




Senior Lifestyles ▶▶▶▶

Prosecutor sharing safety tips with area senior citizens

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*By Kathleen Folkert*

WEST AKRON — Staying safe and avoiding becoming a victim of crime is the theme of presentations offered locally by the Summit County Prosecutor's Office.

Prosecutor Sherri Bevan Walsh said she began giving presentations to senior groups when she became prosecutor almost 10 years ago and has appeared before about 8,000 older adults in Summit County.

"It's a popular program," Walsh said. "It's really interesting and useful, but it's also interesting and enjoyable for me to do."

Walsh is scheduled to appear at The Merriman, 209 Merriman Road, on Oct. 12, according to Karen Robertson, director of marketing for The Merriman. The event, which will begin with lunch at noon, is free and open to the public.

"We want to extend our services to the community as well as the residents in house," Robertson said.

Walsh said in the 10 years since she began the talks, topics and areas of interest have changed somewhat.

"The biggest change would be the con artist scams," Walsh said. "They are more involved than they ever used to be. With the use of computers, there are so many things con artists can do to make themselves look legitimate."

She said she spends time in her talks going over the different types of scams that have occurred in Summit County.

Walsh said attendees often ask about burglaries and violent crime. She also talks about purse snatchings and how to avoid becoming a victim.

"The biggest point I make is to pay attention to your surroundings," Walsh said. "Keep your head up, look to the left and look to the right. Most purse-snatchers are looking to catch victims off guard. They look for a woman who isn't paying attention."

The prosecutor said her talks are applicable for men and women, but often men are there accompanying their wives. She said she tries to take advantage of their presence to alert them to possibly dangerous habits.

“Men are more likely to open their door to a stranger than women are,” Walsh said. “Men don’t feel as worried as women do. But no one should open a door [to a stranger]. We’ve had a number of home invasions where people open the door and intruders force their way into their house.”

Walsh said she and her staff bring copies of her newsletter to talks. This month, she expects her office’s annual calendar with safety tips will be ready to distribute at events like the one at The Merriman.

Walsh said she hopes that local senior citizens will feel safer and act smarter through the presentations.

“I have felt since I first started in this position that our role is broader than just prosecuting cases in the courtroom,” she said. “I have felt we have an obligation to do as much as we can to educate the community about crimes and ways to protect themselves. Ultimately our goal is to reduce crime and see fewer victims.”

Robertson said The Merriman has other upcoming events that the public is welcome to attend. A safe driving seminar will take place Oct. 26 at 1 p.m. and a presentation on veterans’ benefits will take place Nov. 16 at 2 p.m.

The Merriman’s programs are free, but Robertson asked those planning to attend to call 330-762-9341.

Walsh said residents interested in scheduling a presentation for their group or center should call Lisa Holdt at 330-643-2800.