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Summit County Prosecutor Declares September as Senior Safety Awareness Month

Annual Event Focuses Awareness on Keeping Seniors Safe

AKRON, Ohio (Thursday, September 1, 2022) – Summit County Prosecutor Sherri Bevan Walsh announced today the continuation of a public awareness campaign aimed at keeping Summit County's seniors safe. As part of her ongoing mission to make Summit County a better and safer place to live, Prosecutor Walsh has again declared September as Senior Safety Awareness Month. This September marks the 21st straight year Prosecutor Walsh has refocused efforts to help protect our seniors.

"Seniors are among our most vulnerable and are many times targeted by criminals. My goal of Senior Safety Awareness month is to provide information to the community to help minimize their chances of becoming a victim of crime. Scammers and criminals are always thinking of new ways to steal your money and we have to be one step ahead," said Prosecutor Walsh. "All year my office fights to keep the citizens of Summit County safe. September is a time to re-focus on seniors."

As part of this year's campaign, the Summit County Prosecutor's Office is once again teaming up with the Summit County Sheriff's Office with billboards and bus ads which will be seen throughout Summit County. These ads provide the 24-hour Sheriff's Office hotline (330.643.2181) for people to call to report elder abuse. Ads on the interior of Summit County METRO buses will also provide information on some of the more popular scams which target seniors as well as tips to avoid becoming a victim.

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“The Summit County Sheriff’s Office is very pleased to be teaming up with Prosecutor Walsh once again for Senior Safety Awareness Month,” said Sheriff Fatheree. “Whether it’s through our own Sheriff’s Office senior programs, or through partnerships with agencies like Adult Protective Services or this effort with the Prosecutor’s Office, we at the Sheriff’s Office are dedicated to protecting our seniors, and to ensuring that justice is served if they find themselves in any way victimized.”

Earlier this year, Prosecutor Walsh established a new Senior Protection Unit within the Prosecutor’s Office geared toward protecting and fighting for the rights of seniors.

The new “Senior Protection Unit” was established to combat abuse against adults aged 60 and older. The Unit will have an assistant Summit County prosecutor dedicated to work with Summit County Adult Protective Services to review and prosecute criminal and civil cases involving abuse of seniors.

The Senior Protection Unit will also collaborate with local leaders and organizations to provide safety information, trainings, and self-defense classes for the community.

Throughout the entire month of September, the Summit County Prosecutor’s Office will also educate as many senior citizens as possible about scams, criminal activity, and how to protect their home. If you would like to have a prosecutor speak with your group about those topics, please contact Tania Nemer, the Summit County Prosecutor’s Office Community Outreach Prosecutor, at tnemer@prosecutor.summitoh.net.

Recently, old scams have resurfaced, attempting to steal money and identities from unsuspecting victims. The more seniors and their families know, the better prepared they are to not become a victim.

- The Jury Duty scam is making the rounds again. The scam, which has been around for years, is once again targeting Summit County residents. The jury duty scam works like many other phone scams. The caller claims that there is a warrant out for your arrest because you missed jury duty. The caller says you can get rid of the warrant by paying a fine with a gift card. You cannot pay fines or outstanding bills with store gift cards. Scammers hope to catch unsuspecting victims off guard with the threat of an arrest.
- The “Grandparent Scam” is a common scam which targets the elderly. This is when a person receives a call from someone claiming to be their grandchild. The caller says they’re in trouble – either they were arrested or in a car crash – and need cash quick. They will usually ask to have the money sent by purchasing gift cards. The caller also asks to not tell “mom and dad”.
- Another common scam is the IRS Scam. In this scam, a caller claims the person owes taxes and will be arrested if they don’t pay immediately. Again, the caller will ask to make the payment by purchasing gift cards. The IRS never calls to demand an immediate payment.
- New scams also target people who try to sell items online in places like Facebook Marketplace. A potential buyer will contact the seller about the item, then take the conversation onto a non-monitored platform like WhatsApp. There they ask the seller to authenticate themselves with a verification code. If approved, the code allows the fraudster to create an account using the seller’s phone number, which can be used in other scams.

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- Never send money or give out personal information such as credit card numbers, bank account numbers, dates of birth, or Social Security numbers to unfamiliar companies or unknown persons.
- Many scams involve victims purchasing store gift cards. Utilities and companies will not accept payment with store gift cards. If someone calls demanding the purchase of a store gift cards to pay a bill, it is a scam.
- Do not answer any call where you do not recognize the number. Remember, no agency will collect money through gift cards.
- Talk to family and friends or call your lawyer, accountant or banker and get their advice before you make any large purchases or investment over the phone with a stranger.
- Check out unfamiliar companies with your local consumer protection agency, Better Business Bureau, the National Fraud Information Center, or other watchdog groups.

Don't forget you have the power to simply hang up the phone when strangers call and try to sell you something you don't want!

Summit County Prosecutor's Office employees will be at the following upcoming events, providing safety information to the community.

- September 2, 2022 – Akron Zoo's Senior Safari – 10a-2p
- September 8, 2022 – Green Senior EXPO – 10a-noon
- September 8, 2022 - AARP Macedonia Senior Event – 1p-1:30p
- September 28, 2022 – Nordonia Senior Center Safety Speech – 11a-1:30p
- October 4, 2022 – Senior Day at the Akron Art Museum – 1p-4p

The Prosecutor's Office popular Senior Safety Awareness Calendar is also back. The 2023 calendar has great safety information for anyone. If you would like a Senior Safety Awareness Calendar, please contact Tania Nemer, the Summit County Prosecutor's Office Community Outreach Prosecutor, at tnemer@prosecutor.summitoh.net.