

PAVED DRIVEWAYS ARE NICE, BUT...

Yesterday many of you came out to the Plus Fifty Senior Living Fair at the Vista Grande in Clinton, and stopped by our display for information. I enjoyed visiting with those who did stop by, and introduced themselves. I receive lots of phone calls, so it's nice when I get to meet people in person, and put a face with a name.

During the fair, I talked to a woman working at another table, who told me about an encounter with a door to door paving contractor. Her story prompts me to renew my warning about these transient contractor types. The story I heard is pretty much the same boilerplate pitch these transient paving contractors have used for decades. A man driving a heavy-duty looking pickup arrives, and informs the homeowner (usually in rural locations) that his company just finished a paving project "in the neighborhood, and we've got some blacktop left over. The boss wants me to find somebody who will take this leftover blacktop."

If the homeowner seems interested, the paver will hint the job will be free, or sold at a steep discount. Such a great deal tempts a lot of folks. But what they almost always find out after the paving is complete, the actual price comes in much, much higher than what the salesman hinted. And the quality of the work...let's just say it is lacking quality of any kind. The contractor will likely do no sub-surface prep, and will use a product more similar to used motor oil than asphalt. If you dispute the charge, you will get an argument and some high pressure pushback from the contractor until paid. If you pay by check, you can be sure the contractor will cash that check almost before the ink dries, and scam from the area.

I recall attending law enforcement training when I was a very young police officer, more than thirty years ago. One of the topics was paving contractors. What I learned about their method of operation way back then is exactly how they still operate today. The scam works really well.

We are fast approaching the season when these transient types will show up in our country roads and lanes, looking for business. Don't waste your money. Just by showing up and making a sales pitch, they are most likely breaking the law, since they never get the required peddler's permits. And that's just the start. They will violate several other state laws before the deal is concluded. If you get visited by them, show them the door, the gate, or the end of the lane, get them off your property. And call your local law enforcement agency to let us know these folks are out there.

SCAMMERS OFFER TO HELP OBTAIN DISABILITY

The Social Security Administration and the Federal Trade Commission issued a warning about a disability application scam underway. On April 22, 2016, those agencies reported they received reports from people who received phone calls from someone offering to "help complete the

process" of filing for disability benefits. These callers don't have any idea who did or did not apply for disability, they are calling as many people as they can, knowing they will find some small percentage of disability applicants. We call this a phishing scam.

The objective of these callers is to persuade their victims to give up their social security numbers, other personal information, or their bank account numbers. I've heard and read the process of applying for disability can be time-consuming and slow, so the offer of assistance might sound appealing to a lot of applicants. Don't make that mistake of falling for this one.

THIS IS NOT A SCAM

Sheriff Lincoln informed me of a fundraising appeal made from the Iowa State Sheriff's and Deputies Association. The appeal involved direct mail asking for support for this association and its mission, and appears in a letter bearing his signature. This is a real deal. The sheriff told me, someone called him to let him know about this "scam". The caller said he knew it was a scam because he saw the signature, and knew it did not belong to the sheriff. Well, we always tell folks to be alert for fraud, but in this case, you're safe from getting scammed. And the signature is that of the sheriff.

CONTACT SENIORS VS. CRIME

Let me know about scams, fraud, or other crookedness you run across. Most of what I learn, I learn from you. Contact me at Seniors vs. Crime, Clinton County Sheriff's Office, 563-242-9211 extension 4433, or email me at randymeier@gapa911.us