

Scammers pretend to be charities during holidays

Thousands of charitable organizations are registered in Kansas, and many of them rely on the generosity of Kansans during the holiday season.

Legitimate charities engage in a wide variety of important work that helps our communities stay vibrant and strong. Unfortunately, there are also scammers out there who may appear to be nonprofit organizations but whose real purpose is to take advantage of your generosity.

Be careful, and if you are solicited by telephone, e-mail or direct mail by somebody claiming to be



Derek Schmidt

• **Attorney General**

a charity – be skeptical.

Scammers posing as charities will often target people by telephone solicitation. They may use a name or title that sounds similar to a legitimate organization and ask for the donation to be made on

the phone by giving them your bank or credit card number. You should never be afraid to tell the solicitor you need some time to think about it and ask for a physical address to send your donation.

You may also ask them to mail to you written information about the charity. This will give you time to research the organization and make sure it is legitimate. Any legitimate charity will be willing to wait a few days to receive your contribution. Do not allow yourself to be pressured into making a donation.

As the old saying goes, the best defense is a good offense. Think in advance about what charities you want to support this holiday season. This allows you to initiate the contact, and it keeps you in control of your contribution. You should plan and budget your charitable giving just like you budget for other expenses. Do not allow yourself to be swayed by strangers

who may choose to solicit you for your donations.

If you do run into a scam or are concerned about whether an organization is operating lawfully in Kansas, our office is here to help. Please file a report with us by visiting www.ag.ks.gov or call our Consumer Protection Division at (800) 432-2310. You can also find more tips for charitable giving in the Consumer Protection section of our website.

Even when the charity soliciting you to contribute is legitimate, you would be wise to do some checking before giving to ensure that you know exactly who you're giving to and also what will be done with your donation. Here are a few tips.

- First, you should check to make sure the charity you are giving to is registered with the Kansas Secretary of State's Office by going to www.kscharitycheck.org. Most charities that solicit donations in the State of Kansas are required to register. The most common exceptions from registration are educational and religious institutions.

- Second, pay particular attention to how much of each dollar you give will actually support the cause rather than just funding "overhead" and administrative expenses. If an organization is registered, the www.kscharitycheck.org site also will let you know what percentage of the funds raised by the organization goes to support the charitable purpose and what percentage is used for fundraising expenses. Pay careful attention to this information.

- Avoid charities that only give a small portion of each dollar to the actual charitable work. After all, you're giving because you want to support a particular charitable cause – not just to support a fundraising operation.

- Third, if you are planning to claim a tax deduction from your donation, you also should make sure the organization is in good standing with the Internal Revenue Service. You can check to see if an organization is eligible for tax-deductible contributions at www.irs.gov/app/pub-78/. Once you have made your contribu-

tion, be sure to save a receipt or acknowledgement from the organization so you can properly claim your tax deduction.

Kansas charities provide valuable services year-round, and we know they couldn't do it without the support of generous Kansans. The best way to avoid charity scams and to eliminate uncertainty about how your donation will be used is to give to local, familiar organizations with which you have a personal relationship. If you do a little research before you give, you will rest comfortably knowing your donations are put to good use.

Please have a safe and happy holiday season.

The Colby Free Press
Please recycle this newspaper

Thomas County Jail

Booked into the Thomas County jail:

- Travis Logan Downing, 33, Colby, July 2, probation violation, Colby Police Department/Court Services of Thomas County, released Dec. 4 to Graham County for time served.
- Tyson Roy Owings, 33, Colby, Nov. 15, probation violation, Thomas County Sheriff's Office/Court Services, released last Wednesday on probation.
- Larry Andral Smith Jr., 44, Colby, Nov. 29, failure to register as an offender, Thomas County Sheriff, released Dec. 6 on \$100,000 appearance bond.
- Matthew Aaron Bowman, 32, Edmond, Dec. 2, possession of hallucinogenic drugs, possession of drug paraphernalia, Kansas Highway Patrol, released Dec. 4 with charges pending.
- Michael James Callahan, 25, Smithville, Mo., Dec. 3, possession/distribution of hallucinogenic drugs, conspiracy, using communication facility to arrange sales or purchase, no drug tax stamp, improper passing, Highway Patrol, released Dec. 6 on \$100,000 appearance bond.
- James Allen House, 44, Brewster, Dec. 4, driving with license suspended or revoked, Thomas County Sheriff, released same day with charges pending.
- Samantha Anastasia Conn, 24, Westchester, Calif., last Wednesday, possession/distribution of hallucinogenic drugs, Highway Patrol, released same day with charges pending.
- James Theodore Mason, 23, Pittsburgh, Pa., last Wednesday, possession/distribution of hallucinogenic drugs, Highway Patrol, released same day with charges pending.
- Ryan Neil White, 24, Colby, last Wednesday, probation violation, Colby Police/Court Services, released Sunday for time served.
- O Zecharia Zietz, 37, Westminster, Colo., last Wednesday, possession/distribution of hallucinogenic drugs, using communication facility to arrange sales or purchase, no drug tax stamp, Highway Patrol, released Thursday on \$100,000 appearance bond.
- Hadley Darren Duran, 31, Fort Collins, Colo., Thursday, possession/distribution of hallucinogenic drugs, Highway Patrol, released

Friday on \$100,000 appearance bond.

- Christopher Ryan Gatz, 26, Colby, Thursday, battery, Colby Police, released same day on notice to appear.
- Timmy Lee Howser, 59, Colby, Thursday, giving a worthless check, Thomas County Sheriff, released same day with charges pending.
- Devon Keith Shapland, 19, Dighton, Thursday, minor in possession/consumption, transporting open container/alcohol, Colby Police, released same day on notice to appear.
- Samuel Ross Stapp, 21, Norcatur, Thursday, disorderly conduct, Thomas County Sheriff, released same day with charges pending.
- Travis Lee Zerr, 37, Colby, Thursday, battery, Colby Police, released same day on notice to appear.
- Bruce Leon Britton, 54, Oakley, Friday, driving under the influence, Logan County Sheriff's Office, released Sunday for time served.
- Cairn Dextor Ferm, 24, Colby, Friday, welfare warrant, Colby Police/Arapahoe County Colo., Sheriff's Office, released Monday on court order.
- Travis Shane White, 20, Colby, Friday, probation violation, Court Services, released Sunday for time served.

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