

Dutchess County Office for the Aging's

AGING NEWS

For the week of February 2

"My uncle is convinced Taylor Swift is in love with him and needs money. Can somebody help?"

Strange as that scenario may sound, it's easier to be victimized by romance and companionship scammers than you might assume - especially if the victims are lonely or socially isolated.

The encouraging news, as we see it, is that our chances of preventing these scams can be improved with a program OFA already has in place: "Friendly Calls." In its three years of operation, hundreds of Dutchess County older adults have reduced their risk of isolation - and thus their risk of being victimized.

The Romance Scammers' Script

Georgia State University professor and fraud researcher David Maimon recently shared an online "romance fraud playbook" used by scammers around the world.

What struck us was that the scammers do not immediately aim for their victims' money, but first for the appearance of human connection. They hook their victims with compliments; after all, it's only human to respond positively to compliments. Only after weeks of these conversations, when trust is established, do the scammers begin "billing" their victims. The romance fraud playbook comes with over 200 scripted questions and answers.

OFA's Friendly Calls can help that would-be victim protect themselves before a scammer worms their way into the victim's life...and life savings. Contact OFA to find out more about being a volunteer and/or participant.

AARP recently released its list of what they expect will be the biggest fraud and scam trends for 2026:

1. Employment Scams

The internet is crawling with bogus job ads, with many scammers impersonating legitimate employers and job-coaching websites. Here's what to watch for:

- *If the job looks too good to be true, it is.* Fantastic pay? Work from home? Just a few hours a week? There's no such job.
- *Never pay a fee.* Isn't the idea supposed to be that the employer pays you?
- *LinkedIn and Indeed aren't infallible.* Social media can be a big help in landing jobs, but they both have their issues with fake job posts.

- *Check the employer's website.* Don't take the ad's word for it. Go to the employer's website and see if they're really offering the job you're interested in.

2. Recovery Scams

Being scammed is bad enough. Being scammed under the guise of recovering the stolen money is worse. The scammers simply pose as the law enforcement agencies to which their victim reported the crime. Recovery scammers often charge up front for "services" using gift cards, Venmo, wire transfers or cryptocurrency.

3. Fake Arrests

The victim receives a call. They're the subject of a police investigation, or they missed jury duty, or drugs were intercepted en route to their home. It's a

classic false-urgency scam, only now the fakes appear more real thanks to scammers' use of artificial intelligence (AI). The advice remains the same: don't engage. Hang up.

4. "Your Computer's Been Hacked"

Yet another false-urgency scam. Scammers can easily obtain just about anybody's personal information, including yours. Stay calm, don't rise to the scammers' bait, and don't open any unsolicited attachments. Don't click on what they're telling you to click, or call who they're telling you to call.

5. Romance Scams (Some Additional Advice)

- *That "wrong number" call or text...isn't.* Scammers are relying on our instincts to take over here. Back in the day, when we received a wrong-number call at home we'd let the person know that, and they'd go on their way. What changed is that the scammer tries to keep their potential victim on

the line, wearing them down until they slip up. Don't engage with the scammer, and you can't be victimized.

- *Stay on the platform you're using.* This applies to social media users. The scammer may reach out to you while you're using Facebook, and try to charm you into taking their conversation with you to a different social media platform like WhatsApp, or any of the other platforms with less robust scam-seeking algorithms.

- *Funny how they can't meet face to face.* That's often the story. They'll tell the victim they're an international diplomat. They're a touring musician. A model. A cowboy, even. Whatever the job they claim to have, it precludes them from ever meeting in person. But they sure could use your money.

Report Scams and Scam Attempts

Talk to police and financial institutions as needed.

dutchessny.gov/scamprevention has a list of resources. By coming forward to report scams, you'll be helping yourself and thousands of others being targeted by scammers every day.

FEBRUARY HOLIDAYS

Abraham Lincoln's birthday (Thursday, February 12th) is observed as a public holiday in New York State and eight other states. Dutchess County Government offices, including OFA and OFA Friendship Centers, are closed on the 12th.

The national President's Day holiday is observed this year on Monday, February 16th. Offices and Friendship Centers will be closed on that day as well.

Home Delivered Meals clients receive shelf-stable meals in advance of both holidays.

OFA CENTRAL KITCHEN VOLUNTEERS WANTED

OFA's Nutrition Services division is looking for weekday volunteer assistance in our central kitchen, at OFA headquarters in Poughkeepsie (114 Delafield St.).

Every weekday morning, Nutrition Services volunteers help prepare and package hundreds of daily hot meals for OFA Friendship Center clients and homebound older adults throughout Dutchess County.

If you are available any or all weekday mornings (roughly 9am-noon), and can stand while doing kitchen work, find out more about this volunteer opportunity by emailing ofo@dutchessny.gov.

“SENIOR PARK PALETTE” RETURNS IN FEBRUARY

OFA and Dutchess County Parks are presenting the 2026 series of “Senior Park Palette” classes for Dutchess County older adults (age 60+). Dutchess County residents over 60 can sign up for one of the following free classes:

Tuesday, February 10th, 2:30-3:45 pm – Poughkeepsie Friendship Center, 114 Delafield St.

Tuesday, February 17th, 2:30-3:45 pm – Millerton Friendship Center, 28 Century Blvd. (Library Annex)

Tuesday, March 10th, 2:00-3:15 pm – Red Hook Friendship Center, 59 Fisk St. (Red Hook Community Center)

Tuesday, March 24th, 2:30-3:45 pm – East Fishkill Friendship Center, 890 NY 82, Hopewell Junction (East Fishkill Community Center) – **almost full!**

All supplies are provided. Class size is limited to 12.

SIGN UP FOR ALZHEIMER'S MINI CONFERENCE (Wed 3/18)

Join the Alzheimer's Association, the Office for the Aging, Sun River Health and community partners for a mini-conference and listening session on Alzheimer's disease, dementia and memory loss:

Wednesday, March 18th, 9:30-11:30am

Millerton-NorthEast Library Annex (OFA Friendship Center)

28 Century Blvd., Millerton

It's essential learning for older adults and caregivers of all ages. Sign up by calling OFA at 845-486-2555 or emailing ofa@dutchessny.gov.

The event is supported in part by grants from the New York State Department of Health.

Other news:

Why does [workplace ageism](#) still exist?

March 31st is a key deadline day in the Medicare world, described as a “[double deadline day](#).”

How do scammers already know so much of our personal information?

[Here's one look at how.](#)

(video) Got an iPhone that's getting way too many scam calls? [Watch this video for tips](#) on how to slam the door on scams that target your iPhone.

[A touching caregiving story in the Daily Catch](#) local news website, which covers northwestern Dutchess.

This week's birthdays:

1/30: Singer/songwriter/drummer [Phil Collins](#) (75)

1/31: Baseball Hall-of-Famer [Nolan Ryan](#) (79)

2/1: Actor/comedian [Garrett Morris](#) (89)

2/2: Singer/songwriter [Graham Nash](#) (The Hollies / Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young) (84)

2/3: Actor/comedian [Nathan Lane](#) (70)

2/4: Former vice president [Dan Quayle](#) (79)

2/5: Actress/director [Laura Linney](#) (62)

And the Bad Joke!

What has four wheels and flies? A garbage truck.