

NATI NEWSWIRE

SENIOR SAFETY ISSUES

Elderly Abuse Task Force

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The county has created a task force that will focus on protecting the elderly and disabled from abuse. Within the past several years there has been an increase of crimes targeting this group, but you may be surprised who's behind the scams and abuse.

"Our case managers tend to deal more with abuse by family members and care-givers," said Musa Ansari, from the Jefferson Area Board for Aging. The people elderly trust the most are often responsible for abuse, neglect, or theft. In just the past five years the number of criminal investigations in Albemarle County of elderly and disabled being exploited has nearly tripled.

"As property values have increased in the county, as we move to more electronic financial record keeping with identity theft, we've seen an increase in complex financial exploitation," said David Cattell-Gordon, Assistant Director of Albemarle Department of Social Services.

We're not talking a few dollars here or there. Some elderly have been scammed out of their houses, land, and even all of their legal rights.

That's why the county created a task force that will consist of the Commonwealth's Attorney, Albemarle Police, and the Department of Social Services. "We have to work together between the different departments, because Social Services investigate the social problems, but we don't have the expertise to investigate the legal problems," explained Tricia Suszynski with the Department of Social Services.

One of the biggest problems facing law enforcers is getting the victim to press charges against someone they thought they could trust. "They have an emotional conflict because if their relative is prosecuted, then they've sent their own family member to jail," Ansari said.

Because it is tough for people to come forward and admit they have been targeted, members of this task force ask you to keep an eye out for people you know that could be a victim. You are asked to call 1-888-82-ADULT to file a report. The county Board of Supervisors plans to recognize this new program at their meeting Wednesday.

Find this article at: <http://www.charlottesvillenevnewsplex.tv/>

EX-TREASURER IN MICH. ACCUSED OF BILKING COUNTY FOR NIGERIAN SCAM BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

HARRISVILLE, Mich. - The former county treasurer in this Lake Huron vacation community was ordered Wednesday to stand trial on charges that he looted \$186,500 in public funds for a Nigerian investment scam. Thomas Katona is charged with eight counts of embezzlement, one of attempted embezzlement and two counts of forgery. He has not entered a plea. Police have said the money went to organizations linked to a Nigerian "advance fee" scheme, variations of which have been around for years. They begin with unsolicited letters or e-mails seeking help in transferring millions of dollars from Africa to overseas accounts. Victims are typically offered a generous share of the money if they pay upfront "costs" such as taxes, fees and bribes.

IOWA UTILITIES BOARD BANS PHONE COMPANY FROM STATE

By [Darwin Danielson](#)

The Iowa Utilities Board has banned a long-distance telephone company from the state. Rob Hillesland is a spokesman for the Utilities Board. Hillesland says the Utilities Board found in a formal complaint proceeding that the Buzz Telecom had been committing "billing fraud" against many customers. He says the board has order all telecommunications service providers in the state to stop billing customers on behalf of Buzz Telecom and to deny the company access to their exchange services.

Hillesland says the Buzz Telecom was "slamming" customers, or switching their phone service to their company without the permission of the customer. Hillesland says the ban is rare. Hillesland says this is only the second time he can remember that the board has banned a company, so "this is pretty substantial and harsh action by the board." While Buzz Telecom is banned in Iowa, Hillesland says you should still be on the lookout.

Hillesland says you should look at your phone bill for any suspicious charges that you did not authorize. He says companies will use various names to try and sneak in charges. Hillesland says the action was taken to ban Buzz Telecom on the basis of 12 cases, but he says the board has received some 300 complaints. Hillesland says anyone who are suspicious about their telephone bill can call the Utilities Board toll free at: 877-565-4450. Iowa's Attorney General and Consumer Advocate issued an advisory in December urging Iowans to check their phone bills for unauthorized charges from Buzz Telecom. The Attorney General says the company often targeted elderly Iowans.

Preventing Elderly Scams

JEFFERSON CITY - Attorney General Jay Nixon is cracking down on mail scams targeted at the elderly.

8,000 pieces of mail, or 8,000 chances to lose your hard earned money? It depends on who you ask.

"All kinds of companies, all kinds of different organizations, many of them [are] taking advantage of people," said Ron Marsh, Senior Sting participant.

Marsch was a teacher for 32 years, so he's given and received his share of lessons. And though some companies may not admit to taking advantage of people, life taught Marsch otherwise.

"My mother passed away about three years ago. She was 85. And I know there were several things I got involved with mom that tried to get her information through the mail and take advantage of her at her age," explained Marsch.

So just what makes mail scams such an attractive offer? The fact that you can just put something on paper, and drop it in the mail. That's what has Marsch concerned. He decided to take action, and helped organize Senior Sting 2006, an effort to collect 8,000 pieces of mail sent to the elderly.

"In a lot of cases, some companies have responded and said they'll stop sending mail in Missouri, which is a great result. We don't want these fraudulent operators sending in their bogus mail to Missouri consumers," explained Travis Ford, of the attorney general's office. Of course, the battle may never be completely won, so Marsch has some advice, next time you walk to your mailbox.

"I think if you get something and it seems too good to be true, it probably is," he said.

Still teaching after all these years, it's just another lesson from Mr. Marsch.

Attorney General Nixon's office has more than 300 legal actions pending against 27 companies identified in the sting.

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Funding Opportunity for your Program

RMS and NATI provide funding opportunities for Triads, Domestic Violence organizations, and other projects.

To participate, RMS requests that your organization collect used cell phones and contact them at:

911CellphoneBank.com or terrih@sheriffs.org

RMS pays for shipping phones to them and returns usable cell phones to: law enforcement, senior programs, and domestic violence organizations—to provide cell phones to those in need in your community. Salable phones are recycled, with funds being returned to your organization. Contact RMS or NATI today.

Bills push senior-citizen alert program

By ELIZABETH SIMPSON, The Virginian-Pilot

Advocates for the aging will join state legislators today in Richmond to highlight proposed legislation to help locate older people with dementia who wander away.

Two bills before the General Assembly, SB1117 and HB2372, propose a "Senior Alert" program that would be similar to the Amber Alert system, in which law enforcers and the media alert the general public of missing children to help find them. The bills call for the state police to develop uniform standards for such alerts for older people with dementia.

The Senior Alert program would be voluntary on the part of local law enforcement agencies and the media. Representatives from AARP and the Alzheimer's Association will join Attorney General Bob McDonnell, Sen. Nick Rerras, R-Norfolk, and Del. Allen Dudley, R-Rocky Mount, in Richmond today to discuss the proposal. The two lawmakers are chief sponsors of the bills.

Carter Harrison, public policy coordinator for the Virginia chapters of the Alzheimer's Association, said the problem of people with dementia wandering from their homes is increasing because of the aging population. He said the police and the media often alert the public of these cases but that more uniformity would help. Other programs protect older people. The Alzheimer's Association Safe Return program outfits a person with dementia with an ID bracelet, necklace or label that has an emergency number to call. The Chesapeake-based Project Lifesaver outfits a person with a personalized wristband, which costs about \$270, that emits a tracking signal. When a client is reported missing, a search team can track the person through the device.

Reach Elizabeth Simpson at (757)446-2635

Oakland Aims to Protect Seniors From Lottery Scam

OAKLAND, Calif. (KCBS) -- Oakland officials are teaming up with area banks in an effort to keep seniors from being swindled out of their life savings by an old scam.

In the past week, three seniors in the Fruitvale District have been targeted. In one case, a woman lost \$10,000.

A victim is usually approached by a well-dressed man who says he needs money to claim a lottery prize, according to Oakland City Council President Ignacio De La Fuente. An accomplice will then enter the conversation and agree to help, giving the victim the impression that the situation is legitimate.

"They convince them somehow to take out their savings, either to take cash out of their homes or to actually take them to the bank," he told KCBS reporter Mark Seelig.

De La Fuente has convinced Bank of America and other banks in the city to get involved. Bank of America executive Luis Castillo said, "The Bank of America has made a great effort to train tellers to notice things like large checks. We are very familiar with this scam."

He added, "If it looks too good to be true, it probably is too good to be true."

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