

# Alliance Handshake

**April 2016**

One cannot listen to the news or read the newspaper without hearing about another scam or fraudulent scheme going on. New schemes appear all the time - an offer to reduce credit card interest rates, a threat that the IRS is going to arrest you for lack of payment, or the “grandparent scheme” that your grandchild is stuck in London and needs you to send money for a number of reasons. There are red flags common to all of these scams that mark them fraudulent.

We think it is important to share information with you about how to identify and hopefully prevent becoming a victim of these scams.

Identity theft is growing. The top ways identity thieves get your information is through purse snatching, mail theft, dumpster diving, and E-mail “phishing”.

If you play sweepstakes your name can end up on criminal telemarketing lists. City and utility workers do not go door-to-door but con artists do. Many of the investment fraud cases involve financial advisors who have had long-term relationships with their victims. Because we do not want you to become a victim of fraud, this newsletter is dedicated to sharing ways to identify and prevent becoming one!

Enjoy a beautiful spring!

**-William Van Ry, Owner & CEO**

...

It is very important to exercise the mind as well as the body. With each edition of our newsletter, we will include a memory word game for you to complete.

...

Last issues word: **WAYPOINT**

wain	panty	pony	wait
patio	inapt	want	pawn
into	winy	piano	iota
wont	pinot	nipa	anti
pint	tawny	atony	pinto
tiny	atop	piny	tony
yawn	pita	topi	yawp
piton	town	pain	pity
twin	paint	point	typo
pant	pointy		

The average is 25 words. Did you meet or beat this average?

Can you find 55 words within this issues word **HORNETS**?

## **PRIMARY AREAS OF FRAUD:** **Warning Signs & Prevention**

### Identity Theft

When a criminal takes your personal information – social security or credit card number, bank account number, birth date, address – identity theft has occurred. They may use it to steal money, get a loan, open an account, write counterfeit checks, drain your bank account or get an official ID issued in your name. Thieves can get your information through mail theft, purse snatching, hacking computer systems and dumpster diving, to name a few.

Warning signs of identity theft may be any of the following:

- Your purse or wallet is stolen;
- Your bank account is overdrawn;
- There is unusual activity on your credit card;
- Mail you are expecting doesn't arrive, especially if it is related to financial information;
- You get a notice that bills you have already paid are still showing due;
- You are denied when you apply for a credit card or loan.

Things you can do to prevent identity theft:

- Carry a close-fitting pouch instead of a purse or carry a wallet in a front pocket;
- Don't carry your Social Security, credit, Medicare/Medicaid cards, or checkbook in public, and don't put them in the car;
- Shred or cut up any documents containing Social Security, bank account, and credit card numbers;
- If paying bills by mail, do not put them in your mailbox – take them to the post office;

- Have the bank hold boxes of new checks for you to pick up; do not mail them.

### Telemarketing Theft

If you enjoy talking to anyone who phones or if you believe it is rude to interrupt or hang up on a caller, beware. You should never talk to strangers on the telephone – they are not calling to wish you a good day. They are invading your privacy, as though they have walked into your home. Screen calls before answering them. Use caller ID, an answering machine, or voice mail. Hang up on cold callers and put yourself on the No Call List (1-888-382-1222 or [www.ftc.gov/donotcall](http://www.ftc.gov/donotcall) ).

Warning signs that a call is fraudulent:

- In order to participate, you must pay money up front for taxes or fees;
- You must decide and act immediately - before the call ends - or the offer is no good;
- You are called more and more often by an ever increasing type of telephone solicitors.

NEVER under any circumstances give any portion of your credit card, bank account, or Social Security numbers to a caller!

### Mail and Internet Fraud

You play sweepstakes daily because you hold out hope that you will win a big prize someday. You think because your mail is delivered by the U.S. Postal Service, it must be legitimate. You open and read all of your mail because many pieces look like official government documents or heart-felt solicitations for charity – besides, you don't have anything better to do.

If you receive a mailing or E-mail that promotes sweepstakes, lotteries, charities, or work-at-home offers- throw the

envelope away or delete the E-mail without opening it. Even though it may be fun or give you something to do, stop taking part in sweepstakes, lottery, and contest offers.

Don't even give temptation a chance.

- Be cautious of unsolicited mail or email.
- If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.
- Question any offer using terms like "free", "no risk", or "no obligation".

### Contractor Fraud

Someone saying he is a home repair contractor solicits at your door, insisting you have a problem - a bad roof for example. It must be repaired right away. Or, he offers a bargain price because he has materials left over from another job.

Beware door-to-door contractors who use high-pressure or scare tactics to get an immediate decision. **DO NOT** do business with anyone who comes to your door offering a bargain or claims to have materials left over. In fact, it is best to not answer the door to anyone you do not know. Be wary of companies that want to be paid in cash or through messenger or overnight mail!

What if someone claiming to be an inspector appears at your door? They say they work for the city or a utility company and must come into your home to inspect your water heater, furnace, or check a meter in your back yard. City inspectors do not go door-to-door. Do not allow any stranger into your home, no matter who they claim they are.

**NEVER** work with a contractor who requires a substantial payment in advance. Always get at least 3 written bids. Don't always choose the lowest bidder. You get

what you pay for. Require any contractor to use a written contract that lists materials, costs, and the completion date.

### Mortgage Scams

You may have fallen behind in your mortgage payments or you may already be in foreclosure. You're getting phone calls and visits from companies offering to help you pay off your debts. You receive numerous fliers in the mail or on your door offering low interest cash loans.

Prevent becoming a victim to these scams. Avoid companies who contact you in person or by fliers offering a foreclosure relief service. Don't sign forms or papers without reading and understanding what you are signing. If you are feel uneasy or pressured, get advice from a lawyer or other advisor. And finally, don't deed your property to anyone without first consulting an attorney, a trusted family member, or someone else you trust completely. Once you sign legal papers, it can be difficult, or even impossible, to reverse the action.

### Caregiver Fraud

If anyone reviewing copies of all of your bank and financial statements suggests you make a change in your assets, investments, or insurance, always get two or three opinions first. Only a potential crook will not want you to discuss the change with others.

You may be a victim of caregiver fraud if:

- You notice unusual activity in bank and credit card accounts;
- Your caregiver tries to isolate you and you come to rely totally on him or her;
- There is concern voiced that too much money is being spent on your care;
- Your caregiver has complete control over your finances and has all financial

statements mailed to him or her.

No matter how much you know, love, or trust someone, never sign papers you have not read or do not understand. Even if you have a Power of Attorney, or other advisor who manages your finances, insist on receiving and reviewing copies of all bank and other financial statements yourself.

### Financial & Investment Fraud

Older citizens lose millions of dollars every year to financial exploitation. Con artists deliberately target vulnerable older adults, preying on their loneliness and trusting nature, and hoping they lack knowledge of financial, legal and insurance matters.

Warning signs of this type of fraud include:

- High pressure sales tactics from someone who insists on an immediate decision;
- You are told not to discuss the deal with another advisor or to get a second opinion;
- Claiming the investment is guaranteed and 'no-risk';
- Not receiving written information including verifiable references;
- You are asked to invest on the basis of trust or faith.

To prevent becoming a victim of financial fraud, don't become solely dependent on one financial advisor. Check out any offer completely – don't be rushed into a hasty decision.

*Information contained in this newsletter was developed by CASE: Communities Against Senior Exploitation.*

The logo features the word "Alliance" in a large, bold, serif font. The letter "i" in "Alliance" is replaced by a silhouette of two people shaking hands. To the right of "Alliance", the word "Handshake" is written in a smaller, white, sans-serif font. The entire logo is set against a background of vertical grey lines of varying thickness, creating a striped effect.

**Alliance** Handshake