

## **Be Smart Be Safe!**

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Telephone scammers, computer hackers, internet predators, identity theft and social media misuse have unfortunately become rampant problems. According to Bankrate.com, in a recent survey, about 41 million Americans have been victims of identity theft. These issues cannot to be taken lightly. All ages are vulnerable, but seniors living alone are especially so.

Many parishioners may have experienced these problems. How do you respond to a frightening telephone call or prevent a terrible experience? How can loved ones be prepared? As Philoptochos leaders, we can provide valuable services to members and parishioners by inviting a professional in the field to present a program for a chapter meeting or community event.

A few credible organizations that provide speakers at no cost include your local Better Business Bureau or local police department. One chapter had a safety instructor from their local police department come and speak early in the holiday shopping season. The room was packed with Philoptochos members, parishioners & guests. Questions included:

“What could a robber access if a purse was snatched?

How many credit cards could be used to create havoc?

In one instance, the father of a grown daughter, who lives in another state, received a call from a female who was crying hysterically. Soon a man’s voice took over the call, told the father that he had his daughter and used her name. If he wanted to see her again, he would meet the caller with xxxxx amount of dollars to get her back. How terrifying!

Informational programs like these would be of interest and a great service to your parishioners. There are many websites that provide information, but be very careful. Avoid those who are selling something. Many senior parishioners do not use computers. We suggest that you have printed materials ready to hand out. For ready information, we suggest you check out:

<http://www.USA.gov/online-safety>

[www.aarp.org/money/scams-fraud-watch-network](http://www.aarp.org/money/scams-fraud-watch-network)