

**Providing FBI Website to report Internet SCAMS: \_ <http://www.ic3.gov/default.aspx>**

The Sheriff's Office is warning Columbia County residents to beware of ongoing SCAM activity occurring around the county, particularly involving the purchase of pre-paid credit on behalf of others who are pretending to pass on benefits to the purchasers of the credit. Two recent scams include the "Secret Shopper" scam and a scam concerning bogus contest winnings.

The "Secret Shopper" scam seeks to have victims purchase Green Dot Money Paks (a form of pre-paid credit). The victim is sent a check in the mail that is fraudulent and will bounce. The victim is instructed to purchase the pre-paid cards for \$200 (or some other amount) less than the amount of the fraudulent check, and report the card numbers on the Green Point Money packs back to the suspects. The suspects cash in the value on the money packs, the bank informs its customer that the deposited check has bounced, and the victim is out the cost of the money packs.

Bogus contest winnings are also making the rounds in the county. Recently, a county resident lost \$3,000 after she received a letter claiming she was the winner of \$50,000. Along with the letter was a fraudulent check in the amount of \$2,800. The victim called the phone number she found in the letter, and she was told to cash the check and send the money back to the fraudulent sender of the letter by purchasing Green Dot Money Paks. She was told this would help pay for the taxes on her winnings. When the victim called the suspects back, they convinced her to purchase another \$200 in credit and give it to them to help pay for her actual award of \$100,000.



"In the economic times in which we live, many people become vulnerable to the wolves and scam artists who try to take advantage of people hoping to get something for nothing," Sheriff Jeff Dickerson said. "It is important in this information age that we all take steps to protect our identity and our bank accounts from people who are more than willing to spend our limited resources for us -- for nothing in return!"

The Sheriff's Office recommends using Identity Theft protection available commercially to protect your assets, and to be wary of any financial schemes that seem too good to be true: They most likely are!

## **Sheriff's Office Warns of Continued SCAMS in the County**

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If you have been scammed via the internet, you can report the facts to the FBI on their website for making such reports at: <http://www.ic3.gov/default.aspx>  

You can also learn more about SCAMS through the FBI at: <http://www.fbi.gov/scams-safety/e-scams>