

Police help seniors protect against scams



Kevin Flanders Photo

Spencer Police Officer Valerie Morin presents at the Senior Center last week.

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SPENCER – Thanks to a partnership between the Senior Center and the police department, seniors recently learned several ways to defend themselves from a range of threats.

On Feb. 24, Spencer Police Officer Valerie Morin visited the center to discuss how seniors can keep themselves safe in all situations. Always eager to work with local seniors, Officer Morin

has already run similar programs at Howe Village and Senior Living at Prouty. She will continue to hold programs over the next few months.

“There is a great group of seniors in Spencer. Seniors make up a large population of the town, and it’s important to make yourself available to them,” Morin said.

During her presentation, Morin handed out informational packets and discussed a number of threats to seniors, from thieves to phone scam-

mers. Suspects often attempt to target seniors and take advantage of residents they view as vulnerable, Morin said, and it’s important to always be vigilant in public, over the phone, and online.

The presentation featured several precautionary tips for seniors, such as staying in groups when possible, avoiding poorly lit areas, always possessing a phone in public spaces, and being aware of your surroundings. Even simple practices like making regular eye contact with those around you can discourage a potential thief.

The presentation also focused heavily on other forms of crime against seniors, especially the dreaded phone scam. Because scammers use advanced technologies and are often located out of state or country, they can be difficult for police to track. Officer Morin recommended never providing your personal information or answering questions from a stranger over the phone; if a caller is suspicious, hang up and notify the police.

“Some of these scams are very tricky, and can be easy to fall for,” Morin told guests. “People of all ages fall for them, not just seniors. Sometimes they call and pretend to be the police, and other times they pretend to owe you money. The police department will never call you about a warrant or to ask for your support with a project.”

Morin also advised guests to ignore calls from unknown numbers and regularly monitor their bank accounts for suspicious activities.

Meanwhile, email scams are often even more duplicitous and dangerous



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than their phone counterparts. All it takes is one downloaded file or opened attachment to infect your device and steal personal data. Police have repeatedly warned residents about scams targeting several technologies, including social media and email accounts.

The Feb. 24 program concluded with self-defense strategies that can be used in the instance of a physical attack. Additional information was provided in the packets given to seniors.

For Senior Center Director Pamela Woodbury and her staff, it means a lot to welcome members of the police department into the center for presentations.

“We try to do as much as we can with the police department. It is great for the seniors to get these tips,” Woodbury said.

For more information about upcoming programs at the Senior Center, call 508-885-7546.