

The Centerline

City of Kenai
Kenai Senior Center

361 Senior Ct.
Kenai, Alaska 99611
907-283-4156

NOVEMBER 2021

(In celebration of the Kenai Senior Center's 50 years, we've asked the Writers' Group to present stories of our history.)

Happy 50th Birthday!

By Biz Robbins

Many of you know, and some of you even remember, that the Kenai Senior Center once was located in a trailer in Old Town. Small beginnings, but with grand ideas, hard work, and



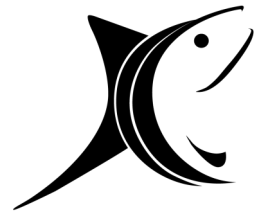
sometimes fancy footwork, it has grown into the handsome facility that we celebrate this year.

I am a newby to this facility, having arrived

only last fall, but I've used it almost every week I have lived here. It has been my pleasure, as part of the center's writers' group, to learn more about this outstanding resource the seniors in Kenai, even on the Peninsula, have at their disposal. So here goes:

In 1971, Phillips Petroleum donated their construction trailer, which was moved to Fort Kenay in 1973. The directors during this period, Betty Warren and Sylvia Johnson, began providing services to seniors, a meal a week, sometimes potlucks, and other activities. By then, a home meals program had been established under Pat Porter, now director. It was first begun by the Salvation Army (serving one person) and in 1980, under the auspices of the city of Kenai, the program expanded to serve home and congregate meals five days a week.

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KENAI

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Ever since the 80s, the center has provided home delivered meals, a vital service to those who are homebound. It is the largest service program, having two paid part-time drivers and one volunteer. The drivers take the time to talk with those at home, often finding they have been that day's only visitor. They have also intervened in attempted suicides, stroke or heart attacks, and falls. The drivers can be an advocate to help seniors make lifestyle decisions in addition to bringing a delicious, nutritious, hot meal.

Congregate meals, served five days a week, bring the most seniors to the center. Meals include salads, soups, main dishes, desserts, all deliciously prepared. They provide 1/3 of the nutritional daily allowance; seniors are served by the center staff.

In 1983, the city constructed the center's present building, located atop a bluff overlooking the Kenai River. As the story I heard goes, that beautiful prime piece of property was obtained from the FAA through the hard work of Kenai mayor Vince O'Reilly. He was a big supporter of the senior center and proposed that particular site with "who else is more deserving of living in such a beautiful spot?"

In 1993, Vintage Pointe Manor was built adjacent to the senior center with funds from the state negotiated by Mayor John Williams and senior center director Pat Porter. The state agreed to fund 20 units to provide independent living to the seniors, but they wanted 40 units. After tenacious lobbying, solid arguments, some back door dealings, and a delicious steak dinner, John and Pat finally got

the legislators to agree to fund 40 units. But they would fund only 20 one year and 20 the next. With that, Mayor John promised not to ask for any more money for operations of senior housing. Construction of the housing didn't cost the taxpayers a dime.

Those who frequent the Kenai Senior Center know that they will find something of interest to do. Besides the meals and the socialization that takes place, the center has provided opportunities for group exercise, ranging from line dancing, to Zumba, to weight training and Tai Chi, to name a few. Musical groups have included bell ringers, bluegrass players, ukulele strummers, and a seasonal choir. Various arts and crafts are available too.

Quilting, ceramics, coloring, and painting have been offered throughout the years. The art of writing has been represented for a long while by dedicated seniors, many of whom can be read in the Centerline and other publications. Specific instruction has also been offered: guitar, Spanish, and various technology tools. The TOPS group is active as well. There seems to be something for everyone, but perhaps the best part is: if a senior is interested in something that isn't offered, the activities coordinator will help him/her set something up.



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Following the preceding “something for everyone” thought, many local, state, and federal organizations are partners and/or collaborators with the center. The Alaska Disability and Resource Center/ Independent Living Center partners to participate in health fairs and also to assist during Open Enrollment to ensure seniors get the help they need; Medicare assistance is also available. The National Family Caregiver Support Program provides assistance to many of the center’s seniors. The Food Bank and Kenai Safeway contribute to the center’s nutrition program with supplemental salad ingredients and donations of day old bread and desserts. Roughly 250 seniors benefit from this program. Many seniors, referred by local medical providers, receive meals, transportation, outreach, and/or information and assistance. These are but a sampling of services seniors receive when the center knows of their need. “Ask and you shall receive, or we shall research where you can find the help you need.” To this writer, it is the apparent motto for the center’s staff.

The staff, led by Director Kathy Romain, has continued old programs and implemented new ones that provide services to senior Alaskans that maintain and increase their quality of life as well as enhance their ability to age safely in place. These programs provide an increasing senior population with

social, educational, and economic opportunities.

At the same time, the staff functions efficiently and responsibly with the center’s partnerships, grant management, and services.

When I look at the Kenai Senior Center’s Mission Statement, I cannot help but believe that it is truly the statement that directs all its efforts. We seniors do come together for fellowship and participation; we engage in many activities that provide personal growth and enrich the quality of life. Personally, I come here at least three times a week: to exercise, to meet with writers, to talk with friends, to get a good meal, and to strum with other ukulele players, and I am never alone. It is a safe place for me to learn, to socialize, to be healthy, to enjoy life.

We seniors are fortunate to have such a gem in our lives. The Kenai Senior Center attracts retirees to the area and it provides a place to age well. May it continue to be a bright light for the city of Kenai and its seniors for another fifty years or more. Happy 50th birthday! - Biz Robbins

City of Kenai Kenai Senior Center

Our Mission Statement

To serve as a community focal point for senior services where adults 60+ come together for fellowship and program participation, to engage in opportunities for dignity and personal growth, to improve and enrich their quality of life, to support the needs of older individuals, to enhance their independence, and to broaden their involvement within the community.

The Directors of the Kenai Senior Center

1971 The Kenai Senior Center started out in a small trailer donated by Phillips Petroleum. The first director was Betty Warren. There were a small group of people from all over the Peninsula (Cooper Landing to Homer) that met every two months for a potluck dinner and social. Betty was director from 1971 to 1973.

1973 The Senior Center moved into Fort Kenay. The new director was Silvia Johnson. The Center shared one-half of the building with the Kenai Museum. They continued the every two-month potlucks and even added some ceramics classes.

1976 Cynthia Dixon became director for a couple months and decided not to remain.



1976 The City of Kenai approached Pat Porter to apply for the job. Pat says they liked her because of the community work she was already doing with the Girl Scouts. She agreed to try it for one year. Pat was the only employee at the time and worked with the City to expand Fort Kenay for the Centennial celebration. The Center began assisting the Salvation Army with its Meals on Wheels program in 1978. In 1980 Betty Warren went to Juneau to request \$1 million from the Legislature to build a new Center. The money was acquired and the promise was made: if the City could match the grant, the taxpayers

would not have to pay any money for the Center.

1980 The Salvation Army turned its Meals on Wheels program over to the Kenai Senior Center. The land was bought and the new Senior Center project began. The proposal included the Center, where seniors could come and have meals, as well as building and a 40-unit apartment complex.

1983 The Center was completed and the program moved in. The kitchen crew made meals for home delivery and to serve in the new dining room. The dining room was only half the size it is now.

1991 Money was appropriated to enlarge the dining room and it was doubled in size. In 1993, Vintage Pointe Manor (the promised apartment complex) was completed. Kenai did not have a Pioneer Home so the apartments were designated to be an independent living center. 40 units were built and rented. (I should have mentioned the City was and still is owner/operator of the Senior Center.) Pat Porter was very instrumental throughout the entire project and when she retired in 1998, she had a lot of which to be proud, including the fact her one-year job turned into 22 years of service.

1998 in November Pat's assistant Kelly Steiner-Kelso became director. She remained director for two years. (Kelly had previously worked for the Senior Center five years.)



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2001 Rachael Craig was hired as the new director.

Rachael says when she first came to the Center, her first goal was to enlarge the



kitchen facilities as she noticed right away the kitchen was too small, especially for the amount of meals being prepared. Rachael reported, a \$40,000 grant was received from the State and was earmarked for the kitchen renovation. In addition, she applied for a Rasmuson grant and learned she shouldn't have been so conservative with her estimated building costs as the bill was way more than she imagined it would be. With a lot of begging, bargaining, help from the City, Kenai Senior Connection, Inc., and individual donations, the project was completed in 2006. During the remodeling, the kitchen crew [Missy and Bob Van Loan (Ethan's dad)] cooked the meals at the VFW and brought them to the Center to serve.

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Rachael also mentioned another goal she had was to have a quality senior program for activities. She worked to provide space for things like the library, card room, sewing room, computer room, and expansion of the volunteer program. Rachael retired in September 2017.

2017 The City of Kenai hired Kathy Romain as the new director. Kathy was not new to the Center having been first hired in March 1997 as the Center's Activities Coordinator. In 1998, she was hired as the Administrative Assistant, and then in October of 2017, she became the new director.

Kathy, along with Red, our new Administrative Assistant, are our resident experts on senior issues from Social Security/Medicare, senior benefits and other senior concerns. Kathy became busier than ever with all the director responsibilities of grant writing, budgeting, and securing monies to operate the Center, in addition to being the City's liaison to the Kenai Senior Connection, Inc. and Council on Aging.

In 2017, Kathy was responsible for the Senior Center being awarded a grant from Subaru for a new Meals on Wheels vehicle



which is used to deliver Meals on Wheels all over, including Kasilof. She also secured COVID monies to replace the kitchen stove, warming oven, a new water fountain/bottle filling machine, touchless ice/water dispenser, touchless restroom water/soap dispensers new computers for the computer labs, and renovation of the game room. Between COVID and the Kenai Senior Connection, Inc., funding was received to provide 200 emergency buckets for seniors, as well as shelf-stable bags of food to home clients.

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Yearly, the Kenai Senior Center serves (40K+) meals to home meal and dining room clients. There are approximately 1,600 active members of the Center which is open five days a week (from 8am to 5pm) for activities. Meals are served every day at noon and scheduled transportation is provided four days a week.

Kathy is responsible for writing grants for over \$500,000 every year. The City of Kenai, Kenai Senior Connection, Inc., and private donations help the Center stay afloat. The Center also received a private memorial donation to build the new greenhouse. Kathy supervises 12 permanent employees and one temporary employee. She says the Center couldn't survive without the many volunteers that step up to help run the organization. THANK YOU TO ALL OF YOU!

My personal thanks to all these people, especially the Directors for keeping their promises of supporting the Kenai Senior Center Mission Statement and to make the Kenai Senior Center the best Center possible. If you are unfamiliar with the Mission Statement it is on page 8 of this month's newsletter.

Carol Prior, Data Entry Clerk,
Volunteer, and Happy Member of the Kenai Senior Center



Kenai Senior Connection, Inc. NEWS

It's already November! Where has this year gone? The following events kept October busy for the Senior Connection:



- Watching the new greenhouse being built (compliments of the Bill Osborne family as a memorial to Bill who was a member of the Kenai Center family as well as Kenai Senior Connection, Inc.).
- Welcoming Red Piersee, the Senior Center's new Administrative Assistant.
- Setting November 30, 2021 as the date to celebrate the Senior Center's 50th Anniversary. The celebratory open house will begin at 3:00 p.m. in the Center's dining room.
- The Connection will have a booth at the Black Friday Holiday Bazaar which will be held at the Old Carr's Mall this year (instead of at the Challenger Center). Raffle tickets for a handmade Quilt (donated by Jan Johnson) as well as tickets for our Annual Doll Raffle (donated doll and handmade clothes by Fran Kilfoyle) will be available for purchase.
- The date to hold our Annual March for Meals fundraising dinner and pie auction was set for March 25, 2022.

Happy Thanksgiving to all...

Velda Geller

President, Kenai Senior Connection, Inc.

WHY WE LOVE THE KENAI SENIOR CENTER...

by Mary Ann Lamecker

After living alone and in various areas, I decided to move to Alaska to live with my oldest daughter and her husband. Next door, their son and daughter needed help with their twin babies (born in June). My daughter had seen the Kenai Senior Center represented at a craft fair and thought I might enjoy going to its activities. So when I moved to Kenai in May, I joined the exercise sessions held three times a week. I had shoulder replacement surgery in January and thought the exercise would be good therapy for me. I also joined the Art Group and the Writers' Group. About a month ago, Senior Center Director Kathy Romain, came to the Writers' Group and told us about the 50th Anniversary of the Senior Center. She asked if someone could go through the notebooks holding the monthly "Centerline" newsletters and pick out some highlights to share. Biz Robbins and I volunteered. I thought it would be a great opportunity to see what the Center had done over the years. WE WERE VERY IMPRESSED!!

We learned, many of the activities have been and continue to be seasonal: spring, summer, fall, winter. Speakers often came in to give presentations on health, nutrition, Medicare, taxes, etc.; groups started meeting to prepare for the holidays and decorate the Center; road trips were planned over the summer to visit nearby sites in Homer, Seward and other spots; there were even some mystery trips, service projects such as cleaning up areas in town; and, periodically yard sales were periodically for various causes. Seniors gathered for Superbowl games; Valentines' Day dinners; wedding anniversary celebrations; craft classes with volunteer instructors; special lunches; Easter bonnet parades; as well as, nature walks and simple hikes were planned for summer days. Activities and presentations on health; patriotic dinners; guest vocalists; participation in the Fourth of July Parade; card groups formed, along with golf group took place, as well as trips to Winterfest, the Nutcracker; Christmas light tours; tea parties and gift exchanges; and potluck dinners.

Exercises groups were formed and a karaoke party was held. Presentations were given on the Rasmussen Foundation and timely issues, and the Center's kitchen was remodeled. A senior companion's group was formed and a gift shop was opened in the Senior Center. An annual picnic was held in July and trips to an aquarium, alpaca ranch, Moose Pass and the Ninilchik Fair took place. Support groups were formed for low vision problems, Social Security and Internet assistance. In September, a bowling league was formed, a scavenger hunt was held in Anchorage and a salmon bake fundraiser was held as well.

Over the years, the Kenai Senior Center has continued to offer classes for exercises, crafts, celebrations for holidays, music groups, presentations with info that is helpful to seniors, healthy meals, short trips to nearby sites and entertainment that we can enjoy.

Unfortunately, years 2020 and part of 2021, were struggling times with Covid and sickness. We pray for the families of those who did not make it through. We want everyone to stay healthy so the staff at the Center sets necessary guidelines to protect us all. Be sure to get the monthly "Centerline" and check out all that is going on. If you'd like to see certain activities or tours, let the staff know. Volunteers are always welcomed. Thank the staff for all they do. I am happy to be a member at the senior Center.—*Mary Ann Lamecker*



Look, Feel, Be

by Chuck Thornton

“To look sharp, use Gillette Blue Blades. To feel sharp and be on the ball. Just be sharp, use the Gillette blades for the quickest, slickest shave of all.”

Some folks appear to be (look) old when they are actually quite young (your appearance may be deceptive). Others (especially following a night of carousing) just feel old. While there are those of us who really are old. We may not look it. We may not even feel it. But, as a quick look at the calendar will affirm, we actually have reached that magical age that has come to be called “OLD.”

The Kenai Senior Center is a facility that was established to provide a location for activities suitable for us old folks, regardless of how we look or feel. Here we are free to choose a variety of activities: exercise (various levels), reading, table games, hiking (in suitable weather, for suitable distances), writing, and various musical formats are available...plus occasional extra programs as they become available.

One of the things the Center provides is Meals on Wheels – a program that supplies noon meals to two groups of Seniors: 1) those who come to the Center’s Dining Room, and 2) those who may be house-bound and have their meals delivered to their door. An added feature for the latter group is the fact that, often, the person delivering the meal provides a brief, but welcome, bit of person-to-person interaction (a simple thing that is often missed by the shut-in).

Another feature that has old (older – as some of us prefer to be called) people in mind is that of providing for inoculations at the Center. Seniors (often making use of Senior Center provided transportation) may come to the Center to receive shots when they are available.

The Staff is yet another positive thing about the Kenai Senior Center. Whether they work on the grounds (mowing grass, shoveling snow, trimming shrubs, etc.), in the kitchen, serve meals, teach classes, lead exercise groups, etc., the members of the Staff represent yet another way in which the City of Kenai demonstrates its concern for the older generation.

Let’s hear it for the Kenai Senior Center!



Kenai Senior Center ~ What It Means to Me

By Yenti Verg-in, Vintage Pointe Resident

Kenai Senior Center (KSC) is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year. The Writers' Group was tasked to write something to commemorate the special occasion. I am not keen in doing either research or interviewing people. A long and hard thought process went through my mind; what does KSC really mean to me? Following is my answer.

Instead of using Center, “C” in this case, stands for “**College:**” “**KENAI SENIOR COLLEGE**” It is a **COLLEGE** that is catering to seniors' needs. Let's think back to our school days. We went to school to learn, taking classes, studying, making friends, and having fun. Now we have time on our hands and we need outlets to occupy our mind and body. The Kenai Senior **College** provides the exact same thing: A place for learning, socializing with peers, doing exercises to keep physically fit, playing games to keep our minds sharp, and, keeping us engaged.

What's more, there are delicious lunches prepared by Missy and her crew -- one doesn't to slave over the kitchen stove, no cleanup to do. I understand that there is even transportation available, if needed.

This **COLLEGE** is different from all the other colleges. In this **COLLEGE**, there is no tuition to worry about; no headaches from homework obligations; no exams which could stress you out; and, you don't need an “excuse slip” for not attending class. Kayla, the Activity Director, can print out a certificate to show your accomplishment in this remarkable college.

The following is and abbreviated list of classes/courses offered at the **KENAI SENIOR COLLEGE**:

Writers' Group
Coloring
Card Games
Scrabble
Entertainment

Sewing/Knitting
Growing Strong
Dominos
Mhjong
Bells

Guitar/Ukulele Lessons
Tai-chi Exercise
Bingo
Wii Bowling
Take Off Pounds Sensibly (TOPS)

So come around, have a cup of coffee, read the newspapers, check out books, puzzles, DVD, play games with your friends, socializing and be engaged.

If you have questions about this remarkable **College** and activities it offers, call 907-283-4156, or get on-line, print out the monthly newsletter, CENTERLINE to keep informed. **KSC's** main goal is to SERVE, so let it be a service for you!



KENAI SENIOR SERVICES CENTER
 KENAI RECREATION CENTER-----NEXT DOOR TO KENAI FIRE DEPT.
 Box 3140, Kenai, Alaska 99611 Phone: 283-4156
 CENTER HOURS: 10:00 A.M. until 3:00 P.M.

NOVEMBER ACTIVITIES 1971

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
(1)	(2) POOL CARDS & HANDICRAFTS 1PM	(3) Center Closed from 12 noon	(4) POOL CARDS & HANDICRAFTS 1PM	(5)
(8)	(9) POOL CARDS & HANDICRAFTS 1PM	(10) SENIOR CITIZENS PEP CLUB 11AM until 12 noon	(11) SOCIAL SECURITY REPRESENTATIVE 10 AM until 2 PM	(12) POT LUCK LUNCH & BIRTHDAY PARTY 12 Noon
(15)	(16) POOL CARDS & HANDICRAFTS 1PM	(17) SENIOR CITIZENS PEP CLUB	(18) AARP ACTIVITY DAY (Bring a	(19)
(22)	(23) POOL CARDS & HANDICRAFTS 1PM	NOVEMBER NOTES		
(29)	(30) POOL CARDS & HANDICRAFTS 1PM			

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO:

Wilma Thompson Mike Juliussen Enid McLane Afton Gilbert

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY TO:

Jasper & Wilma Thompson

Well, friends, it seems winter is upon us and it's time to start planning for the Holiday Season. We'll be having lots of activities at the Center, planned just for you. Remember, the Center is open, Monday through Friday from 10:00 A.M. until 3:00 P.M. and the Coffee is always on, and so is the tea.

We are the proud possessors of a nice electric pot for tea, donated to us by Fisher and Hornaday, and also some carpet tiles, which are already laid in the entry way, donated to us by Conrights. We all appreciate their generosity.

We are planning quite a few craft programs this month and next, so we all can make some items for Christmas. Remember, something you have made yourself will be a real treasure for your loved ones.

The Center will be closed the 3rd from 12 noon for the rest of the day. The AARP Ladies from National Headquarters will be in the area and I'll be helping to show them around. They will be attending the Kenai Chamber of Commerce noon luncheon at the Royal Redoubt, and all are invited to attend. The price of the lunch is \$3. We'll be having our Senior Citizens Pep Club exercises the 10th & 17th. These exercises are lots of fun and good for you, so stop in. After New Years we'll be starting them up again to get in shape for spring.

Our November Birthday Party will be held the 12th to celebrate all November Birthdays. It will be a Pot Luck lunch and we'll have cake.

The Social Security Representative will be here the 11th from 10 A.M. until 2:00 PM. We'll be announcing a Pinochle Tournament soon, so some of you might want to start polishing up your game. We have some nice new cards for you to practice with. Remember, ALL programs in the Center are open to ALL Senior Citizens. If you have any questions or suggestions, call me at 283-4156.

Have a HAPPY THANKSGIVING!

Betty Warren

PROGRAM DIRECTOR

Kenai Senior Services Center

Pages from the Past

November 1971



MEMORIES OF THE KENAI SENIOR CENTER

By Fran Kilfoyle

I first saw the Kenai Senior Center Golden Girls at the Fourth of July Parade. They walked and periodically stopped to dance along the parade route. They were a group of line dancers, all senior women, who were organized here at the Kenai Senior Center. I understand line dancing was considered an exercise program, which it was, but it just looked like so much fun to me.

I wanted to be one of them! I was a senior, but I was still working. It was that thing about having to be 65 to retire with Medicare, and I had to have that. But I checked on the Golden Girls. They danced three days a week (Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays) for an hour on the dance floor at the Senior Center. My work schedule gave me Mondays off. I asked to join them if I could come only on Mondays until the next July when I would be 65, retired, and then could come every day. They welcomed me. It was frustrating not being able to keep up, but I learned a lot, and I hung in there. It was worth the wait.

I am not sure when the Golden Girls first started. My wild guess, based on nothing concrete, is 1995, give or take a year or two either way. I do know that when I retired in late 2003, this group of about 12 fast-stepping lovely ladies were going strong.

I danced with them for several years and experienced many wonderful things along the way. We went regularly to "perform" at Heritage Place, Forget-Me-Not, other assisted living places, and other senior centers. "Just invite us: We'll Come" was our motto.

We went to the Ninilchik Fair every year. Sometimes, we took along some "fans." One year, we met Ernest Borgnine, who spent many summers at his hide-away in the area. He stood back there and watched the whole program, which was about 30 minutes. Then he came and talked to us. He asked about the group. He loved us. He said so! A little long-in-the-tooth himself, he thought this was a great activity for us, at our age, and, we were so good at it!

We also went to the State Fair several different years. What fun trips they were. I remember going, dancing, and coming home, all in the same day. A bit much? Then we went and stayed overnight at the Palmer Hotel. We were so popular, we were asked to dance two consecutive days. People loved us! They even came and sat out in the rain to watch. We didn't get wet--we were under a roof.

We went to almost every school in the area: Kenai, Soldotna, Nikiski, Sterling, and Kasilof. Especially Kasilof. The kids were such a joy for us. Sometimes some of our own grandchildren were there. They loved us too. They called us "The Dancing Grammas."

It was such a special thing to be a Kenai Senior Center Golden Girl. Thank you, Kenai Senior Center for giving me that opportunity!

