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Protection from frauds doesn't require magic: investigator

Bruce Walstad is a professional magician and an expert on scams and fraud. He combined his two areas of expertise at Monday's Hoopeston Neighborhood Watch meeting.

Between reporting statistics on swindles and offering tips on how to avoid them, Walstad displayed a flaming book, a flaming wallet and performed rope tricks for more than 30 people who attended the meeting.

Walstad, of the Franklin Park Police Department, has appeared on such television programs as Oprah, The Justice Files, broadcast news programs, 48 Hours and Geraldo, talking about scams, swindles and fraud.

Senior citizens are the most-targeted group for con games and fraud, Walstad said. Rarely are such crimes reported. Walstad estimated that such crimes are reported in only one in five to one in 100 incidents.

Embarrassment is the main reason those who have been swindled do not report the crimes, but Walstad said victims should not be ashamed. "You better get over it," he said. "You can't be embarrassed. It happens every day."

Often, conmen who find a willing victim return to the same person over and over, sometimes taking hundreds of thousands of dollars.

No one is exempt from the charm of con men, Walstad said. "My father-in-law got it about a year ago," he said. "I've told him umpteen times. I know some conmen who could get by my wife and into my house. I know it. They're that good."

Conmen flourish not only because people are ashamed to report that they've been taken but also because the crimes are not a high priority for many law enforcement agencies which are battling drugs, gangs and violent crimes. "We don't have the resources to go after them," he said.

Those who scam senior citizens use several ploys, most of which involve the person coming into a home. Scams include impersonating utility workers, acting as if they need to use a telephone, "sweetheart" swindles in which someone befriends an elderly person, C.O.D. scams and impersonating a police officer or FBI agent.

Home repair fraud is another favorite of conmen. That is the number one complaint to the Illinois Attorney General's office, Walstad said adding the most prevalent victims are those over age 60.

Telemarketers can also be scams. Nearly \$40 billion—or 1.5-2 percent of the country's Gross National Product—is lost to telemarketers each year. "That's what AT&T was before the government came in and broke them up," Walstad said.

To avoid being taken by conmen, Walstad said residents should never allow unknown people into their homes. Neighbors should also watch out for each other and suspicious activity should be reported to the police department.

Also, he said, people must think skeptically and learn to be rude. "That's not easy to do," he said, "but it works."

Walstad's appearance was sponsored by Drollinger Insurance and Ohio Casualty Co.

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Congratulations, Alderman Rod Kaag

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Kevin Davis

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Bowling Scores



Hoopeston Women's Bowling League Standings 3/26/01

1. R&R Body Shop	46	32
2. Community Bank	42	36
3. Main Street Travel	42	36
4. Rethelford Carpeting	42	36
5. Kankakee Federal	42	36
6. B.J.'s Pump	40	38
7. Pin Pals	38	40
8. Family Affair	38	40
9. Weber's Drug Store	36	42
10. The Scramblers	35	43
11. Gillins Oil	34	44
12. Gutter Balls	33	45

High Team Game: Main Street Travel 1,157, Rethelford Carpeting 1,058, Family Affair, 1053; **High Team Series:** Main Street Travel 3,156, Community Bank 3,077, Rethelford Carpeting 3,046.

High Individual Game: Mona Birch 222, Patti Lowe 221, Helen Taflinger 219; **High Individual Series:** Patti Lowe 612,

Mona Birch 582, Glenda Reed 574.

Games over 200: Patti Lowe 206, 222; Helen Taflinger 219; Glenda Reed 202; Mona Birch 222.

Series over 500: Patty Cappellano 516, Patti Lowe 612, Helen Taflinger 531, Debbie Winters 508, Glenda Reed 574, Mona Birch 582, Shawn Irwin 501, Tracy Lawson 530.

Thursday Afternoon Ladies League Standings 3/29/01

1. Pla-Mor Lanes	50½	27½
2. Crunch's	50½	27½
3. Rex's	47½	30½
4. Gress I	43½	34½
5. 4 MRS	43	35
6. Knuth's	34	44
7. H&R Block	32½	45½
8. Bye	10½	67½

High Team Game: Knuth's 851; **High Team Series:** Knuth's 2,434; **High Individual Game:** Thesia Pierce 201; **High Individual Series:** Thesia Pierce 542.

Police News



The high school necklace found Tuesday was claimed by the owner Tuesday evening.

Carroll W. Jerome, 21, of 719 E. Seminary, was arrested at 6:15 p.m. Tuesday on a Vermilion County warrant for failure to appear. He was released on \$300 cash bond.

New Books at the Library



Non-fiction:

Happy Hours by Devon Jersild
Ice Bound by Jerri Nielsen

In the Hospital



Hoopeston Community Memorial Hospital
April 3

Nothing to report.

Weather



Partly cloudy today. High 68. Tonight, mostly cloudy. Low 52. Tomorrow, mostly cloudy, isolated thunderstorms. High 75, low 53.

For current weather conditions, call the Hoopeston Weather Line at (217) 283-6221.

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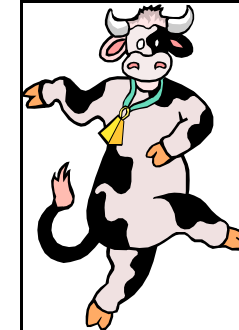
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