



# OBSERVING NATIONAL CRIME PREVENTION MONTH

by Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott

EACH OCTOBER, NATIONAL CRIME PREVENTION Month encourages communities across the country to renew their focus on crime prevention. The Office of the Attorney General (OAG) is committed to working with law enforcement across the state to protect Texas communities, so each October we work to focus on this worthy endeavor.

Preventing crime takes citizen involvement and partnerships with local law enforcement. To further this effort, the OAG has an Outreach Coordinator who addresses consumer and senior groups, law enforcement expos and conferences statewide. Our coordinator answers questions and warns Texans about a multitude of topics, including identity theft, fraud and scams against seniors, to name a few.

Longtime OAG Outreach Coordinator Nancy Gresham retired last month after more than 20 years of tireless, dedicated service to Texas communities. We recently named John Elizarde, who has worked in the OAG's Crime Victim Services Division and Criminal Investigations Division, to serve as our new Outreach Coordinator. John's professional background – including his recent work with the OAG's Special Investigations Unit, where he helped

facilitate the Southwest Border Anti-Money Laundering Alliance – makes him well prepared to oversee and lead the OAG's outreach events. Law enforcement associations and consumer advocacy groups who want to schedule an outreach event with John should contact him at (512) 936-1317 or by e-mail at [John.Elizarde@oag.state.tx.us](mailto:John.Elizarde@oag.state.tx.us).

To better protect our communities, law enforcement agencies must continue working cooperatively to combat crime. With that in mind, we are working with city, county and federal law enforcement officials to take sex offenders out of Texas neighborhoods. The OAG's Cyber Crimes Unit and the Fugitive Unit, which locates sex offenders who have violated the terms of their parole, have combined to arrest more than 2,000 sex offenders. Our investigators are also helping to educate parents and educators about cyber safety by offering tips, training and other valuable resources through our website: [www.texasattorneygeneral.gov](http://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov).

Our Medicaid Fraud Control Unit (MFCU) works diligently with local, state and federal law enforcement agencies to protect nursing home patients from physical abuse, neglect and financial exploitation. Texas

taxpayers spend more than \$17 billion on the Medicaid program each year, so we also investigate Medicaid providers who defraud the taxpayers by submitting reimbursement requests for goods and services that were never actually rendered. Texans can report waste, abuse or fraud by a Medicaid provider by contacting the MFCU at (512) 463-2011.

The OAG is also committed to cracking down on identity theft. Our consumer and senior alerts and educational outreach programs provide Texans with fast, up-to-date warnings about fraudulent sweepstakes offers, foreign "lotteries" and similar financial schemes. We also took action against several companies that carelessly discarded their customers' sensitive personal information in violation of the law. Texans who fall victim to identity theft can use the OAG's ID Theft Kit to help speed the recovery process. The Kit, available for download at [www.texasfightsidtheft.gov](http://www.texasfightsidtheft.gov), includes forms and agency contact information that can help victims restore their credit and prevent further damage to their good name.

Our duty to protect Texans also compels us reach out to victims who are left battered and broken – physically,

emotionally and often financially – in the wake of violent crime. The OAG's Crime Victim Services Division administers the Crime Victims' Compensation Fund, which helps innocent victims and their families when they have no other means of paying for the financial cost of crime.

We also partner with crime victim advocates across Texas who walk victims through the recovery process. Many advocates are victim assistance coordinators (VACs) or crime victim liaisons (CVLs) who work for local law enforcement agencies and prosecutors' offices. Others are sexual assault nurse examiners (SANEs), who are highly-trained medical professionals who work in local hospitals and help recover forensic evidence that is critical to prosecuting sexual assault cases. Together, crime victim advocates help victims in their communities find counseling, emergency shelter or funds to cover expenses associated with the crimes committed against them.

If we continue to foster a strong network of law enforcement, crime victim advocates and caring neighbors, we can help reduce crime and make our Texas communities stronger.

– October 2010