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Conquering the Con: How Seniors Can Avoid Being Swindled and Scammed

Alcatraz East Crime Museum teams up with AARP Foundation to raise awareness about scams targeting seniors

PIGEON FORGE, TN. (August 22, 2017) — Anyone, at any age, can fall victim to a scam. However, con artists most often set their sights on older adults. Seniors in the U.S. are swindled out of an estimated \$37 billion per year, according to a report by True Link Financial, mainly through financial exploitation, criminal fraud and caregiver abuse. In an effort to call attention to fraud that particularly targets older adults, Alcatraz East Crime Museum has collaborated with AARP Foundation on a temporary exhibit to help seniors recognize, refuse and report scams.

“We all want to protect our aging parents and loved ones,” said Janine Vaccarello, chief operating officer for Alcatraz East. “The more people understand how victims are targeted, the more we can do to protect ourselves from these crimes.”

Created by AARP Foundation’s fraud experts and hosted by Alcatraz East, the year-long exhibit, “Scamlot: Conquering the Con,” opens September 21, 2017. Visitors will encounter fraud in its various forms, including impostor scams, investment fraud and lottery scams. The exhibit will also feature stories of notable fraudsters, such as Charles Ponzi, and information on how the public can protect themselves from scams.

“Scamlot” will explore common scams and how to avoid them, including:

- **IRS scams**, in which a caller posing as an Internal Revenue Service agent threatens the victim with arrest if they don’t pay.

- **Tech support scams**, in which fraudsters gain access to personal information by offering to “fix” a nonexistent computer virus.
- **Sweepstakes scams**, which promise a large cash prize in return for a “claim fee.”

“Con artists have their sights set on older adults,” said Emily Allen, senior vice president of programs for AARP Foundation. “Seniors are likely to have accumulated savings, own their home and have good credit — making them attractive targets. We developed ‘Scamlot: Conquering the Con’ to build awareness and understanding of the different types of fraud.”

Among the exhibit’s features will be objects related to infamous fraudsters Bernie Madoff, Lou Pearlman and David Hampton. Visitors will also be able to test their scam spotting skills through interactive displays.

Alcatraz East officially opened December 16, 2016. The new crime museum is located at the entrance to The Island, at 2757 Parkway in Pigeon Forge, near the Margaritaville Hotel and Paula Deen’s Family Kitchen. The museum offers a wide array of exhibits on notorious crimes, law enforcement, and CSI, with historic artifacts and interactives. The Bronco from the famous OJ Simpson chase is currently on display at the museum, along with displays on the Unabomber, Ted Bundy, and Whitey Bulger.

The museum is open 365 days a year, from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m., with the last ticket sold 60 minutes before closing. For more information and to purchase tickets, visit www.alcatrazeast.com.

About Alcatraz East

Alcatraz East is the most arresting crime museum in the United States. Guests of all ages can encounter a unique journey into the history of American crime, crime solving, and our justice system. Through interactive exhibits and original artifacts, Alcatraz East is an entertaining and educational experience for all ages — so much fun it’s a crime!

This family attraction is located at the entrance of The Island, located at 2757 Parkway, Pigeon Forge, Tenn. For more information, visit www.alcatrazeast.com.

About AARP Foundation

AARP Foundation works to increase economic opportunity and social connections that help prevent and reduce senior poverty. We collaborate with individuals and organizations who share our commitment to innovation and our passion for problem-solving. Supported by vigorous legal advocacy, we create and advance effective solutions that help struggling older adults transform their lives. AARP Foundation is the affiliated charity of AARP. Learn more at www.aarpfoundation.org.

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Sources:

¹*The True Link Report on Elder Financial Abuse 2015*, <https://truelink-wordpress-assets.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/True-Link-Report-On-Elder-Financial-Abuse-012815.pdf>.