

HERE'S SOME HELP FOR THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED

In the course of talking to many senior citizens victimized by fraud, or who experienced attempts by someone to scam them, I noticed a fair percentage of senior citizens suffer from loss of vision. This certainly complicates life in general for people, and is a particular handicap if you are trying to read fine print, or even the regular print on advertising, contracts, sales agreements, or other financial papers.

Loss of vision sometimes accompanies the aging process. Macular degeneration, diabetes, and a host of other ailments can result in facing aging with limited vision. In the Clinton area, an active support group exists for those who lost all or part of their eyesight. This group, Vision Impair People (VIP) meets monthly on the third Wednesday at Gil's, 2620 Manufacturing Drive, from 5 pm to 7 pm. VIP's volunteer coordinators, Judy Schaaf and Kathy Youmans-Driscoll, always welcome new members.

VIP started about 1994 in order to provide members with an opportunity to socialize with others sharing the experience of impaired vision, and to learn from each other. Schaaf says, "Members help each other learn how to enjoy life outside their sighted problems." The monthly meetings feature a meal, fellowship, and learning opportunities from speakers.

If you lack transportation, VIP enjoys the support of dedicated volunteer drivers who make sure everyone gets to and from the meetings. VIP collects no dues, and there is no cost to join. You do pay for your own meal.

VIP can link members with the Iowa Department for the Blind, who offer a whole list of services available to the vision-impaired at no cost. One of the most popular services are auditory books. These books are so popular, VIP organized a book discussion group. Other services include independent living teachers, who make home visits to demonstrate all manner of adaptive devices and techniques used in daily living tasks. These include talking watches, clocks, scales, blood pressure cuffs, calculators, thermometers, and computers. Another service offers free radios that receive a news radio reading service. Volunteers read local newspapers from radio station WVIK I Rock Island. A free electronic newsreader, Newslite for the Blind, is available over the telephone. Still other services include signing up for free directory assistance, non-visual needle threading, creating tactile methods for cash

counting, and applying tactile indicators on appliances and electronic devices in the home.

If you are not a joiner, but still want to explore the resources from the Iowa Department for the Blind, you can call 800-362-2587, or call Judy Schaaf.

Retired optometrist Dr. Bob Simmons, who experienced loss of vision, says, "You can be inconvenienced by the loss of sight, but it does not mean you have to be limited in your daily activities." Sounds like a good attitude to take.

SCAM TRENDS

Several people reported calls in the last two weeks from callers impersonating federal agents. Calls came in from crooks claiming to be IRS officials, FBI agents, and the United States District Court. Remember, you will almost never get a call out of the blue from these agents. That's just not the way they work. And in particular you won't hear the kind of foul language used in these calls reported to me, by a federal agent. It's a pretty good bet you are not talking to a federal agent if he tells you, "Listen to me, and shut your _____ hole!"

The use of foul language seems to be common in the federal agent impersonators. Last week a Clinton man reported voice mails telling him to call the IRS. He gave me the phone number he needed to call. I called that number. The person answering, speaking with a strong accent, named himself as an IRS agent. I told him who I was. This man freely admitted he was scamming people. He mocked law enforcement and the US in general, for not stopping him. He said he made a lot of money cheating people. And the language he used showed he was really familiar with most of American obscene terminology! He ended the conversation by suggesting I quit and join him in cheating people.

You can report scams, frauds, exploitation of seniors, and other similar mischief to me at Seniors vs. Crime at the Clinton County Sheriff's Office, 563-242-9211 extension 4433. You can reach me by email at randymeier@gapa911.us, but always include a phone number, name and address with your message. Most of what I learn about, I first hear about from you.

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