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## SCAM ALERT!



A Consumer Update from Mat Heck, Jr., Prosecuting Attorney



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### How "Friends" Can Use Facebook to Scam You

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Recently, more and more people have experienced fake accounts on Facebook asking for money. Scammers have used a real user's photo, made a "new" account, and then messaged family members or friends on Facebook who already trust the real user. The real user's Facebook account was not breached or hacked and the real user has no control over the new account.

Scammers do this by taking advantage of pictures and other public information they can see on a Facebook page, such as, location, occupation, birthday, and friends. The scammer will use this information to make the fake account look as much like the real account as possible.

The scammer will then contact the real users' friends and family who may believe they are having a conversation with the real user. The scammer will often times start by talking about things they see on the real user's page before asking for a loan, a donation or contribution for a "federal government grant."



Often times, the real Facebook user is not aware of what is happening and does not know that someone else has taken their photos and information to impersonate them online.

The scam may be obvious to some, but not to all. Typically scammers will try to target senior citizens who are not as knowledgeable about Facebook and social media.

Unfortunately, this is a situation that Facebook cannot control. However, Facebook has recommended ways to protect yourself online to make sure you don't get scammed.

- Don't accept friend requests from people you don't know
- Don't respond to messages from people you don't know
- Be wary of people asking for an advance in fees or for money
- Be wary of people asking to move your conversation off Facebook
- Be wary of people claiming to be a friend or relative in an emergency

Use what Facebook has available to make your account more secure and report any account you think may be from a scammer.

Tell others about this scam, especially senior citizens, and suggest that if they get a message that they are unsure of they should call or text that person directly.

The above ALERT is part of the Montgomery County Prosecuting Attorney's initiative to help citizens become aware of ways they can avoid becoming a victim, or ways they can help stop criminal activity that may be occurring. Upon request, the office can provide presentations on crime prevention actions and activities to halt crime and increase the quality of life in our community.

If you would like additional information on the above ALERT, or would like additional information regarding our programs to assist consumers in general and/or seniors in particular, please contact Kimberly Oliver, Supervising Attorney, Adult Protection Unit, or Jon Marshall, Supervising Attorney, Fraud and Economic Crimes Unit at 937-225-5757.

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