

Scammers Target Publishers Clearing House Sweepstakes

Beverly Baskin, president and CEO of the BBB of Eastern North Carolina is warning consumers to be leery of an organization posing as Publishers Clearing House.

July 24, 2008 - [PRLog](#) -- Media Contacts:

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Scammers Target Publishers Clearing House Sweepstakes
Check with BBB to Confirm Valid Winnings

RALEIGH, N.C. (July 24, 2008) – Beverly Baskin, president of the BBB of Eastern North Carolina, issues today a consumer warning regarding an organization posing as Publishers Clearing House. The scammers are sending fraudulent certificates that congratulate consumers of winning the \$1 million sweepstakes. “Winners” find a check enclosed for \$5,472 and are instructed to contact a representative before depositing the check. Be aware that these certificates are not sent from the real Publishers Clearing House, and the check is counterfeit. The legitimate Publishers Clearing House asks its winners to sign an Affidavit of Eligibility before disbursing any prizes.

“The scam comes at a time when many families could really use the money,” says Baskin. “Always check with the BBB first to be sure your sweepstakes winnings are valid.”

To avoid being scammed, check www.bbb.org if you receive a certificate proclaiming you a winner, especially if you participate in the Publishers Clearing House sweepstakes.

Don't be caught giving your money to fraudulent charitable organizations either. Deceptive charity scams always creep up around natural disasters. As we approach the heart of hurricane season on the east coast, scammers are waiting for an opportunity to get your money. Check the validity of charitable organizations on the BBB's “For Charities and Donors” page at www.give.org.

Visit www.bbb.org for more trustworthy information regarding sweepstakes winnings, charities and legitimate business.

About BBB of Eastern North Carolina:

The Better Business Bureau of Eastern North Carolina is a 501 (c)(6) not-for-profit corporation serving 33 counties in Eastern North Carolina. The organization is funded primarily by BBB Accredited Business fees from more than 3,200 local business and professional firms. The BBB promotes integrity, consumer confidence and business ethics through business self-regulation in the local marketplace. Services provided by the BBB include, reports on companies and charitable organizations, general monitoring of advertising in the marketplace, dispute resolution services, and consumer/business education programs. All services are provided at no cost to the public, with the occasional exception of mediation and arbitration. Visit bbb.org.

CONSUMER ALERTS FOR JULY 2008

In an effort to keep the media and public informed, the Better Business Bureau of Eastern North Carolina offers monthly BBB Consumer Alerts as potential story or interview ideas. Readers should take into consideration the importance of the practice in question and the total performance of a company. This list is current as of release date. Information regarding business or consumer topics reported here can be obtained through the BBB office by contacting info@raleigh.bbb.org.

You'veBeenLeftBehind.com is a Web site that collects personal data such as bank account numbers, where things may be hidden in the house, locations of safe deposit boxes, etc. The site promise consumers "one last opportunity to reach your lost family and friends," via an e-mail upon the subscriber's "Rapture," which is determined by the absence of a check-in e-mail for six consecutive days. Regardless of religious beliefs, consumers should be very cautious about revealing such personal, identifying information to strangers.

"Publishers Clearing House" is sending a certificate to consumers congratulating them on winning \$1 million. A check for \$5,472 is enclosed. The "winner" is instructed to "contact your representative without any delay BEFORE depositing this check..." This is NOT the real Publishers Clearing House, and the check is counterfeit! Always check with the BBB if you receive such an offer and/or check.

Barnes Medical just came on the BBB's radar in January 2008. Most of the complaints involve the company making unauthorized withdrawals from consumers' accounts and the inability to obtain refunds. Mail to the Champlain, NY address is returned as "undeliverable." One consumer says she has given no information to them, but they withdrew \$398. This company has an unsatisfactory rating.

International Tesla Electric Company, dba Hi-Tech, advertised a "free electricity" machine back in 1999. Now they are advertising fuel savings devices called PICC (Pre-Ignition Catalytic Converter) and the HAFC (Hydro Assist Fuel Cell). According to the company, both are supposed to create a 50 percent increase in gas mileage. The BBB requested independent substantiation of this claim. The company did not respond. Seven Attorneys General have taken action against Dennis Lee, one of the principals. This New Jersey company has an unsatisfactory rating. Thanks to the Nashville, TN BBB for their investigation.

VIL Mall is showing up on Internet searches for less expensive electronics and computers and offers "110% guaranteed lowest prices." The company gives an address in Lubbock, TX, which is actually an Eddie Bauer mall store. Billing seems to be done from Spain or Italy. The Web site does not offer a secure site for payments, and the BBB advises extreme caution! Thanks to the Lubbock BBB for their investigation.

CDN Financial, TD Financial and P. & A. Financial are sweepstakes companies contacting consumers telling them they have won \$100,000, \$450,000 and \$525,000, respectively. The checks enclosed are supposedly to help pay the taxes on the winnings; they are counterfeit, and this is a scam! Always check with the BBB before attempting to deposit such checks.

Fraudulent Charitable Contribution Scams always crop up after natural disasters such as tornadoes, wildfires and floods. Taking advantage of the generosity of individuals who want to make monetary donations to help victims of such disasters, scammers posing as charitable organizations seek to funnel those funds into their own pockets. Before making any kind of donation, the BBB advises consumers to know where their money is going. Check with the BBB. Go to www.give.org to check out charities. The BBB advises to "Give, but Give Wisely."

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Tags [Beverly Baskin](#), [Bbb](#), [Bbb Of Eastern North Carolina](#), [Scams](#), [Publishers Clearing House](#),
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Link <https://prlog.org/10093391>



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