

Sheriff launches program aimed at seniors

Cuccinelli joins Lippa to kick off Triad initiative

By Rebecca J. Barnabi
Reporter

LADYSMITH - Caroline county Sheriff Tony Lippa, joined by Attorney General Ken Cuccinelli, has launched a program aimed at preventing crimes against senior citizens.

Lippa has begun a local chapter of Triad, a program of the National Sheriffs Association to promote safety of senior citizens. Triad is a three-way partnership of law enforcement, senior citizens, and community groups. The program seeks to be proactive, helping prevent crime against senior citizens instead of reacting after a crime has been committed. There are 92 other local chapters in Virginia.

“My concerns for seniors is crime prevention.” Said Lippa, “Are they getting the message? How can we help them get the message?”

Lippa held a kick-off meeting Thursday at the Lake Land of Heritage Clubhouse. He was joined by Cuccinelli, Robert Gordon of Ruther Gen, who will chair the Caroline Triad chapter, and Supervisor Wayne Acors. The four signed a cooperative agreement to launch Triad in Caroline. The Triad chapter will meet monthly with Lippa to assess risks to senior citizens.

“This is the best way to reduce crime against seniors,” said Juanita Balenger, community outreach and Triad director for cuccinelli’s office.

Cuccinelli spoke about the history of the American economy and how it has created a climate that makes it easy for con artists. He also stressed the importance of protecting senior citizens against lending institutions that use illegal ways to foreclose on homes.

Gordon, 83 who is retired form a law enforcement career that began on Long Island, New York and is secretary/treasurer of the United Federation of Police, indicated that the group’s rote will be mainly educational.

“As long as we can educate the people,” he said, the program will be worthwhile if it helps 10-15 people. He suggested that senior citizens should shred all unneeded documents containing personal information and use caution with the Interent.

The Sheriff’s Office already has special programs geared toward helping senior citizens noted Lippa, including Project Lifesaver and Check-Mate. With Protect Lifesaver, and elderly person or a mentally handicapped child can wear a special wristband that helps locate them with 22 minutes if they are missing . With the Check-mate program, law enforcement dispatchers periodically call the home of a senior citizen who lives alone in order to check on them.

Virginia has 1 million residents over the age of 60, according to Balenger, and the number is expected to double by 2030. Senior citizens are targeted by criminals because they may be isolated, have health issues such as dementia, and lack the ability to care for their homes, she said. In addition, they may not report a crime out of a sense of shame when they are victimized.

Senior citizens can reduce the risk of identity theft by carrying fewer items with personal information, such as credit cards, said Balenger, and only shopping online if the Internet site is safe and secure (usually designated with “https” in the URL).