

NATI NEWSWIRE

SENIOR SAFETY ISSUES

10 THINGS YOUR COMMUNITY CAN DO TO STOP CRIME

Safety really can come in numbers, just ask your neighbors.

1. **Work with public agencies** and other organizations -- neighborhood-based or community-wide -- on solving common problems. Don't be shy about letting them know what your community needs.
2. **Find positive ways for youth** in the neighborhood to spend their spare time, through organized recreation, tutoring programs, part-time work, and volunteer opportunities.
3. **Set up a Neighborhood Watch** or a community patrol, working with police. Make sure your streets and homes are well lighted.
4. **Build a partnership with police**, focused on solving problems instead of reacting to crises. Make it possible for neighbors to report suspicious activity or crimes without fear of retaliation.
5. **Take advantage of safety in numbers** to hold rallies, marches, and other group activities to show you're determined to drive out crime and drugs.
6. **Clean up the neighborhood!** Involve everyone -- teens, children, senior citizens. Graffiti, litter, abandoned cars, and run-down buildings tell criminals that you don't care about where you live or each other. Call the city public works department and ask for help in cleaning up.
7. **Ask local officials** to use new ways to get criminals out of your building or neighborhood. These include enforcing anti-noise laws, housing codes, health and fire codes, anti-nuisance laws, and drug-free clauses in rental leases.
8. **Form a Court Watch** to help support victims and witnesses and to see that criminals get fairly punished.
9. **Work with schools** to establish drug-free, gun-free zones; work with recreation officials to do the same for parks.
10. **Develop and share a phone list** of local organizations that can provide counseling, job training, guidance, and other services that neighbors might need.

Phony water workers con elderly

For the second time in a month in Placer County, phony water workers have conned the elderly into letting them inside a home, where they have stolen money and other items.

The Placer County Sheriff's Department said the latest scam occurred at 9 a.m. Wednesday on Hillgrove Street in Granite Bay when two men victimized an elderly man and got away with a safe containing cash and documents. Sheriff's spokeswoman Dena Erwin said one of the suspects told the victim that there was a water problem in the neighborhood and they needed to check his home. The victim led the suspect through the house and into the backyard, she said, and the phony worker instructed him to hold the hose while the water was running.

The suspect then went back into the man's home, let the second suspect in through the front door, and the two men took the safe, Erwin said.

The victim described the suspects as Latino, 5 feet 6 inches to 6 feet tall and having stocky builds. Both had brown hair and eyes. The first suspect wore a tool belt and an identification badge that was turned backward, Erwin said. The first suspect also wore a blue work shirt with an orange T-shirt underneath. On June 27, a similar scam occurred in Loomis.

The **ABA Commission on Law and Aging** (ABA Commission) prepared "Neglect of Older Persons: An Introduction to Legal Issues Related to Caregiver Duty and Liability," is an introduction to legal issues related to liability for neglect of older persons. This document is new. "Information About Laws Related To Elder Abuse" and "Adult Protective Services, Institutional Abuse and Long Term Care Ombudsman Program Laws: Citations by State," are updates to an older chart and accompanying explanation. The new documents contain updated information current as of December 31, 2006. To access: (<http://www.abanet.org/aging/about/elderabuse.shtml>) or go to the ABA Commission's home page, www.abanet.org/aging and then click on the "Elder Abuse" tab on the page's left side). Or access them through the NCEA website (http://www.ncea.aoa.gov/NCEAroot/Main_Site/Find_Help/APS/Analysis_State_Laws.aspx) soon.

Bankruptcy Rising Among Seniors

By Christine Dugas, USA TODAY

Swamped by debt and rising medical bills, elderly Americans have been seeking bankruptcy-court protection at sharply faster rates than other adults, a study to be released Tuesday indicates.

From 1991 to 2007, the rate of personal bankruptcy filings among those ages 65 or older jumped by 150%, according to AARP, which will release the new research from the Consumer Bankruptcy Project. The most startling rise occurred among those ages 75 to 84, whose rate soared 433%.

The study did not address the specific reasons behind the trend. But experts say medical bills have played a major role in the debt that has forced many elderly Americans into bankruptcy proceedings.

"Health care is a big issue for the elderly," says George Gaberlavage, director of consumer and state affairs at the AARP Public Policy Institute. "And out-of-pocket expenses have been going up."

As a result, Gaberlavage says he thinks health care is the single biggest cause of the rise in filings.

During the same 1991-2007 period, bankruptcy filings by younger Americans actually declined. The 2007 statistics are based on a national sample that included 2,435 responses from bankruptcy filers. It's the first in several Consumer Bankruptcy Project reports supported by AARP, which will later study and spell out the individual factors behind the increase.

The number of personal bankruptcy filings for all age groups declined after a stricter new law took effect in 2005. Still, when the filings from 2007 were compared with those from 1991, those of older Americans, as a percentage of all filings, have surged.

"In past generations, older Americans were more financially secure," says Elizabeth Warren, a Harvard Law professor and co-author of the Consumer Bankruptcy Project study. "Now, instead of going into retirement loaded with assets, Americans are hitting their retirement years loaded with debt."

In previous decades, Warren notes, Social Security helped lift millions of older Americans into a solidly middle-class life. But now, with the rising cost of food, drugs and housing, Social Security often doesn't go far enough. For the elderly, bankruptcy is a particular concern because it's typically harder for seniors, usually lacking in well-paying job opportunities, to climb back out of it.

"They have so little time to start over and build up savings, and they have few or no job opportunities," says Susan Reinhard, director of the AARP Public Policy Institute. "The connection between health and economic security is a big issue for older Americans."

NURSING HOME FOR SEX OFFENDERS BECOMES LAW, A FIRST IN AMERICA

Mississippi—The Most Concrete Legislation in America to Protect Long-Term Care Residents in Over 30 Years

The Sex Offenders Long-Term Care Facility Bill, the first of its kind in the nation and the most concrete legislation to protect venerable long-term care residents written in the past thirty years, will be signed into law by Oklahoma Governor Brad Henry on Tuesday, June 10 at 11 am CDT in the Oklahoma State Capitol's Blue Room. Wes Bledsoe, the nation's leading advocate on Predators in America's Nursing Homes states, "Enactment of this bill will directly reduce murders, rapes, sexual and physical assaults against vulnerable long-term care residents, as well it serves as a model for the federal government and state legislatures across America."

The bill (House Bill 2704) ultimately establishes a long-term care facility for Level III (High Risk) and Level II (Moderate Risk) Registered Sex Offenders. The bill was authored by Representative Kris Steele, sponsored by Senator Tom Adelson, and co-sponsored by almost 10% of the Oklahoma State House and Senate membership.

Both chambers of the legislature passed the Sex Offenders Long-Term Care Facility Bill on Thursday, May 22 by unanimous votes.

The bill was inspired and championed by Bledsoe's four-year crusade which uncovered almost sixty murders, rapes, sexual and physical assaults committed by violent and sexual offenders while living as residents in long-term care facilities. Victims of these criminal acts include female and male residents, staff and even one 3 year-old visitor.

Bledsoe's research has also debunked numerous fairy tales used as justifications by elected and appointed officials to warehouse violent and sexual predators in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities. Erroneous justifications include:

1. The offenders are all old
2. Old offenders don't pose a threat
3. Incapacitated or wheelchair bound offenders are safe
4. Child molesters are safe around old people
5. You only need to worry about sex offenders
6. Nursing homes are capable to handle these offenders
7. Prior offenses were minor or they happened long ago
8. Offenders have paid their debt to society
9. It's not rape, it's consensual sex

Bledsoe is currently working with Congressional leaders to call for and conduct a Congressional Hearing to address this "disgraceful issue."

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More Senior Safety related articles are located at www.nationaltriad.org; e-news section

Attorney who robbed millions from client gets three years in prison

BY BRIGITTE RUTHMAN REPUBLICAN-AMERICAN LITCHFIELD --

Peter Sivaslian, an attorney who cultivated the trust of an elderly woman, then stole more than \$4 million from her estate as she slipped into dementia, will serve three years in prison even after repaying the stolen funds with interest.

"This was a crime of opportunity, an investment you planned to realize," Judge Michael Sheldon told the 75-year-old Sivaslian in Litchfield Superior Court on Tuesday.

Though Sivaslian made good on a pledge to repay \$4.5 million in principal and interest, restoration didn't diminish the seriousness of the crime, Sheldon said. Sivaslian, a former Torrington attorney, pleaded no contest in May to two counts of first-degree larceny for cultivating the trust of Jane Wiederhold of Barkhamsted for the purpose of personal enrichment.

"You haven't made it better by pulling out the knife you stuck in," said Sheldon. "The harm you did has not been repaid."

Sivaslian said he was sorry, and that he wished he could turn back the clock and erase three years of incomprehensible suffering and embarrassment.

"I gave back more than I received," a neatly dressed, ashen-faced Sivaslian said. "It has practically wiped out my savings."

Over a period of years after they met in the late 1960s, Sivaslian wove himself into the fabric of John and Jane Wiederhold's financial affairs. Jane was a former New York City model on record at Lasell College in Newton, Mass. as "Queen of the Snow Ball, capable and clever." Her husband, John, was a frugal and meticulous investor who left an estate worth more than \$12 million when he died in 1998.

Wiederhold began suffering from dementia in 1995 and raised concerns about finances in 2001. By 2002, she had lost her grip on reality. She died in January of 2007 at the age of 85.

State's Attorney David Shepack recommended five years as punishment for a pattern of deceit, a term which included provisions for Sivaslian's advanced age and restitution.

His story wasn't consistent, Shepack said. He claimed the funds were gifts, and alternately that he invested the wealth in safe and conservative investments, as if in safe keeping.

Defense attorney John Williams said Sivaslian's life has been disgraced and shamed. He asked for a sentence consisting of community service. As marshals moved in to place handcuffs on Sivaslian, he whispered

a request to Williams for a delay to put his affairs in order. Sheldon granted a two-week stay after imposing an eight-year term, suspended after three years, five years of probation and 1,000 hours of community service.

Sivaslian went out a side entrance, avoiding photographers posted outside the courthouse doors.

Sivaslian is eligible to request a parole hearing after serving 50 percent of his sentence.

NYers Duped By Energy Service 'Power Play' Scams

[Christine Sloan](#) NEW YORK (CBS) — With the high price of fuel, everyone is looking to save a few bucks, especially when it comes to paying for power. Energy service companies promise to save you money, but some are using a 'Power Play' to make you pay much more in the end. Hundreds of New Yorker's are being duped into paying more for gas and electric by energy service companies who either switch them over without their knowledge or trick them into signing contracts that suddenly change, according to some lawmakers. Shiela Bellen says her daughter was conned, and she's probably not alone: "For a couple of months her bills were much less, then they sold to someone else and all of a sudden her bills went up higher than Con Ed," Bellen. "I've gotten fliers in the mail and I've gotten phone calls...they're asking me to change over from Con Ed to another firm," said senior citizen Bobby Lee. Energy service companies are small gas and electric brokers who emerged about 10 years ago after utility deregulation. One local assemblyman says he has crafted legislation to protect consumers from deceptive practices. Assemblyman Michael Gianaris of Queens had this to say to CBS 2: "Very similar to the subprime mortgage crisis...they'll show up and have you sign the dotted line and maybe for a few months your bill will go down and then it goes through the roof." Gianaris added that his bill would impose fines and allow customers to get out of contracts without hefty fees. An AARP spokesperson says complaints against these companies have increased by almost 400 percent, and that most of the victims are seniors. "Energy prices are going up by 22 percent and seniors are stretching every dollar they can...last thing they need is to be gouged by deceptive marketing practices," said Luci De Haan of the AARP. The best way to protect yourself, according to De Haan, is to not sign anything at your door, especially if you don't know the person. CBS 2 HD found 14 energy service companies authorized to provide service to New York City customers, but all of them are based outside of Manhattan.(© MMVIII, CBS Broadcasting Inc. All Rights Reserved.)

Self-abuse frequent form of elder abuse

Tom McMahon, Staff Writer 06/14/2008

University of Nebraska Omaha Assistant Professor of Gerontology Christopher Kelly said self-abuse is the fastest growing type of abuse among the nation's elderly.

He was the featured speaker at a World Elder Abuse Awareness Day event Thursday at Harrah's Casino-Hotel. "About half of all abuse we are seeing today is self-abuse," Kelly said.

He defines it as people not taking proper care of themselves - not eating properly, ignoring health problems, drinking too much or engaging in other risky behaviors. Some people exhibit self-abusive behaviors throughout their lives, but the issue is made worse by failing health or late-life mental health concerns.

"More people are living longer, and more are living alone," Kelly said. Increased isolation and reluctance by friends and neighbors to report the neglect add to the problem, he said.

"People see it as a personal issue and none of their business. But, it puts the person at risk and increases the chances of abuse by others."

In addition to self-abuse, other forms of elder abuse include caregiver neglect and physical, emotional and financial abuse. Of these, neglect and physical abuse are the most-reported types, but financial abuse is the fastest growing. And most of the rise is from telemarketing, door-to-door and e-mail scams, Kelly said.

While most reported abuse occurs in private residences, nursing home and assisted living residents can also be victims, Kelly said. An older attendee at the conference told of his wife in the nursing home.

"Sometimes her room is cold, and her covers are off," the man said. "She can't push her call button for help." He said staff is caring but needs more education.

"They need to go into her room when they pass by and make sure everything is OK. They are trained more to care for ambulatory patients."

Kelly said nursing home ombudsmen investigate complaints coming from long-term care facilities. He said Adult Protective Services deals with community-based abuse reports. He urged people to call if they witness abusive behaviors or notice changes in an elderly person. Kelly said information can be reported anonymously.

He said law enforcement and the court system need to become more involved in addressing the issue and called for additional training of their personnel.

"We need to recognize this as a domestic violence issue and not just a caregiver issue."

To report elder abuse, call the Adult Children and Adult Abuse Hotline at (800) 362-2178. To contact the long-term care ombudsman, call (800) 532-3213.

Trial date set for teacher accused of theft

By Staff reports

Rush-Henrietta Post Rochester, N.Y. -

A judge today set a trial date for the Rush-Henrietta teacher accused of bilking an elderly widow of her life savings. The trial for Lynn Taliento will begin in Monroe County court Nov. 24. Taliento was arrested last year after the victim claimed Taliento scammed her of nearly \$750,000. Taliento is charged with grand larceny and scheming to defraud. State police investigators said Taliento allegedly told the 72-year-old victim she needed the money to help with a sick child, which investigators said was a false story. They said Taliento also promised to pay the money back.

MAN ACCUSED OF POSING AS CITY INSPECTOR TO STEAL FROM ELDERLY

A Northwest Side man who claimed to be a City of Chicago inspector to gain entrance to homes in order to steal items has been arrested and charged, police said Wednesday. Walter Miller, 51, of the 3000 block of West Fullerton Avenue has been charged with residential burglary and home invasion on the South Side over the last few months, according to a news release from Chicago police. Miller preyed on elderly victims and gained entry to their homes by posing as an employee with the Chicago Department of Water Management, a sewer inspector or a representative from an electric company, under the pretense of making emergency inspections, police said. He made off with cash, jewelry and other valuables, they said. Grand-Central Area detectives arrested Miller on Tuesday in the 3500 block of North Central Avenue on a warrant for a parole violation. Detectives eventually discovered that Miller was cited in investigative alerts issued for residential burglaries on the South Side, police said. Police conducted lineups with several of Miller's victims. He was positively identified and later charged in the crimes, which police say started in May. Miller is scheduled for a bond hearing Wednesday afternoon in the Cook County Criminal Courts Building.

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