Scammers Target Lifestyle Groups
By Pretending to Be Club Officers

REPORT A SCAM
To report a scam to Seniors vs. Crime, contact one of their offices in The Villages:
» Sumter County Office:
   Phone: 352-689-4600
   Ext. 4606 Open from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Monday through Thursday.
   Location: Sumter County Sheriff’s Annex
   8035 East CR 466.
» Marion County Office:
   Phone: 352-753-7775
   Open from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Tuesday and Wednesday.
   Location: Marion County Sheriff’s Substation
   8230 Southeast 165th Mulberry Lane.
   Fruitland Park Office:
   Phone: 352-674-1882
   Open from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Wednesdays.
   Location: In The Fruitland Park Police Department
   Annex at the Moyer Village Recreation Center at 3000 Moyer Loop.
» Wildwood Office:
   Phone: 352-750-1914
   Open from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Tuesday through Thursday.
   Location: Wildwood Police Annex at 2722 Brownwood Blvd.
   The Wildwood office is currently operating out of the Fruitland Park office
   and is using the Fruitland Park office telephone number.

Some con artists cast a wide net, trying to ensnare anyone they can in one of their scams.
Others take a more targeted approach, going after individuals armed with specific
information about the intended victim. This type of scam is called spear-phishing.
Spear phishing is on the rise nationwide, and Bryan Lifsey, office manager for the
Sumter County Seniors vs. Crime, said clubs in The Villages have
been targeted.
“The club treasurer will get
an email that looks like it comes
from the club president,” he
said. “It will say ‘I just bought
a new computer for the club. I
need you to cut a check and
send it to this place.”

That is one real scam that
someone attempted to run on a
Villages resident lifestyle group.
Fortunately, Lifsey said none of
the clubs targeted by a spear
phisher have actually fallen
prey. All of them were able to
recognize the scam for what
it was.
In this type of scam, scammers spoof return email
addresses or phone numbers to make it appear as though
the email or call is coming from someone with whom the target
has legitimate business, like a
bank, coworker, or even a friend
or fellow club member.
“They farm social media sites
for information about people,” Lifsey said. “These
clubs have social media sites, and they’ll list their officers
on there with their email
addresses, and that’s all the
information these people need.”
Another common spear phising scam is to contact
someone about a credit card purchase. Lifsey said the
scammer provides the last four digits of the card number and
asks the target to provide the rest of the information from
the card.
“They don’t even need to be
good with computers to get the
last four digits of a credit card,”
he said. “They can get that
easily by dumpster diving. And
if they get a hold of the rest, they
can spend that card online until
it runs out of money.”

Other than social media
and rooting through garbage,
scammers can get people’s
personal information from
other scammers.

Ed Kelly, manager for the
Brownwood Seniors vs. Crime
office, said once you fall victim
to a scam, you’re more likely to
be targeted in the future.
“Once they have success
with someone, especially with
a senior, their name goes on a
‘good list,’” he said. “Then they
know that you’re more likely to
fall for a scam in the future.”
Kelly said that as with many
scams, once you lose the money,
It’s nearly impossible to recover, especially if it leaves the country. Most law enforcement agencies simply don’t have the resources to pursue cases outside of the U.S.

There are ways to protect yourself. Kelly said not to give scammers the chance to take your money.

“Don’t engage them,” he said. “If it’s a phone call, hang up. If it’s an email, delete it. Don’t think that you can outsmart them, and don’t play into their game. They’re pretty good at what they do.”

Lifsey said to be vigilant and verify the person is who he or she claims to be.

Call your club president or call the bank using a number you know and use. Use your intuition and if a situation seems fishy, check on it.

“I always tell people, you’ve been smart and worked hard your whole life,” he said. “Now you’re retired, but don’t retire your common sense.”

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