



# Alzheimer's Resource of Alaska

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## UAA Research Helps Rats Remember

Strangely enough, there's a link between Sweet Tart candy and the uber-healthy Alaska bog blueberry. They share malic acid, that mouth-puckering sourness identified with rhubarb and tart green apples. In fact, malic is Latin for apple.

For 15 years, malate-rich blueberries have been known to improve lab rat memory, as long as the rat ate the whole berry. Human memories improved too when subjects drank concentrated blueberry juice, according to results from a 2010 study. But every attempt to finally identify and isolate the single heroic blueberry ingredient failed.

Until last year. That's when UAA biochemist Colin McGill, working with cells under a microscope, proved that malate from Alaska bog blueberries successfully tamped down chemical processes that drive physical and mental decline -- all those sorry events that happen as we age, or develop illnesses like Alzheimer's and Parkinson's.

Seeing it under a microscope, though, is a world away from

seeing it in a living, breathing animal.

"Every time I presented this," McGill said, "the first hand up was, 'Do you think this is actually going to be absorbed, dietarily? Will it make it through the blood-brain barrier?'"

Now he and UAA behavioral psychologist Eric Murphy can confidently answer yes. They've just completed a study on lab rats specially bred for old age. Malate, dissolved in water, gave these cranky, forgetful seniors a tremendous boost; after just six weeks, they regained their sharp-as-a-tack memories.

Murphy had been skeptical when McGill approached him, looking for a way to test his cell-model results on live animals.

"I thought, there's no way in you-know-where that this is ever going to happen," Murphy said. "I give you a 50-50 chance." They both called it "high risk, high reward."

Still, they persisted. A \$10,000 grant from UAA's research stimulus Innovate fund provided money to purchase 24 NIH rats bred for aging. In McGill's garage, they designed and built their own black T-maze to run cognition tests.

*Continued on page 4*

## Alzheimer's Blood Test a Reality, Availability Uncertain

In one of the largest advances in Alzheimer's research to date, a test has been created that will predict with over 90% accuracy if someone will develop Alzheimer's disease.

The test was developed under lead researcher Howard Federoff, professor of neurology and executive vice president for health and sciences at Georgetown University Medical Center. Federoff said, "This is a game-changer... My enthusiasm is very high."

The test, unlike current expensive, risky, and unreliable options, is a simple blood test that examines 10 fats, or lipids, that set apart those with healthy brains and those with Alzheimer's disease. The test has shown great accuracy when testing those who will develop the disease

*Continued on page 5*

Director's Message .....	pg. 3
News and Events.....	pg. 6
Amblin.....	pg. 6-7
Classes & Groups.....	pg. 10-11



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(800) 478-1080

### [www.AlzAlaska.org](http://www.AlzAlaska.org)

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## Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Friends,

This year, Alzheimer's Resource of Alaska invites you to join us in celebrating 30 years of services to Alaskan seniors and their loved ones. The organization began with founders Rebecca Clement and Beverly Tallman traveling throughout the state, providing education and support for individuals and their family members, passionately working to improve awareness, care and quality of life; all allowing elders to stay safely at home for as long as possible. Their early grassroots effort paved the way for Alzheimer's Resource of Alaska to become what it is today — the state's leading source of information, support and services for individuals with Alzheimer's disease and related dementia.



As we look back and celebrate our progress, we also look forward, knowing there is more work to be done. In recent months, we have continued to expand our services with the January launch of Care Coordination in Bethel and surrounding areas, which will provide much needed assistance to the community. With additional grant funding, we also have expanded education and support programs. We have increased our statewide education staff by twenty percent to reach more people, especially in rural Alaska, with the information needed to improve quality of life. For example, we are planning the translation of educational materials into the Yup'ik language.

In addition to our expansion of services, we are collaborating in a number of studies and research projects. Two studies are currently in process that individuals may want to participate in. Kathryn Sexon, Advanced Nurse Practitioner in Anchorage and a Ph.D. student at the Oregon Health & Science University is studying the impact of moving a relative with memory loss into an assisted living home. Christine Bailes, a Registered Nurse and a Family Nurse Practitioner student at the University of Alaska, Anchorage, is doing a study on how caring for a family member with Alzheimer's disease or a related dementia affects the caregiver's health over time. If you would like to participate in either study, please visit our website for more information, [www.AlzAlaska.org/survey](http://www.AlzAlaska.org/survey).

This is an exciting time for Alzheimer's Resource of Alaska as we continue to grow to meet the need of Alaska's aging population and those affected by Alzheimer's disease and related dementia. We look forward to the day when a cure is found and until then we continue our diligent work for Alaskans.

For a look back at some of our accomplishments over the last 30 years visit <http://www.alzalaska.org/about-us/mission-history/>.

Best regards,

Karl Garber  
Executive Director

### UAA Research... *Continued from cover*

Once half the rats were dosed on malate, trials began between those with and those without. The process dragged on; the geriatric rats were cranky and slow.

Sometimes they just sat in the maze and refused to move, much less explore the T. After five minutes, a test timed out. For old rats with no malate, it could take 15 trials to get 10 good runs. The scientists say they appreciate the four undergraduates who worked through these painstaking trials.

The memory test worked like this: A rat deposited at the bottom of the T was allowed to explore. Next, an arm of the T was closed off randomly, so the rat could choose only one arm.

Next, the rat was re-deposited at the bottom of the T, this time with both T arms open.

A healthy young rat will remember where it went last, and choose fresh territory. Impaired rats (the hippocampus, center of memory in the brain, is removed) randomly alternate, 50-50, between the two arms of the T.

Showing their decline, the geriatric rats with no malate did barely better, alternating 57.14 percent of the time.

Now here's where results get exciting. Healthy young rats with functional memories alternate 85 percent of the time. The malate-supplemented geriatric rats alternated 84.29 percent of the time.

"To put this in lay language," Murphy said, "by treating these geriatric animals with malate, they're behaving as if they were young and vibrant. You get a biochemical event that manifests itself behaviorally; these data are utterly remarkable."

The colleagues are preparing two papers for publication and looking for research money to answer their next questions: dosage and duration. Then, hopefully, comes testing on humans.

This initial round, they delivered a lot of malate -- the equivalent of about 2.5 pounds of dry blueberries (imagine eating that many Sweet Tarts). Could smaller doses deliver the same dramatic results?

They also need to do longitudinal studies, Murphy said: "Malate helps older rats enhance their memory but could it prevent decline? And at what age?"

Though more study is needed, McGill thinks malate may do both. The culprit in decline is the biochemical processes --

oxidative stress -- that McGill first saw under the microscope, and tamped down with malate.

All living organisms produce malate, he explained, which regulates chemical processes in cells. As we age, our malate production drops off, allowing oxidative stress to increase and lead to inflammation and decline.

He suspects that by supplementing the rats with malate, they simply restored the chemical compound to levels capable of temporarily stalling or constraining biochemical processes that drive our aging.

In other words, you can't turn back the clock, McGill said.

"When I first started working on this," he said, "I'd get emails from colleagues whose parents had Alzheimer's, asking where they could get malate. But it's not going to intervene in the progression of Alzheimer's. It's not going to stop aging. It might only provide a larger window of higher function.

"Not a miracle," McGill said, "but pretty cool."

Kathleen McCoy works at UAA, where she highlights campus life through social and online media.

Reprinted with permission from Kathleen McCoy, UAA; and UAA Hometown Alaska, Anchorage Daily News.



## Blood Test... *Continued from cover*

within a few years but researchers hope that it may accurately predict far earlier if someone will develop the disease.

The study included hundreds of participants over the age of 70 in New York and California. Five years after the study began, 28 of the seniors had developed Alzheimer's or the cognitive problems that precede the disease. It was in these 28 seniors that researchers found low levels of the 10 particular lipids. These findings were confirmed by blood tests of 54 other patients with Alzheimer's disease.

The promising test holds two key purposes, the first is that it could warn someone if they are likely to develop the disease in coming years or it could ease anxiety for someone experiencing mild forgetfulness as a part of normal aging. Some people may not want to know the devastating news that they will develop this disease but others would be grateful to have the warning to prepare and enjoy time with family.

The second important goal of

this test is that it could mean the difference of a treatment for the disease being effective or not. Many researchers believe that treatments being developed for Alzheimer's may be effective if they were prescribed before severe brain deterioration begins.

The test would also allow researchers to try experimental drugs on those they know will develop the disease, especially if the blood test proves to be accurate on those in their 40's and 50's. That would be the "holy grail" according to Mark Mapstone, a neuropsychologist at the University of Rochester Medical Center.

Dr. Robert Stern, director of clinical research for the Boston University Alzheimer's Disease Center said, "Drugs need to be used very early in the disease before there's too much destruction of brain tissue. By the time symptoms develop, the destruction is usually irreversible." In fact, research shows that over fifty percent of brain cells responsible for cognitive processing and memory retention are lost by

the time symptoms develop.

The importance of a test that can diagnose the disease prior to this loss of brain function speaks for itself then.

Although hopes are high for this new test, there is still a lot of work to be done before it could arrive in doctors offices.

"We are certainly getting closer to having a blood test for Alzheimer's, which I thought was impossible five years ago," said Stern. "But I predict it will take another five or ten years for one to become available."

Before the test could become widely available researchers will have to perform trials on much larger and more diverse groups and findings will need to be validated by additional labs.

A blood test may not be available today but researchers are making significant progress and there is a growing confidence that an accurate test is in our near future.

Reprinted with permission from Robin Gail.

**Thank you to everyone who has chosen to Pick.Click.Give.  
in support of Alzheimer's Resource of Alaska!**

Your generous support is helping make a difference in the lives of so many Alaskan seniors.

If you haven't participated in Pick.Click.Give but would like to, simply log back in to <http://pfd.alaska.gov/> and click the green add/change Pick.Click.Give. button by August 31st.



## Thank You Scan Home, Rhonda Scott Art and Jens Restaurant!

Recently, Scan Home and Rhonda Scott hosted a fundraiser for Alzheimer's Resource of Alaska. Hors' d'oeuvres were provided by Jen's Restaurant. The event was well attended and all funds raised will support individuals across Alaska. We always appreciate when local businesses and individuals come together to help support our mission!

## Winter Workshop with Teepa Snow a Success!

In February, Alzheimer's Resource of Alaska held a one-day workshop featuring dementia care expert Teepa Snow. The interactive workshop looked at dementia from many perspectives to build a collective understanding of issues and solutions. Participants explored ways to connect and communicate including techniques to move from resistance to cooperation and participation.



Feedback from the workshop was overwhelmingly positive with many reviews similar to these: "I had no idea how much I would learn, best workshop I've ever attended." "Amazing! Informational! I learned so much, thank you for bringing such a talented teacher to Anchorage."

We would like to thank the Trust Training Cooperative for their generous sponsorship of the event.

## New Program Alert - Bethel Care Coordination!

Care Coordination is now being offered in the Bethel region. Care Coordination helps enhance the independence, safety and comfort of seniors over 60 and anyone living with Alzheimer's disease or related dementia by assisting with service coordination. For more information contact Jane Haiar at 907-561-3313 or email [jhaiar@alzalaska.org](mailto:jhaiar@alzalaska.org).

## Vision to Reality: Moving Forward for Quality of Life Two Day Conference

Mark your calendars November 12th and 13th. Alzheimer's Resource of Alaska will be presenting a two day conference at the Egan Center featuring Dr. Bill Thomas, founder of the Eden Alternative and the Greenhouse Project as well as Internationally recognized Author and Speaker Lisa Snyder. This is a training event you will not want to miss!

**Dont forget to check our website calendar of events for all the latest classes, trainings, presentations, groups and more! [AlzAlaska.org/event-calendar](http://AlzAlaska.org/event-calendar)**



# Amblin' for Alzheimer's

## Saturday, May 17

### Kincaid Park Chalet, 9401 Raspberry Rd, Anchorage

Presented by Alzheimer's Resource of Alaska, Oil & Gas Supply and KNIK 87.7FM

Walk, run or skip in support of Alaskan seniors and those affected by Alzheimer's disease or related dementia.

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PRIZES

Register before May 16th: Adults \$25 Children \$15 | Day of registration: Adults \$30 Children \$20

## Register today at [AlzAlaska.org](http://AlzAlaska.org)

Fundraise for a chance to win roundtrip tickets anywhere Alaska Airlines flies!

**10AM**  
Registration

**11AM**  
Walk Begins

**12PM**  
Food & Prizes

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**To go paperless in 2014, email us at [ADRAA@AlzAlaska.org](mailto:ADRAA@AlzAlaska.org) to sign up for electronic delivery of this newsletter, training opportunities and other announcements.**

## Classes around the state

For information on any of these classes or programs visit [www.AlzAlaska.org](http://www.AlzAlaska.org) or contact the office nearest you.

### Anchorage

1750 Abbott Rd.  
561-3313

- **Home and Community Safety**  
10AM-12:00PM OR  
5:30-7:30PM  
Monday, April 21
- **Knowing When to Brake:  
Older Adults Driving**  
10AM-12:00PM OR  
5:30-7:30PM  
Monday, April 28
- **"I Just Want to Walk":  
When Loved Ones Wander**  
10AM-12:00PM OR  
5:30-7:30PM  
Monday, May 5
- **Fall Prevention**  
10AM-12:00PM  
Monday, May 12
- **Art Links**  
11AM -12PM  
Fridays
- **Caring for Aging Parents**  
6:00-7:00PM  
Wednesday, April 16  
Eagle River Public Library  
12001 Business Blvd.  
Suite #176  
561-3313

### Copper River Basin

822-5620

- **Savvy Caregiver**  
(Online Webinar for Family Caregivers)  
7-9pm Wednesdays,  
April 9- May 14
- **Activities of Daily Living:  
Overview** (Online Webinar)  
7-8pm  
Thursday, May 8

### Mat-Su Valley

10355 E. Palmer-Wasilla Hwy.  
746-3413

- **Spirituality & Caregiving**  
1-2:30PM OR 6:00-7:30PM  
Thursday, April 17
- **Savvy Professional**  
8:00AM-5:00PM  
Wednesday  
May 21  
Registration Required
- **Making Daily Life Less  
Stressful**  
1-2:30PM OR 6-7:30PM  
Thursday, May 29
- **Medicare Overview**  
1-2:30PM OR 6-7:30PM  
Thursday, June TBD
- **Art Links**  
1-2 PM  
Fridays

### Fairbanks

565 University Dr., Suite 2  
452-2277

- **Decision Making**  
5:30-7PM  
Tuesday, April 15
- **When Does Forgetting  
Become a Disease?**  
5:30-7PM  
Tuesday, May 13
- **Art Links**  
1:30PM-2:30PM  
Thursdays
- **Savvy Professional**  
8:30AM-5:00PM  
Wednesday, May 21  
Registration Required

### Juneau

3225 Hospital Dr., Suite 100  
586-6044

- **Honoring Connection:  
Communication & Dementia**  
(Online Webinar for Professionals)  
12-1PM  
Tuesday, April 22  
Registration Required
- **Decision Making**  
5:30PM-7:30PM  
Tuesday, April 22
- **Mouth Care Without a Battle**  
(Online Webinar for Professionals)  
12-1PM  
Tuesday, May 20  
Registration Required
- **Activities of Daily Living**  
5:30PM-7:30PM  
Tuesday, May 27
- **Savvy Caregiver**  
6-8 PM  
Wednesdays,  
May 7-June 11 May 7-June  
Registration Required
- **Beyond Bingo& Beach Ball:  
Activity Planning for a  
Meaningful Day** (Online Webinar for  
Professionals)  
12-1PM  
Tuesday, June 24  
Registration Required

For the most up-to-date class listings visit: [www.AlzAlaska.org/events](http://www.AlzAlaska.org/events)



## Support Groups around the state

*A safe place for caregivers, family and friends of persons with dementia to share experiences and solutions.*

<b>Anchorage</b>				
Alzheimer's Resource of Alaska 1750 Abbott Rd.	General Caregiver	2nd Thursday	10-11:30 AM	Marilyn McKay
	General Caregiver	4th Thursday	5:30-7 PM	561-3313
	Guardianship Support	3rd Tuesday	5:30-7 PM	Lisa Wawrzonek 561-3313
Chester Park Cooperative 2020 Muldoon Rd.	General Caregiver	1st Friday	10 -11:30 AM	Kim Jung
		3rd Friday	10 -11:30 AM	561-3313
<b>Eagle River</b>				
Holy Spirit Episcopal Church 17545 N. Eagle River Loop Rd.	General Caregiver	2nd Thursday	6:30-8 PM	Marilyn McKay 561-3313/Linda Shepard 746-3413
<b>Statewide Telephone Support Group</b>				
Alzheimer's Resource of Alaska	General Caregiver	1st and 3rd Wednesday 2-3 PM Dial in 1-877-216-1555, Code 927989		Gay Wellman 882-5620 or (800) 478-1080 x6
<b>Fairbanks</b>				
Alzheimer's Resource of Alaska 565 University Ave. Suite 2	General Caregiver	1st & 3rd Tuesday	11:30 AM-1 PM	Joan Adams 452-2277
<b>Homer</b>				
Friendship Center	General Caregiver	2 Thursday's a month	2:30-3:30	Mary Jo 235-2295
<b>Juneau</b>				
Adult Day Program Center 1803 Glacier Highway	Family Caregiver	Thursdays	6:30-8 PM	Joylynn 463-6177
<b>Ketchikan</b>				
Southeast Senior Services	Family Caregiver	Call for more information		Bernice 225-8080
<b>Kodiak</b>				
Kodiak Senior Center 302 Erskine Ave.	General Caregiver	4th Thursday	12:30-1:30 PM	486-6181
<b>Mat-Su Valley</b>				
Alzheimer's Resource of Alaska Trinity Barn Plaza Mile 2.2 Palmer-Wasilla Hwy.	General Caregiver	2nd Wednesday	1-2:30 PM	Linda Shepard 746-3413
<b>Seward</b>				
Seward Senior Center	General Caregiver	4th Thursday	1-2 PM	262-1280 or (800) 776-8210
<b>Sitka</b>				
Brave Heart Volunteers	General Caregiver	2nd Wednesday	12-1 PM	747-4600
<b>Soldotna</b>				
Soldotna Senior Center	General Caregiver	2nd & Last Tuesday	1-3 PM	262-1280 or (800) 776-8210
<b>Sterling</b>				
Sterling Senior Center	General Caregiver	1st Tuesday	1-2 PM	262-6808



# Alzheimer's Resource of Alaska

30TH ANNIVERSARY  
1984-2014

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Visit [AlzAlaska.org](http://AlzAlaska.org) or call 1-800-478-1080

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