

**BETTER BUSINESS BUREAU
of WESTERN MICHIGAN, INC**

NEWS RELEASE

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The Dangers and Scams of Traveling Youth Sales Crews

This is the time of year when traveling youth sales crews go door-to-door peddling everything from magazines to chocolate bars. They feed you stories about how you can help them avoid inner city troubles or how you can help them through college by buying their product. .

Some consumers have reported troubling experiences once they've allowed the sales crew into their home. Cases of robbery, assault, or worst have been reported. Consumers have also complained about not receiving the magazines or products ordered, non-receipt of refunds and incomplete receipts that make canceling the orders impossible.

Oftentimes the sales crew themselves are in harms way. Various news media have reported abusive treatment of young sales crews. Minors report having been sexually harassed and physically assaulted, some are left stranded with no means of transportation home. In addition, the young people are typically expected to work long hours with little rest and it is not uncommon for them to be exposed to illegal drugs and crime.

While some door-to-door youth sales programs are legitimate, it pays to ask questions *before letting them into your home*. Ask for the name of the organization. If possible, record the license plate of the van or car transporting the children or teenagers. Then contact local law enforcement to report that a crew of young people is canvassing in your community and to ask if they are familiar with the organization. If the sales crew purports to be operating on behalf of a charity or not-for-profit group, check with your local BBB to determine if the charity is registered to solicit in your state.

Pet Lovers, Beware!

Pet lovers are advised to use caution when looking to buy a puppy. The BBB warns that an alarming number of ads are being placed in newspapers and on Web sites by people posing as breeders.

Consumers have contacted the BBB stating they placed orders via e-mail for purebred puppies offered through a Web site or in response to a newspaper ad. The breeder was often located out-of-state with no physical address or phone number listed - only an e-mail address. Interested buyers were asked to wire transfer their payment in advance. The seller promised to ship the puppies within 24 hours of receiving payment. In some cases, once the initial payment was paid, the seller would ask for more money to cover shipping cost or other fees. In the end, the buyers never received their puppies and they lost money that couldn't be recovered.

Wise consumers know to never do business with a breeder who will not speak to you on the phone. The BBB warns buyers to be suspicious of sellers offering purebred puppies at deeply discounted prices. If you are seeking a particular breed of dog, contact a local breed club for information on finding a breeder. You can also contact the American Kennel Club at <http://www.akc.org/classified/index.cfm>.