

# Alaskan Seniors Living Longer Growing Stronger

from the Alaska Commission on Aging



Sean Parnell  
Governor

Summer 2013



William J. Streur  
Commissioner

## Housing is a top priority for Alaska seniors

How will Alaska provide appropriate, affordable and sustainable housing for its growing number of seniors who live independently, supportive services to maintain their quality of life, and help for them to transition to assisted living and nursing home care if needed?

The Alaska Commission on Aging (ACoA) in partnership with the Department of Health and Social Services, Alaska Housing Finance Corporation, and the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority hosted the Alaska Senior Housing Summit, the first conference devoted to discussion of senior housing issues last December at the Wilda Marston Theater, Loussac Library in Anchorage to address these issues. The purpose of the Summit was to bring together policymakers,

persons working in the senior housing field, seniors and other stakeholders to discuss the pressing needs for more affordable, appropriate and sustainable senior housing along the continuum of care that includes independent senior housing, senior housing with support services and long-term care housing such as assisted living facilities and nursing homes. Speakers included representatives from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Alaska Housing Finance Corporation, developers, architects, assisted living and nursing homes, the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority, Department of Health and Social Services, and agencies serving seniors. The event was well-attended by more than 120 persons.

Summit presenters highlighted the importance of partnerships as key to increasing affordable and appropriate senior housing in Alaska. Such partnerships can take many forms that include independent senior housing with senior service providers to provide long-term support services that help older Alaskans maintain their health and independence. Other examples include public-private partnerships to support development of housing for moderate-income seniors to age-in-place and increased funding opportunities to promote growth in the long-term care industry. For a review of the Summit's summary discussion and other information related to the event, please go to the ACoA website [www.alaskaaging.org](http://www.alaskaaging.org).

*(Continued on page 2)*

### **Alaska Commission on Aging Mission:**

***To ensure the dignity and independence of older Alaskans, and assist them through planning, advocacy, education and interagency cooperation, to lead useful and meaningful lives.***

**Alaskan Seniors:  
Living Longer, Growing Stronger**  
is a quarterly publication of the  
Alaska Commission on Aging  
(ACoA).

The mission of the Alaska  
Commission on Aging is to advocate  
for policies, programs, and  
services that promote the dignity  
and independence of Alaska's  
seniors and help them maintain a  
meaningful quality of life.

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[www.AlaskaAging.org/publications.htm](http://www.AlaskaAging.org/publications.htm)



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## Director's Corner

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By Denise Daniello

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### Legislative Advocacy Outcomes

ACoA identified a slate of legislative advocacy priorities to improve services for Alaskan seniors and their caregivers. In collaboration with our advocacy partners, we were able to achieve positive outcomes that address issues affecting older Alaskans. We thank Governor Parnell and the Legislature for supporting budget items and legislation to promote health and independence for Alaskan seniors. ACoA provided committee testimony and letters of support for the following budget items and legislation that were approved.

- Health Promotion, Disease Prevention is a senior grant program under the Division of Senior and Disabilities to promote senior health. An increment of \$150,000 was added to this program's base funding to support strategies that reduce the rate of senior falls and related personal and health care costs. Accidental falls are the #1 cause of non-fatal hospitalized injuries for Alaskans age 65 and older and the #1 cause of fatal for Alaskans age 75 and older. Funding

will be used to provide senior fall prevention activities such as age-appropriate exercises to improve balance, strength and mobility offered in senior centers and other locations; home hazard reduction services to improve accessibility; senior medication management education; among other services.

- Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementia (ADRD) Education and Support Program is another senior grant program under the Division of Senior and Disabilities Services that provides training and support for Alaskans with dementia and their caregivers. Alaska's senior population is growing at a staggering rate. The number of people affected by Alzheimer's disease and related dementia (ADRD) is increasing in proportion to the accelerating senior population, as old age is the greatest risk factor for dementia. ACoA advocated for a \$230,000 increment to the program's base funding to strengthen education, training, counseling, respite and other supports for persons with ADRD and their caregivers. This increment was included in the Governor's and Legislature's operating budget for the ADRD Education and Support Program.



2013 Alaska Commission on Aging Commission Members  
 (From left to right) Albert Ningeulook (Shishmaref), Mary Shields (Anchorage), Eleanor Dementi (Cantwell), Paula Pawlowski (ACoA Chair, Anchorage), Denise Daniello (Executive Director, Juneau), Marie Darlin (Juneau), Pat Branson (ACoA Vice Chair, Kodiak), Sandi Doyle (Fairbanks) and Banarsi Lal (Pioneer Home Advisory Board Chair, Fairbanks). Duane Mayes (Director of Senior and Disability Services, Anchorage) not pictured.

- **Complex Behaviors Collaborative (CBC)** is a program administered by the Division of Behavioral Health to provide training and intensive consultation that benefit persons with cognitive impairments, such as individuals with Alzheimer’s disease and mental illness, who experience difficult to manage behaviors and are at risk for institutional care. ACoA along with the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority, Alaska Mental Health Board, Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse, Governor’s Council on Disabilities and Special Education and the Alaska Brain Injury

Network jointly advocated for a one-time increment in the amount of \$450,000 to continue training and services to support this vulnerable population.

- **Office of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman:** The Commission advocated in support of funding to add an extra ombudsman position to increase capacity for the Office of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman to respond to an increasing number of reports/complaints received by this office and promote protection of elderly people in long-term care settings.

- **Senior Housing:** The Commission and many partners advocated in support of continued funding for Alaska Housing Finance Corporation’s Senior Citizen Housing Development Fund that was approved at \$4.5 million. This funding is used as gap financing to support the development of new and renovation of senior housing projects as well as weatherization and energy efficiency programs benefiting seniors.
- **Senior Access to Primary Health Care:** ACoA advocated in support of \$1,071,700 base operating funding for

**Director's Corner**  
**(Continued from page 3)**

the Senior Medicare Clinic which was later reduced to \$871,700 by the Conference Committee.

- Missing Vulnerable Adult Prompt Response & Notification Plan, "Silver Alert" (HB 59) was passed by the Legislature and will create a statewide alert system (supplementing the State's Amber Alert system for missing children) to find vulnerable adults with Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias, other cognitive impairments or physical disabilities who wander unattended and become lost. This bill had strong bipartisan support and was a high advocacy priority for ACoA this session.

During session, ACoA monitored a total of 29 bills and resolutions and actively supported 8 pieces of legislation by providing committee testimony and submitting letters of support to bill sponsors and legislative committees. ACoA's position papers, letters of support to legislators, 2012 Annual Report, Senior Snapshot and other information are posted on our website at [www.alaskaaging.org](http://www.alaskaaging.org).



Fern Elam, Soldotna resident, is one of the Alaskan Centenarians being honored during May as Older Americans Month in Alaska.

**Older Americans Month in Alaska**

In May, we celebrate "Older Americans Month in Alaska" to recognize the contributions and achievements of older Alaskans. The theme for 2013 is Unleash the Power of Age to honor the value that older Alaskans continue to contribute to their families and communities and to call special attention to the growing number of Alaskan Centenarians, people age 100 years or older, during the Older Alaskans Month celebrations. According to data from the Division of Permanent Fund Dividend (2011), there are at least 60 Alaskans who are 100 years or older in the State, up from 40 persons in 2010.

The oldest person we know is a woman age 105 years old who lives in Southeast Alaska. Twenty-one Centenarians gave their consent to honor them publicly during Older Alaskans Month celebrations. For information about Older Alaskans Month activities and Alaskan Centenarians, please visit ACoA's website ([www.alaskaaging.org](http://www.alaskaaging.org)).

Until Next Time...

A handwritten signature in cursive that reads "Denise Daniello".

Denise Daniello,  
Executive Director  
Alaska Commission on Aging

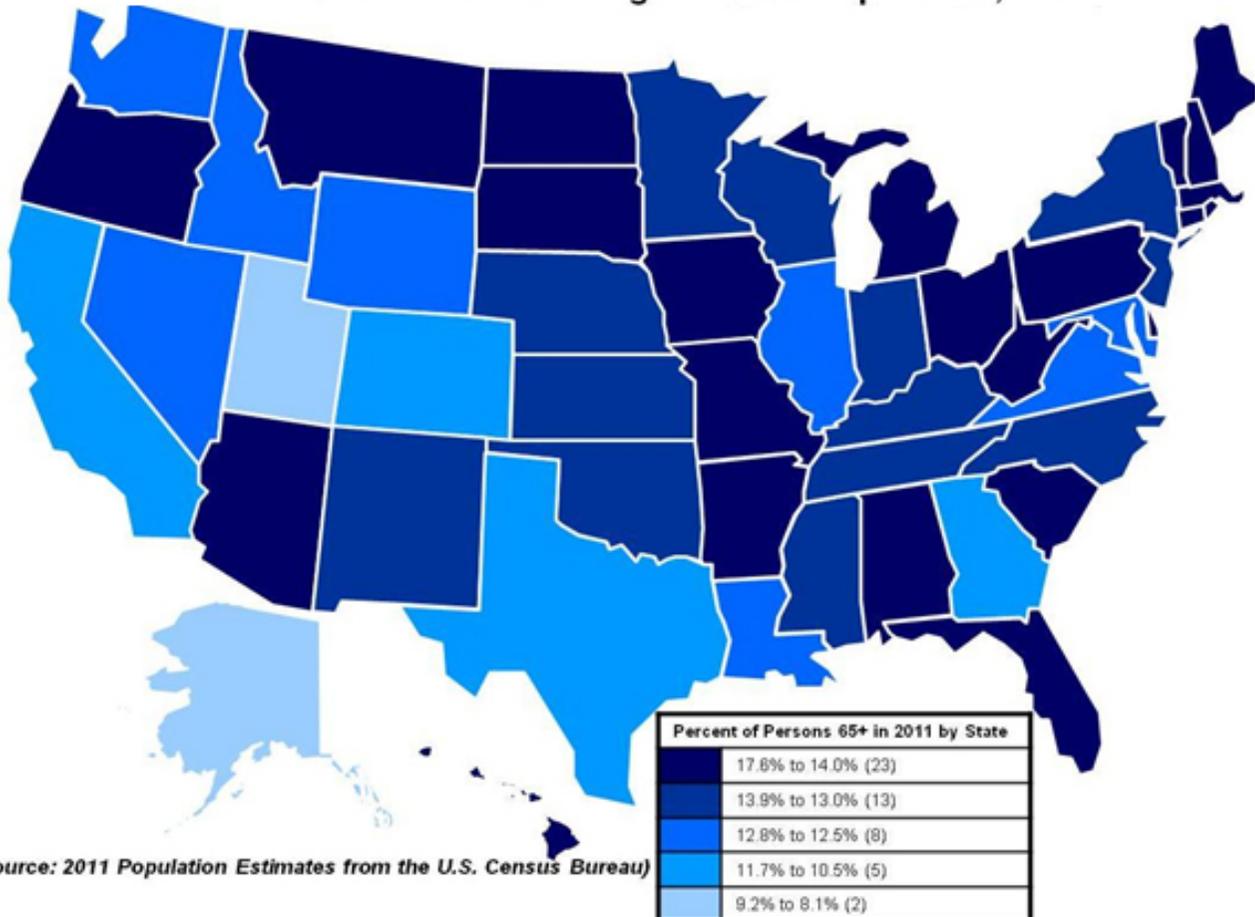
## The 65+ Population for 2011 in the U.S.:

Information about the latest population trends for Older Americans is described below as reported by the Profile of Older Americans, 2012.

- The older population (65+) numbered 41.4 million in 2011, an increase of 6.3 million or 18% since 2000.
- The number of Americans aged 45-64 – who will reach 65 over the next two decades – increased by 33% during this period.
- Over one in every eight persons living in the U.S., or 13.3%, is an older American.
- Persons reaching age 65 have an average life expectancy of an additional 19.2 years (20.4 years for females and 17.8 years for males).
- Older men were much more likely to be married than older women--72% of men vs. 45% of women (Figure 2). In 2012, 37% of older women were widows.
- About 28% (11.8 million) of non-institutionalized older persons live alone (8.4 million women, 3.5 million men).
- Almost half of older women (46%) age 75+ live alone.
- The major sources of income as reported by older persons in 2010 were Social Security (reported by 86% of older persons), income from assets (reported by 52%), private pensions (reported by 27%), government employee pensions (reported by 15%), and earnings (reported by 26%).

\*Principal sources of data for the Profile of Older Americans 2012 include the U.S. Census Bureau, the National Center for Health Statistics, and the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The Profile incorporates the latest data available but not all items are updated on an annual basis.

Persons 65+ as a Percentage of Total Population, 2011



(Source: 2011 Population Estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau)

## Alaska Commission on Aging & Advocacy

***One of the priorities of the ACoA is to advocate for legislation that is important to seniors. During the first session of the 28th Legislature, ACoA held 8 state-wide teleconferences focusing on both state and federal budgets and bills. During the session, we actively monitored 29 bills and resolutions and actively supported 8 pieces of legislation by providing committee testimony and submitting letters of support. We would like to thank the 14 active host sites, seniors, their advocates and ACoA Commission members for spending the time to listen, understand and supporting pertinent legislation by taking an active role in advocating for proposed legislation and budget items that affect Alaskan seniors.***



ACoA Commissioner Banarsi Lal and Lieutenant Governor Treadwell



Senator Kevin Meyer and ACoA members Mary Shields & ACoA Chair Paula Pawlowski.



Senator John Coghill with ACoA Commission members Eleanor Dementi and Marie Darlin



Senator McGuire and ACoA members Pat Branson and Albert Ningeulook.



Representative Muñoz and Staffer Bonnie Gruening present information at the ACoA last legislative teleconference of the session.

## **The ACoA Welcomes Newest Commission Member:**

### **Albert Ningeulook of Shishmaref, Alaska**

Albert Ningeulook was appointed to the Alaska Commission on Aging by Governor Parnell in October 2012 to serve in a public member seat. Born and raised in Shishmaref, a rural community located in the Nome census area, Ningeulook served fifteen years in the Army National Guard. Active in his community, Ningeulook serves as the Vice chair of the Shishmaref Elders' Committee and is the Shishmaref Delegate to the Alaska Village Electric Cooperative. A former member of the Alaska Humanities Forum, he has worked extensively in cultural, language, and writing efforts of his region. Albert is appointed to a seat reserved for a public member. Albert is a poet and writer who has written many articles and stories related to living in rural Alaska.

## **The ACoA Welcomes Newest Commission Member:**

### **Mary Shields of Anchorage, Alaska**

Mary Shields was appointed to the Alaska Commission on Aging by Governor Parnell in January 2013 to serve in a public member seat. Mary, recently retired, was the General Manager of Northwest Technical Services in Anchorage and holds a BA in Psychology from Central Washington University. Mary has served on various boards in Alaska since moving here with her three children in 1972.

## **The ACoA Congratulates the Re-Appointment of Commission Member:**

### **Eleanor Dementi of Cantwell, Alaska**

Eleanor Dementi, resident of Cantwell, has extensive executive leadership experience in Alaska businesses and organizations. She has served on the board of directors of AHTNA, Incorporated since 2008, following her earlier service from 1973-1981. Dementi has also served on the board of the Alaska Federation of Natives from 1999-2007; the board of the Copper River Native Association from 1999-2003; and the board of regents for the Haskell Indian National University in Kansas from 1999-2002. She served as president of the Cantwell Village Council from 1994-1999, and was president of the Denali Borough School Board from 1989-2007. Dementi is re-appointed to a public seat on the Commission.

**An “Elder’s Speech”  
by Albert Ningeulook**  
“Take care of your bodies!  
Take care of your minds!  
Love and respect other  
people! Share and give  
to other peoples even  
if they are people from  
another part of the earth  
who come to your village!  
Never learn a bad way of  
Living! Never drink too  
much because you might  
find out the next morning  
you did something that  
you would not do sober!  
Never smoke too much!  
Never forget what parents  
and elders tell to you --  
advise, stories; everything.  
Never forget the Creator  
because He cares for  
us all the time! This all I  
have to say; Thank you  
all for listening to me!  
Quyana – Thank You!!!!”

Immediately, the audience gave the old man a standing ovation as he slowly walked off the stage with the satisfaction of knowing that he had touched many hearts and minds. Young people emotionally swallow lumps and wiped away tears from their eyes; indeed, the old man had expressed his wisdom, experience and knowledge.

The old man did not speak eloquent English but he had made his point.

*Albert Ningeulook  
Shishmaref, Alaska 99772  
Copyright 1995*



# Health Logic

by  
Sherice Cole

## Steps to a Happier and Healthier You

Positive emotions play an important role in maintaining physical and mental health by reducing stress levels that can increase the risk for developing cancer, heart disease, and other chronic conditions.

### Be positive and generous

- Studies on longevity indicate that persons who live longer have a positive outlook on life and are willing to generously share what they have with others.

**Feel empathy** - The more connected you feel to others, the higher your degree of generosity and compassion. Stay connected to friends and loved ones.

**Embrace Emotion** - Control negative emotions, like counting to 10 before

overreacting with emotion in an argument. Do not bottle up your emotions. Talk to a friend or someone in confidence when you are going through difficult times. Studies show that unresolved negative emotions can manifest into illness and disease.

**Humor** - Watch a funny movie or play a fun game like charades that make you laugh. Research shows laughter not only has the power to reduce stress but also relieves pain, improves immunity, and lowers blood pressure.

### Understanding Unhappiness

- Understanding that unhappiness can help an individual set new directions to achieve positive personal growth and that happy experiences provide the fortitude to address life's challenges.

**Explore spirituality** - People view spirituality in different ways. While some may practice their spirituality by going to church or through prayer, others meditate or enjoy a quiet walk. These activities help slow breathing and brain

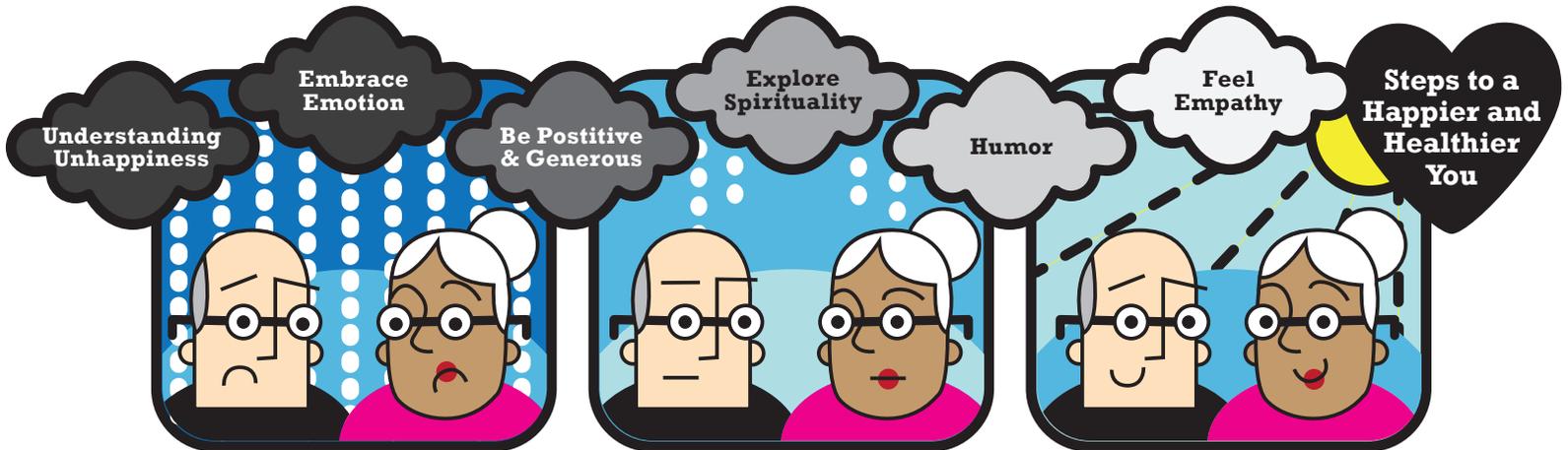
activity, reducing heart rate and blood pressure, which can bring peace of mind.

## Understanding Balance and Aging

As we get older, we tend to sit more and move less, which affects our sense of balance. It is a gradual and slow process but over a decade or two our sense of balance can deteriorate due to inactivity. The good news is that the "use it or lost it" principal is a two-way street. You can restore your balance through exercise. Check with your doctor before starting any exercise program and talk to them about "controlled instability," which is a new exercise form that stimulates your sense of balance while minimizing risk.

There is a program by TheBalanceManual.com that you can look into to find out about a program that improves stability and helps prevent falls.

Reference: Realage.com / www.thebalancemanual.com





## Tips for Seniors

### Free Credit Reports

The Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA) requires each of the nationwide credit reporting companies — Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion — to provide you with a free copy of your credit report, at your request, once every 12 months.

A credit report includes information about where you live, how you pay your bills, and whether you've been sued or have filed for bankruptcy. Nationwide credit reporting companies sell the information in your report to creditors, insurers, employers, and other businesses that use it to evaluate your applications for credit, insurance, employment, or renting/buying a home.

The three nationwide credit reporting companies have set up a central website, a toll-free telephone number, and a mailing address through which you can order your free annual report.

To order, visit [annualcreditreport.com](http://annualcreditreport.com) or call 1-877-322-8228. You may order a credit report from each of the three nationwide credit reporting companies at the same time, or you can order your report from each of the companies, one at a time. The law allows you one free copy

of your report from each of the nationwide credit reporting companies every 12 months.

To request a free copy of your credit report, you will need to provide your name, address, Social Security number, and date of birth. If you have moved in the last two years, you may have to provide your previous address. To maintain the security of your file, each nationwide credit reporting company may ask you for some information that only you would know, like the amount of your monthly mortgage payment or the amount of a car payment, if applicable. Each company may ask you for different information because the information each has in your file may come from different sources.

It is important to review your credit report periodically. The information can affect whether you qualify for a loan and how much you will have to pay to borrow money. The report will also uncover any mistakes on your credit history. Most importantly, the credit report will help you to protect against identity theft which occurs when someone uses your personal information — like your name, your Social Security number, or your credit card number — to commit fraud. Identity thieves may use your information to open a new credit card account in your name. Then, when they don't pay the bills, the delinquent account is reported on your credit report. Inaccurate information like that

could affect your ability to get credit, insurance, or even a job. Source: [www.consumer.ftc.gov/](http://www.consumer.ftc.gov/)

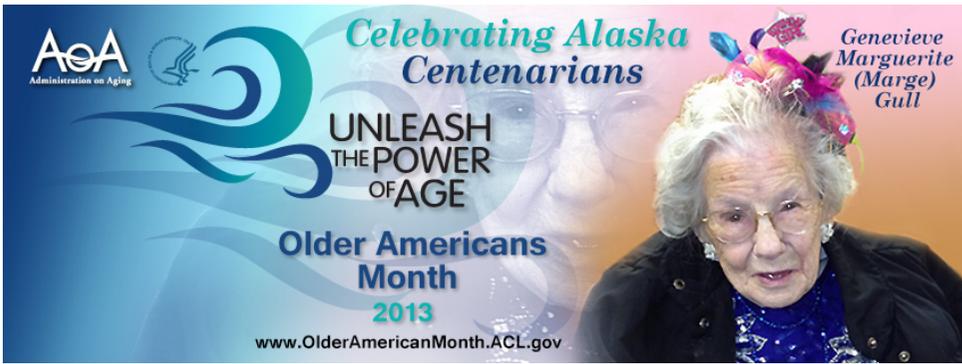
### Do you know a vulnerable adult who is at risk?

Adult Protective Services, a state agency under the Division of Senior and Disabilities Services, protects vulnerable Alaskans' independence and physical, financial and emotional well-being.

Alaska law requires that protective services not interfere with elderly or disabled adults capable of caring for themselves.

Alaska law defines vulnerable adults as a person 18 years of age or older who, because of incapacity, mental illness, mental deficiency, physical illness or disability, advanced age, chronic use of drugs, chronic intoxication, fraud, confinement, or disappearance, is unable to meet the person's own needs or to seek help without assistance.

If you are concerned that a vulnerable adult may be at risk, please contact Adult Protective Services by phone: 907-269-3666 or 1-800-478-9996 (in state only) or you can also make a report online: [www.dhss.alaska.gov/dsds/aps](http://www.dhss.alaska.gov/dsds/aps). All reports are confidential.



According to data from the Division of Permanent Fund Dividend (2011), there are at least 61 Alaskans who are 100 years and older in the State, up from 40 in 2010. The oldest Alaskan is 104 years old. The following 20 Centenarians gave their consent to us to honor them publicly during Older Americans Month celebrations:



Magdalena Mappala - Anchorage

Jamie de Guzman - Anchorage

Johnny McCurry - Anchorage

Genevieve Gull - Anchorage

Austrid Garrett - Anchorage

Alfredo Agron - Anchorage

Alice Larson - Anchorage

Dorothy Norris - Anchorage

Doris McBurney - Anchorage

Edith Hall - Fairbanks

Carl Heflinger - Fairbanks

Clara Anderson - Homer

Margit Andersson - Homer

Fern Elam - Kenai

Kenneth Dewey - Koyuk

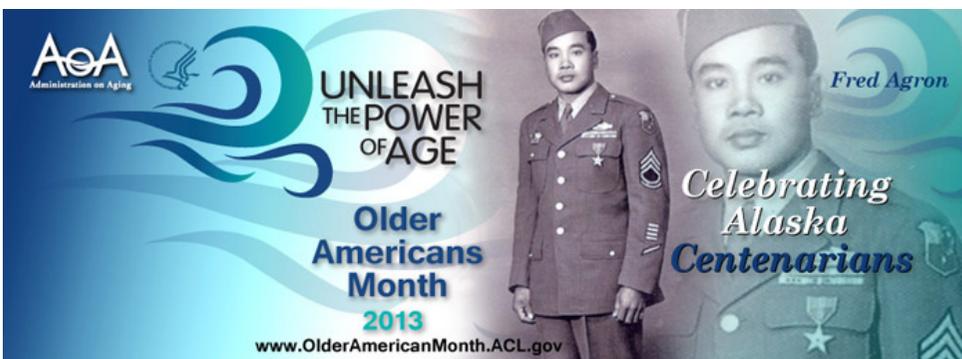
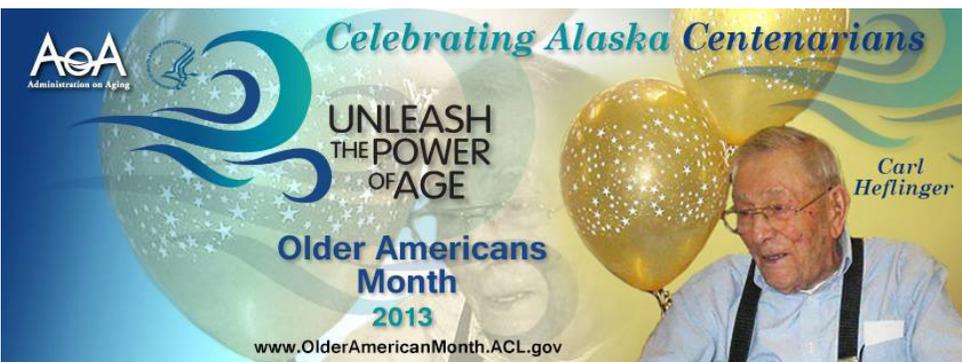
Julia McCombs - Ketchikan

Ruth Estelle - Palmer

John Pestrikoff - Port Lions

Wilma Ellington - Soldotna

Sue Lewis - Soldotna



# STATE OF ALASKA



## *Executive Proclamation* by *Governor Sean Parnell*

WHEREAS, the nation's senior population is growing faster than any other age group, and as the "baby boomer" generation reaches retirement age, they are becoming the most active and involved older population in the history of the nation; and

WHEREAS, Alaska's elders are valuable members of our society, and their wealth of knowledge, wisdom, and vast experiences can be effectively shared through interactions with family, friends, and neighbors across generations which enrich the lives of everyone involved; and

WHEREAS, since 1963, May has been a month to appreciate and celebrate older adults and their contributions to our communities; and

WHEREAS, many older Alaskans remain in the workforce in their later years, benefitting our economy and their workplaces with life experience, practical wisdom, and expertise; and

WHEREAS, Alaska's seniors make up a significant percentage of our state's volunteers, often donating countless hours of their time serving others, and working as members of charitable organizations which provide opportunities for Alaska's youth; and

WHEREAS, Alaskans have a responsibility to honor and respect elders by protecting the dignity, humanity and overall quality of life of older Alaskans; and

WHEREAS, our society is dependent upon intergenerational cooperation and support, and benefits from our collective efforts to serve older Alaskans.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Sean Parnell, Governor of the State of Alaska, do hereby proclaim May 2013 as:

### Older Americans Month

in Alaska, and encourage Alaskans to show their appreciation for our elders, to take time to engage with older Alaskans, and to acknowledge their ongoing and valuable contributions to our state and nation.

Dated: April 14, 2013



*Sean Parnell*  
Sean Parnell, Governor

who has also authorized the  
seal of the State of Alaska to  
be affixed to this proclamation.

**Alaskan Seniors: Living Longer, Growing Stronger**  
Alaska Commission on Aging  
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## Did you know? Alaska Facts and Figures



- The number of Alaskans age 60 to 64 has grown to 40,975 in 2012 from 17,327 in 2000, a 136.5% increase.

- Growing almost as fast as the 85 years-and-older Alaskan cohort. These seniors are generally frail, at risk for developing Alzheimer's disease and related dementias (ADRD), and are the most likely to depend on home- and community-based and long-term support services. The 85-and-older cohort increased from a population of 2,634 in 2000 to 5,448 in 2012, for an increase of 106.8%.

- Retired seniors as a whole contribute at least \$2.1 billion annually to Alaska's economy which includes their retirement income, health care spending and revenue from other sources. The retirement industry is growing as one of the State's top economic sectors.

- 6.3% of Alaskan seniors (age 65+) live below poverty levels (2011).  
For more information on Alaska seniors, please visit our website at [www.alaskaaging.org](http://www.alaskaaging.org) to view the Alaskan Senior Snapshot, 2012.