MONEY RECOVERED FOR ELDERLY VICTIM OF FRAUD

Using Arizona’s civil asset forfeiture laws, the Yavapai County Sheriff’s Office and the Yavapai County Attorney’s Office quickly seized and froze $2,783.04 from a fraud scheme and returned funds to the victim.

The fraud began when a senior citizen in Cordes Lakes received two letters in the mail from what appeared to be Publisher’s Clearing House. Later, the woman received a call from a person identifying himself as “David Washington” advising her that she won $5.5 million and a Mercedes. The man gave her the “winning numbers” that matched the numbers on one of the letters she had received. The victim was instructed to go to Western Union to pay $175.00 to obtain the funds. The victim willingly paid the fee, including additional charges totaling $185.50, and transferred the money as requested.

The victim received a follow up call from “Edward Bartley,” who claimed to be David Washington’s supervisor. This man requested that she make an additional payment of $700 to the IRS before she could get her money. The victim became apprehensive and called Publisher’s Clearing House who advised her that she had been scammed. Publisher’s Clearing House explained the fraudulent activity and that the letters were sent by the scammers themselves and that is how they know the “winning numbers.” The victim then called law enforcement.

The Yavapai County Attorney’s Office quickly filed in court a civil forfeiture action and successfully obtained a court order to forfeit $2,783.04 of funds in the account before the suspects could transfer the funds to another account. $185.50 that was owed to the senior citizen was delivered by the County Attorney’s Office back to the victim. The victim was very grateful for the return of her funds stating, “This money helps me keep the heat on for another month. I want to share this information to help prevent someone else from being a victim of a similar scam.”

The remainder of the funds were paid to the Arizona Criminal Justice Commission Victim Compensation and Assistance Fund.

Yavapai County Attorney Sheila Polk stated: “We are all very thankful for the quick actions of the Sheriff’s Office in freezing the fraudster’s bank account to stop this scam. This case illustrates what an important tool Arizona’s civil asset forfeiture laws are in the fight against financial fraud, especially in cases involving our senior citizens. Asset forfeiture laws allow us to pursue the recovery of funds even when the wrongdoer is beyond our jurisdiction for criminal charges.”