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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **AREA CITIZENS BOMBARDED BY SCAMS**

*If it Appears too Good to be True, it Probably is Fraud*

Area citizens are being bombarded with scam phone calls, emails and letters. Forty-seven citizens reported being victims of scams in the fourth quarter of 2010. Most victims either sent money or gave out account information to scammers. This lost money is almost impossible to recover. The latest scams involve inaccurate claims about Medicare and education grants.

Be wary of a phone caller who claims you are about to lose your Medicare Part B insurance if you don't immediately provide your bank account information for payment. Medicare states that they will *never* make unsolicited calls to a beneficiary.

"Consumers need to remain vigilant in protecting their Medicare numbers, bank account numbers and other personal information," states Dianne Brush, Community Services Specialist. "Don't ever give out your bank account information, social security number or credit card number out over the phone or email unless you initiate the contact."

An alert to this scam was released by the Medicare administration in December. Anyone who receives these scam phone calls should report it to the State Attorney General and the Medicare Fraud Line in Washington, D.C. The number to call is 1-800-HHS-TIPS (1-800-447-8477) or fill out a complaint form on-line at [oig.hhs.gov](http://oig.hhs.gov).

The other recent scam is a phone call which claims to be an opportunity to receive a large federal grant for college. The caller instructs the victim to wire \$250 by Western Union to apply. Once the money is wired, it can't be traced and of course, you don't receive the grant money. "If it appears too good to be true, it probably is fraud," states Brush.

If you are receiving unsolicited phone calls, you should register your phone number on the national "Do Not Call" registry at 1888-382-1222. You can also "opt out" of junk mail by following the procedure with the Direct Marketing Association (DMA) at 212-768-7277, ext. 1888. You will need to fill out a form and mail \$1.00 to the DMA to process your request.

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