

Senior News Georgia

Providing Helpful Information for Mature Adults in GEORGIA!

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and successful
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**November 2023
Volume 37, No. 11**

BBB Scam Alert: “Grandma, help!” Emergency scams take advantage of loved ones!

Submitted by Kelvin H. Collins, President/CEO, Better Business Bureau

Serving the Fall Line Corridor, Inc. • BBB.org/central-georgia • Office: 478.742.9034 (Direct)

OFFICES: Macon: 277 M.L. King Jr. Blvd, Ste 201, Macon, GA 31201. • Augusta: 119 Davis Road, Ste 3-B, Augusta, GA 30907
Columbus: 233 12th Street, Ste 911-B, Columbus, GA 31901

Emergency scams, sometimes called "grandparent scams," prey on the willingness of an unsuspecting, worried individual to help friends and family in need. Often, they will impersonate their targets' loved ones, make up an urgent situation, and plead for help... and money. Social media sites allow scammers to look up information and offer plausible stories. They may even incorporate nicknames and real travel plans into the con to convince their targets.

How the scam works:

Emergency scams are about a family member or friend in a dire situation. You get a call, email, or social media message from someone claiming to be a distressed family member. They may say they've been arrested while traveling overseas, or there was an accident, medical emergency, or other calamity. They provide convincing details, such as family names and school details. A common version is the "grandparent scam," where the con artist contacts a grandparent claiming to be their grandchild and asking for money. The plea is so persuasive that the grandparent wires money to the scammer, only to find out their family member was safe and sound later. This scam can also work in reverse, where the "grandparent" calls their grandchild pleading for help. Recently, the FTC has [warned](#) that scammers are using voice cloning techniques to imitate the voices of loved ones. The technology enables con artists to copy the voices of persons close to you from videos they may find on social media or other sources. They can then use tools to imitate the voice of your loved one and have it appear to say whatever they wish in a call. Some voice cloning efforts may be crude, and others very sophisticated - either way, this adds to this scam's confusing and frightening aspect.

Tips to spot this scam: Resist the urge to act immediately, no matter how dramatic the story is.


Check out the story with other family and friends but hang up or close the message and call your loved one directly. Don't call the phone number provided by the caller or caller ID. Ask questions that would be hard for an impostor to answer correctly.

Know what your family members are sharing online. You may not have control over your family's social media accounts but familiarize yourself with what they share online.

Don't wire any money if there is any doubt about the call. If a person wires money and later realizes it is a fraud, the police must be alerted.

To report a scam or to learn more about [all types of impostor scams](#), visit [BBB Scam Tracker](#) at BBB.org. You can also learn how to protect yourself, by visiting our “[10 Steps to Avoid Scams](#).”

Kelvin Collins is president & CEO of the Better Business Bureau serving the Fall Line Corridor, serving 77 counties in East Alabama, West Georgia, Southwest Georgia, Central Georgia, East Georgia, and Western South Carolina. This tips column is provided through the local BBB and the International Association of Better Business Bureaus (IABBB). The Better Business Bureau sets standards for ethical business behavior, monitors compliance and helps consumers identify trustworthy businesses. Questions or complaints about a specific company or charity should be referred directly to the BBB at Phone: 1-800-763-4222, Web site: BBB.org or E-mail: info@centralgeorgia.bbb.org

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Civil War Weekend at Andersonville National Historic Site!

Saturday, November 4 from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and Sunday, November 5 from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Submitted by Susie Sernaker, susie_sernaker@nps.gov

ANDERSONVILLE, Georgia

Join us on Saturday November 4 and Sunday November 5, 2023 as Andersonville National Historic Site presents our annual Civil War Weekend! Kids can drill like Civil War soldiers, build miniature shelters, and discover more about the Civil War period at Andersonville by participating in our Junior Ranger program. Living historians will be portraying Father Whelan, the women of Andersonville, Confederate guards, and Union prisoners, all to help the history of Camp Sumter, better known as Andersonville Prison, come to life. Cannon firing demonstrations will take place at **10:30am and 1:30pm** on Saturday and at **10:00am and 3:00pm** on Sunday. Musket firing demonstrations will be at **12:00pm** and **3:00pm** on Saturday and **11:30am** on Sunday.

At **1:00 pm** on Saturday and at **1:00pm** on Sunday, join our guest speaker Ryan McNutt, Director of the Camp Lawton Archaeological Project at Georgia Southern University. He will be lecturing on resistance, masculinity, and mental health in POW populations at both Andersonville and Camp Lawton.

Dr. Ryan K. McNutt earned his B.Sc. in Anthropology from Middle Tennessee State University in 2006, and his MLitt and PhD in Archaeology from the University of Glasgow, where he specialized in conflict archaeology. His research interests include utilizing technology such as LIDAR and GIS to answer questions about battlefield and conflict sites, power and dominance in the landscape, and the impact of violence on non-combatants. Since 2016 he has been the director of the Camp Lawton Archaeological Project in Millen, Georgia, which is continually uncovering evidence of guard and POW relations in a Confederate prison camp.

Entrance into the park and all activities are free. For more information or to find out how you can become a living history volunteer, call 229-924-0343.

Andersonville National Historic Site is located 10 miles south of Oglethorpe, GA and 10 miles northeast of Americus, GA on Georgia Highway 49. The national park features the National Prisoner of War Museum, Andersonville National Cemetery, and the site of the historic Camp Sumter Civil War prison. Andersonville National Historic Site is the only unit of the National Park System to serve as a memorial to all American prisoners of war. Admission to the park is free. For more information about the park call 229 924-0343, visit our [website](#), or check us out on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), or [YouTube](#).



Dr. Ryan K. McNutt

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Billy R. Tucker
478-929-3636
seniornewsga@cox.net

Advertising

Billy R. Tucker
478-929-3636
seniornewsga@cox.net

Columnists

Claire Houser-Dodd
Carolyn Brenneman
Lisa Petsche

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CORPORATE OFFICE

Billy R. Tucker,
President/Publisher
Phone/Fax: 478-929-3636
www.seniornewsga.com
E-mail: Seniornewsga@cox.net
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Taking Care!

Cut the stress in long-distance caregiving!

By Lisa M. Petsche – lmepetsche@gmail.com

Millions of Americans are involved in the care of an older adult – usually a parent – who lives in a different area, be it an hour's drive or a plane trip away.

At the best of times, caregiving involves a certain amount of stress, but often the anxiety is compounded when there are many miles between the caregiver and care receiver.

Worries about a parent's physical, mental and emotional health and safety can be overwhelming at times. You may wonder if plans you've set up are being implemented properly, or if you're going to get a call that there's a crisis.

You may also feel guilty that you can't be there on a daily basis to see how your parent is doing (which may be quite different from what they report) and provide assistance as needed. You might wonder if you should be making more sacrifices – either moving closer or inviting mom or dad to come live with you.

Then there are the financial costs: long-distance telephone calls; travel expenses and wear on your car; and perhaps the cost of hiring a companion or personal support worker because you can't be there yourself. If you're employed, you may have to take time off work to deal with crises.

Despite these challenges, there are many ways to maintain peace of mind while providing long distance care. Here are some suggestions.

Make it easy for people to get in touch with you. Get an answering machine if you don't already have one, and a cell phone with voice messaging. Email is also advantageous.

Set up a regular time to call your parent.

Find someone local who can check with them daily. This could be a reliable neighbor or relative, or a volunteer from a telephone reassurance service.

Keep important phone numbers handy: your parent's neighbors, close friends, primary physician, local pharmacy and any home healthcare providers. Ensure all of these people have your name and contact information, and encourage them to call you with any concerns. Stay in touch to get their ongoing perspective on how your parent is doing.

Shop around for a good long-distance phone plan.

Maintain a file of key information, such as your parent's medical conditions and surgical history, medications, medical specialists, banking institutions and other financial contacts, lawyer, clergy, as well as daily or weekly schedule and upcoming appointments.

Investigate other available resources in your parent's community, which might include: personal emergency response systems; letter carrier or utility company alert services; accessible transportation; adult day programs and other leisure programming; outreach services such as foot care and mobile dentistry; home health services involving nursing, homemaking, therapy and companion services; and alternative housing. Such information can be obtained from the local area agency on aging. (To find the appropriate office, call the Administration on Aging's toll-free Eldercare Locator Service at 1-800-677-1116 or search online at <https://eldercare.acl.gov>.)

When you do have an opportunity to visit, pay close attention to your parent's physical condition, mental functioning and mood. Consult their primary physician if you have any concerns.

Perform a safety assessment of their home to identify potential hazards – for example, throw rugs that don't stay in place – and do what you can to address them. Visit a medical supply store and check out the many products that might make daily activities easier and safer.

Ideally, plan to stay with your parent long enough so you're not rushed. That way you'll have ample time not only to attend meetings (try to set these up in advance of your arrival) and run errands, but also to have some enjoyable time together.

*Lisa M. Petsche is a social worker and
freelance writer specializing in elder care.*

Opinion!

THE AUDIENCE

By Daniel W Gatlyn, USN Ret. – Minister/Journalist

A voice with questionable clarity has announced that "all the world's a stage"... along with more that is challenging; and, in a great respect, such is true. If that is fact, then we have, at one time or another, EIGHT BILLION SETS OF EARS, EYES, AND ARMS WAVING, with each claiming to have the authentic slant on every issue. The analogies made that we are very much akin to a bed of ants... each clamoring for attention and each responding with hideous gestures has more merit than we care to admit. As I write, the world is literally "flying apart," with centerfold exploding in the Middle East. It is a toss up on what angle to pursue, for opinions are many. But what else is new? This circus has been unfolding since Adam observed that gourds grow! The Audience expands, the participants go and come, the expertise is barely visible! We are in a quandary on what stands as viable. But not to worry, the patently prime party will usher in the solution. From Genghis Khan to "the gutless gurus of ground zero," a grunt can be heard as to who commands the compound, and who will render decisions.

Not that anyone cares, but as a "would be journalist," I have made the observation that voices from every sector give a shout of plus or minus to the gracious glow pronounced" from the podium." And let me add the following: In my younger days I was also a musician, plucking the strings as gladiators graced the dance floor. My observation in those hours were, "when the music stopped, so did the fancy steps on the floor." My strengthened implications are that when the cameras are shut down, the acts and antics of all the clowns is also likely to cease, or at least be minimized. We will never admit it, but we are a vicious part of the premiere. That much is seldom mentioned; but, "now the audience has become part of the audacity!" How dare we criticize, for we have met the adversary... and it is us!

So gather your garments... refer the simile to the similarity of current events... fish, cut bait, or sing solo... or, whatever vantage points you prefer; for "God's Chosen," the hideous "Others," or perhaps the chant and rant of a million pheasants, makes no difference! Wars, rumors of such, the battered, the butchered, the Banner and emblems of assorted personalities, the weak, the meek, the strong, the brave, the coward, the ill prepared... all have been present since day one; and, the marquee is NEVER GOING TO CHANG! Pray, Pay, Delay or Have Your Say! Better yet, seek Morality, Civility and Sanity; and, who knows... you could be in the Winners' Circle and NOT JUST A PERSON WITHIN THE AUDIENCE.

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Roasting of Michael Chidester!

By Claire Houser-Dodd, Columnist

More fun for us than a barrel of monkeys; and, more fun for Michael than his last trip to the dentist! Michael Chidester is a well-known lawyer (we had no idea just how well) in these parts... Macon, Gray, Byron, Fort Valley and surrounding areas. He is also the Mayor of Byron... well loved and well respected... or so we thought, until the night of Thursday, September 21st for the Byron Rotary Club meeting at the Byron Municipal Complex.

It started off calmly enough, as we saw Michael going in and assured him we'd never say anything bad or derogatory about him, and we couldn't imagine anyone else doing so! Ha!

This event was a roast like the ones Frank Sinatra and Dean Martin, along with members of the Rat Pack, hosted for many years on television. The event was planned by Rotary member Heather Klemm. Heather graciously invited my daughter, Emily, Beth Clark and me. We had heard about the weeks of planning and were pretty excited over the Big Night! The dining room was extravagantly decorated, the fresh flowers were exquisite and the chicken served for our meal was good.

Kudos to Heather and her crew for their hard work designing and setting everything up! All was just lovely, until Martin Moseley, Chairman of the Peach County Commissioners, introduced the speakers and began lighting the fire for the roast.

All long-time friends of Michael's, then it went south... or it hit the fan... so to speak! All the speakers were pretty lethal, but speaking for myself, I believe Mayor Lester Miller of Macon-Bibb County Government did the most damage. He seemed to have the most ammunition for the roasting of Michael.

The first speaker of the roast was T. Clifton Woody, the current Assistant District Attorney of the Brunswick Judicial Circuit. He was previously with the Houston, Bibb and Peach judicial circuit. Mr. Woody started the fireworks detailing the "real" Michael Chidester. Among many other things he said about Michael, he declared he liked Mike better when he was drinking and patting the cute girls on their behinds and calling them, "baby!"

The second speaker was Bob Griggers, the past District Governor of Rotary District 6920. Bob stated that Michael was pretty sharp although he didn't look it; but, he knew all the skinny guys with long hair usually drove the women wild.

Up third was Lester Miller, a long-time friend and law partner with Michael. Lester had the goods on Michael, much to the chagrin of Michael.

Lester recalled eating lunch one day with Michael and their office staff at the Old Times Buffet in Macon. Lester stated: *"They all started loading up on the salad bar and sat down at their table to eat."* After a few minutes he looked over at Michael who was sweating profusely, he said he asked: *"Michael what's wrong?"* To which Michael replied: *"That's the hottest salad dressing I have ever eaten in my life!"* Come to find out instead of adding salad dressing to his salad, Michael had added cocktail sauce to his salad. Michael said he thought he was putting Catalina or French dressing on his salad. Lester then asks the audience: *"What would a normal person do in that instance?"* Lester said a normal person would quit eating the cocktail sauce laced salad and get another salad. But no, not Michael, he continued to eat the rest of the salad.

The anecdote we liked best was about Michael's failure to show up for court dates. It seems Michael had been excused from court for several days due to a "life-threatening illness." When he returned for the fourth day of court, everyone was astonished to see Michael's handsome tan and cherry-red nose. The most interesting part was that Michael's illness coincided exactly with the same time as the Daytona 500 Races in Daytona Beach, Florida. You see, Michael's favorite pastime is watching or going to NASCAR races.

Next came a video from Ken Asbury, the Past President of the Centerville Rotary Club, who was unable to be present at Michael's roast. Ken spoke in detail about the saga of the front porch refurbishing of the Chidester home. He exclaimed: *"How they remained friends after this ordeal was a miracle!"*

Michael's wife, Karla, and son, K Mike, had been sitting quietly by during the roasts from the speakers; but, Karla took to the dais to let everyone know that Michael is very thrifty. How thrifty you may wonder? Karla said: *"Michael refused to let her throw away toothpaste that was almost completely used up!"* She further added: *"He would take the toothpaste from the trash can and continue to use it to her disdain!"*

When Michael took his rebuttal, we loved how he described how his six year old friend, Lester Miller, never allowed a pea to touch a potato on his plate or a carrot to a tomato; and, ironically, he is still the same way today!

What an enjoyable evening, one not to be topped!

Thanks Heather... thanks Lester; and, "that's alright Mike!" We love you anyway!!!

Choosing an Assistant Living Facility!

Submitted by **Kelvin H. Collins, President/CEO, Better Business Bureau**
Serving the Fall Line Corridor, Inc. • BBB.org/central-georgia • Office: 478.742.9034 (Direct)

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Assisted living is one of the fastest growing types of senior housing in the United States. Assisted living facilities usually provide or coordinate personal care services, 24-hour supervision, scheduled and unscheduled assistance, social activities, and some health-related services. These facilities are designed for individuals who cannot live independently, but do not need nursing care on a daily basis.

Costs vary according to the residence, room size, and types of service needed by the resident. Most assisted living facilities charge month-to-month rates, which are generally paid by the residents or by their families from their own financial resources; however, Medicaid and some long-term care insurances might cover some or all of this type of care. Wartime veterans and their spouses may qualify for VA Aid and Attendance Pension based upon income and assets versus the cost of care.

If you decide that an assisted living facility is the best option for you or a family member, the Better Business Bureau suggests the following tips:

- Visit several facilities and talk to the staff, residents and family members who have loved ones in the facility, preferably twice at each facility (once during the week and once on the weekend or evenings. Ask yourself these questions: Is the facility close enough for family and friends to visit conveniently? Does the atmosphere seem pleasant? Does there appear to be enough staff available? Do the residents and staff seem happy and engaged? Do the residents appear to be clean and well groomed? Is the facility clean and well maintained?
- Check licensing as well as complaints filed with your local Department on Human Services and also check the facility’s most recent inspection reports.
- Visit www.longtermcare.gov for information and resources about long term care needs for themselves or a family member.
- Check the facility for safety features including well-lit stairs and halls, handrails in the bathrooms, well-marked exits and a way to call for help if needed.
- Know what the daily or monthly rates are and what is included in this fee. There may be other services available for an extra charge. Find out if the services are provided by the facility’s staff or if arrangements are made with other agencies.
- If applicable, find out if the facility accepts Medicaid and your long-term care insurance. Also ask if the facility is Medicaid certified.
- What choices of accommodations are available? Can you get a private room? Do they have rooms with kitchen facilities? Is the bath-room private or shared? Are there private areas other than the bedroom for visits? Is there enough space for personal belongings?
- Find out how you or your family will be involved in any future care planning processes. Be sure you know what will happen if you should need skilled care later on. Will you have to move, or will the facility be able to provide the care you need?
- Be sure to check the facility’s business review with the Better Business Bureau.

This transition can be daunting but knowing where to begin and what questions to ask can help make the process much more manageable. For more tips you can trust, visit BBB.org.

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Fort Valley State University VPSA Emeritus Thomas Palmer and Associate Professor Emerita Barbara Holimon Palmer were recently named “Peach Golden Eagles!” Congratulations to the Palmers!

Anna Kay Singley... a delightful and successful friend!

by Claire Houser-Dodd, Columnist

On The Cover: Anna Kay Singley

It is so wonderful to keep up with my delightful and successful old Wesleyan Conservatory artist friends.

Anna Kay was married to my cousin, Billy Adams, a very long time Macon, Georgian. She is now a very young 89 years – one year behind me! We still talk, keep up, and carry on just like we used to.

Anna Kay is a former Miss South Carolina from Columbia. Her father was a renowned architect, Mr. Heyward S. Singley, FAIA, well known for his schools, churches, fire departments, National Guard Buildings, and other handsome buildings around Columbia that were all designed before 1958. He was chairman of the State Board of Examiners for 15 years. Her home, when I visited many times, was a monument to his talent and expertise, a truly beautiful place. Her mother always made me feel right at home, and was an excellent cook and hostess.

Anna Kay’s father died young; she and her mother lived in the Columbia home until her mother passed away. She then moved to her father’s family home in Prosperity, S. C., about 40 miles from Columbia, where she had more land for her horses, and a factory building that she turned into an art school and show place.

Always an excellent artist, she has recently won First Place in Master Class of 175 artists at the Crooked Creek Art Show in South Carolina and Second Place Category, in Master Class Gourd Show. If I remember correctly, her painted gourd was named, “Oh My Gourd!” We asked her to do one for us and call it, “Gourd is My Co-Pilot!”

One time back in the 80’s, we went to Albany for her to teach an art class at the museum. On the back road coming home I saw five cows under an oak tree, pulled the RX-7 over in the ditch, took a picture and mailed it to Anna Kay. She painted a large oil painting from it and I believe she sold it to the First National Bank of Columbia for a hefty price.

She has three children, Meg, Kathryn, and Heyward. These three have produced eleven grands and 17 great grands. They all arrived in Prosperity for Anna Kay’s eighty-ninth birthday on her actual birthday, September 15th. For 88 years she has celebrated her birthday on the 5th of September, which was her father’s birthday. She had chosen that day as a child because they were so close.

As a working artist at the State Fair this week Anna Kay still belongs to many groups and goes to 7 different meetings; friends of the Library in Newberry, Basketry Guild in Prosperity, Art of Weaving near New Lake, Book Club in Newberry, Crooked Creek Art League

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“Gourdgeous Lace” – Gourd!



“Just in Case” – Company Logo!



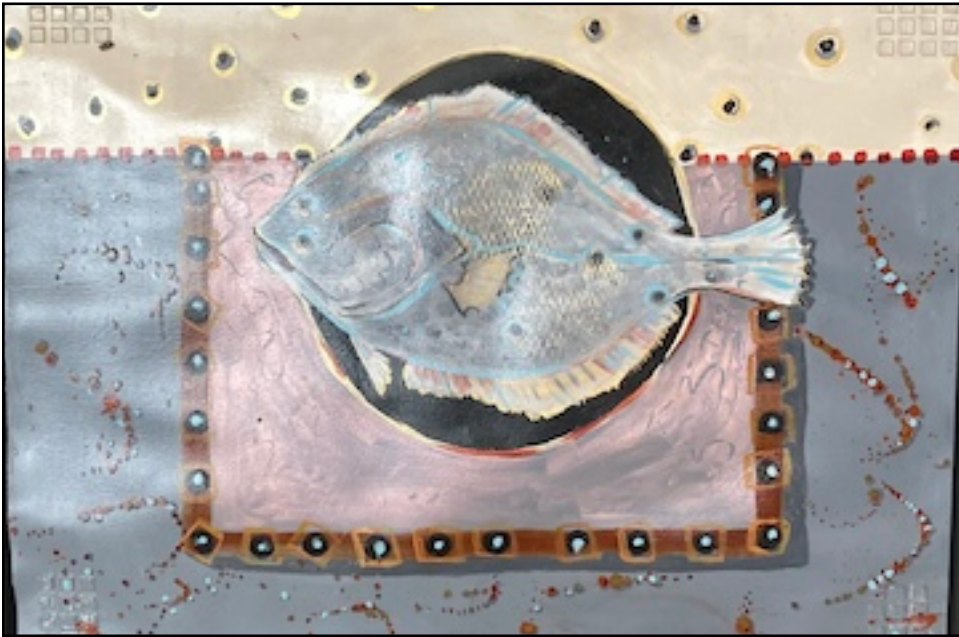
“Trash Basket” – Weaving! Weaving Guild in Silverstreet, S.C.

continued from page 7

in Chapin, Berry Patch Quilting Guild, and the Gourd Guild in Prosperity. The night I spoke with her about this article she had worn her shirt that says, “You are so Gourdeous” with her gourd sox to a meeting.

There is a chance Anna Kay may be moving back to Georgia. We are keeping our fingers crossed! Her grandson, John Boy as we remembered is looking for a house on Shellman Bluff to buy for his retirement. He is planning to let his grandmother live there and paint gorgeous paintings of the Georgia Coast. If this occurs we will be able to get together more easily as we used to do.

If you are interested in Anna Kay’s work, or having her do an art show, or teach a class, you may contact her by dialing 803-364-2126.



“Just Floundering Around” – Acrylic!



“Yard Flowers” – Oil!



“Where Are Those Peeps?” – Watermedia!



“Gourdeous Christmas” – Gourd!

Protecting Older Adults From Scams!

Submitted by Kelvin H. Collins, President/CEO, Better Business Bureau
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Like many of us, older adults are often targeted by con artists. Many older victims don’t ask for help until it is too late! Help your friends, family, clients, or patients avoid fraud by knowing the signs of current or impending fraud.

Warning signs that fraud may occur:

- **Frequent junk mail and spam calls.** Incoming junk mail (illegitimate sweepstakes offers, etc.) or receiving frequent calls from people offering valuable rewards or asking for charitable donations are signs that fraud could easily occur or may have already occurred.
- **Unfamiliar payments are being made.** Checks written or payments made to unfamiliar or out-of-state companies should be a red flag.
- **Acting secretively about phone calls or messages.** When someone hides or acts secretively about phone calls and messages, it could signify that they have engaged a scammer.
- **Sudden problems paying bills or buying food and other necessities.** A sudden lack of funds could mean an individual's money is being drained in some form of scam activity. The cause should be investigated to rule out fraud.

Tips for helping your loved one avoid fraud:

- **Become familiar with [common scams targeting older adults](#).** Knowing the most common tactics used to target older adults can help you more quickly identify when scams occur.
- **Emphasize the criminal nature of [telemarketing and email fraud](#).** Help your loved one learn how to identify it and help them understand that these tactics are illegal. In participating, it is possible they could be pulled into criminal activity unknowingly.
- **Encourage the person to ignore phone calls and messages that appear suspicious.** Don't reply to or click links within emails or text messages they are unfamiliar with.
- **Have a calm discussion about securing accounts and monitoring finances.** Helping older adults monitor their finances can be a great way to prevent scam activity and identify if it has occurred.
- **Help the person change their phone number.** If constant calls continue, changing the person's phone number may be worth changing. Registering the number with the [Do Not Call list](#) is a great first step, although scammers won’t necessarily follow the Do-Not-Call list laws. If unsafe calls continue, it may be best to change the phone number.

The most common types of abuse are physical, emotional, financial, and verbal. The [National Council on Aging](#) says up to five million older Americans are abused yearly, and the annual loss by victims of financial abuse is estimated to be at least \$36.5 billion.

BBB recommends that family, friends, and caregivers learn the signs of abuse or neglect in older adults. Business owners dealing in the industry can share these signs with employees.

Signs of financial abuse or exploitation

- **Lack of amenities the person could typically afford.** A sudden problem with affording the basics, especially if the person was able to in the past (with no change in income), is a sign of financial abuse or exploitation. This could be from a family member, caregiver, or con artist.
- **Giving excessive financial reimbursement or gifts for care and companionship.** Care and companionship are necessary and can take a financial toll occasionally. But if care costs drain an individual's bank account, it's time to investigate and re-assess.
- **The caregiver controls the person’s money but fails to provide for their needs.** A sure sign of financial exploitation is when a caregiver fails to provide an older person with adequate supplies, food, clothing, or other necessities.
- **The caregiver is overly concerned about the person spending money.** Caregivers should be concerned with an individual's spending habits if it is damaging to their health or well-being. Still, average daily spending should not be of concern to a caregiver.
- **Unexpected or unexplainable property transfers such as a power of attorney or a new will.** These can be especially concerning when the person in care cannot comprehend the transaction or what it means. When in doubt, family and friends should look into these transactions carefully.

For additional resources for older adults and their loved ones, visit BBB’s resources for older adults at BBB.org/all/older-adult-resources.

Kelvin Collins is president & CEO of the Better Business Bureau serving the Fall Line Corridor, serving 77 counties in East Alabama, West Georgia, Southwest Georgia, Central Georgia, East Georgia, and Western South Carolina. This tips column is provided through the local BBB and the International Association of Better Business Bureaus (IABBB). The Better Business Bureau sets standards for ethical business behavior, monitors compliance and helps consumers identify trustworthy businesses. Questions or complaints about a specific company or charity should be referred directly to the BBB at Phone: 1-800-763-4222, Web site: BBB.org or E-mail: info@centralgeorgia.bbb.org.

BBB Tip: Choosing a mechanic for auto repair and service!

Submitted by Kelvin H. Collins, President/CEO, Better Business Bureau
Serving the Fall Line Corridor, Inc. • BBB.org/central-georgia • Office: 478.742.9034 (Direct)

OFFICES: Macon: 277 M.L. King Jr. Blvd, Ste 201, Macon, GA 31201. • Augusta: 119 Davis Road, Ste 3-B, Augusta, GA 30907
Columbus: 233 12th Street, Ste 911-B, Columbus, GA 31901

The cost of owning a car does not stop with buying the car. Whether for an oil change or needed repairs, you need to find a trustworthy mechanic or auto shop.

BBB has tips to help you find the right shop and ensure a smooth experience when looking for an auto mechanic or repair shop:

- **Do your research.** Ask friends and family for mechanics they trust. If you need major repairs, you may want to find a dealer or repair shop specializing in the type of repair or a specific make or model car. Make sure the shop has proper licenses and complies with local laws. Look for certifications like an Automotive Service Excellence Seal. ASE certification indicates that some or all technicians have met basic standards of knowledge and competence in specific technical areas. Make sure the certificates are recent but also remember that certification alone is not a guarantee of good or honest work. Check business profiles at BBB.org to see if a business is BBB Accredited and in good standing and to read reviews and complaints. You can also check other online review platforms to see if the shop has a record of complaints.
- **Maintain your car properly.** Read your vehicle's manual for suggested routine maintenance to keep it humming along and reduce the need for repairs. Look for information such as the type and weight of oil to use in different seasons, proper maintenance intervals, and the maximum load your car can carry or tow. Pay close attention to changes in your car's performance, any lit dashboard signals, and unusual smoke or odors.
- **Understand your warranty.** Make note of anything you need to do to keep your warranty valid. If you are getting work done while the car is still under warranty, check to see if there are guidelines you must follow and if you must take the vehicle to a specific location. If in doubt, ask questions at the dealership where you bought your car. If your warranty has expired, shop around for a reputable mechanic to perform the work.
- **Plan ahead.** Don't wait until you have an accident, or your car stops running to look for a mechanic. You will be much more stressed when facing an emergency, so do your research when you can take your time and make educated decisions.
- **Have a professional diagnose the problem.** Self-diagnosing problems can lead to unnecessary costs if you ask for specific work that doesn't actually fix the issue. Describe the problems you are experiencing, with as much detail as possible, but have the auto body shop do a diagnostic (ask first if there is a charge for that) and determine what should be done. Don't rush the technician into making an on-the-spot diagnosis of the problem.
- **Get a written estimate.** Be sure to get a detailed estimate, including repairs, labor, parts, and expected time to complete the repairs before signing to have the work done. Ask if there is a charge to get the estimate before requesting one. Ask for any details on costs connected with the return of parts, the cost of shop supplies, the cost of disassembly, inspection, and diagnosis of the vehicle, and the cost of reassembling the vehicle if you choose not to authorize repairs. If there is anything you do not understand, ask for an explanation. Make sure the estimate states the mechanic will ask for authorization before doing


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additional work or incurring extra costs. Include your name and telephone number so the mechanic can reach you. If there is any uncertainty about the repair, get a second opinion. For larger repairs, you should also get multiple estimates. Never sign off on an estimate that is blank or appears to be incomplete. Be sure to understand all shop policies regarding labor rates, guarantees, and acceptable payment methods.

- **Pay attention when you pick up your car.** When you pick up your vehicle, get a complete and detailed written summary describing everything the mechanic did. Ask the service manager to go over it with you and explain all the work they did and the replacements they made. Also, if they replaced any major parts, ask to see what they did. Depending on the state, some laws allow customers to keep all replaced parts if requested before the work is started, as long as the parts do not need to be returned to a supplier or manufacturer. Be sure that your bill itemizes the repairs, so if a problem occurs later, you can show what was done. It should also note the car's odometer reading before and after the work is done. Are there any charges you do not recognize or understand? If the shop cannot explain a charge, it may not belong on your bill. If you requested to approve work before it was done, and you see charges on the bill that you did not authorize, you should ask questions about those items.
 - **Get all guarantees in writing.** If the shop guarantees its work, get the guarantee in writing. A written guarantee should include what it will cover, such as parts, labor, or both, how long they are guaranteed, and any exclusions. It should also outline whether the guarantee is adjusted for time or mileage and if it transfers to a new owner if you sell the car. Save all paperwork, bills, and receipts.
 - **Follow up with problems.** If you continue to have issues with your car after the work is complete, take it back to the shop that performed the original repair. If issues persist, it will be easier to identify who is responsible for the repair. If you are unable to reach a satisfactory repair, you may wish to file a complaint at bbb.org. If your issue involves the warranty for the car, you can open a dispute with BBB AUTO LINE.
 - **Be a smart consumer.** One of the best ways to protect yourself against disreputable car repair shops and scams is to practice "consumer automotive strategy." Watch your car if possible. Do not leave valuables in your vehicle when leaving it in the shop. Be aware of common scams used by dishonest repair shops. There are many things disreputable mechanics can do to make a car appear to have more problems than it does. If you feel you have been taken advantage of, you should first complain to the repair shop's service manager or the facility's owner. If you cannot resolve the complaint satisfactorily, contact the BBB. You can also contact your local consumer protection or state attorney general's office. If the mechanic who did the work is ASE certified, ASE may be able to take action if enough complaints have been filed.
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Find more tips and resources at [BBB.org/auto](https://www.bbb.org/auto) and view BBB's report on [4 recent auto industry trends](#).

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