



Spring 2009

FROM THE OFFICE OF
SUMMIT COUNTY PROSECUTOR
SHERRI BEVAN WALSH

THE SENIOR NEWS

VICTIM OF CONTRACTING SCAM RECEIVES FREE ROOF

We recently prosecuted a case where a contractor took \$6,530 from an 84-year-old woman to put on a new roof but instead, never returned. Unfortunately, the victim in this case was caring for her bedridden husband.

This case is a reminder to all of us that we could have been the victim—the contractor came highly recommended and seemed sincere. What she didn't know was that she was Joel Crouch's sixth victim. On April 14, 2009, Crouch was sentenced to one year in prison and ordered to pay back \$41,000 to his six victims.

There is, however, a happy ending to Rosetta Banton's story. A concerned citizen who wishes to remain anonymous, arranged for a roof to be installed on Mrs. Blanton's home, free of charge. I am always pleased to see community support when someone is the victim of a crime.

Remember these tips when hiring a contractor:

- ✓ Always obtain at least three separate estimates for the work you need done.
- ✓ Always call the Better Business Bureau to find out if any complaints have been filed against the person or company.
- ✓ If possible, try to hire someone from a company which has been in business for many years.
- ✓ Do not hire individuals who show up at your door and try to convince you that you need to hire them.
- ✓ Do not hire someone who requires you to pay the full amount in advance.
- ✓ Do not assume that because the person is friendly and gives you an impressive brochure, that he is legitimate.
- ✓ Try to get at least one recommendation from a friend who has had a good experience with the repair person.
- ✓ If someone starts performing work at your home without your permission, call the police.

If you have doubts about the repair person, trust your instinct and do not hire them.

TAKE ME HOME



In 2007, Prosecutor Walsh partnered with the Sheriff's Office to launch the *Take Me Home* program. To

date, it is the only database in Ohio for individuals who would have trouble communicating their name and address in a law enforcement situation. The database contains pictures, along with identifying characteristics, that can be searched if someone is lost or wanders away from home.

Coordinator Leslie Knoblauch, who is with the Prosecutor's Office, has been building the database by going to schools and adult day cares to enroll those who might benefit from the program. Currently, there are about 900 individuals, ranging from pre-kindergarten to adults with Alzheimer's, registered in the database.

Take Me Home has become a model for other localities, receiving both local and national inquiries about how to start a program. Every police department in Summit County participates and are members of the Advisory Board. We are proud of our program and will continue to look for ways to ensure everyone who can benefit has the opportunity to enroll.

For more information about ***Take Me Home***, contact **Leslie Knoblauch** at the Summit County prosecutor's office at:

(330) 643-8741

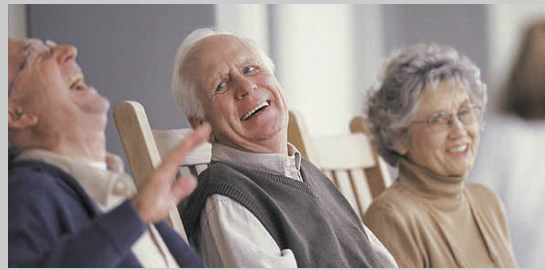
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**How do you choose a nursing home
or assisted living center?**

**Go to www.medicare.gov/NHCompare
or call 1-800-MEDICARE to find a facility
near you and the ratings it received**

MAN SENTENCED TO DEATH FOR MURDER OF 81-YEAR-OLD MAN AND ATTEMPTED MURDER OF HIS 77-YEAR-OLD WIFE

My office handled the case of Hersie Wesson, a 51-year-old man who was sentenced to death on March 6, 2009 for the murder of Emil Varhola, 81, and the attempted murder of his 77-year-old wife in their Kenmore home. The wife of Mr. Varhola has yet to fully recover from the injuries inflicted by Wesson.

As is often the case, the victims knew Wesson. They were former neighbors and at times had given him food and money. Wesson was on parole for a previous felony, and told his girlfriend that he was going to kill her. She alerted the police, who came looking for him. Wesson came to the Varhola's with the intent of stealing a gun from them to kill his girlfriend. When Mr. Varhola refused to relinquish the gun to Wesson, he became violent and stabbed him five times. At the time, Mr. Varhola was on oxygen and used a cane. Wesson then stabbed Mrs. Varhola multiple times in many of her vital organs.

Fortunately, Mrs. Varhola played dead before Wesson left which saved her own life. She was then able to call her son, who called 911. She said during testimony that when the police came, she floated to the door because she couldn't recall how she managed to get to the door. Thanks to Mrs. Varhola's ability to reach her son quickly, Wesson was arrested almost immediately after the stabbing. He is now sitting on death row awaiting his sentence.

Mrs. Varhola received a Hero Award for her bravery on April 28, 2009 from the local Victim's Assistance Program, a well-deserved recognition. I want to extend my sympathies to the Varhola family for their loss and hope that with the trial behind them, they are able to focus on Mrs. Varhola's health and wellness.

BE WARY OF ORGANIZATIONS SOLICITING MONEY FOR THEIR "NOTCH BABY" CAMPAIGN

A "Notch Baby" is someone born between 1917 and 1921 who was receiving Social Security Benefits that were in excess of what they should have received. Congresswoman Betty Sutton researched this issue and found that laws passed in 1972 updated the flawed formula used to calculate Social Security benefits. Congress estimated the Social Security organization would have been bankrupt by the 1980s if the problem was not fixed. In 1977, Social Security benefits of individuals from 1917 or later were reduced to the appropriate amount. The change in benefits for these individuals will not revert back to the way it was before the formula was updated.

Therefore, be cautious of organizations soliciting money to support the "Notch Baby Campaign."

**Visit our Senior Safety website:
www.co.summit.oh.us/prosecutor/srcitsafe.htm**