

# NATI NEWSWIRE

## SENIOR SAFETY ISSUES

### **Group wants Amber Alert for Alzheimer's patients**

By T.J. GREANEY of the Tribune's staff

Joetta Coen of the Mid-Missouri Alzheimer's Association remembers when a woman came up to her after a speech and told a story about her grandfather.

The woman from Rolla had come home from work and received a call from a St. Louis County sheriff who said he had found her grandfather lost and disoriented. She thought it was a mistake; it wasn't.

The woman's grandfather had early-stage Alzheimer's and left his Rolla home intending to drive three blocks to a Wal-Mart. Instead, he drove nearly 100 miles along Interstate 44 to St. Louis County.

"He got on the interstate and kept driving until he had a flat tire," Coen said. "Luckily, about dusk some men were leaving a construction site and saw that the gentleman needed help" and discovered "he had driven a long way and didn't know where he was."

Such stories are the stuff of nightmares for families of people with Alzheimer's and dementia, Coen said. Studies show 60 percent of people with the disease get lost and disoriented at some point, according to the Alzheimer's Association.

"It must be once per week that we get - across our national network - an alert of someone missing," Coen said. Recently a Michigan couple "told the next-door neighbor they were heading to Florida, and that was the last time they were seen."

Anecdotal evidence is fueling an effort to add Missouri to 12 states that already issue "Silver Alerts" to track missing elderly people. A Silver Alert is similar to the "Amber Alert" that interrupts TV and radio programs and uses highway signs to notify the public of a missing child.

Since Florida adopted the Silver Alert system in October, 28 alerts have been issued. All but one of those missing people were found alive.

About 5.2 million people in the United States have Alzheimer's, including 200,000 affected by early-onset Alzheimer's that becomes evident before a patient reaches age 65.

Missouri has a program with a similar goal to that of Silver Alert. In January 2007 the state enacted the

"Endangered Person Advisory Program," which notifies Missouri law enforcement and media when someone too old to qualify for an Amber Alert goes missing under "unexplained, involuntary or suspicious circumstances." Authorities believe it is sufficient.

"Since it's been proven to be effective and since the people we've actually had to activate the alert for have been located, I think that right there speaks for itself," Sgt. Keverne McCollum of the Missouri State Highway Patrol said.

Since the statewide program started, endangered person advisories have been issued 21 times. Four of those 21 people were older than 60 and suspected of having some sort of dementia.

But Jo Walker of Marshfield, president of the Silver Haired Legislature, said that figure likely represents a fraction of the times when an advisory has been needed. "A child in danger, everyone thinks about that," she said. "But an elderly, disabled person in danger - sometimes the family doesn't want attention drawn to it; sometimes if they wander away from a facility, the facility wants to go ahead and handle it; and the police think they can probably find this person quickly. It doesn't always happen, though."

The Silver Haired Legislature earlier this year discussed making the Silver Alert a legislative priority but voted to prioritize other legislation. Walker and other advocates for the elderly will watch the program closely this year to see how often it is used to find older people.

Meanwhile, advocates recommend that relatives of people with Alzheimer's and dementia purchase a subscription to "MedicAlert+Safe Return," a national program that provides elderly people with bracelets or pendants that have vital medical information and a toll-free number to call in the event that person is found in a disoriented state.

The bracelet- or pendant-wearer's ID can be supplied to a national network of Alzheimer's Association offices alerted to be on the lookout for the Alzheimer's patient.

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## Notice from the National Telecommunications and Information Administration

As of Sunday, January 4, 2009 consumers requesting coupons from the agency's TV Converter Box Coupon Program will be placed on a waiting list and coupons will be mailed on a first-come, first-served basis as funds from expired coupons become available. Because of the high demand for coupons, the program reached its \$1.34 billion ceiling, and consequently new coupon requests from eligible households will be filled as funds from expiring coupons are made available.

Please visit [www.DTV2009.gov](http://www.DTV2009.gov) to download the new Consumer Fact Sheet that outlines the options consumers have to prepare for the digital transition that will occur on February 17, 2009. NTIA encourages you to inform as many people as you can of this important change to the Coupon Program.

### Website of Interest

#### Virginia Beach Crime Prevention Hits the Web

*Provided by Master Police Officer Dolly Deans, VBPD*

In an effort to reach as many citizens as possible, the Virginia Beach Police Department has gone to the internet with POD casts. Below are the two links demonstrating how the POD Casts work... The first link highlights Crime Prevention and the second, Auto Theft.

<http://www.vbgov.com/podcast.aspx?show=Crime%20Prevention>

<http://www.vbgov.com/podcast.aspx?show=Crime%20Prevention%20Tips>

### Free snow shoveling for senior citizens

TERRE HAUTE, Ind. (WTHI) - Students from Terre Haute North and Terre Haute South high schools are volunteering to shovel snow for senior citizens. Students aren't equipped to de-ice your driveways, but when the snow hits, they're volunteering their manpower to keep seniors safe. All you need to do is contact the organizer and leave your information. He'll pair you up with a student. Then, when it snows, that student will show-up and shovel the snow for you.

"They were excited about it and more than happy to go along with it," organizer Syllas Smith said. "We had close to 100 kids sign up. We asked them one time, and it was just an overwhelming response." If you're a senior citizen and you'd like to enlist these student's help, you can call 812-917-4053.

### Seniors Who Live Alone Vulnerable

Reported by: *Karen Hopkins*

People are living longer, and more elderly are living alone, putting parents and grandparents at risk for attacks. Friday's elderly rape marked the third case in Shreveport since September. But keeping your older relatives out of harm's way is easier than you might think.

It's not just attacks that seniors and their relatives should be thinking about, health risks and everyday necessities can also provide problems. But some Ark-latex organizations are here to help.

L.K. Webb says he needed help. "I thought somebody, please help me." The 72-year-old was living in a home without running water. "One of the seniors approached me and told me that he needed some help," Neighborhood Assistance Team Member Tira Glover said. Shreveport and Bossier police say all it takes is a call, for officers to check on an elderly neighbor. "The community is very good about coming together and helping us, helping them," SPD Officer Meosha Deal said.

Betty Strogon is 71-years-old, and gets a check up call each week from the Bossier Sheriff. Strogon also wears a medical alert button. "It's a comfort to know you have it because all you have to do is push it and they make the call for you." The emergency necklace costs twenty dollars a month through the Caddo Council on Aging. "If you're being raped or someone has broken into your home, they will hear all the screaming and yelling and then immediately contact 911," Mary Alice Rountree said. Two elderly Shreveport women were raped after a knock on the door last fall. "If anybody knocks on my door, they don't say who they are: I'm telling them I'm calling 911," Strogon said.

No one knows when an attack could come. "I got a stick under my bed about that long and that big around." Webb says being prepared never gets old.

Caddo Council on Aging hosts a triad meeting to talk about senior safety the second Tuesday of every month, from 9am to 10am. Shreveport police offers self defense classes for interested seniors. Contact the Community Policing Bureau at 318-673-6950. The Neighborhood Assistance Team also reaches out to seniors; their number is 318-673-7359.

### Website of the Month

[www.nationaltriad.org](http://www.nationaltriad.org)

Have you updated your Triad or S.A.L.T. contact list since you've given us the information? We encourage you to visit, to check your Triad information online, and to contact us should you need to change any information. Remember, only by sharing your knowledge can we shape the future of Triad!

More Senior Safety related articles are located at [www.nationaltriad.org](http://www.nationaltriad.org); e-news section

## ESTATE OF DENIAL

*Think prosecuting elder abuse will be easy under Newly passed Measure 57? Maybe not.*

BY JAMES PITKIN | JPITKIN AT W WEEK DOT COM

Fletcher Johnson was vacationing on the Italian sea-side last fall when he learned in an email that his stepfather, Warren Cummins, had died at home in Portland on Sept. 24.

The news came from Patricia McIntosh, Cummins' live-in caregiver. Johnson wrote back that his stepdad's passing was "sad, even if not unexpected." Cummins was 91, after all, and relied on McIntosh to provide for his basic needs.

But if the old man's death didn't surprise Johnson, the fate of his stepfather's estate certainly came as a shock. Unbeknownst to Johnson, Cummins signed over his \$492,000 West Hills home, plus securities and bank accounts worth up to \$400,000, a month before his death. And he rewrote his will, leaving everything else to the same person.

The recipient wasn't Johnson. Nor was it one of Cummins' three adopted children. It was McIntosh, who had been his caregiver for just three months.

As Multnomah County investigates allegations of elder abuse in the case, two of Portland's leading probate attorneys are squaring off in court to decide who should inherit the money Cummins made during his career as an accountant.

The case is one of more than 3,000 complaints of elder abuse Multnomah County investigates each year. And financial abuse is the biggest cause of those complaints with caregivers often accused, says Mohammad Bader, adult protective services program manager for the county.

While state administrative rules prohibit "using the nurse-client relationship to exploit the client by gaining property or other items," such cases are notoriously hard to detect and difficult to prove, Bader says, declining comment on this specific case.

As part of Measure 57, which voters approved in November, Oregon launches tough new mandatory sentences this month for people accused of targeting the elderly. But the fight over Cummins' estate illustrates just how ambiguous and messy such cases can be to sort out.

No criminal charges have been brought in the case, though county officials told a concerned neighbor last month they're working with Cummins' family to investigate allegations of elder abuse. Police are not involved. The venue instead in the current fight instead

is Multnomah County Circuit Court, where Cummins' children are challenging McIntosh in a civil probate case.

According to court documents, Cummins—whose wife died in 2007—abruptly fired his former caregiver in May 2008 and hired McIntosh, a licensed practical nurse from Forest Grove. McIntosh is registered with the state and has no disciplinary record with the state Board of Nursing.

## BALTO. CO. POLICE CHIEF FOCUSES ON SCAMS TARGETING ELDERLY

BY NICK MADIGAN |  
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*"There will come a time when virtually every crime will be cyber-related," Johnson said. "It's changing the police workplace dramatically. I need career professionals in this technology."*

Scams targeting the elderly have become so pervasive that officials in Baltimore County are boosting efforts to prevent them. But with older people living longer, the swindles are multiplying faster than anyone can track.

"We're struggling to keep up," county Police Chief James W. Johnson told a meeting in Towson today of the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council. He estimated that he soon will need eight to 10 more officers just to deal with the burgeoning problem.

"We're seeing a significant increase in fraud cases involving elderly victims," Johnson said, citing statistics that show 184 reported fraud crimes against elderly people in the county in the first nine months of last year, compared with 149 during the same period in 2007.

Johnson and other officials at the meeting agreed that the actual number is likely much bigger because many seniors feel embarrassed that they have been duped and keep it from their children and others. To make matters worse, he said, the vast number of computers now in circulation make such crimes easier. In many cases, con artists create Web sites that mimic real ones.

## Senior Citizens can Lose Life Savings via Power of Attorney

By Sandra Block, USA TODAY

Vulnerable senior citizens are increasingly losing their life savings to unscrupulous individuals who have power of attorney over their finances, the AARP says in a report set to be released Thursday.

By giving a spouse, adult child or other individual power of attorney, seniors can ensure that someone will manage their affairs if they become incapacitated. The individual who has power of attorney — known as the agent — can do everything from writing checks to selling property. But because most states lack adequate safeguards, those broad powers give dishonest agents a license to steal, says Naomi Karp, strategic policy adviser for the AARP Public Policy Institute.

National statistics aren't available, but adult protective services agencies are reporting a sharp rise in financial exploitation cases involving power of attorney, the AARP report says.

The economic downturn could lead to more abuses, says Sarah Prout, an attorney for Lakeshore Legal Aid in Port Huron, Mich., "because people are looking for new sources of money."

Prout says her office has seen an increase in power of attorney cases in the past six months. One of her clients is a 67-year-old woman who tried unsuccessfully to evict her daughter from her home after her daughter assaulted her. The client learned that her daughter, who had been granted power of attorney while she was in the hospital, had transferred the property to her name. To protect herself, the woman moved into a shelter for victims of domestic violence.

Prout's client has since obtained a restraining order against her daughter and returned home. But because her daughter still co-owns the property, the woman can't sell or borrow against the home she's owned for 47 years, Prout says.

Power of attorney is governed by state law, and state protections vary greatly, the AARP report says. AARP is urging states to adopt a uniform law that would, among other things, require that a power of attorney document clearly state the agent's duties, including the individual's responsibility to act in good faith. It would also make agents who abuse their powers liable for damages.

New Mexico and Idaho have enacted the law, and 12 states are considering adopting it in 2009.

While power of attorney is a valuable estate-planning tool, seniors need to exercise caution before giving anyone authority to manage their finances, says Lori Stiegel, associate staff director for the American Bar Association Commission on Law and Aging.

"Nobody ever wants to think their child or spouse will exploit them," she says. "But it happens."

## BRACING FOR THE BOOM: GROUP EDUCATES ABOUT SENIOR ABUSE PREVENTION

A group of other South Bay agencies, including police departments, social service agencies and financial institutions, formed a coalition aimed at educating the public and providing resources for seniors to prevent abuse.

By Melissa Evans, Staff Writer

### BRACING FOR THE BOOM» New laws battle elder abuse

After three decades in the banking industry, Karen Liebig saw a lot of impropriety surrounding seniors and their finances.

Among the things she witnessed were family members persuading elderly relatives to take money out of certificates of deposit and caretakers persuading people to change names on property deeds.

"You see all kinds of cases of people depriving seniors of living a life with dignity and respect, essentially," Liebig said. "Some of them would have to leave their homes and live in a facility where they don't want to go."

Liebig and a group of other South Bay agencies, including police departments, social service agencies and financial institutions, formed a coalition aimed at educating the public and providing resources for seniors to prevent abuse.

Liebig, with help from police officers, gives about 40 to 60 presentations a year on elder abuse for religious groups, community groups, nursing homes, retirement communities, service clubs and senior centers. They also participate in about 10 health fairs each year.

The group has put together a 17-minute video on caretaking and elder abuse, a PowerPoint presentation and tip sheets and fliers about various crimes and scams that target the elderly.

"We all have our own jobs, too," said Liebig, who also runs a foundation dedicated to health care and elder issues.

"We do this on the side because we believe that people should be treated with respect."

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Find out more

For information on the KEEP-SAFE Coalition, call 310-701-8118 or visit <http://www.keep-safe.org/>.

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[www.sheriffs.org](http://www.sheriffs.org)



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