

## TAKE A SURVEY – WIN A CRUISE – NOT GOING TO HAPPEN!

A Clinton woman called me last week to report on a phone call she received. She first received a call from a young woman, who asked her to take a short survey. It sounded innocent enough, so she agreed, and answered a few questions, none of which sounded like they pried for personal information. At the end of the survey, the young surveyor told the woman to expect a follow-up call from another representative. Sure enough, almost as soon as the young surveyor hung up, another man called, claiming to represent Royal Cruise Lines. This caller went through a long spiel on how the cruise line offered some folks free cruises, and acted as if he checked several lists to see if the Clinton woman's name appeared on the lists. He sounded overjoyed to tell her, her name did appear on a list of cruise winners. All he needed to do to confirm the winning was to get a credit or debit card number, to pay the taxes. The Clinton woman said she lacked a credit or debit card, so the caller asked if she might borrow one.

Does any of this sound suspicious? Well, it did to the Clinton woman, who smelled a rat and hung up. After doing some checking, we found out Royal Cruise Lines does not exist. Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines does exist however, in a really big way, floating some of the largest passenger ships in the world. The caller employed that well-worn trick of using a sound-alike name to lend credibility to himself. And we determined Royal Caribbean did not conduct these surveys, or offer free cruises.

This story illustrates a point I can't make too often – never give out your personal information to a phone caller you do not know.

## SMALL BUSINESS SCAM

The Federal Trade Commission released a statement on April 9, 2014, warning small businesses of an email scam. The scam falls into the category I refer to as "phishing", or making an email appear as sent from a reliable and trustworthy source. In this case, the source is the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) itself. Small businesses reported receiving emails showing the sender as the FTC, with a subject line, "pending consumer complaint". The messages goes on to tell the recipient of a consumer complaint against the business. The messages contain an attachment, described as detailing the complaint. Anyone opening the attachment opens themselves up to extreme risk of installing a virus or spyware on their computer system.

Anyone receiving such an email needs to delete it without opening these attachments or links.

This kind of "phishing" is pretty common. I received similar emails here in the sheriff's office, appearing as though sent by the Better Business Bureau, or Dun and Bradstreet, a financial rating firm, with the subject lines referring to complaints against my office. You should ignore such emails and delete them. If you wish, before you delete them, you can forward them on to:

- [phishing@antiphishing.org](mailto:phishing@antiphishing.org)
- [spam@uce.gov](mailto:spam@uce.gov)

These are both bona fide organizations which exist to track and deter this kind of nonsense.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

Seniors vs. Crime plans to staff a table at the KROS Mercy Plus 50 Living Fair on April 29, 2014. This event is in its 24<sup>th</sup> year, and this year will be held at the Wild Rose Casino. If you visit the fair, stop by our table.

Seniors vs. Crime will co-host with AARP, a Safe Driving For Seniors class, scheduled for May 8 from 10 am-3pm at the Clinton Community College Technology Center at 1951 Manufacturing Drive in Clinton. A lunch will be provided. To register call 563-441-4100. The class numbers are 137751 for AARP members, costing \$15, and 13759 for non-AARP numbers, costing \$20.

You can contact me at Seniors vs. Crime at the Clinton County Sheriff's Office at 563-242-9211, ext. 4433, to report any scams, frauds, or exploiting of seniors. Most of what I learn, I learn from folks who call in to report these activities to me.

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