



# Elliot Kolkovich

Summit County Prosecutor



# AVOIDING TEXTING SCAMS

Every September, the Summit County Prosecutor’s Office declares the month Senior Safety Awareness month. It’s a time where we refocus our efforts to help protect seniors.

One of the biggest safety concerns we see are scams targeting the elderly. Our office works hard to keep on top of the latest scams targeting the community. Now a new scam has popped up claiming people owe outstanding tolls.

Have you received a text with a link for you to pay the Ohio Turnpike toll fees? Scammers are now sending texts to your cell phone demanding payment. Don’t click on the link!

This latest scam has criminals sending text messages claiming to be from the Ohio Turnpike Commission and demanding you pay an outstanding toll or E-Z Pass fee. A link included in the text takes you to a website where you can enter information and pay the outstanding bill. But the website is fake. Once you enter your information, the scammers take your money and have your credit card information to steal more money.

The Ohio Turnpike Commission does not request payment by text nor do they collect unpaid tolls via text. The only website links associated with the Ohio Turnpike’s E-Z Pass accounts are [ezpassoh.com](http://ezpassoh.com) and [ohioturnpike.org](http://ohioturnpike.org).

The scam is called “smishing” — a combination of the abbreviation SMS (text messages) and “phishing”. Phishing is when scammers



impersonate a legitimate government agency or business and send out a link hoping someone clicks on it.

Similar scams include ones from either the Post Office or Amazon claiming you have a package but the delivery person either can’t find your house or can’t deliver the package without more information. Sometimes a text demands you renew a subscription. Or

perhaps you’ve won a fantastic prize. Or the text claims that there is suspicious activity on your account. The texts include a link which takes you to a fake website.

One simple way to avoid becoming a victim of these scams is to take a moment and question whether the information in the text is legit. Are you expecting a package? Did you recently drive on the Ohio Turnpike? Did you sign up for a contest with a prize?

If you do get one of these texts, you can report it to the Federal Trade Commission by forwarding the text to 7226 (SCAM) or report it to your cell phone carrier. Then delete the text and block the number from your phone. Hopefully that will prevent others from becoming a victim and stop these types of text message to your cell phone.



Also, never click on the links in the texts or reply to these text messages. If you have a question or concern about the text, reach out directly to the company named in the text using verified contact information. That way you know who you’re communicating with and protect yourself from becoming a victim.



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# IN THE COMMUNITY

The Summit County Prosecutor’s Office was proud to take part in the seventh annual Akron Pride Festival.

According to Akron Pride, the festival’s mission is to unify and affirm the LGBTQ+ community in celebrating diversity.

Thousands took part in the festival and enjoyed many activities including music, dancing, and entertainment for all ages.

The event kicked off with an “equity march” celebrating the community and those who support equality and equity for all.



John Galonski, Chief of the Prosecutor’s Office Civil Division, and Leslie Knoblauch, Coordinator of the Office’s Take Me Home Program, spread the word on safety at the recent Seniors & Caregivers EXPO in Macedonia.

Close to 100 people attended the event and learned about ways to stay safe and avoid becoming a victim of a crime.

John and Leslie discussed the latest scams targeting seniors as well as provided giveaway items, including our anti-fraud pen.

These pens are quite popular at our events as the ink cannot be washed or bleached off of a check. The hope is this prevents future crimes.

Stop by our table at any event and grab one!



## GUILTY VERDICTS

### August 2024

Congratulations to the following assistant prosecutors for obtaining convictions at trial.

- Rimma Avanesyan    Matt Kuhn
- Chris Delisio        Jamila Mitchell
- Felicia Easter        Austin Nagy
- Emily Hall             Josh Rau
- Kristi Haude         Dan Sallerson



## Elliot Kolkovich Summit County Prosecutor

### FREE WOMEN’S SELF-DEFENSE CLASS

#### Certified Instructor Chad Cunningham

Learn simple techniques that could save your life!



- Verbal techniques
- Free yourself from a choke-hold
- Learn the wrist breakaway
- Escape if pinned to the ground
- Practice kicks and slaps



**\*\*No Registration Required\*\***

**Tuesday, September 17, 2024  
6:00pm - 8:00pm**

**Stow-Munroe Falls High School  
Auxiliary Gym  
3227 Graham Rd.  
Stow, OH 44224**

**Co-sponsored by**



**Stow Clerk of Courts  
Amber  
Zibritsky**



Scan for our full class schedule  
**For any questions contact  
Tara Fought: 330.643.2787**



# CHILD SUPPORT AGENCY EQUITY & SOCIAL JUSTICE

Over the last month the Summit County Prosecutor’s Office Child Support Enforcement Agency has been involved with some exciting events. On August 14<sup>th</sup>, CSEA and Habitat for Humanity held the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Build a Home project. This year CSEA sent ten volunteers to help frame and add siding to a new home. Habitat for Humanity provides homes to low to moderate income families, with those families taking part in the construction. CSEA helped a family by covering some of those volunteer hours to complete their build.

“I truly enjoyed this experience. I love to help, and this was just very special to me. Then the group I did this with was the cherry on top! Lots of laughter and teamwork,” said Child Support Agency employee Cindy Almendarez-Melgar

“We got to put on siding which was an exciting thing to learn how to do,” added Ruanne Lamarine



On August 19, the CSEA outreach team held the first of many after-hours events, this one at the Akron Urban League.

The goal is to reach people who need help with their child support case while making child support staff more accessible. Services include genetic testing, job assistance, payment modifications, and answering general questions.

The next CSEA after-hours event is Monday, September 16<sup>th</sup> at Akron’s Joy Park Rec Center from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. The outreach team will also be available on Tuesday, September 17 at the Prosecutor’s Office FREE Women’s Self Defense Class at Stow-Munroe Falls High School from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

*The Summit County Prosecutor’s Office “Ambassadors for Equity & Social Justice” formed to bring co-workers of different backgrounds and cultures together. Each month the Ambassadors share thoughts to make our community a better place to live. Here is an article from one of the group’s members.*

September is a month filled with remembrances and celebrations, but there was a recent day the Ambassadors would like to bring to your attention.

Women’s Equality Day, celebrated every August 26<sup>th</sup>, is the day Congress designated as Women’s Equality Day in 1971. The day commemorates the passage of women’s suffrage in the U.S. and reminds us of the hurdles



overcome by the heroic women who faced violence and discrimination to propel the women’s movement forward.

In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, American women, who generally couldn’t inherit property and made half of the man’s wages in any available jobs, began organizing to demand political rights and representation.

In the U.S., the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution was first introduced in 1878, but it failed to gain traction. It wasn’t until women’s involvement in World War I made their contributions painfully obvious that women’s suffrage finally gained enough support.

Because a Constitutional amendment requires approval from two-thirds of the states, 36 of them had to ratify the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment before its passage. The deciding vote in the Tennessee legislature came from Harry T. Burn, a young state representative whose mother’s plea to support the amendment became a deciding factor in his vote (which he switched at the last minute).

Women aren’t done fighting for equal rights. Today, the wage gap between men and women still impacts women’s economic power, and gender-based discrimination still plagues workplaces and businesses transactions.

You can find Women’s Equality Day events in or around your community by logging on to: <https://bit.ly/473GSZ8>



**Help Us Go Green!**

Contact Tara Fought at [tfought@prosecutor.summitoh.net](mailto:tfought@prosecutor.summitoh.net) to receive this newsletter by e-mail



# SENIOR SAFETY AWARENESS MONTH

As part of Senior Safety Awareness Month, the Summit County Prosecutor’s Office is working with Summit County Probate Court to help inform the community and keep residents safe.

This month we are joining with Probate Court Magistrate Steve Elliott for four separate, FREE safety events focusing on avoiding scams, safety, maintaining your independence, and protecting your choices.

The four events are in Cuyahoga Falls, Akron’s Kenmore neighborhood, Green, and Twinsburg.

For more information and to register, please visit <https://prosecutor.summitoh.net/pages/Safety-Speeches.html>.

“My mission is to keep Summit County Safe. As Summit County Prosecutor I will make sure my office works hard to protect our community,” said Prosecutor Kolkovich. “Scammers focus on our emotions and claim we did something wrong. When it comes to avoiding scams, I urge people to Get Information, not Give Information.”

New this year is a series of short videos providing tips to seniors on how to avoid being a victim of a scam. In the video Prosecutor Kolkovich highlights five separate scams which target seniors and gives important information to help seniors and their family members be safe. You can find these videos on the Summit County Prosecutor’s Office social media pages, including Facebook and Instagram.

The Summit County Prosecutor’s Office is also partnering with the Summit County Sheriff’s Office on billboards throughout Summit County. These ads provide information to help people minimize their chances of becoming a victim of a scam.

The billboards have a variety of messages, including “Be Mindful of Scams”, “Don’t Give Information, Get Information”, “Verify, Verify, Verify”, and “Don’t Answer Unknown Numbers”.

We urge people to never send money or give out personal information to unfamiliar companies or unknown persons. Also, many scams involve victims purchasing gift cards. Utility companies do not accept payment with store or Apple gift cards. Also, do not answer calls where you do not recognize the number. Let the call go to voice mail then you can review it.



## FREE Senior Safety Event

- Avoid Scams
- Tips on Staying Safe
- Protect Your Finances
- Avoid Probate?
- Maintaining Your Independence
- Protect Your Choices

**Cuyahoga Falls**  
**September 11**  
**2 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.**  
 Cuyahoga Falls Library  
 2015 3<sup>rd</sup> Street  
 Cuyahoga Falls, OH 44221

**Kenmore**  
**September 18**  
**2 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.**  
 Kenmore Community Center  
 880 Kenmore Blvd.  
 Akron, OH 44314

**Green**  
**September 23**  
**2 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.**  
 Green Central Park Community Hall  
 1755 Town Park Blvd.  
 Green, OH 44685

**Twinsburg**  
**September 25**  
**2 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.**  
 Twinsburg Public Library  
 10050 Ravenna Road  
 Twinsburg, OH 44087



Scan code to register for this event



Contact: James Pollack 330.643.8386



Seniors, Stay Safe by Staying Aware. Avoid Scams.

**Don't Give Information, Get Information.**

prosecutor.summitoh.net

Seniors, Stay Safe by Staying Aware. Avoid Scams.

**Verify. Verify. Verify.**

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Seniors, Stay Safe by Staying Aware. Avoid Scams.

**Be Mindful of Scams.**

prosecutor.summitoh.net



# NATIONAL NIGHT OUT

Keeping Summit County safe is a main goal of the Summit County Prosecutor’s Office. That’s why taking part each year in National Night Out is so important to our office.

Events were scheduled for August 6 in Akron, Stow, Cuyahoga Falls, and Barberton with plans for music, games, and giveaways. Unfortunately the weather did not cooperate, with storms forcing the cancellation of a number of the events. Even with the rain, Prosecutor’s Office employees volunteered at several locations in Akron.

It was great meeting so many people and providing information on ways to stay safe, avoid scams, and how to minimize a person’s chances of becoming a crime victim.

National Night Out was first introduced in August of 1984 after several years of having a patchwork of neighborhood watch groups gather throughout the Country to get communities to be informed and involved in safety.

The first National Night Out involved 2.5 million neighbors across 400 communities in 23 states. The effort has grown to a massive celebration with festivals, parades, cookouts and other various events in cities across the United States.

We had a great time meeting so many people throughout Summit County. Here are just a few pictures of some of the National Night Out locations.



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