

CONSUMER ALERT: Door-to-door magazine seller pretending to be a charity

Local News

Posted by: David Haviland

Posted on : March 23, 2009 at 11:59 am

SEATTLE - The Washington Attorney General's Office today issued a warning about a company selling magazine subscriptions door-to-door in Washington and several other states. Fresh Start Opportunities claims that money from the subscriptions will be used to help young people get a "fresh start on life," but the company isn't a registered charity. The company lists a downtown Seattle address on its Web site at www.freshstartopportunities.com but the address is simply a mailbox and the company's owner is believed to reside in another state. Solicitors represent that the purchase of subscriptions will help young people get off the street and back on their feet so they can earn money to go to school. The Web site describes Fresh Start Opportunities as a "job business training company designed to teach young adults about self discipline, personal growth, self esteem and setting goals for the future."

Consumers have paid between \$50 and \$295 for subscriptions which, according to the company's site, may take up to 120 days to arrive. Calls to the company's phone number and letters sent to its Seattle address are ignored. The company has ignored inquiries from the Secretary of State's Office concerning its failure to register as a charity. It also hasn't responded to the many complaints received by the Attorney General's Office and the Better Business Bureau. A 19-year-old man working for Fresh Start Opportunities was arrested in October after he allegedly broke into an Edmonds home, attacked the owner and stole her purse. The man was also a suspect in burglaries in Sammamish and Tumwater. Incidents of theft by Fresh Start Opportunities employees have also been reported in California. Always check out a charity with the Secretary of State prior to making a donation. Ask solicitors for the need of the charity that they are representing, as well as the name of their employer. Request paperwork. Then search www.secstate.wa.gov/charities or call the office's charities program at 1-800-332-4483. You can whether a charity is registered and how much of each dollar raised is used to help. If you gave money to Fresh Start Opportunities, contact your local police department.