

Senior citizens: beware of Grandparent Scam

Well-meaning senior citizens who think they are helping a grandchild in distress are becoming victims of another wave of the so-called "Grandparent Scam," warns the Better Business Bureau. So far, the scam has targeted grandparents in more than a dozen states and Canadian provinces and stolen as much as \$19,000 from one victim alone.

"The grandparent scam preys on the love of a grandparent for their grandchildren and has proven to be an extremely lucrative con for scammers," said Stephen A. Cox, President and CEO of the Council of Better Business Bureaus. "Fortunately, this is an easy scam to avoid as long as you don't let your emotions get the best of you."

Typically, the grandparent receives a

frantic phone call from whom they are led to believe is their grandchild. A scammer, posing as their grandchild, explains that he or she has gotten into trouble – often in Canada – and needs their help. The "grandchild" might claim he or she caused a car accident or was arrested for drug possession. With the new wave of calls, victims are also contacted by someone claiming to be a police officer or lawyer representing the grandchild in court.

The "grandchild" pleads to the grandparents to not tell his or her parents and asks that they wire thousands of dollars for reasons including posting bail, repairing the grandchild's car, covering lawyer's fees or even paying hospital bills for a person the grandchild injured in a car accident.

One couple in Wisconsin sent \$19,000

to scammers posing as their grandson and his supposed lawyer. The scam has also targeted individuals across the country and in Canada including residents of British Columbia and Manitoba.

If you receive a call from someone claiming to be your grandchild in distress, The BBB advises that you don't disclose any information before you have confirmed it really is your grandchild. If a caller says "It's me, grandma!" don't respond with a name but instead let the caller explain who he or she is. One easy way to confirm their identity is to ask a simple question that your grandchild would know such as what school he or she goes to or their middle name.

What to do if you're scammed

If you have fallen victim to the scam, The BBB recommends that you report the incident immediately to local police and your state Attorneys General office. If there is a request to wire money to Canada, the Canadian Anti-Fraud Call Centre has established the PhoneBusters hotline and Web site to report such fraud.

Reports can be filed easily online through the PhoneBusters site at: www.phonebusters.com, or by phone, toll free at, 1-888-495-8501.

Alcohol checks completed at area businesses, six fail to comply

Alcohol compliance checks were conducted the evenings of Jan. 15 and Feb. 12, 2010 on local businesses which are licensed to sell alcohol beverages. The checks were coordinated by Working Together: A Coalition for Safe and Healthy Communities along with the Cass County Sheriff's Department, Leech Lake Tribal Police and the City Police Departments of Backus, Longville, Pine River and Walker. Students from the Central Lakes College Law Enforcement Department assisted as underage buyers. The underage youth entered these businesses and attempted to illegally purchase alcoholic beverages. The efforts of the following businesses are commended for not selling to the underage buyers:

- Walker BP
- Super One Foods, Walker
- Orton's Y Mart, Walker
- Y Bottle Shop, Walker
- Hoss All American Liquor, Walker
- Hackensack Municipal Liquor Store
- Longville Lakes Bottle Shop

- Remer Municipal Liquor Store
- Lone Wolf Trading Post, Remer
- Village Inn, Outing
- Jerry's Bar and Steakhouse, Boy River
- Willard's Saloon & Eatery, Backus
- Backus American Legion Post 368, Backus
- DJ's Liquor Outlet, Backus
- Harriet Club, Backus
- Pine River American Legion, Pine River
- Trail Break Bar & Grill, Pine River
- Holiday, Pine River
- Pine River Community Bowl Pine River
- Mule Lake Corral in Longville

Six businesses that failed to comply with the law and sold to the underage buyer will be referred to the Cass County Attorney's offices for appropriate action.

Illegal alcohol use by underage people contributes to crime, car crashes, injuries and death. Law enforcement officers find that alcohol also has a role in many of the more frequent minor crimes and nuisances that degrade

the quality of life in our community. Many noise complaints, vandalism, littering and similar nuisances involve young people who have been drinking. Public health officials report that alcohol use and abuse is also connected with teenage pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases and other health problems. We have learned that the community and our youth are safer and healthier when they don't start using alcohol until after they turn 21 years of age. Providing alcohol to an underage person is a Gross Misdemeanor offense punishable by fines up to \$3,000 and up to one year in jail. Typical offenders are fined several hundred dollars.

Please help us keep the next generation safe and keep alcohol out of the hands of our youth. If you would like to help with this mission, please contact Kelly Felton, Substance Abuse Prevention Coordinator or LeeAnn Sampson, Pine River-Backus ATOD Prevention Coordinator at (218) 587-4292.