



# Watch Works

Charles County  
Sheriff's Office

Sheriff Troy Berry  
January/February 2016

## Don't Be a Target For Winter Scams

Many people rely on various contractors because they are unable to shovel snow from their driveways or repair their furnaces, but shopping around can help you avoid becoming a victim.

- Get at least three estimates from reputable contractors that include details about materials and services to be provided for the job.
- Insist on a written contract that includes the price and description of the work needed, and get references. Never pay unreasonable advance sums. Negotiate a payment schedule tied to completion of specific stages of the job.
- You have three days to cancel after signing a contract for home improvements.

Senior citizens can be easily fooled by scam artists posing to make home repairs. It's important to have conversations with your older parents or grandparents about what to watch out for. Please notify your local police if you feel you have been victimized.

The Arizona Attorney General's Office says it shut down a veterans-charity scam that bilked about \$750,000 from seniors across the U.S. suffering from Alzheimer's disease and other memory-related disorders. Three companies used aggressive telemarketing tactics to deceive seniors, claiming they were veterans of the U.S. armed forces and convincing them to purchase products like light bulbs, trash bags, plastic food containers and bed linens priced with an 1,800 percent markup, according to a statement released by the Attorney General's Office. Happy Hands, Standing Tree and Action Point would purchase these household items from wholesalers or warehouse retailers and sell them for hundreds more than their original cost. Examples: sold 100 quart-sized Ziploc bags for almost \$90 and a fruitcake for nearly \$90 after shipping and handling. Although the scammers told the victims the proceeds would go to a veterans' charity, none of the profits were used for charitable purposes. The telemarketers often made calls to the same people until they made a purchase or called them continuously, pressuring them to buy more. If customers attempted to

return their items, the companies would refuse.

### IRS imposter scam.

In the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) imposter scam, callers claim to be with the IRS and demand immediate payment of past-due taxes. Scammers might threaten arrest and jail time if the payment is not received immediately, and usually request that the money be paid back through the purchase of pre-paid cards. Members of the public who are targeted by the IRS imposter scam should hang up on the caller immediately and file a complaint with the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration at [TIGTA.gov](http://TIGTA.gov) or with the Attorney General's Office. Don't let a telephone solicitor pressure you to make an immediate decision.

- Ask for a caller's contact information and tell them you will call them back. Verify that the number they give you is tied to a legitimate company or agency by doing your own research.
- Know that most government entities, including the IRS, will not initiate contact over the phone.

### Dates to Remember

January 1: New Years Day

January 18: Martin Luther King Jr. Day

February 14: Valentine's Day

February 15: Presidents Day



"I hope that telemarketer calls back."



Said no one ever.

## Holiday Cheer

In 2013, 343 people died on New Year's Day, 360 on Thanksgiving Day, and 88 on Christmas Day, according to Injury Facts 2015. Alcohol-impaired fatalities represented 31% of the totals.

- If you offer alcohol at a holiday party, make sure everyone is at a legal drinking age.
- Offer sleeping arrangements for those who over consume.

- Use a designated driver to ensure guests make it home safely.
- Make sure every person in the vehicle is properly buckled up no matter how long or short the distance being traveled.
- Put that cell phone away; distracted driving causes one quarter of all crashes.

When guests are staying in your home, make sure areas have night lights or easy to reach lamps in case they need to get up during the night. Whether you are visiting someone else's home or you have guests in your home, make sure all medications are kept up and away and out of sight from young children.

If you see someone driving erratically, call 911 and report where and in what direction they are traveling. Your phone call may save a life.



## Planning a Teen Party?

As a parent, you cannot give alcohol to your teen's friends under the age of 21 under any circumstances, even in your own home, even with their parent's permission.

You cannot knowingly allow a person under 21, other than your own child, to possess or consume an alcoholic beverage on your property. You can be fined \$2,500 per child for this criminal offense.

If a minor drives after consuming alcohol on your property and is involved in a crash, you may be held responsible.

You may be held civilly liable if sued by another parent as a result of injuries, alcohol poisoning, or sexual assault. And you may be held responsible even if you weren't home, or didn't

know about the party.

You can be fined \$2,500 for furnishing alcohol to or obtaining alcohol for anyone under age 21. These violations are criminal offenses.

### **Safe Party Planning:**

Refuse to supply alcohol to minors!

Be sure a responsible adult is at home when your teen has a party.

Make sure alcohol is not brought into your home or property by your teen's friends.

Create alcohol free opportunities and activities at your home so teens will feel welcome.

Limit party access to a specified area of the home and let teens know that once they leave they cannot

come back.

Have plenty of food and sodas and don't be afraid to make regular and unannounced visits to party areas.

### **If your Teen is Attending a Party:**

Call the parent host to verify the occasion and location of the party, and ensure that there will be adequate adult supervision and no alcohol.

Know how your child is getting to and from the party. Remind your child to never ride with someone who has been drinking or taking drugs.

Remind your teen that you will pick them up "no questions asked," if they find themselves in an uncomfortable situation; no matter how late or how far away.





## A word from your Community Organizer: Connie Gray.....301-932-3080

Wow, where did 2015 go? It started off with snow. Enough for a few days off and lots of shoveling. The Crime Watch kickoff in March went well and then plans for National Night Out. Charles County again won for "Outstanding participation in 2015 NNO". **The citizens of Charles County rock.** National Night out was celebrated by 156 neighborhoods. Cook-outs and carnivals. Dessert socials and pizza parties. Each celebrated in their own individual way. All enjoyed an evening with friends and neighbors.

The two Citizens' Advisory Council Meetings were well attended and citizens brought a lot of good information with them and took good information back to their neighborhoods as well. The Charles County Fair display was enjoyed by thousands. We received great feedback. It was good seeing the children enjoying the Fair and stopping by for pictures in our new Sheriff's Officer figure and the police car cut outs.

We gave a few Neighborhood Watch presentations

and hope to see some of these residents at our meetings and gatherings. We try hard to keep everyone informed about what's going on in Charles County and need your help to be our eyes and ears. So if you "See something, Say something" so that together we can keep Charles County safe. Our next Crime Watch Kickoff will be held on March 23rd. If you would like to attend or need any other information please contact me.

Thanks for all you do!



## New Year's Resolution

The number one New Year's Resolution for 2015 was: lose weight followed by getting organized. A few others were, learn something new or take a class, quit smoking and spend more time with family. According to statistics only 8% of people successfully achieve their resolution; 49% have infrequent success and 24% never succeed in keeping their resolution each year.

What about you? Do you make a resolution each year? Do you succeed? How about this year, will it be the year you succeed.

Stay fit and healthy seem to be on most minds. This is something that most people I know struggle with all year long. Most of the smokers I knew quit years ago and feel better for it, not to mention the extra money they have saved. Now for the "get organized." This seems to be a never ending story in my life. I get organized and then a new project starts and I'm unorganized again. Statistics show people who explicitly make resolutions are 10 times more likely to attain their goals than people who don't explicitly make reso-

lutions. So if you tell someone or say it out loud you know someone is watching to see if you do it. That holds you accountable and more likely to succeed. Whatever your resolution I'm sure it is to make your life or your family's life better. Look around and see if you can make someone's life better. Maybe a smile or a cheery good morning would brighten their lives. We don't know what others are going through and don't know if just recognizing they exist will make a difference. Give it a try.

HAPPY NEW YEAR!





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