

## INSIDE

Legal Tips	2
Health Fairs	2
Stimulus \$ for Seniors	3
Key Steps for Caregivers	4

# Senior Care News

Volume 6, Issue 3

Senior Information/Caregiver Resource Center, Southeast Senior Services

MARCH 2009

## Afraid of Falling? Make Your Home Safer

Falls cause Alaskan seniors to spend more time in the hospital than any other non-fatal reason, according to the Alaska Commission on Aging. Seniors are more likely to fall as increasing age leads to poorer coordination and balance. But steps can be taken in any home to lessen the chances of accidental falls.

- Remove throw rugs. Remove any rugs at the top or bottom of stairs.

- Make room lighting brighter. Use at least a 60 watt bulb. Make sure you can turn on the lights in any room without walking in the dark to reach a light switch.



- Use nightlights, especially in the bathroom.
- Use non-slip rubber mats/strips in bathtub or shower. Install two grab bars in the shower or bath. Use a raised toilet seat and install handrails.
- Remove clutter, especially on the floor and on stairs. Try not to use extension cords or move them out of your way.

- Add handrails to both sides of stairs.
- Wear sturdy, low-heeled shoes, not slippers or bare feet around the house.
- Use sturdy chairs with arms that make it easy for you to sit down and get up.
- Move items where you can reach them without a step stool.
- **KEEP MOVING.** If you stop moving because you are afraid of falling, you will only get weaker. Low key to moderate regular exercise keeps you stronger and less likely to fall. Contact your local Senior Center for an activities calendar.

## Legislative Teleconferences On Tap For Seniors

Concerned about the state budget? Worried about a particular piece of legislation? The 90-day session timeline shortens the time available to contact your legislators. Senior Legislative Teleconferences are scheduled for 9:30 am-11am on March 6, March 20, April 3, April 10, and April 17. Sites include Haines Senior Center, Ketchikan Pioneer Home, Metlakatla Senior Center, Skagway Senior Center, Swan Lake Senior Center, Wrangell Senior Center, and Juneau's Alaska Office Bldg. 1st floor conference room.



## Legal Tips for Older Alaskans

*Seniors and the Law: A Guide for Senior Citizens*

*in the Last Frontier* covers issues from recreation to health care to estate planning to financial problems and legal rights. Of special interest to Family Caregivers is the information on advanced health care directives, with durable power of attorney. The 24-page booklet is available in PDF format from Krista Scully at 907-272-7469 or e-mail [info@alaskabar.org](mailto:info@alaskabar.org) or download a copy at [www.alaskabar.org](http://www.alaskabar.org). The booklet was produced by the Young Lawyers' Section of the Anchorage Bar Association.



## Spring Health Fairs Free To The Public

### Disabled Parking Identification

Need a disabled parking placard? The Alaska Division of Motor Vehicles issues placards to people with a disability. The criteria includes conditions, such as difficulty walking or breathing, which affect many seniors. Applications are available at [www.state.ak.us/dmv/faq/disabled.htm](http://www.state.ak.us/dmv/faq/disabled.htm). Or call us at 463-6177 and we will mail you an application. Placards are more portable than license plates. They can be used in whatever vehicle the disabled person is in. They can be temporary or permanent. There is no cost.

### Need Help Paying Medicare Part D ?

The Social Security Administration is providing extra help paying a Medicare prescription drug plan to people with limited income and resources. Contact SSA at **1-800-772-1213** or [www.socialsecurity.gov](http://www.socialsecurity.gov).

Many Southeast Alaska communities are holding spring health fairs in April. Free health screenings, education, and low cost blood tests will be offered at each site. Look for the Southeast Senior Services' Senior Information/Caregiver Resource Center booth!

**Yakutat** Health Fair, Saturday, April 4, 8 am-12pm, Yakutat High School

**Wrangell** Health Fair, Saturday, April 4, 7 am-12pm,

**Gustavus** Health Fair, Saturday, April 11, 8am-12pm, Gustavus School

**Haines** Health Fair, Saturday, April 18, 8 am-11am, Haines School

**Juneau** Health Fair, Saturday, April 25, 9:30 am-2pm, Nugget Mall

## You Can Help Vulnerable Elders

Seniors may be abandoned, neglected, self-neglected, exploited and abused. Vulnerable adults in any of these situations may be referred to Adult Protective Services by calling **1-800-478-9996**. If the situation is an immediate emergency, call the police first.

Under Alaska law, Adult Protective Services helps adults with a “mental or physical impairment that prevents them from protecting themselves or seeking help.” After a referral, Adult Protective Services investigates and often links clients to community resources. If the situation is life threatening or the senior could be injured, he or she could be placed in protective placement.

In doing its work, Adult Protective Services must first serve the adult client, not the community, not the family and not the police. This legal priority may become central in a case where the adult is perceived to be self-neglectful. The legal key is whether the adult has physical or cognitive impairments that impair him to such an extent that he cannot protect himself or seek help by himself. The law presumes freedom is more important than safety.

If you know of a senior who seems vulnerable to abuse, neglect, exploitation, abandonment, or self-neglect, please call **1-800-478-9996** so a professionally trained individual can make the necessary determination and act to help the senior.



## American Recovery Act : Dollars for Seniors

Alaska seniors on Social Security and Supplemental Security Income will receive a one-time payment of \$250. The payment is part of the recent stimulus package signed into law on February 17, 2009, by President Obama. The Social Security Administration expects all payments to be delivered by late May. The SSA asks that seniors do not contact the SSA unless they do not receive their payment by June 4th.

### Just Getting Through the Day?

Depression can be felt by anyone anywhere, but Family Caregivers are especially vulnerable.

Often you face physical, financial and emotional challenges — and you may face them 24 hours a day. Counseling is available to help you. Call the Senior Information/Caregiver Resource Center for a confidential referral: **1-866-746-3177 or (907) 463-6177**.



## “Senior Snapshot: Older Alaskans in 2008”



“Alaska now has the fastest growing senior population of the 50 states...The fastest growing age group within the senior population is the 85-and-older group...Wait lists

for AHFC housing have grown by over 70 percent in six years...Southeast seniors aged 60 plus now number over 10,000, about 15% of the area’s population, a 28% increase since 2001.” To see more of the snapshot, visit the Alaska Commission on Aging website at <http://www.alaskaaging.org>.

## Come Ride With Us

Door-to-door transportation helps seniors stay as independent as possible. The Care-A-Van serves seniors 60 and older, and persons with disabilities. Vans are wheelchair accessible. Drivers are specially trained in assisting passengers. To register for service in your community, call your local Senior Center. In Juneau, call **463-6194** or **586-6234 (TDD)**.



## Two Key Steps for a Family Caregiver To Take

Family Caregivers have to make many decisions, some large, some small. But two steps are crucial to anyone caring for an Alaskan senior: placing the senior on the Pioneer Home waiting list and helping the senior do a Durable Power of Attorney. A senior age 65 or over is eligible to file a Pioneer Home application if he has been physically present in Alaska for a minimum of 12 consecutive months prior to the application. For a Pioneer Home application, call **907-465-4416**. The Durable Power of Attorney is established through the Advance Health Care Directive form. It is available on-line at the Dept. of Health & Social Services. Or call us at **1-866-746-3177** or **463-6177**, and we’ll send you both the forms and directions.

This newsletter is published by the Senior Information / Caregiver Resource Center, 895 W. 12th St., Juneau, AK 99801. A Program of Southeast Senior Services, Catholic Community Services, Juneau, AK.

To share information or make suggestions about newsletter content, contact Mary Halloran at 463-6198 or 1-866-746-3177. To add or remove your name from our mailing list, email [seniorinfo@gci.net](mailto:seniorinfo@gci.net) or call 463-6177 or 1-866-746-6177 (toll free).