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For Immediate Release, June 19, 2014

**WICHITA, KAN.** – Seminars or presentations at area hotels have prompted warnings from the Consumer Protection Division of the District Attorney’s Office. A post card may arrive in the mail saying you’ve been selected to receive a “free” gift. To get it, all that is required is that you call a certain number. When you call you learn the free offer is yours simply by attending a seminar or a dinner at a local restaurant.

When you arrive, you may be asked to present a credit card as a form of identification in order to enter the room where the presentation is made. The seminar is usually a high-pressure event to convince you to buy a product or a service such as membership in a travel club, interest in a timeshare or help in starting your own business.

In the seminar, testimonials are often on video by people who only give their first names. There is no time to check the truthfulness of the testimonials. The person conducting the seminar may demand you “buy now” because “It’s your only opportunity to purchase this unique offer.”

You may be asked to refer a friend and if the friend signs up for a seminar or purchases a product or membership, you could get some money. Offering benefits like this where someone gets something for a referral or helps the business enter into another consumer transaction violates the Kansas Consumer Protection Act (KCPA).

Some people sign paperwork in an effort to escape the high pressure tactics and “just get home.” The paperwork you receive at the seminar may include an opportunity to cancel within 3 business days after you sign. After reading through pages of material, you find you can’t cancel without incurring substantial charges. This could be called a “nonrefundable processing fee.” Charges like this also violate the Kansas Consumer Protection Act.

To avoid becoming a victim of these types of “opportunities” consider the following:

- Investigate any product or service before you make a purchase;
- How “free” is a gift when you must attend a seminar or buy something else?
- “Free trips” may require you to pay “transportation costs” or there may be restrictions like what days you can travel.

- The value and characteristics of the free gift may be misrepresented.
- Never hand over a credit card to gain admittance into a seminar.
- During the seminar, paid actors may be singing the praises of the service or product, and not real people.
- If seminar representatives cannot clearly answer your questions, do not sign up.
- How long does your contract run and how much money are you ultimately required to pay?
- If you know little or nothing about the company or the product, resist the impulse to sign up.
- If you have not had adequate time to read and understand everything given to you, don't sign up.
- Don't fall victim to, "Today is your only opportunity to purchase this great deal." (If the opportunity is really that good, it will be there tomorrow.)
- Check to determine whether the person/company selling the product/service is required to be licensed in Kansas or in this county to sell the same. Additional licenses are often required for an outside company to sell in a temporary venue such as a hotel in Sedgwick County. Is the business properly licensed?
- Before attending, check with the District Attorney's Consumer Protection Division, the Better Business Bureau or internet blogs. Are there several negative reports?
- If there is little or no information about a company, find out if the company has been discredited and changed its name to continue doing business.

The Federal Trade Commission's website ([www.consumer.ftc.gov](http://www.consumer.ftc.gov)) contains excellent consumer information on various scams. Locate the "consumer Information" tab for a list of various topics or type the topic in the search box. Call the District Attorney's Consumer Protection Division at 316-660-3653 for more information.

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