

Sheriff's Office will offer training to volunteers to keep elderly safe

Elder abuse has made the headlines recently, from an elderly Marine Colonel swindled out of money by his bookkeeper, to the older woman sexually assaulted at a nursing home.

The Sheriff's Office Elder Safe Program is seeking volunteers to work with the elderly and people with disabilities after they have filed a police report. The program is a partnership with Disabilities, Aging and Veterans Services and the District Attorney's Office.

"In addition to receiving excellent training by Washington County officials, volunteers have the satisfaction of knowing the work they do is important to seniors and the community," said program coordinator Joyce DeMonnin.

Volunteers with an understanding of banking and fi-

nance are always in particular demand. Because financial exploitation is the number one crime committed against seniors, Elder Safe has a financial specialist team that works with seniors and banks in elder crime prevention.

"For this group, loss due to scams, frauds and identity theft can be devastating, because the elder probably won't be able to continue earning more money. Once the funds are gone, they're gone," she said.

Elder Safe volunteers must complete an intensive statement of personal history and undergo a complete criminal background check. They must also be available for the training program.

To apply for Elder Safe summer training, call Maxine Leageld, 503-846-6048.

Lower Columbia excursion trains

Passenger trains will return to the lower Columbia River between Portland and Astoria as part of the Lewis & Clark Bicentennial Commemoration.

Beginning May 28, trains will travel between Linnton and Astoria every Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday through

September 20.

Tickets are \$29 one way, \$58 round-trip per adult, Amtrak discounts apply for 2-15 year-olds and seniors age 62 and over. Tickets are available through Amtrak's web site, www.amtrak.com, or by calling 1-800-USA-RAIL.

Help protect yourself from identity fraud

We've all heard horror stories about fraud committed on innocent people when someone has stolen a name, address, Social Security number, credit cards, etc. Here are some practical methods to help keep you safe from some kinds of identity theft.

The next time you order checks have only your initials (instead of first name) and last name put on them. If someone takes your checkbook they will not know whether you sign your checks with just your initials or your first name, but your bank will know how you sign your checks.

When you are writing checks to pay your credit card accounts, do not put the complete account number on the "For" line, put just the last four numbers. The credit card company knows the rest of the number and anyone who might be handling your check as it passes through all the check processing channels won't have access to it.

If you must have a phone number on your checks, use your work phone instead of your home phone. If you have a P.O. Box use that instead of your home address. If you do not have a P.O. Box, use your

work address. Never have your Social Security number printed on your checks. (DUH!) You can add it if it is necessary, but if you have it printed, anyone can get it.

Photocopy the contents of your wallet. Do both sides of each license, credit card, etc. That way you will know exactly what you had in your wallet and all of the account numbers and phone numbers to call and cancel. Keep the photocopy in a safe place. Also keep a photocopy of your passport.

Nevertheless, anyone can lose a wallet or have it stolen. Here is some critical information to limit the damage in case it should happen to you.

1. We know we should cancel our credit cards immediately. But the key is to have the toll free numbers and your card numbers handy, so you know where to call. Keep those

where you can find them.

2. File a police report immediately, in the jurisdiction where it was lost or stolen. This shows credit providers you were diligent, and is a first step toward an investigation (if there should be one).

3. Call the three national credit reporting organizations immediately to place a fraud alert on your name and Social Security number; also call the Social Security Administration. The alert means that any company that checks your credit will know the information was stolen and they have to contact you by phone to authorize new credit.

The numbers to call are:
• Equifax: 1-800-525-6285
• Experian (formerly TRW): 1-888-397-3742
• Trans Union: 1-800-680-7289
• Social Security Administration (fraud line): 1-800-269-0271



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