

DON'T LET THIS HAPPEN TO YOU OR SOMEONE YOU LOVE!

BY BEN KINIRY, ESQ.

Well, it is February and Valentine's Day is upon us. A day for us to celebrate the person we most love in this world (or all the people you love most). This article is not necessarily about them, but this made for a good opening to this article (shameless I say).

There are many people we love. As a society, it goes without saying that we love the seniors in our lives we call grandparents. Also, we all would agree that our grandparents make up one segment of our society that is most vulnerable, in many ways. Additionally, we all agree we should be looking out for our grandparents' best interest as they become less able to fend for themselves, whether it is a health and safety concern or protecting them from those in the world who would abuse, neglect or exploit them.

Last month I took a course on Elder Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation. I have listened to talks on this topic in the past and have read on this topic. For some reason this time was different. Some of the statistics that were relayed were both staggering and shocking (for example, exploitation is a



billion dollar industry and about 90 percent of perpetrators of elder abuse are family members).

In an effort to play my part in being helpful in shedding light on those who would harm our senior population, I, in my everyday interactions with families, make an effort to spot such abuse. I am just one person, so the goal of this article is to get you to think about and spot abuse, neglect or exploitation of the seniors you know and to report what you see (kind of like the "if you see something, say something" campaign). If you see something or if you are a victim, please call the New Hampshire Bureau of Elderly and

Adult Services by calling 1-800-949-0470 or tell someone who will take action.

Following is a brief discussion on the topic, which was taken from a writing by the National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys, Inc. (NAELA).

THE ISSUES

With the aging of the American population, problems of the elderly have become more widespread. One unfortunate outgrowth of this development has been the increased frequency of abuse, neglect and exploitation of vulnerable adults.

Abuse, neglect and exploitation are usually defined by state

legislation, and the definitions may vary significantly. Typically, however, the terms may be defined as follows:

"Abuse" typically refers to physical, emotional, or sexual abuse.

"Neglect" means failure to provide necessities. In most states, it is necessary to show that the wrongdoer has a duty to provide for the victim.

"Exploitation" is usually defined as taking financial advantage of a disabled or elderly victim.

Because state law is much more important in preventing

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DUNBARTON NEWS

By Nora LeDuc



NO SCHOOL Monday February 25 through Friday, March 1 for Winter Break.

CHAIR YOGA meets Tuesday, February 26, and Tuesday, March 26 at 10:30 AM to 11:30 AM at the Dunbarton Library with Instructor Sherry Gamble. Please wear comfy clothes! A great workout for adults.

GENEALOGY GATHERING Thursday, March 7, at the Dunbarton Library scheduled for 6:30 PM to 8:00 PM. Bring your materials and use the Ancestry Library Edition.

THE DCC BOOK CLUB will read: *On A Pale Horse* by Piers Anthony. Discussion will be on Thursday, March 7 at the Vestry at 7:00 PM. The book, a fantasy novel, focuses on Zane, a photographer about to commit suicide who instead kills Death and must assume his office. Tina Bean will host. All are welcome.

KIDS READ TO DOGS at the library is scheduled for Thurs. March 7th and Thurs. March 21, 3:00 PM to 4:00 PM. Please call the library to register for your 15 min. block.

SCHOOL DISTRICT MEETING Saturday, March 9, at 3:30 PM at the elementary school.

VOTING DAY Tuesday, March 12, at the elementary school. No school will be held. Polls open 7am to 7pm. Town Meeting starts when voting ends around 7pm.

SPRESIDE OPEN MIC NIGHT March 16th, in Dunbarton will feature Decatur Creek and celebrate the release of their second CD titled "RISING". Beth Eldridge, Doug Farrell, Jack Henry and Steve Dionne are each talented and skilled songwriters, musicians and singers. Their style may be described as folkish or home-grown but they don't play simple folk songs. They use well-blended harmonies and a variety of instrumentation to bring their stories to life in song and their lyrics are sometimes funny and sometimes touching, but never cliché. You can preview songs and get their CDs from several online sources or you can Email decaturcreek@gmail.com FMI.

THE DUNBARTON BOOK DISCUSSION of *The Alice Network* by Kate Quinn. Wednesday, March 20. Meet at the library at noon. Bring your lunch. Books are available the month prior to the discussion.

(Kiniry Article cont'd. from pg. 5)

abuse, neglect and exploitation than federal law, rules and protections will vary tremendously from state to state. A few generalizations can be made about the issue, but concerned individuals should consult local authorities or an attorney familiar with Elder Law issues for more detailed information.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

In many cases, the perpetrator is a family member or trusted, long-time friend. Frequently, older adults are financially exploited by in-home caregivers.

Remember to promptly remove all financial documents, i.e., checkbooks, bank statements, etc. When a caregiver is placed in the home, also remove family jewelry and items of value. Problems even arise in controlled settings such as nursing homes, adult care facilities, and congregate living arrangements.

It is frequently very difficult to detect abuse. Typically, abusive behavior occurs in private and victims may be unable to describe the attacks. When reports are made, they are frequently not believed.

A growing number of unscrupulous people prey consistently on vulnerable and incapacitated adults. Those familiar with the field report that the same individuals often appear as exploiters of multiple victims.

Experts note that there are some signs of abuse, neglect or exploitation which might alert family members, concerned friends or professionals to the possibility of problems. Among the signs to watch for:

- Withdrawal, particularly when the possible victim suddenly expresses a desire not to visit or receive visits with longtime friends or family. This is forced isolation. Often the abuser reports the older adult is not available to speak on the phone or have a visit.
- Fearfulness or anxiety on the part of the victim or frequent arguments or tension with the caregiver.
- Sudden, unexplained changes in living arrangements (such as a younger person moving in to "care for" an elderly person shortly after they have met).
- Financial exploitation and consumer scams may be different. The elderly are particularly vulnerable to financial abuse such as identity theft and abusive selling tactics. Look for new accounts, new credit cards, unusual investments or participation in sweepstakes.

Most states require professionals who observe signs of abuse, neglect or exploitation to report their suspicions to the appropriate authorities. Depending on state laws, it may be a criminal violation to fail to make such reports. Those required to report their suspicions may include: nurses (and aides), social workers, psychologists, accountants, lawyers, bankers and others."

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