

ARTICLES FOR 7-27-17 ROUNDUP

RUTLEDGE ANNOUNCES FIRST-IN-THE-NATION INITIATIVE AIMED AT PREVENTING PRESCRIPTION DRUG ABUSE ‘PRESCRIPTION FOR LIFE’ CURRICULUM WILL BE AVAILABLE TO ALL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS THIS FALL

ROGERS – Arkansas Attorney General Leslie Rutledge announced today at the Arkansas Sheriffs’ Association meeting in Rogers a first-in-the-nation education initiative called “Prescription for Life” featuring a digital platform to be offered at no cost to all high school students in the State to help them understand the dangers of prescription drug misuse and how to prevent abuse.

“Talking about the harmful impact of prescription drug abuse with children and teenagers can no longer be a goal. It has to be a reality,” said Attorney General Rutledge. “Arkansas ranks first in the nation for ages 12 to 17 in misuse of painkillers. Reversing this trend is a top priority of mine. Prescription for Life will be available to every high school student in Arkansas beginning this fall.”

Prescription for Life will come at no cost to participating schools. Using an evidence-based public health approach, the digital course will empower high school students with the skills and knowledge they need to make safe and healthy decisions about prescription drugs. The course will be aligned with the Centers for Disease Control’s National Health Education Standards and State academic standards.

The self-paced modular course will use video, animations, simulations and interactivity to deliver a personalized, self-guided learning experience. The real-life simulations will demonstrate the impact misuse can have on students’ physical and mental health, relationships and future goals while the scenario-based exercises will help students practice how to support other students in their choices regarding the safe use of prescription drugs.

Educator trainings will be hosted to ensure effective classroom integration and pre- and post-assessments will be used to measure changes in students attitudes and behavior. Educators from the Attorney General’s office will conduct teacher in-service trainings in person and through webcasts and give presentations to parent and community groups throughout the State about how to talk with young people about risks associated with opioid use and how to recognize signs that their loved ones are abusing drugs.

Rutledge has been meeting with families in recent weeks who have lost loved ones to prescription drugs or have been deeply affected by this national epidemic. As she has listened to their stories, Rutledge asked them for feedback and shared her vision to make Prescription for Life available in Arkansas’s 298 public high schools. The program will also be offered to homeschool networks and to interested Arkansas parochial and private schools.

Scott Doerhoff, who lost his son, Will, to a prescription drug addiction and overdose last year said, “Initiating drug education in Arkansas high schools will create the opportunity for a new culture of awareness and safety for our kids and educate them on the life threatening risk of not only illegal

substance abuse but also illicit prescription drug use which is often and extraneously, thought of as being a ‘safe’ way to use substances. The William Christian Doerhoff Memorial Foundation and Parent Advocacy Group applaud Arkansas Attorney General Leslie Rutledge and her staff for their commitment and leadership in protecting Arkansas children.

“The Arkansas Attorney General's office and the Drug Enforcement Administration have joined forces to combat a growing epidemic of prescription opioid misuse and heroin use nationwide,” said Assistant Special Agent in Charge Matthew R. Barden. This important initiative is to educate students about the true impacts of opioids and kick-start lifesaving conversations in the home and classroom. DEA is committed to supporting all educational efforts that provide classroom resources and prevention tools to educators and parents that aim to introduce students to the science behind opioids and their impact on the brain and body.”

“Stemming the tide of the prescription drug abuse epidemic begins with education,” said Arkansas Surgeon General Greg Bledsoe. “Our people – particularly our young people – need to be aware of the high risks associated with prescription drug abuse. I applaud the work of Attorney General Rutledge in initiating this important educational project.”

“Education is critical to combatting prescription drug abuse,” Arkansas Department of Education Commissioner Johnny Key said. “This new program will complement the Arkansas School Health Services Initiative’s efforts to educate students about the harmful effects of prescription drug abuse. We welcome opportunities to partner together to find solutions for issues that affect schools, families and communities.”

“Prescription for Life is an innovative training concept designed to prepare our younger generations to keep their selves, friends, and communities safe from substance abuse,” said Arkansas State Drug Director designee and Benton Police Chief Kirk Lane. “Education and community involvement is the key to resolving the issues of substance use disorder.”

The new education curriculum will be added to the Attorney General’s already robust prescription drug abuse prevention initiative. During 2016, more than 330 pounds of prescription drugs were collected at Attorney General Mobile Offices across Arkansas and 145 pounds have been collected since the beginning of 2017. The sixth annual Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention Summit, hosted by Rutledge, is scheduled for Nov. 9 in Hot Springs with over 720 taking advantage of early bird registration.

Drug overdose deaths are on the rise in Arkansas, increasing from 287 in 2015 to 335 in 2016, according to data from the State Crime Lab. More than 40 percent of teenagers in Arkansas have tried prescription drugs and more than half of all teens report that it is easy to obtain prescription drugs from their parents’ or grandparents’ medicine cabinets. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services reports that between 59,000 and 65,000 people died from drug overdoses in 2016, up from 52,404 in 2015 and double the death rate a decade ago. That is more than the number of deaths from car accidents in 2016. And according to the Centers for Disease Control, the majority of drug overdose deaths – six out of 10 – involve an opioid.

ATTORNEY GENERAL BECERRA STRONGLY OPPOSES FCC'S PROPOSAL TO REPEAL NET NEUTRALITY RULES

SACRAMENTO – California Attorney General Xavier Becerra today expressed his strong opposition to the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) proposal to repeal net neutrality rules, which allow consumers to access online content without interference or manipulation by an internet service provider (ISP). If the rules were to be repealed, an ISP could force web content providers to pay fees for faster internet speeds, limiting consumers' ability to access the internet content of their choice. Attorney General Becerra and 12 attorneys general joined together to make clear in comments to the FCC that doing away with the net neutrality rules would be unwarranted.

"I vigorously oppose the FCC's attempt to gut the net neutrality rules," said Attorney General Becerra. "All consumers should have free, open and equal access to the internet. When internet service providers dictate the speed at which websites load, no one benefits but internet service providers. As the Attorney General of California, a state that's home to countless start-ups and technology giants alike, I know that net neutrality rules represent freedom and opportunity, innovation and fairness. I urge the FCC to do what's right and keep the net neutrality rules in place."

The FCC enacted net neutrality rules in 2015. Known officially as the 2015 Open Internet Order, they were subsequently affirmed by the District of Columbia Circuit Court in 2016 in *United States Telecom Association v. Federal Communications Commission*.

When he assumed office, Attorney General Becerra made protecting consumers a top priority. In addition to today's action, he recently called on the FCC to block robocalls made from fake or "spoofed" caller ID numbers. He also announced a \$33 million multi-state settlement with Johnson and Johnson for marketing over-the-counter medicines that failed to meet quality standards; a multi-state settlement with Western Union for wire fraud scams; and a record \$18.5 million multi-state settlement with Target over data security failures that contributed to the compromise of 40 million customers' payment card information during the 2013 holiday season, among other actions.

A copy of the comments is attached to the electronic version of this release at oag.ca.gov/news

ATTORNEY GENERAL JACKLEY WARNS OF PIRATED WEBSITES

PIERRE, S.D. – Attorney General Marty Jackley warns that hackers are now using so-called pirate websites to infect computers. These websites, which online users visit to watch illegally distributed movies, music, books, and other copyrighted content, have become a major source for infecting computers with dangerous malware that can lead to identity theft and other serious financial and privacy harms.

"To protect your privacy, avoid pirated websites. Pirated websites are both wrong and dangerously risk identity theft and financial loss. This includes 'ransomware' a malicious software that threatens to publish its victim's data or block access unless a ransom is paid," said Jackley.

PSA: Pirated Websites

Malware, such as the types caused by infections from pirate websites, can lead to:

- Financial loss, including breaches to bank accounts.
- Identify theft and loss of privacy that are not easily cleared up.
- So-called ransomware, where access to a computer is frozen until the user pays the ransom using multiple methods i.e. MoneyGram, Western Union, pre-loaded cards, etc.
- Spyware downloads that grants hacker's access to the computer's camera without the user's knowledge.

TIPS that can help avoid your computer being compromised:

- Avoid pirate websites and only visit legal, legitimate websites.
- Install anti-virus programs and keep them updated.
- If you think your computer has been compromised, alert a computer specialist to have your computer analyzed.
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A recent study found that 1 in 3 of these pirate websites exposed users to malware exploitable by criminals, and that almost half of the malware was "drive-by": delivered without a user even having to click on the link.

If you have been targeted by criminals, alert your local law enforcement. For more information and tips to avoid scams and other consumer related issues, contact the Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division at 800- 300-1986 or email consumerhelp@state.sd.us or visit <http://atg.sd.gov/>.

AG BALDERAS, SHERIFF GONZALES, HSI & APD ANNOUNCE SEVEN ARRESTS IN UNDERAGE HUMAN TRAFFICKING OPERATION

Seven men arrested for soliciting sex with who they thought was a 15-year-old girl

Albuquerque, NM – Today, Attorney General Hector Balderas, Bernalillo County Sheriff Manny Gonzales, Homeland Security Investigations and the Albuquerque Police Department announced the successful result of a joint operation targeting commercial sex trafficking of minors in Albuquerque. Seven men were arrested this week in Albuquerque during the operation for soliciting sex with someone they believed to be a 15-year-old girl, who was actually an undercover BCSO deputy.

The men all attempted to pay \$40 to \$200 to have sex with 15-yearold girls. The Albuquerque office of Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) led the multi-agency operation, which began July 17. The four-day operation also focused on consumers of underage prostitutes, and rescuing victims, which included juveniles.

"There is no higher priority than protecting our children from sexual violence and dangerous sexual predators, and I want to thank all of the agencies that worked together on this successful

operation to combat the trafficking of children in New Mexico,” said Attorney General Hector Balderas.

“Operation Recovery is a collaboration between BCSO, HSI, APD and the New Mexico Attorney General. I truly believe in the effort to advocate for victims who have been forced into a life of sex trafficking and placed in a position to restore stability in their life. This partnership has proven to be fruitful in targeting sex traffickers who prey on minors. Let this be a notice to those who participate in sex trafficking that law enforcement will hold you accountable,” said Bernalillo County Sheriff Manuel Gonzales III.

“HSI special agents and our law enforcement partners are pursuing all leads identified during this operation, and will expand investigations to further disrupt and dismantle sex trafficking organizations throughout New Mexico, the United States and abroad,” Waldemar Rodriguez, special agent in charge of HSI El Paso said. Rodriguez oversees HSI operations in west Texas and the entire state of New Mexico. “Sex trafficking will not be tolerated in our city. We are thankful to the Attorney General and our law enforcement partners for all of their efforts. We will continue to collaborate and ensure we end inhumane crimes like this in our city,” said APD Chief Gorden E. Eden Jr.

AG CYNTHIA H. COFFMAN ANNOUNCES INDICTMENT OF COLORADO SPRINGS OPERATION ALLEGED TO HAVE ILLEGALLY DISTRIBUTED NEARLY 200 POUNDS OF MARIJUANA

DENVER— Today, Colorado Attorney General Cynthia H. Coffman was joined by El Paso County Sheriff Bill Elder, Deputy Chief Mark Smith from the Colorado Springs Police Department, and District Attorney Dan May from the 4th Judicial District, to announce the indictment of an alleged criminal enterprise that illegally distributed nearly 200 pounds of marijuana through the Hoppz’ Cropz storefronts in Colorado Springs.

The 13 individuals indicted, including Hoppz’ Cropz owners, Joseph Hopper, Dara Wheatley, Joseph Sergio Crivici and Adam Donaldson, are alleged to have engaged in a criminal enterprise where they and their co-defendants conspired to purchase medical marijuana from licensed facilities and resell it for profit under the guise of the marijuana being offered as a “free giveaway” with the purchase of a dramatically overpriced, yet low-cost item. One ruse they used was selling cheap cigarette lighters- worth a few cents- for \$15 and then “giving away” one gram of marijuana for free. The street value of one gram of marijuana is approximately \$15.

“The members of this operation had hoped they would be able to hide their alleged illegal activity in plain sight by pretending to be a legitimate business,” said Attorney General Coffman. “Criminal activity related to black market marijuana continues to be a serious issue for communities across Colorado, which is why my office works with our state and local partners to dismantle criminal enterprises that are violating Colorado law.”

\$241,401 JUDGMENT OBTAINED IN ALLEGED MORTGAGE SCAM

PHOENIX - Attorney General Mark Brnovich announced his office obtained a \$241,401 judgment against Mortgage Relief Solutions, Inc. and its owner, Eric David Brown. The judgment also prohibits Mortgage Relief Solutions and Eric Brown from engaging in mortgage or real estate-related activity in Arizona.

In March 2017, the Arizona Attorney General's Office filed a consumer fraud lawsuit against Mortgage Relief Solutions, Inc. ("MRS") and Eric Brown. The State alleged MRS and Brown targeted homeowners who were "upside down" on their mortgages and were considering defaulting on their mortgage loans. According to the lawsuit, MRS and Brown falsely claimed they would take over the homeowners' mortgage payments, thereby allowing them to "move on" and avoid further negative consequences to their credit ratings.

MRS allegedly told its clients that it had tenant buyers ready to move into their homes and that those tenants had the ultimate goal of purchasing the homes. MRS and Brown allegedly directed MRS' clients to sign documents that had the effect of giving control over their homes to MRS, Brown, and persons and entities acting in concert with them.

The State alleged that MRS failed to make promised mortgage payments for its clients, resulting in the clients' homes going into foreclosure with negative impacts to the homeowners' credit ratings. The State also alleged that, to the extent that MRS actually had tenants living in its clients' homes, MRS failed to apply rent payments to its clients' mortgages and instead retained the funds for MRS' and Eric Brown's own use.

The State obtained a judgment after neither Mortgage Relief Solutions nor Eric Brown contested the State's allegations brought against them in a Consumer Fraud Lawsuit. The judgment prohibits MRS and Eric Brown from engaging in any activity related to mortgage origination or modification, consumer debt relief, consumer debt modification, real estate sales or leases, or trustee services in the State of Arizona or conducted on behalf of any Arizona consumer. MRS and Eric Brown are also required to pay \$241,401 to the State for consumer restitution, civil penalties, costs and fees, and disgorgement of ill-gotten gains.

Assistant Attorney General Cherie Howe worked on this case.

SCHUETTE ISSUES CEASE AND DESIST TO CHARITY THAT LIED TO DONORS ABOUT PHONE CARD PROGRAM FOR WOUNDED MILITARY

Almost no phone cards were distributed; instead charity diverted millions raised to fundraiser and other programs

LANSING - Michigan Attorney General Bill Schuette today announced a Notice of Intended Action and Cease and Desist Order against Healing American Heroes, Inc. of Round Rock, Texas and its professional fundraiser Jeremy Squire & Associates for over a million violations of the Charitable Organizations and Solicitations Act. Violations included deceptive solicitations and diversion of funds raised to other purposes. Over 10,000 donations – totaling more than \$200,000 – were received from Michigan donors.

"This group systematically exploited thousands in Michigan and hundreds of thousands nationwide who wanted to help wounded service members," said Schuette. "Our troops deserve better; our citizens deserve better."

Case Background

Healing American Heroes came to the attention of the Attorney General's Charitable Trust Section through an audit of its charitable solicitation registration and IRS Form 990. The Charitable Trust Section questioned certain statements on the IRS Form 990, requesting Healing American Heroes' solicitation materials for review, and requested information regarding its supposed charitable activities. The charity's responses revealed numerous violations.

In 2015, Healing American Heroes, fundraising under the name Help Our Wounded, raised \$2.6 million by sending nearly five million deceptive mailings nationwide. The mailings included between one and three phone cards and made statements such as the following:

Stated the "urgent" need for phone cards for wounded service members deployed in the Middle East;

Claimed that "EVERY one of the 50,000 soldiers STILL stationed in Afghanistan and the Middle East wants [a phone card] – and I believe they deserve them";

Told individuals that Healing American Heroes' network of military individuals would distribute the cards;

Asked donors to "sponsor one, two, or even three Emergency Phone Cards for as little as \$10 . . .";

Asked donors to return the mailed phone cards with their contribution to "sponsor" the cards.

The Notice of Intended Action alleges 1,127,590 violations against Healing American Heroes and 1,116,538 violations against professional fundraiser Jeremy Squire & Associates. It also orders the charity and the fundraiser to cease and desist these violations, giving them 21 days to resolve the matter or face a civil action in court. Concurrent with the Notice of Intended Action, the Attorney General is also issuing a Notice of Intent to Deny Healing American Heroes' fundraising registration.

AG PAXTON OBTAINS \$25 MILLION FOR THE STATE OF TEXAS IN ILLEGAL DEBT COLLECTING SUIT

Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton last week obtained a final judgment and permanent injunction against Samara Portfolio Management, LLC, Law Office of Joseph Onwuteaka, P.C., and Joseph O. Onwuteaka, for violations of the Texas Deceptive Trade Practices—Consumer Protection Act (DTPA), Texas Debt Collection Act and the Identity Theft Protection and Enforcement Act (ITPA).

The defendants violated the DTPA by filing 898 consumer debt collection cases in Harris County against debtor-defendants who neither signed the underlying loan contract in Harris County or lived in Harris County at the time they were sued. In violation of the ITPA, defendants also failed

to implement reasonable procedures to protect sensitive personal information in 123 of the lawsuits by filing unredacted social security numbers and driver's license numbers.

Furthermore, defendants violated the Texas Debt Collection Act by attempting to collect on 63 motor vehicle debts without a license. The jury awarded civil penalties of \$25,165,500 and attorneys' fees of \$559,231.30. Assistant Attorneys General Rick Berlin and Stephanie Eberhardt represented the State of Texas.

The attorney general's Consumer Protection Division receives and reviews complaints submitted to the office by consumers. While the attorney general is prohibited from representing such individuals, these complaints are used by the office to help shape priorities and identify issues affecting Texans. Consumers can file complaints by visiting: <https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/cpd/file-a-consumer-complaint>