



**FROM THE OFFICE OF SUMMIT COUNTY
PROSECUTOR**

THE SENIOR NEWS

Training Program for Law Enforcement to Focus on Crimes Against Seniors

We are pleased to announce that our office has been collaborating with a group of law enforcement professionals, the Northern Ohio Elder Protection Training Council, to create a training program for law enforcement. The title of the program being implemented is called "Elder Protection and Law Enforcement: Best Practices in the Identification, Arrest and Effective Prosecution of Offenses Against Seniors."

The goal of this training program is to ensure that when a senior citizen is abused, neglected or exploited, that the professionals who then come into contact with the senior will be prepared to identify the possibility of the victimization. Once they have identified a need to look further, it is hoped that the investigating officers will be knowledgeable about the things to look for to secure evidence needed for prosecutions. When the cases are referred for prosecution, it is hoped that after this

training session the various County Offices will have trained Prosecutors who are able to present that evidence and secure convictions. In this way, the ultimate goal is to reduce the incident of elder abuse in our area.

The training will be conducted in early spring at four key locations in Northern Ohio – Akron, Cleveland, Youngstown and Toledo. In our office, Mary Ann Kovach, Chief of the Criminal Division and Susan Baker Ross, Assistant Civil Division Prosecutor are working with these neighboring counties to create a truly energetic and meaningful training session. The main groups to be trained are Police Officers, Emergency Medical Technicians, Prosecutors and Probation/Parole Officers. There will be general training for all of these individuals and then some specialized training. A Federal Grant through the Department of Justice is making this collaboration possible.

ADULT PROTECTIVE SERVICES STATISTICS FOR 2004

The following statistics are based upon a 2004 survey by the county departments of Job & Family Services. A total of 56 counties responded to this survey and below is a summary of the results:

From July 1, 2003 through June 30, 2004, 12,829 reports of elder abuse, neglect and exploitation were received by the county departments of Job & Family Services. The following is a breakdown of these reports:

1,631 cases of elder abuse

6,656 cases of self-neglect

2,816 cases of Neglect by Others

1,726 cases of Exploitation

Visit our Senior Safety website:
www.co.summit.oh.us/prosecutor/srcitsafe.htm

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WE'RE ON THE WEB!

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If you don't hear from elderly friends for several days, stop by and check on them.

TOUGH PROSECUTION!

Defendant Barbara Wells, 59, pled guilty to taking the identity of another, a 78-year-old woman. Wells was sentenced to two years in prison. The victim received calls from a collection agency saying she owed \$6,000 on a Cingular wireless account, which she never opened. She also received a bill on a Nextel cellular account, this one for \$3,013.77. She never opened that account either.

Ongoing concern: Identity theft is such a common crime that you must be especially vigilant about not giving out personal information on the phone, and do not confirm the information someone may say they have. Do not put your social security number on checks or other documents. Shred unused, discarded credit cards, as well as checks from a closed account. Report any crimes to local police, as creditors will need to verify that a police report was made about the identity theft in order for you to clear your accounts with any credit reporting agencies.

Co-defendants Edward Owens, 28; his wife Michelle Owens, 34; George Youngs, 26; and Jennifer

Fisher, 30, were sentenced to 10 years, 13 years, 10 years and two years, respectively, for their roles in a series of burglaries and arsons involving three homes in Cuyahoga Falls, with at least one of those homes occupied by a senior couple. The crime spree included burning down the home of the two elderly victims and the home of a single (widowed) woman, 87, to cover their tracks in the burglaries they committed at their homes. When the senior couple (he was 72, his wife, 79) learned their house was on fire, they tried to escape through a second-story window onto a porch roof. The husband fell off the roof, suffering a concussion and broken pelvis, for which he was treated at an area hospital.

Ongoing concerns: Burglaries can be prevented by making sure you have deadbolt locks on your doors, and keeping bushes and trees trimmed close to the home to make it harder for would-be burglars to conceal what they are doing. Keep a phone handy near your bed in case of a break-in at night so you can call 911 more easily. If you have a cell phone you should keep it by your bed at night in case your phone lines are cut during the burglary.

Byron Nolan, 21, pled guilty to burglary of the home of a woman, 63, the very home he had been hired to remodel. He told a friend the owner left the house unlocked, and the friend

stole the possessions and then Nolan sold them to a pawnshop. The items included jewelry, a DVD player and checks. Nolan was sentenced to two years in prison.

Ongoing concerns: Be cautious when hiring someone to do work on your home. Beware of workers driving around neighborhoods offering repairs for a low price with leftovers from previous jobs. Get at least three estimates before hiring someone to do home repairs and call the Better Business Bureau (330-253-4565) or check the BBB website at www.akronbbb.org before you hire someone to do a job for you. Ask for I.D. from service representatives who come to your home, and make sure their vehicle has the company logo on it. You should also check with their company to verify identity before letting them in.

Vester Morrison, 44, took \$20,000 from his parents' savings and also took their car without their permission for 48 hours. He pled guilty to grand theft and forgery for writing checks in their name and was sentenced to 17 months in prison.

Ongoing concerns: Make certain that your checkbooks are kept in a safe, secure place, especially if you are concerned that someone else who has access to your home may try to use them without your permission. Never tell anyone your ATM access code.