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FROM THE OFFICE OF
SUMMIT COUNTY PROSECUTOR
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THE SENIOR NEWS

PROTECT YOURSELF!

The Internet is a hub of useful information. It provides easy access to family through e-mail, convenient shopping and can even save you time and money with financial planning. Unfortunately, Internet use is not without its risks. Web surfers must protect against fraud and identity theft. This article provides tips for avoiding fraudulent scams and protecting your personal information while enjoying the wonderful resources the Internet provides.

One of the most common types of Internet crime is fraud. Individuals commit fraud against Internet users through various types of deceptive offers. For seniors, one of the most frequently used scams is investment fraud. Though the Internet provides a valuable resource for researching investments and learning about the market, scam artists take advantage of this resource to sell bad or non-existent investment opportunities. Fraudsters send bulk e-mails to potential victims hoping to illicit a response. The e-mail message often advertises a great investment opportunity and a way to acquire riches quickly. Unfortunately, most of these claims are false and criminally designed to separate you from your hard earned money. Experts recommend the following tips to avoid being the victim of fraud:

According to a May 2006 Harris Poll, 77 percent of adults are now online with eight percent of those being 65 years old or older. That equates to nearly 14 million Internet surfing seniors.

1. Investigate any company thoroughly before investing money or giving personal financial information.
2. Contact the Securities and Exchange Commission (www.sec.gov).
3. Contact the State Securities Regulators (<http://www.sec.gov/answers/statesecreg.htm>).
4. Check with NASD Broker Check Program to investigate the disciplinary history of a specific broker or firm (800-289-9999).
5. Finally, if you suspect you are a victim of fraud, contact the local police or FBI immediately.

Visit our Senior Safety website:

www.co.summit.oh.us/prosecutor/srcitsafe.htm

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WE'RE ON THE WEB!

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PROSECUTOR



Capt. Dennis McFarland and Sgt. Chad Cunningham of the Akron University Police Department help two members of the AARP Barberton senior group with a self-defense move during Senior Citizen Safety Awareness Month.

**SENIOR CASES
HANDLED BY MY
OFFICE**

Audrey Martin, 22, was convicted of Aggravated Robbery against a 68 year old woman and sentenced to three years in prison. The victim had medical problems that prohibited her from standing or walking for any normal period of time. Martin met her as a home health care worker and observed that the victim was prescribed Oxycontin. Martin was a person who used and sold prescription drugs. Martin and her friend, Kelly Mulhearn, went to the victim's home. Mulhearn told the elderly woman that she was sent by home health. The victim told her the door was unlocked and invited her into her home. Mulhearn showed the butt of a toy gun and after a struggle, Mulhearn left with four Oxycontin pills. The victim did not sustain any serious physical injury.

Helpful tip: Always contact home health care to verify identity and visits by alleged caretakers. Criminals will use information familiar to a victim to gain their trust.

Antonio Beard, 22, was convicted of Burglary and Theft Against the Elderly and sentenced to two years in prison. Beard knocked on the door of a 79 year old woman and asked to use her bathroom. He then asked for a glass of water and a cookie. When the victim returned from the kitchen, Beard was leaving and her coat was on the floor. She found her pocketbook missing. The victim thought she had seen Beard in the neighborhood.

Helpful tip: Many criminals will come to your door during the day because they know that most people will open their door. Never open your door to someone you do not know, even if the person looks familiar. Never allow strangers to enter your home, regardless of the "good reason" they may give you to let them inside.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Summit County Office of Consumer Affairs can help you resolve a consumer problem regarding the purchase or solicitation of goods and services, for personal, family or household use such as automotive sales or repairs, home improvement repairs, Internet fraud, fraudulent prize notifications, failure to deliver or refund, misrepresentations by merchants or telemarketers, and other consumer actions.

**Office of Consumer Affairs
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E-Mail: consumeraffairs@summitoh.net

Visit their website for more information, accessing complaint forms and to find out about the latest alerts!

<http://www.co.summit.oh.us/conaffairs.htm>