

County officials: Scammers use fear to gain money, information

By Thomas King
tking@themeridianstar.com

Two scams are circulating around Lauderdale County, taking advantage of citizens who are unaware.

The Social Security and jury duty scams prey on an individual's fear.

The Social Security scam occurs when a con artist calls a person and threatens them with the removal of their social security benefits unless a particular fee is paid or certain information

is given to the caller.

"The federal government and social security administration does not do business by phone," said Chief Deputy Ward Calhoun of the Lauderdale County Sheriff's Department. "They will not call and say benefits are



Calhoun

going to get cut off."

The jury duty scam works in a similar fashion where the person is called and threatened with fines or jail time for missing jury duty.

Calhoun says that although there are different tactics involved, the pattern stays the same – eliciting fear from the subject, then offering a "solution" to the perceived problem.

But in reality, no federal agency does business in that manner, says Calhoun.

"All these federal agencies do business by mail," said Calhoun. "They're not gonna call a citizen to tell them something like that."

Another threat is the ability for these con artists to adapt and change their tactics, as an increased amount of free information has led to some con artists using the names of actual officials to add credibility to their false claims.

"As soon as we hear of one way, they will do it some way different," said

Calhoun. "They use names of people at the sheriff's department because we have a website. Citizens have to protect themselves. Don't talk with anybody making some type of threat over the phone."

"It's all about creating some sort of fear," he added.

"These same scams just keep on coming," said Circuit Clerk Donna Jill Johnson. "These poor victims usually call after the fact and after it soaks in, and we all know that most

do not get reported from embarrassment from being scammed."

"Whatever the scam is, we ask the victim to always contact law enforcement locally (sheriff and city police) as well as the (attorney general's) office," said Johnson. "These cons are getting better and better at what they do."

"These types of scams are continually going on in our world. Let your friends and family know these things are going on," said Calhoun.

Minor injuries reported in police car wreck

Thomas King
tking@themeridianstar.com

Minor injuries were reported in a collision between a grey Honda and a Meridian police car at the intersection of 33rd and Highway 39 near Walmart on Thursday.

MPD Capt. John Griffith said the collision happened when the officer involved was responding to a call traveling south and took a left on 33rd street. The Honda was traveling north and collided with the police car, Griffith said.

The officer, the driver of the Honda and the other passenger were taken to a hospital for medical care, police said.



Police investigate a collision between a grey Honda and a Meridian police car at the intersection of 33rd and Highway 39 near Walmart on Thursday.

Christmas around East Mississippi, West Alabama

Christmas Related Events for this weekend:

Friday, Dec. 6

- Christmas Parade in Decatur - 6 p.m.
- Elf the Musical at the Meridian Little Theatre - 7 p.m.

Saturday, Dec. 7

- Milk and Cookies with Santa at Bonita Lakes Mall, 9 a.m.
- Christmas On The River in Demopolis, Ala. - 9 a.m.
- 10 annual WhistleStop Marketplace at the Historic Newton Depot in Newton - 9 a.m.-3 p.m.
- Meridian Christmas Parade "Parade of Toys" - 5 p.m.
- Shubuta Christmas Parade - 11 a.m.
- Enterprise Christmas Parade - 6 p.m.
- Union Christmas Parade "A Hometown Christmas" - 6 p.m.
- "Christmas Canon" Roxy Theatre in Newton - 7 p.m.
- Peppermint Pops at MSU Riley Center - 7 p.m.
- Elf the Musical at the Meridian Little Theatre - 7 p.m.

McDonnell to address fall graduates at MSU-Meridian

Submitted

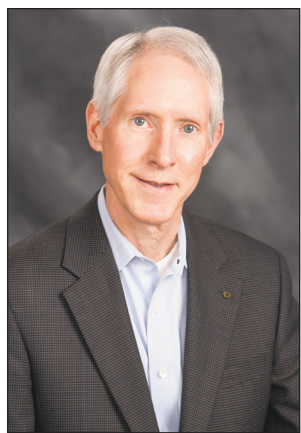
The chief executive officer of Citizens National Bank is the fall graduation speaker at Mississippi State University-Meridian.

Archie R. McDonnell Jr. will deliver the Dec. 12 commencement address during an 11 a.m. public ceremony at the MSU Riley Center for Education and Performing Arts.

More than 100 students are candidates for fall degrees at MSU-Meridian.

"Archie's commitment and dedication to our community is inspiring," said Terry Dale Cruse, associate vice president and head of campus at MSU-Meridian in a news release. "The investment Citizen's National Bank and his family have made here is exceptional for a city the size of Meridian."

CNB manages the Jerry & Ruth Scott Trust, which has funded more than \$70,000 in scholarships to assist working adults with completing their degree at



McDonnell

MSU-Meridian.

A native of Louisville, McDonnell's long and distinguished career in banking began at the age of 15 when he became a courier at CNB for his father, Archie R. McDonnell Sr., who was a longtime president and CEO for the bank.

After earning a bachelor's degree in 1974 in business administration with a concentration in banking and finance at the University of Mississippi, McDonnell was hired as part of the manage-

ment training program at Deposit Guaranty National Bank in Jackson.

In 1975, he became assistant vice president at Citizens National Bank with corporate offices in the state's Queen City.

For the next several years, McDonnell continued his education and graduated from the School of Banking of the South at Louisiana State University and completed the American Bankers Association's National School of Bank Investments and National Compliance School.

In 1983, he became senior vice president, and four years later assumed the role of president and member of the bank's board of directors. In 1999, after his father's retirement, McDonnell was named president and chief executive officer.

In 2013, McDonnell was honored with the Hartley D. Peavey Award of Entrepreneurial Excellence, Mississippi Business Journal's 2013 Leaders in Finance and

the Independent Community Bankers Top 20 Twitter Banking Influencers. In 2018, he received the United Way Al Rosenbaum Lifetime Achievement Award.

An active member in his community, McDonnell serves as chairman and board member of the East Mississippi Business Development Corporation and the Community Health Improvement Network and is a founding board member of the Alliance for Growth.

He is an advisory board member for FIS, the largest financial technology company in the world, and is a member of the national Bank CEO Network. He also has served on numerous other boards, including the east Mississippi chapter of the Navy League, the key chapter of the American Red Cross and Aldersgate Retirement Community.

McDonnell and his wife of 44 years, Mary, are the parents of three children and six grandchildren and attend Central United Methodist Church.

Meteor lights up central Alabama sky

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (AP) — A long-lasting meteor lit up the central Alabama sky this week, according to the National Weather Service.

The service tweeted out a video taken by its camera near Shelby County Airport in Calera that shows the fireball streaking across the dark

sky early Wednesday night, news outlets report. Commentors excitedly noted they saw the meteor in other areas, including Tennessee and Mississippi.

A doorbell camera also caught a glimpse of the meteor, according to one Twitter user based in Decatur, Alabama. The video shows the

meteor bursting into light as it heads toward and ultimately passes over the home.

Those who missed their chance to wish on a shooting star will have another opportunity this month when the Geminids meteor shower dashes across the sky between Dec. 14 and 15.

ANDREACCHIO from page A1

in fact, commit suicide," the lawsuit states.

In 2017, a Lauderdale County grand jury decided not to indict two people in connection with Andreacchio's death.

The Andreacchio case has received national attention, due in part to a popular podcast, "Culpable," which included information gathered from the Andreacchio family, friends, law enforcement and private investigators. In September, the podcast's creators announced a reward of up to \$100,000 for new information leading to a conviction.

According to the parents' suit, McAlister invited people to visit his office to view the autopsy photos who "were then subjected to McAlister's (sic) analysis of the photos that led him to conclude that Christian Andreacchio took his own life."

"His reasons for these extreme efforts are unknown to the Andreacchios, but they now must endure

See related documents at
www.meridianstar.com

daily the knowledge that the graphic evidence of their most private and personal grief has simply become Ritchie McAllister's (sic) public water cooler," the lawsuit states.

The complaint calls for a jury trial.

Ward 5 City Council Member Weston Lindemann attempted to remove McAlister's salary Tuesday, based on concerns about an audio recording that was posted and shared online this week.

Lindemann said later that he was referring to a recording that appeared to be of McAlister threatening violence against Lindemann and discussing photos related to Andreacchio's death.

The Meridian City Council passed a resolution last month requesting the U.S. Department of

Justice open an investigation into the Andreacchio case.

Messages left for McAlister by The Meridian Star on Wednesday and Thursday were not returned.

Rae and Todd Andreacchio also filed a lawsuit Tuesday against Frankie Wagner, a resident of Hattiesburg.

The complaint accuses Wagner of uploading Andreacchio's autopsy photos online and "a personal effort to encourage local individuals to discount the theory of homicide."

Reached by phone Wednesday, Wagner denied uploading the photos online, but said he had shared the file with friends.

"Anything that is obtained through a Freedom of Information Act request is public record," he said.

Wagner said the state of Mississippi has its own discretion to release the files and photos.

"I look forward to going to court with them," Wagner said.

CHARGES from page A1

the autopsy, which revealed broken and cracked ribs and burns, police said.

The child's caregiver, Celeste Louise Smith, 35, of Meridian, was charged with capital murder and two counts of child neglect. Smith directed police to the body.

Police believe Jakie and another child in Smith's care were both abused by Smith.

The children's mother, Teasia Warren, 24, was later charged with two counts of contributing to the delinquency of a minor.

Thames, who police said was a friend of Smith, was charged with contributing to the neglect of a minor on Oct. 8.

Municipal Court Judge Robbie Jones said Thursday there was not enough evidence to connect Thames to criminal wrongdoing in the case.

An investigation by Child Protective Services found no evidence connecting Thames to the case, according to Dubose.

Smith and Warren's cases are pending a presentation to a Lauderdale County grand jury.

TRAUMA from page A1

Aircare program.

"I gave a lecture on airway management and the importance of clinicians understanding the gravity of certain drugs we give and how we may not think about how serious they are," Marshall said. "The importance of staying current on education and having policies in place to protect the patients and making sure we're doing the right thing for the patients."

The event is a joint effort, bringing together members of regional hospitals.

According to Tim Thomas, administrator for the East Central Mississippi Trauma Care Region, it can be costly to send care providers different places for updated medical training, so by setting aside money every year, the organization is able to put on the estimated \$25,000 symposium.

"Every two to three years, we hold a regional conference for the folks in our region," said Thomas. "We have a regional grant that the state gives us and they (the committee) set aside \$5000-6000 a year to budget from it."

The event is not open to the public, as the information provided is clinical in nature.

"It's been very educational learning about different skills, different trauma, injuries and airway management," said Krystal Palmer, a nurse. "It's been very educational toward our jobs in the emergency department to take care of people in the community."

"It's given me some new tools to look at," said Jeff Hemphill, a nurse and teacher. "It's also given me a better base to look at patients on oxygenation and how we better manage the patient overall."

"I really liked all of it," he added.



Meridian's
Good News
Gospel Radio

"Tune in weekdays for Scripture Word of the Week clue where you can win \$100 of groceries with the Piggly Wiggly of Collinsville and Stonewall."

Call us at
(601)693-WMER (9637)
HOME OF SOUTHERN MISS ATHLETICS