

IN THIS ISSUE: Streep in "Let Them All Talk," tools for Hispanic seniors, bank robbery in Strathmore, loneliness is dangerous... but so is sex.



News, Health & Leisure for South Valley Adults 50+ • Volume VII, Number 6 • January/February 2021



Social Security Increases Benefits by 1.3% for 2021

Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits for approximately 70 million Americans will increase 1.3% in 2021.

The cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) will begin with benefits to more than 64 million Social Security beneficiaries in January. Increased payments to more than 8 million SSI beneficiaries began on December 31, 2020.

The Social Security Act ties the annual COLA to the increase in the Consumer Price Index, as determined by the Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Some other adjustments that take effect in January of each year are based on the increase in average wages. Based on that increase, the maximum amount of earnings subject to the Social Security tax (taxable maximum) will increase to \$142,800 from \$137,700.

Social Security and SSI beneficiaries are normally notified by mail starting in early December about their new benefit amount. Most people who receive Social Security payments will be able to view their COLA notice online on their personal "My Social Security" account. People may create or access this account at www.socialsecurity.gov/myaccount.

Information about Medicare changes for 2021 are available at www.medicare.gov. Final benefit amounts were communicated to beneficiaries in December through the mailed COLA notice and my Social Security's Message Center.

The Social Security Act provides for how the COLA is calculated. To read more, visit www.socialsecurity.gov/cola.

The COVID-19 Vaccine is Here!!

"The vaccine is our dawn. It's the warm sun finally rising over the horizon and giving us hope," said Gary Herbst, CEO of Kaweah Delta. "I just wish it was in larger quantities sooner so we could begin inoculating a much larger percentage of our population and really start developing that widespread immunity."

On December 18, Kaweah Delta Medical Center began vaccinating healthcare workers at highest risk of exposure to COVID-19. Dr. Wally Huynh, an internal medicine physician, who has cared for an estimated 150 COVID patients, was the first to be vaccinated.

"It's definitely an honor and a blessing to receive the vaccine because it's going to help protect myself, my family, my coworkers, and my community," said Dr. Huynh after receiving his vaccination.

Vaccinations started the same day Kaweah Delta was caring for 145 COVID-19 patients at its Medical Center, with 17 COVID patients in its 41-bed ICU. Six days earlier, Kaweah Delta reached an all-time high of 150 COVID-19 admissions.

On December 17, Sierra View Medical Center (SVMC), received the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccination for the initial round of immunizations from the Tulare Public Health Department. Sierra View immediately started administering to high-risk area front-line staff and physicians who have opted-in to receive the vaccination.



Sierra View Medical Center immediately started administering to high-risk area front-line staff and physicians.

"We are very excited to be getting the vaccination to some of our staff today, and these are the high-risk direct care providers who are getting the Pfizer vaccine," said SVMC Chief Nursing Officer Dr. Jeffery Hudson-Covolo, DNP. "There are many healthcare workers who have been waiting for this opportunity. It will provide a level of protection for those that take the series of immunizations providing antibodies to the SARS CoV-2 virus."

The first round of immunizations were given out to those identified as high-risk. Approximately 50 front-line healthcare workers received their vaccination on the first day it was available.

The first staff member to re-

ceive the COVID-19 vaccine at SVMC, and one of the very first in Tulare County, was ICU Registered Nurse Kathy Hughes, who has been serving at the bedside of patients in life-threatening situations including COVID-19 patients.

What You Need to Know

You need two doses of the COVID-19 vaccine. A second shot three weeks after your first shot is needed to get the most protection the vaccine has to offer.

Because the current supply of COVID-19 vaccine in the United States is limited, CDC recommends that initial supplies of COVID-19 vaccine be offered to healthcare personnel and long-term care facility residents.

The goal is for everyone to be able to easily get vaccinated against COVID-19 as soon as large enough quantities are available. Once the vaccine is widely available, the plan is to have several thousand vaccination providers offering COVID-19 vaccines in doctors' offices, retail pharmacies, hospitals, and federally qualified health centers.

Vaccine doses purchased with U.S. taxpayer dollars will be given to the American people at no cost.

To learn your level of priority to get the vaccine, based on age, health and career, visit abc30.com/health/find-out-how-many-people-may-get-a-covid-19-vaccine-before-you/8821951.

TCDA Expands Elder Abuse Task Force

Despite COVID precautions hampering a number of outreach and court operations this year, the Tulare County District Attorney's Office reinforced its Elder Abuse Team and is in a strong position for continued support of seniors in 2021.

"There is no greater time to be aware of what our seniors and dependent adults are going through than right now," said District Attorney Tim Ward.

"With decreased physical access to services and periods of

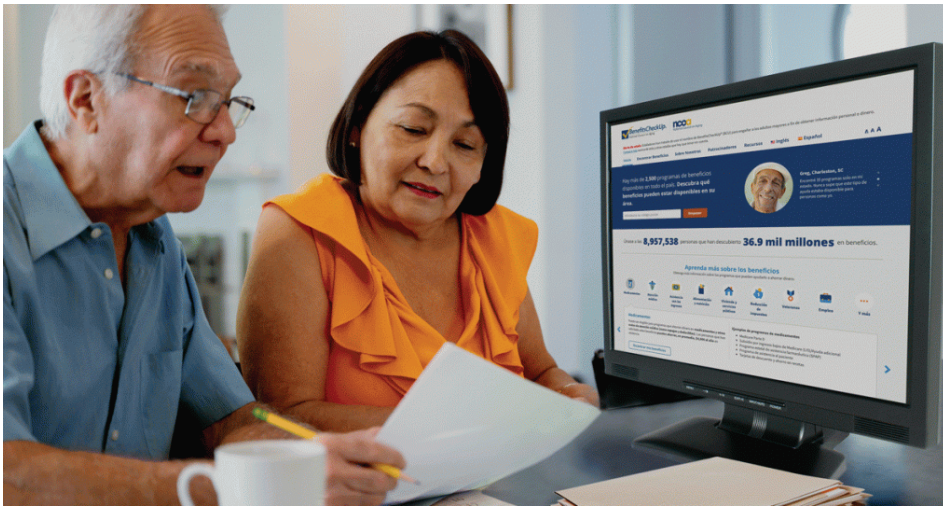
isolation, it is a tragic recipe for scammers and others to take advantage of our most vulnerable neighbors. I encourage anyone who suspects physical, financial, and neglectful abuse to contact the Tulare County elder abuse reporting hotline at 1-877-657-3092."

TCDA elder abuse victim advocates now serve both the north and south county. Long-time elder abuse advocate Nicole Burnham has served in the position for 10 years. Burnham

is a certified handler for courthouse facility K-9 Fortune, and accompanies victims through the court process.

Newly hired bilingual advocate Brenda Rodriguez serves victims in the south county. Advocate Renee Newman supervises the advocate team and their outreach. Deputy District Attorney Peter DeYoung is assigned to prosecute elder abuse cases.

Prior to COVID, the team
(continued on page 4)



BuscaBeneficios.org will connect Hispanic seniors to billions of dollars in federal, state, local and private benefits.

Online Tools Help Hispanic Seniors

The National Council on Aging (NCOA) has launched BuscaBeneficios.org, a free, confidential Spanish-language online tool to connect Hispanic seniors to billions of dollars in federal, state, local and private benefits to pay for daily expenses.

The search engine is modeled after NCOA's Benefits-CheckUp, which has helped millions of older adults find billions of dollars in benefits to pay for food, medicine, utilities and more.

"Every person deserves the resources to age with dignity and economic security," said NCOA President and CEO Ramsey Alwin. "BuscaBeneficios.org is part of NCOA's commitment to aging well for all, especially Hispanic older adults who face disproportionate risks of poverty."

As part of its outreach to His-

panic older adults, NCOA has also launched Chequeo Contra Caidas, a Spanish-language online screening tool that allows older adults to assess their risk of falling – one of the greatest health risks as people age. Users receive a personalized report with culturally competent Spanish fall prevention resources, including a video, tips and handouts.

"NCOA is creating more Spanish-language content, and we are creating critical connections to Hispanic/Latinx organizations," said Vivian Nava-Schellinger, NCOA director of community partnerships and network activation.

NCOA's Spanish website also includes curated content on the COVID-19 pandemic, scams and more. For more information, visit www.ncoa.org/Espanol.



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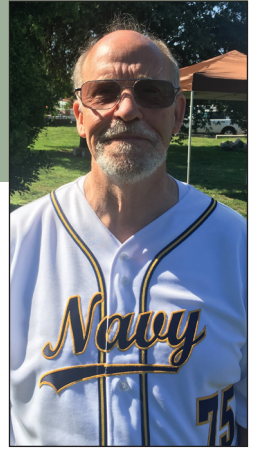
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VETERANS CORNER

Replacing Lost Military Service Records

Are you in need of a copy of your official Military Service Records, which you now realize have been lost or misplaced?

Many service members are unaware of the importance of the information and documents provided to us upon separation from service. As many members eventually find out, there comes a time when we need some of that information.



Ken Cruickshank

When it comes to your military records, the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) is the official keeper. After you are separated from service, your last command is responsible for forwarding your military file to NPRC to become part of the official archives. You can request your records by visiting www.archives.gov, or you can order them through the mail by completing an SF-180 form and mailing it back to NPRC. However, the website method is faster.

In 1973, NPRC suffered a fire and many records were burned. The official word on the fire is: "Due to a fire, Army personnel who served from 1912-1959 and Air Force personnel who served from 1947-1963 with last names after 'Hubbard, James D' need to contact a particular number to reach the special section that attempts to retrieve the damaged records."

Even though the records were damaged, not all were a total loss. If you are in this category, you can request NPRC to send you a form to complete, which will help them in searching for your records.

Records that are NOT held at NPRC include the following:

- Department of Veterans Affairs Records (Release of Information to VA is required for these records.)
- Pay Records (If available at all, they are maintained at the finance centers for each branch of service.)
- Records of veterans who are separated from active service but are in reserve status, either active or inactive
- Records of current members of the National Guard (You will need to contact the Adjutant General's office of the state where you reside.)
- Records of National Guard members recently discharged (It takes about six months after discharge for NPRC to receive the records.)
- Selective Service Records

Depending on when the veteran separated from service, NPRC may not have the active duty health records. (In general, active duty health records are maintained by the Department of Veterans Affairs. There are some exceptions.)

Ken Cruickshank, the Veterans Services Officer for Tulare County, is a retired Navy Master Chief Petty Officer. Contact him at the Veterans Services Office at 3348 W. Mineral King Ave., Visalia; by phone at (559) 713-2880; or by email at KCruicks@tularehhsa.org.



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Deadline for March/April issue is Friday, February 12, 2021

COVID-19 Still Impacts Events and Programs for Local Seniors

Despite the two promising new vaccines approved last month to fight COVID-19, the pandemic's infection and death rates continue to increase.

As of December 21, Tulare County has had 29,364 reported cases of COVID-19. The virus has killed 354 people in the county.

Kings County has had 14,786 cases, with 104 deaths.

In addition to the tragic loss of life, the pandemic has impacted most local businesses, with many of them shutting down temporarily or even permanently.

COVID-19 has also affected most of the programs and events that assist and bring together local seniors.

Visalia Senior Games

More than 500 athletes 50 and older competed in 13 events at the 2019 Visalia Senior Games. An even bigger turnout was expected for the following games, which were originally scheduled for two weekends in March 2020, but postponed.

"At this time, the City of Visalia Community Services Department does not have any updates on the Visalia Senior Games," said City of Visalia Community Services Director Jeremy Rogers. "All plans for future events will depend upon guidelines and recommendations from the state and county

public health officials."

Heart of Seniors

The seventh annual Heart of Seniors "Spectacular Resource Event" Luncheon, hosted by the Senior Coalition, was held on February 13, 2020 at the Wyndham Hotel in Visalia before the full impact of the pandemic. The event included a vital resource fair with vendors, a fashion show with the latest in fashion for the mature woman, and a luncheon.

This year's Heart of Seniors Expo and Fashion Show, which was scheduled for February 11, has been cancelled (instead of postponed) because it is a Valentine's Day event, explained Stefani Salierno-Fisher, executive board member of the Senior Coalition.

"Our plan is to do it next year when we can resume without the covid scare," she said. "We didn't want to risk the lives of any seniors."

As a result of the decision, the next Heart of Seniors event is tentatively scheduled for February 10, 2022.

Visalia Senior Center

The Visalia Senior Center's drive-thru lunch is expected to continue through the end of February. Lunches are available for pick-up/to-go Monday-Friday from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Meals are \$4.50 for Visalia seniors (55+) and must be re-



The next heart of seniors event is tentatively scheduled for 2022.

served by 12:30 p.m. the previous business day.

Menus are online at liveandplayvisalia.com and on the Visalia Parks and Recreation Facebook page. To reserve a lunch or for more information, call (559) 713-4481.

Hanford Parks & Recreation

Hanford Parks & Recreation will continue its aerobics and zumba classes in the park, reports Recreation Supervisor Armando M. da Silva. For more information, call (559) 585-2525.

Tulare Senior Center

"The current plan for the Tulare Senior Center is to continue to offer the Grab & Go program until it is safe and recommended to open our facility for recreation," said Karie Rodriguez, City of Tulare senior administrative assistant. "Hopefully funding will remain in place to encourage the boosted program."

Seniors with reservations can drive up to pick up a meal for a \$3 donation, Monday

through Friday, 11:30 a.m. to noon.

The center delivers lunch to the homes of seniors who used bus or dial-a-ride transportation, and frozen meals to 52 Meals on Wheels clients.

For program updates, call (559) 685-2330.

Alzheimer's Association

The local Alzheimer's Association chapter continues to offer educational programs and support for caregivers online.

For a complete schedule, visit www.alz.org/socal and scroll down to Events. The Educational Programs link leads to online events and activities.

COVID-19 Testing Sites

Tulare County has COVID-19 testing sites in Dinuba, Porterville and Tulare. Testing is free and available to anyone. Appointments can be made by phone at 1-888-634-1123.

Information about testing in Kings County is at www.county-of-kings.com/home/showpublisheddocument?id=23865.

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Elder Abuse Task Force...

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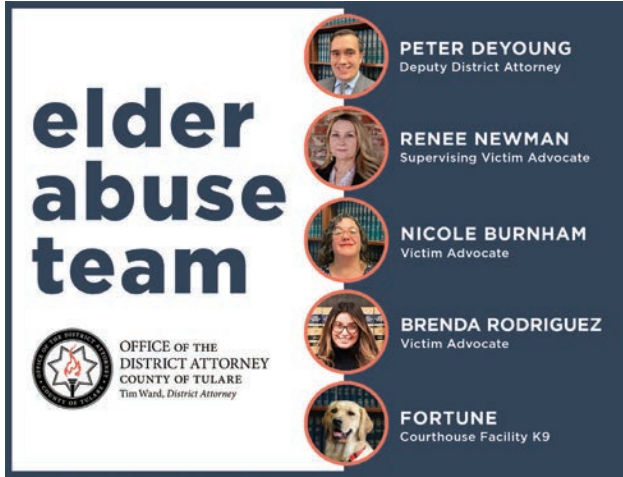
hosted 30 community presentations annually, covering topics such as "Recognizing and Reporting Elder Abuse," "Cons, Scams and Identity Theft," and "How to Stay Safe When Out in the Community and at Home." The team developed several new tools to hand out to the community, in-

cluding a SCAM book and elder abuse photo novella, which is planned for distribution in 2021.

"COVID impeded a number of court and community functions this year, including our ability to do in-person outreach," said Ward. "We have always maintained that prevention is the best defense against this crime. We are pleased that in November we were able to run an extensive media campaign to bring awareness to elder abuse, and we hope that 2021 will allow us to get back in front of service clubs, senior centers and care providers to educate them on what this crime entails."

Due to full and partial community lockdowns, Ward advocates for vigilance on behalf of seniors. "Sometimes it is just a phone call to check on someone," he said.

In 2020, the District Attor-



Graphic courtesy of the Tulare County District Attorney's Office

ney's office filed more than 50 cases of elder abuse and is currently prosecuting more than 100 cases.

"We are encouraging our community to use resources like Meals on Wheels for home delivery for seniors who have difficulty getting their groceries," said Burnham. "We are also making lots of referrals to the Tulare County Mental Health Senior Counseling Program which provides free counseling to any Tulare County resident 50 years or older. COVID has taken a toll on many and we want our community to know that Tulare County is striving to stay emotionally healthy during this time."

More information and additional resources can be found at <https://tulareda.org/elder-abuse> or by calling the District Attorney's Victim Services Division at (559) 636-5471.

Beware of Fraudulent Testing

The County of Tulare urges community members to be aware that instances of scammers going door-to-door with fraudulent COVID-19 tests have been reported in Tulare County.

Fraudsters may be asking individuals for credit card information or to pay for the fraudulent test out-of-pocket, in addition to gathering other private information, which may then be used for identity theft. Scammers may even use social media platforms, telemarketing calls, or text messages to gather this information.

A comprehensive list of verified county testing sites is at <https://covid19.tularecounty.ca.gov>. Community members can see an interactive map of testing sites and view all confirmed locations, including free testing, mobile testing, and all health care provider locations.

Verified county testing locations are safe, private, and never ask for out-of-pocket payments. Moreover, the county does not use door-to-door or in-home testing teams.

Protect Yourself

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of the Inspector General (HHS-OIG):

- Be suspicious of any unexpected calls or visitors offering COVID-19 tests or supplies. If you receive a suspicious call, hang up immediately.
- Never give your personal or financial information to anyone claiming to be on a door-to-door testing team or to anyone offering money related to COVID-19.
- Ignore offers or adver-



tisements for COVID-19 testing or treatments on social media sites. If you make an appointment for a COVID-19 test online, make sure the location is an official testing site.

- Be aware of scammers pretending to be COVID-19 contact tracers. Legitimate contact tracers will never ask for your Medicare number or financial information or attempt to set up a COVID-19 test for you and collect payment information for the test.

- Beneficiaries should be cautious of unsolicited requests for personal, medical, and financial information. Medicare does not call beneficiaries to offer COVID-19 products, services or benefit review.

- Do not respond to, or open hyperlinks in, text messages from unknown persons or entities offering COVID-19 information.

If you believe you are a victim of a COVID-19 related scam, call the HHS-OIG hotline at 800-HHS-TIPS (800-447-8477) and the Tulare County District Attorney's Office Bureau of Investigations at (559) 636-5410.

CALENDAR

Saturday, January 16 - Visalia Gleaning Seniors Saturday Only Yard Sale

Visalia Gleaning Seniors will host this event from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. in the Gleaner Yard, 28600 Road 156 in Visalia. For more information, call (559) 733-5352.

Saturday, March 13 - 2nd Annual Sporting Clays Classic

Hands in the Community is sponsoring this event. For more information, visit seniorcaretkc.org, email seniortkc@gmail.com or call (559) 667-9601.

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Streep, Wiest and Bergen Take a Voyage in 'Let Them All Talk'

"Let Them All Talk" is a unique comedy streaming on HBO Max starring Meryl Streep, Candice Bergen and Dianne Wiest, with Lucas Hedges and Gemma Chan. It touches upon the importance of human relationships - especially as one ages - with humor.

"In the old days, this movie would be called a 'comedy of manners,'" said director Steven Soderbergh. "We had a setup that allowed us to get into some issues that are interesting to me, especially as I am getting older."

"One of the really fascinating things about getting older is how entwined your relationships are with your experience and what a great influence they have on your life," said screenwriter Deborah Eisenberg. "You make a friend when you are young and it's an intense encounter that stays with you your whole life, even if you don't see, or rarely see the person again."

Filmed on Cunard's Queen Mary 2 during an actual crossing from New York to England in August 2019, the movie explores how friendships between women that started during college play out over time.

Alice (Streep) is a best-selling author who has neither married nor has children. When she earns a prestigious literary award that is to be bestowed upon her in England, Alice informs her bright new agent, Karen (Chan),



"Let Them All Talk" stars (l-r) Meryl Streep, Dianne Wiest and Candice Bergen. Photo courtesy of HBO Max.

that she cannot fly. Determined to earn points with her new client, Karen suggests that Alice cross the Atlantic on the Queen Mary 2. If Alice is willing to give a lecture on the boat, Karen can negotiate free passage so Alice will not have to travel by plane.

The idea appeals to Alice, if she can invite two friends from her college days, Roberta (Bergen) and Susan (Wiest).

Once Alice and her group are on board and bound for England, tensions surface at the first meal. Roberta hasn't spoken to Alice in over 30 years because she feels Alice plagiarized the unraveling of her marriage by turning it into her biggest selling novel.

Let's Take An Idea...

"While we were making 'The Girlfriend Experience' (in 2008),

this idea emerged through a conversation we were having one day about a group of women in their 60s or 70s who haven't seen each other in a while," said Soderbergh.

He and producer Gregory Jacobs decided to have their reunion take place on an ocean crossing aboard the Queen Mary 2. Once Streep, Wiest and Bergen agreed to do the film, the decision was made to let the three veteran actors improvise as much as possible.

"I was terrified and intrigued by a film shot so fast in such a confined location - the middle of the ocean - and short of an outline and a suggested narrative direction, we would all make it up as we went along," said Streep.

"The weather on the crossing was a wonderful thing," recalled Wiest. "A day might begin with dense fog, so dense you could see nothing, neither the sea nor others. Then, the fog would lift and there would be a silver gray, the gray that filmmakers would do anything for, and then rays of sun would streak down and a brilliant blue appear and bits of light sparkling everywhere you turned."

"When they said 'wrap,' we peeled off the makeup, hit the bath and bed and looked at the outline for the next day," said Streep. "We went to sleep dreaming as the character, woke up, put our costumes on in our staterooms, and went to work making it all up as it came out of our mouths."

Californians Over 70 Can Renew Drivers License Online or by Mail

Through executive order, Governor Gavin Newsom temporarily waived the California law requiring drivers age 70 and older to visit a DMV field office to renew their license for the length of California's state of emergency or until modified.

The DMV previously provided yearlong extensions to senior drivers with noncommercial licenses expiring during the pandemic. Those who received the extensions are now eligible to renew online.

The DMV previously allowed drivers 69 and under to renew

online, even if their notification states they must come into a DMV office.

The ability for senior drivers to renew online is the latest action to help Californians avoid or delay a DMV office visit during the COVID-19 pandemic. The DMV continues to make changes to limit the time customers spend at an office.

The DMV continues to recommend that customers use its online services, expanded virtual services and other service channels to complete transactions.

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Senior Loneliness a Concern as Pandemic Continues

As social restrictions continue in support of public health, risks associated with isolation permeate among the aging population.

According to a Wells Fargo study conducted by The Harris Poll from November 17-19, a quarter (25%) of all seniors age 60 and above report feeling isolated and lonely, and over a third (43%) spend most of their time alone and may go days without talking to others.

"With smaller family sizes and higher divorce rates relative to earlier generations, baby boomers face a much higher risk of isolation," said Dr. Marti DeLiema, a gerontologist and consultant for Wells Fargo's Aging Client Services.

According to the poll, one in five (20%) seniors age 60 and above report living alone – a number even higher among senior women (26%).

Isolation has been shown to have numerous negative health consequences, ranging from depression to cardiovascular disease and cognitive decline. However, the risks do not stop there.

According to Ron Long,

head of Wells Fargo's Aging Client Services, isolation is a major contributing factor in many elder financial exploitation cases – and the pandemic is exacerbating that.

"Scammers know that seniors are isolated now more than ever," Long said. "When someone is alone, physically or socially, they often miss out on the added benefit of a second pair of eyes and ears."

Compounding the risks associated with isolation is the alarming number of seniors who feel their chances of falling victim to a financial scam is unlikely.

Sixty-nine percent of all seniors age 60 and above believe they are not likely to be susceptible to a financial scam, despite nearly all seniors (97%) acknowledging that older people are very or somewhat susceptible to becoming a victim of a scam.

When asked about their peers, the poll found nearly half (47%) of all seniors age 60 and above knew someone who had already fallen victim to a scam.

"The results indicate what most of us want – the ability to



age in place, relatively unaffected from the realities associated with aging," DeLiema said. "The problem is when someone doesn't feel they are at risk, they are unlikely to take precaution."

Prevention as a Defense

Scammers use things such as Medicare open enrollment, sham charity organizations and increased online shopping to target seniors. Consider some of the following to better protect yourself and loved ones from elder financial fraud and abuse:

- Talk with trustworthy family members about your financial plans and call when

something doesn't feel right – even if you are being told not to.

- Update and have legal documents in place, such as wills, an advance healthcare directive, and powers of attorney for financial matters and for health care.

- Consider signing up for direct deposit, automatic bill pay, and large transaction alerts.

- Keep checks and credit cards locked away.

- Stay aware of potential red flags, including:

- Alleged emergency situations involving family members, often grandchildren, requiring immediate payment;

- Lottery winnings requiring upfront cash payment for taxes and other fees; and

- Phone calls from alleged government agencies, such as Social Security, threatening arrest or penalties.

"Aging resiliently requires planning ahead and not shying away from difficult conversations," said Long. "We have to talk about the risks, the warning signs, and prevention – and we have to keep talking."

Study Shows People over 45 at Greater Risk of STDs

Middle-aged adults face a greater risk of catching sexually transmitted diseases than ever before because society is unwilling to talk about older people having sex, a new study has found.

Negative attitudes toward sexual health and limited knowledge of the needs of over-45s mean some older people are unaware of the dangers of unprotected sex, researchers from the UK, Belgium and the Netherlands warn.

Experts associated with the SHIFT sexual health initiative surveyed 800 adults across the south coast of England and northern regions of Belgium and the Netherlands – with some 200 respondents identified as facing socioeconomic disadvantage.

Almost 80% of respondents in the general population group were between 45 and 65, while 58% of those considered socioeconomically disadvantaged were 45-54.

Researchers said "major changes" in sexual behavior in recent decades have seen rising numbers of sexually active older people, but many barely consider the possibility of STDs.

The most cited reason for not using contraception was that participants deemed themselves to be monogamous, exclusive to one relationship, experts said, followed by participants believing they were not at risk of pregnancy.

"Over-45s at most risk are



generally those entering new relationships after a period of monogamy, often post-menopause, when pregnancy is no longer a consideration, but give little thought to STIs," Ian Tyn-dall, senior lecturer at Britain's University of Chichester, one of the project's partner organizations, said in a statement.

Researchers found that more than 50% of respondents in both the general population and in the socioeconomically disadvantaged group had never been tested for a sexually transmitted infection.

STDs are sexist, and women are the losers. Here's why

Stigma and shame were identified as the greatest barriers to adults accessing sexual healthcare services, with many participants indicating that they

felt that sexual health was a "dirty" term, discouraging people from seeking regular health checks.

"A big barrier to people accessing services is societal stigma, and assumptions that older people are asexual and that sex is no longer part of their lives. This really limits the awareness of sexual health

services among this group," Tess Hartland, research assistant with the SHIFT project, told CNN.

A "significant number" of survey respondents were also unaware of the risks of sexually transmitted infections, researchers said, while 42% of general respondents in the UK and the Netherlands did not know where their nearest sexual health service was located.

"A lot of services and sexual health promotion is really tailored towards young people," Hartland told CNN, noting that some people in the over-45 age category may have received limited sexual health education at school, affecting their attitudes today.

Participants also reported that their healthcare profes-

sionals, such as doctors and nurses, lacked appropriate sexual health knowledge.

"A lot of respondents preferred to go to their doctor rather than a specific sexual health service," Hartland explained. "This means these doctors don't necessarily have a specialism in sexual health."

"Of course, it's quite a sensitive subject and it can be quite difficult to raise, as a health professional, to someone who is over 45," she added.

Researchers found that over-45s living in socially and economically disadvantaged areas were at particular risk of catching sexually transmitted infections, and could have limited awareness of available healthcare services, and limited access to such services.

"It is clear from the numbers reporting fear of being judged by important others who know them and by health professionals that stigma remains a crucial barrier to address in any sexual health promotion intervention," said Ruth Lowry, a researcher on the project from Britain's University of Essex.

"The findings have also shown that groups with one or more socio-economic disadvantages, such as homeless people, sex workers, non-native language speakers and migrants, are at even greater risk of being unaware of their sexual health and unable to access the appropriate services," she added.

The Strathmore Bank Robber – Frozen with Fear

Tucked between Lindsay and Porterville lies the little community of Strathmore. It owes its beginning to the Southern Pacific Railroad and also the rich farm land that surrounds it -- grain and citrus being the dominant crops. Mostly it was a quiet sleepy town and still is, but it had its moments of excitement. On November 26, 1926, shock paid the town a visit when an armed robber invaded the community.

Strathmore traces its beginnings to the late 1800s. By the decade of 1910, the town was on a firm footing. In December 1912, a reporter with the *Lindsay Gazette* visited and was "mighty surprised to see the development." He wrote, "New buildings were everywhere," and noted that conditions looked favorable for a bank.

Officers of the Pioneer Bank of Porterville also took note of the vitality, and in August 1913, they opened a Strathmore branch. Later the bank changed its name to the Pacific Southwest Trust & Savings Bank. The financial institution fit in nicely with the community, but 13 years after it opened its doors, a big surprise would come.

George Pinegar lived in Visalia. The 25-year-old man had worked at various jobs including farm work, and he even worked for Southern California Edison for a time. On the evening of November 25, 1926, the young man, now unemployed, traveled to Strathmore with evil intent. He was going to rob the bank. He bored a hole into a window, unlocked the latch and climbed inside. He hid there waiting for employees to arrive. At about 6 a.m. the next morning, the janitor entered and went to the basement to fire-up the furnace. Pinegar stayed hid-



Tulare County Deputy Ben Gurr became Sheriff Ben Gurr and served from 1946-1950 as Sheriff. Photo circa 1950

den. At 9 a.m., teller John Davidson arrived.

Pinegar, armed with a .32 caliber pistol, confronted Davidson and tied him to the furnace door. Minutes later, Bank Manager Edwards entered, and he too was confronted by Pinegar who demanded all the money. Edwards gathered \$3,000 from the safe and gave it to him. The robber also tied him up and fled on foot with the loot. Both bank employees freed themselves and called the authorities including the Tulare County Sheriff's Department.

Tulare County Sheriff Deputies Ben Gurr and John Hazen raced to the scene to hunt for the robber. It had been raining so the two followed the robber's trail in the mud leading into McGaffney's orange grove. As the lawmen trudged through the mud they spotted a pair of mud-caked shoes stuck in the crotch of an orange tree, so they knew they were close. Soon Deputy Gurr saw a man clinging to a branch in a neighboring tree. One hand was holding the branch and the other hand clinched a pistol.

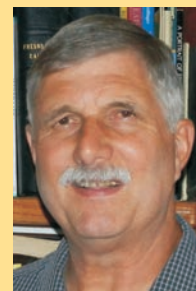
Gurr leveled his rifle at the man and ordered him to drop the gun. In a piercing wail, the man shouted, "Don't shoot me boys, please!" But he didn't drop the pistol, in fact, he never moved. As the lawmen got closer the man appeared like a statue. Later, Gurr described Pinegar as "frozen with fear."

The lawmen reached up and pried Pinegar out of the tree. When he landed on the ground, Gurr, who later would be elected Tulare County Sheriff, grabbed him and forced the pistol out of his hand. Inside his shirt pocket was the \$3,000 taken from the bank. The young



George Pinegar was sentenced to San Quentin for his crime. Photo circa 1926

Dusting Off History
with Terry Ommen



The bank in Strathmore that was robbed by Pinegar, circa 1920 [Photo courtesy Tulare County Library History Room]

robber was deathly afraid and exhausted from all the mud that had gathered on his feet.

Justice was quick. Within six hours of the bank robbery, George Pinegar was standing before Superior Court Judge J. A. Allen charged with bank robbery. The young man sobbed as he pled guilty. He asked for no leniency, and he received

none. Pinegar was sentenced to five years to life in San Quentin State Prison.

The Strathmore bank would be robbed at least once more, this time in 1931, the same year the bank closed for good – the victim of a bad economy and holdups. In 1970, the Strathmore bank building was demolished.

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