



# DODGE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Dale J Schmidt Sheriff Scott Mittelstadt Chief Deputy

## August Sheriff's Column - Scammers continue to scheme

Your social security has been suspended! You have won the Publisher's Clearing House and you have warrants for your arrest! Law enforcement will be coming to arrest you shortly! In addition, your computer has a virus that only the person on the phone can help you with and the warranty on your car is eligible for renewal for only a limited time! If you have a phone, you probably have received a phone call regarding at least one, if not all of these scams.

So why do they continue and why are they happening so frequently? The answer is simple. It still works. I have spoken to victims who have fallen prey to these con artists. I have been on the other end of the phone and have engaged scammers in conversation in an effort to learn more about them. Three weeks ago, I had a conversation with a person from Jamaica who had attempted the Publisher's Clearing House scam. He started out by being polite yet pushy, and eventually went on to more of a threatening, angry and vulgar approach. At the end of the conversation, I was able to waste ten minutes of his time in hopes that I spared someone else from falling victim.

How do we end the madness? We need to continue to educate our friends, family and neighbors. We need to ensure that no one falls for these types of frauds. We need to remember that if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. When I visit our local banks, they all tell me that far too often people come in to withdraw money from their account because of one of these swindles. They do their best to explain that these are scams, but the scammers are profiting off of the fear or excitement they have created and some people have a difficult time recognizing the truth.

Here are a few free tips for you to share with your family, especially elderly who tend frequently be the primary targets of these calls. When you do get one of these calls, just hang up. If you feel compelled to listen (and I ask that you do not) ask for the caller's name, the exact business name/address/phone number from the caller and tell them you will call them back. Then take that information and search Google for the business name/address/phone number to see what pops up. If it is a legitimate business, call them using the phone number on their website, not the one they gave you and ask if the call was legitimate. I am willing to bet that 99.9% of the time it will not be legitimate.

Also, never give out personal information on the phone to include your birth date, your social security number, your bank account or credit card number. These pieces of information will make your finances easily accessible. Also, never purchase a prepaid credit card or gift card to be given the over the phone. You will never see that money again. Finally, do not agree to be a "re-shipper". You may be offered a fee to receive packages and forward them on to another address. You are just being played and used

as a means to keep the perpetrator's name and address out of the crosshairs if someone looks into the scam. Let's work together to ensure that no one falls victim to these financial predators. When in doubt just hang up the phone and together we will keep Dodge County a financially secure place to live, work and visit.

Sheriff Dale J. Schmidt