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MAGAZINE

Est. 2007



SATURDAY **ART ON FIRE 2024**
JUNE 22 **IRON POUR ART FEST**

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Arts



BENDING LIGHT

PAINTINGS BY BRENDA K. JAEGER

Contributed by Brenda Kay Jaeger

Bending Light, an exhibition of paintings by Brenda K. Jaeger, will open on May 13 in The Bodega at Jens' Restaurant. These original acrylic paintings include landscapes of Palmer, the Mat-Su Valley, and other areas of Alaska.

Alaska-born, Brenda paints en plein air and completes her work in her studio in Anchorage. As a child, she attended part of first grade in Palmer. She lives in Anchorage and teaches online through the Brenda Jaeger Art Studio. For information on classes, call (907) 350-4539 or email brendajaegerartstudio@startmail.com.

Artist's Statement

Born in Alaska, I find my heart responds to all Alaska's landscapes offer. One of the many techniques I use is one I call "traceries." I paint an image, often in layers. When a layer is dry, I see small open spaces I call interstices, which are tiny negative spaces or openings. I fill these tiny negative spaces with hues that relate in several ways—complementary hue, adjacent hue, hues used for light, for direction, for shimmer, for luminosity. I like to start en plein air, often finishing paintings in my studio in Anchorage. Everything I do recognizes process as the way of painting.

I drew and painted Alaska landscapes while growing up. In college I took classes from Bob Gilmore, Krielsheimer Professor of Art at Gonzaga University, Spokane, Washington, who taught me everything I know about art. Subsequently I obtained two master's degrees, the first in Drawing and Painting and the second, to teach in preschool through 12th grade. I also hold an Online Teaching Certificate from the Online Learning Consortium. My teaching experience includes teaching in Akiachak, Arctic Village, Circle Village, Bethel, Kongiganak, and other places in Alaska through the Alaska Artist-in-Education Program. I have traveled to Japan three times to study hand papermaking, and to Mata Ortiz,

"Born in Alaska, I find my heart responds to all Alaska's landscapes offer..."



Chihuahua, Mexico, to observe the clay process there.

Art Lessons: I have been teaching art since 1975. I currently teach on Zoom, one-on-one drawing and painting online art lessons, at \$50/hr. I teach all ages, starting where you are in your work, and helping you to develop where you would like to go. I don't charge for the first lesson as it is the introduction in which I learn what your interests are and whether I can help you in what you want to do. If you are interested, contact me at (907) 350-4539. I can also be reached at brendajaegerartstudio@startmail.com.

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BRITTANI WITH GRACE: THE STAR



Contributed by Brittani with Grace

Hello everybody! Welcome to my column. Each month I will draw a Major Arcana tarot card which represents one of many possible paths to follow. Major Arcana cards represent the archetypal themes of life, presenting the overall possible experiences.

Deck: Mermaid Tarot
By Leeza Robertson
Illustrations by Julie
Card: 17 The Star

The Star card is the epitome of Hope. Hope is the yearning for something to appear in our lives. Hope is said to be the pinpoint of encouragement, manifestations, and future happiness. Hope allows us to escape the current moment's reality into a day dream of something desired.

Wishing upon a Star, day dreaming, vision boards, and visualization meditations are all examples of Hope. When we know what it is our heart desires, we send out an energetic frequency. Sometimes what we dream of is so big it's scary. Sometimes it's something small and just helps us to feel better in the moment. Either way, hoping is the cornerstone of our wishes coming true.

Hope can be a complicated concept. In fact, I would like to take a moment to talk about the other side of Hope. The disappointment, discouragement

and the let down that comes along when what we had hoped for doesn't come to fruition.

There are @mes when we Hope so hard, we Hope so much, that we can feel it coursing throughout our beings. We focus so hard on it happening that when it doesn't, we fall into despair. We suddenly feel as though because it didn't happen when we thought it should, it means it never will. I know personally there are @mes when I have had so much Hope in a single moment, waiting and convincing myself that this big thing will happen right then, because I so desperately wanted or needed it to, only to be crushed when it didn't.

When this happens to us, we tend to jump on the judgement train of how we react; whether it is big or small, we have been hoping for years, days, or even just a few hours.

Even something as small as hoping for French fries from an airport restaurant during a layover can be disappointing. Our flight had been delayed an hour and a half. We got off the plane, went right next door only to have them tell us that just a few minutes before we arrived they had completely run out. To add insult to injury, the waitress explained how that had never happened before and how she, herself, was astonished. Excellent.

The excitement and hope I had felt vanished. My entire being slumped and the wave of frustration and disappointment washed over me. I was hungry, @red, and now my plan had been obliterated.

I became cranky, my mind slammed shut, and I even almost cried. We decided just to leave, because my stubborn self had decided that since I wasn't getting the fries, I didn't want anything. Nothing sounded good and I was just going to starve. My partner lovingly looked at me and said "maybe this is an opportunity for growth", and as my eyes turned into laser focused daggers my mouth opened and in a

mocking tone said, "maybe this is an opportunity for growth" (Yeah, I sure am real mature in these situations) he laughed and pulled me in for a hug. (Man he is so incredibly patient) Back on the plane as my frustration grew knowing that when we landed back in Alaska everything would be closed, I felt hopeless; which caused a spiral of disappointment to the point where I was even questioning myself "why can't I just be like those easy 'go with the flow' people" I had allowed myself to spin out over french fries. Eventually, as we were getting ready to hit the taxi way before take off, I breathed deeply and transitioned myself into a state of gratitude, as I do every @me we are about to take off, and I was able to laugh at myself for my reaction. I was able to sit back and ask myself what was the belief about not getting the fries, that sent me into such darkness? A belief is just a thought we tell ourselves over and over again, so what was it that I believed about the disappointment that brought on the overwhelming despair? Doing so allowed my mind the ability of re-opening to other possibilities and hoping for something new. The flight attendant appeared later with an "adult lunchable snack pack" and all was right with the world.

I don't have all the answers. I don't know why something as simple as delicious sounding gorgonzola cheese sauce fries can send me into a tailspin of crushing disappointment.

What I do know, is that it's okay. My emotions and feelings about the situation are valid. Having the awareness to recognize the reactions to crushing hope, gives me back the power to respond in a new way moving forward. So I will continue to allow myself to Hope. Allow myself to dream. Allow myself to live in the ever-loving frequency of happiness and joy as I transmute the energy around me.

Don't be so hard on yourself and Don't ever quit your daydreams.

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Theater

“... 6,300 students came to see the last show of our season – Frindle! The beloved children’s book by Andrew Clements was brought to life on stage and audiences were raving!”

ALASKA JUNIOR THEATER ENDS SEASON WITH A BANG

Contributed by Rowan Holmes
Alaska Junior Theater

Alaska Junior Theater ended its 2023-2024 “Season of Legends” with a bang, all thanks to the help of Griffin Theatre Company. 6,300 students came to see the last show of our season – Frindle! The beloved children’s book by Andrew Clements was brought to life on stage and audiences were raving!

“We read Frindle before the performance. The actors were stellar.” - Chinook, 1st Grade Teacher

“Frindle was a great show and loved the story. Actors were awesome. Loved how actors played different parts. Impressed how they changed clothes so fast. Surprised how many people were there to see the show. They got everything right in the story. The ending was done well. Liked that it was the same, but the few changes like the beginning and ending were well done. Rated 5 stars because the actors were so good.” – Alpenglow, 3rd Grade Teacher

“Better than the book!”

– College Gate, 4th & 5th Grade Teacher

“They enjoyed Frindle. We read the book and came up with our own word – “Flaber” – for the pencil. So, they enjoyed the play, seeing it all in action.” – Eagle River Christian School, 4th Grade Teacher

On Saturday, patrons to the public performance of Frindle got to enjoy walking through two different story tracks and Fur Rondy royalty reading stories before the show as well as a milk & cookie reception and cake walk after the performance, where they also got to mingle with the performers!

We’re so proud to say that over 22,000 people walked through our doors this season.

What’s next for AJT?

Alaska Junior Theater’s Annual Benefit Garage Sale is coming back at the end of June! Be sure to donate your gently used items today!

AJT will be at Reading Rendezvous at the Loussac Library on May 18th from 12:00 PM to 4:00 PM!

AJT will be at the JBER Air Show July 20 & 21, 2024! Be sure to come see us there!

Alaska Junior Theater is excited to announce our 2024 – 2025 Season: “Bold, Bright & Breathtaking!” Featuring FIVE different incredible performances, each with a public show, we’re so excited to bring this incredible season to life.

The season begins in November with 360 Allstars, one of AJT’s favorite shows. Sold out in 2018, 360 Allstars are back and better than ever! A phenomenal physical performance exploring all different forms of rotation, 360 Allstars connects the street with the elite to deliver a supercharged urban circus.

Then, in December, Pushcart Players return once again with Peter and the Wolf, an enchanting tale about the adventure of growing up and all the dangers that come with it. This captivating tale introduces the magical sounds and musical instruments featured in Prokofiev’s exciting musical score.

As February rolls around, David Gonzalez and Daniel Kelly return to Anchorage once more in Aesop Bops!, a funny, fast-paced adventure into the world of Aesop’s classic tales re-imagined by Master Storyteller David Gonzalez. Audience participation abounds in this fun and exciting show.

March brings a new performance to Anchorage with The Fourth Wall: Hybrid Arts Ensemble, an experience like no other. The Fourth Wall is no ordinary ensemble – part chamber music group, part theatre company, part modern dance troupe, part circus act, The Fourth Wall blends music, theatre, dance, and acrobatics into a new hybrid art form.

We end the season with another one of our favorite groups, Lightwire Theater in The Adventures of Tortoise and Hare: The Next Gen. Smart phones and video games create a new landscape of lost connections to life experiences. This incredible show features Tortoise Jr and Li’l Hare in a whole new kind of race, where their adventures lead them to unexpected territory. Innovative electroluminescent puppetry brings this classic tale into a new and brilliant light!

Alaska Junior Theater is a private, nonprofit organization that has been bringing the best in professional theater from around the world to Alaska’s young audiences since 1981. Each year, more than 30,000 students attend a variety of live performances, which share the common educational goal of “bringing learning to life.” For many students, AJT’s school-time presentations are their only exposure to the performing arts.

Save 20% off ticket prices and purchase season tickets by filling out our Season Ticket order form: <https://akjt.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Public-Order-Form2425.pdf>

The Alaska State Council on the Arts offers Excursion Grants to assist with the cost of educational field trips. Go here for more information and for how to apply: https://arts.alaska.gov/Media/ArtsCouncil/docs/grants/Cultural_Collaborations_Excursion_Grant_Guidelines_and_Application.pdf

AJT’s presentation of our “Bold, Bright & Breathtaking” 2024 – 2025 Season receives additional support by National Endowment for the Arts, WESTAF, Alaska State Council for the Arts, Carr Foundation, Atwood Foundation, Municipality of Anchorage and Rasmuson Foundation.

For event information and more, visit us at www.akjt.org.

ALASKA THEATRE OF YOUTH RETURNS TO UAA FOR SUMMER CONSERVATORY 2024



Contributed by Christine Cooke

After a 20-year hiatus, the Alaska Theatre of Youth (ATY) is thrilled to announce the return of its Summer Conservatory Theatre camps to the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA) Fine Arts Building in summer 2024.

ATY, founded in 1983 by the late John Goldring, began as a pilot project at McLaughlin Youth Correctional Center, where workshops were taught on playwriting using raw materials from interviews and personal experiences of students. Now in its 41st season, ATY offers a variety of programs, including Drama Center classes, year-round camps, school workshops, intensives, MainStage performances, Mastery Series, and PlayLab.

The Alaska Theatre of Youth prioritizes providing a safe environment where young people can develop, implementing programming that raises the self-esteem of the children involved, teaching young people new ways to effectively communicate ideas and goals, teaching skills that will help young people succeed in life no matter what occupation they choose, and finally, providing an opportunity to foster artistic and creative urges in all people.

Over the past 20 years, ATY has housed its summer programs in various locations and is overjoyed to be taking over the UAA Fine Arts Building once again. The facilities feature three stages on which ATY youth will get to play and perform: the Mainstage Theatre, a thrust-style stage that seats up to 185 patrons; the Harper Studio Theatre, a black box theatre seating 68; and the UAA Fine Arts Recital Hall, a beautiful concert hall supplemented with color-changing LED lighting that can seat 200. The building also boasts lobby spaces, classrooms, and a nearby trail system.

In summer 2024, ATY will present seven shows with participants in six different Summer Conservatory programs. The camps include Music Theatre Conservatory, Acting Conservatory, Triple Threat Camp and Triple Threat Intensive, and Fairytale Camps 1 & 2. Participants will engage in a curriculum of classes, including dance, movement, voice, acting, character development, stage combat, costuming, circus skills, technical theatre, and of course, rehearsing for the final performance. Kids will



also enjoy classic camp activities, including Wednesday Parties, 80's prom, karaoke, photo scavenger hunts, ATY Field Days, and getting outside daily in the beautiful parks and trails. Final performances are open to the public.

Participants love making new friends and spending their days immersed in imagination and the shoes of their characters. "Summer Conservatory is such a fun place to spend my summer! Best of all, we get to be in a show! But I also love spending the summer hanging out with my theatre friends," says one participant.

Conservatory programs run from May 28 to August 9, with varying camp lengths ranging from one to four weeks and youth ages 5-18. Beginning and advanced actors, singers, and dancers are welcome. There is something for everyone! Don't miss out on this exciting opportunity to be a part of the Alaska Theatre of Youth's Summer Conservatory Theatre camps.

"The Alaska Theatre of Youth prioritizes providing a safe environment where young people can develop, implementing programming that raises the self-esteem of the children involved teaching young people new ways to effectively communicate..."

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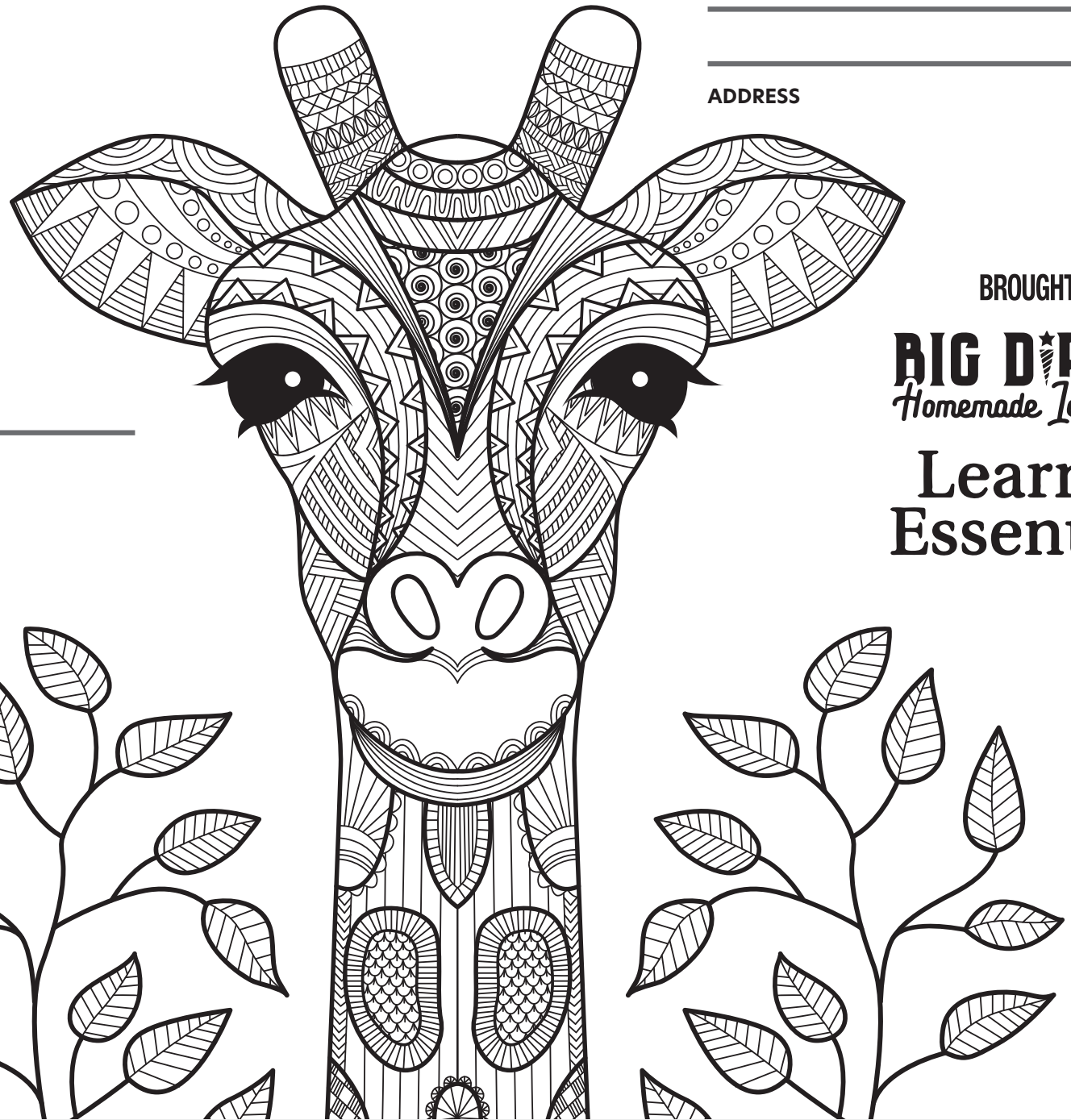
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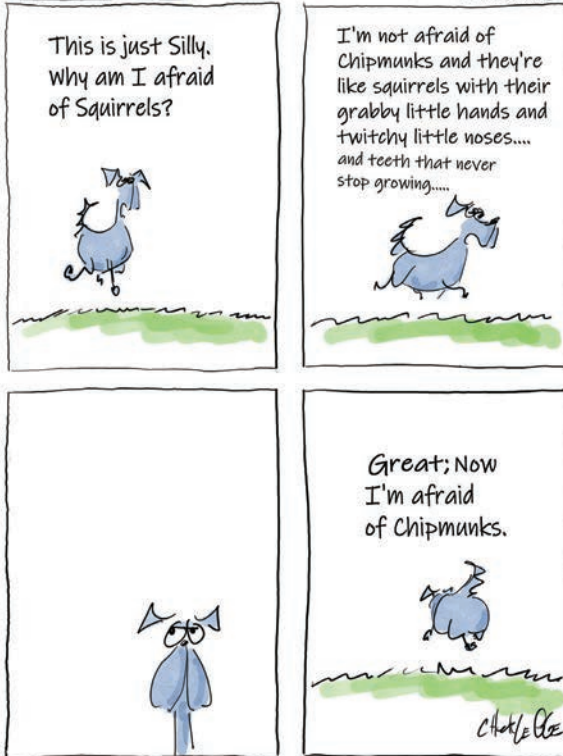
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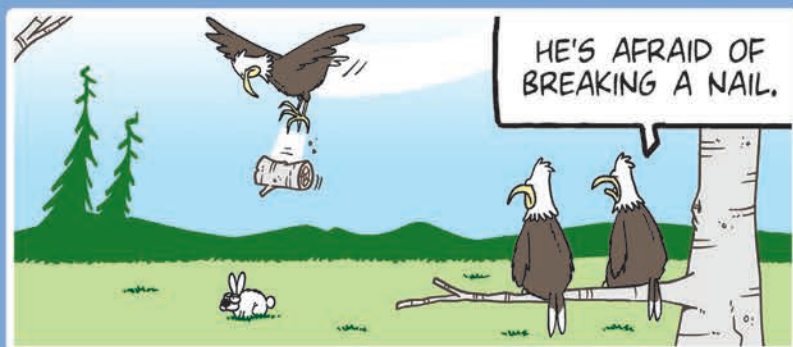


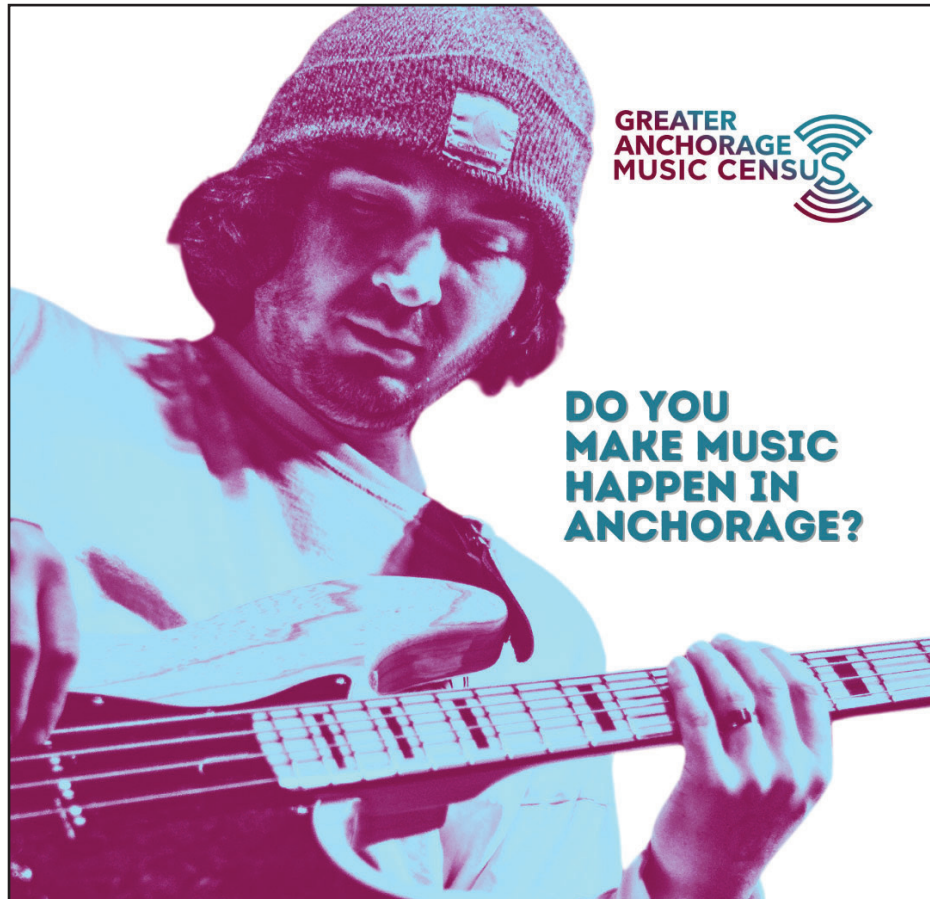
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Contributed Michael Economies

Alaska Creative Economies, Anchorage Economic Development Corporation, Anchorage Chamber of Commerce, and UAA Center for Economic Development lead community effort for Greater Anchorage Music Census launching today Wednesday May 1, 2024. Community engagement partners are invited to join the first Greater Anchorage Music Census and assessment study; census to serve as a “health check” for the local music sector informing community-driven approaches to grow and harness the value of Anchorage’s music ecosystem.

Alaska Creative Economies, the Anchorage Economic Development Corporation, the Anchorage Chamber of Commerce, and the UAA Center for Economic Development are proud to announce that the GREATER ANCHORAGE MUSIC CENSUS launches today, May 1, 2024, to gain an understanding of the current needs of the Anchorage area music community. The census link is LIVE at www.anchoragemusiccensus.org. This launch marks the first time that the music community will have standardized data from which to develop policy solutions and approaches. The Census captures key information about the greater Anchorage and Mat-Su area music economy to help the city and community to make more informed, data-driven decisions to support the music ecosystem.

This project supports broader creative economies initiatives to leverage Anchorage’s vibrant music scene as a driver of quality of life, economic development, and talent attraction and retention in Anchorage. As a community-led effort, community partners are invited to participate in the outreach efforts.

To become an official community engagement partner, please include your organization’s info here or email michael@alaskacreativeeconomies.org.

The census will collect data from a variety of local music professionals and analyze the results to establish a new baseline of data for music industry members including

GREATER ANCHORAGE MUSIC CENSUS

musicians, venue owners, music nonprofits and music business professionals. The census includes a survey that will be open for three weeks to be filled out by anyone working creatively in music, as a musician, or participating in any music related product, service, or venue in the greater Anchorage area. The data will be released publicly through a series of reports later this year.

Who is eligible to participate in the Census: Those working or students in the music industry in ANY capacity who are 18 years or older and living in the greater Anchorage metropolitan area including Mat-Su. You should participate in the census if you contribute any type of music-related work, with or without compensation, and you believe your skills and commitment are worthy of acknowledgement and support.

Lead partners in the Greater Anchorage Music Census are Alaska Creative Economies, the Anchorage Economic Development Corporation, the Anchorage Chamber of Commerce and the UAA Center for Economic Development:

“I am thrilled to see broad participation in the Greater Anchorage Area Music Census throughout our city’s diverse music community. We know that a vibrant music ecosystem drives value for cities in several important ways, such as fueling job creation, economic growth, and tourism, as well as strengthening a city’s brand.” said Jenna Wright, President & CEO of the Anchorage Economic Development Corporation. “For this reason, we must be strategic in how we support our musicians, businesses, and industry workers in order to sustain and grow our music economy. The Census will help us do that and contribute to a sense of pride in Anchorage that increases our city’s livability and gives young people a reason to Choose Anchorage as their forever home.”

“Anchorage has an opportunity to support and develop our local musicians, boosting downstream economic impacts for venues, promoters, hospitality, transportation, tourism, and more. The Greater Anchorage Music Census will provide us with valuable data to inform our path forward.” said Kathleen McArdle, President & CEO of the Anchorage Chamber of Commerce.

“A healthy economy rests on a foundation that includes quality of life. If you want a stable workforce, you need a population that’s happy to live here. That includes music and other forms of entertainment and artistic expression that enrich our lives and help form the bonds that make up a community.” said Nolan Klouda, Executive Director of the University of Alaska Center for Economic Development.

“Local music scenes are complicated ecosystems that appear different to different individuals,” said Don Pitts, Founder of Sound Music Cities. “Over time, initiatives like this can align the collaborative efforts of those who wish to grow and support their music scene. A common vision for what good looks like guides how the community works together to address barriers that come into focus, to activate civic and philanthropic resources, and to empower music people to take ownership, not just of their problems, but their solutions as well.”

Sound Music Cities, which is facilitating the multi-city census process, implements the design, deployment, analysis, and publishing of custom research projects like this around the country, providing tools for the passionate professionals who wish to dig deeply into root causes for systemic issues impacting today’s urban music scenes. For information on Sound Music Cities, visit here.

Michael Howard, Executive Director
907-931-0181 michael@alaskacreativeeconomies.org



ART ON FIRE 2024 IRON POUR ART FEST



**Contributed by
Carmen Summerfield**

It's time for another hot, Hot, HOT Iron Pour! Yes, for the 17th year, the Valley Arts Alliance Art on Fire Iron Pour Art Fest will be held on Saturday, June 22, 2024 in Wasilla at the Museum of Alaska Transportation and Industry. The Valley will be buzzing with artists from across the country, as they gather to cast unique iron sculptures, create Raku pottery, and engage in other similar "fiery" events.

At this Art on Fire Iron Pour Art Fest, visitors can create their own small molds, for their own unique iron plaques. These small mold blanks, approximately 6 inches square, can be etched or "scratched" with a design which, when filled with molten iron, will render a unique keepsake. Known as a "scratch block", these blanks are available for \$10.

Throughout the day, artists will conduct Raku pottery workshops. Raku differs from other forms of pottery in that after a short firing,

the "red hot" vessels are placed inside a metal can full of combustible materials, a process that draws the oxygen out of the glaze and is responsible for the unique and completely unpredictable Raku look.

The Association of Alaskan Blacksmiths will demonstrate blacksmithing techniques, Judy Vars will demonstrate Encaustic wax painting, and other fiery arts, such as glass frameworking, will also be demonstrated. Several local painters will setup their easels and demonstrate their work. Live music and food will be available throughout the day.

The VAA Art on Fire Iron Pour Art Fest will be held at the Museum of Alaska Transportation and Industry, located at 3800 W. Museum Drive (near the airport) in Wasilla, from noon until 5pm on Saturday, June 22. The ticket price is \$10, with children under 12 admitted free. Please join the fun! We hope to turn this day into an extraordinary Iron Pour Art Fest in the Valley!

www.valleyartsalliance.com

The VAA Art on Fire Iron Pour Art Fest will be held from noon until 5pm on Saturday, June 22, 2024.



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PAGE 10

Comedy

COMEDY NIGHT IN TALKEETNA

Contributed by **Jake Armstrong,
Rubber Ptarmigan**

Rubber Ptarmigan is coming back to roost in the Mat-Su Borough's grooviest arts hangar! Join us for a night of stand-up comedy as funny as the day (in Alaska in June) is long. Saturday, June 1st at 7:00pm in the Sheldon Community Arts Hangar in Talkeetna. Tickets are \$20.

Our lineup includes comics from near and far, all of them psyched to tell jokes and get down in Talkeetna. Come find out why the Sheldon Community Arts Hangar is one of the best comedy venues in the state!

JD Etheridge is our special guest headliner, touring Alaska this spring for the very first time. Based out of North Carolina, JD is a regular performer at The Idiot Box Comedy Club and has worked with some of the



biggest names in comedy, including Tom Segura, Judah Friedlander, and Todd Glass. He's a Gemini, an avid BBQ enthusiast, and a Game of Thrones expert. JD's comedy is brilliantly, laugh-til-you-cry funny, and we can't wait to share it with Alaska!

Presented with the generous cooperation of Denali Arts Council. Tickets available online at: tinyurl.com/5hxdj9s7

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**SATURDAY
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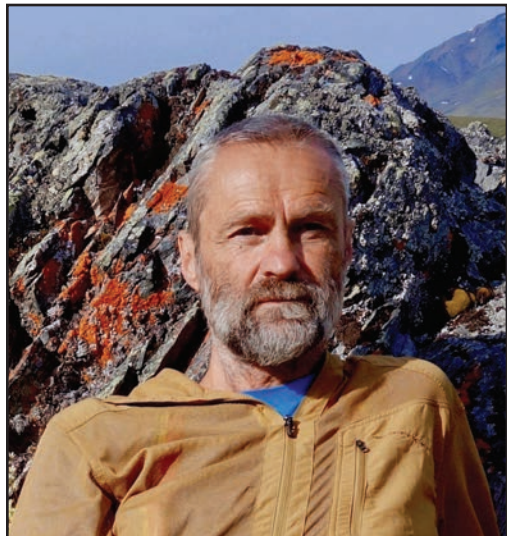
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GEOGRAPHY OF DESIRE

ARCTIC TRAVERSE: A THOUSAND-MILE SUMMER OF TREKKING THE BROOKS RANGE



Contributed by Michael Engelhard

Summoning my life's longest, most formative journey, I sometimes put the maps of my arctic traverse end to end. When I do, all the wilderness I could ever want spreads across my living room floor, a smorgasbord of possibilities. "You must walk like a camel," Thoreau counseled, "which is said to be the only beast which ruminates when walking." And I did.

Riven by glacial valleys, shoaled by the coastal plain, Alaska's largely treeless Brooks Range spans the state's entire width, arcing east to west, a thousand miles scaled down here to just thirteen feet. The dot-

and-dash line of the Continental Divide, which I crossed numerous times, squirms on the mountainous spine, splitting waters headed north to the Arctic Ocean from those southbound for the Bering Strait. To save weight on my sixty-day endeavor, I kept a journal on the maps' backs and in their margins. It was a quest whose magnitude I'd desired yet dreaded for decades and that I had finally planned throughout one year.

I first set foot in that country in 1990, as a University of Alaska anthropology student doing graduate research. The National Park Service wanted to know which areas of Kobuk Valley and Gates of the Arctic National Parks Eskimo and Athabaskan hunters and gatherers had used in the past. If those groups could establish prior claims, they would be entitled to forever hunt, trap, and fish in those preserves. I learned much about the region's topography from Inupiaq elders north of the Arctic Circle. For my unfinished dissertation, I studied how boreal people, the Gwich'in, who until recently had led nomadic subsistence lives, construe place, how maps form in their minds, and if landscapes forge personalities.

The maps aligned in my living room are relics, frayed, taped at the folds, as I consulted them often, frequently in a drizzle, seeking guidance from a two-dimensional oracle. The occasional bloodstain or squashed mosquito proves that my words did not come easily but had to be earned. All formerly blank spaces now crawl with my cursive script, with life transposed into text, the work of a nature accountant or ambulant graphomaniac. The map panels, too, are annotated, with my symbols for caches, campsites, the airstrips' lifeline to civilization—and my route worming into

the wildlands.

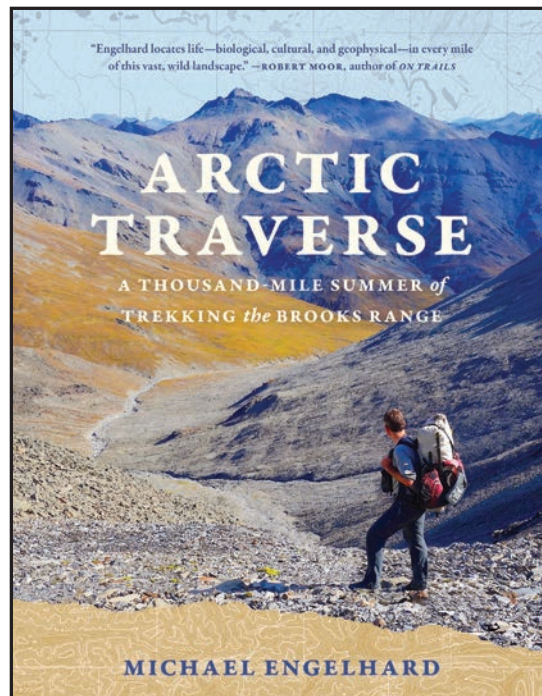
Following map contours step by laborious step, I'd quickly wised up to the cartographers' code. Bunched chocolate-brown lines meant steep climbs or descents; hedgehog marks promised squelchy swamps; robin's-egg blue stood for lakes, ponds and rivers, or finely striated snowfields and glaciers; that same hue spelled wet crossings, creek side coffee breaks, slippery footing.

What the ten US Geological Survey quadrangles fail to show: tussocks, the knee-high vegetation humps taxing my knees, ankles, and spirit; the bushwhack up Ekokpuk Creek, the trip's worst section, not even hinted at by the usual mint-green patches on the map; the vigor of streams I forded that made hiking poles thrum; veils of mosquitoes that shadowed me eager for a meal; grizzlies that circled downwind for a rank whiff of me, which normally—but not always—sent them bolting. Though I did not mark wolf encounters on these sheets, I can to this day pinpoint each one to within a mile even without my dense notes.

The maps do not hold the metal taste of spring water so cold it induced ice cream headaches. They do not carry the perfume of crushed heather or Labrador tea, the souging of breezes or the tang of August blueberries. They omit the fog that blotted out Peregrine Pass, the wind gusting in Noatak Valley, the rain that soaked me for thirty consecutive days. You will not find in them, either the image of me afterward, reduced by twenty-five pounds yet refined somehow, distilled to a new essence, with mental dross and routines stripped away. Six hundred miles walking and four hundred rowing the Noatak River, all by myself, had reopened my eyes to nature's small, quiet wonders.

The blue swath on my westernmost map—the Bering Strait, terminus of my traverse—stretches south to encompass my then-hometown, Nome. Now residing roughly, a hundred miles from the Arctic Circle, in the state's center, its Golden Heart City, Fairbanks, I keep feeling close to the Brooks Range, locus of my desire. In this world, I realize once again, there are no topographic margins. Unlike a sphere rendered in two dimensions, a Mercator projection, Earth has no here or there, no beginning or end. Like the segments arrayed on my floor, maps and dreams and the worlds maps encrypt are connected.

This essay is an excerpt from Michael Engelhard's new memoir Arctic Traverse: A Thousand-Mile Summer of Trekking the Brooks Range. Engelhard, who worked twenty-five years as a wilderness guide, enjoys cabin life on the Fairbanks outskirts.



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Music

CANTORA ARCTICA SHARING SONGS

Contributed by Deborah Till

Cantora Arctica, a Valley Women's Choir is welcoming spring with a concert at the United Protestant Church in Palmer, at 7 PM on May 18th. The choir is directed by Deborah Cooper, the primary accompanist is Anna Witt, but many other valley musicians are contributing their talents.

We share a love of music and wish to share this with the community. The concert is titled "Over the Land and Sea". Many of the choral arrangements tell stories through song from different parts of the country and the world such as Appalachia and Ireland. We'd love to have you join us. Admission is \$5 at the door.

Community

REDEMPTION CLOTHING AT MUSIC IN THE PARK

Contributed by Julia Barnett

The sun is shining, and we are excited to spend our Saturdays with you at "Music in the Park" at Wonderland Park between June 7th and July 4th! Stop by our booth to learn more about our MY House job-training program, and enjoy a 10% off summer sale on our V-necks and long-sleeve tee designs!

Featured Design: The Lupine Long Sleeve

The Lupine flower is a symbol of happiness and having a positive mindset. At REDEMPTION, we believe that attitude is everything. No matter what lies around the bend, your journey will be brighter with a positive outlook and this purple Lupine Long Sleeve design!

Don't live in the area? You can rep the brand and support our local job-training program by ordering your favorite design online at redemptionapparelak.com. Shop in-store at the Bow & Arrow Candle Store in Palmer, Black Birch Books, or the SteamDriven Boutique in Wasilla.

Follow our journey on Instagram and Facebook @redemptionapparelak.

For more information about the services offered at MY House, visit myhousematsu.org or call 907-373-4357. For more information about Music in the Park visit www.musicintheparkwasilla.com.

Thank you for supporting MY House!



RECYCLE REVIVAL 2024

REFUSE, REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE, REVIVE!



Contributed by Terry Koch

What is a "Recycle Revival", you ask?

No, we don't all stand around holding hands and chanting how great recycling is for the earth, although it is. Recycle Revival is an all-day music festival in the mountains, with performances by Alaska's favorites; Carhartt Brothers (The "Bobs"), Braided River,

Denali Cooks and The Roland Roberts Band. In addition to live music, there is also a silent auction with cool stuff, food trucks, a beer garden, and lift rides up with a beautiful hike down. This is truly a family friendly event. Everyone is welcome!

We always strive for zero-waste events, so if you have a reusable container and/or sustainable straw to consume your beverages with, please bring them along. And a folding chair or blanket to sit on.

If you don't own any of these items, they will all be available to bid on in the silent auction. Be prepared to live a sustainable future! Bring your own drinking vessel and receive a free sticker! Or count the exclamation points in this exciting article and get a free sticker!!

Hint: there are two in that last sentence! And it's not too late to donate to the silent auction. We are accepting items until May 25th, at the VCRS office.

This year's Recycle Revival is sponsored by: 95.5 THE PASS, Make A Scene, Aethereal Coffee, Martha Brookbank Real Estate, Dr. Joanie Kirk, ND, Holland American Princess, Sterling & DeArmond PC, Denali Refuse, Country Cannabis, Enstar, Skeetawk,

Alaska Waste, Subaru, Alaska Premier Transport, Valley Country Store, K2 Aviation, Bad Gramm3r, Valley Arts Alliance, Mat-Su Health Foundation, MTA, Denali Zipline Tours, Talkeetna Air Taxi and Matanuska Glacier Tours. Come and join these sponsors, supporters, volunteers, recyclers, music lovers and anyone else willing to pay a paltry \$20 donation for a full day of fun and music, all while supporting a good cause – recycling in Alaska!

If you are unable to attend, feel free to donate at valleyrecycling.org. Donation link is valid year-round! And I needed to end this with an enthusiastic sentence and the final exclamation point. Count 'em up! And we'll see you there!

For more information visit our website valleyrecycling.org or contact us at 907.745.5544

ARTS FIRE

Saturday, June 22 — 12 until 5
Admission \$10 *children under 12
admitted free*

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BLACKSMITHING
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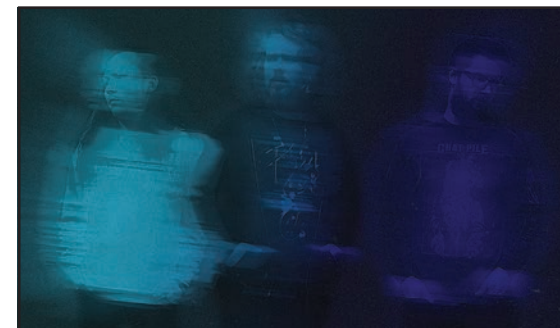
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Mile 47 Parks Highway - beside the Wasilla Airport



Valley Arts Alliance.com

*"...bringing the community together
through the arts..."*



BALSAM GROVE

“YOU’RE SAFE HERE”

Contributed by Kyle Scott

“You’re Safe Here” by Balsam Grove, released in January 2024, is a prime example of the pinnacle of innovation led by modern progressive post-hardcore bands. The band is led by Larry Lee Hansen, longtime active member and supporter of the Alaskan music scene, now based out of Seattle, Washington. The twists and turns of multiple genres and styles are done tastefully here, yet leading you to wonder what might unexpectedly happen next.

The album immediately takes you on a curious path, beginning with the building tension of an instrumental piano piece, before exploding into a duo of fierce metalcore tracks reminiscent of the nostalgia of mid-2000’s bands like Underoath or A Skylit Drive. “Brace Yourself!” takes on the task of a hard-hitting opener, ensuring that the music has your full attention, led by intense screams and crushing guitars. “Break Away!” skillfully and seamlessly transitions back and forth between memorable hooks and wild breakdowns, while keeping up the energy throughout the entire song. After an explosive and exciting outro, the album switches up the mood a bit, showing the great diversity that it offers. “Nostalgia” and “The Knot” both explore mathy post-rock sections, while throwing in progressive rock and metal influences that might remind you of Protest the Hero or Coheed and Cambria.

A brief intermission allows the album to breathe and give you a moment before bringing you into “Sleep Paralysis,” which stands as an important centerpiece of the record and everything it emphasizes. This song has some of the most catchy and memorable moments on the album and will be sure to be one that you will put on repeat. “Driftwood” is another track that stands out as a unique moment on

the album, with the first half bringing in a psychedelic ambient tone with digital percussion and a unique song structure, bringing you into a climactic bridge before taking the energy back down and leading you into the mood of the next song. “The Sad One” lives up to its name, bringing you into an emotional post-rock piece with Circa Survive vibes and hard-hitting lyrics, before once again skillfully inserting a metalcore breakdown for maximum impact.

At this point, you may be wondering, where will this go next? This album doesn’t disappoint, as it ends with two epic and high-energy tracks before going into an outro. Here, you can feel the mood of the album shift and go from despair and darkness to a feeling of aspiration and healing. “Cause and Effect” picks the pace back up and keeps things moving with a very solid jubilant tone, bringing you into the uplifting mood of “Windowpane,” which does an amazing job as an epic finale. The song brings a sense of finality and closure to the story of the album and a glimmer of hope, then emphasized by the “Windwaker (Reprise),” which really brings the entire album together full circle.

The theme of the album is truly meaningful, as it can be very relatable to those who experience depression and anxiety, and those who have a hard time finding motivation and meaning. It tells a story that many experience as they go through cycles of feeling down, untrue to themselves as they are expected to change for other people, but then finding a new light and spark.

This album is sure to be enjoyed by those who grew up with the emo, hardcore, and metal scene, as it takes the nostalgic parts of that music but brings it forward with a modern tone that successfully keeps the genre exciting and fresh!

@balsamgroveband

Non-Profit Directory

ALASKA ANIMAL ADVOCATES **WWW.ALASKAANIMALADVOCATES.COM** **(907) 841-3173**

Alaska Animal Advocates is a non-profit group of dedicated volunteers who are devoted to enriching the lives of companion animals in Alaska.

In order to do this, we will place homeless pets in loving environment, address medical concerns, spay or neuter, microchip, vaccinate, and offer training as is needed.

We believe that every animal deserves a loving home, for his/her entire life and Alaska Animal Advocates will provide the resources to make this happen. In order to make this mission possible, we need the help of volunteers and foster homes.

ALASKA CENTER FOR THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED SENIORS **WWW.ALASKABVI.ORG** **(907) 771-4322**

The Alaska Center for the Blind & Visually Impaired provides blind and low vision Alaskans tools to eliminate vision loss as a barrier to employment, independent living, and community participation. It is the only statewide training and resource center for vision rehabilitation. In the Mat-Su Valley we sponsor two monthly support groups for socialization and informational activities, titled "Living Well with Vision Loss", meeting at the Wasilla Area Seniors and the Palmer Senior Center. Low Vision Clinics demonstrating low vision devices and home assessment visits for independent living are offered to those who qualify and who have uncorrectable vision loss.

ALASKA COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION **WWW.ALASKACDC.ORG** **(907) 746-5680**

Alaska Community Development Corporation is a nonprofit agency located in Palmer, AK. Our focus is housing assistance for low-income households in Alaska. We offer housing assistance to the Matanuska-Susitna Borough and most areas in Southcentral Alaska and to rural areas in Southeast and Southwest Alaska. Our housing assistance includes home weatherization; housing accessibility improvements for seniors and disabled households; & homeownership assistance including home purchase assistance, home building assistance and home loan packaging.

Our housing assistance helps to keep people safely in their homes and helps low-income households move into home ownership. All assistance is free to eligible households.

CONNECT MAT-SU **WWW.CONNECTMATSU.ORG** **(907) 373-2628**

Connect Mat-Su is a program of the Mat-Su Health Foundation that provides access to information and referrals specific to the local community.

Assistance is available in the areas of care, education, food, health, housing, legal services, social connection, transportation, work, and more. It is a network that is both a physical and virtual resource center linking residents to the things needed to thrive physically, mentally, socially, and emotionally.

CONNECT PALMER, INC. **WWW.CONNECTPALMER.ORG** **(907) 746-9675**

Connect Palmer is a Christ Centered Training Center and Housing for Women, located in downtown Palmer.

Connect Palmer's two primary programs are God's Work Design, and LIFE Connect. We also have Sarah's House, a safe and caring place for ladies without homes to live while they participate in our back to work and life skills programs.

We also offer different community assistance programs, such as The Locker, to provide personal care and basic house hold cleaning items, and Scarlet Tapestries which offers basic sewing skills instructions. We are a 501c3 nonprofit organization.

MATANUSKA ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION CHARITABLE FOUNDATION (MEACF) **WWW.MEA.COOP/MEA-IN-THE-COMMUNITY** **MEACONTACT@MEA.COOP** **(907) 761-9300**

\$1.6 million and counting! This is the financial impact MEA's members have had in our community since 2011 when MEACF introduced Operation Roundup. To scratch the surface on those impacted by your generosity are our seniors, recreation, local agriculture, family services, food pantries, and everything in between.

We want to continue adding to this list, so if you know of an organization interested in applying for the MEACF grant and has a specific project in mind, please check us out online for the application process - including financials. Grants are capped at \$10,000 and are approved at each quarterly MEACF meeting. Individual grant requests are now completed through Connect Mat-Su; individual grant requests regarding a disability can contact Access Alaska.

MAT-SU HEALTH FOUNDATION **WWW.HEALTHYMATSU.ORG** **(907) 352-2863**

The mission of the Mat-Su Health Foundation is to improve the health and wellness of Alaskans living in the Mat-Su. The tools we use include grantmaking, convening of local partners, and policy change.

We have generated significant improvements in systems that support the health of Mat-Su residents in areas such as behavioral health, child welfare, crisis response, community connections, workforce development, transportation, housing, and senior services.

Visit www.healthymatsu.org to learn about scholarship and funding opportunities.

MYHOUSE MAT-SU YOUTH HOUSING **WWW.MYHOUSEMATSU.ORG** **(907) 373-4357**

MYHouse is a homeless youth drop in center with two for-profit businesses that train and employ homeless youth. Gathering Grounds Cafe is a coffee shop with homemade soups, sandwiches, salads, and baked goods.

SteamDriven is a trendy thrift shop featuring Steampunk items made from repurposed donations by our youth designers. Fiend2Clean and Young People in Recovery offer support for substance abuse recovery with activities and events. We offer transitional housing for qualified 18-24 year olds, outreach services to connect homeless youth, organizations and groups to

services, and access to public health and job education services on site.

ONWARD & UPWARD **WWW.ONWARDANDUPWARD.ORG** **EMAIL: INFO@ONWARDANDUPWARD.ORG** **(907) 953-5360**

Onward & Upward is an evidence-based, accredited, 501c3 nonprofit organization based in the Mat-Su Valley. Our mission is to establish a culture of "One Health" in Alaska through evidence-based action. We accomplish this by engaging our students in adventurous, inspiring, meaningful, and empowering experiences with varying degrees of challenge methodically designed for positive growth and development.

We offer a diverse range of course offerings from open enrollment summer adventure courses, professional development courses, to year-round after-school and homeschool opportunities. Check out our website at www.onwardandupward.org for more information!

SPECIAL OLYMPICS ALASKA MAT-SU COMMUNITY PROGRAM **(907) 631-8591**

WWW.SPECIALOLYMPICALASKA.ORG

The Special Olympics Alaska Mat-Su Community Program is an accredited program of Special Olympics Alaska, Inc., a 501c (3) nonprofit whose mission is to provide year-round sports training and competition to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. In the Mat-Su Valley, there are 137 active Special Olympics Alaska athletes and 56 Unified partners (non-disabled peers) that train and compete in 12 sports year-round.

There is no cost to participate for qualifying athletes. For more information on the Mat-Su Community Program, please call 907-631-8591, email matsu@specialolympicalaska.org or visit us on social media - @soakmatsu.

UNITED WAY OF MAT-SU **(907) 373-5807**

WWW.UNITEDWAYMATSU.ORG 550 S Alaska St., Suite 205 Palmer AK

United Way of Mat-Su strives to make our community a place where all individuals can thrive. We focus on the building blocks of education, financial stability, health for all, providing resource assistance, community collaboration and advocacy, outreach and engagement across the health, human, and social services spectrum.

Early childhood and family support, youth programs, grants for non-profits, and disaster relief; Mat-Su Valley Resource Guide; volunteer opportunities; Stuff the Bus; Project Homeless Connect, and more. Call for more information on Thrive Mat-Su Mat-Su Coalition, Early Childhood Partnership, Youth 360, and the Alaska Wellness Coalition.

VALLEY CHARITIES, INC. **WWW.VALLEYCHARITIES.ORG** **400 N YENLO STREET, WASILLA AK**

Valley Charities, Inc: Connecting those who need help with the help they need. Valley Charities, Inc. (VCI) oversees a locally owned non-profit Thrift Store, turn-A-leaf.

VCI Re-entry Program assists ex-offenders to become successful citizens helping to stabilize a home, work, per-

sonal needs, and basic council. Our Homelessness Prevention Program provides financial assistance creating housing stability for Valley residents.

Lastly, our Durable Medical Equipment Lending Program supports our residents with short term equipment loans to help with their recovery from illness and injuries.

Housing Assistance: 907-354-4660; Re-Entry Assistance: 907-232-7125; Durable Medical Equipment Lending Program, see our website: valleycharities.org

VALLEY ARTS ALLIANCE **WWW.VALLEYARTSALLIANCE.COM**

Valley Arts Alliance, bringing the community together through the arts... We are a place for both new and established artists of all types - painters, sculptors, musicians, and those involved in the performing arts - to network and to experiment with new ideas and media.

We work with local libraries, schools, museums, art councils, and music and art groups to create more venues for the arts, and to help promote art related events.

Join us at our informal weekly meetings, every Thursday @ 11 at Sophia's Cafe, 9191 E Frontage Road, Palmer-Wasilla Hwy. Check out our archives at www.valleyartsalliance.com

VALLEY RECYCLING VALLEY COMMUNITY FOR RECYCLING SOLUTIONS **WWW.VALLEYRECYCLING.ORG** **(907) 745-5544**

REFUSE, REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE! Drop off your clean, separated recycling Mon-Fri 9:30 to 5 and Saturday 8 to 5. We accept cardboard boxes, aluminum beverage cans, magazines, this newspaper and more!

We are located at 9465 E Chanlyut Circle, near the MSB Central Landfill, just past the MSB Animal Care Shelter. Follow the smells. And follow us on Facebook and Instagram.

Become a member, visit our classroom, schedule a field trip, find out more about volunteer opportunities and ways you can make a difference in your community. #dontfeedthelandfills. Go to our website for more details.

WASILLA AREA SENIORS, INC. **WWW.WASILLASENIORS.COM** **(907) 376-3104**

Wasilla Area Seniors mission is to provide for the lives of seniors living in the Matanuska-Susitna Valley and to enable seniors to live as independently as possible for as long as possible.

WASI provides services, resources, and activities to promote health and independence such as Club50 Fitness Center. Club50 is for individuals 50 years of age and older and provides clean, accessible exercise equipment and offers a variety of FREE fitness classes for seniors of all skill and mobility levels.

For more information, give us a call or find us on Facebook.

Please don't forget to
RECYCLE THIS PAPER 

WWW.MAKEASCENEAK.COM

IT'S A SHAME

Fred Glover

We are Hamas!!!!!!
Shouted by children just barely
Out of their teens
Crowding the quad

They know nothing of life, real life
And they don't care to know,
To explore, to see with open minds
What it's really all about

We are Hamas!!!
Which would indicate they are able and willing
To go to Israel so they too can behead
A three-month-old baby,
While it's mother is forced to watch the carnage while being raped
By an animal with a gun

We are Hamas!!!
Which is nothing but a reincarnation
Of the Nazi SS
Right down to the tactics and philosophy

We are Hamas!!!
Their souls bound for the inner core,
Where fires burn eternally and
The howls and screams of the damned can
Be heard continually.

It seems a shame that they will take
So many gullible young children with them

TRAVERTINE

Contributed by Maxine Franklin

Haiku

What a gift again
to give up this human shape
Lightning, hawks flying.

RAINY FRIDAY

Contributed by Anthony Irsik

I sat on the bench and listened to them play,
Sweet melodies that matched all the rain,
The wind came through and tossed my hair,
A playful gust pulling through the wet air,
The clods were gray and filled the sky,
Giving everyone a melancholy time,
A time that matched the band that played,
Blues were heard at the fling today.

RISE ABOVE

Contributed by Robert Lyons

Burning my soul in scorching rumination
Only relief to be had are the voices of the wall
encircling my mind in rage
The breeze of impulse driven by fluttering
wings of demonic calls
Yearning for the nightmare to end
To awaken free from the hellish consequence
To transcend revenge

MAY IN MATANUSKA -SUSITNA

Contributed by Wendy Brooker

The sun May shine
The wind May blow
The clouds May rain
May hail or snow

Springtime will come
Then it May go
The weekend weather
We May not know

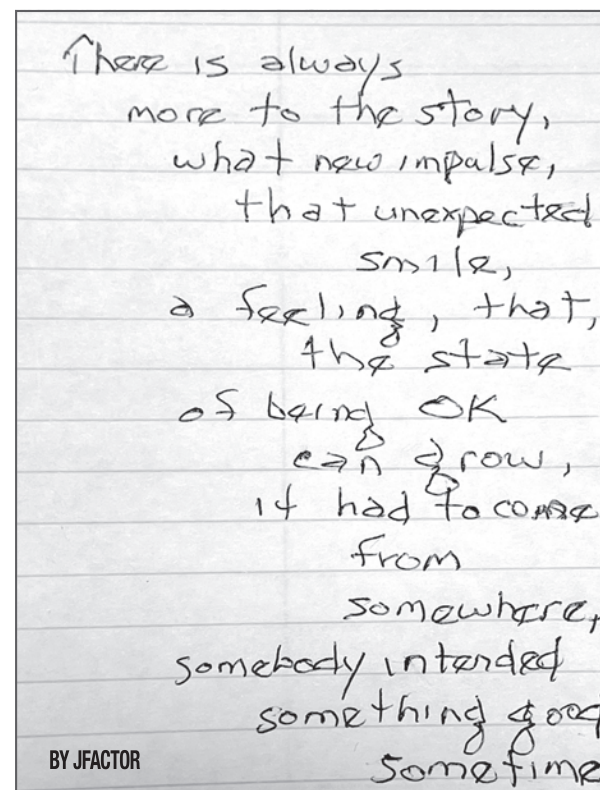
WWW.MAKEASCENE.MEDIA | 907-373-2698

MAKE A SCENE MAGAZINE

RAINDROPS

Contributed by Marna Paron

The raindrops beat on my window in vain
And I began to wonder
What was it they were trying to say
Spite the roar of the wind and thunder
They melted on my pane
Like butter on a hot stove
I couldn't figure out just then
The story that they told
They spoke of someone I once knew
Someone gone away
They reminded me of things we did
And things we used to say
Loneliness set in and I realized my worst fears
A fact I had to face
The raindrops were really my tears!





VAMPIRE CHAMPAGNE

DECAY/METAMORPHOSIS, ALBUM REVIEW

Contributed by Larry Lee Hansen

Portland, Oregon's Vampire Champagne bursts onto the music scene with their debut album, "Decay/Metamorphosis," blending post-hardcore intensity and progressive flair. Alaskan guitarist Kyle Scott, known for his tenure with Palmer, AK band Thrown Away Thoughts, joins vocalists Von-Aldrynne and Sasha Gordy, guitarist Alex Weislow, and drummer Jake Malet in this exciting rock quintet. Recorded at Kaotic Studios in Spokane, the album boasts impeccable production quality, serving as the perfect canvas for the band's explosive sound. Set for release on April 12th, "Decay/Metamorphosis" promises a thrilling fusion of technical prowess and raw emotion.

The album opens with "Pareidolia," subtly beginning with the crackle of a guitar plugged into an amplifier before diving into slamming drums and technical guitar riffs. Von-Aldrynne's intense screaming vocals blend with Sasha's clean melodies over epic flamenco-style guitar leads, while Kyle's eerie vocal harmonies add depth. The chorus, with its groovy half-time section and tasty tapped guitar lead, stands out as a highlight, leaving a lasting impression!

The second track, "Thinking About the Sun Exploding Keeps Me Up at Night," stands out as my personal favorite. Filmed at Portland's Raven's Manor, a haunted bar, the music video enhances the song's lyrical themes of existential dread. The chorus is incredibly catchy; I even found myself humming it one morning! Just when you think you've got the song figured out, a detuned Meshuggah-esque break-

down adds a surprising twist, leaving listeners reeling.

"Lucid," the third track, takes a more melodic approach, showcasing brilliantly composed flamenco-style guitar over lush reverb. Sasha's vocals shine, with interplay from Von-Aldrynne adding power and intensity to the song's build. The climax features a cool spoken word section with flamenco guitar leads, before transitioning into frenzied pop-punk riffs and pounding double bass drumming. As "Lucid" comes to a close, listeners are treated to a deeply ethereal instrumental track, "After," which serves as the album's interlude, a break in the chaos for the listener. Beautiful guitars, sparse drums and sensual saxophone are the highlight of this track. Suddenly, however, the song takes a sharp turn with an amazingly heavy djent guitar riff reminiscent of 'Catch 33'-era Meshuggah, layered with synthesizer arpeggios, showcasing the band's more progressive influences.

"Swallow Sorrow," the album's fifth track, thrusts listeners into a maelstrom of gritty, intense chugging and guttural growls. Sasha's ethereal vocals briefly punctuate the chaos before the relentless onslaught of heavy djent riffing continues. Metalheads will undoubtedly find themselves drawn to this track, captivated by its blend of aggressive riffs and lead guitar melodies.

Now, we reach the title track, "Decay/Metamorphosis," accompanied by an impressive lyric video. This song distinguishes itself as possibly the band's most accessible, embracing a softer approach with a monumental chorus and captivating gang-vocal-style harmonies. I can envision a packed venue singing along to this song with

their hands up high. It's a melodic slow-burn, pulsing in 3/4 time, where ethereal vocals and atmospheric guitars are interlaced with Von-Aldrynne's intense growls, adding depth to the track's meditative vibe. Ending on a melancholic note, Sasha delivers haunting lyrics: "deafening madness dormant in my head; falling asleep can't cure me of this dread." The song gently fades away, leading us to the album's final track, "The Last Thread."

The album's closer ventures into eccentric and experimental territory. It kicks off with a waltz-inspired, eerie piano intro that evokes imagery of haunted houses and sinister carnivals. As Sasha's mournful vocals build, we're propelled into the song's climactic finale. Shredding guitars. Brutal screams. Powerful drums. The intensity of the band reaches new heights! Around the 3-minute mark of this 7-minute epic, we're treated to relentless metal chugs and pounding double bass drum. The song crescendos into an impressive guitar solo at the 5-minute mark, and the album concludes in a barrage of screaming and slamming drums before fading out to clean guitars and Sasha's mournful vocals.

"Decay/Metamorphosis" by Vampire Champagne is a highly impressive first effort! With well-crafted songs that reveal new layers upon each listen, their music will certainly attract fans across the spectrum of rock music. Their diverse vocals alone will appeal to pop and death metal fans alike. I'm so excited to see where this band will go from here!

www.instagram.com/vampirechampagne
www.youtube.com/@vampirechampagne

THE BRIGHT LIGHTS BOOK PROJECT: NOURISH THE MIND, NOURISH THE BODY



Contributed by Alys Culhane

I stood in the U-Haul entryway and watched as Kid's Kupboard Executive Director Milena Sevigny backed the nonprofit's large white box truck between two pillars and stopped. I stepped to the side as Melina, BLBP Board member Pete Praetorius, and Kid's Kupboard Outreach Coordinator Hally Marshall unloaded two shrink wrapped pallets of books then moved them down the hall, into storage unit 1459.

Melina later dropped nine bins off at the Eagle Hotel, the BLBP book distribution warehouse. The full bins will soon be picked up by the Kid's Kupboard staff and dropped off at summer lunch locations. Books and free meals will then be available to children, all summer long.

Lunch and children's books will be available at the Wasilla Library, Bugge Park, The Palmer Amusement Park, The Goose Bay Elementary School, Nunley Park on Swanson Avenue, the Palmer Visitor's Center, The First Baptist Church, and The Goose Bay Elementary School. Books will also be available at the Kid's Kupboard central office.

As I put books in the bins, I thought about the Kid's Kupboard/Bright Lights Partnership. This began in a serendipitous fashion, in May 2021, when Melina and I first met. My goat Stormy had just died, and I was looking for a new buddy for my lone goat, Ranger. Suzy Crosby, the owner of Cottonwood Creek Farm, suggested that I purchase Swamp Thing, so Pete and I went to check her out. Goats are like potato chips – you can never have just one.

I was watching the young goats when Mike, Suzy's husband, suggested that I talk with Melina, the Wednesday night milker, adding that she was also distributing free books. I'd read about Milena's Book Wave program in the December 2020 Make a Wish Program column of the New York Times. She worked for Tote Maritime and was shipping incoming books state-wide.

I followed Mike downstairs into the basement milking parlor. Melina, who was removing teat cups from a milk goat, looked up and smiled. In a rush of words, I told her who I was and about the Bright Lights Book Project. "We have to talk," she said, suggesting that we meet in the next few weeks.

We met in the Koslosky building lobby. I told Melina about our bookcases in the community program, which at that time consisted of a dozen bookcase locations. I watched as she pulled forth a gardening book from the shelf and hugged it to her chest. "I love books! And I love gardening," she exclaimed.

Over lunch, she told me about the Book Waves project, and more specifically, that she was shipping books to Native villages. I didn't say what I was thinking – that this endeavor seemed to me to be a complicated and near impossible task. I'd wanted to ship BLBP books to villages, but I didn't know how to go about it. As if reading my mind, Milena said she'd give me an assist. And so, in time, I too was contacting schools, filling out spread sheets, preparing books for shipping, and connecting with airline freight shippers.

We parted company with me agreeing to accompany Melina to the Kenai Peninsula where she'd distribute Covid relief supplies. She added that I could distribute BLBP books. We did two trips to the Kenai distributing hand sanitizer, cleaning supplies, and books in Native villages that were located on the road system. We were told when we were in Homer that the owner of a used bookstore, the Observance of Hermits, was parting with books. "Let's go and check this out!" Melina said. We descended upon the free books, which the owner had piled onto outdoor picnic tables. We left his place with a Tote van full of books. We, who were now hoarders with a purpose, returned home and unloaded the books in the BLBP Meeting House, a small residential building that was overflowing with books.

Over the next two years, Milena and I found appreciative readers for her Book Waves books and my BLBP books. Our venues included the Loussac Library's Reading Rendezvous, the March Madness Basketball Tournament, and Kaladi Brother's Co-Op for a Cause. We also travelled far and wide, picking up books that had been donated to the BLBP.

Melina suggested that the BLBP form a nonprofit board and get its own 501(C)(3). She was elected president of the newly formed board. And she assisted the BLBP in acquiring the first of three \$25,000 Saltchuk grants. Two years after we met, Melina became the Executive Director of Kid's Kupboard.

Both outdoor book and food distribution are seasonal. However, Melina and I recently resumed working together. We agreed to have books available at the Kid's Kupboard lunch sites.

I finished stocking the Kid's Kupboard bins and, as well, a few extra boxes of books. Who would have thought it, that a chance meeting at a goat farm would lead to a nonprofit partnership.

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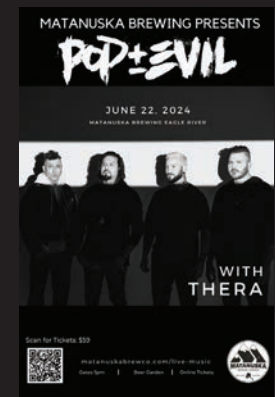
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