

COMING *of* AGE

LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE FOR SENIORS

FALL 2023


Protecting
Seniors from
Fraud

COA's Perfectly
Aged Calendar
Returns

Fall Media
Roundup

AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH
ALISON ARNGRIM

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Take Advantage of the Medicare Annual Enrollment Period and Get the Coverage You Need

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The Medicare Annual Enrollment Period: What Is It and How to Prepare

October 15th marks the start of Medicare's Annual Enrollment Period (AEP). For the next several months, your mailbox and television will be bombarded with Medicare ads and insurance information talking about the Annual Enrollment Period. But what exactly is AEP, and who needs to pay attention?

What is the Annual Enrollment Period

The Medicare Annual Enrollment Period – AEP for short – is a set period when Medicare beneficiaries or those eligible to receive benefits can select or change their Medicare health coverage for the following year. Here's a quick who, what, when, and why about AEP.

Who Anyone who is already enrolled or eligible to enroll in the federal Medicare program.

What An enrollment period where you can make changes to your Medicare benefits. During this period, you can change from Original Medicare to Medicare Advantage (or vice versa), join or change a prescription drug plan, or drop your coverage entirely.

When AEP is from October 15th through December 7th. Changes that you make will take effect on January 1 of the following year.

Why Medicare insurance plans can change each year. Providers can leave the network, benefits can change, and costs can change. You should review your benefits each year. Even if you decide to keep your current plan, you should at least be aware of any changes to your coverage.

And while you may be happy with your current coverage, you could end up paying more than you need or possibly missing out on new benefits. Plans, in addition to your healthcare needs, change yearly. That's why you need to take advantage of AEP and get the best coverage for your health, pocketbook, and lifestyle.

AEP 3-Step Plan

Now that you know what the Annual Enrollment Period is, it's time to start taking steps so you're ready when the time comes. Your health is a priority, and you need to do all that you can to guarantee you receive the care you need and deserve. Here is a three-step AEP plan that will ensure you have a successful Medicare Annual Enrollment Period.

Step 1: Do A Needs Analysis

The first thing you need to do before even considering enrolling in a specific plan is to assess your current needs. A lot can change in a year, especially with your health. Ask yourself the following questions:

- How is my overall health?
- Did I struggle to get the care I needed this year?
- Did I have to visit the doctor more or less?
- Am I comfortable with my current healthcare costs?
- Have my financial circumstances changed?
- Am I happy with my prescription drug coverage?
- Did I have to pay out more than I expected for prescriptions?

These questions are extremely important to your AEP plan because, depending on your health condition and your current financial situation, you may want to look for a more comprehensive plan or a Medicare plan that has cheaper premiums but will still provide you with the benefits you need.

Step 2: Review Changes to Your Current Plan

You should have already received an Annual Notice of Change (ANOC) from your current plan. After you assess your needs, it's an excellent time to review what changes will be made to your current coverage.

Once you review the changes, you need to determine if your current coverage will still meet your needs based on the needs analysis you just compiled. Will you still be able to receive the amount of care you need and deserve? Have your premiums increased, and can you still comfortably afford them if they have?

If you determine your current plan is not the best coverage for the coming year, then it's time to take the next step and find a new plan.

Step 3: Compare Plans

Now is the time to explore your options and compare them. Take your needs analysis and see which plan will offer the benefits you need at a cost you're comfortable with.

Sorting through plans can be confusing. Many Medicare beneficiaries find it helpful to work directly with a licensed insurance agent for guidance and direction. They can help you with everything from completing your needs analysis to reviewing your current plan changes and comparing plans in your area.

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Changing to a VIPcare primary care provider is easy and hassle-free, especially during AEP. We accept most insurance plans in your area. And as a VIPcare patient, you will receive nothing but a 5-star experience. With a mission of Better Health, we focus on prevention and maintenance to get our patients healthy and keep them healthy.

Don't miss this opportunity to get the Medicare coverage and quality care you need and deserve. If you need assistance, contact us at 850-204-0416.

[FROM THE EDITOR]



Emily Echevarria

Marketing Communications Director and Editor-in-Chief

Happy Fall! We are mercifully experiencing sub-90-degree weather here in the Panhandle, and that passes for a crisp start to autumn around these parts. Huzzah! As we escape the dangerous summer heat and enter what is typically a more active period in the community with fall events, we also enter a busy season here at Council on Aging.

Coming up on October 18, we have our Perfectly Aged gala and calendar unveiling, with much of the planning still in progress at the time of this writing. We are also preparing for next year's advocacy efforts with the state legislature, a monumental and to some degree Sisyphean task, as Josh made clear in his Advocacy piece on page 9. While there will always be challenges in our work to provide much-needed services to older adults, we make sure to celebrate the success stories we see every day.

We always get a lift from our dedicated volunteers, and we've included another Volunteer Spotlight on page 10. We love learning what brought our volunteers to the agency and what makes their service so meaningful. This issue also features some highlights from the packed community calendar, from Foo Foo Fest to haunted happenings starting on page 21. For those that would rather stay home and cozy up with a good TV show or book this season, we've included a media roundup with intergenerational appeal on page 13.

While I couldn't have imagined the SAG-AFTRA strike would affect me in any way, we found the rules around the labor action had a minor impact on Kelly's interview with actor and author Alison Arnglim. Regardless of one redacted detail, you'll find the interview a fascinating narrative of Arnglim's life from her young stardom on a beloved TV show to her fearless advocacy work as an adult.

As I mentioned, we persevere in our tireless advocacy work here at COA, even as times become increasingly tiring. We're at the mercy of inflationary prices for goods and services like everyone else, so we continue to lobby for comparable state budgetary allocations year after year. When I say the task is Sisyphean—meaning a task that can never be completed—mean there won't come a day when we receive everything we ask for in a timely manner and then stop those efforts altogether. As part of our mission, we'll always be in ongoing contact with local and state leaders, making the case for the seniors we serve, shining a light on the successes as well as the shortfalls. We can always use more constituent voices in these conversations! If you would like to learn about joining or supporting our advocacy, don't hesitate to contact me at 850.266.2507.

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If you have questions about your subscription, call Emily Echevarria at 850-432-1475 ext. 130 or email eechevarria@coawfla.org. Please do not hesitate to contact Emily with any questions or comments about your service, and thank you.

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Council on Aging of West Florida welcomes your letters and comments. Send letters to Council on Aging c/o Emily Echevarria at 875 Royce St., Pensacola, FL 32503, emails to eechevarria@coawfla.org or contact editor Kelly Oden at Ballinger Publishing, P.O. Box 12665 Pensacola, FL 32591 or kelly@ballingerpublishing.com.

WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

We are always willing to consider freelance writers and article ideas. Please send queries and/or suggestions to Kelly Oden at kelly@ballingerpublishing.com or Emily Echevarria at eechevarria@coawfla.org.

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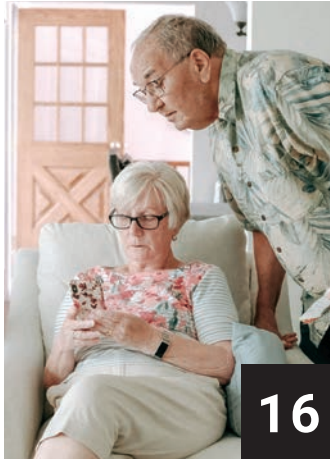
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LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE FOR SENIORS
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Stay Connected!



On the Cover: Alison Arngrim
Photo by Gor Megaera

Council on Aging of West Florida, Inc. is compliant with the Better Business Bureau's Wise Giving Alliance Standards for Charity Accountability.

Ricki Stewart
Licensed Sales Agent

“I care about you,
I’ll treat you like family &
I’m a Gold Level Premier Agent!”



Local agent with knowledge of local Medicare plans.

I’m Ricki Stewart, a licensed sales agent in Pensacola and surrounding areas. When it comes to Medicare, it’s important to consider all of your options. What works well for your neighbor may not be the best fit for you. I know the ins and outs of Medicare, and I’m ready to answer your questions and help you find a plan that fits your needs. **Take advantage of my knowledge and experience to:**

- Take the confusion out of Medicare
- Receive one-on-one service
- Get help comparing plans
- Make enrolling in a plan easier

I look forward to helping you explore your Medicare options so you can enroll in a plan with confidence.





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We are nearing the opening of our new campus! Providing groundbreaking care to the communities we serve is a part of our history. We were born from a legacy of putting people first through better access, experiences and outcomes. We continue to grow and invest in the health of our community to support our Mission of helping people throughout life's journey.

Our new hospital campus is scheduled to open September 23, 2023. It is conveniently located at the corner of Brent Lane and I-110 in Pensacola, Florida. Please visit our website for updates and to learn how we are transforming health care for generations to come.

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Going Negative

by Josh Newby

Going negative, being contrarian and telling supposed truth to power can be addictive, both for the purveyor of these messages and the bystanders. Large corporations have harnessed the addictive properties of provocation and spun them into big profits. The Arabs have a phrase for it, *خالف تعرف*, which literally translates to “oppose and receive recognition.”

I'll admit that, starting this article, I was tempted to go negative after a particularly dispiriting series of meetings I recently participated in down in Orlando with statewide partners. I believe so much in the work that we do, and in the work of my counterparts across Florida, and it is frustrating to no end when the powers that be, who are tasked with enabling the services we offer, sometimes seem to do more harm than good.

But I digress, and will instead share some legislative wins that, as of July 1 of this year, are victories the eldercare industry and seniors themselves can be proud of.

- The Education and Training for Alzheimer's Disease and Related Forms of Dementia House Bill passed without a single no vote from either Florida congressional chamber. The act establishes universal and minimum training guidelines for those who work with seniors in an institutional setting.
- Speaking of zero no votes, the Health Care Provider Accountability Act establishes an extensive list of resident rights that a nursing home must afford, including civil and religious liberties, the right to be free from sexual abuse, neglect and exploitation and creates an AHCA-administered legal remedy for those who have these rights violated.

- Another unanimous decision (this is still the Florida

legislature, right?) was on the topic of prescription drugs and implementing mandates that would require manufacturers to disclose drug price increases within the same calendar year, leading to greater transparency and accountability and a free market solution to skyrocketing prices.

- Senate Bill 232 criminalized exploitation of any person 65 years of age or older. Previous legislation only allowed criminal charges to be brought if it could be proven the victim also had some disability or demonstrable age-related vulnerability.
- Via Section 212.08(7) of the Florida Statutes, all diapers and incontinence supplies, regardless of the age for which they are intended, are now tax-exempt.

The news is not all good, unfortunately, and I will take this opportunity to encourage legislators, staff, the Department of Elder Affairs and other public servants to address what continues to be the single greatest pressure point in our continuum of care—funding. This past year did in fact see historical increases to our funding...historically low, that is. Alzheimer's is a huge challenge this state faces, and I am not one to downplay that, but funding this year seemed primarily preoccupied with that population, and not for the other very needy elders we serve who are not fortunate enough to have a dementia diagnosis. Did going negative on that get your attention? That's right—the level of funding we currently receive for the homebound, the disabled, the hungry and the poor was so disappointing this year that I consider a dementia diagnosis (more so the increased resources that comes with) to be a matter of privilege.

In Florida's next legislative session, I hope to see increases to our Community Care for the Elderly and Home Care for the Elderly programs that really are historical, and that account for inflationary and workforce pressures that all agencies like ours must contend with. Florida is the second-most senior-populous state in the Union, they vote reliably, in many ways they have built the Sunshine State, and those who hold a supermajority in both houses would do well to remember who voted them in.

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Name: Sean Magerkorth

Volunteer Position: Meals on Wheels Delivery Driver & Board Member

SERVING AS A MEALS ON WHEELS volunteer delivery driver for Council on Aging of West Florida isn't Sean Magerkorth's only connection to the agency. He has also served on the Board of Directors for four years utilizing his community connections to help raise funds for our many programs. As First Vice-Chair of the Board, he is next in line to serve as Board Chair. Sean's kindness lights up any room he steps into, and his dedication to his community is remarkable. He is genuinely connected to the clients he serves, and Council on Aging wouldn't be the same without him.

What made you decide to volunteer for Council on Aging of West Florida?

I volunteered for a while with Big Brothers Big Sisters and really enjoyed that. However, I moved on, grew up and eventually heard about Meals on Wheels. After reading about the organization, I thought it was something I wanted to get involved with. These services feel personal to me because both my parents passed away from dementia, and unfortunately, we were not able to keep them in their homes. We tried to for as long as we could before it got to the point where it was impossible, so being able to help the elderly community is very important to me.

Tell me about the volunteer activities you have been involved with.

I've been involved with Big Brothers Big Sisters for about eight years, and that was the biggest activity I've done before. I've also done the school mentor program where I would go out during lunchtime and talk to the kids, play basketball with them, play games in the school and things like that. I've mostly dealt with kids, so this is my first time dealing with the elderly.



What brings you joy as a volunteer for the Council on Aging of West Florida?

What brings me joy as a volunteer is that sometimes we deliver a meal and I'll be the only person that individual might see all week, and some of them really look forward to just that few minutes of chit chatting with me. During the interaction, you can see the appreciation in their eyes just for delivering their food. I just really love seniors, so whatever I can do to make their lives easier matters to me. We're all getting older, and with our challenges adding up every day, it's nice to make their day just a little bit easier.

From your perspective, what is the greatest impact that COA has in your community?

I think a lot of people don't realize the resources Council on Aging has available. Council on Aging has been around for 50 years now, and it's not often you find an agency that advocates for the elderly population, especially for that length of time. When you say, "Council on Aging," I think most people know who they are, even if they don't know all the services they provide; they at least know who they are and what their purpose is.

What would you share with others considering volunteering for the agency?

Absolutely do it! It's a very minimal commitment as far as time goes. At the end of the day, you might think your life is bad or you have a lot of obstacles in your life, but when you're seeing the struggles some of these people deal with on a day-to-day basis it really makes you appreciate what you have. Volunteering your time gives you hope that when you're that age, someone is willing and able to help you.



Name: Gail Anderson

Volunteer Position: Senior Companion at The Retreat Adult Day Care Center

SENIOR COMPANION, GAIL ANDERSON, didn't need to become part of the Council on Aging family when she started, because she was already family! Her sister Sandra serves as an accounting manager for the agency. Sandra thought Gail would be a good fit at our adult day care center, The Retreat, and she couldn't have been more correct. Gail has formed a beautiful friendship with The Retreat participants and staff. Gail's feisty rapport gives all of us something to look forward to when she's in the office.

What made you decide to volunteer for Council on Aging of West Florida?

My sister works at Council on Aging and told me that The Retreat needed help and asked if I would like to volunteer a couple of days each week. I liked it so much that I now volunteer four days a week. The experience has helped me appreciate the kindness the volunteers bring to the clients we care for by bringing their own unique care and love into the world.

Tell me about the volunteer activities you have been involved with.

I'm involved with all the activities we provide for the day care participants. We paint, color, sing, exercise, do arts and crafts and play fun games. I also read stories to the clients. The clients really seem to enjoy themselves during these events. It helps us all feel better knowing that we're contributing to making the days better for everyone involved.

What brings you joy as a volunteer for the Council on Aging of West Florida?

I enjoy interacting with all our day care participants as well as the day care staff. Seeing the positive reactions on the clients' faces when we make a creative drawing or sing a funny song really brings the whole experience together into something that creates joy.

From your perspective, what is the greatest impact that COA has in your community?

The Retreat gives the clients a safe, entertaining and loving place to come each day. It's a judgment-free zone where clients can feel safe expressing themselves and engage fully in the activities provided. The clients can fulfill their creative potential in a way that's safe and engaging for all.

What would you share with others considering volunteering for the agency?

Council on Aging is a great agency that helps seniors in many ways. Volunteering to help our local seniors is a joy. Getting involved in the community brings a sense of empowerment and compassion in a world that sometimes feels void of any emotion. By putting love out into the world, hopefully it finds us in return.



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Fall 2023

Media Roundup

by Nicole Willis

As fall is coming into full-swing, it is the perfect time to unwind and enjoy the cozy vibes before the bustle of the holiday season. Grab a warm cup of tea and cozy up with a good book, or snuggle up under a blanket and binge-watch some new shows. Whichever way you prefer to spend your fall days, we hope you enjoy some of these shows, podcasts and books this season.

Shows



The Golden Bachelor Season 1 airing this fall on ABC

ABC's popular dating program, *The Bachelor*, will be getting a senior-centric spinoff show this fall called *The Golden Bachelor*. The new show will feature 71 year old Gerry Turner on the search for love in

his golden years. Over five years after losing his high school sweetheart and wife of 43 years, Toni, Turner is looking to find love again. Candidates competing for Turner's love are other active and outgoing singles in their golden years. The first season of *The Golden Bachelor* will air sometime in Fall of 2023 on ABC.



Only Murders in the Building

Season 3 out now

Only Murders in the Building follows three unlikely friends played by Martin Short, Selena Gomez and Steve Martin, who are united by their fascination with all things true crime. The trio find themselves investigating something close to home—

murders in their own apartment building. If you've ever wanted to investigate true crime or enjoy a good mystery, this comedic mystery series is for you. *Only Murders in the Building* can be streamed on Hulu. The show's third season aired August 2023. While not yet announced, a fourth season is rumored to be out around the same time next year.

THE GREAT BRITISH BAKING SHOW



The Great British Baking Show

Series 14 airing this fall on Netflix

The Great British Baking Show is back for a new series of kitchen competitions. The show has become a favorite of Americans and Brits alike, featuring fun hosts and judges, as well as relatable and personable everyday people who just so happen to bake. Over the span of 10 weeks, 12 amateur bakers will compete to see who bakes the best cakes, breads and desserts. This season, Alison Hammond will take over Matt Lucas' spot as co-host to Noel Fielding. American viewers can expect to watch the new series sometime this fall. Series 14 of *The Great British Baking Show* is set to premier in the UK in September, with Netflix airing it in the US shortly after.

Podcasts



Squeeze the Day

Airs Monthly

Presented by FiftyForward, a senior citizen resource center in Nashville, *Squeeze the Day* is a podcast that celebrates lives that have been well-lived. Hosted by FiftyForward Communication Director Susan Sizemore, *Squeeze the Day* features a variety of different guests over the age of 50 who have amazing life stories to share and inspiring advice to offer other aging seniors. The wide range of stories and advice shared on *Squeeze the Day* can help older adults, well, squeeze the most out of their days. *Squeeze the Day* inspires listeners to make the most of their time and live their best lives. *Squeeze the Day* is available on Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts and Spotify.



Excuse My Grandma

Airs Weekly

What happens when a millennial moves in with her 81-year-old grandma? Kim Murstein and her grandmother, Gail Rudnick, share their personal experience with this situation in their podcast, *Excuse My Grandma*. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, 27-year-old Murstein moved into her grandmother's home in Palm Beach, Florida. As she began dating in the new city, Murstein quickly realized that her grandma views dating in a more traditional light. *Excuse My Grandma* explores the differences between generations in terms of dating, relationships and cultural values. Get a glimpse into the duo's chaotic world by listening to *Excuse My Grandma* on Spotify, Apple Podcasts or Amazon Music. The ladies also post podcast snippets and full episodes on their YouTube channel, youtube.com/@excusemygrandma.



Stuff You Should Know

Airs Multiple Times a Week

If you are interested in learning how things work or understanding why things are the way that they are, *Stuff You Should Know* is the perfect podcast for you. Launched in 2008, *Stuff You Should Know* is a podcast that dives into the operations of gadgets, feelings, events and more. Hosts Josh Clark and Chuck Bryant take listeners through the ins and outs of the details they should know about a certain topic. For example, they teach listeners how things work—whether that thing is something tangible like soap, a feeling like fear, or something abstract like color. With an archive spanning over 1,500 episodes, there is no shortage of interesting things to learn. *Stuff You Should Know* is available on Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts, Spotify, Amazon Music and more.

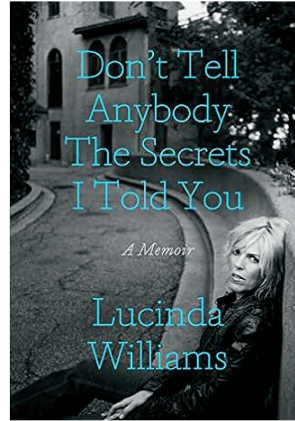


The Nickel Boys, by Colson Whitehead

Published July 2019

The Nickel Boys tells the devastating story of Elwood Curtis, a young African-American boy who is forced to navigate the horror of Nickel Academy, a reform school in Jim Crow-era Florida.

Through the abuse, racism and violence that he experiences in the facility, Curtis manages to meet a friend, Turner, to confide in about life's problems and their horrible situations. *The Nickel Boys* is based on the happenings at the real life "Dozier School," which operated for over 100 years. This book is Colson Whitehead's second Pulitzer Prize-winning book, as *The Nickel Boys* was awarded the 2020 Pulitzer Prize in Fiction.

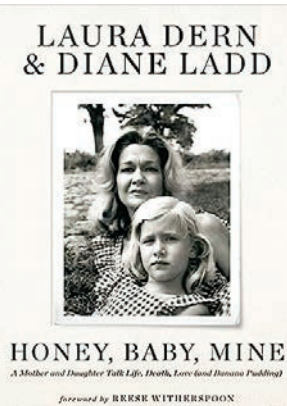


Don't Tell Anybody the Secrets I Told You: A Memoir, by Lucinda Williams

Published April 2023

Don't Tell Anybody the Secrets I Told You is singer-songwriter and three-time Grammy winner Lucinda Williams' heartfelt memoir. Williams' rise to fame and success was

anything but easy; growing up in the Deep South with unstable parents took a toll on the young songwriter that led to years of hard work and perseverance. From long shifts at day jobs and performing at night to Grammy nominations and captivating the hearts of millions, Williams describes her life path filled with hills and valleys. *Don't Tell Anybody the Secrets I Told You*, tells all about the people, places and events that shaped both Williams and her music.

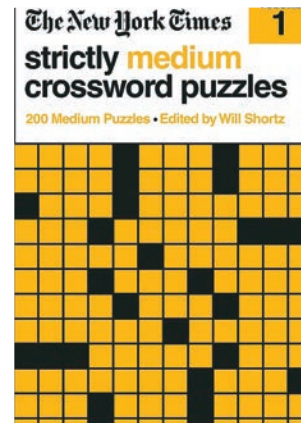


Honey, Baby, Mine: A Mother and Daughter Talk Life, Death, Love (and Banana Pudding), by Laura Dern and Diane Ladd

Published April 2023

In *Honey, Baby, Mine* award-winning actresses and mother-daughter-duo Laura Dern and Diane

Ladd share their conversations about life, death and everything in between. From light-hearted chats about family recipes to emotional conversations about motherhood, Dern and Ladd leave no topic unexplored. *Honey, Baby, Mine* is as personal as it gets. After Ladd was diagnosed with a life-threatening lung disease, Dern encouraged her mother to walk daily to increase her lung capacity. As the two walked, conversations arose—some serious, some silly. These exchanges were recorded and would later serve as the book's outline. *Honey, Baby, Mine* provides real and raw conversations that any mother or daughter would find valuable.



The New York Times Strictly Medium Crossword Puzzles Volume 1: 200 Medium Puzzles, by The New York Times, edited by Will Shortz

Published February 2021

The New York Times (NYT) has crossword-lovers covered with *Strictly Medium*

Crossword Puzzles. Featuring 200 crossword puzzles, this book provides a fun challenge but won't have you stumped for days on end. This book is part of a larger collection of NYT puzzle books released in 2021. If your skill level is a bit lower or higher than medium, consider checking out the other books in the collection: *Simply Easy* and *Seriously Hard*. All three books in the collection are edited by long-time NYT puzzle editor Will Shortz. Whether you are a NYT puzzle fanatic or a casual puzzler, *Strictly Medium Crossword Puzzles* is a great book for anyone wanting some good-for-you fun.



PROTECTING SENIORS FROM FRAUD

Scams Targeting Older Adults

by Emily Echevarria

AS TECHNOLOGY AND COMMUNICATION CHANNELS EVOLVE, so do the tactics of scammers preying on vulnerable individuals. Unfortunately, many fraudsters target older adults with a growing wave of scams that include Medicare fraud, identity theft and various financial scams. Knowledge of the strategies that have become more widely reported can help older adults and caregivers be aware of the precautions they can take to prevent falling victim to these schemes. While the types of fraud perpetrated by opportunistic criminals may be ever-changing, here are some key safety tips and things to look out for that can protect consumers' personal information and finances.

The first thing to know about incidents of scamming is that these situations aren't rare, Gulf Winds Credit Union Fraud Manager Trina Wade explained.

"I would say they're very common," Wade said. "We see a lot of situations where the scammers target our elderly members because they tend to be less familiar with technology and they tend to be more trusting."

The unfortunate fact is that many fraud schemes rely on finding ways to trick people into giving their bank or debit card information directly to the scammer, whether by impersonating a trusted source, creating a sense of urgency where money is needed immediately, or through a more long-term strategy of earning trust.

GIFT CARD SCAM

Wade said a method known as "the gift card scam" is very common, wherein a scammer will get their target to purchase gift cards and then send a photo of the gift card with the number and PIN to use it. The scam can start several ways. The scammer might call and identify themselves as the IRS or another government agency, say the person has won a prize, or identify themselves as a representative for the utility company. They might also impersonate a tech support representative from Microsoft or Apple and get the person to allow remote access to their computer and then say they must be paid to fix an issue with the computer. Whatever the initial false cause for the call, will convince the person they either need to pay for a fee or service in gift cards immediately, or that they have been overpaid and must pay back the difference in gift cards.

ROMANCE SCAM

Romance scams occur when a fraudster connects with a person online and begins a relationship with them, eventually building up trust and convincing the person to send them money. Sadly, romance scams remain common as scammers prey on older adults who are lonely and seeking connection, and they invest time in building a relationship and gaining trust.

"Once that trust is established, the person they're speaking with, who is usually located overseas, starts explaining to our members that they're having financial difficulties and they ask for money," Wade said. "These are long-running scams because it takes a longer time to earn their trust."



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Wade explained that Gulf Winds staff are trained to ask questions when members are initiating possibly suspicious money transfers, and they often start with, “Have you ever met this person?” The scammer will convince their target the funds are needed for travel so they can be together or get married. The reality is that the supposed fiancé is manipulating the emotions of their target for financial gain. If a friend or family member seems to be falling victim to this type of fraud, it can be tough to initiate a conversation, but it’s necessary to prevent financial loss.

SPOOFING

One tactic scammers use to seem legitimate is known as ‘spoofing’ a recognizable phone number. Spoofing falsifies the information transmitted to caller ID display to disguise the caller’s identity. This makes the call look like it’s coming from a trustworthy source such as your banking institution. Often when the target responds, an automated voice recording will say there has been a possibly fraudulent charge on the account, and to press one to speak to someone to fix the issue. This tactic helps identify people that initially believe the call is real.

“They’ll spoof our phone numbers, and they’ll call and say, ‘this is Gulf Winds, we need to go over these transactions, so please give us your card information,’” Wade explained. “They’re good at what they do.”

If such a call comes through from a seemingly legitimate number, the best thing to do is hang up and call the institution back to check whether it was a real call or a possible spoof.

MEDICARE FRAUD

Another common way older adults may be targeted is through Medicare fraud. The Northwest Florida Area Agency on Aging has a program known as SHINE (Serving Health Insurance Needs of Elders) provides educational materials and free, unbiased insurance counseling to Florida elders, caregivers and family members on all issues regarding Medicare. SHINE liaison Marti Hearn said the program assists by teaching seniors how to protect themselves and prevent, detect, and report Medicare fraud.

Medicare fraud takes many forms, including bills for labs never administered or bills for Durable Medical Equipment never ordered by the beneficiary’s physician. A recent example is Medicare patients receiving unsolicited COVID-19 test kit deliveries that neither the patient nor their doctor has ordered, but Medicare has been billed for them. Identity theft often occurs through a variety of telephone, at health fairs, or door to door solicitations. Scammers will sometimes offer a free gift in exchange for a “sign-up” that includes personal information.

While the types of trickery used by criminals will always change and adapt to current technology and trends, there is luckily some consistent guidance on protecting yourself or your loved ones from falling victim to scams. Be vigilant of suspicious calls, protect personal information and ID numbers, and if you suspect you’ve been victimized or given out private information to a scammer, immediately call the relevant organization or elder helpline to report the breach.

TIPS TO PREVENT FALLING VICTIM TO SCAMS

- Do not allow remote access to your computer to someone who calls claiming to be in tech support if you have not initiated some kind of tech help.
- Do not purchase gift cards as remuneration or payment for anything, and do not give gift card information on the phone to anyone you do not know.
- Be wary of long-distance romantic relationships that form online, especially if the supposed partner is asking for money.
- If you get a call that looks like it’s from a trustworthy phone number, but the caller asks for personal information—like a debit card number along with expiration and CVC—hang up and call the number on the organization’s website or recent statements to see if the call was legitimate.
- Never give out personal information such as account numbers, social security numbers, Medicare numbers, passwords or other identifying information in response to unexpected calls or if you are at all suspicious. The IRS, social security office or Medicare will not call and ask for your information over the phone.

If you believe your Medicare or social security identity has been compromised, call 1-800-96-ELDER to report it to a Senior Medicare Patrol counselor with SHINE.



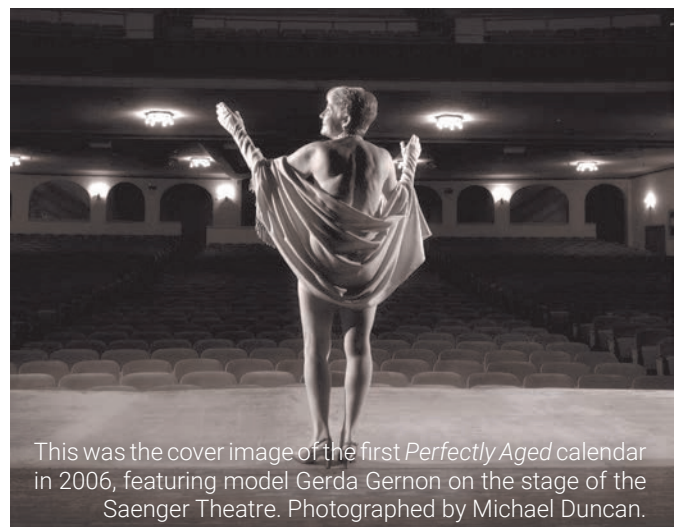
Dr. Elise Gordon *Perfectly Aged* Calendar

Perfectly Aged

An Annual Reminder to Appreciate Aging

by Farrah Hale

In 2004, then Council on Aging President John Clark and close agency friend DeeDee Davis began discussing the concept of a semi-nude calendar highlighting the beauty in aging. After the idea was tossed around, it came to fruition in 2005. They called the calendar *Perfectly Aged* and featured many prominent Pensacolians willing to bare it all for a good cause. Michael Duncan of Duncan McCall advertising designed and photographed the 2006 calendar in elegant black and white while DeeDee curated a diverse list of models to bring the calendar to life. The first round of models included Vince and Anna Whibbs, Jim Reeves and June Baird Guerra



This was the cover image of the first *Perfectly Aged* calendar in 2006, featuring model Gerda Gernon on the stage of the Saenger Theatre. Photographed by Michael Duncan.

of Capt'n Fun and Jubilee restaurant. The calendar was a huge hit in the community and is still remembered 17 years later. The calendar was a success, and Council on Aging continued to produce new calendars through 2008. The calendar served as a reminder of the older adults Council on Aging serves in Escambia and Santa Rosa counties and helped fund the programs that benefit those seniors.

In 2022, the previous calendars circled back into the agency zeitgeist. After celebrating 50 years of service and the end of the beloved Rat Pack gala, Council on Aging was ready to reintroduce the *Perfectly Aged* calendar and highlight prominent figures in the community again. It is time to graduate from roasting and toasting to uplifting and empowering with a newly revived *Perfectly Aged* calendar project.

The 2024 *Perfectly Aged* calendar, designed by marketing communications director Emily Echevarria, is a full-color showcase of editorial

portraits by professional photographer Noel Nichols. The models are carefully chosen by our calendar committee, and they have the creative freedom of location and props to accentuate their unique personalities. Our model's ages range from 52 to 91, showcasing the beauty in aging at any stage. *Perfectly Aged* is tasteful, whimsical, and elevating, while promoting healthy and safe independent living where possible.

The *Perfectly Aged* calendar and unveiling gala is Council on Aging of West Florida's largest fundraiser of the year. Through sponsorships, ad space, calendar sales, and donations, we hope to raise \$150,000 to directly impact the programs and services we provide to our community's seniors.

If you are interested in a calendar ad, gala ticket sponsorship, or calendar purchase, or would like to donate to the agency, please visit coawfla.org/donate or contact Farrah Hale at (850) 266-2513 or fhale@coawfla.org.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

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The Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), sponsored by AmeriCorps, is a free federal program that supports volunteers 55 and better. Locally, United Way of West Florida partners with nonprofits in Escambia County to match potential volunteers with service opportunities in our community. You WILL make a difference whether you give an hour, work on a short term project, or make a weekly commitment.

BENEFITS OF JOINING RSVP

- SOCIAL Enjoy new experiences
- LOCAL Impact your community
- FLEXIBLE Create your own schedule

READY TO START?

Janet Rice McCoy, RSVP Manager
janet.mccoy@uwwf.org, 850-444-7148



2023 FALL SCHEDULE

Volunteers 55+ are invited to join our Escambia County RSVP events for socialization, learning, and occasional volunteer projects.

Events are free, registration is required for lunches and requested with snacking. Visit uwwf.org/rsvp-events.

OCT 23

Get Your Healthcare Ducks in a Row Workshops & Lunch

10AM-1:30PM

Bayview Senior Center
2000 East Lloyd Street

NOV 17

Grocery Store Gardening with Beth Bolles Snacking with Seniors

9AM- 11AM

University of Florida IFAS Extension
3740 Stefani Road, Cantonment, FL 32533



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FALL FUN FOR ALL

Local Festivals & Events

by Morgan Cole

When it comes to fall events, Pensacola always goes big on the fun. From haunted Segway tours and pumpkin patch visits to art festivals and all things Foo Foo, there's a little something for everyone. We have brought you details on some of our favorite upcoming fall happenings and events occurring throughout the city.

First City Arts Center's 17th Annual Pumpkin Patch

October 6 - 7

Hosted annually as a fundraiser for the First City Arts Center (FCAC), this beloved Fall event will return October 6 through 7 for its 17th annual glass and ceramic pumpkin patch. This year, the Pumpkin Patch has been brought home to its original location at the First City Art Center campus in downtown Pensacola. The First Pick Preview Party will be held Friday, October 6 from 5 to 8 pm, with the General Admission Pumpkin Patch Sale on Saturday, October 7 from 10 am to 2 pm. Attendees will have thousands of hand-blown glass and handcrafted

ceramic pumpkins to choose from. All pumpkins in the patch were created by artists working in the glass and ceramic studios at First City Art Center. Handmade pumpkins start at \$20 and come in all shapes, colors and sizes. This annual event not only supports FCAC as a non-profit center for the arts offering affordable art education and outreach programs, but also more than 40 local artists. First City Arts Center is located at 1060 N. Guillemard Street in downtown Pensacola. For tickets and complete event details, visit firstcityart.org.

Historic Pensacola Haunted House Walking and Trolley Tours

October 13 - 14, 21, 27 - 28

October is the best time of year for eerie encounters along Northwest Florida's infamous "ghost coast." You never know when or where you may experience something frighteningly freaky that boggles your mind, especially in downtown Pensacola. Established by the Pensacola Historical Society as an annual fundraiser, UWF Historic Trust continues the tradition of offering the Haunted House Walking and Trolley Tours the two weekends before Halloween every year. With four different itineraries to choose from, tour guides will lead you on a stroll through downtown's grave past as

you learn about Intendencia Street's murderous mayhem, Seville Square's cornucopia of spooks and specters and South Palafox's deadly bars and brothels (for adults only). Tours will be offered October 13, 14, 21, 27 and 28 with time slots available at 6:30 pm, 7:30 pm and 8:30 pm each day. Each tour lasts approximately 1 hour and 15 minutes. Tickets for the walking tours are \$15 for adults and \$8 for children, ages 12 and under. Tickets for the haunted trolley tour are \$20 for adults and \$10 for children, ages 12 and under. For tickets and complete tour details, visit historicpensacola.org.

Gulf Coast Fungi Festival

October 20 - 22

Discover the magic of mushrooms at the Gulf Coast Fungi Festival October 20-22 at the Weeks Bay Plantation in Fairhope, AL. The festival will feature a jam-packed weekend of mycology-themed education, hands-on activities, food, fun and friends. Local experts, vendors, artisans, musicians and a variety of food vendors will be in attendance sharing their knowledge and art with visitors from across the region and beyond. From guided mushroom foraging tours and informative lectures to cooking demonstrations and more, there is something for

everyone to enjoy. Talented artists and musicians will host a variety of captivating performances on each day of the festival for attendees to enjoy. The Gulf Coast Fungi Festival will be held at the beautiful Weeks Bay Plantation located at 12562 Mary Anne Beach Road in Fairhope, AL. Day and weekend passes are on sale now starting at \$30 and can be purchased online at gulfcoastfungifest.com. Visit the Gulf Coast Fungi Fest Facebook page for complete details on scheduled speakers, workshop offerings and to view the music lineup, visit gulfcoastfungifest.com

Pensacola Blue Angels Homecoming Air Show

November 3 - 4

The NAS Pensacola Blue Angels Homecoming Air Show, with the theme of "Celebrating Women In Aviation," will be held November 3 and 4 aboard Naval Air Station Pensacola at 1878 S. Blue Angel Parkway (West Gate Entrance) in Pensacola. Attracting more than 150,000 spectators each year, the Blue Angels Homecoming Air Show features an incredible lineup of aerobatic performers and an incredible show by our very own Blue Angels. Admission, parking and "blanket seating" areas are free and open to the public. "Blanket Seating" means an open paved

area where attendees can stand or sit on their own blankets or lawn chairs. Preferred seating areas (Box or Flightline Club) are also available with paid admission and can be purchased online at naspensacolaairshow.com. The gates will open at 8 am, with the show beginning at 9:30 am. Spectators are encouraged to bring their own seating for the show. For complete details and to view the complete lineup of events, visit naspensacolaairshow.com.

10th Annual Foo Foo Festival

November 2 - 14

Held each Fall in venues and locations throughout downtown Pensacola, this 12-day festival is a celebration of culinary, musical, theatrical and creative happenings. Attracting thousands of both locals and visitors alike, Foo Foo Fest features events of high artistic and cultural caliber, delivered with a hefty dose of Southern sophistication. This year's Foo Foo Festival will take place November 2 through 13 in downtown Pensacola. Programming is provided by grant recipients, as well as already established events, throughout the

city. Each of the ACE grant recipients host individual experiences specific to their craft throughout the festival in addition to marquee events, including the Big Green Egg® Cook-off, the US Navy's Blue Angels Homecoming Air Show at NAS Pensacola, Frank Brown International Songwriters Festival, Great GulfCoast Arts Festival and the Pensacola Marathon. For details on this year's Foo Foo festivities and to view the complete lineup of scheduled events and performances, visit foofifest.com.



Pensacola Greek Festival

November 3 - 5



The 63rd Annual Pensacola Greek Festival is back, and bigger than ever before! Held at the Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church at 1720 W. Garden Street in downtown Pensacola, this three-day cultural event combines the best of southern hospitality with Hellenic culture and cuisine. Featuring live Greek music, youth folk dancing, historic church tours and more, this annual event provides an opportunity for Pensacola Greeks to share their heritage, culture and faith with the local community. A variety of tasty Greek dinners will also

be available for purchase, as well as sandwiches, coffee, desserts and other beverages. This year's festivities will also include an authentic Greek Market, featuring a variety of unique goods and crafts available for purchase. The Pensacola Greek Festival will be held November 3 and 4 from 11 am to 8:30 pm and on November 5 from 11 am to 3 pm at the Greek Orthodox Church in downtown Pensacola. This family-friendly festival is free and open to the public. For more information, visit pensacolagreekfestival.com.

Great Gulfcoast Arts Festival

November 3 - 5

Celebrating its 51st year, the Great Gulfcoast Arts Festival (GGAF) is one of the best-regarded, most popular arts festivals in the United States. The three-day, juried art show draws more than 200 of the nation's best painters, potters, sculptors, jewelers, mixed media and other fine artists to Seville Square in historic downtown Pensacola. All works are original and made from concept to creation by the artists' hands. GGAF also celebrates performance arts and heritage arts by showcasing local and regional talents through a series of unique performances and live demonstrations hosted throughout the weekend. The GGAF also hosts a children's festival with numerous free hands-on activities specifically

designed for young children and toddlers. Visitors will also have a chance to enjoy a special Student Art exhibition, which showcases the talents of both private and public school students in Escambia and Santa Rosa counties. The Student Art Showcase will feature more than 2,000 pieces of art from elementary, middle and high school students. From traditional treats at the Heritage Festival to local favorites and regional festival fare, there are delicious dining and drink choices for every taste at the Festival. The GGAF will be hosted November 3 and 4 from 9 am to 5 pm and November 5 from 10 am to 4 pm in downtown Pensacola's Historic Seville Square. For complete festival details, visit ggaf.org.

More Fall Fun:

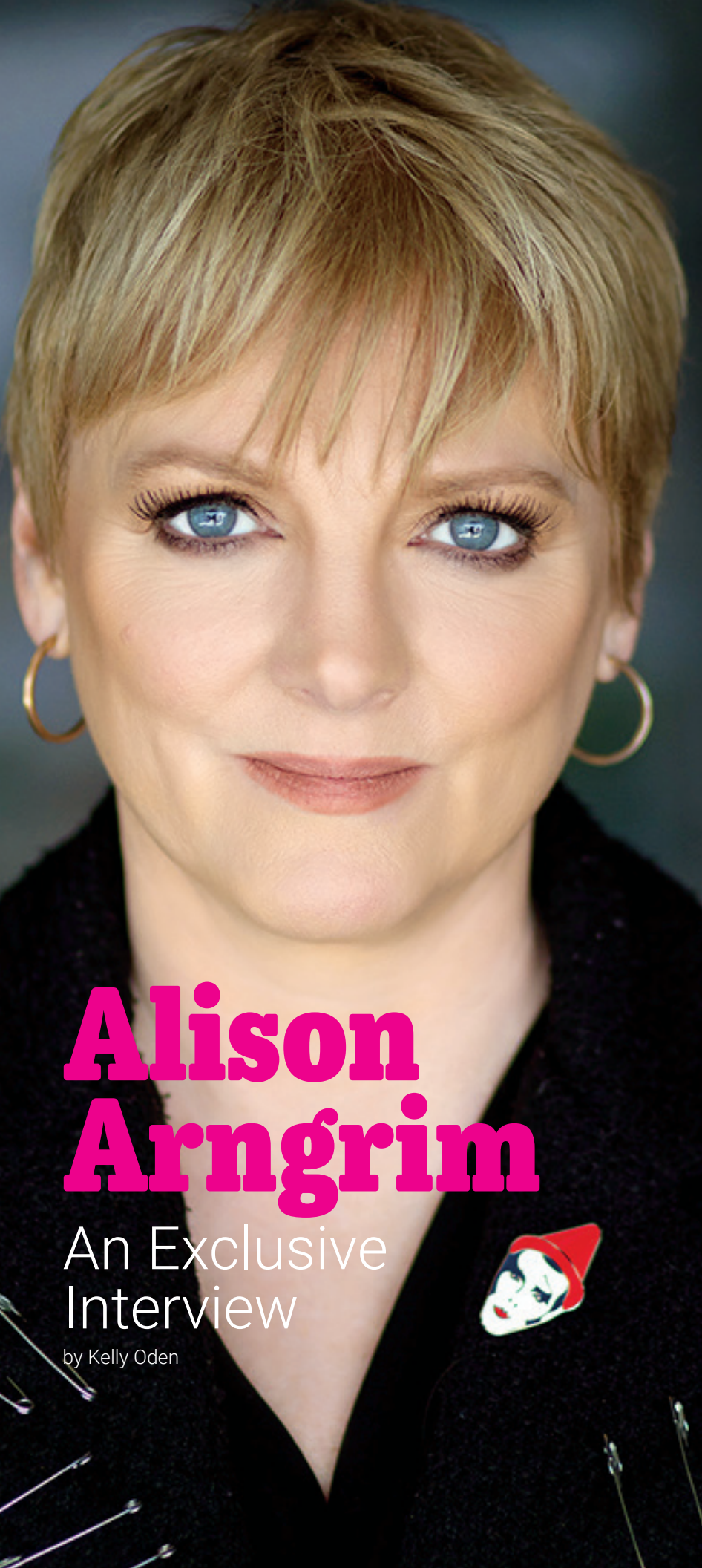
Sweet Season Farm's Corn Maze & Pumpkin Patch
September 30 - November 5
Sweet Season Farms,
2260 Horn Road, Milton
Visit sweetseasonsfarm.com
for tickets and
information.

Pensacola Beach Songwriters Festival
October 4 - 8
Pensacola Beach
(multiple venues)
Visit pensacolabeachsongwritersfestival.com for the complete lineup of events.

Boo at the Zoo
October 14 - 15, 21 - 22, & 28 - 29
Gulf Breeze Zoo,
5701 Gulf Breeze Pkwy.
Visit gbzoo.com for
tickets and event details.

Pensacola Winterfest 2023
November 17, 19 & 24 - 26
December 1 - 2, 8, 10, 15 - 17 & 19 - 24
Palafox Street,
downtown Pensacola
Visit pensacolawinterfest.org
for complete event details.

2023 Snowball Derby
November 30 - December 3
5 Flags Speedway,
7451 Pine Forest Rd.,
Pensacola
Visit 5flagsspeedway.com
to view the complete lineup
of race events.



Alison Arngrim

An Exclusive Interview

by Kelly Oden

Fans worldwide remember **Alison Arngrim** as the acid-tongued hellcat on "The Show That Cannot be Named During the Strike." The Show, set in the grasslands of America's Midwest, was adapted from the book of the same name written by Laura Ingalls Wilder.

But even before that fame-making role as America's favorite love-to-hate-her antagonist, Alison Arngrim was making waves and making a name for herself. Born in 1962 to Hollywood manager Thor Arngrim and actress Norma MacMillan (the voice of many beloved animated characters including Casper and Gumbby), Arngrim's life was infused with Hollywood and acting from an early age.

Arngrim got her first role starring in a ketchup commercial at the age of 5 and landed her most famous role by the age of 12. In addition to starring in The Show, Arngrim appeared on numerous TV series and game shows in the 70s and 80s. She also recorded a comedy album, developed a stand-up act and performed in the theater. Later, she became an advocate for those who could not advocate for themselves by lobbying with the child protection group, the National Association to Protect Children (PROTECT).

A talented stand-up, Arngrim developed her life stories into a one-woman show that has been playing to sold out audiences on and off since 2002. Titled, *Confessions of a Prairie Bitch*, the act, and the subsequent memoir, chronicle Arngrim's highs and lows with both lighthearted humor and candid discussions of personal tragedy.

A true child of Hollywood, Arngrim continues to write, perform and take life with a grain of salt. *Coming of Age* had the pleasure of speaking with Mrs. Arngrim about her life, her career and her refusal to grow up.



Alison with her father, Thor Arngrim



Alison with her mother, Norma MacMillan

COA: I know that your parents were both in show business. Was your pre-acting childhood spent on set a lot? What were you doing as a young girl?

AA: Well, my pre-acting childhood was short, because I started working at five. My Screen Actors Guild card says member since 1967. I started working as a very young child.

COA: What was your very first role?

AA: I think the first thing would have to be the Hunt's Ketchup commercial. There were signs of my destiny even then. The premise was to have small children trying to force a tomato into a bottle—a big tomato into a bottle kind of thing. The director wanted various montages of adorable children trying to put a tomato in a bottle. I was trying to force a tomato into a bottle and the tomato was very ripe. I pressed very hard and it broke. I mean, it exploded and spattered all over me. I was in a cute little white tennis kind of outfit. Of course, the crew thought this was hilarious, but they were stifling their laughter. A very nice lady came over and said, "Can I help? Is there anything I can do?" I said, "Yes. Get this goddamn tomato juice off of me." I was five. They were cracking up. A certain character was clearly coming forth even then.

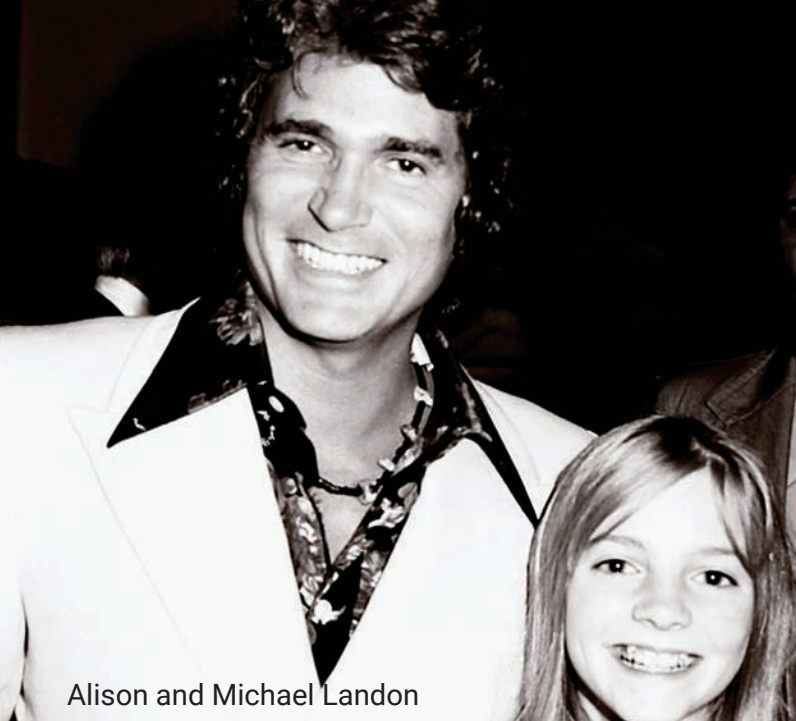
So, I started working very, very young. Everyone we knew was in show business. When I was little, I kind of thought everybody was on TV, like people took turns or something. The concept that everyone was not on TV didn't really sink in until I was seven or eight years old because I would watch TV and we knew that person and that person—of course, we knew everybody. We knew everybody on TV, and it seemed normal. Even at school, other kids' families did something in the industry. So, it wasn't a big deal to be an actor, and many people at my school were actors.

COA: Was school a positive experience for you even when you were playing the mean girl?

AA: Because I played an objectionable person, I was very lucky in that I kept all my friends from third grade on. I had a group of people I met in the third grade, and we kind of stayed together. A lot of them came with me and went to the same junior high, and many of us went to the same high school. So, I had a little clique of friends that I just stayed friends with who knew me as me. I was just Alison. Because making new friends was a little difficult. They didn't care that I was on TV. They just cared that I was this horrible person, and they didn't want to have anything to do with me.

COA: You initially tried out for multiple roles on *The Show* before getting cast as the original mean girl. How did that casting happen?

AA: Yes, it's true. When the show started, it was like the search for Scarlett O'Hara for eight-year-olds, because everyone had read the books. So, it was a huge deal when they pitched the pilot. I was auditioning for everything. I didn't get to do the pilot and I didn't think it was a big deal because, get this, I'd never read the books. I'm the kook who didn't read the books and wound up on the show. I somehow did not read those books. I don't know what happened. I read lots of other great children's literature. So, when they called me back for another audition, I was sort of confused as to what it could be for. Of course, the show was starting to film, and they had to populate the town and hire all those people. I had no idea what was going on. So, I get there and it's for the mean girl, the lead actress's nemesis. They had me read this character, and I was just stunned because she was so awful. When I read it to my dad, he started laughing. He said, "Don't change a



Alison and Michael Landon

thing. Don't look at it, don't even rehearse it. Don't even look at the pages. Just go do that." And I did and I was hired kind of on the spot. By the time we got home, a deal was struck. And that's the thing, I found the humor in it right away. I got that she was horrid, but she was also sort of campy and terrible and making a fool of herself. And I got it—this is so over the top. This girl is so bad, that she's laughable. That is something that Katherine McGregor, who played my mother, really caught about her character—that she was so terrible, she was foolish. I think that's what really made it work. So, I was hired. It was immediate. It was ridiculous. I've never gotten a gig so easily. What does that say about me? I went and I read it once and I nailed it. Am I a great actress or is that an unfortunate comment on my personality?

COA: You have a sense of humor about it now, but when you were younger, was that more difficult?

AA: I very quickly developed a sense of humor about it for sheer survival. Had I not, I don't know what would have become of me. I have always had a warped sense of humor, and that's something I've always done—you know, laugh in the face of disaster and mayhem. But early on, my whole family thought it was funny as hell. My friends thought it was funny because I was more of a tomboy girl. I liked my jeans and my Converse high tops and T-shirts. And here I am in the frilliest dress on the prairie. Everyone was just like, "What happened to you?" I was also more on the shy side if anything. I wasn't the bully. I was the person who got beat up by bullies. And here I was. So, my friends just sort of stared at me and said, "This seems odd. What are you doing?" It was very strange. I went to school the day after the first episode aired and this girl screamed at me, "You, bitch!" as I walked across the grass. I knew what I did at that second was going to set the tone not only for the rest of the school year but probably my life. So, I was like, "Okay, this is it. She has just thrown this at you. This isn't not going to go away. This is not a one-off. How do

you want to set the tone now?" I looked up and said loudly, "Thank you," and bowed right there in the middle of the schoolyard. I thought, 'We're going to have to just take the bull by the horns here—I'm the villain.' It was crazy.

COA: I understand that you made some deep and enduring friendships on set. Can you tell me a bit about that?

AA: We are still friends. Obviously, Melissa Gilbert and I are still friends. We're always texting and going back and forth. She's over in upstate New York now but even when we moved around—thank God for the internet. We're all on Facebook and other social media. We're all texting each other. I have most of the cast on speed dial. We do events together. We do like historical events where we go into places where Laura Ingalls Wilder really lived, and we talk about the history and about the show. And when we do it's like a family reunion. You know, we just lost our Hersha Parady, who played Alice Garvey. She was an aunt, a grandmother to us. A mother to some of the people. And it was just devastating to us. And that's the thing—we are a family. When someone is sick or someone dies, we reach out. There was a GoFundMe for her family to pay for things. We try to leave no man on the field. We support each other in our different endeavors and help each other out. We talk to each other regularly. We have get-togethers that aren't paid (laughs). We sometimes just say, "Oh, we need to get together. All right, we're going to the smokehouse. Who's buying?" We hang out as a family. I don't think a lot of casts do that. But with our show, we did develop relationships that have lasted, and we still care about each other 50 freaking years later.

COA: I love that. You're also a stand-up comic and you do live comedic memoir performances. So how did you get to comedy from this long sort of weeping drama?

AA: I started really young. In the 70s, the popular thing to do when you were in a series was to have something else on the side—singing or dancing. Something to pull out on talk shows and what have you. A lot of people sang. I cannot sing and I was sort of at a loss. My father was a manager, and he managed some comedians, including The Village Idiots. So, we're hanging out at comedy clubs, and being 15, I would give the comedians a hard time. At one point, one of the comedians said, "If you think this is so easy, you ought to try it." Well, that was like being dared to do something. That's very dangerous. Do not dare me to do things. So, I wound up the next day meeting with The Village Idiots, and we put together a stand-up act. Within a few days, I was on stage. I was at coffee houses like John's Place, but I was also at The Improv and The Comedy Store. I was everywhere. Sometimes four nights a week. The idea was that if you do this for four nights a week, every week, you'll probably get pretty good at it. So, there I am Thursday, Friday, and Saturday and the Sunday matinee. I was doing the TV show at the same time. Oh, and then I did a play. I dabbled in theater sometimes, too. I was a very hard-working teenager. I was doing stand-up and I liked it and it worked, so I did wind up doing that on talk shows.



Alison with Melissa Gilbert

And then, I wound up touring. I was 16 and I was playing all over the country. It was wonderfully bonkers. And then, in adulthood. I wound up telling more real stories. A friend said, "You know, your act is great, but the stories you tell in the bar afterward are twice as funny." I thought, 'He's right! What if I did a show that was also the actual true stories from my life that I tell?' So, I did that and that's what became *Confessions of a Prairie Bitch*. The one-woman show.

COA: Did the show come before the memoir?

AA: The show did come before the book. It's crazy. I started doing the show in New York at Club Fez. They said, "You need an hour and a half." Back in the day, in LA, the headliner was doing a 20-minute set. People were doing sets of 5, 10 and 15 minutes. The idea of doing an hour-and-a-half show was not something the average comedian could do. Also, I tended to work very PG-13. They said, "It's New York and you're going to get the overflow from the Joan Rivers show, so you're probably going to need to ratchet it up." I said, "An hour and a half and dirtier. I can do that." So, I did what I tell everyone who is writing an autobiography to do. Find that story that your managers, agents and friends say, "Oh my God, you can't tell anyone that." Make that story your opener and start from there. So, I did. I told the truth, and I added a question-and-answer session, which is still everyone's favorite. I didn't do an hour and a half show. I did two hours and an encore. They went bonkers. I guess this is what people had been waiting for. They wanted someone from the show to come out and say, "This is what really happened." So, I kept doing it and adding to it. I was doing my show in New York a couple of

years later and a literary agent bought a ticket to my show and later contacted me and asked me if there was a book to go with the show. I said, "I guess there could be." So, he said I needed four chapters. I said, "I have them." The next thing I knew, I was back in New York meeting with publishers. The book has things that are in my show—all the lovely funny stuff—but it goes deeper and talks about my childhood and unpleasant things that have happened to me and how I worked through it. It's like the back story to the stand-up show.

COA: You do a great deal of advocacy work on many important issues including child abuse. You talk very openly about the personal experiences that have led you to champion this cause. Can you tell me a little bit about why this cause is important to you?

AA: I, like millions of people, was sexually abused as a child. It's not fun and it really does cause serious problems. They now understand things that they didn't understand even 20 or 40 years ago. Abuse has effects on the development of the brain and neural pathways. As people say, what the mind forgets the body remembers—it's true. It's not just your emotions that are affected. There's now a whole thing called the adverse childhood experiences test, which I recommend not taking unless you're under the care of a therapist because it's really depressing. They know that it can affect you physically and mentally for life in different ways. It's pretty bad stuff. I had gone to therapy in my 20s. And that's when I started talking about it to family members and my friends openly—that this is the thing that happened to me. I never went public, because I



saw what a sideshow they often made of survivors. I didn't want to participate in that. Then, in the early 2000s, I was approached by this marvelous group called PROTECT, or the National Association to Protect Children. They said, "We're going to attack child abuse in a way that maybe not everyone's doing. We're going to attack it legally and legislatively." When they called me to get involved, the Executive Director wasn't aware of what my history was. He knew some of the people he'd approached to be on the board were survivors and some were not. But when we talked, I told him I was a survivor. He said, "Well, you don't have to go public if you do not want to." I said, "Yeah, but me being me, that's probably going to come up and I will. I wound up going on *Larry King Live* and telling my story. I went on for the entire hour, and I spoke openly about having been abused, about the law and about the problems of people who went through this in their lives in general. It had a drastic effect. It made quite the impression. I'm very pleased. And then of course when I wrote my book, I talked much more in detail about that and what that's like for a person.

COA: How was going public for you? Was it a relief?

AA: An absolute relief. It was difficult going in, and I would advise anyone considering going public to make sure you have a whole backup crew. I had friends. I had a therapist. There were attorneys. There was a whole team standing behind me if I needed anything. I think because I had that level of support and because I knew why I was doing it—to draw attention to a law that we were changing—that it was okay. The show was taped and then it aired a couple of days later. When it aired, the only sensation I had was relief. Absolutely. It was just a weight off my shoulders. When I wrote my book it was the same thing. I had a support team. I had editors, the legal department, the publisher

and my agent holding my hand through this process. I felt very sure and very comfortable with what I wrote and how I wrote it. Is this what I want to say? Yes, it is. That's the thing. When you're abused as a child physically, emotionally or sexually, choices are taken away from you. You have no choice, you have no say. Your life is just turned upside down and someone is imposing their total will on you. As an adult you have choices. You have a say. You can choose to do things your way. You can tell your story

Alison in character as the love-to-hate-her mean girl



how you want to tell your story and when you're damn good and ready and not a minute sooner. You are now in control of the situation, not your perpetrator.

COA: Outside of show business and advocacy, what are some of your interests and hobbies?

AA: I am a voracious reader. I read all kinds of stuff. I get those emailed notices of Kindle sales and I feel like I'm a kid at the Scholastic Book Fair. I buy all of them. I also garden. I just harvested a lovely crop of Roma tomatoes and put them in tacos last night. I cook like a fiend. I have cooking videos on YouTube called *Who's Going to Do the Cooking?* I play with the cats, or the cats play with me. I'm not quite sure how that works. I like my social media. I enjoy Instagram and TikTok and all that nonsense. I love to travel. I'm heading out to France in October. I do a show there with a guy named Patrick Loubatière. It's all about the 80s—game shows, music, trivia. It's hilarious and insane. So, I learned to speak French. I was 40-something when I went back to school and learned to speak French.

COA: We are a magazine for mature adults. So, how do you approach aging mentally and physically?

AA: I try to ignore it as much as possible. I have a Peter Pan baseball cap that says, "Never grow up" and I'm going with that. I've managed to avoid completely growing up for many years. But I am 61 and my husband is 74 and passing for much younger. He works full-time. My fabulous doctor often tells people that if they can avoid retiring, do it. Try to avoid retirement. He said that his patients who retire, but continue to do something, are in much better shape. They are active, they take a different kind of job, they take a part-time job, they pursue a volunteer position or an artistic pursuit that they had put off. They are engaged nearly as much as when they were working full-time. These people are fine. People who keep working generally are fine. People who stop everything—they stopped working and then they just don't do anything—do not do as well as the people who stay active. It just doesn't work out. The body doesn't like it. The body says, "Oh, we're not doing anything anymore. Do I even need to keep going?" It's not good for

you. You don't want to tell your body you're done. My husband works full time. Bob goes to work every day, and this is doing wonders for him mentally and physically. Then there is exercise—I hate it with a violent passion, but you do have to exercise. You're supposed to exercise your whole life, but when you get older, you absolutely must do some kind of exercise no matter how badly you hate it. It's the only way out of menopause and aging and everything else. Then there's the attitude thing. I am still 'me' at 61 or 71 or 81. Putting stereotypes on how I should be dressing or how I should be behaving because I'm 61 doesn't work very well for me. So, I dress in jeans and sneakers and a T-shirt. It's 2023 and we are not constrained as much as we used to be by the idea that once you hit a certain age, you can never wear this or that. If it's comfortable, wear what works for you. Don't torture yourself.



Alison testifying on behalf of PROTECT and their work to pass the "Circle of Trust" bill

What's The News?

Cooking with Caregivers



Cooking with Caregivers Cookbook Now Available from Home Instead

Home Instead is introducing its first cookbook fundraiser benefiting Meals on Wheels. For a \$10 donation, the *Cooking With Caregivers* cookbook shares recipes from care professionals and elder care facilities featuring a variety of recipes from shareable appetizers to wholesome dinners to indulgent desserts. At Home Instead, we're not just in business of senior care. We hope to create a future where all people can age with greater comfort and independence. We strive to make that vision a reality by creating a world that's ready to care for each other. That's why we are thrilled to share that we have selected a new, national charitable partnership with Meals on Wheels America to help elevate their efforts to deliver the Power of a Knock™.

Meals on Wheels and Home Instead are aligned in our desire to expand the world's capacity to care. That's why our two organizations have teamed up – to ensure more aging adults receive the knocks they desperately need from Meals on Wheels and to elevate the need to end isolation

for older adults across our country. Our partnership is grounded in a shared belief that every aging neighbor – regardless of race, income or mobility status – deserves a knock on the door to let them know they are valued. Get your copy of this cookbook by calling 850.477.1947 or stop by 817 N. Palafox St., Pensacola, FL, 32501.

Giving Tuesday: Support Meals on Wheels on Nov. 28

As the busy holiday season nears, we invite you to make a meaningful difference in the lives of those who need it most by supporting Council on Aging's Meals on Wheels program for Giving Tuesday. Your donation to our Giving Tuesday campaign can be a lifeline for those who rely on weekly Meals on Wheels deliveries to provide not only nutrition, but a friendly visit from a volunteer delivery driver. By contributing, you're not just giving a meal; you're delivering comfort, companionship, and peace of mind to seniors who might otherwise feel isolated and forgotten. Join us by donating at coawfla.org/donate this Giving Tuesday, November 28, to make a world of difference, one meal at a time.

Senior Volunteers Show Up for 9/11 Day of Service

To honor those we lost on September 11 and the heroes who helped us persevere, Council on Aging's AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers came together for the September 11 Day of Service Project. AmeriCorps and 911Day.org have united in service to strengthen our nation and inspire a new generation of civic-minded Americans on the September 11 National Day of Service and Remembrance. Council on Aging Senior Companion and Foster Grandparent volunteers donated and delivered boxes filled with toiletries and words of encouragement to people in need at Waterfront Rescue Mission.

Thank You.

Many thanks to our donors. We appreciate your generous support. Gifts received from June 2023 – September 2023

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Council on Aging of West Florida is a local independent 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization that has served seniors and their families since 1972. Council on Aging of West Florida helps seniors in Escambia and Santa Rosa counties live healthy, safe and independent lives in their own familiar surroundings by providing community-based, in-home programs and services such as Meals on Wheels and Alzheimer's respite care. For more information, call 850-432-1475 or visit www.coawfla.org.

A copy of the official registration and financial information may be obtained from the division of consumer services by calling 1-800-435-7532 toll free within the state. Registration does not imply endorsement, approval or recommendation by the state. The registration number assigned to Council on Aging of West Florida, inc by the florida department of agricultural and consumer services is ch201. Council on aging of West Florida does not use a professional solicitor or professional fund raising consultant for the purposes of soliciting funds. 100% of donations go to Council on Aging of West Florida, Inc.

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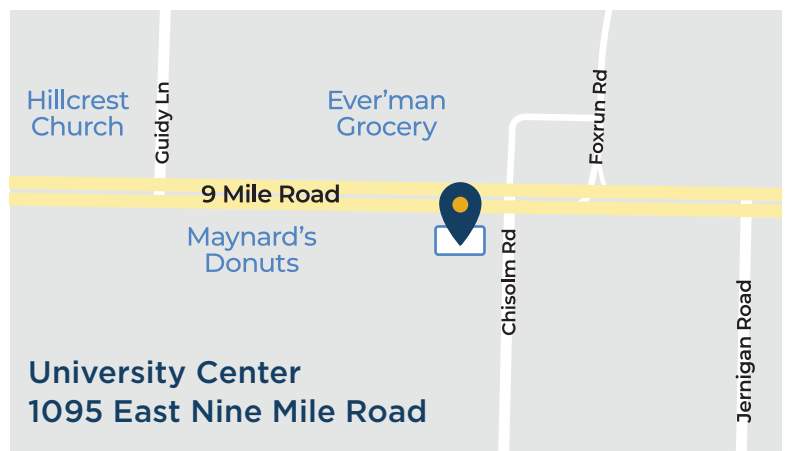
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