

# Living Longer Growing Stronger

from the Alaska Commission on Aging

August 2000

The mission of the Alaska Commission on Aging is to ensure dignity and independence for Alaska's seniors and to assist them, through programs and services funded by the Commission, to lead useful and meaningful lives.



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

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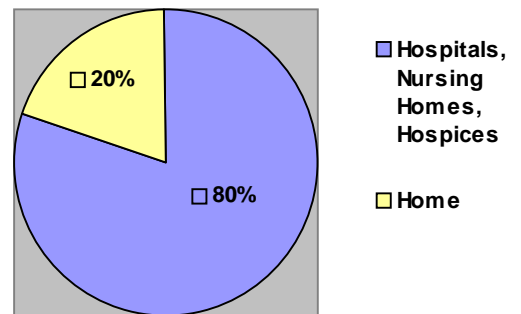
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## Advanced Directives: Feeling vs. Fact



## Where Americans Die



The two sets of data above, (at left from a recent Gallup Poll, at right from the Choices in Dying Organization) are surprisingly similar. Americans' lack of action on end-of-life planning such as advanced directives probably accounts for the number of Americans who die away from home.

## Making the Hard Decisions: Choosing How We Die

We Americans tend to distance ourselves from death and dying. Death was once viewed and accepted as a part of life. Death was handled by the family much like other significant life events. Today, most Americans die outside their homes, in relatively unfamiliar surroundings, and very often, without choices. Even though we think end-of-life preparedness is a good idea, few of us take steps toward being prepared. Our reluctance to address end-of-life issues heightens the likelihood that we will not die as we would like.

A recent study cited by the "Last Acts" Campaign confirms what Americans really desire in end-of-life care:

- To avoid an inappropriately prolonged dying process
- To have relief from their pain and other discomforts
- To strengthen relationships with the people they love
- To retain some control over treatment decisions, if necessary through a surrogate decision-maker that they have appointed
- To not become a burden (financial or otherwise) to the people they love

What really matters is our quality of life, connections to other people, an end-of-life experience that reflects our own choices, and freedom from undue suffering. Death is as unpredictable as it is inevitable. We are each challenged to take responsibility for ensuring that, to the extent possible, we experience the type of end-of-life care we desire. This could be as simple as discussing our wishes with loved ones, or as complex as writing a will or living will that includes detailed arrangements covering a variety of end-of-life contingencies.

In September, several Alaskan communities will join others around the nation in discussing end-of-life issues. The catalyst for this discussion is a public television series scheduled for early September called *On Our Own Terms: Moyers On Dying*.

## Alaska Forms Local Coalitions to Address Improved End-of-Life Care and Planning

Across the country, local coalitions are forming to improve end-of-life care in their communities in conjunction with the PBS series *On Our Own Terms: Moyers on Dying*, which premieres September 10-13 (see listings on page 4). Tapping the potential of this unprecedented 6-hour series to trigger a new conversation about end-of-life care, a national outreach campaign involving medical, professional, and consumer organizations as well as public television stations has developed. Local coalitions have formed in 100 communities across the country. They are planning screenings, town hall meetings, training workshops for volunteers and medical professionals, inter-faith discussion groups, and many other events and activities. The intent is to raise public awareness and promote dialogue about these complex and challenging issues.

In **Anchorage**, the Senior Advocacy Coalition has organized a town meeting-style forum. It will be held on **September 14th** at the Wilda Marston Theatre in the Loussac Library from **7:00 to 9:00 PM**. This is an opportunity to join other concerned Alaskans in discussing end-of-life issues as they affect those who live in Anchorage and the surrounding area. For information, contact Brenda Brown, 338-6492, Julia Thorsness, 561-5322, or Sue Samet, 261-4140.

The **Juneau** *On Our Own Terms* Steering Committee plans a facilitated town meeting featuring a panel of area representatives. It is tentatively scheduled for **September 19th** from **7:00 to 9:00 PM**; a location is pending. They will launch an extensive awareness campaign that includes radio and television interviews, and displays in local stores and businesses. They modified and distributed a survey on end-of-life issues awareness created by the Vermont Ethics Network as part of their Journey's End project. About 300 Juneauites returned the survey. The results are currently being tabulated and will be used to help the steering committee assess Juneau's specific end-of-life interests and needs. If you would like more information on Juneau's plans, please contact Kristin Freng, 586-1670.

The **Fairbanks** *On Our Own Terms* Steering Committee is now planning their town meeting. KUAC-FM radio will air a live call-in show called *Evening Rounds with Amy Mayer*. During the program a group of experienced caregivers will answer questions from a live audience and will discuss end-of-life care. The program will air Tuesday, **August 29** from **6:00 to 8:00 PM** at the Fairbanks North Star Borough Building, downtown Fairbanks. For more information contact Karen Laird, 458-5238.

## How the Statewide Property Tax Cap Initiative Might Affect Juneau

*The Alaska Commission on Aging opposes the Statewide Property Tax Cap Initiative appearing on the November 2000 Ballot. In each issue of Alaskan Seniors: Living Longer, Growing Stronger through October, we will briefly examine how passage of the Statewide Property Tax Cap Initiative might affect a particular part of Alaska.*

Juneau currently has a Property Tax Cap of 12 mills plus voter-approved bonds. The citizens of Juneau approved the cap by voting. This would indicate that for this Alaskan community at least, a limit of 10 mills is too low to fully fund services.

The list of Juneau services directly funded by property taxes includes many that affect the public: the Police Department, Capital City Rescue (Juneau's ambulance service), the City Clerk's Office, the library system, Capital Projects, and Parks and Recreation. Juneau provides financial support to education and social services through property tax dollars. If the property tax cap is approved, funding cuts may affect all of these.

Juneau is currently working to upgrade its high school, and possibly build a new one to relieve overcrowding. This project will not be possible if the Property Tax Cap Initiative passes.

## **Alaskan Programs Accompany National Presentations on End-of-Life Issues**

Below are the public television programs on end-of-life issues to be aired in Alaska in September. For a list of stations airing these programs and their tentative schedules, please see *Television Listings for End-of-Life Issues Programs* on page 4.

### ***On Our Own Terms: Moyers on Dying***

This four-part PBS series from a team of award-winning journalists led by Bill and Judith Davidson Moyers will report on the end-of-life issues facing Americans. Based on two years of research, *On Our Own Terms: Moyers On Dying* will present the stories of the dying, their families, and their care givers, and illustrate the growing struggle to balance medical intervention with comfort and humanity.

Emmy Award-winning journalist Bill Moyers reports on the intimate, end-of-life journeys of more than a dozen individuals, their families and their caregivers as they struggle to infuse the end of life with compassion and caring. Filled with honesty, courage and humor, the series breaks through the culture of denial to wrestle with how we can die better in America. An accompanying Web site, [www.pbs.org/onourownterms.org](http://www.pbs.org/onourownterms.org), will be on line August 28.

In Alaska, a statewide hotline will be staffed beginning at 9:00 PM during the Moyers series. This number will connect you with a Hospice representative with whom you can discuss end-of-life issues. The number, 1-800-474-5822, will scroll across the television screen during the series segments.

### ***With Eyes Open***

This is a nationally-produced companion program to *On Our Own Terms: Moyers on Dying* that encourages viewers to begin to have meaningful dialogues around the complex issues that face them as they contemplate mortality, grief, caregiving, and the afterlife. An accompanying Web site, [www.pbs.org/witheyeyesopen.org](http://www.pbs.org/witheyeyesopen.org), will be on line August 28.

### ***Unexpected Gifts***

*Unexpected Gifts* is a compelling collection of Alaskan stories that explore the issues of death, dying and grief. The stories are woven into an engaging performance where the individuals reveal their own very personal perspectives on events leading up to and after the death of a loved one. Uniquely Alaskan in presentation but universal in theme, this play captures and illuminates the emotions of loss. KTOO-TV and Hospice Home Care of Juneau pooled resources to produce this shortened version of the successful readers play of the same name, performed at Juneau's Perseverance Theater in 1999.

### ***Isn't It Time We Talked About It? An Alaskan Conversation***

This is a touching collection of the inner thoughts and remembrances of individuals and their families as they reveal perspectives about the end of life. Conversations reflect personal beliefs and professional concepts on the issues of choice, ethics, and pain management, as well as spirituality and Native perspectives. In the quest of knowledge, humanity and dignity, the storytellers help provide a new language about dying for a new way of thinking about that experience.

### ***Dying Well in Alaska***

This half-hour panel discussion on end-of-life issues will include Bob Urata, M.D. and Jan Young, R.N., Medical Director and Executive Director, respectively, of Hospice and Homecare Juneau, Don Thibedeau, Case Manager with the Denali Center, an assisted living facility in Fairbanks, and Reverend Anna Frank, Episcopal priest and Archdeacon for the interior region of Alaska.

## Television Listings for End-of-Life Issues Programs

Four Alaska Public Television stations will air programs on end-of-life issues in September:

KAKM Anchorage - Channel 7. Also translates in the following communities:

Bird Creek	Kasilof	Ninilchik
Girdwood	Kenai/Soldotna	Talkeetna
Homer/Seldovia		

KTOO Juneau (Alaska One) - Channel 3, 6, 10. Also broadcasts in the following communities:

Angoon - Channel 2	Ketchikan - Channel 9	Sitka - Channel 8
Kake - Channel 12	Petersburg - Channel 9	Wrangell - Channel 9

KUAC Fairbanks (Alaska One) - Channel 9

KYUK Bethel (Alaska One) - Channel 4

PLEASE NOTE that this information is based on scheduling at the time of publication. Schedules may change. Please check your local listings for exact times and dates.

### Sunday, September 10

8:00 PM	<i>On Our Own Terms</i> (Episode 1)	KAKM
9:00 PM	<i>On Our Own Terms</i> (Episode 1)	KTOO, KUAC, KYUK
9:30 PM	<i>With Eyes Open</i>	KAKM
10:30 PM	<i>Unexpected Gifts</i>	KAKM, KTOO, KUAC, KYUK

### Monday, September 11

8:00 PM	<i>On Our Own Terms</i> (Episode 2)	KAKM
9:00 PM	<i>On Our Own Terms</i> (Episode 2)	KTOO, KUAC, KYUK
9:30 PM	<i>Unexpected Gifts</i>	KAKM
10:30 PM	<i>Isn't It Time We Talked About It?</i>	KTOO, KUAC, KYUK

### Tuesday, September 12

8:00 PM	<i>On Our Own Terms</i> (Episode 3)	KAKM
9:00 PM	<i>On Our Own Terms</i> (Episode 3)	KTOO, KUAC, KYUK
9:30 PM	<i>Dying Well In Alaska</i>	KAKM
10:30 PM	<i>Dying Well In Alaska</i>	KTOO, KUAC, KYUK

### Wednesday, September 13

8:00 PM	<i>Unexpected Gifts</i>	KTOO, KUAC, KYUK
8:30 PM	<i>Dying Well In Alaska</i>	KTOO, KUAC, KYUK
8:00 PM	<i>On Our Own Terms</i> (Episode 4)	KAKM
9:00 PM	<i>On Our Own Terms</i> (Episode 4)	KTOO, KUAC, KYUK
9:30 PM	<i>With Eyes Open</i>	KAKM
10:30 PM	<i>Isn't It Time We Talked About It?</i>	KAKM, KTOO, KUAC, KYUK

