

# 223 Program aims to help seniors fight ID theft

A program on senior identity theft and elder fraud will be presented at 6 p.m. Thursday, June 4, at Morningside Ministries at Menger Springs, 34525 Interstate Highway 10, Boerne.

Senior citizens, their families and caregivers are especially encouraged to attend the program, sponsored by the Kendall County Bar Association.

Paula Pierce, managing attorney for Victims Initiative for Counseling Advocacy and Restoration of the Southwest (VICARS) and Joanne Woodruff, elder fraud prosecutor for the Bexar County District Attorney's office, will speak on the rising incidence of identity theft crimes against seniors and share tips for prevention as well as how to recover from financial fraud.

In Texas, identity theft accounts for 14 percent of reported crimes and an increasing number of victims are seniors. In Bexar County alone, one in five seniors is a victim of identity fraud and losses to those victims

totaled more than \$3 million in the period of 2004-06, according to the DA's Elder Fraud Unit. Reported crimes ranged from home improvement schemes to family caregiver theft.

A program of the Texas Legal Services Center, VICARS is funded by the US Department of Justice to offer assistance to people who are victims of identity theft and other financial fraud. Services they offer include help in restoring identity and credit; obtaining and reviewing credit reports; communicating with police, financial institutions, credit card and credit-reporting companies; compiling documentation and accessing emergency financial needs; and representing victims in small claims court and other legal actions against perpetrators.

The presenters will also share ways seniors can protect themselves against identity theft and help their families be aware of the signs that a loved one has been victimized.