Fraud Alert!

Tugging at Heartstrings

A Sheriff’s Office fraud line recently received a dozen calls from area churches reporting phone calls they received from a man claiming to need money so he could travel north to be with his dying child. Although many of the churches were suspicious of the caller’s story and chose not to assist the man, several churches and individuals unknowingly fell into the man’s web of lies and provided him financial assistance.

In light of this religious rip-off, the Sheriff’s Office reminds all residents that con games are a way of life for many people. These unworthy individuals go from city to city, house to house, and religious organization to religious organization conning victims out of money. Their sob stories pull at the heartstrings of caring and giving folks, ultimately stealing from the victim and making it difficult to get help for those who are in real need of assistance.

It is only natural to want to help others; particularly in these tough economic times. Here are a few tips to keep in mind to avoid becoming the victim of a con man or woman:

- If a person is requesting money to pay a utility bill, write the check directly to the utility company and mail the check yourself.
- Never give money spontaneously. If possible, investigate the request thoroughly and make certain there is a need.
- If someone is requesting money for food, you should purchase groceries or a meal from a restaurant yourself instead of handing over cash.
- If donating to a needy family, it is your responsibility to ensure that the money is used wisely. Develop a plan for donations and then use the plan! It is up to you to conduct due diligence in each request.

Financial needs are at an all time high in Florida, and recovery from the loss of jobs and foreclosures continues to move at a slow pace. Fortunately, there are services available through local outreach and benevolent programs that can help people get back on their feet again. As individuals it is challenging to distinguish between the truly needy and the truly greedy, but as a community we can and will make a difference.

If you have a problem or need assistance call Seniors vs Crime at 352-249-9139
Or visit us at 4093 N. Lecanto Highway Beverly Hills, located in the Beverly Hills Plaza.

Our hours are Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday From 8:30am to 1:30pm and you do not need an appointment.