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1

Beware of Fake Breast Cancer Charity Scams

Posted Monday, October 17, 2011 ; 08:46 PM
Updated Monday, October 17, 2011; 09:44 PM

A lot of people and businesses are raising money this month in support of breast cancer awareness but be careful who you give your money to.

By Sarah Lieu
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CHARLESTON -- The Better Business Bureau put out an alert that scam artists are forming "sound alike charities" to make victims think it's all in the name of breast cancer.

Pink is popping up everywhere -- the color symbolizes breast cancer awareness. It's something three-year cancer survivor MaryAnn Galik is very aware of, but wasn't prepared for when diagnosed.

"Shock. I didn't really think it was going to be anything. I thought it was just a little cyst or something non-malignant," said Galik.

Galik is surrounded by pink these days. She volunteers for the Susan G Komen organization.

But the head of the West Virginia chapter of the organization says shady operators are seeing green.

"I've had phone calls, which I laugh when I get a call from a breast cancer foundation and I'm like, 'Really? And who are you?' And you know they really have a tough time giving you specific information," said Rebecca Newhouse, President of the Board of Directors for the West Virginia affiliate of Susan G Komen for the Cure.

When so many companies want to get on board, it creates what Newhouse calls "pink washing."

"If it just says it's going to breast cancer research...there's no foundation tagging, there's no trademark tagging...there's nothing...you know it very well....they may give a penny....from every thousand dollar or something," Newhouse said.

The Susan G Komen foundation donates 84 cents of every dollar to cancer treatments and research. And survivors like Galik are glad they're there.

"For me, to be able to volunteer and do something positive for other people enriched my life," said Galik.

If in doubt about donating to a breast cancer group, check it out online at the Charity Navigator website. One other thing, the Susan G Komen foundation does not do phone solicitations. So if you receive a call...it's buyer beware.

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