

RESPECT FOR
YESTERDAY,
SUPPORT FOR
TODAY,
PLAN FOR
TOMORROW



Aging Matters

December 2024 Newsletter from the Illinois Department on Aging

Office of
Governor JB
Pritzker

Message From Acting Director Mary Killough



News and
Events

The holidays are upon us! For many, this time of year is associated with connection, gift-giving, and family gatherings. As you visit older relatives you may not see very often, most importantly, enjoy each other's company when you get together. But I also encourage you to take advantage of family time to observe your aging loved ones' home, safety, health, finances and support system. If you notice they could benefit from additional help or [support around the home](#), there are [resources](#) available through the Illinois Department on Aging. Visit our [website](#) or call **1-800-252-8966** to learn more.

Illinois' State
Plan on Aging

Some additional resources you may find helpful this season:

Find Services
in Your Area

- For those who regularly provide care to a loved one, these [tips](#) from the Family Caregiver Alliance may help reduce stress and make the holidays more enjoyable.
- If you're traveling over the next couple of weeks, [drive safely](#) and consider building extra time into your schedule. Before leaving the house, check [GettingAroundIllinois.com](#) for updates on winter road conditions, weather radars, road and bridge closures and other traffic-related information.

Senior
Illinoisans
Hall of Fame

Warm wishes for a safe and happy holiday season, from all of us at IDoA.

License Plate
Discount

Congratulations to the 2024 Engaging Aging Award

Winners!



The Governor's Engaging Aging Award is presented annually to community organizations that go above and beyond to make a positive impact in the lives of older adults. This year, five recipients were selected:

Catholic Ministry to Sick and Aged, Diocese of Belleville

Catholic Ministry to Sick and Aged provides spiritual and social support to people who are hospitalized or living in a long-term care community.

AgeSmart Community Resources Chief Executive Officer Joy Paeth, who submitted the nomination, explained that the Ministry's coordinator, Connie Barre, "has gone the extra mile" to engage a team of 30 to 50 volunteers who share her commitment to affirming the dignity of older adults.

Connie has also stepped in to provide pastoral care when needed, developed spiritual services, and even designed educational programs focused on the needs of disabled older adults. Her tireless fundraising efforts have sustained the Ministry, ensuring its work continues without interruption.

Catholic Charities, Diocese of Joliet (pictured above)

Catholic Charities is a faith-based organization providing service to people in need and calling others of good will to do the same. In 2023, Catholic Charities of Joliet's [Aging and Disability Services](#) division served 17,845 people across its multi-county service area.

AgeGuide, the northeastern Illinois Area Agency on Aging, nominated Catholic Charities for the Governor's Engaging Aging Award because of its innovative and unique service delivery approaches. "They are always eager to seek out partnerships to bring programs and resources to older adults and caregivers in their local communities," said Marla Fronczak, AgeGuide's Chief Executive Officer. "These collaborations have proven to be successful in keeping older adults connected and engaged. Their willingness to try new and innovative ways to support older adults has made them a leader in their field."

Catholic Charities partners with local townships, churches, libraries, food banks, and other community-based organizations to serve older adults and their caregivers through their Aging and Disability Resource Network (ADRN) services, as well as their Community Connection Collaborative

and caregiver services. Catholic Charities has also developed unique intergenerational partnerships for service delivery, including utilizing Lewis University students to deliver telephone reassurance and starting a garden project at their main office with the Horticulture Club at Kankakee Community College.

Family Service Senior Resource Center

Founded in 1911, [Family Service](#) is the oldest private social service agency in Champaign County. Its Senior Resource Center has served older adults since the 1970s, providing home care, meals on wheels, counseling, and transportation services, among other services to support seniors' health and independence.

Family Service was nominated for recognition by the East Central Illinois Area Agency on Aging, whose Executive Director Susan C. Real praised the center's innovative approach to addressing social isolation, while exploring the connection between creativity and mental health. What began as a pilot project in 2020, the Friendly Caller program pairs volunteer callers with older residents of Champaign or Douglas counties who may be experiencing social isolation. In its second year, program administrators incorporated themed activity boxes containing items to promote creativity. Artwork by 'Creativity on Wheels' participants has since been displayed at the Urbana Public Library.

Over the past year, Family Service Senior Resource Center Program Manager Julie Schubach has expanded social events and offerings in partnership with the Krannert Art Museum.

"Family Service creates a safe, healing space that motivates me to get up," said one program participant. "If it had been any other group, I would have stayed in bed. But I thought, 'no, I'm hurting. My life is hard. I need this.'"

Senior Adult Services

Senior Adult Services is a focal-point senior center located in Carbondale, Ill. The center operates out of a former school building and has a long history of providing in-depth community services and clubs for older adults and caregivers, including special programming for LGBTQ+ elders.

Senior Adult Services operates congregate meal sites throughout Jackson County, the largest of which serves an average of 150 older adults daily. Countywide, congregate meal sites are on target to serve over 40,000 meals—and to distribute an additional 60,000 home-delivered meals—this year alone.

"Senior Adult Services is deserving of recognition for their services because of their ability to make everyone that attends feel included," said Becky Salazar, Executive Director of the Egyptian Area Agency on Aging, who submitted the nomination. "I am certain that the success of their programs and high attendance is due to their welcoming nature. I have heard a participant say that he 'feels accepted' at the meal site. The diversity of the crowd is not found to this extent at our other sites."

Senior Services of Central Illinois

[Senior Services of Central Illinois \(SSCI\)](#) offers a wide variety of services to adults aged 50 and older residing in Sangamon, Logan, Mason, and Menard counties. The organization specializes in quality-of-life services intended to support older adults' ability to live independently, in their own homes, for as long as possible.

SSCI also hosts on-site activities, such as dance and exercise classes, computer classes, continuing education courses, crafts, entertainment, and fellowship.

"Senior Services of Central Illinois has been a wonderful partner, providing a wide variety of services to seniors in Planning and Service Area 7," said Carolyn Austin, Chief Executive Officer of AgeLinc, the Area Agency on Aging for Lincolnland. "We were thrilled to nominate them for this award recognizing the hard work of Carol Harms, Executive Director, and her entire team at Senior Services."

Illinois Care Connections Program Gives Older Adults the Gift of Independence



Illinois Care Connections (ICC) is a referral-based program that provides technology and assistive devices to older adults living in the community to enhance their overall well-being and quality of life. In just the past six months, ICC has received more than 2,000 referrals to help older adults obtain tablets, canes, walkers, shower chairs, vision magnifiers, and more. These devices are distributed at no cost to the recipient and are theirs to keep, with minimal exceptions for certain loaner devices.

[Learn more about the program's success](#)

[For provider agencies: How to make a referral](#)

7 Tips to Avoid Scams and Protect Your Identity This Holiday Season

The holidays can bring joy, time off from work and days spent with family—but they can also be accompanied by added stressors. Whether you're stretching your finances to afford presents, struggling with travel plans or rushing to get everything done before taking a few days off, the extra expenses and pressure could make you a prime target for identity theft or scams.

While the dangers are real, there are also things you can do to protect yourself from falling victim to a scam or having your personal information compromised. Here's how to stay safe this season—and keep fraudsters from spoiling your holiday cheer.

1. Practice Caution Shopping Online

Online shopping scams were among the riskiest scams in 2023, according to the most recent Better Business Bureau (BBB) Institute Online Scams Report. Not only are these scams common, but 82% of those targeted in online shopping scams reported losing money.

You can steer clear of online shopping scams with these tips:

- Beware online marketplaces. Practice extra caution or simply avoid shopping on sites

- like [Facebook Marketplace](#), Craigslist, NextDoor and other online marketplaces. If you're buying directly from a person and paying in cash, you won't have the same purchase protections you'd get when buying from a reputable retailer or when using a [credit card](#).
- Use traceable payment methods. If you're asked to pay using gift cards, cryptocurrency or a [wire transfer](#), that's a red flag that the transaction could be a scam. Instead, it may be better to pay with a peer-to-peer payment app that has purchase protections, such as PayPal or Venmo.
 - Look out for "too good to be true" deals. One huge online shopping scam red flag is highly in-demand products at surprisingly low prices. Scammers create websites with realistic listings of scarce in-demand products, such as gaming consoles. Once you check out, you may find that you get an order confirmation and then never receive your purchase.

2. Don't Fall for Phony Delivery Scams

The United States Post Office was the organization most often impersonated by scammers in 2023, according to the BBB. These imposter scams often take the form of fake delivery notification texts designed to trick you into clicking a [phishing link](#). If you click the link, you land on a spoofed website that attempts to collect sensitive information, such as your Social Security number, or downloads malware to your device.

It's especially tempting to click an unsolicited "tracking link" during the holiday season, when a mystery loved one may well have sent you a gift. Unfortunately, criminals capitalize on this impulse, and fake delivery scams are especially prevalent during the holiday season.

To avoid fake delivery scams, simply do not engage with any text or email that prompts you to click links or hand over information. These could well be phishing attempts. Instead, track packages through trusted sources by logging in directly to a delivery service's website.

3. Safeguard Your Passwords

Take the time to consider your account security before the holidays to help minimize risk. Use these best practices for keeping your accounts secure:

- Use a unique password for all your accounts. If that seems like too much effort, consider using a [password manager](#) to establish difficult, individual [passwords](#) for you.
- Turn on multifactor authentication. Wherever possible, and especially with financial accounts, turn on [multifactor authentication](#). This security feature requires you to take an extra step to verify your identity before you can log in, and it could help keep your information safe if your account's password is compromised.

4. Check for Skimming Devices

If you're shopping in stores, check for card-skimming devices that may be attached to an ATM or card reader. Card skimming fraud is more prevalent than you might think: It's estimated to cost financial institutions and consumers over \$1 billion each year, according to the FBI.

In this type of fraud, a scammer attaches a device called a skimmer to a card reader. Skimmers can be small and hard to detect, allowing your transaction to go through like normal. Unbeknownst to you, the device copies your card's information so it can be used or sold later.

Even cards with an EMV chip can be ["skimmed."](#) Paying with cash or using a contactless payment option, such as a tap-to-pay card or [digital wallet](#) on your phone, are more secure options.

5. Don't Shop on Public Wi-Fi

It can be tempting to cross a few items off your list while you're out and about, but public Wi-Fi networks might not be secure. Hackers may be able to take advantage of unsecured Wi-Fi to capture sensitive information that you transmit through the network. That's why it's wise to avoid taking care of holiday shopping, logging in to your bank account or doing anything that involves sensitive personal or payment information when connected to an unsecured network.

A [virtual private network \(VPN\)](#) might keep some of your information secure, but it's still best to avoid logging in to your accounts or making a purchase when you're using a public network.

6. Ignore Get-Rich-From-Home Job Ads

You may see ads about ways to "make \$1,500 a week working from home." Seems fairly easy, and the extra money could certainly help during the holidays—except, you may be inadvertently

participating in a criminal enterprise.

You could be [asked to act as a money mule](#) or reshipping mule by moving money from one account to another or accepting an item that's shipped to you and then reshipping it somewhere else. In either case, you may be caught in the middle of a fraud scheme. Even if you aren't knowingly committing a crime, you could wind up facing criminal charges.

If you're searching for ways to [make extra money during the holidays](#), stay safe by using only trusted platforms or looking for [local businesses](#) that need seasonal help.

7. Verify Requests for Donations

Scammers may take advantage of people's generous nature during the holidays. They'll often send emails or make phone calls posing as representatives for charitable causes and use [spoofing technology](#) to make it look like the email or call is coming from a real charity. Instead of being used to help people, however, the money will go straight to the fraudster's pocket.

Don't let scammers ruin your giving spirit, but check out an organization's website to find a legitimate phone number or online donation option when you're ready to make a donation. If you're unsure about a charitable organization, you can also look it up on sites like [Charity Navigator](#) and [CharityWatch](#).

Stay Safe This Season and Beyond

There's a heightened risk of falling victim to identity theft and fraud during the holiday season, especially as you work your way down your shopping list amid the frenzy of the season. The precautions above can help you finish your shopping and enjoy the holidays while [protecting yourself from identity theft](#) or fraud.

Brrr...It's Cold! Stay Safe During Winter Weather



Winter weather can bring hazards like icy walkways and freezing temperatures. Get #WinterReady by understanding winter risks you face and taking steps now to prepare.

Avoiding Falls

When entering your home, make sure you:

- Dry the wheels or tips of walking aids before entering your home.
- Keep the entryway clear of clutter to avoid slipping or tripping. Use ice melt or sand to clear outside walkways.
- Keep a small table or shelf near the entry door to put items while unlocking the door.
- Use a different entrance if your home's main entrance is often icy during winter.
- If possible, stay inside when the weather is bad. Consider delivery services for prescriptions,

groceries and other necessities.

When outside your home, make sure you:

- Avoid shoveling snow yourself when possible. There is a risk of heart attack for older adults while shoveling snow.
- Use railings to help avoid slipping on icy stairs and walkways.
- Wear nonskid, rubber-soled, low-heeled footwear.
- Ensure outdoor areas are well-lit.

Staying Warm Indoors

According to the [National Institute on Aging](#), about 20% of injuries related to exposure to cold occur in the home. Here are some tips to help keep warm:

- Set your heat to at least 68°F. Even mildly cool homes with temperatures from 60 to 65°F can lead to hypothermia in older adults.
- Place a rolled towel in front of doors to keep out drafts.
- Keep your blinds and curtains closed, and if you have gaps around the windows, try using weather stripping or caulk to keep the cold air out.
- Dress warmly on cold days, even if you are staying inside. Wear socks and slippers and make use of throw blankets.
- When you go to sleep, use extra covers. Wear long underwear under your pajamas and consider wearing a head covering.
- Make sure you eat enough food to maintain your weight — some body fat is necessary for staying warm.
- Avoid or limit [alcohol](#) intake. Alcoholic drinks can make you lose body heat.
- Ask someone to check on you during cold weather. If a power outage leaves you without heat, try to stay with a relative or friend.

You may be tempted to warm your room with a portable space heater, but some space heaters are fire hazards or can increase the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning. The Consumer Product Safety Commission has more information on the use of space heaters. Read the following for tips on using space heaters safely: [Reducing Fire Hazards for Portable Electric Heaters](#) and [Seven Highly Effective Portable Heater Safety Habits](#).



Low-cost tips for keeping your home warm

Events Recap

ANNUAL 2024 GRANT Awards



2024 GRANT RECIPIENTS

13th District AHEPA Scholarship Foundation
AHEPA Chicago Chapter 260
AHEPA Chicago Lakeshore Chapter 205
American Farm School
Annunciation Greek Orthodox Cathedral Chicago
Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church Kankakee
Asia Minor and Pontos Hellenic Research Center
Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops USA
Assumption Greek Orthodox Church Chicago
Center for Enriched Living
Greek American Rehabilitation and Care Centre
Greek Orthodox Ladies Philoptochos Society –
(Metropolis of Chicago)
Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Chicago
Hellenic American Academy
Hellenic Link-Midwest
Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Church
National Hellenic Society

National Hellenic Museum
Orthodox Christian Alumni in Action at U of I
Orthodox Church in America
Orthodox Christian Association of
Medicine, Psychology & Religion
PanHellenic Scholarship Foundation
Philoptochos Society of St. Demetrios – (Libertyville)
Saints Peter and Paul Greek Orthodox Church
St. Andrew Greek Orthodox Church
St. Athanasios Greek Orthodox Church
St. Basil Ladies Philoptochos
St. Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church – (Elmhurst)
St. George Greek Orthodox Church
St. Haralambos Greek Orthodox Church
St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church
St. Tikhon's Orthodox Theological Seminary
Z Life Organization

The Hellenic Foundation's 2024 Grant Awards event on December 12 acknowledged 33 grant recipients and their 43 programs that enhance and preserve the Greek language, culture, heritage, and religion in the Chicagoland area. Since 2016, the Hellenic Foundation has awarded more than \$3.4 million in grant funding.

[View the program book](#)

[Learn more about their senior services](#)

Save the Date

IDOa will resume adding to our [events calendar](#) in January. We encourage you to enjoy time with loved ones this holiday season.

Items of Interest

[Eldercare Locator's Home for the Holidays Campaign](#)

[Aging Unfiltered: The Power of Human Connections Across Generations](#)

[Mobile market brings free food, produce to seniors in north, west suburbs: 'Bridges the gap'](#)

The Illinois Department on Aging does not discriminate in admission to programs or treatment of employment in programs or activities in compliance with appropriate State and Federal statutes. If you feel you have been discriminated against, call the **Senior HelpLine at (800) 252-8966; 711 (TRS)**



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