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Premier Issue

January 2026

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Spokane's Seniors at the Center: Why our region's future depends on its oldest residents

By Sheila Fritts



Spokane is a place shaped by its people—its neighborhoods, its history, and its deep sense of community. But one group in particular forms the backbone of the region: our seniors. Older adults are not only a rapidly growing demographic; they are cultural leaders, economic contributors, caregivers, volunteers, and the memory-keepers of the Inland Northwest. Understanding who they are and what matters to them is essential for anyone envisioning Spokane's future.

Spokane County is home to approximately 555,947 residents, and **18.2%—just over 100,000 people—are age 65 or older** (U.S. Census Bureau's 2024 QuickFacts). According to the same source, the City of Spokane itself has 230,609 residents, with **16.4%—nearly 38,000—age 65 or older**. These numbers make it clear: older adults are not a niche group. They are a major population cohort influencing policy, planning, healthcare, philanthropy, and the local economy.

This demographic reality mirrors national patterns. The Urban Institute's analysis of U.S. Census data tells us **more than one in**

six Americans is now 65 or older, and the population of older adults has grown nearly 40% since 2010. In practical terms, Spokane is aging at nearly the same rate as the nation, and the choices we make today will shape how well people can age here tomorrow.

What Spokane's seniors care about most

To accurately reflect the priorities of older adults in our region, it's important to look at national research—because seniors in Spokane consistently express the same values, concerns, and aspirations as older adults across the U.S.

According to AARP's 2024 Home and Community Preferences Survey, **75% of adults 50+ want to remain in their homes for as long as possible**, and **73% want to stay in their current community**. That preference for stability and continuity shows up every time a Spokane senior chooses to remain close to familiar doctors, faith communities, grocery stores, friends, and favorite walking paths along the river.

But aging in place requires supportive environments. The same AARP survey also reveals a significant percentage of older adults expect they will need **modifications such as grab bars, improved lighting, step-free entrances, and accessible bathrooms** to remain safe and independent. Spokane's aging housing

stock means these needs are even more pressing here than in larger West Coast cities with newer residential infrastructure.

Connection is another core value. An additional AARP national study on leisure and "fun styles," **spending time with family is the most loved activity among adults, particularly women, with 70% reporting it as their favorite way to spend their time**. Seniors also value hobbies, ongoing learning, travel, volunteering, and community involvement. These interests align beautifully with the Inland Northwest's culture—where outdoor recreation, artistic expression, higher education institutions, and a strong nonprofit sector shape daily life.

A broader theme emerges from AARP's research across multiple studies: the top priorities for older adults are **health, financial security, and purpose**. Spokane seniors say the same. They want equitable access to healthcare, confidence that they can afford housing and prescriptions on fixed incomes, and meaningful opportunities to contribute, learn, and remain seen.

Spokane's economy and the industries that support seniors

To talk about seniors in Spokane, we must also talk about the regional economy, because Spokane's... (continued Pg 2)

Spokane's senior population continues to grow, and with it the need for accessible, consistent, relationship focused medical care.

By Dr. Jeffrey Allguire MD



One local primary care organization is reshaping how older adults receive healthcare by combining traditional clinic based visits with in

home care and a model built around proactive, coordinated medicine.

The Complex Care Center team serves as a full-scope primary care provider. They offer routine checkups, chronic condition management, preventive care, urgent concerns, and close coordination with outside specialists. What sets their approach apart is flexibility. Patients can be seen in the clinic when that is convenient, but they can also receive care in their senior living communities when mobility, transportation, or health status creates barriers to traveling.

For many seniors, the ability to receive home visits is more than a convenience. It supports continuity of care when leaving the house becomes difficult and allows providers to meet patients where they truly live. Home visits give the care team insight into daily routines, medication management, fall risks, and environmental factors that directly affect health. At the same time, in clinic visits remain available for patients who prefer that setting or need in office evaluation.

A key part of what makes this hybrid care model possible is the practice's Advanced Primary Care Management program (APCM). The APCM program allows the care team to spend time coordinating services, monitoring ongoing conditions, and staying closely connected with patients between visits. Rather than reacting only when problems arise, the focus shifts to prevention, follow through, and early intervention. This structure supports seniors who often have multiple chronic conditions and benefit from ongoing support rather than episodic care.

The organization accepts Medicare and works closely with patients to navigate coverage, referrals, and documentation. For many seniors, that acceptance provides financial reassurance and stability. Patients are guided through their care plan in a way that emphasizes understanding, not confusion, and families are often included in that process when appropriate.

Care coordination is a central focus behind the scenes. The practice works with family members, caregivers, senior living staff,

hospitals, and specialists to keep everyone aligned. Hospital discharges, medication changes, test results, and referrals are actively followed rather than left for patients to manage on their own. This behind the scenes work often prevents gaps in care that can lead to complications or hospital readmissions.

While the organization continues to grow within the Spokane region, its mission remains centered on steady, relationship primary care for seniors. By combining home visits, in clinic care, Medicare accessibility, and the structure of an Advanced Primary Care Management program, the practice is helping older adults stay healthier, safer, and more supported in the places they call home.

Dr. Jeffrey Allgaier is a primary care physician at Complex Care Center, where he leads initiatives dedicated to improving senior focused primary care.

Spokane's Seniors at the Center

(continued from Pg 1)... largest and fastest-growing sectors directly shape the lives of older adults.

Our region has long served as the **service and commercial hub** for Eastern Washington and North Idaho per the Washington State Employment Security Department's Spokane County Profile. The dominant sectors include **government, higher education, healthcare, retail trade, financial services**, and Fairchild Air Force Base—still the single largest employer in the area.

Healthcare stands at the forefront. According to Advantage Spokane, **healthcare is Spokane's largest industry**, employing approximately **50,418 workers**—a number that has grown 12% in five years and stands **36% above the national average for a region of this size**. According to the City of Spokane, the region's **nine hospitals employ around 43,000 people**, and the healthcare sector is a billion-dollar cornerstone of the local economy, projected to more than double in the next decade.

Why does this matter for seniors? Because older adults are among the region's most consistent healthcare users, and Spokane's concentration of medical resources makes it uniquely equipped to support a large senior population. Spokane's seniors rely heavily on Providence, MultiCare, veteran services, specialist clinics, and rehabilitation centers. Likewise, **nursing, gerontology, social work, and allied health programs** at local colleges and universities train the very professionals who care for our oldest residents.

Other key industries also shape seniors' lives. According to Advantage Spokane, the regional economy is anchored not only by

health services but also by **life sciences, aerospace, advanced manufacturing, agribusiness, logistics, and professional services**. According to the City of Spokane, the area also serves as the Inland Northwest's hub for **entertainment, retail, and hospitality**, all of which support seniors' social, recreational, and day-to-day needs.

Seniors contribute to these sectors as workers, volunteers, mentors, and consumers. Many continue employment past 65; others support small businesses, arts and culture, nonprofit work, and civic leadership. Their impact is economic as much as it is cultural.

Keeping seniors at the front of the conversation

It is not enough to acknowledge how many seniors live in Spokane. Communities thrive when they intentionally plan for the wellbeing of older adults.

The AARP's Livability Index shows that communities that serve people 50+ well are **walkable, safe, affordable**, and offer **reliable transportation and accessible healthcare**. These are the same qualities that benefit families with children, college students, and working adults. When we prioritize seniors, we improve the entire city.

For Spokane, elevating seniors means:

- Ensuring housing is safe, accessible, and affordable for people aging on fixed incomes
- Strengthening public transportation and mobility options
- Supporting nonprofit organizations that prevent social isolation
- Protecting older adults from fraud, scams, and financial exploitation
- Encouraging intergenerational connection and leadership
- Including seniors and senior-serving businesses in economic development conversations

Seniors are influencers, voters, donors, volunteers, caregivers, and storytellers. They preserve history, support local nonprofits, drive health-care demand, and stabilize the community. Their needs and aspirations should center our civic planning—not appear as an afterthought.

As Spokane looks toward its future, it is impossible to imagine that future without seniors at the helm. Their numbers are growing, their influence is significant, and their desire to remain engaged, connected, and independent is clear. We build a better Spokane when we build with older adults at the heart of our decisions.

Because Spokane's seniors are not just part of the community, they are the community.

Sheila Fritts is the Publisher and Editor-in-Chief of the Spokane Senior Times, Marketing Director of Fairwood Retirement Village & Assisted Living, author, artist, photographer, and longtime advocate for seniors and the communities that support them. She can be reached at sheila@porchlightspokane.com or sheila@fairwoodretirement.com

BrightStar Care Helps Spokane Seniors Stay Home with Dignity

By Pamela Duddy of BrightStar Care of Spokane



When 82-year-old Margaret Johnson (this name has been changed to protect our client's privacy), broke her hip last winter, her family feared she'd have to leave the home she'd cherished for more than fifty years. Her daughter Susan remembers: *"Mom kept saying she didn't want to go anywhere. She wanted to be in her own living room, with her garden outside the window."*

The Johnsons turned to BrightStar Care of Spokane. Within days, caregivers were helping Margaret with meals, mobility, and medication reminders. A registered nurse oversaw her recovery plan. Susan says, *"It was such a relief to know someone was watching out for her—not just physically but emotionally too. They treated her like family."*

BrightStar Care is a nationally recognized provider with locations across the country, but its Spokane team is deeply rooted in the local community. Their philosophy is built on what they call "a higher standard." Every caregiver is carefully screened, trained, and supervised by a registered nurse. This means seniors like Margaret

receive personalized care that adapts as their needs change.

For Margaret, the most valuable service was personal care—help with bathing, dressing, and moving safely around the house. Other seniors in Spokane rely on BrightStar Care for:

- Companion Care – Friendly visits and conversation to ease loneliness.
- Transitional Care – Support after hospital stays to reduce readmissions.
- Specialized Care – Alzheimer's and dementia support, chronic condition management, and skilled nursing.
- Rehabilitative Care – Physical therapy and Occupational therapy

Families can choose from just a few hours of help each week to 24/7 care, depending on what their loved one needs.

Local owner Joshua Porter's journey into home care began with his own family. When a loved one needed support, he realized how important it was to find care that combined compassion with professional

oversight. That experience inspired him to bring BrightStar Care to Spokane, with the goal of offering families the kind of trusted, high-quality care he wanted for his own family. His leadership reflects BrightStar's commitment to combining professional excellence with heartfelt compassion.

For Susan and her siblings, BrightStar Care meant more than practical help—it meant peace of mind. *"We could go to work, take care of our own families, and know Mom was safe. She wasn't just surviving—she was thriving again."*

Stories like Margaret's are becoming more common as Spokane's senior population grows. Home care offers independence, dignity, and comfort, while BrightStar Care provides the professional oversight and compassion families need. For seniors who want to age gracefully at home, BrightStar Care is proving to be a trusted partner in Spokane.

Pamela Duddy is Development Director at BrightStar Care of Spokane

SPOKANE SENIOR TIMES



Serving Spokane's 50+ Community since 2026

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ABOUT SPOKANE SENIOR TIMES

Spokane Senior Times is a community journal dedicated to thoughtful storytelling, practical insight, and local perspectives on aging, care, leadership, and life in the Inland Northwest.

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Advertising in Spokane Senior Times supports free access for seniors and must meet standards of accuracy, transparency, and relevance to the senior community. Advertising inquiries may be directed to the email above.

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Meeting the Nutritional Needs of Our Seniors

Spokane offers many resources for adults over 55, including Meals on Wheels, low-cost meals at senior centers, and food banks. Yet a significant number of seniors still fall through the gaps in our local food security network—particularly those who are homebound but do not qualify for Meals on Wheels. It is estimated that up to 25% of seniors experience food insecurity.

Susan McDonald Osborn, Executive Director of Spokane Helpers Network, explains that access to food can be especially challenging for low-income seniors who are disabled, frail, or ill. To address this unmet need,

McDonald Osborn founded Spokane Helpers Network to serve seniors who struggle to access traditional food sources.

“Our goal is to ensure that every senior has access to nutritious food,” says McDonald Osborn. “Through our *Feeding Our Homebound Neighbors* program, we provide free, biweekly meal kits delivered directly to enrolled seniors.” Each nonperishable meal kit requires only light preparation and includes a protein, a vegetable, a fruit, and one or two carbohydrate items to support balanced nutrition.

For more information about the *Feeding Our Homebound Neighbors* program, please email Info@SpokaneHelpersNetwork.org or call 509-979-0933.



Seniors Who Lead

‘Find things that light you up and incorporate them into your life.’

By Dave Ribble



If you ever have the chance to meet Dave and Gaye Ribble, you'll soon understand that these two, aged 77 and 75, respectively, don't mince words when it

comes to the secret of how they approach life.

Gaye is one of the stars of The Diva Show that recently played at Hamilton Studios, now in its third year. She is the CEO of StandOut Marketing Strategies, a promotional marketing company with clients around the country. Gaye is also a Mentor to many, and more recently began coaching with her husband, Dave.

Speaking of Dave, he is the author of The Way of The Conscientious Connector, a book that centers on the need to uplevel one's skills in Communication, Connection and Collaboration, and who now runs the follow up, StandOut Mastery Personal Development Program, where he coaches professionals, amateurs, groups and employees of any industry on how to stand out from their competition.

“There is so much noise out there. Young people coming up struggle with how to talk to people, how to interview, how to research, and how to become the standout that will make all the difference in their lives”, Dave said.

“We see its relevance in our SoulPath Playtime sessions,” Gaye added. “I love helping people understand and then overcome their limiting beliefs, something that is near and dear to my own experiences earlier in my life.”

Staying Relevant: Pursuing Dreams and Goals

“People ask: How do you keep going with new ideas, new concepts? How can I stay relevant?” We tell them this: Hang around people half your age and find out what they are struggling with. Win them over with your charm and good looks but then get into the weeds with them like you always hoped someone would do for you. Not only will you learn a lot about what they are dealing with out there, but you will also find a place where the younger set would like

your advice and opinion, contrary to what you might think.



“Performing with the Divas has been a godsend for me”, Gaye remarked. “First of all, I am the oldest in the group of five generations. I learn from them. They lean into my stories from show business and from being in marketing for four decades. They get my advice when they ask for it, and I keep up with the trends.”

“These kids need our help. Many of them only think they have it figured out but talk to them for a few minutes and you quickly learn how fragile they truly are. If we can help, we want to help them. Dave and I keep adopting them and we have a great time getting to know them.”

Do they continue to have more goals they want to accomplish? Of course.

“Every day is a Gift. Every day we learn and grow and share. Contributing back is a lot of fun.”

Email: Dave@daveRibble.com
Gaye@StandOut-Marketing.com

Dave Ribble, author of "The Way of The Conscientious Connector" and Founder of StandOut Mastery, encourages people of every generation to stay curious, creative and connected because your contribution has no expiration date!



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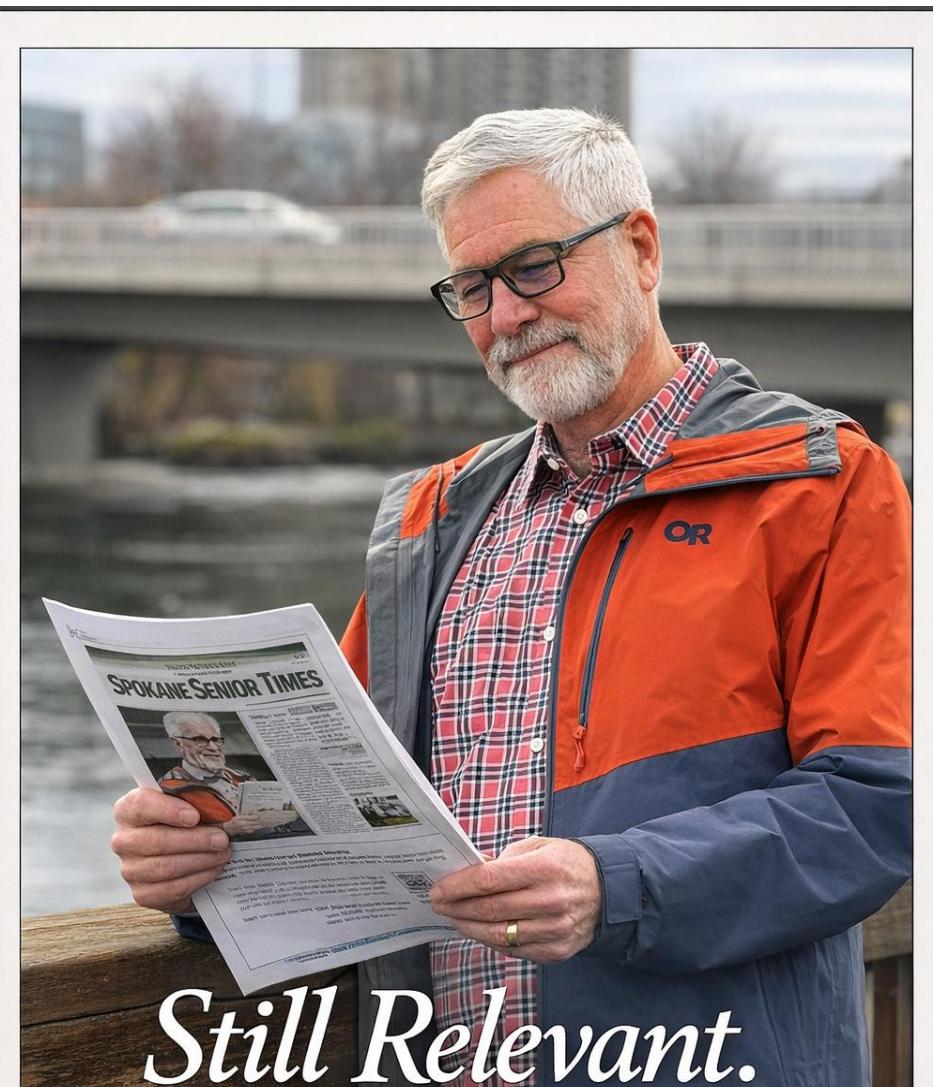
WALK TO END ALZHEIMER'S

The Alzheimer's Association Walk to End Alzheimer's is the world's largest fundraiser for Alzheimer's care, support and research. This inspiring event calls on participants of all ages and abilities to join the fight against the disease.

While there is no fee to register for Walk, all participants are encouraged to raise critical funds that allow the Alzheimer's Association to provide 24/7 care and support and advance research toward methods of prevention, treatment and, ultimately, a cure.



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A Bit of Spokane History

The Fotheringham House

By Paulette Burgess



The Fotheringham House is well known by sight to most who live in Spokane. On the corner of 2nd Avenue and Hemlock Street in

Browne's Addition, the significance of the house, apart from its picture-perfect Queen Anne architecture, is its builder and first resident, David B. Fotheringham.

Like so many of the early settlers, Fotheringham arrived in the new city with nothing but hope and ambition. The year was 1883, and he was drawn to the possibilities afforded by the new railroad.

At the time, "Spokan Falls" encompassed only four square miles and 340 souls. That would soon change. And quickly.

The railroad was paramount.



While the river and falls flowing westward from the great Coeur d'Alene lake were what had attracted the Salish-speaking people for thousands of years, it was a river of steel that lit the fuse for booming business. Non-indigenous explorers and fur traders had known of our regions' abundance for decades prior to the Lewis and Clark expedition. Indeed, there was a market back east hungry for so much old growth timber and precious ore. But prior to June 25, 1881, the inaugural date of a train's arrival to Spokan Falls, there was no way to ship it.

Fotheringham was a carpenter by training, and he understood that a growing town would need structures. He got to work right away; his contracting company eventually built some of the area's most historically distinctive structures, including the Patrick "Patsy" Clark Mansion, the Spokane County Courthouse, and all manner of residences, schools, and hotels.

Growth was exponential. By 1889, Washington Waterpower Company broke ground on the Monroe Street power generator. In less than ten years, a rugged outpost anchored by Fort Spokane had become a commercial hub of national significance. Those that got in early flourished.

So well-known and successful was Fotheringham, eight years after arriving he was made Mayor of the city. That same

year, 1891, he took out a \$2,000 mortgage from the Northwestern and Pacific Hypotheek Bank, a Dutch mortgage bank established in Spokane Falls (whose name had since added the 'e' we still use today), and began building the home that bears his name.

A "hypotheek bank" (mortgage bank) is a financial institution that provides loans for buying or building houses, like a building society or savings & loan association, with Dutch examples including ABN Amro, Hypotrust (via advisors like De Hypotheeker), and brokers like Hypotheek.winkel. These banks (or brokers) offer various mortgage types (annuity, interest-only), help with budgeting, and work with you to find suitable lenders, often for free through the broker.

She stands there still, through many iterations, much like the city she watched grow up around her. Stately and elegant, she began as a premiere residence for privileged society, became a boarding house, most recently a half-way house for those overcoming addiction, to again being a single-family home. Times change; things well build remain.

Paulette Burgess lives and works in the Inland Northwest and is proud to be part of our community. Paulette is an award-winning journalist and a published author as well as a practicing attorney.

How soon should I talk to a real estate professional?

Thinking about your next chapter—whether that means a new home, an apartment, or a retirement community—can feel overwhelming. No matter your stage of life, the idea of moving brings stress, uncertainty, and a long list of questions.

One concern I hear often is that people hesitate to reach out to a real estate professional because they don't want to "waste someone's time." In many industries, meeting with a professional years before you're ready would feel premature. But in real estate, early conversations are not only welcome—they're ideal. You don't need to commit to anything. A good agent can help you understand your options, outline the smartest next steps, and relieve some of the pressure long before you ever decide to move.

If you're thinking about buying or selling in Spokane and would like guidance without obligation, I'm here to help. Call me anytime at 509-995-4229.



Jacob Beal

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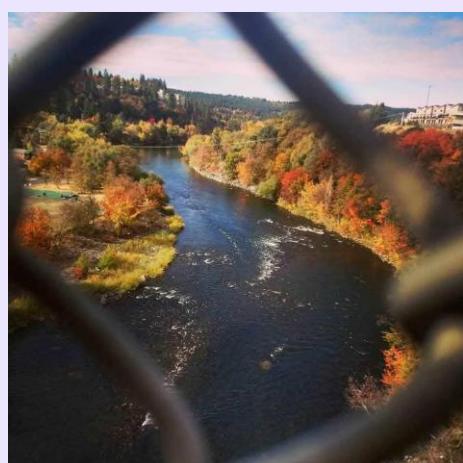


Photo Submission by Katy Smith Byrns

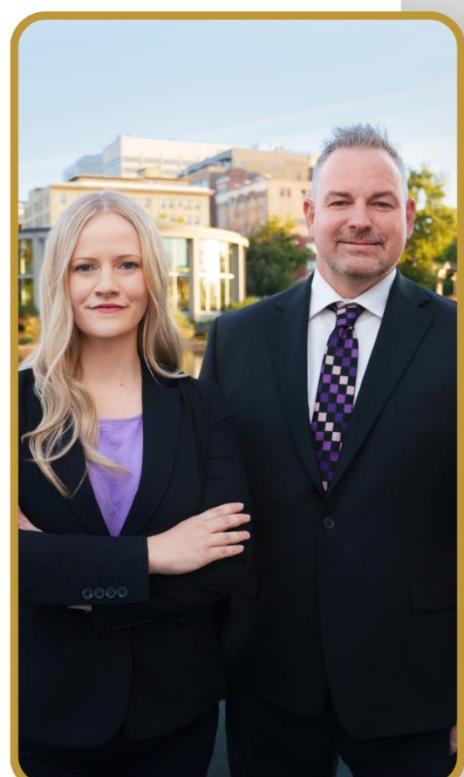
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