

Dutchess County Office for the Aging's

AGING NEWS

For the week of May 25th

Note: the Office for the Aging and OFA Friendship Centers are closed on Monday, May 25th, in observance of Memorial Day. Clients of the OFA Home Delivered Meals program receive shelf-stable meals in advance of the holiday.

When Your Voice Isn't Your Voice

When it comes to scam prevention, it seems there's always a new threat to handle. This time, scammers are using our own voices against us.

If you recorded your own voice mail or answering machine message, now would be a good time to change it back to something that doesn't use your voice. For mobile device users, that would be the generic message provided by your carrier.

Scammers Can Clone Your Voice

And it doesn't take scammers much in the way of technical skills. If they have as little as three seconds of your voice, they can use free artificial intelligence (AI) tools to create a convincing fake of your voice, including your accent, the way you pause, your pitch and cadence, and even the way you laugh.

Scammers can do this with any voice. Next thing you know, it's your (fake) grandchild on the line, claiming that they've been kidnapped and that you need to send them \$5,000.

Whether the scammers are using audio, video, or text, AI has turbocharged scammers' book of tricks to the point where people can no longer consistently tell an AI-generated message apart from the same message produced by a human.

What drives the scammers hasn't changed: to trick you into acting before thinking.

Slowing Down the Scammers

Scammers are like mosquitos. You can spray yourself with repellent, tuck your pants into your socks, stay indoors, even sleep with a net over your bed, and you could still notice a telltale itchy bump on your skin one day. How on earth did the mosquito get through despite all your precautions?

Chalk it up to strength in numbers, and the knowledge that it only takes one slip-up for even the most savvy of us to be fooled.

That's why OFA urges everyone to lead with empathy if we find out that somebody we care about has been scammed. They aren't gullible. They were the victim of a crime.

Stopping Old and New Grandparent Scams

Pick a random code word that you and your family members can share. Make sure the word is easy for you to remember but not a family name, or an address, or a pet's name, or anything that can be used to identify you.

While we advise that you screen all incoming calls, because simply letting a call go to voicemail is often enough to deter scammers, sometimes we pick up the phone out of force of habit.

Suppose you've picked up, and the voice on the other end sounds like a family member in trouble. Remember: A scammer wants you to react emotionally, but you have practiced for moments like this. You know to stay calm. Ask the caller what the code word is. A scammer won't know.

Click. Just hang up. There'll be other scammers, but you defeated this one.

You can file a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission at reportfraud.ftc.gov or the FTC's Consumer Response Center at 877-382-4357.

Your report is shared with thousands of agencies investigating countless scam reports just like yours.

SilverShield: A New Scam-Reporting Tool

It can be a challenge to hold back our natural human instinct to help one another, even when the scenario that requires our help is a fake, dreamed up by a scammer. We may be able to stay calm when a scam comes our way while a caregiver is around to help us keep our cool; but when we're alone with our thoughts is when scammers can thrive. We've found a new tool that can help.

OFA has joined with the New York State Office for the Aging (NYSOFA) and SilverShield (silvershield.ai), which uses AI's strengths for good, to help repel scammers while learning their methods. Every time you report a suspected scam text, call or email to SilverShield, its AI guides you through what to do next, as well as what not to do. Meanwhile, it's also reporting the scam to federal investigators.

Who Can Use SilverShield?

If you have a mobile device, SilverShield can help. If you don't have a mobile device but you do use a computer with email, SilverShield can help.

SilverShield only needs your phone number to operate. It works through text and email, with no wifi needed. You don't need to install an app.

We have a limited number of free one-year SilverShield subscriptions available, through NYSOFA. You're under no obligation to purchase anything. Ever.

We've scheduled an in-person Introduction to SilverShield event for Monday, June 15th at 3 pm, at OFA's Poughkeepsie Friendship Center at 114 Delafield St. in Poughkeepsie. Seating is limited, so reserve your spot by calling OFA during business hours at 845-486-2555.

OFA Picnic Season – Seats Filling Up Fast

Older adults throughout Dutchess County are reserving their seats for the OFA Summer Picnic serving their community. A full schedule of picnics, including a Google Map link to each picnic venue's entrance, is available at www.dutchessny.gov/ofapicnics.

Our first picnic of the season, the May 27th picnic at Boyce Park in Wingdale for older adults from Amenia, Dover, Pawling and Union Vale, is already at capacity, and other early-season picnics are getting close. Picnics do reach full reserved capacity, as a rule, so book your spot by calling OFA during business hours at 845-486-2555. We cannot accept reservation requests made by voice mail or email.

We mail tens of thousands of reservation reminder cards to older-adult households throughout the county. No card? No worries. Having a reminder card is not needed for you to call OFA to book a reservation.

All set with a reserved seat for your picnic? We strongly recommend carpooling with friends. With hundreds of visitors coming to each picnic, carpooling makes parking and access easier for everyone.

Many thanks to AccentCare, Central Hudson, the Pines at Poughkeepsie, and Westchester Medical Center Health Network for their support.

No “SAIL” Remote Exercise Class on Thursday 5/28, Friday 5/29

The regularly scheduled “Stay Active and Independent for Life” (SAIL) remote exercise classes for May 28th and 29th are cancelled, with the SAIL schedule resuming the following week.

Classes are typically held at 10:30am on Thursdays and 2:30pm on Fridays, and will resume after the brief hiatus, in June.

Visit www.dutchessny.gov/seniorexercise or contact OFA for details.

OFA Ambassador Hours for June-August (Check Back for Updates)

Here's the May-August list of OFA Ambassador Mary Reedy's mobile office hours...thus far. There'll be more such office hours scheduled, where you can get your aging services questions answered from a location closer to home.

To book your half-hour spot, call OFA during business hours at 845-486-2555:

Tuesday, June 23rd, noon-1:30pm – Clinton Library, 1215 Centre Rd., Rhinebeck

Thursday, June 25th, noon-3pm – Amenia Library, 3309 NY 343, Amenia

Tuesday, June 30th, 10am-noon – Millbrook Library, 3 Friendly Ln., Millbrook

Tuesday, July 28th, 1-3pm – Millbrook Library

Thursday, August 27th, noon-3pm – Amenia Library

Your local civic organization or government can arrange Mobile Office Hours for your home town by contacting OFA at 845-486-2555 during business hours, or emailing ofa@dutchessny.gov.

Other news:

[Successful aging may be much more within our control than has been assumed](#), at least according to one UK study.

Can engaging in the arts slow aging? [Possibly](#), whether you're participating in the arts or visiting a museum or gallery.

After 177 years, [Schlitz beer has been discontinued](#).

This week's birthdays:

5/23: Former Mets/Yankees manager [Buck Showalter](#) (70)

5/24: Singer/songwriter [Bob Dylan](#) (85)

5/25: Actor/activist/wizard [Ian McKellen](#) (87)

5/26: Actress Helena [Bonham Carter](#) (60)

5/27: Singer/songwriter [Neil Finn](#) (68)

5/28: Singer-songwriter [Gladys Knight](#) (82)

5/29: NBA Hall of Famer/Knicks legend [Richie Guerin](#) (94)

And a Bad Joke:

Elton John bought a treadmill for his pet rabbit. It's a little fit bunny...