

# Media Release

**Yavapai County Sheriff's Office**

**Scott Mascher – Sheriff**

255 E. Gurley Street, Prescott, AZ 86301

Dwight D'Evelyn - Media Coordinator

928-777-7441



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## ***Senior Scammed out of \$25,000 – Alert Grocery Store Employee prevents Further Loss***

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*YCSO and its partner law enforcement agencies continue to publicize scams that target our seniors in Yavapai County. It is our hope the information is shared with family members and friends who may be vulnerable to such fraud. In recent months, YCSO has received calls from citizens contacted by scammers, but because they had an understanding of scam techniques exposed through media outreach and community meetings, they avoided becoming a victim. KNOWLEDGE IS POWER in preventing further victimization of our seniors. Family members should consider monitoring US mail, email, and phone traffic if they believe any elderly relative may be susceptible.*

Last month, an 89-year-old Prescott resident contacted YCSO to report fraud. The victim had received a letter indicating he was randomly selected from a Publishers Clearing House drawing as one of three finalists to win \$1,150,000 each. The victim was instructed to call an agent from Publishers Clearing (scammers will use a variety of fake names) at a specified phone number to obtain instructions on how to receive his winnings. The letter also told the victim to keep the award notification confidential until processing was complete as part of a "security protocol."

Because the letter and its contents appeared authentic, the victim called the number and spoke with a Publisher Clearing house "agent" who congratulated him on winning the money. The agent sounded very convincing to the victim.

**THE SCAM NUTS AND BOLTS:** The agent instructed the victim to withdraw \$25,000 from his personal checking account and wire the money into a separate bank account set up exclusively to receive his award money. The victim was given an "account number" and a bank name to accomplish this transaction. The victim was also asked to fax a form to set up direct deposit of the winnings into his checking account. The victim complied and faxed his banking information and SSN.

After wiring the \$25,000, the agent called back to verify the deposit and asked for an additional \$10,000 in Safeway gift cards. The victim withdrew money from his bank and went to Safeway intending to

purchase high dollar gift cards. An alert employee politely refused and suggested the victim was being swindled. Family members finally became involved and convinced the victim he was scammed and placed a hold on his bank account.

Family members also obtained a copy of the wire transfer and other related paperwork which was provided to the deputy as evidence. The money had been wired to an east coast bank.

**Remember, in a legitimate sweepstakes, winners will NEVER be asked to provide their own money to obtain the offered reward.**

The case has been submitted to YCSO detectives for follow-up.

*Citizens can contact the Yavapai County Sheriff's Office with information or questions at 928-771-3260 or the YCSO website:*

[www.ycsoaz.gov](http://www.ycsoaz.gov)