Five Ways to Help Aging Parents Navigate Finances in Today’s Tech World

Non-profit credit counseling agency Take Charge America offers consumers tips for helping older adults transition methods of managing personal finances

PHOENIX – (Nov. 18, 2013) – Use of technology among senior citizens continues to skyrocket, but many older Americans have difficulty using technological tools for financial matters, preferring instead the same methods they have always used.

“Most of us are comfortable using computers or smart phones to check balances and deposit checks, but this technology is a huge shift for seniors,” said Mike Sullivan, chief education officer for Take Charge America, a national non-profit credit counseling agency. “They often feel more secure depositing a paper check and checking account balances at their local branch, so the transition to the Internet can be difficult.”

Sullivan offers tips for addressing five common financial challenges seniors face today:

1. **Real-Time Banking**: Twenty years ago, consumers could write a check and then go to the bank and cover it with a deposit. Today, checks are often used like debit cards, and funds are deducted immediately. Additionally, deposits can be held for up to seven days depending on the source and amount. This makes it difficult to budget, especially on a fixed income.
   
   Help your parents understand the rules of banking today while also acquainting them with the benefits of using the Internet. Online banking provides an added convenience, particularly for older adults with physical limitations, as they can handle most banking activities without leaving home.

2. **Fraud**: Seniors are frequent victims of fraud perpetrated through email, telemarketing and the mail. Discuss potential red flags with your parents, such as promises of easy money, demands they act immediately, or requests for personal information.

3. **Online Apps**: Digital options like mobile-only coupons, Internet comparison shopping and bill-paying apps require technologies that are not always senior-friendly. Your parents may prefer their traditional methods at times – clipping coupons from the newspaper or writing a check to the cable company – but they may also be interested in using apps and sites that help them find Internet-only deals, provide product reviews or otherwise enhance the consumer experience.

4. **Gifts and investments**: Seniors citizens, more than other groups, are known for purchasing savings bonds and stock certificates. However, stocks and bonds are no longer available in paper form. If your parents want to purchase stock certificates or bonds, help them navigate the purchase online, understanding this process may force them out of their comfort zones.

5. **Paperless**: Many transactions leave no paper trail – and no means of filing paper away for easy future access. Seniors who are long-accustomed to filing paper copies of important financial
documents are no longer receiving Social Security checks in the mail, as payments are now direct-deposited into their accounts. There is no copy to file, and no way to be sure the money was deposited without going online or visiting the bank. This, too, may push your elderly parents out of their comfort zone, so it’s important they’re familiar with their bank’s online system for reviewing account information.

For more financial tips, visit www.takechargeamerica.org.

About Take Charge America, Inc.
Take Charge America, Inc., a non-profit financial education, credit counseling, housing counseling and debt management agency, is dedicated to helping consumers nationwide improve their financial futures. Founded in 1987, the organization has helped more than 1.6 million consumers nationwide manage their personal finances and debts. To learn more, visit www.takechargeamerica.org or call (888) 822-9193.

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