

DON'T BE A VICTIM

Elderly are often targets of mail, telephone fraud

By Nathan Bottiger

Eagle Staff Writer

CLINTON TWP — Criminals who use mail fraud to steal money often target the elderly as victims.

Ian Ortega, a U.S. postal inspector, talked to residents of Concordia at Cabot on Wednesday about the dangers of mail fraud.

Ortega said fraud criminals target the elderly because they often are isolated, lonely and have the most money at their disposal.

"They appeal to your emotional side," Ortega said to about 40 people who attended his talk.

Ortega said popular schemes that his department investigate come in forms such as foreign lotteries, strange sweepstakes and work-from-home or re-packaging plans.

Ortega kept noting one main point throughout his speech.

"There is no purchase or entry fee for a sweepstakes," he said. "If you have anyone telling you otherwise, it's a scam."

Ortega said this would apply to foreign lotteries too, but actually any lotteries not run through a state's lottery system are illegal.

Ortega played news clips showing examples of schemes and the end results, usually in thousands of lost dollars.

He said most times these



Postal inspector Ian Ortega watches as Virginia Hausele, 76, of Concordia at Cabot tries to tell the difference between a real and fake money order.

NATHAN BOTTIGER/BUTLER EAGLE

schemes originate from foreigners, which makes finding the suspects and the money difficult and time consuming.

"As soon as it is wired away, more likely than not, that money is gone," he said.

Virginia Hausele, 76, of Concordia at Cabot said the examples Ortega showed appealed to her emotions.

"Your heart goes out to these people that have been scammed," she said. "It's sad to see people taken advantage of."

The seminar came shortly after many Butler County residents received

numerous calls from impersonated IRS employees, claiming they needed an immediate credit payment for unpaid taxes.

Ortega said if the IRS calls asking for any form of immediate payment, a person should hang up immediately without saying a word.

"If you ask questions, they'll stonewall you. They'll say we're the IRS, don't question us," he said. "The (real) IRS will never call you to demand a payment."

Ortega said not saying anything is important because criminals may

find personal information through conversation and sell it for a profit for others wanting to learn how to break through that person's defenses.

Hausele said she received an IRS fraud call shortly after hearing a few of her neighbors mention the scheme.

"As soon as he said IRS and said a few words, I hung up," she said.

Hausele said she knows that the elderly, even in Concordia's tight community, can fall prey to the suspects, who will go as far as befriending a person and calling them every day.

"Even here in Concordia, where we are like family, people are lonely, and they need someone to reach out to," she said. "Most times it's over the phone."

Hausele said scams will never go away and mail fraud is only one of many attempts to take advantage of innocent people for profit.

"It pervades so many areas of our lives," she said.

Referencing Ortega's speech, Hausele said the best anyone can do is be ready when the time comes and take the right action.

"If you let them get a grip of you, it's much harder to get rid of them," Hausele said. "The more information you have about these things, the better prepared you are."



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Slippery Rock University unveils new strategic plan

By Phillip Rau

Eagle Staff Writer

SLIPPERY ROCK — Slippery Rock University administrators have unveiled the institution's revised strategic plan, the culmination of a project that has taken two years to complete and involved more than 80 people.

The document, which is available on the university's website and still is accepting comments, lays out a three-to-five-year plan that administrators, faculty and staff members will use for their own planning, budget requests and assessment work.

The plan identifies eight goals — from increasing student enrollment to training and retaining "highly-qualified and diverse" faculty, staff and administrators — that will guide the university.

Some goals, such as enhancing student diversity and improving SRU's curriculum and revenue, are internal and include broad strategies — like implementing a "flexible quality liberal studies program" — rather than specific deadlines or initiatives.

For example, as part of the plan SRU sets a goal to revise its code of conduct policies and work to reduce the number of students withdrawing from school for medical reasons, but doesn't go into specifics for how that will be achieved.

SRU's plan also lays out goals to recruit and retain more "highly qualified and diverse" employees and suggests possible ways to achieve that, including developing a mentoring program for employees and improving the university's website to attract more job applicants.

Others set down deadlines for public assessments and improvements to be completed.

As part of work to improve SRU's "campus experience," the plan sets a deadline of August this year for the university to improve "community re-

THE GOALS

Here are the eight goals of the revised strategic plan for Slippery Rock University.

The plan can be viewed online at www.sru.edu/about/strategic-planning.

✓ Increase enrollment while enhancing student quality and diversity.

✓ Offer a quality, flexible, agile and integrated curriculum and co-curriculum to develop the intellectual, social, physical and leadership capabilities of students.

✓ Fuel learning with powerful pedagogies and transformational experiences in and out of the classroom.

✓ Maintain an unwavering focus on success for all students.

✓ Provide a supporting campus experience through quality housing, dining, recreation, health, safety and administrative services and a caring community.

✓ Attract, retain and develop highly qualified and diverse faculty, staff and administrators.

✓ Increase financial resources, enhance physical facilities, employ cost-effective technology and use sustainable processes and procedures.

✓ Engage alumni and friends in the life of the university.

sponse" to emergencies; assess student satisfaction with administrative areas; create a "comprehensive and collaborative" way to address students' mental health needs; and assess the functionality and aesthetics of the current facilities.

The plan also suggests creating an Office for Professional and External Relations as a way to engage more alumni and public in events and activities at SRU and to develop more internship and job shadowing opportunities.



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