Lottery/Sweepstake Scam

Scammers pretending to be with the “Jamaican Lottery”, “Mega Million Lottery” and “Publisher’s Clearinghouse” have been busy preying on the elderly in Southwest Florida over the last several months, hoping to take advantage of vulnerable seniors by convincing them they’ve won a large jackpot.

Smooth talking con-artists promise “supposed winners” big bucks and a new car after they pay the taxes and shipping fees via a wire transfer. Once the money has been sent to the thief, it is impossible to recover. As the scam grows, it becomes a vicious cycle of relentless phone calls, threats, harassment and possibly the loss of the victim’s life savings.

This scam and others like it are taking a large toll on our seniors not only financially, but emotionally and physically as well. These brazen con artists are raking in millions and millions of dollars from our neighbors, friends and family members. Here is what you must know:

• If you did not enter a lottery you will not win one. ♦
• There is no legitimate sweepstakes or lottery that will ever ask you to pay in advance before receiving your winnings. ♦
• Participating in foreign lotteries while in the U.S. is illegal. ♦
• NEVER ever send money via wire transfer to someone you do not know. ♦
• Beware of the 876 phone exchange unless you have a friend or relative who lives in Jamaica. This area is known for targeting aging U.S. citizens.

If you are the caregiver or loved one of an older adult it is imperative you talk to them about this scam and let them know the dangers of getting involved. It’s important to remember that victims are groomed by these predators and you may have to intervene. For more information, please contact the Sheriff’s Office fraud line at 258-3292.