

# Warning about sweepstakes letter scam

Attorney General John Kroger is warning Oregonians not to respond to an unsolicited "sweepstakes" letter claiming that the recipient has "won" money and only needs to pay a small fee to obtain it. The Department of Justice Consumer Hotline has received calls inquiring about a letter from the "Data Release Division" based in Jericho, New York. The letter claims to be a "guaranteed sweepstakes award," notifying the recipient they have won \$1.4 million. In reality, this letter is a deceptive solicitation that seeks money from unsuspecting Oregon consumers.

The Department of Justice has sent a letter to the "Data Release Division" ordering the company to cease mailing this deceptive letter to Oregon consumers or face sanctions for violating Oregon's the Unlawful Trade Practices Act.

Bogus sweepstakes and lottery offers are among the most common scams that seek to rip

off consumers. In 2009, more than 1,000 Oregon consumers reported losing in excess of \$700,000 to sweepstakes, lottery and other scams.

Attorney General Kroger offers the following advice regarding unsolicited telephone calls, mail or e-mail claiming that the recipient won a sweepstakes or lottery:

- Participating in a foreign lottery is illegal. Often these schemes are closely tied to organized crime.
- Never pay-to-play in a sweepstakes.
- Beware of fake organizations using names similar to more well-known groups in an attempt to trick consumers.
- Government agencies do not sponsor sweepstakes.
- Never wire money to receive a prize. Con artists frequently send victims fake checks as a "first down-payment" of their winnings, asking that a percentage be wired back under the misrepresenta-

tion that it will be used to "pay taxes" associated with the "winnings." These fake checks can sit in one's checking account for up to a week before ultimately bouncing.

- Beware of requests for information about income, credit card ownership, or bank accounts as a condition of participating in the sweepstakes or lottery.
- Do not participate in sweepstakes, or respond to advertisements, that resemble a check, bill, or invoice.

The Oregon Department of Justice Consumer Hotline, 1-877-877-9392, is a free resource for all Oregonians with consumer questions, concerns or complaints. If consumers receive fake sweepstakes or lottery offers please shred or delete the offer. If you or someone you know has fallen victim to a sweepstakes or lottery scam, please contact the Consumer Hotline for assistance.

# CCSO offers women's self-defense class

The Columbia County Sheriff's Office is offering a women's self-defense class every other Saturday in July and August. The classes will be held in the Sheriff's Office Training/Conference Room at 901 Port Avenue, in St. Helens. The class will be offered free of charge to Columbia County residents and a light lunch will be provided at no charge.

Classes are offered on the following Saturdays: July 17, July 31, August 14 and August 28. The classes will run from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. with a light lunch provided at no cost. Although the classes are free, registration is required. Class space is limited, so early registration is encouraged.

The course will be taught by instructors who are certified in defensive tactics by the Oregon

Department of Public Safety Standards and Training (DPSST) and American Council on Criminal Justice Training (ACCJT). The course is designed to teach participants skills to protect themselves in situations that could result in serious assault or death. The course will be taught in "hands on" format. Topics will include personal safety strategies for the workplace and travel.

All participants are asked to bring a bottle of water and to wear comfortable clothing, socks and tennis shoes. Participants under the age of 18 are required to have a parent present and sign a release form in order to participate in the class. If you plan to send your child with another adult, please contact the Sheriff's Office prior to the class to ensure the accom-

modation can be made. Due to the mature nature of the information presented, this class is not appropriate for children 15 years and younger.

Pre-registration is required. Registration forms are available at the Columbia County Sheriff's Office, or on line to [www.co.columbia.or.us/sheriff](http://www.co.columbia.or.us/sheriff). Questions may be directed to Timmi Sue at the Sheriff's Office, 503-366-4651.

## Bits & Bites

By Jacqueline Ramsay



Hello and maybe so long for awhile to my loyal followers.

It seems the first day of summer was NOT a good day for me. I let Shadow out for her morning road (I was in my P.J.'s), turned around to come in the house, stubbed my toes, down I went. All I could think of was, "Don't land on your left arm or your face." So, I threw myself to the right, lit KABOOM on my right hand and CRACK

went my right wrist.

So, I am typing this left-handed, one key at a time, hitting a wrong one once in awhile. Ho, ho.

How much I'll be able to plunk out at a sitting will be the boss because I'm supposed to keep my right hand above my heart, to keep the swelling down. Don't get the real cast on until Monday.

I just wanted to let you all know, 80 and 85 degrees here, so maybe (yeah, just maybe) summer is finally here.

Since I can't hold a pencil I will print off now.

## 24 Years Ago This Month

The July 31, 1986, issue of *The Independent* included the following news story on the front page:

Apathy was not the order of the day as a standing-room-only crowd attended the Vernonia City Council meeting on July 21, 1986.

Many of the attendees were there to support Bill and Faye Sword's use of a road through Anderson Park that the city had closed to them in June.

Though asked by Mayor Wallace Vaughn to limit his comments to five minutes because of a crowded agenda, Bill Sword said he didn't think he could do so, then presented

a concise chronology showing nearly 100 years of use of the road by the Sword family, and an even longer history of use by the community. He documented his presentation with old pictures and paintings.

Sword's presentation was necessitated by the city closing the road after receiving complaints about possible damage to the caretaker's trailer in Anderson Park from vibrations caused by heavy equipment using the road.

Although Sword, at that time, said he could document his family's use of the road, the city issued orders to prevent its use for moving logs from Sword's

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