



# CONSUMER ALERT

## Office of Consumer Affairs

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### Fraudulent Police Fundraising Calls Reaching Summit County



With so much need in the world, fraudulent telemarketers are taking advantage of consumers' desire to help others. A local business reported receiving calls from an individual claiming to be from the Summit County Police Department asking for donations to take needy children shopping at Wal-Mart. When the business started questioning the telemarketer about the donation, the caller became abusive and hung up.

It is not uncommon for shysters to use familiar sounding names that mimic legitimate organizations and just because the words "police", "firefighter" or "veteran" come up in a name does not mean that it is affiliated with your local agencies.

"This is a great opportunity for our office to remind consumers and businesses alike to be skeptical of solicitations for donations by phone, mail or even in-person," says Cynthia Sich, Director of the Summit County Office of Consumer Affairs. "In this instance, the scammer claimed to be from an agency that does not exist in our area. Had the business not asked questions but just gave their account information, their donation, and possibly more, would have gone into the pockets of the con artist and not to help those in need."

Donating benefits people and organizations in our community. So make sure your donation counts! Ask questions and find out exactly who you are dealing with, where the funds go, and how they are used. Below are resources and tips to help guide you before donating:

1. Contact the Ohio Attorney General at (800) 282-0515 to see if they are registered to fundraise in Ohio or do an online search at: [www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov/CharitableSearch.aspx](http://www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov/CharitableSearch.aspx).
2. For more charity watchdog services, visit the [American Institute of Philanthropy](#); [Charity Navigator](#) or the [Better Business Bureau Wise Giving Alliance](#).
3. Resist pressure. Legitimate charities will be happy to send you detailed information and give you time to make a decision to donate. Send a check or money order made payable to the charity so that you have a receipt of your contribution.
4. Many appeals are made by third party solicitors who work at for-profit firms that may keep a large portion of your donation. Ask how much of your donation will go directly to the charity.
5. Ask if the charity is tax-exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the IRS code. If the charity is not tax-exempt, you can not deduct your donations on your taxes.

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To report a scam or file a complaint against a business contact the Office of Consumer Affairs  
at 330-643-2879 or visit [www.co.summit.oh.us/conaffairs.htm](http://www.co.summit.oh.us/conaffairs.htm).