



Oct. 3, 2008

“Don’t Let Identity Thieves Ravage Your Reputation”

By Nebraska Attorney General Jon Bruning

Every year, hundreds of Nebraskans experience the frustration and anxiety of reclaiming their lives from an identity thief. I understand, personally, how identity theft can affect a person and his or her family. My wife had her car broken into while it was sitting in the parking lot of a public library. Her purse was stolen, and we were forced to go through the process of canceling credit cards and notifying the police. Even as the Attorney General, it was a difficult process because we didn’t have the information we needed on what to do next.

When an identity thief gains access to your personal information, whether by rummaging through your trash or exploiting you with through an Internet or phone scam, they can use it to steal your money or commit criminal acts in your name. According to the Federal Trade Commission, it takes an average of 12 months for victims to discover that a thief has destroyed their credit and ravaged their reputation.

If you’re a victim, recovering from ID theft can be lengthy and confusing, but my office has something that can help guide you through the process. Our Identity Theft Repair Kit gives you tips on how to protect your personal information, as well as a step-by-step guide to repairing your credit and restoring your good name.

We also recently partnered with a company named Shred Monster and provided secure shredding services at the Columbus Senior Citizen Festival. Dozens of people took advantage of the opportunity to protect themselves. More than 200 lbs. of sensitive information was shredded.

But identity thieves not only target individuals, they target businesses. The Attorney General’s Consumer Protection Division has a variety of resources to help businesses prevent this type of fraud and avoid its devastating consequences. This fall, we’re launching “Guard It,” a guide for business owners to build sound data security plans in order to protect themselves, their employees, and their clients from loss and lawsuits.

I encourage all Nebraskans to stay vigilant about protecting their personal information from thieves and scam artists. Always shred your sensitive documents, verify the credentials of those who ask for personal information, and contact our Consumer Protection Division toll-free at 1-800-727-6432 to receive our Identity Theft Repair Kit and other publications, or download them from www.ago.ne.gov.