

RESPECT FOR
YESTERDAY,
SUPPORT FOR
TODAY,
PLAN FOR
TOMORROW



Aging Matters

March 2025 Newsletter from the Illinois Department on Aging

Office of
Governor JB
Pritzker

Message From Acting Director Mary Killough



News and
Events

Nutrition is a vital component of our health and well-being, especially as we age. But in communities throughout the U.S., older adults sometimes lack access to the high-quality, nutritious food they need to remain healthy and independent.

Illinois' State
Plan on Aging

Funded by the Older Americans Act, the national Senior Nutrition Program has provided nutrition services to older Americans since 1972. The Administration for Community Living, part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, provides grants to states to enable a network of local programs that deliver nutrition services to older adults. These programs promote healthy eating, foster meaningful social connections, and support overall health. They also act as a gateway to other home and community-based services like falls prevention programs, chronic disease management resources, and more.

Find Services
in Your Area

This March, IDoA is proud to celebrate the anniversary of the national Senior Nutrition Program and the vital impacts of [nutrition services](#). For information about home-delivered or congregate (group) meals, healthy eating, meal planning tips and more, contact your [Area Agency on Aging](#) or a nutrition provider in your area by using this [map tool](#).

Senior
Illinoisans
Hall of Fame

License Plate
Discount

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary Killough".

Gov. Pritzker Highlights Social Security on

Standing Up for Illinois Tour



IDoA Acting Director Mary Killough, AgeGuide CEO Marla Fronczak, and Will County Senior Services CEO Brianne Hetman recently joined Governor JB Pritzker, Lt. Governor Juliana Stratton, and Congresswoman Lauren Underwood in the second stop of the Governor's Standing Up for Illinois Tour.

The event brought together state and local leaders to call attention to the Trump Administration's attacks on the federal Social Security Administration (SSA), which will limit access to Social Security benefits for the two million Illinoisans who rely on this support. The event was hosted by The Ovation Center—a recently-opened facility that provides resources, services, and activities to seniors in Will County.

[Continue reading](#)

Helpful Tools for Tax-Filing Season

The deadline for filing individual income tax returns for the 2025 season is quickly approaching. This year, it falls on Tuesday, April 15. The extended due date for filing a return is October 15, 2025.

Need help filing your taxes? Free and low-cost resources are available.

Free Tax Filing Assistance Programs

- [The IRS's Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Service and Tax Counseling for the Elderly](#) programs offer free tax help for individuals making \$67,000 a year or less, people 60 years of age or older, individuals with disabilities, and taxpayers with limited English-speaking skills.
- The [AARP Foundation Tax-Aide Program](#) provides free tax assistance, with a special focus on taxpayers over the age of 50 or who have low-to-moderate income. Program availability is determined at the local or community level (AARP membership not required).
- In Chicagoland, the [Ladder Up Tax Assistance Program](#) (TAP) provides free basic tax

return preparation for families earning up to \$67,000 and individuals earning up to \$35,000 annually.

Free On-Your-Own Filing Options

[IRS Direct File](#) is now available in Illinois, allowing eligible taxpayers to submit their 2024 federal returns directly to the IRS. What's even better is that federal return information can be transferred into [MyTax Illinois](#), where Illinois individual income taxes can also be filed for free.

Only need to file a state return? Taxpayers can use [MyTax Illinois](#) to file for free with its easy question-and-answer format.

Illinois Department of Revenue (IDOR) Taxpayer Assistance

- Individuals with tax questions should contact IDOR's Taxpayer Assistance Division at 1-800-732-8866 or 1-800-544-5304 (TTY).

- Taxpayers may also [visit any of IDOR's offices](#) located in Chicago, Des Plaines, Fairview Heights, Marion, Rockford, and Springfield to receive assistance. Staff at these locations can help with any Illinois state income tax filing inquiries and are available weekdays from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

- Use [Where's My Refund?](#) to find out if IDOR has initiated the refund process. For more specific information about the status of a refund after IDOR has finished processing, taxpayers can check the Illinois Comptroller's [Find Your Illinois Tax Refund System](#).

Charlene Wexler of Richmond, Ill. Inducted Into Senior Illinoisans Hall of Fame



In February, state Rep. Tom Weber's office hosted IDoA Acting Director Mary Killough to honor one of the 2024 Senior Illinois Hall of Fame inductees, Charlene Wexler, with an award recognizing her incredible career.

An accomplished writer, Wexler earned her induction to the Hall of Fame through her inspiring

work and the meaning behind it. Her passion for writing began after the passing of her son, Jeffrey, who lost his battle with leukemia at just 12 years old. During his four-year fight, Wexler journaled as a form of therapy and, when Jeffrey passed, channeled her grief into a novel titled "Lori." Wexler went on to write several more award-winning novels and short stories, including "Elephants in the Room," "Farewell to South Shore," "Milk and Oranges," "Murder Across the Ocean," and "Murder on Skid Row."

[Read Rep. Weber's House resolution congratulating Wexler](#)

Each year, four older adults are inducted into the Hall of Fame for their work in the arts, sports, and entertainment; community service; education; or the labor force. Nominate someone for the 2025 induction class [here](#).

How to Spot a Puppy Scam Online

Puppy buying online is more common than ever, so it's no surprise that you may be on the search for a new dog right now. But unfortunately, as more people look to buy puppies by using the internet to start their search, puppy scams are also on the rise.

In today's digital world, almost everyone uses the internet for shopping, including finding a new puppy! Don't worry — it's easy to spot puppy scams online if you know the red flags. And it's even easier to find a good breeder when you know what questions to ask. Here's everything you need to know before starting your online puppy search.

What Is a Puppy Scam?

Puppy scammers post fake litters online or pretend to be someone they're not, usually an existing breeder, to take advantage of people who are looking for a puppy. This means that if you aren't careful, you could find the perfect puppy, send the "breeder" your money, and never receive a puppy or any follow-up communication in return.

While many times these fake listings appear on websites like Craigslist, some scammers find ways to position themselves as reputable breeders by stealing personal info from them. Luckily, it's easy to know what to look for to ensure your puppy buying experience is both safe and enjoyable.

What Are the Red Flags?

No phone calls. The seller prefers to handle communication by email and not the phone. A reputable breeder will always communicate with you via phone or video chat (if not in person) before selling you a puppy. Fraudulent sellers are oftentimes outside of the U.S. and may be hiding their phone number by only communicating by email.

Copycat or stock photos. Photos of the dog or ad text can be found on multiple websites. Search for the text in the listing to see if the seller copied and pasted it from another site.

Sketchy payment. The seller asks for wiring of money or payment by gift cards. Be aware that if you choose a non-secure method of payment, it is highly unlikely that you will get your money back. Avoid paying a stranger using apps such as Venmo, as it is harder to get your money back if you don't get what you paid for. Paying by credit card or PayPal Goods & Services are typically the safest options.

Price is too good to be true. Research the prices for the breed you are considering ahead of time. Purebred dogs sold at deeply discounted prices are typically frauds. If the seller says they register their dogs with a specific organization, you can call the organization to confirm.

Breeder “badges.” The American Kennel Club (AKC) does not distribute badges to breeders.

How Many People Have Been Affected by Puppy Scams?

According to Better Business Bureau (BBB) data, nearly 10,000 scam reports and complaints have come in during the last three years about “businesses” selling puppies and dogs. The Federal Trade Commission estimates that only about 10 percent of victims report these crimes, so this number could be much higher.

Sixty percent of these reports indicated the consumers never received the pets they purchased, and others received pets that had health or genetic problems and did not receive documentation for their pet.

“Scammers love to try to take advantage of people when they are in high emotion situations,” said Steve Bernas, president and CEO of BBB serving Chicago and Northern Illinois. “The excitement of buying a new pet can cloud good judgement, and victims can be hurt financially and emotionally when they realize they have lost their money, and hopes for a new pet.”

How Can I Safely Find a Breeder or Puppy Seller Online?

While scammers are likely to start talking money immediately, legitimate sources will always take time and diligence to make sure the dog you are choosing is a good fit for your family.

Analyze reviews and referrals. The best sources for purebred puppies will have ample positive reviews or referrals from satisfied puppy owners proving they are legitimate and reputable.

Meet your breeder or puppy seller. Always ask to talk on the phone or video chat. Meeting in person is great whenever possible.

Ask questions. Responsible breeders and puppy sellers love to chat and educate about dogs. Ask anything and everything that you might want to know about the breed, the breeder, and the available puppies. Ask about the breed and how your pup’s parents compare to the official breed standard and other breed traits. How big are the parents? What do they look like? What kind of temperament do they have? Have the parents achieved any AKC titles or awards?

Ask for proof. Don’t be shy — responsible breeders will be happy to share information about your puppy’s parents, and proof of health records and screenings. You should be sure that the puppy has been seen by a licensed veterinarian and know where the puppy is on their shot-schedule. This will also help you so that you have the proper medical information when you bring your puppy home and you will know what shots are needed next.

Get documentation. Ensure that before leaving with your puppy, you will receive documentation of your dog’s papers. The words “American Kennel Club” as well as the AKC logo should be clearly visible. If the breeder or puppy seller hesitates to give you papers, this is usually a warning sign.

Be patient. If they seem anxious to complete the sale or get your deposit as soon as possible, or if you feel like they are pushing you to make a quick decision regarding a puppy, be careful. Such behavior is often a warning sign that the person you are dealing with is actually a scammer, and there is no puppy.

What to Know About the May 7 Real ID Deadline

YOU **DON'T** NEED A REAL ID IF:

- ✔ You have a valid U.S. passport
- ✔ You are under the age of 18

A REAL ID IS NOT REQUIRED TO:

- ✔ Drive
- ✔ Vote
- ✔ Prove citizenship

If you plan to fly after May 7th, and don't have a passport, use our interactive checklist and make an appointment at realid.ilsos.gov

SECRETARY *of* STATE



ALEXI GIANNOULIAS

Beginning May 7, 2025, the federal government will require every person 18 years and older to present a REAL ID-compliant state-issued driver's license or ID card or another [acceptable form of identification](#) — like a valid U.S. passport — to board a flight within the U.S. or enter a secure federal building.

Due to these federally-mandated REAL ID requirements, Illinois Secretary of State facilities have been overwhelmed with requests for REAL IDs. As a result, Secretary of State Alexi Giannoulias is asking everyone to make sure they really need a REAL ID before booking an appointment or visiting a facility.

You **DO NOT** need a REAL ID to drive, vote, open a bank account, apply for or receive federal benefits, enter a federal facility that does not require ID (i.e., a post office), or visit a hospital.

If you are planning to fly domestically after May 7 and do not have a passport, schedule a REAL ID appointment [here](#).

Seniors aged 65 or older may schedule an appointment by calling 800-252-8980 and pressing 2. Seniors can also visit a [walk-in seniors-only DMV](#).

[More information & frequently asked questions](#)

Save the Date



Every May, the Administration for Community Living leads the nation's observance of [Older Americans Month](#), a time to recognize older Americans' contributions, highlight aging trends, and reaffirm our commitment to serving older adults.

The 2025 theme, *Flip the Script on Aging*, focuses on transforming how society perceives, talks about, and approaches aging. It encourages individuals and communities to challenge stereotypes and dispel misconceptions. This year, join us in honoring older adults' contributions, exploring the many opportunities for staying active and engaged as we age, and highlighting the opportunities for purpose, exploration, and connection that come with aging.

Held annually during Older Americans Month, the Central Illinois Senior Celebration will take place on **Wednesday, May 21** in the Orr Building on the Illinois State Fairgrounds.

Items of Interest

[Pritzker signs bill protecting nursing home residents from retaliation into law](#)

[Answers to your Medicare drug plan questions](#)

[What Are Tax Refund Scams? A Guide for Older Adults](#)

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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