grandchild are regular activities that can become challenging as we age. But they don't have to be—if you incorporate strength training into your routine.

Why strength train? As we age, muscular strength decreases so it's essential to train your muscles to keep being able to do the activities you need or want to do. Getting up out of a

chair, getting up from the ground, reaching overhead, squatting, even keeping good posture—all of it can keep you going and prevent injury.

Never trained? There's no time like the present. Start before things happen. It's important to take it slow and use expert guidance. Meet with a trainer who can show you the right moves to develop strength, flexibility, and mobility, especially in the hips, knees, and ankles to make moving easier as you age. Let them assess how well

you can move past 90 degrees. Try using TRX straps then progress to kettle bell squats, front loading to help with core and posture.

Being able to press weight overhead is another crucial skill to maintain as we age. Try overhead presses with light dumbbells or using a resistance machine. Incorporate back-related motions, like rowing. Focus on using a pulling motion to keep the shoulders back and work on your posture alignment to strengthen your core and counter excess sitting.

The key to getting stronger through strength training is not only consistency, training at least 2–3 times a week, but also having a desire to live well. We all aim to live long, happy lives and for many Alaskans, that includes being able to keep skiing, hiking, biking, fishing, and everything else you can do here in Alaska. But to do those activities safely, you must build foundational exercises to prevent injury. For skiers, for example, we use many different muscles, so being able to work on lateral movements in the

hips, knees, and ankles will help keep you strong as you move down the hill or glide for miles on a long Nordic ski trail.

Think of strength training as insurance. Spending time training inside the gym will better equip you for activities outside the gym. Whether it's skiing, hiking, or being active with your grandkids, every ounce of muscle you make will lead to a stronger, more confident, and hopefully, injury-free future.

Tracy Dumas, director of marketing & public relations for The Alaska Club.

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Herbal

continued from page 7

tendency to produce high cortisol levels. Like As, they benefit from adaptogens like ginseng, ashwagandha and holy basil. Licorice provides adrenal support for Bs. Bs with early signs of memory loss or a family history of neurodegenerative disease (Parkinson's, Alzheimer's) may want to take bacopa monnieri leaf extract, which provides antioxidant support for the brain and nervous systems. Bs do well with curries.

ABs tend to be friendly people but don't like crowds. They are intuitive and broad-minded but also want to be liked by others and this can cause internal stress. Neurochemical balance for ABs (the rarest and most modern blood type) is enhanced by rhodiola species, readily found in capsule form, and B vitamins (especially important for vegetarian ABs) including folic acid (not the synthetic folate). Good kitchen medicine for ABs includes curry and parsley.

All blood types can benefit from using herbal medicines regularly. The longer you take herbal medicine, the more it will protect your immune and nervous systems. Medicinal mushrooms are highly

beneficial for most, especially as water (not alcohol) extracts: cordyceps, reishi, maitake and coriolus have been shown to improve NK (natural killer cell) function. Fungi Perfecti (Paul Stamets' company) is a brand of medicinal mushrooms, and widely available. My all-time favorite herbal medicine for long-term use (teas, tinctures or glycerites) remain ginseng, astragalus, licorice and echinacea. Remember, Os should avoid echinacea and choose larch arabinogalactan (sold as ARA-6) instead as your go-immune tonic. For infections of mucous membranes (food poisoning to fissures to sinusitis) goldenseal (*Hydrastis canadensis*) is a brilliant remedy. Often the dose listed on the bottle is geared to someone who weighs around 175 pounds. Adjust dose according to your weight. If you are using a commercially available herbal medicine to prevent illness, or maintain health, use as directed. If you are treating an illness, double the suggested dose for 3–10 days until resolution. In the right season, picking therapeutic plants and making your own medicine is magical for holistic well-being.

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



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Senior Voice, October 2026 | 9



Treating dry eye disease; AI and medical care

By JOHN SCHIESZER

Medical Minutes

Clearing the air to treat dry eye disease

Anyone who has ever endured burning, itchy eyes or extra tearing knows that these symptoms are tough to ignore. They can impact your vision and make it harder to work, focus or sleep. They are also some of the most common signs of dry eye disease, a condition that impacts up to 30% of the population globally, without any real cure. Dry eye can result from insufficient tear production or poor tear quality and may cause eye discomfort, a burning sensation and even fluctuating blurry vision.

“People spend a lot of time trying to get their eyes to feel better. The problem is that we are so focused on the medical solutions that we often forget about the environmental triggers of dry eye symptoms and other diseases,” said Dr. Anat Galor, who is a professor of ophthalmology at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine in Florida. “We want to better



understand whether improving indoor air quality can help reduce symptoms of this very common condition.”

The university team is expanding on an earlier 2024 study. They previously found that after nearly 165 patients’ homes were inspected for air quality and interventions were implemented to reduce indoor air pollutants, many patients experienced improvement in their dry eye symptoms after six months. All participants in the previous study did not use the same interventions, and the low-cost supplies were not provided as part of the study. The new study will build on these initial findings by recruiting nearly 400 participants and

An estimated 73% of the U.S. population age 65 or older suffered from two or more chronic conditions between 2016 and 2019.

providing standardized, low-cost ways to improve home air quality, such as an air purifier, humidity control, and indoor plants.

The researchers note that your eyes are key to understanding many other health conditions and the eyes are a relatively easy way to study the effects of indoor air quality measures. This research may also have implications for mitigating and managing other diseases, like asthma, COPD, immunological disorders and even sleep.

American Geriatrics Society issues position statement on generative AI

The American Geriatric Society (AGS) has developed a new framework to address the ethical, clinical, and systems-level implications of GenAI in the care of older adults. The position paper translates foundational geriatrics principles into actionable guidance for clinical use,

health system governance, and technology development. AGS established a writing group to develop this new position paper to ensure that the adoption of AI improves equitable, and age-friendly care, rather than undermining it.

The new statement includes recommendations on the ethical use of AI and its clinical integration and oversight. The authors write there must be transparency, documentation, and privacy protections. It is essential that GenAI does not replace clinical judgment and relational care. It must be integrated with care for responsible use in the care of older adults.

This paper is one of many efforts that AGS has undertaken in support of its vision for a future where everyone is supported by and able to contribute to communities. The goal is to abolish ageism, ableism, classism, homophobia, racism, sexism, xenophobia, and other forms of bias. This position statement has been published in the Journal of the American Geriatrics Society.

Countries with the most older adults

The share of the world population age 65 and

older is projected to nearly double from 10.5% to 19.6% between 2025 and 2060, according to a new report released by the U.S. Census Bureau. It finds that the global population is aging faster than ever. Between 2020 and 2025, the proportion of the population age 65 and older exceeded the population age 5 and younger for the first time in recorded history.

In 2025, the United States ranked the 48th oldest country out of 227, with 18.9% of its population age 65 or older. By 2060, older adults are projected to make up 23.4% of the U.S. population. Yet, the United States will fall to 110th place globally because other countries are aging much more rapidly.

Japan was the oldest country in the world in 2025, with 29.7% of its population age 65 or older. But by 2060, South Korea is projected to become the oldest country, with 41% of its population age 65 or older. Europe is currently the oldest region in the world, with the percentage of its population age 65 or over increasing from 21% to 30.8% between 2025 and 2060.

Declining fertility and worldwide improvements in health services, educational status and economic development have

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MARY PELTOLA



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Blood clots can be sneaky and also deadly

By CHRISTIAN M. HARTLEY
For Senior Voice

The plane touches down, your bag rounds the carousel, and you drive home feeling nothing worse than a little stiff. Then, ten days later, one of your calves is swollen, warm, and aching, and you can't for the life of you figure out why.

That's the sneaky thing about a blood clot. When it shows up at all, that's often how it does it: quietly, days after the fact. And here's the part that surprises most people: about half of those with a deep vein thrombosis (doctors call it DVT) never feel a thing.

So, what's actually happening? A clot forms in one of the large veins buried deep in your leg. Sometimes your body breaks it down on its own, and you never know it was there. But not always. The real trouble starts when a piece of that clot breaks loose and hitches a ride to



your lungs. That's called a pulmonary embolism, and it can be deadly. The CDC estimates somewhere between 60,000 and 100,000 Americans die from these clots every year. And for about one in four people whose clot reaches the lungs, sudden death is the very first symptom. No warning at all.

Your calf muscles act like a second heart. Each step you take squeezes the veins and pushes blood back toward your chest. Sit still long enough and that pump goes quiet. Your blood slows down and starts to pool, and sluggish blood

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Blood clots can affect anyone, and blood clots can be prevented.

ON AVERAGE, ONE AMERICAN DIES OF A BLOOD CLOT **EVERY 6 MINUTES**¹.

is prone to clot. The CDC warns that anyone traveling more than four hours by plane, car, bus, or train can be at risk. The longer you sit, the greater the risk.

The same thing happens without leaving the house. Recovering from surgery, wearing a cast, fighting through a long illness, or even just parking yourself in the recliner through a dark winter can all silence that calf pump. More than a third of clots are tied to a recent hospital stay, and most of those show up after the patient has already gone home. Your odds also go up if you've had a clot before, if clots run in your family, or if you're dealing with cancer, heart or lung disease, extra weight, hormone therapy, or you're simply past 40.

Good news: The fix is one step away; literally. When you're traveling, get up and walk around every hour or two. When standing up isn't an option, you can still exercise right where you're sitting: point your toes, then pull them back toward your shins. Raise your heels, then your toes. Shift around now and then and try not to cross your legs. Wear loose, comfortable clothes, and maybe skip the cocktail, since a drink tends to keep people planted in their seats even longer.

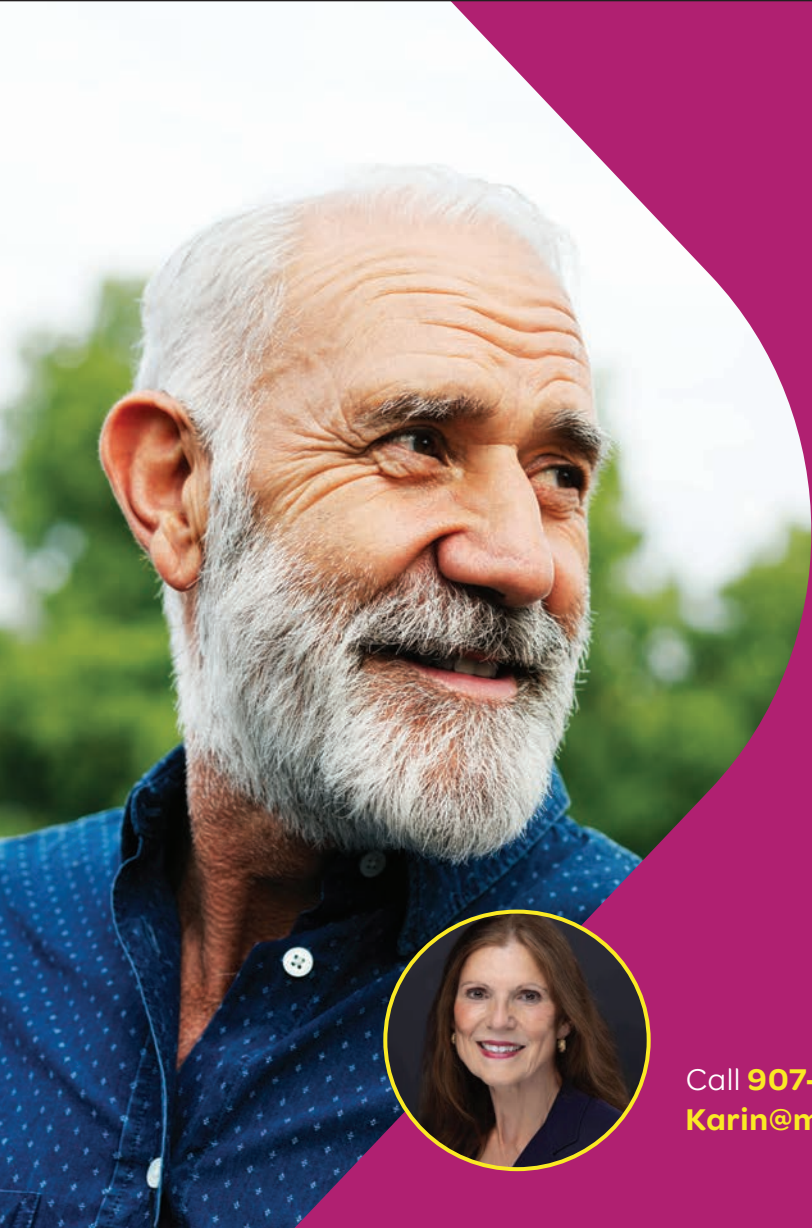
Compression socks and blood-thinning medicine help some people, but they are not one-size-fits-all. Talk with your doctor before a long trip or a planned surgery.

Learn the warning signs. Swelling, pain, warmth, or redness in one leg means call your doctor. Sudden shortness of breath, chest pain that sharpens with a deep breath or cough, a racing heartbeat, coughing up blood, or fainting means call 911. Keep watch for a couple of weeks after any long trip, since most travel-related clots show up in that window.

If you'd like to dig deeper, the CDC has solid information at [cdc.gov/blood-clots](https://www.cdc.gov/blood-clots), and you can also check out the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute at [nhlbi.nih.gov](https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov) or the National Blood Clot Alliance at [stoptheclot.org](https://www.stoptheclot.org). Your own primary care provider can help you figure out your personal risk, too.

A clot is patient. It counts on you to sit still. Don't give it the satisfaction.

Christian M. Hartley is an Alaska resident with three decades of public safety and public service experience. He lives in Big Lake.



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Why connection still matters with dementia

By LISA SAUDER

For Senior Voice

When someone receives a diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease or another form of dementia, it can feel as though life has suddenly been divided into a before and an after.

Conversations quickly turn to what may change. Memory, independence, driving, finances, caregiving, and the future all become part of a new vocabulary for families.

Those conversations are important. Families need information, resources, and a plan for what may lie ahead. But when we focus only on what dementia can take away, we risk overlooking something equally important: the person who is still here.

A diagnosis does not erase someone's desire to laugh with friends, sing a familiar song, spend time with family, contribute to their community, or simply feel that they belong.

At Alzheimer's Resource Alaska (ARA), we see that every day.

We see people living with dementia forming friendships, trying something new, sharing stories, making others laugh, singing together, and continuing to be active participants in their families and communities. We also see what happens when families find spaces where dementia is understood and they no longer feel the need to explain or apologize.

That sense of belonging can become incredibly important as dementia progresses.

There is a tendency to define people living with dementia by the things they can no longer do. But abilities, interests, personalities, relationships, and a lifetime of experiences do not simply disappear with a diagnosis.

Someone may have difficulty remembering what happened yesterday and still recognize the melody of a song they have loved for decades. A person who struggles to follow a complicated conversation may light up when an old friend walks into the room. Someone who needs assistance with everyday tasks may



still have humor, wisdom, affection, and something meaningful to contribute.

Those moments are easy to underestimate, but they matter.

For the person living with dementia, opportunities for connection can provide purpose, familiar-

ity, and joy. For caregivers and family members, they can offer an opportunity to reconnect with the person they love outside the daily responsibilities of caregiving.

Sometimes that happens over a cup of coffee. Sometimes it happens during a support or engagement program. Sometimes it

happens while making art, sharing a meal, or singing a familiar song. The activity itself is often less important than what it creates: an opportunity to be together.

In Alaska, maintaining that connection can come with unique challenges. Families may live hundreds of miles from specialized services. A trip for support

or education might involve hours on the road, a flight, a ferry, or planning around the weather. In smaller communities, there may not be a dementia-specific program nearby at all.

Yet those same communities demonstrate one of Alaska's greatest

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One Voice, Many Lifetimes

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Reflecting on why we moved to Slana

By **MARALEY McMICHAEL**
Senior Voice Correspondent

Our family was enjoying a meal together around the dining table in our Palmer home back in early summer 1999. This didn't happen often because our kids (Patrick and Erin) were already living out on their own. "Pop and I are going to put the house up for sale this summer and move to Slana," I announced while we ate.

"You've got to be kidding" and "But that's out in the middle of nowhere" were a couple of the responses we got. They weren't surprised about us selling the house; they knew that was coming. In fact, Gary had said more than once that he wanted to move out of the Mat-Su Borough (and away from Borough taxes) as soon as Erin graduated from high school in May 1997 and here it was two years later. The relocation to Slana was what took them by surprise.

After the discussion died down, Patrick asked in all seriousness, "Have you really thought about what you are planning to do?"

"Of course," I answered, "What kind of question is that?"

"Well, that's what you guys always ask me whenever I'm thinking about doing something wild and crazy!" he replied with a grin. We assured him that we had not lost our minds. And we would have much to do over the next few months...sell our house, quit our jobs, have a garage sale, and take care of all the other details necessary for a major move.

My mother had purchased a log cabin in Slana back in 1993 (long story) but since she passed away, Dad was stuck with it. He even tried to sell it through Remote Property Realty with no luck. Gary and I had never seen it. When we learned that Dad planned to travel from his home in Homer to Slana and spend



The Slana log home (and bed and breakfast) in summer. Photo by Maraley McMichael

two weeks camped out in the cabin in March 1999, we decided to join him. We could take some time off from work during spring break and make the trip to Slana to check out the cabin and enjoy snowmachining fun, too.

Gary was quite interested in the possibility of living there. I was less than enthused. We knew there was no commercial power in the area and people used generators. Having enjoyed life in Palmer for 15 years, I was quite happy

with our house, our yard, our friends, our church and my two part-time jobs. I remember thinking that if it was a shabby little cabin, I could say to Gary, "I have followed you many places

page 16 please



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BOOK REVIEW:

'Sisters of the Midnight Sun' by Rebecca Wright Stevens

By **DIMITRA LAVRAKAS**
Senior Voice Correspondent

Former North Slope Borough Public Defender Rebecca Wright Stevens has published a memoir “Sisters of the Midnight Sun” that details her life in Utqiagvik (Barrow), her relationship with an Iñupiat man, the drinking parties she attended and one time hosted, and the horrific double murder of two local sisters where she defends one of the suspects.

I am in the unusual position of having reported on the same case when I was editor of The Arctic Sounder covering the North Slope. I am also mentioned in her book, but not in a positive way.

“... I spotted Ed Ellingsworth, local lead detective, his cadaverous frame drooping over a corner of a pew. A young female reporter sat beside him, plump and giggly. I rather liked the way she never spelled the district attorney’s name right. The name was Slusser, but she always wrote Slusher. She also garbled some Inupiat words, and used k, q, and g interchangeably, but so did a lot of people. The language is not yet entirely standardized, but then, neither is English. At least she had learned that Iñupiat was a noun and Iñupiaq an adjective.”

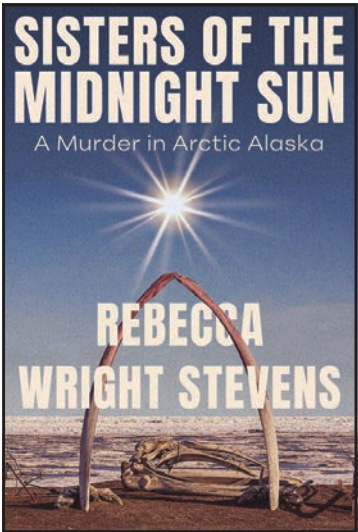
(NOTE: In Associated Press Alaska Style Iñupiat refers to many and Iñupiaq refers to one person or the language. I took Iñupiaq classes when I lived there.)

Aside from that, it is a well-written book, but one that does not really detail the evidence that linked her client, Amos Lane of Point Hope, to the murders. His family was influential in Point Hope.

The prosecutors turned their attention from Amos Lane to John Adams.

Adams, engaged to Bernice Ipalook, was found not guilty on two counts of murder in the first degree of Bernice and her sister Wanda Ipalook, which took place in 1993.

“At the time of his interrogation, Adams did have



“Sisters of the Midnight Sun: A Murder in Arctic Alaska” by Rebecca Wright Stevens, was released earlier this year. \$29 Hardcover 304 pages ISBN: 9781640097711

Cover downloaded from Counterpoint Press, <https://www.counterpointpress.com/books/18225/>

scratches on his face and bruises on his knuckles. And Adams did sign a confession and indicated some knowledge of the way the murders occurred, but he later claimed that he did not do it,” I wrote when I was covering the case for the Arctic Sounder.

Adams’ defense lawyer, Nelson Traverso, of the Fairbanks Office of Public Advocacy, told The Arctic Sounder, “I’m just overwhelmed with emotion right now. I think there was a lot of wrestling to do with the evidence (for the jury). There was too much evidence that led a trail to the other guy.”

Jury member Dick Rohr in speaking about the verdict to the Arctic Sounder said, “Well, we didn’t think that he was guilty beyond a reasonable doubt. We don’t think he was. We had doubts. And there was a lot of doubts. So, that was the reason basically.”

Lane gets immunity

Never charged with the murders, “Amos pled not guilty to one count of perjury,” Wright Stevens writes. “He acknowledged that that the state had compelling evidence that he had been at house 1541, but he never admitted he was there much less that he had hurt anyone. True to form, he never admitted anything at all during the

entire duration of both cases, the double homicide and the perjury charge. He was released for time served.”

Wright Stevens notes that Lane was emotionally damaged when his mother was brutally raped in 1985 and died the next day from her injuries. Some friends said he was never the same person after that.

However, there was much evidence that put him at the scene of the crime but it was dismissed.

“There was DNA evidence that appeared to confirm Amos had been with the sisters that night, but I managed to get it suppressed because the statistical sampling of “Eskimo DNA” was insufficient for comparison purposes,” she writes.

Other evidence was ignored.

“Evidence at the scene, footprints on a pane of glass, glass fragments on clothing, buttons found throughout the house, an appointment card in the trash and semen samples were linked to an alleged suspect, Amos Lane.

Witnesses testified that his movements allegedly did not coincide with the time of the murders,” I reported.

Lane was granted immunity from prosecution for his testimony against Adams, meaning he could never be tried for the murders.

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Rambles

News from the Grapevine

The highlight of October is the **Alaska Federation of Natives Convention**. This large annual gathering brings together Indigenous leaders and community members together to celebrate culture and discuss important policy issues. The convention itself is **Oct. 22-24**. This year’s theme is “Rooted in Land and Tradition, Rising in Our Voices.” The First Alaskans Statewide Youth and Elders Conference is immediately before AFN, Oct. 18-21. Both are at the Dena’ina Civic and Convention Center. <https://nativefederation.org/convention/> October is also when northern lights viewing gets better, with longer, darker skies. Fairbanks is often an ideal place to see the **aurora borealis** because it sits under the “Auroral Oval,” a ring-shaped zone over the far north where aurora activity is especially strong. Fairbanks also counts on low precipitation and distance from coastal areas. You can spend money on staying at a resort like Chena Hot Springs or you can rough it by car camping. <https://www.chenahotsprings.com/> If you’re looking for something more cerebral, UAA has your fix with Pulitzer Prize-winning historian **Jon Meacham**, who is talking about the American presidency **Oct. 7**. Meacham has written several presidential biographies, such as “And There Was Light: Abraham Lincoln and the American Struggle” and “American Lion: Andrew Jackson in the White House.” <https://bit.ly/4AgHjof> This is also a good month for hiking, late-season fishing outings and local runs like the **Zombie Half Marathon** on **Oct. 10**. It’s a point-to-point race, from Goose Lake to Kincaid Park. <https://anchorageclub.org/zombie/> The **Celtic new year celebration**, also called Samhain, is **Oct. 24**. Check the website for ticket information. <https://www.akcelts.org/> The **Kenai Community Library** has its monthly **Write on Track Writers’ Support Group** at 5:30 p.m. **Oct. 27** October also means Halloween. **Fairbanks Trick or Treat Town** is an annual event hosted by Fairbanks Parks and Recreation at Alaskaland (formerly Pioneer Park) featuring a mini hay maze, carnival games, live performances, and trick-or-treating. It is from 1 to 7:30 p.m. **Oct. 31**. <https://www.facebook.com/HalloweenTrickorTreatTown/> **Haines trick-or-treating** organized by the Haines Chamber of Commerce downtown. <https://www.haineschamber.org/event/halloween/>.

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

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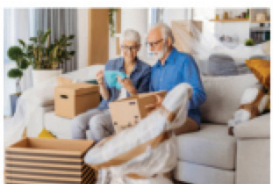


By ALLANA LUMBARD

Downsizing Alaska

If you've lived in your home for 20, 30, or even 40 years, you probably have a running list of things you'd change before selling. New flooring. Paint. A bathroom update. Maybe even a kitchen remodel. But before you start spending money, **talk to a REALTOR® who can help you decide what is actually worth doing.** When I walk through a home with a potential seller, I'm looking at it from a buyer's perspective. What will buyers notice? What repairs could become a distraction? What updates might actually help the home sell?

And just as importantly, **what should you leave alone?** You may be surprised by how often I tell homeowners, "I wouldn't spend money on that." The goal isn't to make your home brand new. It's to make strategic improvements that help it show well without putting money into projects you're unlikely to recoup. If you're thinking about selling next spring, now is a great time to start. **Spring is typically one of our strongest markets in Southcentral Alaska,** and starting early gives you plenty of time to tackle the things that matter, without the pressure of trying to get everything done right before listing. So before you call the contractor, start remodeling, or spend thousands on updates, let's walk through your home together. You might find that you need to do **far less than you think.** Allana Lumbar is a downsizing expert and real estate agent affiliated with Real Broker Wasilla.



Downsizing ALASKA
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Slana

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during the last 25 years and several times lived in less-than-ideal conditions. At this point in my life, I refuse to live in a small cabin that has no running water or electricity." However, I agreed to at least check out the situation before voicing those words out loud.

When we knocked at the cabin door that first evening, Dad greeted us with a flashlight, then gave us a flashlight tour of the house room by room. The generator had not been started in two years, and Dad wasn't ready to do so yet.

The house was cold, dark, and very empty, but also very lovely. It was obvious the builders had put their hearts into this beautiful log building. It certainly wasn't some rinky-dink little cabin and supposedly when the generator was operating, electricity and running water would be normal. That night I lay on my camping air mattress for hours thinking and finally fell asleep "arranging my furniture" in this potential new home. A week later, we called Dad to ask him if he would be willing to rent it to us.

Arriving in Slana October 4, 1999, we were greeted with a foot of fresh snow. We shoveled a path to the doorstep, built a fire in the barrel stove, and slept on a mattress on the floor. As I thought about how crazy it was to move to Interior Alaska when it was already winter, I remembered that Dad and Mom moved



Gary McMichael after a successful grayling fishing trip near the McMichaels' Slana home in 2000.

Photo by Maraley McMichael

to Glennallen in January 1963 with four kids aged 9 months to 7 years, and that worked out fine.

The next day (late morning) the professional moving van with two strong guys arrived with all our furniture and belongings. It took a month of hard work to settle into the house. Gary quickly learned the ins and outs of usage and maintenance of the generator, and I knew I could count on electricity and running water several hours each day. We ordered a load of firewood logs from a business in Tok. We began attending a church in Chistochina and attended the Halloween carnival at the Slana School to begin to get to know our new neighbors.

A year later, we decided to commit to the area. We purchased the property and house from Dad. I got a job as an aide at the Slana School, and we started Nabesna House Bed and Breakfast.

When Patrick and Erin finally saw our new home during their 1999 Christ-

mas visit, they no longer thought we were crazy. Maybe a little out of touch, but not crazy. During the following years, both kids visited separately in various seasons. They enjoyed "getting away from it all." Once I heard one of them refer to our place as "Pop and Mom's little Shangri-La."

Gary and I lived nearly all our married life in Alaska, moving often for various reasons. Sometimes in our discussion of location, Gary would ask, "How about Glennallen (where I grew up)?" I would reply, "Too cold, too remote." Ironically, while living in Slana, when we would go to "town" for the day, we could be referring to either Tok or Glennallen. We had no regrets about our move to Slana. In fact, the only reason we reluctantly moved back to Palmer in 2011 was because of the need to be closer to medical facilities.

Gary missed his (sometimes daily) 4-wheeler trips during the summer to a nearby creek to fish for grayling; I missed the fall berry picking (especially blueberries), and we both missed our beautiful log home. It took almost three years for the little ranch style house we purchased in Palmer to feel like home. But life must go on and change is inevitable. I now look back on our Slana years with fondness, knowing how fortunate I was to experience that lifestyle at least for a time.

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

Maraley McMichael picking cranberries near Slana in early September 2010.

Courtesy Maraley McMichael



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Alaska PFD will arrive in accounts and mailboxes this month

Senior Voice Staff

Qualified Alaskans will receive their 2026 Alaska Permanent Fund Dividend this month. The payout is \$1,000 from the Permanent Fund and a \$200 energy relief payment.

The Alaska Legislature agreed on the amount in May, according to the Alaska Beacon. <https://alaskabeacon.com/2026/05/18/alaska-lawmakers-reach-budget-deal-with-1000-pfd-and-200-energy-rebate-for-residents/>

Direct deposit begins Oct. 1. Paper checks/later approvals will go out around Oct. 22, the State of Alaska Department of Revenue

states on its website.

The Legislature finalized the \$1,200 total after debate over competing proposals. The agreement came as part of a \$13.9 billion compromise state operating budget.

You can learn more about how the Permanent Fund is managed from the Alaska Permanent Fund Corp., which is a state-owned corporation that manages the assets of the Alaska Permanent Fund and other funds designated by law, including the Alaska Mental Health Trust Fund and Power Cost Endowment Fund. The fund's value as of July 31, 2026 is \$87.9 billion. <https://apfc.org/>

Review

continued from page 15

“Dennis Packer, director of the North Slope Borough of Public Safety, was, at the time of the murders, the investigator on the case. He testified that a bloody towel found at the scene was sent to the state crime lab for blood and hair samples, but a test was never received back. A black, torn T-shirt belonging to Amos Lane ‘could have had blood stains on the shirt,’ but it was not sent to the lab. On the stand, Packer said that on further inspection, the reddish stains appeared to be a discoloration on the design. He also said that the tears seemed to be done in a deliberate fashion, somewhat like a workout shirt,” I wrote in the article.

And I wondered how an inspector is elevated to Chief of Police after just a year.

Some thoughts

In reading this book I was puzzled by some of Wright Stevens’ activities

that exposed her to possibly dangerous situations when there was heavy drinking. As I read, I was thinking she was present when things could go horribly wrong and she would end up getting more clients to defend.

After she received the call that Adams was found not guilty, she writes, “I dropped the phone on the floor, picked it up, hung up the receiver and went into the kitchen, where I burrowed into the back of the cupboard for the bottle of vodka I had been hoarding ever since I bought it from a bootlegger.”

I am at a loss to understand how an attorney can break the law by giving money to a bootlegger.

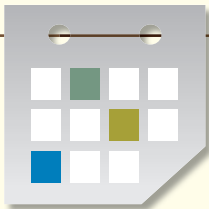
So, for all the words, the story ends with a simple sentence that says it all, “The jury had spoken, but the Ipalook murder case had not been solved.”

In June 2022, Lane, 57, was killed in a law enforcement shoot-out.

An online court records search for Amos Lane shows a history of criminal cases dating back more than 20 years.

Calendar of Events

- Oct. 1-31 National** Breast Cancer Awareness Month. A campaign held throughout October to raise awareness and support for research, early detection, and education regarding breast cancer.
- Oct. 1 National** Black Dog Day. Did you know black dogs have a harder time getting adopted? Maybe today's the day you look at your local shelter and adopt a black dog.
- Oct. 4 National** Taco Day. Dig in.
- Oct. 6 National** News Engagement Day. Founded by the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC), this day encourages people of all ages to read, watch, listen to, and discuss the news.
- Oct. 12 National** Indigenous Peoples Day. Alaska was one of the first states in the union to designate Oct. 12 as a day to recognize Alaska Natives and Indigenous peoples generally in 2015. Then-Gov. Bill Walker's proclamation read: “Alaska is built upon the homelands and communities of the Indigenous Peoples of this region, without whom the building of the state would not be possible.” The day is recognized by other cities and states. It has not yet been made a national holiday by Congress.
- Oct. 12 National** Columbus Day. This is an official U.S. federal holiday honoring Italian heritage and explorer Christopher Columbus.
- Oct. 16 National** Boss's Day. If you have a good boss, let them know. If you don't, maybe it's time to become your own boss or find a different job.
- Oct. 31. International** Halloween, derived from All Hallows' Eve, the traditional eve of All Saints' Day. It's a holiday that's not just for kids anymore. Anyone can don a costume, eat treats and attend community fall events.



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The first All-American mail route was welcome news

By LAUREL DOWNING BILL
Senior Voice Correspondent

Shortly after the discovery of gold in the Klondike, Alaska was a land raw and grand, newly settled towns stitched together by wild rivers, frozen trails, and hope. The great rush for gold had ignited dreams in the hearts of thousands, but it also drew sharp attention to one practical problem – how to get a letter or a bank draft hundreds of miles from the coast to stampeders in Circle City and the Yukon.

The cry for a dependable, all-American mail route had been echoing in the North for years. The infamous failures of earlier efforts—letters lost to storms, dog teams perishing on the trail, entire communities left in silence—meant the simple arrival of the post could cause elation or despair.

But on October 1, 1899, something new came to life: an overland mail corridor from Valdez, marching through Chugach and Ahtna country, over daunting glaciers and endless spruce, toward Circle City and the great Yukon camps.

The new route was born of necessity and grit. Under the steady leadership of Lt. William P. Abercrombie and the toil of prospectors as penniless as they were determined, the trail’s first miles were carved by hand tools from the coastal tangle at Valdez to the tough braided crossing of the Tonsina River.

The soldiers built as they marched, and at each stage, they were joined by stampeders bound for copper and gold. Some made do with what they had: packs lashed tight, shoes worn thin, and dreams leading the way. Others turned back, humbled by the storms and the sheer weight of Alaska.

As the first mailbags left Valdez that autumn, a land that had always been measured in miles and hardship suddenly felt just a little smaller, a little less lonely, thanks to the trailblazers who delivered not just news, but hope itself.

The opening of the mail route did not end hardships, but it did lift the hearts of hundreds of would-be miners and homesteaders. Now, along this new artery, the first bags of mail could make their dogged way through the Copper Valley, on toward Circle City, then carried by steamboat or sled dog to every Yukon post in need of news from Outside. For the isolated, the sound of sled runners on the trail meant news from home, perhaps a money order, or word from a sweetheart left behind.

Also with the route came new settlements and a string of road-houses, rough wooden cabins



Those who settled in Circle City, seen here in summer 1899, were starved for mail and supplies before a mail route was established in October that year.
Courtesy Alaska State Library

where mail carriers could thaw out, rest the dogs, and pass letters to eager hands. As stories from the winter of 1899 recount, even the toughest carriers sometimes vanished into whiteout blizzards.

The route remained perilous: Postmasters at remote Valdez and Glencora, overwhelmed by stacked sacks and desperate expectations, sometimes fled their posts in panic. Others stood firm, braving the silence to keep Alaska’s lifeline

open.

This new mail service, rough as it was, transformed Alaska’s destiny. It seeded the beginnings of telegraph lines and, later, highways. Letters, once rare treasures, became steady threads binding families, businesses, and the pulse of a vast frontier.

And the All-American mail route from Valdez to Circle City was more than dirt packed down by boots and sleds: it was proof that in Alaska,

persistence and faith could move mountains—or at least surmount them, one letter at a time.

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 and Amazon.

Running Hot and Cold

Across

- 1 Brilliantly colored fish
- 5 Stool pigeons
- 9 Math subject
- 13 Mexican mint product
- 14 Hand lotion ingredient
- 15 Nary a soul
- 16 Cobblestone
- 17 Blackthorn fruit
- 18 Wipe clean
- 19 Little butter?
- 20 Squall lines
- 22 “No problemo”
- 24 Budget competitor
- 25 “Aeneid” poet
- 28 Chose
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- 31 Ragout or burgoo
- 32 Work with mail
- 36 Restaurant calculation
- 37 Belligerent grouch
- 40 “The Simpsons” bartender
- 41 Window frame
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- 44 Litmus reddeners
- 46 Milk dispenser
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- 49 French girlfriend
- 50 Olympics jump
- 51 Skin softening ointments
- 55 Morse E
- 58 Grossly unconventional
- 59 Winter coating
- 60 Race’s end

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Down

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- 2 Look-see
- 3 Italian wine region
- 4 Wieners
- 5 Mischievous one
- 6 Fusion of metallic elements
- 7 Shed item
- 8 Spring purchase
- 9 Anchor rings
- 10 Some horses
- 11 Research facil.
- 12 Orders to plow horses
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- 21 Islamic law ruling
- 23 Kin’s partner
- 25 Distillery items
- 26 Pelvic parts
- 27 Tears
- 28 Survey choice
- 29 Jury member
- 31 Eyelid problem
- 33 Fail to mention
- 34 Took the bus
- 35 “Working Girl” girl
- 38 More eccentric
- 39 Woman of rank
- 42 Monotonous
- 45 State of political hostility
- 47 Cut into cubes
- 48 Hyperextend
- 49 Fiddle with
- 50 Capital of Jordan
- 51 Egyptian Christian
- 52 Yorkshire river
- 53 History chapters
- 54 Man Friday
- 56 Unctuous
- 57 Orchard unit
- 61 Pothook shape

Crossword answers on page 30



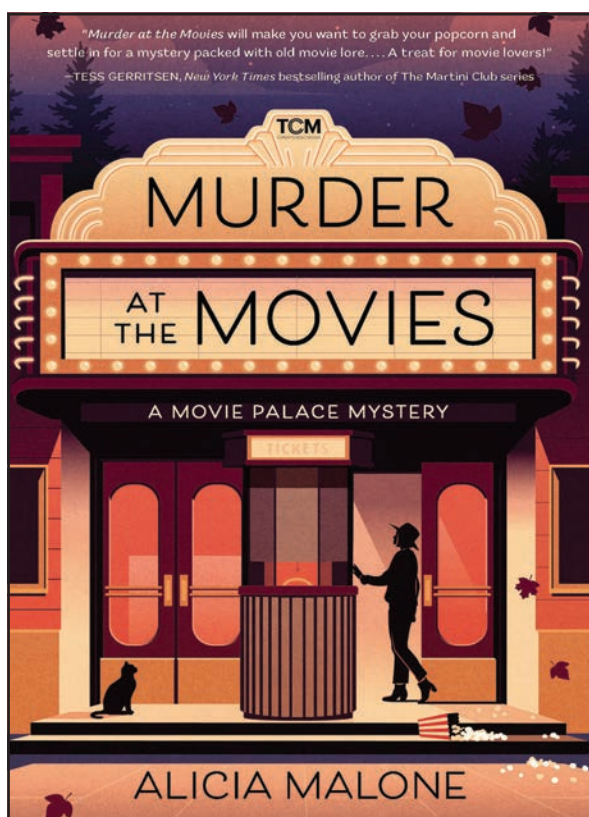
TCM's Alicia Malone releases a cozy murder mystery

By NICK THOMAS

Tinseltown Talks

Securely snug in her Midcoastal Maine home during last year's late-fall chill, Alicia Malone settled in for another approaching snowy New England winter. This time, however, she found not only warmth beside the glow of the crackling wood fire but also inspiration—as she planned a murder. In the following weeks, the Australian transplant would juggle a laptop, sheets of printout drafts, and steaming cups of tea while her pair of golden retrievers looked on as she carefully wove together clues, motives, and suspects to create her debut mystery novel, “Murder at the Movies,” published by Running Press this October.

As the author of several well-received film books, the popular Turner Classic Movies host will surprise and no doubt delight viewers with her venture away from non-fiction writing. “I had always secretly wanted to try my hand at fiction,” said Malone from her Maine home. “I’ve tak-



TCM's Alicia Malone's mystery novel comes out Oct. 6. It is \$18.99 and is published by Running Press.

Photo of Alicia Malone by John Nowak



the crime while at the same time attempting to save the theater from closing.

“I was very much inspired by my move from Los Angeles to Maine,” Alicia notes. “TCM usually only publishes non-fiction film books, but they ended up liking the idea and were very supportive.”

The network's encouragement was no doubt, in part, due to the book's strong connection to an old movie theater and the author's inclusion of numerous classic film references throughout the story. Some were subtle, like naming a local bookstore “The Shop Around the Corner,” a nod to the Jimmy Stewart and Margaret Sullavan 1940 Christmas comedy-drama.

Others were more overt, especially when introducing new characters during plot development such as the theater's projectionist described as looking like Walter Houston in “The Treasure of Sierra Madre.” To any classic film fan, that's a mental picture worth a thousand words. “I wanted to describe some of the characters in a shorthand way,” she explained. “And that's also how my brain works. I'll often see someone and think about what classic film star they look like.”

The book's plot will resonate with fans of murder

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en a lot of fiction writing courses and written some short stories for myself but never published them.”

A chance conversation with a Running Press editor who had published numerous film-related books for TCM surprised them both. Alicia expressed an interest in exploring a fiction novel, while the astonished editor

revealed that her company was actually in the market for a series of cozy mysteries, the family-friendly crime fiction subgenre that frequently features amateur sleuths fixated on solving murders often set in small communities. As it happened, after moving to Los Angeles from Australia in 2010 and later becoming

a regular TCM host, Alicia relocated to small-town Maine a decade later during the pandemic. Blending into the welcoming community, she was invited to sit on the board of the historic Strand Theatre in nearby Rockland.

And the scene was set.

The mystery unfolds on fictitious Pine Island off the Maine coast where Audrey Sullivan relocates after inheriting her grandmother's bankrupt movie theater. Then, one evening during a film screening, murder most foul is committed. In true Miss Marple fashion, Audrey sets about to solve



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Dolly left a legacy in songwriting and philanthropy

By KENNETH KIRK

For Senior Voice

I had this month's column all planned out, and all I needed to do was commit it to paper. But then Dolly Parton died.

The passing of the "Queen of Country" is still fresh as I write this, and there is not a great deal of information available, but what we know so far is encouraging. Dolly had said that she did not want to leave a mess for her loved ones after she was gone, and it appears likely she didn't.

Dolly Parton was one of the most generous and, according to just about everybody who ever met her, kind people on the face of the earth. She started from very humble beginnings, being one of 12 children born in a one-room shack in Appalachia. Her first guitar was homemade. Her song "Coat of Many Colors" about wearing a coat made from rags, was autobiographical.

And yet, perhaps surprising given her well-known charitable streak, she was a very shrewd businesswoman. Here's my favorite example. Early in her career, when she was just coming off being a featured performer on a country-western TV show, she wrote a song called "I Will Always Love You." She had a minor country hit with it.



Then she was approached by Elvis Presley's manager, the so-called "Colonel" Tom Parker.

At first, she was thrilled. If Elvis recorded her song, it would be a huge pop hit, and there was a lot more money there than in country music. Keep in mind that this was before her movie career or her other crossover hits. But Parker had a particular stipulation which he insisted upon whenever Elvis wanted to record a song. The writer of the song had to sign over half of the royalties. When someone writes a song, they get a certain amount each time that song brings in money. In order to have Elvis record her song, she would have to give up half of the money she would otherwise be getting.

Dolly stuck to her guns, and Elvis did not get to record her song. But years later, Whitney Houston recorded it, and not only took it to No. 1 on the pop charts, but held it there for 14 weeks, a record at the

She funded college scholarships. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, she donated a cool \$1 million to medical research. And no doubt most of her charitable endeavors were private; it was discovered, after many years, that she had been quietly providing band uniforms to a couple of underfunded schools.

time. And Dolly got her full royalties for that.

She was remarkably generous. Her Imagination Library provided millions of books to young people. That was a charity she founded in honor of her father, who was illiterate. She provided incentives for children in poor areas to stay in school. She funded college scholarships. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, she donated a cool \$1 million to medical research. And no doubt most of her charitable endeavors were private; it was discovered, after many years, that she had been quietly providing band uniforms to a couple of underfunded schools.

But even with all that giving, her estate is estimated at somewhere between \$450 million and \$650 million. So what about taxes? Dolly's hus-

band died about a year before she did, and she never had children. The first \$15 million of her estate will be exempt from the federal estate tax, which is a 40% tax on everything over that amount. So, using a middle range of \$550 million and subtracting the exempt amount, her estate would be paying around \$214 million in taxes. Right?

Nope, not likely. First of all, I expect she doubled up the exemption, either by filing an estate tax return for her husband after he died or accomplishing the same thing through split trusts. After her husband died, her primary home was transferred from one trust to another, which is fairly common when doing those sorts of estate plans.

Beyond that, there is another exemption beyond the personal exemption.

Anything left to a charitable organization does not count. So Dolly could easily leave \$30 million to her relatives, and the rest to the various charitable organizations she favored, and there would be no estate tax at all. In fact, through the judicious use of various types of charitable trusts, she may have exempted even more for her relatives.

I expect we will see more about Dolly Parton in the news in the coming months and years. There is apparently a plan to name the Nashville airport after her, and most likely there will be other honors as well. I do not expect that we will see stories about fights over her estate plan though. And that is exactly how it should be.

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. And pour yourself a cup of ambition. Yeah, it doesn't really fit, but it's my favorite Dolly Parton line so I had to get it in there.



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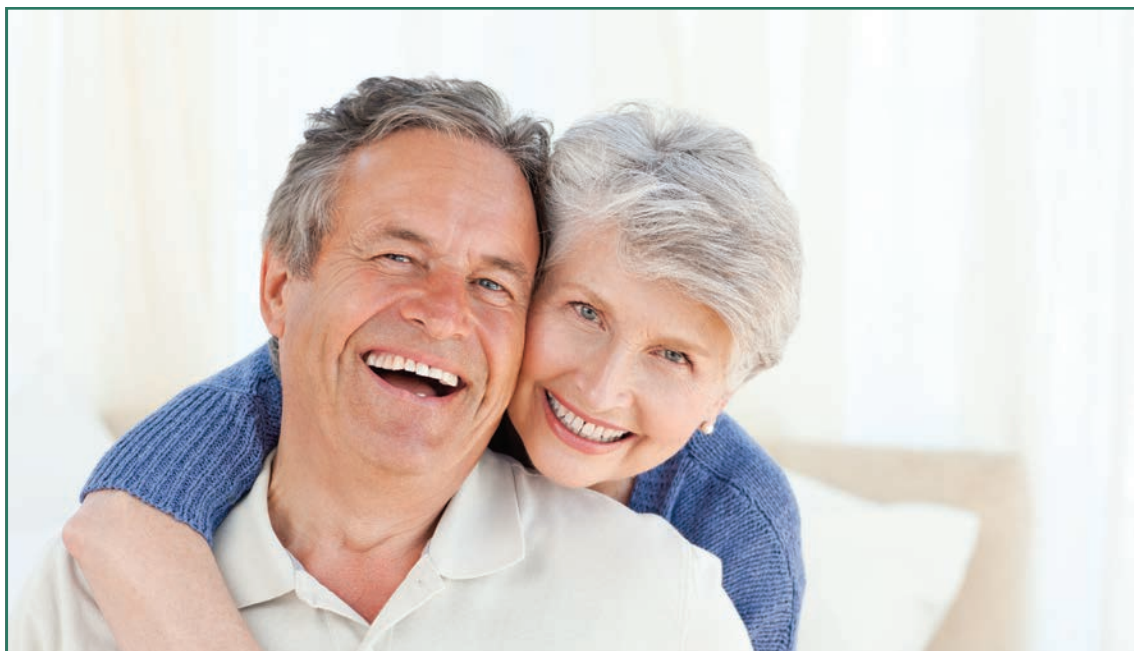
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Best Nintendo game, Apple updates, “vibe coding” apps

By **BOB DeLAURENTIS**

Bob’s Tech Talk

Q. What is one of the best Nintendo games I might not know about?

A. Nintendo Online is a subscription service that gives every Nintendo Switch owner access a vast library of classic games. I would start there.

Decades ago, before the Switch and Wii, was GameCube, which had a relatively short life but some amazing titles. The older Zelda games are there, along with a large library of other popular games from classic Nintendo consoles.

Not long ago Nintendo Online expanded into GameCube games, including Zelda’s WindWaker, and the hidden gem, Starfox Adventures.

Starfox Adventures was created by the game studio Rare Limited, which had earned a reputation for next-level quality. I had not played Starfox Adventures since 2002, when it first debuted. In re-playing recently, I noticed how many aspects of the gameplay “predicted” what the open world adventures like Zelda

Breath of the Wild would feel like.

StarFox Adventures is so well designed that despite the last few levels feeling a bit undercooked, I nominate Starfox Adventures as the best video console game you probably never heard about.

Q. Apple has released updates for all its devices. What changes are noteworthy?

A. There is no shortage of videos that describe what’s new, but I have a few items that every Apple user should know.

Siri AI is still in beta, but it’s ready for its close up. Lots of improvements but initially turned off by default. Go to Settings and there should be a prominent button visible to request the new Siri.

The Photos app’s Tools menu is worth finding right away. It will appear whenever you edit an image and tap on Adjust. Of the three new tools, Clean Up is probably worth trying on nearly every image to remove unwanted elements. Select the Clean Up tool and trace your finger over any

blemishes or distractions to erase them. Most of the time it works like magic!

Another must-do adjustment is enabling Impersonation Risk Detection. Once enabled, the phone will attempt to identify active impersonation scans. Because of the signals it may process, it requires that you give your device explicit permission to use it. To get started, visit Settings on your device, and choose Privacy and Security, then scroll down to find and switch on Impersonation Risk Detection.

There are dozens of small improvements, and lots of videos explaining what is new. But for my readers, these three new features are standouts that should be a part of your everyday life.

Q. What does “vibe coding” an app mean?

A. “Vibe coded” apps are part of the AI tidal wave swamping the tech world.

Programming an app is a painstaking process that requires special skills. For example, you need to learn a programming language

Wander the Web

Here are my picks for worthwhile browsing this month:

Super Helpful (shelpful)

This site is a fountain of productivity advice for Apple products. shelpful.com

Usenet Returns

For those of us old-timers, Usenet was social media for the 1980s and 1990s. Usenet-Rewind an archive spanning from 1980 to present day. usenet-rewind.com

Human History

History is a collection of stories, and this site is a novel way to look at humanity. anyhumanever.com

and communicate in that language in a way the computer understands.

Vibe coding an app means that rather than follow a traditional path, the app is coded by asking AI tools in plain English sentences to create the app for you.

Apple’s fall updates include a little jewel of a feature that deserves attention: vibe coded shortcuts.

The Shortcuts app is a tool that helps everyday users write little programs. I use shortcuts myself every day, but I don’t write about them because I think it has been a niche product for a small number of users until now.

For example, I have a shortcut called “order

breakfast” that accesses the Starbucks app and orders my selected items. In order to set this up, I needed to learn how the Shortcuts app works and build my own shortcut.

With the latest updates and new Siri, I can simply ask Siri to create a new shortcut to order breakfast.

This new feature has rough edges, but it works. And exploring it today is a great way for anyone to peek over the horizon at one direction of modern computing. To learn more, check out “shelpful” in Wander the Web.

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



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Rediscovering “us” in Thailand: Koh Samui

This is part 3 of 3 of a couple rediscovering each other after their children moved out.

By **KIM SHERRY**

For Senior Voice

There’s something both exhilarating and slightly disorienting about traveling as newly minted empty nesters. No schedules, no negotiations over where to eat, no one asking for Wi-Fi passwords every five minutes. Just the two of us, figuring out how to travel, relax, and reconnect again.

Our final stop brought us to Koh Samui, a palm-fringed island in the Gulf of Thailand known for laid-back beaches, warm waters, and a gentle reminder to slow down – or at least try to.

Travel day – steps vs. snacks

Leaving Chiang Mai, we squeezed in one last walk, because travel days are notoriously low-step, high-snack situations, and we are nothing if not committed to balance. A smooth connection through Suvarnabhumi Airport and a delightful lounge experience, courtesy of Philippine Airlines, kept spirits high despite a delayed flight.

Koh Samui’s open-air airport feels more like a botanical garden than a transit hub, which almost softened the blow of paying for a taxi (no ride shares allowed, cue mild grumbling from husband Bruce). Thirty minutes later, we arrived at Lamai Bayview Boutique Resort – rustic, charming, and promising a “bay view” we couldn’t see in the dark.

Dinner at the hotel surprised us: shrimp cakes, soy sauce egg noodles, sweet-and-sour chicken – comfort food that hit the spot. Our bungalow was simple and cozy. As for that view? A mystery for morning.

When paradise throws a curveball

Morning revealed it all—ocean, palms, and the kind of view that makes you forget your reading glasses. After a generous breakfast buffet (a skill we’ve clearly



mastered), we launched into our official “Day One Recon Mission” to figure out where we are, what we can walk to, and where the food is, without anyone under 18 vetoing our plans.

The beach? Technically there. Practically? Over-taken by a storm surge. The roads? Busy and not pedestrian-friendly.

After two hours of wandering, we were hot, slightly defeated, and approaching what we’ll politely call a “joint meltdown.” Salvation arrived in the form of a French bakery, baguette sandwiches, and a much-needed reset. Not every day in paradise feels like paradise, and that’s okay. Flexibility, it turns out, is our new skill.

The afternoon redeemed itself with pool time and balcony lounging. Dinner at beachfront Chom Ley Cafe sealed the deal: papaya salad with prawns, green curry, and basil chicken stir-fry. The tide calmed, the beach walk home was lovely, and balance was restored.

Top left: On Pig Island, a thirsty little piglet and Bruce turned hydration into the day’s most delightful surprise.

Top right: At Grandfather Rock we found proof that Thailand’s sense of humor is as bold as its landscapes.

Middle right: At the Mummified Monk, we received a quiet blessing that felt unexpectedly meaningful in this season of life.

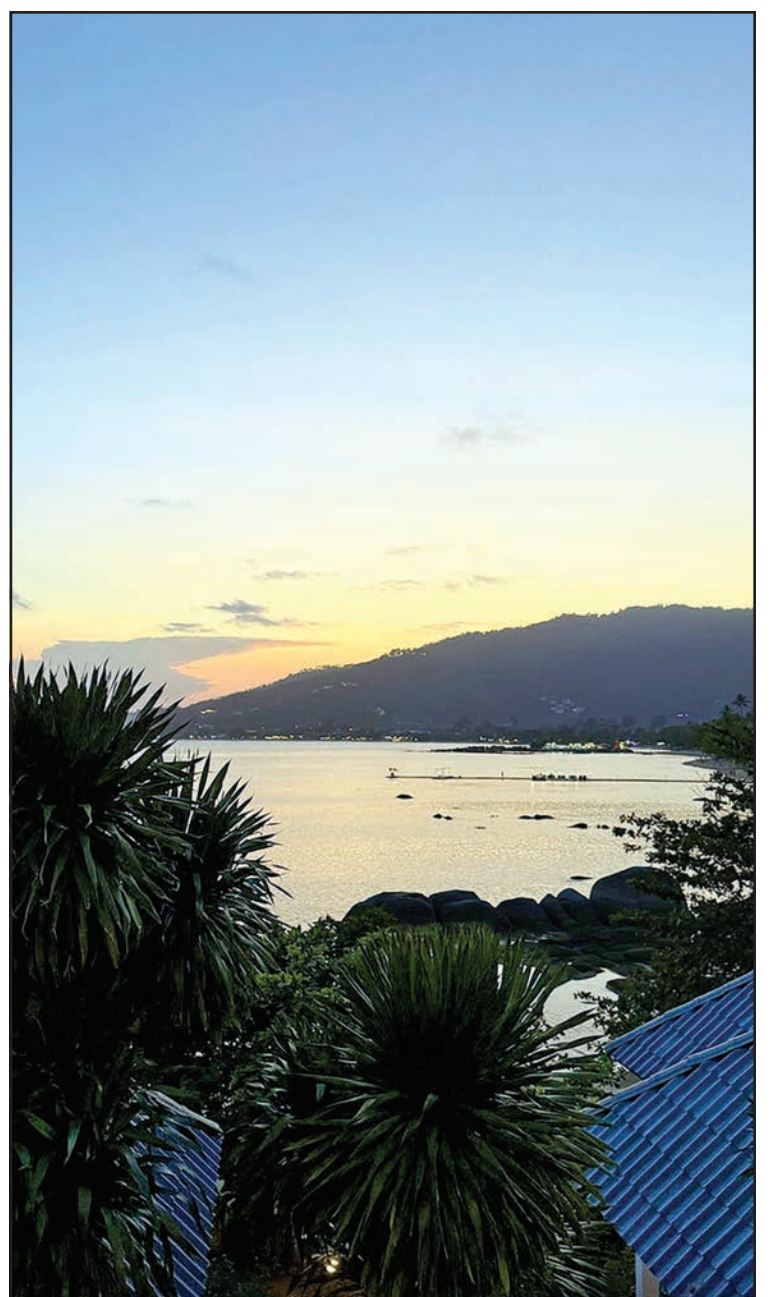
Bottom right: We enjoyed watching the sunset from our bungalow balcony, where the day slowed, the wine poured, and “just us” felt exactly right.

Photos by Kim Sherry

The art of the pivot

Pig Island was canceled the next day, thanks to the lingering storm. Disappointing? Yes. Devastating? Not really. Empty nester lesson: when plans fall apart, you simply make new ones.

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Koh Samui

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We took a beach walk, dodging waves with varying degrees of success, then landed at Kawin’s Kitchen, a beautifully designed spot with standout flavors. Chicken satay and a bright, herb-packed pork salad quickly became trip favorites.

The rest of the day followed a now-familiar rhythm: pool, balcony, wine, repeat. And a realization, we are not great at doing nothing for too long. Some people are. We admire them. We are not them. So we booked more activities. Growth is important, but so is a well-timed excursion in an air-conditioned van.

Culture, connection, and carnitas

Our island tour kicked off right on time the next morning. It turns out we like relaxation—but give us an itinerary and we come alive.

We visited temples, a Laughing Buddha, the cheeky Grandfather and Grandmother Rocks (the Thai sense of humor is alive and well), a waterfall, and the deeply moving site of a mummified monk. We made a donation and received a blessing—quiet, reflective, and unexpectedly meaningful at this stage of life.

Then, in a plot twist no one saw coming, we had Mexican food. In Thailand. And yes, it was excellent. Nachos, carnitas tacos, and a margarita the size of bad judgment. Even the most devoted Thai food enthusiasts need an intermission.

Afternoon plans? Pool, balcony, wine—and casually dreaming about the next trip. Because apparently, that’s who we are now.

Pigs, people, and pure delight

Pig Island finally happened on the fifth day, and it was amazing. A boat ride, a beach, and pigs. Lots of pigs.

Official guidance: Don’t feed them, give them water instead. So there we were, poking holes in water bottles while pigs enthusiastically slurped – surreal and oddly delightful. Avoid the large pigs (they bite) and focus on the piglets.

We wandered away from the crowds, a reliable

empty nester strategy, and found our own quiet stretch of beach. A quick swim (carefully avoiding any “pig-related hazards”) left us refreshed and laughing.

The tour wrapped with snorkeling (a bit murky, but still fun) and a casual island buffet. A weird, wonderful, unforgettable day.

A splurge worth making

For our final day, we chose a smaller, semi-private tour of Mu Ko Ang Thong National Park. It was worth every penny. With 12 people onboard, the experience felt relaxed and personal (there are options for every budget).

We started with snorkeling, then swam into a small sea cave with our guide, something we wouldn’t

have attempted on our own, and kayaked along the coast. A quick note: kayaking is not as leisurely as it looks. Your arms and back will remind you later.

Lunch was a simple, homemade spread of curries, fried chicken, and rice on a quiet island, unpretentious and delicious. The grand finale: a steep climb to Thale Nai Lagoon, where the view of an emerald-green lagoon rewarded the effort. Pro tip: walk down the stairs sideways. It works.

We returned tired, slightly sunburned, and completely content.

Final thoughts: The joy (and adjustment) of two

Traveling as empty nesters is a shift. There’s more space, more spon-

taneity, and more time to eat, walk, reflect, and occasionally forget what day it is.

Thailand gave us beauty, humor, a few unexpected detours, and the chance to reconnect, not as parents managing a schedule, but as partners rediscovering each other.

And as it turns out, that might be the best destination of all.

Kim Sherry, mother of two daughters and a fourth-generation Alaskan who grew up in King Salmon, is a host on Alaska Public Radio program *Hometown, Alaska*. She loves to cook and appeared on the

third season of ‘The Great American Recipe’ on PBS as the first contestant ever coming from Alaska. She also participated in the new culinary show “100 Cooks” on the Food Network and HBO. Kim is an artist who specializes in pet portraits, has written and illustrated two children’s books, is an avid gardener, and loves to travel.



The climb to Thale Nai Lagoon is steep, sweaty, and absolutely worth it for this emerald view.

Photo by Kim Sherry

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Classic cars make their seasonal appearance

By PAOLA BANCHERO

Senior Voice

You see them zipping by in the milder months. With colors of deep teal, metallic brown, a rare powder blue, some emit beep-beeps while others rumble mightily.

They are the vintage cars of Alaska, on display now. Like showy birds, they largely go away before bad weather arrives, their owners careful to protect against snow, potholes and inattentive drivers.

"These cars are meant to be seen," said Eli Guzmán, whose Chevrolet Bel Air required 10 years of work. It had belonged to his great-uncle. Restoring it became a labor of love between Eli and his father.

Eli's car has won several car shows and he was proudly showing it off at a car show at the Dimond Mall in early September that was organized by the Antique Auto Mushers of Alaska.

The Antique Automobile Club of America <https://aaca.org/> has two regions in Alaska: the Vernon L. Nash Antique Auto Club of Fairbanks and the Antique Auto Mushers of Alaska based in Anchorage. Both groups meet up during the summer and share tips and expertise.

Sonny Byrd, Jr. is a recent addition to the Antique Auto Mushers of Alaska. He is 50 and owns a milk-chocolate brown 1958 Chevrolet Bel Air. The car is a beauty, known for one-year-only styling, quad headlights, and expansive chrome trim. Byrd beams when he talks about Daisy Bel, as she is named, or is in her proximity.

Richard Golding is the president of the Antique Auto Mushers of Alaska. He sprinkles dad humor throughout his conversation, to the mock exasperation of his wife, Linda Mattes-Golding, who is a past president of the club.

When asked how one gets into vintage vehicles, he replied without missing a beat, "Usually through side doors."

The Antique Auto Mushers were described by two different members as an eating club with a car



problem, and sure enough, Senior Voice caught up with them one evening in early September outside Sami's City Diner on the corner of Minnesota Avenue and Benson Boulevard in Midtown Anchorage. It was easy to spot them, as several immaculate vehicles were parked outside, including a silky 1984 Alfa Romeo Spider. A cherry-red 1967 version was featured in the film "The Graduate." There was a powder-blue Citroën that belongs to the Goldings, a Rolls Royce and other

Top: A Ford Thunderbird parked outside on a July day.

Middle: Ron Stattner owns a 1967 Camaro SS that is so pristine you could eat off the motor.

Right: Michael Packard stands by his 1968 Dodge.

Photos by Paola Banchero

vintage models.

The club's last car show of the season was Sept. 5 at the Dimond Mall, but it

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Cars

from page 24

won't be long until some of the cars are out again on the open road.

"Blacky" Black, a Vietnam vet with two long-haired Dachshunds and two Model As at the car show, said he drives one of them in the winter. He puts cables on the rear tires of the four-door coupe. There are some things you have to know, like how to work a double clutch and deal with a spark advance. He also mentioned that the car has narrower tires than you'll find on modern vehicles. "You're fighting the steering wheel." But it was not a complaint.

Golding and Mattes-Golding both emphasized that the vintage car club makes appearances at assisted living and other residences, often engaging with residents about the make, model and memories of a particular car. Many

Above: Eli Guzmán's Chevrolet Bel Air is a wonder of chrome and vibrant turquoise.

Right: A 1984 Alfa Romeo convertible only sees action in mild weather.

Photos by Paola Banchemo

members also participate in a series of visible events, such as the Fourth of July parade in downtown Anchorage and the Bear Paw Festival in Eagle River.

Tom Cresap, wearing a flat cap hat (some might call it a driver's hat) is the longtime editor of The Tinkering Times, the club's newsletter.

He was a teacher with a few extra dollars when he decided to get himself a Model T for a birthday present. By building homes, he was able to supplement his teacher's income and add to his collection. But the real gift has been the friendships he's made along the way.

"This is like a family," he said. "We pat each other on the back."





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How scammers profit from your missing pet

By AIDAN SMITH

For Senior Voice

Pet owners in Alaska know that when your pet goes missing, you'll try everything in your power to bring them home. Unfortunately, some scammers use that vulnerable moment against you.

How lost pet scams target Alaskans

A lost pet scam often begins with the news every pet owner hopes to hear: Someone says they found your missing pet. But then the request for money begins. The scammer may demand a reward before returning the pet or claim your pet needs urgent medical care that must be paid for immediately.

Most lost pet scams rely on information you share publicly. Details like your pet's name, breed, appearance, and last known location can help neighbors join the search, but they can also help scammers sound con-

vincing. In a case featured on AARP's The Perfect ScamSM, a caller posing as a local humane society employee told a family that their missing cat needed emergency surgery. Using details from the family's social media posts to gain their trust, the scammer convinced them to send \$2,000.

Criminals can also use artificial intelligence to make lost pet scams more convincing. In another case, a couple received a photo that appeared to show their missing dog on an operating table. The scammer demanded \$2,746 for emergency surgery, but the couple realized that the veterinary office did not exist and the image was likely AI-generated.

How to react to a potential lost pet scam

Alaskan pet owners should be cautious if someone contacts them immediately after they post about their missing pet. Ask questions about markings,

behaviors, or other details you did not share publicly before sending money or personal information.

If someone claims your pet is at a shelter or veterinary clinic, find the organization's official phone number yourself and call to verify the story. And before paying for medical care, request a live video showing your pet.

Most importantly, remember that urgency does not prove that an emergency is real. Taking a few minutes to verify the story will not make you a bad pet owner.

How Alaskans can prevent lost pet scams

If your pet goes missing, be careful about how much information you include in public posts. Share enough to help people identify your pet, but keep one or two details private, like a unique marking or behavior. You can use those details later to determine whether someone actually

found your pet.

You should also consider microchipping your pet and keeping the contact information connected to the chip up to date. Accurate microchip information can make it easier for someone who genuinely finds your pet to contact you.

Decide in advance how your household will respond. Talk with everyone in your household about what you would do if a pet goes missing, including how you would verify any call, text, or message from someone claiming to have found them. Agree that no one will send money until the story is confirmed. A few minutes of planning now can help prevent a stressful situation from becoming even worse.

Resources for victims of lost pet scams

If you or a loved one has been targeted by a scam or fraud, you are not alone. Call the AARP Fraud Watch NetworkTM Helpline at **877-908-3360**, open Monday through Friday from **4 a.m. to 4 p.m. Alaska time**, to speak with a fraud specialist about possible next steps. Whether you lost money, shared personal information, or simply have a question, you can call.

You can also find alerts, prevention tips, and other resources through the AARP Fraud Watch Network. Remember, if you can spot a scam, you can stop a scam.

Aidan Smith is an intern for AARP Alaska.

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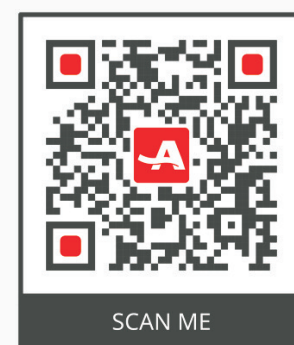
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Helping an aging parent manage their money

By JIM MILLER

Savvy Senior

Dear Savvy Senior,

Since my dad passed away last year, my 82-year-old mother has struggled to keep up with her bills. She's proud and insists on doing things herself, but I worry she's falling behind. How can I help her manage her finances without upsetting her? - Concerned Daughter

Dear Concerned,

You're not alone - lots of adult children step in to help aging parents with their finances. Whether it's paying bills, handling bank accounts, filing insurance claims, or sorting through taxes, taking on these responsibilities can feel tricky. The key is to approach it with respect, organization, and the right safeguards.

Here's how to help your mom without stepping on her independence.

Have a conversation

Talking about money can be sensitive, especially with a parent who values doing things on her own. Start with a gentle, respectful conversation. Share your concerns and offer to help with her bills or other chores. If you have siblings, loop them in too. Knowing the whole family is on the same page can reassure your mom that everyone cares, not that you're taking over.

Get organized

If your mom is open to your help, the first step is getting organized. Make a clear list of her financial info, including monthly

bills like utilities, phone, cable, and credit cards; bank and investment accounts; company benefits like retirement plans or pensions; insurance policies, including life, home, auto, long-term care, and Medicare; and copies of recent income tax returns. Having everything in one place will make managing her finances much smoother for both of you.

Locate legal documents

Now's also a good time to see if your mom has essential legal papers: a will or trust, an advance directive with a living will and health-care proxy, and a durable power of attorney for finances. If she doesn't, now's the time to get them in place. If she does, make sure they're up to date and that you know where to find them.

Simplify financial tasks

To make life easier for both you and your mom,

set up automatic payments for her bills and have her income go straight into her bank account. If her accounts and investments are scattered, consider consolidating them—it makes everything much simpler. You can also get her banking and investment accounts online so you can pay bills and monitor everything anytime, without digging through papers or making extra trips.

Set up protections

Protect your mom from scams or risky spending. A True Link Visa Prepaid Card (truelinkfinancial.com/prepaid-card) gives her access to her money but lets you set spending limits. Online monitoring services like Carefull (get-carefull.com) or EverSafe (eversafe.com) can watch her accounts, flag anything suspicious, and send alerts if something seems off. These tools give peace of mind while letting her

maintain independence.

Seek outside help

If you live far away or just need a hand, professional services can step in. SilverBills (silverbills.com) handles bill payments, while a certified daily money manager (aadmm.com) can come by once or twice a month to pay bills, make deposits, sort through health insurance statements, and keep everything organized. Think of them as extra hands to make life easier for both of you.

Helping a parent manage finances takes patience, respect, and tact. With clear communication, organization, and the right safeguards, you can support your mom while keeping her independence and peace of mind intact.

Send your questions or comments to questions@savvysenior.org, or to Savvy Senior, P.O. Box 5443, Norman, OK 73070.

YOUR SUPPORT HELPS

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Alaska

ADRC

Aging & Disability Resource Centers

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- **Explore** your options for meeting those needs

Anchorage

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

www.muni.org/adrc

Kenai Peninsula, Kodiak Island, Valdez-Cordova

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

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

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

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

Mat-Su Borough

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

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

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/



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.



Taking a gander at charitable estate planning

By HARRY NEED

For Senior Voice

Each fall, a sudden symphony, as a gaggle of estate planning professionals in V-formation transit National Estate Planning Awareness Week (NEPAW) and trumpet the accessibility of estate planning, Oct. 19-25.

Estate planning provides the opportunity to reflect on what we give versus what we leave behind. Giving implies active, intentional action. You can't wing it. Planning with a giving mindset is a choice to demonstrate your family values, acknowledge a stroke of fortune, or fledge a lifelong passion.

Consider the legacy of Edith R. Bullock. A pioneering businesswoman, Territorial legislator and UA Regent, Bullock devoted her life to advancing Alaskans. Decades later, one piece of her estate gift, the Edith R. Bullock Prize for Excellence, continues to honor individuals who demonstrate extraordinary commitment to education, research and public service across Alaska.

Like so many others who transformed the causes and communities they cared about most, Bullock's planning didn't require immense wealth or complex maneuvers. It can be as simple as updating the

beneficiary designation on your financial account or adding a simple paragraph to your will to bring your most meaningful causes under your wing.

Charitable estate planning also offers practical advantages. Gifts structured through retirement assets or living trusts can reduce tax and administrative turbulence. For instance, an IRA left to an individual is taxed as income upon withdrawal. Charities don't pay income taxes. Planning with tax-deferred assets can maximize your philanthropic gifts while preserving the rest of your nest egg for your heirs.

This October and during NEPAW, take the time to discuss your estate plan with your flock. If you are in the 60% of Americans without an estate plan, you are not a straggler! Your charitable and financial professionals offer free planning resources and will provide referrals to legal professionals who can help you stay on course and offer tailwinds to those who follow.

Harry Need, CFRE, is a philanthropic advisor at the University of Alaska Foundation. Nothing in this article should be taken as tax or investment advice. For your specific circumstances, please consult with your professional advisors.

decreased by more than 2 percentage points between 2000 and 2019, and slightly more for men than for women.

An estimated 73% of the U.S. population age 65 or older suffered from two or more chronic conditions between 2016 and 2019. Alzheimer's disease and other dementias are among the top five leading causes of death in those age 60 and over as of 2021.

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

Adults

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contributed to a growing older population across regions. The report highlights how this growth may impact healthcare systems, employment, and overall financial, physical, and mental well-being. Life expectancy is projected to increase faster than healthy life expectancy. This means a smaller share of the extra years lived is expected to be lived in good health. In the U.S., for example, the proportion of years lived in full health after age 60

ANNUAL REPORT



Edith R. Bullock left a legacy at the University of Alaska through her estate plan. Read her story in the annual report.

OCT. 19-25 is NATIONAL ESTATE PLANNING AWARENESS WEEK

Consider how you might support UA students or programs using the estate planning resources we offer.



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Why we need to grieve

By **BRITTINI SHELTON**
Owner, Legacy Funeral Homes

Grief is not a problem to be solved. It is the natural response to losing someone we love, and it arrives whether we invite it or not. Yet many of us treat it as something to get through quickly, or worse, to avoid altogether. We stay busy. We tell ourselves we are fine.

The trouble is that grief does not disappear when it is ignored. It waits. Unspoken sorrow often surfaces months or years later as restlessness, exhaustion, irritability, or a sadness with no clear source. Avoiding grief does not make it smaller. It only delays the work.

Grief has a purpose. It is how we slowly come to absorb a reality our hearts are not ready to accept: that someone who mattered is gone, and that life must be rebuilt around that absence. Mourning gives us the time and the structure to do that rebuilding, piece by piece.

This is why the rituals

surrounding death matter so much. A funeral or memorial service is not simply a formality. It is a gathering that says, out loud and in the company of others, that this person lived and that their life meant something. Sharing stories, hearing a favorite hymn, standing at a graveside, or lingering over old photographs are ways of making the loss real enough to face. We cannot heal from what we will not acknowledge.

These moments also draw a community around us. Grief is heavier when carried alone. The neighbors who bring a casserole, the friend who tells a story you had never heard, the family members who gather from far away are all part of how we survive the early days.

If you are grieving, give yourself permission to feel it. Talk about the person you lost. Say their name aloud. Attend the service and let others attend yours. Remembering is not dwelling in the past. It is how we carry the people we love into the rest of our lives.

Malone

continued from page 19

mysteries from the 1940s and beyond: following introduction of the lead character and the crime, sinister motives for the usual suspects become clear to the inquisitive armchair detective who butts heads with the local police, and ultimately leads to the concluding reveal.

While cable and traditional TV networks continue to face viewership challenges from streaming services, TCM still reaches millions of households, giving the familiar host a potentially huge audience

that any first-time author would kill for. Follow-up novels by the author are also planned for the publisher's "Movie Palace Mystery" series (see www.aliciamalone.com).

"I feel very lucky that TCM has such dedicated viewers who are supportive of all the TCM hosts and their projects," said Alicia. "I wrote my book with them in mind. Even if you don't watch the channel but like mysteries or film references, you can still enjoy this book."

Nick Thomas teaches at Auburn University at Montgomery in Alabama and has written features, columns, and interviews for many newspapers and magazines. See www.getnickt.org.

MOVING? Let us know!

Send your change of address information to Senior Voice, 401 E. Fireweed Lane, #102, Anchorage, AK 99503, or call 907-276-1059 (Anchorage area) or 1-800-478-1059 (toll-free statewide).



Dementia

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strengths: people know how to show up for one another. Throughout my years working with families across Alaska, I have seen just how powerful community can be. I have watched neighbors check on neighbors, family members rearrange their lives to care for someone they love, senior centers become gathering places, and communities find creative ways to keep older Alaskans connected. Those experiences have reminded me that supporting someone living with dementia is not only about providing care. It is also about protecting their place within their family, their community, and the life they have built.



This month, Alzheimer's Resource Alaska is focusing on the importance of continuing to see, include, and value the person beyond a dementia diagnosis, with a special focus on what that can look like in communities across Alaska. The organization is having an intergenerational concert Oct. 18 at the Alaska Center for the Performing Arts. This is the Forget Me Not Chorus rehearsing. Photo by Sam Lilly

One of the most important things I have learned from families across Alaska is to keep seeing the person, not just the diagnosis. Whether someone lives in Anchorage or in a small community hundreds of miles away, they still want the same things all of us want: to be included, to contribute, to be surrounded

ed by people who know them, and to know they still matter. That idea shapes many of ARA's programs and partnerships across Alaska. Programs such as the Forget Me Not Chorus and Memory Café create opportunities for people living with dementia and their families to participate without worrying about whether a forgotten name, repeated question, or change in ability will be misunderstood. That kind of connection has value far beyond a single program or event. Imagine what our communities could look like if a dementia diagnosis did not gradually push someone to the margins. What if our workplaces, churches, senior centers, schools, neighborhoods,

businesses, and community organizations became more comfortable welcoming and including people experiencing cognitive change? Sometimes inclusion is remarkably simple. It can mean continuing to extend the invitation, even if someone needs a little more help participating. It can mean slowing down a conversation instead of ending it. It can mean sitting together even when words are harder to find. It can mean asking what someone can still do rather than assuming what they cannot. It can also mean supporting the caregiver standing beside them. There are difficult realities associated with dementia, and we should never minimize them. Families

may experience profound changes, grief, uncertainty, and new responsibilities as the disease progresses. There will be hard days. But those hard days do not have to become the entirety of someone's life. There can still be music. There can still be laughter. There can still be friendship, purpose, recognition, and moments that become treasured memories for the people who share them. Most importantly, there is still a person who deserves to be seen. Dementia may change the way someone communicates with the world, but it does not change their need to belong to it. Perhaps one of the greatest things we can do as neighbors, friends, family members, and fellow Alaskans is make sure there continues to be a place for them beside us. If you or someone you love is navigating Alzheimer's disease or another dementia, you do not have to navigate it alone. ARA provides education, support, care coordination, engagement opportunities, and resources for Alaskans across the state. Visit alzalaska.org or call 907-561-3313 to connect with our team. Lisa Sauder is the CEO, Alzheimer's Resource Alaska

Hospice of Anchorage

Navigating the Holidays

October 30, 2026

6:30-8:30PM

First Congregational Church (downstairs)

2610 E. Northern Lights Blvd.

Navigating the Holidays is an annual bereavement gathering created to honor loss during a season that can feel especially difficult. Winter and the holidays often deepen feelings of grief, and this event offers a space to connect with community, learn supportive tools, and share ideas to help one another through the months ahead. Light refreshments provided.

RSVP: Please follow the QR code or contact us via phone or email.

No cost to attend.

907.561.5322 • info@hospiceofanchorage.org

Requirements

continued from page 5

the requirement for at least one month between renewals. Because some implementation details are still being developed, Medicaid recipients are encouraged to check the State's information frequently rather than relying on information they may have received several months earlier. Marupudi said if you are unsure what applies to you, have questions about the requirements or receive a notice you do not understand, seek assistance promptly rather than waiting for your next renewal. "These are significant changes, particularly for people who have been accustomed to renewing Medicaid once a year. More frequent eligibility reviews, combined with new work and community engagement requirements for

some individuals," he said. From a healthcare access perspective, one of the major concerns is that additional administrative requirements could result in interruptions in coverage for people who remain eligible for Medicaid. That could happen if someone misses a notice, does not realize they need to respond, is unsure whether an exclusion applies to them, or has difficulty providing requested information. There is still a great deal unknown about exactly how some aspects of these changes will be implemented. "The State is continuing to develop its processes and guidance, and information may change as implementation moves forward. There is not necessarily one source today that answers every implementation question, which makes it especially important for Medicaid recipients, providers, and community organizations to continue following updates closely," Marupudi said.

For individuals, the best steps right now are straightforward: keep your contact information current with the Division of Public Assistance, check Medicaid communications regularly, respond promptly to requests for information, and continue checking the State's Medicaid resources as new guidance becomes available. Anyone with questions or concerns about how the requirements may apply to their individual situation can contact the Division of Public Assistance at doh.dpa.info@alaska.gov. Also, more information can be found on the Medicaid Work and Community Engagement Requirements web page. <https://bit.ly/4xpMLVz> 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

Crossword answers from page 18

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Vaccines

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worsened chronic conditions like asthma or heart disease.

Protect yourself from shingles

Shingles is an extremely

painful viral infection that stems from the same virus as chickenpox. Called varicella zoster, it stays in the body after you have chickenpox, lies dormant and years later can reactivate to cause shingles. Anyone who has had or been exposed to chickenpox is at risk.

The shingles rash can cause burning, tingling,

and in some cases, long-term nerve pain. There is a vaccine called Shingrix, and it is approved and recommended for everyone over the age of 50.

Symptoms:

1. A sharp or stabbing pain. A rash that looks like mini pimples usually follows the pain.
2. Itching or tingling
3. Fever
4. Red rash and blisters
5. Fever
6. Headaches
7. Chills
8. Light sensitivity

Not taking the vaccine can lead to complications such as postherpetic neuralgia that causes deep, burning nerve pain lasting for months or even years;

vision loss is possible if shingles occurs near or in the eye causing permanent eye damage or blindness. Severe cases can lead to hearing problems, pneumonia, or even brain inflammation (encephalitis).

A first dose is given at the doctor's visit, then a second two to six months after.

So, be wise—immunize.

Table 1 Recommended Adult Immunization Schedule by Age Group, United States, 2025

Vaccine	19–26 years	27–49 years	50–64 years	≥65 years
COVID–19	1 or more doses of 2024–2025 vaccine (See Notes)			2 or more doses of 2024–2025 vaccine (See Notes)
Influenza inactivated (IIV3, ccIIV3) Influenza recombinant (RIV3)	1 dose annually			1 dose annually (HD–IIV3, RIV3, or allIV3 preferred)
Influenza inactivated (aIIV3; HD–IIV3) Influenza recombinant (RIV3)	Solid organ transplant (See Notes)			
Influenza live, attenuated (LAIV3)	1 dose annually			
Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV)	Seasonal administration during pregnancy (See Notes)		50 through 74 years (See Notes)	≥75 years
Tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis (Tdap or Td)	1 dose Tdap each pregnancy; 1 dose Td/Tdap for wound management (See Notes)			
	1 dose Tdap, then Td or Tdap booster every 10 years			
Measles, mumps, rubella (MMR)	1 or 2 doses depending on indication (if born in 1957 or later)			For health care personnel (See Notes)
Varicella (VAR)	2 doses (if born in 1980 or later)	2 doses		
Zoster recombinant (RZV)	2 doses for immunocompromising conditions (See Notes)		2 doses	
Human papillomavirus (HPV)	2 or 3 doses depending on age at initial vaccination or condition	27 through 45 years		
Pneumococcal (PCV15, PCV20, PCV21, PPSV23)			See Notes	See Notes
Hepatitis A (HepA)	2, 3, or 4 doses depending on vaccine			
Hepatitis B (HepB)	2, 3, or 4 doses depending on vaccine or condition			
Meningococcal A, C, W, Y (MenACWY)	1 or 2 doses depending on indication (See Notes for booster recommendations)			
Meningococcal B (MenB)	19 through 23 years	2 or 3 doses depending on vaccine and indication (See Notes for booster recommendations)		
Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib)	1 or 3 doses depending on indication			
Mpox	2 doses			
Inactivated poliovirus (IPV)	Complete 3-dose series if incompletely vaccinated. Self-report of previous doses acceptable (See Notes)			

Center for Disease Control 2025 vaccine recommendations

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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).

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