

Governor's Office of Consumer Protection warns of vacation scams

Governor's Office of Consumer Protection

As spring break and summer vacation planning season draw near, the Governor's Office of Consumer Protection (OCP) has been receiving numerous complaints about vacation scams.

In the typical scenario consumers receive a letter or postcard promising them free roundtrip airline tickets in exchange for attending a sales presentation about travel club membership. After attending the presentation, usually at a local hotel, consumers discover that they have to pay money in order to receive the "free" airline tickets.

Consumers also claim that these travel companies employ high-pressure sales tactics and deceptive means to coerce them into buying travel memberships that generally cost several thousand dollars. The company promises huge

travel discounts as a benefit of membership, but consumers soon discover that these discounts are nonexistent or equivalent to the rates consumers can get themselves on well-known Internet travel sites. When consumers try to cancel their memberships and receive refunds their requests are usually refused.

Consumers can avoid travel scams by remembering the following tips: Be wary of incredible deals or free tickets, prizes or memberships. If it sounds too good to be true, it usually is. And know that if you are promised a "free" prize, the company cannot legally charge you any fees in order to collect that prize.

If you are unfamiliar with the travel company, contact the Better Business Bureau at www.bbb.org to check its reputation and see whether there have been any complaints lodged against it. You should

also confirm that the company is registered with the American Society of Travel Agents (www.asta.org).

Before agreeing to anything or giving out your credit card information, ask for detailed written information about the cost of the vacation, including all items and fees, as well as membership cost. Read the contract carefully. Ask about your right to cancel and get the cancellation policy in writing.

There are a number of well-known travel sites that provide discounted rates for airfare, hotels and rental cars, without requiring you to pay for membership. Do the math, and see if it is actually a better deal to plan and book trips yourself.

If you entered into the sales agreement at a place that is not the company's regular place of business, such as a hotel room, the three-day right of cancellation

may apply. If it does, you are legally permitted to cancel the contract within 72 hours for a full refund. In addition, the company is required by law to inform you at the time of sale — both verbally and in writing — that you have the right to cancel the contract within 72 hours.

If you do decide to purchase a trip or travel membership through this kind of company, use your credit card to pay for it. This way, if you believe you were scammed, you can dispute the charges through your credit card company.

If you have been the victim of a vacation scam, contact the Governor's Office of Consumer Protection at (404) 651-8600 or 1-800-869-1123 (toll-free in Georgia, outside of the metro Atlanta calling area).

For more information, contact Shawn Conroy, Governor's Office of Consumer Protection, at (404) 656-3790.

Photos

from 1B

history of Gilmer County."

"I take that quite seriously," Titus stated.

Protecting historic area photos, documents

As part of this mission, the Genealogical Society members have been researching old settlements, schools and churches in the Gilmer County area. Through this project they have become discouraged that the community does not have a strong historic photo archive.

"We have been remiss at scanning (photos) and putting a copy off site. This is an immediate project that we need to do," Titus stated, adding, "I've seriously felt a sense of urgency about this."

As a result, the Gilmer County Genealogical Society will be hosting a photo scanning session next weekend. The purpose of the initiative is to help preserve the community's historic images and documents and to create a backup database for use in area research.

Described as an opportunity to "save your Gilmer County ancestors before they are lost to fires, floods (and) tornadoes," the event will take place Saturday, May 4, from 10 a.m. to noon and 1 to 3 p.m., at the Gilmer County Library, located at 268 Calvin Jackson Drive in Ellijay beside Mountain View Elementary.

Volunteers will be on hand at three stations in the library to scan old photos and family Bibles. Scanned images will be archived and catalogued at the library and will be used to develop a digital database of images. Backup copies will also be stored off-site in a safety deposit box for an added level of protection.

Attendees will also have the opportunity to get answers to their photo restoration questions and will receive handouts about how to safely preserve and maintain their photos at home.

"This is a major project for the community and I'm excited about it," Titus noted. "I feel it will be well received."

The event is free and

open to the public. Participants will keep the original copies of their photos.

While the May 4 event will focus on preserving old photos and documents from the local community, Titus shared there is a possibility the Genealogical Society will host a future scanning session for families whose ancestors are not from Gilmer County.

Other upcoming events, ways to get involved

Looking ahead to the Genealogical Society's other upcoming events, Titus stated, "We're going to have a slam-bam year."

This summer, the organization is hosting a lecture at the Gilmer County Library titled "How to Dig into Your Family Roots," which will explore how to conduct genealogical research. The seminar will take place Saturday, June 22. For more information about this and other upcoming events at the library, call (706) 635-4528, visit www.sequoyahistoricallibrary.org or stop by the Gilmer County Library.

In July, the society also hopes to host a community homecoming event.

Titus further shared that the organization has acquired a camcorder and is looking for people who would be willing to be interviewed for oral histories.

For more information about the Gilmer County Genealogical Society, visit www.gcgis.org. To contact the organization, email gcgis@etcmail.com or send a letter to the Gilmer County Genealogical Society, P.O. Box 919, Ellijay, GA 30540.

Photo scan at library

Members of the community are invited to bring photos of their Gilmer County ancestors to the local library Saturday, May 4, so that the images can be scanned and archived.

The event will take place from 10 a.m. to noon and 1 to 3 p.m., at the Gilmer County Library, located at 268 Calvin Jackson Drive in Ellijay.

Take

from 1B

drugs at over 5,200 Take Back sites last fall and that over 2 million pounds of medication have been dropped off at collection sites since the events began three years ago.

Cases of prescription drug abuse have risen dramatically in recent years and Nicholson said it's something he encounters frequently in his line of work.

"I don't want to say it's an epidemic, but it's absolutely gotten worse in the last 10 years. Prescription drugs just about took the place of methamphetamine a few years ago, as far as the use of

them," he added.

Removing the availability of — and temptation associated with — potentially addictive prescription medication is another objective of the collection program.

Nicholson said the types of medicines collected Saturday will not be limited to just pills. Unwanted and expired liquids will also be accepted.

"We're not going to take any used syringes," said Nicholson. "A good example of what we would take is an unused EpiPen."

Nicholson confirmed the medication drop-off box will remain in the courthouse lobby for those who miss the event or wish to drop off medications at a later time.

Relay

from 1B

Teams do most of their fundraising prior to the event, though many teams also hold creative fundraisers at their campsites during the Relay.

The event brings together friends, families, faith-based groups, schools and businesses including retail stores, banks, hospitals... people from all walks of life. Their efforts are aimed at furthering the ACS efforts to save lives by helping people stay well, get well, finding cures and fighting back.

While the event's primary goal of raising funds to fight cancer and sup-

port local cancer patients and caregivers is taken seriously, the event is a lot of fun.

Teams and sponsors set up booths and play games. There is always good food to eat and fun to be had. The local Relay welcomes several entertainers who perform throughout the evening and often into the early hours of the next morning.

Event organizers encourage anyone to stop by and enjoy the evening. Parking and entry to the Relay are free.

If anybody is interested in volunteering, starting a Relay team or has a business that would like to be a sponsor, visit RelayForLife.org or call 1-800-227-2345.

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Saturday, April 27, 2013

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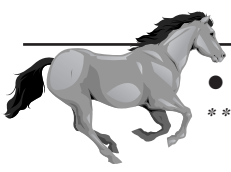
Classes with 5 or more entries receive payback

Gilmer County Saddle Club memberships available (individual or family)

Monthly Horse Show - 4th Saturday

For more information: Call 706-76-2845 or visit www.gilmercountysaddleclub.com

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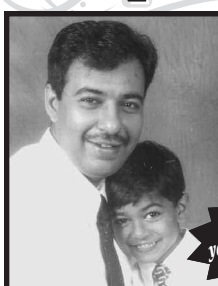
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