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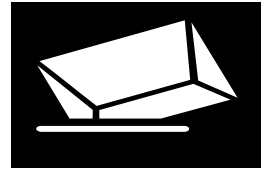
Summer 2010



# The Crime Stopper Newsletter

CRIME STOPPERS OF PINELLAS COUNTY, INC.

## A Letter From The President



Dear Friends of Crime Stoppers:

All eyes of the world have been focused on the BP deep water horizon oil leak in the Gulf of Mexico. The date of April 20, 2010 will go down in history as one of the world's worst man-made disasters. Isolating, containing and stopping the leak completely has challenged all of BP's engineers, executives and oil drilling experts. Although it now appears the leak has been contained, the reality is the leak was just the beginning of the problem—the long term effects often are not known for some time. The damage has been done. Our wetlands, beaches, tourism, jobs, wildlife and the lives of millions of people have been adversely affected. It is impossible to say how long it will take to fully recover.

What does this have to do with Crime Stoppers? Upon closer review it happens that the course of the BP investigation tends to mirror how we respond to crime trends in our community. Once the leak was reported – no one could believe it was happening. No one could anticipate the extent of the spill. The consequences affected livelihoods and the environment and the fix was not immediate.

Criminals taking control of a community can be just as insidious. They start small – with property crimes and minor thefts, but left unchecked can become emboldened to commit more serious offenses, affecting more lives and property. Often citizens don't realize certain crime trends have arrived in their community – when the realization sets in – they can't believe the warning signs were overlooked as the circles of consequence grow wider and farther. Crime Stoppers is part of the solution to shutting down the spread of crime in our community.

Citizens, law enforcement and the media working together to fight crime is the fundamental mission of Crime Stoppers. Just as a united effort has stopped the "gusher in the Gulf" – so too can efforts unified under Crime Stoppers "put a lid" on the activities of would-be criminals in Pinellas County.

Greg Tita, President  
Crime Stoppers of Pinellas County, Inc.

## Crime Stoppers Receives Target Grant



  
**TARGET.** Crime Stoppers of Pinellas was recently awarded a Law Enforcement Grant from Target. The Grant award will help fund the Crime Stoppers "Be The Hero" youth activity coloring book. The activity book will allow the Program to reach out to a younger audience

and familiarize them with the Crime Stoppers concept as well as promoting positive decision making and good citizenship. The partnership between Target and Crime Stoppers of Pinellas is a great opportunity to reach more of the community.

# Targeting The Elderly—Tips For Preventing Fraud

(Reprinted from Vol. 3, Issue 2)

Pinellas County has long been a retirement haven with our beautiful beaches and the incredible year round warm weather. With much in the area to offer retirees the attraction is understandable. Unfortunately, those same desirable features also attract persons who tend to target the retirement population for less than desirable purposes. Often, education is the key to **not** being victimized by the criminal element who attempt to touch us in person, by phone or mail and now via the Internet. Information **is** available to educate and inform the public on points to be aware of as a consumer. As part of our ongoing community awareness efforts, Crime Stoppers of Pinellas County encourages our readers to visit the website mentioned below for information and tips on preventing fraud.

The Stetson University College of Law Consumer Protection Project has invaluable information on their website at [www.law.stetson.edu](http://www.law.stetson.edu) addressing issues specific to the elderly population. Below are a few tips from their website regarding home repair, telemarketing and Internet fraud.

## **Home Repair Fraud**

Watch For Red Flags:

- The Contractor knocks on your door without you calling him, asking to do the repair.
- The Contractor offers you a great deal because he could use supplies from another job.
- The Contractor asked you to give him money up front to pay for supplies.
- The Contractor's bid was a lot lower than the other bids.
- The Contractor tells you the bid is good for today only.
- The Contractor will only take cash as payment.
- The Contractor doesn't give you a written contract of wants you to sign a contract with blanks in it.
- The Contractor uses high-pressure sales or scare tactics to get you to say yes.
- The Contractor wants you to borrow money from a lender the Contractor knows and have you apply for a home equity loan to pay for work.
- The Contractor wants you to sign the loan application or contract without reading it.

Make Sure You:

- Get 3 written estimates before hiring a Contractor.
- Ask the lowest bidder why the estimate was so low—if the offer sounds too good to be true, it probably is.
- Ask to see the Contractor's state license & insurance certificate.

- Ask for and get references. Call them.
- Never pay for the entire job until the work is completed to your satisfaction.
- When the work is finished, ask for a waiver of lien to make sure the Contractor has paid all related debts.

## **Telemarketing Fraud**

Watch For Red Flags:

- Guaranteed loan in exchange for a processing fee.
- Credit card loss protection.
- Foreign lottery offers.
- You have to pay shipping, registration and taxes to get your prize.
- Vacation deals with fees, restrictions or up-front costs.
- You must buy products to enter a sweepstakes or win a prize.
- High pressure or time-sensitive tactics.

Make Sure You:

- Sign up for the Do Not Call List.
- Screen your calls by using caller ID or an answering machine.
- Hang up on telemarketers.
- When you receive a call purportedly from your bank, hang up and call the bank at its published number.
- Safeguard your financial information and Social Security numbers.

## **Internet Fraud**

Make Sure You Don't:

- Don't send a check or money order for something you bought at an Internet auction.
  - Don't send money up front for anything.
  - Don't fall for false information about values in stocks.
  - Don't fall for an email from someone from another country asking for help in transferring money.
  - Don't give out your personal information to sellers or through emails, or through websites unless you're familiar with them.
  - Don't give out your personal information.
  - Don't respond to unsolicited special offers.
- Make Sure You Do:
- Purchase auction insurance.
  - Buy only from a reputable company.
  - Examine feedback on sellers.

For more information on these and other topics, please visit the Stetson University College of Law Consumer Protection Project at [www.law.stetson.edu](http://www.law.stetson.edu) by clicking on Elder Law and then Consumer Protection Project—For Consumers or For Professionals.

And remember, any reputable Contractor or business would encourage you to take these precautionary steps.

# Campus Crime Stoppers

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To report or not to report...That is the question students may ask themselves when faced with having to turn in someone they know—a fellow student—for bringing a gun to school; for selling marijuana on campus; for stealing an iPod out of a book bag; for bullying another student; for spray painting gang signs on the gym doors.

Doing the “right thing” oftentimes is not easy and in fact deciding to act when you have information about a crime or something that just doesn’t seem right can be a difficult decision. “What if they find out I’m the one that came forward”...“My friends will disown me for telling”...“I don’t want to get anybody in trouble.”

Each question is a real concern but the consequences of not acting can be grave. A crime goes unsolved; a student is unnecessarily hurt by violence. In a perfect world, everyone would report any and all information regarding crime directly to law enforcement. But in the real world we need to have other options in place for getting information from those people that would not otherwise come forward.

Offering anonymity is the foundation of Crime Stoppers of Pinellas County, Inc. and Campus Crime Stoppers. Crime Stoppers doesn’t want your name---we want your information!

Campus Crime Stoppers is a non-profit school based program involving students in the fight against crime. The mission of Campus Crime Stoppers is to provide a tool for students to provide information about crime occurring on their school campus without the fear of retaliation. The goal is to make the Pinellas County School community a safer place in which to learn. Students can report crime by providing information to Campus Crime Stoppers via the telephone tip line, online or by text message...**all without ever having to give their name.** Once Campus Crime Stoppers receives the information it is then forwarded to the school resource officer for investigation.

Students have 3 ways to provide information to Campus Crime Stoppers via the 24 hour anonymous tip line at 1-800-873-TIPS (8477), or provide a tip online at [www.CrimeStoppersOfPinellas.org](http://www.CrimeStoppersOfPinellas.org) or text message a tip. To text a tip to Campus Crime Stoppers, text keyword *TIP144* plus your tip information to C R I M E S (274637). Student callers **do not** have to give their name and are assigned a code number which they will need to remember for any future contact. Student tipsters are advised to contact the tip line at a later date to check on the status of their campus tip and they must have their assigned code number at that time. If the tip results in solving a crime, leads to an arrest, recovery of property, narcotics or disciplinary action such as suspension or expulsion, the student caller may be eligible for a reward of up to \$100. If the tip results in the recovery of a firearm on campus, the reward is \$250. It is the responsibility of the student caller to contact Campus Crime Stoppers with their assigned code number to find out if they have been approved for a reward. Once approved, tipsters are advised of the bank location for pick up of their reward money, and they still **do not** have to give their name.

“Doing the right thing” just became a little easier--no excuses. And no one knows your name—contact Campus Crime Stoppers.



Name  
Address  
Address  
Address

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***"We're Fighting Crime  
One Call At A Time!"***

Crime Stoppers of Pinellas is a 501(c)3  
non-profit, charitable organization.

**We're on the web**

**Visit us at:**

**[www.CrimeStoppersOfPinellas.org](http://www.CrimeStoppersOfPinellas.org)**

**Did You Know?**

You can support Crime Stoppers by using GoodSearch.com (powered by Yahoo!) as your internet search engine and designate Crime Stoppers of Pinellas as the charity in the drop down box. The Pinellas Program will receive a penny for each search you do.

**Save The Date**—Friday October 15, 2010

9th Annual Crime Stoppers Classic Golf Tournament  
Pasadena Yacht & Country Club

For more info: [CrimeStoppersOfPinellas.org](http://CrimeStoppersOfPinellas.org) or [Paradise-Golf.com](http://Paradise-Golf.com)  
Call 727-465-8041 or 727-582-5864

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## What Have You Done For Me Lately?

What have you done for me lately? That question could certainly be perceived as “in your face” and could easily offend if not asked properly or delivered with tact. It might even put some people on the defensive.

But if you truly were to be asked that question, depending on the source ...what would your answer be? Would it be a time for you to reflect on your accomplishments or reevaluate any goals you may have set for yourself. Maybe it would be an epiphany of sort to help you refocus your efforts—a type of self evaluation.

If your boss were to ask you that question, would you be able to answer with confidence that you had worked to your full potential and felt good about your individual efforts toward the common goal?

If you volunteered your time for a project in the community or a non-profit program you believed in and were asked that question, what would be your answer? Would your contribution to the cause consist solely of attending a monthly meeting? Could you say that your efforts and time spent had a positive impact on moving the project or program forward in some aspect or assisted in accomplishing goals for the greater good?

Maybe if we prepared ourselves for a question like “What have you done for me lately?” it would afford us an opportunity for positive change or a chance to be proud of our accomplishments. What would it be for you?

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