

SCAM JAM from page 1A

Kristina Edmunson, communications director for the Office of the Attorney General, said, “We have a new scam alert we want people to know about that is related to genetic testing. We have received reports from consumers that scammers are setting up tables at county fairs and other public events and offering free cheek swabs for genetic testing. They are soliciting data at these types of public events that they can use to scam individuals and Medicare.”

Edmunson was a participant in this year’s Scam Jam, which has taken on a slightly different form than in previous years.

“It’s been a few years since we have been in Florence and we wanted to hear from folks on the coast on what types of scamming experiences they have had. We thought it would be fun to hit the coast, so we are holding workshops in four cities on the coast in four days,” she said.

According to the alert, the ODJ reports numerous complaints asking for Medicare beneficiaries’ private information in order to report the genetic test results. The scammers then use the information to steal the individual’s identity or for fraudulent billing purposes. The possible misuse of personal information of Oregonians could result in thousands of dollars spent needlessly for unnecessary tests or services never requested or delivered.

AARP was also part of the Scam Jam, and Carmel Snyder, director of advocacy and outreach for AARP in Eugene, spoke at length about the problem of fraud directed at older residents.

“We have been doing these types of events all over the state for the

Complaints from consumers over unexpected car repair costs remain high on the list of yearly complaints, as does the gathering of data by what are referred to as “Fraudulent Entity” calls. These calls may claim to be offering free testing to seniors for a number of

community members who have lost a few hundred dollars up to several thousands of dollars to these scams.”

The ultimate goal for all of the presenters at the Scam Jam was to inform. All of the groups represented agreed that knowledge is power, especially when it comes to safeguarding the financial assets of seniors, who often live on a fixed income.

The ODJ and AARP have some very simple instructions for seniors that are contacted on the phone by someone they do not know soliciting information, money, passwords, account numbers or to download software — “Just hang

up!”

Pitcher also has some important advice for anyone concerned with a call or some other form of unsolicited contact.

“We want to protect our citizens and encourage people to either call us or come in and talk to us before sending money in any form to anyone they have questions about. No legitimate business, organization or agency is going to demand payment by phone, email or mail that you can’t easily verify who they are with just a little follow up,” Pitcher said. “Any deal that *sounds* too good to be true *is*.

“Take a little time before you act, do a little investigating and protect your hard-earned money.”

For more information, visit www.doj.state.or.us/consumer-protection/.

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— Commander John Pitcher, *Florence Police Department*

past few years and we know that the coast has a large older population, which is the main target of scammers,” Snyder said. “Scammers are everywhere and we need to get everyone that we can involved in getting the information out to the public. These people are professionals and they have a lot of time to work this type of scam, where they intimidate and even threaten potential victims.”

The number of reports made to the ODJ in 2018 by residents who were concerned they had been the victim of a scam, or had questions related to that fear, was more than 38,000.

Of these more than 1,000 calls a day, 7,000 were documented and referred for further investigation by the Financial Fraud and Consumer Protection section of the ODJ.

ailments that are designed to obtain Medicare information. These requests for information should be ignored unless specifically ordered by a personal physician.

Florence Police Commander John Pitcher says his department is well aware of the problem with fraud of this type and was glad the department was able to participate in this year’s Scam Jam.

“We had Sgt. (Denton) Tipler attend and be part of this for us. He participated in the panel at the end of the presentation to answer questions and put a local perspective on this problem,” Pitcher said. “Every year, we have a variety of different types of scams that these people use to target members of our community and unfortunately every year we have a few citizens that fall victim to them. We have had local

Chris Chandler set to enlighten Florence stage Aug. 3

Provocative American storyteller Chris Chandler will host a KXCR summer fundraiser on Saturday, Aug. 3, at Florence Unitarian Universalist Fellowship as he slips back to the Northwest from an extended gig in the United Kingdom.

Chandler’s performances are known as a unique entertainment experience. The late great Utah Phillips called Chandler “the best performance poet I have ever seen.” He has worked with everyone from Allen Ginsberg to Pete Seeger and was a master of ceremonies at the nationally regarded

Kerrville Folk Festival in June.

Behind Chandler’s spoken word riffs on American culture is a sharp eye and a deep love of language. Striking in appearance, sporting a black bowler on his shaved head, he sometimes finds himself climbing any nearby

chair to add emphasis to a story’s riveting conclusion. He is a showman to the core.

Chandler, son of a southern preacher, left his home and, instead of pursuing a career in New York theater, trusted his instincts to hit the road to find and tell the stories of America. As any entertainer will attest, it hasn’t been easy. For the last 30 years he has traveled from gig to gig, losing his long blond hair, but sharpening his craft.

Everywhere he and his guitar-playing sidekick Sean Shanahan appear, the reaction usually includes a recognition that it is a unique entertainment experience.

Suggested donations are \$15.

Doors of the Florence Unitarian Universalist Fel-



ChrisChandler.Org

lowship, Highway 101 and Heceta Beach Road, open at 6 p.m., with the show beginning at 7 p.m.

Tea and coffee are available, and people are encouraged to bring in healthy finger foods to share. Optional BYOB if over 21.

For more information, call 541-997-2997 or 541-305-9003.

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