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# NORTHSHORE JOURNAL

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Christine Mallory, Editor

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## Computer Repair Scams Plague NorthShore Residents

By Kitty Mayo

Too savvy to be tricked by a scam? The latest round of slick computer repair scams may take you off guard.

Designed to send that cold chill that you get when your computer starts acting wonky down your spine, the most recent flavor of scammers knows how to hit you where it hurts. And before you know it, your guard may be down as you give the con artists access to your computer, your personal information, and even (gasp!) your bank account or credit card.

The initial contact can come in two forms: Either a pop-up message on your computer saying it has a virus, or a phone call saying that they have been monitoring your computer and know it's infected with a virus.

Full disclosure: I called a number on a pop-up warning and gave these frauds access to my computer. It was eerie watching them monkey around on my screen from some remote place. At first they told me their help was covered by some software warranty. Fortunately, I cut them off when they asked for a credit card, and no harm was done. Except to my ego for being gullible.

Honor Schauland, Executive Director at the Clair Nelson Center in Finland, says that she has had family members fall prey to recent phishing scams.

Her family member received a phone call saying that his computer needed maintenance, convincing him to give them remote access to his laptop, and his credit card. Schauland knows another person who had an alarm sound blast through their computer speakers, warning of a supposed virus. "They were overwhelmed so called the number on the screen without realizing it was a scam, and they (the scammers) were really helpful, they just need your credit card number or bank information and they say they can clean up your computer," Schaland said.

The trick is, there is no virus and the whole thing is a hoax designed to steal your money.

"So many people I know personally are being affected by this scam, and it's understandable because they play on your fears and freak people out and promise to fix it, but I'm tired of it happening!," said Schauland, who wants to get the word out to warn people.



Cole Bauer, who offers technical computer services at the Clair Nelson Center and as his own business, says that, unfortunately, he is all too familiar with these types of scams.

Bauer says that one trigger for getting a false warning message on your computer screen is by misspelling a website. Simply by putting too many "o's" in "google", or using a ".com" instead of a ".org" where it is called for can set off these alarmist messages.

"Something comes up on your screen saying it is from Microsoft and a phone number to call for help," said Bauer.

In other instances, hackers seem to already have access to an individual's computer, and while Bauer is not sure how access is gained, he suspects that the scammers are able to get into a resident's modem remotely, or through a public IP address.

"Once they call and scare the person, they get permission to install software that allows them access anytime and they can look at your keystrokes and get your passwords. They want your identity," said Bauer.

While the warnings are very dire, Bauer says he has never found an actual virus when the scare tactic screen comes up.

The bottom line, Bauer says, is to refuse to give out any information, and if you are truly concerned there is something wrong with your computer, contact a legitimate computer repair service of your own choosing.

- Never call a number from a pop-up message on your computer.
- If you think you went to a misspelled website, shut your computer off and restart it.

Bauer is available for technical consultation from 11:00 am to 2:00 pm each Thursday at the Clair Nelson Center, or can be contacted by leaving a message at his google phone number: (612) 405-4384. Bauer, who lives off-grid and will call you back from his computer when he drives to a spot with internet service, says he typically will return a call within 36 hours.

## North Shore Area Partners: Keeping Elders Independent

By Kitty Mayo

Starting out as a grassroots organization in 2003 when community members saw a need to help aging neighbors, North Shore Area Partners coordinates a long list of services for people over the age of sixty in the far reaches of the region.

Serving the elders of eastern Lake County, and the citizens of Silver Bay, Beaver Bay, Isabella, Little Marais, and all points in between, NSAP strives to bring resources to seniors that help them remain living independently in their own homes.

In an area that fierce independence is practically a genetic component of those that live here, being able to live at home safely and in good health is understandably a highly prized goal.

Pastor Stew Carlson, board chair of NSAP and pastor at Sychar Lutheran Church, says getting community involvement, both for fundraising and volunteering, is critical to the success of the organization as it grapples with reaching people over such a widespread area.

Carlson has the unique perspective of being a minister for many congregation members who are moving out of their homes into assisted living or nursing homes. He sees first hand the difficulty of coming to terms with a new chapter of life in aging, as well as a longing for independence that is humanly innate, built into our need to make our own choices.

"For the average community member there is a failure to recognize how traumatic that transition from home to nursing home is to the well-being of an elder," Carlson stated.

That kind of trauma, Carlson says, can translate into negative emotional impacts, and then failing physical health, especially if the elder feels that moving out of home is being forced upon them.

That is why Carlson and NSAP are passionate about rallying any and all community support possible to keep seniors in their own homes for as long as possible.

"The entire community needs to assume a degree of ownership," says Carlson about the gaps that exist as barriers to seniors remaining in their own

homes, adding, "People have a right to make their own decisions."

Transportation to medical appointments, housekeeping, snow removal and lawn care are a few of the most important tasks that NSAP attempts to help elders with by connecting them with volunteers. Providing respite for caregivers is another area of great need, and one that Carlson says is vital. "Getting a break is really a struggle for caregivers, and supporting them so they can recuperate is so important," said Carlson.

Around 200 participants accessed NSAP resources during 2015, with about 100 volunteers giving 3,890 service hours.

"We need volunteers to keep the organization going, if everyone was willing to commit one hour a month just think what we could do!," said Carlson.

Drivers for medical appointments, and people willing to provide respite to caregivers are two areas really needed, according to Carlson. Family members caring for an elder are often depleted of resources and energy, and even a few hours away from their caregiving duties can be a huge help. "Caregivers are pretty much confined to their homes, and in 'on' mode all the time, a little break can give them a lot of rejuvenation," stated Carlson. In terms of commitment from a volunteer, that may be something as simple as just sitting and visiting with an elder for a few hours as infrequently as one time a month.

NSAP offers classes for elders, something that Carlson says can serve a dual purpose: learning skills that improve quality of life, as well as spending positive social time that can be enriching. Mobility classes can increase safety and prevent falls, one of the greatest risks in later years, as well as providing human contact and reducing the negative impacts of isolation.

Upcoming classes at NSAP in Silver Bay include a Diabetes Education workshop to be held on August 15<sup>th</sup> from 10:00 am to 11:30 am at the Sychar Lutheran Church at no cost to participants.

For more information or to learn more about NSAP's services, call (218)226-3635. Volunteers and donations are always welcome.

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