



Municipality of Anchorage

Ethan Berkowitz, Mayor

Senior Citizens Advisory Commission

April 17, 2020

Mayor Ethan Berkowitz,

The Senior Citizens Advisory Commission (SCAC) would like to take this opportunity to thank you for allowing us to have a voice in serving the senior population of Anchorage and to provide you with an update on our efforts. Our commission is comprised of long time member Dawnia Clements. Joining her are the chair and co-chair Theresa Brisky and AnnaBell Stevens, also a long time member. Other commissioners are Jim Bailey, Hattie Gardner, Pam Kelley, Dr. Emily McMahan, and Gayle Schuh. These are all people with genuine concerns for Anchorage seniors and who work together to support our senior population. We look forward to having our last seat filled with someone committed to elder issues as soon as possible.

Future Plans After a January planning session it was decided that Alzheimer's Awareness will be a focal point for the Senior Commission this year. The two areas we wish to target: educating people to recognize the signs of this progressive condition and providing a benchmark for detection by doing memory screening in the community. The SCAC will be involved in a project that has the Alzheimer's Resource of Alaska partnering with the State of Alaska, Division of Senior & Disability Services. The stress on family caregivers can be extreme. We will be testing the theory that early interventions can reduce the stress of caregivers allowing the family member in need of memory care to age in place longer. Due to the recent health mandates these plans may carry over into next year.

Older Americans Month We had been looking forward to hosting our annual celebration of Older Americans Month at the Senior Activity Center, but hopefully we will be able to celebrate together in May 2021. Every year we pay tribute to a volunteer from the community with the Ron Hammett Award, highlighting their efforts to improve the lives of Anchorage seniors. Nominations have been submitted and we will announce the good news when the winner is chosen.

Outreach and Education Staying knowledgeable about local resources is important to us. In order to foster our understanding of various agencies and the impact they have on seniors, we invite local specialists to inform us about their programs. We have learned from the following in the past year:

- o Providence Palliative Care
- o Vision Zero for safer roadways

- o Better Business Bureau
- o The Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education focused on Supported Decision Making.
- o SAGE Alaska
- o Alaska Premier Auctions and Appraisals explained how they can assist with downsizing as well as assistance for executors
- o FEMA and post-earthquake assistance for seniors
- o Baxter Senior Living Center

Area of Concern Ongoing works centers around a way to revive the Senior Friendly Project. When the program was implemented in 2013 we worked with the Human Service department at the University of Alaska and Older Persons Action Group. The project was a national effort to educate businesses on how to best serve the shopping needs of older people. Because of the many senior tourists Anchorage hosts, it would benefit businesses to better understand this population. After brief training businesses would receive a designation as a Senior Friendly establishment and receive an identifying decal. Many older people in the Lower 48 look for this decal when they shop. We have done extensive research and reached out to other organizations to see if it would be feasible to reinstitute this program in Anchorage, but budget cuts make finding local partners difficult. We continue to explore this possibility in the hopes that we will help combat ageism and the discrimination of older people.

Once again thank you for the opportunity to serve Anchorage and its senior population. We are committed to being a positive and productive commission.

Sincerely,

Theresa Brisky, Chair
On behalf of the Senior Citizens Advisory Commission