



Oil Boom to Senior Boom: Alaska’s Elders are here to Stay

“To me, fair friend, you never can be old,
 For as you were when first your eye I eyed,
 Such seems your beauty still.”
 - William Shakespeare

Volume Three, Number Four
 April 2010
www.alaskafood.org

Seniors in Alaska

From 1997 to 2007 the senior population (65+) in Alaska grew faster than in any other state in the U.S. Some of this can be attributed to the oil boom of the late 1970’s. Between 1970 and 1983, Alaska’s net gain from migration was 78,000. Some of those 30-year-olds stayed, and today are 62. In 2008, Alaska counted 30,395 residents ages 60 – 64, a 62.9% increase from 2001. 50,777 are over 65, a 49.8% increase since 1998. In rural Alaska, elders are living longer. They are less likely to have participated in Social Security due to subsistence lifestyles. Overall, Alaska seniors are healthier than their counter parts in other states, 19% less likely to die from any cause during a given year than seniors in other states.

Alaska 2008 US Census Population Estimates

Economic Status

Alaska seniors appear less likely to be living in poverty than seniors outside Alaska, but many struggle financially. In 2009, over 20% of Alaskans age 65 and older received a cash supplement from the Alaska Senior Benefits Program, 13% of seniors in the North Slope Region to 59% in the Bethel/Wade Hampton region. This is a monthly cash benefit from \$124 to \$250 based on gross annual income. Seniors must have incomes below 175% of the federal poverty level, \$23,678 for a single senior and \$31,868 for a couple. 5,045 seniors statewide received funds from the Old Age Assistance Program, a part of federal Adult Public Assistance (APA). 29% of all APA recipients in Alaska are seniors. The average amount of APA monthly benefits for all recipients is \$277.91. Retired seniors as a whole contributed approximately \$1.7 billion annually to Alaska’s economy, including retirement income and health care spending. This source of income is one of Alaska’s top industries. *Senior Snapshot: Older Alaskans in 2009*

Food Insecurity in Alaska

46.1% of adult clients at food pantries are ages 30 - 49, at kitchens 28.5%
 25.4% of adult clients at food pantries are ages 50 - 64, at kitchens 51.3%

11.5% of adult clients at food pantries and .09% at kitchens are 65 and over. 42.7% of households with at least one member over 65 experience low food security and 15% experience very low food security. Among households these same households, 21.8% use home delivered meals and 5.4% participate in brown bag programs. *2010 Hunger Study*

In 2009, for seniors 60 to 65, the average food stamp benefit was \$160.72, \$99.23 for those 66 and over. November 2009, 3,861 seniors 60 to 65 and 2,239 seniors 66 and over received food stamps. Senior food stamp recipients, 60 and over, increased 22% from 11/08 to 11/09. *Alaska Department of Public Assistance*

The USDA estimates 37% of eligible Alaskans 60+ are eligible for an additional \$72/mo for food assistance, but haven’t applied for food stamps. *AARP Alaska*

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Strengthening Alaska's Anti-Hunger Network

Geography

Haines Borough has the largest concentration of seniors in Alaska, with 14% of the population being over 65. Seniors make up 11% of Kenai Peninsula Borough residents. Of the 86 statewide Alaska Food Coalition members, over one third focuses on service to seniors. From Bethel to Yakutat, Alaska Food Coalition members are serving elders through pantries, kitchens, nutrition and mental health services, transportation and congregate meals. Member agencies have told us seniors are most concerned things are going to get worse. Anti-hunger advocates are working hard to provide our communities with resources needed to make sure no one goes hungry in Alaska.

How to Help

In 2011 Congress will consider reauthorization and amendments to the Older Americans Act (OAA) effective in FY 2012. In anticipation of this process, the Administration on Aging (AoA) is soliciting input concerning the reauthorization through three mechanisms:

(1) AoA-Convended Listening Forums; (2) OAA Reauthorization Input Events; and (3) Direct Input via the AoA Website or Mail. There are no listening forums or input events scheduled in Alaska to date. You can access the website for direct input at: http://www.aoa.gov/AoAroot/AoA_Programs/OAA/Reauthorization/Index.aspx

The State of Alaska Commission on Aging is developing the Alaska 2012 – 2015 State Plan for Services <http://www.hss.state.ak.us/acoa/> Make your voices heard.

Resources

Alaska Economic Trends April 2010: Alaska's 2009 Population

<http://labor.alaska.gov/trends/apr10.pdf>

A Profile of Older Americans: 2009 Administration on Aging, U.S.D.H.S.S.

<http://www.mowaa.org/Document.Doc?id=69>

Report on the Economic Well-Being of Alaska Seniors (2007)

<http://www.hss.state.ak.us/acoa/documents/seniorwellbeingReport.pdf>

Conferences of Alaska Native Elders:

Our View of Dignified Aging

http://elders.uaa.alaska.edu/reports/yr1_2qualitative.pdf

The Alaska Food Coalition is here to help. Copies of Alaska Food Coalition White Papers are available online: <http://www.alaskafood.org/whitepapers.shtml> For additional information, contact: Vanessa Salinas, Alaska Food Coalition Manager. afc@foodbankofalaska.org

*Next Month:
Direct Mail
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